Cyrus Lakdawala

# Bird's opening

## move by move



EVERYMAN CHESS

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First published in 2015 by Gloucester Publishers Limited, Northburgh House,
10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT

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**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN Kindle: 978-1-78194-249-9
ISBN epub: 978-1-78194-250-5

Distributed in North America by National Book Network,
15200 NBN Way, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214. Ph: 717.794.3800.

Distributed in Europe by Central Books Ltd.,
99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN. Ph 44(0)845 458 9911.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess,
Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT
email: info@everymanchess.com; website: www.everymanchess.com

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Everyman Chess Series
Chief advisor: Byron Jacobs
Commissioning editor: John Emms
Assistant editor: Richard Palliser

Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.
Cover design by Horatio Monteverde.
Printed by TJ International Limited, Padstow, Cornwall.

# About the Author

**Cyrus Lakdawala** is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the U.S.

**Also by the Author:**
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*The Classical French: Move by Move*
*1 ... b6: Move by Move*

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# Series Foreword

*Move by Move* is a series of opening books which uses a question-and-answer format. One of our main aims of the series is to replicate - as much as possible - lessons between chess teachers and students.

All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions and to complete exercises, to test their skills in chess openings and indeed in other key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess openings, and to study chess in general.

Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms
Everyman Chess

# Bibliography

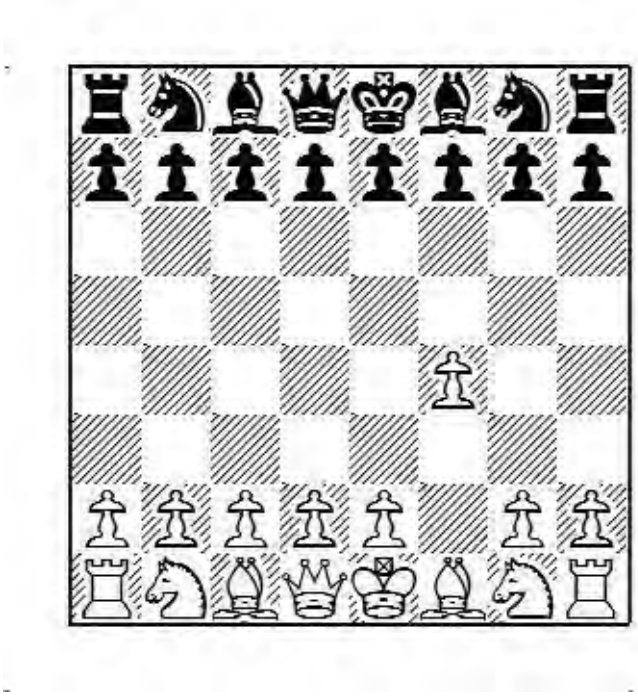
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# Introduction

When it comes to chess openings, your writer tends toward an abysmally low tolerance to routine. Some of us play one set of openings our entire lives, taking up the Ruy Lopez at age eight and passing from this world at age 90, still essaying the Spanish Game. I, on the other hand, change openings like articles of clothing.



Every opening variation has its distinctive aroma and feel. With 1 f4! initiating the Bird's Opening, the flavour and smell of course is of the Dutch Defence (whose intellectual property we openly violate … or is it the Dutch which violates *our* intellectual property?), but a tempo up, since we play it as White.

The Chinese classical text, the *Tao Te Ching,* commences with the phrase "*The Tao that can be explained is not the eternal Tao"*. Some positions are more about 'sense and feeling' than about 'analysis'. The Bird's is not an opening suited for corporate tastes. A friend at the San Diego Chess Club, after hearing that I was writing a book on Bird's Opening, told me (with a degree of malicious glee!) that Henry Bird, the opening's founder, only managed a 47% score with his line as White. With our first move, we seize control over the e5-square, in the hope of later occupying it with a piece. In any experimental opening line like Bird's, we have the stock horror movie character: the mad scientist, who risks tampering with the forces of nature to satisfy scientific curiosity. When our opponents refuse to believe a non-standard opening contains hidden potential - when it actually does - they are like a person born blind, who is unable to grasp even the concept of the existence of colour. Now very few of us play Bird's exclusively as White, and I hereby suggest we play it as a side line or a surprise weapon. Opening theory, as we all know, can be either a weapon or a crutch. Why not stick to a mainstream, theoretical line, you may ask? The answer is: frequent habitual repetition of an opening variation, played *ad nauseam*, while allowing you to know it well, may also empty the variation of all its adventure - and therefore its fun, which in turn deadens us to its subtleties.

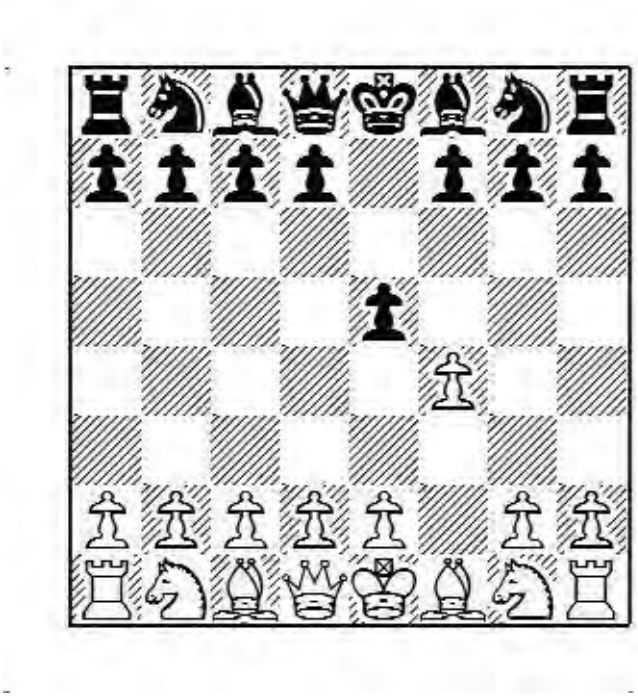
Each time we agree to enter a theoretical opening duel (which is really a duel of homework), our hands shake like a nervous vegan ninth grade kid (whose parents are PETA members) who is forced to dissect a frog in biology class. With 1 f4, this is unlikely to happen simply because the theory remains rather stable, mainly since so few of us play the opening. I'm an intuitive player at heart, and I deeply resent it when my opponent forces me into that unpleasant task: Homework! With 1 f4, we operate on moods and feelings, not hard variations, as most believe (though the From's Gambit would be the sole exception). Because of the blessing/curse of constantly developing technology, we all find ourselves struggling not to fall behind in a frantic opening theory arms race. Our

variations, played just yesterday by some GM across the globe, are now instantly transferred to us to absorb and memorize. Some of us try to avoid this techno-rat race by sub-specializing in just a few positions. If you open with 1 f4! as White and meet all Queen's pawn openings with 1 … f5 with Black (for example, 1 Nf3 f5; 1 d4 f5; 1 c4 f5; 1 g3 f5), we manage to cover 66.66% of *all* our openings with a single Bird's/Dutch overall structure.

Evolutionary mutations of a major opening line producing a playable offshoot are uncommon in chess. In the case of the Bird's, its offshoot - the Dutch - is oddly, far more popular than its intellectual creator. We can use the Bird's unpopularity and weaponize it. In essence, we chant a spell of theoretical concealment when we open with 1 f4!, which tends to offend theory's officialdom. If we play the opening regularly, our eyes slowly grow accustomed to the Dutch-like murk, while we hope to lure opponents from their familiar world of rationality, into our world of confused disassociation and illogic, where both sides must play almost by inference, rather than direct decree. Your opponent can even study and prep for your coming Bird's and still not play it very well, since when we play an unfamiliar opening line, we can study it diligently at home, but on another level, the play is tempered by experience, and our opponents are in a sense, infants to the line - even when armed with theoretical knowledge.

Let's take a look at some of our key battlegrounds. We must sort through the thicket of Dutch expectations (played a move up), retaining some lines, while perhaps choosing to discard others.

**From's Gambit**
**"The time to hesitate is through. No time to wallow in the mire."**



Our first diagram is that of From's Gambit, where we sense apocalyptic warning signs everywhere. The learning of such a complex line is not simply an affectation of the theoretically affluent. This isn't a wing-it style chapter and we must know our theory as if our lives depend on it - because over the board, they do. From's originates from 1 f4 e5!?, where Black's e-pawn insolently looks in our direction and makes a neck-slicing gesture

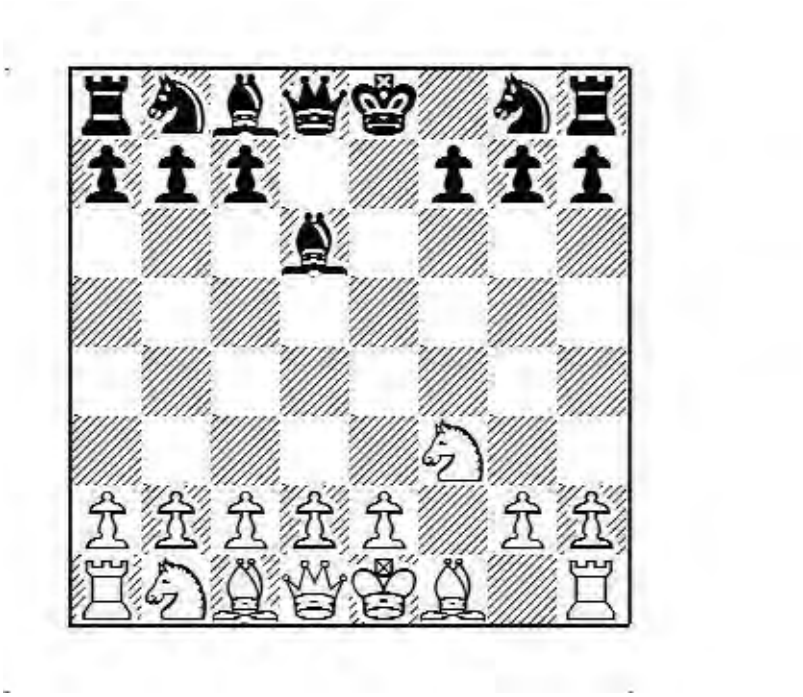
by dragging a finger across its throat. So the opening choice to wilfully enter such a position is for those with a contentious disposition, since Black in essence declares war on us on move one with an immediate pawn sacrifice!

My feeling is that we should accept (and this too is backed up by the comps' evaluations) Black gambit, with the philosophies:

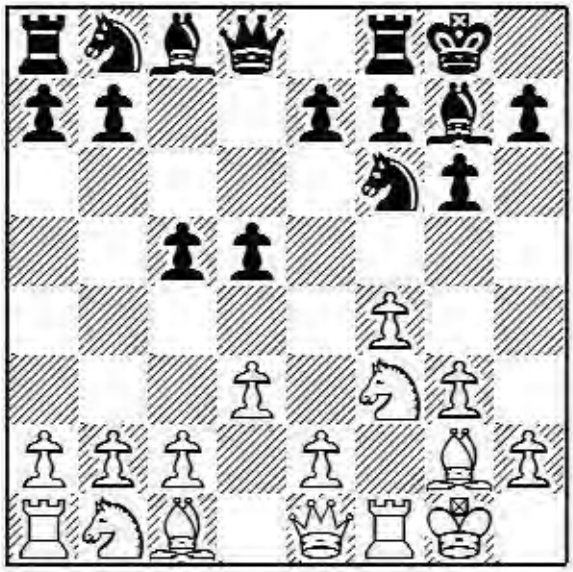
1. If we are unable to unlock a door, then the next best thing is to kick it down.

2. By declining the gambit, we tend to transpose into an open game fight (1 f4 e5 2 e4) rather than a strategic tussle, and the former is exactly what the opponent wants.

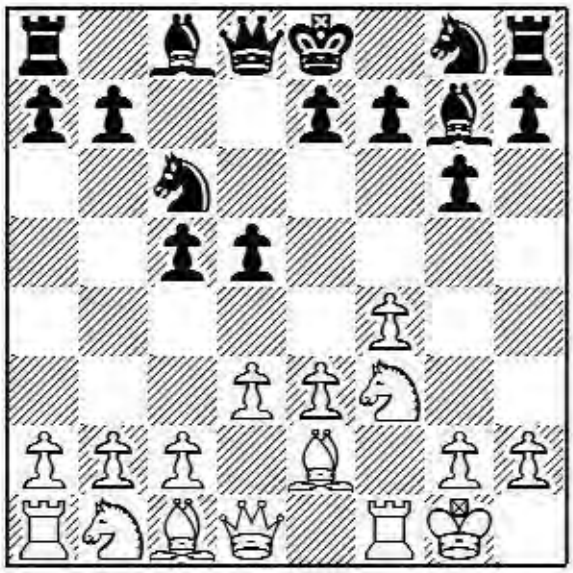
Don't be intimidated by this chapter. No position - no matter how ludicrously irrational - is beyond our competence to comprehend with the help of books, chess computers and databases. Black overharvests his or her dark squares in exchange for a pawn, which under the comp's gaze, risks diminishing returns.



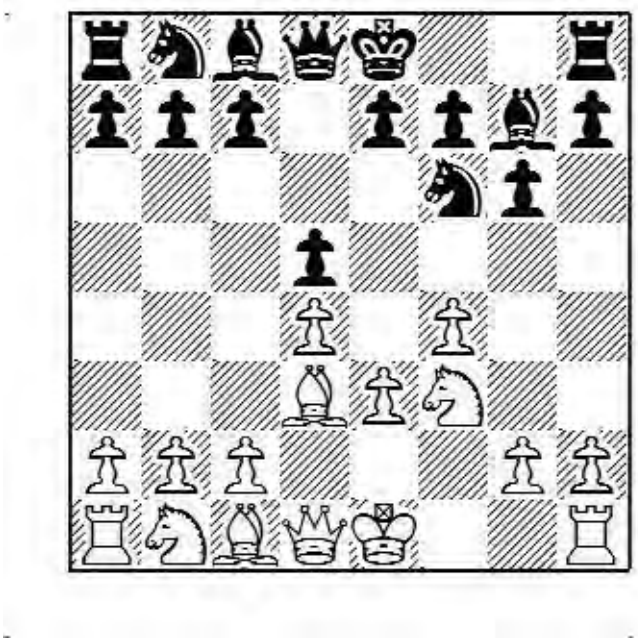
In the diagrammed position, Black's most common move is 5 … g5!?, threatening … g4, when we note Black's quickly degrading environmental stewardship when it comes to structure, all in the name of attack.



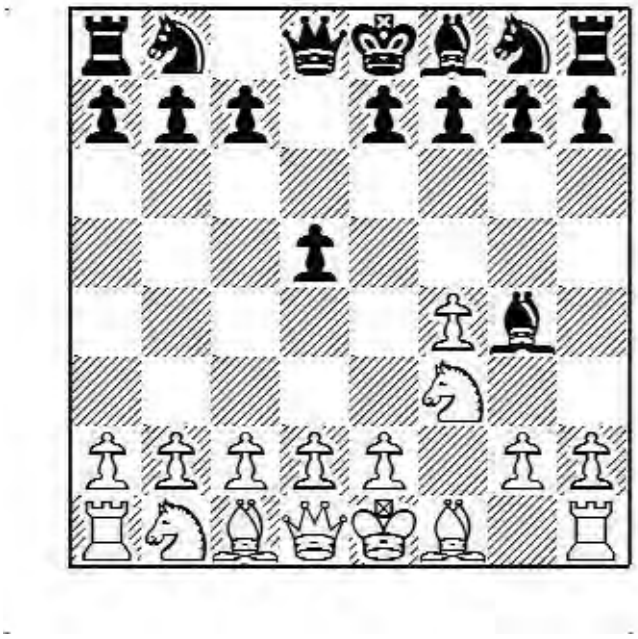
The next diagram is the Reversed Leningrad Dutch-Bird. We concentrate on the Qe1 line, where White tries to implement e2-e4. The resulting positions are subtle and your growing experience in the line will become a greater and greater asset as time passes.



This is the Classical Bird's Opening, which is difficult to understand and even more difficult to play skilfully. It is the nature of 1 f4 lines to be devoid of neat, snug-fastening variations on either side. When we study this chapter, we note a seemingly endless series of back-and-forths, to divert attention to true intent.



Next come the Stonewall lines, where the e4-hole is the stigmata we bear. We give something (control over e4) and we get something (increased central influence). This blocked position often leads to a dense jungle of disorder, with Black's and White's doctrines mutually contradictory. Our serpentine structure is designed to intimidate as White usually builds on the kingside for an attack. Conversely, we may regard Black's future queenside expansion with indulgent tolerance, as we refuse to intervene.

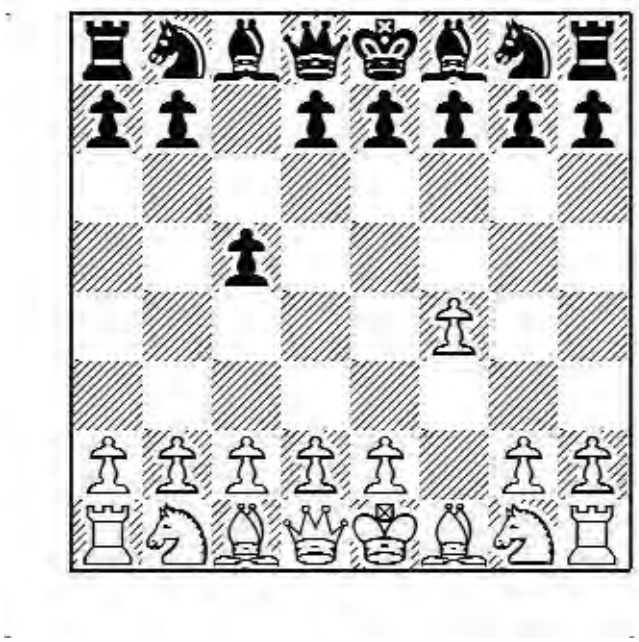


Black's plan in the early … Bg4 lines is monochromatic - pursuing a light-square central pawn array with the following plans:

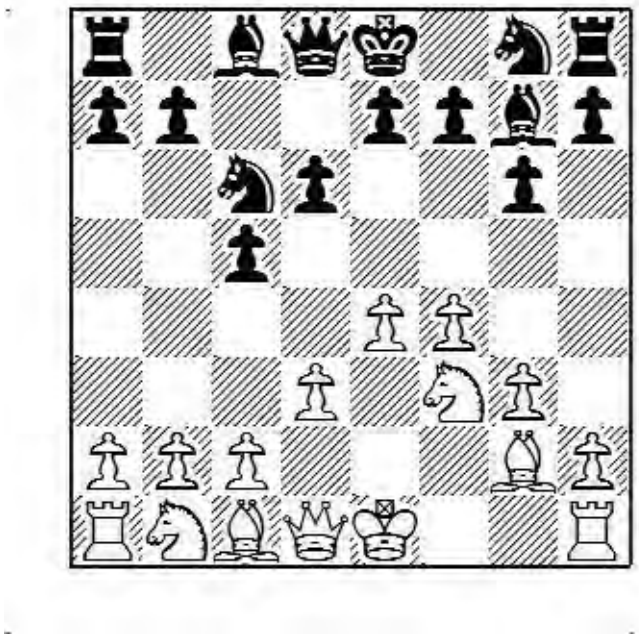
1) Hand over the bishop pair by playing … Bg4 and … Bxf3.

2) Play … c7-c6, … Nd7 and … e7-e5, or play … c7-c6 and … e7-e6, which switches the structure to favour Black's remaining bishop.

In the resulting positions, the concept of equilibrium is virtually non-existent, since our position tends to either rise or sag.



This is Bird's versus an English setup. Such unstructured positions can be played with a wide degree of latitude from both parties, with free associative interpretations.



Transposing into the Sicilian, we look at both the Nc3 Closed Sicilian setups, as well as the c2-c3 build-up - aka The Clamp - where White hopes to erect a kind of super centre with an eventual d3-d4.

**A brief history of Bird's Opening**

Our founding father, British Master Henry Bird, took up his pet line in the mid-1850s and played it faithfully for four decades. The Bird's popularity never quite caught on, the way the Dutch Defence did.

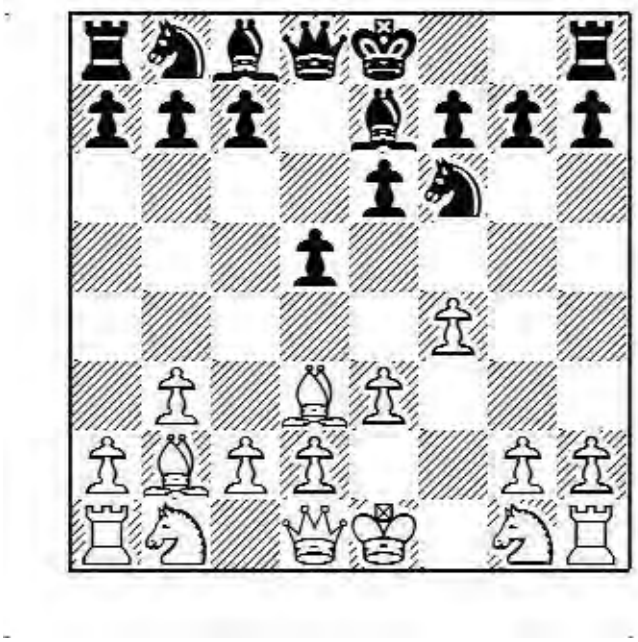
The following game, with the famous double bishop sacrifice, probably propagated the Bird's Opening more than any other chess game by appearing in publications time and time again.

*Example 1*

**Em.Lasker - J.Bauer**

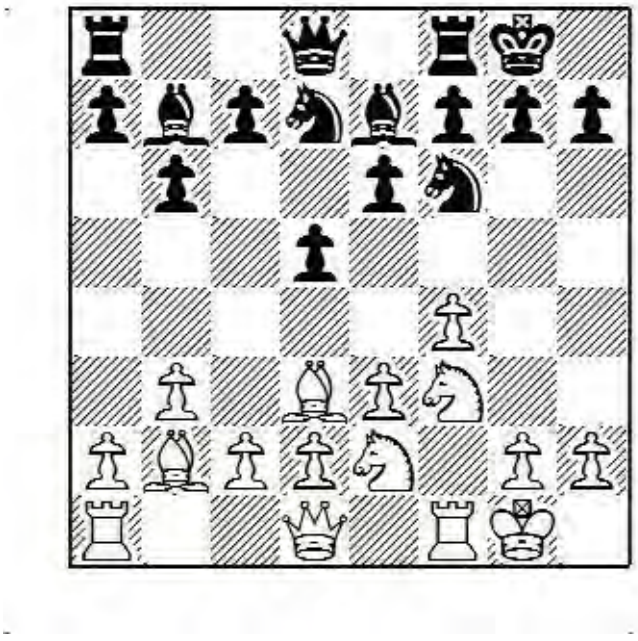
Amsterdam 1889

**1 f4 d5 2 e3 Nf6 3 b3 e6 4 Bb2 Be7 5 Bd3**



Posting the bishop on d3 is probably a bit too barbaric for the modern era. Safer is 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 b6 7 0-0 Bb7 8 Qe1 Ne4 9 Nc3 Nd6 10 Qg3 Nf5 11 Qh3 Nc6. Jobava now punts in 12 Bd3!?. Wait a minute. I take that back. Even today's GMs can't resist the d3-posting! The game followed 12 … Nb4 13 Bxf5 exf5 14 Qxf5 g6 (Black regains his sacrificed pawn, at the cost of weakening the dark squares around his king) 15 Qh3 Nxc2, B.Jobava-P.Tregubov, Warsaw 2013. I like White's kingside chances after 16 Rac1 Nb4 17 Qh6! when the naive 17 … Nd3?? is met with 18 Ne4! Nxb2 19 Neg5 Bxg5 20 Nxg5 and Black must give up his queen in order to avoid mate.

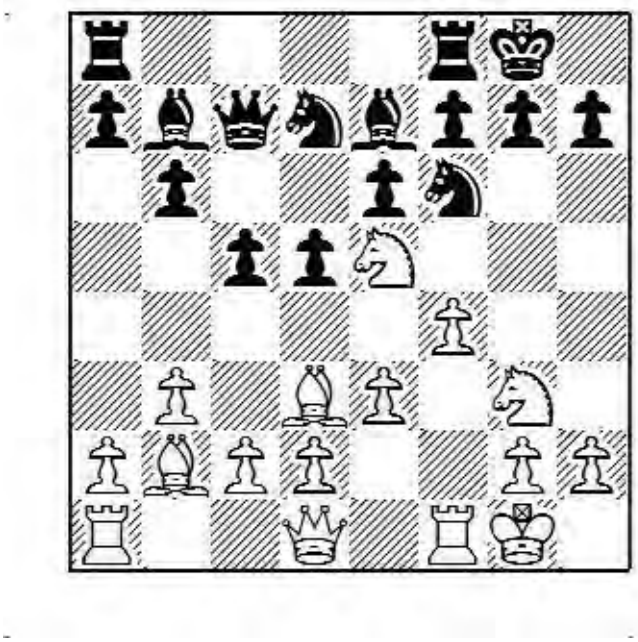
**5 … b6 6 Nf3 Bb7 7 Nc3 Nbd7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Ne2**



**9 … c5**

Most players today would immediately eliminate the light squared menace with 9 … Nc5!.

**10 Ng3 Qc7 11 Ne5**



**11 … Nxe5?!**

Black should counter White's kingside attack with the central counter 11 … d4!.

**12 Bxe5 Qc6 13 Qe2 a6?**

13 … g6 was necessary.

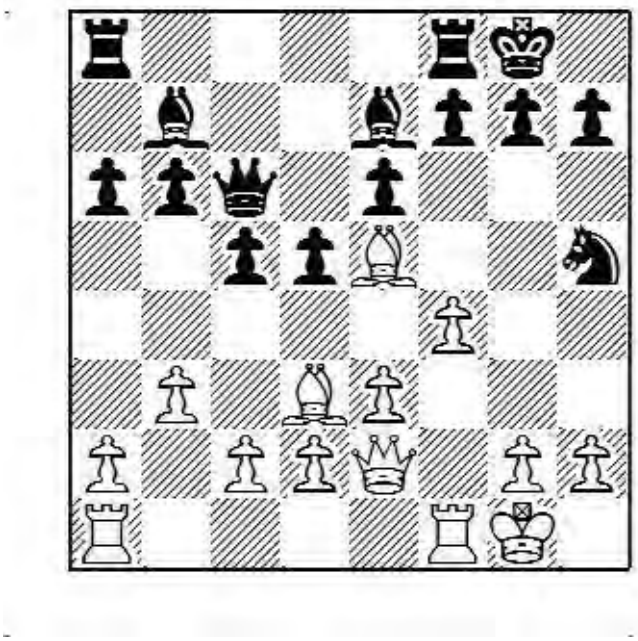
**14 Nh5! Nxh5??**

A look at the alternatives:

a) 14 … Ne8?? is met with 15 Bxg7!

b) 14 … d4 15 Bxf6 Bxf6 16 Qg4 Kh8 (16 … e5 17 Be4!) 17 Rf3 Rg8 and 18 Bxh7!

c) 14 … Rfd8 is Black's best chance. After 15 Bxf6 Bxf6 16 Nxf6+ gxf6 17 Rf3 c4 18 Bxh7+! Kf8 (the bishop is poison for Black) 19 Rg3, White is a clean extra pawn up.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Lasker's combination, now almost a rote piece of

geometrical lore, was at the time a completely original sacrificial attacking plan. White to play and force the win. Note that 15 Qxh5 f5 achieves nothing.

***Answer*:** Annihilation of king's cover.

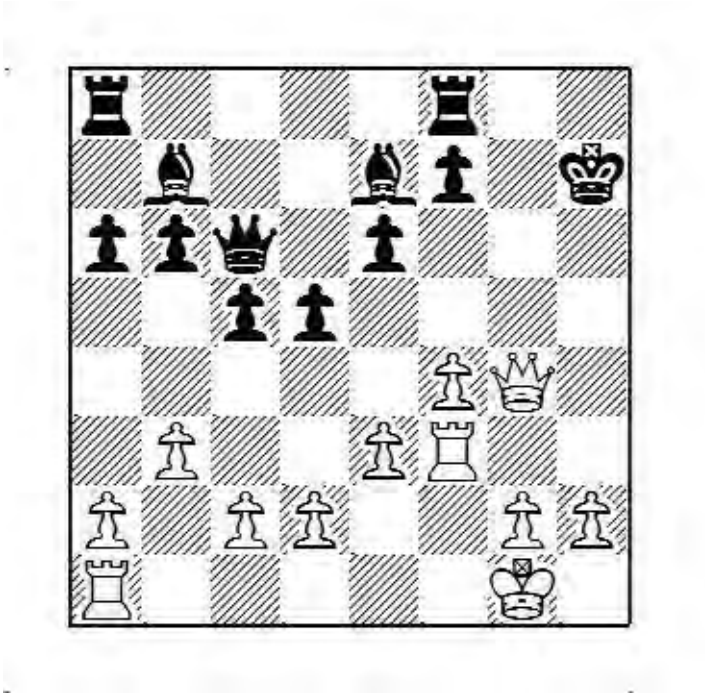
**15 Bxh7+!!**

***Question*:** Come on! Two exclams for this rote

combination which I would probably find in a blitz game?

***Answer*:** The combination is rote, mainly since players like Lasker were the (great!) predecessors who showed us the way. I got a recent email from my longtime friend IM Jack Peters, who wrote the following: "I recently went over the article about Labourdonnais vs. McDonnell in the *March 2011 Chess Life*. Three of McDonnell's wins were annotated, separately, by Morphy, Anderssen and Paulsen. By modern standards, their annotations were awful! Do you know if annotators had different customs then? For example, were they reluctant to give tactical variations? Was it considered impolite to point out errors? All three annotators mentioned beginner-level stuff and ignored the critical moments of the games. I found Morphy's fulsome praise for ordinary moves irritating. When he did try to pinpoint some mistakes, he was often wrong! If I had to guess his strength based on his notes, I would not consider him a great player." The answer to Jack's question is the same as the answer to yours: That which is rote to the modern day club player, was all new to the old guard. So we shouldn't judge them by modern day standards. Even basic ideas like developing quickly and fighting for the centre were arcane secrets, known only to a select few in the romantic era.

**15 … Kxh7 16 Qxh5+ Kg8 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Qg4+ Kh7 19 Rf3!**

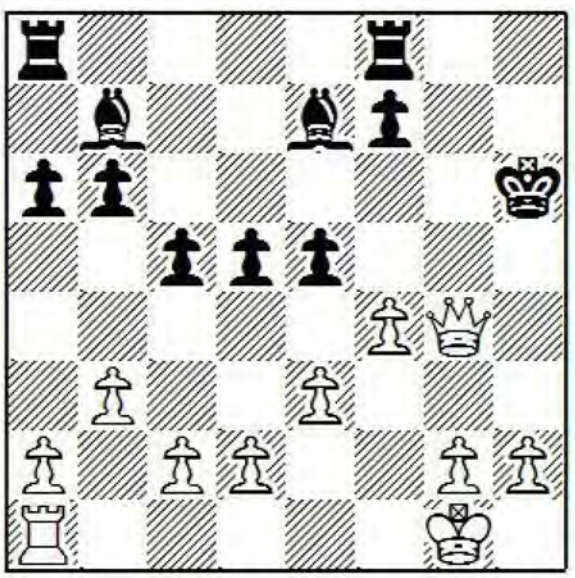


Lasker's devastating point: he lifts a second attacker, after which Black's king is unable to cope.

**19 … e5**

Black's only move.

**20 Rh3+ Qh6 21 Rxh6+ Kxh6**



Black got two bishops and a rook for a queen and two pawns - seemingly not so bad. However, the combination isn't over!

***Question*:** It is Lasker's next move which clearly

shows that Black is busted. What did he play?

***Answer*:** Double attack.

**22 Qd7!**

Winning a piece and the rest is a mopping up exercise.

**22 … Bf6 23 Qxb7 Kg7 24 Rf1 Rab8 25 Qd7 Rfd8 26 Qg4+ Kf8 27 fxe5 Bg7 28 e6 Rb7 29 Qg6 f6 30 Rxf6+ Bxf6 31 Qxf6+ Ke8 32 Qh8+ Ke7 33 Qg7+ Kxe6 34 Qxb7 Rd6 35 Qxa6 d4 36 exd4 cxd4 37 h4 d3 38 Qxd3 1-0**

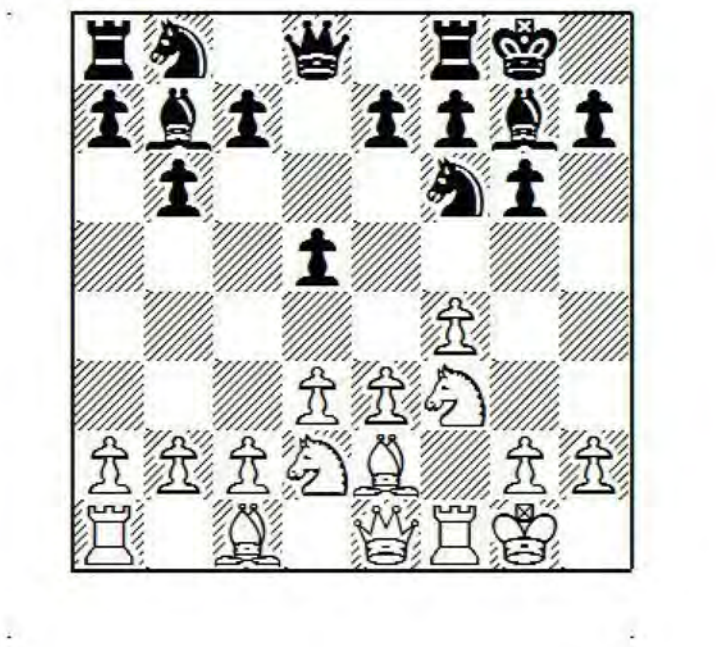
**Summary:** The famous double bishop sacrifice unleashed by the future world champion Emanuel Lasker at the beginning of his chess career did the Bird's Opening a big favour in getting the opening featured in chess publications up till today.

Free-thinking GMs continued Bird's idea, like Nimzowitsch, Tartakower, Larsen, and current GMs Lars Karlsson, Mikhail Gurevich, Henrik Danielsen and Artur Jakubiec. In recent years, the top exponents of the Bird's are Nakamura, Nepomniachtchi and Rapport. I think Larsen did more than any other GM to popularize the opening (it probably should be called the Bird-Larsen Attack). Here is an example of Larsen's deviously subtle understanding of the opening.

*Example 2*
**B.Larsen-S.Gligoric**
Havana Olympiad 1966

Great players - both living and dead - leave indelible imprints upon our minds, and by default, our play. Add to this our own uniqueness and we have a constantly changing chess entity. This soft lump of clay alters and shifts form throughout our chess lives. Bent Larsen's handling of 1 f4! had just such an effect upon your writer. This is my favourite game in the book. I originally placed it in Chapter 3 as a model example for the Classical Bird. However, I liked it so much that I yanked it away and it thus got promoted to the Introduction.

**1 f4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 d3 d5 4 e3 Bg7 5 Be2 0-0 6 0-0 b6 7 Qe1 Bb7 8 Nbd2**



***Question*:** What is White's intent behind this move?

***Answer*:** White plans a Nimzowitchian overprotection strategy of e5, with Ne5 and then Ndf3, backing up e5.

**8 … Nbd7 9 Qg3!?**

When we engage in a flight of fancy at the board, we should also attempt a kind of purposeful dreaming which is functional, as well as aesthetically pleasing. A move which appears self-evidently obvious to one player may look bizarrely idiosyncratic to another. This kind of move was perfectly "normal" for Larsen. Already, this is a new move in the position, though a typically odd Larsonian opening idea which hasn't been repeated since.

***Question*:** Why would a player so acquainted with opening theory proceed to spit in its face by rejecting conformity? What exactly does the queen do on g3?

***Answer*:** To answer your first question: Larsen veers from theory to de-book and confuse opponents, forcing them to play on their own, rather than rely on homework. To answer your second question, 9 Qg3 suppresses Black's … e5 break. Also, the queen can easily transfer to h3, as it normally does in Qh4 lines, so White isn't really giving up anything by playing his queen to g3. A look at other options:

a) The caveman attack is also available after 9 Qh4 e6 10 g4 Ne8 11 Qh3 Nd6 12 c3, J.Pelikan-J, Behrensen, Mar del Plata 1958. Now Black can strike back in the centre with 12 … e5 and if 13 f5? gxf5 14 gxf5 Kh8, White's king looks far more compromised than Black's.

b) White is perhaps aiming for the e4 break after 9 Bd1 though after 9 … Re8, Black sets up … e5 too. Following 10 Ne5 (White correctly avoids 10 e4?! e5 11 f5 gxf5 12 exf5 e4 13 dxe4 dxe4 14 Ng5 e3 15 Nb3 c5 when White's queenside pieces are badly bottled up) 10 … Nxe5 11 fxe5 Nd7 12 d4 (I don't trust White's compensation if he speculates with 12 e6!? fxe6 13 Bg4 Nf8) 12 … e6, T.Grum-K.Hilmer, Deggendorf 2006, White should play the freeing break 13 e4 c5 14 c3 when he stands no worse.

**9 … e6**

Preparing to play … Qe7 later on.

***Question*:** Didn't Larsen's queen lose a potential tempo on his last move?

***Answer*:** Not at all, for several reasons:

1) … Nh5 actually misplaces the knight.

2) White reacts with Qh3, where he kind of wants to go to anyway, and then gains a useful tempo himself with g4 in booting the knight off the h5-square.

**10 Ne5 Ne8**

This move opens the possibility of … f6 ejecting White's knight but this is exactly what Larsen wanted to provoke!

***Question*:** Why would he do that? Doesn't … f6

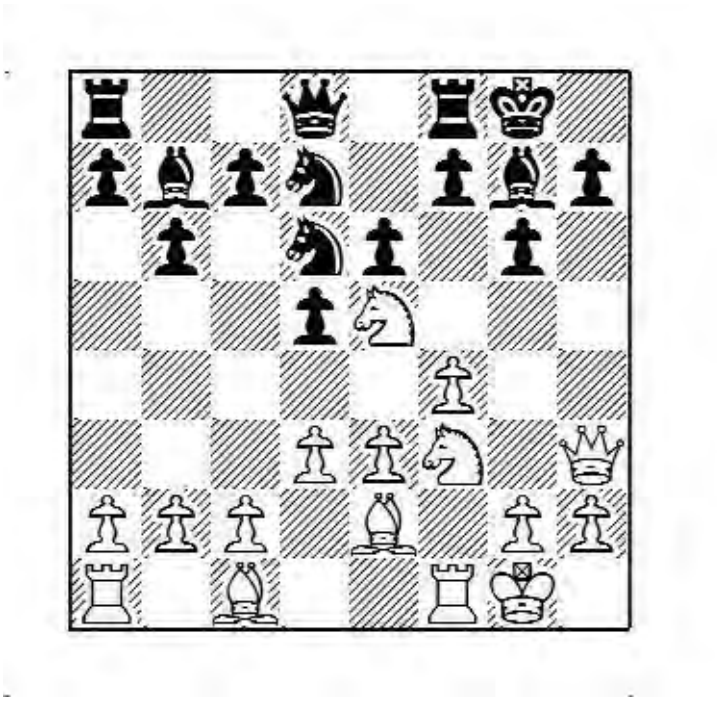
kick White's knight out of its advanced post?

***Answer*:** The point is it also loosens Black's king cover, a side-effect which Larsen later uses to his benefit. Conversely 10 … Nxe5 (one of those moves we all hate to play) looks fine after 11 fxe5 Nd7 12 Nf3 c5 13 b3 Rc8 and if 14 Bb2?! (14 c3! is correct), Black has 14 … d4 15 exd4 cxd4 and better since the c2- and e5-pawns fall under attack.

**11 Ndf3 Nd6**

With hindsight, maybe Black should toss in the immediate 11 … f6 so that White doesn't get a chance to build as he did in the game.

**12 Qh3**



A silent menace creeps up on Black, seemingly inconspicuous and non-threatening.

Both g4 and Ng5 are contemplated.

**12 … Qe7**

Perhaps intending … f6 next, but Larsen keeps Black busy.

**13 Ng5!?**

Larsen, who is a stranger to self-doubt, doesn't mind losing a tempo to provoke the weakening … h7-h6.

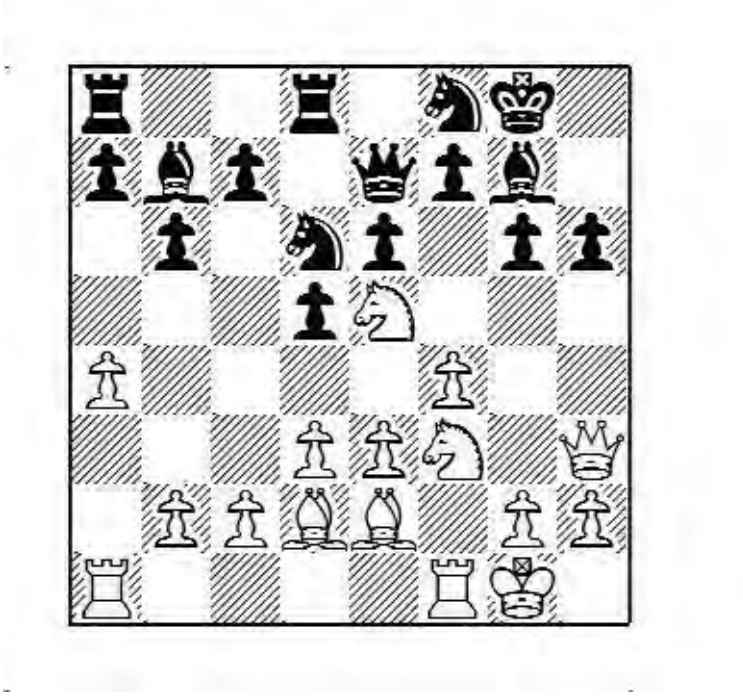
**13 … h6**

Pretty much necessary, since after 13 … Nf6 14 Bd2, White can continue to mass up on the kingside.

**14 Ngf3 Rfd8**

Clearing the f8-square to continue with … Nf8 and … f7-f6, which of course further loosens the black king's pawn front.

**15 Bd2 Nf8 16 a4**



***Question*:** Larsen was famous for marching his rook pawns up the board. However, here, he has a specific piece setup in mind when he pushed a4. What is it?

***Answer*:** The idea is to cover the b5-square, so that White can play Bc3 without worrying about … Nb5.

**16 … f6**

Another necessary evil.

**17 Ng4 Nf7**

Covering the h6-pawn.

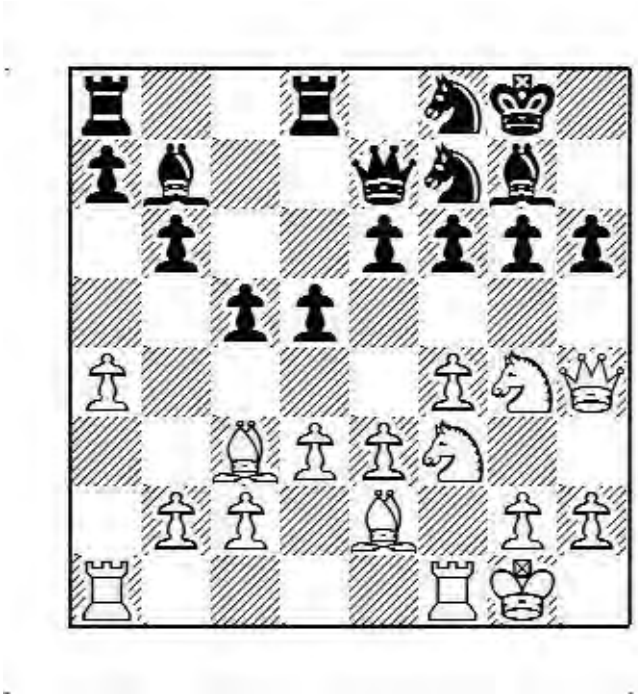
***Question*:** Shouldn't Black just go ahead and push forward with 17 … h5?

***Answer*:** I think your suggestion may be Black's best move. Following 18 Nf2 e5 19 fxe5 fxe5 20 e4! Bg5 tricks are in the air. 20 … Bf6 21 Rfe1 Bc8 22 g4!? dxe4 23 dxe4 h4, the position submerges into strategic murk - absolutely perfect for Larsen's style, while Gligoric, who preferred positional clarity would undoubtedly have been out of his natural element.

**18 Bc3**

White is continually probing and pressing on the black king's cover and now he takes aim at the f6-pawn.

**18 … c5 19 Qh4!**



White attackers glide about, propelled by the hands of the master conjurer Larsen, their gaze firmly fixed upon f6. It's instructive to watch how he methodically pokes and prods his opponent, goading fresh weaknesses on the black king's front. What is really striking about this game is the alarming pace in which Black's position decayed.

**19 … g5?!**

Gligoric has had enough of the affronts and pushes back, at the substantial cost of weakening his king. The passive 19 … Nh7! should be played, although it allows White weird tricks like 20 Nfe5! g5 21 Ng6! Qe8 22 fxg5 hxg5 23 Qh3 f5 24 Rf2! d4! (Black can't accept the gift with 24 … fxg4? 25 Bxg4 Bc8 26 Bxg7 Kxg7 27 Raf1 Rd7 28 Bh5 e5 29 Qg3 Qe6 as White has 30 Nf8! Nxf8 31 Rxf7+ with a winning attack) 25 exd4 cxd4 26 Bb4 a5 27 Ba3 Ra7 28 Ne7+ Kh8 29 Ng6+ with perpetual check.

**20 fxg5 fxg5?!**

The wrong recapture, which makes matters worse and violates the principle: *recapture toward - and not away - from the centre.* However, capturing toward the centre was no picnic for Black either after 20 … hxg5 21 Qh5 e5 22 h4! (continuing to chip away at the black king's pawn front) 22 … d4 23 Bd2 Ne6 24 hxg5 fxg5 25 exd4 cxd4 26 Rae1 Nf4 27 Bxf4 gxf4 28 Nh4 Qg5 29 Qxg5 Nxg5 30 Nf5 Re8 31 Bd1 Nf7 32 c3, introducing the threat of Bb3. Having written a book on Larsen, I came to the conclusion that he was more of a strategist than a tactician. In this game, after his 20th move, Black finds himself in

deep trouble, and it isn't obvious that he even went wrong - even with the comp's help! If this isn't strategic magic, I don't know what is.

**21 Qh5**

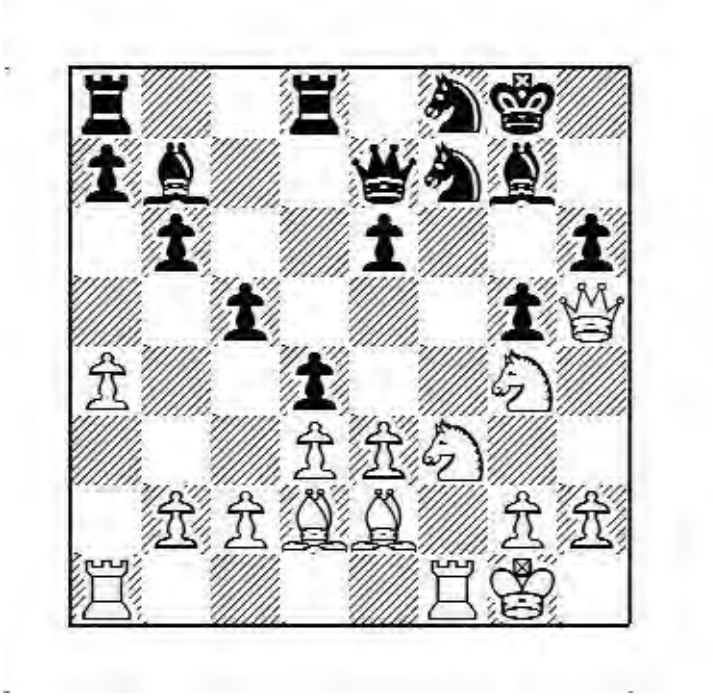
Attackers creep forward ominously. Black, despite having played natural and principled moves, is in deep trouble.

**21 … d4**

Black must retain his dark-squared bishop.

**22 Bd2**

Alternatively, 22 Be1 Nd7 23 e4 Nf6 24 Nxf6+ Bxf6 25 h4 allows White to continue chipping away at the black king's cover.



**22 … dxe3?**

A mistake in an already very difficult situation. Black has to try 22 … e5 23 e4 Ne6 24 g3 when White can contemplate both the doubling of rooks on the f-file, and also the h2-h4 lunge.

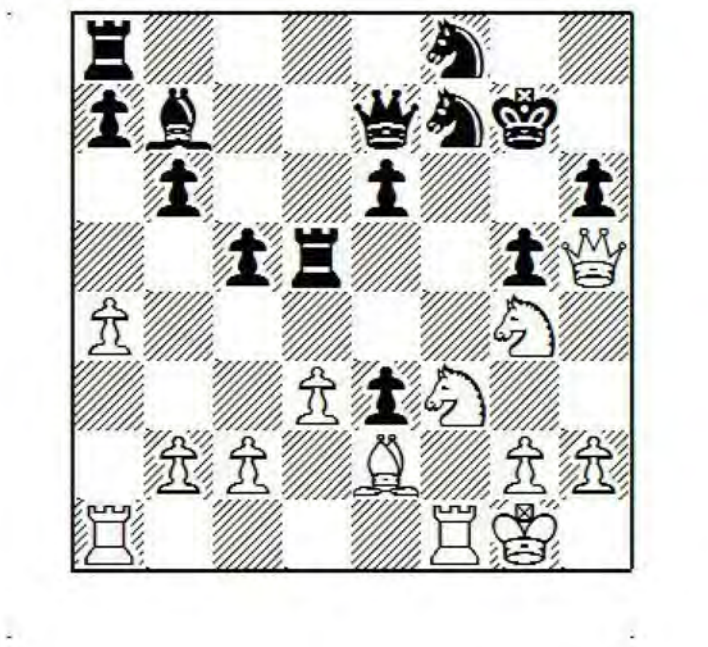
**23 Bc3!**

The bishop, unsatisfied with mere reverence from his followers, now demands outright worship from his g7-brother. The hermetic seal of Black's defence finally opens a crack, just enough to allow infiltration. Larsen recognized that Black's position was bound to collapse with the swap of dark-squared bishops. Less accurate is 23 Bxe3?! Rd5 when Black can resist better.

**23 … Rd5**

Futile is 23 … e5 as it enables 24 Nfxe5! Nxe5 25 Bxe5 and if 25 … Bxe5?, White has 26 Nxh6+ Kh8 27 Rf7 Qe6 28 Nf5+ Kg8 29 Ne7+ and Black can resign.

**24 Bxg7 Kxg7**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White attackers exchange sly nods of complicity. Our intuition screams that a hidden combination exists. How did Larsen win the queen?

***Answer*:** Clearance/deflection/removal of the guard/queen trap.

**25 Nh4!**

The knight drives around the problem, rather than through it.

Step 1: Offer a knight to open the f-file.

**25 … gxh4 26 Rxf7+!**

Step 2: Clearance/removal of a key defender/annihilation of a defensive barrier/queen trap. This shot hits Black with the sickening 'thud' sound of a sledgehammer crashing through the rotten timber.

**26 … Qxf7 27 Qxh6+ Kg8**

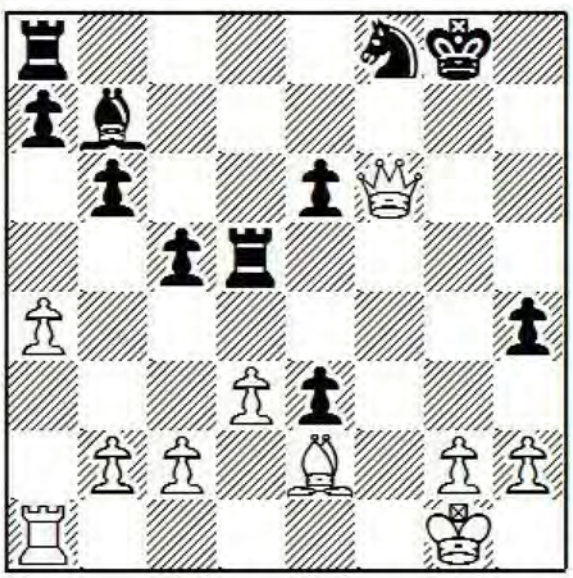
Sherlock Holmes said that in life-threatening emergencies, we tend to "save the object dearest to our hearts." In the case of the black king, the "dearest" object happens to be himself. He has little choice but to forgive his h6-sister her trespasses - mainly since she has the power to arbitrarily order his immediate execution if the mood comes upon her.

**28 Nf6+**

Step 3: Black must hand over his queen.

**28 … Qxf6 29 Qxf6**

Black's mere rook and knight (coupled with his scattered position) does not quite measure up to the White queen. This means he is completely lost though he did make a fight out of the dire situation.



**29 … Rf5!**

Gligoric seizes upon his only hope: Infiltration to f2, after which the rook hits g2, the e2-bishop and also c2 if the bishop moves.

**30 Qxh4**

Larsen picks off the h4-straggler, realizing that he can deal with the … Rf2 threat.

**30 … Rf2 31 Qg3+**

The comp found 31 Qg5+! Kh8 32 Bf3 Bxf3 33 gxf3 Nh7 34 Qe5+ Kg8 35 Qxe6+ Kg7 36 Qe7+ Kh8 37 Qxe3 Rxc2 38 Qe5+ Kg8 39 Kh1! which is even stronger than the queen check on d5, which picks off the loose a8-rook. White forces mate.

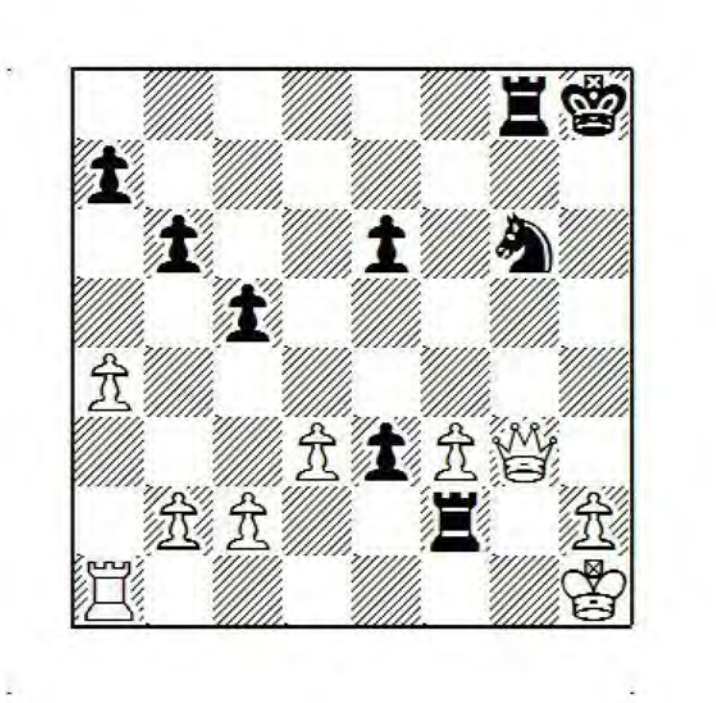
**31 … Kh8 32 Bf3**

Resolving his g2 problem.

**32 … Bxf3 33 gxf3 Ng6**

Gligoric cuts off the Qe5+ threat. Of course his knight isn't hanging due to the g-file pin.

**34 Kh1 Rg8**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Larsen missed a forcing

variation which wins Black's knight. Can you find it?

**35 a5**

A slight smear on a once pristine work of art.

***Answer*:** Larsen missed 35 Rg1! Rxc2 (35 … Rg7 is met with 36 h4! intending h5) 36 Qh3+ Kg7 37 Qxe6 Kh7 38 Qh3+ Kg7 39 Qf5! and White wins the knight, since 39 … Kh6 is met with 40 Qg5+ Kh7 41 Qh5+ forcing mate.

**35 … bxa5 36 Qg5?!**

This move prolongs the game. Larsen misses the immediate win once again as 36 Rg1! still works just like on the last move.

**36 … Kg7 37 Qxe3 Rxc2 38 Rc1?!**

Just because a move looks logical doesn't guarantee that it's the best one. Larsen, perhaps worried about his king, underestimates his own attack. He missed another winning line in 38 Qxe6! Rh8 39 h3 Rxb2 40 Rg1 Rh6 41 Rxg6+! Rxg6 42 Qe5+ which picks off the b2-rook and wins.

**38 … Rxb2 39 Qxc5 Kf7!**

Black's forces finally begin to coordinate and White's win is no longer a simple matter.

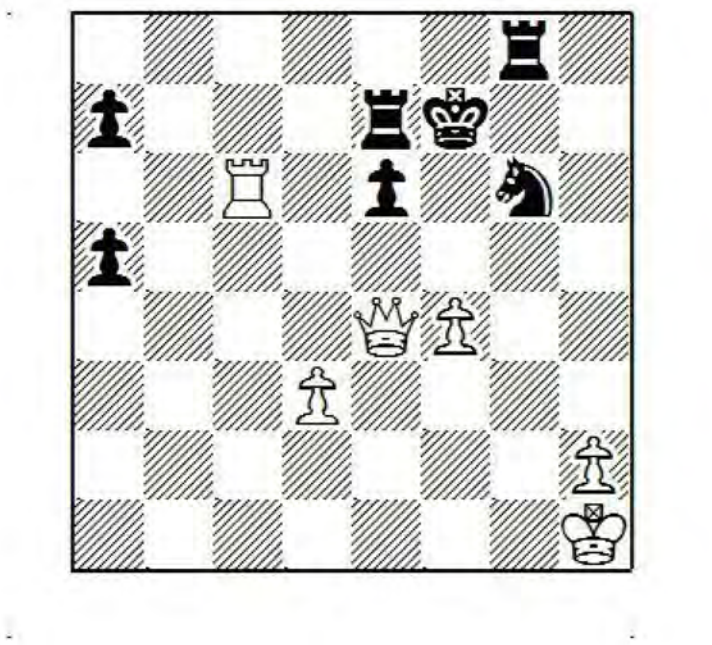
**40 Qd4!**

The pair of black a-pawns are up for grabs, yet Larsen correctly declines, fearing Black's initiative after 40 Qxa7+ Ne7 41 Qxa5 Rgg2 42 Qe5 Rge2 when the win won't be so easy for White.

**40 … Rb7 41 Qe4 Rd7 42 Rc6**

A new enemy is identified: the e6-pawn.

**42 … Re7 43 f4!**



The threat of f4-f5 is in the air and now Black's king is in greater danger than White's.

**43 … Nf8 44 d4**

There was no reason to hold off on 44 f5! Rg5 45 fxe6+ Nxe6 46 h4 Rg6 47 d4 Nf8 48 Qf5+ Kg7 49 Rxg6+ Nxg6 50 h5 with a straightforward win for White after 50 … Nf8 51 h6+! Kg8 52 Qg5+ Kf7 53 d5 Rd7 54 Qg7+ Ke8 55 Qe5+ and if 55 … Kf7, White completes the rout with 56 h7! Nxh7 57 Qe6+.

**44 … Rg6 45 Rc5 a4 46 d5**

Stripping Black's king of pawn protection.

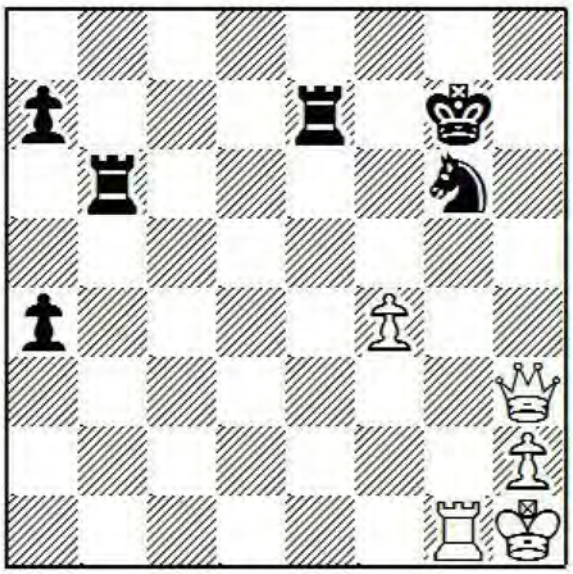
**46 … exd5 47 Qxd5+ Kg7 48 Qd4+ Kh6 49 Qc3!**

When we set up a cheapo, in the back of our mind lurks the sinister thought: "I want something for nothing!"

**49 … Rb6!**

Gligoric alertly sidesteps the trap 49 … Rb7?? which will be met by 50 Rh5+! Kxh5 51 Qh3 mate!

**50 Qh3+ Kg7 51 Rg5+ Ng6 52 Rg1!**



Great wealth doesn't immunize us from fear, since even the rich die. This prudent rook retreat secures the win. White's position requires conflicting demands:

1. White seeks to attack.

2. White's own king requires protection.

In this instance, defence takes precedence. He correctly avoids the tempting line 52 f5? as after 52 … Re1+ 53 Rg1 Rxg1+ 54 Kxg1 Ne5, White's win is no longer an easy matter.

**52 … Kf7 53 Qh5!**

Threat: f4-f5. White continues to move the ball forward, if only by a few centimetres. The computer found 53 f5! Ne5 54 Qh5+ Kf6 55 Qg5+ Kf7 56 f6! Re8 (not 56 … Rxf6? as 57 Qg8 is mate!) 57 Qh5+! Kxf6 58 Qxe8 and White wins.

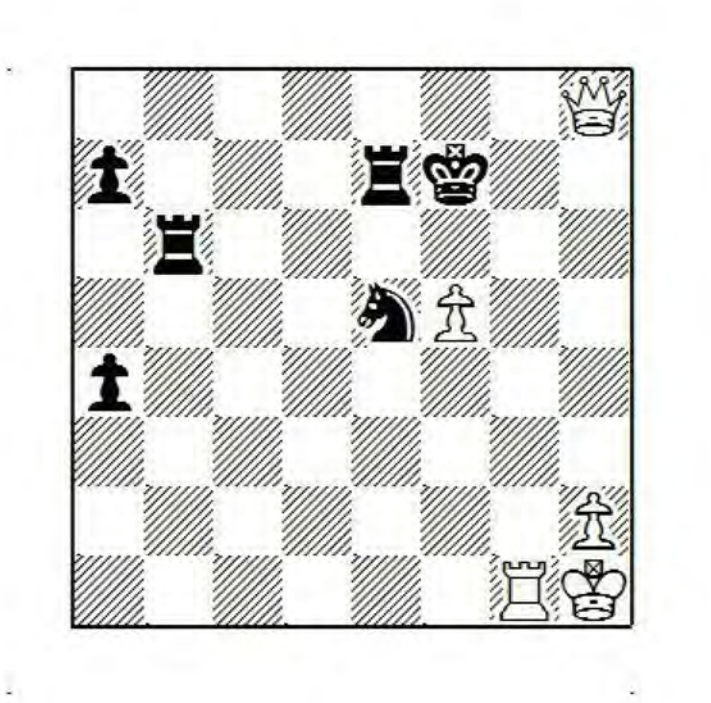
**53 … Kf8**

Black's king may have acquired a few battle scars yet still retains his life. Of course, giving away the knight is the equivalent of resignation, but when our plans go awry from their original intent, what else is there to do but improvise?

**54 f5!?**

"No thanks, I couldn't possibly accept such a gift!" Here we see an extreme example of Larsen's somewhat impractical artistic streak. The comps say this is actually stronger than simply taking the knight, which your writer and every club player in the world would pounce on in a nanosecond, with 54 Rxg6 Rxg6 55 Qxg6 and Black can resign.

**54 … Ne5 55 Qh8+ Kf7**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black's king reminds us of a psychologically tormented victim in an Edgar Allan Poe story. White to play and force mate:

**56 Qg7+?**

Fatigue has an awful way of tightening attention's aperture, so that you see and understand less and less as the game goes on. White's last move is in violation of the principle: *when hunting the opponent's king, don't chase it. Instead, cut off avenues of escape*.

***Answer*:** There is no cure to 56 Rg8! with the mating threat of Qf7. For example, after 56 … Rb1+ 57 Kg2 Rb2+ 58 Kg3 Rb3+ 59 Kh4 Rb4+ 60 Kh5, the checks run out.

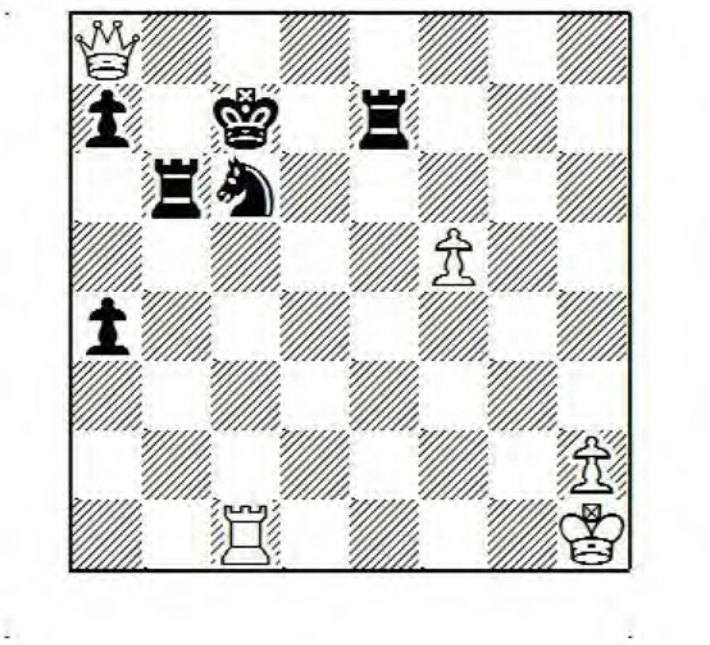
**56 … Ke8 57 Qg8+ Kd7 58 Qa8**

The queen broods long, hateful thoughts concerning her d7-brother, who continues to slip out from her grasp.

**58 … Nc6 59 Rd1+ Kc7**

Exit stage right: Black's king seeks shelter on the queenside.

**60 Rc1!**



Threat: Qxa7+. Black's position, fragile as a water bubble, may burst with the slightest flick of a finger.

**60 … Kd7**

Black may trap the White queen after 60 … Re1+ 61 Rxe1 Rb8 but this still loses after 62 Qxb8+ Nxb8 63 f6 Nd7 64 f7 a3 65 Rc1+ Kb7 66 Ra1.

**61 f6 Rf7 62 Rd1+ Kc7 63 Qe8! Rh7**

Not 63 … Rxf6 as 64 Rd7 mates!

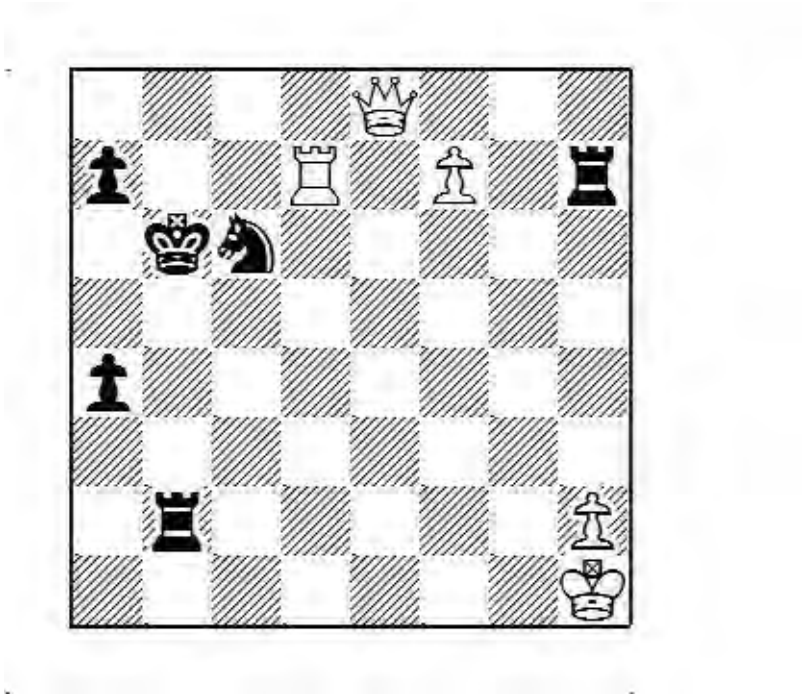
**64 f7**

Not only threatening to queen, but also Rd7 mating again!

**64 … Rb2**

Black's threats come far too late.

**65 Rd7+ Kb6**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Find one powerful

shot and you first win heavy material, then force mate.

***Answer*:** Skewer. Black's king has no good squares.

**66 Qe3+! 1-0**

"So now you recognize - much too late - the degree to which my power overwhelms yours," the queen tells her unfortunate b6-rival. After 66 Qe3+! Kb5 (66 … Ka5 67 Qc5+ Rb5 68 Rxa7+ Nxa7 69 Qxa7+ Kb4 70 f8Q+ forces mate) 67 Qd3+, White wins the h7-rook.

**Summary:** You may want to try Larsen's 8 Nbd2 plan against Black's passive … b6 plan. White fights for control over the e5-square with Qg3!?, Ne5 and Ndf3. This idea needs more testing and you can be sure it will take your opponents by surprise.

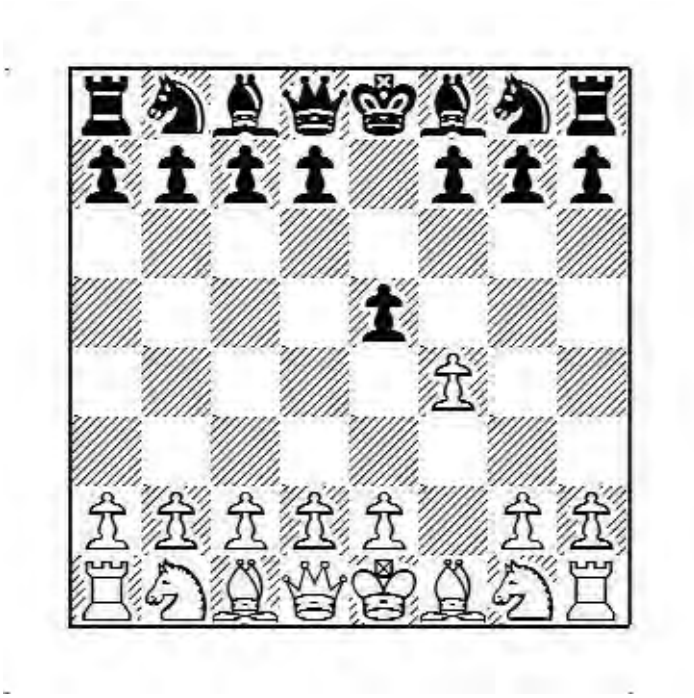
**Acknowledgements**
Thanks, to editor GM John Emms, and to CM Junior Tay for the final edit. Thanks also to Nancy for her proofreading and punctuation gerrymandering. May our opponents' brows knit in worried concentration upon seeing us open with 1 f4!.

# Chapter One
# From's Gambit

In this chapter, we deal with Black's most aggressive response to Bird's, From's Gambit. From the get go, Black offers us a pawn for an instant development lead and attacking chances. Now when I played 1 f4 online in 2005 to 2006, From's was the most common response from titled players. Today, having taken up Bird's opening again, I haven't had a single From's Gambit from a titled player - in fact, I haven't had anyone play it! The reason: It is currently in theoretical disrepair and the fun-killing comps have pretty much worked it out in White's favour. A gambit with the black pieces is a tricky entity, since we as White already get a one move development head start, which in turn decreases Black's compensation. Be warned though, at the club level it is still quite popular. If you know your lines, you should be able to pull out a clear advantage. Still, such positions, even though borderline unsound for Black, are not so easy to play for our side, since we are thrown on the defensive for such a long time. So even though we have an advantage over the board, Black, in a certain sense, still retains the practical chances. So let's not underestimate this line. Tossed into such murk, we deal in "maybe" and "I'm-not-so-sure", more than fixed notions. Our difficulties can be encapsulated into a single issue: King safety. If you test the positions against the comps, taking Black, you will soon master the art of snatching Black's gift pawn and converting it to the full point.

*Game 1*
**S.K.Williams-D.Howell**
Halifax (rapid) 2004

**1 f4 e5**



Black speculates with the From's Gambit, the most militant response to 1 f4. If we accept (and in this book we only examine the accepted lines), we shouldn't play in a mood of distracted abstraction. Early on we deal in hard variations to meet Black's rather fanciful attacking ideas.

**2 fxe5**

We should grab the pawn and make Black prove it. Gambits with Black are questionable entities, since we as White have a one move head start, which decreases Black's development lead compensation.

***Question*:** What alternative is there to acceptance?

***Answer*:** If you have King's Gambit experience and feel comfortable there, then by all means, transpose with 2 e4.

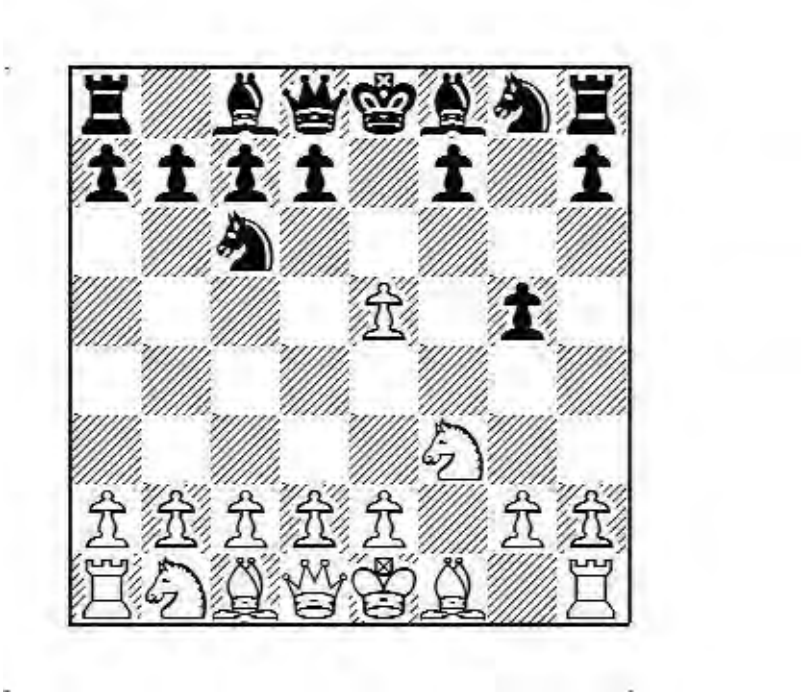
**2 … Nc6**

This is an offshoot line. We examine Black's main line 2 … d6 for the remainder of the chapter.

**3 Nf3**

Don't fall for 3 d4? which was played eleven times in the database. Now amazingly, only five of the eleven found the rather obvious 3 … Qh4+ 4 g3 Qxd4 with a clear structural advantage for Black.

**3 … g5!?**



***Question*:** Isn't this weakening?

***Answer*:** It is certainly not a consequence-free decision, but believe it or not, the … g5 thrust is standard operating procedure for Black in From's. The idea is to displace White's f3-knight and discourage White from kingside castling.

Let's look at the alternative 3 … d6 where White can accept or decline the gambit without prejudice:

a) After 4 exd6 Bxd6 5 d4 Nf6 6 Bg5 (also possible is to simply play for a direct e4 with 6 Nc3) 6 … h6 7 Bxf6 Qxf6 8 e4 Bg4, White can stabilize the centre with 9 c3! (it is not advisable to play for adventure with 9 e5?! Bxe5 10 dxe5 Nxe5 11 Bb5+ c6 12 Be2 Bxf3 13 gxf3 Rd8 14 Qc1 Nxf3+ 15 Bxf3 Qxf3 when Black gets obviously powerful compensation for the piece) 9 … 0-0-0 10 Bb5 Rhe8 11 Bxc6 bxc6, Henrik Danielsen-Heini Danielsen, Torshavn 2000. I prefer White structurally if he simply returns the pawn with 12 0-0! (one of the tricks of surviving From's is to return our booty to take over the initiative, if given a chance) 12 … Rxe4 13 Nbd2 and White intends Qa4 next, with the edge.

b) Declining the pawn with 4 e4 dxe5 5 Bb5 Bc5 is quite reasonable as White inflicts structural damage at the cost of the bishop pair in an open position after 6 Bxc6+ bxc6 7 d3 Bg4 8 Nbd2 Ne7 9 Nc4 f6 10 Be3 Bb6 11 a4! (White seeks a bishop swap with a5, without fixing Black's pawn structure) 11 … a5 12 0-0 0-0 13 Qe1 and I prefer White due to his superior structure, L.Karlsson-A.Randazzo, Montcada 2010.

**4 d4**

A thematic move. White supports the e5-pawn while simultaneously attacking the g5-one. I don't like weakening our dark squares with 4 h3 which is also playable, but not in the spirit of the opening.

**4 … g4 5 Ng5**

*Houdini* prefers the inverted 5 Ng1!? d6 6 e4! when White returns the pawn to seize an initiative. Following 6 … dxe5 7 d5 Nce7 8 Nc3 f5 (otherwise White quickly develops a bind on the f-file) 9 Bg5 h6 10 Bh4 Bg7 11 Bb5+ Kf7, W.Linker-H.Georg, Germany 2010, I like White's chances after 12 Bc4 Qd6 13 a3 when both Nb5 and the line-opening exf5 give cause to worry Black.

**5 … d6**

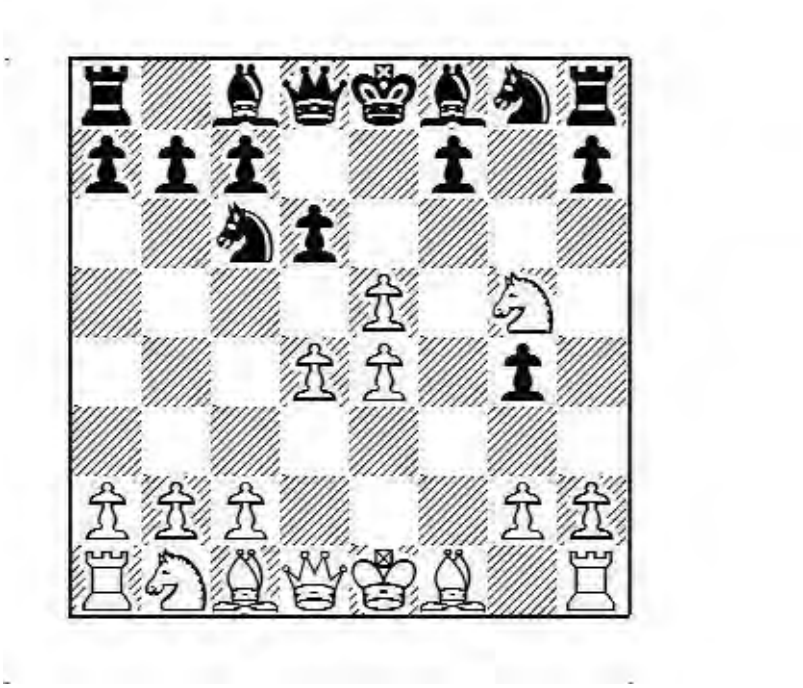
Let's look at other possible tries:

a) 5 … d5 6 exd6 Bxd6 7 d5 Ne5 8 Ne4 f5 9 Nxd6+ Qxd6 10 Bf4! Nd3+ 11 Qxd3 Qxf4 12 e3 Qb4+ 13 Qc3 Qxc3+ 14 Nxc3 and I don't see an iota of compensation for Black's missing pawn.

b) 5 … Bh6 has also been analysed on Chesspublishing.com by GM Anthony Kosten. I don't think it's all that pleasant for Black after the simple 6 Ne4! as White hands over his extra pawn to seize the initiative. After 6 … Bxc1 7 Qxc1 Nxd4 8 Nbc3 Qh4+, T.Bohn-K.Zimmermann, Germany 2003, suddenly, this looks like a King's Gambit gone wrong for Black. White stands clearly better after 9 Nf2 Ne6 10 g3 Qh5 11 Bg2 Qxe5 12 Nxg4 with a huge development lead and an open f-file for White.

**6 e4!**

Note that White can transpose back to the 5 … d5 line with 6 exd6.



***Question*:** With the text move, didn't White

just self-trap his knight after his last move?

***Answer*:** He did just that. This kind of f7 piece sacrifice is seen in King's Gambit Allgaier lines. In this case, I believe it is a very nice version for White. Why? Because we started a pawn *up*, not down one, as in the King's Gambit.

**6 … h6?!**

Black takes the bait when he probably should refrain from doing so. Other choices:

a) The dubious 6 … dxe5?! 7 Bc4 and the position morphed into a rotten pseudo-King's Gambit for Black following 7 … Qxd4 8 Bxf7+ Ke7, K.Hayward-R.Johnson, correspondence 1986. White has a winning attack after 9 Qe2 h6 10 c3 Qd6 11 0-0.

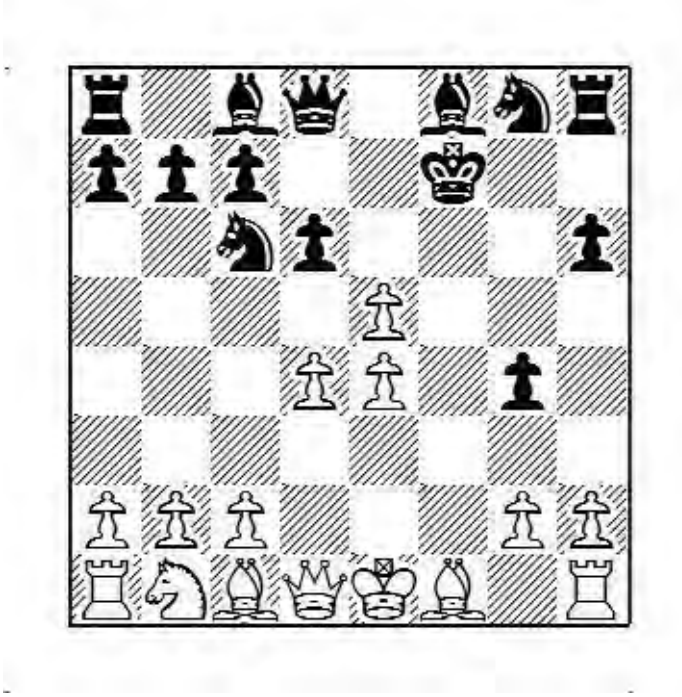
b) Maybe Black should opt for the yet untested option 6 … Bh6 7 h4 dxe5 8 d5 Nce7 9 Nc3 a6 10 Be2 f6 11 Ne6 Bxe6 12 Bxh6 Nxh6 13 dxe6 when I still prefer White, but Black looks better off than in the game continuation.

**7 Nxf7**

When your car's reverse gear doesn't function, there is no choice but to drive forward.

**7 … Kxf7**

The king's trash talk presages his future bloody nose.



**8 Bc4+?!**

This obvious reaction appears to be an automatic reflex, rather than true intent. We all play such mechanical moves quickly. However, this isn't White's best continuation of the attack. Stronger was 8 e6+! when Black is forced to decline with a rotten position due to the pawn fork after 8 … Kxe6 9 d5+. After 8 … Ke8 9 Qxg4 Qf6 10 d5 Ne5 11 Qh5+, White gets three choking pawns for the piece.

**8 … Kg7?!**

Black may be okay after 8 … Ke8!. This move may prevent White from implementing his wishes for a winning attack. After 9 e6 Qh4+ 10 g3 Qf6 11 d5 Ne5 (now we see the problem. White simply wasted a tempo with his earlier Bc4+) 12 Be2 Nf3+ 13 Bxf3 Qxf3

14 Qxf3 gxf3 15 0-0 c6 16 Rxf3 b5!, Black intends to hammer away White's imposing central wedge with … Bb7 and … Ne7, after which he looks at least equal.

**9 e6**

1. White has two pawns so far for the piece, with Black's g-pawn in danger.

2. White rules the centre.

3. The e6-pawn impedes the development of Black's unemployed queenside pieces who tend to spend their days loitering about at the mall.

4. Black's king - who wears an expression of perpetual suspicion - is in serious danger. Apart from the g4 pawn hanging, White has a ready-made open f-file to attack with.

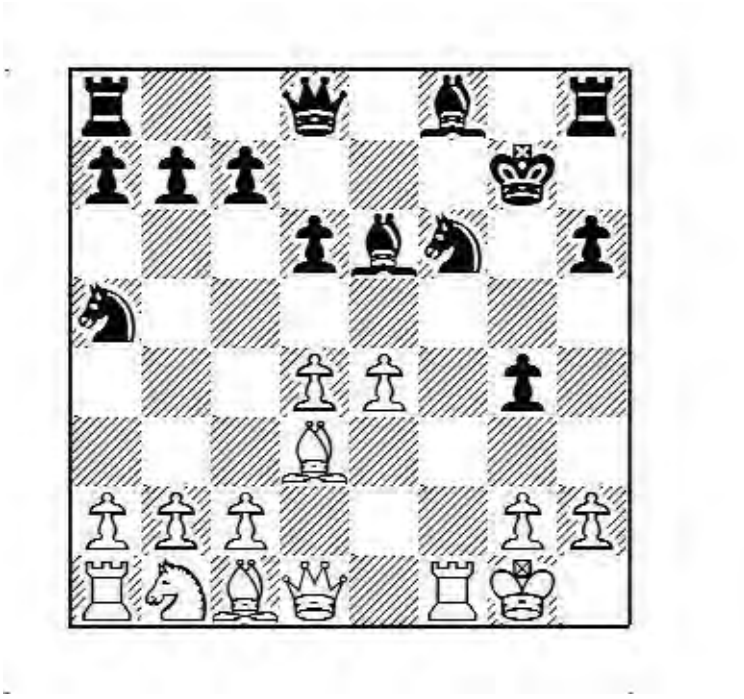
Conclusion: Failure to reproduce an original result is the bane of all scientific hypothesis. Black's position is precarious and fleeting as dandelion fluff on a windy day. Long, hard defence is certainly not what he envisioned when he offered From's Gambit!

**9 … Nf6 10 0-0 Na5?!**

Such a lash-out doesn't exactly infect us with optimistic hope of success in Black's defensive endeavour. After this move, Black's position goes from difficult to lost. He has to try a developmental contortion like 10 … Rh7! with the idea of hiding his king with … Kh8 next.

**11 Bd3 Bxe6**

Maybe Black should just apologize and agree to the loss of time with 11 … Nc6.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Consistency doesn't represent a virtue if you are on the wrong track. Williams found a way to regain his sacrificed piece with a clear

residual advantage after Black's last move. What would you play here for White?

***Answer*:** Trapped piece.

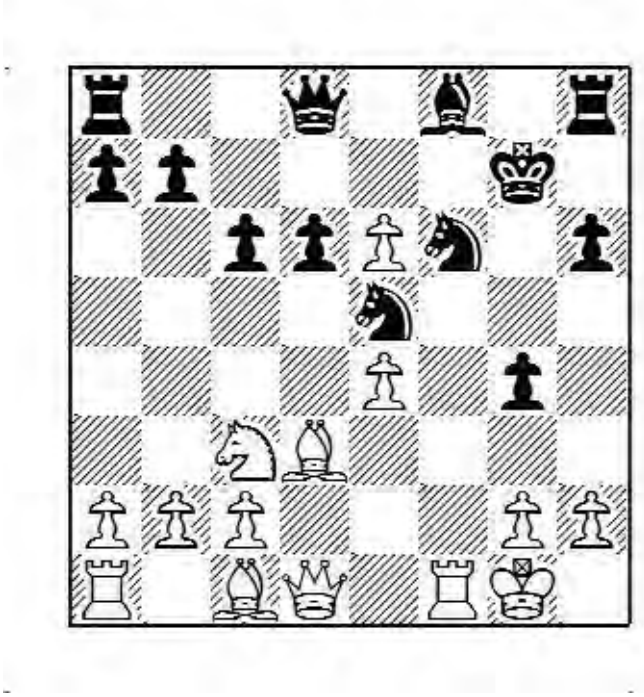
**12 d5! Nc6**

12 … Bd7 13 b4 traps the stranded a5-knight.

**13 dxe6**

The position is a nightmare for Black, since now he doesn't even have his extra piece as a consolation for his wretched king's position.

**13 … Ne5 14 Nc3 c6**



***Exercise (planning)*:** How did GM Williams

find a powerful way to accelerate his attack?

***Answer*:** Transfer the knight to f5.

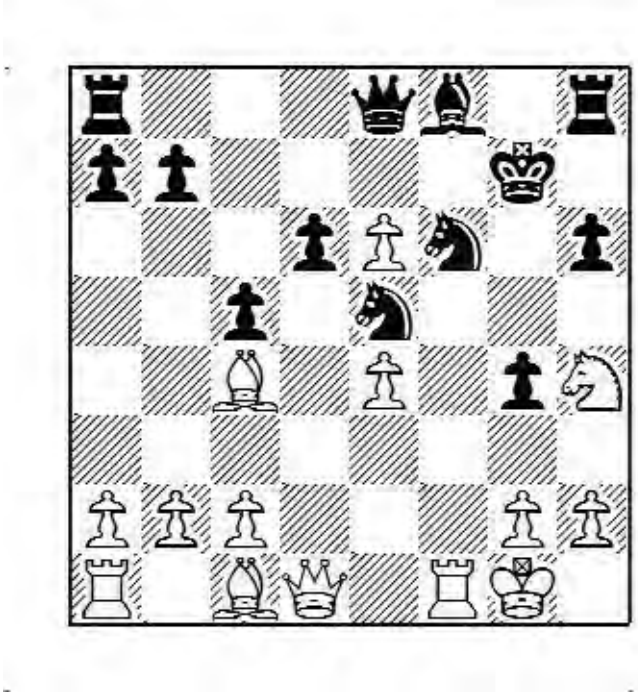
**15 Ne2! Qe8 16 Nd4 c5?!**

This weakening move worsens Black's position, but I suppose it is human nature to lash out at an offender when we sense that our honour has been compromised by an insult.

**17 Nf5+**

Even stronger was 17 Bb5! and if 17 … Qd8 (also, after 17 … Nc6 18 Nf5+ Kg8 19 Nxd6 Qg6 20 Nxb7, Black's position collapses) 18 e7! wins on the spot.

**17 … Kg6 18 Nh4+ Kg7 19 Bc4?**



A serious indulgence, which nearly cost White his advantage. A soldier who fights without fear may soon be a dead soldier. I have always felt burdened by an overactive imagination and I suspect Williams suffers the same affliction on the chess board as well. Williams overpresses, and by demanding more from the position than it warrants, he attempts to fit horseshoes on cows, pigs and chickens. He should play 19 e7! Bxe7 (or 19 … Qxe7 20 Nf5+ when Black's queen crimsons at her blatant social stumble) 20 Nf5+ Kg6 21 Bf4 with a dominating position.

**19 … Nxc4!**

Thanks!

**20 Rxf6!**

This follow-up sacrifice was Williams' imaginative idea.

**20 … Kxf6 21 Qf1+**

Double attack.

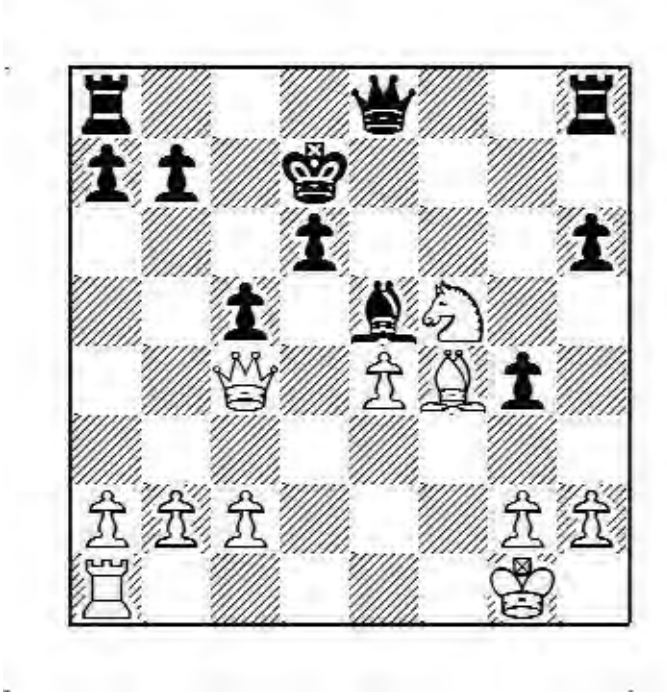
**21 … Kxe6 22 Qxc4+**

Stronger is 22 Qf5+ Ke7 23 Ng6+ Kd8 24 Nxh8, regaining the material invested. The black king's insecurity also gives White a slight pull.

**22 … Kd7 23 Bf4 Bg7?**

The weakening of the d6-pawn proves suicidal. Believe it or not, *Houdini* prefers Black here after 23 … Qe6! 24 Qb5+ Kc8! when the burden is on White to prove that he has full compensation for the exchange.

**24 Nf5 Be5**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Find White's most lethal way of conducting the attack.

***Answer*:** Annihilation of king's cover/double attack/pin.

**25 Nxd6! Qe6**

Black's best chance as the alternatives lose quickly:

a) 25 … Bxd6 walks into a deadly pin after 26 Rd1 Kc8 27 Rxd6 and if 27 … b6, 28 Qd5 forces mate. For example, after 28 … Rb8 29 Rd8+! Qxd8 30 Qc6+ Qc7 31 Qxc7 with mate.

b) 25 … Kxd6 26 Qd5+ Ke7 27 Qxe5+ Kf7 28 Qf5+ Kg8 29 Qxg4+ Kh7 30 Rd1 Rd8 31 Rxd8 Qxd8 32 Qf5+ Kg8 33 Qg6+ Kf8 34 Bd6+ wins Black's queen.

**26 Qb5+! Kxd6**

The king continues to issue hysterical, impotent threats to White's amused attackers. Also hopeless for Black is 26 … Ke7 27 Qxb7+ Qd7 28 Nf5+ Ke8 29 Qxd7+ Kxd7 30 Bxe5 and White wins.

**27 Rd1+ Ke7**

27 … Kc7 walks into mate after 28 Qxc5+ Qc6 29 Qxe5+ Kb6 30 b4! Qb5 31 Rd6+ Kc7 32 Qe7+ Kc8 and the clearance sacrifice 33 Rd8+ forces mate after 33 … Rxd8 34 Qc7.

**28 Bxe5 Rhd8**

Capturing on e5 walks into mate after 28 … Qxe5 29 Qd7+ Kf6 30 Rf1+ Kg6 31 Qf7+ Kg5 32 Rf5+ Qxf5 33 Qxf5+ Kh4 34 g3+ Kh3 35 Qf1 and Black gets mated.

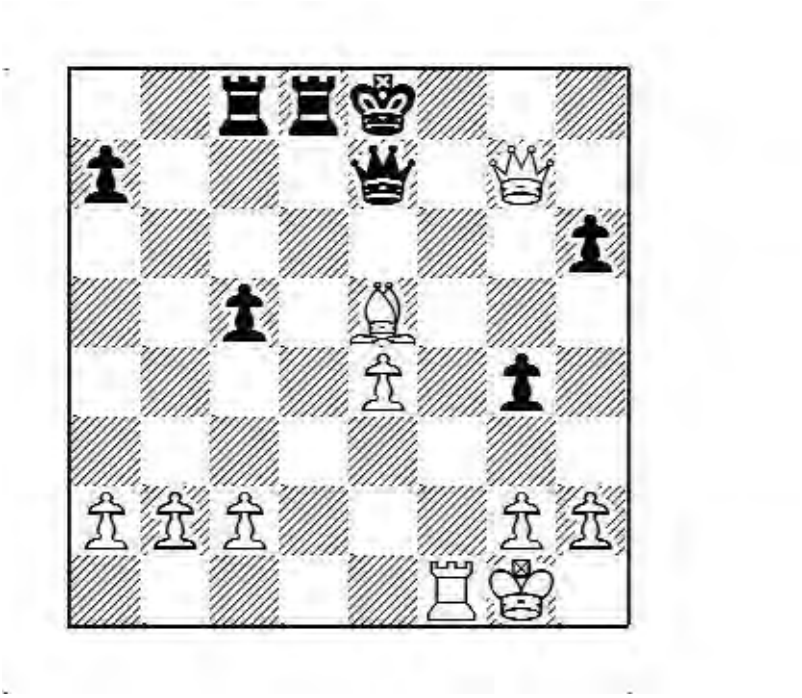
**29 Qxb7+ Ke8 30 Rf1!**

Despite all of the black king's positive affirmations, bad things continue to enter his life.

**30 … Rac8**

30 … Qxe5 31 Qf7 mate isn't much of an option for Black.

**31 Qg7 Qe7**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black's king is now on

his knees spitting blood. How did White force mate?

***Answer*: 32 Qg6+! Kd7 33 Rd1+ 1-0**

Black's king has no squares to hide.

**Summary:** Let's accept the From's Gambit. The comps remain unintimidated, and so should we.

*Game 2*
**A.Muzychuk-V.Solovjova**
Russian League (Women), Dagomys 2009

**1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6**

Black's main line, which we will concentrate on for the remainder of the chapter.

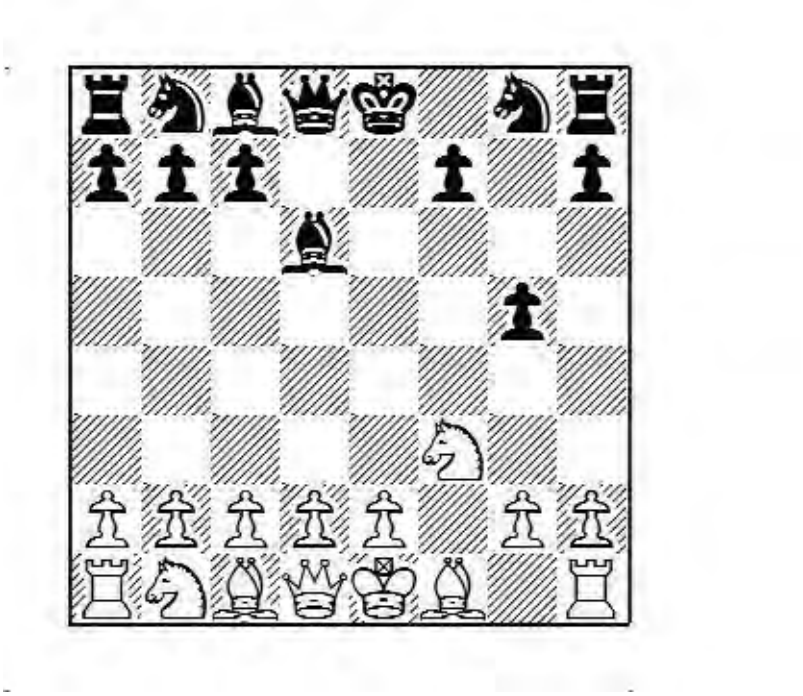
**3 Nf3!?**

This odd move-order merely transposes. Our main line runs 3 exd6 Bxd6 4 Nf3.

**3 … dxe5 4 Nxe5 Bd6 5 Nf3**

We are back to our normal position.

**5 … g5**



The pretence of peace, fragile and tentative, now devolves into open warfare. The Lasker Variation (5 … g5) is our tabiya position in the chapter, and the one you are most likely to face over the board. Black threatens to chase our knight away with … g4, and then deliver mate with … Qh4+ followed by a devastating sacrifice on g3. We examine the more restrained 5 … Nf6 at the end of the chapter.

**6 g3**

A problem ignored is a problem nourished. So White takes action against the … g4 threat by giving the knight a protected square on h4. This is White's main move and I believe our only hope of wresting an advantage. I'm begging the reader not to fall for 6 h3?? Bg3 mate!. There lie three unfortunate souls who fell into this trap in my database. Please don't be victim number four!

***Question*:** Are we going to cover 6 d4 g4 lines?

***Answer*:** No, for two reasons:

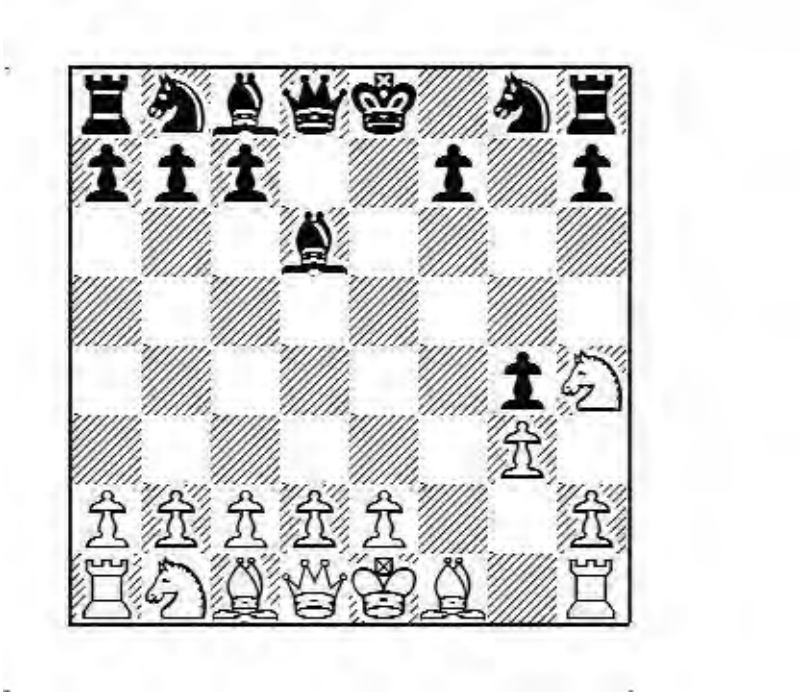
1. I don't trust this line for White and believe Black gets dynamic equality easily.

2. I don't want to use up space with the line since the normally even-tempered folk at Everyman get a wee bit agitated and hint at terrible reprisals upon your humble writer every time I exceed a book's space requirements (which occurs in every single book I write!). Just a sample variation then - I prefer Black's position after 7 Ng5!? (7 Ne5 Bxe5 8 dxe5 Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1 Nc6 is a line we won't be covering) 7 … f5 8 e4 h6 9 e5 Be7 10 Nh3 gxh3 11 Qh5+ Kf8 12 Bc4 Rh7.

**6 … g4**

If 6 … h5, White can return the pawn favourably after 7 d4 g4 8 Nh4 Be7 with 9 Bf4! as 9 … Bxh4 10 gxh4 Qxh4+ 11 Bg3+ gives White the bishop pair, the dark squares as well as a strong centre.

**7 Nh4**



**7 … Ne7**

Black's main move.

***Question*:** What is Black's intention?

***Answer*:** Black will play … Ng6 next, which pretty much induces White to exchange on g6, after which Black opens the h-file with … hxg6. When the h-file opens, Black not only gets the obvious attacking chances down the file, but also has constant … Rxh2 tactics that White must watch for.

Other options are:

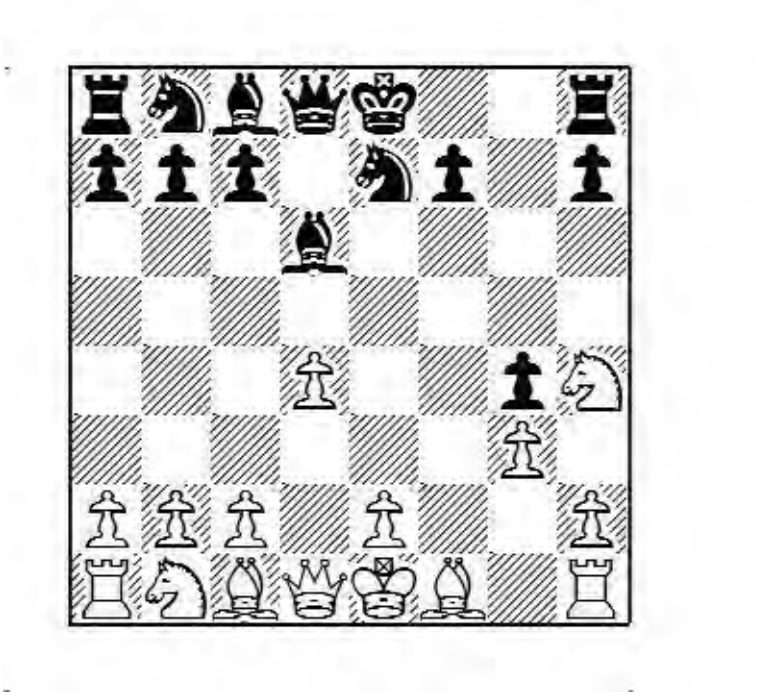
a) 7 … Be7 8 Ng2 h5 and White has two good choices:

a1) 9 Nf4 h4 10 Bg2 Nf6, V.Pechenkin-M.Hughey, Edmonton 2008. I don't see sufficient compensation for Black after 11 Rf1.

a2) 9 d4 h4 10 Rg1 hxg3 11 hxg3 Nf6 12 Nc3 Nc6 13 Be3 Bb4 14 Qd3 Be6 15 0-0-0 and Black doesn't have compensation for the missing pawn, C.Lakdawala-H.Nakamura, Internet (blitz) 2006.

b) Now, with 7 … Nc6, Black sets up what he believes to be a strategic trap. Our solution: fall into it! Black gets a poor game after 8 Bg2 Be7?! (hitting the h4-knight which has nowhere to go). Black hopes for Bxc6+, after which he gets serious light square compensation for the pawn. Our trick is to simply ignore it and play 9 0-0! when not only did Black lose time, but he also handed White the bishop pair in an open position and gave away control over the dark squares. Following 9 … Bxh4 10 gxh4 f5 11 c3, P.Stockhammar-L.Flores, correspondence 2010, White gets a strategically won game with 11 … Qxh4 12 d4 as he prepares both Bf4 and d4-d5, followed by Qd4 when his bishops and dark square control rule.

**8 d4**



This move is important, because we will soon be required to cover the g3-pawn with our queen on d3.

**8 … Ng6 9 Nxg6**

The delicate negotiations are a quilt work of grudging compromises from both sides.

***Question*:** Why must we cooperate and allow

Black to open the h-file, when we have 9 Ng2?

***Answer*:** We swap one problem for another with the knight retreat. While it's true we didn't allow Black to open the h-file, we lost time with our knight and Black gets compensation after 9 … h5! which forces the h-file open in any case. After 10 e4 h4 11 e5 Be7 12 Rg1 hxg3 13 hxg3 c5!, White's once impressive pawn centre comes under assault and Black stands at least even, N.Chepel-M.Mozharov, Moscow 2010.

**9 … hxg6 10 Qd3**

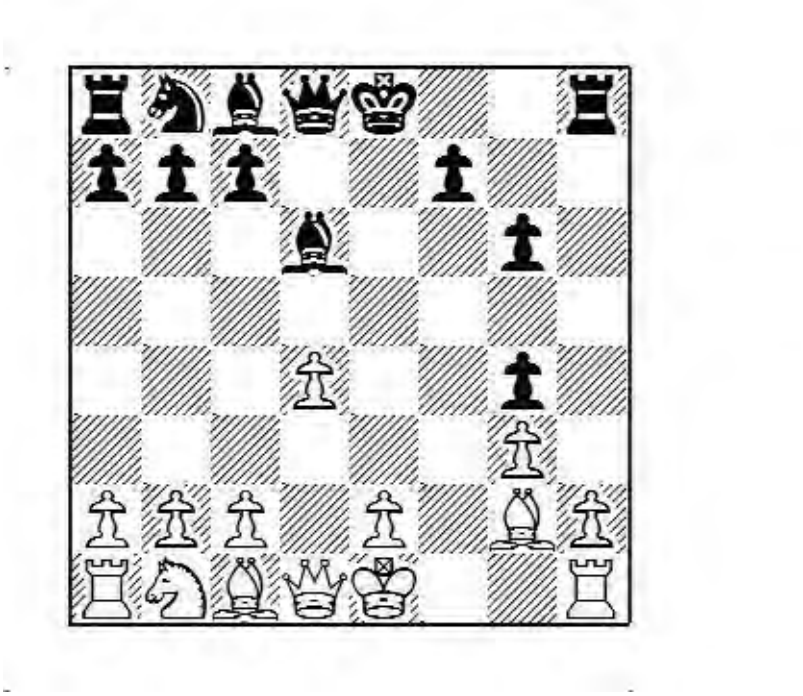
A multipurpose move:

1. White's queen covers g3, a necessary requirement of our line.

2. White fights for the e4-square.

3. White gives himself the option of queenside castling and even manual queenside castling with Kd1!?.

I remember back in Montreal 1972, as a kid playing an adult, the latter unsuspectingly played 10 Bg2?.



Now I beam with pride as I recall how I bashed out the magnificent shot 10 … Rxh2! and went on to win brilliantly or at least I remember it that way!

**10 … Nc6**

In online blitz games, I frequently run into 10 … Bf5?! which is likely an inaccurate move-order by Black and after 11 e4 Qe7 12 Bg2 Nc6:

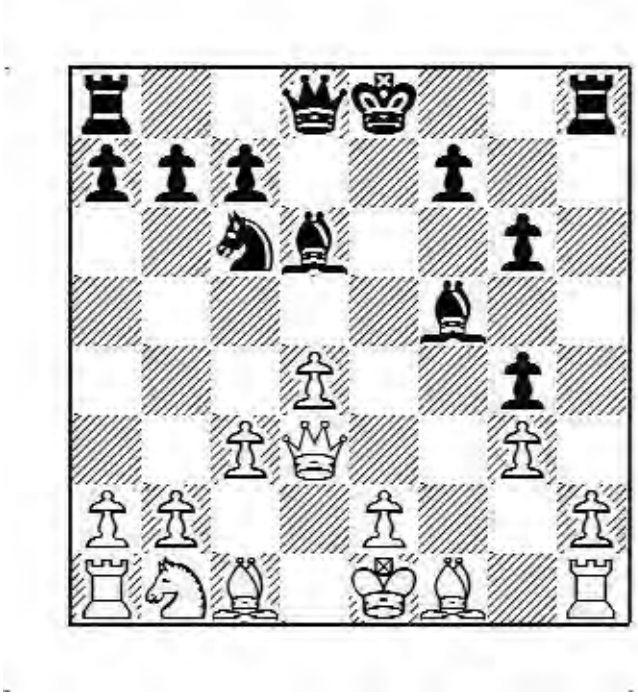
a) I had once played the rote 13 0-0? when my GM opponent missed (as did I!) 13 … Nxd4!, when Black stood at least equal, C.Lakdawala-"Jubilant" Internet (blitz) 2014.

b) White has the strong 13 Qe3! which threatens to capture the f5-bishop. After 13 … Bd7 14 Nc3! (intending Nd5) 14 … 0-0-0 15 Nd5 Qe6 16 0-0 Kb8 17 e5, Black is getting pushed back and is busted, B.Blankenberg-C.Augustin, correspondence 2002.

**11 c3**

Warding off dirty knight foray tricks with … Nxd4 or … Nb4. Most certainly not 11 Bg2? Nxd4! when White is unable to recapture. Sadly, I see three further unfortunates in my database, who had the misfortune to be White in this position. As you may have guessed, all three lost.

**11 … Bf5**



Black's main move.

***Question*:** Isn't Black's last move just begging for a tempo loss?

***Answer*:** I agree that it appears counterintuitive, but Black reasons that she needs to induce e2-e4 to weaken the f3-square.

a) 11 … Qe7 12 Bg2 Bd7 (12 … Bf5 is met with 13 Qe3! Qxe3 14 Bxe3 and now 14 … Rxh2?? fails to 15 Bxc6+! bxc6 16 Rxh2 Bxg3+ 17 Rf2 with an extra piece for White) and now White can calmly return the pawn with 13 Nd2 0-0-0 14 Nc4 Rh5 15 e4 Rdh8 16 Nxd6+ cxd6 17 Be3 Rxh2 18 0-0-0 and keep a positional plus with his strong centre and bishop pair.

b) 11 … f5?! 12 Bg2:

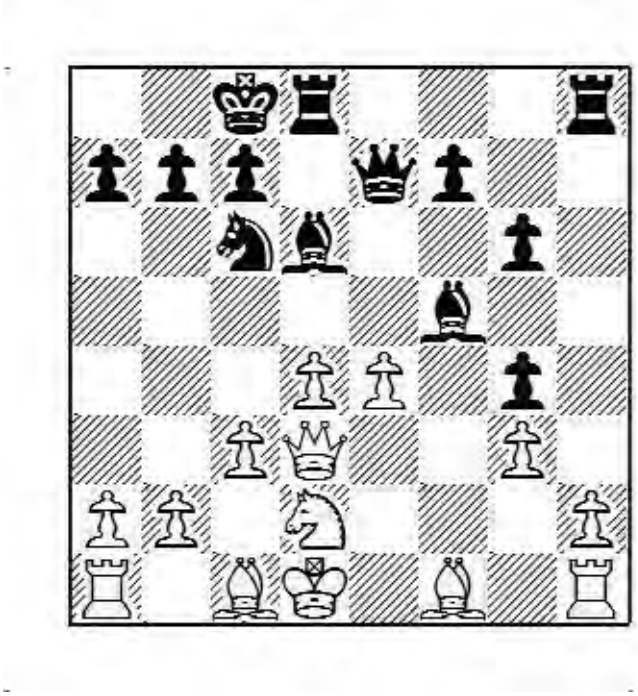
b1) 12 … Ne7?! is way too slow as after 13 Nd2 f4? 14 Ne4 g5 15 Qb5+ c6 16 Qxg5 fxg3 17 Qf6!, Black is lost and resigned in R.Bachler-K.Steudel, Graz 1996. It isn't just Black who wins miniatures in the From's.

b2) Black had to accept an inferior position after 12 … Bd7 13 Nd2 Qe7 14 Nc4! 0-0-0 15 Nxd6+ cxd6 16 h3 gxh3 17 Rxh3 Rxh3 18 Bxh3 Re8 19 Bg2 Nd8 20 Kf2.

c) 11 … Bd7 12 Nd2 Qe7 13 Ne4 Bf5 was R.Bachler-B.Rogulj, Austria 2013. White can try 14 Bg2 0-0-0 15 Bg5! Bxe4 16 Bxe7 Bxd3 17 Bxd8 Re8 18 0-0-0 Bxe2 19 Bg5 Bxd1 20 Kxd1 when the bishop pair gives White the edge in the ending.

**12 e4 Qe7 13 Bg2**

A viable alternative is 13 Nd2 0-0-0 and now White has 14 Kd1!?.



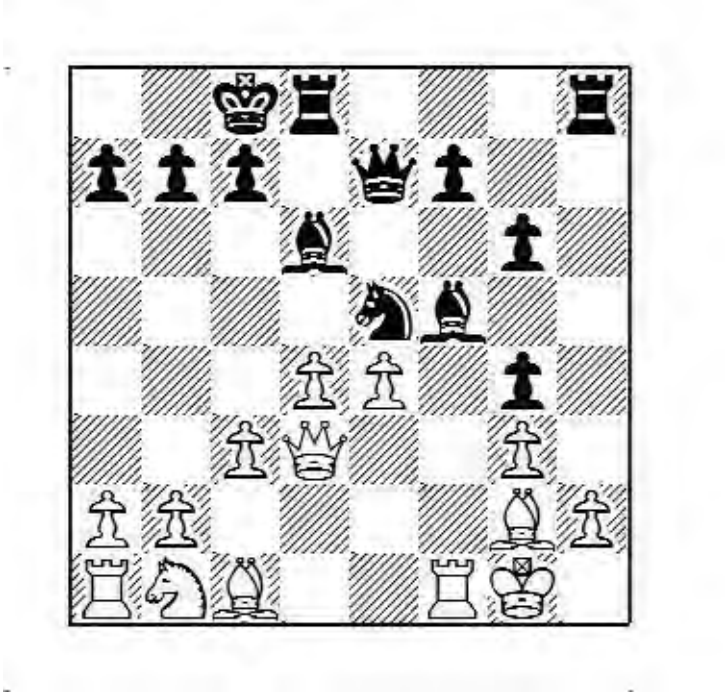
The white king darts away to the queenside like a cat chased out of the backyard by my terrier, Kahless, who deals harshly with those who dare enter his terrible realm. I like this odd idea as White's king may be safer on the queenside than the kingside. E.Davila-L.Arias, Managua 2001 continued with 14 … Be6. Now when I took Black in this position against *Houdini*, the game proceeded 15 Qe2 (now d5 is a real threat) 15 … Na5!? (clearing the way for a central disruption with … c7-c5) 16 Bg2 c5 17 d5 (we must keep central lines closed) 17 … Bd7 18 Nb3! Nxb3 19 axb3 a6 20 Bf4 Rde8 21 Kc2 Bxf4 22 gxf4 f6 23 Qf2 and with White poised to play Ra5, I no longer believe in Black's compensation for the pawn.

**13 … 0-0-0 14 Be3**

Breaking the e-file pin. White must keep in mind that Black can generate an attack swiftly with standard developing moves. For example, after 14 0-0, Black gets good play after:

a) 14 … Bd7 15 Bf4 Bxf4 16 Rxf4 f5 17 Rf2 Qh7 18 Bh1, C.Lakdawala-"Mulatico", Internet (blitz) 2005. Now my anonymous GM opponent can generate full compensation for the pawn with 18 … Ne5! 19 Qe3 (19 dxe5? loses to 19 … Ba4! 20 Qe2 Rd1+ winning the White queen) 19 … Nf7 20 e5 Be6 21 Nd2 c6. Stylistically, I still prefer White due to the extra pawn, but the objective evaluation is probably dynamic equality.

b) Also dangerous is 14 … Ne5!?.



Be aware of this tactic, since it is very common in the From's. White played carelessly with 15 Qd1?! (I still prefer White after 15 Qe3 Be6 16 Nd2) 15 … Nf3+! (in answer to your previous question, this is why Black wants to induce e4 as it weakens f3) 16 Bxf3?! (necessary was 16 Rxf3! gxf3 17 Qxf3 Bh3 18 Be3 Bxg2 19 Kxg2 Qd7 20 h4 f6! 21 Nd2 g5 22 e5 fxe5 23 Bxg5 Rdf8 24 Qe4 exd4 25 Qxd4 Qc6+ 26 Kh3 when Black stands only slightly better) 16 … gxf3? (Black missed the immediately crushing 16 … Rxh2! when 17 Qh2 cannot be played due to 17 … Qh4+ so White will get murdered on the h-file) 17 exf5 Rxh2! 18 Qxf3 (18 Kxh2?? walks into mate after 18 … Qh4+ 19 Kg1 Qxg3+ 20 Kh1 Qg2) 18 … Rh3 19 Bf4 Bxf4 20 Qxf4 Rdh8 and White is helpless, despite his extra piece after 21 Qf3 Qg5! 22 Kf2 Rh2+ 23 Kg1 Rh1+, V.Antoshin-A.Panchenko, USSR 1983. This game should serve as a stark warning to us. We must understand every defensive nuance of the From's or risk annihilation.

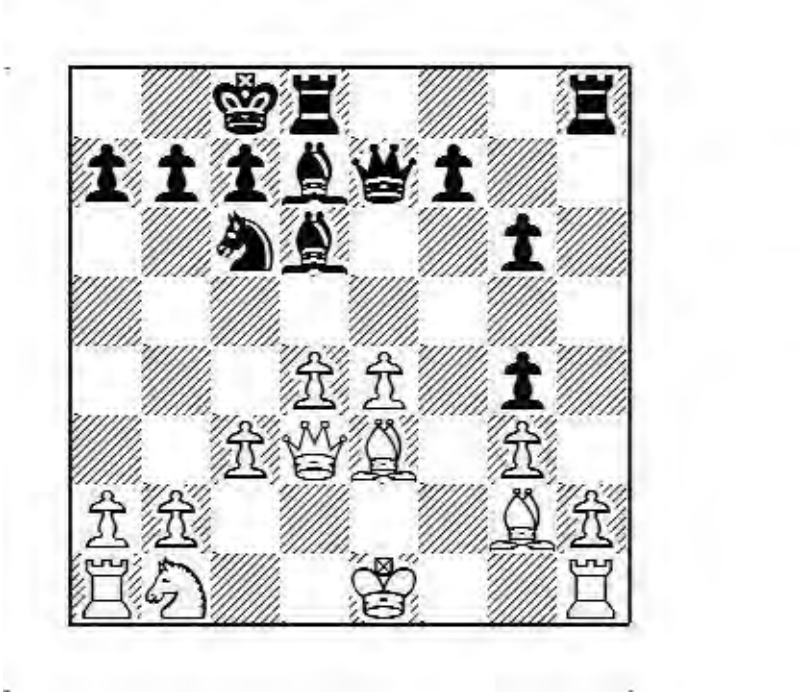
**14 … Rde8**

Let's have a look at the alternatives:

a) 14 … Rxh2? looks dubious at best and unsound at worst. After 15 Rxh2 Bxg3+ 16 Kf1 Bxh2 17 exf5 Re8 18 Bd2, I don't see enough compensation for the piece for Black.

b) 14 … Be6 15 Bf2 f5 16 Nd2 Qf7 17 0-0-0! Bxa2?, T.Rendle-V.Kotronias, Caleta 2005. Now White missed 18 e5! when Black was completely busted. For example, 18 … Bxe5 (18 … Be7 19 Bxc6! bxc6 20 Qa6+ Kd7 21 c4! traps the a2-bishop) 19 Bxc6! bxc6 20 Qa6+ wins, since White can take the e5-bishop next.

c) Perhaps Black's best chance in this position is 14 … Bd7!?.



This is a suggestion of Israeli GM Boris Alterman in *The Alterman Gambit Guide: Black Gambits 2*. My take is that White keeps the edge following 15 Bf2 f5 16 Nd2:

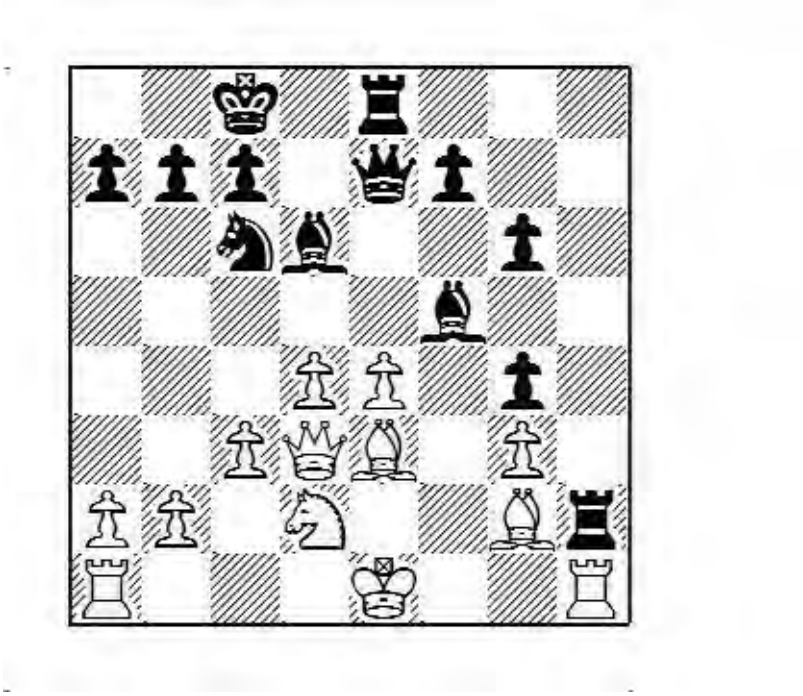
c1) 16 … fxe4 17 Bxe4!? (the alternate recapture 17 Nxe4 seems fine too after 17 … Rde8 18 0-0-0 Bf5 19 Rde1 Qf7 20 Kb1 Qd5 21 Ka1 Bf8 22 Qc2 Bg7 23 Qb3 Qxb3 24 axb3 b6 25 Ka2 Nd8 26 Ng5, B.Fister-I.Kóta, correspondence 2009, and White consolidates with the edge) 17 … Rdf8 18 0-0 Qh7 19 h4 gxh3 20 Kh2 Ne7 21 Nc4 Nf5 22 d5 and White's queenside play is more relevant, now that the kingside is secure.

c2) 16 … Rde8 17 0-0-0 (not 17 e5?! Bxe5! as 18 dxe5? Nxe5 19 Qf1 Nd3+ 20 Kd1 Bb5 is winning for Black) 17 … fxe4 18 Bxe4 Qf7 19 Rhf1 Qxa2 20 Bxg6 Re7 21 Bg1 and White keeps the extra pawn. Black's queen might look intimidating on the a2-square but it can't do much on its own.

**15 Nd2**

This is a very common position in the From's, yet *Houdini* assesses it as virtually winning for White!

**15 … Rxh2?**



This sacrifice is more lavish than the initial From's pawn sac in the opening. Black, mistakenly praying that her move has the effects of levelling off the downward trend in her position, is willing to back up her initiative-at-any-cost project with unstinting amplitude. Black risks carrying her doctrine too far, with this tempting yet unsound idea. Other options are:

a) 15 … Rh5? 16 0-0-0 Be6, Rodriguez Vila, A-Granara Barreto, S Montevideo 2012. Now White should play 17 e5 Nxe5 18 dxe5 Rxe5 19 Ne4 Bxa2 20 Nxd6+ cxd6 21 Bf4 Re2 22 Bd5 and he can consolidate with a winning advantage.

b) In Game 3, we look at 15 … f6 (15 … Bd7 16 0-0-0 f6 transposes to Game 3 too).

**16 Rxh2 Bxg3+ 17 Ke2!**

The point: the e3-bishop is covered and Black's f5-bishop now hangs.

**17 … Bxh2**

Also insufficient is 17 … Bxe4 18 Qxe4 Bxh2 19 Rh1 Bd6 20 Rh7 Qd7 21 Qd5 Nd8 22 Ne4 Re6 23 Rh8 when White has taken over the initiative, while retaining her extra piece.

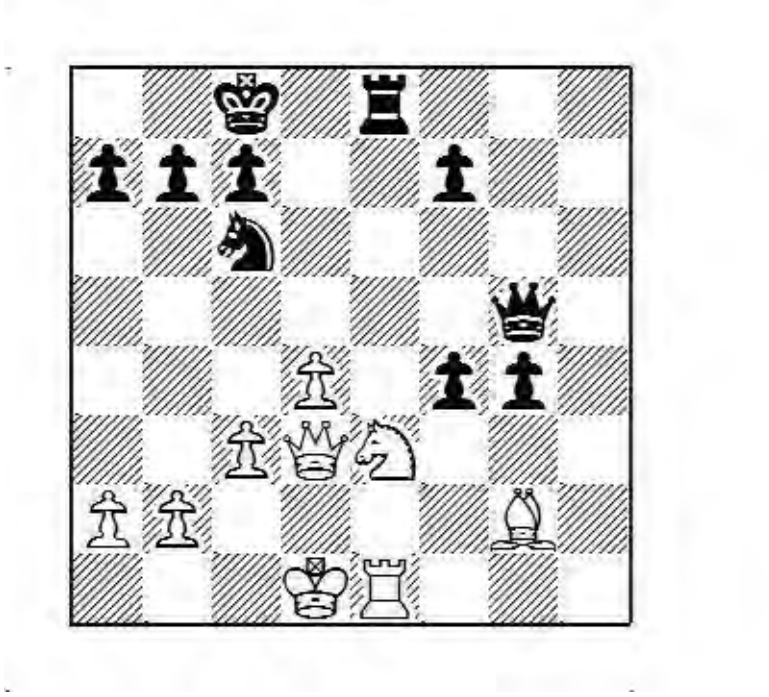
**18 exf5 Bf4 19 Nf1**

Also possible was 19 Nc4 since 19 … b5 fails to 20 fxg6! (threat: Qf5+ and Qxf4) 20 … fxg6 21 Qxg6 (renewing the Qf5+ threat) 21 … Bxe3 22 Qxg4+ Kb8 23 Bxc6 Bxd4+ 24 Kd1 Rd8 25 Kc2 bxc4 26 cxd4 Qh7+ 27 Qe4 Qh2+ 28 Kc3 and White's king is safe.

**19 … Qg5 20 Re1?!**

There was no reason to hand Black a pawn. Better was the immediate 20 fxg6 fxg6 21 Kd2 Rf8 22 Re1 Ne5 23 Qe4 Nc4+ 24 Kd1 and White consolidates.

**20 … gxf5 21 Kd1 Bxe3 22 Nxe3 f4**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** White can swap queens with 23 Qf5+.

In the resulting ending, White would be up a piece for two pawns.

But the question arises: Can White deal with Black's three kingside passed pawns? Should White head for his ending, or keep queens on the board?

***Answer*:** Black's passed pawns are easily tamed by White's extra piece. Now the white rook, knight, bishop and king form a clique, in which Black's unfortunate kingside pawns are involuntarily included.

**23 Qf5+!**

The queen greets her sister's attacking overtures with a wintry smile.

23 … **Qxf5**

The long suffering black queen gazes up at the ceiling, as if trying desperately to forget her sister's impending visit.

**24 Nxf5 Rh8**

24 … Rxe1+ 25 Kxe1 Kd7 26 Nh6! forces a kingside blockade of Black's passers, no matter how she responds.

**25 Rh1 Re8 26 Bd5**

Threatening the f7-pawn.

**26 … Nd8**

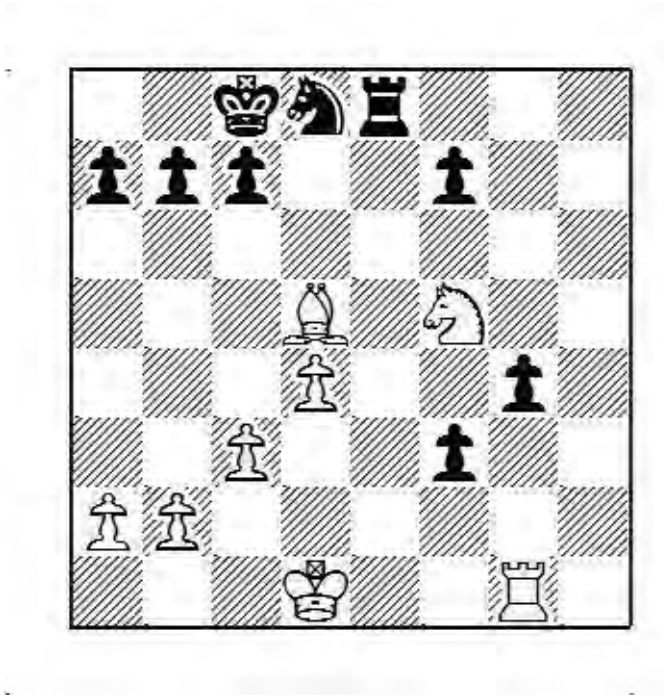
The knight just sits there on d8 like a sparrow on a fence, thinking whatever thoughts sparrows think.

**27 Rg1**

Black is unable to hang on to her pawns.

**27 … f3**

Also 27 … g3 28 Rf1 Ne6 29 Nh4 Rg8 30 Bxe6+ fxe6 31 Ng2 Rh8 32 Ke2 wins for White.



***Exercise (planning)*:** Find a clear path for White to consolidate:

***Answer*:** Cover the f1-queening square.

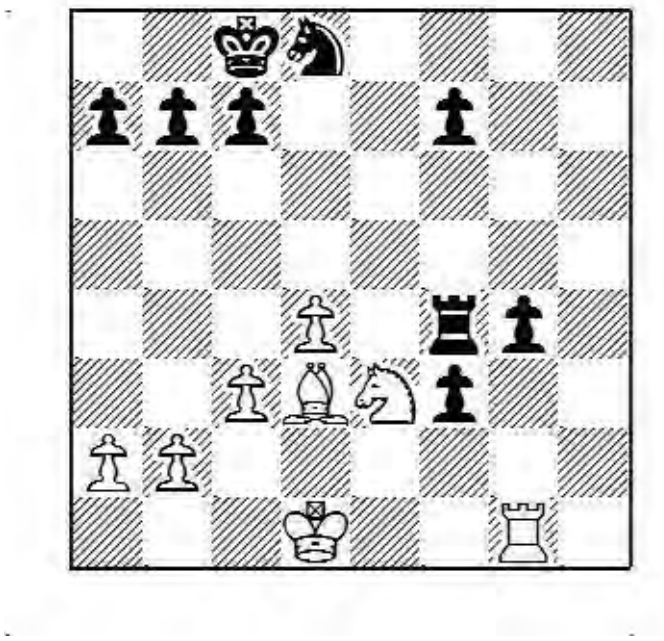
**28 Bc4!**

The careless 28 Rxg4?? allows Black a probable draw after 28 … f2 29 Ng3 Re1+ 30 Kd2 f1Q 31 Nxf1 Rxf1 when Black should hold the game.

**28 … Re4 29 Bd3**

Black is bled pale on the light squares, which White now dominates.

**29 … Rf4 30 Ne3!**



Attackers/defenders arrive in force, reinforcing the f1-square, while adding a second attacker on g4.

**30 … f2 31 Rxg4 Rf3 32 Ke2 1-0**

**Summary:** Be thoroughly prepared for the position we reach after 11 … Bf5. Matters may appear intimidating for our side, but comp analysis always seems to fall in our favour.

*Game 3*
**A.Schirbel-B.Blankenberg**
Correspondence 2004

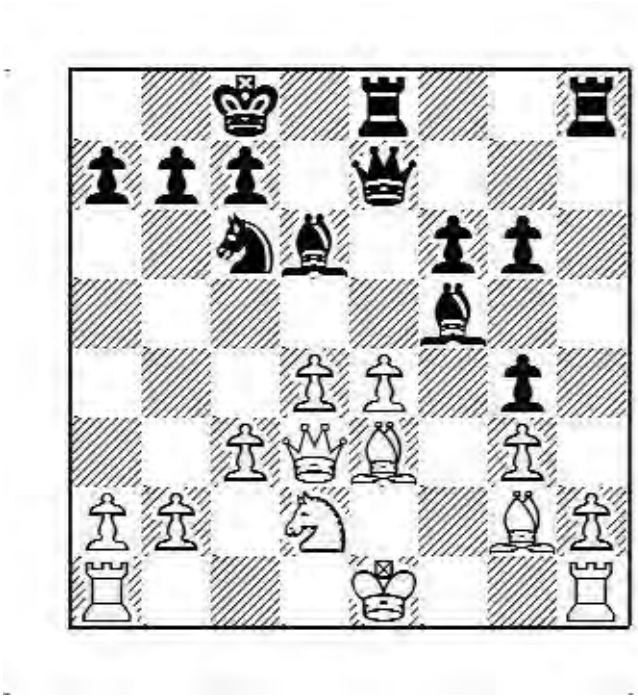
**1 f4 e5**

Bad habits are so easy to take up, and so intractably resistant to alteration. I repeat my assertion that the From's, although a popular way to meet 1 f4, may well be borderline unsound.

**2 fxe5 d6 3 exd6 Bxd6 4 Nf3**

The primary attraction of the From's gambit is that the unsuspecting White player might walk into 4 Nc3?? Qh4+ 5 g3 Qxg3+ 6 hxg3 7 Bxg3 mate!

**4 … g5 5 g3 g4 6 Nh4 Ne7 7 d4 Ng6 8 Nxg6 hxg6 9 Qd3 Nc6 10 c3 Bf5 11 e4 Qe7 12 Bg2 0-0-0 13 Be3 Rde8 14 Nd2 f6?**



This is a move constructed more of hope than of accomplishment.

***Question*:** What is the purpose of tossing in … f6?

***Answer*:** A dual purpose move:

1. Black prevents e4-e5 tricks which will cost Black a piece.

2. If White castles kingside, Black enables the attacking transfer … Qh7.

However, Black's decision comes with a steep price tag: it allows White a forcing continuation which leads to a winning position. Better is 14 … Bd7 which we will look at

in Game 4.

**15 exf5!**

When a ceasefire is short, its other name is reloading. A plan suffused with simplicity is infinitely easier to implement than one of convoluted grandeur. White hasn't lost his will to fight. Instead, he simply seeks a different battleground. The black pieces' reptilian stare at e4 fails to intimidate White, who returns his extra pawn to simplify into a won ending. The simplification motif looks even better than the admittedly tempting 15 0-0-0 Bd7 16 Nc4 Kb8 and here, White unleashed a combination that ensures material gains with17 e5! fxe5 18 dxe5 Nxe5 19 Qd4! b6 20 Nxe5 Qxe5 21 Qxe5 Rxe5 22 Bd4, netting the exchange and soon victory after 22 … Re2 23 Bxh8 Rxg2 24 Rd2 Rxd2 25 Kxd2, K.Soederberg-A.Moura, correspondence 2000.

**15 … Qxe3+**

If a detective shows up late at a crime scene, this can only benefit the perpetrator of the crime. Black's initiative is one of brevity and soon grows cold.

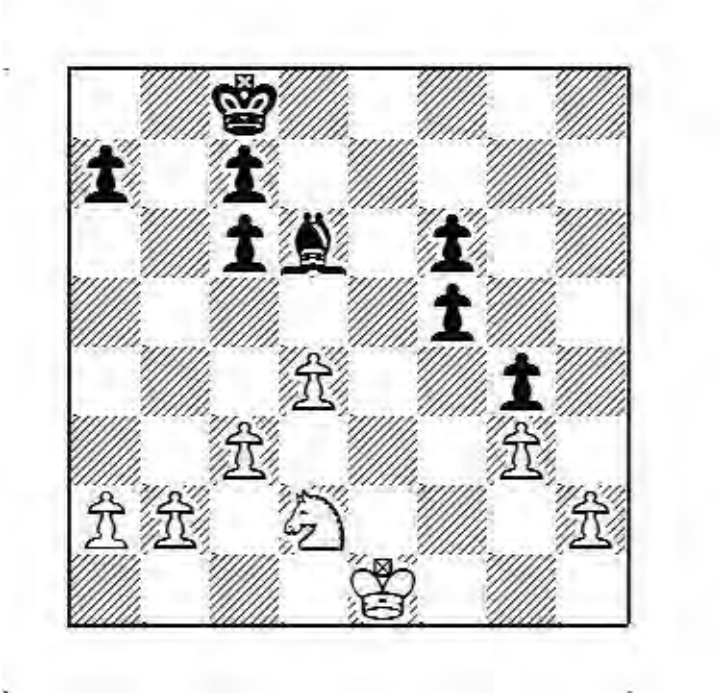
**16 Qxe3 Rxe3+ 17 Kf2 Rhe8**

Threat: … Re2+. Black's attack is built on the vapours of dreams, rather than a solid foundation.

**18 Rae1 Rxe1 19 Rxe1 Rxe1 20 Kxe1 gxf5 21 Bxc6**

The bishop decides to punish the coarse, insolent offender on c6, inflicting damage upon Black's structure.

**21 … bxc6**

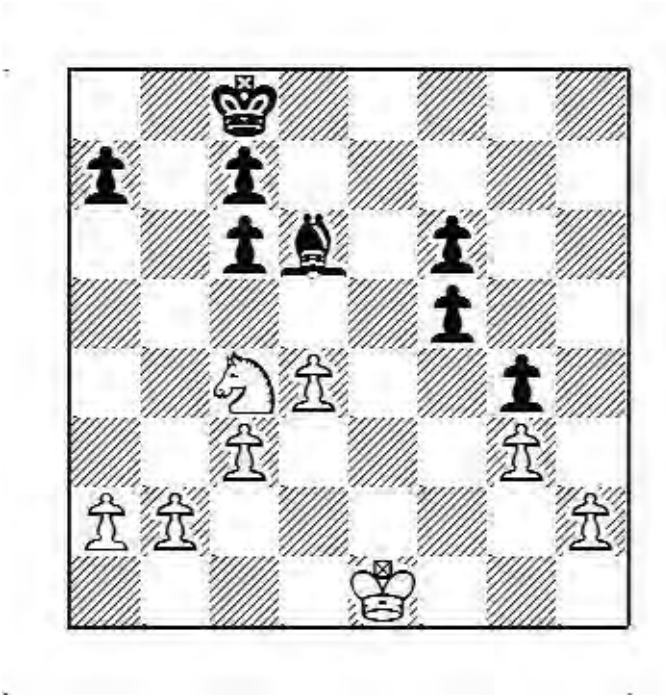


***Exercise (planning)*:** Black's alleged counterplay lapses into a brooding silence. He plans to undouble his crippled kingside with … f5-f4. How does White cross this?

***Answer*:** White and black interests run parallel: Both sides seek control over the f4-square. White thus chases away Black's supporter of the f4-square - the position's most valuable commodity - and threatens to win the king and pawn

ending.

**22 Nc4!**



The knight dominates its counterpart the way a puppy chases a chicken on the farm.

**22 … Bf8**

In some positions we search for salvation, only to encounter unsympathetic lines. The bishop concludes his stuttering sermon and resumes his seat on f8.

***Question*:** Black's last move hangs the f5-pawn. Why didn't he continue with 22 … Kd7 since Black gets to undouble his c-pawns if White captures on d6?

***Answer*:** Black's 'even material' status is merely symbolic, the way a dictator spruces up his uniform with medals and emblems he never earned in war, or anywhere else. The trouble is Black then ends up with a crippled kingside pawn majority from which he is unable to create a passed pawn, despite his extra pawn on the kingside. White, on the other hand, can indeed create a passer on the queenside. So in essence, Black is down a pawn in a king and pawn ending - the equivalent of a death sentence.

Let's look: 23 Nxd6! cxd6 (23 … Kxd6 24 Ke2 Kd5 25 Ke3 Kd6 26 Kf4 Ke6 27 c4 a5 28 b3 leaves Black in zugzwang) 24 Kf2 Ke6 25 Ke3 Kd5 26 Kf4 Kc4 27 Kxf5 Kd3 28 Kxg4 Kc2 29 h4 and Black is not even close in this non-race.

**23 Ne3**

The f5-pawn falls and Black's position is resignable.

**23 … Kd7 24 Nxf5**

Threat: Ne3, which picks off the g4-pawn.

**24 … Ke6 25 Ne3 f5 26 b4!**

Clamping down on Black's … c5-break.

**26 … Bh6 27 Ke2 Bf8**

Black can only await events.

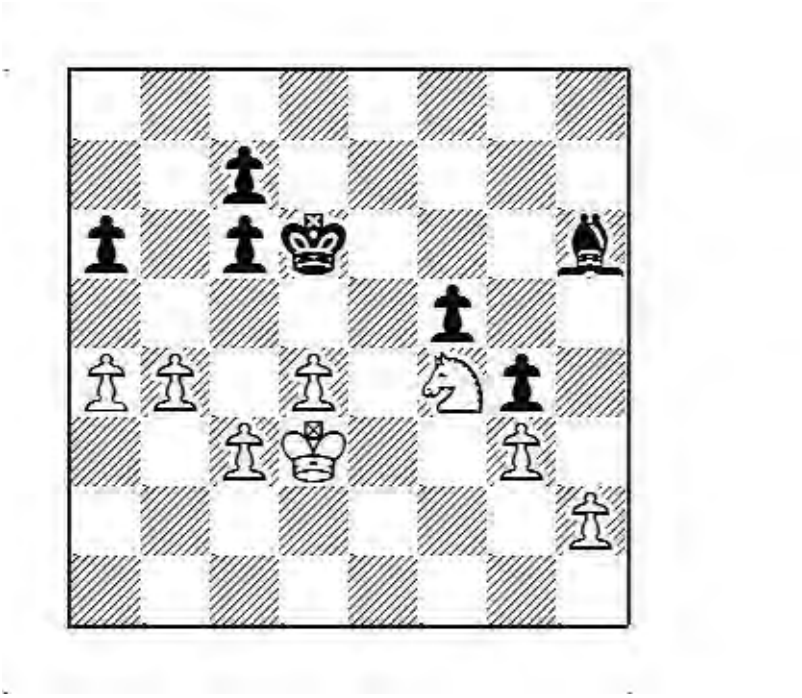
**28 Kd3 Bh6 29 Ng2 Kd7**

29 … Bg5 30 a4 a6 31 Ne3 Bh6 32 Nc4! f4 33 Ne5 wins.

**30 Nf4 a6**

There was no saving the game in any case. After 30 … Bg5 31 a4 Kd6 32 c4 Bh6 33 c5+ Kd7 34 b5 Bg5 35 Kc4 Bh6 36 d5 cxd5+ 37 Kxd5 Bg7 38 c6+ Ke7 (38 … Kc8 39 Ke6 Bd4 40 Kxf5 Bg1 41 Kxg4 wins), 39 Ne6 picks off the c7-pawn.

**31 a4 Kd6**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Plaster continues to fall from the ceiling indicating a shaky foundation for Black. His happiness on the kingside is purchased in the form of sacrifice and depletion on the other wing. Work out a clear winning plan for White:

***Answer*:**

Step 1: Fix the a6-pawn as a target for White's knight.

**32 a5! Ke7**

Step 2: Clear the d3-square to transfer the knight to c5, and then pick off the a6-pawn.

**33 Ke2! 1-0**

Black decides to lay down his arms.

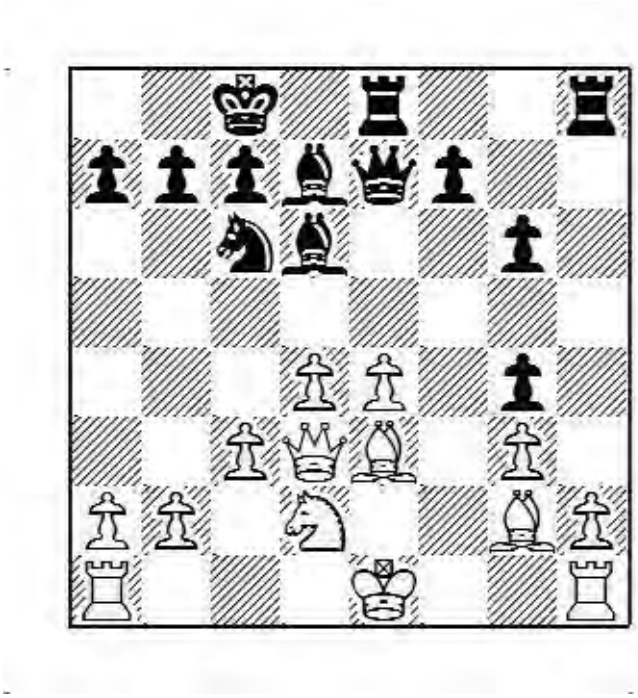
Following 33 … Kd8 34 Nd3 (threat: Nc5. The knight plans to posit himself on higher ground) 34 … Bf8 35 Nc5, the deliciously weak c5-square provides an enticing confection for White's knight. "Perverse little brat. Did you believe you could evade me forever?" the knight asks the a6-pawn. This move either forces a won king and pawn ending, or divests Black of a second pawn. With 35 … Bxc5, the bishop declares, "Your superior military might is no match for my innate virtue, coupled with my stainless prayer," to which the knight can only shake his head in dismay at the cleric's monumental naivety. Following 36 dxc5 Kd7 37 Ke3 Ke6 38 Kf4 Kf6 39 c4 Ke6, White has 40 b5!.

Step 3: Create a passed-a-pawn, which is decisive. After 40 … cxb5 41 cxb5 axb5 42 a6, once again, Black is too slow.

**Summary:** In this supposed mainline, Black will be lucky to even achieve a slightly worse position. Every variation examined ends up with a near-decisive advantage for White. I know some people will scream bloody murder for what I am about to say: the mainline From's is wobbly and possibly unsound for Black if White plays with comp-like precision - and we all can. It's just a matter of studying the position thoroughly.

*Game 4*
**T.Bohn-G.Perrin**
German League, 2004

**1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6 3 exd6 Bxd6 4 Nf3 g5 5 g3 g4 6 Nh4 Ne7 7 d4 Ng6 8 Nxg6 hxg6 9 Qd3 Nc6 10 c3 Bf5 11 e4 Qe7 12 Bg2 0-0-0 13 Be3 Rde8 14 Nd2 Bd7**



Black wisely eliminates exf5 ideas, which we examined last game.

**15 0-0-0**

Now e4-e5 is in the air. This looks stronger than 15 Bf4 as played in J.Pessi-T.Sandvik, Finland 2009, which can be met with 15 … Bxf4 16 gxf4 f5 17 e5 g5! 18 Bxc6 Bxc6 19 Qxf5+ Kb8 20 Rg1 gxf4 21 Qxf4 Qe6 when Black has some compensation for the pawn in the form of light square domination and an insecure white king.

***Question*:** Can White get away with the piece win with 15 e5?

***Answer*:** This kind of move plays into Black's hands. Black doesn't look worse after 15 … Bxe5 16 dxe5 Nxe5 17 Qe2 Nf3+ 18 Kf2 Rh5! when White must watch out for both … Re5, … Rf5 and … Bb5 tricks. Following 19 Nxf3 gxf3 20 Bxf3 Rf5 (White must be on alert for … Bc6) 21 Rhf1 Bc6 22 Kg1 Rxf3 (not 22 … Qxe3+?? as 23 Qxe3 Rxe3 24 Bg4 leaves White up an exchange) 23 Rxf3 Bxf3 24 Qxf3 Qxe3+ 25 Qxe3 Rxe3 26 Kf2, the ending is equal.

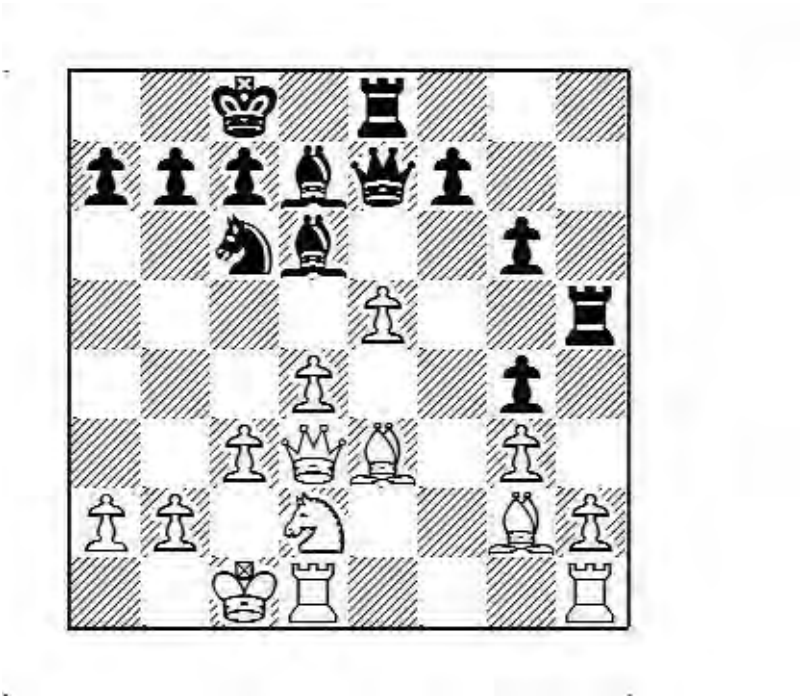
**15 … Rh5**

A new move which dares White to win a piece with e4-e5 on the next move. As mentioned in the previous game, 15 … f6 16 Nc4 favours White.

**16 Nc4**

White plays it safe.

***Question*:** How to make sense of the disorganized clutter in the middle? Can White take up the challenge and get away with it this time round after 16 e5?



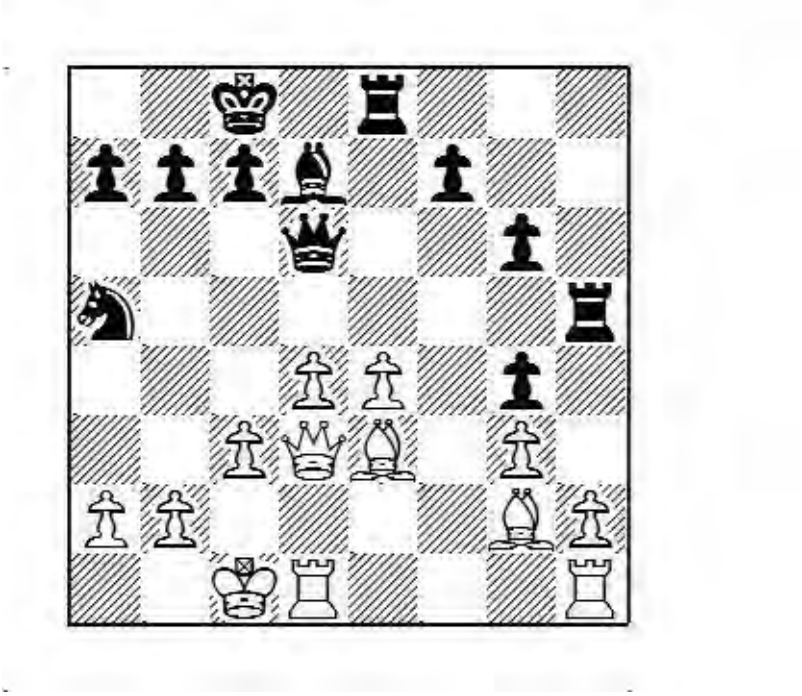
***Answer*:** *Houdini* says "Yes" and is unimpressed by Black's compensation after 16 … Bxe5 17 dxe5 Nxe5 18 Qc2 when Black's position looks dangerous, yet the comps defend and win every try from this point. For example, 18 … Bb5 19 c4 Bc6 20 Bxc6 Nxc6 21 Rhe1 Rxh2 22 Bf2 Qf8 23 Ne4 f5 24 Nc5 Rxe1 25 Rxe1 Nd4 is met with 26 Qa4! (threat: Re8+) 26 … Nc6 27 Qb5 and Black can resign.

**16 … Na5!?**

Black disturbs the stasis with a provocation. When a move appears unfathomable, all we can do is speculate its true intent. Such a provocative excursion can only be interpreted as an act of war. I suppose a rash action isn't against our own interests if all other measures fail. Black is losing, no matter how he plays it. The trouble for Black is that the (hoped for) compensation feels just out of reach, just like attempting to recall a partially remembered dream.

Also insufficient is 16 … f6 as White has the powerful 17 e5! fxe5 18 Qxg6 Reh8 19 Rhf1! exd4 (or 19 … Rxh2 20 Bxc6 Bxc6 21 Rf7 Qe8 22 dxe5 Bf8 23 Bxa7! and White dominates as the b8-square is annexed) 20 Bxc6! Bxc6 (20 … bxc6 21 Bxd4 is also busted for Black and 20 … dxe3 21 Nxd6+ cxd6 22 Rf7 wins too) 21 Bxd4 Be8 22 Qxg4+ Bd7 23 Qg6 R8h6 24 Nxd6+ cxd6 25 Qg8+ Kc7 26 Bxa7 and White wins.

**17 Nxd6+ Qxd6**



***Exercise (planning)*:** White has a clear way

to exploit the geometry. How would you continue?

***Answer*:** Dual purpose:

1. Cut off the a5-knight's escape route, which forces further dreadful concessions from Black.

2. Nix Black's intention to lift his h5-rook horizontally for a queenside attack, which isn't going to happen now.

**18 d5!**

Now, White threatens to pluck the wayward a5-knight with b2-b4. White's irksome cross-border provocations continue, hoping for retaliation. He has altered events to suit him so blandly and so imperceptibly that we barely notice that his position continues to improve.

**18 … a6**

Intending to meet b4 with … Bb5. Black decides that immediate remedial measures are necessary to stem the flow of White's threats.

Also insufficient is 18 … b6 as after 19 Bf4 Qf8 (19 … Qc5 is met with 20 b4 Qc4 21 bxa5 Qxa2 22 axb6 axb6 23 Rd2 Qa1+ 24 Qb1 when taking the c3-pawn fails to a rook block on c2) 20 Qa6+ Kb8 21 Bxc7+! Kxc7 22 Qxa7+ Nb7 23 d6+ and White wins.

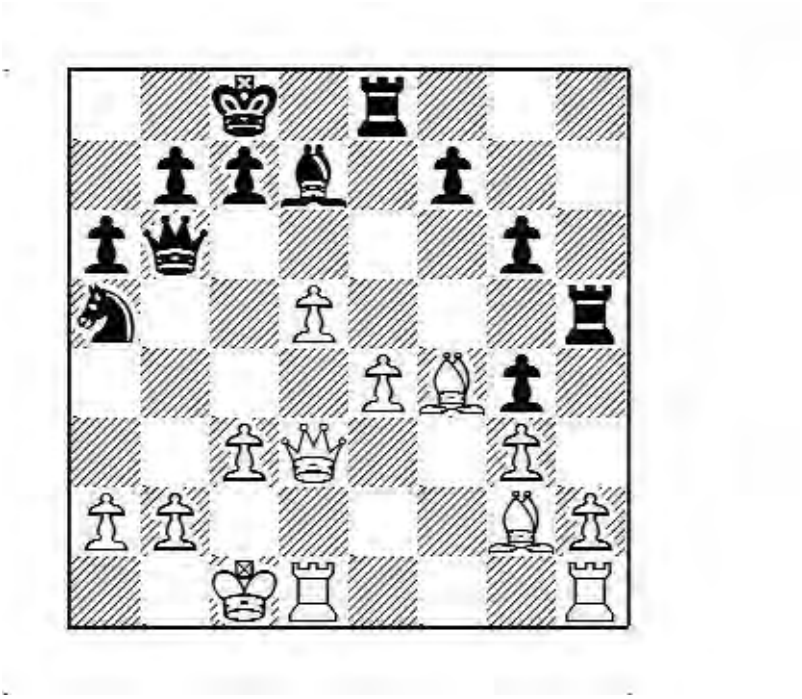
**19 Bf4!**

The amorous bishop gazes into the black queen's ocean blue eyes and drowns in desire.

**19 … Qb6**

19 … Qf8 is countered by 20 Qd4 (threatening Qa7) 20 … b6 21 b4 Nb7 22 d6! and we reach a slight yet important distinction between the two attacks: White's is very real, while

Black's isn't. Following 22 … c5 (also 22 … Nxd6 23 e5 wins for White) 23 Qd3 b5 24 e5 Rhxe5 25 Bxe5 Rxe5 26 Rhe1, Black is down on material with a lost game.



The queen's moods change like quicksilver, from cold to hot. She loiters around White's king, uncertain of her welcome.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** When desire passes by, expense tends to step aside. Black's last move is an unsound piece sacrifice. White to play and win material.

***Answer*:** Trapped piece.

**20 b4!**

This is now possible, due to Black's queen position on b6.

**20 … Bb5**

That which once appeared as an elite fighting unit, now devolves into a quarrelsome rabble.

**21 bxa5**

White's queen views the freshly butchered body of the a5-knight with a satisfied nod of her head.

**21 … Qxa5 22 c4**

Black has nothing for the piece and can resign here.

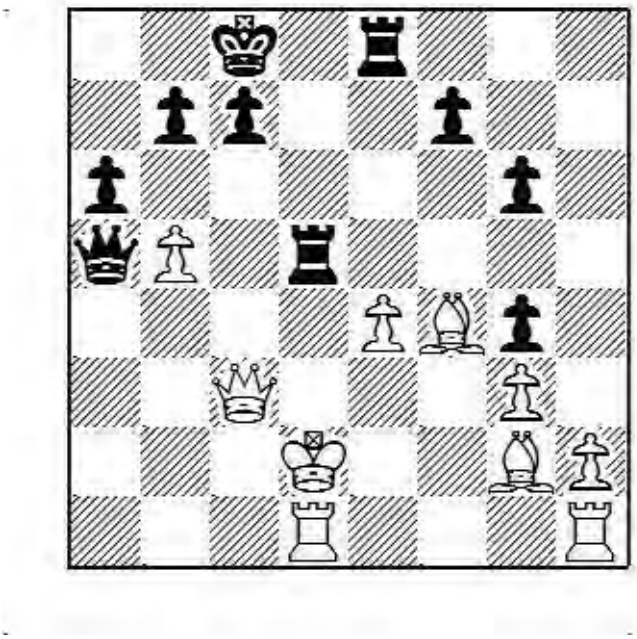
**22 … Qxa2 23 cxb5 Qa1+**

Yet another worry is casually tossed upon Black's already existing cargo of miseries. He decides to hand over a second piece, but such sporadic lunges do little to worry White's king, who remains safe and snug, surrounded by defenders. Also futile is 23 … Qxg2 24 Qc3 Re7 25 d6 Rd7 26 dxc7 and White wins.

**24 Qb1 Qc3+ 25 Qc2 Qa1+ 26 Kd2**

“Take care! Bye, bye! My best wishes to all!” yells the king, as he makes his hasty departure from his obnoxious sister. Of course White isn’t about to allow a perpetual check two pieces up.

**26 … Qa5+ 27 Qc3 Rxd5+**



Well, why not? The concept of money tends to be moot when you are in the late stages of a terminal illness.

**28 exd5 Re2+**

This attempted deflection trick fails.

**29 Kd3**

Even taking the rook wins.

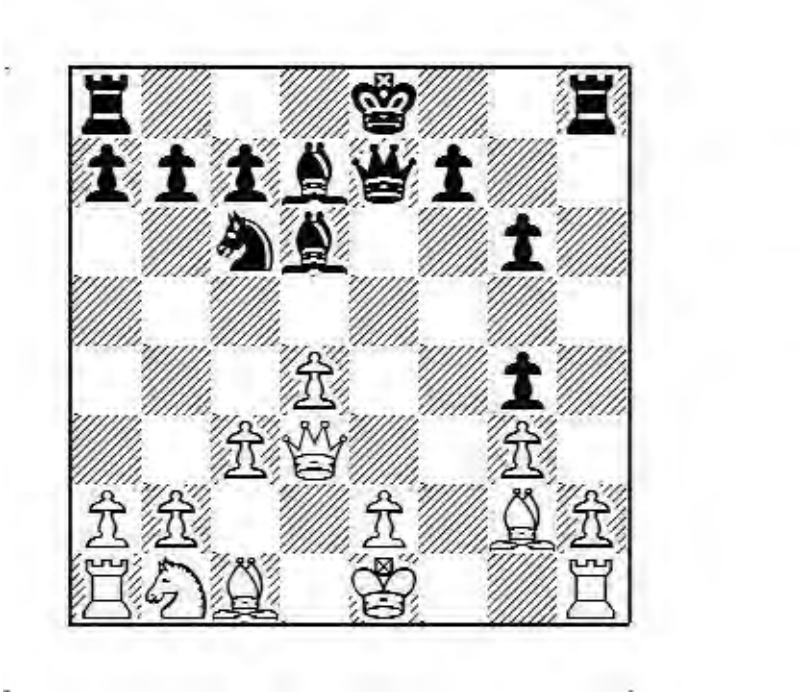
**29 … Qxb5+ 30 Qc4 1-0**

The amused white queen regards her sister’s pretensions to the droning of an annoying yet harmless insect. Black’s enraged queen, having been deprived of her wishes, is on the point of weeping from sheer frustration, since her checks have run their course.

**Summary:** Castling queenside can be a very viable option for White in From’s Gambit.

*Game 5*
**T.Taylor-J.Becerra Rivero**
Minneapolis 2005

**1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6 3 exd6 Bxd6 4 Nf3 g5 5 g3 g4 6 Nh4 Ne7 7 d4 Ng6 8 Nxg6 hxg6 9 Qd3 Nc6 10 c3 Qe7 11 Bg2 Bd7!**



If Black wants to play the Lasker line, then in my opinion, this is his or her only viable option. Black refuses to give White a free tempo for the e4-push. This may be Black's best line in the 4 … g5 From's, where he can reach a slightly inferior ending. If that is the case, then I ask: why play this line as Black?

***Question*:** Is there a downside to … Bd7?

***Answer*:** Yes, there is one issue for Black: Now White can play a piece to e4, thus Black must watch out for Qe4 and Nd2/Ne4 (intending Bg5) ideas.

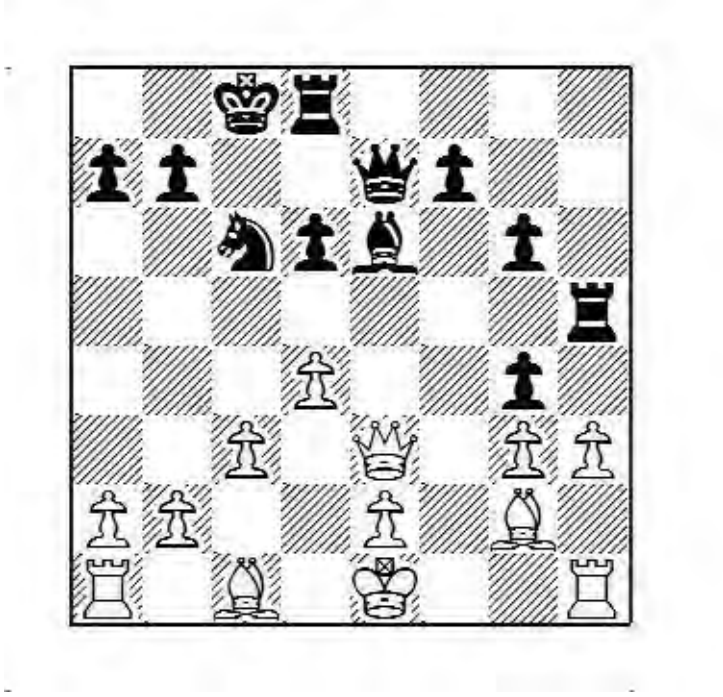
**12 Nd2 0-0-0 13 Ne4!**

White immediately exploits the open e4-square by planting his knight there, threatening both Nxd6+, which picks off the bishop pair and seizes control over the dark squares, and also Bg5, winning the exchange.

**13 … f5?!**

A trivial seeming cause can spark monumental change. This move allows White a small tactic. Let's have a look at Black's other choices:

a) Black's best is 13 … Rh5! which is a risky venture yet seasoned with a touch of restraint. This multipurpose move eyes the d5-square and covers against Bg5. Following 14 Nxd6+ cxd6 15 Qe3 (this is a similar trick Taylor pulled on Becerra, but it isn't as effective here) 15 … Be6! (suppressing d4-d5, while retaining queens on the board; this is the point of his earlier 13 … Rh5! as Black fights for control over the key d5-square) 16 h3! (otherwise Black gains play from ganging up on the h2-weakness)



***Question*:** Should Black pile up on the h-file with 16 … Rdh8?

***Answer*:** The move is not effective. White simply bypasses with 17 h4! and now the intended 17 … g5?? isn't possible due to 18 d5.

Instead, after 16 … gxh3 17 Bf3! Ra5 (the rook must travel in awkward lateral fashion, due to White's constant d5-double attack threat) 18 Bd2! (Black's rook is in serious danger now, since c3-c4 is in the air) 18 … Rxa2 19 Rxa2 Bxa2 20 Qxe7 Nxe7 21 Rxh3, Black may have regained his pawn but he still stands worse in the ending, due to White's bishop pair and dark square control, G.Arnold-K.Boldysh, correspondence 2005. This is one of the few lines which actually held up theoretically for Black, although he remains under some strategic pressure.

b) Black might choose 13 … Bf5 with the intention of preventing Bg5 but White can play the move anyway and still retain an edge! Following 14 Bg5!:

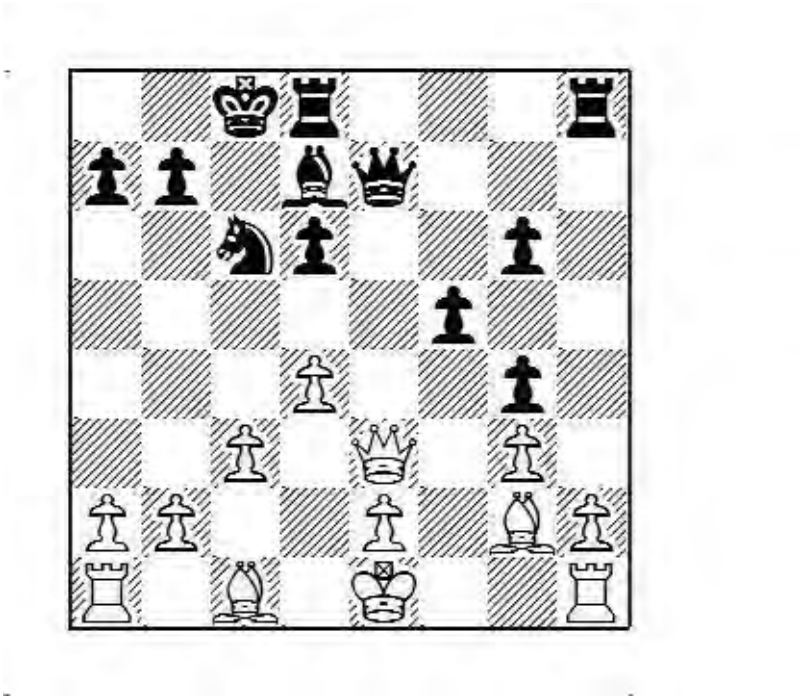
b1) 14 … Qxg5?! 15 Nxg5 Bxd3 16 exd3 Rxh2? (the favourite black trap in the From's falls flat here) 17 0-0! Rh5 (17 … Bxg3?? hangs material to 18 Ne4) 18 Nxf7 Rd7 19 Rae1! (even stronger than chopping on d6) 19 … Bxg3 20 Re8+ Nd8 21 Be4, S.Bergmann-V.Zakharov, correspondence 2006. White threatens Bxg6, followed by Bf5. Black is hopelessly tangled and resigned in a few moves.

b2) 14 … Be4 15 Bxe7 Bxd3 16 Bxd8 Re8! Black's only reply. (16 … Nxd8?? 17 exd3 Rxh2 (ah, yes, Black's favourite trap once again)18 Kf2 and White has a routine win with the extra exchange, W.Pfeifer-V.Viskin, Stuttgart 2004) 17 0-0-0 Bxe2 18 Bg5 Bxd1 19 Kxd1 Rh8 20 h3, and once again, White's bishop pair still gives him an edge in the ending.

**14 Nxd6+ cxd6**

The other recapture 14 … Qxd6 can be met with 15 Bf4 Qe7, F.Mueller-M.Kaeser, correspondence 1987. Now simplest is 16 Qe3! with the dual threat to swap queens and also d4-d5!, aiming for Qa7 if Black declines to trade.

**15 Qe3!**



The stern queen's faint smile is the equivalent of another woman's wild abandon. Black receives blows from multiple directions. Remember this theme: White threatens both a queen swap and also d4-d5, heading for the a7-square.

**15 … Qf7!?**

Technically, this is a mistake according to the comps, but I would play the same way. After all, which human would willingly enter a miserable ending a pawn down?

After 15 … Qxe3 16 Bxe3 Kc7 (covering against White's d4-d5 threat) 17 Kf2, Black is down a pawn and this one just feels like slow death.

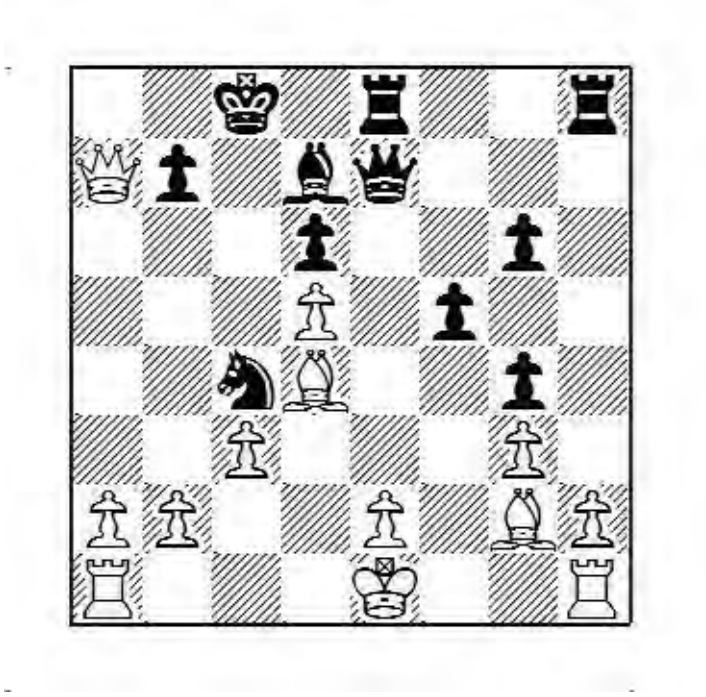
**16 d5!**

Double attack: The c6-knight and a7-pawn are simultaneously menaced.

**16 … Ne5 17 Qxa7**

The queen masticates a second pawn. She remains serenely indifferent to the high cost in time of her expedition.

**17 … Rde8 18 Be3 Nc4 19 Bd4 Qe7**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Black threatens mate on the move. White has the choice of either 20 e4 or 20 0-0. Both favour White but only one consolidates and leads to a winning position. Which one would you play?

**20 e4?!**

This move allows Black unnecessary chances. White consolidates with …

***Answer*:** White can defend successfully with 20 0-0! even with Black massing up the pieces on the kingside. For example, after 20 … Qh7 (20 … Rh5 21 b3 Nd2 22 Bb6! and White wins) 21 Bxh8 Rxh8 22 Rf4! (not only attacking Black's knight, but also threatening to swing the rook into the attack via b4) 22 … Ne5 (22 … Qxh2+?? 23 Kf2 and Black can resign, since both Rh1 and Rxc4+ are threatened) 23 Rb4, Black cannot survive.

**20 … Qg5!**

Troubles intrude upon the white king's thoughts from every direction. The g5-intruder threatens to enter via d2. Suddenly, Black has serious attacking chances for his material. When we gaze upon the black attackers, each one seems to thirst for the white king's death more than all the others combined. The comps still like White here, but the position isn't easy to navigate for us confused humans.

**21 0-0?!**

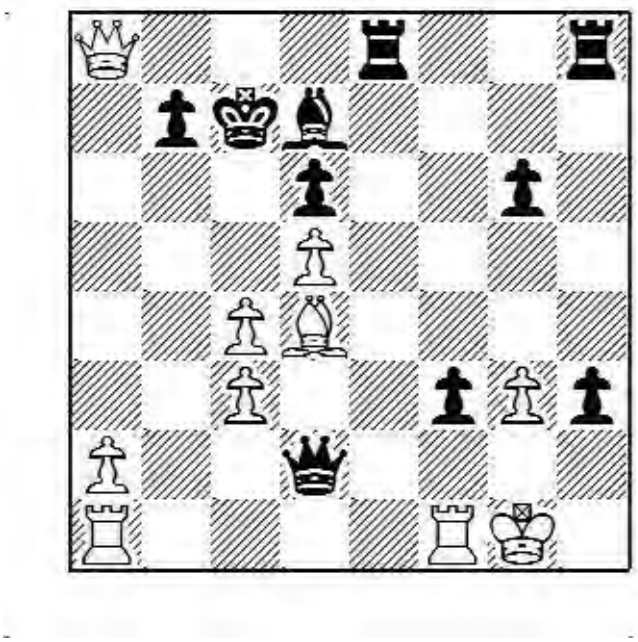
This fails to exert a restraining effect upon Black's growing initiative. White should consolidate with 21 Rd1! f4 22 0-0!! f3 23 Rf2! Kc7 (23 … fxg2 24 Bxh8 and Black is unable to recapture due to a queen check on a8) 24 e5! Rxe5 25 Bf1 and White wins.

**21 … Qh6! 22 Bxh8?!**

***Question*:** How could taking a free exchange be a mistake?

***Answer*:** White's bishop, the steward of the all-important dark squares, was stronger than Black's rook! White should still stand better with the lane-clogging idea 22 h4! gxh3 23 Bf3 and if 23 … fxe4?, White can order a massive

counterstrike on the other side of the board with 24 b3!! 24 … exf3 (24 … Nd2 25 Bb6 is also curtains for Black) 25 bxc4 Qd2 26 Qa8+ Kc7.

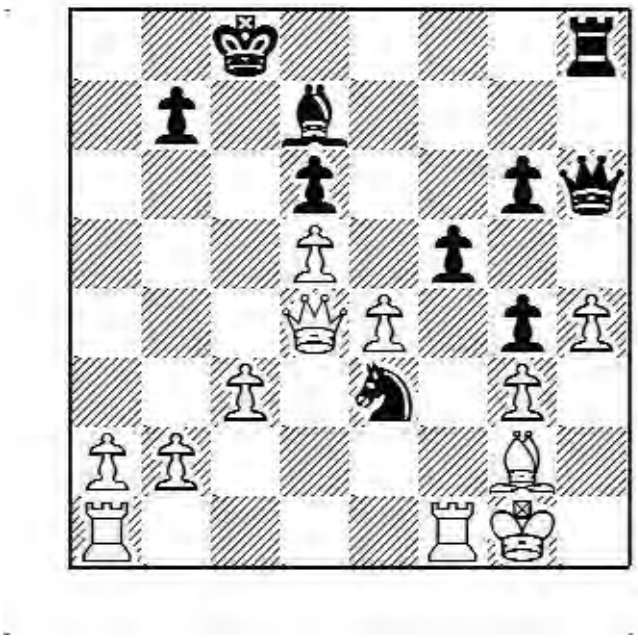


"Ah! There is the paragon of valour, quivering and hiding under his bed," says the queen, with a mocking finger pointed at Black's king.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Find the logical continuation of White's attack:

***Answer*:** Attraction. 27 Bb6+! Kxb6 28 Rab1+ Kc5 29 Qa5+ Kxc4 30 Rb4+ Kd3 (30 … Kxc3 31 Qa3+ Kc2 and 32 Qb3 is mate!) 31 Rd4+ wins.

**22 … Rxh8 23 Qd4 Ne3 24 h4!**



We should retain this lane-clogging defensive trick into our memory banks. Now White's hunted king finds some degree of safety in his lair.

**24 … gxh3**

Black's h-pawn gums up his intended attack.

**25 Bf3 fxe4!?**

Black refuses to settle for a slightly inferior ending after 25 … Nxf1! 26 Rxf1 f4 27 g4 Qh4 28 Kh1 g5 29 c4 Re8 30 Qf2 Qxf2 31 Rxf2 Kc7 32 Kh2 Rh8 33 Rf1 Rh4 34 Rg1 b6 35 b4 Rh8 36 a3 when White has all the winning chances, but conversion will not be easily accomplished.

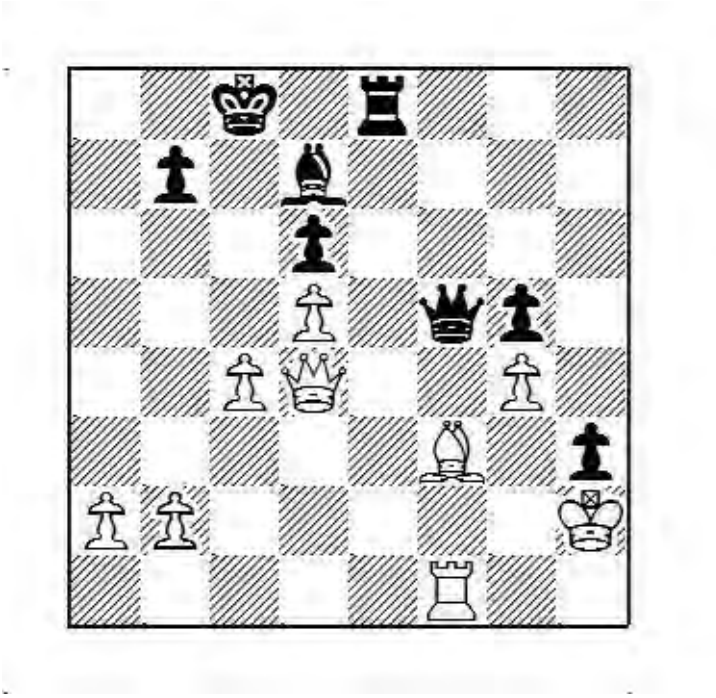
**26 Bxe4 Nxf1 27 Rxf1**

In the aftermath, White stubbornly retains his extra pawn.

**27 … Re8 28 Kh2 Qh5 29 Bf3 Qf5 30 c4 g5**

Intending … g5-g4.

**31 g4**



This move artificially isolates Black's h3-straggler, which is certain to fall if queens come off the board.

**31 … Qc2+ 32 Rf2 Qc1 33 Qd2 Qb1!?**

After 33 … Qxc4 34 Qxg5 Qxa2 35 Qf6 Qa6 36 Kxh3! (the king is no longer in danger so it's time to pick up the h3-pawn) 36 … Qb6 37 Kg3, White's g-pawn threatens to advance.

**34 b4**

Intending to slowly expose Black's king with a future c4-c5.

**34 … Qa1 35 Qb2**

The white queen glares at the a1 - intruder with cold disfavour.

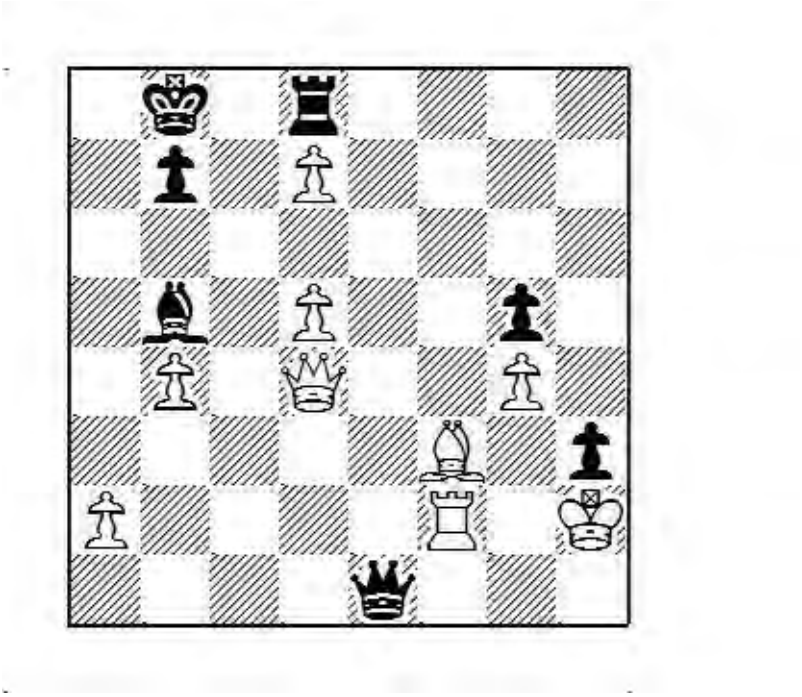
**35 … Qe1 36 c5 Bb5**

Becerra jumps at the opportunity to activate his bishop.

**37 cxd6 Kb8 38 d7! Rd8**

Also, 38 … Bxd7 39 Re2! reduces material and brings White one step closer to consolidation. After 39 … Rxe2+ 40 Qxe2 Qxe2+ 41 Bxe2 Kc7 42 Kxh3 Kd6 43 Bf3 Bb5 44 Kg3 Bc4 45 a4, the d5-pawn is untouchable since Black loses the king and pawn ending after 45 … Bxd5 46 a5! Bxf3 47 Kxf3 Kc6 48 Ke4 Kb5 49 Kf5 Kxb4 50 Kxg5 Kxa5 51 Kf6 b5 52 g5 and White promotes, while Black's b-pawn is too slow. There are no silver medals in queening races.

**39 Qd4!**

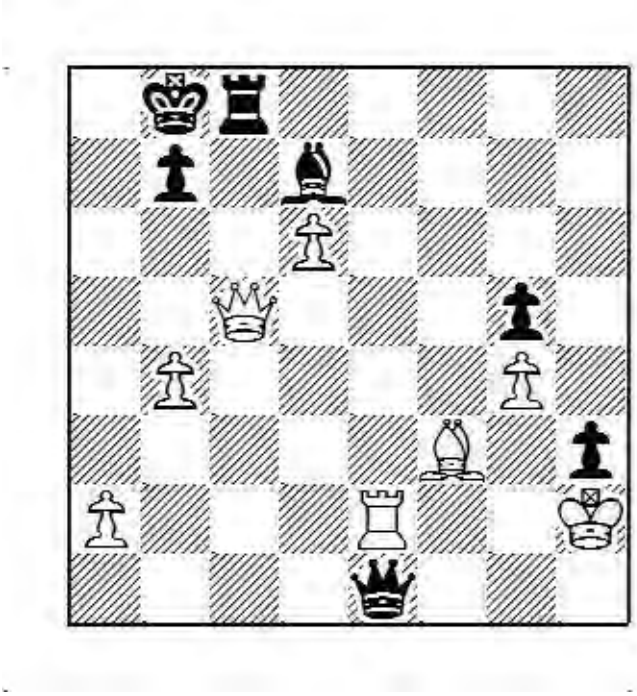


Besides keeping an eye on the f2-rook and b4-pawn, the centralized queen prepares to advance the d5-pawn.

**39 … Bxd7 40 d6**

Also good is 40 Re2! Qf1 41 Qf2 Qc1 42 Qe3 and 42 … Qc7+ is met with 43 Qe5 forcing queens off, with a winning ending.

**40 … Rf8 41 Qc5 Rc8 42 Re2**



Planning to send the e1 - aggressor back with a sharp rebuke.

***Exercise (critical decision)*:** It isn't easy to discern if we are actually in a desperately bad position, or if we have allowed our fears to deceive us. In such positions, we must forget past mistakes since our survival demands that there be no scope for remorse. Black can keep queens on the board with 42 … Qf1. But let's examine the forcing ending line 42 … Qxe2+ 42 Bxe2 Rxc5 44 bxc5 b6, which breaks up White's pawns. Can Black achieve a draw in this line?

**42 … Qxe2+??**

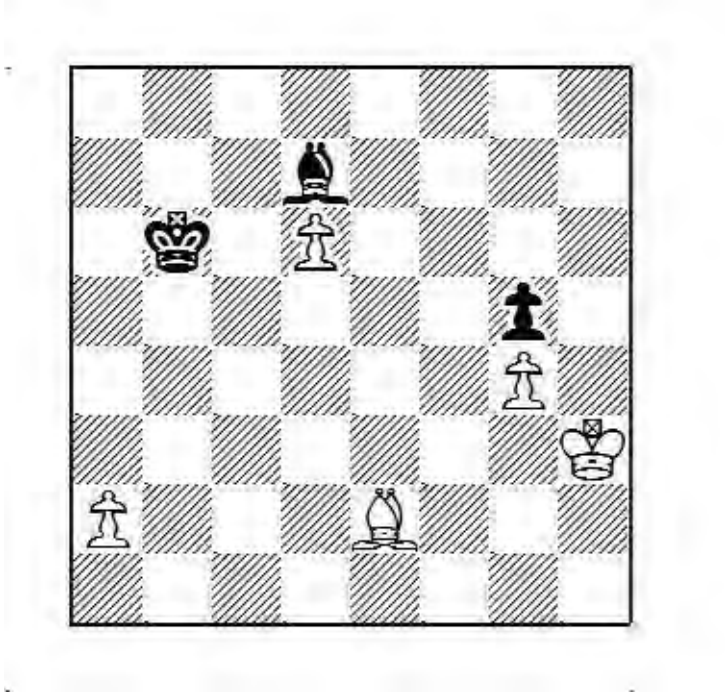
Late starts make for troubled voyages. This plan strikes a discord with the position's actual needs and swapping queens is akin to suicide. The parties have been at war for many moons and now Black decides to make peace overtures with what he mistakenly believes is a drawn ending.

***Answer*:** His only prayer is to retain queens and make a pest of himself with 42 … Qf1! 43 Qf2 Qd1 44 Rd2 Qc1 when Black's resistance isn't a thing which can be so easily brushed aside, since consolidation won't be so easy for White, due to his exposed king.

**43 Bxe2 Rxc5 44 bxc5 b6**

Becerra's point. White's pawns are broken up. But he misassesses the ending, which is an easy win for White.

**45 cxb6 Kb7 46 Kxh3 Kxb6**



***Exercise (planning/critical decision)*:** White can play either

47 Kg3, intending to eventually pick off the g5-pawn, or

47 Bd3 with Bf5 ideas. Only one of the moves wins. Which one?

***Answer*:** The Bf5! threat is decisive.

**47 Bd3!**

Nothing refreshes the eye and the spirit more than favourable geometry. Now all of Black's happiness resides in the post-queen swap era. Black had probably banked on 47 Kg3??, after which he holds the draw with 47 … Kc5 48 Kf3 Kxd6 49 Ke4 Kc5 50 Ke5 Kb4 51 Kf6 Ka3 52 Kxg5 Kxa2 53 Kf6 Bxg4 54 Bxg4.

**47 … Be6**

The bishop raises his eyes heavenward, as if supplicating God to remove the undignified demands placed before him. Also futile is 47 … Kc5 48 Bf5 Kxd6 49 Bxd7 Kxd7 and Black loses the king and pawn ending.

**48 a3**

Of course White must preserve his a-pawn.

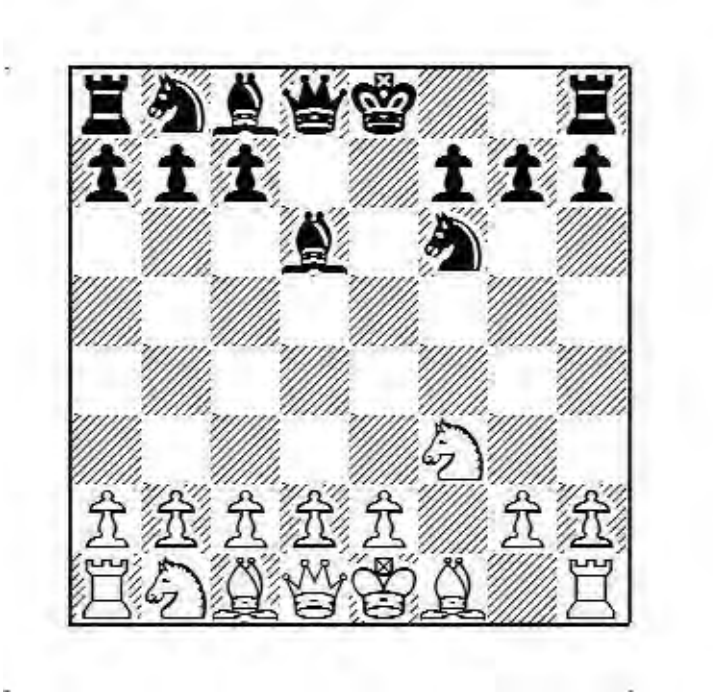
**48 … Kc6 49 Bf5 1-0**

There is no point continuing with 49 … Bb3 50 d7 Kc7 51 Kg3 and White's king simply walks over and takes the g5-pawn.

**Summary:** 11 … Bd7! may be Black's best line in the 4 … g5 version of From's Gambit. With best play, he lands in a slightly inferior ending, where he regains the pawn but hands White the bishop pair.

*Game 6*
**P.Dimitrov-A.Stojanovic**
Festival Open, Bled 2008

**1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6 3 exd6 Bxd6 4 Nf3 Nf6**



IM Tim Taylor calls this the Mestel Variation. Black refuses to weaken with … g5. Instead, he relies on absolute piece play and his development lead to compensate for the missing pawn. This line scores about the same as the 4 … g5 line. In my opinion, the Mestel Variation is somewhat sounder for Black than the 4 … g5?! Lasker line, which really probably deserves a dubious mark, since it fails to hold up under the comp's analytical glare.

***Question*:** This move appears sounder than

the 4 … g5 lines. Why isn't this Black's main line?

***Answer*:** Probably, this is because it isn't as forcing as the 4 … g5 lines, which in turn, gives White a far greater development leeway.

**5 d4**

"In my opinion, White has only one good move here, and that is the text," writes Taylor.

***Question*:** Do you agree?

***Answer*:** I don't agree, and think 5 Nc3 is just as good as 5 d4. We look at this move in Game 7.

***Question*:** Why create a gaping hole on e4?

***Answer*:** We give up something to get something. While it's true that we hand Black control over the e4-square, we seize a good chunk of central control with our d-pawn. French Defence players commonly allow such structures with even material. In this instance, we assume the French Defence posture (in reverse) with an extra pawn. We now look at two other options first:

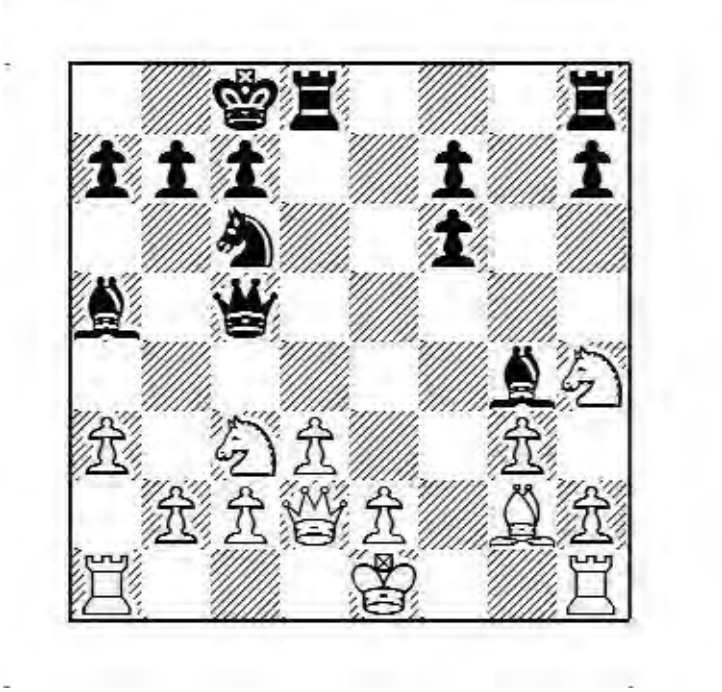
a) I used to play 5 e3 but now believe White has better ways to play the position:

a1) After 5 … Ng4, White has to be careful since Black threatens the tricky … Nxh2! followed by … Qh4+ if we capture the knight (there's also 5 … c5 6 Nc3 Nc6 7 Bb5 Qc7 8 Qe2 Bg4 9 Qf2 0-0-0, C.Lakdawala-L.Christiansen, Internet (blitz) 2005 with insufficient compensation for Black if White plays 10 Bxc6 Qxc6 11 d3 followed by kingside castling). Following 6 Qe2 Nc6 (6 … Nxh2?? doesn't work anymore for Black as after 7 Nxh2 Qh4+ 8 Kd1, 8 … Bxh2 is met by 9 g3! which allows White to retain the extra piece, leaving inadequate compensation for Black) 7 Nc3 and here we look at two possibilities:

a1) 7 … Nce5 8 g3 h5, V.Malaniuk-S.Dyachkov, Maikop 1998, and here White can seize the advantage with 9 Nxe5 Bxe5 10 d4 Bd6 11 Ne4 h4 12 Bg2 f5 13 Nxd6+ Qxd6 14 e4! 0-0 15 c3 fxe4 16 Bf4 Rxf4 (otherwise Black just stands clearly worse due to White's strong centre and bishop pair) 17 gxf4 Nf6 18 f5! Bxf5 19 Qf2 h3 20 Qxf5 hxg2 21 Rg1 and Black has insufficient compensation for the exchange.

a2) 7 … 0-0 8 Ne4!? (a better plan may be 8 d3 intending Bd2 and 0-0-0) 8 … Re8 9 Nxd6 Qxd6. Black gets full compensation for the pawn due to White's development lag and awkward queen, A.Bryntse-B.Lindh, correspondence 1975.

b) 5 g3 looks a little more logical than 5 e3/6 Qe2, since White may or may not toss the move in later, giving him greater options. After 5 … Nc6 6 Bg2 Bg4 7 d3 Qd7 8 Nc3 0-0-0 9 Bg5 Qf5 10 Qd2 Bb4 11 Nh4 Qc5 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 a3 Ba5, H.Danielsen-O.Vea, Copenhagen 2005,



GM Nigel Davies suggests that 14 Rb1! "would have been very annoying for Black as White is threatening b2-b4".

In Game 7, we will cover 5 Nc3.

**5 … Bf5**

After 5 … Bg4 6 Nc3 0-0 7 e3 (I like this better than pinning with Bg5, since White needs his dark-squared bishop to cover the e3-pawn) 7 … Re8, J.Herrera Gonzalez-L.Abal Cores, Granada 2009, I prefer White's position after 8 Be2 c6 9 0-0 Bc7 10 h3 Bh5 11

Bd2 Qd6 12 Bd3! Nbd7 (not 12 … Bxf3?! 13 Qxf3 Qh2+ 14 Kf2 as Black's attack leads nowhere and he just handed White the bishop pair for nothing) 13 Qe2 Rad8 14 Qf2 as I don't see an attacking plan for Black from this position. Black's best shot may be to try and fight for control over the e4-square with 14 … Bg6! 15 Bxg6 hxg6 16 Rae1 c5. I still prefer White though Black has some compensation for the pawn, due to the central pressure.

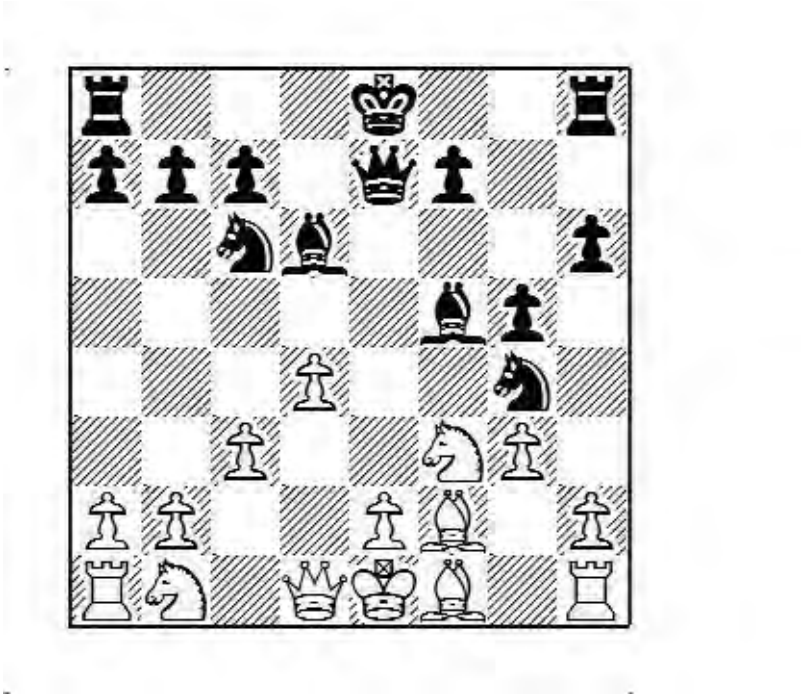
**6 e3**

"A nice compact way to play it which leaves the onus firmly on Black to demonstrate his compensation," writes Davies.

***Question*:** I don't understand why White deliberately

keeps his bishop inside the chain. Why not pin with 6 Bg5?

***Answer*:** As mentioned before, White plays the position as if on the black side of a French Defence, where the 'bad bishop' is actually needed to cover our one big weakness, the e3-pawn. After 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4 g5! 8 Bf2 Ng4 9 g3, J.Boerner-S.Heinrich, Eisenberg 1993, I don't like White's convoluted position after 9 … Nc6 10 c3 Qe7.



Black's compensation for the pawn:

1. A huge lead in development.

2. Weak squares to pressurize on e3 and e4.

3. White's king is unsafe and castling short allows Black an easy attack with … h5 and … h4.

**6 … Ne4?!**

Occupation of the e4-square may be a tad early, since this enables White to swap pieces. A couple of alternatives:

a) Black tried a lunge with: 6 … Ng4?, A.Capaliku-B.Trangoni, Venice 2012. Here White can ignore the threat to h2 and proceed with 7 Bd3! Bxd3 8 Qxd3 when the

intended 8 … Nxh2?? fails miserably to the zwischenzug 9 Qe4+! Kf8 10 Nxh2 when White picks up a piece for free.

b) The calm 6 … 0-0 may be Black's best line, but I don't believe in his or her full compensation for the pawn after 7 Bd3.

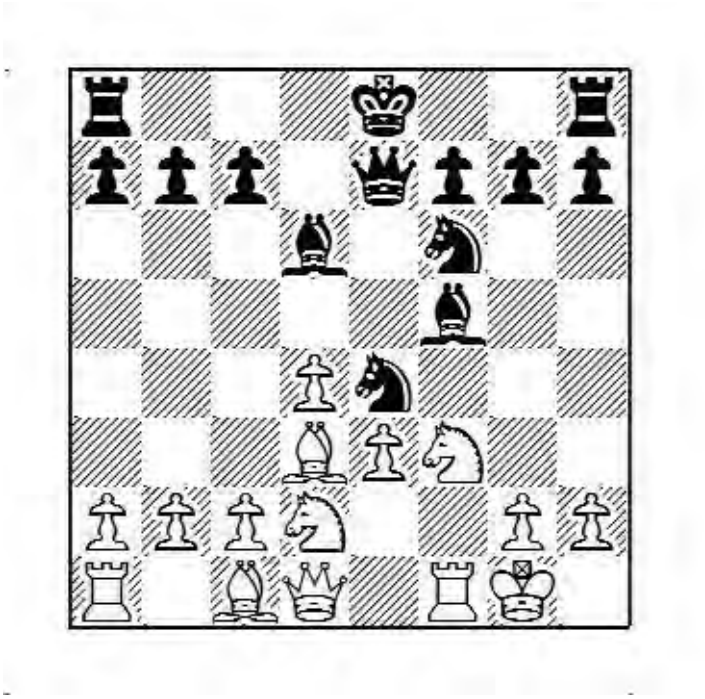
**7 Bd3**

Even though Black controls e4 for now, White must constantly challenge for the square.

**7 … Nd7 8 Nbd2**

Favourable swaps may also emerge for White with his constant contesting of the e4-square.

**8 … Ndf6 9 0-0 Qe7**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White has access to a tactic familiar to

French Defence players. How can he seize the initiative here?

**10 Nc4**

This is okay but White has an even stronger move.

***Answer*:** White has the discovered attack/interference idea 10 Ne5! when the black defenders are greeted with a rain of sighing arrows in the middle. Black is in trouble, no matter how he responds:

a) 10 … Bxe5? 11 Rxf5 Bd6 12 Nxe4 Nxe4 13 Qf3 g6 (13 … Nf6 14 e4 Nd7 15 e5 is completely hopeless for Black) 14 Rb5 c6 15 Rxb7! Qxb7 16 Bxe4 Rc8 17 Qf6 (double attack on h8 and d6) 17 … Kd7 18 Qxf7+ Be7 19 Bf3 and White has a winning position, with three pawns plus the initiative for the exchange.

b) Relatively best may be 10 … Bg6 11 Bb5+! Kf8 (forced, as 11 … c6 is met by 12 Nxc6!) 12 Ndf3 c6 13 Bd3 though Black has absolutely no compensation for the missing pawn.

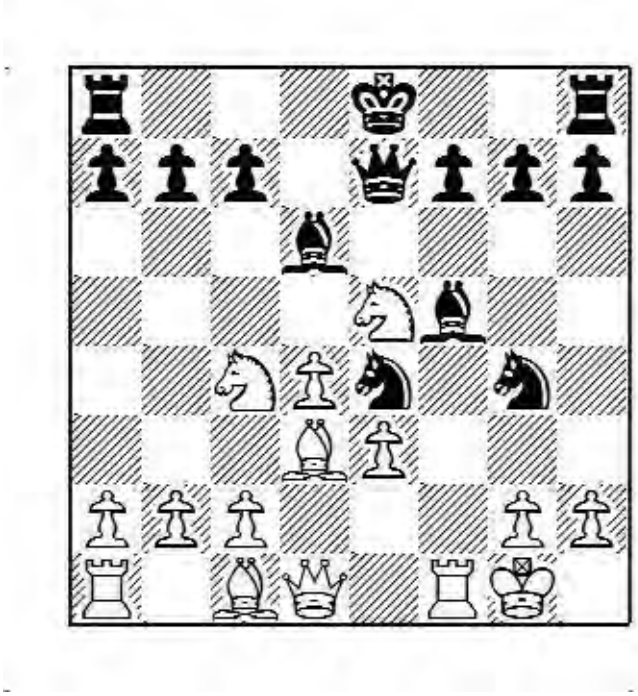
**10 … Ng4?**

Even a disorganized mob needs a leader. Clearly, the sight of White's king kindles Black's malice and he seeks a means of propulsion to ignite an initiative/attack. Everyone in Black's camp agrees that White's king is sorely in need of punishment, but there is no agreement which defines the proper manner of its application. Black encounters a hundred frustrations and few profits from this overoptimistic attacking plan.

10 … 0-0 was necessary though I don't believe in Black's compensation after 11 Nfe5! Be6 12 b3 Rad8 13 Qf3 Bd5 14 Nxd6 cxd6 15 Ng4 Nxg4 16 Qxg4.

**11 Nxd6+**

White continues to either miss or reject the discovery/interference idea 11 Nfe5! when several of Black's pieces are loose and he is busted.



For example, 11 … Qh4 is met with 12 h3 Bxe5 13 Nxe5 Nxe5 14 Rxf5 Ng6 15 Qf3 Nd6 16 Rh5 Qe1+ 17 Kh2 0-0-0 18 b3 Qc3 19 Rb1 and White is up a pawn with the initiative and has the bishop pair versus Black's knight pair.

**11 … cxd6 12 h3?!**

He misses the theme for the third time. White once again had 12 Ne5! Nxe5 (12 … dxe5 13 Rxf5 g6 14 Qxg4! gxf5 15 Qxf5 Nd6 16 Qxe5 Qxe5 17 dxe5 Nc8 18 b3 and White's three pawns for the exchange gives him a winning position) 13 Rxf5 Nxd3 14 cxd3 Nf6 15 e4 Nd7 16 Bf4 when White has an extra pawn and the superior position.

**12 … h5!?**

The insolent g4-knight continues to set up lodgings adjacent to White's king. This is a wild lunge, but are we not all guilty from time to time of violating our own cherished principles and edicts? "Objectively speaking, Black should play 12 … Ngf6 though he doesn't have much for his pawn," writes Davies.

**13 Qe1**

The human move. White decides to give the g4-knight a wide berth. The comps of

course scream for acceptance of the piece with 13 hxg4! hxg4 14 Bxe4 Bxe4 15 Nd2 Bd3! 16 Qxg4! (not 16 cxd3? Qxe3+ 17 Rf2 g3 18 Ne4 gxf2+ 19 Nxf2 Qxd4 after which Black is back in the game, although even here, I prefer White) 16 … Bxf1 17 Nxf1 and Black has no attack for his material deficit.

**13 … d5?**

Black continues to push his position way past tolerable limits. Viable options are fast dwindling, so he should just resign himself to being down a pawn after 13 … Ngf6.

**14 Ne5!**

White finally sees the discovered attack/interference theme. *Houdini* prefers the inhuman 14 Nh4! Bd7 15 Nf5 Bxf5 16 Rxf5 Kf8 (16 … Ngf6?? hangs the queen to 17 Re5) 17 Rxd5 Nef6 18 Rf5 when Black is down two pawns without a shred of compensation.

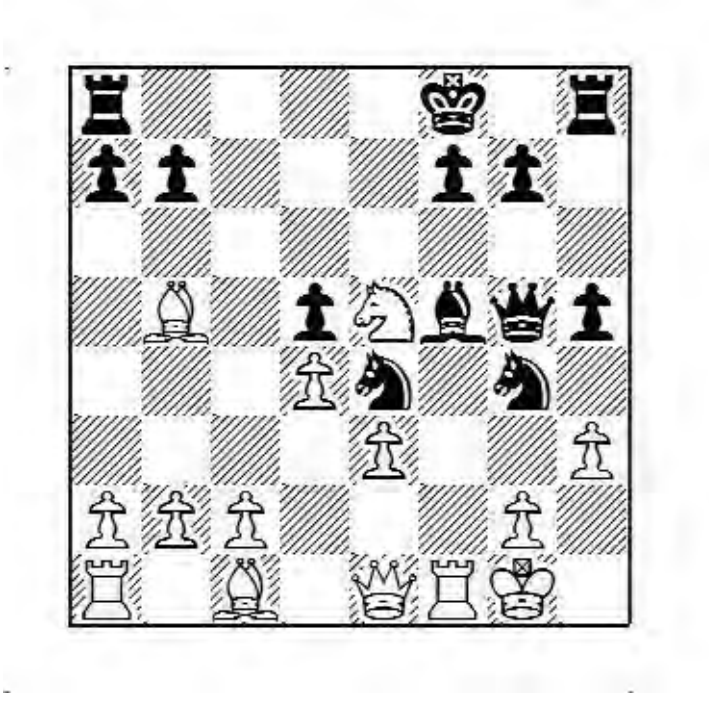
**14 … Qg5**

After 14 … Nxe5 15 Rxf5 Nc6 16 Rxd5, once again Black finds himself down two pawns for nothing.

**15 Bb5+!**

Also strong is the simple 15 Bxe4! dxe4 16 hxg4 hxg4 17 Qg3! which consolidates and leaves Black without compensation for the piece, since the white king is adequately defended.

**15 … Kf8**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White to play and force the win:

***Answer*:** Queen trap.

Step 1: Lure Black's queen to the f6-square, on the open f-file.

**16 h4!**

White isn't tempted by 16 hxg4?! hxg4 as this offers Black strong attacking chances for the piece.

**16 … Qf6 17 Nd7+!**

Step 2: Knight fork/pin. "It's time to push grandma off the cliff," mused the knight.

**17 … Bxd7 18 Rxf6**

"Mercy!" pleads Black's queen. "I'm sorry. Did you say something? My thoughts were elsewhere," responds White's rook.

**18 … Ngxf6**

18 … Bxb5 19 Rf4 also leaves Black down a queen with insufficient compensation.

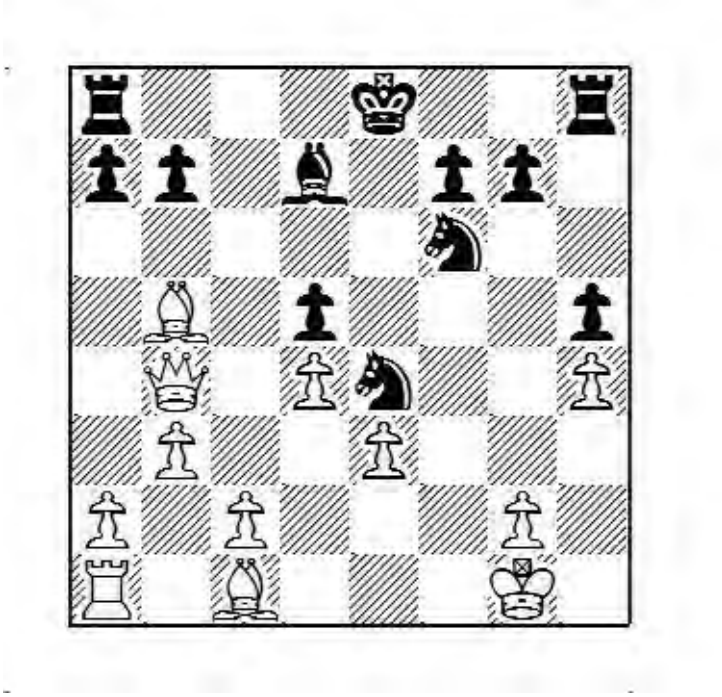
**19 Qb4+**

Under the queen's mean spirited exterior is a mean spirited interior.

**19 … Ke8**

The black king, who has been playing truant, is returned to class, where White's queen intends to teach him a lesson. It is futile trying 19 … Kg8 as after 20 Bxd7 Nxd7 21 Qxb7 Nb6 22 a4, Black can resign.

**20 b3!**



Intending to introduce the queen bishop into the fray with Ba3.

**20 … a6 21 Bxd7+ Kxd7**

Or 21 … Nxd7 22 Ba3 Kd8 23 Qxb7 Rb8 24 Qxd5 and White wins.

**22 Qxb7+**

The queen doggedly pursues Black's king, never more than a few minutes behind his trail.

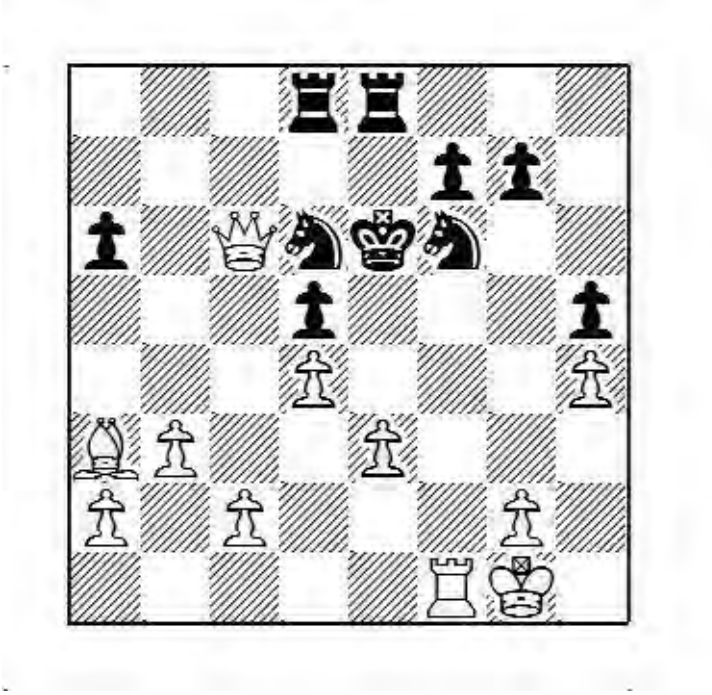
**22 … Ke6 23 Ba3**

Opening the possibility of nasty Qe7 and Qc6 checks. “Pain is God’s way of reducing pride,” lectures the bishop, as he looks tellingly at Black’s nervous king.

**23 … Rhe8 24 Rf1!**

Attacking principle: *When engaging in a king hunt, don’t chase the opponent’s king. Instead, encroach and cut off flight squares.*

**24 … Rad8 25 Qc6+ Nd6**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White to play and win further material:

***Answer*:** Deflection/removal of a key defender.

**26 Bxd6! 1-0**

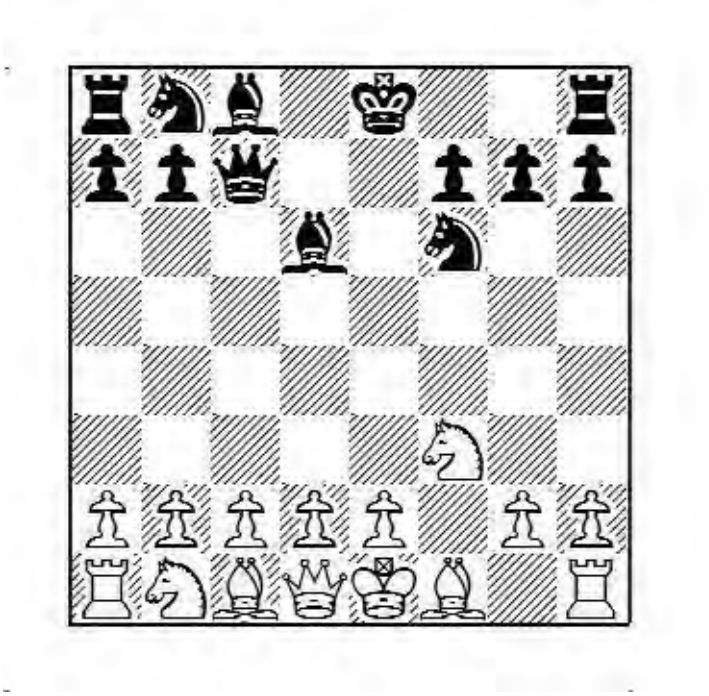
There is no point continuing as after 26 … Rxd6 27 Rxf6+! leaves the e8-rook hanging.

**Summary:** With 5 d4 (intending e2-e3 next), we treat the position as if we are on the Black side of a French Defence (albeit with an extra pawn), where we temporarily cede control over the e4-square to seize the centre and complete our development.

*Game 7*
**E.Noire-H.Faber**
Correspondence 2007

**1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 d6 3 exd6**

Black can also offer a second pawn with 3 … Nf6!? 4 dxc7 Qxc7 5 Nf3 Bd6 with a powerful dark square attack on Black’s kingside, not least threatening mate in two with a nasty ..Bg3-check!



Let's look at how the game can develop from here:

a) 6 Kf2?! Bf5 7 d3 Nc6 8 Nc3, R.Lean-J.Tay, Singapore (rapid) 2007, and here, White is already in dire straits after 8 … Ng4+ 9 Kg1 0-0-0 10 e3 Bf4! 11 g3 (it's easy to be flagrant with the bishop offer when acceptance with 11 exf4 Qb6+ 12 d4 Nxd4 leads to impending doom for White) 11 … Bxe3+ 12 Bxe3 Nxe3 13 Qd2 Rhe8 14 Re1 Qb6 15 Rxe3 Qxe3+ 16 Qxe3 Rxe3 and Black has not only regained material parity but also emerged with a huge lead in development due to the poor white king placement.

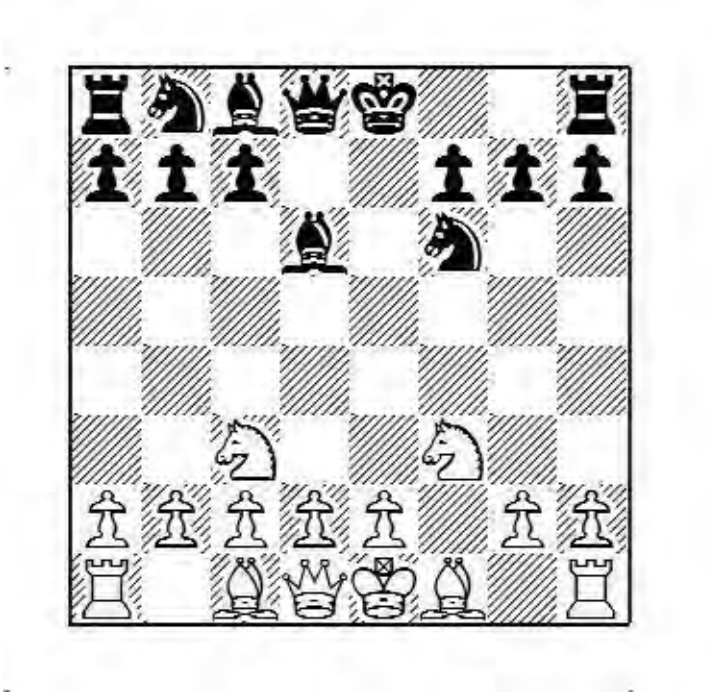
b) 6 e3 Ng4 7 Bb5+ Nd7 8 d4 Bxh2 9 Kf1 (most definitely not 9 Nxh2?? Qg3+ with mate to follow) 9 … a6 10 Bxd7+ Bxd7 11 Nxh2 Nxh2+ 12 Kg1 Ng4 gives Black strong compensation for the pawn.

***Question*:** This line looks very risky for White! How do we deal with it?

I didn't sign up for the Bird's to let Black go fowl-hunting, did I?

***Answer**:* Not to worry! I just want to illustrate the dangers of walking headlong into this variation. White can and should, for practical purposes, decline the second pawn and return to the Mestel variation with 4 Nf3!. Let's just say a bird in the hand is worth more than two in an ambush.

## 3 … Bxd6 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Nc3



Incidentally, this is also *Houdini*'s first choice in the position.

***Question*:** What is the idea?

***Answer*:** Twofold:

1. White prepares to either gain a tempo or remove Black's dark-squared bishop with a future Ne4.

2. With Ne4, White adds another sorely needed defender to the kingside.

**5 … Ng4!?**

"Your screams will provide me hours of entertainment, which is wonderful since I am easily bored," the knight declares to White's king, who can only suppress a yawn at the knight's bluster. When in doubt, we tend to agonize between taking radical action and its opposing power, doing nothing. How one interprets such positions varies with a degree of latitude. This is Black's main move, intending dirty tricks like … Nxh2, which is very tempting since White doesn't have the power to play h2-h3. However, White has adequate resources to deal with it since he has access to Ne4! ideas. Black is by no means obliged to play 5 … Ng4 and can continue more quietly with something like 5 … Bg4 6 d4 0-0 7 e3! when we reach a position very similar to the one we looked at in the previous game.

**6 g3!**

Much stronger than the line given by Taylor, which runs 6 Ne4?! Nxh2!:

a) 7 Nxh2?? (this move was given without comment by Taylor but White doesn't have to be so cooperative) 7 … Qh4+ 8 Nf2 Bg3 and White can resign.

b) Preferable is a cooler response like 7 d4 Ng4 8 Qd3 f5 9 Nxd6+ Qxd6 10 Ne5! (this emergency measure saves White) 10 … Nxe5 11 dxe5 Qxe5 12 Bd2 and White is better.

**6 … h5**

This logical continuation, intending … h4 next, accentuates the growing kingside

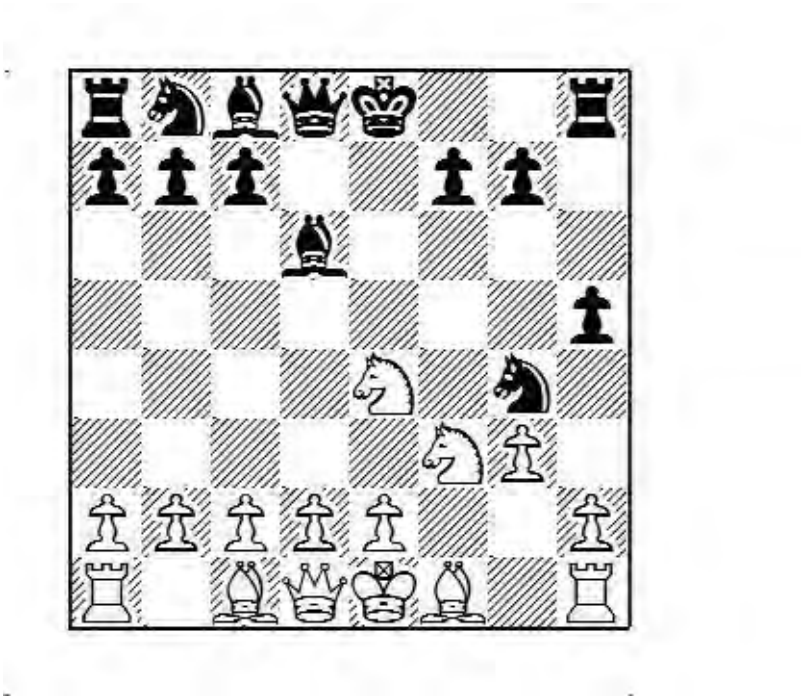
menace.

***Question*:** Isn't White in deep trouble after 6 … Nxh2 7 Rxh2 Bxg3+ 8 Rf2?

***Answer*:** Not at all. Black essentially handed over all his attackers and White's king is safer than it appears.

After 8 … Bxf2+ (8 … 0-0 9 Ne4 Bxf2+ 10 Nxf2 also favours White) 9 Kxf2 g5!? (this desperate attempt to push forward the passed g- and h-pawns is easily dealt with) 10 d4 g4 11 Ne1 h5 12 Bf4 h4 13 e3 h3 (this may look scary, but the passers will be induced into a blockade at some point) 14 Nd3 a6 15 Nc5 f5 16 Bc4 Nc6 17 Qh1! (Reti-esque stuff!) 17 … Na5 18 Ne6 Bxe6 19 Bxe6 c6 20 Bxf5, F.Fritsche-M.Heilmann, correspondence 2004, White is winning.

**7 Ne4!**

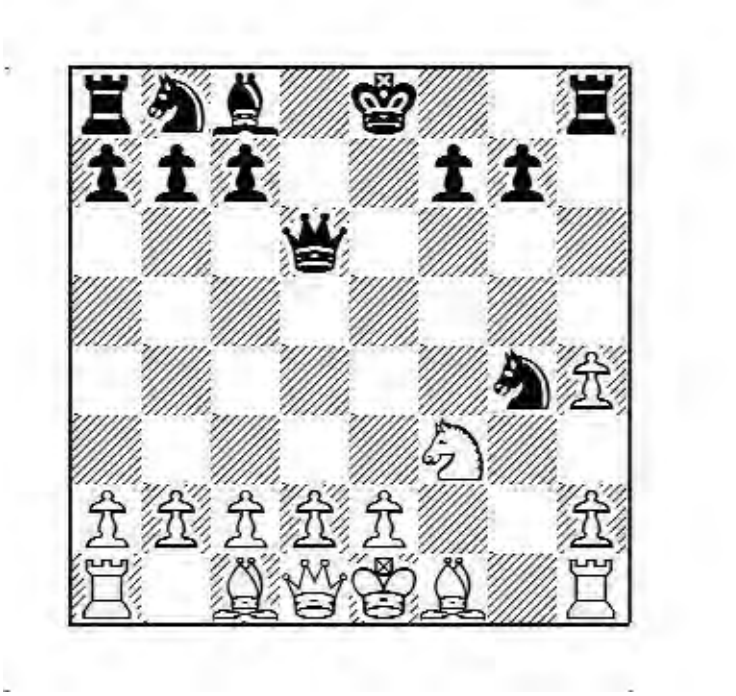


Going after the powerful d6-bishop. Now we see the downside of … Ng4: Black hands over control of the e4-square. I prefer the text move over 7 d3 h4 8 gxh4 Nxh2 9 Ne4 Nxf3+ 10 exf3 Be7 11 Qe2 Nc6 (11 … Bxh4+?? 12 Kd1! leaves Black pinned and still having to deal with multiple threats) 12 Bg5 Nd4 13 Qf2 Bxg5 14 Nxg5 Qe7+ 15 Kd2 Qb4+ 16 Kc1 Ne6 17 Ne4 when Black has compensation for the pawn, but if given a choice, I would still take White with the extra pawn, E.Tsen-Heymann, correspondence 2006.

**7 … h4 8 Nxd6+**

Nobody pays attention to the bishop's sermon, since he didn't have much to say. White logically removes one of Black's best attackers, while increasing his own influence on the dark squares. This is preferable to 8 gxh4 Nc6 9 d3 Be7 10 Bg5 Bf5 11 Ng3 Be6 12 c3 Qd7, G.Arnold-V.Sutkus, correspondence 2009. The position looks dynamically balanced after 13 h3 Nge5 14 Bg2 Nxf3+ 15 Bxf3 f6 16 Be3 Rxh4 17 Bf2 Rxh3 18 Rxh3 Bxh3 19 Bh5+ Kf8.

**8 … Qxd6 9 gxh4!**



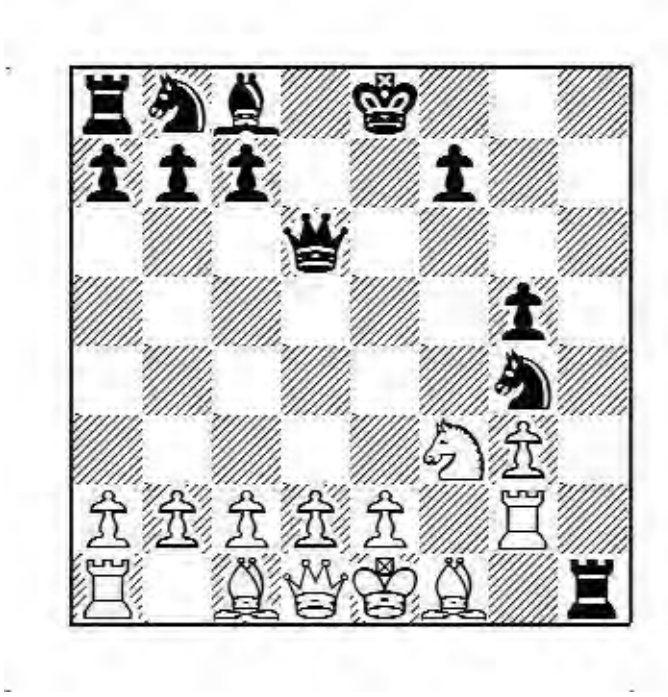
Ruthless practicality. White suffers no illusions of his opponent's objective, which is to annihilate his king. When two parties desire the same territory, disequilibrium tends to grow proportionally to the power of their desires. The snake-like vertebra of White's structure is voluntarily shattered.

***Question*:** You don't have a problem with this eyesore of a

structure - not to mention White's ominous lag in development?

***Answer*:** I begin with the rather outrageous supposition that White stands better. Admittedly, terrible sights swim before the white king's eyes, and the structure may make for an ugly sight. However, White is up two pawns and the onus is on Black to prove compensation. Also, I just don't see a concrete way for Black to exploit his development lead. *Houdini* continues to give White a slight plus, while I assess it as a more serious advantage for White.

Most definitely not the alternative capture 9 Nxh4??, as this fails miserably to a series of pretty combinations after 9 … g5! 10 Nf3 Rxh2! 11 Rg1 Rh1! 12 Rg2.

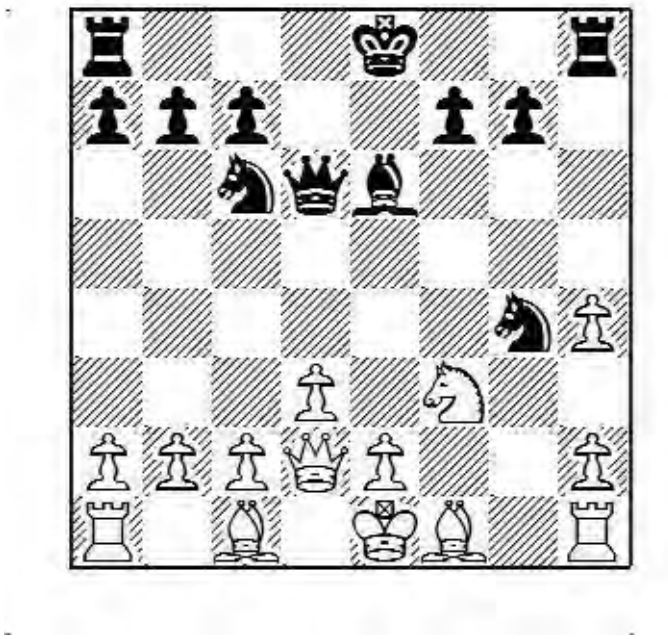


***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black to play and win.

***Answer*:** Line opening/deflection. 12 … Ne3! 13 dxe3 Rxf1+ 14 Kxf1 Qxd1+ and it's game over.

### 9 … Nc6 10 d3 Be6 11 Qd2!

White schemes to concoct an unorthodox yet efficient solution to his development woes and void his opponent's attacking ambitions.



***Question*:** What is the plan behind this move?

***Answer*:** White's power is on the dark squares, so this is where he intends to operate to unravel. White plans Qf4 to contest the key h2-b8 diagonal. Black will be inclined to cede the diagonal as a queen trade will favour White, who has

two pawns in the bag.

**11 … 0-0-0 12 c3**

Cutting off both … Nd4 and … Nb4 tricks, while further enhancing his dark square control.

**12 … Ne7**

This logical move, intending … Nf5 (which eyes the e3-square and also threatens … Nxh4), allows White to take over the initiative. *Houdini* suggests 12 … Kb8 which also works out in White's favour after 13 Qf4 Qd7 14 Rg1 f6 15 Bd2 Rh5 16 0-0-0 Nge5 17 Nxe5 Nxe5 18 Kb1 Rdh8 19 Be1 when Black remains two pawns down without compensation.

**13 Qf4 Qb6**

The queen's face is sketched into lines of displeasure at having to dance to her sister's commands.

**14 Qg3**

Covering the f2-square, while preparing Bh3.

**14 … Ng6**

It is pointless to play 14 … Ne3 15 Bxe3 Qxe3 16 Nd4 Qh6 as 17 Qg5! forces queens off the board. After 17 … Qxh4+ 18 Qxh4 Rxh4 19 Nxe6 fxe6 20 h3, Black is down a clean pawn in the ending.

**15 Bh3 Nf6 16 Bxe6+ Qxe6 17 Nd4 Qb6 18 Nf5**

Not only covering the h4-square but also threatening the g7-pawn.

**18 … Rhg8?!**

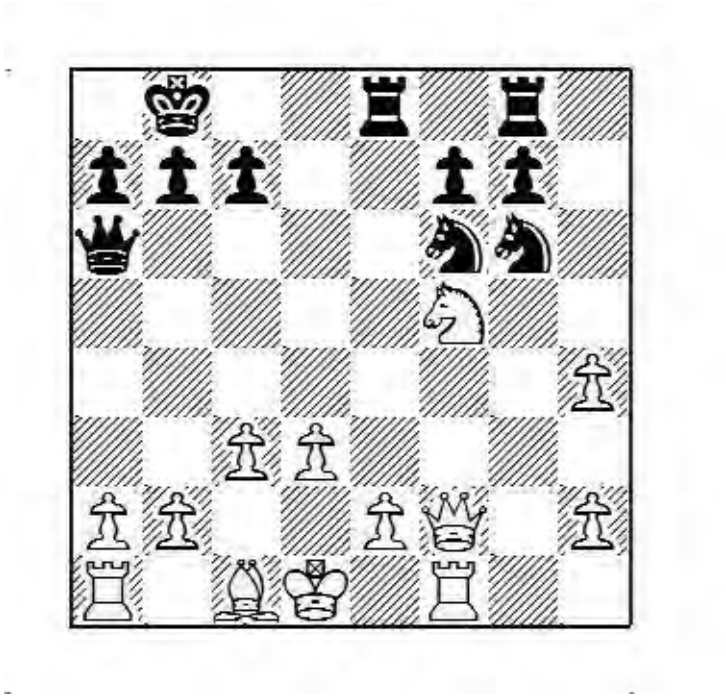
A passive stance isn't going to save him. Black's best chance to hold the game is 18 … Rh7 19 Rf1 Re8 20 Kd1! Kb8 21 Qf2 Qxf2 22 Rxf2 Ng4 23 Rg2 Nxh4 24 Rxg4 Nxf5 25 Rg2 when Black must hope he can hold the pawn down ending.

**19 Rf1 Rde8 20 Qf2 Qa6**

Threatening a one move cheapo on d3 which isn't likely to work since this is a correspondence game! The move is perhaps made with a degree of annoyance at the continued impregnability of White's position.

**21 Kd1 Kb8?**

More resilient was 21 … Nh5 though White retains his big advantage.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black's last move allowed White a combination.

***Answer*:** Undermining.

**22 Nxg7!**

The base g7-pawn teeters on the edge of indispensability. When it falls, Black's position follows suit. White wins yet another pawn, while destabilizing Black's kingside. Now the game alters course, the way even a tiny shift in the conductor's baton suddenly shifts orchestral harmony.

**22 … Rxg7 23 Qxf6**

The queen demands harsh, immoderate terms from her enemies. Black is done for if queens come off the board, hence he has to cede more ground.

**23 … Qa4+!**

Black finds the only way to retain queens. After 23 … Qxf6 24 Rxf6 Nxh4 25 Rf2, Black finds himself two pawns down in the ending.

**24 b3 Qg4**

Threatening a one-move mate.

**25 Rf2 Rgg8**

Also insufficient is 25 … Qg1+ 26 Kc2 Rh7 27 Qf3 Nxh4 as 28 Qg3 consolidates.

**26 Qg5**

What a pest! White's queen delights in dispensing her own brand of justice to her sister in the form of endless lectures on proper conduct and court etiquette.

**26 … Qh3**

The embarrassed black queen is left blushing prettily, as her sister continues her scolding.

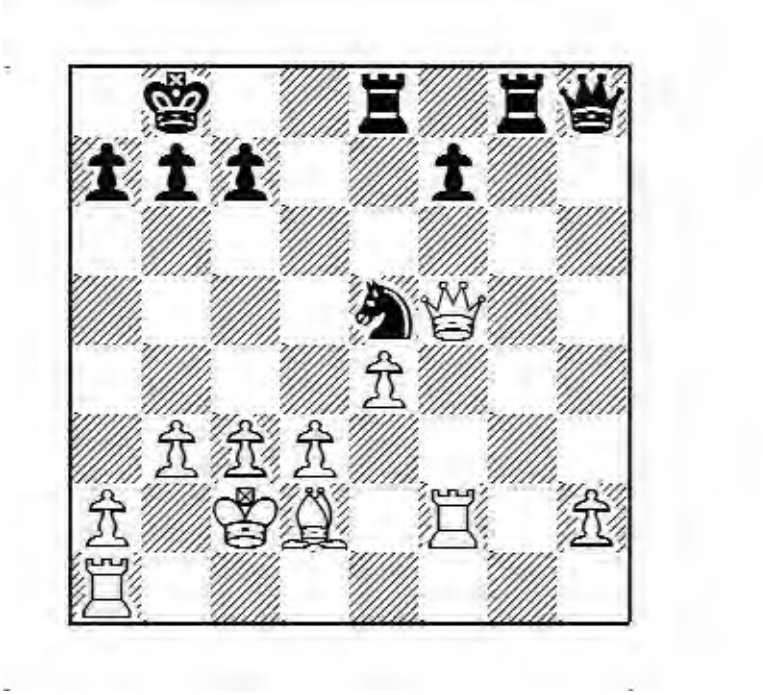
**27 Qf5 Qxh4 28 Bg5**

"A martyr's job is to endure," mutters the long suffering bishop, who finally sees daylight. At long last, White begins the process of bringing out his queenside pieces.

**28 … Qh5 29 Bd2 Qh8 30 Kc2**

The second step of bringing into play the a1-rook nears.

**30 … Ne5 31 e4**



White finally pushes one of his central pawns to the fourth rank.

**31 … Ng4 32 Re2 Rg6 33 Rg1 Nh6 34 Qf2 Ng4**

Also 34 … Re7? 35 Rxg6 fxg6 36 Qh4 Rh7 37 Qg5 Qg8 38 Rg2 Nf7 39 Qxg6 Qxg6 40 Rxg6 leaves Black down three pawns.

**35 Qxf7**

Another one bites the dust. The queen continues to feed like an obese leech, bloated to repletion.

**35 … Ne5 36 Qf1 Rxg1 37 Qxg1 Qf6 38 Qe3 Qf1**

Threat: … Qa1.

**39 Re1**

Oh, no you don't, buddy girl!

**39 … Qf7**

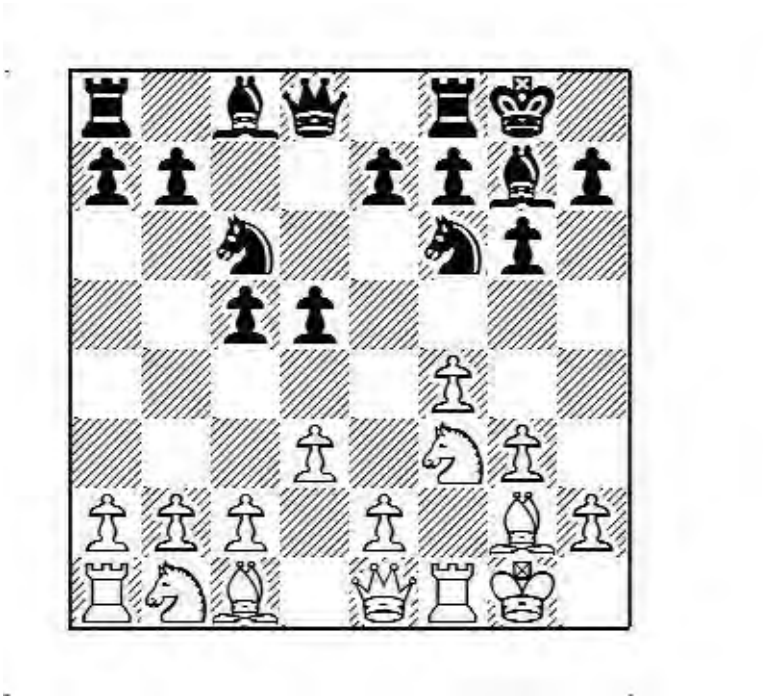
The queen, asked to leave the party and deprived of her wishes, indulges in a crimson-faced sulk back to her room.

**40 d4 1-0**

**Summary:** In my opinion, 5 Nc3 leads to an edge for White and is every bit as playable as 5 d4.

# Chapter Two
# Reversed Leningrad Dutch

If you play the Reversed Leningrad Dutch setups, then the following two diagrams will be your most common tabiya setups. We reach highly specialized positions, where matters are not likely to arrange themselves in conjunction with our opponent's opening-theory wishes. With our last move, Qe1, the argument for rights to the e4-square continues afresh. Our queen's seemingly innocuous errand, when examined deeper, holds dangerous portent for Black.

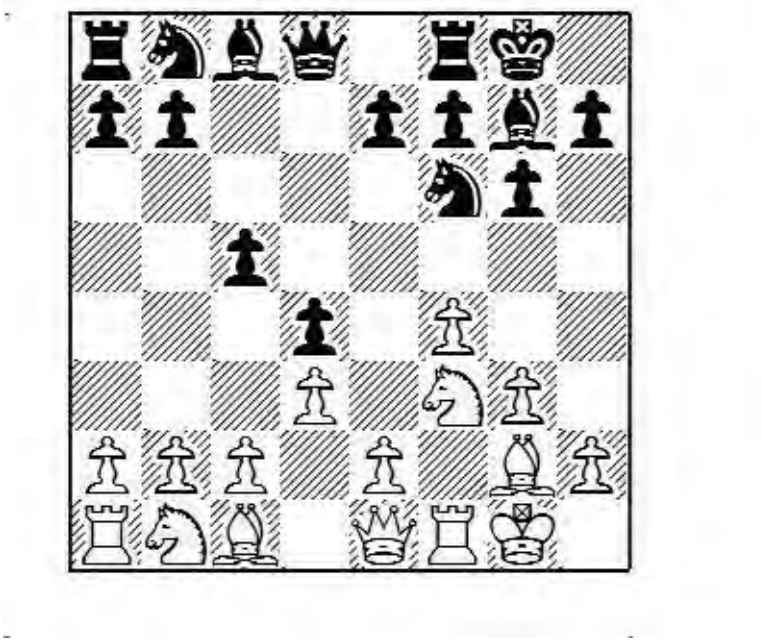


In the top diagram:

1. We do our best to force our opponent to rethink and revise views by taking him or her on with our thematic e4-break.

2. Our queen raises a pointed finger warningly in the black king's direction, perhaps later playing h2-h3, g3-g4 and Qh4.

3. After we play Qe1, Black usually ignores our impending e4 break and castles, a move based on the philosophy: If we are unable to contribute meaningfully to the conversation, then our best course is to remain silent on the matter. Black will subsequently respond to e2-e4 with … dxe4, followed by the central counter … e7-e5, after which we usually take on the hanging pawns, with superior central control and kingside attacking chances, but also perhaps a liability should we reach an ending.



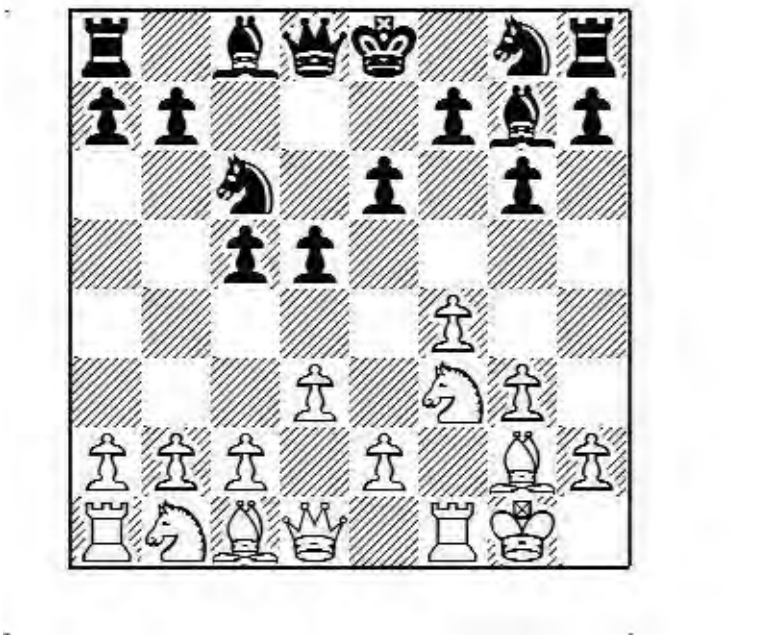
In the second diagram, Black considers the e2-e4 ‘threat’ concern-worthy enough to waylay it by pushing the d-pawn to d4. We react with the following plan: Na3, c2-c3, Nc2 and Bd2, retaining a super-flexible centre while letting Black guess how it will eventually gel.

*Game 8*
**A.Jakubiec-M.Kraemer**
German League 2003

**1 f4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 g3**

In this chapter, we examine Leningrad Dutch/Bird positions.

**3 … g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 d3 d5 6 0-0 e6**



With such fluid structures, the positions tend to be murky beyond enumeration. Black reinforces the d5-pawn and plans to develop his g8-knight to e7. We will see more of this black structure in Chapter 6 (Bird’s versus the Reversed English) later in the book (except with Black’s d-pawn on d6, rather than on d5). For the remainder of the chapter, we

mainly look at positions where Black's knight develops to f6.

***Question*:** What is the purpose of developing the knight to e7, as opposed to f6?

***Answer*:** By developing the knight to e7, Black keeps his kingside pawns fluid.

***Question*:** Why does such fluidity matter?

***Answer*:** White often later attacks Black's king with a kingside pawn avalanche, beginning with e2-e4 and g2-g4. Black plans to meet this idea by erecting a wall with … f7-f5 at an appropriate moment, to keep White's kingside ambitions in check.

**7 c3**

A useful, multipurpose move:

1. It blunts the power of the g7-bishop, guarding the b2-pawn in case of … Qb6 tricks.

2. Black's pieces are kept out of d4.

Since our plan is Qe1 for the remainder of the chapter, just for the sake of consistency, you may want to play this way against every Black system.

For example, after 7 Qe1 Nge7 8 c3 b6 9 Na3 Bb7 10 h3 a6 11 Nc2 b5 12 e4 (White engages in his thematic central pawn break) 12 … dxe4?! (I think Black is better off avoiding this move, since it hands White the e4-square after e5) 13 dxe4 c4 14 Be3 0-0 15 Bc5, White has a pleasant grip on the dark squares, F.Grafl-J.De Wiljes, Internet (blitz) 2007.

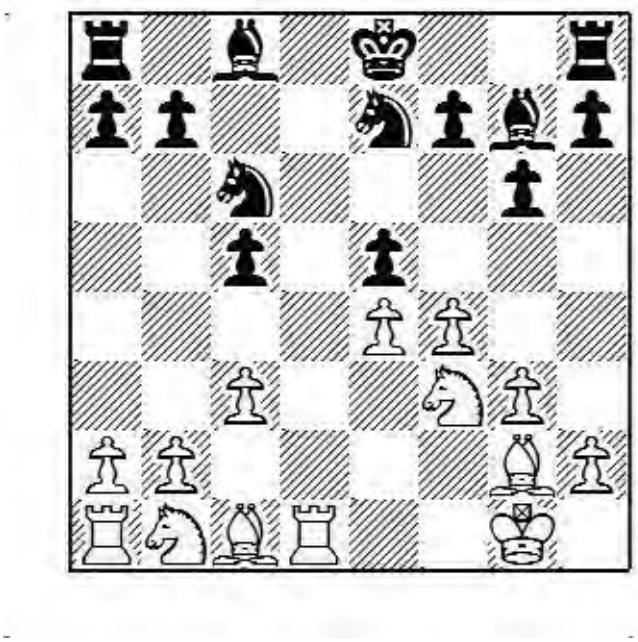
**7 … Nge7 8 e4**

This is White's main break in the Leningrad Dutch/Bird. White takes advantage of the fact that Black's knight isn't developed on f6 (thus it does not fight for control of the e4-square).

**8 … 0-0**

***Question*:** Can Black equalize by swapping

queens with 8 … dxe4 9 dxe4 Qxd1 10 Rxd1 e5?

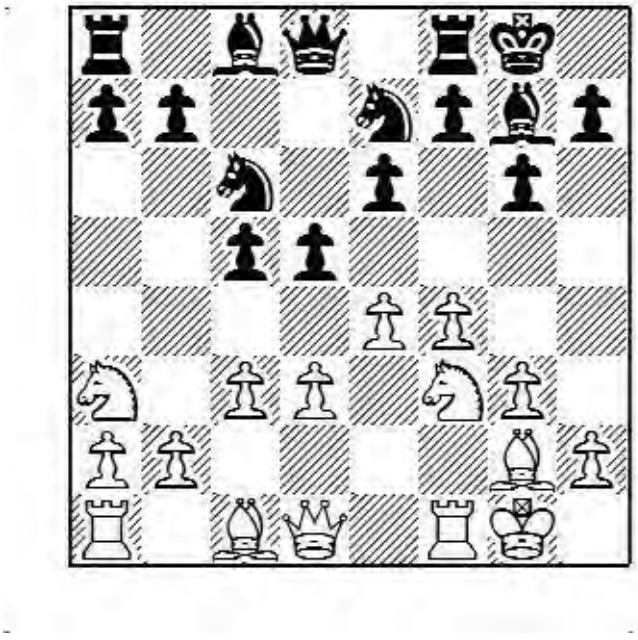


White may soon get hanging central pawns, and with queens off, won't they become weak?

***Answer*:** I think White's central pawns - hanging or not - are well protected, and the ending favours White due to his extra central space. For example: 11 Na3 0-0 12 Nb5 Bg4 (12 … b6 13 Be3 exf4 14 gxf4 Bg4 15 h3 Bh5 16 Rd7 Rfd8 17 Rad1 Rxd7 18 Rxd7 Kf8, L.Liljedahl-S.Hjorth, Nassjo 1970; Black remains under pressure in the ending after 19 a4) 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Bxf3 Rad8 15 Be3 b6 16 Kf2 f5 17 exf5 gxf5, C.Valiente-A.Ferrara, Vicente Lopez 2004. I like White's bishop pair in the open position after 18 Rd6 Rxd6 19 Nxd6 exf4 20 gxf4 and now 20 … Rd8 can be met with 21 Nxf5 Nxf5 22 Bxc6 Nxe3 23 Kxe3 when Black finds himself down a pawn.

**9 Na3**

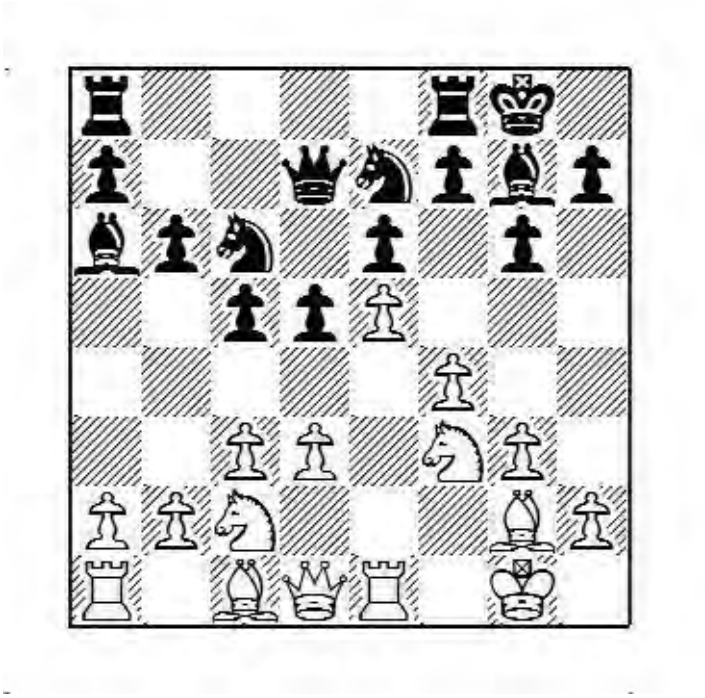
In this case, the a3-square may be the best spot for the knight, since it may be useful later on in building White's space advantage with a future plan of e4-e5, d3-d4, and Nc2, which supports the d4-pawn. The knight may also later transfer to the e3-square for a kingside assault.



**9 … b6 10 e5**

White can also retain central tension with 10 Qe2 but it doesn't seem to make much difference since Black can force e4-e5 with 10 … Ba6 (threat: … dxe4, when the d3-pawn then hangs) 11 e5 Qd7 12 Bd2 b5!? 13 d4 cxd4 14 cxd4 Qb7 (threat: … b4, which forces White's next move) 15 b4! Qb6 16 Nc2 (as pointed out earlier, from the c2-square, the knight helps cover the d4-pawn) 16 … Nf5 17 Bc3 Rfc8 18 Bb2 h5 19 Bh3 Nce7 20 Rfd1 Rc4 21 a3 Bc8 22 Nfe1 a5 23 Nd3 Ra7 24 Nc5 f6 25 Kh1 fxe5 26 fxe5 Bh6 when White's centre holds its ground and he may claim a tiny edge. He was later able to whip up a decisive kingside assault by exposing Black's king with g3-g4, K.Movsziszian-S.Das, Barcelona 2014.

**10 … Ba6 11 Nc2 Qd7 12 Re1**



***Question*:** Why move off the f-file? Isn't

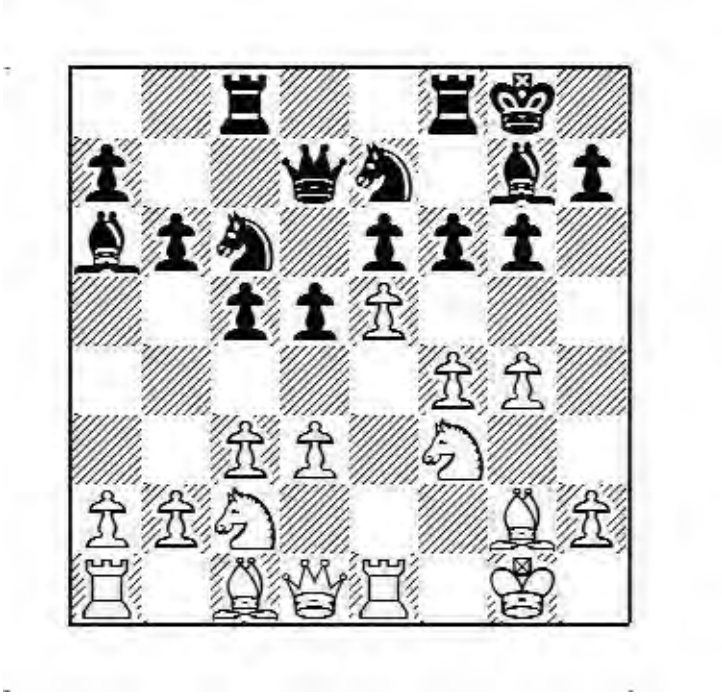
White attempting a g3-g4 and f4-f5 pawn break?

***Answer*:** White's last move was prophylactic, discouraging … f7-f6, when White responds with exf6, handing Black a hole on e5 and a backward e6-pawn.

**12 … Rac8**

After 12 … d4, since White plans an eventual kingside assault, his best bet is to always try and keep the centre as closed as possible with 13 c4 (this move also denies Black's knight use of the d5-square). Following 13 … Bb7 14 Ng5! (heading for the e4-square) 14 … f6 (otherwise Black may never get a chance at the freeing move) 15 exf6 Rxf6 16 Qe2 Re8 17 Nxe6! (White isn't intimidated by the coming pin on the e-file) 17 … Nf5? 18 Bd5 Re7 (I think Black saw too late that 18 … Kh8 would be met with the decisive shot 19 Nxc5! Rxe2 20 Nxd7 when 20 … Rxc2 would run into the crushing 21 Re8+) 19 Nxc5+ Qxd5 20 cxd5 Rxe2 21 Rxe2 bxc5 22 dxc6 Rxc6 23 b3, Black is down an exchange and a pawn, G.Cabrilo-N.Nikcevic, Niksic 1991.

**13 g4 f6**



Principle: *Counter in the centre when assaulted on the wing*. Black must play this move sooner or later, or risk White building his attack in leisure.

**14 exf6 Bxf6 15 d4**

Clamping down on both the e5-hole and the backward e6-pawn.

**15 … Rce8 16 Be3**

Threatening the c5-pawn.

**16 … Qd6 17 Qd2 Na5 18 b3**

White must slightly weaken his queenside to cover the strategic threat … Nc4.

**18 … Nb7**

Perhaps intending to transfer to the knight to the e4-square in the future with an eventual … Nd6 and … Ne4.

**19 Bf2**

Heading for the g3-square to harass Black's queen and cover the f4-pawn. This move also uncovers the e-file to further pressure the weak e6-pawn.

**19 … Nc6 20 Bg3 Qd8 21 Ne5**

***Question*:** By allowing Black … Nxe5, doesn't White shut

down his own pressure on the e5-square and the e6-pawn?

***Answer*:** He does, but gets the following compensation in return. After recapturing on e5:

1. Black's knight is denied its planned … Nd6 idea.

2. White gains central space, cramping Black further.

3. White creates a kingside pawn majority, which automatically enhances kingside attacking chances.

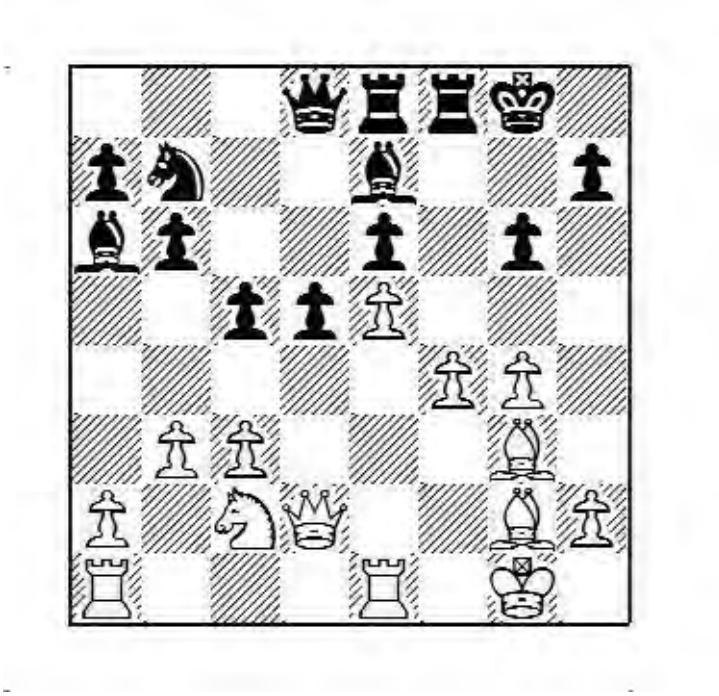
**21 … Nxe5?!**

This may be too obliging and now follows a strategic rock slide. Perhaps Black should have considered retaining tension with 21 … Nba5 when White's edge was smaller than the one he got in the game.

**22 dxe5!**

As mentioned above, the kingside pawn majority automatically amplifies White's kingside attacking chances.

**22 … Be7**



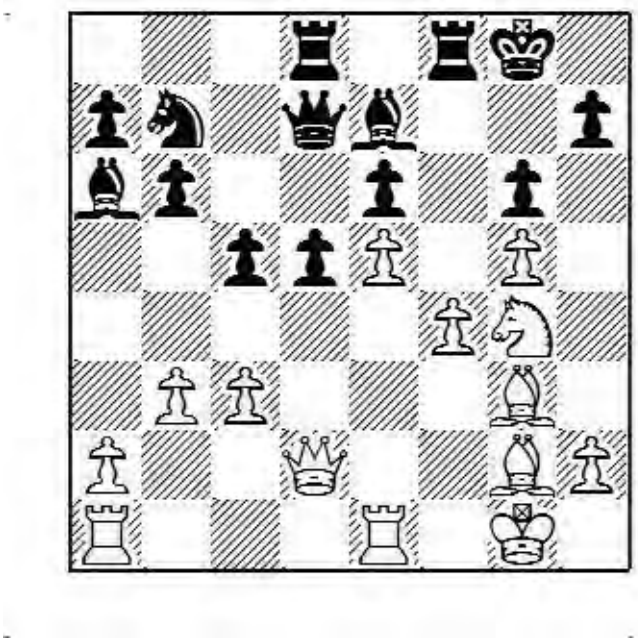
***Exercise (planning)*:** This must have been a moment of terrified apprehension for Black, similar to what I experienced upon spotting my wife Nancy surreptitiously blending kale into my morning smoothie. We have opposite wing majorities. White's only plan is to try and whip up a kingside attack. Come up with a clear plan.

***Answer*:** Play g4-g5!, intending the manoeuvre Ne3, Ng4 and Nf6+. This will play create havoc with Black's king safety.

**23 g5! Qd7 24 Ne3**

The knight spots an opening in the defence and glides through.

**24 … Rd8 25 Ng4**



Mission accomplished. Black is in dire trouble. He must watch out for both Nf6+ and even Nh6+ in some cases.

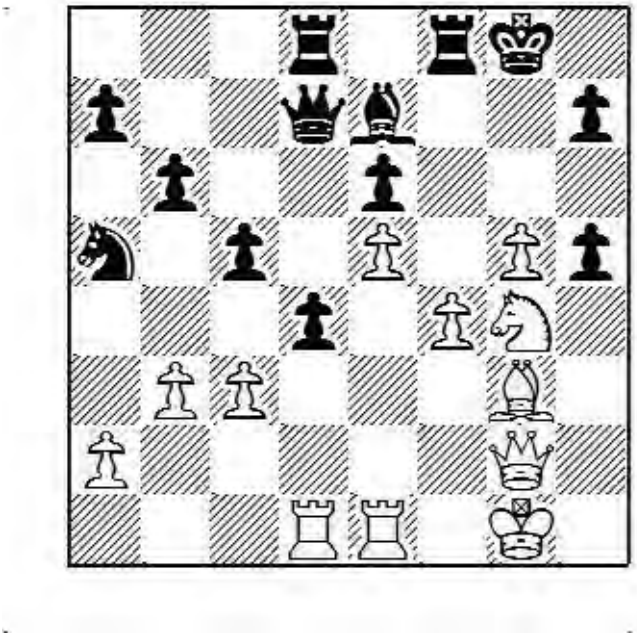
**25 … d4**

This is a frantic attempt to generate counterplay in the middle, since Black sees Nf6+ falling upon him with tremendous force.

**26 Rad1 Na5 27 h4!?**

Principle: *The threat is stronger than its execution*. White wants to leave Nf6+ hovering over Black's head, thinking about h4-h5, rather than jump in with the immediate 27 Nf6+ which is also strong as 27 … Bxf6 28 exf6 Nc6 29 Bf2 gives White a clear strategic advantage.

**27 … Bb7 28 h5 Bxg2 29 Qxg2 gxh5**



**30 Nh6+!?**

Sometimes our idiosyncrasies are a blessing, and other times a curse. For some players, the only certainty is their unpredictability. The knight bursts forth with perhaps a tad too much exuberance, sneering at the f6-offer in disparagement. This idea, which contradicts the conventional wisdom of such positions, may be too ornate and throws away some of the advantage, which is there for the taking with 30 Nf6+!. "Were it not deeply disrespectful, one might call Your Grace a snivelling coward," declares the knight with a condescending smile to Black's king, who is caught hiding under his bed, his teeth chattering like castanets. Following 30 … Bxf6 31 exf6 Nc6 32 c4 Rf7 33 Kh2 Re8, White can leisurely build up a kingside attack, coupled with pressure on the e6-pawn.

**30 … Kh8 31 Qh3**

Internally, the queen convulses with mirth at the thought of the black king's distress.

**31 … Nc6 32 Qxh5**

Threat: Nf7+ and Nxd8.

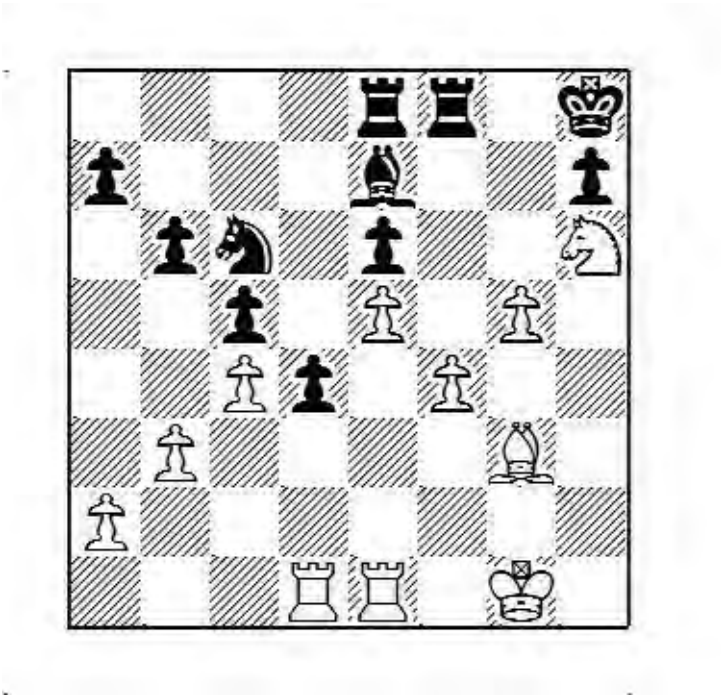
**32 … Qe8!**

Black stands slightly worse in the ending, which is infinitely better than getting mated in the middlegame!

**33 Qxe8**

"How very tiresome when a bumbling halfwit dares enter our august presence," mutters the queen to herself, as she submits to her annoying e8-sister's wishes. Black's troubles, however, don't entirely disappear with the swap of queens.

**33 … Rdxe8 34 c4**



White cuts out … dxc3 ideas. Advantage to White:

1. He still owns considerably more space.

2. He can move his king all the way to e4.

3 He still has attacking prospects along the h-file.

4. He can backtrack with Ng4 and Nf6, causing disharmony in Black's camp.

5. He can play for an eventual f5-break.

**34 … Rd8 35 Kg2 Nb4 36 Rd2 a6**

Black needs a queenside distraction and prepares … b5, but it is slow. Maybe he should get his king into the game, preparing his eventual transfer to g6.

**37 Ng4!**

It's never too late to say you are sorry. White realizes the h6-adventure yielded him little and decides to reroute the knight to a superior square.

**37 … b5**

Possibly mistimed. Black should perhaps sacrifice a pawn with 37 … h5!? as sometimes our best strategy is unreasonable petulance. After 38 Rh1 Kg7 Rxh5 Rh8 40 Rh6 Rxh6 41 gxh6+ Kg6 42 Kf3, conversion won't be so easy for White.

**38 Rh1**

Threatening Rh6 with a simple pile-up on the h7-pawn. Both the e6- and h7-weaknesses continue to remain under the rook's not-so-benign surveillance.

**38 … Rd7**

When our need is desperate, so are our actions. The power of attrition takes its toll on Black, since he allows e6 to fall. This gives White two connected passers on the e and f-files. Also futile is 38 … Rde8 39 Rh6 Bd8 (Black's pieces nurse e6, as if consoling a sick, beloved pet) 40 Nf6 Bxf6 41 exf6 bxc4 42 bxc4 Rf7 43 Kf3 Nc6 44 Bh4! (threat: g6!) 44 … Rg8 45 Rh2 d3 46 Ke4 Nd4 47 Be1! (intending to transfer to c3) 47 … Nf5 48 R6h3 Rd7 49 Bc3 and Black can resign.

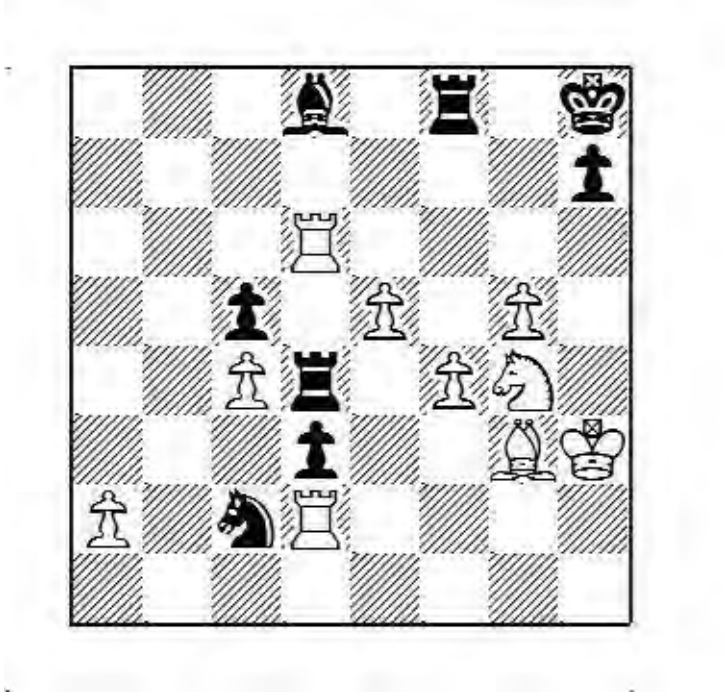
**39 Rh6 bxc4 40 bxc4 d3 41 Rxe6**

Black's counterplay income fails to meet cash outflow and White's play comes faster.

**41 … Nc2 42 Rxa6**

Black continues to give with open-hearted bounty. What he receives in return (besides the pure altruistic joy of giving) however, is questionable.

**42 … Rd4 43 Kh3 Bd8 44 Rd6!**



Picking off Black's last hope, the d3-pawn.

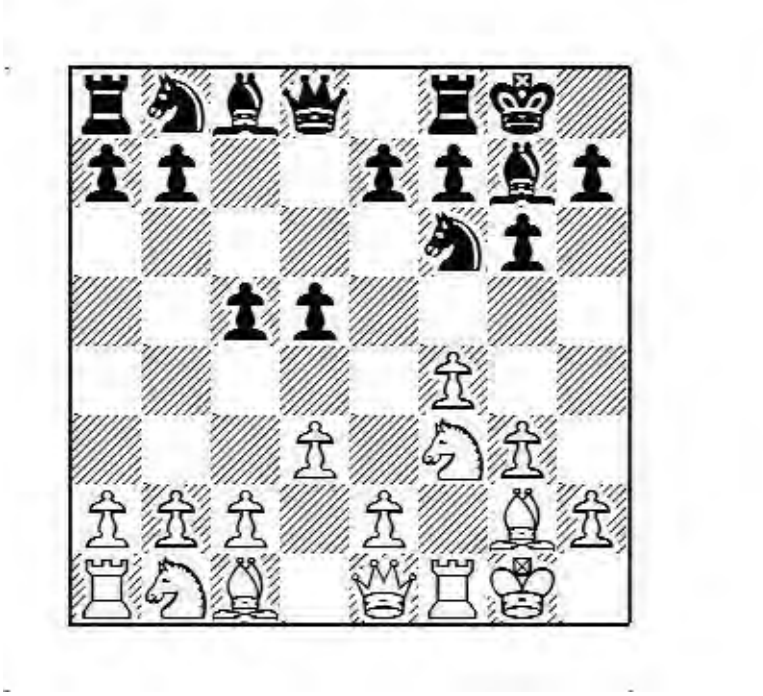
**44 … Ba5 45 Rxd3 Rxc4 46 Rd7 1-0**

Haunted eyes take inventory of the ruins of his position. Nf6 follows, leaving Black without hope.

**Summary:** We all carry theoretical knowledge within our memory banks which doesn't do us any good in real life. For example, I remember from high school chemistry class that hydrogen's atomic number is one, while uranium's is 92. Besides writing this thought in this book, I doubt that I will derive much future benefit from this knowledge. We chess players are the world champions of carrying around useless knowledge which won't help us in real life. However, one piece of knowledge which will win you games is the plan White played in this game: Remember this important Leningrad/Bird attacking theme: f2-f4, e4-e5 and g3-g4-g5. Then transfer a knight to the f6-square, via g4, with serious attacking chances.

*Game 9*
**C.Lakdawala-N.Arutyunov**
San Diego (rapid) 2014

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 d3 Nf6 6 0-0 0-0 7 Qe1**



We reach our critical position. This is a popular line for Black with colours reversed in Leningrad Dutch, and is the one we concentrate on in the chapter.

***Question*:** What are the ideas behind 7 Qe1?

***Answer*:** White's main point is to play for the e4-break. A secondary idea can be for the queen to swing into the attack via h4, after the insertion of h2-h3 and g3-g4.

**7 … Qb6!?**

My opponent seeks to throw me off theory with a rare move. Black pressures the b2-pawn, while leaving open possibilities of … c4+. In the following games, we look at Black's more common responses 7 … Nc6 and 7 … d4.

Here, I would like to show you that the position is playable even with colours reversed and a tempo down, courtesy of Leningrad Dutch Specialist Vladimir Malaniuk. The game concerned went 1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 d6 7 Nc3 Qe8 8 Qb3!? (this is the same idea my opponent played on me, but with an extra tempo) 8 … Na6 9 Bg5 (*Houdini* prefers White after 9 c5+ Kh8 10 cxd6 exd6, while I think the position is close to even) 9 … c5 (this blocks out annoying c5+ ideas) 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 Rfd1 Bg7 12 e3 Kh8 13 Rac1 h6 14 dxc5 Nxc5 15 Qc2 Bd7 16 Nd4 Rb8 17 Qe2 a6 18 b3 g5 19 Nd5 e5! 20 Nc2, I.Vainerman-V.Malaniuk, Kiev 1986. I like Black's chances after 20 … e4 intending … Nd3.

**8 Nc3**

This is already a new move in the position.

***Question*:** Doesn't a coming … d5-d4, gaining a tempo on your knight, bother you?

***Answer*:** Well, it did bother me a little but I didn't see an alternative I liked. In any case, allowing the d-pawn advance is pretty typical in the Leningrad Dutch after 1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 d6 7 Nc3 Nc6

and now after 8 d5, Black typically goes 8 … Na5 or … Ne5.

I didn't care for:

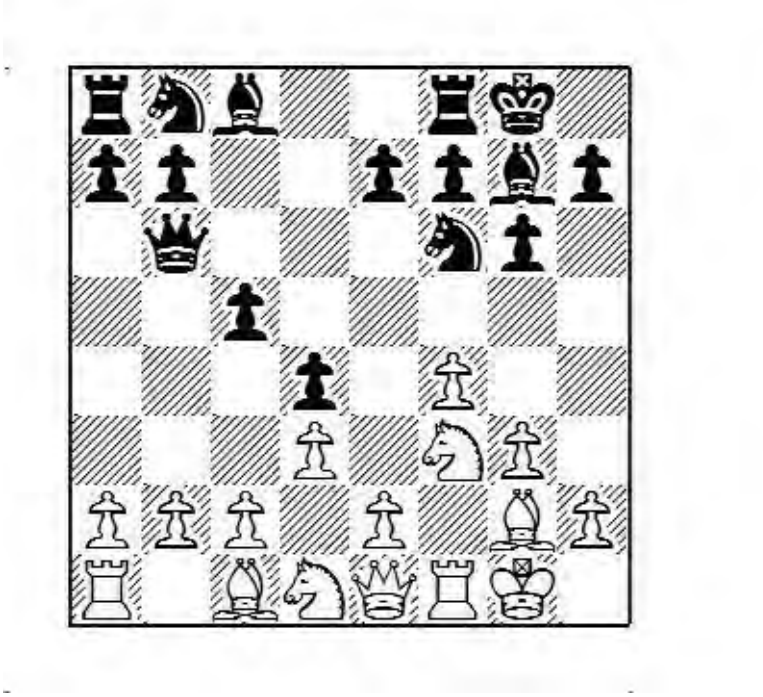
a) 8 c3 (blunting the g7-bishop's glare to the b2-pawn) 8 … Nc6 (I didn't play this way with White, mainly because I was concerned about the line 8 … c4+ 9 Kh1 Qa6 and if 10 dxc4 Qxc4 11 Nbd2 Qa4, I didn't like the fact that I couldn't play e2-e4) 9 Kh1 Bd7 10 e4 (now I like White's position) 10 … e6 11 Nbd2 Rad8 12 e5 Ng4 13 Nb3! (targeting the c5-pawn) 13 … c4!? (this weakens the d4-square) 14 dxc4 dxc4 15 Nbd4 a6 16 Qe2 Rc8 17 h3 Nh6 18 Be3 Nxd4 19 Nxd4 Qc7 20 g4 and Black found himself getting strategically squeezed, A.Fouquet-Vouin Massy 1993.

b) As mentioned earlier, Malaniuk played 8 Na3 but a tempo down, with the Black pieces.

**8 … d4**

Why not? Black gains a tempo.

**9 Nd1**



This option is available thanks to the Qe1-shift.

I didn't like White's game after:

a) 9 Na4 Qc7 and then … b5 or … Bd7 worries White.

b) Nor did I particularly care for White's game after 9 Ne4 Nxe4 10 dxe4 when Black intends … e5 or … Nc6-b4 at some point.

White's extra tempo in the Leningrad Dutch used for Qe1 is not very effective especially when Black has played an early … Qb6 instead of … Nc6.

**9 … Nc6 10 e4**

The point is if Black captures the e3-pawn en-passant, as he did in the game, then White's knight emerges with tempo after Nxe3 and Nc4.

**10 … dxe3**

***Question*:** This move seems to activate White's pieces.

Why not just leave it alone and attack the queenside?

***Answer*:** I think then White gets a slightly favourable version of a reversed g3 King's Indian, where the centre is closed. White can attack kingside very quickly with h2-h3, g3-g4 and Qh4. Also, Black's queen on b6 actually hinders his natural queenside attack, blocking the natural … b7-b5 and … c5-c4 break.

**11 Nxe3 Nd4 12 Ne5**

This way White gains yet another tempo with a coming c2-c3. Of course pushing the c-pawn doesn't come without cost, since my d3-pawn becomes a backward one. But this is a normal state of events in many Leningrad Dutch positions.

**12 … Be6 13 c3**

This has to be played sooner or later. The d4-knight gets kicked out, at the cost of weakening the d3-pawn.

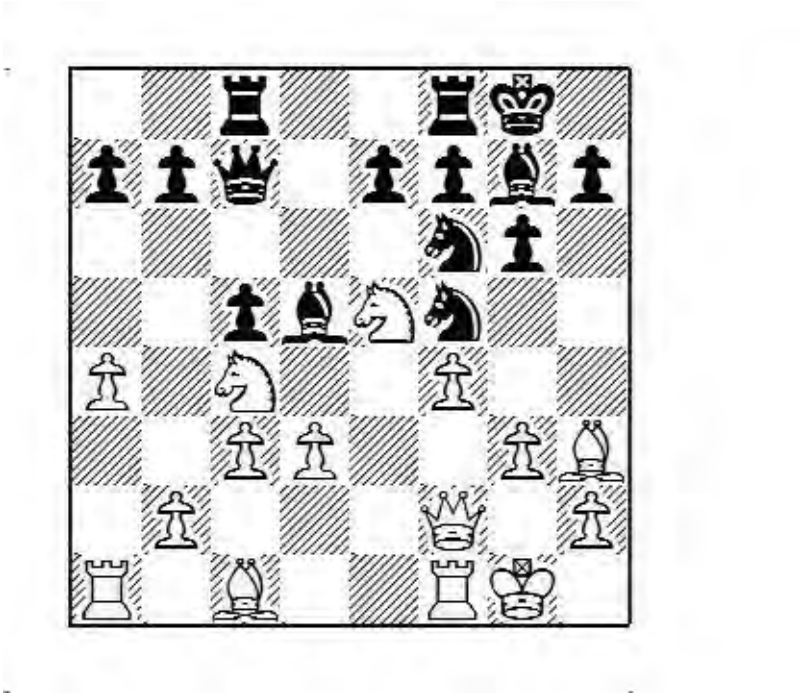
**13 … Nf5 14 Qf2**

Taking aim at the c5-pawn if Black trades on e3.

**14 … Rac8 15 N3c4 Qc7 16 a4**

Anchoring the c4-knight without having to worry about … b7-b5.

**16 … Bd5 17 Bh3!?**



Generally, an exchange of light-squared bishops tends to suck some of the inherent dynamism out of White's position. Now White toys with the g3-g4 push.

**17 … e6 18 g4**

Out you go! I realized this move weakens, but it's thematic.

***Question*:** Where are you going with this pawn push?

***Answer*:** I hadn't yet outlined a clear plan. I just knew that White should seek to create a disturbance around Black's king. I can play for either f4-f5 or g4-g5 tricks. Also by playing g3-g4, it clears the h4-square for my queen.

**18 … Nd6**

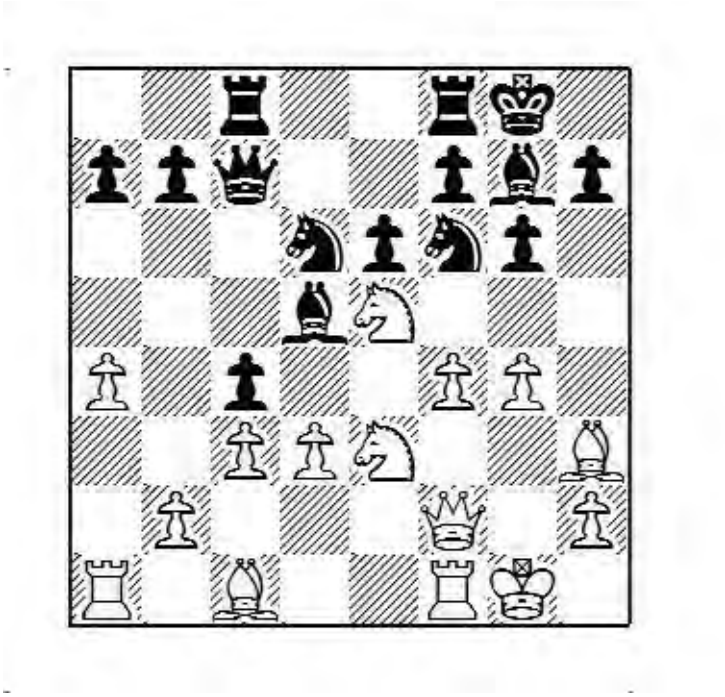
Challenging my c4-outpost.

**19 Ne3**

Played with a hidden threat.

**19 … c4?!**

It was necessary for Black to hand over the bishop pair with 19 … Bc6 20 Nxc6 Qxc6 21 Bg2 Qc7 when Black's position was still fine since the d3-pawn remained weak.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** When equally powerful forces are in stasis, all hell breaks loose if a third factor is introduced by one side. All our troubles over the board are those of our own creation. Black's overconfident last move is a mistake. My opponent either missed or ignored White's threat. How can White win material?

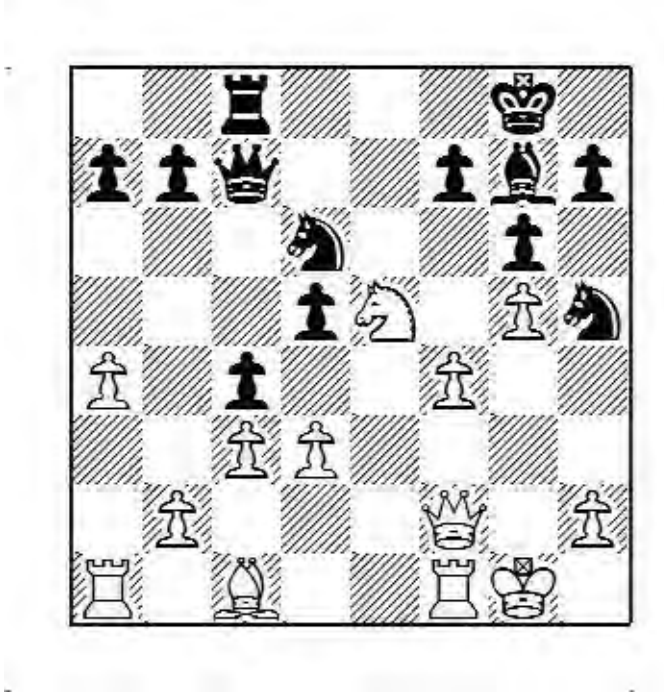
***Answer*:** Removal of the guard. When Black's f6-knight moves, White captures on d5, then Black hangs an exchange on c8.

**20 g5!**

I entered this line with great hesitation, since I knew winning the exchange wasn't completely consequence-free. Nevertheless, it was the correct decision.

**20 … Nfe8?!**

The qualities of overconfidence (19 … c4?!) and underconfidence (this move) converge into a blurred middle. My opponent's meek retreat indicates uncertainty. I suspected that my opponent was in shock, having missed the tactical idea. I expected 20 … Nh5! 21 Nxd5 exd5 22 Bxc8 Rxc8.



***Question*:** Doesn't Black have full compensation for the exchange here? After all, White looks overextended on the kingside and is weak on the light squares.

***Answer*:** You have a point, but my judgment was Black has some - but not full compensation for the exchange - for the strategic troubles you pointed out in White's position. After 23 Qf3 cxd3 24 Qxd5 Bxe5 25 fxe5 Nf5 26 Qxd3 Qxe5 27 Bd2, it won't be easy, but White should eventually consolidate with the extra exchange, since my rooks have access to both e and d-files, and my king for now looks reasonably well guarded.

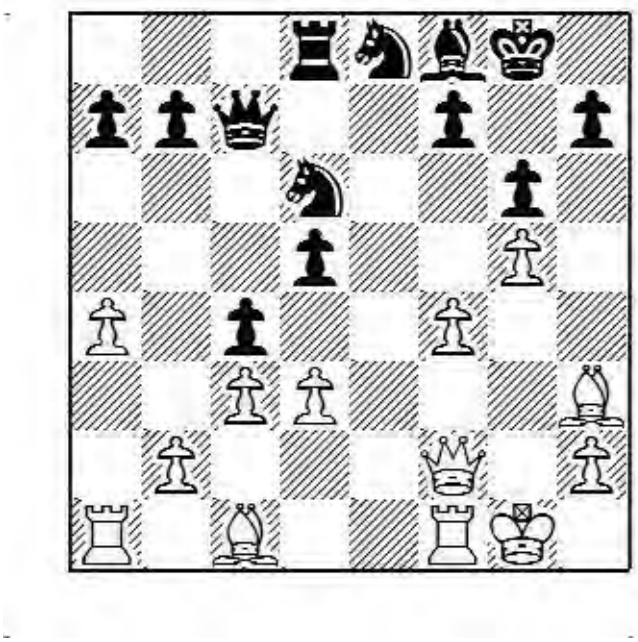
**21 Nxd5 exd5 22 Nd7**

The human move. This way I don't hand over the light-squared bishop, the steward of the white squares. *Houdini* prefers 22 Bxc8 Nxc8 23 dxc4 dxc4 24 Re1.

**22 … Rd8**

The comp prefers 22 … cxd3 23 Nxf8 Ne4 24 Qe3 Bxf8 25 Qxd3 Rd8.

**23 Nxf8 Bxf8**



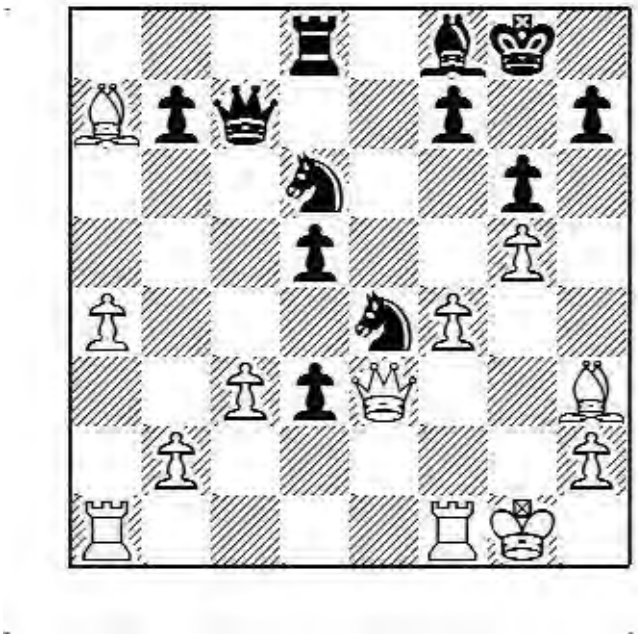
**24 Be3?!**

Normally, when there comes a call for urgent and decisive measures, your unfortunate writer tends to twiddle his fingers, stare at the ceiling while whistling through his teeth, and stammer endlessly. My queen declines the a7-gift, despite a thousand inducements. To wilfully refuse to take action is, in a strange way, an action in itself. I wanted to develop but my advantage drops considerably after the text move, a poor replica of what I could get after the counterintuitive 24 Qxa7!, a move I had actually considered. Following 24 … cxd3 25 Qd4 Ne4 26 Qxd3, White should consolidate without too many obstructions.

**24 … cxd3 25 Bxa7 Ne4 26 Qe3**

Threat: Bb6.

**26 … N8d6?!**



Black should agree to 26 … Ra8!? 27 Bd4 d2.

**27 Bb6**

But I said "Threat: Bb6!" Black's wild ideas refuse to settle into any semblance of order as he hands over another exchange to increase the level of complications. The mind, when left all alone in its projections of terrible futures, sometimes reaches unimaginable destinations. This second exchange sac looks like an overreaction.

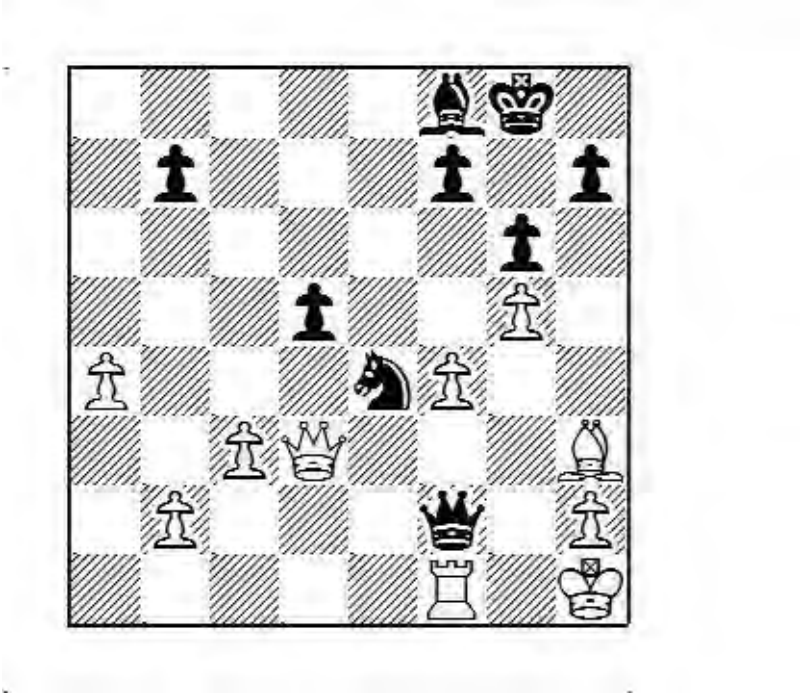
**27 … Qe7 28 Bxd8 Qxd8 29 Qxd3**

Okay, so although in serious time pressure, I'm up two exchanges and conversion should be simple, right?

**29 … Qb6+ 30 Kh1!?**

I decide to return an exchange to cool off his initiative. This still wins but is slightly inaccurate. More decisive is 30 Qd4! Qxb2 31 Kh1 Bg7 32 Qxd5 Nf2+ 33 Rxf2 Qxa1+ 34 Kg2 and White consolidates as his difficulties vanish in a fingersnap.

**30 … Nf2+ 31 Rxf2 Qxf2 32 Rf1 Ne4**



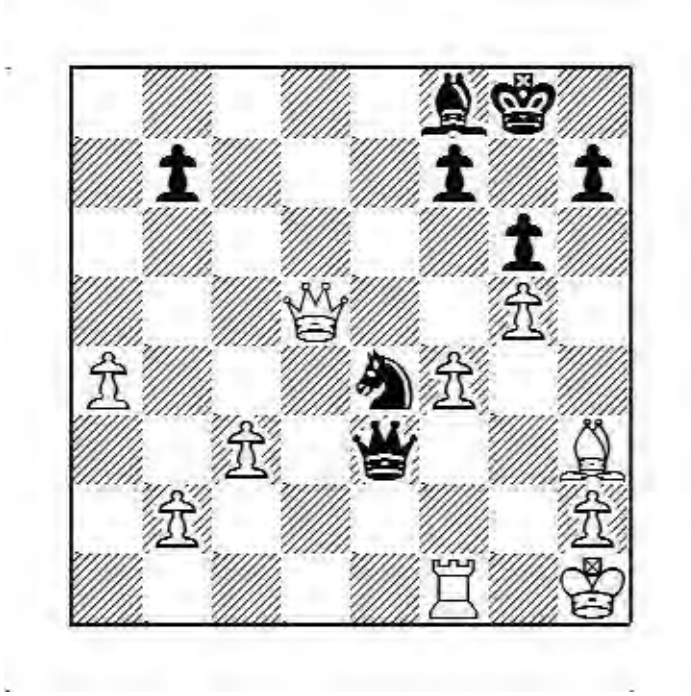
***Exercise (critical decision)*:** In such messy positions, we tend to hold theories by the dozen, but very few actual facts. Of course, White is unable to capture the 'hanging' queen on f2 due to a mega-fork. So, our decision is between 33 Bg2 and 33 Qxd5. One wins, while the other allows serious counterplay. Which one would you play?

**33 Qxd5?!**

Both clocks were dangerously low and the calculation fragments fall like droplets of rain. After this error, the missing components of White's win begin to wander away.

**Answer:** 33 Bg2! is correct. The primary target is Black's knight, which should be removed as quickly as possible. Following 33 … Qxb2 34 Bxe4 dxe4 35 Qxe4 Qxc3 36 f5!, White is winning.

**33 … Qe3!**



Black threatens both … Qxh3 and … Nf2+.

**34 Bg2?**

I essentially agree to a forced draw, missing the deeply hidden solution. White can still pick up the full point after 34 Be6!!, though this is too tough a move to find when your clock is hanging! Now the seed of Black's attempted counterplay isn't given time to germinate as after 34 … Qe2 (instead, 34 … fxe6 35 Qxe6+ Kg7 36 Qd7+ Kg8 37 Qd5+ Kh8 38 Qd4+ Qxd4 39 cxd4 has White's rook and three pawns easily overcoming Black's minor pieces) 35 Bxf7+ Kg7 36 Qb5! Nf2+ 37 Rxf2! (37 Kg2?? allows 37 … Nd3+ 38 Kg1 Bc5+ when it is Black who wins) 37 … Qxf2 38 Bc4! Qf3+ 39 Kg1 Qg4+ 40 Kf2 Qxf4+ 41 Ke2, White has excellent winning chances. For example, 41 … Qxh2+? 42 Kd1 Qc7 43 Qd5 Qd6 44 a5 Be7 45 Kc2 Qxd5 46 Bxd5 Bxg5 47 Bxb7 gives White an extra decisive pawn.

**34 … Nf2+**

Now it's a forced draw.

**35 Rxf2**

I got what I expected from this skirmish - nothing. My rook has little choice but to swallow his dreary gruel without enthusiasm. One of the first basic mates we teach beginners is the following smothered mate pattern with 35 Kg1?? Nh3+ 36 Kh1 Qg1+37 Rxg1 Nf2.

**35 … Qxf2 36 Qe5**

Also, 36 Qf3 Qxb2 37 h4 Qc1+ 38 Kh2 Bd6 39 Kg3 Qe1+ 40 Kg4 Qe6+ 41 f5 Qe5 leaves White tied down and Black draws easily.

**36 … Bc5 ½-½**

White must take perpetual check.

**Summary:** Let's specialize in the Qe1 (which is in reality, the … Qe8 Leningrad Dutch setup with a move ahead for White) formation in the Reversed Leningrad Dutch formation. Our goal is to play for e2-e4 and then usually a kingside attack.

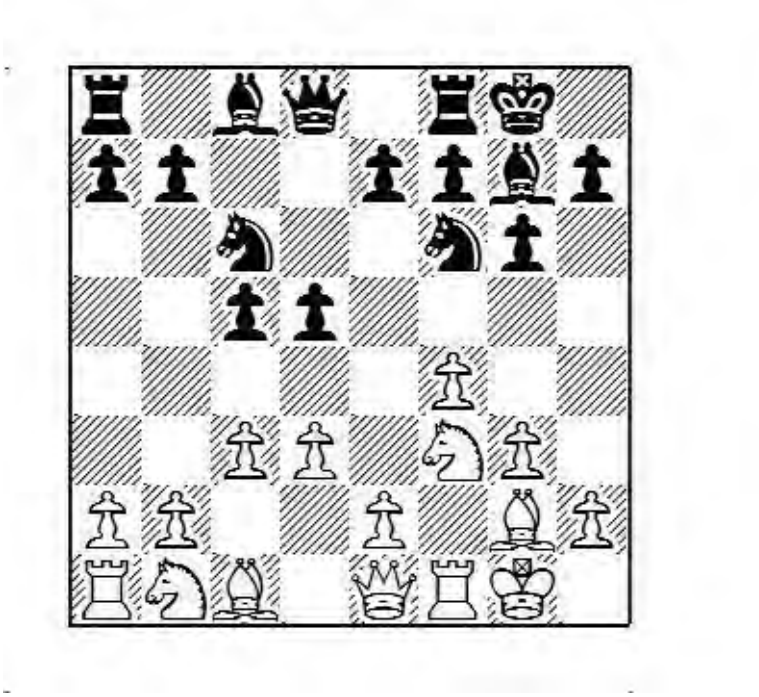
*Game 10*
**V.Malaniuk-C.Humeau**
Corsica Masters Open, Bastia 2009

GM Vladimir Malaniuk is one of the best Leningrad Dutch players with the Black pieces (as prep for this book, I went over his black Dutch games), so it's natural that he sometimes opens with 1 f4! to reach his favourite lines a move up.

**1 f4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 0-0 5 0-0 c5 6 d3 d5 7 Qe1 Nc6**

Black continues to develop and allow White the e4-break. In Game 15, we will look at 7 … d4.

**8 c3**



White's main move.

***Question*:** Why play 8 c3?

***Answer*:** For the following reasons:

1. White seizes control over both d4- and b4-squares and thus rules out any White knight forays on those squares.

2. White holds his structure fluid, keeping his opponent guessing. For example, White can play for the simple e4, or he can play future ideas like Na3-c2, Bd2, Rb1 and b2-b4.

Note that in the Dutch Leningrad, one standard Black line goes 1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 d6 7 Nc3 c6. Here, one of the motifs of 7 … c6 is to play on the queenside with … Qa5. However in our line, our queen is slated for central or kingside play with Qe1 so that option is not available.

***Question*:** Why doesn't White play 8 e4 if this is our main idea in the Qe1 line?

***Answer*:** There is no real rush. White doesn't mind transposing to … d4 lines if Black opts for 8 … d4 9 Na3 Nd5 10

Bd2, which is a position we examine in Game 15 and Game 16. In this chapter, we will concentrate on the more direct 8 e4.

**8 … Qd6**

Black fights for control of the e5-square and seeks to play … e5 at some point himself.

***Question*:** This straightforward plan looks logical. Is there a downside?

***Answer*:** There are two issues Black must deal with:

1. Black's queen sits in the path of a potential pawn fork after White plays e4, threatening e4-e5.

2. Black's queen may later be vulnerable to either Nc4, or even Ne4, if Black's d-pawn is exchanged for White's e-pawn.

**9 Na3**

***Question*:** Why play the knight to the rim?

Isn't it better to let it remain centralized on the d2-square?

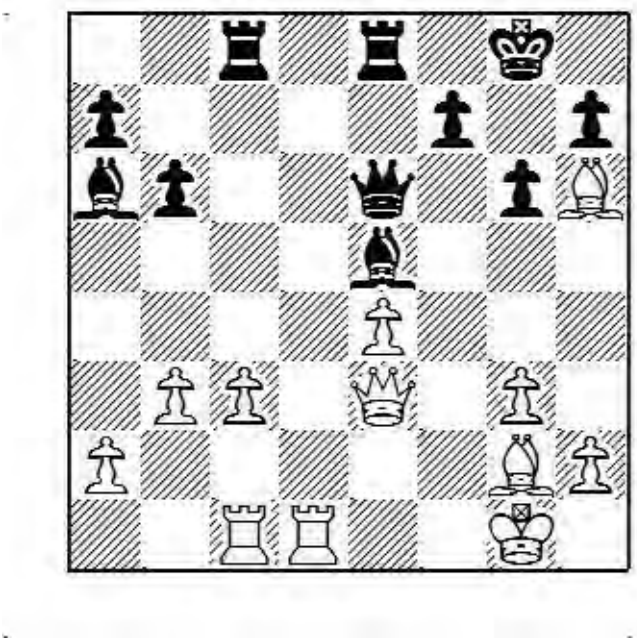
***Answer*:** All five games from my database had White playing Na3, which has two points:

1. Any … d4 ideas can be met with the tempo-gaining Nc4.

2. Playing the knight to the d2-square weakens White's most tender point in the Bird/Leningrad Dutch: the d3-square/pawn.

***Question*:** What is wrong with the immediate 9 e4?

***Answer*:** This is a new move in the position and actually *Houdini*'s first choice. There is probably nothing wrong with it. I think White simply wants to keep Black guessing by posting the knight to a3. Black can respond with 9 … dxe4 10 dxe4 e5 11 Nbd2 (threat: Nc4 and then capture the e5-pawn) 11 … Qd3 (as indicated, this is one problem with tossing in c2-c3 and then e2-e4: the d3-square is weakened) 12 Nxe5! (White takes on an inferior structure to increase piece activity) 12 … Nxe5 13 fxe5 Ng4 14 Nf3 Nxe5 15 Nxe5 Bxe5 16 Bh6 Re8 17 Qf2 Qc4 (covering both the c5- and f7-pawns) 18 b3 (overloading Black's queen) 18 … Qe6 19 Qxc5 b6 20 Qe3 Ba6 21 Rfd1 Rac8 22 Rac1 and White has won a pawn.



However, his e-pawn is isolated. Also, Black's position is weakness-free and he has super-active pieces. I would say Black comes close to full compensation here, but if given a choice, I would still take the pawn-up side.

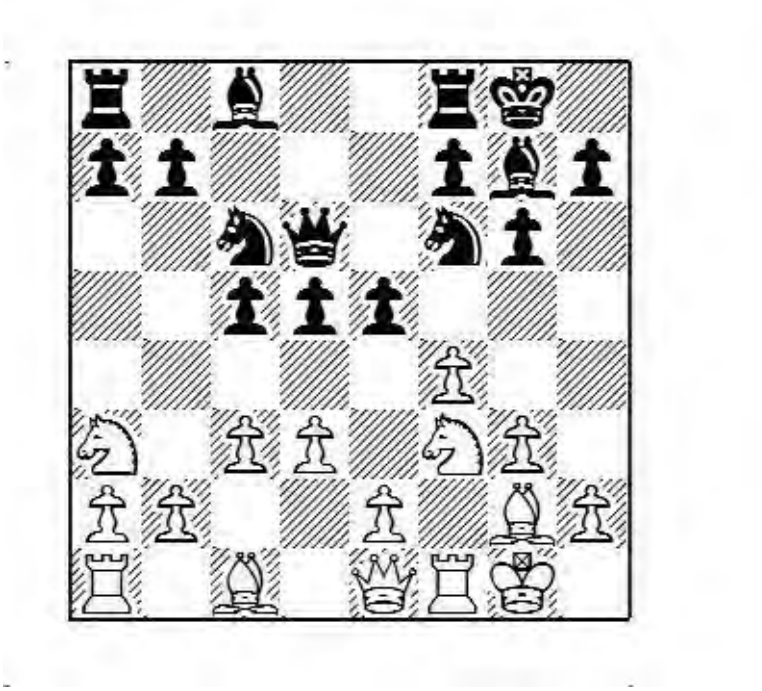
**9 … Bg4**

This move in the position is a very common idea against the Bird's in other lines. Black plays an early … Bg4 and … Bxf3 to enforce a quick … e7-e5 break. Of course, Black's freedom comes with consequences, as he or she hands us the bishop pair in the process. A look at other options:

a) With 9 … Bf5, Black clamps down on White's e4-break. I don't think this plan is such a great idea, since Black ends up wasting time with the bishop if White manages to play e2-e4 or h2-h3 and g3-g4 anyway. After 10 h3!, intending to gain time on the bishop with g3-g4, 10 … Rae8 (10 … e5 is met with 11 g4 e4 12 gxf5 exf3 13 Bxf3 when White picks up the bishop pair and exerts light square control, with an edge) 11 g4 (White achieved a useful attacking move for free) 11 … Bc8 12 e4 dxe4 13 dxe4 e5 14 Nc4 (this is okay, but even stronger is 14 fxe5! Nxe5 15 Nxe5 Qxe5 16 Bf4 Qe7 17 Nb5! Nxe4 18 Nd6! when White picks up the exchange for a pawn) 14 … Qe6 15 Ncxe5 Nxe5 16 Nxe5 b6 (White's extra pawn won't be so easy to maintain, since he drops the e4-pawn if his knight moves away from the e5-square) 17 g5! Nh5 18 Ng4 Bb7 19 e5 Bxg2 20 Kxg2 f6! 21 gxf6 Nxf6 22 Nxf6+ Bxf6 23 Qg3, here *Houdini* thinks Black gets full compensation for the pawn, but I don't believe it and prefer White, Z.Nemec-M.Haspl, Czechia 1997.

b) 9 … d4 allows White to gain a tempo with Nc4, but Black is counting on the knight being misplaced since it usually goes to the c2-square. After 10 Nc4 Qc7 11 cxd4 cxd4, the players agreed to a premature draw, F.Dushatskiy-C.Krause, Emmendingen 2012. I prefer White after 12 Bd2 Be6 13 Rc1 Bd5 14 b4 a6 15 Nce5 Qb6 16 Rc5 e6 17 Qf2, hitting the d4-pawn. If 17 … Nxb4 18 Qxd4 Nc6 19 Nxc6 Bxc6 20 Rc2, White looks slightly better, due to his central majority.

***Question*:** Why not simply play to open the e-file with 9 … e5?



***Answer*:** Yes, it's a good choice. Strangely enough, this thematic freeing break has never been played in this position.

c) After 9 … e5!? 10 Nb5 Qd7 (10 … Qe7 11 fxe5 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 allows White to seize the advantage as 12 … Qxe5 13 Bf4 Qh5 14 Nc7 wins material) 11 fxe5 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 Qxb5 13 Qf2 Re8 and now White can speculate with 14 Nxf7!? Kxf7 15 Bg5 Qa6! (not 15 … Qb6?? as 16 Bxd5+ Ke7 (16 … Be6 17 Bxf6 and if 17 … Bxd5? 18 Bd8+! Black's queen must play to a6) 17 e4 is a winning attack for White) 16 Qf4! Qe6 17 Qh4 h6 18 Bxf6 Bxf6 19 Bxd5! Kg7 20 Bxe6 Bxh4 21 Bxc8 Raxc8 22 gxh4 Rxe2 23 Rf2 Rce8, White's extra pawn won't be so easy to convert.

**10 e4**

Threat: e4-e5, winning a piece.

**10 … Bxf3!?**

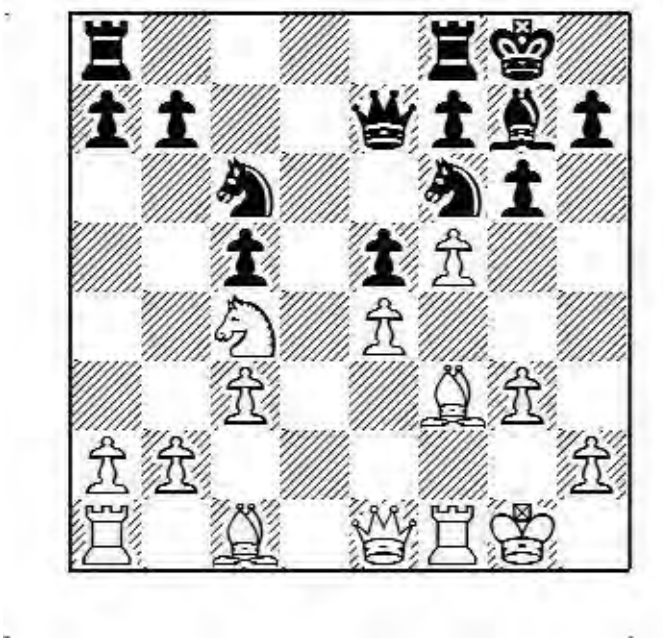
There are many voices in the bishop's head, yet none urge moderation. When we engage in a speculative sacrifice, we essentially agree to invest hard cash for an abstract ideal.

***Question*:** Doesn't this move lose material? Black's last move can harbour but a single implication: I plan to confuse my way to victory against my higher rated opponent.

***Answer*:** When hoping to complicate, we sometimes play like a person with a stomach ache: we only feel better when we purge ourselves of material. Black decides to seize opportunity by the hair with a speculative queen sacrifice is the logical continuation. However, the comps claim White stands slightly better at the end of the line. Black's resolution hardens and he refuses to back off with 10 … dxe4. A person can take a mild interest in the concept without being an advocate as after 11 dxe4 Qd3 12 e5 Nd7 13 Ng5 h6 14 Ne4, White has a pleasant space advantage.

**11 e5!**

A cute zwischenzug. Malaniuk seizes the chance to complicate the position against his lower rated opponent. Also strong is 11 Bxf3 dxe4 12 dxe4 e5 13 Nc4 and if 13 … Qe7, White can play the thematic 14 f5! idea.



The idea is to establish a big clamp on the kingside as well as to meet 14 … gxf5 with 15 Bg5! when White gets a strong initiative.

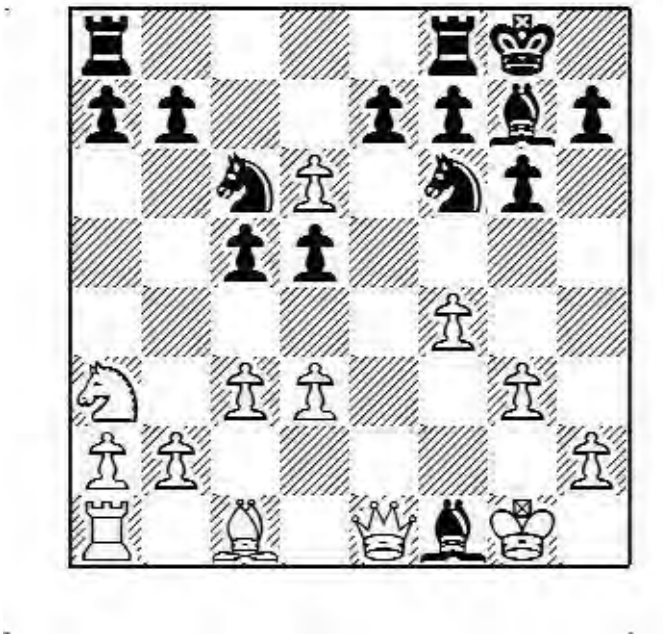
**11 … Bxg2**

The patterns morph and shift in bewildering array. Black has no choice since 11 … Qc7?? 12 exf6 Bxg2 13 fxg7 Bxf1 14 gxf8Q+ Rxf8 15 Qxf1 leaves Black a piece down.

**12 exd6**

The black queen's face seethes with crimson fury at the treachery of her light-squared bishop, who sold her out to the enemy. "Destiny frowns on the disloyal, " she shouts out to him, on the way to her execution.

**12 … Bxf1**



**13 Qxf1!**

White is faced with multiple bewildering permutations, yet only a single optimal

response. Malaniuk demonstrates wonderful strategic judgment as Black's light-squared bishop is more important than White's rook. The greedier 13 dxe7!? Bxd3 14 exf8Q+ Bxf8 15 Be3 Re8 16 Qd2 Bf5 leaves Black with only bishop, knight and pawn for the queen, yet he rules the light squares. I feel that Black stands no worse here.

**13 … exd6**

Black has enough material for the queen but White stands better since he may be able to generate kingside attacking chances associated with an early f4-f5.

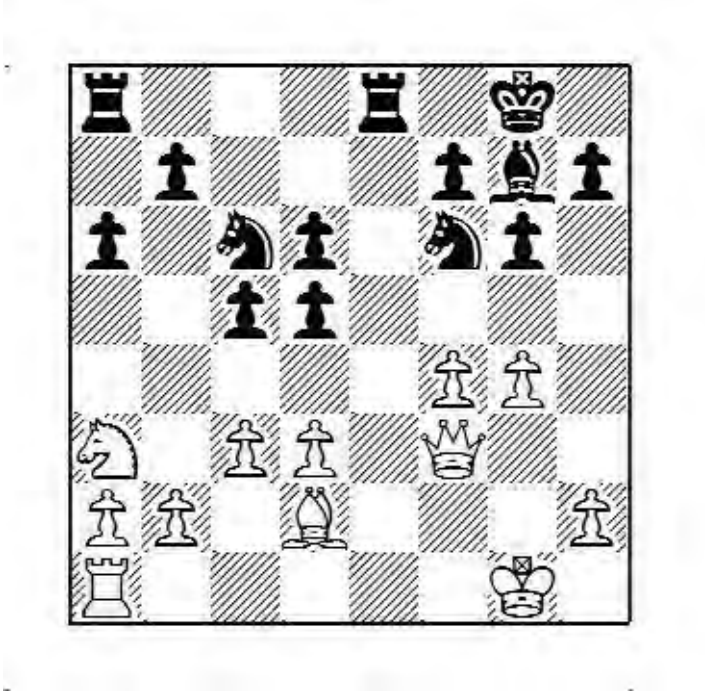
**14 Qf3**

Taking control over the g4-square. *Houdini* likes the immediate 14 f5!?.

**14 … a6**

Cutting off Nb5 tricks.

**15 Bd2 Rfe8 16 g4!**



Malaniuk seems to complicate the game 'methodically'. White menaces both a simple kingside pawn avalanche and also the no-nonsense g4-g5, followed by Qxd5.

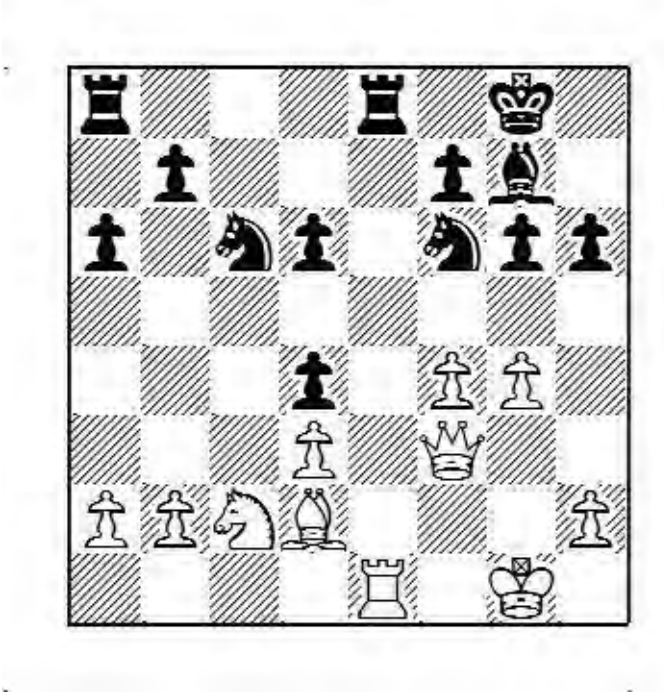
**16 … h6 17 Nc2**

Malaniuk seeks to bring his offside knight into play, spurning the riskier 17 g5!? hxg5 18 fxg5 Ne5 19 Qh1 Nfd7 20 Qxd5 Nb6 21 Qxb7 Rab8 22 Qg2 Nxd3 23 b3 d5 24 Rf1 which picks up a pawn at the cost of activating Black's pieces.

**17 … d4**

Simultaneously protecting his d-pawn, while denying White Ne3 ideas. However, the move creates further pawn weaknesses (doubled and isolated d-pawns) which Malaniuk later exploits.

**18 cxd4 cxd4 19 Re1**



By swapping rooks, White no longer has to contend with Black doubling rooks on the e-file with intention of infiltrating via the e2-square.

**19 … Rxe1+ 20 Bxe1 Re8 21 Bf2!**

Target: The weak d4-pawn.

**21 … Nd7**

Covering the d4-pawn at the cost of weakening the d5-square.

**22 Qd5 Nf6?!**

Black is almost equal after the correct 22 … Nc5! 23 f5 g5 24 Ne1 Be5.

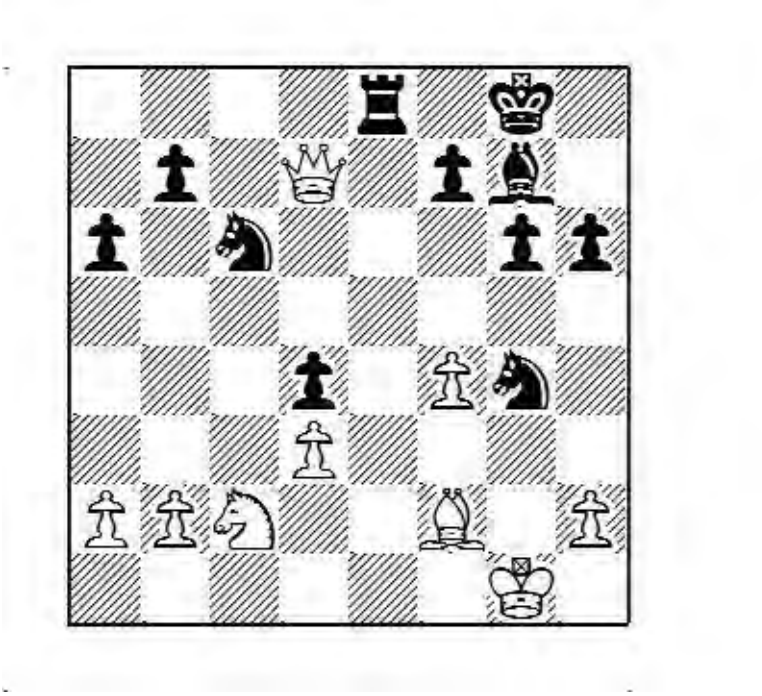
**23 Qxd6!?**

Malaniuk rejects the riskier 23 Qb3 Nxg4 24 Qxb7 Ne7 25 Bxd4 Bxd4+ 26 Nxd4 Nd5 27 Kg2! h5 28 h3 Ngf6 29 f5 g5 30 Qxa6 when Black must generate kingside threats, or else lose to White's two queenside passers. After 30 … Re3, I think Black still has some practical chances here.

**23 … Nxg4?!**

Now Black's minor pieces find themselves in endless travail, harassed unceasingly by White's queen. Black looks okay after the startling 23 … Bf8!! 24 Qc7 (not 24 Qxf6?? as 24 … Be7 traps the queen in broad daylight) 24 … Re7! 25 Qc8 Nd5 (with the sneaky threat of … Nb6! trapping White's queen) 26 g5 h5 27 Nxd4 Rc7 28 Qh3 Nxf4 29 Qf3 Nxd4 30 Bxd4 Rc1+ 31 Kf2 Rc2+ 32 Ke1 Bb4+ 33 Bc3 (33 Kd1?? loses to 33 … Rd2+ 34 Kc1 Nxd3+ 35 Kb1 Ne1! 36 Qb3 (the queen must guard the back rank mating threat) 36 … Rxd4 with a winning position for Black) 33 … Rxb2! 34 Bxb4 Rxb4 and I don't think Black stands worse, despite *Houdini*'s slightly favourable assessment for White.

**24 Qd7!**



The queen continues to poke and probe, teasing out small concessions. Black doesn't lose a piece, but instead, his position destabilizes.

**24 … Re2**

This move saves the piece but White has worked out how to destabilize Black's position further.

**25 Qxg4 Rxc2 26 Qc8+**

White's harassment can't so easily be dismissed as a hallucination. The point is that the b7-pawn falls, and this in turn eradicates the black knight's support.

**26 … Bf8 27 Qxb7**

White hopes to refurbish his otherwise flaccid-looking position with a new inflow of cash.

**27 … Nb4**

This move unleashes White's bishop. His last hope was 27 … a5. White makes progress with 28 Kf1 h5 29 a3 Kg7 30 Qb3 Rc1+ 31 Ke2 Be7 32 Qb5 Bf6 33 Qa4 Kh7 34 b4 (this passer will cost Black dearly) 34 … axb4 35 axb4 when b4-b5 is threatened and Black is unable to salvage the game.

**28 Bxd4**

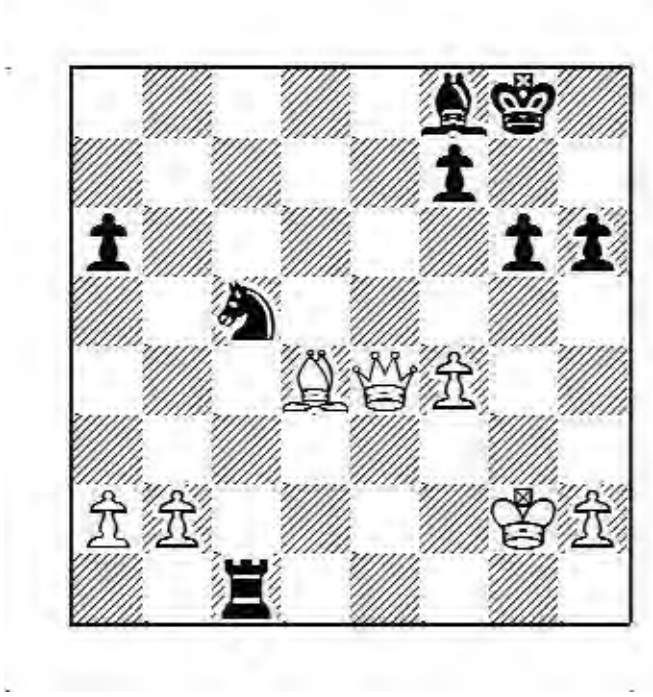
The old bishop rarely travels outside his prefecture. But when offered hard cash, he makes exceptions.

**28 … Nxd3 29 Qe4! Rc1+**

Also, 29 … Rd2 30 Be3 Nc5 31 Qa8 Rd1+ 32 Kg2 Ne6 33 Qxa6 gives White the win with two queenside passed pawns.

**30 Kg2 Nc5?**

Futile is 30 … Rd1 as 31 Bc3 Bg7 32 Qa4 Rb1 33 Qe8+ Bf8 34 Kf3 leaves Black hopelessly tangled.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black's last move was a

blunder in a lost position. White to play and force mate:

***Answer*:** On the h8-square lies Black's dark urgency.

**31 Qe5!**

The queen, having all her life prided herself on intellect over vulgar force, now comes to the conclusion that maybe vulgar force has its uses after all.

**31 … Rc2+**

Also futile is 31 … f6 32 Qxf6 32 … Rc2+ 33 Kh3 and White mates in four moves.

**32 Kh3 1-0**

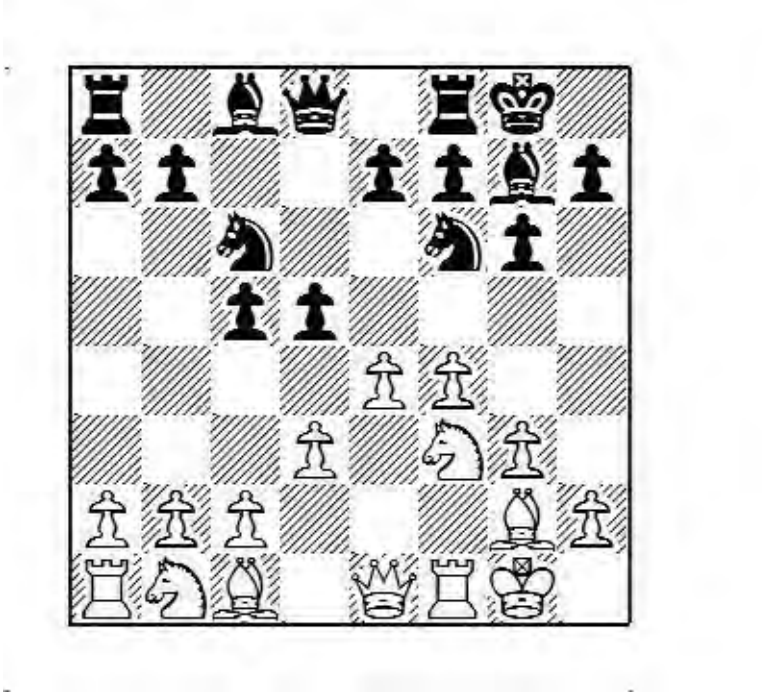
**Summary:** You don't have to play the immediate 8 e4. Instead, 8 c3 keeps Black guessing at our intentions.

*Game 11*
**A.Rodriguez Vila-D.Stamenkovic**
Villa Martelli Mercosur Cup, Argentina 2006

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 g3 Nc6 4 Bg2 g6 5 0-0 Bg7 6 d3 Nf6 7 Qe1 0-0**

Black allows White his e2-e4 break without trying to stop it. Later in the chapter, we will look at Black's … d4 plans.

**8 e4**



**8 … dxe4**

Black's main move.

***Question*:** Why does Black exchange pawns at this point?

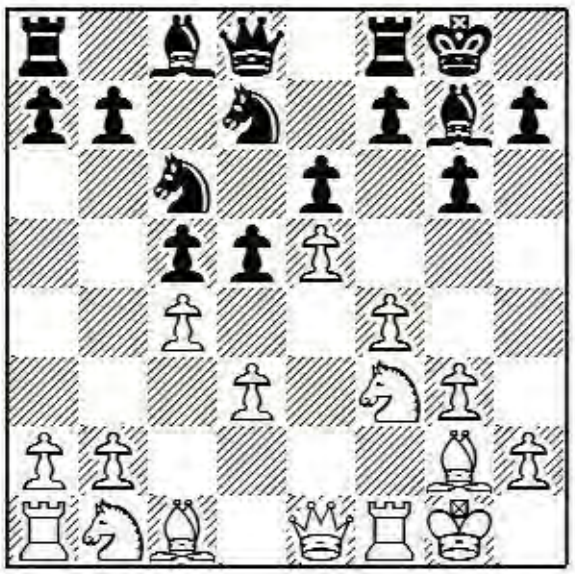
***Answer*:** Since White signalled his kingside attacking ambitions with 7 Qe1, Black's move follows the principle: *Counter in the centre when attacked on the wing.*

***Question*:** But it's just an exchange, isn't it, not a real central counter?

***Answer*:** Please see Black's next move!

Let's have a look at some Black alternatives:

a) 8 … e6 9 e5 (White grabs more space) 9 … Nd7 10 c4 (seeking to induce … d4, after which Black's pieces are denied use of the square, while White's knights get access to the e4-one):



a1) 10 … f6!? (Black decides upon a central counter, which activates his pieces at the cost of a slight structural weakness) 11 exf6 Qxf6 12 Nc3 Nb6 13 Be3! Nd4?! (better was 13 … Qe7 14 cxd5 Nxd5 15 Bf2 Nxc3 16 bxc3 b6 17 Ng5 with a minimal edge to White, who has the better structure, control over the e4-square and the more active pieces) 14 Rc1! Nxf3+ 15 Bxf3 d4 16 Ne4 Qe7 17 Bd2 e5 18 b4! and White achieved a strategically won game, V.Koziak-A.Krupko, Mukachevo 2013.

a2) 10 … Nb6 11 Be3 Qe7 12 Bf2! Rd8 (12 … dxc4 13 dxc4 Nxc4? 14 Qc1! b5 15 b3 and White wins the exchange with Bxc5 next) 13 Nbd2 and I prefer White's position, with extra space and potential for a kingside attack.

b) 8 … d4 turns the game into a Reversed g3-King's Indian structure, which in this instance is advantageous for White due to his mobile kingside pawns. The blocking of the centre is in his favour since he harbours kingside attacking ambitions. White has scored over 80% from this position. After 9 h3 (preventing … Ng4-e3 tricks) 9 … Ne8 10 Na3 Nb4 11 g4 e6, P.Nikac-M.Krivokapic, Cetinje 2008, I like White's kingside chances after 12 e5 which clears the e4-square for White's pieces.

c) 8 … b6 9 e5 Ne8 10 Nc3 Nc7 11 Qf2 f6 12 d4 cxd4 13 Nxd4 Nxe5 14 Qe1! Ba6 15 Rf2 Qd6! Black must sacrifice a piece (15 … Nf7 16 Nc6 Qd7 17 Nxe7+ Kh8 18 Nexd5 Rae8 19 Be3 wins a clean pawn for White) after 16 fxe5 fxe5 17 Rxf8+ Rxf8, J.Dietz-A.Feuerstack, Germany 2006. I think Black is just short of full compensation after 18 Nb3.

**9 dxe4 e5**

White will stand better with extra space and control over the e4-square if he is allowed unfettered access to an e4-e5 push. This move prepares to hand White hanging central pawns after the … exf4, gxf4 pawn trade.

***Question*:** Are these future central hanging

pawns a strength or a defensive burden for White?

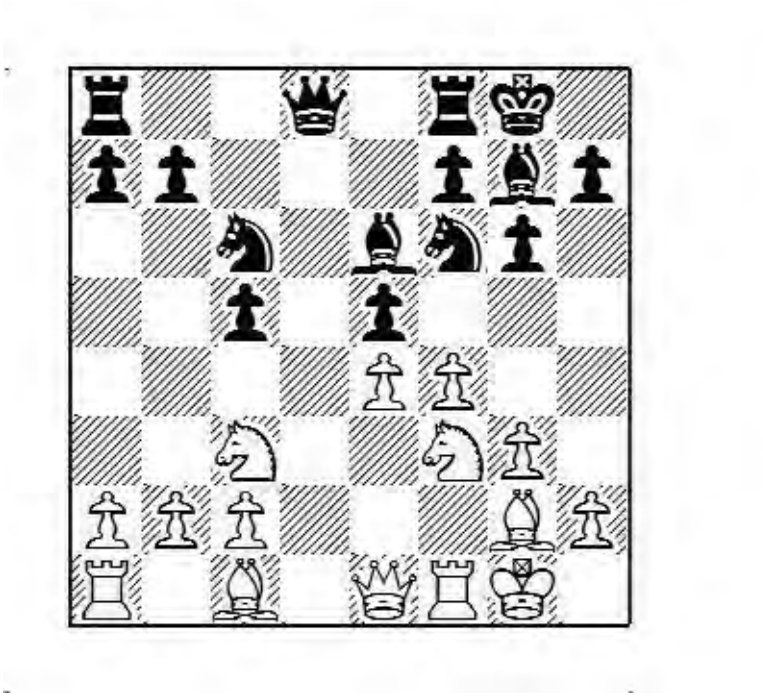
***Answer*:** Well, that depends on who you ask. White's central control attacking chances clearly increase with the hanging pawns, but they also may become vulnerable and prone to blockade. I would say the positions which arise are dynamically balanced and the player with superior understanding of the resulting structures and plans (that means us!) holds a large practical advantage.

The alternative 9 … Nd4 10 Nxd4 Qxd4+ (White will later gain time on Black's now exposed queen) 11 Kh1 e5 (otherwise White plays e4-e5 herself, with a clear edge) 12 Nc3 Qd8 13 f5 b6 14 Bg5 h6 15 Rd1 Qe8 16 Bxf6! (eliminating the only defender of the d5-square) 16 … Bxf6 17 Nd5 (threatening the f6-bishop and also the c7-fork) 17 … Bd8 18 Qe3 has Black's king in serious danger and White's knight calling the shots, A.Muzychuk-E.Danielian, Beijing 2012.

**10 Nc3**

10 c3?! allows Black to build up pressure on the e4-pawn after 10 … Re8 11 Nbd2 exf4 12 gxf4 Bf5 when White is overextended, R.Reynolds-M.Khachiyan, Agoura Hills 2009.

**10 … Be6**



Black refuses to take the f4-pawn and continues to develop calmly. Let's look at other alternatives:

Also, after 10 … Re8 11 fxe5! Nxe5 12 Nxe5 Rxe5 13 Bf4 Re8, F.Pancevski-M.Schekachikhin, Albena 2011, 14 Nb5 wins the exchange (White can also play for a safe strategic edge with 14 Rd1 Qa5 15 e5 a6 16 Rd6 Nh5 17 Nd5 Qxe1 18 Rxe1 Nxf4 19 gxf4) following 14 … Nh5 15 Rd1 Qb6 16 Nc7 Bg4 17 Nxa8 Rxa8 18 Rb1 Nxf4 19 gxf4 and I don't believe in Black's compensation for the exchange.

In Games 12 and 13, we examine Black's main line 10 … Nd4 while Game 14 covers 10 … exf4.

**11 f5!**

This pawn sacrifice seizes the initiative.

**11 … Bc4**

Black wisely declines the proffered pawn.

11 … gxf5?! looks like a bad idea for Black, P.Montigel-U.Rapp, Wuerttemberg 2000. White exerts tremendous pressure after 12 Bg5! Bc4 13 Rf2 f4 14 gxf4 Qe8 15 Bxf6! Bxf6 16 b3 Ba6 17 Nd5 Bd8 18 Qc3 exf4 19 Kh1 f6 20 Bh3 and his pieces dominate. Note that 20 … Qxe4?? is met with 21 Re1! Qxd5 22 Be6+ winning.

**12 Rf2 Ng4 13 Rd2**

This Rf2-d2 motif is a common manoeuvre in the Bird/Leningrad Dutch.

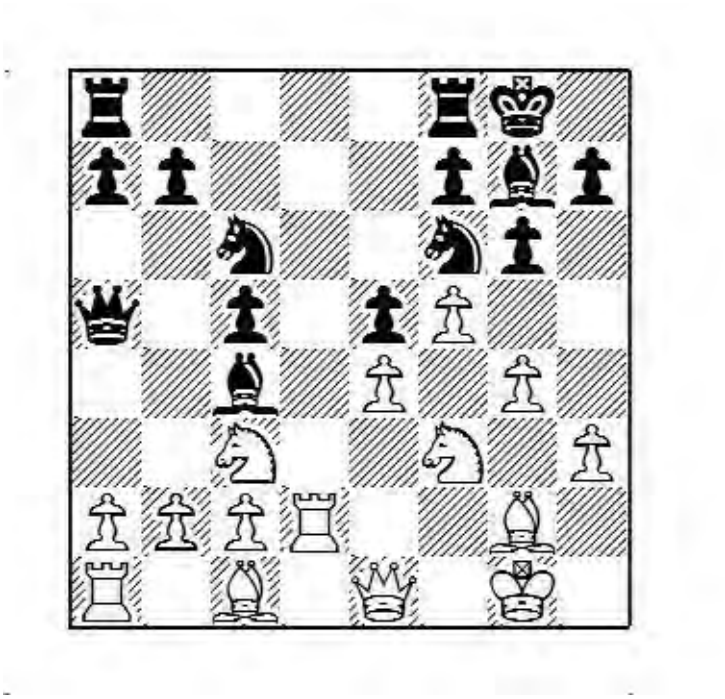
**13 … Qa5**

White also looks clearly better after 13 … Qc8 14 b3 Ba6 15 fxg6 fxg6 16 Nd5.

**14 h3**

Black's pieces have only been moving forward. Now he feels the recoil.

**14 … Nf6 15 g4**



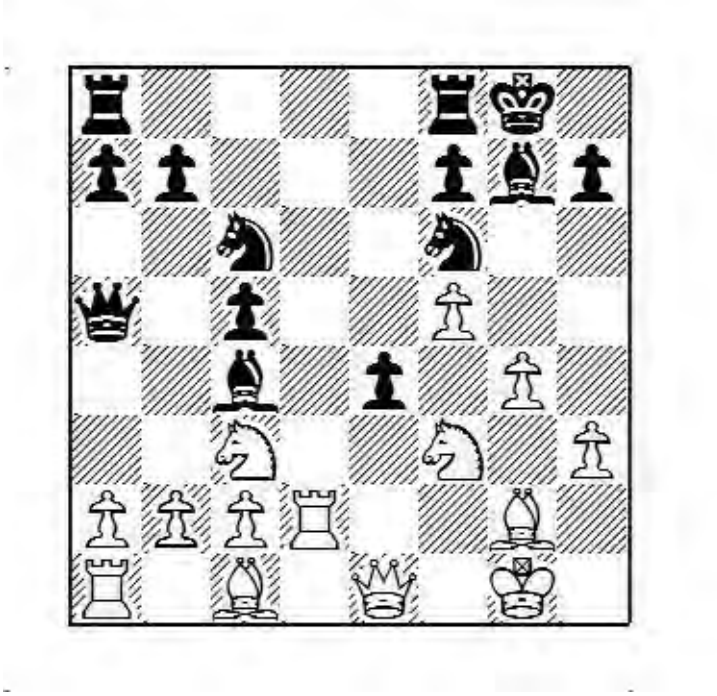
Strategic threat: g4-g5 and f5-f6, burying Black's g7-bishop. One glance tells us that White has a dangerous kingside buildup, while Black's queenside or central counterplay has yet to gel into anything substantial.

**15 … h6?!**

Preventing White's threat at the cost of weakening the kingside. There is a fine line between the practice of patience - which is a virtue - and just sitting around, waiting for something to happen - which isn't. The problem with the move is its inherent passivity, which leaves Black without counterplay in the coming moves.

***Question*:** Can't Black try for a classical central counter

to White's kingside attack with 15 … gxf5 16 exf5 e4?



***Answer*:** On the surface, it appears as if Black continues in bland disregard to his opponent's offensive capability. But I think your suggestion is the principled continuation. Black takes advantage of White's queen on the e-file to strike in the centre. Even though White's position shimmers with hopeful possibilities, ultimately they are transient and out of his grasp. I couldn't find a path to a White advantage from this position. For example:

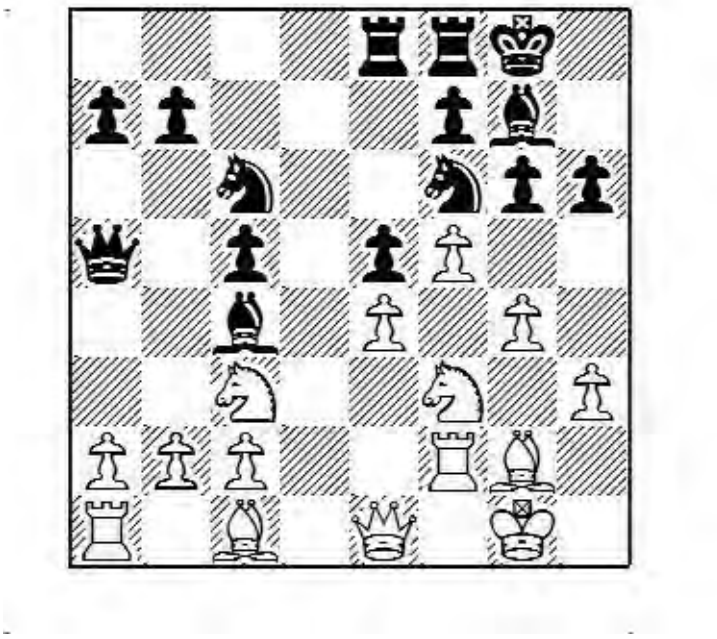
a) 17 Nxe4 Rfe8 18 Nfg5 Nxe4 19 Nxe4 Bd5! 20 c3 (20 f6 Bxe4 21 Bxe4 Bxf6 22 c3 Re7 23 Re2 Rae8 24 Bf4 Qa4 25 Bxc6 Rxe2 26 Qxe2 Qxc6 27 Qf2 Qd5 28 Rf1 b6 29 Bh6 Bg7 30 Qd2 Qxd2 31 Bxd2 reaches a drawn ending) 20 … Nd4! 21 b4! Qb6 22 bxc5 Qa5 23 Qf2 Nf3+! 24 Bxf3 Bxe4 and Black will win back his material with equality.

b) 17 Ng5 Rfe8 18 Ngxe4 Nxe4 19 Nxe4 Bd5! (if not for this anomaly, Black would indeed be busted) and 20 c3 Nd4! transposes back to the 17 Nxe4 line above.

**16 Rf2**

The rook goes about unobtrusively pursuing his kingside interests.

**16 … Rae8**



The comp doesn't like his move, but even after other suggestions, White eventually takes control over the position.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White has access to a tactical idea

which either wins a pawn, or swaps off Black's best piece, his

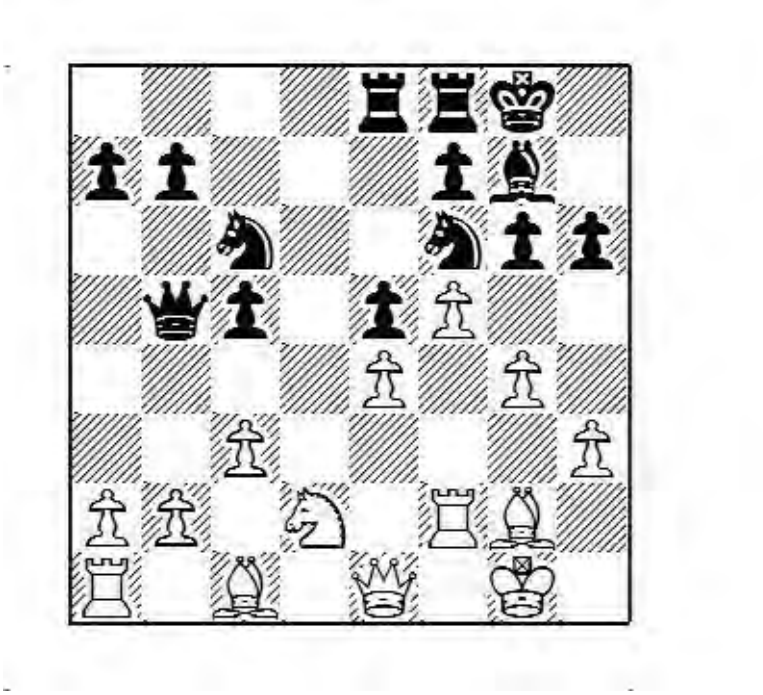
light-squared bishop, for a knight. What would you play here?

***Answer*:** Double attack.

**17 Nd2! Bb5**

This allows White bishop pair and light square domination. The trouble is 17 … Ba6? drops a pawn to 18 Nb3! Qb4 19 a3 Qb6 and White initiates the double attack with 20 Na4, picking off a pawn, plus the light-squared bishop after 20 … Qc7 21 Naxc5.

**18 Nxb5 Qxb5 19 c3**



It's critical that we find a way to sort out the position's constitutive elements, so a schematic chart is necessary to flesh out the collection of interrelated parts:

1. White has a dangerous kingside space advantage.

2. Number one automatically means that Black's king may be unsafe.

3. White owns the bishop pair.

4. White controls the light squares, enhanced by the fact that Black is missing his light-squared bishop.

5. Black has a bad bishop, with many of his pawns fixed on the same colour as it.

6. Black has no obvious route to counterplay.

Conclusion: Despite *Houdini's* near-even misassessment, Black is close to strategically busted, if not already so.

**19 … Qa5?!**

He had to get the queen back into play with 19 … Qd3.

**20 Nb3! Qb5 21 Bf1! Qb6**

Parrying with 21 … c4 allows 22 Nd2 Na5 23 b4, picking off the c4-pawn.

**22 g5**

White goes for a direct assault on Black's king, which isn't bad, but even stronger is 22 fxg6! fxg6 23 Be3 and if Black tries a desperado piece sacrifice with 23 … Nd4, White consolidates after 24 cxd4 exd4 25 Bd2 Nxe4 26 Rxf8+ Bxf8 27 Bg2.

**22 … hxg5 23 Bxg5 gxf5!?**

Now Black risks getting mated. Maybe he should try 23 … Ne7 24 Bc4 gxf5 25 exf5 Ned5 26 Bxf6! (deflecting away the intended … Nf4) 26 … Nxf6 27 Rg2 Kh8 28 Qh4+ Nh7 29 Rd1 Bf6 30 Qh5 Re7 31 Kh1 e4 32 Rdg1 e3 33 Bxf7! (deflection- neither black rook is able to capture, due to the g8-mating threat) 33 … Qc6 34 Be6 and White has a winning position.

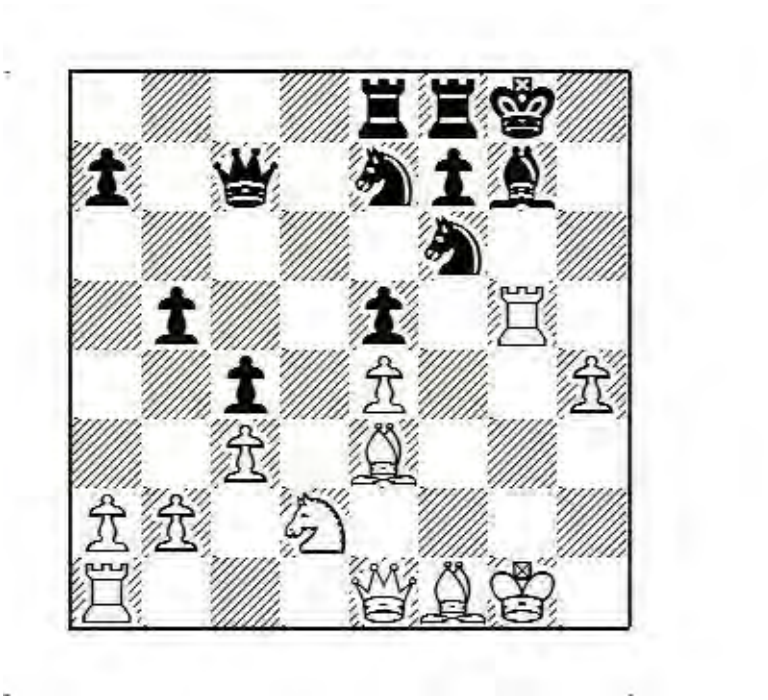
**24 Rxf5**

*Houdini's* suggestion of 24 exf5 allows Black to complicate with 24 … e4 25 Bxf6 Bxf6 26 Rg2+ Kh7 27 Qe2 (threatening mate on the move) 27 … c4+ 28 Kh1 Kh6 29 Nd2 Ne5 30 Nxe4 Rg8 and White has a winning position even here.

**24 … c4+?!**

Better was 24 … Ne7 25 Rf2 Ng6.

**25 Be3 Qc7 26 Nd2 Ne7 27 Rg5 b5 28 h4!**



Discouraging … Ne7-g6 with the threat of h4-h5. Also tempting was 28 a4! a6 29 axb5 axb5 30 Ra7 Qd6 31 Rb7 when 31 … Rb8 (31 … Qc6?? hangs a piece to 32 Rb6) 32 Rxe7! Qxe7 33 Qh4 Qe6 34 Rxg7+! Kxg7 35 Bh6+ Kh8 (the only move) 36 Bxf8+ Nh7 37 Bc5 when White has a winning position.

**28 … Nh7 29 Rg2 Kh8 30 a4!**

This move opens the a-file, activating White's only inactive piece, his a1-rook.

**30 … a6 31 axb5 axb5 32 h5**

Cutting off … Ng6 ideas.

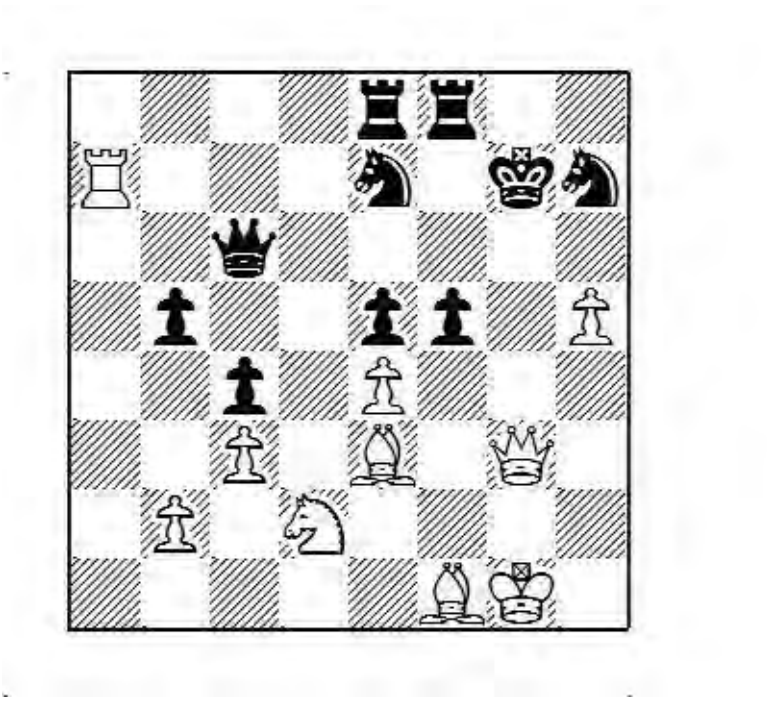
**32 … f5!**

Black must generate some kind of counterplay, or else risk a slow strategic death.

**33 Ra7 Qc6 34 Rxg7!?**

This really isn't White's best move, from an empirical standpoint, but keep in mind: when it comes to concocting plans, outcome is of infinitely greater value than intent. *Houdini* isn't impressed by this speculative exchange sacrifice. From a practical standpoint, it makes Black's defence very difficult to coordinate, since the dark-squared bishop was Black's best defender. The more prosaic 34 Qg3! Rg8 35 exf5 Bf6 36 Qf3 Qxf3 37 Nxf3 maintains an edge for White in the ending.

**34 … Kxg7 35 Qg3+**



The queen's heart swims in emotions she finds difficult to define, as she demurely approaches Black's king.

***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Black hasn't quite reached the abandon-all-hope stage.

He has a choice of three king moves: … Kh8, … Kf7 and … Kf6.

He may survive two of them. One loses. Pick one.

**35 … Kf7?**

As it turns out, the most logical-looking one is the only one which loses! In time pressure, our reality compresses into 64 squares. Black's last move, a blunder, allows White to unleash a devastating combination. Black survives after:

a) 35 … Kh8! 36 Qxe5+ Qf6 37 Qxb5 Rg8+ 38 Kf2 with a colossal mess rated dead even by the comps.

b) Black is also okay after 35 … Kf6! 36 Qh4+ Kf7 37 exf5 Nf6 with a completely unclear position, also assessed by the comps at 0.00.

**36 Nxc4!!**

Overloaded defender/pin/zwischenzug/knight fork. White continues to brazenly order expensive items and then have the nerve to charge them to Black's account.

**36 … Rg8**

Accepting the sacrifice after 36 … bxc4 37 Bxc4+ Kf6 (Black's queen is overloaded as 37 … Qxc4 results in Black's pinned e7-knight allowing 38 Qg6 mate!) 38 Ra6! (this pin shot wins Black's queen) 38 … Qxa6 and the 39 Qh4+! zwischenzug forces a win after 39 … Kg7 40 Bxa6.

**37 Nxe5+ Kf8 38 Ng6+! Kf7**

Black's king continues to resist with the manic energy of the doomed. He holds himself in heroic opposition to overwhelming forces, but only for a few moves before the inevitable. Instead, 38 … Nxg6 39 Bh6+! wins on the spot.

**39 exf5 Qe4 40 Bg2**

Activating the final attacker.

**40 … Qb1+**

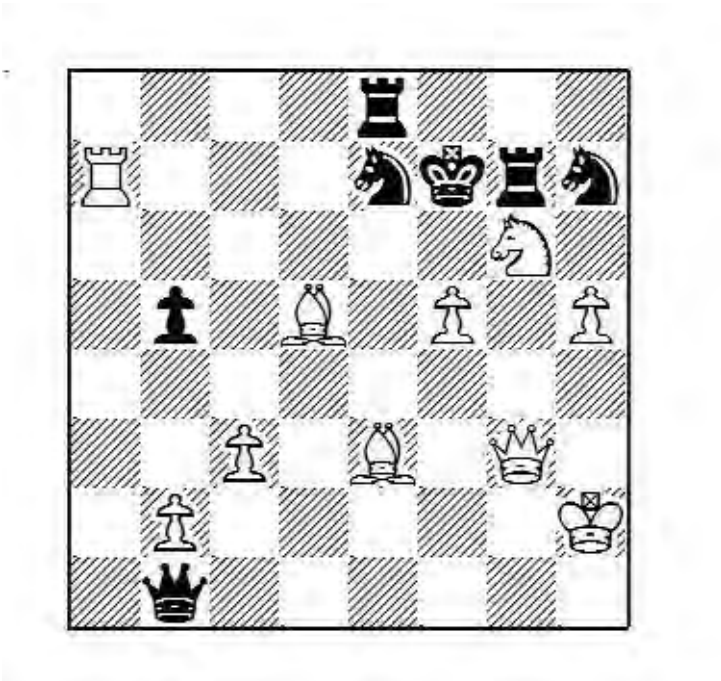
40 … Qxf5 allows an unbelievably sweet mate after 41 Nh8+!! when Black's rebellion has run its course. The position bristles with mathematical anomalies and oddities:

a) 41 … Rxh8 42 Bd5+! Kf6 (42 … Qxd5 43 Qg6+ Kf8 44 Bh6 mate!) 43 Bd4+ and mate next move.

b) 41 … Kf6 42 Bd4+ Ke6 43 Ra6+ forces mate in two moves.

c) 41 … Kf8 42 Bh6+ Rg7 43 Qxg7 mates again.

**41 Kh2 Rg7 42 Bd5+ 1-0**

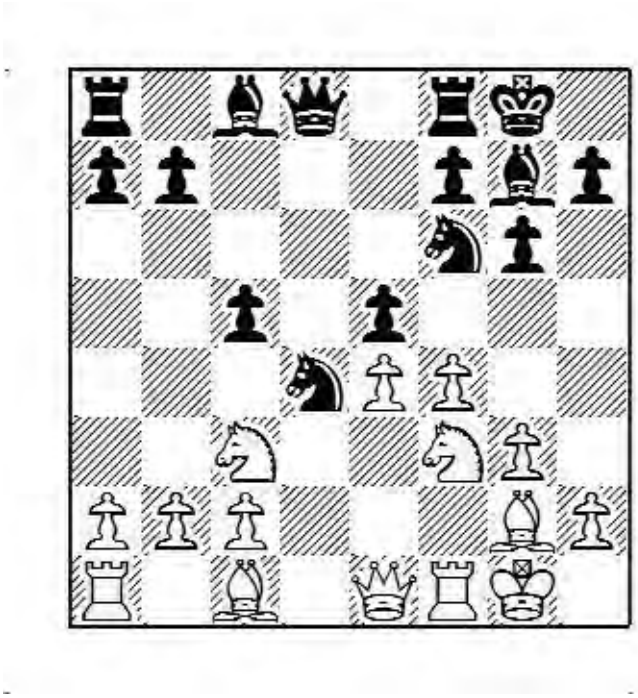


There is no point continuing as after 42 … Kf6 43 Qe5 is mate!

**Summary:** Prepare for a potential hanging pawns position after 9 … e5. Although, as in this game, it doesn't always come out that way if Black delays … exf4 for too long.

*Game 12*
**D.Melnikov-V.Kazakovskiy**
Chigorin Memorial, St Petersburg 2013

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 c5 7 Qe1 Nc6 8 e4 dxe4 9 dxe4 e5 10 Nc3 Nd4**



Black's main line, where his knight counterattacks our soft spot, the c2-pawn.

**11 Qd2**

Let's look at the alternatives:

a) 11 fxe5 Ng4 (11 … Nxc2?! 12 Qf2 Nxa1 13 exf6 Qxf6 14 Bf4 and White also picks up the errant a1-knight, gaining two powerful minor pieces for a rook and pawn, with a clear advantage) 12 Nxd4 Qxd4+ 13 Kh1 Be6 14 h3 Nxe5 15 Nd5 with approximately balanced chances, A.Jaworowski-R.Rizzo, correspondence 2002.

b) 11 Nxd4 exd4 (11 … cxd4 12 fxe5 Ng4 (also, 12 … dxc3 13 exf6 Bxf6 14 b3 is equal) 13 Nd5 Nxe5 14 Bf4 gives balanced chances) 12 Na4! Nd7 and Black threatens … b5, trapping White's knight, E.Jakubiec-Z.Borosova, Orlova 2011. Now White can try 13 e5 Rb8 14 b3 with an even position.

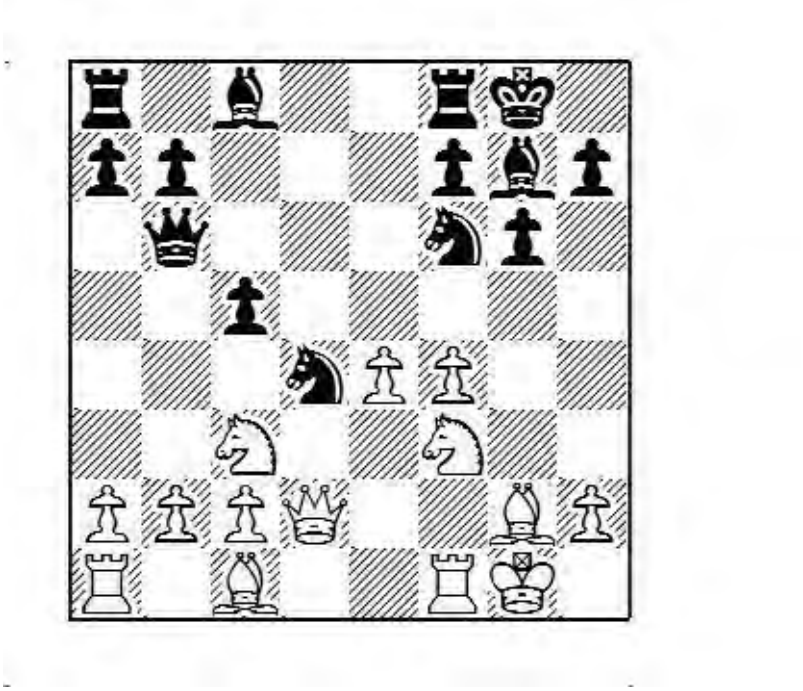
c) We will look at 11 Rf2 in Game 13.

**11 … exf4**

Black decides to hand White the hanging pawns imbalance.

Trading with 11 … Nxf3+ 12 Rxf3 Qd4+ 13 Kh1 c4 (Black may be better off simplifying with 13 … Qxd2 14 Bxd2 b6) 14 Qe1 exf4!? (Black may have been better off avoiding this imbalance. White's hanging pawns look more a strength than a weakness here) 15 gxf4 Bg4?! (15 … Qb6 is an improvement, although I still prefer White here) 16 Rg3 leaves White dominating the centre, with a clear advantage in D.Melnikov-A.Giri, St Petersburg 2007, as both e4-e5 and Be3 are in the air.

**12 gxf4 Qb6?!**



The queen's eyes gleam with vindictive mirth. This move is new in the position, but not an improvement.

***Question*:** What is Black's intention?

***Answer*:** Black takes indirect aim at both the b2-pawn and White's king, while supporting the d4-knight and clearing the path for … Rd8. However, if we examine on a deeper level, we are struck by the move's inherent incongruities: on the b6-square, Black's queen is vulnerable to e4-e5 and Nd5 ideas. Black has sounder choices:

a) 12 … Ng4! should equalize, H.Danielsen-M.Kopylov, Germany 1999. Now White should play 13 e5! (not 13 h3?! Nxf3+ 14 Rxf3 Bd4+ 15 Kh1 Qh4 16 Nd1 b6! when White is under serious pressure) 13 … Be6 14 h3 Nh6 15 Ne4 Nxf3+ 16 Rxf3 b6 17 Rd3 with a balanced position.

b) 12 … Bg4 13 e5 Nh5 14 Nxd4 cxd4 15 Nd5 (15 Nb5 f6 16 Qxd4 fxe5 17 fxe5 Qxd4+ 18 Nxd4 Bxe5 19 c3 Rxf1+ 20 Bxf1 Nf4 21 Bxf4 Bxf4 22 Re1 leaves Black a shade better due to the bishop pair) 15 … Rc8 16 Qxd4 Rxc2, F.Bernabe Duran-F.Pariente Lopez, Malaga 1995. I prefer White's position after 17 Bd2, intending to challenge with Rac1 next.

**13 e5**

The logical continuation. We glimpse the microcosmic forerunner of White's intent: he seeks to chase away the defender of the d5-square.

**13 … Rd8**

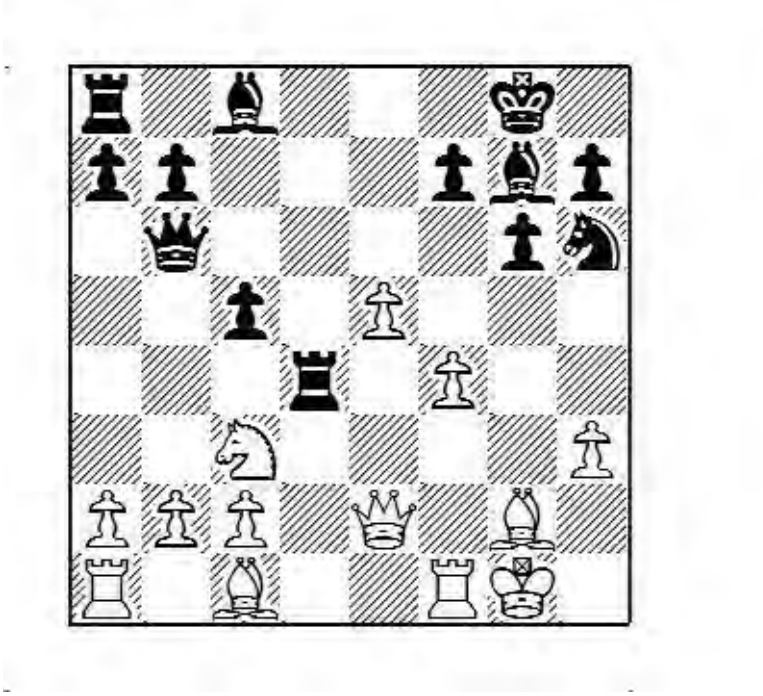
Threatening a discovered attack cheapo.

**14 Nxd4 Rxd4**

***Question*:** Why not chase away the knight with 14 … cxd4?

***Answer*:** Your suggestion walks into a tactic after 15 Na4!, attacking the queen, when White wins a piece next move with exf6.

**15 Qe2 Ng4 16 h3 Nh6**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black is hampered by an obstruction, which allows White to take advantage of the geometry to win material. How?

**17 Be3!**

***Answer*:** Double attack. White threatens Bxd4, and if the rook moves, then Na4 picks off the c5-pawn.

**17 … Qxb2**

Played with the philosophy: when we are unable to make the most of a situation, then the next best thing is to attempt to undo the worst of it. Black, seizing upon a desperate extremity, decides to sacrifice an exchange for a pawn:

a) 17 … Rd8 hands over a pawn. Now simplest is 18 Na4 picking off the c5-pawn on the next move.

***Question*:** But then can't Black hold on to his pawn with 18 … Qb4?

***Answer*:** White has a winning position after 19 Nxc5 Qxb2 20 Rab1 and the b7-pawn falls. If 20 … Qxa2??, 21 Ra1 Qb2 22 Ne4! (the threat is Rfb1 when White's thuggish forces search for new methods of offending Black's queen) and 22 … Qb4 fails to save the queen after 23 Bc5 (the distasteful c5-nuisance returns, to the queen's deep chagrin) 23 … Qb2 24 Rfb1, winning. Everyone knows that the rook's sudden whimsies sometimes lead to people's deaths. "Undoubtedly, my lifelong trait of always being right about everything is the reason for my diminishing social status in Her Majesty's eyes," laments White's rook.

b) 17 … Be6 is rather tricky and White has to exercise care with 18 Bxd4 cxd4 19 Nd5 Bxd5 20 Bxd5 Nf5 21 Rf2! Qxb2 22 Re1 Ne3 23 Bb3 Qc3 24 Qd2! Qc5 and White will

unravel after 25 c3 Nf5 26 cxd4 Nxd4 27 Qe3.

**18 Bxd4 cxd4 19 Nd5 Bf5 20 Ne7+**

A practical decision. White decides to eliminate the pesky bishop, rather than go for the equally promising line 20 Rfb1 Qxc2 21 Qxc2 Bxc2 22 Rxb7 d3 23 Rd7 Rb8 24 Ne7+ Kh8 25 Nc6 Re8 26 Nb4 when Black's d3-pawn falls and he is busted.

**20 … Kh8 21 Nxf5 Nxf5 22 Rfb1**

Black's queen begins to suspect that the dashing b1-rook's affections may not be as genuine as she first imagined. The newly opened b-file is White's regulatory apparatus which insures that … Qxb2 comes at a steep cost for Black.

**22 … Qc3 23 Qd3!**

Challenging Black's most active piece. The queen tosses her sister the briefest of malicious glances as she passes by.

**23 … Bh6**

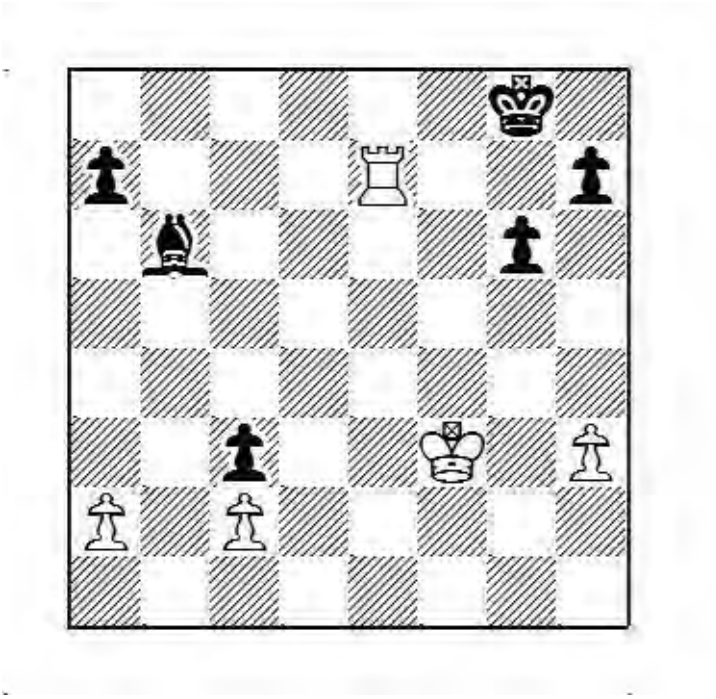
Black seeks counterplay by going after the base of White's central pawn chain.

**24 Qxc3 dxc3**

By blocking the c-file from … Rc8, the ruffles which afflicted White's structure in the past have been somewhat smoothed away.

**25 Rxb7 Bxf4 26 Be4**

In cases of conflicting impulses, White veers on the side of caution. He can also go for 26 Rxf7 Re8 27 Be4 Be3+ 28 Kg2 Rxe5 29 Bxf5 Kg8 30 Rc7 Rxf5 31 Re1 Rf2+ 32 Kg3 Bf4+ 33 Kxf2 Bxc7 34 Re7 Bb6+ 35 Kf3 and White wins.



Black's king is cut off and White will, though zugzwang, pick off either Black's a- or c-pawn.

***Question*:** I'm not so certain I would win

this over the board. Can you show the technique?

***Answer*:** A sample of the winning technique: 35 … Kh8 36 Ke4 Kg8 37 Rb7 Kh8 38 Rb8+ Kg7 39 Rc8 Ba5 40 Rc5 and Black drops a queenside pawn, giving White the passer he needs to secure the win.

**26 … Ng3 27 Bd3 Bxe5 28 Rxf7 Nh5 29 Re1**

Planning to double rooks on the seventh rank, if possible.

**29 … Bd4+ 30 Kg2 Bc5**

Black desperately attempts to cut off the impending Re1-e7.

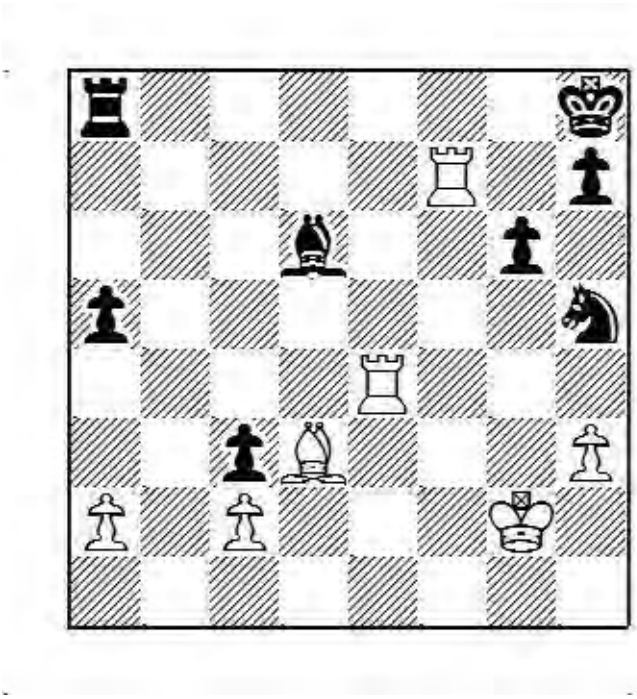
**31 Re5 Bd6**

The bishop crosses himself so quickly, that he isn't sure it counted in God's eyes.

**32 Re4**

Guarding against … Nf4+ and … Nxd3.

**32 … a5**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Black's position passed the level of 'unpleasant' and threatens to enter 'awful' territory. This isn't a position which requires sustained analytical inquiry to see that Black is busted. We must deal with a few remaining loose threads to solve the equation. Come up with a clear winning plan for White:

***Answer*:**

Step 1: Black can no longer prevent penetration to the seventh rank.

**33 Rd4 Be5 34 Rdd7**

Inch by inch, the defence grudgingly weakens.

**34 … Nf6**

Step 2: Attack and win the a5-pawn, after which resistance is, to quote Borg the Star Trek villain, “futile.”

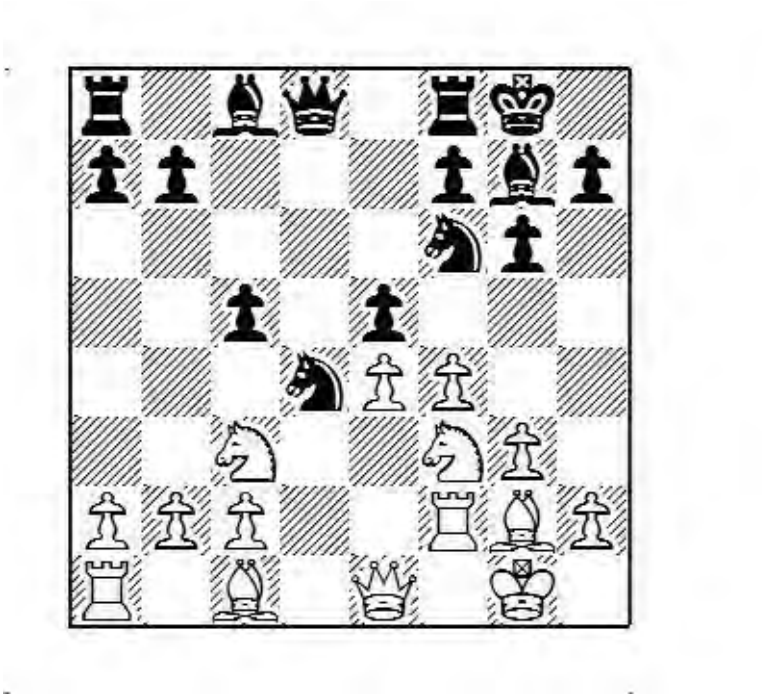
**35 Ra7 1-0**

Black notes to his distress, untoward activity in his now rapidly depleted back account. The a-pawn falls.

**Summary:** I believe the hanging pawns in this line are more a strength than a burden for White.

*Game 13*
**M.Heidrich-W.Wernert**
Germany 2004

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 Nf6 5 d3 0-0 6 0-0 c5 7 Qe1 Nc6 8 e4 dxe4 9 dxe4 e5 10 Nc3 Nd4 11 Rf2**



Now White threatens Nxe5. White’s queen remains on e1 to offer the e4-pawn added support, allowing the rook to cover the c2-pawn.

***Question*:** But doesn’t this allow Black a tempo gain with … Ng4 next?

***Answer*:** It isn’t really a tempo gain as after White moves his rook to d2, he will regain the tempo with h2-h3, ejecting the g4-intruder.

**11 … Ng4**

Attacking the rook while covering the e5-pawn.

**12 Rd2**

The rook’s only square, but one safe square is all an attacked piece requires to deal with the threat.

**12 … exf4**

This move was played in all four games in my database. This move settled the White threat of h2-h3, followed by Nxe5.

**13 gxf4 Nxf3+**

Let's examine the alternatives:

a) 13 … Re8 (a logical move, now that White's queen sits on e1) 14 h3:

a1) 14 … Nf6?!, X.Penas Hernandez-J.Fluvia Poyatos, Paretana 1999. I like White's position after 15 Nxd4 cxd4 16 Qf2 Nh5 17 e5! f6 18 Rxd4 Qe7 19 exf6 Qxf6 20 Rd1 when I'm not so sure about Black's full compensation for the pawn, since White's pieces remain quite active.

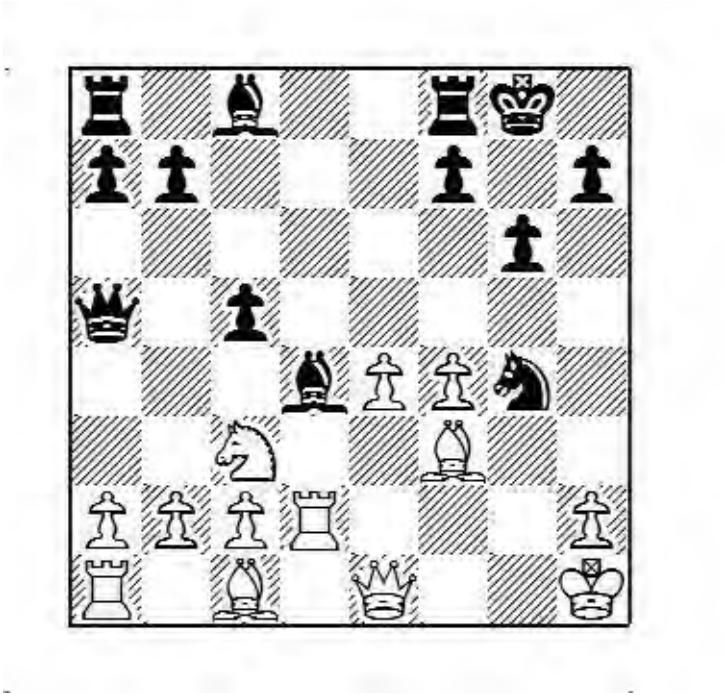
a2) Correct was 14 … Nxf3+ 15 Bxf3 Bd4+ 16 Kf1! Nf6 17 Kg2 Bxc3 18 bxc3 Qa5 19 Re2 Be6. Now White can try 20 c4!? Qxe1 21 Rxe1 Bxc4 22 Bb2 as White's bishop pair in the open position and powerful pawn centre offer him full compensation for the pawn in the ending.

b) 13 … Qa5, M.Heidrich-P.Haba, Germany 2006. *Houdini* works this position out to a draw after 14 e5 Nf5 15 Nd5 c4 16 h3 Qc5+ 17 Kh1 Nge3 18 Qf2 Be6 19 Ng5 Bxd5 20 Rxd5 Ng3+! 21 Kg1 (21 Kh2?? hangs the queen to 21 … Ng4+ 22 hxg4 Qxf2) 21 … Ne2+ 22 Kh1 Ng3+ with perpetual check.

**14 Bxf3 Bd4+**

Pretty much forced, since 14 … Qa5 15 Rg2 h5 16 h3 Nh6 17 f5! favours White.

**15 Kh1 Qa5**



***Question*:** Can Black get away with handing over his powerful dark-squared

bishop to inflict damage upon White's structure with 15 … Bxc3 16 bxc3?

***Answer*:** *Houdini* seems to think so, but comps are notoriously unruffled about allowing an opponent attacking chances. We humans may get quite nervous about Black's position. The only game in the database with this plan went 16 … Qf6, S.Kusnetsov-A.Vovk, Alushta 2006. At this point, perhaps White should go for 17 Rd3! (covering against … Ne5 tricks) 17 … c4 (a concession, which does allow … Ne5 next, but at the cost of weakening the d4-square and the dark squares further) 18 Rd1 Re8 19 a4 when the position is pretty unclear. I still prefer White, despite his structural weaknesses, since his grip on the dark squares remains strong.

**16 Rg2**

Challenging the g4-intruder.

**16 … Bxc3?!**

I question this risky decision, to hand over the precious dark-squared bishop in return for structure, mainly as White is allowed to retain queens on the board, further enhancing his attacking chances along the newly weakened dark squares. White also retains an advantage after the meek 16 … Nf6 17 Bd2 though.

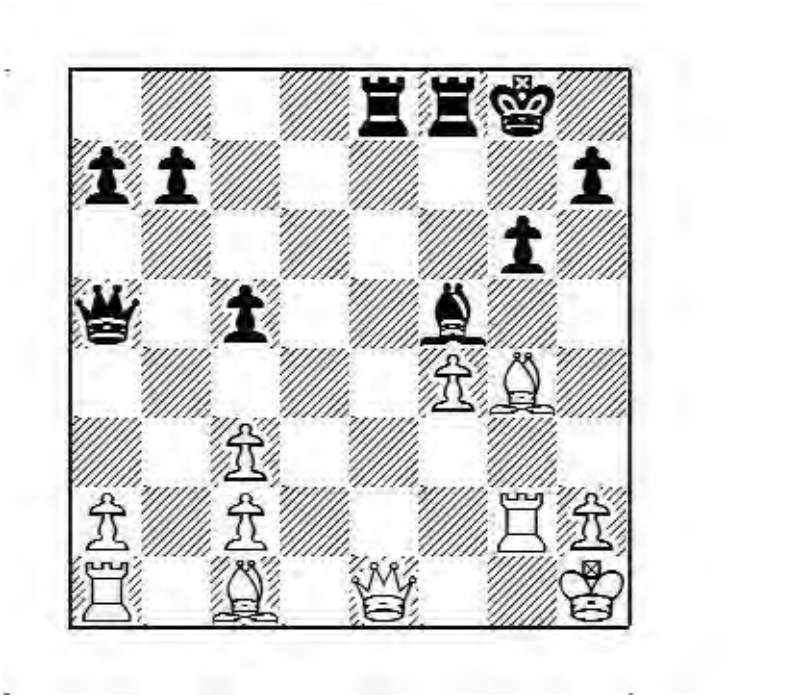
**17 bxc3 f5!?**

Black sacrifices a piece, not liking the looks of 17 … Nf6 18 f5 Re8 19 Re2 c4 20 e5 Nd5 21 e6 when Black's king gets exposed.

**18 exf5 Bxf5**

Most definitely not18 … gxf5?? as 19 Rxg4+! fxg4 20 Bd5+ Kg7 21 Qe7+ forces mate in two moves.

**19 Bxg4 Rae8**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** This looks pretty scary for White.

Black threatens both the queen and the c3-pawn (if the queen moves away from its defence) and also … Be4. What would you play here?

***Answer*:** Defensive move.

**20 Re2!**

Black has no time to capture g4, since his e8-rook hangs. This resource may have been overlooked by Black.

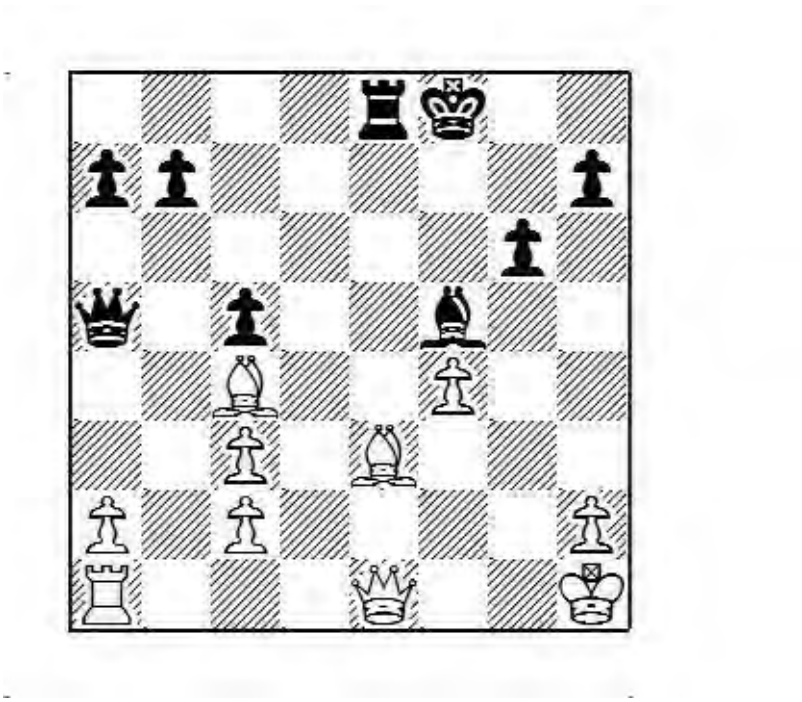
**20 … Rxe2**

Not 20 … Bxg4? as after 21 Rxe8 Bf3+ 22 Kg1, White threatens Qe6+ and Black has no follow-up.

**21 Bxe2 Re8 22 Bc4+**

Well, that was an easy way to break the e-file pin.

**22 … Kf8 23 Be3**



White begins the process of unravelling his queenside.

**23 … Qa4!?**

This allows White's dark-squared bishop into the middle and it is White who is now attacking. He had to try the admittedly dismal 23 … Qc7 24 Qf2 b6.

**24 Bxc5+ Kg7 25 Bd4+ Kf8 26 Qf1**

Everyone is covered.

**26 … Qxc2 27 Kg1**

A wise precaution, removing the king off a light square.

**27 … b6 28 Qf2**

White consolidated and Black can resign here.

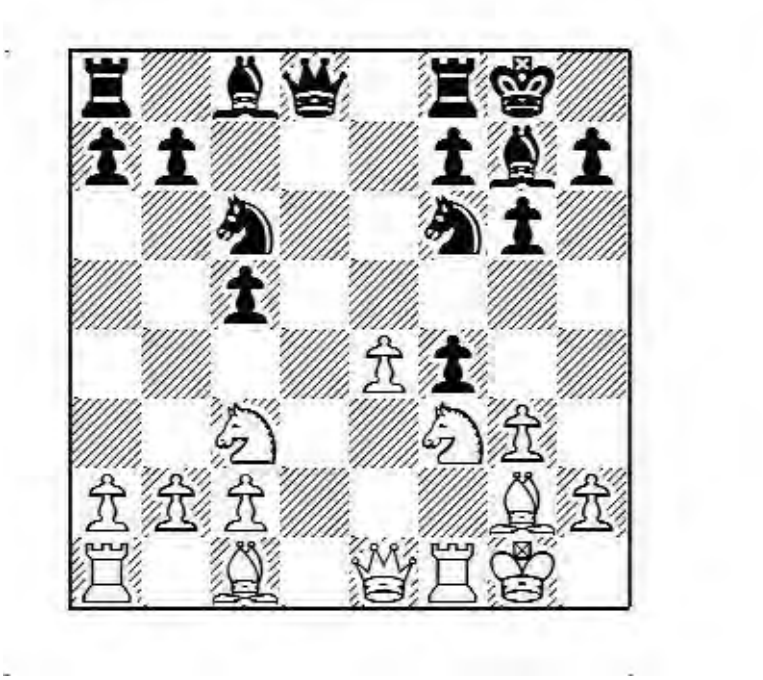
**28 … Qa4 29 Bb3 Qc6 30 Re1 Rxe1+ 31 Qxe1 Qf3 32 Qh4 1-0**

This cuts off Black's intended … Qg4+ and threatens mate on d8.

**Summary:** White can also cover the c2-pawn with 11 Rf2, as an alternative to 11 Qd2, which we looked at in Game

*Game 14*
**C.Lakdawala-D.Aldama**
San Diego (rapid) 2014

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 c5 5 d3 Nc6 6 0-0 Nf6 7 Qe1 0-0 8 e4 dxe4 9 dxe4 e5 10 Nc3 exf4**



This move is a rarity.

***Question*:** It looks quite logical to hand White

hanging pawns. Why isn't it played more often?

***Answer*:** Black releases central tension early, thereby giving White greater options. Still, having analysed it, it looks fine for Black.

## 11 gxf4 Nd4

Now the fight swerves to unfamiliar ground - at least from my side. Strangely enough, this is a new move in the position, yet two IMs played the move against me in the same week, one in internet blitz, and this, the other, in a tournament game.

Other possible options:

a) 11 … Re8 12 e5 Bf5 13 Be3 Ng4 14 Rd1 (14 Bxc5 Qa5 15 Ba3 Qb6+ 16 Kh1 Ne3 favours Black, who picks off White's important light-squared bishop) 14 … Qa5 15 Nd5 Qxe1 16 Rfxe1 Nxe3, D.Melnikov-E.Kopasov, St Petersburg 2010. At this point, *Houdini* works it out to a drawn ending after 17 Nxe3 Bh6 18 Nxf5 gxf5 19 Rd5 Bxf4 20 Rxc5 Re6 21 Bh3 Rae8 22 Bxf5 Nxe5 23 Nxe5 Bxe5 24 Bxe6 Bd4+ 25 Kf1 Bxc5 26 Bf5.

b) 11 … Rb8 12 e5 Ng4 13 h3 Nh6 14 Be3 Qa5 15 Qf2 b6 16 Nd2 Ne7, N.Stawski-R.Lugo, Canberra 2004. White has a tiny pull after 17 Rfd1 Qa6 (17 … f6?? 18 Bf1! and the threat to trap Black's queen with Nb3 and a2-a3 wins material) 18 Nde4 Nhf5 19 Nf6+ Kh8 20 Nce4 Nxe3 21 Qxe3 Nf5 22 Qf2 though *Houdini* claims equality. I feel that White

has a grip on the dark squares, despite swapping off his dark-squared bishop.

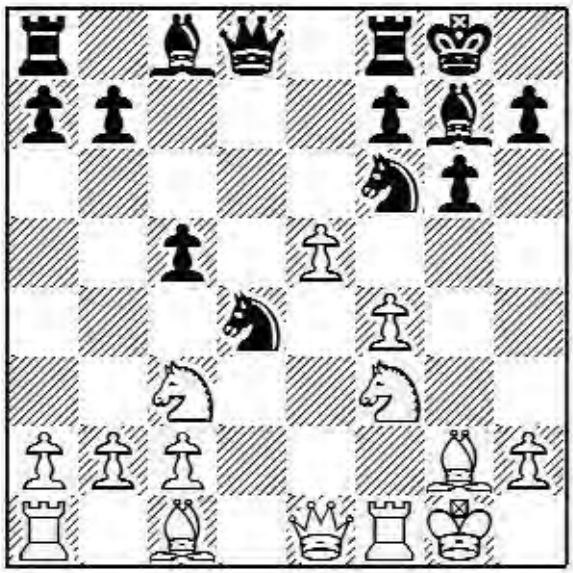
c) 11 … Be6, S.Martinsen-A.Barton, Hastings 2011. I would continue with 12 e5 Ng4 13 h3 Nh6 14 Qf2 b6 15 Ng5 and once again, *Houdini* says it's even, while I prefer White, due to the potential to pick up the bishop pair and the ability (for his knight) to gain access to the e4-square.

**12 Rf2**

The ideal butler mingles efficiency with an outward show of neutrality to either friend or foe. Other tries are:

a) 12 Qd2 Nh5 13 Qf2 Nxf3+ 14 Qxf3 Bd4+ 15 Be3 Nf6 16 h3 Qb6 17 e5 Qxb2 18 Bxd4 cxd4 19 Ne2 Nh5 20 Qb3 Qxb3 21 axb3 Rd8 22 Rfd1 and White seems to have full compensation for the sacrificed pawn. The d4-pawn is under pressure and Black's forces are tied down to his queenside pawns.

b) I considered the interesting 12 e5!? punt:



b1) 12 … Nxc2 13 Qf2 Nxa1 14 exf6 Qxf6 15 Be3 Bf5 16 Rxa1 b6 17 Ne5 Rae8 18 Re1 when chances look dynamically balanced here, with Black getting a rook and two pawns for two knights.

b2) Declining with 12 … Ng4 is also possible. After 13 Nxd4 cxd4 14 Ne4 Bf5 15 h3 Nh6 16 Nd6 Qc7 17 Qf2 Qxc2 18 Qxd4 Rad8 19 Rf2 Qc7 20 Qxa7, White is up a clean pawn, so Black was induced to sacrifice the exchange with 20 … Rxd6!? (20 … f6 21 Qxb7 Qxb7 22 Nxb7 Rd1+ 23 Rf1 Rxf1+ 24 Bxf1 fxe5 25 Bc4+ Kh8 26 Nd6 leaves Black in a tough ending to hold. 26 … Bxh3? is met by 27 fxe5 and White should convert his three passed pawns to a win) 21 exd6 Qxd6 22 Be3 Re8 23 Rd2 Qe6 24 Bf2 Bxh3? 25 Re1 and Black's queen is overloaded, C.Lakdawala-K.Kiewra, Internet (blitz) 2014.

**12 … Bg4**

Black seeks swaps.

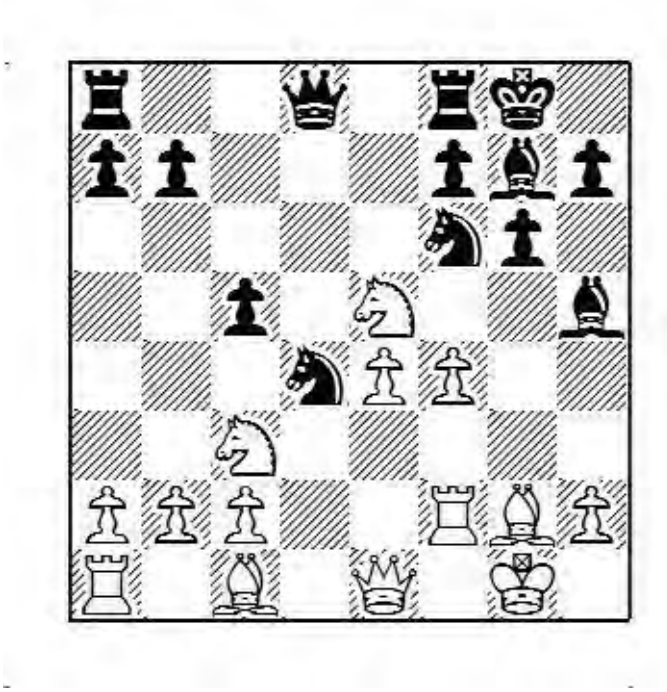
***Question*:** Why is Black looking for trades?

***Answer*:** The theory is, the side with the hanging pawns - in this case White - does better to keep pieces on the board, since hanging pawns tend to be at their most powerful in a middlegame, and a potential weakness in endings or simplified late middlegames.

**13 Ne5!?**

So based on the above-mentioned principle, I keep pieces on the board. On the other hand, 13 e5 Bxf3 14 Bxf3 Nxf3+ 15 Rxf3 Re8 16 Qf1 Ng4 17 Qg2 Nh6 18 Rd3 Qh4 19 Bd2 looks dynamically balanced.

**13 … Bh5!?**



This is logical as Black retains watch over the key light squares on g4, e2 and d1. The downside of the move is that the bishop may be out of play somewhat on the h5-square. *Houdini* prefers the more conformist 13 … Be6.

**14 Be3 Re8 15 Rd2**

Applying pressure to the d4-knight.

**15 … Qc7**

***Question*:** This looks meek. Why not play 15 … Qb6,

when Black develops with a threat on the b2-pawn?

***Answer*:** After 15 … Qb6 16 Na4 Qb5, I had planned the risky 17 Nxc5!? Ne2+ 18 Rxe2! (18 Kh1 allows Black the undermining trick 18 … Nxf4!) 18 … Qxe2 19 Qxe2 Bxe2 20 Re1 Bh5 21 Nxb7 when White has two pawns for the exchange and I thought I would stand clearly better here. However, *Houdini* points out the line 21 … Rxe5! 22 fxe5 Ng4 23 Bd4 Bxe5 24 Bxe5 Nxe5 25 Nc5 Rc8 26 b4 Rd8 27 Rc1 Rd2 28 Nb3 Re2 29 Nd4 Rd2 30 Nb3 results in a draw by repetition.

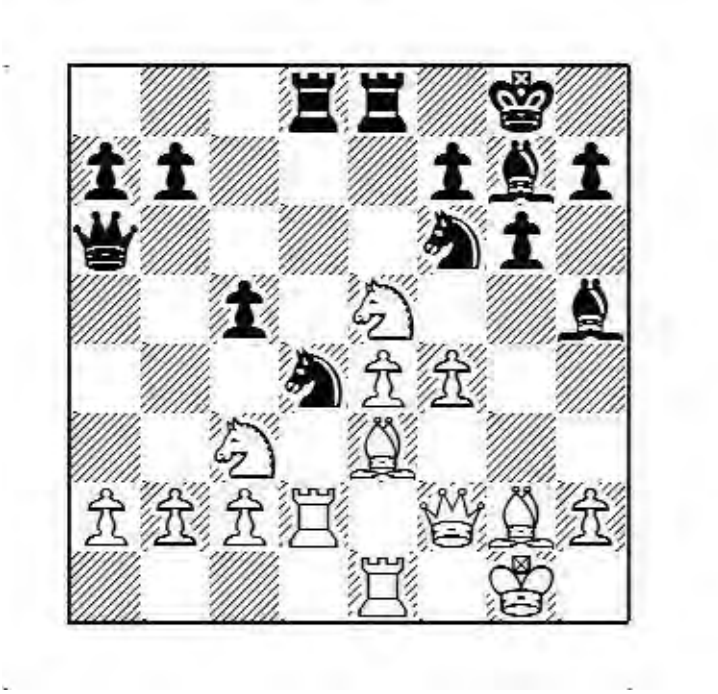
**16 Qg3**

More accurate is 16 h3!, taking control of the g4-square, when White looks a shade better.

**16 … Rad8 17 Re1 Qa5 18 Qf2?**

Sometimes the pathogen itself isn't enough to kill us. Instead, our own body's massive over-response to the attack is our undoing. I incorrectly goad my opponent into an e5-exchange sacrifice, when in reality it favours him. Once again, I should play 18 h3!.

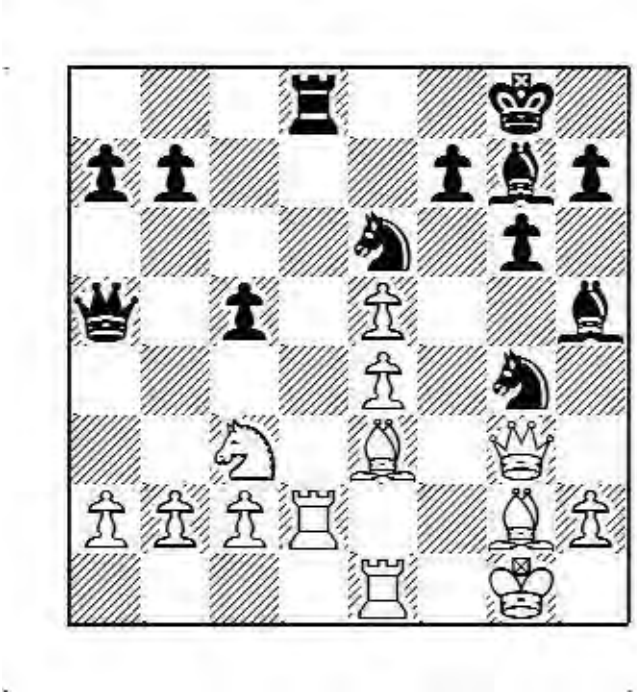
**18 … Qa6?**



Curiosity does battle with indecision and loses. Now Black stands worse. Aldama, having mistakenly decided that the exchange sacrifice represents an unprofitable line of inquiry, decides to turn his attention to the queenside. Black seizes the advantage with the thematic exchange sacrifice 18 … Rxe5! which both players had seen, but misassessed. Now the alien shape shifter alters his appearance, from defender to attacker. Intuition is a mysteriously powerful force, which doesn't require hard evidence to come to a correct conclusion. The strange thing is, both IM Aldama and I at first intuitively thought that the exchange sacrifice was correct, and gave Black the advantage. Yet both of us, through flawed over-analytical thinking, rejected it as satisfactory for White - when it clearly isn't. The analytical mind often smooth-talks intuition away from the correct path. After 19 fxe5 Ng4 20 Qg3:

a) Aldama and I only looked at 20 … Nxe5?! 21 Rf1 and after 21 … Nc4 22 Rdf2 the position is dynamically balanced. Now if Black gets greedy with 22 … Nxb2?? 23 Rxf7! is a killing shot for White. The c3-knight is taboo, since 23 … Qxc3 loses instantly to 24 Rxg7+! Kxg7 25 Qc7+!. Black's king tends to get a blank, distant look on his face when his sister prattles on about his many character flaws.

b) Stronger is the powerful 20 … Ne6!! which both of us missed.



The correct path is a shadow, just beyond the reach of consciousness. This computer-generated trick threatens … Bxe5 with deadly force on the h2-b8 diagonal, leaving White in serious strategic trouble. Following 21 Qh4 Rxd2 22 Bxd2 Qb4 23 Bc1 Bxe5, Black has tremendous dark square pressure for the exchange.

**19 h3!**

At last, I wake up and cover against the exchange sacrifice theme … Rxe5, followed by … Ng4.

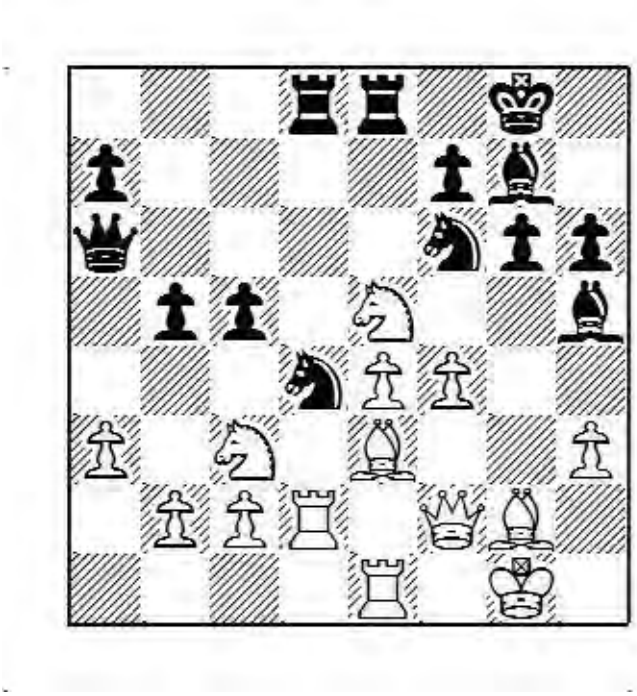
**19 … b5?!**

Necessary was 19 … Bf8.

**20 a3!?**

I should probably accept the pawn with 20 Bxd4! cxd4 21 Rxd4 Rxd4 22 Qxd4 and I don't think Black gets enough compensation for it.

**20 … h6?!**



He should settle for 20 … Bf8 though after 21 Rd3!, White intends b2- b4! with a clear advantage, but not as large as the one in the game.

***Question*:** What is Black's idea behind his last move?

***Answer*:** Black roots about for counterplay with a future … g6-g5 undermining trick.

***Exercise (planning)*:** The position shifted imperceptibly, just a finger's breadth.

White can win a pawn now advantageously at the cost of the bishop pair with 21 Bxd4. But there is something far stronger. Find one powerful idea and White wins material without handing over the bishop pair.

***Answer*:** Undermining. Black soon discovers that he has no good way to prevent Nxc5.

**21 Nd3!**

Powerful retreats tend to be easily overlooked in our analytical process. There is no good defence to Nxc5. Now events over the board occur quicker than it takes to write this sentence.

**21 … Nd7**

Also futile is 21 … Bf8 22 e5 Nh7 23 Ne4 and once again, the c5-pawn falls without compensation.

**22 Nxc5**

The human move. This alters Black's game from 'atrocious' to 'merely dire'. *Houdini* prefers the powerful 22 e5!, clearing the e4-square for the c3-knight.

**22 … Nxc5 23 Bxd4 Rxd4!?**

I interpreted this exchange sacrifice as a clear indicator of Black's mounting frustration,

yet it may be his best practical chance, with mutual time pressure approaching. I was certain my uber-aggressive opponent wouldn't meekly go along with the program with 23 … Ne6 24 Bxg7 Rxd2 25 Qxd2 Qb6+ 26 Qf2 Qxf2+ 27 Kxf2 Kxg7 28 Ke3 with a pawn-down ending for Black.

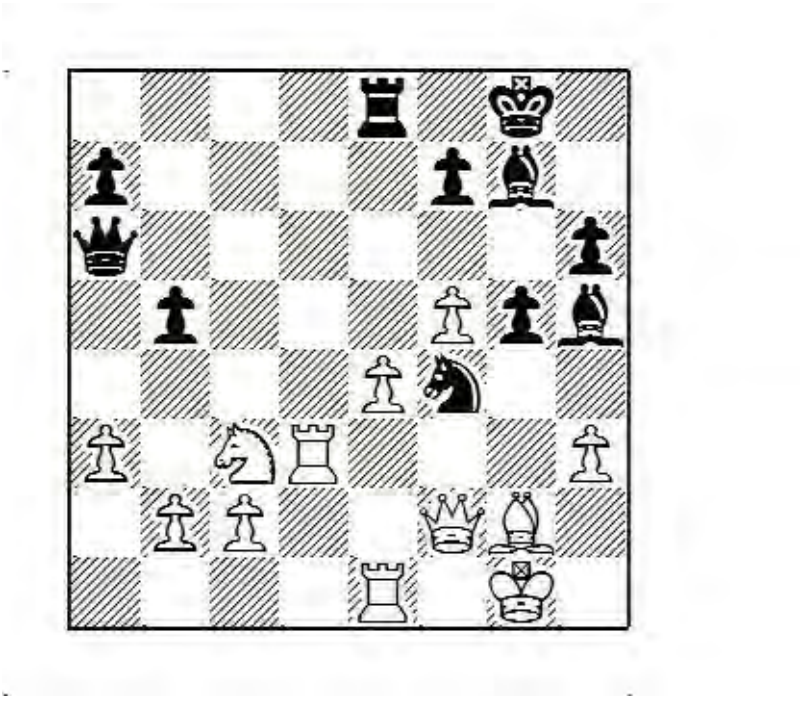
**24 Rxd4 Ne6 25 Rd3 g5!**

Black seeks to increase his power on the dark squares.

**26 f5!?**

Simpler is 26 fxg5! hxg5 27 Nd5! Bxb2 28 e5! with a winning position, since there is no good defence to the coming Nf6 triple fork.

**26 … Nf4**



***Exercise (planning)*:** White is up a full exchange and pawn, yet

Black's play on the dark squares gives him some practical chances

in the coming time scramble. How should White continue?

***Answer*:** Simplification. White returns the exchange to stay a pawn up, with initiative.

**27 Nd5! Nxd3**

After 27 … Nxd5 28 exd5, the passed d-pawn is decisive.

**28 cxd3 Qd6**

In order to cover against the c7-fork.

**29 f6**

Black's once powerful dark-squared bishop is pushed back and marginalized.

**29 … Bf8**

The bishop, who holds his hands in a you-have-misunderstood-me gesture, is peer-

pressured into silence.

**30 d4**

White's centre pawns lurch forward in zombie-like horror movie fashion.

**30 … Rc8 31 h4!**

The idea is to trade and isolate the g5-pawn and then play to win it.

**31 … Bg6**

After 31 … gxh4 32 Qxh4! Rc2 33 Ne7+! Bxe7 34 fxe7 Qxd4+ 35 Kh1 Qe5, the Black queen gets deflected of the defence of the bishop with 36 e8=Q+ Qxe8 37 Qxh5 and White wins.

**32 hxg5 hxg5 33 e5**

This natural move lengthens the winning process. *Houdini* prefers 33 Qe3 (hitting the g5-weakie) when 33 … g4? is met with 34 e5 Qd7 36 Be4!, removing a key kingside defender.

**33 … Qe6 34 Qg3 Rc4**

Aldama decides that the g5-pawn is a useless appendage, like those not-so-terrifying, tiny little arms on an otherwise terrifying Tyrannosaurus Rex.

His options aren't very palatable either:

a) 34 … Bh6?? fails miserably to 35 Ne7+ Kh7 36 Bh3.

b) 34 … Rd8 35 Qf3 g4 36 Qb3 a6 37 Kh2 Kh7 38 Kg3 Kg8 (Black can only wait) 39 Rh1 Rd7 40 Rh4 Bf5 41 Qd1! Rxd5 42 Qh1 and Black collapses under the dual threats of Rh8 mate and Bxd5.

**35 Rd1 Rc2 36 Qxg5**

The queenside pawns are not important. Principle: *Launch a direct attack on the enemy king when you control the centre*.

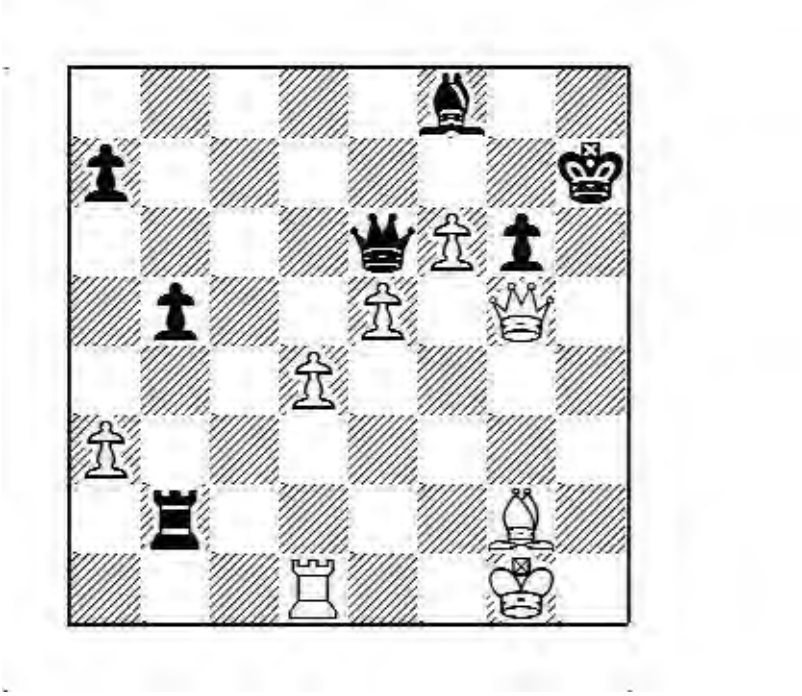
**36 … Rxb2 37 Ne7+!**

37 Nf4 is met with 37 … Qf5.

**37 … Kh7**

Also winning is 37 … Bxe7 38 fxe7 Qd7 39 Be4 Kh7 40 Qh4+ Kg8 41 Bxg6 fxg6 42 Rf1 Kg7 43 Qf6+ Kh6 44 e6 Qd5 45 Qh4+ Kg7 46 Rf7+ Kg8 and the cheeky 47 e8=R mates! The rook's face tends to express his sentiments without words, and the expression the black king sees is not one to his liking.

**38 Nxg6 fxg6**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Work out the ramifications of 39 Be4, which allows 39 … Qh3. Can White force a win? Or does it allow Black unnecessary counterplay?

***Answer*:** Simplification. It works.

**39 Be4!**

Black's king mischievously pinches his nose in nasally mimicry of his powerful g5-sister, who unfortunately just walked into the room and overheard him. The … Qh3 pseudo-threat is easily defanged. I originally planned 39 Rd3 Bh6 40 Rh3??. When a pure positional player like me launches a direct attack upon the enemy king, it is more a contrived persona - an actor playing a part - rather than who he is. Then I realized that Black can pull a fast one with 40 … Qxh3! which wins on the spot. Thank goodness an incorrect variation doesn't count as a mistake if it doesn't leave the confines of its creator's mind.

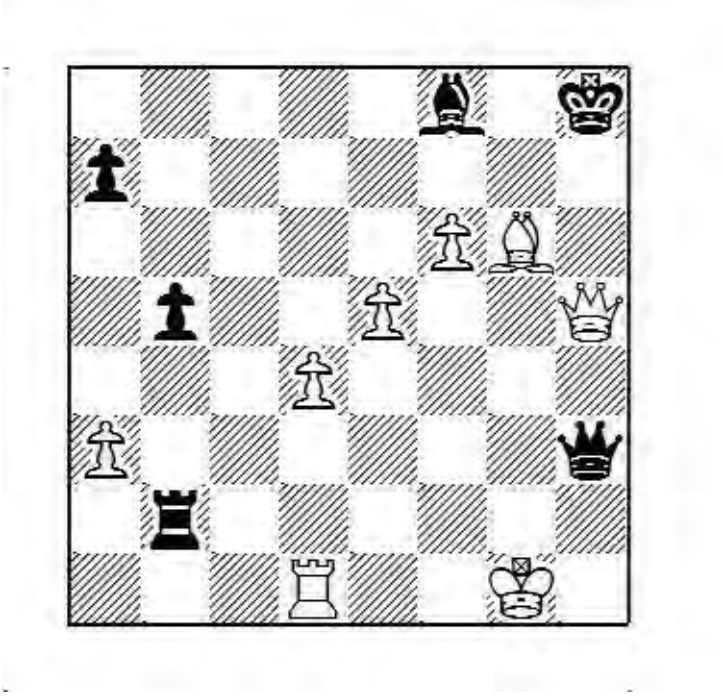
**39 … Qh3**

Weaving intricate murder plots is one of the few pleasures in which the queen indulges in her golden years.

**40 Bxg6+! Kh8**

Otherwise White's bishop gets a deadly discovery if Black's king plays to the g8-square.

**41 Qh5+**



Deadly simplification. Black can resign once queens are removed from the board, since he has no hope of halting White's three deep passers.

**41 … Qxh5 42 Bxh5 Bxa3 43 d5**

Also winning is 43 e6.

**43 … Bc5+ 44 Kh1 Rb4**

This isn't even a cheapo, since White can ignore the … Rh4+ 'threat' and instead, push his d-pawn. I saw no need for this and instead preserved the bishop.

**45 Bf3 Rf4 46 Kg2 Rf5 47 d6**

It isn't necessary to cover the e5-pawn as queening threats take precedence.

**47 … Rg5+**

After 47 … Rxe5, 48 d7 Bb6 49 d8Q+ Bxd8 50 Rxd8+ Kh7 51 f7 does the job.

**48 Kh3 Bb6 49 e6 Rf5 50 e7**

Who cares about a bishop when we get a new queen?

**50 … Rxf3+ 51 Kg4 Re3 52 d7 1-0**

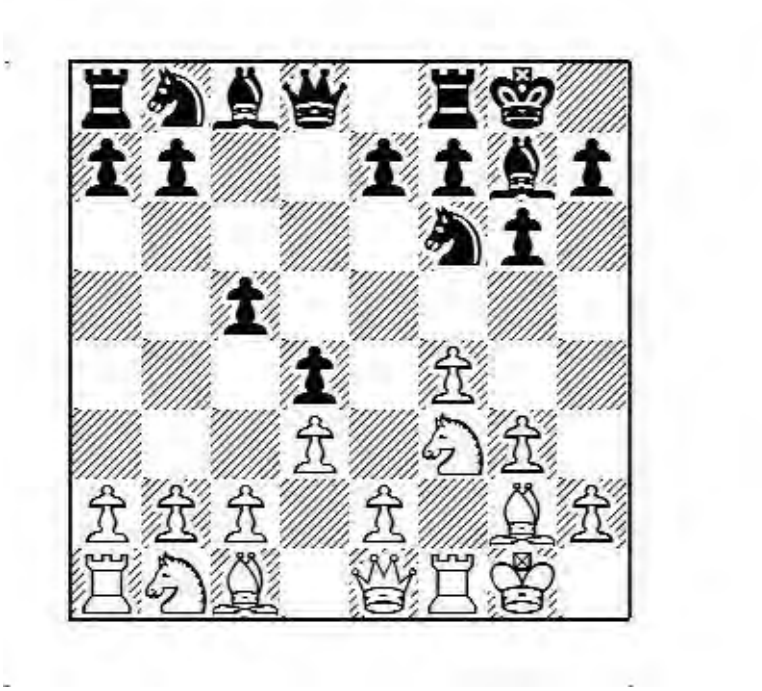
**Summary:** IM Aldama's 10 … exf4 and 11 … Nd4 is an unexplored yet playable idea for Black, leading to rich complications.

*Game 15*
**A.Jakubiec-A.Moiseenko**
Warsaw 2007

**1 f4**

When facing a much higher rated opponent, we the underdog, can either slay the creature, like in the Saint George/Dragon matchup, or, far more likely, be devoured by it, as in the unfortunate Noah/whale misunderstanding. I think the underdog's best shot is not to go for a theoretical battle, hoping to earn a '+=' with White. Instead, play into a position you feel you *understand*, equally or better than the opponent. In this case, Jakubiec sticks to what he knows best against his higher rated opponent.

**1 … d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 c5 7 Qe1 d4**



This is Black's main option to 7 … Nc6.

***Question*:** Why push … d4 when it doesn't come with a tempo gain?

***Answer*:** By pushing the d-pawn down to the fourth rank,

1. Black denies White his main idea, which is e2-e4.
2. Black gains central space.
3. Black clears the d5-square for his pieces.
4. White's e4-push is simply met with an en passant capture.

**8 Na3**

White's main response.

***Question*:** What is White's intention behind this move?

***Answer*:** White plans to challenge Black's d4-pawn wedge with the plan: Na3, c2-c3, Bd2 and Nc2. If we induce Black to trade on c3, White opens the b-file for his rooks and also greatly increases his central pawn influence.

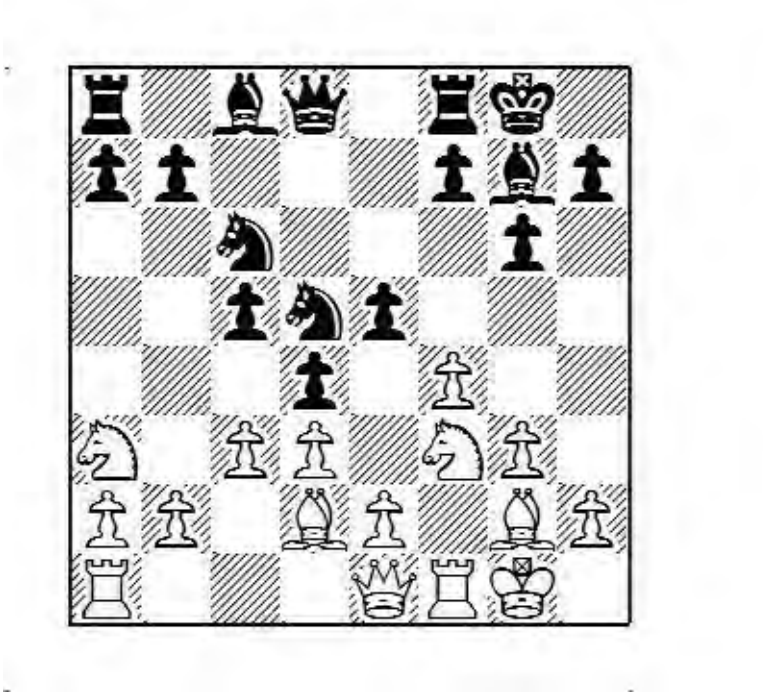
**8 … Nc6 9 Bd2**

9 c3 Nd5 10 Bd2 simply transposes to the game.

**9 … Nd5 10 c3**

We follow through with the above mentioned plan of declaring challenge to the d4-pawn.

**10 … e5**



This is Black's main move in the position. In Game 16, we will look at 10 … Rb8.

***Question*:** Why does Black want to play … e7-e5, swapping a central pawn for a wing pawn? It clearly isn't a freeing break, since Black's pieces are already developed.

***Answer*:** Playing … e5 is a trade-off. Black swaps off a more valuable e-pawn for White's f-pawn, which also opens the f-file for White. In return, Black creates a backward pawn target on e2, which he hopes to pressurize later down the e-file.

***Question*:** Who do you think gets the better of the bargain?

***Answer*:** I prefer White's chances, while the comps say it may be a 50-50 deal, with neither side gaining the edge. Looking at the stats, White has scored 62% from the position - better than average.

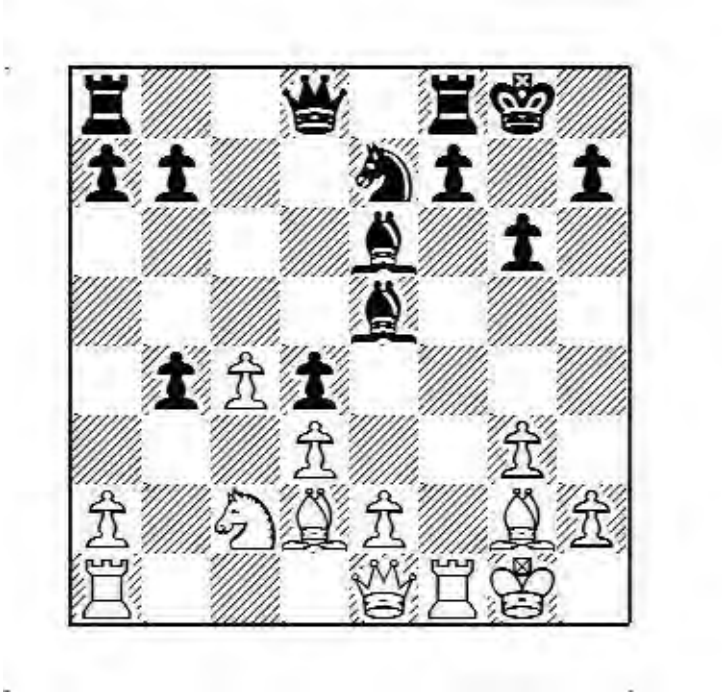
**11 fxe5 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 Bxe5 13 Nc2!**

White salts the position with a touch of mystery. Don't get tempted by 13 Nc4?! which gains a tempo on Black's bishop, at the cost of misplacing the knight. Black looks slightly better after 13 … Bg7 14 e4 Nb6 15 Nxb6 Qxb6 as White's position is uncomfortable, since Black threatens both … Qxb2 and also has … c5-c4 tricks, K.Larsen-A.Slavin, Uxbridge 2010.

**13 … Bg7?!**

This is book theory yet it doesn't address White's intent, which is c3-c4! and b2-b4! taking over the initiative. Let's have a look at the alternatives:

a) After 13 … Be6?, Kamsky followed through with the same plan as in the Moiseenko game with 14 c4! Ne7 15 b4! cxb4, G.Kamsky-S.Sjugirov, Moscow 2010.



Now White maximized his queenside pressure with 16 Bf4! Bd6 17 Nxb4 Rb8 18 a4 Nf5 19 Nc2 b6 20 g4! Ne3 21 Nxe3 Bxf4 22 Rxf4 dxe3 23 Qg3 and the e3-pawn soon fell.

***Question*:** If White's c4! and b4! plan is so strong, then how can Black deal with it?

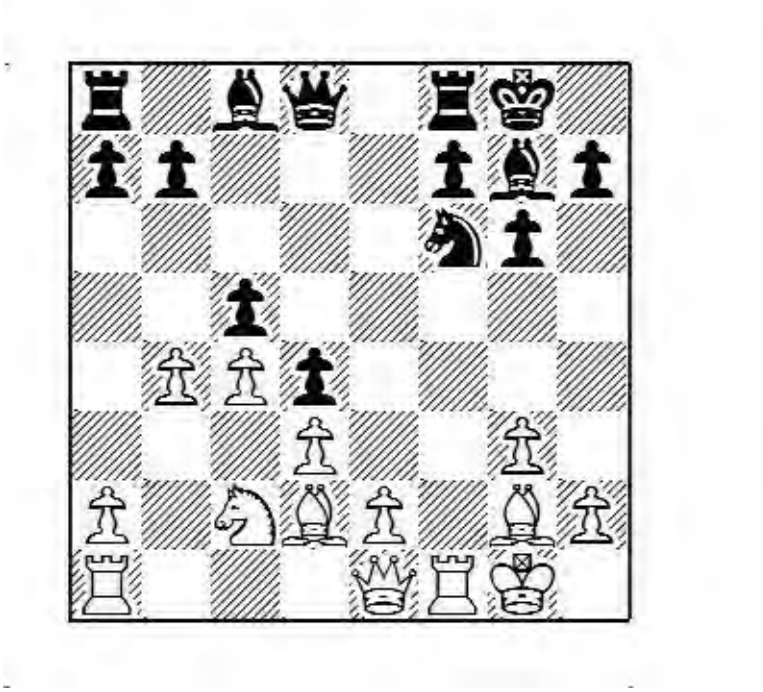
***Answer*:** Sometimes a loss and a playable game are separated by only infinitesimal degrees of separation.

b) The yet unplayed 13 … a5! may be Black's most logical move since it prevents White's intended c4! and b4! plan. If I played White, I would respond with 14 a4 Ra6 15 e4 Nf6 16 cxd4 cxd4 17 Bg5 when the position may be even though stylistically I prefer White's game.

**14 c4! Nf6**

Black has also tried 14 … Ne7 and 14 … Nc7 with similarly dismal results.

**15 b4!**



White's agenda is revealed with this thematic break. He gets Benko Gambit-like pressure, without the initial investment of a pawn.

**15 … cxb4 16 Nxb4 Re8**

Black has also tried 16 … Ng4 17 Nd5 Bd7 18 h3 Ne5 19 Qf2 Bc6 20 Bb4 Re8 21 Bc5! when White went on to pick off a key central pawn, V.Malaniuk-F.Bindrich, Dresden 2010.

**17 Qf2**

Keeping watch over the d4-pawn, while menacing Bg5.

**17 … Qc7**

*Houdini* recommends the inhuman 17 … Qd7 but Black's position looks quite awkward after the simple 18 h3.

**18 Rab1**

Pressure continues to build on the b7-pawn as well.

**18 … Be6**

Black reinforces both the d5- and f7-squares. Also, 18 … Ng4 19 Nd5! Qd7 20 Qf3 f5 21 h3 Ne5 22 Qf2 Kh8 23 Bg5 leaves Black under strong pressure.

**19 h3**

A useful move, cutting off irritating … Ng4 ideas.

**19 … Qc8?**

An inaccuracy in an already very difficult position. 19 … Rac8 minimizes his discomfort.

**20 Bg5!**

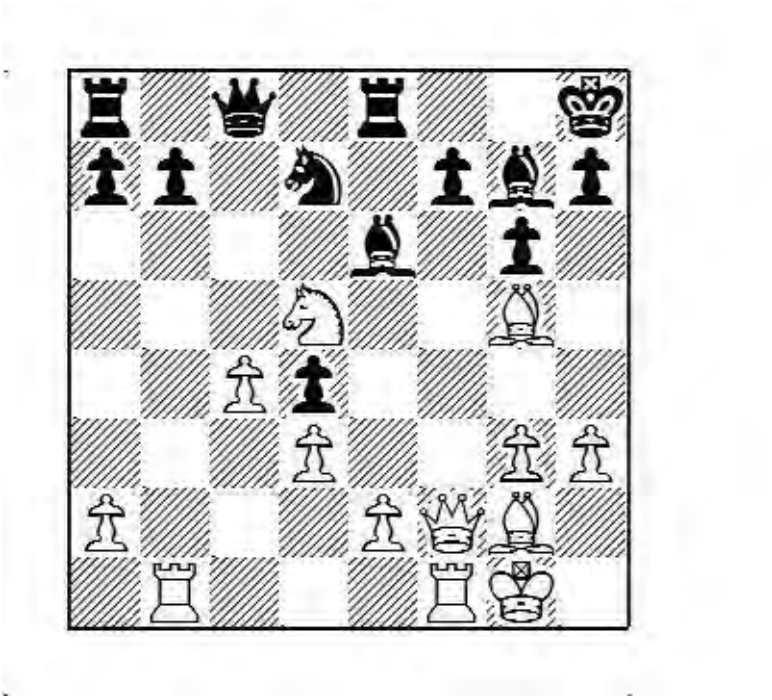
The long ignored bishop feels that his dignity warrants greater attention. Also winning is 20 Nd5! Bxd5 21 Bxd5 when Black's game collapses after 21 … Qxh3 22 Rxb7 Rf8 23 Bb4 Nxd5 24 Bxf8 Rxf8 25 cxd5 Bh6 26 Rxf7! Be3 27 Rxf8+ Kg7 28 Rf7+ Kh6 29 Qxe3+ dxe3 30 R1f3 as White should convert his material advantage without too many

difficulties.

**20 … Nd7 21 Nd5**

Threat: Ne7+, winning the exchange.

**21 … Kh8**



***Exercise (planning)*:** White to play and win material:

***Answer*:** Simplification/removal of a key defender/interference/double attack. The d4- and b7-pawns are simultaneously attacked and Black's game crumbles.

**22 Nf6!**

Attackers creep forward, deeper and deeper into Black's camp, careful not to make any overt display which would bring undue attention to themselves.

**22 … Nxf6 23 Bxf6 Rb8 24 Qxd4**

The queen doesn't tolerate insolence from a mere servant, like Black's d-pawn. White wins a key central pawn for zero compensation, while retaining all his strategic advantages.

**24 … Bxf6 25 Qxf6+ Kg8 26 Kh2 b6 27 Rb5!**

The rook pursues a promising line of inquiry. Jakubiec, sensing the kill, swings his queen rook into the attack.

**27 … Qa6?!**

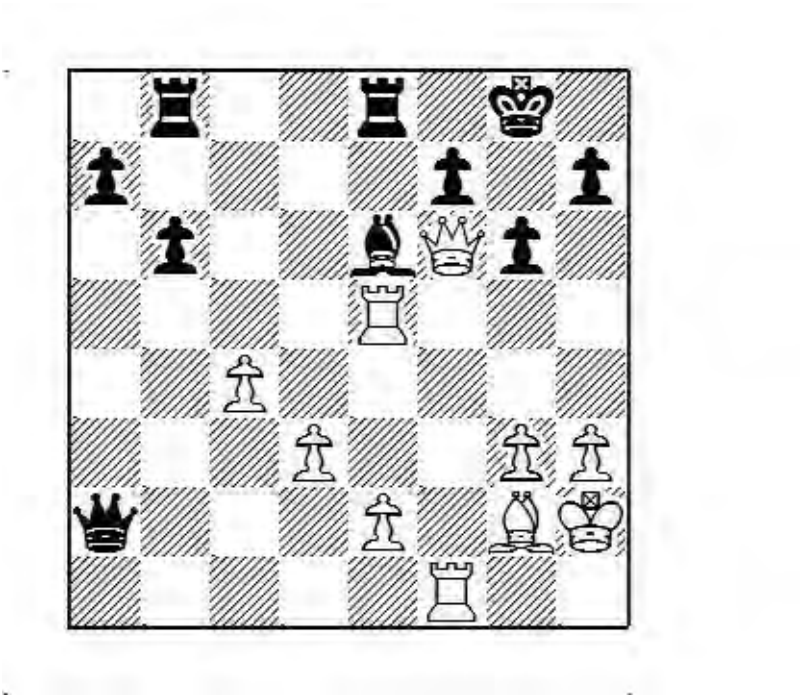
One way to discover your enemies is to enter a room and pick out the people who strain *not* to look in your direction. The queen reacts to the white rook's offence with almost bland equanimity. This is just asking for it. Black should redress the kingside force imbalance by airlifting in another defender with 27 … Qd8.

**28 Re5!**

The rook goes after the defender of the f7-pawn as industriously as an over-caffeinated beaver working overtime on a dam project.

**28 … Qxa2?**

Necessary was 28 … Qc8.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Tourist brochures have a way of overstating the scenic location's charms. In this case, Black nabs the worthless a2-pawn. Some principles can be so broadly applied, as to be rendered invisible. We note a continued infringement of the directive: Don't go on a pawn-hunting expedition when your king's life is endangered. Black defenders appear to be callously indifferent to their king's plight. Black's last move was played with the philosophy: the player with the disadvantage should never agree to a bargain, since the negotiation will never end in his or her favour. Clearly, White's prospects are of gladsome expectation. White to play and force the win:

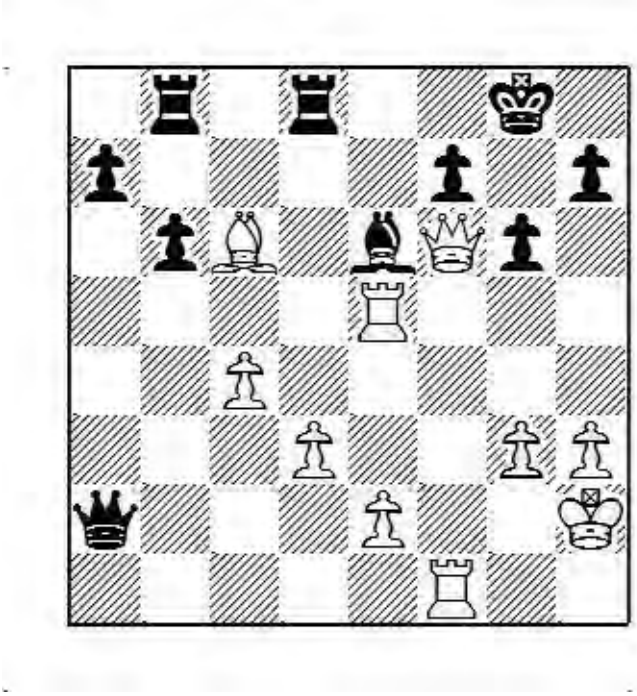
***Answer*:** Removal of the guard.

**29 Bc6!**

Outwardly the bishop shrouds himself in godliness, while inwardly he calculates and manipulates, always toward his self-interests.

**29 … Red8**

Also, 29 … Rf8 allows White exactly the same idea after 30 Rxe6! fxe6 31 Qxe6+ Kg7 32 Qe7+ winning.



**30 Rxe6!**

That which was once merely a vague hint of an attacking idea, now transforms into a three-dimensional entity. Black's painful after-effect is the consequence of earlier optimism. Removal of the f7-defender is the solid surface which allows White's idea traction.

**30 … fxe6 31 Qxe6+ Kg7 32 Rf7+ Kh6**

"Someday your throne will be mine," thinks Black's king as he wistfully gazes at his hateful e6-sister. Then, to his horror, he realizes he spoke his secret thought aloud.

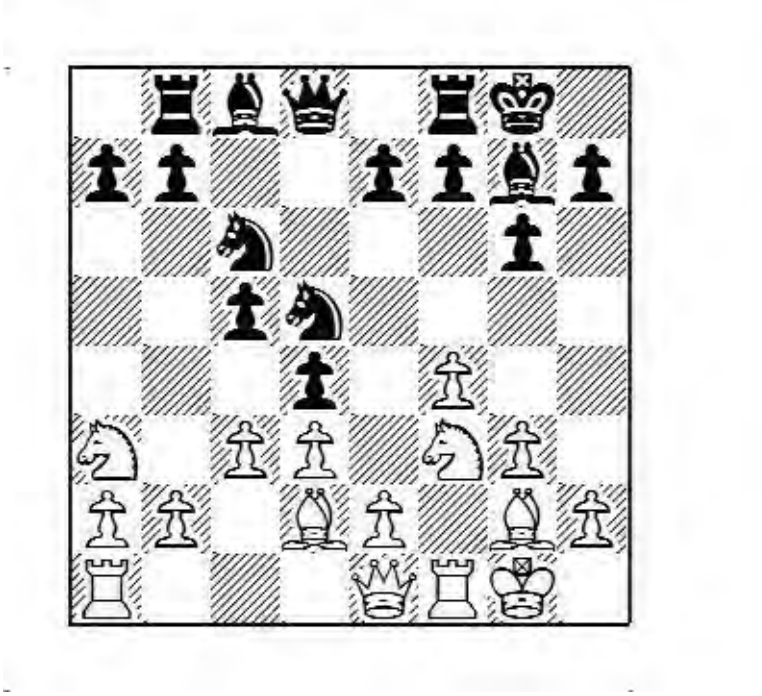
**33 Qe3+ 1-0**

Following 33 … g5 34 Qe6+ Kh5 35 Rxh7 is mate!

**Summary:** When Black plays the 7 … d4 plan, remember our counter plan: Na3, Bd2, c2-c3, Nc2, c3-c4! and b2-b4!, with Benko-Gambit like pressure on Black's queenside, but without the investment cost of a pawn.

*Game 16*
**K.Kuzmicz-D.Klein**
BDO Chess Tournament, Haarlem 2012

**1 g3 d5 2 Bg2 Nf6 3 f4 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 c5 7 Qe1 Nc6 8 c3 d4 9 Na3 Nd5 10 Bd2 Rb8!**



I think this move is more accurate than the previous game's 10 … e5.

***Question*:** Does Black move his rook to b8 in order to get off the h1-a8 diagonal?

***Answer*:** Correct, but Black also seeks to challenge White on the queenside, with … b5, rather than in the centre with … e5.

**11 Nc2**

White continues as last game, further reinforcing the e3-square and the b2-b4 push.

***Question*:** Do you prefer the c2-square to the c4-one as an outpost for the knight?

***Answer*:** I do, as on the c4-square:

1. The knight is vulnerable to a tempo loss after … b5.

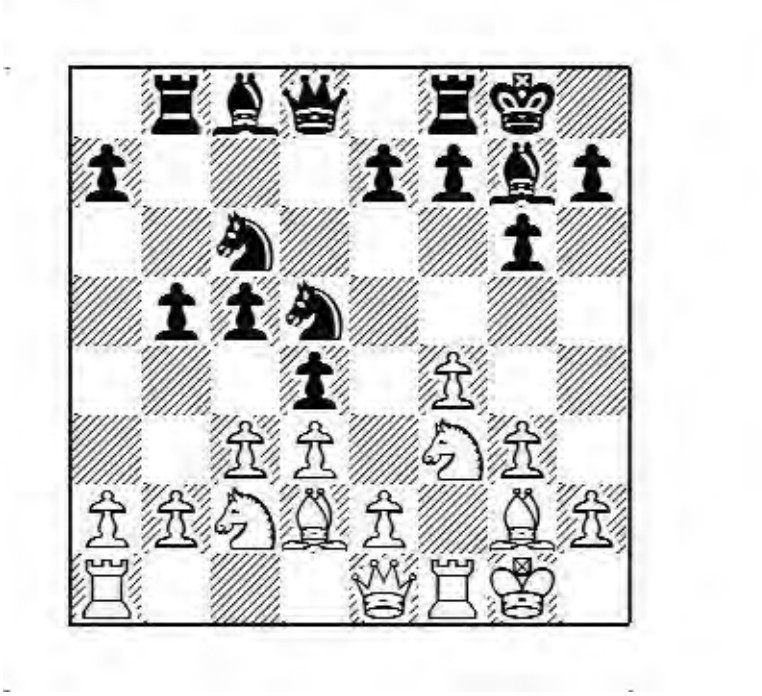
2. The knight fails to reinforce b2-b4, denies White his normal plan of c3-c4! followed by b2-b4!, as we saw in the previous game.

3. The knight fails to add pressure to the d4-pawn.

Let's examine how 11 Nc4 pans out:

11 Nc4 b6 (Black also gets at least equality after the more aggressive 11 … b5 12 Nce5 Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Bb7 14 Qf2 f6 15 Nf3 e5) 12 Rc1 Bb7 13 Qf2, R.Mainka-K.Kannenberg, Bad Woerishofen 2014. Black achieves a rather pleasant equality after 13 … e6 when White doesn't have much to do.

**11 … b5!**



This move eliminates White's c3-c4! and b2-b4! idea.

**12 e4**

I prefer this freeing move to the plan 12 cxd4 cxd4 13 Qf2 Qb6 14 Nh4 Qd8 15 f5 Bb7 16 g4!? (White is intent on creating trouble on the kingside) 16 … Qd6, H.Danielsen-A.Petrosian, Schwerin 1999. The game is in dynamic balance after 17 Rac1 Rbc8 18 g5.

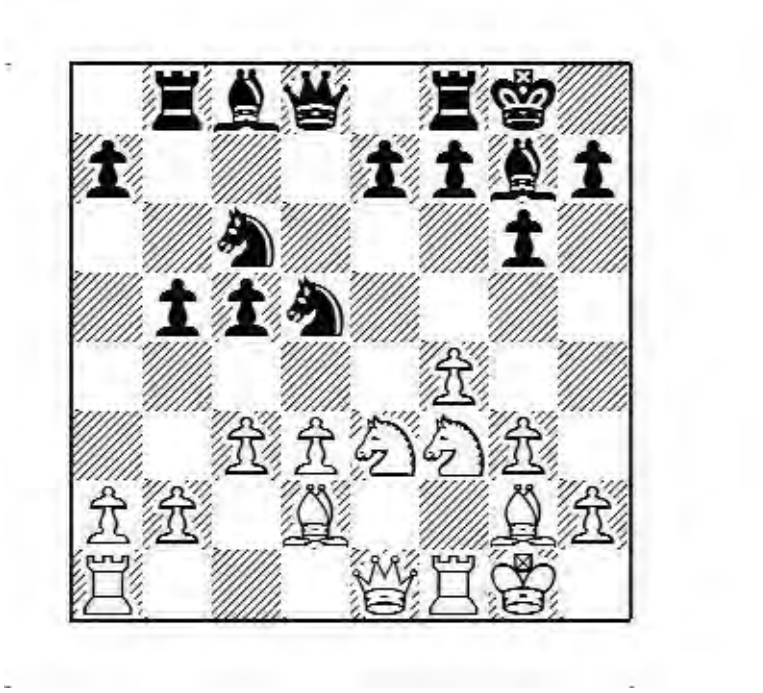
**12 … dxe3**

The human response, played in all three games in my database. *Houdini* prefers capturing away from the centre with 12 … dxc3!? when we have the following choices:

a) 13 bxc3 Nb6 (Black gives up control over the centre to attack it in hypermodern style) 14 d4! (White offers a pawn for an initiative and the dark squares) 14 … cxd4 15 Ncxd4 Bxd4+ 16 cxd4 Nxd4 17 Nxd4 Qxd4+ 18 Be3 Qa4 19 f5 and White's unopposed dark-squared bishop, coupled with Black's relatively undefended king, insures dangerous attacking chances in exchange for Black's extra pawn.

b) 13 exd5 cxd2 14 Qxd2 Nb4 15 Nxb4 cxb4 16 Ne5 Bxe5 17 fxe5 Bb7 18 Qxb4 Bxd5 19 Bxd5 Qxd5 20 Qxe7 Rbe8 21 Qxa7 Rxe5 is equal.

**13 Nxe3**



***Question*:** Why did White deliberately take on a backward d3-pawn?

***Answer*:** Such structures are quite common with colours reversed in g3-King's Indian lines, which this position closely resembles. The d3-pawn is hardier than it looks. In fact, I believe it is Black who should worry about his own c5-pawn.

**13 … e6**

This new move is an improvement over 13 … Nb6, J.Psenicka-J.Mares, correspondence 1991. White can now play to pressure the c5-pawn with 14 Ng5! Bb7 15 Ne4 as this induces Black to fall into a defensive posture with 15 … Nd7. Here I prefer White, since the c5-pawn looks weaker than our d3-one. White can also pursue a kingside agenda by pushing f4-f5.

**14 Qf2**

Threat: Nxd5, followed by Qxc5. If White is concerned about his d3-weakness, he can clog the d-file with 14 Nxd5 exd5 15 Qf2 Qb6 with an equal game after 16 Ne5.

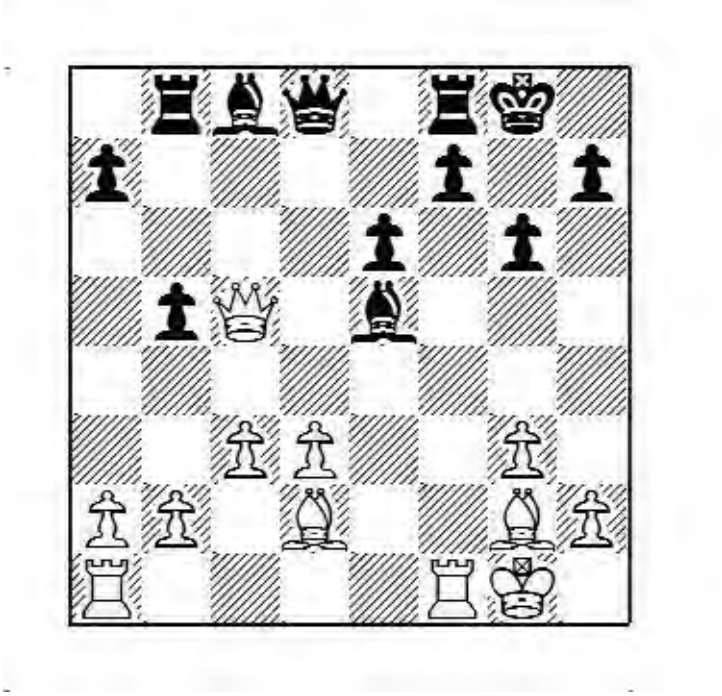
**14 … Nf6**

Retreating the knight to the b6-square may have been the more accurate course.

**15 Ne5! Nxe5 16 fxe5 Nd7 17 Ng4!**

White takes aim at the weakened dark squares around Black's king.

**17 … Nxe5 18 Nxe5 Bxe5 19 Qxc5**



White got the better of the deal in the trading. Soon he will have greater central influence when he plays d3-d4.

**19 … Qc7**

After 19 … Bc7 20 d4 Bb6 21 Qe5 Bc7 22 Qe2, White can look forward to potential kingside attacking chances, based on Black's weakened dark squares and the semi-opened f-file.

**20 Be3 a6 21 Rf2**

Preparing to double rooks on the f-file. White maintains a nagging strategic edge.

**21 … Bd7 22 Raf1 f5 23 Re1**

The rooks switch to fresh targets along the e-file.

**23 … Rfe8 24 Rfe2 Qxc5**

Black's troubles are not relieved by an exchange of queens.

**25 Bxc5 Bc7 26 d4**

Fixing the backward e6-pawn as a target.

**26 … Kf7 27 b4!?**

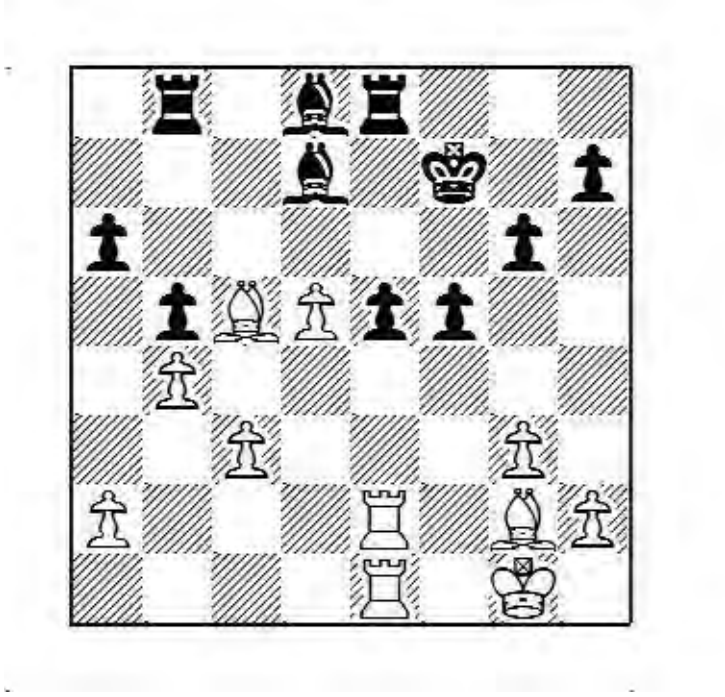
This move allows White a permanent c5-outpost, at the cost of losing some of his queenside flexibility. Instead, 27 d5?! is premature and allows Black equality after 27 … e5 28 d6 Bb6 29 Bxb6 Rxb6 30 Rxe5 Rxe5 31 Rxe5 Rxd6 32 Kf2.

**27 … Bd8 28 d5!**

Now this is possible due to White's previous move.

**28 … e5!**

Black avoids the trap 28 … Rc8?? 29 dxe6+ Bxe6 30 Bd5 and White wins the exchange and infiltrates.



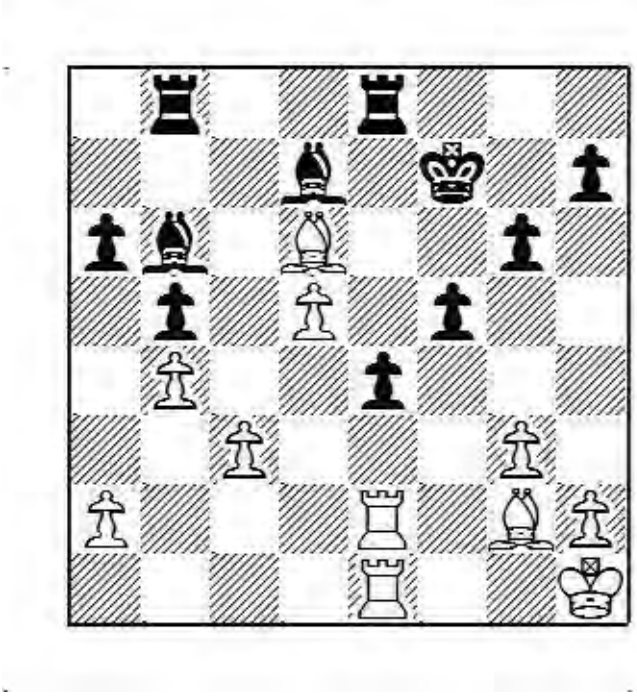
***Exercise (planning)*:** White can play the immediate 29 Rxe5, or he can play the double attack 29 Bd6. One leads to the advantage, while the other allows Black counter-chances. Which one should he play?

**29 Bd6?**

The con artist's only focus is how to separate the gullible from their money. In this instance, the d6-con artist himself is actually the mark. After this move, White becomes disassociated from his original intent. Missing an opponent's intent is the same feeling as seeing a flash of motion in our peripheral vision, but then when we turn to look, we find nothing there.

***Answer*:** White secures the advantage with 29 Rxe5! Bf6 30 R5e2! Rxe2 (30 … Bxc3 31 Re7+ Kf6 32 R1e3 Rxe7 33 Bxe7+ Kf7 34 Bc5 Bf6 35 Ra3 Bc8 36 d6 leaves Black under pressure in the ending) 31 Rxe2 Re8 32 Rc2 f4! 33 Kf2 Bf5 34 Rc1 netting an extra pawn and all the winning chances.

**29 … Bb6+ 30 Kh1 e4!**



A dark, ancient evil which lay dormant for untold ages arises once again, reassuming its supernatural powers. In this way, Black hopes to recoup, re-gather and launch a vicious counterattack. This move demonstrates excellent judgment. With this exchange sacrifice, Black gets full compensation due to his powerful dark-squared bishop.

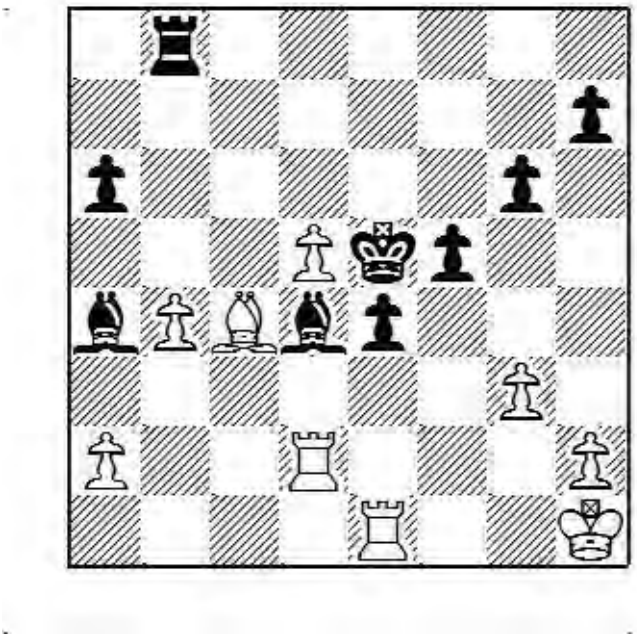
**31 Bxb8 Rxb8 32 Rc2 Kf6!**

Black's king soon takes up a dominating e5-post. I don't believe that White stands even a shade better here, despite being up a full exchange.

**33 Bf1 Ke5 34 c4 bxc4 35 Bxc4 Ba4 36 Rd2?!**

Now Black actually stands better. Correct was 36 Bb3 Bd7 37 Rd1 Kd6! with equal chances.

**36 … Bd4!**



With the dual threats, … Bc3 and … Rxb4. We don't need Capablanca's intuitive

powers to tell us that Black stands better. His harmonious king and bishop pair weave in and out, existing in a fugue condition, with one taking up the melody from the other when needed.

**37 Rb1 Bc3**

Also to be considered was the line 37 … g5! 38 Bxa6 f4 39 gxf4+ gxf4 40 Rg2 f3 41 Rg7 e3 42 Bd3 e2 and White must hand over a piece with 43 Bxe2 fxe2 44 Re7+ Kxd5 45 Rxe2 Bd7. Black has all the winning chances.

**38 Rg2 Rb6**

Also, 38 … a5 39 b5 e3 looks quite dangerous for White.

**39 a3 g5!**

Sometimes the interrogator uses the discomfort of an extended silence to get the subject to disclose information. Nothing is threatened for now, yet the intended … f5-f4, creating two connected central passed pawns (which are further supported by Black's king), looms over White's thoughts.

**40 Ba2?!**

White's mind continues to circle the problem of how to effect a breakthrough into Black's position. Doing nothing is not an option. It is better to play 40 Rc1 Bd4 but even then, I don't think White can save the game.

**40 … f4**

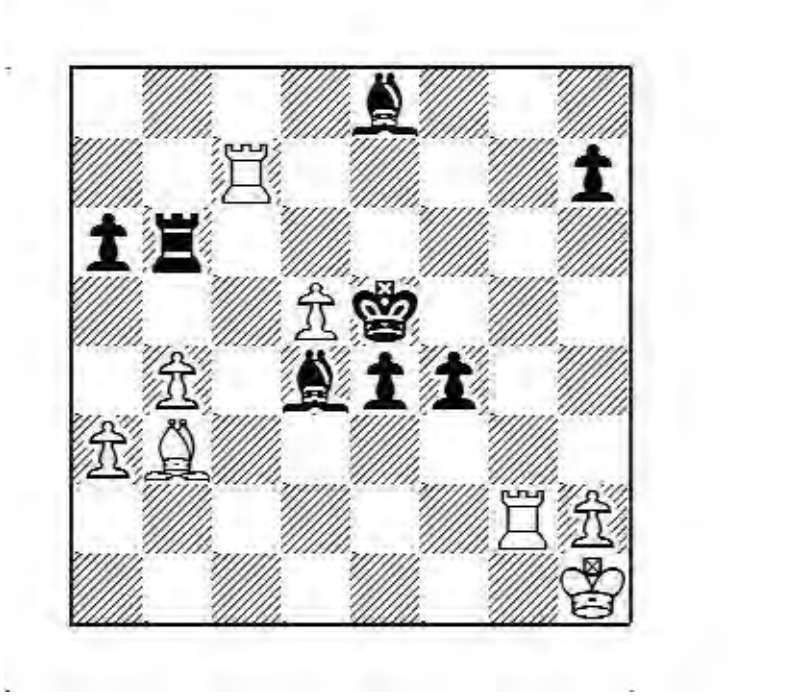
More accurate is 40 … e3! intending … Kd4.

**41 gxf4+ gxf4 42 Bb3 Be8?!**

"I must cleanse such heretical thoughts from my mind, before God hears them," thinks the worried bishop. Black's plan begins to dilute, the way a copy of a copy tends to fade. This passive response gives White a break. I doubt White can save himself after 42 … Bb5! 43 Rg5+ Kd4 44 Rd1+ Bd3 45 Rf5 Ke3!.

**43 Rc1 Bd4 44 Rc7?**

White missed an opportunity to draw with 44 Rg5+! as Black's advantage, which at one stage felt eternal, now must be downgraded to 'for the time being'. Instead, 44 … Kf6 45 Rg8 Bh5 46 h4 e3 47 Rc7 e2 48 Rf8+ Ke5 49 Re7+ Kd6 50 Re6+ Kc7 51 Re7+ is perpetual check.



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** White's last move should lose. Should Black play 44 … Bh5, or the more forceful 44 … f3? One wins, while the other should lead to a draw.

**44 … f3?**

When a miracle occurs and in the end, you lose anyway, I interpret it as a waste of good luck. The advanced f-pawn certainly strikes a sinister note, as it violates White's territorial sovereignty even further. Yet, the move is a blunder which throws away the win. The ending is nightmarishly confusing for both sides.

***Answer*:** Correct is 44 … Bh5! 45 Rg5+ Kd6 46 Rxh7 Bf3+ 47 Rg2 with a winning position for Black after 47 … Ke5.

**45 Re7+!**

White's kingside forces strongly resent what they believe to be foreign interference in their traditional way of life. Now they begin to fight back.

**45 … Kf4**

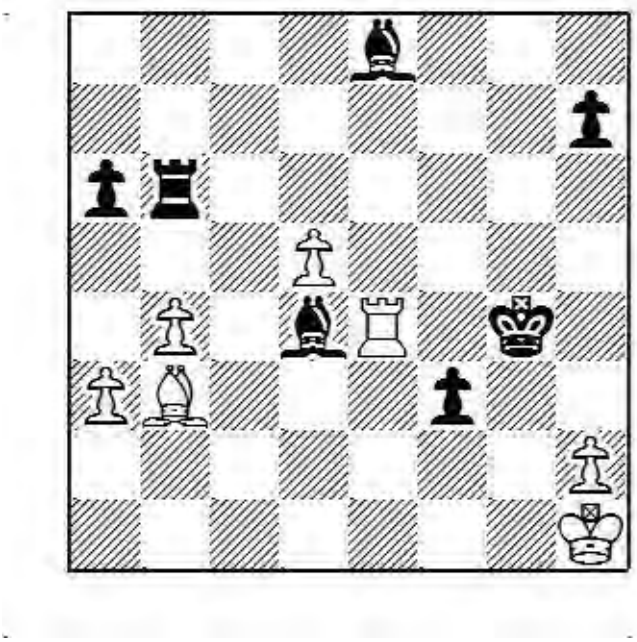
Black's deeply entrenched passers remain an ever present emblem of his authority - until now. However, 45 … Kd6? 46 Re6+ Kc7 47 Rc2+ Kd8 48 Rxe4 f2 49 Bc4 Rg6 50 h4 Ba7 51 Rf4 Rg1+ 52 Kh2 Bb8 53 d6! Bxd6 54 Rd2 Ke7 55 Rxd6 Kxd6 56 Rxf2 leaves Black fighting for the draw.

**46 Rg4+!**

White finds a way to break up Black's once deadly connected passers. Black's threats, which just a few moves ago, multiplied wildly, have now reached their plateau.

Also drawing is 46 Rxe8 fxg2+ 47 Kxg2 Rg6+ 48 Kh3 Rh6+ 49 Kg2 Rg6+ 50 Kh3 Rh6+ 51 Kg2 Rg6+ with perpetual check.

**46 … Kxg4 47 Rxe4+**



White must have breathed a huge sigh of relief after playing this move. The long implanted e4-blockage is extracted.

***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Should Black play his king to the f5-square, hoping for a draw, or can he get ambitious with 47 … Kh3? Which one would you play?

**47 … Kh3?**

This is more a death-rattle than a counterattack. Black's ambitious winning attempt loses. ***Answer*:** He should still hold the draw after 47 … Kf5! 48 Rxe8 Rf6 49 Bc2+ Kg5 50 Bd3 f2 51 Rg8+ Kf4 52 Kg2 Ke5 53 Rg5+ Kd6 54 Kf1 Rh6 55 Be4 Rxh2 56 Bg2 with a likely truce.

**48 Rxd4 Rf6**

After 48 … f2 49 Bc4 Bb5 50 Bxb5 axb5 51 Rd3+! Kg4 52 Kg2 Rf6 53 Kf1, the passer is halted and Black can resign.

**49 Bc4**

The long redundant bishop finally looks for honest work.

**49 … Bb5**

The myopic 49 … f2?? allows 50 Bf1 mate!

**50 Bxb5 axb5 51 Kg1**

It's all over, since White's king gets in front of the passer, ending Black's last hope.

**51 … Rd6 52 Kf2 h5 53 Kxf3 h4**

Also futile is 53 … Kxh2 54 Rh4+ Kg1 55 Rxh5 and White wins.

**54 Rd2 Rg6 55 Ke4 Rg4+ 56 Ke5 Rg5+ 57 Ke6 Rg6+ 58 Kf7 Rg1 59 d6 Rf1+ 60 Ke7 Re1+ 61 Kd8 Rc1 62 d7 Rc8+! 1-0**

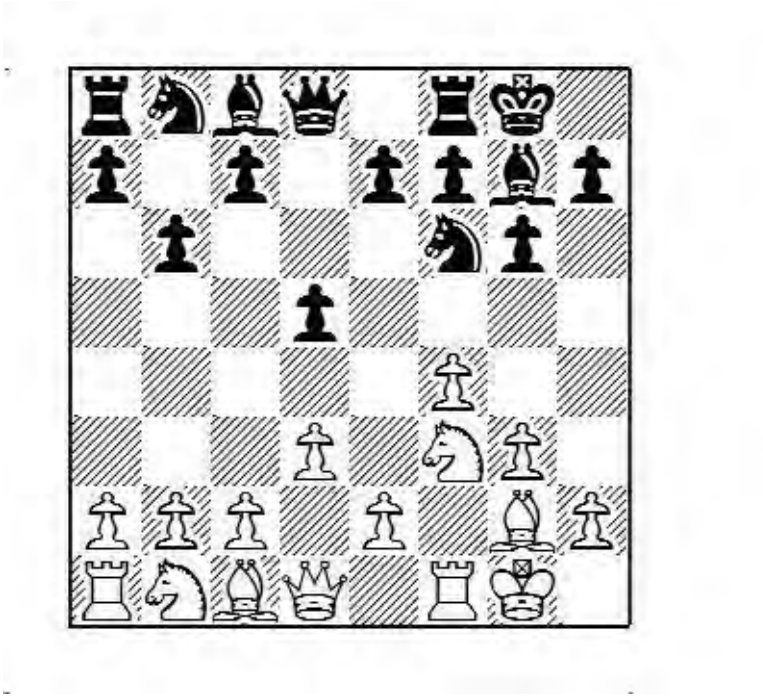
This game is clear proof that the foundational operating principle of the universe is

irony. I gave Black's last move an exclam, since he sets up a brilliant underpromotion helpmate after 63 dxc8=B mate! "Your existence threatens me, so you will be expunged from the world," the newly-elected bishop informs Black's king.

**Summary:** I think 10 … Rb8! equalizes and is an improvement over Game 15's … e5 plan.

*Game 17*
**A.Jakubiec-E.Rozentalis**
Warsaw AIG Life (rapid) 2007

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 Nf6 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 b6**



Black holds back on the natural … c7-c5 and chooses to develop quietly.

***Question*:** What is the point of not playing … c7-c5?

***Answer*:** Black's position is flexible and unresolved. Therefore, he keeps White guessing to his final intent. For example, he can decide to forgo … c7-c5 and place a knight on the c5-square, an idea used by Lautier (Nbd2-c4) on the White side of the Dutch Leningrad or simply play for … e7-e5 after … Nbd7, as utilized by Topalov (Nbd2 followed by e2-e4), also in the Dutch Leningrad.

**7 h3**

***Question*:** This move looks strange. What is its purpose?

***Answer*:** Black refuses to challenge White in the centre, so White uses the lull to build a direct attack upon Black's king with g3-g4, Qe1-h4. Instead:

a) White can of course reverse the order to the more traditional 7 Qe1 Bb7 8 h3.

b) He can also play for a queenside advance following 7 c3 Bb7 8 Na3 c5 9 Nc2 Nc6 10 Bd2 Re8 11 b4 (this plan is actually more common to the Classical Dutch lines, rather than in Leningrad Dutch) 11 … Nd7 12 Rb1 Qc7 13 bxc5 bxc5 14 Qc1 e5?! 15 fxe5 Ndxe5 16 Qa3?! (I missed the idea 16 Nxe5! Nxe5 17 Ne3! Qd7 18 c4, winning material)

16 … Nxf3+ 17 Bxf3 Ne5 18 Bg2 Ng4 19 Rfe1 Bh6? (19 … Be5 20 c4 Bxg3 21 hxg3 Qxg3 22 d4 Qf2+ 23 Kh1 Rxe2 24 Rxe2 Qxe2 25 Qf3 Qxd2 26 Qxg4 Qxc2 27 Rxb7 dxc4 28 dxc5 is even according to the comps) 20 Bxh6 Nxh6 21 c4 Red8 22 Ne3 when Black is busted and about to lose a key pawn, C.Lakdawala-E.Lobron, Internet (blitz) 2005.

**7 … Bb7**

***Question*:** How do we respond to 7 … Ba6 which suppresses White's e4-break?

***Answer*:** Your move is an unplayed idea. White can instead consider the plan used in the stem game, the standard kingside assault plan 8 Qe1, intending g3-g4 and Qh4.

**8 Qe1 Nbd7**

The most flexible move. Black leaves the c5-square open for a knight, just in case he needs it to suppress e2-e4.

If instead, 8 … c5 9 c3 Nc6 10 Na3 a6 11 e4 dxe4 12 dxe4 e5 13 Nc4 and now Black offered a pawn with 13 … Qc7!, H.Danielsen-J.Gunnarsson, Reykjavik 2006 (bad is 13 … exf4? 14 Bxf4, leaving Black in deep trouble, since Rad1 comes next with serious threats such as Nd6 or Bd6). Maybe White should now accept with 14 Nfxe5 Nxe5 15 Nxe5 Rad8. White must deal with some awkwardness, since he hangs the e4-pawn if he moves his knight away from the e5-square. But still, a pawn is a pawn, and if given a choice, I would take White's position.

**9 g4**

Now it becomes clear that White is playing directly for mate.

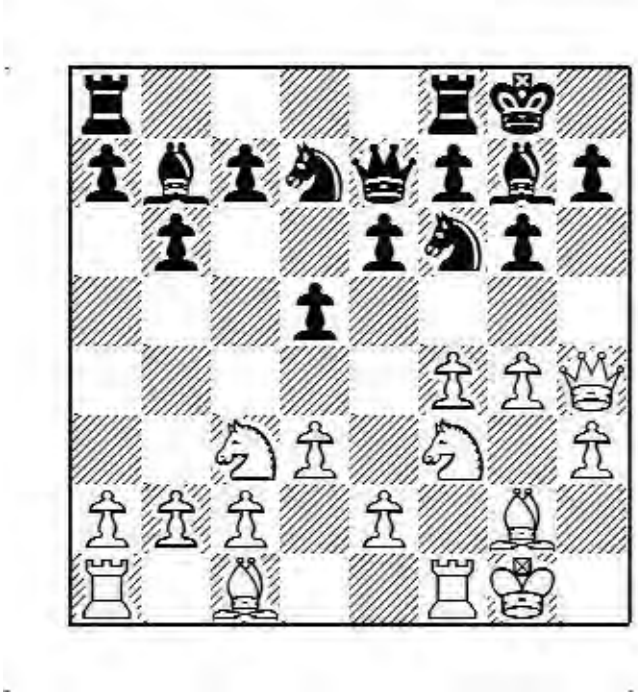
**9 … e6**

Tournament praxis has seen:

a) 9 … c5 10 c3 Qc7 11 Na3 e5 12 fxe5 Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Qxe5 14 Bf4 Qe6 15 Qf2 Bc6 16 Rae1 d4 17 c4 Nd7?! (17 … Bxg2 18 Kxg2 a6 19 e3 is even) 18 Nb5! Bxg2 19 Qxg2 Be5 20 e3! and Black is already in trouble. Following 20 … dxe3? (necessary was 20 … a6 21 Bxe5 Qxe5 22 exd4 Qg7 23 Nc7 Qxd4+ 24 Rf2 Rad8 25 Qg3) 21 Rxe3 Rac8, A.Jakubiec-W.Ehrenfeucht, Polanica Zdroj 1999, White has a winning position after 22 Bxe5 Nxe5 23 g5!.

b) 9 … Ne8 10 e4 dxe4 11 dxe4 Nc5 12 e5 f6 13 Nc3 fxe5 14 Nxe5 Bxg2 15 Kxg2 Qd6 16 Be3! Bxe5 17 fxe5 Qc6+ (of course not 17 … Qxe5?? 18 Rxf8+ Kxf8 19 Bh6+ when White wins Black's queen) 18 Kh2 Ng7 19 Qe2 and White looks better since Black seems shaky on the dark square, A.Kharlov-Y.Yakovich, Moscow 1992.

**10 Nc3 Qe7 11 Qh4**

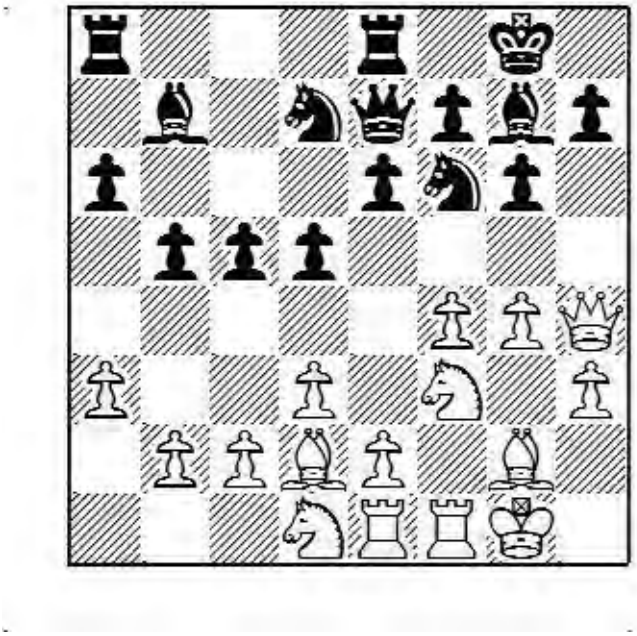


This is a standard Closed Sicilian plan, which also works here in the Reversed Leningrad Dutch. White can also directly play for e2-e4 here. After 11 e4 dxe4 12 dxe4 Nc5, F.Hoelzl-H.Wirthensohn, La Valetta 1980, White looks just a shade better due to his extra space after 13 e5 Nd5 14 Nxd5 Bxd5 15 b3.

**11 … Rfe8 12 Bd2 a6 13 Rae1**

White loads up on the kingside before committing to a lunge.

**13 … b5 14 a3 c5 15 Nd1**



***Question*:** Why did White retreat the knight?

***Answer*:** White's plan is simple:

1. Transfer every available piece over to the kingside.

2. Deliver checkmate.

White plans Nf2, after which he can play for our now familiar g4-g5 and Ng4 attacking plan.

**15 … Qd6 16 Nf2 d4**

Black clears the d5-square for his knight as well.

**17 g5**

Here we go. White initiates his attacking plan along the kingside dark squares.

**17 … Nh5 18 Ne4 Bxe4!?**

***Question*:** This seems like a pretty large concession.

Why not just back up the queen to the e7-square instead?

***Answer*:** After 18 … Qe7, White can respond with the tricky 19 Ba5! (preventing … Nb6 and … Nd5). Now White threatens Nh2, after which Black must watch out for Bf3 and also Ng4.

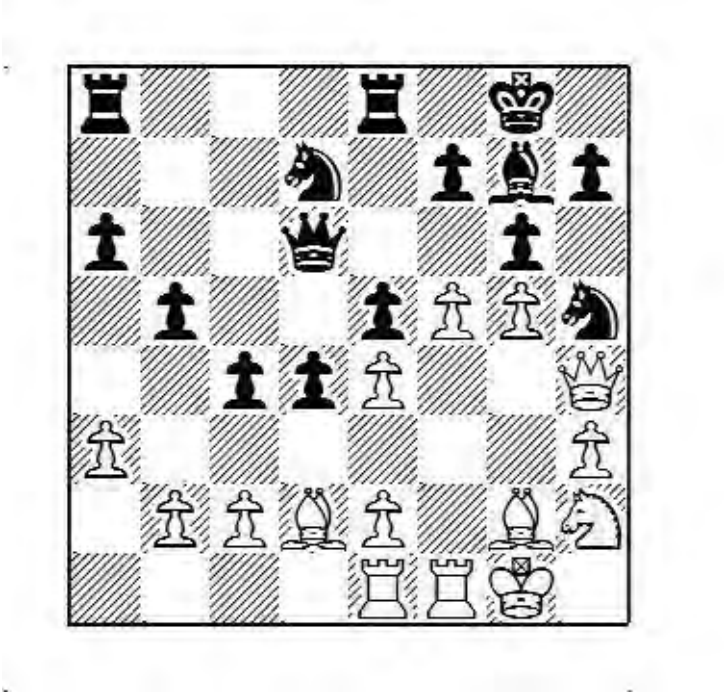
**19 dxe4 e5**

I think this may be the correct decision, despite the fact that it allows White's next bypassing move. If 19 … Nb6, 20 e5 Qd7 21 Nh2! intending Ng4 and Nf6+ (as well as Bf3 and Bxh5 ideas) looks quite dangerous for Black.

**20 f5 c4**

Of course Black rules the queenside, but White banks on kingside action to distract his opponent.

**21 Nh2**



Commencing our favourite plan: Ng4 to aid in the kingside assault.

**21 … c3!?**

This is a clearly demarcated battle, with each side pushing the other on his respective

dominant wing. This move reminds White that if his kingside attack fizzles, he will probably lose the game on the queenside.

**22 bxc3 Qc5**

I like White's chances in the line 22 … Nb6 23 Rd1 dxc3 24 Bc1 (White can't get distracted with 24 Bxc3?? as after 24 … Qc5+ 25 Qf2 Qxc3 26 Qxb6 Bf8! 27 Rd5 Nf4, Black is winning) 24 … Qc5+ 25 Kh1 Nc4 26 Bf3 Nf4 27 Ng4 and I think Black is in deep trouble here. *Houdini* initially thinks the chances are even. But give it a few minutes and White's advantage rises considerably. Black always gets nailed on the kingside, no matter how he squirms here.

**23 Ng4 Nb6?**

Black's only move is 23 … Qxa3. Even then, White's kingside assault looks quite promising after something like 24 Qf2 (threat: fxg6, Qf7+ and Qxd7) when Black must play almost perfectly to survive. After 24 … Rad8 25 Rd1 dxc3 26 Be3 Nf4 27 Bc1 Qc5 28 e3 Nxg2 29 fxg6! Nf4 (29 … fxg6?? 30 Qf7+ Kh8 31 Rxd7 Qf8 32 Kxg2 wins) 30 gxf7+ Kxf7 31 Rd5 Qa7 32 exf4 Qxf2+ 33 Kxf2 Nb6 (33 … exf4?? 34 Rfd1 places the d7-knight in a deadly pin) 34 Rxd8 Rxd8 35 f5, it's anyone's game.

**24 cxd4 exd4?**

This second mistake abruptly ends Black's resistance. Forced was 24 … Qxa3 25 Qf2 Nc4 26 e3 Rac8 27 Bc1 although White looks close to winning here as well.

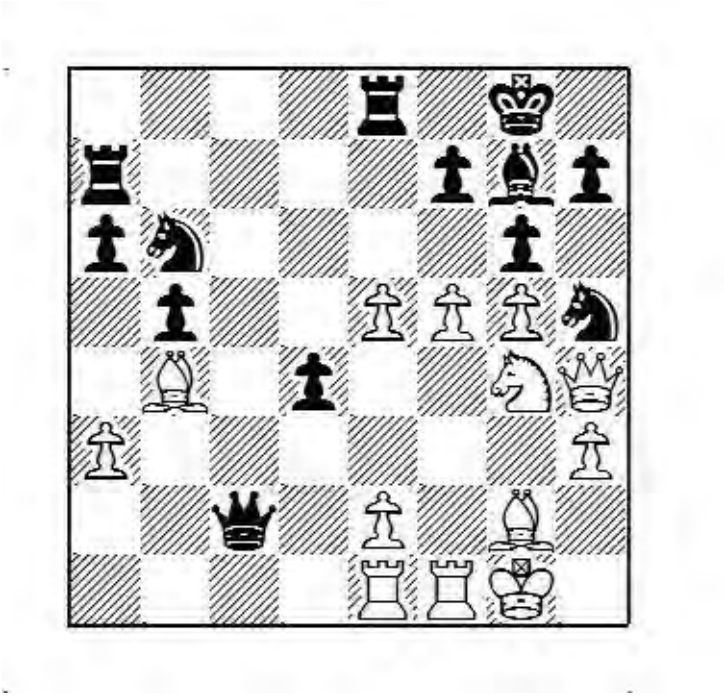
**25 Bb4!**

Increasing the scope of the dark-squared bishop to aim at the kingside.

**25 … Qxc2 26 e5!**

Threat: Bxa8.

**26 … Ra7**



***Exercise (planning)*:** How would you conduct White's coming attack?

***Answer*:** Annihilation of king's cover.

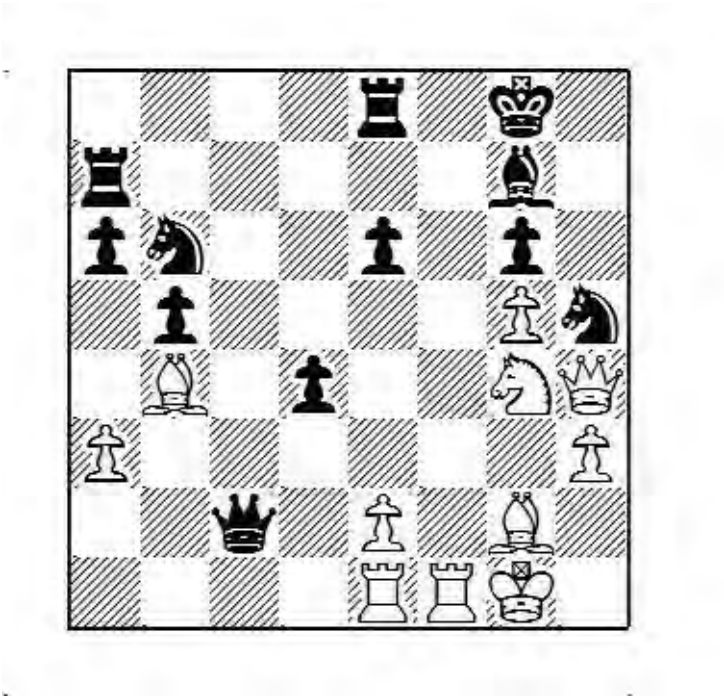
**27 e6!**

Now Black's king is unable to withstand the attacking heat.

**27 … fxe6**

Futile is 27 … a5 as 28 Rc1 Qxe2 29 Bc5 Ra6 30 exf7+ Kxf7 31 Rce1 Qc4 32 Nh6+ Bxh6 33 fxg6+ Kxg6 34 Rf6+! Kg7 35 gxh6+ forces mate.

**28 fxg6 hxg6**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Find one deadly shot and Black's position crumbles.

***Answer*:** Discovered attack.

**29 Be4!**

White's bishop is immune and thus becomes decisive in prising open the black king's cover.

**29 … d3**

29 … Qxe4 30 Nh6+ discovers on the queen.

**30 Bxg6**

Now the e8-rook and h5-knight hang simultaneously.

**30 … Bd4+ 31 e3 1-0**

Black's entire army hangs.

**Summary:** Remember the Closed Sicilian attacking plan: Qe1, h2-h3, g3-g4 and Qh4.

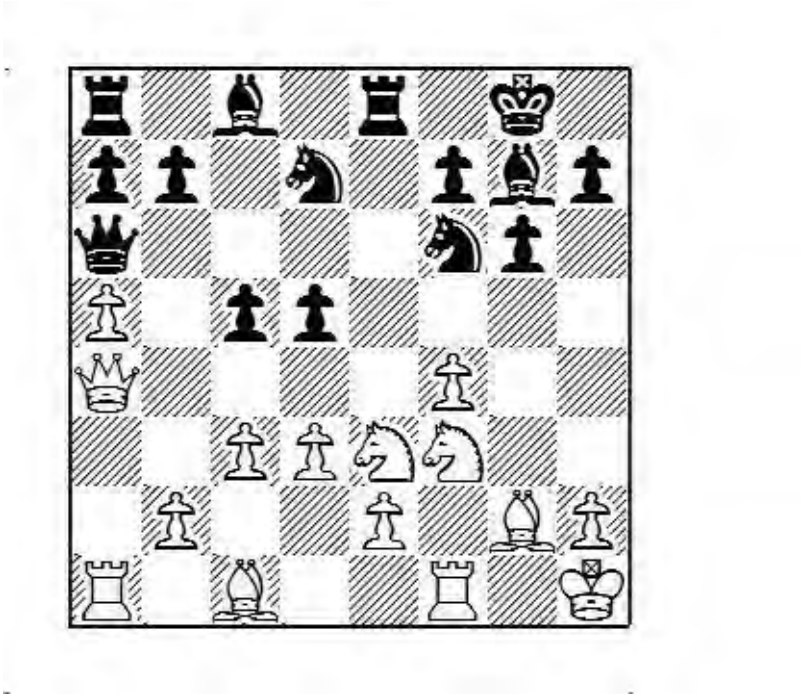
*Game 18*
**M.Bartel-Y.Shen**
Moscow Aeroflot Open 2009

**1 f4**

As White, I sometimes meet the Leningrad Dutch with Black's setup, the following way: 1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 c3 Bg7 5 Nf3 d5!? (more common is a line like 5 … d6 6 0-0 0-0 7 Qb3+ e6 8 Ng5 d5 9 Bf4 Nh5 10 Nh3 Nxf4 11 Nxf4 c6 12 Nd2 Qe7 13 c4 Nd7 (13 … Bxd4? is met with the trick 14 cxd5 cxd5 15 Nxd5!) 14 Nf3 when Black's bishop pair compensates for the slight e5 weakness, P.Harikrishna-H.Nakamura, Biel 2012) 6 Bf4 c6 7 Nbd2 Be6 8 Qb3 Qb6 9 Ne5 Nbd7 10 Ndf3 Ne4 11 Nxd7 Bxd7 12 Ne5 Be6 13 Nd3 with an edge to White, due to his control over the e5-square, C.Lakdawala-B.Baker, San Diego 2004. In the stem game, we will thus discuss Black's … c6 (as opposed to the more typical … c5) idea.

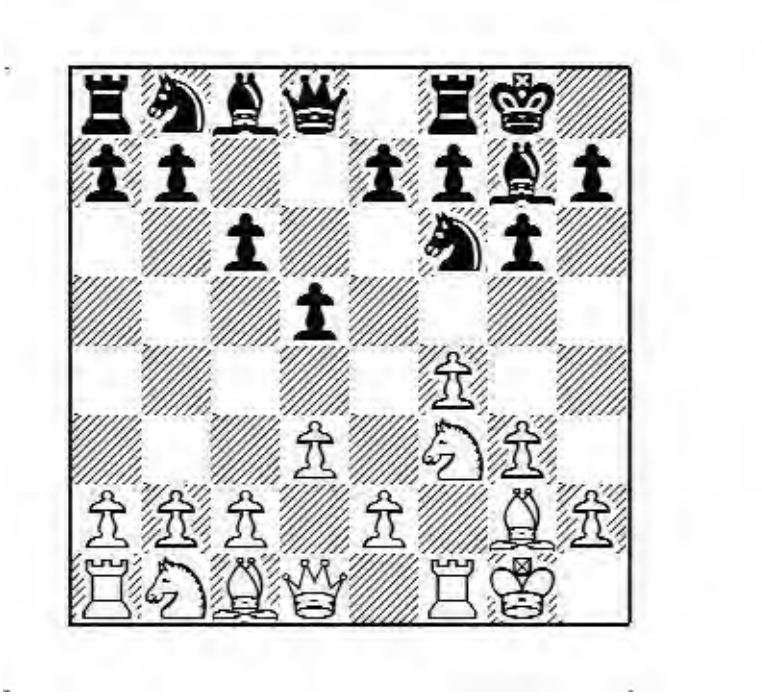
**1 … d5 2 Nf3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 Nf6 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3**

The late, great Larsen essayed 6 c3 c6 7 Kh1 Qb6 8 Na3 Nbd7 9 Nc2 Re8 10 a4!? e5 11 a5 Qb5 12 d3 c5 13 Ne3!? (nobody can accuse Larsen of a routine interpretation of the opening!) 13 … exf4 14 gxf4 Qa6 15 Qa4! (intending to swing the queen into the kingside by f4-f5, followed by Qh4)



15 … Rb8 16 f5! c4!? (Kavalek offers a pawn in an attempt to cross Larsen's plan by clogging the white queen's access to h4; the comps are not so impressed though and neither was Larsen) 17 dxc4 Nc5 18 Qb4 Nce4 19 Nd4 (stronger was 19 fxg6! hxg6 20 Nxd5 Nxd5 21 cxd5 and if 21 … Qxe2?? 22 Bf4 Ra8 23 Rae1 Qc2 24 Ng5 and White wins) 19 … Bf8 20 Qb5 dxc4 21 fxg6 hxg6 22 Qxa6 bxa6 23 Nxc4 and Black's queenside piece pressure gives him partial, but not full compensation for the pawn. Larsen went on to take the full point, B.Larsen-L.Kavalek, Halle 1963.

**6 … c6**



***Question*:** Why hold back and play the c-pawn

up one notch, rather than to the c5-square?

***Answer*:** Black deals with the Bird/Leningrad Dutch by setting up with an ultra-solid Schlecter Slav formation with the following reasons:

1. The d5-pawn is reinforced.

2. Black's queen has access to the b6-square, so White must watch out for … Qb6, followed by … Ng4 trick. This motif simultaneously threatens the b2-pawn as well as the e3- and f2-squares.

**7 e3**

White's most flexible move.

***Question*:** Why this move rather than our normal 7 Qe1?

***Answer*:** For two reasons:

1. 7 e3 may be slightly more accurate than 7 Qe1, since White later has a choice of playing his queen to either the e1- or e2-square.

2. Black can pretty much force e2-e3 anyway after 7 … Qb6+ 8 e3 Nbd7 9 Nc3 a5 10 a4 Nc5 11 Kh1 Na6 12 e4 Nb4 13 Rf2 d4 14 Na2 Na6 15 h3 Nd7 16 b3 Qd8 17 Bd2 b6 18 g4, A.Jakubiec-V.Komliakov, Panormo 2001. Here, GM Jakubiec launched a successful kingside attack.

**7 … a5**

This move is a theoretical novelty.

***Question*:** This looks like Black stabs out at nothing

on the queenside. What is the point of this move?

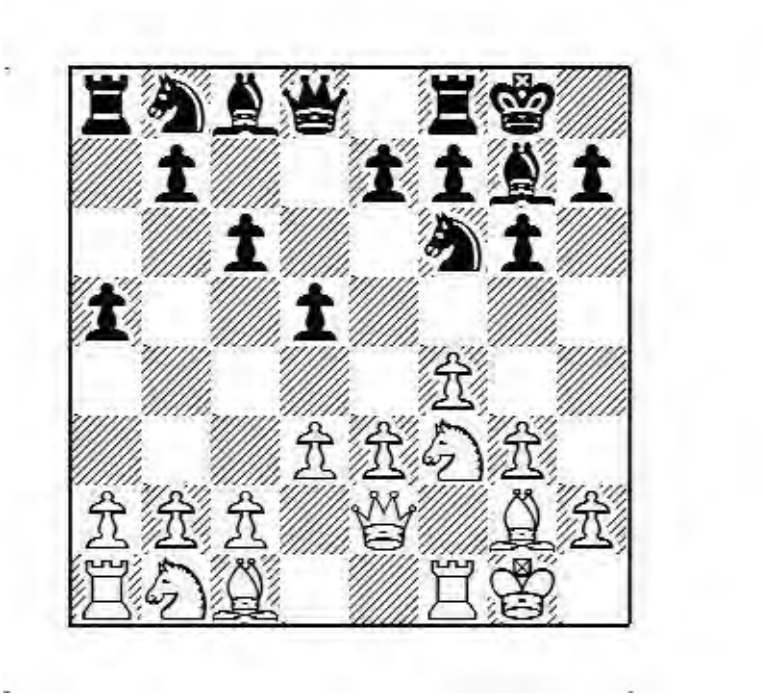
***Answer*:** Black expands on the queenside, gaining useful space and prepares … a5-a4-a3, hoping for eventual contact.

A couple of alternatives:

a) Black can also play for an … e7-e5 plan after 7 … Nbd7 8 Nc3 Qc7 9 e4 dxe4 10 dxe4 e5!? and I think it's quite risky to allow White f4-f5, since attacking chances automatically follow. After 11 f5, White later plays for g4-g5 with a strong kingside grip, V.Malaniuk-V.Kachar, Saratov 2006.

b) Black can also play to dump his potentially bad bishop with 7 … Bg4 8 h3 Bxf3 9 Qxf3 Nbd7 10 e4 e5 (otherwise White plays e4-e5 himself, with a clear central space advantage) 11 f5 dxe4 12 dxe4, S.Kindermann-H.Cording, Germany 1982. I like the looks of White's coming autopilot attack of pushing the g-pawn all the way to g5.

**8 Qe2**



This is the reason some players play 7 e3, rather than 7 Qe1. The e2-square is a more natural one for the queen as it helps to clear the back rank for the rooks to connect eventually.

**8 … a4**

Black intends to push … a3 if allowed.

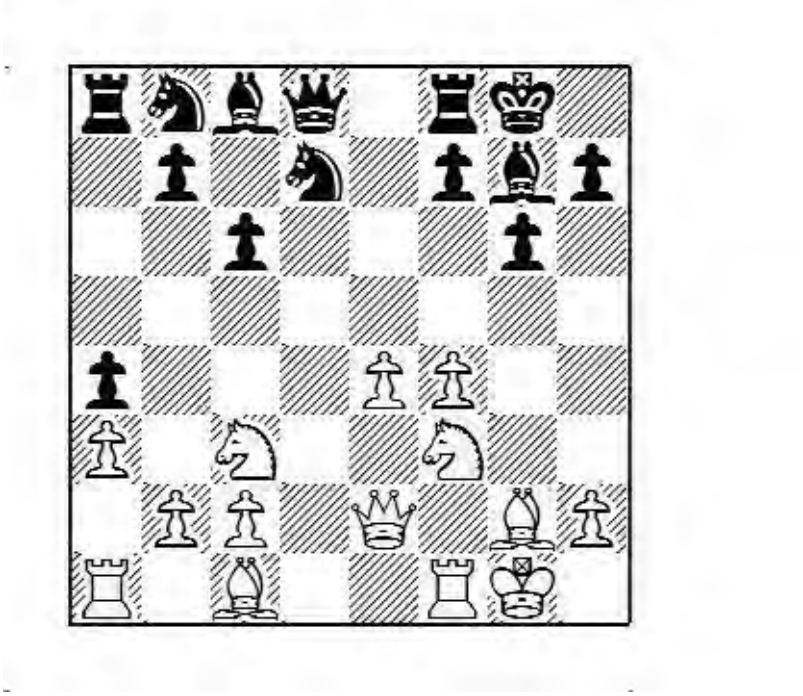
**9 a3 Nfd7?!**

Black alters established procedure with a move which smacks of artificiality. Black plays for the … e5 freeing break, at the cost of tangling his development somewhat. I would be more inclined to play 9 … Bg4 and then swap off the bad bishop. This is followed with … e6, switching the structure to favour Black's remaining good bishop.

**10 Nc3 b5!?**

Well, maybe he isn't playing for the … e5 break after all. Black can try 10 … e5 11 e4

dxe4 12 dxe4 exf4 13 gxf4.



***Question*:** Can Black try the risky dark-squares

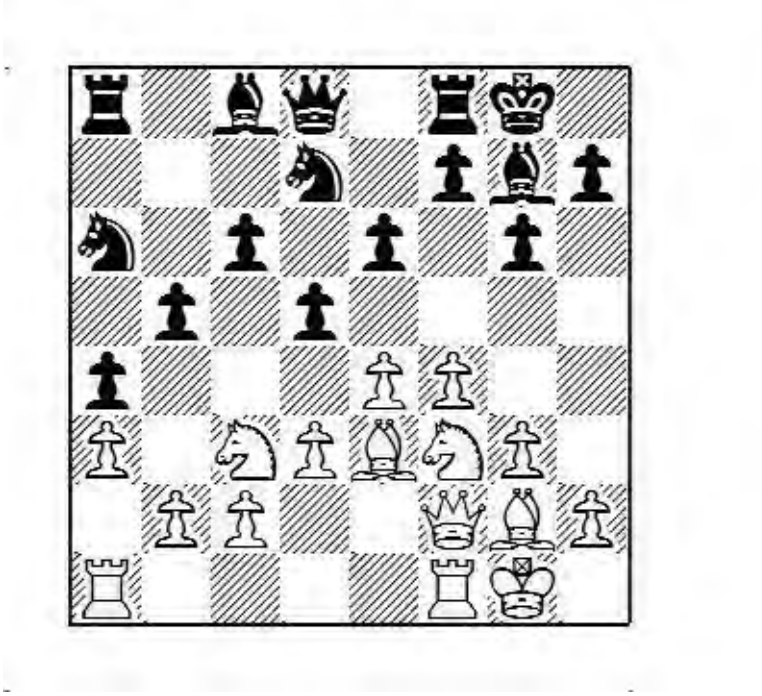
-for-damaged-structure idea with 13 … Bxc3?

***Answer*:** *Houdini* claims your suggestion is playable. Of course the danger of this move is the potential degradation of dark square integrity around Black's king. After 14 bxc3 Qe7, if Black survives White's coming attack, he then owns the superior structure. However, that is a pretty big 'if'. White can already proceed to launch a powerful attack with the pawn sacrifice 15 f5! and meet 15 … gxf5? (15 … f6 16 Bh6 Rf7 17 Qf2 gives White a strong initiative too) with 16 Bh6 Re8 17 Rae1 with a huge advantage. So in this case, I believe king safety is more important than structural issues.

**11 e4 e6**

Black sets up a light square wall. It's more normal to engage this plan only after playing … Bg4 and … Bxf3.

**12 Be3 Na6 13 Qf2!**



A multipurpose move:

1. White prevents Black from unravelling with … Nb6 or … Ndc5.

2. White furthers his grip on the d4-square.

3. White leaves open future attacking options like h2-h3, g3-g4 and if possible, Qh4.

**13 … Rb8**

Enabling … Nb6 and also thinking about … b5-b4 ideas with the intention of creating conflict on the queenside, Black's territory.

**14 h3**

Preparing g3-g4.

**14 … Bb7**

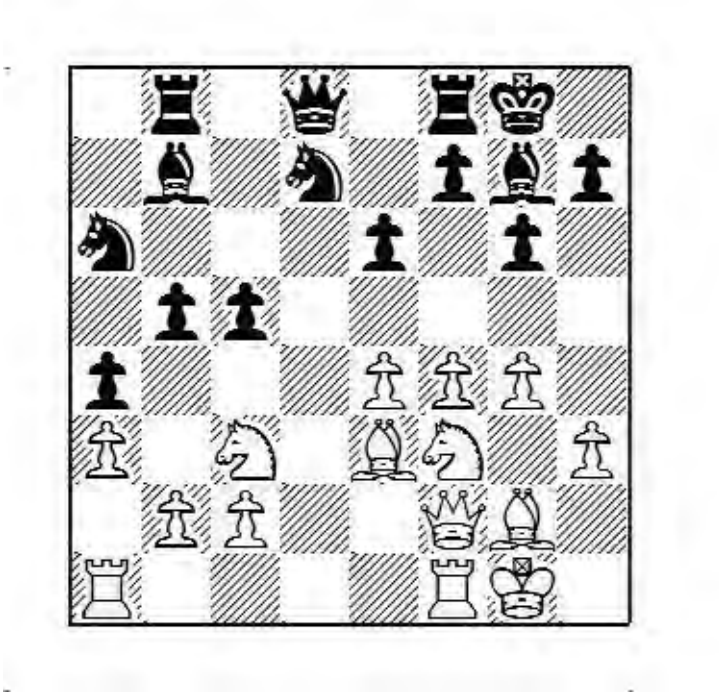
Black's position looks strategically sour after 14 … f5?! 15 exd5 exd5 16 Ba7 Rb7 17 Bd4! when the exchange of dark-squared bishops leaves Black weak all over on the dark squares.

**15 g4 dxe4**

Principle: *Counter in the centre when assaulted on the wing*. However, the move has a downside. If White gets a chance to play dxe4 and e4-e5, then he has access to Ne4, feeding a big attacker into the kingside.

**16 dxe4 c5**

Black continues to lavish time and capital to his queenside dream.



**17 Rad1**

I suspect that Bartel is playing directly for mate. He retains a pleasant strategic edge after 17 e5 f6 18 exf6 Bxf6 19 Rad1 and now *Houdini's* suggestion is 19 … Bxc3!?. The risky plan obviously pulls in contradictory trajectories. The old blameless bishop spent decades in serious contemplation and prayer. Now all the repressed goofiness which was previously bottled up in his psyche emerges in a powerful explosion of irrationality. Following 20 bxc3 Qe7 21 Rfe1 Nb6 22 Ne5 Nd5 23 c4 bxc4 24 Nxc4 Nxe3 25 Qxe3, White applies pressure to the e6-pawn and his c4-knight is clearly superior to its a6-counterpart.

**17 … Qe7**

How to differentiate wisdom from folly? If we are unable to do so, then the two become virtually interchangeable. The mate-oblivious comps of course demand that Black play 17 … Bxc3!?. To my mind, this is the equivalent of entering a duel with a papier-mâché sword, versus the skilled opponent's cold steel. After 18 bxc3, White threatens Ne5. Of course, we fearful humans know better. I like White's attacking chances over Black's structure after 18 … Qe7 19 f5! Bxe4 20 Bh6 Bxf3 21 Bxf3 Rfc8 22 fxe6 fxe6 23 Bf4 Rb6 24 Qd2 Nab8 25 Bd6 and in this open position, White's scary bishop pair is worth more than Black's extra pawn.

**18 e5**

White's clamp continues to grow.

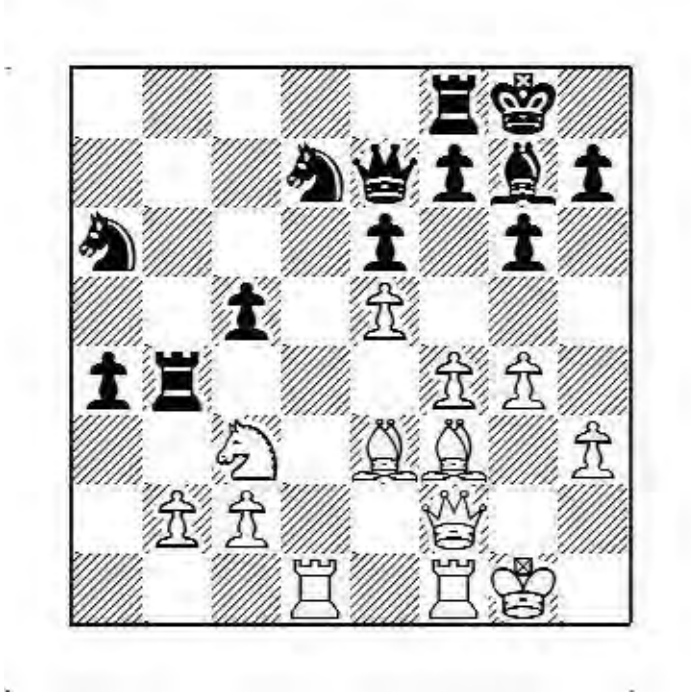
**18 … b4!?**

Contesting the e5-pawn wedge with 18 … f6 19 exf6 Nxf6 20 Ne5 also looks promising.

**19 axb4 Bxf3**

This move energizes Black's queenside attack, at the cost of handing White the bishop pair.

**20 Bxf3 Rxb4**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Come up with a clear attacking plan for White

(hint: I already mentioned this plan over and over in this chapter!):

***Answer*:** The f6-square is the masked connection point which unites White's attackers. Play for g4-g5! followed by Ne4 and Nf6+.

**21 g5!**

In the span of a single chess game, we make dozens of secret wishes without even realizing it. Both Black's and White's thoughts unite on the need to push their respective attacks along as quickly as possible. In this case, White's threats come faster. Ah, yes, our now familiar theme: First clamp down on the f6-square, and then transfer a knight there. White achieved a strategically won game. But then I very reasonably ask: where did Black go wrong? I suspect that his 9th move … Nfd7?! may be identified as the culprit.

**21 … Rc8**

Also, 21 … Rxb2 22 Nxa4 Rb4 23 Nc3 Rc4 24 Ne4 Nb4 25 Rd2 Nd5 26 Nf6+ is decisive for White.

**22 Ra1**

Bartel wants to eliminate the a4-pawn, Black's only real chance of counterplay. Also, 22 Rd6! Nab8 23 Ne4 Rxb2 24 Ra1 looks quite awful for Black.

**22 … Rxb2 23 Nxa4 Rb4 24 Nc3!**

The knight's fangs haven't yet been drawn in. With this triple purpose move:

1. White uncovers on the a6-knight.

2. White threatens to increase the pressure further with a coming Ra7.

3. White re-transfers his knight back to the c3-square, where it heads for its ideal e4-post.

**24 … Nc7 25 Ra7!**

Black is horribly tangled.

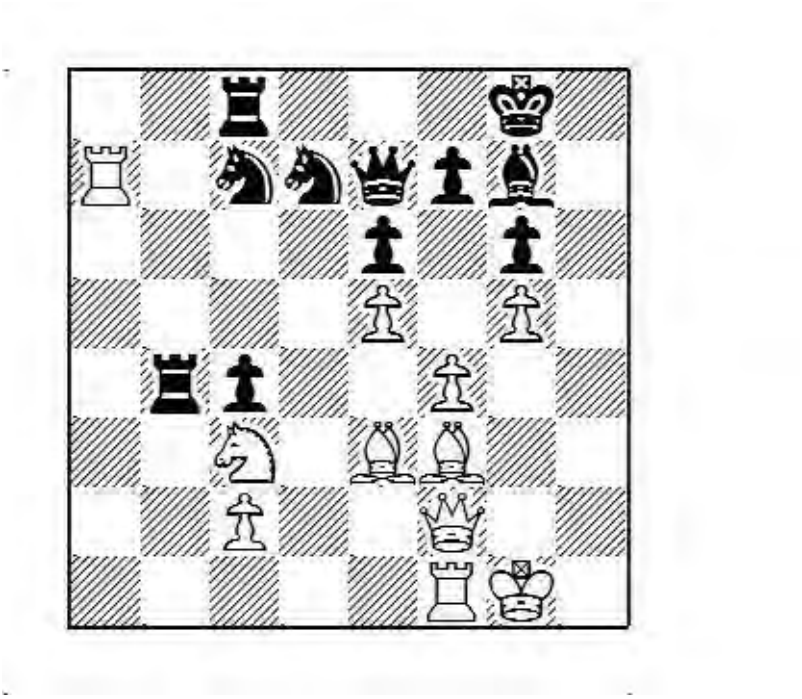
**25 … h6**

Of course this alters nothing, since White can simply back up the g5-pawn with his h-pawn.

**26 h4 hxg5**

The trouble with this move is that it opens the h-file for White's major pieces.

**27 hxg5 c4?**



Recovery from a serious illness isn't likely if you merely take intermittent doses from an already diluted medicine.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** In losing positions, confusing

variations tend to cross over and intermingle, like voices heard in

a dream. Black's last move was a mistake. How can White exploit it?

**28 Ne4**

Bartel is unable to connect the stray data to a combinational pattern. Since White has been playing for this move for many moves, it's easy to miss the killer blow.

***Answer*:** Pin/skewer. Black is unable to extricate his queen from multiple pins and skewers after 28 Rd1! which wins a piece, no matter how Black wiggles. In such complex positions, our strategic skills are of scant use. When the position gets crazy, tactics come to the forefront. For example, 28 … Rb2 (also, 28 … Bf8 29 Ne4! and the threat of Rxd7 and Nf6+ is decisive) 29 Bc1 Rbb8 30 Ba3 Qe8 31 Bc6 wins for White.

**28 … Nb5?**

Instead, 28 … Nd5 was forced.

**29 Nf6+! Bxf6 30 gxf6 Qd8 31 Rxd7!**

"You are no more than a pretty yet empty symbol, like a wooden mermaid on a ship's

bow," the rook taunts his d8-cousin.

**31 … Qxd7**

The queen's tightly drawn brow and agitated foot-tapping give us a picture of her mood.

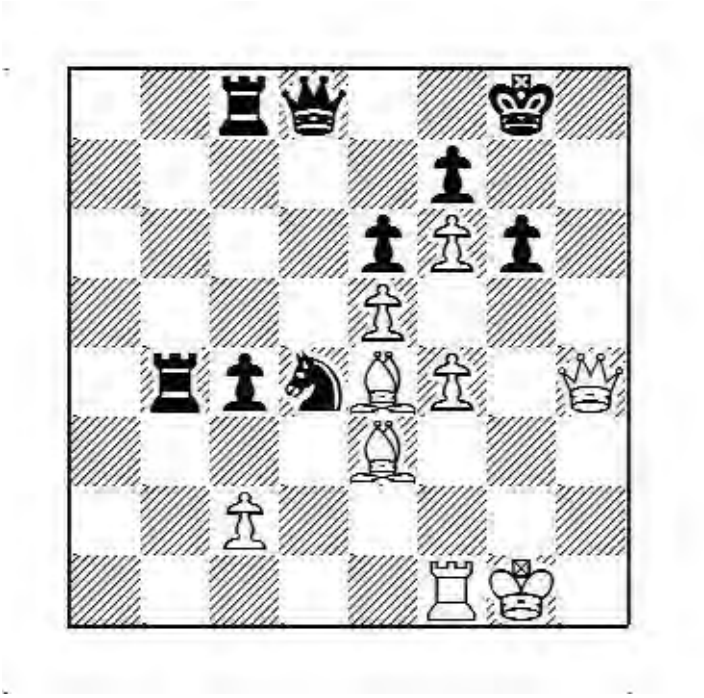
**32 Qh4**

One senses a distinct lack of affection between the siblings on h4 and g8. Threat: Qh6. Vulgar two-move mate threats don't count as subtle stratagems, but nobody can deny that they uplift the spirit.

**32 … Nd4 33 Be4!**

A really stupid way to blow the game would be 33 Qh6?? as Black wins with 33 … Nf5, forking the queen and the bishop.

**33 … Qd8**



***Exercise (planning)*:** The haggard black king looks in the mirror and fails to recognize the stranger who gazes into his eyes so intensely. It grows obvious that Black isn't going to pull off a coherent defence with such a tenuous assembly of offside defenders. Find one attacking idea and Black is mated:

***Answer*:** Clearance. There is no defence to the coming Rh1.

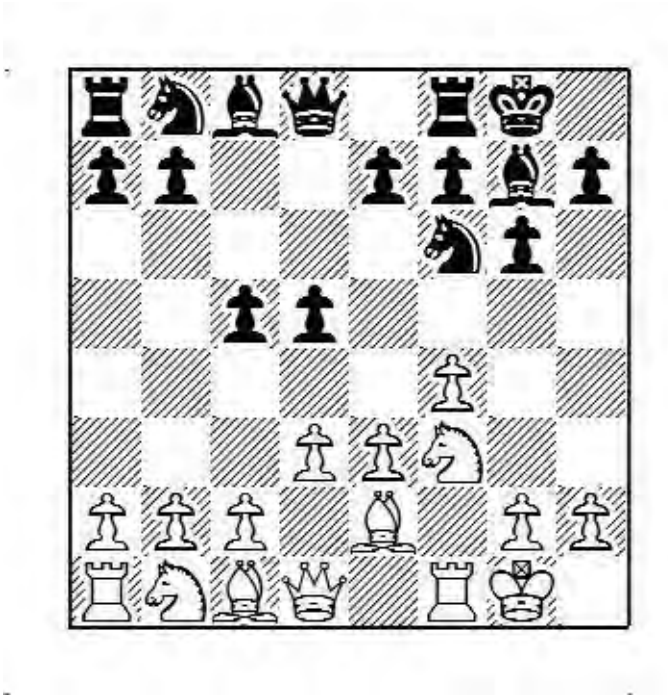
**34 Kf2! 1-0**

"Our war plan must be implemented with a high degree of intelligence," lectures White's king, adding "which is synonymous with the fact that I alone am capable of creating it."

**Summary:** When Black sets up with the … d5, … c6 formation, you may want to think

about playing 7 e3, rather than our standard 7 Qe1 plan, since by playing e2-e3, we have the choice of later transferring the queen to e2, a more natural square than e1.

# Chapter Three
# Classical Bird and Fianchetto Lines



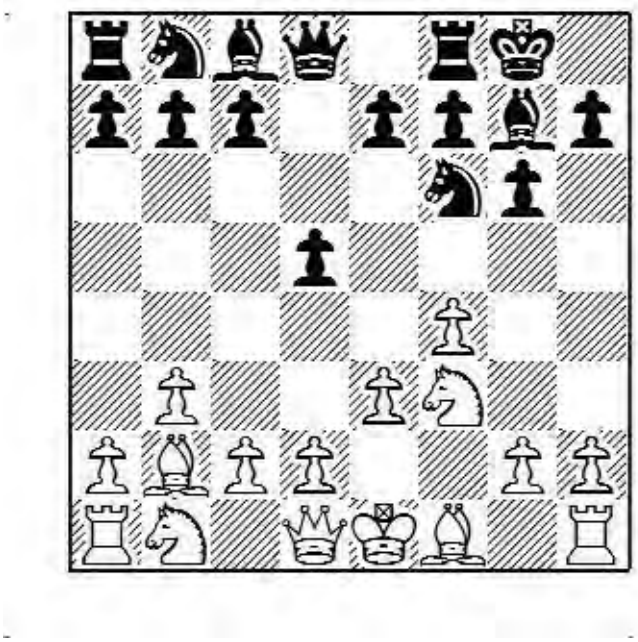
White modestly holds the e-pawn back to the third rank in the Classical lines, yet harbours great ambitions. We can play for three distinct plans in the position:

1. White plays for central expansion with e4, often with the help of Qe1 and Bd1.

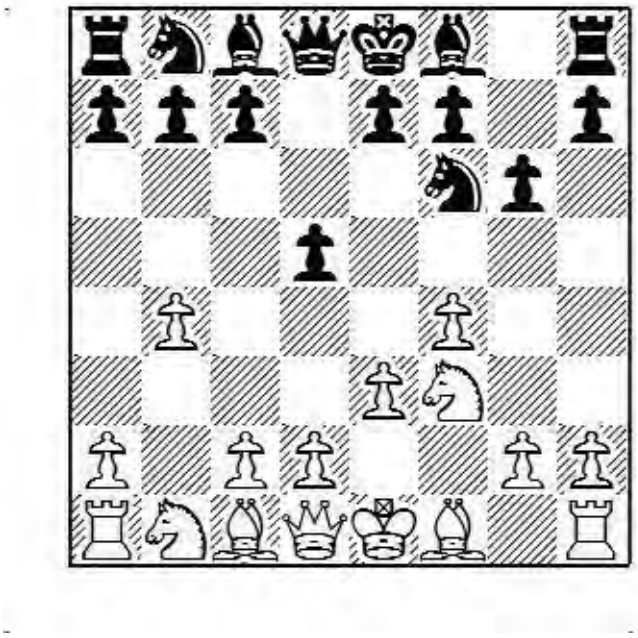
2. White plays for a direct kingside assault, with Qe1, Qh4, sometimes Ne5 and often g2-g4.

3. White can simply use the f-pawn as a means of softening the black king's pawn cover, with f4-f5 ideas later on.

The resulting positions feel like a nest of ambiguities, which neither prove nor disprove. Instead, they all seem to point to the dreaded unclear evaluation. Of course this factor rarely bothers Classical players who tend to be natural tactician/attackers. White may embrace harsh strategic extremes (like tossing in g2-g4!? to attack), and most Classical adherents believe they will escape the consequences of past strategic indiscretions by hocus-pocusing their way out through the use of the smoke and mirrors of extreme complications. It is to Black great peril if he or she underestimates the danger and la-di-das away the kingside menace.



At the end of the chapter, we briefly touch upon the Fianchetto Bird lines, where White concentrates on an overprotection of the e5-square. We essentially reach a Queen's Indian position a move up, but can expect no advantage if Black plays correctly.



In this final diagram, theory walks the brink of lunacy, yet somehow manages to avoid falling off. This is Bent Larsen's odd Bird Orangutan, where White may even play on the queenside, a rarity in most Bird lines.

*Game 19*
**E.Andreassen-A.Mori**
Correspondence 2007

**1 f4 c5**

Our move-order usually arises from 1 … d5; and 1 … Nf6, both moves preventing White from playing e2-e4. For example: 2 Nf3 d5 3 e3 g6 4 Be2 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 c5 7 Qe1 Nc6 and we reach one of our tabiya positions of this chapter.

**2 Nf3 g6**

This move-order discourages White from b3-Bird lines, which we examine briefly near the end of the chapter.

**3 e3**

I normally just play 3 e4 if Black allows it, transposing the game into a Sicilian Defence.

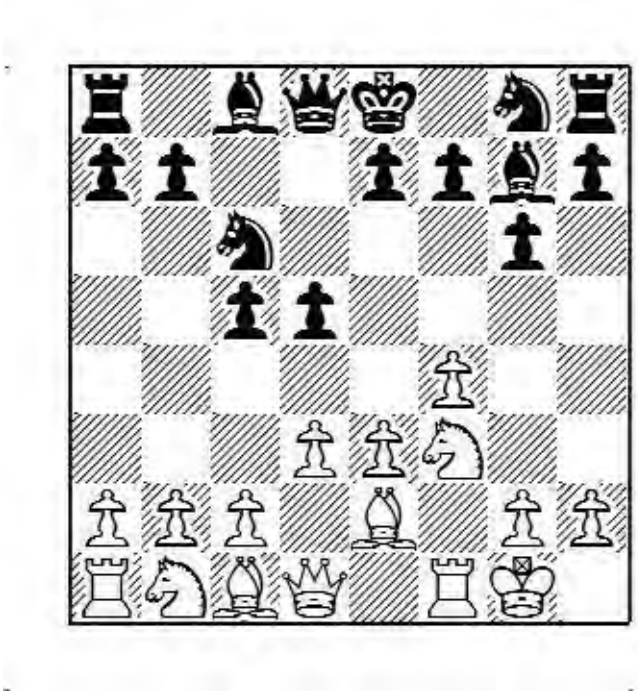
***Question*:** You don't like 3 e3 here?

***Answer*:** I don't really understand the point of playing e2-e3 and then later *trying* to achieve e3-e4, when we can do it in one shot, *unless* White intends to follow with d2-d4 and a Stonewall setup.

***Question*:** Then why do so many players choose 3 e3 over the immediate 3 e4?

***Answer*:** We mustn't overlook an extra dimensional factor in White's equation: flexibility. White's formation is fluid, and by playing the e-pawn modestly to the e3-square, we keep Black guessing as to our intent. It's based on the philosophy: It becomes difficult for our opponents to overcome an anonymous enemy, since they don't know which direction to shoot. Also, the White player might be a Classical Dutch or Stonewall Dutch specialist, seeking to embroil his opponent into a tabiya where he is more experienced with, coupled with an extra tempo.

**3 … Bg7 4 Be2 Nc6 5 0-0 d5 6 d3**



This move sets in motion the Classical, or Ilyin-Zhenevsky Bird/Dutch.

***Question*:** What is White playing for?

***Answer*:** White has several plans at his or her disposal:

1. White can play for the e3-e4 break, often in conjunction with Qe1 and even Bd1.

2. White can play for a kingside attack, with Qe1 and Qh4, although this isn't so easy to achieve.

3. White can play the following queenside plan: a4, Na3, c2-c3, Nc2, Bd2, Rb1 and b2-b4, which we look at later in the chapter.

4. I have even seen White switch later on to a delayed Stonewall setup with c2-c3 and d3-d4, if Black posts his or her pieces oddly, or out of sync with this formation.

Now saying all this, I don't play the Classical lines.

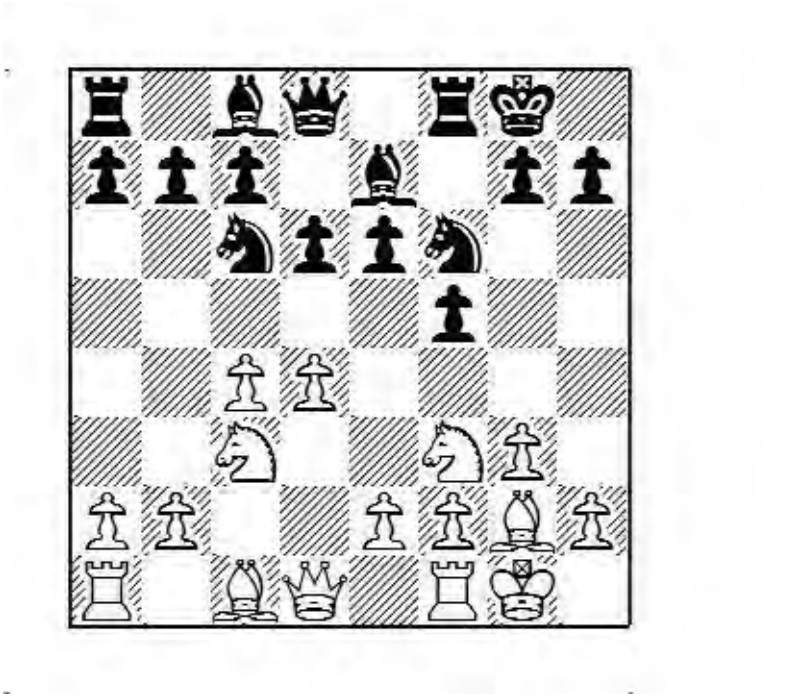
***Question*:** Why not?

***Answer*:** It just feels too passive, as if White is the one seeking to equalize. I prefer Leningrad and Stonewall lines instead. But I realize readers may play the Classical lines, so that is why this chapter is in the book.

### 6 … Nf6 7 Nc3!?

If White is intent on developing a knight to the c3-square, then the more common move-order is 7 Qe1 0-0 8 Nc3 which is White's normal move-order here.

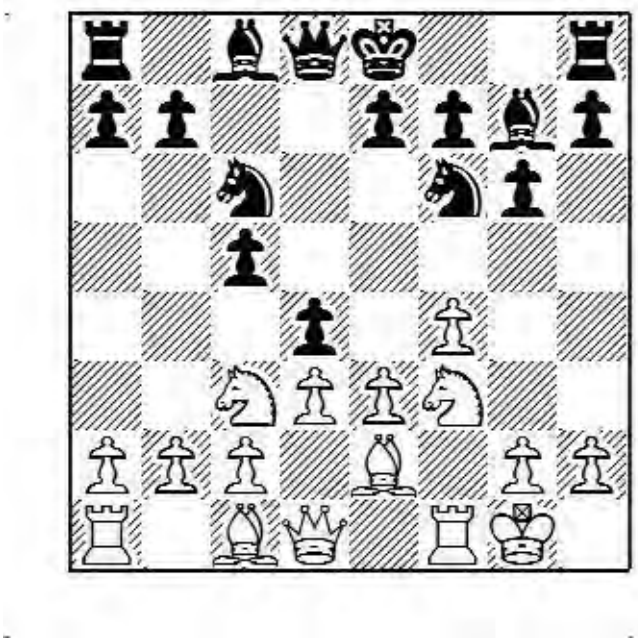
One interesting point to note at this juncture is that the analogous position in the Classical Dutch, following 1 d4 f5 2 c4 Nf6 3 g3 e6 4 Bg2 Be7 5 Nf3 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 Nc3, 7 … Nc6?! is considered an error.



This is because, as Classical Dutch maven GM Simon Williams pointed out, after 8 d5! Ne5 9 Nd4, "White achieves a safe advantage". Following 9 … Nxc4 10 dxe6 g6 (after 10 … d5 11 Nxf5 Bxe6 12 Nxe7+ Qxe7 13 Nxd5 Nxd5 14 Bxd5 Rad8 15 Bxe6+ Qxe6 16 Qc2, Black has insufficient compensation for the pawn) 11 Bh6 Re8 12 Bc6!, White wins the exchange as 12 … bxc6 loses the queen after 13 Nxc6, A.Rombaldoni-S.Bergsson, Stefan, Porto Mannu 2014. The extra tempo White has over the Classical Dutch 7 … Nc6 line makes a difference, as you will see in the notes to Black's next move.

### 7 … 0-0

The thematic 7 … d4 results in an unbalanced game.

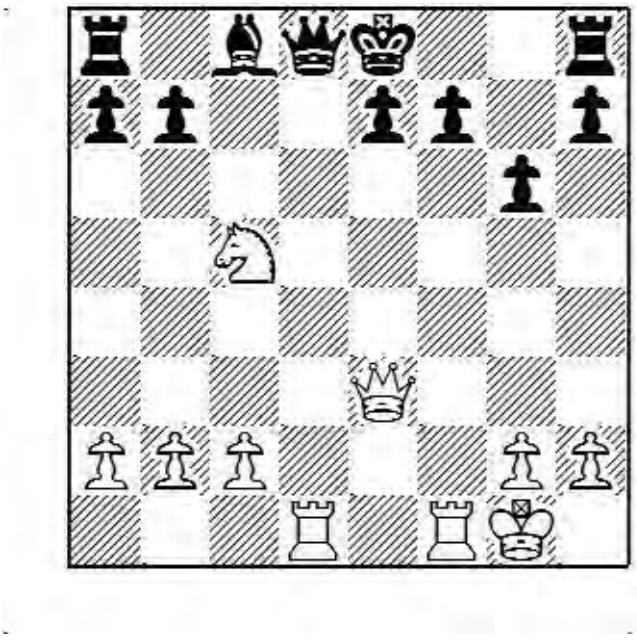


After 8 Ne4:

a) 8 … Nd5 9 Nxc5:

a1) 9 … Nxe3 10 Bxe3 dxe3 11 c3 Qb6 12 Na4 Qc7 13 d4 and Black's e3-pawn may eventually fall, but he seems to have some compensation with his bishop pair, R.Maric-D.Janosevic, Skopje 1967.

a2) More complex is 9 … dxe3 10 d4 Nxf4 11 Bxe3 Nxe2+ 12 Qxe2 Nxd4 13 Nxd4 Bxd4 14 Rad1 Bxe3+ 15 Qxe3.



Here, compared to the Classical Dutch line which we've just discussed in the notes to 7 Nc3!?, Black has yet to castle and this crucial tempo keeps White in the game. Following 15 … Qb6 16 c3 Qxb2 17 Na6!? bxa6 18 Rd8+ Kxd8 19 Qd4+ Kc7 20 Qc5+ a truce can result from perpetual check.

b) 8 … Nxe4 (Andreassen is three for three in this position with White) 9 dxe4 Qb6 10

e5 (10 exd4 cxd4 11 Bd3 is an idea for White to secure the queenside and turn his attention to the kingside later with a3, Qe1 and Qh4) 10 … 0-0 11 Bc4 Bf5 (11 … dxe3 12 Bxe3 Qxb2 13 Rb1 Qa3 14 Qe2, gives sufficient piece pressure for the pawn though I think this is Black's most promising continuation) 12 Qe2 Rad8 13 e4 (sharpening the game by creating opposite wing pawn majorities) 13 … Bg4 14 Bd2 Na5 15 Bd3 Rc8 16 Qe1 Nc6 17 b3 and I slightly prefer White's position, since his queenside is secure for now. Also, he can pursue a kingside attacking agenda with Qh4 soon, E.Andreassen-T.Lovholt, correspondence 2008.

**8 Qe1**

The queen almost always plays to e1 in the Classical lines, with the following purposes:

1. On e1, the queen helps engineer an e4 break.

2. The queen may later play to h4, in pursuit of a kingside attack.

**8 … d4**

This central counter is certainly tempting, given that White egged it on by playing his knight to c3. Instead, after 8 … b6, 9 Ne5 clearing f3 for his bishop, is *Houdini*'s first choice in the position. White plays on the principle: *The cramped side is helped by exchanges*. Of course, we must ask why White, who moved first, is the one who is cramped. But this just may be my anti-Classical bias speaking! Following 9 … Bb7 10 Nxc6 Bxc6 11 Bf3 Re8 12 e4 e6, G.Reim-A.Mende, Germany 1995, I prefer White's game after 13 e5 Nd7 14 Ne2 f6 15 d4 Rc8 16 c3 Bb5 17 Be3 with some extra space and 17 … cxd4 18 cxd4 Rc2 is met with 19 Rf2! when the b2-pawn is taboo, due to the Qc3 trick.

**9 Nd1**

They say the meek shall inherit the earth. One paradox of the Classical Dutch is the opening's adherents are universally imaginative tactician/attackers, yet for some reason, they wilfully begin the game quite passively. I always wonder that in positions this barren of the dynamic factor, why doesn't the natural tactician/attacker suffer bouts of claustrophobia of the intellect? White's move is probably slightly more accurate than 9 Ne4 Nd5 10 Nxc5 Nxe3 11 Bxe3 dxe3 12 c3 Qc7! when the f4-pawn is loose and not so easy to defend.

**9 … dxe3**

A look at the alternatives:

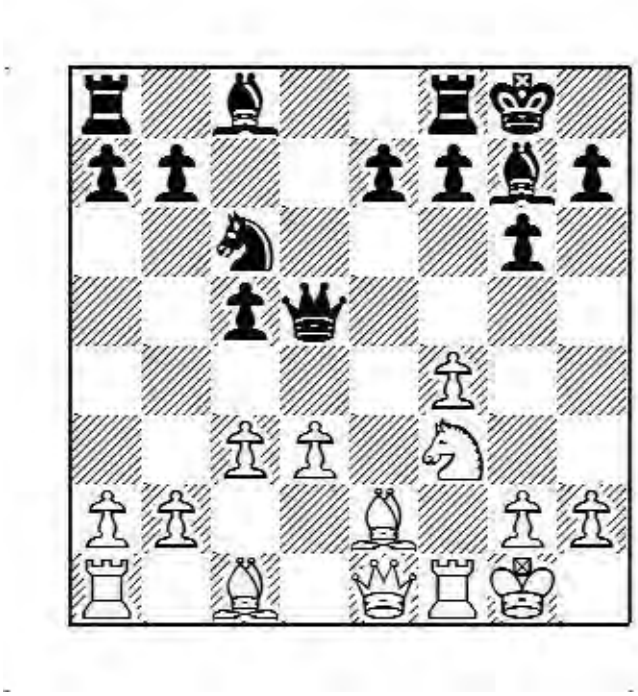
a) 9 … Nb4 is met with the tricky 10 Nxd4 Qb6, K.Hayward-L.Chepurnoy, Corresponence 1987. The game looks even after 11 a3.

b) 9 … Qb6 is met with the bypass move 10 e4 when White is happy to close the centre and direct his efforts to a kingside build-up.

**10 Nxe3 Nd5**

Taking aim at the f4-pawn and also unleashing the dark-squared bishop along the a1-h8 diagonal.

**11 Nxd5 Qxd5 12 c3**



At this moment I'm fighting an overwhelming urge to make some kind of rude "Isn't-White-playing-to-equalize?" joke about the Classical Bird. Well, this isn't exactly inspirational stuff from White, but most Classical Bird/Dutch players are not looking for an opening edge. Instead they seek a position with which they are familiar and feel comfortable, and the experience in handling such positions may count later when the game explodes in messy complications.

**12 … Bf5**

Black adds heat to the backward d3-pawn.

**13 Qf2 b6**

***Question*:** Shouldn't White be concerned about the d3-weakness?

***Answer*:** A little, but the pawn isn't as weak as it looks. For example, after 13 … Bxd3 14 Rd1 c4 15 Ne1, White regains the pawn, with the bishop pair as interest.

**14 Rd1 Rad8**

We reach the end of theory. Black can pile up on the d3-pawn all day long and still not be able take it. 14 … Rae8 intending … e5 is also logical, G.Arnold-P.Spierenburg, correspondence 2010. Following 15 h3 e5 16 fxe5 Nxe5 17 d4 Bc2 18 Rd2 Nxf3+ 19 Bxf3 Be4 20 dxc5 Qxc5 21 Qxc5 bxc5 22 Bxe4 Rxe4 23 Rd3 Re1+ 24 Kf2 Rfe8 25 Rd8! Rxd8 26 Kxe1, an approximately even ending is reached, with White's inherently superior structure, juxtaposed with Black's development lead.

**15 Be3 Bg4 16 Rd2**

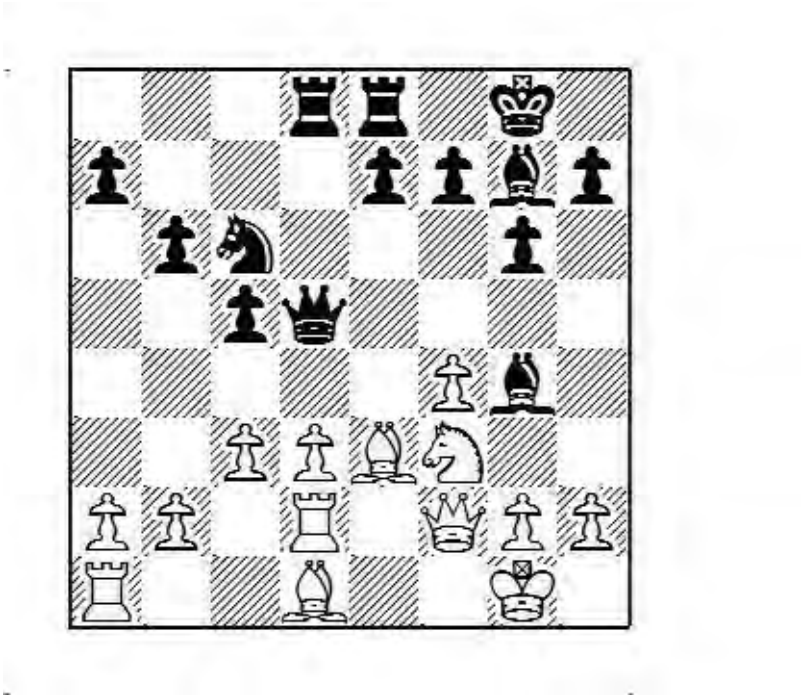
White prepares his coming manoeuvre.

**16 … Rfe8**

It appears as if White experiences difficulties, since he is unable to develop his a1-rook without creating further weaknesses. In reality the position remains even, predicated upon White finding his next move. White's plan for the moment is utterly denuded of any sense

of identity, like an egg destined to be a future parrot named Polly, but for now, remains just an egg.

**17 Bd1!**



The d1-elemental, born of darkness, finally allows itself to be seen by the world. Here we see the art of misdirection in action. The bishop feints left when in reality his intentions veer right, in the direction of Black's king. White intends to energize his passive position with Bb3, followed by Ng5.

**17 … e6!?**

Possibly an overreaction. It's critical to sift the real from the merely hopeful. I'm not so confident about this move since it narrows the escape routes for the g4-bishop. The move sets in motion a complex chain of events, whose final destination is difficult for either side to fathom. Black had two options in:

a) 17 … Na5 18 h3 Bf5 19 d4 c4 White managed to unbackwardize (I request that you don't google this 'word') his once backward d-pawn. (19 … Nc4 20 Bb3 cxd4 21 Bxd4 Qc6 22 Re2 is slightly in White's favour) 20 Ng5 Qd7 21 Bf3 Bd3 22 Re1 with even chances.

b) 17 … Nd4 allows a choice of captures:

b1) 18 Bxd4!? (anything to unbalance the game) 18 … cxd4 19 c4 Qd6 20 Ng5 Bd7 21 a3 a5 22 Bb3 e6 with a dynamic Benoni-like position. *Houdini* prefers Black, while I would be okay with White's side.

b2) 18 Nxd4 cxd4 19 Bxg4 dxe3 20 Qxe3 Bh6 21 Qf3 Qxf3 22 Bxf3 Bxf4 23 Rdd1 e5 24 Bc6 is even.

**18 Bb3 Qd6 19 Ng5!**

A disquieting prospect looms over Black, who must now be on high alert for h2-h3 and g2-g4 tricks on his g4-bishop.

**19 … Qc7?!**

This allows White to take over the initiative. Black retains dynamic chances with 19 …

h6! 20 Ne4 Qc7 21 h3 Bf5:

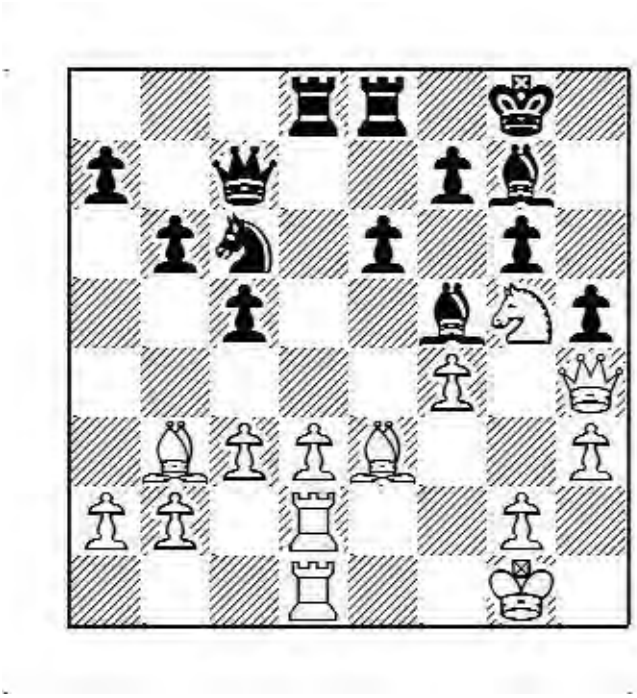
a) 22 Rad1 h5 23 Ba4 and I prefer White since Black has nothing to do but await White's g2-g4 plan.

b) 22 g4!? is risky due to 22 … Bxe4 23 dxe4 Rxd2 24 Qxd2 Rd8 25 Qe2 g5!. Black must counterbalance White's light-squared power with his own influence on dark. Following 26 Rf1 gxf4 27 Bxf4 Ne5 28 Bc4 Qe7 29 Bb5 c4 30 Kg2 Qc5, Black stands no worse and may well have a strategic edge here due to White's lack of control over the dark squares and the d3-square.

**20 Qh4!**

Forcing Black to weaken his king's cover. White attackers begin to mill about the kingside, as if on a picnic.

**20 … h5 21 h3 Bf5 22 Rad1**



That which was once merely a vague, baleful abstraction, now takes real form and true menace. Now g2-g4 is a serious worry for Black, who must weaken further to keep his light-squared bishop alive.

**22 … f6 23 Ne4**

Threatening Nxf6.

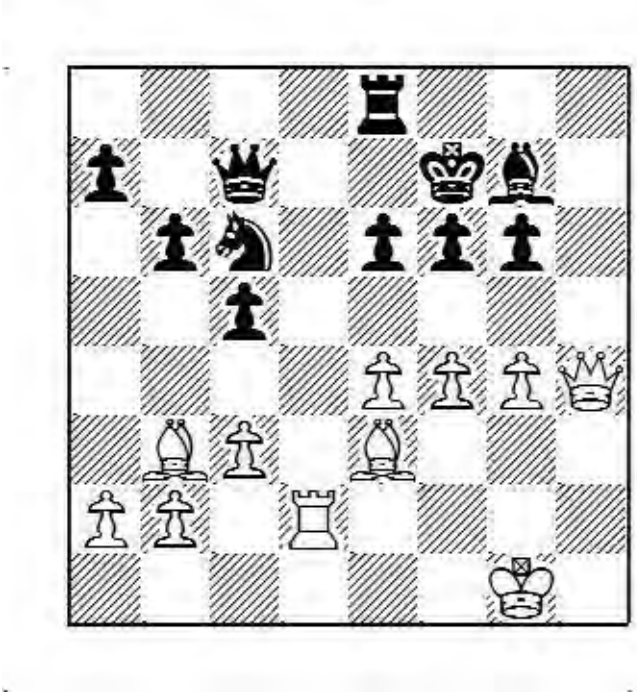
**23 … Kf7**

Black's king decides to travel the land incognito to discover if he is loved by the people. He later discovers that he isn't loved all that much. Black can also try 23 … Ne7 24 g4! (Black survives 24 Nxf6+?! Bxf6 25 Qxf6 Nd5 26 Bxd5 exd5) 24 … hxg4 25 hxg4 Bxe4 26 dxe4 Rxd2 27 Bxe6+ Kf8 28 Rxd2 Qc6 29 Bd7 Qxe4 30 Qg3 Nf5 31 gxf5 Qxe3+ 32 Qxe3 Rxe3 33 fxg6 Bh6 34 Bf5 Re7 35 Rf2 and Black remains down a pawn but the presence of opposite-coloured bishops offers drawing chances.

**24 g4**

Insuring the bishop pair and control over the light squares.

**24 … hxg4 25 hxg4 Bxe4 26 dxe4 Rxd2 27 Rxd2**



Black is in trouble:

1. White has the bishop pair.

2. White rules the dark squares.

3. The e6- and g6-pawns remain under pressure with f4-f5 in the air.

**27 … Ne7!**

Black's best defensive chance, since he intends … c4 next. 27 … Na5?! is met with 28 f5 Nxb3 29 fxg6+ Ke7 30 axb3 Rh8 31 Qf2 when White is up a pawn and g4-g5 is in the air.

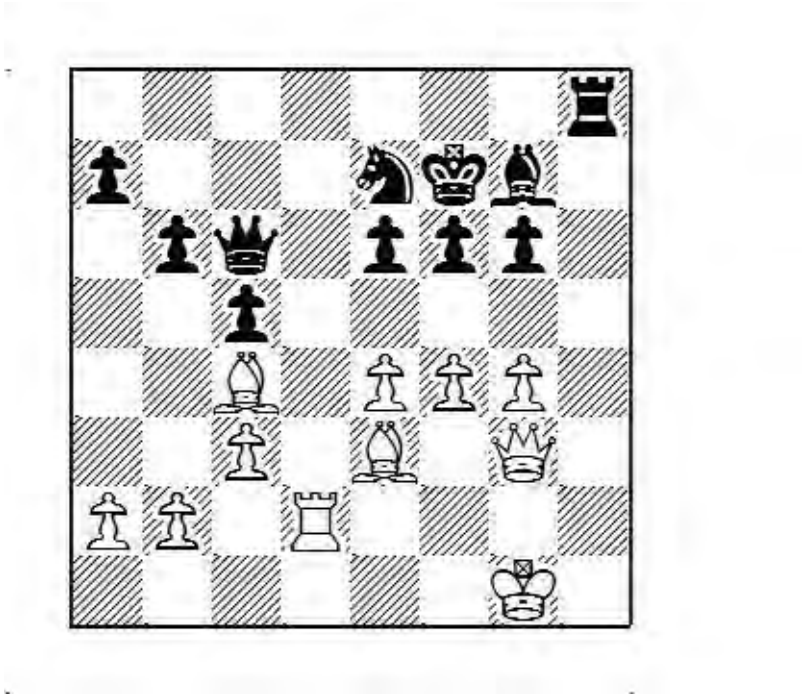
**28 Bc4!**

Oh no you don't! White blocks out the stifling … c5-c4.

**28 … Rh8**

Another try is 28 … Qc6 29 f5 Qxe4 30 Bxe6+ Kf8 31 Re2 Nxf5 32 Bxf5 Qc4 33 Bh6! Rxe2 34 Qxf6+ Qf7 35 Bxg7+ Kg8 36 Bd3 Qxf6 37 Bxf6 Rxb2 38 Bxg6 Rxa2 39 g5 when this ending looks somewhat scary for White but comp analysis shows that White still wins. Following 39 … Rd2 40 Bf5 Kf7 41 Be5 b5 42 g6+ Ke7 43 g7 Rd8 44 Kf2 Kf7 45 Bh7 b4 46 c4 Re8 47 g8Q+ Rxg8 48 Bxg8+ Kxg8 49 Ke3 Kf7 50 Bd6, White wins.

**29 Qg3 Qc6**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** We begin to detect seepage into

White's light square domination. After all, Black menaces

both … Qxe4 and … b6-b5. How should White continue?

***Answer*:** Work the e6-pin, since the e4-pawn is protected through tactics.

**30 f5!**

White toils with single-minded energy toward his goal of exposing Black's king, even if his own king gets partially exposed in the process.

**30 … gxf5**

Not 30 … Qxe4?? as 31 Bxe6+ Ke8 32 Qb8+ forces mate.

**31 Rd6!**

The blunder 31 gxf5? is met with the trick 31 … Nxf5! 32 Bxe6+ Qxe6 33 exf5 Qxf5 34 Qc7+ Kg8 35 Rd8+ Bf8 36 Qg3+ Kh7 37 Qc7+ with perpetual check.

**31 … Qxe4?**

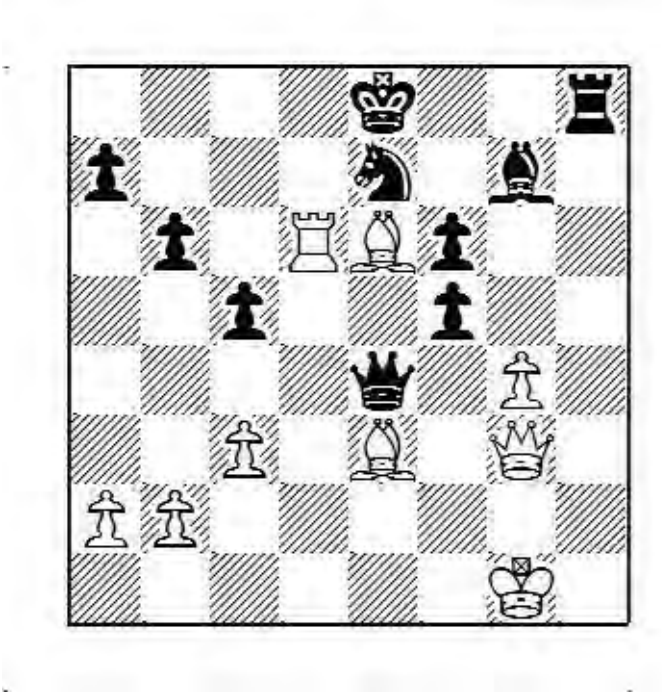
Black can continue to resist with 31 … Rh1+! (when no rational solution can be found, where else can we go but the irrational?) 32 Kxh1 (the king hesitatingly accepts the tip with the grave courtesy of a butler, unused to gratuities) 32 … Qxe4+ 33 Kg1 Qxc4 34 gxf5 Nxf5 35 Rd7+ Ne7 36 Qf3! (threat: Qh5+) 36 … Qh4 37 Rxa7 f5 and White should be winning but conversion even here won't be so easy, since his king is somewhat exposed.

**32 Bxe6+**

"This is for your own good. The scriptures deem public humiliation the great reducer of pride," intones the bishop, as he concludes his sermon.

**32 … Ke8**

Also, 32 … Qxe6 33 Rxe6 Kxe6 34 Qc7 fxg4 35 Qxa7 is hopeless for Black.



The forced deference to White's attackers also brings with it the psychological baggage of resentment for Black's king.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** An attack, by its nature, remains

unmollified until it reaches its aim of checkmate. Black just blundered

in an already losing position. White to play and force mate in four moves:

***Answer*:** Clearance/attraction.

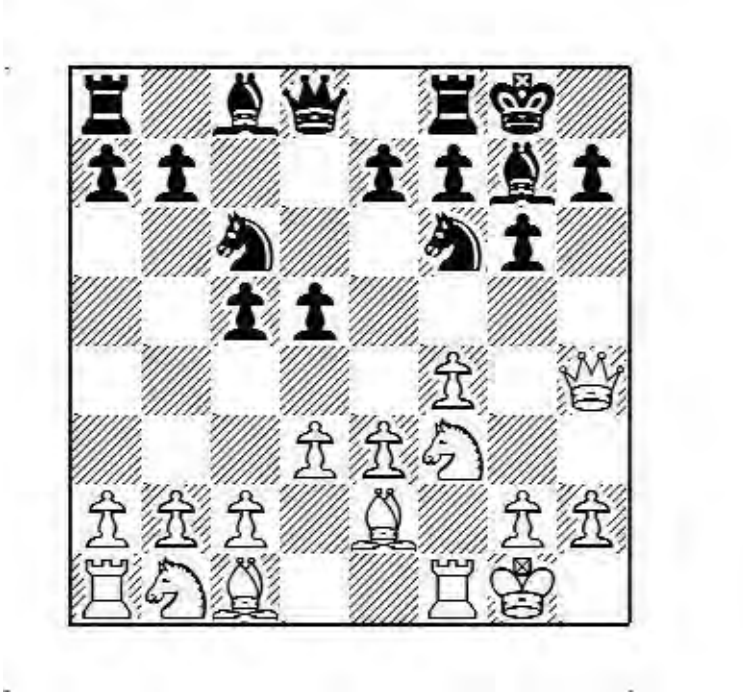
**33 Rd8+! Kxd8 34 Qb8+ 1-0**

The denouement follows after 34 … Nc8 35 Qxc8+ Ke7 36 Qd7+ Kf8. "I am so very sorry for the 75 attempts I made on your life. Now why not let bygones be bygones?" asks Black's king. The queen answers: "I realize that you are sorry, but I cannot forgive until you are made a lot sorrier" and promptly executes 37 Qd8 mate!

**Summary:** The positions are roughly even in the early Nc3 line, mainly since Black's counter … d5-d4 assures even chances.

*Game 20*
**T.Baranowski-E.Bortnik**
Correspondence 2004

**1 f4 g6 2 Nf3 Bg7 3 e3 Nf6 4 Be2 0-0 5 0-0 c5 6 d3 d5 7 Qe1 Nc6 8 Qh4**



White's main move in the position, but it may not be best. IM Tim Taylor calls this popular idea "primitive and direct" and then later refers to it as a "crude attacking move which, being so obvious, is easy to defend against".

***Question*:** Do you agree with Taylor's assessment?

***Answer*:** Pretty much, yes! However, I will add that "primitive and direct" ideas may sometimes constitute a virtue on a club level of play, or in rapid games, where defence is much harder than attack, due to the time shortage. So I wouldn't dismiss it out of hand. Later on in the chapter, we see GM Lie play the Qh4 idea and win, but a move later, only *after* Black's queen plays to c7.

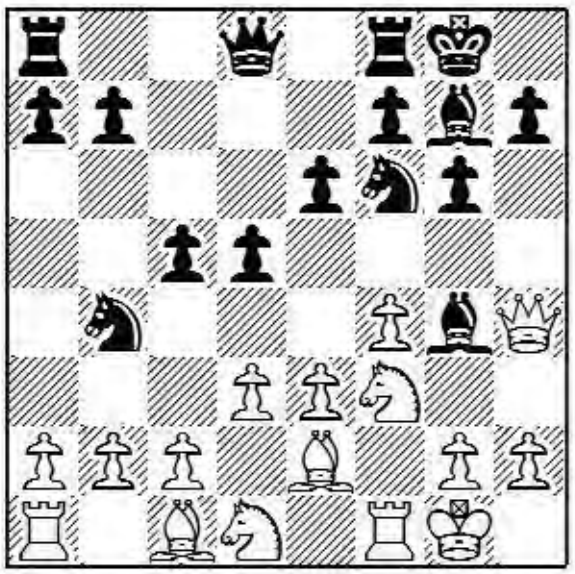
***Question*:** What difference does that make?

***Answer*:** When Black's queen sits on d8 and White plays Qh4, then Black has access to … e7-e5! ideas which both counter in the centre and also offer to swap queens, which White obviously doesn't want, since he launched an attack with Qh4.

**8 … b6**

Black calmly completes his development and prepares either … Bb7 or … Ba6.

Black can seek to reduce White's kingside attacking force with 8 … Bg4 9 Nc3 e6 10 Nd1 (maybe White was better off pushing his h-pawn), J.Rotstein-E.Vasiukov, Dresden 2006. With his last move, White transferred the knight to the kingside, preparing Nf2. Now Black has a hidden idea which wins an exchange for a pawn after 10 … Nb4!



11 c3 (11 Bd2?! Bxf3 12 Rxf3 Nxc2 13 Rc1 Nb4 14 a3 Na6 15 Rh3 h5 and I don't believe in White's compensation for the pawn) 11 … Nc2! (only computers suggest moves like this as Black's knight isn't as trapped as it first appears) 12 Rb1 Bf5! (intending … c5-c4, after which it is White's b1-rook, and not the c2-knight which is in danger) 13 Nf2 (threat: g2-g4) 13 … c4 14 dxc4 (14 Nd4 Nxd4 15 exd4 b5 gives Black a coming queenside initiative) 14 … Nd4 15 exd4 Bxb1 16 a3 Ne4 17 Qxd8 Rfxd8 18 c5, I think White has close to full compensation for the exchange, but if given a choice, I would take Black, the material-up side.

**9 Nbd2**

I would avoid 9 a4 when the committal Qh4 has been played, since White isn't interested in queenside play. After 9 … Bb7 10 Kh1 Ne8 11 Qh3 Nd6, White lunged forward with 12 g4?!. Hmm. Even a caveman may pinch his nostrils at this one, condemning it as a bit too hooliganish for his taste! After 12 … e5 (Black engages a standard central counter) 13 f5?! (this is unrepentant stuff from White!) 13 … e4 14 dxe4 Nxe4, White looks strategically busted, yet he went on to win, so we should keep an open mind about the practical aspects of such thug-like play, J.Dobos-G.Danner, Budapest 1994.

**9 … Ba6**

***Question*:** What is the point of developing

the bishop to the a6-square, where it hits a d3-wall?

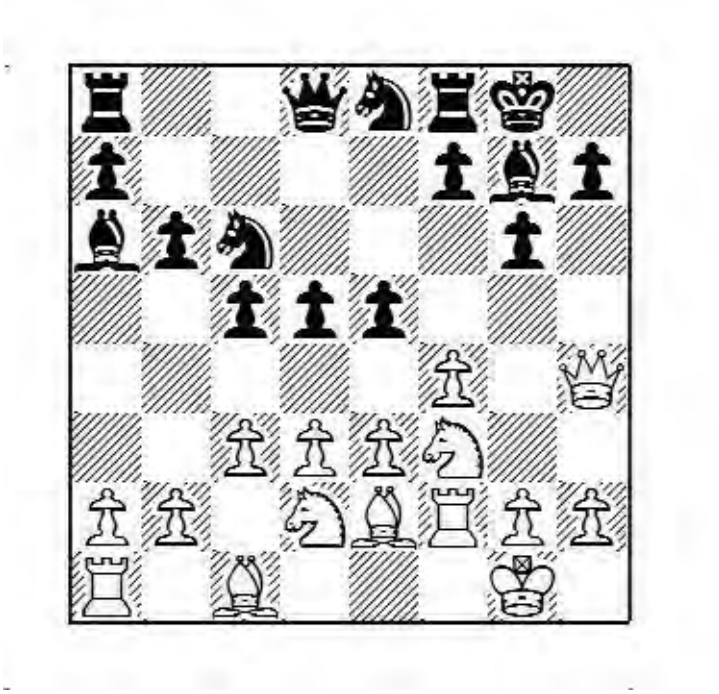
***Answer*:** Black's idea is to discourage his opponent from achieving e3-e4.

Black has an interesting untried idea here with 9 … Ng4!?. This diverts White from his intended kingside attack. Following 10 Nb3 Nb4 (Black meets White's crudeness with some crudeness of his own!) 11 Ne1 Nh6 12 c3 Nc6 13 e4 e6 (engaging Black's terrible weapon in this variation: a potential queen swap) 14 Qf2 (White rightfully declines to

trade queens) 14 … f6, Black prevents e4-e5 and stands no worse.

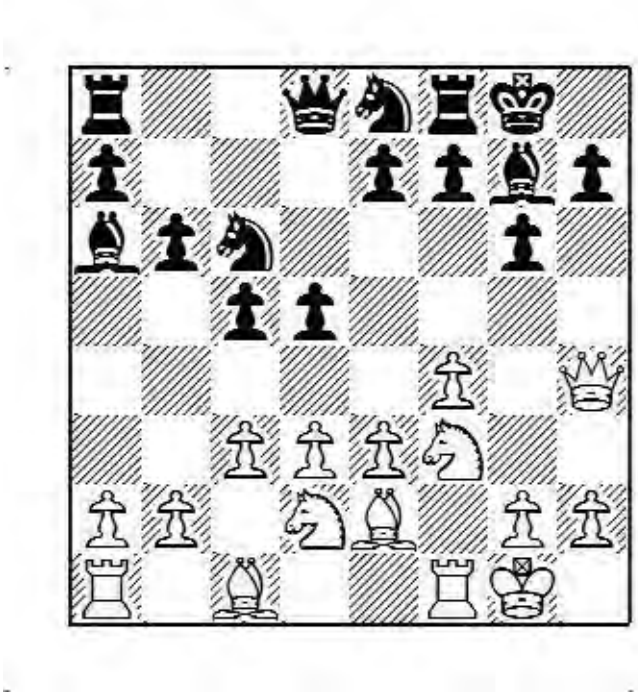
**10 c3**

Keeping Black's knight out of the b4-square. Larsen preferred 10 Rf2 Ne8 11 c3 and here, we see the idea discussed in the notes to 8 Qh4. Black unleashed 8 … e5!, the principle being: meeting a wing attack with a central counter.



The game continued 12 Qxd8 (a tacit admission that 8 Qh4 failed to achieve its objective, which was to deliver checkmate on Black's king) 12 … Rxd8 13 fxe5 Nxe5 14 Nxe5 Bxe5 15 a4 Bb7 16 d4 Bg7 17 dxc5 bxc5 18 Nb3 Rc8 19 e4! d4! (19 … dxe4?! 20 Be3 c4 21 Nc5 Bc6 22 Bxc4 and White stands better since his pieces are more active) 20 cxd4 cxd4, B.Larsen-W.Schmidt, Aarhus 1971. At this point Larsen misses 21 Bg4! which somewhat embarrasses the c8-rook as it has no safe squares. However, Black may still be okay here following *Houdini's* suggested plan 21 … f5! 22 exf5 Nf6 23 Bh3 Ne4 24 Rf3 Nc5 25 f6 Bxf3 26 Bxc8 Rxc8 27 Nxc5 Rxc5 28 fxg7 Bc6 29 Bf4! when 29 … Rc2 is met with 30 Rc1! d3 31 Rxc2 dxc2 32 Bh6 Bxa4 with a drawn ending.

**10 … Ne8!**



A new move in the position and a good one. This strategic retreat prepares the central counter … e7-e5.

**11 Qf2!**

A good counter-reaction by White, who sidesteps Black's intended queen swap with … e7-e5. Also, by protecting the e2-bishop, White enables his own e4-break.

**11 … h6?!**

Some of our troubles are real, while others are contrived fabrications of our own making. I'm not quite sure the point of this move since it voluntarily weakens Black's kingside pawn front.

He should follow his central counter plan with the more direct 11 … e5! 12 fxe5 Nxe5 13 Nxe5 Bxe5 14 Nf3 Bg7 15 e4 (freedom at last!) 15 … Nc7 (15 … dxe4 16 dxe4 Bxe2 17 Qxe2 Qe7 18 Bf4 Rd8 is about even as I don't believe the e4-isolani constitutes a real weakness for White)16 Bf4 Ne6 17 Be5 f6 18 Bg3 d4! (this violates the principle: *Don't close the centre when the opponent attempts a wing attack*, yet this is an exception to the rule) 19 c4 Bh6 (threat: … Be3) 20 Kh1 Be3 21 Qe1 Bb7 22 Nh4 and I prefer Black, whose potential queenside play with … a7-a6 and … b6-b5 looks more promising than anything White's jumbled would-be attackers may drum up on the kingside.

**12 e4 d4?!**

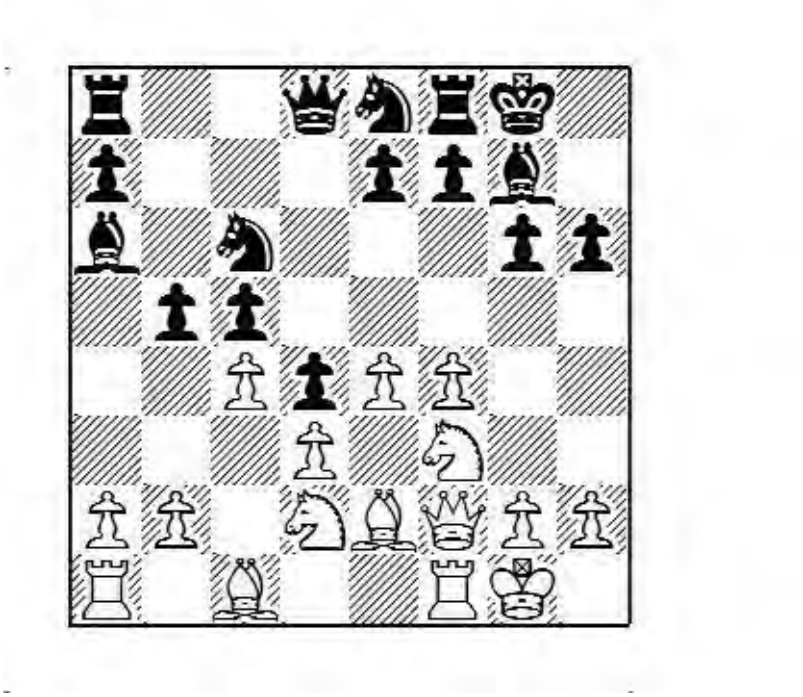
This clogging of the centre plays into White's hands strategically, since it allows him to turn his attention to a kingside attack without fear of a central counter. Black should probably settle for 12 … dxe4 13 dxe4 Bxe2 14 Qxe2 Qd7, with the idea of … Rd8. The position is about even, although this time, I actually prefer White due to his superior central space.

**13 c4 Bc8**

This is the *Total Recall* sci-fi movie retold, where the bishop resembles the amnesiac (played by Arnold Schwarzenegger) who finally remembered who he was and did not like his actual self, in which case, his cure was no cure.

***Question*:** Rather than this meek retreat, shouldn't

Black proceed with his queenside attack with 13 … b5?



***Answer*:** I think this distraction idea may be Black's best bet. Following 14 e5!:

a) 14 … Rb8 15 b3 Qb6 16 a3 Nc7 17 Ne4, Black looks better off here than he did in the game's continuation.

b) 14 … bxc4 15 Nxc4 Nc7 16 Nfd2 (keep in mind that White can abandon his kingside attacking plan and switch to queenside play) 16 … Nb4 17 Ne4, the c5-pawn is fragile and White's knights are powerfully posted.

**14 e5!**

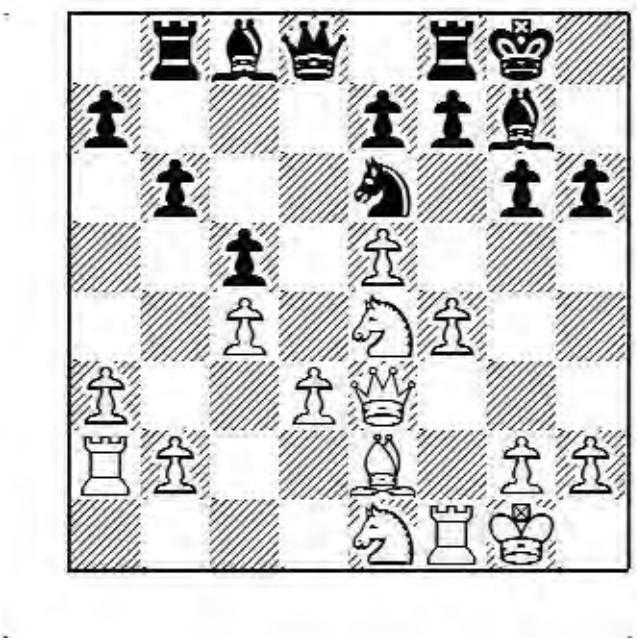
Clearing the e4-square for his knight.

**14 … Nc7 15 Qg3!**

The queen creeps closer to the g6-weakness, perhaps later intending Nh4 and an eventual f5-break.

**15 … Rb8 16 Ne4 a6**

Black plans … b5, but this isn't so easy to achieve since White's e4-knight targets c5. Here, he has an interesting pawn sacrifice with 16 … Nb4!? 17 a3 Nc2 18 Ra2 Ne3 19 Bxe3 dxe3 20 Ne1 Ne6 21 Qxe3 and Black controls the d4-square, his king is safe and he owns the bishop pair.



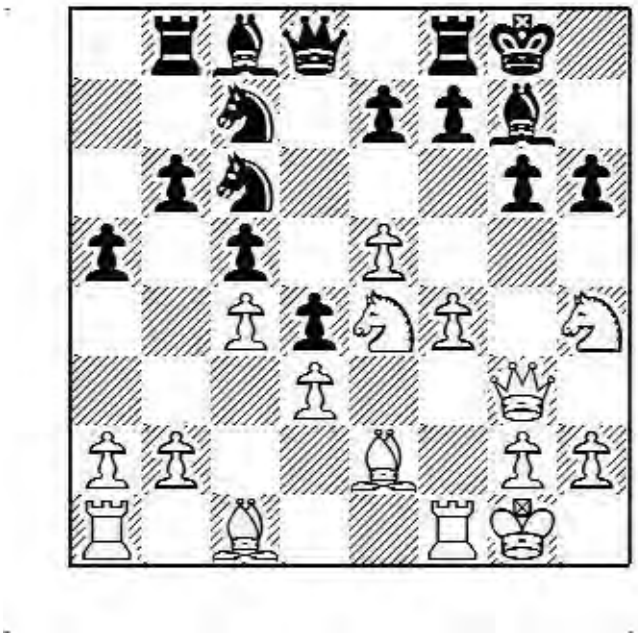
This looks better than what Black got in the game. Following 21 … f6! to blow open the centre, Black's central play seems sufficient compensation for the pawn.

**17 Nh4!**

White methodically builds for a strike. Now Black must be on high alert for piece sacrifices on g6, and also f4-f5! pawn sacrifice ideas.

**17 … a5?**

Black's only hope of survival is to feed a defender to the kingside with 17 … Ne8!. The positionally suspect 17 … e6? is too high a price to pay to close off White's f5-break. After 18 Nf6+ Bxf6 (18 … Kh8 is met with the sweet looking 19 Qxg6!) 19 exf6 Qxf6 20 Bf3 Nb4, White can exploit the weak g6- and h6-pawns as well as the c7-knight and b8-rook with 21 f5! (discovered attack/multiple attack).



***Exercise (planning)*:** Black grossly underestimates the latent power in

White's kingside build-up. How did White achieve his attacking aims?

***Answer*:** Pawn sacrifice/annihilation of king's cover. The fact that the e5-pawn hangs is of little worry to White, who shears Black's defensive cover around his king.

**18 f5!**

All subterfuges rise to the surface, into the light. White's forces target the g6-pawn, the gift which keeps on giving - with owlish intensity. Black's once pristine king's cover is now degraded through prolonged exposure to the elements.

**18 … Bxe5**

Not much choice as 18 … g5?? 19 f6 ensures that it's time for Black to resign.

**19 Bf4**

White's forces continue to creep from the centre to the periphery. Forced moves can also be powerful ones. White eliminates the black king's only defender.

**19 … Bxf4 20 Rxf4**

Rooks tend to be a taciturn race in the opening and middlegame. Only later on in the late middlegame and endings, do they become more talkative. This position is an exception, where White's rook can be safely airlifted into the attack. Now it becomes plain to see that Black's king inadvertently wandered into the wrong part of town and found himself surrounded by five beefy, smiling thugs.

**20 … Qe8**

20 … Ne5 is met by the retreat/attacking sortie 21 Rf2! when the defence collapses.

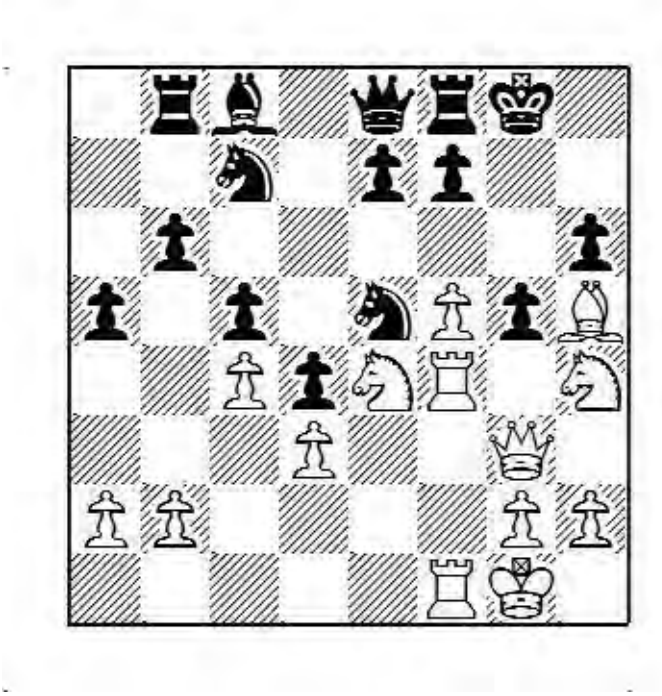
**21 Bh5**

Make that six beefy, smiling attackers surrounding Black's king.

**21 … Ne5 22 Raf1**

Gulp! My mistake: make that seven beefy, smiling attackers. White's assault is an astounding feat of complete inclusion. Also crushing was the immediate 22 fxg6! f6 23 g7 (double attack/discovered attack) 23 … Qxh5 24 gxf8Q+ Kxf8 25 Rxf6+! (annihilation of defensive barrier) 25 … exf6 26 Nxf6 Qf7 27 Qxe5 Rf1, with a bloodbath on the kingside.

**22 … g5**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** There are some positions which we can study for 15 minutes, without even an iota of comprehension as to the correct plan. This isn't one of them! Black's last move merely verifies a fact which was already painfully

obvious to us all: he is busted and about to face a reprisal of biblical proportions. Your writer, in an uncharacteristically good mood, is about to toss you the easiest combination alert in *Move by Move* publishing history. White attackers tingle

and crackle with an almost inhuman level of competence. Continue White's attack.

***Answer*:** Piece sacrifice/annihilation of the defensive barrier.

**23 Nxg5**

So obvious that it doesn't merit an exclam.

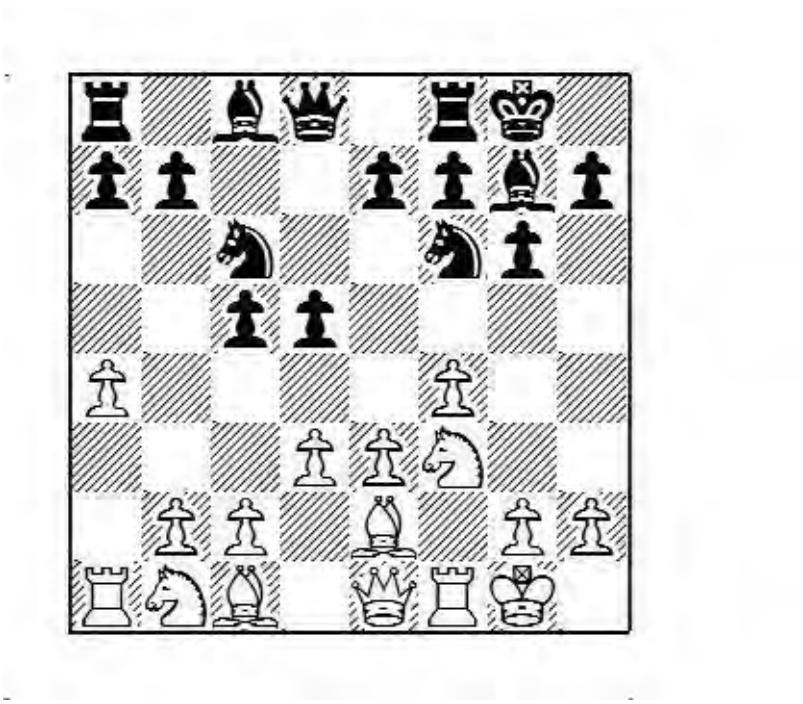
**23 … hxg5 24 Qxg5+ 1-0**

The queen is proud to an equal degree of her g8-brother's demoralization. Black's king is the hyperactive third-grader (i.e. your writer as a lad), doing his utmost to present his best behavior to the new teacher, who he realizes will almost certainly hate him within a week's passing. Following 24 … Kh7, White has access to a million ways to win here, one of which is following: 25 Bg6+!. "We thank Thee, oh Lord, for making me so much better than everyone else," prays the bishop, with deep gratitude. There is no need to calculate a move like this. Our eyes just confirm its correctness. After 25 … Kg7, "My ever-so-quick mind is not so easily beguiled," says the king, as he cunningly taps the side of his head with a finger and the rout is completed with 26 f6+ exf6 27 Qxf6+ Kg8 28 Bh7+! (clearance sac) 28 … Kxh7 29 Nf5 (again, clearance sac) 29 … Bxf5 30 Rh4+ Kg8 31 Rh8 mate.

**Summary:** From time to time we all experience the urge to channel our inner Neanderthal. 8 Qh4 may be an unsubtle attacking attempt, yet at a club level or a rapid game, it may well work on a targeted opponent who doesn't feel comfortable defending.

**K.Lie-B. Leer Salvesen**
Norwegian League 2003

**1 f4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 d3 d5 4 e3 Bg7 5 Be2 0-0 6 0-0 c5 7 Qe1 Nc6 8 a4**



The wait-and-see move.

***Question*:** What is the purpose of this move?

***Answer*:** There are multiple reasons:

1) The basic tenet of this move is to stem the … b5 queenside expansion plan for Black.

2) Another possibility is to make use of the b5-square to hold the knight (see the notes to White's 9th move).

3) The pawn move also helps to initiate White's Bird/Classical Dutch queenside plan (which we look at in a couple of games): Na3, c2-c3, Bd2, Nc2 and b2-b4.

4) Finally, this space gaining move doesn't impede White's Qh4 plan (as in this game).

**8 … Qc7**

Black's main move, where he logically tries to enforce the … e5-break. Black's other options:

a) 8 … b6 9 Qh4 (we will look at the plan 9 Na3 Bb7 10 c3 e6 11 Rb1 Rc8 12 b4 in Game 22) 9 … Bb7 10 Na3 Nd7 11 Qh3 e6 12 Rb1 (if White is going to play for the queenside expansion plan, then he may be better off leaving his queen on the e1-square) 12 … Qe7 13 c3 e5 14 e4 dxe4, S.Le Floch-Y.Berthelot, Bretagne 1999. The position is in dynamic balance after 15 dxe4 exf4 16 Bxf4 Nde5 (of course, the e4-pawn wasn't really hanging, due to the Ng5 trick) 17 Nc4 Nxf3+ 18 gxf3 Rad8 19 Rbd1 with approximately even chances.

b) I think 8 … Re8! may be Black's best continuation. He plays for … e7-e5, without removing his queen's gaze from h4:

b1) 9 Ne5 Qc7 10 Qg3 Nd7 11 Nxc6 bxc6!, M.Repplinger-A.Bitalzadeh, Leiden 2010. The slight weakening of Black's queenside pawn structure is irrelevant since this move strengthens d5, opens the b-file and keeps Black's queen on c7, where she can help enforce the … e5-break. The game may be dynamically balanced after 12 Nc3 although if given a choice, I would take Black's side.

b2) 9 Qg3 Bf5 10 c3 Qb6, Bohn, T-Rueckert, H Germany 2006. After, 11 Nbd2 c4! 12 d4 Na5, White gets an uninspiring Stonewall position.

c) White also can play the material-reducing plan we looked at in the last game with 8 … Bg4 and after 9 Ne5 Bxe2 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Qxe2, V.Okhotnik-C.Bernard, Le Touquet 2005, play may go 11 … Re8 12 f5 e5 13 e4 with the kind of messy position Classical Bird/Dutch players like.

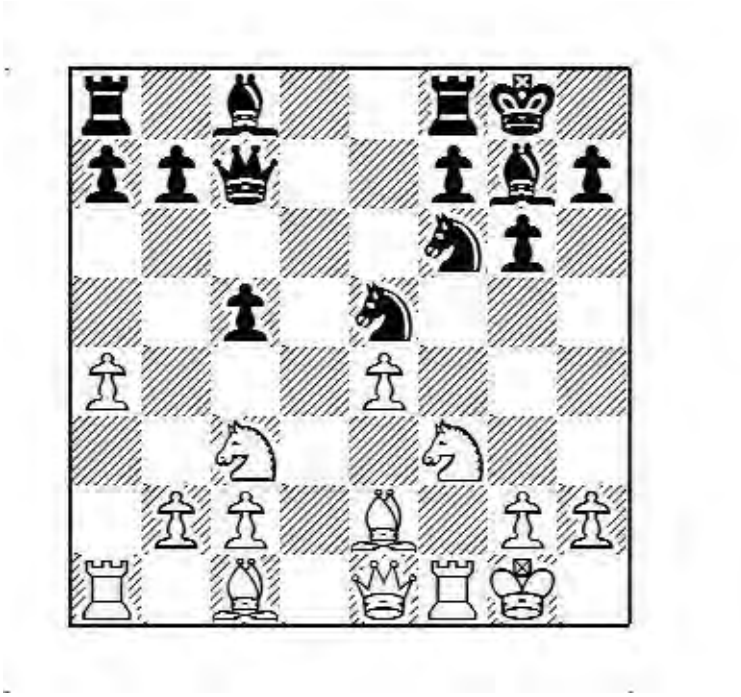
**9 Qh4**

***Question*:** Last game you hinted that White's Qh4 may be a

somewhat shady continuation, yet here you say nothing. Why?

***Answer*:** What a difference a move makes. With Black's queen on c7, White no longer fears … e7-e5 queen-swap ideas from Black.

9 Nc3 (playing for e2-e4) is White's main alternative. After 9 … e5 10 fxe5 Nxe5 11 e4! dxe4 12 dxe4,



don't be afraid to take on such isolanis, if you get the resulting activity boost which tends to follow. Following 12 … Be6 13 Qh4 Nxf3+, now White recaptured with his g-pawn, while I would recapture with the bishop, with dynamically balanced chances, Okhotnik, V-Bouverot, O Elancourt 2004.

9 Nc3 playing for e3-e4 is White's main alternative:

a) 9 … d4 10 Nb5 Qb6 was the line we spoke about earlier in the notes to 8 a4. The protected knight gives White a tempo to advance in the centre with 11 e4 to establish a good mobile centre.

Not surprisingly, the same concept applies (one tempo down) in the Classical Dutch with 1 d4 f5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4

g3 Be7 5 Bg2 0-0 6 Nc3 d6 7 Qc2 a5 8 0-0 Nc6 9 d5 Nb4 and 10 Qb3 is met by 10 … e5, A.Link-E.Mueller, Germany 1992.

b) 9 … e5 10 fxe5 Nxe5 11 e4! dxe4 12 dxe4. Here, don't be afraid to take on such isolanis, if you get the resulting activity boost which tends to follow. Following 12 … Be6 13 Qh4, V.Okhotnik-O.Bouverot, Elancourt 2004, White met 13 … Nxf3 with 14 gxf3 while I would recapture with the bishop, with dynamically balanced chances as 14 Bxf3 helps to shore up a Nd5 hop.

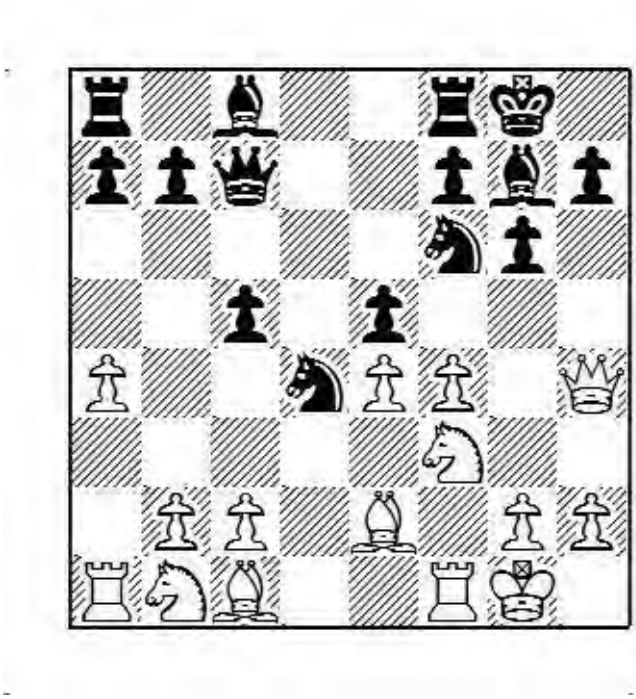
**9 … e5 10 e4!**

This freeing move (as I mentioned before, it's very strange that White requires a 'freeing move') activates White's power on the kingside.

**10 … dxe4**

This move was played in every game in my database. Oddly enough, *Houdini* prefers the unplayed 10 … exf4!? and after 11 Nc3!, if White recaptures on f4 with the bishop, he faces the awkward … Qb6. Following 11 … dxe4 12 Bxf4 Qb6 13 dxe4 Qxb2 14 Bd2 Nd4 15 Nxd4 cxd4 16 Rfb1 dxc3 17 Rxb2 cxb2 18 Rb1, it's safe to say this position is unclear, with *Houdini* assessing it at even.

**11 dxe4 Nd4**



A principled move, forcing a key white attacker off the board, while prying open the c-file.

***Question*:** I assume the e4-pawn isn't really hanging?

***Answer*:** Black can actually take it, although in the end, White stands better. Let's look how the line goes. After 11 … Nxe4!? 12 fxe5 Bf5 13 Bd3, it looks like Black has been tricked, but this may not be the case as 13 … Qd8! 14 Re1 Nxe5 15 Qxd8 Raxd8 16 Nxe5 Bxe5 17 g4! (this move wins a piece but it isn't for free) 17 … c4! 18 gxf5 cxd3 19 Rxe4 dxc2 20 Nd2 gives Black three pawns for the piece. White's extra piece and developmental lead in the ending should be worth more than Black's pawns.

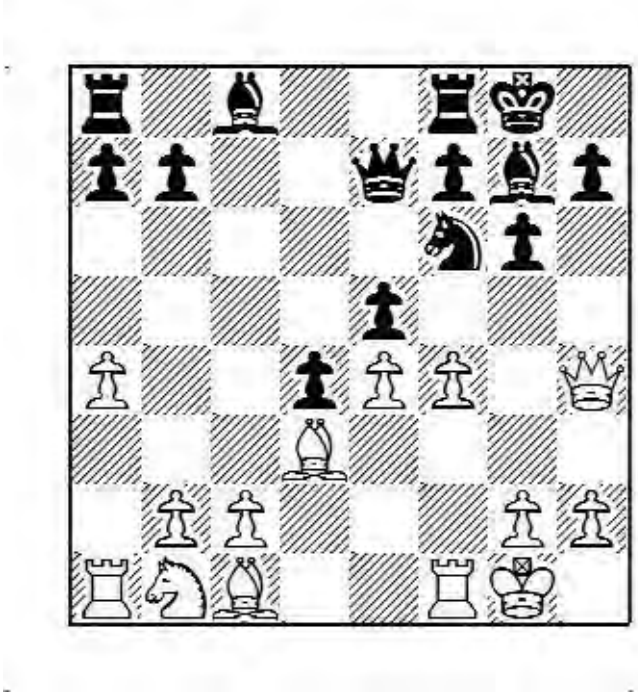
**12 Nxd4 cxd4**

No one has tried the unbalancing 12 … exd4!? 13 Nd2 Re8 14 Bf3 and now 14 … Qd8 prepares … Nd5 if White pushes e4-e5. After 15 Qg3, I prefer White's kingside chances over Black's central play.

**13 Bd3**

Covering both the c2- and e4-pawns.

**13 … Qe7**



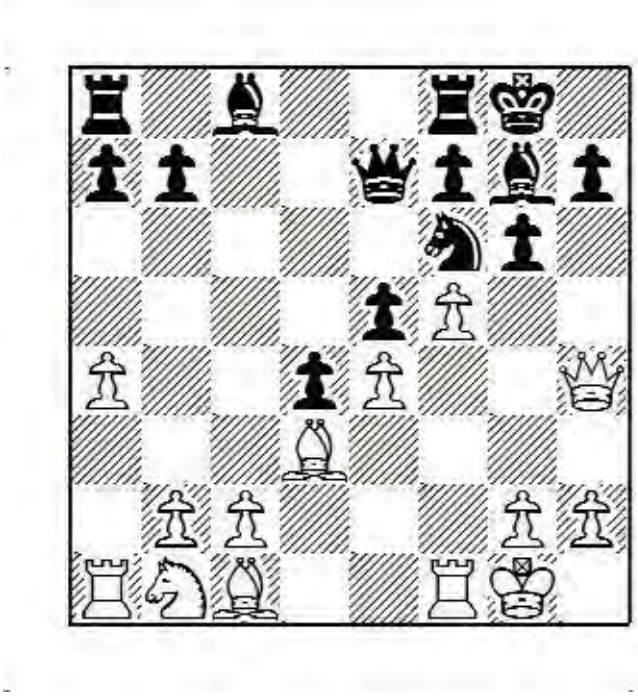
Black sets up … Nd5 to prepare a queen trade. Other options are:

a) 13 … exf4 14 Bxf4 Qc5 15 Nd2 Ng4 16 Nc4 Ne5, S.Gavritenkov-V.Zhidkov, Tula 2000. I slightly favour White's chances after 17 Nxe5 Bxe5 18 Bg5! Qc7 19 Bf6.

b) 13 … Qc6 14 Nd2 and now f4-f5 is a real concern for Black so Black eliminated the possibility with 14 … exf4 15 Qxf4 Ng4 16 Nc4 Be6 17 h3 Bxc4 18 Qxg4 Bxd3 19 cxd3 Qc2 20 Qf3 f5 21 Bf4 fxe4 22 Qxe4 Rae8 23 Qxb7 Qxd3 24 Rad1 Qe4 25 Qxe4 Rxe4 reaching an even ending, W.Zampronha-M.Santos, Sao Bernardo do Campo 2011.

c) 13 … Be6?! is just begging White to play his next move and White obliged with 14 f5 gxf5 15 exf5 Bd5 16 Bg5 Qc6 17 Nd2 a6 18 Rae1! Rae8, W.Zampronha-E.Gerbelli Neto, Sao Bernardo do Campo 2014. Now White missed the idea 19 Ne4! Bxe4 20 Rxe4! (threatening Rg4!) and Black is busted after 20 … Kh8 21 Rf3 Rg8 22 Rh3.

**14 f5!?**



Lie risks all, allowing Black a surging centre in exchange for kingside attacking chances.

**14 … gxf5 15 exf5 e4**

Black must play this move or White quickly blockades on the e4-square.

**16 Bc4 e3!**

***Question*:** Isn't White lost? After all, the d4-pawn looks poisoned and the e3-pawn chokes White's queenside. His kingside attacking chances feel disproportionally meagre when compared to his labour and strategic investment outlay in the centre.

***Answer*:** White is not lost, but the actual assessment is uncertain. I agree that a move like 14 f5!? is certain to prompt retaliation, and we get the uneasy feeling that his idea appears to be built more by emotion than intellect. *Houdini* gives Black a slight plus, since White experiences difficulties developing his queenside around the e3-obstruction. Miraculously, White's plan hasn't collapsed under the weight of his outrageous premise: that he can conduct a kingside attack with his entire queenside undeveloped and bottled up.

**17 Bd3**

White correctly avoids 17 Qxd4? e2 18 Re1 Rd8 19 Qe3 (or 19 Qf4 Rd1 20 Bd2 Qc5+ 21 Kh1 Bxf5 22 Nc3 Ng4 23 Raxd1 Nf2+ 24 Qxf2 Qxf2 25 Rxe2 Qc5 (Black threatens both c4-bishop and … Bg4) 26 Bd5 Bg4 leaves White down material and struggling) 19 … Qxe3+ 20 Bxe3 Ng4 21 Bf2 (forced) 21 … Nxf2 22 Kxf2 Bxb2 23 Ra2 Bd4+ 24 Kf3 Bxf5 25 Rxe2 Rac8 when Black has the bishop pair, pawn targets and the initiative in the ending.

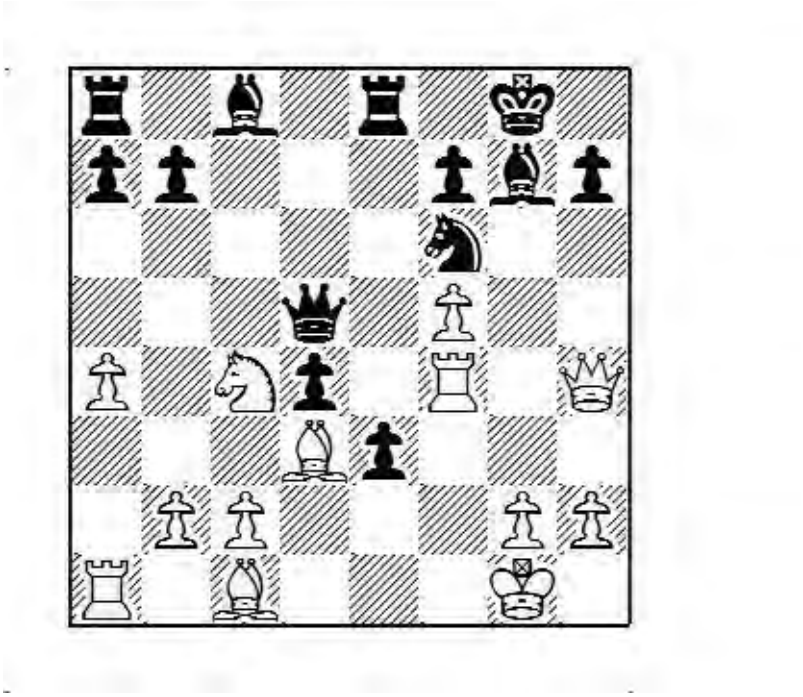
**17 … Qe5?**

A mistake, after which Black's counterplay quickly dwindles to zero. This move doesn't take into account White's next two moves properly. It also loses critical time and the game tilts in White's favour. Black still retains an edge after 17 … Re8! 18 Na3 Nd5 19 Qxe7 Rxe7 20 Nc4 b6 21 b3 Bb7 22 Bb2 and I prefer Black, whose deeply entrenched central pawns continue to create headaches for White.

**18 Na3 Re8 19 Nc4**

A crucial tempo loss as White begins to unravel his queenside pieces.

**19 … Qd5 20 Rf4!**



Threatening the d4-pawn and forcing Black's rook into passivity. Suddenly, Black's past feeling of exhilaration gradually gets weighed down with strategic worry over how to cover the d4- and e3-pawns.

**20 … Rd8**

Also insufficient is 20 … Nd7 21 Rg4 Qc6 22 Qg3 Qf6 23 Nd6 Re7 24 b3 Nc5 25 Bb2 (there is no remedy to the coming Bxd4) 25 … Kf8 and now, simplest is 26 Rxg7! (removal of a key defender/double attack) 26 … Qxg7 27 Qxg7+ Kxg7 28 Bxd4+ f6 29 Bxc5 with a winning game for White.

**21 Rf3!**

Transferring the rook to its optimal post on g3.

**21 … Kh8**

Angry words press upon the black king's lips, seeking expression, and it is only with great effort that he is able to constrain them and remain silent to his guest's continual affronts.

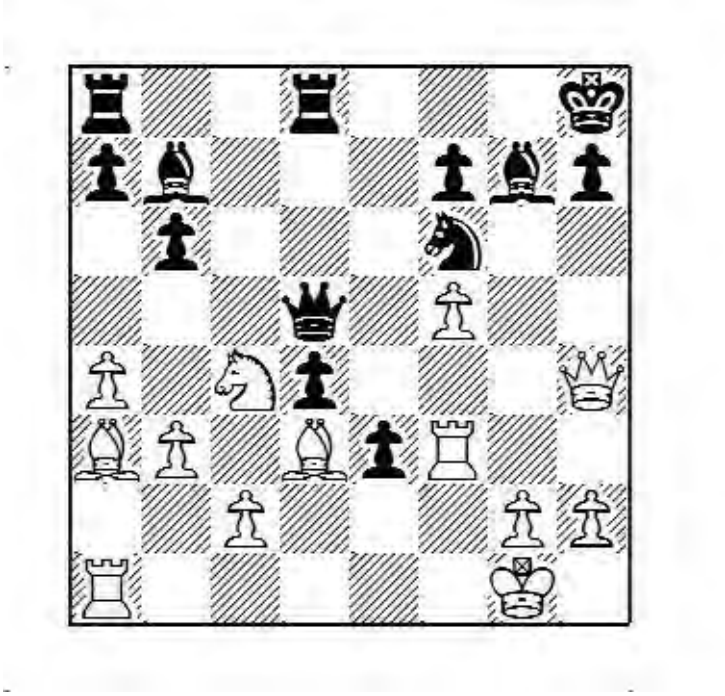
**22 b3**

White nonchalantly completes his queenside development before continuing the attack. The idea is Bb2, after which White threatens Nxe3!.

**22 … b6 23 Ba3!?**

Hey, I said: "The idea is Bb2, after which White threatens Nxe3!" The bishop decides to take a stroll, regarding the tasty d4- and e3-morsels with conspicuous disinterest. This move is also winning. Likewise, 23 Bb2 does the job. The bishop regards the d4- and e3-pawns the way a dentist views a mouth with two rotting teeth and 23 … Bb7 24 Nxe3! Qc6 25 Rg3! Rac8 26 Nc4 leaves White a pawn up with a winning attack.

**23 … Bb7?**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black just blundered in a lost position. What did he overlook?

***Answer*:** Double attack.

**24 Be7! Rg8!**

Sneaky guy. Black sets up a cheapo, which his GM opponent sidesteps.

**25 Nd6**

Good enough:

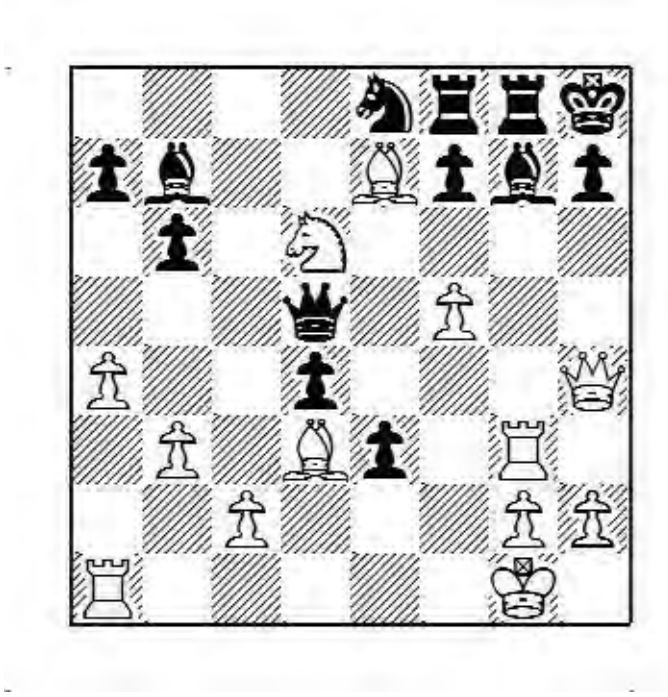
a) Certainly not 25 Bxf6?? which walks into Black's trap after 25 … Qxf3! 26 gxf3 Bxf6+ 27 Qg3 Bxf3 when it is Black, not White, who wins.

b) Also crushing for White is 25 Rg3 Ne4 26 f6 Bf8 27 Nd6! Rxg3 28 Bxe4 Qxe4 29 Nxe4 Rg6 30 Ng5 h6 31 Nxf7+ Kg8 32 Ne5 Rxg2+ 33 Kf1 and White wins.

**25 … Raf8 26 Rg3**

The carefree rook roams about like a tourist with an unfixed destination or itinerary. One logical point follows the other with luminous clarity. Threat: Bxf6. Black can barely move.

**26 … Ne8**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** The black king's old way of life is about to come to an abrupt end and the new one will not be to his liking. This one isn't so difficult. How did White force mate?

***Answer*:** Clearance/double attack. White opens up a deadly threat on the h7-pawn, while attacking the g7-bishop.

**27 f6**

The kingside, now in flames, is essentially a dateline location for a war correspondent's frantic dispatches. As it plays out, the outsider assassin f-pawn is in reality the ultimate insider, who somehow gained the black king's misplaced trust and close access.

**27 … Bh6**

Everything loses here. Black's beleaguered forces are unable to withstand White's assault from multiple angles.

**28 Qxh6 Qxg2+**

This certainly qualifies as a super-desperado move.

**29 Rxg2**

The rook calmly waves away the nuisance with an indifferent motion of the hand.

**29 … Rxg2+ 30 Kf1 Rf2+ 31 Ke1**

Threat: Qxh7 mate. Meanwhile, Black's checks have ended.

**31 … Rg8!?**

Hey, I said: "Threat: Qxh7 mat … " Oh, never mind. While under the hallucinatory effects of that drug called time pressure, I sometimes feel the odd sensation of time decelerating, as an unreal construct, created by my own mind. My clock, however, doesn't really care what I think, and just keeps ticking away. When we frantically search for options and when none are found, we have but two further options: resignation or suicide.

Black in this case chooses the latter.

**32 Qxh7 mate! 1-0**

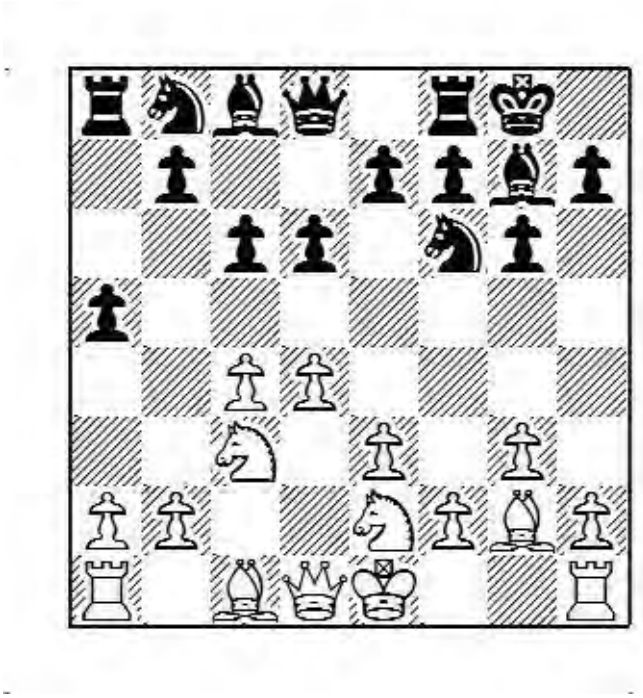
The queen listens to the black king's long list of grievances with the mixture of boredom and amusement. "Don't hate me," she tells him. "I am merely a messenger of painful truths you prefer not to hear."

**Summary:** White's Qh4 idea looks far more viable only *after* Black plays … Qc7.

*Game 22*
**K.A.Lie-B.Ostenstad**
Norwegian League 2010

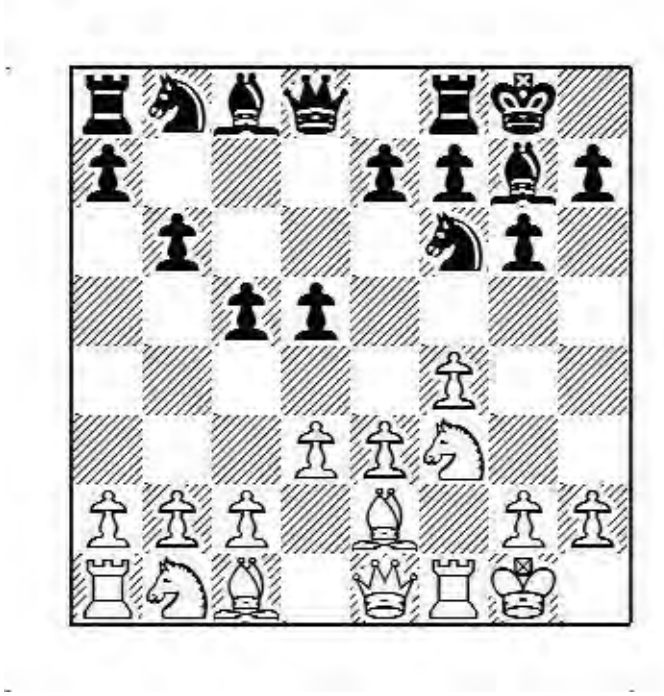
**1 f4**

Larsen may have been the inventor of the manoeuvre you see Lie play this game: a2-a4, Na3, c2-c3, Bd2 and b2-b4, in the following game. 1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 0-0 5 d4 d6 6 e3 c6 7 Nge2 a5!!



Larsen invents an original strategic concept, which had the effect of completely confusing Petrosian, the master of strategic play who walked into 8 b3 Na6 9 0-0 e5 10 Bb2 Re8 11 a3 Rb8 12 h3 h5 13 Qc2 Be6 14 Kh2 Qc7 15 Rac1 b5. There we go. Black achieves his queenside expansion aims and after 16 cxb5 cxb5, Larsen went on to out-Petrosian his opponent and squeezed him mercilessly from this position, T.Petrosian-B.Larsen, Santa Monica 1966. This game is annotated in *Larsen: Move by Move*.

**1 … d5 2 Nf3 g6 3 e3 Bg7 4 Be2 Nf6 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 c5 7 Qe1 b6**



***Question*:** What are the differences between the early … b6 lines

and the lines where Black plays … Nc6 and plays for … e7-e5?

***Answer*:** With … b6 lines, Black takes a more laid-back approach, first developing his or her queenside before deciding whether to play for … e5. In my opinion, the early … Nc6 and … e5 lines put more pressure on White, who at times feels like it is he, not Black, who attempts to equalize.

**8 a4**

Lie begins the Larsen queenside expansion plan.

**8 … Nc6 9 Na3**

***Question*:** Why isn't White playing his queen to h4?

**Answer:** I like Lie's idea of keeping the queen on e1 for now, since the transfer to h4 encourages queen swaps later on. For example: 9 Qh4 Ba6 10 Na3 Ne8 11 Rb1 Nd6 12 c3 e6 13 Qxd8 (13 Qh3 is possible but White's coming kingside 'attack' looks pretty fishy to my positional player's eyes) 13 … Raxd8 and the players reach a similar position to the Lie-Ostenstad game, except queens have come off the board, which helps Black, G.Engelhardt-F.Repanic, correspondence 2010.

**9 … Bb7 10 c3**

Once again, I prefer to hold back on 10 Qh4 which can be met by 10 … Nd7 11 Qh3 and Black can choose whether to play for … e5 or not:

a) 11 … e5 12 f5 e4 13 dxe4 dxe4 14 fxg6 hxg6 15 Rd1 and I prefer Black after 15 … Bc8.

b) 11 … e6!? 12 Rb1 Qe7 13 c3 e5 14 e4 dxe4 15 Ng5 h6 16 Nxe4 f5 and White's position looks disorganized and I see no possibility of a kingside attack, S.Le Floch-Y.Berthelot, Bretagne 1999.

**10 … e6**

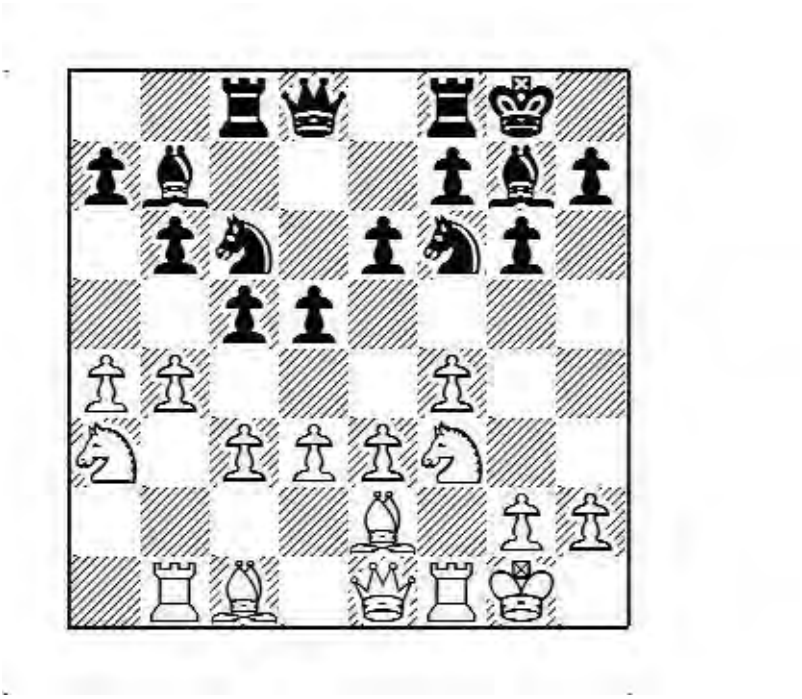
***Question*:** Why isn't Black playing for the … e7-e5 break?

***Answer*:** I think playing for … e7-e5 is Black's best strategy versus the Classical Bird, but it isn't obligatory. Black reasons that playing … e7-e5 results in an open f-file, which may favour White.

**11 Rb1 Rc8**

Black allows White his intent. GM Kotronias tried 11 … a5!? suppressing White's b4-break at the cost of slightly weakening the b5-square. This isn't such a bad idea since White is unable to make much use of the b5-square. After 12 b3 Ba6 13 Nb5 d4! 14 exd4 (14 cxd4 cxd4 15 Nbxd4 Nxd4 16 Nxd4 Nd5 17 Bd2 Bxd4 18 exd4 and Black's superior structure outweighs his dark square weaknesses) 14 … cxd4 and White should probably play 15 c4 with a strange-looking Reversed Benoni-style setup, R.Bellin-V.Kotronias, Gausdal 1992,

**12 b4**



White achieves his queenside expansion idea.

**12 … cxb4**

The text move slightly improves upon 12 … Ne7, C.Wheatley-J.Cobb, Swansea 1999, which can be met with 13 bxc5 Rxc5 14 Nb5 a6 15 Nbd4 when White looks slightly better since Ba3 is in the air and the b6-pawn looks weaker than the c3-one.

**13 cxb4 Ne7**

Heading for the f5-square.

**14 Nb5**

White seeks to make good use of the artificial hole on d4 by transferring his offside a3-knight there.

**14 … Nf5**

The fight for the d4-square begins in earnest.

**15 Nfd4**

15 Nxa7 Ra8 16 Nb5 Rxa4 only activates Black's rook.

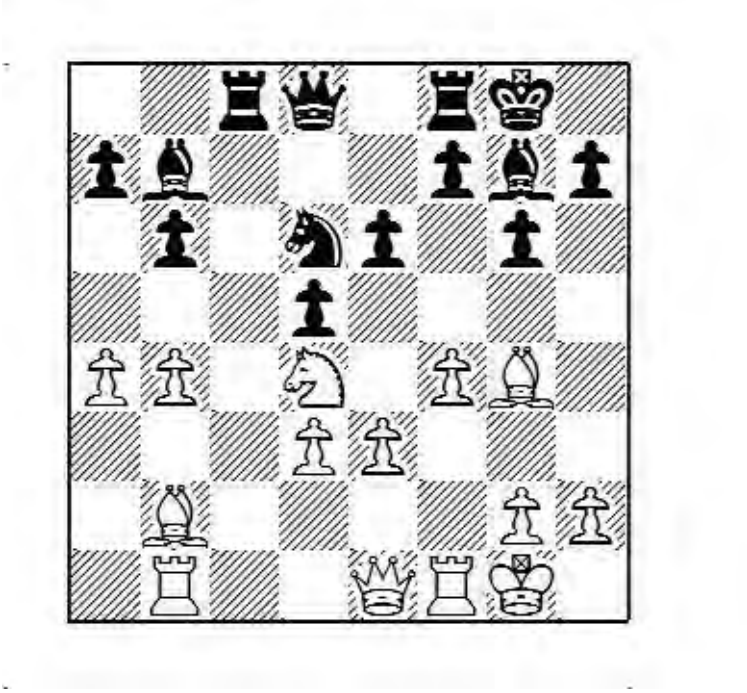
**15 … Nxd4**

Maybe Black should stand his ground and play 15 … Re8! since White can hardly wait to swap on f5, opening the e-file. Following 16 Qf2 (16 g4!? Nxd4 17 Nxd4 e5 18 fxe5 Nd7 leaves White's structure looking a tad loose) 16 … a6!, White is forced to capture on f5 and 17 Nxf5 exf5 18 Nd4 Qe7 19 h3 Nd7 20 Bf3 Nf8 21 Bd2 Ne6 22 Nxe6 Qxe6 23 d4 is close to even. I prefer Black's side though, since the potential … Rc4!? future exchange sac for light square domination is in the air. If White plays Be2, Black may even not move the rook!

**16 Nxd4 Ne8**

Contemplating … Nd6 and … Nf5.

**17 Bb2 Nd6 18 Bg4!**

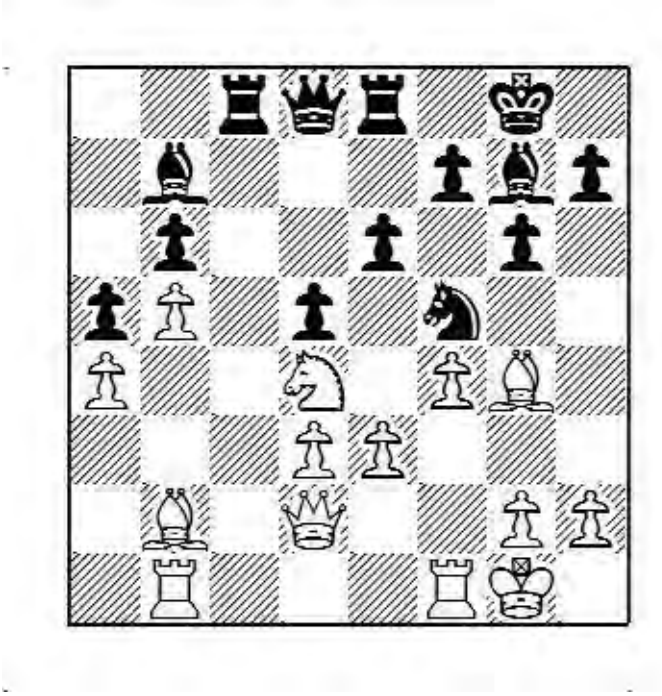


White's forces focus on coverage of the d4-square with the intense concentration of a pack of predators closing in on prey. He intends Bxf5 if Black plays … Nf5. In this way, White retains domination of the d4-square.

**18 … Re8 19 b5**

White gains more queenside space and eyes the c6-square as a future potential entry point.

**19 … a6 20 Qb4 a5 21 Qd2 Nf5**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Perhaps Black should have held off on this move and made a waiting move, since now White is handed a clear plan to dominate the dark squares. How should White proceed?

***Answer*:**

Step 1: Chop Black's knight with the g4-bishop.

**22 Bxf5! exf5 23 Rfe1 Qd6 24 Nf3!**

Step 2: Transfer the d4-knight to the f3-square, encouraging a swap of dark-squared bishops. In the aftermath, White ends up with a powerful d4-knight versus a bad bishop. If Black wants to avoid this scenario, then he must sacrifice a pawn with … d5-d4 to activate his b7-bishop.

***Question*:** Should Black sacrifice with … d5-d4 next?

***Answer*:** He should play the clearance sacrifice.

**24 … d4!**

The b7-wizard raises his arms following the incantation. Excellent strategic judgment. Grandmaster Ostenstad, who I have met many times across the board in internet blitz games, isn't about to bend in the face of defiance, especially when his insurgency commands equal resources to the ruling authority. If not for this move, the dark square weakness becomes an endemic problem for Black, not likely to be relieved anytime soon. He is much better off handing over a pawn, rather than suffer the bad bishop scenario after 24 … Rc7 25 Bxg7 Kxg7 26 Nd4 Qa3 27 Rec1 Rec8 28 Rxc7 Rxc7 29 Qb2! Qxb2 30 Rxb2 Kf6 31 Rc2 Rxc2 32 Nxc2 Ke6 when only White can win the ending.

**25 Bxd4!?**

I would have gone for the line 25 Nxd4 Qd5 26 Re2 which looks a shade better for White than what he got in the game.

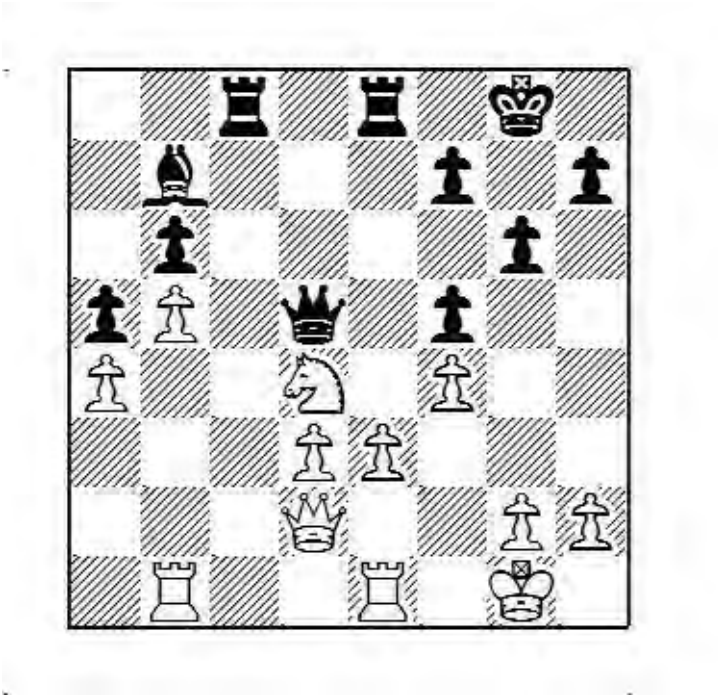
**25 … Bxd4!?**

This is natural but perhaps not best.

***Question*:** Is Black playing for a win?

***Answer*:** I believe so, since he refused to enter a line where he regains the sacrificed pawn with an approximately even game after 25 … Bxf3! 26 Bxg7 Kxg7 27 gxf3 Qa3! 28 Rec1 Qxa4 29 Qb2+ Kh6 30 Kf2 Red8 31 Ke2 Rxc1 32 Rxc1 Rd5 33 Rb1 Rc5 34 Kd2 when the game is even. Following 34 … f6! 35 Qb3 Qxb3 36 Rxb3 Kg7 37 d4 Rc4, Black stands no worse in the rook ending.

**26 Nxd4 Qd5**



The jewel-bedecked queen dazzles all before her in court. Black's powerful activity, coupled with the weakness of the a4-pawn, seems to offer him full compensation for the missing pawn.

**27 Nf3 Rc7!**

Black once again relies on his superior activity. He struggles for a draw in the line 27 … Qd6 28 Rec1 (28 Nd4 Qd5 simply repeats the position) 28 … Bxf3 29 gxf3 Qa3 30 Kf2 Rxc1 31 Rxc1 Qxa4 32 Qb2! (the soon-to come Ra1 pretty much forces Black into … Qb4, after which White swaps queens and then picks off the b4-pawn) 32 … Qb4 33 Qxb4 axb4 34 Rc4 Rd8 35 Ke2 b3 36 Kd2 Kg7 37 e4 when only White can win.

**28 Rec1**

Every swap helps White.

**28 … Rec8**

After 28 … Rce7 29 Ne5 f6 30 Nc4, White hangs on to his extra material.

**29 Ne1**

For the pawn, White's position sags under the strategic burdens he carries with the bent knees of a weightlifter.

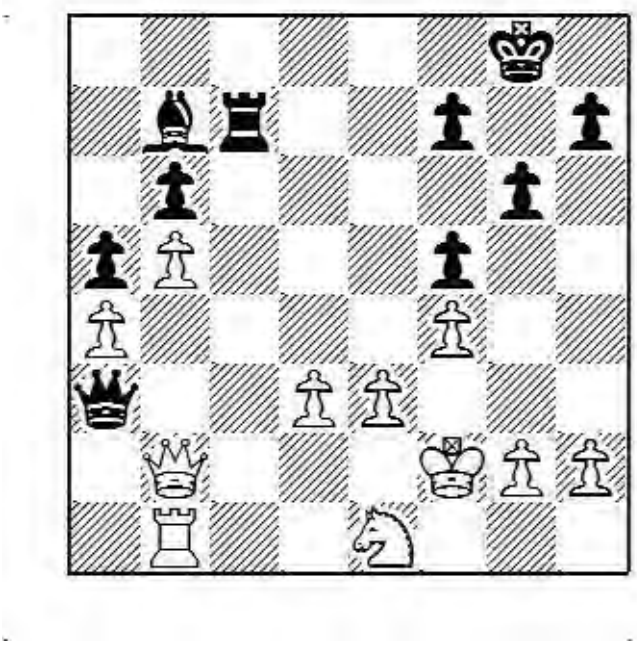
**29 … Qd6!**

Eyeing … Qa3 infiltrations.

**30 Kf2 Qa3**

The queen's angry gaze reads volumes without need of words.

**31 Rxc7 Rxc7 32 Qb2!**



The queen runs and veers with the skill of a seasoned cockroach, attempting to dodge an oncoming human foot. White's supernatural pieces bend in eye-confusing defensive formations, somehow barely able to constrain the attacker's energy. Having undergone fearsome defensive ordeals, they continue to stand defiantly. White's position deteriorates if he goes passive with 32 Qd1?! Bd5.

**32 … Rc3!**

White's structure, now brittle as icicles, threatens to shatter to pieces upon the slightest mistake. Inferior is 32 … Qxa4?! 33 Ra1 Qb4 (tears of unquenched resentment and humiliation trickle down the black queen's cheeks, as she once again finds her wishes frustrated by her sister) 34 Qxb4 axb4 35 Rb1 and White picks off a pawn.

**33 Ke2**

Defenders continue to flutter out like startled bats emerging from a barn.

**33 … Bd5?!**

Tiny fragments of trouble begin to bubble and prick through the once calm surface of Black's position. Overweening ambition, mixed with an underwhelming position makes for an unappetizing recipe. Our appetite for victory must match our resources on the board. We not only have to work on our own plans, but must also guess our opponent's intent. The key is to learn to think yourself into the opponent's head, and be ready for his intent - even before he knows what it is. This move turns out to be a critically wasted

tempo. Black secures the draw with the more accurate 33 … Qxb2+! 34 Rxb2 Ra3 35 Rc2 Rxa4 36 Rc6! Ra2+ 37 Kd1 Kf8 38 Rxb6 Bxg2 39 Nxg2 Rxg2 40 h4 Ra2 41 Ra6 a4 42 Ra7 Kg7 43 b6 Kf6 44 e4 fxe4 45 dxe4 Rb2 46 b7 a3 47 Kc1 Rb4 48 Rxa3 Rxb7 49 Kd2 Rb2+ 50 Ke3 Rh2 51 e5+! Kg7 (51 … Kf5 52 Ra6 Rh3+ 53 Kd4 Kxf4 54 Rf6+ Kg3 55 Rxf7 Rxh4+ 56 Kd5 Rh1 57 Rg7! and Black must force a draw with 57 … Rd1+ 58 Ke6 h5 59 Rxg6+ Kf4) 52 Ra7 (threat: e5-e6) 52 … Kg8 53 Ra8+ Kg7 54 Ra7 with a draw.

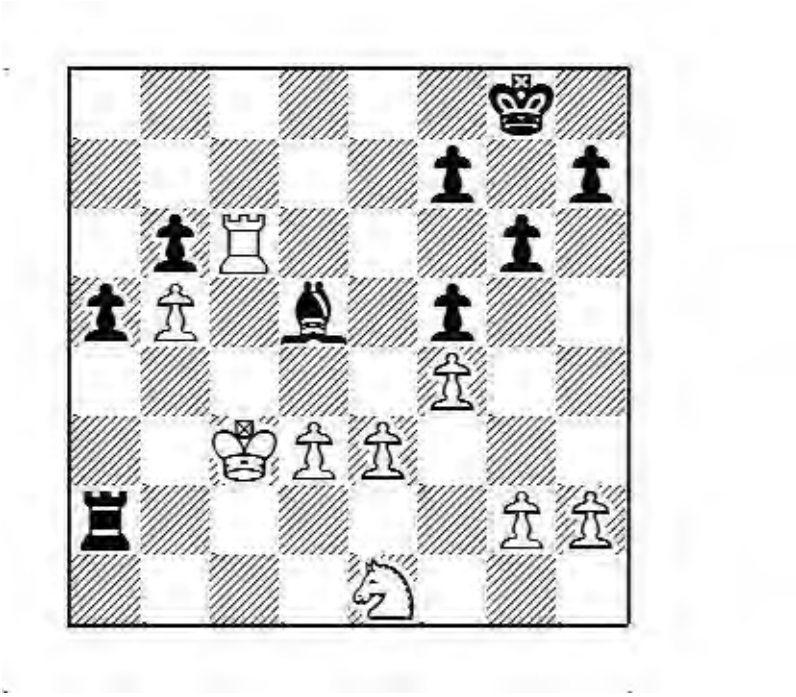
**34 Kd2 Rb3 35 Qxa3 Rxa3 36 Rc1 Rxa4 37 Rc6!**

The rook materializes from empty space. He is a master of concealing his own flaws, while amplifying the flaws of his enemies. This shot is slightly more accurate than handing Black's king a tempo with 37 Rc8+ Kg7 38 Rb8.

**37 … Ra2+**

Of course the c6-rook was poisoned. After 37 … Bxc6?? 38 bxc6 Ra2+ 39 Nc2, the rook is unable to halt the c-pawn's promotion.

**38 Kc3**



The king takes his first step toward emancipation. Compare this to the line given after Black's 33rd move. In this version, White's king isn't cut off on the back rank.

**38 … Re2?**

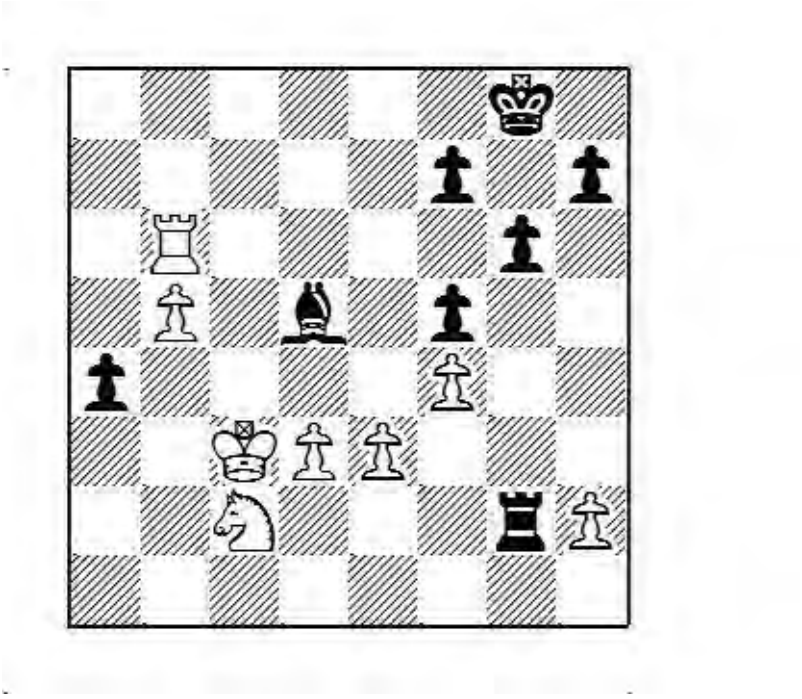
After this move Black's game goes from difficult to lost. His best shot is to enter the pawn-down ending after 38 … Ra1! 39 Nc2 Rb1 40 Rxb6 a4! (40 … Bxg2? 41 Na3 Rc1+ 42 Kd4 leaves Black in deep trouble since White's passed b-pawn is an endless source of worry) 41 g3 Kg7 42 Ra6 Rxb5 43 Rxa4 when Black, although down a pawn, can continue to resist.

**39 Nc2 Rxg2**

This pawn is like finding a precious treasure in a dream: the treasure lasts only as long as the dream.

**40 Rxb6 a4?!**

Black puts up greater though futile resistance with 40 … Rxh2 41 Ra6 Rh1 42 Rxa5 Rb1 43 Na3 Rb3+ 44 Kd4 Bf3 45 Kc4 Rb2 46 Kc3! Ra2 47 b6 Bc6 (47 … h5 48 e4! forces the b-pawn's promotion) 48 Nc4 Rxa5 49 Nxa5 Ba8 50 b7 and White wins.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black was busted no matter how

he played it. How did White end the game in a single move?

***Answer*:** Trapped piece. Black's bishop runs out of safe squares on an open board.

**41 Rd6! 1-0**

There's not much point continuing with 41 … Bf3 42 Ne1! Rf2 43 Nxf3 and if 43 … Rxf3 44 b6 Rf1 45 b7 Rb1 46 Rd8+ Kg7 47 b8=Q wins. "Your actual guilt or innocence is not germane to this case, since I deem you guilty without need for a trial," the newly coroneted queen informs Black's crestfallen rook.

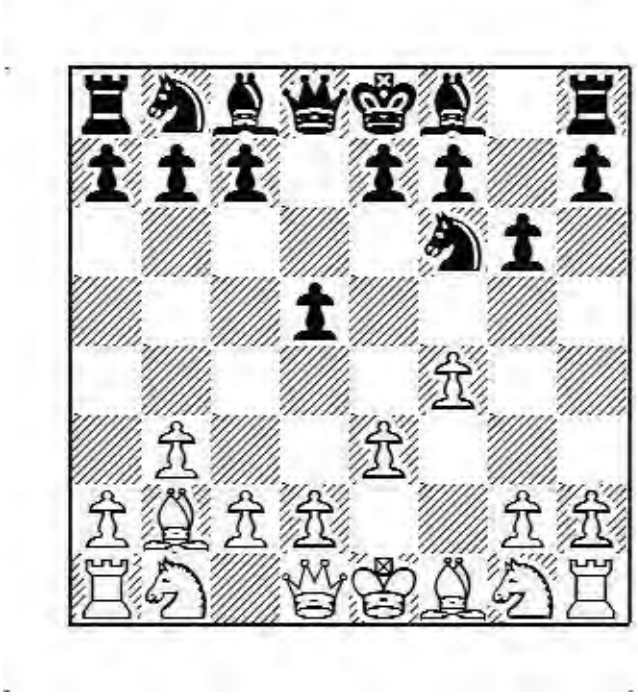
**Summary:** Remember the queenside expansion plan: a2-a4, Na3, c2-c3, Bd2 and b2-b4.

*Game 23*
**B.Larsen-R.Keene**
Teeside 1972

**1 b3**

We soon transpose to a Bird position.

**1 … d5 2 Bb2 Nf6 3 e3 g6 4 f4**



We transpose to the Queenside Fianchetto Bird.

***Question*:** Should White consider chopping the f6-knight here?

***Answer*:** Now remember, we wouldn't actually reach this position as White, since we open with 1 f4!. As a white Trompowsky player, I am very sympathetic to virtually all Bxf6 lines, but this one may be an exception.

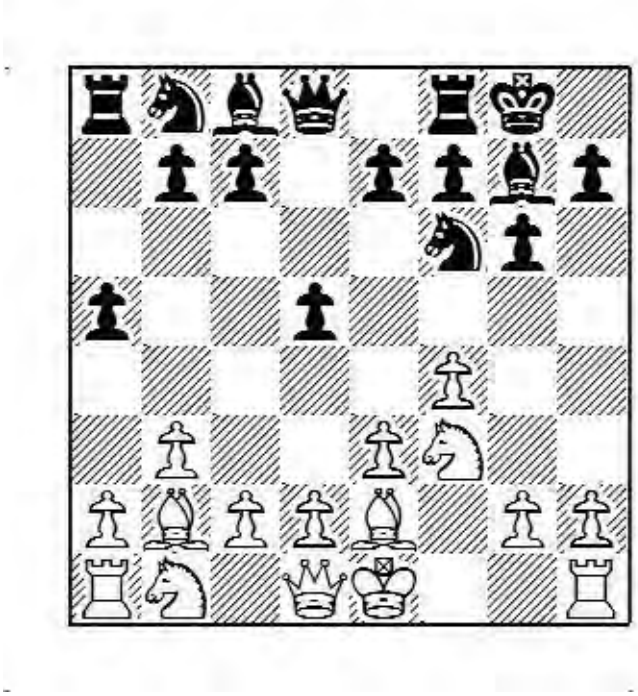
I think White is better off avoiding it since after 4 Bxf6!? exf6 5 d4, GM Jonathan Rowson writes that the position "would be a strange kind of Trompowsky, where b3 may prove to be useful, but could also be a liability. If Black plays quietly with … Bg7, … 0-0 and … f5, White will have time to play g3, Bg2, Ne2, and c4 with a pleasant position, so Black should probably try to make something happen more quickly". (Maybe White can try 5 Nf3 c5 6 Bb5+ Nc6 7 Nc3 Bg7 8 Bxc6+ bxc6 9 0-0. Your knight-loving writer would be okay with White, but I will bet 90% of the readers favour Black here!) Following 5 … c5 6 c3 cxd4!? 7 exd4 (7 cxd4?! Bb4+ 8 Nd2 Qa5 is awkward for White) 7 … Bd6, Rowson continues " … Black has a position reminiscent of a line in the Caro-Kann (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ exf6!?) but it doesn't look like a bad version because the unopposed bishop on d6 looks very strong". I would add that White's c3-pawn looks at least as big a liability as Black's d5-isolani.

**4 … Bg7 5 Nf3 0-0**

***Question*:** Is there any difference in the position when Black plays an early … c5?

***Answer*:** Yes, when Black tosses in an early … c5, he or she gives us the option of playing Bb5+, with the idea of dumping our light-squared bishop, similar to the Bogo-Indian plan (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Bb4+). For example, 5 … c5 6 Bb5+ Nbd7 7 0-0 0-0 8 Qe1 a6 9 Bxd7 Bxd7 10 d3 b5 11 Nbd2 has White was better off than normal, swapping away his worst piece, K.Chernyshov-S.Tiviakov, Warsaw (rapid) 2002.

**6 Be2 a5!?**



White's setup is so (initially) innocuous that Black can pretty much play anything against it. Black's move is actually quite logical.

***Question*:** What is Black's idea?

***Answer*:** Normally White tends to play for mate on the kingside in this line of the Bird, so Keene decides to create an immediate distraction for White on the other side of the board, where … a5-a4 would be annoying for White. Other Black setups:

a) 6 … c5 is Black's main line, which should equalize without difficulties. After 7 0-0 Nc6, White is inclined to play 8 Ne5. Black uses this as a technique to equalize a move down in this position, for example, with 1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 g3 b6 5 Bg2 Bb7 6 0-0 Be7 7 Nc3 Ne4 8 Qc2 Nxc3 9 Qxc3 Bf6, A.Stella-K.Chernyshov, Pardubice 2011. However, it's still our best move as White.

***Question*:** Why?

***Answer*:** White's biggest problem in the Queenside Fianchetto Bird is the light-squared bishop (this is why I don't play it as White and prefer Leningrad and Stonewall Bird setups). By playing our knight to e5, we clear the way for Bf3, perhaps following with d3 and e4 if allowed. After 8 … Qc7 (Black doesn't want doubled c-pawns, and so covers his c6-knight) 9 Nxc6 Qxc6 10 Bf3, the bishop arrives on f3 with the added bonus of having taken a bead on Black's queen, with only the d5-pawn in the way. This position is basically a Queen's Indian Defence, with colours reversed. Following 10 … b5 11 Be5 b4 12 d3 a5 13 c4 Bb7 14 Nd2, the position is balanced, S.Szilow-J.Worek, Krakow 2004.

b) 6 … b6 7 Ne5 Bb7 8 Bf3 c5 9 0-0 Nc6 10 Nxc6 Bxc6 11 Qe2 Qd7 12 d3 Ne8 13 Bxg7 Nxg7 The game is even, C.Zuidema-J.Marcus, Leeuwarden 1973.

c) Black can add a bit of dynamism with 6 … Bg4 by attempting to create an imbalance with … Bxf3. We will examine various … Bg4 ideas in Chapter 5. Following 7 0-0 c5 (7 … c6 resembles the Malaniuk-Miroshnichenko note below, without the inclusion of … a5) 8 d3 Nc6 9 Ne5 Bxe2 10 Qxe2 Rc8 11 Nd2 Nxe5 12 Bxe5 Nd7 13 Bxg7 Kxg7 14 f5!, the position is probably even, although I slightly prefer White, since he can poke and prod around Black's king with his advanced f-pawn, K.Chernyshov-A.Zontakh, Cappelle la Grande 2003.

d) 6 … c6 7 0-0 Bg4 once again resembles the next note.

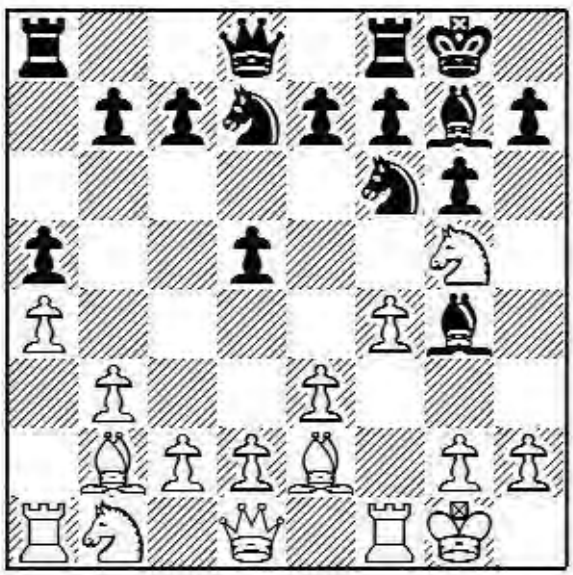
**7 a4 Bg4**

Keene is happy to hand Larsen the bishop pair, since it weakens White's control over the e5-square. As mentioned earlier, an entire chapter is devoted to the various … Bg4 and … Bf5 lines.

**8 0-0 Nbd7**

Black probably intends to continue with … Bxf3, followed by … c6 and then play for … e5, with an approximately even game. After 8 … c6 9 d3 Nbd7 10 Ne5 Bxe2 11 Qxe2 Ne8 12 Nxd7 Bxb2 13 Ra2 Qxd7 14 Rxb2 Nd6, the players agreed to a draw in this even position, V.Malaniuk-E.Miroshnichenko, Zurich 2009.

**9 Ng5!?**



"When my needs meet the law, it is the law who must step aside and give way," declares the arrogant knight. With genius, the unthinkable is ordinary. As usual, Larsen attempts to mess with his opponent's head by creating a completely unexplored position. It's a dangerous time for us when we face vague, shadowy opposition, mainly since we lack full comprehension of the opponent's intent.

***Question*:** Won't White lose a tempo when Black later plays … h7-h6?

***Answer*:** White loses the tempo, but also provokes Black into weakening his king, similar to the Larsen-Gligoric game from the book's introduction.

**9 … Bxe2 10 Qxe2 Ne8!**

Keene fights for control over the e5-square. He is in no hurry to avoid weakening his king with 10 … h6 11 Nf3 Ne4 12 Bxg7 Kxg7 13 d3 Nd6 14 Nbd2 c6 15 e4. I prefer White's prospects, due to his central space and potential for generating play on the kingside, over Black's on the queenside with … b7-b5 ideas.

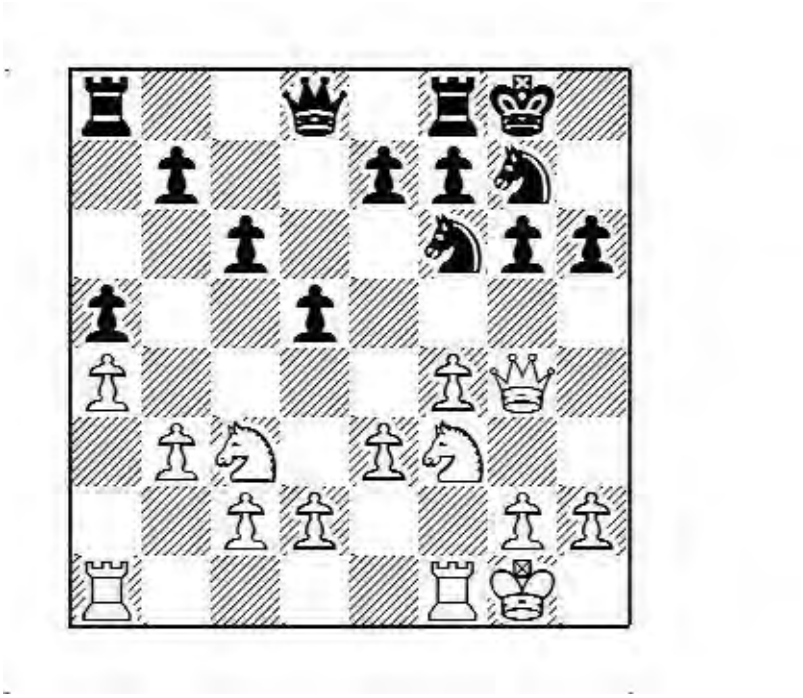
**11 Bxg7 Nxg7 12 Nc3 c6 13 Qg4**

The queen's eyes form into ominous slits, every time she nears her g8-brother. Now White's queen is able to transfer to either h4 or h3, inducing Black to weaken.

**13 … h6**

At last, a slight scratch in Black's kingside armour.

**14 Nf3 Nf6**



Rowson writes that "It would appear that White has achieved approximately nothing out of the opening and that Black is very comfortable. Even so, I included this game because it shows that when there is a full set of pawns, there is plenty of scope to outplay people from equal positions, especially if you are enjoying yourself, and not dispirited by the lack of a theoretical advantage".

**15 Qh3 h5!**

Inhibiting g2-g4 ideas.

**16 Ne2 Qd7 17 Qh4**

Larsen needs his queen to have any hope of a successful kingside attack.

**17 … Nf5 18 Qe1 Qc7 19 Ng3**

White wants to play f4-f5 at some point, but Black won't oblige.

**19 … e6! 20 Nxf5**

We sense a clear deflation of White's intended kingside initiative. This move essentially ends White's hopes of a kingside attack.

**20 … exf5 21 Qh4 Qe7 22 c4!?**

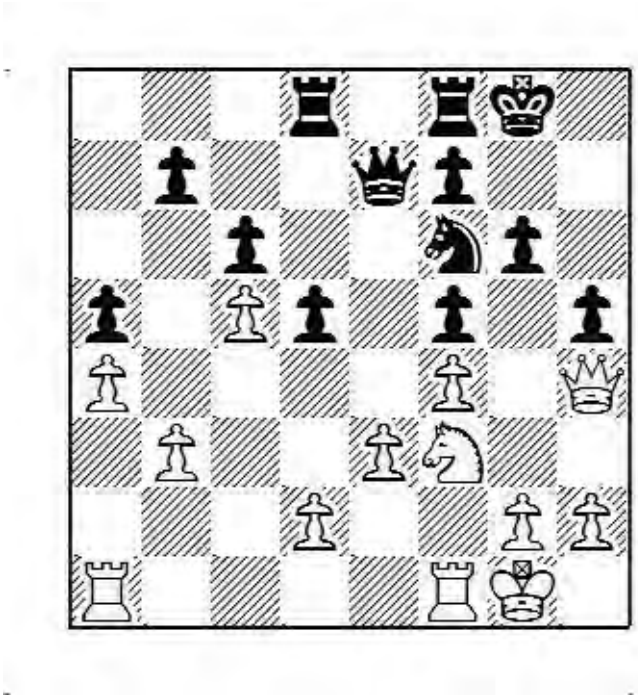
This move on the other side of the board pretty much suggests Larsen's abdication of his previous intent to checkmate Black's king. He willingly risks a potential queenside weakness on the b4-square to generate play on the other side of the board.

**22 … Rad8**

A tiny, tiny inaccuracy which allows Larsen a foothold to play for a win. With hindsight

of Larsen's plan, Black should play 22 … Kg7! to prevent White's next move. After 23 Rfc1 c5!, I prefer Black's position.

**23 c5!**



White uses the fact that Black's queen is unable to take the c5-pawn to establish a beautiful d4-outpost for his knight.

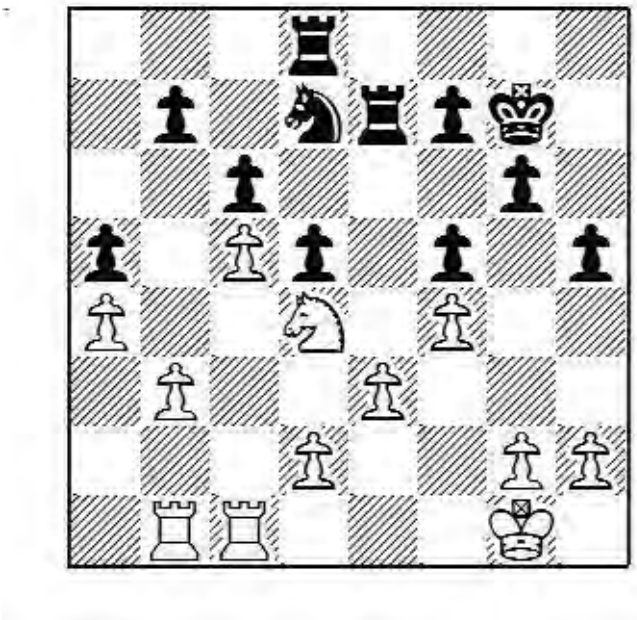
**23 … Rfe8 24 Rfc1!**

The correct rook, since nothing is happening for White on the kingside.

**24 … Kg7 25 Nd4 Nd7**

This move forces queens off the board.

**26 Qxe7 Rxe7 27 Rab1!**



The ending may look even but it isn't. White will play b3-b4 to prise open the b-file, applying pressure to the b7-pawn, while Black can only await events.

**27 … Ra8 28 b4**

Black's last move didn't discourage Larsen from his plan, since the b7-pawn is weaker than the a4-pawn.

**28 … axb4**

Otherwise White plays b4-b5 to increase the queenside pressure.

**29 Rxb4 Ra7 30 Kf2 Nb8**

The b7-pawn will be both attacked and protected twice. The difference is in the activity levels of the two sides.

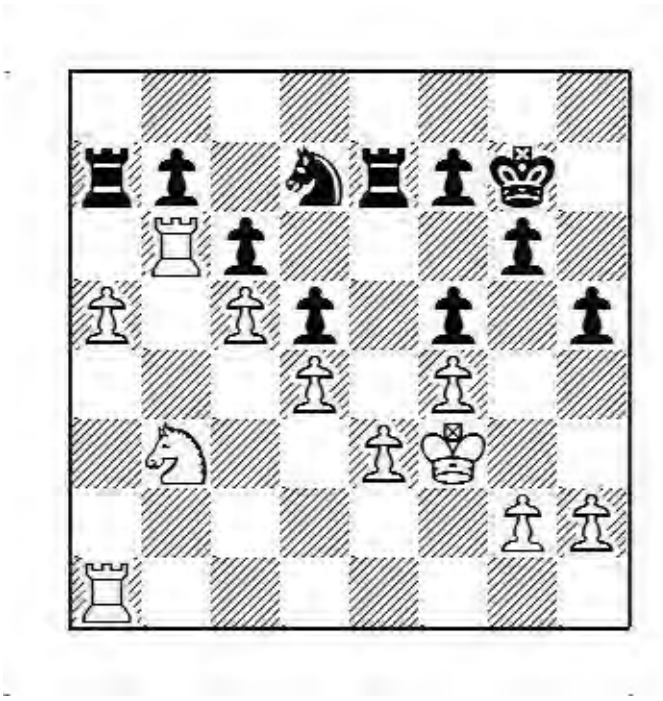
**31 Nb3 Re4 32 d4!?**

Another strategic gamble by Larsen that Black won't be able to make use of the newly created e4-hole, or apply pressure to the newly created backward e3-pawn.

**32 … Re7 33 Kf3 Na6**

It may be more logical to try and occupy the e4-square with 33 … Nd7! 34 h3 Nf6 35 a5 (35 Nd2 Ne4 36 Nxe4 dxe4+ 37 Ke2 h4! and if 38 Kd2 Rd7 39 Kc3 Kf6 40 Kc4 Ke6 41 Rcb1 f6! 42 a5 g5, Black has sufficient play for the draw) 35 … Ne4 36 Rb6 Ra8 37 Ra1 Rc8 38 a6 bxa6 39 Na5 Re6 when the weakness of the c6-pawn is balanced by White's e3-worry.

**34 Rb6 Nb8 35 Ra1 Nd7 36 a5!?**



Chance loves to gamble with Fate. 36 Rb4 is obviously safer, but Larsen didn't operate by my standards of safety!

**36 … Nb8**

Keene plays it safe, refusing to soften his fortress resolve. He sees no reason to accept Larsen's gift but I think he should take it. Black doesn't look worse after 36 … Nxb6!? 37 cxb6 Ra8 38 Nc5 Rae8 39 Ra3 h4. Here I would just shuffle pieces and ask White where he plans to effect a breakthrough. I don't see how White plays for a win without a high

risk of loss. If 40 a6!? bxa6 41 Nxa6 Ra8 42 Rb3 Rxa6 43 b7 Rxb7 44 Rxb7 Ra2 45 Rc7 Rc2, the game should still be drawn, although I would rather have Black's pawn-up side.

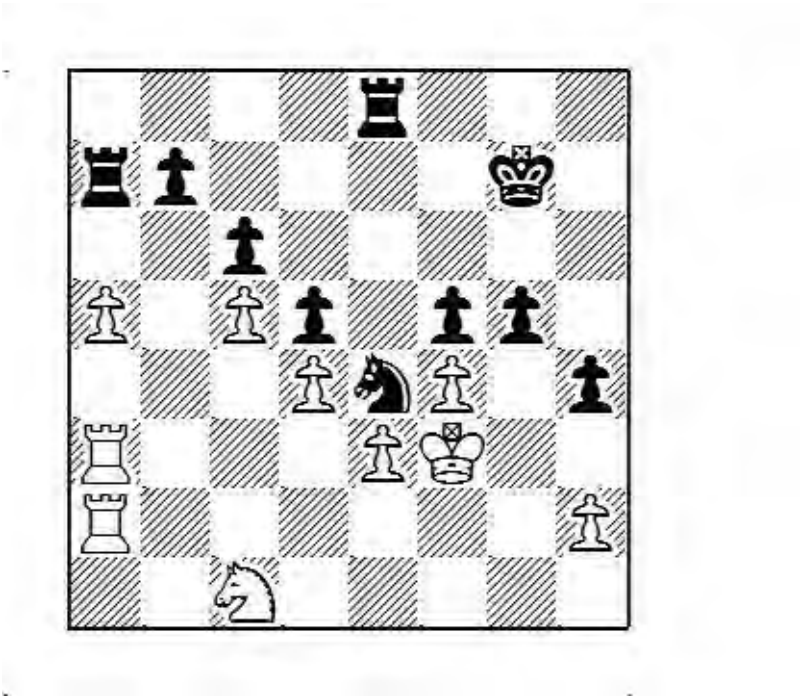
**37 Nc1 Nd7 38 Rb3 Nf6 39 Ra2 Re8 40 g3 Ne4 41 Rba3!**

Black lives in a coercive environment which requires great vigilance. Larsen angles for an a6-break.

**41 … h4**

Maybe Keene plays for the win himself. More solid is 41 … Rea8 42 Nd3 Kf6 43 Nb4 Ke6 44 a6 Rb8! 45 axb7 Rxa3 46 Rxa3 Rxb7 and now White is unable to capture the c6-pawn, since 47 Nxc6?? is met with 47 … Rb2 forcing mate.

**42 g4 fxg4+ 43 Kxg4 f5+ 44 Kf3 g5!?**



Keene deftly transmutes a defensive position into an offensive one. He seeks to generate sufficient kingside play to offset White's queenside bind. The only problem with such an 'active' move is that it creates kingside isolanis for Black and also an f4-hole for White's knight or king. Safer is 44 … Rea8 45 Nd3 Kf6 46 Ne5 Ra6. Now White can't play 47 Rb2? Rxa5! 48 Rxa5 Rxa5 49 Rxb7?? as 49 … Ra2 wins.

**45 fxg5 Nxg5+ 46 Kf2**

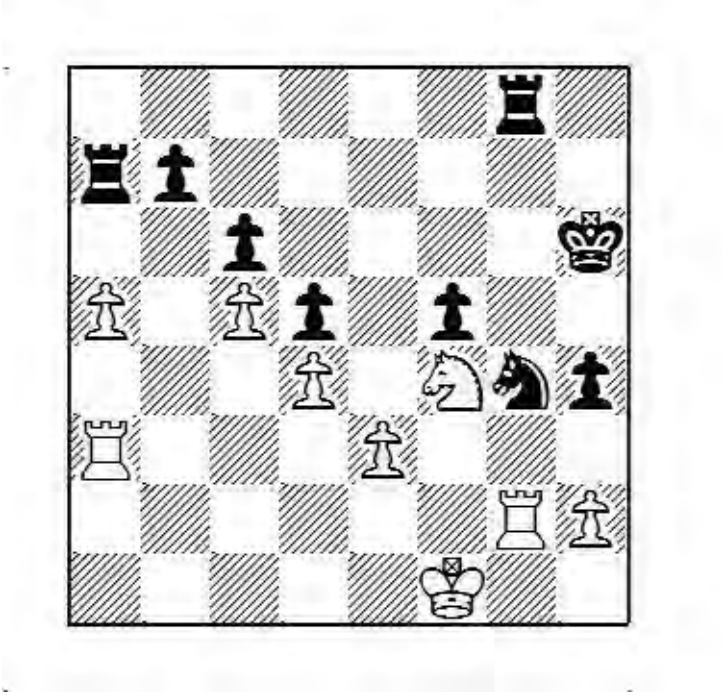
World class players don't fall for traps like 46 Kf4?? Kg6! when White is mated on the next move.

**46 … Ne4+ 47 Kg2 Kh6 48 Ne2**

Heading for the f4-outpost.

**48 … Rg8+ 49 Kf1 Nf6 50 Nf4 Ng4 51 Rg2?**

White should play 51 h3.



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Larsen's last move was an error. Should Black play

51 … Re8 attacking the e3-pawn, or should he try and activate his sleeping a7-rook with 51 … Raa8? A key fits only one lock, just as this position has only a single solution. Black scores at least a draw in one of the lines, while the other allows White's position to grow into winning proportions.

**51 … Raa8?**

This move fails to reverse the polarity of flow from White's initiative.

**Answer:** Much better is 51 … Re8!. Now the size of White's once robust initiative, which once swelled, now shrinks in disorienting fashion. After 52 Ke2 Re4! (threat: … Nxe3 and … Rxf4) 53 h3 (most certainly not 53 Kf3?? Rxa5! and Black's deflection tactic wins since 54 Rb3 Rb5 55 Rd3 Rb1 is untenable for White) 53 … Nxe3! 54 Rg6+ Kh7 55 Rxe3 Rxf4 56 Ree6 Re4+ 57 Kf3 Rxe6 58 Rxe6 Rxa5 59 Re7+ Kg6 60 Rxb7 Ra4 61 Ke3, the ending should be drawn with accurate play despite Black's extra pawn, since the c6-pawn remains chronically weak.

**52 Ke2**

Now White is in command again.

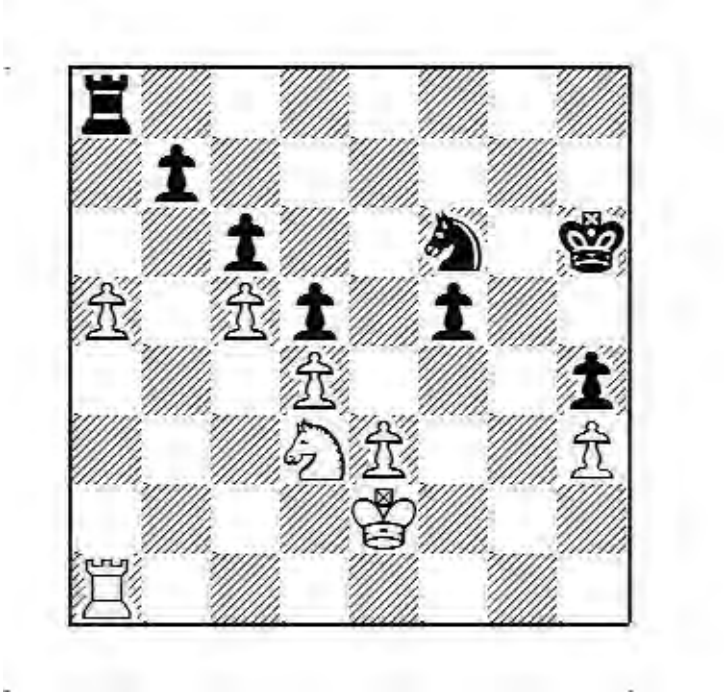
**52 … Nf6 53 Rxg8**

The trade of rooks favours White, since his fears for his king safety decline considerably.

**53 … Nxg8 54 Ra1 Nf6 55 Nd3! Ng4?!**

Black should try 55 … Ne4 56 Ne5 Kg5 57 a6 Ra7.

**56 h3 Nf6**



***Exercise (planning)*:** A seemingly impermeable defensive barrier intervenes all of White's attempts to make progress. Now the key word is "seemingly". There is indeed a clear plan for White to reach a winning position. Find it.

***Answer*:** Undermining. Black has no defence to an eventual a5-a6, which in turn undermines the c6-pawn, decisively weakening Black's once perfect queenside pawn structure.

**57 Ne5!**

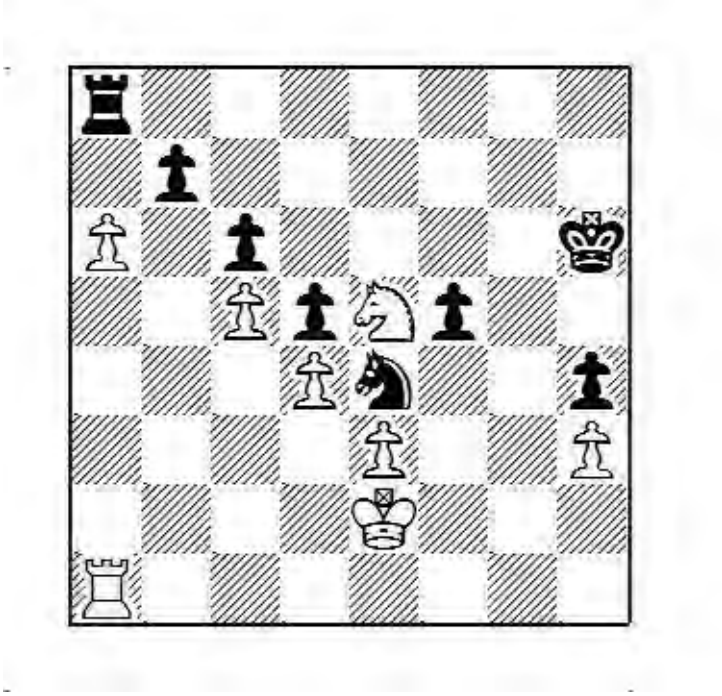
Larsen sets inevitability into motion. Step 1: Transfer the knight to e5 to apply pressure to the c6-pawn. White's knight looms like a monolith over the puny pawn.

**57 … Ne4**

Also losing for Black is 57 … Ra6 58 Kf3 Nh5 59 Rb1 Ra7 60 Rb6 Kg5 61 Nf7+ Kf6 62 Nd8 Rxa5 63 Nxb7 Ra2 64 Rxc6+ Kg5 65 Nd6! with the threat of Nf7 mate and wins.

Step 2: Undermine the c6-pawn.

**58 a6!**



Now the weakness in Black's creaking queenside pawns resonates painfully. The key is to remove the b7-defender from the matrix, and only then will all the pieces of the puzzle effortlessly fall in sync.

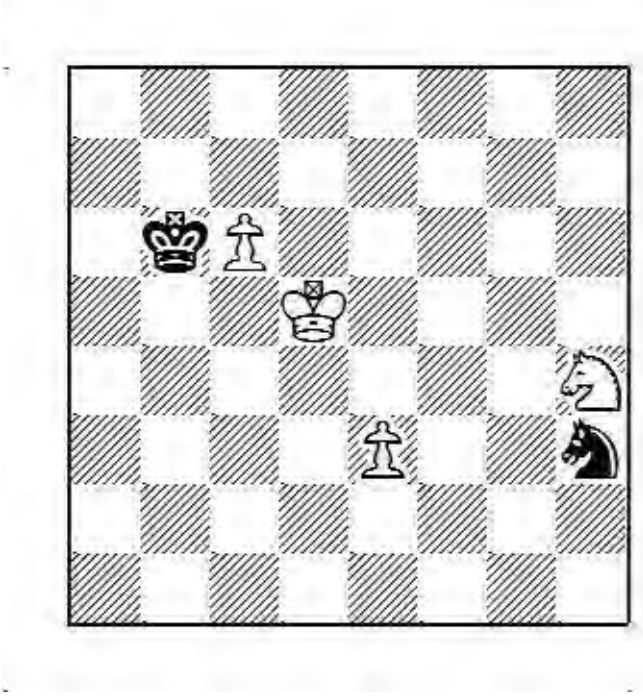
**58 … bxa6 1-0**

Keene played this move and then resigned. Black's queenside structure lies helpless as a newborn animal, stripped of parental guardians and approached by predators.

***Question*:** Wasn't this a premature resignation?

***Answer*:** I don't think so. *Houdini* has White up +2.02. White's winning technique:

Step 3: Capture the c6-pawn, after which Black's ragged pawns fall. After 59 Nxc6, White threatens both Nb4 and Ne7, to which Black has no defence. With 59 … Kg7 60 Nb4 Nc3+ 61 Kd3 a5 62 c6! Kf7 63 c7 (threat: Rxa5!) 63 … Rc8 64 Rxa5 Rxc7 65 Rc5! (simplification - White forces a winning knight ending) 65 … Rxc5 66 dxc5 Ne4 67 Kd4 Ke6 68 Nxd5 Ng5 69 Nf4+ (covering the h3-pawn) 69 … Kd7 70 Kd5 Ne4 71 c6+ Kc7 72 Ne6+ Kb6 73 Nd4 Nf2 74 Nxf5 Nxh3 75 Nxh4,

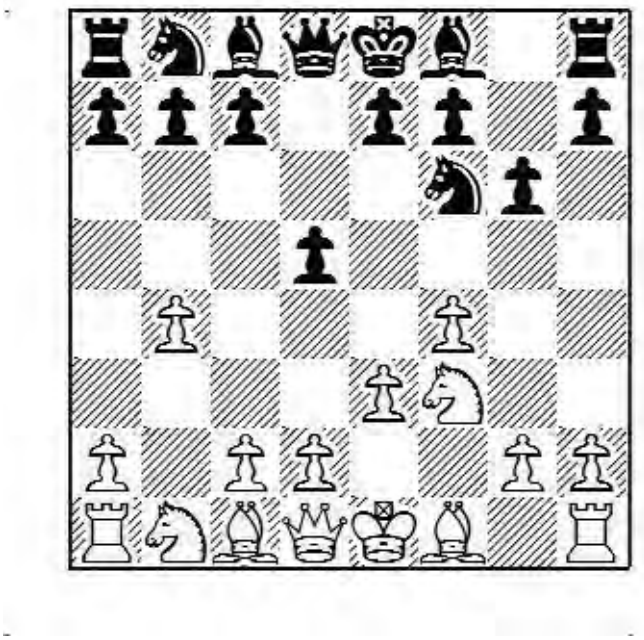


White wins as long as he doesn't allow Black to sacrifice his knight for *both* white pawns.

**Summary:** The position we reach in the Queenside Fianchetto Bird is basically a Queen's Indian Defence with an extra move for our side - good enough for equality, but no more.

*Game 24*
**B.Larsen-B.Spassky**
Amsterdam Interzonal 1964

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 g6 4 b4!?**



The Bird/Orangutan, one of Larsen's many opening eccentricities.

***Question*:** Doesn't this move violate the principle:

*Don't create play on your opponent's strong wing?*

***Answer*:** I don't think so. White *usually* plays on the kingside, but he hasn't signed any contract just yet, and can also fight for queenside space. The move also has the added benefit of making it more difficult for Black to play … c7-c5.

***Question*:** Why is … c7-c5 so crucial for Black?

***Answer*:** If Black is denied … c7-c5, then it becomes next to impossible to engineer the thematic … d5-d4 central counter.

**4 … Bg7**

Black has two more possibilities in:

a) 4 … a5 5 b5 c5! (by provoking White into pushing b4-b5, Black enables his … c7-c5 push) 6 Bb2 (6 bxc6 bxc6 7 c4 Bg7 8 Bb2 looks about even) 6 … Bg7 7 Be2 0-0 and in this messy position, the players agreed to a draw for tournament purposes, T.Taylor-E.Yanayt, Los Angeles 2011.

b) 4 … e6!? seems a bit odd, since Black has already committed to a kingside fianchetto. After 5 a3 Bg7 6 Bb2 0-0, L.Fiorella-F.D'Amico, Mazara del Vallo 2009, play might go 7 c4 a5 8 b5 Nbd7 9 Nc3 Re8 (intending … e7-e5) with even play.

**5 Bb2 0-0**

After 5 … Bg4 6 Be2 Bxf3 7 Bxf3 c6 8 0-0 Qb6 9 a3 Nbd7 10 Bd4 Qc7 11 Qc1 (preparing c2-c4 and also keeping open possibilities of bossing the long dark square diagonal with Qb2) 11 … 0-0 12 c4 dxc4 13 Qxc4 e5! (this central counter equalizes) 14 fxe5 Nxe5, N.Dietrich-E.Romani, Havana 1966, I slightly prefer White after 15 Bxe5 Qxe5 16 Nc3 Rad8 17 Rad1 since he can play for a b4-b5 break.

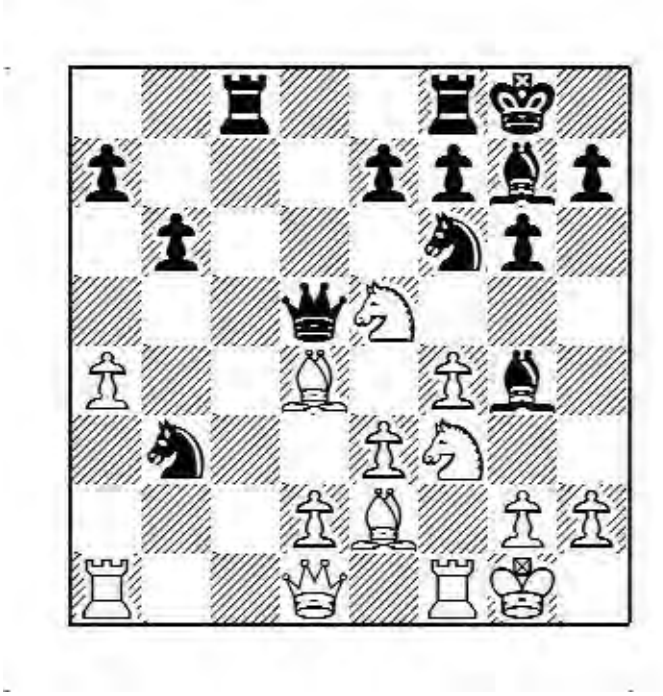
**6 Be2 Bg4**

Logical. Spassky prepares … Bxf3, similar to Keene's plan in the previous game. Instead, after 6 … a5 7 b5 a4 (insuring that White can't back up his b-pawn with a2-a4) 8 0-0 c6 9 Na3 Bg4 10 c4 e6 11 Rb1 Nbd7 12 bxc6 bxc6 13 Nd4 Bxe2 14 Qxe2 Rc8 15 cxd5 cxd5?! (15 … exd5! and the game remains balanced) 16 Nab5, White's ominously entrenched knights assured him of a large strategic advantage, B.Ivkov-M.Cuellar Gacharna, Sousse Interzonal 1967.

**7 0-0 c6**

Since Black plans to swap off his light-squared bishop, Spassky switches the structure to favour his remaining bishop.

Another Larsen game went 7 … Nbd7 8 c4 dxc4 9 Na3 c5 10 bxc5 c3 11 Bxc3 Nxc5 12 Nc4 Rc8 13 Bd4 b6 14 a4 Qd5 15 Nce5 Nb3?! (Black retains equality after 15 … Ne6 16 Nxg4 Nxg4 17 Bxg7 Kxg7)



***Exercise (combination alert/calculation)*:** Larsen worked out a rather involved forcing sequence which wins a clean pawn. How did he do it?

***Answer*:**

Step 1: Interference. 16 Bc4! Rxc4 17 Qxb3 Rc5 18 Qxd5 Rxd5 and the queen trade has not quelched White's initiative.

Step 2: Double attacking on the a7- and e7-pawns. With 19 Nc6! Rd7 20 Nfe5 Rc7, White continues pressing.

Step 3: Undermining. After 21 a5! bxa5 22 Rxa5, now the a7-pawn falls. Following 22 … Bf5 23 Rxa7 Rxa7 24 Bxa7, Larsen converted smoothly after 24 … Re8 25 Bc5 Bf8 26 Ra1 (intending Ra7) 26 … Nd7 27 Nxd7 Bxd7 28 Ne5 Bg7? (He had to try 28 … Bb5 29 Rb1 Ba4 30 Rb7) 29 Ra7 (White wins a second pawn) 29 … Bxe5 30 fxe5, B.Larsen-P.Dely, Moscow 1962. In this instance, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops actually helps Larsen's side, rather than the defender,

**8 a4!?**

Larsen clearly signals that he expects his fight to be on the queenside, rather than kingside, which is traditional for most Fianchetto Bird lines. The problem with the move is that it weakens the b4-square further.

**8 … Nbd7 9 Na3!?**

Continuing to develop, while preparing c2-c4. In a weird way, this may be one of Larsen's semi-sound pawn sacrifices, since it opens him up to … Qb6 ideas.

**9 … Bxf3**

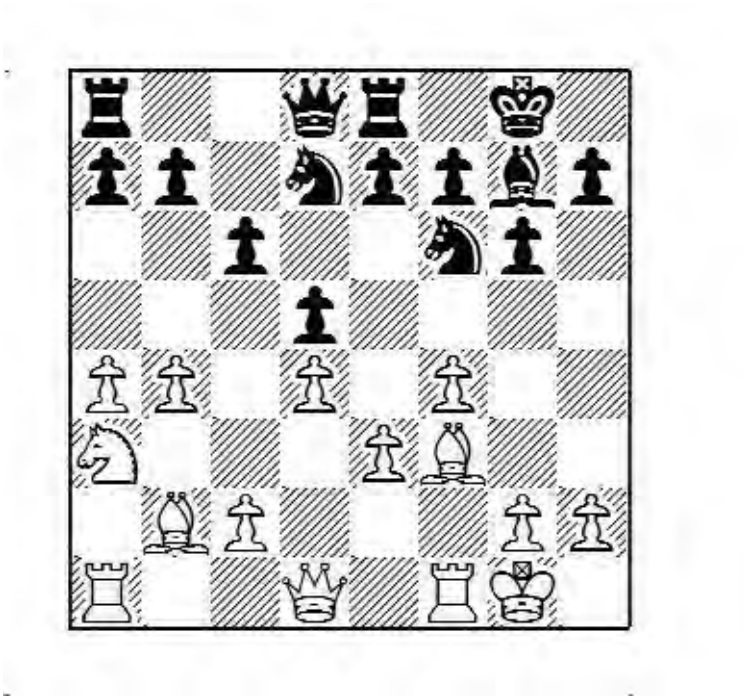
Spassky continues with his strategic plan. He isn't the type to go pawn chasing with a move like 9 … Qb6!? which does indeed look tempting. A correspondence game saw the pawn sacrifice 10 Rb1!? Qxb4 11 Bxf6 (11 Nc4!? Bxf3 12 gxf3 dxc4 13 Bxf6 Qxa4 14

Bxg7 Kxg7 15 Rxb7 offers White structural compensation for the pawn) 11 … Qxa3 12 Bxg7 Kxg7 13 Rxb7 Rfb8 14 Qb1, M.Egan-S.Graham, correspondence 2012. White's queenside pressure and superior structure constitutes compensation for the pawn. But full compensation? I'm not so sure.

**10 Bxf3 Re8**

Spassky logically prepares his … e7-e5 freeing break, after which Black's pieces grow active. Instead, after 10 … a5 11 b5 Nc5 12 c4 Nd3 13 Bc3 Nb4, E.Pedersen-F.Fuglsang, Denmark 1998, I prefer White by just a shade following 14 Nc2 c5 15 cxd5 Nfxd5 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Na3 when White may make some use of the c4-square later in the game.

**11 d4!**



Larsen squelches the … e5 break and turns the game into a really funky Stonewall setup. One of the flexible aspects of the Classical e3 line is that White can keep Black guessing and switch to a Stonewall setup with d2-d4, at a moment's notice.

**11 … Ne4!?**

Preparing to transfer the knight to d6, but Larsen doesn't give it the chance. This move was given a dubious mark by Taylor, but I'm not convinced this is really where Black's troubles began.

***Question*:** How can Black occupy the e4-square

without allowing White to jam up the hole with Bxe4?

***Answer*:** Perhaps with a line like the following: 11 … Nb6 12 a5 Na4!? 13 Bc1 Nc3 14 Qd3 Nce4 and there we go as now Black controls the e4-square. After 15 c4 Qd7, Black's control over the e4-square compensates for White's queenside space.

**12 Bxe4**

Handing back the bishop pair for the privilege of plugging the e4-hole with a black pawn.

**12 … dxe4 13 Nc4**

Eyeing both the a5- and e5-squares as potential future outposts.

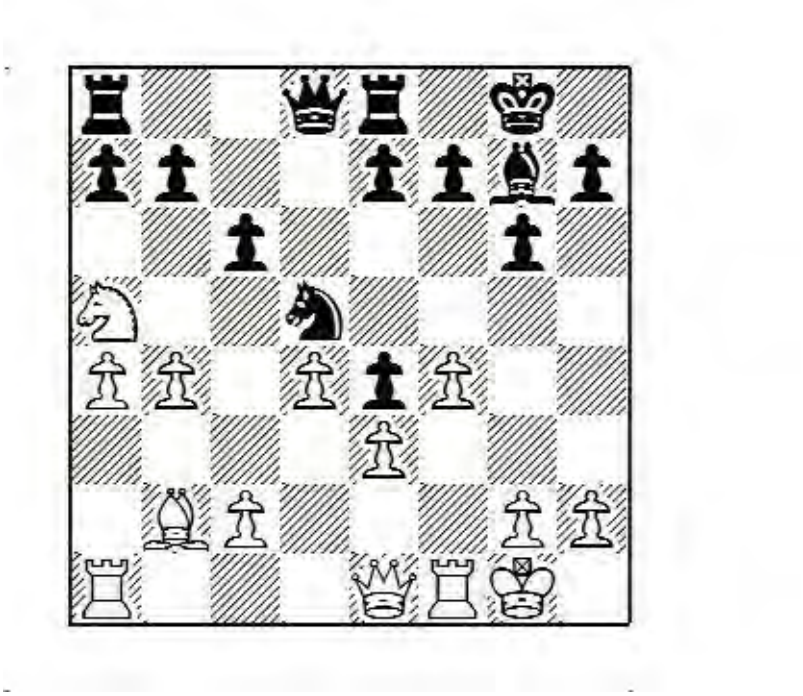
**13 … Nb6 14 Na5**

Clearing the way for c2-c4.

**14 … Nd5**

Attacking b4- and e3-pawns simultaneously, though White defends this easily.

**15 Qe1**



Taylor suggests that White holds a clear advantage here, while I think the game is still even.

***Question*:** If two IMs contradict one another, who is the reader supposed to believe?

***Answer*:** In all such cases, the reader should place his or her implicit trust in your almost infallible writer, of course!

**15 … Qd7**

This move may be slightly inaccurate, since it allows White an uncontested queenside space advantage. Black looks okay after 15 … Qb6, H.Hess-J.Gronemann, correspondence 2009. The position looks even after *Houdini*'s suggested line 16 Rb1! Qxb4 17 Qxb4 Nxb4 18 Nxb7 Nxc2 19 Kf2 Nb4 20 Ba3 Nd3+ 21 Ke2 Bf8 22 Nc5 Nxc5 23 Bxc5 Reb8 24 Rfc1 e6 25 Bxf8 Kxf8 26 Rxb8+ Rxb8 27 Rxc6 Rb2+ 28 Kf1 Rb1+ 29 Kf2 Rb2+ 30 Kf1 Rb1+ with a draw.

**16 c4 Nf6**

Black retains the option of … b6 to eventually eject White's knight from its lofty a5-post.

**17 b5**

Larsen increases his queenside space advantage.

**17 … Qc7 18 Rb1 Ng4**

Threatening the cheapo … Nxe3, which overloads White's queen.

**19 bxc6 b6 20 Qe2**

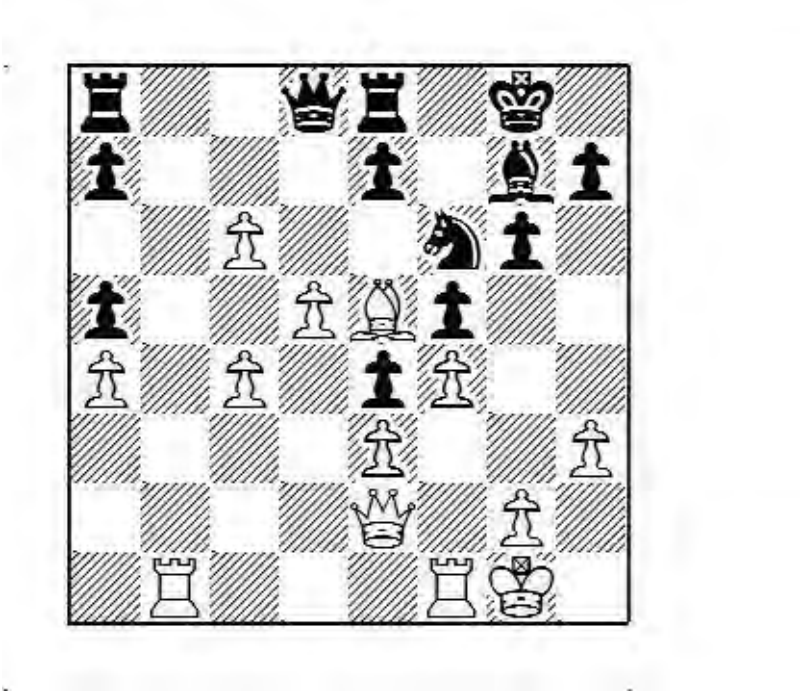
After 20 Nb3 Qxc6 21 Nd2 e6 22 a5 Rab8 23 axb6 axb6, the game remains approximately even.

**20 … f5?!**

This move allows Larsen a future undermining with h3 and g4. 20 … Nh6 21 Nb3 Qxc6 22 a5 e6 23 g4 Rec8 24 Rfc1 Bf8 25 h3 looks only a shade better for White.

**21 Nb3**

Houdini points out an almost impossible to see combination, starting with 21 h3! Nf6 (Black is completely busted after 21 … Nxe3?? 22 Qxe3 bxa5 23 d5) 22 d5!! (White's central pawn mass is worth more than Black's piece) 22 … bxa5 23 Be5. Now if instead of 23 … Qc8 Rb7 which admittedly looks rather grim, 23 … Qd8 allows White a brilliant shot.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** When a fantasy writer is cornered into an impossible plot situation, there is only one available escape plan: use magic to untangle the characters. One powerful idea resolves the position in White's favour. Find it:

**Answer:** Piece sacrifice/attraction/pawn fork/pawn promotion.

White has the aesthetic 24 Rb8!!:

a) 24 … Rxb8?? 25 c7 (a hungry pack of Orcas approach the ice flow, upon which rests two fat, dozing seals) 25 … Qd7 26 cxb8Q Rxb8 27 Bxb8 and after the shattering explosion, Black's position is a smouldering heap of rubble and detritus, under swirling ash filled air. White is up an exchange with a winning position.

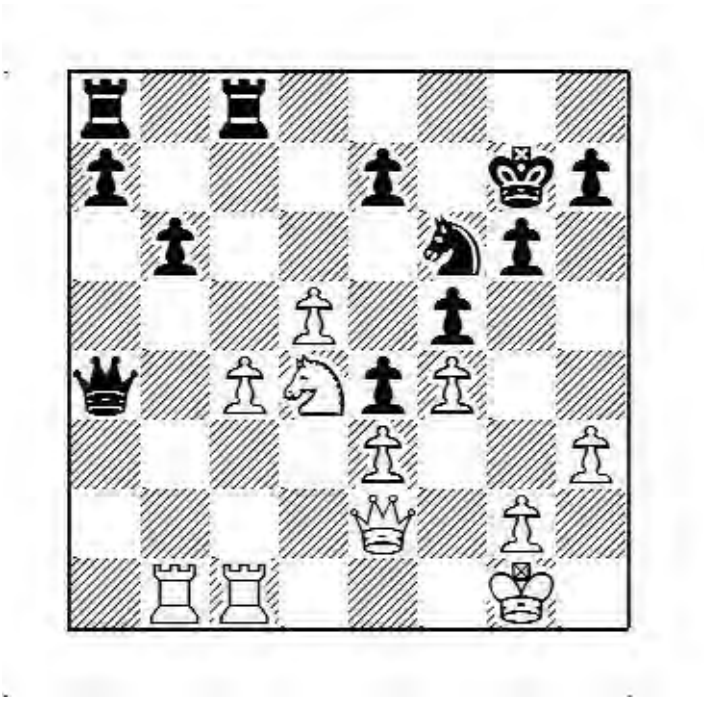
b) 24 … Qxb8 25 Bxb8 Raxb8 26 Rd1 Rec8 and Black seemingly garnered enough material for the queen. His new problem is White's dangerous pawn clot on c6, d5 and c4. White wins after 27 c5 e6 28 d6! Rxc6 29 d7, since 29 … Rd8 is met with 30 Qb5 Rc7 31

c6 Nd5 32 Rxd5! exd5 33 Qxd5+ Kh8. The black king regales the ladies of the court with accounts of his acts of heroism and cunning on the battlefield, all which flow from his imagination, rather than from reality as after 34 Qf7, there is no defence to the coming Qe8+.

**21 … Qxc6 22 d5!**

Brilliant strategic judgment. Larsen offers a pawn to clear the d4-square for his knight to reach the e6-outpost, the rotten molar of a square, which will later plague Black with endless pain.

**22 … Qxa4 23 Bxg7 Kxg7 24 Nd4 Rec8 25 h3 Nf6 26 Rfc1**



***Question*:** White is down a pawn. Does he have enough compensation?

***Answer*:** Admittedly, it appears as if Larsen continues to borrow recklessly on his attack at usurious interest rates, which he decides he can still afford. White has more than enough compensation for the pawn he sacrificed:

1. His knight dominates on the d4-square, where its tendrils reach out to the f5-, e6-, c6- and b5-squares.

2. Black's king is in danger, especially if White manages to get in g2-g4.

3. White actually exerts queenside pressure as well.

**26 … Qd7**

26 … h5!? suppresses the g4-break at the cost of further weakening his king.

**27 g4! Kf7**

Also, 27 … fxg4?! fails to win a pawn, since White can simply block the black queen's access to g4 with the zwischenzug 28 Ne6+ Kf7 29 hxg4.

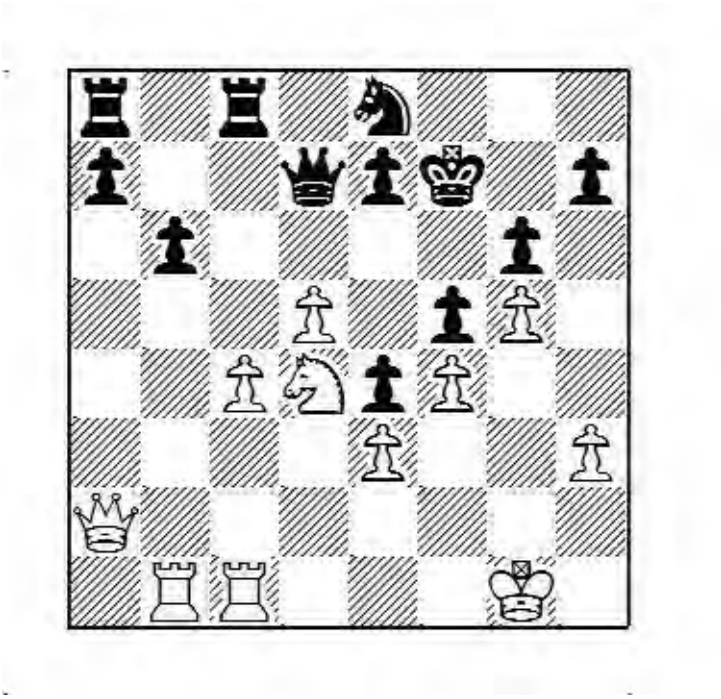
**28 g5?!**

Closing the kingside can't be White's best continuation. Stronger is 28 gxf5! gxf5 29 Kh2 and now White threatens Ne6 and Rg1, anticipating g7-invasions.

a) If Black responds with 29 … Rg8?, White plays 30 Nc6! (threat: Ne5+, forking king and queen) 30 … Kf8 31 Rg1 and White has a winning attack, since Black's king, a fatally easy mark, finds himself lured into a dangerous pocket.

b) Black's best shot is to probably appease with an exchange offer with 29 … Rc5! 30 Ne6 Rac8 31 Nxc5 Rxc5 when a win for White won't be so easy to engineer.

**28 … Ne8 29 Qa2!**



Taking indirect aim at Black's king, worrying him with c4-c5 and d5-d6 ideas.

**29 … Nd6?!**

Black may be holding his own after 29 … Qd6! 30 h4 Ng7 when the position seems to be in dynamic equilibrium.

**30 h4**

Playing for h4-h5 and potentially h5-h6 or hxg6+. Instead, 30 Nc6! Kg8 31 c5 bxc5 32 Rxc5 Qe8 33 Ra5 Rc7 34 Ra6 leaves Black under heavy pressure.

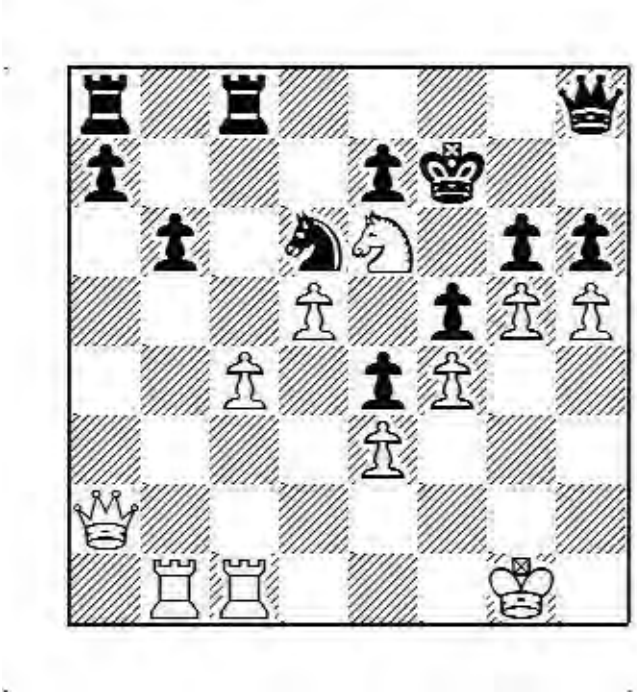
**30 … Qe8 31 Ne6**

The alternative is 31 Nc6 Rc7 32 c5 bxc5 33 Rxc5 which is similar to the previous note.

**31 … Qh8 32 h5!**

This appears to be a position where Black has little choice but to keep his growing resentment in check … unless you are Boris Spassky!

**32 … h6!?**



In this position, control over the kingside serves as an index to elevated status. Spassky decides that the overall structure is in dire need of a makeover, like a homely but rich matron who defies her own ugly exterior with yet another plastic surgery. Technically, this move deserves a '?!' but the move gets upgraded to 'interesting' since it poses serious practical difficulties for Larsen. Spassky, not a patient man when it comes to defence, decides to turn a problem into an advantage by going after White's king - at the cost of further exposing his own king.

**33 Rb2!**

Larsen immediately transfers force over to the kingside.

**33 … gxh5 34 Rh2?!**

Spassky's gamble pays off. Larsen misses the correct continuation 34 gxh6 Qxh6 35 Rg2 Rg8 36 Ng5+ Kf8 37 Kh2! with Rcg1 and Ne6+ threats. This virtually forces Black to hand over the exchange on g5.

**34 … hxg5 35 Nxg5+ Ke8 36 c5! Rxc5 37 Rxc5 bxc5 38 Qa4+ Kf8**

Spassky isn't a likely candidate for the line 38 … Kd8?? 39 Ne6+ Kc8 40 Qc6+. The queen smiles sadly at the black king's forlorn attempts to flee his inevitable destiny as 40 … Kb8 41 Qc7 is mate!

**39 Rg2**

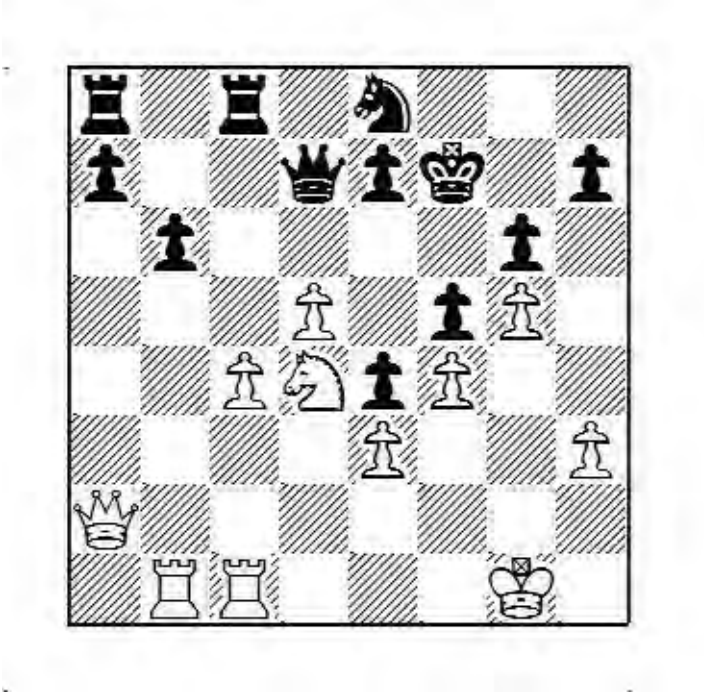
Black is up three pawns, yet *Houdini* assesses at 0.00.

**39 … Re8 40 Qd7 Qh6?!**

Spassky misses 40 … Rb8 41 Ne6+ Kf7 42 Nxc5 Rb1+ 43 Kh2 Qf6! 44 Rg5 Qb2+ 45 Rg2 Qf6 which is drawn by repetition of moves after 46 Rg5.

**41 Qxa7!**

The queen, old beyond imagining, vampirically keeps herself alive by sucking the life force from her victims. Instead, 41 Ne6+?! allows Black a fortress draw after 41 … Kf7 42 Nxc5 h4 43 Ne6 h3 44 Rg7+ Qxg7+! 45 Nxg7 Rg8 46 Kh2 Rxg7 47 Kxh3.



The black king's heavily fortified defensive barrier is enough to insulate him from his d7-sister's long reach of power. White is unable to make progress.

**41 … Qh8 42 Qd7 Qh6?**

Black can resist with 42 … Rb8! 43 Ne6+ Kf7 and if 44 Rg7+ Qxg7+! 45 Nxg7 Rg8 46 Qe6+ Kf8 47 Qh6 Rxg7+ 48 Kf2 c4 and he won't lose this, and may even stand better.

**43 Ne6+ Kf7 44 Ng5+ Kf8 45 Kh2**

*Houdini* found an inhumanly difficult win after 45 Ne6+ Kf7 46 Nxc5! Ra8 47 Ne6 Rb8 48 Ng5+! Kf8 49 Qa7 Rc8 50 Ne6+ Kf7 51 Kh2! (zugzwang) 51 … Rc1 (51 … Re8 52 Ng5+ Kf8 53 Qa1! (threat: Ne6+ followed by Rg7+) 53 … Rc8 54 Ne6+ Kf7 55 Rg7+ Ke8 and 56 Qa4+ mate) 52 Nd8+! Kf8 53 Qd4 (Ne6+ is once again a dire threat) 53 … Ne8 54 Qe5 Qf6 55 Ne6+ Kf7 56 Ng5+ and Black's queen is toast.

**45 … h4 46 Ne6+ Kf7 47 Ng5+ Kf8 48 Kh3 c4 49 Ne6+ Kf7 50 Ng5+ Kf8**

By this point, so psychologically icky is White's knight that Black's king and queen feel the urgent need to bathe every time he comes around to visit.

**51 Rg1 c3**

Spassky tries desperately for a distraction.

**52 Qe6!?**

A last-ditch winning effort for Larsen, who reassesses and decides that his king hunt has hobbled along on one leg for long enough.

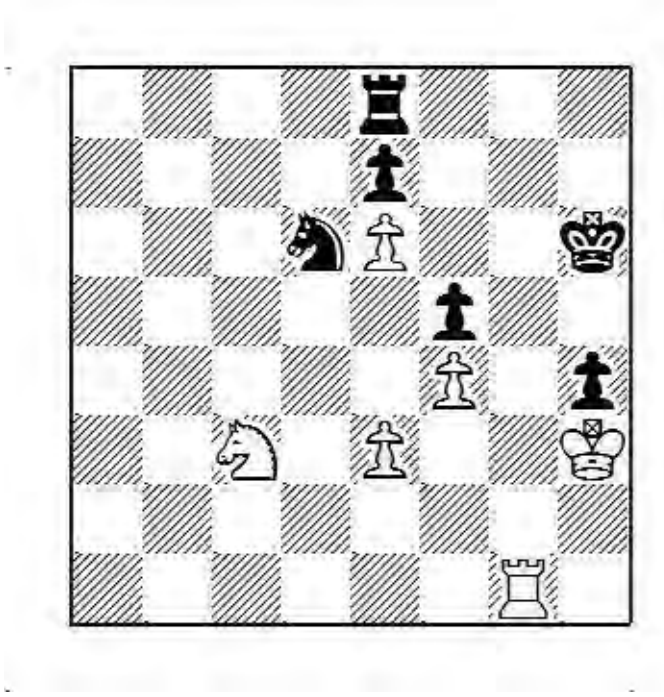
**52 … Qxe6 53 dxe6**

With a rather sneaky Nh7 mating threat.

**53 … Kg7!**

Avoiding the vulgar cheapo 53 … Rc8?? 54 Nh7+ Ke8 55 Rg8 mate.

**54 Nxe4+ Kh6 55 Nxc3**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** The position should be drawn, predicated upon

Black finding the right path. But be careful. The worst possible mind state in

such situations is the one of the self-congratulatory thought: "Everything draws!"

In this case, everything most certainly doesn't draw. Should Black play 55 … Rd8

and stay passive, or should he play 55 … Ne4, offering to damage his pawn structure to eliminate White's powerful knight? One path draws, while the other loses.

**55 … Ne4??**

Patience is the bane of all active players, where even a trivial success may embolden them into acts of overconfidence. In this case the passive path draws, while the active one loses.

***Answer*:** 55 … Rd8! intending … Nc4 is necessary and White can't make progress. For example, 56 Rg5 Nc4! 57 Kxh4 Nxe3 is drawn.

**56 Nxe4 fxe4 57 Kxh4**

The rook ending is an easy win for Larsen, with Spassky's king cut off.

**57 … Ra8 58 f5!**

The scaffolding has been taken down, now that White's home repair project is completed.

**58 … Ra2**

Also pointless is 58 … Ra5 59 Kg4 Kg7 60 Kf4+ and if 60 … Kf6 61 Rg6 is mate.

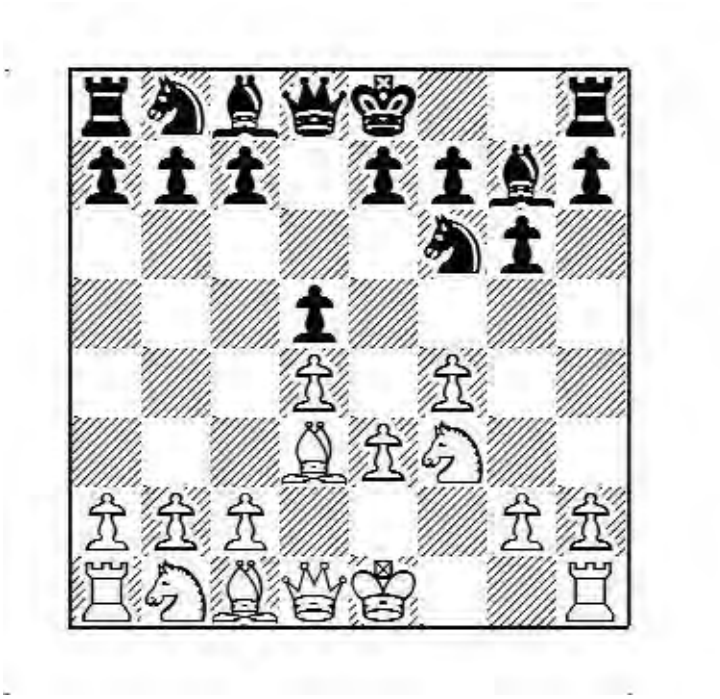
**59 Rg8 Rf2 60 Rf8! 1-0**

It's all over after 60 … Kg7 61 Rf7+ Kg8 62 Kg5 Rf3 63 Rxe7 Rxe3 64 Kf6.

**Summary:** The hybrid Bird/Orangutan idea 4 b4!? produces an odd position which your

opponents are hardly likely to have studied.

# Chapter Four
# The Stonewall Bird



With the Bird Stonewall formation, we clamp down on Black's natural … e7-e5 break, with an inverted pyramidal wall on f4, e3 and d4. In doing so, the polarity of the two sides' goals grow even more pronounced. The d4-f4 clamp does indeed produce a stifling quality, effectively hindering … e7-e5, but it doesn't come without cost, and the implications of our act are far-reaching, since we voluntarily allow Black a juicy e4-hole. Medical science sometimes utilizes snake toxins as a necessary ingredient in a pharmaceutical line. The moral: even a dangerous and toxic entity may have its beneficial side-effects. With this structure, we gamble that our e5-clamp and enhanced kingside attacking chances make up for our voluntary e4-puncture. "What kingside attack?" you may ask. Well, for now it runs only with apathetic efficiency. But in the future, we may be able to generate a serious build-up, extending our kingside boundaries by force of arms, with a setup like 0-0, Qe1, Nbd2, fianchetto our bad c1-bishop, then proceed with Ne5, Qh4, Rf3, g2-g4, Rh3 and Raf1, when virtually every white piece participates in the assault. Of course, we must be careful. When a Stonewall structure sours, our former attacks become like bad vacations: we are full of joy when embarking, yet at the end, ask ourselves why we bothered with the time and expense. So take a look at the games in this chapter and see if this risky structure appeals to you.

*Game 25*
**A.R.Abdulla-E.Hossain**
Bangladesh Championships, Dhaka 2008

**1 d4**

The Bird move-order to get to the text game after White's fifth move is 1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 g6 4 d4 Bg7 5 Bd3 as played in E.Gleizerov-S.Vaibhav, New Delhi 2012. My experience with Reversed Stonewall formations mostly arises from the Colle, rather than from 1 f4.

For example, my buddy, GM Jesse Kraai mockingly named 1 Nf3 c5 2 c3 the "Lakdawala Accelerated". I know he was joking, but this is the only chess opening named after me, so I will take what I can get! Let's look at a couple of … e6 setups after 2 … Nf6 3 d4 e6 4 e3:

a) 4 … b6 5 Nbd2 d5 6 Ne5 Bd6 7 f4 (and there we are, A Colle to a Reversed Stonewall Dutch) 7 … 0-0 8 Bd3 Ba6 9 Bc2 (oh, no you don't! … White preserves his powerfully aimed light-squared bishop) 9 … Qc7. Here, I flicked out 10 g4!? and it's

possible that I ingested too much caffeine that morning! This is uncharacteristic bravery/foolhardiness from your normally cautious writer. The game continued 10 … cxd4?! (as mentioned above, this swap only helps White) 11 exd4 Nc6 12 g5 Nd7 13 Ndf3 Rac8 14 Be3 Na5 15 Qb1 g6 16 h4 Nc4 17 Nxc4? (17 Bf2 is correct) 17 … Qxc4? (a re-blunder. We both missed the slick zwischenzug 17 … Bxf4! after which White is down a pawn for nothing) 18 Qd1 Rfe8 19 Qd2 Kf8 20 Ne5 Bxe5!? 21 fxe5 Ke7 22 Qf2 Rf8 23 Rh3! (now White has a winning position) 23 … Rce8 24 Bc1! (preparing to re-route the bishop to a monster diagonal from the a3-square) 24 … Kd8 25 b3! Qb5 26 Ba3 Rg8 27 Bd6 and Black was paralyzed, C.Lakdawala-P.Hummel, Los Angeles 1998. This game is annotated in *The Colle: Move by Move*.

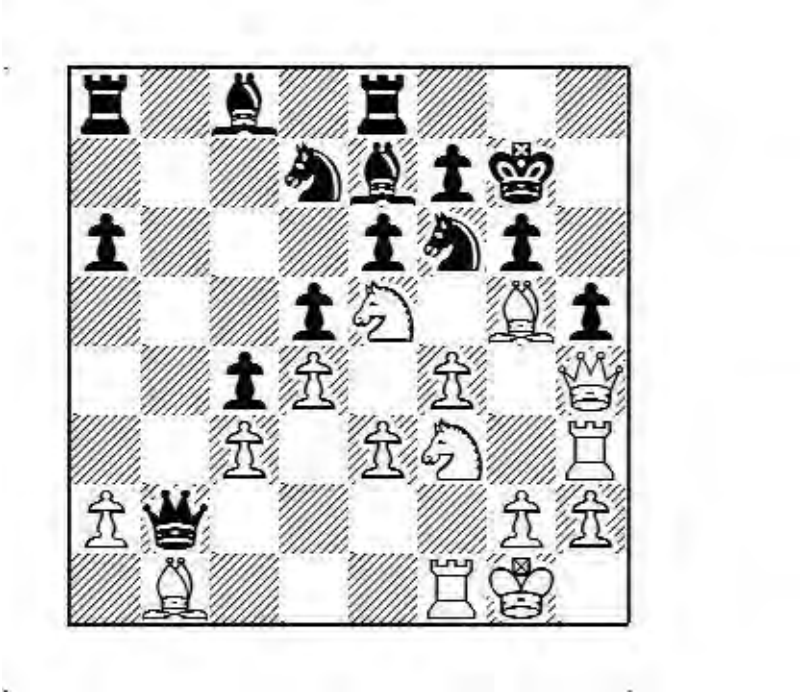
b) 4 … d5 5 Nbd2 Be7 6 Bd3 0-0 7 Ne5 Nc6 8 f4 cxd4?! (in general, this swap can only benefit White, since it opens the c-file, and also relieves White of all worries about plans like … c4 and later … b5) 9 exd4 Nd7 10 0-0 g6?! (the weakening of the dark squares will become a problem for Black in the future) 11 Qe2 Ndxe5? (this move allows White's dark-squared bishop into the attack) 12 fxe5 f6 13 exf6 Bxf6 14 Nf3 Qc7 15 Bh6 Re8 16 Ne5! Bxe5 17 dxe5 Nxe5 18 Rf6! Bd7 19 Raf1 Nxd3 20 Qxd3 (principle: *Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker)* White threatens both Rxg6+ and also Rf7, with a winning attack, Lakdawala, C-Pena, P San Diego (rapid) 2005. This game is annotated in *The Colle: Move by Move*.

## 1 … d5

1 … Nf6 2 c3!? I sometimes use this move-order trick to get a kind of super Stonewall formation after … d5 3 Bg5 e6 4 Nd2 Be7 5 e3 and here, if Black plays 5 … 0-0?!, he is oblivious about White's coming kingside attack. He should stall or completely avoid kingside castling here. Following 6 Bd3 Nbd7, White has 7 f4 and has achieved a super Stonewall.

***Question*:** What is so 'super' about White's Stonewall?

***Answer*:** Normally, one of White's biggest problems in the Reversed Stonewall is how to develop the sleeping c1-bishop. With this trick, White's dark-squared bishop jumped the fence and leaped over both e3- and f4-pawns, remaining outside the chain. After 7 … c5 8 Ngf3 a6 9 0-0 b5 10 Ne5 Qb6 11 Rf3, *Houdini* only gives White an edge here, while I think White already has a winning attack. The game continued 11 … Re8 12 Rh3 g6 13 Qe1 (White's attack is on complete autopilot, with each move very easy to find) 13 … Kg7 14 Qh4 h5 15 Ndf3 b4 16 Rf1 (*Houdini* points out 16 Bh6+!! Kxh6 17 Bxg6 is crushing) 16 … bxc3 17 bxc3 c4 18 Bb1 Qb2.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** How did White

exploit his overwhelming build-up on the kingside?

***Answer*:** Annihilation of king's cover. 19 Nxf7! Kxf7 20 Ne5+ Kg7 21 Bxg6 (Black's king is completely stripped of cover) 21 … Rh8 22 f5 Qb6 23 fxe6 Qxe6 24 Bf5 1-0, C.Lakdawala-K.Griffith, San Diego (rapid) 2012.

**2 e3 Nf6 3 Bd3**

In this chapter we concentrate on the bishop's development to d3, as opposed to the more passive placement on e2.

***Question*:** What are the differences?

***Answer*:** On the d3-square:

1. The bishop is more aggressively placed to attack the black kingside.

2. White is more vulnerable to swaps, since Black not only has the … b6 and … Ba6 swap plan (which also is there when White develops the bishop to e2), but also, White must watch out for … Bf5 ideas. Now … Bf5 isn't all that scary for us since after we swap, Black's king gets a tad more insecure when Bxf5 and … gxf5 are played. We look at this plan later in the chapter.

3. White doesn't give up on the fight for the e4-square, but instead challenges for the square.

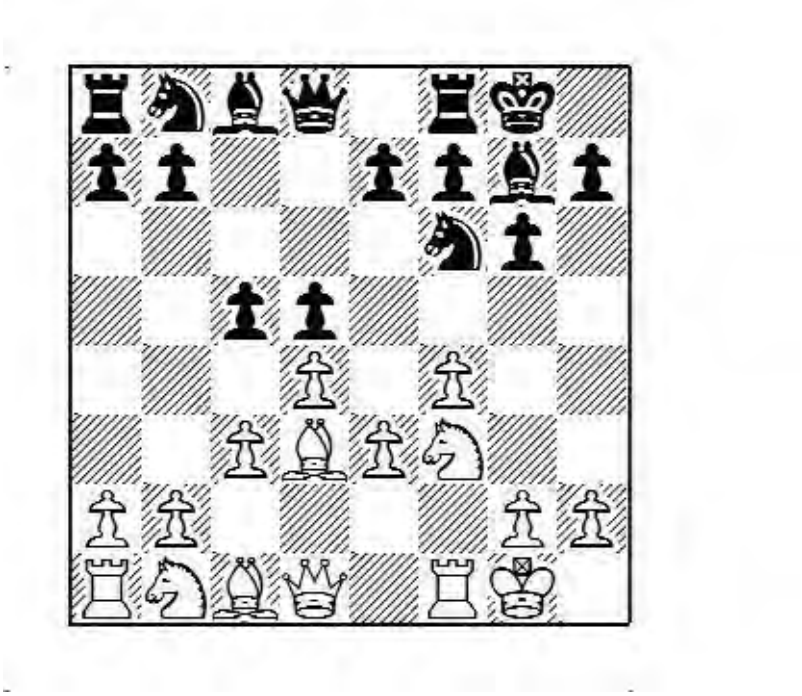
**3 … g6 4 f4**

This move turns a Colle into the Stonewall Bird.

**4 … Bg7 5 Nf3**

In this position I would play 5 Nd2 to fight for the e4-square at the earliest possible time.

**5 … 0-0 6 0-0 c5 7 c3**



We arrive in one of the most common starting positions in the Reversed Stonewall Dutch.

***Question*:** What are White's goals in the position?

***Answer*:** The following:

1. If possible, seize control over the e4-square.

2. If possible, avoid a swap of light-squared bishops.

3. Find a way to develop our troubled piece, the c1 - bishop.

I tend to favour a queenside fianchetto, but White can also play the manoeuvre Bd2, Be1 and Bh4.

4. Generally, White can build up a kingside attack, although this plan is certainly not obligatory.

**7 … b6**

Now … Ba6 is in the air. Other options:

a) 7 … Nc6 8 Nbd2 Qb6?! (this is a very common response at the club level today though it actually hinders queenside play) 9 Qe1 Bd7 10 Kh1 e6 11 Qh4 cxd4?! (as mentioned above, we should love when Black plays this move, since it opens the e-file and frees our sleeping c1-bishop) 12 exd4 Na5 (intending to swap off his bad bishop with … Bb5 next), J.Pelikan-C.Maderna, Buenos Aires 1945. Now White should deny the impending bishop trade with 13 a4! and then build a promising kingside attack with Ne5 and Rf3.

b) With 7 … Bf5, Black swaps off the light-squared bishops, accepting a slight weakness in his structure, which can also be interpreted as a strength, since Black strengthens his grip over the e4-square. After 8 Bxf5 gxf5 9 Nbd2 Nbd7 10 Ne5 Ne4 11

Nxe4, White is happy to plug up the e4-hole and 11 … fxe4 12 Qg4 (12 b3 is also possible, with about an even game) 12 … f5 13 Qe2 Nxe5 14 dxe5 e6 15 Bd2 Rf7 16 Be1 Bf8 17 Bf2 a6 18 h3! (worrying White about a g4-break) 18 … Rg7 19 Kh2 Qe8 20 g4 is probably close to even but I prefer White's side since he can play both on the kingside and also keep Black wondering about c3-c4 ideas, J.Granda Zuniga-J.De la Villa Garcia, Seville 2009.

**8 Qe2**

Preventing Black's intended … Ba6.

**8 … Bb7**

***Question*:** How do we stop … Ba6 if Black tosses in 8 … a5?

***Answer*:** We can't and must allow it. However, just because Black achieves … Ba6 doesn't mean our counterplay goes dead. Here's an instructive example:

9 Nbd2 e6 10 b3 (I favour the fianchetto development over the Bd2, Be1 and Bh4 plan) 10 … Ba6 11 Bb2 Bxd3 12 Qxd3 Nfd7 13 c4 (no more bad bishop) 13 … Nc6 14 Rad1 Qc7 15 Ne5 Rfd8 16 Ndf3 cxd4 (the game sharpens, with White taking on potential hanging pawns or an isolani) 17 exd4 Rac8? (Black should try 17 … Ndxe5 18 fxe5 dxc4 19 Qxc4 Qd7 20 Qe2 when White's potential for attack down the f-file is compensated by Black's control over the d5-square) 18 Ng5! Ndxe5 19 fxe5 (White has a winning attack) 19 … Qe7? (Black had to take his chances with 19 … Rf8 20 cxd5 exd5 21 Ba3 Nb4 22 Qh3 h6 23 Rc1 Qb7 24 Rxc8 Qxc8 25 Bxb4 Qxh3 26 Nxh3 axb4 27 Nf4 Rd8 28 Rc1 though White still holds the initiative) 20 Nxf7 dxc4 21 Qh3! Rf8 22 Nd6 Rxf1+ 23 Rxf1 Rf8 24 bxc4 and White is up a pawn in a dominating position, H.Danielsen-B.Halldorsson, Reykjavik 2002.

**9 Bd2**

In this chapter we mainly look at the fianchetto as a means of developing the dark-squared bishop. This game is an example of the Bd2-e1-h4 development theme.

**9 … Qc8**

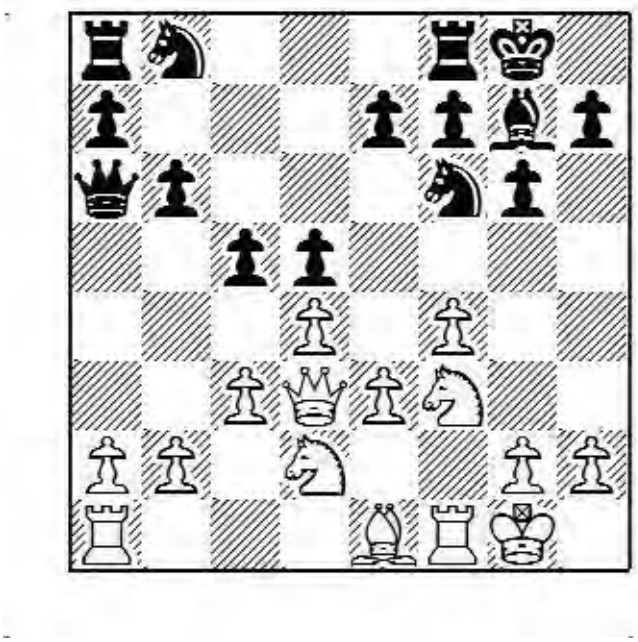
Useful, discouraging f4-f5 and also worrying White about potential … Ba6 swaps.

**10 Be1 Ba6**

With this trade, Black achieves equality.

**11 Bh4**

Instead, after 11 Nbd2 Bxd3 12 Qxd3, Black has an annoying counter-idea with 12 … Qa6! which pretty much ends White's attacking joy.



White's kingside ambitions are adjourned until further notice. However, White isn't worse in the coming ending after 13 Qxa6 (13 Qc2 is possible but I don't like the queen's placement on the c-file, where a black rook will soon post itself) 13 … Nxa6 14 a4 Rfc8 15 Bh4 e6. At this stage, I would chop Black's knight on f6 and take my chances in the balanced ending, R.Bellin-S.Tiviakov, Kilkenny 1998.

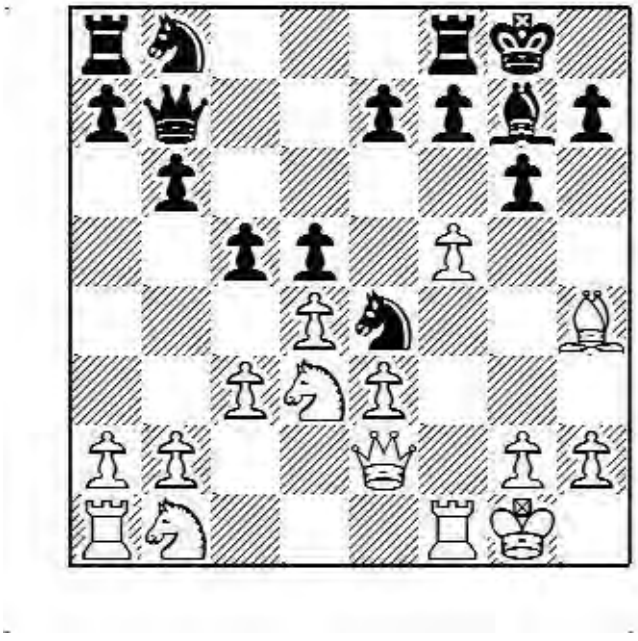
**11 … Qb7**

Continuing to take aim at the e4-square. However, I'm not so sure this additive is necessary. Once again, I would go for the killjoy line 11 … Bxd3 12 Qxd3 Qa6!.

**12 Ne5**

I'm a big control-e4 guy in such positions, and would continue 12 Nbd2.

**12 … Bxd3 13 Nxd3 Ne4 14 f5!**



Now the game starts to get interesting. White begins a kingside build-up.

**14 … Nc6 15 Nd2 c4!?**

Black hopes this is the beginning of a queenside attack, with … b5 to follow. However it does violate the principle: *don't close the centre when being attacked on the wing*. With the less committal 15 … Nd6, I would have kept matters fluid with 16 g4 (note that 16 fxg6 hxg6 17 dxc5 bxc5 18 Nxc5?! does not win a pawn because the b2-pawn is hanging).

**16 Nf4 Nxd2 17 Qxd2 Qd7 18 Qc2!**

White offers a pawn to wreck Black's king cover.

**18 … Bh6**

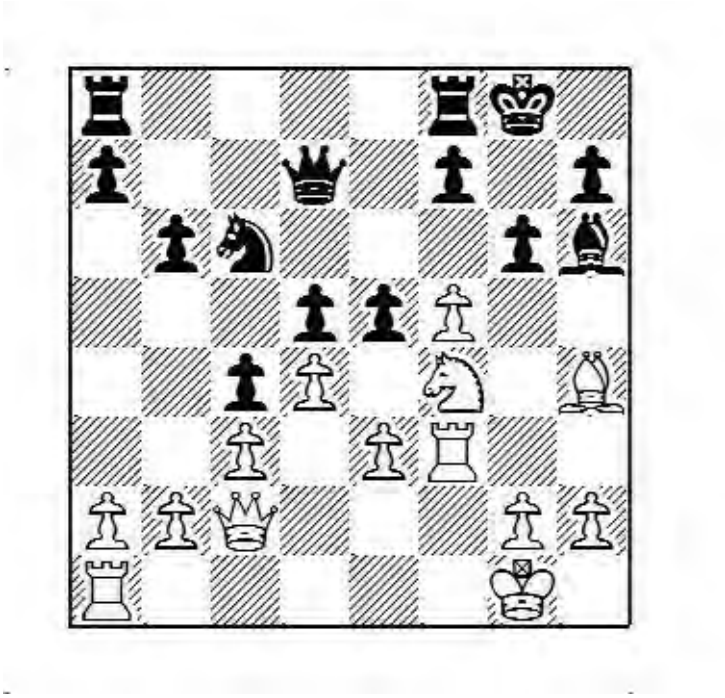
Black wisely declines as 18 … gxf5? 19 Nh5 Bh6 20 Rae1 f4 21 h3! gives White a powerful attack. If Black gets greedy with 21 … fxe3?? then 22 Rf6! is crushing after 22 … Bg7 23 Rxe3! when Black won't survive.

**19 Rf3**

The position charges with tension, the way the air feels just before the first lightning strike of the storm.

**19 … e5?**

Black only stands slightly worse after the correct 19 … Kh8. When the macho policy fails, it's time for Black's king to sneak into his room and hide under the bed.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black experiences a conflict between perception and

reality. His last move followed the principle: *Strike in the centre when assaulted on the wing*. However it also allowed White a path to a winning attack. This is why our game is so enragingly frustrating. Black *follows* the principle and yet his choice is

the losing move! However, sometimes we can derive the truth from simple observation, rather than logic. Our eyes sweep the position and we realize Black is in deep trouble, without need of mathematical proof. The absence of defenders for the

black king conveys all the information we require. Now is the time to strike. How?

***Answer*:** Piece sacrifice/annihilation of king's cover.

**20 Nh5!**

A species tends to flourish in an environment with an abundance of food resources, coupled with an absence of natural predators. This is but the first stab of pain from the f6-abscess. White's last move is a paralyzing blow which appears without forewarning or even the slightest premonitory apprehension of its approach.

**20 … Qd6**

The knight can't be touched as 20 … gxh5?? gets crushed after 21 Rg3+ Bg7 22 Bf6.

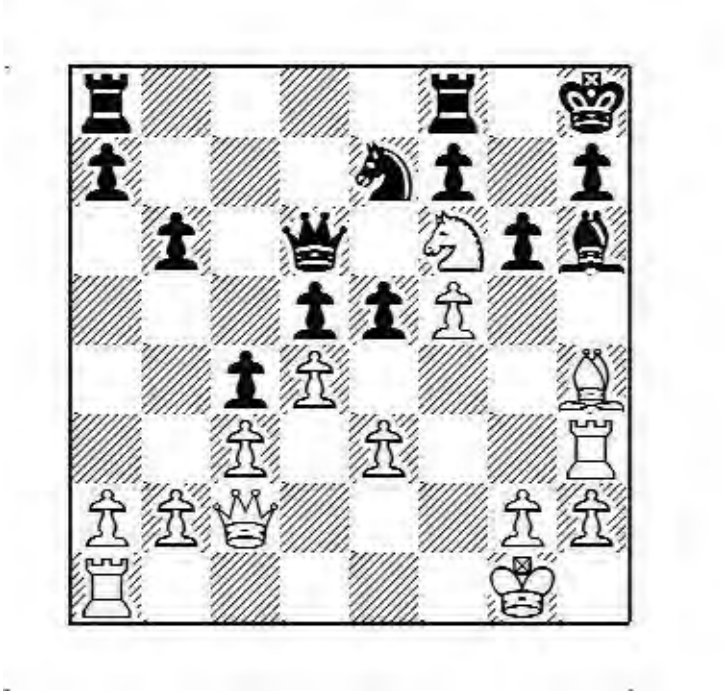
**21 Nf6+ Kh8**

Black's king still has 100% confidence in his defenders - which is down from the 110% confidence he had in them just a minute ago.

**22 Rh3!**

Targets: The h6-bishop and h7-pawn. An approach by the enemy with slow deliberation can be more menacing than a frantic lunge.

**22 … Ne7**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Two perils - two Damoclesian swords -

hang over Black's head. White has two ways to win. Find one of them.

***Answer*:** Clearance/triple attack/pin.

**23 Bg3!**

The wizard casts darkly ominous looks in the direction of the e5-pawn, while his h3-servant eyes both the h6-bishop and h7-pawn. That which was once theoretical - merely an abstraction - is now made real.

***Answer #2*:** Also crushing was the clearance/double attack move 23 Bg5! (a dark square bonanza opens before White) 23 … Nxf5 (also, 23 … Ng8 24 dxe5 Qxe5 25 Ng4 forks the e5-pawn and h6-bishop) 24 Rf1! and there is no defence to the coming Rxf5.

**23 … Nxf5 24 Bxe5**

"Please! There is no sense in an emotional outburst," lectures the bishop quite sensibly to Black's queen, adding, "The best course is to gracefully accept your reality."

**24 … Qe6**

The queen emits a sharp inward breath which expresses her outrage that her spiritual advisor just climbed uninvited into her bed.

**25 g4! 1-0**

Black's game is neck deep in quicksand, threatening to submerge without a trace. After 25 … Nxe3 26 Rxh6 Nxc2, 27 Rxh7 delivers mate! The king's door is smashed and splintered, now dangling aslant on its hinges. "Since it grows apparent that your intellect is one lacking complexity, I will make my demands clear: abdicate or pay the price," the rook asserted to Black's king.

**Summary:** This game was an example of the Bd2-e1-h4 development scheme, as opposed to the queenside fianchetto, which we concentrate on later in the chapter.

*Game 26*
**S.H.Moosavian-S.J.Alavi Moghaddam**
World University Championship, Novokuznetsk 2008

**1 d4 d5 2 e3 Nf6 3 Bd3 g6 4 f4 Bg7**

***Question*:** Can Black try the odd looking 4 … Nc6? intending … Nb4, followed by … Bf5?

***Answer*:** This is an annoying idea, where Black once again attempts to take the fun out of our position. But we have ways of sharpening the game. For example, after 5 c3 Bf5 (eliminating White's best piece, or gaining a tempo if White avoids the swap) 6 Bxf5 gxf5 7 Nf3 Qd7 8 Nbd2 e6, S.Novoa Quintas-C.Joglar Tamargo, Infiesto 1996, White can try 9 Ne5 Nxe5 10 fxe5 Ne4 (maybe Black should try the counterintuitive 10 … Ng8 with an even position) 11 Nxe4 dxe4 (11 … fxe4 12 0-0 allows White to press down the f-file) 12 g4! with a sharp position. The white king's vulnerability is counterbalanced by Black's soon-to-be weak kingside pawns.

**5 Nf3 c5**

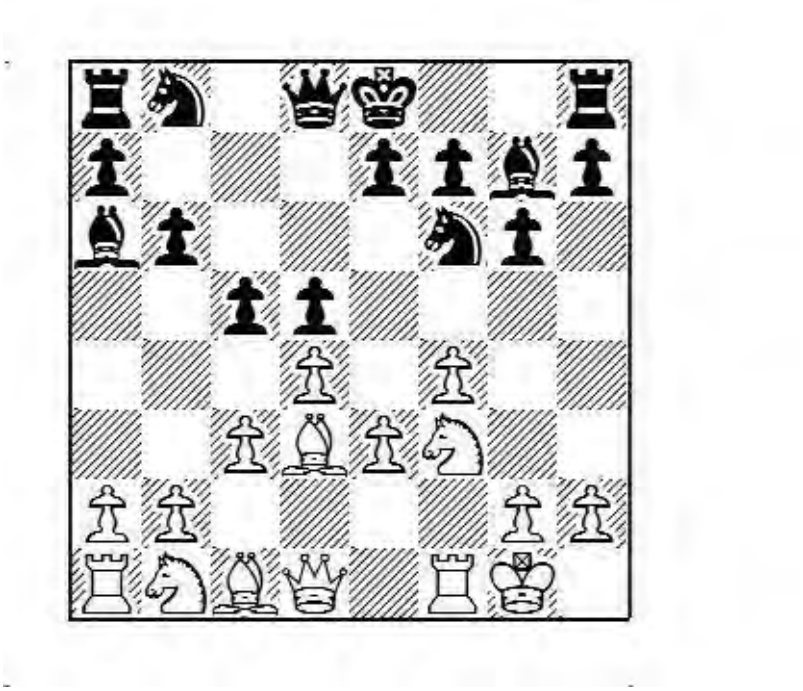
After 5 … 0-0 6 0-0 Ne4!?, let's examine the options:

a) 7 Bxe4?! dxe4 8 Ng5 c5 9 dxc5 Qxd1 (9 … f5 10 Qe2 Qd5! looks better for Black) 10 Rxd1 Bg4 (once again 10 … f5 looks correct) 11 Re1 Bf5 12 Nd2 e5 (12 … Na6! 13 Ngxe4 Nb4 14 Re2 Nxc2 15 Rb1 Nb4 looks uncomfortable for White) 13 Ngxe4 exf4 14 exf4 Bd4+?! 15 Kf1 Na6 16 c3 Bxc5, C.Lakdawala-"Kamel" Internet (blitz) 2014. White looks clearly better in the ending after 17 Nf6+ Kg7 18 Nde4 Bb6 19 Be3 with an extra pawn and good chances to convert.

b) Perhaps White does best to play it like a Queen's pawn opening with 7 c4! c6 8 Nc3 Nxc3 9 bxc3 Nd7, R.Kasanicky-P.Petran, Martin 1996. White achieved a nice looking Grünfeld-like game after 10 Qb3 when White's f4-move worked out nicely to suppress Black's … e7-e5 break.

**6 c3 b6 7 0-0 0-0**

Everyone but beginning players know of the trap 7 … Ba6??

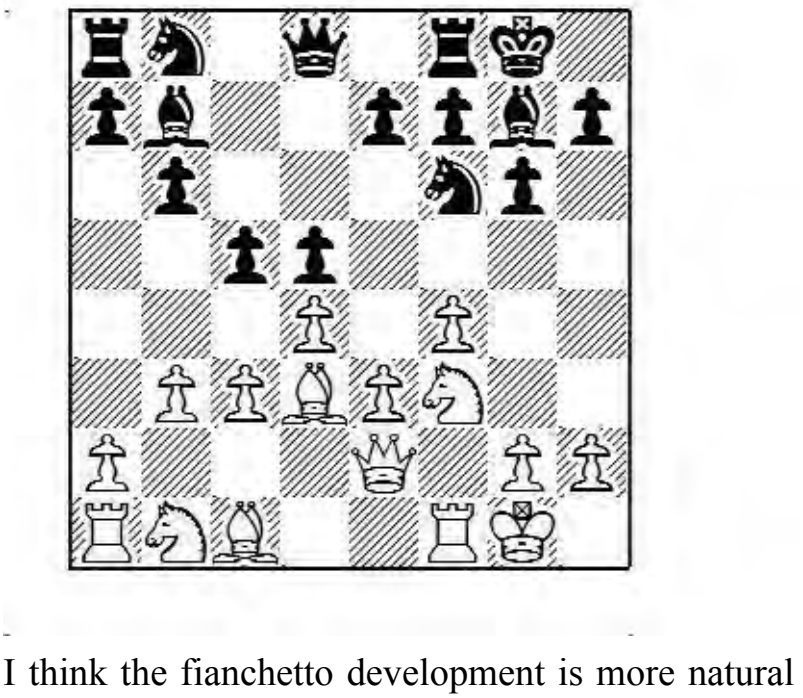


White cashes after 8 Bxa6 Nxa6 9 Qa4+ when Black hangs the a6-knight.

**8 Qe2 Bb7**

After 8 … a5 9 a4 Ba6 10 Bxa6 Nxa6 11 b3 Ne4 12 Bb2 e6 13 Na3 (White takes advantage of the b5-hole) 13 … Qe7 14 Rfc1 Rfc8 15 Rc2 cxd4 16 exd4 Nc7 17 Rac1 Ne8 18 Nb5 N8d6 19 c4, I prefer White, since the Ba3 idea is in the air, J.Klinger-G.Kallai, Lenk 1990.

**9 b3**



I think the fianchetto development is more natural for White than the Bd2-e1-h4 plan we saw in the previous game.

***Question*:** Why?

***Answer*:** The fianchetto plan is more natural because:

1. It takes fewer moves than the cumbersome plan of transferring White's bishop to h4.

2. It is more flexible, since it doesn't commit White to a kingside assault, and we can play in the centre with an eventual c3-c4 break.

3. Any black attempts to swap off light-squared bishops with … Ba6 can be met with the c4-block!.

4. It challenges the assumption that Black is the boss of the queenside, since Black is denied an autopilot … c5-c4, … b6-b5 queenside pawn avalanche plan.

**9 … a5**

Seizing queenside space, though at the cost of a b5-hole. Let's look at the other options:

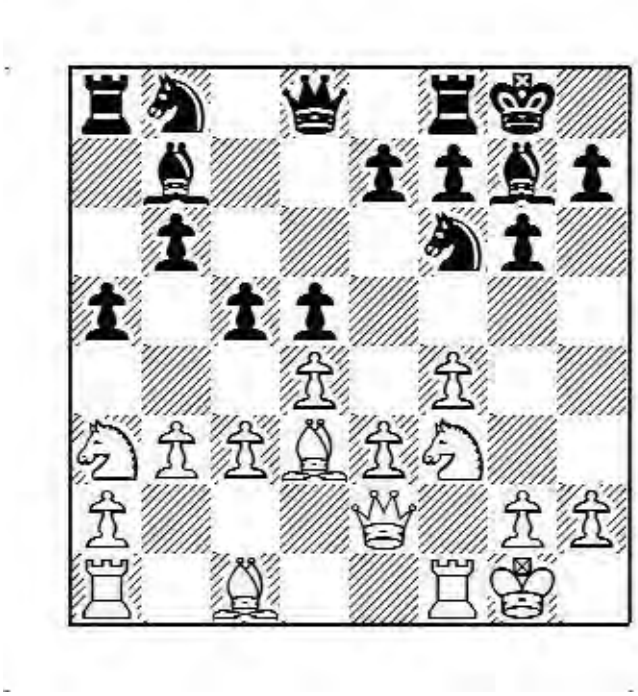
a) 9 … Ne4 10 Bb2 Nd7 11 Nbd2 Nxd2 12 Qxd2 Nf6 13 Qe2 Ne4 14 Rac1 Rc8 15 Rfd1 Nd6 16 Ne5 (White provokes … f7-f6 under the assumption that the loosening hurts Black more than it helps) 16 … Rc7 17 c4 cxd4 18 exd4 Qc8 19 Rc2 Rd8 20 Rdc1 and White achieves a slightly favourable future hanging pawns position, since his centre looks quite stable and he soon menaces c4-c5, P.Szablowski-R.Rodriguez Lopez, Budapest 2011.

b) 9 … Nbd7 10 Nbd2 Ne8 11 a4 (White plans to post his bishop on the a3-square) 11 … Nd6 12 Ba3 Rc8 13 Rac1 Rc7 14 Ne5 Nf6 15 dxc5!? (White inflicts a bit of structural damage and instead, 15 c4 probably reaches a hanging pawns position) 15 … bxc5 16 c4 Qc8 17 cxd5 Nxd5 18 Ndc4 and White owns the c4-outpost and Black's c5-pawn may later become a source of worry, K.Moutousis-L.Pirani, Varna 1994.

c) 9 … Qc7 10 Bb2 Ne4 11 Na3!? (this is a little odd, but not such a bad idea as White denies Black a freeing … Nxd2 swap by avoiding that square) 11 … Nd7 (11 … a6 is met with 12 c4) 12 Nb5 Qb8 13 a4 a6 14 Na3 Qd6 15 c4 cxd4 16 exd4 Qb4, J.Klinger-A.Shalamberidze, Werfen 1993. At this point White can play 17 Nc2! Qxb3 (otherwise Black simply loses time with his last move) 18 Rfb1 Nc3 19 Bxc3 Qxc3 20 c5 e6 21 Rb4! (threat: Ra3! trapping Black's wayward queen) 21 … Rfc8 22 Ra3 Bxd4+ 23 Rxd4 Qxc5 and White's piece is worth far more than Black's three pawns, since Black's undefended king looks quite vulnerable.

d) The … Ba6 plan starting with 9 … Qc8 doesn't make as much sense now. Affter 10 Bb2 Ba6, S.Gonzalez de la Torre-J.Baron Rodriguez, Ortiguera 2003, I would block Black's intended swap with 11 c4 when Black's a6-bishop may be misplaced in the coming hanging pawns position.

**10 Na3**



Eyeing the b5-hole. I think it may be more accurate to toss in 10 a4 to prevent … a4 ideas and to clamp down on the b5-square. After 10 … Ne4 11 Bb2 Nd7 12 Na3 Ndf6 13 c4 e6 14 Rfd1 Qe7 15 Nb5 Rfd8 16 Rac1 Ne8, L.Vidal-V.Stephan, Montlucon 2011, I like White's chances after 17 Bxe4!? dxe4 18 Ne5 f6 19 Ng4.

**10 … Nc6**

***Question*:** Can Black play for a light square queenside strategy with 10 … a4 intending to transfer a knight to a5, for example, after 11 Bb2 Nc6 12 Nb5 axb3 13 axb3 Na5?

***Answer*:** This may be Black's most promising idea. Still, White doesn't look worse after 14 Bc2 Ne4 15 Ra3 (reinforcing the defence of the b3-pawn) 15 … Nd6 (15 … c4 16 Bxe4 dxe4 17 Nd2 cxb3 18 Nxb3 Nxb3 19 Rxb3 Qd7 20 c4 is dynamically balanced, with the weakness of Black's b6-pawn matched by White's c3-pawn) 16 Nxd6 exd6 17 Nd2 with an equal game. I don't believe White's backward e3-pawn will be too big a cause for concern.

**11 Nb5 Re8**

Once again, I like your 11 … a4 idea.

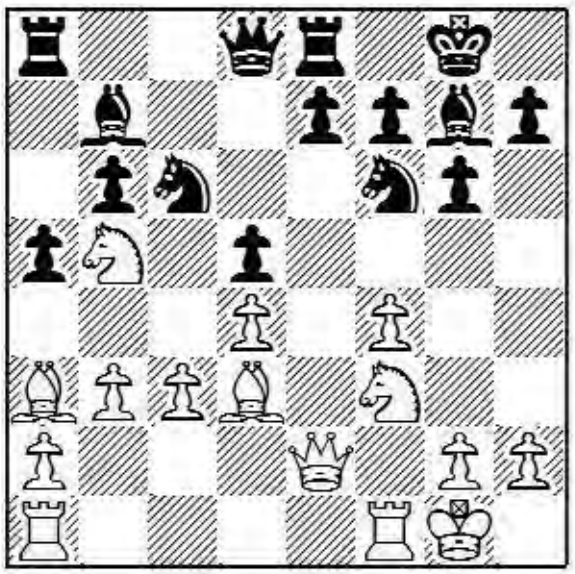
**12 Ba3**

And once again, White disdains 12 a4.

**12 … cxd4**

This violates the principle: *Don't break pawn tension if doing so improves the opponent's position*. I would play 12 … Ne4 after which White can speculate with 13 Ng5!? Nxg5 14 fxg5 cxd4 15 exd4 and White has chances down the newly opened f-file.

**13 exd4**



**13 … Nd7?**

Defensive toil, by its very nature, is rarely a joyful exercise, and the concept of 'preference' is a luxury reserved only for those in wealth and power. This is an instance of retreating a piece from an already good square, which in turn allows White an uncontested kingside build-up. Correct was the central counter 13 … Ne4! 14 Ne5 Nxe5 15 fxe5 f5 with sharp play, where I still slightly favour White.

**14 Rad1**

I would play 14 Rae1 instead to press in the centre before going all guns ablazing on the kingside.

**14 … Nf8**

The Neanderthal's plight: He and his family shiver in a storm. They approach a cave mouth. If they enter, do they encounter a safe, warm place of refuge? Or does a dangerous predator lurk inside the cave? With his last move, Black decides to enter the cave. Maybe Black should try his luck with 14 … Qc8 although I'm not crazy about his position there as well.

***Question*:** How would White proceed with his kingside attack in this case?

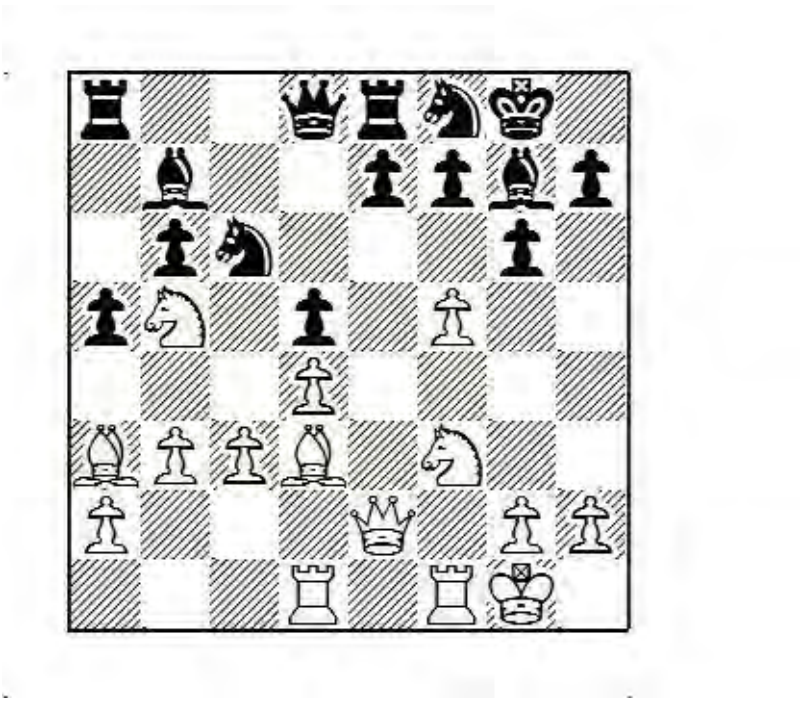
***Answer*:** White's main idea, like in the stem game, involves the f4-f5 spike. Let's take a look at a couple of possibilities:

a) 15 Ng5 Nf6 (an admission that his previous … Nd7? was a waste of time) 16 f5 Qd7 17 Rde1 a4 18 bxa4! Rf8 (Black has nothing active to do as 18 … Rxa4? 19 Qc2! Raa8 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 Bxg6! fxg6 22 Qxg6 Rf8 23 Nc7! wins, since 23 … Qxc7 is met with 24 Ne6) 19 Qc2! (loading up decisively on the g6-weakness) 19 … Ba6 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 Bxg6 fxg6 22 Qxg6 Bxb5 23 Ne6 Rf7 24 axb5 Rxa3 25 bxc6 Qe8 (25 … Qxc6? 26 Ng5 Qe8 27 Rxf6! is an immediate game ender) 26 Rf3 Ra8 27 Rg3 Nh5 (threatening a trap) 28 Qxh5! (White falls into the 'combination') 28 … Rf1+ (not all combinations win) 29

Rxf1 Qxh5 30 Rxg7+ Kh8 31 Rf3 and there is no defence to the coming Rh3.

b) 15 f5 Nf6 16 Ne5 a4 17 fxg6 hxg6 18 Nxg6! fxg6 19 Bxg6 (White has a strong attack) 19 … Qg4 (19 … Rf8? 20 Bf5 Qd8 21 Qe6+ Rf7 22 Bg6 Qf8 23 Nc7 Rc8 24 Nxd5 and Black collapses) 20 Bf7+! Kh8 21 Qxg4 Nxg4 22 Bxe8 Rxe8 23 Rde1 (I told you the rook belonged on the e1-square!) 23 … axb3 24 axb3 Nf6 25 Rf5 with a large advantage for White.

**15 f5**



All poisons are dosage-dependent. In this case, White attempts to poison his opponent's king position, which for now sickens, but fails to kill Black. However, Black's problem is that he lacks a central counter to White's unopposed kingside build-up, which if left unchecked in time, will indeed prove fatal.

**15 … Ba6 16 Ng5!**

Taking aim at the f7-pawn.

**16 … Bf6**

The weakening 'kick' 16 … h6?? is met with the crushing 17 fxg6 fxg6 18 Rxf8+! Rxf8 19 Qe6+ Kh8 20 Qxg6 and White forces mate.

**17 Qg4**

White's fierce threats arrive in ever shortening intervals. An inkling of this, a smattering of that, and little by little, Black's position continues its downward trajectory.

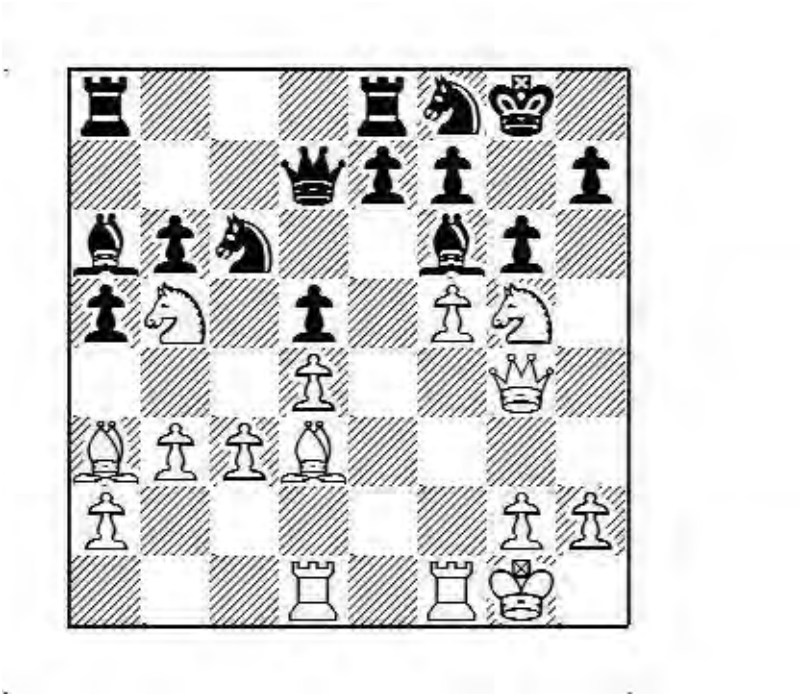
**17 … Qd7**

Things are already getting dodgy for Black, for example:

a) 17 … a4 18 fxg6 hxg6 19 bxa4 Bc8 20 Qf4! Be6 21 h4! Rxa4 22 h5 pries open Black's king. After 22 … gxh5 23 Nxe6 Nxe6 24 Qh6 Bg7 25 Qh7+ Kf8 26 Rxf7+! Kxf7 27 Rf1+, mate is inevitable. Black's queen closes her eyes and shakes her head sadly, as if in validation to a long held belief about her husband's lack of competency to rule.

b) 17 … Bxg5 reasons that allowing the white knight's continued existence on g5 is

akin to an Australian couple leaving their new pet dingo to watch the baby while they go to the movies. After 18 Qxg5 Qd7 19 Qf4!, White gets a decisive double attack, threatening to invade down on f7 with the queen or play the Nc7 fork.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** One look tells us that White has a winning attack. How would you proceed here?

***Answer*:** Annihilation of the defensive barrier. The f7-weakness is the beating heart of Black's fears.

**18 Nxf7!**

In a situation when someone dislikes us for whatever reason - real or imagined - no matter what we do or say will be interpreted as a deliberate offense or provocation. Black's forces, who for so long disliked White's looming kingside knight, now hate him even more. With such sacrifices, there is no need to dawdle over niceties like soundness or unsoundness. We can just see at a glance that the sac works, without even need of analysis, since it strips Black's kingside to its bare essentials.

**18 … h5**

Black gets slaughtered if he accepts the knight offer with 18 … Kxf7 19 fxg6+ Kg7 20 Bf5 h5 21 Qxh5 Qb7 (Black's queen bites her lower lip in vexation at having her wishes brushed aside) 22 Bc1! Bxb5 23 Qh6+ Kg8 24 Be6+! (deflection) 24 … Nxe6 25 Qh7+ Kf8 and 26 Qf7 is mate!

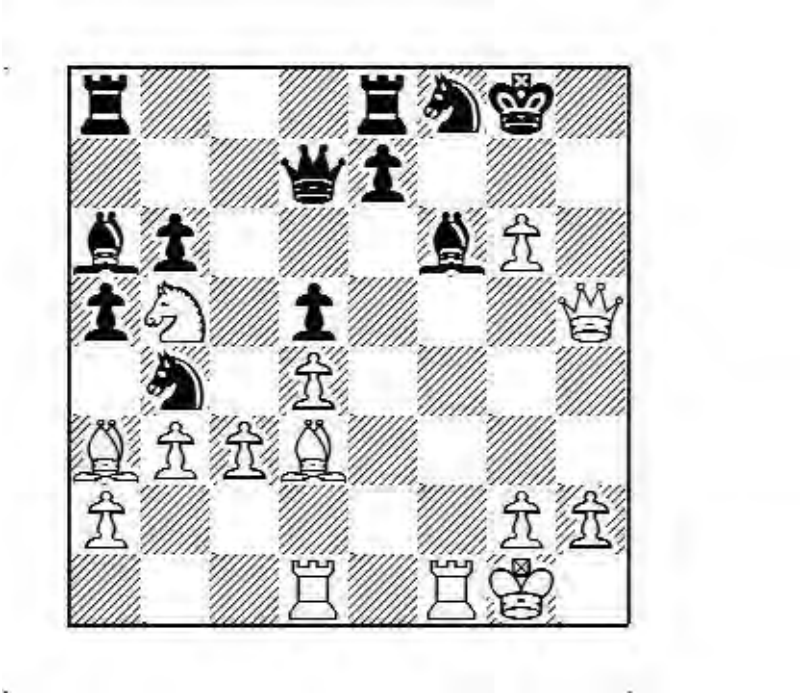
**19 Qh3 Kxf7**

"Of all the people in the world, I am surely the wisest," declares the king, as he unwisely challenges the white knight's authority. If Black declines again, then he gets ripped open without any payment for his king's pain and suffering. For example, after 19 … Nd8 20 Ne5 Bxe5 21 dxe5 Bxb5 22 e6! Qc6 23 fxg6 and Black's extra piece counts for nothing in view of the denuded king and his impending doom.

**20 fxg6+ Kg8 21 Qxh5**

The queen rejoices in her dark heart at the black king's scheduled public humiliation.

**21 … Nb4**



This exuberant flourish fails to help Black's game.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black's cadaverous position, with its numerous rotting kingside holes, isn't survivable. His last move was an attempt to confuse the issue in a lost position. How should White proceed with his attack?

***Answer*:** Clearance.

**22 g7!**

Such sacrifices are like potato chips, in that no attacker can only eat just one and then stop.

**22 … Bxb5**

After 22 … Kxg7 23 Rf3, there is no good defence to the coming Rg3+, and the kingside battlefield is littered with smoke, toppled war machinery and the broken bodies of defenders.

**23 Qh8+ 1-0**

White's love-smitten queen unexpectedly plumps herself down next to Black's embarrassed king. There is no defence to 23 … Kf7 24 g8=8 and mate! If she could get away with it, the newly promoted queen would tax the air the black king breathes.

**Summary:** In my opinion, the queenside fianchetto plan is White's most promising attempt to extract an edge in the Reversed Stonewall lines as:

1. The plan is quicker than the cumbersome plan of transferring White's bishop to h4.

2. The plan is more flexible. It doesn't commit White to a kingside assault, and we can play in the centre with an eventual c4-break.

3. Any black attempts to swap off light-squared bishops with … Ba6 can be met by the

c4-block!

4. The plan challenges the assumption that Black is the boss of the queenside, since Black is denied an autopilot … c5-c4, … b7-b5 queenside pawn avalanche plan.

*Game 27*
**P.Szablowski-I.Blasko**
First Saturday GM Tournament, Budapest 2011

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 g6**

***Question*:** If Black tosses in an early 3 … c5, do we

stick to Stonewall, or switch to Classical or b3-lines?

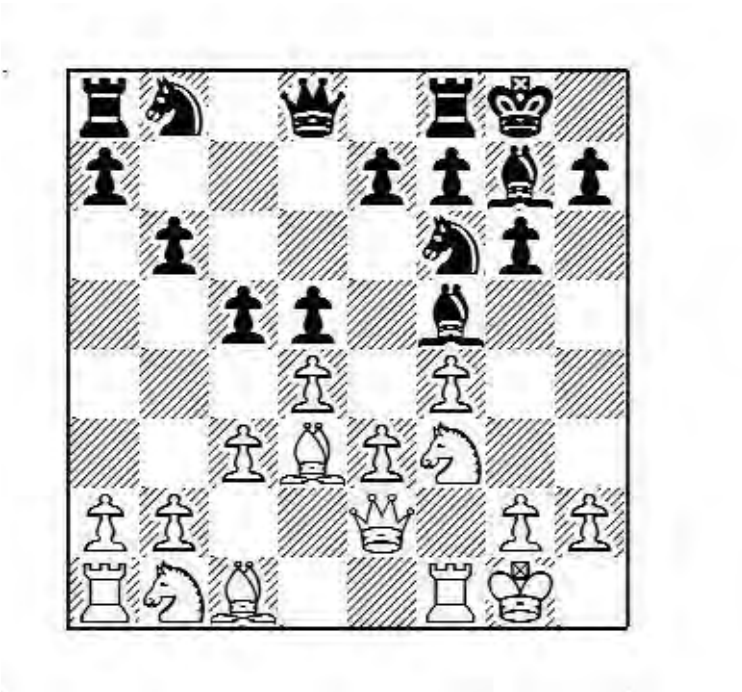
***Answer*:** Most players switch to the b3- and Classical lines. I would avoid Stonewall in this version. For example:

a) After 4 d4, the Stonewall isn't the best choice, since Black gets a bishop quickly to the f5-square. But it's still playable for White. 4 … Bf5! This position is at least equal for Black, who has a plus score from here. Following 5 c3 Nc6 6 Be2 e6 7 0-0 Be7 8 Ne5 0-0 9 Nd2 Nxe5 10 fxe5 Ne4 11 Nxe4 Bxe4 12 Bd3 Bxd3 13 Qxd3 f5 14 exf6 Bxf6 15 dxc5 Qc7 16 e4 Qxc5+ 17 Be3 Qc4 18 Qxc4 dxc4 19 Rad1, the position is dead even and the players agreed to a draw in just a few moves, A.Rapoport-A.Shirov, Toronto (simultaneous) 2010.

b) 4 Be2 transposes to the Classical Bird.

c) 4 Bb5+ Bd7 5 Bxd7+ Nbxd7 6 0-0 e6 7 d3 and White rids himself of a problem piece, then makes the switch to Classical lines. The position here is equal as well after 7 … Bd6, J.Zozaya-A.Iglesias, Pamplona 1998.

**4 d4 Bg7 5 Bd3 0-0 6 0-0 c5 7 c3 b6 8 Qe2 Bf5**



Black decides that if he experiences trouble swapping on his right hand side, then he will try his luck swapping from the left.

***Question*:** Isn't the … Bf5 swap more dangerous for Black after he castles kingside?

***Answer*:** Correct, but Black's king probably is safest on the kingside anyway, since if he castles long, White can open the queenside quite easily with b2-b3 and then a4-a5 or c3-c4 ideas.

**9 Bxf5**

***Question*:** Should we ignore Black's bishop and allow our opponent to

swap on d3, since by swapping on f5, we allow Black a grip over the e4-square?

***Answer*:** I think we are better off swapping on f5, even with Black's enhanced control over the e4-square, since it also weakens Black's king somewhat. We can play for future h2-h3 and g2-g4 plans, or our normal b2-b3, Bb2, Nbd2 and c3-c4 plan. If we can manage to swap away dark-squared bishops down the a1 - h8 diagonal, Black's king may get aired out.

The alternative 9 Nbd2 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 just feels a bit too milquetoast for my tastes. Black gets easy equality after 10 … Nc6 11 b3 Qc7 12 Ba3 Na5 13 Rac1 with a balanced position, V.Ragozin-V.Panov, Kiev 1950.

**9 … gxf5 10 Nbd2 Nbd7**

Other options:

a) 10 … e6 11 Ne5 Qc7, L.Bregoszewski-F.Zombirt, Wroclaw 2012. Now White can consider 12 b3 cxd4 13 cxd4 Nbd7 14 a4 Rfc8 15 Ba3 Qb7 16 h3 (intending g2-g4) 16 … Rc3 17 Bb4 Rc2 18 Rfc1 Rac8 19 Rxc2 Rxc2 20 Qd1 Rc7 (20 … Qc8?? hangs an exchange to the interference 21 Ndc4) 21 Rc1 Qc8 22 Rxc7 Qxc7 23 Kf2 with an equal ending.

b) 10 … Ne4 11 Nxe4 fxe4 12 Ne5 f6 13 Ng4 Qd7 14 b3 is balanced.

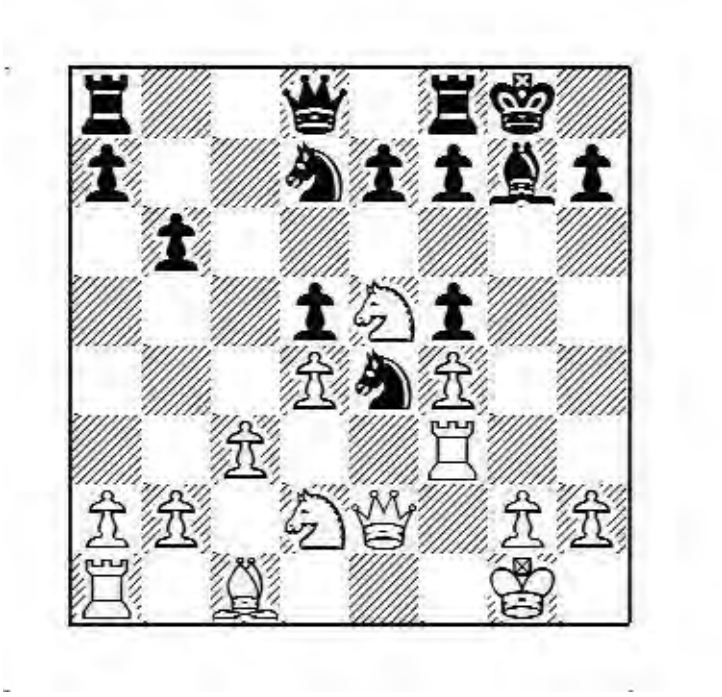
**11 Ne5 cxd4**

As mentioned before, this move is common in both the Colle and the Stonewall, even for very strong players, but it invariably helps White, since it frees our problem bishop. Instead, 11 … Qc7 can be met with 12 Rf3 with h2-h3 and g3-g4 ideas to follow.

**12 exd4 Ne4 13 Rf3**

Intending Rh3, Qh5 and Qxh7 mate ideas. Of course, Black may do something in the interval to prevent such a possibility! Such pseudo-attacking plans may transcend logic, but not belief. We Stonewallers just have faith in our lucky star. I would consider continuing with 13 Nxe4! dxe4 (13 … fxe4 14 Nc6 Qe8 15 f5 Nf6 16 Ne5 looks better for White, who can think about g2-g4 soon) 14 g4! fxg4 15 Qxe4 Nf6 16 Qg2 h5 17 h3! gxh3 18 Qxh3 Qd5 19 Kh2 and White's play down the g-file looks promising. After 19 … Bh6 20 Rg1+ Kh8 21 Qg2 Kh7 22 f5 Qxg2+ 23 Rxg2 Bxc1 24 Rxc1 Rg8 25 Rcg1! Rxg2+ 26 Rxg2 Rf8 27 Kh3 Kh6 28 Kh4, Black has a difficult ending, with his forces tied down.

Let's go back to the game move 13 Rf3.



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** One tiny shift can turn an even position into a losing one. Black has a choice of 13 … f6, ejecting the e5-intruder, or 13 … Ndf6, bolstering control over critical squares like e4 and h5. One leads to a strategically lost position, in the other, Black remains equal. Which one would you play?

**13 … f6?**

Self-preservation struggles with curiosity, and the latter wins. In the matter of a single move, Black's position goes from okay to dismal. Black's last move is a bit like saying: "I will fix the leaking roof, but only *after* the hurricane passes". Psychological laws tend to govern such situations, and it's very difficult for a defender to allow White's knight to remain undisturbed on e5 in near-perpetuity. Better is 13 … Ndf6! which is a deterrent to keep White's attacking intentions in check. Following 14 Rh3 e6 15 Nxe4 Nxe4 16 Be3, 16 … Qe8!, intending … f7-f6, looks fine for Black.

**14 Nc6!**

The knight plunges into enemy territory, with no intention of getting out!

**14 … Qe8 15 Rh3!**

The rook shoulders his way in.

**15 … a5**

All societies have mechanisms in place to purge the troublesome elements within them. Yet Black can't find a way to get at White's unruly c6-knight. It feels as if the c6-knight is a weak enclave within hostile, foreign territory. But appearances deceive. However, 15 … e6 16 Nxe4 dxe4 (16 … fxe4 17 f5! Rf7 18 Nb4 a5 19 Nc2 Nf8 20 Ne3 Rd8 21 Qh5 leaves White with a powerful kingside initiative) 17 d5! exd5 18 Nd4 is also quite awful for Black.

**16 Nxe4 fxe4**

Also, 16 … dxe4? is met by 17 d5! with a strategically won game for White.

**17 f5!**

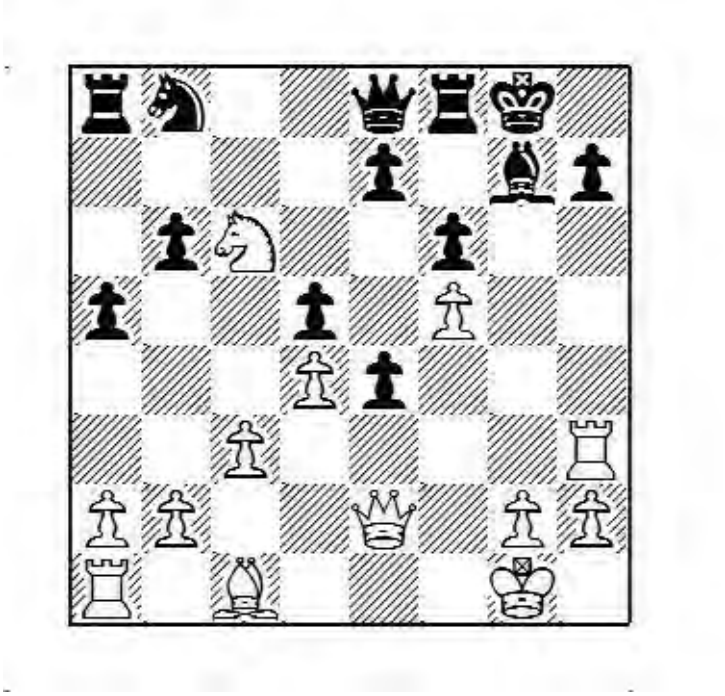
Conspirators, exchanging significant glances and sly nods, creep closer to Black's king, stealthy and silent as shadows.

**17 … Ne5**

Complete desperation as the alternatives are unpalatable as well:

a) 17 … e6 18 Qg4 e5 19 Qh4 h5 20 Rg3 with a winning attack.

b) 17 … Nb8



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White to play and force the win.

***Answer*:** Deflection. After 18 Nd8!! Qxd8 (no choice, since it is fatal to allow the knight to reach e6) 19 Qh5 h6 (19 … Qe8 20 Qxh7+ Kf7 21 Bh6 Rg8 22 Qg6+ Kf8 23 Bxg7+ Rxg7 24 Rh8+ Rg8 25 Rxg8 mate) 20 Bxh6 Qe8 21 Qh4 Rf7 22 Bf4! Qc6 23 Qh7+ Kf8 24 Rg3 e5 25 Rxg7! Rxg7 26 Bh6 Qd7 27 Qh8+, White has a crushing attack.

**18 dxe5 Qxc6**

Black's cat-like queen practices detached love. In this case she is either unable or unwilling to lend assistance to her king.

**19 e6! 1-0**

One step succeeds the other with pristine logic. Black feels the squeeze and was certainly assailed with feelings of claustrophobic alarm.

The bullying e-pawn, which cuts off the Black king's flight, tends to obtrude its way into his heavy thoughts. Following 19 … Qe8 20 Qg4 (the delighted queen approaches g4 at a pace somewhere between a skip and a run) 20 … Kh8 (the wounded king, screaming in fear more than pain, flutters about like a sparrow with a broken wing, destined to never fly again) 21 Qh4 h5 22 Qg4, it is curtains for Black.

**Summary:** My policy is to always trade on f5 when Black plays a combination of … g7-g6 and … Bf5. Black's

enhanced control over the e4-square is counterbalanced by the slight weakening of his kingside pawns.

*Game 28*
**E.Tate-P.R.Fricano**
Chicago Open 2008

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 g6 4 d4 Bg7 5 Bd3 0-0 6 Nbd2**

An online blitz hack of mine went 6 0-0 c5 7 b3 Qc7 8 Ne5 b6 9 Qe2 Nc6 10 c3 Bf5 11 Bxf5 gxf5 12 Nd2 Ne4 13 Nxe4 dxe4 14 Bd2 Rad8 15 Qh5 e6 16 g4! (*Houdini* frowns on this move, obviously aware of my dubious attacking skills) 16 … Ne7 17 Rf2 f6 18 Nc4 Kh8 (18 … b5 19 Na3 b4 20 Nc4 fxg4 21 Qxc5 Qxc5 22 dxc5 bxc3 23 Bxc3 Rd3 24 Rc1 Nd5 25 Bd2 leads to a sharp ending, with opposite wing majorities) 19 a4 Rd5 20 Kh1 fxg4 21 Qxg4 f5 22 Qh5 Ng6?! (22 … Rg8 looks better) 23 Rg1 Rf6?! 24 Rfg2 Kg8 25 Ne5 and White has a winning attack, C.Lakdawala-"LMLLM" Internet (blitz) 2014.

**6 … b6 7 Ne5 c5 8 0-0**

I would probably toss in the immediate 8 b3, just to eradicate … c5-c4 possibilities.

**8 … Qd6**

This theoretical novelty is a bit odd.

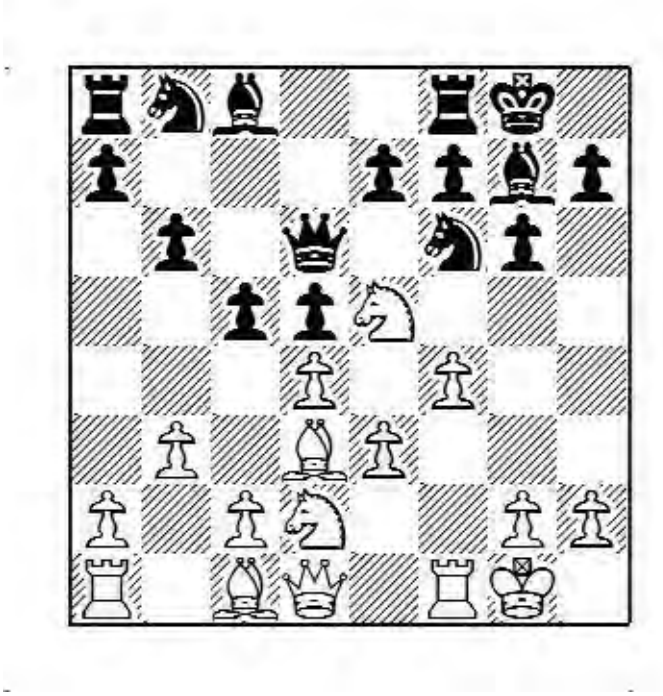
***Question*:** What does Black have in mind with his last move?

***Answer*:** There are two possible ideas behind his last move:

1. Perhaps he wants to play a future … Ba6 without allowing Nc6 tricks.

2. White has a harder time playing c2-c4 with Black's queen on the d6-square, since … dxc4 uncovers an attack on the d4-pawn. Normal is 8 … Bb7 9 b3 (9 c3 Ba6! is an equalizer, now that White tossed in c2-c3, K.Kuderinov-B.Avrukh, Istanbul 2012) 9 … Nc6 10 Bb2 Qc7 11 a3 and White achieved his setup without wasting a move on c2-c3, D.Sapmaz-N.Batsiashvili, Kocaeli 2014.

**9 b3**



***Question*:** How is this position different from the ones we looked at?

***Answer*:** In this version White didn't play c2-c3.

***Question*:** How does omitting the move help White?

***Answer*:** It may not, but if White later plays c2-c4 in one go, he saves a tempo.

**9 … cxd4**

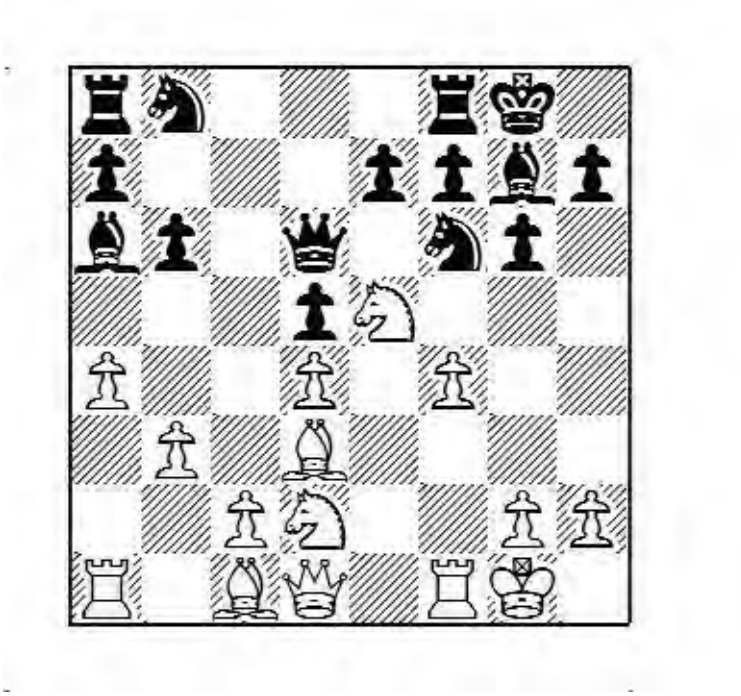
The position becomes a likely candidate for a future White hanging pawns situation, although in this particular game, it never came about.

**10 exd4 Ba6**

Reducing White's attacking potential by taking advantage of the fact that White is unable to play c2-c4. This is one positive point of Black's … Qd6.

**11 Bxa6**

I like 11 a4! here.



Now 11 … Bxd3 is met with 12 cxd3! and after 12 … Nc6 13 Ba3 Nb4 14 Nb1! (planning to occupy the future b4-hole) 14 … Rfc8 15 Qd2 a5 16 Nc3 Ne8 17 Nb5, White picks off a pawn.

**11 … Nxa6 12 Qe2**

Gaining a tempo on the a6-knight, while covering the e4-square.

**12 … Nc7 13 Bb2 Rac8 14 c3**

White is content to go passive on the queenside while slowly building on the other side.

**14 … Ne6!?**

Awkward, but it's *Houdini*'s second choice in the position. Black intends … Nh5 next.

**15 Qe3 Bh6**

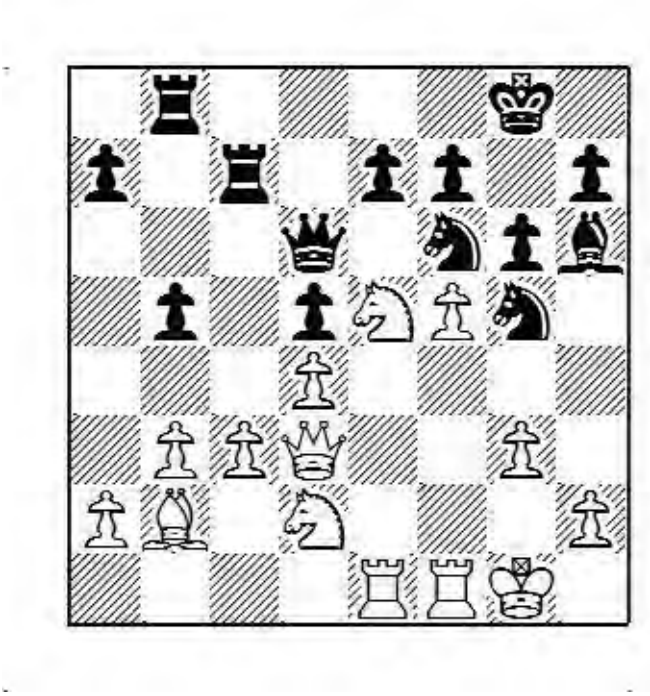
I'm not so sure this plan to attack the f4-pawn is all that effective. I now clearly prefer White, who can calmly build up a kingside attack.

**16 g3 b5 17 Rae1 Rc7 18 Qd3**

Eyeing both the b5-pawn and the f5-break.

**18 … Rb8 19 f5!? Ng5?!**

Better is 19 … Ng7 20 fxg6 hxg6 21 Ndf3 although here Black must be on guard for Nxf7 and Ne5+ tricks.



Black's last move allowed White a mini-combination. Do you see it?

***Answer*:** Step 1: Open the f-file.

**20 fxg6 hxg6 21 Nxg6!**

Step 2: Sacrifice the knight on g6. However, Black is by no means obliged to accept it. This looks like a decisive shot but amazingly, Black stands only slightly worse here.

**21 … Nfe4!**

Principle: *Meet a wing attack with a central counter*.

**22 Nf4 b4?!**

Cunning tends to be born of desperation's womb. Black attempts to undermine the c3-pawn, by giving up yet another one. *Houdini* doesn't like this move and suggests the calm 22 … e6 after which White can speculate with 23 Nxe4 dxe4 24 Qd1! Nf3+ 25 Rxf3 exf3 26 Nh5 when White has strong attacking compensation for the exchange, not to mention two extra pawns, after he picks up the f3-straggler.

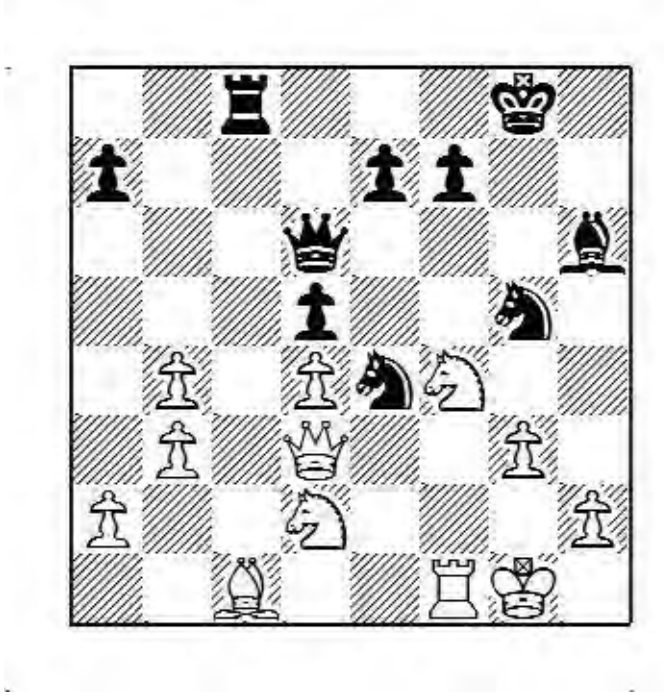
**23 cxb4 Rbc8**

Not 23 … Rxb4?? which is met with 24 Ba3.

**24 Rc1?**

A miscalculation which throws away material. Instead, after 24 Re2!, Black has yet to prove full compensation for two pawns.

**24 … Rxc1 25 Bxc1**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** How does Black pick up two pieces for a rook?

***Answer*:** Removal of a key defender/attraction/knight fork.

**25 … Rxc1! 26 Rxc1 Nxd2**

Black's d2-knight is secure due to an f3-fork.

**27 Rc8+ Bf8**

Most definitely not 27 … Kg7?? as 28 Nh5 is mate, and this would be an abrupt and embarrassing end to the game.

**28 Qf5?**

This loses. *Houdini*'s assessment is 0.00 after the correct 28 Kg2!.

**28 … Ndf3+ 29 Kh1 Qxb4**

Menacing the e1-infiltration and threatening mate in two moves.

**30 Rc1 Qd2?!**

Stronger is 30 … Qxd4! 31 Qc2 (31 Qxd5?? Qb2 is decisive since White has no reasonable way to protect the h2-pawn) 31 … Ne4 32 Qe2 and 32 … Ned2! intending … e7-e5 is decisive.

**31 Qc2 Qxd4 32 Rd1 Qe4?!**

Black's previously generous attacking zeal noticeably ebbs. His chances reduce sharply with the removal of queens. Black should make dutiful obeisance to his attack, indulging in its every whim by keeping queens on the board with 32 … Qe5! as this gives Black a winning position.

**33 Qxe4**

The long estranged sisters reconcile.

**33 … dxe4 34 h4 e5 35 Nd5 Nh7 36 Rc1**

Suddenly, the ending doesn't look all that easy to win for Black, since he is in danger of dropping his a-pawn.

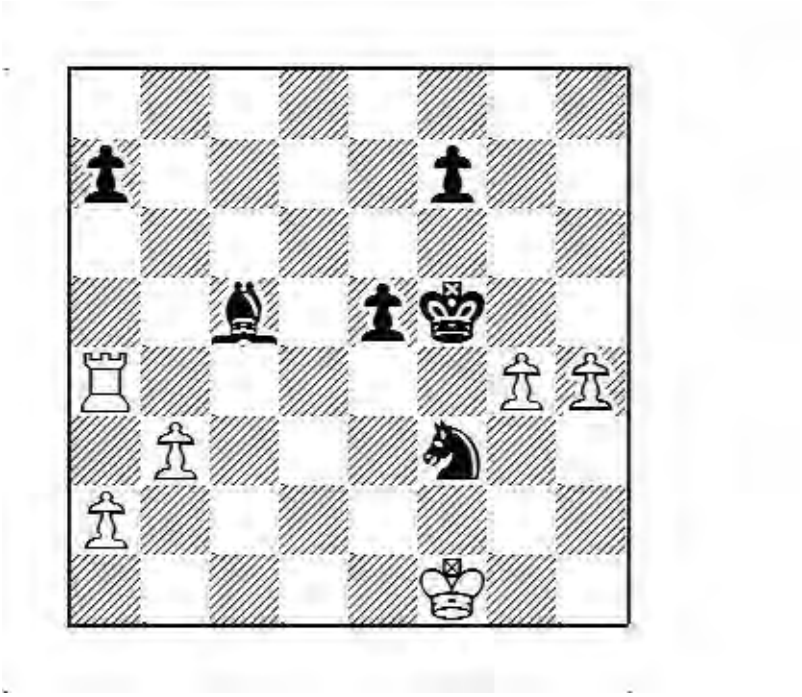
**36 … Kg7 37 Rc4 Nf6?!**

Why give up the e4-pawn? Black should play 37 … Nd4 when he still has the better chances.

**38 Nxf6 Kxf6 39 Rxe4 Kf5 40 Ra4**

White also has chances to hold the game after 40 Rc4 e4 41 Kg2 Ne5 42 Rc8 Bb4 43 Kf2.

**40 … Bc5 41 Kg2 Ne1+ 42 Kf1 Nf3 43 g4+!?**



Why is it that we all shrink from suffering, yet joyfully create its causes? White, the much higher rated player, perhaps unwisely plays for the win, although he is later rewarded for his optimism.

**43 … Ke6**

Also possible is 43 … Kf6 44 Ra6+ Bb6 45 b4 Nxh4 46 a4 Kg5 47 b5 Bd4 48 a5 Nf3 when:

a) 49 b6 axb6 50 axb6 Bxb6 51 Rxb6 Kxg4 52 Rf6 is drawn.

b) 49 Rxa7?? Bxa7 50 b6 Bxb6 51 axb6 Nd4 and the knight catches the b-pawn by a tempo.

**44 h5 Kf6**

Black's king heads for the freshly created g5-hole.

**45 Ra6+ Bb6 46 Ke2 Nd4+**

Missing 46 … e4! 47 b4 Kg5 and this looks very difficult for White to hold.

**47 Kd3 Ne6**

Tactically preventing Ke4 due to the c5-fork.

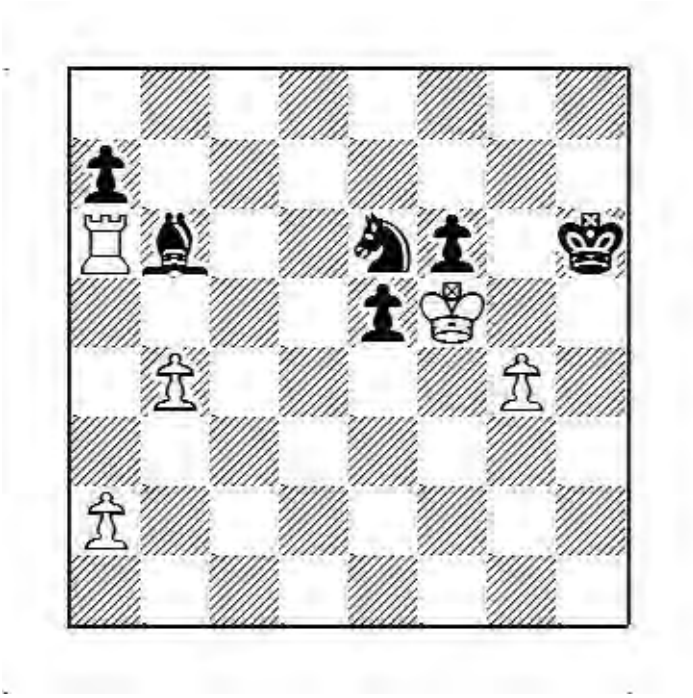
**48 b4**

Cutting off the fork square. White fights back with the desperate energy born of long discomfort.

**48 … Kg5 49 Ke4 f6 50 h6?!**

Optimism alone is insufficient to mend a sour position. White offers to pay the admission fee of one pawn to break the blockade's gateway. Unfortunately, the move fails to accomplish this if Black responds correctly. This move was based on the philosophy: *When losing, our best hope for survival is anarchy, leaving only disorder in its wake*. This desperado shouldn't work. Correct was 50 Kf3 with some chances to hold.

**50 … Kxh6 51 Kf5**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Black is on the cusp of a huge upset against a titled player. Should he play 55 … Nc7 or 51 … Ng7+? One leads to a clear win, while the other allows White some chances to save the game.

**51 … Nc7?!**

The complexities just barely evade both sides' comprehension.

***Answer*:** 51 … Ng7+! ejects White's king and wins. This move effectively cauterizes the f5-wound and sends White's king tumbling, head over heels. After 52 Ke4 (52 Kxf6? e4! 53 Ra3 (threat: Rh3+ mate) 53 … Bd4+ 54 Kf7 e3 55 Rb3 e2 56 Rb1 Bc3 and the e-pawn will cost White a rook) 52 … Ne8! 53 Ra3 Kg5 54 Rg3 Bd4 55 a4 Nd6+ 56 Kd5 Kf4 57 Rg2 Ne4 58 a5 Nc3+ 59 Kc4 (59 Kc6 e4 wins) 59 … a6 60 Kd3 Nb5, … e5-e4 is next and Black wins.

**52 Ra3 Nb5?!**

Black begins to lose the thread. 52 … Bd4! still retains winning chances.

**53 Rd3 Bd4 54 a4**

Finally, White's long-sluggish majority begins to advance.

**54 … Nc3 55 Kxf6**

The ideal camouflage is one where the 'hider' blends into the background. Optically,

this move looks like a blunder, but it is actually a good move since … e5-e4+ isn't possible.

**55 … Nd5+ 56 Kf5 Ne3+**

Picking off the g4-pawn. The game should now be drawn. 56 … Nxb4 should also draw.

**57 Ke4 Nc2?**

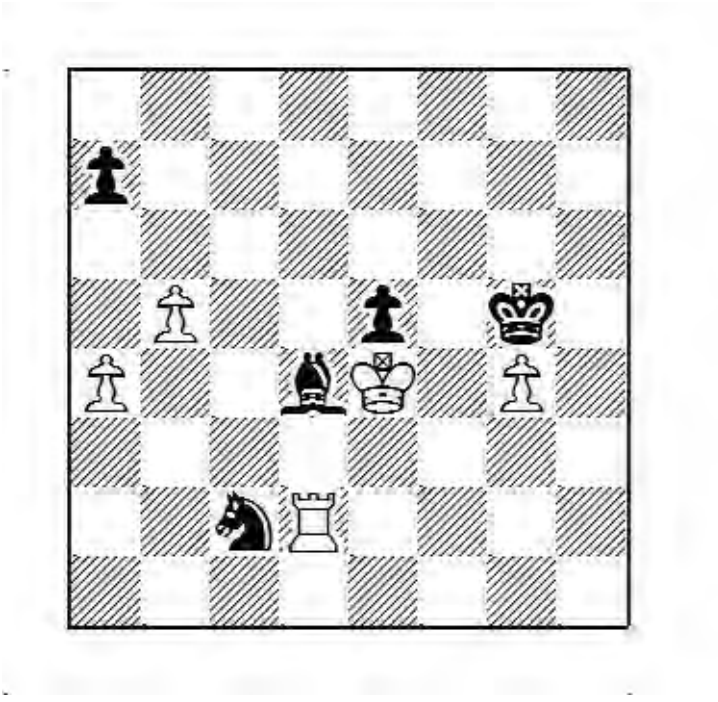
What? 57 … Nxg4 58 Rxd4 exd4 59 Kxd4 Kg5 60 Kc5 Kf5 61 Kb5 Ne3 62 Ka6 Nd5 63 b5 Nc3 is drawn.

**58 b5**

Suddenly, Black's knight is badly out of sync and White will soon menace queening combinations.

**58 … Kg5 59 Rd2!?**

White has the fascinating possibility of 59 a5 Kxg4 60 Rb3 Kg5 61 Rg3+ Kf6 62 Rc3! Bxc3 63 b6 axb6 64 a6 Ne3! 65 a7 Bd4 66 a8Q Ke6. The king's smile trembles with Charlie Brown-like wobbly uncertainty. Now this may be a win for White with a comp playing. But a human? It won't be so easy to break though Black's fortress.

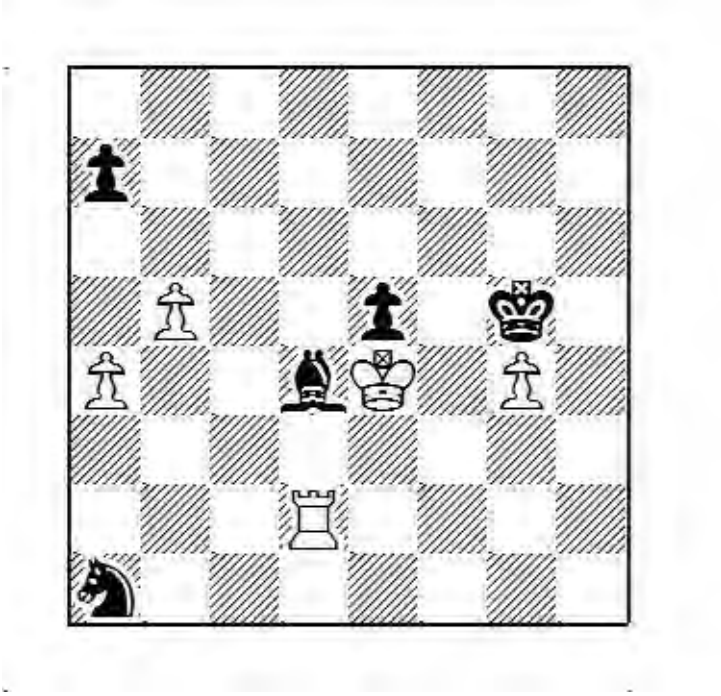


***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Black must find the correct square for the knight.

Should he play 59 … Na3 or 59 … Na1? Only one of the lines draws.

**59 … Na1?**

***Answer*:** 59 … Na3! holds the draw after 60 Rxd4 (60 Kd5 Kxg4 61 Rd3 Nc2 is also equal) 60 … exd4 61 Kxd4 Kxg4 62 Kc5 Kf5 63 Kc6 Ke5 64 Kb7 Nc4! 65 Kxa7 Kd5 66 b6 Na5 67 b7 Kc5! (not 67 … Nxb7?? 68 Kxb7 and White forces a new queen) 68 b8Q Nc6+ 69 Ka8 Nxb8 70 Kxb8 Kb6 and Black saves the game.



The stress, fatigue and panic endured while playing under extended time pressure have a way of either enhancing or emptying our thought processes. We either play much better or much worse - but never normally.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** No time to rest. White found a forced win. How?

***Answer*:** Removal of the guard/pawn promotion. Black's king is too far away and his knight is stationed in the worst possible location to halt the queening attempt.

**60 Rxd4!**

Now White's kingdom shines in happy endings.

**60 … exd4 61 Kxd4 Nb3+ 62 Kc4!**

An adroit zig and a deft zag are all that stand between White and his new queen. IM Tate avoids the trap 62 Kd5?? Kxg4 63 Kc6 Kf5 64 Kb7 Nc5+ which is a drawn ending.

**62 … Na5+**

The once ever-present knight is now just thin air.

**63 Kb4!**

Deftly avoiding drawing cheapo number two. The effect of Black's drawing hope is overlain by an even more effective counter by White. After the careless 63 Kc5??, Black draws with 63 … Kxg4 64 Kd6 Nc4+ 65 Kc7 Kf5 66 Kb7 Ke6 67 Kxa7 Kd7 68 b6 Nxb6 69 Kxb6 Kc8.

**63 … Nb7 64 a5 Kxg4**

Also, after 64 … Nxa5 65 Kxa5, Black's king is way too far away to draw.

**65 a6 Nd8 66 b6! axb6 67 Kb5 Nf7 68 a7 Nd6+**

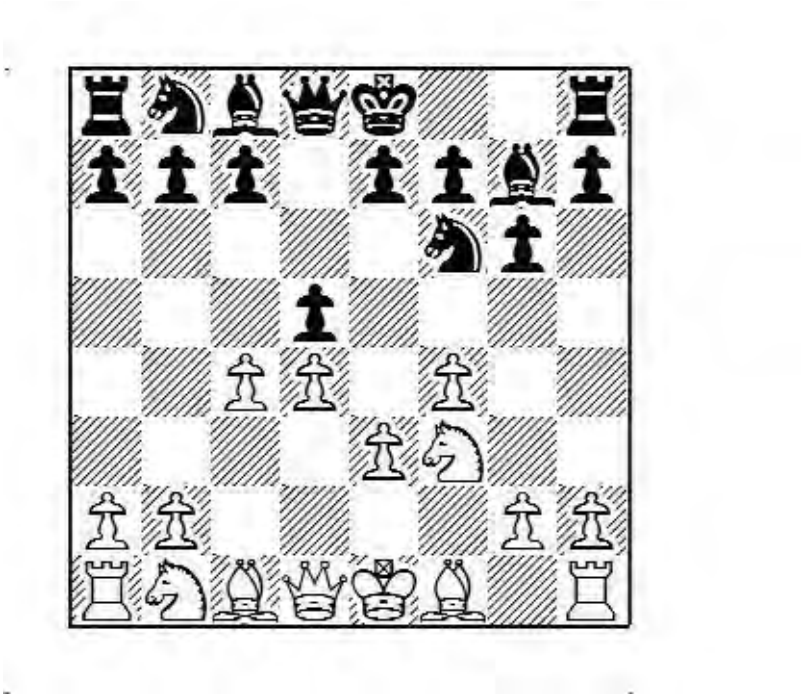
The knight, sensing the presence of a terrible imminence, shudders uncontrollably.

**69 Kc6 1-0**

**Summary:** White's optimal setup may be to mix the Stonewall with b2-b3, omitting c2-c3.

*Game 29*
**L.Karlsson-H.Bentsen**
Gausdal Byggern Masters 2005

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 g6 4 d4 Bg7 5 c4!?**



Here we see a hybrid of a Stonewall and a queen's pawn opening.

***Question*:** Does the inclusion of the f4-move help or hurt White?

***Answer*:** A little of both. The f4-move clamps down on Black's … e7-e5 break and seizes valuable central space. However it may contribute to overextension if the game opens further, especially if Black plays an early … c5, where White gets a Grünfeld with the pawn on f4, which somehow looks misplaced in the position. White can also play the c2-c4 break in a slower manner with 5 Bd3 0-0 6 0-0 b6 7 c4 e6 (Black can speculate with a typical Grünfeld-type pawn sacrifice 7 … c5!? 8 dxc5 Na6!? 9 cxb6 Qxb6 when it feels to me like Black has enough for the pawn) 8 Nc3 Bb7 9 b3 and White reached a favourable b3-version where he didn't expend a redundant tempo on an early c2-c3, I.Blasko-P.Dlauchy, Eger 2003.

**5 … c6**

A solid but passive reaction. The most principled continuation is 5 … c5! 6 dxc5 Qa5+ 7 Nc3 0-0 8 cxd5 Nxd5 9 Qxd5 Bxc3+ 10 Kf2 Bg7 11 Bd2 Qc7 12 Be2 Be6 13 Qd3 Nd7 14 Qa3 Nxc5 15 Ng5 h6 16 Nxe6 Ne4+ 17 Kg1 fxe6 18 Rc1 Qb6 19 Ba5 Bxb2 20 Qd3 Qxa5 21 Qxe4 Kf7 22 Rb1 Bf6 23 Bc4 Qf5 24 Qxf5 gxf5 25 Rxb7 with an equal ending, E.Fagerbekk-M.Kolodziejski, correspondence 2009.

**6 Nc3 0-0 7 Be2**

White's king bishop is usually placed more actively on the d3-square:

a) 7 Bd3 dxc4 8 Bxc4 Bf5 9 Ne5 b5?! (this overly-aggressive stab causes weakness in Black's queenside) 10 Be2 b4?! (this move too only benefits White, who takes control over the c5-square) 11 Na4 Be4 12 0-0 Nbd7 13 a3 a5 14 Bf3 Nxe5 15 fxe5 Bxf3 16 Qxf3 Nd5 17 Nc5 and White has a queenside bind, J.Mach-R.Pescatore, correspondence 2002.

b) My choice would be 7 b3 and after 7 … Qa5!? (in order to lure White's bishop off the a1-h8 diagonal, but it loses time for Black so I would rather play 7 … Ne4 instead) 8 Bd2 Qd8 9 Bd3 Bg4 10 0-0 e6 11 Qe1 Bxf3 12 Rxf3 Ne8 13 Rh3 f5, White looks a shade better due to the bishop pair and the possibility to expand on the queenside with c4-c5, L.Kovacs-J.Isepy, Budapest 1997.

**7 … b6**

I don't see a need for this move. Why fianchetto Black's light-squared bishop when it has access to both the f5- and g4-squares?

**8 0-0 Bb7 9 Ne5 e6 10 b3**

White once again benefitted due to the fact that he didn't waste an earlier tempo with the redundant c2-c3.

**10 … Nbd7 11 a4**

White displays queenside ambitions.

**11 … Ne4?!**

This innocent-looking move triggers catastrophic strategic events for Black, and his once robust counterplay grows viscous and slowly comes to a standstill. Instead the 11 … c5! freeing move ventilates Black's position enough to complete development. Following 12 Bb2 cxd4 13 exd4 Ne4, we have a hanging pawns position with White looking only a microbe better after 14 a5.

**12 Nxe4 dxe4 13 Ba3 Re8?**

An automatic response to being attacked. However, Black did have other options:

a) 13 … c5?! is also not ideal. Freedom isn't always attractively priced for our tight budgets. Sometimes we may be better off suffering a cramped position, rather than handing over concessions to blast out of our hovel. After 14 Nxd7 Qxd7 15 dxc5 Qc6 16 cxb6 Rfd8 17 Qc1! Bxa1 18 Qxa1 Rd2 19 Re1 Qxb6 20 Qc3, White's monster dark-squared bishop and three to one queenside pawn majority give him huge compensation for the exchange.

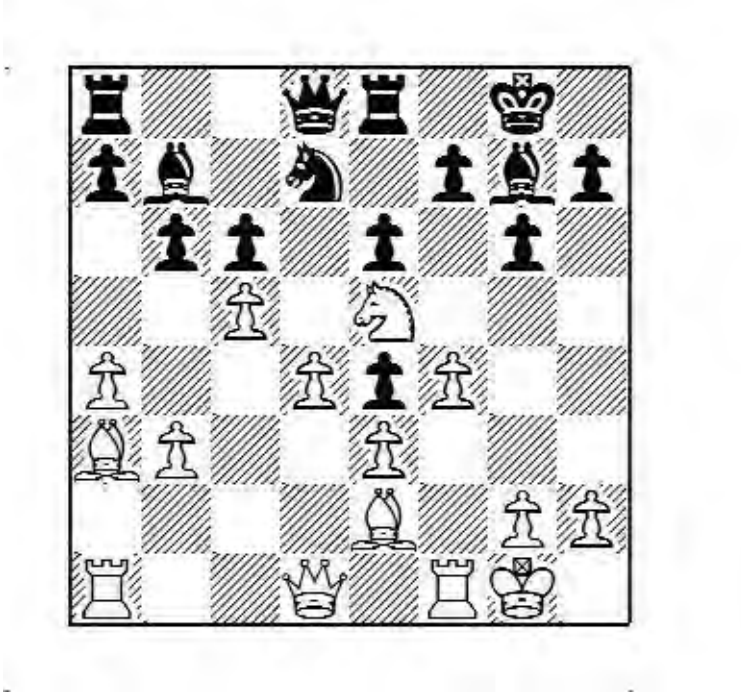
b) Black's best chance is the exchange sacrifice 13 … Nxe5!. We tend to be patient with a little pain if in doing so; it eradicates a giant chunk of our suffering. This desperado appears to be Black's best hope. The soundness or unsoundness of such sacrifices is not open to immediate verification. Only with hindsight or a suitable passage of moves do we learn the truth.

Following 14 Bxf8 Nxc4:

b1) 15 bxc4 Bxf8 Black has hopes for survival with one pawn for the exchange, although as of yet, Black's goal of freedom remains short of completion.

b2) White can still go wrong with 15 Bxg7? Nxe3 16 Qc1 Nxf1 17 Be5 (17 Bh6 is met with 17 … Nxh2! 18 f5 Ba6! 19 Bxa6 Ng4 20 Be3 exf5 when Black gets four pawns for the piece) 17 … f6 18 Qxf1 fxe5 19 dxe5 c5! and Black stands better.

**14 c5!**



Multipurpose:

1) Black is denied an eventual … c6-c5 freeing break.

2) Black's b7-bishop gets marginalized.

3) White clears the c4-square for a piece.

4) White achieves a territorial advantage on the queenside.

***Question*:** What about the fact that White had just given Black the d5-hole?

***Answer*:** The loss of control over the d5-square is minor compared to the strategic gains White made with his last move.

**14 … bxc5**

Now the c5-hole proves to be a sizable cavity, ready for Dr. Karlsson's drill. No better is 14 … Nf6 15 Qc2 and Black can hardly play … Nd5? as it will always meet with Qxe4. Black must now watch out for a knight transference to the d6-outpost, as well as g2-g4-g5 undermining ideas.

**15 Nxd7**

Destroying the defender of the c5-pawn and also denying Black … Nf6-d5 ideas.

**15 … Qxd7 16 Bxc5**

Black's game is a strategic train wreck.

**16 … Bf8 17 Qc2 Bxc5**

The coming opening of the d-file helps White. Perhaps Black should go into Maginot Line mode with 17 … f5 though after 18 b4, White is still calling the shots with his spatial plus and better mobility.

**18 dxc5!**

White opens the d-file for rook infiltration, which is much stronger than the rote 18

Qxc5 as White's advantage is reduced after 18 … a5.

**18 … f5 19 Rad1 Qg7**

Black's coming … e6-e5 counterplay just isn't going to cut it.

**20 Rd6 e5**

Also, after 20 … Rad8 21 Rfd1 Rxd6 22 cxd6 Qd7 23 Qc5 Ba8 24 b4 Rb8 25 Bc4, White owns the entire board.

**21 Qc3**

The queen surveils the e5-pawn with covert interest. Also strong is 21 Bc4+ Kh8 22 Rfd1 Rab8 23 Rd7 Re7 24 Qc3! Rbe8 25 Rxe7 Qxe7 26 fxe5 Bc8 (White's e-pawn is taboo) 27 Rd6 Kg7 28 Rxc6 Kh6 29 e6 and Back gets asphyxiated.

**21 … Re7 22 Rfd1 Rae8**

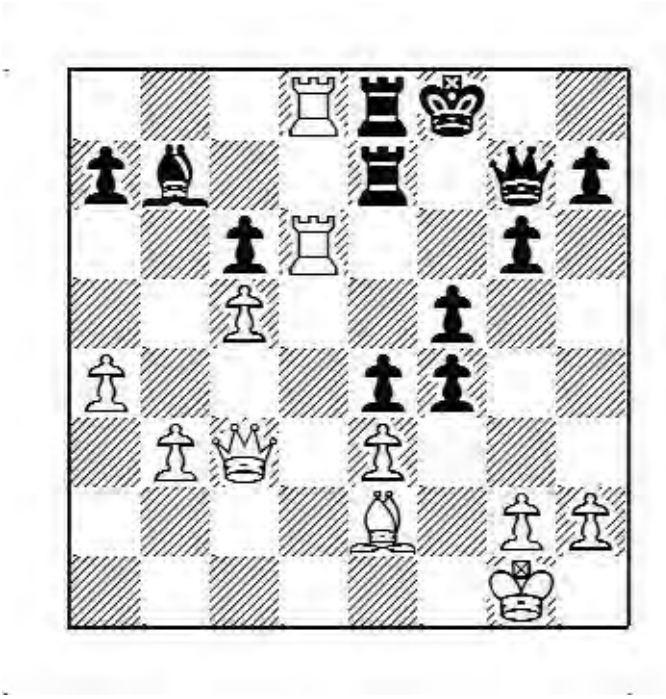
After 22 … exf4 23 Bc4+ Kh8 24 Rd8+ Re8 25 Qxg7+ Kxg7 26 R8d7+ Kh6 27 Rxb7 fxe3 28 Kf1, White wins.

**23 Rd8 Kf8 24 R1d6**

White's monster strategic bind increases with each passing move.

**24 … exf4**

Trading rooks would also be futile after 24 … Rxd8 25 Rxd8+ Re8 26 Rd6 Ba8 27 Bc4 and Black is in zugzwang.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** The noose is already around the black king's neck, with the hangman awaiting the signal. In this case, the king's hopes for a dramatic last-minute reprieve rider, with horse foaming at the mouth, is not to be. Black's last move allows White to force mate. Try and work out the win.

***Answer*:** Infiltration/attraction.

**25 Rf6+!**

The once vaporous attacking forms begin to assume density, as they approach Black's king with varying degrees of bloodlust and truculence.

**25 … Rf7 26 Rxe8+ Kxe8**

The king is a mouse, brought before a stern tribunal of cats.

**27 Qe5+ Kd8**

Or 27 … Re7 28 Qb8+ Kd7 and the king quivers and sways like a sapling in a storm as 29 Rd6 is mate!

**28 Rd6+ 1-0**

The middle is engorged with white attackers. Black gave up because:

a) 28 … Kc7 29 Rxc6+! Kd7 (the swashbuckling king postures for the ladies in court, with hands on hips, feet wide apart and head tilted at a debonair angle though in real battles, however, he proves himself to be a tad less brave than previously believed) 30 Qc7+ Ke8 31 Qb8+ Ke7 32 Qxb7+ Ke8 33 Rc8 mate ends the contest. Black has been busted for so long, that the delivery of checkmate almost feels like an anti-climax.

b) 28 … Rd7 hangs the queen to 29 Qxg7 when the black queen emits a soprano cry of lamentation.

c) 28 … Kc8 29 Qe8+ Kc7 and the white queen's stern prod with her forefinger into the black king's ribs to get his attention with 30 Qd8 mate.

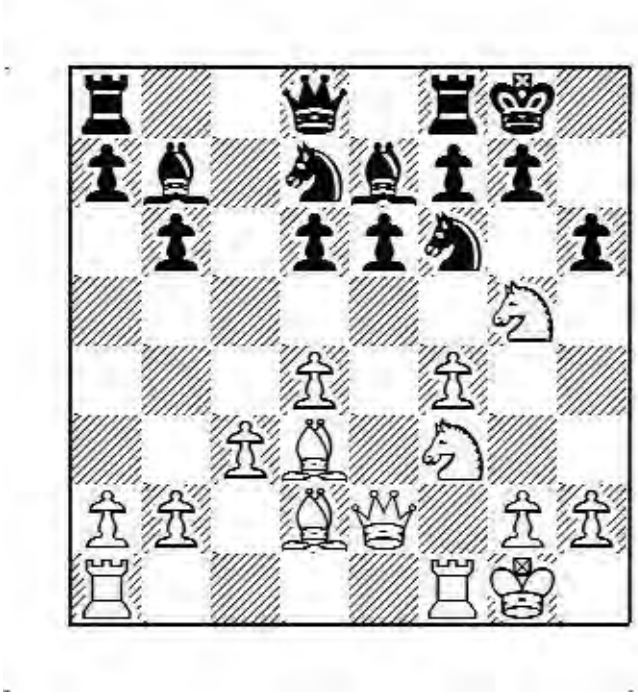
**Summary:** White can mix the Stonewall structure with the traditional queen's pawn early c4. Black's equalizing response seems to be an early … c7-c5 counter.

*Game 30*
**H.E.Bird-L.Paulsen**
Nuremberg 1883

**1 f4**

***Question*:** In all cases in this chapter, we only looked at the Stonewall line when Black played … d5. Is a Stonewall viable when Black's structure is unfixed and flexible?

***Answer*:** The Stonewall is still viable when Black's structure remains fluid, but it's a bit trickier for our side, because we keep guessing just if and when Black will engage a central pawn break. For example: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c3 c5 3 e3 e6 4 Bd3 b6 5 f4!? (the Stonewall is riskier for White with the unfixed structure) 5 … Bb7 6 Nf3 d6 7 0-0 Nbd7 8 Nbd2 Nd5?! (a waste of time) 9 Ne4 Be7 10 Qe2 cxd4 11 exd4 0-0 12 Bd2 N5f6 13 Neg5 (principle: *The side with extra space should avoid swaps if possible*) 13 … h6



14 Nh3 (I chickened out from speculative sacrifice 14 Nxe6!? Bxf3 15 Rxf3 fxe6 16 Qxe6+ Kh8 17 g4! d5 18 g5 Ne4 19 Bxe4 dxe4 20 Rg3 and *Houdini* claims White's attack is of more value than Black's extra piece) 14 … Re8 15 Rae1 e5!? (here comes the central break) 16 fxe5 Bxf3 17 Rxf3!? (17 Qxf3! dxe5 18 Nf2 favours White, who dominates the light squares and can build for a kingside attack) 17 … dxe5 18 Rg3? (instead, 18 Re3! Nd5 19 Rg3! and now if 19 … Bh4?? 20 Rxg7+! Kxg7 21 Qg4+ Kh8 22 Qh5 Qf6 23 Rf1 Nf4 24 Nxf4 exf4 25 Rxf4 Re1+ 26 Bf1 Qg5 27 Qxh4 Qxh4 28 Rxh4 White has too much material for the exchange) 18 … Kh8? (18 … exd4! 19 Bxh6 Bf8 20 Qf1 dxc3 and Black's extra pawn is worth more than White's attacking chances) 19 Re3? (19 Bc4! and if 19 … exd4? 20 Ng5! hxg5 21 Bxf7 with winning advantage for White) 19 … Nd5 20 Re4 N5f6 21 Re3 Nd5 22 Re4?!. Here we see a rather dismal example of your writer's nearly non-existent attacking skills. Now I got nervous and mistakenly took the repetition after 22 … N5f6, C.Lakdawala-K.Trujillo, San Diego (rapid) 2014. However, *Houdini* says White can still play for the win with 22 Rg3! and 22 … Bh4 can be met with 23 Rxg7! with a winning attack.

**1 … c5 2 Nf3 d5 3 e3 a6!?**

***Question*:** Why … a7-a6?

***Answer*:** For two reasons:

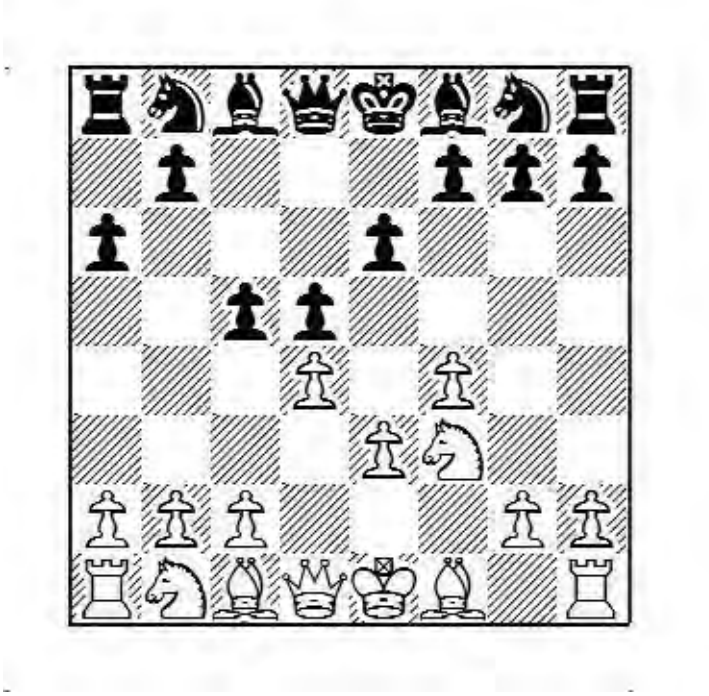
1. White is prevented from unloading his light-squared bishop with Bb5+, at a cost of time.

2. The … a7-a6 move may prove useful later if Black decides to expand on the queenside.

**4 d4**

Our founding father played both b3-versions and the Stonewall.

**4 … e6**



We reach a version where Black's light-squared bishop rests within the pawn chain.

**5 Bd3**

I would prefer 5 b3 before flicking in Bd3.

**5 … Nf6**

***Question*:** Should Black gain the tempo with 5 … c4?

***Answer*:** That's a tough call. On the one hand, … c5-c4 violates the principle of keeping the centre fluid, in case White later builds up an attack. On the other hand, the move gains a tempo. I would probably play … c5-c4 in this case.

**6 0-0**

6 b3! is once again a more accurate move.

**6 … Nc6 7 c3**

Okay, now White is insulated from … c5-c4, since his bishop can retreat to the c2-square.

**7 … Bd6 8 Ng5?!**

This erratic flailing falls wide, like blows lashed out by a raging blind man, unable to hit his enemy. Ah yes, the good old Romantic era folk. Henry Bird has the dubious distinction of having a minus score with his own opening (47%), and maybe the reason was due to this sort of moves! Of course, the other reason is that Bird mainly played in a stratified zone against the elite players of his day, and may still have scored below 50% had he tried other openings instead .

***Question*:** What is his last move all about?

***Answer*:** The mind of the 19th century chess master was a huffy entity, always trying to pick a fight. Obviously, White has better than this time-wasting idea. It would be wiser to keep ambitions on leash with the more conventional

continuation 8 Ne5 0-0 9 Nd2 and then build up a kingside assault.

**8 … cxd4?!**

As mentioned so many times in this book, this … cxd4 exchange is a century-old inaccuracy which only benefits White. His dark-squared bishop gets activated and his e-file has just been opened. I would play 8 … h6 9 Nf3 c4!? 10 Bc2 b5 and then think about castling long.

**9 exd4 Qc7 10 Qf3**

This move blocks a future Nf3. The e2-square was the more accurate one for the queen.

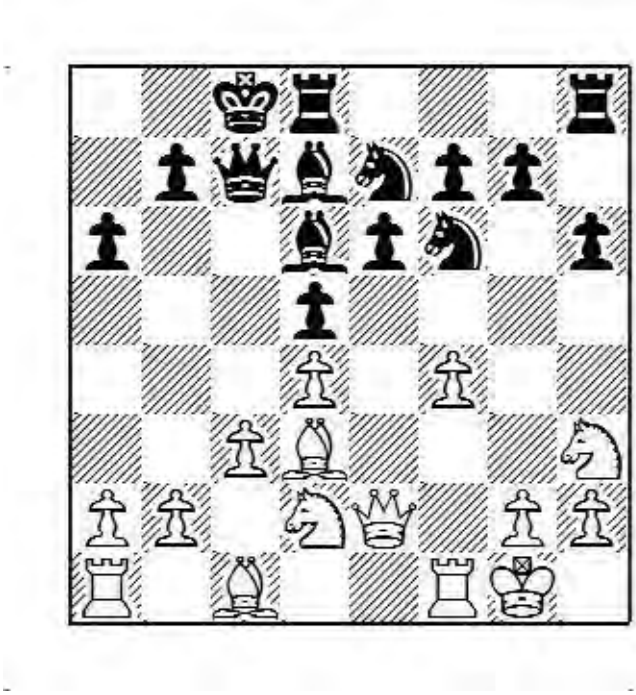
**10 … h6 11 Nh3 Bd7 12 Nd2 Ne7**

Bolstering the f5-square and perhaps menacing … Bb5.

**13 Qe2**

Preventing … Bb5.

**13 … 0-0-0?!**



***Question*:** Isn't Black's king more exposed on the queenside than the kingside?

***Answer*:** Black takes on an impossible task, the way a baseball outfielder tries to run down a ball which we, the spectators, can clearly see is way, way of out of mortal reach. Yes, this appears to be one of those "let's-tempt-fate" reactions. The decision may stem from the 19th century code of honour, where a gentleman never backs down from a duel. I think Black should indeed castle short. For example, after 13 … 0-0! 14 Nf3, Black can offer a pawn for the bishop pair and light square counterplay with 14 … Ne4!. Following 15 Bxe4 (15 Nf2 f5 and Black stands no worse) 15 … dxe4 16 Qxe4 Bc6 17 Qe1 b5, Black has full compensation for the pawn.

**14 a4**

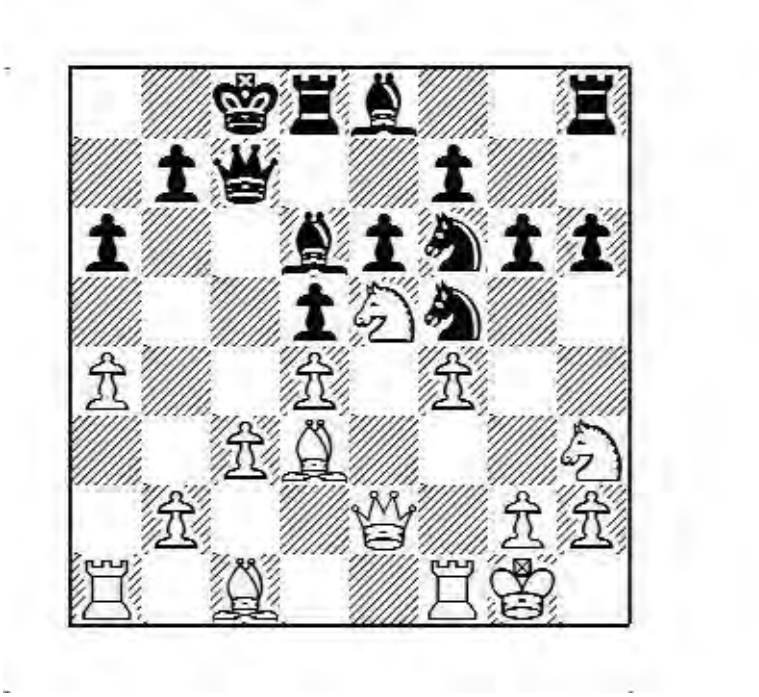
White prepares a pawn avalanche.

**14 … Nf5 15 Nf3 g6**

I don't understand this move, since White certainly wasn't threatening to swap on f5.

Instead, 15 … Kb8 was a more useful move for Black.

**16 Ne5 Be8**



**17 Bd2**

White should toss in 17 Nf2! to insulate himself from … Ne4 ideas.

**17 … Kb8 18 b4**

White's attack clearly rolls faster than Black's, although once again he should first toss in 18 Nf2! to suppress … Ne4! ideas.

**18 … Be7**

Intending … Nd6 and … Nfe4, but it's awfully slow. Black should offer the pawn for the bishop pair and light squares with 18 … Ne4! 19 Bxe4 dxe4 20 Qxe4 f6 21 Nd3 Bc6! 22 Qe2 (the careless 22 Qxe6?! Rhe8 23 Qxf6? Bd5 24 Rfe1 Rg8 25 Re5 Rdf8 results in a winning position for Black) 22 … Rhe8 with compensation for the pawn.

**19 b5 a5**

He has to close lines.

**20 Rab1**

Intending b5-b6.

**20 … Nd6?**

20 … b6! was necessary to prevent White's next move.

**21 b6!**

Isolating the a5-pawn which cannot be defended after an eventual c3-c4 push.

**21 … Qc8 22 Nf2 Nd7**

Of course the a4-pawn can't be touched, since it suicidally opens the a-file after 22 … Bxa4?? 23 Ra1 Be8 24 Rxa5 Nd7 25 Nxd7+ Qxd7 26 Rfa1 and it is curtains for Black.

**23 fxg4**

White seeks to trade a pair of knights before prising open the c-file. White can blow open the centre with the piece sacrifice 23 Nxg6!? fxg6 24 Qxe6:

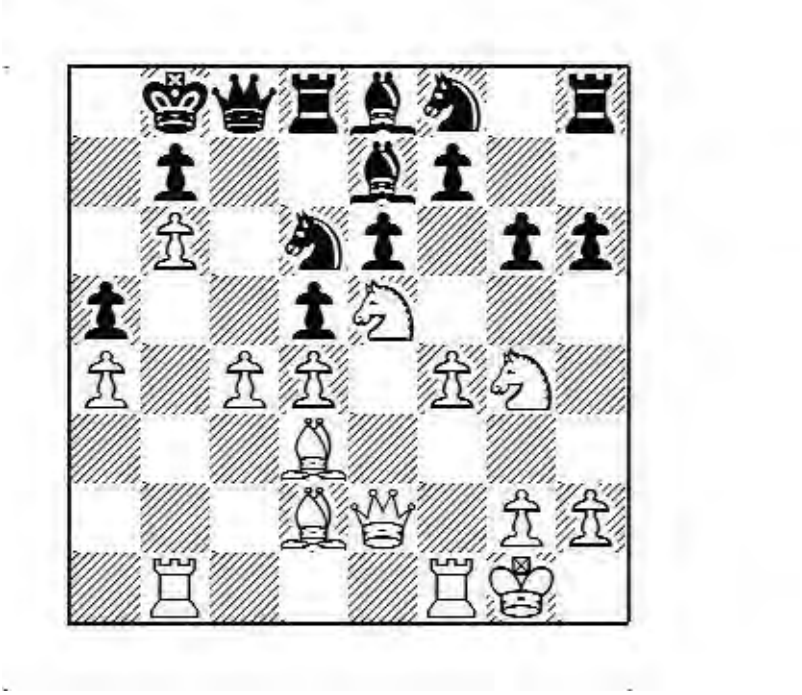
a) 24 … Bf8 25 Qxd5 Qc6 26 Qxa5 Nc8 27 c4 with a winning attack.

b) 24 … Nxb6! offers a more staunch defence after 25 Qxe7 Qc7 though White remains one clean pawn up.

**23 … Nf8?**

Such a passive response during opposite wing attacks is akin to suicide. Instead, 23 … Nxe5 24 fxe5 Ne4 may have been Black's final chance.

**24 c4!**



Multipurpose:

1. White's bishop attacks the a5-pawn.

2. The c-file may open, which may benefit White's attack.

3. White threatens to clamp down further with c4-c5.

**24 … h5**

Black won't survive 24 … dxc4 25 Rfc1.

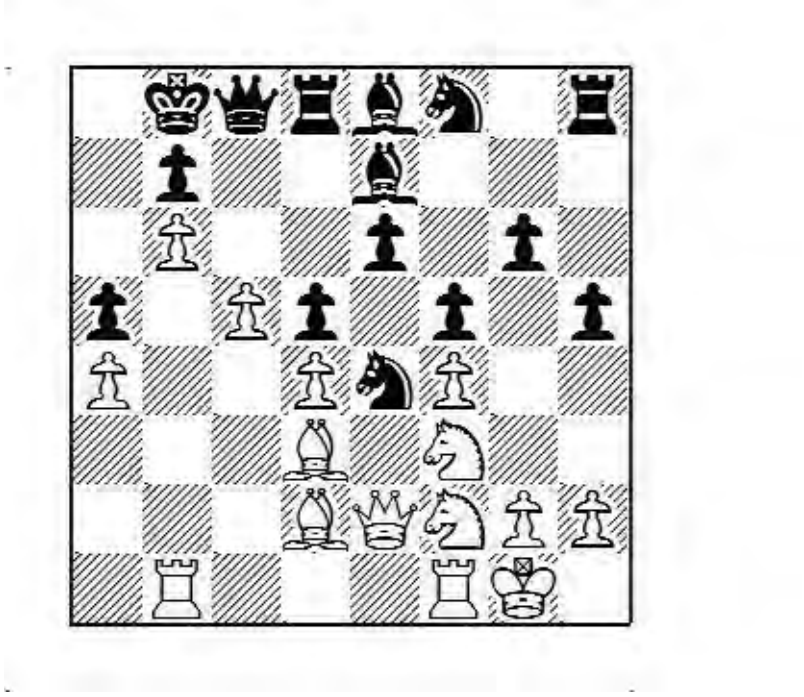
**25 c5 Ne4**

After 25 … hxg4 26 cxd6 Rxd6 27 Rfc1 Qd8 28 Bxa5 f6, now simplest is 29 Qc2 when the threat to invade down the seventh rank costs Black more than he can afford to pay.

**26 Nf2**

Preparing to trade off Black's best piece.

**26 … f6 27 Nf3 f5**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Work out a forced win for White.

**28 Bb5**

So crushing is White's position, that such inaccuracies only prolong the game, rather than throw away the win.

***Answer*:** Black is crushed if White's queen reaches the a5-square. All Bird had to do was clear the path with 28 Be3!, intending Qe1xa5 and Black collapses.

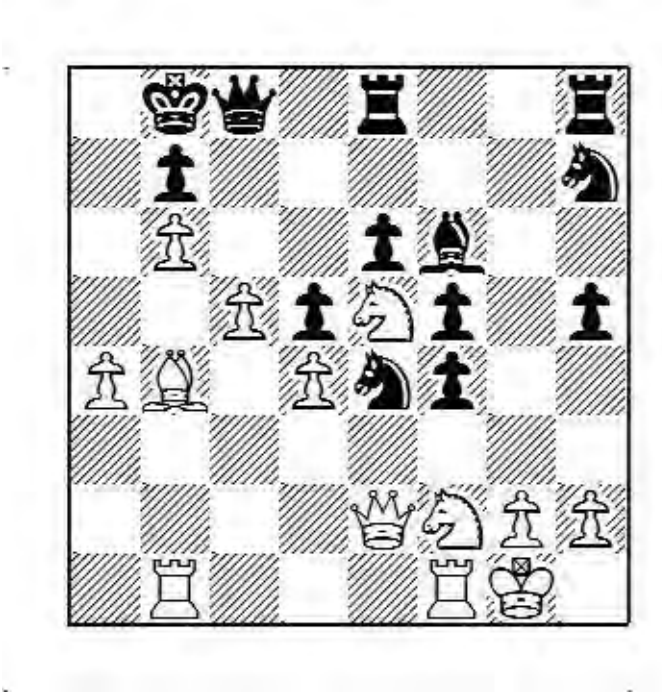
**28 … Bf6 29 Bxa5 Nh7**

Defenders jerk about in weaving erratic patterns, like water bugs bouncing on the pond water's surface.

**30 Bb4 g5 31 Bxe8 Rdxe8 32 Ne5**

Also decisive is 32 Qb5 Qc6 33 Nd3 Qxb5 34 axb5 and White's queenside pawns plus the open a-file will win the game for him.

**32 … gxf4**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White to play and force the win:

**33 Qb5?!**

Threat: Qa5-a7 with mate! But Black's king has time to escape. When seeking a forcing continuation, we strain our minds searching for jumbled fragments of half-remembered patterns which we hope will fit the puzzle. There is no need for cruel carnage when a precision strike will do.

***Answer*:** Bird missed the killing clearance 33 c6!:

a) 33 … bxc6 34 Nxe4 (removing a key defender of the d6-square) 34 … fxe4 35 Bd6+ Kb7 (35 … Ka8 36 b7+ mates) 36 a5 Qa8 37 a6+! Qxa6 38 Qxa6+ Kxa6 39 Ra1+ Kb7 40 Ra7+ Kxb6 41 Bc5+ Kb5 42 Rb1 is mate.

b) 33 … Bxe5 34 dxe5 Qxc6 35 Nxe4 fxe4 36 Bd6+ Ka8 37 Qd2 and there is no defence to the coming Qa5 mating idea.

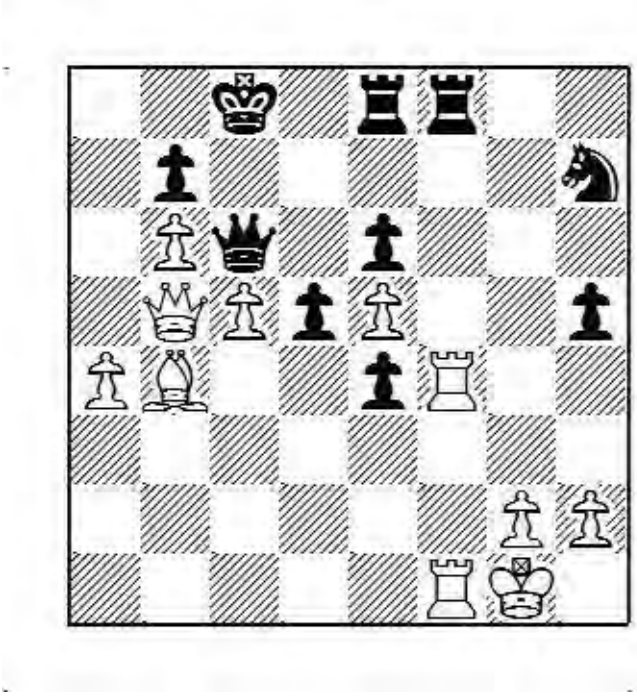
**33 … Bxe5 34 dxe5 Qc6?!**

After this mistake, Black's game continues to dissolve. Following 34 … Nhg5! 35 Nd3 (35 Qa5 Qc6 and Black's king is just fine) 35 … Qc6 36 Nxf4, White's advantage is far less than in the game continuation.

**35 Nxe4 fxe4**

The other recapture is also futile as 35 … dxe4 36 Qa5 Rd8 37 Qa7+ Kc8 38 Rfd1 Rd3 39 Qa8+ Kd7 40 Qxh8 wins for White.

**36 Rxf4 Rhf8 37 Rbf1 Kc8?**



Tingles of dread run up and down the king's spine, as he faces his accusers and regurgitates mouthfuls of lame excuses.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Menace is poised over the black king's head, ready to drop at a moment's notice. Black just blundered in a lost position. White to play and win:

***Answer*:** Double attack. White threatens both Rc7+ and Rxh7. This forces Black to swap queens, after which c5-c6 becomes a killing threat.

**38 Rf7! Rxf7 39 Rxf7 Qxb5**

The queen's hiccupping sobs do little to lighten the mood in Black's camp. This move allows White a crushing c6-push to which there is no defence.

**40 axb5 Nf8**

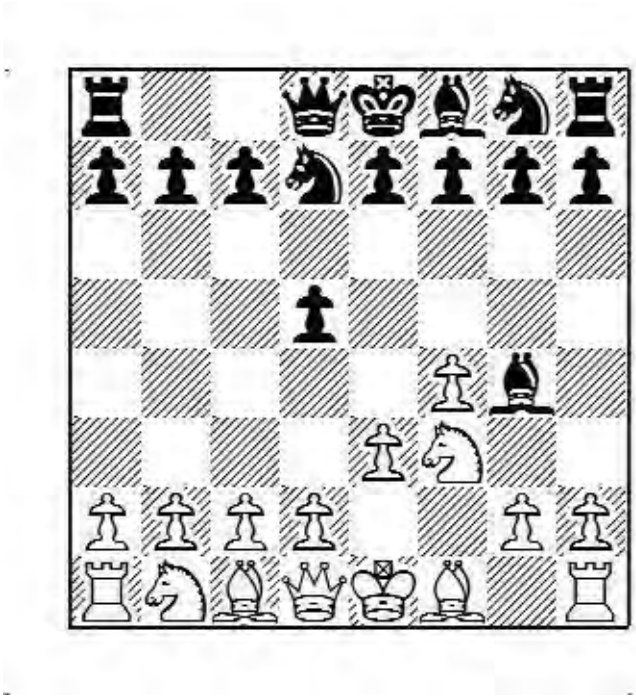
Also, 40 … Ng5 41 Rg7 alters nothing.

**41 c6 1-0**

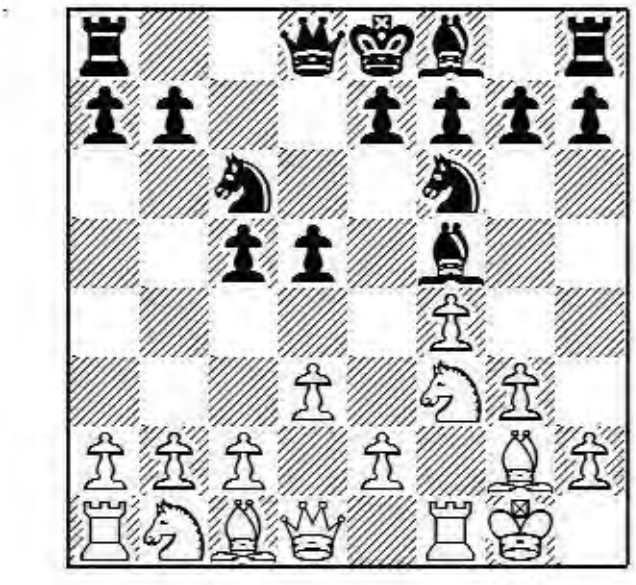
Black gives up without having to endure 41 … Ng6 42 cxb7+ Kb8 43 Bd6 mate! The bishop decides to circumvent etiquette by accosting his cousin and berating him publicly. "How absurd, the notion that a person of low birth is capable of besting one of noble birth," responds the king to the bishop, who knows something the king doesn't.

**Summary:** When Black plays an early … e7-e6 and keeps the light-squared bishop inside the pawn chain, I think White gets a slightly better version of the Stonewall.

# Chapter Five
# … Bg4 and … Bf5 Set-ups



In this chapter, we examine Black's very popular plan of an early … Bg4, … Bxf3, … Nd7 and … e5 (or sometimes just … e6, when Black rids him or herself of the bad bishop and then alters the structure to favour the remaining dark-squared bishop). We also look at … Bf5 Reversed London System (otherwise known as the New York System) ideas. With the … Bg4 idea, Black decides to grant his plan of freedom at any cost, an unconditional priority. Black's once cooped up light-squared bishop is the ambitious young man, trapped in a small, sleepy town, whose single goal in life is to earn enough money to escape his drab existence to live in the big city. A battle emerges between the subtle (our bishop pair) and the elemental (Black's instant freedom).



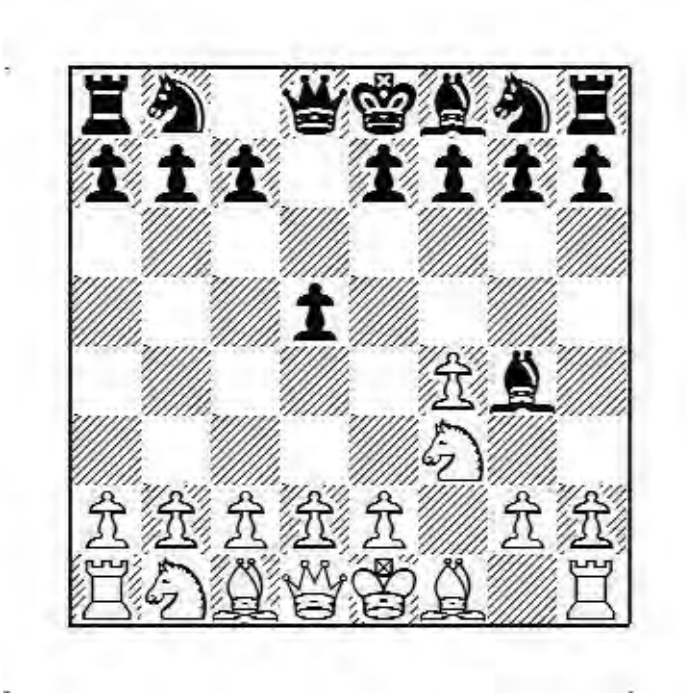
In the next diagram, we examine … Bf5 developmental plans, which are incarnations of the London System a move down. In such a placid-looking position, it is easy to be misled by outer appearances. The game tends to radically sharpen later on, since the players operate on opposite referents, with White generally playing for the e4-push, followed by a kingside attack, and Black seizing queenside space, generally playing for … c5-c4 breakthrough plans.

*Game 31*
**V.Kramnik-M.Oratovsky**
USSR 1990

**1 f4**

Legit at last. A World Champion-to-be uses the Bird's. With colossal talent comes colossal expectations. Either a prodigy lives up to it, or recedes into the sunset, getting closer and closer to the rest of us as he or she ages.

**1 … d5 2 Nf3 Bg4**



***Question*:** What are Black's ideas behind the early … Bg4?

***Answer*:** Black responds to our Bird's with a Reversed Trompowsky with the following ideas:

1) If White refuses to play e2-e3, then Black is generally happy to inflict minor damage to White's structure with … Bxf3.

2) … Bxf3 creates an immediate imbalance, sharpening the game.

3) White's f3-knight is key defender of the e5-square. If Black eliminates it, then he can play for … Nd7 and … e7-e5, with complete freedom as compensation for handing White the bishop pair.

**3 e3**

White's main move.

A look at other options:

***Question*:** Can't White gain a tempo with 3 Ne5?

***Answer*:** It's not much of a tempo gain, since White's knight is then left vulnerable to an … f7-f6 recoil.

a) After 3 Ne5:

a1) 3 … Bf5 With this, Black simply switches to a New York System formation. Following 4 c4 f6 5 Nf3 d4 6 Qb3!? Nc6!, we have a Reversed Trompowsky Vaganian Gambit. In this case Black gets excellent compensation after 7 Qxb7 Bd7 8 Qb3 e5 9 d3 (9 fxe5 fxe5 only helps Black, who just got an open f-file and f6-cleared for his knight and after 10 d3 Nf6 11 a3 Bc5 12 Nbd2 0-0 13 Qc2 a5, … e5-e4 is in the air with Black getting huge compensation for the pawn) 9 … Rb8 10 Qd1, V.Pogosian-M.Perunovic, Plovdiv 2012. Black already looks better after 10 … exf4 regaining the lost pawn, while retaining the development lead.

a2) Also possible is 3 … Bh5 intending … f7-f6 at some stage. Following 4 c4 f6 5 Nf3 c6 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 Qb3 Qd7 8 Nc3 e6 9 f5!?, T.Tuomala-J.Ahvenjarvi, Jyvaskyla 2011, Black looks no worse after 9 … Bf7 10 fxe6 Bxe6 11 Nd4 Bf7 12 e3 Nc6.

b) If you don't like to face the pawn-grab variation, 3 d4 is an option:

b1) 3 … e6 4 e3 (my childhood rival simply switches to a Stonewall) 4 … c5 5 c3 Nc6 6 Be2 Bxf3 (Black sticks to his plan and eliminates his bad bishop) 7 Bxf3 f5!? (now it's Stonewall versus Stonewall) 8 0-0 Nf6 with balanced chances, S.Barbeau-E.Rozentalis, Montreal 2011.

b2) 3 … Bxf3 4 exf3 e6 5 Be3 c6, D.Langier-C.Bulcourf, Buenos Aires 1995. Here I would continue 6 c3 Bd6 7 Bd3 Ne7 8 Qc2 g6 9 g3 Nd7 10 Nd2 with an even position.

**3 … Nd7**

Another benefit of this system is that it is easy to play Black, since he mindlessly plays for … e5, no matter how White responds (except when White switches to Stonewall with d2-d4).

**4 h3**

Apart from putting the question to the bishop, other options are:

a) 4 Be2, which is too passive for my tastes. This says a lot, since I play both Colle and London Systems as White! After 4 … Bxf3 5 Bxf3 Ngf6 6 b3 (I would probably switch to Stonewall with 6 d4!? to prevent Black's intended … e7-e5 freeing break) 6 … e5 7 fxe5 Nxe5 8 Bb2 Bd6 9 Nc3 c6 10 Qe2 Qe7, K.Chernyshov-P.Svidler, Voronezh 2003, if anyone stands better, it's Black with central control and total freedom of movement.

b) White can switch immediately to Stonewall with 4 d4 Ngf6 5 Bd3 e6 6 Nbd2 c5 7 c3 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Qe1 and 9 … Bf5! equalizes for Black, who either regains his lost tempo or swaps off White's best attacking piece, D.Koetsier-H.Galje, Almelo 2004. Instead, 9 … Bxf3 10 Rxf3 Re8 11 Rh3 cxd4 12 exd4 Qc7 13 Nf3 gives White the kind of attractive Stonewall attack we are after, J.Bergmann-M.Siepmann, Recklinghausen 1999.

**4 … Bxf3 5 Qxf3**

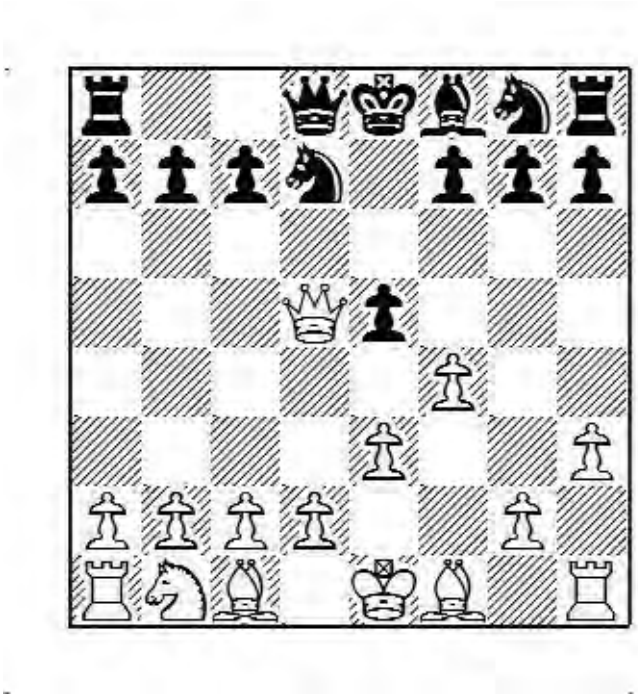
The queen gives the d5-pawn a lustful stare, the import of which isn't difficult to determine.

**5 … e5!?**

This move encourages crazy complications, with almost infinite permutations. No twelve-step anti-addiction program in the world is capable of holding back a natural attacker from a sacrifice as tempting as this one. We must pass through a ring of fire if we accept the pawn sacrifice. Black achieves maximum activity economy with a minimal investment of only one pawn. In the next couple of games, we will examine the more restrained 5 … Ngf6.

Back can also defend the d-pawn with 5 … c6. After 6 Nc3 e5 7 d3 (restraining … e5-e4) 7 … Bd6 8 Bd2 Ne7 9 0-0-0 Qc7 10 f5 0-0-0 11 g4 h6 12 Bg2. White has an edge due to the bishop pair. Here, Black got too ambitious with 12 … b5?! (when, oh when, will our opening achieve respect?) 13 Kb1 Nb6? (allowing White's next move, which inflicts damage to Black's structure) and White took over with 14 f6! gxf6 15 Qxf6 b4 16 Ne2 Na4 17 Qxf7 Qb6 18 Rhf1 Rd7 19 Qe6, C.Lakdawala-I.Yanvarjov, Internet (blitz) 2006. Black was busted, with no trace of attacking compensation for the pawn and his strategic disadvantages.

**6 Qxd5!?**



There is no verification procedure to such a pawn grab. You just take the pawn and pray for the best. The term "acceptance" is sometimes synonymous with "exasperated fatigue", but not this time. The queen views the d5-pawn as a rich country brimming with bounty, unguarded and just asking to be plundered by a powerful neighbour. White gambles that he can snatch this pawn and survive, mainly since his structure is unfixed, and so Black has a tough time focusing on a target.

***Question*:** Isn't this a bit greedy?

***Answer*:** Well, yes, I admit that with this move, we wholeheartedly embrace the Donald Trump philosophy that more is better (of course, we must factor in that Black also gets 'more' development). Our pawn grab (think of it as From's Gambit, Version 2.0, but not as favourable) stands up under comp analysis, but obviously a human defender faces numerous practical perils by being thrown on the defensive for many moves. White can also chicken out and get a

reasonable position with 6 d4:

a) 6 … e4 (this was played in every other game in my database) 7 Qf2, S.Schmidt Schaeffer-J.Fries Nielsen, Lund 2011. Here I would play 7 … c5 which is a theoretical novelty in the position. After 8 Nc3 (8 c3 gives White a rather uninspiring Stonewall formation) 8 … cxd4 9 exd4 Bb4 10 Bd2 Ngf6 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 g4, a sharp opposite wings attack position is obtained with approximately balanced chances.

b) I would actually go for the untested 6 … exd4!? to keep the e4-square open for potential occupation later on. Following 7 exd4 Ngf6 8 Bd3 Bd6 9 0-0 0-0 10 Nd2, now Black can try muddling it up with 10 … c5 when his development lead is enhanced.

**6 … Qh4+**

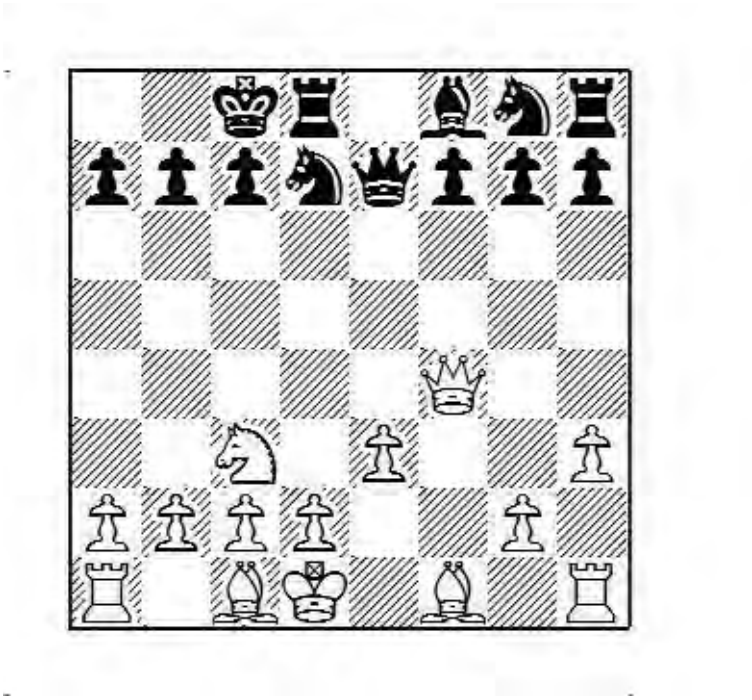
The queen spins White's king about with the centrifugal force of a county fair ride, disrupting our castling.

**7 Kd1 0-0-0 8 fxe5?!**

This is White's main move, but I actually think it's inaccurate:

a) 8 Qxf7? grabbing the second pawn pushes the greed-is-good strategy too far after 8 … Ngf6 with threats of … Ne4 and … Ng4, when White is just too far behind in development to expect to survive.

b) 8 Qf3! is a huge improvement to Kramnik's 8 fxe5, which opens the game further. Here, Black played 8 … exf4, T.Bohn-E.Etienne, Germany 2007. At this stage, no one has tried 9 Qxf4! Qe7 10 Nc3.



This is an important position for us, since White gets superior, tempi-up version of what Kramnik got in the game. The king is actually quite safe on the d1-square and can move off to c1 if necessary later.

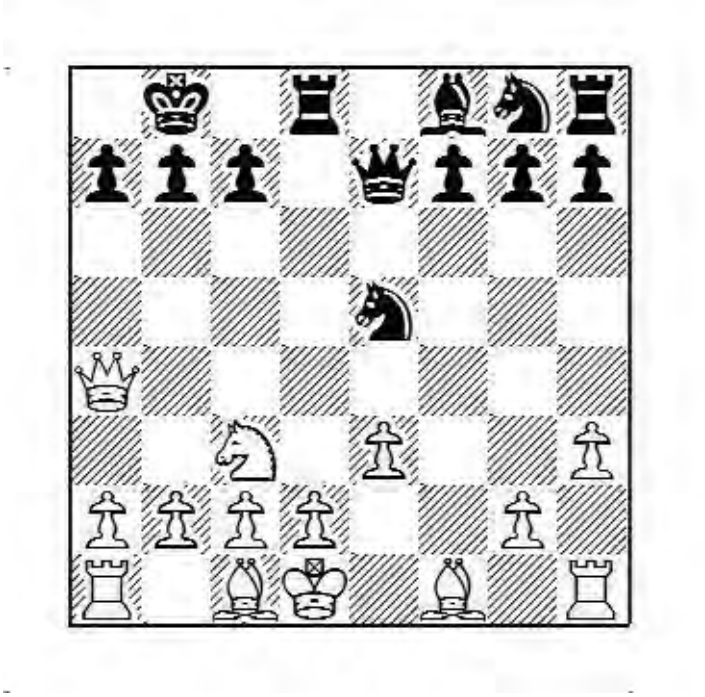
**8 … Qe7**

Covering the f7-pawn, while picking up the e5-one.

**9 Qa5**

Gaining a precious tempo.

**9 … Kb8 10 Nc3 Nxe5 11 Qa4!**



We observe the queen's mysterious back and forth swaying with that windshield-wiper look of spectators at a tennis match. This position is a product of deep compromise for our side. On the one hand, we are up a pawn with no readily available sacrificial targets for Black. On the other hand, we are way behind in development and Black has two open central lines. The position, evaluated around even by the comps, requires comp-like precision from our end. We must avoid the blunder 11 d3? Nc4 12 Qf5 Nxe3+ 13 Bxe3 Qxe3 and after the careless 14 Qxf7?, White will soon collapse following 14 Nf6 15 Be2 Bd6, due to the coming … Bf4.

**11 … h5**

Also very dangerous for our side is 11 … Nh6 planning … Nf5, after which White must watch both e3- and g3-squares. After 12 d3 (12 g4!? f5 is probably a bad idea for White, who allows unfavourable confrontation) 12 … Nf5 13 Qf4 (covering the g3- and e3-squares) 13 … g6! (no rest for the weary as … Bh6 is next) 14 g4 Bh6 15 Qf2 Nh4 16 e4 Bxc1 17 Kxc1 f5! (principle: *Open the game and create confrontation when leading in development*) 18 exf5 gxf5 19 gxf5 (*Houdini* gives the line 19 Kb1! Rhf8 20 Qe3 Rde8 21 Be2 Qf6 22 Qg3 f4 23 Qf2 f3 24 Bd1 Ng2 25 Ne4 Qf426 a3 Qe3 27 Rf1 Qh6 28 Qg3 Ne3 29 Re1 Qb6 30 Ka2 when White finally unravels. Even here, Black seems to have full compensation after 30 … N5c4! 31 Rb1 Nd6! 32 Bxf3 Nxc2 33 Rec1 Nd4 34 Nc5! (threat: Nd7+) 34 … Ka8 35 Bd1) 19 … Rhf8 20 Kb1, A.Hanegby-R.Pijl, correspondence 2001. Black looks slightly better after 20 … Nc4! 21 a3 Rxf5 22 Qe2 Re5 23 Ne4 Nd6 24 Ka2 Nxe4 25 dxe4 Rxe4 26 Qb5.

**12 d3**

Maybe White can get more ambitious with 12 d4!? which admittedly does allow … c7-c5 possibilities.

**12 … Rh6**

Activating the rook.

**13 Bd2 Rb6**

The rook provokes queenside pawn weakness.

**14 b3?!**

*Houdini* thinks this extracurricular project was better left undone, since it weakens the dark squares around White's king:

a) 14 Kc1! looks like an improvement. After 14 … g6 15 Qf4 Bh6, J.Smail-D.Hauser, correspondence 2008, White remains up the extra pawn after 16 Qf2 Rf6 17 Qe1 but the question of converting it remains a long, long way off. *Houdini* suggests 14 d4!? Nc6 15 a3! and if 15 … Rxb2?!, 16 Bb5 White menaces both Kc1 and also Bxc6, when Black is in trouble.

**14 … g6!**

Black prepares to develop his dark-squared bishop on the newly weakened a1-h8 diagonal, or perhaps on h6, targeting the e3-pawn.

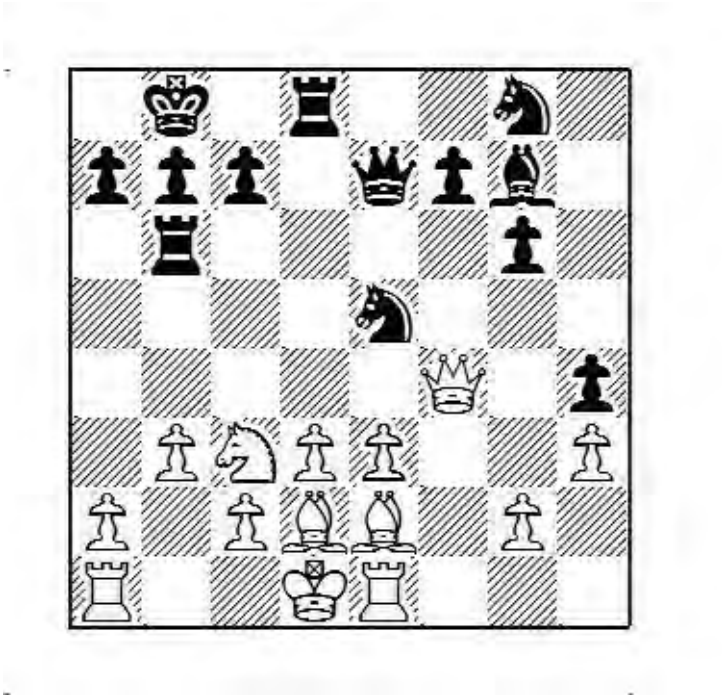
**15 Qf4**

"Boy, this is a tough way to make a living," thinks the queen of her thankless, minimum wage job of defending the e3-pawn.

**15 … Bg7**

*Houdini* suggests that Black applies more pressure with 15 … Bh6! 16 Qf2 Rf6 17 Qe2 Re6 18 g3 Nc6! 19 Bg2 Nd4 20 Qf2 Rf6 21 Qg1 Nf3 22 Bxf3 Rxf3 23 Kc1 when White must return the booty to survive. After 23 … Bxe3, Black regains the pawn and stands better.

**16 Be2 h4 17 Re1**



Kramnik manages to develop his kingside. The question arises: where will his king find a safe haven? The b2-square is certainly not all that tempting with the g7-bishop lurking, and the centre may be vulnerable to line opening sacrifices.

**17 … Rc6**

Threat: … Nxd3.

**18 d4**

White has to push at some point, but now he becomes vulnerable to future … c7-c5 line opening ideas. His choice is more aggressive and probably better than the meek 18 Rc1 after which White's king is boxed in the centre.

**18 … Rcd6**

Black cannot tarry with 18 … Nh6 19 Kc1 Nf5 20 Kb2 Ng3 21 Rad1 as White manages to complete his development.

**19 Kc1**

White's king won't be such an easy target with so many burly security guards flanking him. Kramnik decides it's high time to leave the middle. *Houdini* at this stage begins to prefer White's position.

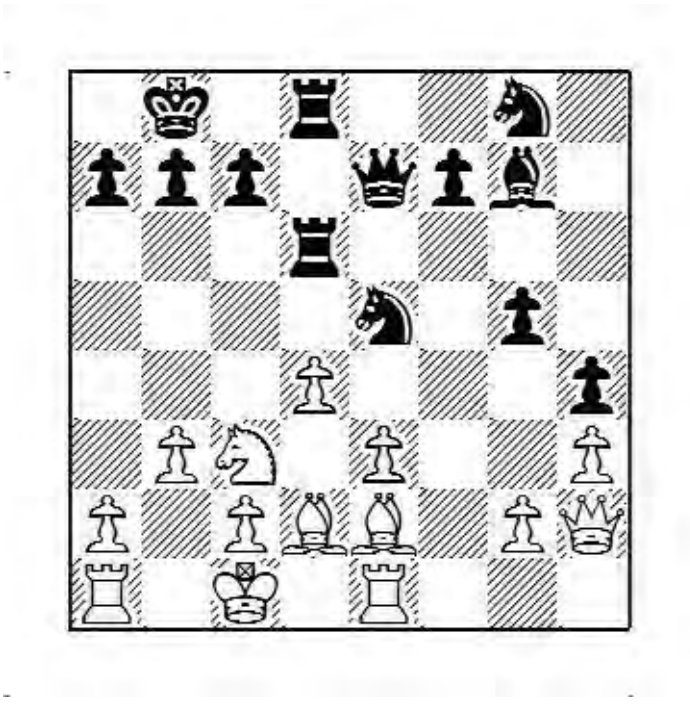
**19 … g5!?**

I'm not so sure this impulsive move helps Black's cause. Perhaps more prudent would be 19 … Bh6 20 Qf2 c5 21 Ne4 cxd4 22 Nxd6 Qxd6 23 Kb2 Bg7:

a) White can go for complications with 24 exd4 Nd3+ 25 Bxd3 Bxd4+ 26 Qxd4 Qxd4+ 27 Bc3. After murdering her sister, Black's queen now faces her ghost. Suddenly, White has rook and bishop for the queen and possesses the initiative. *Houdini* rates the position at even, while I would rather have White's position.

b) Otherwise, after 24 c3!? d3 25 Bd1 Qb6 26 Qxh4 Rc8, Black retains a scary-looking initiative for the material sacrificed.

**20 Qh2!**



"When it comes to evasion, I am matchless in both cunning and craft," boasts the queen, who continues to remain clear of all assassination attempts. The queen remains on the h2-b8 diagonal, discouraging … c7-c5. Following 20 Qf2 c5 21 Ne4 cxd4 22 Bb4 dxe3 23 Qxe3 Nc6 24 Bxd6+ Rxd6 25 Bc4 Bxa1 26 Nxd6 Qxd6 27 Qe8+ Nd8 28 Rd1 Bb2+ 29 Kxb2 Qxd1 30 Bd3 Kc8 31 Qxg8 Qd2 32 Qe8 Qf4, the ending is close to even,

yet White may benefit from the bishop versus knight with opposite wing majorities.

**20 … f5**

***Question*:** Can't Black play 20 … c5!? anyway?

***Answer*:** The move is a lot trickier for Black with White's queen looming on the h2-b8 diagonal. After 21 Nb5 cxd4 22 exd4 Rxd4 23 Nxd4 Rxd4 24 Bd3 Qd6 25 Kb1 Nxd3 26 Qxd6+ Rxd6 27 cxd3 Bxa1 28 Kxa1 Rg6 29 Kb2, White looks a shade better in the ending, due to the bishop versus knight imbalance.

**21 Kb2 c5!?**

Otherwise White completes his queenside development and consolidates his extra pawn.

**22 Nb5 a6!?**

White is doing well with the other options:

a) 22 … R6d7 23 Bc3 cxd4 24 exd4 a6 25 Bf3 axb5 26 Rxe5! Bxe5 27 Qxe5+ Qxe5 28 dxe5 Re7 29 Re1 and White has full compensation for the exchange, with a nasty looking extra passed e-pawn.

b) 22 … cxd4 23 exd4 Rxd4! 24 Bc3! (24 Nxd4? Rxd4 25 Bc3 Qc7! 26 Bf3 Re4! and Black threatens … Nd3+! which with a winning attack) 24 … Rf4 25 Qg1 Nc6 26 Rad1 and White stands better as he completes his development.

**23 Nxd6 Qxd6**

Threatening a cheapo.

**24 Rh1**

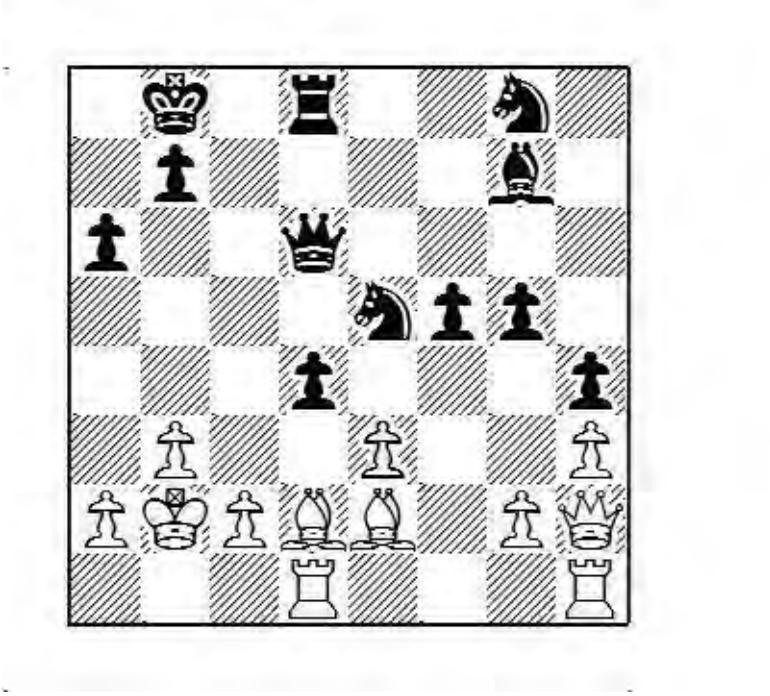
Giving protection to White's loose queen. It is easy to mess things up:

a) 24 c3?? hangs the queen to 24 … Nc4+.

b) 24 Kb1 cxd4 25 Rd1 Rc8 and Black has a dangerous attack brewing while threatening … Rxc2, followed by … d4-d3+.

**24 … cxd4 25 Rad1?**

White had to try 25 c3! d3 26 Bf3 Nf6 27 Raf1 with some advantage to Black, whose dominating position outweighs White's extra exchange.



White makes a seductive yet flawed detour, veering from the correct path.

***Exercise (critical decision)*:** We sense that White's game, packed with a generous sprinkling of weaknesses, is about to collapse. Black has a choice between the forcing 25 … d3, opening the a1-h8 diagonal for Black's bishop, or the calmer 25 … Ka8, getting his own king off the h2-b8 diagonal. One move wins, while the other allows the advantage to swing in White's direction. Which one would you play?

**25 … Ka8?**

The geometry is arranged in patterns of alien symbolism, just out of both players' grasp. This is no time for defence. The advantage swings back to White after this error.

***Answer*:** Black wins with 25 … d3! The d-pawn continues to surge, the way six-year-old plummets down a water theme park slide. This move raises White's fear of encroachment around his king. After 26 Bc3 (26 cxd3?? hangs the queen to 26 … Nf3+) 26 … Rc8!, there is no good defence to the coming … Rxc3.

**26 Kb1**

Also, after 26 exd4! Qxd4+ 27 c3 Qe4 28 Bf3! Nxf3 29 gxf3 Qc6 (covering against Qc7) 30 Qe2, White retains good chances to consolidate.

**26 … Nf6?**

Instead, 26 … Rc8! keeps Black in the game.

**27 exd4 Ne4**

Not 27 … Qxd4?? as it loses instantly to 28 Ba5.

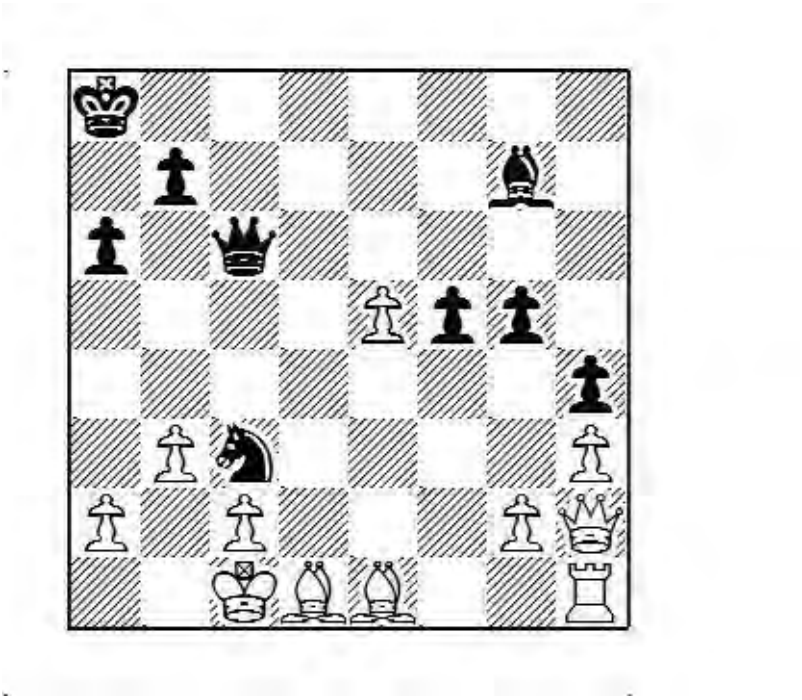
**28 Be1!**

The clearest continuation. Now White either wins material or forces a queen swap.

**28 … Qc6 29 dxe5?!**

Kramnik misses 29 c3!! and if 29 … Nxc3+ 30 Bxc3 Qxc3 31 dxe5 Rxd1+ 32 Rxd1 Bxe5, it looks like White is in trouble, with dual attacks of … Qb2 mate and … Bxh2, but everything is under control as 33 Rd8+ Ka7 34 Qg1+ b6 35 Rd7+ wins for White.

**29 … Rxd1+ 30 Bxd1 Nc3+ 31 Kc1!**



The careless 31 Bxc3?? Qxc3 leaves White helpless against the coming … Bxe5.

***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Black must strike and either make his mark, or fail trying. Black, although down a full rook, remains okay if he discovers the correct move. His choices: a) 31 … Nxa2+, grabbing a pawn with check. b) 31 … Qc5, threatening to open the a1-h8 diagonal with … Bxe5 next. Which one should he play?

**31 … Nxa2+??**

The consequences of this blunder cannot be edited away. Black coughs politely to get the white king's attention, but by doing so he traps his own knight, which in turn, ends his attack.

***Answer*:** The game remains even after the correct 31 … Qc5! as it is critical for Black to play … Bxe5, opening the diagonal. After this move, the pall of misery which hung over Black lifts miraculously. Following 32 Bxc3 (32 Qg1!? is exceedingly dangerous for White, who may even lose after 32 … Nxa2+ 33 Kd2 Qd5+ 34 Ke2 Bxe5 with threats everywhere and a nightmarishly powerful attack. *Houdini* rates the position at dead even) 32 … Qxc3 33 Qg1 Bxe5 34 Bf3 Bf4+ 35 Kb1 Be5, the game is drawn.

**32 Kb2**

At last, a breath of aesthetic relief in an otherwise error-plagued game. The knight is trapped and Black has no mate.

**32 … Qc5 33 Kxa2**

Kramnik seizes the tiny remaining portion of his opponent's happiness and makes it disappear.

**33 … Bxe5 34 Qg1 Bd4 35 Qf1 1-0**

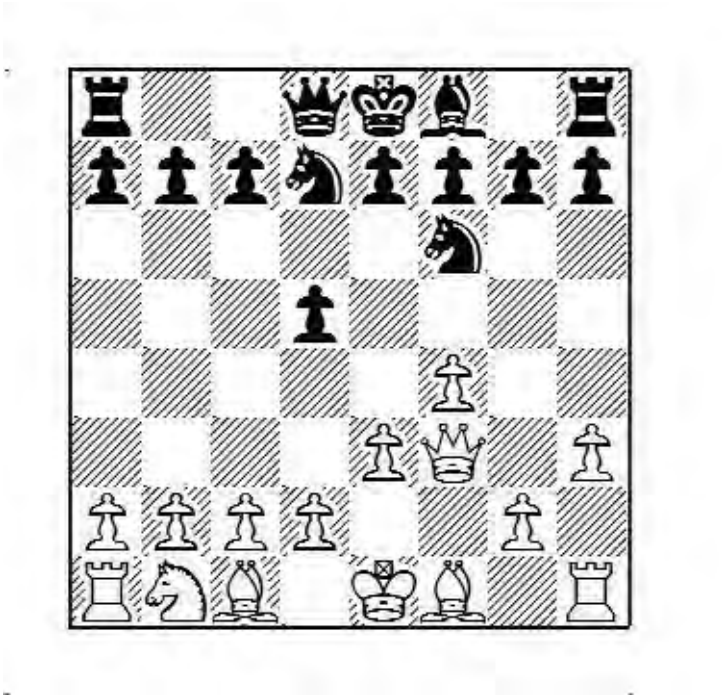
Black's confused queen and bishop, having been denied their prey, cock their heads in dog-like disbelief. All the critical squares (c3, c2, a5 and a3) are all covered and Black's attack is at an end.

**Summary:** Black's pawn sacrifice 5 … e5!? is probably sound. I suggest we practice the acceptance lines against our computers, since we must be supremely prepared if we eat the pawn and hope to survive Black's coming initiative. With

the pawn grab, we edge forward to the lip of destruction, yet (hopefully!) refuse to jump. If your cardiologist bans you from this pawn grab line, then you can play 6 d4, with an even Stonewall structure, or even dodge the entire line with 3 d4. Also, the improvement 8 Qf3! allows White a superior version of the pawn grab line than what Kramnik got in the game.

*Game 32*
**H.Danielsen-O.Salmensuu**
Koge Open 1997

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 Bg4 3 e3 Nd7 4 h3 Bxf3 5 Qxf3 Ngf6**



No pawn sacrifice this time. Black sensibly protects the d5-pawn, while preparing … e7-e5.

**6 Nc3**

In Game 33, we will look at the immediate 6 g4! which may be an improvement over 6 Nc3.

**6 … e6**

***Question*:** Why does Black suppress his … e7-e5 break

when he can play 6 … c6 preparing … e7-e5 next?

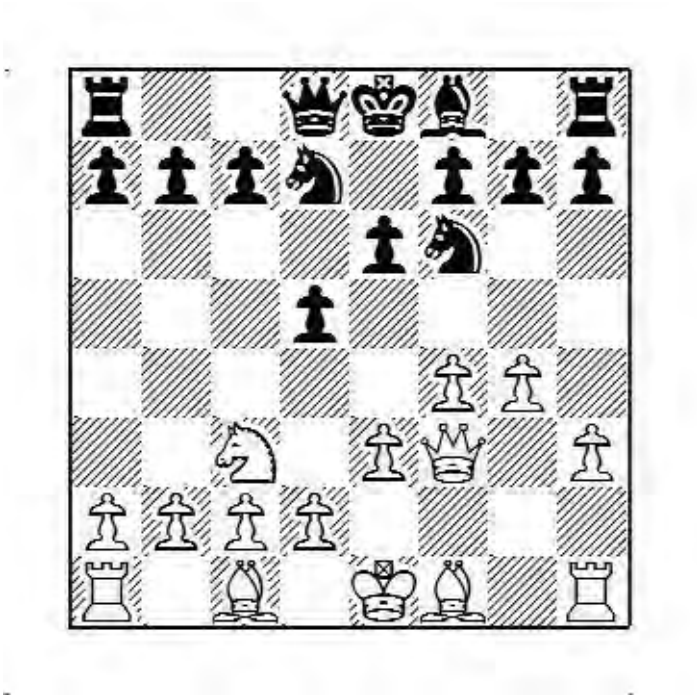
***Answer*:** The reason is that White can simply play7 d4! denying Black the opportunity. White has a nice looking Stonewall, with the bishop pair and control over the e4-square. After 7 … e6 8 Bd3 g6 (after 8 … c5 9 0-0 Qb6, White can speculate with 10 g4!? cxd4 11 exd4 Qxd4+? 12 Kh1! with a development lead for the pawn, the bishop pair and a potential attack against Black's king, whichever side it chooses to go) 9 Ne2 Bg7 10 0-0 0-0 11 c3 c5 12 Rf2 cxd4 13 exd4 Nb6 14 g4 Nc8 15 Ng3 Nd6 16 f5, White got the kind of Stonewall position we are all after, T.Bohn-R.Steinbrecht, Germany 2004.

***Question*:** Can Black sacrifice his d-pawn like in the previous game with 6 … e5?

***Answer*:** This is an inferior version to last game's sacrifice, since White gets to swap off an extra pair of pieces after

7 Nxd5 Nxd5 8 Qxd5 Qh4+ 9 Kd1 0-0-0, C.Lakdawala-"zhugu", Internet (blitz) 2014. I don't believe in Black's compensation after 10 fxe5!. Chess is a confusing game. In the previous game, I gave Kramnik's fxe5 a dubious mark, and this game, with just a slight shift, the same idea gets an exclam! Following 10 … Qe7 11 d4! Nxe5 12 Qe4 Qd6 13 c3 Kb8 14 Kc2, White unravels and I don't believe Black gets any compensation for the pawn.

**7 g4!**



The once coiled serpent slowly raises its head, its interest stirred by potential prey. GM Danielsen isn't one to engage in drifting, agenda-less play, hoping the opponent takes action first. This aggressive bayonet move is by far White's best move in the position, but as mentioned earlier, I think it's even more effective a move earlier (and we will examine that in the next game).

***Question*:** What are some of the ideas behind the g4-bayonet thrust?

***Answer*:**

1. White gains kingside space, making kingside castling exceedingly risky for Black.

2. White threatens to gain time with g4-g5 next, sending Black's knight back to g8.

**7 … Bb4!**

Black's best response.

**8 g5 Ng8?!**

A new move and not such a good one. It's a cheaper knockoff of the real plan, the way hospitals give you lime Jello and call it "dessert." Black should avoid this meek retreat and go for the principled 8 … Bxc3! handing White both bishops. After 9 bxc3 Ne4 10 d3!? (a risky decision but attacks tend to be conducted in regret-less fashion, simply because after a point of strategic no return, there is no choice but to push forward; 10 c4 is sounder and about equal after 10 … c6) 10 … Nd6?! (Black should take up the challenge with 10 … Nxc3! and perhaps Nimzowitsch intended to sacrifice a pawn with 11 Bd2!? Na4 12 Rb1 Ndb6 13 Bg2 with some compensation due to the bishop pair, space plus

development lead though I would take Black's weakness-free side, if given a choice) 11 c4 c6 (11 … dxc4 12 Bb2 0-0 13 dxc4 Nc5 14 0-0-0 Qe8 15 e4!? is double-edged and level, according to *Houdini*) 12 e4?! (this move is too weakening) 12 … dxe4 13 dxe4 f5 (the advantage swings to Black after 13 … Nc5!) 14 exf5 Qa5+?! (the knight or pawn recapture on f5 would have kept Black in the game) 15 Bd2 Qxf5 16 0-0-0 0-0-0 17 Bc3 Ne8?! 18 h4 and White's bishops overpowered the knights in this open position, A.Nimzowitsch-H.Kmoch, Kecskemet 1927.

**9 d3**

White should deny his opponent … Bxc3 with 9 Ne2! Ne7 10 a3 Ba5 11 b3 with an edge since Black will be hesitant to castle short. Now if 11 … Nf5 (11 … c5 12 Bb2 forces kingside castling and after 12 … 0-0 13 h4, the position looks promising for White) 12 h4 c6 13 Bh3 Qe7 14 Bb2 Rg8 15 Bxf5 exf5 16 Nd4 g6 17 0-0-0 h5 is coming and White retains a nagging strategic edge.

**9 … c6**

Worthy of consideration is 9 … Bxc3+!. As a Trompowsky player, I'm always quick to hand over bishops for knights, if doing so damages the opponent's structure. Both sides underestimate the white knight's potential. After 10 bxc3 Ne7, the position is sharp and about even. I wouldn't mind taking Black here.

**10 Bd2**

Now White stands better, with the bishop pair, kingside space and the potential to play for an e4-break.

**10 … h6!?**

I would leave the kingside alone and just develop the knight to e7.

**11 h4 h5!? 12 a3 Bd6 13 Ne2!**

***Question*:** Why an exclamation mark for this knight retreat?

***Answer*:** The move clears the c3-square for White's bishop and prepares to transfer the knight to g3, after which Black may have to weaken his kingside dark squares with … g7-g6 to hang on to his h5-pawn.

**13 … Ne7**

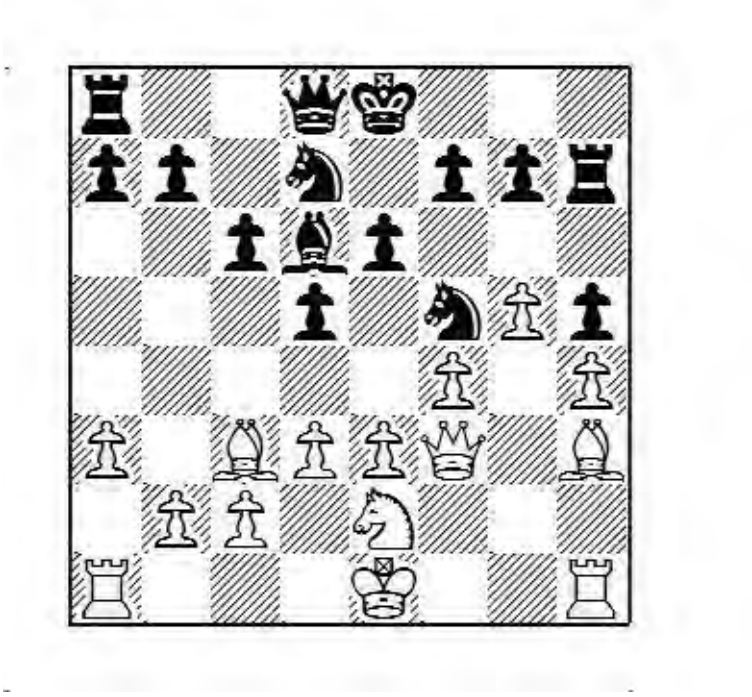
Not 13 … e5? 14 Bh3 Ne7 15 Bc3 Qc7 16 0-0-0 and Black is in deep trouble, since he can't castle on either wing.

**14 Bc3 Rh7**

Awkward, but 14 … e5? 15 Bh3 is even worse, as pointed out in the above note.

**15 Bh3 Nf5?**

Necessary was 15 … Qb6, with a still playable position.



***Exercise (planning/combination alert)*:** The last move was incorrect and Danielsen's sharp tactical eye spots an irregularity. Come up with a plan to exploit it, and Black's position comes apart, the way chicken bones do after stewing in the pot for too long.

***Answer*:** Step 1: Chop the offending f5-knight.

**16 Bxf5! exf5**

Step 2: Hit hard with a central counter.

**17 e4!**

This powerful shot creates a concentric disturbance in Black's camp, creating agitated ripples.

**17 … fxe4**

Also, 17 … Nb6 18 exf5 Qd7 19 f6 leaves Black in a hopeless position as well.

**18 dxe4 Nb6**

Most definitely not 18 … dxe4?? which hangs a rook to 19 Qxe4+ Qe7 20 Qxh7. When we get out-calculated, we feel ripped off, much the way the Indians must have felt when the Quaker Oats hat-wearing early settlers swapped a few worthless trinkets for eternal rights to Manhattan Island in the 1600s.

**19 exd5 cxd5**

Once again, Black must keep a watchful eye out for the Qe4+ cheapo. Most definitely not 19 … Nxd5?? 20 Qe4+ Qe7 21 Qxh7 Nxf4 22 Rh2 0-0-0 23 Qf5+ Kb8 24 Bxg7 Re8 25 0-0-0! and White wins.

**20 Qd3!**

Danielsen mercilessly exploits the awkward rook's position.

**20 … g6 21 f5! Kd7**

Attempting to generate counterplay from this wasteland is about as effective as trying to rouse a corpse with an offer of a cup of coffee. The king is relegated to a dreary purgatorial existence on d7. In this case, it is redundant for the annotator to state the obvious by typing "desperation". After 21 … Qe7 22 0-0-0 0-0-0 23 Bf6, Black can resign. "Oh, no! Not the 'wages of sin' sermon again," thinks Black's queen, as she sees the bishop enter the room and walk in her direction.

**22 a4**

Simpler and stronger is 22 0-0-0.

**22 … Qe8**

Covering the g6-pawn is the last of Black's troubles. Also hopeless is 22 … Kc7 23 0-0-0.

**23 a5 Nc4 24 Qxd5 Rc8 25 Qxb7+**

Black's Job-like king supplicates White's queen in the attitude of Charlton Heston negotiating with God on the Mount. "I have been sorely tested in the fires of God's suffering," he thinks, with a dismal sigh.

**25 … Rc7 26 Qb5+ Rc6 27 Rh3!**

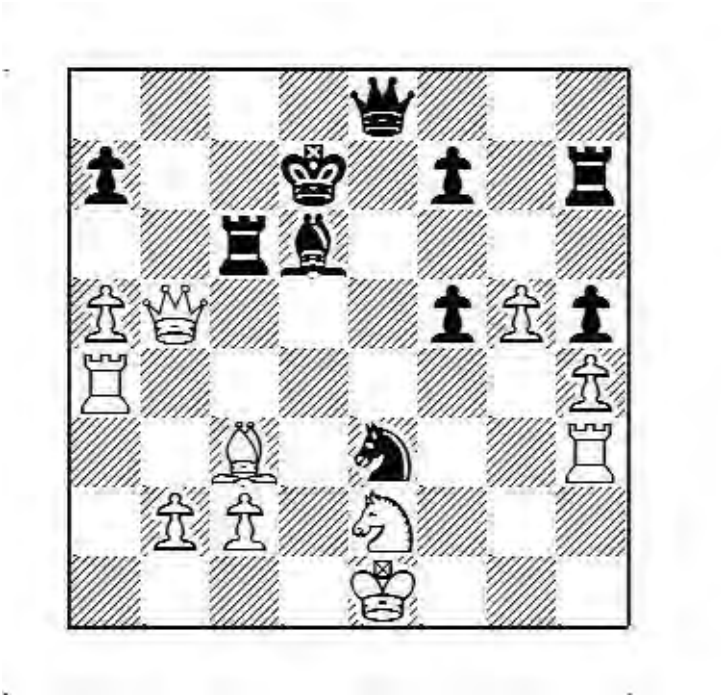
Alertly covering against … Qe3 and … Bg3+ ideas, while adding Rd3 to the black king's worries.

**27 … Ne3 28 Ra4!?**

Attackers encircle Black's king, the way vultures close in on the wounded animal. A simpler way to keep the edge is 28 Qd3 Nxf5 29 0-0-0.

**28 … gxf5**

Also, 28 … Nxf5 29 Rc4 Qc8 30 Rd3 Qa6 31 Qxa6 Rxa6 32 Nd4 leaves Black completely busted, since his h7-rook isn't exactly carrying his share of the workload.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White has access to two

methods of winning material here. Find one of them.

**29 Qd3!**

Attacking the e3-knight and the f5-pawn, while … f5-f4 is prevented since it hangs the h7-rook. White attackers conduct a cruel vivisection on the h7-rook, now helplessly strapped down and under the knife.

**29 … f4!?**

Hey, I said "while … f5-f4 is prevented since it hangs the h7-rook!" Of course everything else loses as well, since 29 … Ng4 30 Qxf5+ picks up the h7-rook all the same.

**30 Qxh7**

"Unintelligent people offer value to society, since the non-stupid have a point of reference of what not to do," the obnoxious queen lectures Black's rook. The remainder only requires a perfunctory level of care from White to bring home the point.

**30 … Qe6 31 Rxe3**

The rich can afford to be generous as Black's last active piece gets eliminated.

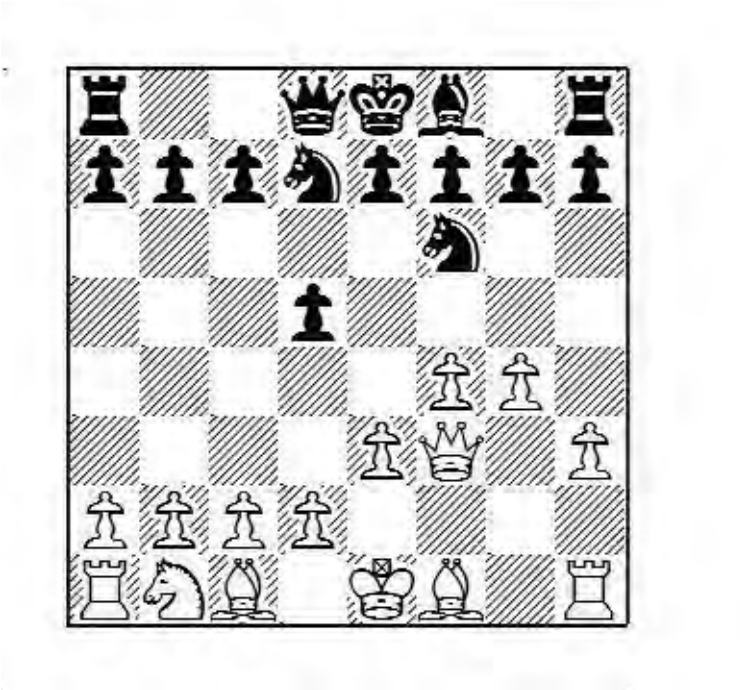
**31 … Qxe3 32 Re4 1-0**

The rook raises his hand, as if seconding his queen's motion.

**Summary:** 6 Nc3, intending g2-g4 is a dangerous idea for Black, but even better is to omit Nc3 and play 6 g4! as Danielsen demonstrates in the following game.

*Game 33*
**H.Danielsen-T.Luther**
Petermaennchen GM Tournament, Schwerin 1999

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 Bg4 3 e3 Nd7 4 h3 Bxf3 5 Qxf3 Ngf6 6 g4!**



Obsessions, like muscle spasms, have a way of returning, whether we want them to or not. Here is the g4-move, this time in its improved, bug-free version 2.0. White decides to embark on a perilous journey into an uncharted wasteland. 6 g4! is a new move at the time

and possibly an improvement over 6 Nc3 in Game 32.

***Question*:** What is so great about this move?

***Answer*:** By holding back on Nc3, White denies Black his main source of counter in … Bb4! and … Bxc3. In essence, we remove Black's most effective plan in the position, while threatening g4-g5, gaining move space and kicking Black's knight.

**6 … e6**

Black can still play for … e7-e5 but at a cost: a loss of time after g4-g5. After 6 … c6 7 Nc3 e5 8 g5 (and there is our time-gainer) 8 … e4 9 Qg2 Ng8, W.Dean-F.Toumani, correspondence 1996. Now White can play 10 b3 Qa5 (intending to rob White of the bishop pair after … Ba3) 11 a4! 0-0-0 12 Bb2 Ne7 13 h4, when White's bishop pair gives him an edge.

**7 d3!**

Denying Black the … Bb4 pin, while contemplating g4-g5. White scored nine out of ten from this position in my database. 7 Nc3 Bb4! transposes to the Nimzowitsch-Kmoch game we looked at in the notes to the previous game, where Black looks okay.

**7 … Bb4+?!**

The bishop strikes everyone as a talentless poser, trying too hard to establish his reputation in court. I think this move, which only benefits White, is the beginning of Black's future difficulties. Later, we discover a kind of parallax error of perception in this decision but at this stage, the move admittedly looks tempting.

Instead, 7 … c6 may be Black's best. After 8 Nc3:

a) 8 … Bb4 9 Bd2 avoids the … Bxc3/ bxc3 pawn structure and White stands clearly better here.

***Question*:** You have been saying all along that White's entire

strategy is to avoid the … Bb4 pin, yet can't Black now do just that?

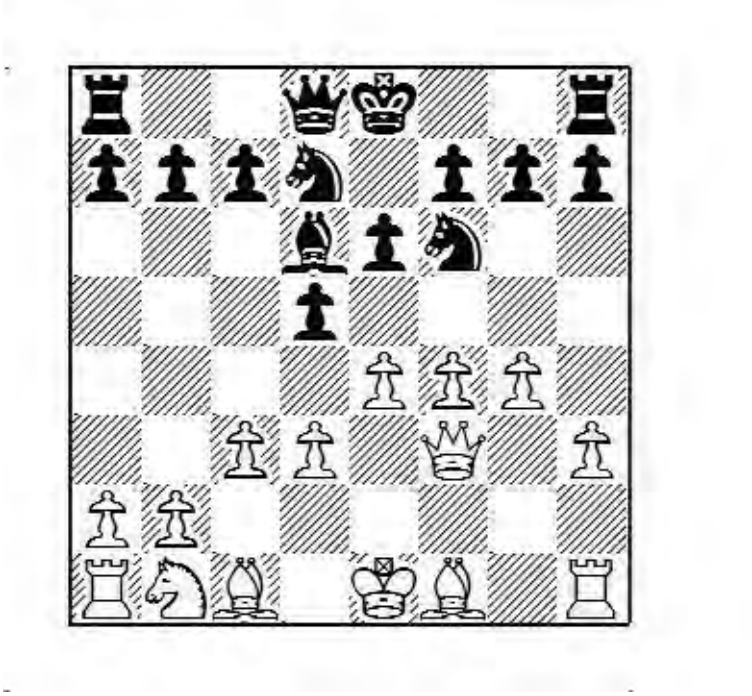
***Answer*:** It's not so much the pin that White wants to avoid. It's … Bxc3+, bxc3 structure-damaging exchange which is the problem.

b) 8 … Qb6 and if Black now plays 9 Bg2 g6 10 0-0 0-0-0, W.Oaker-J.Garcia Gil, correspondence 2006, White's position looks slightly more promising if he continues with the plan Rb1, Bd2 and b2-b4. Black lacks an easy way to get at White's king on the other side of the board and will have to search for a counterplay inducing central counter.

**8 c3!**

White avoids Nc3 and Black's bishop has to make a pin-less retreat.

**8 … Bd6 9 e4!**



White begins to sketch barely visible outlines of his coming idea (that his lag in development doesn't matter!), which remains a distance from fruition.

***Question*:** Isn't White violating the principles: *Don't open the*

*game or create confrontation while lagging in development?*

***Answer*:** Greys are so much more confusing than Black or White. Correct, yet Danielsen realizes the position is an anomaly. Black has no good way to exploit his development lead, since he can only open one file without any meaningful effect on White's position, since he lacks entry points. Meanwhile:

1. White continues to annex territory at a rate which would warm the heart of dictators worldwide.

2. White's bishops awaken with the coming of the e2-e4 advance.

**9 … dxe4 10 dxe4 e5!?**

I wouldn't have played this move. This is simply the exchange of one strategic disability for another. GM Luther decides he must challenge White's gigantic centre with a stake of his own, but in doing so, he weakens his light squares. When we desperately search for counterplay when none exists, we become like homeless people, sifting and rummaging through a dumpster, seeking an item of value in a trash heap. Black's last move further weakened his light squares. To be fair, even going into desperation mode with 10 … Ng8!? might be insufficient. After 11 e5 Qh4+ 12 Kd1 Bc5 13 Qxb7!, White shamelessly grabs a pawn when grossly behind in development - and then gets away with the crime! Following 13 … Rb8 14 Qf3 Ne7 15 Nd2 0-0 16 Ne4 a5 17 Kc2, I don't see any compensation for the pawn, since it is White who still owns space and the bishop pair, while retaining a relatively safe king. If Black attempts to exploit his developmental lead by opening with 17 … f6?, he pays for it after 18 Bc4 Rb6 19 Rd1 Nd5 20 Bxd5 exd5 21 Rxd5 when Black loses material.

**11 g5**

Sending Black's knight to purgatorial non-existence on g8, reducing Black's development lead in the process.

**11 … Ng8**

The knight, attempting to walk, plops on its bottom, in toddlerish motion.

**12 f5**

Principle: *Close the position when behind in development*. White also increases his already alarmingly large kingside space advantage.

**12 … h6!?**

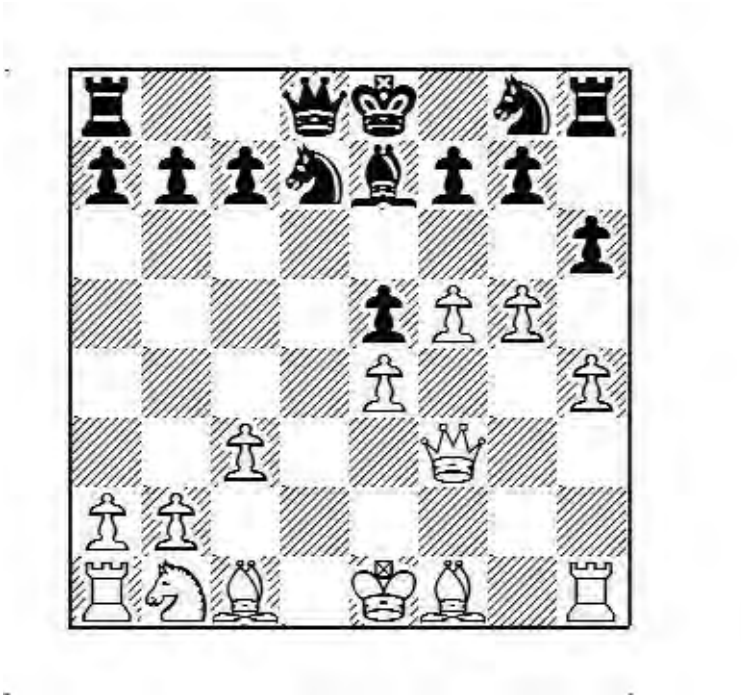
If Black just sits around without confrontation, White's space and bishop pair will squeeze him.

**13 h4**

Keeping the kingside pawn-roller intact.

**13 … Be7?**

Necessary was 13 … Qe7 intending to castle long, when Black still had a playable game.



Now Black's greatest forebodings are realized.

***Exercise (planning)*:** Black's intent is to create confrontation

while leading in development. How did White cross this plan?

***Answer***: Pin/interference.

**14 Qh5!!**

"Others can sometimes see flaws in us which we ourselves are blind to," White's queen tells her e8-brother. Threat: Bc4. A wide savannah of prey-opportunity lies on the a2-g8 diagonal. IM Tim Taylor writes: "Immobilizing Black's entire position with a key pin of

the h6-pawn (the f7-pawn is monitored, too). White is practically winning, in defiance of every beginner's book that says develop your minor pieces and not your queen!"

**14 … Nb6**

Better was 14 … Bc5 meeting Bc4 with … Qe7.

**15 Be3**

Danielsen finally decides to develop a piece other than his queen. The comp points out that even stronger is 15 f6! when all options are unpalatable:

a) 15 … Bxf6? 16 gxf6 Qxf6 17 Be3 is completely unsound for Black.

b) 15 … gxf6?? 16 g6! with decisive material gain to follow.

c) 15 … Bf8 16 Be3 Qd7 17 Nd2 gxf6 18 0-0-0 Bg7 19 gxf6 Nxf6 20 Qxe5+ Qe7 21 Qf5 Qe6 22 Qxe6+ fxe6 23 Bh3 e5 24 Rhg1 Bf8 25 Rdf1 Be7 26 Rg6 when Black is completely busted.

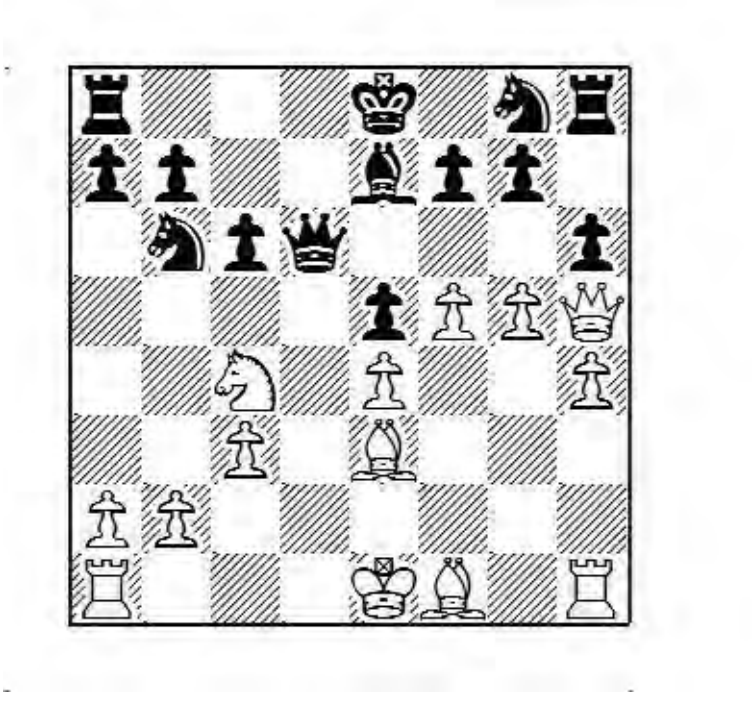
**15 … Qd6 16 Na3**

Worrying Black about Nb5 tricks in case he castles long.

**16 … c6**

The disruptive 16 … g6 may have been Black's last prayer. However, he isn't likely to save the game after 17 Qf3 hxg5 18 Rd1 g4 19 Qxg4 gxf5 20 Qxf5 Qf6 21 Nb5 Kf8 22 Nxc7 Qxf5 23 exf5 Rxh4 24 Rxh4 Bxh4+ 25 Ke2 Rc8 26 Nb5 Nc4 27 Rd7 when White picks up queenside pawns.

**17 Nc4!**



White's roguish knight looks upon his goody-two-shoes b6-adversary in much the same fashion Rhett Butler viewed the saintly Ashley Wilkes in *Gone with the Wind*. White eliminates Black's best defensive piece, the b6-knight and develops his bishop to hit the powerful a2-g8 diagonal at a go.

**17 … Nxc4**

Now the f7-pawn falls. In any case, after 17 … Qc7 18 0-0-0 Rd8 19 Rxd8+ Bxd8 20 Nxb6 axb6 21 Bc4 b5 22 Be6! Now if 22 … Kf8 23 Bc5+ Ke8 24 Rd1, Black is completely paralyzed and can resign.

**18 Bxc4**

"When I pass from this earthly existence, I will sit at God's right hand," declares the bishop, as he gives himself airs. Amazingly, it is now Black who lags in development, and the white queen and bishop are completely in sync, as if Siamese twin tennis players competing in a doubles championship.

**18 … 0-0-0**

Black's king has a "catch-me-if-you-can" expression on his face.

**19 Rh2!**

"Suddenly it becomes clear that Black is quite lost. White intends Rd2, swapping Black's one, active, rook, when the rest of Black's pieces remain trapped on the kingside," writes GM Tony Kosten. Less accurate is 19 Bxf7, since the 19 … Qd3 double attack hits the e3-bishop and the e4-pawn.

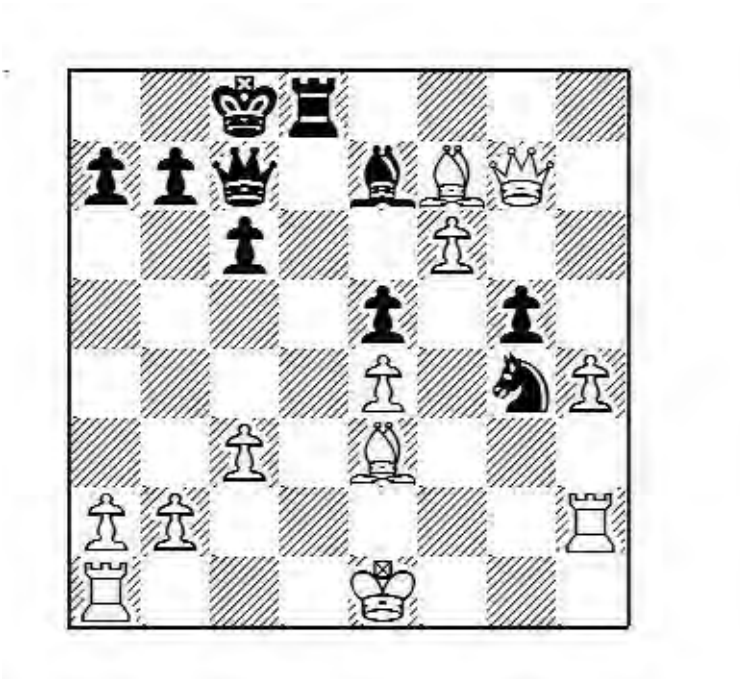
**19 … Qc7**

Black gives away the f7-pawn as a kind of bribe, but as we all understand, money tossed about doesn't always expunge past strategic misconduct. Following 19 … f6 20 Be6+ Kb8 21 Rd2 Qc7 22 0-0-0 Rxd2 23 Rxd2, Black can resign since there is no reasonable defence to either e8- or d7- infiltrations.

**20 Bxf7 hxg5!?**

The intoxicated h6-subaltern flubs it while on guard duty. The interest on Black's debt continues to compound, as he refuses to capitulate quietly. This desperate attempt to muck up the game, fails. Calmer play also loses without a fight. For example, after 20 … Rd3 21 Qe2 Qd8 22 Bc4 Rd6 23 Bc5 Rd7 24 Bxa7 hxg5 25 hxg5 Rxh2 26 Qxh2 Bxg5 27 Qxe5, Black can resign.

**21 Qxh8 Nh6 22 Qxg7 Ng4 23 f6! 1-0**

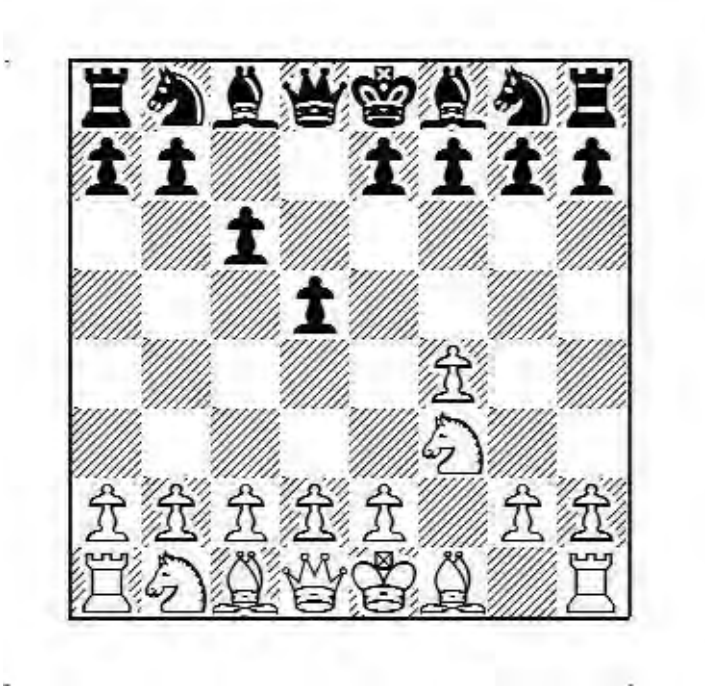


Black's position resembles a college dorm on Sunday mornings, in the terrible wake of an all-Saturday night party. White mops up after 23 … Nxe3 24 Be6+ Kb8 25 fxe7 Re8 26 hxg5.

**Summary:** 6 g4! looks like an improvement over last game's 6 Nc3, mainly since it denies Black the early … Bb4! and … Bxc3! plan.

*Game 34*
**M.L.Grunberg-G.Jiroveanu**
Revelion Open, Romania 1999

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 c6**



Black covers the d5-pawn and keeps White guessing about … Bg4 or … Bf5. Tournament praxis has seen the immediate 2 … Bf5 3 g3 Nf6 4 Bg2 e6 5 0-0 Be7 and now White makes room for her queen on e2, intending d2-d3, Qe2, Nbd2 and e3-e4 with 6 e3. We can also achieve our e4-break by engaging our Chapter Two Qe1-plan with 6 d3 h6 7 Qe1 0-0 8 Nc3 Bh7 9 e4. After 6 … 0-0 7 d3 c5, we get a version of the London System versus our Reversed Leningrad, with Black's c-pawn on c5, rather than c6. Following 8 Qe2 Nc6 9 Nbd2 (9 Nc3 is maybe more accurate, intending to meet 9 … d4 with 10 e4) 9 … h6 (9 … c4! is annoying for White after 10 dxc4 Bxc2 11 cxd5 exd5 when Black achieves a pleasant isolani position) 10 c3 Qc7 11 e4 dxe4 12 dxe4 Bh7 13 e5 Nd5 14 Ne4 a6 15 c4 Nb6 16 b3 Nc8 17 Bb2, A.Muzychuk-E.Tairova, Heraklio 2004, White has a strategic and spatial advantage.

**3 g3**

Note that from Games 34 to 38, we will look at … Bf5 and … Bg4 versions versus the Reversed Leningrad formation.

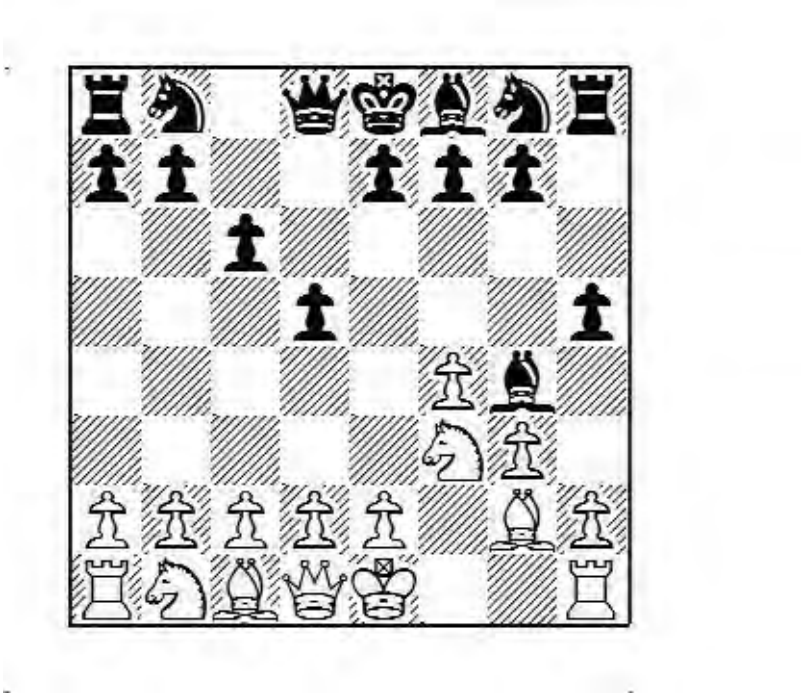
***Question*:** What if we are Classical or Stonewall players and commit to 3 e3?

***Answer*:** Let's take a look:

a) 3 … Bg4 4 h3 Bxf3 5 Qxf3 Nd7 (preparing … e5, which we won't allow) 6 d4 Ngf6 7 Bd3 and White attains an excellent version of the Stonewall, with the bishop pair and control over the e4-square, S.Schmidt Schaeffer-S.Prudlo, Berlin 2007.

b) 3 … Bf5 (Black plays the New York System version) 4 d3 e6 5 g3 (White slowly prepares the e4-push) 5 … Nd7 6 h3 h5 7 Bg2 Ngf6 8 Nc3 Bb4, M.Jendrian-F.Mertens, Internet (blitz) 2004. At this point, I would play 9 Bd2 intending Qe2, and then castle the opposite wing of whichever way Black's king chooses to go, with a very sharp position which I believe is in White's favour.

**3 … Bg4 4 Bg2 h5!?**



This is one of Black's best scoring lines, but I'm not sure it should be.

***Question*:** What is Black's idea?

***Answer*:** I think Black wants our side to get nervous about castling kingside, since then we must calculate … Bxf3, followed by … h5-h4 ideas. More normal is 4 … Nd7 5 0-0 Bxf3 6 Bxf3 e5 7 d3 Ngf6 8 Nc3 Qc7 9 e4 dxe4 10 Nxe4 Nxe4 11 Bxe4 Bd6?! (11 … exf4 12 Bxf4 Bd6 13 Bd2 0-0 is about even, although I still would take White if given a choice) 12 f5?! (*Houdini* gives White a solid plus after 12 fxe5! Nxe5 13 d4 Ng6 14 c3 0-0-0 15 Bd2 h5 16 Qf3) 12 … 0-0-0 13 Bg5 f6 14 Be3 Nc5 15 Qf3 Nxe4 16 Qxe4 with a level position, C.Lakdawala-D.Kopec, Internet (blitz) 2014.

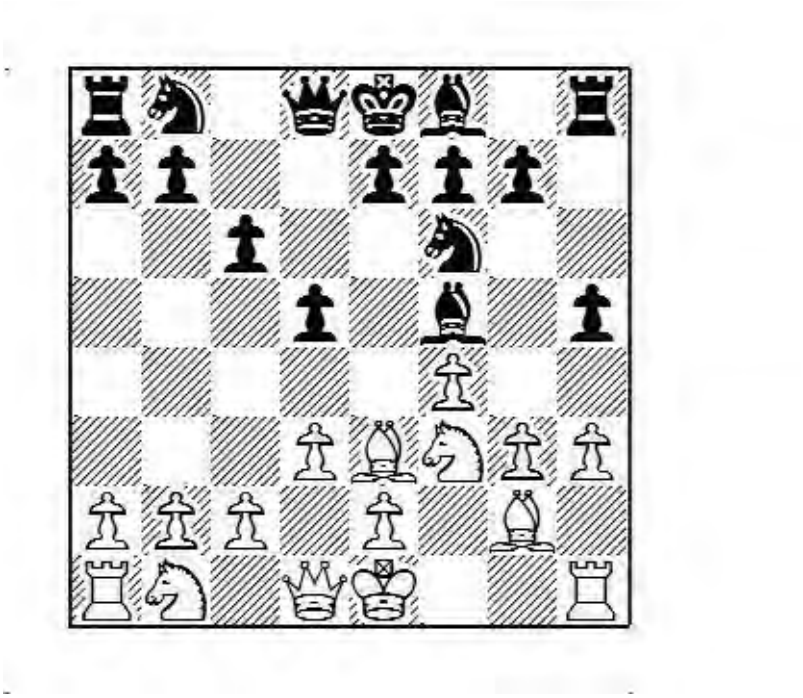
**5 h3**

Also interesting is 5 d3 with the idea of making Black to take on f3 without the tempo-wasting h3-move, or to follow up with Nbd2, after which we can recapture with the d2-knight and retain control over the e5-square. Following 5 … Nd7 6 Nbd2 Nh6 (eyeing the e3-hole, but we don't give Black's knight a chance to play to f5) 7 e4 (White can also try the risky 7 h3!? Nf5 8 Nf1 Bxf3 9 Bxf3 h4 10 g4 Ng3 11 Nxg3 hxg3 12 Kf1 e5 13 Qe1 Bd6 14 Qxg3 Qc7 15 fxe5 Nxe5 16 Qf2 when Black has compensation for the pawn) 7 … h4, E.Bricard-N.Mitkov, Mulhouse 2004, I prefer to play White's side after 8 h3 Bxf3 9 Qxf3 hxg3 10 Qxg3 e6 11 Nb3 Be7 12 0-0 and White's king is safe enough, despite the open h-file for Black. Also, White owns the bishop pair and central space.

**5 … Bf5!?**

Black hopes to exploit the recent weakening of White's kingside. More thematic would be to continue with the plan and trade minor pieces with 5 … Bxf3 6 Bxf3 Nd7 7 d3 (I would consider a Stonewall/Leningrad hybrid here with 7 d4!? (clamping down on the e5-square) 7 … Nh6 8 g4!? e6 9 e3 Qh4+ 10 Ke2 0-0-0 11 Bd2 with mutual chances) 7 … e5 8 Nc3!? (8 e4 dxe4 9 Bxe4 Ngf6 10 Qe2 is a little wimpy for White and about even) 8 … Bd6 9 e4 exf4 10 exd5 (10 gxf4 Qh4+ 11 Ke2 Bxf4 12 exd5 Ne7 13 dxc6 Nxc6 14 Bxc6 bxc6 15 Bxf4 Qxf4 16 Qd2 is also about even) 10 … fxg3 11 dxc6 bxc6 12 Bxc6 Rc8 13 Bg2 with an unclear position which *Houdini* rates around even.

**6 d3 Nf6 7 Be3!?**



***Question*:** What is the idea behind this move?

***Answer*:** First, it prevents … Qb6. Secondly, White intends Bf2, covering his weakest point, the g3-pawn, while making his king safer to castle short. There is really nothing wrong with our normal plan 7 0-0 followed by Qe1, Nbd2 (or Nc3 and e2-e4).

**7 … Qc8?!**

Black prevents his opponent from castling, at the high cost of congesting development. More natural is 7 … e6 8 Nbd2 Nbd7 9 0-0 Bd6 10 Qe1 Qe7 11 Bf2 Bc5 12 e4 dxe4 13 dxe4 Bg6 14 a3. I still prefer White due to the extra central space, but Black looks solid and can castle on either wing.

**8 Bf2 g6?!**

This is also unnatural and doesn't fit well with the structure since Black will remain passive after White achieves the e4-push. Better was 8 … e6.

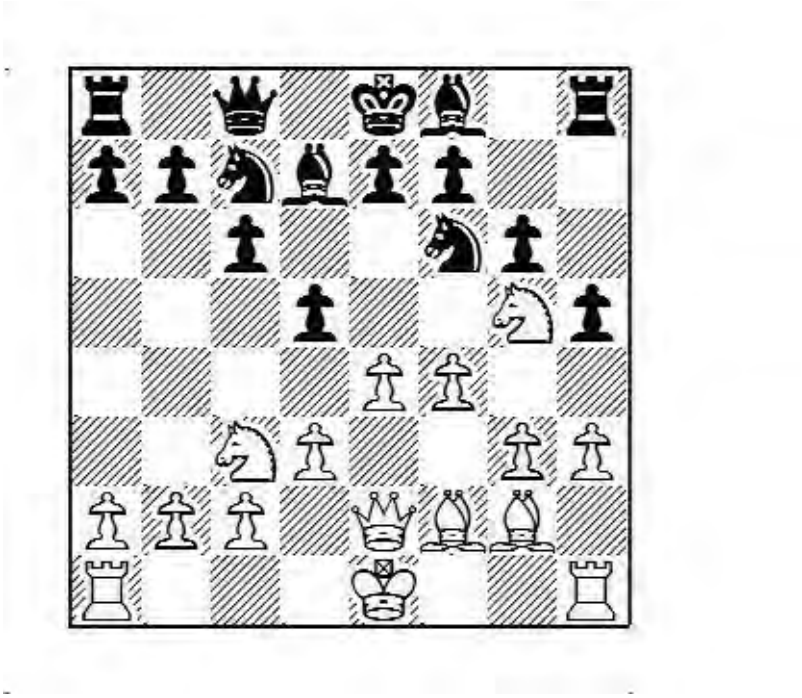
**9 Nc3 Na6 10 Ng5!**

Black will be in full retreat mode when White achieves e2-e4.

**10 … Nc7**

Anticipating White's next move, Black reinforces the d5-pawn.

**11 e4 Bd7 12 Qe2**



Here we have a tale of two positions, one pristine and harmonious, the other in the throes of contortion. The opening has gone badly for Black:

1. White controls the lion's share of central space.

2. Black's king won't be safe on the kingside or queenside; or in the centre, for that matter.

3. Black's pieces sprawl in ungainly fashion, on artificial squares.

**12 … Bg7 13 Bf3**

***Question*:** Why is White avoiding e4-e5, which gains more space?

***Answer*:** The pawn push will release the central tension and lock the centre, giving Black some relief:

a) The premature 13 e5?! Ng8 actually helps Black, who just got handed control over key light squares on f5 and e6. He will continue with … Nh6 and harmonize his development somewhat.

b) I would probably play 13 0-0-0! when I think Black has little choice but to castle kingside, after which White's attack will develop quickly with a timely g4- or f5-break.

**13 … dxe4**

Black's congestion is helped somewhat by the swap 13 … Nh7! 14 Nxh7 Rxh7.

**14 dxe4 Ne6 15 Nxe6 Bxe6 16 0-0-0!**

White, sensing opportunity, boldly offers the h3-pawn to increase his development lead. Instead, 16 Bg2?! throws away most of White's advantage after 16 … Qc7 when both … 0-0-0 and … h5-h4 are in the air.

**16 … Bxh3 17 Rxh3!?**

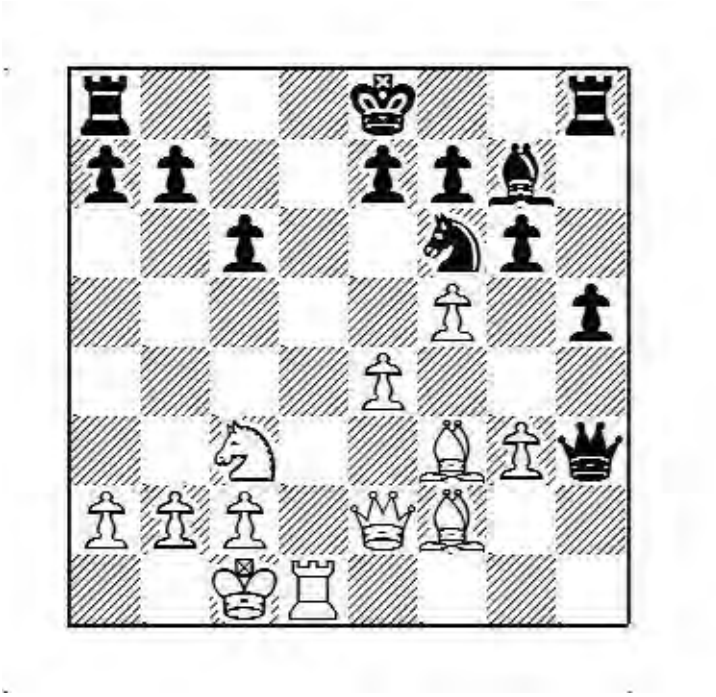
This decision isn't as arbitrary as it first appears. White sacrifices an exchange with a queen trap in mind. However, the combination is not so effective. White looks better if he simply interprets it as a pawn sacrifice by unleashing 17 e5! Ng8 18 Ne4. White has huge compensation for the pawn, in the form of:

1. A space-grab bind.

2. The development lead.

3. Attacking chances against Black's insecure king.

**17 … Qxh3 18 f5**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** White's idea is to trap Black's queen with Rh1. However, the comps say Black is just fine here, provided that he finds the correct response. Should he play 18 … h4, or 18 … Ng4? Only one of the moves offers him sufficient play.

**18 … Ng4?**

This confuses the symbol with the actual reality.

***Answer*:** Many of our over-the-board fears are later proven groundless by the all-seeing, never-fearing comps. Black is just fine after 18 … h4! when White's queen-trapping agenda is open, while Black's remains shrouded in secrecy:

a) White must exercise care as 19 Rh1?? fails miserably to 19 … Qxh1+ 20 Bxh1 hxg3 21 Bg2 gxf2 22 Qxf2 Ng4 23 Qg3 Ne5 and Black has a winning position with two rooks and a pawn for the queen, plus an e5-hole and dark-squared bind.

b) Better is 19 gxh4! when White's tenuous hold over Black's queen is endangered by a hotbed of sedition. Black can counter with 19 … Rxh4! (Black absorbs the brunt of White's blow and his queen continues to be among the living and in contrast, the greedy 19 … Qh2!? 20 e5 looks dangerous for Black) 20 Bxh4 Qxh4 21 fxg6 fxg6 22 Qg2 Qh6+ 23 Kb1 Nd7 24 Rh1 Qf4 25 Qxg6+ Qf7 26 Qg2 (threat: Bh5) 26 … 0-0-0 when he may even hold an edge due to the superior minor pieces and control over the dark squares.

**19 Rh1**

This is a doomed relationship between the rook and Black's queen, reminiscent of the romance between King Kong and Fay Wray, which never came to pass. In this version, Black doesn't get enough for the queen.

**19 … Nxf2 20 Qxf2**

Black's queen isn't going anywhere.

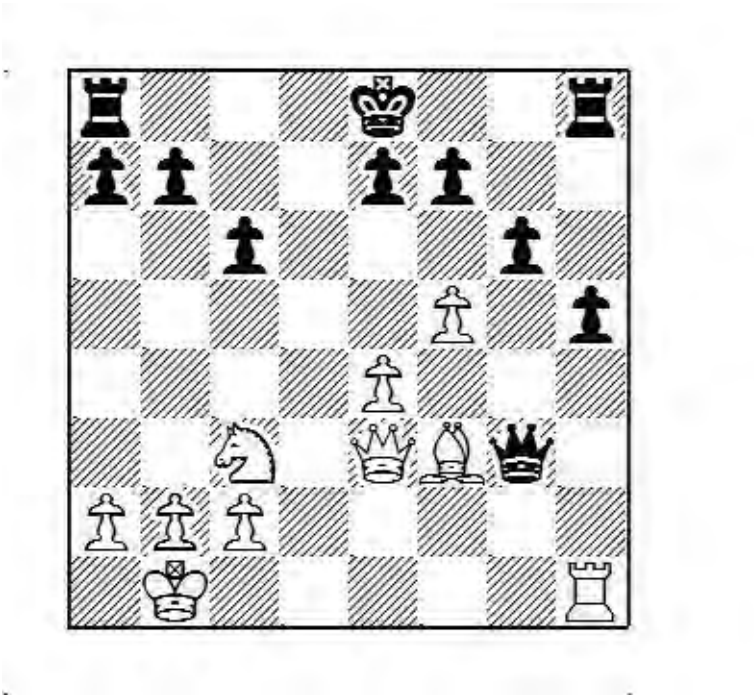
**20 … Bh6+**

Black's best chance for survival is 20 … Qxh1+ 21 Bxh1 Be5 though the position is already quite lost.

**21 Kb1 Be3?**

A last ditch attempt to rescue the queen.

**22 Qxe3 Qxg3**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black gave up a piece to extricate his queen. The trouble is Black's queen is still trapped! How?

**23 Rg1?**

The law becomes moot where enforcement is unable to follow. Now the position's magic-spell mood evaporates into one of day-to-day reality. Okay, fine. This game may not be either player's magnum opus. Now Black's queen really does escape.

***Answer*:** White traps the queen with 23 e5! (threat: Bxc6+, followed by Qxg3) 23 … 0-0-0 24 Ne2! and Black must resign, since his queen gets ambushed all the same.

**23 … Qh4?!**

Black misses the strong blockading 23 … Qe5! move. After 24 fxg6 fxg6 25 Rxg6 0-0-0 26 Qxa7 Qd4!, Black's queen greets her sister with that overly delighted sound hostesses

tend to make when unwanted in-laws drop in unexpectedly. Following 27 Qxd4 Rxd4 28 Rg1 h4, the passed h-pawn still gives offers Black hope to save the game.

**24 fxg6 fxg6 25 e5!**

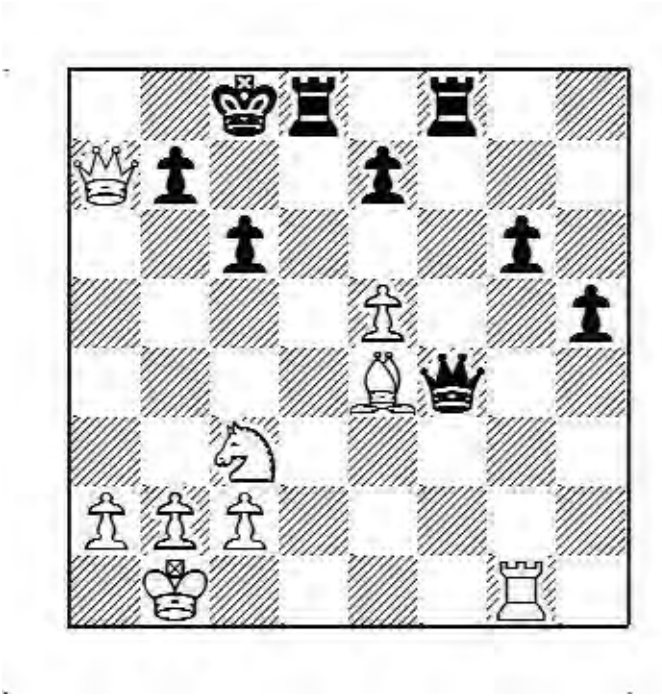
White refuses to take time out to capture the g6-pawn to defray costs. This move clears the e4-square for his activity-starved minor pieces.

**25 … Rf8 26 Be4 0-0-0 27 Qxa7**

The queen clenches and unclenches her fist, in murderous anticipation of the wallop she plans to hand Black's king.

**27 … Qf4**

A similar finish follows after 27 … Qf2. I can't show you the rest or I will give away the answer to the coming combination alert!



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Attackers perch like hungry crows

eyeing an elderly mouse in the park. White to play and force the win:

***Answer*:** Step 1: Chase Black's king to c7.

**28 Qa8+**

The queen points to the door, giving Black's king a leave-this-instant gesture.

**28 … Kc7**

Step 2: Offer a sacrifice which can't be accepted.

**29 Nb5+!**

This well-planted kick bruises the black king's royal rear-end.

**29 … Kb6**

If instead 29 … cxb5, 30 Qxb7 is mate!

Step 3: Chase Black's king up the board.

**30 Qa7+!**

The queen's little-girl helium voice lowers her rival's guard, since it disguises her innate ruthlessness and cunning. "Your Grace will be my 'guest' for an as yet, undefined period of time," she sweetly informs Black's king.

**30 … Kxb5 31 Qxb7+ Ka5**

Also futile is 31 … Kc4 32 Qb3+ Kd4 33 Qb4+ Ke3 34 Qe1+ Kd4 35 Bh1! (threat: Qc3 mate!) 35 … Qe3 36 Qb4+ Kxe5 37 Qxe7+ Kd4 38 Rd1+ Kc4 39 b3+! (this luft-creating move allows White to capture Black's queen without fear of back rank mate) 39 … Kb5 40 Qxe3 Rxd1+ 41 Kb2 Rxh1 (it appears as if Black escaped but it's just an illusion) 42 Qa7! (threatening mate in two moves) 42 … Rh4 43 a4+ and Black must hand over a rook, or walk into 43 … Kb4 44 Qb6 mate!

**32 b4+**

Is there anything more joyful in the universe than a king hunt, which drags the opponent's king kicking and screaming up the board into your territory?

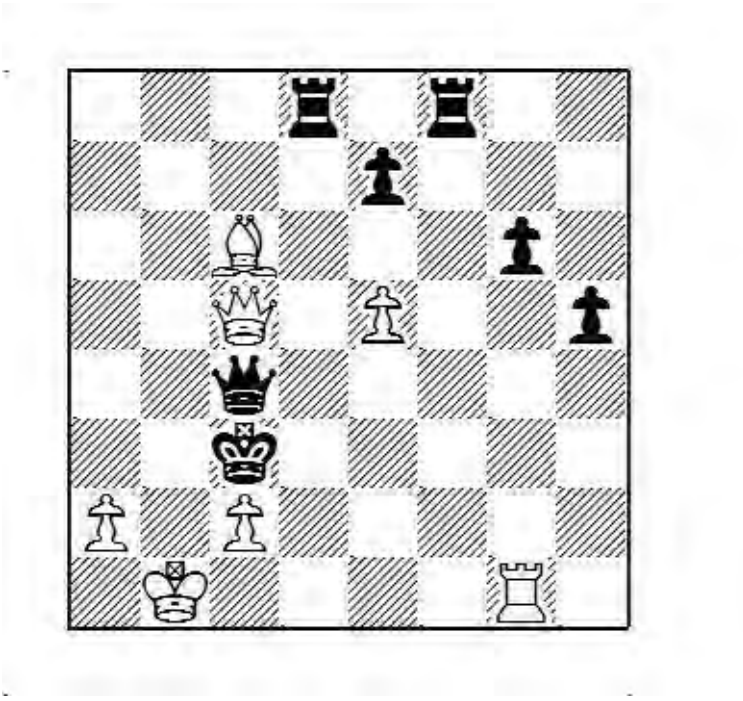
**32 … Ka4 33 Bxc6+**

Slightly more accurate is 33 Qxc6+! Kxb4 34 a3+ Ka5 35 Qc7+ Ka6 36 Bb7+ Ka7. Black's king finds it mildly disconcerting that White's forces toss their hats in the air, hip-hip-hooraying, as his death sentence is pronounced and indeed, 37 Bc8+ Ka8 38 Qb7 is mate!

**33 … Ka3 34 Qa6+ Kxb4 35 Qb5+ Kc3 36 Qc5+**

The queen follows Black's king like a puritanical shadow.

**36 … Qc4 1-0**



Black decides it is unnecessary to go through 37 Rg3+ Kd2 38 Qe3+ (why take a queen when you have mate?) 38 … Kd1 39 Qc1+ Ke2 40 Re3+ Kf2 41 Qe1 mate. Black's king is so busy fawning over the white queen that he doesn't notice the jewel-handled blade she

had just pulled from her right stocking.

**Summary:** This game was a mishmash of Reverse Leningrad vs Reversed Torre structures and notable for White's interesting Be3-f2 manoeuvre to counter Black's h-pawn rush.

*Game 35*
**Tu Hoang Thong-I.Bedgarani**
Moscow Olympiad 1994

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 c6 3 g3 Bg4**

Black's simple plan:

1. Eliminate a key e5-defender with … Bxf3.

2. Play … Nd7 and then … e5, with complete freedom.

**4 Bg2**

***Question*:** Does the Ne5 sally work for White with the inclusion of Black's … c6?

***Answer*:** The Ne5 move is a little more playable for White with … c6 and g3 tossed in. For example: 4 Ne5 Bf5:

a) 5 d3! Nd7 6 Nxd7 Qxd7 7 Nd2 Nf6 8 h3 (to prevent … Bh3) 8 … h5 9 Bg2 e6 10 e4 dxe4 11 dxe4 Bh7 12 Qe2 0-0-0 13 Nc4 Bb4+ 14 c3 Bc5 15 Ne5 Qe7 16 b4 Bd6 17 Nc4 Bc7 18 0-0 and this position I slightly favour Black, whose attack looks a shade stronger.

b) 5 g4?! is less accurate as the position is sharp and unbalanced after 5 … Bc8 (also, after 5 … e6!? (threatening mate) 6 h4 Be4 7 Rh2 f6, White's position feels clunky and slightly overextended) 6 h3 Nd7 7 d4 f6 8 Nd3, P.Yee-J.Chan, Richmond 2011. Black already looks better after 8 … e5!.

**4 … Nd7 5 d3**

Of course White has no reason to waste time with h2-h3, since Black intends to chop the f3-knight anyway.

**5 … Bxf3**

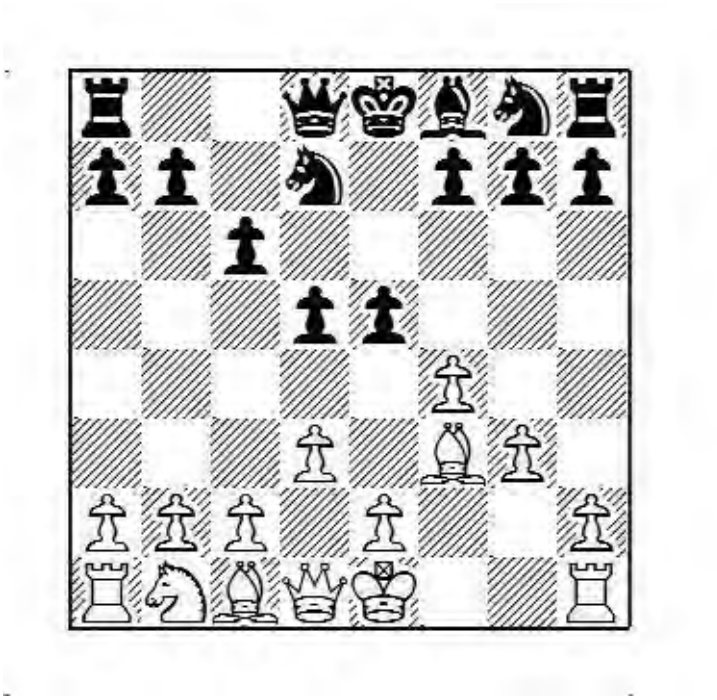
I think this plan is simple and logical for Black. After 5 … Ngf6 6 0-0 e6 7 Nc3 Qb6+ 8 Kh1 Be7 9 e4 dxe4 10 dxe4 0-0-0 11 Qe1 Bh5!? (a mysterious computer (literally!) move as Black was better off eliminating the knight with 11 … Bxf3 12 Bxf3 h5) 12 Rb1 Kb8 13 Be3 Qb4?! (the comp wastes time as the queen should retreat to c7) 14 a3 Qa5 15 h3 h6!? (it still refuses to take the knight!) 16 b4 Qxa3?, A.Rodriguez Vila-*Comp Pocket Fritz 3*, Villa Martelli 2007. Black is completely busted after 17 b5 c5 18 g4 Bg6 19 Ra1 Qb4 20 Ra4 Qb2 21 f5 Bh7 22 Bf4+ Ka8 23 Ra2 Qb4 24 Qa1, forcing mate.

**6 Bxf3**

***Question*:** Since Black plans … e5, why not recapture on f3 with a pawn?

***Answer*:** Recapture with 6 exf3?! hasn't been played, mainly since it is strategically suspect. Black will simply switch from an … e7-e5 plan to a triangle formation, where White's light-squared bishop on g2 is something of a sorry sight after 6 … e6 7 Nc3 Ne7 8 0-0 h5 9 h4 Nf5 when Black already looks better.

**6 … e5**



Black has equalized by staking a claim in the centre. His pieces can develop freely and White's bishop pair will take quite some time to exert themselves.

**7 0-0**

Alternatives:

a) White can play for a light-squared bind, at the cost of weakening his dark squares with 7 f5!? Ngf6 8 e4 dxe4 9 dxe4 Qb6 10 Qe2 0-0-0 11 Nd2 Qc7 12 Nc4 Bb4+?! (this helps White who wants to play c2-c3 anyway and 12 … Nb6 looks better) 13 c3 Be7 14 b4 g6 15 fxg6 hxg6 16 a4 Bf8 17 Be3 Kb8, L.Karlsson-S.Smagin, Copenhagen 1988. White's attack looks far more dangerous than Black's after 18 0-0.

b) I don't trust 7 e4?! dxe4 8 dxe4, M.Mukhin-I.Bajarany, Baku 1991. I prefer Black after 8 … exf4 9 gxf4!? (after 9 Bxf4, 9 … Ne7 intending … Ng6 and either knight to the e5-outpost gives Black a strategic plus) 9 … Qh4+ 10 Kf1 0-0-0 11 Qe2 Bc5 as White's bishop pair fails to make up for his insecure king.

**7 … Ngf6**

Intending … e5-e4.

***Question*:** if Black plays 7 … exf4 which way should we recapture?

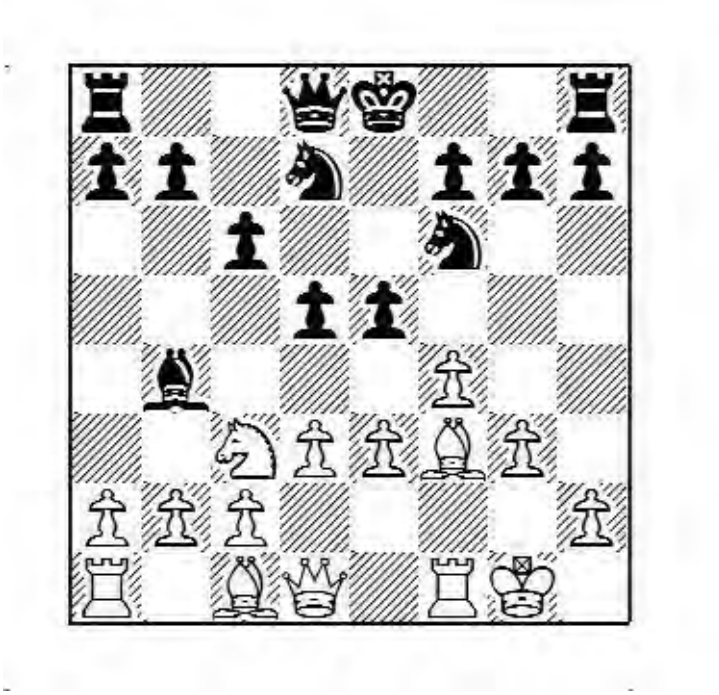
***Answer*:** I would take back with the bishop, increasing the development lead with a b2-pawn offering. For example, after 8 Bxf4!, now Black shouldn't get greedy with 8 … Qb6+?! 9 Kh1 Qxb2 10 Nd2. White's development lead and bishop pair mean more than Black's extra pawn.

**8 Nc3 Bb4**

This move is new and looks quite logical, since … Bxc3, followed by … e5-e4 hangs over White. Tournament praxis has seen 8 … h5?! (it's dangerous to try and launch an attack when behind in development) 9 e4 dxe4 10 Nxe4 Be7?!, R.Junker-G.Blaich, Germany 1992 (better was 10 … Nxe4 11 Bxe4 Nf6 12 Re1 Bc5+ 13 Kg2 when White's

development lead gives him an edge). I don't see Black's compensation after 11 Nxf6+ Bxf6 12 Bxh5! exf4 13 Rxf4 Qb6+ 14 Kg2 with an extra pawn for White, since the b2-pawn is untouchable.

**9 e3**



A stabilizing move though a tad too passive. I would take my chances with the more aggressive 9 e4 Bxc3 10 bxc3 dxe4 11 dxe4. It would be an evenly matched battle of the bishop pair versus structure.

**9 … Qe7**

I would be more inclined to play 9 … Bxc3!, seizing control over the e4-square. After 10 bxc3 e4 11 Bg2 Qe7 12 a4 0-0-0 13 Ba3 Qe6 14 Qd2 h5 15 h3 h4 16 g4 Nxg4! 17 c4! Ngf6 18 cxd5 Qxd5 19 Qb4, White probably has compensation for the pawn but if given a choice, I would take Black's side.

**10 Bg2 0-0**

Now 10 … Bxc3 isn't as strong here as it was on the previous move. Following 11 bxc3 e4 12 c4! dxc4 13 dxe4 Nxe4 14 Qd4 f5 15 Qxc4 0-0-0 16 Bxe4 Qxe4 17 Qxe4 fxe4 18 Bb2 Nf6 19 Rfd1 c5 20 Kf2 h5 21 h3 Rxd1 22 Rxd1 Rd8 23 Rxd8+ Kxd8, *Houdini* now worked out a forced win with 24 g4! Ke7 25 Bxf6+ Kxf6 26 gxh5 b5 27 Ke2 a5 28 Kd2 and White wins the king and pawn ending.

**11 Bd2 Rfe8 12 a3 Bd6**

Now there is no reason to hand over the bishop for White's c3-knight.

**13 e4**

White fights back in the centre.

**13 … dxe4 14 dxe4 b5 15 Qe2 Nb6**

The knight eyes the c4-square. Also reasonable was to get the dark-squared bishop in the thick of things with 15 … Bc5+ 16 Kh1 Bd4 17 f5 Nb6.

**16 Rae1**

White remains aloof to happenings on the queenside, since he feels his interests are not overly threatened by Black's activity in that region.

**16 … a5**

Playing … exf4 at any stage only energizes White's position.

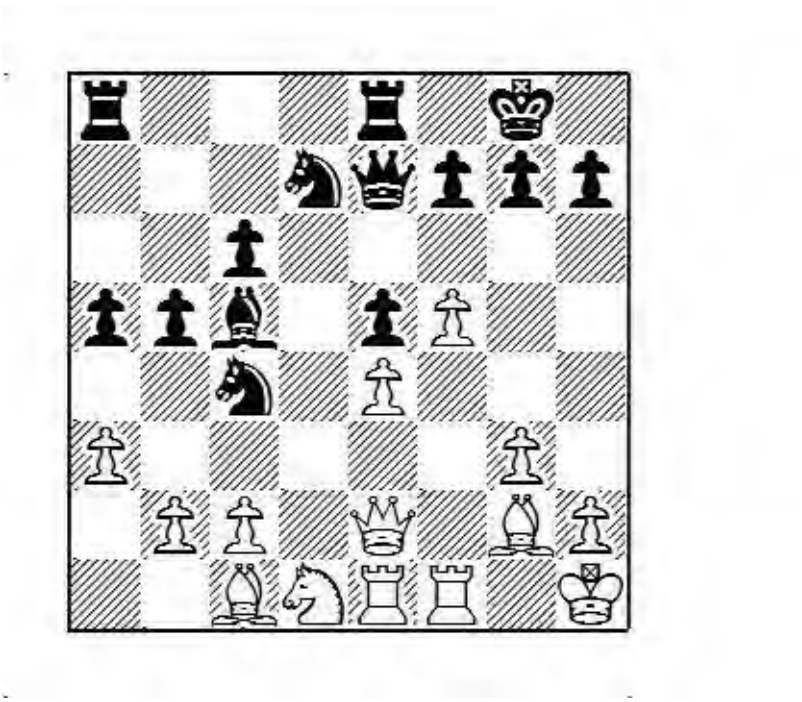
**17 Kh1 Nfd7 18 Nd1 Nc4**

Both parties prepare gains on their respective wings.

**19 Bc1**

The black knight's friendly overtures are met with a chilly rebuff from White's bishop.

**19 … Bc5 20 f5**



White kingside phalanx starts to assume the King's Indian-type pawn storm.

**20 … f6**

This move gives White a g5-contact point, but it would probably have to be played anyway at some point.

**21 g4**

Here he comes. Now an eventual kingside attack becomes a geographic reality for Black's king.

**21 … Nd6**

A sign that the c4-excursion didn't produce fruit.

**22 h4 Qf7**

*Houdini* misassesses this position, giving Black an edge, when in reality, White actually stands better. This is mainly due to his latent and unopposed light square power which will materialise should the position open up. Black can try to impinge upon White's attempted g5-break with 22 … Nf7! 23 Rf3 Rad8 24 Rg3 h6 25 Nf2 Nf8 26 Nh3 Nh7 but then White can try to soften Black's light squares on the other side of the board with 27 a4! (White's position continues to derive energy in an almost photosynthetic way from his power on the light squares) 27 … Qb7 28 Bf1 Rb8 29 g5! hxg5 30 hxg5 fxg5 31 Nxg5 Nfxg5 32 Bxg5 Nxg5 33 Rxg5 and White has a promising kingside attack.

**23 Rf3**

Preparing to shift the rook over to the g3- or d3-square.

**23 … Kf8!?**

Wild impulses contend with the inner voice of reason. In this instance, the wild impulses win the make-a-virtue-of-necessity argument. This move was made with the philosophy: *Sometimes the potentiality for harm to our position can be greater when we refuse to make a concession, rather than grudgingly make one*.

***Question*:** Where is Black going with his king?

***Answer*:** To the other side of the board, where he is loved! This is a typical King's Indian Defence strategy, to walk the king away from the hot zone to safety on the other side.

**24 Rd3 Nc4 25 g5**

The menacing g-pawn approaches Black's king in anything but supplicating fashion.

**25 … Red8 26 Bf3!**

The bishop crouches in ambush, awaiting an unsuspecting victim along the trail. Now Black must contend with the annoying Bh5.

**26 … Ke7!?**

Continuing the queenside transplant project. After 26 … a4 27 Nf2 Bd4 28 c3 Bb6 29 Rg1 Na5 30 Bh5 Qc4 31 Qg4! Ra7 (31 … Bxf2?? 32 gxf6 g6 33 Bh6+ Ke8 34 fxg6 and Black is mated) 32 Be3, Black is completely busted.

**27 Bh5! Qf8**

Reacting with 27 … g6 only weakens Black's king further.

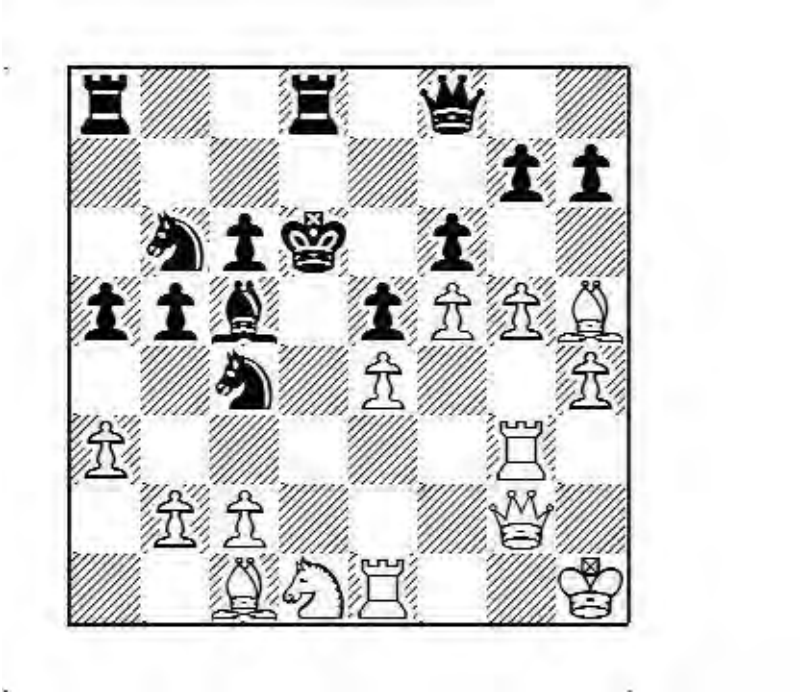
**28 Qg2 Ndb6**

Hoping for a rook trade on the d-file to relieve the pressure.

**29 Rg3?!**

The knight manoeuvre 29 Nf2! with the idea of Ng4, gives White a winning attack.

**29 … Kd6!**



The defensive task which lies before Black requires a physician's sympathetic objectivity: A body part must be amputated if the patient's survival requires such a sacrifice.

**30 Nf2 Kc7**

Black's king breathes a deep sigh of relief.

**31 gxf6 gxf6 32 Nd3 Bd6?!**

The game remains in dynamic equilibrium after the correct 32 … Rd7 which covers the seventh rank.

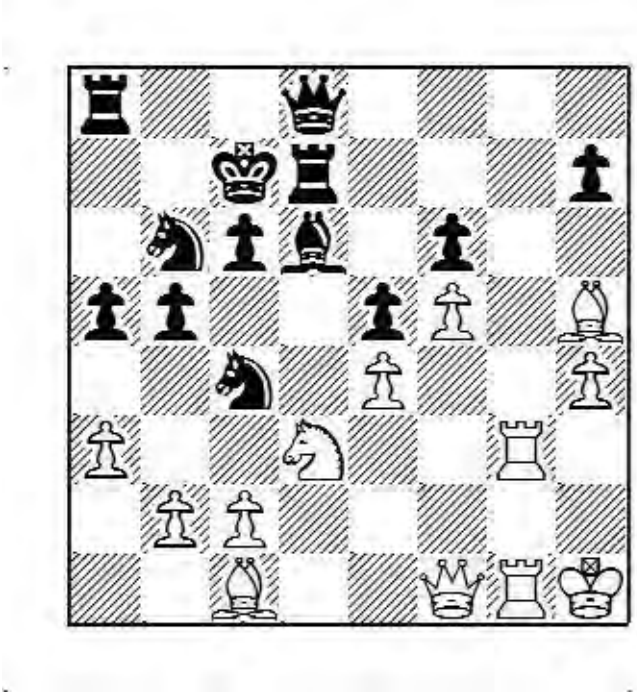
**33 Rg1**

Much stronger is 33 Bf7! which allows White to transfer his light-squared bishop to the e6-square, deeply hampering the coordination of Black's defence. Following 33 … Kb7 34 Be6 Qh8 35 b3! Nxa3 36 Be3 Rab8 37 Nc5+ Bxc5 38 Bxc5 b4 39 Rg7+ Ka6 40 Qg1, White has a decisive attack.

**33 … Rd7 34 Qf1 Qd8?**

This move causes White to lose the fight for control over the dark squares on the a3-f8 diagonal, in particular, the c5-square.

***Exercise (planning)*:** Come up with a clear winning plan for White:



**35 R1g2**

This move keeps Black in the game.

***Answer*:** Correct was 35 b3! and White can win after the following procedures are undertaken:

Step 1: Lure Black's knight to the a3-square. Complex, multi-tiered plans are risky projects, since the shattering of even a single link in the complex chain of events causes the entire structure to come crumbling down around its creator. So Black replies 35 … Nxa3 since he has no other options and well, he does have a pawn for it.

Step 2: Seize control over the c5-square and the gateway to infinite strategic riches after 36 Qf2! Kb7, followed by 37 Be3.

Step 3: Invade the c5-square, eliminating Black's dark-squared bishop, the square's only defender. Following 37 … Qc7, White slots in 38 Bc5! Now, after 38 … Rc8 39 Bxd6 Rxd6 40 Nc5+ Ka8, Black's beaten-down king reminds us of one of Gogol's characters, who accepts his life of institutionalized serfdom without complaint.

Step 4: Invade down the seventh rank. Black collapses here after 41 Rg7 Nd7 (also 41 … Qd8 42 Ne6 wins) 42 Rd1! Rxd1+ 43 Bxd1 Rd8 44 Ne6 Qd6 45 Nxd8 Qxd1+ 46 Kg2 c5 47 Ne6 Nxc2 48 Rxd7 Qxd7 49 Qxc2 and White wins.

**35 … Bf8?!**

Covering the g7-square. Black was better off with 35 … a4 as it keeps the a5-square free for the Nc4 if it gets hit by b2-b3.

**36 Qg1!**

At last, White hits upon the correct plan.

**36 … Qe7 37 b3!**

White threads his way through the labyrinth of confusing variations and extracts meaning from them.

**37 … Nxa3**

The knight retreat 37 … Nd6 loses after 38 Be3 Nbc8 39 Nc5. "Apparently it is my

destiny to patiently explain the obvious to the dull-witted," bemoans the knight to Black's now trapped rook.

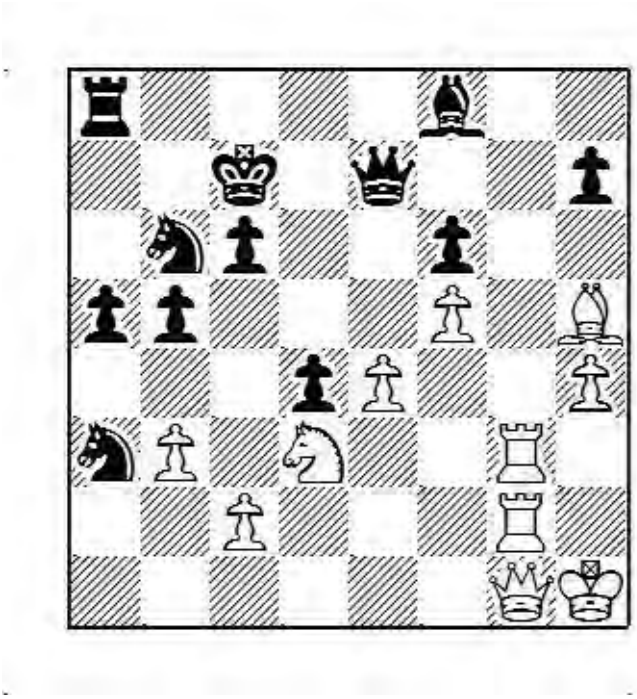
**38 Be3**

The decisive blow. The once haphazard swarm, sensing weakness with a collective hive mind, condenses upon a single target, the c5-square, which is Black's administrative node. Loss of control over that square is the equivalent of a country's government being overthrown by rebels.

**38 … Rd4**

The primal need to challenge an oppressor may be a more powerful force than even that of self-preservation. This desperado fails, but nothing worked at this stage.

**39 Bxd4 exd4**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White to play and win:

***Answer*:** Pin/queen trap.

**40 Rg7! 1-0**

White's queen allows her rooks to do the killing, in the manner of a she-wolf teaching her cubs to hunt.

**Summary:** I think Black's plan … c7-c6, … Bg4, … Bxf3 and … e7-e5 is an equalizer. The position, although outwardly relaxed, is in reality dense with opportunity for both sides.

*Game 36*
**C.Lakdawala-I.Ivanov**
Los Angeles Open 1999

Doesn't it strike you as odd that the military pays a coward and a hero of equal rank, with equal pay? The only time when I don't play it safe is when life puts me in that uncomfortable situation: the must-win game. Igor led the tournament by half a point and I knew I was unlikely to beat his solid Slav or Nimzo-Indian English with my normal 1 Nf3, so I tried to muck it up from the very first move.

**1 g3**

***Question*:** Did you file this game into the wrong book?

***Answer*:** Please try and remain calm. I sometimes use this tricky move-order on players who I know will play … d5, … c6 and … Bg4 on virtually everything. Our move-order would be 1 f4 d5 2 g3!? c6 3 Bg2 Bg4 4 d3 which is similar to what I got in the game with Ivanov.

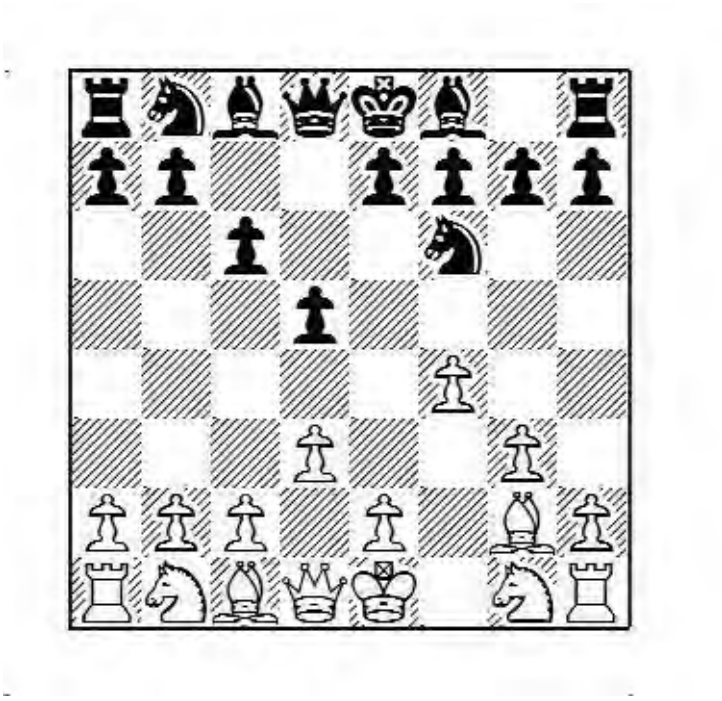
***Question*:** Won't this move-order simply transpose to normal lines?

***Answer*:** Not necessarily. White's idea is to stall Nf3, in which case Black may regret … Bg4 (the bishop lacks a knight to chop on f3), which can be met with future time gaining ideas like h2-h3 and g2-g4, or even Nh3-f2. Following 4 … h5 5 h3 Bf5 6 Nf3!? (the idea is to kick his bishop around without allowing him to trade it for a knight) 6 … Nh6 7 0-0 Qc8 8 Kh2 g6 9 Nc3 Bg7 10 e4 (more gain of time) 10 … Bxc3!? (*Houdini* suggests the admittedly nauseating 10 … Be6) 11 bxc3 dxe4 12 dxe4 Be6 (12 … Bxe4?? loses instantly to 13 Qd4) 13 Ng5 Na6, C.Lakdawala-A.Saidy, Los Angeles 1999, *Houdini* claims a winning position for White after 14 Qd4 f6 15 Nxe6 Qxe6 16 Rb1 Qc8 17 Ba3.

**1 … d5 2 Bg2 c6 3 d3 Nf6**

3 … e5 4 Nf3 Bd6 turns the game into a Reversed Pirc.

**4 f4**

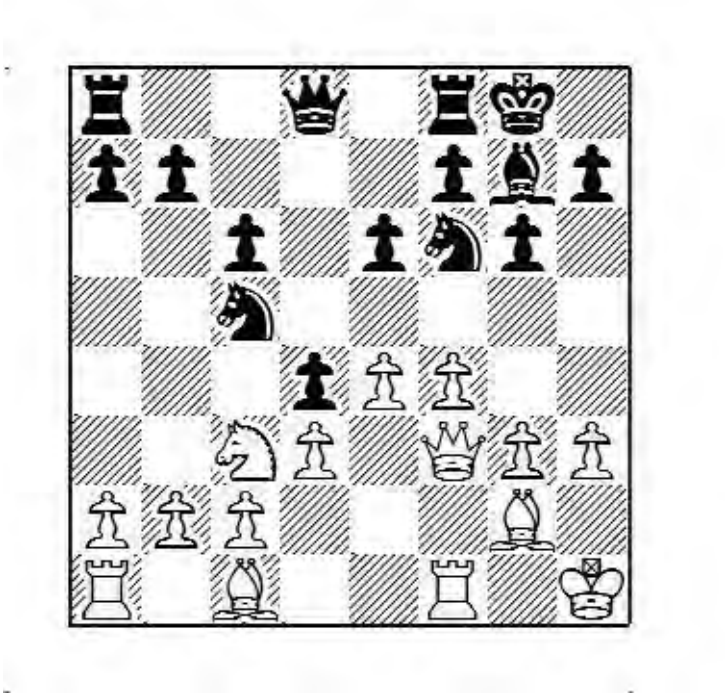


There we go. Back to Bird's opening. This move-order is kind of sneaky. I felt like Igor somehow got tricked into a line he didn't normally play, by making this sudden switch to the Leningrad Bird formation. Of course it doesn't work unless you are willing to play 1 g3 lines on other Black setups. Being caught in an unfamiliar opening is similar to one of those Kafkaesque dreams we all endure, where we walk into a classroom and the test instructions are in Swahili rather than our own language.

**4 … Qb6**

a) The passive and solid Schleter Slav setup with 4 … g6 can be used in many versions. After 5 Nf3 Bg7 6 0-0 0-0 7 Kh1 Nbd7 8 Nc3 Nc5 9 e3 Bg4 (same theme: Black

eliminates his bad bishop, but in this version, Black will have a more difficult time forcing … e7-e5) 10 h3 Bxf3 11 Qxf3 e6 12 e4, 12 … d4?! is a strategic error.



***Question*:** Why?

***Answer*:** For the following reasons:

1. Since Black will soon be attacked on the kingside, it violates the principle: *Don't close the centre when attacked on the wing.*

2. Black ends up with a remaining bishop which was on the opposite colour of his pawns - until now. Black's d4-pawn hampers the bishop's activity. The remainder of the game is instructive and it continued 13 Ne2 Na6 14 Bd2 Qb6 15 Rab1 Rad8 16 a3 Nc7 17 g4 (Black lacks a central break, while White leisurely builds for a kingside attack) 17 … Rfe8 18 Ng3 Nd7 19 h4 f6 20 Bh3 e5?! (this move makes matters worse) 21 f5 Rf8 22 Rf2 Rf7 23 b3 c5 24 Rg1 (every white piece shifted over to eye Black's king) 24 … Rdf8 25 Rh2 Qc6 26 Qg2 Ne8 27 g5 Nd6? (this loses material, but Black was busted in any case as he wouldn't have survived 27 … b5 28 h5 fxg5 29 hxg6 hxg6 30 Bxg5 c4 31 fxg6) 28 fxg6 hxg6 29 Be6 f5 30 Bd5 Qc7 31 h5, K.Movsziszian-J.Mercadal Benejam, Ciutadella 2008, and Black resigned as either allowing 32 g6 (after 31 … gxh5) or 32 hxg6 is devastating.

b) After 4 … Bf5, White's Leningrad formation is more potent, since he has not developed his king knight to block the g2-bishop. This means it is easier to enforce the e4-break. With 5 Nh3 (of course, there is nothing wrong with posting the knight on f3 as well with 5 Nf3 e6 6 0-0 Bc5+ 7 e3 Nbd7 8 Nc3 Bg4 9 Qe1 Bxf3 10 Bxf3 0-0 11 Kh1 e5 12 e4 dxe4 13 dxe4 Re8 14 f5 h6 15 Bd2 Qe7 16 g4 Nh7 17 h4 Nb6 18 Be2 Rad8 19 Bd3 Rd6 20 Qg3, D.Lima-J.Cuartas, J Cali 2001 when White built up a promising kingside attack) 5 … e6 (Black can also rid himself of his light-squared bishop with 5 … Bxh3!? 6 Bxh3 e6 7 0-0 h5 8 e3 when I prefer White's chances, mainly due to future hopes on the light squares.) 6 Nf2 Bc5 7 e3 Bb6 8 0-0 h6 9 Qe2 Nbd7 10 Kh1 Qc7 11 e4 Bh7 12 Nd2 0-0-0

13 a4, S.Gerzadowicz-M.Spiegel, correspondence 1986, I nearly always like the looks of White's attack in such opposite wing Leningrad Bird positions.

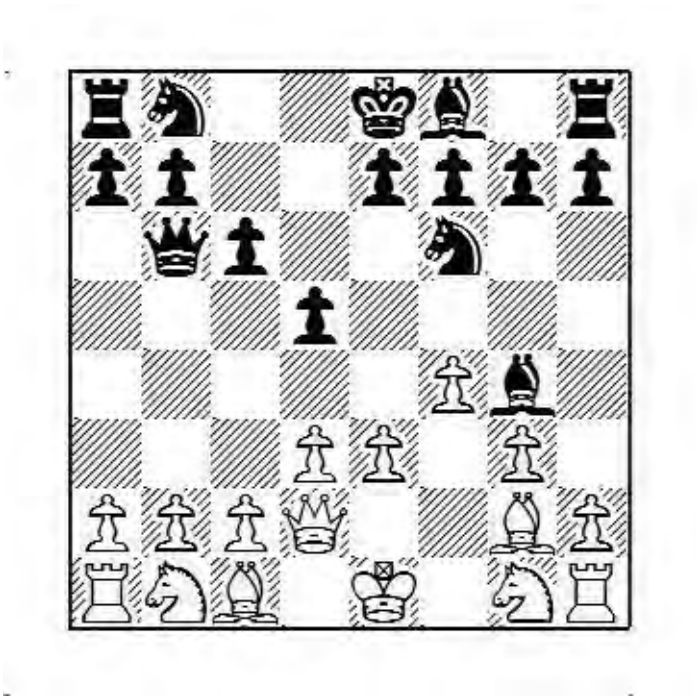
**5 e3**

I didn't care for 5 Nf3 Ng4 forcing White into a Stonewall/Leningrad hybrid after 6 d4 h5.

**5 … Bg4**

This move isn't as logical as it first appears and 5 … g6 is a safer alternative.

**6 Qd2!**



A new move and I believe a good one.

***Question*:** Why on earth would you contort like this, rather than play 6 Nf3?

***Answer*:** Remember, the entire idea of holding back on Nf3 is to lure Black's bishop to g4 and then gain time on it with h2-h3 and g3-g4, without allowing a trade for a knight. White's loss of time with the queen is easily offset by Black's coming tempo loss on his bishop, when White plays h2-h3. Normal is 6 Nf3 (which to my mind, gives Black what he or she wants) 6 … Nbd7 7 0-0 e5 8 h3 Bxf3 9 Qxf3 Bd6, B.Pel-J.Broekmeulen, Netherlands 2007, and Black has equalized.

**6 … e6**

The problem with 6 … Nbd7?! (intending … e7-e5) is that White forces a huge concession from Black after 7 h3 Be6 with a really goofy-looking bishop on e6.

**7 Nc3 d4?**

This move has 'slippery slope' written all over it. Black's idea is to take the wind out of White's e4-break, but the concession he makes with a serious loss of time makes it a bad bargain. Black should settle for 7 … h5 8 h3 Bf5 9 e4 Bh7 10 Qe2 Bc5 11 Nf3 Nbd7 12 Ng5 when Black has an inferior but still playable game.

**8 exd4 Qxd4 9 h3**

The beginning of multiple time-gaining moves.

**9 … Bh5 10 g4**

White intends to castle long, so the kingside pushes don't weaken his king.

**10 … Bg6 11 Qe2**

Cheapo alert: White threatens to snag a piece with f4-f5 next.

**11 … Bb4**

11 … Be7 12 Nf3 Qb6 13 Ne5! Nbd7 14 h4! h5 15 Nxg6 fxg6 16 g5 Ng4 17 Bd2 Nf8 (17 … Qxb2 18 Rb1 Qa3 19 Rxb7 only benefits White) 18 0-0-0 Qf2 19 Rde1 Qxe2 20 Rxe2 with a strategically won game for White, who has:

1. The bishop pair.
2. Light square control.
3. Targets on e6, g6 and g4.
4. Control over the e4-square.

**12 Bd2**

White once again threatens f4-f5.

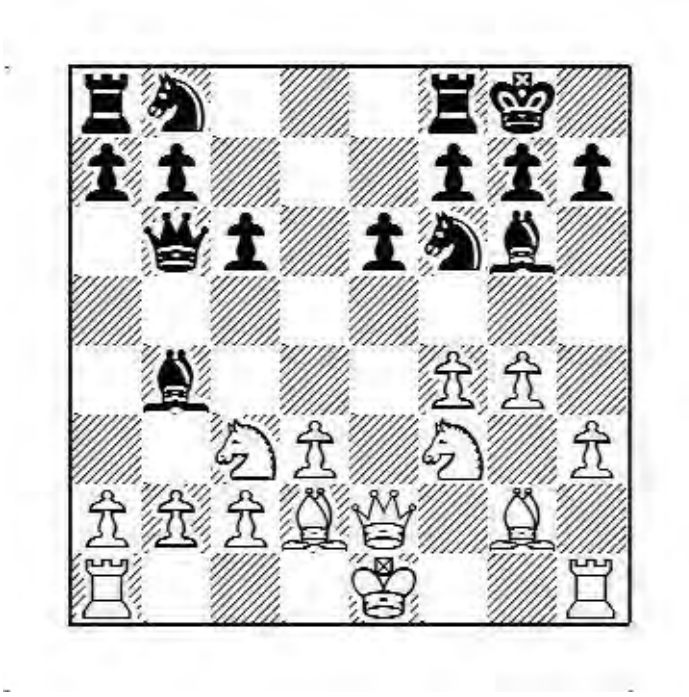
**12 … 0-0**

The only move, but of course the trouble is Black's king walks into a ready-made attack on the kingside.

**13 Nf3**

Another tempo gained.

**13 … Qb6**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Come up with a clear attacking

plan for White, which will result in a winning position.

***Answer*:** Play Ne5, after which Black has no good way to deal with the h3-h4-h5 threat.

**14 Ne5! Nfd7**

This move doesn't give White a chance to play the h-pawn piledriver plan. However, it loses time, a commodity Black can ill afford at this moment.

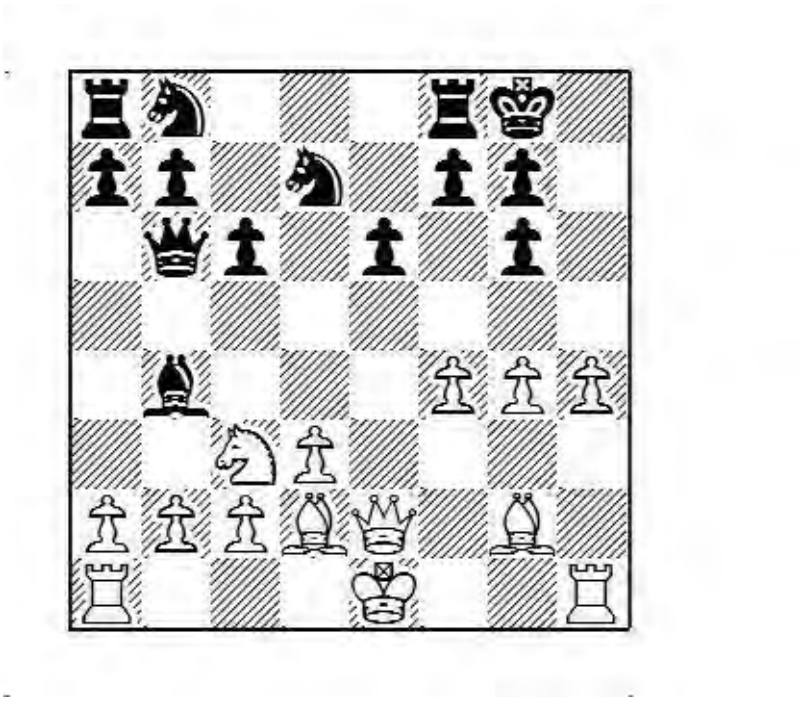
The alternatives aren't very comforting for Black:

a) 14 … Nbd7 15 h4! h5 16 Nxd7 (16 Nxg6 fxg6 17 g5 is also tempting) 16 … Nxd7 17 gxh5 Bf5 18 0-0-0 and White has an extra pawn and a much quicker attack to boot.

b) 14 … Bxc3 15 bxc3 Nbd7 16 h4! h5 17 Nxg6 fxg6 18 g5 Ng4 19 Be4 Kh7 20 Bf3 Qb2 21 Rc1 Qxa2 22 Bxg4 hxg4 23 c4! Rae8 24 h5 e5 25 Qxg4 exf4+ 26 Kd1 Ne5 27 hxg6+ Kxg6 28 Qh5+ Kf5 29 Qh3+ Kg6 30 Qh7+ Kf7 31 Rh6! with a winning attack for White.

**15 Nxg6 hxg6 16 h4**

Of course, this is the way to go. I think it was Fischer who said of the Dragon, something like: "Pry open the h-file, sac, sac and mate!" Well, that is my plan here as well. White's attack plays by itself with ease.



**16 … e5**

Principle: *Counter in the centre when attacked on the wing.* However, principles don't always work in hopelessly-lost positions! Also, 16 … Nf6 17 h5 gxh5 18 g5 Ng4 19 Bf3! (19 Rxh5?! Qg1+ slows White down) 19 … Bxc3 20 Bxc3 Ne3 21 Qh2 g6 22 Bxh5 is curtains for Black.

**17 h5**

No time to waste. Fischer's advice is taken and the h-file soon opens.

**17 … exf4**

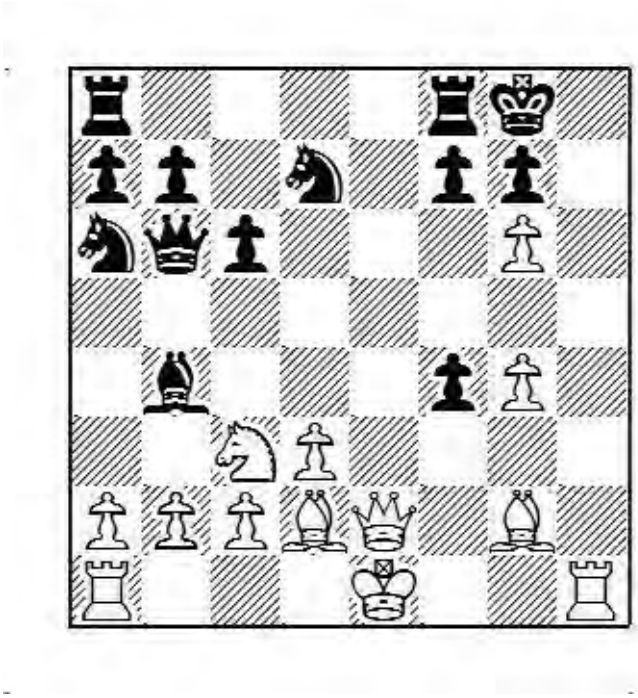
Also ineffectual is 17 … gxh5 18 f5! hxg4 19 0-0-0 Nf6 20 Qxe5 Re8 21 Qh2 Kf8 22 Qh8+ Ke7 23 Qxg7 Nbd7 24 Bg5 Bxc3 25 bxc3 and it's game over, since nothing can be done about a coming rook check on e1.

**18 hxg6 Na6**

a) 18 … fxg6 19 Qe6+ Rf7 20 0-0-0 and if 20 … Nf8, 21 Rh8+ Kxh8 22 Qxf7 Nh7 23 Rh1 is decisive.

b) 18 … Nf6 19 g5 Re8 20 Be4 Bxc3 21 Bxc3 and Black loses a piece, since 21 … Nxe4 is met with 22 Rh8+ Kxh8 23 Qh5+ Kg8 24 gxf7+ Kf8 25 fxe8R mate!

Let's return to the game position after 18 … Na6.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Your writer's dull life is generally devoid of spectacular combinations. This game is an exception. White to play and win:

***Answer*:** Pin/clearance.

**19 Bd5!**

Every conversation in the room abruptly halts in mid-clause at the charismatic bishop's entrance. White threatens mate, starting with Rh8+!, when the weakened light squares have become a graveyard for the aged and infirm in Black's camp. Please give me a minute to compose myself, since I'm overwhelmed with emotion from the last move. It took every ounce of will power on my part to avoid striking a heroic pose at this point. There are moments in a game when we enter that place athletes call "the zone", where everything we do mysteriously and magically calibrates to perfection. What concordance of causes and conditions puts one in "the zone", our version of paradise? Nobody seems to know the answer to this question.

**19 … Nf6**

Other options are also doomed to fail:

a) 19 … cxd5? 20 Rh8+ Kxh8 21 Qh2+ Kg8 22 Qh7 mate!

b) 19 … Rae8? 20 gxf7+ Rxf7 21 Qxe8+ Nf8 22 Bxf7 mate!

**20 Ne4**

When attacking, it's generally a mistake to impose an upper limit on how much we spend on the war. White's horse, a quadruped, is more stable than Black's king, a wobbly biped. This is an example of removal of the guard, going after a key defender of the h7-square. The cardinal rule of show business is to give the audience exactly what it wants. In this case I was clearly playing to the crowd. This is more of a case of the performer (your show-offy writer) craving an audience. Though spectacular, the knight sally is not the strongest. In reality, the move's flashy nature is a distraction, the way a woman's beauty may also camouflage her vices from an admirer. Simpler and stronger was the non-flashy 20 Qh2 Rfe8+ 21 Kf1 Kf8 22 Bxf7 (Qh8+ is coming) 22 … Ke7 23 g5 and Black gets slaughtered.

**20 … Qe3!**

Oh, no! The most devious way to deal with a double cross, is a double-double cross. It's jarring to see natural beauty violated, as when I notice my dogs squatting under one of my beloved fruit trees in the backyard, voiding their vile business into the once pristine soil. I completely missed this move. He swaps queens and now there is no mate. Any number below a 100% statistical probability still means there is a theoretical chance for survival for the underdog. At this stage Black probably hits the 99% mark, and what remains is more a prayer than an actual chance. I calculated the following lines:

a) 20 … cxd5?? 21 Rh8+! Kxh8 22 Qh2+ Kg8 23 Nxf6+ Qxf6 24 Qh7 mate! "Some men are born to lead," declares Black's king. "As are some women," responds the queen, with a hint of a devious smile. Black's king laments the fact that he has always been attracted to imposing Amazons, capable of beating him into chutneyfied pulp if they lose their tempers - which unfortunately seems to be the case here.

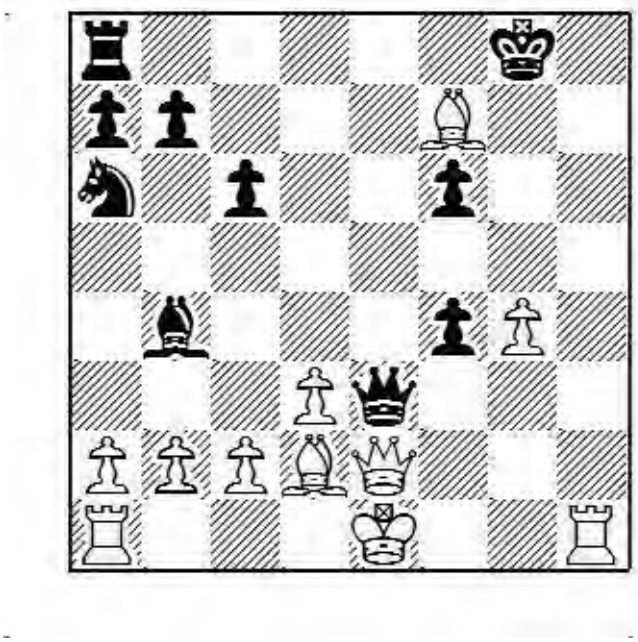
b) 20 … Nxe4?? 21 Rh8+ Kxh8 22 Qh2+ (Black's frightened king bows obsequiously low as the white queen walks by) 22 … Kg8 23 Qh7 mate!

c) 20 … Bxd2+?? 21 Kf1! and Black is mated all the same.

**21 gxf7+**

Darn it. I wanted to win like an artist, not a butcher, but in life you take what is offered to you.

**21 … Rxf7 22 Nxf6+ gxf6 23 Bxf7+**



"I am incorruptible," declares the bishop, as he smoothly pockets the bribe.

**23 … Kxf7 24 c3 Qg3+**

Trading queens won't help a bit after 24 … Qxe2+ 25 Kxe2 Bd6 26 Rh7+ Kg6 27 Rd7 Re8+ 28 Kf3 Bb8 29 d4 and Black can resign.

**25 Kd1 Rg8?**

Igor's clock was hanging by a molecule. Following 25 … Bd6 26 Kc2, White consolidates with a winning attack while Black's material deficit inspires little hope of renewal.

**26 cxb4**

Black continues to disgorge material at an alarming rate. Yes. Even GMs allow one-ply-piece hangs if their clocks get low enough.

**26 … Rxg4 27 Kc2 1-0**

This game, played on my 39th birthday, was an unexpected present.

**Summary:** You can experiment with move-order tricks, delaying Nf3, if you know your opponent always plays the … d7-d5, … c7-c6 and … Bg4 plan. I think a too-early … Bg4 isn't so healthy for Black when White delays Nf3.

*Game 37*
**P.Orlov-I.Vukovic**
Yugoslav Championship, Skender Vakuf 1980

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 c5**

Let's have a look at some options:

2 … Nf6 3 g3 Bf5 4 Bg2 e6 5 d3 h6 6 0-0 Be7 (waiting a while to play … c7-c5 cuts down on White's options) 7 Nc3:

a) 7 … 0-0 8 Qe1 (this plan works well for White if Black delays … Nc6, since now White doesn't need to worry about either … Nd4 or … Nb4 distractions) 8 … c5 9 e4 Bh7 10 Ne5! (White got an optimal Leningrad against a London System, since Black must now make a concession to develop the b8-knight, or lock the centre with … d5-d4, which

White wants) 10 … Nc6 (10 … d4 11 Nb1 Nbd7 12 Nxd7 Qxd7 13 Nd2 just looks like an unfavourable Reversed King's Indian for Black, since White's kingside chances look clearly superior with a locked centre) 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Kh1 Rb8 13 Qe2 Nd7 14 b3 Bf6 15 Bd2 Nb6 16 Rae1 c4 (this move undoubles the pawns but doesn't manage equality) 17 dxc4 dxc4, F.Bistric-S.Kamberovic, Sarajevo 2012, is favourable for White who can now go for 18 e5 Be7 19 Ne4 with a clear strategic edge due to control over the e4- and d6-squares.

b) 7 … d4 is met favourably with 8 Nb5 Bc5 9 b4! Bb6 10 Bb2:

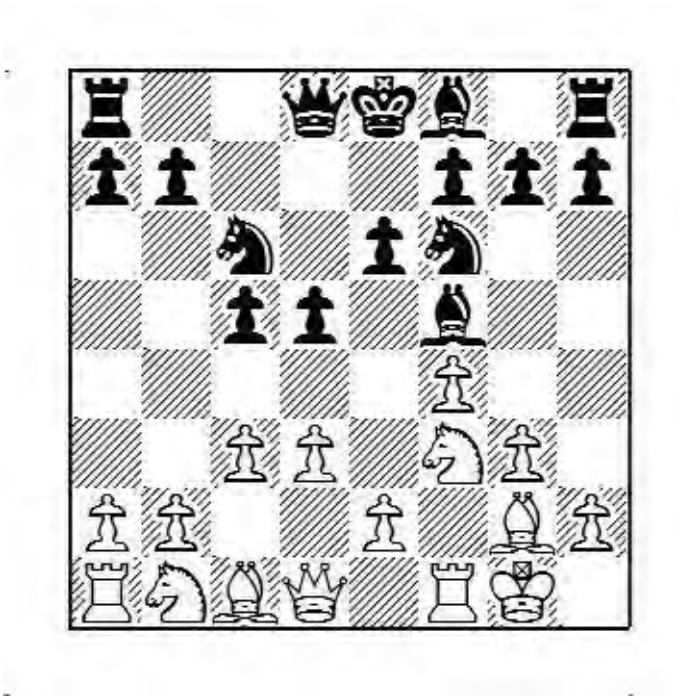
b1) 10 … Nc6 11 Ne5 Nxe5 12 fxe5 Ng4 13 Bxb7 and I prefer White in this messy position.

b2) 10 … Ng4 11 Nbxd4 Ne3 12 Qd2 Nxf1 13 Kxf1 (White has monster compensation for the exchange) 13 … Bh7 14 Qc3! (threat: Nxe6! and Qxg7) 14 … Qe7 15 a4 a5 16 Nb3 f6 17 bxa5 and Black is in deep trouble.

**3 g3 Nc6 4 Bg2 Nf6 5 0-0 Bf5 6 d3 h6**

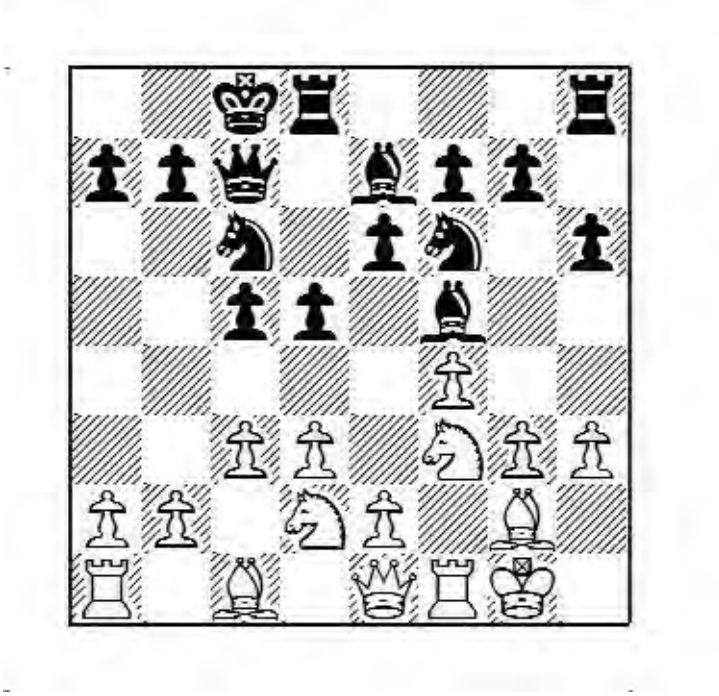
The main alternative is 6 … e6:

a) White's main line is 7 c3:



7 … Be7 8 h3 (getting Black nervous about a potential pawn storm on the kingside) 8 … h6 9 Nbd2 Qc7 10 Qe1 (here we see the value of tossing in an early c2-c3 as Black's … Nd4 and … Nb4 options are eliminated). Here, Black has a choice of whether to castle long or short:

a1) 10 … 0-0-0!?



White has an interesting pawn sacrifice to complicate the issue with 11 Ne5!? (after the safer 11 e4 Bh7 12 a3 g5! 13 fxg5 Nh5 14 g4 Nf4 15 gxh6 Nxd3 16 Qe3 c4, Black's attack looks more promising than White's, D.Melnikov-M.Aseeva, St Petersburg 2005) 11 … Nxe5 12 fxe5:

a11)12 … Nd7 13 c4 Qxe5 14 Nb3 g5 15 cxd5 exd5 16 Qf2 Bg6 17 Be3 Rhe8 18 Rac1 Kb8 19 d4 Qc7 is a good fighting continuation and gives about equal chances.

a12) Black can capture the pawn immediately with 12 … Qxe5 13 Nc4!? (this is not merely a queen snaring attempt, but also an effort to seize the e5- and d6-squares) 13 … Qc7 (not 13 … dxc4?? as 14 Bf4 traps the queen) 14 Bf4 e5!? 15 Bxe5 Qd7 16 Nd6+ Bxd6 17 Bxd6 b6! 18 Be5 Rhe8 19 Bxf6 gxf6 20 Rd1 Bxh3 21 Rxf6 Bxg2 22 Kxg2 Re3 23 Qf2 Rde8 24 Rxf7 Rxe2 25 Rxd7 Kxd7 26 Rh1 Rxf2+ 27 Kxf2 with a totally even ending.

***Question*:** How do we proceed if Black castles kingside with 10 … 0-0?

***Answer*:** I think Black should indeed castle kingside. Being a London system player from White's side, I can tell you his king is a lot safer than it first appears.

a2) 10 … 0-0 11 e4 Bh7 12 Qe2 (12 e5 Nh5! 13 Nb3 Bxd3 14 g4 Bxf1 15 Bxf1 f6! 16 gxh5 fxe5 17 Nxe5 Nxe5 18 Qxe5 Qxe5 19 fxe5 Rf5 Black will end up with a rook and two pawns for two minor pieces, with probably the slightly better chances in the ending) 12 … c4! (we must be on constant alert for this trick in the Leningrad/London positions). After 13 dxc4 dxe4 14 Ne1 Na5 15 Nc2 Rfd8 16 b4 e3 17 Nxe3 Bd3 18 Qf3 Bxf1 19 Bxf1. Here, White's two pawns and bishop pair give him full compensation for the exchange.

***Question*:** Can we stick to our Qe1 plan?

***Answer*:** Yes, the plan is also possible, although Black can get highly active play.

b) After 7 Qe1, let's look at Black's options:

b1) 7 … Be7 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Bg6 (9 … h6 makes more sense, preserving the bishop) 10

Nh4 d4 11 Nxg6 hxg6 12 Na3 Qd7 13 Bd2 Nd5 14 Nc2, T.Vaatainen-S.Hamalainen, Helsinki 1997, and White looks slightly better due to the bishop pair.

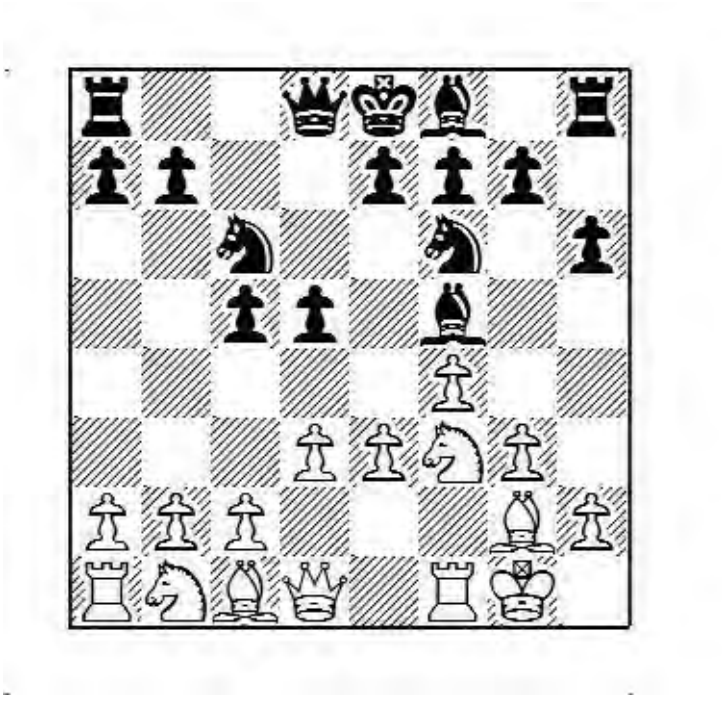
b2) Black has a strange possibility with 7 … c4!? which is untested but it looks like a good one. After 8 Kh1 (8 dxc4 Bc5+ 9 Kh1 0-0 and now the greedy 10 cxd5 exd5 11 c3 Re8 gives Black loads of pressure for the pawn, with beads on the e2-, e3- and e4-squares) 8 … Bc5!? (a pawn sacrifice, aiming at swift development and piece play) 9 dxc4 0-0!? and Black reaches the same sort of attacking setup attained after 8 dxc4. For the pawn, Black has the initiative with a strong initiative and good pressure from the raking bishop pair.

***Question*:** If … c4 was so strong after 7 Qe1, then does it work after 7 c3?

***Answer*:** The idea is diffused somewhat, but it's still very playable.

c) After the untested 7 … c4!?, the game might continue 8 Nh4 (8 dxc4 Bc5+ 9 Kh1 dxc4 10 Qxd8+ Rxd8 11 Nbd2 Ng4 12 Nxc4 Nf2+ 13 Kg1 Nh3+ reaches perpetual check) 8 … Bc5+ 9 Kh1 cxd3 10 Nxf5 exf5 11 exd3 0-0 12 Nd2 Ng4 13 Qf3 and *Houdini* says the game is even. White has the better structure and also the bishop pair, but must contend with Black's enormous piece activity down the e-file.

**7 e3!**



I think this is White's best setup. As we saw in the above notes, White runs into all sorts of difficulties if he or she goes with the theoretical Qe1 and c2-c3 plan, since Black constantly has … c5-c4! tricks, undermining the d3-pawn and e4-square.

Also strong is 7 Ne5!, which creates structural damage for Black. Following 7 … e6 8 Nxc6 bxc6, D.Van Dooren-D.Goriachnik, Differdange 2007, now White should prevent … c5-c4 tricks by fixing the pawns in Nimzo-Indian style with 9 c4! Rc8 10 Nd2 Be7 11 Nf3! (11 e4?! allows Black counterplay with 11 … dxe4 12 Nxe4 Qd4+ 13 Nf2 Ng4 14 Qe2 Nxf2 15 Qxf2 Qxd3) 11 … 0-0 12 b3 when Black's damaged queenside structure

becomes a long-term liability.

**7 … e6 8 Qe2**

In this way White slowly and harmoniously prepares e3-e4, while keeping a sharp eye out for … c5-c4 ideas.

**8 … Be7 9 Nbd2**

Also possible is 9 Nc3 0-0 10 Ne5! Nxe5 11 fxe5 Nd7 (11 … Bg4? 12 exf6! Bxe2 13 fxe7 Qxe7 14 Nxe2 results in White's three pieces being worth far more than Black's queen and pawn though *Houdini* with a startling misassessment, actually gives Black the edge here, which is absolutely incorrect) 12 Nxd5! Nxe5 13 Nxe7+ Qxe7, B.Gonzalez-G.Nsubuga, Istanbul 2000. White looks slightly better due to the bishop pair after 14 b3.

**9 … 0-0**

***Question*:** How do we deal with 9 … Nb4?

***Answer*:** By continuing the central advance with 10 e4 and after 10 … Bh7 (not 10 … Nxc2? as after 11 exf5 Nxa1 12 fxe6 fxe6 13 Ne5 Nc2 14 Ndf3 Nb4 15 Ng6, Black is busted, since White threatens the h8-rook and Qxe6) 11 Ne1 0-0 12 e5 Nd7 13 c3 Nc6 14 Ndf3 b5 15 Be3, both sides get to play on their respective wings with mutual chances.

**10 Kh1 Qc7 11 e4**

At long last, White achieves his thematic central break.

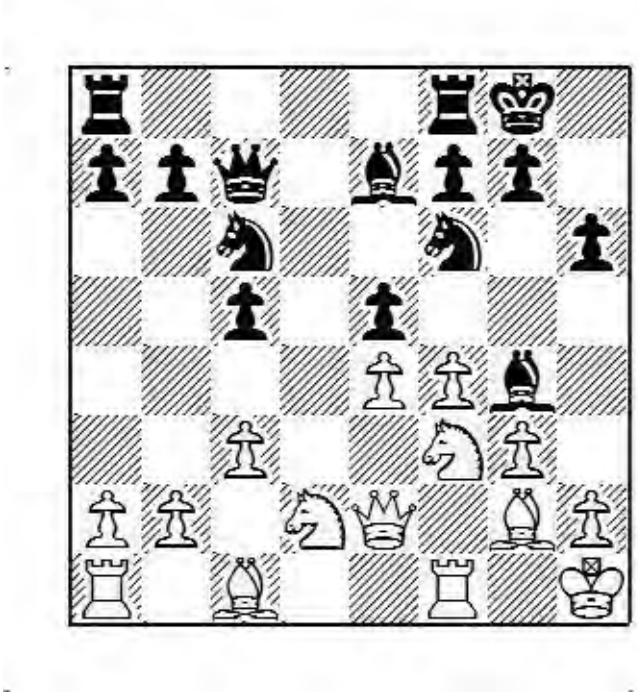
**11 … dxe4**

The central pawn trade is based on the principle: *Open the centre when attacked on the wing*. When this exchange is made though, White gets the e4-square for his pieces after dxe4 and e4-e5 later on. Also possible is 11 … Bh7.

**12 dxe4 Bg4**

12 … Bh7 is more in the spirit of the London System (or the New York System, as the … Bf5, … h6 line versus the Reti system is known as). Play may go 13 c3 Rfd8 14 Ne1 (covering the d3-square) 14 … Rab8 15 e5 Nd5 16 Ne4 with approximately even chances.

**13 c3 e5?!**



A strategic error. Now Black ends up in an inferior Reversed Exchange King's Indian.

***Question*:** Why is this an inferior version for Black?

***Answer*:** In terms of the fight for central squares, White has gained the d5-square while Black does not have the corresponding d4-square under control, since White still has a pawn on c3. A more relevant issue is that since Black will be forced to hand over his good bishop, he should keep his pawns off the dark squares. In this version, he later suffers on the light squares. Black should play 13 … Rfd8 14 h3 Bh5!? (risky but interesting) 15 g4 Bg6 16 f5 Bh7 when Black is compensated for his buried h7-bishop with power on the dark squares.

**14 f5! Rad8 15 Qf2**

White intends Ng1 and h2-h3, trapping Black's g4-bishop. There is nothing wrong with the immediate 15 h3.

**15 … Bxf3**

White's piece-trap idea is seen in the line 15 … Na5? 16 Ng1! c4 17 h3 Bc5 18 Qe1 Bh5 19 g4 Bxg4 20 hxg4 Nxg4 21 Qe2 Ne3 22 Rf3 and Black doesn't get enough for the piece.

**16 Bxf3 Qd7**

I would play 16 … b5 intending … c5-c4 next.

**17 Re1**

Overprotecting the e4-pawn, while clearing the f1-square for the knight.

**17 … Na5 18 Nf1 Nc4**

18 … b5 looks better.

**19 Ne3?!**

A violation of the principle: *Don't swap pieces unnecessarily when you plan to launch an attack*. When we attack without all the necessary resources, we feel like a guard dog straining at the tether, unable to reach the final necessary six inches to take a bite out of

our target. Correct was 19 b3! Nb6 20 c4 Qd4 21 Be3 Qd6 22 Rad1 which looks clearly better for White since Black has nothing to do, while White has plans like preparing a g4-g5 break and also the transference of a knight to the e3- and d5-squares.

**19 … Nxe3 20 Bxe3 Qc6 21 Rg1**

A resolve to launch an attack may be easily formed in the mind, yet not so easy to implement over the board. White plays for a g5-pawn break but may have been better off first tossing in 21 c4! which wisely implements a few defensive safeguards, such as denying Black the … c5-c4 counterplay.

**21 … Rd3**

Naturally, the e4-pawn isn't really hanging after 21 … Nxe4?? since 22 Qg2 causes Black to hang a piece.

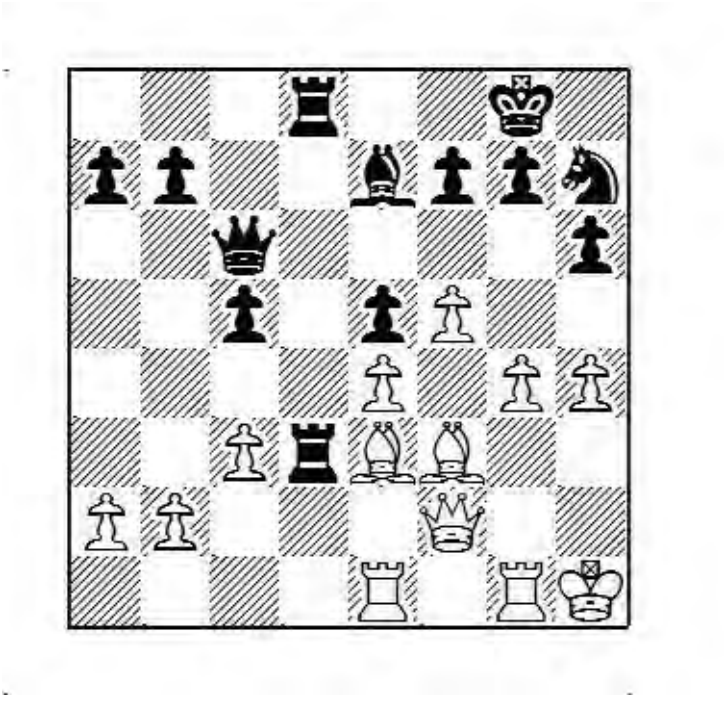
**22 Rae1?!**

A better rook move is 22 Rad1 when 22 … Rfd8 23 Rxd3 Rxd3 24 c4 Ng4! 25 Bxg4 Qxe4+ 26 Bf3 Qxe3 27 Qxe3 Rxe3 28 Bxb7 should lead to a draw.

**22 … Rfd8**

Stronger is 22 … c4! and after 23 Rd1 (23 Bxa7?? b6 24 Bxb6 Rxf3! (overloaded defender) leaving Black standing clearly better) 23 … b6, Black has the advantage.

**23 g4 Nh7 24 h4**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Should Black play 24 … f6, clamping down on

White's intended break, or ignore it and continue his own counterattack

with 24 … c4? One leads to a good position, while the other is strategically flawed.

**24 … f6?!**

For now, Black keeps a wary reconnaissance over White's not-so-surreptitious kingside

ambitions. This discourages White's intended g5-break at the high cost of a dreadful weakening of his light squares.

***Answer*:** Correct was 24 … c4!, intending … Rxe3, followed by … Bc5. When intolerably bound, we are inclined to test our bonds. After 25 Rg2 Rxe3! (Black fights back on the dark squares) 26 Qxe3 Rd3 27 Qe2 Bxh4, Black's domination of the dark squares plus his extra pawn give him more than enough compensation for the exchange.

**25 Rg2?!**

White proceeds with his idea with muted tones. Instead, after 25 Be2! leads to a clear advantage after 25 … Qxe4+ 26 Kh2!. Now if 26 … R3d7 27 Bb5 Rd6 28 b3! (hoping to lure Black's queen to the d5-square and then meet it with the Bc4 pin) 28 … Kh8 29 Bxc5 Qd5 30 Bxd6, White picks up an exchange.

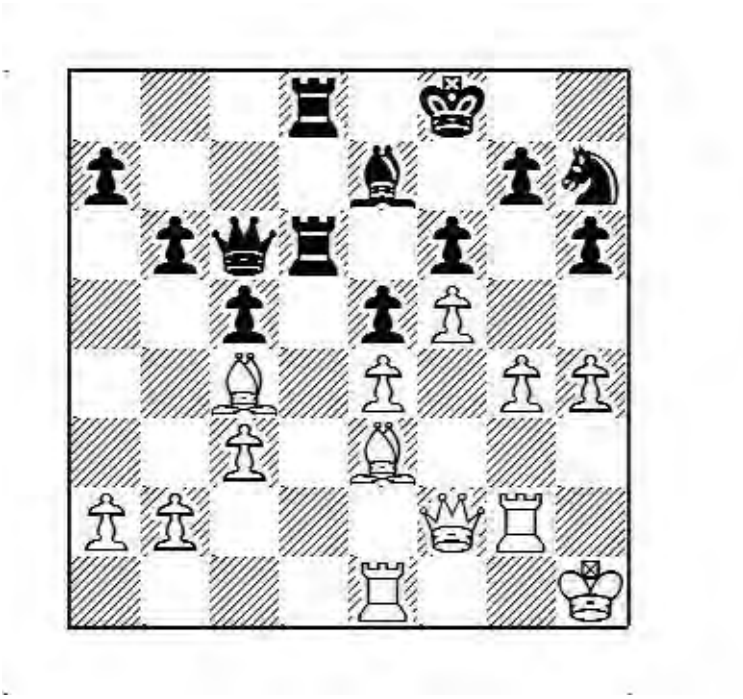
**25 … b6 26 Be2!**

Black must either fork over an exchange or allow White's bishop to lord over the powerful a2-g8 diagonal.

**26 … R3d6**

Black also cannot hold the position after 26 … Qxe4 27 Bxd3 Qxd3 28 Qf3.

**27 Bc4+ Kf8**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Should White play the immediate 28 Bd5, after

which Black will sacrifice the exchange or should he continue to

build with 28 Qf3 first. One plan is much stronger than the other.

**28 Bd5**

***Answer*:** White retains the advantage after this move, but crushing is 28 Qf3! when 28 … R6d7 (28 … b5 29 Bd5 Qc7 30 c4 is strategically hopeless for Black) runs into 29 g5! (the g-pawn continues to scale the position as deftly as a mountain goat on a rocky cliff and it becomes clear that Black's traditional buffer to prevent just such a move failed, since White's queen infiltrates via h5) 29 … fxg5 30 Qh5! (the h5-square is the portal which gives White's queen entrance to the mate threat) 30 … Bf6 (30 … Qf6? 31 hxg5 Nxg5 32 Bxg5 and Black is unable to recapture either way)

31 Qg6. “I have seized half your power. Does this make you half a man?” the queen mockingly asks Black’s king. There is no way to cover the h7-knight.

**28 … Rxd5**

Played with the philosophy: *I break it, I buy it*. Black can’t tolerate the mighty d5-bishop.

**29 exd5**

The e-pawn barges through, ignoring the black queen’s startled squeak of complaint.

**29 … Qxd5 30 b3 Qc6**

As mentioned about a dozen times before, I would try 30 … c4.

**31 Qe2**

White must challenge the d-file at some point.

**31 … Qd5 32 c4!**

White’s magic is light-squared dependent. If his influence recedes on them, so likewise, his magic will dissipate.

**32 … Qc6 33 Bg1 Rd7 34 Qe4**

White should convert the ending, mainly since Black’s minor pieces remain completely passive. Challenging the d-file with 34 Rd1 is the alternative.

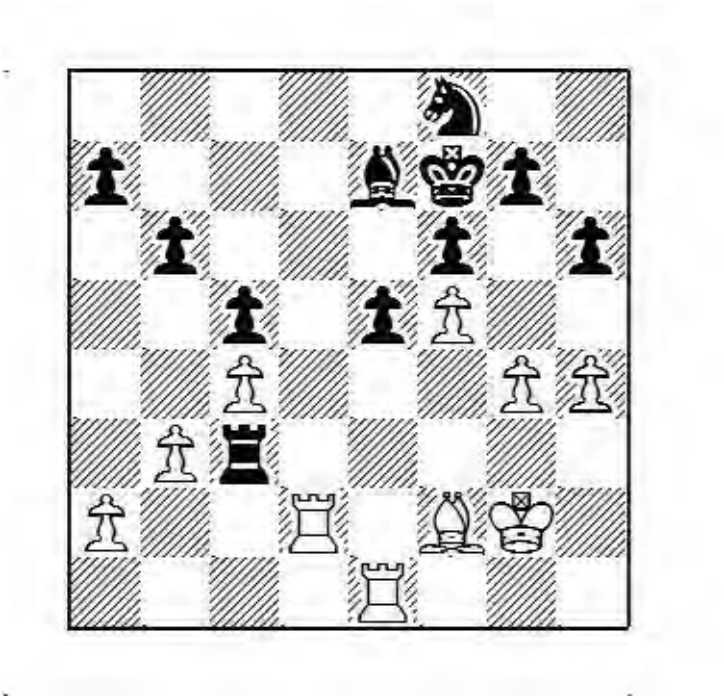
**34 … Qxe4 35 Rxe4 Rd1 36 Rge2 Ra1 37 Kg2 Kf7 38 Be3**

White can save a tempo over the game continuation with 38 Rd2 Nf8 39 Bf2.

**38 … Rb1 39 Rd2 Nf8 40 Bf2!**

Now he sees the plan. The key is to swap off Black’s most active piece, which is his rook.

**40 … Rc1 41 Re1 Rc3?!**



This creates a gap in the chain of Black’s reasoning. He should swap rooks, but this wouldn’t have saved him in the long run.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Immigration to the c3-square fails to improve the quality of life for Black's rook, and we sense a discordant element in the pattern. Concealed within is a barb, set for Black. White to play and win:

***Answer*:**

Step 1: Clear the e1-square for the bishop, who plans to levy a harsh tax on the black rook for the c3-occupation.

**42 Red1**

That which was once scattered, now regroups.

**42 … Ke8**

In war, invisibility of intent is a weapon. Black misses White's idea. However, even if 42 … b5 avoids the coming rook trap, it will not save the game after 43 cxb5 c4 44 Bxa7 cxb3 45 b6 Bc5 46 Rb1 bxa2 47 Rxa2 when the b-pawn's push costs Black more material.

**43 Re2! 1-0**

Step 2: Cover the e3-escape square, after which there is good no defence to the coming Be1. There is no defence to 43 … e4 44 Rxe4 (threatening to double rooks on the e-file) 44 … Nd7 45 Re2! (once again threatening Be1) 45 … Ne5 46 Bg3! (the bishop gives himself away, since his eyes are so much less affable than the rest of his face) 46 … a6 47 Bxe5 fxe5 48 Rxe5 and the position is hopeless for Black.

**Summary:** Items to keep in mind against the Reversed London System/New York System:

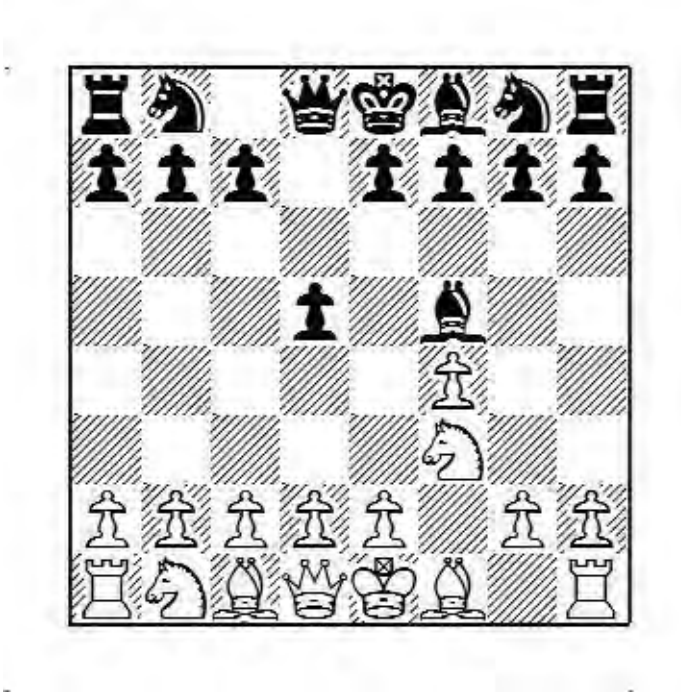
1. When Black plays an early … Nc6, White's best way to proceed may be e2-e3, Qe2, Nbd2 and e3-e4.

2. When Black delays … Nc6, then go for the plan Nc3, Qe1 and e2-e4, since in this version we don't worry about distracting … Nb4 and … Nd4 ideas.

3. I would avoid White's most popular plan Qe1 and c2-c3, which allows Black too many … c5-c4! central undermining tricks.

*Game 38*
**K.C.Arkell-S.Lalic**
London 1988

**1 f4 d5 2 Nf3 Bf5**



We take a look at Black's New York System setup against non-Leningrad systems.

**3 e3 Nf6 4 b3**

Instead of the queenside fianchetto, let's have a look at the Classical and Stonewall setup versus the New York System:

a) The Classical setup is quite playable with 4 d3 e6 5 Be2 Bd6 6 0-0 Nbd7:

a1) After 7 Nc3 c6 8 a3 Qc7 9 Rb1, A.Bryntse-B.Mattsson, correspondence 1967, play may logically go 9 … h6 10 Bd2 0-0 11 Qe1 Bh7 12 Qh4 Rfe8 13 g4!? with the kind of messy position most Classical Bird players enjoy.

***Question*:** In this game, Black refuses to play … h6.

Should we go after the bishop with 7 Nh4?

***Answer*:** I wouldn't do that at this moment, since the swap frees Black's position and may add pressure to our newly backward e3-pawn.

a2) For example, after 7 Nh4 0-0 8 Nxf5 exf5, Black's freedom of movement and space is more relevant than White's unimpressive bishop pair.

b) I would avoid the Stonewall versus the London setup with 4 d4, mainly since it feels illogical to weaken the e4-square when Black's entire strategy is to converge upon that very square. No further analysis is required to prove this point, but here is a sample anyway. After 4 … e6 5 Bd3 Be7 6 0-0 0-0 7 c3 (7 b3 looks more logical, but I still prefer Black after 7 … Ne4) 7 … Nbd7 8 Qc2 Bxd3 9 Qxd3 c5 10 Nbd2, Black already stands slightly better due to his good bishop, E.Fernandes-G.Vescovi, Vitoria 2006.

**4 … e6 5 Bb2 Be7 6 Be2**

Once, consumed by attacking zeal, I banged out the grossly premature 6 h3?. When we launch such statistically improbable looking ideas, in the back of our minds lurk the irrational thought: "This one will work!" Maybe this awful move really deserves two

question marks! I proceeded with my plan with a generous effusion of optimism, when the data clearly contradicted such a course. Our mistakes tend to be born of sudden impulse, yet are chillingly irrevocable. One of my in-laws, having had one too many at the local bar, boldly decided to get a tattoo on his arm of Woody Woodpecker smoking a cigar. I can tell you he deeply regretted the decision the following morning when his wife saw the tattoo:

a) Fortunately, my opponent replied in kind with 6 … h6? when my flawed idea now works out well. After 7 g4!, now the idea works wonderfully for White and following 7 … Bh7 8 d3 Nbd7 9 Nc3 c6 10 Qd2 Qc7 11 0-0-0 0-0-0 (Black wisely castles long to avoid White's kingside assault) 12 Rg1, White's kingside space gives him a pleasant edge, C.Lakdawala-P.Graves, San Diego (rapid) 2013.

b) My opponent and I both missed 6 … Ne4! which would have left me red-faced. After 7 Rg1 Bh4+ 8 Ke2 Ng3+ 9 Ke1 Nh5+! (covering the g7-pawn, while clearing the g3-square for the bishop) 10 Ke2 Bg3, White has a rather dismal position.

**6 … h6 7 0-0 c5 8 h3**

Warning Black that g2-g4 may be coming. GM Arkell's move is clearly more ambitious than 8 Ne5 Bh7 9 d3 Nbd7 with an even game, K.Miraoui-E.Neiman, France 2002.

**8 … Nc6 9 d3 0-0**

***Question*:** It seems to me like Black walks straight into her

ex-husband's (yes, they were once married) intent. Why?

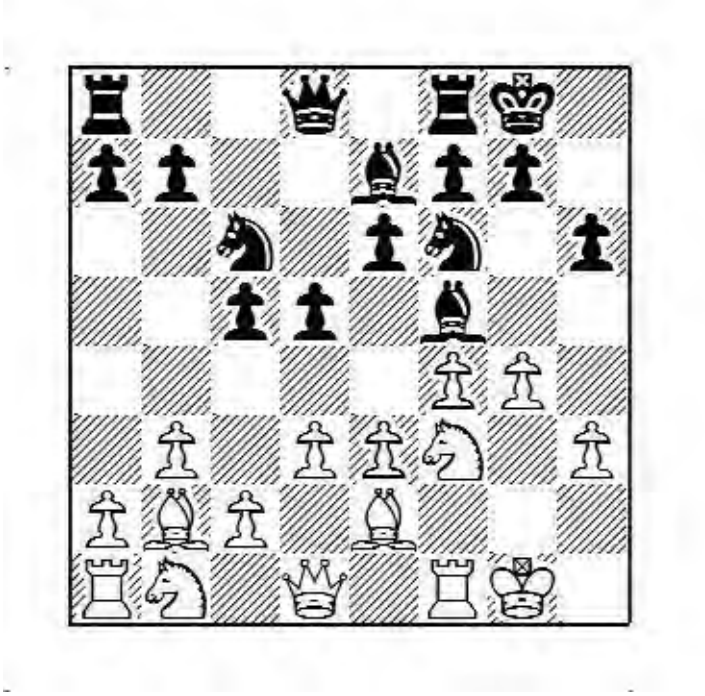
***Answer*:** For simple reasons: she believes in her defensive resources, and also perhaps she encourages him to play g2-g4 in the hopes of overextension.

***Question*:** Can Black castle queenside?

***Answer*:** Yes, this would appear to be a safer alternative. After 9 … Qc7 10 Nbd2 0-0-0 11 Qe1 Kb8 12 Ne5 Nxe5 13 Bxe5 Bd6 14 Nf3 Bxe5 15 Nxe5 Ne8, Black looks just fine to me, but oddly, the position is actually made *less* sharp by the fact that the players castled on opposite wings!

**10 g4!?**

A new move and to my mind, a consistent one. Good though? I'm not so certain! *Houdini* bellows outrage at White's last move, which to my mind is the logical 'B' to his earlier 'A' - the h3-move. Up until now the relationship between the two forces on the kingside had been one of courteous disinterest. The implication of such a provocative act is far reaching, since the position loses its semblance of order. When we wilfully complicate, our true motive is to contaminate our opponent's available data, and thereby poison the decision-making process. In war, the opponent's ignorance is our bliss. The safer 10 Nbd2 was played in all the other database games.



**10 … Bh7 11 Nbd2 Qc7**

Now … d5-d4 tricks are in the air. The immediate 11 … d4!? is also possible, with the idea of weakening White's kingside dark squares. In general though, Black, the defending side, should avoid closing the centre. After 12 e4 Qc7, now White can play 13 Kg2! when 13 … Qxf4?! is met with 14 Nxd4 with advantage to White.

**12 Ne5 Rad8**

Black can also provoke with 12 … Nxe5 13 Bxe5 Bd6!? 14 Bxf6 (more lively than exchanging on d6) 14 … gxf6 15 Qe1 Kg7 16 Qf2 Rg8 with chances for both sides. The comps slightly prefer Black here.

**13 Qe1**

White continues to build up his looming kingside assault.

**13 … Nd7**

Fighting for the e5-square. After 13 … Nb4 14 Bd1 d4 15 e4 Nd7 16 Nxd7 Rxd7 17 a3 Nc6 18 e5, *Houdini* prefers Black, while I would be happy to take White's side here, since the e4-square has been cleared for occupation.

**14 Nxc6 Qxc6**

14 … bxc6 is risky because White is by no means obliged to go all out for an attack and can enter Nimzo-Indian mode with 15 Nf3, simply hoping to take advantage of Black's queenside structural defects later in the game.

**15 Nf3 b5**

Reminding White that she may one day engage in a queenside assault of her own.

**16 Qg3**

The queen is clearly a woman who carries a burden of dark resolve. White's pieces continue to mass on the kingside.

**16 … a6?!**

This move seems a waste of time, giving White a precious move for his kingside assault. She should get on with it and strike with 16 … c4!. Chances remain balanced after 17 Bd4.

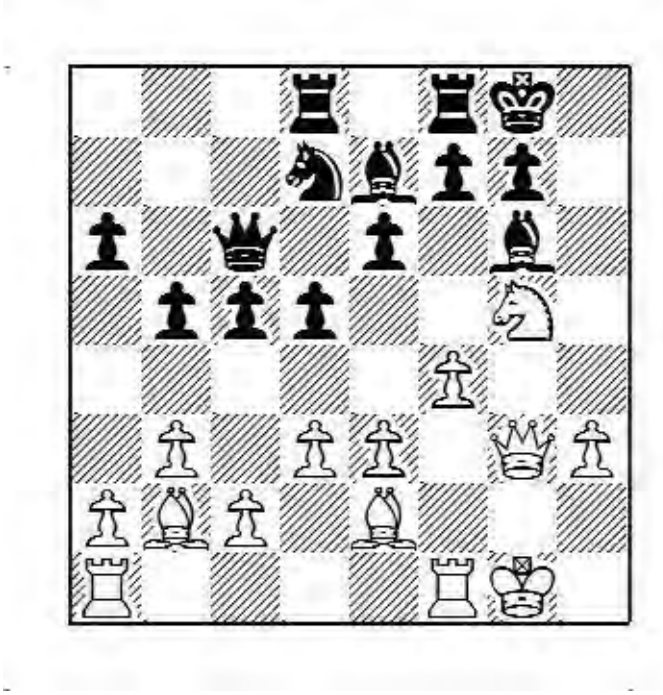
**17 g5**

White rides the attack at manic speed.

**17 … hxg5**

The careless 17 … h5?! will allow White to generate traction on the light squares after 18 Nh4! (intending g5-g6!) 18 … Bg6 19 Nxg6 fxg6 20 c4!.

**18 Nxg5 Bg6?!**



Necessary was 18 … Bf6 though after 19 Nxh7 Kxh7 20 Bxf6 Nxf6 21 Qh4+ Kg8 22 Kh2, White will use train his rooks on the g-file with strong pressure against the black kingside.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black's last move allowed

White to unleash a little combination. Do you see it?

***Answer*:** Attraction/double attack.

**19 Nxe6!**

"Mercy is a chemical defect found only in the weak," declares the knight.

**19 … Qxe6**

Also, 19 … fxe6? just hangs a pawn for nothing after 20 Qxg6.

**20 f5!**

White regains the piece with the superior position, due to the g7-mate threat, which fixes Black's g6-bishop in place.

**20 … Qd6**

Tough for Black too is 20 … Qc6 21 fxg6 Qxg6 22 Qxg6 fxg6 with a difficult ending.

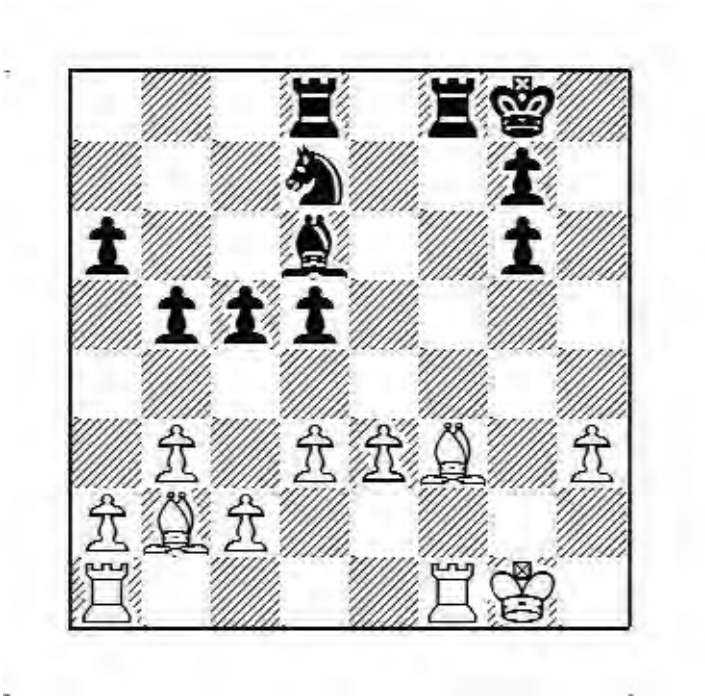
**21 Qxd6**

The sisters greet one another with austere courtesy, yet little warmth. Arkell is forced to swap queens and abandon his attack. In return, he receives a promising ending, which is of course not an issue for him, since the endgame is his forte.

**21 … Bxd6 22 fxg6 fxg6**

White has the better ending due to bishop pair and a healthy queenside majority, when juxtaposed with Black's crippled kingside majority, which essentially leaves her down a pawn.

**23 Bf3**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Black can play her knight to either the f6- or b6-square to cover the d5-pawn. One square is clearly worse than the other. Which one would you play to?

**23 … Nb6?**

This allows a powerful undermining.

***Answer*:** Black should take her chances with 23 … Nf6! inviting 24 Bxf6!?.

***Question*:** Didn't playing … Nf6 simply hang the d-pawn?

***Answer*:** *Not* sacrificing here is akin to the refusal of seeing a doctor when you are bleeding to death, citing "The cost is too high". There is no question that we live in a material age. But sometimes one must look deeply into an object to discover its worth. Black does indeed lose her d-pawn, yet in doing so provokes opposite-coloured bishops, thereby enhancing her drawing chances considerably. After 24 Bxf6 (White can also decline the pawn and try to milk his strategic advantages with 24 a4 though Black is much better off here than in the game's continuation after 24 … b4) 24 … gxf6 25 Bxd5+ Kg7, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops insures drawing chances.

**24 a4!**

White is unfazable, refusing to veer even an iota. Threat: a5, followed by Bxd5+. This powerful undermining idea opens lines while destabilizing the d5-pawn. Now from White's perspective, the initiative is as easily attained as the air we breathe.

**24 … bxa4**

Black gets tied up quickly after 24 … Be7? 25 axb5 axb5 26 Ra6 Rb8 27 Be5 Rb7.

**25 bxa4 Be7 26 a5 Na8**

You know matters are not going well when your knight is herded to the bleak a8-square.

**27 Rab1**

Eyeing future invasions on the b7- and b6-squares, that is, if Black's knight moves.

**27 … Bg5 28 e4**

Now White creates a passed pawn.

**28 … Be3+ 29 Kg2 d4**

After 29 … dxe4 30 Bxe4 g5?, 31 Rxf8+ Rxf8 32 Be5! allows White to dominate.

**30 Ba3 Rf7 31 Bg4**

There is no reason to take the c5-pawn and allow a black rook into the position after 31 Bxc5?! Rc7 32 Bb4 Rxc2+.

**31 … Re7 32 Rb2**

When you are in control and the opponent remains void of counterplay, there is no reason to proceed at a breakneck pace. Now he really does threaten to capture the c5-pawn.

**32 … Re5**

Also hopeless is 32 … Rc7 33 Rfb1.

**33 Rb7 c4**

Uncovering an attack on the a5-pawn.

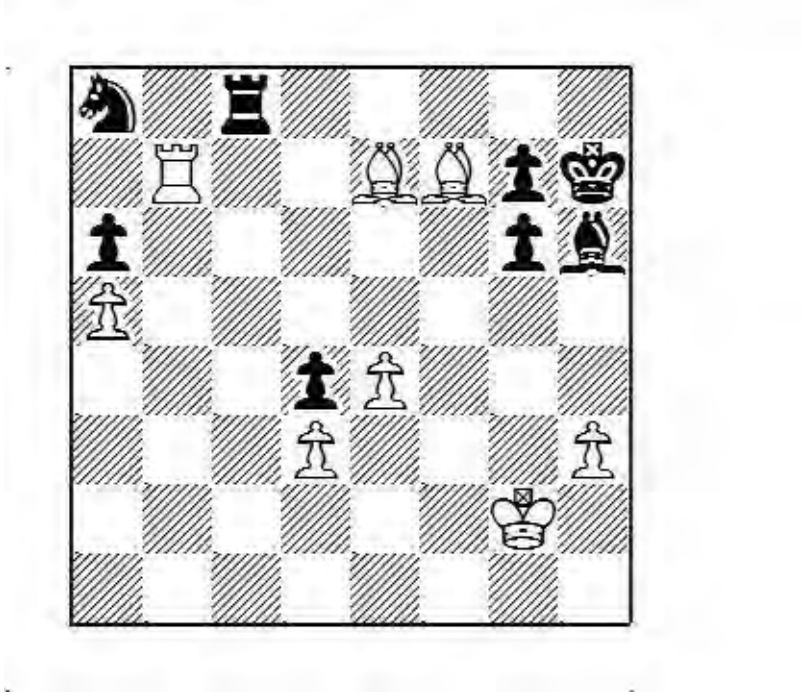
**34 Rff7 Bh6 35 Bb4**

Everything is covered and Black's minor pieces are forced into dismal servitude.

**35 … cxd3 36 cxd3 Rb5 37 Be6!**

Every white piece works in overdrive while black bishop and knight's eyes bulge and flutter in mimicry of strangulation victims.

**37 … Rxb7 38 Rxb7+ Kh7 39 Be7 Re8 40 Bf7 Rc8**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Come up with a clear winning plan for White.

***Answer*:** Shepherd White's e-pawn up the board.

**41 Bd6!**

Shepherd guides the e-pawn up the board.

**41 … Bd2 42 e5**

Of course, the loss of the a5-pawn is irrelevant now.

**42 … Bxa5 43 e6 Bc7**

Also, after 43 … Bd8, 44 e7 picks up a piece.

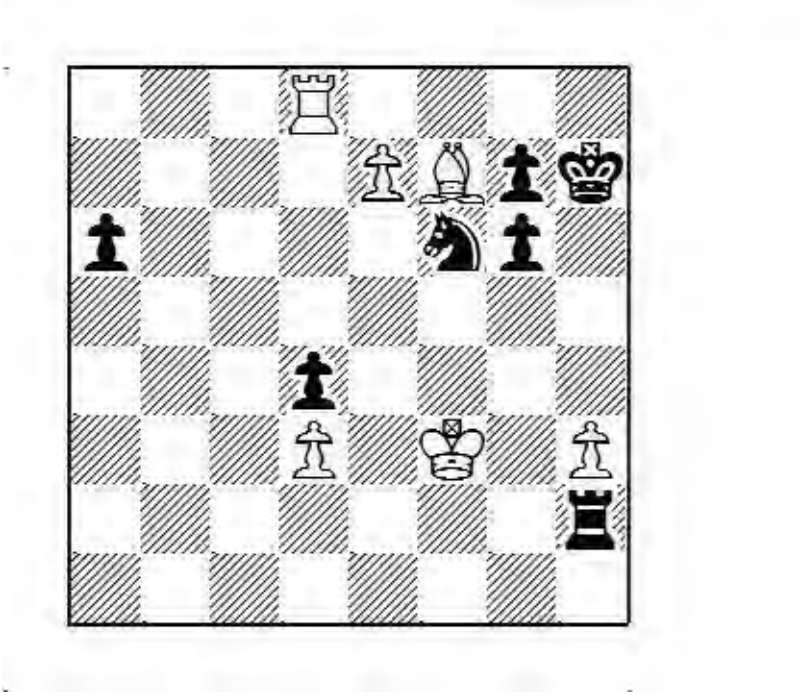
**44 Bxc7 Nxc7 45 e7**

Threat: Rxc7 and e8Q.

**45 … Ne8 46 Rd7**

Threat: Rd8, to which there is no good answer.

**46 … Nf6 47 Rd8 Rc2+ 48 Kf3 Rh2 1-0**

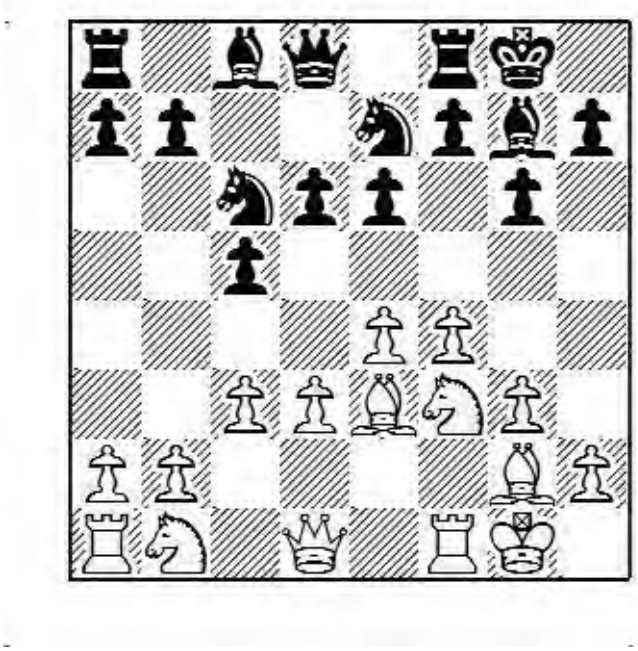


The game might finish 49 Bg8+! Kh6 (the king ducks into a corner the way a cockroach scurries out of sight when the kitchen light is suddenly turned on at midnight) 50 Be6 (White threatens Rf8 and Rxf6, eliminating the defender of the promotion square) 50 … Rh1 and 51 Rf8 is curtains for Black, whose anguished knight looks left, right and then at the ceiling, as if seeking escape from the inescapable.

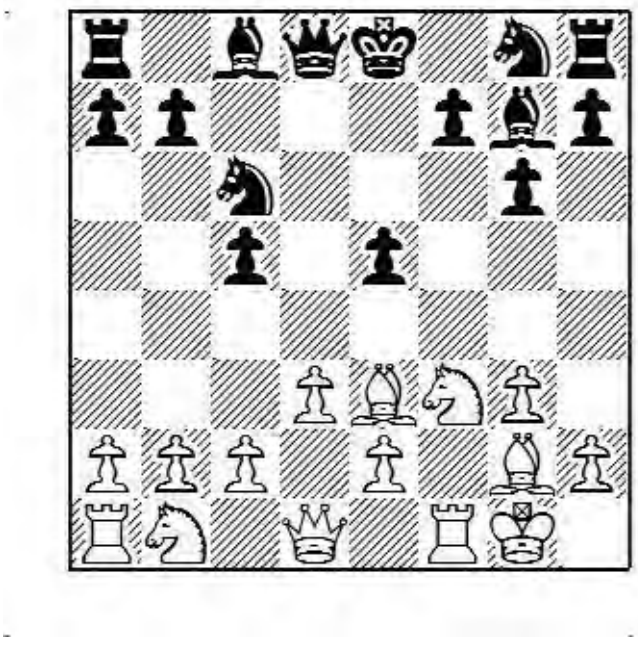
**Summary:** Arkell's early h2-h3!? and g2-g4!? looks like an interesting yet risky way to meet Black's New York System.

# Chapter Six
# Bird's versus Reversed English Set-ups

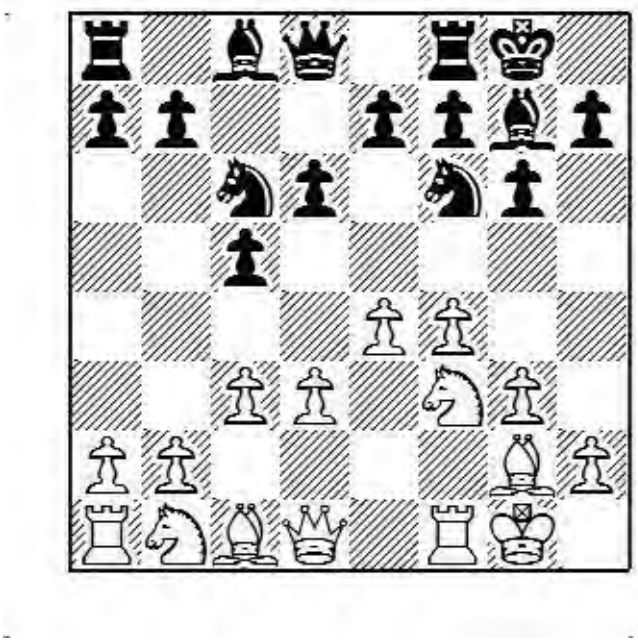
In this chapter we examine one of Black's most popular and flexible setups, the Reversed English versus our Bird's Opening. We will look at the … Nf6, … e7-e6 and … Ne7 line first.



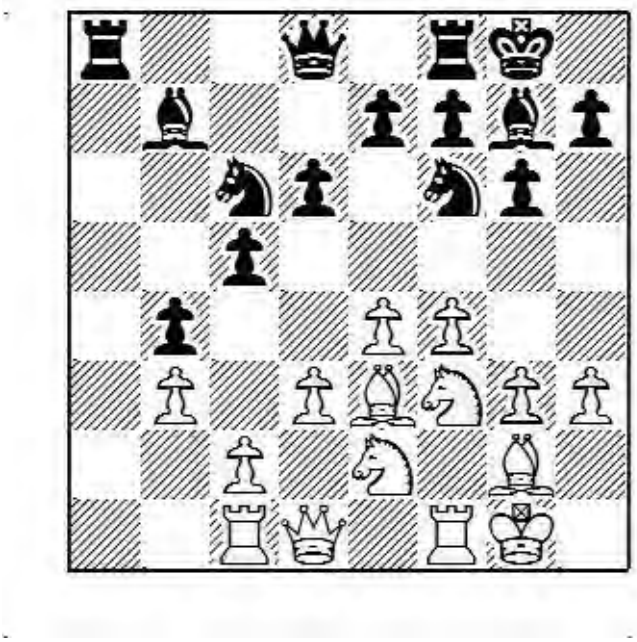
The Botvinnik System … e7-e5 setups (which surprisingly, work out very badly for Black) will be examined too.



One direct transposition to the Closed Sicilian will also be featured. Our strategy against the Reversed English is 'The Clamp'.



The player's desires are cast into sharp relief, where White plays c2-c3, preparing to annex central space with an eventual d3-d4. Black, on the other hand, tends to proceed with serene indifference to our intent, acting as if it was invisible, by making queenside gains with … Rb8, … b7-b5 and … b5-b4.



Rivals tend to coalesce when both sides seek to lay claim to a single precious resource. The positions we reach tend to be the complete opposite, where both sides respond catatonically to the other's intent, by not responding at all, and instead, pursuing our individual agendas.

*Game 39*
**V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov**
World Championships Final (Game 11), Baguio City 1978

**1 g3**

Let me pre-empt your question by saying that we soon will transpose to Bird's versus the Reversed English. Our move-order runs: 1 f4 c5 (I wish to point out that 1 … d6 2 Nf3

Nf6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 c5 7 Nc3 Nc6 8 Nh4!? Rb8 9 f5!?, A.Jakubiec-S.Galdunts, Griesheim 2003, doesn't score well for White in this position and I think the idea to hold back on e4 isn't very effective, so we won't be covering it) 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 0-0 d6 6 d3 Nf6 (we will also examine structures arising from 6 … e6; 6 … e5 and even versions where Black refuses to develop the g8-knight and simply proceeds to gain queenside space with … Rb8 and … b5) 7 e4 0-0 8 c3 when we reach the stem game continuation.

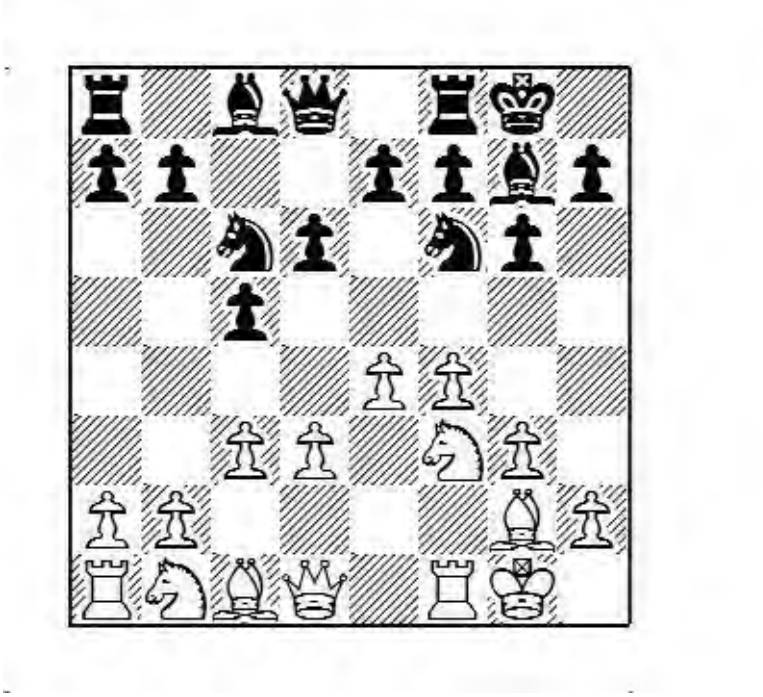
**1 … c5**

Black mainly tries to transpose to Closed Sicilian, which we for the most part deny, except when Black plays an early … Nf6.

**2 Bg2 Nc6 3 e4 g6 4 d3 Bg7 5 f4 d6 6 Nf3 Nf6**

We begin by looking at versions of Black's … Nf6 deployment, the most straightforward move.

**7 0-0 0-0 8 c3**



Okay, here we are. White's last move introduces a hybrid line, similar to Closed Sicilian, dubbed 'The Clamp'.

***Question*:** What is White's idea behind 8 c3?

***Answer*:** Very simply, White plays a big centre with d3-d4 at some stage and attempts to squeeze Black out.

***Question*:** Are we going to look at transposition to Closed Sicilian with 8 Nc3?

***Answer*:** Yes, in fact, we cover it in the following two games, but *only* when Black plays an early … Nf6 (which I believe is White's most promising Closed Sicilian variant). On early … e7-e6 and … e7-e5 lines, which we will look at later in the chapter, we proceed in non-Closed Sicilian fashion with the Clamp system.

**8 … Rb8**

Black's main move, intending to gain queenside space and chip away at c3, with … b7-b5 and … b5-b4.

***Question*:** Are we covering Classical and Stonewall versus Black's English setup?

***Answer*:** We touch upon these systems briefly in the next and final chapter. In this one, we only cover the Reversed Leningrad, since I just don't have room in the book to cover all three. Tim Taylor covered the Classical versus the Reversed English in his *Bird's opening* book, and I suggest you pick that one up if you want a fuller reference.

Black can also continue 8 … Bg4 9 h3 Bxf3 10 Qxf3 Nd7 11 Be3 Rc8! (reinforcing the c6-knight to play … b7-b5) 12 g4 (after 12 a4 a6 13 Na3 b5 14 axb5 axb5 15 Nxb5 Rb8, A.Strikovic-S.Vega Gutierrez, Las Palmas 2013, White can now speculate with 16 Na3 Rxb2 17 Nc4 Rb3 18 e5 Ndb8 19 Rac1 dxe5 20 Qd1 exf4 21 Qxb3 fxe3 22 Rce1 when Black has compensation for the exchange) 12 … b5 13 a3 a5 14 Nd2 Nb6 15 Qf2 b4 16 axb4 axb4 17 Rfc1 Qd7, Ye Jiangchuan-B.Gelfand, Shenyang 2000. White maintains a tiny edge after 18 Bf1, intending d3-d4 next.

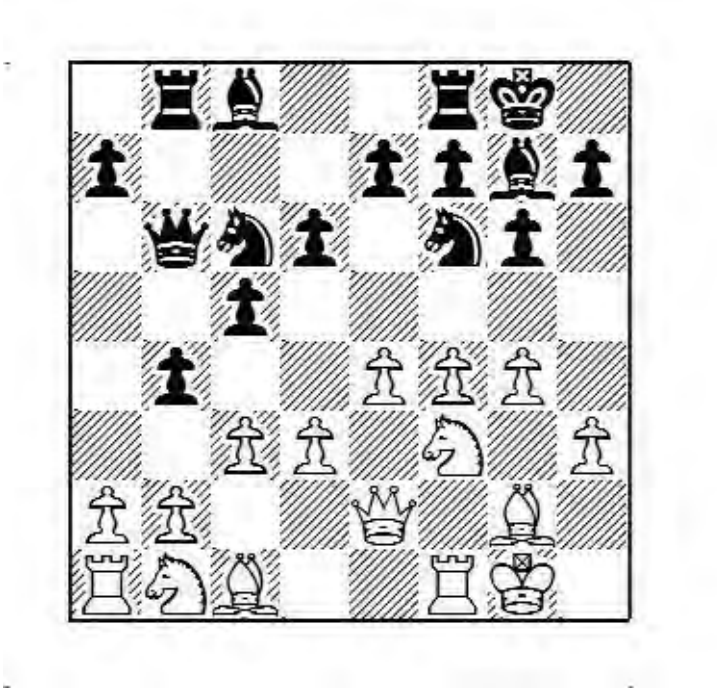
**9 Qe2**

This move was a theoretical novelty then.

**9 … Ne8**

A look at the alternatives:

a) 9 … b5 10 h3 Qb6 11 g4 (11 Na3 can also be considered, when … b5-b4 is always met with Nc4) 11 … b4!?.



This move induces a d4-hole, but also closes the queenside. Thus, White is given a free hand to attack on the other side of the board (I would have kept matters fluid with 11 … Nd7). Following 12 c4 a5 13 Nbd2 Nd7 14 Rb1 a4 15 Kh1 (White just lives with the d4-hole and continues to prep a kingside assault) 15 … Bb7 16 Qe1 e6 17 Qh4 Rbe8 18 Ng5 (inducing a weakening of Black's kingside pawn front) 18 … h6 19 Ngf3 f5 20 Qg3 Kh7

21 Rg1 Bh8?! (I would open the centre with 21 … fxe4 22 Nxe4 Nd4) 22 gxf5 gxf5 23 Qh4 Bf6? (23 … Bg7 was necessary) 24 Ng5+ Kg7 (24 … Bxg5 25 fxg5 won't save Black either) 25 exf5 exf5 (25 … Nd4 had to be played) 26 Bd5, Black's game collapses, R.Claverie-J.Leiva Rodriguez, Montevideo 2011.

b) 9 … Bg4 makes more sense, now that White played a move with his queen. Following 10 h3 Bxf3 11 Qxf3, the minor piece trade shows that White's Qe2 isn't such a great move, since now White loses a tempo (it's probably better to play 11 Bxf3 e6 12 Be3 Nd7 13 Bf2). After 11 … Ne8 12 Nd2 b5 13 a3 a5 14 e5! (White regains the lost tempo on Black's c6-knight) 14 … Rc8 15 a4 (creating a puncture on the c4-square) 15 … b4, S.Nadyrhanov-J.Nesterov, Bishkek 1993, now I would consider a speculative pawn sacrifice with 16 Ne4!? dxe5 17 f5 when White's kingside play and light square domination compensate for the missing pawn.

**10 Be3 Nc7**

***Question*:** Where is Black going with this knight?

***Answer*:** In these positions, a common theme for Black is to achieve … b5-b4 and then work on c3- and d4-squares with … Nb5. The obvious issue with this plan is that it removes a defender from Black's king.

**11 d4**

The Clamp arises. Korchnoi relies on his central space to try and achieve an advantage.

**11 … cxd4 12 cxd4 Bg4**

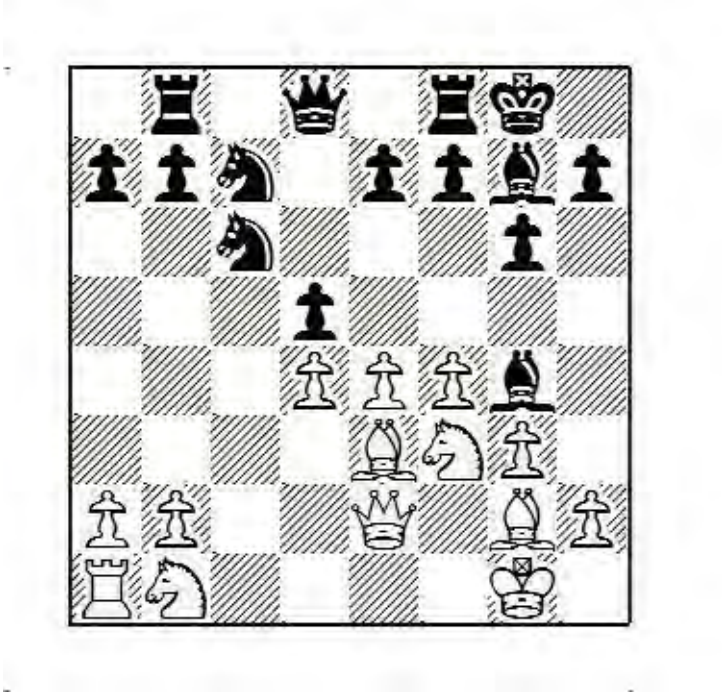
Threat: … Nxd4. In the Clamp, Black sometimes swaps away the bishop for a knight, in the hopes of reducing White's kingside attacking potential, but who says we *must* attack? White can simply play in the centre with the bishop pair.

**13 Rd1**

Covering the d4-pawn. White is just going to use his spatial plus to choke Black without resorting to extreme measures.

**13 … d5!**

Well timed. Karpov regains central space and produces a light square puncture on f5.



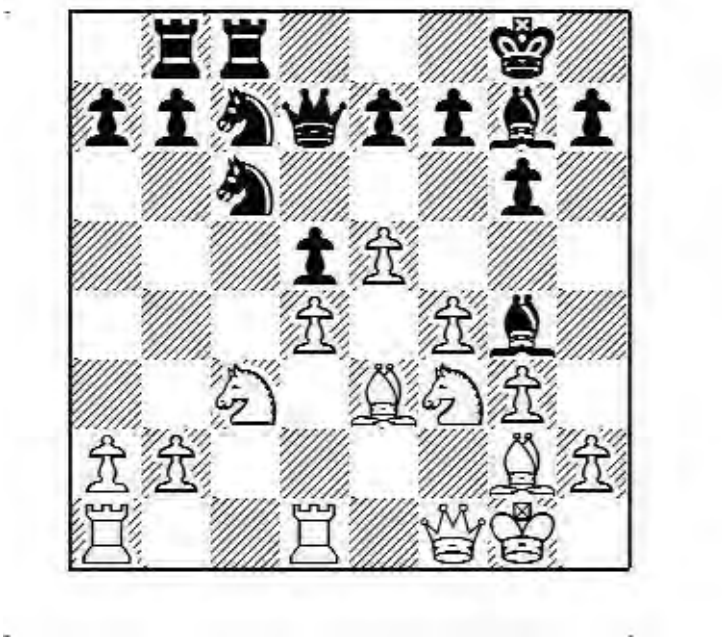
**14 e5 Qd7**

Now it will be harder for White to achieve h2-h3, since he requires contortion with Qf1 to implement this plan.

**15 Nc3 Rfc8**

Karpov loads up on the queenside, relying on the inherent soundness of his structure to safeguard his king.

**16 Qf1!**



Breaking the pin and seizing control over the h3-square! Just because a plan is void of fancy decorations and frills, doesn't mean it isn't effective.

**16 … b5**

Karpov begins to advance on the queenside. His last move creates a hole on c5 though.

**17 h3 Bxf3**

I remember GM Bent Larsen annotating this move with “Like a good boy.” The piece trade is a natural move, but one which gives White a nagging edge. Black can also consider the more complex line 17 … b4! 18 Ne2 (18 hxg4 bxc3 19 bxc3 Qxg4 20 Bf2 Na5 and Black’s control over the c4-square and pressure against the backward c3-pawn insure him of equality at a minimum) 18 … Bf5 19 g4 Be4 20 Ng3 b3 with a complex position where I don’t believe Black stands worse.

**18 Bxf3**

At long last, White picks up the bishop pair. Korchnoi chooses to take the positional route, rather than fish for a kingside attack with 18 Qxf3 e6 19 g4 intending Ne2-g3 and an eventual f5-break. With this plan, White narrows his investigation to the confines of the kingside, while ignoring Black’s build-up on the other side of the board.

**18 … b4 19 Bg4!**

The careless 19 Na4?! allows Black a discovery trick with 19 … Nxd4 and now if 20 Nc5? Nxf3+ is check, and Black wins a pawn. Korchnoi’s last move prevents this line by denying Black the … Nf3+ zwischenzug.

**19 … e6 20 Na4 Na5**

The discovery 20 … Nxd4?? now fails miserably to 21 Nc5 Qe7 22 Bxd4 Nb5 23 Nb3 and White picks up a piece.

**21 Nc5**

The knight asserts command of the c5-square. Now we see the down side of Black’s earlier … b5-push.

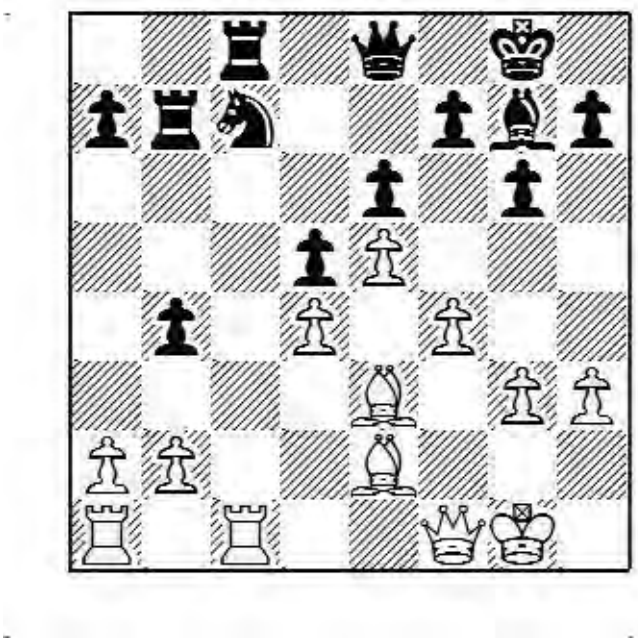
**21 … Qe8 22 Be2**

Covering the c4-square.

**22 … Nb7**

Challenging White’s c5-outpost.

**23 Nxb7 Rxb7 24 Rdc1**



Korchnoi has come out on top, with a central and kingside space advantage, the bishop pair and greater influence on the light squares.

**24 … Qd7 25 Rc2**

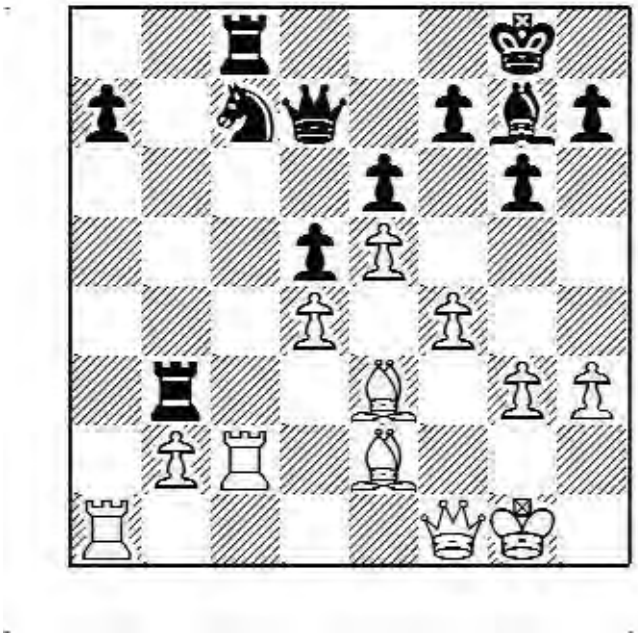
Korchnoi obviously goads 25 … b3.

**25 … b3?**

It's a trap! Karpov chooses an inopportune moment to take action by launching a badly mistimed counterstrike. Intuition sometimes warns us of hidden and impending dangers by a subconscious signal called fear. Here we see a rare example of Karpov being unaware of the position's hidden perils, with his defensive guard down. Correct was 25 … Rcb8.

**26 axb3 Rxb3?**

However, even after 26 … Rcb8, 27 Bd1! retains the extra pawn, since 27 … Rxb3?! loses to 28 Rxa7 R8b7 29 Rxb7 Rxb7 30 Be2 and White keeps a solid extra pawn.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Karpov just walked into

Korchnoi's trap. White to play and force the win of material:

***Answer*:** Pins.

**27 Qc1!**

The witch stirs a fuming vat, adding pinches of secret ingredients, mingled with her incantations. Korchnoi's last move resonates with deep implication. The position is no democracy, but rather a pyramidal structure, ruled exclusively by White's bullying major pieces. In the space of a single move, he manages to:

1. Cover the loose e3-bishop.

2. Add heat to the c7-pin.

3. Threaten Rxa7.

4. Threaten Ba6.

**27 … Rb7**

The perfect camouflage allows one to hide in plain sight. No choice, but now Korchnoi makes good use of the pin with the next move.

**28 Ba6!**

Black's humourless rooks miss the bishop's punchline. When karma blesses us with favourable geometry, all we can do is to gape in gratified wonder at our good fortune. White picks up a full exchange. However, the state of mind most dangerous to us is one of overconfident, suppressed exultation. Note how Korchnoi refused to give Karpov even an iota of a chance in the mop-up period.

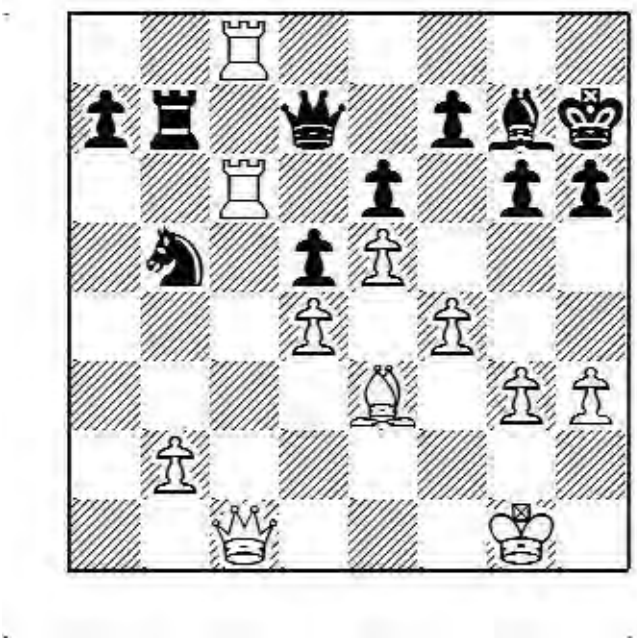
**28 … Rcb8**

There is nothing more awful than that familiar shock of that head-shaking, chagrined enlightenment, when we realize that we just threw away the game.

**29 Bxb7 Rxb7 30 Ra3!**

The coming Rac3 shatters the c7-blockade.

**30 … h6 31 Rac3 Nb5 32 Rc8+ Kh7 33 R2c6**



Black is nearly in zugzwang.

**33 … f6**

Karpov hopes to open the kingside to make White's king more insecure. However by doing so, he makes his own king less safe.

**34 Kg2 Qf7 35 Qc2**

Targeting the g6-weakness and cutting off all future … Qf5 infiltration ideas.

**35 … a5 36 g4**

Black must now be on alert for the f4-f5 break.

**36 … fxe5**

Also futile is 36 … f5 37 Kg3 h5 38 gxh5 gxh5 39 Kh2 a4 40 Ra8 Na7 41 Ra6 and the a4-pawn falls. Following 41 … Qd7 42 Rxa4 Rxb2 43 Qxb2 Qxa4 44 Qb8 Qc2+ 45 Kg3 Qe2 46 Qg8+ Kg6 47 Qxe6+ Kh7 48 Qxf5+ Kh6 49 Qg5+ Kh7 50 f5 Qe1+ 51 Bf2 Qc3+ 52 Kg2, Black gets mated.

**37 fxe5 a4 38 Ra8 Na7 39 Ra6!**

The a-pawn falls.

**39 … Qe7**

Also, 39 … Qd7 40 Kg3 and the a4-pawn is lost all the same.

**40 Rxa4 Rc7 41 Qb3 Nc6 42 Ra1 Nb4**

When our position is lost, the most we can achieve is to set up feverish plots and traps, as well as poke, prod and annoy the opponent with mini digressions, hoping to distract him or her from the correct path.

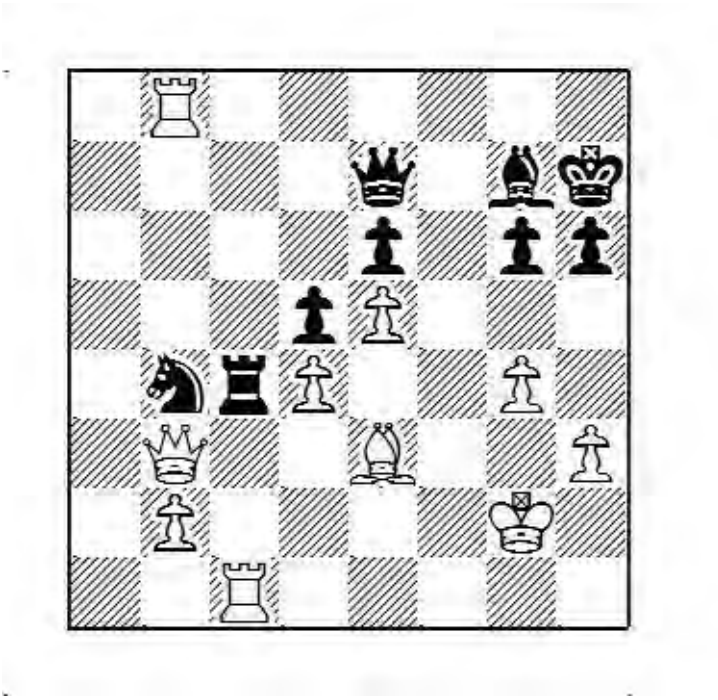
**43 Rc1**

Oh, no you don't! Korchnoi covers against c2-infiltration attempts.

**43 … Rc4!**

When tossed into a hostile environment, survival becomes the primary goal of life. Karpovs offers up a pawn to open the long light-squared diagonal. Korchnoi wisely declines.

**44 Rb8!**



Threat: Rxc4, followed by Qxb4. When someone is angry with you and then makes a big show of ignoring you, then isn't it a case of being ostentatiously ignored? Korchnoi refuses to snap at the c4-bait, since in doing so he opens himself up for light-squared tricks played against his king. Although 44 Rxc4?! dxc4 45 Qxc4 Qb7+ 46 Kg3 Qxa8 47 Qxb4 is still lost for Black, he will get better chances than what he got in the game.

**44 … Rxc1 45 Bxc1 Qc7**

Karpov resourcefully finds a path into White's position after all, but it's just not enough to save him.

**46 Rxb4 Qxc1 47 Qd3**

Covering against all checks and targeting the g6-weakness.

**47 … h5 48 Rb6!**

There is no reason to allow 48 gxh5 Qg5+ 49 Kf1 Qxh5.

**48 … Bh6**

He won't have time for … Be3 and … Qg1+.

**49 gxh5**

Also, 49 Rxe6 Qxb2+ 50 Kg3 h4+ 51 Kf3! wins.

**49 … Qg5+**

The queen tends to overcompensate for her polite upbringing by being as rude as she possibly can be to everyone she meets. The kingside grows into a region of diminishing probability for Black's perpetual check project. The alternative 49 … Be3 is too slow as after 50 Qxg6+ Kh8 51 Rb8+ Qc8 52 Rxc8 mate!

**50 Qg3 Qd2+ 1-0**

There's no need to play on as after 51 Qf2 Qg5+ 52 Kh2, White's queen and king deal with the black queen's tantrums as strict parents do with an insubordinate child. The checks come to a completion.

**Summary:** You can play the 8 c3 Clamp after … Nf6 English lines, but I actually prefer a direct transposition to the Closed Sicilian with 8 Nc3, as in the next couple of games.

*Game 40*
**B.V.Spassky-E.P.Geller**
Candidates Match (Game 6), Sokhumi 1968

**1 e4**

Our Bird's Opening move-order runs 1 f4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 0-0 d6 6 d3 Nf6 7 e4 (or 7 Nc3 0-0 8 e4) 7 … 0-0 8 Nc3.

**1 … c5 2 Nc3**

Sometimes dusting off a discarded, cobwebby line (the Closed Sicilian was a rare guest in 1968, until Spassky's success popularized it) can have the same effect on a booked-up opponent as a theoretical novelty in a trendy variation. Spassky surprised the super-theoretical Geller with Closed Sicilian three times in their match. Final result: Spassky 3-0 Geller.

**2 … d6 3 g3 Nc6 4 Bg2 g6 5 d3 Bg7 6 f4 Nf6 7 Nf3 0-0**

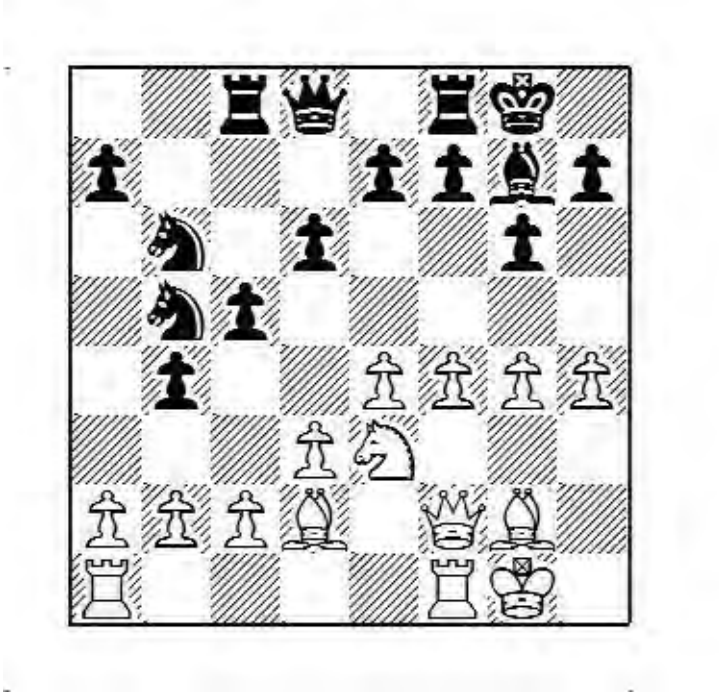
Let us consider 7 … Bg4.

***Question*:** Why is Black willing to hand over the bishop pair?

***Answer*:** Early … Bg4 and … Bxf3 themes are common in the Closed Sicilian (and also the Clamp System lines). Black sometimes considers it a reasonable trade-off, since he or she is willing to concede the bishop pair to reduce White's kingside attacking force and weaken control over the contested d4-square.

After 7 … Bg4 8 h3 Bxf3 9 Qxf3 0-0 10 0-0 Rc8, we look at two branches:

a) 11 g4 Nd4 12 Qf2 b5 13 Nd1 b4 14 Ne3 Nd7 15 h4 Nb6 16 Bd2 Nb5



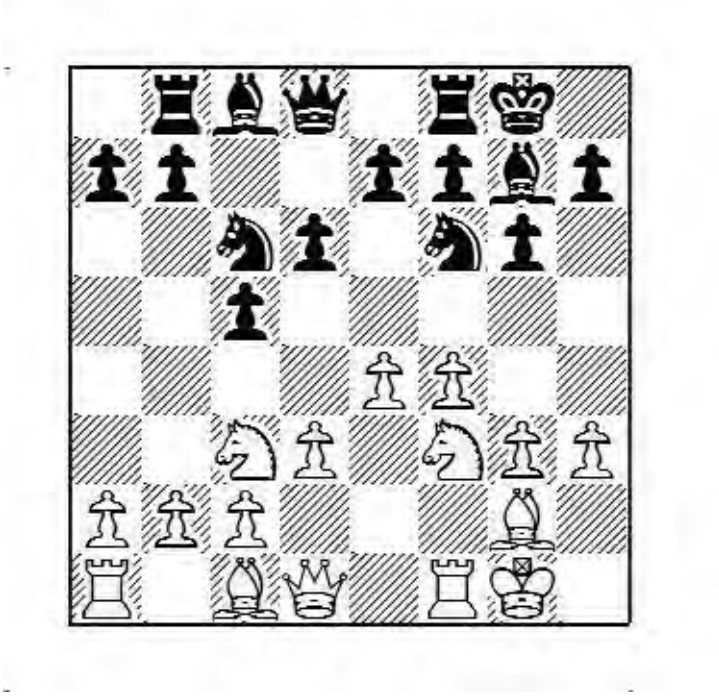
17 b3!? (Short is not the type to go for a passive and safer version with 17 Rab1 Na4 18 Bc1) 17 … Bxa1 18 Rxa1 when of course the greedy comps condemn Short's sacrifice as unsound, but he had the last word, since he managed to pull off a winning attack later on, N.Short-M.Narciso Dublan, Lanzarote 2003.

b) 11 Be3 Nd7 12 Kh1 Qa5 13 Bd2 Nd4 14 Qd1 Qa6 (intending to open the queenside with … c4 next) 15 Nd5 Nc6 16 Bc3 (Spassky hopes to eliminate the black king's best defender) 16 … Nf6?! (White seizes the advantage after this passive response. Black should risk 16 … Bxc3 17 bxc3 e6 18 Ne3 b5 19 Qd2 Qa5 when at least Black gets queenside play in exchange for White's kingside attacking chances) 17 Qd2 Nxd5 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 19 exd5 Nb8 (19 … Nd4 is met with 20 g4 intending c2-c3 next) 20 Rae1 Rce8 21 Qc3+ Kg8 22 Re3! Qb6 (not 22 … Qxa2? as after 23 b3 Qa6 24 Rfe1m White regains the lost pawn favourably) 23 Rfe1 Qd8 24 g4 and Black found himself tied down and without counterplay, B.Spassky-K.Robatsch, Germany 1984.

**8 0-0**

We go old school, transposing to the Closed Sicilian, but only versus the … Nf6 lines.

**8 … Rb8 9 h3**



I think this is White's best move in the position.

***Question*:** What is the move's purpose?

***Answer*:** It's threefold:

1. White can post his bishop on e3, without fear of … Ng4.

2. White prevents the option … Bg4 and … Bxf3, a swap which reduces White's kingside attacking fuel and weakens the d4-square.

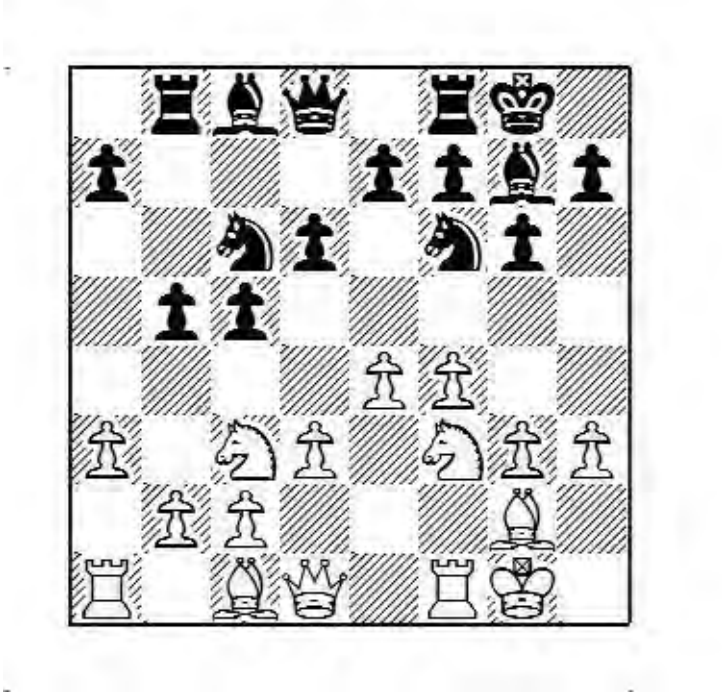
3. White can expand later on the kingside with g3-g4 and f4-f5, with an attacking plan common to both Closed Sicilian and Sicilian Grand Prix, which goes Qe1-h4, Bh6 and Ng5, loading up on Black's often under-defended king in this line.

A rather direct way of handling the kingside assault is 9 Nh4?!. As mentioned in the last game, the Nh4?! and f4-f5 plan seems far less effective than the way Spassky plays it in this game. After 9 … Nd4 10 f5 b5 11 Bg5 b4 12 Nb1!? Nd7 13 Nd2 Ne5 14 Kh1 a5 15 Rb1 a4 16 Nhf3 (an admission that his earlier Nh4?! went nowhere) 16 … Nexf3 (the greedy 16 … gxf5!? offers White some compensation for the pawn after 17 Nxe5 dxe5 18 exf5 Nxf5 19 Nc4) 17 Nxf3 Nb5 18 Qd2 a3!, B.Spassky-E.Geller, Candidates (2nd matchgame), Sukhumi 1968, White experiences serious strategic difficulties on the queenside, while his kingside attack has barely started. White only won this game because it was Spassky at the helm.

**9 … b5**

Black gains valuable queenside ground.

**10 a3**



***Question*:** This move induces a future swap on b4, which

opens the queenside further. Is this wise on White's part?

***Answer*:** When it comes to a wing where our opponent owns more space, our general policy should be one of wary non-intervention, whenever possible. This position is an exception to the general rule. When White avoids the swap of a-pawns he is in danger of a queenside collapse, as in Spassky's game versus Geller in the above notes (although Spassky won anyway!).

**10 … a5 11 Be3 b4**

Instead, 11 … Nd7 forces White to waste a tempo on Rb1. After 12 Rb1 b4 13 axb4 axb4 14 Ne2 Bb7 15 g4 Ra8 16 c4!? e6 17 g5 Re8 18 h4 d5 19 e5 Ne7 20 Ng3 Qc7 21 Bf2 Nf5 22 Rc1 Nxg3 23 Bxg3 Red8 24 Qe2 Ra2 25 Bf2 Bf8 26 Nh2 (remember this plan from Chapter 2?) 26 … dxc4 27 dxc4 Bxg2 28 Kxg2 h5! 29 gxh6 Bxh6 30 Be3 Qb7+ 31 Kg3 f5 32 Rcd1, the position is even and the players soon agreed to a draw, N.Short-G.Kasparov, Zurich 2001.

**12 axb4**

No more a-pawn to worry about.

**12 … axb4**

***Question*:** Is capturing away from the centre with 12 … cxb4

playable as Black intends to eventually force … a4 and … a3?

***Answer*:** I don't see a single game in the database with this idea. The trouble is your plan is unlikely to be implemented after 13 Na4! which blockades adequately. Still, the position actually looks playable for Black, so it could be an interesting theoretical novelty on Black's part.

**13 Ne2 Bb7**

Instead, 13 … Nd7 attempts to make White waste a tempo with Rb1. I have a feeling

Spassky would not back down and may have played 14 b3!? anyway! The less adventurous among us can always play the safer 14 Rb1.

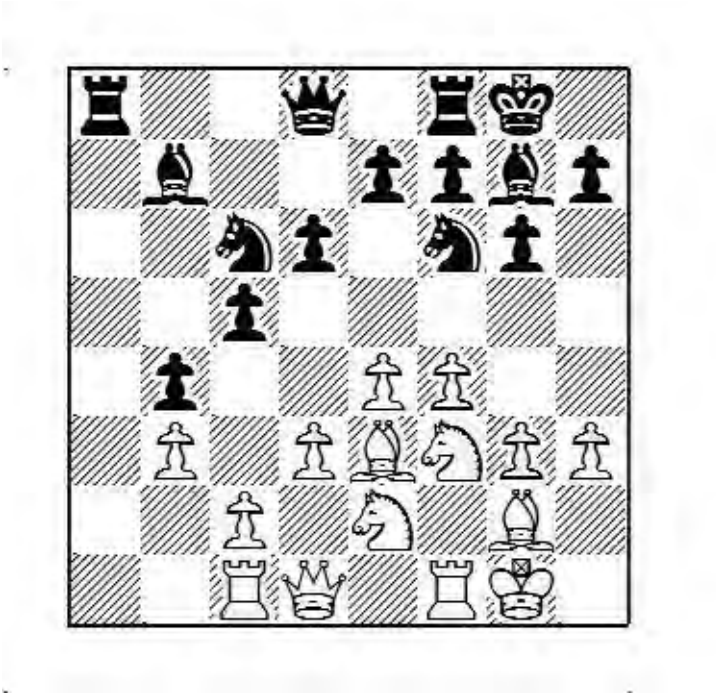
**14 b3!**

This is more accurate than 14 Qd2 Ra8 15 Rab1?! and at this stage in the match, Spassky was still tinkering with White's optimal setup. After the sixth game of the match, he discovered that the rook belongs on c1, so White effectively lost a tempo here (so, correct is 15 Rac1!) but with 15 … Qa5, Geller wastes a tempo right back! I would have played the queen to b6 instead. After 16 b3 Rfc8 (Black seizes the initiative with 16 … d5! 17 e5 d4!) 17 f5 Qb6 (there is Black's lost tempo) 18 g4 Ra2 19 Nc1!? (booting the a2-rook away, at the cost of deactivating his knight) 19 … Ra5 20 Qf2 (heading for the h4-square) 20 … Qc7 21 Ne2 Ra2 22 Rbc1, at last, Spassky reconfigures to the optimal setup, B.Spassky-E.Geller, Candidates (4th match game), Sokhumi 1968.

**14 … Ra8!**

Black plans to make good use of the open h-file to infiltrate.

**15 Rc1!**



Remember this setup. White only concedes his opponent a single weak point on c2 and then proceeds to attack furiously on the other side of the board.

**15 … Ra2 16 g4 Qa8?!**

The 'best' move is a concept which demands an absolute. In such positions of bewildering complexity, with our clock mercilessly ticking away, we are sometimes better off taking a practical route, settling for a 'reasonable' move. Geller underestimates the danger to his king, moving his queen too far away - which says something about his confidence level, after his Closed Sicilian debacles in the 2nd and 4th games of the match. Black has superior options in:

a) 16 … Qc7 (Black's most commonly played move today) 17 Qe1 Rfa8 18 f5 Rb2! (preparing to transfer his other rook to a2 and load up on the c2-pawn) 19 Nf4 Raa2 20 Qf2 Nd4! (principle: *Meet a wing attack with a central counter*) 21 Bxd4 cxd4 22 Nxd4

g5 23 Nfe2 Nd7, D.Reinderman-K.Van der Weide, Rotterdam 1998. Black stands no worse and has more than enough compensation for the missing pawn, with his dark square power.

b) 16 … Nd7 17 Qe1 e6 18 f5!? Nde5 19 Nf4?! (19 Nxe5 Bxe5 20 Qf2 looks like a better way to handle the White position) 19 … Nxf3+ 20 Rxf3 Nd4 21 Rf2 exf5 22 gxf5 Re8 23 Qf1 d5 24 f6 Bf8 (Black looks better after 24 … Bxf6! 25 Nxd5 Bxd5 26 Rxf6 Bxb3 27 cxb3 Ne2+ 28 Kh2 Qxd3 29 Bf2 Nxc1 30 Qxc1 Qxb3 31 Qxc5 Qc3 (since … Qe5+ is imminent, queens must come off the board) 25 Bxd4 cxd4 26 exd5 Re3 27 c4! (a cute trick which eliminates the c2-weakness and supports the d5-pawn) 27 … Ra5 28 Be4 Bd6 29 Qg2 Qxf6? (the position is still balanced after 29 … Bc8) 30 Nxg6 Qg7, A.Fedorov-L.Van Wely, Riga 2014. White stands better after 31 Nf4.

**17 Qe1 Qa6?!**

This is still too slow. Geller's plan is like transferring a fresh water fish into the salty ocean: it's going to choke, spasm and die, when removed from its natural environment. The ocean may be a "natural" entity, but to the dead fish, it is a synthetic, poisonous place. Geller suggested 17 … d5 18 e5 Nd7 19 Qh4 e6 as a better defence.

**18 Qf2!**

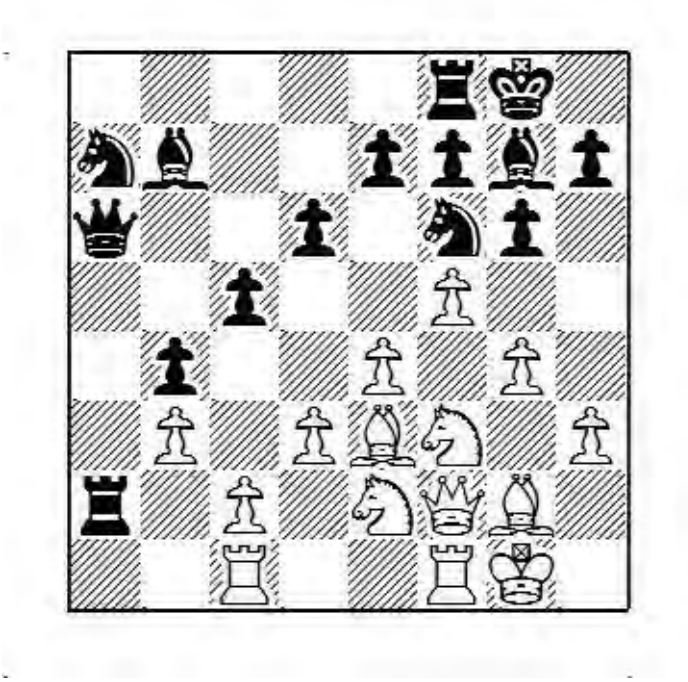
***Question*:** Why not play the queen to h4 instead?

***Answer*:** 18 Qh4?? walks into the cheapo 18 … Rxc2! 19 Rxc2 Qxd3 20 Ne1 Qxe3+ 21 Kh1 Qxb3 and White is completely busted.

**18 … Na7?!**

Throughout the match, Geller seemed to be under the illusion that his king was immortal in Closed Sicilian positions, without need of security. Kasparov criticized this move and suggested 18 … Nd7.

**19 f5**



White has six pieces plus a pawn avalanche, all coming for Black's king.

**19 … Nb5 20 fxg6 hxg6?**

Geller's will is incommensurable with the position's actual requirements. There is such a thing as being too positional, where a player is unwilling to make a necessary strategic concession.

***Question*:** Isn't there a principle which states: *Capture away*

*from the centre if you feel that your king is in danger?*

***Answer*:** Correct. I think this is how Geller should have played it. For example, better is 20 … fxg6! 21 Nf4 Bc8 22 Ng5 Nd4 (after 22 … Nc7 23 Qh4 e5 24 Nxh7! g5 25 Nxg5 exf4 26 Rxf4 Ra1 27 Rcf1, White has a dangerous attack as well as three pawns for the piece) 23 Bxd4 cxd4 24 Qh4 e5 25 Nd5 Qa7 26 Nxb4 Rb2 27 Nd5 h6 28 Ra1 Qd7 29 Nxf6+ Rxf6 30 Rxf6 Bxf6 31 Qxh6 Qg7 32 Qxg7+ Bxg7 33 c3! (threat: Ra8!) 33 … Rxb3 34 cxd4 Bh6 35 h4 Rxd3 36 d5 and Black still struggles to attain a draw.

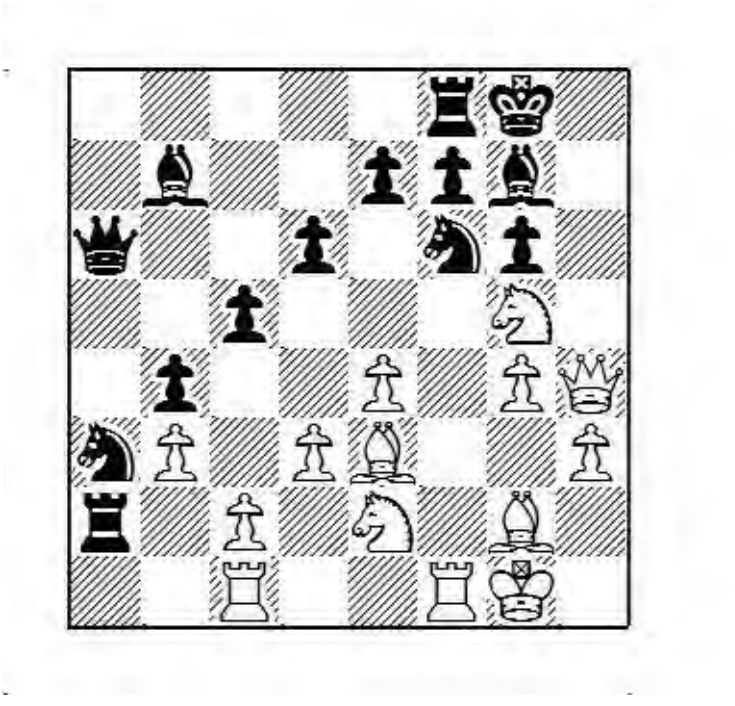
**21 Ng5 Na3**

Threatening the c2-pawn.

**22 Qh4!**

Who cares about the inconsequential bit on c2? Threat: Rxf6 and Qh7 mate!

**22 … Rc8**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** We reach a point of heart-pounding

anticipation. With the c2-pawn about to fall, there is no turning back.

White must find a breakthrough combination. Take heart: the attack's

construction is rough, yet substantial. How would you continue here?

***Answer*:**

Step 1: Sacrifice an exchange to destroy the defender of the h7-square.

**23 Rxf6!**

Such sacrifices are indigenous to the opening itself. Criminal activity can be boiled down to two categories:

1. Crimes committed for gain.

2. Crimes committed for malice.

White's last move clearly qualifies for the latter category, since Spassky is willing to pay any price to get his hands on Black's king.

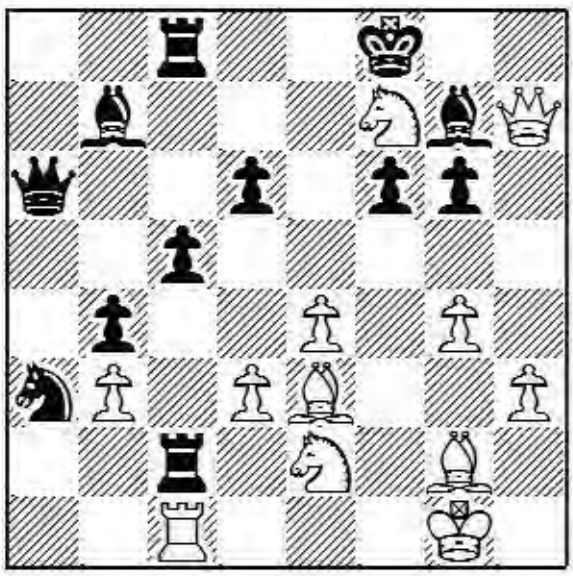
**23 … exf6**

Forced as 23 … Bxf6?? leads to 24 Qh7+ Kf8 25 Qxf7 mate!

**24 Qh7+ Kf8 25 Nxf7!**

Step 2: Sacrifice a piece on f7, which induces Black's king into a pin, but more importantly, softens up the g6-pawn.

**25 … Rxc2**



The position is not one of an organized, unified currency. Black values hard cash, while White treasures raw power. White's queenside becomes mottled with structural flaws - which are completely moot if Black's king gets fried on the other side of the board.

If 25 … Kxf7, Black's king can only witness in limp resentment the destruction of all he loves. White's pieces flood in with 26 Bh6 Rg8 27 Nf4 Rxc2 (or 27 … g5 28 Qg6+ Ke7 29 Bxg7 gxf4 30 Bxf6+ Kf8 31 Qh7 "What do you expect of me?" asks Black's king. "I expect you to die, Mr. Bond, " replies White's queen, who fancies herself in the same category as a Bond villain) 28 Rf1! (there is no rush as White replenishes, adding a brand new attacker into the mix) 28 … Qa8 (all other defensive tries fail miserably) 29 Qxg6+ Ke7 (also, 29 … Kf8?? 30 Qxf6+ Ke8 31 Qe6+ is even worse for Black) 30 Bxg7 Qe8 31 Bxf6+ Kd7 32 Qh7+ Kc8 33 g5 Kb8 34 h4 and there is no remedy to the steady advance of White's kingside passed pawns.

**26 Bh6**

The unwilling g7-bishop is forced into the role of de facto subsidiary defender of his king.

**26 … Rxc1+ 27 Nxc1 Kxf7**

The king's expression is of puffy-cheeked outrage. When we are up material, in the back of our mind often lurks the delusional thought: "My abundant resources will protect me." Also pointless is 27 … Bxh6 (the bishop's faith is sorely tested) 28 Nxh6 Ke8 and White can unleash the game-ender 29 Ng8!.

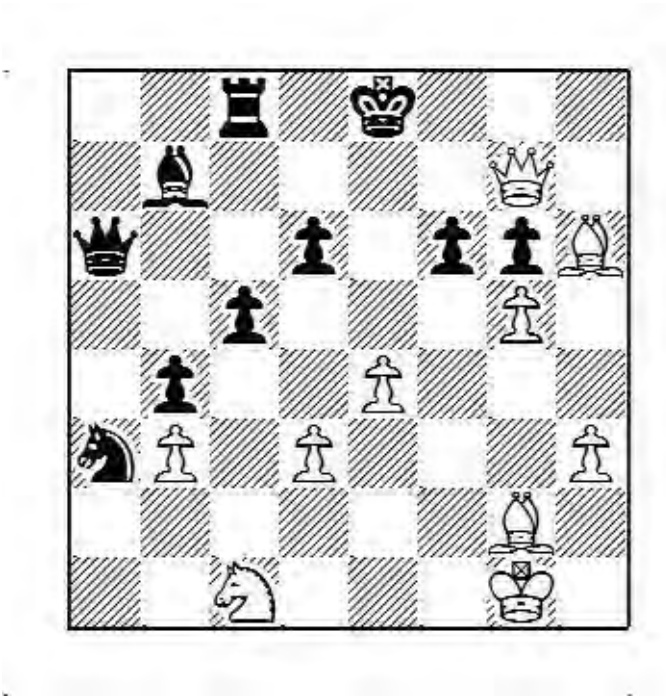
**28 Qxg7+**

"One of the biggest errors a person can make in life is to mistake an enemy for a loved one, " the queen informs her brother.

**28 … Ke8**

The king hopes to circumvent fate, forgetting that fate isn't so easily confused.

**29 g5**



More efficient is 29 e5! d5 (29 … Bxg2?? 30 e6 mates) 30 exf6 Qe6 31 Qxb7.

**29 … f5 30 Qxg6+ Kd7 31 Qf7+ Kc6**

You know your position is unsalvageable when you are forced into a move like this, walking into discovered check. In any case, after 31 … Kd8? 32 g6, there is no defence to the coming bishop check on g5.

**32 exf5+ 1-0**

Following 32 … Kb6, White can simply liquidate to a trivial win with 33 Qxb7+ Qxb7 34 Bxb7 Kxb7 35 f6 and the kingside passed pawns win.

**Summary:** Remember Spassky's … Nf6 Closed Sicilian plan of b3! and Rc1!, leaving Black only the single c2-point of attack on our kingside. Meanwhile, our forces build ominously over Black's king on the other side of the board. At the club level, you can mow down the majority of your opponents if you study Spassky's kingside plan of attack, since Black's defence can't be winged or guessed at the board.

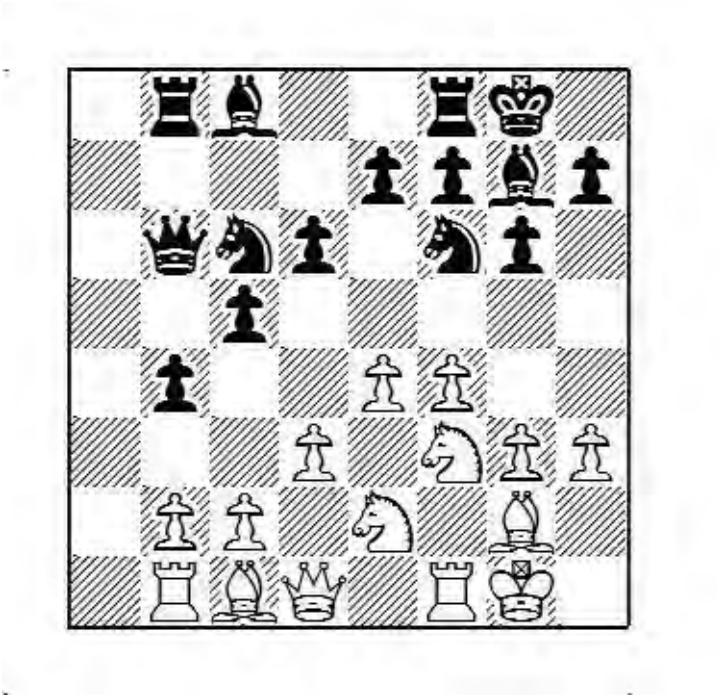
*Game 41*
**B.Baker-J.Bryant**
San Diego (rapid) 2007

In this game, my buddy National Master Bruce Baker (we have played close to 300 rated games, and by now can read each other's minds!) shows how to take down a soon-to-be IM with the Closed Sicilian versus the … Nf6 line. I remember Bruce asking me before the game, what opening should he should play against his talented young opponent. I replied: "Closed Sicilian". The opening has the effect of nullifying a booked-up tactician, forcing him or her into a manoeuvering game, and on the defence of his king - both kryptonite to youthful talent.

**1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 d6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 d3 Nc6 6 f4 Nf6 7 Nf3 0-0 8 0-0 Rb8 9 Rb1?!**

This isn't accurate and essentially loses a tempo, since the rook belongs on the c1-square. Correct was 9 h3 as played in the previous game.

**9 … b5 10 a3 a5 11 h3 b4 12 axb4 axb4 13 Ne2 Qb6**



A new move, and I have a feeling it isn't Black's best move. Instead, 13 … c4! is more logical, since it is in Black's best interest to open the queenside:

***Question*:** If White plays 14 dxc4, can Black capture the e4-pawn?

Or does he get in trouble with two loose knights on e4 and c6?

***Answer*:** Black can recapture the e4-pawn without a problem. For example:

a) After 14 dxc4 Nxe4 15 Nh4 Qb6+ 16 Kh2 Nc5, both knights are covered and Black has a slight edge.

b) Perhaps better is 14 Be3 b3 15 c3 Bb7, M.Koskinen-T.Sammalvuo, Karhula 2004. Here, White should probably go for 16 dxc4 Nxe4 17 Qxb3 Na5 18 Qa2 Qc7 19 b3 Nxc3 20 Nxc3 Bxc3 21 Qc2 Bg7 22 f5 with a dynamically balanced game.

**14 Be3 Ba6!?**

I don't like this move, since it blocks the pathway for … Ra8 and … Ra2. I would play 14 … Bb7 followed by … Ra8 and … Ra2.

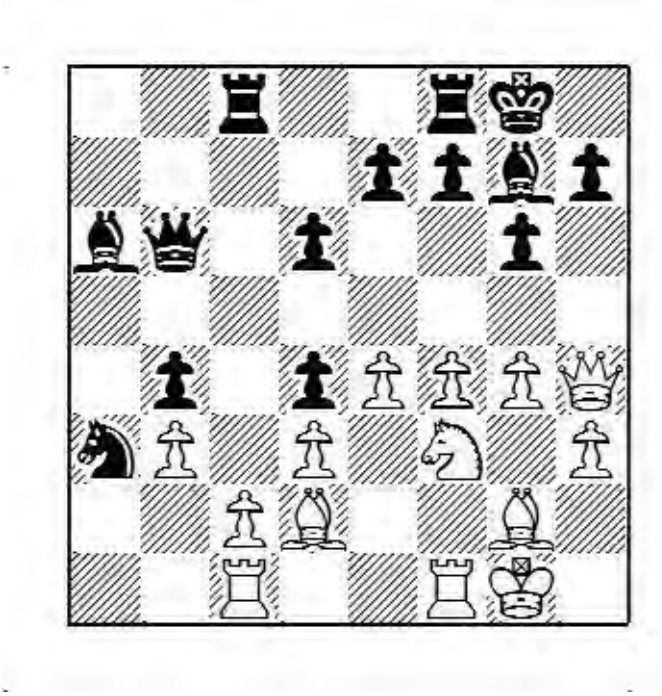
**15 b3 Ne8?!**

Both chess and tennis players dread the unforced error.

***Question*:** Why did Black retreat his knight to the e8-square?

***Answer*:** This is the beginning of an overly ambitious plan, to transfer the knight to the b5-square, via Nc7. Of course the trouble with this plan is that Black risks Geller's fate (of underestimating the danger to his king). He should leave the knight where it stands and play 15 … Ra8 intending … Bb5 and … Ra2.

**16 g4 Nc7 17 Qe1 Nb5 18 Qh4 Ncd4 19 Nexd4 cxd4 20 Bd2 Na3 21 Rbc1 Rbc8**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** This is the moment of truth. Just like last game, the base of our pawn chain on c2 comes under dire pressure. Should we retreat and defend with 22 Ne1, or should we just hand over the pawn and play for mate with 22 f5? Our styles constitute good and evil on the board. For example, a tactician may have no qualms in giving away pawns to attack, while a pure positional player may find such a path abhorrent. In this instance, styles must be placed aside. There is only one correct decision here. Which direction should White go: Forward? Or should he sound a strategic retreat?

**Answer: 22 f5!**

The game is afoot, Watson, and it's too late for half-measures. The nature of our environment forces us to either evolve or die. It's clear we live in a Topalovian era of never backing down - no matter the cost. White's forces proceed with the avowed intention of launching a punitive expedition in the neighbourhood of Black's king. We pay for such nerve-racking decisions with a kind of psychic bill, which awaits us at home in the mail. White may be playing fast and loose with his structural base, nevertheless, his decision is thematic of the line and absolutely correct. 22 Ne1?! is a violation of a natural

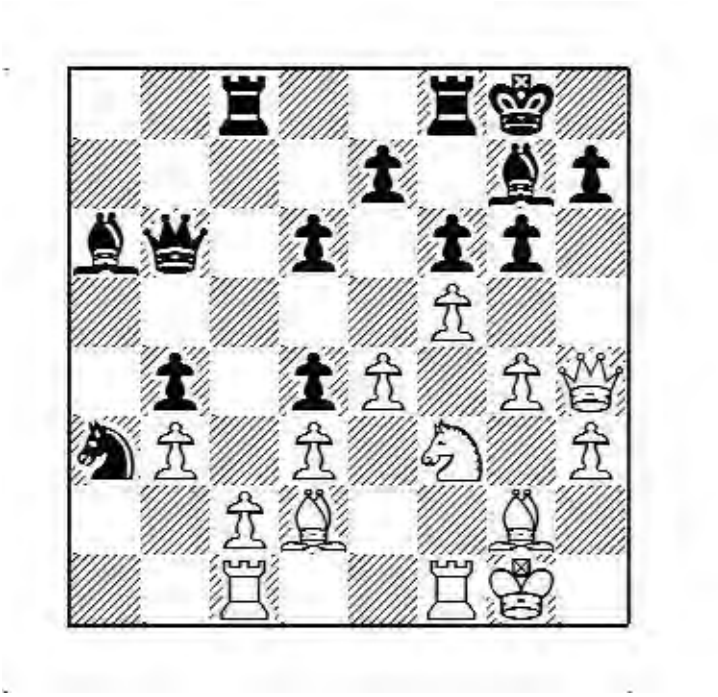
attacker's stringent code of honor: Never retreat if a forward action is available. With so many fatal-looking options, it is easy to be taut with deep indecision. Black looks like he is in good shape after 22 … Rc7 23 f5 Rfc8 24 Qf2 e5.

**22 … Rxc2?!**

It's very difficult to resist the temptation to make a move like this one.

***Question*:** I realize that 22 … f6 looks terribly ugly, but it does safeguard the

e7-pawn and seizes control over the g5-square. Can Black get away with this idea?



**Answer:** Black appears to have entered one of those dreaded 'heads-I-win; tails-you-lose' situations. I think your suggestion is clearly superior to the way Black played in the game, but it may not save him, since 22 … f6 also loosens Black's already insecure king. Let's look:

By default, Black simply has to try 22 … f6! (when the position's complexity level goes out of control, we have little choice but to follow a series of hunches, whose other name is intuition) 23 fxg6 hxg6 24 Bh6 Rf7 (not 24 … Rxc2? as 25 g5! Rxc1 26 Rxc1 Rc8 27 Rxc8+ Bxc8 28 Bxg7 Kxg7 29 Qh6+ Kf7 30 Qh7+ Ke8 31 Qxg6+ Kd8 32 Qg8+ Kc7 33 g6! wins for White due to the decisive passed g-pawn) 25 g5 Bxh6 26 Qxh6 Rh7! 27 Qxg6+ Rg7 28 Qf5 Rc5 29 Qe6+ Kh7 30 gxf6 Bc8 31 fxe7! Bxe6 32 e8Q Bd7 33 Qf8 Bxh3 34 Rf2 and White emerges with a clear advantage. If Black attempts to re-establish material equality, he loses after 34 … Bxg2? 35 Rxg2 Rxg2+ 36 Kxg2 Rxc2+ 37 Rxc2 Nxc2 38 Qf7+ Kh6 39 Qf6+ Kh7 40 Ng5+ Kg8 41 Qf7+ Kh8 42 Qh7 mate! Of course for us humans, such convoluted comp-generated lines are no more than a mathematical abstraction, which is interesting to observe, yet impossible to duplicate over the board if the players had taken this route.

**23 Rxc2?!**

An inaccuracy which reduces White's advantage. White wins after 23 fxg6! fxg6 24 Ng5 h6 25 Ne6 Rxc1 (not 25 … Rxd2?? as 26 Qxe7 forces mate) 26 Bxc1 Rxf1+ 27 Bxf1 g5 28 Bxg5! Bc8 29 Nxg7 hxg5 30 Qxg5 Kf8 31 Qh6 Kf7 and 32 g5 is decisive.

**23 … Nxc2 24 Ng5 h6 25 fxg6! fxg6 26 Ne6**

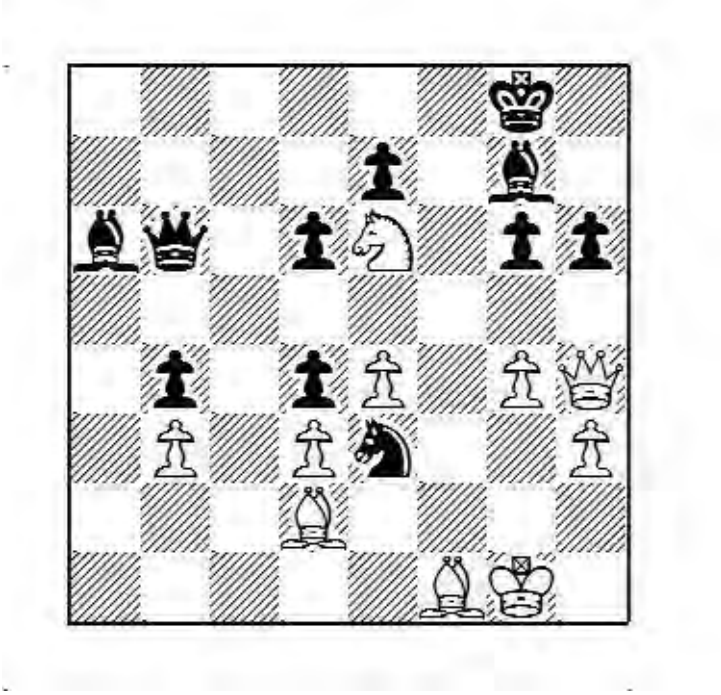
The e6-square is the command headquarters for White's assault team.

**26 … Rxf1+ 27 Bxf1 Bf6?**

As everyone knows, defence is far more difficult than attacking:

a) Lashing out with 27 … g5? only runs into 28 Bxg5! Ne1 29 Kf2! Nxd3+ 30 Bxd3 Bxd3 31 Bxh6 and Black's king can't escape.

b) A surprisingly degree of resistance can be put up with 27 … Ne3!



28 Qxe7 Qb7 29 Qe8+! (trading down to a pawn-up ending after 29 Qxb7?! Bxb7 30 Nxg7 Kxg7 31 Bxb4 Nxf1 32 Kxf1 d5 33 e5 Bc8 34 Kf2 h5 35 gxh5 gxh5 36 h4 Kg6 37 Bc5 Kf5 38 Bxd4 Kf4! 39 b4 Bd7 offer Black drawning chances thanks to the opposite-coloured bishops) 29 … Kh7 30 Nxg7 Kxg7 31 Be2 Qc7 32 Kf2 g5 33 Bxb4 Nc2 34 Bd2 Qf7+ 35 Qxf7+ Kxf7 and White's win won't be so easy.

**28 Qxh6 Kf7 29 Nf4**

The g6-pawn falls and White wins by simply pushing his kingside passed pawns.

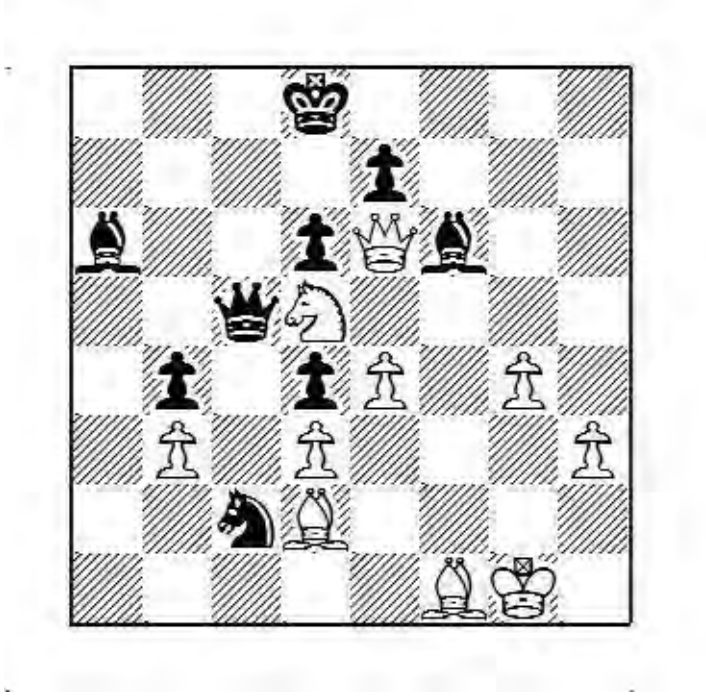
**29 … Ke8**

An 'agreement' negotiated by one side under duress, isn't really an agreement. Black's king, seeking to escape his sister at the earliest possible moment, exits with a 'toodledo' wave. 29 … g5?? isn't possible due to 30 Qg6+ ("Your insolent posturing will cost you dearly, considering the gravity of the charges levelled against you, " declares the queen) 30 … Kf8 31 Ne6 mate!

**30 Qxg6+ Kd8 31 Qg8+ Kd7**

A swifter end follows after 31 … Kc7?? as 32 Nd5+ forks the king and the queen.

**32 Qe6+ Kd8 33 Nd5 Qc5**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White can take on f6, but there is something stronger:

***Answer*:** Undermining. The e7-pawn falls with devastating effect.

**34 g5! Be5 35 Qxe7+ Kc8 36 g6 Ne3 37 g7**

It's all over since the g-pawn costs Black a piece.

**37 … Bxg7 38 Qxg7**

More precise is 38 Qe8+! Kb7 39 Qd7+ Kb8 (39 … Ka8 40 Bxb4 Qa7 41 Nc7+ comes to the same thing) 40 Bxb4 and White wins.

**38 … Nxf1 39 Qf8+**

When you sense the presence of an immediate combination, yet are unable to see it, it's the same maddening feeling a writer gets when he can't come up with the perfect word - a word he already knows, but can't remember - to describe something he writes about. More clinical is 39 Bxb4! Qc6 (39 … Qc1 40 Nb6+ Kb8 (Black's king feels a similar irritation felt by early Christians, as the Romans applauded the lions as they entered the arena) 41 Bxd6+ Qc7 42 Qxc7 mate!) 40 Ne7+ and the king and queen fork ends the game.

**39 … Kd7 40 Qf7+ Kc8 41 Qxf1**

Immediately winning is 41 Bxb4!.

**41 … Qc2 42 Qc1**

The practical move, after which White has an easy win in the ending. The comp claims that 42 Bxb4 forces mate in 15 moves.

**42 … Bxd3 43 Qxc2+ Bxc2 44 Nxb4 Bxb3 45 h4 Bf7 1-0**

The position is an easy win here for White. However, White blundered in the mutual time scramble and managed to checkmate with bishop and knight versus lone king, on the five second time delay alone. Why can't our games ever be tidy?

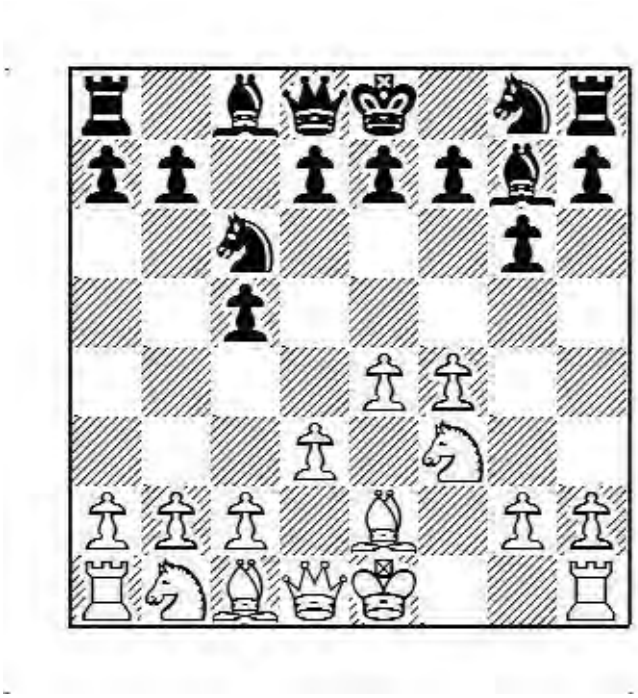
**Summary:** The usual build-up on the c2-pawn is a little like attempting to intimidate a shark by threatening to drown it. Don't fear the eventual loss of the c2-weakie. We must simply have faith that our kingside chances compensate.

*Game 42*
**S.Movsesian-E.Paehtz**
Solin 2006

"Sergei Movsesian is a 2700+ Grandmaster who doesn't mind wheeling out the 'Big Clamp' once in a while. This is a viable way to play for White - it may not lead to a theoretical advantage, but it keeps pieces on the board and leads to a complex fight," writes IM David Vigorito.

**1 e4**

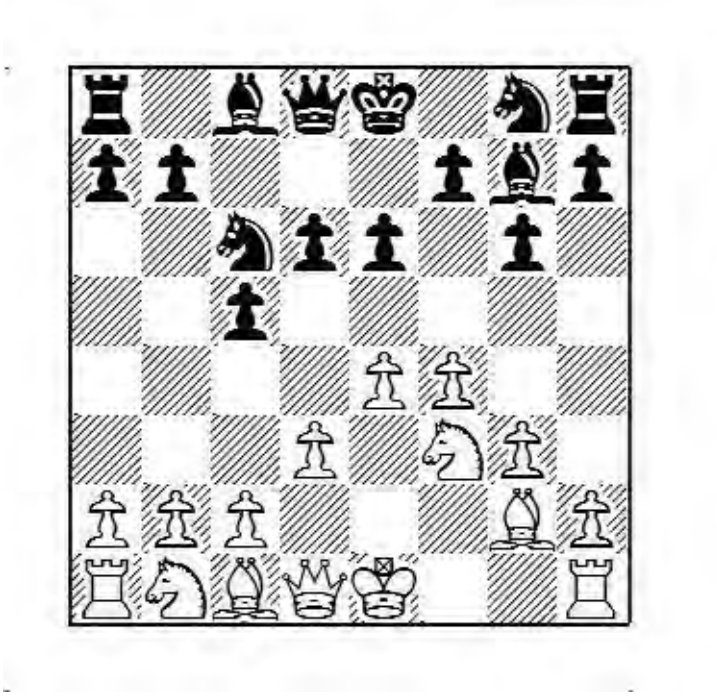
White can also play against Black's Reversed English position in Classical Bird fashion. For example: 1 f4 g6 2 Nf3 Bg7 3 e4 c5 4 d3 Nc6 5 Be2.



I like this version better than the e3 lines of Chapter 3. White plays e2-e4 in one go, but on the down side, Black gets increased control over the d4-square.

After 5 … d6 6 0-0 e6 7 c3 Nge7 8 Be3 0-0 9 Nbd2 b6 10 Bf2!? (more typical is 10 Qe1 d5 T.Taylor-D.Rensch, Las Vegas 2006) 10 … Qc7?! (the queen is better placed on the d-file and hence 10 … Qd7 is more to the point) 11 Rc1 Bb7, White annexes queenside space with 12 b4! with a space advantage. Following 12 … cxb4 13 cxb4 Qd7 14 Qb3 e5 15 fxe5 Nxe5! (15 … dxe5?! 16 a4 Rae8 17 Nc4 is difficult for Black) 16 Nxe5 Bxe5 (I would have recaptured with the pawn) 17 Nc4 Bg7?! (17 … Nc6 was forced) 18 Bg3!, C.Lakdawala-P.Graves, San Diego (rapid) 2014, Black is forced to be on the defensive.

**1 … c5 2 d3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 Nc6 5 f4 d6 6 Nf3 e6**



This is the flexible … e6 system, one of Black's most popular setups against Closed Sicilian. Here, Black tends to play the same setup by default versus our Clamp.

***Question*:** What is Black's idea?

***Answer*:** Black can challenge White's kingside pawn storm with … Nge7, … 0-0 and … f7-f5!, which strikes back in the centre and offers Black's king greater safety by keeping the White pawns at bay.

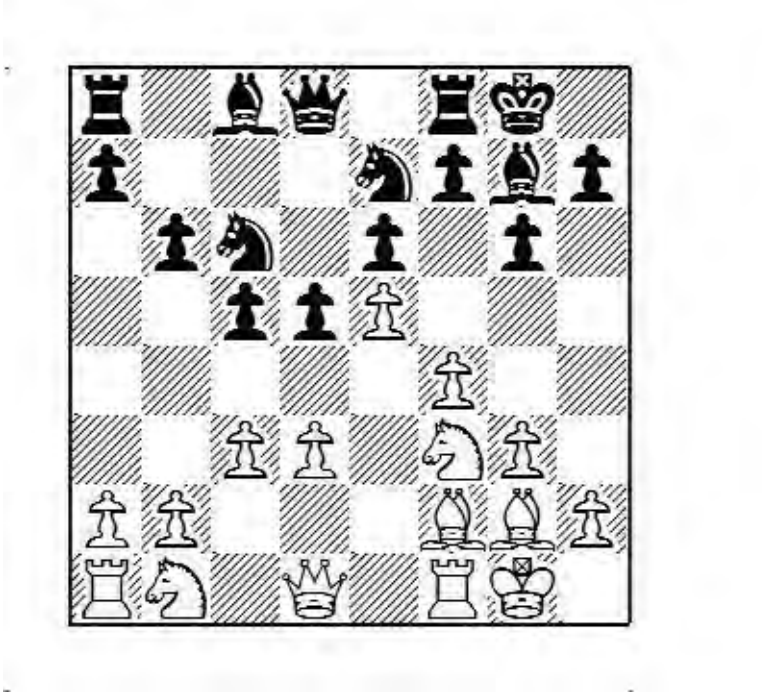
**7 0-0 Nge7 8 c3 0-0**

***Question*:** I realize this is the Leningrad Bird versus Reversed English chapter,

where Black's d-pawn avoids the d5-square, but what is wrong with playing 8 … d5?

***Answer*:** It's not a good idea, since we reach a position very similar to Jakubiec-Kraemer (Game 8) from Chapter 2, except that Black is down a tempo due to having wasted a move playing … d7-d6 and later … d6-d5.

After 8 … d5 9 Be3 b6 10 e5 0-0, White can play 11 Bf2, which is a dual purpose, clearing the path for Re1 and anticipating … Nf5.



***Question*:** Why does White want the rook on the e-file,

rather than the f-file? Isn't he playing for an f5-break?

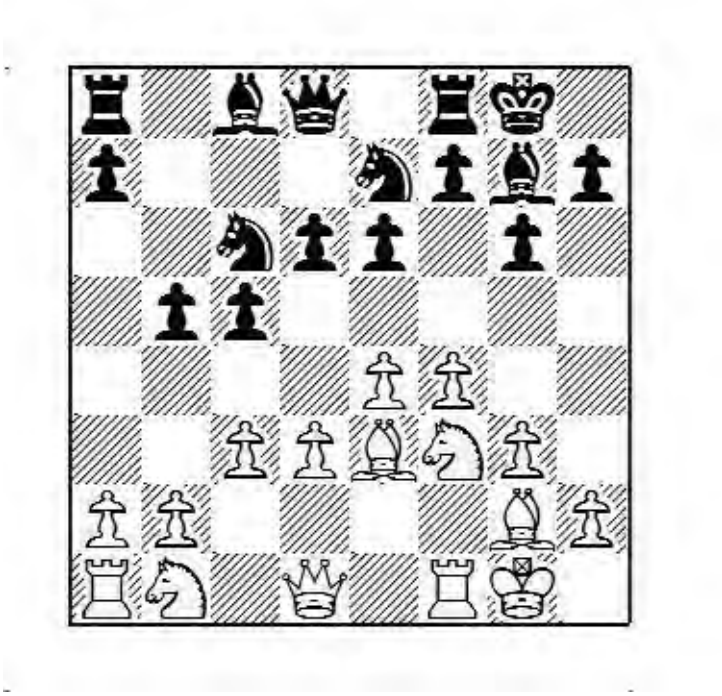
***Answer*:** White often does play for a future f5-break, but first things first: We must suppress … f7-f6. So to accomplish this, we need our rook on the e-file for now.

Following 11 … Ba6 12 Re1 Rc8 13 g4 (this cuts off … Nf5 and also opens the potential for our plan: g4-g5 and then transfer a knight to the f6-square, either via the e4- (if Black played … d4) or g4-square) 13 … d4 14 c4 b5 15 b3 bxc4 16 bxc4 Nb4 17 a3 Qa5 18 Bf1 (tempting is the exchange sacrifice 18 axb4!? Qxa1 19 bxc5 Rfd8 20 Nbd2 Qxd1 21 Rxd1 Bb7 22 Nb3 Rd7 23 Ra1 Bxf3 24 Bxf3 g5! (this is forced as Black is busted if the d5-pawn falls) 25 fxg5 Bxe5 26 h4 and I prefer White in this unbalanced ending, since Black is tied down to defending both the d4- and a7-pawns) 18 … Bb7 19 Nbd2 (now the b4-knight hangs, since the a1-rook is covered) 19 … Bxf3 20 Nxf3 Nbc6, S.Grunberg-N.Barbu, Romania 1993, White has a clear advantage after 21 Nd2 (intending to transfer to the e4-outpost). If Black tries to disrupt with 21 … g5!?, White retains serious attacking chances after 22 fxg5 Nxe5 23 Ne4 as the f6-square has been weakened.

**9 Be3**

Preparing the Clamp plan of d3-d4, and also preventing … d6-d5 (not that we need to prevent it, since Black then gets a move-down version we looked at in Chapter 2)

**9 … b5**



This may not be Black's best plan.

***Question*:** Why not? Isn't it natural for Black

to attack White's pawn chain at c3, with … b5-b4?

***Answer*:** The trouble is an early … b7-b5 weakens the c5-pawn, so White responds with d3-d4. After a pawn trade on the d4-square ( … cxd4/cxd4), there is no longer a c3-pawn for Black to attack with … b5-b4.

**10 Bf2?!**

This is possibly inaccurate. I would go for the immediate 10 d4!:

a) 10 … cxd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5 Nf5 13 Bf2 and White consolidates his centre, while denying Black counterattacking targets on the queenside.

b) One of my students tried 10 … c4!? against me in a training game. This possible strategic inaccuracy violates the principle: *Don't close the centre when attacked on the wing.* After 11 Nbd2 d5 (Black backs up the c4-pawn in order to undermine White's c3-pawn with a future … b5-b4) 12 e5 (*Houdini* suggests retaining the central tension with 12 Ne5) 12 … b4 13 g4 a5 14 Rf2 a4 (threatening to undermine the queenside with … a4-a3 next) 15 a3 bxc3 16 bxc3 Bd7 17 Nf1 Na5 18 Ng3 (White continues to build for a kingside assault) 18 … Nb3?! (this looks impressive but White isn't bothered much by it and Black may have been better off playing 18 … Rb8 intending … Rb3) 19 Raa2 Rb8 20 h4 Qa5 21 Qe1, now he began to get worried about White's kingside attack with h4-h5 coming, so he countered with 21 … f5 22 exf6 Bxf6 23 h5, C.Lakdawala-J.Ma, San Diego 2014. This position (which *Houdini* misassesses as even) has Black at an impasse on the queenside. On the other side of the board, Black's king is subjected to oblique pressures, which are felt, yet hard to describe. White soon generated a winning attack.

**10 … Rb8?!**

Black misses an opportunity as 10 … b4! gives her the queenside counterplay and 11 Qc2 bxc3 12 bxc3 Rb8 13 Nbd2 Ba6 insures counterplay.

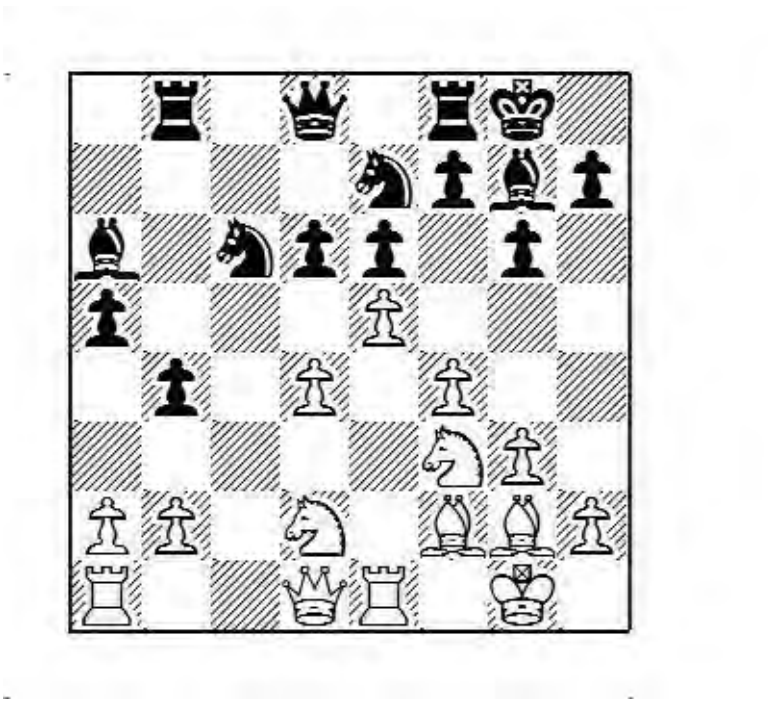
**11 d4 cxd4**

This is too cooperative. It is as if White played d3-d4 at the correct moment to realise his Clamp strategy. Perhaps Black should muck matters up with 11 … b4! 12 dxc5 dxc5 13 Bxc5 (or 13 Qxd8 Rxd8 14 Bxc5 Rb5! 15 cxb4!? Bxb2 16 Nbd2 Bxa1 17 Rxa1 when Black can liquidate with 17 … Rxb4! 18 Bxb4 Nxb4 19 Bf1 to reach an even ending) 13 … bxc3 14 Nxc3 Qa5! (not 14 … Rxb2?! as 15 e5 favours White) 15 Bxe7 Nxe7 16 Rf2 Rxb2 17 Rxb2 Bxc3 18 Qb3 Bxb2 19 Qxb2 Ba6, with equal chances.

**12 cxd4**

Now it will be very difficult for Black to open the queenside.

**12 … b4 13 Nbd2 a5 14 Re1 Ba6 15 e5!**



This pretty much forces Black to play … d6-d5, since she can't allow a white knight to reach the e4-square.

**15 … b3!**

Probably this is Black's best chance. She speculates with a pawn sacrifice to free up the b4-square for her pieces. When we notice a flaw in ourselves, it is human nature to overcompensate in the opposite direction. In this case, Black lashes out violently to turn her inherently passive position into one of aggression and initiative. However, after 15 … d5, 16 Nb3 would be a tough, counterplayless grind for Black, since White owns the c5-square and he can also build up a kingside attack at leisure.

**16 axb3!**

Stronger than the greedy 16 Nxb3?! Bb5 17 a4 Bc4 18 Nfd2 Bd5 which should offer Black reasonable compensation for the pawn, with pressure down the b-file and control over the d5-outpost.

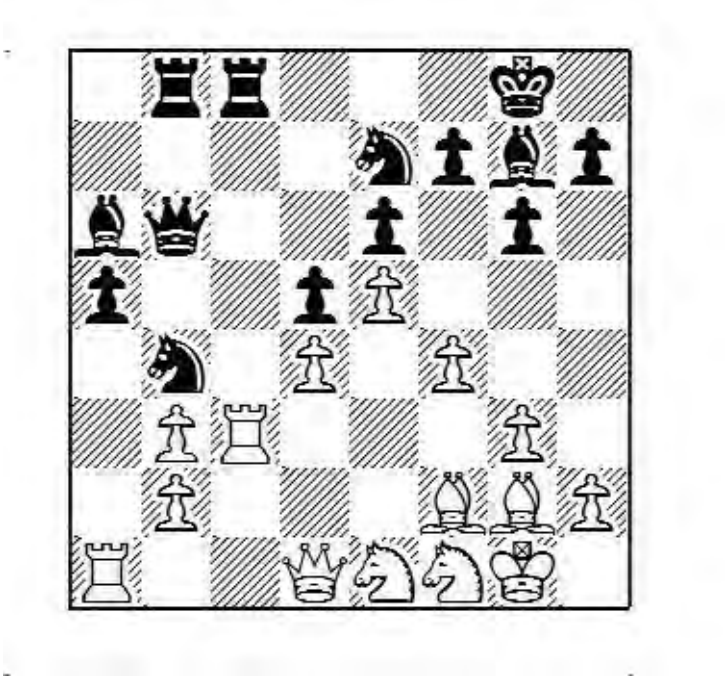
**16 … d5 17 Re3!**

Adding coverage to the d3-square and the b3-pawn, while preparing to transfer the rook to c3.

**17 … Qb6 18 Rc3 Nb4**

White must be on alert for d3-invasion themes.

**19 Nf1 Rfc8 20 Ne1**



Movsesian defends well, covering the sensitive d3- and c2-squares. In passive positions, our resentment must be borne in secrecy, where we plot our future freedom and revenge.

**20 … f5!?**

Black's position, as pretty as it looks, maxed out in its activity level. I don't see an active plan here other than what she played. If she waits with a temporizing move like 20 … h5, White leisurely builds for an h2-h3, g3-g4 and f4-f5 break, starting with 21 Ne3.

**21 exf6 Bxf6**

Black activated her dark-squared bishop, at the high cost of weakening the e6-pawn.

**22 g4!?**

This move is risky since it weakens the f4-pawn. Perhaps Movsesian feared 22 Nf3 Rxc3!? 23 bxc3 Nd3 24 Ra3 when White remained tied down, though with an extra pawn.

**22 … Bg7**

Clearing the path for … Rf8 to go after the newly weakened f4-pawn.

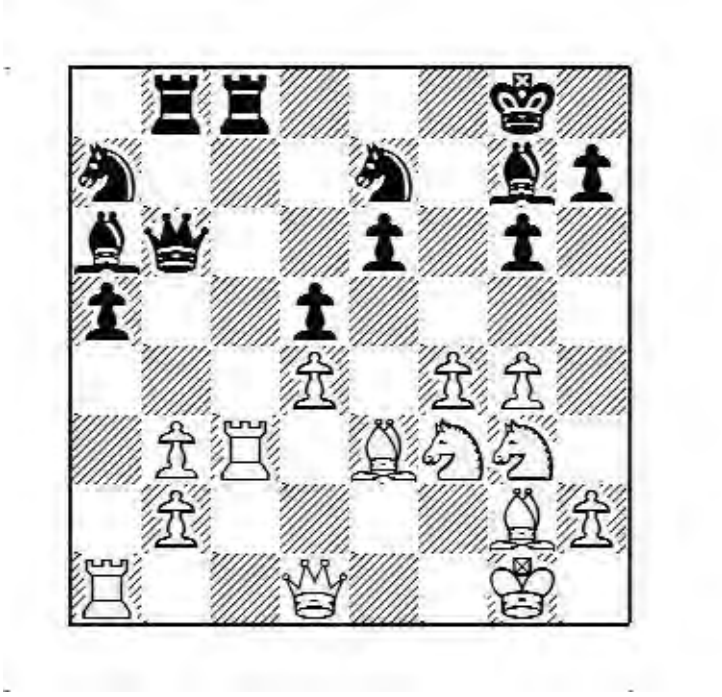
**23 Be3**

I prefer 23 Qd2 intending Nf3.

**23 … Nbc6 24 Nf3 Na7!?**

The idea is to go after the c3-defender with … Nb5, but the move is also slow, and tends to ignore White's kingside and central build-up. White also retains an advantage after the quieter 24 … Rb7 25 Ne5 Rf8 26 Ng3 when h2-h4-h5 is coming.

**25 Ng3**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Time to pause and contemplate the data to get our bearings. Black has a choice of two plans: 1. Play 25 … Nb5 to exchange off the c3-defender. 2. Black plays 25 … Rxc3 26 bxc3 Qxb3. Now you must work out the complications of swapping queens, followed by Rxa5. One plan offers Black some compensation for the pawn; the other allows White to consolidate. Which one would you play?

**25 … Rxc3?**

The wiring for Black is somewhat frayed in this line, since the b3-pawn is tactically defended.

***Answer*:** Better was to stick with the original program with 25 … Nb5!. This move is more a necessity, rather than a preference. After 26 Rxc8+ Rxc8, Black's queenside pressure gives her some, but not full compensation for the pawn.

**26 bxc3 Nac6**

I suspect that Paehtz intended 26 … Qxb3?? and then realized that the line fails after 27 Qxb3 Rxb3 28 Rxa5 Rb6 29 Bf1! Bxf1 30 Rxa7 (double attack - the f1-knight and the e7-bishop hang simultaneously) 30 … Nc8 31 Rxg7+ (this is the sting at the end of the calculation as Black loses material) 31 … Kxg7 32 Kxf1 when Black is busted, since White has two minor pieces plus pawn for only a rook.

**27 Nd2**

The b3-pawn is covered and Black finds herself down a pawn for precious little compensation.

**27 … Rf8 28 Qe1!**

Indirectly covering the c3-pawn and eyeing the one on e6. White's move may appear defensive in nature, but I think this is really the beginning of White's future kingside counterattack, since the queen slips closer to squares like h4.

**28 … Qc7 29 Nf3 Qb6**

Luring White's rook into an awkward lateral defence of the b3-pawn.

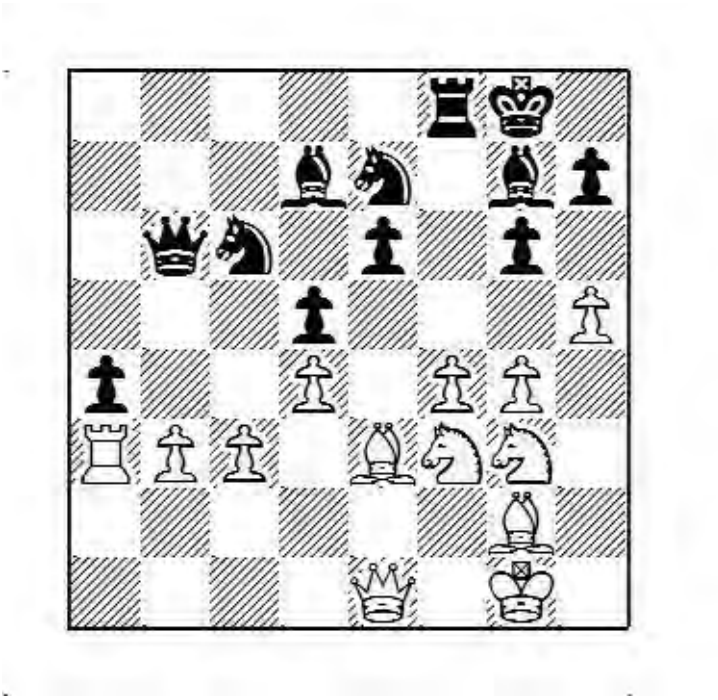
**30 Ra3 Bc8**

Black covers the e6-pawn, her single weakness and asks White how he plans to make progress.

**31 h4!**

The idea of a kingside attack remains in its childhood, yet we sense the outline of a future peril of vast menace arising for Black. I like this move, intending h4-h5, softening up the pawn front around Black's king. When we finally seize the initiative after a long standoff, I imagine it must be similar to the vengeful satisfaction a CEO feels when his or her giant corporation finally secures a 51% share in the hostile takeover of a hated competitor.

**31 … Bd7 32 h5 a4!?**



Such positions allow for elasticity of interpretation. There isn't a single correct answer. Active players crave adventure and counterplay the way you and I need food and water to survive. Black hopes this move has the effect of sucking some of the inspiration out of White's kingside attacking dreams by distracting him on the other wing. Black sacrifices a second pawn to open the a5-square for her knight.

**33 bxa4**

The philosophies of the players are at variance. Black is happy to give, while White delights in taking. White should accept since 33 b4?! Na7 allows Black to make progress on the queenside, without the cost of a pawn.

**33 … Na5 34 Ra1**

Also to be considered is the riskier plan 34 hxg6 hxg6 (34 … Nxg6 allows the dangerous 35 Nh5) 35 Bf1 Nc4 36 Bxc4. White hands over his precious light-squared bishop to create a passed a-pawn and remove Black's powerful a5-knight. Following 36 … dxc4 37 a5 Qb2 38 Bc1 Qc2 39 a6 Bc6 40 Qd2 Qb1 41 Ng5 Bd5 42 a7 Ra8 43 Qe1 Qb6 44 N3e4 Rxa7 45 Qh4 Kf8 46 Nc5, Black is busted, despite White's somewhat aired out king.

**34 … Qb3**

White's pieces begin to resent the queen's fussy officiousness.

**35 Bc1!?**

Intending Ba3 to annex dark squares in Black's camp.

**35 … Qc2 36 Ba3 Rxf4!?**

Once we rule out the improbable, the impossible appears to be true and real. This move smacks of obvious desperation. Unearthing a plan in the midst of such chaos is to attempt to express the inexpressible. In any case, Black is unable to save herself after 36 … Re8 37 hxg6 hxg6 38 Ng5 Nc4 (after 38 … Nec6, White has the 39 N3e4!! clearance leading to 39 … dxe4 40 Qh4 Ne7 41 Qh7+ Kf8 42 Qxg6 Kg8 43 Qf7+ Kh8 44 Bxe4 Qxc3 45 Qh5+ Kg8 46 Bh7+ Kh8 47 Nf7 mate!) 39 Bxe7! Rxe7 40 Bxd5 and White wins.

**37 Bxe7 Nb3 38 Ra3 Nc1 39 Qd2**

Hoping to force queens off the board by hitting Black's queen and rook simultaneously.

**39 … Qb1!**

A little cheapo just before the time control.

**40 Kh2**

The weak 40 Qxf4?? fails to the double check 40 … Ne2+, forking the king and queen.

**40 … Rxg4 41 h6 Qb8**

Attacking the g3-knight.

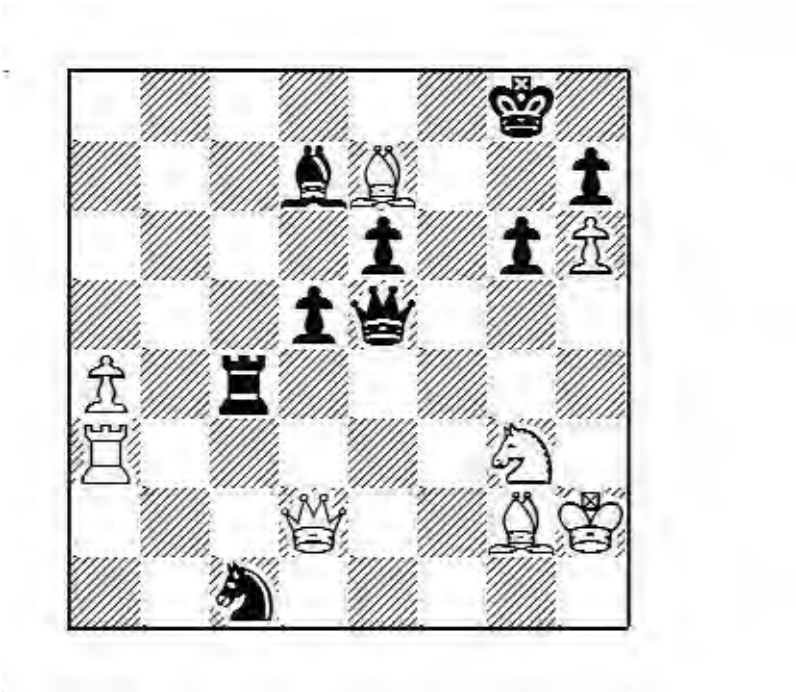
**42 Ne5!**

White sacrifices a pawn to remove Black's dark square power.

**42 … Bxe5 43 dxe5 Qxe5 44 c4!**

Laterally covering the g3-knight.

**44 … Rxc4**



***Exercise (planning)*:** Find the correct plan and you force mate.

***Answer*:** Weak back rank/removal of the guard. Black is unable to effectively cover the porous kingside.

**45 Rf3! 1-0**

Black's king begins to experience serious spasms of unease.

Step 1: Lure Black's rook to the c8-square with 45 Rf3! (threatening mate on f8) 45 … Rc8.

Step 2: Lure Black's queen away from e5 by threatening to infiltrate f8 once again. 46 Qf2 Qb8.

Step 3: Seize control over the a1-h1 diagonal, after which Black is mated. After 47 Qd4!, the queen gloats, "Your failed monarchy will soon be consigned to the rubbish heap of the dead past" as checkmate is inevitable.

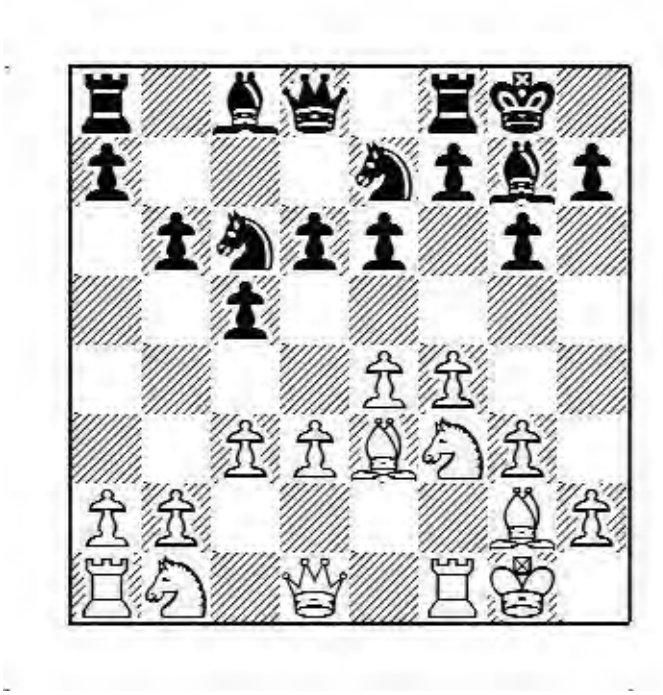
**Summary:** Meet an early … b7-b5?! with a quick d3-d4!, which crosses Black's plan of … b5-b4 and … bxc3.

*Game 43*
**S.Movsesian-A.Belezky**
German League 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 d3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 f4 d6**

We won't be covering 5 … e6 6 Nf3 Nge7 7 0-0 d5 8 c3 since this transposes to positions we looked at in Chapter 2.

**6 Nf3 e6 7 0-0 Nge7 8 c3 0-0 9 Be3 b6**



I think this is actually a superior system for Black, rather than the early … Rb8 and … b7-b5 ideas.

***Question*:** But isn't this more passive for Black?

***Answer*:** Passive, yes, but also more solid, since White is unable to easily undermine the c5-pawn with d3-d4, as we

examined last game.

**10 Bf2**

We saw this idea last game, where White removes the bishop from future … Nf5 ideas and also clears the e-file for his rook. Instead, after 10 Na3 Ba6 11 Re1 Qd7 12 Nc2 e5 13 d4 cxd4 14 cxd4 exd4 (Black banks on his piece activity to compensate for his d6-isolani) 15 Nfxd4 Rac8 16 Qd2 Nxd4 (16 … Rc7 may be slightly more accurate) 17 Nxd4 Bb7 18 Rad1 Rfd8 19 Bf2 Qe8 20 b3, A.Shirov-A.Khalifman, Amsterdam 1995, the position is close to balanced, but I still prefer White due to his superior structure. In the next game, we will look at an early d3-d4, without all the preparatory work White played in this game.

**10 … Qd7**

***Question*:** This is a very odd-looking move. Why move

the queen, when Black can develop his c8-bishop?

***Answer*:** Actually this move is completely standard in such structures. Black keeps White guessing, as to which square he plans to develop his c8-bishop, while his queen covers the e6-pawn.

***Question*:** Why is the e6-pawn in need of coverage?

***Answer***: It gives Black a future option of … f7-f5 counterattack ideas, when the e6-pawn might indeed require some protection. As mentioned in the last game, 10 … d5?! isn't such a great idea for Black, since he transposes to a position from Chapter 2 a move down.

**11 Re1**

White's main move, backing up the e4-pawn.

**11 … Ba6**

***Question*:** Is it better for Black to develop his bishop on the a6- or b7-square?

***Answer*:** It's hard to say. I tend to prefer to place it on the b7-square, since it's more central and doesn't impede the future advance of Black's queenside pawns. Still, in my database, the a6-development scheme is slightly more popular. Here is an example of the b7-development plan: 11 … Bb7 12 Na3 Rae8 (Black backs up his e-pawn to play for either … f7-f5 or … e6-e5) 13 d4 cxd4 14 cxd4:

a) 14 … Rc8 (a change of plans now that the c-file has been opened) 15 Qd2 Na5 16 b3 and White looks slightly more comfortable, due to his extra space, S.Movsesian-D.Kryakvin, Pardubice 2007.

b) 14 … d5 15 e5 Ba6 16 g4 f6 17 exf6 Bxf6 18 Qd2 Bg7 19 Rac1 Bh6! 20 Bg3!? (20 Be3 prevents Black's coming idea) 20 … e5!? (this is possible due to the pin on the f4-pawn) 21 Nxe5 Nxe5 22 Rxe5 Qxg4 23 Rce1 Qd7 24 Qb4 Nf5 25 Bxd5+ Kh8, K.Movsziszian-A.Hoffman, Mancha Real 2000. The position remains tensely charged after 26 Bg2 Bg7 27 Bf2! Bxe5 28 fxe5 Bb7 29 e6 Qe7 30 Qxe7 Rxe7 31 d5 Rd8 32 Re5 Kg7 33 Be1! (intending to transfer to the c3-square) and I prefer White's chances, while

*Houdini* calls it close to even.

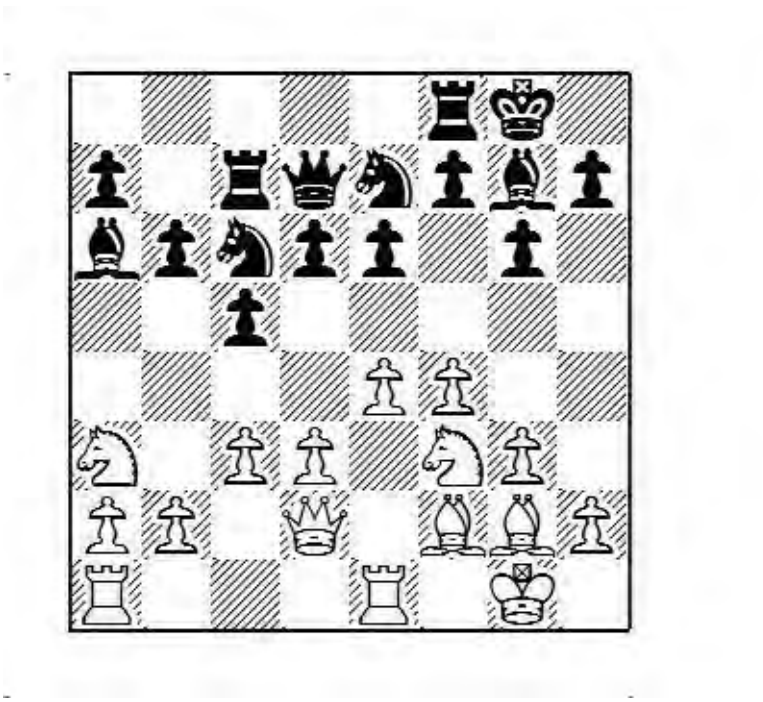
**12 Na3**

The a3-development of the knight is pretty much obligatory, now that Black's bishop takes a bead on the d3-pawn.

**12 … Rac8**

Black awaits the opening of the c-file. Another option is 12 … Rae8 13 Nc2, J.Netzer-B.Bellahcene, Bischwiller 2009. Here I would go for 13 … e5 with balanced chances.

**13 Qd2 Rc7!?**



Preparing to double rooks on the open c-file of the future! Black can also try 13 … e5 14 f5!? (14 Rad1 is safer) 14 … gxf5 15 Bh3 d5! 16 exf5 f6, W.Muhren-J.Werle, Nijmegen 2001, when the game turns into a battle between White's coming kingside attack and Black's imposing centre. I prefer Black's chances.

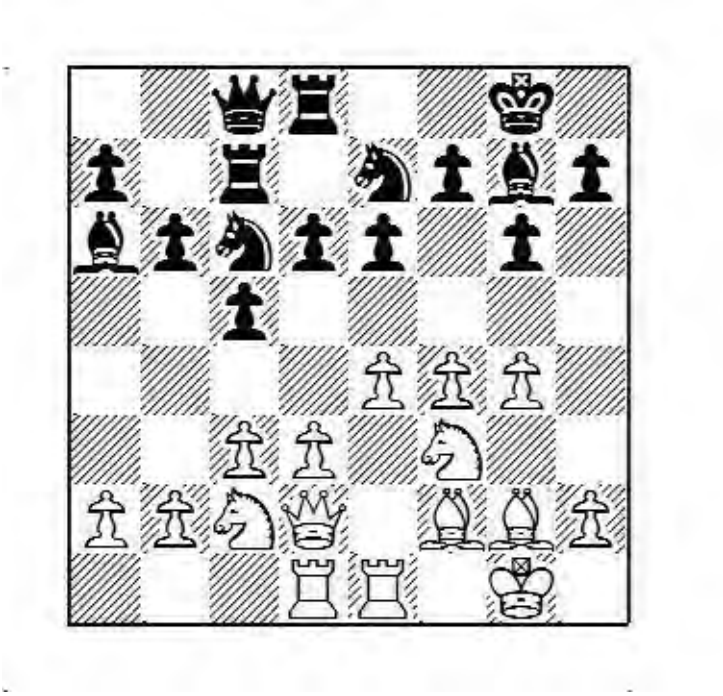
**14 Rad1 Rd8**

It doesn't make sense to double on the c-file until White commits to the d4-push which will allow Black to open the c-file.

**15 Nc2 Qc8**

Black bides his time. I think he should strike back in the centre with 15 … e5 16 Ne3 exf4 17 gxf4 with a dynamic position. Black must avoid the tempting 17 … d5?! 18 Nxd5 Nxd5 19 exd5 Qxd5 20 Bh4! Rdc8 21 Ne5 Qd6 22 Nxc6 Rxc6 when White should play 23 f5!. There is no need to grab the exchange (with Bxc6) and give Black all sorts of counterplay opportunities. White exerts strong pressure in the centre and kingside.

**16 g4**



A new move which saves a tempo (h2-h3) in conducting the kingside advance. White logically pursues his kingside attacking agenda. Movsesian's move looks like an improvement over the previously played 16 h3, T.Stepovaia-E.Fomichenko, Krasnodar 1997.

**16 … e5**

Principle: *Meet a wing attack with a central counter*. He can't wait around forever, while White builds his kingside attack.

**17 f5 d5**

Utilizing the same principle. It appears as if White's queen is in an uncomfortable position. Movsesian deals with the issue effectively.

**18 Qg5!**

Threat: f5-f6.

**18 … h6**

Not 18 … Bb7? as after 19 f6! h6 20 Qh4 g5 21 Qh5 Bxf6 22 Qxh6 Bg7 23 Qxg5, White wins a pawn.

**19 Qh4 g5 20 Qh5!**

Preparing h2-h4, while menacing f5-f6!

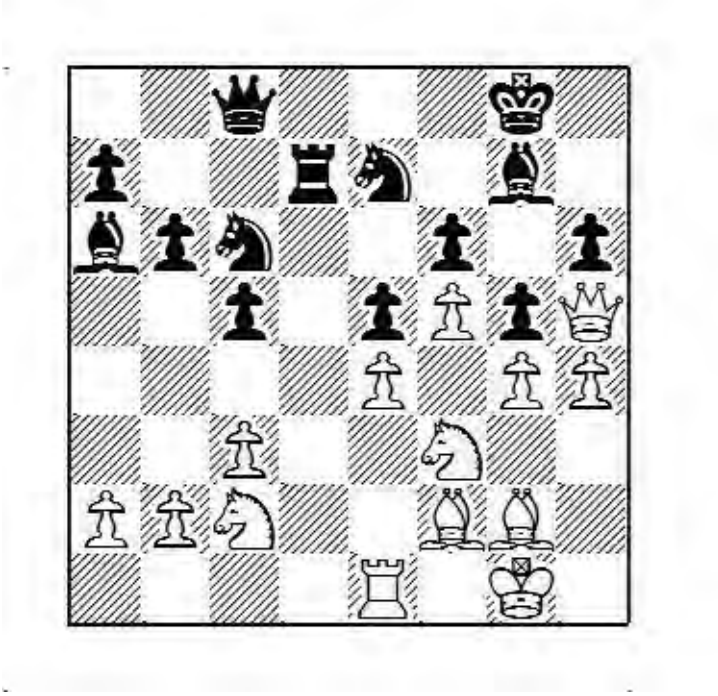
**20 … f6 21 h4 dxe4**

Black wisely begins the process of swapping major pieces to dilute White's attack.

**22 dxe4 Rxd1**

The seemingly strong 22 … Bd3 runs into 23 Ne3! and 23 … Bxe4? is met harshly with 24 Nxg5! Bxg2 25 Qf7+ Kh8 26 Ne6 Nxf5 27 Nxc7 Nxe3 28 Ne6 Rg8 29 Bxe3 Bf3 30 Rd7 Bxg4 31 Bxh6! Qxd7 32 Qxd7 Bxh6 33 Kf2 when White wins.

**23 Rxd1 Rd7 24 Re1?!**



***Exercise (combination alert/planning)*:** Movsesian wants to keep

one pair of rooks on the board, just in case it is needed down the

h-file later on. But I believe his last move is inaccurate, since it allows

Black a hidden tactical idea. Black to play and force White on the defensive.

***Answer*:** Double attack.

**24 … Bc4!**

Threats: … Bf7, trapping White's queen, and … Bxa2. Once again, 24 … Bd3 25 Ne3! is similar to the last note as 25 … Bxe4? runs into 26 hxg5 hxg5 27 Nxg5! Bxg2? 28 Qh7+ Kf8 29 Ne6+ forcing mate.

**25 hxg5**

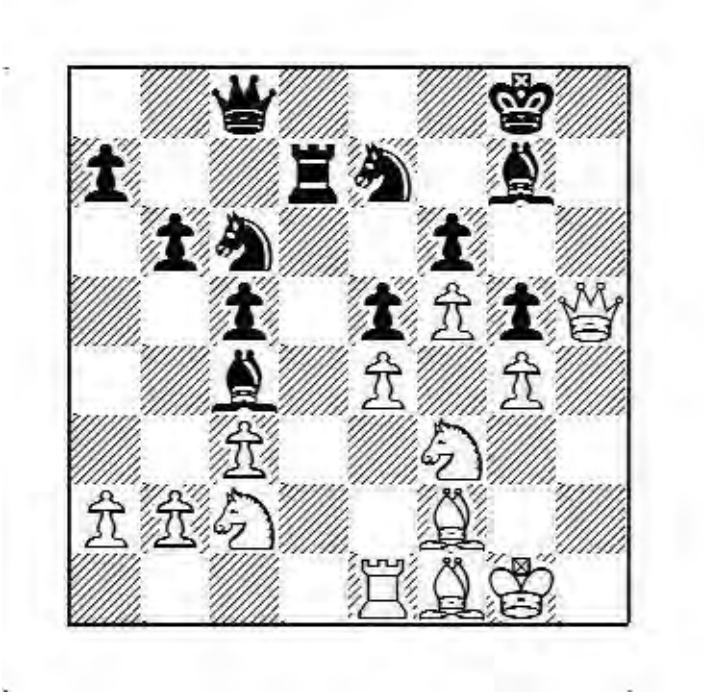
Freeing the queen.

**25 … hxg5 26 Bf1!?**

Movsesian plays with the ultra-confidence of a higher-rated player who believes his coming victory is pre-ordained by destiny. He boldly/recklessly offers a pawn, rather than submit to 'disgrace' with 26 Ra1. White's options, in order of increasing desirability:

a) 26 b3?! Bf7 27 Qh3 Rd3 28 Re3 Rxe3 29 Nxe3 Qa6! leaves White's queenside in some danger.

b) Your chicken hearted/humble writer would probably go for 26 Ra1! which is a psychologically difficult move to make. Very few GMs would be willing to play this sort of move against a lower-rated player. It may look awkward, but at least it covers the a2-pawn.



**26 … Bf7?!**

With this decision, Black's counterplay goes inert. He mistakenly believes that his opponent's generosity is a false boon and so he plays it safe. But why? I don't see White's compensation after 26 … Bxa2!. Even a pacifist, when provoked enough, will turn and fight. The bishop refuses to supinely go along with White's wishes, and takes up the a2-challenge. After 27 c4 (or 27 Ne3 Bf7 28 Qh3 and I still fail to see White's full compensation for the pawn) 27 … a5 (intending … a5-a4 and … Bb3) 28 Ne3 Nd4, I don't see enough compensation for the pawn.

**27 Qh3**

White repeats the chivalric gesture, continuing to offer the a2-morsel.

**27 … c4**

Inoculating himself against all a2-temptations! Black once again views the a2-venture as profitless speculation. Maybe Black should change his mind and take it after all. Now the advantage swings to White.

**28 Be3!**

Worrying Black about potential piece-for-two passed-pawns sacs on g5.

**28 … Rd6 29 Be2 Kf8 30 Kf2**

Preparing to transfer the rook to the h-file.

**30 … Ng8?!**

Black is convinced White is about to sacrifice on the kingside. This is a critical question of resource allocation: kingside or queenside? Whichever side receives the funds, the other suffers. It's similar to someone protesting about funding for the space program, while citing poverty as underfunded. I would improve the position of the c6-knight by transferring to it to c5, starting with 30 … Na5 and if 31 Nxg5!? fxg5 32 Bxg5, then manoeuvre it with 32 … Nb7 33 Qh4 Ng8 34 Be3 Nc5!. This move saves the day, since White is menaced to cover both the e4-pawn and the d3-square. This in turn, forces him to

hand over his best piece with 35 Bxc5 Qxc5+ 36 Ne3 Rd2 37 g5 Rxb2 38 Rd1 Qe7 39 Ng4 Qb7 40 Ne3 Qe7 with a repetition draw.

**31 Rh1 Bh6**

Black prays the g5-gash will eventually harden into a scab. He covers against the g5-sacrifice, but in doing so, Black's position grows more and more passive.

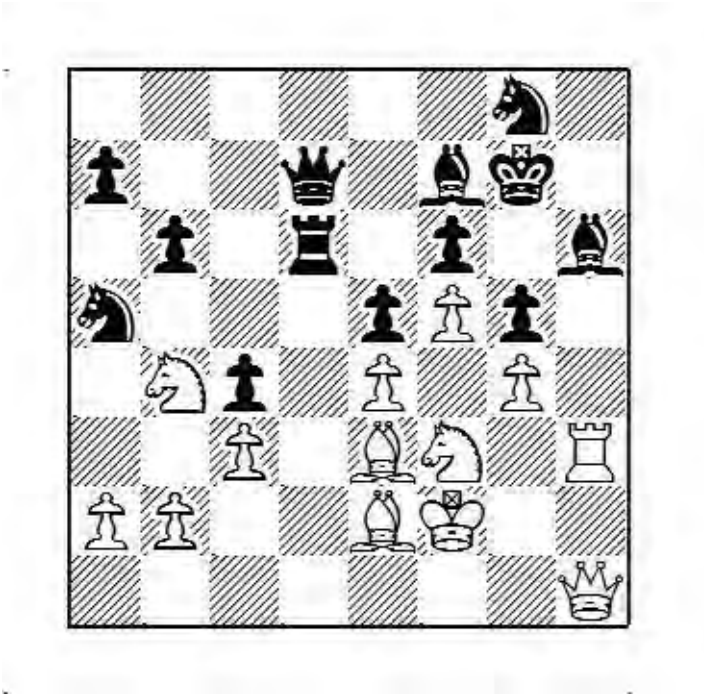
**32 Qf1**

Taking aim at the c4-pawn.

**32 … Na5 33 Nb4**

Eyeing the d5-square.

**33 … Qd7 34 Rh3 Kg7 35 Qh1**



Continuing to intimidate by 'threatening' ghost sacrifices, now on the h6-bishop. Such ploys have the effect of eating up the opponent's clock, while increasing paranoia.

**35 … Qd8**

Black's single concern seems to be in preventing any and all g5-sacrifices.

**36 Qh2 Qe7 37 Nd2 Qd8 38 Ke1 Qc8 39 Qh1!**

Preparing the knight's entry to d5.

**39 … Rd7 40 Nd5 Qc6 41 Kf2! b5**

Black will be hard pressed to save the ending after 41 … Bxd5?! 42 exd5 Qxd5 43 Qxd5 Rxd5 44 Nxc4.

**42 b4! Nb7**

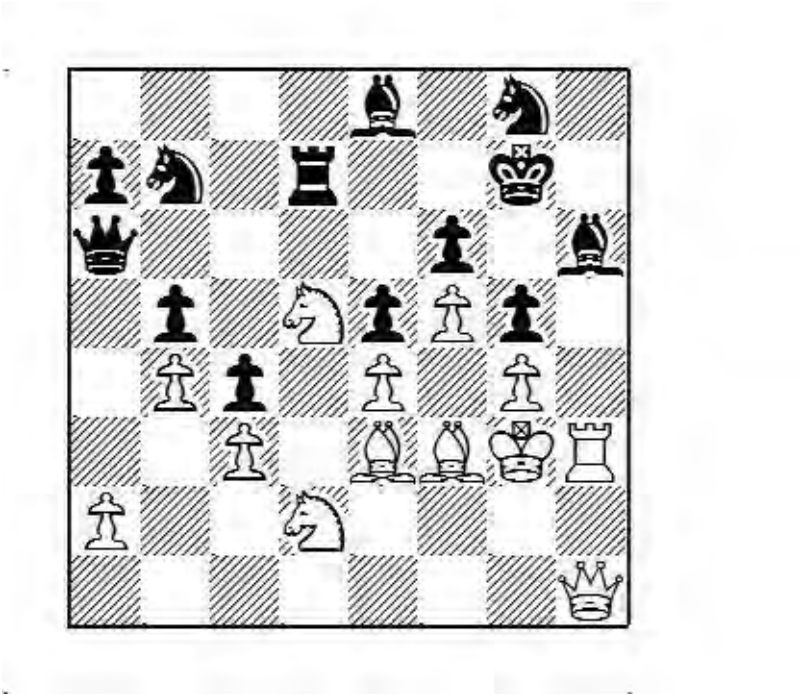
The panicky 42 … cxb3?! 43 axb3 Bxd5? 44 exd5 Qxc3?? loses to 45 Ne4! Qc8 46 Nxf6! and Black's primal fear turns to reality. White wins, since the f6-pawn is patient zero, where the plague originated.

**43 Bf3**

The careless 43 Bxa7?! runs into 43 … Qa6 and Black favourably regains the lost pawn.

**43 … Qa6 44 Kg3! Be8**

Not 44 … Qxa2?? as after 45 Nxf6 (the same attacking theme as in the notes to Black's 42 Nb7), White wins.



***Exercise (combination alert/planning)*:** In manoeuvring positions, we must be careful not to get hypnotized and begin to play planlessly, where one move feels exactly like the previous twelve, where they mingle, merge and all identity is lost. How did White deal with the irritating issue of his semi-hanging a2-pawn?

***Answer*:** Deflection.

**45 a4! Rf7!**

Black reinforces the f6-pawn. The a-pawn can't be touched:

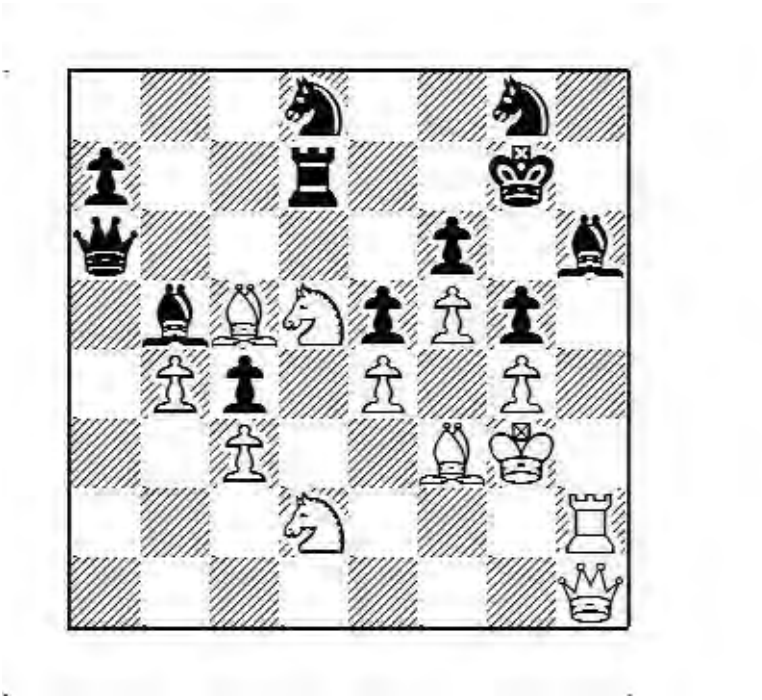
a) 45 … Qxa4 46 Nxf6! wins.

b) 45 … bxa4 46 b5! Qd6 47 Nxc4 is also winning.

**46 axb5 Bxb5 47 Rh2**

Now Qf1-h3 is a possible new fear for Black.

**47 … Nd8 48 Bc5! Rd7**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** We sense a distinct penal colony atmosphere to Black's dejected defenders on the kingside. White has a breakthrough combination and has a way to give physical form to his dark mood. He owns the missile, but where is the delivery system?

***Answer*:** Overloaded defenders/removal of the guard.

**49 Ne7!**

Black's g8-knight is overworked and other than sacrificing the exchange with 49 … Rxe7 which might lengthen the game at best, Black's resistance is over.

**49 … Nf7 50 Nxg8 Kxg8 51 Rxh6 Nxh6 52 Qxh6**

The queen sighs dreamily of a Hobbesian world where the strong (herself) tyrannize the weak (Black's king and pretty much everyone else). White has two pieces for a rook and also a winning attack. Black has no further hope.

**52 … Rg7 53 Nf1**

A new attacker heads for the d5-outpost.

**53 … Qa1 54 Kg2 Qa2+ 55 Kg1 Qa6 56 Ne3 Qa1+ 57 Kg2 Qb2+ 58 Kg3 Qxc3 59 Nd5**

The beginning of the end. There is no answer to the knight foray towards the kingside.

**59 … Qe1+ 60 Bf2 Qc1**

The queen agrees to the bishop's "request" with a fatalistic shrug of her shoulders.

**61 Nxf6+**

Black's kingside structure, frozen in place for so long, like the eternal immovability of those long-faced Easter Island statues, finally crumbles.

**61 … Kf7 62 Nh5 1-0**

**Summary:** An early … b6 may be Black's best plan in the … e6 line versus the Clamp, since the move stabilizes the key c5-square.

*Game 44*
**L.J.McShane-A.Khalifman**
Drammen Smartfish Masters 2005

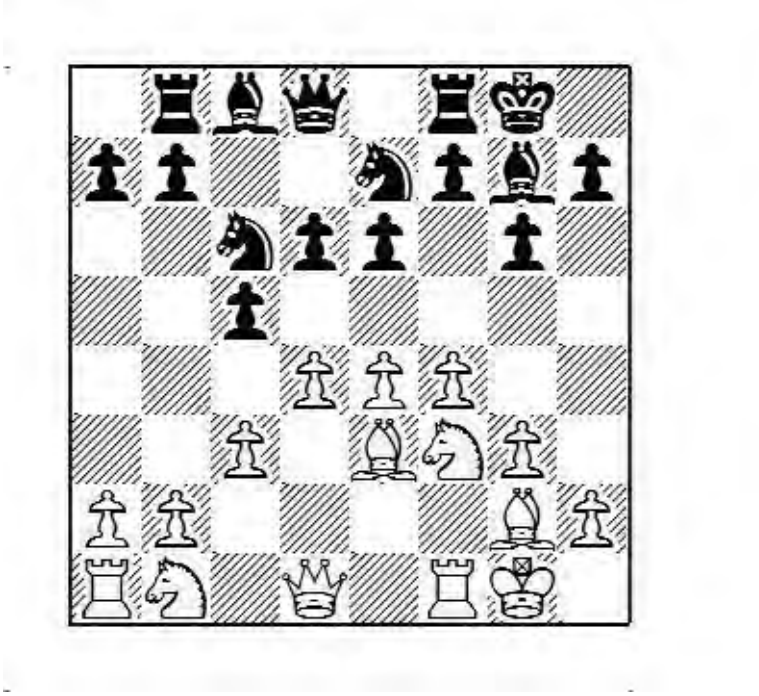
**1 e4 c5 2 d3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 f4 d6 6 Nf3 e6 7 0-0 Nge7 8 c3 0-0 9 Be3 Rb8**

***Question*:** What is the difference between

9 … Rb8 and 9 … b6, which we looked at last game?

***Answer*:** The difference is, 9 … Rb8 keeps White guessing about Black's intent. Will he play for … b7-b5? Or will he play … b7-b6 anyway? In any case, the rook shift also gets it out of the way of the g2-bishop's potential range.

**10 d4**



This is an example of White playing for an immediate d3-d4, rather than waiting, as he did last game.

***Question*:** Which plan do you prefer?

***Answer*:** I prefer the immediate d3-d4 plan, as played in this game, since when White waits too long, he offers Black numerous equalizing central counters, like … e6-e5 and … f7-f5.

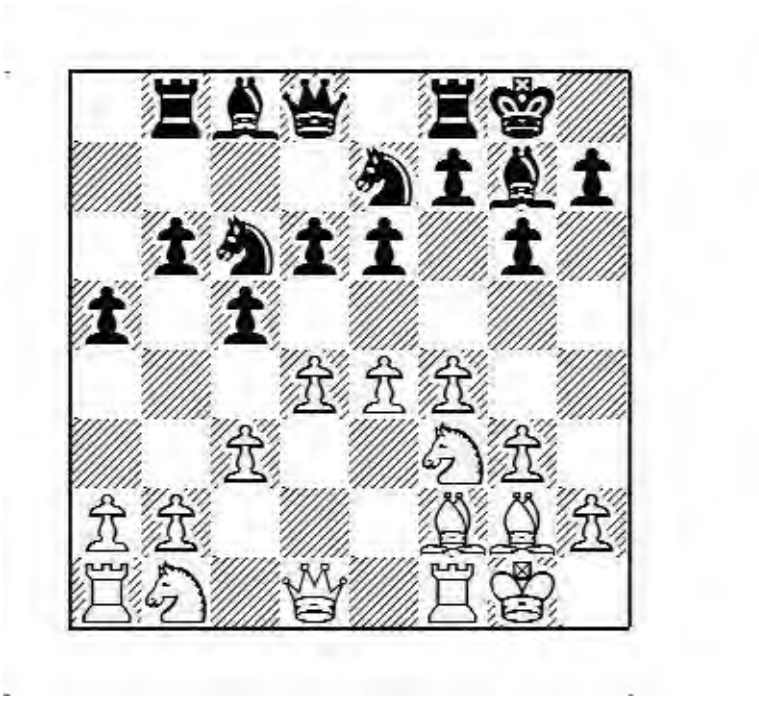
**10 … b6**

Khalifman retains central tension. More common is to swap immediately with 10 … cxd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5 Qb6!? (this makes … Rb8 look rather redundant and 12 … b5 is more natural though Black probably feared creating a c5-hole, which allows White ideas like Nd2-b3-c5) 13 Qd2 Qb4!? 14 Nc3 Na5 15 b3 Bd7, K.Movsziszian-D.Larino Nieto, La Roda 2009. I think Black's early queen adventure will prove to be a loss of time after a line like 16 Rfc1 Rfc8 17 g4 Rc7 18 Ne1 Rbc8 19 Nd3 Qb6 20 Nc5 when Black's pieces, especially his queen, look out of position.

**11 Bf2**

After 11 Na3 d5 12 e5 c4, once again, I'm distrustful of the … c5-c4, … b7-b5, … a7-a5, … b5-b4 plan. Following 13 b4 b5?! (essentially semi-sealing his own potential queenside counterplay, maybe Black should make a stand and allow the queenside to open by trading off his c-pawn for White's a-pawn, with 13 … cxb3 14 axb3 a5 15 Rf2 Ba6) 14 Nc2 a5 15 a3 Ra8 16 g4, A.Minasian-Ye Jiangchuan, Elista 1998, White's kingside chances look better than Black's on the semi-locked queenside.

**11 … a5**



A new move, seizing useful queenside space. It looks better than 11 … Qd7 12 Re1 cxd4 13 cxd4 d5 14 e5 Ba6 15 Qd2 Rfc8 16 Na3!? Na5 17 b3 Rc7 18 Nc2 Rbc8 19 Nb4 Bb7 20 Bf1, O.Sepp-E.Kengis, Kilingi Nomme 2002. White has superior chances for White since the queenside is secure from invasion and White's extra central space indicates a potential kingside attack.

**12 Re1 Ba6 13 a3**

***Question*:** Doesn't this move weaken queenside light squares?

***Answer*:** It's a trade-off. White slightly weakens queenside light squares to inoculate himself from future surprise … cxd4, cxd4 and … Nb4 invasion threats.

**13 … Qd7**

Reinforcing the e6-pawn to enable a future … f7-f5.

**14 Nbd2**

***Question*:** Why not seize further space with 14 d5?

***Answer*:** I like your plan. White looks a shade better in the following Benoni-ish position after 14 … exd5 15 exd5 Na7 16 a4 Rfe8 17 Nfd2 Nf5 18 Rxe8+ Rxe8 19 Na3 Nc8 20 Nac4 h5 21 Qb3 Qb7 22 Bf3 Bf6 23 Kg2 with space, light square power and the potential for kingside expansion. Black can only passively defend and await White's intent.

**14 … Rfc8 15 Nf1**

Heading for the e3-square. There the knight covers the c4- and c2-squares, while preparing a distant g3-g4 and f4-f5 pawn break.

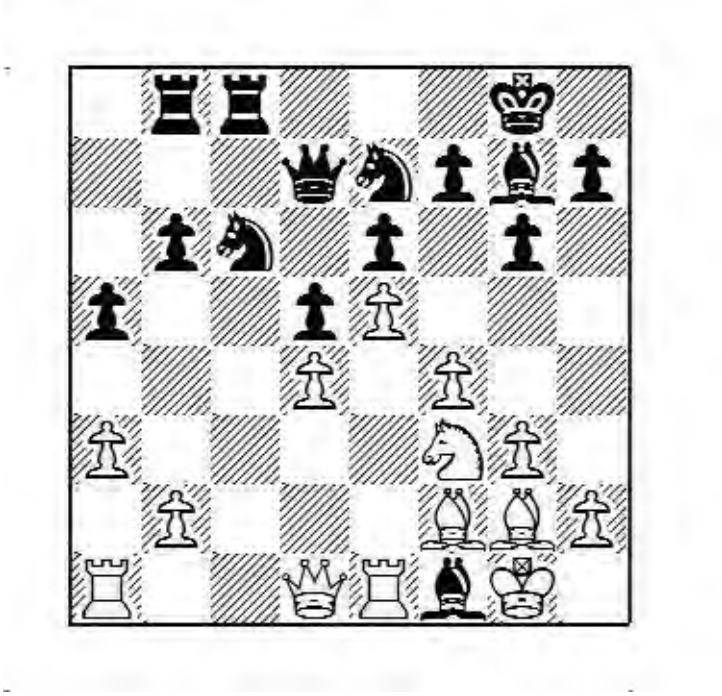
**15 … cxd4**

Khalifman finally breaks central pawn tension. Instead, 15 … f5?! weakens the e6-square after 16 d5! exd5 17 exd5 Nd8 18 Ng5!. White has an even more favourable version of the Benoni structure we examined in the above notes, since Black has been induced to accept a chronic e6-weakness.

**16 cxd4 d5**

Once again, Black's position is unable to withstand after 16 … f5? 17 d5! Nd8 18 dxe6 Nxe6 19 exf5 Nxf5 20 Rxe6! Qxe6 21 Ng5 Qf6 22 Qb3+ Bc4 23 Bd5+ Bxd5 24 Qxd5+ Kh8 (24 … Kf8?? hangs the queen to 25 Nxh7+) 25 Nf7+ Kg8 26 Nxd6+ Kh8 27 Nxc8 Rxc8 28 Rb1 Rc2 29 b4 axb4 30 Rxb4 Rc6 and Black is tied up while a pawn down.

**17 e5 Bxf1!?**



This move, a risky and probably incorrect decision, results in a disconnected narrative, in what was once a flowing story. Black rids himself of his 'bad' (maybe not so bad) bishop and reduces White's kingside attacking potential. But in doing so, he permanently weakens his light squares. Otherwise, 17 … Rc7 18 g4 Rbc8 19 Ne3 was the passive but more solid alternative.

**18 Bxf1 b5**

Intending … a5-a4, … Na5, which menaces invasions on the b3- and c4-squares.

**19 b3!**

Alertly denying Black's plan. Now, whichever queenside pawn Black pushes, White bypasses.

**19 … Na7**

Clearing the c-file and worrying White about c2- and c3-infiltrations.

**20 Re2 h5**

To anchor the knight on the f5-square, with the understanding that it won't be there forever, since White may eventually engineer the h2-h3 and g3-g4 push, ejecting Black's knight from f5.

**21 Rea2**

***Question*:** What is the point of this odd-looking move?

***Answer*:** White simply clears the path for the coming Bd3.

**21 … Nf5 22 Qe1**

Menacing the a5-pawn.

**22 … Qc7?!**

This is a violation of the principle: *When doubling or tripling major pieces on an open*

*file, the queen should not be the lead piece.* This tiny inaccuracy leads to future difficulties. Black's best shot at equality lies in the variation 22 … a4! 23 b4 Rc6 24 Bd3 Rbc8 when White will have a hard time building for a kingside attack, since he must be on constant alert for c-file tricks.

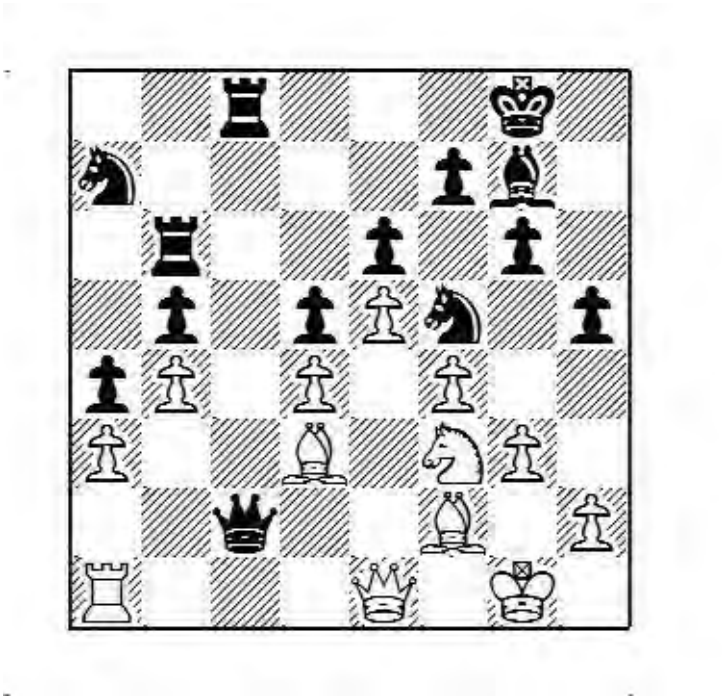
**23 Bd3 a4 24 b4**

White can leisurely build for h2-h3 and g3-g4, while Black is unable to implement … Nc8-b6, since in doing so, he hangs the b5-pawn.

**24 … Rb6**

Preparing to treble on the c-file, followed by … Rc1, which would bring healing exchanges. After 24 … Qc3 25 Qf1, it is Black's queen which is in constant danger on the c3-square.

**25 Rc2 Qxc2!?**

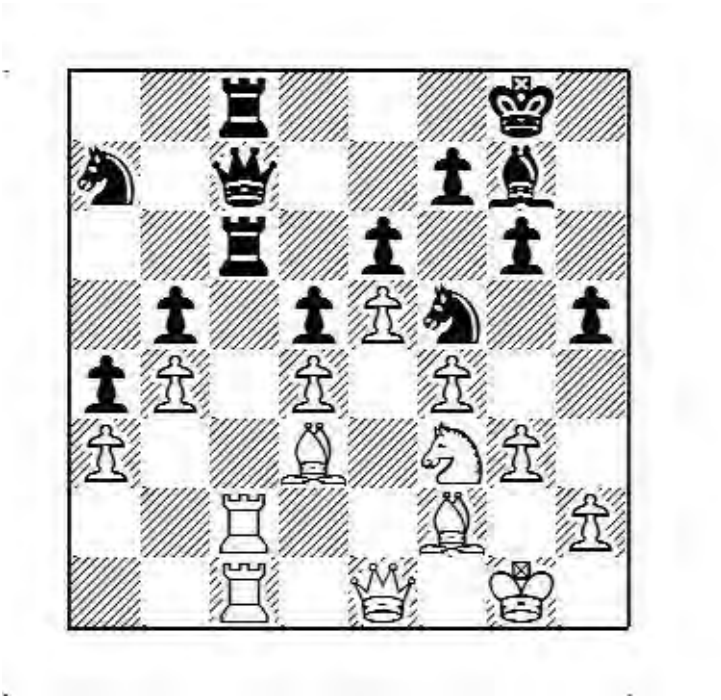


***Question*:** Is Black not chasing a chimera with this decision?

***Answer*:** Black's aggressive antecedent (his decision to give up his light-squared bishop for White's knight) justifies - at least in his mind - this speculative venture. When set into motion, such high-risk plans are mindless mechanisms, with no off-switch. The concept of 'importance' isn't necessarily a mutually agreed upon subject. In the chess world, there is a percentage of players among us with a certain birth defect, in that they have enlarged lobes in the brain-area which control risk-taking. Khalifman, like Topalov and Tal, can safely be placed in this category. Khalifman feels a solution which is sensed, more than grasped by the analytical mind. So he attempts an enterprising/foolhardy decision, which places positional considerations above material disadvantage. Darwin theorized that population was dependent upon food supply. If food dwindles, then so does population. Khalifman feels his counterplay level (his food supply) is low, so he hands over his queen for only rook and bishop, eliminating White's light square power, while taking control over the c-file. The idea does force White on the defensive, but only temporarily. The trouble is White can defend his queenside, while gradually preparing h2-h3 and g3-g4, and go after Black's king.

***Question*:** White seems to hold all the strategic trumps after 25 … Rc6

26 Rac1. What do you suggest for Black to counter this situation?



***Answer*:** Black can speculate with an exchange offer for the light squares and a passed pawn with 26 … Rc4!?. This sacrificial plan is not a replica of Khalifman's. Here, White is not obliged to accept it and can slowly build with 27 Kg2! Bf8 28 h3 Nh6 29 Nd2 Qd7!? (29 … Rxc2 30 Rxc2 Qd7 31 Rxc8 Qxc8 32 Nb1 will be tough to hold for Black, since the b5-pawn becomes a perpetual target should queens come off the board) 30 Nxc4. The black rook's long unbroken tenancy of the c4-square finally comes to a conclusion. I would rather take the exchange with the knight, rather than with the light-squared bishop. Following 30 … bxc4 (clearing the b5-square for Black's a7-knight) 31 Be2 Nb5 32 Ra2 Nf5 33 Qd2 Ne7 34 g4 hxg4 35 hxg4 Nc6 (such moves are more for psychological effect as Black worries his opponent about potential … Nxa3 and … Bxb4 tricks) 36 Rh1 Bg7 37 Rh3, it feels to me like Black is losing ground here as well. White can engineer an f5-break at some point.

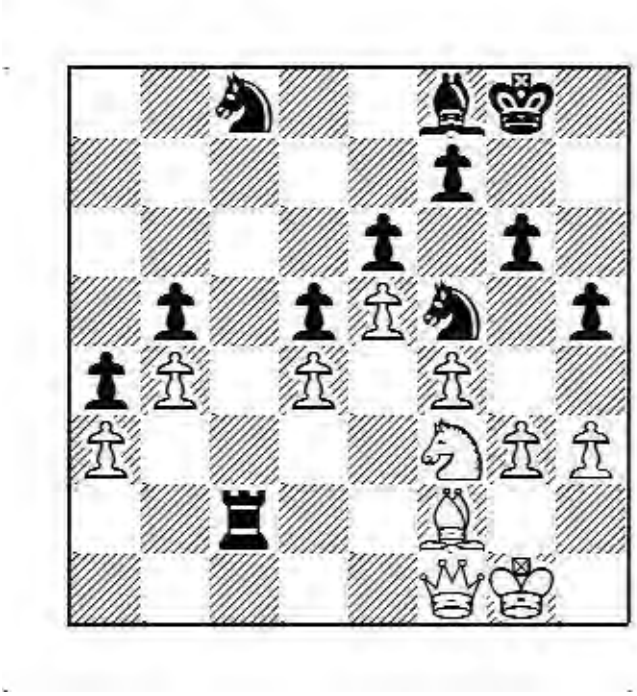
**26 Bxc2 Rxc2 27 Rc1 Rbc6 28 Rxc2 Rxc2 29 Qa1 Bf8 30 h3**

At some point, White will play g3-g4, pushing Black back, while preparing a queenside attack.

**30 … Nc8**

Hoping to have time for … Nb6 and … Nc4, after which Black's position improves dramatically.

**31 Qf1!**



Attacking the b5-pawn, while denying the … Nb6-c4 plan.

**31 … Rc3**

Attacking both the f3-knight and a3-pawn.

**32 Ng5 Na7**

After 32 … Rc4? 33 Qd3 Nb6 34 Kg2 Ne7 35 Nf3!, White is poised to play Nd2 and Black can't afford to hand over more material.

**33 Qa1 Rc2 34 Qb1 Rc3 35 Qb2 Rc4 36 Nf3 Nc8 37 Kg2 Na7**

Also insufficient is 37 … Nb6. White can set problems with 38 Qe2! (threat: Nd2 and Qxb5) 38 … Bh6 39 Qd3 Ne7 40 Be3 Nbc8 41 g4 hxg4 42 hxg4 Na7 (42 … Bf8 43 Nd2 is also hopeless for Black, who either gives up an exchange, or his b5-pawn) 43 f5! Bxe3 and now the killer zwischenzug 44 f6! wins.

**38 g4**

Architecture is more than just shelter. At last, White becomes the aggressor.

**38 … hxg4 39 hxg4 Nh6**

Also, after 39 … Ne7 40 Bh4 Nac6 41 Bf6 Bg7 42 Nd2! Rxd4 43 Bxe7, White wins more material. Following 43 … Rxf4 44 Bf6 Rxg4+ 45 Kh3 Rf4 46 Qc3 Nd4 47 Bg5 Rf5 48 Qxd4 Rxg5 49 Nf3, White consolidates and wins.

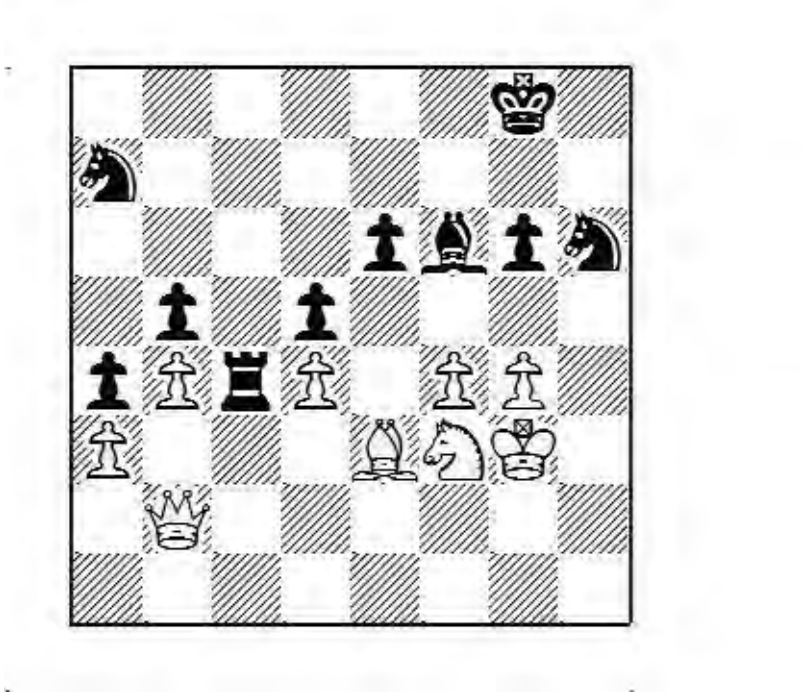
**40 Kg3 Be7 41 Be3**

Threat: f4-f5.

**41 … f5!?**

This desperate bid for freedom weakens Black's king's protective cover and allows a tactical trick. Anyway, after 41 … Bf8 42 Qd2 (renewing the f4-f5 threat) 42 … Kh7 43 Ng5+ Kg8 44 Qd3 Kg7 45 Nf3 Nc6 46 f5! exf5 47 Bxh6+ Kxh6 48 gxf5, Black won't survive.

**42 exf6 Bxf6**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** This one is easy. White to play and win:

***Answer*: 43 f5!**

"When a fact appears to be opposed to a long train of deductions, it invariably proves to be capable of bearing some other interpretation," said Sherlock Holmes. White's last move clearly contradicts Black's earlier supposition, that his queen sacrifice permanently drained the dynamic potential from White's side. All around in Black's position we note tell-tale moribund signs of decay. His proprietorship of the f5-square, once tenuous now snaps, and his king's safety is drained like a winter's leafless tree. White simultaneously menaces weaknesses on h6, g6 and e6. Now the kingside offers scant scope for concealment for Black's harried king.

**43 … Nf7 44 fxg6**

No one can truthfully call the pale, sullenly malevolent g6-pawn a handsome boy.

**44 … Nd6**

Also, 44 … Nh8? 45 Qh2 Nxg6 46 Qh6 Kf7 47 Qh7+ Bg7 48 Ng5+ Kf6 49 Qg8 forces mate.

**45 Qh2**

Threat: Qh7+ and Qxa7.

**45 … Rc7 46 Bf4**

"Now you finally realize I am no angel. The world abounds in evil, so I deem it a waste of energy to resist it," declares the bishop, truthfully.

**46 … Nac8 47 Kh3**

A strange way to threaten the d6-knight.

**47 … Rc6 48 Kg2! 1-0**

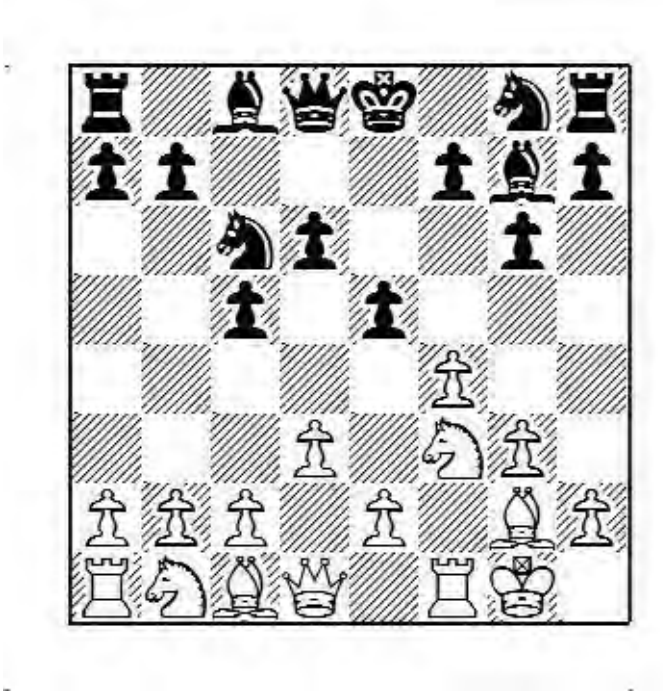
Black is unable to cover both d6 and h7-points. 48 … Rc7 is met with 49 Qh6! (most certainly not 49 Bxd6?? Rc2+ when Black makes up all his previous lost ground) 49 … Rg7 50 Ng5 Bxg5 51 Qxg5 Rd7 (covering against d8-mating threats) 52 Qf6 and it's all over. The queen believes in a tiered democracy, where an enlightened minority (herself) rules the ignorant, unwashed masses (everyone else). There is no defence to Bh6 or Be5.

**Summary:** Black is unable to retain central pawn tension eternally in this line, since White has access to both d4-d5 and e4-e5 space-gaining plans.

*Game 45*
**K.Movsziszian-A.Kovchan**
Sitges Open, Sevilla 2013

Note that although the names may sound alike, this isn't Sergei Movsesian playing White, whose games we looked at earlier in the chapter. GM Karen Movsziszian is another Clamp aficionado.

**1 g3 g6 2 Bg2 Bg7 3 d3 c5 4 f4 Nc6 5 Nf3 d6 6 0-0 e5?!**



***Question*:** Why on earth would you give the … e7-e5 Botvinnik System,

which is one of Black's most popular setups, a dubious mark?

***Answer*:** The Botvinnik System works well versus the Closed Sicilian. Against the Leningrad Bird, I think it's one of the worst setups Black can play. Even though I consider it an actual inaccuracy from Black, we will cover it heavily, mainly since you will get this quite often from players who believe they can play the position as if it is a Closed Sicilian. Just watch.

**7 fxe5!**

Opening the f-file gives Black serious trouble, since in many lines, the f7-pawn comes under fire.

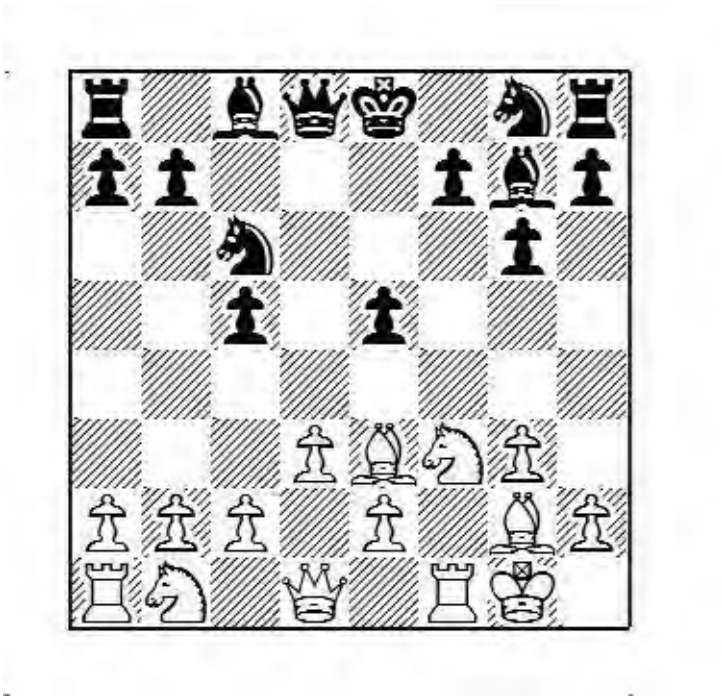
**7 … dxe5**

***Question*:** Can Black recapture the e5-pawn with the knight?

***Answer*:** The move loses time and I don't see a single game in my database with it. But it doesn't really look worse than recapture with the pawn.

After 7 … Nxe5 8 Nxe5 Bxe5 9 Nd2 Ne7 10 c3 0-0 (also, 10 … d5 11 e4 d4 12 Nc4 Bg7 13 e5! 0-0 14 cxd4 cxd4 15 Bg5 Be6 16 Nd6 Qd7 17 Nxb7 Rac8 18 b4 Bxe5 19 Nc5 keeps Black under pressure) 11 Nc4 Bg7 12 Bf4! (principle: *Create confrontation when leading in development*) 12 … d5 13 Nd6 h6 (13 … Be6? and White gets away with taking the b7-pawn after 14 Nxb7 Qb6 15 Qb3 Qc6 16 Na5) 14 h4 b6 15 Nxc8 Rxc8 16 Bh3 Ra8 (16 … f5 17 e4! also looks quite unpleasant for Black) 17 Qd2 h5 18 d4, White continues to hold a slight development lead and the bishop pair, thus keeping a clear edge.

**8 Be3!**



Remember this key idea. The silent white bishop, on a secret mission, speaks to no one and hurries past with cowl drawn forward to hide his face. The normal genteel manners of early opening play are placed aside. White's pieces emerge with a mysterious rationale, not easily discernible upon a quick glance. We sense that something just isn't right in Black's position, and there may be a dead mouse in the otherwise sweet smelling potpourri. This odd computer move applies pressure on Black, who experiences difficulties holding on to his c-pawn, mainly since … b7-b6 isn't tactically possible.

**8 … Nd4**

This move is a temporary fix, which costs Black yet more time. He hopes the knight's transference to e6 will be the necessary antibody to his c5-disease. In the next game we cover the more commonly played 8 … Qe7.

***Question*:** Can Black pull off a double attack counter with 8 … e4?

***Answer*:** Your suggestion is a curious superimposition of wild abandon, placed over previous caution. It's a thankless task to try and balance that which is basically an irreconcilable relationship between Black's desire to counterattack, and the actual reality, which says a counterattack won't work when lagging in development. Be heavily prepared for this one,

since at some point, one or more of your future opponents will try it. The lines are complex but White always comes out on top.

Black doesn't have the time to capture the b2-pawn after 8 … e4 9 Ng5 (attacking the f7-pawn) so he has to block with 9 … Nf6. After 10 c3! exd3 (also, 10 … Nd5 simply drops a pawn to 11 Bc1! when Black is unable to simultaneously cover the e4- and f7-pawns) 11 Bxc5 h6 12 Ne4 Nxe4 13 Bxe4 Qg5 14 b4! (not 14 Ba3?? which hangs a piece to 14 … Qe3+ 15 Rf2 Qxe4) 14 … Bh3 15 Rf2 0-0-0 (not 15 … dxe2?? which loses to 16 Bxc6+ bxc6 17 Rxe2+ Be6 18 Qd6 Rc8 19 Na3 (White threatens a brutal exchange sacrifice on e6) 19 … Qf6 20 Rd1! and there is no reasonable answer to the coming Qd7 mate!) 16 exd3 Ne5 17 Nd2 Rxd3! (17 … Nxd3?? 18 Bxb7+! Kxb7 19 Rxf7+ Rd7 20 Qf3+ Kc7 21 Bd6+! Kxd6 22 Ne4+ wins Black's queen) 18 Qa4! Rxd2 (18 … a6 19 b5! shatters the black king's cover) 19 Qxa7, White has a winning attack.

**9 c3**

Ejecting the d4-annoyance and covering the b2-pawn against long diagonal tricks.

**9 … Ne6**

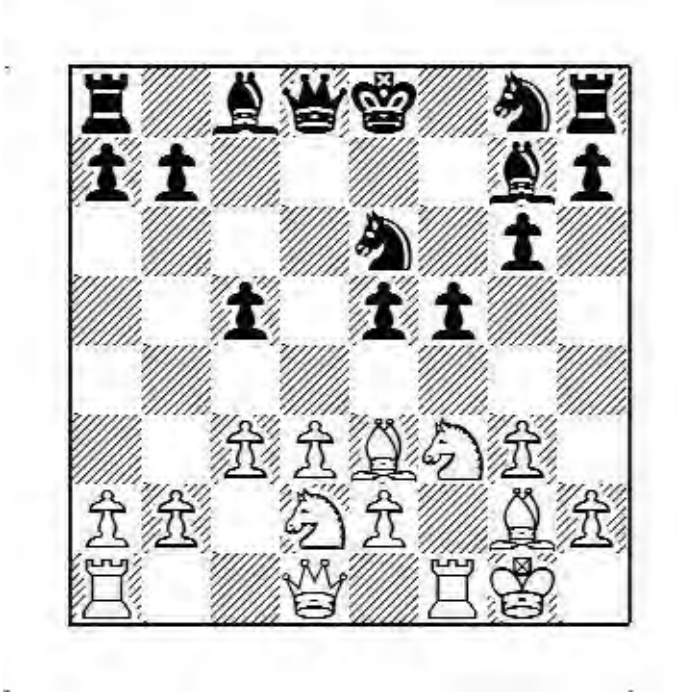
Black attempts to repair the neglect of the c5-pawn, at a high cost in development.

Instead, 9 … Nxf3+?! 10 Bxf3 Qc7 11 Qa4+! Bd7 12 Qc4 and Black drops a pawn, since 12 … Rc8?? is met with 13 Bxb7! with a discovered hit on f7. Following 13 … Be6 14 Qa4+ Bd7 15 Qa6 Rb8 16 Bd5 f5 17 Bb3, White has an extra pawn and a crushing position.

**10 Nbd2**

Preparing to challenge Black with Ne4 next.

**10 … Ne7**



***Question*:** Can Black cut off White's Ne4 plans with 10 … f5?

***Answer*:** If Black tosses in 10 … f5?!, a distortion factor appears, which creates a final product more flawed than the original (which Black sought to escape). I see three problems with this response. We glean the following clues:

1. It weakens the e5-pawn.

2. Black falls even further behind in development.

3. The move further weakens Black's light squares.

After 11 Nc4 (attacking the e5-pawn) 11 … Qc7 12 Ng5! (going after Black's best piece) 12 … Nxg5 (12 … Bh6 13 Qd2 Nf6 14 Nxe6 Bxe3+ 15 Qxe3 Bxe6 16 Nxe5 leaves White up a pawn with a winning position) 13 Bxg5. Now if 13 … Ne7 14 Qa4+ Nc6 (14 … Bd7? 15 Qa3! Threat: Bxb7!, which can't really be met reasonably) 15 Qb5, White picks up a clean c5-pawn.

**11 Ne4**

Attacking the c5-pawn. Also strong is 11 Ng5! Nxg5 12 Bxg5 0-0 13 Ne4 Qc7 14 Nf6+ Kh8 15 Qa4 (threatening to swing over to h4) 15 … Ng8 16 Ne8! when Nxg7 follows, after which Black is chronically weak on the dark squares, as well as behind in development.

**11 … Nf5 12 Bf2**

Renewing the c5-threat.

**12 … Qc7 13 Qa4+!**

Also effective is 13 b4! cxb4 14 Qa4+ Bd7 15 Qxb4 which leaves Black in serious trouble.

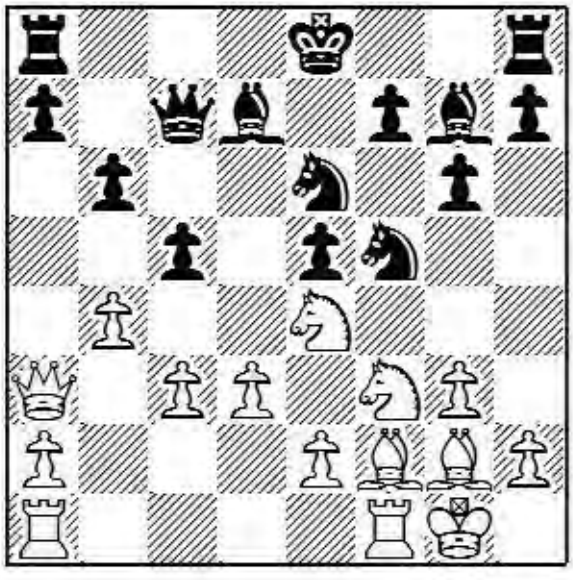
**13 … Bd7 14 Qa3**

White relentlessly pursues the c5-pawn.

**14 … b6**

This move is now tactically possible, since White has two knights blocking the h1-a8 diagonal.

**15 b4!**



Principle: *Create confrontation and open the game when leading in development*. One senses a spider-like arachnid quality to White's play, as his web continues to grow on the queenside.

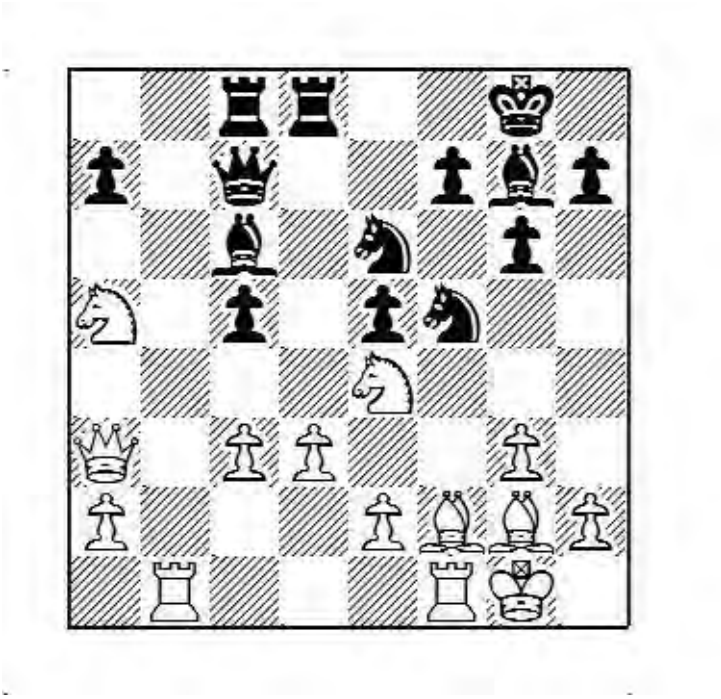
**15 … Rc8**

This leaves Black with a c4-hole and a c5-target. After 15 … c4 16 dxc4 0-0 17 Rad1 Rad8 18 Qb3 Bc6 19 Nfd2, Black has insufficient compensation for the pawn, yet he looks better off than in the game continuation.

**16 bxc5 bxc5 17 Nfd2!**

Seizing control over the c4-square.

**17 … 0-0 18 Rab1 Bc6 19 Nc4 Rfd8 20 Na5!**



The lawless knight creates a cloud of consternation among the townfolk, as he despoils all with his vile touch.

**20 … Bxe4?!**

***Question*:** Why did Black hand over the bishop pair?

***Answer*:** When we waste time and energy to try and avoid a non-existent combination, we attempt to give form and shape to that which is not real. Black probably feared the line 20 … Ba8 21 Nb7!? (a quiet building move like 21 Qa4 may well be stronger) 21 … Rd7 22 Nbxc5 Nxc5 23 Qxc5 Bxe4! 24 Qxc7 Rdxc7 25 Bxe4 Rxc3 26 Bd5 R3c7 27 e4 Nd4 28 Bxd4 exd4 29 Bc4 and Black remains under pressure. However, this is still how he should have played, since the opposite-coloured bishops offer drawing chances.

**21 Bxe4**

Now Black must worry about Rb7, as well as c6-infiltrations.

**21 … Nd6**

Covering the b7-square from incursions, while attacking White's light-squared bishop.

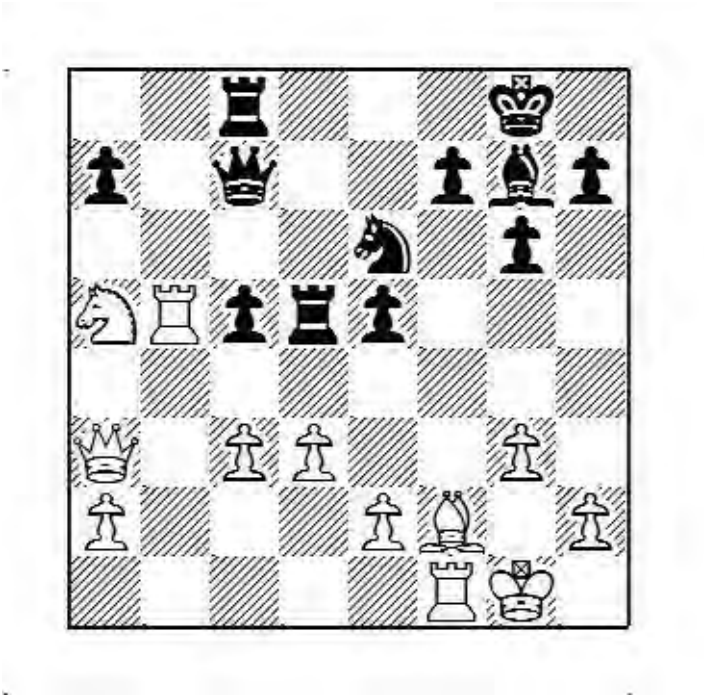
**22 Bd5**

The bishop takes up a dominating post.

**22 … Nb5**

This move picks off White's monster bishop, yet fails to end Black's light square issues.

**23 Rxb5 Rxd5**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White has a simple method of picking up a pawn. How?

***Answer*:** Double attack.

**24 Rb7 Qd8 25 Rxa7**

There goes the a-pawn.

**25 … Rd7**

Also futile is 25 … e4 26 Qa4! and now if 26 … exd3??, 27 e4! Rd6 (27 … Rh5 28 Nc6 is even worse for Black, since Ne7+ is coming) 28 Nb7 Qc7 29 Nxd6 Qxd6 30 Rxf7! wins.

**26 Rxd7 Qxd7 27 Nc4 Ng5!?**

Both sides have chosen an allegiance to a wing. Black attempts a sneaky little trap/cheapo. Well, a man can dream, can't he? *Houdini* prefers the line 27 … Qc6 28 e4 Rd8 29 Rd1 Ng5 30 Qc1 Nh3+ 31 Kg2 Nxf2 32 Kxf2 f5 33 Qc2!. Now if Black wants the pawn back, he faces the line 33 … fxe4 34 dxe4 Rxd1 35 Qxd1 Qxe4 36 Ne3 Qb7 37 Qd5+ Qxd5 38 Nxd5. I don't think Black will hold the ending, due to the fact that White has a passed a-pawn.

**28 Be3!**

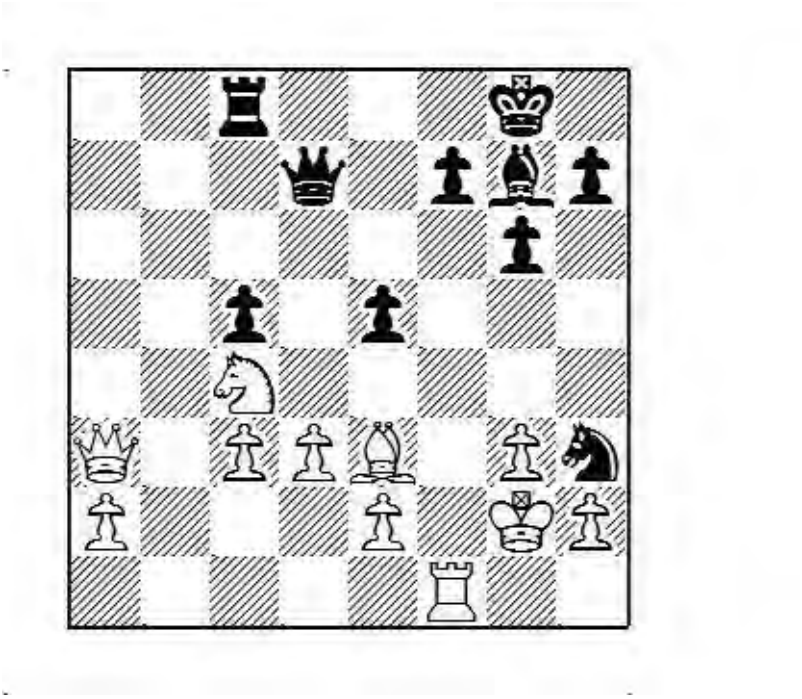
Attacking the g5-intruder, while threatening Nb6 for real this time. White avoids the cheapo 28 Nb6?? which runs into 28 … Qb7! (threatening … Nh3 mate! and also … Qxb6). When we fall for a filthy cheapo, we come to realize that we are as innocent as

Adam or Eve, just moments before their fall from grace. After 29 h4 Nh3+ 30 Kh2 Nxf2 31 Nxc8 Ng4+ 32 Kg1 Bh6! (threat: … Be3+) 33 e4 Qxc8, the advantage swings to Black.

**28 … Nh3+**

Forced but this a good move, giving Black a chance to complicate.

**29 Kg2**



**29 … Qg4?**

Black misses his chance to create some confusion in the White ranks. Here, he should have messed things up with 29 … Nf4+ 30 Bxf4 (30 gxf4?! Qg4+ 31 Kh1 Qxe2 32 Qc1 Qxd3 muddles things up considerably) 30 … Qb7+ 31 Kg1 exf4 32 Rxf4 (another try is 32 Nd6 Qa8 33 Qb3 c4 34 Nxc4 Qa7+ 35 Kg2 Re8 36 Qc2 Qa8+ and here, after the seemingly safe 37 Rf3, Black has the sneaky tactic 37 … fxg3 38 hxg3 Bxc3! when White is still a pawn up but it's not easy to win this) 32 … Ra8 33 Qxc5 Rxa2 34 Re4 h5 35 Qb6 Ra1+ 36 Kg2 Qa8 and Black continues to squirm and complicate, despite being two pawns down.

**30 Qb2**

Everything is under control. The move covers the e2-pawn and clears the path for the a-pawn's push.

**30 … Rd8!?**

Black decides to default on his c5-debt. Nothing else works in any case. Following 30 … h5 31 Rf3 h4 32 Qb7 Rf8 33 Qe7 hxg3 34 hxg3, Black's attack is at its end.

**31 Bxc5**

Thanks!

**31 … Nf4+ 32 Kf2 Ne6 33 Be3**

More accurate was 33 Be7! Re8 34 Qb7 (threat: Nd6) 34 … Nf4 35 gxf4 Qxf4+ 36 Kg2 Qg4+ 37 Kh1 Qxe2 38 Ne3! and White consolidates. If 38 … Qxe3??, White has 39 Bg5! which short circuits Black's queen and the f7-pawn simultaneously.

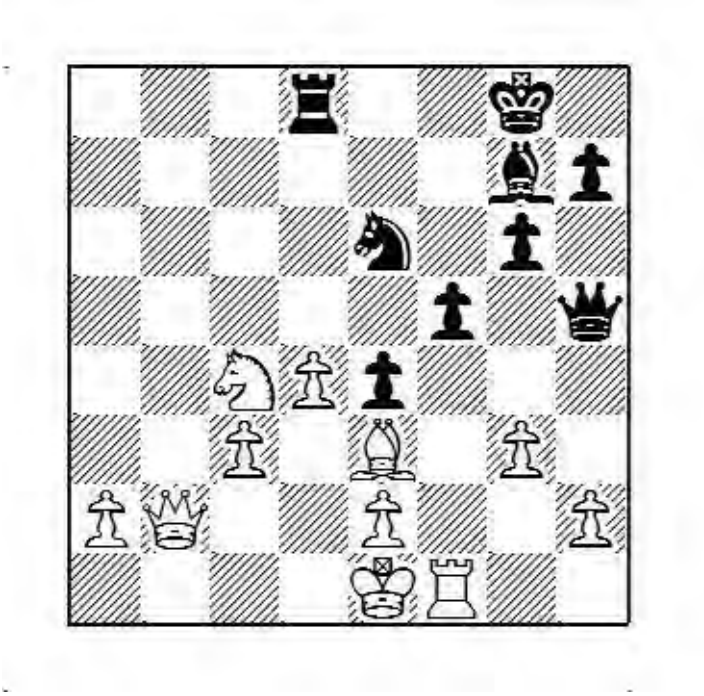
**33 … e4**

This move is at discord with the position's natural landscape. Instead, 33 … f5 offers Black more hope though it still loses in the end. After 34 Bb6 Rf8 35 Qb3 f4 36 Ke1!. Black can't play 36 … fxg3?? 37 Rxf8+ Bxf8 38 Ne3! Qh3 39 hxg3 Qxg3+ 40 Kd2 Kf7 41 Nd5 as Nc7 is threatened and so is the simple push of the a-pawn. Black is busted.

**34 d4 f5 35 Ke1!**

Every step increases the distance between the king and his pursuers.

**35 … Qh5?!**



Black's last move was a blunder in an already losing position.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** The black queen's problem is one of jurisdiction. She goes after the h2-pawn, but White soon proves that she is in fact out of play. How did White exploit Black's last move?

***Answer*:** Double attack.

**36 Qb6! 1-0**

"Now you understand the potency and extent of my power. No further warnings or threats will be required to assure your obedience," the queen tells Black's worried rook and knight. The just white queen seeks to dole out punishments commensurate with the crimes. Of course, this means capital punishment in all cases. White will prevail after 36 … Re8 (36 … Kf7 37 d5! Bxc3+ 38 Nd2 and Black loses heavy material) 37 Nd6 Re7 (37 … Rf8 38 Nxf5 wins more material) 38 Nc8 Re8 39 Qc6 g5 40 Nd6 Rd8 41 Nxf5.

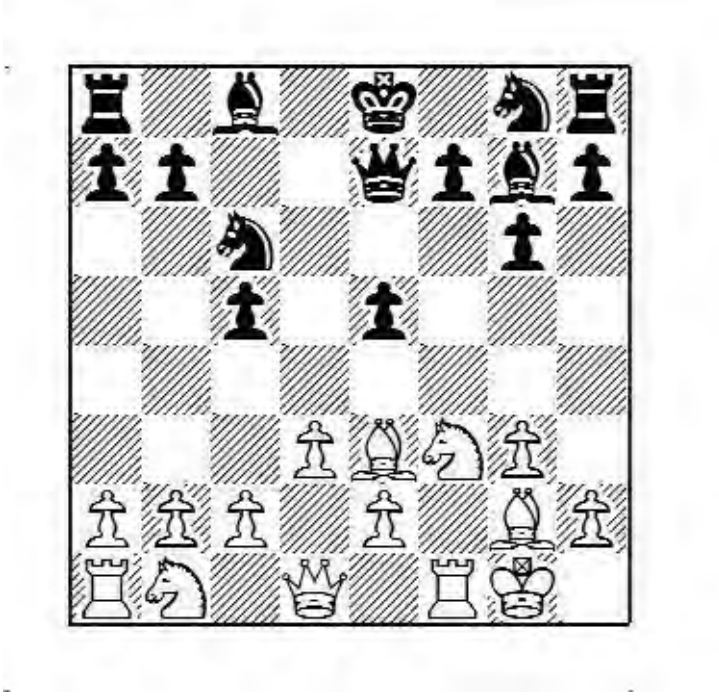
**Summary:** Believe it or not, 6 … e5?! is a mistake, and the Botvinnik System works out miserably for Black against the Leningrad Bird, due to our tricky 8 Be3! idea.

*Game 46*
**K.Movsziszian-M.A.Panelo Munoz**

**1 g3 c5 2 Bg2 Nc6 3 d3 g6 4 f4 Bg7 5 Nf3 d6 6 0-0 e5?! 7 fxe5 dxe5 8 Be3!**

The power-mad bishop interprets any and all opposition to his authority as moral decay and degeneracy in society.

**8 … Qe7**

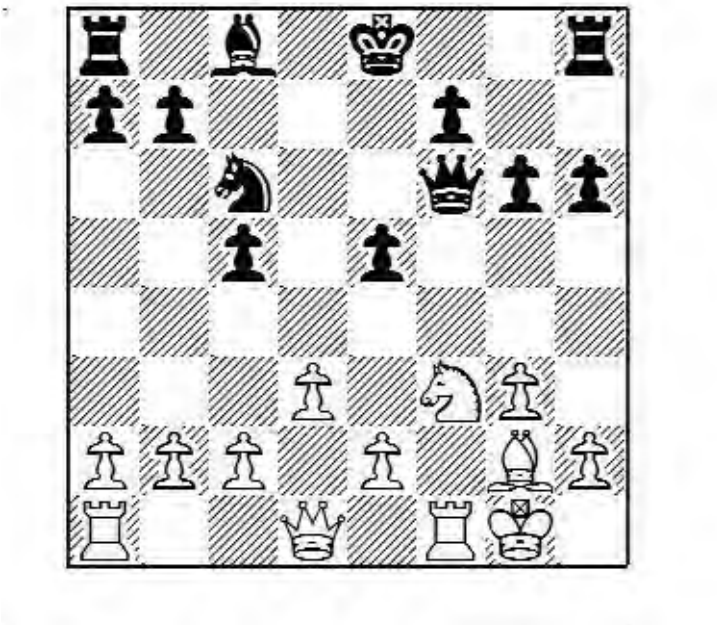


Black's most common response to our 8 Be3! trick.

**9 Nc3 Nf6 10 Bg5 Qd7**

Black gets out of the pin immediately. Let's look at some options where Black deals with the pin actively:

a) 10 … h6 11 Nd5 Qd8 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 Nxf6+ Qxf6.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** How did White seriously impair Black's pawn structure?

***Answer*:** Discovered attack.

By uncovering the rook against the Black queen, White gets to damage the black queenside pawns with 14 Nd4! Qd6 15 Nxc6 bxc6 16 Qd2, K.Movsziszian-M.Munoz Pantoja, Sabadell 2013. Black is in deep trouble strategically:

1. He lags seriously behind in development.

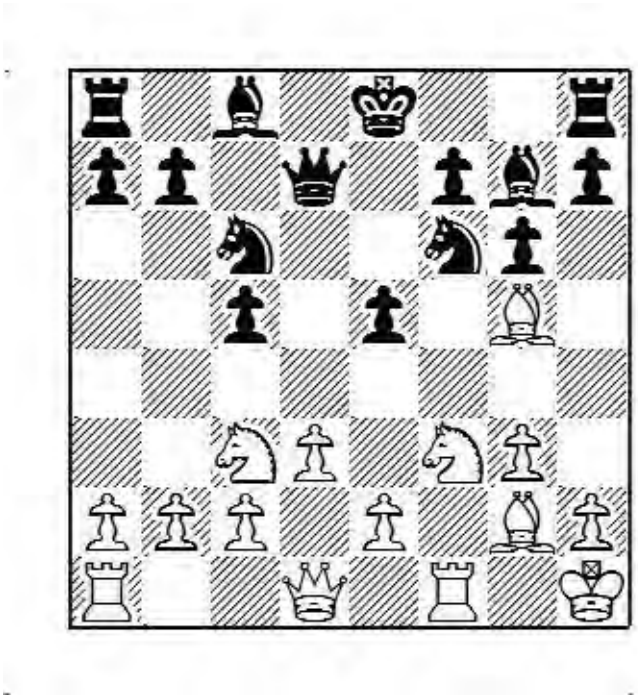
2. His pawn structure is a wreck.

3. He is unable to castle and his king's insecurity is certain to be an issue in perpetuity.

b) 10 … Be6?? looks reasonable but only succeeds in cutting off Nd5. There is the issue of White being able to use the e4-square though. After 11 Ne4 h6, K.Movsziszian-C.Bauer, Rabat (blitz) 2014, White should play 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 Nxf6+ Qxf6 14 Nd4! Qe7 15 Nxc6 Qc7 16 Nxe5 Qxe5 17 Bxb7 Rb8 18 Bc6+ Kf8 19 b3 with two extra pawns and a winning position.

**11 Kh1?!**

With this lax move, White risks compromising his initiative.



***Question*:** Why the dubious mark? White's move looks

like a reasonable safety measure against … Qd4+ ideas.

***Answer*:** I interpret it as a strangely muffled response for such a dynamic position. I suspect Movsziszian was playing to net a pawn with a Nxe5! cheapo. White can play more forcefully with 11 Qd2! 0-0 (11 … h6?! is even worse for Black after 12 Bxf6 Bxf6 13 Qe3! and oddly enough, Black has no good way to protect the c5-pawn) 12 Qe3! with a double attack on both the e5- and c5-pawns. After 12 … Qd6 13 Bxf6!, Black loses his c5-pawn, no matter which way he recaptures and with 13 … Qxf6 14 Qxc5, Black's bishop pair isn't enough compensation for the missing pawn.

**11 … Ng4!**

Denying White an f6-target and provoking h2-h3 (which would in turn weaken the g3-

pawn). The careless 11 … 0-0? is met with 12 Nxe5! Nxe5 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 Rxf6 Ng4 15 Rf4! Ne3 16 Qg1 Nxg2 17 Qxg2 and Black doesn't have compensation for the pawn, since he remains seriously behind in development.

**12 e4**

White avoids the immediate 12 h3 h6 13 Bd2 Nf6 as Black can go after the g3-weakness with potential … Nh5 ideas.

**12 … h6 13 Bd2 0-0 14 Nd5**

Seeking to induce kingside weaknesses with 14 Qc1 can be met with 14 … g5!? 15 h4 f6 16 Nd5 Qd6 17 Qd1 Be6 18 c4 when White only looks a shade better.

**14 … f5?!**

It's impossible to avoid a fight if your opponent begins the game in a cantankerous mood. Black's plan, mired in contradiction, goes into motion with the creaking of wheels and the grinding of gears. This is however a violation of the principle: *Avoid confrontation when lagging in development*. Black's rationale is that if one pushes a conservative strategy too far, he risks stagnation. This tempting, yet mistaken prematurely active move is similar to a man who leaps off a cliff and thinks to himself while he falls: "What's the problem? I feel no pain and the breeze is rather pleasant." The trouble of course is that his happiness is of a very temporary nature. Black looks nearly equal after the more circumspect 14 … Qd6 15 Qc1 h5 16 c3.

**15 Nh4!**

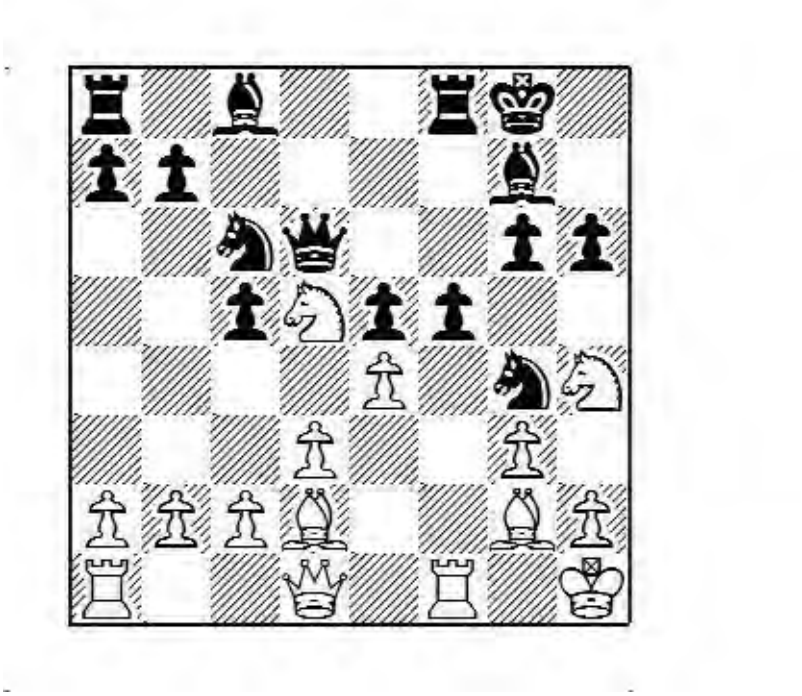
The kingside hums with the sound of war industry, as White offers a promising exchange sacrifice.

**15 … Qd6?**

It is indeed easy to go wrong here:

a) Also bad is 15 … Kh7?? which fails miserably to 16 Nxg6! (attraction/double attack) 16 … Kxg6 17 exf5+ and Black can resign.

b) A better course of action is 15 … fxe4 16 Bxe4 Nf2+ 17 Rxf2 Rxf2 18 Be3 Rf7 19 Nxg6 Nb4 20 Nc3 c4 21 Bc5 Nc6 22 dxc4 Qxd1+ 23 Rxd1 Bg4 24 Rd2 with an admittedly difficult ending for Black, since White has two pawns plus key light squares for the exchange.



***Exercise (planning)*:** Black's hoped-for initiative is of short duration.

Work out a concrete plan to reach a winning position for White:

***Answer*:**

Step 1: Create a very real target on f5.

**16 exf5 gxf5**

Step 2: Send Black's knight back to f6, which weakens Black's grip over the now weakened f5-square.

**17 h3! e4!?**

Black's costly war effort feels disproportionate to the staggering cost. The g4-knight refuses to turn and look back, fearful that his resolution to sacrifice himself for his cause would then abandon him. This move fails to confuse White.

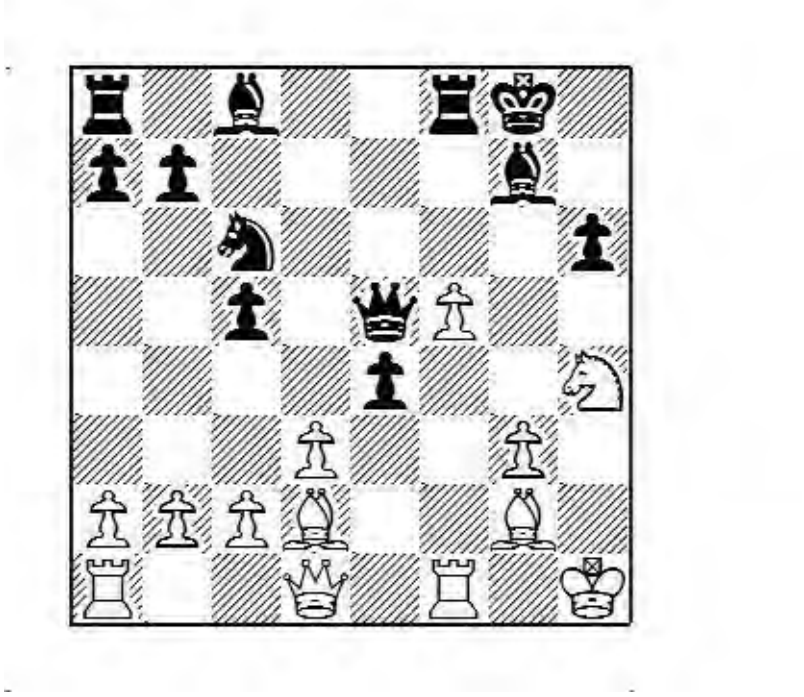
Step 3: Take down the f5-pawn by playing Ne3, adding a 3:1 ratio of attackers to defenders on f5. This is especially the case had Black played 17 … Nf6 instead as 18 Ne3! wins a key pawn for nothing.

**18 hxg4 Qxd5 19 gxf5**

Black's queen remains gloom-drenched and taciturn after the mysterious disappearance of her beloved f-pawn.

**19 … Qe5**

Also, completely hopeless for Black is 19 … Rf7 20 Bxe4.



***Exercise (calculation)*:** Black just offered us a knight fork on g6. But if we go for it, Black's queen may take the g3-pawn. Should we risk the exchange grab or avoid it?

***Answer*:** We should grab the exchange, since the g3-pawn is poisoned for Black's queen.

**20 Ng6! Qxb2**

Not 20 … Qxg3?? as 21 Bf4! traps Black's queen.

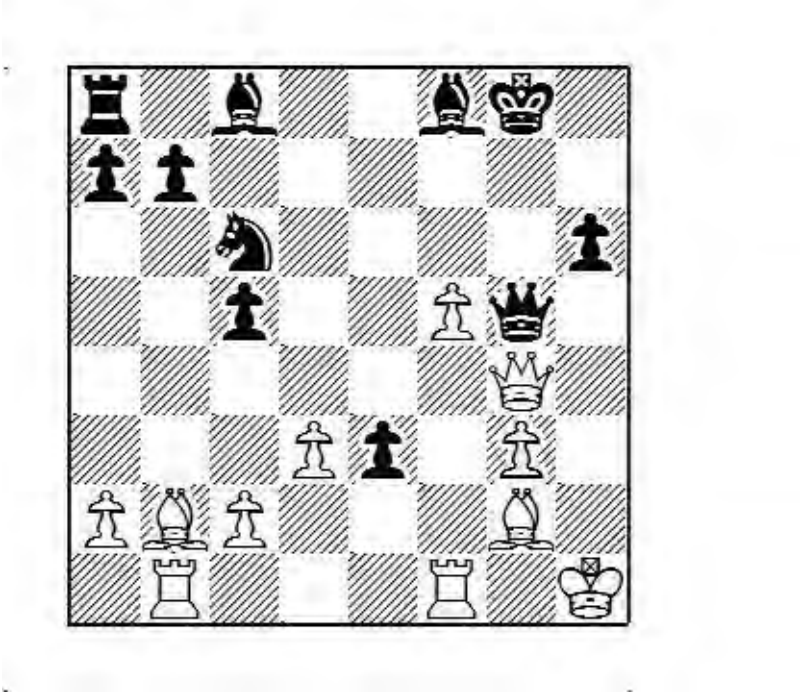
**21 Rb1 Qd4 22 Nxf8 e3 23 Bc1**

Even stronger is 23 Ne6! Bxe6 24 fxe6 exd2 25 Rxb7 Rc8 26 e7 Qd6 27 Qh5 Nxe7 28 Qf7+ Kh8 29 Rxe7 and White wins.

**23 … Bxf8 24 Bb2 Qd8 25 Qg4+**

The queen smiles wickedly, as if to a private malicious joke about her unfortunate g8-brother.

**25 … Qg5**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** The accumulated terrors of Black's position would unnerve even the most stoic among us. Find White's continuation which forced mate:

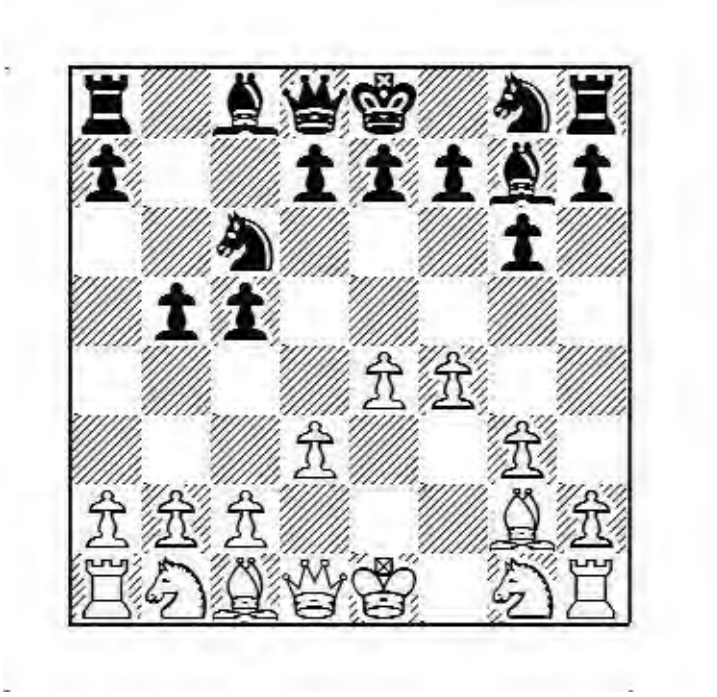
**26 Qc4+! 1-0**

Black king and queen glare at their tormentor with varying degrees of loathing. With 26 … Kh7 27 Qf7+, when the king's sister visits, his sense of utter revulsion is similar to your writer's, when one of my six-year-old students rips a scab off her arm, intently examines the nauseating yield, and then makes the somewhat questionable decision to pop the bloody scab in her mouth, in order to enjoy a nutritious, yet low carb snack during the lesson. After 27 … Bg7 28 Be4!, the bishop's mad cackle of evil mirth arouses suspicions in court that maybe he isn't quite as saintly as his reputation previously indicated. He responds to the black king's curses with the following advice: "Your Grace would be wise to save his final breaths for prayer."

**Summary:** After 8 … Qe7, harass Black with pin ideas of Bg5, followed by either Nd5 or Ne4.

*Game 47*
**S.Movsesian-V.Baklan**
European Championship, Plovdiv 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 d3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 f4 b5**



***Question*:** How is this early … b7-b5 different

from the games we examined earlier in the chapter?

***Answer*:** This game is an example of a plan, where Black exerts tremendous early energy exclusively on the queenside, putting kingside development on hold for the moment. In Game 48, we will look at 5 … Rb8.

**6 Nf3**

Since White played a2-a4 later on, he may want to try it here though 6 a4!? b4 7 Nd2 d6 should transpose to the game continuation, except that White reduces Black's options.

**6 … Rb8 7 0-0 d6**

***Question*:** What if Black attempts to pre-empt White's coming

c2-c3 by tossing in 7 … b4? The idea is that White is unable to

play a2-a3, since after … bxa3, then the b2-pawn hangs.

***Answer*:** This idea has only been tried once, in the game, E.Real de Azua-A.Needleman, Ezeiza 2000. I think White can indeed respond as Black hoped for, with a pawn sacrifice in mind. For example: 8 a3!:

a) 8 … bxa3?! 9 Nxa3! and we offer up the b2-pawn. If Black bites with 9 … Bxb2?, we get tremendous compensation after 10 Bxb2 Rxb2 11 Nc4 Rb8 12 Qd2! Nf6 (12 … d6 13 e5! d5 14 Na5 Nxa5 15 Rxa5 Qb6 16 Qc3 c4+ 17 Nd4 and White regains the material favourably since 17 … cxd3?? loses instantly to 18 Rb5!) 13 e5 Nd5 14 f5! and according to *Houdini*, Black is in a resignable position, since White has a winning attack, no matter how Black responds.

b) Wiser is 8 … a5 9 axb4 axb4 10 Nbd2 which leads to positions with which we are familiar.

**8 a4**

This is a new move and when it is played by a 2700 player, we should take note.

Instead, 8 Nc3 transposes to Closed Sicilian lines and 8 … b4 9 Ne2 e6 (9 … Nf6 10 a3! a5 11 axb4 axb4 12 h3 reaches Closed Sicilian lines that we have examined earlier in the chapter) 10 a3 a5 11 axb4 axb4 12 c3 Nge7 13 d4 0-0 14 Be3 is dynamically balanced, A.Ryvova-H.Kubikova, correspondence 2000.

**8 … b4**

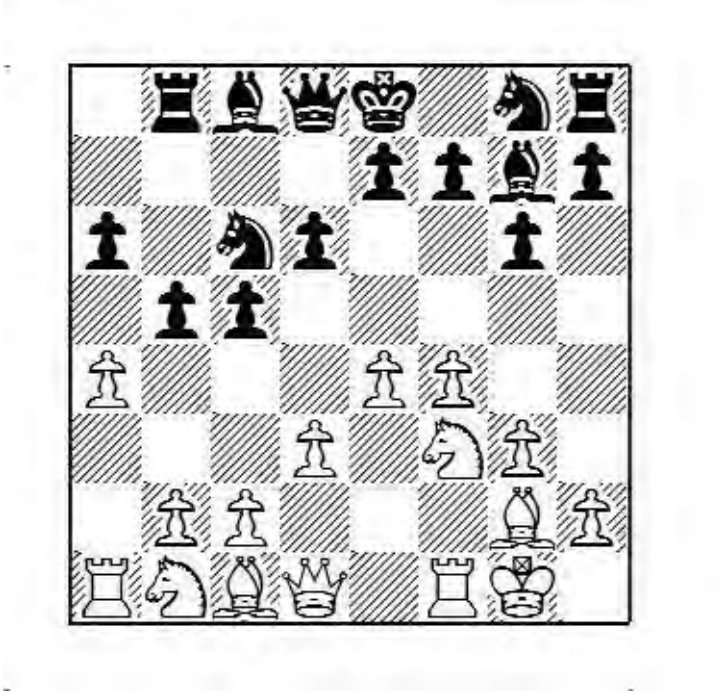
This move closes queenside lines, which can only help White.

***Question*:** Can Black apply pressure to the b2-pawn by simply exchanging?

***Answer*:** White does not have to recapture immediately so the pressure on the b2-pawn is not a big deal:

a) White intends to meet 8 … bxa4 with 9 c3 which nullifies most of the b2-pressure. After 9 … e6 10 Qxa4 Nge7 11 Na3 0-0, White has the strong 12 e5! dxe5 (12 … d5 may be wiser, giving White an edge after 13 Be3 d4 14 Bf2! Rxb2 15 Nc4 Rxf2! 16 Rxf2 dxc3 17 Qa3 Qxd3 18 Bf1 Qd7 19 Qxc3 Black gets some but not full compensation for the exchange, since the c5-pawn remains weak) 13 Nc4! with advantage to White. For example, after 13 … Bd7 (13 … Qxd3?? 14 Rd1 Qe2 15 Rd2 Qe4 16 Ng5 Qe1+ 17 Bf1 and there is no good way to save Black's queen from the coming Re2, except to hand over a piece with 17 … Nd4 18 cxd4 f6 19 Rd1 Qb4 20 Qxb4 Rxb4 21 Rxa7 Nc6 22 Rc7 Nxd4 23 Ne4 when Black lacks compensation) 14 Qa3! Be8 15 Qxc5, White applies strong pressure to Black's position in the centre.

***Question*:** How do we respond if Black simply maintains tension with 8 … a6?



***Answer*:** Trade pawns and transpose.

b) We reach familiar positions after 9 axb5 axb5 10 Nc3:

b1) 10 … b4 11 Ne2 Qb6 12 Kh1 Nf6 13 Rb1 0-0 14 Be3 with a similar version of our

familiar Closed Sicilian setup we examined earlier in the chapter.

b2) 10 … e6 can be met effectively with 11 e5! Now Black should bypass since 11 … dxe5?! opens the position favourably, with our lead in development and open a and f-files. 12 fxe5 Nxe5 13 Bf4 Ne7 14 Nxe5 Qd4+ 15 Kh1 Bxe5 16 Qe1 Bxf4 17 Rxf4 Qd6 18 Ne4 Qc7 19 Qc3! e5 20 Re1 b4 21 Nf6+ Kf8 22 Qxe5 Qxe5 23 Rxe5 which leaves Black in deep trouble in the ending, since he remains gravely lagging in development.

**9 Nbd2 Nf6**

Possible is:

a) 9 … Nh6!? 10 h3 f5 11 Rb1 0-0 12 b3 Nf7 which looks about even to me.

b) 9 … e6!? which once again looks like a risky setup, in conjunction with … Rb8 and … b7-b5-b4, since Black is behind in development. White should respond with 10 e5! Nge7 11 Nc4 dxe5 12 fxe5 0-0 13 Be3 Nd4 14 Nxd4 cxd4 15 Bg5. *Houdini* still claims it's even. To my human eyes, White's position looks promising, with all those potential dark square holes, ripe for future occupation.

**10 h3 0-0 11 Nc4 Ba6**

Threat: … Nxe4, undermining the c4-knight.

**12 Re1 Nd7**

***Question*:** What happens after 12 … Nxe4!? 13 Rxe4 d5?

***Answer*:** The position erupts into total chaos after 14 Nce5 dxe4 15 Nxc6 Qd6 16 Nfe5 Rb6 17 Nxa7! (17 Na5?! exd3 18 cxd3 Bxe5 19 fxe5 Qxe5 leaves White with a lot of weak pawns) 17 … Bxe5 18 fxe5 Qxe5 19 Qe1 Ra8 20 Nc6 Rxc6 21 Qxe4 Qxe4 22 Bxe4 Rac8 23 Bxc6 Rxc6 24 b3 leaves White a shade better in the ending, due to the protected passed a-pawn and Black's weak c5-pawn. Still, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops makes the game a likely candidate for a draw.

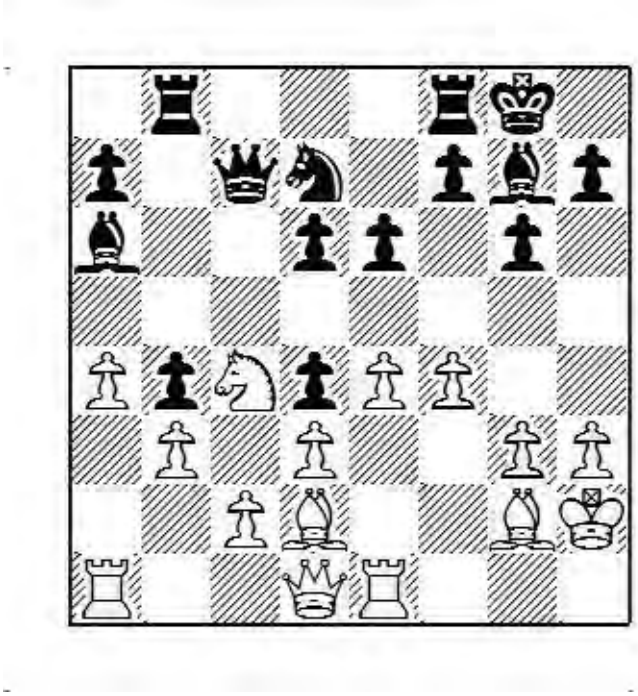
**13 Kh2 Nd4 14 Nxd4**

Movsesian decides he can't allow Black's knight eternal access to the d4-square. In agreeing to this exchange, though, he does allow Black to open the c-file.

***Question*:** How does opening the c-file matter, since White's c4-knight plugs the file?

***Answer*:** The outpost is not a permanent one, especially if Black eventually engineers … e6 and … d5, ejecting the c4-obstruction.

**14 … cxd4 15 b3 Qc7 16 Bd2 e6!**



White must do something about the coming … Qc5 and … d6-d5 plan, which opens lanes for Black's major pieces down the c-file.

**17 a5 Qc5 18 Qf3**

Cutting off … d6-d5 for now.

**18 … Bb7**

Renewing the threat.

**19 a6!**

This move disrupts Black's intention a touch. The idea is to activate the sleeping a1-rook via the a5-square.

**19 … Ba8 20 Ra5! Qc7 21 Qf2 Nc5**

Threat: … d6-d5, undermining the defender of the a5-rook.

**22 Raa1**

White can try 22 f5!? to gain the f4-square for his bishop. Black is unable to play 22 … d5?? (better is 22 … Nd7 23 Ra4 Qc5 with a tense position) as 23 exd5 exd5 24 Bf4 is winning for White.

**22 … d5?!**

At last, Black achieves his goal of ejecting the c4-blockader. However, the move actually enables White to increase his advantage, since Black weakens his own d4-, d5- and b4-pawns. Black should just await events with 22 … Nd7 with a slightly inferior but fully playable position.

**23 exd5 exd5 24 Ne5 Ne6**

Covering the d4-pawn, while threatening the one on c2.

**25 Re2**

Indirectly covering the c2-pawn.

**25 … Rb6 26 Rae1!**

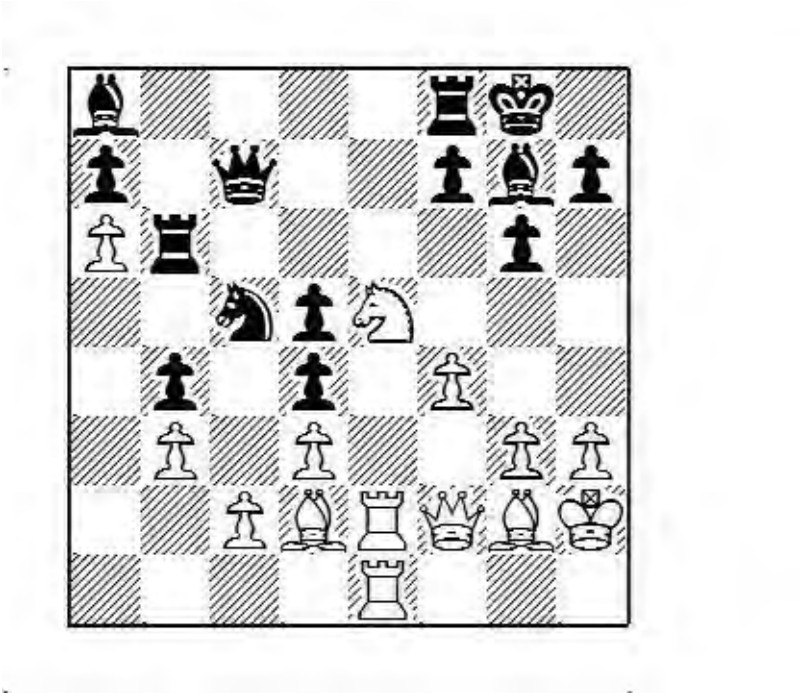
Both c2- and a6-pawns are tactically covered. Now Black must calculate Nxf7 tricks.

**26 … Nc5**

The alternatives show Black has to suffer anyway:

a) After 26 … Qxc2? 27 Bxb4 Qxb3 28 Bxf8 Nxf8 29 Rc1 Qb5 30 Rc7, White is winning.

b) Also, 26 … Rxa6 27 f5! gxf5 28 Qxf5 Bxe5 29 Rxe5 Ng7 30 Qf4 f6 (30 … Qxc2?? 31 Bxb4 Rd8 32 Re7 wins) 31 Bxb4 Qb8 32 Re7! Qxf4 (32 … Qxb4?? 33 Qg4! Rf7 34 Re8+ Rf8 35 R1e7 wins) 33 gxf4 Rc8 34 R1e2 Ra2 35 Rd7 gives Black a very difficult position.



**27 f5!?**

The addition of the f-pawn constitutes an attacking quorum. The proletariat uprising vows to avenge itself upon the black king's once-privileged life. Movsesian displays interest in going after Black's king, when it may have been wiser to remove the d4-pest. White looks clearly better after 27 Qxd4! Nxa6 28 Qf2.

**27 … Rf6 28 g4 gxf5?!**

Now the black king's security suffers multiple compound fractures. *Houdini* suggests 28 … Rxa6 29 Kh1 Rb6 30 Nf3! with advantage to White, since the d4-pawn falls.

**29 gxf5 Nd7**

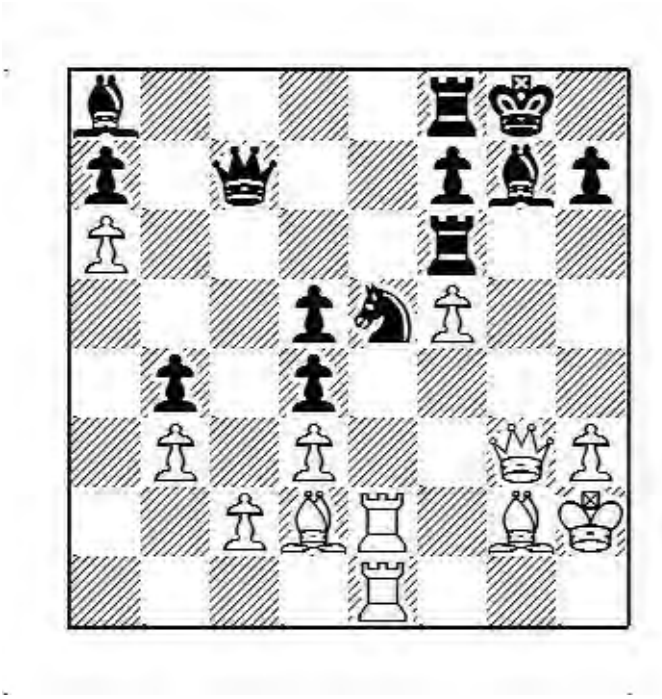
Also, 29 … Ne4 30 dxe4 Qxe5+ 31 Bf4 Qe8 32 Qxd4! (the black pawns, now separated and defenceless, are now at the non-existent mercy of White's queen. By this capture, White forces his opponent to live in privation) 32 … Rxf5 (Black is also busted after 32 … dxe4 33 Bxe4 Re6 34 Qg1! Rb6 35 f6! (clearance) 35 … Rxf6 36 Bxh7+, picking up Black's queen) 33 exf5 Qxe2 34 Qxg7+ Kxg7 35 Rxe2 leaves White up a piece.

**30 Qg3**

The pin is no problem for White.

**30 … Nxe5**

Most definitely not 30 … Rxf5?? Such boneheaded blunders haunt our dreams and evoke inner cries of anguish. Black walks into mate after 31 Bh6.



In the text continuation, Black dangles a brave face on the e5-square for White to consider.

***Exercise (critical decision)*:** These are decisions which tax the synapses. White is given two tempting options: 31 Rxe5, simply recapturing Black's knight, or 31 Bf4, increasing the pressure. Both lines favour White. However one of them is winning. Which one would you play?

**31 Rxe5?**

White mistakenly decides to go with the truncated version, rather than risk the economy, jumbo-sized one. The e5-square for White is that impossibly unattainable high school cheerleader. White reasons that he must separate the dreamy-eyed theoretical from the clarity of the practical, but in doing so, greatly decreases his advantage. Every player fears losing the thread of the game, when that dreaded turkeyfication process begins, and we miraculously manage to transform a winning position into a ho-hum one in the space of just a few moves. As of this moment, White only satisfies one of the needed requirements. Missing is the crucial second element.

***Answer*:** Events unexpectedly bend in kindly geometry for White after 31 Bf4! which places an unbearable defensive demand upon Black, who faces Bxe5. The bishop speaks eloquently of the power of virtue, yet behind closed doors he behaves utterly without scruples. Black has to hope his desperado knight can sell itself for a sufficient tempo with 31 … Ng4+ (futile is 31 … Rxf5 32 Bxe5 Rxe5 33 Rxe5 when White picks up an exchange with a completely winning position) 32 Qxg4 Qd7 but after 33 Be5!, an asteroidal belt of attackers rings Black's king, and we note incontrovertible evidence of Black's decline. Following 33 … Qxf5 34 Qxd4 Rg6 35 Bxg7 Rxg7 36 Re8! Rg6 (36 … Qg6?? 37 Rxf8+ Kxf8 38 Qxb4+ Kg8 39 Re8 mate!) 37 Qxa7 Bc6 38 Rxf8+ Kxf8 39 Qc5+ Kg7 40 Kh1, the passed a-pawn is decisive.

**31 … Kh8 32 Re8!?**

Movsesian rejects the line 32 Bxb4 Rg8 33 Re8 Qxg3+ 34 Kxg3 Bf8+ 35 Kf4! Bxb4 36 Rxg8+ Kxg8 37 Re8+ Kg7 38 Rxa8 Rxa6 39 Bxd5. White probably feared Black's enhanced drawing chances, due to the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

**32 … Qxg3+ 33 Kxg3**

The king strikes a daring pose for the benefit of the ladies in court - like Black's queen - who mostly just hides stifled yawns.

**33 … Bc6!**

Not 33 … Rxf5?? as 34 Bxb4 wins. The lax defenders incur the black king's heated reprimands.

**34 Rxf8+?!**

White should enter the line 34 R8e7! Rg8 35 Kh2 Bf8 36 Rxa7! Rxf5 37 Kg1! when the passed a-pawn should be decisive.

**34 … Bxf8 35 Kg4?!**

This move allows Black to save the game. He retains winning chances after 35 h4! Kg7 36 Re5! Bd6 37 Bf4 Kf8 38 Re2.

**35 … Bd7 36 Re5 Rg6+!**

A good move, forcing White's king to lose a tempo, while blocking the power of the g2-bishop.

**37 Kf3 Rxa6**

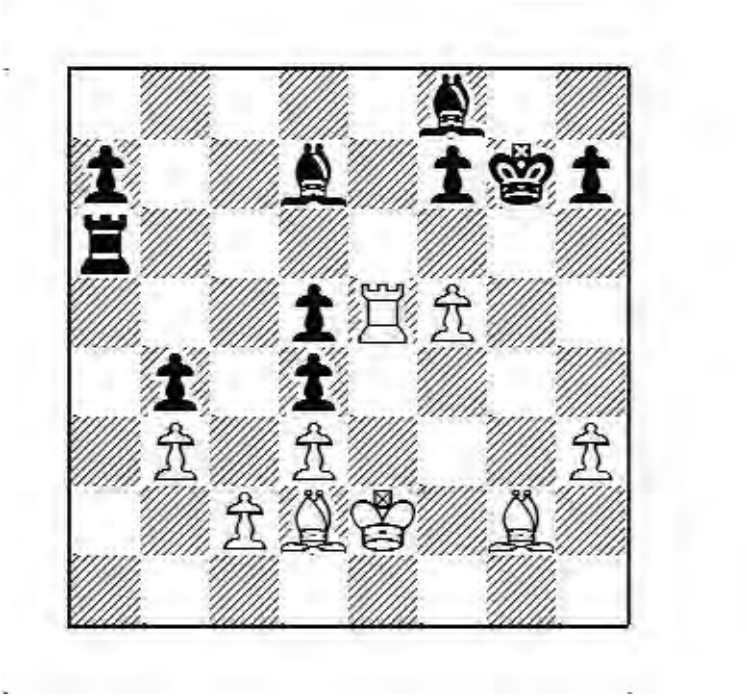
Now Black should save the game.

**38 Ke2**

The d5-pawn for now is untouchable, since 38 Rxd5?? Bc6 wins.

**38 … Kg7?**

A trifle careless. Instead, 38 … Ra5! 39 f6 Be6 should hold the draw.



***Exercise (calculation)*:** Can White get away with 39 Rxd5? Calculate the response.

***Answer*:** Black's 38th move was an error and White can indeed get away with the crime, due to a future double attack.

**39 Rxd5! Bc6 40 Rxd4! Bxg2 41 Rg4+**

The double attack regains the lost piece with advantage.

**41 … Kf6 42 Rxg2 Kxf5 43 Rg5+ Ke6 44 Rh5?!**

This move once again throws away White's hard won advantage. White should try 44 d4! which frees up the d3-square for White's king. White retains winning chances with his extra pawn after 44 … Ra1 45 Re5+ Kf6 46 Re8 Bd6 47 Rh8 Kg7 48 Rd8 Be7 49 Rd7 Kf8 50 Rb7 a5 51 Rb5.

**44 … Ra2 45 Kd1 Ra1+ 46 Ke2 a5!?**

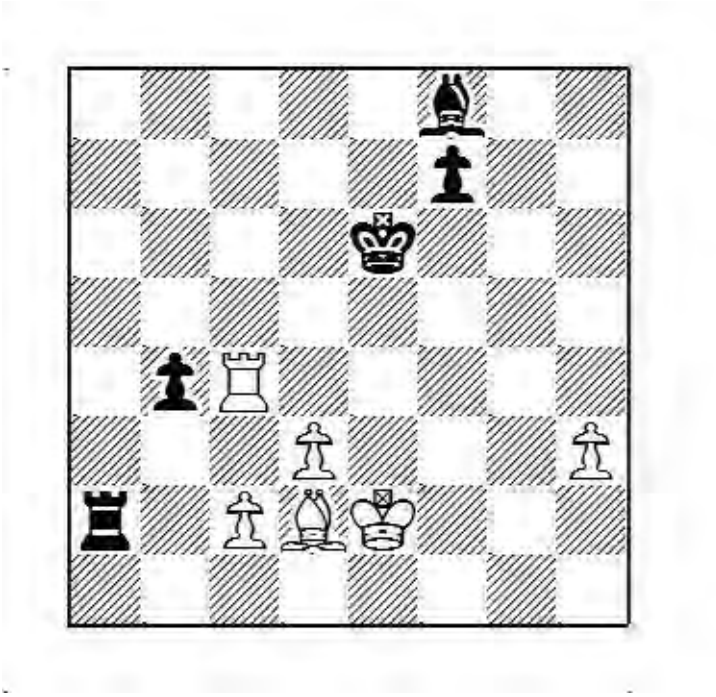
This still may work but Black should simply repeat the position with 46 … Ra2!, which looks like a safer way to secure the draw.

**47 Rxh7 a4!**

Endgame principle: *It is in the material-down side's best interest to exchange as many pawns as possible.*

**48 bxa4 Rxa4 49 Rh4 Ra2 50 Kd1!?**

I'm not sure just why Movsesian agreed to the draw, when he can play on with 50 Rc4!.



Black is unable to play 50 … b3? 51 cxb3 Bh6?? 52 Rc6+ when White picks off Black's bishop.

**50 … Ra1+ 51 Ke2 Ra2 52 Kd1**

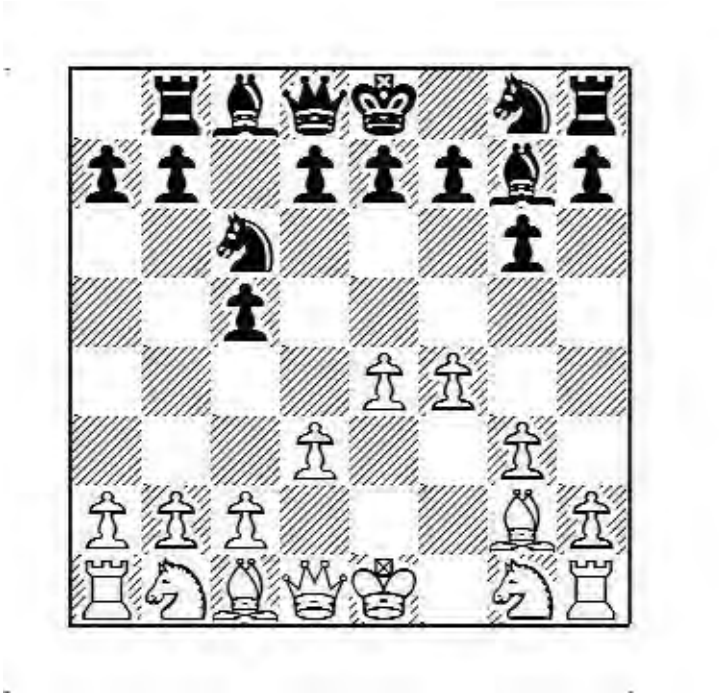
It isn't too late for 52 Rc4!.

**52 … Ra1+ ½-½**

**Summary:** The benefit of an early a2-a4 is that it encourages a closing of the queenside, which tends to favour White in Clamp lines.

*Game 48*
**N.J.Fries Nielsen-P.M.Nielsen**
Danish Championship, Aarhus 1981

**1 e4 c5 2 g3 g6 3 Bg2 Bg7 4 d3 Nc6 5 f4 Rb8**



This move is almost, but not quite synonymous with 5 … b5, which we looked at last game.

***Question*:** What is the difference?

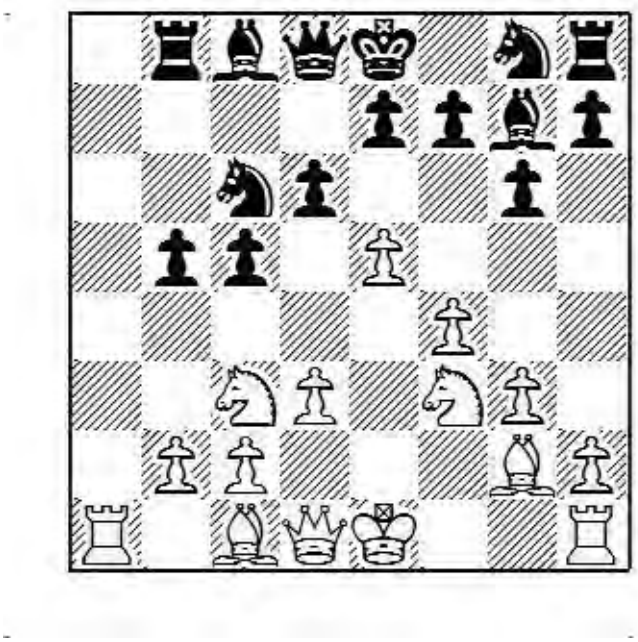
***Answer*:** I think 5 … Rb8 is more accurate, since this move-order avoids the closing of the queenside, which happened to Black in the previous game. Now a2-a4 can be met with … a7-a6, when Black retains flexibility in his queenside pawn advance.

**6 a4**

I only see one game in the database with this move. I think it makes sense for White to rid himself of his a-pawn, by forcing Black to play … a7-a6 and … b7-b5. Note that White can't force a transposition to last game with 6 Nf3 b5 7 a4 since Black is not obliged to play 7 … b4, and can simply respond with 7 … a6.

**6 … a6 7 c3**

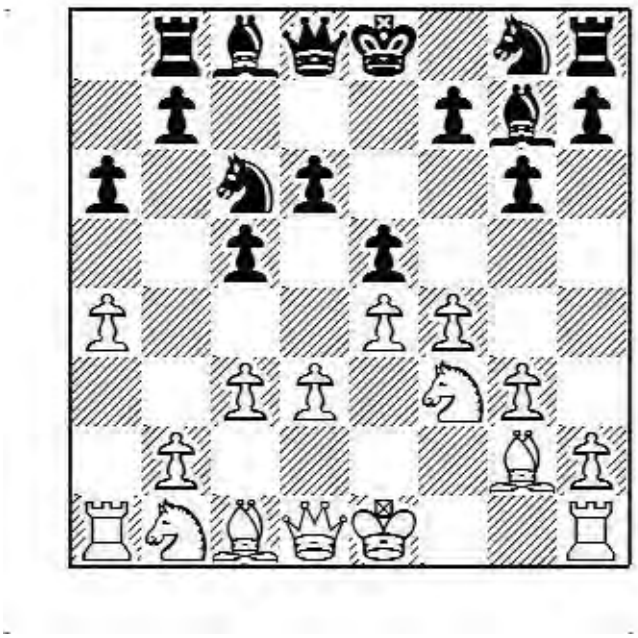
7 Nc3 transposes to Closed Sicilian lines. A model example by English GM Nigel Short showed how to handle White with 7 … d6 8 Nf3 b5 9 axb5 axb5 10 e5!.



This trick, along with early f4-f5 ideas, is a natural adjunct to our opening. I like this move, which questions Black's premise that he can get away with only developing his queenside, to the neglect of his kingside pieces. It follows the principle: *Create confrontation when leading in development*. Black went astray with 10 … Bg4?! (this move pretty much agrees to hand White the bishop pair). After 11 0-0 Nh6 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 Nd4 14 Qf2 0-0, N.Short-S.Maze, Caleta 2014, White holds a clear advantage with 15 Ne4 due to his strong bishop pair.

b) Perhaps Black should try 10 … dxe5 11 fxe5 Nh6! 12 Ne4 0-0 13 Nxc5 Bg4 14 c3 Nxe5 15 d4 which looks about even.

**7 … d6 8 Nf3 e5**



***Question*:** Why is this version of the Botvinnik System okay

for Black, when compared to the earlier games in this chapter?

***Answer*:** This time Black gets an acceptable version of the Botvinnik system, unlike the previous games of this chapter, where Black played … e7-e5?! *before* White played e2-e4. Let's look at non-Botvinnik system continuations first:

a) 8 … b5 9 axb5 axb5 10 0-0 Bg4?!. This doesn't work well with Black having wasted so much time on the queenside already (10 … Nh6 looks like a better way to bring out the pieces and play continue 11 h3 0-0 12 g4 f5 13 exf5 gxf5 14 g5 Nf7 15 Be3 with a sharp and dynamically balanced game) 11 h3:

a1) 11 … Bd7 12 d4 cxd4 13 cxd4 Qb6 14 Be3 e5 15 Nc3 Nge7 16 Ne2 (the d4-pawn is adequately covered) 16 … 0-0 17 Qd2 exd4 (Black may have been better off with 17 … exf4 18 Nxf4 Qd8 since his d6-pawn looks safer than in the game's continuation) 18 Nfxd4 Nxd4 19 Nxd4 Qd8, A.Zatonskih-T.Mazuchowski, Flint 2002, White stands clearly better, due to her coming pressure on the now weak d6-pawn and the possibility of generating a kingside attack with f4-f5, .

a2) 11 … Bxf3?! only compounds the problem after 12 Qxf3 e6 13 e5! d5 14 Be3 (the point is Black is unable to play the normal … d5-d4, since his c6-knight hangs with check). After 14 … c4 15 Bc5 Nge7 16 Nd2 0-0 17 b3!, White looks clearly better with his superior piece placement, utilizing the principle: *Open the position when you possess the bishop pair*.

b) 8 … Bg4 9 0-0 e6 10 Be3 Nge7 11 h3 Bxf3 12 Bxf3 0-0 13 Nd2 and I prefer White's chances due to the bishop pair, A.Nunez Miranda-I.Madurga Lopez, Tres Cantos 2010.

**9 0-0 Nge7 10 Be3!?**

This move is slightly inaccurate if White intends to meet … exf4 with the bishop recapture. I would go for a line like 10 Na3! 0-0 11 fxe5!? dxe5 12 Be3 b6 13 Qe2 with equal chances.

**10 … exf4!**

This makes sense, now that White moved his bishop.

**11 Bxf4!?**

Agreeing to the loss of tempo. It was more consistent to take on potential future hanging pawns and play 11 gxf4!? although I still prefer Black's side slightly after 11 … 0-0 12 Nbd2 b6!, with the idea of … d6-d5 next.

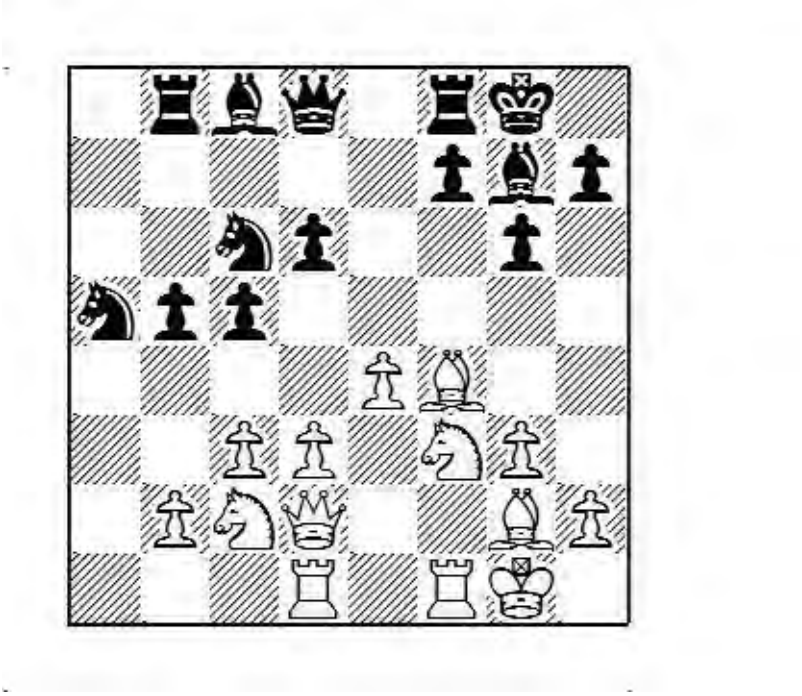
**11 … 0-0 12 Na3 b5 13 axb5 axb5**

Black came out of the opening with equality at a minimum, mainly since White wasted a tempo on his early Be3, and then Bxf4.

**14 Qd2 Na5**

Threatening a Nb3-cheapo.

**15 Rad1 Nec6 16 Nc2**



**16 … Nb3**

I would leave the knight where it stands (on the a5-square) and play 16 … Bg4 intending … b5-b4. The reason is that White has trouble playing the thematic d3-d4 move, since this allows the knight entry to the c4-square.

**17 Qe1!?**

This is possibly inaccurate. He wants to keep an eye on c3, but the trouble is the queen is uncomfortable on the e-file with Black's rook about to move to e8. White may have been worried about his centre (especially his d-pawn) if he got ambitious with 17 Qf2 b4 18 d4 bxc3 19 bxc3 cxd4 20 cxd4 Bg4 21 h3 Bxf3 22 Bxf3 although here I feel White is fine.

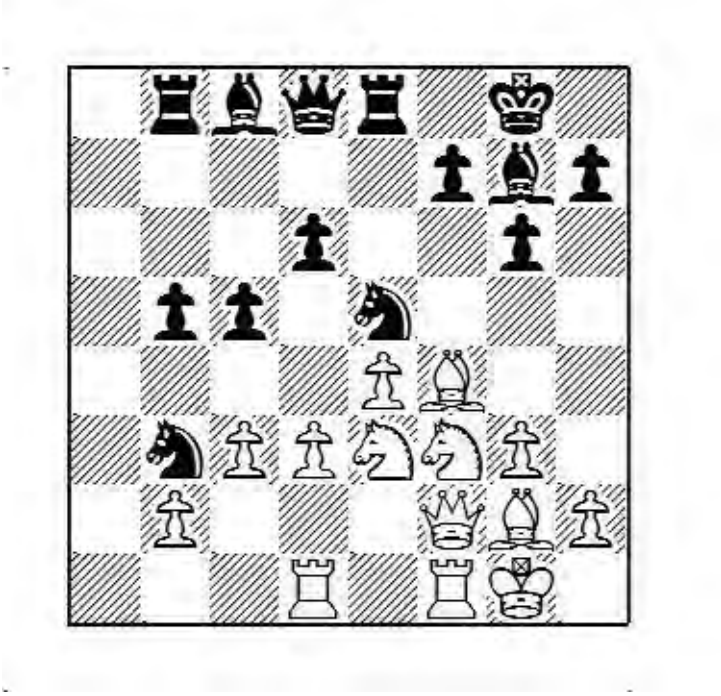
**17 … Re8**

Of course. Now White must surely be getting nervous about his queen's placement.

**18 Ne3**

Targeting the d5-hole.

**18 … Ne5 19 Qf2**



He could have saved a tempo by moving the queen to this square (without Qe1) in the first place. Despite White's inaccuracies, I still think the position is close to even.

**19 … f6!?**

He will have to play this move sooner or later. For example, after 19 … Nxf3+ 20 Qxf3 Be6 21 Ng4 (eyeing both the f6- and h6-squares) 21 … f6 (21 … h5!? 22 Nh6+ Kh7 23 Nf5! looks optically dangerous for Black though he is probably fine after 23 … Bf8) 22 Nh6+ Kh8 23 Bh3! Qd7 24 Bxe6 Rxe6 25 Ng4, the game still looks close to even.

**20 Ne1!?**

White's position remains in a state of congestion. The idea is to deny Black … Nxf3+, when White plays d3-d4.

**20 … Be6 21 N1c2 b4**

At long last, Black plays his thematic break.

**22 h3!?**

This allows Black to weaken the c3-pawn. White had the option of entering the line 22 cxb4 cxb4 23 d4 Nf7 (certainly not 23 … Nc4?? 24 d5! and if 24 … Nxe3, 25 Qxe3 wins with a double attack on the b3-knight and e6-bishop) 24 Nd5 Bxd5 25 exd5 f5 26 Rd3 Na5 27 Bd2 Nc4 28 Bxb4 Nxb2 29 Rb3 Nc4 30 Rc3 and the position remains balanced.

**22 … bxc3 23 bxc3 Nf7**

The immediate 23 … Qa5 is met with 24 Qe1 Qa6 25 Qe2 reaching the same sort of positions reached in the stem game.

**24 g4**

White finally displays kingside ambitions.

**24 … Qa5 25 Qe1 Qa6 26 Bg3 Ne5**

Black provokes d3-d4 from his opponent, which would open entry points like the c4-square.

**27 Qe2!?**

White's proud queen unconsciously elevates her chin just a trifle after her a6-sister's snub. Fries Nielsen continues to play it conservatively. I would probably opt for 27 d4 Nd3 28 Qe2 c4 29 Kh2.

**27 … Rf8 28 Rf2**

Covering the queen to enable d3-d4.

**28 … Bh6 29 d4**

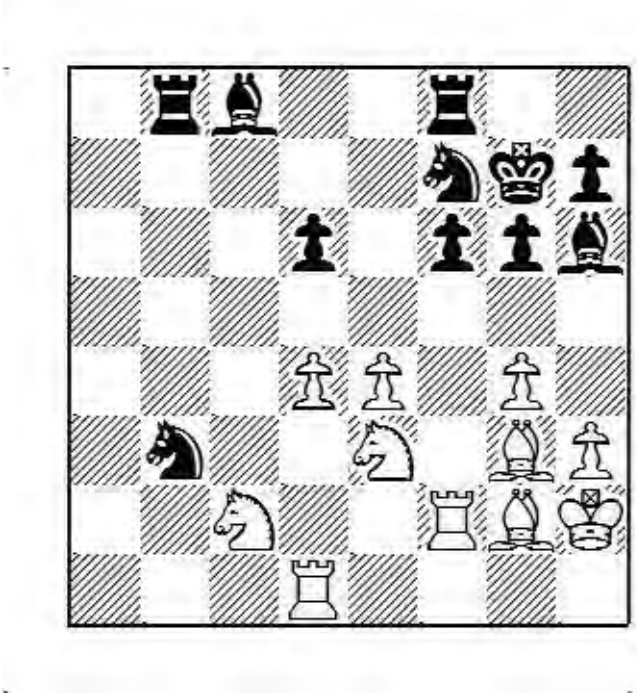
White forces an even ending.

**29 … Qxe2 30 Rxe2 cxd4 31 cxd4 Nf7 32 Rf2**

Hitting the f6-pawn.

**32 … Kg7 33 Kh2 Bc8?**

33 … Rbc8 was still approximately even.



The correct plan tends to appear distant and refracted when our clocks get low.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black's bishop places his faith in a barren doctrine,

and the last move may have been a time trouble mistake. How did White exploit it?

***Answer*:** Attack the f6-pawn, which surprisingly can't be defended without losing material.

**34 Nd5!**

An idea need not be lofty or expansive to be effective. The weakness of the f6-pawn is a microcosm of Black's overall difficulty - weak dark squares.

**34 … f5?!**

The unstructured defenders are unaccustomed to disciplined conduct. Black refuses to respond in rote, somnambulistic fashion, deciding the time has arrived to try and jar his

opponent. However, his move only makes matters worse by weakening his own king. He should try 34 … Bg5 35 h4 Bxg4 36 Rdf1 Bh6 37 Nxf6 Be6 38 d5 Bf5 (not 38 … Bc8?? as 39 Nxh7! is much worse for Black) 39 Nxh7! Kxh7 40 exf5 when Black loses a pawn as well as the bishop pair. However, there aren't many pawns left on the board and White may have trouble winning after 40 … g5.

**35 exf5 gxf5 36 gxf5**

The f-pawn cramps Black and his king doesn't look all that healthy anymore either.

**36 … Rb5?!**

A loss of time as the rook gets harassed all over.

**37 Na3!**

This plan fits the position's specifications perfectly. The knight heads for the c4-square with tempo.

**37 … Ra5 38 Nc4**

Forcing Black's rook back to passive defence of the d6-pawn.

**38 … Ra6 39 Nc7**

Running the rook off its lateral defence of the beleaguered pawn.

**39 … d5!?**

In times of desperation, we all treat material concerns with reckless disregard to consequences. Black saw no hope in the line 39 … Ra7 40 Ne6+ Bxe6 41 fxe6 Nd8 42 Rxf8 Kxf8 43 Rf1+ Kg7 44 Nxd6 Nxe6 45 Be5+ Kg8 46 Bd5 and it's time to resign.

**40 Bxd5!**

White decides the provocation merits a vigorous rebuke. This looks even more efficient than accepting the offered material with 40 Nxa6 dxc4 41 Nc7 Be3 when Black picks off the d4-pawn and can still hope to resist.

**40 … Rf6 41 Ne6+ Bxe6 42 Bxe6**

Black is down two pawns, with an awful position to boot.

**42 … Rd8 43 d5 Nc5 44 Rg2**

Sidestepping … Ne4 tricks, while threatening discoveries himself.

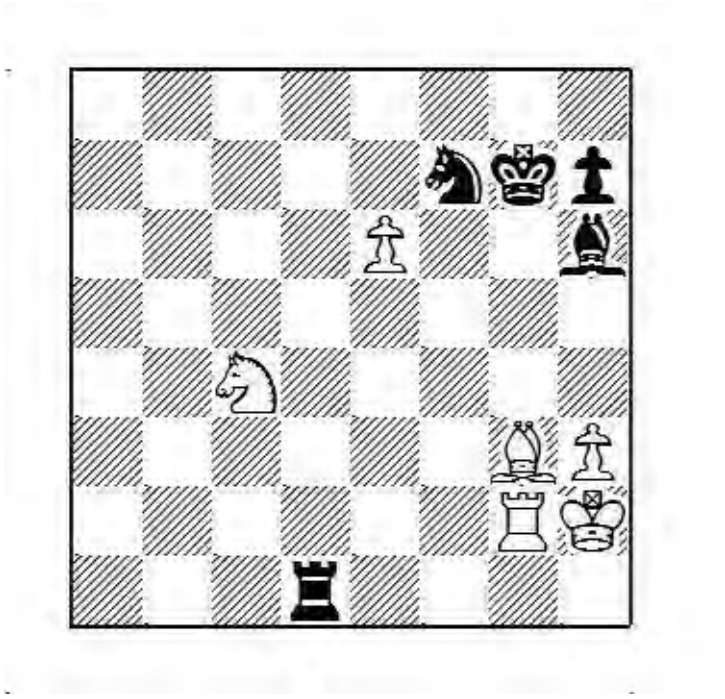
**44 … Nxe6 45 fxe6 Rxe6**

The passage of time merely augmented Black's resentment, so now he decides it's payback time. It feels as if Fortune smiles at him, but it's a wan, conditional smile of temporary joy. This must be tried, otherwise Black must resign, but his pin trick fails. The single most important precept of business is: *Buy low; sell high*. Black's last move reverses the process.

**46 dxe6!**

Black's impudent rook receives a swift rebuke.

**46 … Rxd1**



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** We can win a piece by simply taking the f7-knight.

But why do so when we have a much stronger continuation? What did White play?

***Answer*:** Pawn promotion/interference.

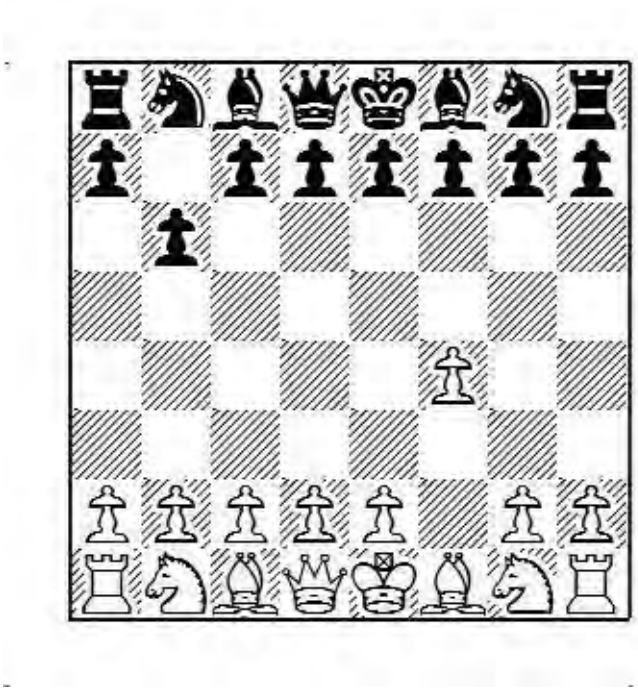
## 47 e7! 1-0

White not only threatens to promote, but also to play Be5 which would be the dreamed of double checkmate! Black could try one last stunt in 47 … Ng5! (a sinister figure crouches, lying in wait at the centre of the tangle) 48 Rf2! (most certainly not 48 e8=Q?? when Black delivers 48 … Nf3 mate!) 48 … Re1 49 Be5+! and with this interference trick, White forces a new queen.

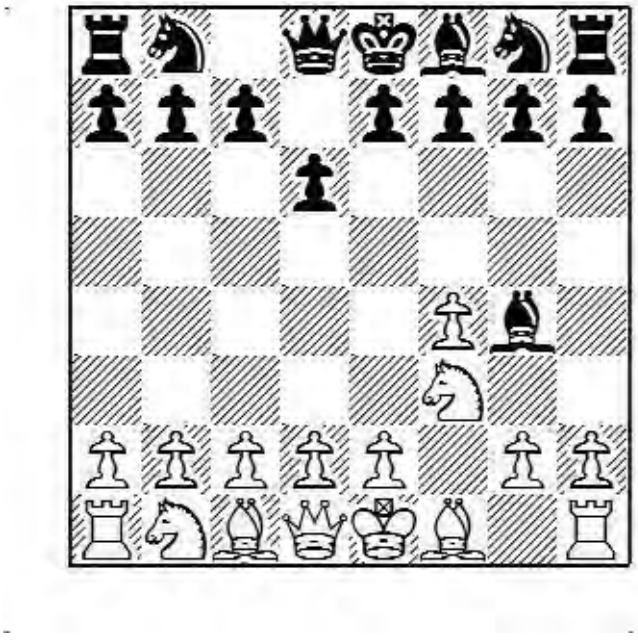
**Summary**: In my opinion the early … Rb8 system is one of Black's best choices versus both Clamp and Closed Sicilian lines, since it retains maximum flexibility. You may just want to skip the Clamp setup and go for an early Nc3, transposing to a Closed Sicilian in this case, perhaps following Short's example in the notes.

# Chapter Seven
# Bird’s versus Owen’s Defence, 1 … f5 and 1 … d6

We conclude the book with coverage of 1 … b6, 1 … d6 and the copycat 1 … f5 variations, all of which contain a high degree of latitude of interpretation.

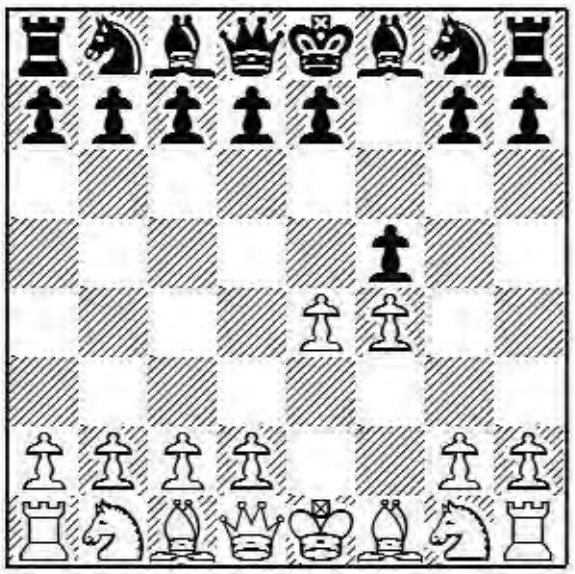


When facing the Owen’s Defence setup (1 … b6), we annex the centre with 2 e4 and bolster it with 3 d3, reaching the same sort of kingside pawn formation we use against 1 … c5.

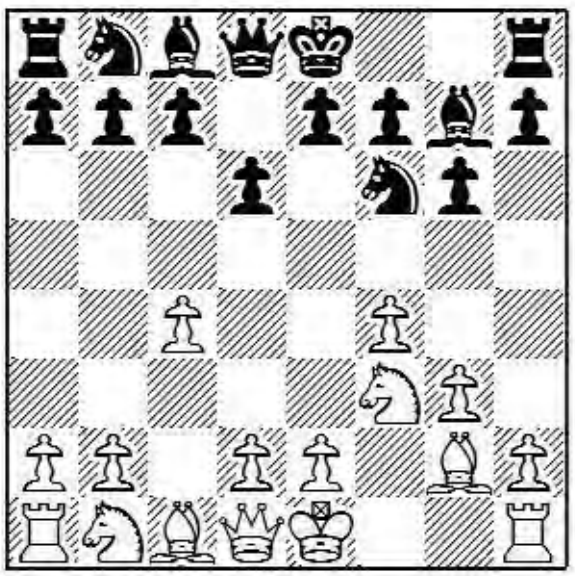


In this diagram, I suggest 3 e4, where we probably pick up the minor exchange later on when Black trades on f3. We can either play for a Clamp-like c2-c3, or go for a Classical-like d2-d3, where we achieve e2-e4 in one go.

We also cover a couple of weird ideas from our side:



Against 1 … f5?! I suggest 2 e4!, offering to enter From's Gambit from the other end of the board. Now if you recall, I was a little hard on From's Gambit in Chapter 1. So what has changed? The answer is our extra tempo. The inclusion of the f4-pawn advance surprisingly helps White.

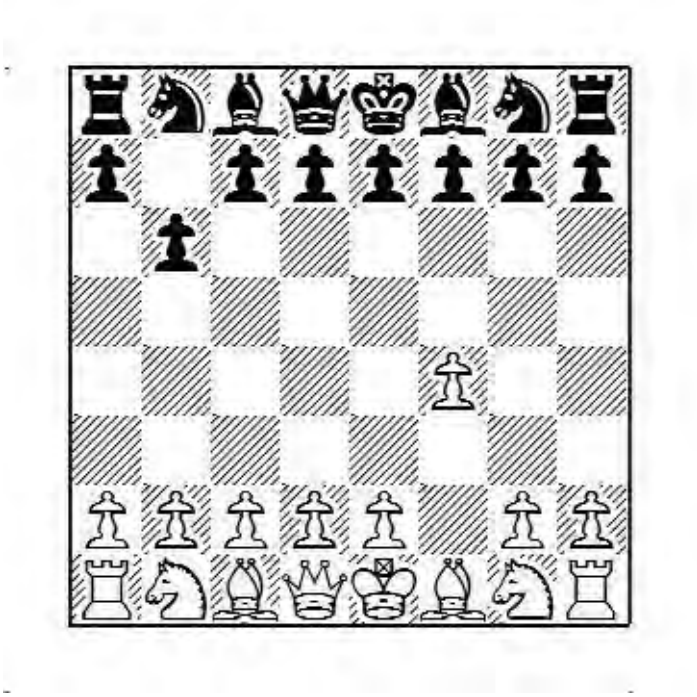


When Black wheels in the King's Indian Defence setup, we craft an odd double flanking concept and then feel and imagine our way through the remainder. This is a strange Leningrad/English Opening hybrid, designed by British IM Michael Basman, clearly intended to strategically confuse. With it, he managed an upset draw versus Mikhail Tal.

*Game 49*

**C.Lakdawala-G.Singh**
San Diego (rapid) 2014

**1 f4 b6**



The Owen's Defence can be played against almost any White move-order.

**2 e4**

I see no reason to avoid seizing the centre. If you play 2 Nf3 Bb7 then go for 3 e3 instead of 3 g3. The point is, 3 g3 can be met with 3 … Bxf3! 4 exf3 and I think Black has equalized. After 4 … e6 5 d4 d5 6 Be3 Ne7 7 Nd2 g6 8 Nb3 Bg7 9 c3 Nd7 10 Bf2 0-0 11 Be2 Qc8 12 0-0 c5, White's bishop pair doesn't mean much in this blocked, Reversed Trompowsky-like position, H.Danielsen-L.Cyborowski, Mysliborz 2008. If White tries to open up the game with 13 c4!?, Black can respond with 13 … Rb8! and 14 Rc1?! can be countered with 14 … dxc4! 15 Rxc4 b5! 16 Rc2 c4 with a clear advantage to Black, who has seized control of the important d5-square.

**2 … Bb7 3 d3 g6**

Black keeps the position fluid, and depending on how he or she plays, we can easily transpose to Clamp positions which we examined in the previous chapter. In Game 50, we examine a French-like setup with 3 … e6.

**4 Nf3 Bg7 5 g3**

Keeping open options for Leningrad/Closed Sicilian/Clamp positions.

**5 … e6**

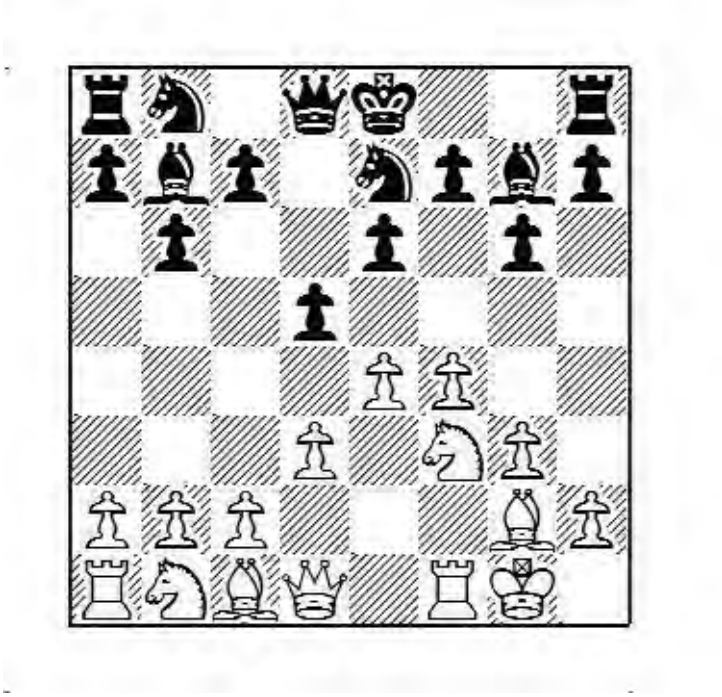
If Black plays 5 … c5, 6 Bg2 Nc6 7 0-0 d6 8 c3 gets us into the Clamp and A.Zatonskih-M.Manik Hlohovec 1995 went 8 … e5. Here I would go for 9 f5! when 9 … gxf5?! 10 Nh4 fxe4 11 dxe4 Nge7 12 Qg4 Ng6 13 Bg5 Qc8 14 Nf5 0-0 15 Qh5 looks terribly dangerous for Black, who might already be busted.

**6 Bg2 Ne7**

I thought my opponent was going for the flexible Hippopotamus setup, with both

bishops fianchettoed and knights on the e7- and d7-squares.

**7 0-0 d5!?**



A new move. I take that back. Black plays a hybrid of Hippopotamus and French setups. I get the feeling that this is more an improvisational insight, rather than part of any deliberate plan on my opponent's part. He simply played an oddball move to shove me out of theory's reach.

***Question*:** What is Black's normal continuation here?

***Answer*:** Normal would be to head for Hippo lines with 7 … d6 8 c3 Nd7. However in D.Svetushkin-F.Fernandez Barrera, Linares 2000, after 9 Be3, Black decides to get weird with 9 … a5!? (9 … a6 10 Nbd2 0-0 gets us into a Clamp/Hippo, where White can continue to expand in the centre with a coming d3-d4) 10 Bf2 a4!? 11 Na3 Nc5 (this looks like a waste of time as Black seems to be provoking a future d3-d4, which White probably wants) 12 Re1 0-0 13 Qc2! (enabling d3-d4 by covering the e4-pawn) 13 … Qc8 14 d4 Nd7 15 Rad1 and White's extra space gives him the edge.

**8 Nc3**

I go for a Closed Sicilian-like setup, rather than 8 e5 0-0 9 Be3 c5 10 Bf2 Nbc6 11 c3, leading to a Clamp position similar to what we looked at in the previous chapter.

**8 … 0-0**

***Question*:** Can Black get away with the pawn grab 8 … Bxc3?

***Answer*:** It's a strategic trap. Black simply gives away his dark squares and is left empty-handed after 9 bxc3 dxe4 10 Ng5 when White regains the pawn with Black's chronically weakened dark squares as a bonus.

**9 e5**

***Question*:** What are you going to do with your now unemployed c3-knight?

***Answer*:** Transfer it to the kingside in the hopes of generating an attack with Ne2, g2-g4 and Ng3.

**9 … c5 10 Qe1**

Discouraging … f7-f6, while preparing future attacking dreams via g3-g4, Qg3 or Qh4.

**10 … Nbc6 11 g4**

Here we go!

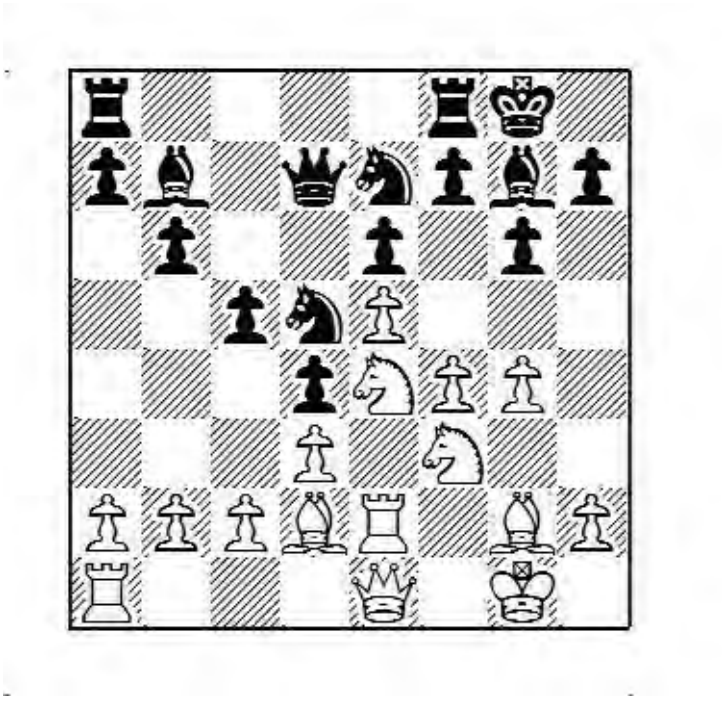
**11 … Nb4**

This move doesn't bother White much. I think Black should go for an … f7-f6 plan anyway with 11 … Qd7! 12 Qh4 f6 (principle: *Meet a wing attack with a central counter*) 13 exf6 Rxf6 14 Bd2 and I don't think Black stands worse.

**12 Rf2 d4?**

Black decides that the d5-square is redeemable in cash value, and is willing to pay a high (too high, actually) price for the privilege of ownership. One senses tempers igniting and that blood will soon flow after this radical move, a decision of deadly, irreversible consequence. Black hands over the e4-square to seize control over the d5-outpost. However, his rewards are not commensurate with the risks of this plan. The e4- and d5-squares are separated by multiple degrees of importance. White gets by far the better of the bargain, since his knight begins to hover over the weak f6-square, placing Black's king at grave risk. Once again, I would have played for the f6-break with 12 … Qd7! 13 a3 Nbc6 14 Bd2 f6.

**13 Ne4 Nbd5 14 Bd2 Qd7 15 Re2!**



Triple purpose:

1. White clears the pathway for Qh4 or Qg3.
2. White discourages an f6-counter by loading up on the e-file.
3. White reinforces the weak e3-square.

**15 … Rac8!?**

He encourages Nd6. But should I play it? It becomes a decision between agility and brute force.

**16 Nd6?**

In this case, brute force was the superior path. I don't allow the provocation to go unchallenged, when I would be much better off ignoring it. As usual, I get distracted by some positional nicety, rather than just go for the caveman attack, which apparently works here. *Houdini* frowns on this move and suggests continuing the attack with 16 Qh4! Nc6 (neither can Black survive 16 … f6 17 exf6 Nxf6 18 Neg5 Bd5 19 Rae1 when the e6-pawn falls) 17 Nf6+ (the weakness of the f6-square is a buoy which marks the black king's location) 17 … Bxf6 18 exf6 Qd8. Now I didn't appreciate that after 19 f5! exf5 20 gxf5, White has an obviously winning attack.

**16 … Rc7 17 Nxb7**

Sigh. So I pick up the lousy bishop pair - when I could have had a probable mate on the kingside instead!

**17 … Rxb7 18 Ng5**

Here comes the replacement to take its place on the juicy e4-square.

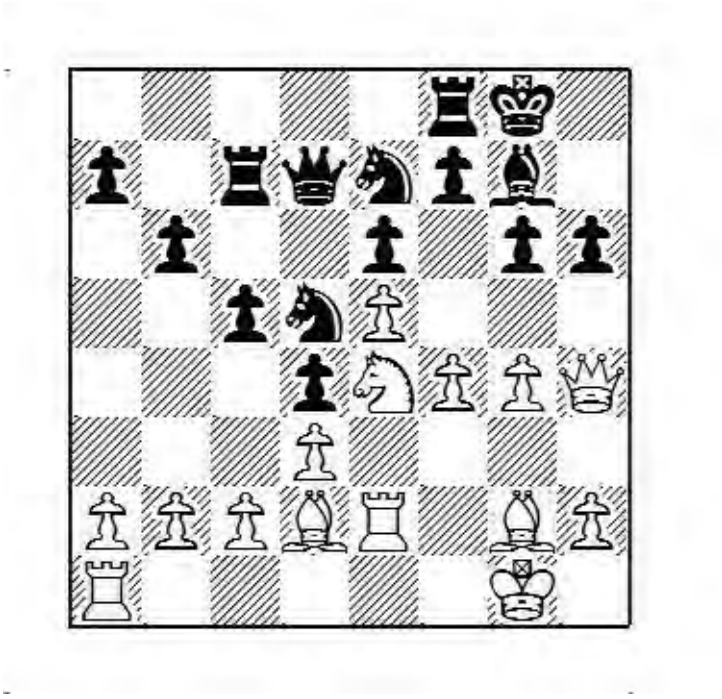
**18 … Rc7 19 Qh4**

The queen carries herself as a person raised in an atmosphere of infinite privilege, by provoking more weakness around Black's king.

**19 … h6**

My opponent told me he had planned to offer a sacrifice with 19 … h5? to seize control over the f5-square, but then realized that I don't need to accept. White wins with 20 f5! (threatening f5-f6), inducing Black to seal the f5-square with a pawn. Now if 20 … exf5, 21 gxh5 wrecks the black king's cover and the exposed king has no chance against the concerted efforts of his enemies.

**20 Ne4**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** White's knight is about to enter the f6-square.

It's obvious Black needs some kind of central counter, or he faces annihilation on the kingside. His choices are 20 … f6 and the more radical looking 20 … g5, intending … Ng6 next. Both fulfil the principle: *Launch a central counter when assaulted on the wing.* However, only one is correct. Black has a pair of logical moves, one primitive, the other uncouth! Which one should he play?

**20 … f5?**

Right principle; wrong move. Black's move critically weakens the e6-pawn. To win a chess game, a player requires traits from the following categories, the final one being the most important:

1. Courage.
2. The toil of excellent pre-game preparation.
3. Long-range planning.
4. Short range-improvisation.
5. Calculation and combinational ability.
6. Blind luck!

Sometimes we win, more by luck than design, but hey, we will take it!

***Answer*:** My opponent considered then (luckily for me!) rejected 20 … g5! (Black's constipated kingside was in dire need of a developmental laxative) 21 fxg5 Ng6 22 Qf2! (22 Qg3?! Bxe5 23 Nf6+ Nxf6 24 Rxe5 Nxg4! 25 Re4 Ne3! 26 Bxe3 dxe3 27 gxh6 Kh7 28 Qxe3 e5! and now Black's king is safe and White's extra pawn doesn't mean much) 22 … hxg5 23 Nf6+ Bxf6! 24 exf6 Ne3! 25 Bxe3 dxe3 26 Rxe3 c4 27 Rae1 cxd3 28 Rxd3 Qa4 29 c3 Qxg4 30 Rg3 Qf4 31 Be4 Rd8 32 Bxg6 Qxf2+ 33 Kxf2 fxg6 34 Rxe6 Kf7 35 Re2 Kxf6 and Black should save the game.

**21 exf6 Nxf6 22 Nxf6+ Rxf6**

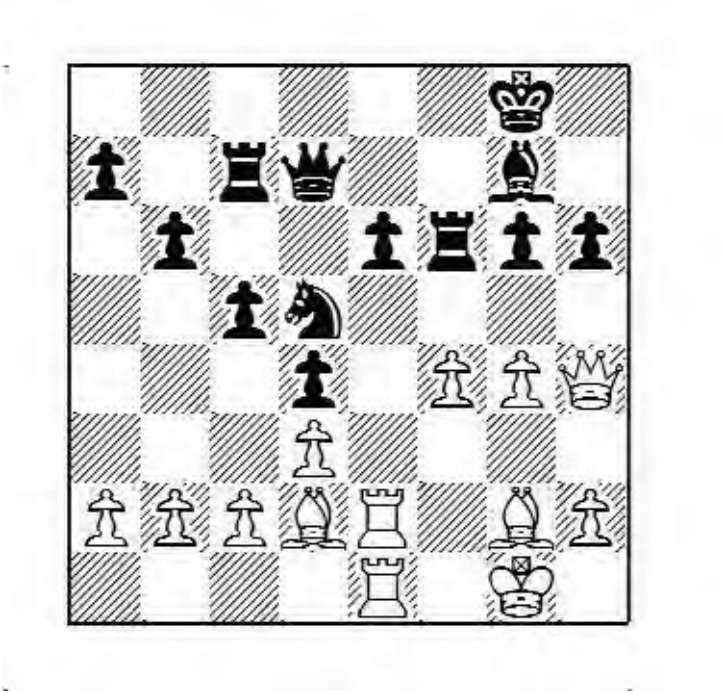
Otherwise White picks up the h6-pawn.

**23 Rae1**

White's rooks hold the feet of the weak to the fire. The e6-pawn is a stationary target and Black suffers from chronically weakened light squares.

**23 … Nd5?!**

He should try something like 23 … c4 24 dxc4 Rxc4 25 Be4 with an admittedly wretched position.



This attempt to counterattack hastens his downfall.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White's next move is so simple that I'm embarrassed to call it a "combination". White to play and force a winning position:

***Answer*:** Removal of the guard. The e6-pawn falls once the f6-defender is shooed away.

**24 g5**

The final defensive link to the e6-weakie frays.

**24 … hxg5 25 fxg5 Rf7**

Also, 25 … Rf5 26 Rxe6 Ne3 27 Rxg6 Nxg2 28 Kxg2 is hopeless for Black.

**26 Bh3**

This is winning but *Houdini* claims it inaccurate, preferring 26 Rxe6! Ne7 27 Bf4 Rc8 28 Rd6 Qf5 29 Bh3! Qxf4 (Black's queen has little choice but to follow the bishop's unwanted program with glacial dignity) 30 Qxf4 Rxf4 31 Rxe7 Bf8 32 Rxg6+ Kh8 33 Rxa7 Re8 34 Be6 and White wins.

**26 … Rc6?**

This leads to an immediate collapse. Black can still fight on after 26 … Ne3! (the key to producing strong resistance from a difficult position is to constantly engineer

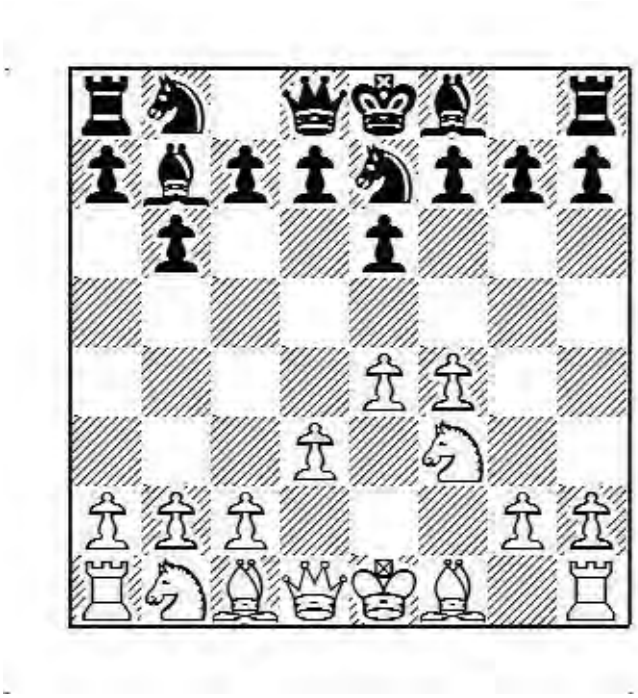
inconveniences for the opponent) 27 Bxe3 dxe3 28 c3! Qd6 29 Rxe3 e5 30 Qc4 Kf8 31 Be6 Rf4 32 Re4 Rf3 33 Bg4! Rff7 (forced) 34 h4 and Black is strategically busted but at least he can still play on.

**27 Rxe6 1-0**

**Summary:** Our Closed Sicilian/Clamp lines leave Black plenty of leeway for odd setups, like the Hippopotamus, or hybrids, like this game. Don't get surprised by them.

*Game 50*
**L.Karlsson-E.Berg**
Taby Open, Sweden 1991

**1 f4 b6 2 e4 Bb7 3 d3 e6 4 Nf3 Ne7!?**



4 … d5 is a reasonable move here. Following 5 e5 (5 Nbd2 Nf6 6 Qe2 dxe4 7 Nxe4 Nc6 8 c3 Qd5 9 Qc2 0-0-0 10 Be2 and Black stands no worse) 5 … d4! (otherwise White may achieve a good French Defence if d3-d4 is allowed) 6 Be2 c5 7 Nbd2 Ne7 8 0-0 Nd5 9 Ne4 Nc6 10 Rb1 Qd7 11 c4! (Black's knight should be ejected from its d5-outpost) 11 … dxc3 12 bxc3 0-0-0! (long castling is more dynamic than the insipid 12 … Be7 13 c4 Ndb4 14 a3 Na6 15 Bb2 when White can build for a kingside attack if Black decides to castle there) 13 a3 Be7 14 Qc2 f5 15 exf6 gxf6 16 c4 Nc7 17 Bb2, D.Gjuran-M.Tratar, Ljubljana 2010, the position is dynamically balanced.

**5 g3**

We stick with our familiar default setting of the Bird Leningrad structure.

**5 … d5**

Black challenges in the centre in French Defence fashion, with the inclusion of the odd … Ne7.

**6 Bg2**

This move allows Black easy equality. White may have been better off maintaining tension with 6 Qe2! dxe4?! (the central exchange probably benefits White as after 6 … c5, Black may have feared 7 exd5 Qxd5 8 Bg2 Nbc6 9 Ne5 Qd8 10 0-0, but Black looks fine

after 10 … g6 11 c3 Bg7) 7 dxe4 Nec6 (7 … Ba6 8 Qf2 Bxf1 9 Kxf1 intending Kg2 next, gives White an edge due to the central space advantage) 8 Be3 Be7 9 Bg2 0-0 10 0-0 Na5 11 Nbd2 Ba6 12 c4 c5 13 b3 Nd7 14 Rad1 Qc7 15 e5 and White's central space edge, control over the e4-square and the clumsy black queenside pieces gave the former a clear edge, R.Szymczak-M.Gorzkiewicz, Krakow 2012.

**6 … Nd7**

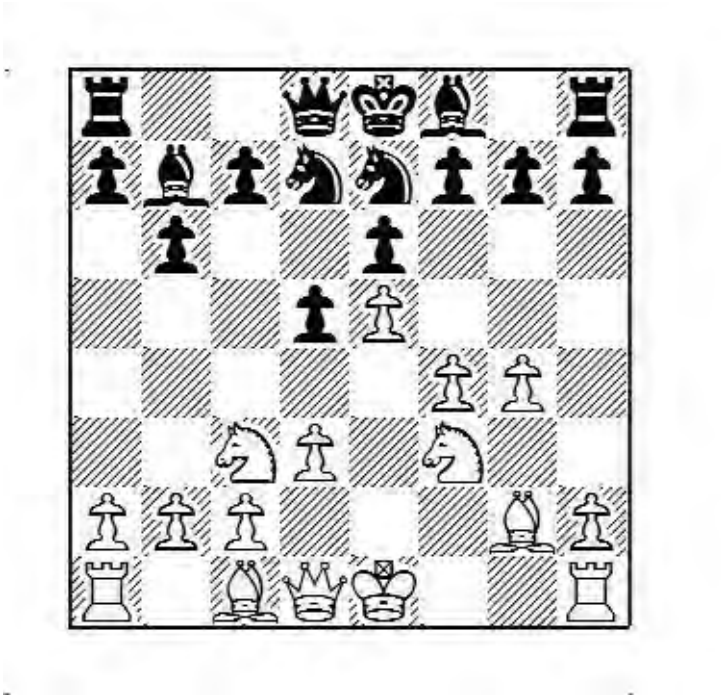
6 … dxe4! looks better. After 7 Ng5 Nbc6 8 Nxe4 Nf5 9 0-0 Qd7 10 c3 0-0-0 11 d4 h5, Black intends to push ..h5-h4, and I would take Black if given a choice.

**7 Nc3 Nf6!?**

***Question*:** Doesn't this move walk into a tempo loss?

***Answer*:** Correct. This move costs Black time, egging White to make a move which he wants to play in any case. The fact that Black feels the need to agree to such a concession is not a terribly reassuring sign. Yet if we look closer, we see that his position is fully playable after 7 … g6 8 0-0 Bg7 and at some point, White will play e4-e5 anyway, with only an edge.

**8 e5 Nd7 9 g4!?**



Karlsson, abandoning temperate conduct, is clearly looking to make trouble on the kingside, with a move choice not impelled by caprice alone.

**9 … Ng6**

Black may be better off with 9 … h5 10 h3 c5 (10 … d4?! 11 Ne4 Bxe4 12 dxe4 hxg4 13 hxg4 Rxh1+ 14 Bxh1 c5 15 Qe2 Nc6 16 Bd2 Be7 17 g5 Qc7 18 0-0-0 0-0-0 and White has a comfortable strategic advantage, with extra central space, and the fact that Black's position is made conspicuous by the absence of his light-squared bishop) 11 Qe2 Nc6 12 g5 g6 13 Bd2 a6 14 0-0 Bg7 15 Nd1. I think Black looks fine here, since he can try kingside castling and then expanding on the queenside.

**10 h4**

Denying Black use of the h4-square.

**10 … h5**

10 … Be7 can be met with 11 g5 h5 12 Qe2 when Black's development is tangled and it is difficult to castle on either wing.

**11 Ng5**

Going off on his own private war effort, without approval from headquarters.

**11 … hxg4 12 Qxg4 Ne7**

Black seizes control over the f5-square.

**13 Ne2**

Heading for the g3-square to challenge Black's f5-control.

**13 … Nf5**

Black stakes out the f5-goat and awaits the hungry tiger's approach from the jungle.

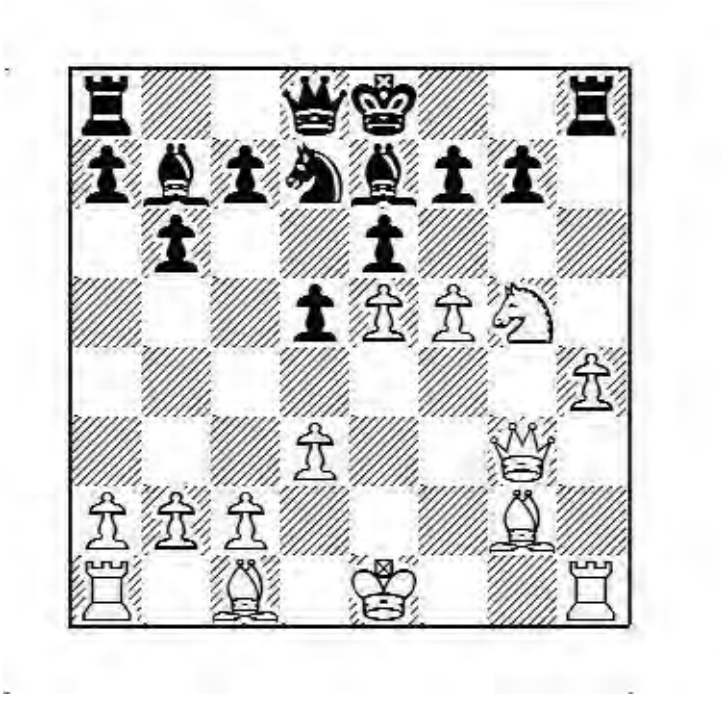
**14 Ng3 Nxg3 15 Qxg3 Be7?!**

Black may still be okay if he untangles with 15 … Nc5!, watching over the critical e6-square. After 16 h5 Qd7 17 Bd2 0-0-0 18 0-0-0, Black has a playable game.

***Question*:** Why is the e6-square important?

***Answer*:** If Black controls that key square, it kills White's f4-f5, … exf5, e5-e6! tricks, which he got in the game's continuation.

**16 f5!**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** White strikes while Black's king is still stuck in the middle of the board. It almost appears as if there is no way Black can look

forward to a happy destiny, yet a single chance remains. He can respond with 16 … exf5, which allows e5-e6, or Black can contort with 16 … Nf8. Both lines lead to White's advantage, but one of them is decisive. How should Black play?

**16 … exf5?**

An escape route is not available to Black's king. Allowing the e6-break is disastrous.

***Answer*:** Black had to try 16 … Nf8!. This makeshift response is just short of satisfactory, but still Black's best move. Finding no profitable course, the knight backs down with clenched fists. The versatile knight is the black king's bodyguard, clerk, beer-fetcher, door opener and general business factotum. Such contortions may cause us psychological outrage, yet if we escape irreparable bodily harm, is it not worth it? Following 17 Bh3 exf5 18 Bxf5 d4 19 Rf1 Ne6! 20 Bd2 Bxg5 21 hxg5 Qd7 22 g6 0-0-0, Black's king considers it prudent to withdraw from the danger zone. After 23 gxf7 Qxf7 24 0-0-0 Kb8, Black stand worse but is still alive.

**17 e6! Ne5??**

The knight tilts drunkenly away from his pursuer. The tragedy continues, and here begins Act II. This is a monster miscalculation in a lost position, which looks like a last resort for a saving grace in a position where no grace exists.

Instead 17 … fxe6! was forced and 18 Nxe6 Bxh4 (to blackmail someone, one must first have leverage, which in this case the bishop lacks)19 Kf1! (once scattered patterns now arrange themselves into coherent geometries. This unpinning trick wins material) 19 … Bxg3 (or 19 … Qf6 20 Rxh4 Rxh4 21 Bg5 Rg4 22 Qxg4 fxg4+ 23 Bxf6 gxf6 24 Nxc7+ Kf7 25 Nxa8 Bxa8 26 Kf2 when Black doesn't have enough for the exchange) 20 Rxh8+ Ke7 21 Nxd8 Rxd8 22 Bg5+ Nf6 23 Bxf6+ gxf6 24 Rxd8 Kxd8 25 Ke2 leaves Black struggling in the ending, but infinitely better off than the game's continuation.

**18 Qxe5 f6**

Black doesn't regain the piece with this double attack.

**19 Qxf5**

Black has no time to capture the g5-knight.

**19 … Rh6**

Covering the mate threat instead of walking into 19 … fxg5 20 Qf7 mate! The powerfully built queen easily outruns Black's out of breath, obese king, whose body is one of soft adiposity. "There is a big difference between working 'with' someone and working 'for' someone," the queen instructs Black's king, who now understands his underling status all too well. However, the text move loses anyway.

**20 Nf7 1-0**

**Summary:** If Black plays in French fashion against our Leningrad Bird, try and maintain the central pawn tension (not pushing the e4-pawn unnecessarily) for as long as possible.

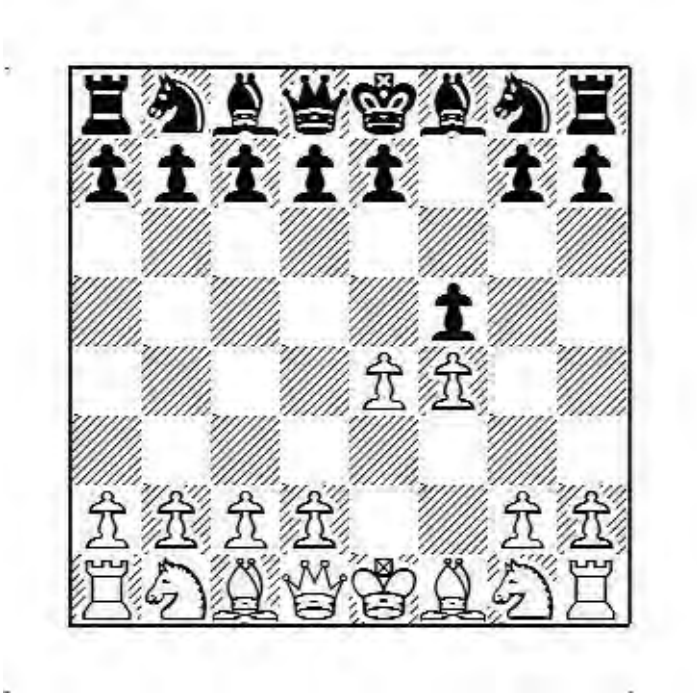
*Game 51*
**A.Jakubiec-D.Kondopoulos**
Krakow Malopolski-chA 2013

**1 f4 f5?!**

The sincerest form of flattery. Black imitates our Bird, responding with Dutch, daring

us to make good use of the extra tempo, which we fully intend to do with our next move.

**2 e4!**



This move is designed to teach these uppity Dutch players not to mess with their Bird-betters! Normally, when we partake in a pawn sacrifice in the opening, we bind ourselves with a promissory note to a gangster/loan shark, who will certainly break our legs if our promise to repay is betrayed. This sacrifice doesn't fall into this category and is more than sound.

***Question*:** What? This looks like some kind of an inverted King's Gambit.

***Answer*:** Actually, it's a Reversed From's Gambit, where we get the extra move f2-f4, which I think is useful for the following reasons:

1. The inclusion of f4 discourages Black from … e7-e5.
2. The inclusion of f4 enables us timely f4-f5 attacking possibilities for the future.
3. The inclusion of f4 may serve as a hook for future Ng5 attacking ideas.

***Question*:** You believe the sacrifice is completely sound?

***Answer*:** Sound, and then some. It scores an impressive 65.1% for White in my database.

***Question*:** If I don't like this gambit, what are my options?

***Answer*:** You can go for a Leningrad versus Leningrad setup or a b3-Bird versus … b6-Bird as well:

a) 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 d6 7 Nc3 Nc6 8 e4 e5 9 exf5 Bxf5 10 fxe5 dxe5 and I'm not convinced White has anything much here, since the e5-pawn is secure and Black's pieces are even more active than White's, K.Filonenko-A.Polivoda,

Dnipropetrovsk 2003.

b) 3 b3 b6 4 Bb2 Bb7!? (4 … e6 is safer) 5 Bxf6 (played to sharpen the position) 5 … exf6 6 e3 Na6 7 a4 Nc5 8 a5 g6 9 a6 Bd5 10 Nc3 Bf7 11 Bc4 Ne6, R.Rapport-V.Laznicka, Novy Bor 2014. The position looks balanced to me after 12 Ne2 c6 13 Ned4.

**2 … fxe4**

Such a position can carry a wide disparity of interpretation. Black for now accepts the gambit.

***Question*:** How should Black decline the gambit?

***Answer*:** Black has two ways to decline, one idiotic, the other reasonable.

a) We feature the ridiculous way to decline first with 2 … e5?. Black transposes to a King's Gambit versus King's Gambit, a violation of the principle: *Symmetry doesn't work well for the move-down side in open positions.* After 3 exf5:

a1) 3 … e4? 4 Qh5+ Ke7 5 d3 is wretched for Black, who by a miracle, actually managed to win from this position, C.Kennaugh-K.Shirazi, Cappelle la Grande 2003.

a2) 3 … Qe7 4 Be2 exf4 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 0-0 looks grim for Black, who lags dangerously behind in development.

a3) exf4 4 Qh5+ Ke7 5 Nf3 Nf6 6 Qg5 Kf7 7 Nc3 Be7 8 d4 Nc6 9 Bxf4, V.Karachisaridis-L.Ziechaus, correspondence 2006. Black has a sorry looking pawn down position after 9 … Re8 10 0-0-0 d5 11 Bd3.

b) Black can exercise prudence with 2 … d6. When we offer a pawn sacrifice to unbalance the game and our opponent rudely declines, keeping the game balanced, then have we not traded nothing for nothing? In this case, however, we can force Black back into either a Reversed From's, or a version of the game's continuation, where Black fails to achieve equality. We support our e-pawn with 3 Nc3!:

b1) 3 … fxe4 is countered with 4 d3! and this untested move is much stronger than capturing on e4. Black can accept or decline, but in both cases fails to achieve equality.

b2) Maybe Black should try 3 … Nf6!? 4 e5 dxe5 5 fxe5 Nd5 6 Nf3 e6 7 Nxd5 Qxd5 8 d4 c5 9 Be3 cxd4 10 Qxd4 and Black is seriously behind in development.

**3 d3!**

Hoping to enter Reversed From's Gambit.

**3 … e3**

Black fails to achieve equality by declining:

a) 3 … exd3 4 Bxd3 Nf6 5 Nf3 e6 (Black probably rightfully doesn't trust 5 … g6 since White has the future f4-f5 prying mechanism) 6 Ng5. White threatens the cheapo Nxh7, followed by Qh5+. Here we see a benefit for White in playing f2-f4, in that it acts as a hook for the g5-knight. After 6 … Qe7 (covering against White's threat at the cost of tangling up his kingside development) 7 Nc3 d5 8 0-0 Nc6 9 Re1, White got a kind of super version of the From's and Black's game looks quite uncomfortable to me, B.Gonzalez-R.Ugalde Garcia, Costa Rica 1996.

b) 3 … d5 4 dxe4 dxe4 5 Qxd8+ Kxd8 6 Nc3 Nf6 7 Nge2, A.Kralovic-V.Chovanec,

Bratislava 2004. Black's position looks difficult after 7 … Bf5 8 Nd4 e6 9 Bc4 Kd7 10 h3.

**4 Bxe3**

White still has the edge, since he controls extra space and leads in development.

**4 … Nf6 5 Nf3 g6**

The Queen's Indian-like continuation 5 … e6 6 Nc3 Be7 7 Qd2 b6 8 0-0-0 is awkward for Black. If he castles kingside, he walks into Be2, h2-h3 and g2-g4, when White's attack looks natural and easy to conduct.

**6 Nc3 Bg7 7 d4**

I'm not sure if this counts as a Stonewall structure or not. White looks better, with extra space, superior development and a chance to build a kingside attack.

**7 … b6 8 Bd3 e6 9 h4!**

A move consonant with White's belligerent mood, which lets Black know he means business on the kingside.

**9 … Nc6?!**

An inaccuracy. Better is 9 … Bb7! 10 h5 Nxh5 11 Rxh5! (11 Ng5 fails to gain an advantage after 11 … Nf6 12 Qe2 Qe7 13 0-0-0 Nc6 14 Nxh7 0-0-0! 15 Ng5 Rxh1 16 Rxh1 Nh5 17 Qf2 Rf8 when Black gets counterplay on f4 and looks fine here) 11 … gxh5 12 Ng5 Ke7 13 Qxh5 Qe8 14 Qg4. This won't be easy for Black to handle either, but at least in this version he is up material. In the game continuation, Black suffers without pay.

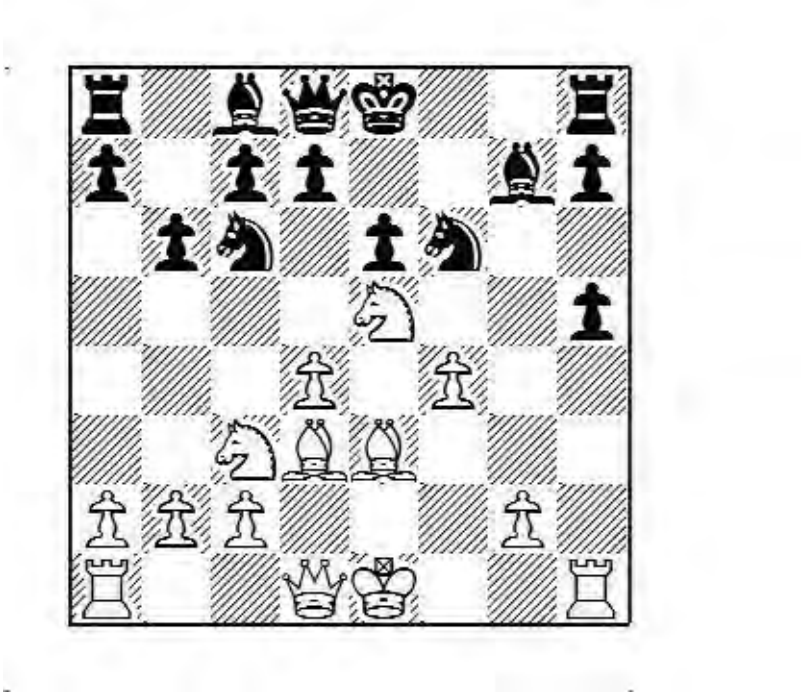
**10 h5!**

Consistent and powerful.

**10 … gxh5**

10 … Nxh5 is met with 11 Ng5 Nf6 12 Nxh7! regaining the pawn advantageously, when the black rook and knight expostulate sharply at the boorish uninvited h7-guest's intrusion.

**11 Ne5**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** The opening has not gone well for Black, and he finds himself in damage-control mode. Both g2-g4 and Rxh5 are in the air. He can eliminate White's powerful e5-knight with 11 … Nxe5, or simply continue to develop with 11 … Bb7. One leads to an inferior position, while the other is utterly disastrous. Which one would you play?

**11 … Nxe5?**

Merchants meet in the centre to clamour and jostle, each attempting to stake out the most promising location at a Farmers' market. This capture is completely at odds with the position's requirements, as it displaces Black's best defender, the f6-knight.

***Answer*:** Black's only chance to hang in there was 11 … Bb7! 12 Ne4 (going after the f6-defender) 12 … Ng4 13 Nxg4 hxg4 14 Qxg4 Qe7 15 Qh5+ (otherwise Black just castles long to safety) 15 … Qf7 16 Qxf7+ Kxf7 17 c3 Ne7 and Black has an inferior but still playable ending.

**12 dxe5**

I would intuitively play 12 fxe5 to open the f-file and allow White's dark-squared bishop access to the g5- and h6-squares.

**12 … Ng4 13 Bg1**

Simpler is 13 Bd2, keeping watch over the f4-pawn.

**13 … 0-0**

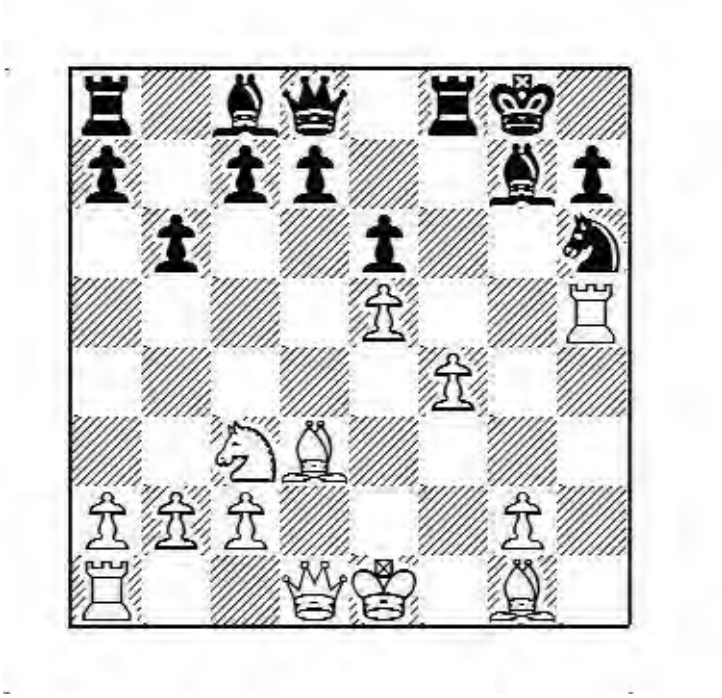
Black decides to brazen it out, acting as if nothing is wrong. Boy, you talk about castling into it. The kingside is inhabitable land, but there really is no choice. Also, the defensive try 13 … Qe7? runs into 14 Qf3 Rb8 15 Rxh5 Nh6 16 Rxh6! Bxh6 17 Qh5+ Qf7 18 Qxh6 and Black is crushed.

**14 Rxh5**

Black's now dangling g4-knight is once again displaced, as White's forces continue to tease and bait the unfortunate piece.

**14 … Nh6**

The attempt to maintain the g4-knight fails after 14 … Rxf4? 15 g3! Rb4 16 Bxh7+ Kf7 17 Qf3+ Ke7 18 Qxa8 leaving White up a rook and a piece. Following 18 … Rxb2, 19 Qe4 consolidates for White.



***Exercise (planning)*:** Black's knight is carried out like a dying beetle on its back, by a procession of hungry ants, all looking forward to their miniscule bite of flesh. Work out a clear winning plan for White to exploit the black knight's poor position on h6:

***Answer*:**

Step 1: Cover the f4-pawn, while threatening to pop a rook in the corner.

**15 Qf3!**

The queen smiles her twisted smile, as if in recollection of some cruel, private joke.

**15 … Rb8**

Step 2: Transfer the queen to the h3-square, after which Black's long harassed knight has no place to go.

**16 Qh3! Rxf4**

Also 16 … Nf5 runs into 17 g4 Nh6 18 Rxh6 Bxh6 19 Qxh6 Qe7 20 Ne4 and it's time for Black to resign.

**17 Be3!**

It feels as if Black's entire army is hanging. There is no reason to offer Black hope with a line like 17 Rxh6? Bxh6 18 Qxh6 Qh4+ 19 Qxh4 Rxh4.

**17 … Qf8 18 Bxf4**

I would have avoided this and simply castled long. Black collapses after 18 0-0-0 Bb7 19 Qh2! Rf2 20 Qh4 Rxg2 21 Bxh6.

**18 … Qxf4 19 Ne2 Qf8**

Sad but forced. Anyway, 19 … Qb4+ 20 c3 Qf8 21 0-0-0 is virtually the same thing.

**20 0-0-0**

Black, already down material, is helpless against the coming Rh1.

**20 … d6 21 Rh1 Nf5 22 g4**

Of course. The end result is no longer in doubt and the remainder is a formality with which Black must formally comply.

**22 … dxe5**

The equivalent of resignation. One can't intimidate a corpse. Black plays as if he is already dead. What is it in our psyche which compels us to play on in ridiculously lost positions? Just recently, I mixed up my opening lines and got my queen trapped for only two minor pieces by move 15 against a 2300 + player. Instead of resigning, I played on until move 50. But I ask psychologists who read this: Why didn't I just immediately resign? In any case, after 22 … Ne7 23 Rxh7 dxe5 24 Rh8+, Black gets mated.

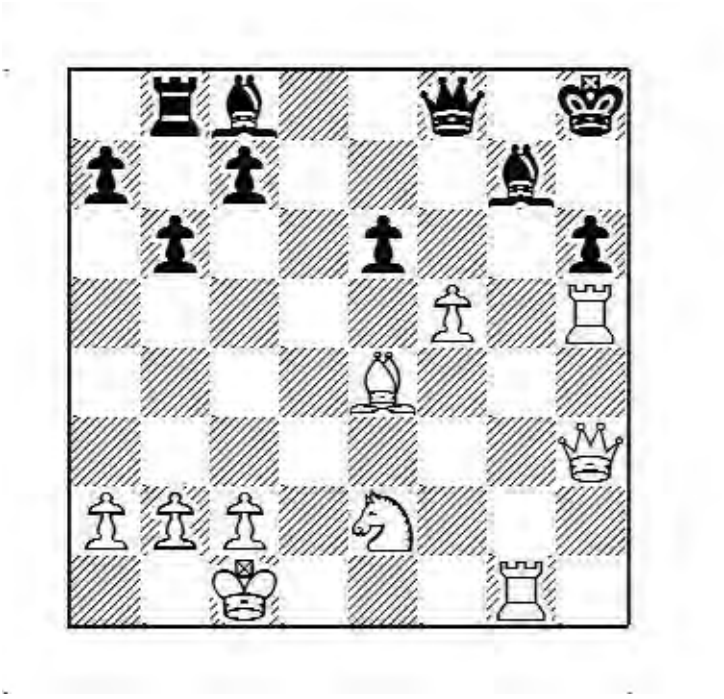
**23 gxf5**

The lunch before the storm. White augments his already considerable wealth with another piece.

**23 … e4 24 Bxe4 h6 25 Rg1**

Black is down a rook and faces a raging attack. Even I would resign here!

**25 … Kh8**



The paranoid king's mistrustful philosophy has been filtered by a lifetime of dodging assassination plots.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** The kingside is a wasteland, with virtually nothing of worth remaining to be looted or kidnapped - except for Black's king. Find one last powerful move and you add misery to the black king's already cheerless disposition. White to play and force mate:

***Answer*:** Removal of the guard. Black gets mated in a few moves.

**26 Rxg7! 1-0**

"You will serve the duration of your life in a darkened chamber, with only your regrets as company," the rook tells Black's king. Black king and queen, now reintroduced to White's nasty rook, feign ignorance, pretending not to recognize him, and failing that, outright stupidity.

**Summary:** I think we should meet the copycat 1 … f5?! with 2 e4!, inviting From's Gambit a move up. Black fails to reach equality, whether or not he or she accepts or declines.

*Game 52*
**M.J.Basman-M.Tal**
Hastings 1973

**1 f4**

Here is a recent game between two strong GMs displaying Basman's opening idea. 1 c4 g6 2 Nc3 c5 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 Nc6 5 d3 d6 6 f4!? (this is similar to Basman's idea versus Tal) 6 … Nf6 7 Nf3 0-0 8 0-0 d5!? 9 cxd5 Nxd5 10 Bd2 e6 11 Rc1 b6 12 a3 a5 and we reach a rather odd Leningrad Bird position with equal chances, R.Rapport-R.Van Kampen, Wijk aan Zee 2013.

**1 … d6**

Black engaged in a queenside expansion plan after 1 … Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 0-0 5 0-0 d6 6 d3 c6!? (6 … c5 7 e4 leads to Clamp/Closed Sicilian lines which we examined in the precious chapter) 7 Nc3 b5!?. Black plays the position as if in a Pirc Defence, which doesn't make as much sense when White's d-pawn is on d3, rather than d4. After 8 e4 b4 9 Ne2 Qb6+ 10 Kh1 Ng4 11 d4 d5?! (11 … Ba6 adding pressure to White's centre looks correct) 12 e5 h5 13 h3 Nh6 14 Be3, Black lacks queenside or central counterplay to offset White's considerable central space advantage, C.Lakdawala-R.Bruno, San Diego (rapid) 2008.

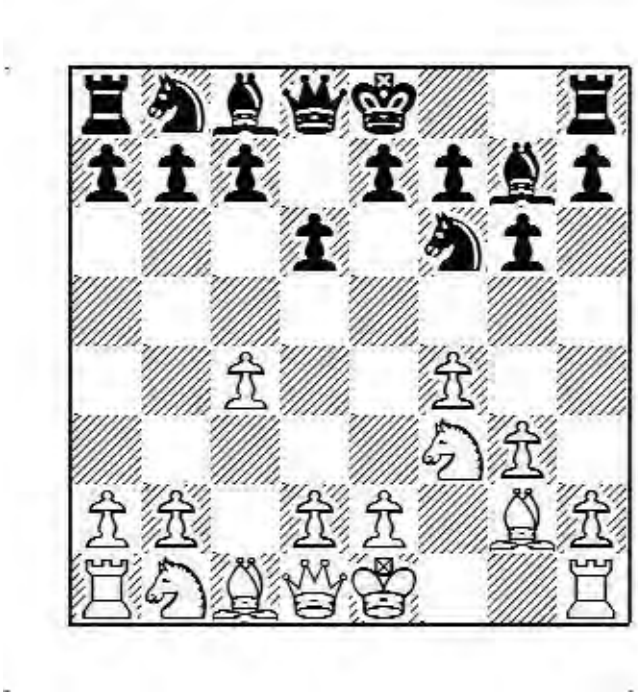
**2 Nf3 g6**

In the final game of the chapter and book, we will look at 2 … Bg4.

**3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 Nf6**

Black has played the standard King's Indian Defence moves in response to the Leningrad Bird formation. But now, Basman decides to go off-tangent (which is kind of late in the game by his usual standards!).

**5 c4!?**



Tradition grudgingly steps aside to make way for novelty. Ever since I was a kid, I have been a fan of the eccentric/creative British IM Michael Basman, who displays this curiously Larsonian trait of weirding up any opening line he plays. I'm not sure if this was a spur-of-the-moment idea, or something more sinister, carefully contrived in home prep.

***Question*:** What is this setup?

***Answer*:** It's an odd hybrid of the English Opening and the Leningrad Bird. It has only been tried seven times in my database, scoring a very impressive 71.4%, and that certainly caught my eye. Instead, 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 c5 7 e4 Nc6 transposes to a position we looked at in the previous chapter.

**5 … 0-0 6 Nc3 c6!?**

Tal thinks about playing … d6-d5, hoping to switch to a structure which would make White's f4/c4 combination out of synch. The most common Black alternative is 6 … c5 and after 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d3 Rb8 9 h3 a6 10 a4 Ne8 11 Bd2 (11 e4!? would be Botvinnik English-like) 11 … Bd7 12 g4 Nc7 13 a5 b5 14 axb6 Rxb6 15 Na4 Rb8, A.Gorbatov-S.Bouaziz, Cappelle la Grande 1995, the game remains balanced with 16 Bc3.

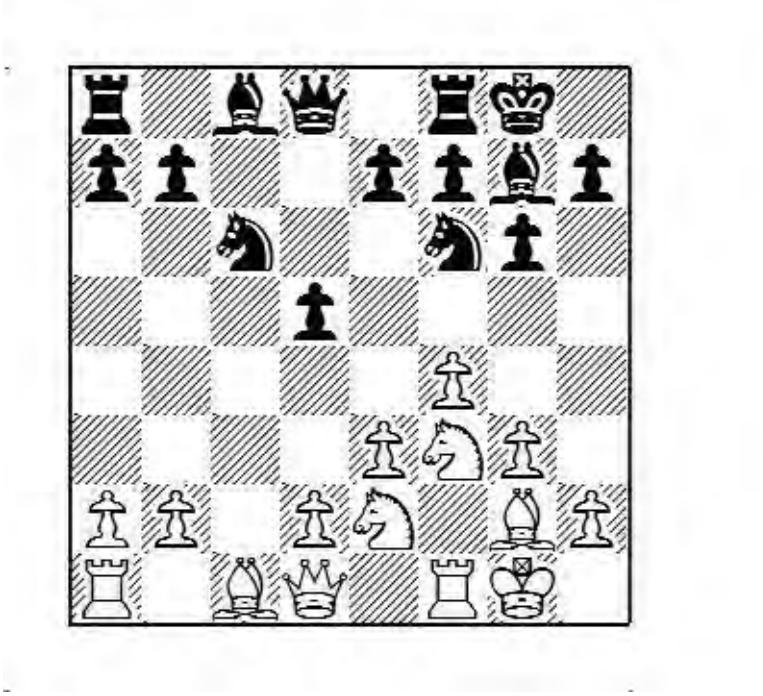
**7 0-0 d5 8 cxd5 cxd5 9 e3!**

Basman displays excellent understanding of the position.

***Question*:** What is the purpose of White's last move?

***Answer*:** White realizes that Black plans … d5-d4 and that must be prevented. He plans Ne2 next, seizing control over the key d4-square. Black looks well placed after the rote 9 d3 d4 10 Ne4 Nd5 11 Bd2 Nc6.

**9 … Nc6 10 Ne2**



"Completing a formation that looks curiously like a Christmas tree - at least more than the Sicilian Dragon looks like a Dragon," writes GM Nigel Davies. The fight for the d4-square continues.

**10 … Qd6**

Tal's tactical gifts shined in open positions. He intends … e7-e5 at some point.

**11 Qa4?!**

One can over-Larsenize a position!

***Question*:** What is White's idea?

***Answer*:** White plans Qa3!? next, inviting … Qxa3, bxa3 which opens the b-file for White. The trouble with White's plan is that it weakens his central light squares, especially the one on d3. I would suggest instead 11 d3 intending Bd2-c3, fighting for more central dark squares.

**11 … Bd7**

Stronger is 11 … Bf5! which messes up White's idea, since the d3-square becomes an invasion target for Black's bishop.

**12 Qa3!? Nb4!?**

This move weakens the d4-square and plays into White's plan. Tal tended to keep queens on the board. Styles and preferences must take a back seat to the best move. Stronger was 12 … Qxa3! 13 bxa3 Ne4 14 Rb1 b6 15 Bb2 Bf5 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Rbc1 Rac8 and Black looks slightly better to my eyes, since an idea like … Nc5 followed by … Nd3 or … Bd3 presents itself.

**13 Ned4 a5 14 d3**

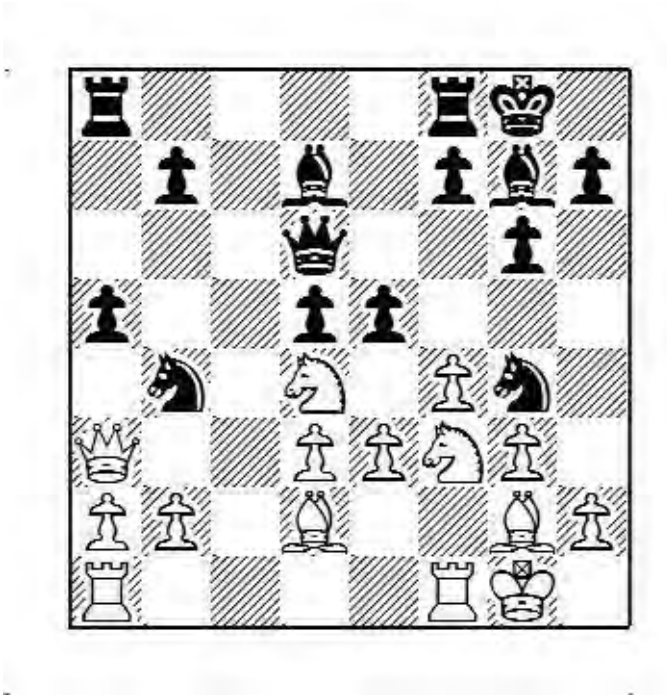
At last, White finally manages to develop his queenside pieces, intending Bd2 next.

**14 … Ng4!? 15 Bd2**

The weakening 15 h3?! is met with 15 … e5! 16 Ne2 e4 17 dxe4 dxe4 18 Nfd4 Nf6 19

Bd2 Rfe8. Black looks better due to the e4-pawn wedge and control over the d3-square/outpost.

**15 … e5**



Tal logically opens the e-file, going after e3-weakie, which is still reasonably well protected.

**16 fxe5 Nxe5**

I'm beginning to prefer White's position now. Black looks slightly better at the end of the line 16 … Qa6! 17 Rac1 Nxd3 18 Rc7 Ngxe5 19 Nxe5 Nxe5 20 Bxd5 Bc6 21 Bxc6 (White gets tangled up after 21 Nxc6?! bxc6 22 Bg2 Qe2) 21 … bxc6 22 Qc5 Qd3 23 Bc1 Qe4.

**17 Nxe5 Bxe5 18 Qb3!**

Indirectly targeting the d5-pawn, since a2-a3 may follow.

**18 … Nc6?!**

Black had to try 18 … Bxd4! 19 exd4 Bf5 20 a3 Nc6 21 Rf4 Rfd8 22 Raf1 Qd7 23 g4 Be6 when White's pawn weaknesses are balanced out by his enhanced control over the dark squares.

**19 Nb5 a4 20 Qxd5**

Maybe Tal had only counted on the crazy line 20 Nxd6? axb3 21 Nxf7 Bxb2 which favours Black.

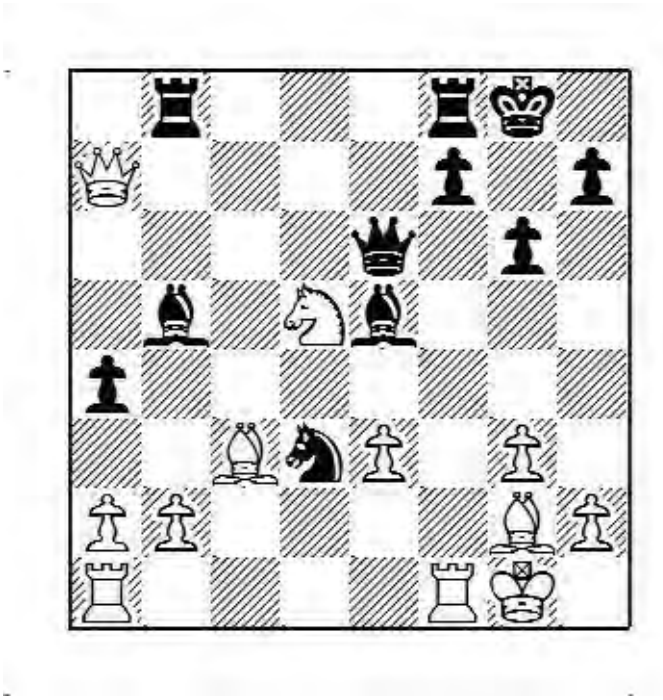
**20 … Qe7!?**

Tal gets in deeper and deeper trouble by playing for the win against his lower rated opponent. Instead, 20 … Qxd5 21 Bxd5 Bxb2 22 Rab1 a3 23 Nd6 Be6 24 Bxe6 fxe6 25 d4 looks like a tough ending for Black, but may objectively be better than Tal's continuation.

**21 Nc3 Nb4 22 Qxb7 Rab8 23 Qa7 Nxd3 24 Nd5**

This is a big square for White's knight, who clears the c3-square for a bishop.

**24 … Qe6 25 Bc3 Bb5**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** In this position, White has three tempting candidate moves: a) 26 Nc7, forking the black queen and the b5-bishop. b) 26 Rad1,

calmly developing the only undeveloped piece. c) 26 Rf6, a flashy sacrifice,

hoping to seize control over Black's dark squares. Two of the lines favour White, while the odd line out tilts the game in Black's favour. Which one would you play?

**26 Nc7?**

Basman picks the worst of the three.

***Answer(s)***: He gains the advantage with the other two options:

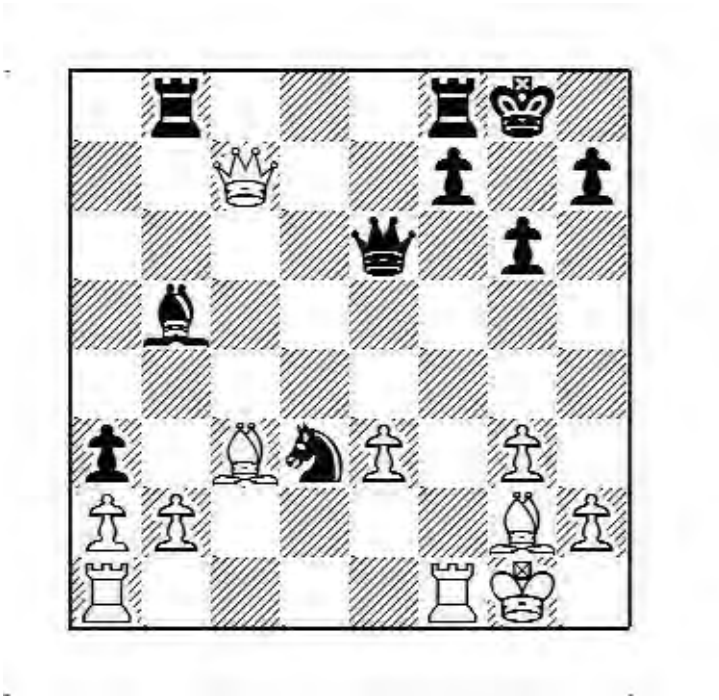
a) The audacious 26 Rf6! rook tuck is a warning of an even more dire, systematic problem in Black's degrading position: weak dark squares. This flashy path is White's second best line. Black does best to decline the rook with 26 … Qd7! (Black is by no means obliged to accept the tainted gift as the greedy 26 … Bxf6?? loses to 27 Nxf6+ Kh8 28 Ng4+ f6 29 Rf1! with a decisive White attack) 27 Ra6! (clearing f6 for a knight check) 27 … Bxc3 28 bxc3 Qxa7 29 Rxa7 Rfd8. White is up a pawn but it won't be so easy to convert, since Black's forces remain highly active.

b) The quiet 26 Rad1! is White's strongest line. After 26 … Rbd8 27 Rf6! (in this structure, such sacrifices are the rule, rather than the exception) 27 … Qe8! (once again, Black isn't forced to accept) 28 Rd6!! (a pretty interference shot) 28 … Rxd6 29 Ne7+! Kh8 30 Bxe5+ Nxe5 31 Rxd6 f6, White is an exchange up.

**26 … Bxc7 27 Qxc7 a3?**

Black should just grab the exchange with 27 … Qxe3+! 28 Kh1 Nf2+ 29 Rxf2 Qxf2 30 Qe5. Tal probably rejected this line due to this move, but Black is just fine after the simple

30 … f6 31 Qd5+ Kg7 when White lacks full compensation for the exchange.



This is tinsel rather than substance. Tal turns a potential win into a potential loss in the space of a single move.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Basman finds himself in

the enviable position of an IM landing in a winning position

against a former World Champion. Find White's startling shot:

***Answer*:** Overloaded defender/pin.

**28 Rxf7!**

The kleptomaniacal rook, even though born to great wealth, is compelled to steal the property of others. Black's last move is met with an adder-tongued retaliatory strike. What a sweet move, made sweeter from the fact that it was played against the great Mikhail Tal. Most certainly not 28 bxa3?? Qxe3+ 29 Kh1 Rbc8 30 Qb7 Rxc3 31 Qxb5 Rc2! 32 Rad1 Nf2+ 33 Rxf2 Qxf2 and Black wins instead.

**28 … Rxf7**

No choice, since 28 … Qxf7?? loses on the spot to the pin/deflection trick 29 Bd5! as the bishop conjures delicious dreams of sweet revenge upon his f7-cousin. White wins.

**29 Qxb8+ Be8**

A forced move. Instead, 29 … Rf8?? is met with 30 Qa7! which covers the e3-pawn while threatening mate on g7 (most definitely not 30 Qxb5?? which walks into the smothered mate which every kindergartener knows, after 30 … Qxe3+ 31 Kh1 Nf2+ 32 Kg1 Nh3+ 33 Kh1 Qg1+ 34 Rxg1 Nf2 mate!). After 30 … Rf7, 31 Qd4 White consolidates and wins.

**30 Bd4**

Once again, 30 bxa3?? walks into the familiar mating pattern 30 … Qxe3+ 31 Kh1

Nf2+ and you know the rest.

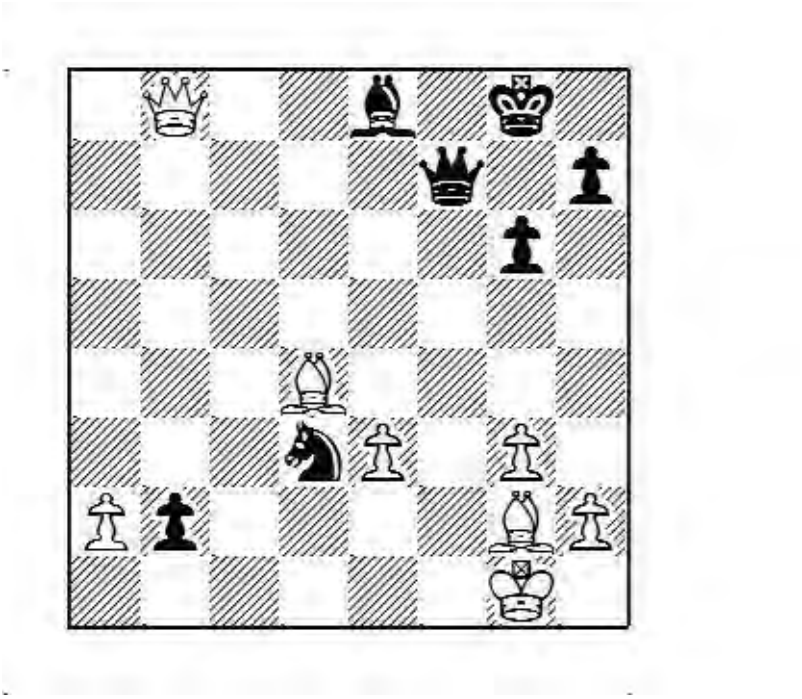
**30 … axb2 31 Rd1 Nf2**

If Black sets up a cheapo with 31 … Rd7, White should avoid 32 Rxd3? Rxd4! 33 Rxd4 Qxe3+ 34 Kf1 b1R+ 35 Qxb1 Qxd4 36 Bf3 Bf7 with a likely draw.

**32 Rf1**

More accurate, according to *Houdini* is 32 Rb1!.

**32 … Nd3 33 Rxf7 Qxf7**



***Exercise (critical decision)*:** Black threatens mate with … Qf2+ next.

We have two ways to deal with the issue: a) 34 Bd5, a deflection shot.

b) 34 h3, simply creating luft for White's king. One of the lines

is winning, while the other seriously complicates White's hopes.

**34 Bd5?**

In this case, the combination is best left unplayed.

***Answer*:** The quiet 34 h3! wins after 34 … h6 35 Kh2 Kh7 36 Bxb2. Black is down two pawns with zero counterplay. He is unable to play 36 … Qxa2? 37 Bc3 Qf7 38 Qd6 (threatening the knight and heading for the d4-square) 38 … Nf2 39 Qd4 (Black is paralyzed) 39 … Qf8 40 Kg1! h5 (Black is unable to extricate his knight with 40 … Bb5?? which walks into 41 Qa7+ Kg8 42 Bd5+ Qf7 43 Qxf7 mate!) 41 e4 and the knight is trapped.

**34 … b1=Q+!**

Deflection. Tal's defensive antennae quiver, sensing menace close by. Desperation is a kind of synthetic enthusiasm, where we take risky action, but only at gunpoint. In this case the desperado works beautifully. Tal meets White's deflection shot, with a deflection shot of his own.

**35 Qxb1 Qxd5 36 Qxd3 Qxa2**

White is still up a pawn but his own king lacks cover.

**37 Qe4**

If White reloads on the long dark square diagonal with 37 Bc3, Black prepares to bolt with 37 … Kf7! and if 38 Qd4? Qb1+ 39 Kg2 Bc6+, White must suppress ambition and avoid 40 Kh3?? when White's attempt to dodge perpetual check walks into mate or queen loss after 40 … Qf5+ 41 g4 (also, 41 Qg4 gets White mated after Bg2+ 42 Kh4 g5+! 43 Qxg5 Qh3) 41 … Qf1+ 42 Kg3 (the penniless hobo king is sent packing, with a bandanna-tied stick on his shoulder) 42 … Qg2+ 43 Kf4 Qxh2+ 44 Kg5 h6 mate! When a shrimpy pawn dares to challenge a king and deliver mate, it's as if one of Santa's surlier elves enters a bar, has one too many, picking a fight with a 350 pound NFL linebacker - and then sends his beefy opponent to the hospital.

**37 … Bb5!**

A light flurry of activity flushes the stagnation from Black's position.

**38 g4**

Also, 38 Qf4 Qb1+ 39 Kg2 Bc6+ 40 Kh3 Qf5+ 41 Qxf5 gxf5 42 Kh4 h6! is drawn, due to the opposite-coloured bishops.

**38 … Qc4 39 Qa8+ Kf7 40 Qf3+ Ke8 41 Qa8+**

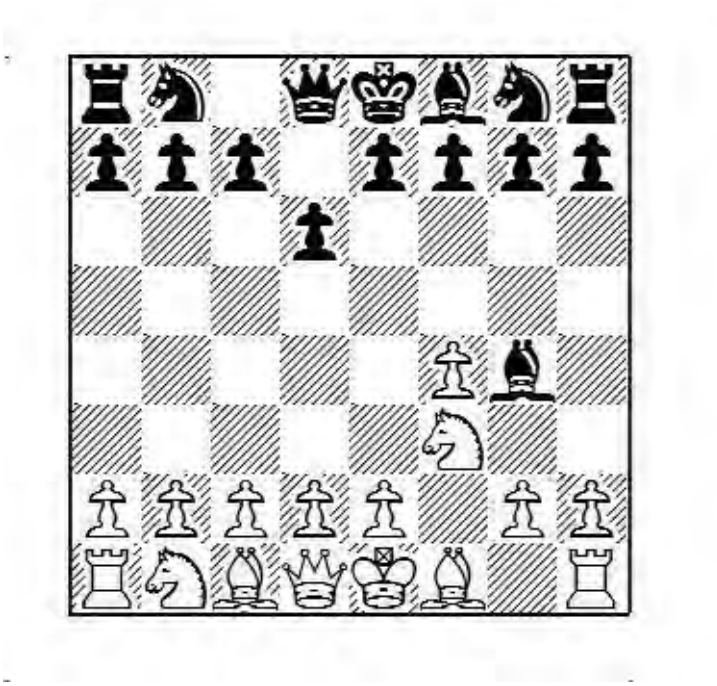
Recent reverses hinder White's dream of a full point and the conflict settles into equilibrium. An easy draw also follows after 41 Kf2 Qf1+ 42 Kg3 Qxf3+.

**41 … Kd7 ½-½**

**Summary:** The English/Leningrad Bird seems fully playable for White. The move is likely to confuse your opponents, so you may want to give it a try.

*Game 53*
**B.Kovacevic-M.Godena**
European Championship, Kusadasi 2006

**1 f4 d6 2 Nf3 Bg4**



This move is a suggestion of IM Richard Palliser, my Everyman editor. The strategic threat of … Bxf3 pretty much forces us out of the Leningrad Bird formation.

**3 e4**

***Question*:** You voluntarily walk into a pin?

***Answer*:** The pin is no big deal, since we intend to play Be2 next.

**3 … e5**

Black decides to assert himself in the centre, grabbing his fair share. We end up in a funky kind of King's Gambit Declined, where Black's … Bg4 may not be the best posting.

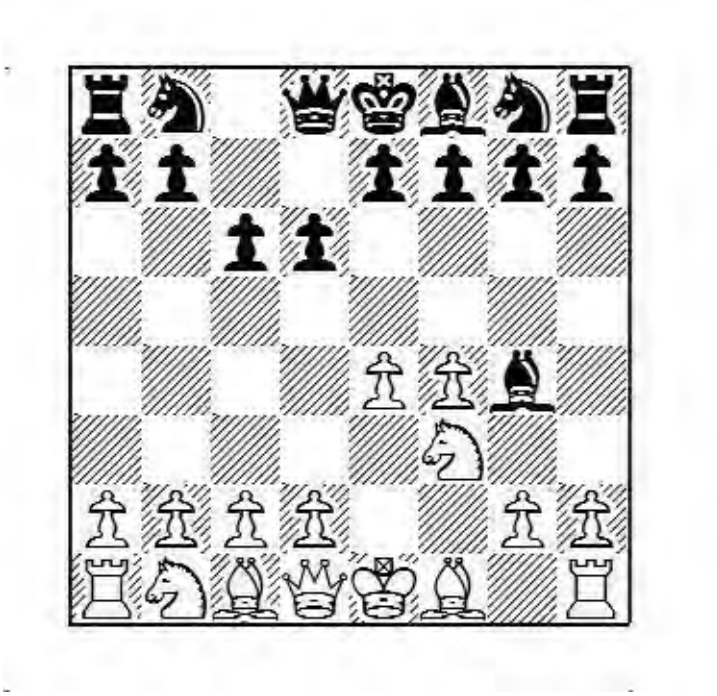
***Question*:** How does this affect the posting of Black's bishop?

***Answer*:** By changing the structure with … e7-e5, Black's light-squared bishop, by default, becomes the good bishop. This means he will either eventually swap it off for White's f3-knight, or lose a tempo later while retreating it. Alternatives:

a) After 3 … c5, the game resembles a Sicilian Grand Prix, but with Black's bishop on an early posting on g4, which isn't normal. I would just go for the bishop pair now with 4 h3 Bxf3 5 Qxf3 Nc6 6 c3 (the position also takes on Clamp-like dimensions) 6 … e6 7 Be2 Be7 8 0-0 d5 9 d3 and I slightly prefer White, due to the flexible pawn centre and bishop pair, D.Wichmann-U.Kraus, Wiesbaden 2000.

b) White gets the upper hand after 3 … Nc6 4 Be2 Nf6 5 d3 Bxf3 (5 … e6 6 c3 d5 7 e5 Nd7 8 0-0 Be7 9 b4! a6 10 Be3 0-0 11 Nbd2 f6 12 d4 gives White a considerable space advantage) 6 Bxf3 (White has the bishop pair and is about to play c2-c3, cutting off … Nd4) 6 … Nd4?!, E.Oldach-H.Kessner, Bad Sooden 2005. Now White could have made Black pay with 7 e5! Nxf3+ 8 Qxf3 Nd7 9 Qxb7! (the immediate pawn grab is even stronger than 9 exd6 cxd6 10 Qxb7 g6 11 c3 Bg7 12 0-0 and I don't see full compensation for the pawn) 9 … dxe5 10 fxe5 Nxe5 11 Qe4 Nd7 12 0-0 and White has a scary looking development lead, coupled with open e- and f-files.

c) 3 … c6



***Question*:** What is Black's idea behind this move?

***Answer*:** Black plans … Bxf3, followed by … e7-e6 and … d7-d5, switching the structure to favour his remaining bishop. After 4 h3 Bxf3 5 Qxf3 e6, A.Popovic-B.Lajthajm, Obrenovac 2010, I slightly prefer White after 6 Nc3 d5 7 b3, keeping open the possibility of long castling.

d) A conservative King's Gambit Declined follows after 3 … Nf6 4 d3 e5, R.Bachler-S.Schmidt Schaeffer, Germany 1996. Now play might go 5 Be2 Nc6 6 0-0 Bxf3 7 Bxf3 Nd4 when Black regains the bishop pair but falls just short of equality. Following 8 Be3! (intending Bxd4, followed by e4-e5!) 8 … Nxf3+ 9 Qxf3 exf4 10 Qxf4 Be7 11 Nc3, White is slightly better with a comfortable space edge, the open f-file and development lead.

e) With 3 … Nd7, Black remains flexible, keeping White guessing. After 4 h3 Bxf3 5 Qxf3 c6 6 b3!, White intends to castle long and then initiate a kingside pawn storm à la GM Danielsen with g2-g4 later on. Following 6 … Ngf6 7 Nc3 e5 8 Bb2 Be7 9 0-0-0 Qc7 10 g4, Black's position is passive and an assault looms over his head, S.Bryntze-L.Evertsson, Stockholm 2012.

**4 d3 Nc6 5 Be2 Nf6 6 0-0 g6?!**

This is a very slow move, with the f-file potentially opening. Black probably should settle for the passive but more solid 6 … Be7 7 c3 (cutting off … Bxf3 and … Nd4 ideas), V.Pechenkin-R.Gardner, Edmonton 2009. White stands a shade better after 7 … 0-0 8 Na3 where the knight intends to transfer to the c2-square where it can help prepare a future d3-d4 break.

**7 Nc3**

I would be inclined to open the f-file right away with 7 fxe5 dxe5 8 Be3.

**7 … Bg7 8 Qe1**

Heading for the h4-square, and that suffices to convince Black to cancel his kingside

castling plans.

**8 … h6!?**

White looks a shade better in the line 8 … 0-0 9 Qh4 Bxf3 10 Bxf3 Nd4 11 fxe5 dxe5 12 Bd1 Nd7 13 Bg5 f6 14 Be3 Nc5 15 Ne2 Nce6 16 c3 Nxe2+ 17 Bxe2. White's bishop pair, for now dormant, has the feel to become meaningful later on, if for instance, White's light-squared bishop find its way to the a2-g8 diagonal.

**9 Kh1 Qd7!?**

Still refusing to castle short. The trouble is I'm not so certain Black's king is any safer castling long. I would risk 9 … 0-0 10 h3 Bd7 11 fxe5 dxe5 12 Be3 Be6, which doesn't look all that terrible for Black.

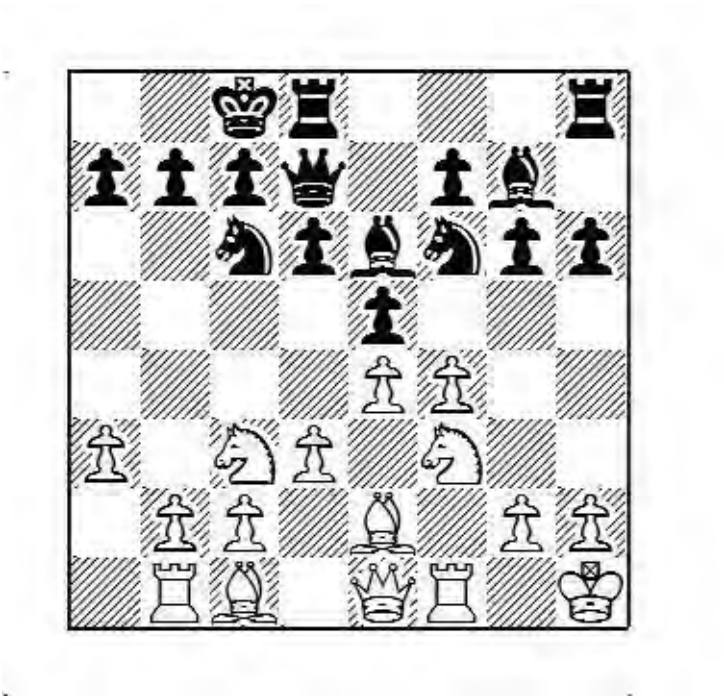
**10 Rb1**

White begins to formulate an argument against Black's intent. This move comes with a warning: Don't castle queenside!

**10 … Be6**

Black wants to hang on to his good bishop.

**11 a3 0-0-0!?**



Faith and opportunism become allied. Black's last move is an outright declaration of war.

**12 Bd1?!**

Securing the c2-pawn from … Nd4 irritations, but allowing Black the possibility of irritating central counters. White should fix the structure with 12 fxe5! dxe5 13 b4 with the quicker-looking attack.

**12 … exf4!**

Black exchanges to activate his g7-bishop.

**13 Bxf4 Nh5?!**

A violation of the nursery rhyme principles: *A knight on the rim is grim (or dim)* and also *A knight on the side we cannot abide*. Black looks slightly better if he prepares a central counter with 13 … g5! 14 Be3 d5! 15 Bg1 dxe4 16 dxe4 Bc4 17 Be2 Bxe2 18 Qxe2 Rhe8.

**14 Bd2**

Adding protection to the c3-knight in order to lash out with b2-b4 later on.

**14 … Rde8**

It's too late for a … d5 central counter as 14 … d5?! 15 Nxd5 Bxd5 16 exd5 Qxd5 17 Bc3 Rhe8 18 Qf2 Re7 19 Nd2 is uncomfortable for Black with Bf3 in the air.

**15 b4**

Here he comes.

**15 … Kb8**

15 … f5?! is met with 16 Nh4! Qf7 17 Bxh5 gxh5 18 Nxf5 Bxf5 19 Qf2 when White will emerge with an extra pawn.

**16 Qf2**

White removes his queen from the e8-rook's gaze.

**16 … Ref8?!**

Why this rook? I don't understand why Black didn't play the natural 16 … Rhf8.

**17 b5 Nd8**

Black's knight is misplaced. It belonged on either the e7- or e5-square.

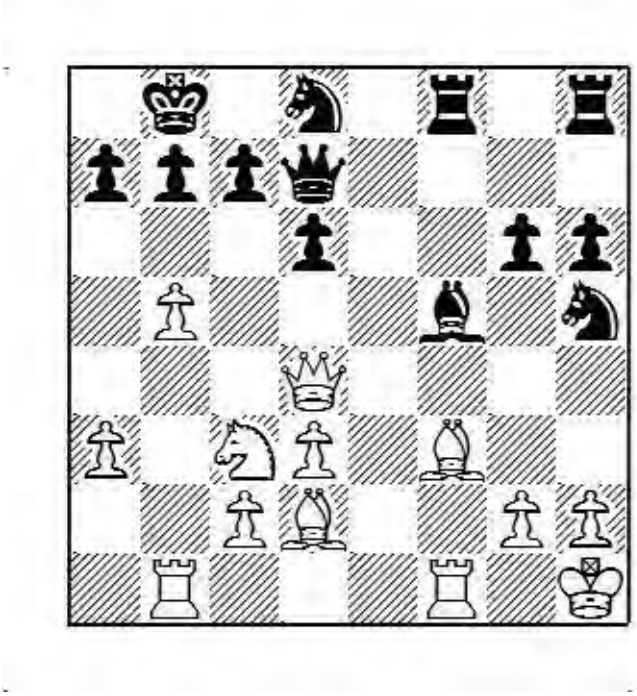
**18 Nd4 f5?**

With this move, Black hopes to leave his otherwise flat counterplay level. But it's mistimed. 18 … Nf6 avoided the structural damage which follows.

**19 exf5 Bxd4**

Black pays a high price for recapturing on f5.

**20 Qxd4 Bxf5 21 Bf3**



With the impending Be3 in the air, one senses a bloodbath as all of White's pieces soon face Black's king.

**21 … Nf6**

Also insufficient is 21 … Ne6 22 Qd5 Nc5 23 Na4 Qe6 24 Nxc5 Qxd5 25 Na6+! (zwischenzug) 25 … bxa6 26 bxa6+ Kc8 27 Bxd5 and Black is hopelessly busted.

**22 Be3**

Threatening mate in two moves. White's queen and bishops let the defenders (who palpably feel the ill-will) experience the full weight of their malevolent presence. "How can you exercise dominion over other nations and territories when you are not even master of your own fears?" White's queen asks her now sweating b8-brother.

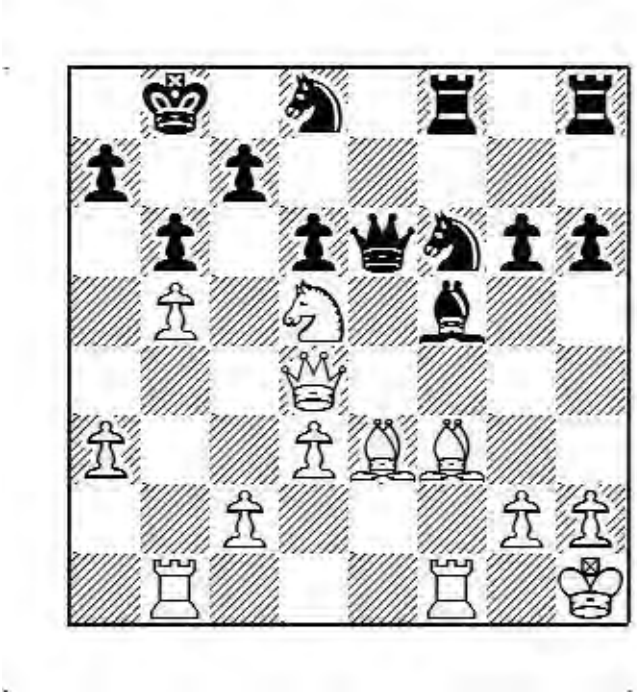
**22 … b6**

This leaves a painful gash along the light squares around his king, but there wasn't much choice.

**23 Nd5**

Setting up a diabolical threat. When we set up a trap, our move must feign innocence and misunderstanding so perfect, that our opponent believes us.

**23 … Qe6?**



Black's nervous queen inquires of the white knight's business in a shrill voice.

***Exercise (combination alert)*:** Black's last move was a blunder

in a strategically lost position. How can White exploit it?

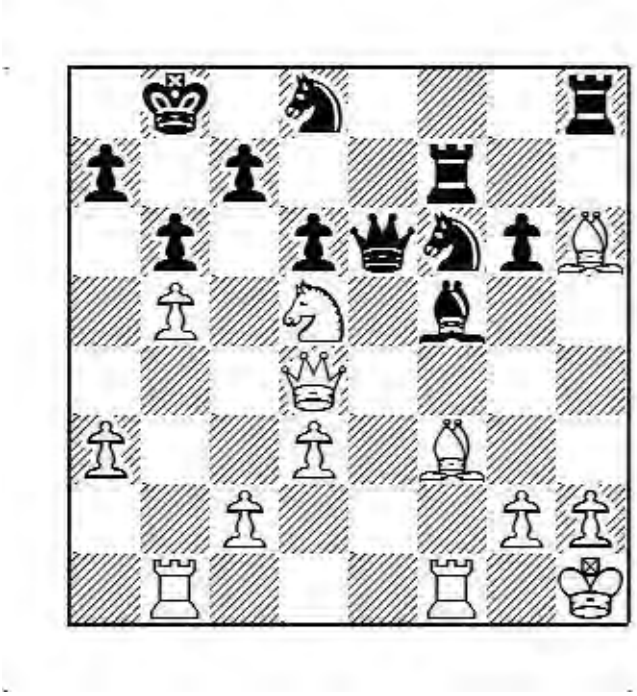
**24 Bxh6**

The bishop decides to go shopping in a low rent district. This move is flashy, but not the best one.

***Answer*:** Attraction/trapped piece. White does better with 24 Nxf6! Rxf6 (24 … Qxf6 25 Qd5 Kc8 26 Bd4 is game over, as well) 25 g4! and as it turns out, tomorrow really isn't the first day of the rest of the trapped black bishop's life. He finds himself in a lonely minority of one, against a mob of those opposed to his very existence.

**24 … Rf7?**

Black had to settle for a pawn down position after 24 … Rxh6 25 Rfe1 Qg8 26 Nxf6 Qf7 27 Qd5 Qxd5 28 Nxd5.



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** After the last move, Black's position goes flat as yesterday's half-drunk can of Diet Coke. White has two ways to win. Find one of them:

***Answer*:** Pin.

**25 Bg5!**

The ugly episode of the f6-pin has yet to run its course. Stay tuned!

***Answer #2*:** White also wins with 25 Rfe1! Qc8 26 Nxf6 Rxh6 27 Re8! when there is no reasonable defence to the coming Qd5, since 27 … Be6 fails to 28 Re1.

**25 … Nd7!?**

Do you get the feeling that Black came away from this move with only hollow certainty in its effectiveness? Black discovers a starkly simple solution to his f6-pin problem. Completely ignore it! This isn't exactly an all-purpose solution, since the h8-rook hangs. I can't fathom this move and White's next since it seems too early in the game for time pressure.

**26 Bxd8!?**

This game certainly contains some mysteriously unconventional facets. This wins, but will someone tell me why White refused a free rook? Hmmm. What's wrong with this picture? The position represents a visually odd paradox, and exudes the aura of one of those shaky every-which-way home movies my parents shot in the 1960s, where the camera just kept bouncing. 26 Qxh8 seems to do a pretty good job of forcing Black to resign. The queen's dreaded phrase "This is for your own good" is synonymous with pain-to-follow.

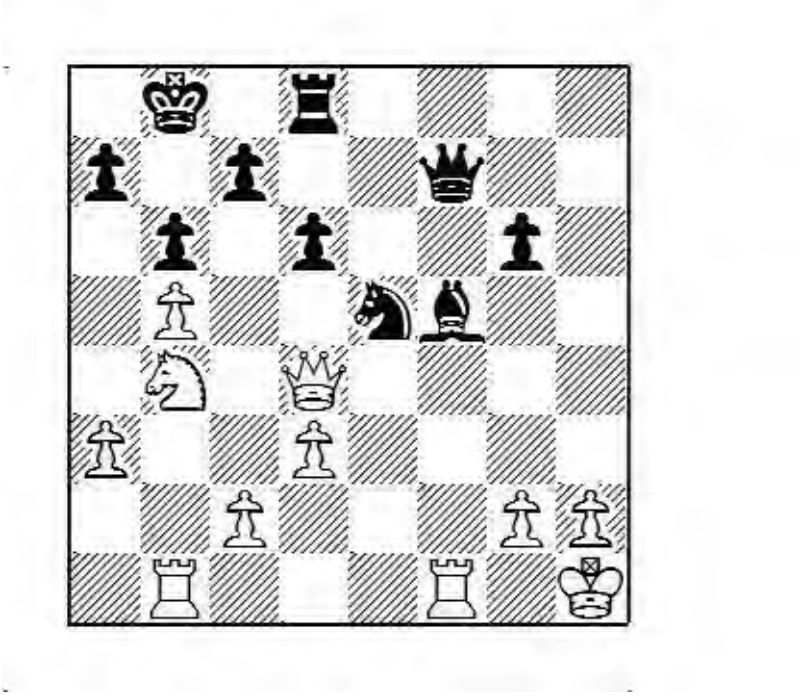
**26 … Rxd8 27 Nb4**

Black's light squares are punctured beyond repair.

**27 … Ne5 28 Bd5**

The vulgar bishop leers at Black's queen with a disconcerting pirate's squint.

## 28 … Qf6 29 Bxf7 Qxf7



***Exercise (combination alert)*:** White to play and increase his material advantage:

## 30 Rbe1 1-0

Good enough, but White can do better.

***Answer*:** Pin. 30 g4! and 30 … Nxg4 31 Qxg4 leaves White up a rook.

**Summary:** I would react to 1 … d6 2 Nf3 Bg4, by switching to a slightly favourable Classical Dutch-style setup with 3 e4.

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