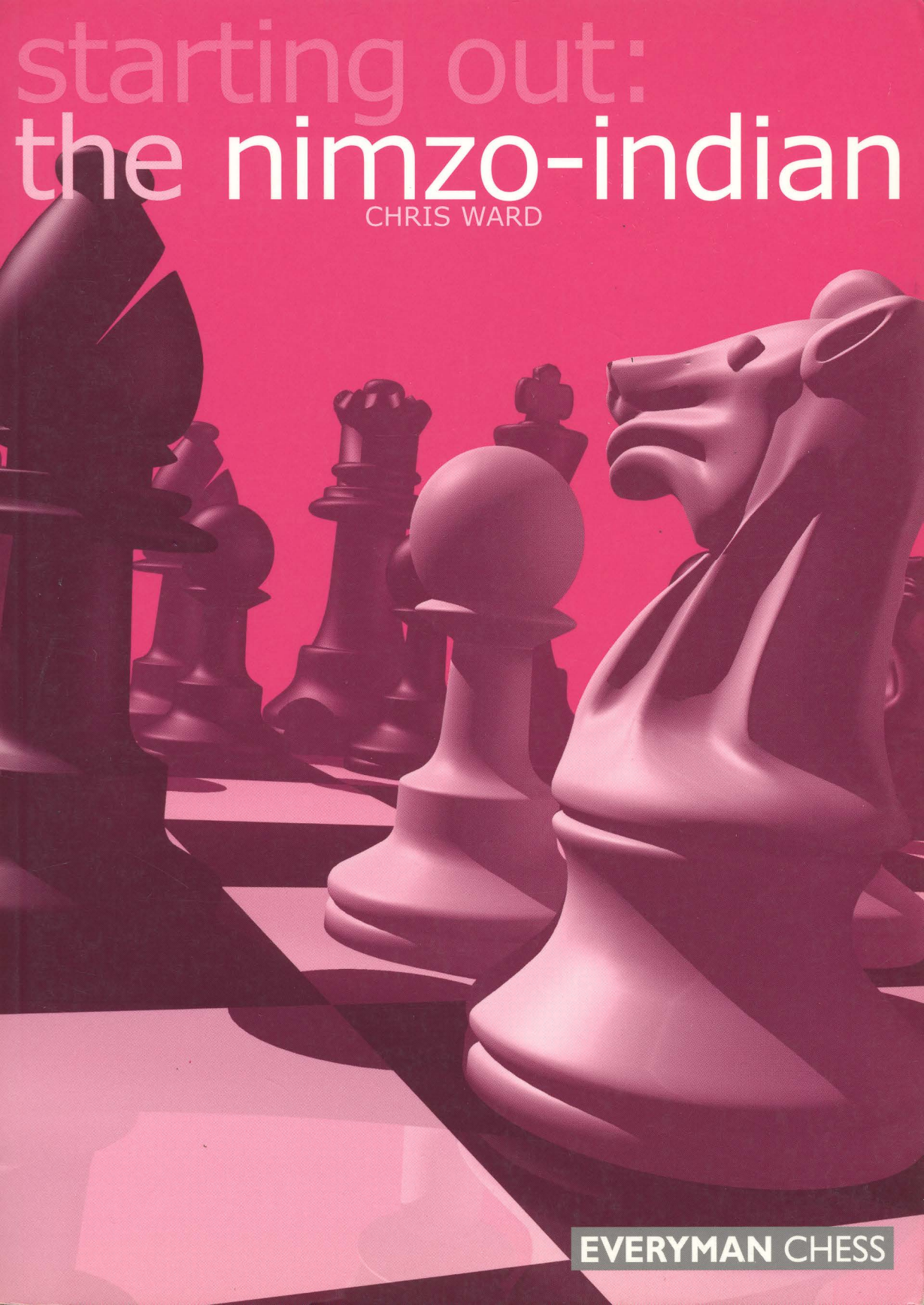
starting out: the nimzo-indian

CHRIS WARD



EVERYMAN CHESS

starting out: the nimzo-indian

Ideal for those wanting to understand the basics of the Nimzo-Indian.

The Nimzo-Indian is one of the soundest and most popular defences against 1 d4, offering Black the chance to unbalance the game early on and play for a win without undue risk. Advocates include virtually all of the world's top players, including Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik, Vishy Anand and Anatoly Karpov. In this revolutionary book, Grandmaster Chris Ward revisits the basic principles behind the Nimzo-Indian and its many variations. Throughout this easy-to-read guide the reader is helped along by a wealth of notes, tips and warnings from the author, while key strategies, ideas and tactics for both sides are clearly illustrated.

- Written by a battle-hardened Nimzo-Indian player
- All the important variations are covered
- A back-to-basics look at one of the most important openings

Chris Ward is a Grandmaster and a former British Champion. He is also a highly successful coach and a well-respected writer. His earlier works for Everyman include *Improve Your Opening Play* and the best-selling *It's Your Move*.



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Introduction

1 d4

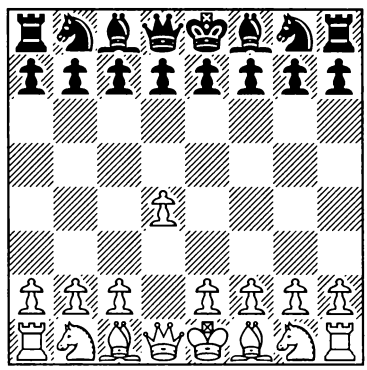


Diagram 1
The game is under way

Personally, I usually like to kick off a game of chess with the move **1 d4** as illustrated in Diagram 1. An important opening principle recommends putting your pawns in the centre and, although I favour 1 d4 over 1 e4, it is purely a matter of taste. Given the opportunity, I would almost certainly insert e2-e4 too.

As a means of preventing e2-e4, through pressurising this key square, Black could employ the risky Dutch Defence (1...f5) or block White's attempt with 1...d5. The former exposes the king along the h5-e8 diagonal (not currently a disaster) and the latter encourages the early pawn break 2 c4 (the popular Queen's Gambit). More flexible is **1...Nf6** when the ball is thrown back into White's court.

Although no doubt eager to arrange the attractive e2-e4, White must employ some subtlety. For instance, the immediate 2 Nc3 is thwarted easily by 2...d5. With ...Bf5 also available, not only is White unlikely to realise his dream but any pawn break is now difficult. Note that the c2-pawn could not be swerved around the knight to get to c4!

NOTE: A pawn break is the process of challenging an opponent's fixed pawn with a pawn of one's own, with the intention of creating an open or half-open file for later use by a rook or two.

TIP: In queen's pawn openings it is often advisable not to obstruct your c-pawn as it is useful for attacking or supporting the centre.

Although both 2 Nf3 and 2 Bg5 (The Trompovsky) are frequently seen in tournament play, **2 c4** is consistent as White tries to dissuade ...d7-d5 and thus prepares Nc3 and e2-e4.

QUESTION 1: Why is 2 f3 not a good idea for White?

Black's next move is **2...e6** and in Diagram 2, in terms of theory, it is decision time for White.

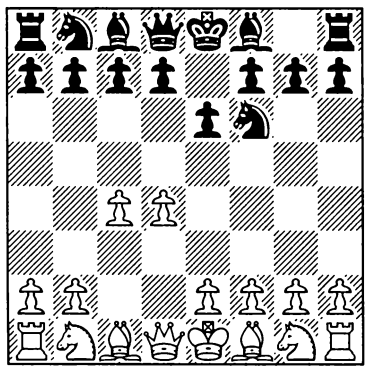


Diagram 2
Black frees his bishop

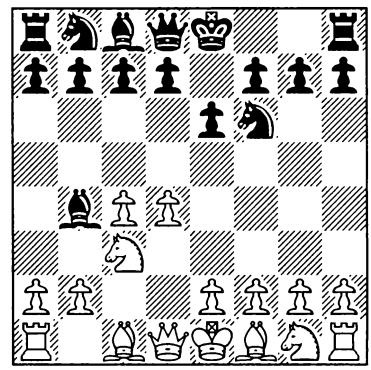


Diagram 3
Black prevents 4 e4

3 Nf3 is a perfectly reasonable move and there are more than a few players that fancy an early fianchetto via 3 g3. Nevertheless, the most testing continuation is **3 Nc3** when White gets straight to the point of trying to arrange central domination with 4 e4. Sure, Black could prevent this with 3...d5 which would transpose into the Queen's Gambit Declined (QGD), but the move characterising the Nimzo-Indian Defence is **3...Bb4** (Diagram 3).

Rather than committing a pawn, Black employs the early 20th Century idea of Aron Nimzowitsch of utilising his dark-squared bishop to pin the c3-knight and thus indirectly pressurising e4. The reader will soon become aware of just how many battles are fought over this vital square and will hopefully learn just when it can be relinquished in favour of a wider picture. For the time being, though, Black is right not to give it away and it should be observed that with his last move Black must be prepared to concede this bishop for the knight.

A very simplified view of the Nimzo-Indian is:

' Black trades minor pieces on c3 in order to double White's pawns.

Following this he seeks to block up the position when he can claim that knights are more suitable than bishops.'

One can't deny that there is an element of truth in this statement. With reference to Diagram 4, in such a scenario and wherever the other pieces, clearly a knight could dominate a bishop in a static pawn structure.

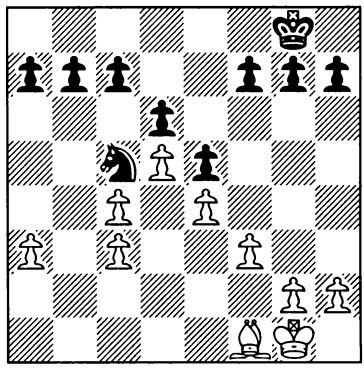


Diagram 4
The knight sits pretty!

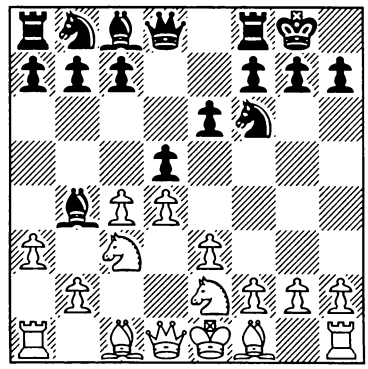


Diagram 5
The retreating option

However, in reality it is difficult to generalise as the situation is more complex and I'd prefer to deal with each chapter in turn.

Certainly 4 a3 Ba5?? 5 b4 Bb6 6 c5 is to be avoided, but ...Bxc3 frequently occurs even when White can recapture there with a piece, thus not compromising his queenside pawn structure.



NOTE: Black must be prepared to swap his bishop for a knight on c3 but sometimes it is more prudent to retreat.

Regarding the above assertion, Diagram 5 should shed a little light.

Black has the e4-square adequately under control. He finds his bishop attacked but to capture on c3 would merely allow White to replace that knight with the one on e2. A superior move is 6...Be7. The bishop has fulfilled its original task nicely and is a valuable piece that will most likely figure prominently later.

I remember when I was first told that in Diagram 6 the move 6...Ba5 was playable because I was very dubious. However, although the prospect of the bishop-trapping b2-b4 is a worry, available to help out in the combating of, say, Rb1 and Qa4 are the likes of ...Na6 and ...Qe7. As in the previous example, Black isn't that eager to aid in the untangling of White's pieces and is more interested in capturing on c3 after the e2-knight moves again.

Well, you now know what the Nimzo-Indian is, but to get more acquainted with it I recommend that you carefully read through the rest of this book. The chapters are split into the different main lines but

throughout you will pick up titbits of information that may easily be applicable whatever variation you find yourself in.

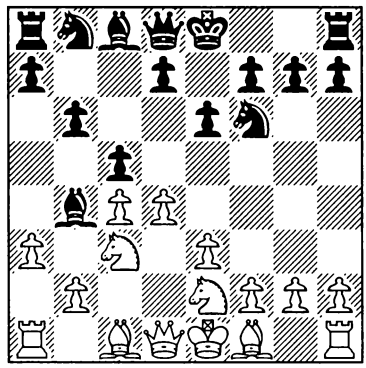


Diagram 6
The f1-bishop is obstructed

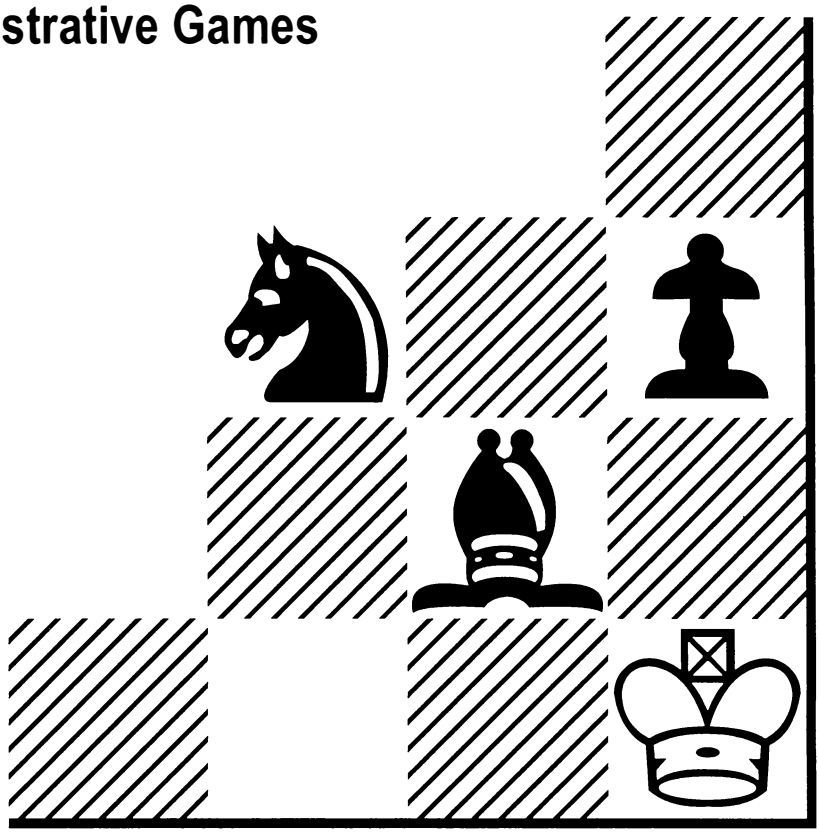
The Nimzo-Indian was the first queen's pawn defence that I ever learnt and I have continued to play it since I was a junior. Furthermore, as White I have tried practically everything against it. I apologise if you think that there are too many of my own encounters in the practical games selection but I can assure you that they're not just to show off my wins! Indeed, I hope that you'll be able to learn from my mistakes just as much as anybody else's featured throughout the book.

There is no answer as to which system is the best and generally there are trends in how the top players attempt to meet the Nimzo-Indian. The only thing I will say is that this book is completely unbiased (honest!). Read on!

Chapter One

The Rubinstein Variation 4 e3 b6

- Introduction
- White Plays 5 Bd3
- White Plays 5 Nge2
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 (Diagram 1)

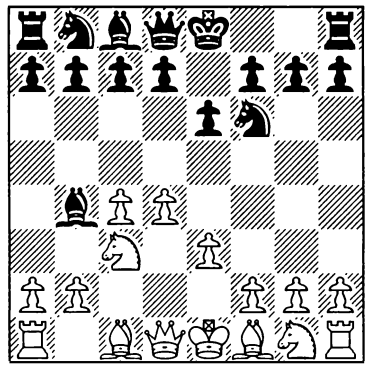


Diagram 1
A solid move

Don't be fooled by 4 e3. Commonly acknowledged as the Rubinstein Variation, White may appear to settle for advancing this centre pawn just one square, but advancing it to e4 (and possibly even e5 a little later) certainly hasn't been ruled out. The c1-bishop is temporarily blocked in but its partner on f1 is raring to go.

This chapter focuses on the response **4...b6**, which I myself tend to favour. Generally the idea is to fianchetto the bishop on b7 from where it pressurises White's kingside as well as maintaining further control over the e4-square. Another option that Black has is to overshoot the bishop to a6 from where it can attack White's c4-pawn. This may be particularly effective if White has doubled c-pawns and has difficulty defending the further forward of the two.



WARNING: The move ...b7-b6 certainly doesn't rule out the participation of the black c- or d-pawns. However, regarding the latter Black should always watch out for Qa4+ which, if overlooked, could spell the end for a bishop on b4.

After 4...b6 I'd like to consider two different main paths: 5 Bd3 and 5 Nge2.

White Plays 5 Bd3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 b6 5 Bd3 (Diagram 2)

This is considered more accurate than 5 Nf3 as White immediately gets to grips with the e4-square and thus, for example, prevents the immediate reply 5...Ne4.

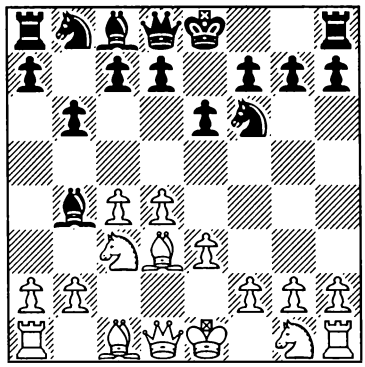


Diagram 2
Scrutinising e4

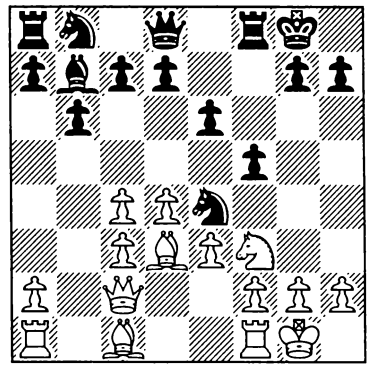


Diagram 3
White must budge the black knight

5...Bb7

The most natural reaction and consistent with the last move. Regarding my last warning, obviously not 5...d5?? 6 Qa4+ when Black drops a whole piece.

6 Nf3

Still the most popular continuation. However, protecting the g2-pawn via 6 f3 has been tried as has 6 Nge2, essentially offering the pawn as a sacrifice. Regarding the latter, 6...Bxg2 7 Rg1 Bf3 leads to a very interesting position. Instead of regaining the pawn with 8 Rxg7 Nh5 9 Rg1 Qh4!?, perhaps White should leave it as a gambit with 8 Qc2.

6...Ne4

The best way to ensure that White doesn't advance his pawn here is to insert a piece on this key square first. Further pressure is added to c3 and the black f-pawn is now able to have its say in the middlegame.

7 Qc2

White defends his knight whilst simultaneously attacking Black's. This looks obvious although in recent times White has favoured trying to delete this move altogether by tendering the pawn sacrifice 7 0-0. As it happens, that move order is the subject of our first illustrative game.

7...f5

Black stubbornly refuses to budge. Advancing the f-pawn also introduces other options for Black. For example, after castling the rook 'swinger' ...Rf6-h6(or g6) could be a good attacking weapon.



TIP: If Black has it in mind to play ...Bxc3, resulting in White obtaining two c-pawns, then he may prefer ...f7-f5 over ...d7-d5 to control the e4-square. The latter would enable White to easily undouble his

pawns. Yes, a timely cxd5 and c3-c4 would also see White emerging with more centre pawns.

8 0-0 Bxc3

White's last move unpinned his knight and thus pressurised e4 again. Hence the time had come to part with the bishop. The alternative 8...Nxc3 9 bxc3 Be7 would have allowed White to gain the initiative with 10 e4.

9 bxc3 0-0 (Diagram 3)

Plans

Natural developing ideas for Black include ...d7-d6 and ...Nbd7 with the knight on a good track that doesn't obstruct the bishop. One possibility is to try to aim for ...e6-e5 while a kingside attack, possibly involving the previously mentioned ...Rf6 swinger, is certainly not outrageous. This is particularly the case if White moves his f3-knight allowing the aggressive ...Qh4. An amusing continuation that White should avoid is 10 Nd2 Qh4 11 g3?! Ng5 12 gxh4?? Nh3 mate, but he can't be criticised for retreating his knight. A priority should be to budge the e4-knight with f2-f3 and if he can ever arrange e3-e4 then all the better. Another idea that he may look out for is the opportunity to play c4-c5 in order to undouble his pawns.



NOTE: Unless it nets a pawn, it is rarely a good idea for White to trade his bishop for the knight on e4 as both ...Bxe4, dominating the light squares, and ...fxe4, opening up the f-file, are attractive replies.

White Plays 5 Nge2

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 b6 5 Nge2 (Diagram 4)

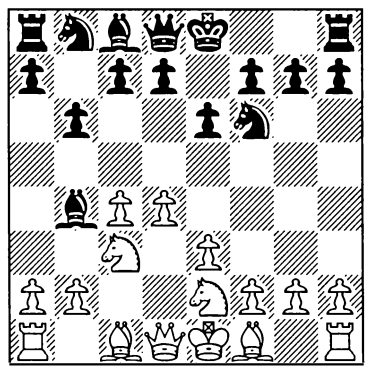


Diagram 4
A replacement is at hand!

With his last move White offers some extra support to the c3-knight

so that he is no longer troubled by the threat of doubled pawns. An ideal scenario for White is to have Black play ...Bxc3 so that he can just recapture with his knight. Following simple development, the 'two bishops' advantage can be claimed with no pawn structure blemishes.



NOTE: When the advantage of the 'two bishops' is referred to, the implication is that one side has a pair of bishops whilst the opponent may instead have one and a knight or perhaps two knights. If you have a bishop pair then it is rare that they are both bad and they can be positively awesome in an open position.

QUESTION 2: What is an 'open' position?

5...Ne4

A very principled move as Black maintains the pressure on the c3-knight. After this the threat of pawn doubling is still there. The same is not true after 5...Bb7 and thus 6 a3 is best met with 6...Be7. Nevertheless, as no pieces have been traded off, the space advantage after 7 d5 0-0 8 e4 leaves White with the upper hand despite his slightly deficient development.

Another idea which is sometimes employed here (as well as in similar positions) is 5...Ba6. Then a valid concept is that after 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 Nxc3 d5, Black could hope to exchange light-squared bishops thus ultimately leaving himself with a knight against a bad bishop.



NOTE: The colour of the squares of a side's fixed pawns determine whether a bishop is 'good' or 'bad'. To work in harmony it is preferable that the pawns control one set of coloured squares whilst the bishop controls the other. A bishop is defined as 'bad' if its pawns are blocked on the same colour.

As it would be undesirable for White to be left with only a dark-squared bishop when he has pawns on dark squares, he shouldn't play ball and 8 b3 would successfully retain some tension in the position.

6 Qc2

Perfectly playable instead is 6 Bd2; after 6...Nxd2 7 Qxd2 0-0 8 a3 Be7 White would have a space advantage but rather unusually it would be Black who has the bishop pair.



TIP: With a white knight on e2 rather than f3, both sides should consider ...Qh4 as a move.

With reference to the above tip, after 6 a3? Qh4! 7 g3 Qf6 the forced 8 f4 leaves White positionally all over the place.

6...Bb7 7 a3 Bxc3+ 8 Nxc3 Nxc3 9 Qxc3 0-0 (Diagram 5)

White has achieved his aim of obtaining the bishop pair without damaging his pawn structure, although now he is lagging behind in development.

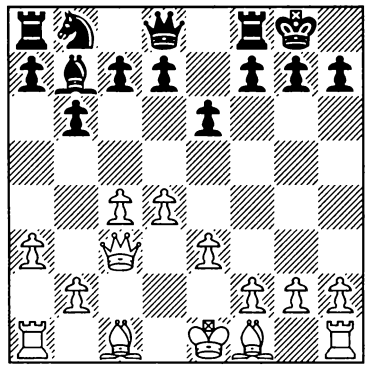


Diagram 5
No doubled pawns

Plans

White must tread very carefully in trying to get his bishops out. For example, it would be very easy to suggest 10 f3?! (blunting the b7-g2 diagonal) with 11 Bd3 and 12 0-0 to follow, but there is a flaw. Black has 10...Qh4+! 11 g3 Qh5 hitting White's f-pawn twice. Upon 12 e4, very awkward is 12...f5.

With that in mind, White might prefer developing his other bishop on b2 first via 10 b3 or 10 b4. If he castles queenside then, aside from the obvious f2-f3 and e3-e4 plan, he could certainly consider offering the g2-pawn as a sacrifice.

On Black's part, developing the knight on d7 after ...d7-d6, from where it could transfer to f6 after the typical ...f7-f5 push, looks reasonable. The side of the board on which the white king opts to rest should influence Black's thoughts on which side of the board to concentrate his efforts.

Illustrative Games

Game 1
□ **B.Martin** ■ **Ward**
Oakham Masters 1994

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 b6 5 Bd3 Bb7 6 Nf3 Ne4 7 0-0 f5

Black chooses to keep the e4-square bolstered rather than accepting White's offered pawn.

8 d5



TIP: This pawn push is a reasonable plan for White in the Nimzo when a black bishop is fianchettoed on the queenside. As well as blocking out this piece from the action, White pressurises the e6-

and f5-pawns. Furthermore, a white knight now has the attractive d4-square available.

8...Bxc3

With White again threatening to win a pawn on e4, it was decision time for Black.

9 bxc3 Na6

After, say, 9...exd5 10 cxd5 Nxc3 11 Qc2 Nxd5 12 Bxf5 White has good play for his sacrificed pawn with his dark-squared bishop ready to take up an active post along the b2-g7 diagonal. The drawback of White's 8th move is that it conceded the c5-square. This is an excellent home for a black knight and in fact the immediate 9...Nc5 may be more accurate.

10 Nd4 Nec5 11 Bc2?!

This retreat is too time-wasting, a more dynamic plan being to try to get in the break e3-e4 a little quicker.

11...0-0 12 f3 Qf6 13 Bd2 g6 14 e4 e5 15 Ne2 f4! (Diagram 6)

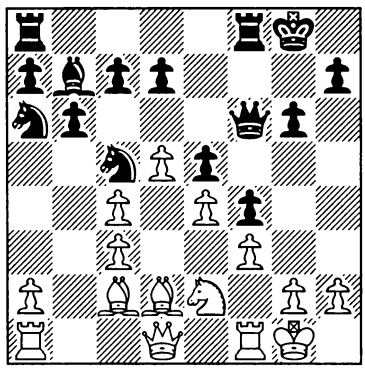


Diagram 6
A delight for knights!

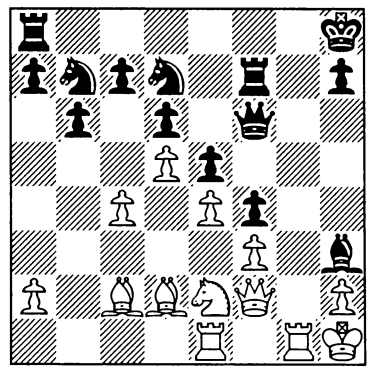


Diagram 7
The g-file is where it's at!



WARNING: White must be very sure about his chances before allowing Black to block up the position in this manner as this type of pawn structure is more favourable for knights.

16 Rf2 g5



TIP: Often it is best to concentrate your efforts on the side of the board to which your fixed pawns lean.

17 Kh1 Rf7

With the attacking break ...g6-g5-g4 imminent (the fixed pawns on e5 and f4 lean towards the kingside), Black starts to rally his troops. The g-file is going to be all-important.

18 Qf1 d6 19 g3 Bc8 20 gxf4

If White tried to block things up with 20 g4 then Black would turn to the pawn break ...h7-h5, with his major pieces likely to invade along the h-file instead.

20...gxf4 21 Rg2+ Kh8 22 Qf2 Bh3 23 Rgg1 Nb7

The g-file is very appetising but Black hasn't forgotten that when doubled, the c4-pawn is a natural target too. Black has plenty of time and sets about maximising the use of his knights.

24 c5

Frustrated, White offloads a pawn in order to try and increase the scope of his bishop pair.

24...Naxc5 25 c4 Nd7 26 Rae1 (Diagram 7)

White would have preferred to have doubled rooks on the open g-file but, due to the advanced black f-pawn, g1 is the only safe square available for use.

26...Nf8!

The start of an excellent plan.

27 Nc1 Ng6 28 Nd3 Rg8 29 Bd1 Rfg7

Had Black switched a rook to the g-file on move 26 then White could have solved some problems by trading off both sets of rooks.



TIP: When you have a space advantage, you should try to avoid fair swaps.

30 Be2 Nh4

This knight has covered a lot of distance but has found a perfect square.

31 Rxg7 Rxg7 (Diagram 8)

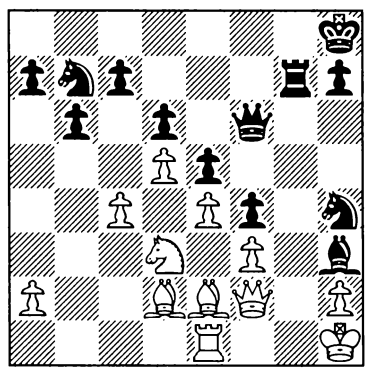


Diagram 8
An inevitable invasion

32 Bf1

Black's superior control of the g2-square rendered 32 Rg1 unplayable.

32...Bg2+ 33 Bxg2 Rxg2

Rather than let his bishop go, White now opts to part company with his queen. The battle is lost.

34 Qxh4 Qxh4 35 Kxg2 Qg5+ 36 Kh1 Qh5 37 Kg2 Nd8 38 Nf2 Nf7 39 Nh3 Ng5 40 Ng1 Qe8 White resigns

---

Game 2
☐ **Inkiov** ■ **Psakhis**
Minsk 1982

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1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 b6 4 Nc3 Bb4 5 e3 Ne4 6 Qc2 Bb7 7 Bd3 f5 8 0-0 Bxc3 9 bxc3 0-0 10 Ne1

Preferred here to 10 Nd2 with White instead choosing to chase away the annoying knight without allowing the trading option.

10...c5 (Diagram 9)

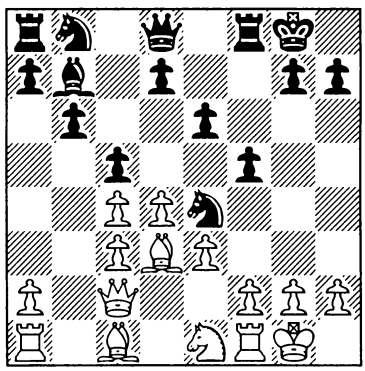


Diagram 9
White plans the f2-f3 pawn push

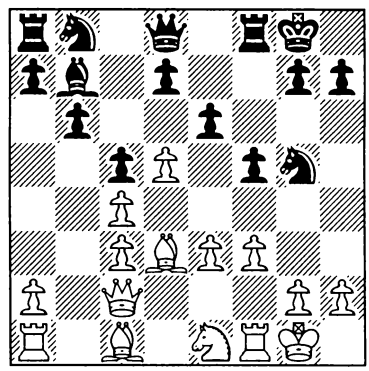


Diagram 10
Pressure on e6 and f5



NOTE: Although early on ...c7-c5 and ...b7-b6 are often seen independently, in the long run they can easily be played (as here) in tandem. One drawback is the slight weakening of the b6-pawn that may thus encourage an a4-a5 queenside-pressurising plan.

11 f3 Ng5

As there is no necessity to advance the d7-pawn (the b8-knight can develop on c6), an alternative and playable retreat here would have been 11...Nd6.

12 d5 (Diagram 10)

A critical feature in this game is that Black is never able to seal things up completely. Here 12...e5 is unplayable because of the hanging f5-pawn. For the same reason, 12...exd5 doesn't win a pawn.



TIP: When in possession of the 'bishop pair', White should always be on the lookout for ways to open up the position.

12...Qf6 13 e4 f4 14 e5!

Correctly played before Black can get his own e-pawn to this square.

14...Qh6

Instead 14...Qxe5 15 h4 Nf7 16 Bxh7+ Kh8 17 Be4, leaving the f4-pawn as an easy target, would be very favourable for White.

15 Be4 d6 16 exd6 e5

Black has come up with an interesting plan to close the position to suit his knights but White proves equally cunning at opening things up.



NOTE: Supported passed pawns are typically powerful in the endgame but in the middlegame they can often get in the way.

17 Nd3 Nxe4

If Black didn't take this now, then soon White would manoeuvre a knight to this square.

18 fxe4 Qxd6 19 Bxf4!?

Very dynamic. White acts quickly before Black has the opportunity to complete his development.

19...exf4 20 e5 Qh6 21 e6 (Diagram 11)

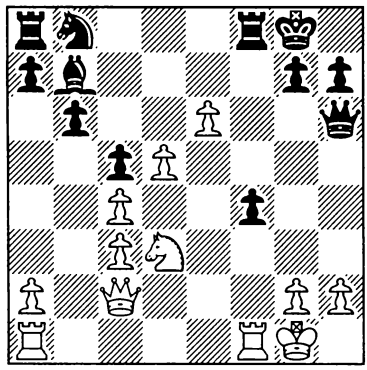


Diagram 11
Nice pawns!

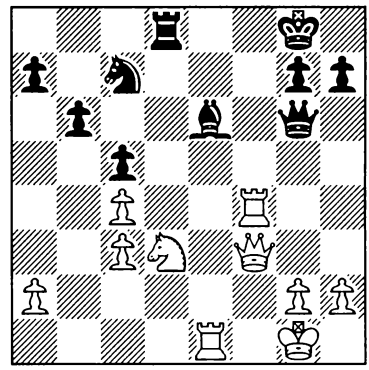


Diagram 12
Beware Rf8+

The connected passed pawns are menacing and they do a good job of keeping Black's queenside pieces out of the action.

21...Na6 22 Rae1 Nc7 23 Qe2 Rae8 24 Qg4 Bxd5?!

Despite what may have sounded like biased comments from me, Black is of course consoled by having an extra piece. Though eager to break up White's pawns, he returns the material too soon. Correct was 24...Qg6.

25 e7! Be6?!

And now 25...Rf7 would have been more prudent.

26 exf8Q+ Rxf8 27 Qd1 Rd8?! 28 Rxf4 Qg6 29 Qf3! (Diagram 12)

Utilising the trick 29...Qxd3 30 Rf8+! to escape the pin.

29...h6 30 Ne5 Qc2 31 h4 Re8 32 Rf1 Kh7 33 Qc6 Rc8 34 Nd7 Qxc3 35 Qe4+ Kh8 36 Ne5 Qd4+ 37 Qxd4 cxd4 38 Rxd4 Kh7 39 h5! b5 40 c5 Bxa2 41 c6 Be6 42 Ng6 a5 43 Rf8 Rxf8 44 Nxf8+ Kg8 45 Nxe6 Nxe6 46 Rd7 Black resigns

---

Game 3

☐ **Merriman** ■ **Ward**

Monarch Assurance Open, Port Erin 1994

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 b6 5 Nge2 Ne4 6 f3 Nxc3 7 Nxc3?! (Diagram 13)

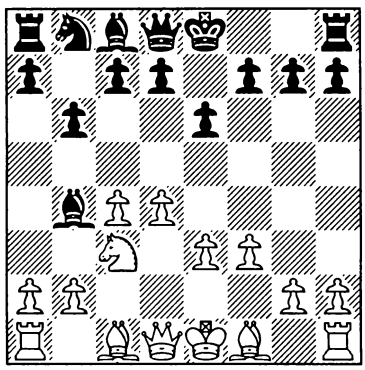


Diagram 13
Keep in mind ...Qh4+

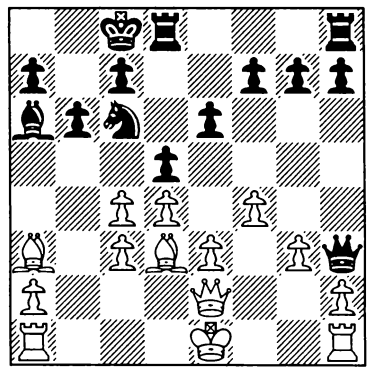


Diagram 14
Hunting an outpost on c4

As White is destined to obtain doubled c-pawns anyhow, he may as well gain a tempo on the bishop, and after 7 bxc3 Be7 8 Ng3 he can at least start amassing a big pawn centre.



NOTE: An opponent is more likely to more cramped by advancing centre pawns, the more pieces there are in existence. This is because he will have less space in which to house them all and manoeuvre them around.

7...Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 Nc6

Although ...d7-d6 and ...Nd7 is a generally acceptable development option, here Black has already decided on a target for this knight.

9 Bd3 Qh4+!



TIP: Always look out for checks. This queen check in particular is notorious for throwing a spanner into White's works as it provokes a weakening of the white kingside.

10 g3 Qh3

A real thorn, the black queen prevents White from castling kingside

and threatens to invade on g2.

11 Qe2 Ba6

Yes, it is the pawn on c4 that has been singled out for attention.

12 Ba3 0-0-0 13 f4 d5! (Diagram 14)

Introducing a new dimension. Although Black would like to win the c4-pawn, the square alone makes worthy prey.

14 0-0-0

After 14 cxd5 Bxd3 15 Qxd3 exd5 there is no more than a check on a6 but the backward e3-pawn would be in for a torrid time.

14...Na5

Black is angling for an outpost on c4 and the knight is just the piece that wants to occupying it.

15 c5 Bxd3 16 Rxd3 Nc4 17 Bb2 (Diagram 15)

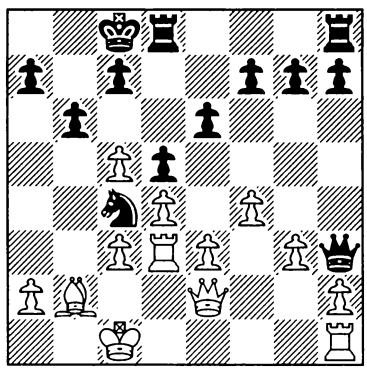


Diagram 15
Pretty grim!

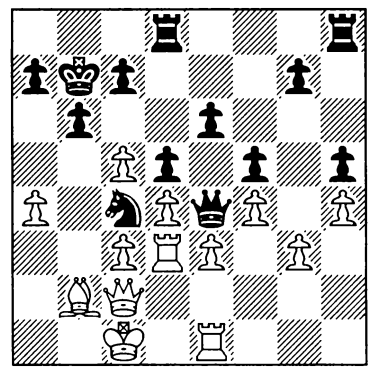


Diagram 16
Black dominates



NOTE: Diagram 15 is a very good example of a very 'bad' bishop!

17...Qf5

Frustrating White by not even allowing the pawn break 18 e4.

18 Rf1 h5

Black has a long-term plan in mind but in the meantime is sure to retain light-squared domination.

19 Re1 Qe4 20 Qc2 Kb7

One option that Black has is to open the b-file with ...bxc5 when his rooks are ready to inflict some damage.

21 a4 f5 22 h4 (Diagram 16)

An absolutely horrible move for White to have to make. Nevertheless, it is necessary in order to prevent Black's rooks from entering his position down the h-file.

22...Rh6 23 Qe2 Rg6 24 Rg1 Kc6

Black's chosen plan is far from his only one. White's major pieces are pretty paralysed and amusing would be 24...Rg4 25 Kc2 Rh8 26 Bc1 Rh6 27 Bd2 Rhg6 28 Be1. The bishop has just about made it in time to defend the g3-pawn but due to pins Black can capture on either h4 or f4.

25 cxb6

NOTE: This game is a good example of why White doesn't always solve his queenside pawn structure problems by achieving c4-c5. Although he may exchange off a doubled pawn, the a-pawn remains isolated and, after ...axb6, Black's rooks would have an obvious target.

25...axb6 26 Kc2

Ironically it is the one pawn not on a dark square that is about to receive Black's attention. As all of White's other pieces are otherwise engaged in defensive duties, it's a case of all hands to the pump!

26...Ra8 27 Kb3

Unfortunately from White's point of view, his pieces are perfectly placed for a neat tactic.

27...Rxa4! 28 Kxa4 Qxd3 White resigns

Game 4
□ **Townsend** ■ **Ward**
British League 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 b6 5 Nge2 Ne4 6 Qc2 Bb7 7 a3 Bxc3+ 8 Nxc3 Nxc3 9 Qxc3 Qf6!? (Diagram 17)

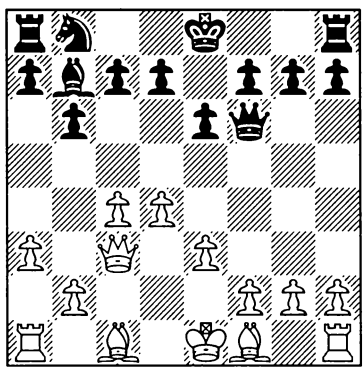


Diagram 17
White has the 'bishop pair'

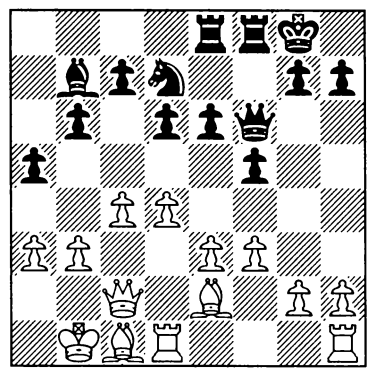


Diagram 18
Black is okay!

I was playing Black in this game and 9...Qf6!? was wheeled out after much thought. This over-the-board inspiration is not quite a novelty

but the move is certainly very rare.

10 b3

The point behind 9...Qf6 is that I intended snatching the g2-pawn after 10 Bd3, while upon 10 f3 the standard treatment of ...Qh4+ still looks promising. After the game my opponent was baffled as to where he had gone wrong or at least how he might have played more actively. One idea is the more adventurous 10 b4 although then White will be naturally wary of castling long.

10...d6 11 Bb2 0-0 12 Qc2 Qh6

Freeing up the black f-pawn and homing in on White's e3-pawn so as to prevent 13 f3.

13 0-0-0 Nd7 14 Kb1 f5

A standard continuation. Having unpinned his e-pawn, White was no doubt eager to play 15 e4. The text, of course, puts a stop to that and makes the f6-square a comfortable option for the knight.

15 f3 Rae8

Obviously not now 15...Qxe3?? as 16 Bc1 somewhat embarrasses the black queen.

16 Bc1 Qf6 17 Be2 a5 (Diagram 18) 18 e4?!

Played because White couldn't find an alternative plan. The problem is that this is detrimental and I'd be surprised if White is really worse after say 18 h4 or maybe 18 h3, angling for 19 g4. That said, I was more than happy with my position anyway.

18...fxe4 19 fxe4 Qg6

The white e-pawn becomes a natural target.

20 Bf3 Nf6 21 Rhe1 e5 22 d5



NOTE: The black bishop is clearly not well placed when fianchettoed against a pawn like this. However it can often re-enter the game via c8.

22...Bc8 23 Be3

My thoughts were that it was necessary here for White to play 23 h3 in order to prevent Black's next move. I know that this creates other holes and the f3-bishop is a bad one, but without it White has serious problems holding his position together.

23...Bg4

Now White has the unpleasant choice of taking or allowing a new target (a pawn) to be created on f3.

24 Bxg4 Qxg4 25 Bg1 Rf7

Were the queens off then White might be able to give Black something to think about by advancing his queenside pawns. As it stands, though, he can't afford to open up his king position.

26 Re3 Ref8 27 Rde1 Nh5 28 Qe2 Qg6

As previously remarked, there is no reason for Black to be interested in a queen trade. Black dominates the f-file and keeps an eye on the e-pawn. Meanwhile, of course, 29...Nf4 is a threat.

29 g3 Nf6 (Diagram 19)

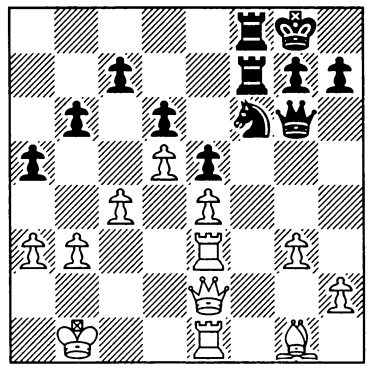


Diagram 19
The e4-pawn is a target

30 Rc3?

An error in time trouble. I was expecting 30 h3 when with 30...h5 I figured I had an excellent available plan in ...Nh7-g5. Observe that there is no opportunity for White to place a rook on the f-file because of a ...Nxe4 tactic similar to as in the game.

30...Nxe4! 31 Qxe4 Qxe4+ 32 Rxe4 Rf1+ 33 Rc1 Rxc1+ 34 Kxc1 Rf1+

The awkwardly placed bishop was always the target.

35 Kc2 Rxg1 36 Re2 Rf1 37 b4 axb4 38 axb4 Rf3

Simple chess. Black cuts off the white king.

39 c5 bxc5 40 bxc5 Ra3 41 Re1 Ra5 42 cxd6 cxd6 43 Rd1 Rc5+ White resigns

Played in preference to 43...Ra2+. As the white king is now being consigned to a restricted queenside area, there is no hope in playing on.

Game 5
□ Gual Pascual ■ Arguelles Garcia
Spanish Championship, Barcelona 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 b6 5 Nge2 Ba6 6 Ng3 (Diagram 20)

As previously stated, modern theory suggests that White can obtain a slight edge via the simpler 6 a3. With the text White encourages complications.

6...Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 d5 8 Ba3

Despite having several pawns on dark squares, White finds a useful post for this bishop. He ignores the current situation on c4 but prevents Black from castling.

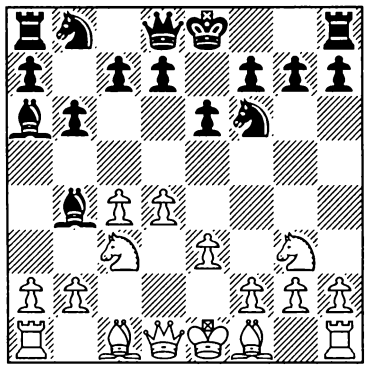


Diagram 20
Double my pawns!

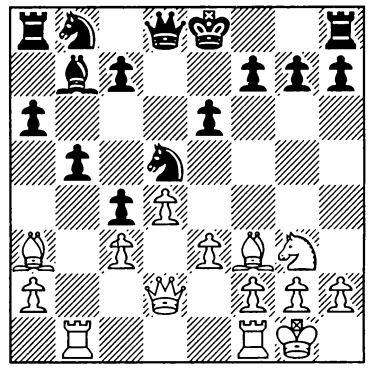


Diagram 21
Black can't castle

8...dxc4

This move looks a little to greedy to me. Of course after 8...Bxc4 9 Bxc4 dxc4 White can regain his pawn with 10 Qa4+, but after 10...Qd7 11 Qxc4 Qc6! Black has probably achieved equality. Being unable to castle short will not be much of a hindrance with the queens off.

9 Be2

Counting on long term compensation and hence choosing not to opt for the obvious 9 e4!?.

9...Bb7 10 0-0 b5 11 Rb1 a6

Because of the pinned b5-pawn, White now has 12 Bxc4 Bxg2 13 Kxg2 bxc4 14 Qa4+ but opts to take an alternative route.

12 Bf3 Nd5 13 Qd2 (Diagram 21) 13...c6?

Okay, Black had to suffer a little but this is really too much to bear. Now his lack of dark-squared control is disastrous!



TIP: Be very careful about putting too many pawns on the same colour as your remaining bishop.

14 Ne4 Qd7 15 Nd6+ Kd8 16 e4 Nb6 17 Bh5 g6

Preventing 18 Nxf7+ but now another dark square bites the dust.

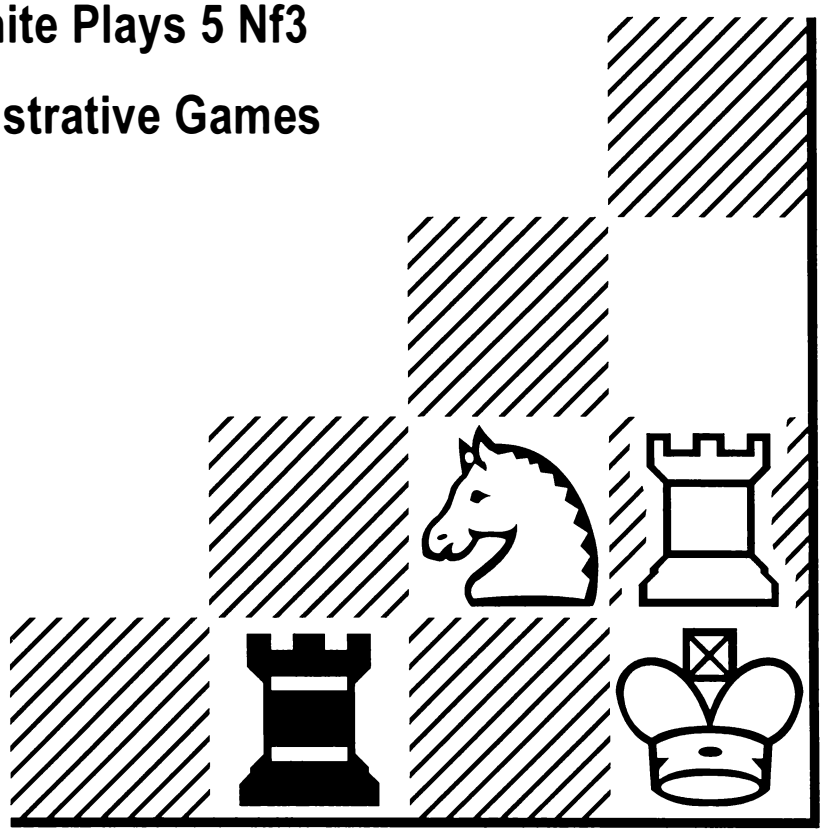
18 Qg5+ Kc7 19 Qe5 Black resigns

An accurate finish by White leaves Black with an attacked rook and an unpalatable discovered check to face. He does, however, still have his extra pawn!

Chapter Two

The Rubinstein Variation 4 e3 0-0

- Introduction
- White Plays 5 Nge2
- White Plays 5 Bd3
- White Plays 5 Nf3
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 (Diagram 1)

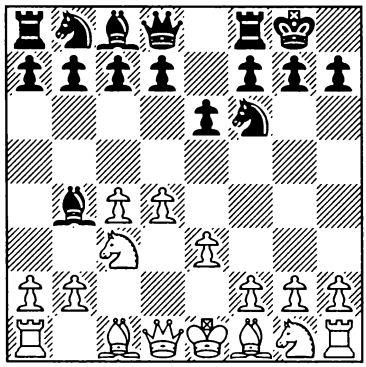


Diagram 1
A sensible move

After 4 e3, the reply 4...0-0 is fairly non-committal. Black's logic is simple; he 'knows' that he is going to play this move anyway, so why not get it out the way now? How he follows up will depend upon the piece formation that White adopts. I am going to divide this chapter into 5 Nge2, 5 Bd3 and 5 Nf3. Certainly each option has distinguishing features but regarding the next chapter too, there is always a chance of a transposition.

White Plays 5 Nge2

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Nge2

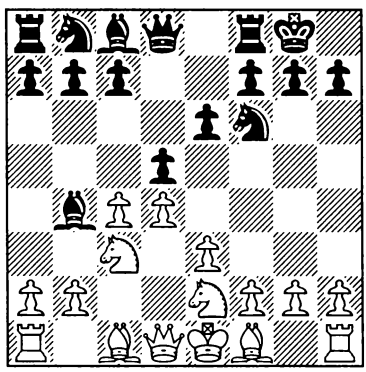


Diagram 2
The c1-bishop is locked in

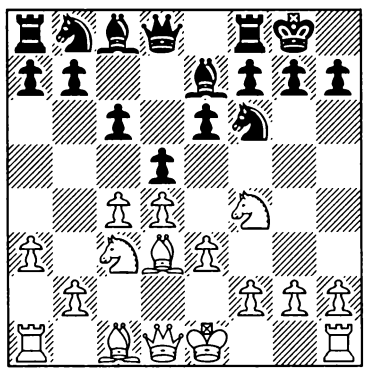


Diagram 3
The d5-pawn is bolstered

Just as in the last chapter, the white knight supports its colleague to ensure that he doesn't end up with doubled pawns.

5...d5 (Diagram 2)

Black stakes his claim in the centre. He now has every intention of preserving his dark-squared bishop.



NOTE: Black should never reject this move purely on the grounds that it might transpose into a 'Queen's Gambit Declined' (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6) as invariably there are fundamental differences. In Diagram 2, for example, White finds his dark-squared bishop locked inside the pawn chain. In a QGD he would have most likely deployed it on g5 or f4 before playing e2-e3.

6 a3 Be7 7 Nf4

Despite my initial description of Nge2, one shouldn't write this move off as merely defending c3 as it has other options too. Although f3 is arguably its most natural start, in fact both the f4- and g3-squares have their moments. On f4 the knight pressurises the d5-pawn and if Black takes on c4 then White will most certainly aim to play e3-e4.

7...c6

Black adopts a solid formation and bolsters the d5-pawn.

8 Bd3 (Diagram 3)

Plans

If White could arrange the e3-e4 break then things would look rosy but, because of the lack of support for the d4-pawn, this seems unlikely. A 'containing' plan would be to put 6 a3 to good use and expand on the queenside, with b2-b4 being an obvious candidate. Meanwhile Black needs to figure out how to activate his light-squared bishop. At some stage he may need to concede ...dxc4 but be ready to break with ...e6-e5 or ...c6-c5.



TIP: A plan in itself which many Grandmasters adopt is to frustrate the opponent by limiting his activity. Frequently under the strain, victims will crack and lash out with deadly repercussions.

White Plays 5 Bd3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 (Diagram 4)

As this chapter's selection of practical games alone should demonstrate, White now has a few options here. 6 Nf3 will transpose to the next covered line but aside from the text below, also not uncommon are 6 a3 and 6 Nge2 dxc4 7 Bxc4, when either 7...c5 or 7...e5 should follow. Regarding the latter, observe that 8 dxe5?! Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1 Ng4 wouldn't be advisable for White.

6 cxd5 exd5

Maintaining control of the e4-square and freeing the c8-bishop. After

the inferior 6...Nxd5, once White easily solves the problem of his attacked knight (say with 7 Nge2) he can look forward to playing e3-e4.

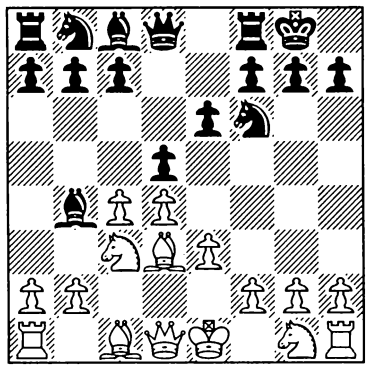


Diagram 4
e2 or f3?, that is the question!

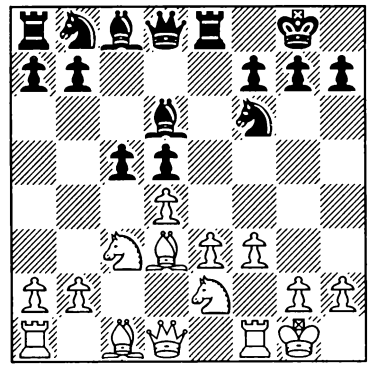


Diagram 5
Attacking the centre

7 Nge2 Re8

Black has at his disposal a half-open e-file and he should use it.

8 0-0 Bd6

This may seem like an odd retreat, especially when the queenside pieces are still at home. However, Black may want to play ...c7-c5 and he doesn't want this important piece caught offside. Furthermore, on d6 the bishop is very active and it makes White think about his h2-pawn.

9 f3

Were his dark-squared bishop outside of his pawn chain then White could consider a slower plan of queenside expansion. As things stand, though, the attraction is to get in e3-e4 and, if allowed, e4-e5!

9...c5 (Diagram 5)

Plans

Now that White has weakened his e3-pawn, Black is not too worried about his d5-pawn becoming isolated. His last move pressurises the centre and, although attacking d4 is sensible, the possibility is always there to play ...c5-c4 and create a strong queenside with ...b7-b5 etc. As for White, arranging e4 and e5 will be difficult but in the interim a manoeuvre of Qe1-h4, with some chances for a kingside attack, should be a consideration.

White Plays 5 Nf3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Nf3 d5 6 Bd3

There is nothing amazing in White's last two moves and, along with Black's next move, they could all have come in a different order.

6...c5 7 0-0 (Diagram 6)

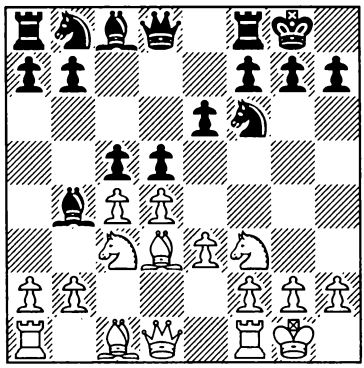


Diagram 6
Decisions, decisions!

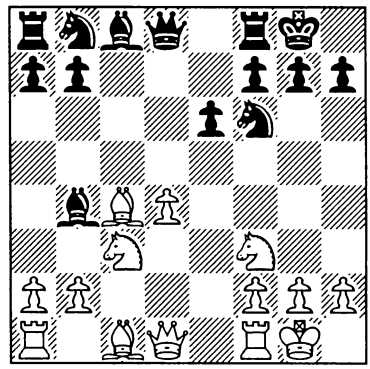


Diagram 7
The famous 'IQP' middlegame

A pretty pattern has formed in the centre and Black's last move informed White that the second player is certainly going to have a say about the typically key area of the board. He must now decide whether to retain the tension in the middle of the board or saddle his opponent with an isolated pawn. Whilst the main continuation below is the most popular, there is in fact no obligation here for Black to clarify the situation. Indeed, 7...b6, 7...Nbd7 and 7...Nc6 have all been seen in practical play.

7...cxd4 8 exd4 dxc4

NOTE: In order to gain a tempo, Black has effectively waited until White's light-squared bishop has moved before taking on c4.

9 Bxc4 (Diagram 7)

Black could have switched the order of his 7th and 8th moves but the outcome would have been the same.

Plans

The isolated queen's pawn position shown in Diagram 7 could be reached via a number of different openings that at first seem a million miles away from the Nimzo-Indian (e.g. via the Caro-Kann: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e6 6 Nf3 Bb4 7 Bd3 dxc4 8 Bxc4 0-0 9 0-0).

Whole books have been written on just this scenario but I will attempt to summarise the plans available. First up, the d4-pawn is isolated and hence potentially weak. In the long run Black may contemplate coordinating his forces to attack it, although at present this isn't

easy and White has plenty of defenders available. The more pieces that are traded off the weaker this pawn will become and, as is typical with a space advantage, White should try to avoid fair swaps.



TIP: When facing an isolated pawn, one can't go wrong by occupying the square directly in front of it with a piece.

Regarding the above tip, any black piece would ultimately look good on d5. Typically Black will fianchetto his bishop on b7 (via either ...b7-b6 or ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5) and a manoeuvre of a knight to d5 is very reasonable. Black can retreat his bishop to e7 where it may help to unpin the f6-knight (in the event of Bg5) or he can trade on c3. In the latter event the d-pawn would no longer be isolated but instead the new c-pawn could be a target.

White players tend to look upon the isolated d-pawn as strength rather than a weakness. Indeed, its inhibiting features include the control of the key e5-square and thus the prevention of the freeing pawn break ...e6-e5. A kingside attacking plan is to be encouraged, with a queen and bishop alignment against h7 a common occurrence and a rook 'swinger' along the 3rd rank also possible. Although White will often utilise the e5-square, he should also be on the look-out to achieve the d4-d5 break should Black let his guard down or if the ensuing tactics favour him.

Illustrative Games

Game 6
□ **Epishin** ■ **Pezerovic**
Bad Wiessee 2001

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d6?! (Diagram 8)

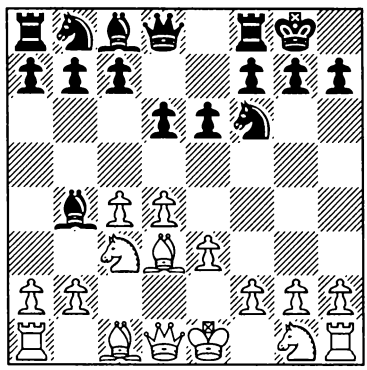


Diagram 8
A little passive

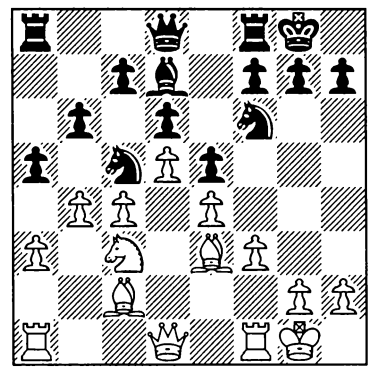


Diagram 9
Black is forced back

Not very inspirational. White is granted a hassle-free space advan-

tage in this game and he certainly makes the most of it.

6 Nge2 b6 7 0-0



WARNING: When Black plays moves such as ...d7-d6 and ...c7-c5 he must be sure to trade his bishop for the knight or at least take real care that it won't be trapped.

7...Bxc3

White was threatening to moye this knight and then embarrass the bishop with a2-a3 and b2-b4.

8 Nxc3 Bb7 9 e4 e5 10 d5

Everything is going smoothly for White. He has the bishop pair without having had to compromise his pawn structure, and his attractive advanced pawns make Black's remaining bishop look silly.

10...Nbd7 11 Be3 Nc5 12 Bc2 a5 13 a3 Bc8 14 f3 Bd7 15 b4 (Diagram 9)

White continues to expand on the queenside, towards which his fixed pawns (on e4 and d5) lean.

15...Nb7 16 Qd2 Qe7 17 Rfc1 Ra7 18 Bb3 Rfa8 19 Rab1 h6 20 Ne2

QUESTION 3: Shouldn't White have played 20 b5 here?

20...axb4 21 axb4 Ne8 22 Nc3 Kh8 23 Rf1



NOTE: A feature of being cramped is the lack of communication that a player's pieces have between the kingside and queenside.

The black knights would take ages to switch sides and the rooks are pretty much tied to the a-file. Hence White switches attention to the kingside and prepares the pawn break f3-f4.

23...g5 24 Qb2

White deems Black's last move as a significant weakness and turns back to the queenside.

24...f6 25 Ra1 Qd8 26 Kf2!?

Feeling safe as houses, the white king starts to centralise. He might be anticipating the endgame although the idea of h2-h4 has something to be said for it too.

26...Kg7 27 Ke2 Qb8 28 Kd2 Rxa1 29 Rxa1 Ra7 30 Rh1

The grandmaster spends a lot of his time toying with his opponent – he is clearly enjoying himself. With reference to the space advantage situation again, in contrast to his opponent, observe how long it would takes Black's major pieces to get over to the kingside.

30...Ra8 31 h4 Qa7 32 Bc2 Qa3 33 Qxa3 Rxa3 34 g3 Ra8 35 f4 Kg6 36 Bd1 Ng7 37 Kc1 Ra1+ 38 Kb2 Ra8 39 Be2 Re8 40 f5+ Kf7 41 Ra1!

After all that, it is White who has emerged in possession of the only open file!

41...Rb8 42 Ra7



TIP: As well as open files, rooks love the seventh rank.

42...Ke7 43 Bd1 Be8 44 g4 Bd7 45 h5

White effectively seals off the kingside, confident that he can make the necessary progress on the other side of the board.

45...Ne8 46 Ka3 Kd8 47 Ba4! Bxa4 48 Kxa4 Kc8 49 Kb5 Nd8 50 Ka6 (Diagram 10)

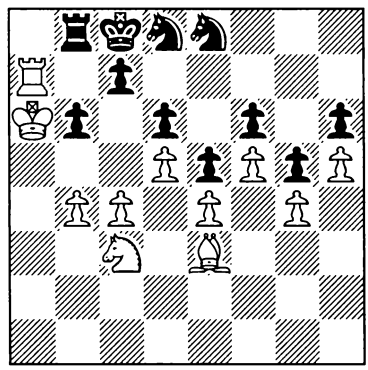


Diagram 10
Black is on the ropes!



TIP: The king is a very useful piece in the endgame.

50...c5

Black is struggling for air and one brilliant winning variation is 50...Nb7 51 Na4 Ng7 (or 51...Nd8 52 Bxb6! cxb6 53 Nxb6+ Rxb6+ 54 Kxb6 with the black knights in desperate trouble) 52 Bxg5! fxg5 53 f6 Nxh5 54 f7 Kd7 55 Rxb7!.

51 Nb5 Rb7 52 Rxb7 Nxb7 53 Kxb6 cxb4 54 Na7+ Kb8 55 Nc6+ Kc8 56 Nxb4 Nd8 57 Na6 Nb7 58 Nb4 Nd8 59 Nc6 Nf7 60 Bd2 Nc7 61 Ba5 Kd7 62 Kb7 Ne8 63 Bb6 Ng7 64 Nb8+ Ke7 65 Kc8 Nxh5

Finally a black knight does something, but it is not enough.

66 gxh5 g4 67 c5 g3 68 c6 Black resigns

Game 7
□ **Gulko** ■ **Adams**
KasparovChess Grand Prix 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 a3

An alternative to 6 Nf3, 6 Nge2 and 6 cxd5.

6...Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 dxc4 8 Bxc4 c5 (Diagram 11)

This pawn is undefended but, although gaining some dark-squared control, 9 dxc5? would leave some horribly weak queenside pawns.

Indeed, all three would then be isolated and one would most likely soon fall after ...Qa5.

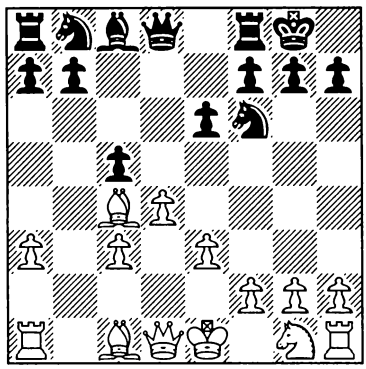


Diagram 11
The black queen can go to a5

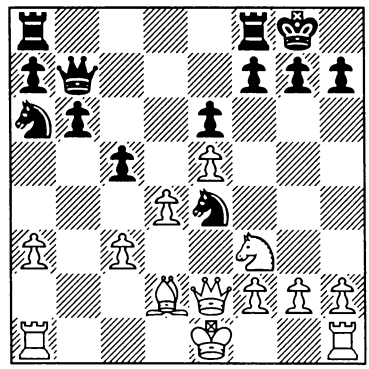


Diagram 12
Black has a queenside pawn majority



TIP: Black need not have the c5-square protected when playing ...c5 as dxc5 is frequently undesirable.

9 Nf3 Qa5

Theory suggests that forcing White's bishop to d2 is worthwhile as then Black will never see it materialising on a3 (after a typical a4-a5 push).

10 Bd2 Qc7!?

Also playable is 10...Ne4 11 0-0 b6, but here Black opts to retreat his queen first.

11 Bd3 b6

As an alternative to a plan of ...Nc6 and ...e6-e5, Black provides options for his light-squared bishop.

12 e4

The big debate in this kind of game is whether White's extra centre pawn offers him a middlegame plus or whether Black's queenside majority will prove decisive in the endgame. In retrospect I suppose White could have opted for 12 Qe2 instead as it prevents ...Ba6, but I'm sure many would plump for 12 e4.

12...Ba6

Thematic. Black seeks to exchange off one of the powerful white bishop duo.



NOTE: A bishop-for-knight advantage isn't usually as great as a two bishops vs. bishop and knight advantage.

13 Bxa6 Nxa6 14 Qe2 Qb7!

This seems fairly obvious as now the a6-knight is protected and the

c7-square vacated for its future residence. However, in addition the e4-pawn is attacked with no other white pieces available to come to its defence.

15 e5

Although this hits the f6-square, usually White only really wants to play this move if he can make use of either the e4-square or the b1-h7 diagonal. There is no white knight ready to take up this central post and of course his light-squared bishop has already been swapped off.

15...Ne4 (Diagram 12)

The d5-square looks like the natural post for a knight, but Black has earmarked his other knight for that.

16 0-0 Rfd8 17 Rfd1 cxd4 18 cxd4 Nxd2 19 Rxd2 h6!

Another multi-purpose move. Sure, Black usefully prevents any back-rank mates, but also Ng5 is stopped. This means that White has no real chances for a kingside attack and no obvious active future for his knight. Rather than being a strength, the extra d4-pawn is now more of a liability.

20 Rc1

As far as I can make out the rest of the game is a little depressing for White. For that reason, before Black gets in his central knight blockade, I may have been tempted by 20 d5!? Rxd5 21 Rxd5 exd5 22 Nd4 when it's probably fair to say that at least White has some play for his pawn. That aside, I'm afraid it's really difficult to say where White goes wrong in this game (his 12th move?). However, whilst Boris Gulko is a strong grandmaster, it must be added that his opponent Michael Adams is absolute class. I am always impressed with the current world number four's handling of the Nimzo-Indian and his games are a joy to watch.

20...Nc7 21 Rdc2 Nd5 22 g3 Rac8

The time when the extra queenside pawn will tell looms nearer.



NOTE: The term 'queenside pawn majority' means as it sounds, i.e. having an extra queenside pawn. This could involve a '3 vs. 2 pawns' or a '2 vs. 1 pawn' scenario and it's generally a good thing to have in an endgame where the kings are on the kingside. However, if both kings started on the queenside then it would be preferable to have a 'kingside pawn majority'. Sure, it is useful to have the ability to create a passed pawn to deflect the enemy monarch but one should still remember to take each position on its merits.



WARNING: Beware of generalisations, except this one of course!

23 Qd3 Rxc2 24 Rxc2 b5 (Diagram 13)

Another sensible alternative is of course 24...Rc8.

25 Rc5 a6 26 Qe4 b4 27 axb4 Qxb4 28 Qe1

Still White struggles for any action and it is Black that is turning the screw.

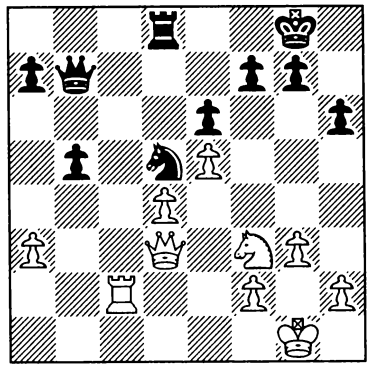


Diagram 13
The knight has a lovely outpost

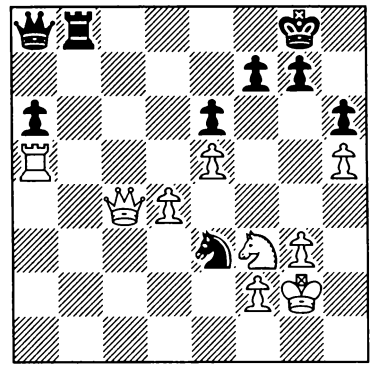


Diagram 14
Shock treatment!

28...Qb3 29 Kg2 Rb8 30 Qc1 Kh7 31 h4 Ra8

Black has grand plans for his passed a-pawn.

32 Ra5 Qb7 33 h5 Kg8 34 Qc2 Rc8 35 Rc5 Rb8 36 Qc4 Qa8

Incredible manoeuvring that makes Adams such a good player to watch. Now Black's rook is on an open file whilst his queen supports the pawn push and is on a juicy diagonal.

37 Ra5 Ne3+!! (Diagram 14)

And out of the blue a decisive blow is struck.

38 fxe3 Rb2+ White resigns

In case you were wondering, with ...Qxf3 next on the agenda, mate is forced in five moves!

Game 8
☐ **Vera** ■ **Garcia Martinez**
Cuban Championship, Las Tunas 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 Nge2 (Diagram 15) 6...c5 7 cxd5 exd5

7...cxd4 8 exd4 Nxd5 is a different way to play that leads to an 'Isolated Queen's Pawn' middlegame with the knight on e2 rather than f3.

8 a3 Bxc3+

Current theory assesses 8...cxd4 9 axb4 (or 9 exd4 Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 b6) 9...dxc3 10 Nxc3 Nc6 as equal.

9 bxc3 b6

This is a typical way for Black to play. He wants to eliminate White's bishop pair advantage by trading his 'bad' bishop for White's 'good' one.

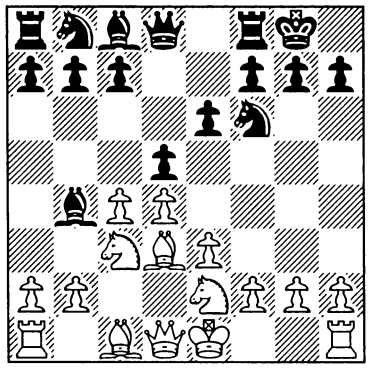


Diagram 15
Preferring e2

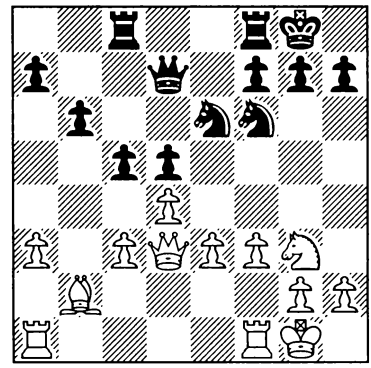


Diagram 16
The white knight eyes up f5

10 0-0

A successful black strategy is illustrated well with 10 f3 Ba6 11 0-0 Re8 12 Ng3 Bxd3 13 Qxd3 Nc6 14 Bb2 h5!? 15 Rad1 c4 16 Qd2 Qd7 17 Rde1 h4 18 Nh1 Qf5 (Black at first fights to keep control of the e4-square) 19 Nf2 Qg6 20 Nh3 Re7 21 Qf2 Qh7 22 e4 dxe4 23 Ng5 Qg6 24 Nxe4 Rae8 25 Nd6 Rxe1 26 Rxe1 Rxe1+ 27 Qxe1 h3 28 Qe2 Qb1+ 29 Kf2 Qh1 30 Qf1 Qxh2 31 Nxc4 Ng4+ and White resigned, Bick-Del Rio Angelis, Ubeda 2000.

10...Ba6 11 Bxa6 Nxa6 12 Qd3 Nc7 13 f3 Ne6 14 Bb2 Rc8 15 Ng3

Without a black pawn on e6, the f5-square is ripe for invasion and White knows just the piece that he wants there.

15...Qd7 (Diagram 16) 16 e4 cxd4 17 cxd4 dxe4?

Arguably Black's previous move was an inaccuracy but this certainly is. We soon see the implications of opening up the f-file.

18 fxe4

These hanging pawns can either be very weak or very strong. In this encounter it appears to be the latter case. Although the centre pawns are targets, now the b2-bishop can see plenty of light at the end of the tunnel.

18...Nc5 19 Qe2 Na4 (Diagram 17) 20 Rxf6! Nxb2

Regarding the exchange sacrifice, 20...gxf6 21 Nh5 Kh8 22 Nxf6 Qd8 23 d5 compensates White exceedingly well.

21 Nf5!

The knight hops into its optimum position where it also happens to defend the d4-pawn. The f6-rook is immune to capture because of Qg4+ and Qg7 mate.

21...Qe8

To help explain this move, note how 21...Nc4 22 Qg4 g6 23 Nh6+

would drop the queen.

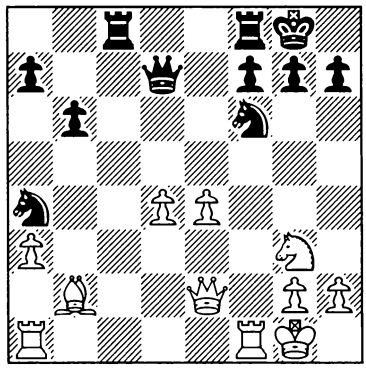


Diagram 17
The f-file has been opened

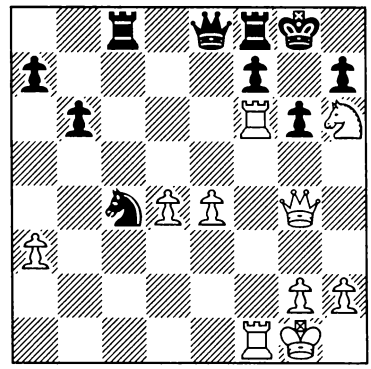


Diagram 18
Serious pressure!

22 Rf1

Now all of White's pieces are getting in on the act.

22...Nc4 23 Qg4 g6 24 Nh6+ (Diagram 18) 24...Kh8

24...Kg7 25 Rxf7+ Rxf7 26 Rxf7+ Kxh6 27 Qh4 mate would be a different end to the game.

25 Nxf7+ Kg7 26 Nd6 Black resigns

Black suffers heavy material damage.

Game 9
□ **V.Georgiev ■ Kalinin**
Wijk aan Zee 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 cxd5 exd5 7 Nge2 Re8 8 0-0 Bd6

As White has at least temporarily incarcerated his dark-squared bishop, then Black can look upon 3...Bb4 as being a job well done. Certainly there is no longer any need for him to feel obliged to trade it for a knight and on d6 it points menacingly at the white king.

9 Bd2 (Diagram 19)

The jury is out on whether this is a subtle and useful developing move or a comparative waste of time. More common is the immediate 9 f3 c5 10 Qe1 Nc6 11 Qh4, but if Black's knight is better posted on c6 then perhaps Bd2 (dissuading ...c7-c5 as White is yet to weaken the e3-square) is justified.

9...Nbd7 10 f3 c5

Black isn't too worried about the prospect of an isolated d-pawn given the pressure that he should be able to mount against e3. Moreover, e3-e4 is now an even tougher break for White to achieve.

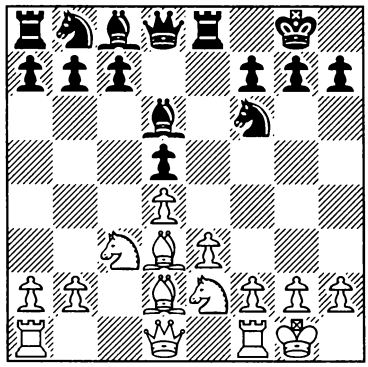


Diagram 19
A waiting move

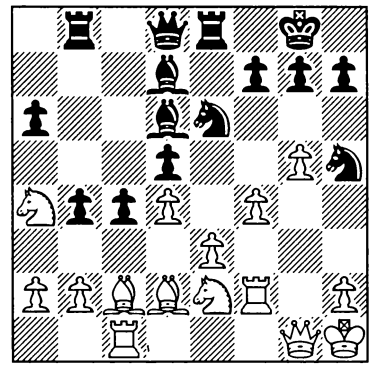


Diagram 20
Space-devouring pawns

11 Rc1 a6 12 Rf2 Nf8 13 Kh1 Ne6 14 Qg1

One can't help feeling that White's last three (arguably preparatory) moves are just a little slow. Black in the meantime gets on with some handy queenside expansion.

14...b5 15 g4 b4 16 Na4 c4 17 Bc2 Bd7 18 g5 Nh5 19 f4 Rb8 (Diagram 20)

White's kingside pawns just don't look as menacing as Black's equivalent ones on the other side of the board. At a glance one can see that White's extra pawn is on e3, with Black's being much stronger on c4. Indeed, now Black is threatening to win a piece with 20...b3.

20 Ra1 Bb5 21 Qg4 g6 22 b3 c3 23 Bc1 Neg7

As it happens, incredibly powerful was 23...Qe7!, which amongst other things would have threatened ...Bxe2 with ...Nexf4 to follow. Nevertheless, Black clearly remains on top with White's queenside pieces in a complete mess.

24 Qf3 Qd7 25 Nc5 Bxc5 26 dxc5 Ne6 27 a3

White must attempt something to activate his queenside pieces, but he is clearly struggling.

27...a5 28 Kg1 d4!

Opening things up when White is bound to suffer for the absence of a back rank rook.

29 Nxd4 Nxd4 30 exd4 Re1+ White resigns

It's game over. Upon 31 Kg2, the crusher would be 31...Bc6.

Game 10
☐ **Rebel Tiger 12.0e ■ Shredder 4**
Computer Tournament, Cadaques 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 Nf3 c5 7 0-0 Nc6

(Diagram 21)

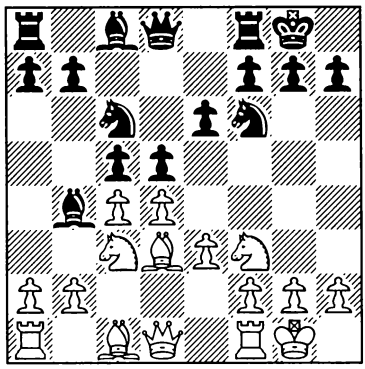


Diagram 21
No captures yet!

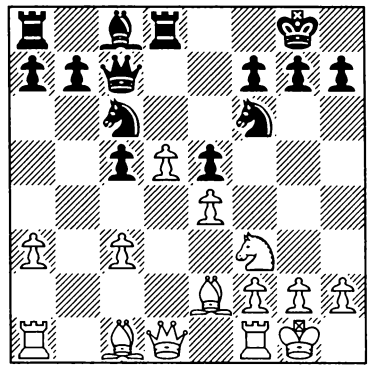


Diagram 22
Not really en prise

8 a3

White can opt to saddle Black with an isolated pawn via the immediate 8 cxd5 exd5 9 dxc5 Bxc5 10 b3 Bg4, but then the bishop would be misplaced on d3 (it would belong on e2 where it wouldn't obstruct potential pressure against the d5-pawn).

8...Bxc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 Bxc4 Qc7 11 Be2

Central pawn exchanges would have left this bishop vulnerable, but as ...e6-e5 is a common Black plan it's fair to say that 11 Ba2 would also be a reasonable retreat.

11...e5

In retrospect Black may have preferred 11...Rd8!? to try and dissuade the ensuing pawn advance.

12 d5 Rd8 13 e4! (Diagram 22)

Neat. Black can't capture on e4 in view of 14 Qc2 when both knights would be attacked.

13...Ne7 14 Qc2 Ng6 15 Bg5 Qe7 16 g3 b6 17 a4!



TIP: When Black has a pawn on b6, it is always worth White at least considering this challenging a4-a5 plan.

17...h6 18 Be3



TIP: If possible to arrange, it is often sensible to block a supported passed pawn with a knight. The nature of the knight is such that it can comfortably rest there but fulfil other useful functions too.

18...Bh3 19 Rfb1 Ng4

Alas, a ...Ne8-d6 manoeuvre would still be too slow when compared to White's queenside ambitions.

20 Bd2 Qc7 21 a5 (Diagram 23)

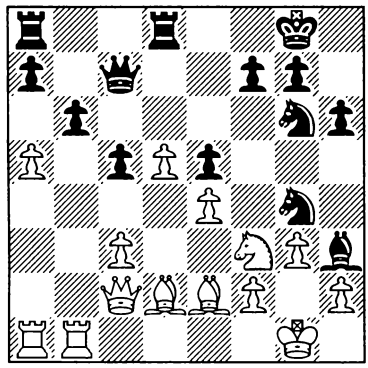


Diagram 23
Black's queenside is tested

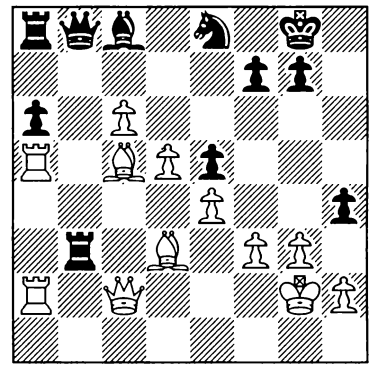


Diagram 24
Connected passed pawns rule!

21...bxa5?

To a human(!) this looks very suspect although it isn't easy to suggest a constructive plan.

22 Rb5 Nf8 23 c4

Now Black just has weak queenside pawns whilst White has a supported passed pawn and two handy bishops.

23...Rdb8 24 Rbxa5 Rb7 25 Ne1 Nf6 26 f3 Bc8 27 Nd3 N8d7 28 Be3

Black has had serious positional troubles for a while and now comes the inevitable decisive loss of the c5-pawn.

28...Ne8 29 Nxc5 Nxc5 30 Bxc5 a6 31 Bf2 Qb8 32 R1a2 Nc7 33 Kg2 Rb1 34 Bd3 Rb3 35 c5 Ne8 36 c6 h5 37 Bc5 h4 (Diagram 24) 38 gxh4

It's always with moves like this that computers show their true colours. However, this decision will have little effect on the overall outcome of the game.

38...Rxd3 39 Qxd3 Qc7 40 Qc3 Rb8 41 Bb4 f5 42 exf5 Bxf5 43 Rxa6 e4 44 d6 Nxd6 45 Ra7 exf3+ Black resigns

A spite check only. Black must lose his queen to prevent mate on g7.

Game 11
☐ **Vladimirov ■ Kasparov**
Europe vs. Asia (rapid), Batumi 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 Nf3 c5 7 0-0 cxd4 8 exd4 dxc4 9 Bxc4 b6 (Diagram 25) 10 Qe2

Although Kasparov himself has no doubt been trying to, who could forget the shocking 10 Bg5 Bb7 11 Re1 Nbd7 12 Rc1 Rc8 13 Qb3 Be7 14 Bxf6 Nxf6 15 Bxe6 fxe6? (15...Rc7! has been proposed as a better

defence) 16 Qxe6+ Kh8 17 Qxe7 Bxf3 18 gxf3 Qxd4 19 Nb5 Qxb2? 20 Rxc8 Rxc8 21 Nd6 Rb8? 22 Nf7+ Kg8 23 Qe6! Rf8 24 Nd8+ Kh8 25 Qe7 Black resigns, of Kramnik-Kasparov at the 2000 BGN World Championship?

10 Re1 is the other popular alternative.

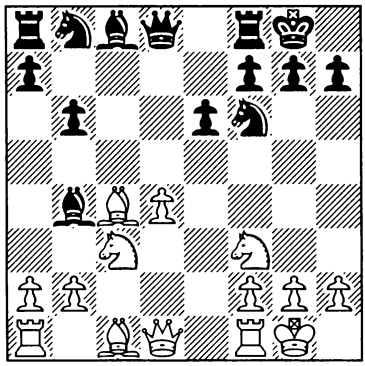


Diagram 25
The bishop will develop on b7

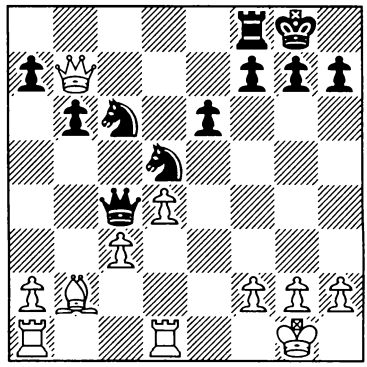


Diagram 26
The bishop is poor

10...Bb7 11 Rd1 Bxc3

11...Nbd7 is sensible too but Kasparov opts to mix things up here and now.

12 bxc3 Qc7

This sneaky move hits through to the c3-pawn and offers up the pawn-doubling ...Bxf3 as a serious possibility.

13 Bb2?!

I would have thought that 13 Bd2 is preferable to this but by far the most critical continuation must be 13 Bd3!? Qxc3 14 Bb2. White may be able to make a timely second pawn sacrifice with d4-d5, when his bishop pair would look particularly impressive.

13...Bxf3!

Continuing a destabilising policy.

14 Qxf3?

This game would tend to suggest that 14 gxf3 is better. White then has more pawn islands but there is still the potential for the two bishops to get in on the act. He may also be able to use the half-open g-file for attacking purposes.

14...Qxc4!

Confidently bashed out, Black was clearly in no need to check out the complexities of 14...Ng4. As the game goes, the white queen is trapped behind enemy lines.

15 Qxa8 Nc6 16 Qb7 Nd5 (Diagram 26)

Whilst the white bishop looks dreadful, Black's queen and knights dominate in the centre. However, although the white queen is lacking in squares, it is not yet doomed and White is of course the exchange up.

17 Re1 Rb8! 18 Qd7 Rd8

Showing who's boss. Black could take a draw by repetition but has something else in mind.

19 Qb7 h5!?

The immediate 19...Na5 20 Qxa7 Qc6 (threatening ...Ra8) does look promising, e.g. 21 Re5 (or 21 c4 Nxc4 22 Rac1 Nf4 23 f3 Nd3 24 Rxc4 Qxc4 25 Qxb6 Ra8) 21...Ra8 22 Rxd5 (utilising the back rank mate threat) 22...exd5 23 Qe7 Nc4. However, as White is arguably still just in the game after 23 Qb4 (and not 23 Bc1?? Re8), Kasparov instead tightens the screw. After the text there is no back rank problem and the h-pawn may even have an attacking role to play.

20 Bc1?!

Possibly concerned about the possibility of 20...Nf4, White misses Black's threat.

20...Na5! 21 Qxa7 Qc6 22 Qa6

As previously mentioned, amongst other reasons, 22 Re5 Ra8 23 Rxd5 Rxa7 24 Rd8+ doesn't work now because of 24...Kh7.

22...Nc4 23 Rb1 Nc7 White resigns (Diagram 27)

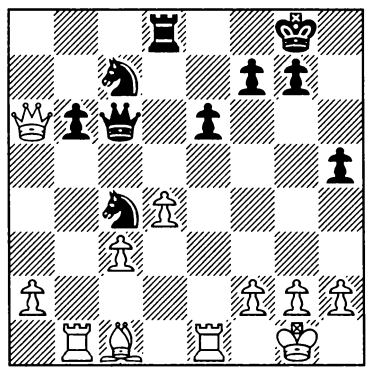


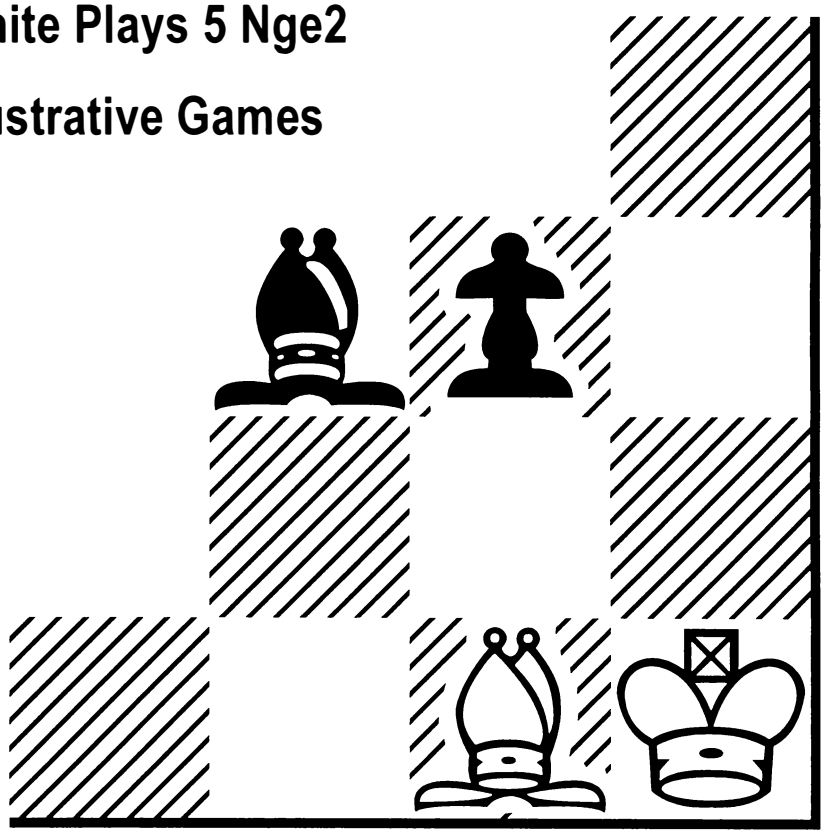
Diagram 27
The queen lacks escape squares

As the only 'saviour' is 24 Rxb6, White throws in the towel..

Chapter Three

The Rubinstein Variation 4 e3 c5

- Introduction
- White Plays 5 Nf3
- White Plays 5 Bd3
- White Plays 5 Nge2
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 c5 (Diagram 1)

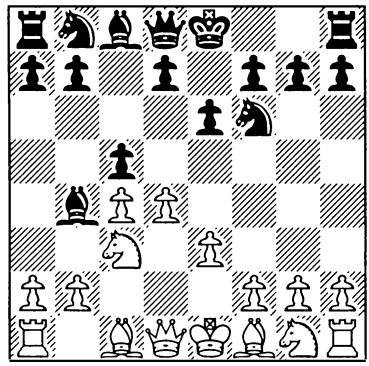


Diagram 1
Challenging the centre

Here Black gets straight to the point. With 4...c5, castling is temporarily eschewed in favour of getting to grips with the centre.



Note: White is rarely tempted to capture this pawn in this sort of position as there is then a realistic chance of him being saddled with doubled or even tripled isolated pawns.

Dismissing 5 dxc5, White has a decision to make about the piece configuration that he wants to adopt and there is a familiar choice. His light-squared bishop could be tempted by d3 and the knight, as usual, must decide between e2 or f3. Let us take a look at some options.

White Plays 5 Nf3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 c5 5 Nf3 (Diagram 2)

Considered to be fairly innocuous, this position can also be reached via the alternative Nimzo-Indian move order 4 Nf3 c5 5 e3.

5...Nc6

Just one of a few playable continuations. White has d4 well guarded, but Black simply develops his knight to a sensible square.

6 Bd3



NOTE: Although generally quite tempting for White, the advance d4-d5 is far from always good. The pawn will become a target on d5 and, because of the pin on the c3-knight, the supporting e4 push is not always possible. Indeed, White is frequently advised to keep his pawn structure fluid and d4-d5 may be prove really powerful later.

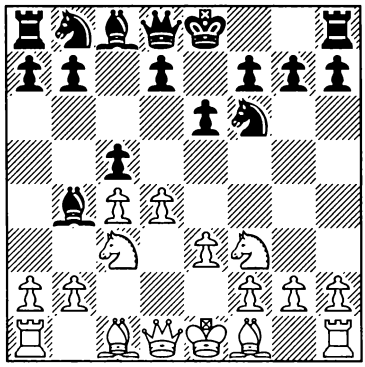


Diagram 2
Lacking ambition?

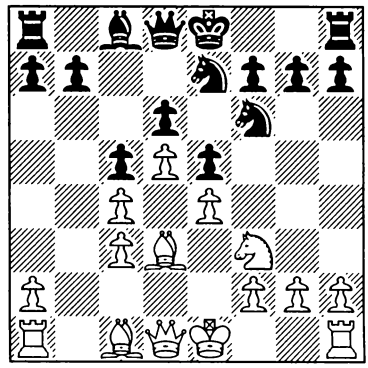


Diagram 3
A cagey middlegame awaits



TIP: Often the threat is greater than the execution!

Yes, the last tip is a popular piece of advice. Black will always have to worry about White advancing his d-pawn but, for the time being, see what happens to 6 d5 in this chapter's first illustrative game.

6...Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 d6

Having traded off his dark-squared bishop, Black logically looks to place pawns on dark squares in order to complement the bishop that remains.

8 e4 e5 9 d5

With the d4-pawn under pressure, finally White relents. Of course, it makes more sense to advance this pawn to gain more space rather than to trade pawns and end up with doubled isolated pawns.



NOTE: Doubled pawns aren't necessarily a bad thing. By definition their presence infers at least one half-open file and often they control key squares.

9...Ne7 (Diagram 3)

Plans

Although the c4-pawn is often a target – and in another situation Black may have preferred ...Na5 with possibly ...b7-b6 and ...Ba6 to follow – it also has a positive role to play. There is little chance of Black expanding on the queenside with ...b7-b5 and indeed White may choose to utilise his a-pawn and the b-file to pressurise his opponent. In addition, the pawn on c3 does a good job of keeping enemy knights out of what would otherwise be an excellent outpost on d4. Other typical plans for White to try and make progress include turning to the pawn break f2-f4 and trying to manoeuvre a knight to f5. In contrast, the f4-square is an attraction for the black knights and

Black's strategy often simply involves frustrating his opponent. He has no real weaknesses and knows that most endgames should be favourable for him.

White Plays 5 Bd3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 c5 5 Bd3 Nc6 6 Nge2

By now we know that this is a familiar feature of 4 e3; the king's knight opts to support its colleague.

6...cxd4 7 exd4 d5 8 cxd5

As the c3-knight is protected, White opts to trade pawns rather than allow the ...dxc4 that would distract (if only temporarily) his bishop from its most active diagonal.

8...Nxd5 9 0-0 0-0 (Diagram 4)

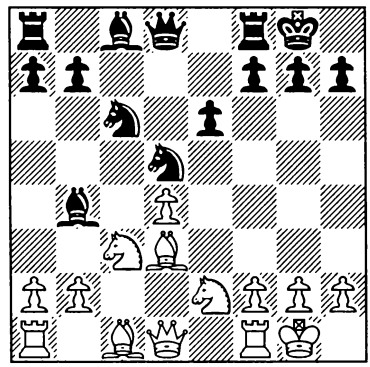


Diagram 4
Blocking the isolated pawn

Plans

Many of the same ideas hold true as in my last discussion on the typical 'IQP' position. The clear difference, as can be seen in Diagram 4, is that there is a knight on e2 rather than f3. This means that it will travel a different path. Sure, it supports c3 but then again there is a lesser grip over the e5-square. The d4-pawn will become weaker the more pieces that are traded off and a white kingside attack (possibly initiated by Bc2 and Qd3) should certainly be considered.

White Plays 5 Nge2

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 c5 5 Nge2

White ensures that he won't receive doubled pawns at the cost of obstructing his bishop.

5...cxd4 6 exd4 d5

My selected line here serves the purpose of introducing a new dimension. However, also slightly different to anything we've seen so far is 6...0-0 7 a3 Be7 8 d5 exd5 9 cxd5. White's pawn on d5 affords him a nice space advantage but he is lacking in development. To get castled he may have to fianchetto his king's bishop while Black makes the most of the e-file and ponders how to bring out his queenside pieces.

7 a3 Be7

It seems a shame to help White untangle, although saddling him with an isolated pawn via 7...Bxc3+ 8 Nxc3 dxc4 is an acceptable alternative.

8 c5

This whole concept had to appear eventually, although in fairness it is probably forced here as an IQP is definitely undesirable with the bishop languishing on f1.

8...0-0 9 g3

The f1-bishop must come out to enable White to castle and it isn't convenient to budge the e2-knight just now.

9...b6

A useful insertion. Black challenges White's restricting pawn whilst also offering up ...Ba6 as a possibility.

10 b4 (Diagram 5)

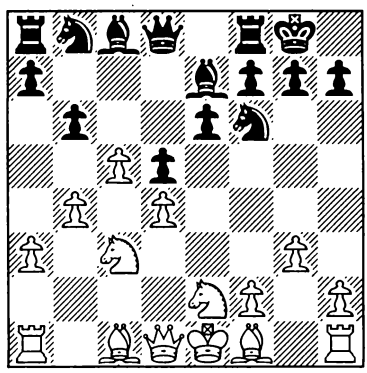


Diagram 5
Pawn structure imbalance

Plans

It comes as no great surprise that White wants to support his advanced c-pawn in this manner. Indeed, 10 cxb6 would hand the initiative to Black as White's isolated d4-pawn would then be far more of a target than Black's equivalent a- or b-pawn.

Now an exciting middlegame looks on the cards, particularly in the likely occurrence of 10...bxc5 11 dxc5. Centre pawns are always considered vital in the opening and middlegame and Black would have two extra of those. On the other hand, White's large queenside pawn majority would clearly hold potential too.

Illustrative Games

Game 12
☐ **Norri** ■ **Pulkkinen**
Helsinki 1993

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 c5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 d5

As I previously stated, many club players would have difficulty resisting this early advance, although in fact it is very rare at the highest levels.

6...Ne7

The pawn on d5 gains space but has also become a target. Remember that 7 e4 is obviously unplayable because the c3-knight is pinned.

7 d6 Nf5 (Diagram 6)

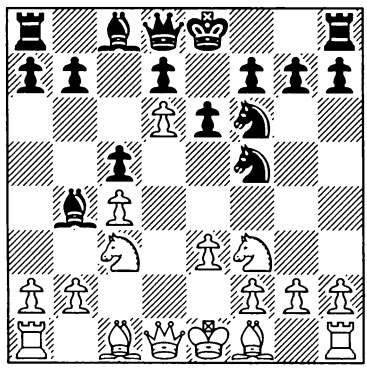


Diagram 6
Strong or weak?

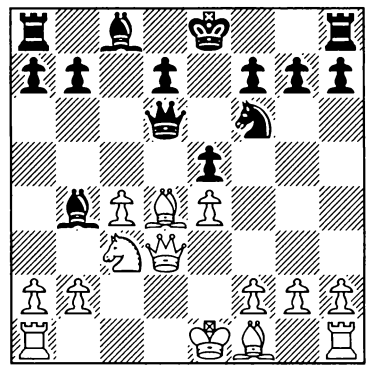


Diagram 7
Symmetrical queens!

The d-pawn has encroached further into enemy territory and could easily help in suffocating the opponent. However, Black has set his sights on rounding it up.

8 Qd3

White would have preferred not to have moved his queen so soon but 8...Ne4 was a threat.

8...Qb6

The d6-pawn is now hit twice, thus forcing White's hand.

9 e4 Nd4

Okay, this square is an outpost but Black doesn't seriously expect this knight to remain in long-term existence. It does, however, fulfil the purpose of cutting off the white queen's protection of his 'out-on-a-limb' pawn.

10 Be3

More adventurous would have been 10 e5!? but after 10...Ng4 no doubt White was worried that both of those pawns might drop off.

10...Qxd6 11 Nxd4 cxd4 12 Bxd4 e5! (Diagram 7) 13 a3

After 13 Be3 Qxd3 14 Bxd3 Bxc3+ 15 bxc3 White's doubled isolated c-pawns would soon suffer.

13...exd4 14 axb4 0-0 15 Be2 Qxb4 16 Qxd4 Nxe4! 17 0-0

Black would regain the material after 17 Qxe4 Qxb2.

17...Qxb2 18 Qxe4 Qxc3 (Diagram 8)

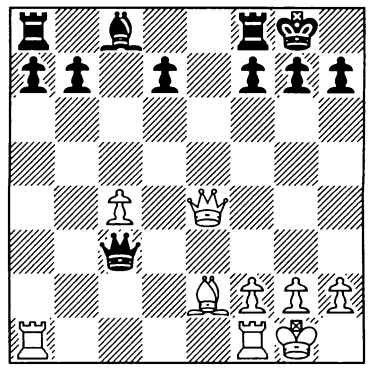


Diagram 8
Extra pawns

Black has emerged two pawns up and the rest is fairly straightforward.

19 Rfd1 d6 20 Bf3 a5 21 Rab1 a4 22 Rxd6 a3 23 Rdd1 a2 24 Ra1 Be6 25 Qxb7 Rab8 26 Qa7 Qxa1 27 Rxa1 Rb1+ 28 Bd1 Rxa1 29 Qa4 Rd8 White resigns

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Game 13
☐ **Babula** ■ **Van der Sterren**
Bundesliga 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 c5 5 Bd3 Nc6 6 Nf3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 d6 8 0-0

Different to the 8 e4 e5 9 d5 Ne7 in the theoretical section.

8...e5

Black, however, reacts the same. His dark-squared pawns nicely com-

plement his light-squared bishop.

9 Nd2 (Diagram 9)

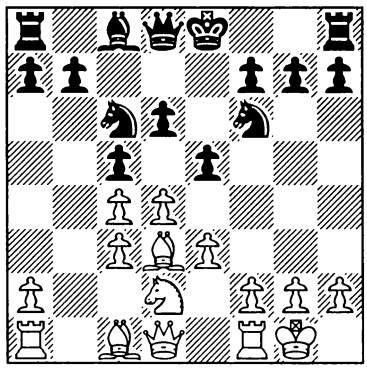


Diagram 9
Preparing f2-f4

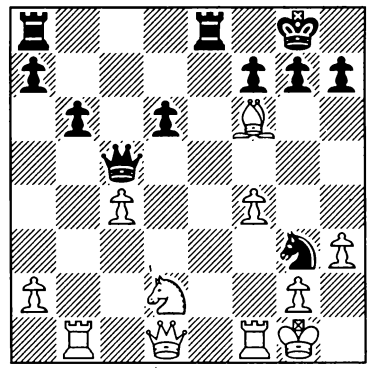


Diagram 10
An awkward check



NOTE: It is a common theme in this so-called 'Hübner Variation' for White to allow Black to attack d4 more times than it is defended. The logic is that White is happy to clear off more pawns (even at the cost of losing one) as it leaves the board freer for his bishops to operate. In contrast, Black prefers a more blocked pawn structure where his knights can rule the day.

White paves the way to introduce his f-pawn into the equation. 9 Ng5, also with an idea of hopping into e4, is also possible.

9...0-0 10 Rb1 Qc7!?

Played as an alternative to 10...Qe7, which would instead offer its weight to ...e5-e4. Nevertheless, Black has a reason for his selection.

11 h3

White would love to open up the position for his bishop pair and sees f4 as being the perfect break. However, first he feels the need to remove the possibility of ...Ng4. As it transpires, though, there is a downside in the form of the hole soon created on g3.

11...b6

Following textbook policy, Black continues to place pawns on the opposite colour to his remaining bishop. This further bolsters the c5-pawn, moves the pawn itself out of potential trouble from the b1-rook and offers up ...Ba6 for the future.

12 f4

Getting straight to the point, although in view of the game continuation, possibly 12 Ne4 would have been more prudent.

12...exd4 13 cxd4 cxd4 14 exd4 Re8!

Stronger than the immediate 14...Nxd4 when, bearing in mind a future Bb2, 15 Ne4 could be rather dangerous.

15 Kh1?!

The white king attempts to tuck itself out of harm's way but only succeeds in walking into more trouble!

15...Nxd4 16 Bb2 Bf5!

A key move that effectively seals White's fate.

17 Bxf5 Nxf5 18 Bxf6 Ng3+ 19 Kg1 Qc5+ (Diagram 10)

The queen appears right on cue.

20 Kh2 Nxf1+ 21 Nxf1 gxf6

Finally Black takes this bishop, leaving himself plenty of material up.

22 Ng3 Kh8 23 Rb5 Qf2 24 Qa1 Re6 25 Rf5 Rg8 26 Qc3 Rg6 White resigns

---

Game 14
☐ **Kacheishvili** ■ **Jenni**
Anibal Open, Linares 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0

Actually 4...0-0 rather than 4...c5, but this game is more relevant to this chapter than the last.

5 Bd3 c5 6 Nge2 Nc6

Not as popular as 6...cxd4 7 exd4 d5 or indeed the immediate 6...d5, neither of which commit the queen's knight.

7 0-0 d5

7...cxd4 8 exd4 d5 is more like the main line with White generally choosing between 9 Bg5, 9 a3 and 9 cxd5.

8 cxd5 exd5 9 a3 Bxc3 10 bxc3 Re8 11 f3 b6 (Diagram 11)

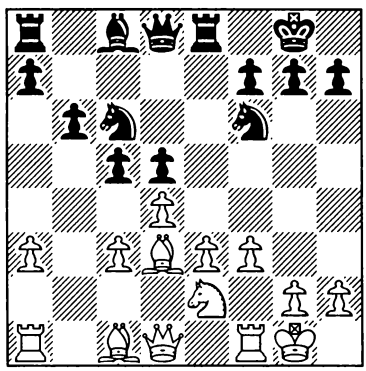


Diagram 11
Tension in the centre

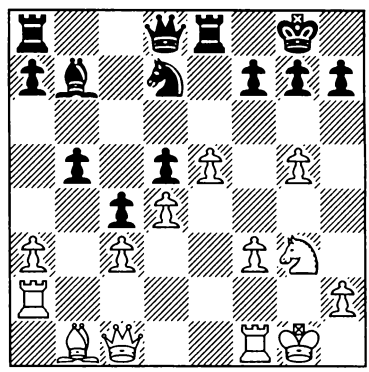


Diagram 12
Lying in wait!

White has the bishop pair and a capacity for a big pawn centre. Black has a free enough position but would do well to keep the enemy dark-squared bishop out of the action.

12 Ra2



TIP: White players should keep an eye out for this crafty move as it is often the best way to activate the queen's rook.

12...Bb7 13 g4!?

Unable to get in e3-e4, White opts to expand on the kingside.

13...c4?!

Facilitating Black's next move, but sealing in his bishop and taking the pressure off the centre. As yet he has no targets on the kingside and so a less panicky move like 13...Qd6 might be more prudent.



WARNING: Be very sure before taking the pressure off the centre.

14 Bb1 Na5 15 Ng3 Nb3 16 g5 Nd7 17 e4

Compared to White's centre, Black's extra pawn on the queenside is unlikely to have a big impact for some time.

17...Nxc1 18 Qxc1 b5 19 e5 (Diagram 12)

The pawns, nicely placed on dark squares, beautifully complement the light-squared bishop. Now the e-, f- and g-pawns look very menacing and there are other problems besides.



NOTE: Bishops are long-range pieces. It may rest on b1 but White's light-squared bishop has a big influence elsewhere.

19...a5 20 Nh5 Qb6 21 Nf6+!

This 'spanner-in-the-works' move was looking distinctly on the cards.

21...gxf6 22 gxf6

Now Qg5 and Qh6 will both be mating, thus forcing Black's response.

22...Kh8 23 Qh6 Rg8+ 24 Kh1 Nf8 25 Rg1 (Diagram 13)

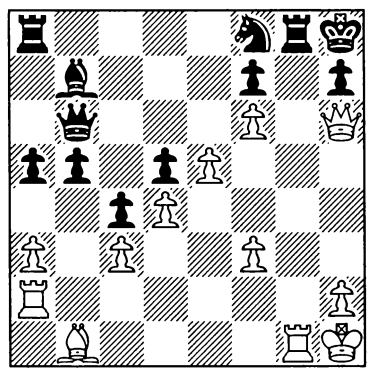


Diagram 13
Mate is inevitable

Calling in the cavalry. After a trade of rooks mate will come at g7.

25...Ng6 26 Rg5 Black resigns

Cute! As well as 27 Rh5, White threatens the queen sac 27 Qxh7+.

Game 15

☐ **Sherbakov ■ Jakovenko**

Russian Team Championship, Omsk 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 b6

Specifically 4...b6, but with a transposition clearly possible I have chosen to include it here.

5 Nge2 c5 6 a3 Ba5 7 Rb1 (Diagram 14)

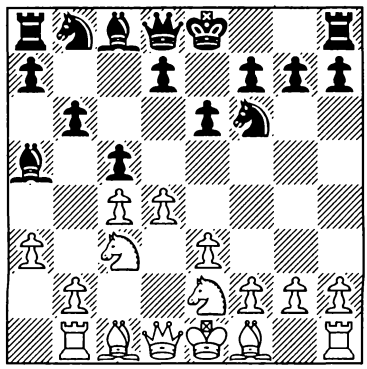


Diagram 14
Don't forget the bishop!

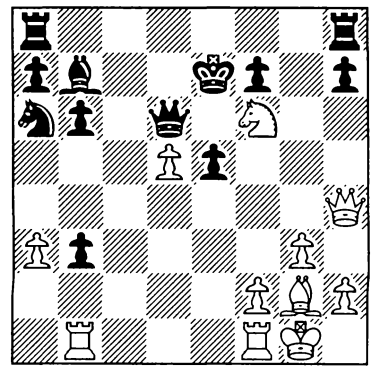


Diagram 15
A king in trouble

The bishop on a5 is precariously placed, with b2-b4 a perpetual threat to be guarded against.

7...Qe7 8 Bd2 Ba6

8...Na6 is more common as it further controls the b4-square. Nevertheless, Black's dynamic choice asks questions of the c4-pawn.

9 Nf4 cxd4 10 exd4 Bxc3 11 Bxc3 d5 12 g3

12 cxd5 exd5+ 13 Be2 Bxe2 14 Nxe2 Nc6 would leave White with a bad bishop.

12...Qd7

After 12...Bxc4 13 Bxc4 dxc4 White had in mind 14 0-0!, with Black unable to prevent the advance d4-d5 that would vastly improve the bishop.

13 b3 Bb7 14 Bg2 dxc4?

A careless move which nevertheless proves very instructive for us. Better was the solid 14...0-0.

15 d5!

The opening of the long diagonal is painful for Black. Now castling looks too dangerous.

15...cxb3!? 16 Bxf6 gxf6 17 Nh5! Qd6 18 0-0

In contrast to its enemy number, the white king is now safely tucked away.

18...Na6

No better was 18...Nd7 19 dxe6 Qxd1 20 Rfxd1 Nc5 21 Bxb7 Nxb7 22 Rd7, e.g. 22...Nc5 23 Nxf6+ Kf8 24 Rxf7 mate.

19 Nxf6+ Ke7 20 Qd4! e5 21 Qh4 (Diagram 15)

QUESTION 4: Black now didn't take the knight, but why not?

21...Kd8 22 Rxb3 Kc7

A desperate attempt to escape with the king.

23 Ne4! Qxd5 24 Rd3!!

Very nice. Now the queen is forced to leave the e5-pawn unprotected.

24...Qxd3 25 Qe7+ Qd7 26 Qxe5+

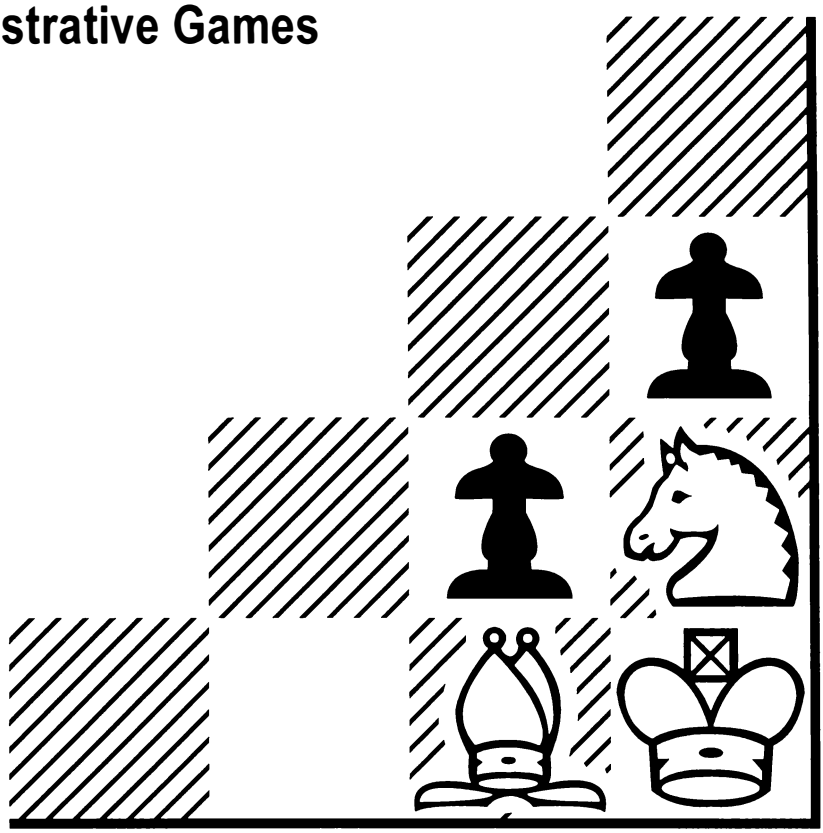
26 Rc1+ Nc5 27 Qxe5+ Kd8 28 Nxc5 bxc5 29 Qxh8+ was a simpler way to win, but White gets there in the end.

26...Kd8 27 Qf6+ Kc7 28 Qe5+ Kd8 29 Qxh8+ Ke7 30 Qf6+ Kf8 31 Qh6+ Ke7 32 Qf6+ Kf8 33 Qh6+ Ke7 34 Re1 Qe6 35 Qh4+ Kf8 36 Qxh7 Nc5 37 Re3 Nxe4 38 Bxe4 Bxe4 39 Qh8+ Ke7 40 Qh4+ Kd7 41 Rxe4 Qf5 42 Qe7+ Kc6 43 Rf4 Qd5 44 Qf6+ Kc7 45 Rd4 Qe6 46 Qf4+ Kc8 47 Rc4+ Kd8 48 Re4 Black resigns

Chapter Four

The Classical Variation 4 Qc2 d5

- Introduction
- White Plays 5 a3
- White Plays 5 cxd5
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 (Diagram 1)

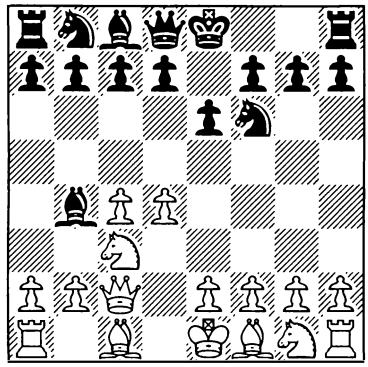


Diagram 1
A comfort move

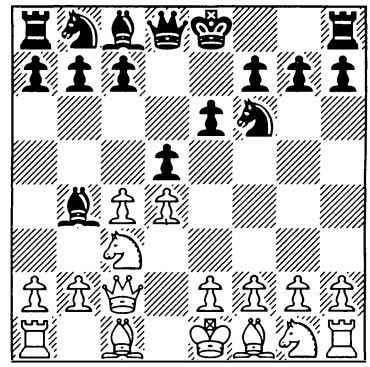


Diagram 2
Resembling a QGD

The Classical Variation has become very popular in recent times as White aims to obtain a slight plus via the acquisition of the bishop pair advantage without doubled pawns.



TIP: Don't bring your queen out too early.

Above is a standard opening tip that is generally aimed at preventing such a valuable piece being kicked from pillar to post when the rest of the army should be getting developed instead. However, the c2-square is hardly a vulnerable square for the white queen and, having higher short-term ambitions for his dark-squared bishop, this is preferred to 4 Bd2.

Black's three main replies are covered over the next three chapters, starting with

4...d5 (Diagram 2)

Black observes that White might be being crafty and in controlling the key square e4, prevents his opponent from obtaining central domination through 5 e4. Bearing this in mind and taking a slight deviation, it should be observed that 4...b6?! is almost a case of shutting the gate after the horse has bolted. Unlike in the 4 e3 lines, Black's bishop won't arrive on b7 in time to prevent the attractive advance and indeed, with f2-f3 possibly following, it could well find itself fianchettoed against a wall of pawns.

Diagram 2 shows definite similarities with the Queen's Gambit Declined. The fundamental differences are that White would normally give preference to developing a knight or bishop rather than the queen and, not usually interested in a bishop-for-knight exchange (as

cxd5 is always possible, doubling White's c-pawns is a fruitless exercise), Black's bishop would rather rest on e7. Regarding the latter point, though, White must beware.



WARNING: A serious threat is ...dxc4 as the d4-pawn is then attacked and Black can utilise the b4-e1 pin to successfully employ ...b7-b5.

QUESTION 5: Why doesn't White just play 5 c5 here?

Noting the above warning, we now reach a theoretical crossroads.

White Plays 5 a3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 a3

The original idea of 4 Qc2. White wants those two bishops!

5...Bxc3+

One might question why Black appears to be playing ball. I suppose the bishop could simply retreat to e7 but then it is clear that a tempo has been lost. White wouldn't have chosen to employ Qc2 and a3 so early in a standard QGD but in the long run they are both useful.

6 Qxc3 Ne4

The alternative 6...dxc4 is also on show in the games section but with this old move Black seeks to punish White's early queen sortie.

7 Qc2 c5

Logically attacking the centre, Black looks for fast and active play. Incidentally, the same could be said of the gambit 7...e5!?.

8 dxc5 Nc6 9 cxd5

Brave is 9 Nf3 Qa5+ 10 Nd2 as 10...Nd4 11 Qd3 e5 is very complicated. However, as you will discover, 9 e3 is a cautious alternative.

9...exd5 10 Nf3 (Diagram 3)

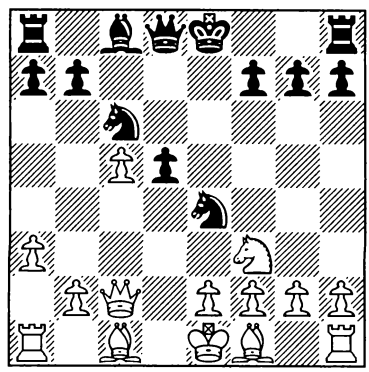


Diagram 3
Sparks will fly!

Plans

Black has sacrificed a pawn but has reasonable compensation. He should continue to develop quickly and with the likes of ...Bf5 could easily gain yet more tempi on the white queen. The axiom 'in for a penny, in for a pound' should be adhered to, with ...b7-b6 (another gift to open the c-file) also a consideration.

The white position will come under heavy bombardment but if he can survive then the endgame should be favourable. Even if he has to return some of his material advantage to stay alive, there is always the bishop pair to turn to and that will be a real bonus in an open position.

White Plays 5 cxd5

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 cxd5

With this move White is angling for a favourable version of the QGD exchange variation. Yes, after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5 the queen often comes to c2 to prevent ...Bf5, whilst Black really isn't interested in ...Bb4. Nice logic but the second player is rightly determined to have his say. Indeed, one option now is 5...Qxd5. Covered in Game 19, Black takes advantage of the pin and immediately hits the d4-pawn. The selection below, however, frees the c8-bishop.

5...exd5 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4

Considering the fireworks ahead, 7 Bxf6 Qxf6 8 e3 is certainly a quieter way to play, but it is worth observing that Black can try to avoid this with 6...c5 instead.

7...c5 8 dxc5

With his last move Black has chosen to mix things up at the risk of incurring weaknesses. With no current support of the d4-square, White's reply is the only testing one.

8...g5

As Black is creating undesirable holes on the kingside, he is clearly going for broke. The intention was never to simply recapture on c5 with the bishop and, although ...d5-d4 is always in the melting pot, here it would fail to 9 0-0-0!. Talking of pins, Black's last move escapes one and the aim now is to exploit a different one.

9 Bg3 Ne4 10 e3 Qa5 (Diagram 4)

Plans

We have reached an extremely double-edged position in which the c3-knight is receiving a severe battering. Black must continue to play as dynamically as possible for if White consolidates then he will no doubt exploit the kingside weaknesses and target the isolated d-pawn.

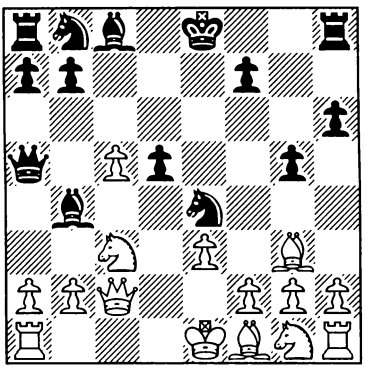


Diagram 4
Definitely pinned!

Illustrative Games

Game 16
☐ **J.Popovic** ■ **Ma.Stojanovic**
Yugoslav Women's Team Championship 2000

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 b6?!

Rather than controlling e4 in time, as this fianchetto often does in the 4 e3 or 4 Nf3 lines, the bishop may now find itself biting on granite.

5 e4! Bb7 6 Bd3 Bxc3+

Black doubles the pawns before Nge2 appears but she remains seriously space deprived.

7 bxc3 (Diagram 5)

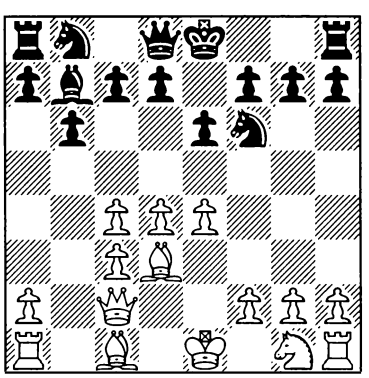


Diagram 5
The e-pawn is coming!

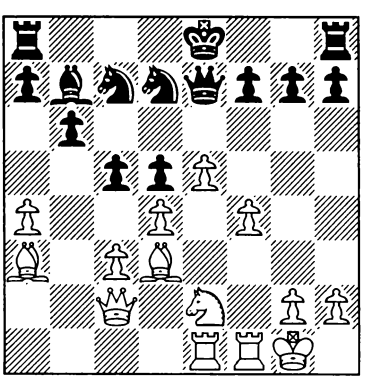


Diagram 6
The f-pawn is coming!

NOTE: The pawn on c3 does a good job of supporting d4.

7...d5

Black stakes a claim in the centre but this creates weak dark squares.

8 cxd5 exd5 9 e5 Qe7 10 Ne2 Nfd7 11 0-0

Now an obvious plan of ramming the f-pawn down Black's throat suggests itself.

11...c6 12 a4

White hasn't even had to waste an earlier tempo with a2-a3 and now she aims to put a bishop on that square.

12...Na6 13 Ba3 c5 14 Rae1 Nc7 15 f4 (Diagram 6)

Inevitable. The position plays itself and White can hardly go wrong.

15...Ba6 16 Bxa6 Nxa6 17 f5

Black has managed to trade off her 'bad' bishop for White's 'good' one but now has other concerns.

17...Nc7 18 Nf4 0-0

Hardly into safety, but the king had to vacate the centre.

19 Qd3 Qg5 20 Nh3 Qe7 21 Re3

Yes, the likes of f5-f6 and Rg3 don't look too appetising for Black!

21...f6 22 e6 Nb8 23 Nf4 Re8 24 dxc5 Black resigns

Game 17
☐ **Baburin** ■ **Ward**
Monarch Assurance Open, Port Erin 1998

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 7 Qc2 c5 8 dxc5 Nc6 9 e3

Not as critical as 9 cxd5 but White stops ...Nd4 and frees his bishop.

9...Qa5+ (Diagram 7)

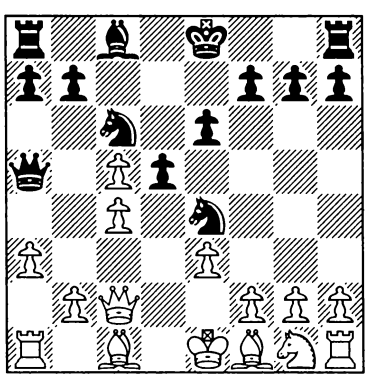


Diagram 7
A useful check

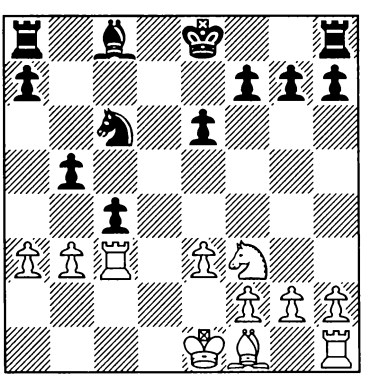


Diagram 8
The c-pawn is pinned

The only available check but a good one. Of course White can't block with the pawn because his a-pawn is pinned.

10 Bd2 Qxc5

The bishop on d2 is a valuable prize but Black is in no hurry to take it.

11 Nf3 Nxd2 12 Qxd2 dxc4

This time it is Black grabbing the c-pawn. Now White must play accurately to win it back.

13 Qc3 Qa5 14 Rc1

14 Bxc4 Qxc3+ 15 bxc3 would leave White in a worse position because of his isolated queenside pawns.

14...Qxc3+ 15 Rxc3 b5 16 b3 (Diagram 8)

White cannot allow Black to consolidate his extra pawn.

16...Rb8 17 bxc4 bxc4 18 Rxc4 Rb1+ 19 Kd2 Bd7 20 Kc2 Ra1

In staying along the eighth rank, the black rook prevents White from completing his kingside development. Now the outcome is a fair one.

21 Kb2 Rd1 22 Kc2 Ra1 23 Kb2 Rd1 24 Kc2 Draw agreed

Game 18
☐ **Likavsky** ■ **Cvitan**
Charleville 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 dxc4 7 Qxc4 b6

Black has conceded the bishop pair but gains a dangerous development advantage in exchange. Although b7 is a good square for a bishop, Black has another idea to keep the enemy queen on the move.

8 Nf3 0-0 9 Bg5 Ba6 (Diagram 9)

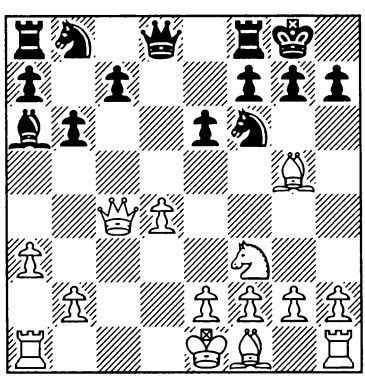


Diagram 9
Move please!

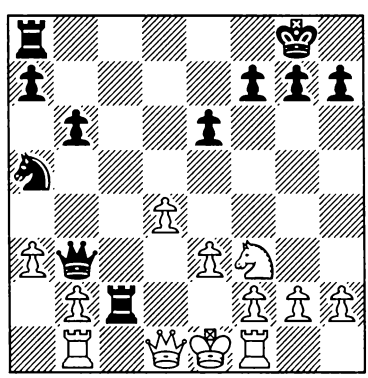


Diagram 10
Seventh heaven!

10 Bxf6?!

With this move White effectively engages in a risky pawn grab that ultimately suffers the consequences.

10...Qxf6 11 Qxc7 Rc8 12 Qe5 Qg6

White is far from castling whereas Black is not far from invading White's position via the c-file.

13 Qg5 Qc2 14 Qd2 Qb3

Naturally Black wants to keep the queens on. The current threat is to invade the seventh rank with the rook but 15 Rc1 would only see Black's other rook eventually making a fatal appearance after 15...Nd7.

15 Rb1 Nc6 16 e3 Bxf1 17 Rxf1 Na5

The white king will have to stay in the middle now whilst the black knight prepares to get in on the act.

18 Qd1 Rc2 (Diagram 10) 19 Ne5 Rac8

Yes, Black is definitely in control of the c-file!

20 Nd3 R8c3

Very flashy (the rook can't be taken because of ...Qxc3+) but 20...Nc4 is also very appealing.

21 Nc1 Qc4

And the rook still can't be taken because of the lack of flight squares available to the white king.

22 Ne2 Rd3 (Diagram 11)

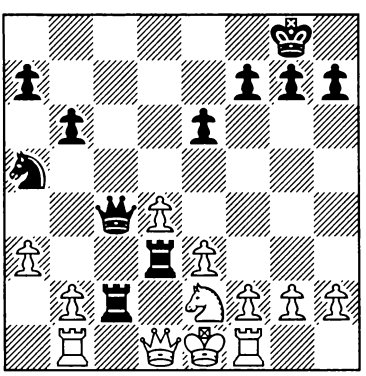


Diagram 11
Trapped!

The rooks have wiggled their way into White's position and now the white queen is checkmated!

23 Qxc2 Qxc2 24 Rc1 Qd2 mate

A good job too or else Black's own queen would have been lost!

Game 19
☐ **Shipov** ■ **Short**
Monarch Assurance Open, Port Erin 1999

1 d4 e6 2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 cxd5 Qxd5 6 e3 (Diagram 12)

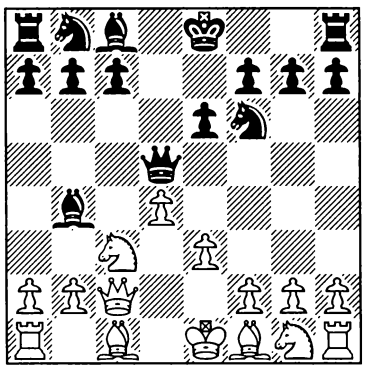


Diagram 12
Time to unpin!

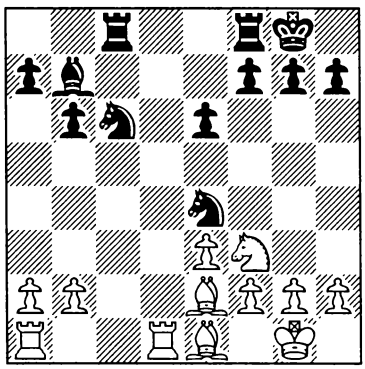


Diagram 13
A temporary retreat

Preventing the queen swap that may come with 6 Nf3 Qf5 is probably a more ambitious way for White to play.

6...c5 7 Bd2

Now the queen is no longer safe from the knight and so Black makes the typical bishop pair concession.

7...Bxc3 8 Bxc3 cxd4 9 Bxd4 Nc6 10 Bc3 0-0

Generally Black has managed okay in this line due to his good development.

11 Nf3 b6

11...Qc5, intending 12...Nd5, has also been tried.

12 Be2 Bb7 13 0-0 Rac8 14 Rfd1 Qe4 15 Qxe4 Nxe4 16 Be1 (Diagram 13)

The bishop has retreated away from the evil clutches of the black knight. Despite Black having no apparent weaknesses, I can't help feeling that the potential of White's bishop pair gives him a lasting advantage.

16...Rfd8 17 Rxd8+ Rxd8 18 Rc1 a5 19 Bb5 Rd6 20 Kf1 f6 21 Ke2 e5 22 a3 Kf8 23 Nd2 Nxd2 24 Bxd2 h6 25 f3 Ke7 26 b4 axb4 27 axb4 Kd8 28 Bd3 Ne7 29 b5 e4? (Diagram 14)

Black has set his sights on a draw and, regarding that aim, now appears to see the bright lights. The Athens-based English Grandmaster whipped out what he thought was the start of a forced sequence.

Alas, he had made a remarkably common oversight.

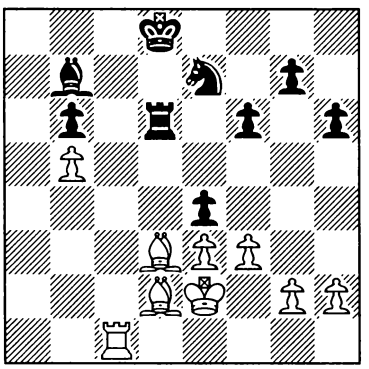


Diagram 14
A premature push

30 fxe4 Re6 31 Rc4 Nc8 32 Rd4+ Kc7 33 Be1!



WARNING: Backward bishop moves are allegedly the most difficult to see.

Regarding the above warning, this one (ironically the second time it's been played this game) is a killer. Black had expected White to play 33 Bb4 in order to attempt to intercept the ...Nd6 and something-takes-e4 plan. Instead the bishops now turn up the gas and their potential is soon realised.

33...Nd6 34 Bg3 Kd7

Escaping one pin, but walking into another. Black is losing the exchange.

35 Bc4 Re5 36 Bxe5 fxe5 37 Rd2 Bxe4 38 Bd5 Bxd5 39 Rxd5 Ke6 40 Rd3 Nxb5 41 Rb3 Nd6 42 Rxb6 e4 43 g4 g6 Black resigns

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Game 20
☐ **Law** ■ **Ward**
Lloyds Bank Masters, London 1994

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4 c5 8 dxc5 g5 9 Bg3 Ne4 10 e3 Qa5 11 Nge2 Bf5 12 Be5 (Diagram 15)

Kasparov's choice in his 1995 World Championship match with Nigel Short. This position is so complicated that despite plenty of analysis of the possibilities, study partners and I are still no closer to discovering the truth of this variation. White has an extra pawn and a superior structure but he has problems completing his kingside development with Black being so dangerously active.

12...0-0 13 Nd4 Nxc3 14 Nxf5

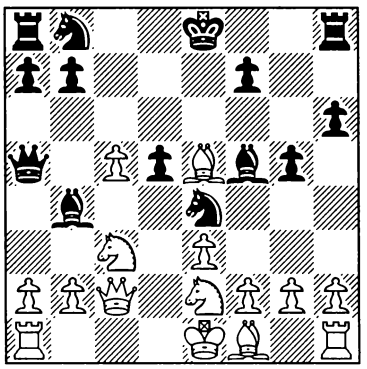


Diagram 15
Aspirins required!

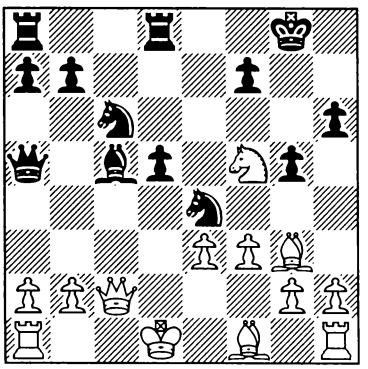


Diagram 16
White can't castle

14...Ne4+ 15 Kd1 Nc6 16 Bg3?!

The position is so critical that just one mistake could cost the game. I believe that this is just that error and that 16 Bd6 is to be preferred.

16...Bxc5 17 f3 Rfd8! (Diagram 16) 18 Nxh6+ Kg7 19 Nxf7

After 19 Nf5+ Kf6 the checks dry up and 20 fxe4 dxe4+ 21 Nd4 Bxd4 22 exd4 Nxd4 looks horrible for White.

19...Kxf7 20 fxe4 dxe4+ 21 Kc1 Bxe3+ 22 Kb1 Kg7!

A useful waiting move. All saving checks are eliminated, with 23 Qc3+ Qxc3 24 bxc3 Rd2 leaving White paralysed.

23 a3 Rd2 24 Qxe4 Bd4 (Diagram 17)

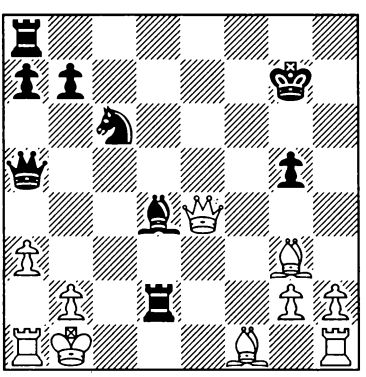


Diagram 17
Rooks at home

Now there is no satisfactory way to defend the b2-pawn.

25 b4 Rd1+ White resigns

Game 21
☐ **Shipov** ■ **Ward**
Monarch Assurance Open, Port Erin 1999

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bg5 c5!? (Diagram 18)

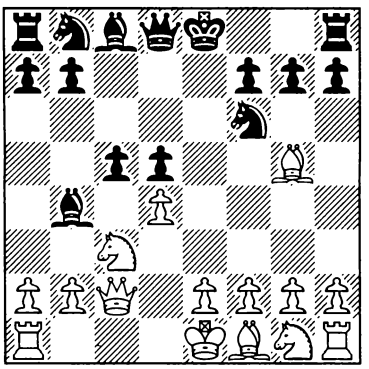


Diagram 18
The fun begins

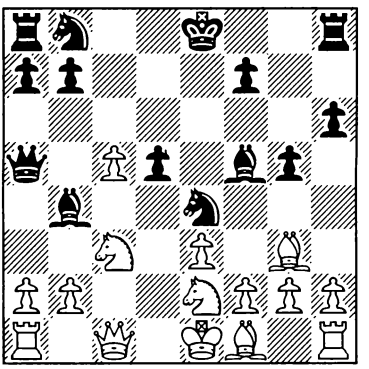


Diagram 19
Safety first!

Played in preference to 6...h6, this move has the advantage of sidestepping the solid white option 6...h6 7 Bxf6.

7 dxc5 h6 8 Bh4

Despite my previous comment, White still has the chance to play cautiously with 8 Bxf6. However, although Black has an isolated d-pawn, he will regain his lost pawn and his two bishops provide him with some comfort. Another of my own encounters continued with 8...Qxf6 9 e3 0-0 10 Nge2 Be6 11 a3 Bxc5 12 Nf4 Rc8 13 Rd1 d4 14 Ne4 Qf5 15 g4 Qe5 16 Nxc5 Rxc5 17 Qe2 Bc4 18 Qf3 Nc6 19 b4 dxe3 20 Qxe3 Re8 21 Qxe5 Rcxe5+ 22 Kd2 Re4 23 Bxc4 Rxc4 24 Nd3 Nd4 25 Nc5 Nf3+ 26 Kd3 Ne5+ 27 Kd2 b6 28 Nb3 Rd8+ 29 Ke2 Re4+ and White resigned, Matthiesen-Ward, Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1999.

8...g5 9 Bg3 Ne4 10 e3 Qa5 11 Nge2 Bf5 12 Qc1 (Diagram 19)

My opponent knew that 12 Be5 was the main move but decided to sidestep this critical line because he felt unprepared. Indeed, the complications as highlighted in the previous game are immense and it is not surprising that White didn't want to get crushed in the opening due to a lack of home preparation.

12...Nd7!? 13 Bd6

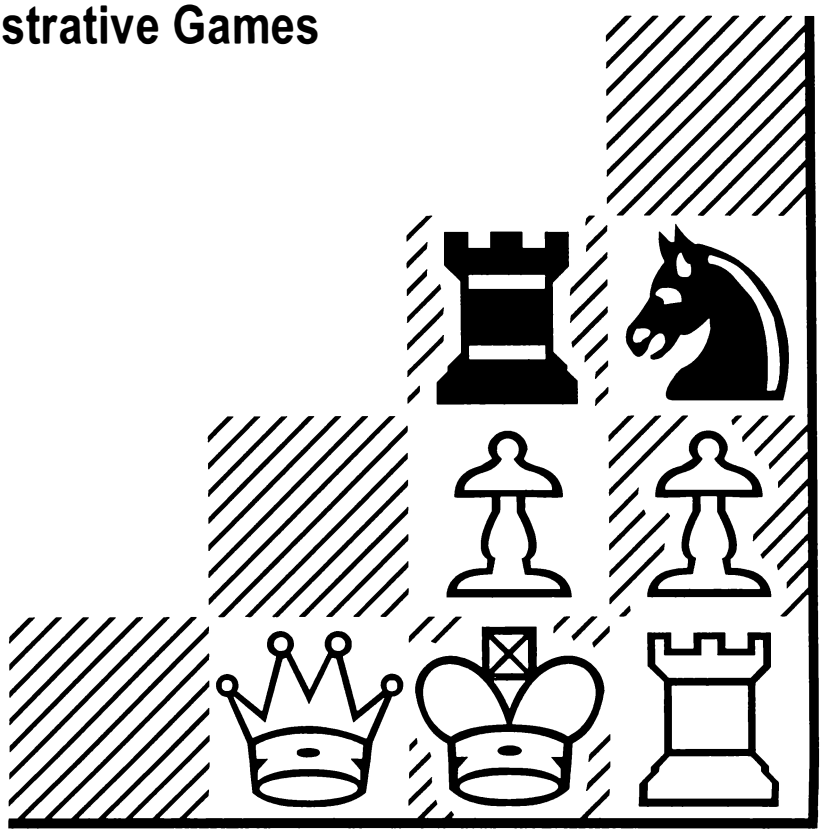
In fact White must now play accurately to avoid a quick defeat.

13...Ndxc5 14 Bxc5 Qxc5 15 a3 Bxc3+ 16 Nxc3 Nxc3 17 Qxc3 Draw agreed

Chapter Five

The Classical Variation 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3

- Introduction
- Black Plays 6...b6
- Black Plays 6...Ne4
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 (Diagram 1)

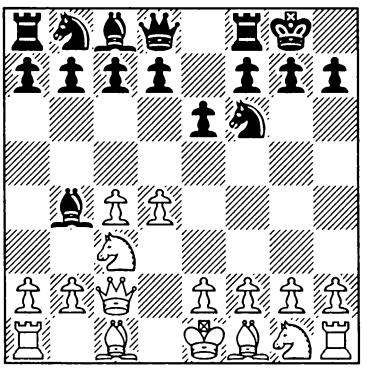


Diagram 1
Black is not committed

With his flexible 4th move Black plays it cool. The implication is that he is not worried about 5 e4 now as he believes that White might suffer repercussions due to his comparatively backward development. Indeed, over the years the vast majority of players have continued slowly but in recent times the ambitious e-pawn push has hit the headlines. That said, it suddenly appears to have become unfashionable and so I will limit its coverage to this chapter's first practical game.

5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3

White has secured his beloved two bishops advantage and now it is time for Black to show his hand. I am making a division here, with the first choice still remaining by far the most popular variation. That said, whilst advancing the b-pawn one square is very sensible, Game 23 takes a look at the fascinating pawn sacrifice 6...b5(!? or ?!).

Black Plays 6...b6

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b6

As yet Black doesn't commit a central pawn and for the time being simply provides options for the bishop.

7 Bg5



TIP: Knights before bishops.

The above tip is still a valid general opening principle but whilst one should always bear it in mind, there will always be exceptions. Here, for example, White may be unsure of where to develop his knight (as

you will soon see, each of e2, f3 and h3 has its adherents). However, he may be keen to play the safe e2-e3 but may want to extract his bishop first. Setting up a pin in this manner is an obvious choice.

QUESTION 6: If this bishop pin is so annoying, why doesn't Black take time out with 6...h6?

7...Bb7

Many would play this without thinking but it is my duty to inform you that 7...Ba6 is also by no means ridiculous. Generally Black will be in favour of a bishop trade as it will eliminate White's bishop pair advantage, while the pressurising of the c-pawn is a serious plan in its own right. Later, for example, Black may be able to play ...c7-c5 in conjunction with ...d7-d5 and, if a rook is on c8, then life could become very uncomfortable for White.

8 f3

Current opening theory suggests that this move either now or on the next turn is the most ambitious way for White to play. Indeed, after 8 Nf3 Black can develop sensibly with ...d6 and ...Nbd7. His control of the e4-square pretty much provides him with equality.

Regarding the text, it is certainly very logical as even if White doesn't intend putting a pawn on e4 just yet, it is certainly useful to prevent an enemy knight occupying the post and blunting the b7-g2 diagonal can't be a bad idea either.



WARNING: Just because the f6-knight is apparently pinned, one can't rule out it moving to provide a scenario whereby both queens are left attacked.

The drawback for White is that his kingside pieces remain undeveloped and indeed his knight might be particularly miffed about this.

8...h6 9 Bh4 (Diagram 2)

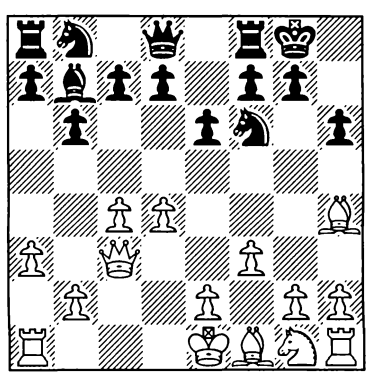


Diagram 2
e2-e4-e5 appeals!

Plans

Regarding the last move, of course White hasn't gone to all that trouble to obtain the bishop pair just to solve Black's pinning problem with the casual 9 Bxf6. Indeed, the h4-d8 diagonal is an important plus for White, who must now complete his kingside development. Denied access to f3, the knight may jump out to h3 and, given the chance, his e-pawn would have an immediate impact on the game.

Black won't want to weaken his kingside with ...g7-g5, which could prove disastrous, but he must challenge the centre with a pawn or two. Indeed, 9...d5 would prevent 10 e4 whilst the quick appearance of ...c7-c5 could prove awkward for White if he doesn't get his act together. With the queens still on, Black would be especially unhappy with having to sometime recapture with ...gxf6, but the black queen can move once the supporting ...Nbd7 is implemented.

Black Plays 6...Ne4

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4

A comparatively new line championed by England number one Michael Adams. A recent article described Black's system here as employing all the 'happy' moves. The knight takes up an excellent post in the centre and, by moving now, prevents White from setting up the typical pin with Bg5.

7 Qc2 f5

Yes, another enjoyable Nimzo-Indian insertion. Black often strives hard for the two moves that he has just managed so quickly.



NOTE: 8 f3 is unplayable in view of 8...Qh4+ 9 g3 Nxg3.

8 Nh3 (Diagram 3)

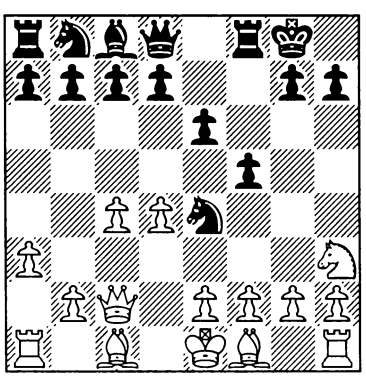


Diagram 3
Preparing f2-f3



TIP: 'Knights on the rim are dim' is another useful opening principle.

Plans

The above tip is worth bearing in mind and it refers to the fact that knights control more squares when they are more centrally situated. It is merely a hint that developing them on the edge restricts their scope. However, clearly there will be cases whereby a knight may travel to the side en route to greener pastures. White may consider the f4-square to be an attractive place for a knight and there is no quicker way to get there than via h3.

More to the point is that White will be eager to budge the black knight and his last move makes 9 f3 a realistic possibility as the h-pawn wouldn't be pinned after ...Qh4+. White will definitely be eager to get in this pawn advance, which would also vacate the f2-square to offer another option to the h3-knight. Given that the e4-knight will be forced away, one argument is that Black will actually have lost time. On the other hand, even if it returns to f6, the intermittent ...f7-f5 will at least have made it more difficult for White to arrange e2-e4. Thanks to a bit more space on the kingside (afforded by his advanced f-pawn), the traditional ideas of ...Qe8-h5/g6 could also appear. Alternatively, aiming for ...e6-e5 through ...d7-d6 is sensible although retreating the knight to d6 in conjunction with ...b7-b6 and ...Bb7 (or even ...Ba6) has also been seen in practice.

Illustrative Games

Game 22
☐ **Ward** ■ **J.Horvath**
Malta 2000

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 e4 (Diagram 4)



TIP: Put your pawns in the centre.

The above tip represents a very literal interpretation of this favourite opening principle, but the big question is whether White is asking for too much too soon. Indeed, it's fair to say that the jury is still out on this rather bold approach. Compared to other Classical lines, there is relatively little theory on 5 e4 but, although that may appeal to those who just want to 'play some moves' without being booked up to the hilt, I can tell you that the whole line is a minefield.

5...d5

A critical response. Although 5...d6 and 5...c5 are playable, with this move Black really rises to the challenge. While White has been moving pawns (and his queen!), Black has built up a lead in development. The second player is only too happy for the centre to be opened up, especially as the enemy monarch still languishes there.

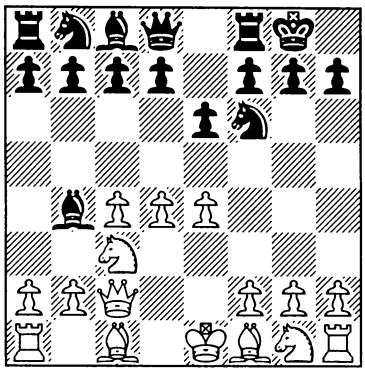


Diagram 4
Seeking world domination!

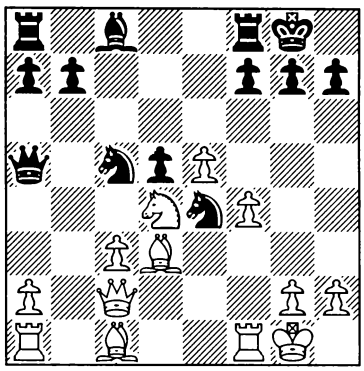


Diagram 5
Active defence

6 e5 Ne4

The aggressive way is the only way or else Black could easily find himself squashed. A familiar situation arises now as White finds himself having to budge the annoying e4-knight.

7 Bd3 c5

There is no peace for the wicked. White would just love some respite to get his knight out and castle but Black doesn't oblige.

8 cxd5 exd5 9 Nge2 cxd4

Black voluntarily accepts an isolated d-pawn that could obviously prove to be weak later. However, this does deflect the e2-knight from its c3-defending duties and Black is right to continue actively.

10 Nxd4 Nd7 11 f4 Ndc5

Tempting is 11...Qh4+, but after 12 g3 the move 12...Nxg3 doesn't work because of 13 Qf2, while 12...Qh3 13 Bf1 Qh5 14 Bg2 is currently considered to be a little better for White because of his strong pawn chain.

12 0-0 Bxc3 13 bxc3 Qa5!? (Diagram 5)

If White gets settled then it stands to reason that he will be better placed. As well as blockading the weak d5-pawn, he has a long-term plan involving f4-f5. Black's correct solution is to give White something to think about.

14 Be3

Prepared to sacrifice a pawn, I just didn't fancy 14 Bxe4 or the passive 14 Bd2.

14...Nxd3 15 Qxd3 Bd7

Very sensible as 15...Qxc3 16 Qxc3 Nxc3 17 Rfc1 Ne4 18 Rc7 would have given White a lot of pressure.

16 Rfc1 Rfc8 17 c4

It's necessary to eliminate this weakness now before it becomes too much of a hindrance. I felt, though, at this stage that as White I was battling to maintain equality.

17...Qa6 18 Nb5

Effectively liquidating to what I assumed (probably correctly) would be a drawn endgame.

18...Rxc4 19 Rxc4 Bxb5 20 Qxd5 Nf6

Winning a pawn but leading to a trade of queens and a drawish opposite-coloured bishops scenario.

21 exf6 Bxc4 22 Qg5 Qxf6 23 Qxf6 gxf6 24 a3 b5 25 Rd1 a5 26 Rd6 b4 27 axb4 axb4 28 Bd4 f5 29 Bf6 (Diagram 6)

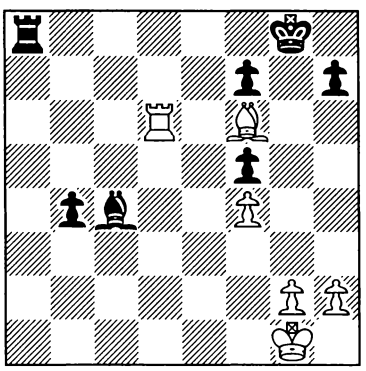


Diagram 6
Active defence part two!

Without the rooks it would be a simple draw. With them the attacker is often offered some hope, but here Black is unable to go on a walkabout with his own major piece as he has problems with his king.

29...b3 30 Rb6 h6 31 h4 Kh7 32 h5!

The black king is now boxed in and so there is nothing doing.

32...Re8 33 Rb4 Rc8 34 Rb6



TIP: Rooks belong behind passed pawns.

The white rook not only ensures that Black's passed b-pawn makes no further progress but has other active options too. The same would not be true if it tried blocking the pawn by manoeuvring to b2 instead.

34...Bd5 35 g3 Re8

Once more Black tries to trade rooks (with ...Re6), when the h5-pawn would drop too. There is, however, no need for White to allow this.

36 Rb5 Bc4 37 Rb4 Rc8 38 Rb6 Ra8 39 Kf2 Ra6 40 Rxa6 Bxa6 Draw agreed

Game 23
☐ **Van Wely** ■ **Nikolic**
Wijk aan Zee 2000

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b5 (Diagram 7)

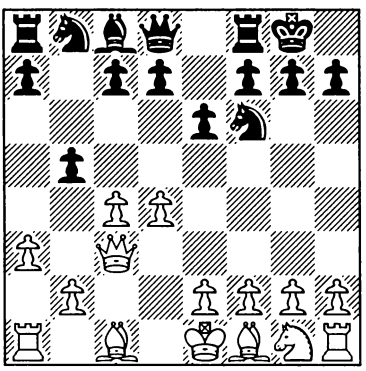


Diagram 7
Overshooting?

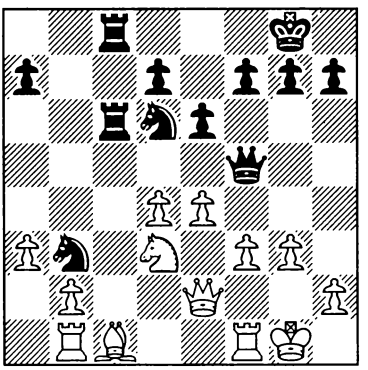


Diagram 8
c-file control

With Black angling for control of e4 and d5, this is essentially a case of a pawn for some squares. The text is an interesting sacrifice but, having played through several games with this line, I can only conclude that it is down to the individual to decide on its appeal. Glad I could be of help!

7 cxb5 c6 8 e3

If White has a 'thing' about not accepting gambits then 8 Bg5, intending 9 e3, is an alternative and sensible way to play.

8...cxb5 9 Bxb5 Ne4 10 Qb3 Qg5!?

Black seeks to expose White's under-developed kingside and hopes to provoke a weakness or two.

11 Bf1

Hardly desirable, but at least this retreat refrains from creating holes.

11...Nc6 12 Qc2

A different high-profile encounter saw 12 Nf3 Qg6 13 g3 Rb8 14 Qd3 Qf5 15 Be2 Rb6 16 0-0 Ba6 17 Qd1 Bxe2 18 Qxe2 Rc8 19 Ne1 Na5 20 Nd3 Nb3 21 Rb1 Rbc6 22 f3 Nd6 23 e4 (Diagram 8).

Now, despite White gaining the centre, Black maintained his pressure and was ultimately allowed to infiltrate the enemy position via the c-file: 23...Qa5 24 Be3 Nc4 25 Rfd1 h6 26 Nb4 R6c7 27 d5 Nxe3 28 Qxe3 Qa4 29 dxe6 dxe6 30 Na2 Rc2 31 Nc3 Qa5 32 Re1 Nd2 33 Re2 Rd8 34

Rd1 Rxc3 35 Qxc3 Qxc3 36 bxc3 Nxf3+ 37 Kf2 Rxd1 38 Kxf3 Ra1 39 Ke3 Rxa3 40 Kd4 e5+ 41 Kc4 f6 42 Rb2 a5 43 Rb7 h5 44 h4 Kh7 45 Rc7 Kg6 46 Kd5 a4 47 c4 Rd3+ 48 Ke6 Rxg3 49 Re7 Rg4 and White resigned, Baburin-Adams, Kilkenny 1999.

12...f5 13 Nh3 Qd8 14 b4 Bb7 15 f3 Rc8

White can continue to point to his extra pawn as a plus, but Black continues to develop at the expense of the white queen. Leaving the knight temporarily en prise, the threat is ...Nxd4.

16 Qb2 Nd6 17 Bd3 Qb6 18 0-0 Ba6 19 Bxa6 Qxa6 20 a4

With c4 looking like a likely invasion point, White attempts to grasp another light square or two.

20...Qb6 21 Rb1 Ne7 22 Nf4 Rc4 23 Bd2 Rfc8 24 Rfc1 Nd5 25 Nxd5 exd5 (Diagram 9)

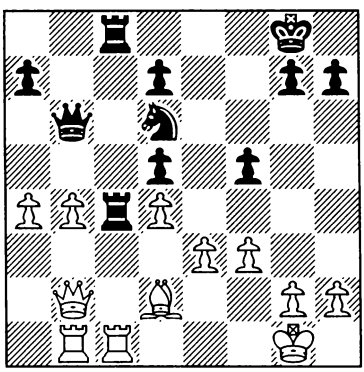


Diagram 9
Worth a pawn?

An intriguing position. Black dominates the c-file and has a nice bind on e4 as well. White has a 'semi-bad' bishop for a knight but does, of course, have that extra queenside pawn.

26 b5 f4 27 exf4 Rxa4 28 Rxc8+ Nxc8 29 Be3 Nd6 30 Qb3 Rc4 31 g4

It's still very difficult to assess (particularly with regard to where Black goes wrong in this game). White now tries making headway with his kingside pawn majority. He is also keen to deprive the black knight of the f5-square.

31...h5 32 h3 Qa5 33 Kf2 h4 34 Kg2 Kh8 35 Bf2 Qd2 36 b6 axb6 37 Qxb6

As well as 38 Qxd6, White threatens 38 Qd8+ and 39 Qxh4+. As his king is as weak as White's, my conclusion is that Black appears to have shot his bolt.

37...Nf7 38 Qg6 Qxf4 39 Re1 Rc8 40 Re7 Kg8 41 Bxh4 Ra8 42 Qd3 Nd6 43 Bg3 Qf6 44 Bxd6 Qxd6 45 Re5 Qb8 46 h4 Qb2+ 47

Re2 Qb6 48 h5 Qf6 49 Kg3 d6 50 Qe3 Qf7 51 Qe6 Ra3 52 Qxf7+ Kxf7 53 Kf4 Rd3 54 Ra2 Rxd4+ 55 Kf5

'This intriguing game eventually ends in a draw but as I believe that White is winning and Black has made no obvious mistakes, I wonder whether 6...b5 is just a bad move.

55...Rd3 56 Ra7+ Kf8 57 f4 Re3 58 Rd7 d4 59 Rxd6 d3 60 g5 Kf7 61 h6 gxh6 62 Rxh6 d2 63 Rd6 Re2 64 Kg4 Ke7 65 Rd3 Ke6 66 Kf3 Rh2 67 Ke3 Kf5 68 Rd5+ Kg4 69 Rxd2 Rh1 70 Rg2+ Kf5 71 g6 Rh8 72 g7 Rg8 73 Rg5+ Kf6 74 Ke4 Re8+ 75 Kf3 Kf7 76 Kg4 Ra8 77 Kh5 Kg8 78 Rg6 Ra1 79 Rg4 Rh1+ 80 Kg6 Rh4 81 Kf5 Rh6 82 Ke5 Ra6 83 Rg5 Ra5+ 84 Kf6 Ra6+ 85 Kf5 Ra5+ 86 Kg4 Ra4 87 Rg6 Ra1 88 Kf3 Ra3+ 89 Ke4 Ra4+ 90 Kf5 Ra5+ 91 Kg4 Ra1 92 f5 Rg1+ 93 Kh5 Rxg6 94 Kxg6 Draw agreed

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Game 24
☐ **Privman** ■ **Hebert**
Philadelphia 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b6 7 Bg5 Bb7 8 f3 d5 9 e3 Nbd7 (Diagram 10)

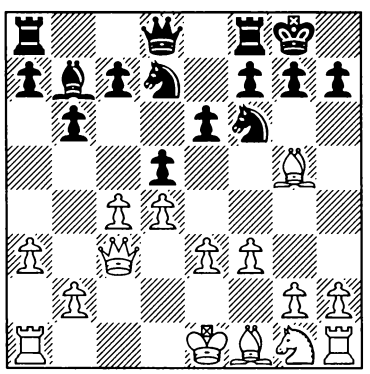


Diagram 10
Supportive knights

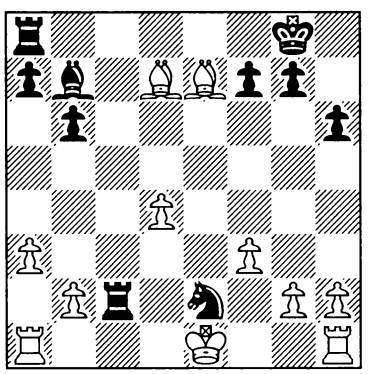


Diagram 11
Castling impossible!

This type of position can be reached with or without ...h7-h6 and Bh4 thrown in. Either way, by far the most popular continuation for White is to trade pawns on d5. In this game he doesn't and ultimately suffers the consequences.

10 Bd3 h6 11 Bh4 c5 12 Ne2?!

An important theme in this line is the apparently pinned f6-knight moving to attack the white queen. Often the white knight prefers to move to h3 as then it cannot be captured after ...Ne4xc3.

12...cxd4 13 exd4 dxc4 14 Bxc4 Ne4!

A simplifying tactic that I had warned of earlier. Clearly now 15 fxe4?

Qxh4+ is unacceptable.

15 Bxd8 Nxc3 16 Be7

If White recaptures on c3 (be it with the pawn or knight) then Black is left with the superior pawn structure.

16...Rfc8 17 Bxe6

After the straightforward 17 bxc3 Rxc4, again White stands worse because of his inferior pawn structure.



TIP: The fewer the pawn islands the better.

However, that doesn't mean give away as many pawns as you can (!) but rather try to keep them together (where they can protect each other) as opposed to in several pockets.

17...Nxe2 18 Bxd7 Rc2 (Diagram 11)

White may have the bishop pair but he is in big trouble.

19 Rd1 Nf4 20 0-0 Rxg2+

20...Rc7 21 Bd6 Ne2+ 22 Kf2 Rxd7 also looks rather impressive although you can't argue with the text.

21 Kh1 Rxb2 22 Bf5 Re8 23 Bd6 g5 24 Bxf4 gxf4 25 Be4 Rxe4 White resigns

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Game 25
☐ **I.Sokolov** ■ **C.Hansen**
Malmö 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b6 7 Bg5 Bb7 8 f3 h6 9 Bh4 d5 10 e3 Nbd7 11 cxd5

With theory generally considering this continuation to simplify to a drawish ending, White has often been known to maintain the tension with 11 Nh3.

11...Nxd5 (Diagram 12)

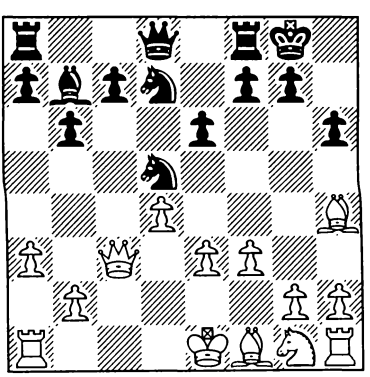


Diagram 12
Queens attacked!

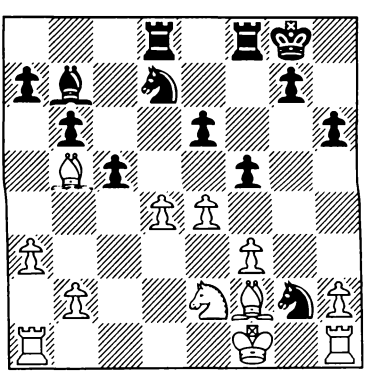


Diagram 13
The knight is out on a limb

12 Bxd8 Nxc3 13 Bh4

After 13 Bxc7 Nd5 14 Bd6 Nxe3 15 Bxf8 Nc2+, as Black's knight won't get trapped, his development advantage leaves him with the upper hand.

13...Nd5 14 Bf2

If White could just keep things simple then his bishop pair advantage would really tell. It's up to Black to make sure things aren't so straightforward but, while the text (eliminating a potential target on the half-open c-file) is logical, a time out with 14...f5 also looks reasonable.

14...c5 15 e4

15 Bb5 N5f6 16 Ne2 a6 17 Ba4 b5 is equal according to various sources.

15...Nf4

Certainly ambitious, the alternative 15...Ne7 being a safe retreat.

16 Bb5 Rad8

It soon becomes clear why Black opted to use this rook. However, with the c-file looking likely to be opened, 16...Rfd8 is a consideration too.

17 Ne2!?

Previously 16...Nxg2+ 17 Kf1 would have left both knights attacked but now this is a serious option. The line 17 g3 Ng6 18 Rd1 f5 leaves White with problems along the b7-h1 diagonal. However, 17 Bg3 is possible, with a greedy knight experiencing escaping difficulties.

17...Nxg2+

Clearly not satisfied with 17...Nxe2 18 Kxe2 cxd4 19 Bxd4, Black takes up the 'complications' gauntlet.

18 Kf1 f5 (Diagram 13)

The knight is trapped but Black has some devilish play in mind.

19 d5!

Looking to close off the b7-h1 diagonal and who can blame White in view of 19 Kxg2?! fxe4 when Black has an attack?

19...exd5 20 exd5 Bxd5

At least this way White has kept the f-file closed.

21 Kxg2 Ne5 22 Ng1

A very ugly move to have to play. It hardly looks as though it is White who has the extra piece. Nevertheless, he does and Black needs more than just those two extra pawns.

22...g5

Preparing to scrutinise the f3-pawn still further with ...g5-g4. In search of improvements, Black may wish to consider 22...c4 or 22...Rf6.

23 Re1 Ng6 24 h4!

Black has a useful square or two for his knight but White just concentrates on trying to activate his king's rook.

24...g4 25 h5

Important. White wants that h4-square for himself.

25...Nf4+ 26 Kg3 Ne6 27 Rh4 Ng5 28 Be3

Simple chess. 28 Re7 may be good but the text enables the position to be clarified.

28...Bxf3 29 Nxf3 Nxf3 30 Rhh1 Nxe1 31 Rxe1

Black has three extra pawns but the bishop pair is awesome. That said, I'm not entirely sure about Black's next move, which doesn't seem to help in the overall scheme of things.

31...f4+ 32 Bxf4 Rd4

Black gets a square for his rook but now there are even more open diagonals for the bishops.

33 Rf1 c4 34 Kxg4

All of a sudden there is just one pawn to go with the rook against the two bishops.

34...Kh7 35 Ba4 a6

The key to meeting 35...Rg8+ would be avoiding 36 Kf3?? Rxf4+ 37 Kxf4 Rf8+.

36 Bc2+ Kg7 37 Kg3 Re8 38 Kf3 Re6 39 Bf5 Re8 40 Rg1+ Kf6 41 Bc2 Black resigns

The h-pawn is doomed, as is Black.

Game 26
□ **Ward** ■ **Adams**
Southend 2001

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1 c4 Nf6 2 d4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 7 Qc2 f5 8 Nh3 d6

Typically Black has it in mind to place some pawns on the opposite colour from the remaining bishop. In contrast, 8...d5? would be positionally flawed. The bishop on c8 would become 'bad' and an outpost would be conceded on e5.



NOTE: An outpost is a square that is protected by one's own pawn(s) but could never be attacked by an enemy pawn. Knights in particular are very fond of outposts.

9 f3 Nf6 10 e3 e5

Black now has his fair share of the centre and can easily develop his pieces. As is so often the case in the Classical Variation, White can point toward his bishop pair (minus structural weaknesses) to offer him a long-term advantage.

11 dxe5

I must confess to not going exactly overboard on my preparation for

this game but I do recall observing that theory ultimately recommended this move and White's next to help secure a slight edge. In light of this game, possibly that conclusion needs to be reviewed.

11...dxe5 12 Nf2

Still played pretty much on autopilot. I didn't really trust 12 Bd3 in case it walked into ...e5-e4 but certainly 12 Be2 looks reasonable.

12...Nc6

Though 12...c5 has been played before, Black's forthcoming plan does seem to suggest itself. White won't want to open up the e-file ahead of schedule whilst the black knight would dearly love to take up residence on d4.

13 b4

The b2-g7 diagonal is an attraction for White's dark-squared bishop, although of course I was a little worried about remaining behind in development.

13...f4 14 Bd3

The advantage that I could see of holding back on developing this bishop is that, with Black's f-pawn just advanced, it now takes up a nifty post. I didn't give much thought to 14 exf4 which would have left the d4-square at Black's mercy.

14...a5! (Diagram 14)

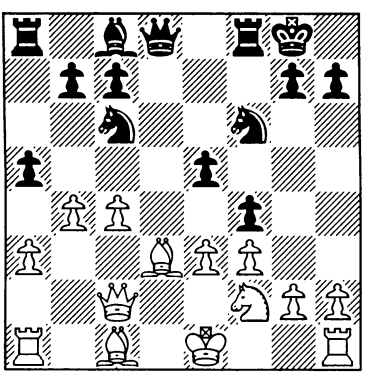


Diagram 14
Provoking a weakness

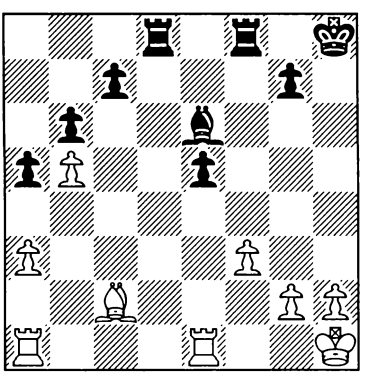


Diagram 15
Holding on

Black knows where his knight is heading but prompts White to concede the c5-square before beginning its journey.



TIP: Pay heed to this idea, which is applicable to many different openings. Rather than moving the knight immediately, a provocation of the enemy b-pawn in such a manner is often advantageous.

15 b5 fxe3 16 Bxe3 Nd4 17 Bxd4

I guess this might be seen as playing it safe as ideally White would like to keep both of his bishops. I did consider the likes of 17 Qb2 and 17 Qb1 but felt that I didn't want Black embedding his knight in with ...c7-c5.

17...Qxd4

I still felt that I held a minute advantage here although you can see how useful it is for Black to have the c5-square at his disposal.

18 0-0

The annoying thing about this is that now the knight is pinned.

18...Be6 19 Rfd1 Qc5 20 Kh1 Rad8 21 Ne4 Nxe4 22 Bxe4 Qxc4 23 Bxh7+ Kh8 24 Rdc1!?

Bearing in mind the black king is looking a little ropy, it would be nice to keep the queens on. The text tries to encourage Black to do just that, whilst preserving rooks to avoid immediate back rank problems.

24...Qxc2

It's no great surprise that the world number four declined my not-so-generous offer of the b-pawn. Indeed, after 24...Qxb5?! 25 Be4 the black queen is caught offside, the b- and c-pawns are obvious targets and the consequences of the white queen making it to the h-file could easily be devastating.

25 Bxc2 b6

I spent a long time here pondering the likes of 26 Be4. Black has weaknesses on c7 and e5 but it seems that these are not enough for him to lose.

26 Re1 (Diagram 15)



NOTE: Although it is generally true that one should try to place pawns on the opposite colour from a remaining bishop, when rooks are present in an endgame, it doesn't hurt to have the odd one on a matching colour. Indeed, they can often look after each other whilst the rooks go on the attack.

26...Bf5

A slightly fortuitous defence to have available.

27 Rac1 Bxc2 28 Rxc2 Rf7 29 h3

To involve both rooks, the back rank problem had to be addressed eventually.

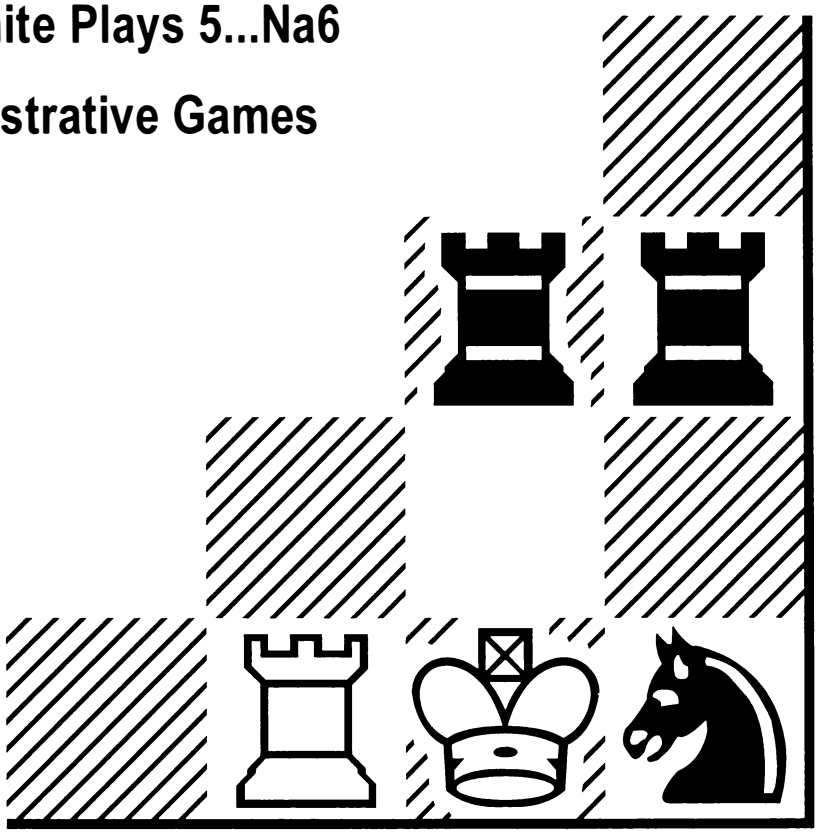
29...Rd5 30 Rec1 Rxb5 31 Rxc7 Rxc7 32 Rxc7 Rb3 33 a4 Rb4 34 Rb7 e4 Draw agreed

All rook and pawn endings are drawn and this one is no exception!

Chapter Six

The Classical Variation 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5

- Introduction
- Black Plays 5...Bxc5
- Black Plays 5...0-0
- White Plays 5...Na6
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 (Diagram 1)

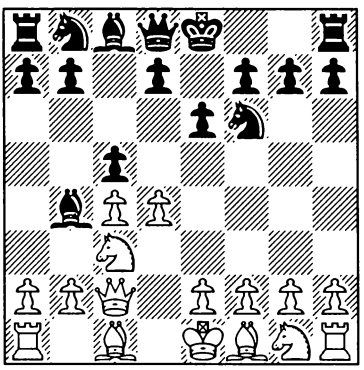


Diagram 1
Hitting d4

In many respects the continuation 4...c5 is the most logical way to meet the Classical Variation as without further ado Black exploits the lack of support that White now has for a key central square. As the pin remains on the c3-knight, the advance 5 d5 simply loses a pawn and hence **5 dxc5** is the only testing possibility.

With this move it would be very wrong to say that White has relinquished the initiative just because a centre pawn is conceded for an outer one. Indeed, the c4-pawn continues to exert pressure in the vital area of the board, and a half-open d-file is made available to aid in targeting Black's d-pawn and perhaps invading the d6-square.

Black will regain the pawn on c5 but there are a few ways in which he can go about doing so: 5...Bxc5, 5...0-0 and 5...Na6.

Black Plays 5...Bxc5

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 Bxc5

Certainly getting straight to the point, but the drawback of this is that the bishop has now moved twice and the c3-e1 pin is no longer in operation.

6 Nf3



WARNING: Instead of the text please note that 6 Bg5? falls foul of 6...Bxf2+! 7 Kxf2 Ng4+. Netting a pawn and embarrassing the king, this is a tactic worth remembering.

6...Qb6

As White's next move is forced, the purpose behind this and Black's

previous move can be seen. The c1-bishop will not be travelling to the active squares g5 or f4 in the near future.

7 e3

Funnily enough, I don't think I've ever seen any games with 7 e4, which does of course allow the queen to defend f2. However, in view of 7...Ng4 I guess that's not completely surprising.

7...Qc7

While it's eventually going to be attractive for White to place a rook or two on the d-file, one mustn't forget that Black has at hand a half-open c-file. This queen retreat, though, is more to do with the fact that at some stage the forking threat of Na4 had to be dealt with, while Black wants the make ...b7-b6 available to help to develop his queen's bishop via a fianchetto.

8 b3

Likewise, White wants to activate his dark-squared bishop and 8 Bd2 doesn't fit the bill.

8...a6

Another move not involving a minor piece, but a useful one. Later in the day Black may try to arrange the queenside advance ...b5, but for the time being that square becomes out of bounds for a white knight.

9 Bb2 b6 (Diagram 2)

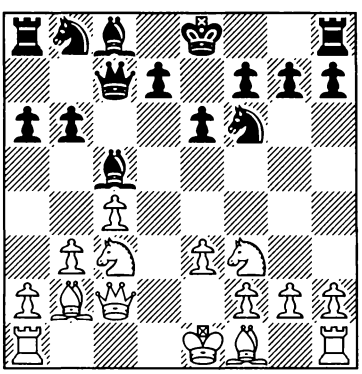


Diagram 2
The d-file is half-open

Plans

Black is on his way to setting up the famous 'hedgehog' formation with the characteristic moves of ...Bb7, ...Be7 (so as not to leave this bishop offside), ...d7-d6, ...Nbd7 and ...0-0. Scrutinised in Game 27, typically this system is tough for White to crack. Black generally looks to break with ...b6-b5 or ...d6-d5 but, that aside, just plays it

cool and waits for the opponent to err.

White has obvious moves such as Be2, 0-0 and a rook to d1, but to make serious progress he may have to advance on the queenside or in the centre.

Black Plays 5...0-0

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 0-0

Here Black's logic is that as the c5-pawn isn't going anywhere, there is no hurry to capture it.



TIP: Always make a move that you 'know' you are going to play before one that you are not sure of.

Castling kingside was pretty much a certainty at some not-far-off juncture, whereas it is very possible that Black could seek to eliminate the c5-pawn with the queen or a knight.

6 a3 Bxc5

Black could claim that has he effectively gained a tempo with his preferred 5th move as ...Bxc5 has occurred anyhow with the insertion of the comparatively irrelevant move a2-a3. The counter- argument is that the latter point is just not true as it is useful the cover the b4-square and the option is now always there for a b2-b4 expansion.

7 Nf3 Nc6

7...Qb6!? would lead to lines similar to those studied in the previous section.

8 Bg5

8 b4 is considered a little premature, but another alternative bishop deployment comes with 8 Bf4; it's handy to keep an eye on the c7- and d6-squares.

8...Nd4

Taking advantage of the fact that e2-e3 has not yet been played.

9 Nxd4 Bxd4 10 e3 Qa5

Hitting the bishop on g5 and threatening to wreck White's queenside pawn structure.

11 exd4 Qxg5 (Diagram 3)

QUESTION 7: Is the bishop on c8 a 'bad' bishop?

Plans

The positioning of the black queen makes kingside development a little difficult for White, who is recommended to try 12 Qd2. A trade of queens (not forced, but White's spatial plus in the centre gives him an edge in any case) would bring us closer to an endgame that is minimally better for White. The pawn structure is unbalanced and so White will expand on the queenside where his extra pawn is present.

Black will get his bishop out, place a rook or two on the c-file and then centralise the king.

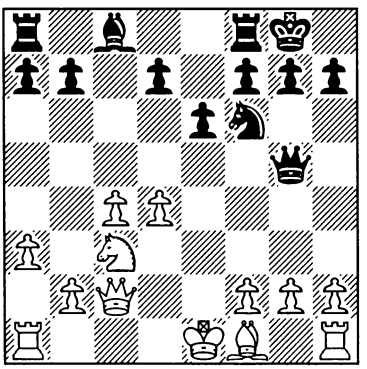


Diagram 3
White wants the queens off

Black Plays 5...Na6

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 Na6

Initiating the most dynamic of the three variations, Black quickly gets another piece in on the act. The intention is to gobble up White's temporary extra pawn and simultaneously activate the knight.

6 a3

Forcing a bishop-for-knight concession as 6...Bxc5 would leave the a6-piece looking more than a little silly.

6...Bxc3+ 7 Qxc3 Nxc5

White has the bishop pair advantage and it's easy to see how Black may suffer on the dark squares. However, Black's lead in development is clear and Black's knight duo plan on making life very difficult for White.

8 f3

Possibly planning the pawn push e2-e4, White is also eager to keep Black's knights away from this square. So interesting is this line that I have dedicated four of this chapter's five illustrative games to it, the last of which features 8 b4 instead.

8...d5



TIP: Although it is true that bishops like open positions, remember that there are other pieces to consider.

White has the bishop pair but Black wants to open things up while his opponent's king is in the centre and its army languishes at home.

9 cxd5 b6

The c5-knight was attacked and Black doesn't think twice about jettisoning a pawn to keep up the momentum. Now 10 dxe6 looks very greedy and on my databases I can find no practical examples of this sacrifice being accepted by humans or machines.



NOTE: Machines or computer engines have a reputation for being far more materialistic than us of flesh and blood. They don't get nervous about accepting 'hot' pawns and they don't crack under pressure. However, that doesn't mean that their initial levitation towards greed is the right way to go. Invariably it is their lack of judgement that leaves them requiring several minutes of deep analysis to conclude that adequate compensation is being provided.

10 b4 Na4 (Diagram 4)

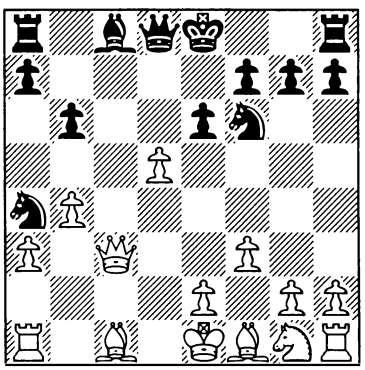


Diagram 4
White's pieces are at home!

Plans

After his next response White will have no pieces out to show for his first eleven moves. After, say, 11 Qb3 Black will most likely protect his attacked knight with 11...b5 and then continue to make an assault against the undeveloped white position. As for the first player, he must try to stabilise the situation and get his pieces into the game as quickly as possible. A failure to do so could so easily mean his being pushed off the board.

Illustrative Games

Game 27
☐ **Kiriakov** ■ **Tiviakov**
Monarch Assurance Open, Port Erin 1999

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 Bxc5 6 Nf3 Qb6

Black knows that both his queen and bishop will have to move again soon but sees this as a fair trade for keeping White's bishop within its own pawn structure.

7 e3 Qc7 8 b3 b6 9 Bb2 Bb7 10 Be2 a6

A typical move to prevent an annoying Nb5.



WARNING: Black must be very careful to guard the d6-square because an infiltration there by White could prove deadly.

11 Rd1

A standard idea. White utilises the half-open d-file to pressurise Black's d-pawn.

11...Be7

Black must retreat this bishop before playing ...d7-d6 so that it doesn't get caught offside.

12 0-0 0-0?! (Diagram 5)

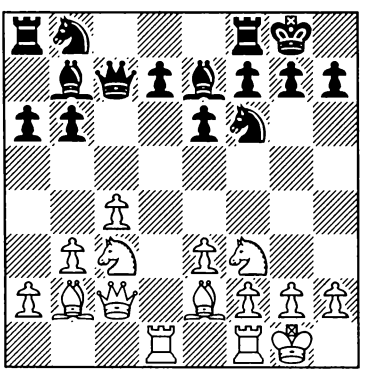


Diagram 5
Premature castling?

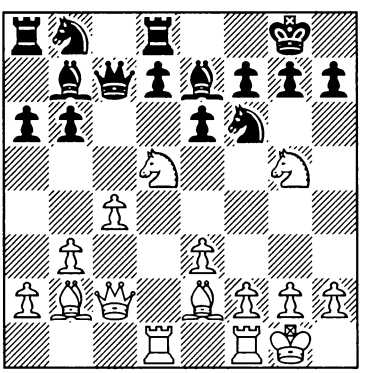


Diagram 6
Out of the blue!

Amazingly, in view of this game I am inclined to go as far as calling this move a mistake. Previously, completing the 'hedgehog' set-up first with 12...d6 and 13...Nbd7 had been attempted. I just wonder whether those black players knew why that was!

13 Ng5!

Being a Queen's Indian (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6) player as well, there is little doubt that Grandmaster Tiviakov has come across this theme before – White cheekily has ideas of delivering mate on h7. There is no white bishop contesting the h1-a8 diagonal here (often it fianchettoes on g2), but the alarm bells should be ringing.

13...Rd8

Giving the king an escape square and presumably hoping (but failing!) to dissuade White from playing the forthcoming continuation.

Note that 13...h6? would lose on the spot to 14 Nd5! exd5 15 Bxf6 hxg5 16 Bxe7 Re8 17 Bxg5.

14 Nd5!! (Diagram 6)

Played anyway. As soon becomes clear, White generates excellent positional, as well as tactical, compensation for the piece.

14...exd5

Refusing the sacrifice is no use, e.g. 14...Bxd5 15 Bxf6 Bxf6 16 Qxh7+ Kf8 17 cxd5 Bxg5 18 d6 winning the queen because of the threat of 19 Qh8 mate.

15 Bxf6 Bxf6 16 Qxh7+ Kf8 17 cxd5 d6

Necessary to prevent White from advancing his pawn there. White already has two pawns in the bag for the piece and Black's awkward queenside situation doesn't help him.

18 Bh5 Bxg5

After 18...Nd7 the white knight would have inflicted some grief via 19 Nxf7 Rdc8 20 Nh6 (with mate initiated through 21 Qg8+ extremely difficult to stop).

19 Qh8+ Ke7 20 Qxg7 Rf8 21 Qxg5+ Ke8 22 Rc1 Qd8

Instead 22...Qe7 would have just returned the piece in view of the obvious 23 Qxe7+ Kxe7 24 Rc7+.

23 Qf5 (Diagram 7)

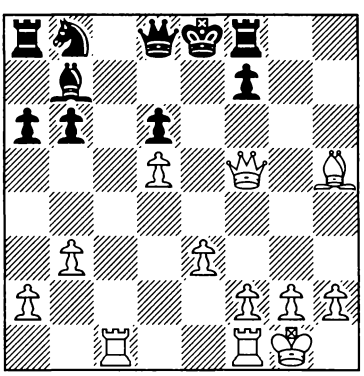


Diagram 7
The f7-pawn is pinned

Sneakily threatening to transpose into the previous note via 24 Qe6+.



WARNING: Remember that pinned pieces don't fulfil the role that they normally do.

23...Qe7 24 Rc4

Relentless. Black doesn't want to allow an enemy rook to his seventh rank, but he must guard against 25 Re4.

24...Nd7 25 Rc7 Bc8 26 Rfc1 Kd8 27 Bg4

It's horrible! Black is dreadfully tied up and is just waiting for the inevitable.

27...Qe8 28 R1c6 Rg8 29 h3

As it happens, a forced winning continuation was 29 Qc2 Ke7 30 Qe4+ Kd8 31 Qc4 Ke7 32 Bxd7 Bxd7 33 Qh4+ Kf8 34 Qh6+ Ke7 35 Qxd6+ Kd8 36 Qf6+ Qe7 37 Rxd7+ Kxd7 38 Rc7+ Kxc7 39 Qxe7+ Kb8 40 Qd6+ Kc8 41 Qc6+ Kb8 42 Qxb6+ Kc8 43 Qc6+ Kb8 44 d6 Ra7 45 d7 Rb7 46 Qd6+, but I don't think we should be too hard on White!

29...b5 30 Qf4 Qf8 31 Bxd7 Bxd7 32 Qf6+ Ke8

As previously seen, 32...Qe7 would fall foul of 33 Rxd7+ Kxd7 34 Rc7+.

33 Rxd6 Rd8 34 Rdxd7 Black resigns

On 34...Rxd7 White has the terminating 35 Rc8+.

Game 28
☐ **Shirov** ■ **Bauer**
Istanbul Olympiad 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 Na6 6 a3 Qa5?! (Diagram 8)

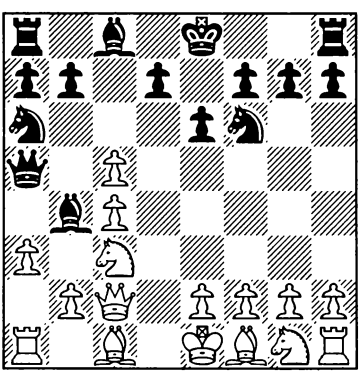


Diagram 8
The c5-pawn's a goner!

This is possible because the a-pawn is now pinned. However, theoretically speaking it is an inferior continuation.

7 Bd2 Nxc5 8 0-0-0!?

A very ambitious move but that's the sort of player that Shirov is. Any back rank rook move (thus threatening axb4) looks playable, whilst 8 e3 Bxc3 9 Bxc3 Qa4 10 0-0-0 Qxc2+ 11 Kxc2 should also be comfortably better for White.

8...Bxc3 9 Bxc3 Qa4

Black really had to preserve the queens in order to try and justify his 6th move.

10 Qxa4 Nxa4 11 Be5!?

Naturally White wants to keep both halves of his bishop pairing on the board and there is a certain magnetism about the d6-square.

11...b6

11...d5 is best met by 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 cxd5 exd5 14 e4!, bearing in mind 14...dxe4? 15 Bb5+.

12 f3

Both covering the square and preparing the push e2-e4.

12...Ke7 13 Bd6+ Kd8 14 e4 Ne8 15 Bg3 Ke7 16 b3 Nc5 17 b4 Na4 18 Kc2

White's kingside pieces remain at home yet he still employs this cheeky move that threatens 19 Kb3 to trap the 'on-the-rim' knight.

18...d6 19 Kb3 Bd7 (Diagram 9)

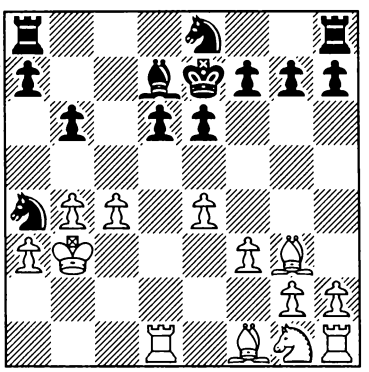


Diagram 9
Kings doing things!

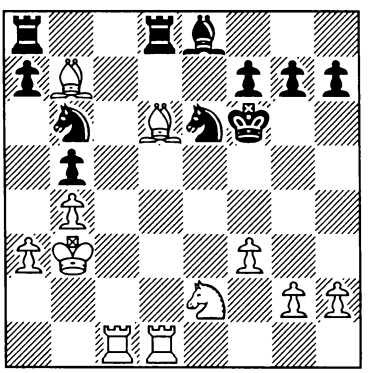


Diagram 10
All squares covered

20 e5! d5

The point behind White's last move was that 20...dxe5? is unplayable in view of 21 Rxd7+! Kxd7 22 Kxa4.

21 cxd5 exd5 22 Ba6!

22 Rxd5? allowing 22...Be6 was not a consideration for White, who now prevents a black rook from coming to the c-file.

22...Nc7 23 e6!

A neat tactical shot.

23...Nxe6

Offering more hope than 23...Nxa6? 24 exd7 b5 25 Rxd5.

24 Rxd5 Bc6 25 Bd6+ Kf6 26 Be5+ Ke7 27 Bd6+

NOTE: Often experienced players repeat the position once with no intention of doing it a second time and enabling the opponent to claim a draw. One reason for doing this may be to ward off time trouble but another is to gain the psychological advantage of showing just who is boss!

27...Kf6 28 Rd2 Rhd8 29 Ne2 b5 30 Rc1

The a6-bishop may appear to be cut off but there is no serious chance of Black rounding it up.

30...Be8 31 Rdd1 Nb6 32 Bb7 (Diagram 10)

Here the bishops demonstrate just how well they combine. The attacked black rook has nowhere to run to.

32...Nc4 33 Bxa8 Rxa8 34 Nc3 Kg6 35 Nxb5!

Simplifying the situation to a different completely won endgame.

35...Bxb5 36 Rxc4 Bxc4+ 37 Kxc4 Rc8+ 38 Kb5 Rc2 39 Ka6 Rxg2 40 Kxa7 Black resigns

White's passed pawns on the queenside will roll to victory.

Game 29
☐ **Bykov** ■ **Nikolenko**
Russia Cup, Moscow 1999

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 Na6 6 Nf3

As implied by the theoretical section, more critical is 6 a3. The problem with placing a knight here is that White won't be able to keep a black knight out of e4 with f2-f3.

6...Nxc5!? 7 a3 Bxc3+ 8 Qxc3 b6!? (Diagram 11)

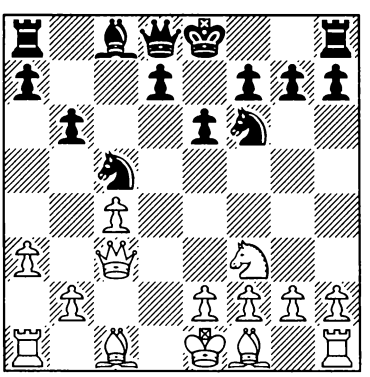


Diagram 11
Will it be a6 or b7?

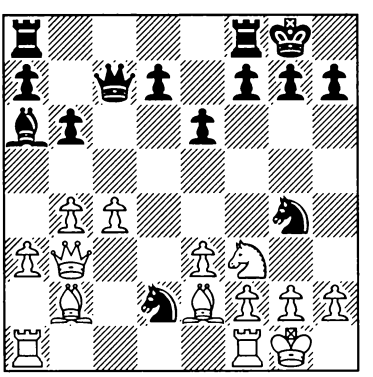


Diagram 12
A decisive family fork

9 e3 0-0 10 Be2 Ba6

Black chooses to apply pressure to the c4-pawn, with ...Rc8 next on

the agenda.

11 b4 Nce4 12 Qb3?!

In retrospect 12 Qd4 d6 13 Bb2 would have been better.

12...Qc7!

Black continues his assault on White's c-pawn but he has something else in mind too.

13 Bb2 Ng4! 14 0-0??

Okay, this loses but aside from the fact that it would leave the h-pawn en prise, protecting the f-pawn with 14 Rf1 was hardly attractive.

14...Nd2!! (Diagram 12)

A winning deflection.

Oh dear! The f3-knight is required to guard against ...Qxh2 mate and so the text constitutes a very impressive fork.

15 Be5 Nxf3+

15...Nxb3 would also have won material.

16 Bxf3 Nxe5 17 Bxa8 Bxc4 18 Rfc1 Rxa8 19 h3

With 19 f4 being met by 19...Rc8, the game is effectively over.

19...d5 20 a4 Qe7 21 Qc3 Nd3 22 Rcb1 Qh4 23 Qd2 e5 24 b5 h6 25 a5 Re8 26 axb6 axb6 27 f3 e4 28 f4 Qg3 29 Rf1 Bxb5 30 Rab1 Bc4 White resigns

The b-pawn might drop but then ...Ra8-a2 is crushing.

Game 30

☐ **Golod** ■ **Gaprindashvili**

Linares 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 Na6 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 Qxc3 Nxc5 8 f3 d6 (Diagram 13)

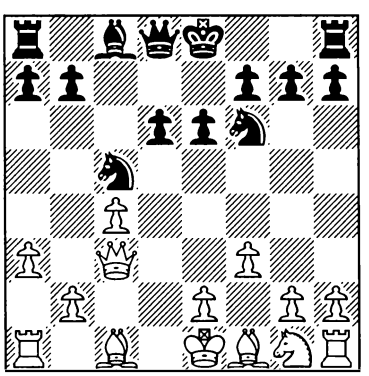


Diagram 13
Black is in no hurry

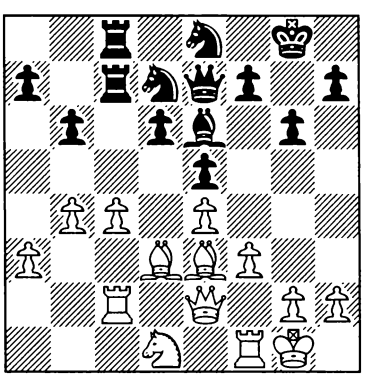


Diagram 14
Aiming for the outpost

Though this move is not ridiculous, the general feeling is that Black needs to act quickly and that is why 8...d5!? holds more appeal.

9 e4 0-0 10 Be3 b6 11 Nh3!?

Not the first time that we have seen this way of deploying the knight. Although 11 Ne2 is perfectly playable, on h3 the knight doesn't obstruct the bishop and it has both f4 and f2 as future possibilities.

11...e5 12 Nf2 Be6

The backward d6-pawn will eventually become a target for White but Black's focus of attention is the c4-pawn.

13 b4!

Budging the knight from its comfortable perch and gaining space on the queenside.

13...Ncd7 14 Rc1 Rc8 15 Qd2 Qe7 16 Bd3 Rc7



TIP: If you are stuck for a plan, you generally can't go wrong with a doubling of rooks on a half-open file.

17 0-0 Rfc8 18 Qe2 Ne8?!

Playing into White's hands by adopting a rather defensive stance. More troubling to the opponent would have been 18...Nh5!? with a view to invading on f4.

19 Rc2 g6 20 Nd1 (Diagram 14)

White prepares to manoeuvre the knight to the outpost on d5.

20...Kh8 21 Bf2

And it is going to use the e3-square as opposed to the c3-square, which would interfere with the defence of the c-pawn.

21...f5 22 Ne3 Qf7 23 Rfc1 Ng7 24 Nd5 Rc6

24...Bxd5? 25 cxd5 Rxc2 26 Rxc2 would see the white bishops reigning supreme.

25 c5!

Opening up some diagonals in favour of the material-winning 25 b5 Bxd5 26 bxc6 Bxc6, which would leave Black with a solid position.

25...dxc5 26 Ba6 Rb8 27 Bb5 Rcc8 28 Bxd7

White deems that now is a reasonable time to concede a bishop.

28...Qxd7 29 bxc5 bxc5 30 h3!?

Preferring not to rush into 30 Rxc5 Rxc5 31 Bxc5 Bxd5 32 exd5 Qxd5 33 Bxa7 Ra8.

30...fxe4 31 fxe4 Nh5

31...Bxd5 32 exd5 Qxd5 33 Rxc5 Rxc5 34 Rxc5 Qd6 35 Qxe5 would leave White with a big endgame advantage.

32 Rxc5 Rxc5 33 Rxc5 Nf4 34 Nxf4 exf4 35 Qc2 (Diagram 15)



TIP: Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker.

As the black king is exposed along the a1-h8 diagonal, White has an

obvious plan of attack. With the white rook poised to invade on c7, Black has his work cut out trying to cover key dark squares. Certainly his light-squared bishop is of little help in that department.

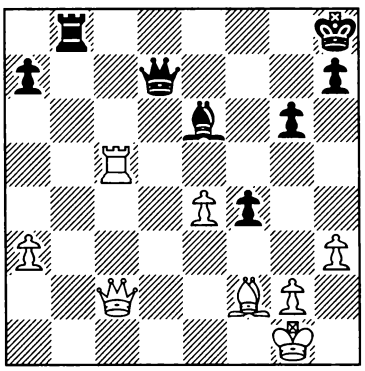


Diagram 15
Dark-squared trouble

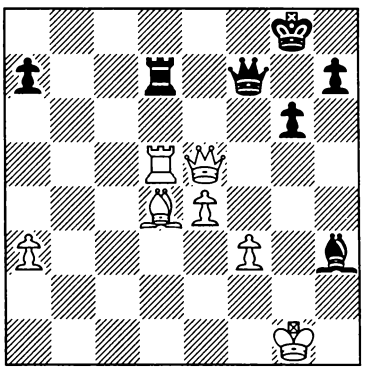


Diagram 16
Threatening mate

35...Rb7

Reiterating my previous comments, 35...Rc8? 36 Qc3+ Kg8 37 Rxc8+ Qxc8 38 Qf6, followed by Bd4, would be crushing. Observe how in comparison White's own king has no worries whatsoever.

36 Qc3+ Kg8 37 Qf6

Actually 37 Qe5!, again with Bd4 in mind, would have been even stronger.

37...Qf7 38 Qe5 f3 39 gxf3

Black's grovelling plan was 39 Bd4 Kf8!.

39...Bxh3 40 Rd5?

Due to time trouble we now see a double mistake. A forced win is 40 Bd4! Kf8 41 Rd5 Bd7 42 Qh8+ Qg8 (or 42...Ke7 43 Bc5+ Ke6 44 Qe5 mate) 43 Qf6+ Qf7 44 Bc5+ Kg8 45 Qd8+ Be8 (or 45...Kg7 46 Bd4+ Kh6 47 Qg5 mate and 45...Qe8 46 Rxd7!) 46 Re5. Black cannot defend the bishop on e8 and 46...Rb1+ 47 Kg2 Rb2+ 48 Kg3 are merely spite checks.

40...Rd7?

Returning the mistake. Although there are plenty of dangerous-looking checks, it appears that there is no win after 40...Qxf3!.

41 Bd4! (Diagram 16) 41...Qxf3 42 Qh8+ Kf7 43 Qg7+ Ke8 44 Qg8+ Ke7

Alternatively 44...Qf8 45 Re5+ Re7 46 Rxe7+ Kxe7 47 Bc5+ is a juicy skewer!

45 Bc5+ Kf6 46 Qf8+ Rf7 47 Bd4+ Black resigns

It's mate next move.

Game 31
☐ **Ionov** ■ **Aseev**
St. Petersburg 1997

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 Na6 6 a3 Bxc3+ 7 Qxc3 Nxc5 8 b4

Rather than preventing Black's next with 8 f3, White seems to positively encourage it. White, however, was looking for a square to develop his dark-squared bishop and b2 is quite attractive.

8...Nce4 9 Qd4 d5 10 c5 (Diagram 17)

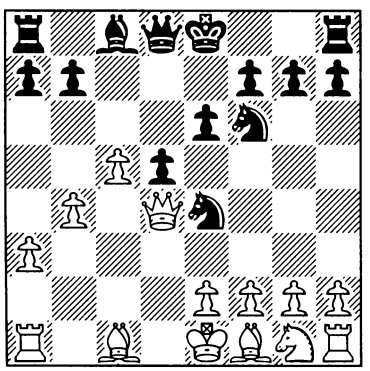


Diagram 17
The e4-knight lacks a retreat

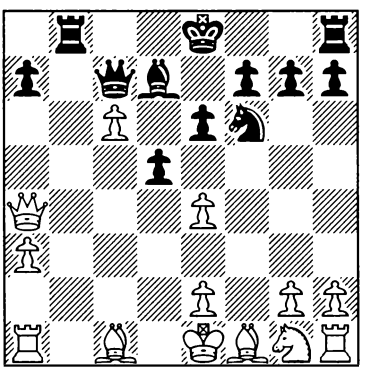


Diagram 18
Has White forgotten something?

A natural reaction. Given the chance to play the likes of Nf3, e3, Be2, Bb2 and 0-0, White would be laughing. Black, though, has no intention of being so obliging.

10...b6!

The e4-knight has no safe retreat square but Black ignores this fact in favour of getting to grips with the c5-pawn.

11 f3 bxc5 12 bxc5 Qa5+ 13 Qb4 Qc7

Keeping things lively. Instead 13...Qxb4+ 14 axb4 Nc3 would be playing into White's hands.



TIP: Knights often dislike open spaces.

Whereas the long-range bishop can exit from a battle area quickly, without pawns to offer protection, a knight away from home can easily be a liability. This is an important point that people often don't pay enough heed to when weighing up the relative virtues of bishops and knights.

14 fxe4 Rb8 15 Qa4+ Bd7 16 c6 (Diagram 18)

Black's piece sacrifice has lead to a very complicated position. What is

clear, though, is that sixteen moves into the game, White only has pawn and queen moves on display; a feature which tempts Black into putting more wood on the fire.

16...Qe5!? 17 cxd7+ Ke7 18 Ra2?! Qc3+ 19 Kd1

Beautiful is 19 Bd2? Rb1+ 20 Kf2 Ng4 mate.

19...Ng4

Threatening 20...Nf2 mate.

20 Qxa7 Rb1

Pinning the bishop and thus, as well as ...Q(or R)xc1 mate, White has ...Ne3+ to deal with.

21 d8Q+ Kxd8 22 Rc2 Ne3+ 23 Qxe3 Qxe3 (Diagram 19)

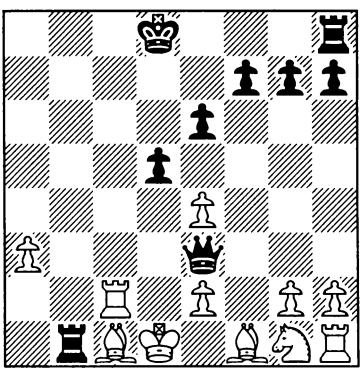


Diagram 19
Too late to develop!

White has three pieces for the queen, but just look where they are!

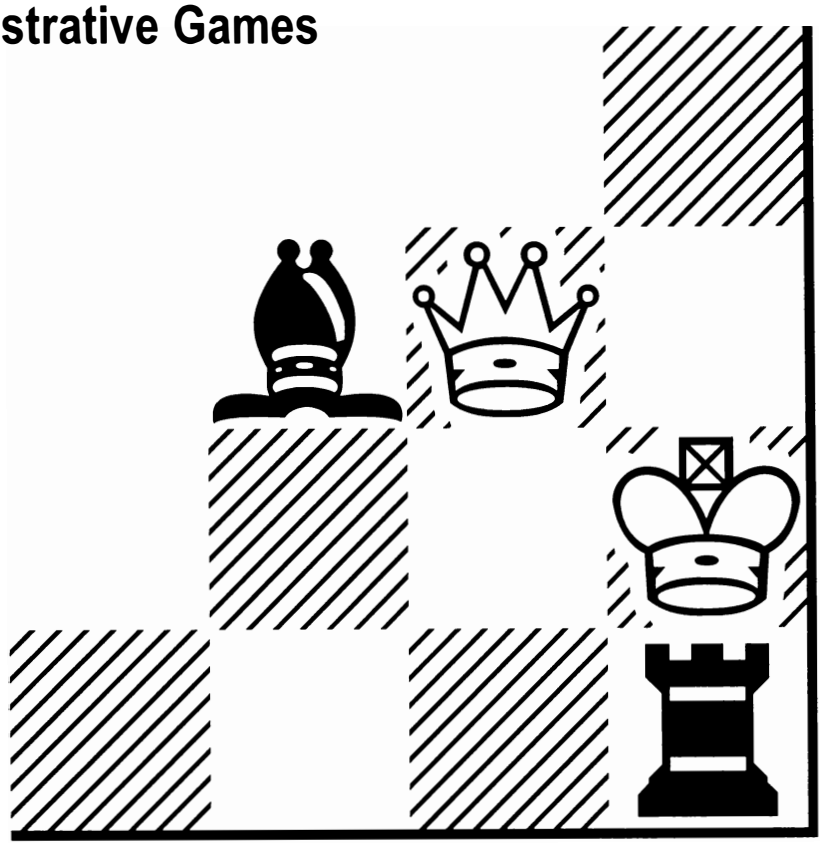
24 Nf3 dxe4 25 Nd2 Ra1 26 Rb2 Ke7 27 Rb7+ Kf6 White resigns

The h8-rook will go to c8 or d8 next.

Chapter Seven

4 Nf3 b6

- Introduction
- White Plays 5 Qb3
- White Plays 5 Bg5
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 b6 (Diagram 1)

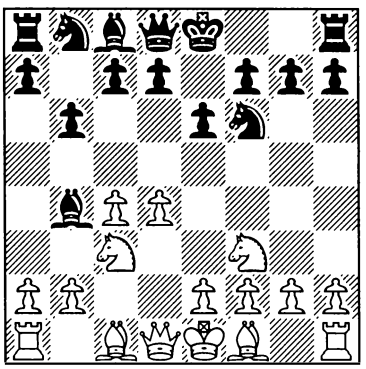


Diagram 1
Simply developing

Although throughout this book I no doubt go on and on about the need to battle for the e4-square, it is very difficult to criticise the move 4 Nf3. It's true that an early f2-f3 is eliminated from the equation, but White keeps several other options open. If so desired, I guess e2-e3 is possible although more popular is to extract the bishop with Bg5 first. Then, on a completely different track, we have the concept of a kingside fianchetto. That is covered in Chapter 9.

As for the logical reply 4...b6 (illustrated in Diagram 1), this is the first of three familiar black responses that I will take a look at. The other two are 4...0-0 (Chapter 8) and 4...c5 (Chapter 9).



WARNING: Although one may start off playing a certain opening, there is always the possibility that you may (by accident) transpose into a different one. As this may not suit you, it pays to be on the ball.

Regarding this possible occurrence, observe that the alternative 4...d5 would transpose to a 'QGD Vienna Variation'.

Anyway, here the chapter diverges:

White Plays 5 Qb3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 b6 5 Qb3

A continuation that has become popular in recent times. The white queen ventures slightly further afield than in the Classical Variation, but for a reason. Not only is the c3-knight protected so as to avoid the doubling of pawns but the pinning bishop is directly attacked. Should Black rather too casually trade off minor pieces then White could

boast that he has saved a tempo by not having to play a2-a3.

5...a5

A simple reply that avoids the wild lines of 5...c5 (guarding the bishop whilst simultaneously attacking the white centre) featured in Games 32-34.

6 a3

Because of Black's clever riposte, White players have been known to settle for 6 g3 instead. Indeed, many see it as an improvement over the less popular 5 g3 (i.e. directly after 4...b6) that leads to opposed fianchettoed bishops but with the structurally weakening ...Bxc3+ thrown in.

6...a4

QUESTION 8: Doesn't this simply leave the bishop en prise?

7 Qc2

I'm going to assume that you either knew or have read the answer to the above question and accept that if White is eager to avoid doubled pawns, then this is his best option.

7...Bxc3+ 8 Qxc3 Bb7 (Diagram 2)

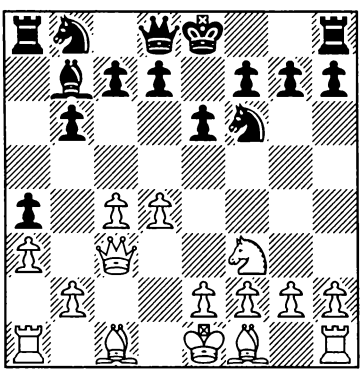


Diagram 2
The b2-pawn is 'fixed'

Plans

Although White has achieved the knight-for-bishop trade that he was after, the general feeling is that the a-pawn advance has favoured Black. Bearing in mind the good old 'en passant' rule, White can't now play b2-b4 without receiving an isolated a-pawn. Furthermore, aside from the usual ...d7-d6 and ...Nbd7 standard development idea, there is also the possibility of a ...Nc6-a5-b3 manoeuvre. White could try to make something of c4-c5 but that only gives the f6-knight another attractive alternative to e4. Objectively I doubt that Black really stands

better but he certainly has the more obvious moves to play whereas his opponent will have a tough job of making his bishop pair advantage count.

White Plays 5 Bg5

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 b6 5 Bg5 (Diagram 3)

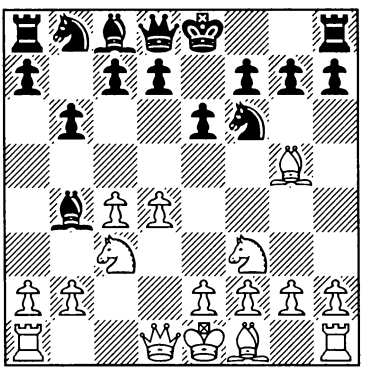


Diagram 3
The battle of the pins

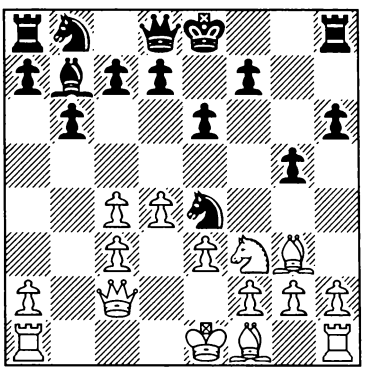


Diagram 4
Occupying e4

This is the move that sticks in my mind from when Garry Kasparov began championing it in the mid 1980's. Many juniors seem to like employing the move Bg5 in a lot of openings and, consequently, against the Nimzo I was no different. Pins are the order of the day; Black now realises that he must forgo his if he wants to 'unpin' with the retreat ...Be7.

5...Bb7

For now, though, Black continues his development and again casts a watchful eye over e4.

6 e3 h6

Black puts the question to the white bishop but it must not lose its nerve now with 7 Bxf6 or else his opponent will be very happy.

7 Bh4 g5



WARNING: Though frequently tempting, there can often be repercussions of such an early kingside advance.

Game 33 offers backing to the above assertion but that doesn't mean that the text is a mistake. As an alternative Black does have a quieter set-up available in the form of 7...Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 d6, with the idea of ...Nbd7 and possibly ...Qe7. That offers some flexibility and indeed there is no need for him to commit his king too early. However, though risky, 7...g5 is perfectly playable. The f6-knight will be free to move and there are no prizes for guessing where it is heading!

8 Bg3 Ne4

Piling direct pressure on the c3-knight. Here Kasparov came up with the offer of a pawn sacrifice with 9 Nd2!?. Then of course 9...Bxc3 10 bxc3 Nxc3?? would leave the knight stranded after 11 Qc2, whereas 9...Nxc3 10 bxc3 Bxc3 11 Rc1 provides some compensation. Below, though, is the most obvious sequence.

9 Qc2 Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 (Diagram 4)

Plans

As the e4-knight is in no immediate danger, Black has time to develop in a typical fashion with ...d7-d6 and ...Nbd7. I suspect that castling kingside might be a touch dodgy but, aside from castling queenside, a plan of ...Kf8-g7 is not unusual as a rook remains on the h-file in case of trouble. Alternatively, the immediate 10...Nxg3 forces White to make a decision on which way he should recapture.



TIP: Generally one is advised to capture with pawns towards the centre.

I thought that I'd get that tip in before notifying you that, although in this instance 11 hxg3 offers an attractive half-open h-file, in fact 11 fxg3 is the main move! Suddenly White then has three pawn islands but a half-open f-file to go along with the one on the b-file.

Either way, White will look to utilise those rook possibilities and to exploit the weaknesses created by the advance of the black h- and g-pawns. His a-pawn could be called into action and each of c4-c5 and d4-d5 should come into consideration at various stages.

Another idea featuring an early ...g5-g4 and ...Qg5 is referred to in Game 35.

Illustrative Games

Game 32
□ **C.Horvath ■ Weinzettl**
Austrian Team Championship 1999

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6

Regarding my earlier statement on transpositions, here this game starts off as a 'Queen's Indian Defence'.

4 Nc3 Bb4 5 Qb3 c5 (Diagram 5) 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4 Nc6

Black forsakes ...Bb7 in order to immediately pressurise the centre.

8 d5 Na5

A move which highlights one of the drawbacks of having the queen on b3.

9 Qc2 g5

It certainly appears that this is the critical juncture in this line and

what is clear is that 9...Nxc4 is equally risky, e.g. 10 0-0-0 Bxc3 11 Qxc3 exd5 12 Rxd5 Na5 13 Rd6 Qc7 14 Rxf6 d5 15 Qe3+ Kf8 16 Bg3 and Black resigned in Miles-Kalesis, Chania 1997.

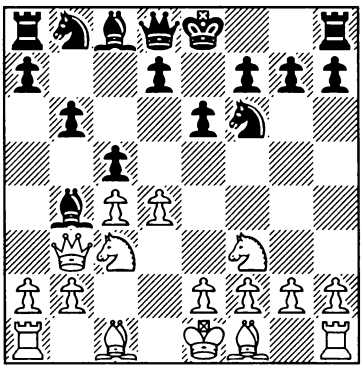


Diagram 5
A busy c-pawn

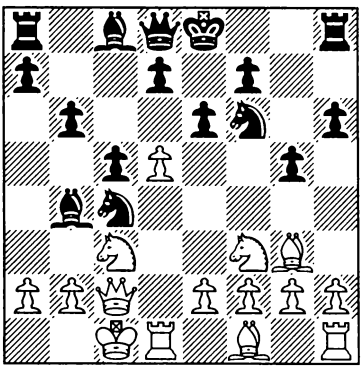


Diagram 6
Crazy stuff!

The move 9...Ba6 is covered in the next game, while a safe option is 9...d6. At the other end of the spectrum, if Black really wanted to be provocative then 9...0-0 10 0-0-0 Ba6 11 Ne4 Bxc4 could be attempted: 12 Nxf6+ gxf6 13 dxe6 Bxa2 14 Rxd7 Bxe6 15 Rd3 Qc7 16 Kb1 Bf5 17 e4 Bxe4 18 Bxf6 Qc6 19 Be7 Rfe8 20 Ne5 Bxd3 21 Qxd3 Qe6 22 Bd6 Rad8 23 Qg3+ Kh8 24 Qf4 Re7 25 Bc4 Qxd6 26 Nxf7+ Rxf7 and White resigned in Karason-McMahon, Reykjavik 1999.

10 Bg3 Nxc4 11 0-0-0 (Diagram 6) 11...g4?

As Black's own dark-squared bishop is nowhere to be seen, this is a potentially suicidal move. Nevertheless, I'm sure that the above side-lines have convinced you of the danger to Black, leading one to the definite conclusion that White already has good compensation for the pawn.

12 Bh4!

The pin is back with ...g5 no longer an option.



NOTE: Pawns can't move backwards!

Okay, the above statement is obvious but the implication is that one should be absolutely certain before advancing pawns as there is no turning the clock back.

12...gxf3 13 Ne4 Black resigns

Game 33
☐ **Wells** ■ **Koneru**
British Championship, Millfield 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 b6 5 Qb3 c5 6 Bg5 Nc6 7 d5 Na5

8 Qc2 h6 9 Bh4 Ba6 (Diagram 7)

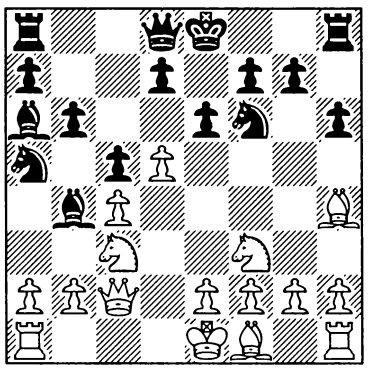


Diagram 7
Scrutinising c4

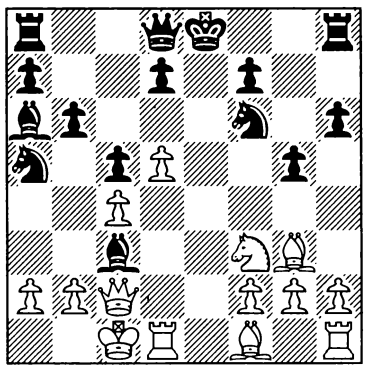


Diagram 8
White ignores the bishop

The only serious move in this position not discussed in the last game. Black keeps her options open as to whether or not she captures the offered c-pawn and indeed with which piece she might take it.

10 e4 g5 11 Bg3 exd5

Possibly with this move Black overlooks the strength of White's dynamic response. In view of this, perhaps the immediate 11...Bxc4 makes more sense. However, then both 12 0-0-0 and 12 Bxc4 Nxc4 13 0-0 provide White with very reasonable compensation for the pawn.

12 0-0-0!

Unpinning the c3-knight and introducing the rook to the central shenanigans. A blasting open of the centre could spell disaster for the black king which, in the light of the ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5 expansion moves, won't feel too comfortable on the kingside either.

12...Bxc3

A key point to note is that after, say, 12...d4 13 Nd5 the b4-bishop would be stuck out on a limb.

13 exd5! (Diagram 8) 13...0-0

Black cannot preserve the bishop as, besides the whole concept of the trapping a2-a3 after 13...Bb4, White has the powerful 14 Bd6!. This threatens 15 Qe4+ and practically forces the temporary saviour 14...Ng8. However, after 15 Bd3 a rook will make it to e1 next anyhow, with 15...f6 16 Bg6 mate not exactly being what Black is after!

14 Qxc3 Ne4 15 Qc2 Nxg3

Black eliminates one of the potentially devastating white bishops, although now there is the h-file to contend with.

16 hxg3 Qf6 17 Nh2!

There is simply no let-up from White, who plans an invasion of the

enemy king position while the black minor pieces languish redundantly on the queenside.



NOTE: Were the black g-pawn back on g7, Black wouldn't be experiencing anything like the problems that she is here.

17...h5 (Diagram 9)

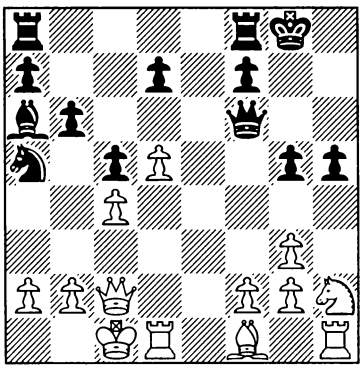


Diagram 9
The h-file holds promise

Saving this pawn but, because of the upcoming mate threat on h7, not interfering with White's plan.

18 Ng4! Qg6 19 Bd3 f5 20 Bxf5! Black resigns

The knight fork on h6 would regain any temporarily sacrificed material. A fine game by White.

Game 34
☐ **Campos Moreno** ■ **Adams**
Spanish Team Championship 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 b6 5 Qb3 c5 6 a3 Ba5 7 Bg5 Bb7

Black develops his bishop naturally although it should be observed that the b6-pawn is now pinned to it.

8 dxc5

A quieter alternative is 8 e3 though even here the players can steer the game (with mutual agreement) to rather sharper waters, e.g. 8...0-0 9 Rd1 Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 Qe7 11 Be2 d6 12 0-0 Nbd7 13 Nd2 Rfc8 14 f3 h6 15 Bh4 Qe8 16 e4 Nh5 17 f4 f5 with all sorts of fun in the middle, Seirawan-Adams, Bermuda (1st match game) 1999.

8...Na6! (Diagram 10)

Black's whole point is that he is ready to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative. Too passive is 8...Bxc3+?!, for example 9 Qxc3 bxc5 10 Nd2 0-0 11 0-0-0 h6 12 h4! (if the bishop is captured then Black will suffer severely along the h-file) 12...d6 13 Bxf6 Qxf6 14 Qxf6 gxf6 15 Nb3 Rd8

16 Nxc5 with a clear extra pawn for White, Wells-Eismont, Harkany 1993.

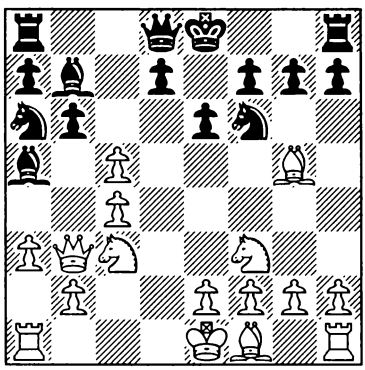


Diagram 10
Take my pawn!

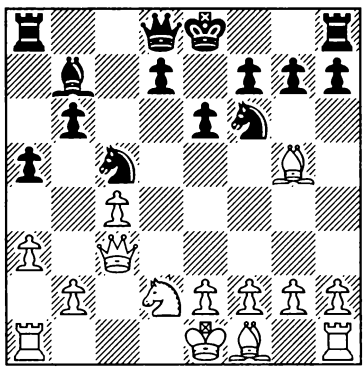


Diagram 11
...a5-a4 is threatened

9 Qc2

Accepting the offering is very risky, e.g. 9 cxb6?! Nc5 10 Qc2 Be4 11 Qd1 Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 Qxb6 13 g3 Ng4 14 Qd4 (if 14 Bg2?? then 14...Nd3+! with big things happening on f2) 14...0-0 15 Be7 Qb2! 16 Rd1 Nb3 17 Qxe4 Qxc3+ 18 Nd2 Nxd2 19 Rxd2 Qa1+ 20 Rd1 Qc3+ 21 Rd2 Qc1+ 22 Rd1 Qxd1+! 23 Kxd1 Nxf2+ 24 Kc2 Nxe4 25 Bxf8 Rxf8 when Black was up on material in Van Wely-Seirawan, Wijk aan Zee 1995.

9...Bxc3+

Of course not 9...Nxc5? 10 b4.

10 Qxc3 Nxc5

White has the two bishops but, in a situation resembling the Classical Variation, he finds himself being behind on development and having to deal with the prospect of a knight coming to e4.

11 Nd2

The endgame after 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 Qxf6 gxf6 13 e3 Rg8!? is in Black's favour because of his active piece play.

11...a5 (Diagram 11) 12 b4?!

White wanted to prevent the pawn-fixing 12...a4 but the text opens up the position before White is really ready. More advisable is 12 b3.

12...axb4 13 axb4 Rxa1+ 14 Qxa1 Na6 15 Qb2 Qe7 16 c5 bxc5 17 e4

At least the threat of 18 e5 buys White some time.

17...h6 18 Bh4 e5 19 Bxa6 Bxa6

White tries to regain his pawn but now this bishop is a monster. Be-

ing unable to castle is ultimately White's downfall.

20 Qa3 Qe6 21 Bxf6 cxb4!

A well calculated intermezzo.

22 Qxb4 gxf6 (Diagram 12)

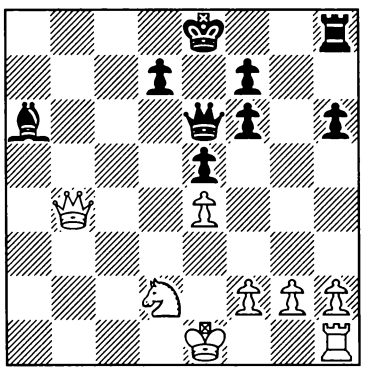


Diagram 12
No castling!

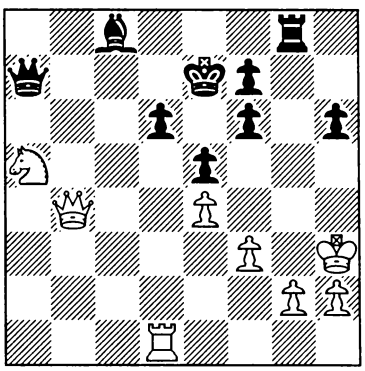


Diagram 13
A king on the ropes!

23 f3

After 23 Qb8+ Ke7 24 Qxh8 Qg4 the threats of mate on e2 and taking on g2 are too great.

23...Qc6 24 Kf2 d6 25 Rd1 Ke7 26 Nb3 Qc7! 27 Na5? Qa7+!

I did say 'always look out for checks' and the white king now pays the highest price for not having done so.

28 Kg3 Rg8+ 29 Kh3 Bc8+ White resigns (Diagram 13)

The white king has been caught in a deadly crossfire. After 30 g4 (or 30 Kh4 Qf2+ 31 Kh5 Rg5+ 32 Kxh6 Qh4 mate) the game should terminate via 30...Bxg4+! 31 fxg4 Qe3+ 32 Kh4 (or 32 Kg2 Rxg4+ 33 Kh1 Qf3 mate) 32...Qf2+ 33 Kh3 Qf3+ 34 Kh4 Qxg4 mate.

Game 35
☐ **Parker** ■ **Ward**
British Championship, Nottingham 1996

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 b6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 g5 7 Bg3 Ne4 (Diagram 14) 8 Rc1

Years later I faced the same opponent and the game continued in a more mainstream fashion with 8 Qc2 Bb7 9 e3 Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 Nxg3 11 fxg3 g4 12 Ne5 Qg5 13 Qf2 f5. Having control of the long b7-g2 diagonal is a comfortable feeling but White generated some play with 14 c5 Nc6 15 Nxc6 Bxc6 16 Bd3 bxc5 17 0-0. I really don't know why I adopted the greedy stance that I did (before then radically changing my mind!) but frankly I deserved all I got after 17...cxd4?! (Black is

better after 17...0-0) 18 exd4 0-0 19 Qe2 Rf6 20 Rae1 h5 21 Bb5 Be4 22 Bxd7 h4 23 Qc4 hxg3 24 hxg3 c6 25 Qc5 Bd5 26 c4 Bxg2 27 Kxg2 Qd2+ 28 Kg1 Kg7 29 Bxe6 Re8 30 d5 f4 31 Qf2 Qd3 32 Bf5 Qxf5 33 Rxe8 f3 34 Qxa7+ Rf7 35 Qd4+ and Black resigned, Parker-Ward, London League 2002.

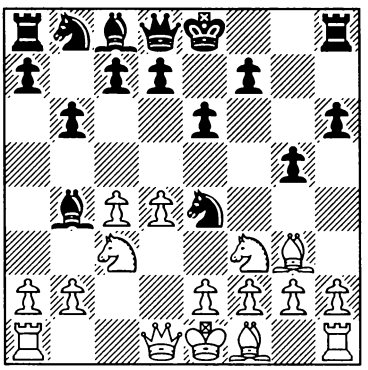


Diagram 14
Black's pin remains

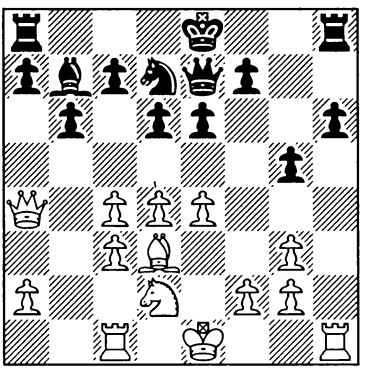


Diagram 15
White plays on both sides

On an advanced note, Black's selected move order has avoided Kasparov's pawn sacrifice (mentioned earlier) as 8 Nd2? Nxc3 9 bxc3 Bxc3 10 Rc1 Bxd4 cannot be justified.

8...Bxc3+ 9 bxc3

Although White hasn't had to play Qc2, frankly that would be more useful than placing the rook on the passive c1-square.

9...d6 10 Nd2

White has a plan of forgoing e2-e3 in favour of angling for e2-e4 in one turn.

10...Nxg3 11 hxg3 Nd7 12 e4 Bb7 13 Bd3 Qe7 14 Qa4 (Diagram 15) 14...e5?!

I wanted to place my pawns on dark squares but 14...c5 15 0-0 e5 would have been a more accurate way of doing so.

15 c5!?

White rightly seizes his chance to mix things up.

15...dxc5 16 0-0 a6 17 f4

With the black king having nowhere obvious to hide, White attempts to blow open the centre.

17...gxf4 18 gxf4 exf4 19 Rxf4 Rg8 20 Nf3 Rg7 21 Rb1 cxd4?

You'd think that I would have learnt my lesson. Both 21...Qd6 and 21...a5 would have been more prudent as opening up the c-file is not helpful to the defence!

22 cxd4 Qd6 23 e5 Qc6 24 Qa3 0-0-0 25 Rc1 Qe6 26 Bf5 Qd5 27 Qd6! (Diagram 16)

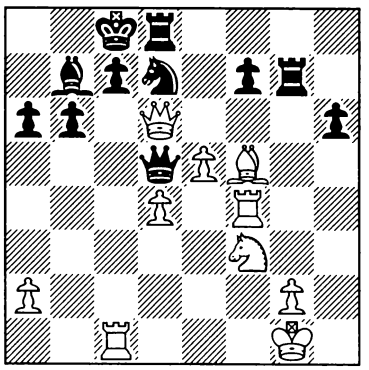


Diagram 16
Extremely visual!

Taking advantage of the pinned c-pawn and threatening mate.

27...Qxd6 28 exd6 c5 29 dxc5 bxc5 30 Ne5 Rxg2+

Alas, this is nothing more than a temporary annoyance.

31 Kf1 Rdg8 32 Rxc5+ Kd8 33 Nxf7+ Ke8 34 Bxd7+ Kxd7 35 Rc7+ Ke6 36 Re7+ Kd5 37 d7

This passed pawn can't be stopped.

37...Rg1+ 38 Ke2 R1g2+ 39 Rf2 R2g7 40 Re8 Black resigns

Game 36
□ Barsov ■ Zhang Zhong
Hastings 2001/02

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 b6 5 Bg5 Bb7 6 Nd2

This specific move is rare but the theme is not. The knight vacates the square that is key in an f2-f3 and e2-e4 bishop-blunting operation. The drawback is leaving d4 unprotected, a feature that Black seeks to exploit.

6...h6 7 Bh4 c5 8 a3 Bxc3 9 bxc3 d6 10 f3 Nbd7 11 e4 e5 12 d5 (Diagram 17)



NOTE: Remember that one must beware of making the sweeping statement that Black stands better in a blocked position.

Referring to the above position, one can accept how White's light-squared bishop could easily end up being dreadful, but it could also become comparatively active on a4. Besides this, Black's bishop is hardly the epitome of dynamism at present and, if White's knight ever makes it to f5, it could be far better off than either black knight could ever dream of being.

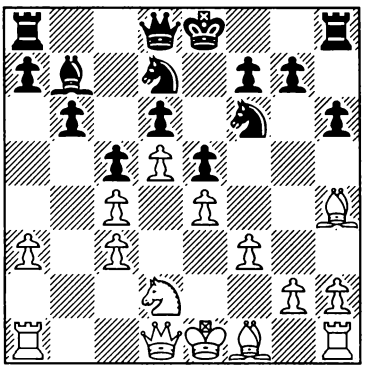


Diagram 17
Manoeuvring possibilities

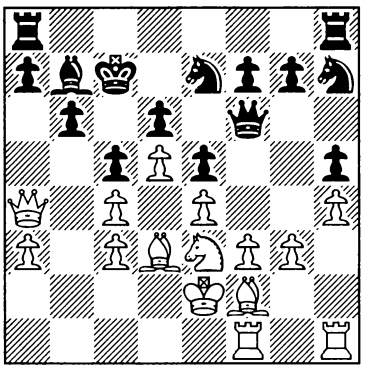


Diagram 18
A slow build-up

12...Qe7 13 Bd3 Nf8 14 Qa4+ Kd8



TIP: When the centre is blocked there is often no need to castle. Indeed, in such situations Black often moves his king to c7 where it is not only quite safe but also helps to defend the queenside in the very possible event of a white a-pawn advance.

15 Bf2 Ng6

The advance 15...g5 could have limited White's kingside possibilities but, on the other hand, it seriously weakens the f5-square.



TIP: Knights often love 'bishop five' squares, that is f5 and c5 for White and f4 and c4 for Black.

As 15...g5 creates an outpost on f5, White would then be gifted an obvious plan of manoeuvring his knight there (via f1 and e3).

16 g3 Nh7 17 h4 Kc7 18 Nf1 Qf6 19 Ke2 Ne7 20 Ne3 h5 21 Raf1 (Diagram 18)

To make serious progress White deems it necessary to prepare for the pawn break f3- f4.

21...g5

I was actually doing live commentary on this game and, despite my last remarks, this still seems to be playing into White's hands. Nevertheless, if Black wanted to win then he had to try something and the text possibly reflects the ambitions of the tournament's top seed.

22 hxg5

Now Black's h-pawn is isolated and could so easily soon become a target.

22...Nxg5 23 Be1 Qg6 24 f4! Nxe4 25 fxe5 Nxg3+?!

Due to the complexity of the position, Black can be forgiven for erring. In retrospect, 25...dxe5!? 26 Bxe4 Qxe4 27 Rxf7 Rhe8 offered a better

defence in view of 28 Rxh5 Bxd5!.

26 Kd2!

An 'automatic' 26 Bxg3? could have spoiled the advantage: 26...Qxg3 27 exd6+ Qxd6 28 Rxf7 Raf8 when Black is completely okay.

26...Nxf1+ 27 Rxf1 Qg5 28 exd6+ Kxd6 (Diagram 19)

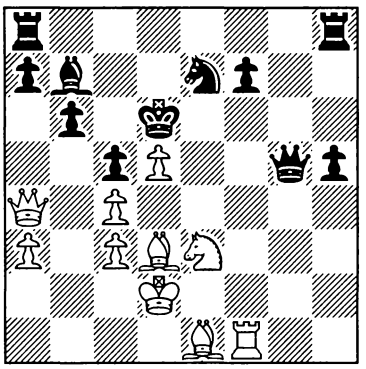


Diagram 19
Prepare yourself!

29 Rf6+!!

Extremely visual and note 29 Bg3+?! Qxg3 30 Rf6+ Kc7 31 d6+ Qxd6! would clearly have nothing like the same impact.

29...Ke5

The rook was out of bounds, e.g. 29...Qxf6 30 Bg3+ Qe5 31 Bxe5+ Kxe5 32 Qd7.

30 Rf3

Bringing the concept of Bg3+ into play.

30...f5 31 Bxf5 Rhd8 32 Bg3+ Kf6 33 Bc8+

33 Be6+ Kg7 34 Rf7+ Kh8 35 Bf4, with 36 Be5+ in mind, would have been a cleaner finish but from here on in there was only going to be one winner.

33...Kg7 34 Bxb7 Rf8 35 Bf4!

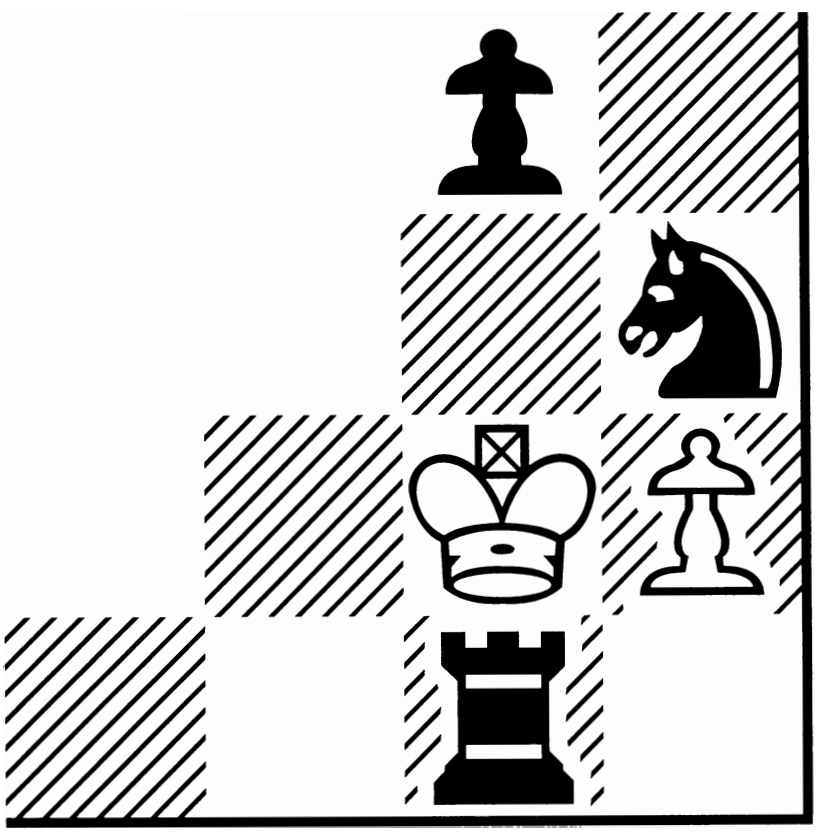
Securing an extra piece.

35...Rxf4 36 Rxf4 Rd8 37 Rf2 Ng6 38 Rg2 Qf4 39 Qc2 Rd6 40 Qf5 Black resigns

Chapter Eight

4 Nf3 0-0

- Introduction
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 0-0

Although it is difficult to be critical of such an obvious move as castling (particularly if you consider my early advice about 'always making a move that you know that you are going to play before one that you are not sure of'), personally I suspect it is inferior to the other 4th move alternatives. My reasoning is that Black commits his king a bit too early thus making it more difficult to escape the ensuing pin.

5 Bg5! (Diagram 1)

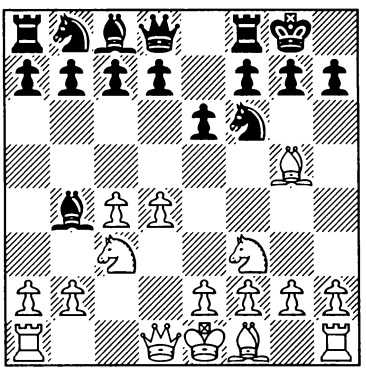


Diagram 1
No suitable 'unpin' available

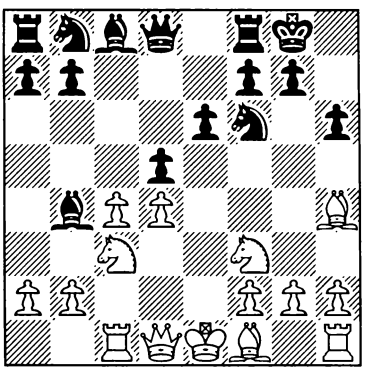


Diagram 2
White expects ...dxc4

5...h6

Games 39-41 sees Black forgoing this move but the positions reached with or without it can be very similar.

6 Bh4 c5

Reiterating my opening comment, the concept of ...g7-g5 is going to be very unattractive – the black king is likely to suffer.

7 e3 cxd4

I can certainly see why 7...Qa5 is tempting as it pressurises c3 whilst simultaneously unpinning the knight. If you play through Games 39 and 40, though, you will be surprised how quickly it loses its appeal!

8 exd4 d5

Black now appears to aim for an IQP-style position but the interjection of ...h7-h6 is detrimental (see Game 38).

Again the idea of 8...Qa5 is on the agenda but, because Black has already traded pawns on d4, the response 9 Bxf6 wouldn't really cut it here (check out Game 40 to see why).

Instead 9 Bd3!? looks quite promising for White after 9...Bxc3+ 10

bxc3 Qxc3+ 11 Kf1. He has a lead in development and, with Bxf6 available to tear open the black monarch's pawn shield, the f6-knight has nowhere to run.



NOTE: To try for an advantage against ...Qa5 ideas, White must be prepared to sacrifice a pawn.

9 Rc1 (Diagram 2)

Plans

9 Rc1 is a useful developing move which, aside from bringing a rook to a potentially open file, could also prove helpful in the event of a c4-c5 advance. Although 9 Bd3 looked obvious, Black is hoping for a ...dxc4, Bxc4 tempo gain leading into a typical IQP middlegame. As it stands Black must decide on whether to allow White's light-squared bishop to recapture directly from f1 or else commit his queen's knight now (i.e. either to c6 or d7). Game 38 is a famous encounter starting from Diagram 2.

Illustrative Games

Game 37
□ **Ward** ■ **Varley**
British Championship, Southampton 1986

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 0-0 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 c5 7 e3 g5?! (Diagram 3)

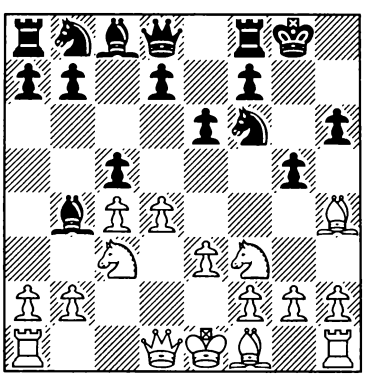


Diagram 3
Patzer's push!

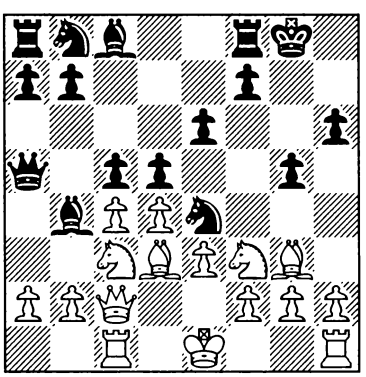


Diagram 4
a-pawn on offer!

With all due respect to my opponent, this would quite possibly be the number one choice for a novice. However, although this unpinning sequence was very acceptable in the last chapter, the presence of the black monarch on the kingside should be a deterrent.

WARNING: Beware moving pawns around the castled king.

Although the above is especially relevant when the kings rest on opposite sides of the board, often holes can be exploited after same-side castling too.

8 Bg3

QUESTION 9: Could White have considered sacrificing a piece with 8 Nxg5 here?

8...Ne4

The knight is now free to move and hence it hops into its favourite square. Black will have his fun, but when that is over there will be a high price to pay.

9 Qc2 Qa5 10 Rc1

It goes without saying that 10 Qxe4? Bxc3+ (and particularly 11 bxc3?? Qxc3+) is not the route to take!

10...d5 11 Bd3 (Diagram 4) 11...Qxa2

NOTE: It's worth remembering that the a2-pawn is effectively *en prise* in such a situation. Also, a ...Bxc3, bxc3 follow-up could lead to a trade of queens and to an endgame where Black is a pawn up.

In this position, though, White doesn't have an ending in mind.

12 Bxe4 dxe4 13 Ne5!?

White has a lead in development and intends to exploit the weaknesses around the enemy king.

13...Nd7 14 0-0 Bxc3 15 Qxc3

With a reminder of 'opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker', Black is destined to suffer on the dark squares. Furthermore, his queen is severely lacking in options and this is what seals his fate.

15...Qa4 16 dxc5 (Diagram 5)

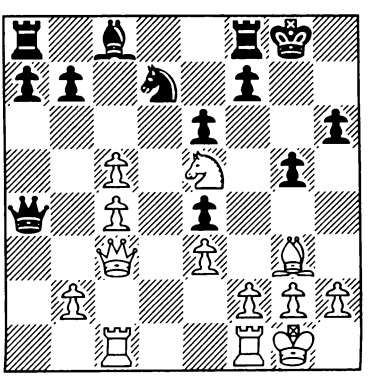


Diagram 5
Watch that queen!

16...f5?

Overlooking White's next move but in fairness little else was on offer. The white queen and bishop were just itching to get at g7.

17 Ra1 Black resigns

Game 38
□ **Kasparov** ■ **Karpov**
World Championship (game 11), Moscow 1985

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 0-0 5 Bg5 c5 6 e3 cxd4 7 exd4 h6 8 Bh4 d5 9 Rc1 dxc4

As this allows White's bishop to take back on c4 in one turn, there is definitely an argument for 9...Nc6. However, that commits the knight (some might prefer it supporting its colleague on d7) and provides White with the different option of 10 c5 (or perhaps 10 a3 first).

10 Bxc4 Nc6 11 0-0 Be7

With the knight on c6, this is the only satisfactory way to escape the pin.

12 Re1 b6 13 a3 (Diagram 6)

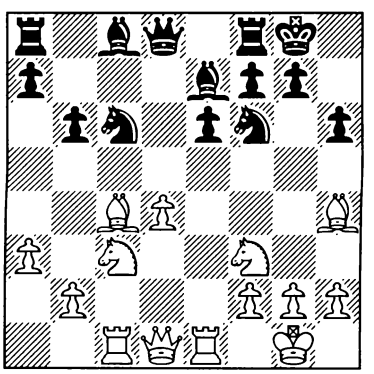


Diagram 6
A standard IQP position

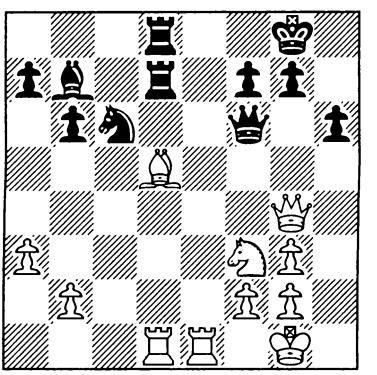


Diagram 7
White to play and win

A useful move as it eliminates the possibility of ...Nb4. That would help Black to blockade the isolated pawn on d5 and also interfere with a simple plan that White may have of aligning the bishop and queen along the b1-h7 diagonal. With that idea in mind, this is a good example of why the insertion of ...h7-h6 can be detrimental in such situations. Blocking off the diagonal with ...g7-g6 is much more shaky without a pawn on h7; sacrifices on e6, f7 and g6 become much more likely.

13...Bb7 14 Bg3 Rc8 15 Ba2

Out of sight but most certainly not out of mind!

15...Bd6 16 d5

This is not just a case of eliminating White's only weakness; here arguably the world's greatest ever player is targeting f7.

That said, though I'm reluctant to be critical of the great man, an argument could be put forward for preserving more pieces. Indeed, after 16 Bh4!? (16 Be5!? also throws the cat amongst the pigeons), if Black looks to repeat with 16...Be7, then 17 Qd3 sets up the idea of Bb1 and mate threats on h7 very nicely.

16...Nxd5 17 Nxd5 Bxg3 18 hxg3 exd5 19 Bxd5

The bishop is a monster here, looking menacingly in each direction. Black is far from lost but evidently the pressure starts to mount.



NOTE: Remember that doubled pawns are not necessarily a bad thing.

Earlier I talked about how having a set of doubled pawns at least guarantees a half-open file. In addition, the new structure in itself could be an improvement. Observe how the group of pawns around the white king provides an excellent shield. Controlling the f4-square is another bonus.

19...Qf6 20 Qa4 Rfd8 21 Rcd1 Rd7 22 Qg4 Rcd8?? (Diagram 7)

One of the most famous blunders in world championship history. Anatoly Karpov overlooks a simple tactic when either of 22...Rdd8, 22...Rdc7 or 22...Rd6 would have kept him well in the game.

23 Qxd7!! Rxd7 24 Re8+ Kh7 25 Be4+ Black resigns

After 25...g6 26 Rxd7 White will win more material.

Game 39
□ **Sorri** ■ **Johansson**
Helsinki Open 1991

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 0-0 5 Bg5 c5 6 e3 Qa5 (Diagram 8)

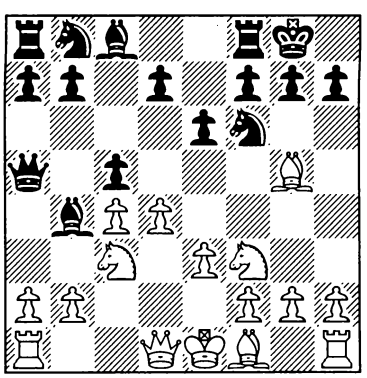


Diagram 8
Ready for ...Ne4

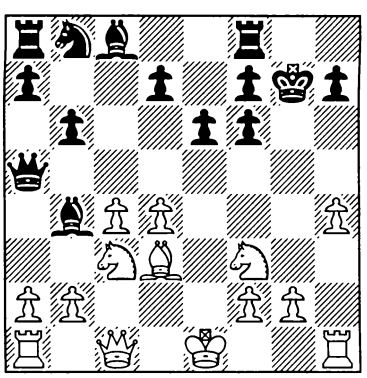


Diagram 9
Preparing a rook swinger

Obviously Black already attacks c3 enough times but it is important that he is prevented from placing his knight on e4. Here it looks as though the gambit-style 7 Bd3 (vacating the f1-square for the king) should be playable but the selected continuation also gets straight to the point.

7 Bxf6 gxf6

The more materialistic 7...Bxc3+ is featured in the next game.

8 Qc1 cxd4

Although Black may harbour ambitions of ganging up against White's c4-pawn, for me this only seems to justify his opponent's last move. Besides protecting c3, clearly the queen has interests along the c1-h6 diagonal.

9 exd4 b6 10 Bd3 Kg7 11 h4!? (Diagram 9)



TIP: In a scenario such as this, with White likely to have doubled c-pawns and Black having doubled f-pawns, it is in White's interest to keep the queens on. With them on he has attacking chances, but should they be removed, the focus will be on the weak queenside structure.

The text prepares a swift introduction of the king's rook but the fact is that White would have good attacking options after 11 0-0 as well.

11...Bb7 12 Rh3 Bxc3+ 13 bxc3 Rh8

Already White was threatening the devastating Rg3+ and Qh6 and one can see that Black is not exactly overwhelmed with defenders!

14 Kf1

A worthwhile preparatory move that allows the white queen to venture away without fear of the annoying ...Qxc3+.

14...Kf8 15 d5!?

This is a common plan for White against the fianchettoed black bishop. White not only prevents ...Nc6 and shuts off the diagonal, but also offers a nice square to his own knight.

15...Na6 16 Nd4

Black dare not contemplate giving away the f5-square with ...exd5.

16...Qc5 17 Qh6+ Ke7 18 Rf3 Raf8

Once one sees 18...f5 19 Rxf5! (actually there are other good moves too) 19...exf5 20 d6+ Ke8 21 Re1+ Kd8 22 Qf6+ Kc8 23 Qxh8 mate, one realises that it was impossible to protect the more advanced of the doubled f-pawns.

19 Qxf6+ Ke8 20 Nf5 (Diagram 10)

The only white piece not currently involved in the fun is the queen's rook and that would have a dream debut after 20...exf5 21 Re1+.

20...Rhg8



TIP: The queen and knight are a most deadly attacking force.

Between these two pieces they cover all permutations and Black's last move prevented 21 Ng7 mate.

21 d6 Black resigns

There is no stopping the mate on e7.

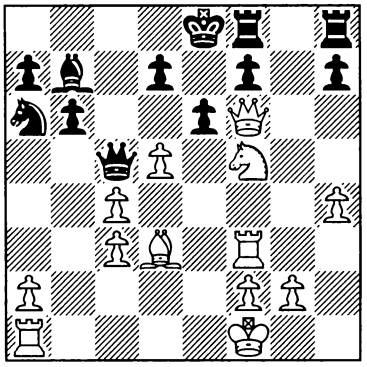


Diagram 10
Mate threatened

Game 40
□ **Taimanov** ■ **Estevez Morales**
Leningrad 1973

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 0-0 5 Bg5 c5 6 e3 Qa5 7 Bxf6 Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 Qxc3+ 9 Nd2

Blocking the check but also clearing the way for the queen to enter the kingside action via the d1-h5 diagonal.

9...gxf6 10 Rc1 (Diagram 11)

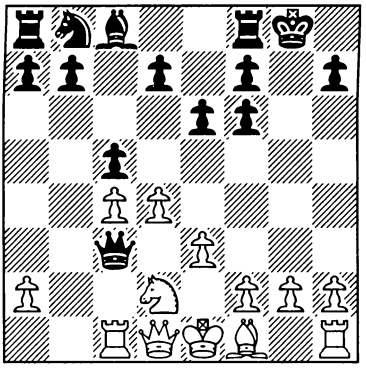


Diagram 11
The black queen is offside

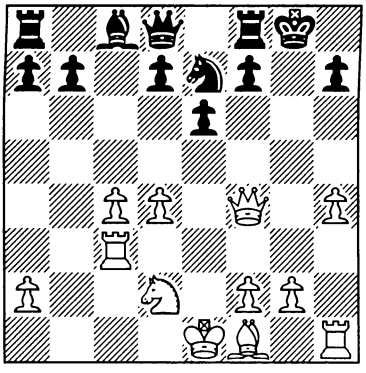


Diagram 12
The attacking h-pawn

With reference to earlier comments, the queen would have been able to take on d4 had Black previously inserted ...cxd4 exd4. Of course, White then wouldn't have sacrificed the pawn in this same manner.

10...Qa5 11 Qg4+ Kh8 12 Qh4

The undeveloped black queenside is of no help to the king.

12...cxd4 13 Qxf6+ Kg8 14 exd4 Qd8

Black would be okay after a queen trade as White has just as many pawn islands as him. With the black king so exposed though, White will not oblige.

15 Qf4 Nc6 16 Rc3

White initiates a dangerous-looking rook swinger prompting black to seek a piece that can block the g-file.

16...Ne7 17 h4 (Diagram 12)

All logical stuff. As well as providing entry for the other rook into the game, White's h-pawn will budge a g6-knight and possibly even help the queen to give mate on g7.

17...f6 18 Rg3+ Kh8 19 Bd3 Rf7

A pretty much forced response as 20 Qh6 Rf7 21 Bxh7! was a huge threat.

20 h5 Nf5 21 Bxf5 exf5

Now positionally Black is in trouble too, with doubled isolated f-pawns a far from desirable item!

22 0-0 d6 23 Re1 Bd7 24 Qxd6 Qa5 25 Re7 Qxd2 (Diagram 13)

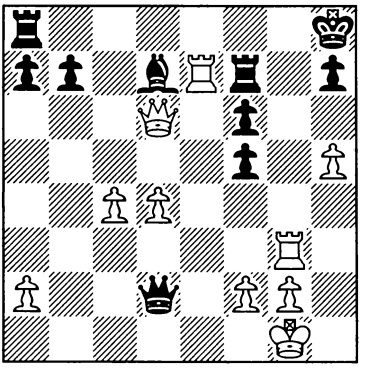


Diagram 13
Careful!

26 Qxd7

And not 26 Rxf7?? Qd1+ 27 Kh2 Qxh5+, picking up the rook. The only untidy thing about this game is that it goes to an ending. Frankly, though, White was always going to win.

26...Qe1+ 27 Rxe1 Rxd7 28 d5 b5 29 cxb5 Rxd5 30 a4 f4 31 Rg4 Rxh5 32 Rxf4 Kg7 33 Re7+ Kg6 34 Rg4+ Kf5 35 Rgg7 Rh4 36 Rxa7 Rxa4 37 Rxa8 Rxa8 38 Rxh7 Ra2 39 b6 Rb2 40 b7 Kf4 41 Re7 f5 42 Kf1 Kg5 43 Ke1 Kf6 44 Rh7 Ke5 45 Kd1 Kd4 46 Rd7+ Kc3 47 g3 Black resigns

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Game 41
□ **Ward** ■ **McLeod**
Monarch Assurance Open, Port Erin 1999

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 0-0 5 Bg5 c5 6 e3 d6 (Diagram 14)

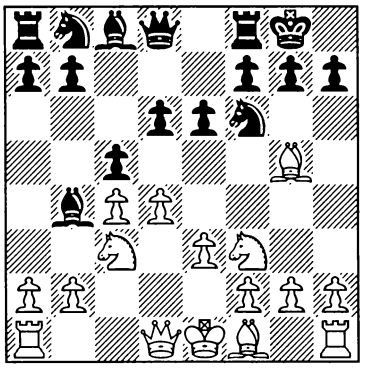


Diagram 14
Black 'takes it easy'

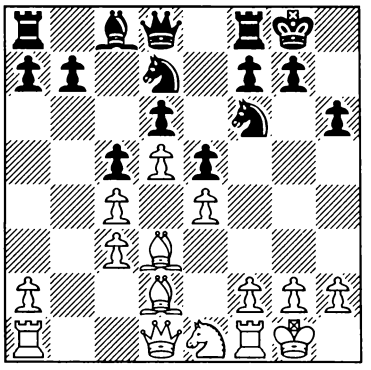


Diagram 15
The f-file has potential

Adopting a different stance altogether. In this game Black goes into 'blocking things up' mode; a policy which sometimes works and sometimes doesn't!

7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 0-0 Bxc3



WARNING: When it is no longer pinned, beware the knight moving away.

A Nb5 could be awkward at some point and if the c3-knight does move away, then Black's dark-squared bishop could easily be embarrassed.

9 bxc3 Qc7?!

The '?!' is not so much for this move but rather the fact that Black wastes times deciding where he really wants this queen to be.

10 e4 e5 11 d5 h6 12 Bd2

The d3-bishop is 'bad' but its colleague on d2 has potential. As mentioned earlier, you rarely get two 'bad' bishops with a bishop pair.

12...Qd8 13 Ne1 (Diagram 15)

A multi-purpose move. A black ...Nh5-f4 plan is stopped in its tracks whilst a manoeuvre to f5 for this knight is very much on the cards.

Furthermore, White begins preparations for an f4 pawn break.

13...Qe7 14 Nc2 Re8 15 Ne3 g6

One can see why Black wanted to keep the white knight out of f5 but now the odd dark-squared hole has been created, whilst the h6-pawn becomes an obvious target.

16 g3



WARNING: This is necessary if, as is typical, White intends meeting ...exf4 with gxf4. My point is that White must be very sure before conceding the e5-square to an enemy piece.

16...Kh7 17 Qe2 b6

It's difficult to suggest a plan for Black. The c4-pawn, so often a target, is defended three times here yet can only be attacked once!

18 Rae1 Nf8 19 f4 exf4 20 Rxf4 (Diagram 16)

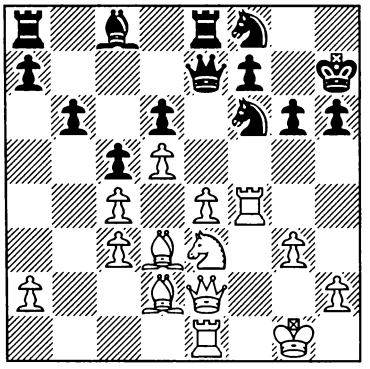


Diagram 16
White's rooks spring to life

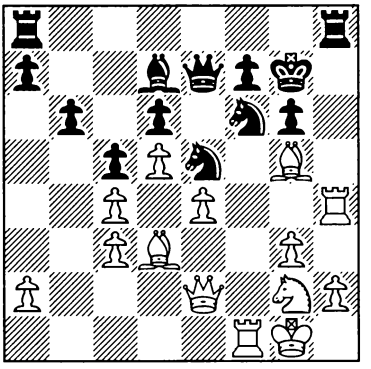


Diagram 17
No ...h7-h6 this time!

I meant what I said about controlling the e5-square but, as ...g7-g6 is proving so detrimental, the temptation was always going to be there to utilise the half-open f-file.

20...N8d7 21 Ref1

Pressurising f6 and through to f7.

21...Rf8 22 Rh4 Ne5 23 Rxh6+! Kg7

The h6-pawn was attracting attention and the point was obviously 23...Kxh6 24 Nf5+.

24 Rh4 Bd7 25 Ng2

Letting the d2-bishop in on the act.

25...Rh8 26 Bg5 (Diagram 17)

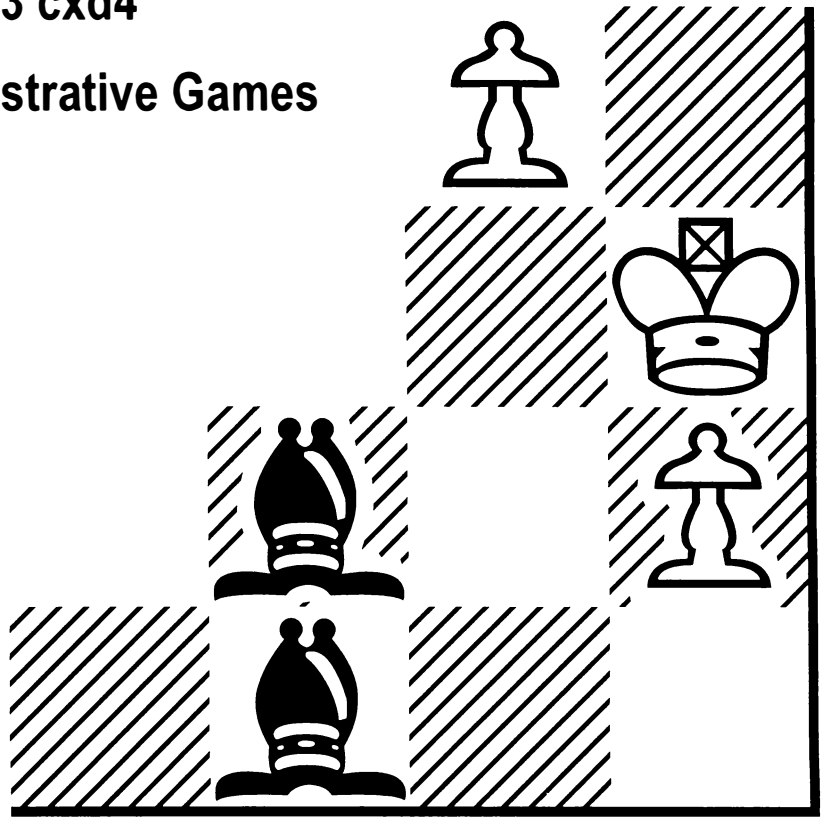
The pin is back and this time it's for good!

26...Bg4 27 Bxf6+ Qxf6 28 Rxg4 Black resigns

Chapter Nine

4 Nf3 c5

- Introduction
- The Kingside Fianchetto
- 5 g3 Nc6
- 5 g3 cxd4
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 c5

After 4...c5 White could transpose to one of the less ambitious 4 e3 variations with 5 e3, but this chapter is all about a different system altogether.

QUESTION 10: If openings are all about gaining space, after 4...c5 why wouldn't White simply want to play 5 d5?

The Kingside Fianchetto

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 c5 5 g3 (Diagram 1)

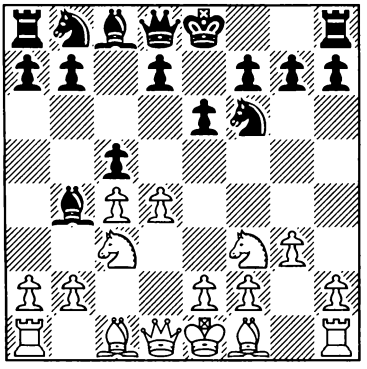


Diagram 1
White plays 5 g3



WARNING: Openings involving a white fianchetto frequently have reputations of being 'dull' and 'boring'. Black players beware, however, because this line can be as sharp as any of the other variations.

5 g3, as illustrated in Diagram 1, introduces a whole new dimension to the Nimzo-Indian. White's bishop is destined for g2, where it will pressurise Black's queenside. With that in mind, there is no need for him to support d4 with another pawn as a centralised knight is handy too.

There are plenty of available set-ups for Black to try in order to counter White's system and of course the pin plays a part in some. For example, even here 5...Ne4 is possible although I believe that modern theory's assessment of 6 Qd3 Qa5 7 Qxe4 Bxc3+ 8 Bd2 (yes, it's worth noting that bxc3 isn't always forced) 8...Bxd2+ 9 Nxd2 of being a little better White is fair because of the nicely centralised white queen and potentially excellent bishop on the g2-b7 diagonal.



NOTE: With the light-squared bishop aiming for or already on g2, the white queen won't obstruct it on d3 and is generally more active there than on c2.

It's also possible for Black to challenge the h1-a8 diagonal with 5...b6, but after 6 Bg2 Bb7 7 0-0 he must be careful not to forget his b4-bishop (it no longer pins anything and Nb5 could be embarrassing) or allow the blocking-out d4-d5. Hence 7...cxd4 8 Qxd4 is normal, with Black often employing a 'hedgehog' formation.

The early ...d6 and ...d5 (both without ...cxd4) are seen in Games 42 and 43 respectively and that leaves me to break the theoretical section into two: 5 g3 Nc6 and 5 g3 cxd4.

5 g3 Nc6

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 c5 5 g3 Nc6 6 Bg2 Ne4 (Diagram 2)

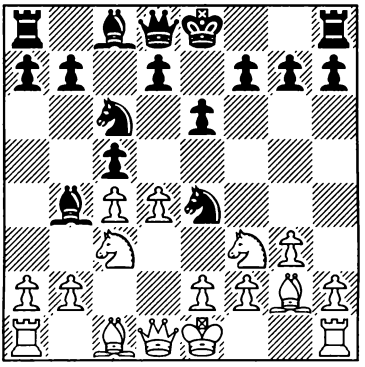


Diagram 2
Pressurising knights

It was Black's last chance to get this in before White castled and now White has a decision to make about how he's going to support c3.

7 Bd2

Simpler than the complicated 7 Qd3 Qa5 8 d5, but not necessarily better.

7...Nxd2 8 Qxd2 cxd4 9 Nxd4 0-0

Plans

Unusually it is Black who has the bishop pair, but while it is advisable for him to preserve his dark-squared one, activating the other one won't be so easy. Unless White gifts Black the chance to play ...d7-d5 via an early trade on c6, the second player will probably have to settle for just trying to keep the opponent out of his position with

moves such as ...a7-a6 (preventing Nb5-d6) and ...f7-f5. Meanwhile, White will most likely castle kingside and centralise his rooks in order to target Black's d-pawn. Even a slight error could leave Black under the cosh.

5 g3 cxd4

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 c5 5 g3 cxd4 6 Nxd4 0-0

The final opportunity to get in ...Ne4 could lead to a very unbalanced position after 6...Ne4 7 Qd3 Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 Nc5. In this instance both of White's bishops would be good but if Black can survive the pressure that will inevitably come his way then he should be able to make something out of his structural advantage. In plain English, the potential is definitely there to attack those doubled and isolated c-pawns.

7 Bg2 d5 8 cxd5

Game 45 takes a look at the immediate 8 Qb3, which obviously has some similarities with the text continuation.

8...Nxd5 9 Qb3 (Diagram 3)

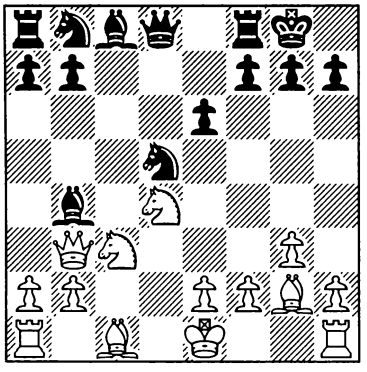


Diagram 3
Fighting knights

Plans

Many consider this more energetic than the automatic 9 Bd2 as, on top of protecting c3, the queen hits both black minor pieces. The drawback is that the knight on d4 is undefended, although Black can't take advantage of this fact immediately. Typically, White will end up with isolated pawns after something eventually takes on c3, and always consistent is the pressure that White has against Black's queenside. Game 46 travels further into this position.

Illustrative Games

Game 42
□ **Ward** ■ **Fenn**
Monarch Assurance Open, Port Erin 1994

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 g3 c5

With this move Black effectively allows White to transpose into this relevant 4 Nf3 c5 5 g3 system. However, Chapter 12 shows that there are other possibilities at Black's disposal.

5 Nf3 d6

Not the most critical response and Black soon discovers that developing naturally isn't quite so easy.

6 Bg2 Nbd7 7 0-0 Bxc3 8 bxc3 Ne4?! (Diagram 4)

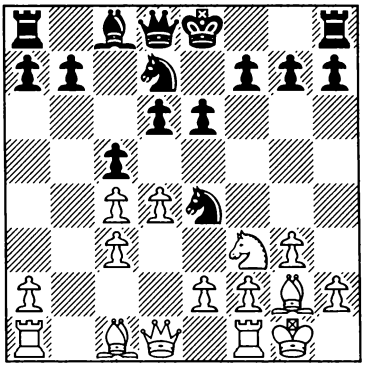


Diagram 4
Enjoy it while you can!

A typically good square, of course, but with White's bishop on g2, Black just can't offer the knight the required support to keep it there.



NOTE: The knight isn't really threatening to take on c3 as Qc2 would most surely result in it being trapped.

9 Qd3

Regarding the last observation, White isn't worried about the c-pawn but is certainly interested in budging the knight.

9...f5 10 Nd2

White's play is so straightforward. Black's knight is now attacked three times but defended just once.

10...Nxd2 11 Bxd2 Nf6 12 Bf4

White certainly doesn't want to allow the position to become closed through the likes of 12 d5? e5.

12...Nh5

12...0-0 13 dxc5 dxc5 14 Bd6 would leave White picking up the c5-pawn and dominating the board with his two bishops.

13 Be3 Qc7 (Diagram 5)

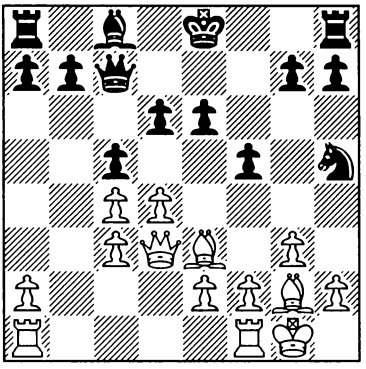


Diagram 5
The d-file has a future!

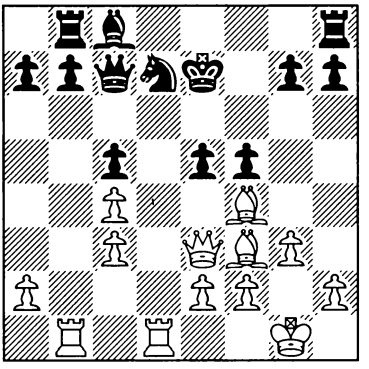


Diagram 6
Time to remove the knight!

14 dxc5

The position was always going to be opened up in this manner. The text leaves White with doubled isolated c-pawns but that feature pales into insignificance when compared to the open d-file and the available tasty diagonals.

14...dxc5 15 Rfd1 Ke7

Black bravely makes an attempt to prevent White invading the d6-square but White now continues to turn up the heat.

16 Rab1 Rb8 17 Bf3

A strong and very amusing alternative would have been 17 Bg5+ Kf7 18 Bd8! Qe5 19 f4.

17...Nf6 18 Bf4 e5 19 Qe3 Nd7 (Diagram 6) 20 Rxd7+!

White eliminates the flimsy defender of e5 but you'd hardly call this a sacrifice!

20...Bxd7 21 Bxe5 Qc8 22 Bxb8+ Black resigns

Suddenly White is a piece and a pawn up, with other delights on the horizon too.

Game 43
□ **Ward** ■ **Jaton**
Mont St. Michel 1994

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 g3 c5 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Bg2 d5 (Diagram 7)

One of the earlier attempts against this white system sees Black leav-

ing the tension in the centre. Though I don't think I can justify awarding this move a '?!', my personal view on the matter is that it encourages White to simplify into a very comfortable middlegame.

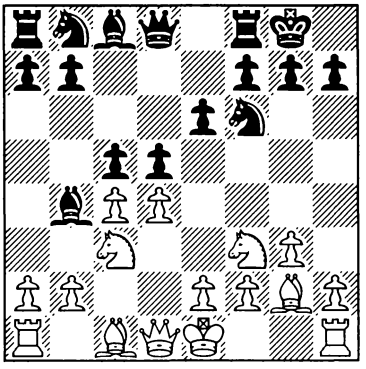


Diagram 7
Confrontational pawns

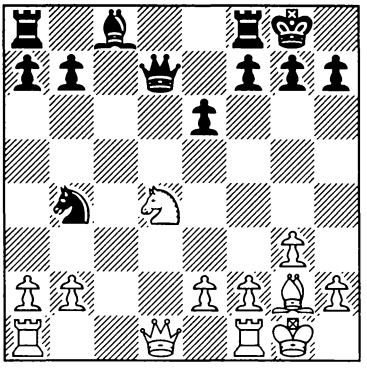


Diagram 8
Black is in a tangle

7 cxd5 Nxd5

After 7...exd5 we could easily reach an IQP scenario where White's g2-bishop is favourably positioned to exploit the target pawn.

8 Bd2 Nc6 9 Nxd5 Qxd5 10 Bxb4 Nxb4 11 0-0

Now Black must beware of a knight move discovering an attack on the queen.

11...cxd4 12 Nxd4 Qd7 (Diagram 8)

Comparing the relative activity of the two bishops sums up this situation. Whilst White's sits proudly scrutinising Black's queenside, Black's is at home obstructing the rooks.

13 Nb3

Preparing to move the knight to either c5 or a5. If Black trades queens now, it wouldn't be long before the white rooks would invade the seventh rank.

13...Rb8 14 a3 Na6

Yes, knights on the rim are dim but this was necessary to prevent 15 Nc5.

15 Na5 Qc7 16 b4 (Diagram 9)

It's so easy to play White's position. His (well okay, 'my') minor pieces eye up the b7-pawn and the c6-square whilst the major pieces are about to arrive on the scene too.

16...Rd8 17 Qb3 Bd7 18 Rac1 Qb6 19 Rfd1 Bb5

Black is almost paralysed and, although Qf3 is also available to hit b7, other ideas are on offer too, e.g. 19...e5 20 Qb2 f6 21 Nc4 embar-

rasses the enemy queen and prepares to invade on d6.

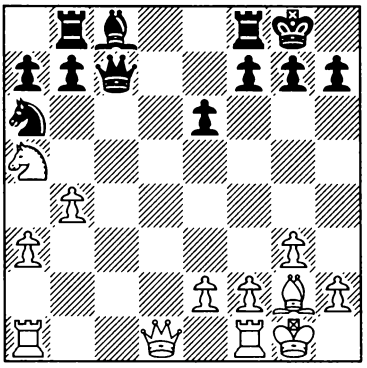


Diagram 9
White's play is smooth

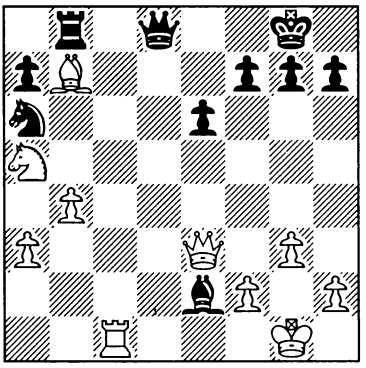


Diagram 10
The white queen orchestrates

20 Rxd8+ Qxd8 21 Bxb7 Bxe2 22 Qe3! (Diagram 10)

The immediate 22 Bxa6 Bxa6 23 Nc6 would allow Black to utilise the fact that the c1-rook is undefended with 23...Qc7. Hence the text does more than just attack the black bishop and a7-pawn.

22...Bb5 23 Bxa6 Bxa6 24 Nc6 Black resigns

No doubt much to Black's chagrin, White won this game with very simple chess.



WARNING: Take heed of my comments on this system; it is not very nice losing a game like this where there is little activity and the only chance is to somehow try and grovel a draw!

Game 44
□ **Ward** ■ **Eriksson**
Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1997

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 g3 c5 5 Nf3 cxd4 6 Nxd4 Ne4 7 Qd3 Qa5 (Diagram 11)

Earlier I talked about 7...Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 Nc5 as being very double-edged. Black's selection here certainly hits hard on the c3-situation but...



WARNING: One must guard against concentrating on some pieces to the detriment of others.

8 Nb3 Qf5

8...Bxc3+ 9 bxc3 Qxc3+ 10 Qxc3 Nxc3 11 Bb2 would see White regaining his pawn with interest (i.e. his bishop pair would be fantastic), while 8...Nxc3 9 Bd2!? also seems to favour White, e.g. 9...Ne4 10 Qxe4 Bxd2+ 11 Nxd2 and White's bishop will again very much influence events on the queenside on g2.

9 Qe3

The f2-square had to be guarded!

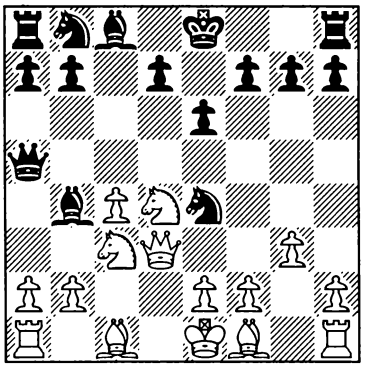


Diagram 11
A troublesome trio

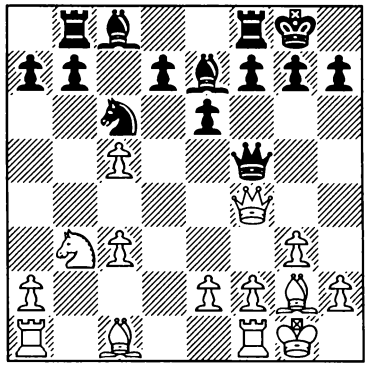


Diagram 12
Annoying the queen's rook

9...Nxc3 10 bxc3 Be7 11 Bg2

Regarding an earlier warning, although Black has managed to inflict damage upon White's queenside pawn structure, his own queenside pieces are still at home. This, of course, interferes with an otherwise simple plan of doubling up the rooks against White's c-pawns.

11...Nc6 12 0-0 0-0 13 c5

The first indication that White doesn't see his c-pawns as mere targets. The fact is that if Black doesn't advance either his b- or his d-pawn then he isn't going to develop his bishop!

13...Rb8 14 Qf4 (Diagram 12)

Offering a queen trade but also threatening to win material with 15 Bxc6.

14...Qxf4 15 Bxf4 e5

Black didn't fancy 15...Ra8 16 Bd6 but the text does leave a gaping hole on d5.

16 Be3 b6

One could suggest that White has won a psychological battle but even after a trade of b- for c-pawn, Black will have fewer pawn islands. Indeed, it is the piece activity that is the overriding factor.

17 Rfd1 Rd8 18 Rd2

White's plan to date has been to restrict the opponent. The initiation of doubling on the d-file simply brings a currently redundant piece into play.

18...Kf8 19 Rad1 Ke8 20 cxb6 axb6 21 f4 f6

Black cannot allow a bishop to get to c7 but now White is relentless.

22 Be4 g6 23 f5 g5 24 h4! (Diagram 13)

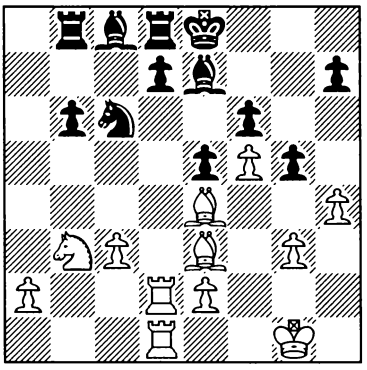


Diagram 13
Moving up a gear

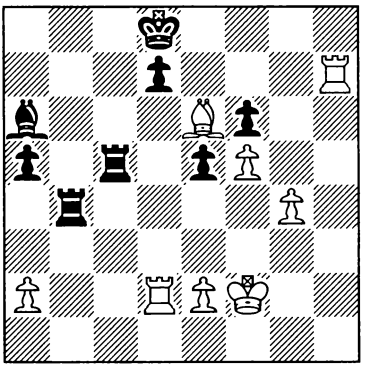


Diagram 14
Ganging up

24...gxh4 25 g4

The intention was always to put the h-file to good use.

25...Na5 26 Nxa5 bxa5 27 Bd5 Ba6 28 Kf2 Rdc8 29 Rh1 Rxc3

Finally Black's pieces start to see the light of day, but ironically it's now the positioning of his king that doesn't look too clever!

30 Rxh4 Bc5

The best practical chance was 30...Bb4!?, although 31 Rxh7 Rxe3 32 Kxe3 Bxd2+ 33 Kxd2 Rb2+ 34 Kc3 Rxe2 35 g5 (intending 35...fxg5? 36 f6) certainly looks worrying.

31 Bxc5 Rxc5 32 Rxh7 Rb4 33 Bf7+ Kd8 34 Be6! (Diagram 14)

The d-pawn is now doomed and the ensuing endgame is very unappetising.

34...Bb5 35 Bxd7 Rd4 36 Rxd4 exd4 37 Bxb5 Rxb5 38 Rf7 Rb6 39 Ra7 Rb5 40 Rf7 Rb6 41 Kf3 Ke8 42 Ra7 Rb5 43 Ke4 Re5+ 44 Kxd4 Rxe2 45 Rxa5 Rg2 46 Kd5 Re2 47 Ra7 Re5+ 48 Kd6 Re4 49 a4 Black resigns

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Game 45
□ **Ward** ■ **Brynell**
Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1996

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1 d4 e6 2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 g3 c5 5 Nf3 cxd4 6 Nxd4 0-0 7 Bg2 d5 8 Qb3 (Diagram 15)

In contrast to our main line, here White chooses to play the queen out before trading pawns on d5. This decision, though, does offer Black the opportunity to obtain an aggressive pawn centre.

8...Bxc3+ 9 Qxc3 e5 10 Nb3 Nc6

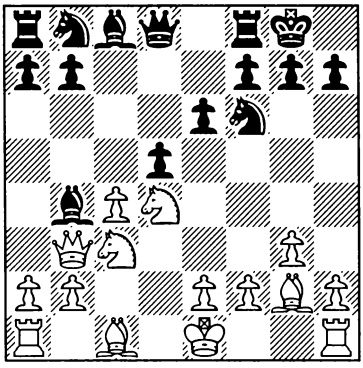


Diagram 15
Black has more centre pawns

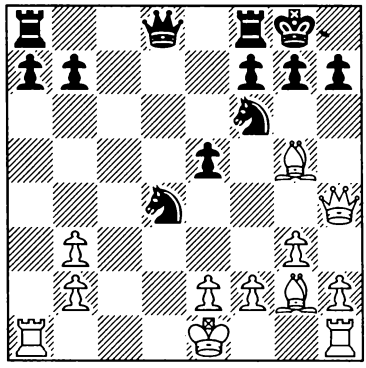


Diagram 16
Delight for the knight!

Black could play ...d5-d4 now or next turn but in this game elects not to. Certainly 10...d4 11 Qa5 reaches an unbalanced position. White has the bishop pair and an extra pawn on the queenside whereas Black has the attractive e- and d-pawns. Both 11...Qe7 and 11...Qe8 have led to some interesting encounters.

11 Bg5 dxc4!?

As an alternative Black intends developing pieces at the expense of the white queen.

12 Qxc4 Be6 13 Qh4 Bxb3

Giving up this second bishop is obviously a major concession bearing in mind the open nature of the position. Nevertheless, the pull of the d4-square is also great.

14 axb3 Nd4 (Diagram 16) 15 0-0!?

White solves the forking problems but this is, of course, a pawn sacrifice.

15...Nxe2+ 16 Kh1 Nd4 17 Bxb7 Rb8 18 Be4

White attacks h7 but alas the queens are about to come off.

18...h6 19 Bxf6 Qxf6 20 Qxf6 gxf6 21 Rxa7 Rxb3 22 f4

Switching the action to the f-file. Unfortunately, though, the board is running out of pieces!

22...exf4 23 Rxf4 Rxb2 24 Rxf6 Re8! 25 Raxf7

One might call this a bluff but there was nothing else left for White to do.

25...Rxe4 (Diagram 17) 26 Rf8+

Besides being a piece up, Black now has a threat of his own. It's definitely time for that perpetual check!

26...Kg7 Draw agreed

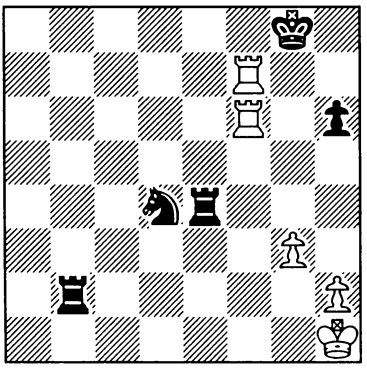


Diagram 17
Time to bail out!

Game 46
□ **Bacrot** ■ **Anand**
Corsica Masters, Bastia 2001

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 c5 5 g3 cxd4 6 Nxd4 0-0 7 Bg2 d5 8 cxd5 Nxd5 9 Qb3 Nc6 10 Nxc6 bxc6

White has struck first blood in the 'isolating opponent's pawns' game, but from Black's point of view his knight is now very well supported.

11 0-0 Qa5 12 Bd2

White is rightly reluctant to trade on d5 as that would result in a strong black pawn centre. Instead he intends budging the knight a different way.

12...Bxc3 13 bxc3

The only way for White to aim for an advantage as recapturing like this preserves his bishop pair.

13...Ba6 14 Rfd1

White ignores the threat to his e-pawn as 14...Bxe2 15 c4 Bxd1 16 Rxd1 Qb6 17 cxd5 cxd5 18 Qf3 leaves him with the better practical chances. Black's pawn structure would be very solid in this side variation, but a bishop pair on an open board such as this will always be magnificent.



NOTE: Although a rook and two pawns total more 'points' than two minor pieces (seven against six), often it is only later in the endgame that this materialistic viewpoint becomes relevant.

14...Qc5 15 e4 (Diagram 18)



TIP: Patience is a virtue!

I know you weren't expecting advice quite like this but, just as in life, it is very relevant. Finally White has arranged a satisfactory way of

removing the knight from d5.

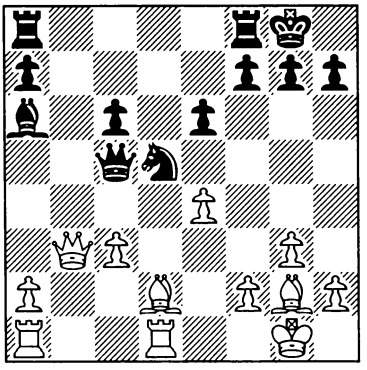


Diagram 18
Time to move on

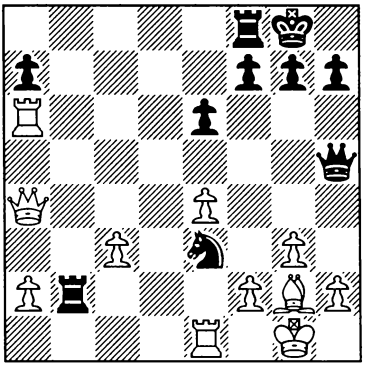


Diagram 19
Prepare yourself!

15...Nb6

The alternative 15...Bc4 16 Qa4 Nb6 17 Qb4 Qxb4 18 cxb4 is slightly better for White although Black has reasonable chances to hold on for the draw.

16 Be3 Qh5 17 Rd6?!

Particularly in light of the game, White might prefer to engage in the fascinating 17 Bxb6!? Rfb8 (or 17...Rab8 18 Qa3 Rxb6 19 Rd7 with a bit of action on the seventh rank) 18 Be3!? Rxb3 19 axb3 Be2 20 Rxa7!. Back rank tactics save the day and leave the rook, bishop and pawn looking preferable to the black queen.

17...Nc4 18 Rxc6 Nxe3!? 19 Rxa6?

Completely underestimating the danger. Probably 19 fxe3 Qe2 20 c4 Rad8 21 Bf1 Qf3 22 Bg2 (and not 22 Rxa6?? Rd2) 22...Qe2 23 Bf1 Qf3 24 Bg2, with a draw by repetition, would have been a reasonable outcome.

19...Rab8! 20 Qa4

20 Qa3 would have dropped the exchange to 20...Nc2, whilst 20 fxe3 Rxb3 21 axb3 Qe2 is a much inferior queen sacrifice to the one previously given.

20...Rb2! 21 Re1? (Diagram 19)

Clearly 21 fxe3? Qe2 was no solution either but White could have grovelled on with 21 Qd4. The text, though, enables us to see a truly beautiful finish.

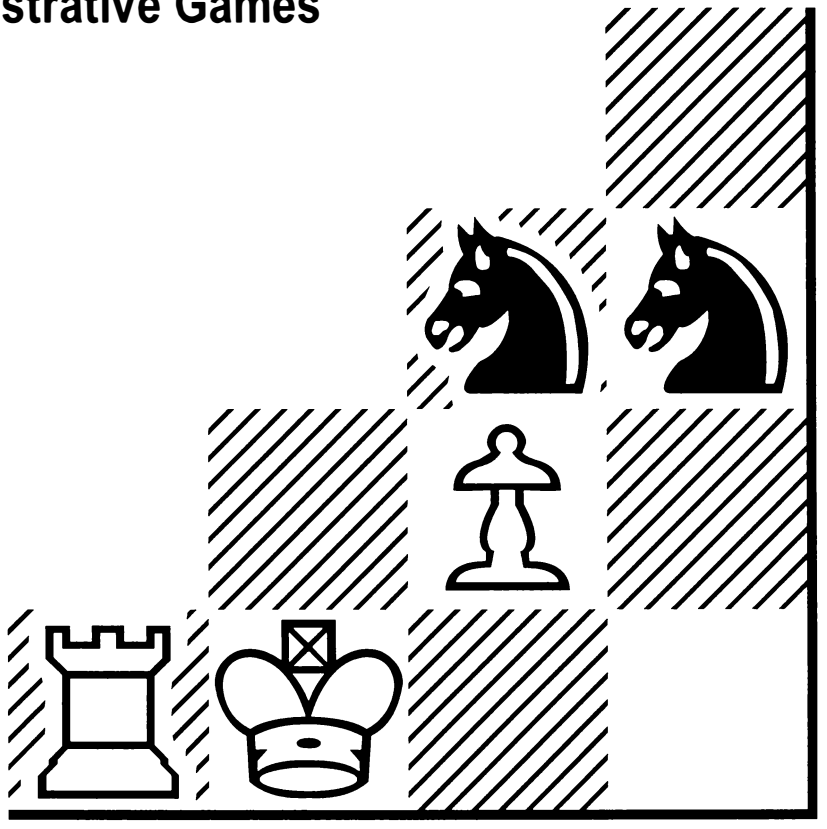
21...Qe2!! White resigns

Bearing in mind 22 Rxe2 Rb1+ 23 Bf1 Rxf1 mate, there is no satisfactory defence to White's problems on the second rank.

Chapter Ten

The Sämisch Variation: 4 a3

- Introduction
- White Plays 4 a3
- White Plays 4 f3
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 a3 (4 f3)

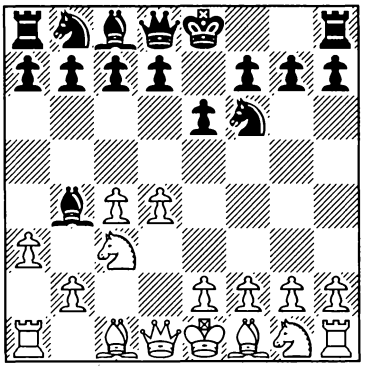


Diagram 1
Put up or shut up!

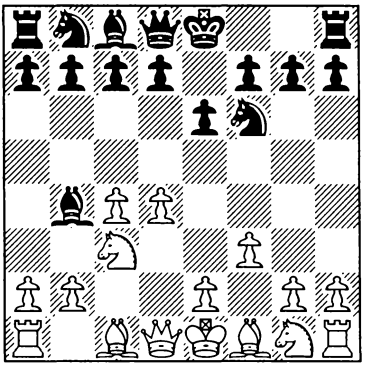


Diagram 2
Guess what White's up to?

This chapter deals with 4 a3 and 4 f3, both of which seem to be referred to these days as the Sämisch Variation. Certainly this the case with 4 a3 (which I played as White as a junior), but because the recently more popular 4 f3 has the habit of transposing, that move also appears to share the same name-tag.

The move 4 a3 may seem a little silly as in the many of the lines we've already looked at Black voluntarily plays ...Bxc3 without this provocation. The point, though, is that White seeks to clarify the situation now without having committed any of his kingside pieces. Specifically, he wants to follow up with a swift f2-f3 (i.e. without developing the knight on this square) and, if allowed, e2-e4.

The reason that 4 f3 is not simply superior is that given the holes created on e3 and f2, Black may (particularly after 4...d5) seriously reconsider the concept of exchanging the dark-squared bishop.

Though likely to reach the same position through transposition, both systems do have their pros and cons and so I'll take them in turn.

White Plays 4 a3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 a3 Bxc3+ 5 bxc3 c5

The crafty 5...Ne4 is the subject of Game 47 but the text is a more standard continuation. Knowing that White won't desire tripled isolated pawns, Black effectively states that he won't be letting his opponent have it all his own way in the centre.

6 f3 d5

Although this move offers White the opportunity to undouble his c-pawns, Black is right to intercept the straightforward 7 e4.

7 cxd5 Nxd5

Certainly 7...exd5 shouldn't be ruled out as a possibility but the logic of the text is that, as White is going to have the bishop pair on an open board anyway, Black could at least try to punish him for a lack of development. Here White must take time out to defend c3.

8 Qd3

QUESTION 11: Why doesn't White simply defend the pawn with 8 Bd2?

8...b6

Now Black seeks to expose the vulnerable position of the white queen.

9 e4 Ba6 10 Qd2 Bxf1 11 Kxf1



NOTE: Castling is the standard procedure that is generally recommended to be completed early on in a game. However, if there is an alternative solution for putting a king into safety and developing the relevant rook then that could also be acceptable.

11...Ne7 (Diagram 3)

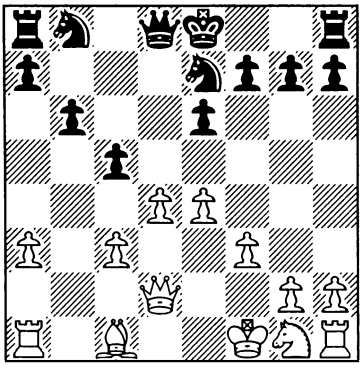


Diagram 3
White can't castle!

Plans

White has managed to get in the beloved e2-e4; achieving the advance without a stop-off on e3 is a psychological plus point. However, although his pawn centre looks impressive, he no longer has a bishop pair and, eleven moves into the game, the only pieces that appear to have moved are his king and queen! Indeed, White really needs to sort out his development and Game 48 witnesses an unconventional introduction to the game for White's h1-rook. Given the opportunity, a3-a4-a5 suggests itself but it certainly seems as though h2-h4 also

deserves consideration.

For Black, the c4-square could be an attractive place for a knight. If he ultimately trades on d4 he can continue to attack White's centre and then later look to make something of his queenside pawn majority.

White Plays 4 f3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 f3 d5

Game 49 features 4...c5 5 d5. Then, instead of 5...Bxc3+?!, interesting is 5...Nh5 freeing up the queen and the f7-pawn. Theory gives 6 Nh3 Qh4+ 7 Nf2 Qxc4 8 e4 as offering White good compensation for possibly two sacrificed pawns, and 6 g3 f5 as unclear.



TIP: Always bear in mind the concept of ...Qh4+ when there is a pawn on f3.

5 a3 Be7

Black could transpose to the previous line with 5...Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5, but 5...Be7 helps to introduce a new concept.

6 e4 dxe4 7 fxe4 e5!

An important move. White was threatening to run amok in the centre and without this central push life would be very uncomfortable for Black. White won't be interested in taking on e5 as it would ruin his pawn structure and he wouldn't retain the extra pawn for long. Hence his response is forced.

8 d5 Bc5

Justifying the decision to preserve the dark-squared bishop, Black now relocates it to a very tempting diagonal.

9 Nf3 Ng4 (Diagram 4)

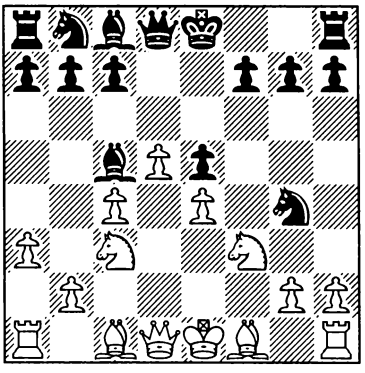


Diagram 4
Beware the fork!

Plans

The above position is not very Nimzo-like but it is very fascinating. White has a strong-looking pawn structure and the possibility of b2-b4 and c4-c5 makes it even more threatening. The presence of a half-open f-file could also be useful later but at this precise moment it is a problem. There are gaping holes on f2 and e3 which the black bishop and knight combine well to exploit. It's a very tactical middlegame and White needs to begin by either eliminating the bishop on c5 or at least chasing it off the diagonal.



WARNING: Beware winning the exchange if it involves a knight ending up stuck in a corner. Invariably a rescue mission is difficult to implement.

Regarding the above, whilst 10 Na4 seems reasonable, the greedy 10...Nf2 11 Qe2 Nxh1 12 Nxc5 would ultimately backfire. White could, for example, play g2-g3 and Bg2 in order to net the knight.

Illustrative Games

Game 47
☐ **House** ■ **Ward**
Jersey Open, St Helier 2002

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 a3 Bxc3+ 5 bxc3 Ne4 (Diagram 5)

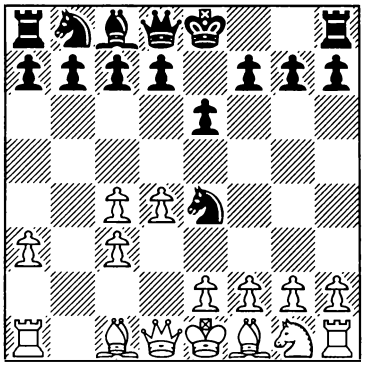


Diagram 5
A one-man band

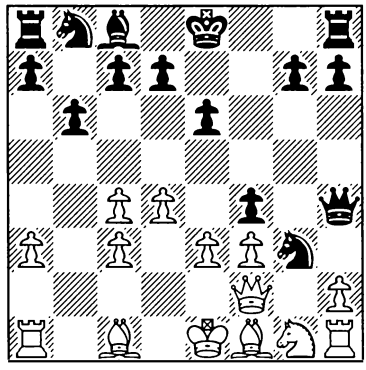


Diagram 6
f-pawn to the rescue

A rather obscure variation with an amusing premise. This knight isn't actually threatening to take the c3-pawn because of Qc2 but, on the other hand, White can't budge it just yet with 6 f3? because of 6...Qh4+. Black accepts that the knight will be forced away eventually but wants to play ...f7-f5 first. Furthermore, after a possible ...c7-c5,

the move ...Qa5 is also available and the concept of ...Nxc3 may become a reality.

6 Qc2 f5 7 e3

With what by now should be a familiar theme to you all, White could certainly try 7 Nh3 in order to facilitate a speedy f2-f3.

7...b6

Giving the bishop the choice of b7 or a6.

8 f3 Qh4+! 9 g3 Nxg3 10 Qf2 f4 (Diagram 6) 11 Nh3

Upon 11 exf4 the knight can escape via f5, leaving White's pawn structure shot to pieces. I suppose White has a little compensation for the exchange after 11 hxg3 Qxh1 or 11 e4 g5 12 hxg3 Qxh1 but there is no realistic chance of the black queen being trapped.

11...Nf5 12 Nxf4 Qxf2+ 13 Kxf2

The dust has settled after a fairly forced sequence and at the time I felt that Black (that is me!) had emerged with a slight plus due to the superior pawn structure.

13...0-0

I had it in mind to ultimately hit White's f-pawn, although typically c4 is a target too.

14 Bd3 Nc6 15 Rg1 Ba6 16 c5

As I've mentioned before, playing c4-c5 and cxb6 far from solves White's pawn weakness problem but it is, of course, preferable to just losing a pawn.

16...Bxd3 17 Nxd3 d6 18 cxd6 cxd6

Now White's remaining c-pawn is on a half-open file. Note, however, that despite two isolanis on the a- and h- files, White doesn't actually have any more pawn islands than his opponent.

19 e4 Nh4 20 Rg3 e5 (Diagram 7)

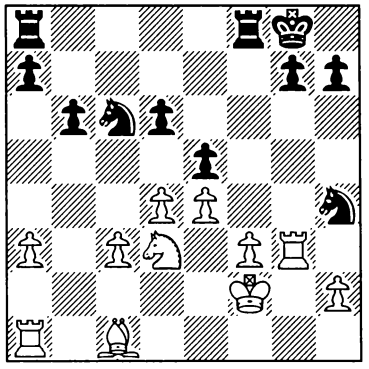


Diagram 7
Three pawn islands apiece

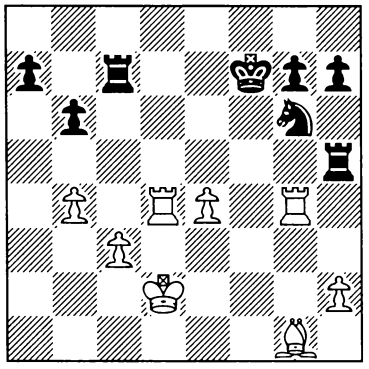


Diagram 8
Kings belong in the centre

Ideally Black should be trying to fix his opponent's pawns on dark squares but with a well supported centre there is no need for White to oblige.

21 Be3 Rf7 22 Ke2 Re8 23 Nb4 Nxb4

I didn't really want to help iron out White's pawns like this but, on the other hand, I didn't want the white knight setting up camp on d5 either.

24 axb4 d5!?

A centralised king is typically a strength. This move, mixing things up, was how I had been planning to try to expose White's king as a weakness instead.

25 dxe5 dxe4 26 fxe4

This leaves the e-pawns isolated, but 26 f4 Nf5 would see the black knight and pawn combine well to deprive White of squares.

26...Rxe5 27 Rg4 Ng6 28 Rd1 Rfe7 29 Rd4 Rh5 30 Bg1 Rc7 31 Kd2 Kf7 (Diagram 8)

Initially in this endgame I had been a little nervous that, rather than merely placing the king and rooks to avoid forks, White might somehow be able to activate them to make something of a passed pawn or perhaps attack my queenside. I knew, though, that the danger would pretty much be averted once my king was centralised.

32 Rg3 Ne5 33 Rd5?!

A waste of time and, given the way the game pans out, it looks as though White needs to seek a more active defence.

33...Ke6 34 Rd4 Rh4 35 Kc2 Rf4

The knight sits pretty while Black's rooks seek out new worlds!

36 Kb3 g6 37 Be3 Rf1 38 Rd8 Rb1+ 39 Kc2 Rh1 40 Re8+ Re7 41 Rxe7+ Kxe7 42 Bg1 b5! (Diagram 9)

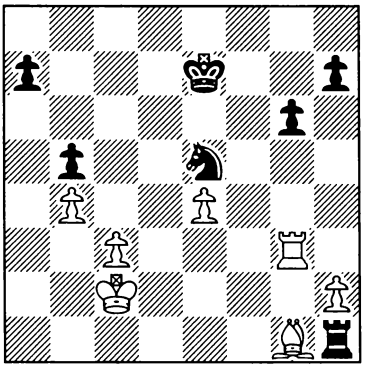


Diagram 9
No Houdini act required!

The move that White so dearly would have loved to have played himself. Although the black rook looks funny in the corner, White uses plenty of resources to keep it jailed and, to my credit, I had calculated that White wouldn't be able to win it.

43 h3

To illustrate the significance of Black's last move, note that 43 Bxa7 Rxh2+ 44 Kb3?? Nc4 would have seen White walking into a mating net.

43...a6 44 Kd1 h5 45 Ke2 h4 46 Bc5+ Ke6 47 Rg2 Rxh3 48 Bd4 Rg3 49 Rxg3 hxg3 50 Kf1 Nc4 51 Kg2 Nd2

The e-pawn is destined to fall, leaving a completely won ending.

52 Kxg3 Nxe4+ 53 Kf4 Kd5 White resigns

Game 48
□ Shirov ■ Canchess
Internet simultaneous 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 f3 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 cxd5 Nxd5 8 Qd3 b6 9 e4 Ba6 10 Qd2 Bxf1 11 Kxf1 Ne7 12 Ne2 Nbc6

12...0-0 13 a4 Nbc6 14 Kf2 Na5 15 Qa2 has previously been assessed as equal by Alexei Shirov, who has in recent times been the leading protagonist of this variation.

13 h4!? (Diagram 10)

After 13 dxc5 a typical theme is for Black to offer a pawn sacrifice with 13...Qc7!?. As White's king is a little awkwardly placed and he is behind in development, acceptance is not advisable. Hence 14 Qd6 is sensible: 14...Qxd6 15 cxd6 Nc8 16 Nd4 Nxd4 17 cxd4 Nxd6 with a level endgame.

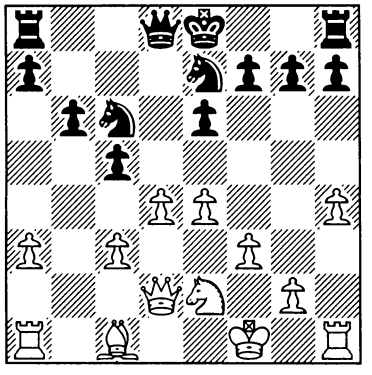


Diagram 10
Another pawn move

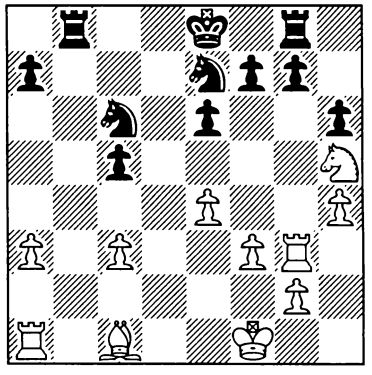


Diagram 11
Tactics approaching

13...h6?!

I suppose the justification for this move is that Black didn't want any dark-squared weaknesses in his camp. This, of course, may have been the case if White had achieved h5-h6. Nevertheless, it would have been more in the spirit to take up the challenge with 13...0-0. After all, Black does have an ...f7-f5 break available to try and expose the enemy monarch on the f-file.

14 Rh3 Qc7

Black's play looks rather bizarre when it comes to the defence of the g-pawn. However, 14...0-0 15 Rg3 is surprisingly dangerous as illustrated by 15...Kh8 16 Rxg7!! Kxg7 17 Qxh6+ Kg8 18 Nf4 with no good defence available to 19 Nh5.

15 Rg3 Rg8 16 dxc5 bxc5

The positional pawn sacrifice would be nothing like as good now; the position of Black's own king is far from secure and his king's rook is rather passive.

17 Qf4 Qxf4

At the very least providing White with a simple bishop-for-knight advantage in the endgame. As the white knight has some handy options from f4, possibly 17...Ne5 would have been wiser.

18 Nxf4 Rb8 19 Nh5! (Diagram 11)

Obvious, but also very strong.

19...Ng6

Almost out of the blue Black is in big trouble, for example 19...Kf8 falls foul of 20 Rxg7! Rxg7 21 Bxh6.

20 Bxh6! gxh6 21 Nf6+

The key to this neat tactic is that there is no place to which the black king can move that will escape the material-winning h4-h5.

21...Ke7 22 Nxg8+ Rxg8 23 h5

The point, of course, is that the pin guarantees winning the knight.

23...Kf6 24 hxg6 fxg6 25 Rb1 Rb8 26 Rxb8 Nxb8 27 Ke2 Nd7 28 f4 e5 29 Rd3 Black resigns

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Game 49
□ **Golod** ■ **Martinovic**
Bad Wiessee 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 f3 c5 5 d5 Bxc3+?!

Playing straight into White's hands, this effectively donates a free tempo to the opponent.

6 bxc3 d6 7 e4 Qe7 8 Ne2 Nbd7 9 Ng3

Now the knight is out of the bishop's way and this is a comfortable square for it to rest. It eyes up the f5- and h5-squares for future habitation and offers support to the e4-pawn (relevant in the event of the f-pawn advancing).

9...Nf8 10 Bd3 e5

NOTE: You may one day hear the phrase 'blocking it up for the draw'. Be careful what you read into that statement as there is often plenty of play even in the most closed of positions.

11 0-0 h6 12 Rb1! (Diagram 12)

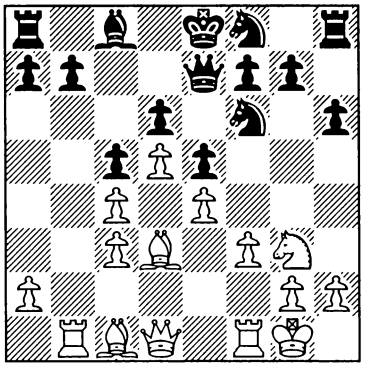


Diagram 12
Play on both flanks

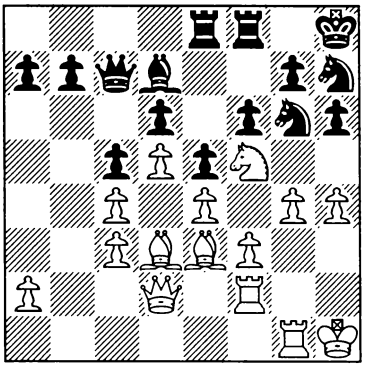


Diagram 13
Awaiting the inevitable

White's play is model in this game. This move pressurises the b7-pawn, thus preventing ...Bd7 and ultimately dissuading long castling. Black naturally doesn't want to play ...b7-b6 as it will only be a target for White's a-pawn.

12...Qc7 13 Rf2

Another flexible move. Later White's rooks could double on the b- or f-file.

13...Ng6 14 Nf5

A fantastic square for the knight. Black is loath to capture it there and so that leaves the tough task of dealing with its threats.

14...0-0 15 Be3 Kh8 16 Qd2

Now there are big problems on h6 and g7 and that's just the start!

16...Nh7 17 Kh1 Bd7 18 g4

Yes, in line with White's last move, now it's time to call in the cavalry!

18...Rae8 19 Rg1 f6 20 h4 (Diagram 13)

We can now see why the manoeuvre ...Kd8-c7 is so popular in this sort of blocked centre position. Now Black can do nothing but wait for White to do his worst!

20...Ne7 21 Rh2 Rf7 22 g5 fxg5 23 hxg5 hxg5 24 Rxg5 Ref8 (Diagram 14) 25 Rxh7+! Black resigns

Yes, it's mate in seven; 25...Kxh7 26 Qh2+ Kg8 27 Nh6+ Kh7 28 Nxf7+ isn't a bad start!

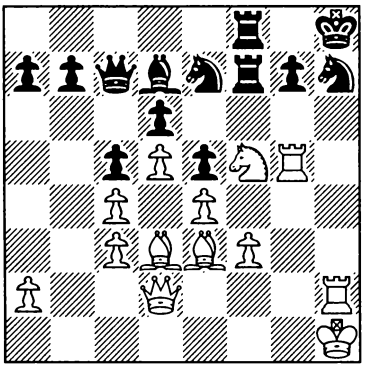


Diagram 14
Mate in 7!

Game 50
☐ **Saric** ■ **Nikolac**
Pula 2001

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 f3 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Nc6 7 e3?!

It just doesn't make any sense not to play 7 e4 as, after all, that is what this Sämisch system is all about.

7...b6

A typical plan. Black is not intending to fianchettoing his bishop but rather play it to a6 where, combined with ...Na5, he can pressurise the weakest of the doubled white c-pawns.

8 Bd3 0-0 9 Ne2 Ba6 10 e4 (Diagram 15)

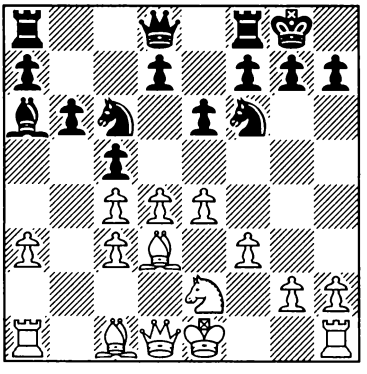


Diagram 15
The c4-pawn is targeted

It seems to me that White has effectively lost a tempo with the way

he has handled the opening, his only possible comeback being that at least Black has committed his king to the kingside.

10...Ne8!

A flexible move that anticipates the pawn push e4-e5 and enables his own f-pawn to be used as centre-attacking weapon. Black also sidesteps a possible Bg5 pin.



TIP: It is worth considering the concept of going backwards in order to come forward.

11 f4 f5 12 Ng3

12 e5 Na5 leaves White on the defensive with an undesirable set of fixed pawns on the kingside.

12...Nd6 13 0-0 (Diagram 16)

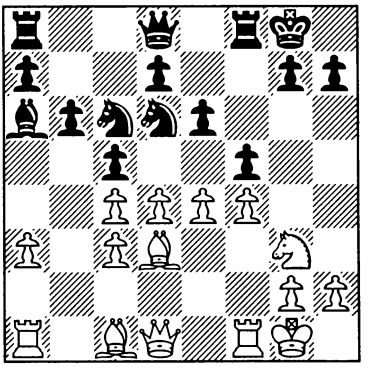


Diagram 16
Keeping out the bishops

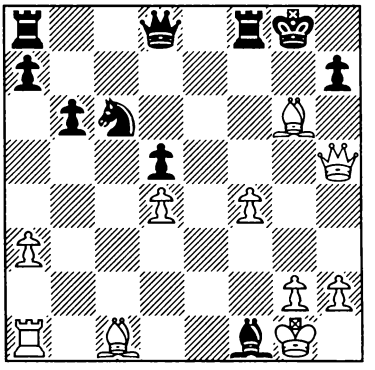


Diagram 17
The black king currently lacks defenders

White is counting on sacrificing a pawn but Black now handles the position very sensibly.

13...cxd4 14 cxd4 fxe4 15 Nxe4 Nxe4 16 Bxe4 d5!

Instead 16...Bxc4 17 Bxh7+ Kxh7 18 Qc2+ is rather murky.

17 cxd5 exd5

17...Bxf1 18 dxc6 would be a silly exchange to take even with the cheap tactic 18...Be2 in mind.

18 Bb1

Clearly 18 Bd3 Bxd3 19 Qxd3 Qf6 20 Bb2 Na5 is grim positionally, although White's forthcoming effort smacks of desperation.

18...Bxf1 19 Qh5 g6 20 Bxg6 (Diagram 17) 20...Qd7!

Black rightly has no intention of allowing the perpetual check that comes with 20...hxg6.

21 Kxf1 hxg6 22 Qxg6+ Kh8 23 a4

23 Qh6+ Qh7 24 Qxc6 Qd3+ 25 Kf2 Qxd4+ allows Black to pick up the rook in the corner and still return for check-blocking duties.

23...Qh7 24 Qxc6 Rac8

A different approach from the above-mentioned ...Qd3+.

25 Qb5 Qxh2 26 Qxd5 Rxc1+! 27 Rxc1 Qxf4+ White resigns

Black picks up the rook and White doesn't get a perpetual.

Game 51
☐ **Volkov** ■ **Romanishin**
European Team Championship, Batumi 1999

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 f3 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Nbd7

I believe this game is a good indicator as to why the immediate 6...c5 is a far more popular try.

7 cxd5 exd5 8 e3

Basically, White has the two bishops advantage and an extra centre pawn. If he can get the latter going, then Black is in for a bit of stick.

8...0-0 9 Bd3 Nb6 10 Ne2 Bd7 11 a4! (Diagram 18)

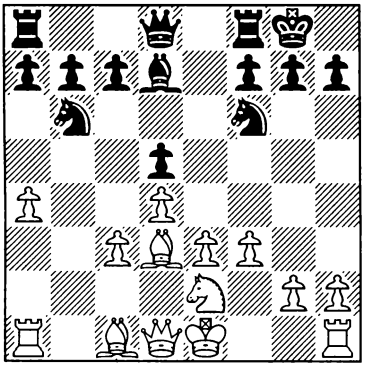


Diagram 18
Black lacks activity

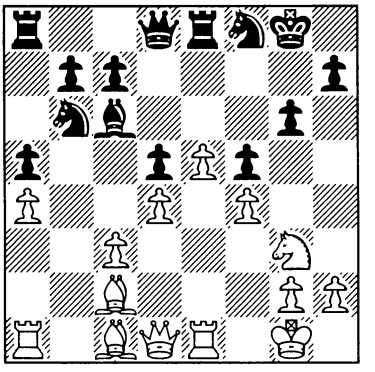


Diagram 19
Time to open up the kingside

Preventing Black from parking his bishop on this square and threatening to budge the knight with 12 a5.

11...a5 12 0-0 Bc6

For the time being Black halts White's progress in the centre. However, as this is only a temporary measure, I can't help feeling that Black's whole set up is too passive.

13 Ng3

The absence of the black bishop from the c8-h3 diagonal also gives White the free run of the f5-square.

13...Re8 14 Re1 Qd7?!

When you consider Black's following move, this queen foray seems a little ridiculous. Bearing in mind Ba3, though, her majesty was destined to be harassed.

15 Bf5 Qd8 16 Bc2

Protecting the a4-pawn and facilitating Qd3.

16...Nfd7 17 e4 Nf8 18 e5

Now that White has achieved his aim of getting his pawn to e5 (where it obstructs neither bishop), life becomes extremely difficult for Black.

18...g6

Patching up the f5-square but creating some dark-squared holes that are going to be all the more weak in the absence of the relevant bishop.

19 f4 f5 (Diagram 19)

Naturally Black wants to block things up, but boy is he in for a shock!

20 Nxf5!! gxf5 21 Bxf5

White has only actually bagged two pawns for the piece, but he now has an impressive pawn majority to go with his fantastic bishops. Meanwhile, Black's pieces remain out of it whilst his king is very exposed.

21...Nc4 22 Bc2 Bd7 23 f5 Ra6 24 Qf3 Bc8

There was no good way to defend the d-pawn.

25 Qg3+ Kh8 26 Bg5 Qd7 27 e6 Black resigns (Diagram 20)

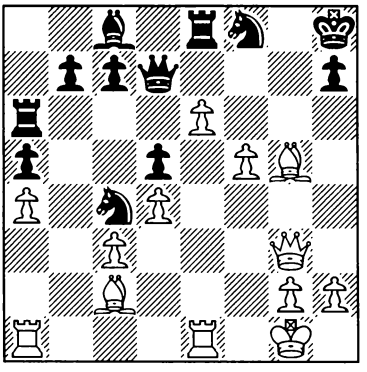


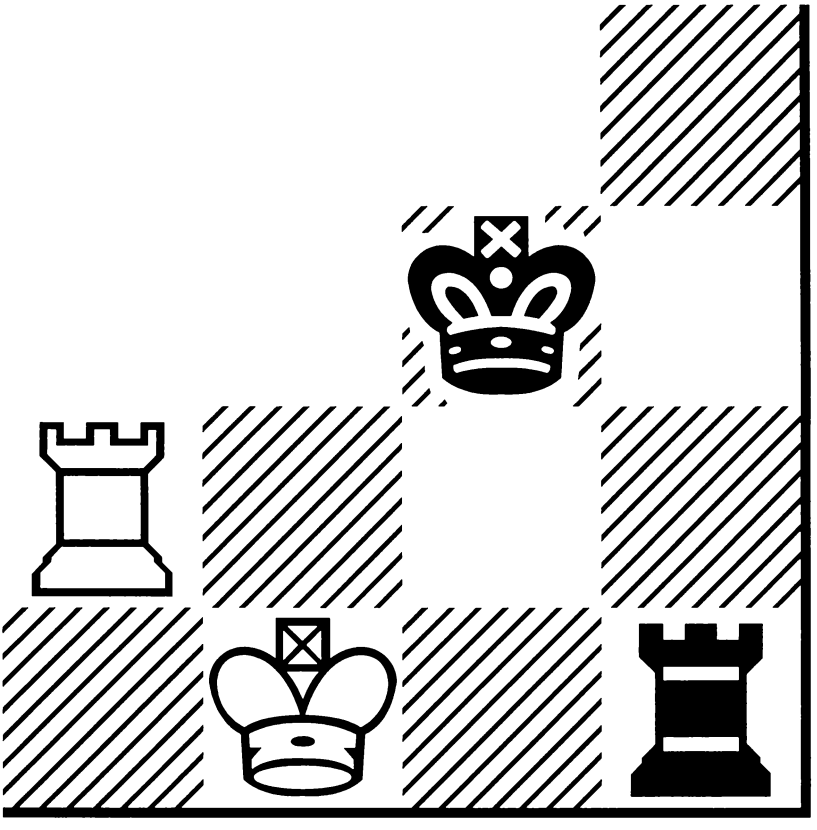
Diagram 20
The a6-rook is cut off

Just like that it's game over. On 27...Qg7 there is 28 f6 and probably 29 f7, whilst 27...Qd6 falls foul of 28 Bf6 mate.

Chapter Eleven

The Leningrad Variation: 4 Bg5

- Introduction
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bg5 (Diagram 1)

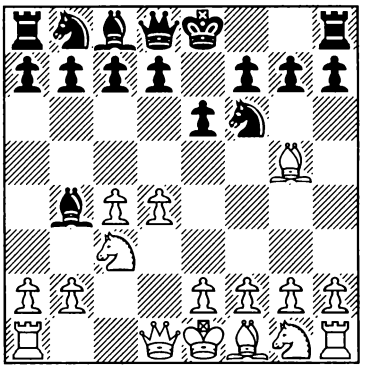


Diagram 1
The counter-pin

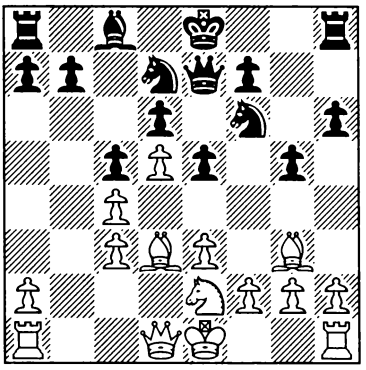


Diagram 2
Intriguing!

The Leningrad Variation is considered by many to be the most aggressive method of meeting the Nimzo-Indian. White appears unperturbed by the pin on his own knight and reacts by setting up an equally annoying pin on the f6-knight. One blatant observation that can be made is that should Black concede his dark-squared bishop, then it frequently involves doubling White's pawns. On the other hand, an early Bxf6 would merely bring Black's queen into play. The point is, of course, that White has no intention of engaging in such a swap and positively encourages his opponent to weaken his kingside in order to escape the pin.

4...h6

Although this looks fairly harmless, some players prefer to play it a little later, though a transposition is not unlikely. However, for reasons that the games selection illustrates, some prefer to delete it altogether.



TIP: White should make Black work hard to obtain the trade of dark-squared bishop for king's knight.

5 Bh4 c5

Black must take some action in the centre and 5...d5 would merely angle for an inferior QGD. The absence of a bishop on c1 also makes the concept of heaping more pressure on the c3-knight more attractive.

6 d5

Playable here as White can realistically hope to back it up with f2-f3 and e2-e4. It is worth noting here that 6...Nxd5?! 7 Bxd8 Nxc3 8 Qb3

Ne4+ 9 Kd1 Nxf2+ 10 Kc1 Kxd8 is a tactic that doesn't pay off because of 11 Qg3! Nxh1 12 Qxg7. Also, 6...Qa5?! fails because 7 Bxf6 would then see the bishop temporarily defending c3 and obviously not allowing ...Ne4 to follow!

6...d6

Typically the momentum is with White in this line but the pawn sacrifice 6...b5 (discussed in Game 52) seeks to radically alter that trend.

7 e3

The more direct 7 f3, intending e2-e4 in one turn, may look more to the point (see Game 53) but it is far from clear that White wants to close his options so early along the d3-h7 diagonal.

7...Bxc3+

Inserted before White has the opportunity to defend this knight with a piece. Game 54 considers the implications of leaving this capture out.

8 bxc3 e5

It certainly makes no sense for Black to trade pawns on d5 now and the text expresses his desire to keep the position closed.

9 Bd3 Qe7

Committing the queen early, but this move is more of a nudge and hardly leaves the queen exposed to the enemy forces. Its inclusion is justified by the preparation of a potential ...e5-e4 and a possible king walk to c7 via d8.

The alternative 9...Nbd7 is the subject of Game 55.

10 Ne2

From here the knight may dream of a future transference to f5 via g3. It's not playable here, but under different circumstances a Nf3-d2 manoeuvre is acceptable. On e2 the knight guards the c3-pawn, whereas on d2 it would protect the c4-pawn.

10...g5

Though this undoubtedly creates the odd weakness, I believe that this aggressive continuation is stronger than 10...Nbd7 for reasons that you will discover in Game 56.

11 Bg3 Nbd7 (Diagram 2)

Plans

This middlegame is of a very different variety. White has the bishop pair but, although the dark-squared one is supposed to be 'good', Black certainly seems to have it under control at present. White needs to try and change that and, whilst f2-f3 may offer a retreat square, going on the attack with h2-h4 could also try to exploit the early advance of Black's kingside pawns. Black then shouldn't be too eager to push his pawn to g4 as a reintroduction to the h4-e7 diagonal

for the white bishop could prove devastating. Hence ...Rg8 could feature in order to hold Black's kingside intact, with the king heading to the queenside via ...Kd8-c7.

Whilst White could ultimately try to manoeuvre his knight to the very attractive f5-post, a black knight would look good on e5. Although this square is currently occupied by a pawn, the advance ...e5-e4 should definitely come into consideration even if it involves sacrificing a pawn. As usual, the c4-pawn should be a long-term target.

Illustrative Games

Game 52
□ **Ward** ■ **Hinks-Edwards**
British League 2000

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bg5 h6 5 Bh4 c5 6 d5 b5 (Diagram 3)

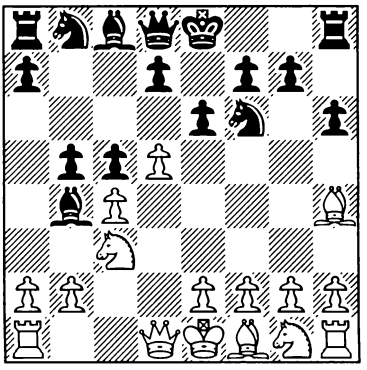


Diagram 3
An interesting gambit

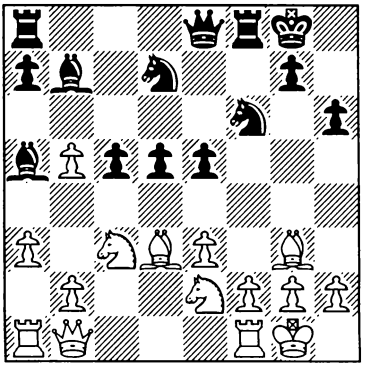


Diagram 4
Centre pawns rule okay!

Black sacrifices a wing pawn in order to have more influence in the centre.

7 dxe6

Alternatively, White can at least temporarily decline the gambit with 7 e3 or even offer one of his own via 7 e4 g5 8 Bg3 Nxe4.

7...fxe6 8 cxb5 d5 9 e3 0-0

QUESTION 12: This is sensible, but why not go for winning a piece with 9...d4 here?

10 Bd3

10 Nf3 is also possible but this way White retains the option of the c3-supporting Nge2.

10...Bb7

10...d4 again looks premature in view of 11 exd4 cxd4 12 a3 Ba5 13 b4 but 10...a6!? persists in an interesting gambit mode.

11 Nge2 Nbd7 12 0-0 Qe8

Escaping the pin and designed to hinder White's Nf4-g6 plans.

13 Bg3 e5 14 a3 Ba5 15 Qb1 (Diagram 4)

Eyeing the g6-square and preparing 16 b4. If Black's c-pawn is traded off then the power of his centre is significantly diminished as he can never really afford to concede the d4-square to a white knight.

15...Bb6 16 b4 c4 17 Bg6

This tempo is required to prevent Black getting in ...d5-d4. White's next plan will be to further reduce Black's control over this key central area by pushing away the dark-squared bishop.

17...Qe7 18 Rd1 Rfd8 19 a4 Nf8 20 a5 Bc7 21 Bf5 Rab8 22 Qb2 Nh5? (Diagram 5)

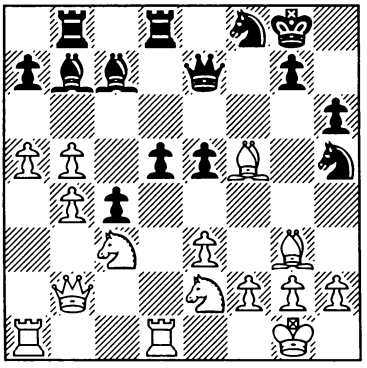


Diagram 5
A centre under pressure

The first real mistake of this interesting tussle. The game continuation suggests that Black can't really afford to remove a defender of d5.

23 b6! Nxg3 24 hxg3 axb6 25 a6 Ba8 26 a7 Rb7 27 Nxd5 Qf7 28 Be4 Bd6 29 Ndc3 b5 30 Ra6 Black resigns

There was no need to take the exchange just yet and I'd kind of envisaged 30...Be7 31 Rxd8 Bxd8 32 Bd5 as being the end. Coincidentally, Black obviously also decided that there was no other way to grovel on.

Game 53
☐ **Parker** ■ **Lautier**
Mondariz 2000

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bg5 c5 5 d5 d6 6 f3 h6 7 Bd2?!

Although the consistent 7 Bh4, maintaining the pin, is the main move here, it is easy to see why some club players may be attracted to this

continuation. The logic may be that the bishop has fulfilled its role of helping to secure a big centre and it can now return with a job evidently well done, simultaneously preventing doubled pawns.

7...exd5 8 cxd5 0-0 9 e4

Regarding my last comments, the truth, though, is soon brought home to White in this highly instructive encounter.

9...Nh5! (Diagram 6)

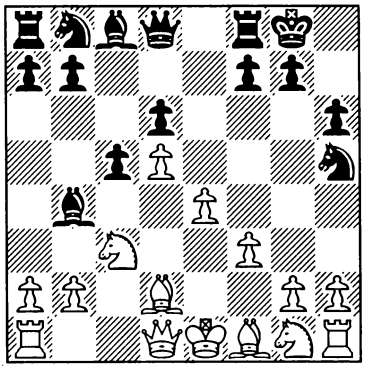


Diagram 6
Providing serious options

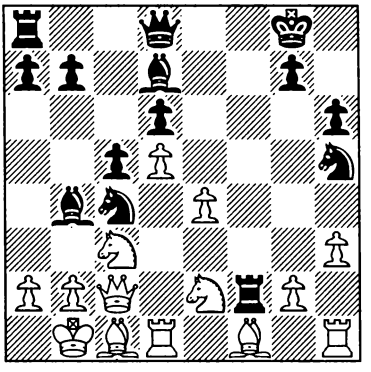


Diagram 7
White is in a bit of a muddle

A very important move that takes advantage of the fact that this knight is no longer pinned. Black doesn't allow White the chance to complete his development and, as well as threatening ...Qh4+, prepares to strike out at the centre.

10 Nge2 f5! 11 Qc2

11 exf5 Bxf5 12 g4 is of course foiled by 12...Qh4+.

11...fxe4 12 fxe4

There wasn't any better but this was a most undesirable sequence for White, whose opponent now has the juicy e5-square at his disposal.

12...Nd7 13 0-0-0 Ne5



NOTE: This e5-square is an excellent outpost for a black knight and it is often worth sacrificing a pawn in order to secure its positioning here in a middlegame.

14 Kb1 Bd7 15 h3 Nc4 16 Bc1 Rf2 (Diagram 7)



TIP: Rooks really do love the 7th rank!

Now the e2-knight is pinned and White is in a real bind.

17 Qd3 Ne5 18 Qe3 Qf8

In view of the tactical variation 18...Qf6 19 g4 Bxc3 20 Nxc3 (or 20 bxc3 Nc4 21 Qd3 Bb5) 20...Rf3, the alternative queen move also looks sensible.

19 g4 Nc4 20 Qd3 Ne5

Simply showing who is boss!

21 Qe3 Bxc3 22 gxh5

22 Nxc3 Rf3 with the black knight coming to g3 or f4 is rather unattractive for White and so he tries to mix things up a bit.

22...Ba5 23 Rg1 Kh7

By unpinning the g-pawn, this cuts out Qxh6. However, an alternative cheeky continuation is 23...Bg4!?, the point being that after 24 hxg4 Rf3 the white queen is trapped.

24 Nf4 Rf3 25 Ng6 Qf6 26 Qe2 Rf2 27 Qe3 Rf3

Black seems to enjoy the odd repetition. Leaving aside psychological reasons, in tournament play this is a good way to help avoid time trouble.

28 Qe2 Re8 29 Nxe5 Rxe5 30 Rg6 Qf8 31 Qg2?!

Upon 31 Rxd6 (offering this rook for the f3 one), Black has the crafty intermezzo 31...Rxe4 with the pinning ...Bf5 being the key.

31...Bxh3 (Diagram 8)

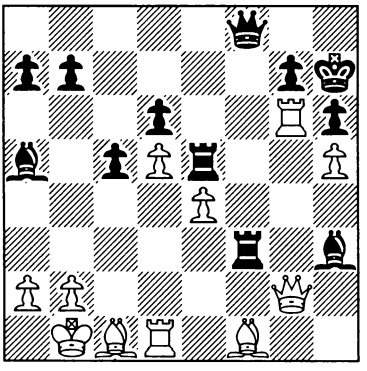


Diagram 8
The f1-bishop looks doomed

White's last move wasn't objectively his best, but as far as he was concerned it was his last throw of the dice.

32 Rxh6+ gxh6 33 Qg6+ Kh8 34 Bxh3 Rxh3 35 Bxh6 Qg8 36 Qf6+ Kh7 37 Bf4 Rexh5 38 Qxd6 Rh1 White resigns

There is no mate and there is no perpetual. In the cold light of day White is a rook down.

Game 54
☐ **J.Cooper ■ Giddins**
British League 2000

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1 d4 e6 2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bg5 c5 5 d5 d6 6 e3 Qe7?!

Essentially in this game Black tries to do without the early ...Bxc3 and White tries (and succeeds!) to punish him for it.

7 Nge2

At this juncture I'd like to mention a sneaky idea behind Black's early queen move. After 7 Bd3 exd5 8 cxd5 Qe5 White might have other options in this particular position (e.g. sacrificing a pawn), but in similar ones he would simply have to relinquish his bishop on f6.

7...exd5 8 a3!? (Diagram 9)

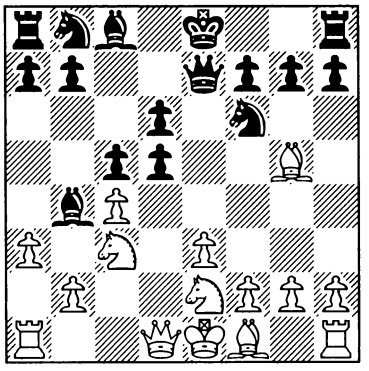


Diagram 9
Temporarily Ignoring d5

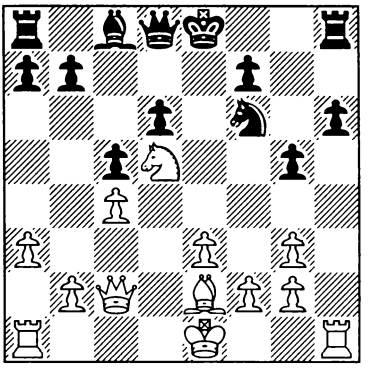


Diagram 10
Watch that a1-h8 diagonal!

A tasty-looking pawn sacrifice.

8...Bxc3+

This is kind of forced as 8...Ba5 fails to 9 Bxf6 Qxf6 10 Qa4+ Bd7 (or 10...Nc6 11 cxd5 winning the knight) 11 Qxa5 b6 12 Nxd5 bxa5 13 Nxf6+ gxf6 leaving Black with an abysmal pawn structure.

9 Nxc3 Nbd7

9...dxc4 obviously invites White to develop quickly but is probably no worse than the text.

10 Nxd5 Qd8 11 Be2

Black's d-pawn is backward whilst White has an outpost on d5 and the bishop pair. One wouldn't expect the game to end quite as abruptly as it does but it's clear that White already has quite a big advantage.

11...h6 12 Bh4 g5

Escaping the pin but creating problems on a different diagonal.

13 Bg3 Ne4 14 Qc2 Nxg3 15 hxg3 Nf6?? (Diagram 10)

Losing, but arguably the best solution! Black's position was lousy.

16 Qc3 Black resigns

Game 55
□ **Ward** ■ **Gligoric**
Malta 2000

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bg5 c5 5 d5 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 d6 7 e3 h6 8 Bh4 Qe7 9 Bd3 Nbd7 10 Nf3

10 Ne2 and 10 dxe6 are also playable.

10...Nb6 (Diagram 11)

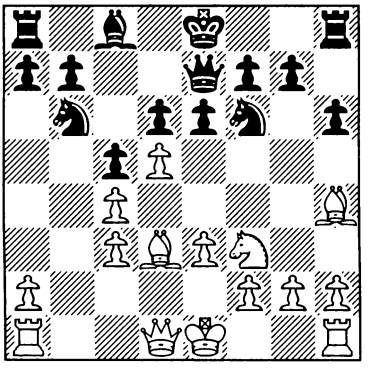


Diagram 11
Tension remains on d5

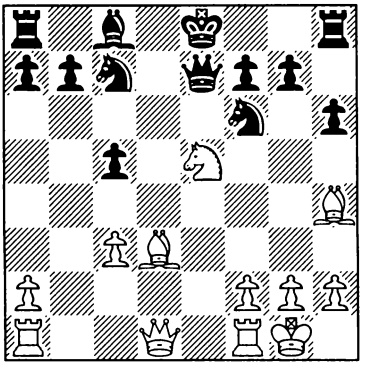


Diagram 12
Black should castle quickly!

Already well out of my theory, at the time that this game was played I thought that this was extremely provocative and I simply couldn't resist sacrificing a pawn. Now I believe I understand a bit more about the position and consider 10...Nb6 to be quite reasonable.

11 0-0

It could well be that 11 dxe6!? Bxe6 12 0-0 is more accurate for reasons that I'll explain in the notes to Black's next move.

11...exd5?!

Grabbing the pawn is very risky and it seems as though 11...e5! is a most satisfactory and safe alternative. My original thinking was that I would have the typical set-up except Black would have an offside knight on b6. However, after 12 Nd2 g5 13 Bg3 h5! the point is that 14 h4 can be met by 14...Ng4. The point is that White doesn't want to be castled at this juncture as it prohibits most of his normally available kingside aggression.

12 cxd5 Nbxd5 13 e4 Nc7 14 e5

With the two bishops advantage and a lead in development, I wanted the board as open as possible.

14...dxe5 15 Nxe5 (Diagram 12) 15...Be6?!

Black is possibly harbouring plans to castle queenside but this is way

too ambitious. I was expecting 15...0-0 and considered myself to have reasonable compensation for the pawn. Indeed, I was in the process of deciding between 16 Rfe1 and 16 f4 (perhaps with Qf3 and Rae1 to follow), when I was shocked by the text.

16 Qa4+!

Fortunately recalling the advice I always offer juniors (and you are probably getting sick of by now!) about looking out for checks, I observed this sneaky move that throws a big spanner in Black's works. Now his king is embarrassed as there is no satisfactory alternative to moving it.

16...Kf8 17 Rae1!?

I was quite pleased with the result of my longest think of the game. I left a rook on f1 because I felt that Black would have to turn to ...g7-g5 in order to solve his problems and thus the f-file could soon see some action.

17...g5 18 Bg3 Nfd5 19 f4!

Certainly the loss of the c3-pawn wouldn't affect anything and Black is in big danger of being battered down the f- and e-files.

19...gxf4 20 Bxf4 Nxf4 21 Qxf4

Now, amongst other things, 22 Ng6+ is threatened.

21...Ke8 (Diagram 13)

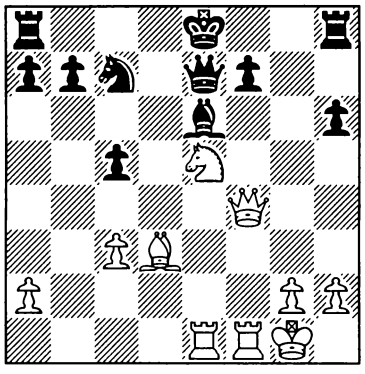


Diagram 13
The black king has already moved!

22 Nxf7

Ironically, 22 Qa4+ would again have been extremely strong and indeed scores highest on the ultimate oracle, the scoring scheme of the computer engine 'Fritz'! However, I was never going to be able to resist the temptation of this rather visual continuation (even if I had been looking out for checks!).

Note that I would also have played this against 21...Kg7.

22...Kd7 23 Ne5+ Black resigns

White's position is crushing and a lot of fun to play. There was no way that I was going to be content with just 23 Nxh8. For starters, I could win at least an exchange with Ng6 next go.

Game 56
□ **Misanovic** ■ **H.Hunt**
European Women's Team Championship, Batumi 1999

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bg5 c5 5 d5 h6 6 Bh4 d6 7 e3 Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 Qe7 9 Bd3 e5 10 Ne2 Nbd7

The first deviation from our main line continuation of 10...g5. Seeing it as a move order mistake, White immediately sets about taking advantage of the situation.

11 f4!? (Diagram 14)

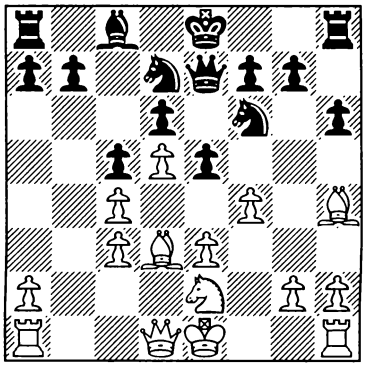


Diagram 14
The f-file has potential

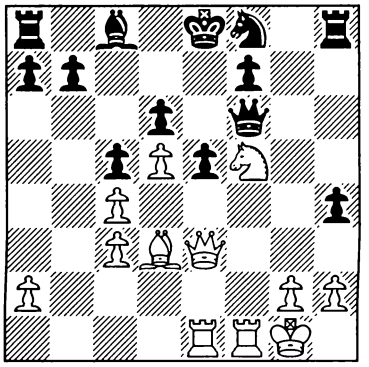


Diagram 15
White has no redundant pieces

Instead of 11 Ng3 Nb6 12 Nf5, White gets straight to the point. Now complications are on the agenda as there is no safe way out for Black.

11...g5

The textbook-recommended response that I might now venture to suggest needs reconsidering. Pressure would certainly mount along the f-file if Black did 'nothing' and 11...exf4 12 exf4 g5 13 Bf2 Ng4 14 0-0 Nxf2 15 Rxf2 Nf6 16 Ng3 Bg4 17 Qe1 Nh5 18 Bf5 Bxf5 19 Re2 Black resigns, as in Parker-O'Cinneide, Dublin 1993, is just one accident waiting to happen.

12 fxg5 Ng4



TIP: Treat your pieces collectively as an army and not just as individuals.

White's g-pawn is pinned but now Black relies too much on one piece.

13 Ng3 Nxe3 14 Qf3 hxg5 15 Qxe3 gxh4 16 Nf5

White has sacrificed a pawn and is immediately compensated by this wonderful square for the knight.

16...Qf6 17 0-0 Nf8 18 Rae1 (Diagram 15)

An innocuous-looking move that is, in fact, remarkably dangerous and poses all sorts of problems. That said, the more obvious 18 Rf2 and 18 Rf3 have also proved quite good for White, leading one to the conclusion that Black is definitely better off avoiding this position.

18...Bxf5?

It's very tempting to remove this knight, but this continuation seems to pretty much lose by force. 18...Ng6 19 Rf2 Kd8 on the face of it looks like a better practical try, but Black's pieces are hardly well co-ordinated. White is possibly justified in trying 20 Nxd6!? Qxd6 21 Bxg6 fxg6 22 Qg5+ as 22...Kc7 loses the queen to 23 Rf6. Instead 22...Qe7 would be critical.

19 Rxf5 Qe7

One point behind 18 Rae1 is demonstrated after 19...Qh6 20 Rxe5+! dxe5 21 Qxe5+.

20 Ref1 Rc8

This looks pretty grim but 20...Rh7 is foiled by 21 R5f3 Rg7 22 Qh6.

21 Rxf7 Qxf7 22 Rxf7 Kxf7

Black has two rooks for a queen. Alas (and a point obviously not lost on her opponent), Black's remaining pieces lack cohesion.

23 Qf3+ Ke8

The fork on g4 prevents White from placing her king on the g-file.

24 Qf6 Rg8 25 Bc2 (Diagram 16)

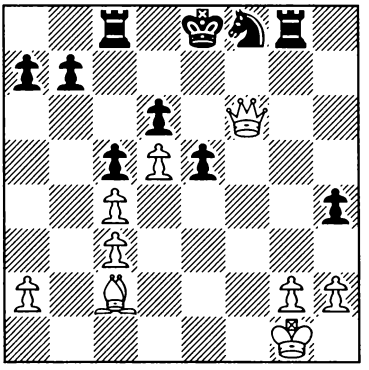


Diagram 16
Black's e-pawn is not dangerous!

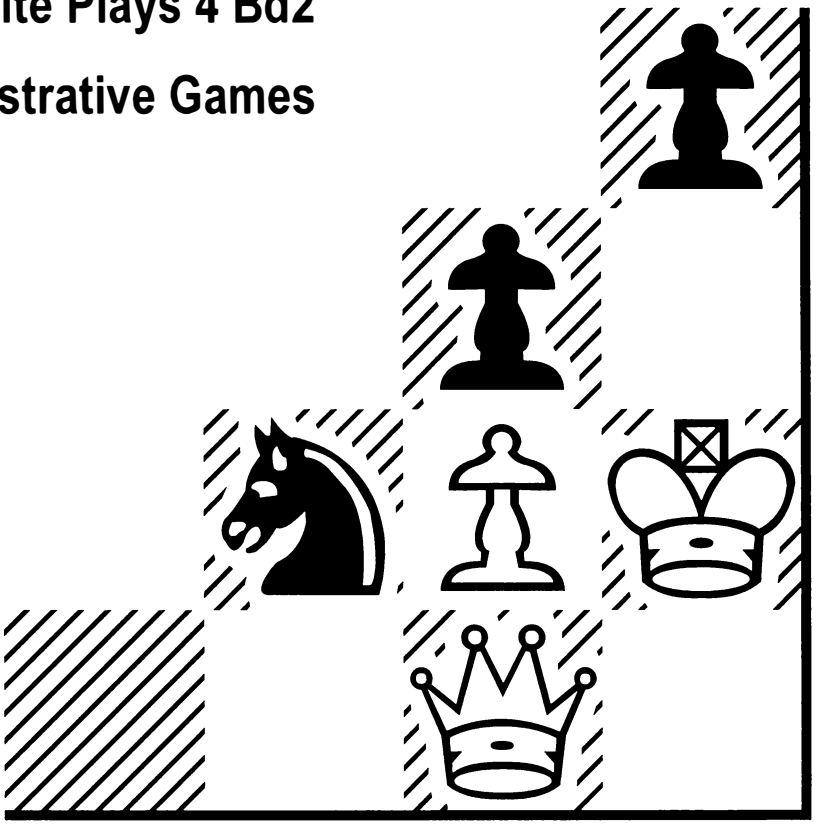
A devastating check on a4 is threatened, leaving Black helpless.

25...b5 26 cxb5 Rg4 27 Bf5 Black resigns

Chapter Twelve

Odds and Ends

- Introduction
- White Plays 4 g3
- White Plays 4 Qb3
- White Plays 4 Bd2
- Illustrative Games



Introduction

Upon meeting the Nimzo-Indian, compared to other openings, White has an extraordinary number of reasonable fourth-move alternatives at his disposal. I have already covered the mainstream lines but, for completion's sake, I just thought I'd take a brief look at the theoretically-considered less important ones.

White Plays 4 g3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 g3 (Diagram 1)

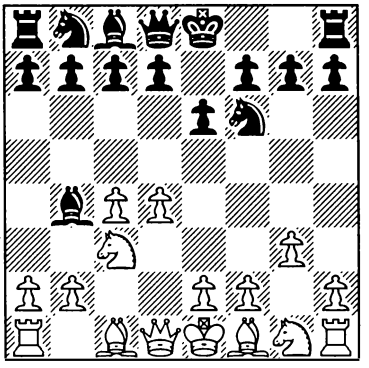


Diagram 1
Grabbing the h1-a8 diagonal

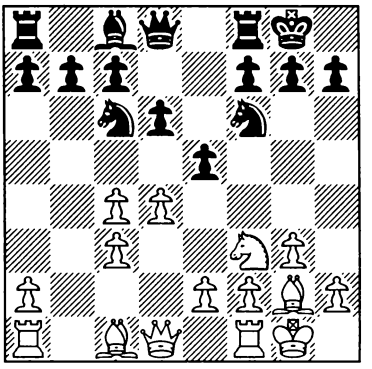


Diagram 2
A thematic approach

This specific move has actually already been seen in Chapter 9, when Black tended to transpose to a main line through 4...c5 5 Nf3. By playing g3 on move 4, White dissuades a black queenside fianchetto, but there is a downside.

4...0-0

Although a lot of players seem to do it on impulse, the fact is that there is no compulsion for Black to play 4...c5. Although a quick ...b7-b6 has been ruled out of the equation, in my view Black has available a couple of very reasonable systems through utilising his d-pawn.



TIP: While it is your prerogative to transpose into what you may know, often it is possible to punish an opponent's move order inaccuracies.

5 Bg2 Bxc3+

The text continuation is more in keeping with the Nimzo-Indian style, although I have to say that 5...d5 is also not bad. For the technical ones amongst you, that would transpose into some sort of QGD Catalan Variation with the knight a little misplaced on c3. In that event

White must be especially careful that Black doesn't just take on c4 and then keep the extra pawn.

6 bxc3

Although this book has already illustrated how useful the domination of the long h1-a8 diagonal can be for White, it should also be clear that with the bishop on g2, White's c4-pawn is that much more vulnerable.

6...d6 7 Nf3 Nc6 8 0-0 e5 (Diagram 2)

Plans

Black's play is very logical. He has traded off his dark-squared bishop in a deal that has left him with a couple of weak pawns to target; now he places his own pawns so as to complement the remaining bishop. Black is generally not going to be interested in allowing White to undouble his pawns through ...exd4 but he should consider ...e5-e4 which, in offering some more space, could easily be the springboard for a kingside attack, e.g. via ...Bf5, ...Qd7, ...Bh3 etc.

Although White usually won't be enamoured with the concept of closing the position with d4-d5, it would be acceptable if he could arrange to obtain the initiative via an f4 pawn break. Indeed, the f-file and the f5-square (for the white knight) are the most likely outlets for serious action.

White Plays 4 Qb3

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qb3 (Diagram 3)

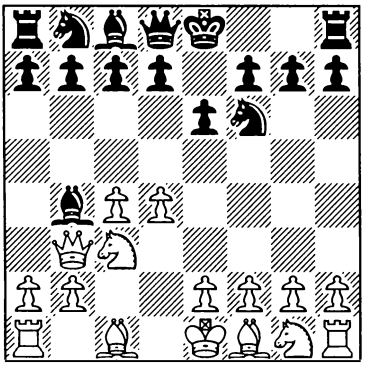


Diagram 3
Forcing the issue?

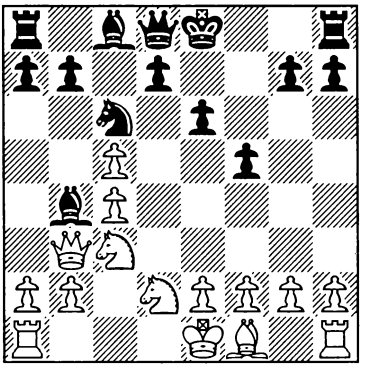


Diagram 4
Black has the bishop pair

Earlier we saw 4 Nf3 b6 5 Qb3 and this is a kind of mix between that and the 4 Qc2 Classical Variation. With reference to the latter, Black won't be keen on 4...Bxc3+ as after 5 Qxc3 White will have saved a

tempo by not having to play a2-a3. Regarding the former, White hasn't yet committed his knight to f3 but that leaves his centre temporarily more vulnerable and so Black may respond more radically than with a queenside fianchetto.

4...c5 5 dxc5 Nc6

Black is in no great hurry to regain the c5-pawn and may prefer to first have a bit of fun with the pin. Once you note the likes of ...Nd4, Qxb4?? ...Nc2+, one can see why the queen is a little awkwardly placed on b3.

6 Nf3 Ne4

Threatening to cripple White's queenside pawns without even having to concede the dark-squared bishop.

7 Bd2 Nxd2 8 Nxd2 f5 (Diagram 4)

Plans

Black was encouraged to play 8...f5 in order to keep a white knight out of e4 (and hence the hole on d6). He will be able to regain the pawn on c5 and will find himself in the unusual position of being the one in possession of the two bishops. Although that sounds good, he must figure out how to develop the one on c8. White is likely to play e2-e3 and Be2 and could challenge the f3-a8 diagonal in the possibility of a black queenside fianchetto. Black's d-pawn stands out as a target, with White inevitably looking to bring a rook or two to the half-open d-file.

White Plays 4 Bd2

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Bd2 (Diagram 5)

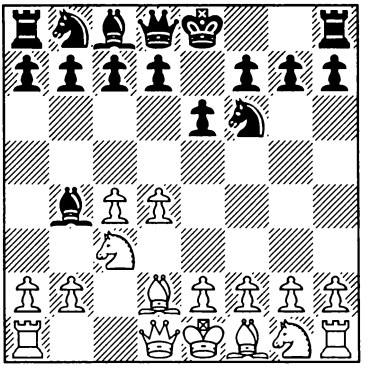


Diagram 5
No doubled pawns, thanks!

If you are truly starting out in the Nimzo-Indian then there is no

more appropriate place for me to end this book than with the standard novice treatment. As a junior, many of my opponents seemed to respond this way almost without thought. Certainly the concept of unpinning the knight and preventing the pawn doubling seemed to appeal, although at higher levels this idea lacks punch.

4...0-0 5 a3 Bxc3 6 Bxc3 Ne4!

Plans

White obtained the bishop pair but it was a time-consuming sequence and the fact is that the black knight could soon capture White's dark-squared bishop if desired anyway. The dark steed proudly sits on e4 and, with ...Qh4+ (in the event of f2-f3) in mind, it can't easily be budged. Support should be offered in the form of ...f7-f5 and essentially Black should choose between developing his remaining bishop via a ...d6 and ...e5 formation or a queenside fianchetto.

As 7 Bb4 d6 isn't particularly helpful, White will probably have to settle for, say, 7 Rc1. Strictly speaking, he is probably not worse and at least there is a long-term plan of expanding on the queenside. However, he definitely has no advantage and, with a monster present on e4, Black's position is definitely easier to play.

Illustrative Games

Game 57
☐ **I.Sokolov ■ Kurajica**
Sarajevo 1987

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 g3 0-0 5 Bg2 Nc6 6 Nf3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 d6 8 0-0 e5 9 Re1 Re8

A sensible non-committal move.



TIP: If stuck for a plan, either eliminate one of your opponent's well-placed pieces or improve the positioning of one of your own.

10 e4 exd4

Played only because White can't recapture with the c-pawn without losing a pawn.

11 Nxd4 Na5

Again Black is not interested in ironing out White's pawns and instead directs his attention towards the most advanced of the white c-file isolanis.

QUESTION 13: I've mentioned them throughout this book, but what exactly is an isolani?

12 Qa4 b6! (Diagram 6)

As well as protecting the knight, this puts paid to any ideas White may have had of eliminating a weakness through the pawn push c4-

c5. Black is now exposed along the g2-a8 diagonal but he has that situation well under control.

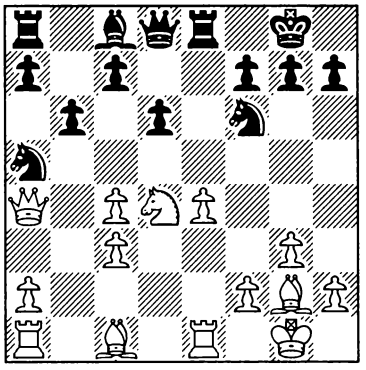


Diagram 6
As usual c4 is targeted

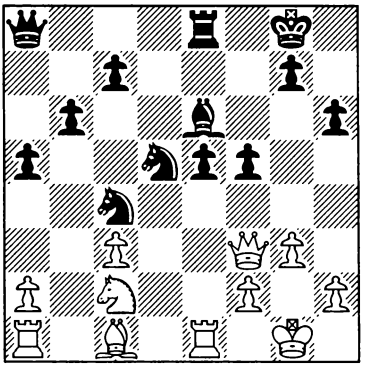


Diagram 7
Beware a mate on g2

13 e5 Bd7 14 Qd1 dxe5!

Always the plan, Black sacrifices the exchange. His expectation is that White will suffer on the light squares around his monarch in the absence of the fianchettoed bishop.

15 Bxa8 Qxa8 16 Nc2 Nxc4

Of course, with two pawns already bagged, Black isn't even material down.

17 Bg5 Nd5 18 Nb4 Be6 19 Qf3

White battles desperately to try and patch up the holes but he is on to a loser.

19...h6 20 Bc1 a5 21 Nc2 f5 (Diagram 7)

Now Black is in control of all of the key squares.

22 Qd3 Qc6 23 f4

White attempts to at least obtain the d4-square but the negative side of his effort is that it exposes the king along another diagonal.

23...e4 24 Qd4 Rd8 25 g4

A valiant attempt at activity, but alas Black is not interested over there as he has bigger fish to fry down the middle.

25...Rd6!

Protecting the rook and thus making a discovered knight move potentially fatal. White avoids that threat but another pawn falls, as does his whole position.

26 Qf2 Nxc3 27 Be3 Qd7 28 Bd4 Nb5 29 Be5 Nxe5 30 fxe5 Rd2 31 Re2 Rxe2 32 Qxe2 Nd4 (Diagram 8)

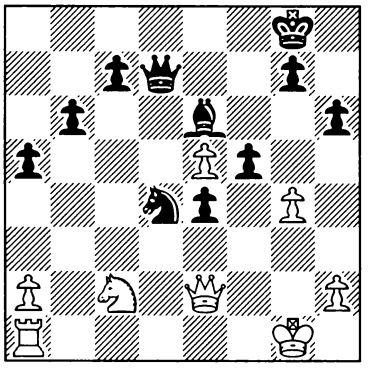


Diagram 8
A fork is on the horizon

The knight comes to d4 now but it will be the inevitable arrival of the black queen there that seals White's fate.

33 Qf2 Nxc2 White resigns

Game 58
☐ **Fries Nielsen** ■ **Ward**
Copenhagen 1994

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1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qb3 c5 5 dxc5 Nc6 6 Nf3 Ne4 7 Bd2 Nxd2 8 Nxd2 f5 9 e3 Bxc5 10 Be2 b6 11 0-0 Bb7 12 Na4 Rb8 13 Nxc5 bxc5 14 Qc3 Qf6 15 Qxf6

15 Bh5+ is possible but the black king won't be unhappy in the centre.

15...gxf6 (Diagram 9)

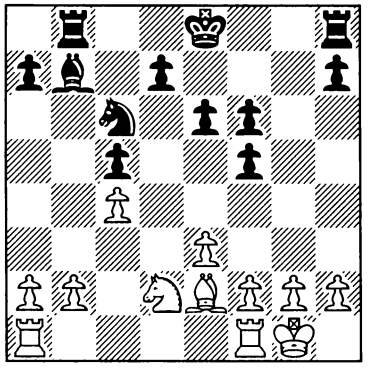


Diagram 9
The black rooks are happy

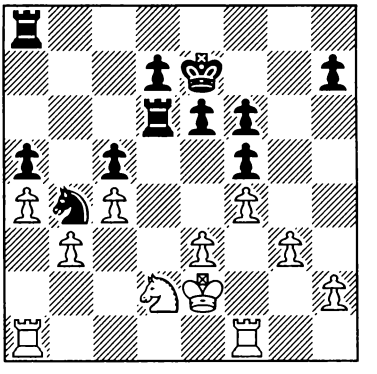


Diagram 10
Black probes

Now Black has three pawn islands compared to White's two but the

half-opened knight's files are going to be very handy.

16 f4

Although f3 looks like a vulnerable square for a rook, if he could arrange it White would like to get in a Rf3-h3 manoeuvre in order to hit Black's isolated h-pawn.

16...Rg8



TIP: Rooks much prefer to attack pawns than defend them.

Now White must do something about the potentially fatal threat to his g2-pawn (don't forget that bishop on b7!).

17 g3 Ba8 18 b3

White had to protect his b-pawn too but, because of this double whammy, White has been deprived of any rook-swinging options along the third rank. For the foreseeable future Black's isolated rook's pawns look as safe as houses.



TIP: Rooks are the best pieces for attacking isolated pawns.

18...Ke7 19 Kf2 a5

Ironically making the isolated pawn out as a strength. White is not happy with the prospect of ...a5-a4 and so stops the pawn in its tracks.

20 a4

His decision, though, has serious repercussions. His backward b-pawn (fixed on the same colour as his bishop) will forever be a target and the b4-square is now an outpost.

20...Nb4 21 Bf3 Rb6 22 Bxa8 Rxa8 23 Ke2 Rd6 (Diagram 10)

Yes, adding insult to injury, it is Black who has achieved the 'rook swinger'.



TIP: In the endgame rooks crave activity.

24 Rfc1 Rd3 25 Rab1 Rb8 26 Nf3 Rd6

Black had a bit of fun there but now has a deeper plan in mind.

27 Rc3 Rdb6 28 Rb2

Black has doubled rooks on the b-file but now just keep an eye on his knight.

28...Na6 29 Nd2 Nc7 30 Rb1 Ne8 31 Kf3 Nd6

White's pieces are ridiculously passive and, in conjunction with a possible future ...Rb4xa4 plan (e.g. once the knight is gone from d2), Black intends plonking his knight on e4. White is close to being in zugzwang and now desperately seeks some play.

32 g4 fxg4+ 33 Kxg4 Rg8+ 34 Kf3 Nf5

Unfortunately it is Black who is most grateful for the opening of the g-file!

35 Kf2 Nh4

A black rook is destined to infiltrate either down the g- or d-file.

36 Rg1 Rxg1 37 Kxg1 Rd6 38 Nf1 Rd1 39 Kf2 Nf5 40 Ke2 Rb1 41 Rd3 Nd6 42 Nd2 Rh1 43 e4 Rxh2+ 44 Kd1 Rh4

The rook continues to make a nuisance of itself.

45 Rf3 f5 46 e5 Ne4 47 Nxe4 fxe4 48 Rf1 Kf7 49 Ke2 Kg6 50 Rd1 Kf5 51 Rxd7 (Diagram 11)

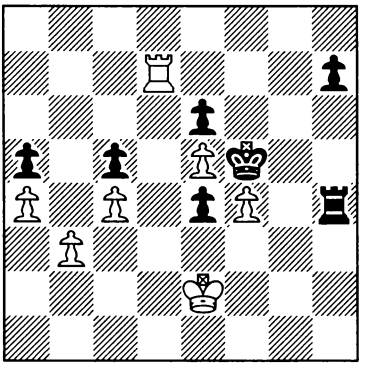


Diagram 11
The endgame is won

Finally a white piece gets some action but it is too little, too late.

51...Kxf4 52 Rc7 Rh2+ 53 Kd1 Ke3 White resigns

The white rook hasn't the time to take any pawns for fear of being mated.

I hope that you've enjoyed picking up tips on how to play or face the Nimzo-Indian and to round things off, just a bit of extra advice:



NOTE: A loss isn't a good thing!



WARNING: Losing isn't fun!

TIP: Win!!!

Good luck!!!

Solutions to Exercises

1)

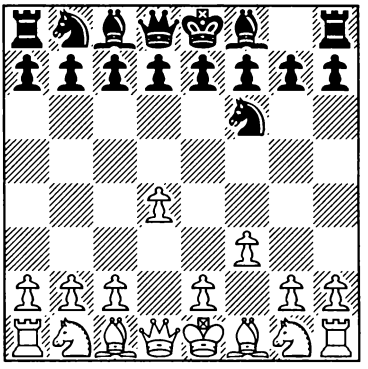


Diagram 1
A premature pawn push

Although 2 f3 (depicted in Diagram 1) strives to achieve 3 e4 and, unlike 2 Nc3, doesn't obstruct the c-pawn, this early pawn sortie cannot be justified. Throughout this book you will see why this move has its place, but here it is premature. Black can thwart White's plans with the simple 2...d5. Then White has deprived his king's knight of its most natural resting place and takes on an unwanted weakness on e3.

2) An 'open' position refers to one in which there are few blockages and where the pawn structure is far more fluid. Bishops tend to suffer more when the pawn structure is static as they may struggle to see the light of day. Knights, on the other hand, have more of a manoeuvring capacity and, given time, may often find a route to where they want to be.

3) No. White correctly never even considered playing b4-b5 as it would have conceded the c5-square. In the game, the cherished c4-c5 break has become a definite reality.

4) The knight was out of bounds in view of 21...Qxf6 22 d6+ Ke6 (Diagram 2).

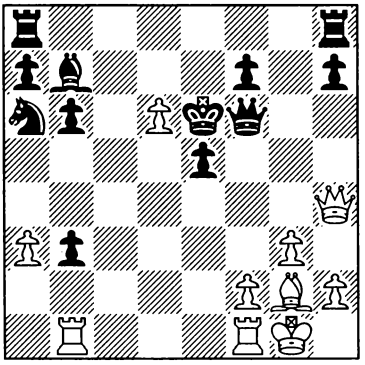


Diagram 2
In the firing line

Now 23 Bh3+ (always look out for checks!), which wins the black queen, is far better than the exchange-winning 23 Qxf6+ Kxf6 24 Bxb7 Nc5 which, because of Black's pawn majority, is rather unclear.

5) Such an advance is a common mistake amongst novices who frequently react to a pawn confrontation by effectively sidestepping the situation. The simple answer to this question is that this move (and many like it) would take the pressure off the centre and relieving the tension often hands the initiative to the opponent.

Black wouldn't be able to respond with ...b7-b6 immediately because of 6 Qa4+ but it is certainly a move that could feature a little later. Moreover, without having to worry about d5 anymore, Black may also be able to arrange the freeing ...e6-e5.

6) If Black could have the move ...h7-h6 for free then he would do but the fact is that there are bigger fish to fry. An opening principle is 'no unnecessary pawn moves', which hints that aside from space gaining central pawn pushes one should prioritise piece development. Though not useless, 6...h6 simply wouldn't help out in that department.

Funnily enough, strong players have tried 6...Qe8 before but this is a multi-purpose move. Firstly, 7 Bg5 is dissuaded as the knight is not pinned and so 7...Ne4 is available and, secondly, Black prepares ...d7-d6 with ...e6-e5 to follow.

7) In Diagram 3 there is no doubting that the bishop on c8 is technically a 'bad' one. Definition-wise this is not just because it can't move anywhere, but rather because it operates on the same colour as its fixed pawns. This is clearly an exaggerated example and the quiz position is more favourable. Admittedly, the c8-bishop currently has little scope but the pawns obstructing it are NOT fixed. After ...b7-b6 and ...d7-d6 they would suddenly be in perfect harmony. The answer,

then, is 'No'.

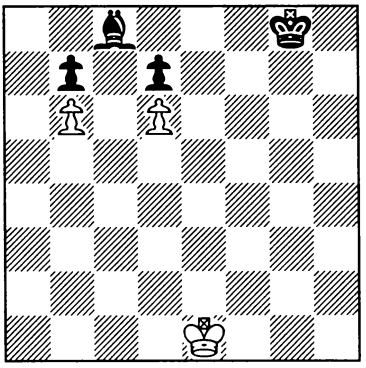


Diagram 3
A 'bad' bishop!

8) Technically speaking, I suppose the b4-bishop is actually en prise. However, as 7 Qxb4 Nc6 8 Qb5 Ra5 suddenly sees the queen trapped, it is not advisable for White to take it.

9) Despite the warning about not pushing pawns around the castled king, I originally thought up this question to advise against getting carried away. I mean, two pawns is not enough for a piece. However, the more I began looking at the likes of 8 Nxg5 hxg5 9 Bxg5 cxd4 10 Qxd4, the more I thought, 'hang on a moment, this might just be playable!' Indeed, here 10...Be7 11 Qh4 looks quite dangerous. Mate could soon be threatened on h7 via Bd3 or on g7 via Bh6.

As there are plenty of variations to study, I definitely can't categorically say that the sacrifice is a good idea. However, I most certainly can say that it should be a consideration!

10) I must confess that this was a bit of a tough question and quite possibly one that you might have wanted to ask me. Well at least you'll get your answer!

First up, I wouldn't say that openings are 'all about gaining space' but one can't deny that it is a big feature. With that in mind, as a matter of fact the advance 5 d5 has been seen in practical play. In truth, though, it is not very popular as it is seen as being premature. Although it gains space, Black's dark-squared bishop is not on f8, nor even fianchettoed on g7, but rather on b4. As it pins the knight on c3 and White's other knight is already on f3, it is extremely unlikely that White will be able to support the d-pawn in the near future with e2-e4. Instead White may have to turn to a kingside fianchetto himself, giving Black the time to stake his own claim for the centre. A good example of active opening play by Black is given below:

Wunsch-Milov

Heraklio 1993

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 c5 5 d5 Ne4 6 Bd2 Bxc3 7 bxc3 d6 8 g3 0-0 9 Bg2 Nxd2 10 Nxd2 e5 11 0-0 f5 (Diagram 4)

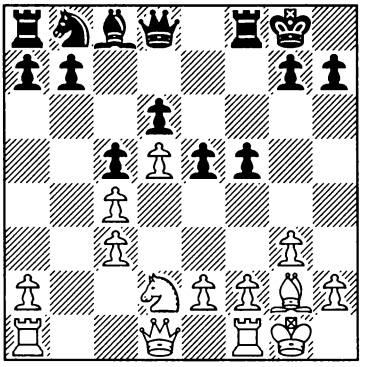


Diagram 4
Deploying the f-pawn

White has the typical doubled c-pawns which are only compensated by the presence of a half-open b-file. However, White only has his 'bad' bishop left and, with the option of ...f5-f4 open to Black, it is the second player who has the initiative on the kingside.

11) Surely you got this one as it's down to that 'always look out for checks' theme again. Although White would prefer not to be moving his queen, the simple fact is that 8 Bd2? would drop a pawn to 8...cxd4 9 cxd4 Qh4+!. If you didn't get this then you should be ashamed of yourself as it is the only check on offer.

12) As the knight is pinned, attacking it with a pawn sounds very nice in theory. Alas, in practice 9...d4?! fails to 10 a3 Ba5 (or 10...dxc3 11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 12 axb4) 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 Qh5+! (the only available check!) 12...g6 (or 12...Kd8 13 0-0-0 pinning the d-pawn) 13 Qxc5. Black's position has come apart at the seams.

13) An isolani is an isolated pawn, which in turn is a pawn that has no compatriot pawns on either adjacent file.

NOTE: If, for example, you have two pawns on the c-file but none on the b- or d-file (not uncommon for White in the Nimzo-Indian) then you have 'doubled isolated pawns'.

starting out: the nimzo-indian

Ideal for those wanting to understand the basics of the Nimzo-Indian.

The Nimzo-Indian is one of the soundest and most popular defences against 1 d4, offering Black the chance to unbalance the game early on and play for a win without undue risk. Advocates include virtually all of the world's top players, including Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik, Vishy Anand and Anatoly Karpov. In this revolutionary book, Grandmaster Chris Ward revisits the basic principles behind the Nimzo-Indian and its many variations. Throughout this easy-to-read guide the reader is helped along by a wealth of notes, tips and warnings from the author, while key strategies, ideas and tactics for both sides are clearly illustrated.

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Chris Ward is a Grandmaster and a former British Champion. He is also a highly successful coach and a well-respected writer. His earlier works for Everyman include *Improve Your Opening Play* and the best-selling *It's Your Move*.



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