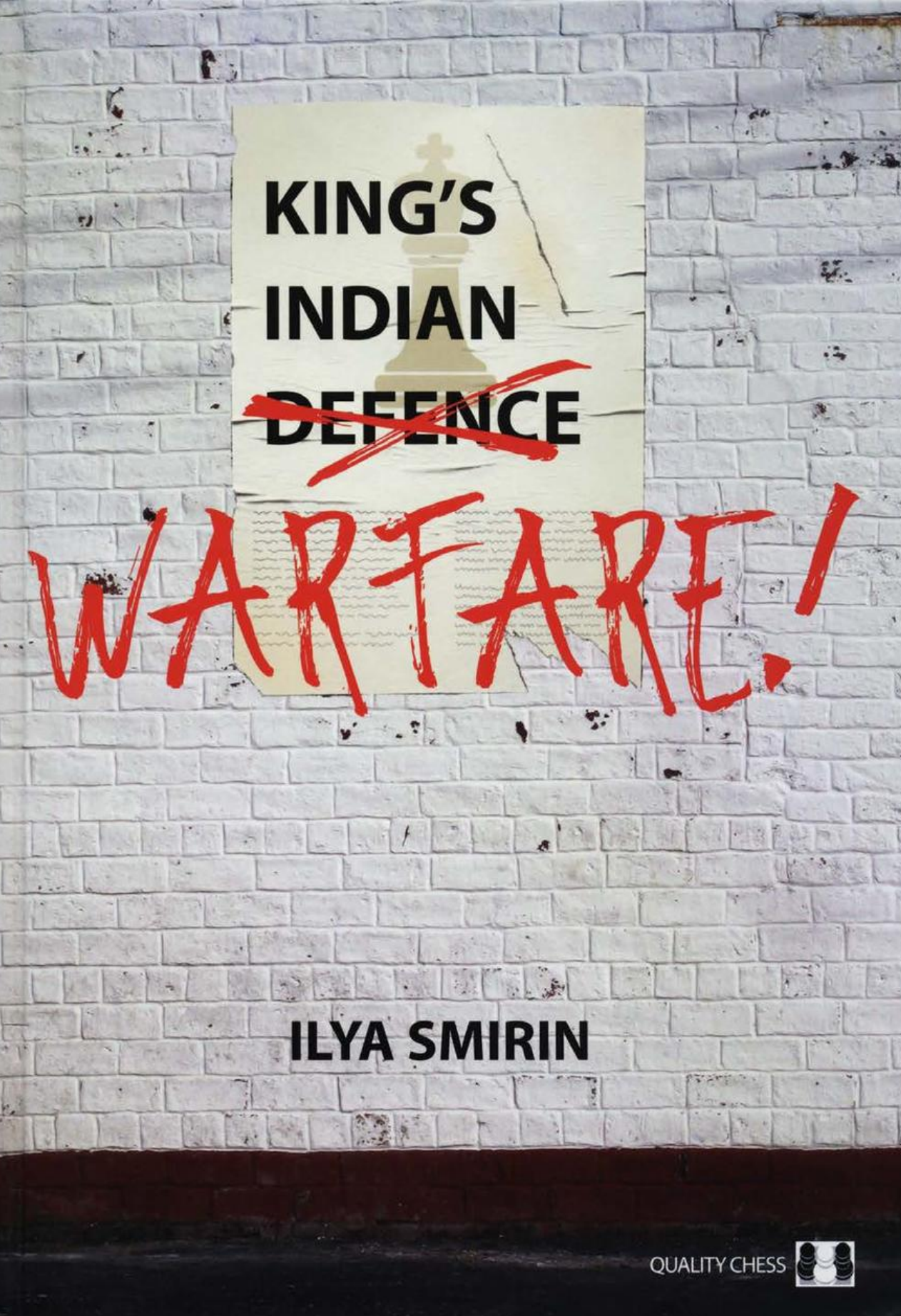
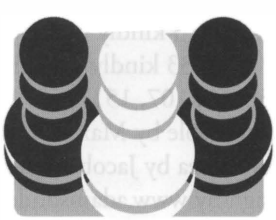

KING'S
INDIAN
DEFENCE
WARFARE!
ILYA SMIRIN
QUALITY CHESS

KING'S INDIAN WARFARE

By

ILYA SMIRIN



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KING'S INDIAN WARFARE

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Key to symbols used

⩲	White is slightly better
⩱	Black is slightly better
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+–	White has a decisive advantage
–+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
⩦	with compensation
⇄	with counterplay
∞	unclear

?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate

Foreword

I first played against Ilya in 1980, when we were both in our early twenties. He was already a strong player of course – as well as a big King's Indian fan. Since then, he has played this opening successfully against some of the best players in the world.

I believe there are two types of people who play the King's Indian. One type bases their play on knowledge and analysis; the other type plays according to feeling and understanding. Ilya Smirin undoubtedly belongs to the latter camp. I don't think he ever studied any deep theory! He has an excellent feeling for the middlegame, particularly for dynamic possibilities. When he gets a chance to attack the king, there are very few who can stop him.

Ilya may not know as much opening theory as some players, but he knows a lot about the history of the King's Indian. I know that Ilya has been greatly inspired by the games of Mikhail Tal, Robert Fischer and especially Leonid Stein, one of his favourite players. The way Ilya handles the King's Indian has been influenced by all of them. Stein in particular is one of Ilya's heroes; the Soviet GM would often aim for the most complicated position possible, in order to obtain attacking and other dynamic possibilities. Ilya possesses the same type of flair for such positions – and nowhere is his talent more obvious than in the King's Indian.



Ilya has played the King's Indian successfully against some of the very best players in the world. See, for instance, Chapter 2, which contains Ilya's games against Vladimir Kramnik, who is known as one of the strongest players on the White side of the KID. I find Ilya's success against Kramnik and other elite players extremely impressive, as each game is a huge challenge. When you play this opening you take a big risk from the very beginning. White gets space in the centre and a lot of freedom for his pieces, while as Black you must rely on your dynamic and tactical qualities.

Ilya is deeply confident in the potential of the black pieces in the King's Indian. Chapter 8 contains the game Gelfand – Smirin from the 2005 European Club Cup in Saint Vincent, where Ilya played brilliantly and I was really lucky to save the game. Ilya's resourcefulness and feeling for dynamics was really impressive in this game.

Everything in chess is a reflection of one's personality. Ilya is a big fan of theatre, as well as action movies – and I think this is reflected in his handling of the King's Indian, which always leads to a lot of drama and action on the board! I'm sure the readers will enjoy the many ferocious attacks and dramatic battles contained in this book. Hopefully it will inspire some readers to start playing the King's Indian – or return to it, if they've not played it for a while.

Reading this book gives you a different type of insight into the King's Indian. It's not a theoretical book, where you get answers to your opening questions – and probably the King's Indian is not meant to be played in such a clinical way. Ilya's games have great instructive value, to be sure – but this is also a book for pleasure and for inspiration. For players who enjoy wild chess, who value imagination, creativity and epic fights on the board, this book will be a treat.

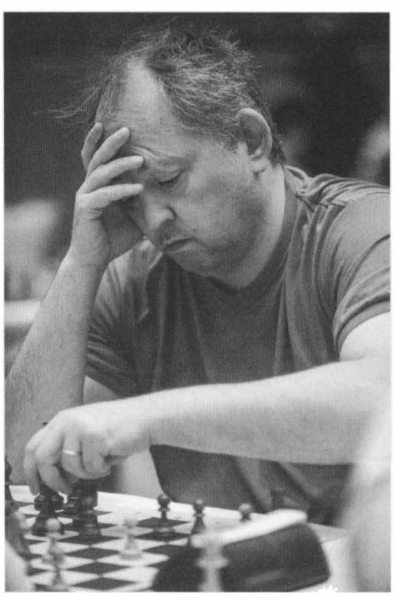
Boris Gelfand
2012 World Championship Finalist

Preface

In this book I would like to present my best King's Indian Defence games and in the process share with the reader my views on this complex and double-edged opening.

The King's Indian Defence is one of the most fascinating openings in chess. It involves everything I love about the game: risk-taking, attacking, exchanging weaknesses or material for dynamic chances, clever tactics, surprising turnarounds and a deep sense of possibility.

Many outstanding chess players played the King's Indian Defence throughout their whole careers. It is enough to mention just a few names (in chronological order): David Bronstein, Efim Geller, Mikhail Tal, Leonid Stein, Robert Fischer, Garry Kasparov. In modern days the King's Indian Defence is the main (and successful) opening in the games of Teimour Radjabov, and it is also played by Hikaru Nakamura, Alexander Grischuk and various other top players.



Not a King's Indian, but at least a current photo...

I have been a great lover of the King's Indian Defence from the very beginning of my chess life – that's over 30 years now. It is my favourite opening, so when I chatted to Jacob Aagaard after our game at the 2011 European Team Championship, and he asked if I had ever thought about writing a book, I felt attracted to share my love for and experience in handling this exciting opening.

What I want to achieve with this book is to give the reader a course in playing the King's Indian, which in turn will also be a course in playing dynamic chess. Every chapter will be structured in the following way:

- A few positions from the games in the chapter for the reader to solve
- General introduction to the topic; for example, tactics typical of the King's Indian
- Some of my own games that are relevant to the topic

The basic idea is to explain the topic in a simple (yet hopefully not simplistic) way and then show how the concepts showed up in my games, which were played at a high grandmaster level. I would implore the reader to be realistic when trying to solve the positions from the games. My intention is to help you broaden your mind and improve your imagination.

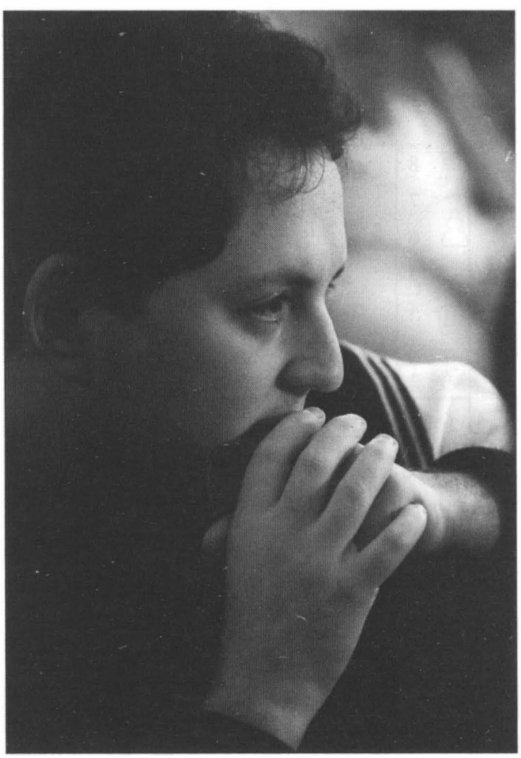
I decided quite deliberately to have 49 main games in this book. I could easily have made it 50, of course, but I like the number 49 for several reasons. 7x7 is one of them, but there is also the feeling of incompletion. Or in other words: I am leaving room for more. And it is certainly my goal to add to this collection of memorable King's Indian games in the years to come.

I hope this book will help the reader to play better chess, and inspire more players to take up this fascinating opening.

Ilya Smirin,
Kfar Sava, August 2016

Chapter 1

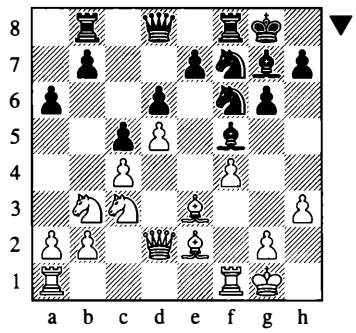
Always Dangerous



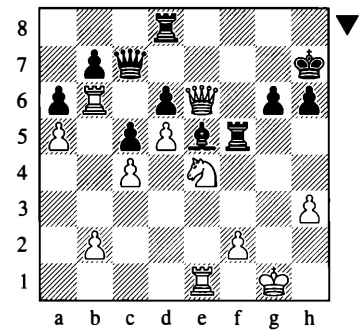
Since we were young, baby!

Test yourself against the book

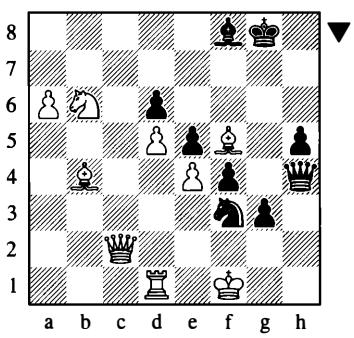
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



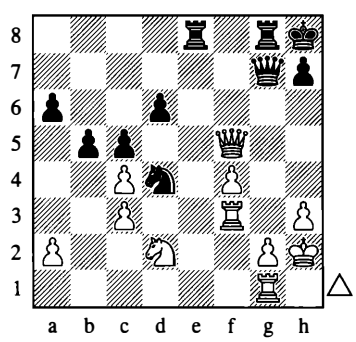
How can Black fight for the initiative? (see page 20)



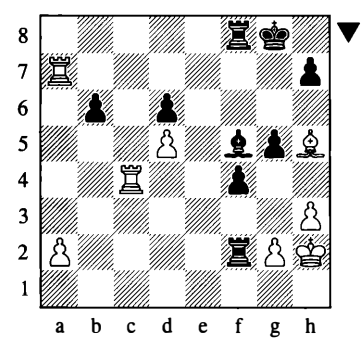
It is rare you can play a trap that is also the strongest move! (see page 26)



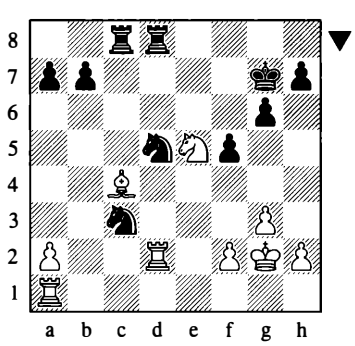
Black to play and win (see page 13)



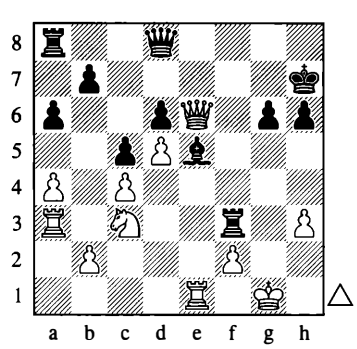
White has just received a big surprise blow. How should he react? (see page 21)



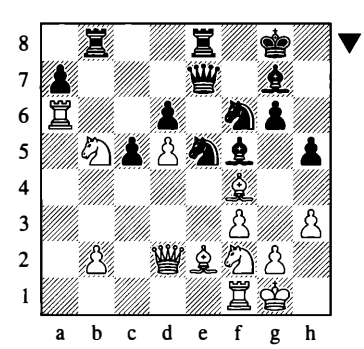
A nice little tactic (see page 33)



An easy one (see page 15)



Train your positional play. What should White play? (see page 25)



Another nice little tactic (see page 36/37)

I have played the King's Indian Defence throughout my entire career. It's a big enough opening to have enough dimensions not to get boring. I have played it positionally and I have played it in the style of a stuntman jumping out of an airplane without a parachute. And as you will see in this book, even the endgames can be quite complicated and require a lot from the players.

The KID has been a big part of my career and life, so when I was finally talked into writing a book by my good friend Boris Avrukh, I felt that the natural place to start was to write about my favourite opening. In this book I hope to give the reader a good understanding of the potential offered by the King's Indian. I have chosen to do this through my own games, based on some overarching themes. The games are, however, all extensively annotated. I do not like the idea of pretending that a big fight lasting for a number of hours can be explained through a simple idea. Trust me: the players know the ideas quite well, but there are many of them and they are often contradictory. The question is which idea or theme is more important in a position and who will benefit from this. In order to determine this, the players use all the tools available to them during the game: their tenacity, calculation, intuition, creativity and so on.

The main reason I like this opening is that it is almost always dangerous – for both sides of course. From the very beginning the board is transformed into a treacherous minefield in a way that you will very rarely find in the Queen's Gambit Declined. It is a very creative opening in which both players have chances to invent something from the beginning.

An example of an early disaster for White is this game from the European Championship.

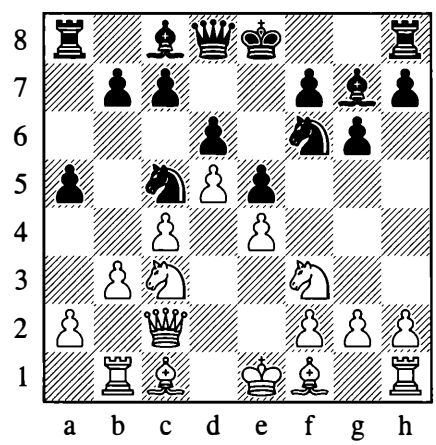
Nimrod Veinberg – Ilya Smirin

Jerusalem 2015

1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.d5 ♘d7 4.e4 ♘c5 5.♘c3 a5 6.♘f3 ♘f6

We have reached a position that could have arisen from the King's Indian, but through an unconventional move order. Black's position is a bit more flexible than usual.

7.♕c2 g6 8.b3 ♗g7 9.♖b1?



White mixes up his ideas. He wants to play a2-a3 and b3-b4 in order to drive away the knight from c5. But this allows a common King's Indian trick.

9...♘fxe4! 10.♘xe4 ♘xe4

I won the game on move 25. White cannot take the knight on account of 11.♕xe4 ♗f5.

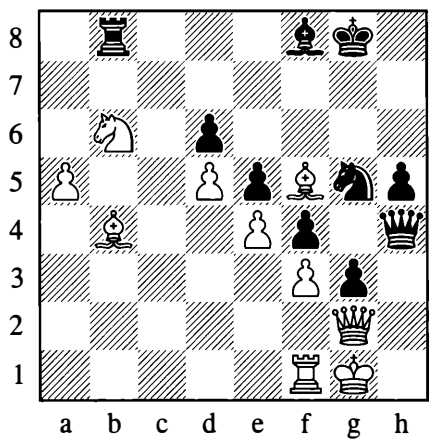
This is of course a rather simple trick, and certainly uncharacteristic of Veinberg's usual level, but at the same time also a good illustration of how perpetually dangerous the King's Indian is, even for someone who is a very strong player by most people's standards.

In the following game an IM is approaching the first time control in an entirely lost position against an experienced grandmaster.

Still, it would be too early to give up. The King's Indian supplies you with continual counter-chances, even when things have gone wrong.

Yannick Pelletier – Andreas Skytte Hagen

Legnica 2013



This game has gone in the way White usually wants in the King's Indian. Black has thrown everything, including the kitchen sink, into an attack on the kingside. He has sacrificed a piece and pushed his pawn to g3. Nevertheless, White has managed to contain the attack, keep the extra piece, and gain a winning position.

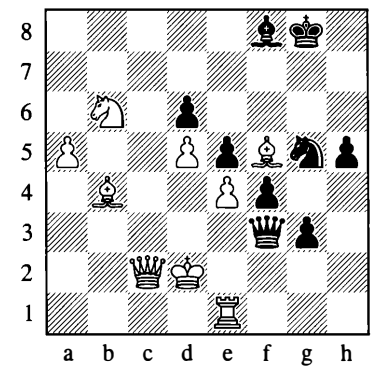
But even under such dire circumstances, there is still hope of victory for the King's Indian hero. The young Danish player decides to make more of his rook, which is not doing much at the moment.

40...♖b7!

White's task in this type of position is one of containment. This is never easy, as you have to both anticipate the opponent's ideas and find a good way to meet them, while still advancing your own agenda.

41.♖d1?!

It turned out when we analysed the game afterwards that 41.♖e1! was more accurate. The reason is found in the following variation: 41...♖c7 42.♔f1! ♖c2?! 43.♕xc2 ♕h1† 44.♔e2 ♕xf3† 45.♔d2 and White is completely winning.

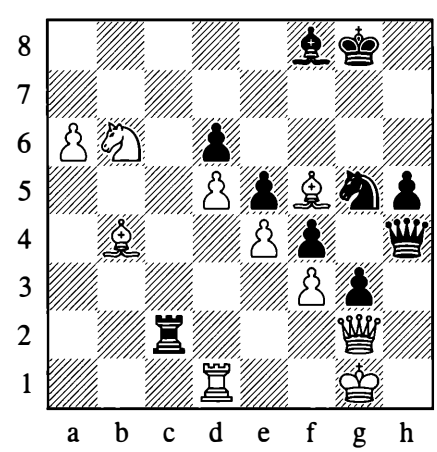


Now, imagine that the white rook is on d1 instead of e1, and Black has 45...♕e3#! (Of course White can deviate, but not without concessions, which is the point.)

41...♖c7 42.a6?!

After 42.♔f1 ♖c2 43.♗d2 White would still keep most of his advantage. But it is also evident that Black has gained some counterplay. Remember that when we joined this game, he looked entirely down and out. Being just lost is not that bad!

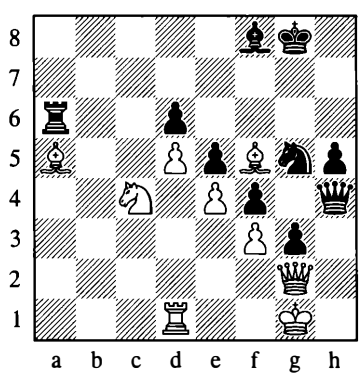
42...♖c2!



43.♕xc2?

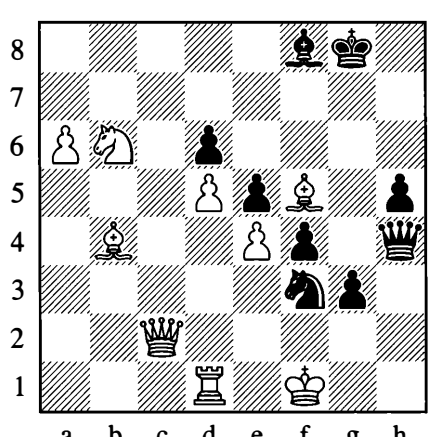
Pelletier does not believe in the sacrifice. I do not think this was because he was unable to calculate the consequences correctly. It was just that on this day, at this moment, a combination of bad form and hours of trying to keep the lid on Pandora's Box had drained his powers, and he missed something. This will be a common theme in this book, in virtually every game. It is so basic that I presume that the reader will take note of it now and not forget it.

43.♗d2 ♖a2 44.♘c4 ♖xa6 45.♗a5



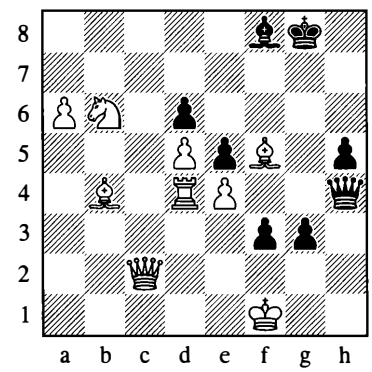
White would have kept the advantage, keeping the black rook out of the game. But it is clear that Black has also improved his chances, having eliminated the a-pawn.

43...♘xf3† 44.♔f1



44...♕h1†?

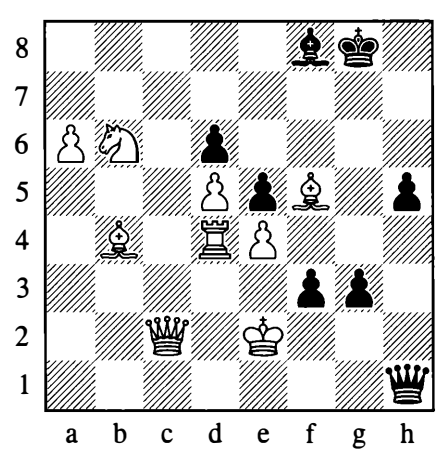
Hagen plays the most tempting move, presumably missing the winning idea entirely: 44...♘d4! 45.♖xd4 f3!!



This is another theme you will find again and again in this book, in every chapter: in the King's Indian material is only a part of the equation. The dynamic potential of the pieces is at least as important.

For example, in this position Black has two pawns for a rook, a knight and a bishop, but these two pawns are so powerful that the fight is decided in Black's favour.

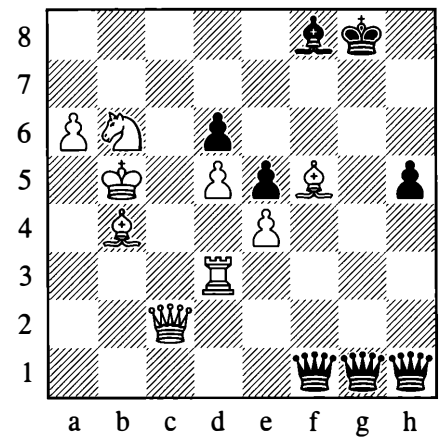
45.♔e2 ♘d4† 46.♖xd4 f3†



47.♔d3??

A clear sign of bad form. After 47.♔d2! g2 48.♗e6† ♔h8 49.♕c8 it is White who wins.

47...f2 48.♔c4 f1=♕† 49.♖d3 g2 50.♔b5 g1=♕



Four queens on the board: three against one. Black is winning.

51.♘c4 ♕ff2 52.♕b3 ♕b1 53.♔c6 ♕xb3 54.♖xb3 ♕c2 55.♖g3† ♔h8 56.♔b5 ♕a1 57.♖a3 ♕d4 58.♖c3
0–1

In this chapter we shall see eight of my games, all very different in character. The common theme (as indeed it is throughout the book) is the constant opportunity for creativity and/or an attack on the king. I hope to inspire the reader to always keep one eye on the prize and not allow himself to be constrained by materialism. Chess is like life: it is not about collecting material goods and counting them at the end. It is about finding fulfilment and joy through being the best that you can be and making the biggest possible mark on your surroundings. Or in short, to deliver checkmate!

My Games

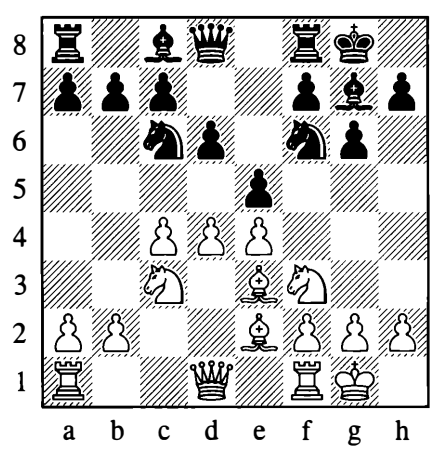
Lembit Oll – Ilya Smirin

Rostov-on-Don 1993

Lembit Oll started his chess career as a prodigy. He was a very talented player with a sharp sense for the initiative and very good calculating abilities. Lembit had an excellent memory and was a strong theoretician. Unfortunately, at some point he began to have mental problems, which led to his tragic death. Lembit passed away very young, being just 33 years old. He held 42nd place in the FIDE rating list at that time. Incidentally, he was the first USSR national master I ever played against. We drew our first encounter back in 1982. Here is our game from the Bondarevsky Memorial, which was held in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.♗e3

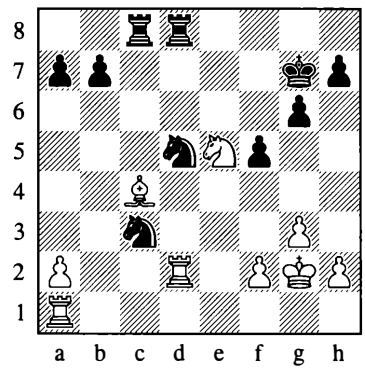
Usually White chooses this continuation as a way to avoid the main variations after 8.d5 ♘e7.



8...♖e8

8...♘g4 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗c1 f5 11.♗g5 has been a more popular line in the last few decades. Here is a high-level example from 1990: 11...♗f6 12.♗xf6 ♘xf6 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.♕xd8 ♖xd8

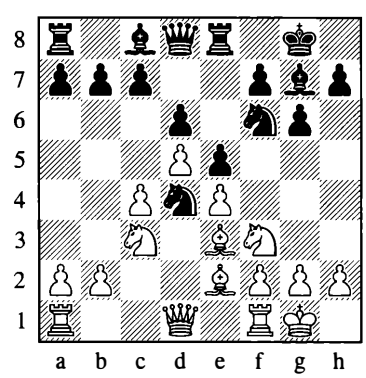
15.♘d5 ♘xe4 16.♘xc7 ♖b8 17.♖fd1 ♗d7 18.♗d3 ♖bc8 19.♘d5 ♘c5 20.♗f1 ♗e6 21.b4 ♗xd5 22.cxd5 ♘xb4 23.♘xe5 ♘e4 24.♗c4 ♘c3 25.♖d2 ♘bxd5 26.g3 ♔g7 27.♔g2?



27...♘e3† 0–1 Portisch – Kasparov, Linares 1990. Which 8th move to choose is basically a matter of one's mood during the game.

9.dxe5

9.d5 ♘d4! is the idea.



10.♘xd4 exd4 11.♗xd4 ♘xe4 12.♗xg7 ♔xg7 13.♘xe4 ♖xe4 14.♕c2 ♖e8 ½–½ was played in the well-known game Reshevsky – Najdorf, Zurich 1953, in which 8...♖e8 was seen for the first time.

9...dxe5 10.c5

After 10.♕xd8 ♘xd8 11.♘b5 ♘e6 12.♘g5 ♖e7 the position is rather simple and roughly equal, a draw being the most probable outcome. Oll continues in the most principled way – he grabs some space and prepares to activate the e2-bishop on b5.

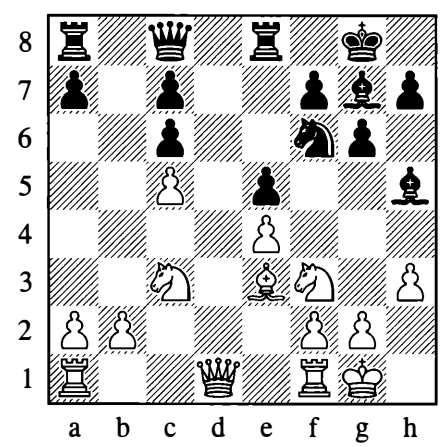
10...♗g4 11.♗b5 ♕c8

A reasonable alternative was 11...♘d7 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.h3 ♗xf3 14.♕xf3 ♘f8, with a similar structure to that which will arise later in the game. Black will transfer the knight to e6 and d4, thus compensating for the doubled c-pawns.

12.h3 ♗h5

I did not like the position after 12...♖d8 13.♘d5 ♘xd5 14.exd5 ♗e6 15.dxe6!? ♖xd1 16.exf7† ♔xf7 17.♗c4† ♔f8 18.♖axd1, which happened in one game. Despite the material advantage (queen for a rook plus bishop) Black has to be careful in my opinion – his king is vulnerable and White's pieces are active and well coordinated.

13.♗xc6 bxc6



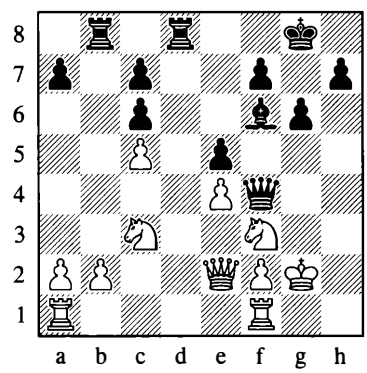
14.♗g5

14.♕e2 was played against me by Van der Sterren in a rapid game a year earlier: 14...h6 15.♔h2 g5 16.♕c4 ♖b8 17.b3 a5 18.♘d2 g4 19.f3!, with a definite positional advantage for White: Black's bishops are not very active and his pawn structure is not ideal either; (0–1, 34) Van der Sterren – Smirin, Tilburg 1992.

Of course, 14.g4?? is impossible due to 14...♘xg4.

14...♖b8 15.♖b1

A forced draw could be the result of the "petite combinaison" after: 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.g4 ♖d8 17.♕e2 ♗xg4 18.hxg4 ♕xg4† 19.♔h2 ♕f4† 20.♔g2



20...♖xb2! 21.♕xb2 ♕g4†

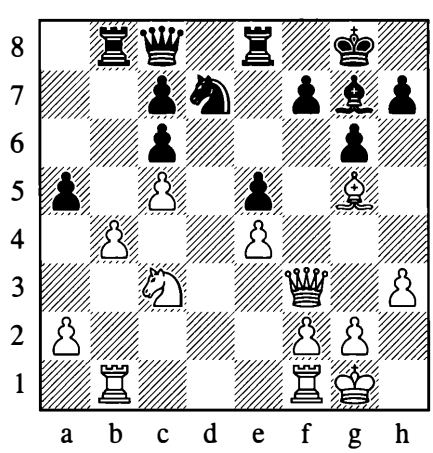
Perhaps 15.b3!? was slightly more precise, as the rook on a1 would then be freed from defending the b2-pawn.

15...♗xf3 16.♕xf3 ♘d7 17.b4

Or 17.♗e3 ♘f8 and the knight goes to e6.

17...a5

17...♘f8 was also perfectly playable, but I wanted to use the knight's current position on d7 to exchange the potentially weak pawn on a7.



18.b5?!

Lembit is not satisfied with 18.a3 axb4 19.axb4 ♘f8=. True to his style, he is looking for more tactical play.

18...♘xc5?!

During the game I thought that 18...cxb5 19.c6 ♘c5 20.♘d5 (White should probably continue 20.♗e3 ♘e6 21.♖fd1!? ♘d4 22.♗xd4 exd4 23.♘xb5 ♗e5 with a slightly worse but surely defendable position – the bishop on e5 is stronger than the white knight and the c6-pawn is more a weakness than strength here) would be dangerous for Black. Perhaps neither of us noticed that after 20...♘e6 21.♘e7†? ♖xe7 22.♗xe7 ♕e8 23.♗a3 ♕xc6 Black would have a material advantage and the better position.

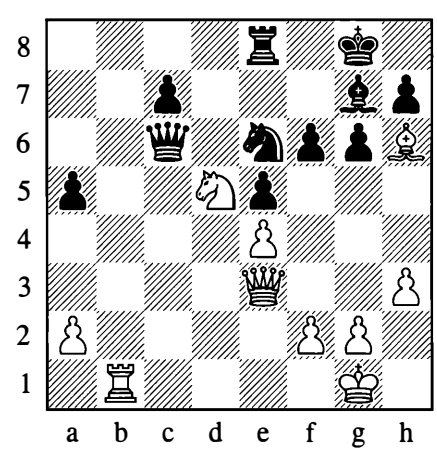
19.bxc6 ♘e6 20.♕e3!

This is better than 20.♗e3 ♖xb1 21.♖xb1 ♕a6, when the pawn on c6 is doomed.

20...f6 21.♗h6

Perhaps 21.♗h4 ♖xb1 22.♖xb1 g5 23.♗g3 ♕a6∓ 24.♘d5 ♕xc6 25.♖c1 was more accurate, but it's not easy to voluntarily put one's bishop in an unfortunate position (g3) when one is not looking at a computer screen.

21...♖xb1 22.♖xb1 ♕a6 23.♘d5 ♕xc6



Right now Black is on the defensive, but he has enough resources to neutralize the opponent's threats. Meanwhile, being a pawn up gave me some optimism...

24.♖c1 ♕b7!

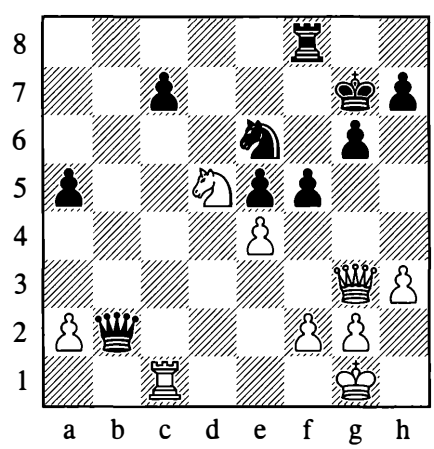
The best square for the queen.

Worse was 24...♕d6 25.♗xg7 ♔xg7 26.♕a7, with the initiative for White.

25.♗xg7 ♔xg7 26.♕f3 ♖f8 27.♕g4 f5!

Not falling into the trap: 27...♖e8?? 28.♘xc7 ♘xc7 29.♕d7†

28.♕g3 ♕b2



Defending the e-pawn and attacking the rook at the same time.

29.♖c4?

Suddenly White oversteps the safety line.

The only way to equality was 29.♖c6 ♕b1† 30.♔h2 ♕xe4 31.♖xe6 ♕xd5 32.♖xe5 ♕xa2 33.♖e7† ♖f7 34.♕xc7, when the weak king leaves Black with not a single winning chance.

29...c5!

The extra passed pawn advances. Now the scope of the white rook is very limited.

30.♖a4 f4 31.♕g4?

The second and last mistake. Lembit did not feel the danger to his king, which has been abandoned by its defenders.

The only way to minimize the damage was 31.♕c3 ♕xc3 (now Black can't create a mating net by 31...♕b1† 32.♔h2 ♘d4 33.♕xc5 ♘e2 due to 34.f3) 32.♘xc3 ♖a8 33.♘d5 and his active pieces gives White reasonable hope for a draw in the ending.

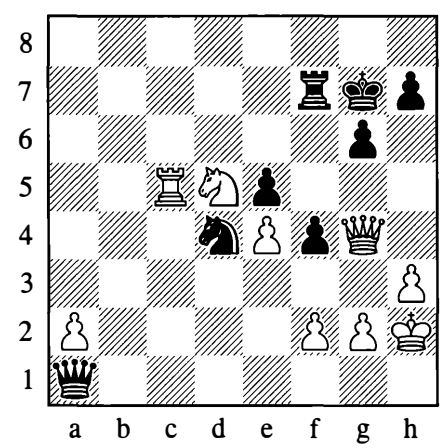
31...♘d4 32.♖xa5 ♖f7!

After this prophylactic move White is defenceless against the mating threats. No wonder Oll overlooked this – Black's attack appeared as if out of nowhere.

33.♖xc5

No better is 33.♕d1 f3 34.g3 ♘e2† 35.♔h2 ♘c3 36.♕e1 ♘xe4.

33...♕a1† 34.♔h2



34...h5!

After 35.♕g5 ♘e2 White cannot avoid mate on g1. The black queen in the corner also protects the pawn on e5. Lembit resigned. I was very pleased that such a brilliant player as Rafael Vaganian, who also played in the tournament, praised my play highly at the end of the game.

0–1

Alexey Kuzmin – Ilya Smirin

Nabereznye Chelny 1988

Alexey Kuzmin is a well-known theoretician who for many years has worked in Qatar as a coach. He is also a long-time opening adviser of Alexander Morozevich. But at the time this game was played, Morozevich was still too young...

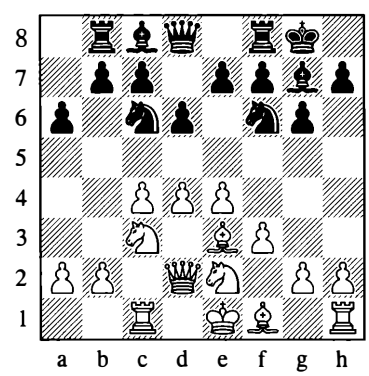
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0–0 6.♗e3 ♘c6 7.♕d2 a6 8.♘ge2 ♖b8

The most popular move in the position, preparing ...b7-b5.

I played 8...♗d7 in the game Chigladze – Smirin, which you will also find in this book (page 223).

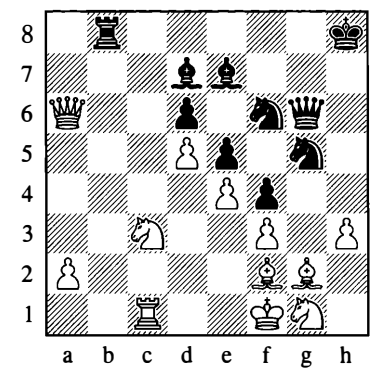
9.♘c1

9.♖c1 is the popular move nowadays.



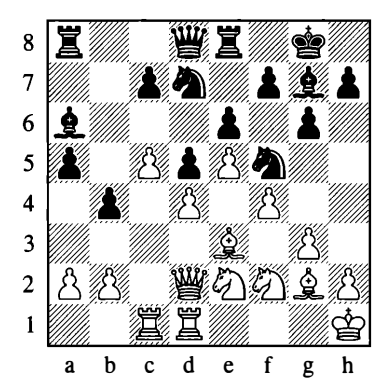
a) 9...b5? 10.cxb5 axb5 11.♘xb5 is the main idea behind the prophylactic 9.♖c1.

b) Recently I played the following tense and interesting encounter: 9...h5!? (directed against g2-g4 and potentially against ♘g3) 10.h3 e5 11.d5 ♘e7 12.g4 c6 13.♖g1 b5!? 14.b3 bxc4 15.bxc4 cxd5 16.cxd5 ♗d7 17.♘g3 h4 18.♘ge2 (18.♘f5!? gxf5 19.gxf5 ♘xf5 20.exf5 ♗xf5 with an unclear position) 18...♘h7 19.♘d1 f5?! (A brave but risky decision. Safer is 19...♘c8 20.♘ec3 a5 with a complex struggle.) 20.gxf5 gxf5 21.♗f2 ♔h8 22.♗xh4 ♗f6 23.♗f2!? (23.♗xf6† ♖xf6) 23...♖g8 24.♖xg8† ♘xg8 25.♕c3 ♘g5 26.♗g2 f4 27.♘g1 ♕e8 28.♕a3 ♗e7 29.♘c3? (29.♗f1 is much stronger) 29...♕g6 30.♔f1 ♘f6 31.♕xa6



31...♖g8! (suddenly Black gets a strong attack against the opponent's king) 32.♗h1 ♗xh3† 33.♘xh3 ♘xh3 34.♕a7 ♗d8 35.♔e2 ♘h5?! (35...♕h6!∓) 36.♔d2 ♘g3 37.♘e2? (the only continuation was 37.♗g2 ♘xe4† 38.♘xe4 ♕xg2 39.♔e2) 37...♘xh1 38.♖xh1 ♕g2 39.♖xh3† ♕xh3 40.♕a3 ♗e7 41.♗b6 ♕f1 42.♕b3 ♗h4 43.♕d1 ♕xf3 0–1 Baron – Smirin, Israeli Championship 2016.

c) In this line both sides often use somewhat mysterious knight manoeuvres, as in the following game: 9...e6 10.♘d1 ♖e8 11.g3 ♘e7 12.♗g2 b5 13.c5 b4 14.♘f2 a5 15.0–0 ♗a6 16.♖fd1 ♘d7 17.f4 d5 18.e5 ♘f5 19.♔h1 ♖a8



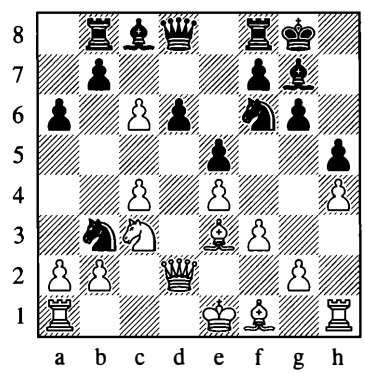
20.♘g1 ♘b8 21.g4 ♘xe3 22.♕xe3 f5 23.gxf5 gxf5 24.♕h3 ♘c6 25.♗f3 ♖e7 26.♖d2 ♕f8 27.♕h4 ♘d8 28.♘fh3 And White won soon; (1–0, 37) Vitiugov – Ganguly, Khanty-Mansiysk (ol) 2010. The bishop on a6 ended up being entirely sidelined.

9.h4

This continuation occurred in my short but very interesting game with Lautier:

9...h5 10.♘c1 e5 11.d5 ♘d4 12.♘b3 c5 13.dxc6 bxc6

13...♘xb3?!



This is worse due to the intermediate 14.c7! ♕xc7 15.axb3.

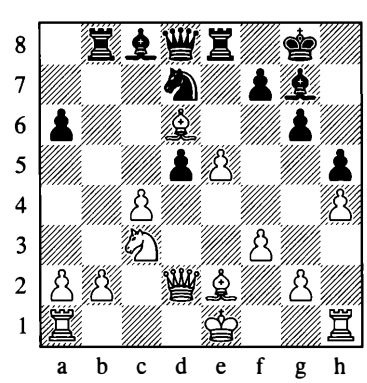
14.♘xd4 exd4 15.♗xd4 ♖e8

A well-known pawn sacrifice.

16.♗e2 d5 17.e5 c5!?

Over the board improvisation.

18.♗xc5 ♘d7 19.♗d6



19...♘xe5!

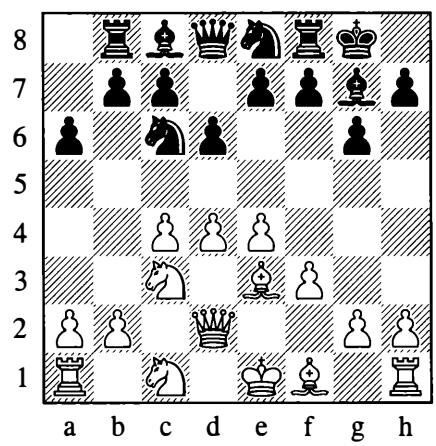
Black gives up a whole rook in order to keep the white king in the centre.

20.♗xb8 ♘xc4 21.♕c1 ♗f5

And in this really wild and unclear position we both preferred not to take any further risks (the game was played in a very important match in the European Club Cup) and we agreed to a draw, ½–½ Lautier – Smirin, Rethymnon 2003.

9...♘e8!?

9...e5 10.♘b3 (or 10.d5 ♘d4 11.♘b3) is considered to be the main continuation.



This is one of my original ideas in the KID. By withdrawing this knight Black prepares to create counterplay by means of ...f7-f5. I just thought: "If White can place his knight on c1, why Black can't do a similar thing and place his knight on e8?"

10.d5

In the next game Kuzmin improved with: 10.♘b3 f5 11.exf5 ♗xf5 12.♗e2 ♘f6 13.0–0 e5 14.♖ad1 exd4 15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.♗xd4 ♕d7 17.♖fe1 ♖fe8 18.♗a7 ♖bd8 19.♗f2 ♕f7 20.♗f1 ♖xe1 21.♖xe1 ♔h8 22.b3 ♖e8 23.♖d1 ♗e6 24.g3 ♖d8 25.♗g2 h6 26.♗d4, with a small but lasting edge; (1–0, 48) Kuzmin – Badea, Moscow 1991. I think this is the right way for White to continue.

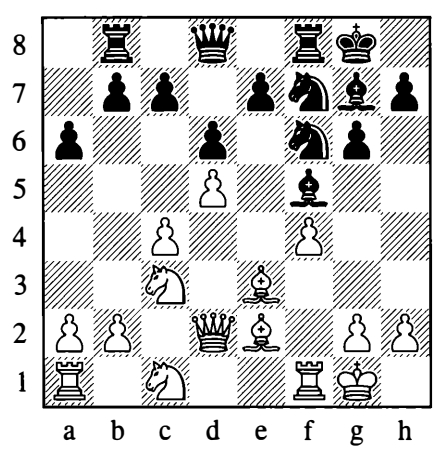
10...♘e5 11.♗e2 f5

Today I would prefer 11...c5 12.0–0 (or 12.a4 f5 13.f4 ♘g4!? 14.♗xg4 fxg4 15.♘d3 ♗d7 16.e5 ♗f5 and the two bishops allow Black to look to the future with optimism) 12...b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.♘xb5 ♗a6 with a good version of the Benko Gambit. A sample variation is 15.a4 ♘c7 16.f4 (16.♘xc7 ♗xe2 17.♕xe2 ♖xb2!) 16...♗xb5 17.axb5 ♘d7 18.♘b3 ♘xb5 and Black is OK, as 19.♘a5?! runs in 19...♘d4.

12.f4 ♘f7

Also here 12...♘g4 13.♗xg4 fxg4 was not bad, even though after 14.0–0 c5 (14...b5 15.cxb5 axb5 16.♘d3 b4 17.♘d1 ♘f6 18.♘1f2±) 15.dxc6 bxc6 16.♘d3 ♘f6 17.b3 the position arising is in my opinion easier to handle with White – the bishop pair doesn't fully compensate for the pawn weaknesses and White's solid centre.

13.exf5 ♗xf5 14.0–0 ♘f6

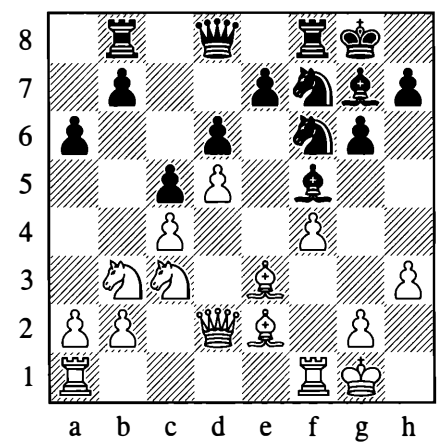


The knight has fulfilled its role (it made ...f7-f5 possible) so it may return.

15.♘b3 c5 16.h3

The usual prophylaxis against a possible ...♘g4.

Still I would prefer here to take *en passant*: 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.♘d4 ♗d7 18.c5 (18.f5 c5 19.fxg6 hxg6 20.♘f3 ♗f5 with good piece-play for Black) 18...dxc5 19.♘b3 ♗f5 20.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 21.♗xc5, with a pleasant endgame, for instance: 21...♘d5 22.♗xa6 ♘xc3 23.bxc3 ♗xc3 24.♖ac1 ♗f6 25.♖fe1 e5 26.♗c4 exf4 27.♗e7 ♗d4† 28.♘xd4 ♖xd4 29.♗f6 ♖e4 30.a4 and the passed a-pawn plus the bishop pair outweigh the missing pawn.



16...♘e4?

A serious mistake. I made this move as a matter of "common sense" – to exchange knights and activate the g7-bishop. But I missed a much more serious factor – the activation of White's e2-bishop.

Instead, Black could have played the energetic 16...b5! 17.cxb5 axb5 18.♗xb5 ♘xd5 19.♕xd5 ♗xc3 20.bxc3 ♖xb5 with an excellent position – White has a couple of pawn weaknesses (a2, c3) and he can't exploit the weak dark squares around the opponent's king because of the passive bishop on e3.

17.♘xe4 ♗xe4 18.♗g4 ♗f5

If 18...b5 19.♘a5 bxc4 20.♘xc4 ♖b4 21.♖ac1 ♔h8 22.b3 White would keep some advantage due to his active pieces (the knight on c4 and bishop on g4) and better pawn structure.

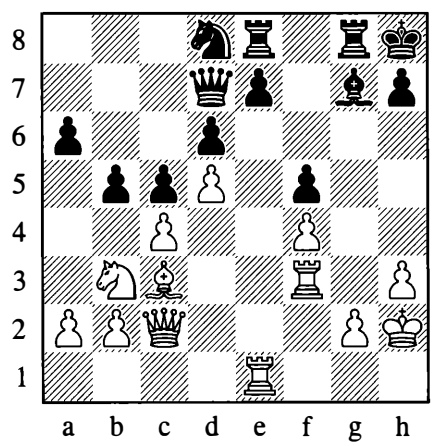
19.♗xf5 gxf5 20.♖f3

Now White is better, mainly because of the unfortunate position of the black knight. The pawn on f5 is also a weakness in Black's camp. The next few moves are pretty natural.

20...♔h8 21.♕c2 b5 22.♗d2 ♕d7 23.♗c3 ♖g8 24.♖e1 ♖be8 25.♔h2

25.♖fe3 was called for; my prospects are not rosy after that.

25...♘d8



26.♘d2?

A careless move which lets Black obtain counterplay with the help of tactics.

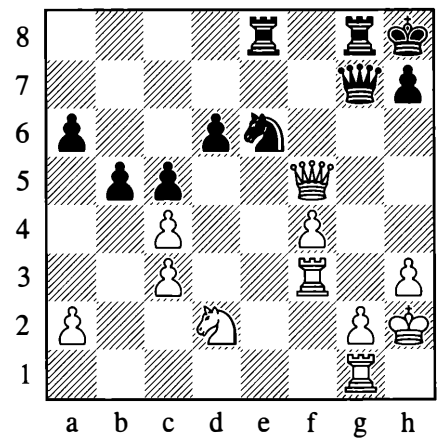
After the simple 26.♗xg7† ♖xg7 27.♖fe3 ♖eg8 28.♖1e2 I would have to "wait and see," whereas White will gradually strengthen his position. The weaknesses on e7 and f5 plus the pressure along the e-file would give White a clear edge in this line.

26...e6! 27.dxe6?!

As is often the case, one mistake is followed by another. Kuzmin does not see the danger.

27.♖fe3 e5!? 28.a3 would keep part of his advantage.

27...♘xe6 28.♕xf5 ♗xc3 29.bxc3 ♕g7 30.♖g1

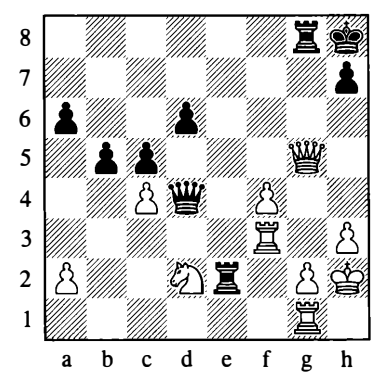


30...♘d4!

An unexpected blow. This was my idea when I played 26... e6. It should have led to a draw by force.

31.♕d3?

Tantamount to resignation. My opponent was in a kind of shock and did not find the only defence: 31.cxd4 ♖e2 32.♕g5 ♕xd4



33.♖d3! ♕xd3 34.♕f6† ♖g7 35.♕f8† with perpetual check. To be honest, I also did not see that.

31...♘e2?!

An unnecessary pirouette. Much stronger was the straightforward 31...♘xf3† 32.♕xf3 ♕e7, with a trivial win after the unavoidable exchange of queens.

32.♖f2!?

32.g4 ♘xg1 33.♔xg1 ♖e1† 34.♘f1 ♕e7 35.f5 would be more resilient, even though Black should win anyway – the extra exchange is worth something after all.

32...♘xg1 33.♔xg1 ♕f6 34.cxb5 axb5 35.♔h2

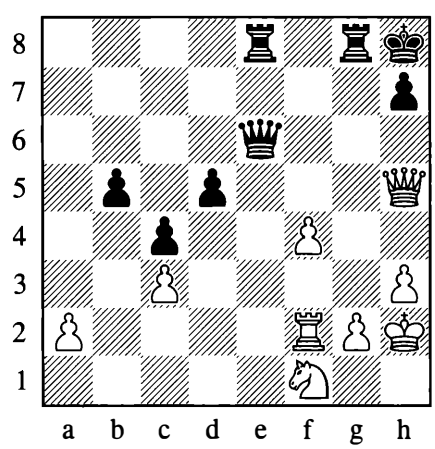
35.g4 c4 36.♕f3 ♖e1† 37.♔g2 was slightly better. The most precise move here seems to be 37...♕f5!, with a decisive material and positional advantage.

35...c4 36.♕f3 ♕e6 37.♘f1 d5

37...♕e4!? would win on the spot.

38.♕h5

After the most stubborn 38.♕d1 Black would still have a clear win: 38...♕b6 39.♖f3 b4! 40.cxb4 (or 40.♕xd5 b3 and b-pawn queens) 40...d4 and this duo of passers decides the outcome.



38...b4

A similar idea in even more favourable circumstances.

39.cxb4 c3 40.f5 ♕e5† 41.♔h1 d4 42.♕f3 ♕e4

0–1

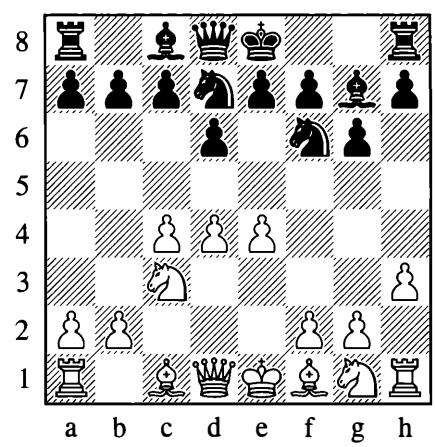
Alexander Beliavsky – Ilya Smirin

Belgrade 1998

Alexander Beliavsky was one of the strongest players in the world between 1980 and 1990. He's always been a tough opponent for me. I lost our three first encounters – in 1988, 1989 and 1990 (all those games were played in the USSR Championships) – and every time he beat me in style. Therefore this game may be seen as some kind of revenge.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.h3 ♘bd7

The most popular choice here is the natural move 5...0–0. In this game, however, I decided to develop the knight to d7 first, preparing ...c7-c5.



6.♗d3

6.♗g5 0–0 may lead to a transposition of moves. Alternatively, Black may proceed with 6...h6. I usually try to avoid this move, which creates some potential weaknesses on the kingside (the pawns on h6 and g6 sometimes become vulnerable), but on the other hand this is an easy way to get rid of the bishop on g5 and break the pin along the h4-d8 diagonal. Black's play looks logical in the following encounter: 7.♗e3 e5 8.d5 ♘c5 9.♕c2 a5

10.0–0–0 h5 11.♘f3 ♗h6 12.♗xh6 ♖xh6 13.♗e2 ♔f8 14.♕d2 ♔g7 15.♕e3 ♕e7 and in this position without dark-squared bishops Black should be OK; Kazhgaleyev – Shchekachev, Livry Gargan 2005.

6...0–0 7.♗g5 c5 8.d5

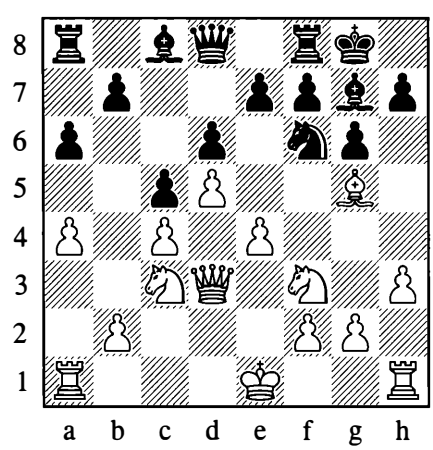
8.♘f3 occurred in the game Avrukh – Smirin, Israel 1999. You will find this game later, on page 27.

8...♘e5 9.♘f3

Alexander allows the exchange of his d3-bishop, counting on his strong centre and good development. He is right in my opinion.

9.♗e2 essentially turns out to be a loss of time, which was exploited by Vlad Tkachiev in the following game: 9...b5! In the spirit of the Benko Gambit. 10.cxb5 a6 11.bxa6 ♕a5 12.♗d2 ♗xa6 13.♕c2 ♖fb8 14.♖b1 ♘fd7 15.f4 ♘c4 16.♗xc4 ♗xc4 17.b3 ♗xc3! 18.♗xc3 ♕xa2 19.♖b2 ♕a1† 20.♔f2 ♕f1† 21.♔e3 ♖a3! 22.bxc4 ♖xb2 23.♕xb2 ♘b6! 0–1 Pinter – Tkachiev, Porec 1998.

9...♘xd3† 10.♕xd3 a6 11.a4



11...♘h5!?

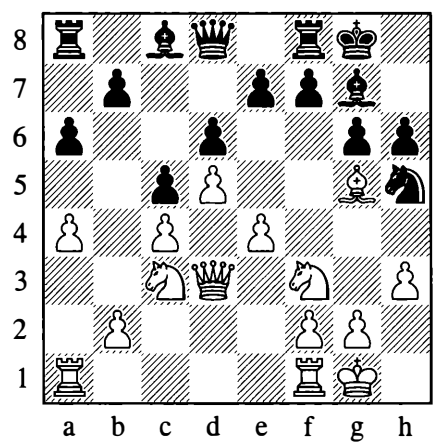
This move is connected with a rather original idea to carry out the advance ...f7-f5, undermining the e-pawn and banking on future counterplay along the f-file.

12.0–0

Of course, White could play 12.g4 ♘f6 here, but in this case he would have to answer some questions, the main one being: "Where do I hide my king?"

12...h6

The immediate 12...f5 is dubious due to 13.exf5 ♗xf5 14.♕e2 ♕d7 15.♕xe7 ♗xh3 16.♕xd7 ♗xd7 17.♘e4 and the pawn on d6 cannot be defended.

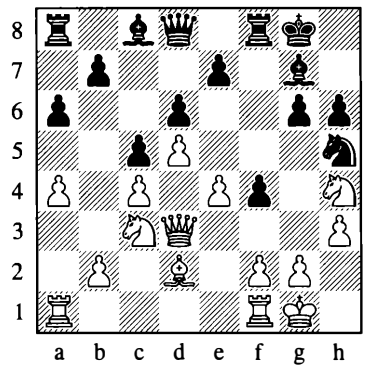


13.♗e3

In the first game in which I played 11...♘h5 my opponent put his bishop on d2: 13.♗d2 e6 (13...f5?! can hardly be recommended here – 14.♖ae1 fxe4 15.♕xe4 and the pawns on e7 and g6 are hanging) 14.dxe6 ♗xe6 15.♘d5 (more ambitious was 15.a5!? b6 16.axb6 ♕xb6 17.♖fd1 and White's position looks good)) 15...♖e8 16.♖ad1 ♗xd5 17.exd5 ♕d7 18.b3 b5 19.axb5 axb5 20.cxb5 ♖ab8 21.b4 ♖xb5 ½–½ A. Mikhalevski – Smirin, Rishon Le Zion 1997.

13...f5 14.exf5

14.♘h4!? could have led to an interesting tactical struggle: 14...f4 15.♗d2

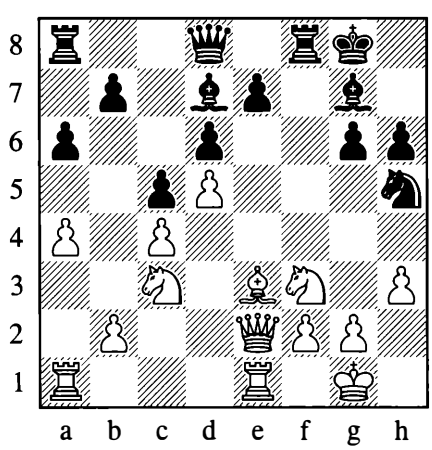


15...♗xc3! 16.♗xc3 e5 17.dxe6 (or 17.♘xg6 ♖e8 and the knight on g6 will be lost for insufficient compensation) 17...♕xh4 18.♕xd6 ♖e8 19.♕e5 ♔h7 20.g4 with unclear play. Of course, this is an example of a "silicon" line.

14...♗xf5 15.♕e2 ♗d7

This prophylactic move prevents the possible threats g2-g4 or ♘h4.

16.♖fe1



The strategic picture is more or less clear now: White has a better pawn structure, good pieces and pressure on the e-pawn. My trumps are the two bishops (yes, again!) and some dynamic possibilities connected, first of all, with the f-file. Overall I would perhaps prefer White's chances here, but Black has his own reasons for optimism.

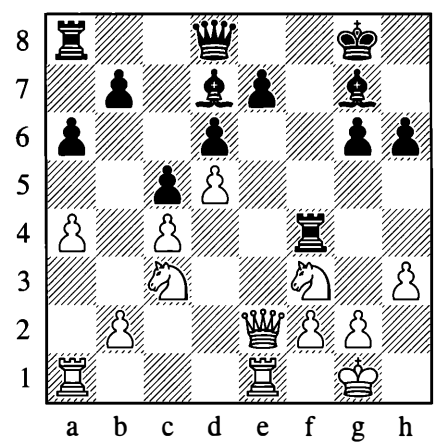
16.♘h4 is not dangerous due to 16...♕e8.

16...♘f4

It was not easy to play some "improving the position" moves, which is why I decided to force matters.

The following sample line shows that it was probably the correct decision. 16...♔h7 17.♗d2 ♖f7 18.♘e4 ♕f8 19.♖a3 (19.♘eg5† hxg5 20.♘xg5† ♔g8 21.♘xf7 ♕xf7 22.♕xe7 ♖f8 23.♕xf7† ♖xf7 and this endgame is not that bad for Black, I guess) 19...♘f4 20.♗xf4 ♖xf4 21.a5 ♖b8 22.♖b3 and I do not like Black's position.

17.♗xf4 ♖xf4



18.♕xe7

Beliavsky chooses the concrete approach.

In the style of (let's say) Magnus Carlsen would be 18.♖a3, keeping the pressure and making a useful waiting move. In that case Black may switch his attention to the queenside: 18...♕b6 19.a5 ♕b4 with a tense struggle, but again White's chances are somewhat better.

18...♗xh3 19.gxh3

Or 19.♕e3 ♕f8.

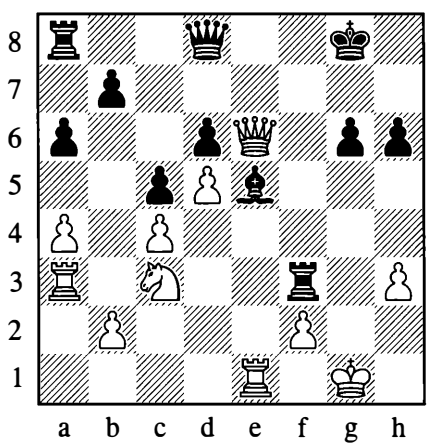
19...♖xf3 20.♖a3!

Big Al (as they used to call Alexander Beliavsky in those days) finds a strong resource – the rook is excellently placed on the third rank for both attacking and defensive purposes.

20...♗e5

20...♗d4 would be a reasonable alternative here. The following variation looks like a very logical one: 21.♕e6† ♔h8 22.♘e4 ♖xa3 23.bxa3 ♕f8! 24.♕xg6 ♕f4 25.♔f1 ♖f8 26.♕g4 ♕h2 27.♕g2 ♕f4 with a draw – the active black pieces leave the opponent no chance to use his extra pawn.

21.♕e6†



21...♔h7?

A big tactical mistake. It could cost the game.

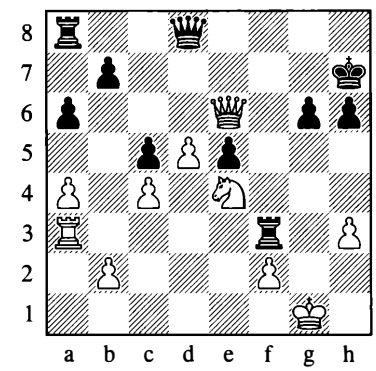
After the correct 21...♖f7 22.♘e4 (22.♖xe5 dxe5 23.♘e4 ♕e7 24.♕xe7 ♖xe7 and Black is fine) 22...♔g7 23.♔h1 ♕h4 the position would be dynamically balanced. For example: 24.♘xd6 ♗xd6 25.♕xd6 ♕xc4 26.♖ae3 ♖af8 27.♖e6 ♕d3 28.♖xg6† ♕xg6 29.♖g1 ♕xg1† 30.♔xg1 ♖xf2, with a peaceful outcome soon.

21...♔g7? is much weaker because of the strong 22.♖xe5! dxe5 23.♘e4 with a huge initiative.

22.♘e4?

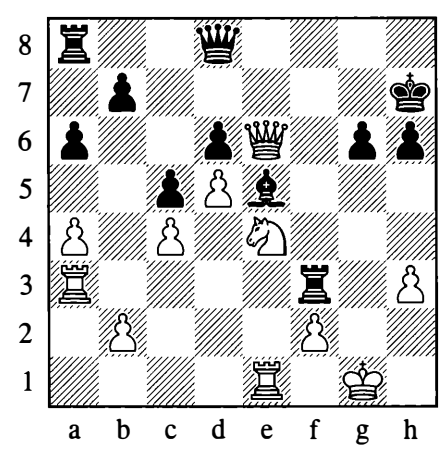
Alexander misses his chance.

Very soon after the game he pointed out that he could get an overwhelming position after: 22.♖xe5! dxe5 23.♘e4



Now 23...♖xa3 loses on the spot after 24.♕f7† ♔h8 25.♘f6.

And after 23...♖f4 24.♖g3 ♕g8 25.♘f6† ♖xf6 26.♕xf6 ♕g7 27.♕xg7† (the simplest) 27...♔xg7 28.♖b3 ♖b8 29.♖b6 the rook endgame is obviously hopeless for Black.



22...♖f5

So life goes on!

Of course, 22...♖xa3 23.bxa3 looks pretty dangerous because of the strong potential

pressure against the b7-pawn, but the computer is not convinced: 23...♕f8 24.♖b1?! (better is 24.♘xc5 ♗h2†! 25.♔g2 dxc5 26.♕e7† ♔g8 27.♕xf8† ♖xf8 28.♔xh2 ♖xf2† 29.♔g3 ♖c2 30.♖e4 ♔f7 31.♔f4 ♖c3 32.♔e5 ♔e7 with a probable draw) 24...b5 25.axb5 ♕f4∓

23.♖b3

23.♔h1 was my opponent's suggestion in *Informant*. He evaluates the position as better for him. However, after 23...♕h4 it's Black who enjoys the advantage – all his pieces are well coordinated and the king on h1 proves to be more vulnerable than its black counterpart, for instance: 24.♖b3 ♖af8! 25.♖xb7†? ♔h8 26.♖b3 ♖xf2 and White is hopelessly lost.

23...♕c7 24.a5 ♖d8?!

Too passive. The correct decision would be 24...♖ff8, preparing to get rid of the annoying queen on e6 by means of 25...♖ae8. In this case I would have nothing to complain about. In my opinion it's White who has to take care to keep the position balanced – after all, his king feels no more comfortable than Black's king, and my pieces are active enough.

25.♖b6?

I fully agree with Beliavsky's suggestion 25.♔h1!?, even though I think that after 25...♖ff8! 26.♖g1 ♕f7 Black does not stand badly at all.

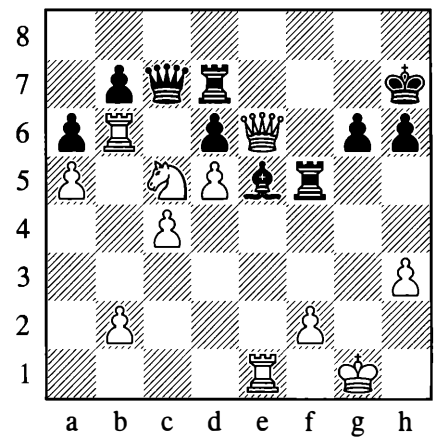
25...♖d7!

An overture to one of the best traps I have ever set in my entire career!

26.♘xc5

Falling directly into the trap. My opponent very quickly and confidently made this and the next moves, perhaps feeling sure that he was on his way to winning another game against his client. To tell the truth, it was unreal to play over the board.

White should have played 26.♘g3! ♖e7 27.♖xe5! ♖xe5 28.♕xd6 with good drawing chances. In fact, this was the only continuation here.



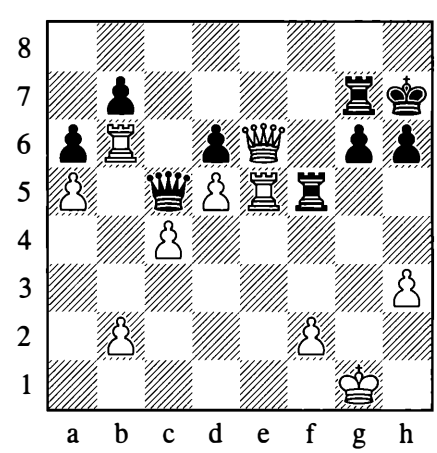
26...♖g7!!

The rook hides in ambush.

Both of the alternatives were losing: 26...♖e7 27.♕xe7† ♕xe7 28.♖xb7 and 26...♖g5† 27.♔f1 dxc5 28.♖xe5 ♖xe5 29.♕xg6† ♔h8 30.♕xh6† ♔g8 31.♖g6† ♖g7 32.d6 ♕d7 33.♖xg7† ♕xg7 34.♕xg7† ♔xg7 35.d7.

27.♖xe5 ♕xc5!

White was counting on 27...♖xe5 28.♕xd6 or 27...dxe5 28.b4, but the move I made came as a real shock for my formidable opponent.



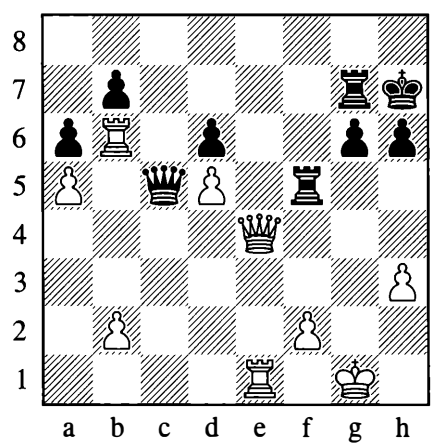
28.♖e2

Alas, after 28.♖xf5 gxf5† – check! – this was the reason for my 26th move. 29.♔h1 (29.♔f1 ♕xc4† 30.♔e1 ♖g1†) 29...♕xf2 and White gets checkmated. Beliavsky now gets into time trouble and loses quickly, but actually his position is already beyond salvation.

28...♕xc4 29.♕e4

More stubborn was 29.♖xd6, but after 29...♕c1† 30.♔g2 ♖g5† 31.♔f3 ♕c4! the white king would not escape the mating net.

29...♕c1† 30.♖e1 ♕c5



The attack is irresistible – the rook on b6 has turned out to be completely out of play and cannot help his monarch.

31.♕e3 ♖e5! 32.♕c1 ♖g5†

White resigned due to 33.♔f1 ♕xd5.

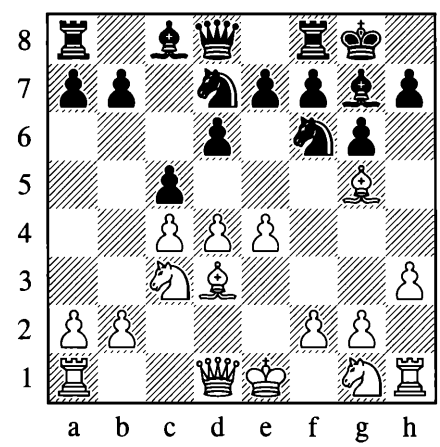
0–1

Boris Avrukh – Ilya Smirin

Israel 1999

Usually I was successful in games with Boris Avrukh, my long-time teammate in the Israeli national squad. It seems that I was an "uncomfortable" opponent for him. Boris is not only a talented and strong grandmaster but also a well-known theoretician, and he has written a few highly popular books on openings. He now lives in the USA.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.h3 ♘bd7 6.♗d3 0–0 7.♗g5 c5



8.♘f3

Borya deviates from my game with Beliavsky and keeps the pawn tension in the centre. Objectively speaking it's hardly the best choice, but at least it leads to relatively fresh positions.

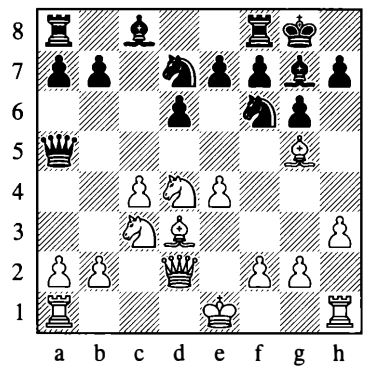
8.d5 ♘e5 was played in Beliavsky – Smirin above.

8...cxd4

This leads to a version of the Maroczy Bind that is good for Black – in my opinion in this particular position the white bishops are slightly misplaced. They would be better positioned on e2 and e3.

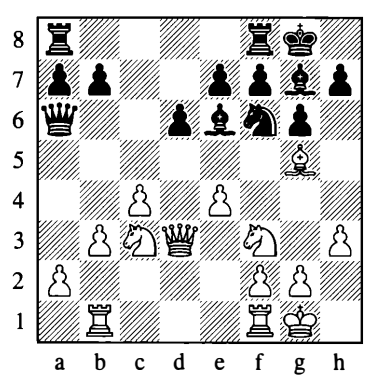
9.♘xd4 ♕a5 10.♗d2

If 10.♕d2 I was planning:



10...♘xe4! 11.♘xe4 (11.♗xe4 ♗xd4 12.♕xd4 ♕xg5) 11...♕xd2† 12.♔xd2 ♗xd4 13.♗xe7 ♖e8 14.♗xd6 ♗xb2 15.♖ab1 ♗g7 with slightly better chances – the king is stuck in the centre of the board and will cause White some trouble even without queens. After all, there are enough pieces on the board to attack or disturb it.

10.♘f3!? ♘c5 11.0–0 perhaps deserved attention. Here the following tactical variation is possible: 11...♗e6 12.♖b1 (12.♕c2!?) 12...♕a6! 13.b3 ♘xd3 14.♕xd3

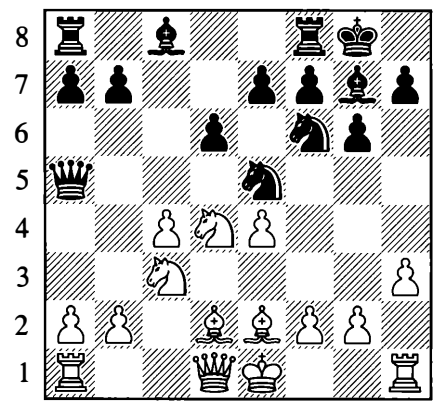


14...d5! 15.exd5 ♗f5 16.♕d2 ♗xb1 17.♖xb1, with compensation for the exchange, but Black certainly remains no worse.

10...♘e5

I saw that 10...♕b6 11.♗e3 (11.♘b3 ♘e5 12.♗e2 ♗e6 is not advisable for White) 11...♕xb2 12.♘a4 ♕b4† 13.♗d2 ♕a3 14.♗c1 would lead to a draw by repetition. I was in a fighting mood and declined that.

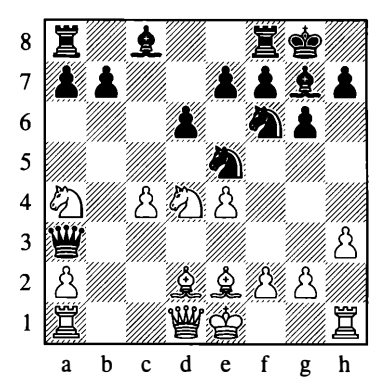
11.♗e2



11...♕c5

11...♘xc4? does not work here because of 12.♗xc4 ♕c5 13.♕a4!.

11...♕b6 12.♗e3 ♕xb2 13.♘a4 ♕b4† 14.♗d2 ♕a3



This would probably lead to a similar draw, because the position resulting after 15.♘b5? ♘d3† 16.♔f1 ♘xf2 17.♘xa3 ♘xd1 18.♖xd1 ♘xe4 19.♗e1 ♗d7 20.♘b5 ♖ac8 would be clearly in Black's favour – three

pawns for a knight plus much better piece coordination compared to the opponent's forces. I decided to chase the d4-knight from a different square.

12.♘b3 ♕c6

By attacking the c- and e-pawns I can try to disturb my opponent a little. If he can finish development and place his pieces in the centre, White's space advantage will tell, as is often the case in such structures. This is why I did not like 12...♕c7 13.♘d5 ♕d8 14.♗g5 ♖e8 15.♘d2, when White is about to consolidate.

13.♘d5

Avrukh could have played 13.♘d4, after which a draw by repetition would be very probable. He also shows fighting spirit and made the more aggressive move.

13...♘xd5 14.cxd5?

But this is a serious mistake – Boris just completely overlooked my next move.

The knight should have been taken by the e-pawn:

14.exd5 ♕a4 15.♗c3!

During the game I was planning to reply with the sharp:

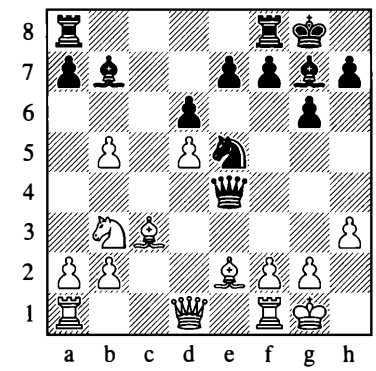
15...b5?!

In fact Black had two better moves at his disposal:

15...♗d7 16.0–0 (bad is 16.f4? ♘xc4 17.♗xg7 ♘e3 18.♕d3 ♕xf4 19.♗d4 ♘xg2† 20.♔d1 ♗f5 21.♕d2 ♕g3) 16...♖ac8 17.♘d2 ♕xd1 18.♖axd1 g5!? with an acceptable endgame.

Or the sharper: 15...♗f5 16.g4 ♗d7 17.f4 (here 17.♘d2 ♕xd1† 18.♖xd1 g5!, securing the outpost on e5 for the knight looks attractive for Black) 17...♘xc4 18.♗xg7 ♘e3 19.♕d3 ♕xf4! 20.♗xf8 ♖xf8 Now Black is playing without a whole rook, but the opponent faces unpleasant problems with his king being under pressure: 21.♖g1 f5 22.g5 ♕b4† 23.♕c3 ♕h4† 24.♔d2 f4 and it's very messy.

16.cxb5 ♕e4 17.0–0 ♗b7



But it would be a dubious decision after:

18.f4 ♘d7 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7

And now, let's say:

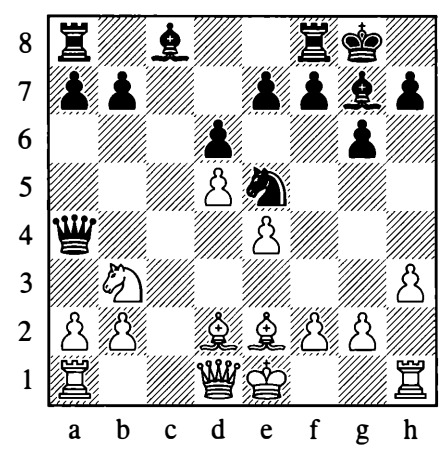
20.♘d4

20.♗f3 ♕xf4 21.♘a5 is also not bad.

20...♗xd5 21.♗f3 ♕e3† 22.♔h1 ♗xf3 23.♖xf3 ♕e4 24.♕d2 ♕d5 25.a4

White would have the initiative.

14...♕a4!



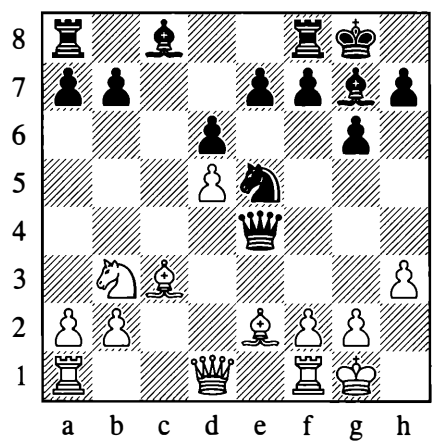
Suddenly White has no convenient way to protect the pawn on e4.

15.0–0!

Relatively best. White gives up a pawn, but finishes his development and may even hope to obtain some compensation by making use of the unstable position of the black queen on e4.

15.f3 f5 with the idea 16.exf5? ♕h4† or 15.♕c2 f5 would be weaker, at least from a practical point of view.

15...♕xe4 16.♗c3

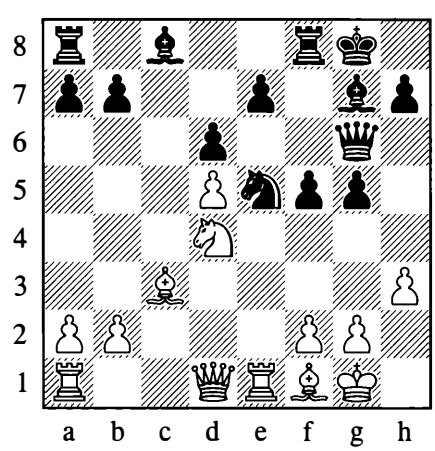


16...g5!

The purpose of this move is to vacate g6 for the queen and simultaneously to prevent f2-f4, thus securing the knight in its central position.

17.♖e1 ♕g6 18.♘d4 f5 19.♗f1

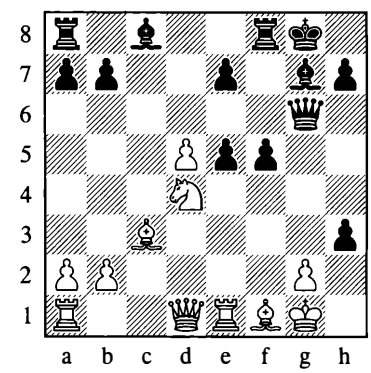
Or 19.♘f3 ♘xf3† 20.♗xf3 g4.



19...f4?!

Not the best decision. I wanted to create the threat of ...f4-f3, but I underestimated Avrukh's next move. I had two better ways to continue:

a) The sharp: 19...g4!? 20.f4 I was afraid of this move during the game, but in fact I have a strong sacrifice at my disposal: 20...gxh3! 21.fxe5 dxe5



Black has three pawns for a piece and a strong initiative. It's not easy for White to find a way to solve his problems, for instance: 22.♘e6 ♗xe6 23.dxe6 hxg2 24.♗xg2 e4 25.♗xg7 ♕xg7 26.♕b3 f4 27.♔h1 e3 28.♖g1 ♔h8 29.♗h3 ♕e5 30.♕c3 ♕xc3 31.bxc3 f3 and the pawns have advanced too far – White is helpless.

Still, after the best 22.♘f3 e4 23.d6! exd6 24.♘h4 ♕g3 25.♕b3† ♔h8 26.♗xg7† ♕xg7 27.♗c4! hxg2 28.♖ad1 the position is not at all clear: temporarily Black has five (!) pawns for the piece, but White's forces are active.

b) The simple 19...♗d7, finishing development. This seems to be the most practical decision: after the logical 20.♘f3 (20.♕b3 g4) 20...♘xf3† 21.♕xf3 g4 22.♕d3 ♗xc3 23.♕xc3 ♖ac8 Black preserves his extra pawn and is also active enough to claim an edge here.

20.♗e2!

A good prophylactic move, directed against both ...f4-f3 and ...g5-g4.

20...♗d7 21.♘f3

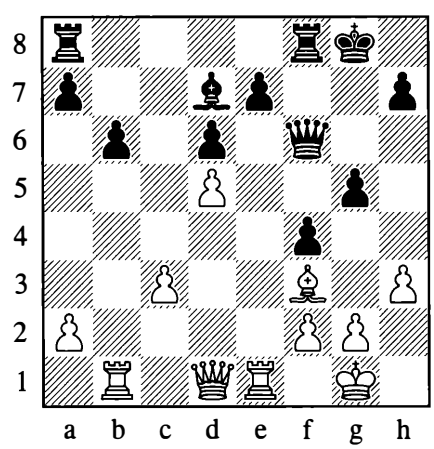
The correct idea in general, intending to exchange the strong knight on e5.

But probably slightly more accurate would be 21.♕b3 ♖ab8 22.♘f3 ♘xf3† 23.♗xf3, and thanks to the pressure on e7 and Black's somewhat spoiled pawn structure, White has reasonable compensation for the pawn.

21...♘xf3† 22.♗xf3 ♗xc3 23.bxc3

Now White's pawn structure is not ideal either.

23...♕f6 24.♖b1 b6



25.♕e2?!

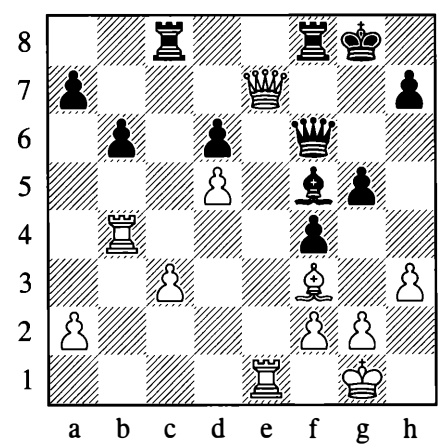
My opponent did not notice that after the exchange of bishops the black king would become more vulnerable, otherwise he would have played: 25.♗g4! ♗xg4 (25...♖ad8 26.♖b4 ♗xg4 [26...♕xc3?! 27.♖be4] 27.♕xg4 ♖f7 28.♖be4 does not change much) 26.♕xg4 ♖f7 27.♖e4! ♖af8 (or 27...♕xc3 28.♖xf4!) 28.c4 ♔h8 (28...f3 29.g3) 29.♖be1 and White is perfectly OK – the extra pawn is not significant.

25...♗f5 26.♖b4

If 26.♗e4 ♖f7 27.c4 Black would exchange bishops in much better circumstances: 27...♗xe4 28.♕xe4 ♖c8 and the weakness c4 can be felt. Nevertheless, it deserved serious attention in my opinion – White would still have some compensation.

In contrast, 26.♖b3 ♖ac8 27.♕xe7 ♕xe7 28.♖xe7 ♖f7 cannot be advised. The resulting endgame is very unpleasant for White – he has the worse pawn structure and passive pieces after 29.♖e2 ♔f8, with ideas of 30...♖e7 or 30...♖fc7.

26...♖ac8 27.♕xe7



27...♖xc3?!

An interesting moment, which is instructive to some extent. After making some calculations I played this tempting move. Alas, as is often the case, my calculations were not free from mistakes and objectively speaking this capture misses the chance for a big advantage.

Instead Black should have chosen the prosaic exchange of queens: 27...♕xe7 28.♖xe7 ♖f7 29.♖xf7 ♔xf7 I do not think White can hold this. After, say, 30.h4 h6 31.hxg5 hxg5 32.♖b3 ♗d3 33.g3 ♔f6 the difference in activity of the pieces is too great. As we know, piece activity is one of the major factors in endgames.

28.♗h5?

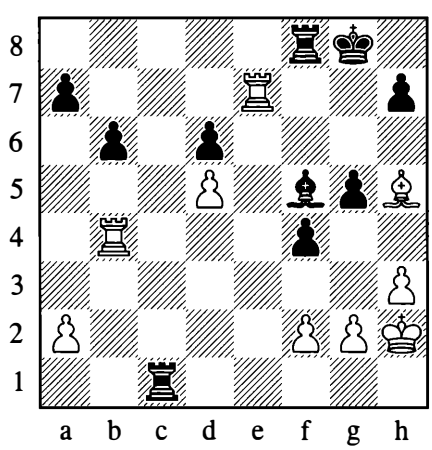
My opponent also did not calculate accurately.

After 28.♕xa7 I was going to play the pretty 28...♖xf3! 29.gxf3 ♕c3 – a slightly unusual kind of fork. However, after 30.♖eb1 ♗xb1 31.♖xb1 ♕xf3 32.♕xb6 ♕xd5 (32...♕xh3 33.♕xd6 ♖e8 34.♖b8=) 33.♖b5 ♕d1† 34.♔h2 h6 35.a4 f3 (35...♕xa4 36.♕xd6 ♕xb5 37.♕g6† ♔h8 38.♕xh6† with a draw) 36.♕c6 ♕f1 37.♕d5† ♖f7 38.♖b8† ♔g7 39.♕d4† ♖f6 40.♖b7† ♔g6 41.♕e4† ♔h5 42.♕g4† ♔g6 43.♕e4† the game would end with perpetual check. Of course this is not a forced variation, but the outcome looks justified.

28...♕xe7 29.♖xe7

Avrukh was counting on his active rook, but Black's trumps are more important.

29...♖c1† 30.♔h2



30...♖f1!

The key move – the rook not only attacks the f-pawn, but also helps to set up mating motifs along the first rank.

31.♖c4

These mating threats may be seen in the following variation: 31.♖xa7 ♖c8 32.♖xb6 ♖cc1 33.♖b8† ♗c8 34.g3 ♖xf2#

After 31.♗e2 ♖e1 (31...♖xf2? 32.♔g1) 32.♖d4 ♖f7 33.♖e8† ♔g7 34.♖d1 ♖xd1 35.♗xd1 ♔f6 36.♖d8 ♔e5 Black would obtain a technically won position.

The most complex variations would arise after: 31.♖c7

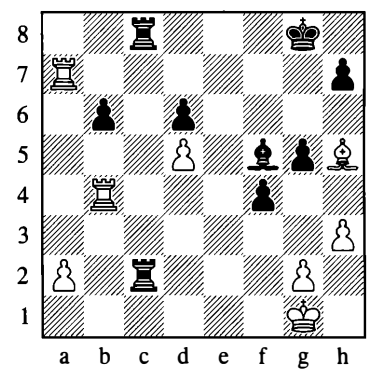
For the moment preventing the f8-rook from joining the attack via c8.

31...♖xf2 32.♖xa7 ♖c8 33.♔g1

33.♖xb6 ♗e4 and wins.

33...♖fc2

33...♖d2 34.♔h2! and it's hard for Black to make progress.



34.♖a3

This seems to be the most resilient. Other options are:

34.♖xb6 ♗e4 still wins.

34.♗g4 ♖d2! (a nice move) 35.♖xb6 (35.♗xf5 ♖c1† 36.♔h2 ♖dd1 with inevitable checkmate; 35.♗f3 ♖c1† 36.♔h2 ♖f2 37.♖xb6 ♖ff1 38.♖b8† ♗c8–+) 35...♗xg4 36.hxg4 f3! 37.♖c6 ♖xg2† 38.♔f1 ♖b8 39.♖c1 ♖xg4 40.♖cc7 ♖h4 41.♖g7† ♔h8 42.♖xg5 ♖h2 We see that this endgame is full of tactics and mating motifs.

34...♖c1† 35.♔f2 ♖8c2† 36.♗e2 ♖d2! 37.♖xb6 ♖cc2 38.♖b8† ♔g7 39.♖a7† ♔h6 40.♖e8 g4! 41.hxg4

Or 41.a4 g3† 42.♔e1 (42.♔f3 ♖d4 is another mating net) 42...♖xd5 with checkmate soon after 43....♖c1†.

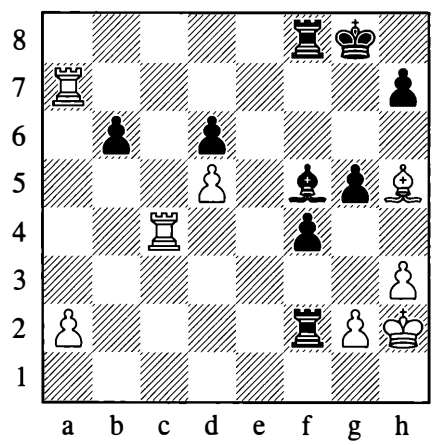
41...♗xg4 42.♖ae7 ♖xa2

Transposing into a won pawn ending.

31...♖xf2 32.♖xa7

This allows a nice finish, but the position was already beyond salvation.

After the best 32.a4 f3! 33.♗xf3 ♗d3 34.♖d4 ♖8xf3 35.♔g1 ♖f1† 36.♔h2 ♔f8 37.gxf3 ♔xe7 38.♖xd3 ♔f6 39.♖e3 ♖a1 the endgame is lost.



32...f3! 33.♗xf3 ♗d3 34.♖c3 ♖8xf3 35.♔g1 ♖c2!

This slightly unusual trick forces immediate resignation – after 35...♖c2 36.♖xc2 ♖f1† 37.♔h2 ♗xc2 Black remains with an extra bishop.

0–1

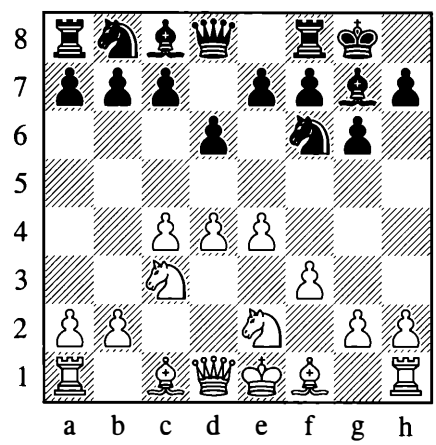
The final game of this chapter was played at the World Team Championship on home soil. Sadly we were not able to take any medals on that occasion.

Alexander Grischuk – Ilya Smirin

Beersheba 2005

The main reason why I included this game is that the book lacked examples of "Benoni-like" games. Besides, victory over a player as strong as Alexander Grischuk is not an everyday event.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0–0 6.♘ge2



The logical move. The main advantage is that White can decide later whether to develop the bishop on e3 or g5.

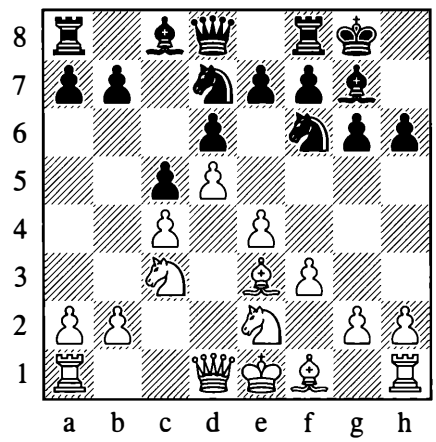
6...♘bd7

There is a wide choice here: 6...♘c6, 6...c5 and 6...c6; and after 6...e5 7.♗g5!? White profits from this move order – even Fischer scored only 1½ points out of 4 from the resulting position. He was young though – those games were played in 1958-59. This line has also occurred once in my practice: 7...♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♕d2 h5 10.♘c1 ♘h7 11.♗e3 f5 12.♘d3 c6 13.0–0–0 (13.dxc6!? bxc6 14.♖d1) 13...cxd5 14.cxd5 ♗d7 15.♔b1 ♘f6, with a complicated struggle; (½–½, 51) I. Sokolov – Smirin, Groningen 1993.

7.♗g5 c5 8.d5

Now the game develops in the spirit of the Benoni structure.

8...h6 9.♗e3



9...h5

Directed against ♘g3. An original idea, but I think that the more usual 9...♘e5 10.♘g3 e6 (or 10...h5 first) would be the sounder choice.

10.♘c1

I would prefer 10.♘f4!? ♘e5 11.♗e2 and it is not so clear what Black is going to do next (11...g5?! 12.♘d3 ♘xc4 13.♗xg5).

10...♘h7

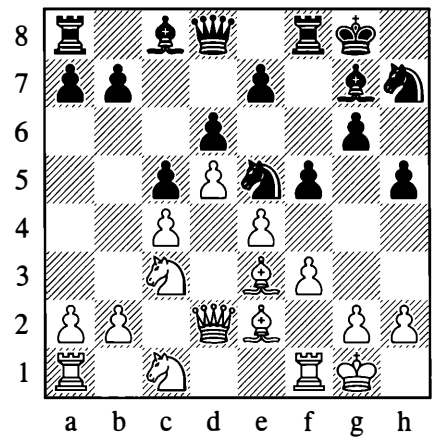
The standard manoeuvre in such positions; Black prepares ...f7-f5.

11.♗e2 ♘e5 12.0–0

If 12.f4 ♘g4 13.♗xg4 ♗xg4 Black would be OK – the bishop pair is an important factor here.

12...f5 13.♕d2

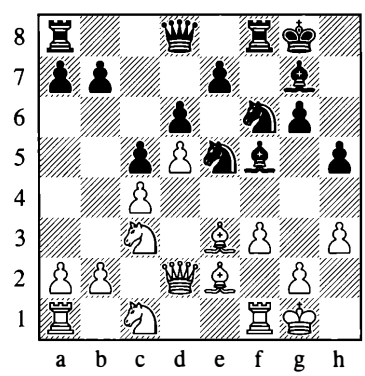
If White tries for activity in the centre – 13.f4!? ♘f7 14.e5 – Black would obtain good counter-chances after 14...dxe5 15.♗xc5 ♕c7 16.♗a3 a6!?, with an interesting struggle ahead.



13...fxe4!?

Probably the best way to handle the tension in the centre.

If instead 13...♘f6, White would get a positional advantage after the simple: 14.exf5 ♗xf5 15.h3! (15.f4? ♘eg4)

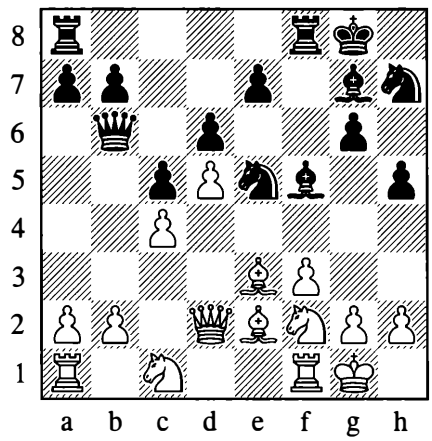


15...a6 (15...e6?! is not good due to 16.f4 ♘f7 17.dxe6 ♗xe6 18.♗d3) 16.a4 ♕a5 17.♖a3 – Black has insufficient dynamic possibilities to compensate for his structural weaknesses.

14.♘xe4 ♗f5 15.♘f2

15.♘g3 was a worthy alternative. After 15...e6!? (15...♗d7 16.♗h6!? and Black's king will have to be taken care of after the exchange of bishops) and, let's say, 16.♖e1 h4 17.♘xf5 exf5 18.f4 ♘g4 19.♗xg4 fxg4, a double-edged situation would arise.

15...♕b6!?



16.a4?!

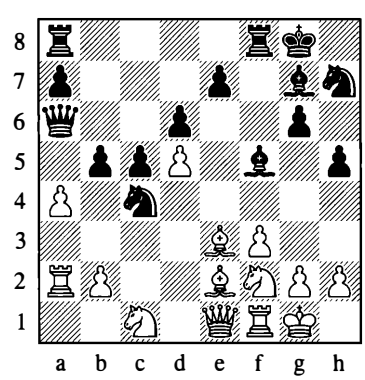
A sloppy move.

Correct was 16.♘b3 a5 17.♖ae1 a4 (17...♕b4 18.♘c1) 18.♘c1 ♖f7 and the "full-contact" struggle is yet to start.

16...♖ac8?

I failed to exploit White's inaccuracy.

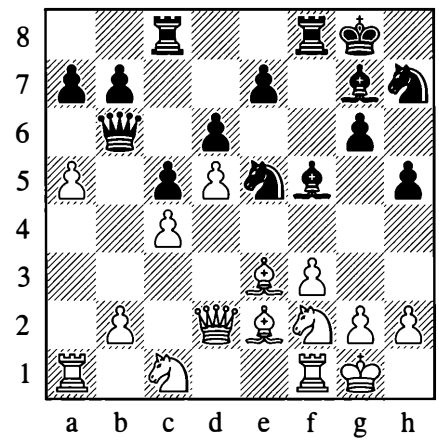
Concrete play was demanded: 16...♕a6! 17.♖a2 ♘xc4 18.♕e1 b5 with the idea:



19.axb5?! ♕xa2 20.♘xa2 ♘xe3 would lead to an excellent position for Black.

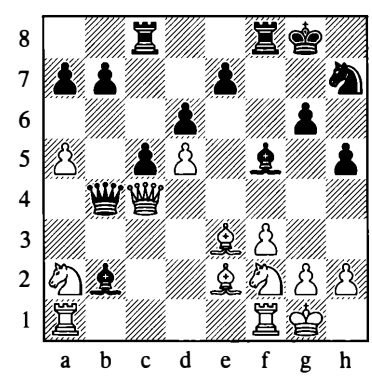
17.a5

17.♖a2 ♗b1 18.♖a3 ♕b4 19.♘b3 ♕xd2 20.♘xd2 ♗f5 may have led to a slightly more pleasant ending for White. Grischuk is playing for complications instead.



17...♕d8?!

A retreat at the wrong moment. Black should have stuck to his principles and played the intended: 17...♕b4 18.♘a2! (I didn't notice this in my previous calculations) 18...♘xc4 19.♕c1 ♗xb2 20.♕xc4



20...♕xa5! (Nor did I see this. I certainly did not want to play a nearly hopeless position after 20...♕xc4 21.♗xc4 ♗xa1 22.♖xa1.) 21.g4 hxg4 22.fxg4 ♗xa1 23.♖xa1 (23.gxf5? ♗d4) 23...♗d7 24.♕e4 ♔f7 with a wild position. Black has a material edge, but his king is unsafe and the white pieces may become very active. Still I believe that Black should be more or less OK.

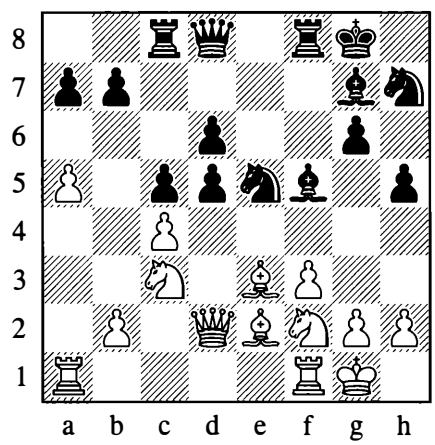
18.♘a2 e6 19.♘c3

White has managed to consolidate and has a clear positional edge.

Of course, Alexander did not fall into the trap: 19.g4? hxg4 20.fxg4 ♗d3! 21.♘xd3 ♘xc4 would lose on the spot.

19...exd5

I did not like the prospects after 19...♘f6 20.♗g5!?.



20.cxd5?

The question mark may seem too severe an evaluation, but after this wrong capture I could breathe normally again.

Much stronger was 20.♘xd5 ♘f6 21.♗g5, exerting strong pressure on Black's position.

20...♘f6 21.h3

With the idea of proceeding with f3-f4 or g2-g4, but later Sasha changed his mind.

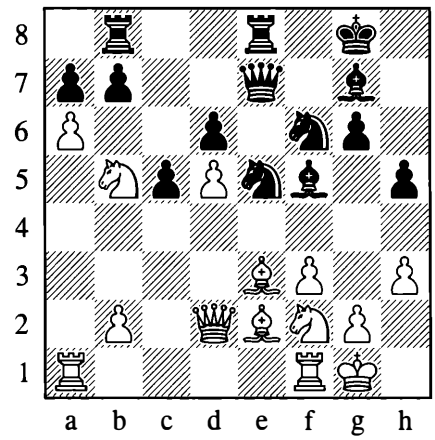
The immediate 21.a6 ♖b8 22.♖a3!? was more to the point.

21...♖e8 22.a6 ♖b8 23.♘b5

It is not clear whether White needs to play 23.f4 ♘f7. In my opinion, before seeking concrete play it was better to make a useful move such as 23.♖fe1.

23...♕e7!?

Aiming at the white bishops on the e-file.



24.♗f4?

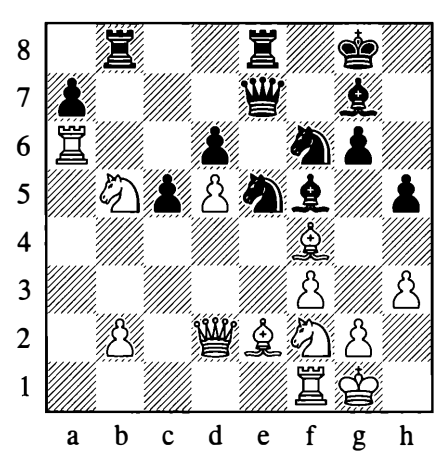
Around here my opponent started to run short of time. Perhaps he had not noticed some of Black's tactical possibilities.

More prudent was 24.♖fe1 bxa6 25.♘c3 (25.♖xa6? ♘xf3†! 26.♗xf3 ♖xb5) 25...♘f7 26.♗xa6 ♕c7, with a tense struggle.

However, the strongest continuation here would probably be the computer's suggestion 24.♘d1!?, protecting the bishop on e3. But such a move is not easy to play over the board.

24...bxa6 25.♖xa6

It's hard to say whether 25.♘c3 ♖b4 26.♗xa6 would be a better choice – Black would still have a promising position in that case.



25...♘xf3†!

With this simple tactic Black takes over the initiative.

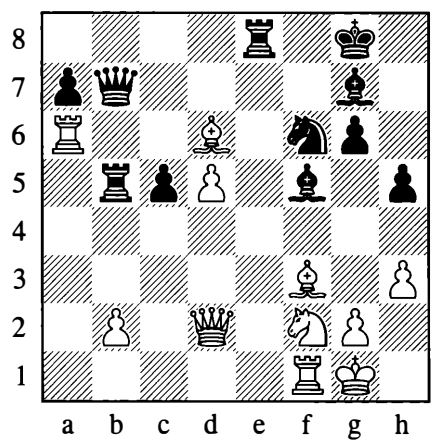
26.♗xf3

Of course not 26.gxf3? ♕xe2.

26...♖xb5 27.♗xd6

Or 27.♖xd6 ♘d7! 28.♘d1 ♘e5, with an obvious advantage for Black.

27...♕b7



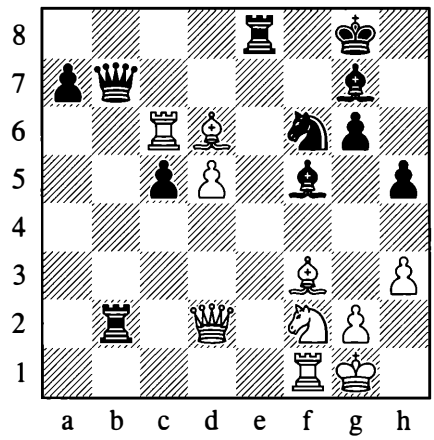
28.♖c6?

This is a desperate move. I remember being very surprised by it during the game.

After the simple 28.♖a2 there is nothing terrible for White yet – his position is rather solid. The strongest continuation for Black in that case seems to be 28...♕b6 29.♗f4 ♖b4 30.♗e3 ♘d7!? with pressure on the b2-pawn and some initiative (31.g4? ♘e5 is bad).

28...♖xb2

It's not Black's extra pawn that matters most now, but the activity of his pieces.

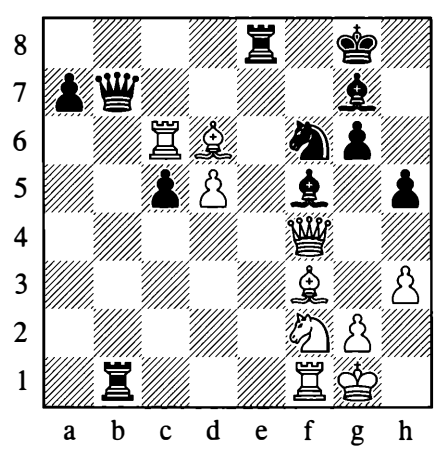


29.♕f4?

Probably the decisive error.

The only correct path is 29.♕a5 ♖b1 30.♕xc5 ♘d7 31.♕c4 ♕b2!? (or 31...♖ee1 32.♘d1 and apparently White can hold) 32.♖c8 ♖xf1† 33.♔xf1 ♕a1† 34.♗d1 ♖xc8 35.♕xc8† ♔h7 36.g4! hxg4 37.hxg4 ♗xg4 38.♔g2, and due to the insecure position of Black's king, White has excellent drawing chances. To choose the best path in such a sharp position with very limited time left, one must mainly rely on intuition. In this game it let Grischuk down.

29...♖b1



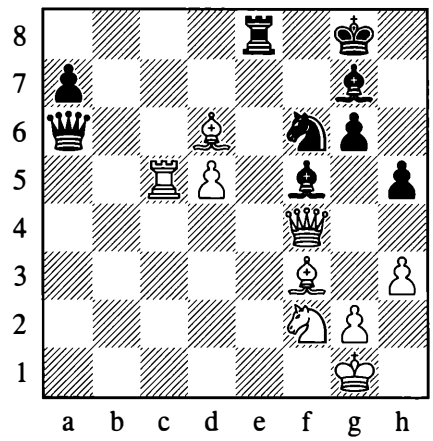
30.♖xc5?!

This third mistake in a row leads to immediate disaster.

But even after the relatively best 30.♕c4 ♕b2! 31.♖xb1 ♕xb1† 32.♔h2 ♘d7 33.♗g3 ♘e5 34.♕xc5 ♘xf3† 35.gxf3 ♕f1 White would be helpless.

Or 30.♖xb1 ♕xb1† 31.♔h2 ♕e1! 32.♗xc5 ♘d7? 33.♗d4 ♕b4–+.

30...♖xf1† 31.♔xf1 ♕a6† 32.♔g1



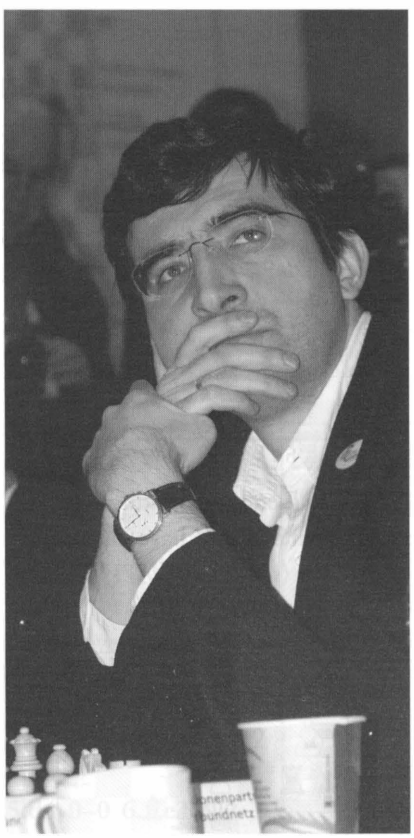
32...♗h6!

White resigned because of 33.♕g3 h4 and 33.♕xh6 ♖e1† 34.♔h2 ♕xd6† 35.g3 ♕xc5. To give up one piece to capture two is reminiscent of a combination in checkers.

0–1

Chapter 2

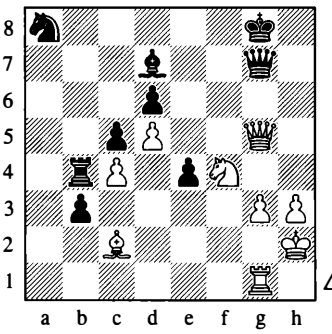
Kramnik



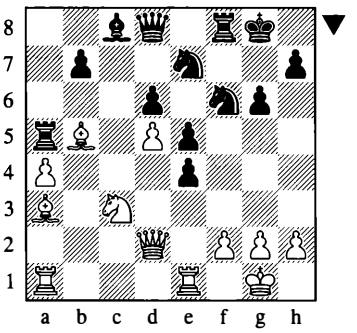
Kramnik at the Dresden Olympiad 2008

Test yourself against the book

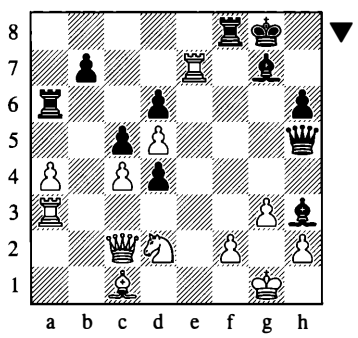
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



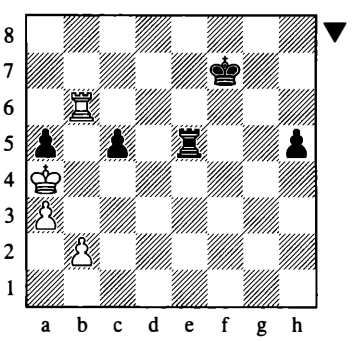
Kramnik missed his chance. Can you see it? (see page 51)



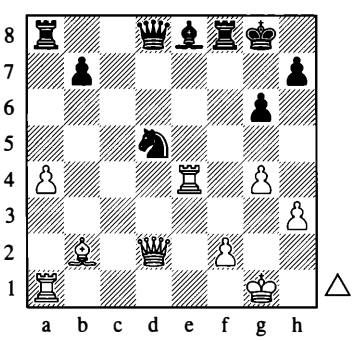
Think prophylactically. How should Black progress? (see page 63)



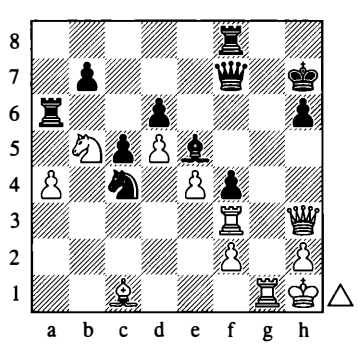
A hard one. How can Black energize his pieces? (see page 44)



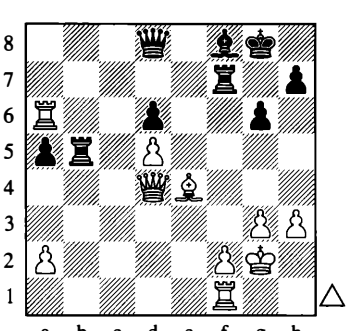
Rook endings are difficult. What should I have played? (see page 56/57)



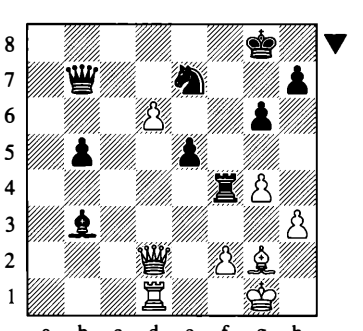
White has sacrificed a piece in this line, but how can he prove compensation? (see page 65)



Can you find Kramnik's nice combination? (see page 45/46)



White is much better. How should he consolidate? (see page 60)



The moment of triumph. How should Black continue? (see page 66)

In the period 1992-2002 I played a "mini-match" of four games against one of the strongest anti-King's Indian players of all time. I am happy, both on my own behalf and on behalf of the King's Indian, that I was able to score 2½–1½ against this outstanding player, who has a tremendous lifetime score against the King's Indian.

Kramnik was a talented junior in the late 1980s, but not visibly more so than many other talented players from his generation, like Konstantin Sakaev and Mikhail Ulibin. But in the early 1990s his strength increased rapidly. It was seen as risky when Kasparov wanted Kramnik's participation as first reserve in the Russian team for the Manila Olympiad. But with a score of 8½/9 he easily took the gold medal on his board and helped secure gold for Russia.

Only a year later he entered the world's top ten. The year after that he dealt a major blow to the reputation of the King's Indian with this complicated game.

Vladimir Kramnik – Garry Kasparov

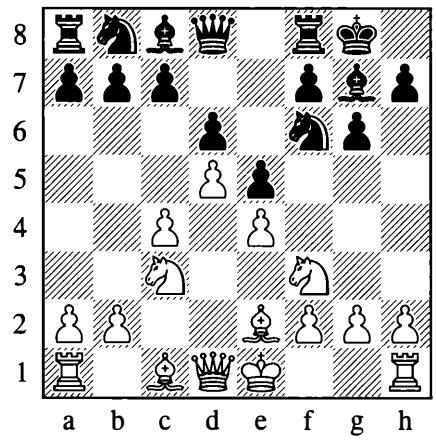
Linares 1994

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4

This was Vladimir Kramnik's move order in the 1990s, eventually leading Chess Stars to publish a series of books with a Kramnik repertoire, starting with this move order.

2...g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.d5

This move defines the Petrosian System, named after the ninth World Champion. This was quite popular in the 1980s, but less so these days. Kramnik also played it against me in 1995, as we shall see below.



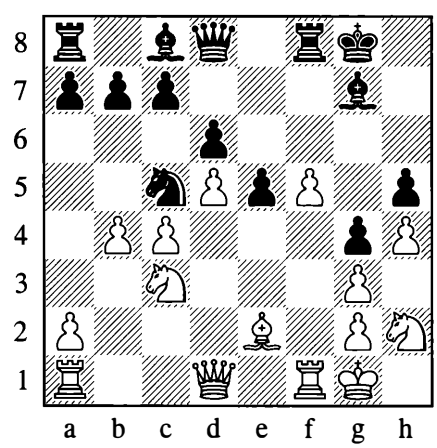
7...♘bd7

I used to play this as well, although in most cases in the last 20 years I have placed the knight on a6, with or without ...a7-a5.

8.♗g5 h6 9.♗h4 g5 10.♗g3 ♘h5 11.h4 g4 12.♘h2 ♘xg3 13.fxg3 h5 14.0–0 f5

A typical dynamic reaction.

15.exf5 ♘c5 16.b4

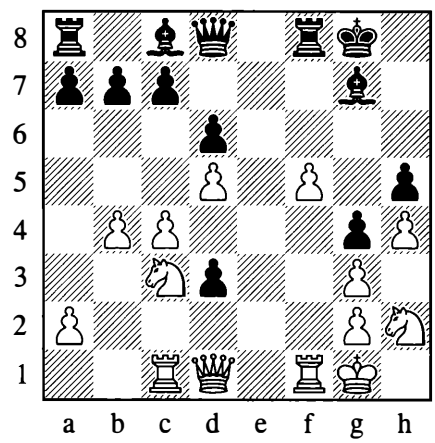


16...e4!?

Typical of the King's Indian: opening up the diagonal for the King's Indian bishop at the cost of a pawn.

The position after 16...♘a6 17.♖b1 ♗xf5 18.♗d3± is simply pleasant for White – for example in Handke – Socko, Groningen 1998.

17.♖c1 ♘d3 18.♗xd3 exd3



19.f6!

Kramnik has a good sense of the nature of these positions as well, even though he is more comfortable playing White in them. After 19.♕xd3 ♕f6∓ Black is very harmoniously placed and the bishops will become dominant very quickly. White's extra pawn is irrelevant.

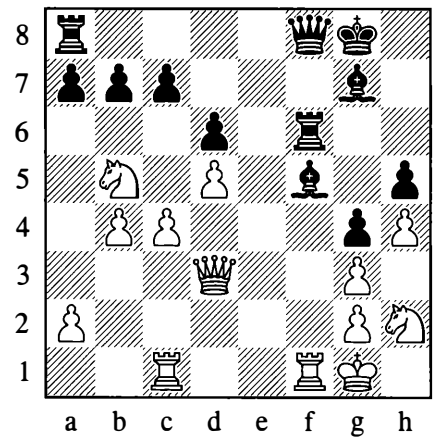
19...♖xf6 20.♕xd3

This has been tested in some games since 1994 and the general conclusion is that White is a bit better, but Black's position is by no means untenable.

20...♕f8 21.♘b5!?

A very ambitious idea.

21...♗f5



22.♖xf5! ♖xf5 23.♘xc7 ♖c8 24.♘e6 ♕f6 25.♘f1

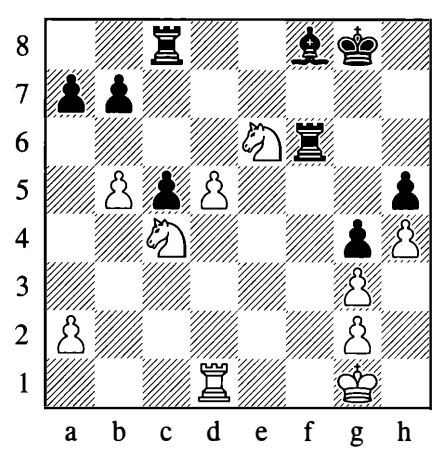
Kramnik pointed out in his 1994 analysis that 25.♖f1 is met strongly by 25...♖f8!! 26.♘xf8 ♕d4† 27.♕xd4 ♗xd4† 28.♔h1 ♖xf8, where White has no winning chances despite his two extra pawns.

But maybe 25.♖e1!? was a worthwhile try.

25...♖e5 26.♖d1 ♕f5 27.♕xf5 ♖xf5 28.c5 ♗f8 29.♘e3 ♖f6 30.♘c4?!

This seems a bit too creative. Maybe 30.♖c1 with even chances was better.

30...dxc5 31.b5

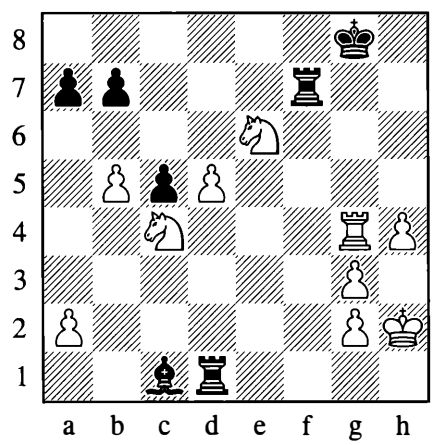


31...♗h6?!

This was heavily criticized 20 years ago, but it is not that bad. Still, Kasparov seems to have missed White's main threat.

Critical was 31...♖e8 32.♖e1 ♖f5! 33.♖f1 ♖xd5 34.♘c7 ♖ed8 35.♘xd5 ♖xd5, when White has decent drawing chances, but Black should be happy with the way things are going.

32.♖e1!± ♖e8 33.♖e5 ♖e7 34.♖xh5 ♖ef7 35.♔h2! ♗c1 36.♖e5 ♖f1 37.♖e4 ♖d1 38.♖xg4†



38...♔h7??

A simple blunder that loses the game immediately and shows the pressure Kasparov has been under for most of the game.

38...♔h8! 39.♖e4 ♖xd5 40.♘e5 looks dangerous, but after 40...♖f2!, with counterplay against g2, Black would have his chances as well.

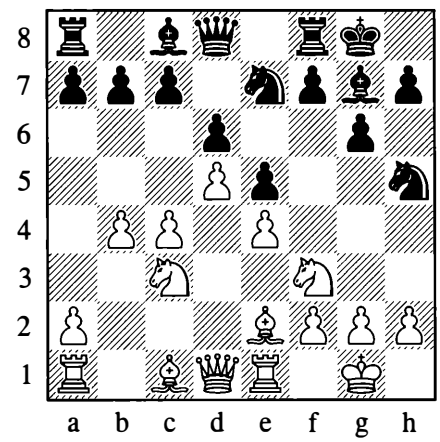
39.♘e5 ♖e7 40.♘f8†
1–0

A messy game that should by no means make us lose heart, but this is exactly what Kasparov did after losing his second full-length tournament game in the King's Indian to Kramnik a few years later.

Vladimir Kramnik – Garry Kasparov

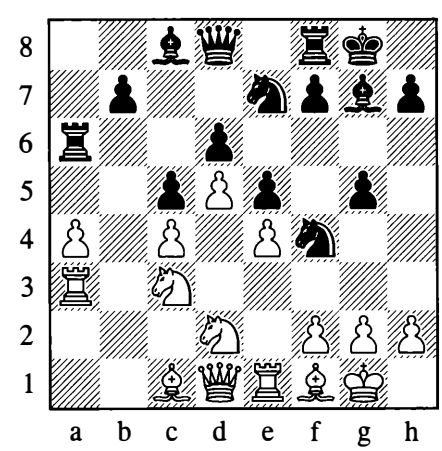
Novgorod 1997

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 ♘h5 10.♖e1!



This idea was introduced by Ivan Sokolov and quickly became one of the big main lines of the King's Indian.

10...♘f4 11.♗f1 a5 12.bxa5 ♖xa5 13.♘d2 c5 14.a4 ♖a6 15.♖a3 g5!?

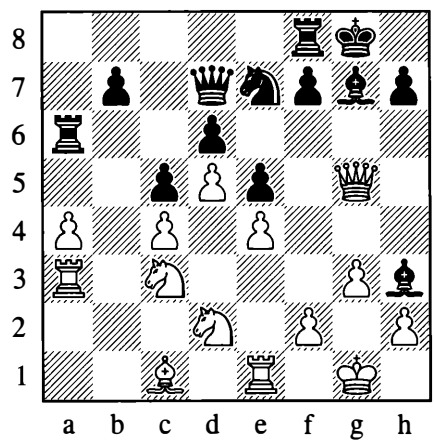


A novelty at the time. Black offers a pawn in return for White making some concessions on his kingside.

16.g3

Kramnik accepts the challenge.

16...♘h3† 17.♗xh3 ♗xh3 18.♕h5 ♕d7 19.♕xg5



19...h6?

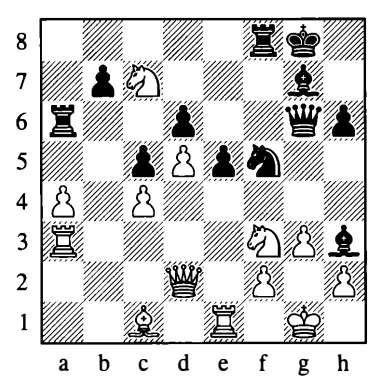
Later it turned out that this was the moment where Black lost the opening battle. Subsequent games mainly took the following direction:

19...f5!? 20.exf5

The critical line is probably 20.f3 f4∞, as in Balcazar Novoa – Craciunescu, email 2006.

20...♘xf5 21.♘f3 ♕e8 22.♕d2 h6 23.♘b5 ♕g6 24.♕c2

24.♘c7 is met with the active:



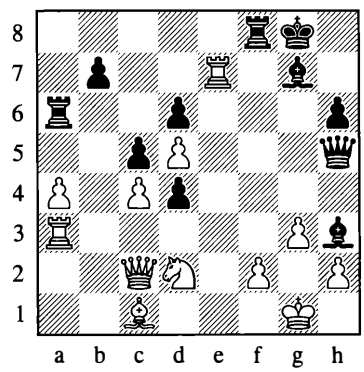
24...e4! 25.♘xa6 bxa6 26.♖xe4 ♘xg3 27.hxg3 ♕xe4 28.♕d3 ♕xd3 29.♖xd3 ♖b8! and Black has enough counterplay for the pawn.

24...♕h5

24...♕f7!∞ was stronger.

25.♘d2 ♘d4 26.♘xd4 exd4 27.♖e7?

27.♘e4± was probably a bit better for White. Instead he is blown off the board.

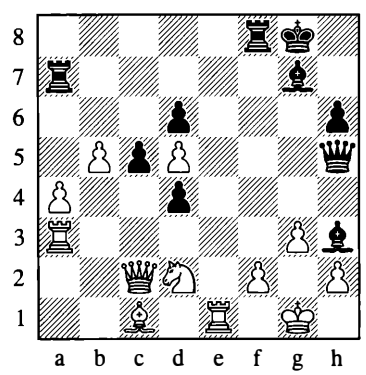


27...b5!!

An amazing idea, activating the rook on a6.

28.cxb5 ♖a7!! 29.♖e1

29.♖xa7 ♕e2 and White is mated.



29...♖xf2!

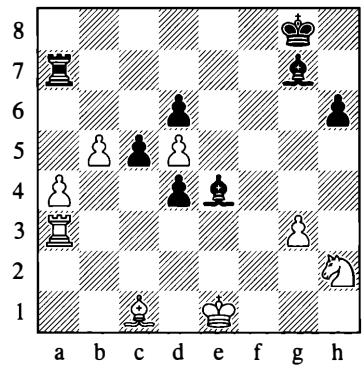
The attack does not slow down.

30.♔xf2 ♗f5 31.♖e4 ♕xh2† 32.♔e1 ♕h1† 33.♘f1

33.♔e2 ♖e7! and White's position is collapsing.

33...♗xe4 34.♕h2 ♕xh2 35.♘xh2

White has managed to avoid mate, but the ending is not much fun either.



35...♖b7 36.♗f4 c4 37.♗xd6 c3 38.♘g4 h5 39.♘f2 ♗xd5 40.♘d3 ♗c4 0–1 Goncalves – Sender, corr. 2001.

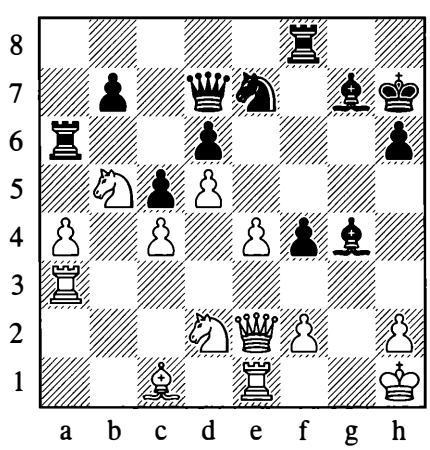
20.♕e3 f5 21.♕e2 f4 22.♘b5 ♔h7

22...♘g6 was met strongly by 23.♔h1! ♔h7 24.♖g1± in Szeberenyi – Zimmerman, Budapest 1999.

23.gxf4!

The opening of the kingside turns out to be to White's advantage.

23...exf4 24.♔h1 ♗g4



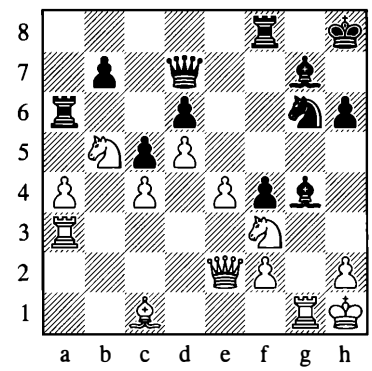
25.♘f3!!

The star move of the game. Kramnik enters into a pin voluntarily, knowing it to be temporary.

25.f3 ♗h5∞ would give Black great counterplay. The knight comes to e5 and the white pieces will find it hard to become active.

25...♘g6 26.♖g1 ♗xf3†

26...♔h8 was tried in Baeckstroem – Petraitis, corr. 2002.

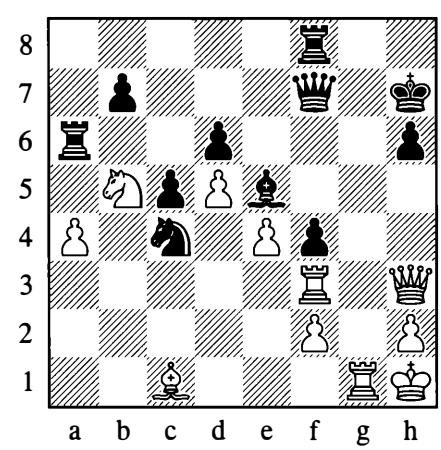


White is much better after 27.♘c7! ♖b6 28.h3!±.

27.♕xf3 ♘e5 28.♕h5 ♕f7 29.♕h3 ♘xc4?!

Black wins back his pawn, but White is allowed to activate all of his inactive pieces and start a great attack. The position was dismal anyway, but this cut the game short.

30.♖f3! ♗e5



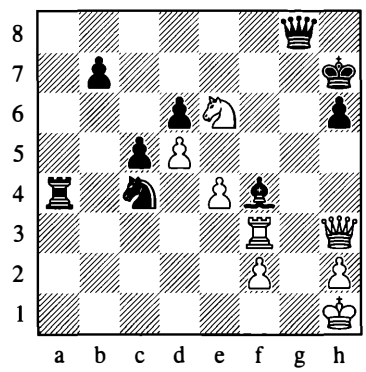
31.♘c7!! ♖xa4

31...♕xc7 32.♕xh6† leads to mate.

32.♗xf4!

1–0

Kasparov resigned on account of: 32...♗xf4 33.♘e6 ♖g8 34.♖xg8 ♕xg8



35.♕f5† ♔h8 36.♕f6† ♔h7 37.♘f8†

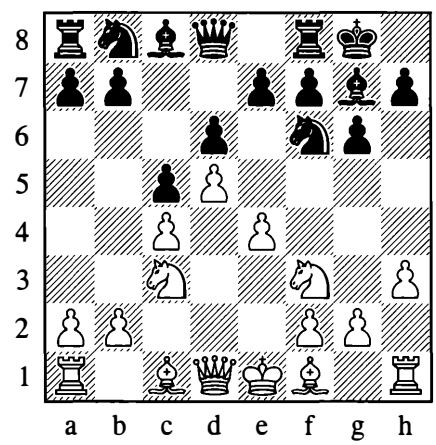
My Games

Vladimir Kramnik – Ilya Smirin

Moscow 1992

This game was played in the Alekhine Open. In 1992 Vladimir Kramnik was not yet such a formidable player, but he was already one of the strongest in the world. Playing him with Black was a serious test.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.e4 0–0 6.♘f3 d6 7.h3



7...e6

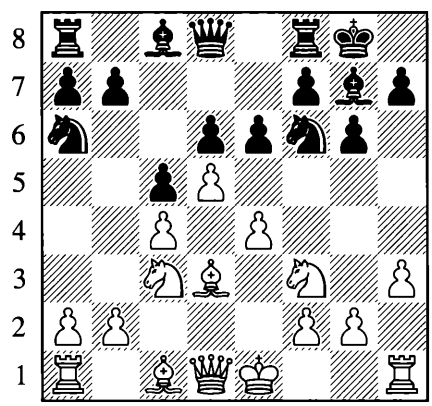
Actually this is a mix of the King's Indian and Benoni openings. Still I think it's logical to consider this opening as a King's Indian – the pawn structure is similar and the bishop is on g7 after all!

On a few occasions I have played a slightly different version here: 7...♘a6 8.♗d3 ♘c7 9.0–0 e5. It's not a big difference – Black is still worse. The position is somewhat cramped and White's forthcoming offensive on the queenside may be very unpleasant. Yes, Black has possibilities for active play on the opposite wing, but they are not easy to carry out. His practical chances should not be underestimated though, and Black's position is solid.

8.♗d3 ♘a6

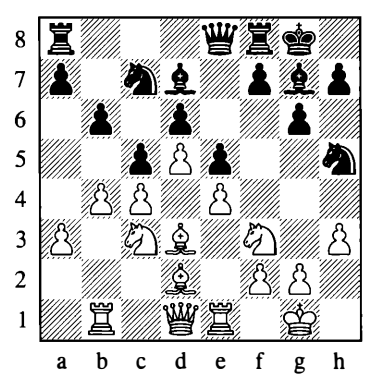
I used to play this system sometimes.

The main (and better) continuation here is 8...exd5 9.cxd5 (or 9.exd5 ♖e8† 10.♗e3) 9...b5 10.♗xb5 (or 10.♘xb5) 10...♘xe4 with a lot of theory to follow. I was never fond of entering this theoretical discussion and usually preferred the move in the game, even though it is objectively rather dubious, as I said.



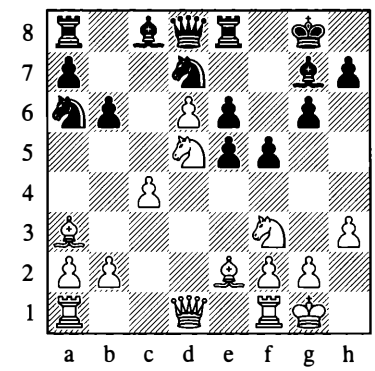
9.♗g5!?

Provoking ...h7-h6. Alexander Beliavsky once beat me very convincingly by playing quite simply: 9.0–0 e5 10.a3 ♘h5 11.♖e1 ♘c7 12.b4 b6 13.♗d2 ♗d7 14.♖b1 ♕e8



15.♗c2! ♘f4 16.♗a4 cxb4 17.♗xd7 ♕xd7 18.axb4 f5 19.exf5 ♖xf5 20.♘e4, with an overwhelming positional advantage; (1–0, 42) Beliavsky – Ilya Smirin, Moscow 1988.

9.♗e3 was played against me by the very talented and almost forgotten player Leonid Zaid: 9...♘c7 10.e5 (this leads to a sharp battle) 10...dxe5 11.♗xc5 ♖e8 12.d6 ♘a6 13.♗a3 ♘d7 14.0–0 f5 15.♗e2 b6!? 16.♘d5!

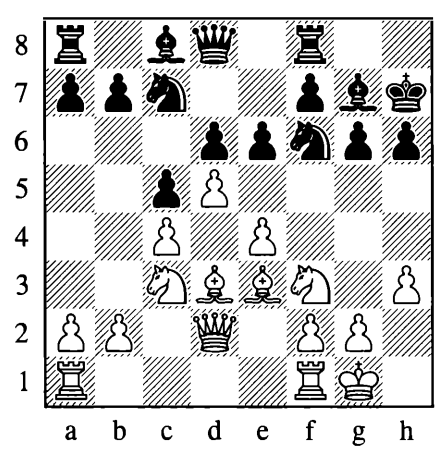


16...♘dc5 17.♘e7† ♖xe7 18.dxe7 ♕xe7 19.b4 ♘d7 20.c5 e4 21.♘d4 ♘e5 22.♖c1 ♘c7 23.♘b5 ♘d5 with good compensation for the exchange; (0–1, 39) Zaid – Smirin, Israel 1991.

9...h6 10.♗e3 ♘c7 11.♕d2

A standard manoeuvre: White gains a tempo by attacking the pawn on h6.

11...♔h7 12.0–0



12...e5

I did not want to proceed in the more usual way: 12...exd5 13.cxd5 (13.exd5 b5) 13...b5

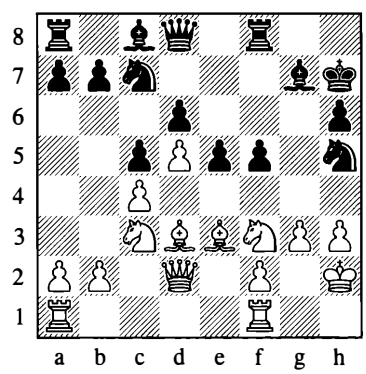
14.a3 a5 etc. Today I would probably choose this livelier structure, despite the knight on c7 being placed slightly passively – it would look better on d7. But how to carry out ...b7-b5 then?

13.♔h2 ♘h5 14.g3

Keeping the knight out of f4.

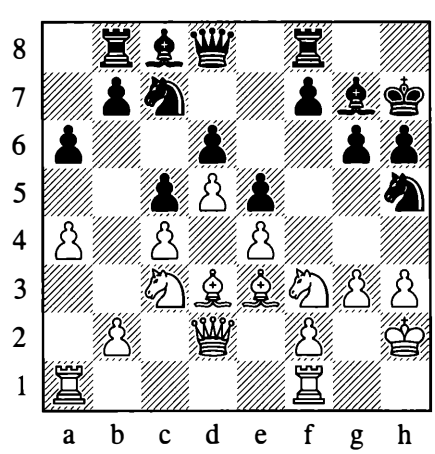
14...a6

This is not the time to start play on the kingside: 14...f5? 15.exf5 gxf5



16.g4! e4 17.♘xe4. Black has no choice but to try to do something on the queenside – the area of White's supremacy.

15.a4 ♖b8



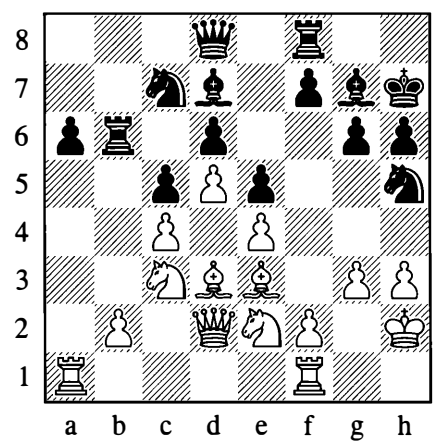
16.♘g1!?

Prophylactic defence of the pawn on h3. Meanwhile, Vladimir is planning to regroup this knight to e2. Also, the pawn on f2 may move now – either one or two squares – if an appropriate moment arises. But this is quite a distant prospect.

16...♗d7 17.a5 b6

With the slim hope that White will not take on b6 and this pawn will go further. Alas...

18.axb6 ♖xb6 19.♘ge2



19...f5

It's not clear which side will benefit more from this advance, but Black has to do something.

The alternative 19...♕c8 20.g4 ♘f6 21.♔g2 h5 22.♖h1! seems to be too passive.

20.exf5 gxf5 21.♖ab1

White protects the b-pawn and implies that b2-b4 will become possible.

Black would welcome 21.g4 e4 22.gxh5 exd3 23.♕xd3 ♖xb2, with real counterplay.

21...♘f6

21...f5-f4 is impossible due to the pin, and this advance cannot be prepared by means of 21...♔h8? because of 22.♗xh6.

I did not want to play 21...e4 22.♗c2 either – it is not clear how to develop an initiative, and meanwhile some weaknesses (such as the f4-square becoming available to the white knight) have been created.

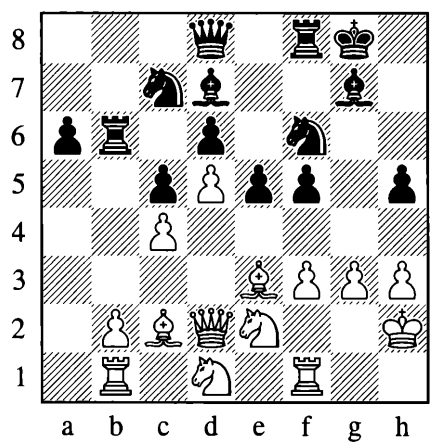
22.f3

Just in case, Vladimir deprives Black of a possible ...e5-e4.

22...h5!?

Black made this move to finally escape the unpleasant pin along the b1-h7 diagonal.

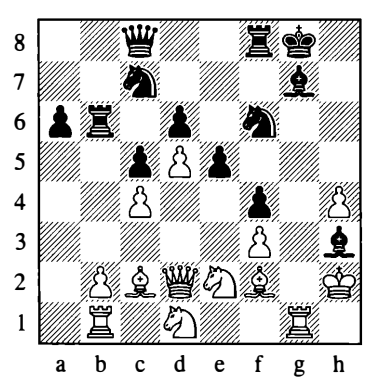
23.♗c2 ♔g8 24.♘d1



Now White is ready to start the queenside attack after an eventual b2-b4. I decided to stop it physically for a while.

24...♖b4?!

24...h4!? 25.gxh4 f4 26.♗f2 ♕c8 27.♖g1 ♗xh3



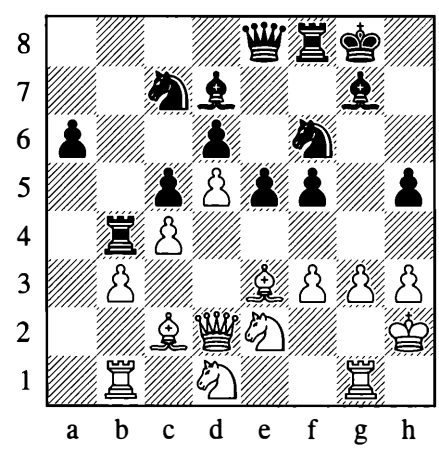
This was the better option – Black's king becomes more open, but his pieces get some oxygen and the pawn on f4 offers hope of doing something on the kingside. After let's say 28.♘ec3 (28.b4 ♗f5 is unclear) 28...♗f5 29.♖g5 ♘h7 White probably has a positional edge, but Black is not without counter-chances and the situation remains tense.

25.b3 ♕e8

All of Black's pieces are now well-placed, with one notable exception – the knight on c7. As Siegbert Tarrasch used to say: "If one piece is bad the whole position is bad." This applies to this game to a certain extent.

26.♖g1!?

Another prophylactic move "just in case".



26...a5

Intending to play ...a5-a4 to undermine the white pawn chain on the queenside.

Intuitively I did not want to play 26...e4 here. The following sample variation shows that White remains on top: 27.♘f4 exf3 28.♕f2! a5 29.♕xf3 a4 30.♗d2 axb3 31.♗xb3 ♖b7 32.♗c2 ♖xb1 33.♗xb1 ♘e4 34.♗xe4! fxe4 35.♕e2 and despite the simplification, Black is worse – the pawns on h5 and e4 are about to fall.

27.♗h6!

White wants to exchange the g7-bishop, the main potential defender of Black's king.

27.♘c1 deserved some attention as well – White is going to play ♘d3 or ♘a2 in order to win the a5-pawn after the rook retreats from b4. The following line looks logical and almost forced: 27...a4 28.♘a2 ♖b8 29.bxa4 ♖xb1 30.♗xb1 ♗xa4 31.♗xf5 ♘fxd5 32.♗e4 ♘f6 and in the event of 33.♕xd6 ♘xe4 34.fxe4 ♘e6 35.♘ac3 White remains the stronger side; but, as is often the case in the King's Indian, Black has some compensation and reasonable practical chances for the pawn.

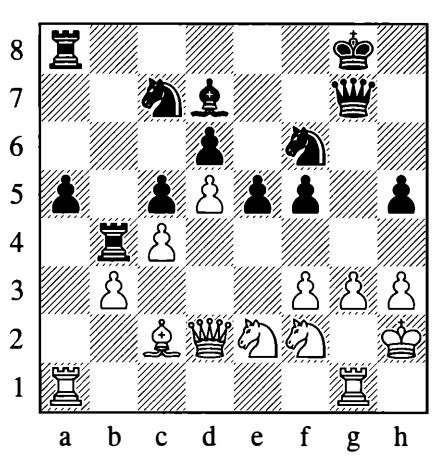
27...♕g6 28.♗xg7 ♕xg7 29.♘f2

After the exchange of dark-squared bishops the unfortunate placement of the knight on c7 is felt even more. Black has to hurry to really include it in the battle. The question is: "Can he?"

29...♖a8

From a practical point of view the following pawn sacrifice deserved some consideration: 29...♔h8!? 30.♘d3 ♖b7 31.♕xa5 ♖g8, trying to fish in troubled waters. But objectively the compensation is clearly insufficient. Moreover, I did not yet feel that Black's position was so dangerous strategically.

30.♖a1!

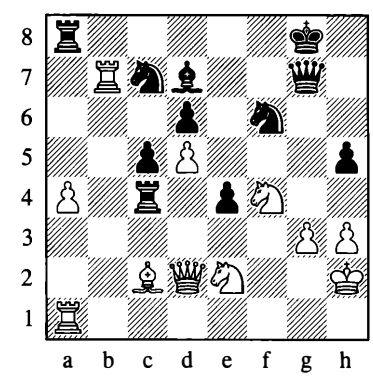


We may conclude that Black has been outplayed – he has weaknesses on both wings without real counterplay.

30...e4

This kind of desperate move (the black king now becomes really weak) could have led to a loss by force. Still it was not a bad decision – after all, I managed to draw the game! I was eager to obtain counter-chances at any price.

If Black had proceeded instead with 30...a4, trying to open the queenside, then after 31.♘d3 ♖bb8 32.bxa4 e4 (the only real try) 33.fxe4 fxe4 34.♘df4 ♖b4 35.♖gb1! (the key move) 35...♖xc4 36.♖b7



...the rook would penetrate with devastating effect, for instance: 36...♘g4† (36...♘fe8 37.♖a2 ♗c8 38.♖b6 would prolong the game, but Black's pieces work as single units – there is no coordination between them whatsoever. His position will soon fall apart) 37.hxg4 ♕xa1 38.♖xc7 ♕b2 39.♘xh5 ♖xc2 40.♕g5†, with a complete rout.

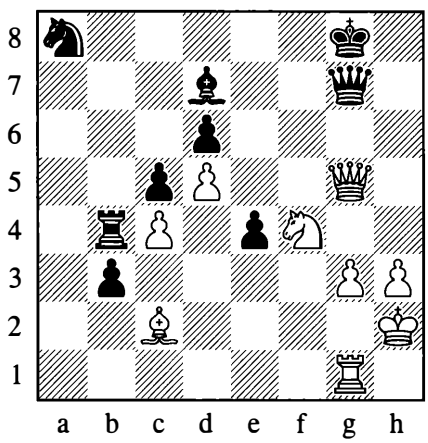
31.fxe4 ♘xe4 32.♘xe4 fxe4 33.♘f4 ♕d4!?

This and the next move is the only option to complicate White's task. Passive defence did not offer any hope.

34.♕e2 a4 35.♕xh5

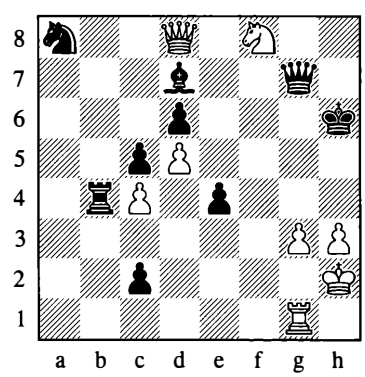
35.♘xh5 would lead to a winning position too, but the move made by Kramnik is more natural and no less strong.

35...axb3 36.♖xa8† ♘xa8 37.♕g5† ♕g7



38.♕d8†

Vladimir did not find the forced win: 38.♘g6! bxc2 (other moves don't save Black either) 39.♕d8† ♔h7 (39...♔f7 40.♘h8†) 40.♘f8† ♔h6



41.♕h4# Truthfully, I also failed to see it – it was not so easy to spot in mild time trouble.

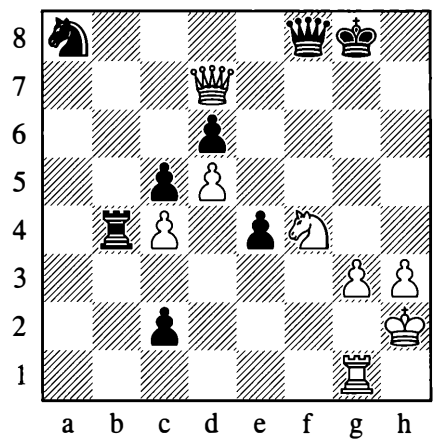
38...♕f8 39.♕g5† ♕g7 40.♕d8†?

Kramnik could still have won as shown below, but instead he preferred to repeat the position.

40...♕f8 41.♕xd7

Now 41.♕g5† would lead to a draw – threefold repetition.

41...bxc2

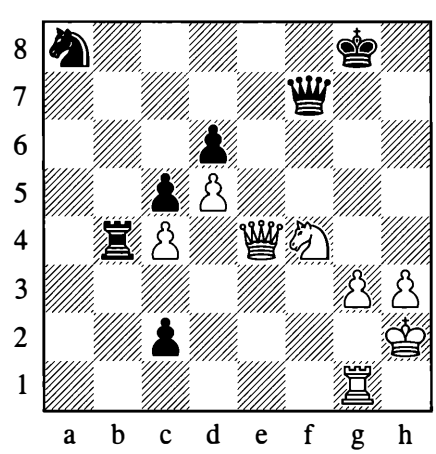


42.♕g4†

Finally missing the win. It was not trivial though: White must first play 42.♖c1! ♖xc4 and only after that 43.♕e6† ♕f7 44.♕xd6. Black cannot hold this – just look at the knight on a8!

42...♕g7 43.♕c8† ♕f8 44.♕e6† ♕f7 45.♕xe4

Now 45.♕xd6 ♖b1! would lead to a draw – the c-pawn is too strong.



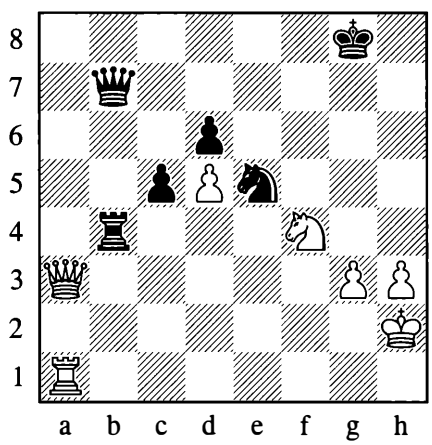
45...♘b6!

This knight was bad on c7 and miserable on a8, but now it proudly joins the battle.

46.♕xc2 ♘xc4 47.♕c3 ♘e5

Suddenly all of Black's pieces become very active.

48.♖a1 ♕b7 49.♕a3



Vladimir offered a draw, which I accepted. Black is not worse, but he has no real grounds to play for a win – his king is too exposed. The following logical variation 49...♖b2† 50.♔h1 c4!? 51.♕xd6 ♖b1† 52.♖xb1 ♕xb1† 53.♔g2 ♕e4† 54.♔h2 (the only move) 54...♘f3† 55.♔h1 leads to a draw by force.

½–½

Vladimir Kramnik – Ilya Smirin

Moscow 1995

This game was played in a short (two games) match with a rapid time control. The match was a part of the excellently organized Professional Chess Association (PCA) cycle of tournaments which took place in cities like New York, Moscow, Paris and London. The venues for these events were also very good, such as the Javits Convention Center in New York. The PCA was founded in 1993 and ceased to exist in 1996. Pity! Those events had a 16-player knockout format, among them 10 invited personally and six qualifying from Swiss-system tournaments. The invitees, such as Kasparov, Anand, Kramnik and Ivanchuk, were the strongest players in the world. The qualification tournaments were also high-level events. I managed to qualify four times in a row, which I consider one of the main achievements in my career. On the fifth occasion I was invited directly to the final (in New York in 1995). The World Champion, Garry Kasparov, was the main force in creating the PCA, and (alas) he was also responsible for its death. Once again, it's a pity that it all ended after three years, but at least those years were very productive and left their mark on modern chess history.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.d5

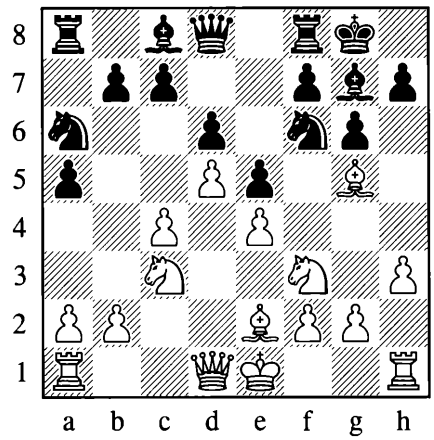
Again the Petrosian System.

7...a5 8.h3

A relatively rare continuation in this particular position. Often the game transposes to the 6.♘f3 0–0 7.h3 e5 8.d5 line.

8.♗g5 would lead to the "pure" Petrosian System.

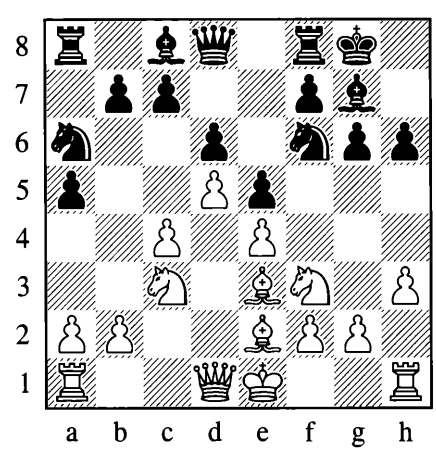
8...♘a6 9.♗g5



9...h6

Later in this position I preferred to avoid or to postpone this move, which somewhat weakens Black's kingside formation. A relatively recent example is 9...♘c5 10.♘d2 ♗d7 11.h4 h6 12.♗e3 h5 13.f3 c6 (13...a4!?) 14.♘b3 cxd5 15.♘xc5 d4 16.♘xd7 ♕xd7 17.♘a4 (17.♗xd4!? exd4 18.♕xd4±) 17...dxe3 18.♘b6 ♕c7 19.♘xa8 ♖xa8 20.♕d3 ♗h6 21.g3 ♘d7 22.♖d1 ♖a6 with good compensation for exchange; (½–½, 41) Cramling – Smirin, Stockholm 2012.

10.♗e3



10...♘d7!?

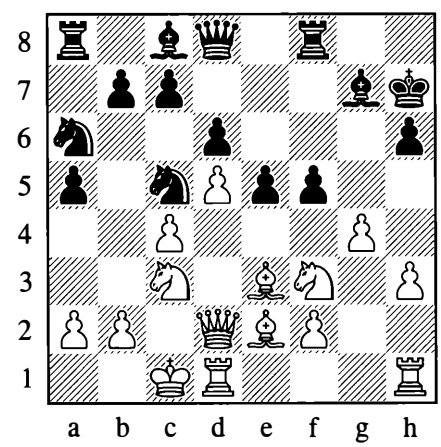
This is now a well-known idea in similar positions, but in 1995 it was a rare manoeuvre. Black transfers this knight to c5 and implements the ...f7-f5 push after that. The main negatives are a certain loss of time and the non-ideal placement of the knight on a6.

Vassily Ivanchuk chose a different route for the knight in his encounter with Kramnik from the same tournament: 10...♘h5 11.♘d2 ♘f4 12.♗f1 ♘c5 13.♘b3 b6 14.g3 ♘h5 15.♘xc5 bxc5 16.♕d2 ♔h7 17.♗e2 ♘f6 18.0–0–0 ♕e7 19.g4 ♘d7 20.h4 ♘b6 21.h5 g5; (½–½, 35) Kramnik – Ivanchuk, Moscow 1995.

11.♕d2 ♔h7 12.g4 ♘dc5 13.0–0–0 f5

A risky continuation. Now the black king becomes more open, but there was nothing better.

14.exf5 gxf5



15.♖dg1!

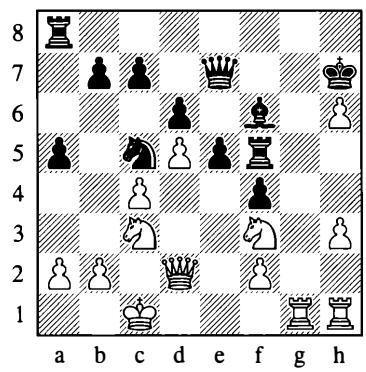
A strong move. The target – the black king.

15...♕e7

It's better for Black to refrain from moving the central pawns: 15...e4 16.♘e1 ♕f6 17.g5 hxg5 18.♗xg5 ♕d4 19.♕f4 and the king is under attack, or 15...f4? 16.♗xc5 ♘xc5 17.♕c2† ♔g8 18.♘e4 and Black is strategically lost – his bishop on g7 is firmly blocked and White controls the vital light squares on the b1-h7 diagonal.

16.gxf5

Not the best choice, helping Black to activate the c8-bishop. After 16.g5! f4 17.♗xc5 ♘xc5 18.♗d3† ♗f5 (18...e4 19.♘xe4 ♘xe4 20.♕c2 ♗f5 21.♘h4 ♖ae8 22.♖e1±) 19.♗xf5† ♖xf5 20.gxh6 ♗f6



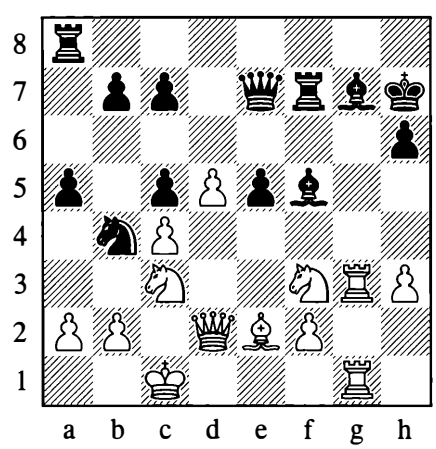
21.♖g4!? ♔h8 22.♕c2 e4 23.♔b1 White's chances should be preferred – the opponent's king feels unsafe.

16...♗xf5 17.♖g3 ♘b4 18.♗xc5

Of course not 18.♖hg1? ♘xa2†.

18...dxc5 19.♖hg1 ♖f7

More precise was 19...♗f6 20.a3 e4, but this was hard to determine during a rapid game.



20.a3

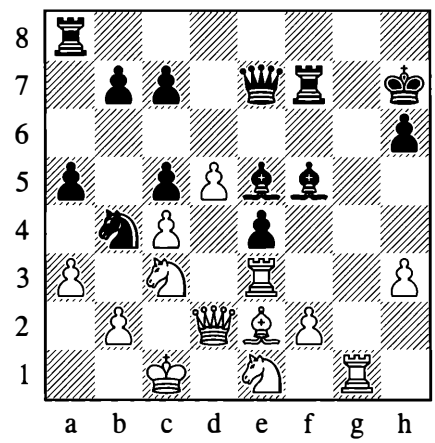
20.♘e1!?, providing extra cover for c2 and d3 and threatening to play 21.♗h5 (or ♗g4 in some cases) deserved serious attention.

20...e4 21.♘e1 ♗e5!

Of course 21...♘a6? is out of the question. The knight on b4 is a kamikaze at the moment.

22.♖e3

22.axb4? axb4 in turn is also out of the question.



22...♕h4?

The wrong step.

I should have played 22...♗f4, resulting in a sharp and completely unclear position with both kings in potential danger. In the event of the brave and greedy 23.axb4?! axb4 24.♘b1 ♖a2 25.♗g4 ♗g6 26.♘g2 ♗e5 27.♖b3 b5!?∞ White's extra piece doesn't immediately make its presence felt.

23.♔b1?

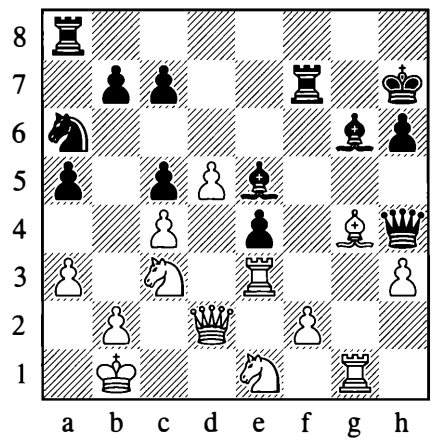
Too soft.

After the energetic 23.♗g4! ♗xg4 (23...♗f4 24.axb4 [now it's time!] 24...axb4 25.♗xf5† ♖xf5 26.♘xe4) 24.♖xg4 ♕xf2 25.♘xe4 ♕xd2† 26.♔xd2 ♗xb2 27.axb4 axb4 28.♘f3 ♖a2 29.♔d3 White would have a clear advantage in the endgame – the compensation for the piece is clearly insufficient.

23...♘a6

It's time to retreat!

24.♗g4 ♗g6



25.♖g2

Vladimir decides to part with the exchange. Indeed, he will have clear compensation, mostly because of the poor coordination of Black's pieces. In particular, the knight on a6 is currently searching for something at the edge of the board, far from its colleagues. But if it manages to become useful without making substantial concessions, the extra exchange will start to become significant.

In my (and the computer's) opinion 25.♘d1 was a better way to give up the exchange after 25...♗f4 or 25...♗h2!? 26.♖g2 ♗f4.

25...♗f4 26.♘c2 ♖af8 27.♘d1 ♗xe3 28.♘cxe3 b6

Not forgetting about the pawn on a5.

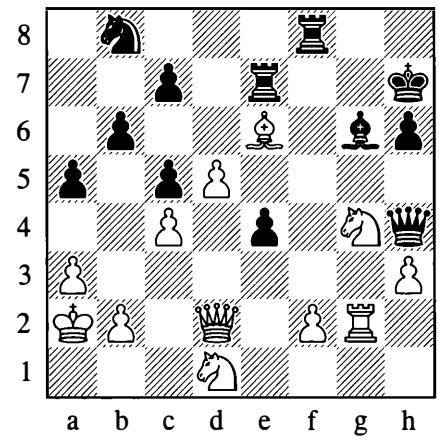
29.♔a2 ♘b8

The knight is coming closer!

30.♗e6 ♖e7

Black has managed to stabilize the position and with the extra exchange may look to the future with hope.

31.♘g4

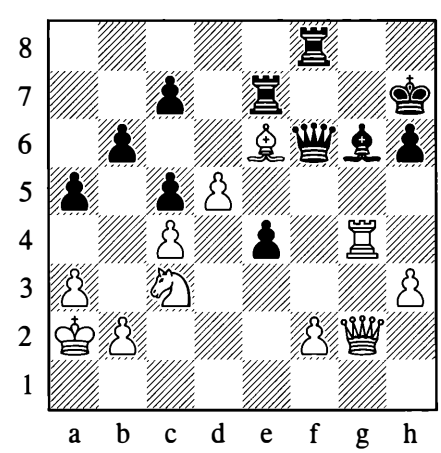


31...♘d7

After the centralizing 31...♘c6! I would have been on the verge of winning – the knight will go to d4 (could it have dreamed about that just seven or eight moves ago?).

32.♘c3 ♕g5 33.♕e1 ♘f6 34.♕g1 ♘xg4 35.♖xg4 ♕f6 36.♕g2?

Correct was the simple 36.♘xe4 ♗xe4 37.♖xe4 ♖g7 38.♕b1 ♔h8 39.♕c1 and White is OK – the bishop on e6 plus a pawn are not inferior to the black rook.



36...♖xe6?

This was unnecessary.

36...♖g7 37.♘xe4 ♕f3–+ would have led to a winning position – there is no compensation any more.

37.dxe6 ♕xe6 38.♔a1

The smoke has cleared. Black has an extra pawn and an obvious advantage.

38...e3?!

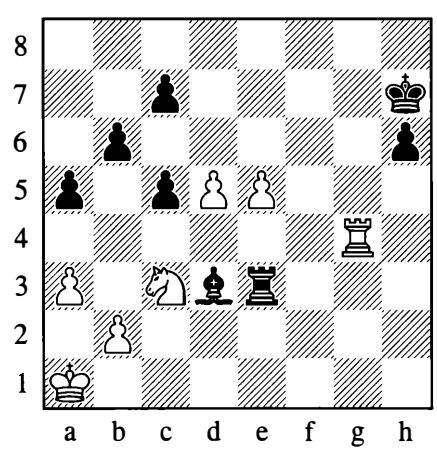
The most rational approach was 38...♖f3 39.♖g3 ♖d3, with just a few technical difficulties remaining, but adrenaline drove me forward!

39.fxe3 ♗d3 40.♕d5!?

40.♖g7† ♔h8 41.♖xc7 ♕e5 42.♖b7 ♖f1† 43.♔a2 ♗xc4† 44.b3 ♕xc3 45.♖b8† ♔h7 46.♕e4† ♔g7 47.♕g4† ♔h7 48.♕e4† with a "simple" perpetual.

40...♕xd5 41.cxd5 ♖f3 42.e4 ♖xh3 43.e5 ♖e3

Vladimir had little time left; I was better in this aspect.



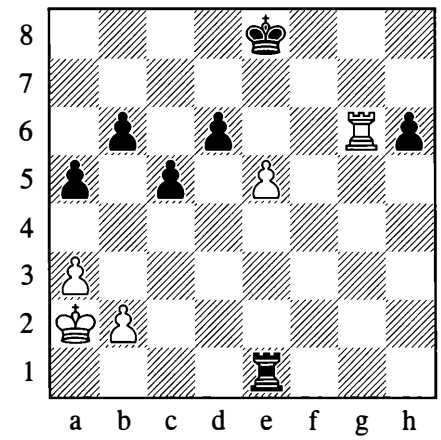
44.d6!

Correct. This endgame activity should have led to a draw.

44...cxd6 45.♘d5 ♖e1† 46.♔a2 ♗g6

46...♖xe5?? 47.♘f6† ♔h8 48.♖g8#

47.♘f6† ♔g7 48.♘e8† ♔f8 49.♖xg6 ♔xe8



50.♖xd6?

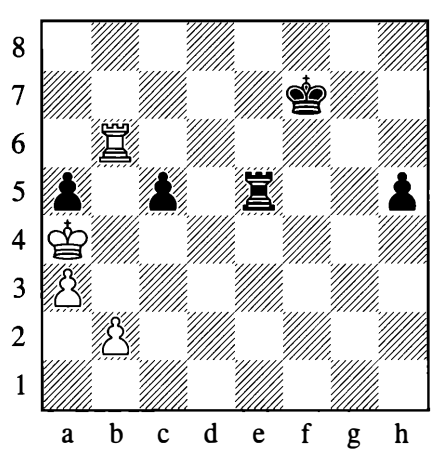
It seems that in time trouble Vladimir lost his usually cool state of mind.

The other capture 50.♖xh6 ♖d1 (50...dxe5 51.♖xb6 e4 52.♔b3 should be drawish as well) 51.exd6 ♔d7 etc. would lead to a simple draw in the "three versus two" rook ending.

50...h5 51.♖xb6 ♖xe5

The rook ending is on the board! All the black pawns are separated, but the extra h-pawn is a dangerous passer.

52.♔b3 ♔f7 53.♔a4

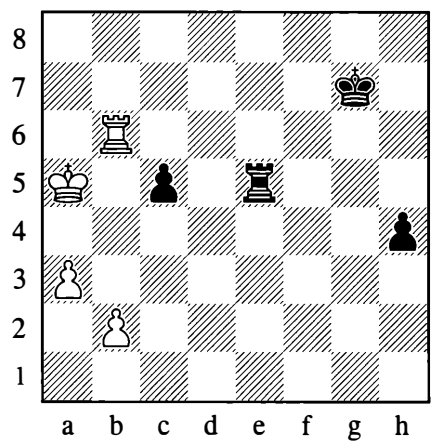


53...♔g7?

With just three pawns left, one should take more care not to give up any of them easily.

Correct was 53...c4 54.♖c6 ♖g5! (I did not see this move) and Black is close to winning with the white king stuck on a4 – 55.♖c7† (certainly not 55.♖xc4? ♖g4) 55...♔e6 56.♖c8 ♔d7 57.♖h8 ♖c5 and so on.

54.♔xa5 h4



55.♖b7†?!

From now on the lack of time started to tell more and more.

55.♖d6 h3 56.♖d2 ♖h5 57.♖h2 ♔f6 58.a4=

55...♔g6 56.♖b6†

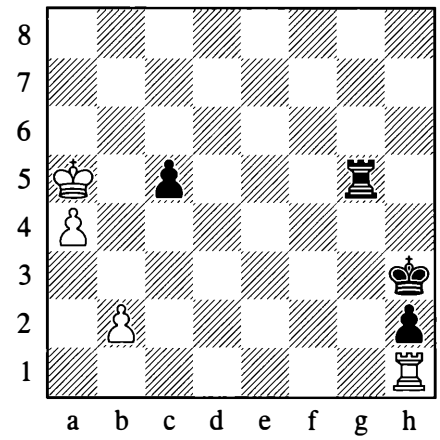
Time trouble... Why push the black king toward supporting his passed pawn? 56.♖d7 would draw easily.

56...♔g5 57.♖b8 ♔g4 58.a4 h3 59.♖g8†?

This should have been the losing mistake.

59.♖d8 h2 60.♖d1 ♔f3 61.♔b5 was still enough for a draw.

59...♖g5 60.♖d8 h2 61.♖d1 ♔h3 62.♖h1



62...♔g2?

I needed to cool down here (as I remember, I still had more than one minute), take a deep breath and play 62...♖g1 63.♖xh2† ♔xh2 64.♔b5 ♖c1 65.a5 ♔g3 66.a6 c4, when White should resign.

63.♖xh2† ♔xh2 64.♔b5

Now the rook is placed slightly differently (not stopping the a-pawn from behind) and it means that the win has just slipped away.

64...♔g3 65.a5 c4† 66.♔xc4 ♖xa5 67.b4 ♖h5 68.b5 ♔f4 69.b6 ♔e5 70.b7 ♖h8 71.♔c5 ♔e6 72.♔c6

Very soon only two kings will remain on the board, so we agreed a draw. An interesting game with lots of ups and downs. Unfortunately, the last mistake was mine.

½–½

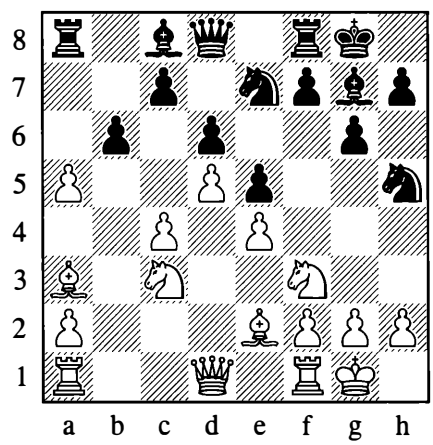


Vladimir Kramnik – Ilya Smirin

Belgrade 1999

I would not have included this game if it had not been one of my four games against Kramnik. But it is, so here it is. Besides, his play in the opening phase of the game may serve as an example of neutralizing Black's counterplay in the Bayonet.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 a5 10.♗a3 b6 11.bxa5 ♘h5



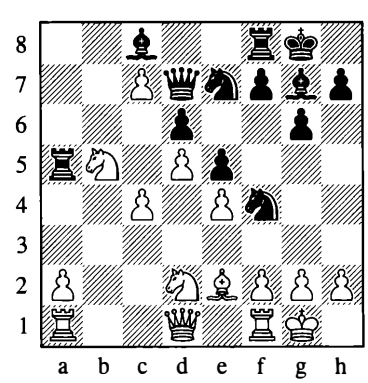
12.♖e1

A serious blow to this line was delivered by the following recent game:

12.♘d2 ♘f4 13.axb6!

The novelty that possibly kills this particular variation.

13...♖xa3 14.♘b5 ♖a5 15.bxc7 ♕d7



16.a4!

An impressive piece sacrifice; White has three pawns for it, one of which – on c7 – is incredibly annoying for Black.

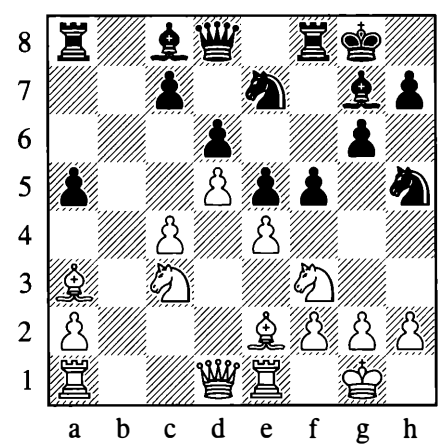
16...♗a6 17.♘b3 ♗xb5 18.cxb5 ♕xc7 19.♘xa5 ♕xa5 20.g3 ♘xe2† 21.♕xe2

White won very convincingly in Pelletier – Nakamura, Skopje 2015. Yannick Pelletier revealed after the game that he had been waiting for several years to implement this idea.

12...f5 13.♗b4!

This looks stronger than 13.♘d2, as was played by Bareev against me in the game on page 205.

13...bxa5 14.♗a3



14...♘f6

After this game I switched to 14...♘f4, but also without much success – see the annotations to the game Bareev – Smirin page 205.

15.♗d3!

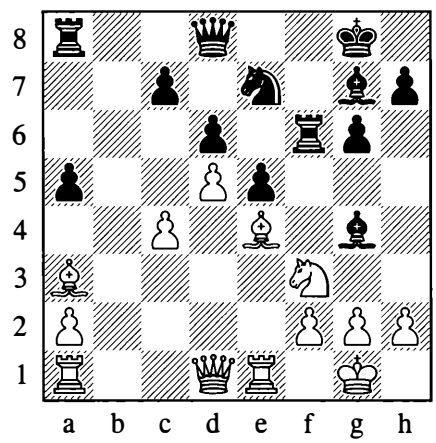
A strong positional move. Now the pawn e4 is firmly protected in a convenient way and Black has problems finding counterplay.

I was hoping for 15.♘d2 ♗h6!, with a position to my taste.

15...fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♗g4

I could not find anything better; nor do I see anything now.

17.♘xf6† ♖xf6 18.♗e4



This move defines White's strategic advantage – he has more space, he has more active pieces and he has a plan, connected with the usual c4-c5. Black, alas, has none of that. He may just hope that his position will be solid enough to survive – surely not the dream of those who, like me, are loyal servants of the King's Indian.

18...♘f5 19.♕d3 ♖f7 20.♖ab1 ♗h6 21.c5

According to plan.

21...♕f6

A slight hint of counterplay against the f2-pawn.

22.cxd6 cxd6 23.♖b6 ♖d8?!

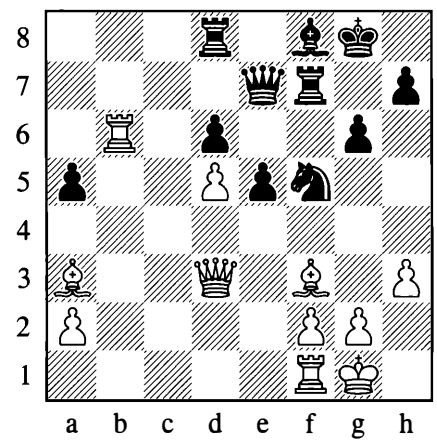
Too passive. Also, the a-pawn is now left on its own.

Correct was 23...♗xf3 24.♕xf3 ♕d8 25.♖eb1 ♘d4 26.♕d3 ♗f8 and Black may count on a successful defence – at least he has a central knight on d4 and the d-pawn is protected for now.

24.♖f1!

This strong prophylactic move takes away even a hint of counterplay and Black is doomed to passive defence.

24...♕e7 25.h3 ♗xf3 26.♗xf3 ♗f8

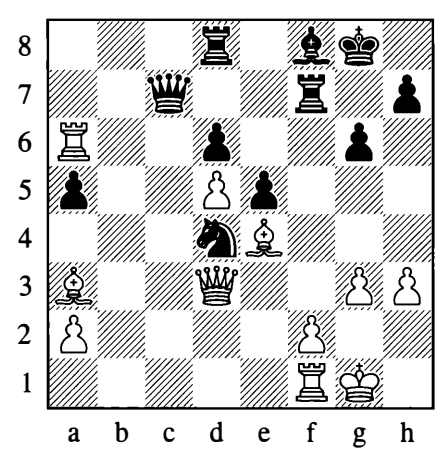


27.g3

Not the most accurate move.

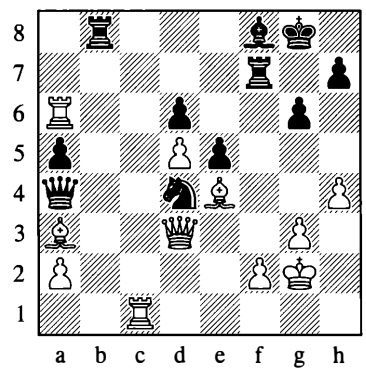
After the precise 27.♗e4! (this move is useful in any case, and White can carry out the plan with g3, h4 and so on later) 27...♕e8 28.♖fb1 ♕a4 29.♖c6 Black is left with all his problems while White controls the important b- and c-files.

27...♘d4 28.♗e4 ♕c7 29.♖a6

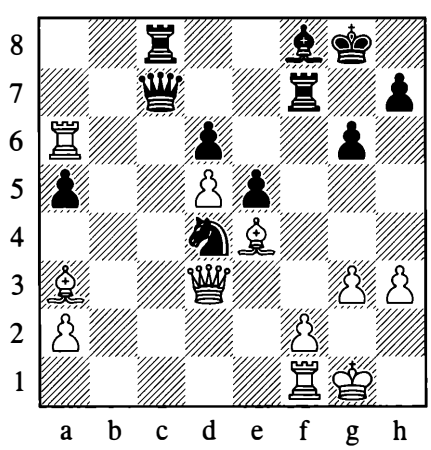


29...♖c8?!

Much stronger was 29...♖b8 30.♖c1 ♕d7 (attacking the pawn on h3!) 31.♔g2 ♕a4 and suddenly Black seems to be more or less OK. For example: 32.h4 (32.♖c4 ♕b5)



32...♘b3! 33.♗xg6 hxg6 34.♕xg6† ♗g7 35.♖b6 ♖bf8 36.♖xb3 ♖f6! 37.♕c2 ♖xf2† 38.♕xf2 ♖xf2† 39.♔xf2 ♕d4† 40.♔g2 ♕xd5† and in the resulting position the queen is not inferior to the pair of rooks.



30.♔g2

My hopes were connected with 30.♖c1 ♕xc1† 31.♗xc1 ♖xc1† 32.♔g2 ♖c2. Vladimir avoids that, of course.

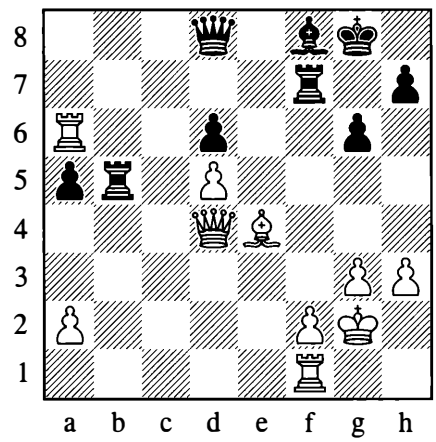
30...♕d8 31.♗b2

White has regained control – there is not much that Black can do.

31...♖c5

31...♗g7 32.♗c3 ♖c5 33.♖b1 ♕f8 34.♖b2±.

32.♗xd4 exd4 33.♕xd4 ♖b5



34.♖c6?

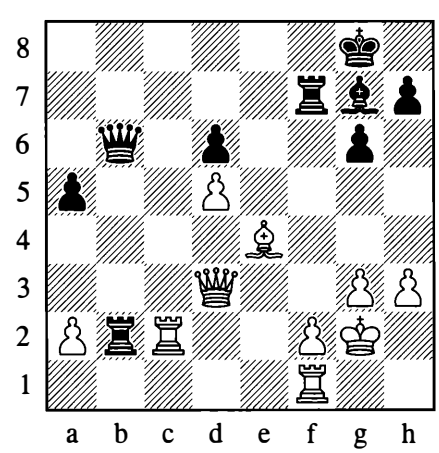
But this is the wrong move.

White should have exchanged his passive rook on f1: 34.♖b1! ♗g7 35.♕d2 and White should win – the a-pawn will fall or Black's king will be under attack.

34...♖b4 35.♖c4

35.♕d3 ♖b2 would lead to a similar position to that which arose in the game.

35...♗g7 36.♕d3 ♖b2 37.♖c2 ♕b6 38.♖c8† ♗f8 39.♖c2 ♗g7



Black's heavy pieces are quite active – White has serious problems converting his extra pawn.

40.♗f3?!

I believe that the immediate 40.h4 would offer better winning chances. 40...♗d4? would be bad due to 41.♗xg6!.

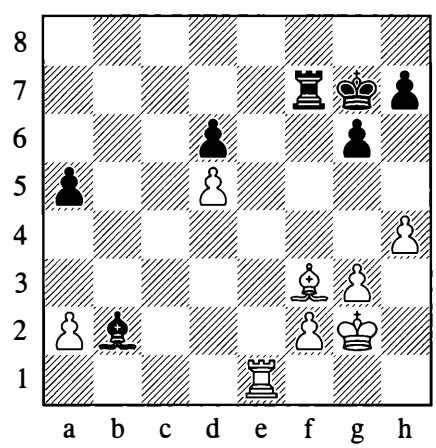
40...♗d4 41.h4 ♔g7 42.♖d2

42.h5!? deserved attention, with the idea 42...gxh5?! 43.♖h1 ♗xf2? 44.♖xh5 h6 45.♕d2.

42...♖xd2 43.♕xd2 ♕b4 44.♕e2 ♕b2

Black is chasing the white queen and Kramnik has nothing better than to exchange it.

45.♕xb2 ♗xb2 46.♖e1

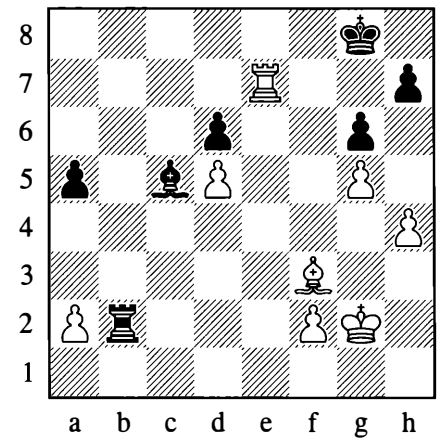


It seems that in this ending with bishops of opposite colours Black may hold – White can hardly avoid the exchange of rooks due to the pressure on f2.

46...♗d4 47.♖e4 ♗c5 48.g4 ♖b7 49.g5

49.♖e2 ♗d4 50.♗e4 ♖b2 does not change anything.

49...♖b2 50.♖e7† ♔g8



51.♖e2

Vladimir spent some time considering the attempt 51.♗g4!? ♖xf2† 52.♔g3 ♖xa2 53.♗e6† ♔f8 54.♖f7† ♔e8 55.♖xh7. In the end he decided against it. After 55...♖a1 (55...a4? 56.h5 gxh5 57.g6 ♗d4 58.g7 ♗e5† 59.♔f3 ♗xg7 60.♖xg7 a3 61.♖a7) 56.♗f7† ♔f8 57.♗xg6 a4 58.h5 ♖g1† 59.♔f4 a3 60.♖h8† ♔g7 61.♖a8 ♖f1† 62.♔e4 ♖e1† the game would be drawn anyway.

51...♖xe2 52.♗xe2 ♔g7

The draw is evident. The final moves were made by White out of inertia.

53.♗b5 h6 54.♗e8 hxg5 55.hxg5 ♗b4 56.♔f3 ♗d2 57.♔g4 ♗e1 58.f4 ♗d2 59.♔f3 ♗c1 60.♔e4 ♗d2 61.♔f3 ♗c1 62.♔g4 ♗d2 63.f5 gxf5† 64.♔xf5 ♗b4 65.♔e6 ♗c5 66.♔e7 ♗b4 67.♔d8 ♗c5 68.♔c7 ♗b4 69.♔b6 ♔f8 70.♗h5 ♔g7 71.♔b5 ♔f8 72.♗d1 ♔g7 73.♗c2 ♔f8 74.♔a4 ♔g7 75.a3 ♗c5

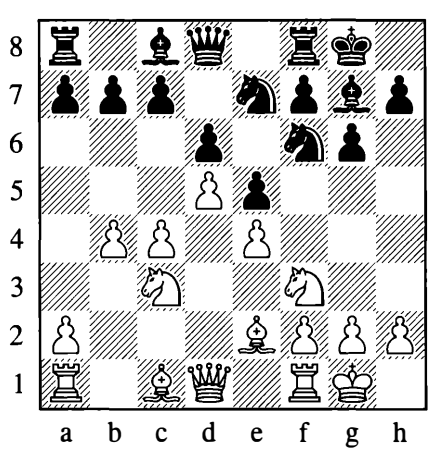
½–½

Vladimir Kramnik – Ilya Smirin

Russia – ROW (rapid) 2002

This game is memorable for me for two reasons: it is my only win over a reigning World Champion (albeit in a rapid game) and the event in which it was played was a very special one. The match Russia – Rest of the World was the third such competition in the history of chess. In the first two, in 1970 and 1984, the Soviet Union team (which no longer existed in 2002 and was replaced by Russia) had beaten the World team by 1 and 2 point margins respectively. But this time the ROW team won with a 52–48 score (the rapid time control format allowed so many games to be played). Each team consisted of 10 players plus a few reserves. It was an honour for me to be a part of the World team. The Russian team line-up was exceptionally strong: 3Ks (Karpov, Kasparov, Kramnik) plus such players as Morozevich, Grischuk and Svidler. Our team was also not so bad – Anand, Ivanchuk, Gelfand, Shirov etc. I think it was the strongest team versus team chess competition at least since 1970 – the year of the original "Match of the Century". The Kremlin Palace of Congresses in Moscow was the venue for the match.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4



The so-called Bayonet Attack – the most straightforward way of developing a queenside initiative.

9...♘h5

Another popular line is 9...a5, trying to play on "White's" part of the board.

10.♖e1

This is Vladimir Kramnik's pet line. His results in it are very impressive – for example, I will mention below his win against Garry Kasparov in his prime years.

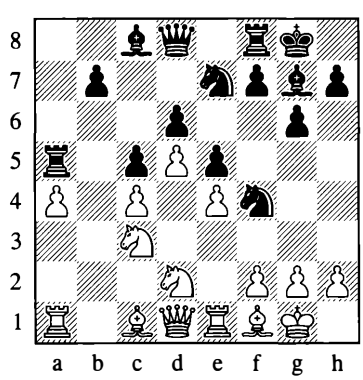
10...a5

The second most popular move in this position. The first is 10...f5, after which play usually goes 11.♘g5 ♘f6 12.♗f3 (or 12.f3).

11.bxa5 f5

This is a rather risky move. I played it mainly for practical reasons, hoping that my opponent would not be too familiar with this line.

The main continuation is 11...♖xa5 12.♘d2 ♘f4 13.♗f1 c5 14.a4 (including Kramnik's win over Kasparov after a transposition of moves – see page 41).



I think the resulting semi-closed position slightly favours White, mainly because the knight on f4 is somewhat misplaced. Often it goes back to h5 and f6, losing time in the process.

12.♘d2

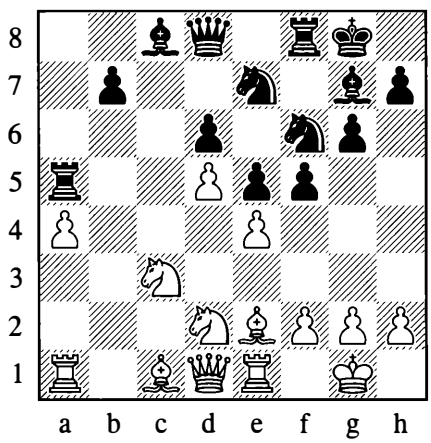
12.c5!?

12...♘f6 13.c5

In 2001 Radjabov played 13.f3 ♖xa5 14.♘b3 ♖a8 15.c5 against me. You will find this game on page 242.

13...♖xa5 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.a4!?

15.♘c4 ♖a6



This move serves two purposes: White gains space on the left wing (the b5-square is now under firm control) and at the same time prepares to develop the bishop on a3. From there it will exert strong pressure on the most valuable pawn in Black's camp – the d-pawn.

15...♗h6

By activating this bishop, Black sets a small trap.

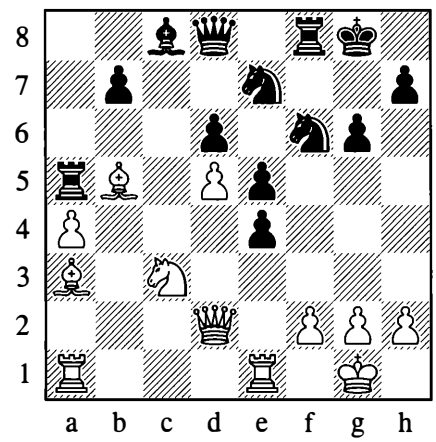
16.♗a3

The trap was 16.♘c4 ♗xc1 17.♘xa5? ♗b2. Of course, I did not expect Vladimir to fall into it.

16...♗xd2

Almost forced, but not at all a bad move. It's true that Black parts with the dark-squared bishop, to which I sometimes feel emotionally attached. As compensation he gains the central pawn on e4.

17.♕xd2 fxe4 18.♗b5



18...♗f5

This move was asking to be played – Black develops the bishop while protecting his extra pawn – but now I consider it to be inaccurate.

Better was the prophylactic 18...♖a8 and in the event of 19.♘xe4 ♘xe4 20.♖xe4 ♗d7 21.♗f1 ♗xa4 22.♗xd6 ♕xd6 23.♖axa4 ♖xa4 24.♖xa4 ♔g7 the draw should not be far away.

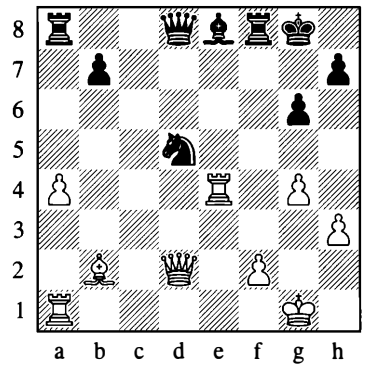
19.h3 ♖a8 20.g4

White gets the pawn back, but his king's shelter becomes slightly weaker.

Instead 20.♖ac1 deserved serious attention. White just improves his position, gradually applying pressure on the opponent's position. Indeed, it's not so easy to offer a good plan for Black, whereas White has plenty of ways to proceed: ♗b4, ♕a2-a3 etc.

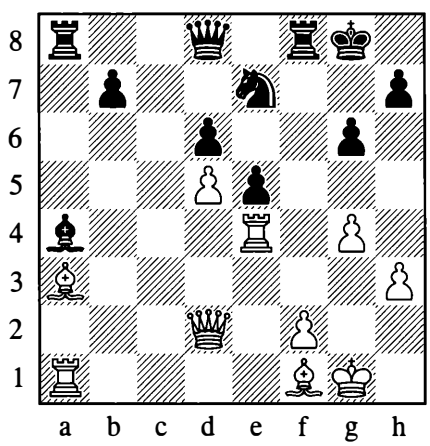
20...♗c8 21.♘xe4 ♘xe4 22.♖xe4 ♗d7! 23.♗f1

Interesting complications could arise after: 23.♗xd6!? ♗xb5 24.♗xe5 ♗e8 25.♗b2 (25.♕h6 ♖f7) 25...♘xd5



26.♖e6!! ♘f4!? (26...♖xa4? 27.♖xa4 ♗xa4 28.♕d4; 26...♗c6 27.♕d4 ♘f6=) 27.♕c3 ♘xh3† 28.♔h2 ♖xf2† 29.♔xh3 ♖xb2 30.♕xb2 ♕d3† 31.♔h2, with an approximately equal position.

23...♗xa4



24.♗b4?

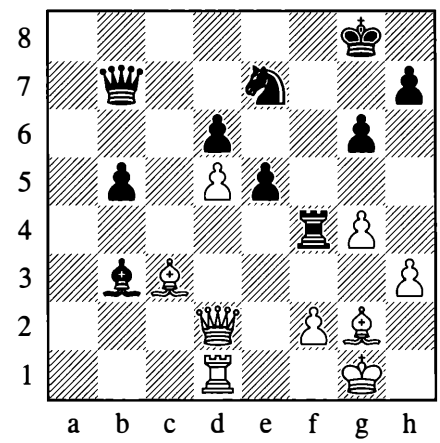
Vladimir goes for too much. Perhaps he just missed Black's answer.

After the obvious 24.♗xd6 ♕xd6 25.♖axa4 ♖xa4 26.♖xa4 ♘c6 27.♗g2 ♘d4 both sides have trumps and the position is roughly balanced.

24...b5!

I definitely prefer Black's chances – the extra pawn is secured and White has no obvious compensation. Only the two bishops give him some hope.

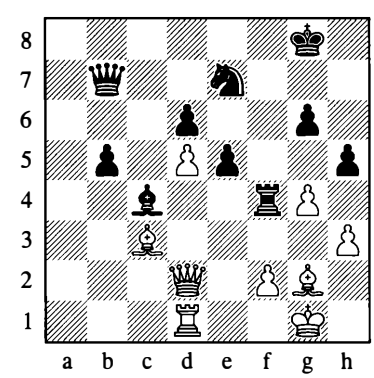
25.♖a3 ♖c8 26.♖c3 ♕b6 27.♗g2 ♖xc3 28.♗xc3 ♗b3 29.♖e1 ♗c4 30.♗a5 ♕b7 31.♖d1 ♖f4 32.♗c3 ♗b3



33.♗xe5?

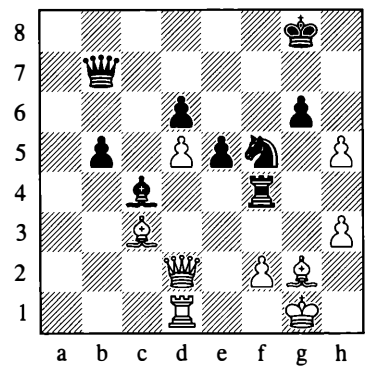
Until this moment Kramnik has defended very well but, being short of time, he commits a fatal blunder.

After the correct 33.♖b1 ♗c4 (the point is that after 33...♗xd5 34.♗f1! the b-pawn falls) 34.♖d1 it would not be easy at all for Black to increase his advantage. The best way seems to be: 34...h5!?



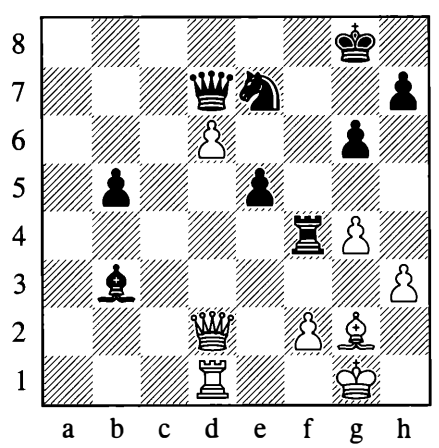
35.gxh5 (in case of 35.♗xe5!? dxe5 36.d6 ♕d7 37.dxe7 [also interesting is 37.♕e1!? hxg4

38.♕xe5 ♖f7 39.dxe7 ♕xd1† 40.♔h2 ♖xe7 41.♕xe7 ♕d4 42.hxg4 ♕xf2] 37...♖d4 38.♕e1 ♖xd1 39.e8=♕† ♕xe8 40.♕xd1 hxg4 41.♕xg4 and in both variations White's chances for a draw and Black's for a win are about equal)



35...♘f5! (I like this idea) 36.hxg6 ♘h4 Now White in turn has an extra pawn, but he will experience great difficulties trying to defend against his opponent's very active pieces.

33...dxe5 34.d6 ♕d7!



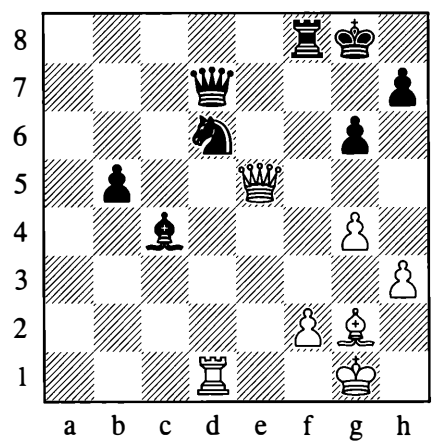
35.♖c1

Honestly, I was amazed by this move during the game. It took me some time to realize that after 35.dxe7 Black could play 35...♖d4 with an immediate win. Would I have found this move over the board? I hope so...

35...♗c4 36.♕b4

36.dxe7 ♕xd2 37.e8=♕† ♖f8

36...♘c8 37.♕c5 ♘xd6 38.♕xe5 ♖f8 39.♖d1



39...♘f7

Not an outstanding game, but it's a great feeling to beat the champion of the world!

0–1

Chapter 3

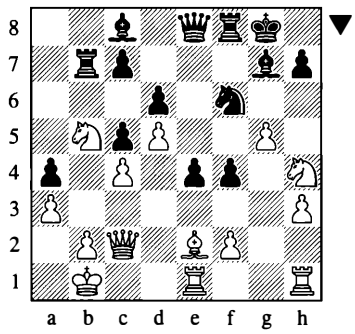
The King's Indian Bishop



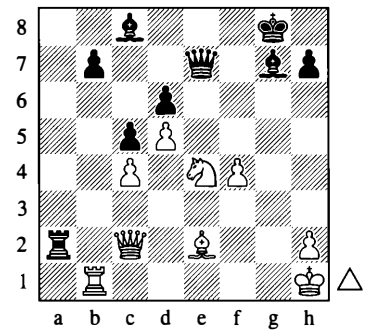
Black against a young Alexander Khalifman

Test yourself against the book

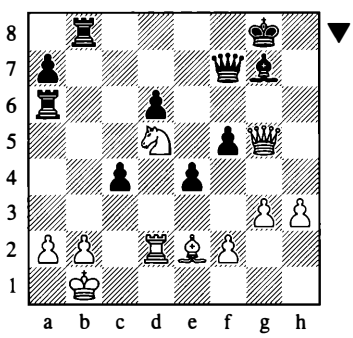
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



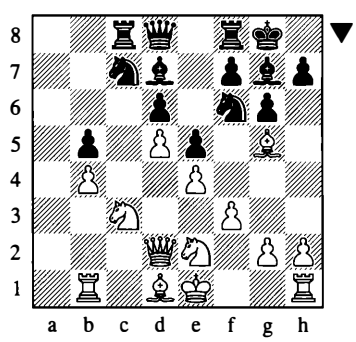
The knight is under attack. Where to go? (see page 80)



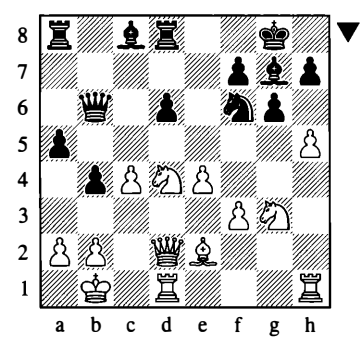
I believed this was winning for Black. What did I miss? (see page 90)



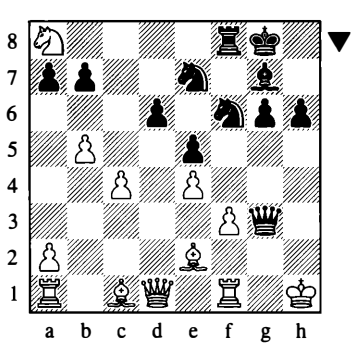
Can you find Ding Liren's brilliant combination? (see page 71)



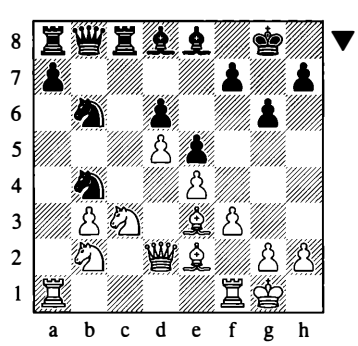
A small positional exercise. How to reorganize the pieces? (see page 83)



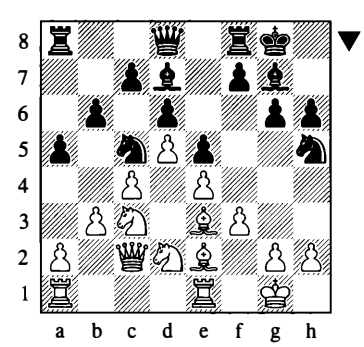
Playing the KID is about getting the most out of the pieces. How? (see page 97)



Here is a nice novelty. Don't tell anyone! (see page 73)



It is hard to improve the pieces. Maybe it is time to do something? (see page 84)



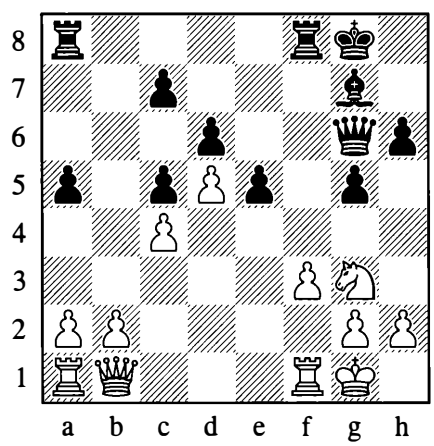
This is the stage for building up. What is next? (see page 103)

In this chapter we shall look at the potential power of the King's Indian bishop on g7 (with some occasional assistance from its comrade-in-arms, the bishop on c8).

In the standard King's Indian formation the bishop looks buried on g7, but this is just a superficial appearance. Black will frequently give up a pawn or even a piece to bring the bishop into the game. The most thematic idea is ...e5-e4, opening up the long diagonal. This idea can seem very basic, but it is still important at the highest level.

Wang Yue – Teimour Radjabov

Wijk aan Zee 2009



25...♕xb1 26.♖axb1 e4!

A typical sacrifice in the King's Indian. The bishop is so strong on the long diagonal that its release is easily worth the investment of a pawn.

27.♘xe4 ♗d4† 28.♔h1 a4

Wang Yue no doubt felt under great pressure at this point. The combination of the strong bishop and the open b-file is very unpleasant. Still, his next move is dubious.

29.h4?!

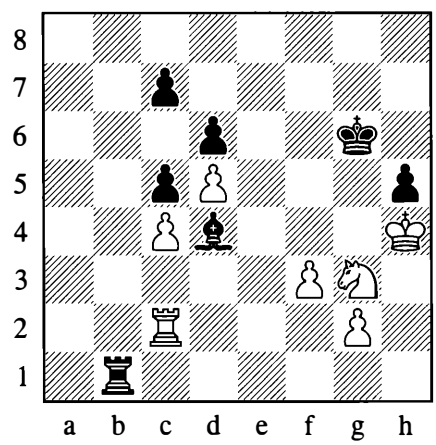
Black has plenty of compensation for his pawn, but the computer is able to find a way to hold: 29.♖fc1 ♖fb8 30.♖c2 ♖b4 and only now 31.h4! gxh4 32.♔h2, when after 32...♖ab8 33.b3 axb3 34.axb3 ♖xb3 35.♖xb3 ♖xb3 36.♔h3 White has enough counterplay.

29...gxh4 30.♔h2 ♖fb8 31.b3 axb3 32.axb3 ♖a2 33.♖fd1 ♔f7 34.♖d2 ♖a3 35.♔h3?!

White continues to be under strong pressure. The best defence here seems to be 35.♖d3 ♔g6 36.♔h3 ♖a2 37.♖d2, although Black continues to be a bit better after 37...♖xd2 38.♘xd2 ♔f5!.

35...♖axb3 36.♖xb3 ♖xb3 37.♔xh4 ♔g6 38.♖c2 ♖b1 39.♘g3 h5

White is under pressure and on the last move before the time control he errs.



40.f4? ♗f6† 41.♔h3 ♖b3! 42.♔h2 h4 43.♘e2 ♔f5

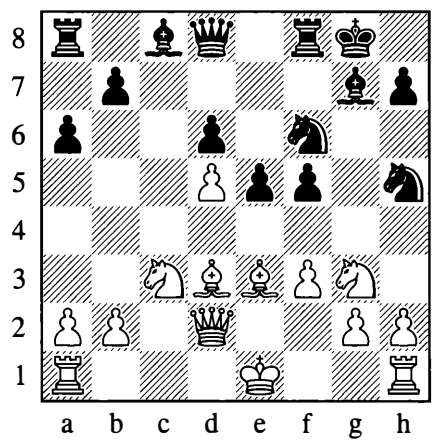
The black king invades the white position and wins the game.

44.♖a2 ♖b4 45.♖a8 ♖xc4 46.♖e8 ♖b4 47.♖e6 ♖b3 48.g4† hxg3† 49.♘xg3† ♔g4 50.♘e2 ♖b2 51.♔g2 ♗e5 52.♔f2 ♗xf4 53.♖e7 ♔f5 54.♖f7† ♔e5 55.♔f3 ♗d2 56.♖xc7 ♔xd5 57.♘g3 ♖b3† 58.♔g2 ♗f4 59.♘e2 ♗e5 60.♔f2 ♔e4 61.♖h7 ♖f3† 62.♔e1 d5 63.♔d2 d4 64.♖h4† ♔d5 0–1

I do not want to give the wrong impression. You should not give up the pawn without pondering the downsides. It does lose a pawn after all. So, without being downbeat about it, I want to show a classic game that on the surface looks very impressive, but is a bit less so when we get into the details.

Florin Gheorghiu – Garry Kasparov

Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988



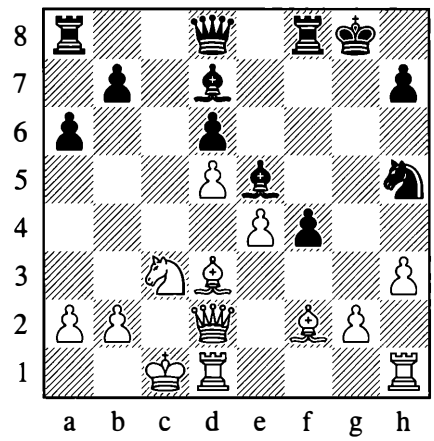
The opening is over and the middlegame has just begun. Kasparov shows that he wants a fighting game by sacrificing a pawn in order to bring his bishop to life.

15...e4!?

If you read the newspaper columns from 30 years ago, this decision was universally commended. It looks so thematic and the game was so impressive. But a deeper look suggests that the decision was rather risky as well.

15...f4! 16.♘xh5 fxe3 17.♘xf6† ♗xf6 18.♕xe3 ♗h4† 19.g3 ♗g5 was another way to bring the bishop to life and was also strong.

16.♘xh5 ♘xh5 17.fxe4 f4 18.♗f2 ♗g4 19.h3 ♗d7 20.0–0–0 ♗e5

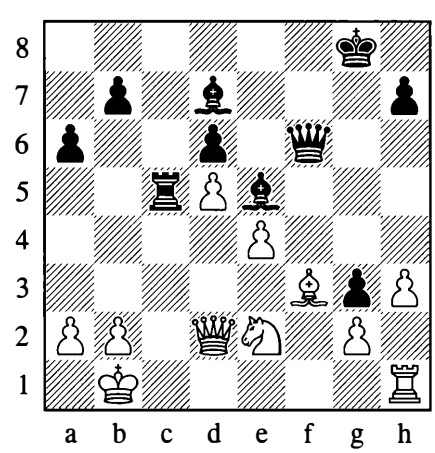


Black has long-term compensation for the pawn. White might be able to fight for an advantage if he played ♘e2-d4-e6 at this point. But with timid play, he allowed the World Champion to show the full potential of his position.

21.♔b1 ♕f6 22.♗e2?! ♘g3 23.♗xg3

This leaves Black in control of the dark squares for the rest of the game and could easily be criticized, but luckily things are never that simplistic in chess; White also neutralizes the knight and reduces Black's attacking options. And he does have an extra pawn to play with...

23...fxg3 24.♗f3 ♖ac8 25.♘e2 ♕g6 26.♖c1 ♖xc1† 27.♕xc1 ♖c8 28.♕e3 ♕f6 29.♕d2 ♖c5



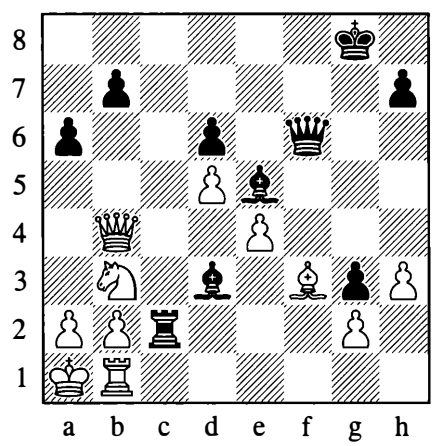
Black has great compensation for the pawn. The right choice here is 30.♖c1 with chances to defend, as the absence of knights would make it harder for Black to find a way through.

Instead Gheorghiu plays too timidly again, trying to reroute the knight to d3. This is swiftly punished by a powerful bishop invasion.

30.♘c1? ♗f4! 31.♕b4 ♗b5 32.♘b3

Black wins slowly after 32.a4 ♗xc1! 33.axb5 ♖xb5 and White has to choose between giving up the queen and playing 34.e5 ♖xb4 35.exf6 ♗xb2, both leading to hopeless endgames.

32...♗d3† 33.♔a1 ♖c2 34.♖b1 ♗e5



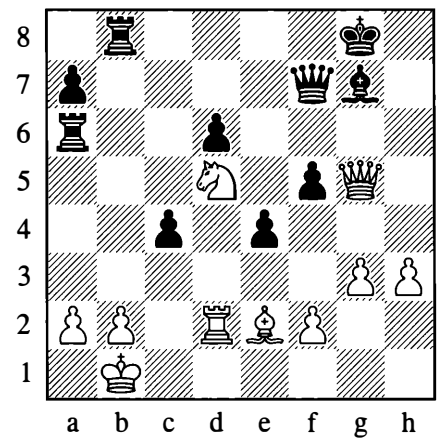
A great picture: the bishops are all-powerful.

35.♘c1 ♗xb2† 36.♕xb2 ♕xb2†
0–1

In the King's Indian we frequently get into situations where both players are carrying out their plans, and arriving first is the way to reap the rewards. If you hesitate, as poor Gheorghiu did above, you will end up second best. In the following game we see a reversal of the fortunes of Radjabov versus a Chinese opponent. Once again the power of the g7-bishop is the dominant feature of the position.

Teimour Radjabov – Ding Liren

Wijk aan Zee 2015

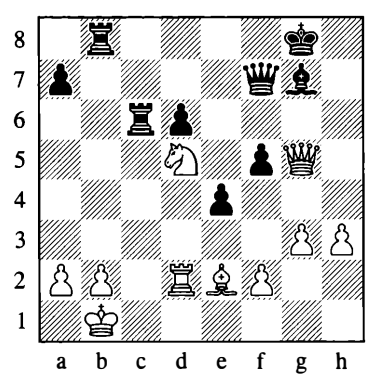


33...c3!!

Ding Liren gives up a pawn in order to win a tempo and open the c-line. All other moves would allow White to get coordinated or advance with his own threats.

34.♗c4

The idea behind Ding Liren's combination is revealed in the following line: 34.♘xc3 ♖c6! 35.♘d5



35...♕xd5!! 36.♖xd5 ♖xb2† with mate in a few moves.

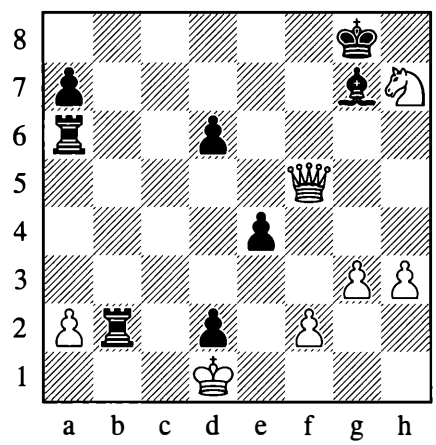
34...cxd2 35.♘f6†

35.♕xd2 ♖xb2† and Black wins.

35...♔f8 36.♘h7† ♔e8 37.♗xf7† ♔xf7 38.♕xf5† ♔g8 39.♔c2

This loses quickly, but Black is also winning in the following long line: 39.♕e6† ♔xh7 40.♕xe4† ♔h8 41.♕h4† ♔g8 42.♕c4† ♔f8 43.♕f4† ♔e7 44.♕e4† ♗e5 45.♕h4† ♔d7 46.♕h7† ♔e6 47.♕g6† ♗f6 48.♕e4† ♔d7 49.♕h7† ♔e8 50.♕g8† ♔e7 51.♕h7† ♔f8 and White is running out of checks.

39...♖xb2† 40.♔d1

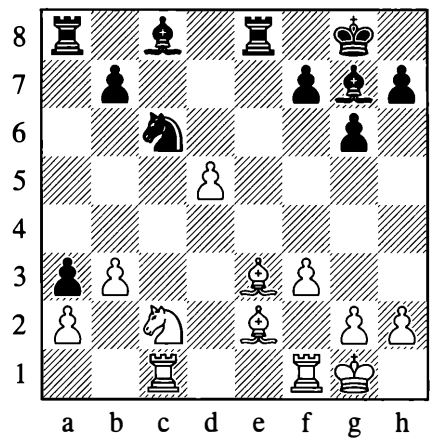


40...♖b1†! 41.♔xd2 ♖xa2† 42.♔e3 ♖e1† 43.♔f4 ♖xf2†
0–1

One of the ways to make more of the King's Indian bishop is to neutralize the opponent's dark-squared bishop. Kasparov managed to do so above by taunting his opponent with a cheeky knight. But Gheorghiu had no need to take it, and maybe should have considered not doing so. A more forceful way to ensure dark-squared domination is to give up the exchange. This is obviously a double-edged decision; a rook is more powerful than a bishop in general. But there are situations where the bishop, because of how the rest of the pieces are placed or interact, is very powerful and offers at least sufficient compensation. The following game is such a case.

Jan Gustafsson – Vladimir Kramnik

Dortmund 2012

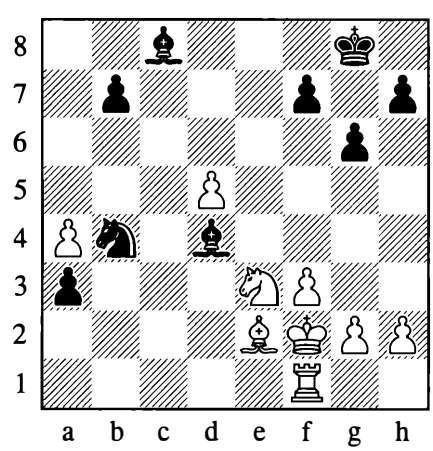


18...♖xe3! 19.♘xe3 ♘b4 20.♖c4?

Gustafsson has been under a lot of pressure since the very beginning of the game and here he fails to find the accurate defence.

After 20.♔f2! ♘xa2 (20...♗d4? 21.♖c4) 21.♖c7! ♘c3 22.d6 ♘xe2 23.♔xe2 ♗e6 24.♖xb7 a2 25.d7 ♖d8 26.♖a7 ♗xb3 27.♖a3 ♗e6 28.♖d1 ♔f8 29.♖a7 the game would end in a draw.

20...♘xa2 21.♖a4 ♖xa4 22.bxa4 ♗d4 23.♔f2 ♘b4!



24.♖c1 a2 25.♖xc8† ♔g7 26.♖c1 ♘xd5 27.♖d1 ♘xe3 28.♖xd4 a1=♕ 29.♔xe3 ♕g1† 0–1

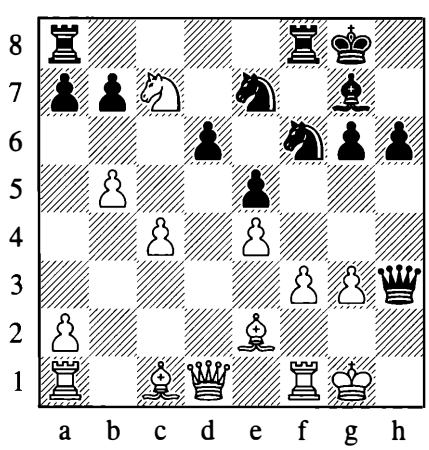
To me the most important thing about this game is that Kramnik played the KID and won. It shows that he probably does not think that the King's Indian is a bad opening.

Before we move on to the more complex case of my own games, I want to show a modern masterpiece, in which the King's Indian bishop is freed from its cage by violent means and comes out to dominate the board.

Loek van Wely – Daniel Stellwagen

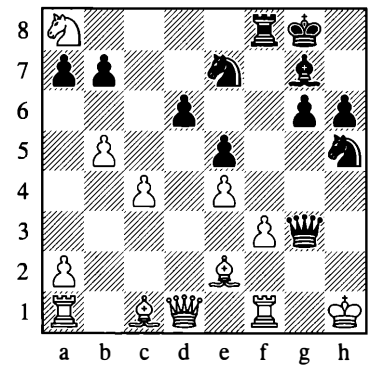
Amsterdam 2009

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 ♘h5 10.g3 f5 11.♘g5 ♘f6 12.f3 f4 13.b5!? fxg3 14.hxg3 h6 15.♘e6 ♗xe6 16.dxe6 ♕c8 17.♘d5 ♕xe6 18.♘xc7 ♕h3



19.♖f2!

19.♘xa8 ♕xg3† has resulted in five draws in my database. This is not really an opening book, but I still find it worth mentioning 20.♔h1 ♘h5!!N.



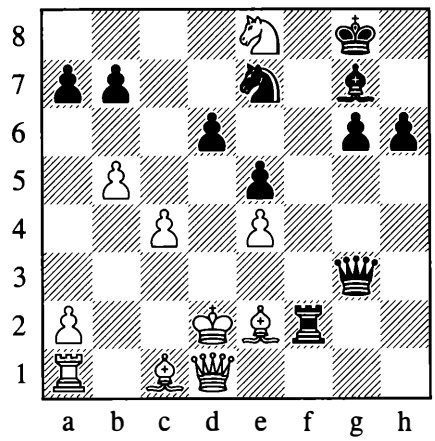
I find it surprising that people who would happily sacrifice a rook did not find this move. Maybe the main problem is realizing that the knight is heading for g3 not f4? 21.♕c2 ♕h3† 22.♔g1 ♘g3 gives Black a devastating attack. The engine's main line goes like this: 23.♗b2 ♖f4 24.♖fe1 ♗f6 25.♗d1 ♕h1† 26.♔f2 ♘xe4† 27.♖xe4 ♘f5 28.♖xf4 exf4, when Black is completely winning after both 29.♕xf5 ♕h4†! and 29.♔e2 ♗xb2.

19...♘xe4! 20.fxe4

20.♖h2 ♕d7 21.fxe4!N (21.♘xa8 ♘xg3∞ was played in Van Wely – Degraeve, Mondariz 2000. The common wisdom was that Black was doing very well.) 21...♕xc7 22.♗e3 would give a strategically interesting position. The engine thinks that White has the advantage, while I would guess there are chances for both sides.

20...♖xf2 21.♔xf2 ♖f8† 22.♔e3 ♕xg3† 23.♔d2 ♖f2 24.♘e8

24.♕e1 has also been played a few times. The engine suggests 24...h5!?N as the way forward. For example: 25.♔d1 h4 26.c5 d5 27.♘xd5 ♘xd5 28.exd5 h3 29.c6 ♕h4 30.c7 ♕a4† 31.♔d2 ♕a5† 32.♔d1 with a draw. Luckily chess is so rich and humans so creative that no one has followed this computer line to the end yet.



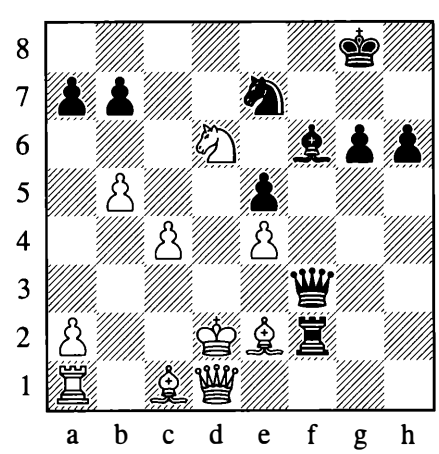
So far the players have repeated the moves from Van Wely – Radjabov, Dresden (ol) 2008. In that game Black played 24...h5 and was worse. Stellwagen had a big improvement ready.

24...♕f3!!

The improvement. Objectively the position is equal; in the real world, where engines cannot assist you, White's task is very difficult.

25.♘xd6 ♗f6!

This is the critical moment of the game. Stellwagen has played his improvement and Van Wely now had time to think about what to do. But defending is harder than attacking, and he did not manage to find the very difficult sequence of moves needed to achieve a draw.

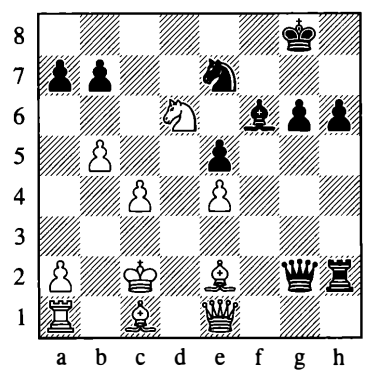


26.c5?

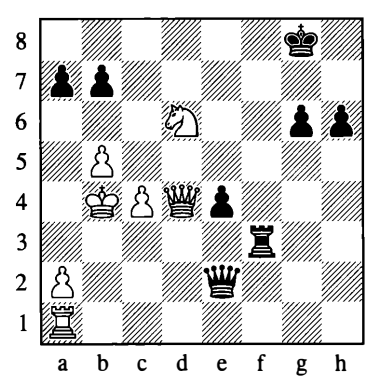
This loses to a brilliant line-opening tactic that brings out the King's Indian bishop.

26.♔e1?! is also unsatisfactory. After 26...♕g3! 27.♔d2 ♗g5† 28.♔c2 ♗xc1 29.♖xc1 ♕e3 we have a complex endgame where Black's extra pawn gives him all the chances.

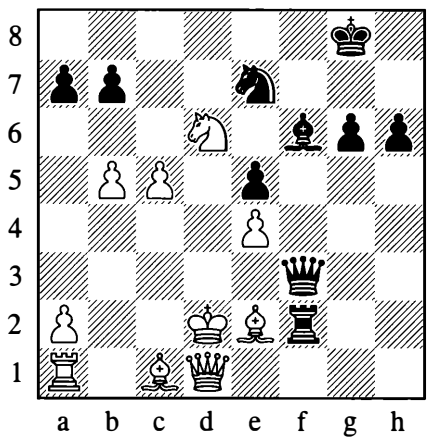
The drawing line is rather difficult: 26.♕e1! ♖h2! 27.♔d1! (27.c5? fails to 27...♘c8!!∓ with the idea 28.♘xc8 ♗h4! 29.♔d1 ♕xe4 and White's position collapses) 27...♕g2 28.♔c2!



28...♘c8! (Black can also force a draw immediately with 28...♕f3 29.♔d1 ♕g2) 29.♘xc8! ♕xe4† 30.♔b3 ♖xe2 31.♕c3 From here on, White has some equally good alternatives, but also a lot of inferior ones. 31...♖f2 32.♘d6 ♕e2 33.♗e3! e4 34.♗d4 ♗xd4 35.♕xd4 ♖f3† 36.♔b4



36...♖d3! 37.♕e5 ♕d2† 38.♔c5 ♕e3† 39.♔b4 ♕d2† with a draw.

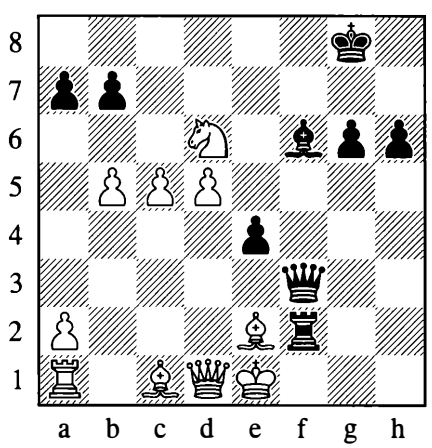


26...♘d5!! 27.exd5 e4!

The bishop has finally come to life, with devastating effect.

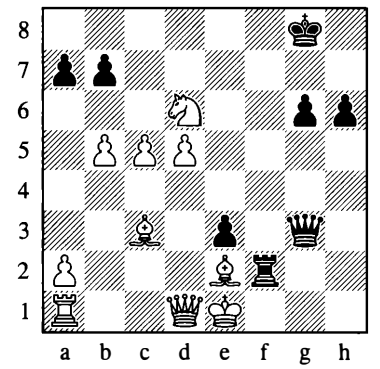
28.♔e1

The only move if you are a human.



28...♕g2?

Stellwagen in turn misses a great sequence: 28...♗c3† 29.♗d2 ♕g3!! 30.♗xc3 e3!

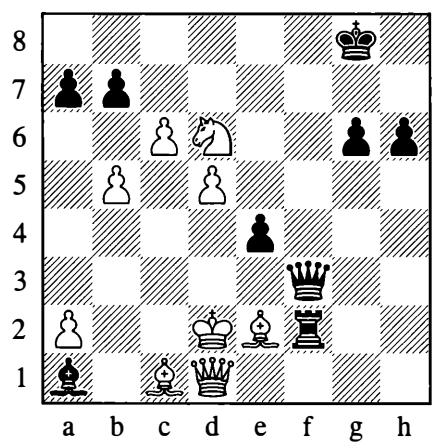


With mate in two moves, usually starting with ...♖f1†.

29.♔d2 ♗xa1 30.c6?

30.♘c4!∓ would have kept the battle going.

30...♕f3!



The dust clears and Black wins.

31.♘xe4 ♕xe4 32.c7 ♕f4† 33.♔e1 ♗c3† 34.♗d2 ♕g3 35.♗xc3 ♖f3† 36.♔d2 ♖xc3 37.d6 ♕e3† 38.♔e1 ♖c1 39.♕xc1 ♕xc1† 40.♔f2 ♕c5† 41.♔f3 ♔f7 42.♗f1 ♕f5† 43.♔g3 ♕e6! 44.♔f2 h5 45.a4 ♔f6 46.♗g2 ♕c8 47.♔g3 g5

0–1

My Games

In the first game I managed to make the most of my bishop by opening the centre in classical style.

Giorgi Kacheishvili – Ilya Smirin

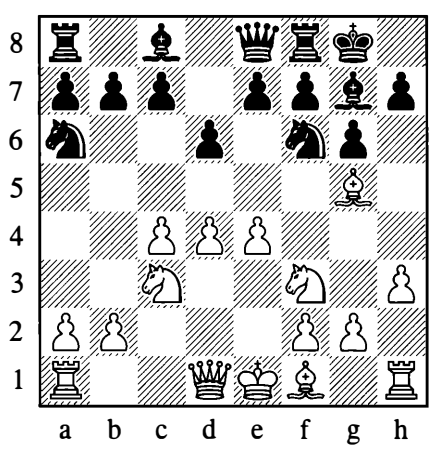
Minneapolis 2005

This game was played in the last round of the Minneapolis Open tournament. Both players needed a win to guarantee a decent place.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.h3 ♘a6

Lately I have usually played 6...e5 7.d5 a5 here. Which line to choose is, as so often, a matter of taste. It seems that my taste has changed a little.

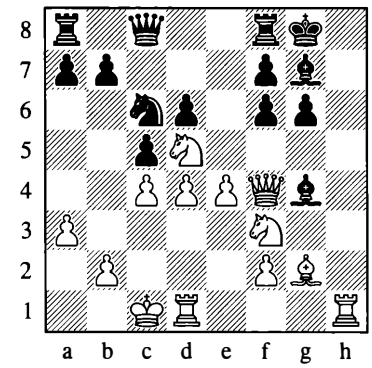
7.♗g5 ♕e8



8.♗e2!?

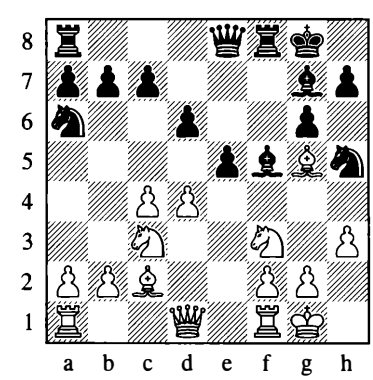
An apparently modest but quite logical move. Why not? After all, the pieces have not come into direct confrontation yet.

The alternative 8.g4, playing "wide" and trying to grab the maximum amount of space, is much more popular. I managed to beat the Polish Grandmaster Macieja in the following interesting encounter: 8...c5 9.♕d2 ♘b4 10.♗g2 h5 11.♗xf6 exf6 12.0–0–0 hxg4 13.hxg4 ♗xg4 14.a3 ♘c6 15.♕f4 ♕c8 16.♘d5



16...♕e6 17.♘c7 ♕xc4† 18.♔b1 f5 19.♗f1 ♕a4 20.♗b5 ♕a5 21.♘d5 ♕xb5 22.♕xd6 f6 23.♕e6† ♖f7 24.♘h4 ♕e2 25.♖de1 fxe4 26.♕d6 ♖d8 27.♕h2 ♕d3† 28.♔a1 ♖xd5 29.♘xg6 ♖h5 0–1 Macieja – Smirin, Maalot-Tarshiha 2008.

But the most logical continuation here seems to be the natural developing move 8.♗d3. At least in the following game I faced problems: 8...e5 9.0–0 ♘h5 10.♗c2 f5 11.exf5 ♗xf5



12.♖c1 (after the correct 12.♗xf5 gxf5 13.♘d5 Black would remain worse – the knight on a6 is not a piece to be proud of, as the following sample variation shows: 13...♔h8 14.♖e1 e4 15.♘h4 ♕f7 16.♘e3 f4 17.♘ef5±) 12...♕f7 13.♗e4? ♗xe4 14.♘xe4 exd4 15.♘xd4 ♖ae8; (0–1, 36) Wendt – Smirin, Ohrid 2009.

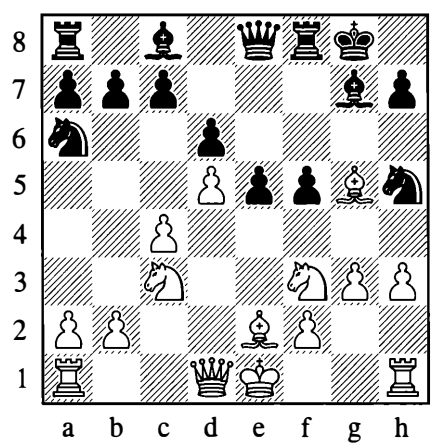
8...e5 9.d5 ♘h5 10.g3

It's essential to take the f4-square away from the knight on h5.

10...f5

Perhaps 10...f6 11.♗d2 f5, chasing the bishop from g5 to d2, deserved some attention here. It has been played in several games – here is one of them: 12.♘h4 ♘f6 13.exf5 gxf5 14.♕c2 e4 (14...♘b4 15.♕b3 a5 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♕c2 ♘c5 18.♗e3 would transpose to the game) 15.♗e3 ♘d7 16.♘g2! ♘e5 17.♘f4 ♘c5 18.0–0–0; (½–½, 35) Mchedlishvili – Avrukh, Beersheba 2005. The position is complicated, but White's piece setup looks somewhat "prettier".

11.exf5 gxf5



Black's position looks quite attractive due to the active pawn duo on e5 and f5. However, these pawns are also a cause for concern: the one on f5 may easily become a target. Moreover, the advance of either pawn may create vulnerable squares for the white knights: d4 and f4 in the case of ...e5-e4 and e4 in the case of ...f5-f4. In other words, there is no reason for Black to be too optimistic here.

12.♘h4 ♘f6 13.♕c2

Eyeing the pawn on f5.

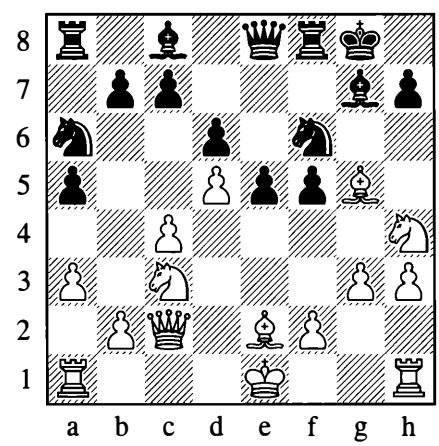
13...♘b4

Another logical (and perhaps better) option would be 13...c6!?, preparing to open the c-file in the event of long castling. After that the game might continue 14.g4!? (14.♘xf5 ♗xf5 15.♕xf5 ♘xd5 is unclear) 14...cxd5 15.cxd5 f4 with an interesting position, full of potential dynamics.

14.♕b3 a5

This is a useful manoeuvre to improve Black's position on the queenside.

15.a3 ♘a6 16.♕c2



16...♘c5

The most natural move.

After 16...a4 17.0–0–0 (17.♕xa4?! ♕xa4 18.♘xa4 ♘e4) 17...♘c5 18.♗e3 ♘b3† 19.♔b1 ♗d7 20.♘b5 ♕c8 (20...♖c8!?) 21.♖hg1 ♔h8 22.f3 White's chances should be preferred – it's very hard for Black to organize decent counterplay, and his position lacks flexibility; (1–0, 35) Mchedlishvili – Hillarp Persson, Gothenburg 2005.

17.♗e3!

Of course not 17.♘xf5? ♗xf5 18.♕xf5 ♘fe4–+.

17...b6

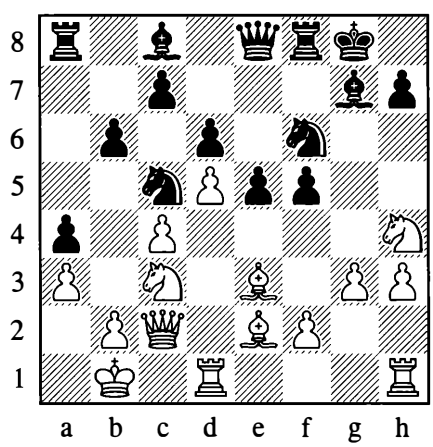
Black wants to recapture with the b-pawn in the case of a possible ♗xc5.

17...a4 18.♗xc5! dxc5 19.♘xf5 ♗xf5 20.♕xf5 ♘xd5 21.♕e4 ♘xc3 22.bxc3 would lead to a very unpleasant position for Black, especially since it was a must-win situation for both players.

The careless 17...♗d7 would allow my opponent to reveal the following strong idea: 18.g4! fxg4 19.hxg4 ♘xg4 20.♗xc5 dxc5 21.♗xg4 ♗xg4 22.f3 ♗d7 23.0–0–0, when White has good compensation for the pawn, and will develop an initiative along the g- and h-files, even though after 23...♖a6 the position is not yet so clear.

17...e4 or 17...♘ce4 were also possible, but I did not particularly like either move.

18.0–0–0 a4 19.♔b1



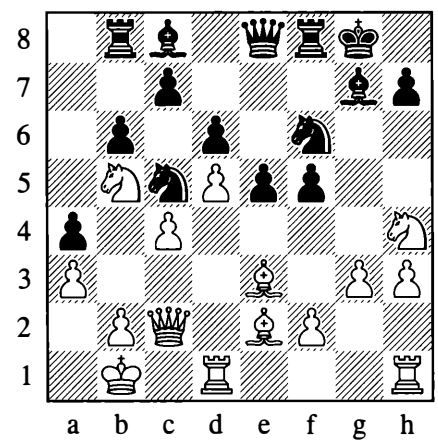
19...♖b8?!

This artificial move appears to be a serious inaccuracy.

The correct decision would be 19...♘b3, avoiding a possible capture on c5 and neutralizing to some extent White's idea to play g4, since Black can then answer ...f4. But to be honest, after 20.♖hg1 ♔h8 21.f3!?, with the same g4 idea, I would still prefer White here.

20.♘b5

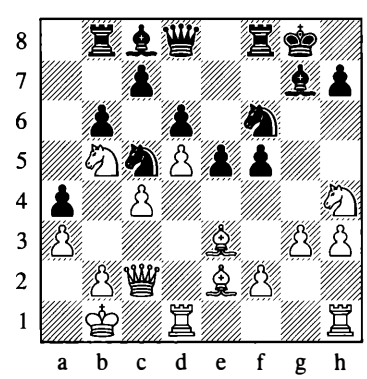
Giorgi correctly played this natural and strong move. The knight occupies an active position, at the same time "just in case" closing the b-file. It looks highly improbable that Black will develop a deadly attack along this file, but actually it happened later in the game! Of course, 20.♘b5 is not to be blamed for that...



20...♖b7?!

This looks a bit ugly and indeed it is! I did not want to allow:

20...♕d8



21.♘a7!?

After 21.g4 ♘xd5 the knight on h4 is hanging.

21.♘g2!?, preparing g4, deserves serious attention here; White's prospects look good. But I should probably not be too worried about the text move. After:

21...♗d7 22.♘c6

As often in the KID, Black's resources should not be underestimated: 22.♗xc5? bxc5 23.♘xf5 ♘e4! 24.♘c6 ♗xf5 25.♗d3 ♘c3† 26.♕xc3 e4 and Black completely takes over the initiative.

22...♗xc6 23.dxc6 ♘fe4 24.♗f3 ♕f6

Black's position would be acceptable – the white knight is rather misplaced on h4 under these circumstances.

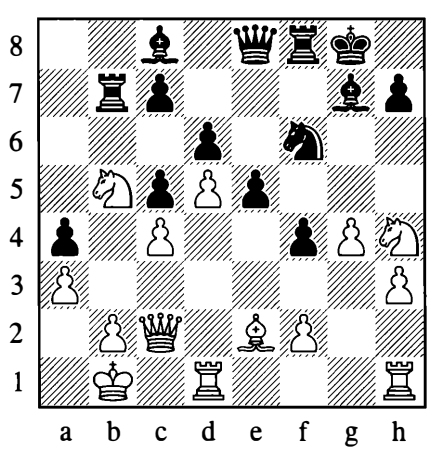
21.g4!

This is the key move of White's strategy.

21...f4

It would be unwise to open files leading to Black's king: 21...fxg4? 22.hxg4 ♘xg4 23.♗xg4 ♗xg4 24.♖dg1 ♕d7 25.f3 and Black loses material.

22.♗xc5 bxc5

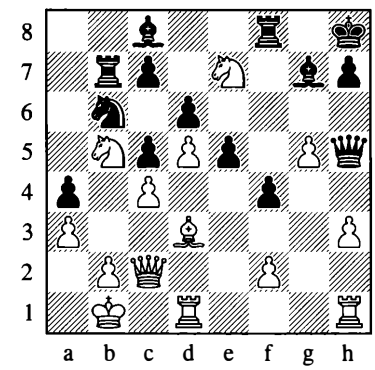


23.g5!

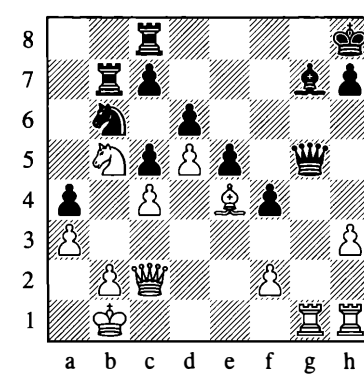
It seems that White rules, but I did not want to accept that.

23...e4!?

It's easy to understand why the natural but passive move 23...♘d7 didn't appeal to me. After 24.♗d3! (24.♘f5 ♘b6 25.♘xg7 ♔xg7 26.♗d3 ♕f7 does not look bad for Black) 24...♕h5 25.♘f5 ♘b6 26.♘e7† ♔h8



27.♗e4! (in the event of 27.♖hg1 e4! 28.♗xe4 ♘xc4! 29.♕xc4 ♕e8 things are not so clear – this line has some similarities with what actually happened in the game) 27...♕xg5 28.♘xc8 ♖xc8 29.♖dg1

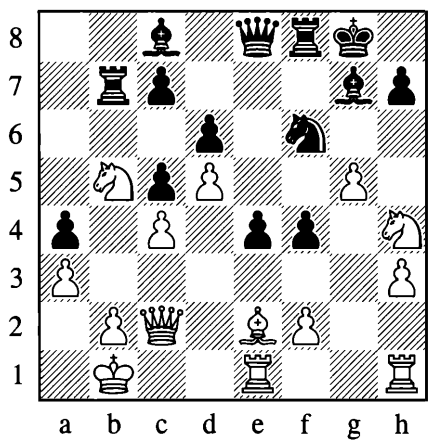


White would get a firm grip on the resulting position. I was going to obtain counterplay at any price (in this case – a piece).

24.♖de1?

Just one mistake – and the game is effectively gone! Giorgi should not have trusted me – principled and correct was: 24.gxf6 ♗xf6 25.♖dg1† ♔h8 26.♖g4! This move was

probably missed by both of us, but honestly I was not in the mood to search for it too much. 26...♕e7 (or 26...♕e5 27.f3!±) 27.♖xf4 ♗xh4 28.♖xf8† ♕xf8 29.♗g4! Black would remain with too many weaknesses to count seriously on a positive outcome.



24...♘xd5!!

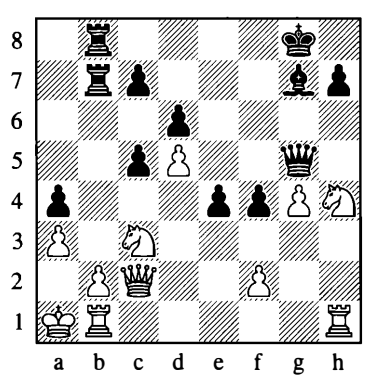
This sacrifice completely turns the tables. The bishop on g7 becomes a monster, and an assault begins along the b-file (see the comment after move 20).

25.cxd5 ♗d7 26.♘c3 ♕e5

Now the pawn on b2 looks really frightened.

27.♔a2

27.♔a1 loses after a pretty forced line: 27...♖fb8 28.♖b1 ♕xg5 29.♗g4 ♗xg4 30.hxg4

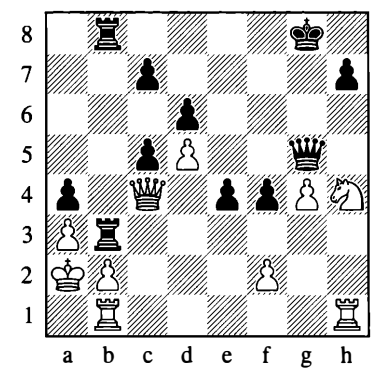


30...♖b3! 31.♔a2 ♗xc3 32.bxc3 ♖xb1 33.♖xb1 ♖xb1 34.♔xb1 ♕xh4 35.♕xe4 ♕xf2 And the black king will easily escape the checks.

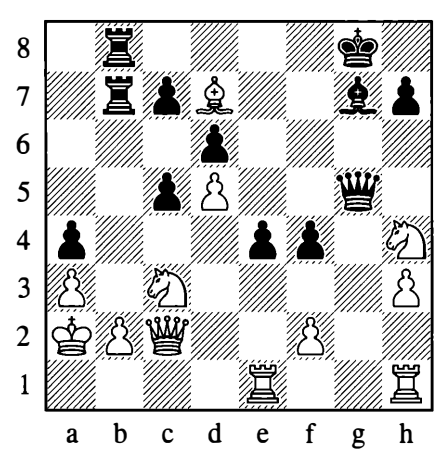
27...♕xg5 28.♗g4! ♖fb8 29.♗xd7?!

This allows an elegant finish.

More stubborn was: 29.♖b1 ♗xg4 30.hxg4 ♗xc3 31.♕xc3 ♖b3 (weaker is 31...♕xd5† 32.♔a1 ♖b3 33.♘f5! ♖xc3 34.♘e7† ♔g7 35.♘xd5) 32.♕c4



32...♕e5 33.♕c2 ♕xd5 34.♔a1 ♕e5 35.♔a2 ♕e6! 36.♔a1 c4 with an irresistible attack: 37.♘f5 c3 38.♘d4 cxb2† 39.♕xb2 ♖xb2 40.♘xe6 ♖xb1† 41.♖xb1 ♖xb1† 42.♔xb1 e3 43.fxe3 f3 Still, I would have needed to find all this over the board. Now Black's task is simpler.



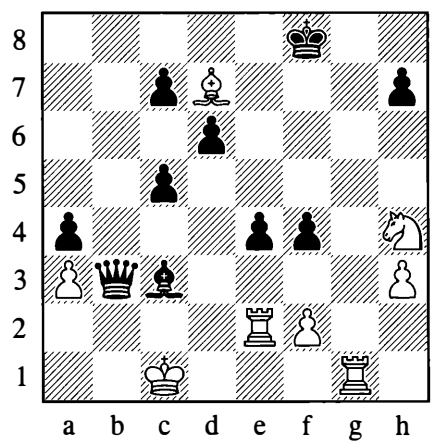
29...♖xb2†! 30.♕xb2 ♖xb2† 31.♔xb2 ♕xd5!

Despite having almost the whole set of pieces for the queen, White is absolutely helpless against Black's threats. White's numerous but uncoordinated forces are unable to help His Majesty.

32.♔c1

Or 32.♗xa4 ♕d2†.

32...♗xc3 33.♖hg1† ♔f8 34.♖e2 ♕b3



A picturesque position. The queen is ready to pick up her last prey – the pawn on a3 – with checkmate to follow soon. White resigned.

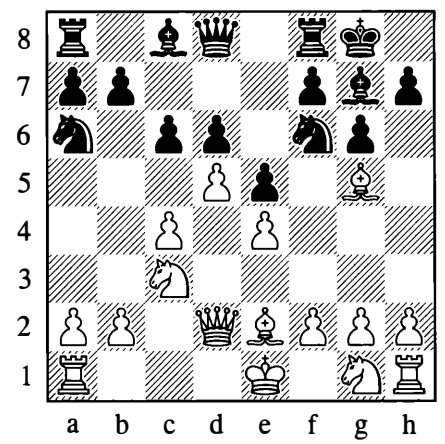
0–1

In the next game we shall see a thematic, though not very common, bishop manoeuvre, followed up with a great dynamic takeover of the dark squares.

Denis Khismatullin – Ilya Smirin

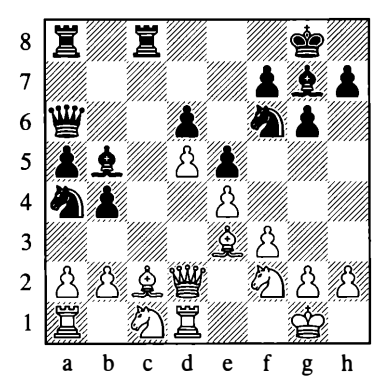
Poikovsky 2015

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♗g5 ♘a6 7.♕d2 e5 8.d5 c6



9.f3

Sometimes White tries to do without this move and plays 9.♗d3, protecting the e-pawn in advance and vacating e2 to develop the g1-knight. In a rapid game with Avrukh in 1996 I quickly obtained a good position by simple and energetic moves: 9...♘c5 10.♗c2 cxd5 11.cxd5 a5 12.♘ge2 ♗d7 13.0–0 b5 14.f3 b4 15.♘d1 ♕b6 16.♗e3 ♖fc8 17.♘f2 ♗b5 18.♖fd1 ♕a6 19.♘c1 ♘a4

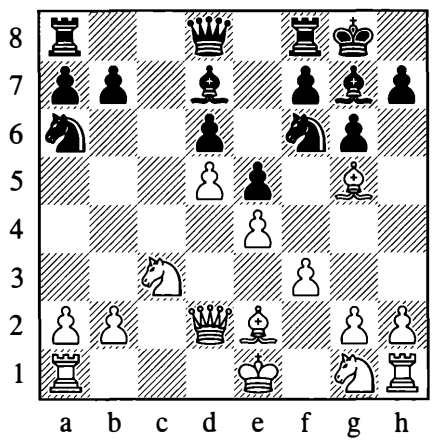


Black soon had a winning position – which nonetheless I lost; (1–0, 42) Avrukh – Smirin, Tel Aviv 1996.

9...cxd5

I played 9...♕a5 against Leitao –you will find this game elsewhere in the book (page 128), where I also look a bit on 9...cxd5. This time I went for the more common continuation.

10.cxd5 ♗d7

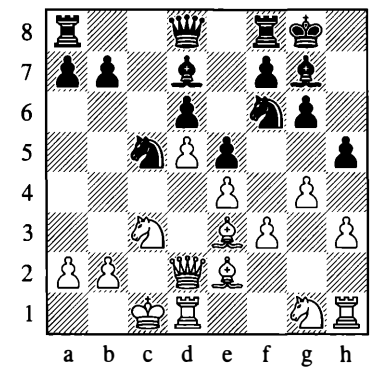


11.♗d1!?

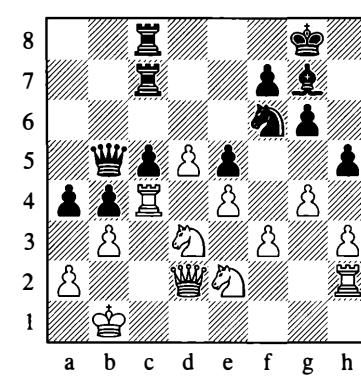
The standard manoeuvre in this type of position. The idea is to set up the pieces in a natural and harmonious way – the knight on g1 will be developed to e2 and the bishop usually goes to c2 shortly after that. This is more often carried out before the exchange of c-pawns. This small difference allows Black to gain some activity on the queenside and to dispute White's usual supremacy there.

11.♗d3?!, with the same idea, is worse because of 11...♘c5 12.♗c2 a5 13.♘ge2 (13.a4 ♕b6) 13...b5 and Black is fine, as he was in the game Avrukh – Smirin mentioned above (actually after 14.0–0 the position from that game would arise).

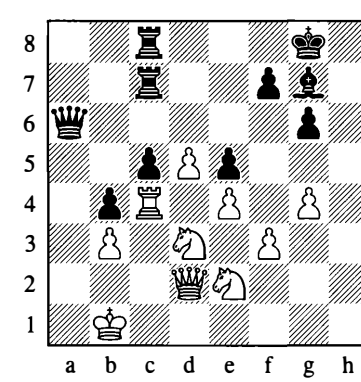
White may choose another plan starting with the popular 11.g4 – to grab space on the kingside. The king usually hides on the queenside after castling long. In my opinion the following game demonstrates the disadvantages of this idea: 11...h6 12.♗e3 (12.♗xh6? ♘xe4 13.♘xe4 ♕h4† is a well-known motif) 12...h5 13.h3 What about the knight on g1? 13...♘c5 14.0–0–0



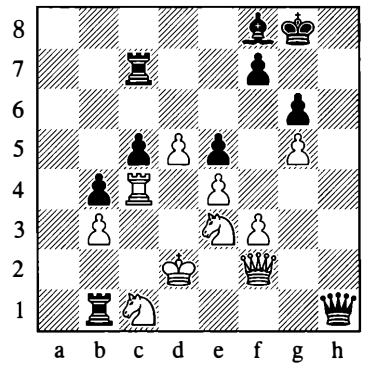
14...♕b8!? 15.♔b1 ♖c8 16.♖h2 b5 17.♖c1 a5 18.♗d3 ♖a7 19.♘ge2 ♖ac7 20.♘d1 a4 21.♘f2 b4 22.♗xc5 dxc5 23.♗c4 ♗b5 24.♘d3 ♗xc4 25.♖xc4 ♕b5 26.b3



26...♘e8! 27.♖h1 ♘d6 28.♖hc1 hxg4 29.hxg4 axb3 30.axb3 ♘xc4 31.♖xc4 ♕a6



32.♘ec1 ♕f6 33.♕e3 ♕h4 34.g5 ♕h3 35.♘f2 ♕f1 36.♘g4 ♖a8 37.♕f2 ♕h1 38.♔c2 ♖a1 39.♔d2 ♖b1 40.♘e3 ♗f8



41.♕g3 ♖a7 42.♕xe5 ♕xf3 43.d6 ♕f2† 44.♔d3 ♖b2 45.♘c2 ♖d7 0–1 Alterman – Xu, Cap d'Agde 1994.

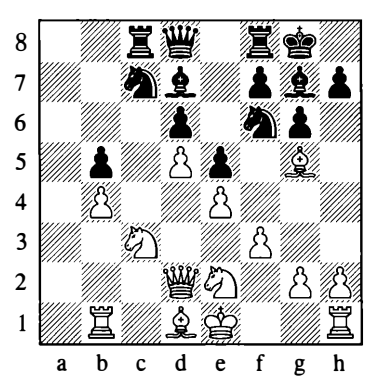
11...b5

Certainly not 11...♘c5? 12.b4.

12.a3 b4

During the game I thought this move was almost mandatory.

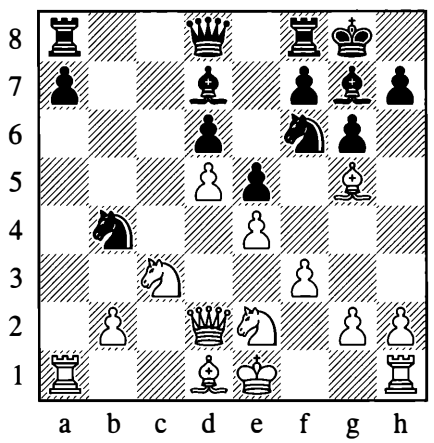
Now I believe that the following is a worthy alternative: 12...♘c7 13.♘ge2 (if 13.b4 a5 14.♖b1 axb4 15.axb4 ♖c8 16.♘ge2



16...♘a8! This knight is going to c4. 17.0–0 ♘b6 Black is OK.) 13...a5 As played in the game Ubilava – Grigoriants, Linares 2003.

13.axb4 ♘xb4 14.♘ge2

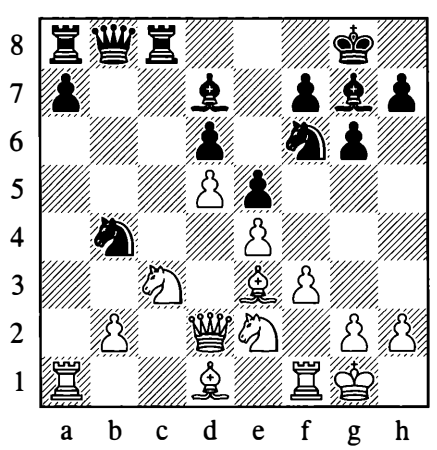
The main battlefield is the queenside. Black's position is a bit cramped, so it's important for him to place his pieces well to match the opponent's activity. After some thought, I found a good way to set up my forces.



14...♕b8

Everyone onto the queenside!

15.0–0 ♖c8 16.♗e3



16...♗e8!

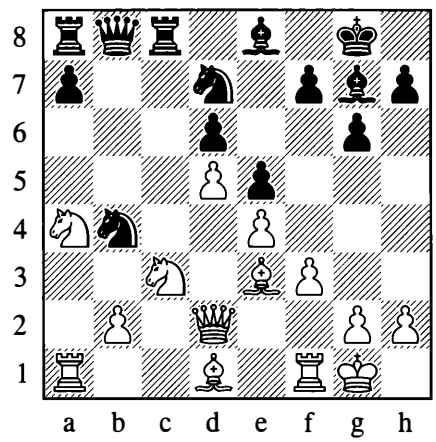
A very important move. The bishop frees d7 for the knight, and at the same time the pawn on f7 will be defended. Why might it need protection? Because White will start kingside

activity by means of f3-f4 and a white rook will operate on the f-file.

17.♘a4

White is doing some regrouping as well.

17...♘d7 18.♘ec3



18...♗f6! 19.♗e2 ♗d8

Almost all the black pieces are on the 8th rank, but they function and interact well enough – an interesting positional observation. Seemingly Denis was too optimistic here, but it was easy to overestimate the meaning of White's space advantage during the game.

20.b3 ♘b6

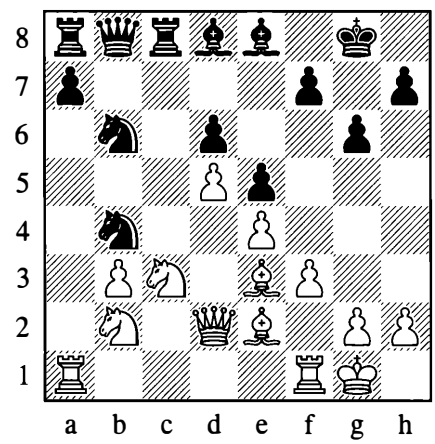
It looks as if Black is just going to exchange a pair of pieces – a usual thing to do in a somewhat cramped position. Khismatullin naturally wants to avoid this, but falls into the trap.

21.♘b2?

This manoeuvre was prepared by the previous move. It's interesting that Houdini initially approves this very logical continuation – the knight is on its way to c4 to exert pressure on the queenside.

21.f4!? ♘xa4 22.bxa4 ♗b6 23.♖ac1 exf4 24.♖xf4 ♗xe3† 25.♕xe3 ♕c7 should be OK for Black.

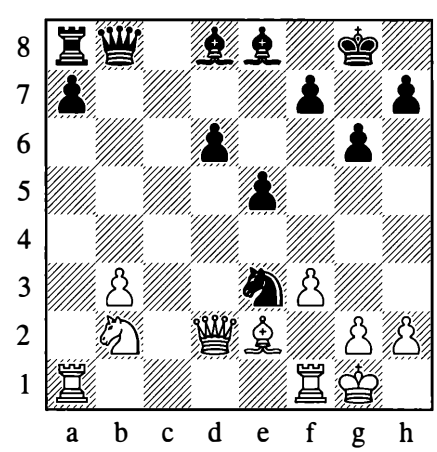
Something like 21.♖fc1 ♘xa4 22.bxa4 ♗b6 could have been played. The position would be roughly balanced after that – Black's pieces are well placed and the opponent's space advantage is not significant.



21...♖xc3!

A simple but nice tactical blow. Suddenly the potential energy of Black's pieces is released. It's interesting that if the white king were on h1 he would have nothing to worry about, and might claim a positional advantage. But in that case he would lack the time for the b2-b3 and ♘b2 setup. The tragedy of a single tempo?

22.♕xc3 ♘6xd5 23.exd5 ♘xd5 24.♕d2 ♘xe3

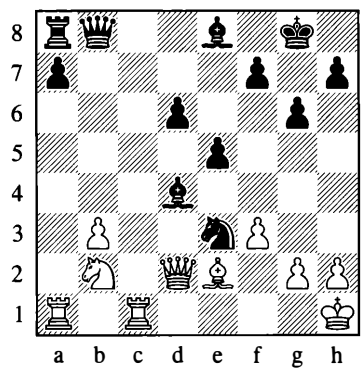


25.♖fe1?!

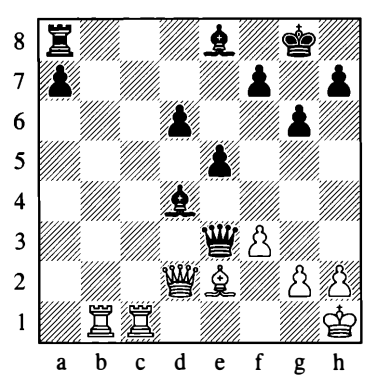
A generous move – who cares about the little pawn on b3? Still, it was worth selling for a higher price.

25.♖fc1 ♕xb3?! 26.♘c4 (not 26.♖c3? ♕b4) 26...♘xc4 27.♗xc4 ♕b6† 28.♔h1 and White's activity does not give the opponent real hopes of converting the material advantage.

Better is 25...♗b6 26.♔h1 ♗d4, striving for activity and centralization.

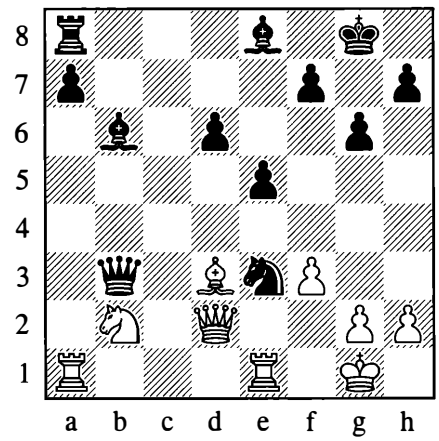


After 27.♖ab1 Black may take the pawn under better circumstances. (27.♖a3 ♘f5 28.b4 ♕d8 would leave Black with both material and positional superiority) 27...♕xb3 (also strong enough is 27...♕d8 28.♘c4 ♘f5 29.♗d3 d5 30.♗xf5 dxc4 31.♗e4 c3) 28.♘d1 (or 28.♘c4 ♘xc4 29.♗xc4 ♕e3 30.♕xe3 ♗xe3) 28...♕a3 29.♘xe3 ♕xe3



And the bishop plus three pawns are too many for the rook, even though White retains fighting chances.

25...♕xb3 26.♗d3 ♗b6



Black's advantage is now overwhelming.

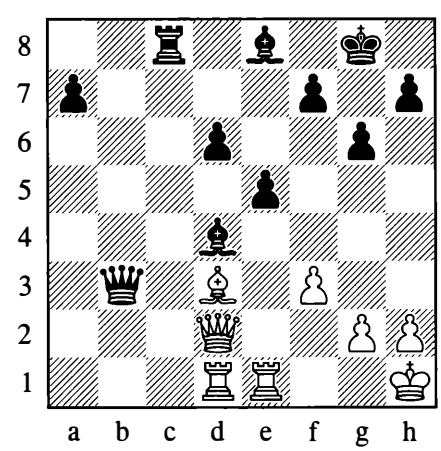
27.♔h1 ♖c8 28.♘d1!?

The most resilient. The strong knight on e3 should be exchanged or at least disturbed.

28...♘xd1

28...♖c2!? 29.♗xc2 ♘xc2 30.♘c3 ♘xe1 deserved attention as well, but I decided in favour of the simple exchange of knights.

29.♖axd1 ♗d4



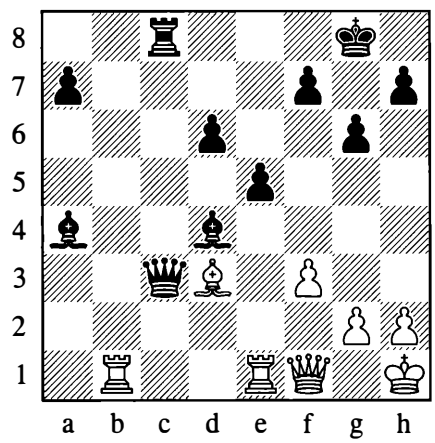
30.♕e2?!

30.♖b1 was demanded and would indeed have been the relatively best decision.

30...♗a4

30...a5 31.♖b1 ♕e6 was not bad either.

31.♖b1 ♕c3 32.♕f1

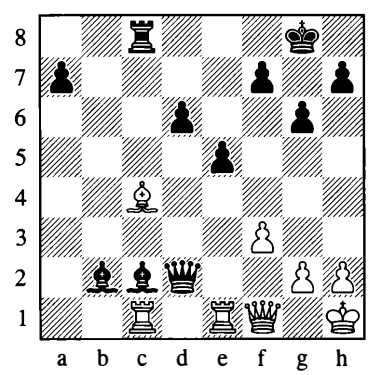


32...♕d2! 33.♗c4

If 33.♖bc1 ♖xc1 34.♖xc1 a5 35.♖c8† ♔g7 36.♗c4 Black would win rather simply after 36...♕c3 37.♗e6 ♗c5 38.♖c7 ♗e8 and so on.

33...♖c5

33...♗c2, with the idea: 34.♖bc1 ♗b2



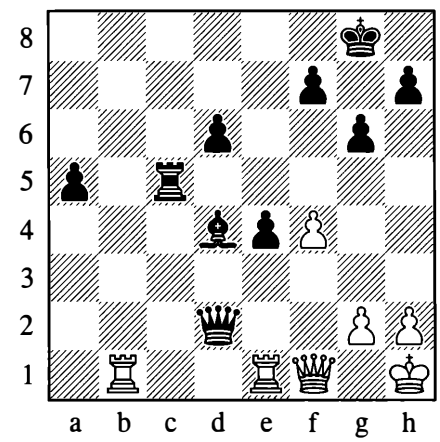
Would have won quickly.

34.♗b3 ♗xb3?!

Now the simplest way would be: 34...♗b5 35.♖ed1 ♕a5 36.♕e1 ♕xe1† 37.♖xe1 a5 38.♗a2 a4 39.♖ec1 ♗d3 40.♖xc5 dxc5 etc. 41.♖b8† ♔g7 42.♖a8 c4 43.♖xa4 c3

35.♖xb3 a5 36.f4 e4 37.♖bb1

37.♖d1 ♕f2 38.♕xf2 ♗xf2 39.g3 would be more resilient. We both were in mild time trouble.



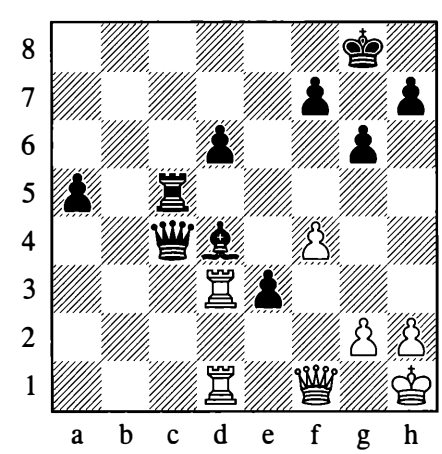
37...e3?!

Another inaccuracy in a technically won position.

Stronger was 37...d5 38.♖bd1 ♕b4 39.f5 ♗c3 40.♖e3 a4 41.♕a6 ♕c4 still with a fairly easy win.

38.♖ed1 ♕c3 39.♖d3 ♕c4 40.♖bd1?

40.♕d1 ♖d5 41.♖c1 ♕b4 42.♖c2 would make Black work hard to achieve victory – the rook on d5 is quite awkwardly placed.



40...♖c8!

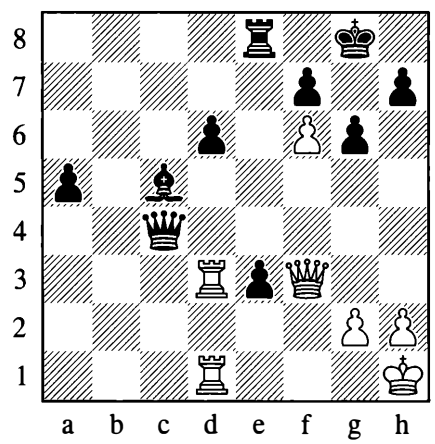
Fortunately I found this strong move – the last one before the time control. Now the win is easy.

41.f5

Or 41.♖xd4 e2 42.♖xc4 exf1=♕† 43.♖xf1 ♖xc4.

41...♗c5 42.♕f3 ♖e8 43.f6

Losing at once, but 43.♕c6 ♕e4 44.♕xe4 ♖xe4 45.♖e1 a4 would also be hopeless.



43...♕xd3

White resigned in view of 44.♖xd3 e2.

0–1

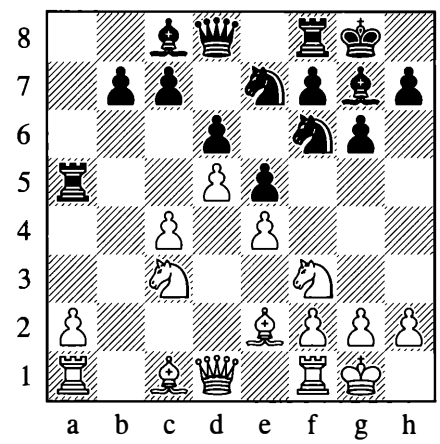
Just as Kasparov's bishops dominated Gheorghiu, I was able to dominate a top German grandmaster with my own two bishops in the following game.

Christopher Lutz – Ilya Smirin

Groningen 1993

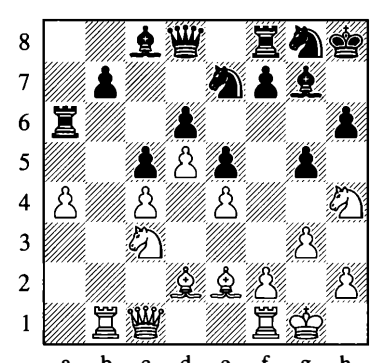
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 a5 10.bxa5 ♖xa5

As in the game Postny – Smirin elsewhere in this book (page 146), I preferred this immediate capture instead the popular 10...c5.

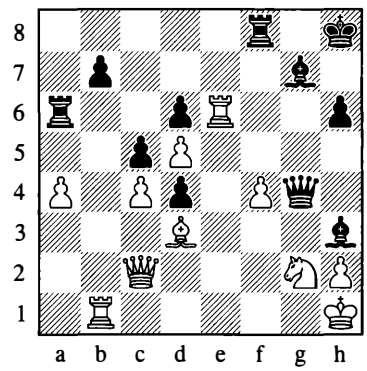


11.♘e1

In my opinion the moves 11.♘d2 or 11.a4, as was played by Postny in the above-mentioned game, look more logical than moving the knight from f3 to d3 via e1. After 11.a4 I had played another interesting encounter in this line: 11...c5 12.♖b1 ♔h8 13.♗d2 ♖a6 14.♕c1 ♘fg8 15.g3 h6 (I did not like 15...f5?! because of 16.♘g5) 16.♘h4 g5!?



17.♘g2 (17.♘f5!? ♘xf5 18.exf5 ♗xf5 19.♖xb7 ♗c8 20.♖b8 f5 with double-edged play) 17...f5 18.f4 gxf4 19.gxf4 fxe4 20.♘xe4 ♘f5 21.♗c3 ♘d4 22.♗xd4 exd4 23.♕c2 ♘e7 24.♘g3 ♘f5 25.♘xf5 ♗xf5 26.♗d3 ♕d7 27.♖fe1 ♗h3 28.♔h1 ♕g4 29.♖e6

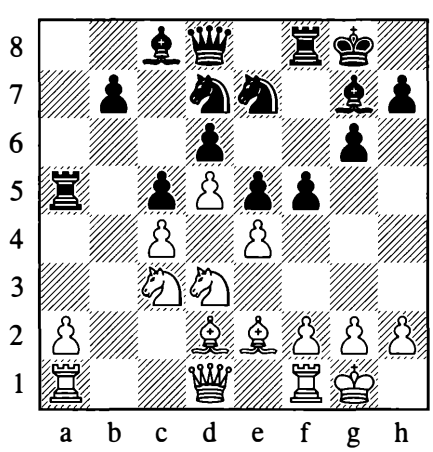


29...♖xa4 30.♖g6 ♗xg2† 31.♕xg2 ♕xg2† 32.♔xg2 ♖xf4 33.♖xb7 ♖a2† 34.♔g1 ♖a1† 35.♔g2 ½–½ Bykhovsky – Smirin, Haifa 2008. In my opinion this game was played quite well by both players.

11...♘d7 12.♘d3 f5 13.♗d2

After 13.f3 Black may continue 13...c5!? anyway.

13...c5!?



I like such pawn structures – Black stops the idea c4-c5, his queenside is solid enough and has no visible weaknesses, and the pawn on d6 will be comfortably protected by a rook on a6.

14.exf5

Lutz prefers this exchange over the possible 14.f3. Indeed Black seems to be fine after the probable 14...♖a6 15.♕c2 ♘f6 16.♖ab1 f4 (16...h5!? first deserves attention) and it's advisable for White to play 17.g4 – otherwise he may easily find himself under attack without real counterplay on the queenside. It's important that in the event of 14.f4 ♖a6!? Black is well prepared for the clash in the centre.

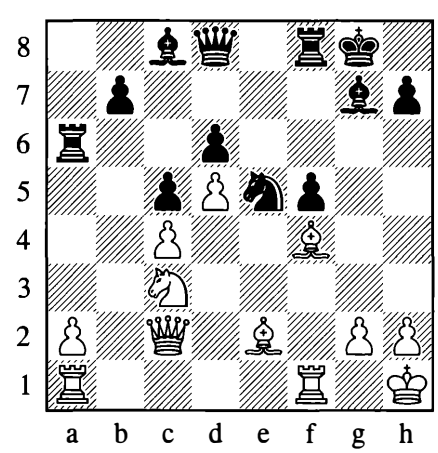
14...gxf5

14...♘xf5 15.♘e4 ♖a6 was quite possible – I believe Black is OK. But unlike in the much later encounter with Postny I decided to take on f5 with the pawn.

15.f4 ♘g6

I did not want to release the tension: 15...e4 16.♘c1 (of course not 16.♘f2?? e3 or 16.♘e1??) Even though objectively it was not a bad decision at all; but I was eager to play a more lively position.

16.♕c2 ♖a6 17.♔h1 exf4 18.♘xf4 ♘xf4 19.♗xf4 ♘e5



The strong knight on e5 offers Black some dynamic possibilities – the weak pawn on f5 is not actually that weak.

20.♖ab1

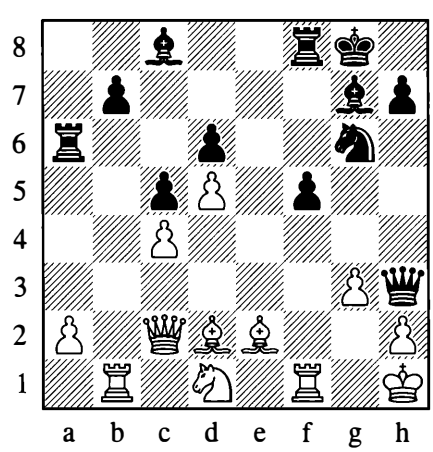
The prophylactic 20.g3 would be a subtle choice. Black might sacrifice a pawn in this case as well: 20...♘g6 21.♗d2 f4!? 22.gxf4 (bad is 22.♗xf4? ♖a3! – a rather unexpected rook incursion – 23.♗d2 ♗h3 and Black's initiative is too strong) 22...♕h4 23.♗d3 ♗h3 24.♗xg6 hxg6 25.♕xg6 ♗xf1 26.♖xf1 and neither side has much to complain about – the position is in dynamic balance.

20.a4!? deserved attention as well – as we saw from the previous line it's useful to restrict the potential activity of the rook on a6.

20...♘g6 21.♗d2 ♕h4

The queen gets closer to the white king, causing him at least psychological discomfort. By the way ...♗e5 is a serious threat.

22.g3 ♕h3 23.♘d1!?



White also has some threats – for instance, this knight is going to f2, trapping the intruder queen.

23...f4

The only move, combining activity with salvation of the queen.

24.♘f2

Certainly not 24.gxf4? ♗f5.

24...♕d7?!

The queen goes a little bit too far – it would be better to stop on f5:

24...♕f5

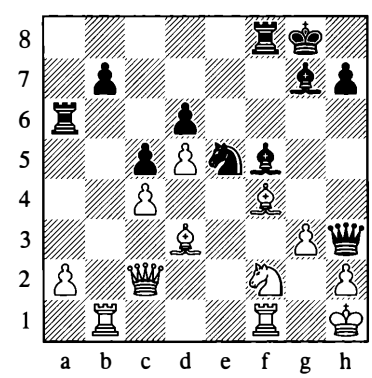
Now White has to act precisely to avoid trouble:

25.♘e4!

25.♗d3 ♕h5 cannot be recommended.

25...♖a3

The queen may return: 25...♕h3 26.♗xf4 (26.♘f2 ♕d7 leads to a draw of course) 26...♗f5 27.♗d3 ♘e5 28.♘f2 (28.♗xe5? ♗xe4†)



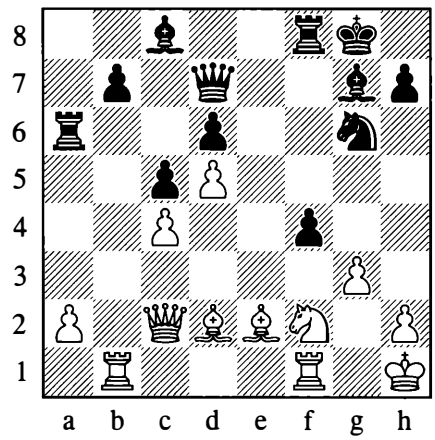
28...♘xd3! 29.♘xh3 ♗e4† 30.♕g2 Forced. (bad is 30.♔g1 ♗d4† 31.♘f2 ♘xf2) 30...♗xg2† 31.♔xg2 ♖xa2† 32.♔h1 ♘e5 And the game should end peacefully.

26.♖b3

26.♗xf4? ♖c3!

26...♖xa2!? 27.♘f6† ♗xf6 28.♕xa2 ♕e4† 29.♗f3 ♕xc4 30.♖c1 ♕d4 31.♗xf4 ♘xf4 32.gxf4 ♕xf4 33.♖f1 ♕h4

And despite Black's slight material advantage (two pawns for the exchange) the white heavy pieces are active and the position is balanced.



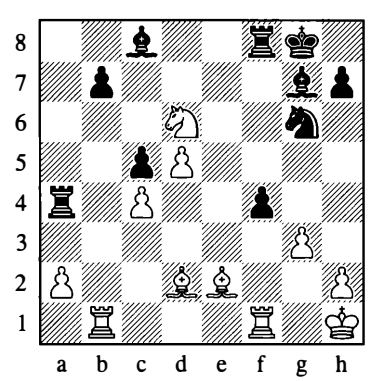
25.♘e4?

This centralization is a serious error.

After 25.♗g4 ♕a4 (the best reply) 26.♕xa4 ♖xa4 27.♗xc8 ♖xc8 28.♘e4 fxg3 29.♘xd6 g2† (29...♖f8 30.hxg3 ♖xf1† 31.♖xf1 ♖xa2) 30.♔xg2 ♖ca8 31.♗e3 ♗e5! Black's activity leaves the opponent with no real winning chances.

25...♕e7?

Returning the favour. If I had looked in the opposite direction I might have found: 25...♕a4! This unexpected move does not seem to be logically connected with the previous play, but it is fully justified tactically. When after: 26.♕xa4 ♖xa4 27.♘xd6 (27.gxf4 ♗f5 28.♗d3 ♖xa2∓)



27...♗h3! 28.♖xf4 Relatively best. 28...♘xf4 29.♗xf4 ♖xa2 30.♗f1 ♗g4 Black would obtain a nearly-decisive advantage. Alas, my mind was occupied with the other idea.

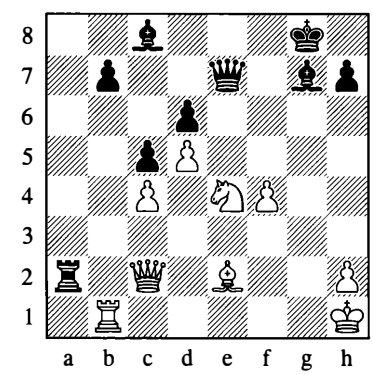
26.♗xf4

The right decision.

26.gxf4? ♗f5 27.♗d3 ♖xa2! Again the blow comes from the queenside. 28.♕xa2 ♗xe4† 29.♗xe4 ♕xe4† 30.♔g1 ♗d4† 31.♖f2 ♘h4 White loses on the spot.

26...♘xf4 27.gxf4

Instead 27.♖xf4 allows a familiar tactic, but it's level if White is careful: 27...♖xf4 28.gxf4 ♖xa2!



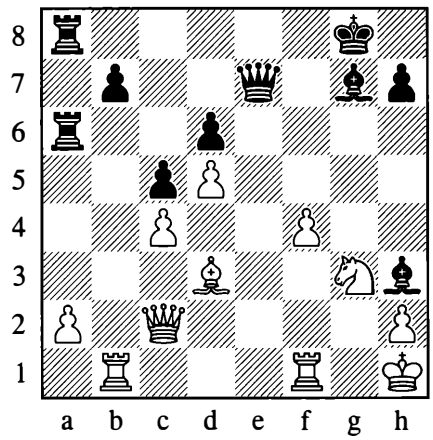
The line I had spotted was: 29.♕xa2? ♕xe4† 30.♔g1 ♗d4† 31.♔f1 ♕h1# Did we not just see that?

But the engine points out a miraculous escape route: 29.♘f6†!! ♗xf6 30.♖g1† ♔f8 31.♕xa2 ♕e4† 32.♖g2 Now 32...♗h3? 33.♕a8† is winning for White, so Black should settle for 32...♗d4 when White can hold after 33.♕b3.

27...♗f5

The pawn was sacrificed to obtain this position. Black obviously has some compensation (two bishops, pressure on a2 along the a-file), and objectively it's *probably* about level, but it's anything but clear.

28.♗d3 ♖fa8 29.♘g3! ♗h3!



White has to make a tough choice to withstand the opponent's threats.

30.♖fe1

The position is still balanced after this move, but perhaps now White has the tougher task holding that balance.

After the following alternative it's still objectively equal, but Black has to find the more difficult moves:

30.♖f2

The most principled and direct reply is:

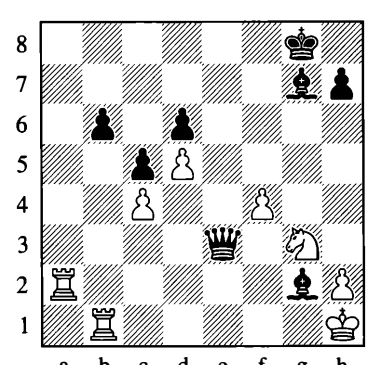
30...♖xa2

30...h5!? is wild but also seems roughly equal.

31.♕xa2 ♖xa2 32.♖xa2 ♕e3 33.♗e4 b6!

Ensuring the b-pawn does not drop with check, but not an easy move for a human to find.

34.♗g2 ♗xg2†

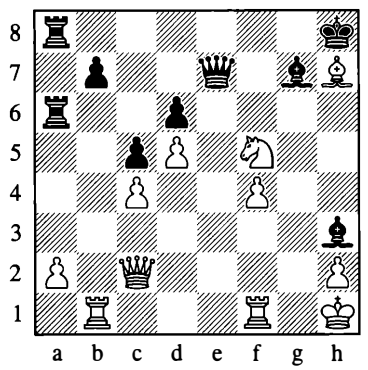


Now both recaptures lead to equality:

35.♔xg2 ♕xf4 36.♖a8† ♔h7=

35.♖xg2 ♔f8 36.♖xb6 ♕c1† 37.♖g1 ♕xc4=

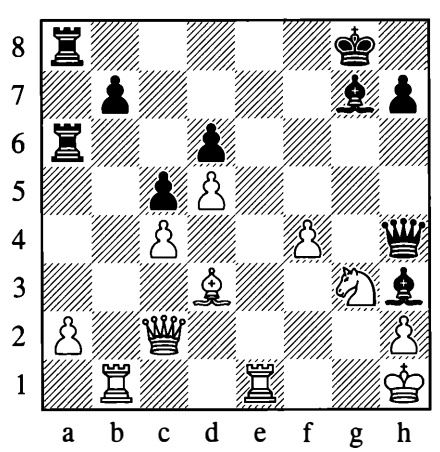
Instead after the forcing line: 30.♗xh7† ♔h8 31.♘f5



31...♕f7! 32.♖g1 ♖xa2 33.♖xg7 ♕xg7 34.♘xg7 ♖xc2 35.♗xc2 ♔xg7 36.♖xb7† ♔f6 37.♖b1 ♖a3 38.♔g1 ♖f3 the game should also end in a draw.

30...♕h4

Now White has to be exceptionally careful, as otherwise Black's initiative will explode into life.

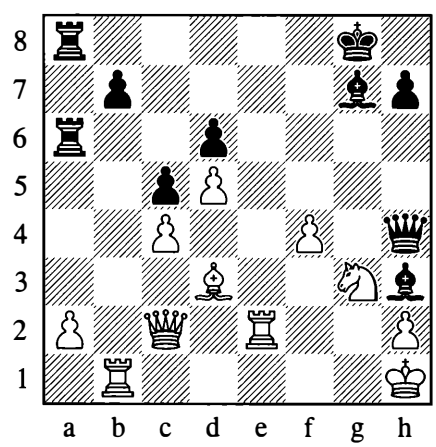


31.♖e2?

After this mistake, White is definitely in trouble.

After the cold-blooded 31.a4!? ♖xa4 32.♖e8† ♖xe8 33.♕xa4 ♖f8 34.♖xb7 ♗c8 (34...♖xf4? 35.♕a7; 34...♕xf4? 35.♖xg7†) 35.♖b1 ♕xf4 36.♖f1 ♕e3 37.♖xf8† ♔xf8 38.♕d1 ♗e5 39.♔g2 the position would still be about equal.

31.♗e2 was also a good option. For example: 31...♕xf4 (31...♖xa2 32.♕e4 and White is OK) 32.♖xb7 ♖xa2 33.♖xg7† ♔xg7 34.♕xa2 ♕xg3! 35.♕b2† ♕e5 36.♕xe5† dxe5 37.♗f1 with a drawn rook ending on the way.



31...♗g4! 32.♖xb7?

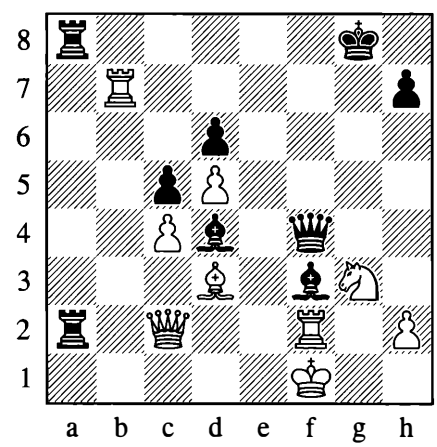
In time pressure the German grandmaster completely loses control.

After 32.♘f5 ♗f3† 33.♖g2 ♕g4 34.♗e4 ♕xg2† 35.♕xg2 ♗xg2† 36.♗xg2 he would retain some practical chances. Now the game is over.

32...♗f3† 33.♔g1 ♗d4†

The decisive invasion by the bishop.

34.♔f1 ♕xf4 35.♖f2 ♖xa2



Black's triumphant position.

36.♖b8† ♖xb8

White resigned due to 37.♕xa2 ♕c1# (for instance).

0–1

The following game again shows the pair of bishops dominating. The centre is blown open, and when White misplays the complications, we get to see the full potential of the bishops in action.

Boris Alterman – Ilya Smirin

Israel 1991

Boris Alterman was one of the best Israeli players in the 1990s. We played a lot of games with each other, among them a few KID encounters. This game was the beginning of our KID dialogue.

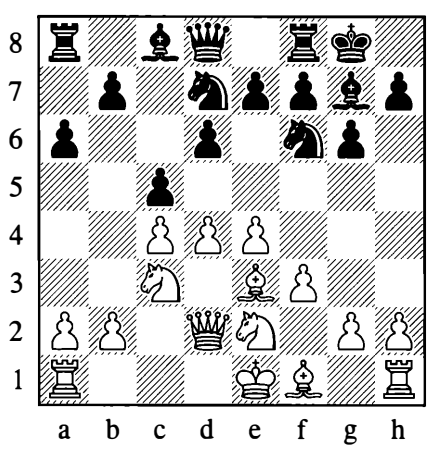
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3

The Sämisch System was Alterman's usual choice against the KID.

5...0–0 6.♗e3 ♘bd7

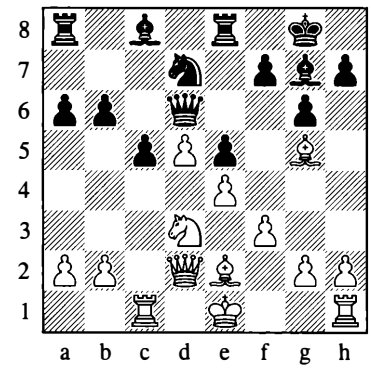
I played this move quite often until Alexey Dreev beat me in 2002.

7.♕d2 c5 8.♘ge2 a6



9.0–0–0

Dreev used a different plan in the above-mentioned game: 9.dxc5 dxc5 10.♖d1 ♕a5?! (more precise here is 10...♕c7) 11.♘c1 ♕c7 12.♘d3 b6 13.♗f4 e5 14.♗g5 ♖e8 15.♗e2 ♘f8 16.♘d5 ♘xd5 17.cxd5 ♘d7 18.♖c1 ♕d6



19.b4! cxb4 20.♕xb4 ♕b8 21.0–0 ♗f8 22.♕b2±; (1–0, 43) Dreev – Smirin, Dos Hermanas 2001. In my opinion this plan, releasing the tension in the centre, is unpleasant for Black – he will find it hard to create counterplay. White meanwhile enjoys better piece-placement.

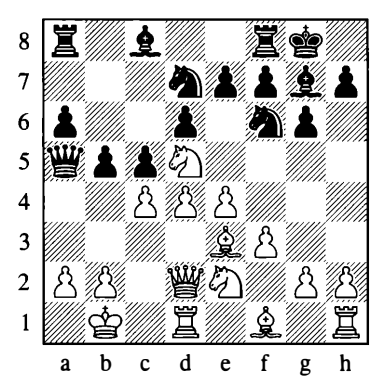
9...♕a5 10.♔b1 b5

Opposite-side castling should suit Black well – he has already started his play against the white king. That promises a sharp game.

11.g4!?

A logical idea – White fights for control over the central d5-square (after a potential g4-g5). At the same time he is going to launch a pawn attack against the black king.

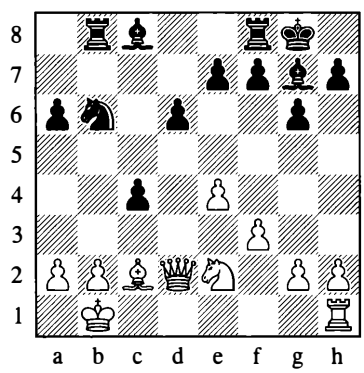
A queen sacrifice occurred in the following famous game of the young Mikhail Tal:
11.♘d5



11...♘xd5! 12.♕xa5 ♘xe3 13.♖c1 ♘xc4

Tal mentioned in his book that before the game he made a bet with his opponent – the Bulgarian player Bobotsov – who was sure that the resulting position after the sacrifice is clearly in White's favour and even laughed about it. Tal was of the opposite opinion and proved to be right.

14.♖xc4 bxc4 15.♘c1 ♖b8 16.♗xc4 ♘b6 17.♗b3 ♗xd4 18.♕d2 ♗g7 19.♘e2 c4 20.♗c2



20...c3!

His attack became irresistible and the game ended very soon:

21.♕d3 cxb2 22.♘d4 ♗d7 23.♖d1 ♖fc8 24.♗b3 ♘a4 25.♗xa4 ♗xa4 26.♘b3 ♖c3 27.♕xa6 ♗xb3 28.axb3 ♖bc8 29.♕a3 ♖c1† 30.♖xc1 ♖xc1†

0–1 Bobotsov – Tal, Varna 1958.

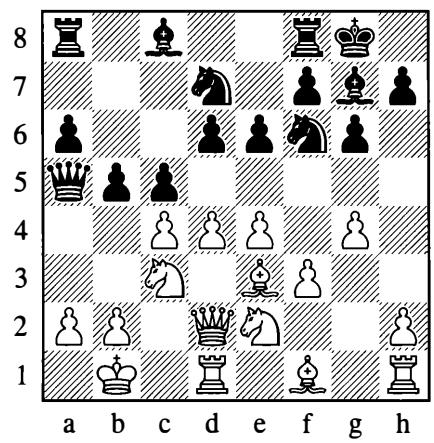
Needless to say, such a brilliant game by one of my all-time chess heroes inspired me a lot. Actually this old game was probably the main reason I started to play the 6...♘bd7 line.

11...e6!?

Taking the d5-square under control.

I did not like the look of 11...b4 12.♘d5 ♘xd5 13.exd5 or 11...bxc4?! 12.h4 with a rapidly-developing initiative for White.

But 11...♘b6 12.♘d5 (after 12.♘g3 b4 13.♘d5 ♘fxd5 14.exd5 ♘a4 the white king would be facing unpleasant pressure) 12...♘fxd5! 13.♕xa5 ♘xe3 would lead to interesting complications with an unusual material balance, similar to the game Bobotsov – Tal.



12.♘g3

After 12.g5 ♘e8 (12...♘h5? 13.♘g3±; In the case of the temporary piece sacrifice 12...b4 13.gxf6 ♘xf6 14.dxc5 dxc5 15.e5! bxc3 16.♕xc3 ♕xc3 17.♘xc3 ♘d7 18.f4 ♗b7 19.♖g1 White would obtain a clear advantage in the resulting endgame – the opponent's pieces are rather passive and the weakness on c5 is obvious.) 13.♘g3 cxd4 (13...bxc4!?) 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.♕xd4 b4 16.♘ce2 ♕xg5 it's not clear if White has enough for the pawn.

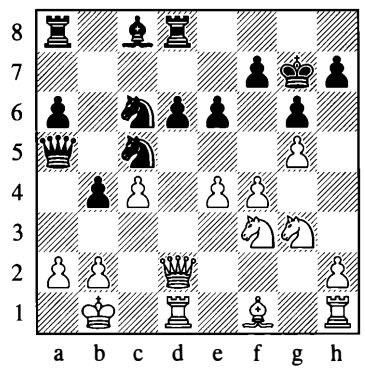
12...cxd4 13.♗xd4 b4

13...♘e5!? 14.♗xe5 dxe5 15.cxb5 axb5 16.♗xb5 ♗a6 17.♗xa6 ♖xa6 deserved serious attention – on b1 the king is under pressure along the a- and b-files, the bishop on g7 will soon join the play via f8, and the knight on f6 is ready to relocate via e8-d6 at the appropriate moment. All this, in my opinion, is fully worth just one pawn.

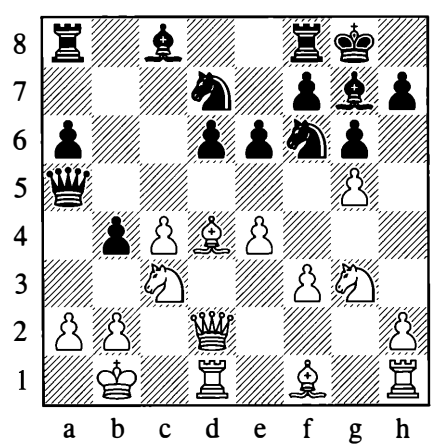
14.g5!?

In his turn attacking the knight.

14.♘ce2 ♘e5 15.g5! (15.♘g1 does not look good) 15...♘fd7 (15...♘xf3? loses material after 16.♕e3 ♘xg5 17.h4 e5 18.♗b6 ♘g4 19.♕g1 ♕a4 20.b3 ♘f3 21.bxa4 ♘xg1 22.♘xg1) 16.♘g1 ♘c5 17.f4 ♘c6 18.♗xg7 ♔xg7 19.♘f3 ♖d8



This would lead to a tense position where Black should be okay. For instance, 20.h4 (or 20.b3 e5 21.f5 ♕a3 and then 22.♕b2 a5 or 22.h4? ♘xb3) 20...b3 21.a3 ♕xd2 with an acceptable ending.



14...e5!

Adding to the number of hanging pieces.

Bad would be 14...bxc3? 15.♗xc3 ♘xe4 16.♘xe4 ♗xc3 17.♕xc3 ♕xc3 18.♘xc3 ♗b7 19.♗e2 ♘e5 20.♖xd6 ♘xf3 21.♗xf3 ♗xf3 22.♖f1, and in this endgame White's advantage is nearly decisive.

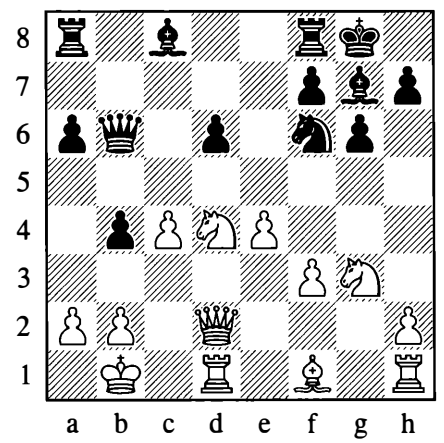
15.gxf6 ♘xf6

For the moment Black is a piece down, but my adversary cannot save both of his attacked minor pieces.

16.♘ce2

This is of course much stronger than: 16.♗e3? bxc3 17.♕xc3 ♕xc3 18.bxc3 ♖d8∓

16...exd4 17.♘xd4 ♕b6



The position has stabilized for a while. White has some superiority in the centre, but my bishop on g7 is left without its counterpart. The bishop's activity may become a major factor, so Black should open the position somehow on the queenside and/or in the centre. White, in contrast, would prefer to keep those sectors of the board as closed as possible and try to attack the black king. Whoever executes his plan better should be on top.

18.♗e2?

This obvious developing move proves to be a loss of valuable time.

Alterman should have immediately started his kingside play with:

18.h4 ♖d8!?

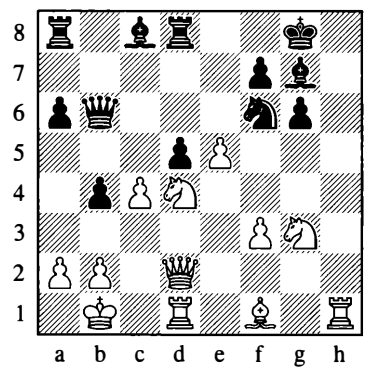
Now the attempt to stop this pawn mechanically by means of 18...h5?! is very

dangerous due to: 19.♖g1 ♖d8 20.♘gf5!± gxf5? 21.♖xg7† ♔xg7 22.♕g5† ♔h7 23.♕xf6

19.h5 d5!

And compared with what could have happened in the game, White has clearly the better version here:

20.hxg6 hxg6 21.e5



21...dxc4

If 21...♘e8 22.c5! ♕xc5 23.f4 and Black's position is not rosy at all.

22.♗xc4

Now bad is: 22...♘d5 23.♕g5 ♖e8 24.♖he1± Therefore the only way to continue involves a piece sacrifice:

22...♖a7! 23.exf6 ♗xf6

The next sequence of moves looks to be pretty forced:

24.♘ge2 ♗f5† 25.♔a1 ♖ad7 26.♕h6 ♗g7 27.♕h2 ♔f8!

The computer's move.

28.♗d3 ♗xd4 29.♘xd4

29.♗xf5 ♗e5!

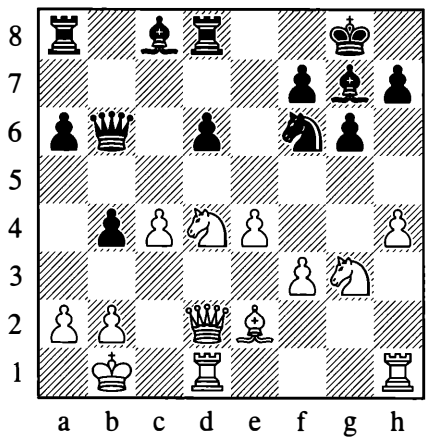
29...♕xd4 30.♗xf5 ♕xd1† 31.♖xd1 ♖xd1† 32.♗b1 ♖f1

And it all ends in a draw after:

33.♕h8† ♔e7 34.♕h4† ♔e8 35.♕e4† ♔f8 36.♕xb4† ♔g8 37.♕e4 ♖dd1 38.b4 f5=

Quite a line!

18...♖d8 19.h4



19...a5?

Now it's my turn to play slow chess.

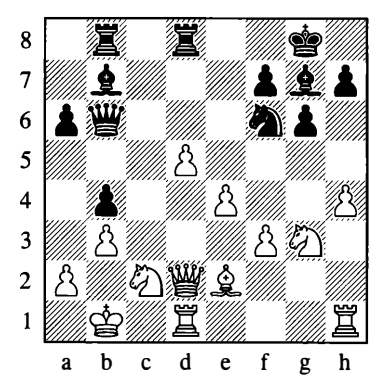
Correct was the energetic 19...d5! at once. White has a wide choice after that:

20.cxd5? ♘xd5 21.exd5 ♖xd5–+

20.♘b3 a5! 21.e5 (21.cxd5 a4 22.♘c1 a3 23.b3 ♘xd5 24.exd5 ♕f6–+) 21...♘d7 22.♕xd5 ♗b7 23.♕d6 ♗xe5 24.♕xb6 ♘xb6∓

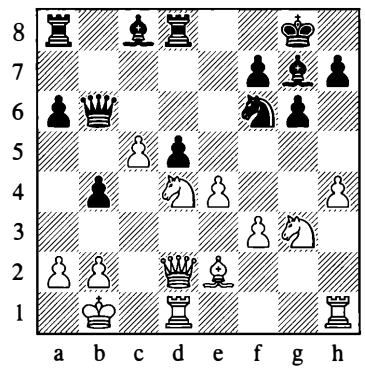
20.e5 dxc4 21.♗xc4 ♘d5 (threatening ...♘c3†) 22.♕e1 ♗b7∓

20.♘c2 ♖b8 21.b3 (21.cxd5 b3 22.axb3 ♘xd5 23.exd5 ♕xb3 24.♘d4 ♕xd5–+) 21...♗b7 22.cxd5



22...♗xd5!∓ White cannot play 23.exd5 as the f6-knight would soon land on c3.

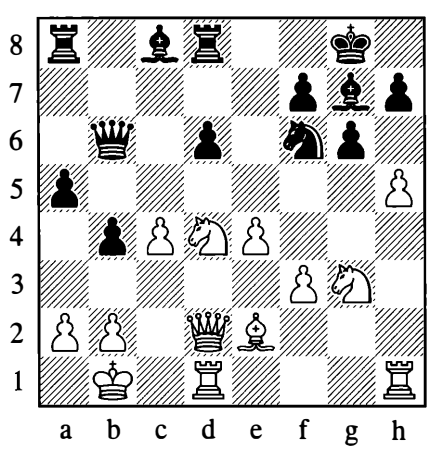
20.c5 looks like the best choice.



20...♕c7! Aiming at the g3-knight (wrong would be 20...♕xc5? 21.e5 ♘d7 22.f4). 21.♖hg1 ♖e8 (21...dxe4 22.♘b5 ♕d7 23.♕g5 ♕e7 24.♘d6 with an unclear position) 22.♘gf5 ♗xf5 23.♘xf5 ♕xc5 24.♕g5 ♕c7 Black remains better, although the situation is still tense.

In all these variations the bishop on g7 plays a major role.

20.h5

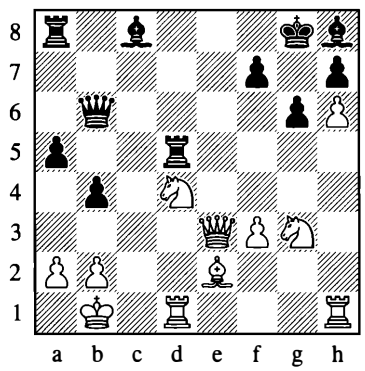


20...d5!

Better late than never. This is basically the only way to obtain serious counterplay.

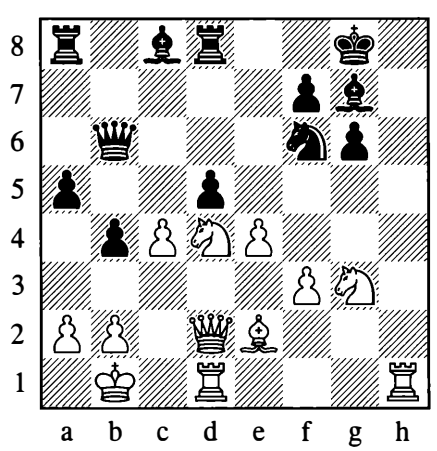
21.hxg6

21.h6!? deserved serious attention. The main purpose of this move is not obvious – after 21...♗h8 White would have the option to put his knight on g7(!) to block the dangerous bishop with its body. 22.exd5 ♗b7 (the piece sacrifice does not work here: 22...♘xd5 23.cxd5 ♖xd5 24.♕e3



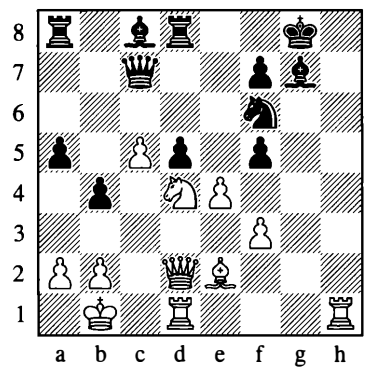
24...♗e6 [24...♗b7 25.♘df5 ♕f6 26.♘g7! – see previous comment] 25.♘df5 ♗xf5† 26.♘xf5 ♕xe3 27.♘xe3 ♖e5 28.♖d3 ♖ae8 29.♖hd1 ♔f8 30.♖d8! ♖xe3 31.♗b5 and White wins – all thanks to 21.h6) 23.♘b5 ♗c6 The position is hard to evaluate even with the computer's help. My feeling is that Black has enough play for the pawn.

21...hxg6



22.cxd5?!

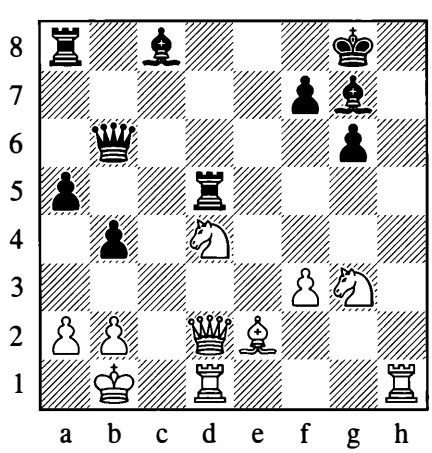
As a result of this move I was forced to sacrifice the knight for two central pawns, but actually I was happy about this. Alterman could have avoided that by sacrificing a piece himself: 22.c5! ♕c7 (perhaps better is 22...♕xc5, but after 23.e5 ♘e8 24.f4 my pieces are very passive, for instance: 24...♕b6 25.♗f3 ♘c7 26.♕h2 ♔f8 27.♕h7 and I would dislike this situation very much) 23.♘gf5! gxf5



24.e5! Very nice. 24...♕xe5 25.♘c6 ♕c7 26.♘xd8 ♕xd8 27.♖dg1 With an overwhelming attack.

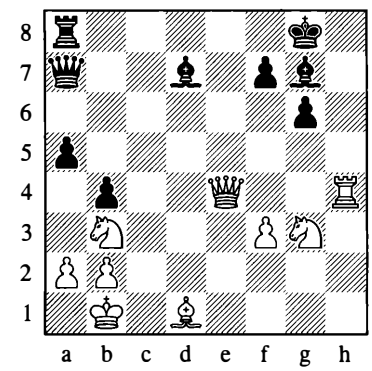
22.e5?! is less strong: 22...dxc4 23.♗xc4 ♖a7!? (23...♘d5 24.♕g5!) 24.exf6 ♗xf6 25.♘ge2 ♗f5† 26.♔a1 ♖ad7 27.♕h6 ♗g7 28.♕h2 a4!? This would lead to an unclear position with great compensation for the piece.

22...♘xd5 23.exd5 ♖xd5



24.♕e3

Or 24.♖h4 ♕c7! as the knight on g3 is hanging. 25.♕e3 ♗d7! is logical, leading to a very interesting and unusual position (worse is 25...♗b7 26.♖g1 ♕d7 27.♘b3 ♖c8 28.♖c1; of course 25...♕xg3 26.♕e8† ♗f8 27.♖h8† is impossible). 26.♕e4 ♕c5 27.♘b3 ♖xd1† 28.♗xd1 ♕a7



Black would get only one pawn for the piece, but the bishop pair is incredibly strong and White's forces are not coordinated well – I would like my position here from a practical point of view.

24...♗e6!

The only move, but a very strong one. Black appears to be fine in all variations.

Bad were the following: 24...♖xd4?? 25.♕e8† ♗f8 26.♖h8† or 24...♗b7? 25.♘df5!+– or 24...♗d7? 25.♕e4 ♕d6 26.♗c4+–.

25.♘c2

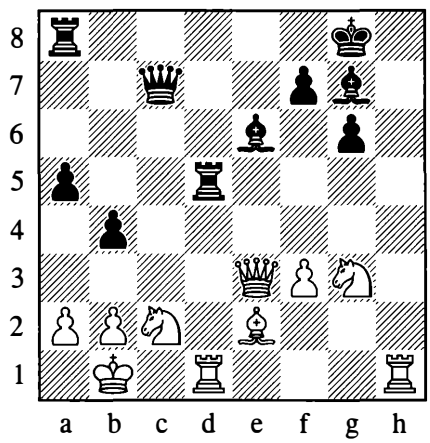
A reasonable decision.

25.♘df5 ♗xf5† 26.♘xf5 ♕xe3 27.♘xe3 ♖e5 28.♖d7 ♖xe3 29.♗c4 ♖f8 would have led to an endgame with an extra pawn and winning chances for Black (but not 29...♖xf3?? 30.♗d5).

Good enough was 25.♕e4 ♗xd4 26.♗c4 ♖ad8 27.♗xd5 ♗xd5 28.♕e2 (28.♕h4? ♗xf3 29.♕h7† ♔f8 30.♖hf1 ♗g7!∓) 28...a4 with

a complicated but objectively about equal position after the precise 29.♖d2.

25...♕c7



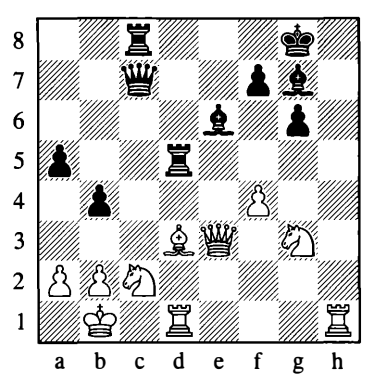
As in some previous variations, we see that Black has excellent compensation for the piece here – the two bishops are very strong, White's forces are not placed well, and the king may easily find itself under a strong attack.

26.♖xd5

It was a hard task for my opponent to make a choice here. He could have played:

26.f4!? ♖c8 27.♗d3

27.♖c1? ♖c5 28.♗d3 ♕b6!–+ and White has no defence against 29...♖xc2.

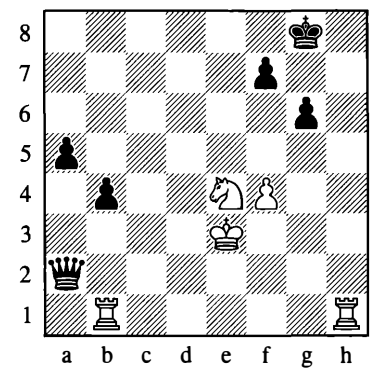


27...♗xb2!?

Giving up another piece.

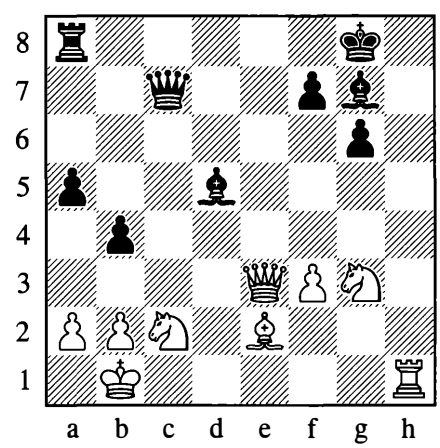
Weaker is 27...♖d6 28.♘e4 ♗xa2†?! 29.♔a1 ♖dd8 30.f5.

28.♔xb2 ♕c3† 29.♔c1 ♗g4 30.♘e4 ♕a1† 31.♔d2 ♕b2 32.♖c1 ♖cd8 33.♖b1 ♖xd3† 34.♕xd3 ♖xd3† 35.♔xd3 ♗e2† 36.♔xe2 ♕xc2† 37.♔e3 ♕xa2



As is often the case, the forcing line leads to a balanced endgame. But it was surely impossible to find all this during the game. Boris decided just to eliminate a pair of rooks – an understandable choice under the circumstances.

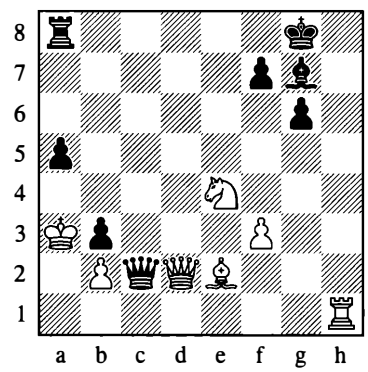
26...♗xd5



27.♖g1?

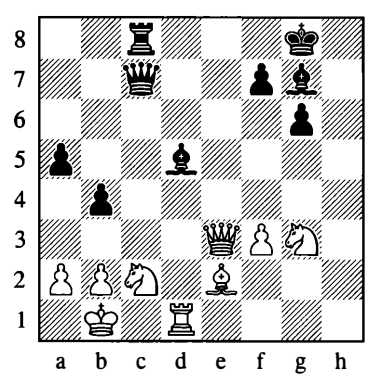
But he errs here and immediately gets a lost position – the price of a move in situations like this is very high.

Not much better was: 27.♘e4? ♗xa2† (27...♕e5 28.♕d4 ♕xd4 29.♘xd4 ♗xd4 30.♖d1 ♖d8 31.♖xd4 ♗xa2† 32.♔xa2 ♖xd4 33.♔b3 would leave White with good drawing chances) 28.♔xa2 ♕xc2 29.♕d2 b3† 30.♔a3

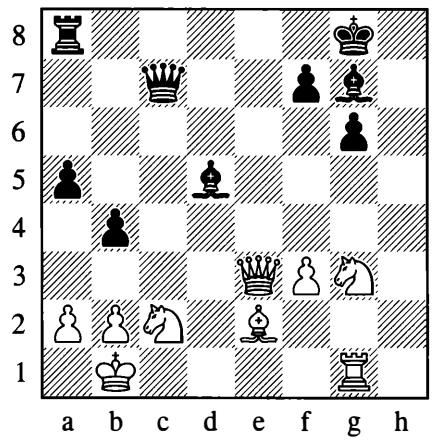


30...♖b8! 31.♕xc2 bxc2 32.b3 ♗h6 33.♔b2 c1=♕† 34.♖xc1 ♗xc1† 35.♔xc1 ♖xb3 36.♔c2 ♖b8 And I would rate Black's winning chances here very highly.

27.♖d1 was the only correct continuation. 27...♖c8 (27...♗xa2†? 28.♔xa2 ♕xc2 29.♕b3 does not work) Alterman would have had to find the paradoxical:



28.♘a1! (28.♖d2 a4 29.b3 axb3 30.axb3 ♕a5 and Black's assault looks very dangerous) This seems to lead to a dynamic balance after 28...♗e6 29.♘e4 a4 30.♘d6 ♖d8 31.♘e4. No wonder he did not find all this, and missed a decisive blow.



27...♗xa2† 28.♔xa2 ♕xc2–+ 29.♕b3

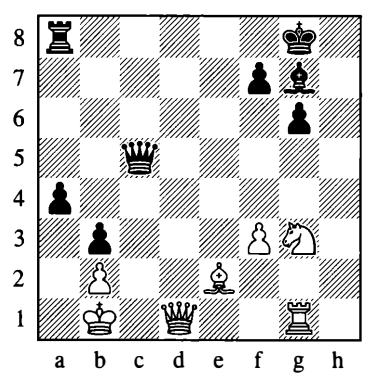
Or 29.♕c1 ♕a4† 30.♔b1 b3.

29...♕c5

By attacking the rook I win a very important tempo to play ...a5-a4, after which White is doomed despite having an extra knight.

30.♖d1

No better would be:
30.♕d1 b3† 31.♔b1 a4



32.♕c1

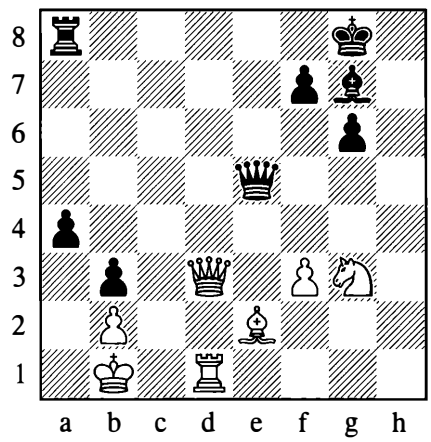
Or 32.♘e4 ♕e5 33.♘c3 a3 34.♕xb3 axb2 35.♕xb2 (35.♖d1 ♕e3!) 35...♕f5† 36.♔c1 ♕c5.

32...♕xc1† 33.♔xc1

33.♖xc1 a3! Even the exchange of queens does not stop the attack. 34.bxa3 ♖xa3 35.♖c8† ♔h7 36.♔c1 ♖a1† 37.♔d2 ♗h6†

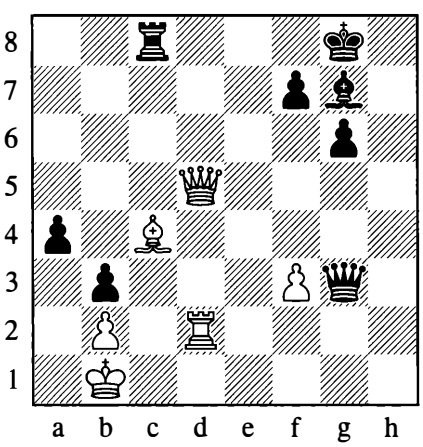
38.♔c3 (38.♔d3 b2) 38...♖c1†
33...♖c8† 34.♔d2 ♗xb2

30...a4 31.♕d3 b3† 32.♔b1 ♕e5!



Regaining the piece while continuing the assault. Here White could easily resign, but the next few moves were made.

33.♖d2 ♕xg3 34.♕d5 ♖c8 35.♗c4



35...♖xc4

Simple, but nice.

36.♕xc4 ♕e1† 37.♕c1 ♕xc1† 38.♔xc1 ♗h6 39.♔d1 ♗xd2 40.♔xd2 g5
0–1

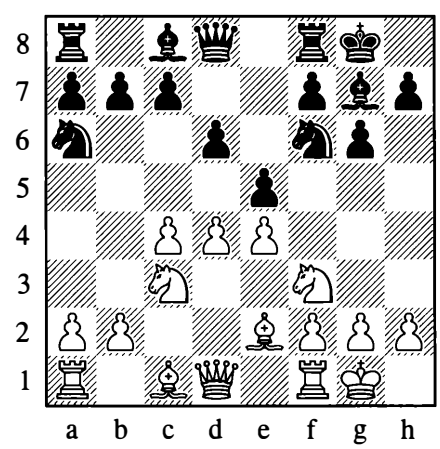
In the last game of this chapter we shall see an early exchange of the King's Indian bishop. Even though Black gives up a pawn on the way, it is still a worthwhile investment, as White suffers from a weakness on the dark squares for the rest of the game.

Igor Naumkin – Ilya Smirin

Ischia 1995

This game was played on the beautiful Italian island of Ischia, near Naples. The tournament's atmosphere (the sea, Italian cuisine, etc.) and environment were very inspiring, and probably played a great part in my creative mood during the tournament. In this game with Grandmaster Igor Naumkin I managed to find over the board one of my best opening ideas in the KID.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 ♘a6 7.0–0 e5



8.d5

White transposes into the Petrosian System.

8.♗e3 and 8.♖e1, trying to keep the pawn centre intact for a while, are the most popular continuations here.

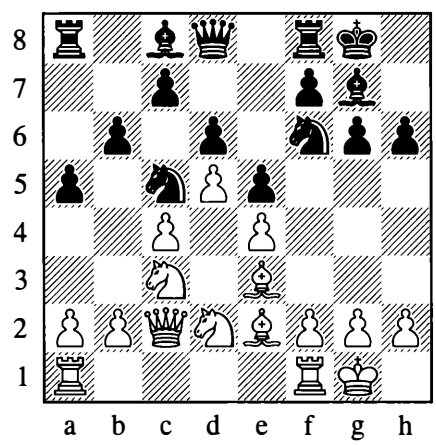
8...♘c5 9.♕c2 a5

Now the main drawback of releasing the tension in the centre with 8.d5 is evident – the black knight occupies an excellent outpost on c5. Black should not overestimate this factor though. I have played a few interesting games in this variation, and in this book you will find my encounters with Zilberman in this line.

10.♗g5 h6 11.♗e3 b6

Adding support to the knight on c5.

12.♘d2



12...♗g4!?

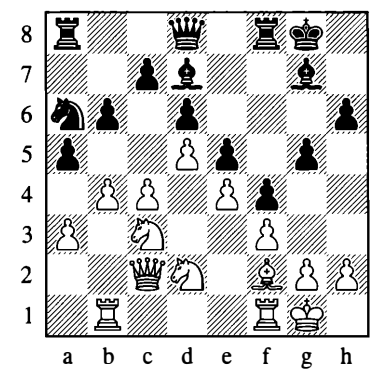
An interesting, well-known idea. Usually the exchange of the light-squared bishops favours White in structures like this. There are two main reasons:

(a) Black remains with the rather passive bishop on g7.

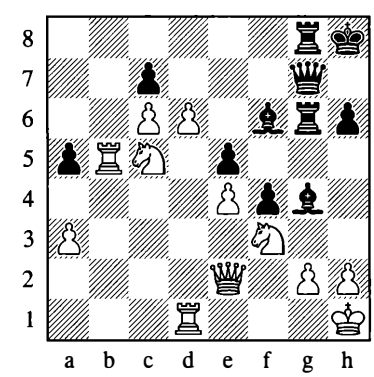
(b) After ...f7-f5 White will react with f3, and after a probable ...f5-f4 the bishop will go to f2 and it will be very hard for Black to create an attack on the kingside without the light-squared bishop, which usually supports the ...g6-g5-g4 push and is also ready to sacrifice itself around the h3 area.

But in this particular position the immediate exchange on g4 is not advisable for White – he would swap his bishop on e3 for the black knight, and this of course would be in Black's favour.

30 years ago I played the more natural continuation 12...♘g4 against Ivanchuk. It was an interesting struggle: 13.♗xg4 ♗xg4 14.a3 ♗d7 15.b4 ♘a6 16.♖ab1 f5 17.f3 f4 18.♗f2 g5



19.bxa5 bxa5 20.c5 g4 21.c6 ♗c8 22.fxg4 ♗xg4 23.♘f3 ♗f6 24.♕e2 ♔h8 25.♔h1 ♖g8 26.♖b5 ♘c5 27.♗xc5 dxc5 28.♘a4 ♕e7 29.♘xc5 ♖g6 30.♖d1 ♖ag8 31.d6 ♕g7

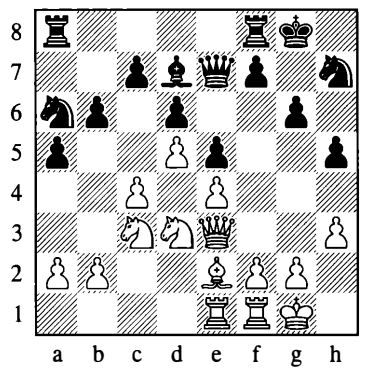


32.d7? (32.dxc7 ♕xc7 33.♘d7±) 32...♗xf3 33.♕xf3 ♖xg2 34.♖bb1 ♕g5 35.♕h3 ♗e7 36.♖bc1 ♖g4 37.♘b7 ♕g6 38.♕f3 ♕h5 39.♖c3 ♕g6 40.♖cc1 ♕h5 41.♖d3 ½–½ Ivanchuk – Smirin, Pinsk 1986.

13.f3

I have also faced 13.h3 ♗d7 here.

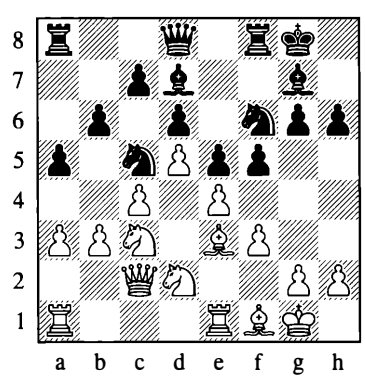
13.♕d1!? was played against me by the very talented Grandmaster Igor Ivanov: 13...h5 (13...♗d7!?) 14.h3 (14.♗g5!?) 14...♗d7 15.♕c2 ♘h7 16.♘b3 ♘a6 17.♕d2 ♕e7 18.♖ae1 ♗f6 19.♘c1 ♗g5 20.♘d3 ♗xe3 21.♕xe3



21...♕g5 22.♕xg5 ♘xg5 23.♗d1 f5 24.f3 ♘c5 25.♘xc5 bxc5; 0–1 (45) I. Ivanov – Smirin, Philadelphia 1990.

13...♗d7 14.b3

In my opinion, stronger was: 14.♖fe1!? ♘h5 15.♗f1 f5 16.b3 ♘f6 17.a3



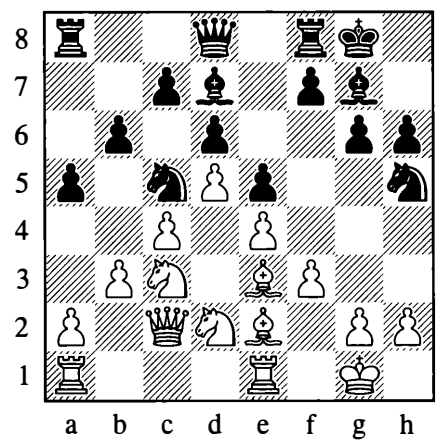
This looks like a better version of White's plan; (0–1, 47) Savchenko – Smirin, St Petersburg 2012.

14...♘h5

This move is the main reason behind 12...♗g4: after 13.f3 the d1-h5 diagonal is not controlled by the bishop on e2 anymore and the knight goes to h5, preparing ...f7-f5 and having the square f4 in mind.

15.♖fe1

Vacating f1 for the bishop in case the knight jumps to f4.



15...♗f6!

I am proud of finding this move, and the idea connected with it, over the board.

15...f5 was the usual continuation here.

16.♗xh6

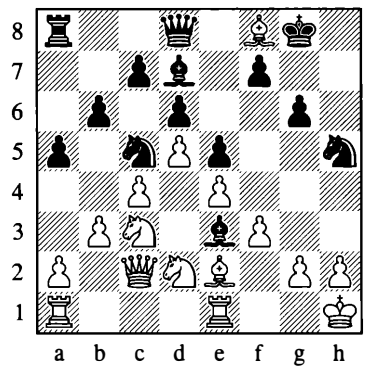
Accepting the pawn sacrifice fully passes the initiative to Black.

Bad was 16.a3 ♗g5 17.♗f2? ♗xd2 18.♕xd2 ♘xb3.

I think 16.♖ab1 ♗g5 17.♗f2 f5 18.a3 was the best continuation, with a complex struggle.

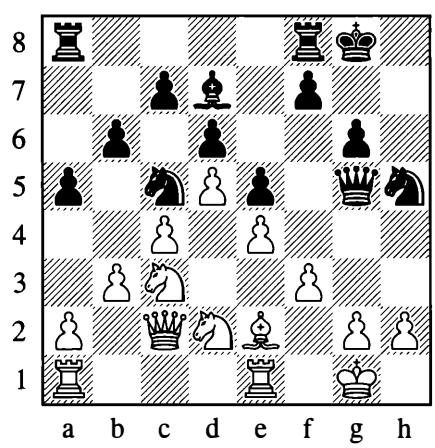
16...♗g5! 17.♗xg5

Immediately losing was: 17.♗xf8? ♗e3† 18.♔h1 (18.♔f1 ♕h4 19.♘d1 ♘g3†)



18...♘g3† 19.hxg3 ♕xf8 20.♘f1 ♕h6† 21.♘h2 ♔g7 with inevitable mate – this is the tactical justification of my 14th move.

17...♕xg5



The compensation for the pawn is more than evident now – all Black's forces are active, and after ...f7-f5 White's right flank will be under attack. Black may make use of the missing h6-pawn – if the rook comes to h8 the pawn on h2 will be under fire. In contrast, White's pieces are quite passive. He will find it particularly hard to give his rooks decent jobs.

18.♘f1

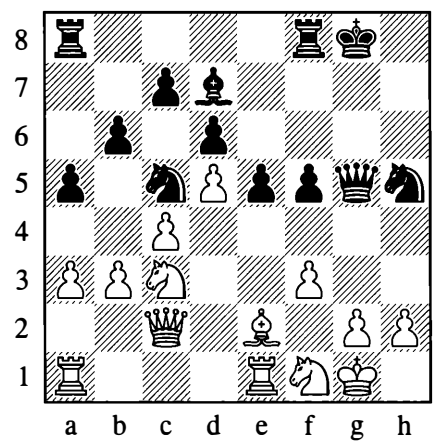
Naumkin decides to cover the h2-pawn in advance, but now the g-pawn becomes an object of attack.

In the case of 18.♗f1 ♔g7!, threatening ...♖h8, the picture would be different but still very unpleasant for White.

18...f5 19.exf5

This exchange opens the g-file dangerously, but 19.♕c1 ♘f4 20.g3 ♘h3† 21.♔g2 f4∓ was even worse – the attack would roll freely and White would soon be doomed.

19...gxf5 20.a3



20...a4!

An important finesse; Black also improves his position on the queenside.

The preliminary 20...♘f4 21.♘g3 and only now 21...a4 was also quite strong.

21.b4

21.bxa4 would not look pretty, but at least it would not allow the immediate transfer of the knight to d4 via b3.

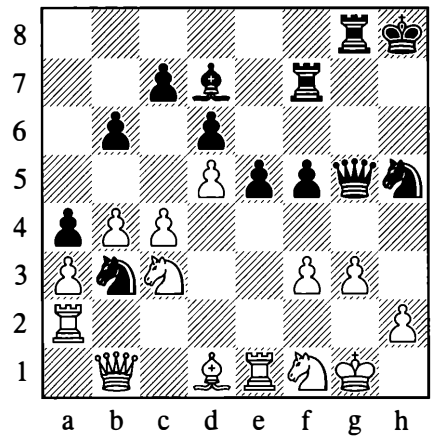
21...♘b3

Now Black's advantage is almost decisive.

22.♖a2 ♖f7 23.g3 ♔h8! 24.♗d1 ♖g8

Now all my pieces have joined the assault; White cannot withstand this.

25.♕b1



25...♕h4?!

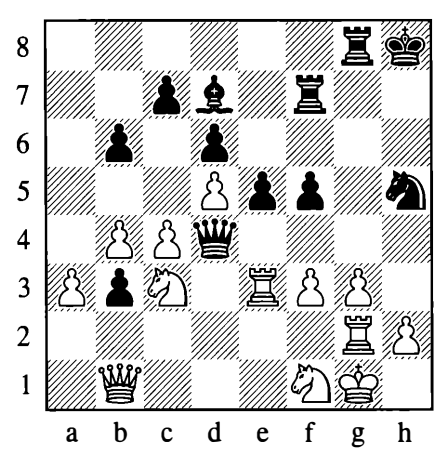
Starting here, I several times missed an opportunity to finish the game quickly. I should have kept my excellent knight from being exchanged for the passive bishop on d1.

25...♘d4 26.♖f2 (26.♕d3 ♕h4 27.♖g2 ♘f4–+) 26...♕h4 27.♖g2 ♖fg7 and White's position is falling apart: he cannot prevent 28...♘f4, with decisive threats.

26.♗xb3 axb3 27.♖g2!

I did not notice this defence, counting on 27.♕xb3? f4 28.♘e4 fxg3 29.hxg3 ♘xg3–+.

27...♕d4† 28.♖e3



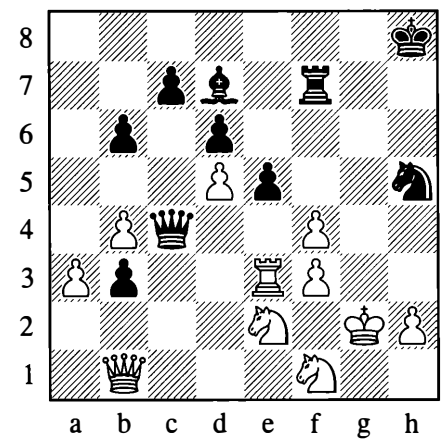
28...f4?!

Stronger was 28...♘f4 29.♖d2 ♕xc4.

29.♘e2 ♕xc4 30.gxf4?

The simple 30.♕xb3 would reduce my advantage considerably.

30...♖xg2† 31.♔xg2



31...exf4?

Now it is my turn again to make a serious mistake. 31...♘xf4† 32.♘xf4 exf4 33.♕xb3 (33.♖e4 ♕xd5–+) 33...♗h3† would win by force.

32.♖e4

Or 32.♕xb3 ♖g7† 33.♔h1 ♕xb3! 34.♖xb3 ♗b5 35.♖b2 ♖e7 and one of the white knights is gone.

32...♕xd5

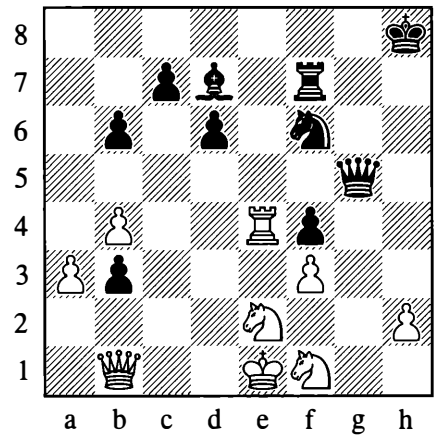
Despite the mutual mistakes, White's position remains lost.

33.♔f2 ♕g5

More resolute was 33...c5! 34.♘c3 (34.♔e1 c4) 34...♕g5 35.♕xb3 ♖g7 36.♔e1 ♘f6 37.♖e2 ♕h4† 38.♔d2 ♗h3.

34.♔e1 ♘f6?!

Another inaccuracy. 34...d5 35.♕xb3 ♖f5 36.♖d4 ♖e5! would break all resistance on the spot.



35.♕b2?

I missed this move, but much stronger was 35.♕xb3! when Black must settle for a clear advantage after: 35...d5 36.♖xf4 ♖e7 37.♖xf6 ♕xf6 38.♕xd5∓

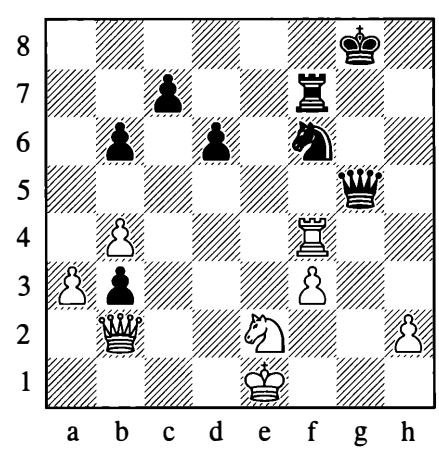
But not 35.♖xf4? ♖e7–+.

35...♔g8?

And here the immediate 35...♗b5! was a winner.

36.♖xf4 ♗b5 37.♘fg3 ♗xe2 38.♘xe2

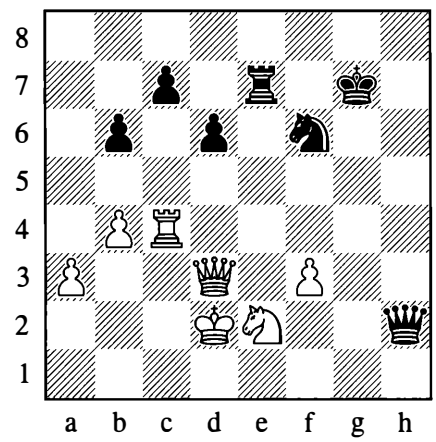
38.♖f5 fails to 38...♕e3 39.♘xe2 ♖e7! 40.♖xf6 ♕g1† 41.♔d2 ♖xe2† and the queen is lost.



38...♖e7! 39.♕xb3† ♔g7

The position has simplified and my opponent even has an extra pawn at the moment. But despite numerous lapses, Black's advantage is still large...

40.♖c4 ♕g1† 41.♔d2 ♕xh2 42.♕d3



42...c5! 43.♖c1 ♔f7 44.bxc5 bxc5

Although there is not much material left on the board, Black's advantage is still decisive: the white king is stuck in the centre, all my pieces are more active than White's, and finally the mighty pawn duo on d6 and c5 is much more powerful than the isolated pawns on a3 and f3. No wonder the end is near.

45.a4

Or 45.♖e1 d5 46.♔d1 ♕f2 leaves White helpless against the advancing pawns. For example, 47.♖g1 ♖xe2 48.♕g6† ♔e6–+ and White has already run out of good checks.

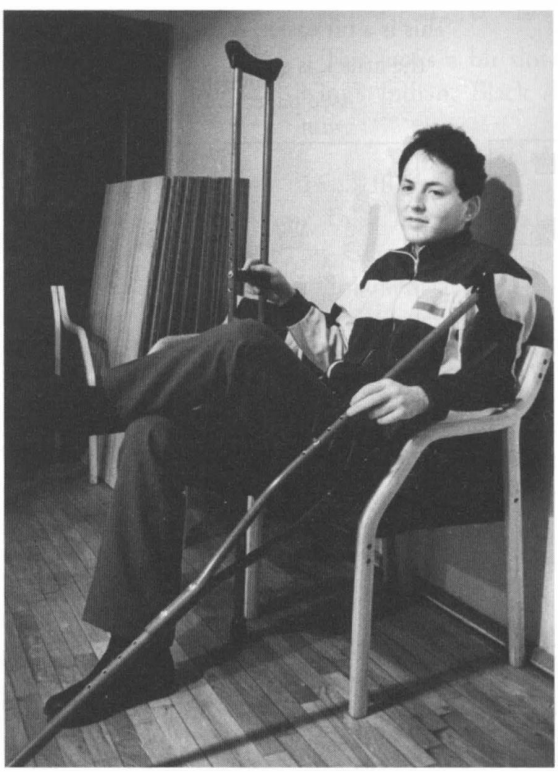
45...♖e5! 46.♕b5 ♕f2 47.♖c3 d5

The pawns have started to roll and Naumkin decides to call it a day due to 47...d5 48.♖xc5 ♖xe2† 49.♕xe2 ♕xc5. I made quite a few errors in the second part of the game, but despite that, this remains one of my most beloved KID encounters.

0–1

Chapter 4

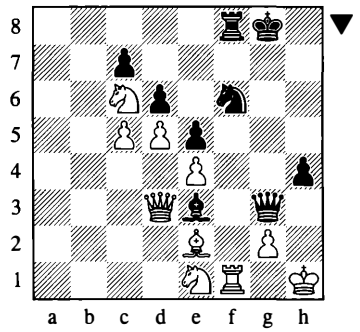
Line Opening



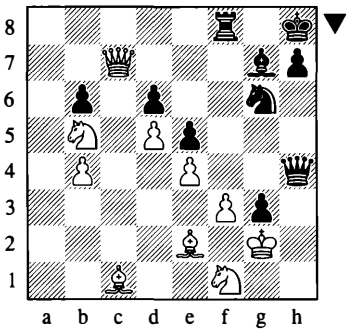
In the King's Indian it is important to look beyond apparent obstacles to success...

Test yourself against the book

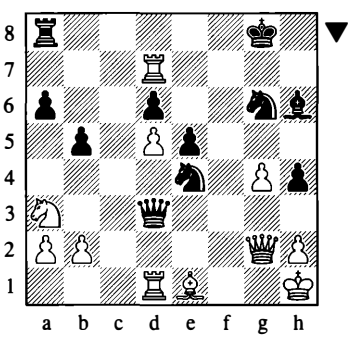
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



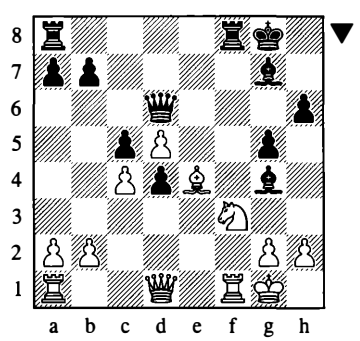
This is a bit easier. A piece down, the attack is still very strong. (see page 122)



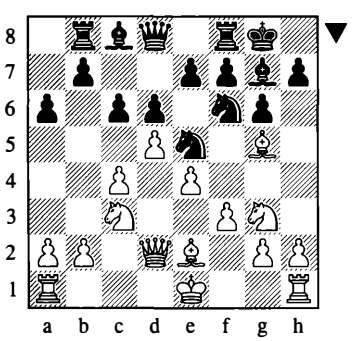
How can Black continue the attack? (see page 138)



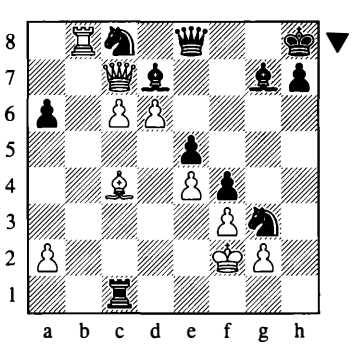
Deep analysis. Black has a nice difficult combination. (see page 116)



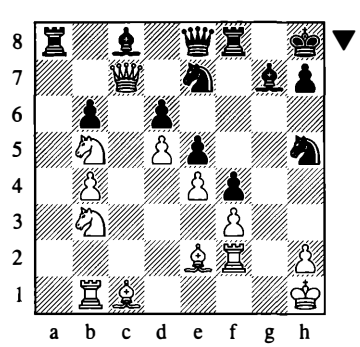
How can Black fight for the initiative? (see page 126)



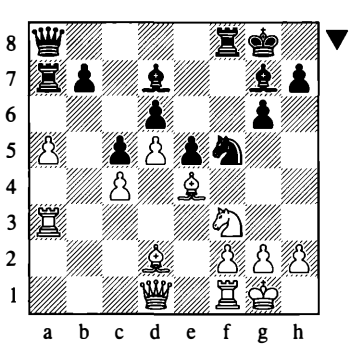
How can Black fight for the initiative? (see page 142)



One of the most imaginative combinations in KID history (see page 117)



Let your intuition guide you! (see page 137)



How can Black fight for the initiative? (see page 148)

One of the most important themes in the King's Indian is line opening. From the beginning of the game Black allows White to take more space. The trade-off is that White is advancing on the queenside and Black on the kingside, where the king is. But this does not fully compensate for the lack of space. Black needs to open lines for his pieces, often with a sense of urgency, in order to get the most out of the position's potential.

This is probably the biggest topic in the King's Indian and a natural follow-up to our discussion of the King's Indian bishops, where the main characteristic was the great potential this bishop holds. In this chapter we shall investigate the potential of all of the pieces.

As this topic is rather important to the understanding of the King's Indian, the introduction is longer than in all the other chapters and somewhat generic. To some this will probably mean seeing examples or ideas they already know intimately, while for others this will be essential background knowledge to understand the more complex games that follow.

We start with the most generic of all King's Indian games, played in a famous Candidates Tournament on which two great books have been written, by Bronstein and Najdorf. I have read the book by Bronstein maybe 20-25 times and it has helped me a lot.

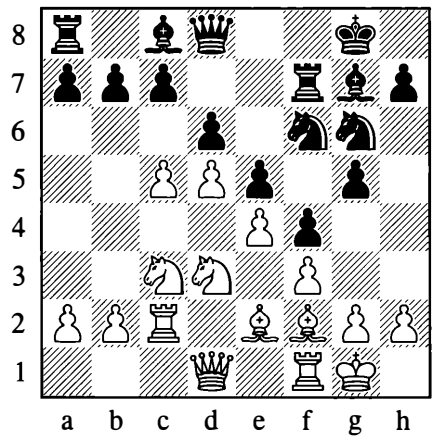
Mark Taimanov – Miguel Najdorf

Zurich 1953

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.♗e3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗f2 g5 13.♘d3

This idea, forcing through c4-c5, is no longer popular.

13...♘f6 14.c5 ♘g6 15.♖c1 ♖f7 16.♖c2

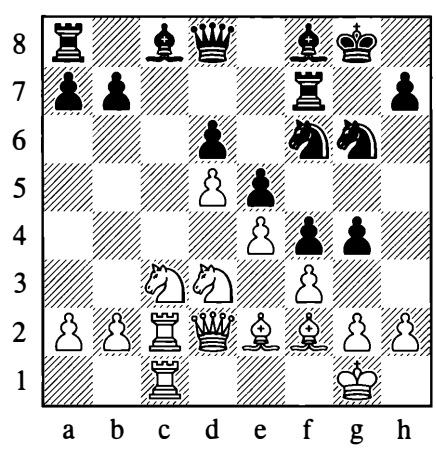


This looks a bit slow. As I understand the King's Indian, Black should already be OK now.

16...♗f8

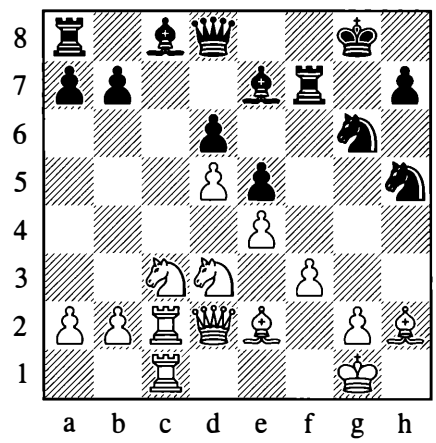
This is the modern system, invented by Gligoric earlier in the same year in a tournament at Mar del Plata. This name has now been extended to cover all of the lines after 8...♘e7, as in the recent two-volume work on this position by Vassilios Kotronias.

17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♕d2 g4 19.♖fc1



An important moment in the history of the King's Indian Defence. Najdorf comes up with a wonderful pawn sacrifice that since then has become as much a staple as bread and butter.

19...g3! 20.hxg3 fxg3 21.♗xg3 ♘h5 22.♗h2 ♗e7



Black's counterplay on the dark squares is hopefully obvious to all. A few moves ago it was hard to see how the black pieces were going to get into the game. But through line opening and a small material investment, we now have four active pieces with great potential.

The rest of the game is well played by Najdorf. Today we might see a more dynamic approach, but we should not fault the players for playing as if they did not know Tal's games, as Tal was still playing junior tournaments in Riga at this point!

23.♘b1

It was stronger to play 23.♘d1 ♗g5 24.♘e3, although Black has a good game after 24...♕f8.

23...♗d7 24.♕e1 ♗g5 25.♘d2 ♗e3† 26.♔h1 ♕g5 27.♗f1 ♖af8

Black has the advantage. All his pieces are playing their part.

28.♖d1

28.♖a1 b5 29.a4 was analysed by Kasparov in Part IV of his *Great Predecessors* series. He gave a good line in reply, but he did not consider the most direct approach: 29...♘h4! 30.axb5 ♗xb5 31.♖a3 ♖g7 32.g4 ♗xd2 33.♕xd2 ♕xd2 34.♖xd2 ♘xf3 35.♖f2 ♘xh2 36.♖xf8† ♔xf8 37.♔xh2 ♘f6 and Black is close to winning.

28...b5 29.a4 a6 30.axb5 axb5 31.♖c7 ♖g7 32.♘b3?!

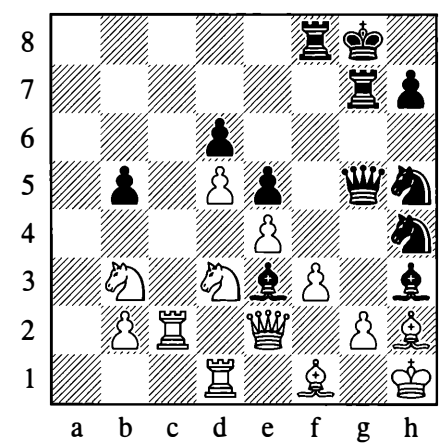
The final mistake, though it should be said that White is under a lot of pressure anyway.

32.♗e2 ♘gf4 33.g4 ♘xd3 34.♗xd3 ♘f6 also gives Black a winning attack.

32...♘h4 33.♖c2 ♗h3

33...♖xf3 was a bit more obvious, but we are in the territory of "anything wins".

34.♕e2



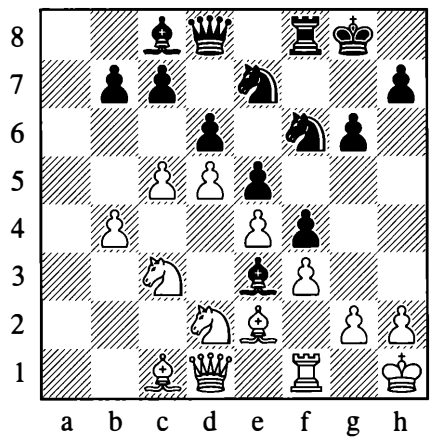
34...♘xg2! 35.♗xg2 ♗xg2† 36.♕xg2 ♕h4 37.♕xg7† ♔xg7 38.♖g2† ♔h8 39.♘e1 ♘f4 40.♖g3 ♗f2 41.♖g4 ♕h3 42.♘d2 h5 43.♖g5 0–1

Grandmasters today have intimate knowledge of how important it is to fight for the initiative when facing the King's Indian, but we still see wipe-outs like this. Some of them are below.

The following example from the Soviet Women's Championship shows another typical line opening: the check on g3 with a knight to open up the h-file to the king.

Tatiana Shumiakina – Narine Karakashian

Volzhsky 1989



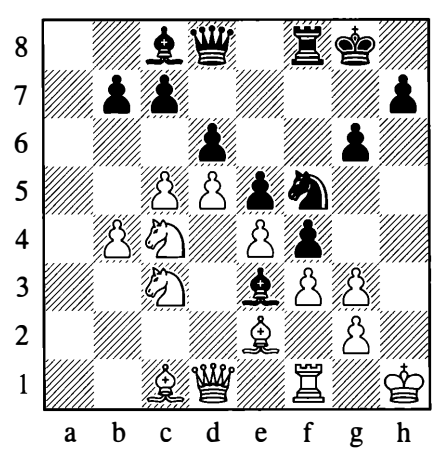
Black has achieved a lot, getting her bishop to e3, outside the pawn chain. But if White has time to play ♘c4, it will all be for nothing. The bishop is exchanged and White is ready to attack on the queenside. Black has to react energetically.

18...♘h5! 19.♘c4

This allows Black to unfold her attack.

19.♕e1 is met with 19...♘f5!!, when White has to play 20.♖f2, which is obviously not good, in order to avoid 20.exf5 ♘g3† 21.hxg3 ♕g5 with mate.

19...♘g3† 20.hxg3 ♘f5!!



This is of course the point. The queen is heading for h4 with great urgency.

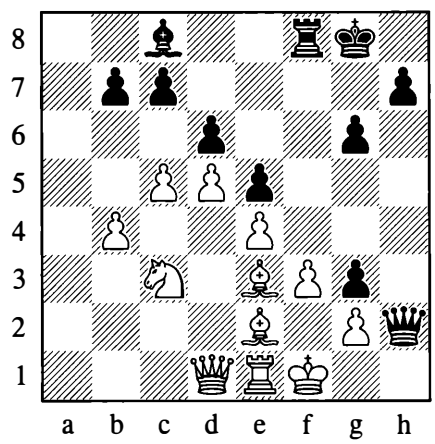
21.♘xe3 fxg3

With the bishop gone, we need someone else to assist with the attack on the dark squares.

22.♔g1

22.♘g4 ♕h4† 23.♔g1 ♘e3 and mate.

22...♘xe3 23.♗xe3 ♕h4 24.♖e1 ♕h2† 25.♔f1



25...♗h3!

The final piece comes into the attack, making up for the fact that I have chosen not to include any ...♗xh3 examples in this chapter, finding it just a bit too generic.

26.gxh3 g2†

I have to say that I enjoy 26...♕h1† 27.♗g1 ♕xh3# more. It is purer somehow. But mate is mate and it wins the game.

0–1

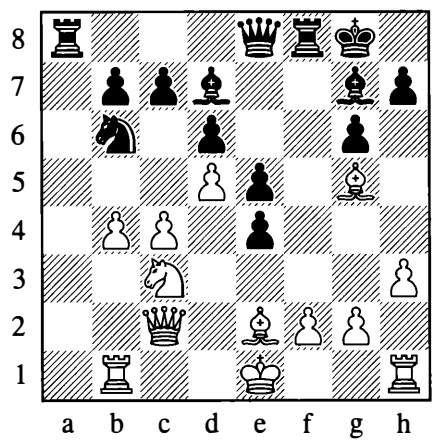
As I said, there is no pushing the pawn to g3 with ...♗xh3 to follow in this chapter, but I have something almost as good for you.

In the next example, we have a non-generic break, but otherwise a very typical reaction. I want the reader to understand that it is

important both to know the typical ideas and to get a sense of the dynamic attitude necessary to play the King's Indian well.

Igor Bjelobrk – Alexander Grischuk

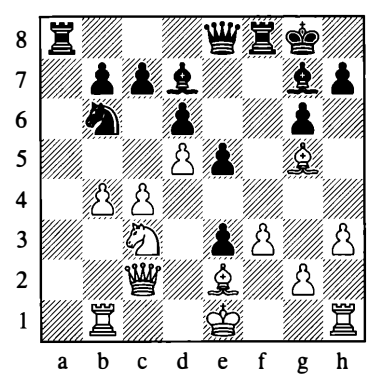
Tromsø (1.1) 2013



White has played a little slowly and is in need of "just one more move" to have a good position. If Black were to act timidly here, White would have time to make this extra move, but against an experienced King's Indian maestro like Grischuk, there is no such luck.

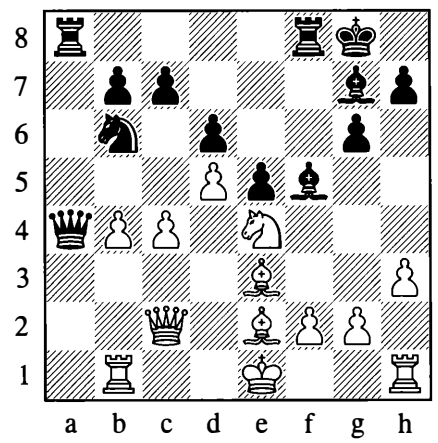
19...e3!! 20.♗xe3

20.f3 would have allowed Black to play the thematic:



20...e4! 21.♘xe4 ♗f5, when all his pieces are playing. For example: 22.0–0 ♘a4 23.♖b3 ♗xe4 24.fxe4 ♕e5 25.♗xe3 ♖xf1† 26.♗xf1 ♘c3 with a big advantage.

20...♗f5 21.♘e4 ♕a4!



22.♕d3

22.♕xa4 ♘xa4 and the knight is heading for c3 in many lines. Besides the loss of at least a pawn, the white position is full of holes. For example: 23.f3 ♗xe4 24.fxe4 ♘c3 25.♖c1 ♘xe4

22...♕a2 23.♗xb6

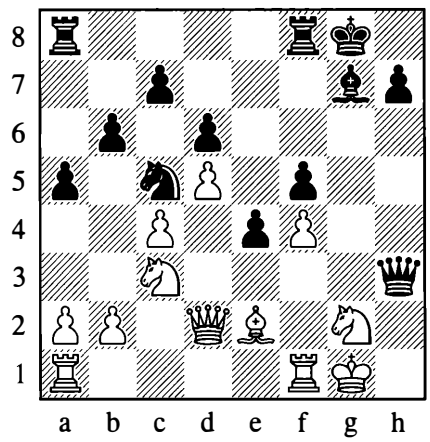
23.♗c1 ♗xe4 24.♕xe4 ♘a4 is also decisive. For example: 25.♗d2 ♘c3! 26.♗xc3 ♖f4 27.♕d3 e4 and White's position collapses.

23...♖a3 24.♗e3 ♖xd3 25.♗xd3 ♗xe4 26.♗xe4 ♗h6 27.0–0 ♗xe3 28.fxe3 ♖xf1† 0–1

We shall continue the journey from the classic ideas into the theme of dynamic line opening. The following example is particularly brilliant in the sidelines, where we can see the importance of making space for the pieces.

Giovanni Vescovi – Teimour Radjabov

Bursa 2010



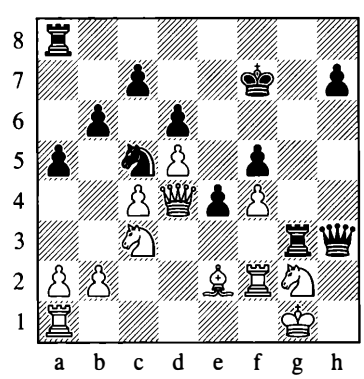
Black has given up a piece and caused real damage, but needs to find a way to bring the remaining pieces into the attack.

23...♔f7!

Creating a path for both of the rooks to enter the attack.

24.♖fe1

The important line to foresee is 24.♕e3 ♗d4!!. A key tempo-winning move. This time around, the King's Indian bishop is rather useless, but it can be given away to win time and clear the g-file for the rooks. 25.♕xd4 ♖g8 26.♖f2 ♖g3!



Making space for the second rook and threatening ...e4-e3 at the same time. 27.♗f1 ♖ag8 28.♖e1 ♖8g6 29.♖d2 ♘d3 and White needs to do something desperate, and give up something he does not want to give, in order to avoid being mated.

24...♖g8 25.♗f1 ♘d3

The black pieces are flowing in effortlessly.

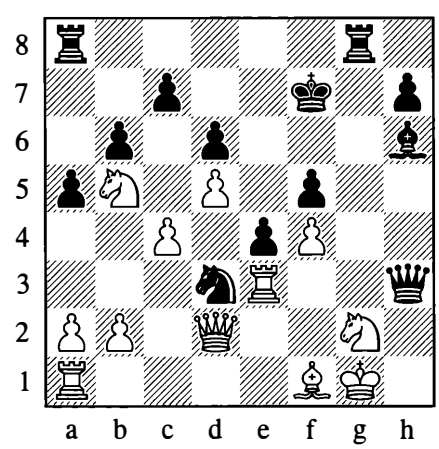
26.♘b5

26.♕e3 also does not offer a serious defence. The simplest line is probably 26...♕xe3† 27.♖xe3 ♗d4 and the attack continues unhampered, despite the exchange of queens. For example: 28.♘d1 ♘xb2 29.♘xb2 ♗xe3† 30.♔h2 ♗d4 31.♖b1 ♖g6 and White cannot avoid further material losses.

26...♗h6!

26...♘e5!? is another typically atypical King's Indian tactic that also gives Black a winning attack.

27.♖e3



27...♘xf4!

A decisive tactic.

28.♖xh3 ♘xh3† 29.♔h2 ♗xd2 30.♔xh3 ♖g5 31.♖d1 ♖ag8 32.♖xd2 ♖h5†

33.♘h4 ♖g4 34.♔h2 ♖gxh4† 35.♔g1 ♖h1†

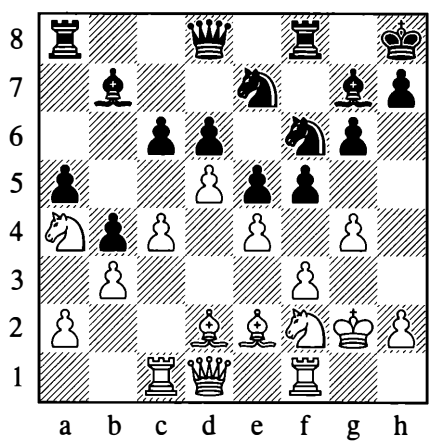
White resigned. After 36.♔f2 ♖5h2† 37.♗g2 f4 the game is over.

0–1

In some of the examples above White has been a bit overmatched. In the next examples, two of the best players of our time are blown away by – you guessed it – dynamic line opening.

Levon Aronian – Magnus Carlsen

Nice (blindfold) 2010



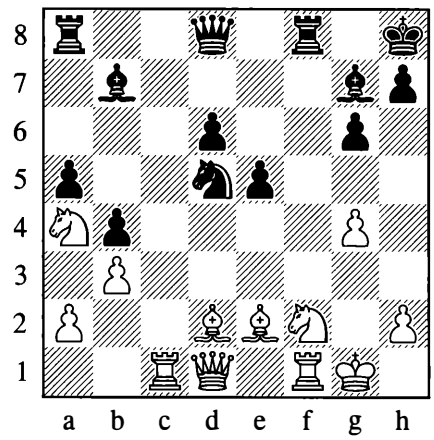
Magnus Carlsen is best known for his endgame skills, but make no mistake about it, Carlsen can play all types of positions. Here he shows his skills as an attacking player in a blindfold rapid game, a few months after he took the Number 1 spot in the rating list.

18...fxe4 19.fxe4 cxd5 20.exd5 ♘exd5!

For a King's Indian player it is easy to give away a piece to open up lines for the rest of the pieces.

21.cxd5 ♘xd5 22.♔g1

22.♔h3 ♘f4† 23.♗xf4 ♖xf4 gives Black a winning attack. A line that a human might calculate would go something like this: 24.♕d3 ♕g5 25.♖c7 ♕h6† 26.♔g3 e4 27.♕xd6 ♖f6 28.♕c5 ♗f8! and White suffers devastating material losses.



22...e4!!

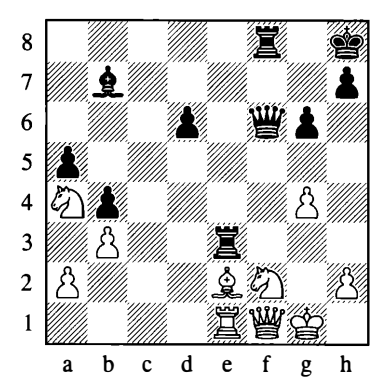
The great point of the sacrifice. White has to take the pawn, which gives Black time to bring in the King's Indian bishop.

23.♘xe4 ♗d4† 24.♖f2

24.♘f2 ♕f6 is entirely decisive. The white pieces are all tied up.

24...♖xf2

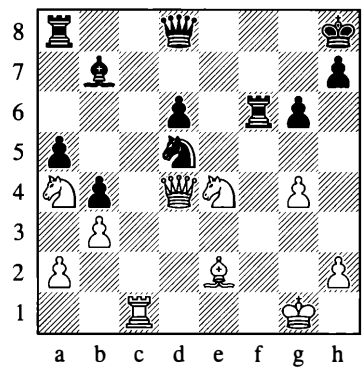
Black could have accelerated his attack a bit with 24...♗xf2†! 25.♘xf2 ♕f6 26.♕f1 ♖ae8 27.♖e1 ♘e3 28.♗xe3 ♖xe3, where White is defenceless.



For example: 29.♘d1 ♖g3†! 30.hxg3 ♕d4† 31.♘f2 ♕e3! and White can do nothing.

25.♘xf2?!

Aronian could have made things more difficult with 25.♗g5!, when Black plays: 25...♗f6 26.♗xf6† (26.♘xf6?! loses to the beautiful 26...♘e3!) 26...♖xf6 27.♕d4



27...♘f4!! 28.♗f1 ♗xe4 29.g5 ♘e6∓ and Black will fight for a win with an extra pawn.

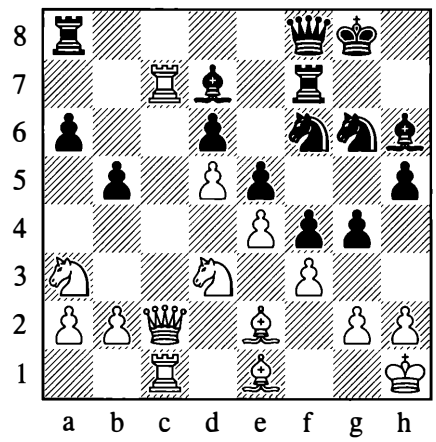
25...♕h4 26.♕e1 ♖f8 27.♗f3 ♖xf3 28.♕e4 ♕xf2†
0–1

Nakamura has won with Black in the King's Indian against many of the top players. You can look up his wins against Anand, Gelfand and Kramnik, should you feel so inclined. For our topic, his most recent example against his new compatriot and Top-10 colleague will do just fine.

Wesley So – Hikaru Nakamura

Sinquefield 2015

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.f3 f5 11.♗e3 f4 12.♗f2 g5 13.♘d3 ♘g6 14.c5 ♘f6 15.♖c1 ♖f7 16.♔h1 h5 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♘b5 a6 19.♘a3 b5 20.♖c6 g4 21.♕c2 ♕f8 22.♖c1 ♗d7 23.♖c7 ♗h6 24.♗e1



Black has managed to regroup in the traditional manner without White managing to create serious threats on the queenside. This allows Black to crash through.

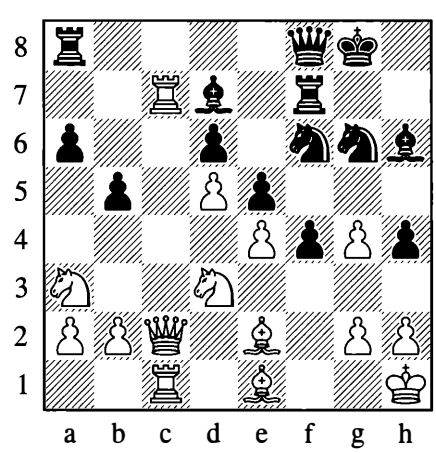
24...h4!

Preparing ...h4-h3 at the right moment.

25.fxg4

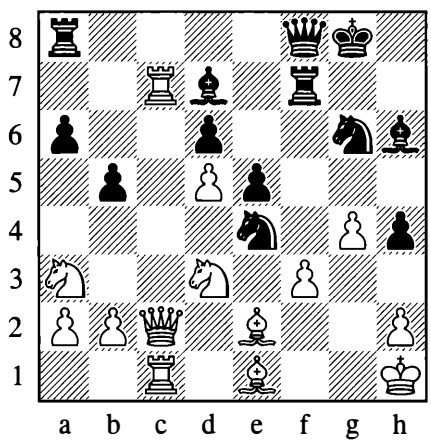
So decides to take up the challenge.

The engine suggests 25.♗b4 is a better move, but there is something artificial about it. Black does not have to play 25...h3 immediately, and he might increase the pressure further before executing the attack. In short, I do not believe that White is OK here.



Now Black sacrifices material in order to open up the position for all his pieces, after which White is defenceless.

25...f3! 26.gxf3 ♘xe4!!



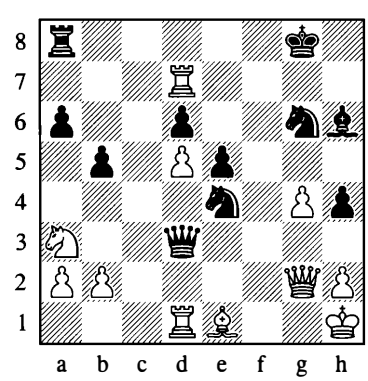
Dynamic line opening in action. All the black pieces are coming to life.

27.♖d1

It is easy to criticize this move, but hard to come up with an alternative.

27.fxe4 ♖f1† 28.♔g2 fails to 28...♗e3!!, when the attack is decisive. The main point is 29.♗xf1 h3†! 30.♔xh3 ♕f3† 31.♗g3 ♗xg4#.

A more complicated variation is 27.♖xd7 ♖xf3 28.♗xf3 ♕xf3† 29.♕g2 ♕xd3 30.♖d1.



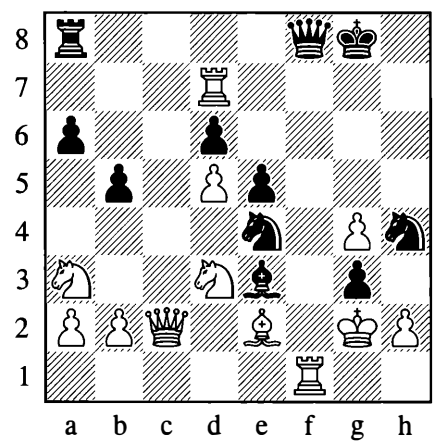
White seems all right until you find 30...♗d2!! 31.♗xd2 ♘f4 32.♗e1 ♘f2†!! 33.♕xf2 ♕e4† and everything falls.

The best chance, 27.♘b4 ♖xf3∓ still gives Black an overwhelming advantage, as White cannot play 28.♕xe4?! on account of 28...♖f1† 29.♔g2 h3†! 30.♔xh3 ♘f4† and it is all over.

27...♖xf3! 28.♖xd7 ♖f1† 29.♔g2 ♗e3! 30.♗g3

30.♗xf1 h3† is the same as before, although after 31.♔xh3 ♕f3† 32.♗g3 it is the knight that delivers checkmate: 32...♘g5#

30...hxg3 31.♖xf1 ♘h4†



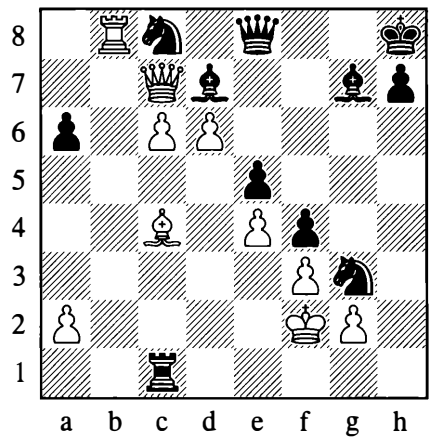
The knights are terrific attackers. White could resign, but he found it more sportsmanlike to play out the attack.

32.♔h3 ♕h6 33.g5 ♘xg5† 34.♔g4 ♘hf3 35.♘f2 ♕h4† 36.♔f5 ♖f8† 37.♔g6 ♖f6† 38.♔xf6 ♘e4† 39.♔g6 ♕g5#
0–1

This chapter is about line opening, but I also feel it is necessary to talk for a moment about dynamic line blocking, with one last example before we go from the glorious theory to the reality of messy practical play. This game is like something from out of this world, involving both dynamic line opening and dynamic line blocking.

Per Auchenberg – Brian Elgaard

Copenhagen 1992



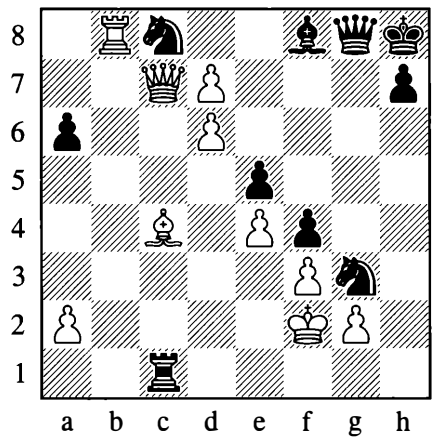
White has made great progress on the queenside, but Black is not without his chances. The key task is to find a way to get the queen into the attack. It all comes together like a beautiful symphony, with three bizarre moves.

34...♕g8!!

Yes, the queen is hanging, but it is also immune on account of ...♖f1#.

White continues with his plan.

35.cxd7 ♗f8!!



Closing the 8th rank for just a moment and opening the g-file for the queen.

36.♖xc8

It is a pity that White did not take with the pawn, but at least he allowed his opponent to execute the checkmate.

36...♘h1†

Knight checks in the corner are always special.

37.♔e2 ♕xg2† 38.♔d3 ♕c2#
0–1

My Games

Alexander Huzman – Ilya Smirin

Sverdlovsk 1987

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6

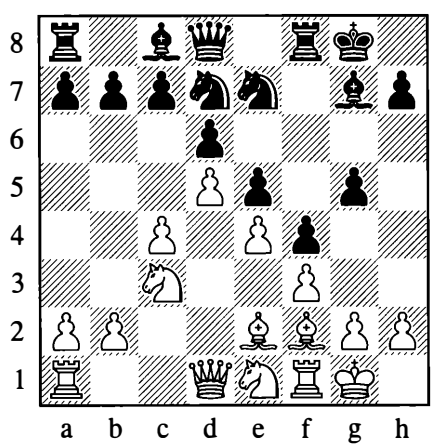
The most popular continuation among such moves as 7...♘a6, 7...♘bd7, 7...exd4, 7...♕e8 and 7...c6.

8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.♗e3

One of the most aggressive setups for White against the KID, and a pet variation of Viktor Korchnoi.

10.♘d3 f5 11.f3 f4 is another popular line; a slightly more "quiet" one.

10...f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗f2 g5



13.♘b5!?

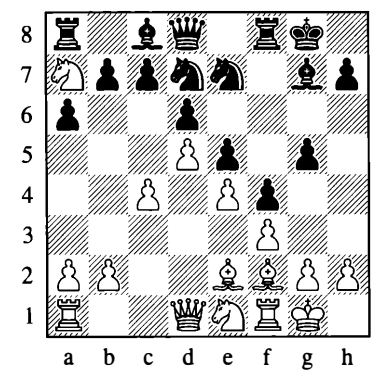
An interesting story is connected with this move. It was first played by Korchnoi against Hulak just two days before my game with Huzman. There were neither databases nor internet in those ancient days, so information usually reached players much more slowly than nowadays. However, the Korchnoi – Hulak game was an exception – it was published the next day in the Russian language newspaper "Soviet Sport". I was lucky, as during the lunch break, only a few hours before the game, Boris Gelfand enlightened me about the brilliant idea played by Korchnoi.

13.♘d3 ♘f6 14.c5 ♘g6 15.♖c1 ♖f7 was played in Taimanov – Najdorf, Zurich 1953, as mentioned in the introduction.

13...b6!

Forewarned is forearmed, even though I did not expect that my future Israeli teammate Alexander Huzman would follow Korchnoi's footsteps. Here is his game:

13...a6 14.♘a7!!



A really beautiful move!

14...♖xa7 15.♗xa7 b6 16.b4 ♗b7 17.c5 dxc5 18.♖c1 ♘c8 19.bxc5 ♗a8 20.c6 ♘f6 21.♗xb6

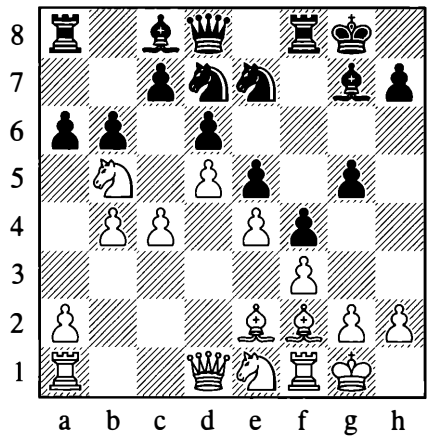
The bishop falls in the end, but the price is very high.

21...♘xb6 22.♗xa6 g4 23.♘d3 g3 24.h3 ♘e8 25.♘c5

White won in Korchnoi – Hulak, Zagreb 1987.

I did not want to repeat Hulak's fate, and found the best move 13...b6 over the board.

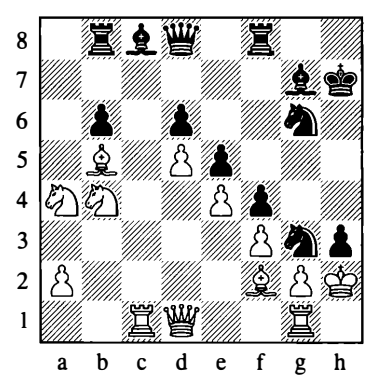
14.b4 a6



15.♘a3

In my opinion, retreating this knight to c3 is more logical, even though Black is usually doing OK after that. Below is another of Korchnoi's games – this time he was on the receiving end of Black's attack:

15.♘c3 h5 16.♔h1 ♘f6 17.c5 g4 18.cxb6 cxb6 19.♖c1 g3 20.♗g1 gxh2 21.♗f2 h4 22.♘a4 ♖b8 23.b5 axb5 24.♗xb5 ♘h5 25.♔xh2 ♘g3 26.♖g1 ♘g6 27.♘d3 ♔h7 28.♘b4 h3



29.♖xc8!?

29.gxh3 ♗xh3! 30.♔xh3 ♕g5!! gives Black a winning attack.

29...♖xc8 30.gxh3 ♖h8 31.♗xb6 ♕e7 32.♘d3?! ♖b8!

Black has a big attack and won in Korchnoi – Ye Jiangchuan, Novi Sad 1990.

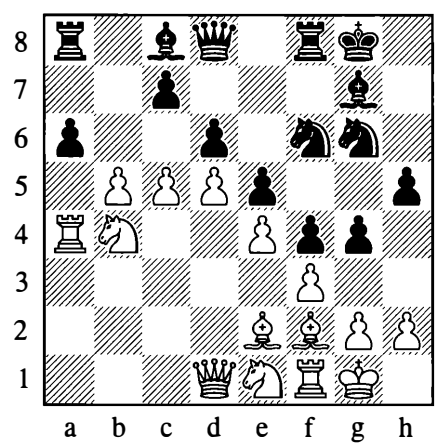
15...h5?!

Black starts his usual routine in this variation – activity (attack) against the opponent's king. However, in this case I would prefer 15...♖f6, with the further transfer of this rook to g6 or h6, or 15...♘f6 16.c5 b5, which I like most. In contrast, after 15...a5?! (activity on the wrong flank) 16.c5! axb4 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♘c4 ♘c5 19.♘d3 White's chances should definitely be preferred – he is far ahead in developing an initiative.

16.c5 b5

Now it's evident that the knight on a3 is preventing White from playing a2-a4, so he must move it first – and time is very valuable in such positions.

17.♘ac2 ♘f6 18.a4 bxa4 19.♖xa4 ♘g6 20.b5 g4 21.♘b4



21...g3!

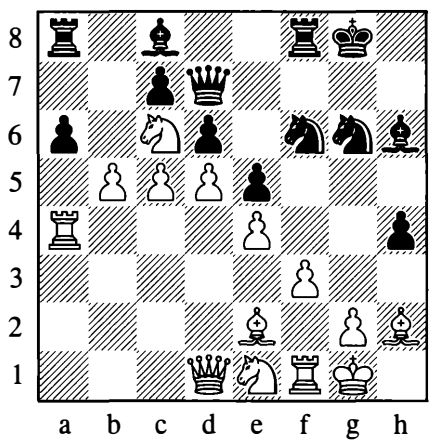
After the famous game Taimanov – Najdorf (see above) this pawn sacrifice became typical in such positions.

22.hxg3 fxg3 23.♗xg3 h4

Black's activity is based mainly on the weak dark squares around the white monarch. Black's knights strive to reach f4 and g3; the bishop will support them from h6 and the g-file is free for Black's heavy artillery. The question is: will

Black have enough time to do all these things, or will the opponent smash Black's queenside and/or centre first?

24.♘c6 ♕d7 25.♗h2 ♗h6

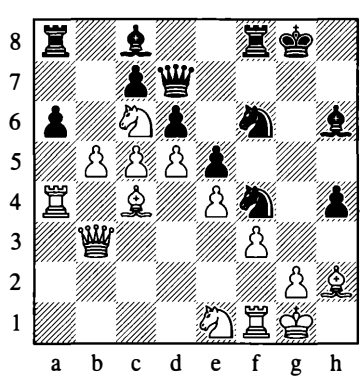


Now 26...♗e3† 27.♔h1 ♘h5 is threatened.

26.f4?!

It's easy to understand the motivations behind this drastic decision: the black knight is deprived of the h5-square and White's pieces on the kingside have more space. On the other hand, White has returned the sacrificed pawn (though he will immediately take the pawn on a6), one black knight is already *en route* to the excellent outpost at f4, and the e4-pawn and g4-square have become much weaker. I think the more principled (and stronger) continuation was:

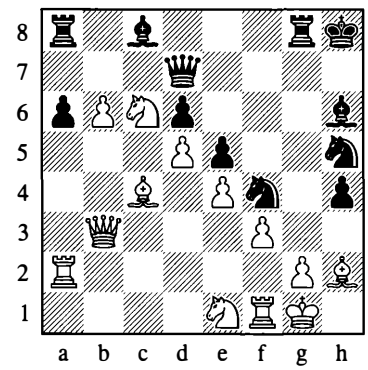
26.♕b3 ♘f4 27.♗c4



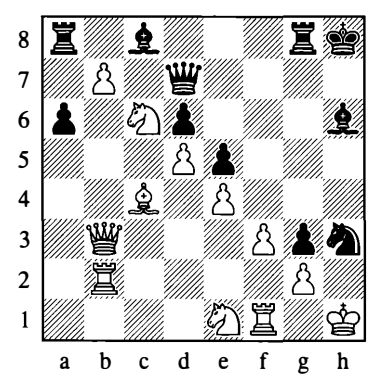
After which the following complications are possible:

27...♔h8 28.b6

28.♖a2 ♖g8 29.cxd6 cxd6 30.b6 ♘6h5



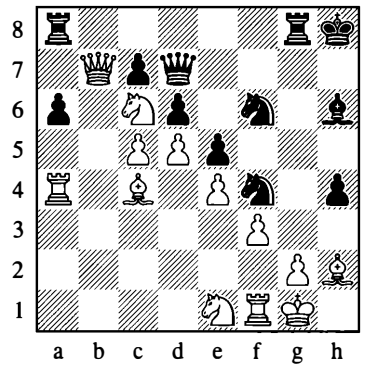
31.♖b2 (the following exciting variations show the strength and danger of Black's direct assault against the white king: 31.♘a5 ♘h3† 32.♔h1 ♘g3† 33.♗xg3 hxg3 34.b7 ♗e3 And now 35.bxa8=♕ ♕h7–+ or 35.bxc8=♕ ♖axc8 36.♕b7 ♖c7 37.♕xc7 ♘f2† 38.♖fxf2 gxf2 39.♖xf2 ♕xc7.) 31...♘h3† 32.♔h1 ♘g3† 33.♗xg3 hxg3 34.b7 (34.gxh3 ♕xh3† 35.♔g1 ♗f4 36.♖g2 ♖g7–+)



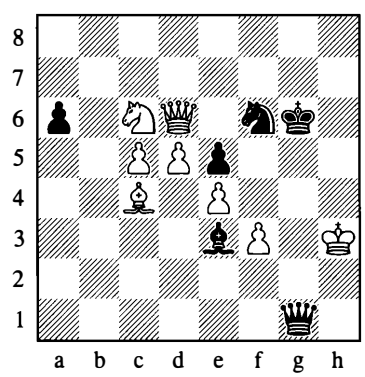
34...♗e3!! 35.bxc8=♕ ♖axc8 36.♕xe3 ♘f4 37.♕a7 ♕e8 and despite two extra pieces White is helpless to prevent mate after ...♕h5.

28...♖g8 29.bxc7

29.b7 seems to be losing after 29...♗xb7 30.♕xb7



30...♘xg2! 31.♘xg2 h3 32.♖a2 ♗e3† 33.♔h1 hxg2† 34.♖xg2 ♖xg2 35.♔xg2 ♖g8† 36.♗g3 ♕h7 37.♖h1 ♖xg3† 38.♔xg3 ♕xh1 39.♕c8† ♔g7 40.♕xc7† ♔g6 41.♕xd6 ♕g1† 42.♔h3

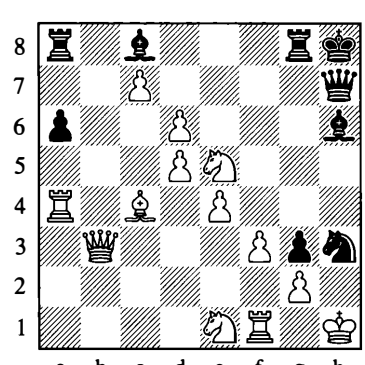


42...♗f4 43.♘xe5† ♔h5–+ Quite a journey for the black king!

29...♘6h5 30.cxd6 ♘h3† 31.♔h1 ♘g3† 32.♗xg3 hxg3 33.♘xe5

33.♘e7 ♘f4!–+

33...♕h7



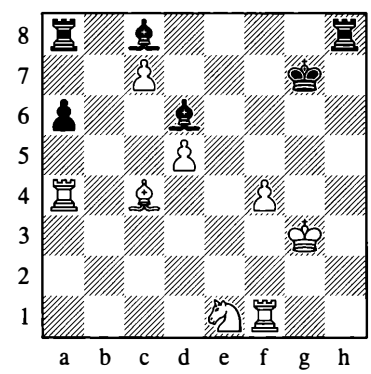
34.gxh3

The only move in this wild and picturesque position. If 34.♕c3? ♖g7 35.d7 ♗xd7 36.♗xa6 ♗d2! White gets mated in 6 according to the silicon brains.

34...♗e3 35.♘f7† ♔g7

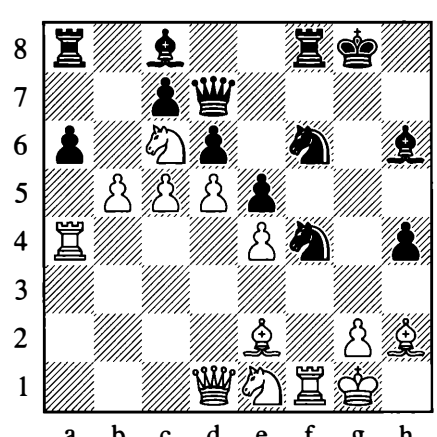
And after the forced:

36.♘g5! ♗xg5 37.♕b2† ♗f6 38.e5 ♕xh3† 39.♔g1 ♕h2† 40.♕xh2 gxh2† 41.♔xh2 ♗xe5† 42.f4 ♖h8† 43.♔g3 ♗xd6



There arises a complex endgame, the most probable result of which is a draw, despite White's extra pawn (the pawn on c7 will fall). I apologize for showing such long and possibly not error-free variations. Usually I try to avoid that, but on this occasion these variations are very important for understanding the whole picture. Also I hope you will find them interesting and even paradoxical.

26...♘xf4



27.bxa6?

In such a sharp and unbalanced position this natural move, which would probably be made by the vast majority of players, proves to be a mistake.

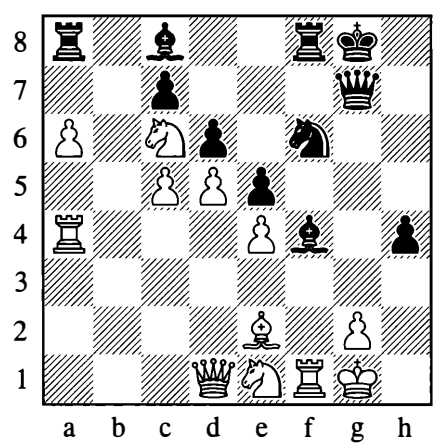
Correct was 27.♘d3!, with an unclear battle.

27...♕g7 28.♗xf4

The knight on f4 is very annoying, so Huzman decided to exchange it. But now the bishop, which replaces the knight, becomes really menacing. It's hard to suggest something better, for instance:

28.♔h1 ♘g4 29.♗g1 (29.♖a3 ♘h3!–+) 29... h3, and from h1 the king stares in fear at his numerous enemies.

28...♗xf4



29.♕d3

Again, it's not easy to offer a better move.

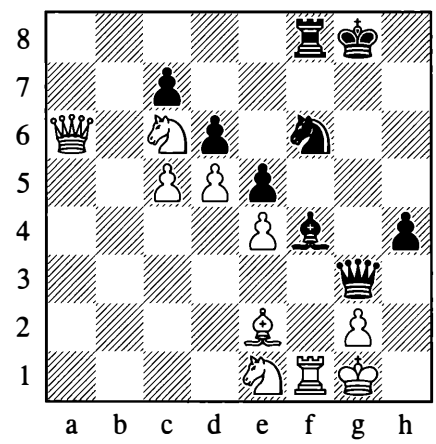
After 29.cxd6 ♕g3!? 30.♖xf4 ♕xf4 White is in trouble.

29...♖xa6?!

A tempting but, alas, wrong sacrifice.

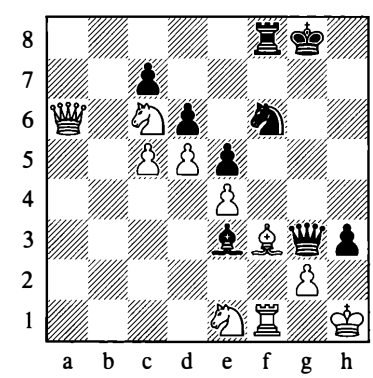
After the immediate 29...♘d7! (my opponent saw this move during the game) 30.cxd6 ♘c5! 31.♘e7† ♔h7 32.♕a3 ♘xa4 Black would have a decisive advantage.

30.♖xa6 ♗xa6 31.♕xa6 ♕g3



32.♕d3?

A serious mistake. After 32.♗f3 ♗e3† (32...h3? 33.♘e7† ♔h7 34.♘f5 ♕h2† 35.♔f2 ♖g8 36.♕c4+–; 32...♘xe4 33.♗xe4 ♕h2† 34.♔f2 ♕g3† 35.♔g1=) 33.♔h1 h3

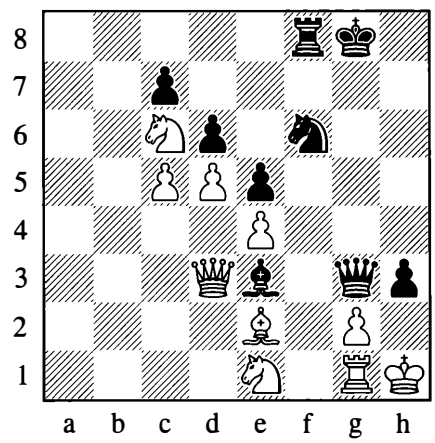


34.♕e2! (the queen is back in time) 34...♗f4 35.gxh3 ♕xh3† 36.♔g1 ♘g4 (36...♔h7 37.♖f2) 37.♘c2 ♗h2† 38.♔h1 the game would have ended in a draw.

32...♗e3† 33.♔h1 h3! 34.♖g1?

The last error in time trouble.

34.♖f3 ♕xe1† 35.♗f1 still would have allowed White to hold on, even though Black is much better.



34...♔f7!

Now the rook will join the attack from h8 to threaten checkmate. White cannot prevent this, so he resigned.

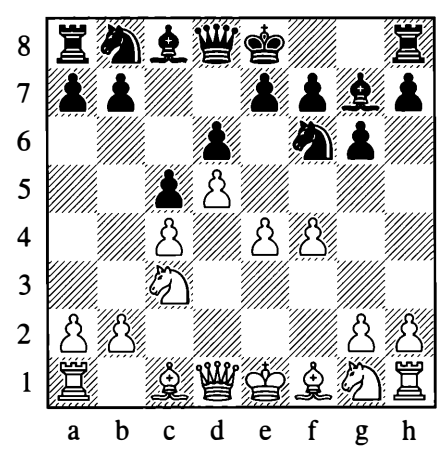
0–1

Yuri Dokhoian – Ilya Smirin

Sverdlovsk 1987

This game, as was my encounter with Huzman, was played in a competition that was very memorable for me. The first league of the USSR Championship in Sverdlovsk (now Ekaterinburg) was my first really big success. Despite being a newcomer to tournaments of this calibre, I took clear first place ahead of such players as Tseshkovsky, Khalifman, Gelfand, Tukmakov and Malaniuk. Before the tournament I had not touched chess or even thought about it for around two months. The reason – I was in military service from 1986-88. By winning this first league I qualified for the 1988 USSR Championship. It was a super-tournament with the participation of Kasparov, Karpov, Yusupov, Salov, Ivanchuk, Beliavsky, Vaganian and others, but that's already a different story.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.f4



The aggressive Four Pawns Attack (with a slightly different move order) – a sign that White is going for the maximum in the opening. He would love to smash his opponent with his powerful centre.

6...0–0 7.♘f3 e6

As a teenager, a couple of times I played a pawn sacrifice in the spirit of the Benko Gambit – 7...b5 8.cxb5 a6 9.a4 ♕a5 – but without much success.

8.dxe6

More common is:

8.♗e2 exd5 9.cxd5

9.exd5!?

9...♗g4

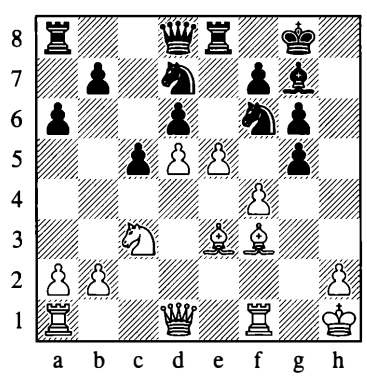
9...♖e8 10.e5 leads to very deeply analysed complications. To play such lines requires one to have a lot of theoretical knowledge and a good memory.

10.0–0

The following is an inspiring (for Black) game by the great Mikhail Tal:

10...♗xf3

Modern theory recommends 10...♘bd7. 11.♗xf3 ♘bd7 12.♔h1 a6 13.♗e3 ♖e8 14.g4 h6 15.g5 hxg5 16.e5



16...gxf4! 17.exf6 ♖xe3 18.fxg7 ♘e5 19.♗g2 ♕g5 20.♘e4 ♕h4 21.♕d2 ♔xg7 22.♕f2 ♕xf2 23.♖xf2 f3 24.♘xd6 ♖d8 25.♘xb7 fxg2† 26.♔xg2 ♖xd5 27.b3 ♘d3 28.♖c2 ♖e1

0–1 Doroshkievich – Tal, Yerevan 1975.

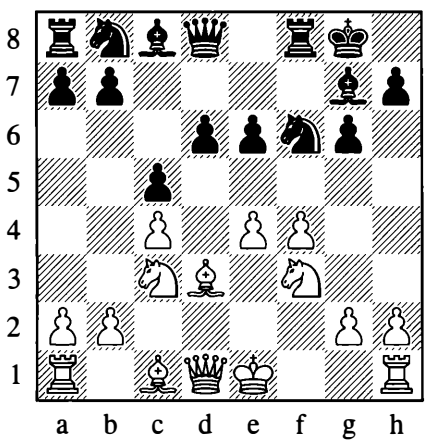
However, the move made by Yuri Dokhoian (a former long-time second of Garry Kasparov, and captain of both the men's and women's Russian national team) has its venom.

8...fxe6

Now Black's pawn formation in the centre becomes stronger.

I like the other possible capture 8...♗xe6 less, but perhaps it's just a matter of taste.

9.♗d3



9...e5!?

Over-the-board improvisation.

The main continuation here is:

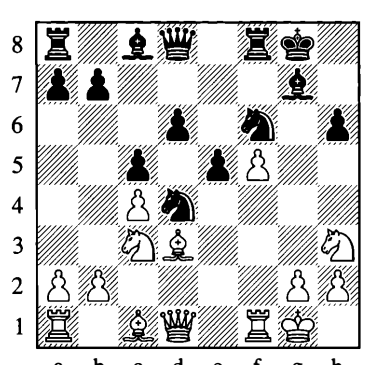
9...♘c6 10.0–0 ♘d4

I'd like to mention a game by another World Champion:

11.♘g5

More promising looks 11.♘xd4 cxd4 12.♘b5 and Black has to solve certain problems.

11...e5 12.f5 h6 13.♘h3 gxf5 14.exf5



14...b5! 15.♗e3 bxc4 16.♗xc4† ♔h8 17.♗xd4 cxd4 18.♘d5 ♗a6! 19.♘xf6 ♗xc4 20.♘h5 ♗xf1 21.♕g4 ♕d7 22.♖xf1 d3 23.♕f3 d2 24.g4 ♖ac8 25.♕d3 ♕a4 26.♘f2 ♕d4

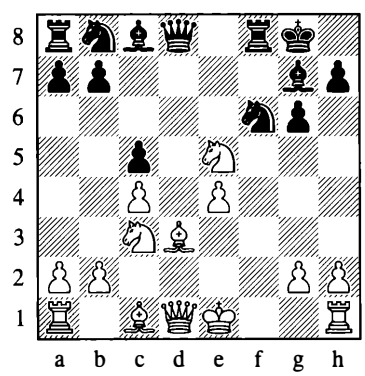
Black won in Christiansen – Kasparov, Moscow 1982.

10.fxe5

Interesting complications could have resulted after 10.f5!? gxf5 11.exf5 d5!? 12.cxd5 (12.♘xd5 is possible as well) 12...e4. I will leave it to the reader to bring in a verdict.

10...dxe5 11.0–0

On the greedy: 11.♘xe5



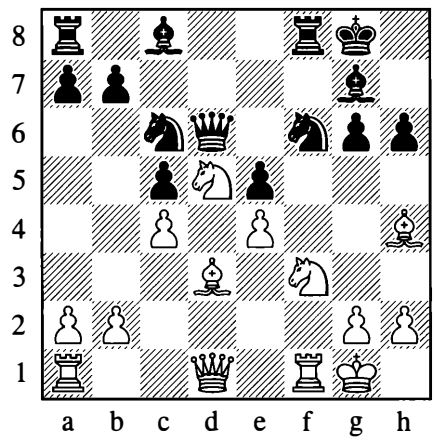
Black can (and should) continue 11...♘g4! 12.♘f3 ♖xf3! 13.gxf3 (13.♕xf3? ♘e5) 13...♕h4† 14.♔d2 ♘f2 15.♕e1 ♘c6! (the point), with a devastating attack.

11...♘c6

So the position is almost symmetrical, the only difference being that the bishop on g7 is potentially slightly more active than its counterpart on d3. Since it is White's turn to move, chances should be roughly equal.

12.♗g5 h6 13.♗h4 ♕d6 14.♘d5?!

In my opinion 14.♗c2 ♘d4 15.♘xd4 cxd4 16.♘d5 ♘xd5 17.cxd5=, with a dull position, was more to the point. But in that case I doubt this game would have been in this book.



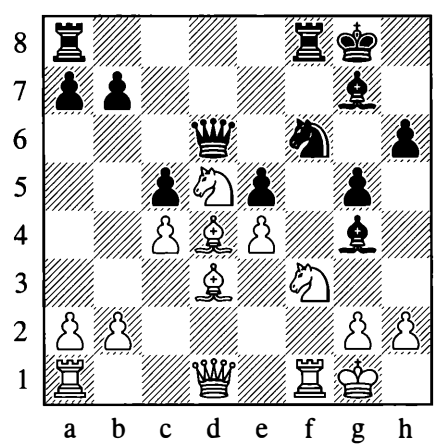
14...g5!

Fighting for the initiative.

15.♗e1

After 15.♗g3 ♘h5∓ Black's activity is annoying, and it is not easy to find a plan for White.

15...♗g4 16.♗c3 ♘d4 17.♗xd4



This bishop has made a long trip just to be exchanged for the knight on d4 – a definite achievement for Black.

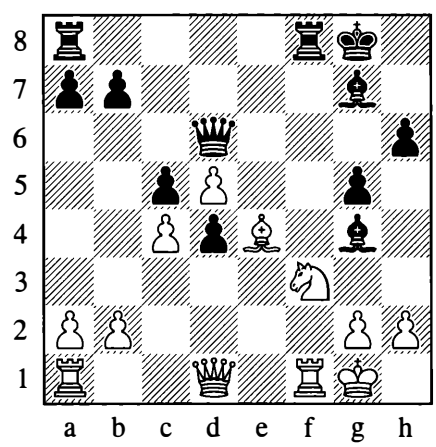
17...♘xd5! 18.exd5

18.♗xe5 ♗xe5 19.exd5 ♗xh2† understandably did not appeal to my opponent.

18...exd4 19.♗e4

It seems that White has a solid and perfectly safe position.

19.h3, to check the intentions of the bishop on g4, was the better move. Now if 19...♗xh3 (19...♗h5 20.♗c2 ♕f4 21.♕d3 ♕e3† 22.♕xe3 dxe3 23.g4 ♗f7 24.♖ae1 ♖ae8 25.♖e2 and White is not worse in this ending; 19...♗d7!?) 20.gxh3 ♕g3† 21.♔h1 ♕xh3† 22.♘h2 ♗e5 23.♕c2 ♗xh2 24.♗f5 ♖xf5 25.♕xf5 ♕xf5 26.♖xf5 ♗f4 Black would remain slightly better, with two pawns for the exchange, but after, let's say, 27.♖e1 a draw is the most probable outcome.



19...b5!

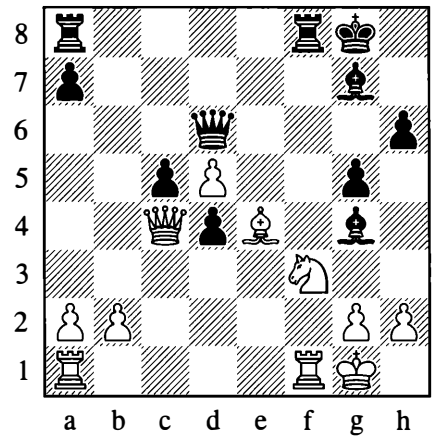
With the clear goal of opening up the position; my bishop pair would appreciate that very much!

20.♕d3?

This natural move is a mistake, but it was not easy to foresee Black's reaction.

20.cxb5 c4∓ was barely playable, but after the modest 20.b3 bxc4 21.bxc4 ♖ab8 Black would have only a little pressure.

20...bxc4 21.♕xc4

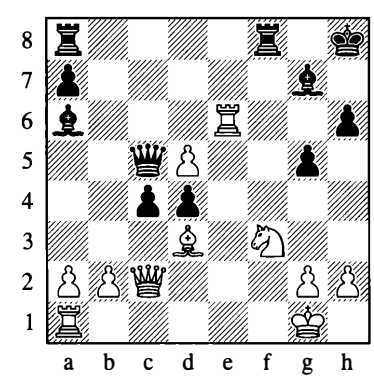


21...♗c8!

A very strong and unexpected manoeuvre, with the idea ...♗a6. Also ...g5-g4 may be an important threat in some lines.

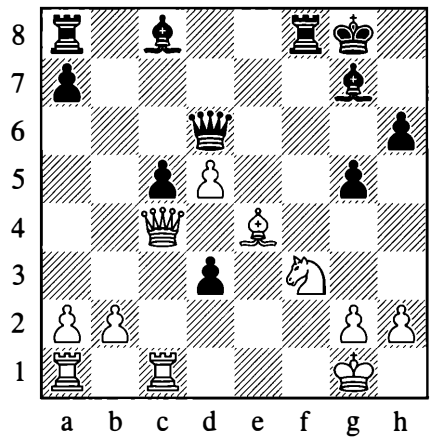
22.♖fc1

Slightly preferable was 22.♕c2 ♗a6 23.♖fe1, but with energetic play – 23...c4 24.♗h7† ♔h8 25.♖e6 ♕c5! 26.♗d3 (26.♖xa6 d3† 27.♕f2 ♕xf2† 28.♔xf2 ♔xh7)



26...♕b5! 27.♖xa6 cxd3 28.♕c6 ♕xb2 29.♕c1 ♕c3 30.♖c6 d2! 31.♖xc3 dxc1=♕† 32.♖cxc1 d3 33.♖ab1 g4 – Black obtains a nearly-decisive advantage in the endgame.

22...d3!



I am sorry for using so many diagrams, but this four-move span (starting from my 19th move) is one of my favourites in my whole career. It's hard to believe, but this powerful push basically decides the game in Black's favour. The dynamics of Black's position are so strong that the opponent is helpless.

23.♗xd3

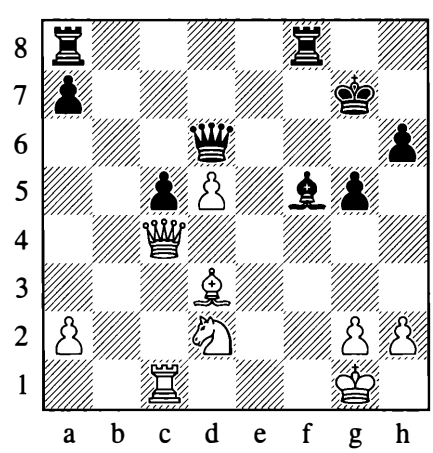
What else? 23.♕xc5 ♕xc5† 24.♖xc5 g4 25.♘d2 ♗d4† and 23.♖ab1 ♗a6 24.♕xc5 ♕xc5† 25.♖xc5 ♖xf3 26.♗xf3 ♗d4† and Black wins in both cases.

23...♗xb2

And a simple fork is the result. A decisive loss of the exchange is unavoidable.

24.♖ab1 ♗xc1 25.♖xc1 ♗f5–+ 26.♘d2 ♔g7?!

26...♗xd3 27.♕xd3 ♖ae8 would win faster.



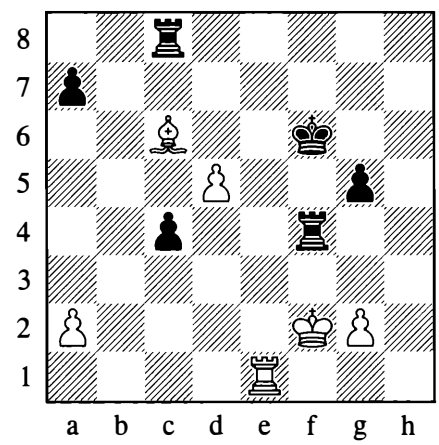
27.♘e4?!

More stubborn was 27.♕c3† ♕f6 28.♕xf6† ♖xf6 29.♗b5, but after 29...♖b8 30.♖xc5 a6 31.♖c7† ♔f8 32.♗f1 ♖b2 Black is winning anyway.

27...♕e5 28.h4 ♗xe4 29.♕xe4 ♕xe4 30.♗xe4 ♖f4

The rest is simple and does not require further comment.

31.♗d3 ♖d4 32.♗b5 ♖c8 33.♗c6 c4 34.hxg5 hxg5 35.♔f2 ♔f6 36.♖e1 ♖f4†



37.♔g3 c3 38.♖e6† ♔f7 39.♖e2 ♖c4 40.♖c2 ♖b8 41.♗d7 ♖b2 42.♖c1 c2 43.♗f5 ♔f6 44.♗h7 ♖xa2 45.d6 ♖b2 46.♖f1† ♔g7 47.d7 ♖d4 48.♗f5 ♖b1

What I like most about this game is the speed with which White's seemingly solid position fell apart after a few forceful strokes.

0–1

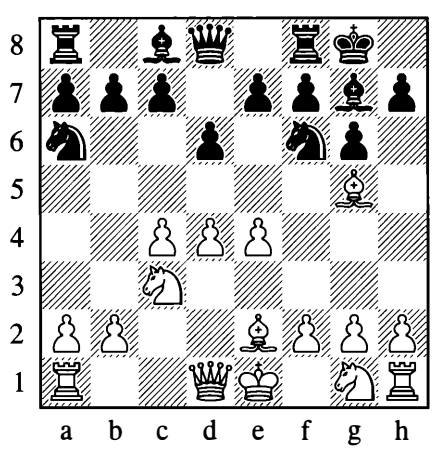
Rafael Leitao – Ilya Smirin

New York 2000

This game was played in the penultimate round of the New York Open. Just as it sounds, this was a traditional big open tournament held every year in New York. I managed to take clear first place by beating Becerra, Leitao and the young rising star 16-year-old Alexander Grischuk in the last three rounds. Alas, up to now this was the last New York Open held in the centre of Manhattan – after 2000 it ceased to exist. That's a pity, because I liked the tournament's atmosphere, which made the event very special among those I played in the USA. As a small consolation, I remain the last winner of this famous event.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♗g5 ♘a6

The main idea of this move is that after 6...♘bd7 7.♕d2 e5 8.d5 Black cannot play 8...c6? due to 9.dxc6 bxc6 10.♕xd6.



7.♕d2

The more straightforward and aggressive 7.f4 was played in an old game by Yuri Yakovich.

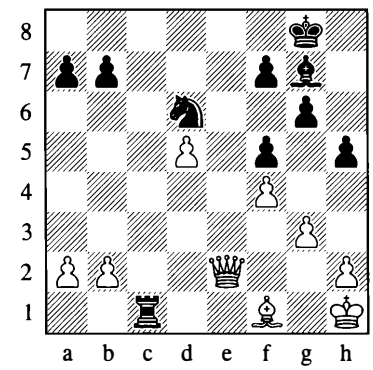
7...c6 8.♘f3 ♘c7 9.♕d2 d5

9...b5!?

10.♗xf6 exf6 11.0–0

Better is 11.exd5 cxd5 12.c5.

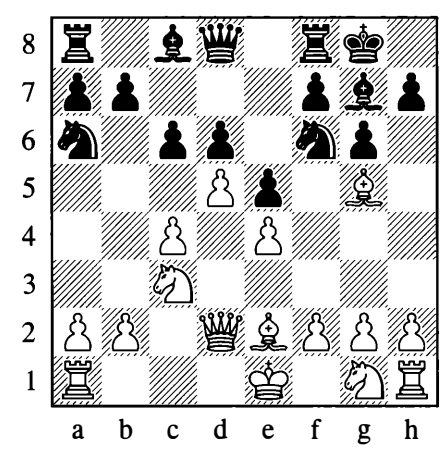
11...dxe4 12.♘xe4 ♗g4 13.♖ad1 ♕e7 14.♘f2 ♗xf3 15.♗xf3 f5 16.d5 cxd5 17.cxd5 ♕d6 18.g3 ♘b5 19.♗g2 ♖ac8 20.♔h1 ♖c4 21.♘d3 ♖fc8 22.♖c1 h5 23.♕e2 ♕c7 24.♖xc4 ♕xc4 25.♖c1 ♕xc1† 26.♘xc1 ♖xc1† 27.♗f1 ♘d6



28.b3 ♖b1 29.♕d3 ♖b2 30.♗g2 ♖xa2 31.h4 a5 32.♕e3 b5 33.♕b6 ♗f8 34.♗f3 ♖a3 35.♔g2 b4 36.♗d1 ♖a2† 37.♔f1 ♘e4 38.♔e1 ♗c5 39.♕b8† ♔h7 40.♕e8 ♔g7 41.♕e5† ♔g8 42.♕b8† ♗f8 43.♗f3 ♘d6 44.♕b6 ♖a3 45.♗d1 ♘e4 46.♗f3 ♖a1† 47.♔e2 ♘d6 48.♔d3 ♖c1 49.♕xa5 ♖c3† 50.♔e2 ♖xb3 51.♕a4 ♖b2† 52.♔d3 b3 53.♗d1 ♘e4

0–1 Yakovich – Smirin, Munich 1993.

7...e5 8.d5 c6



Now this advance is possible. Black starts some activity on the queenside. There is always

a question in positions of this type in the KID: which side will benefit more from that? Quite often queenside play may boomerang for Black, and White turns out to be superior on this part of the board after all. Usually it depends on nuances and the placement of pieces. Here, for instance, in Black's favour is the fact that after a likely pawn exchange on d5 (White will recapture cxd5) the knight on g1 will not easily be able to reach its desired destination on c4 – the f3-square, needed for the manoeuvre ♘f3-d2-c4, will be occupied on the very next move.

9.f3

Of course 9.♘f3 ♘c5 would be great for Black.

9...♕a5

I have played this move a few times.

A more popular line here is:

9...cxd5 10.cxd5 ♗d7

Defining the pawn structure in the centre. For instance:

11.♗b5!?

A logical idea – to swap the light-squared bishops and vacate the e2-square for the knight on g1 – but it costs White some tempos.

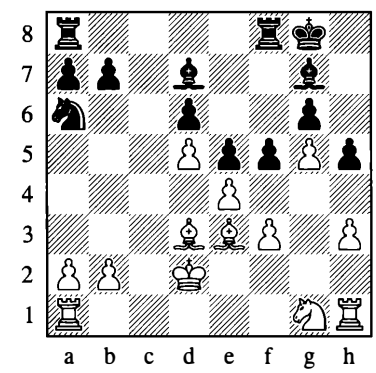
11...♗xb5 12.♘xb5 ♕b6 13.♘c3 ♘c5 14.♖b1 ♘h5 15.♗e3 ♘f4 16.g3 ♘fd3† 17.♔f1

With complicated play in Yusupov – Gelfand, Dortmund 1997.

10.♗d3!?

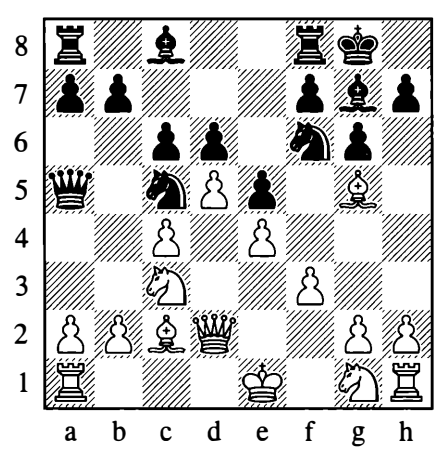
White prepares the natural ♘ge2 and short castling. If Black does not create counterplay quickly, he will just stand worse, with a lack of space, as is often the case in the KID.

A couple of times I have faced 10.g4 here – this move aims to grab some space on the kingside and to prepare the development of the knight on g1 to f2 via h3. After this is done, White may even think about aggression with h2-h4-h5 (the immediate h4 with the knight still on g1 may face the counterpunch ...h7-h5). 10...h5!? This move disturbs the opponent's plan, but Black's king may feel a little uneasy. 11.h3 cxd5 12.♘xd5 (12.cxd5 ♗d7 would lead to a complicated middlegame) 12...♕xd2† 13.♔xd2 ♘xd5 14.cxd5 f6 15.♗e3 f5 16.g5 ♗d7 17.♗d3



17...h4!? 18.♖c1 ♘c5 19.♗xc5 dxc5 20.♖xc5 ♖fc8 21.♖xc8† ♖xc8 22.exf5 gxf5 23.♘e2 ♗f8, and Black has sufficient (at least) compensation for the pawn in the endgame; Yusupov – Smirin, Yerevan 1996.

10...♘c5 11.♗c2

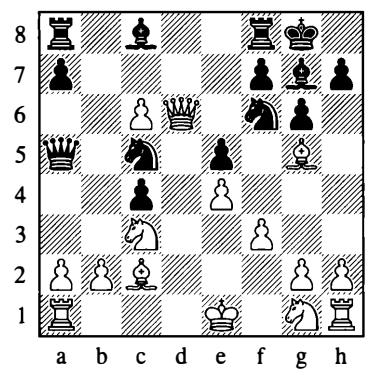


11...b5!?

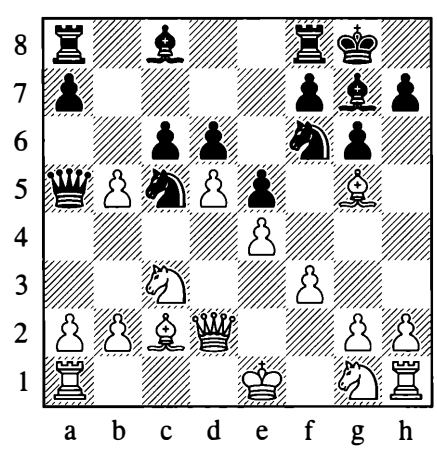
An interesting over-the-board improvisation. I wanted to use White's temporary lack of development and to undermine the central pawn chain. Strictly speaking, I did not have much choice – after 11...cxd5 12.cxd5 ♗d7 13.a3 all the black pieces would have to retreat very soon, and I certainly wanted to avoid that.

12.cxb5

12.dxc6 bxc4 13.♕xd6? does not work:



13...♖d8 14.♕e7 ♗f8 15.♕xf6 ♖d6 and the queen is trapped on account of 16.♕xe5 ♘d3† 17.♗xd3 ♕xe5.



12...cxd5

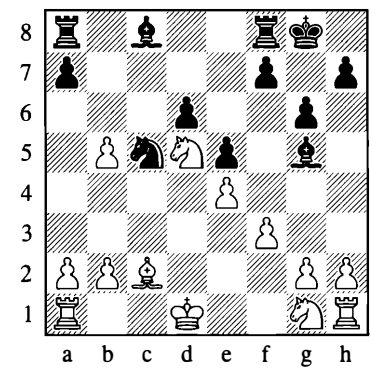
This pawn sacrifice was the idea behind my 11th move.

After the naive 12...cxb5? 13.a3 Black would remain much worse.

13.exd5?!

The wrong capture. Rafael had to choose another way, occupying the central square d5 with the knight rather than the pawn:

13.♗xf6! ♗xf6 14.♘xd5 ♕xd2† 15.♔xd2 ♗g5† 16.♔d1

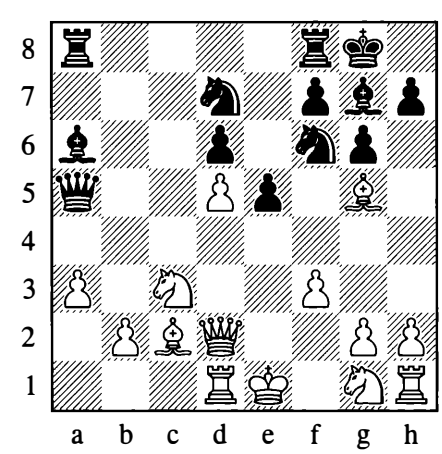


And after 16...♗b7 17.♘e2 (17.♘c3!? ♖fd8 18.♘h3 ♗e3 19.♔e2 ♗d4 20.♘f2 does not look not bad either) 17...♗xd5 18.exd5 ♖fc8 19.♘c3 ♗e3, transferring the bishop to d4, Black would have compensation for the pawn, but White would probably keep some edge – the extra pawn is an extra pawn after all.

13...♗b7 14.♖d1 a6!

With the intention of opening some files on the queenside in the spirit of the Benko Gambit.

15.a3 ♘cd7 16.bxa6 ♗xa6



Now Black will combine pressure against the pawn on d5 with play on the queenside. A very important factor is that White's king is still in the centre.

17.♘ge2 ♘b6

The c4-square is an excellent destination for this knight.

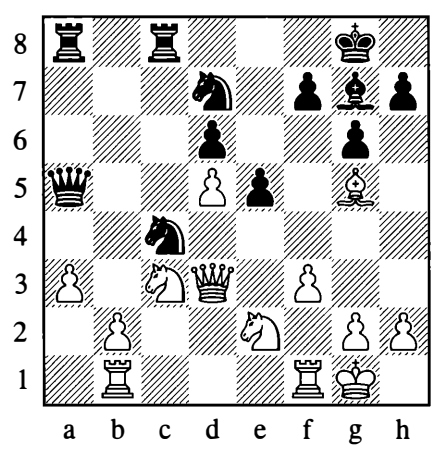
18.♗d3 ♗xd3 19.♕xd3 ♖fc8 20.0–0?!

The Brazilian Grandmaster is in a hurry to castle, but it was better to offer a queen exchange before it's too late – 20.♕b5! with roughly equal chances. If 20...♕xb5 21.♘xb5 ♘fxd5 22.b3!? ♖c2 23.♔f2 White's pieces are active enough.

20...♘c4 21.♖b1

Bad would be 21.♗c1? ♘xb2 22.♗xb2 ♕b6† 23.♔h1 ♕xb2, with a clear edge.

21...♘d7



The knight moves closer to the battlefield and now Black is ready for ...f7-f5, which will considerably strengthen his position.

22.♘a2?

An oversight. Leitao wanted to transfer this knight to c6 via b4, but he just has no time to do it. He should has preferred the passive 22.♔h1 ♖ab8 23.♗c1, with a position that is still defensible. 22.♖fc1 would lead to very sad consequences: 22...♖ab8 23.♖c2 ♘xa3! 24.♖a1 (24.bxa3? ♖xb1† 25.♘xb1 ♕e1#) 24...♕c5† 25.♗e3 ♕xe3† 26.♕xe3 ♘xc2 27.♕c1 ♘xa1∓ and the queen is clearly no match for the black rooks.

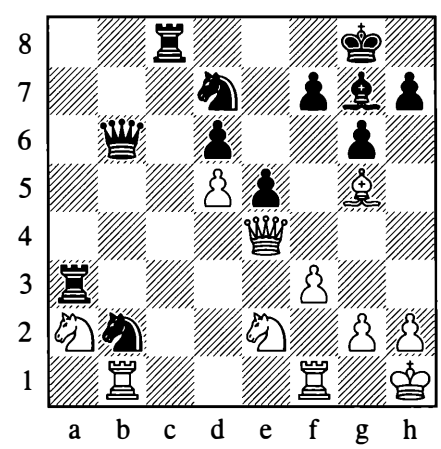
22...♕b6† 23.♔h1

The last mistake. The only move was 23.♖f2, even though Black is clearly dominant after, let's say, 23...f5 24.♘ac3 e4 25.fxe4 ♘de5 26.♕g3 ♘g4.

23...♘xb2 24.♕e4

24.♕d2 ♘c4

24...♖xa3



White's pawns are falling one by one. The end is near.

25.♘ac3

Or 25.♘b4 ♖c4–+.

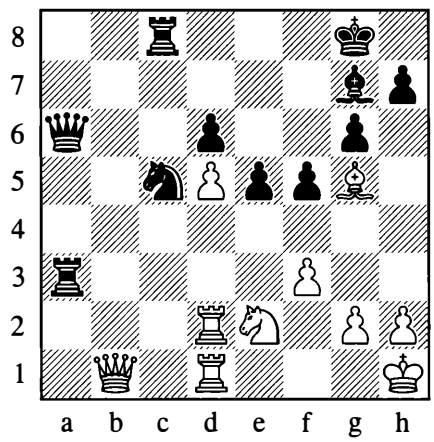
25...♕a6!

25...♖axc3 26.♘xc3 ♖xc3 would win even faster, but I did not want my knight on b2 to be pinned, and chose a more "human" continuation.

26.♖xb2 ♖axc3–+

Now the white knight is the one that is pinned.

27.♖d1 ♖a3 28.♖bd2 ♘c5 29.♕b1 f5



The triumph of Black's strategy. It was very pleasant to have such an ideal position.

30.♗h4 e4 31.fxe4 ♖a1

White resigned – heavy material losses are unavoidable.

0–1

Viktor Gavrikov – Ilya Smirin

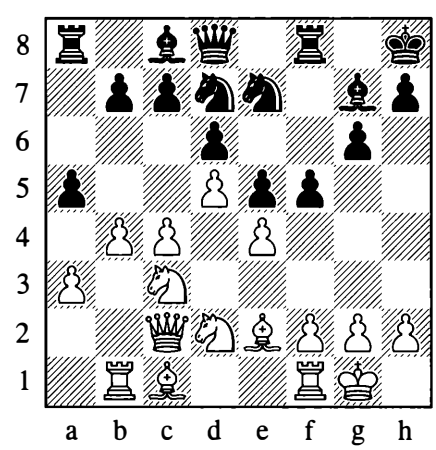
Klaipeda 1988

This game remains very special in my memory. I was playing against the well-known theoretician Grandmaster Viktor Gavrikov and he was clearly better prepared. Still, I was not too impressed, managing to create huge complications and get a winning position. The way the game ended is unique for me as well – more about this at the end. To this day I consider this game (as well as Radjabov – Smirin from this book) as one of my best ever.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘d2

This continuation was the most popular from the 1980s until the mid-1990s, when Vladimir Kramnik started to play 9.b4 ♘h5 10.♖e1 with huge success. 9.♘e1 is also played often nowadays. But I would not be surprised if the good old 9.♘d2 were to regain popularity in the near (or more distant) future.

9...a5 10.a3 ♘d7 11.♖b1 f5 12.b4 ♔h8 13.♕c2

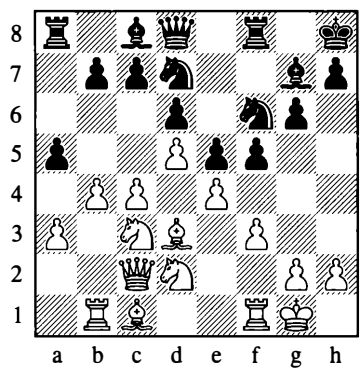


13...b6

Following in the footsteps of Garry Kasparov – he played this move against the

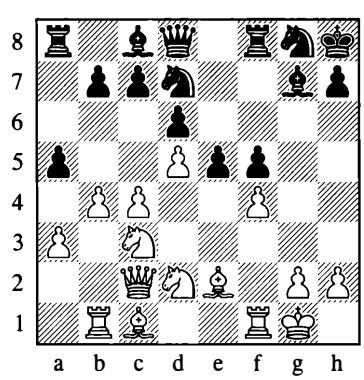
same opponent just a few months before this encounter.

13...♘g8!? became a popular continuation after Kasparov played it several times, albeit after 14.f3. In this case White may continue 14.f3 ♘gf6. For example, it was played in the following well-known game at the highest level: 15.♗d3!?

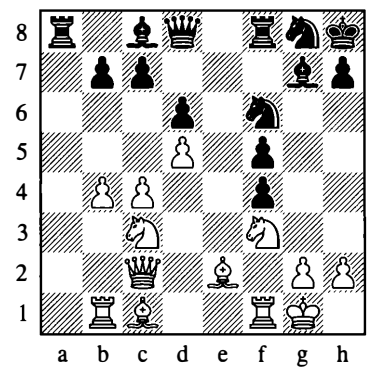


This very interesting idea is to force ...f5-f4 and release the pawn tension in the centre. It became very popular. 15...f4 16.♘b5 b6 17.c5!? dxc5 18.bxa5 ♖xa5 19.♘c4 ♖a8 20.a4 ♘e8 21.a5 ♗a6 22.♗d2 ♗xb5 23.♖xb5 ♘d6 24.♖b2 ♕e7 25.♘xd6 ♕xd6; (½–½, 41) Ivanchuk – Kasparov, Linares 1992.

A different plan is 13...♘g8 14.exf5 gxf5 15.f4



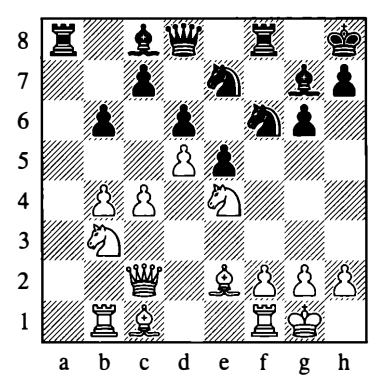
Trying to apply pressure to Black's kingside at a moment when Black's pieces are not yet active enough. This option seems to me to be more promising for White, for instance: 15...axb4 (or 15...♘e7 16.♘f3 e4 17.♘g5 ♘f6 18.♗e3 h6 19.♘e6 ♗xe6 20.dxe6) 16.axb4 exf4 (perhaps 16...♘e7 is slightly more flexible here) 17.♘f3 ♘df6



18.♗d3 and, as practice shows, White chances are preferable.

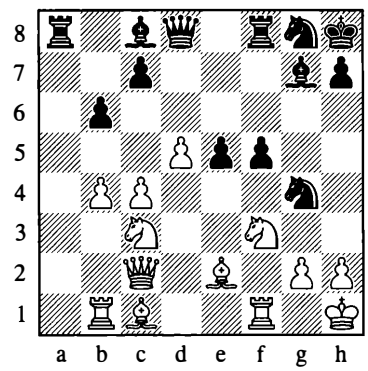
14.f3!?

Gavrikov improves his play compared to the game with the World Champion, in which he proceeded: 14.♘b3 axb4 15.axb4 fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♘f6



Gavrikov – Kasparov, Moscow 1988, with a draw after 40 moves. Now if the pawns are exchanged on e4 White will take with the f3-pawn, eliminating the opponent's idea of activating the knight on e7 via f5.

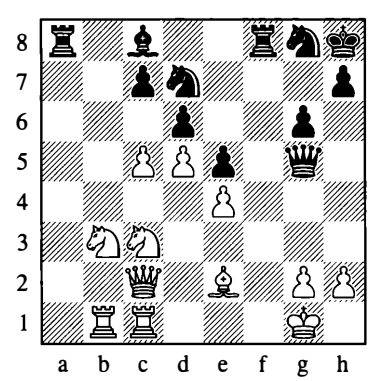
I like the way White handled the opening in the following game: 14.♔h1!? A useful waiting move; White allows the opponent to show his hand. 14...♘g8 15.exf5 gxf5 16.f4! ♘df6 (16...♘e7 looks a more logical move, but I think White is better in any case) 17.fxe5 dxe5 18.♘f3 axb4 19.axb4 ♘g4?!



20.♘g5! h6 21.♗xg4 hxg5 22.♗xf5 e4 23.g4! with a decisive advantage; (1–0, 32) Lputian – Frolov, Helsinki 1992.

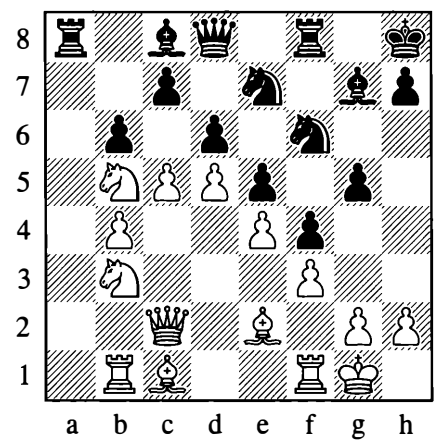
14...f4

A typical move, preparing the kingside attack. The alternative was 14...♗h6?!, activating and exchanging the King's Indian bishop. But it takes a lot of tempos. Then 15.♘b3 ♗xc1 16.♖fxc1 fxe4 17.fxe4 axb4 18.axb4 ♘g8 19.c5 bxc5 20.bxc5 ♕g5 looks logical for both sides.



21.c6! (21.♘b5? ♕e3† 22.♔h1 ♖f2 23.♖e1 ♖b8!; 21.cxd6 cxd6 22.♕d2 ♕d8 23.♕e3 ♗a6 with approximate equality) 21...♘df6 22.♕d2 ♕h4 23.♕e3 White's chances are to be preferred: the pawn on c7 is very weak and some activity on the queenside does not compensate for that.

15.♘b3 axb4 16.axb4 g5 17.c5 ♘f6 18.♘b5

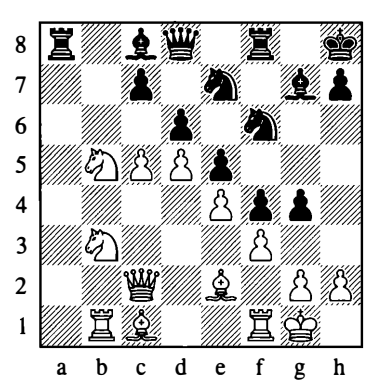


Gavrikov had spent barely a few minutes until this moment, demonstrating his home preparation, whereas for me all this was new. But, being young, I was very optimistic!

18...g4

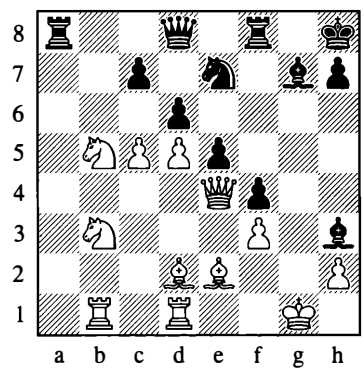
I decided to keep the b-pawns, even though the pawn on b6 may potentially become a weakness.

But now I think that probably it would not be a bad decision to remove them – after: 18...bxc5 19.bxc5 g4



20.cxd6

20.♗d2 with the idea of putting a bishop on a5 does not really work due to: 20...gxf3 21.gxf3 ♗h3 22.♖fd1 ♘xe4! 23.♕xe4 (or 23.fxe4 ♘xd5! with a very strong attack)



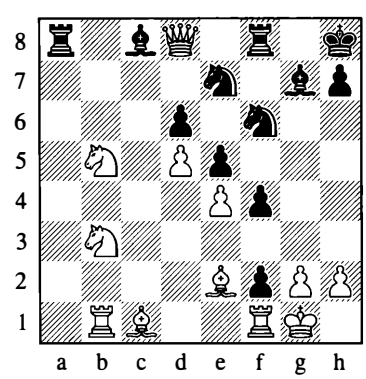
23...♖f6! 24.♔h1 ♗f5 25.♕c4 ♗xb1 26.♖xb1 ♖h6 27.♗d3 ♕d7 28.♕e4 ♖f8! 29.♘c3 ♘f5 and Black's attack outweighs the minimal material deficit.

20...cxd6

The absence of b-pawns would be slightly in my favour – after all, as I said, the weak pawn on b6 no longer exists.

After a possible:

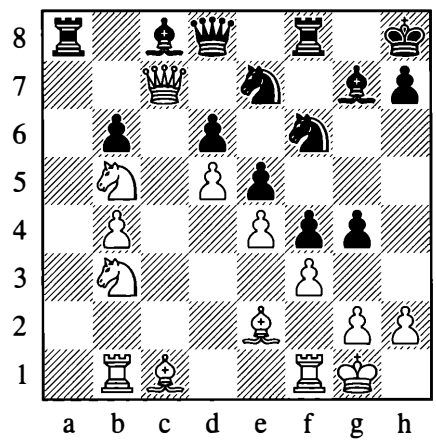
21.♕c7 gxf3 22.♕xd8 f2†!?



23.♖xf2 ♖xd8 24.♘d2 ♘g6 25.♗a3 ♗f8

Black is OK in this queenless middlegame – the vulnerability of the pawn on e4 compensates for the weak d6-pawn, and Black's pieces are no less active than White's forces. But in this case we would not have seen the most fascinating part of the game – so I am glad that I chose the more strategically double-edged continuation.

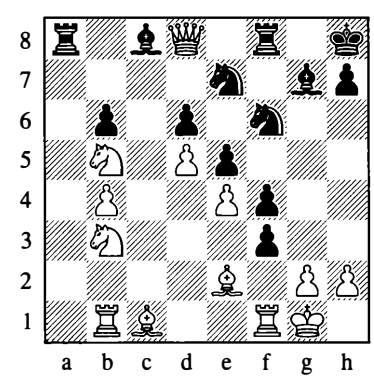
19.cxd6 cxd6 20.♕c7



I realized that strategically my position was very dangerous, especially in a possible endgame.

20...gxf3 21.gxf3

A variation in which keeping the b-pawns on the board turns out to be in my favour could have happened if: 21.♕xd8



21...fxe2!

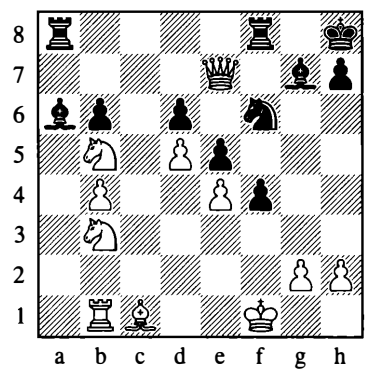
I do not like the consequences of 21...♖xd8 22.gxf3 ♗h3 23.♖d1 ♖g8 24.♗f1 ♗f8† 25.♔h1 ♗xf1 26.♖xf1.

Back in 1988 I was going to answer 21...f2†?! 22.♖xf2 ♖xd8 and thought that I would have real counterplay against the pawn on e4. But the artificial intellect insists that after 23.♘d2 ♘g4 24.♗xg4 ♗xg4 25.♘c4 ♘c8 26.g3! White has a tangible advantage in the endgame. It is sometimes difficult to argue with such a competent opinion.

22.♕xe7

Or 22.♕xb6 exf1=♕† 23.♔xf1 ♘xe4 24.♘xd6 ♖a6 25.♘xc8 ♖xb6 26.♘xb6 ♘c3 27.d6 ♘f5 28.♖a1 ♘xd6, with a complex but approximately equal endgame.

22...exf1=♕† 23.♔xf1 ♗a6!

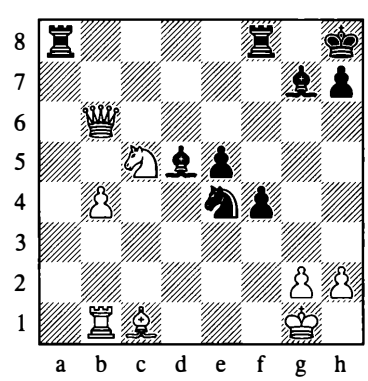


Here it is! Because of the b-pawns, the rook on b1 is unable to protect the pinned knight on b5.

24.♕xd6 ♗xb5† 25.♔g1 ♘xe4

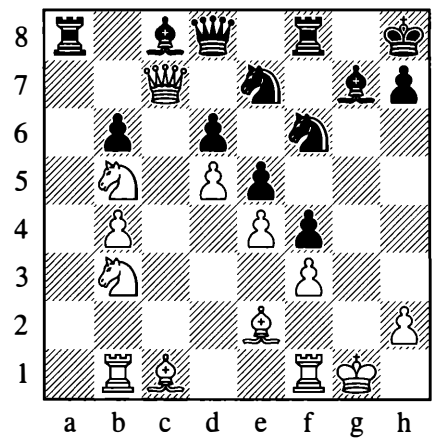
The position it really messy, but it seems that after the probable continuation:

26.♕xb6 ♗c4 27.♘c5 ♗xd5



28.♗b2 ♘d2 29.♖d1 ♘c4 30.♕c7 ♖f7 31.♘d7 ♘e3

Black is at least not worse. Still, I think that considering the problems that White faced in the middlegame, it was probably the right decision to exchange the queens immediately.



21...♕e8!

As I mentioned before, I was not eager to exchange queens, even though the computer does not think that Black has real problems after:

21...♕xc7 22.♘xc7 ♖a2 23.♘d2

If 23.♖b2 ♖a4 24.♗d2 Black has: 24...♘fxd5! An excellent sacrifice to activate the King's Indian bishop. 25.♘xd5 ♘xd5 26.♗b5 (bad is 26.exd5 e4 27.♖bb1 e3 28.♗c1 ♗f5 29.♖b2 ♖g8 30.♔h1 ♖c8 31.♗d1 ♖a7, and despite having an extra piece, White is on the ropes) 26...♖a3 27.exd5 e4 28.♗c1 e3, with great compensation.

23...♗h3 24.♖d1 ♘e8 25.♘b5 ♖g8 26.♔h1 ♗f6 27.♖g1 ♖xg1† 28.♔xg1

I still suspect that Black's position is not so rosy, and that the weaknesses on b6 and d6, together with a lack of space on the queenside, might soon tell. Fortunately, I had a strong alternative at my disposal, and I went for it. Objectively speaking this is the strongest move in the position – I failed to find even equality for White after that.

22.♔h1

Suddenly my opponent needed to solve a concrete problem connected with his king facing some serious threats. It's not easy, from a psychological point of view, to switch from dreams of a pleasant endgame to the necessity of calculating numerous quite complex variations, or to call on one's intuition for help. It is a really hard task, and Gavrikov did not manage to cope with it during the game. But even now, not being limited by time and having a very powerful assistant (you know what I mean), I find it hard to show the right path for White. For example, both the possible captures of the "doomed" pawn on d6 are inadvisable for White:

22.♕xd6? ♗h3 23.♖f2 ♕g6† 24.♔h1 ♘xe4! and White may as well resign.

22.♘xd6 ♕g6† 23.♔h1 ♘exd5! 24.exd5

A nice variation may arise after 24.♕c4 ♘h5! 25.♘xc8 (25.♕xd5 ♘g3† 26.hxg3 ♕h5† 27.♔g1 fxg3 28.♖f2 gxf2† 29.♔xf2 ♗g4–+) 25...♖axc8! 26.♕xd5 ♘g3† 27.hxg3 ♕xg3 and you may check for yourself that the attack decides the outcome.

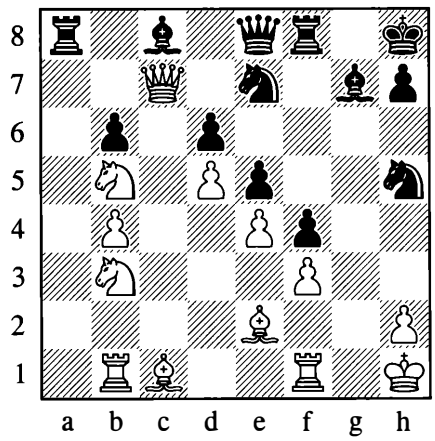
24...♕xb1 25.♖g1 ♗d7 26.♘d2 ♕a2

Black has an extra exchange without allowing any compensation.

After the move in the game it seems for a moment that the white king has found safety in the corner, but it's just an illusion.

22...♘h5!

Black's pieces start to get closer to the white monarch. This knight is clearly in sacrificial mode now – the jump to g3 is constantly hanging in the air (and indeed will happen soon).

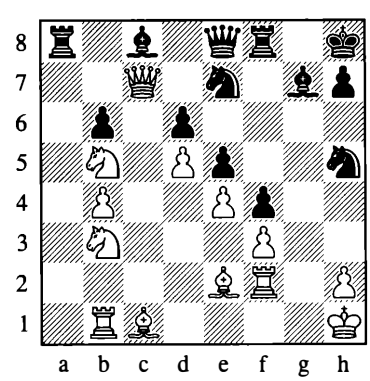


23.♖b2?

Analysing the game without a computer back in 1988, I thought this move was mistake and that White should have played:

23.♖f2

But now the silicon creature considers both moves to be equal to each other. Moreover, to my sincere amazement, it cannot find a completely satisfactory defence for my opponent in the complications starting after 21...♕e8!. If that's true, we may consider White's 21st move to be a serious and almost decisive mistake: Gavrikov should have exchanged queens instead.

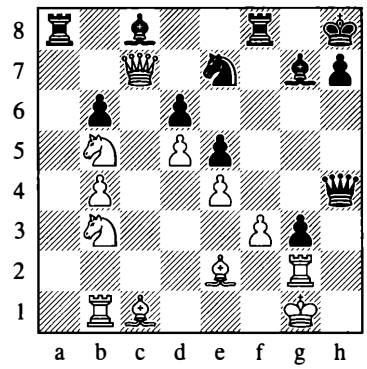


OK, if White were to proceed on move 23 with the other rook, the knight sacrifice seems to lead to a decisive advantage for Black:

23...♘g3†!

But not 23...♗f6? 24.♘xd6 ♕g6 25.♖g2 ♕h6 26.♕d8! ♗e6 27.♕xa8 ♖xa8 28.dxe6+– (a variation from 1988).

24.hxg3 fxg3 25.♖g2 ♕h5† 26.♔g1 ♕h4!



The key move, protecting both the pawn on g3 and the knight on e7. White's main problem, in this and similar positions, is that he is unable to regroup his pieces fast enough to defend his king.

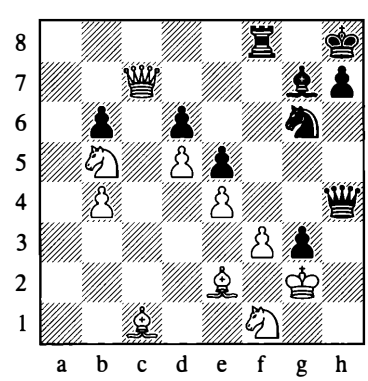
27.♘d2

Or 27.♗d1 ♗h3 28.♖bb2 ♖ac8 29.♕xd6 ♘g6! 30.♘c7 ♖f6 31.♘e6 ♖xe6 32.dxe6 ♗xg2 33.♖xg2 ♖d8 34.e7 ♕xe7! 35.♕xe7 ♖xd1# – nice!

27...♗h3 28.♘f1 ♗xg2

The simplest.

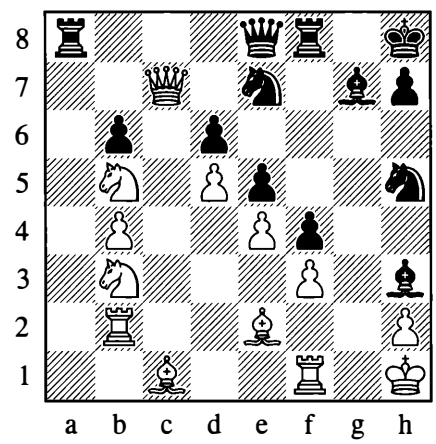
29.♔xg2 ♖a2! 30.♖b2 ♖xb2 31.♗xb2 ♘g6 32.♗c1



32...♗h6! 33.♗xh6 ♕xh6 34.♘xg3 ♘f4† 35.♔f2 ♕h2† 36.♔e3 ♕xg3

And the defence is broken. This beautiful variation shows that Black's pieces (the rook in this case) may also penetrate from the queenside.

23...♗h3



24.♖e1

Now I would like to present some lengthy computer analysis. Sorry about that, but I hope you will enjoy the variations. White had two other major options at his disposal:

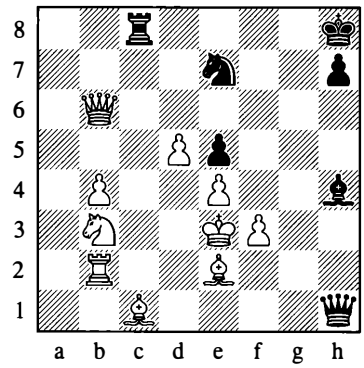
a) 24.♖g1 ♘g3† 25.hxg3 ♕h5 26.♖g2

Or 26.♕xe7 ♗f6–+.

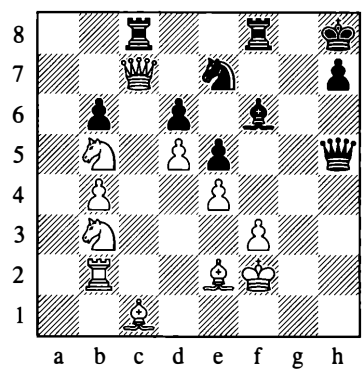
26...♗xg2† 27.♔xg2 fxg3 28.♔xg3 ♗f6 29.♔f2 ♖ac8

The strongest.

I was very happy when I discovered a checkmate of rare beauty in 1988: 29...♕h1 30.♘xd6 ♖ac8 31.♘xc8 ♖xc8 (objectively stronger is 31...♕h4† 32.♔f1 ♖g8 33.♗d1 ♕h1† 34.♔e2 ♖g2† 35.♔d3 ♕xd1† 36.♘d2 ♖f2 37.♕d8† ♘g8 38.♕xb6 ♖xf3† 39.♔c4 ♕e2† 40.♔c5 ♖c3† 41.♔d6 ♖xc8 and White is helpless) 32.♕xb6 (alas, this line is not forced and after 32.♕xc8† ♘xc8 33.♖c2 ♘d6 34.♖c6 White is still in the game) 32...♗h4† 33.♔e3

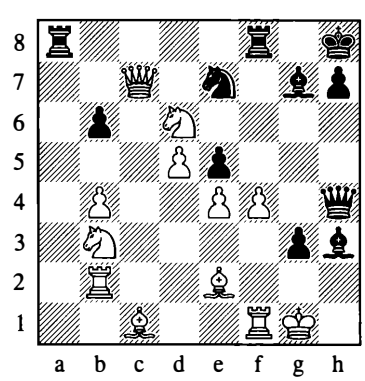


33...♖c3† 34.♗d3 ♕e1† 35.♖e2 ♗f2#

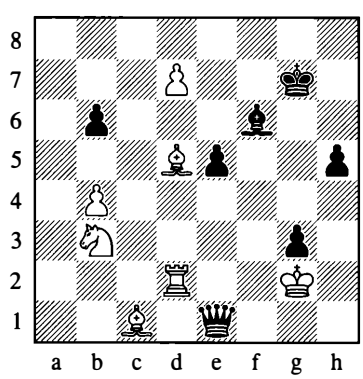


30.♕xd6 ♗h4† 31.♔g1 ♖xc1† 32.♘xc1 ♕g5†
With the total collapse of White's position.

b) 24.♘xd6 ♘g3†
Again this knight sacrifices itself in kamikaze fashion.
25.hxg3 ♕h5 26.♔g1 fxg3 27.f4
The only move.
27...♕h4



28.f5
If 28.♗f3 exf4 29.♖d2 ♗xf1 30.♔xf1 ♕h3† 31.♖g2 (31.♗g2 ♕g4 32.♕xe7 f3–+) 31...♘g6 White has no defence. After the most stubborn 32.♘f5 ♖xf5 33.exf5 ♖e8! 34.♘d2 ♕xf5 35.♗e4 ♖xe4 36.♘xe4 ♕xe4 37.♕c8† ♘f8 38.♕c2 ♕xd5 39.♗b2 ♔g8 40.♗xg7 ♔xg7 he is able to escape the mating attack, but the resulting position would be easily winning by technical means for Black.
28...♗xf5 29.♗b5
Bad is 29.♗f3 ♗h3 30.♗g2 ♗xg2 31.♖xf8† ♖xf8 32.♖xg2 ♕g4 33.♕c2 ♕f3 34.♕e2 ♕xb3.
And 29.♗d3 ♗h3 30.♘f7† ♔g8 31.d6 ♗xf1 would lead to the same position.
29...♗h3 30.♘f7† ♔g8 31.d6 ♗xf1 32.♗xf1 ♘d5! 33.♕c4 ♖xf7 34.♕xd5 ♖af8 35.♗c4 ♔h8 36.♕xf7 ♖xf7 37.♗xf7 ♕xe4 38.d7 ♗f6 39.♖d2 ♔g7 40.♗d5 ♕e1† 41.♔g2 h5



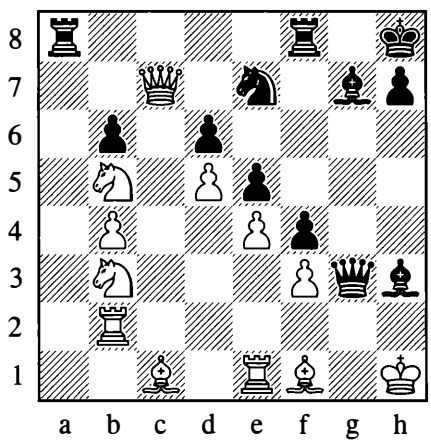
After a huge mess, an unbalanced position has arisen. Black is still on top, but, thanks to the pawn on d7, White is certainly not doomed, and may count on a positive outcome. It might well be that this position is the best White may hope for as a result of the complications.

24...♕g6 25.♗f1

After 25.♗d1 ♕f6! White has no defence: 26.♘xd6 ♕h4 27.♖g1 ♘g3† 28.hxg3 fxg3

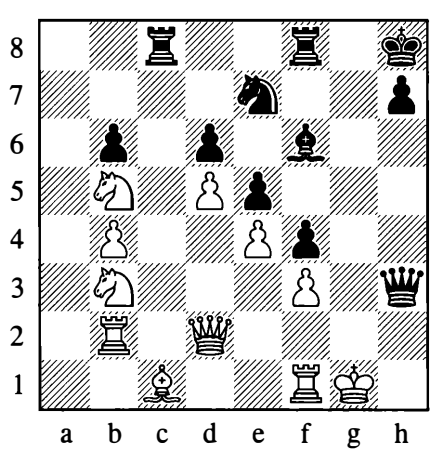
29.♖xg3 ♕xg3 30.♕xe7 ♕e1† 31.♔h2 ♕xd1 32.♘f7† ♖xf7 33.♕xf7 ♖f8 34.♕e7 ♖xf3 and his position just falls apart.

25...♘g3†! 26.hxg3 ♕xg3



As we have already seen in a few variations, the knight on h5 has completed his mission on g3 and the queen and some other black pieces have made a rendezvous with the white king. The few next moves are basically forced for White.

27.♕c3 ♖ac8 28.♕d2 ♗xf1 29.♖xf1 ♕h3† 30.♔g1 ♗f6



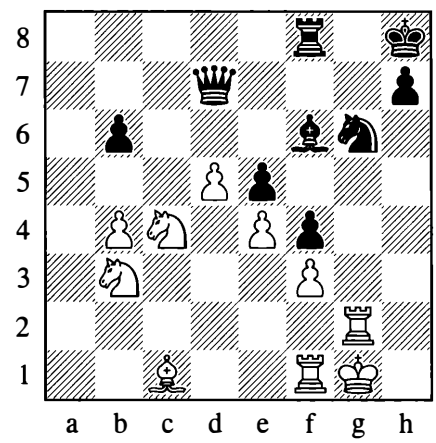
White must give up his queen to avoid immediate disaster.

31.♕g2

31.♖f2 does not help due to 31...♖g8† 32.♖g2 ♖xg2† 33.♕xg2 ♖g8–+.

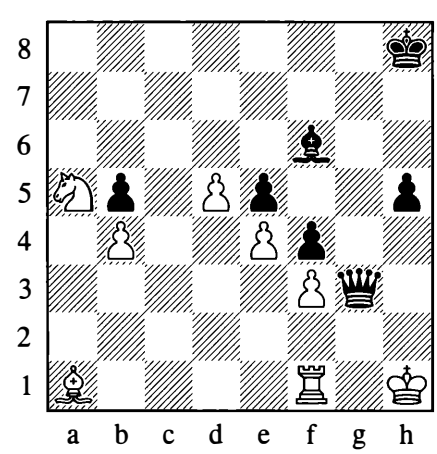
If 31.♕d3 ♖g8† 32.♔f2 ♘xd5! 33.exd5 e4 34.♕xe4 ♖ce8 White should resign despite his two extra pieces.

31...♖g8 32.♘xd6 ♖cf8 33.♖e2 ♕d7 34.♘c4 ♖xg2† 35.♖xg2 ♘g6



The rest, as they say, is a matter of technique: Black has a material advantage and the white king is still unsafe.

36.♗b2 ♘h4 37.♖h2 ♕c7 38.♘bd2 b5 39.♘a5 ♕c2 40.♗a1 ♖g8† 41.♔h1 ♖g2! 42.♖xg2 ♘xg2 43.♔xg2 ♕xd2† 44.♖f2 ♕e1 45.♖f1 ♕g3† 46.♔h1 h5



Here, as was the custom in the good old days, the game was adjourned. The position is easily winning for Black – the forcing line 47.♘c6 ♔h7 48.♗c3 ♗h4 49.♘xe5 ♗f6 50.d6 ♗xe5 51.♗xe5 ♕h4† 52.♔g2 ♕g5† 53.♔f2 ♕xe5 54.♖d1 ♕c3 demonstrates that convincingly. But the game was destined not to be resumed – for some reason Gavrikov withdrew from the tournament a few days later. He did not resign, so the position was evaluated by tournament officials and declared a win for me. However, I did not receive a point in the tournament's crosstable – all Gavrikov's results were cancelled. But despite that, the game brought me enormous creative pleasure.

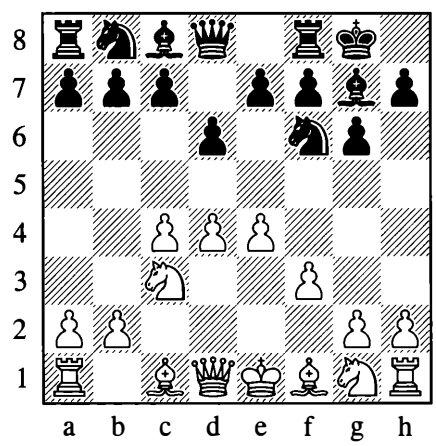
0–1

Igor Novikov – Ilya Smirin

Las Vegas 1999

Las Vegas... one of the most surreal cities in the world. For me, playing chess in this gambling empire always added some more adrenaline than usual. The following is my favourite game from all the five tournaments (including the 1999 World Cup) that I played in Vegas.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0–0



6.♗g5

This is a more ambitious move compared to the most popular 6.♗e3. In my opinion it has one drawback – the d4-pawn (or square) may become more vulnerable.

6...a6 7.♕d2 ♘c6 8.♘ge2 ♖b8

Preparing ...b7-b5, just as in the line where the bishop is developed on e3 instead of g5.

9.d5

Sometimes White chooses the prophylactic:

9.♖c1

Here I have played:

9...h5!?

This may look a bit strange, but in fact it's quite a logical move: Black grabs space on

the kingside and prepares to play ...♘h7 in some cases.

9...b5? does not work due to the rook on c1: 10.cxb5 axb5 11.♘xb5

10.♘d1

A fashionable move in similar positions nowadays, but it does not impress me much. In a few games White has chosen 10.b3!? which is a kind of waiting move.

10...e5 11.d5 ♘e7 12.c5

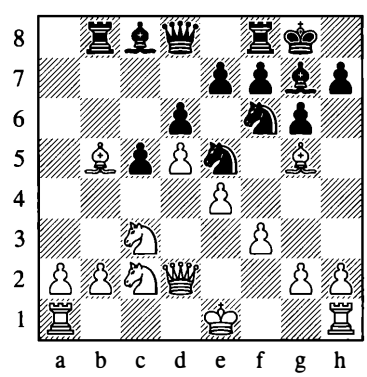
Black has better development and can easily meet the opponent's activity on the queenside.

12...dxc5 13.♖xc5 ♕d6 14.♖c2 c6 15.dxc6 ♕xd2† 16.♖xd2 ♘xc6 17.♘ec3 ♗e6

½–½ Kaidanov – Smirin, Mallorca 2004. Actually I could continue playing in the final position.

9...♘e5 10.♘g3

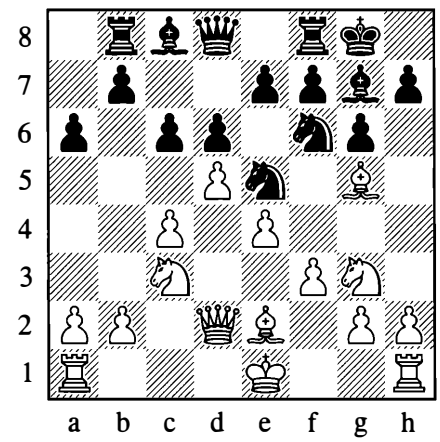
After 10.♘d4 c5 11.♘c2 b5?! (11...♘h5!? with the idea ...f7-f5 is an interesting alternative) 12.cxb5 axb5 13.♗xb5



I was convincingly beaten by Dreev after: 13...♖xb5?! 14.♘xb5 ♘c4 15.♕e2 ♕a5† 16.♔f2 ♘xb2 (16...♕xb5 17.b3± – I did not notice that in time) 17.a4; (1–0, 39) Dreev – Smirin, Biel 1993.

10...c6 11.♗e2

White has a clear space advantage and no visible weaknesses. One more move – castling – and he will consolidate his edge. So I have to hurry to create counterplay. The only way to do that is to try to undermine White's central pawns on c4 and d5.



11...b5 12.cxb5 cxd5!

A positional pawn sacrifice; a similar motif may be seen in the game Leitao – Smirin above.

In the case of the modest 12...cxb5 13.0–0 it would be hard for Black to find a reasonable plan.

13.exd5

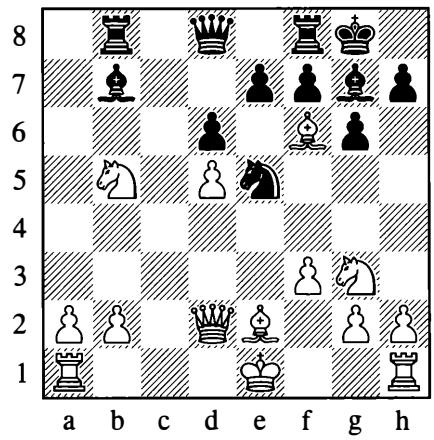
After 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.♘xd5 ♗g7 the two strong bishops and advantage in development provide Black with clear compensation for the missing pawn.

13...axb5 14.♘xb5 ♗b7

The aim – the pawn on d5.

15.♗xf6

After the knight retreat 15.♘c3 I was going to continue 15...♗a8!? with the idea 16.0–0? ♕b6†.



15...exf6!

Perhaps Novikov expected 15...♗xf6 16.♘e4 ♗g7 17.0–0 with an extra pawn and a stable position – White's knights coordinate efficiently.

16.f4

16.0–0 f5 would lead to a kind of dream position for Black – the bishop on g7 is terrific and the b- and e-files are open for the black rooks, and most importantly the knight on g3 is very passive since the e4-square is under Black's control.

The greedy 16.♘e4!? was just about possible. For example: 16...f5 17.♘exd6 ♗a6 18.a4 ♕h4† 19.g3 ♕e7 20.0–0 ♖fd8 21.f4 ♖xd6 22.fxe5 ♕xe5 Black has fine compensation for the missing pawn. And of course 23.♘xd6?? would lose to 23...♖xb2.

16...♘d7 17.f5!?

Very logical. By blocking the pawn on f6, White turns the g7-bishop into a passive piece, while the knight on g3 is looking hopefully at e4. Again, if White can castle he will be more than OK.

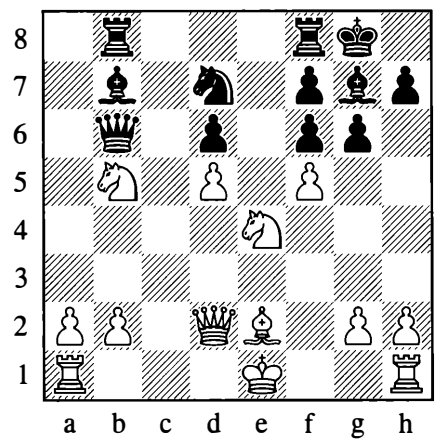
If White were to capture another pawn instead by 17.♘xd6?! f5 18.♘xb7 ♖xb7 19.♖b1 ♕b6 he would be in serious trouble.

17...♕b6

Keeping the enemy's king in the centre.

18.♘e4

It is very important that long castling is just losing: 18.0–0–0? ♗a6 19.♘c3 ♗h6! – the "passive" bishop delivers a lethal blow.



18...♗a6! 19.♘bxd6?

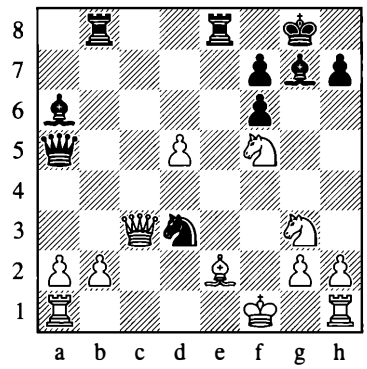
In such a sharp position this natural move proves to be a decisive mistake, which I failed to exploit.

If 19.♘exd6 ♗xb5 20.♘xb5 ♖fe8 21.♘c3 ♗f8! only a computer would have chances to defend White's position.

19.a4!, protecting the knight, was the only correct move. After 19...♗xb5 20.axb5 ♖a8 21.♖xa8 ♖xa8 22.♘f2 ♖a1† 23.♘d1 seemingly White can hold, even though his position does not look aesthetically pleasing.

19...♘e5?

For many years I thought this move deserved a "!", but now I have discovered that 19...gxf5! 20.♘xf5 ♖fe8 21.♘eg3 ♘c5 (with the threat ...♘d3†) was just a killer. All Black's pieces are attacking the "centralized" king and the pretty knight on f5 and two extra pawns do not help. The following nice variation: 22.♕d4 ♕a5† 23.♕c3 ♘d3† 24.♔f1



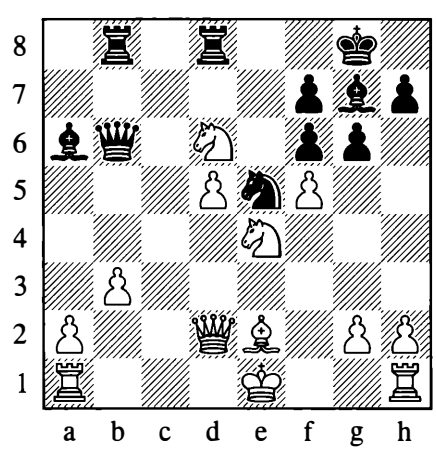
24...♖b4! 25.♗xd3 (25.♘h5 ♘f4–+) 25...♖f4† 26.♔g1 ♕b6† 27.♘d4 f5! demonstrates this.

20.b3

Now this pawn is protected and it in turn will protect the knight if it goes to c4.

20.a4 ♗xe2 21.♕xe2 ♖fd8 22.♘b5 ♖xd5 23.♖d1 ♖bd8 did not look promising for my opponent.

20...♖fd8



21.♘c4?

After the strongest move 21.♗xa6 ♕xa6 22.♕e2! (22.♖d1 ♗f8! 23.♘xf6† ♔h8–+) 22...♖xd6 23.♘xd6 ♕xd6 24.0–0 ♕xd5 I would keep an edge, but two connected passers on the queenside offer White some chances.

21...♘xc4 22.bxc4 ♖e8 23.c5!?

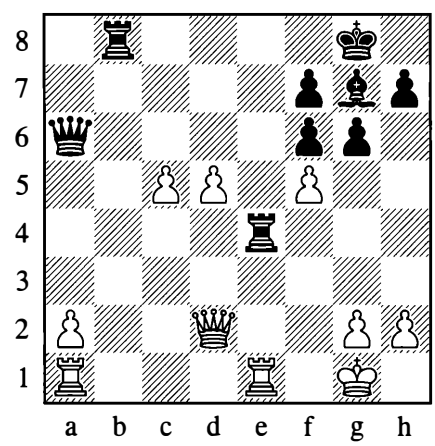
The best option – Novikov gives up the piece but keeps two central passed pawns and finally castles. Otherwise he would be doomed to a silent death, for example:

23.♕d3 gxf5

Or: 23.♘c3 ♗f8! 24.♔d1 ♗h6!! (a really beautiful move; the prosaic 24...♗b4 is not as powerful, but should also be enough for a win) 25.♕xh6 g5! This is the idea – the white queen is cut off and the king is absolutely helpless. 26.♖b1 (or 26.♕h3 ♖e3) 26...♕d4† 27.♔c2 ♖xe2† 28.♘xe2 ♕xc4† 29.♘c3 ♕d3†

23...♕a7 24.0–0 ♖xe4 25.♗xa6 ♕xa6 26.♖fe1

If 26.d6 ♖e2 27.♕d5 ♖bb2–+.



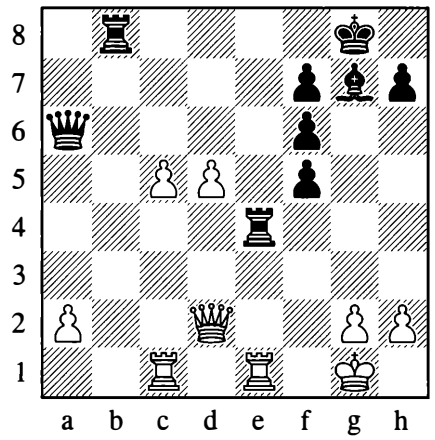
The position remains tense and is far from the technical stage of converting an extra piece. I had to find precise and energetic continuations to prove Black's (decisive) advantage.

26...gxf5!

I like this capture. The tripled pawns look ugly, but Black gets control over e4.

27.♖ac1

After 27.c6 ♗f8 or 27.d6 ♕c6 the pawns would be blocked.



27...♕a3!

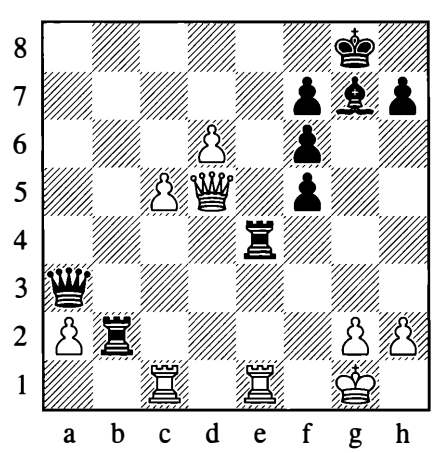
The winning move; Black creates a direct attack against the king. Because of that, White has no time to advance the c- or d-pawns far enough.

28.d6

If 28.c6 ♖b2 29.♕d1 Black would win after: 29...♕xa2 30.♕f3 ♖g4 31.g3 ♖e4! 32.c7 ♖xe1† 33.♖xe1 ♕a7† 34.♔h1 ♕xc7 35.♖e8† ♗f8 36.♖xf8† ♔g7! A nice variation!

28...♖b2 29.♕d5

Just as fatal for White is 29.♕d1 ♕xa2 30.♕f3 ♖g4! 31.g3 ♗f8 32.d7 ♖d4 33.c6 ♖dd2.



29...♖be2!

The point. The white king has to leave his shelter.

30.♖xe2

Or 30.♖f1 ♕e3† 31.♔h1 ♕xc1 is the end.

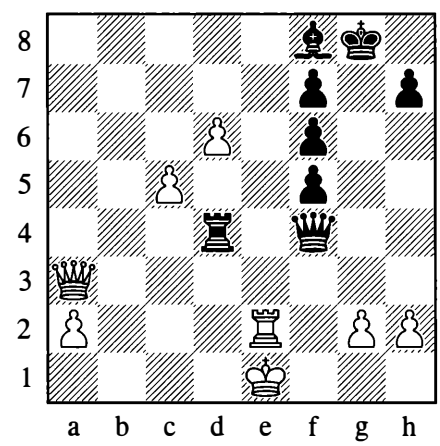
30...♕xc1† 31.♔f2 ♕f4† 32.♔e1 ♖d4–+

The rest was easy and very pleasant for me – I always like to attack my opponent's king when I'm a piece up.

33.♕a8†

Or 33.♕f3 ♕c1† 34.♔f2 ♕xc5 35.♖e8† ♗f8 36.♕g3† ♖g4†.

33...♗f8 34.♕a3



34...♕xh2!

Just grabbing some more material, preventing the possible exchange of queens after ♕g3†, and threatening checkmate simultaneously.

35.♕e3 ♖e4 36.♕f2 ♖f4 37.♕e3 ♗h6 38.♕e8†

Or 38.d7 ♕h1† 39.♔d2 ♖d4†.

38...♔g7 39.♔d1 ♕g1†
0–1

Evgeny Postny – Ilya Smirin

Maalot-Tarshiha 2008

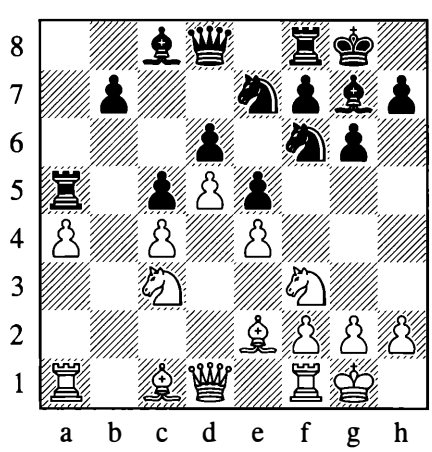
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♘c3 0–0 5.e4 d6 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 a5 10.bxa5

I have faced this move quite a few times in my career. Still I think that after it Black's life is easier, and the "more theoretical" 10.♗a3 poses more problems. But maybe it's just a matter of taste.

10...♖xa5 11.a4

11.♘d2 c5 12.a4 ♖a6 13.♖a3 happened in a rapid game with Bareev. We can compare this position with one from the game Aronian – Radjabov, Sofia 2008: 9...♘h5 10.♖e1 a5 11.bxa5 ♖xa5 12.♘d2 ♘f4 13.♗f1 c5 14. a4 ♖a6 15.♖a3 ♘h5 It's obvious that I have gained few tempos – my knight on f6 did not travel to h5, f4 and back to f6. No wonder Black got an excellent position after the opening: 13...♘d7 14.♘b5 f5 15.exf5 gxf5 16.♗b2 ♘g6 17.g3 ♘f6 18.f4?! exf4 19.gxf4 ♗h6! 20.♖g3 ♘g4; (½–½, 45) Bareev – Smirin, Moscow 2002.

11...c5



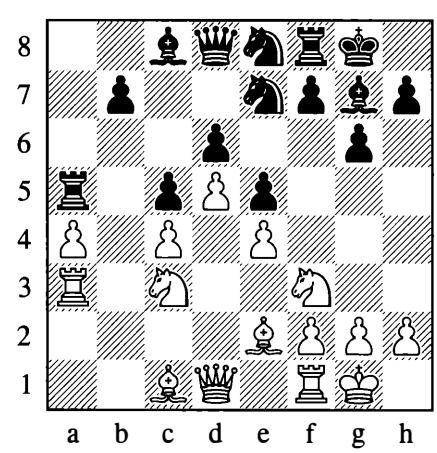
Now we have a typical pawn structure for this and similar lines – the queenside is stabilized and it's not easy for White to develop activity there. On the other side, Black too will have difficulties trying to start his kingside play – White, as often in the KID, enjoys a space advantage and may place his pieces comfortably to meet such attempts.

12.♖a3

I faced a slightly different setup by White in the following encounter with Victor Mikhalevski: 12.♗d2 ♖a6 13.♖b1 ♘d7 14.♕c1 ♔h8 15.♗g5 ♗f6 16.♗h6 ♗g7 17.♗g5 ♗f6 18.♗d2 ♗g7 19.♖a1 ♘f6 20.♖a3 ♘e8 21.♘b5 ♘f6 22.♘c3 ♘e8 23.♘b5 ♘f6 24.♕b1 ♘fg8!? Preparing the next move. 25.♗d1 ♗h6 26.♗c3 ♗g7 27.♗d2 ♗h6 28.♗c3 ♗g7 29.♘d2 ♘h6 30.♕a1 g5! Vacating g6 for the knight on e7. 31.♗c2 ♘g6 32.♗b2 ♘f4 33.♖e1 f5 And after several repetitions of moves, I managed to start some offensive actions against the opponent's king; (½–½, 65) Mikhalevski – Smirin, Philadelphia 2008.

12...♘e8

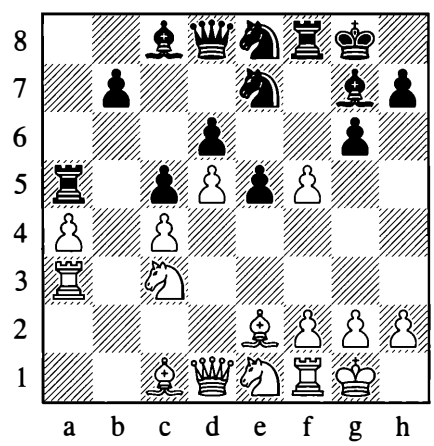
Another of my games continued: 12...♖a6 13.♘e1 ♘d7 14.♘d3 ♘b6!? (the immediate 14...f5 was also not bad at all, but I wanted to play something "more original") 15.♕b3 f5 16.exf5 ♘xf5 17.♘b5 ♘d7 18.f4 e4 19.♘f2 ♖e8 20.♕c2 ♘f6 21.♗b2 ♗d7 22.♗xf6 ♗xf6 23.♘xe4 ♘d4 24.♘xd4 ♗xd4† 25.♔h1 ♗xa4 26.♖xa4 ♖xa4 27.♕xa4 ♖xe4 28.♗d3 ♖e3 29.♕c2 ♕h4 30.♕b1 ½–½ Lputian – Smirin, Kemer 2007.



13.♘e1?!

I do not like this move. In my opinion the knight should stay on f3 longer to meet ...f7-f5 with ♘g5, making use of the weak square on e6. I think that White has stronger options here, such as 13.♗d2 ♖a6 14.♕c1!? (aimed against a possible ...h6 to prevent the knight's leap to g5, as in my game with Mikhalevski above); or the prophylactic 13.g3!?, intending to play ♘h4 and wait for Black to play ...f5, after which White's reaction would be exf5 ...gxf5 f4!, stopping the opponent's activity thanks to the excellent knight on h4. Actually there are a few similar examples of this manoeuvre in the book.

13...f5 14.exf5



14...♘xf5!

I think Postny expected 14...gxf5 15.f4 ♘g6 16.♘d3 e4 17.♘f2 (or 17.♘e1) with mutual chances, and underestimated the capture with the knight.

15.♘e4 ♘f6

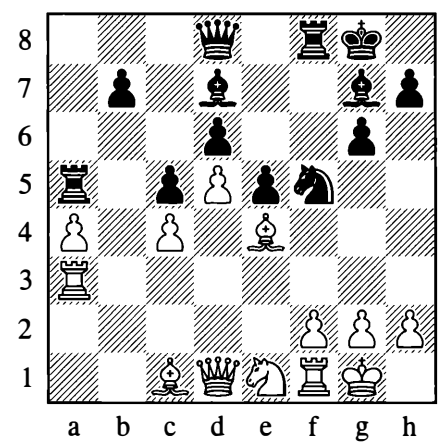
I would suggest that Black already has a pleasant position: all his pieces are active enough, which cannot be said about the misplaced knight on e1. Moreover, the a4-pawn, as we will see very soon, may become vulnerable. There is yet another factor in my favour: the square d4 for the black knight weighs more heavily here than the square e4 for the white pieces.

16.♗d3

Another second-best move; my opponent does not feel the danger yet.

Probably he should have continued 16.♗g5 h6 (in my opinion 16...♕c7!? is more accurate) 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♘d3 ♗g7 19.♗g4 and due to the strong knight on e4 the chances are about equal.

16...♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♗d7



Now White's problems are obvious. His pieces lack coordination and the knight on e1 is evidently misplaced.

18.♗d2 ♖a7 19.♘f3

Back to the action.

19...♕a8?!

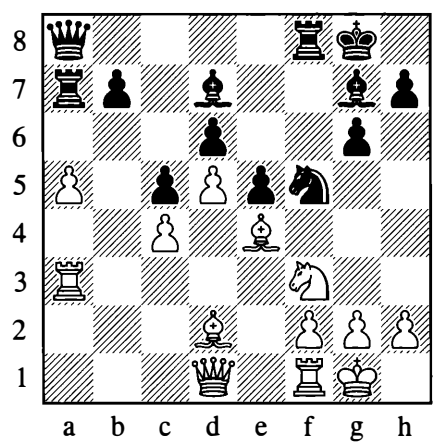
Tempting, but not the best decision.

The position demanded the far more energetic 19...b5! 20.cxb5 ♗xb5 21.♖e1 and only now 21...♕a8. After that the best continuation for White seems to be 22.♘g5 ♗xa4 23.♕g4 ♗d7 24.♖xa7 ♕xa7 25.♕h3 h6 26.♘e6, hoping

to obtain compensation for the pawn. Still after 26...♗xe6 27.dxe6 ♘e7 28.♗xh6 (bad is 28.♕d3 c4 29.♗e3 ♕a5) 28...d5 29.♗xg7 ♔xg7 30.♗f3 c4 White would have to work hard to hold the resulting position – Black clearly dominates, but the limited material leaves decent drawing chances.

20.a5?

This unlucky pawn had to be sacrificed: 20.♘g5 ♖xa4 (20...♘d4? 21.♘xh7 ♔xh7 22.♕h5†) 21.♖xa4 ♗xa4 22.♕b1 ♘d4 23.♘e6 ♘xe6 24.dxe6 ♗c6 25.♗xc6 bxc6 26.e7 ♖e8 27.♗g5 and here the drawish variation 27...h6 28.♕xg6 hxg5 29.♕e6† ♔h7 30.♕f5† ♔h8 31.♕h3† ♔g8 32.♕e6† looks a logical conclusion.



20...b5!

Now Black has managed to take over on the queenside – a rare feat for this opening line.

21.cxb5 ♗xb5 22.♖e1 ♗c4

Suddenly the pawn on d5 has become very weak and White has no time for the manoeuvre ♘f3-g5-e6. Without this, he can hardly hope for counterplay.

23.♗c3 ♘d4

This knight jumps to d4 at the best possible moment – now the d5-pawn is doomed.

24.♗xd4 exd4 25.♘g5

As I mentioned above, this is the only real attempt to get some counterplay.

25...♗xd5

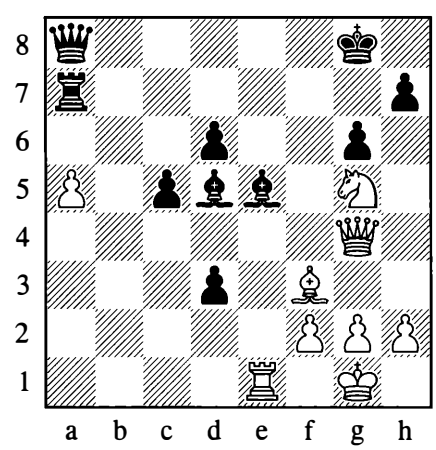
The right choice: this pawn had to be removed.

The other capture was less strong: 25...♖xa5 26.♖xa5 ♕xa5 27.♘e6, with the sample variation 27...♖b8 28.h4! ♗e5 29.h5 d3 30.♖f1! and unclear complications.

26.♕g4 ♗e5 27.♖f3 ♖xf3

27...♖e8 was probably a cleaner way to convert the advantage, for instance: 28.h4 h5 29.♕h3 ♗xe4 30.♘xe4 c4 and the end is near – the duo of pawns on d4 and c4 are too close to the prize rank.

28.♗xf3 d3



29.♗xd5†

Houdini "thinks" the move 29.♖d1 is the most stubborn defence. This is indeed so, but after some time the same Houdini shows a forced win for Black:

29...c4

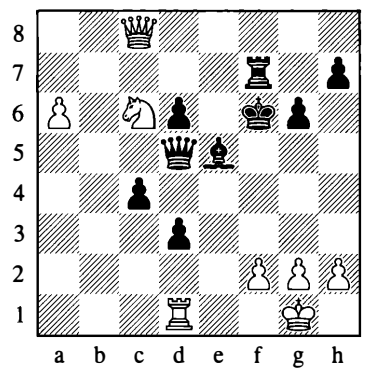
Less precise is 29...♗xf3 30.gxf3 (30.♘xf3 ♕d5) 30...♕d5 31.f4 ♗f6 32.♕c8† ♔g7

33.♕h3 (33.♘e6† ♔h6 34.♕f8† ♗g7 35.♘xg7 ♖xg7 36.♕f6 c4–+) 33...♗xg5 34.♖xd3 ♕c4 35.fxg5 ♕c1† 36.♕f1 ♕xg5† 37.♖g3 ♕f6 38.a6 with chances for survival.

30.♗xd5† ♕xd5 31.♕c8† ♔g7 32.♘e6† ♔f7 33.♘d8†

33.♘g5† ♔e7 is similar to what happened later in the game.

33...♔f6 34.♘c6 ♖f7 35.a6



35...♕c5!

The only winning move.

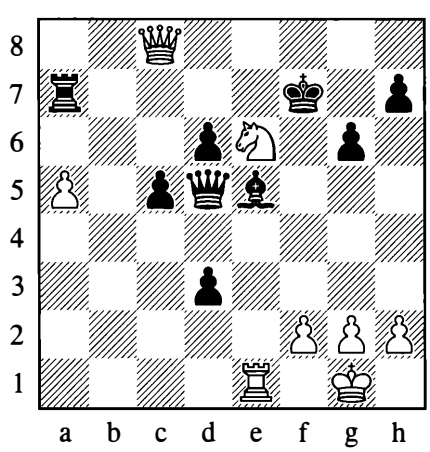
36.a7

Or 36.♕h8† ♔g5 37.♕d8† ♔h5 and White has no more good checks.

36...♔g7 37.♖f1 d2 38.a8=♕ ♕xf2† 39.♖xf2 d1=♕†

With mate.

29...♕xd5 30.♕c8† ♔g7 31.♘e6† ♔f7



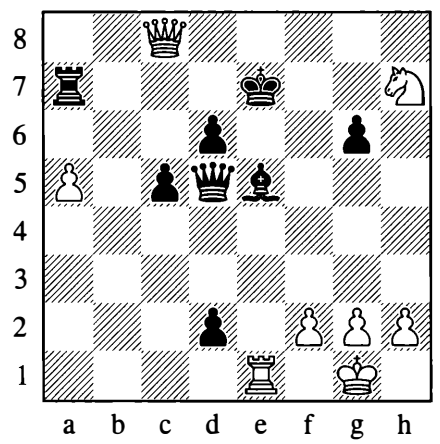
32.♘g5†

Or if: 32.♘d8† ♔f6 33.♘c6 d2 34.♖d1 ♗xh2† 35.♔xh2 (35.♔h1 ♖f7 36.♕h8† ♔g5 37.♔xh2 ♖xf2 38.♕d8† ♔h5 39.♖g1 d1=♕) 35...♕h5† 36.♔g3 ♕xd1 37.♕h8† ♖g7 38.♕d8† ♔e6 39.♕e8† ♔d5 The black king travels quite a long way to victory.

32...♔g7 33.♘e6† ♔f7

Time-trouble repetition.

34.♘g5† ♔e7 35.♘xh7 d2



The black king is in safety, and the game is essentially over.

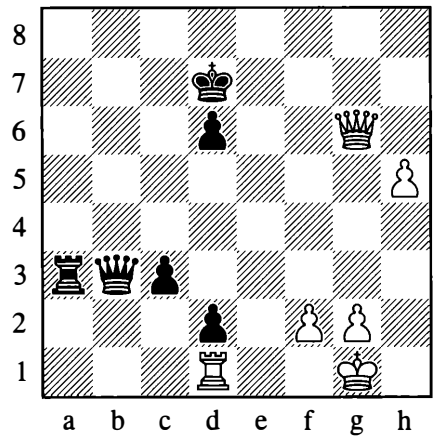
36.♖d1 c4

36...♗xh2† would win too, but the move I made is simpler.

37.♕f8† ♔d7 38.♘f6† ♗xf6 39.♕xf6 ♖xa5

This pawn did not escape its fate.

40.♕xg6 ♖a3 41.h4 c3 42.h5 ♕b3

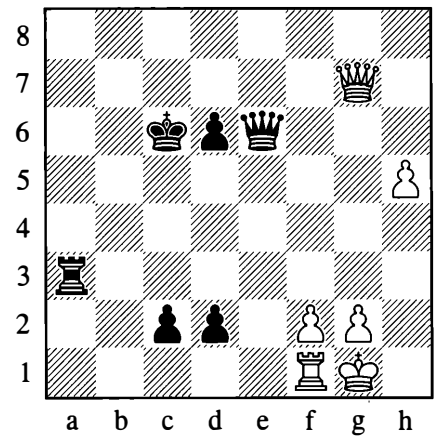


43.♕g4†?!

Shortening the suffering.

43.♕g7† ♔c6 44.♕g4 would prolong the game, but after: 44...♕a4 45.♕c8† ♔d5 46.♕f5† ♔d4 47.♕g4† ♔c5 (Just not: 47...♔d3 48.♕f3† ♔c2? 49.♕f5† ♔xd1?? 50.♕b1† ♔e2 51.♕f1# Quite a picture!) 48.♕c8† ♕c6 49.♕f5† ♕d5 50.♕c8† ♔d4 51.h6 ♕h5 52.g4 ♕xh6 The inevitable would happen anyway.

43...♕e6 44.♕g7† ♔c6 45.♖f1 c2



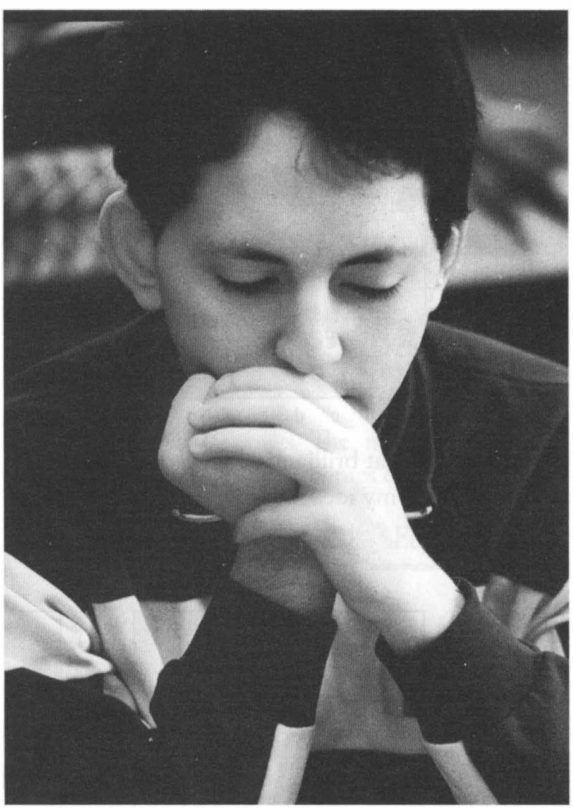
46.♕b2 d1=♕ 47.♕xa3 ♕xf1†

In view of 48.♔xf1 ♕c4† White resigned.

0–1

Chapter 5

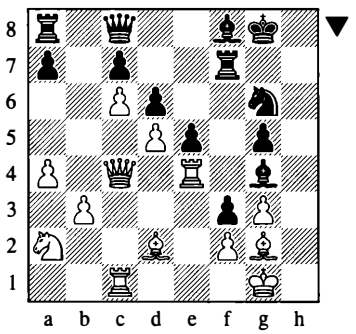
Destruction of Pawn Structure



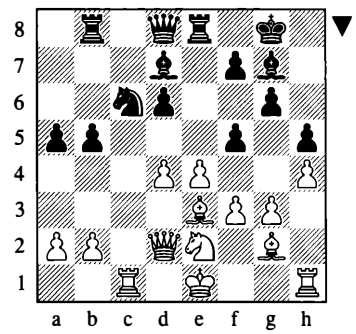
If you cannot find a way, go deeper!

Test yourself against the book

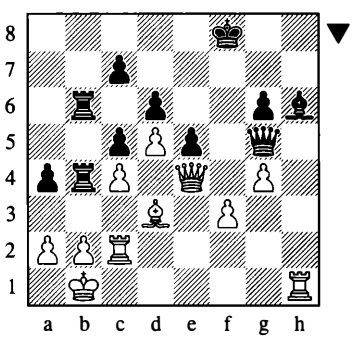
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



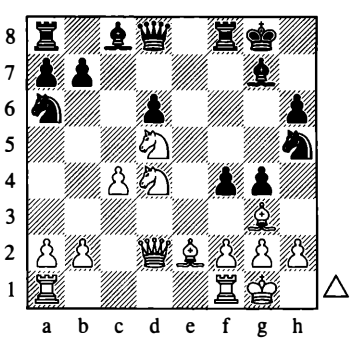
Time to do something!
(see page 157)



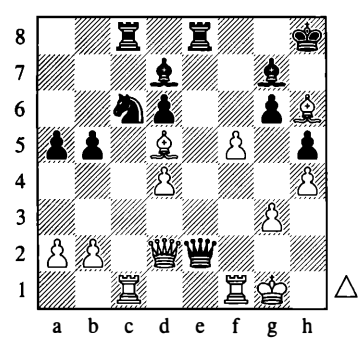
A difficult one. How can Black improve his position?
(see page 166)



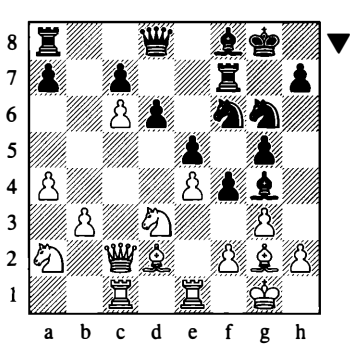
Can you calculate this till the end? (see page 153/4)



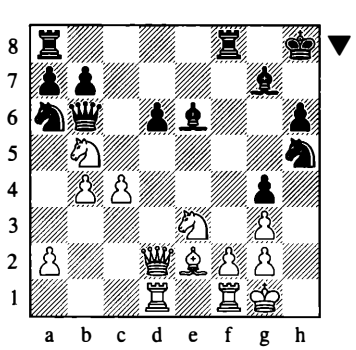
What brilliant refutation of my idea had I missed?
(see page 162)



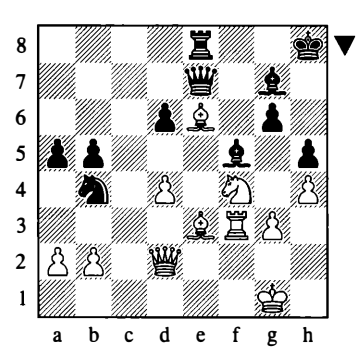
White has a direct win. Can you find it? (see page 167)



How can Black strengthen the attacking resources?
(see page 156)



Time for the big combination!
(see page 163)



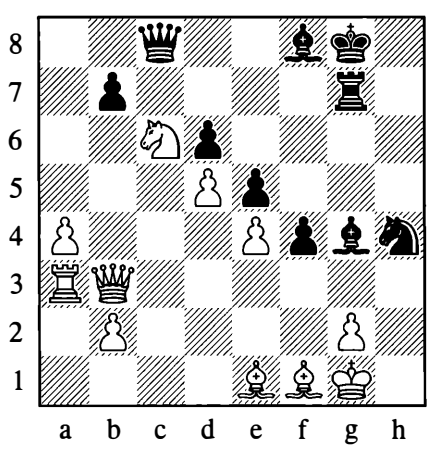
Sometimes one nice move is all you need... (see page 167)

In this chapter I will show three of my own games with different variations on the theme of the destruction of pawn structures. In the first of my games I break through on the g-file, though in a slightly different way than in our first example below. In the second I remove the structure on the dark squares, and in the third we have a very complex example, which I would suggest that you take more than just a few ideas from.

In general, the destruction of a pawn structure takes place on one colour of squares. By removing the defence there, we create a way to access the opponent's position. The following two examples are pretty simple, which should be a good way to come to grips with the basic idea before we look at it in a dynamic scenario.

Aleksej Aleksandrov – Alexei Fedorov

Minsk 2016



The first example is elementary for a seasoned King's Indian player. Black has positioned himself for a classical breakthrough on the g-file, set up already by ...g5-g4, ...hxg4 and so on. We have reached an obvious crunch point: the black pieces are as active as they are likely to get, so anything other than direct action would be a waste of time.

The main defence of the white king is on the light squares, so elimination of the defence of these squares is essential.

30...♘xg2!

Fedorov has played the King's Indian for decades; this move will have come very easily to him. The immediate 30...f3? 31.♗xh4 would be very poor, of course. And defending the knight would be a waste of time.

31.♗xg2 f3

The attack on the light-squared defenders continues.

32.a5

32.♗f1 ♗h3† would contribute to the complete destruction of the defence on the light squares.

32...♗h5!

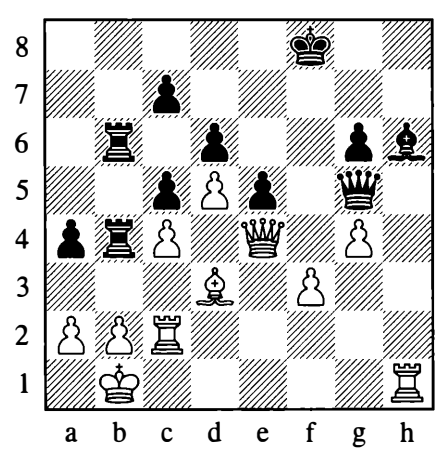
The final finesse; Black does not want a pawn on g2.

33.♔f1 ♖xg2
0–1

The next example is also very basic. Black comes crashing through on the dark squares.

Eesha Karavade – Pierre Bailet

Nancy 2016



32...♖xb2†! 33.♖xb2 ♖xb2† 34.♔xb2 ♕d2† 35.♔b1

Or 35.♔a3 ♕b4#.

35...a3!

With a simple threat of mate in one.

35...♕b4† 36.♔c2 would be the wrong direction, although Black can still repeat with 36...♕d2† 37.♔b1 and continue as in the game.

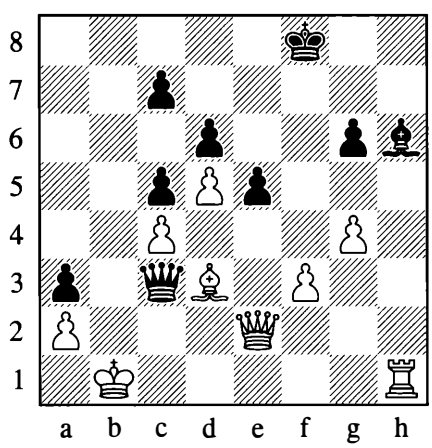
36.♕e2 ♕b4† 37.♔a1

Or 37.♔c2 ♕b2† 38.♔d1 ♕c1#.

37...♕c3†

37...♗d2!? also wins immediately.

38.♔b1



38...♗d2!

Cutting off the queen and deciding the game.

0–1

My Games

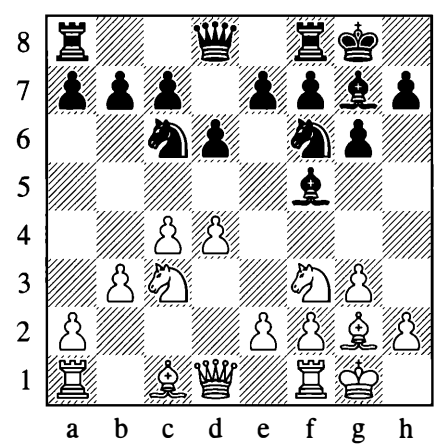
Alexei Barsov – Ilya Smirin

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010

The 2010 Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk was different for me from other such events. It was my ninth Olympiad playing for the Israeli team and for the first time we won a medal – bronze. In 2008 in Dresden our team had even greater success – the silver medal – but for the first time since 1992 I had not participated in the Olympiad. (Perhaps that was the reason for such a great team result? Well, never mind.)

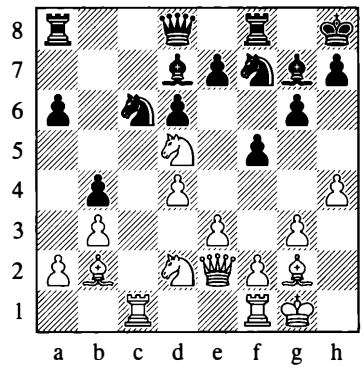
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.g3 0–0 5.♗g2 d6 6.0–0 ♘c6 7.♘c3 ♗f5 8.b3

The curious-looking move 8.♗e3!?, which has been played by Jon Hammer, among others, definitely deserves attention.



8...e5

More than twenty years ago I used to play the logical-looking 8...♘e4, but the following tough defeat changed my mind about that move: 9.♘d5!? ♗d7 10.♗b2 f5 11.e3 It's not easy for Black to find a plan connected with counterplay here. 11...a6 12.♖c1 b5 13.♘d2 ♘g5 14.♕e2 b4 15.c5 ♔h8 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.h4 ♘f7



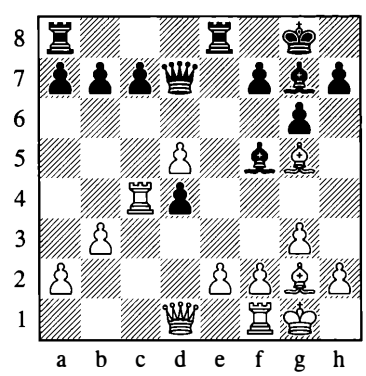
18.♘f4 ♘a5 19.♗xa8 ♕xa8 20.♖c7 ♖d8 21.♖fc1 e5 22.dxe5 ♘xe5 23.h5 g5 24.h6 ♗f8 25.♘d3 ♔g8 1–0 Cvitan – Smirin, Tilburg 1993.

9.d5

The most principled choice, but perhaps not the best one.

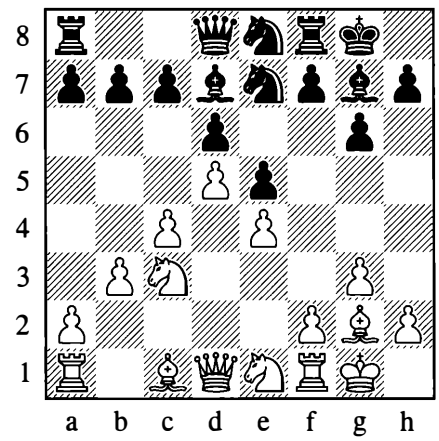
9.♗b2 leads to a dull and equal position after 9...♘xd4 10.♘xd4 exd4 11.♕xd4 ♘e4 12.♕e3 ♘xc3 13.♗xc3 ♖e8 14.♕d2 ♗xc3 15.♕xc3 ♗e4.

9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♗g5!? is not as innocent as it looks. For instance: 10...♕c8 11.♘d5 ♘xd5 12.cxd5 ♘d4 13.♘xd4 exd4 14.♖c1 ♕d7 15.♖c4 ♖fe8



16.♖xd4 (16.♗f4!?) 16...♖xe2 17.♕xe2 ♗xd4 18.♖c1 ♖e8 With equality, but I lost in the end; (1–0, 35) Durarbayli – Smirin, Plovdiv 2012.

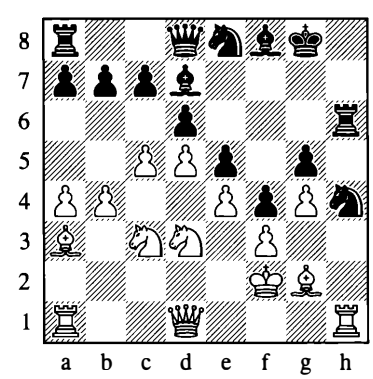
9...♘e7 10.♘e1 ♘e8 11.e4 ♗d7



Black's pieces have withdrawn from the f-file to play ...f7-f5 as soon as possible. It looks as though Black has just lost a tempo compared to the line with the immediate 7...e5 8.d5 ♘e7, but in fact the "extra" move b2-b3 turns out to be in Black's favour.

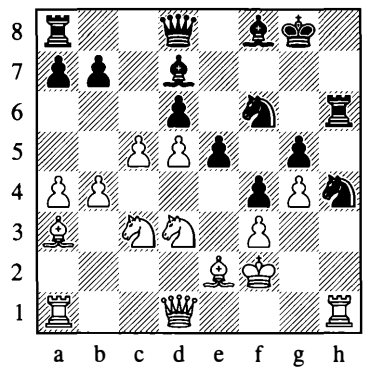
12.♘d3 f5 13.♗d2

A similar scenario as in this game happened in my blitz encounter with Shakhriyar Mamedyarov from the World Blitz Championship: 13.c5 f4 14.a4 g5 15.g4 Trying to close the kingside. 15...h5 16.h3 hxg4 17.hxg4 ♘g6 18.f3 ♘h4 19.♔f2 ♖f6 20.♖h1 ♖h6 21.♗a3 ♗f8 22.b4

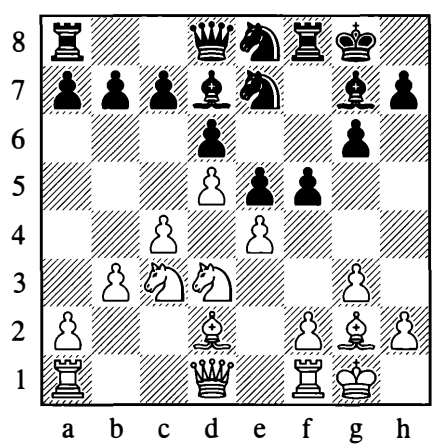


22...c6! Now the position opens up even more and the king on f2 feels unhappy about that.

23.♗f1 ♘f6 24.♗e2 cxd5 25.exd5



25...e4! 26.♘xe4 ♘xe4† 27.fxe4 ♗g7 With a crushing attack; (0–1, 38) Mamedyarov – Smirin, Khanty-Mansiysk (blitz) 2013.



13...f4!

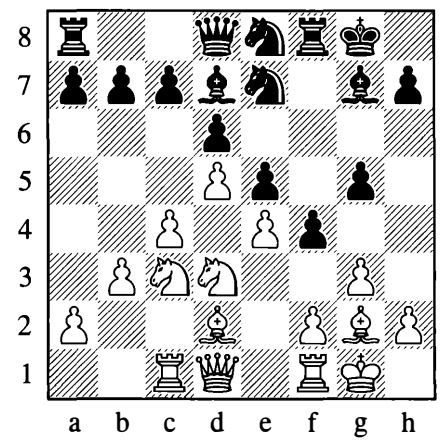
Starting a direct attack against White's king.

14.♖c1

The simple variation 14.gxf4 exf4 15.♘xf4? ♗xc3 16.♗xc3 ♖xf4 shows the drawback of the white pawn being on b3 instead b2: it does not protect the knight on c3.

14...g5

Black's play is very simple: soon almost all of his pieces will be involved in the attack. White will find it hard to defend or to create his usual counterplay on the queenside. It's surprising to see that, without making obvious mistakes, White is clearly worse after just 14 moves! I would again like to stress the critical role of the "small" detail of the pawn being on b3 – it completely changes the assessment.



15.c5 ♘g6 16.♖e1 ♖f7

The standard regrouping – the rook vacates f8 for the bishop.

17.a4 ♗f8 18.♘a2?

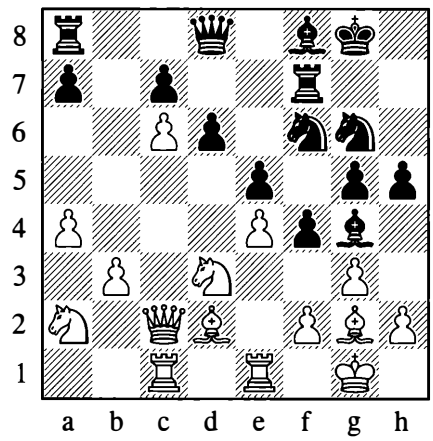
This manoeuvre looks artificial, and indeed this is a weak move.

Barsov should have continued 18.b4, creating some activity on the left flank, planning to put his queen on b3 and trying to deflect the opponent from a direct kingside assault. In this case the game could have continued 18...♘f6 19.♕b3 h5 20.c6!? (20.♘b5 also deserves attention) 20...bxc6 21.dxc6 ♗xc6 22.♘b5 ♗xb5 23.axb5 ♖b8 24.♖a1 ♖b7 25.♘b2, and at least White has active pieces and some compensation for the missing pawn.

18...♘f6 19.c6

This pawn push was the aim of the previous move. It proves to be harmless for Black though.

19...bxc6 20.dxc6 ♗g4 21.♕c2 h5!

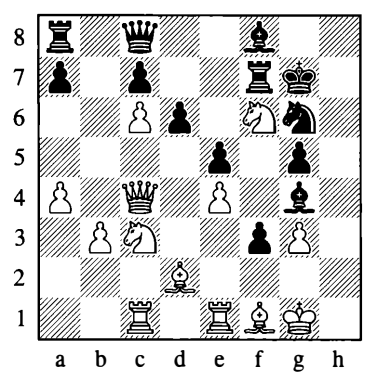


Black's centre is stable, so he can concentrate on the attack. Now it's hard to give White any good advice.

22.♕c4 ♕c8 23.♘db4 h4 24.♘d5?!

This loses virtually by force.

The only chance to prolong resistance consisted of: 24.♘c3 hxg3 25.hxg3 ♘h5 26.♘bd5 Occupying the strong outpost on d5 with the knight. Even in this case, after: 26...f3 27.♗f1 ♘xg3 28.♘f6† ♔g7 29.fxg3



29...♗e7! This computer suggestion decides the outcome, but it would be not so easy to find this move over the board. 30.♘xg4 (or 30.♕a6 ♖xf6 31.♗e3 ♕h8 and White is doomed) 30...♕xg4 31.♔f2 ♖h8 Black has an irresistible attack.

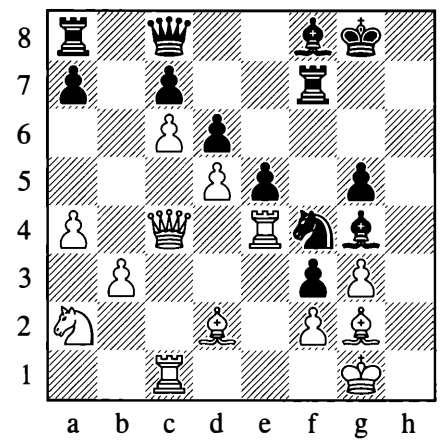
24...♘xd5 25.exd5 hxg3 26.hxg3 f3

This pawn is a bone in White's throat.

27.♖e4

27.♗f1 ♗h3 28.♖e4 ♘f4! 29.♗xf4 gxf4 would change nothing.

27...♘f4!

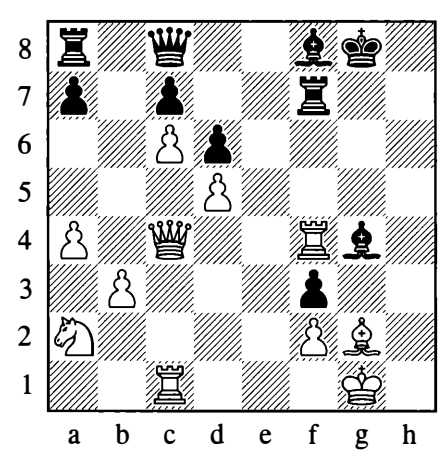


A simple but pretty move, sealing the opponent's fate.

28.gxf4 gxf4

28...fxg2 was even simpler, for instance 29.fxg5 ♕f5 30.♗e3 ♕h7.

29.♗xf4 exf4 30.♖xf4

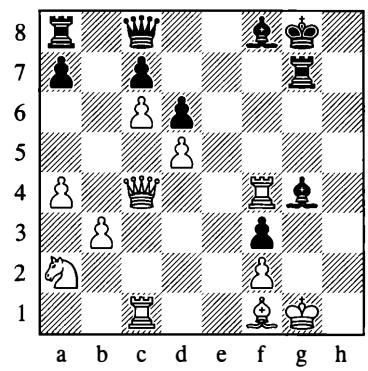


30...♖g7

30..♖xf4 31.♕xf4 fxg2 32.♖c4 ♗d1 would be enough for the win, but I wanted to win more quickly and decided to proceed with my attack.

31.♗h1

Slightly more stubborn was 31.♗f1:

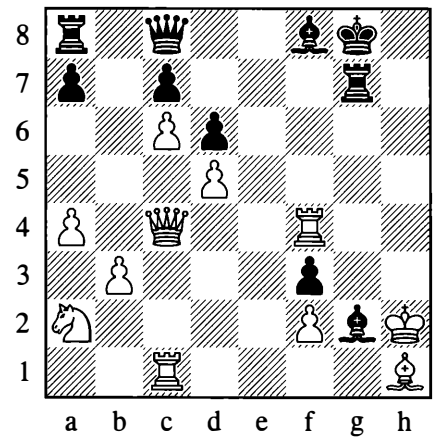


And I would have to choose between:

31...♗h3† 32.♔h1 ♗xf1 33.♕xf1 ♖h7† 34.♔g1 ♗h6 35.♖xf3 ♖g7† 36.♔h2 ♕g4 37.♕h3 ♗f4† 38.♔h1 ♕xh3† 39.♖xh3 ♗xc1 40.♘xc1 ♖e8 41.♘d3 ♖e4

And the more resolute computer method 31...♖g5 32.♔h2 ♗h6 33.♖e1 ♖g7 34.♖xg4 ♕xg4 35.♕xg4 ♖xg4, both leading to a win. This is not surprising – the white knight on a2 is situated too far from the battle.

31...♗h3† 32.♔h2 ♗g2



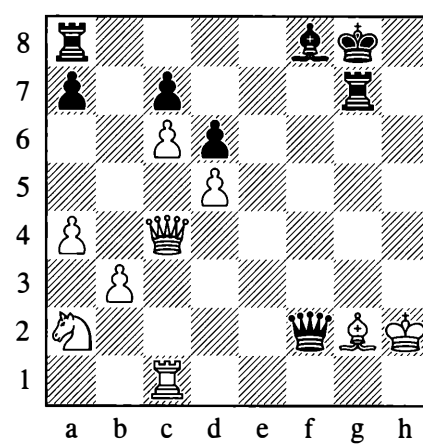
33.♖xf3

33.♖h4 ♗e7 34.♖h5 ♕e8! would bring no relief.

33...♗xf3 34.♗xf3 ♕f5 35.♗g2

If 35.♕e4 ♕g5 36.♗g2 ♖e8 37.♕f3 ♕d2 38.♗h3 ♕xa2 the unfortunate knight would be lost, leaving his army lacking a whole rook.

35...♕xf2



But now the situation is bad enough to cause immediate capitulation.

0–1

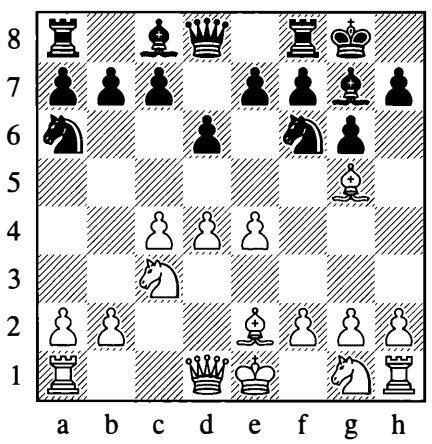


Mikhail Nedobora – Ilya Smirin

Israel 2008

This game was played in one of the numerous (about 25!) Israeli Team Championships I participated in. It's included in the book because of a nice trap that I set, and its excellent refutation, which my opponent failed to find. The opening phase is of some importance as well in my opinion.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♗g5 ♘a6

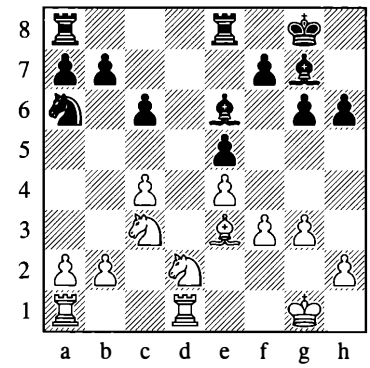


7.♘f3

White's move may be seen as some kind of hybrid of the Averbakh System with the Classical System (5.♗e2 and 6.♘f3). It looks natural, and is hardly worse than more popular continuations such as 7.♕d2 or 7.h4.

7...h6 8.♗h4

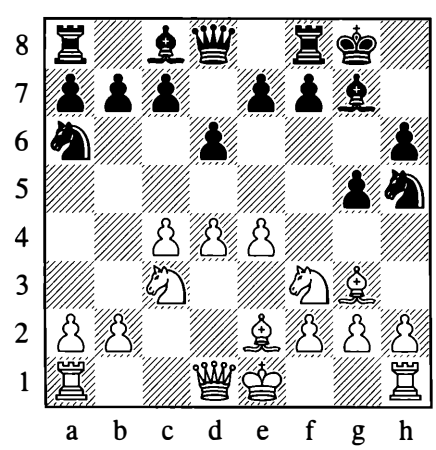
This is definitely more logical than: 8.♗f4 e5! 9.dxe5 ♘h5 10.♗e3 (after the more ambitious 10.g3 ♘xf4 11.gxf4 ♘c5 I think Black has enough compensation for the pawn) 10...dxe5 11.0–0 c6 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♖fd1 ♖e8 14.g3 ♘f6 15.♘d2 ♘g4 16.♗xg4 ♗xg4 17.f3 ♗e6



And I managed to win this slightly more pleasant endgame (two bishops); (0–1, 61) Milov – Smirin, Haifa 1995.

8.♗e3 e5 9.0–0, as was played for instance in Gelfand – Naiditsch, Wijk aan Zee 2014, is possible, but in my opinion the "extra" move ...h6 should be in Black's favour here. In my game with Maxim Rodshtein, which you will find in this book on page 278, I reached this position with White to move!

8...g5 9.♗g3 ♘h5

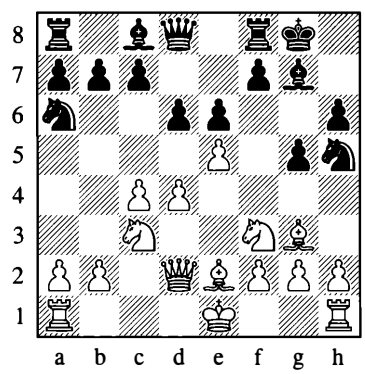


The principled approach – Black is going to exchange the dark-squared bishop despite weakening his own kingside pawn structure. This would work perfectly were it not for another drawback – the knight on a6 is rather poorly placed in these circumstances (even on

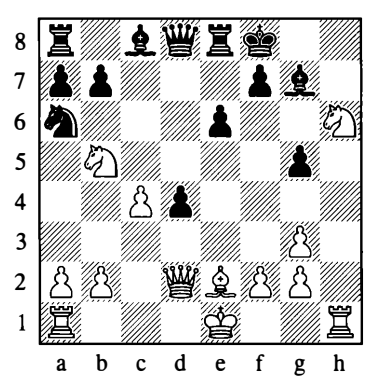
b8 it would be better, I suppose). Still I feel that Black should be OK – the bishop on g7 usually feels happy in such positions.

10.0–0

Back in 1998 I played an interesting game with Alexey Aleksandrov: 10.♕d2 e6 (with the idea ...f7-f5, threatening just to win the bishop on g3 after ...f5-f4) 11.e5 A very aggressive move (probably 11.0–0, transposing to the game Nedobora – Smirin was objectively better).



11...♘xg3?! (As I found out after the game, I had to play: 11...f5! 12.exf6 ♕xf6 13.0–0–0 ♘f4 This is the idea – the knight on h5 has found another, better, job. 14.h4 g4 15.♘e1 e5 And Black is doing great – I would be happy to play this position.) 12.hxg3 dxe5 13.♘xe5 c5 14.♘g4! cxd4 15.♘b5 ♖e8 16.♘xh6† ♔f8



17.♘xf7! ♔xf7 18.♗h5† ♔g8 19.♗xe8 ♕xe8 20.♕xg5 And Black was on the verge of defeat. In the end I was lucky to escape; (½–½, 40) Aleksandrov – Smirin, New York 1998.

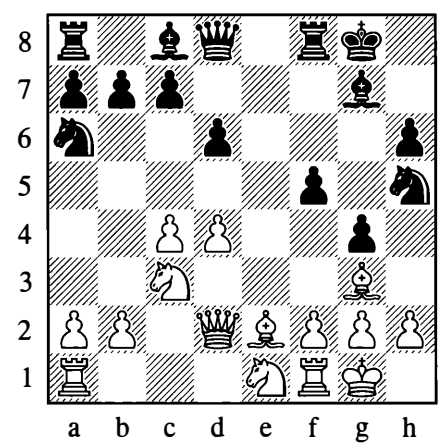
10...e6 11.♕d2 f5

Going for the bishop on g3.

Today I would probably choose another plan – 11...c5!? 12.d5 ♘xg3 13.hxg3 exd5 14.cxd5 (14.♘xd5!? ♖e8 15.♗d3 ♗e6 16.♘e3 ♘b4 17.a3 ♘c6!? seems to lead to a complex and double-edged position) 14...♘c7 Transposing into a Benoni-type position. It should be perfectly playable for Black. One small detail may work in his favour – on d2 the queen occupies a square which often belongs to the f3-knight.

12.exf5 exf5 13.♘e1

Black has to decide what to do with the knight on h5.



13...g4

I thought this move was the most principled one – the hunt for the g3-bishop continues.

The timid 13...♕e8 does not solve all the problems: 14.♗xh5 ♕xh5 15.f4 ♗d7 16.♘c2 ♖ae8 17.♖ae1 with somewhat better prospects for White – the black bishops are not very

active, White has a good central formation, and we have already spoken about the knight on a6.

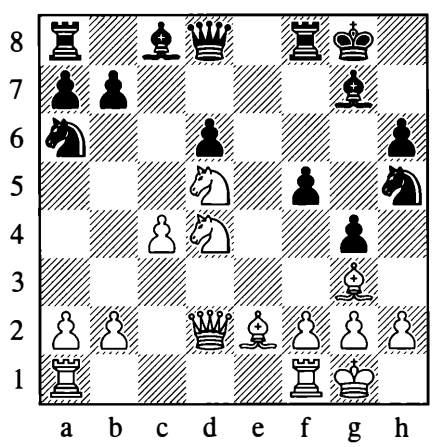
But the simple 13...♘xg3 14.hxg3 ♘b4!? was the optimal solution – the black knight has joined the battle! After let's say 15.a3 ♘c6 16.♘c2 f4!? 17.gxf4 ♖xf4 18.♘d5 ♖f8 19.♖fe1 ♘e7!? 20.♗f3 ♘xd5 21.♗xd5† ♔h8 Black's position seems to be fully acceptable.

14.♘d5 c5?!

Played in the same spirit; I found a possibility to set a nice trap and went for it, not sensing the danger.

Correct was 14...♖e8 15.♘c2 ♕g5 16.♖ad1 ♕xd2 17.♖xd2 ♗e6 18.♘f4 ♘xf4 19.♗xf4 ♖ad8 and White's advantage is minimal if any.

15.♘c2 cxd4 16.♘xd4



Black's position is seriously compromised – there are too many weaknesses. Still, I was very inspired by the idea and made my next (beautiful, I thought) move without hesitation.

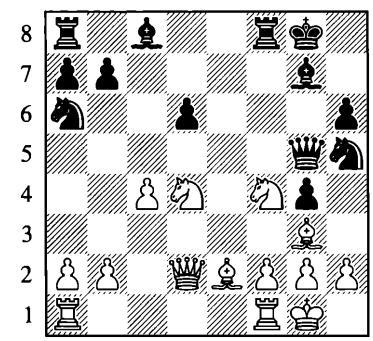
16...f4?

16...♘c5 17.♘b5 ♘e4 18.♕e3± would lead to a difficult situation for Black – he has insufficient dynamic options to compensate for his structural disaster.

It's interesting that even now after 16...♕g5!? 17.♕xg5 hxg5 18.♘e7† ♔h7 19.♘dxf5 ♗xf5 20.♘xf5 ♖xf5 21.♗d3 ♔g6 22.♗xd6 ♘f4 23.♗xf4 gxf4 24.♖fd1 b6 Black would have reasonable chances to hold this ending. But of course, I did not even look in that direction.

17.♘b5?

Mikhail trusts me. If, after 17.♘xf4 ♕g5, he had found the only (but winning) move:



18.h4!! gxh3 19.♗xh5 ♖xf4 20.♕xf4 ♕xh5 21.gxh3 he would have delivered a serious blow to my ego. Alas, it remained big after the game. More seriously, 18.h4!! would have been a brilliant refutation, but luck smiled on me this time.

Of course, if 17.♗xf4? then 17...♘xf4 18.♘xf4 ♕f6! is a nice double threat; Black would win fair and square.

17...fxg3 18.hxg3

Certainly the resulting position should be evaluated as winning for Black – White's compensation for the piece is clearly insufficient. But the win is not automatic here – White's forces are quite active and Black still has numerous weaknesses.

18...♔h8?!

A prophylactic move of the "just in case" kind.

More accurate, logical and strong would be 18...♘f6.

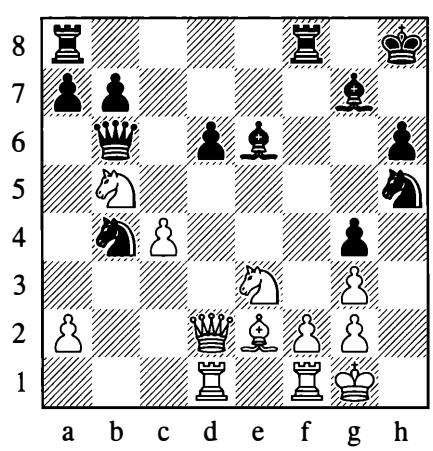
19.♖ad1 ♗e6 20.♘e3

After 20.a3 (simply preparing 21.b4) the following variation is possible: 20...♗xd5 (20...♘f6? 21.♘f4 and suddenly White is better; 20...♕d7 21.b4 ♖ad8 looks like a good alternative) 21.♕xd5 ♘f6 22.♕xb7 ♘c5 23.♕c6 ♖c8!? 24.♕xd6 ♕e8 25.♕d2 ♘fe4 26.♕e3 a6 27.♗xg4! ♘xf2! 28.♕xe8 ♖cxe8 29.♖xf2 ♖xf2 30.♔xf2 axb5 31.cxb5 ♗xb2 32.♗f3 ♖b8 33.♗c6 ♗xa3 I believe Black should win this, even though it will not be at all easy.

20...♕b6 21.b4?

Missing some simple but pretty tactics.

After the correct 21.♕xd6 ♕xd6 22.♖xd6 ♖ae8 23.♘xg4 (23.♗xg4 ♗xg4 24.♘xg4 ♖e4) 23...♗xb2 the extra bishop should tell in the end, but again Black would have to overcome some obstacles.



21...♘xb4!

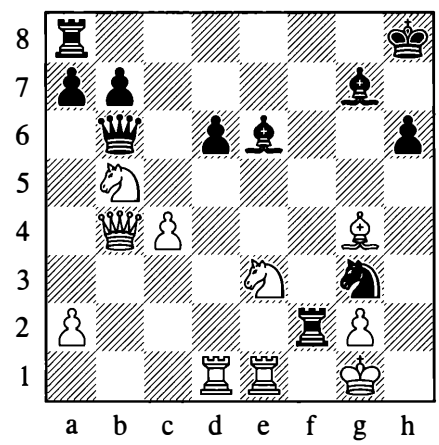
Giving back the extra piece to destroy the shelter of White's king.

22.♕xb4 ♘xg3 23.♖fe1 ♖xf2!

This second blow leads to an irresistible mating attack.

24.♗xg4

Or 24.♔xf2 ♘e4†.



24...♖f1†! 25.♔h2 ♗e5 26.♗xe6 ♘e2†

The elegant 26...♖h1† 27.♖xh1 ♘f1† 28.♔h3 ♕xe3† 29.♔g4 ♕f4† 30.♔h5 ♕g5# would checkmate a bit faster.

27.g3 ♕xe3

White resigned. Maybe the game is not of the very highest level, but it was an interesting struggle nonetheless.

0–1

Kiril Georgiev – Ilya Smirin

Elenite 1994

The strong tournament in the Bulgarian Black Sea resort Elenite (near Burgas) went well for me – I tied for first place with Topalov, Khalifman and Epishin. This game contributed a lot to this success.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 ♘c6

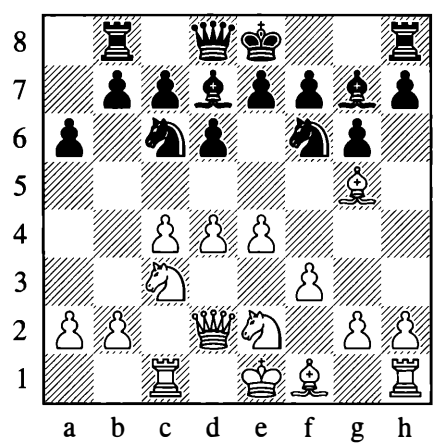
This time I wanted to experiment a bit and to try to postpone castling.

6.♘ge2 a6 7.♗g5

Kiril Georgiev chooses the most active move.

The more popular and cautious 7.♗e3 (the d4-pawn!) would be another option.

7...♖b8 8.♖c1 ♗d7 9.♕d2



9...h5!?

White's setup is aimed against 9...b5?. It would not be good here because of 10.cxb5 axb5 11.d5 ♘e5 12.♘d4 b4 13.♘cb5. That's why I decided to open a second front on the kingside, even though this move looks rather abstract.

10.h4?!

In my opinion this move plays into Black's hands – White's kingside becomes more vulnerable.

Grandmasters of today would probably continue here 10.b3!? 0–0 11.h3 with the idea g4, or 10.♘d1!? with the intention of transferring this knight to e3 or f2 and meeting ...b5 with c4-c5. But in 1994 such subtle prophylactic manoeuvres were mostly undiscovered.

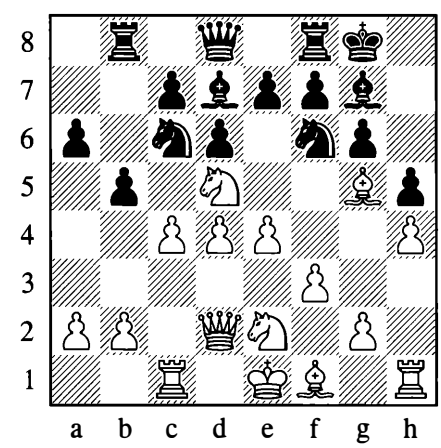
10...0–0

It's time to castle.

11.♘d5

11.g3 b5 would be good for Black. For instance, 12.cxb5 axb5 13.d5? ♘e5 14.♘d4 b4, and 15.♘cb5? ♗xb5 16.♗xb5 ♖xb5 17.♘xb5 ♘xf3† is impossible of course.

11...b5



12.c5

The correct decision.

The pawn exchange 12.cxb5?! axb5 would weaken White's control over the centre.

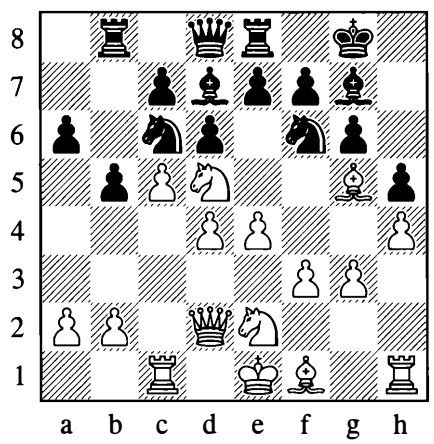
12...♖e8

White's play is not without some tactical venom.

12...♘h7? would lead to immediate disaster: 13.cxd6 cxd6 14.♖xc6 ♘xg5 15.♕xg5† ♗xc6 16.♘xe7† ♔h7 17.♘xc6

13.g3

With the modest objective of completing development. If White manages to do so, and keeps his strong central grip, he will have an edge. That's why Black has to organize counterplay rather quickly.



13...a5!?

Also possible was something like: 13...♘h7 14.♗f4 (14.♗e3?! dxc5 15.♖xc5 e6 16.♘df4 e5! 17.dxe5 ♘xe5) 14...♖c8 (the immediate 14...e6?! 15.♘xc7 ♕xc7 16.♗xd6 leads to White's advantage) 15.♗g2 e6

But Black made a more concrete and ambitious move – to grab some space on the queenside. Also, the potential knight jump to b4 (after an exchange on d5) may cause worries for White.

14.cxd6

Kiril decided to release the pawn tension.

14...cxd6 15.♘xf6†

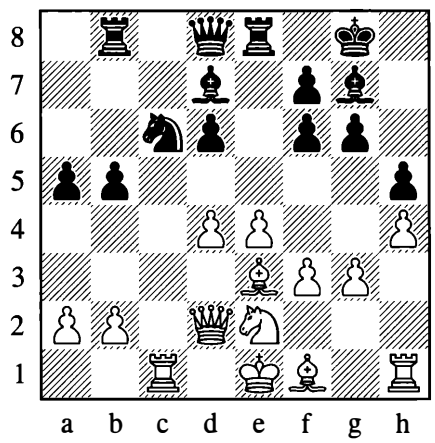
15.♗g2? was bad due to the simple 15...♘xd5 16.exd5 ♘b4.

15...exf6

Now ...f6-f5, undermining White's central pawn chain, may be very unpleasant for him.

16.♗e3

The undermining ...f5 can be seen in the variation 16.♗f4?! f5! 17.♗xd6? fxe4 18.fxe4 ♖xe4 19.♗xb8 ♕xb8, and Black has an overwhelming position.



16...f5

I need not have rushed with this obvious move.

As my opponent pointed out after the game, 16...a4!?, with the idea ...♘a5 would have posed serious problems for him. For example:

17.♗g2 ♘a5∓ 18.♗f4 ♕b6 19.♗xd6 (19.0–0 f5) 19...♘c4

17.b3 axb3 18.axb3 ♘a5 19.♖b1 (19.♕d3 b4! 20.♗g2 ♗b5) 19...d5! 20.♗g2 ♗c6!∓

In both cases White's position is on the verge of collapse.

17.♔f2! This computer suggestion seems to be best, as is often the case.

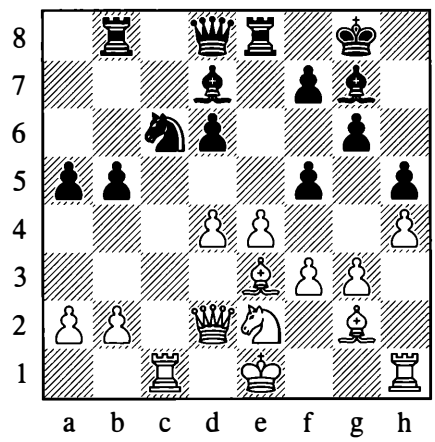
Still, after 17...♘e7!, supporting the pawn pushes ...f5 or ...d5, I would love my prospects.

17...f5 18.exf5 would be welcomed by White; 17...♘a5 is not effective either because of 18.♘c3.

17.♗g2?!

This very natural developing move proves to be inaccurate in this tense situation.

Better would be the more principled though risky 17.exf5, which would promise an interesting fight ahead.



17...fxe4?

But this premature exchange is clearly wrong.

17...a4! would probably be even stronger than on the previous move. After that I do not see an entirely satisfactory continuation for White.

For instance: 18.exf5 ♘a5 19.fxg6 fxg6 20.♗g5 ♕b6 21.0–0 ♘c4

Or 18.0–0 ♘a5 19.♖c2 ♘c4 20.♕c1 ♘xe3 21.♕xe3 ♕b6.

And finally 18.b3 axb3 19.axb3 ♖a8!? 20.0–0 ♖a3. And in all three variations it's hard to envy White's position.

18.fxe4

White is going to castle, after which he would be happy, with a good pawn centre and well-placed pieces.

18...f5?!

18...a4 19.0–0 ♘a5 would have not nearly the same effect as before – after 20.♗h6 ♘c4 21.♕f4 the pawn on f7 is under attack – a direct consequence of 17...fxe4?.

Still I could have found some prudent continuation like 18...b4!? 19.0–0 ♘a7, intending to bring this knight to b5 with a somewhat worse but reasonable position. But I was already driven by adrenaline, and wanted to play as actively and riskily as possible.

19.exf5

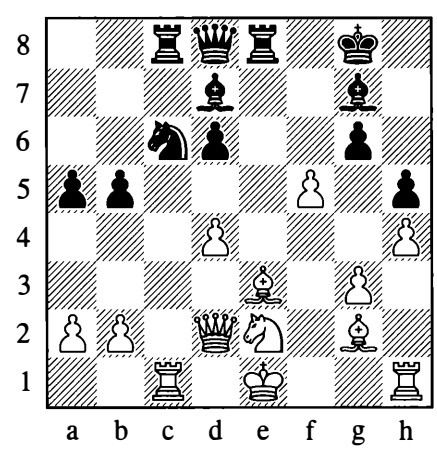
I began to feel that something had gone wrong, but fortunately I did not have much choice but to try to keep things messy.

19...♖c8!?

Relatively the best decision.

19...♕e7 20.♔f2 ♖bc8 21.fxg6 ♕f6† 22.♘f4 would be hopeless.

19...♕b6 20.0–0 ♖xe3 21.♕xe3 ♘xd4 22.♗d5† ♔h8 23.♔h1 ♖e8 24.♕g5 also leads to disaster.



20.0–0!

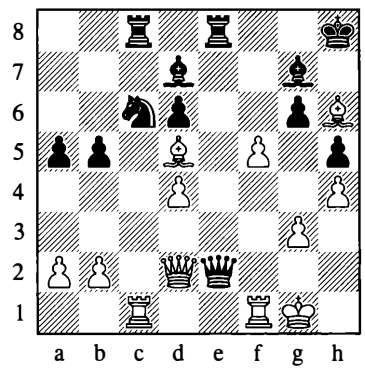
Completing development.

After the less strong 20.fxg6 ♕f6 Black would manage to keep the white king in the centre, with practical chances.

20...♕e7 21.♗d5† ♔h8 22.♖f3?

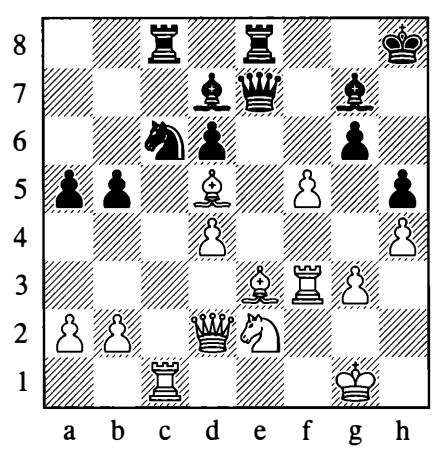
Oops! This is wrong. Now my bluff pays off.

Georgiev fails to find the precise and powerful: 22.♗h6! ♕xe2



23.f6 is tempting, as 23...♗f8? 24.♗g7†! leads to checkmate, and 23...♗xf6 24.♖xf6 ♕xd2 25.♗xd2 ♘xd4 26.♖xc8 ♗xc8 27.♗xa5 ♗f5 leaves Black with only slim chances to hold.

But 23.♗xg7†! ♔xg7 24.f6† ♔h7 25.♗g8†!! is even more convincing. Black can only resign. The key point is 27.f8=♕†!.



22...♘b4!

This unexpected knight jump changes the picture. Now White has to find a way to hold his own in tactical complications.

Probably Kiril was counting on 22...gxf5? 23.♘f4, with a big advantage.

23.♖xc8 ♗xc8 24.♘f4?

This obvious move, which was made in the approach to time trouble, immediately brings White very close to defeat.

24.f6! ♗xf6 25.♘f4 was required, with the small but vital difference that after 25...♗f5 (better is 25...♕g7 with approximate balance) 26.a3 ♘xd5 27.♘xd5 the bishop on f6 will be hit by the white knight, and the position arising will be in White's favour.

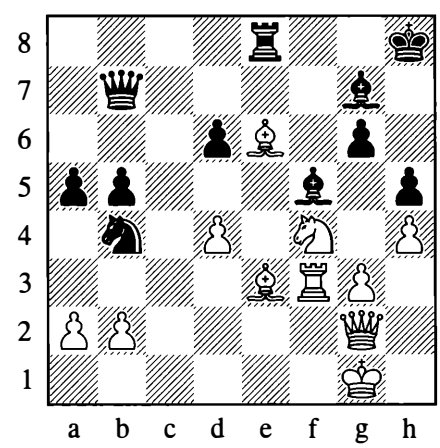
24...♗xf5 25.♗e6

Obviously Georgiev has been counting on this move. Objectively speaking his position was already worse than "so-so". For instance, 25.♗b3 would just lose after 25...♕e4.

25...♕b7!

Exposing the rook's awkward position.

26.♕g2



26...♗g4!

In my opinion, this is the best move from a practical point of view, especially considering that my opponent was experiencing a serious lack of time. It required some calculation.

26...♗xe6? 27.♘xe6 ♖xe6 28.♖f8† ♗xf8 29.♕xb7 ♖xe3 30.♕f7 would lead nowhere.

26...♗e4 27.d5! would bring unnecessary complications. After let's say 27...♖xe6!? 28.dxe6 ♗xf3 29.e7! ♕xe7 (29...♗c6?? 30.e8=♕†) 30.♕xf3, White would keep good drawing chances.

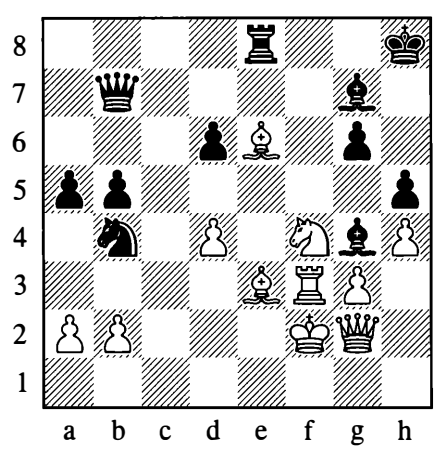
27.♔f2?

The final mistake, but the choice was very tough.

27.♘xg6† ♔h7 28.♗xg4 hxg4 would lose on the spot.

27.d5 ♖xe6! 28.♘xe6 ♕xd5–+ is the same outcome.

Only 27.♗xg4 hxg4 28.♖f1 ♕xg2† 29.♘xg2 ♘c2 30.♗f2 ♘xd4 31.♘e3 would have prolonged resistance. But I believe that even in this case Black should gradually win after 31...♖e4.



27...♘d3†

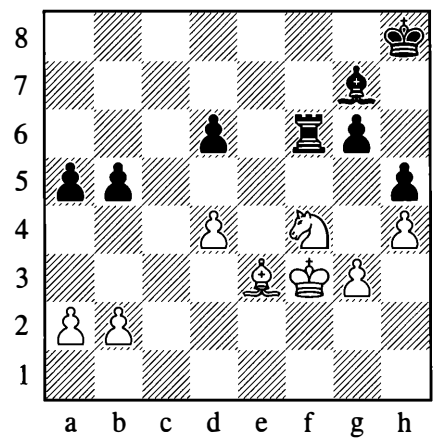
The simplest.

As usual, the artificial intellect insists on stronger options, like 27...♖xe6! 28.♘xe6 ♘d3† 29.♔e2 ♕c6 30.♘xg7 ♕c2† 31.♗d2 ♔xg7, with total domination. But after all, you can't win the same game more than once!

28.♘xd3 ♗xf3

28...♗xe6!–+ says the computer.

29.♕xf3 ♕xf3† 30.♔xf3 ♖xe6 31.♘f4 ♖f6



The complications are over and a prosaic ending with an extra exchange has arisen. Its evaluation is clear – Black should win easily.

32.♔e4 ♔g8 33.b3

33.♔d5 would be slightly more stubborn, but after 33...♔f7 34.♔c6 b4 35.♔b5 ♖f5† 36.♔c6 ♗h6! 37.♔xd6 g5 White is doomed anyway. Now it's even simpler.

33...♗h6 34.a4 bxa4 35.bxa4 ♔f7 36.d5 ♗xf4 37.♗xf4 ♔e8 38.♔d4 ♔d7 39.♔c4 ♖f5 40.♔d4 ♖f8 41.♔d3 ♖b8
0–1

Chapter 6

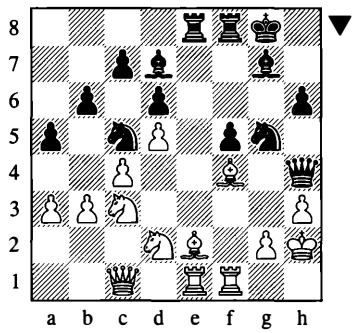
Knight Agility



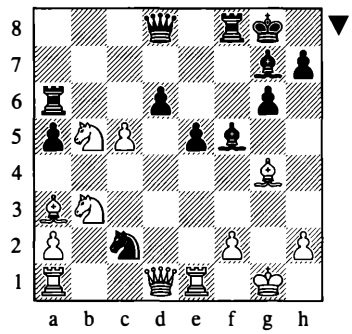
Also with White I have always been able to make good use of the knights...

Test yourself against the book

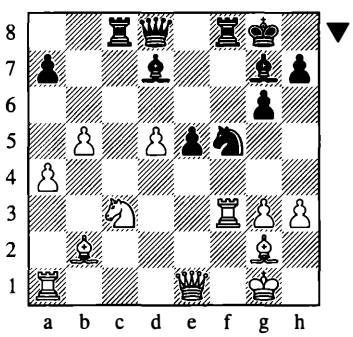
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



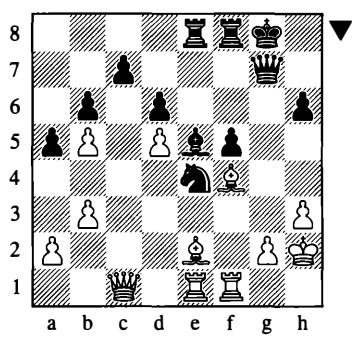
Positional play. What is Black's best move? (see page 200)



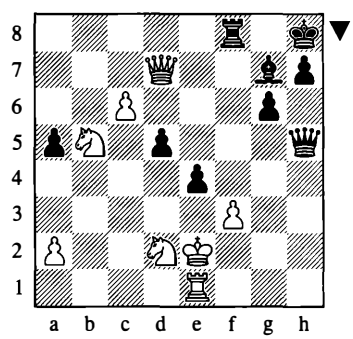
Can you navigate the complications better than I did? (see page 208)



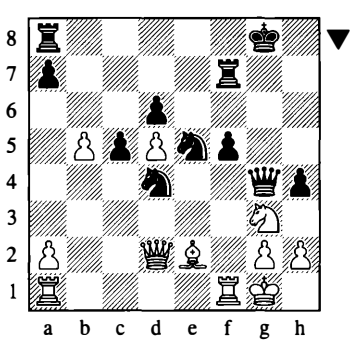
Train you KID muscle (see page 176)



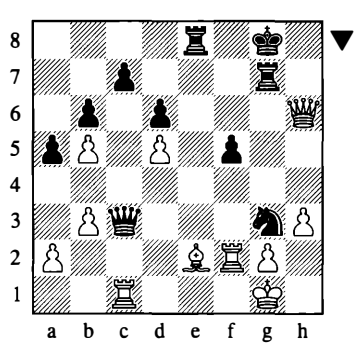
White is quite weak on the dark squares (see page 203)



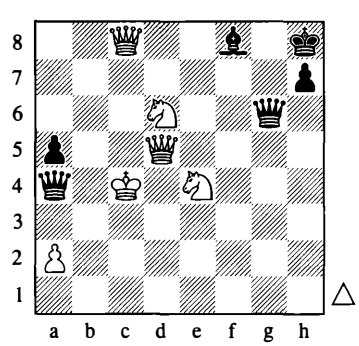
Another day at the office... What should Black play? (see page 210)



As a start, don't lose the queen (see page 181)



Simple tactics (see page 205)



What is White's only move? (see page 212)

When I was talking about the games for this book with my publishers, they pointed out that some of the games were centred on the knights. I have to admit I had never thought about this and do not have a great secret to share about the knight's role in the King's Indian – only that it is quite natural that the knights would be prominent pieces in some games, as the King's Indian often leads to closed positions. Yes, we want the bishop to break out, often with dynamic line opening, but sometimes this is not possible and the knights will have to field the majority of the activity.

As you will see from my own games in this chapter, the main playing field for the knights is the dark squares. A knight comes to d6, blocking a pawn, and is very powerful. It makes it to the more active square e5, where it has a big range. Or it goes to f4 and aims at targets behind enemy lines. Or it can go to d4 and dominate the opponent.

On the way it will go mainly via h5 and f5, but these squares have a tendency to be transition squares. The same is the case for Kasparov's knights in the lightly-annotated example below. This is quite natural when you stop to ponder for a moment. Black's pawn structure in the King's Indian is on the dark squares and White dominates the light squares with his pawns. A knight needs support to do its best (and worst!) and who is better at supporting a knight than a pawn?

Do pay attention to the dynamic potential of the knights in the King's Indian. Without the knights there would be far fewer tactics in chess; and without tactics the King's Indian would not be the King's Indian...

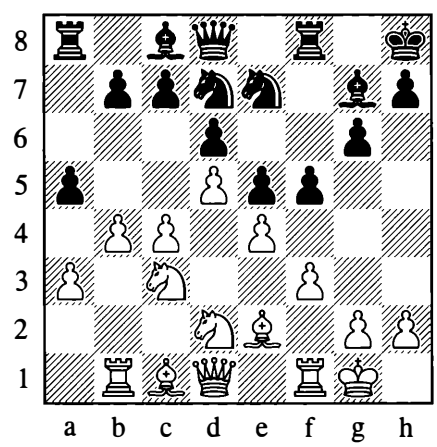
But I digress. Let's have a quick look at some textbook knight-handling from a great King's Indian player.

Alexander Khalifman – Garry Kasparov

Paris (rapid) 1991

In this rapid game from his King's Indian prime, Kasparov manages to make 13 knight moves before crashing through on the kingside. As the former World Champion's favourite number was 13, this must have pleased him immensely.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘d2 a5 10.a3 ♘d7 11.♖b1 f5 12.b4 ♔h8 13.f3



13...♘g8

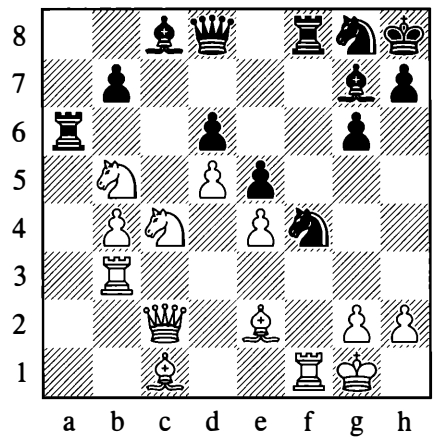
The move Kasparov introduced against Karpov (see page183).

14.♕c2 axb4 15.axb4 ♘df6 16.c5 ♘h5 17.♘c4 ♘f4 18.cxd6 cxd6 19.♘b5 ♖a6 20.♖b3?!

This move is thematic in some lines, but here it does not really work.

20.♗e3 was preferable, but after 20...♘f6 Black clearly has a good game.

20...fxe4 21.fxe4



21...♗d7! 22.♘c3

22.♘cxd6 ♖xd6 23.♘xd6 ♕b6† 24.♗e3 ♕xd6 also looks very pleasant for Black.

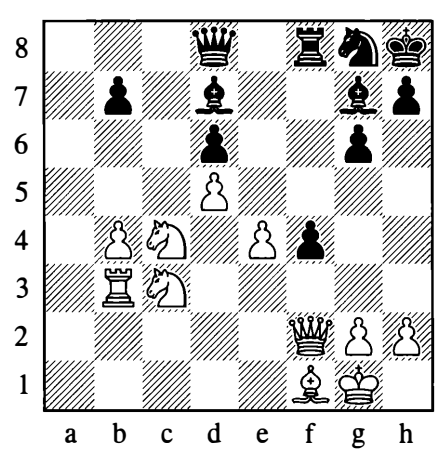
22...♖a1

The position is already a bit uncomfortable for White. He decides to get rid of the strong black knight, but this dramatically weakens his dark squares.

23.♗xf4?!

23.♗f3 was better, but Black has a promising position nonetheless.

23...♖xf1† 24.♗xf1 exf4 25.♕f2



25...♘h6!

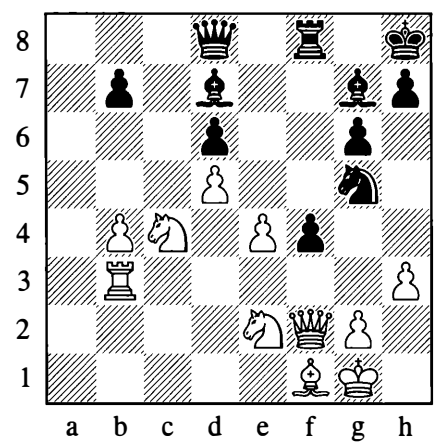
The knight aims for the e5-square.

25...f3 26.gxf3 ♕g5† 27.♔h1 ♕c1 was also strong, but by no means a very human solution.

26.h3 ♘f7 27.♘e2

27.♕xf4 would lose very quickly to some rather natural moves: 27...♗d4† 28.♔h1 ♘e5 29.♕c1 ♕f6, and the attack is decisive. We can add 30.♗e2 ♗xh3 to the line if you like. I am certain that it would be within Kasparov's powers to see such a tactic, even in a rapid game.

27...♘g5!



We should always stay flexible. When the opponent prepares for one idea, it is good to have another he had not anticipated ready.

28.♘xf4?

This loses immediately, but the position after 28.♘d2 ♕e7 would also not hold for long.

28...♕f6 29.g3 ♘xe4 30.♕e3 ♘xg3 31.♕xg3 ♕xf4 32.♕xf4 ♖xf4
0–1

My Games

When you play through my games you will probably realize that the knights do an awful lot of work, only to be eliminated once it is time to reap the rewards. This is perfectly natural. Chess is not only a game of piece coordination and harmony, it is also about destruction and ruthlessness. So do not get too attached to your knights, just because you realize they have great potential.

Mesgen Amanov – Ilya Smirin

King of Prussia 2010

1.d4

The World Open (sounds good, doesn't it?) in Philadelphia is a tournament I played in more times than any other event in my career. In 2010 the World Open took place in a town near Philadelphia with the romantic name of 'King of Prussia'.

1...♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3

The system with a fianchetto of the light-squared bishop has a very solid reputation. Its main aim is to restrict the opponent's potential activity and obtain a small but lasting edge.

3...♗g7

Perhaps the simplest way to fight for equality is 3...c6 with ...d7-d5 to follow, transposing into the Grünfeld. The then World Champion Garry Kasparov played it a few times against Anatoly Karpov in their matches in 1986 and 1987. All the games ended peacefully. I have also played this line quite a lot, mostly when I did not mind a draw. But in this game I was in a more aggressive mood.

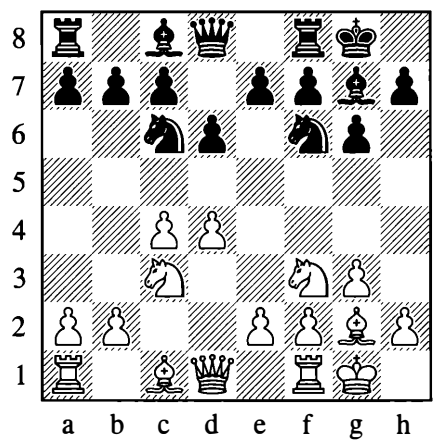
4.♗g2 0–0 5.♘c3 d6

After 5...c6 White plays 6.e4.

6.♘f3 ♘c6

Besides this move, Black can choose from three main different plans: 6...♘bd7 and ...e7-e5, 6...c5, and 6...c6. I have played all of them in my practice, but in the last few years I have switched almost exclusively to 6...♘c6.

7.0–0



7...♗f5

Here too Black had a wide choice: 7...a6, 7...e5 or 7...♗g4. I like the move in the game – Black continues with development and stays flexible with his pawn structure. Besides, ...♘e4 becomes a possibility. Of course, how to continue here is a matter of taste.

8.d5

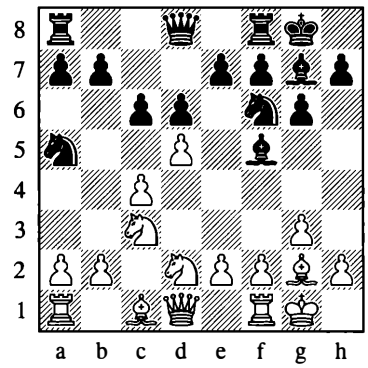
8.b3 happened in my game with Barsov, which is also included in this book.

8...♘a5 9.♘d2

9.♘d4 is another option here. After 9...♗d7 (9...♘xc4? 10.♘xf5 gxf5 11.♕d3) 10.b3 c5 11.dxc6 bxc6 (11...♘xc6 was played a few times by Boris Gulko, among others) 12.♗b2 ♖b8 13.♖b1 ♕c8 14.♖e1 ♖d8 15.♕d2 ♘b7 16.e4 e5 17.♘de2 ♗h3 18.f3 ♗xg2 19.♔xg2 ♘c5 20.♗a3 ♘e6 21.♖bd1 ♗f8 22.♕e3 h5 23.♖d3 ♖b7 24.♖ed1 ♖bd7 I had good position and later managed to win, Greenfeld – Smirin, Haifa 1993.

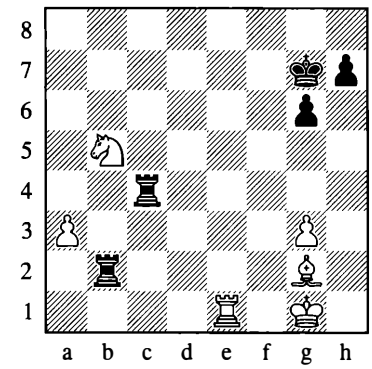
9...c5

I came to dislike 9...c6 after the following game:

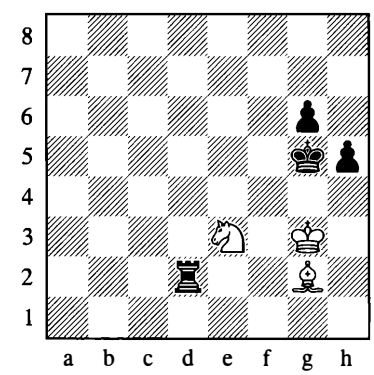


10.b4 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 ♗xc3 12.e4 ♗xa1 13.exf5 ♗g7 14.♖e1?! (14.bxa5 cxd5 15.♘b3±) 14...cxd5 15.bxa5 gxf5 16.♗xd5 ♕xa5 17.♘c4 ♕c7 18.♗f4 ♖ad8 19.♕b3 b6 20.♗f3 ♖c8 21.♗d5 ♖cd8 22.h4 e6 (22...♕c5!) 23.♗xe6 fxe6 24.♘xd6 ♔h8 25.♖xe6 ♕c3 26.♕d5 ♖d7 27.♕b5 ♖dd8 28.♖e7 ♕c5? 29.♕xc5 bxc5 30.♘f7† ♖xf7 31.♖xf7 c4 32.♖xf5 c3 33.♖c5 ♗d4 34.♖c4; (1–0, 50) Ivanchuk – Smirin, Odessa 2007.

Objectively speaking this line is not clearly bad. I decided to give it another try in my game with Michalik, where I played the better 10...♘xc4. This game is mostly interesting for the endgame, so I give the game in full: 11.♘xc4 ♘xd5 12.♘xd5 ♗xa1 13.♗h6 ♗g7 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♘f4?! (better is 15.♘de3) 15...e5 16.e4 ♗xe4 17.♗xe4 exf4 18.♕xd6 fxg3 19.hxg3 b5 20.♕xd8 ♖axd8 21.♘a5 ♖d4 22.♗f3 ♖xb4 23.♘xc6 ♖b2 24.♘xa7 ♖d8 25.a3 ♖d3 26.♗c6 ♖c3 27.♖a1 ♖cc2 28.♖f1 f5 29.♗g2 ♖c3 30.♖a1 ♖cc2 31.♖f1 ♖c4 32.♖e1 f4 33.♘xb5 fxg3 34.fxg3



34...♖g4 35.♗f1 ♖xg3† 36.♔h1 ♖g4 37.♘d6 ♖b6 38.♘c4 ♖f6 39.♘d2 ♖d4 40.♘b3 ♖a4 41.♔g2 ♖g4† 42.♔h1 ♖f3 43.♘d2 ♖xa3 44.♗g2 ♖a2 45.♖e7† ♔h6 46.♖d7 ♖b4 47.♘f1 ♖bb2 48.♘e3 ♖e2 49.♖d3 ♔g5 50.♔h2 ♖ad2 51.♖xd2 ♖xd2 52.♔g3 h5



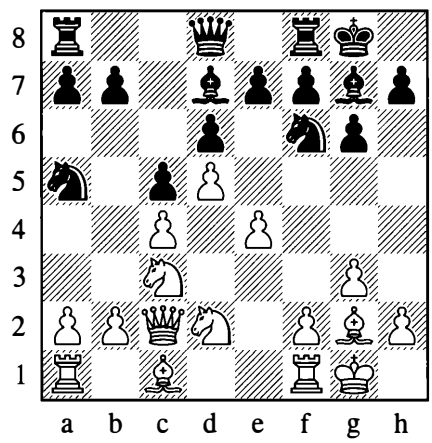
53.♔f3 ♔h4 54.♗f1 ♖d6 55.♘g2† ♔g5 56.♔g3 ♖b6 57.♗e2 ♖b4 58.♗f3 ♖b3 59.♔f2 h4 60.♗e4 ♖b2† 61.♔e3 h3 62.♘e1 h2 63.♘f3† ♔h5 64.♘e5 g5 65.♘d3 ♖b1 66.♘f2 ♖e1† 67.♔d2 ♖xe4 68.♘xe4 ♔h4 0–1 Michalik – Smirin, Jerusalem 2015.

10.e4 ♗d7

It seems that Black has simply lost time by moving this bishop twice in the opening. However, it is unclear if e2-e4 is so useful for White. There are three reasons for answering in the negative: the scope of the bishop on g2 is restricted, the d4-square can no longer be controlled by the e-pawn, and the e4-square is

unavailable to the knights for the foreseeable future. Of course, the strong pawn centre built by White may become a cause for concern for Black.

11.♕c2



11...e5

In this game I decided to close the centre and prepare to play on the kingside.

A year earlier I tried the more popular 11...a6 in a rapid game against Boris Avrukh – 12.b3 b5 13.♗b2 ♖b8 14.♖ae1 e5 15.♘d1 ♘g4 16.h3 ♘h6 17.♗c3 f5 18.f4 b4 19.♗b2 exf4; (½–½, 33) Avrukh – Smirin, Netanya 2009. Black had the worse position in the course of this game, so I chose a different line against Amanov.

12.a3

In 2012 Mesgen Amanov played the definitely stronger 12.b3 in one of his games and won pretty quickly. The main problem for Black in this system (as in the analogous Yugoslav Variation) is the rather unfortunate position of the a5-knight on the edge of the board. It is hard for him to join the kingside battle from there.

12...b6

Vacating b7 for the knight.

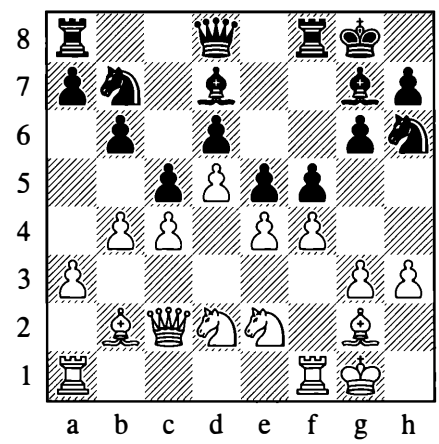
13.b4 ♘b7 14.♗b2 ♘g4

A pretty standard manoeuvre in this variation; Black prepares for the ...f7-f5 push.

15.h3 ♘h6

Both black knights occupy far-from-central positions, but the closed character of the game allows them to do so without substantial damage.

16.♘e2 f5 17.f4



It's becoming interesting – the pawn tensions are growing, and even more so after Black's next move.

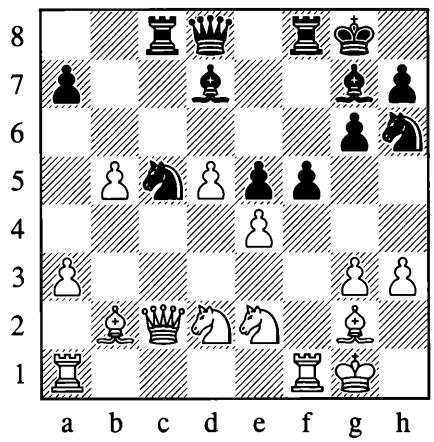
17...b5!

Now the battle is raging in the centre and on both flanks.

18.fxe5 dxe5 19.bxc5?!

This wins a pawn, but leads to a serious activation of Black's forces. More prudent was a waiting move like 19.♕b3!?, not releasing the tension prematurely. In my opinion the question "to keep or to release the pawn tension?" and the timing of it is one of the subtlest problems in chess.

19...♘xc5 20.cxb5 ♖c8



I was happy at this point – all the black pieces are active, and the a5-knight has been delivered to an excellent outpost on c5.

21.♘c3 ♕g5

21...♘f7!? deserved serious attention. The knight will go to d6 and later Black can decide where to put the queen – on g5 or perhaps somewhere else.

22.♖f3 fxe4

Another plan was 22...f4 23.♖af1 with a complicated game.

23.♘dxe4 ♘xe4 24.♕xe4 ♘f5 25.♕e1 ♕d8!?

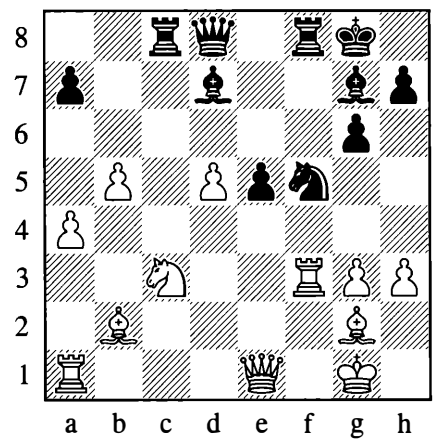
Suddenly the queen retreats. She switches her action from the kingside to the opposite side of the board.

25...e4? does not work because of 26.♘xe4, but now this move is threatened, which my opponent did not notice. In addition, the queen may now become active via b6 or a5.

26.a4?!

Better was the subtle prophylactic move 26.♖b1!, protecting the bishop on b2 if 26...e4 27.♘xe4.

26.♘e4? ♖c2 27.♖f2 ♕b6 28.♔h2 ♘e3 would lead to a bad position for White – Black is too active and material losses are unavoidable.

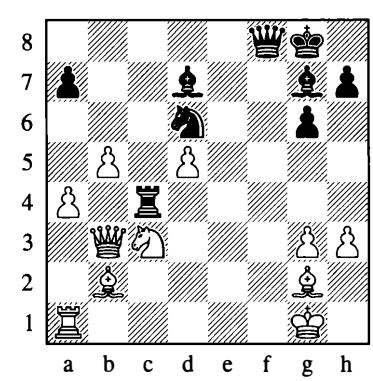


26...e4!

By sacrificing the second pawn Black opens the a1-h8 diagonal for the g7-bishop, and the pin on the knight at c3 becomes very sensitive for White.

27.♕xe4 ♖e8

Stronger was the computer's suggestion: 27...♘d6 28.♖xf8† ♕xf8 29.♕b4 ♖c4! 30.♕b3



30...♗xh3! 31.♖f1 ♗d4† 32.♔h2 ♗f5! with a devastating attack, but I failed to spot it.

28.♕d3 ♘d6 29.♖d1

The attempt to free himself from the pin by means of 29.♘d1? does not work due to

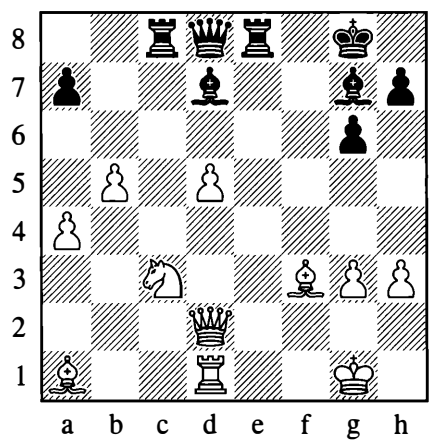
29...♖e1† 30.♖f1 ♕b6† 31.♔h2 ♗f5, with a total collapse.

29...♘c4 30.♗a1 ♘e5 31.♕d2?

Leading to an immediate loss.

Much more stubborn was 31.♕f1 ♘xf3† 32.♕xf3 ♕b6† 33.♔h2 ♕e3 (33...♖e3 34.a5!) 34.♘e4 ♕xf3 35.♗xf3 ♖c2† 36.♔g1 ♗xh3 37.d6 and White is not yet doomed.

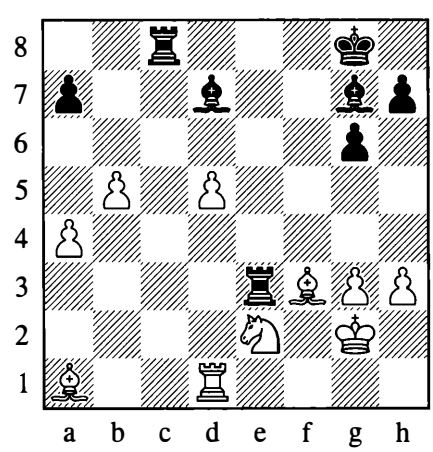
31...♘xf3† 32.♗xf3



32...♕b6†?

I briefly lost my concentration. 32...♕f6! 33.♗g2 ♖xc3 would win easily.

33.♔g2 ♕e3 34.♕xe3 ♖xe3 35.♘e2



Thanks to the active rooks, Black has good winning chances in this endgame, but the outcome is far from obvious. After all, White is OK in terms of material.

35...♗xa1 36.♖xa1 ♖f8

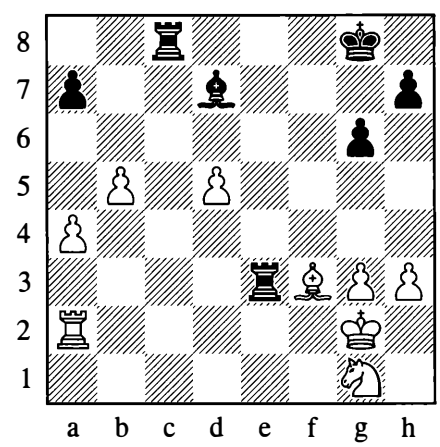
Or 36...♗xh3† 37.♔xh3 ♖xf3 38.♘d4 ♖d3 39.♘c6 ♖c7 40.♖e1 and this position is hard to win – the knight on c6 is very strong.

37.♘g1 ♖c8

An interesting psychological moment – I hoped that Amanov would not repeat moves but would try to find something better. My hope proved to be justified.

38.♖a2?!

After the correct 38.♘e2 Black would probably have nothing better than 38...♗xh3†, transposing into the previous line.



38...♖cc3! 39.♔f2 ♔f8

Now Black's plan is to exchange one pair of rooks and collect the defenceless a- and b-pawns after that. It's difficult for White to prevent this with his passive pieces.

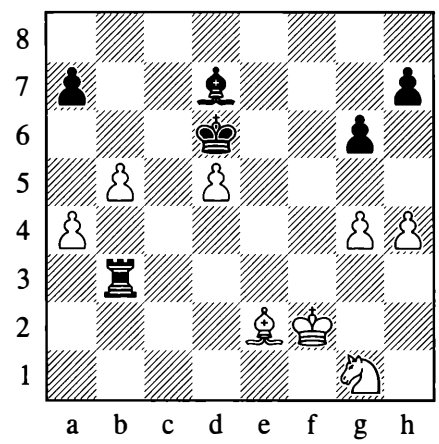
40.h4?!

A better try was 40.♖d2 ♖ed3 41.♖b2 ♖b3 42.♖e2.

40...♔e7 41.g4?!

Still 41.♖b2 ♖b3 42.♖c2 was more stubborn. After the king reaches d6 the win becomes rather simple.

41...♔d6 42.♗e2 ♖a3 43.♖b2 ♖eb3 44.♖xb3 ♖xb3



Black has fulfilled his plan while White's pieces remain inactive. The rest is a simple matter of technique.

45.h5 ♖b4 46.hxg6 hxg6 47.♔g3 ♖xa4 48.♔h4 ♖b4 49.♔g5 ♗xb5 50.♗xb5 ♖xb5

The a-pawn is out of reach of the white knight, so White resigned.

0–1

Boris Chatalbashev – Ilya Smirin

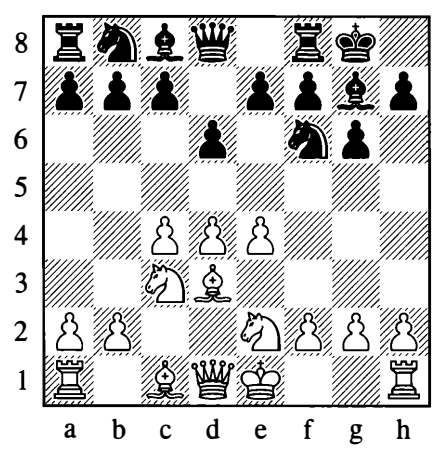
Athens 2007

I had won two tournaments in Athens, the Acropolis Open, in 2007 and 2008. Alas, after that the tournament was held in Khalkidhiki in 2009 and my result was poor. Probably the ancient spirit of Athens (and also an excellent swimming pool on the roof of the hotel, which I used every day before rounds) influenced me in a very positive way. This game was played during my first successful Athens event.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗d3

White chooses the system with the development of the light-squared bishop to the more active square d3 compared to e2. The only drawback of this setup is that the pawn on d4 becomes more vulnerable without the queen's protection.

5...0–0 6.♘ge2



6...♘c6

I like this move – Black immediately takes aim at d4. Actually there are a few different paths to choose from. It's possible to transpose into the Benoni with:

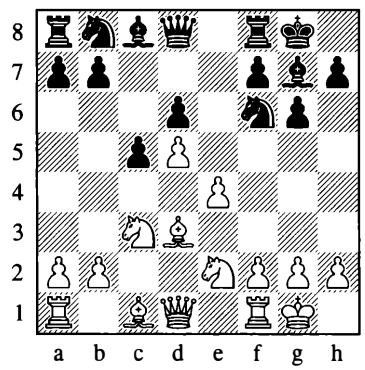
6...c5 7.d5 e6

An example between high-level opponents is:

8.h3

Instead one of my games went:

8.0–0 exd5 9.cxd5



9...♘a6 (9...♘g4!? is an interesting alternative, immediately looking for concrete counterplay) 10.f3 ♖b8 11.a3 ♗d7 12.♖b1 ♕a5 13.♔h1 b5 14.♗d2 c4 15.♗c2 ♕c7 16.♗f4 ♖fe8 17.♘d4 ♘c5 18.♘c6 ♖b6 19.a4 ♗xc6 20.dxc6 b4 21.♘b5 ♕xc6 22.b3 ♘h5 23.♗e3 c3 24.♘xa7 ♕c7 25.♘b5 ♕d8 26.♕d5 ½–½ Khalifman – Smirin, Sverdlovsk 1987.

8...exd5 9.exd5 ♘fd7 10.f4 f5 11.0–0 ♖e8 12.♗d2 ♘a6 13.♖e1 ♘f6 14.♘g3 ♖xe1† 15.♗xe1 ♗d7

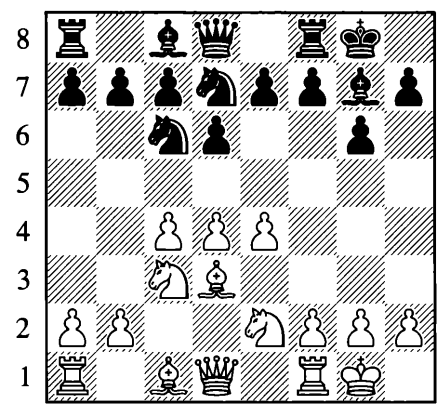
With approximate equality – Black has no bad pieces or real weaknesses; (0–1, 56) Malakhov – Grischuk, Moscow 2010.

6...e5 7.d5 ♘h5!? is a different plan. As in the Sämisch System, Black prepares a quick ...f7-f5. I played this once – 8.0–0 ♘d7 9.♗c2 f5 10.exf5 gxf5 11.♘g3 ♘xg3 12.fxg3 e4 13.g4 ♘e5 14.gxf5 ♗xf5 15.♘xe4 ♘xc4, with an unclear position; (0–1, 39) Lev – Smirin, Haifa 1993.

7.0–0 ♘d7

In this game I wanted to postpone ...e7-e5 for one move.

The other way is the immediate: 7...e5 8.d5 ♘d4 9.♘xd4 exd4 10.♘b5 (10.♘e2!?) 10...♖e8 11.♖e1 ♘g4 (also quite possible is 11...a6 12.♘xd4 ♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♗xd4 14.♕c2 ♗d7 15.♗e3 ♗g7 16.♖ad1 c5 17.dxc6 ½–½ Seirawan – Benjamin, Los Angeles 1991) 12.h3 a6 13.hxg4 axb5 14.cxb5 ♕h4 15.g3 ♕xg4 16.♕xg4 ♗xg4 with good chances to equalize.



8.♗e3

Or: 8.♗c2 e5 9.d5 ♘d4 10.♗e3 (10.♘xd4!? exd4 11.♘b5 ♘e5 12.♘xd4 ♘xc4 13.♖b1 happened in a few games, with good results for White; among others, Chatalbashev played it in 2009) 10...♘xc2 I believe that after exchanging this important bishop for the knight, Black has no problems at all. 11.♕xc2 a5 12.a3 b6 13.b4 f5 14.exf5 gxf5 15.f3 ♗a6 16.b5 ♗c8 17.f4 ♘c5 18.♖ad1 ♗d7 19.♘g3 ♕h4!? 20.♘ce2 ♖ae8 21.fxe5 ♗xe5 22.♗f4 ♗g7 23.♘d4 ½–½ Moiseenko – Smirin, Maalot-Tarshiha 2008.

8...e5 9.d5 ♘d4 10.♕d2

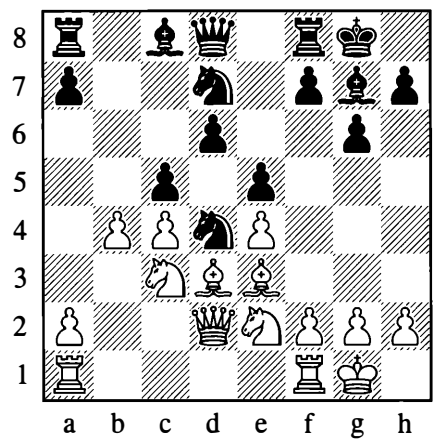
Now 10.♘xd4 is impossible and the knight will remain on d4 for some time.

10.♖c1 and 10.♘b5!? are other popular options in this position.

10...c5 11.dxc6

Practically forced from a positional point of view, as otherwise the knight on d4 would be too strong.

11...bxc6 12.b4 c5



13.b5?!

This decision to release the pawn tension is too optimistic in my opinion. Yes, in an endgame such a pawn structure would favour White (he will potentially be able to create a dangerous passer on the queenside) but in the middlegame it's a strategically risky move. Now the d4-knight occupies an excellent, well-reinforced outpost. It will help a lot in Black's upcoming activity against the white king.

13.♖ab1, with a complex position, should be preferred.

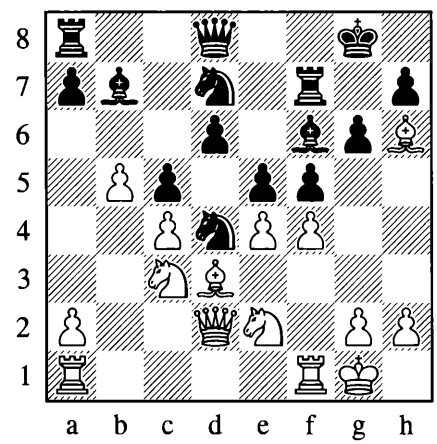
13...f5

Of course.

14.♗g5 ♗f6 15.♗h6 ♖f7 16.f4

True to his aggressive style, the Bulgarian grandmaster Boris Chatalbashev tries to play as actively as possible. If he were to continue 16.exf5 gxf5 17.♘d5 instead, then after 17...♘b6!?∓ the strong pawn centre would promise Black excellent prospects. Or if 16.♘d5, then at once 16...f4 and again I would prefer Black – he has gained some space on the kingside and the b6-bishop is cut off from the rest of its forces and may become a target.

16...♗b7



Black's position makes a nice harmonious impression: his pieces interact very well. Both fianchettoed bishops control important diagonals, and we have already spoken about the knight on d4. White should be careful now.

17.fxe5?

The wrong choice, helping Black to activate the dark-squared bishop.

The dangerous knight on d4 should have been immediately exchanged: 17.♘xd4 cxd4 18.♘d5 ♗xd5 (or 18...♘c5 19.fxe5 ♗xd5 20.cxd5 ♗xe5 21.♗g5) 19.cxd5 fxe4 20.♗xe4 ♘c5 (20...exf4 21.♕xf4 with an approximately equal position) 21.fxe5 ♘xe4 (21...dxe5 22.♕c2 ♖c8? 23.♗xg6) 22.♕xd4 ♗xe5 23.♕xe4 ♖f6! A nice trick. 24.♖xf6 (24.♖ae1? g5–+) 24...♕xf6 25.♖f1 ♗xh2† 26.♔xh2 ♕xf1 27.♗f4! The draw is inevitable.

17...♗xe5

Black has a clear advantage now – his pieces are quickly becoming very active.

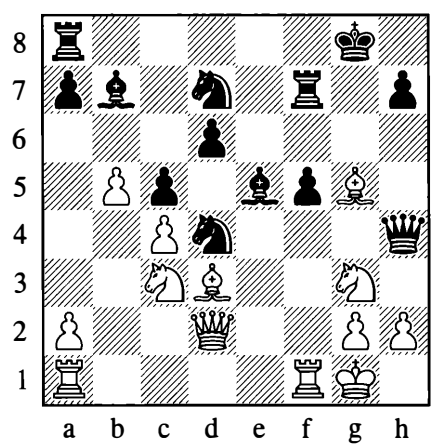
18.exf5 gxf5

Premature would be 18...♕h4 19.♗f4 ♘xe2† 20.♗xe2 ♗d4† 21.♔h1 ♖xf5 22.♗g3 ♕g5 23.♕xg5 ♖xg5 24.♖ac1 ♘e5 25.♘d5, with approximate equality.

19.♘g3

Or 19.♖ae1 ♕h4 20.♗f4 ♔h8 21.♘d5 ♖g8, and all Black's forces will participate in the upcoming attack on White's king. I doubt White will withstand that.

19...♕h4 20.♗g5



20...♕g4!

The queen enters the midst of events and feels perfectly safe – the opponent is unable to harm it. Meanwhile, Black's assault is now speeding up considerably.

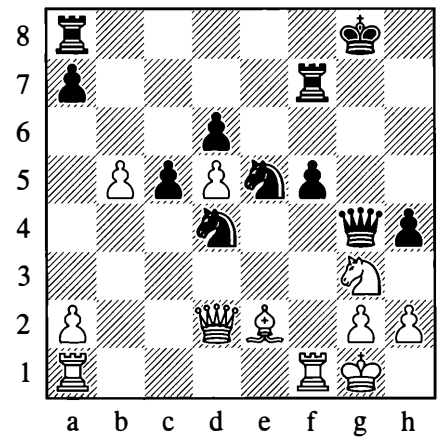
21.♗f4 h5!

After the inclusion of this pawn in the attack, my advantage became decisive – White cannot survive the storm.

22.♘d5

The other options are no better, for instance 22.h3 ♕g6 etc.

22...♗xd5 23.cxd5 h4 24.♗xe5 ♘xe5 25.♗e2



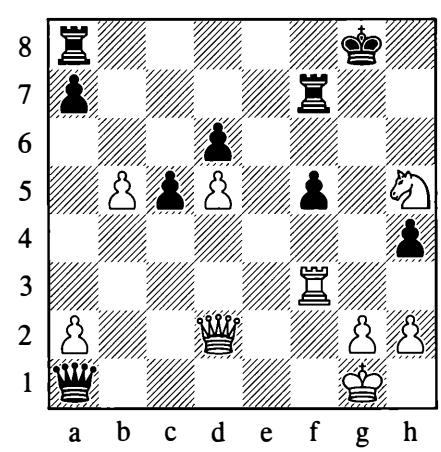
25...♕g7!

This wins the exchange with the help of a little geometric trick.

26.♘h5 ♘ef3†!

Just another example that in a position with a big advantage, tactics usually work in your favour.

27.♗xf3 ♘xf3† 28.♖xf3 ♕xa1†

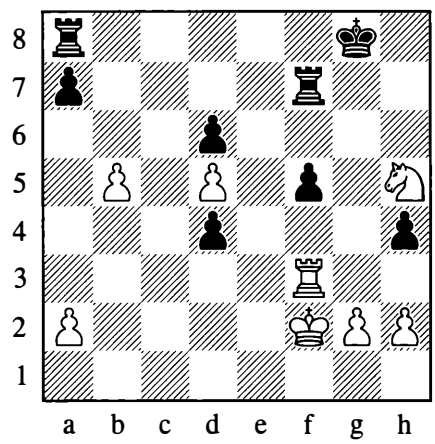


Not quite the famous ♕b2-h8† from the game Petrosian – Spassky, World Championship (10) 1966, but it was a very pleasant "long" move!

29.♔f2 ♕d4†

The computer prefers 29...♖e8 30.♘f4 ♖e4 31.♘e6 f4, but my decision to swap queens is easy to understand.

30.♕xd4 cxd4



This endgame with an extra exchange is technically won, of course.

31.♖d3 ♖c8 32.♖xd4 ♖c2† 33.♔f3 ♖fc7!

The last precise move in the game; now White cannot avoid the exchange of rooks. The rest does not require any further comment.

34.a4 ♔f7 35.♘f4 ♖7c3†

36.♘d3 ♖c4 37.♖xc4 ♖xc4 38.a5 ♖d4 39.♘f4 ♖b4 40.b6 axb6 41.axb6 ♔f6 42.g3 ♖b3† 43.♔g2 hxg3 44.hxg3 ♖xb6 0–1

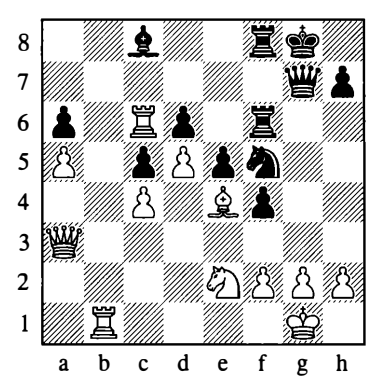
Rustam Kasimdzhanov – Ilya Smirin

Elista Olympiad 1998

The Olympiad in Elista was memorable for me. It was our first success after quite a few tries – the first time that the Israeli team tied for third place – and it happened before Boris Gelfand joined our team in 1999. Two other Boris's – Avrukh and Alterman – plus myself and Lev Psakhis made a big contribution to this result. This game has also remained special for me. I found an original manoeuvre and the very strong player Rustam Kasimdzhanov collapsed shortly after that.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘d2 a5

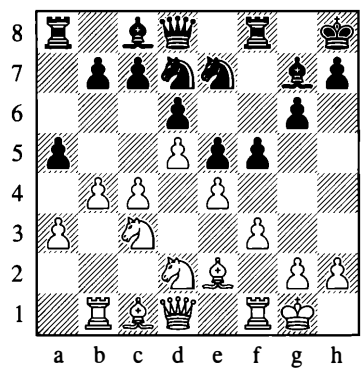
9...c5 became very popular after the following famous game: 10.♖b1 ♘e8 11.b4 b6 12.a4 f5 13.a5 ♘f6 14.♕a4 ♗d7 15.♕a3 ♗h6 16.♗d3 ♕c7 17.bxc5 bxc5 18.exf5 gxf5 19.♗c2 a6 20.♘de4 ♗xc1 21.♘xf6† ♖xf6 22.♖fxc1 ♖af8 23.♖b6 ♗c8 24.♘e2 f4 25.♗e4 ♘f5 26.♖c6 ♕g7 27.♖b1



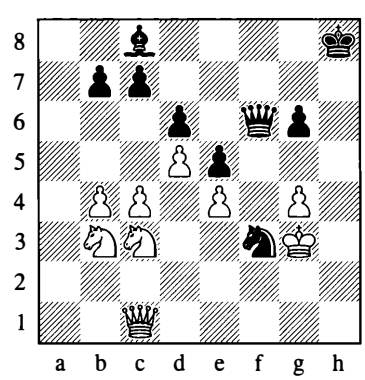
27...♘h4 28.♕d3 ♗f5 29.♔h1 f3 30.♘g3 fxg2† 31.♔g1 ♗xe4 32.♕xe4 ♘f3† 33.♔xg2 ♘d2 0–1 Larsen – Fischer, Denver (4) 1971. I have played 9...c5 a few times, but mostly I have followed another great champion – Garry Kasparov. He usually played 9...a5 and made huge contributions to this line.

10.a3 ♗d7

10...♘d7 was played by Kasparov several times. Perhaps the most memorable game was a clash with his formidable "eternal" opponent – the great Anatoly Karpov. In this game Garry was close to winning, but Anatoly managed to hold: 11.♖b1 f5 12.b4 ♔h8 13.f3



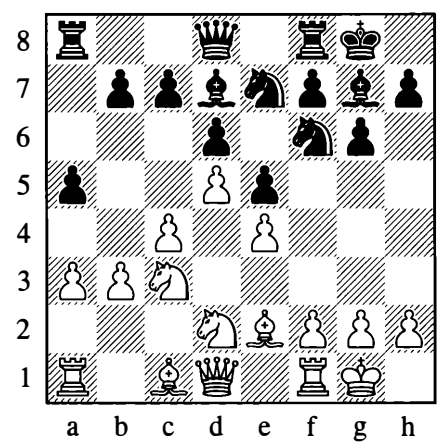
13...♘g8! This move became very popular; by playing it Black solves his usual problem in this line: how to coordinate his forces and to make the e7-knight an active piece. 14.♘b3 axb4 15.axb4 ♘df6 16.♗d2 ♘h5 17.g3 ♘hf6 18.♖f2 ♘h6 19.♖a1 ♖xa1 20.♕xa1 ♘f7 21.♕c1 f4 22.g4 h5 23.h3 ♘h7 24.♗e1 ♗f6 25.♔g2 ♔g7 26.♖f1 ♘hg5 27.♖h1 ♘xh3 28.♖xh3 ♘g5 29.♖h2 hxg4 30.fxg4 ♖h8 31.♗h4 f3† 32.♗xf3 ♘xf3 33.♗xf6† ♕xf6 34.♖xh8 ♔xh8 35.♔g3



35...g5?! (35...♔g7! gives Black a big advantage) Now that ...♕h4† is no longer possible, White can neutralize the knight. 36.♘e2! ♔g7 37.♕h1 ♘d4 38.♘bxd4 exd4 39.♕d1 ♕e5† 40.♔f3 ♕f6† 41.♔g3 ♕e5† 42.♔f3 ♕f6† ½–½ Karpov – Kasparov, Skelleftea 1989.

I have also played this line a few times (once against Kasparov himself in 1988, and it was quite a game – you will find it elsewhere in the book) and another time against Gavrikov in the same year. For a while I considered it one of my best creative achievements, and you will also find that game in this book. However, in the game against Kasimdzhanov I had chosen other continuation, introduced to practice by the outstanding KID expert Efim Geller in 1974.

11.b3



The most natural continuation, preventing the blockading ...a5-a4.

11...♘c8

This was an original idea of Geller – Black transfers this knight to b6, to be able to jump to a4 if White starts activity on the queenside by means of b3-b4.

11...c5 or 11...c6 are other popular lines here – it shows that Black has a lot of versatility in this system.

12.♖b1 ♘b6 13.♕c2

After the immediate 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 ♘a4 15.♕c2 ♘xc3 16.♕xc3 ♗h6 (Langeweg – Geller, Amsterdam 1974) Black has no problems at all – he has good piece play and no real weaknesses.

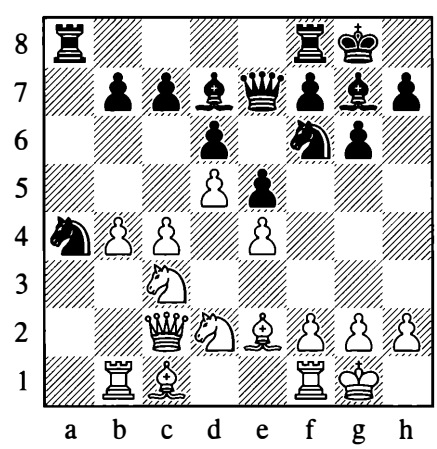
13...♕e7

I played this move for the first time against M. Gurevich (Elenite 1994).

14.b4

Or 14.♗b2 ♗h6 15.♖be1 ♗g4 16.♗xg4 ♘xg4 17.a4 ♘d7 18.♘f3 ♘c5 19.♗a3 b6 20.♗xc5 bxc5 21.g3 ♘f6 22.♘h4 ♕d7 23.♔g2 ♗g5 with approximate equality; (½–½, 54) M. Gurevich – Smirin, Haifa 1995 – this was our second battle in this particular variation.

14...axb4 15.axb4 ♘a4



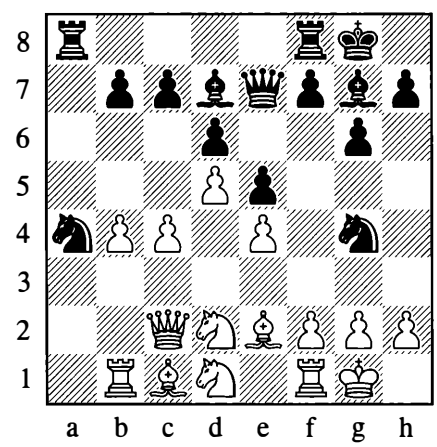
16.♘d1

After some thought Rustam came up with a fresh idea, keeping the knight from being exchanged.

Useless is 16.♘b5 c6! (this is the idea behind 13...♕e7 – now the d6-pawn is protected) 17.♘c7? ♖a7.

After: 16.♘xa4 ♗xa4 17.♕c3 ♗h6 18.♕d3! (18.f3 ♘h5) 18...c6 19.♘f3 ♗g7 (19...♗xc1 20.♖fxc1 cxd5 21.cxd5 ♖fc8 22.♘d2 ♕d8!? was also perfectly playable with approximate equality – Black easily can match the opponent's activity on the queenside) 20.♗g5 cxd5 21.cxd5 h6 22.♗d2 (22.♗h4 g5 23.♗g3 ♘h5⇄) 22...♗d7 23.♖bc1 ♕d8 24.♕b1 ♘h5 25.g3 ♗g4 26.♔g2 ♕d7 27.♘g1 ♗xe2 28.♘xe2 f5 Black was OK in the other game; (½–½, 50) M. Gurevich – Smirin, Elenite 1994.

16...♘g4!



This move is the main reason why I included this game in the book. It looks rather paradoxical at first sight – the knight jumps into the air, and White may attack him with the f- or h-pawns. But it transpires that both these moves have drawbacks. Meanwhile I want to proceed with ...f7-f5, when the knight on d1 is temporarily unable to move to e3. I love this idea, even though objectively it deserves a !? rather than !.

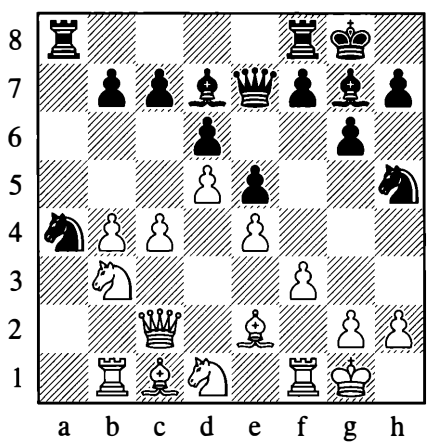
17.f3

If 17.h3 I would continue 17...♘h6 and after 18.♘b3 f5 19.f3 ♘f7 Black would feel great – his initiative on the kingside is obvious, and the h3-pawn may be an additional weakness in the near future, after let's say ...♕h4 and ...♘g5.

17...♘f6!

17...♘h6 would be less to the point – the pawn is still on h2 and after 18.♘b3 f5 19.c5± I would probably prefer White. Instead the knight returns to f6, but the position has been changed – because the f3-pawn limits the bishop on e2, Black can play ...♘h5 next. I used a similar idea in my game with Zilberman, which you will find in this book, but in that game this idea was well known, while in the present game it was over-the-board improvisation, which I value much more highly.

18.♘b3 ♘h5



19.♘a5?!

The future FIDE World Champion underestimates Black's idea. He would have been better off playing the prophylactic:

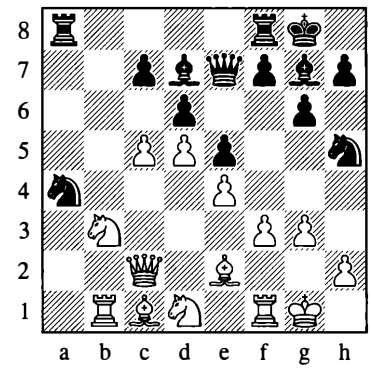
19.g3

When I would have to choose between the defensive:

19...b6

I think this is the best move in the position. Or the more energetic: 19...f5 20.♘a5 f4 21.g4 ♘f6 22.♘xb7 h5 23.gxh5 (23.g5 ♘h7 24.h4 ♘xg5 25.hxg5 ♕xg5† 26.♔h1 ♕h4†=; 23.h3 ♘h7) 23...♘xh5 But after 24.♖f2! I cannot find a way to continue the attack on the kingside, whereas Black's queenside lies in ruins.

20.c5 bxc5 21.bxc5



21...♖fb8!?

21...f5 22.c6 ♗e8 23.♖a1±

21...♗f6!? 22.c6 ♗h3 23.♖e1 ♗g5

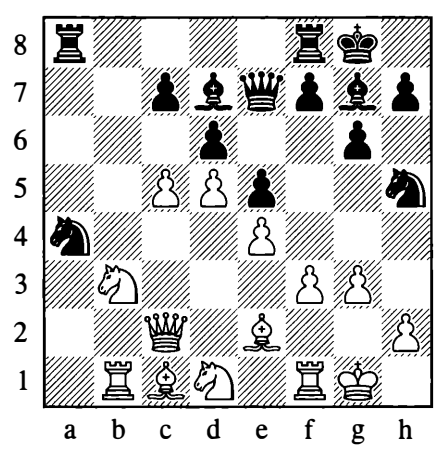
22.c6 ♗h3

The consequence of 19.g3.

23.♖e1 ♗f6! 24.♘e3 ♗g5 25.♖a1 ♘b6

And despite the strong white pawn on c6, which divides the board into two parts, all Black's forces are rather well coordinated and he has a fully acceptable position.

19...♘f4!



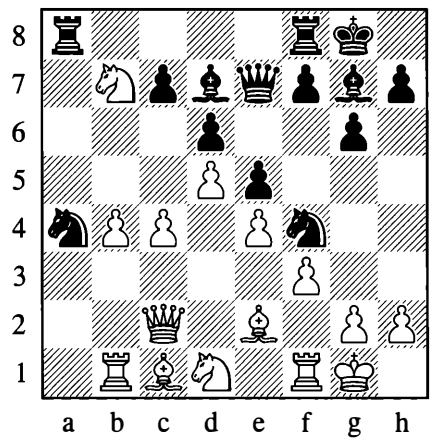
Both knights have reached active positions, and it seems that the knight on f4 does a more effective job than its white counterpart on a5.

20.♘xb7??

A blunder which immediately decides the outcome.

It was much better to eliminate the annoying knight: 20.♗xf4 exf4 21.♘xb7 Now Black totally dominates on the dark squares and can choose between 21...♖fb8 22.♘a5 ♕e5! 23.♖b3 ♕d4† 24.♔h1 ♕b6 25.♘c6 (what else?) 25...♗xc6 26.dxc6 ♘c5 (26...♕xc6∓) 27.♖b1 ♘e6 28.b5 ♖a3 29.♕d2 ♖ba8 with better chances, or 21...♕h4 22.♕d2 ♖ae8 23.♕e1 ♕h6, with rich play and a better position for just one small pawn.

But the best decision in this situation was the modest 20.♖f2, acknowledging that White's 19th move was a mistake, but hoping for a stubborn defence in a worse position. This would be an easy decision for a computer program, but not for humans who usually do not like to confess their mistakes.



20...♘xe2† 21.♕xe2 ♖fb8 22.c5

Alas, 22.♘a5 is impossible due to 22...♖xa5, but the game is lost in any case.

22...dxc5 23.bxc5 ♘xc5 24.♘xc5 ♖xb1 25.♘xd7

My opponent resigned, not waiting for 25...♖xc1.

0–1

Tigran Kotanjian – Ilya Smirin

European Championship, Yerevan 2014

I greatly enjoyed the atmosphere of the European Championship in Yerevan. I also came away satisfied with my own performance, especially its creative aspect. A notable case was the following game from the second round, against the Armenian Grandmaster Tigran Kotanjian.

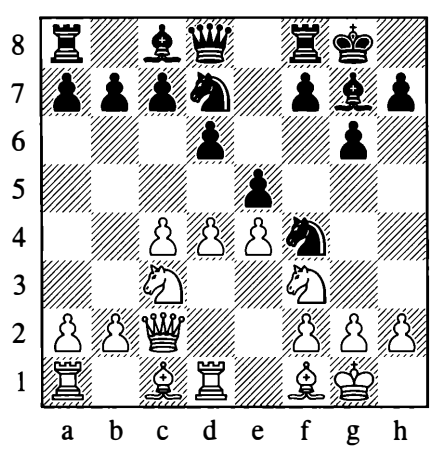
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 ♘bd7 7.0–0 e5

There were two mundane reasons why I opted for developing the knight on d7, which today is quite a rare variation: (a) I was counting on the surprise effect, and (b) In my view, the variation itself is not bad.

8.♕c2 ♘h5

I intended this sideways jump to confuse my opponent somewhat, but he didn't bat an eyelid and made his next two moves quickly.

9.♖d1 ♘f4 10.♗f1



10...c6?!

This move deserves a question mark, but I wasn't keen on the theoretical 10...c5, which is stronger, but less aesthetic according to my taste.

11.d5?!

I was glad to see this premature release of the tension. After the tougher 11.♗e3 ♕e7 12.g3 ♘h5 (or 12...♘e6 13.d5) 13.d5 c5 14.a3, a standard closed structure would arise in a form highly favourable to White. In our post-mortem analysis, Kotanjian described that situation as a "catastrophe" for Black. That is putting it strongly, but in broad terms it isn't far from the truth.

11...cxd5 12.cxd5

In the case of 12.♘xd5 ♘xd5 13.cxd5 ♘f6 14.h3 ♗d7, I would have nothing to complain about.

12...♘f6

Black's ...f5 is postponed for now, but his pieces are coming into play – for instance, his bishop is already poised to jump out to g4 with an awkward pin.

13.♘d2

This knight is headed for c4, with subsequent activity on the queenside and against the pawn on d6 – but that is still some way off. For the moment the bishop on c1 is shut in, and in its turn it blocks the rook on a1. Taking an unbiased look at the position as a whole, you notice that all White's pieces, except for the knight on c3, are placed on the first two ranks. Of course that doesn't mean anything yet, but all the same... In this sense Black is more active. However, his knight on f4 won't achieve anything all on its own; it needs support.

13...♘g4!

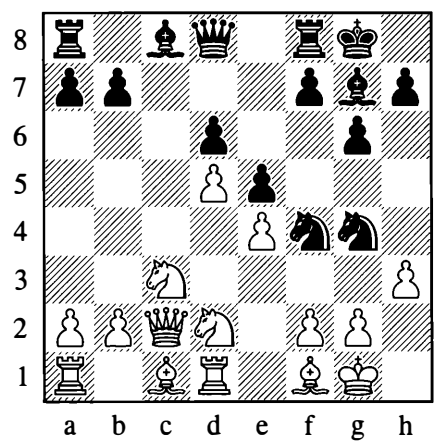
One knight is good, two are better. Moreover, everything is now ready for ...f5.

14.h3

What's this – an oversight, underestimation of the reply, provocation, or the result of exact calculation? This last supposition was

practically out of the question; as to the other three, during the game I reckoned it was a case of underestimation.

A more cautious line was: 14.♘c4 f5 15.f3 (or 15.h3 ♘h6) 15...♘f6 (again 15...♘h6 isn't bad) 16.exf5 (on 16.g3 fxe4 17.gxf4 exf3 18.♕f2 e4 19.h3 ♗f5, we reach a complicated position with Black holding the initiative) 16...♗xf5 17.♕b3 At this point, a piece sacrifice looks interesting: 17...g5!? 18.g3 g4! 19.gxf4 gxf3 20.♘e3 ♗d7 21.f5 ♗h6 And what is clear is that nothing is clear; but over the board I would take Black's side.



14...♘xf2!

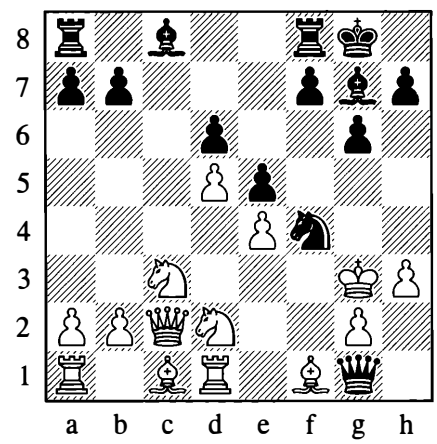
The exclamation mark is an award for boldness. I took about 15 minutes to perform some preliminary calculations and reject the good positional alternative 14...♘h6 15.♘c4 f5. The temptation to play inventively outweighed all else, and the knight sacrificed itself to draw the white king out of its shelter.

15.♔xf2 ♕b6† 16.♔g3

The only move. Not 16.♔e1 ♕e3† 17.♘e2 ♘d3† (a pleasing case of a boxed-in king) or 16.♔f3 f5 with a crushing attack.

16...♕g1!

An attractive move. The queen has penetrated to the very base of the white kingside. Its main role at the moment is to stop the enemy king from taking refuge in the calm haven of h2.



17.♘e2

This again is strictly White's only move. One of the short variations I had calculated before resolving on my 14th was 17.♘f3 ♘h5† 18.♔h4 ♗f6† 19.♗g5 ♗xg5† 20.♘xg5 ♕e3 21.♖d3 ♕f4† 22.g4 h6, with an inevitable quick mate.

17...♘h5† 18.♔f3 ♕h2

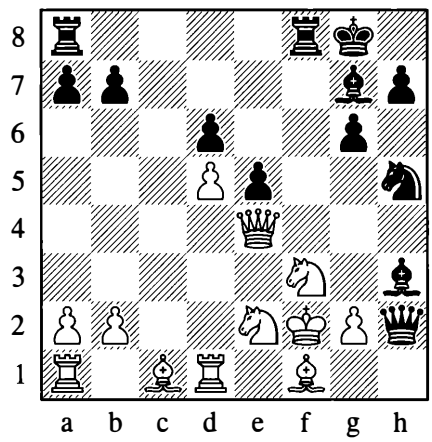
So for the moment the white king is stuck in the danger zone. It isn't under direct attack right now – but in just one move's time, after the typical King's Indian break with ...f5 (rarely so effective as here!) virtually all Black's forces will be joining in the attack.

19.♔f2

The king could have moved away into the centre under fire from the black pieces: 19.♔e3 f5 (or 19...♗h6† 20.♔d3 f5 21.♔c4! – wow!) 20.♘f3 ♕h1 21.♘c3 fxe4 22.♘xe4 ♗xh3 23.♕f2 And in the computer's opinion, White has everything in order – but not many of us mere mortals would have gone in for something like this.

19...f5 20.♘f3 fxe4 21.♕xe4 ♗xh3

Reinforcements have reached the queen in time, but there are quite a few defenders round the white king too.



22.♗f4!

I had missed this strong move in my calculations, hoping for 22.♔e1? ♕h1 with an overwhelming position. I now had to extricate myself somehow as I went along.

22...♕h1

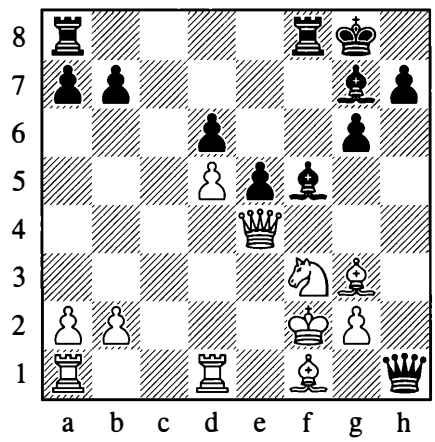
Fortunately the queen is not lost, and Black retains quite good chances in the tactical fight.

23.♘g3?!

A first step in the wrong direction.

Tigran and I had both seen the variation: 23.gxh3 ♘xf4 24.♘xf4 (24.♔g3 ♖ae8!) 24...♖xf4 25.♕xf4! exf4 26.♗g2 ♗d4†! 27.♘xd4 ♕h2 At this point my opponent broke off his calculations. I saw just a little further: 28.♖d3! f3 (the only way to save the queen; otherwise 29.♖h1) 29.♖xf3 ♕e5 30.♖d1 ♖c8 31.♔g1 In the resulting situation, queen and pawn are fighting against rook, bishop and knight. White has a small material plus, and his chances overall must be preferred; but in my view Black shouldn't lose with precise play – White's king is exposed and demands protection from his pieces.

23...♘xg3 24.♗xg3 ♗f5



25.♕a4?

This is already a losing error. I think the reason for it was that Kotanjian overrated his position. He didn't want to go in for 25.♕h4 ♕xh4 26.♗xh4 (26.♘xh4? ♗c2† 27.♔e1 ♗xd1 28.♖xd1 ♖ac8) 26...e4 27.♘d4 ♗g4† 28.♔e1 ♗xd1 29.♖xd1 ♗e5, with approximate equality in a complex ending – White's pieces are active, but Black has a material edge. Instead of this, White makes a move based on a decisive oversight.

25...e4 26.♗xd6

My opponent evidently hadn't seen that after 26.♗e2 e3†! 27.♔xe3 ♕xg2, Black would win at once.

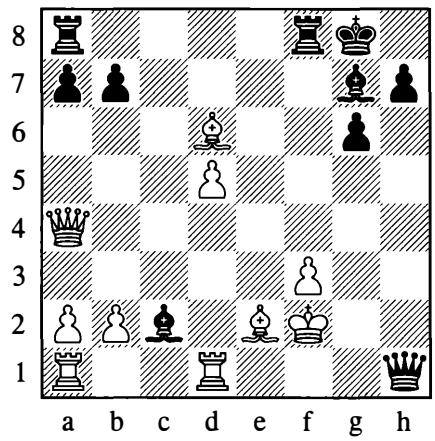
26...exf3 27.gxf3

The only move. White loses immediately in the event of 27.♗xf8 ♖xf8 28.gxf3 ♕h2† 29.♗g2 ♗h3 30.♖g1 ♗e5.

27...♗c2

An obvious-looking strike, but here I missed 27...♗d7! 28.♕xd7 ♖xf3† 29.♔e2 ♕h5! 30.♕e6† ♔h8 31.♔d2 ♖f6, winning in all variations – as indicated by the computer.

28.♗e2

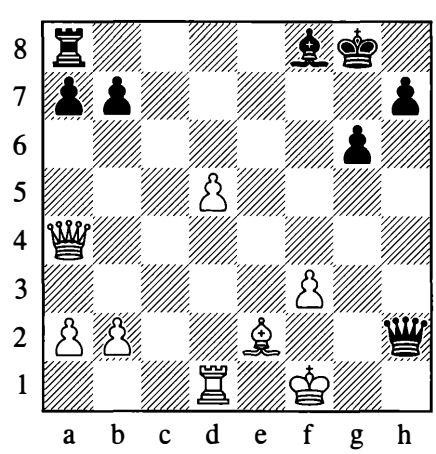


28...♗xd1?

And this is just wrong. The correct line was the prosaic 28...♕xd1 29.♗xd1 ♗xa4 30.♗xa4 ♗xb2 31.♖b1 ♗d4† 32.♔g2 ♖f6 – and although the strong passed pawn on d5 and White's active bishop pair give Black some difficulty in winning, his material advantage is great; playing the position is already, in essence, a mere matter of technique. However, I was bent on continuing the attack. These things happen...

29.♖xd1 ♕h3 30.♗xf8 ♕h2† 31.♔f1 ♗xf8

There is material equality on the board, but Black has an obvious initiative – and the opposite-coloured bishops, as usual, help in the attack. Not everything is so simple, though.



32.d6!

A correct pawn sacrifice. Now it is the black king's turn to feel uncomfortable.

32...♗xd6 33.♕b3† ♔f8

If 33...♔h8 then 34.♖xd6!, and Black has to give perpetual checks with 34...♕h1† (not 34...♕xd6 35.♕c3† ♔g8 36.♗c4† ♔f8 37.♕h8†) 35.♔f2 ♕h2† 36.♔e1 ♕g3† 37.♔f1 ♕h3†.

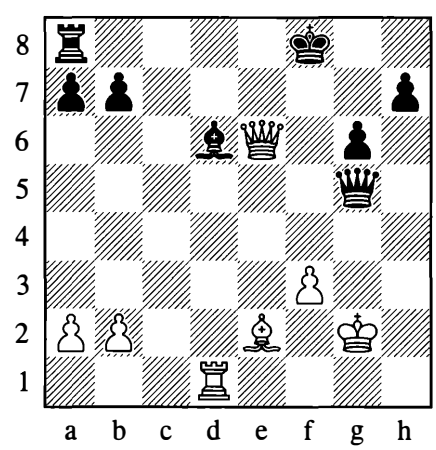
34.♕e6

The bishop on d6 is under attack and White also threatens ♕f6†, mating; in addition, the prospect of his bishop coming out to c4 gives cause for concern. Black solves these problems with the aid of checks.

34...♕h1† 35.♔f2 ♕h4† 36.♔g2

Not 36.♔f1? which loses to 36...♗c5 37.♔g2 ♖e8.

36...♕g5†



37.♕g4

Better was 37.♔f1 ♗c5 38.♗c4 ♕g1† 39.♔e2 ♕f2† 40.♔d3 ♕xf3† (after 40...♖d8† 41.♗d5 ♕d4† 42.♔c2 ♕g7 43.♖e1, White is not at all worse) 41.♔c2 ♕f5† 42.♕xf5† gxf5 43.♖d7, and the game heads rapidly towards a draw.

37...♕e5!

It's useful to provoke White's next move.

38.f4 ♕f6 39.♕g5?

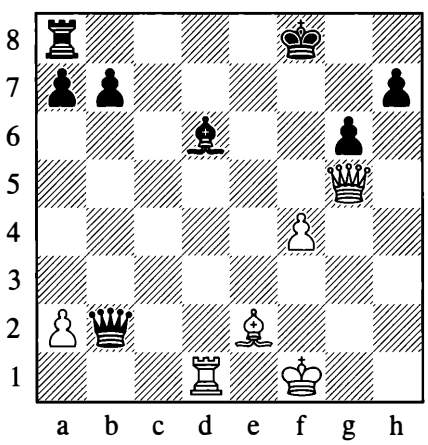
He shouldn't have given up a second pawn like this. After 39.f5!? gxf5 40.♖f1 f4 41.♖d1 White would have had excellent drawing chances.

39...♕xb2

It's always pleasant to pick up a pawn along the way.

40.♔f1

Not 40.♕h6†? ♔g8–+.

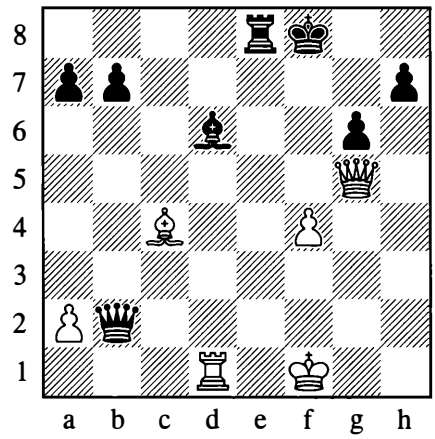


40...♖e8!

After this rook's entry into the game, my optimism increased significantly.

41.♗c4

White would lose with 41.♕h6† ♔g8 42.♗c4† ♔h8 43.♖xd6 ♕c1† (or 43...♕b4!) 44.♔g2 ♕xc4. As it is, his threats are dangerous but the situation is clarified by my next two accurate moves.



41...♔g7! 42.♕d5

After 42.♖xd6 ♕c1† 43.♔f2 ♕xc4 44.♖d7† ♔g8–+ 45.♕f6? ♕e2†, Black gets in first with the mate.

42...♖e3!

This dots all the "i"s and crosses all the "t"s.

43.♕d4†

This hastens the finale, but the game was no longer to be saved. After 43.♕xd6 ♖f3†, the white king would be mated. There would be the same result after 43.♕f7† ♔h6 44.♖xd6 ♕b1† 45.♔g2 ♕e4† 46.♔h2 ♕c2† 47.♔g1 ♖g3† 48.♔f1 ♕c1†.

43...♕xd4 44.♖xd4 ♖f3†

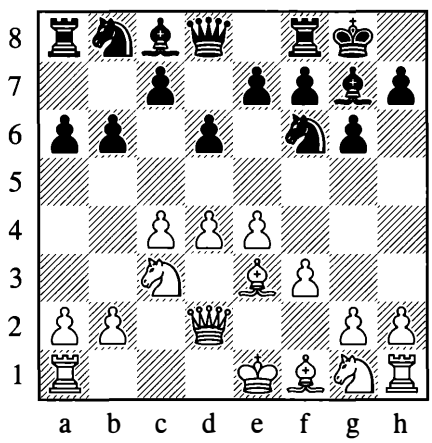
White resigned, as after 45.♔e2 ♖xf4 there is only Black left on the board.

0–1

Boris Alterman – Ilya Smirin

Israeli League 2004

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0–0 6.♗e3 a6 7.♕d2 b6



This time I wanted to deviate from my usual Sämisch treatment and to play something new and unexpected.

8.♖d1

Alterman quickly and confidently made this move, which is considered to be the best.

8.♘ge2 c5 9.d5 e6 would lead to Benoni positions. In the following game Black managed to solve his problems successfully: 10.a4 exd5 11.cxd5 ♘bd7 12.♘g3 ♘e5 13.♗e2 h5 14.0–0 h4 15.♘h1 ♘h7 16.♘f2 f5 17.exf5 gxf5 18.♘h3 ♘g6 19.♔h1 ♖a7 20.♖ae1 ♖e7 21.f4 ♗f6 22.♗c4 ♖fe8 23.♗f2 ♖xe1 24.♖xe1 ♖xe1† 25.♕xe1 ♕e7 26.♕d1 ♗xc3 ½–½ Dydyshko – Vokac, Ostrava 2005.

8...♗d7!?

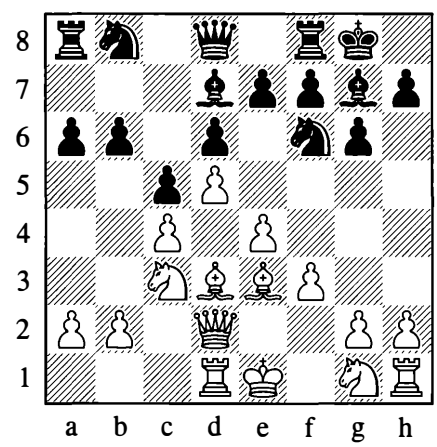
I like this original move more than the natural 8...♘bd7. Here is a game in which Grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev played convincingly in the opening and middlegame: 9.♗d3 c5 10.♘ge2 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♗b7 12.0–0 e6 13.♗e2 This is a good version of the "hedgehog" for White – the weakness on d6 is significant. 13...♖e8 14.♘c2 ♗f8 15.♗f4 ♘e5 16.♗g5 ♘ed7 17.♔h1 ♕c7 18.♕f4 ♗e7 19.♕h4 ♗d8 20.♕f4 ♗e7 21.♖d2 ♘h5 22.♕e3 ♗f8 23.f4 ♘g7 24.♖fd1 f6 25.♗h4; (1–0, 39) Razuvaev – Zagrebelny, Moscow 1983.

9.♗d3

Of course, in the event of the active 9.e5 ♘e8 10.f4 I would play 10...c5, undermining the strong white pawn centre with good counterplay.

9...c5 10.d5

Now after 10.♘ge2 Black can develop the b8-knight to the much more active square c6 – 10...♘c6 with the idea 11.0–0?! ♘g4!.



10...b5!

Making use of the absence of the white rook from its initial position, Black carries out this important move, striving for queenside activity.

11.b3

Of course not 11.cxb5?! axb5 12.♗xb5 ♗xb5 13.♘xb5 ♖xa2.

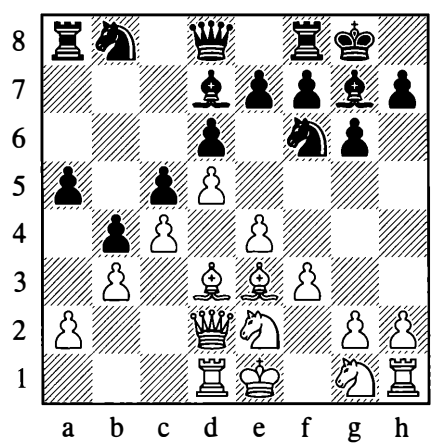
11.♗h6 was played against me by the Romanian Grandmaster Mircea Parligras,

but it did not bring him an opening success: 11...♗xh6! 12.♕xh6 bxc4 13.♗xc4 ♗b5 14.♗b3 ♕b6 15.♘h3 ♘bd7 Black was fine: he has easy and pleasant play against the b2-pawn along the b-file, while the white king is stuck in centre for the moment. 16.♘f2 ♘e5 17.♖d2 a5 18.♘xb5 ♕xb5 19.♗d1 ♘c4 20.♗e2 ♕b4 21.♗xc4 ♕xc4 22.a3 ♖ab8∓; (½–½, 44) Parligras – Smirin, Skopje 2014.

11...b4

Grabbing some space on the queenside and driving away the knight on c3.

12.♘ce2 a5



Now my opponent faces a problem – how to complete the development of his pieces?

13.♗h6

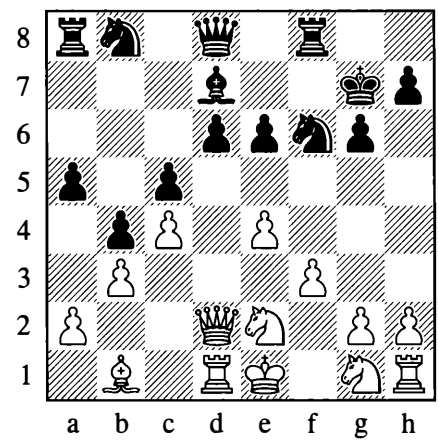
13.♘g3?, to vacate e2 for the other knight, was impossible due to the cheap trick 13...♘xd5 14.cxd5 ♗c3. That's why Boris Alterman decides to exchange the dark-squared bishops, but it leads to some weakening of the dark squares, as is often the case in the Sämisch System.

13...e6 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.dxe6

I think this decision to change the pawn structure is correct.

After, let's say, 15.♘g3 exd5 16.cxd5 a4 17.♘1e2 ♗c8!? 18.0–0 ♘bd7 Black would have a good position – the knight on g3 is slightly misplaced in my opinion.

15...fxe6 16.♗b1



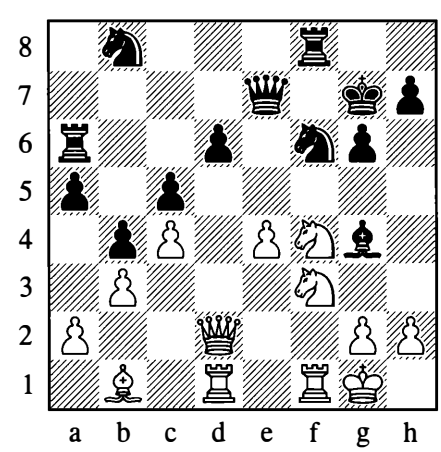
16...♖a6!

Here we see another benefit of 12...a5 (besides activity on the queenside) – now it's possible to defend the d6-pawn in this unusual way.

17.f4 e5

The main purpose of this move is to fix the white pawn on e4, thus making the bishop on b1 rather passive. Also Black fights to dominate on the dark squares.

18.♘f3 ♕e7 19.0–0 exf4 20.♘xf4 ♗g4

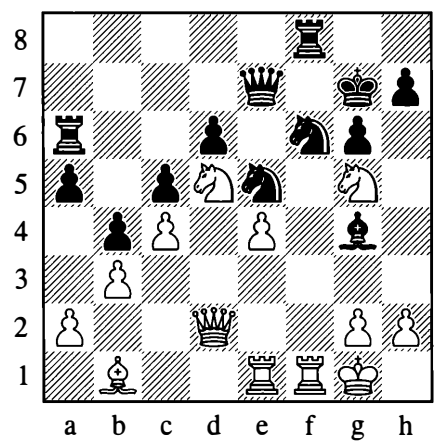


I decided to let my opponent activate his e2-knight, but in exchange Black is now free to develop his knight from b8 to d7 and e5.

21.♘g5 ♘bd7 22.♖de1

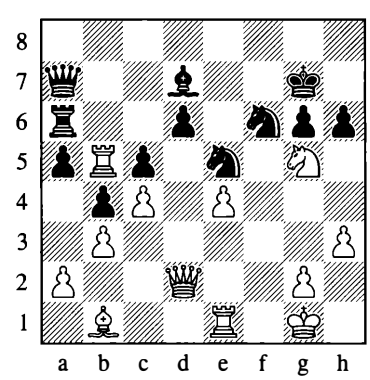
Or 22.h3 ♗xd1 23.♘ge6† ♔h8 24.♘xf8 ♕xf8 25.♕xd1 ♕e7 and Black is definitely better because of the poor bishop on b1.

22...♘e5 23.♘d5



23...♕d8

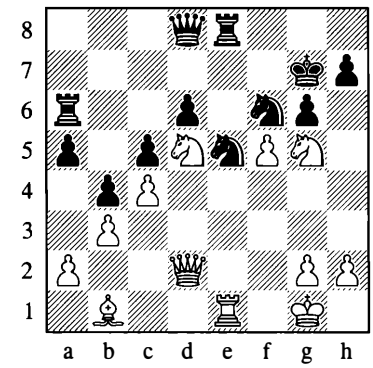
With hindsight, more accurate would have been: 23...♘xd5 24.♖xf8 (24.exd5 ♖aa8 and Black is OK at least) 24...♘f6!? (24...♕xf8 25.exd5 ♖a8 is good as well) 25.♖b8 h6 26.h3 ♕a7 (26...♗h5 27.♖f1!) 27.♖b5 ♗d7



28.♘f3 ♗xb5 29.cxb5 ♖b6 30.♘xe5 dxe5 31.♗d3 with roughly equal chances.

24.♘e3?!

White could have played the nice: 24.♖f5! ♗xf5 25.exf5 ♖e8 (the only move)



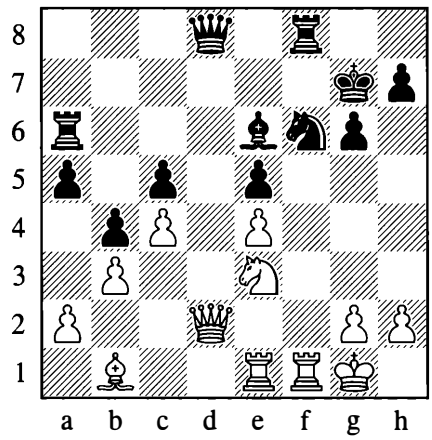
26.♘e6† (very interesting and perhaps stronger would be 26.♘f4!? ♔g8 27.♖f1 gxf5 28.♗xf5 with annoying pressure against the black king – the white knights are very dangerous and even more importantly the light-squared bishop is now active) 26...♖xe6 27.fxe6 ♘xd5 28.cxd5 ♕e7 29.♖f1 ♖a8 And chances are about even – the e5-knight is still stronger than the white bishop, but the protected pawn on e6 is definitely a force Black has to reckon with.

24...♗c8 25.♘f3 ♗e6?!

Having consolidated the position, I commit another inaccuracy.

After the correct 25...♘fd7! 26.♘xe5 ♘xe5 27.♖xf8 ♕xf8 28.♖f1 ♕d8 29.♘d5 ♗e6 30.♘f6 h6 (prophylactic against 31.♕g5) Black would have nothing to worry about – his king is well covered, the knight on e5 is pleasant to see, the b1-bishop has no bright future. I would definitely prefer to play as Black in this situation.

26.♘xe5 dxe5

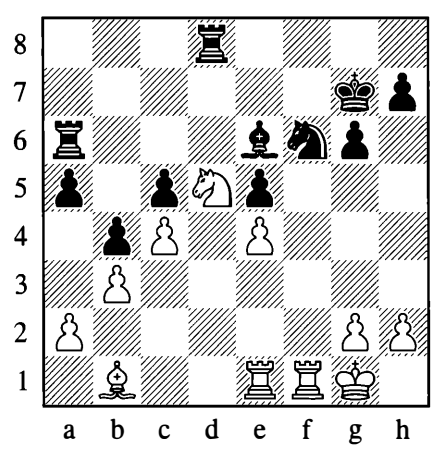


27.♕xd8?

My opponent had to continue more aggressively with 27.♘d5!, when this knight is annoying. If Black were to exchange it right away with 27...♗xd5?! 28.exd5 he would end up in the worse position – the e5-pawn is weak, the white bishop has improved its status a lot, and d5 is a protected passer.

27...♖xd8 28.♘d5

Without queens, this jump has much less effect – White does not have enough pieces to support the knight's activity and I can just ignore it.



28...♘e8

Starting the plan of bringing this knight to d4. This endgame is worse for White than it looks for two reasons: Black has an active plan with ...a5-a4 at the appropriate moment and (again) the black bishop is just better than its white counterpart. In my opinion White has enough resources to draw, but it seems that Boris Alterman underestimated the potential danger.

29.♗c2 ♖a7 30.♖f2 ♘d6

The knight continues its route towards d4.

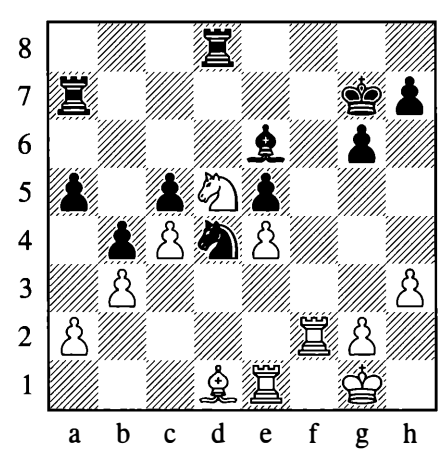
31.♘b6 ♘c8 32.♘d5

Probably 32.♘a4 ♖c7 33.♘b2 should have been preferred. Then after 33...♘b6 (or 33...♖cd7 34.♘a4 ♖c7 35.♘b2) 34.♘d3 ♘xc4!? 35.bxc4 ♗xc4 36.♘c1 ♗b5 I would have enough compensation for the piece, but hardly more, for instance: 37.♘b3 a4 38.♘d2 c4 39.h3 ♖b8 40.♖b1 b3 41.axb3 axb3 42.♘xb3 cxb3 43.♖xb3

32...♘e7 33.h3

Perhaps White should have preferred to defend passively: 33.♘xe7 ♖xe7 34.♖d1 ♖xd1† 35.♗xd1 ♖d7 36.♗c2 a4 37.♔f1 axb3 38.axb3 ♖a7 39.♖d2 ♖a1† 40.♖d1 ♖a2 41.♖d2 ♔f6 42.♔e1 And in my opinion he should hold this fortress.

33...♘c6 34.♗d1 ♘d4



The knight has arrived.

35.♘e3 ♖f7

I decided to exchange a pair of rooks to prevent any possible counterplay.

36.♖ef1 ♖xf2 37.♖xf2 ♗d7

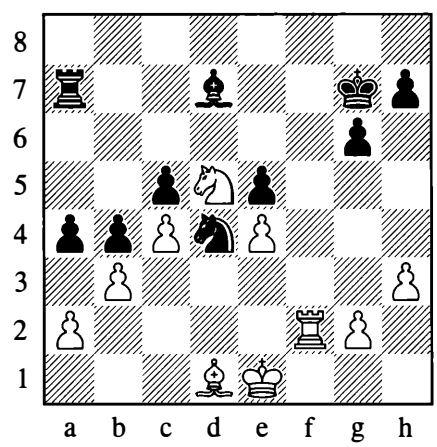
The next step is breaking through on the queenside after the inevitable ...a5-a4.

38.♘d5 ♖a8 39.♔f1 ♖a7

The final preparation.

Of course, not the immediate 39...a4? 40.♘b6.

40.♔e1 a4



41.bxa4

My opponent chooses to spoil his pawn structure (now the pawns on a2 and c4 become weak) but not to allow me to exchange pawns on b3 and penetrate to a1 with my rook. It's hard to say which is the lesser evil.

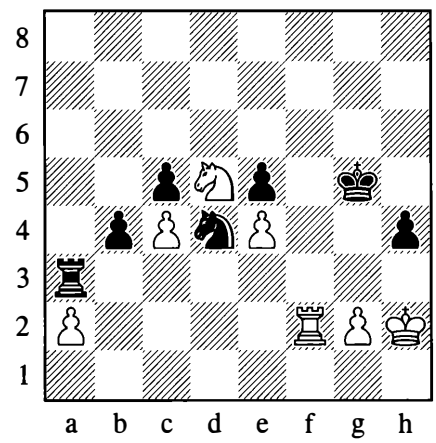
41...♗xa4 42.♗xa4 ♖xa4 43.♘b6 ♖a7 44.h4 h5 45.♘d5 g5!

Now it's time to activate the king.

46.hxg5 ♔g6 47.♔f1 ♔xg5 48.♔g1 ♖a3 49.♔h2

White still holds the last line of defence. My next move aims to clear the space for the black pieces to be able to penetrate through the kingside.

49...h4!



50.♔h1?

This seems to be a decisive mistake – Alterman hopes to save the game by defending passively.

He should have taken a more active approach instead:

50.♘b6! ♖c3

What else?

50...h3 51.♘d7

Or 50...♖a7 51.♔h3 ♔h5 52.♔h2 ♔g4 53.♘d5.

51.♘d7 ♖xc4 52.♘xe5 ♖c1 53.♘f7† ♔h5 54.♘e5 c4 55.♖d2 b3 56.axb3 cxb3 57.♖xd4 b2 58.♖b4

Another way is 58.♖d5!? b1=♕ 59.♘d3† ♔g4 60.♘xc1 ♕xc1 61.♖d3= with a well-known theoretical fortress.

58...b1=♕ 59.♖xb1 ♖xb1 60.♘f3 ♖b4 61.g3=

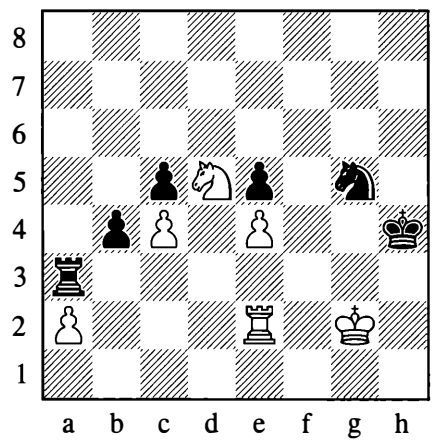
50...h3 51.♔h2 hxg2 52.♔xg2 ♘e6

White is doomed – he has to defend too many pawns and squares.

53.♖f5† ♔h4 54.♖f2

If 54.♖xe5 ♘d4! White would be completely lost despite the small amount of material remaining.

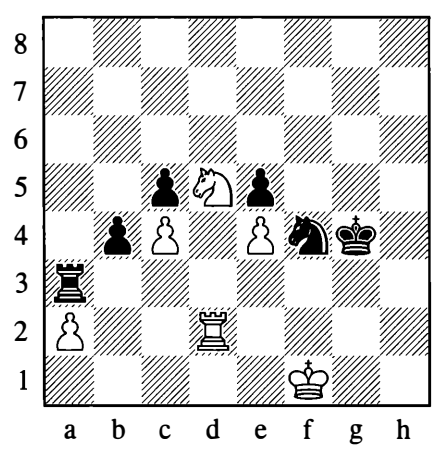
54...♘g5 55.♖e2



55...♘h3! 56.♖d2 ♔g5 57.♖c2 ♔g4 58.♖d2

Slightly more stubborn was 58.♘f6†, even though it would not change much.

58...♘f4† 59.♔f1



59...♘d3?

The natural 59...♔f3! would have won immediately.

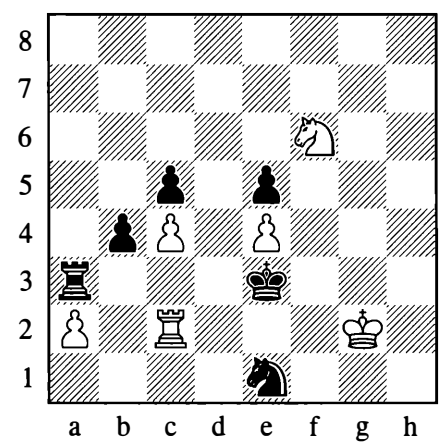
60.♔g2?

Again Boris missed the chance to complicate my task: 60.♘c7 with the idea 60...♔f3? 61.♘b5. Instead correct is 60...♘f4 61.♘b5 ♖h3!? 62.♔f2 ♘e6 63.♘d6 ♘g5 and Black should still win this.

60...♘c1

The rest is simple; Black's pieces came through.

61.♘f6† ♔f4 62.♘d7 ♘d3 63.♘f6 ♔e3 64.♖c2 ♘e1†



0–1



Yaacov Zilberman – Ilya Smirin

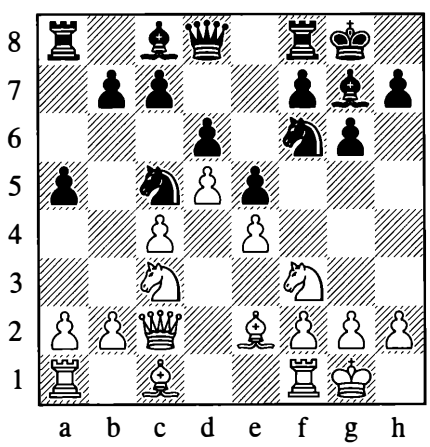
Tel Aviv 1999

I played quite a few KID encounters with the Israeli Grandmaster Yaacov Zilberman. In almost all of them the same position arose after 11 moves. This game is the most interesting in my opinion, but I will briefly mention some other games between Yaacov and myself.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♘c3 0–0 5.e4 d6 6.♗e2 ♘a6 7.0–0 e5 8.d5 ♘c5 9.♕c2

Or 9.♘d2 ♗h6.

9...a5



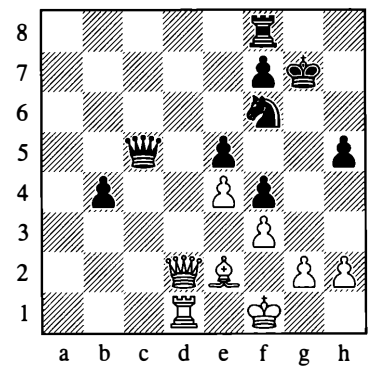
10.♗g5

10.♘d2 ♗h6! would lead to excellent play for Black, as has been known since the game Petrosian – Geller, Moscow 1949.

10...h6 11.♗e3 b6

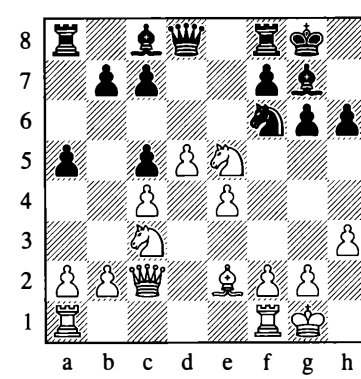
This secures the knight's outpost on c5.

11...♕e7!? is another option here. Although much less popular, this move is probably just as good as 11...b6. I played it once against – well, you guessed right: 12.♘d2 ♗d7 13.b3 h5 14.f3 ♔h7!? A different plan – Black goes for the exchange of dark-squared bishops. 15.a3 ♗h6 16.♗xh6 ♔xh6 17.b4 ♘a6 18.♖ab1 axb4 19.axb4 ♔g7 20.♕d3 c5! 21.dxc6 bxc6 22.♖fd1 c5 23.♘b3 cxb4 24.♘b5 ♘e8 25.♘xd6 ♗a4 26.c5 ♘xc5 27.♘xc5 ♗xd1 28.♖xd1 ♖d8 29.♘f5† gxf5 30.♕xd8 ♕xc5† 31.♔f1 ♘f6 32.♕d2 f4



33.g3 ♖g8 34.♖c1 ♕b6 35.♖b1 ♖b8 36.gxf4 ♔h7 37.♗c4 ♕c7 38.♗d3 ♘d7 39.♖c1 ♕d6 40.♖d1 ♖g8 41.♕f2 b3 42.♗e2 ♕c6 43.♕a7 b2 44.♕a2 ♕g6 45.♔e1 ♖b8 46.♔d2 exf4 47.♔c2 ♘e5 48.♔b1 ♕c6 49.♕a3 ♕c7 50.♕d6 ♕a7 51.♗a6 ♖e8 52.♕f6 ♖e6 53.♕f5† ♔g7 54.♕g5† ♘g6 0–1 Zilberman – Smirin, Israel 2011.

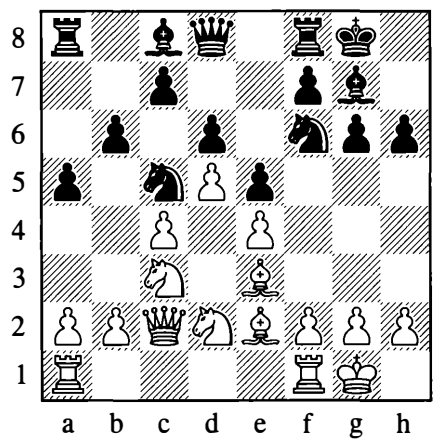
11...♘g4 would lead to a different type of position. Once it was played by the great Robert James Fischer: 12.♗xc5 dxc5 13.h3 ♘f6 14.♘xe5



14...♘xd5 15.cxd5 ♗xe5 16.f4 ♗d4† 17.♔h1 ♕h4; (0–1, 65) Gligoric – Fischer, Siegen (ol) 1970.

I think it's purely a matter of taste which line to choose.

12.♘d2



12...♗g4

Another encounter with Zilberman saw the "simpler" (and weaker, I should add) 12...♗d7 13.b3 ♘h7 14.a3 f5 15.f3 f4 16.♗f2 g5 17.b4 and I was much worse, as White is ahead with his attack; ½–½ Zilberman – Smirin, Israel 2007.

13.h3

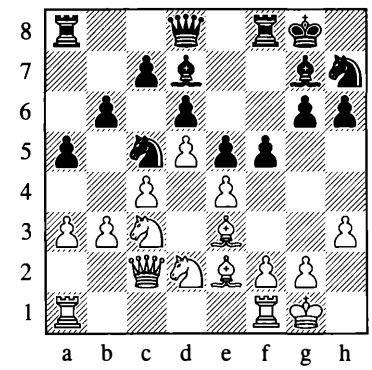
For 13.f3 see the game Naumkin – Smirin on page 101.

13...♗d7!?

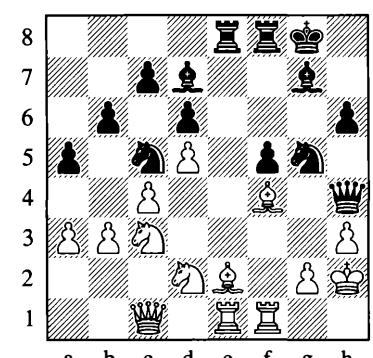
We will see later in the game that on h3 the pawn in general stands worse than on its initial position, and this factor will help Black to develop an initiative on the kingside.

14.b3 ♘h7 15.♖ae1

In our next "thematic opening duel" Yaacov preferred a more traditional approach, but without success: 15.a3 f5



16.exf5 (the sample variation 16.f3 ♘g5 17.b4 f4 18.♗f2 [better is 18.♗xc5 bxc5 19.bxc5, but Black is fine, of course] 18...♘xh3† 19.gxh3 ♗xh3 20.♔h2 ♗xf1 21.♖xf1 axb4 22.axb4 ♘d7 shows clearly the drawback of the pawn being on h3) 16...gxf5 17.f4 exf4 18.♗xf4 ♕h4 19.♖ae1 ♘g5 20.♔h2 ♖ae8 21.♕c1



21...♗e5! 22.♗xe5 ♖xe5 23.b4 axb4 24.axb4 f4! 25.♘f3 ♘xf3† 26.♖xf3 ♘b3 27.♕d1 ♘d4! 28.♖d3 ♘xe2 29.♖xe2 ♗g4 30.♕c2 ♗xe2 31.♘xe2 ♖e3 0–1 Zilberman – Smirin, Panormo 2001.

15...♕h4!?

Trying to make use of the advanced position of the h-pawn.

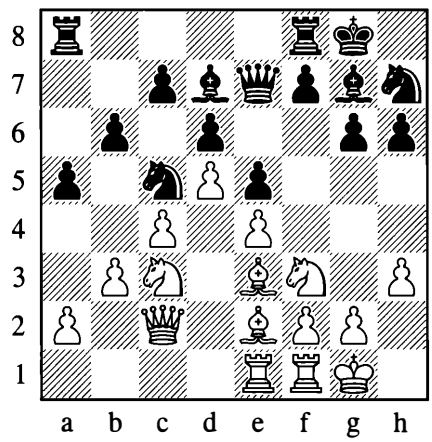
15...f5 16.exf5 gxf5 (on the other capture – 16...♗xf5 17.♘de4 – White controls the e4-square and remains OK) 17.f4 would lead to a rather standard double-edged position.

16.♘f3

My opponent did not like 16.a3?! f5 17.exf5 (or 17.b4 ♘a6 18.♘f3 ♕e7) 17...♗xf5, when Black's pieces are very active.

16.g3 ♕xh3 is impossible, of course.

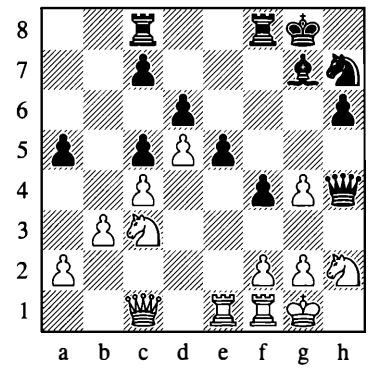
16...♕e7



Similar manoeuvres ...♗c8-g4-d7 and ...♕d8-h4-e7 (an interesting coincidence) have improved Black's position a bit, and it looks quite attractive to me – the black pieces are well placed and the traditional ...f7-f5 is in the air.

17.♘d2

Rafael Vaganian preferred 17.♕c1!?, attacking the pawn on h6, in a game against me. I replied: 17...f5! 18.exf5 (bad is 18.♗xh6? fxe4 19.♗xg7 ♔xg7 20.♘d2 ♘g5) 18...gxf5 19.♘b5 ♖ac8 20.♘h2 (or 20.♗xh6?! f4 21.♗xg7 ♕xg7 with an evident initiative for the pawn) 20...f4 21.♗xc5 bxc5 22.♗g4 ♗xg4 23.hxg4 ♕h4 24.♘c3 (24.f3 ♘g5 25.♘c3 e4! 26.♘xe4 ♗d4† 27.♔h1 ♘xe4 28.♖xe4 ♗f2 29.♖xf2 ♕xf2 30.♕b1 ♖ce8 31.♖xe8 ♖xe8 32.♕g6† ♔f8 33.♕f6† may have led to a draw by perpetual)

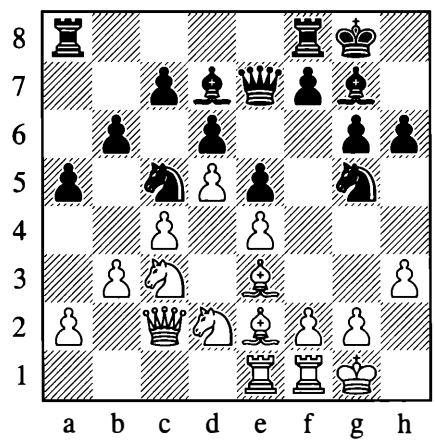


24...f3!; (½–½, 48) Vaganian – Smirin, Rostov-on-Don 1993. Black has obtained a good and active position.

17...♕h4 18.♘f3 ♕e7 19.♘d2

White agrees to a draw.

19...♘g5!?



But not me! Black's pieces have started to concentrate around the opponent's king; ...f7-f5 is coming and White is on a defensive footing.

20.f3

A kind of prophylactic move.

After the careless 20.a3? ♘xh3† 21.gxh3 ♗xh3 Black would get a huge advantage.

20...f5

Now the sacrifice on h3 does not work because of 22.♖f2.

21.exf5 gxf5

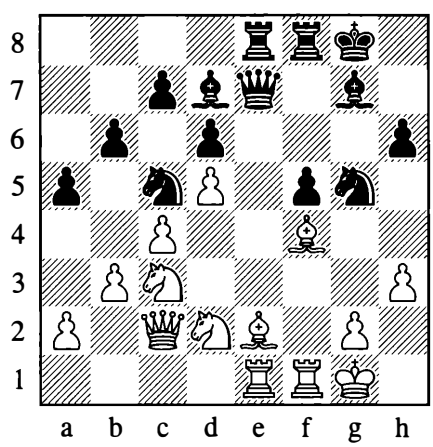
The capture with the pawn is much more interesting and aggressive than 21...♗xf5?! 22.♘de4 with an equal and dull position – some exchanges on e4 would soon follow.

22.f4

The standard method to stop the black pawn on f5 physically.

22.♔h1!? was, perhaps, more cautious. In this case a logical continuation would be 22...e4 (I do not like 22...f4?! 23.♗xc5 bxc5 24.♘de4) 23.f4 ♘h7 with a complex position, but optically my sympathies lie with Black here.

22...exf4 23.♗xf4 ♖ae8!



Probably Zilberman underestimated this strong move. Now the "semi-pin" on the e-file is rather unpleasant for him.

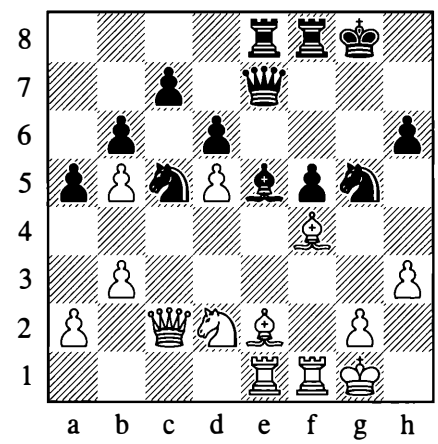
24.♘b5

If 24.♗h5 ♕xe1 25.♖xe1 ♖xe1† 26.♔h2 ♘ce4 my two rooks would be considerably stronger than my opponent's queen – the black pieces work excellently together, and White's king is under strong pressure.

24...♗xb5

It was a pity to part with one of the better bishops, but I had great hopes for the remaining one – the dark squares are starting to feel vulnerable in White's camp. By the way, the weak square on g3 was created because Black provoked the move h2-h3 earlier. In some variations (as we will see later in the game, for example) this weakness might tell.

25.cxb5 ♗e5

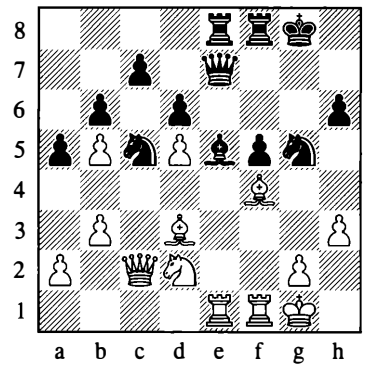


26.♕c4?

Apparently after this move White's game is already beyond salvation – Black's pieces become too dominant.

26.♗h5 ♗d4† 27.♔h2 ♕xe1 28.♖xe1 ♖xe1 would again be in Black's favour.

The only correct decision would be 26.♗d3!, creating some counterplay by eyeing the pawn on f5.



After this I failed to find an advantage for Black in the following variations:

26...♘ge4?! 27.♗xh6 is unsound.

26...♗d4† 27.♔h2 It's interesting that now the pawn's position on h3 hugely favours White – in chess, as in life, the same things under different circumstances may have completely different meanings. 27...♕xe1 28.♖xe1 ♖xe1 29.♗xf5 ♗g1† 30.♔g3 ♖e2 31.♕d1 ♗f2† 32.♔g4 ♖e7 The computer insists strongly on equality – I will not argue with that.

26...♘xh3† 27.gxh3 ♕g7† 28.♔h1 ♗xf4 29.♖xe8 ♖xe8 30.♖xf4 ♕g3 31.♖f3 ♖e1† 32.♗f1 ♖xf1†! 33.♖xf1 ♕xh3† 34.♔g1 ♕g3† leads to a draw by perpetual.

26...♕g7 27.♗xe5 ♖xe5 28.♖xe5 ♕xe5 29.♗xf5 ♕xd5 30.♗g4 with an approximately level position.

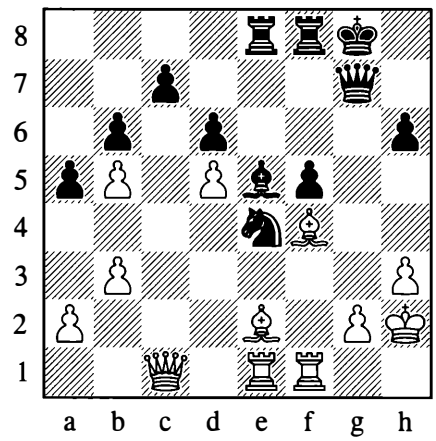
26...♕g7!

The ideal place for the queen – it creates the threat of ...♘h3† and controls a few important dark squares – e5, g5 and g3. At the same time the e8-rook becomes very active along the e-file.

27.♔h2 ♘ge4 28.♘xe4 ♘xe4!

This is much stronger than 28...fxe4. Now the knight on e4 is clearly superior to the e2-bishop, and this is the major factor which determines Black's overwhelming advantage.

29.♕c1



29...♘g3!

See the note after Black's 24th move.

30.♖f2?!

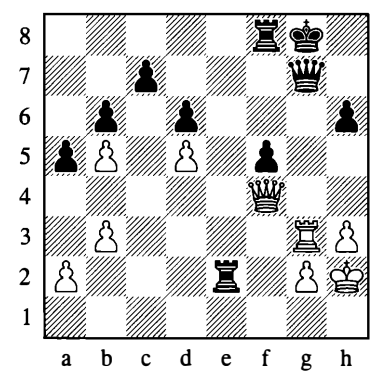
Zilberman misses his last chance. He had to find a much more stubborn idea:

30.♖f3! ♗xf4 31.♕xf4 ♘xe2

After 31...♘h5 32.♕h4 ♕e5† 33.♔g1 f4 34.♖b1 ♘g3 35.♕g4† ♔h8 36.♗d3 ♖e7 Black remains clearly better, but White can still resist.

32.♖xe2 ♖xe2 33.♖g3

And I would have to find the precise path:



33...♕xg3†!

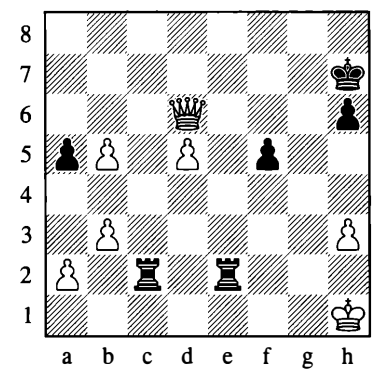
On the tempting 33...♖f7 34.a3! Black may easily fall into the trap: 34...♕xg3† 35.♕xg3† ♖g7 36.♕f3 ♖gxg2† 37.♕xg2† ♖xg2† 38.♔xg2 ♔f7 39.♔f3 ♔f6 40.♔f4 ♔g6 41.h4 ♔h5 It seems the pawn ending is won, but... 42.♔xf5 ♔xh4 43.♔e6 h5 44.♔d7 ♔g3 45.♔xc7 h4 46.♔xb6 h3 47.♔a7 h2 48.b6 h1=♕ 49.b7 leads to a draw – Black cannot prevent the b-pawn from queening.

34.♕xg3† ♔h7 35.♕c3

Here 35.a3 ♖g8 36.♕f3 ♖gxg2† 37.♕xg2 ♖xg2† 38.♔xg2 ♔g6 39.♔g3 ♔g5 40.h4† ♔h5 does not save White – Black has an extra tempo compared with the previous line.

35.♕f3 ♖xa2 is hopeless, of course.

35...♖g8 36.♕xc7† ♖g7 37.♕xb6 ♖gxg2† 38.♔h1 ♖c2 39.♕xd6 ♖ge2



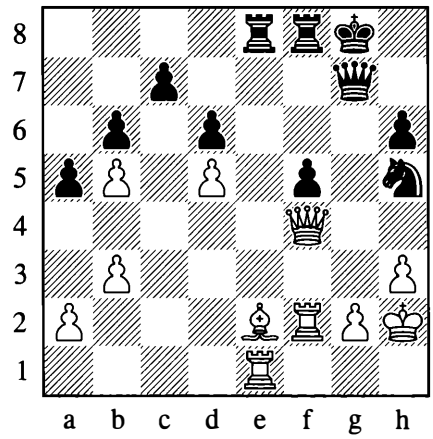
40.♕d7† ♔g6 41.♕d6†

41.♕c6† ♔h5 42.♕xc2 ♖xc2 43.b6 ♔h4 44.b7 ♔xh3 45.♔g1 ♖g2† 46.♔f1 ♖g8 etc.

41...♔h5

And it's winning in the end. But this would certainly not be easy to find during the game!

30...♗xf4 31.♕xf4 ♘h5!



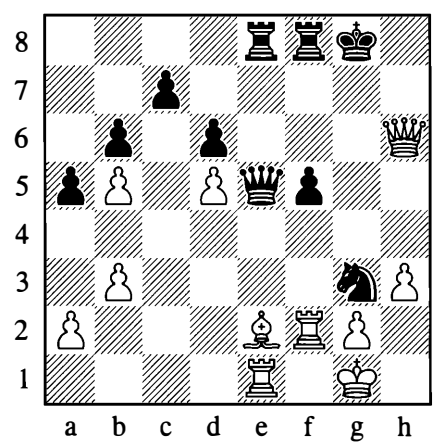
This manoeuvre gives the black queen access to e5, with lethal consequences.

32.♕h4 ♕e5† 33.♔g1

All White has left is choosing a way to lose.

After 33.g3 f4! 34.gxf4 ♘xf4 35.♖g1† ♔h7 he would have to resign.

33...♘g3 34.♕xh6

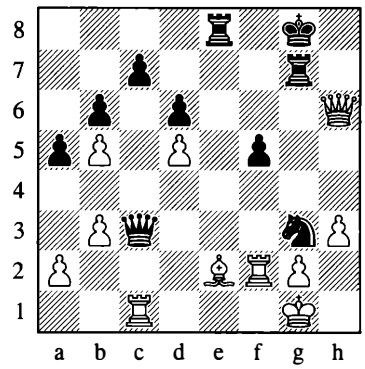


34...♖f7!

The last detail; now the bishop is in a deadly pin and will be lost.

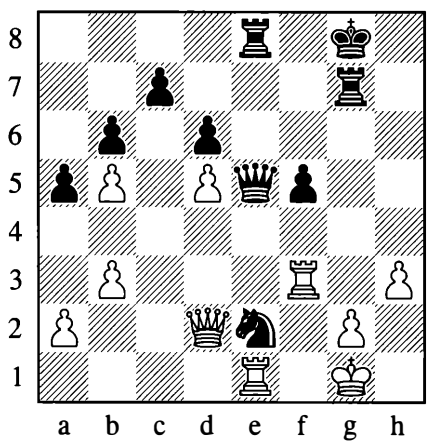
35.♖f3 ♖g7 36.♕d2

36.♖f2 ♕c3 (not the only winning continuation) 37.♖c1



37...♖xe2! 38.♖xc3 would lead to checkmate: 38...♖e1† 39.♔h2 ♖h1#

36...♘xe2†



White resigned because of 37.♔f2 ♕h2.

0–1

The final game of this chapter is as complicated and chaotic as a novel by Tolstoy. First my knights terrorize my opponent. Then, in deep complications, the white king goes running and the white knights keep him safe, until he goes astray.

Evgeny Bareev – Ilya Smirin

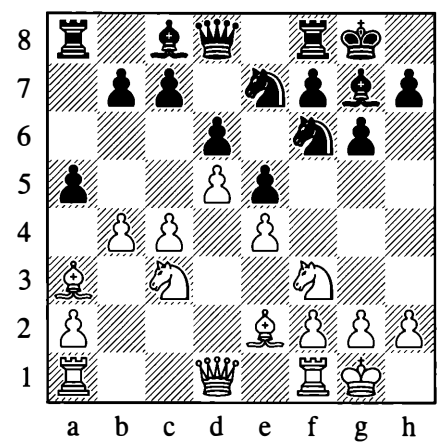
Moscow (rapid) 2002

This game was played in the Moscow Grand Prix event in rapid chess with a time control, if I am not mistaken, of 25 minutes plus 10 additional seconds for each move. The game is not free from mistakes, to put it mildly. The main reason I included it here is the bizarre and highly unusual final position. Besides, this encounter stays in my memory as a win over one of the best players in the world at the time – Evgeny Bareev.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♘f3 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 a5

Not 9...♘h5 this time. I played the second-most-popular move, immediately challenging White on the queenside.

10.♗a3



10...b6

I have quite often played this move, in connection with the next one, but in my opinion this line has mostly experimental value.

The main line is 10...axb4 11.♗xb4 ♘d7 12.a4. White, as usual, prepares to push c4-c5, while

Black usually connects his kingside play with ...f7-f5. I do not particularly like the scenario here, although I played this once against San Segundo in 1997 (in Gran Canaria, drawn after 30 moves).

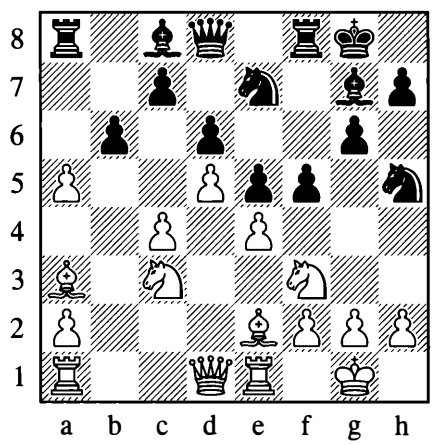
11.bxa5 ♘h5!?

Again, more common is 11...♖xa5 12.♗b4 ♖a8 13.a4, but as I already said, that's not to my liking.

12.♖e1

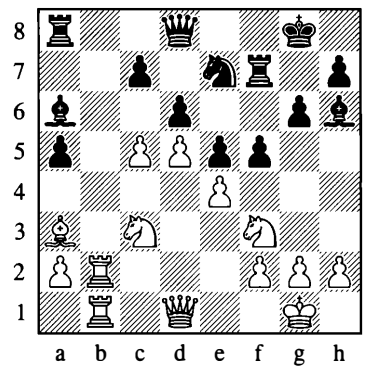
Not good is 12.axb6 ♖xa3. This is the tactical idea behind 10...b6. 12.♘b5 ♖xa5 13.♗b4 ♖a6 14.♘d2 occurred twice in my games with Van Wely (in 1998 and 2011).

12...f5



13.♘d2

I have faced a lot of trouble after 13.♗b4 bxa5 14.♗a3. I drew my game against Kramnik in 1999 (you will find this game on page 59) and beat Delchev, but lost convincingly to Huzman and Eljanov. Here is the last of these games: 14...♘f4 15.c5 ♘xe2† 16.♖xe2 ♗a6 17.♖b2 ♗h6 18.♖ab1 ♖f7

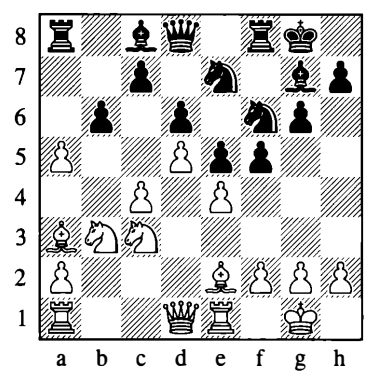


19.h4! ♔g7 20.exf5 ♘xf5 21.g3 ♕f6? 22.♘e4 ♘e3 23.♘xf6 ♘xd1 24.♖xd1 ♖xf6 25.♘g5 ♗xg5 26.hxg5 ♖f5 27.cxd6 cxd6 28.♗xd6 ♖xg5 29.♖c2 ♖c8 30.♖xc8 ♗xc8 31.♖c1 ♗g4 32.♖c7† ♔g8 33.♗e7 ♖h5 34.d6 ♔f7 35.f3 ♗e6 36.g4 1–0 Eljanov – Smirin, Porto Carras 2011.

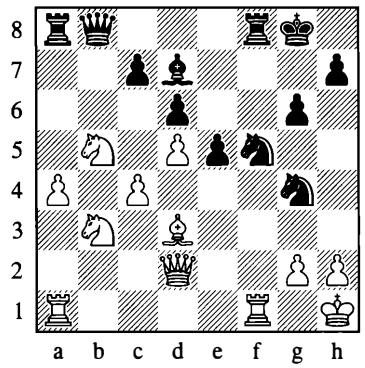
I think this game clearly shows the troubles Black may experience in this line – White was very quick to achieve a lot on the queenside and in the centre, while Black had no time to organize any serious counterplay.

13...♘f6 14.♗b4

After 14.♘b3?! I won the following interesting game against the very strong and creative player Anton Korobov:

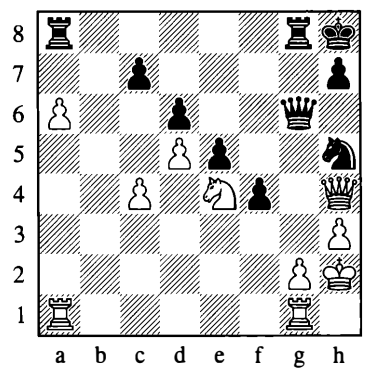


14...fxe4 15.♗b4 bxa5 16.♗xa5 ♘f5 17.♘b5 e3 18.fxe3 ♗h6! 19.♗d2 ♗xe3† 20.♗xe3 ♘xe3 21.♕d2 ♘f5 22.a4 ♗d7 23.♗d3 ♕b8 24.♔h1 ♘g4 25.♖f1



25...♕d8

25...♘fe3! 26.♖f3 e4 27.♗xe4 ♘xc4∓ 26.♗xf5 gxf5 27.h3 ♘f6 28.♕g5† ♔h8 29.♕h4 f4 30.♘d2 ♗f5 31.a5 ♕d7 32.♘c3 ♕g7 33.a6 ♖g8 34.♖g1 ♗g6 35.♔h2 ♘h5 36.♘de4 ♗xe4 37.♘xe4 ♕g6



38.♕e1

38.a7!

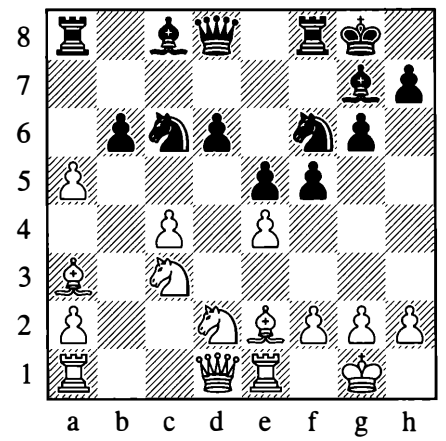
38...♖gb8 39.♕e2 ♖b3 40.a7 ♖b7 41.♖gb1 ♖xb1 42.♖xb1 ♖xa7 43.♕g4 ♔g7! 44.♖b8 ♕xg4 45.hxg4 ♘f6; (0–1, 55) Korobov – Smirin, Nakhchivan 2011.

14...c5

After 14...bxa5 15.♗a3 ♗h6 16.c5 ♗xd2 17.♕xd2 ♘xe4 18.♘xe4 fxe4 19.♗d1!? White would have a pleasant position.

I wanted to give a decent job to the e7-knight. This piece (or more precisely a lack of prospects for this piece) often causes trouble for Black in the Bayonet Attack.

15.dxc6 ♘xc6 16.♗a3



16...bxa5?

This was a rapid game and I made this move without much thought. It is a rather serious mistake.

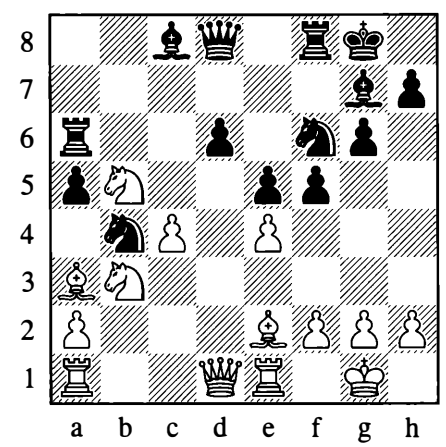
Correct was 16...♘d4!? or the quieter 16...♘xa5 17.exf5 gxf5 18.♘b5 ♘b7 19.♘b3 ♗e6 and Black is not doing badly at all.

17.♘b5

Also strong is 17.♗f3!? ♖a6 18.c5! and lack of development is the main cause of Black's troubles.

17...♘b4 18.♘b3 ♖a6

Not 18...♘xe4? 19.♗xb4 axb4 20.♕d5†.



19.exf5?

Bareev returns the favour.

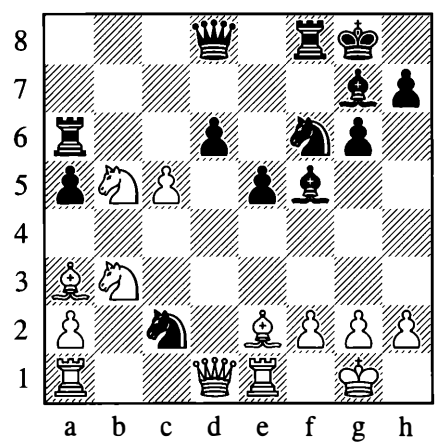
He shouldn't help Black finish his development, but instead he should open the position as much as possible with the energetic 19.c5!. After 19...dxc5 (19...♘xe4 20.♘xd6 ♖xd6 21.cxd6±; 19...d5 20.exd5 ♘fxd5 21.♘d6 with a decisive advantage) 20.♕xd8! ♖xd8 21.♖ad1 ♖f8 22.♘xc5 White's pieces are very active, and I would face major difficulties in this endgame.

19...♗xf5 20.c5

Now this is not as strong, as Black is already much better prepared for the tactical clash.

20...♘c2

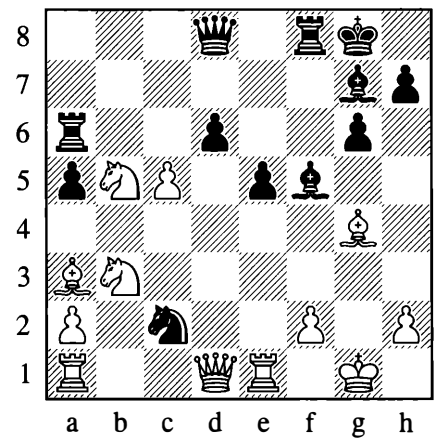
This is the difference. Probably Evgeny missed something in his calculations, because the move I made is very obvious.



21.g4?

How to describe this move: desperation? If yes, it's way too early. Such a weakening of the king in an open position is rarely any good. After the "normal" 21.♘xd6 ♖xd6 22.cxd6 ♘xa3 23.♖c1 White would retain very decent fighting possibilities due to the strong pawn on d6 and the unfortunate position of the knight on a3, whereas now White should be losing quickly.

21...♘xg4 22.♗xg4

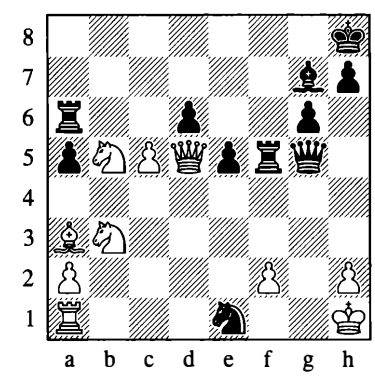


22...♕g5?

Obvious, but wrong – in such positions precise calculation is much more important than common sense.

22...♘xe1 was winning.

For instance: 23.♕d5† ♔h8 24.♗xf5 ♕g5† 25.♔h1 ♖xf5



26.♖xe1 ♖xf2

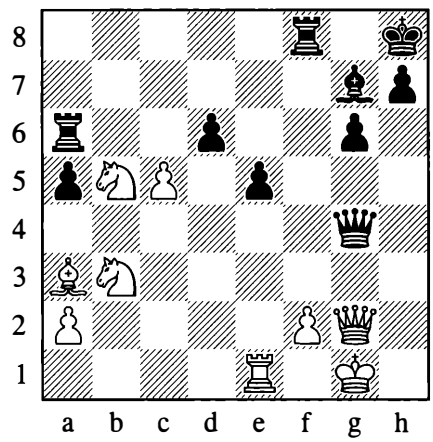
Or: 23.♗xf5 ♕g5† 24.♔f1 ♕xf5 25.♕xe1 ♕h3† 26.♔e2 e4 27.♖d1 ♕f3† 28.♔d2 ♕d3†

23.h3 ♘xe1

This was asking to be played, but better was the other capture: 23...♘xa3! 24.♕d5† ♔h8

25.♘xa3 h5 26.♕d2 ♕xd2 27.♘xd2 hxg4 28.hxg4 ♗xg4 29.♘ac4 dxc5 30.♘xe5 ♗f5 and the extra pawn and two powerful bishops allow us to assess this endgame as technically winning.

24.♕d5† ♔h8 25.♖xe1 ♗xg4 26.hxg4 ♕xg4† 27.♕g2



White has managed to bring his strongest piece to the defence, and beat off the first wave of the attack. Now Black switches his attention to the queenside, where White's pieces (the knight on b5 and bishop on a3) hang in the air slightly.

27...♕a4 28.♕b7 d5!

Cutting off the queen from his king.

29.c6

The a3-bishop comes into play. At the same time the pawn moves toward future glory.

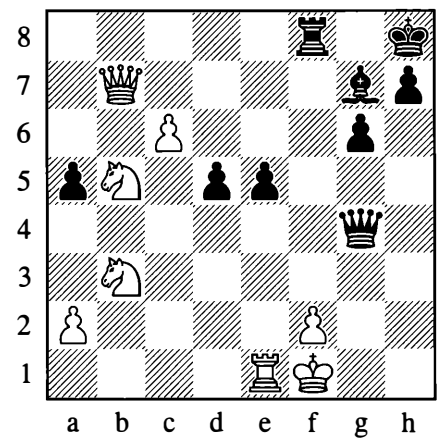
Of course the rook was untouchable: 29.♕xa6?? ♕g4† 30.♔f1 ♕f3 with mate.

29...♕g4† 30.♔f1 ♖aa8

We both had little time left. I decided to give it a try and not to force a perpetual, correctly sensing that Black might be able to do so later if necessary.

30...♕h3† 31.♔g1 ♕g4† (31...♖f5 32.♖e3 and White seemingly holds after 32...♕h4 33.♖g3 ♕e4 34.♔f1 ♕c2 35.♗c5) 32.♔f1 ♕h3†=

31.♗xf8 ♖xf8



32.♘d2!

Someone has to help the king, and the knight rushes to do it. Just in time!

32...e4

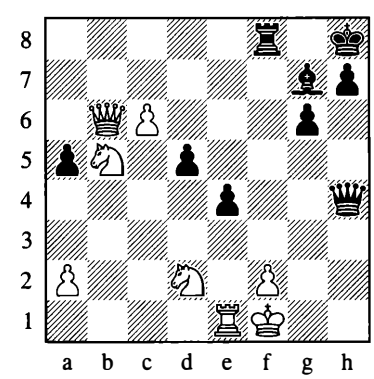
A good alternative was:

32...♕h4!?

This is quite strong, but White has a narrow path to hold:

33.♕b6 e4!

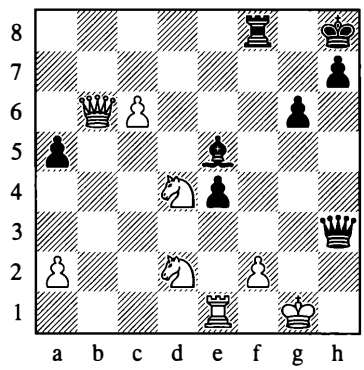
33...d4 34.♔e2 ♗h6 35.♔d1!= The only move (bad is 35.♖f1 d3† 36.♔xd3 ♖d8†).



34.♔e2!

34.c7 d4 35.♔e2 ♕xf2† 36.♔d1 e3 37.♘c4 ♕xa2 38.♘ba3 ♕a1† 39.♕b1 ♕xb1† 40.♘xb1 ♖c8–+

34...♕h5† 35.♔f1 d4 36.♘xd4 ♕h3† 37.♔g1 ♗e5



It looks as though the game is over, but there is a defence:

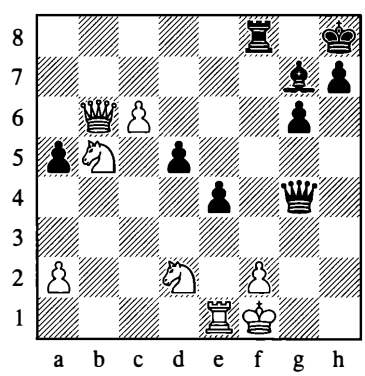
38.♘4f3! exf3 39.♘xf3=

Needless to say, all that was impossible to find over the board, as both Evgeny and I were down to the last drops of our remaining time and played according to our intuition.

33.♕d7?

Bareev did not guess correctly.

The calm 33.♕b6!, protecting the pawn on f2, was necessary and would lead to a draw in all variations.

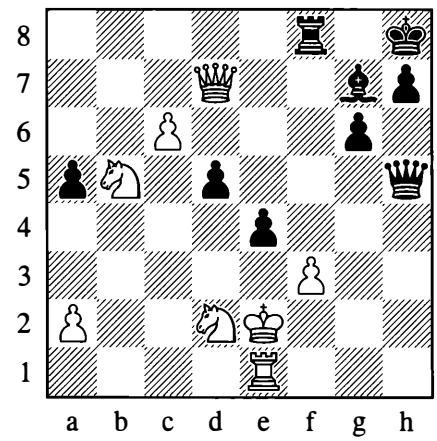


The simplest would be: 33...♕h3† 34.♔e2 ♕g4† 35.♔f1 ♕h3†

33...♕h4

33...♕g3 was winning too.

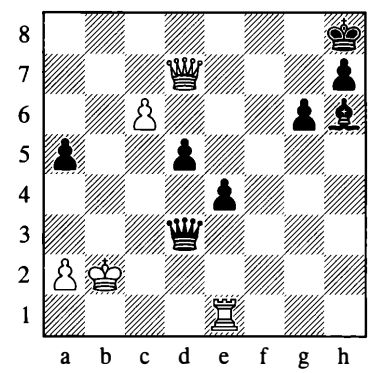
34.♔e2 ♕h5† 35.f3



35...exf3†?

My turn to err.

After 35...♖xf3! 36.♘xf3 ♕xf3† 37.♔d2 the white monarch would remain lonely and soon fall: 37...♕d3† 38.♔c1 ♗h6† 39.♔b2 ♕xb5† 40.♔c2 ♕c4† 41.♔b2 ♕d4† 42.♔c2 ♕d2† 43.♔b3 ♕b4† 44.♔c2 ♕c4† 45.♔b1 ♕d3† 46.♔b2

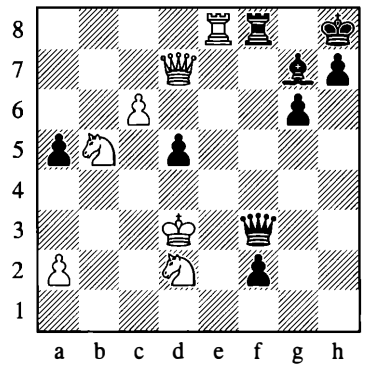


46...♗f8! This quiet move is the shortest way to victory. 47.♕e8 ♕d2† 48.♔b3 (48.♔b1 ♕xe1† and so on) 48...a4† 49.♔xa4 ♕b4#

36.♔d3 g5?

The second mistake in a row.

Black should have pushed the passer: 36...f2 37.♖e8 ♕f3†

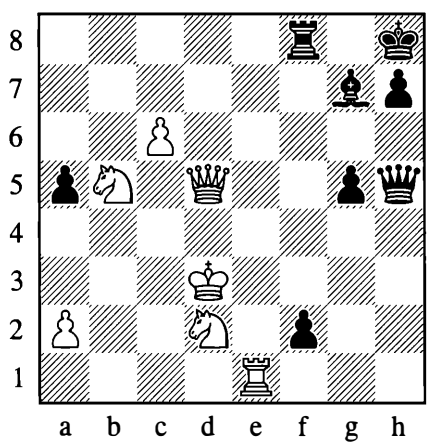


38.♔c2 (38.♘xf3 f1=♕† 39.♔c2 ♕xf3 40.♖xf8† ♗xf8 41.♘c3 ♕f2† 42.♔d3 ♕f3†=) 38...f1=♕ 39.♘xf1 ♕xf1 40.♖xf8† ♕xf8 41.♕xd5 ♕f2† with perpetual check.

37.♕xd5

I remember that after the d5-pawn disappeared, I started to feel uneasy, but I had no time to berate myself and made my next move very quickly.

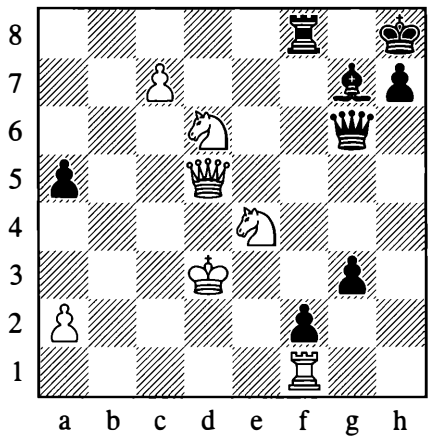
37...f2



38.♖f1

38.♖h1 was winning, according to Houdini.

38...♕g6† 39.♘e4 g4 40.♘bd6 g3 41.c7



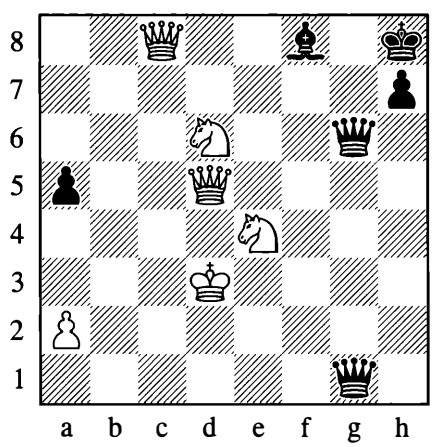
41...g2

Any player who played the strongest 41...h6!! should be rewarded for extraordinary skills or banned for cheating. The possible continuation after that could be: 42.♘f7† (42.c8=♕ ♖xc8 43.♘xc8?? g2–+) 42...♔h7 43.♘fg5† hxg5 44.♖h1† ♗h6 45.♕b7 g2 46.c8=♕† ♖f7 and the computer evaluates this position as exactly equal. Sure!

42.♖xf2 g1=♕

The first promotion.

43.♖xf8† ♗xf8 44.c8=♕

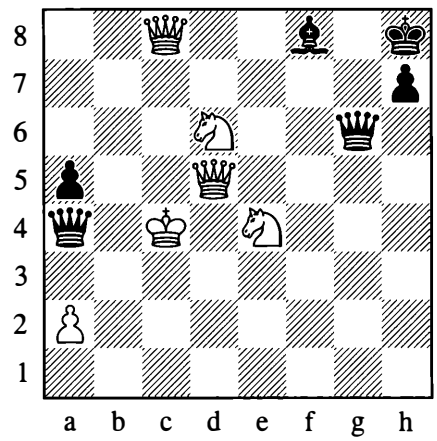


The second promotion. We were already playing on just the 10 second increments.

In such a position we could only make decisions purely by instinct.

Objectively better was: 44.♕e5† ♕g7 45.♕xg7† ♔xg7 46.c8=♕ ♕f1† (46...♕b1† 47.♕c2 ♕xc2† 48.♔xc2 a4 49.♔d3 ♔g6 50.♔d4 h5 51.♔e5 ♗e7) 47.♔c2 ♕e2† 48.♔b1 with winning chances.

44...♕d1† 45.♔c4 ♕a4†



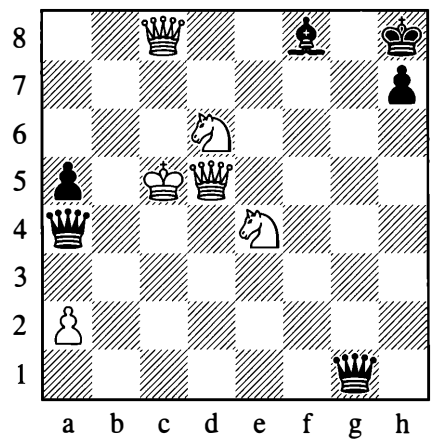
46.♔c5??

I should be thankful to Evgeny for this move, as it leads to a mate of exceptional beauty.

46.♔c3 ♕g7† 47.♔d2 ♕b4† 48.♔c2 ♕bb2† 49.♔d3 ♕b1† 50.♕c2 ♕f1† 51.♕e2 ♕b1† 52.♕c2 would have led to a draw.

Here I became desperate for about 15 seconds until I found the right move with 5-10 seconds left.

46...♕g1†!



0–1

One of the most unusual pictures I have ever experienced in my games.

Chapter 7

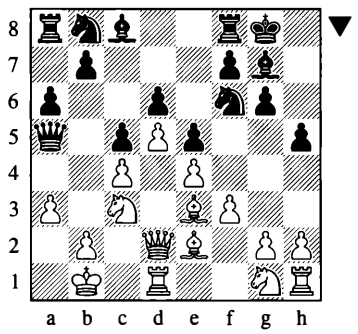
Kamikaze Rooks



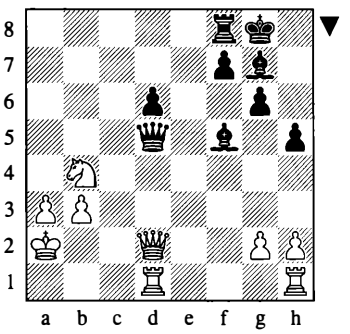
With Alexander Moiseenko, the 2013 European Champion; a great player and a great human being

Test yourself against the book

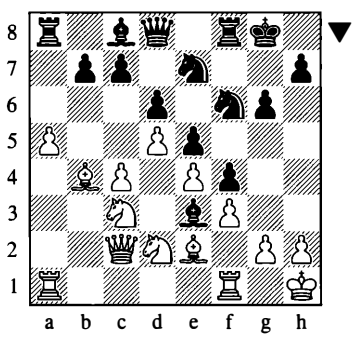
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



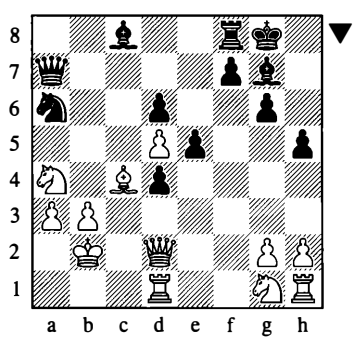
Positional play. How should Black react? (see page 219)



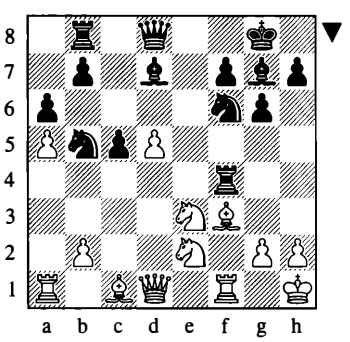
The next one is even worse! (see page 221)



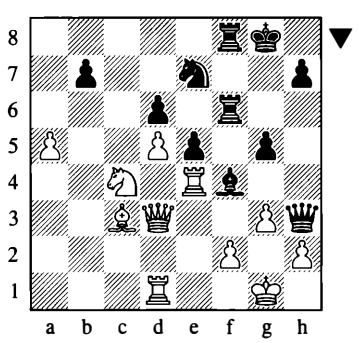
Spot the weakness (see page 215)



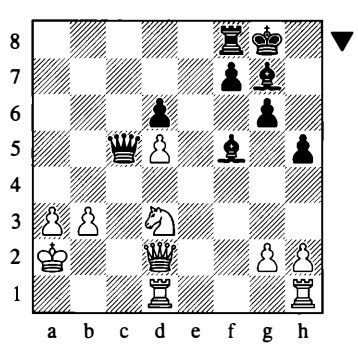
How do you generate compensation for the piece? (see page 220)



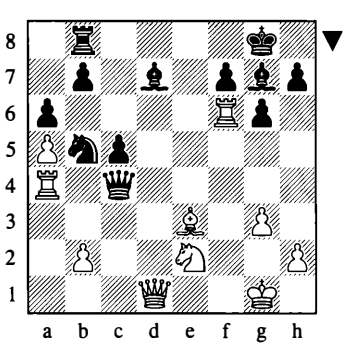
Where should Black place the rook? (see page 231)



The bishop looks trapped (see page 216)



I missed a beautiful win (see page 221)



The grand finale! (see page 232)

In a few of my games I have managed to use my rooks almost as if they were minor pieces, using them with the same sort of energy and short manoeuvres as a knight or bishop would use in an attack. I am not sure where I picked up this idea (I dread to call it a skill, as I have not been able to show it often enough for that) of using the rook like this; a logical place would be from the games of Mikhail Tal, who was absolutely sensational with all of the pieces, including the rooks. More about Tal in the notes to my game against Haba below.

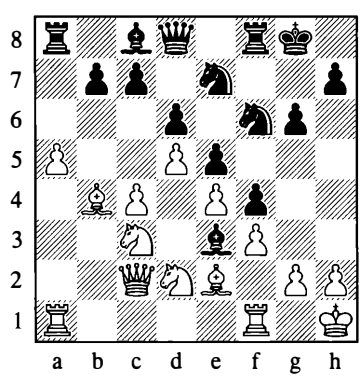
I have gone over a number of recent games to find one by another player that showed the same handling of the rooks, and I came up with the following game, where Black's entire strategy is centred around a rampant rook.

Andrey Zontakh – Jaroslav Ulko

Voronezh 2015

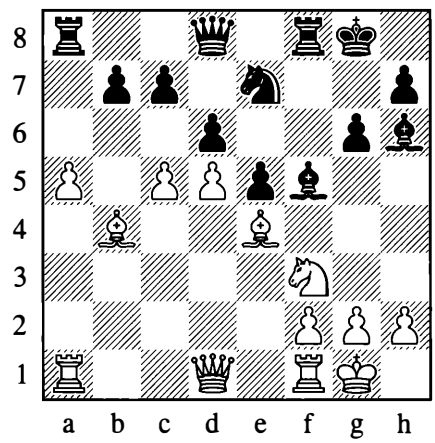
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 a5 10.♗a3 axb4 11.♗xb4 ♘d7 12.a4♗h6 13.a5

I do not want to go into the theory here, but I would like to quickly give a game where a strong grandmaster lost to a well-known trick that has already been described in this book: 13.♘d2 f5 14.a5 ♘f6 15.f3? Inviting the bishop in is not a good idea. 15...♗e3† 16.♔h1 f4∓ 17.♕c2?



17...♘h5! Black is already completely winning. 18.♖fb1 (18.h3 ♘c6! 19.dxc6 ♗xh3! also leads straight to mate) 18...♘g3† 19.hxg3 ♘f5 20.exf5 ♕g5 21.♘f1 ♕h6† 22.♘h2 fxg3 0–1 A. Fedorov – Ozolin, Kazan 2013.

13...f5 14.♗d3 ♘f6 15.c5 fxe4 16.♘xe4 ♘xe4 17.♗xe4 ♗f5



18.cxd6

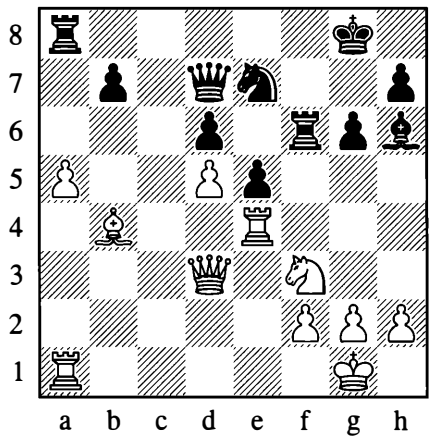
This reduces White's options, but not Black's, as ...dxc5 was not really threatened.

18.♖e1 is more critical. Compared with our game, after 18...♗xe4 19.♖xe4 ♕d7 White has 20.♕b3!± as played in two other games. But Black can play differently too, of course.

18...cxd6 19.♖e1 ♗xe4 20.♖xe4 ♕d7 21.♕d3 ♖f6

Black plays this game quite aggressively. It is not without risks, but sometimes you need to take risks in order to win games.

But what we really need to see here is that Black has placed the rook on f6 and not f7, as I am sure some would do intuitively. This is a fine judgement. Not only is the d6-pawn in more danger than the b7-pawn, Black also has the option of swinging the rook to h6 later on, and it is not improbable that he was dreaming of doing this here.

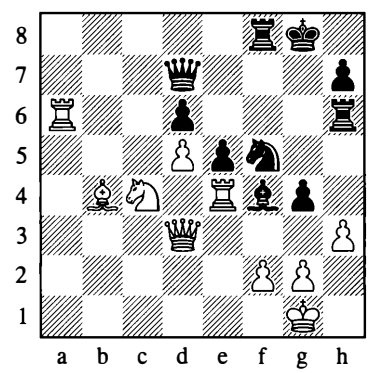


22.♘d2 ♖af8 23.♘c4 ♗f4!?

Black is preparing to swing the rook to the h-file. 23...♕b5 would have more or less equalized, but again Black is going all-in.

24.♗c3 g5! 25.g3

Black's attacking potential can be seen in lines such as this: 25.a6!? bxa6 26.♖xa6 ♘f5 27.♗b4 ♖h6! 28.h3 g4!



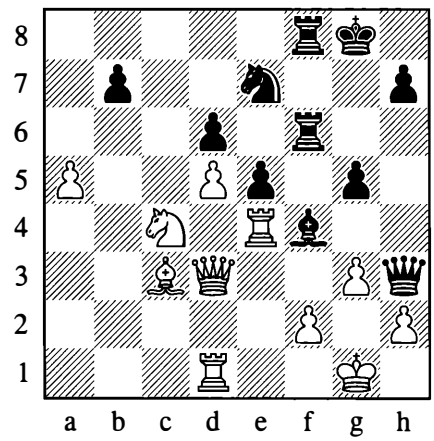
The game has sharpened up and White needs to be very careful not to be worse immediately. For example: 29.hxg4? ♗h2†! 30.♔h1 ♘g3†! 31.fxg3 ♗xg3† 32.♔g1 ♗f2† 33.♔f1 ♗c5† and Black wins.

25...♕h3

Black has played very creatively and is rewarded for his ingenuity and risk-taking when his opponent fails to find a reasonable way to deal with the questions he has been posed.

26.♖d1?

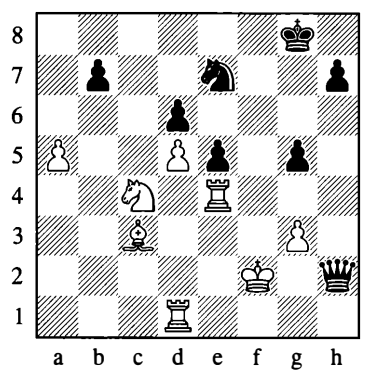
26.♕f1 was necessary. After 26...♕h5 Black continues to enjoy a good game, but White's position is not objectively worse. The most prudent way to continue is probably 27.♕e2 ♕h3 28.♕f1, with a draw by repetition coming up.



26...♖h6!

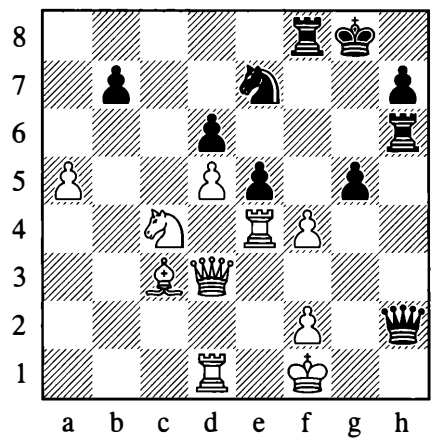
Black must have been ecstatic to be able to carry out his plan. This gives him an excellent chance to show off his agility with the rook.

But it would be a shame not to mention that Black had an additional win with: 26...♗e3!? 27.♕xe3 ♖xf2 28.♕xf2 ♖xf2 29.♔xf2 ♕xh2†



30.♔f3 ♕h5† 31.g4 ♕h3† 32.♔e2 ♕xc3, and although there is some work to do, it should not be too difficult.

27.gxf4 ♕xh2† 28.♔f1



28...♖h3!

The rook continues to play a brilliant supporting role, creating a path for the queen.

29.♖e3

Both 29.♕c2 ♖xc3 and 29.♘e3 gxf4 win immediately.

29...♕xf4 30.♗e1 ♖h2 31.♖f3!?

Hoping to escape to an endgame an exchange down. Although this too was winning for Black, the game is more convincing.

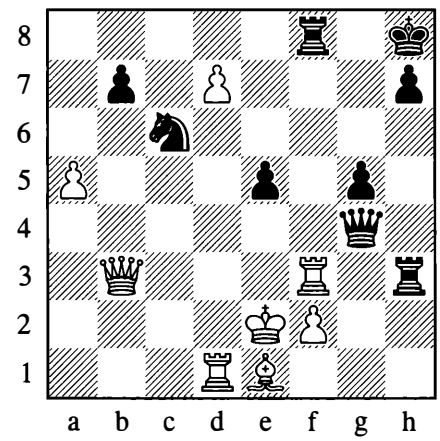
31...♖h1† 32.♔e2 ♕g4!

This pin is decisive.

33.♘xe5

Desperation, but 33.♘d2 also does not come close to holding. For example: 33...♘f5 34.♕e4 ♘d4† 35.♔d3 ♕xe4† 36.♔xe4 ♘xf3 37.♘xf3 ♖f4† 38.♔e3 ♖h3 and Black wins.

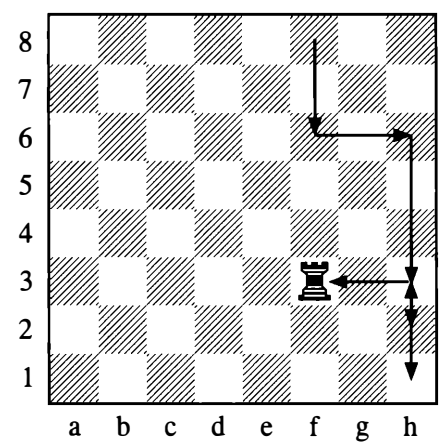
33...dxe5 34.d6 ♘c6 35.♕b3† ♔h8 36.d7 ♖h3



The rook returns to h3 with devastating effect.

37.♖dd3 ♖hxf3 38.♖xf3 ♘d4† 39.♔f1 ♘xf3 40.♕d5 ♘h2#
0–1

The rook's amazing journey on a very small space is shown here:



My Games

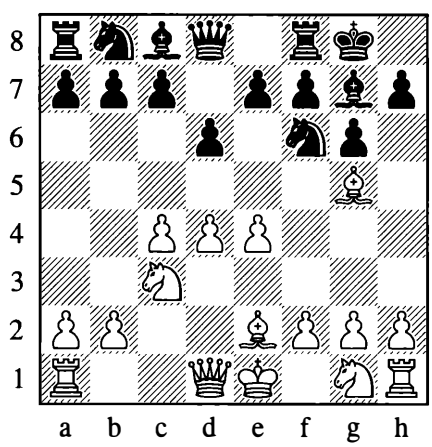
The following three games are hard to describe, with no simple theme to be squeezed from them with the exception of the kamikaze rook: a rook that runs rampant and is willing to die for the cause if necessary.

Vyacheslav Dydyshko – Ilya Smirin

Byelorussia 1986

This was one of my memorable games as a teenager. It was played in the Championship of Belarus and my opponent was Vyacheslav Dydyshko, one of the strongest Byelorussian masters. Vyacheslav holds the record for the most titles as Champion of Belarus. He has been a grandmaster for many years now, but in the 1980s the average master in the USSR was no weaker than the average modern GM (of course, this is just my personal opinion). In this tournament I earned the title of USSR National Master – an important step in my career.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♗g5



The Averbakh System, named after Yuri Averbakh, at the time of writing the oldest living grandmaster.

6...h6

The popular move in those days. Later I switched mainly to the more sophisticated 6...♘a6, examples of which you will find in this book.

The immediate 6...e5? 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.♕xd8 ♖xd8 9.♘d5 leads to material losses – this a well-known idea behind the Averbakh System.

7.♗e3 e5

Now this is allowed.

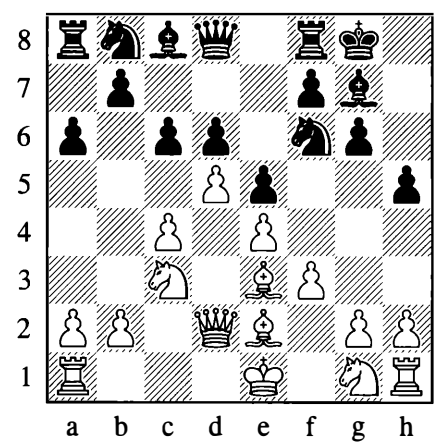
8.d5 c6

The more flexible (and probably better) move 8...♘a6 was played in the game Aleksandrov – Smirin, Minsk 1987, which continued 9.♕d2 h5 10.0–0–0?! (better was 10.f3 – the light-squared bishop is very important for White in this structure) 10...♘g4 11.♗xg4 ♗xg4 12.♘ge2 ♗d7 13.♔b1 f5; (0–1, 54).

9.♕d2

Here we see the main drawback of 6...h6 – Black has to protect this pawn.

9...h5 10.f3 a6

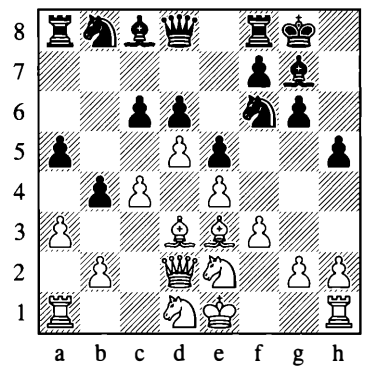


Preparing ...b7-b5 with activity on the queenside.

11.0–0–0

Playing slightly into Black's hands.

More to my taste is 11.♗d3!? with the possible continuation: 11...b5 12.♘ge2 The standard method of developing the g1-knight in the Averbakh System. 12...b4 (12...cxd5?! 13.cxd5 ♘h7 14.0–0 ♘d7 15.b4 f5 16.exf5 gxf5 17.a4±; [½–½, 32] A. Petrosian – Smirin, Polanica Zdroj 1989) 13.♘d1 a5 14.a3

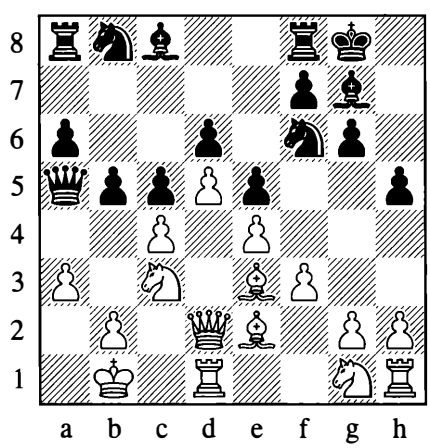


I would probably prefer White's chances here – Black's pawns are slightly over-extended on both wings.

11...♕a5 12.♔b1 c5

Instead 12...cxd5? 13.♘xd5 ♕xd2 14.♘e7† ♔h7 15.♖xd2 ♗e6 16.♖xd6 does not look good for Black.

13.a3 b5!

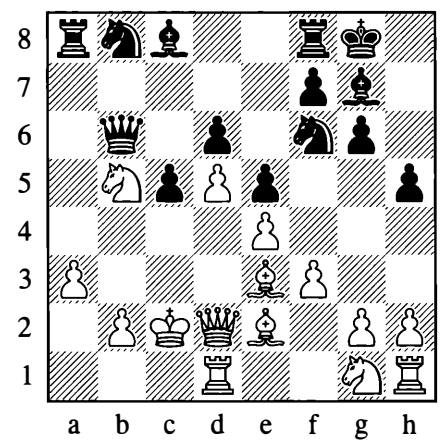


Now the king on b1 starts to feel some discomfort.

14.cxb5 axb5 15.♘xb5 ♕b6 16.♔c2

A prophylactic measure against 16...♗d7 17.♘c3 ♖xa3, but isn't it too early for the king to be involved in the battle?

16.♖c1 seems to be a more natural choice. In this case I would proceed: 16...♘a6 (16...♗d7? does not work: 17.♘xd6! ♕xd6 18.♗xc5 ♕c7 19.♗xf8+–) 17.♖c3!? An interesting resource. 17...♘c7 18.♖b3 ♗d7! Black has good compensation for the pawn, at least from a practical point of view.



16...♖a4!?

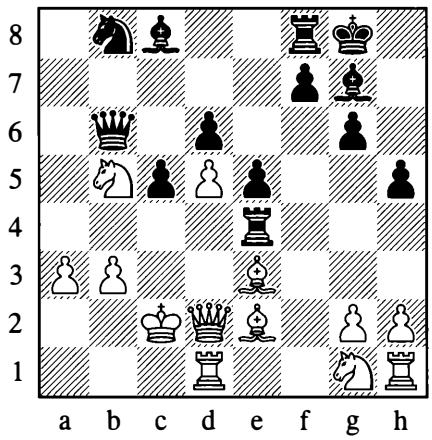
Not a necessary move, and the objective evaluation is closer to "?".

16...♗d7 17.♘c3 ♘a6, with very decent play for the sacrificed pawn, was called for, but I just really liked the idea in the game, and could not resist temptation!

17.b3 ♘xe4!

Here it is! The objective evaluation for this move is also given above.

18.fxe4 ♖xe4

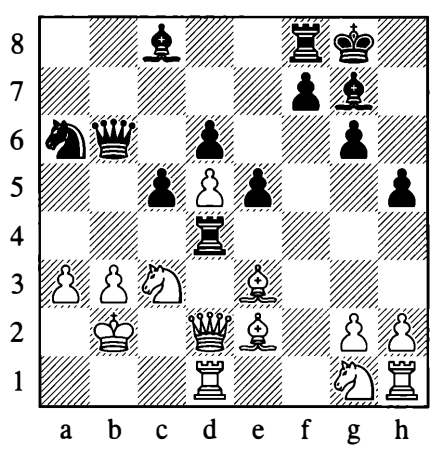


So, only one pawn for a knight, I am underdeveloped and I am attacking – paraphrasing Napoleon Bonaparte. The main purpose of the sacrifice was to open lines for both black bishops. In particular, the g7-bishop may turn into a monster.

19.♔b2

One possible line here is 19.♗d3 ♗f5 20.a4 ♘a6 21.♗xe4 ♗xe4† 22.♔b2 ♗d3 23.♘e2 ♗xb5 24.axb5 e4† 25.♘c3 ♖b8!, with strong threats by the rook. Houdini recommends 19.♗c4 and promises a big advantage to White. The computer is probably right, but Houdini did not exist in 1986...

19...♘a6 20.♘c3 ♖d4!



Adding fuel to the fire; the rook on d4 makes a nice aesthetic impression. My opponent has to accept the second sacrifice.

21.♗xd4 cxd4 22.♘a4 ♕a7

Now Black is playing a whole rook down with no immediate threats. Still he has huge compensation. The central pawns will move shortly, opening up the g7-bishop at the same time. And this bishop... Well, at the moment it's much stronger than either of White's rooks.

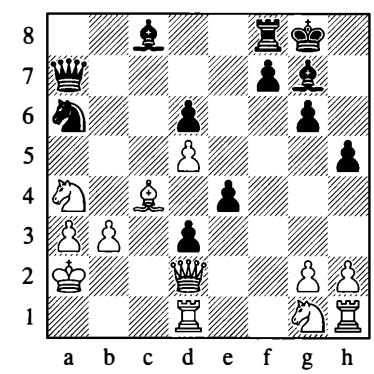
23.♗c4 d3! 24.♔a2 e4

As was just said.

25.♘h3?!

Not the best choice.

More prudent was: 25.♕a5 ♕f2† (less convincing is 25...♕d4?! 26.♘e2 ♕f2 27.♕e1 ♕xg2 28.♖d2 dxe2 29.♖xe2 ♕g5 30.♖xe4 when White might be better but it's still messy) 26.♕d2 (26.♖d2?? ♕e1–+) 26...♕a7



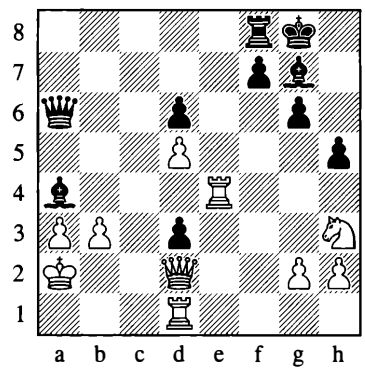
27.♕a5, with a draw.

Or 25.♖e1 ♗f5 26.♘e2!? though Black still has lots of play after 26...♘c5!.

25...♘c5?

A pity. In this case, it was better to attack the unfortunate knight on a4 rather than exchange it.

After the natural and logical 25...♗d7 White would be on the verge of collapse. For instance: 26.♗xa6 (26.♕a5 ♗xa4 27.♕xa4 ♕d4 28.♖d2 ♕c3–+) 26...♕xa6 27.♖he1 ♗xa4 28.♖xe4



28...♗xb3† 29.♔xb3 ♕b5† 30.♕b4 ♕xd5† 31.♖c4 ♕xg2 32.♖d2 ♕xh3 And Black wins.

26.♘xc5 ♕xc5 27.♗xd3!?

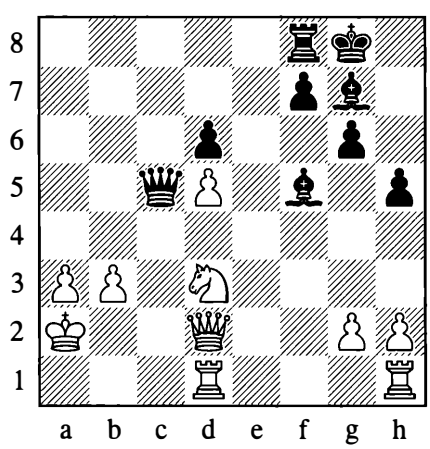
Not a bad practical decision. The pawn chain e4-d3 was too strong.

27...exd3 28.♘f4 ♗f5

Trickier was: 28...♗c3 29.♘xd3 (29.♕xd3? ♗g4–+ 30.♘e2? ♕xa3† 31.♔xa3 ♖a8† – a cheap but nice trap) 29...♕a5 30.♕e3 ♗d7 31.♘b2 (the best defence against ...♕xa3†) 31...♖e8 32.♕f2 ♗b5, and the only move here seems to be 33.♖hf1, with a dynamic balance.

29.♘xd3?

Better was 29.♖c1 ♕b5 30.♖c4∞.

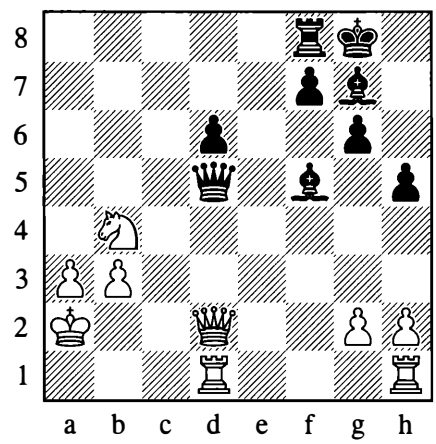


29...♕xd5?

Alas, here I missed a really pretty win: 29...♗xd3 30.♕xd3 ♗c3! 31.♔b1 (31.♖c1? ♕xa3†! – the point) 31...♖b8 32.♕c2 ♕xa3 33.♕xc3 ♖xb3† 34.♕xb3 ♕xb3† 35.♔c1 ♕c4† 36.♔b1 ♕e4† 37.♔c1 ♕xg2, with a completely won endgame. To some degree such mistakes from both sides can be explained by the unusual character of the game.

30.♘b4?

Another oversight. White needed to find 30.♘b2 when the fight continues. After what he played, the game could immediately be over.



30...♕e5?

Well, I missed it too. The hard-to-spot killer was 30...♗b1†!! when taking with the rook drops the queen, while 31.♔xb1 ♕xb3† is also a quick mate. It's all obvious to an engine, but even years after the game, I had no idea there was a forced mate here.

31.♖he1

31.♘c6 could have posed more problems for me, but Vyacheslav decided to centralize his rook and decentralize my queen. The price for that – the pawn on h2.

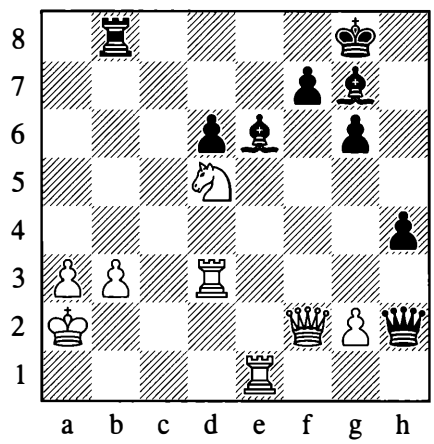
31...♕xh2

Now material is about even and so are the chances. I do not remember exactly, but it seems to me that somewhere around here Dydyshko started to get into time trouble.

32.♘d5 ♗e6 33.♕f2 ♖b8 34.♖d3 h4??

A huge mistake which could have cost the game. Black is going for too much, playing on both flanks and moving a pawn away from his own king.

34...♖b5 seems to be the most precise continuation here. After that, all three outcomes are possible.



35.♘f4??

The simple 35.♖xe6 fxe6 36.♘e7† ♔h7 37.♖h3 would put an immediate end to the game. One (albeit big) mistake could trample over all my creative play. *C'est la vie!*

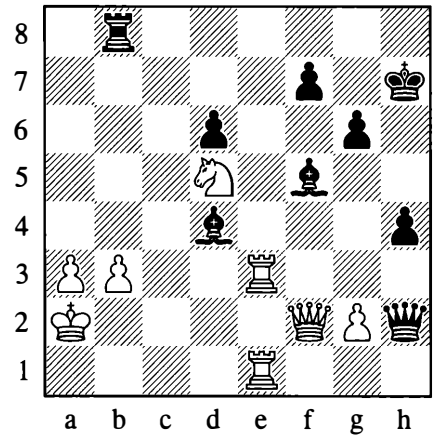
35...♗f5

Black is on track again.

36.♖de3 ♔h7 37.♘d5?!

A blunder, though not a terrible one.

37...♗d4



38.♕g1?

Just an awful move; White loses composure in time trouble.

After 38.♘e7 ♗e6 39.♕c2! ♗xe3 40.♖xe3 ♕f4 41.♖xe6 fxe6 42.♕xg6† ♔h8 43.b4 my opponent could probably hold, despite his oversight.

38...♕xg1 39.♖xg1 ♗xe3 40.♘xe3 ♗e6

The resulting endgame is easily winning for Black. I was not at my most precise in the endgame, but the advantage was too big for it to matter.

41.♘c4 ♗xc4 42.bxc4 g5 43.♖d1 ♖e8 44.a4 ♖e2† 45.♔b3 ♖xg2 46.a5 ♖e2 47.♖xd6 h3 48.a6 h2 49.♖d1 g4

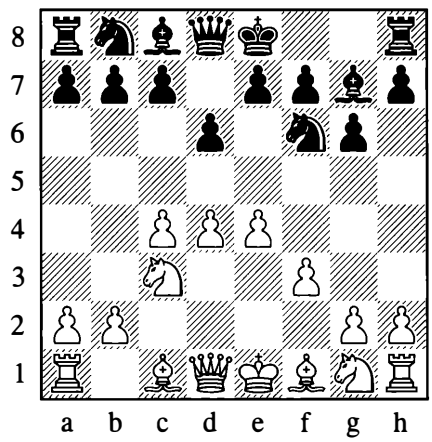
I enjoyed this game very much at the time. I still love it, and even feel somewhat proud of its risky and intuitional sacrificial spirit, and for the imagination I showed.

0–1

Ivery Chighladze – Ilya Smirin

Baku 2009

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3



The Sämisch System, named after German Maestro Fritz Sämisch, who first employed it at a high level. White strengthens the pawn on e4, building a strong pawn centre. About the only serious drawback of this setup was pointed out by a famous admirer of the KID, GM Eduard Gufeld: "Do you like the Sämisch System? Ask the knight on g1." Indeed, this knight is now deprived of its most natural square f3 and has to be developed somewhere else: to e2 (in which case the bishop on f1 will be temporarily shut in) or h3.

5...0–0 6.♗e3 ♘c6

One of many options for Black. I used to play virtually every move – 6...c5, 6...e5, 6...♘bd7, 6...a6 and 6...c6 – but I have to confess that 6...♘c6 is my favourite continuation.

7.♘ge2 a6 8.♕d2 ♗d7

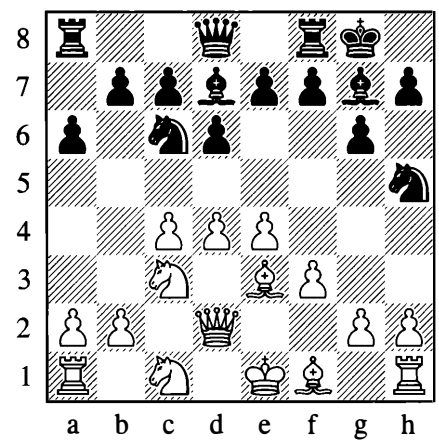
Compared with the usual 8...♖b8, this move makes it less favourable for White to play the nowadays fashionable 9.♖c1 – see the game Postny – Smirin below.

9.♘c1

The standard manoeuvre in such positions. Usually White transfers this knight to b3, develops the bishop to e2, and castles (sometimes queenside). If he manages to do so without concessions, White usually gets better chances in the middlegame.

9.♖c1 b5 10.b3 (if 10.cxb5 axb5 11.♘xb5 ♖xa2 the position would open in Black's favour, who has better development and a great game) 10...bxc4 11.bxc4 ♖b8 12.♘d1 a5 happened in the rapid game Postny – Smirin, Israel 2010, which I managed to win.

9...♘h5!?



I like this move in similar positions. It opens up the g7-bishop, increasing the pressure against the pawn on d4. At the same time, Black is ready to play ...f5 in some lines.

10.♘b3

An important point is that after 10.g4 e5 11.d5? (11.dxe5 ♘xe5 12.♗e2 ♘f6∞) 11...♘d4 Black would obtain a dream position.

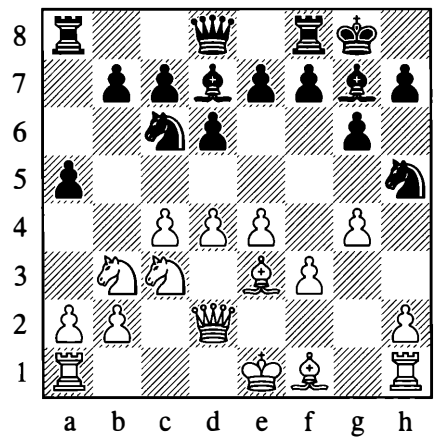
10...a5

A change of plan. Now Black is going to attack the knight on b3 after ...a5-a4. The pawn push ...b7-b5 (the main aim of 7...a6) is

not relevant any more. Note that the rook on a8 is better placed in its initial position rather than on b8.

11.g4

After 11.♖d1 a4 12.♘c1 e5 13.d5 ♘d4 14.♘1e2 ♘xe2 15.♗xe2 ♘f4 16.0–0; (0–1, 42) L. Kaufman – Smirin, Rockville 2013, Black should have continued simply 16...f5, with an ongoing initiative on the kingside.



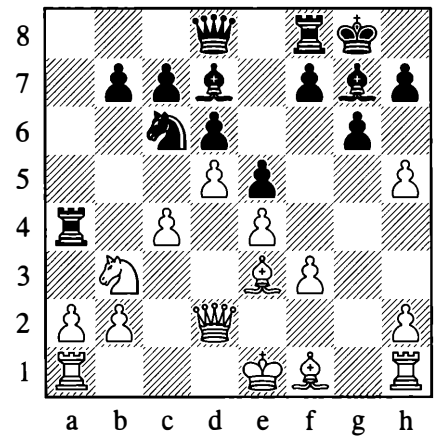
11...a4 12.♘xa4

After 12.♘c1 the brief tactics after 12...e5! would lead to a dream position for Black.

12...♖xa4

Also interesting and perhaps stronger was 12...e5! with complications all over the board, for example: 13.gxh5 (or 13.♘c3 – the best move – 13...exd4 14.♘xd4 ♕h4† 15.♗f2 ♘xd4 16.♕xd4 ♗xd4 17.♗xh4 ♘f4 with full compensation for the pawn in the endgame) 13...exd4 14.♘xd4? (14.♗g5 ♕e8 and White has to give up the knight on a4) 14...♕h4† 15.♗f2 ♘xd4 and Black is close to the win.

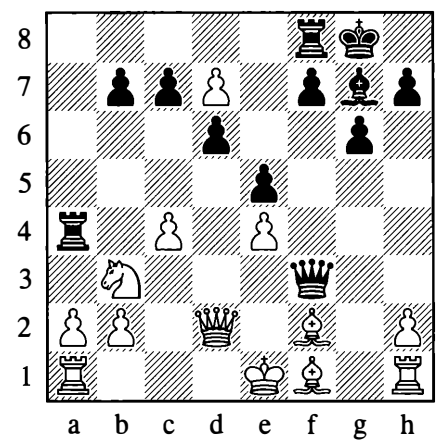
13.gxh5 e5 14.d5



14...♕h4†!?

This was the idea. After the prosaic 14...♘d4 15.♘xd4 exd4 16.♗g5 ♕e8 17.♗d3 Black would simply remain worse – there is not enough play for the missing pawn.

15.♗f2 ♕xh5 16.dxc6 ♕xf3 17.cxd7



17...♕xh1

I declined the obvious 17...♕xe4† 18.♕e2 ♕xh1 because after 19.♗h4 ♖aa8 20.♕g2! ♕xg2 21.♗xg2 White would have a serious advantage – the d7-passer, together with the two bishops, is too much for Black to match. After the move I made an irrational (from both positional and material points of view) situation has arisen.

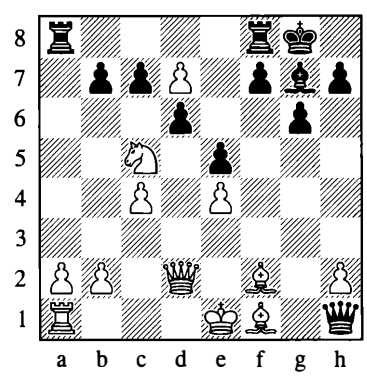
18.♘c5?!

It was hard for my opponent to make the right choice. White has a slight material advantage – two pieces versus rook and pawn, but even more important is that the d7-pawn can be awfully dangerous. On the other hand, White has not finished his piece development yet and his pieces don't coordinate in the best way. Black should be careful with his queen – it is quite active in the corner, but it may still be in trouble in some variations.

The best move in the position seems to be 18.♕d5! centralizing the queen and protecting the pawn on c4. Probably the best Black could do in this case would be: 18...♖d8 19.♕xb7 c5 (19...♗h6!?) 20.♗g3 (or 20.♕d5 ♗h6 21.♗g3 ♕g1 22.♘d2 ♕e3† 23.♗e2 ♖xd7 24.♘f3 with a messy position) 20...♖xc4 21.♔f2 ♕xe4 22.♕xe4 ♖xe4 23.♖d1 White is better in this complex endgame, even though there is a lot of struggle ahead after 23...♗f8 (but not 23...♖xd7?? 24.♘xc5).

18...♖xc4

It was hard to resist the temptation to take a pawn, but much stronger was: 18...♖aa8!



19.♗h4 dxc5 20.d8=♕ ♖fxd8 21.♗xd8 ♕xe4† 22.♗e2 ♕h1† 23.♗f1 ♗h6 24.♕xh6 ♖xd8 and Black is obviously better.

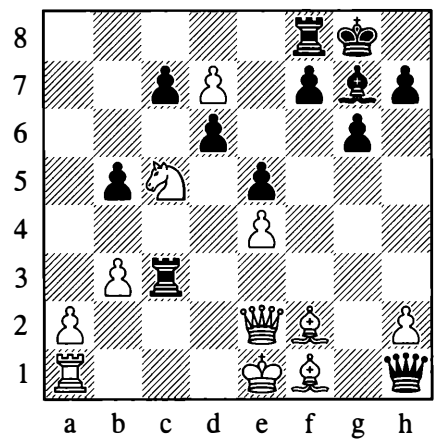
19.0–0–0 ♕xh2 20.♘d3 ♗h6 21.♗e3 ♗xe3 22.♕xe3 ♖xa2 23.♔b1 ♖fa8 24.d8=♕† ♖xd8 25.♖d2 (25.♔xa2? ♕c2–+) 25...♕h1 26.♔xa2 ♖a8† 27.♔b3 ♕xf1 with a material edge (four pawns for the knight) and the initiative.

19.♕e2 b5 20.b3

The best move in the position.

20...♖c3

Not falling into the trap: 20...♖xc5? 21.♗xc5 dxc5 22.0–0–0 ♖d8 23.♗h3 and the black queen is gone. At the same time the black rook starts a remarkable slalom.

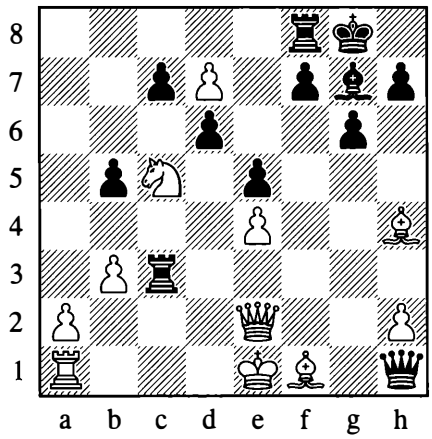


21.♗h4?

Oops, wrong idea! White had to make a move with the knight:

21.♘d3 f5 22.♗h4 ♖c2!? (or 22...fxe4 23.♘f2 ♕xh2 24.d8=♕ ♖xd8 25.♗xd8 with a very messy position and a possible perpetual after: 25...♗h6 26.♕g4 ♗d2†! 27.♔xd2 ♕xf2† 28.♔xc3 b4† 29.♔xb4 ♕c5† 30.♔a4 ♕a7† 31.♔b5 ♕b6† 32.♔a4 ♕a7†) 23.♕xc2 ♕xe4† 24.♔d1 ♕xh4 25.♖b1 (25.♕xc7? e4) 25...♕d4, and nothing is clear yet.

21.♘b7 ♗f6 22.♔d1 ♖f3 23.♔c2 leads to quite a wild positon, which I suspect is easier to handle with Black over the board.



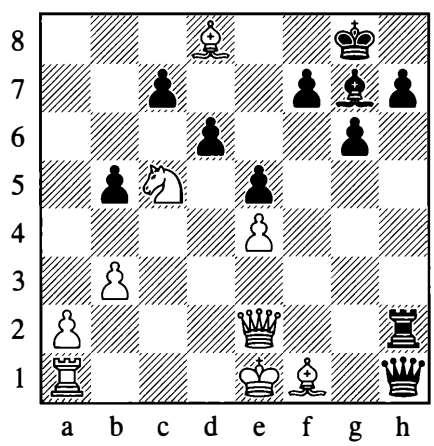
21...♖h3!

The slalom continues!

22.d8=♕?

Chigladze loses control over the game. After the only continuation 22.♗g3 ♖xg3 23.hxg3 dxc5 24.♖d1 ♖d8 25.♕g2 ♕xg2 26.♗xg2 b4 it would not be an easy task for Black to convert the two extra pawns into a win. Indeed, in the resulting endgame the opposite-coloured bishops plus the strong passer on d7 give White reasonable drawing chances.

22...♖xd8 23.♗xd8 ♖xh2!

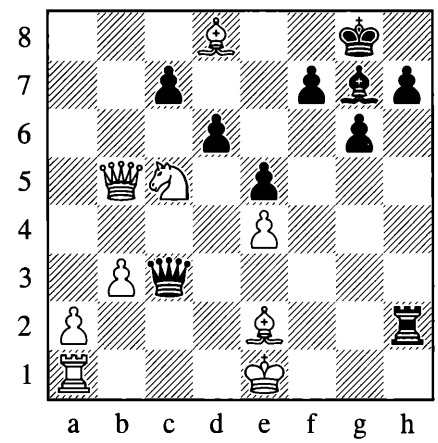


The rook slalom has been completed! It is hard to find another 25-move game in which a rook has travelled a similar route (a8-a4-c4-c3-h3-h2) and, together with a queen on h1(!), created a mating attack against the white king. The two extra pieces don't help in this situation.

24.♕xb5

This loses immediately, but even after the most resilient 24.♕g4 dxc5 25.0–0–0 ♖xa2 26.♗e2 ♕h2 27.♖d2 h5 28.♕d7 ♕f4! 29.♗xc7 ♗h6 White is absolutely helpless.

24...♕f3 25.♗e2 ♕c3†



After 26.♔d1 ♕xa1† 27.♔c2 ♕xa2† 28.♔c3 ♖xe2 almost all White's pieces disappear from the board, so my opponent resigned.

0–1

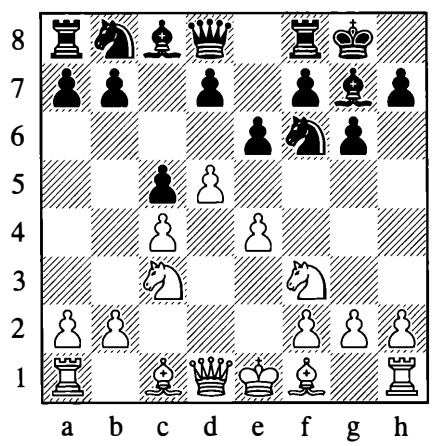
So although the rook did its job, it survived till the end. It has no such luck in the next game, where a runaway rook creates weaknesses in the white camp, sharpening the game, before it ends with a surprising little tactic.

Petr Haba – Ilya Smirin

Polanica Zdroj 1989

This game was played in a tournament in Polanica Zdroj, Poland in memory of the outstanding player Akiba Rubinstein. In this tournament I made my second and final norm to obtain the title of International Grandmaster. My first norm came in the Rilton Cup tournament in Sweden (1988/89). The Rilton Cup was my first tournament outside of the USSR (at the age of nearly 21) and my first possibility to make the norm. Polanica Zdroj was my second chance.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.e4 0–0 6.♘f3 e6



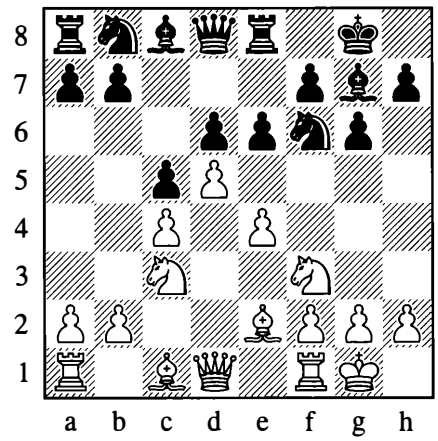
7.♗e2

I consider 7.♗d3 to be a more unpleasant continuation for Black, but this is a subjective opinion, of course.

7...d6 8.0–0 ♖e8

In the late 1980s I loved to play like this: to postpone the exchange on d5 for a few moves.

I wanted to avoid the position after 8...exd5 9.exd5!? (9.cxd5 ♖e8) 9...♖e8 10.♗d3, considering it to be slightly passive for Black. Again, that's my personal taste – the position is perfectly playable after 10...♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♘bd7 13.♕d1 etc.



9.♘d2

The most popular and ambitious move – White wants to take on d5 with the c-pawn after an eventual ...e6xd5. It has an obvious drawback though – the bishop on c1 is temporarily shut in by the knight.

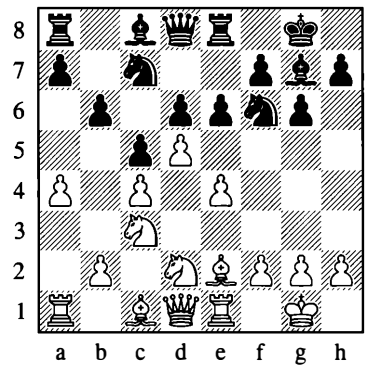
9.h3 exd5 10.exd5 ♗f5 11.♗d3 ♘e4 12.♘xe4 ♗xe4 has been played a few dozen times and leads to approximate equality; after exchanges it's easier for Black to play – the opponent's space advantage is less significant.

9.dxe6 is another plan: after 9...♗xe6 10.♗f4 ♘c6 11.♗xd6 ♘d4 (11...♕a5!? is the riskier option) 12.e5 ♘d7 13.♘xd4 cxd4 14.♕xd4 ♘xe5 15.♗xe5 ♕xd4 16.♗xd4 ♗xd4 17.♖ac1 ♖ad8 Black has good compensation for the pawn in the endgame. The vast majority of such games have ended peacefully.

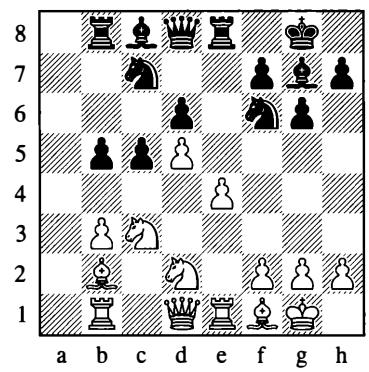
9...♘a6 10.f4

Here we see another reason for Black to delay the capture ...exd5: now 10.f3 with the idea of playing ♘c4 makes no sense – the c4-square is still occupied by the white pawn.

A well-known game between Smyslov and Polugaevsky continued: 10.♖e1 ♘c7 11.a4 b6



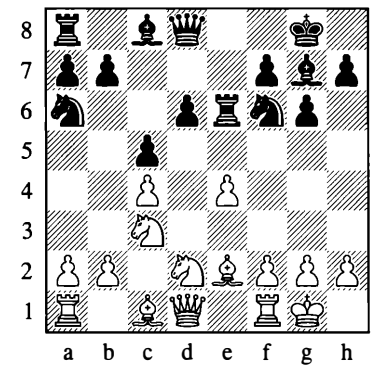
12.♖b1 ♖b8 13.b3 a6 14.♗b2 exd5 All the preparatory moves have been made, and the time has come for this exchange. 15.cxd5 b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.♗f1



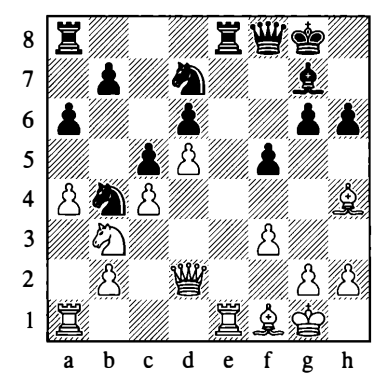
17...♘g4! 18.♘f3 f5 19.h3 ♘e5 20.♘xe5 ♗xe5 21.exf5 ♗xf5 22.♗d3 ♕f6 and Black won; (0–1, 38) Smyslov – Polugaevsky, Riga 1975.

This game was played in the USSR Team Championship in the famous match between the Russian Federation and Moscow, which ended with the score 8½–½ in favour of the former – an incredible result considering that the two teams were roughly equal in strength. After this match ex-World Champion Vassily Smyslov made his famous statement: "The most important thing now is to save the people." And in reference to his game with Polugaevsky: "I got excited, overestimated my position. I should have continued 3.♘f3" (after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5).

Also possible is: 10.dxe6 ♖xe6!?



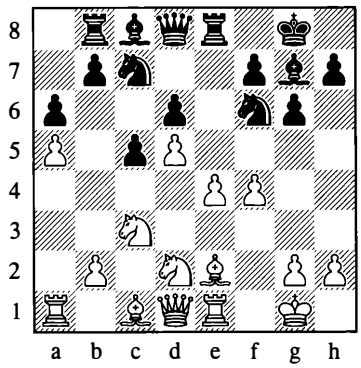
This was tested in one of my games: 11.f3 ♘b4 12.♘b3 ♗d7 13.♗e3 a6 14.a4 ♗c6 The defects of Black's pawn structure are compensated for by the good position of his pieces. 15.♕d2 ♘d7 16.♖fe1 f5 17.♗g5 ♕f8 18.♘d5 ♗xd5 19.exd5 ♖ee8 20.♗f1 h6 21.♗h4



21...g5 22.♗f2 ♗e5 23.a5 ♕f6 with better chances for Black; (0–1, 51) Bandza – Smirin, Dortmund 1990.

10...♘c7 11.a4 exd5

Two years before the game against Haba, I played the following interesting encounter: 11...♖b8 12.♖e1 exd5 13.cxd5 a6 14.a5



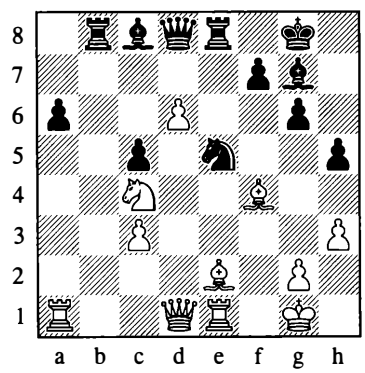
14...h5?!

An insolent kind of move, with the idea of the knight jumping to g4.

The simple 14...♗d7 15.♗f3 ♗b5!? with good play was better – the d2-knight is still deprived of the possibility of moving to c4.

15.h3 b5 16.axb6 ♖xb6 17.♗f3?

Correct was: 17.♘c4 ♖b8 (17...♖b4? 18.e5 dxe5 19.d6 ♘b5 [19...exf4 20.dxc7 ♕xc7 21.♕d6±] 20.fxe5, with a big advantage) 18.e5 dxe5 19.d6 ♘b5 20.fxe5 ♘xc3 21.bxc3 ♘d7 22.♗f4 ♘xe5

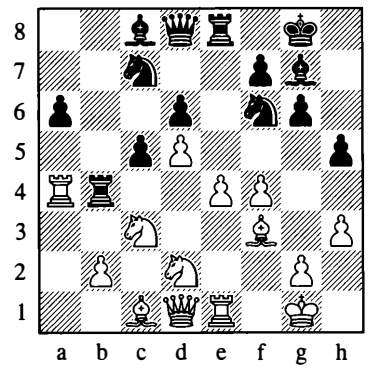


23.♕d2! White's activity and strong pawn on d6 provide at least enough compensation for the minimal material deficit.

17...♖b4!

Suddenly White runs out of active ideas.

18.♖a4?



18...♘fxd5!

A nice blow. Black wins a pawn because the white queen is overloaded.

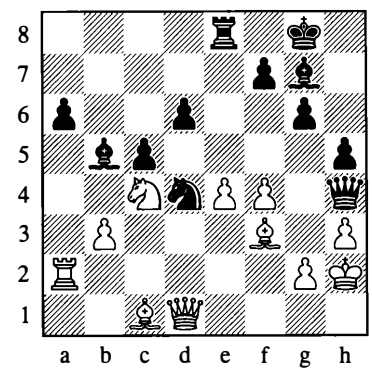
19.♘xd5

Or 19.exd5 ♖xe1† 20.♕xe1 ♗xc3 21.♖xb4 ♗xb4 also leaves Black a pawn up.

19...♘xd5 20.♖xb4 ♘xb4 21.♘c4 ♗e6 22.♘e3

Of course 22.♘xd6?? fails to 22...♗d4†.

22...♕h4 23.♖e2 ♗d7!? 24.♘c4 ♗b5 25.b3 ♘c6 26.♖a2 ♘d4 27.♔h2



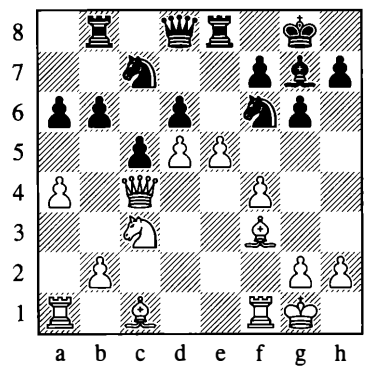
27...♘xf3† 28.♕xf3 ♕e1 29.♖c2 ♗xc4 30.♖xc4 ♗d4

0–1 Basin – Smirin, Minsk 1987.

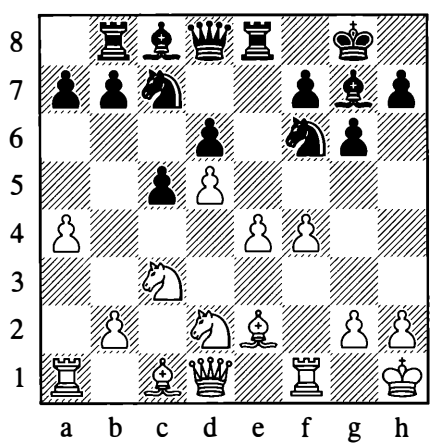
12.cxd5 ♖b8 13.♔h1

The position is very double-edged, but I like Black's chances here – I believe that the white pieces don't provide sufficient support for his advanced pawn centre.

If 13.♗f3, protecting the e4-pawn and thus preparing the key move ♘c4, I would probably reply with: 13...b6 (13...a6?! 14.♘c4 b5 15.axb5 axb5 16.♘xd6 ♕xd6 17.e5 ♕d8 18.d6, with a strong initiative for White) 14.♘c4 ♗a6 15.♕b3 ♗xc4 16.♕xc4 a6 This is a kind of dream position for Black in this structure – all his pieces are active and if White tries a typical breakthrough with: 17.e5



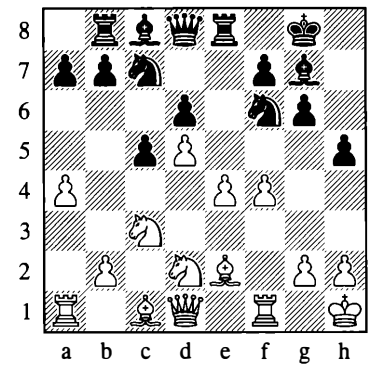
Black would answer with the intermediate 17...b5! 18.axb5 axb5 19.♕e2 b4, with an obvious advantage.



13...a6

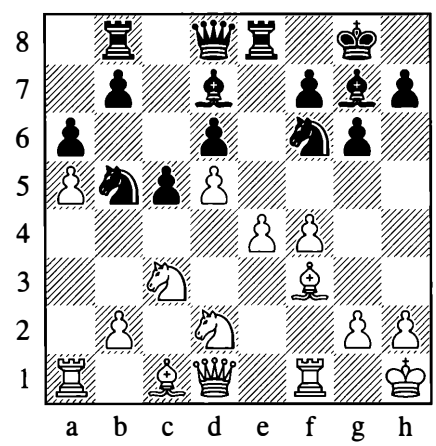
The game with Basin left pleasant memories, so in a different game I tried the idea with ...h7-h5 once more. But this time my opponent was from a much higher weight category:

13...h5?



14.f5! Immediately using the weakening of the kingside created by Black's previous move. 14...a6 15.a5 gxf5?! 16.♗xh5 ♘b5 17.exf5 ♖e5 18.♗f3 ♖xf5 19.♘c4 And it's hard to look at Black's position without crying; (1–0, 29) M. Gurevich – Smirin, Moscow 1988.

14.a5 ♗d7 15.♗f3 ♘b5

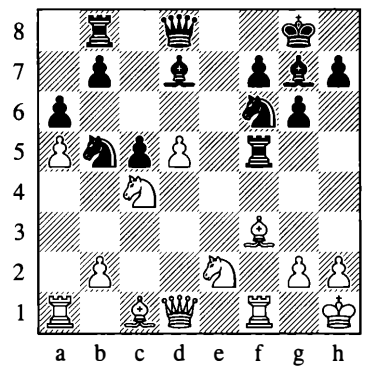


Again, as we saw in some lines above, all Black's pieces are actively involved in the battle, whereas White has not completed his development yet. His next move is a natural attempt to change the unfavourable course of the game. But Black is ready for that.

16.e5 dxe5 17.fxe5 ♖xe5 18.♘c4 ♖f5 19.♘e3

Trying to hunt down the rook on f5.

19.♘e2, with the same idea, was no better due to:

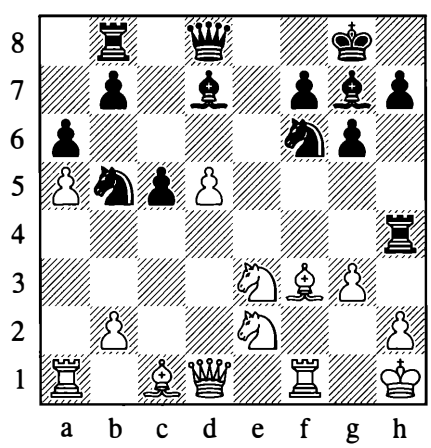


19...♘h5 (I was surprised to find that this position had occurred in a recent game between two top-ten players: 19...♖xf3 Actually the opening was played slightly differently, and this was the 21st move. 20.gxf3 ♗h3 21.♖e1 ♕xd5 22.♘f4 ♕xd1 23.♖xd1 ♗d7 24.♗e3 ♗c6, with better prospects for Black in the endgame, though Nakamura – Vachier-Lagrave, London 2015, was later drawn.) 20.♗e3 ♘d4! 21.♘xd4 cxd4 Black is better, in particular because 22.♗xd4? loses material after: 22...♕h4 23.♗xg7 ♘g3† 24.♔g1 ♘xf1

19...♖f4 20.♘e2 ♖h4!

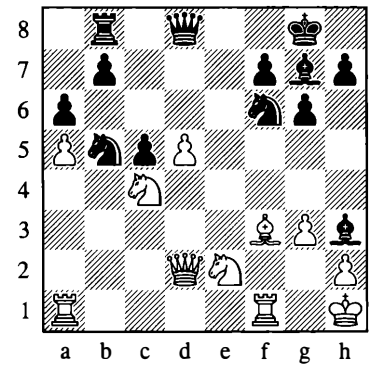
Provoking the next move, which compromises the white king's pawn shelter.

21.g3



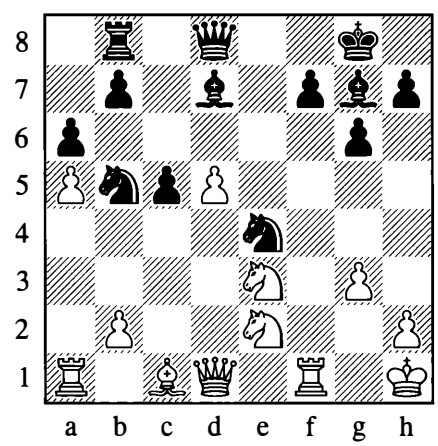
21...♖e4!?

Also 21...♖b4 22.♗d2 ♖xb2 23.♘c4 ♖xd2 24.♕xd2 ♗h3



with a big advantage, was a good version of the exchange sacrifice as well. But instead I used my chance to follow in the footsteps of my favourite player, Mikhail Tal, at such an advanced stage of the game. I was not 100 per cent sure about it, but it seemed to me that I had seen exactly the same position in a game of Tal's while reading a book I love very much – *Vogon Ataki* by Tal and Damsky. After returning home, I discovered I was right!

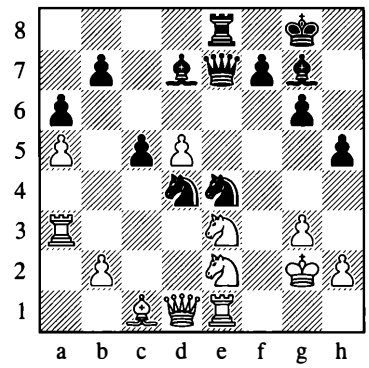
22.♗xe4 ♘xe4



23.♘c4

Here my opponent deviated from 23.♘f4, which happened in the above mentioned game:

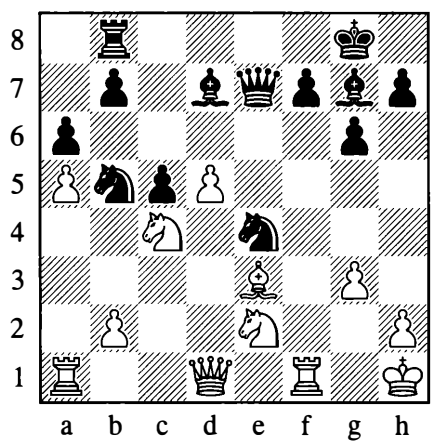
23...♘d4 24.♔g2 ♕e7 (24...♗b5! 25.♖e1 ♕d7 26.♖a3 ♖e8 was even stronger) 25.♖e1 h5 26.♖a3 ♖e8 27.♘e2? (correct was 27.♘c4)



27...♗h3†! 28.♔xh3 ♘g5† 0–1; Ufimtsev – Tal, USSR 1967.

23...♕e7 24.♗e3?

White's position is bad, no doubt about it: his king is weak and Black's pieces control almost the entire board. Still after the best try 24.♘f4 ♘d4 25.♗e3 he could resist for a while.



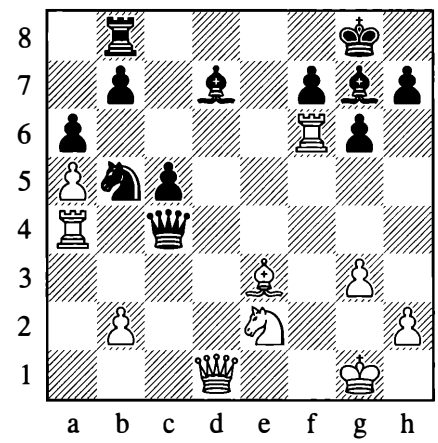
24...♘f6?

A sloppy move. 24...♘ed6 25.♘xd6 ♕xe3 26.♘xb5 ♗xb5 would win easily.

25.♔g1 ♕e4 26.♖f4 ♕xd5 27.♖xf6 ♕xc4 28.♖a4?

Haba did not see the tactical refutation.

The correct 28.♖f4 ♕e6 29.♗xc5 ♖e8 30.♖f2 ♗c6 31.♕d3! ♗xb2 32.♖af1 would keep White's hopes alive despite being much worse – just look at the bishop on c6 and the h1-a8 diagonal.



28...♘c3!

Too many white pieces are hanging – a decisive loss of material is unavoidable.

29.♕xd7 ♘xa4 30.♖f4 ♕xe2 31.♕xf7† ♔h8 32.♖e4

Many roads lead to Rome – for instance 32...♖f8 33.♖e8 ♕xe3†. White resigned without waiting for Black's 32nd move.

0–1

Chapter 8

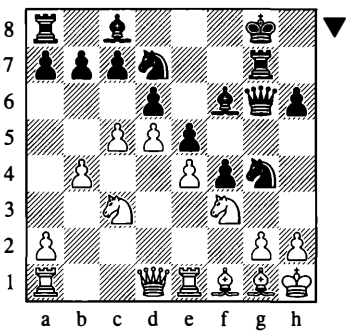
Fighting for the Initiative



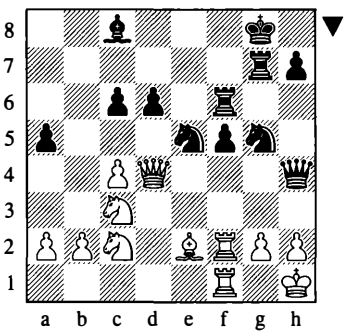
Never end the fight!

Test yourself against the book

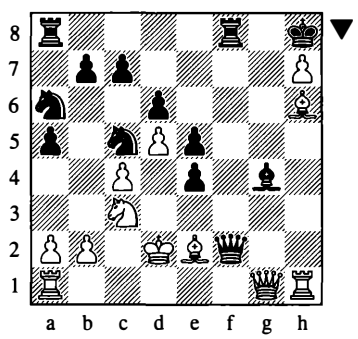
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



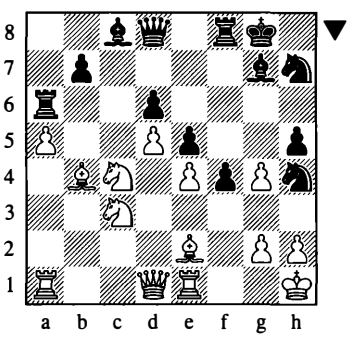
How should Black organize his pieces? (see page 239)



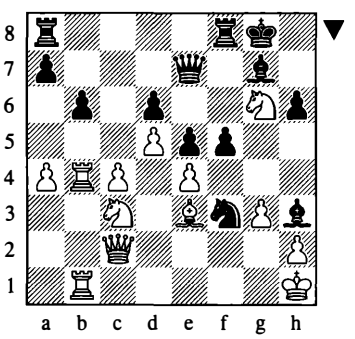
Traditional King's Indian magic! (see page 261)



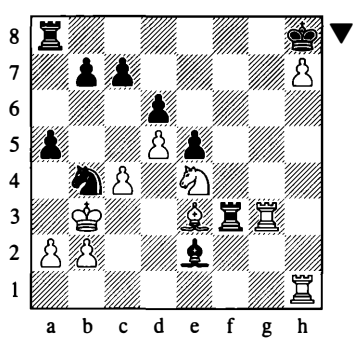
What is the most energetic continuation? (see page 236)



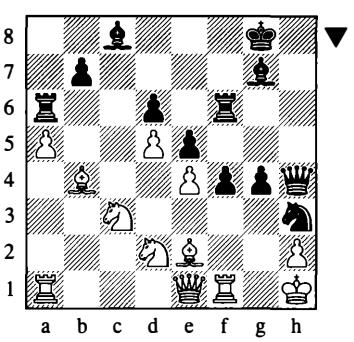
How does a King's Indian Warrior play such a position? (see page 246)



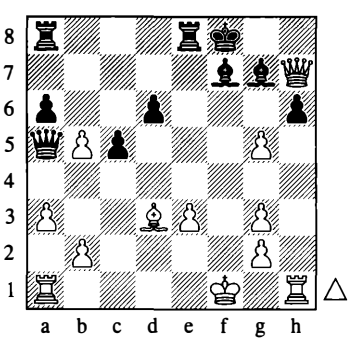
Should the queen go to f6 or f7? (see page 264)



A bit later: what is the most energetic continuation? (see page 236)



A difficult tactical moment. How does the attack win? (see page 248)



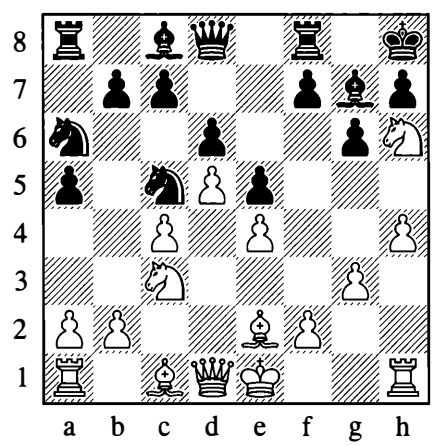
How should White have continued the attack? (see page 271)

One of the most important aspects of the King's Indian is the fight for the initiative. White has more space from the start, and if nothing happens to combat this, then Black can easily find himself with his back against the wall. But as we have already seen, the King's Indian has great dynamic potential. Black seeks counterplay with all the themes we have already examined and more, and is always looking for a way to grab the initiative. In the King's Indian this really is a key factor. The games in this chapter show a brutal fight for the initiative at all costs. Often pieces are sacrificed simply to gain time. At other times it is just an attitude all the way through the game, as in the following recent game.

Abhijeet Gupta – Kaido Kulaots

Cappelle-la-Grande 2015

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.h3 e5 7.d5 ♘h5 8.g3 a5 9.♘h2 ♘a6 10.♗e2 ♘f6 11.♘g4 ♘d7 12.♘h6† ♔h8 13.h4 ♘dc5



14.g4

I am not sure this is the best move here.

14.h5 feels a bit more critical, but Black's position has plenty of resources too. For example: 14...g5 15.♘g4 f5 16.exf5 ♗xf5 17.h6 ♗f6 18.♗e3 ♗e7 19.♔f1 ♕e8 20.♔g1 ♕g6, and Black was fine in Wimmer – Cillóniz Razzeto, email 2014.

14...f5! 15.h5

This feels risky, but is quite interesting.

After the less aggressive 15.gxf5 gxf5 16.♗g5 Black is fine, but not more.

15...fxe4! 16.hxg6 ♕f6 17.♘f7†?!

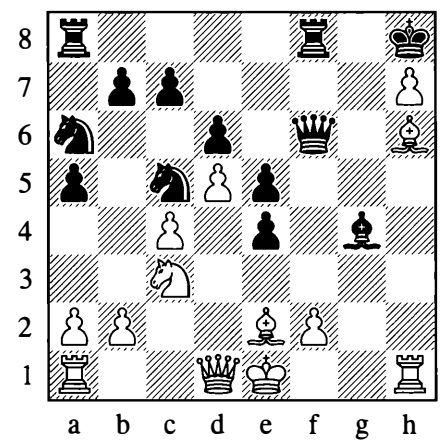
After this Black is able to set White a good deal of problems.

17.♘f5 ♕xg6 18.♘h4 ♕f7 19.♗e3 with an unclear game was more prudent.

17...♔g8 18.♘h6† ♗xh6!

No draw today.

19.gxh7† ♔h8 20.♗xh6 ♗xg4!



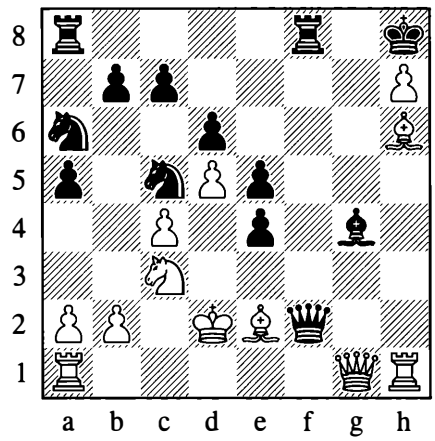
Threatening a big check on d3.

21.♔d2 ♕xf2 22.♕g1?

This is the only serious mistake in the game.

22.♗e3! was necessary. White will just about be able to hold, based on the following variation: 22...♗xe2 23.♕xe2 ♕xe2† 24.♔xe2 ♖f7

25.♖ag1 ♖xh7 26.♖xh7† ♔xh7 27.♖h1† ♔g7 28.♖g1† ♔f7 29.♖f1† ♔e8 30.♖h1! and Black cannot make meaningful progress.



22...e3†!

It feels as though Gupta had overlooked this combination.

23.♗xe3

After 23.♔c1 ♕xg1† 24.♖xg1 ♗xe2 25.♗xf8 (25.♘xe2? ♖f2–+) 25...♘d3† 26.♔b1 ♗h5∓ White is also in an unpleasant position.

23...♘e4†! 24.♔c2

Or 24.♘xe4? ♕xe2† 25.♔c3 ♘b4 leads directly to mate.

24...♘b4† 25.♔b3 ♕xg1 26.♖axg1 ♗xe2 27.♘xe4

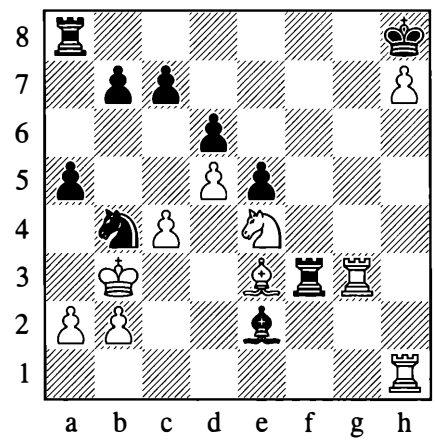
White is drifting into a lost position, but his task was already difficult.

27.♘xe2? ♖f3 loses on the spot, and after 27.♖g8† ♖xg8 28.hxg8=♕† ♔xg8 29.♘xe2 ♖f8∓ Black will definitely be playing for a win in the endgame with an extra pawn. Still, this might have been the best chance.

27...♖f3 28.♖g3?

The final error.

28.♔a4 was necessary, leading to a long variation: 28...♗xc4 29.♖g8† ♖xg8 30.hxg8=♗† ♔xg8 31.♖g1† ♔f8 32.♗h6† ♔e8 33.♘d2 ♖h3 34.♖g8† ♔f7 35.♖g7† ♔f6 36.♘e4† ♔f5 37.♘g3† ♖xg3 38.♖xg3 ♗xa2∓ Black is playing for a win with the three pawns for the exchange, but White has some drawing chances too.



28...b5!

Breaking down the remains of the white position.

After 28...♖af8 29.a3 ♘a6 30.♖hg1, or any other move that failed to fight for the initiative, White would not be worse.

29.♔c3

Black wins in all lines. Also after 29.cxb5 ♘xd5 30.♖e1 ♖xg3 31.♘xg3 ♗xb5 and 29.♖xf3 bxc4†.

29...bxc4 30.♔d2 ♖xg3 31.♘xg3 ♗f3

Black has a winning endgame, but it took him an additional 52 moves to convert it.

...0–1

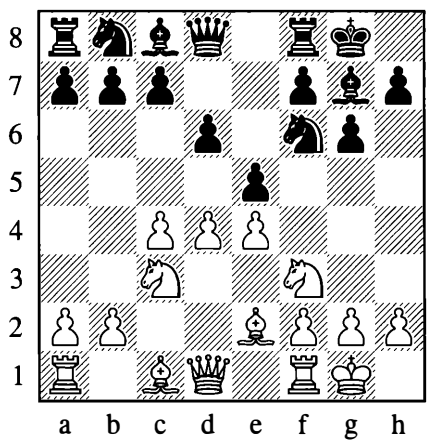
My Games

Viktor Korchnoi – Ilya Smirin

Dresden 1998

This game remains very special for me – my first encounter with the great Viktor Korchnoi, one of my chess heroes.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♘f3 e5 7.0–0



7...♘a6

I did not want to play 7...♘c6 against "Viktor the Terrible". He had won quite a few very convincing games in the line 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.♗e3 and I was impressed by his handling of the positions that arise.

8.♗e3 ♘g4 9.♗g5 ♕e8 10.d5

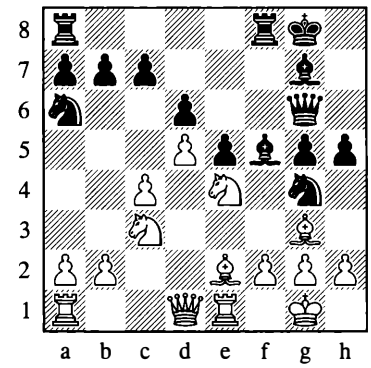
The main line here goes 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.h3, but at the end of the 20th century Korchnoi followed modern theory less strictly, and often liked to improvise over the board.

10...f5 11.♘d2

Another path is: 11.♘e1 ♘f6 12.f3 h6 13.♗d2 g5 14.♘d3 ♕g6 15.♘f2 f4 16.b4 h5 In G. Nikolic – Antic, Tivat 1995, Black won by a direct mating attack.

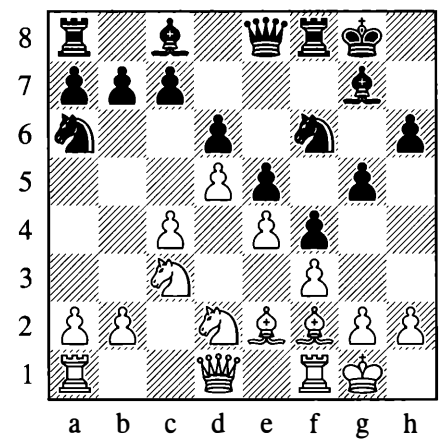
11...h6 12.♗h4 g5 13.♗g3 ♘f6

After: 13...h5 14.exf5 ♗xf5 (14...♘f6 15.h4) 15.♘de4 ♕g6 16.♖e1!



Black would face an unpleasant problem – his kingside activity has come to a stop and he is just left with weaknesses.

14.f3 f4 15.♗f2



So the picture became clear – attacks on opposite wings. My formidable opponent was a great master in such positions as White, and I often like to play them with the black pieces.

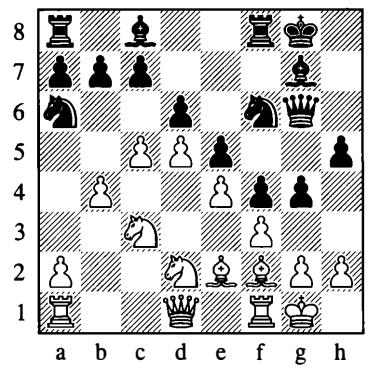
15...♕g6

I had preferred this move as a way to prepare the ...g5-g4 push rather than 15...h5, which would also lead to interesting play. For instance: 16.b4!? g4

16...♘xb4 17.c5, with an overwhelming position for only a pawn.

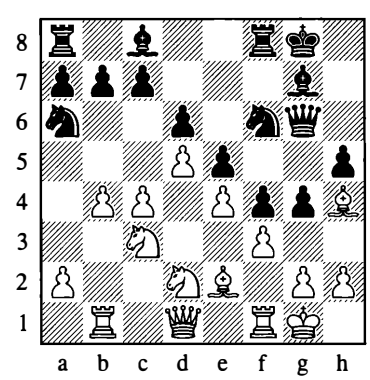
17.♖b1

The more active option is: 17.c5 ♕g6



18.c6! (18.♗h4 ♘xb4 19.cxd6 cxd6 20.♘c4 ♘e8 and Black looks OK) This may lead after: 18...g3 19.♗e1 ♕g5 20.h3 ♕h4 to a typical sharp KID position, in which Black's attack against the white king looks much slower than White's activity on the opposite side of the board. However, after the possible continuation: 21.cxb7 ♗xb7 (21...♗xh3? 22.gxh3 ♕xh3 23.♖f2 gxf2† 24.♗xf2+–) 22.♖b1 ♘b8 23.♘c4 ♗c8 24.♖b2 ♘h7 Black transfers the knight to g5 and, after a piece sacrifice on h3 at the appropriate moment, would have very dangerous threats.

17...♕g6 18.♗h4



18...gxf3 19.♗xf3 ♘g4 20.♕e2 ♗f6 21.♗xf6 ♖xf6 22.c5 ♘e3 23.♖fc1

With a complex position.

16.♔h1!

The first in a chain of deep prophylactic moves.

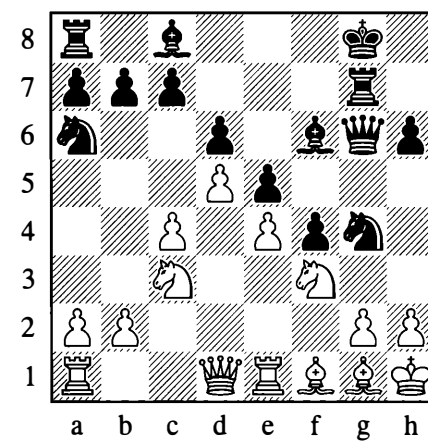
16...g4

Again, 16...h5 17.♖b1 g4 18.♗h4 was not to my taste. I wanted to leave the h5-square vacant for a knight or queen, just in case.

17.fxg4 ♘xg4 18.♗g1 ♖f7 19.♘f3

Another option was the pawn sacrifice 19.b4!? ♘xb4 20.c5, but it seems that after 20...♗f8 Black does not stand badly at all.

19...♗f6 20.♖e1! ♖g7 21.♗f1



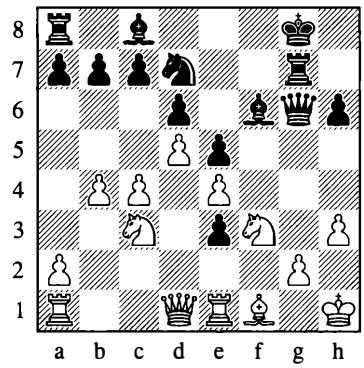
Korchnoi made the last few moves (and good ones, I should say) very quickly, and here he looked at me with a laugh, as if saying: "Well, young man [this is how he referred to me immediately after the game], who are you going to attack? And how?"

21...♘c5 22.b4

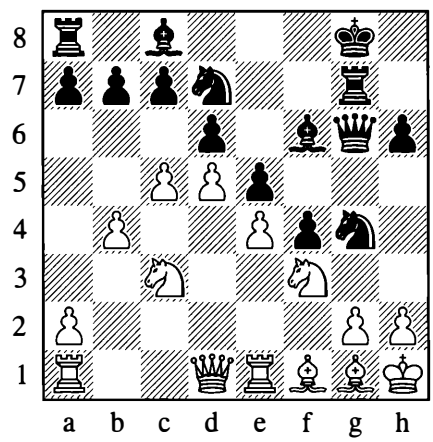
Or 22.h3 ♘e3 23.♗xe3 fxe3 24.♖xe3 a5!, and in a practical game I would say that the strong knight on c5, the initiative against White's king on the g-file, and the bishop pair outweigh the missing pawn.

22...♘d7 23.c5

Perhaps more precise was: 23.h3 ♘e3 24.♗xe3 fxe3



25.♖xe3 ♗e7 (with the idea ...♘d7-f6-h5) 26.c5! ♘f6!? (26...dxc5 27.♘b5 ♕b6 28.bxc5 and White has an edge) 27.♕c2 ♘h5 and nothing is clear.



23...♗d8!

Probably the hardest move for me to find in the game. It has two main goals: vacating the f6-square for the knight on d7, and protecting the weakest link in the black camp – the pawn on c7. From f6 the knight will continue to h5 and sacrifice itself on g3, followed by a mating attack with ...♕h5† (see annotations to Black's 24th move).

23...♗e7 24.♘b5 is what I was avoiding.

24.h3

During the game I was very surprised by the fact that Viktor spent more than an hour on this move! I was expecting it, and believed this move to be the most natural – and almost only – one.

Such variations as 24.♖b1 ♘df6 25.♖b3 ♘h5 26.♘b5 ♘g3† 27.hxg3 fxg3 28.♗e3 ♗g5 29.♔g1 ♕h5–+ cannot inspire White.

24...♘e3?!

I made this move instantly, within a few seconds (after such lengthy thought by Korchnoi). I thought it was forced because of: 24...♘gf6 25.♘h4

After 25.♖c1 ♘h5 26.♗f2 ♘df6 27.♖c2 ♘g3† 28.♗xg3 ♕xg3 Black's chances should be preferred – the dark squares around White's king are weak, and White's dark-squared bishop is gone.

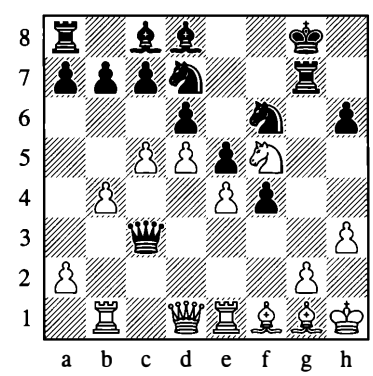
25...♕g3 26.♘f5?!

And I hadn't noticed, that:

26...♕xc3

is possible, and after:

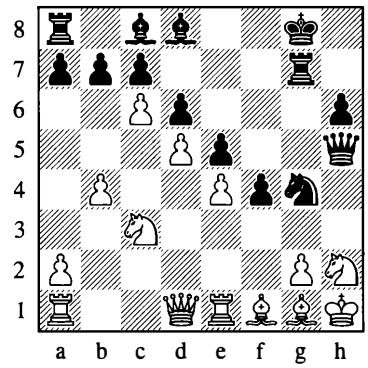
27.♖b1



27...♘xc5! 28.bxc5 ♗xf5 29.exf5 b6

Black has an extra pawn and the advantage.

A nice draw could be a result of: 24...♘df6 25.hxg4 (25.♘h4 ♘h5! 26.♕xg4 ♘g3† 27.♔h2 ♕f7 28.♕f3 ♗xh4∓) 25...♘xg4 26.c6 (26.♘h2? ♗h4–+) 26...♕h5† 27.♘h2

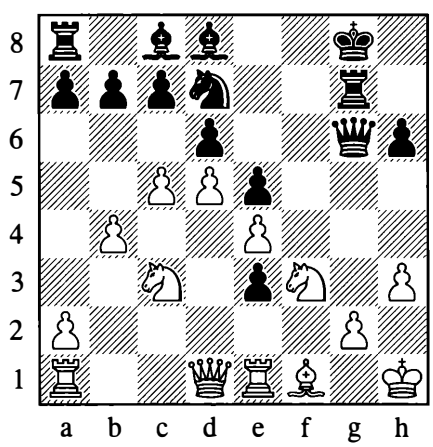


27...♕xh2†! 28.♗xh2 ♘f2† 29.♔g1 ♘h3† 30.♔h1 ♘f2† So now I understand why Viktor thought for so long!

25.♗xe3

Korchnoi looked at me somewhat angrily (he had thought for so long and I had replied immediately and quite weakly) and took my knight.

25...fxe3



26.c6?!

He played this quickly as I remember.

After the simple 26.♖xe3 ♘f6 27.♕b3 ♘h5 28.♘e2 I doubt Black would have sufficient play for the pawn, although the position remains tense.

26...♘f6 27.cxb7

Again, 27.♖xe3 was better.

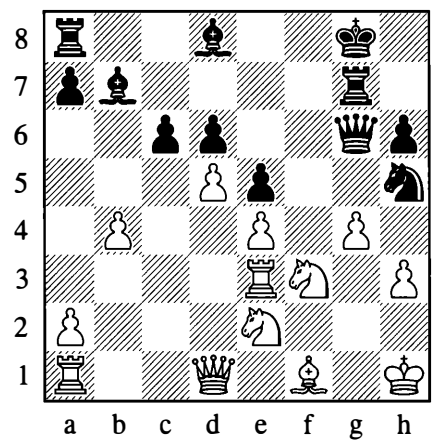
27...♗xb7 28.♖xe3 ♘h5 29.♘e2

At this point Viktor Lvovich was already in serious time trouble, and in such a sharp position that is a very serious factor.

29...c6!?

Also possible was 29...♗a6 30.g4 ♗xe2 31.♗xe2 ♘f4 with good play (the knight on f4 is terrific), but in White's time trouble I wanted to open up both black bishops. The nice square b6 is available for the bishop now. From a practical point of view, I believe the move I made was the best one.

30.g4!



Absolutely the correct decision. White eliminates the pressure on the g-pawn, simultaneously attacking the knight. This is more important than the weakening of the white king's pawn cover.

30...cxd5

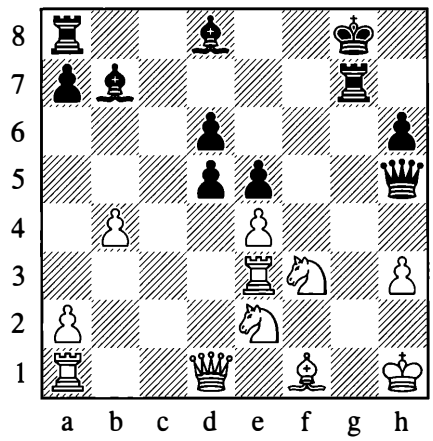
This sacrifice was asked for, but a subtler version of it would be:

30...♗b6! 31.gxh5

31.dxc6 ♗xc6 32.♕c2 ♗xe3 33.♕xc6 ♖f8 34.♘h4 ♕g5 35.♘f5 ♖xf5 36.exf5 ♘f6 with a great position.

31...♕xh5 32.dxc6 ♗xc6 33.♕b3† ♔h8
Black is more than OK. For example:
34.♖c1 ♗b5 35.♘fg1 ♗xe3 36.♕xe3 ♖ag8
White, with his passive pieces, is in trouble.

31.gxh5 ♕xh5



32.♘fg1?

The only serious mistake by Korchnoi in the game, but already the decisive one! The outstanding defender quickly spotted the right idea – to prepare ♖e3-g3 – but in intense *zeitnot* he could not find the correct way. Indeed, to find under any circumstances the only right move, 32.♘h2!, was almost impossible. It seems that White would hold the advantage in this case!

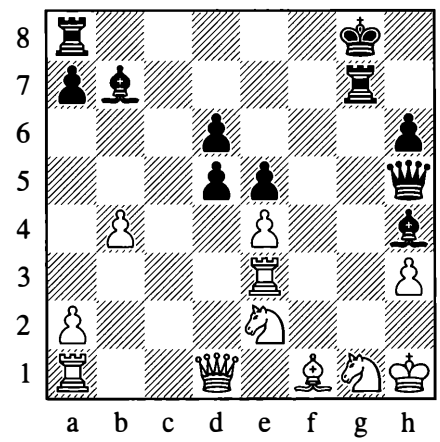
There are variations like:

32...♕h4 33.♕b3! ♔h8 (33...♗b6 34.♖g3 ♕xe4†? 35.♗g2 ♕xe2 36.♗xd5†+–) 34.♗g2 ♖xg2 35.♔xg2 d4 36.♖f1! ♗b6 37.♖g3 ♕xe4† 38.♘f3 ♕xe2† 39.♖f2 ♗xf3† 40.♖gxf3 ♕e4 41.♔h2 d5 42.♕a4!+–

Or: 32...♗h4 33.exd5 ♖f8 34.♕b3 ♕g6 (34...e4 35.♘g4!+– This is a huge difference – see the variations after the 33rd move below) 35.♖f3
They both do not look good for Black.

Probably the best continuation would be 32...d4 33.♖g3 ♗xe4† 34.♗g2 ♖xg3 35.♘xg3 ♗xg2† 36.♔xg2 ♕xd1 37.♖xd1 ♖c8 with good chances to draw, although White is the stronger side here.

32...♗h4!



33.♘f3?

After 33.exd5 ♖f8 34.♕b3 e4 Black's assault is irresistible. White does not have the resource ♘h2-g4 and this detail proves to be decisive – 35.♖d1 ♕g6.

Even after the most stubborn computer defence: 33.♕b3 ♔h8 34.exd5 ♖ag8 All Black's pieces are in the attack! 35.♖d1 ♗f2 36.♖f3 ♗xg1 37.♘g3 ♖xg3 38.♖xg3 ♖xg3 39.♕xg3 ♕xd1 40.♔xg1 ♕xd5 41.a4 ♕d4† 42.♕f2 ♕xf2† 43.♔xf2 ♔g7 44.♔e3 d5 Black wins in the endgame. Still, all this would have had to be found over the board, whereas now Black's task is easy.

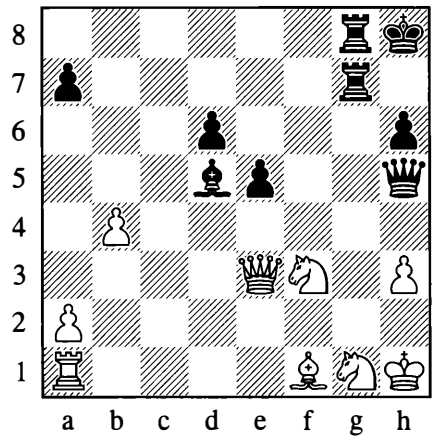
33...♗f2

Now it became evident that Black is winning.

34.♕b3 ♔h8!?

Not the only way, but in my opinion the most logical one. White's pieces are tied up and completely helpless.

35.exd5 ♗xe3 36.♕xe3 ♗xd5 37.♘eg1 ♖ag8



All Black's forces are participating in the assault – it's impossible to stop it.

38.♔h2 e4 39.♖d1 exf3 40.♖xd5 ♕xd5 41.♕xh6† ♖h7 42.♕f6† ♖gg7 43.♘xf3

43.♕f8† ♕g8 and there is no perpetual.

43...♕xa2† 44.♔h1 ♕f7 45.♕c3 ♕f5 46.♔h2 ♕f4† 47.♔h1 ♕g4 48.♕c6 ♖xh3† 49.♗xh3 ♕xh3† 50.♘h2 ♕e6 51.♘f3 ♕g4

White resigned. A good battle!

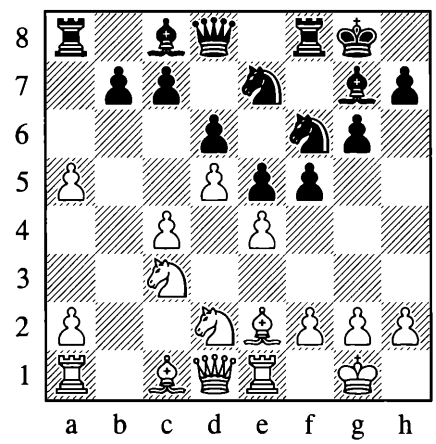
0–1

Teimour Radjabov – Ilya Smirin

Dos Hermanas 2001

This was my first encounter with Teimour Radjabov. He was 14 years old back then and was not a really big threat yet. Later, as we all know, Teimour entered the chess elite. Radjabov himself has played the KID as Black all his life, and he is a renowned expert in this opening.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 ♘h5 10.♖e1 a5 11.bxa5 f5 12.♘d2 ♘f6



So far as in the game Kramnik – Smirin, which you will find on page 63.

13.f3!?

Vladimir Kramnik chose 13.c5 in this position. Radjabov's move is not so active, but is more fundamental. White strengthens the pawn on e4 first and only after that is he going to attack on the queenside.

13...♖xa5 14.♘b3

The knight is not ideally placed on b3 in such positions, but it helps White to play c4-c5 quickly and at some point after that it can be transferred back to d2 and c4.

14...♖a8 15.c5 f4

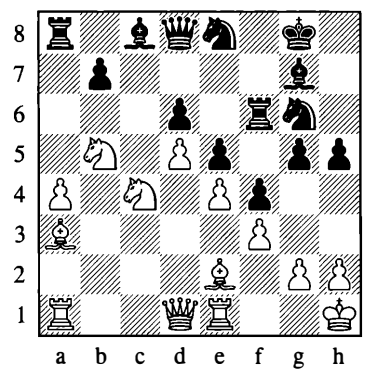
Here it goes! Many players (including myself) love to have attacks going on on opposite wings of the board.

16.a4 g5 17.♗a3

The picture is clear – Black's chances lie only in the kingside attack, but those chances should not be underestimated. White may gain the whole queenside and win a lot of material, but he will lose if gets mated. This is a primitive explanation, but, as we will see, it describes well some of the possible variations, often leading to really wild situations.

17...♘g6

I believe this move serves the attack better than 17...h5 (too many pawn moves?) which was played in the game Gelfand – Nisipeanu, Bazna 2009. In my opinion, if White were to proceed in this position: 18.cxd6 cxd6 19.♘b5 ♘e8 20.♘d2! ♘g6 21.♘c4 ♖f6 22.♔h1!?



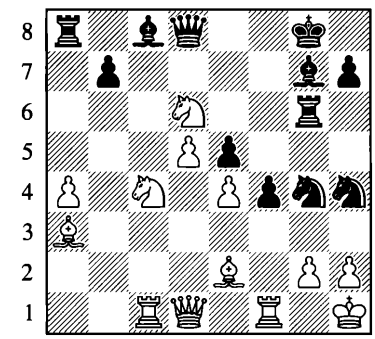
He would obtain a considerable advantage – Black's main forces are tied to the defence of the pawn on d6 and can hardly join the kingside attack. For instance: 22...♘h4 23.♖g1 ♖g6 24.g3! fxg3 25.♖xg3, and White is basically better on both wings; his knights are excellently placed and he has plenty of useful moves, such as ♕b3 and ♖ag1.

18.a5

The other way to develop the queenside attack was: 18.cxd6 cxd6 19.♘b5 ♘e8 20.♘d2

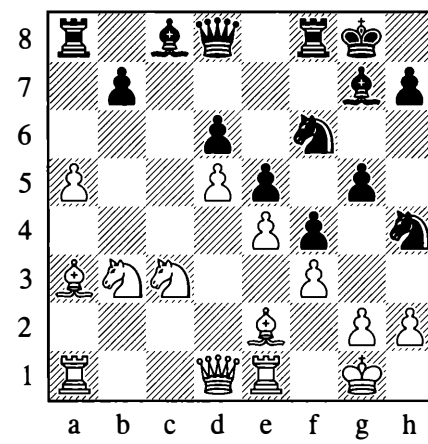
Now after 20...h5 White again gets the upper hand after 21.♘c4 ♖a6 22.a5.

I believe Black should instead continue: 20...♘h4! 21.♘c4 ♖f6 22.♖c1 g4 23.fxg4 ♖g6 with a strong counterattack – the knight on h4 makes the difference. There may follow: 24.♔h1 ♘f6 25.♘bxd6 ♘xg4 26.♖f1



26...♘xh2! 27.♘xc8 ♖xc8 28.♖f2 ♖h6 With serious direct threats against the white king.

18...♘h4 19.cxd6 cxd6



20.♗b4!?

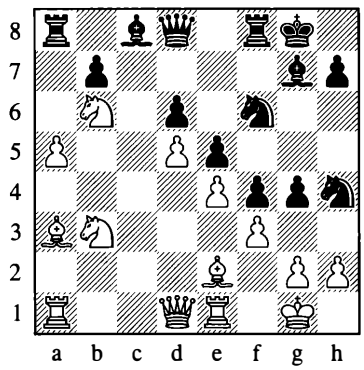
Radjabov decides to bring the knight from b3 to c4, and protects the a-pawn so that he can do that.

In the annotations to his victory over Nisipeanu, Boris Gelfand offered here:

20.♘a4!?

The knight invasion on b6 is very unpleasant, so Black has to show his hand:

20...g4 21.♘b6



21...♘xe4!

After the simple 21...gxf3 22.♗xf3 ♘xf3† 23.gxf3 (23.♕xf3 ♗g4 24.♕c3 ♖a6∞) 23...♖a6 24.♔h1 I would probably prefer White, mainly because of the poor position of the rook on a6.

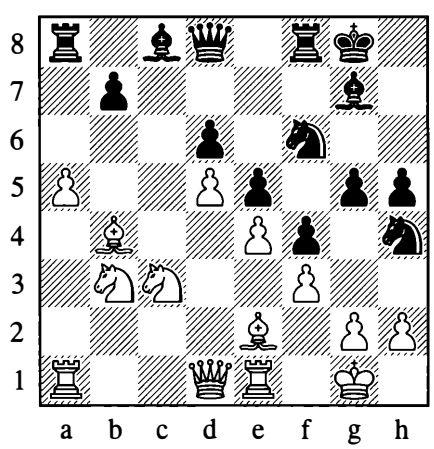
22.fxe4

22.♘xa8 ♘xg2! 23.fxe4 ♕h4 – see the similar annotations to 21.♘a4.

22...f3

Again, see the similar detailed annotations after White's next move.

20...h5



21.♘d2

All according to plan.

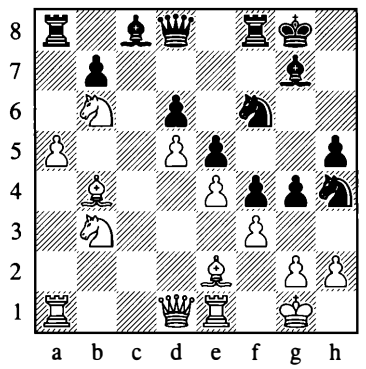
If Teimour had changed his mind and played:

21.♘a4

Then after:

21...g4 22.♘b6

Black has the same resource:



22...♘xe4! 23.fxe4

Basically the only move.

Bad is: 23.♘xa8 ♘xg2! 24.fxe4 (24.♔xg2 ♕h4 25.fxg4 ♕f2† 26.♔h1 ♘g3† 27.hxg3 fxg3 with mate) 24...♕h4! 25.♘d2 (25.♖f1 g3) 25...♘e3 26.♕c1 g3 27.♘f3 gxh2† 28.♔h1 ♕g3 29.♘h4 ♗h3 30.♗f3 ♕xh4

23...f3!

23...♘xg2? does not work: 24.♔xg2 f3† (24...♕h4 25.♘d2 f3† 26.♗xf3 gxf3†) 25.♔h1 ♕h4 26.♗xf3 ♖xf3 27.♖e2+–

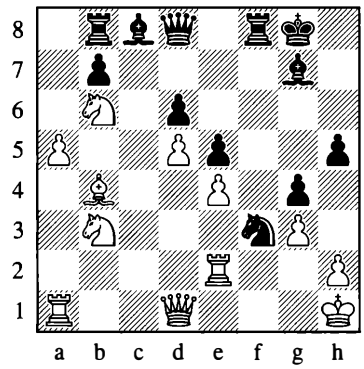
24.g3

24.♘xa8 ♘xg2 25.♖f1 ♘f4 and Black is better even without the rook and knight: 26.♗xf3 gxf3 27.♖xf3 ♕g5† 28.♖g3 ♗g4

24...fxe2 25.♖xe2 ♘f3† 26.♔h1 ♖b8

The resulting position is better for White (the knight on b6 is very strong and Black has problems with the defence of the d-pawn and the development of the light-squared bishop), but Black has counterplay on the kingside, which gives decent chances.

A possible continuation is:



27.♘d2 ♘d4

27...h4 28.♖g2! hxg3 29.♖xg3±

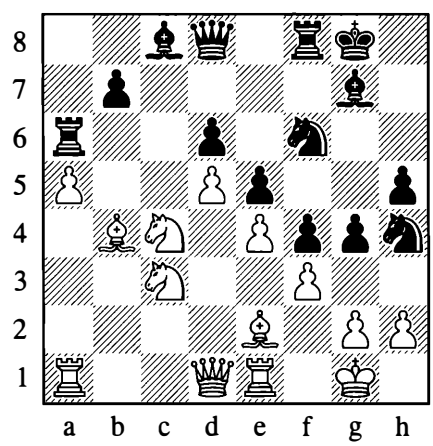
28.♖g2 ♖f6 29.♘dc4 ♗f8 30.♖b1 ♗d7 31.♗c3 ♗e8! 32.♗xd4 exd4 33.♕xd4 ♗g7 34.♕d2 ♗g6

And the pair of strong bishops provides compensation for the pawn.

21...g4 22.♘c4

Or 22.♔h1!? immediately was an option.

22...♖a6



23.♔h1!

A good defensive move. The king hides in the corner, and the rook will protect g2 from g1 if needed.

And of course not 23.♘b6?? ♖xb6.

23...♘h7!

Preparing the next sacrifice by vacating the road to h4 for the black queen. The knight on h7 will later join the attack via g5.

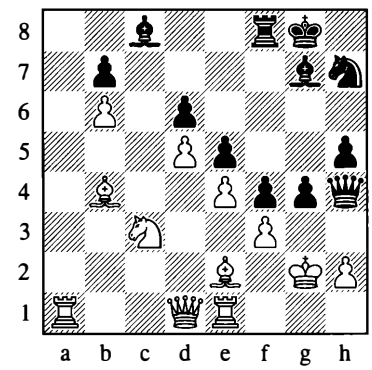
24.fxg4

A good illustration of the strength of the attack would be:

24.♘b6 ♖xb6!

24...gxf3? 25.♗xf3!

25.axb6 ♘xg2! 26.♔xg2 ♕h4



The assault outweighs the sacrificed rook.

The only defence here seems to be:

27.♖a2

Not 27.♗xd6? ♕h3† 28.♔g1 g3 with a quick mate.

27.♖h1 ♘g5∓

27...g3 28.♖h1 ♗h3† 29.♔g1 ♕d8!

An excellent move, suddenly targeting the pawn on b6.

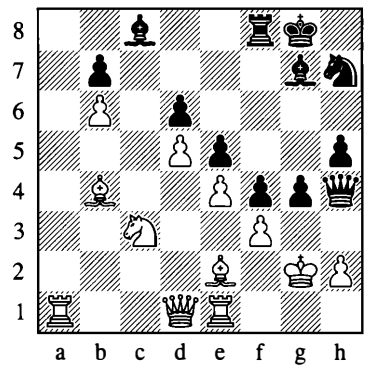
30.♗a5 g2

30...♕c8 31.♗b4 ♕d8=

31.♗b5 ♕g5

In a practical game, Black has the upper hand.

The best move seems to be the retreat: 24.♘d2!?

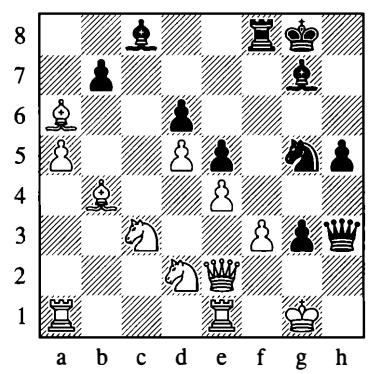


The knight returns to help His Majesty.

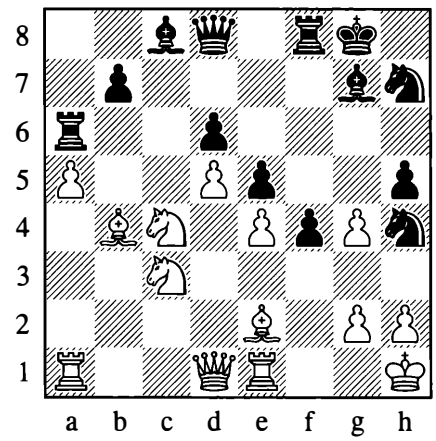
24...♖a8 25.fxg4 hxg4 26.♗xg4 ♕g5 27.♗f3 ♖f6 28.♘a4 and Black's threats are probably not strong enough.

24...♕g5 25.♖g1 g3 (25...♖f6 26.♗xa6 bxa6 27.♖c1) 26.♕e1 and White is just winning – the opponent's attack has come to a full stop.

The rook on a6 is under fire and Black should invest some serious material: 24...♘xg2! Anyway! More prudent moves would not do. 25.♔xg2 ♕h4 26.♗xa6 g3 27.hxg3 The best choice. 27...♕h3† 28.♔g1 fxg3 29.♕e2 ♘g5!



And suddenly a drawing mechanism is created, for instance: 30.♕g2 ♕h4 31.♕h1 ♘h3† 32.♔g2 ♘f4† 33.♔g1 ♘h3† 34.♔f1 g2† 35.♕xg2 ♘f4 36.♕f2 ♕h1† 37.♕g1 ♕h4 38.♕f2=



24...♘xg2!

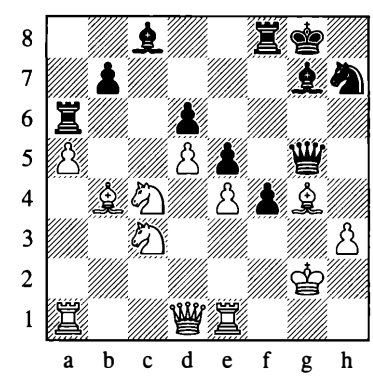
It seemed to me that this sacrifice came as an unpleasant surprise to Radjabov, who was very optimistic until this point. Now Black's forces get close access to the white monarch. A knight is not a high price for that.

25.♔xg2

The silicon creature prefers 25.♖g1!? – a move that would hardly come to mind over the board. It is probably right: after 25...f3 26.♗xf3 ♘f4 27.gxh5 White would have an edge in a very complex position.

25...hxg4 26.♔h1

Teimour had a tough choice between this move and:
26.♗xg4 ♕g5 27.h3



27...f3†!?

Weaker is 27...♘f6 28.♖h1 b5!? (another sudden computer move) and the computer, as so often, gives equality at the end of a complicated line.

28.♔f2 ♗xg4 29.hxg4 ♗h6!

The King's Indian bishop has joined the attack.

30.♖h1

The only move.

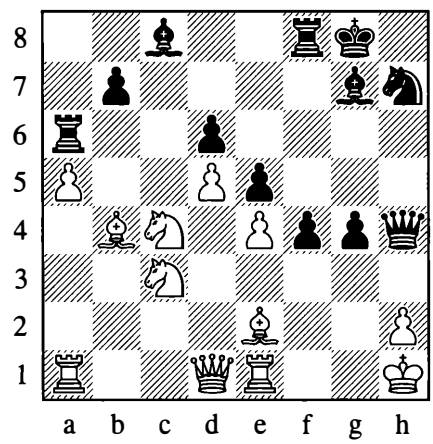
30...♘f6 31.♔f1

During the post mortem, Alexey Dreev proposed 31.♕g1 here, but after 31...♖c8 (31...♘xg4†?? 32.♕xg4 ♕xg4 33.♖ag1 was the idea) 32.♖xh6 ♕xh6 33.♕g3 ♖xc4 34.g5 ♕g6 35.gxf6 ♕xg3† 36.♔xg3 ♖xb4 Black is winning.

31...♘xg4

Even Houdini finds it difficult to repel the attack – White is in great danger. So I think Teimour made the best move in the position.

26...♕h4



Black's pieces are starting to rendezvous with the white king, and the pawns on g4 and f4 are leaning dangerously toward it.

27.♘d2

This knight quits its aggressive plans (attacking the d-pawn) and steps back into defence.

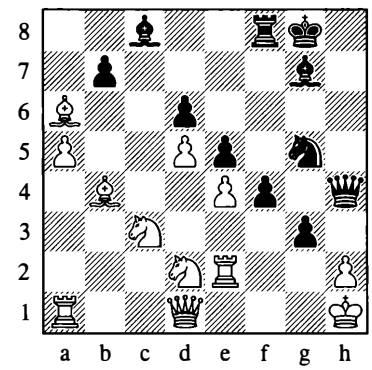
27.♖a2 g3 28.♗f3 ♘g5 was hardly better.

27...♘g5!

Of course not 27...g3? 28.♘f3.

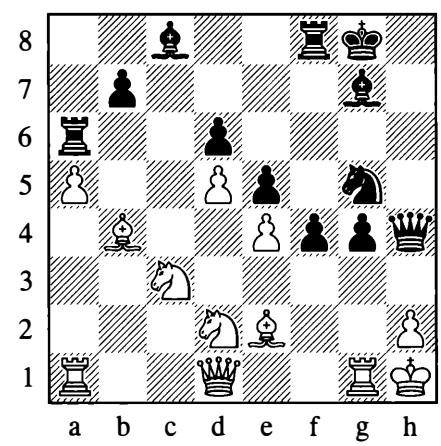
28.♖g1

The rook could be taken, but not safely: 28.♗xa6 g3 29.♖e2



After 29...f3 White replies 30.♕g1! g2† 31.♖xg2 fxg2† 32.♕xg2 ♖f2 33.♕g3 ♕xg3 34.hxg3 bxa6 35.♖a2 then, almost by force, there arises a dynamically balanced endgame.

But instead after 29...♗g4! 30.♕g1 ♖f6 more forces join the assault. Despite Black's huge material losses – rook and knight – White would be on the verge of collapse; a beautiful variation.



28...♘h3

I could not foresee that after:

28...g3 29.♖g2

29.♘f1 ♖f6∓

29...♗h3 30.♕g1 ♖f6 31.♗xa6 ♗xg2† 32.♕xg2 bxa6

The attack would be very strong and more than enough to compensate for the opponent's extra knight. The best option for him here seems to be:

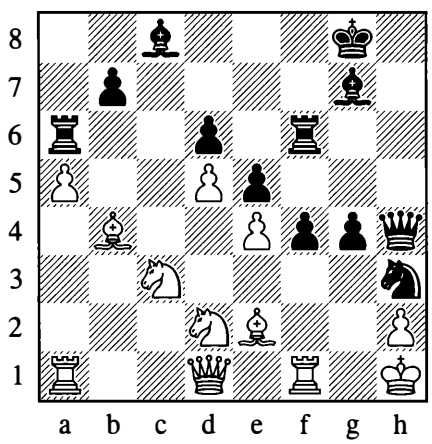
33.♘e2

33.♖f1? ♖h6 34.♘f3 ♘xf3 35.♖xf3 ♕g4–+

33...♖h6 34.♘xg3 fxg3 35.♘f1

Obviously Black is on top. But the move I made is probably not worse.

29.♖f1 ♖f6!



The rook calmly joins the attack. Black's pieces continue to concentrate themselves, without hurrying, around the white king. I was really excited by the possibility of making "quiet" attacking moves while being a piece (and potentially a whole rook down).

30.♕e1

Of course, I could not calculate all the variations after:

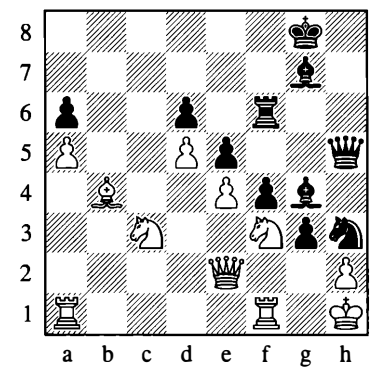
30.♗xa6 bxa6

Grabbing as much material as possible in the hope of giving some of it back to repel the attack, but I was hoping that Black's threats would be very strong. Intuition did not let me down:

31.♕e1

31.♖a2 ♖h6 32.♕e1 g3 33.♘f3 ♕h5 34.♕e2 ♗g4 35.♕d3 ♘g5 36.♘xg5 ♕xg5 37.♖g2 ♕h5 38.♕c2 ♗h3 39.♘d1 ♖g6 This line looks pretty forcing and Black is winning at the end.

31...g3 32.♘f3 ♕h5 33.♕e2 ♗g4



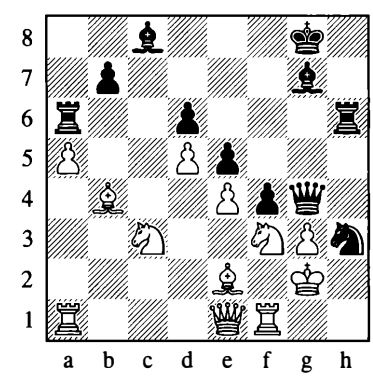
34.♕g2 ♖h6∓ 35.♖a2 ♘g5 36.♘xg5 ♕xg5–+

White is defenceless – the extra rook is small consolation and Black's excellently coordinated army prevails.

30...♕h5?

A pity. This mistake spoils the impression of the game a little.

Black should have acted resolutely: 30...g3 31.♘f3 ♕g4 (32...g2# is the threat!) 32.♔g2 ♖h6–+, with the very nice point: 33.hxg3

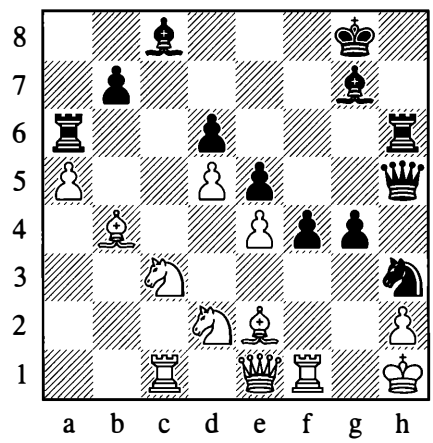


33...♘f2!! 34.♕xf2 ♕h3† 35.♔g1 ♕h1# It would be great to finish the game in such a wonderful way, but alas I failed to spot this idea.

31.♖c1

White has gained some time to organize the defence.

31...♖h6



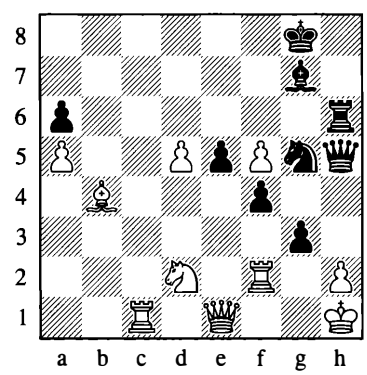
32.♘d1?!

This time it was absolutely "legal" to take the rook, which remains under fire for several moves:

32.♗xa6 bxa6 33.♘e2!

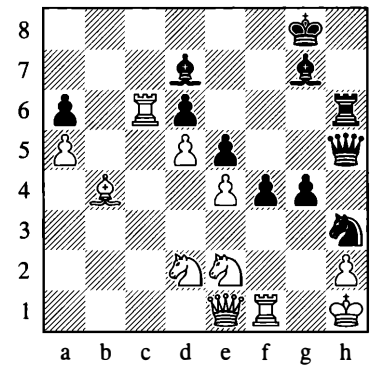
33.♘d1 ♗d7 34.♘c4 g3–+

33.♘b5 ♗d7 34.♘xd6 g3 35.♘f5 ♗xf5 36.exf5 ♘g5 37.♖f2



37...♕xh2†! Pretty – instead of taking the rook, Black sacrifices the queen. 38.♖xh2 ♖xh2† 39.♔g1 ♘h3† 40.♔f1 g2†–+

33...♗d7 34.♖c6!?



34...♘g1!

The only move.

35.♖f2 ♘h3

White can take a draw by means of:

36.♖f1

Or he may look for something else.

In this variation we see that after my mistake on move 30, the attack lost a great deal of speed and sharpness. I hope that these somewhat numerous variations have not bored the reader: most of them are really nice and they are needed to understand what is going on on the board.

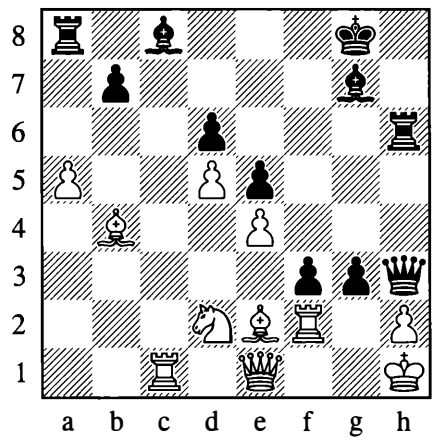
32...♖a8

The rook is alive!

33.♘f2 f3!

Not falling into the small trap set by my young opponent: 33...♘g5? 34.♖xc8†! ♖xc8 35.♘xg4

34.♘xh3 ♕xh3 35.♖f2 g3!

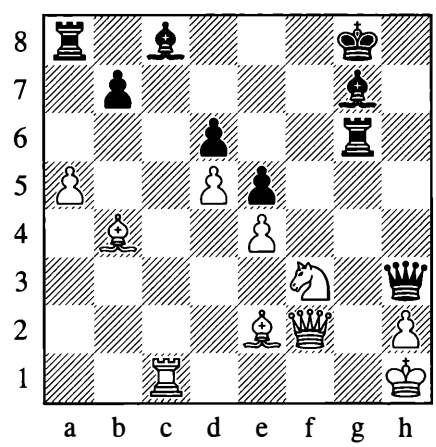


These two attacking pawns cost White a whole rook.

36.♘xf3 gxf2 37.♕xf2

The smoke has cleared. Black is left with a minimal material advantage (the exchange for a pawn), but the white pieces are active enough, and objectively the position is about equal. We were both in slight time trouble, and I think I overestimated Black's chances during the game.

37...♖g6



38.♗xd6?

A big oversight. If Teimour had realized he was OK, he would probably have found the strong continuation 38.♗d2!, with the idea ♘g5. In this case, after the logical 38...♖f6 (not 38...♗g4? 39.♘g5 ♖f8 40.♕xf8† ♗xf8 41.♘xh3 ♗xe2 42.♘g5) 39.♖g1 there arises a position of dynamic balance – the black king might become vulnerable.

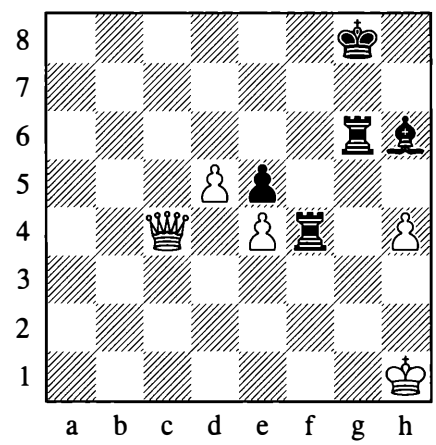
38...♖xd6 39.♘g5 ♕d7 40.♗g4 ♕e7!

This was missed by Radjabov. The rest is easy – Black's material advantage decides the matter.

41.♗xc8 ♕xg5 42.♖g1 ♕f6 43.♗f5 ♖xa5 44.♕c2 ♖a8 45.♕c7 b5 46.♕b7 ♖ad8 47.♕xb5 ♖b6 48.♕c5 ♖db8 49.♖g6 ♕xg6

Not a necessary sacrifice. 49...♖b1† 50.♔g2 ♕h4 51.♖xg7† ♔xg7 52.♕c7† ♔f8 53.♕d6† ♕e7 54.♕h6† ♕g7† would win easily, but I wanted to finish the game in an attacking spirit.

50.♗xg6 ♖xg6 51.♕c2 ♗h6 52.h4 ♖f8 53.♕c4 ♖f4



Two rooks and a bishop create a mating net around the king.

54.d6† ♔h8 55.♕c8† ♖g8 56.♕h3 ♖xe4 0–1

I have to admit that I love this game very much, and think of it as one of the best in my career.

Jaan Ehlvest – Ilya Smirin

Khanty-Mansiysk 2009

The game was played in the first round of the World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk. This northern Russian city has become one of the world's biggest stages for high-calibre chess events in recent years. In 2001 Jaan Ehlvest (one of the strongest player in the world in the late 1980s) beat me in the equivalent tournament in Moscow. That third-round defeat was very painful for me – the level of games was pretty good, I was leading in the course of the match, but I lost in an Armageddon blitz game. Now, after eight years, I was eager to have my revenge.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4

This was the second of two games in the classical time control mini-match. In a knockout tournament, the loser goes home. I had won the first encounter with White, so Jaan had to win to stay in the match. Perhaps the KID is not the most common opening choice in a situation like that, but I decided to stay with my favourite opening (anyway, I am not very good at making a draw "to order" with Black).

5...0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0

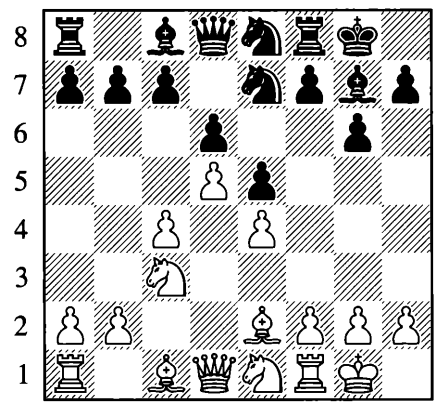
The Classical System. This time I chose the most principled continuation.

7...♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1

I did not expect this move from Ehlvest. Usually he had played 9.♘d2 or 9.b4. But his choice is easy to understand – after 9.♘e1 there usually arises a sharp, double-edged situation which perfectly suited my opponent, considering his must-win situation.

9...♘e8

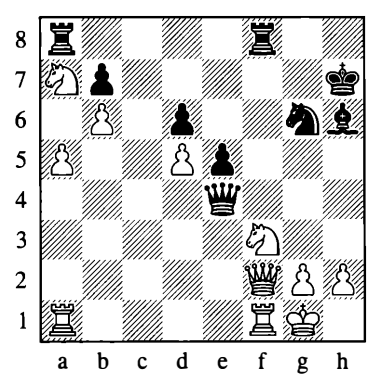
9...♘d7 is a more common option here. The move in the game became popular after Garry Kasparov played it twice in 1992 against Shirov and Korchnoi. The main difference between the two knight moves is that from e8 it will defend the d6-pawn and the important square c7, after White plays c4-c5 and c5xd6, whereas on d7 the knight makes it harder for White to play c4-c5 and it sometimes controls e5 in the event that White decides to play the double-edged f2-f4.



10.♘d3

Ehlvest goes for a more positional approach. Victor Korchnoi usually played the sharper line starting with 10.♗e3.

For example, the following interesting game of his was mentioned earlier: 10.♗e3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗f2 h5 13.c5 g5 14.a4 ♘g6 15.a5 ♗h6 16.b4 ♔h7 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.♘b5 g4 19.fxg4 hxg4 20.♗xg4 ♗xg4 21.♕xg4 ♘f6 22.♕f3 ♕d7 23.♘xa7 ♘g4 24.b5 ♘xf2 25.♕xf2 f3 26.♘xf3 ♕g4 27.b6 ♕xe4



28.♖fe1 (28.♔h1! would have given White a big advantage) 28...♕xd5 29.♕c2 ♖ae8 30.♖ad1 ♕xa5 31.♕c7† ♖e7 32.♕xd6 e4 33.♘h4 ♖g7 34.♘xg6 ♖xg6 35.♕e7† ♗g7 36.♕h4† ♔g8 37.♕xe4 ♖xb6 38.♕d5† ♕xd5 39.♖xd5 ♖b2 40.♖f1 ♗h6 41.♖xf8† ♔xf8 42.♖f5† ♔e7 43.♘b5 ♗e3† 44.♔f1 ½–½ Korchnoi – Kasparov, Debrecen 1992.

10...f5 11.♗d2

After 11.f4 (quite a logical move: as we have already noted, the knight on e8 does not control e5) I was going to continue 11...exf4 12.♘xf4 c6!? with a complex struggle in which Black, in my opinion, has decent counterplay – he undermines White's not yet very strong centre from both flanks.

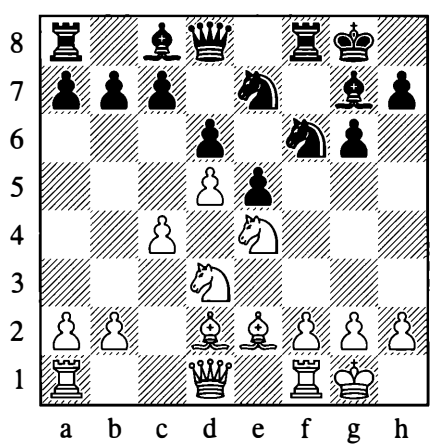
I think that 11.f3 is a slightly more precise move order compared to the game continuation. Now 11...fxe4 12.fxe4 makes no sense, so Black should proceed 11...f4 12.c5 g5 with the usual attacks on opposite sides of the board.

11...fxe4

I decided to make the game simpler from the strategic point of view. After all, my main goal was not to lose.

11...♘f6 12.f3 f4 is the main continuation here, with the usual attacks on opposite wings.

12.♘xe4 ♘f6



In my opinion, control over the central square e4 gives White hope for a definite positional advantage, but Black does not have much to complain about. Indeed, the bishop on g7 is slightly passive, but all the other pieces are doing well. In particular, the knight on e7 has access to f5 and, potentially, to d4. Black's pawn structure is solid enough – in other words, White's advantage is minimal, if any.

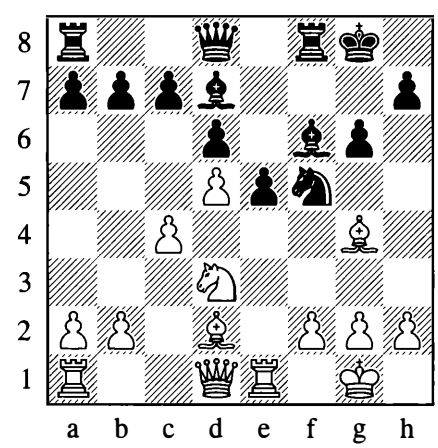
13.♘xf6† ♗xf6 14.♗g4

To my great surprise, I discovered another game by Ehlvest in which he had played this position as Black 29 years prior to our game! 14.♗c3 ♘f5 15.♗f3 ♗g7 16.♖e1 ♔h8 17.♖c1 ♖f7 18.♗g4 ♘h4 19.♗xc8 ♖xc8 20.♖e4 g5 21.c5 b6 22.cxd6 cxd6 23.♗d2 h6 24.♖ec4 ♖xc4 25.♖xc4 b5; (½–½, 34) Dydyshko – Ehlvest, Tallinn 1980. I doubt though that Jaan remembered that during our encounter.

14...♘f5

Of course the exchange of light-squared bishops would be in White's favour – at least now, when the black pieces are not yet active.

15.♖e1 ♗d7



16.♗c3

Here or on the next move 16.c5 deserved attention – White is trying to develop activity

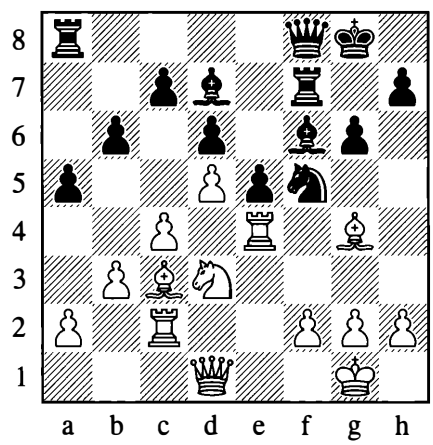
on the queenside, but there is the small drawback that the d5-pawn may become weak in some variations.

16...a5 17.♖c1 b6

It's not easy for White to obtain active play, so both sides begin manoeuvring, trying to steadily improve their position.

18.♖c2 ♖f7 19.b3 ♕f8 20.♖e4

Ehlvest could have changed the strategic picture by means of 20.f4!?, but after 20... exf4 21.♘xf4 ♗xc3 22.♖xc3 ♕g7 23.♖d3 ♖af8 24.♘e6 ♗xe6 25.dxe6 ♖e7 Black should be more or less OK – White's main hope – the pawn on e6 – is firmly blockaded.



20...♕g7!?

Black prepares to start some play on the kingside. The queen vacates f8 for the a8-rook and at the same time from g7 it will support the future advance of the g- and h-pawns.

21.f3 h5 22.♗h3 g5!

Following the plan.

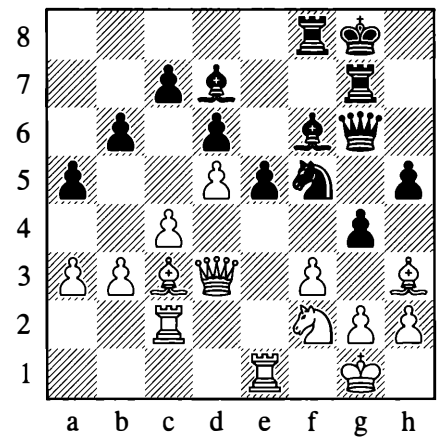
23.♘f2

A good prophylactic move. White stalls ...g5-g4, and from f2 the knight is ready to jump to e4 at the appropriate moment.

23...♕g6 24.♖e1 ♖af8 25.♕d3 ♖g7

Tension is growing. All of Black's pieces are concentrated on the kingside. They are just waiting for orders.

26.a3 g4!



Here we go! The real action starts now. This push required calculation and, more importantly, some guts.

27.fxg4 ♗h4!

This is the point.

28.♖e4

Or 28.gxh5 ♕xh5 29.♖e4 ♘d4 would lead to the position in the game by transposition.

After 28.g3 hxg4 29.♗g2 (29.♘xg4? ♘xg3 30.♕xg6 ♖xg6 31.hxg3 ♗xg4) 29...♗e7 30.♘e4 ♕h5 a complex, slightly boring, and approximately equal position would arise.

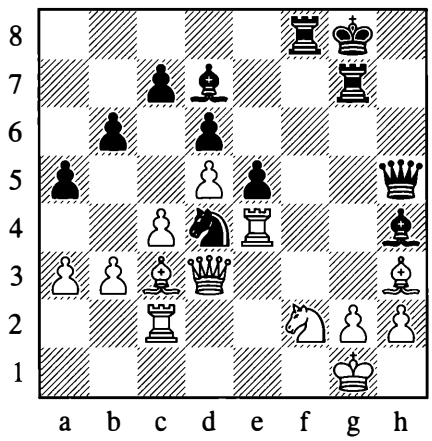
Of course, bad was 28.gxf5 ♗xf5 and the board geometry works in Black's favour – 29.♘e4 ♗xh3 with a huge advantage.

28...♘d4!?

Black had a good tactical alternative which I did not see: 28...♗xf2† 29.♖xf2 ♘g3! 30.♖xf8† ♔xf8 31.hxg3 hxg4 32.♗xg4 ♗xg4, and White

can forget about trying to win this game. But objectively my move was no less strong.

29.gxh5 ♕xh5

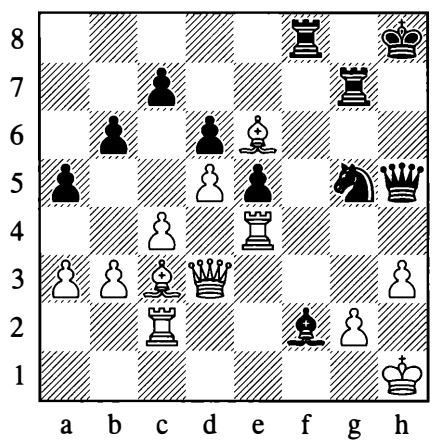


Black is very active for just one small pawn, and now starts a forcing line.

30.♗xd7 ♘f3† 31.♔h1 ♗xf2 32.♗e6† ♔h8 33.h3

A little joke – 33.♗h3?? ♕xh3 34.gxh3 ♖g1#

33...♘g5!



This strong move clarifies the situation – Black is fine.

34.♖ee2 ♖f3!?

There was no special need for this spectacular move.

After the simple: 34...♘xe6 35.♖xf2 (bad is 35.dxe6? ♖xg2! 36.e7 [36.♔xg2 ♕g5† 37.♔h2 ♕g1#] 36...♖f6 and Black is winning) 35...♘f4 36.♕f3 ♕h7 37.♕e3 ♕g6, despite being a pawn down, Black would have a very safe (in terms of not losing the game) and active position – White's king is in constant danger and all his pieces (especially the bishop on c3) are rather passive.

But again, the move made in the game is not objectively weaker – it just leads to a more complex and unpredictable struggle.

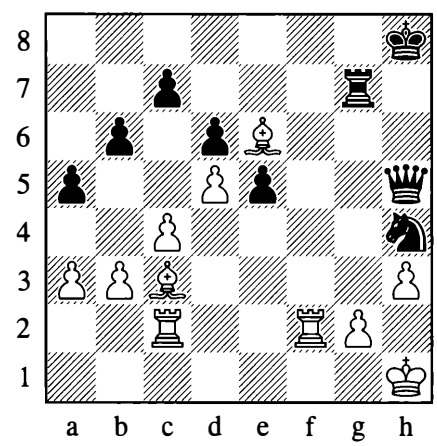
35.♕xf3!

This queen sacrifice is the only option.

35.gxf3? ♘xh3 36.♗g4 ♕h4 would have led to immediate disaster.

35...♘xf3 36.♖xf2 ♘h4

On h4 the knight fulfils two functions: it protects the vital f5-square from the white bishop, and applies pressure to g2.



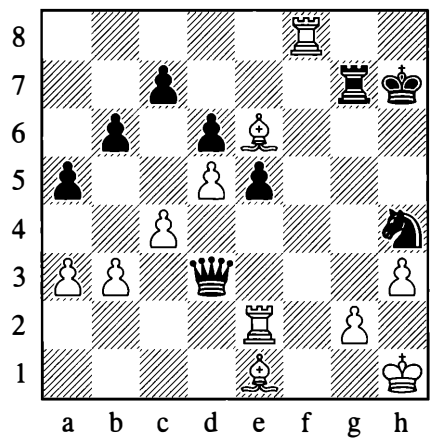
Black has a minimal material advantage, neither king is very comfortable, and both sides' pieces are fairly active. The verdict: there

is a dynamic balance on the board. But good moves are required...

37.♖ce2

The brave 37.g4 ♕g5 38.♗d2 ♕g6 39.♖f8† ♔h7 40.♖f5 ♔h8 41.♖f8† ♔h7 would lead to a draw, which would not have suited Jaan anyway.

37...♕g6 38.♗e1 ♔h7 39.♖f8 ♕d3



40.♖ef2?

The losing error.

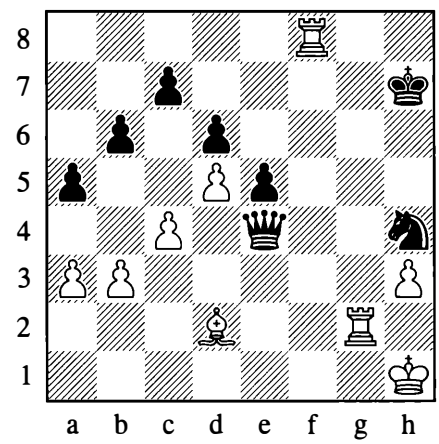
Correct was 40.♗xh4! ♕xe2 41.♗f5† ♖g6 42.♖f7† ♔h6 43.g4! and the threat of 44.g5† ♔h5 45.♖h7† would force Black to give perpetual check: 43...♕f3† 44.♔h2 ♕e2† 45.♔h1 ♕f3†=

40...♕e4?

I saw that this move would lead to the desired draw by force, and went for it, reaching my goal of advancing into the second round of the World Cup.

However, 40...♕b1 41.♖e2 (41.♖f1 ♕e4) 41...♖xg2 would have led to a simple forced win. It happens...

41.♗d2 ♖xg2 42.♗f5† ♘xf5 43.♖xg2 ♘h4



44.♖f7† ♔h8

And due to the coming perpetual, we agreed to a draw. Despite the missed win, this game brought me great creative pleasure.

½–½

Josh Manion – Ilya Smirin

Las Vegas 1997

This game is another Las Vegas "masterpiece". But speaking seriously, it seems that the centre of the world gambling empire used to inspire me occasionally to creative and somewhat risky play.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 0–0 5.♘f3 d6 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 ♘h5 10.♘d2

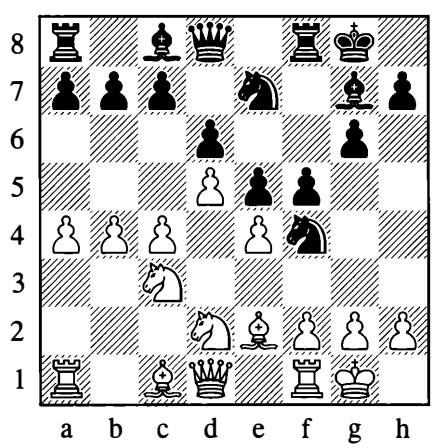
This move became well known after the famous game Petrosian – Gligoric, Rovinj/Zagreb 1970. In my opinion, the modern fashion for 10.♖e1 or 10.g3 looks more logical.

10...♘f4 11.a4

The drawback of 10.♘d2 may be seen after the immediate 11.♗f3?! ♘d3 12.♗a3 a5! and Black is fine.

11...f5

This is clearly better than the possible continuation 11...♘xe2† 12.♕xe2 f5 13.f3 f4 14.c5 – White's queenside attack develops more quickly compared with the opponent's play on the other wing.



12.♗f3

It looks like White has changed his mind and decided to keep this bishop from a possible exchange for the knight on f4. In my opinion 12.f3 or 12.c5 deserved serious attention.

12...g5

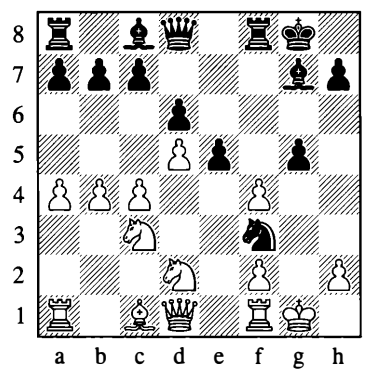
12...♔h8!?, with the rather well-known idea of transferring the knight from e7 to f6 via g8, has been played a few times here.

13.exf5 ♘xf5 14.g3

Now there is a choice.

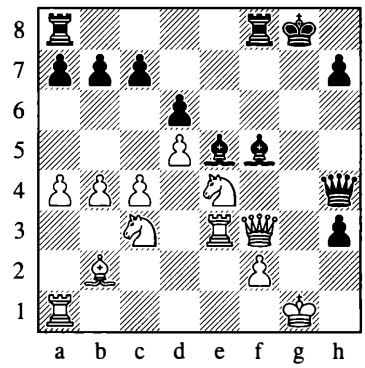
14...♘h3†

Instead 14...♘d4 was played in the above-mentioned encounter: 15.gxf4 ♘xf3†



In one of my games 16.♘xf3 g4 17.♔h1 was played. I managed to draw it despite being somewhat worse almost all the way (perhaps this is a reason why I deviated against Manion?) – 17...gxf3 18.♕xf3 ♗f5 19.♖g1 ♗g6 20.♗d2 ♕d7 21.♘e4 ♖ae8 22.♘g5 exf4 23.♗c3 ♗xc3 24.♕xc3 ♖e5 25.♘e6 ♖ff5 26.♖g4 ♕f7 27.♖ag1 f3 28.a5 c6 29.♕d4 cxd5 30.♘g5 ♕f6 31.h4 ♕e7; (½–½, 46) Kourkounakis – Smirin, Gausdal 1990.

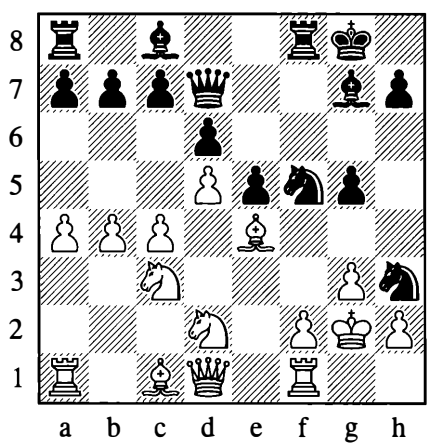
16.♕xf3 g4 17.♕h1 exf4 18.♗b2 ♗f5 19.♖fe1 f3 20.♘de4 ♕h4 21.h3 ♗e5 22.♖e3 gxh3 23.♕xf3



23...♗g4 24.♕h1 h2† 25.♔g2 ♕h5 26.♘d2 ♗d4 27.♕e1 ♖ae8 28.♘ce4 ♗xb2 29.♖g3 ♗e5 30.♖aa3 ♔h8 31.♔h1 ♖g8 32.♕f1 ♗xg3 33.♖xg3 ♖xe4 0–1 Petrosian – Gligoric, Rovinj/Zagreb 1970.

15.♔g2 ♕d7!? 16.♗e4

The idea that 15...♕d7 is connected with may be seen in the variation 16.♘de4 ♘d4 17.♗h5? g4, intending ...♕f5, and the bishop on h5 does not feel good.



16...g4

I did not trust the resulting position after the forcing line 16...♘xf2 17.♔xf2 ♘xg3† 18.♔g1 ♘xf1 19.♘xf1. Now it seems to me that Black is not worse – after all he has some material advantage and the king on g1 is slightly open. (The artificial brain is overoptimistic here, claiming a big edge for Black in that line – I do not agree with that evaluation.) White's achievements are excellent piece coordination, control over the important square e4, and the currently rather poor bishop on g7.

17.♘b3 ♕e7

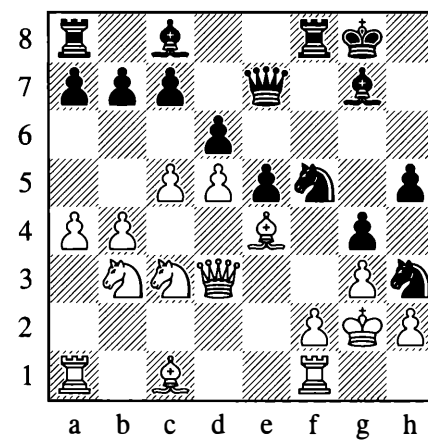
The queen changes its location for a more natural one.

17...♕f7 was a good alternative in that sense.

18.♕d3 h5

18...♘g5 19.♗xg5 ♕xg5 20.c5 was played in one of my games. I would probably prefer White here – his play looks very easy, whereas it's not so clear which plan Black is going to follow.

19.c5



19...♘f4†!?

Not a necessary move, of course, but I was in "sacrifice mode". The decision was purely intuitive, in the style of the young Mikhail Tal. Just one thing was clear to me: my opponent would have to solve some complicated problems and I hoped he would not quite be able to cope with that. Moreover, the position after the sacrifice looked very likable to me...

20.gxf4 exf4

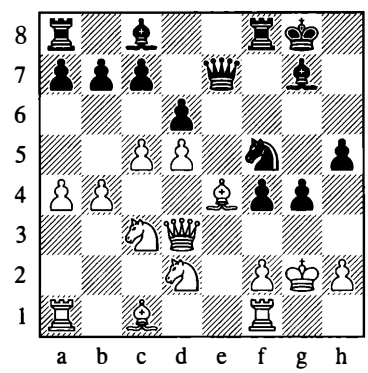
The compensation for the knight is obvious – the white king is under attack and the opponent's well-coordinated forces give him a serious headache. Black's main threat is probably ... f4-f3, after which the white king may easily fall into a mating net. Manion decided to put an automatic stop to the f-pawn.

21.f3?

Oops! A serious mistake which I failed to exploit. It was not an easy task to find the best solution over the board.

Obviously 21.♗xf4? ♘h4† does not work.

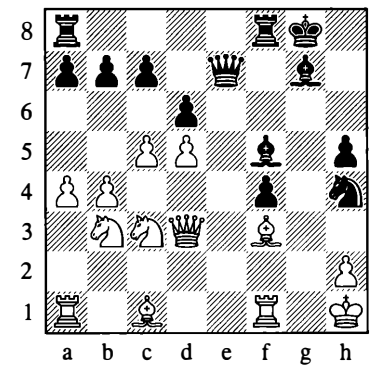
The best decision seems to be 21.♘d2!, bringing the knight to help His Majesty.



After 21...♕h4 (this continuation is asking to be played) 22.♖g1 a5!? 23.bxa5 dxc5 there would arise a position that is very hard to evaluate, even with computer help. Still, my soul belongs to Black here. By the way, this line shows that the sacrifice on the 19th move was objectively OK.

21...♗e5?

As I said earlier, I liked the structure of the black piece and pawn formation, and subconsciously I did not want to change it. As I remember, I did not even consider the strongest and rather simple: 21...gxf3† 22.♗xf3 ♘h4† 23.♔h1 ♗f5!



After which White would be on the verge of losing, for instance: 24.♗e4 ♗xc3 25.♗xf5 ♖xf5 26.♖g1† ♔h7 and 24.♕d2 ♕e3! 25.♗b2 ♖ae8 26.♕xe3 ♖xe3 27.♘d2 ♗xc3 28.♗xc3 ♖xc3 29.♗xh5 f3 and so on.

22.♖a2!

The rook plays a big part, protecting the whole second rank, especially the pawn on h2.

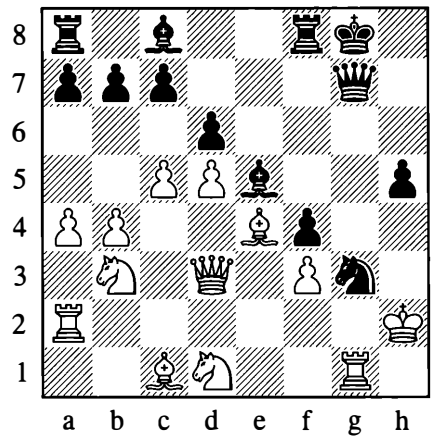
22...♕g7

If 22...♘h4† 23.♔h1 g3 White would have at his disposal a strong tactical decision: 24.♗xf4! ♗xf4 25.hxg3 ♗xg3 26.♖g1 ♘f5 27.♖h2 h4 28.♘e2 giving a piece back, but taking over the initiative and in turn creating strong threats against the king on g8.

23.♘d1

Not a bad move, but I think 23.♗xf5 ♗xf5 24.♘e4 should have been preferred. After 24...♖ae8 (24...gxf3†? 25.♔h1 ♕h7 26.♘bd2+–) 25.♔h1 ♔h8 26.♖g1 g3 27.♖e2 h4 the position would remain very complex.

23...g3 24.♖g1 gxh2† 25.♔xh2 ♘g3



This knight has survived a possible exchange and is awarded the right to occupy a strong outpost very close to the enemy king.

26.♖gg2

White must be very careful all the time. If he were to play the innocent-looking 26.♗b2?! then after 26...♗xb2 27.♖xb2 ♕g5 he would have to find 28.♖gg2! (28.♘f2? ♕h4† 29.♔g2 ♖f7 leads to disaster) 28...♕h4† 29.♔g1 ♕h1† 30.♔f2 ♗h3 31.♖xg3† fxg3† 32.♔xg3 to stay in the game.

26...♕g5 27.♘f2 ♔h8!

The king moves off the g-file, freeing the queen and knight. At the same time, g8 is now vacated for the black rook.

28.♘d4

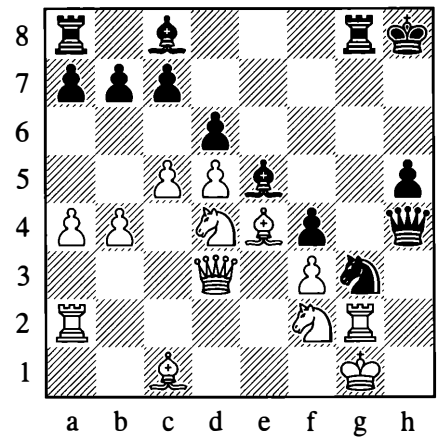
Also now if 28.♗b2 ♖g8 29.♗xe5† dxe5 30.♔g1 ♕h4 (not 30...♘e2†? 31.♔f1 ♕xg2† 32.♔xe2 ♗h3 33.♘d2) 31.♕c3 ♖g5, with the idea ...♗h3, Black would be happy.

Or 28.cxd6 cxd6 29.♖c2 ♖f7! would lead to a position with some kind of dynamic balance (but not 29...♖g8? 30.♖c7+–).

28...♕h4†

It would be a huge mistake to play 28...♖g8? 29.♘e6 ♕h4† 30.♘h3 immediately – the c8-bishop interposes and the attack comes to a full stop.

29.♔g1 ♖g8

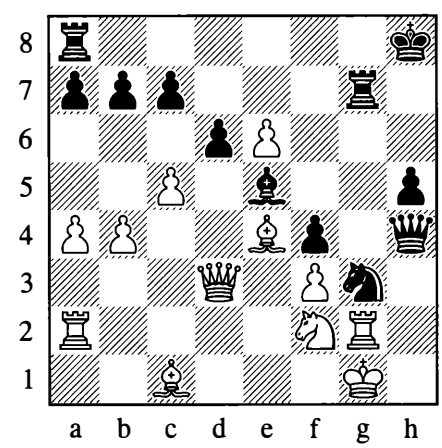


30.♘e6?

Now this does not have a lethal effect, but instead becomes the main reason for White's imminent defeat.

Instead, my opponent would be better off playing the curious variation 30.♘f5! ♘xf5 31.♖xg8† ♔xg8 32.♗xf5 ♕g5† 33.♘g4 hxg4 (33...♗xf5?? 34.♕xf5) 34.♗xg4 ♗xg4 35.♖g2 ♕h6 36.♖xg4† ♔h8, which would lead to approximate equality.

30...♗xe6 31.dxe6 ♖g7



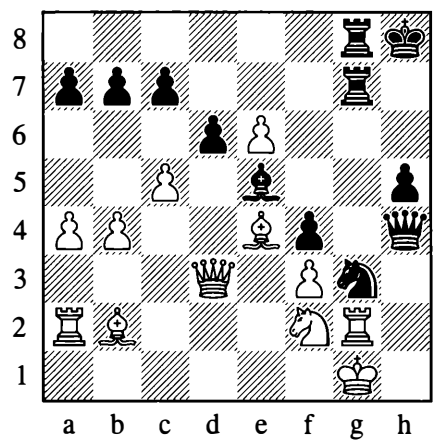
32.♗b2?

The final and decisive error, but objectively speaking it was nearly impossible to find the only defence in time trouble.

For example, 32.cxd6 would lose immediately after: 32...♖ag8! 33.♘g4 ♕h1† 34.♔f2 hxg4 35.d7 ♗d4† 36.♕xd4 ♕f1#

Only 32.♗f5! dxc5 33.♗g4! would allow White to continue fighting, even though in a worse position after 33...♖d8 34.♖h2 ♕e7 35.♕b3 ♔g8.

32...♖ag8



Now all the black pieces are taking part in the attack. Their combined effort is irresistible.

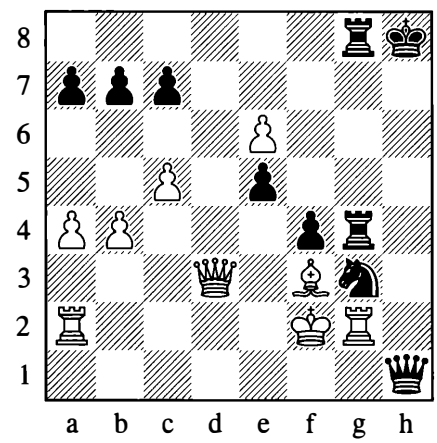
33.♗xe5 dxe5 34.♘g4

Or 34.e7 ♘e2† 35.♔f1 ♖xg2 36.♖xe2 ♖g1#.

34.♖xg3 ♖xg3† 35.♔f1 ♖g1† 36.♔e2 ♕xf2† 37.♔xf2 ♖8g2# Pretty, isn't it?

Houdini's first suggestion is 34.♕d7 ♖xd7 35.exd7. This basically says everything about the position after Black's 33rd move.

34...♕h1† 35.♔f2 hxg4 36.fxg4 ♖xg4 37.♗f3



37...e4 38.♕d4† ♖4g7 39.♗xe4

While making this move, Josh Manion overstepped the time limit, so the checkmate 39...♕f1# was not executed on the board.

0–1

Boris Gelfand – Ilya Smirin

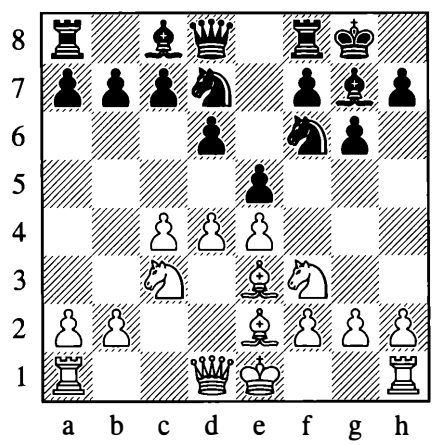
Saint Vincent 2005

The chessplayer I have played most often in my life is Boris Gelfand. Our first game dates back to 1979! We have also been teammates plenty of times – first for Belarus and after that for the Israeli national squad. Once we even teamed up in the Russia – Rest of The World match. This game from the European Club Championship in Saint Vincent was around our 30th meeting.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.♗e3

Also possible is: 7.0–0 ♘bd7 8.♕c2 c6 9.♖d1 ♕e7 10.d5 c5 11.g3!? ♔h8 12.♗g5! a6 13.♘h4 ♕e8 14.♖e1 ♘g8 15.♗d2 ♕e7 16.♘g2 f5 17.exf5 gxf5 18.f4 e4 19.g4!?; (1–0, 51) Korchnoi – Romanishin, Brussels 1986.

7...♘bd7



8.0–0

This position may arise after a transposition of White's 7th and 8th moves

8.d5

This is also a logical continuation here. It happened in the following game, in which there occurred an elegant queen sacrifice:

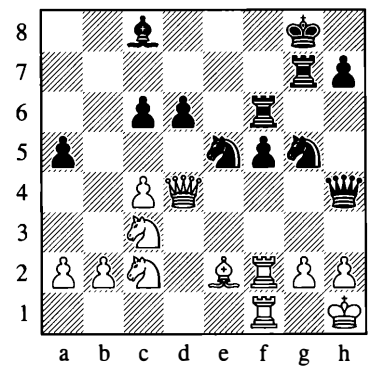
8...a5

Better is 8...♘g4 9.♗g5 f6 10.♗d2 f5.

9.♘d2 ♘e8 10.0–0

10.g4 ♘c5 11.h4! leads to a very promising position for White.

10...f5 11.exf5 gxf5 12.f4 ♗h6!? 13.♘db1 exf4 14.♗xf4 ♗xf4 15.♖xf4 ♘e5 16.♕d4 c5 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♘a3 ♘g7 19.♖f2 ♘e6 20.♕d2 ♖a7 21.♘c2 ♖g7 22.♖d1 ♕h4 23.♖df1 ♖f6 24.♔h1 ♘g5 25.♕d4?



25...♕xh2†!! 26.♔xh2 ♖h6† 27.♔g3

27.♔g1 ♘h3† 28.♔h2 ♘xf2† 29.♔g1 ♘h3† 30.♔h2 ♘f4† 31.♔g1 ♖xg2#

27...♘e6† 28.♕g4 ♘xg4 29.♗xg4 ♖xg4† 30.♔f3 ♖xc4 31.♔e3 f4† 32.♔d2 ♖g6 33.♖e1 ♖c5 34.♘e4 ♖e5 35.♔c1 ♗a6 36.♘xd6 ♖xe1† 37.♘xe1 ♘d4 0–1 Kantsler – Smirin, Jerusalem 2005.

8...♕e7

A relatively flexible continuation – the central pawn structure is not yet fixed.

A couple of times I have played 8...c6 9.d5 c5, but I did not particularly like the course of those games.

Once I tried the rather experimental but recently popular continuation:

8...♖e8!? 9.d5

According to the usual standards of the KID, the rook is placed poorly on e8 (it does not

support ...f7-f5), but sometimes there are more flexible rules nowadays...

9...♘h5 10.g3 ♗f8!?

It went well:

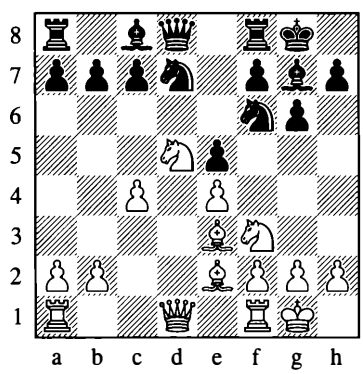
11.♘e1 ♘g7 12.♘d3 f5 13.f3 ♗e7 14.♕d2 ♘f6 15.c5 fxe4 16.fxe4 ♘g4 17.♗xg4 ♗xg4 18.♖ac1 ♗h3 19.♖fe1 ♖f8 20.♘f2 ♗d7 21.♘d3 ♘e8 22.♗h6 ♖f7 23.♖f1 ♘f6 24.cxd6 cxd6 25.♘f2 ♖c8 26.♘e2 ♖xc1 27.♘xc1 ♕b6 28.♗e3 ♕a6 29.♖e1 ♗d8

With excellent play; (0–1, 51) Colovic – Smirin, Skopje 2014.

9.♕c2

If 9.d5 I was going to proceed with 9...♘e8, preparing ...f7-f5, as happened a few times in the games of GM Kochyev.

9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♘d5 ♕d8 was played three times against me.



I managed to win all three games. Here is one of them: 11.♕c2 ♘g4 12.♗g5 f6 13.♗d2 c6 14.♘e3 ♘xe3 15.♗xe3 f5 16.exf5 gxf5 17.♖ad1 ♕e7 18.♗g5 ♕e8 19.c5 e4 20.♘d2 ♘e5 21.f3 ♕h5 22.♗f4 ♗e6 23.♖de1 ♕g6 24.fxe4 fxe4 25.♕xe4 ♗xa2 26.♕b4 ♗d5 27.♘f3 ♕g4 28.♗d2 ♘xf3† 29.♗xf3 ♗d4† 0–1 Bercys – Smirin, Philadelphia 2011.

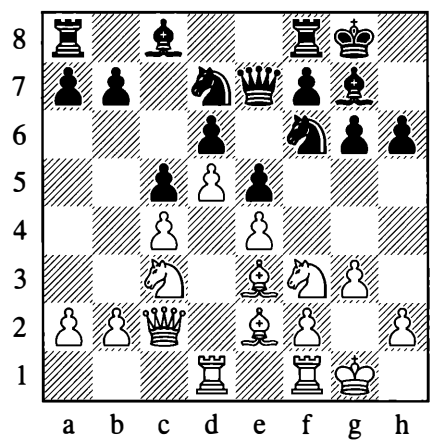
The move made by Gelfand seems to be the most principled one.

9...c6 10.♖ad1 h6

The immediate 10...♘g4 11.♗g5 f6 12.♗c1 did not appeal to me; hence this prophylactic and somewhat weakening move.

In this game Boris managed to cast serious doubt on the strategic correctness of this plan, so I propose playing a different, more open, type of position instead: 10...exd4!? 11.♘xd4 ♖e8 12.f3 ♘e5 13.♖fe1 a6 14.♗f1 (14.♕d2!?) 14...c5 15.♘b3 ♗e6 16.♘d2 ♕c7 17.♔h1 ♖ab8 18.b3 ♗d7 19.h3 ♘c6; (0–1, 60) King – Kveinys, Germany 1993.

11.d5 c5 12.g3!



A deep positional approach. White is going to put his knight on the ideal square h4, after which it will be hard for Black to obtain his customary kingside initiative by means of ...f7-f5. Meanwhile White will have a free hand to develop his usual activity on the opposite wing. I think this idea, in a similar position, was introduced to practice by Viktor Korchnoi in his game against Oleg Romanishin (given in the note to White's seventh move). At least this is one of the first such examples.

12...♘h7!?

I quickly realized the danger of being positionally outplayed and found this

manoeuvre. It has its drawback, but apparently Black had nothing better.

13.♘h4?!

Boris follows his plan. During the game I saw 13.♕d2!, attacking the pawn on h6.

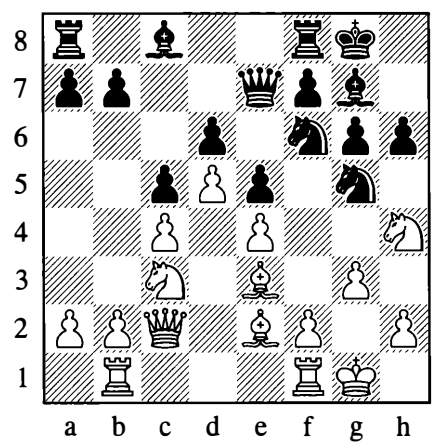
I was going to sacrifice a pawn with 13...f5?!, but after: 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♗xh6 ♘df6 (or 15...f4 is met by 16.♗xg7 ♕xg7 17.♔h1 ♕h6 18.♖g1 ♔h8 19.g4) 16.♘h4 Black's position would be nearly hopeless – his king is weaker than White's, and the missing pawn does not add optimism.

But instead the best move 13...h5 would mean a kind of strategical failure after 14.♘h4 ♗f6 15.♘g2, and it would be very hard to obtain counterplay, although the situation is not tragic yet.

13...♘g5

Now this knight is the basis of my kingside activity. At an appropriate moment it may jump to h3, causing a headache for the white monarch.

14.♖b1 ♘f6



15.b4?!

Playing too straightforwardly.

In *Chess Informant* Gelfand proposed:

15.f3 ♘h5 16.♘g2!?

If 16.♖fe1 ♘h3† (16...♘f4 17.♗f1) 17.♔h1 ♗f6! 18.♘g2 ♗g5 Black is OK.

16...♗h3

16...f5?! is premature due to 17.exf5 ♗xf5 (17...gxf5? 18.f4±) 18.♘e4 and White has the better and risk-free position.

17.♖be1

After the sample move:

17...♘f6!?

This knight is heading for a better place.

18.♘d1 ♘fh7 19.♘f2 ♗d7

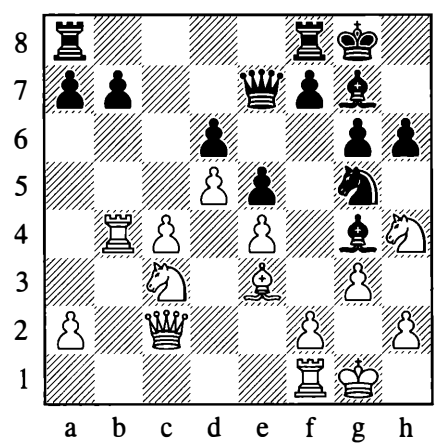
A complex struggle would be ahead.

15...cxb4 16.♖xb4 ♘g4 17.♗xg4

An undesirable exchange for White, but forced.

He could not keep the bishop pair: 17.♗d2 ♘h3† 18.♔g2 ♘f4†

17...♗xg4

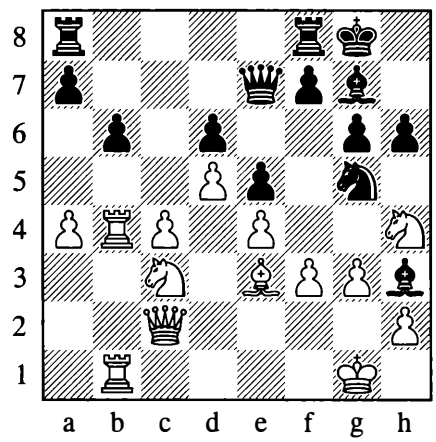


The plans of both sides are clear now: White will continue to try to smash Black on the queenside, whereas the absence of White's light-squared bishop causes him worries; he would be glad to take back the move g2-g3, as it considerably weakens his king's residence.

18.f3 ♗h3 19.♖fb1 b6 20.a4?

Boris did not see my next move.

He proposed here the prophylactic manoeuvre: 20.♘d1! ♗d7 (now 20...f5? does not work – 21.♗xg5 ♕xg5 22.♘f2+–) 21.♘f2 ♘h3† 22.♘xh3 ♗xh3 23.a4 with a double-edged position after 23...♖fc8!? – the pawn on c4 may be vulnerable in some cases.



20...f5!!

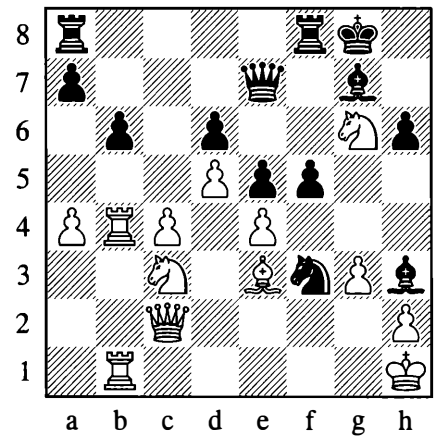
An excellent resource; Black sacrifices the exchange and takes over the initiative. This move was also basically forced – after 20...♖ac8 21.a5 bxa5 22.♖b7 Black's position would just be bad strategically.

21.♘xg6

Played after quite lengthy thought.

Probably he had nothing better: 21.a5 bxa5 22.♖b7 ♕f6; or 21.exf5 gxf5 22.a5 f4 (not 22...e4? 23.f4 ♘f3† 24.♘xf3 exf3 25.♗f2) 23.gxf4 exf4 24.♗f2 ♕f7! and White will hardly survive.

21...♘xf3† 22.♔h1



22...♕f6?

I became too excited during the game and lost my cool. Somehow I just forgot about the existence of the square f7.

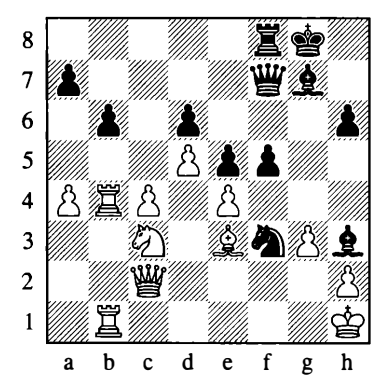
22...♕f7!

This was evidently a much stronger move – the queen gains access to h5 and in many variations it would be lethal for the white king. It seems that White cannot repel the attack:

23.♘xf8

Or 23.exf5 ♖fe8 and the pawn on f5 is falling, just like all the rest of White's position (but of course not 23...♗xf5? 24.♕xf5 ♕xf5 25.♘e7†).

23...♖xf8



24.exf5

24.a5 is too slow now due to 24...f4

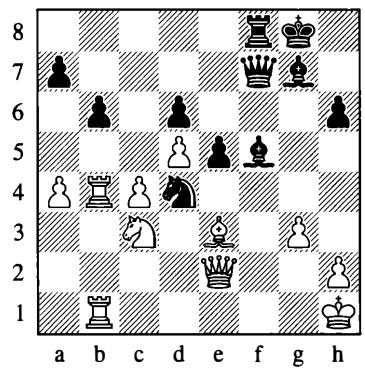
25.♗f2 fxg3 26.♗xg3 ♘e1! 27.♕f2 ♕h5.

24.♕f2 ♕h5 or 24.♖4b2 f4 are not cures either.

24...♗xf5 25.♕e2

25.♕g2 ♕h5 with an irresistible attack; again the queen goes to h5!

25...♘d4

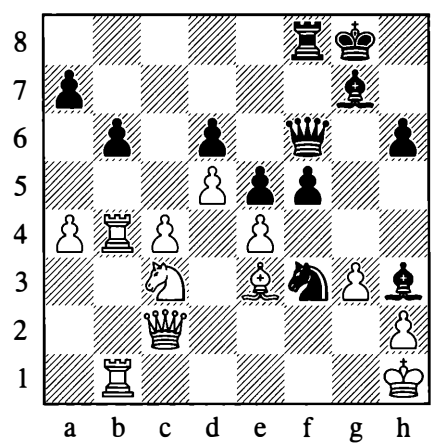


26.♗xd4 exd4 27.♘b5 d3–+ (Gelfand)

28.♕g2 d2!

White is helpless.

23.♘xf8 ♖xf8



24.exf5

My opponent proposed here:

24.♕f2

As the more precise continuation. However, after:

24...fxe4 25.a5 ♕g6! 26.axb6 ♘d4

White would be in trouble – his king is in real danger. For instance:

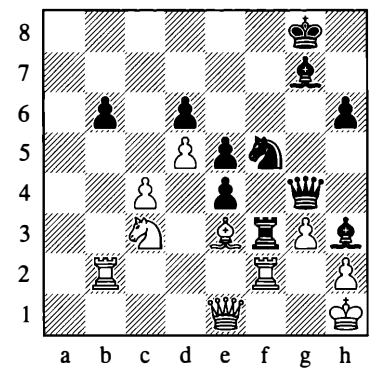
27.♕e1

27.bxa7? loses due to the simple but nice 27...♖xf2 28.♗xf2 ♕f5 29.a8=♕† ♔h7 and the bunch of white pieces would not help to avoid checkmate.

27...axb6 28.♖4b2 ♕g4 29.♖f2

29.♘b5 ♖f1† 30.♕xf1 ♗xf1 31.♖xf1 ♘f5 32.♖e1 h5 33.♖be2 ♔h7!∓

29...♖f3 30.♖bb2 ♘f5!?

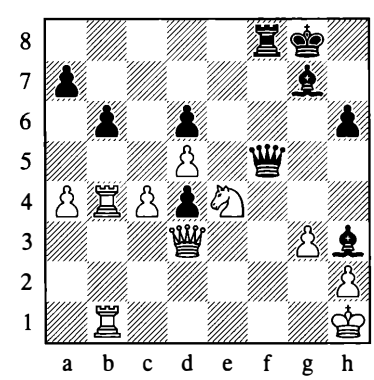


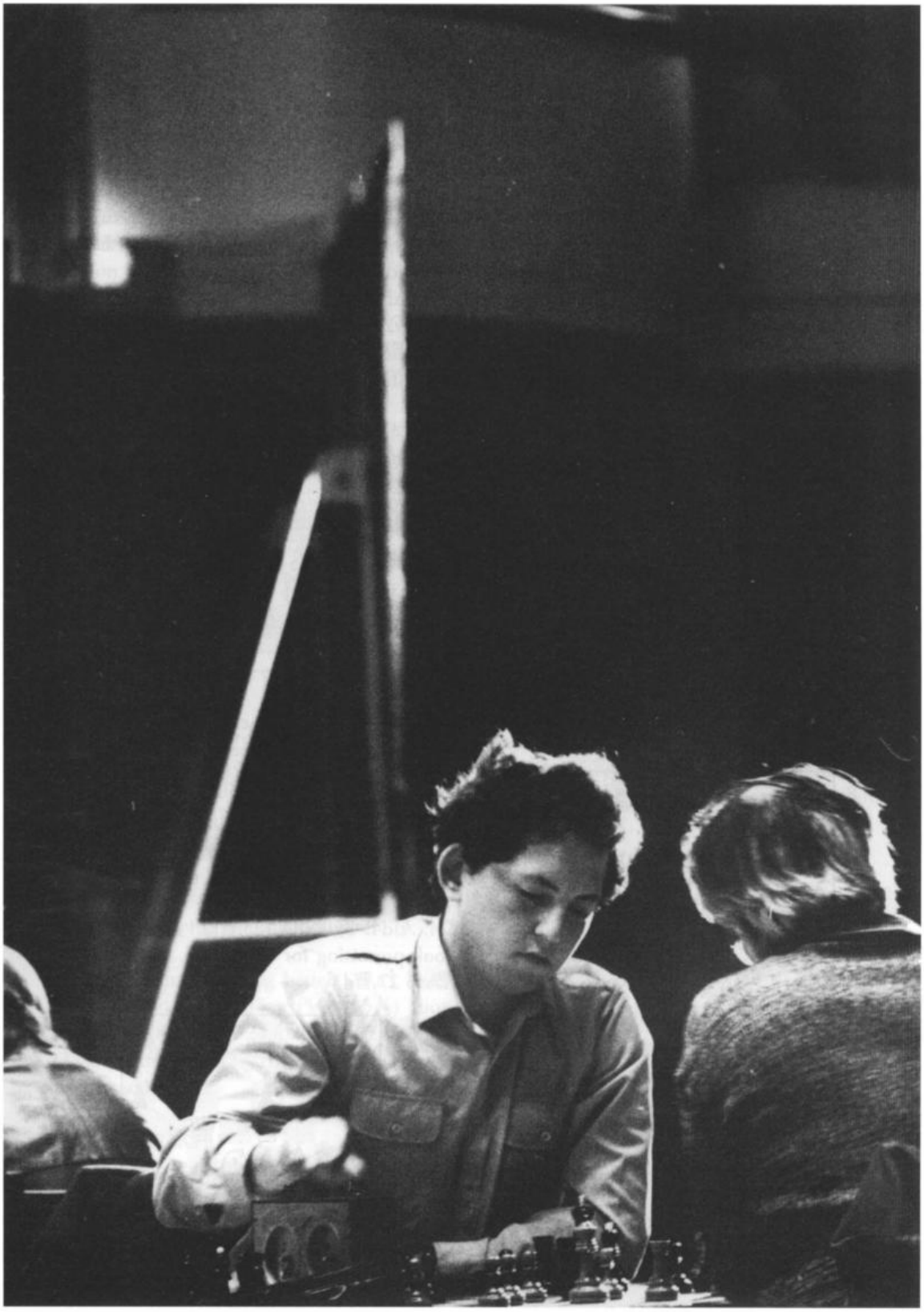
I believe that Black's initiative clearly outweighs the small material disadvantage.

24...♗xf5?!

This obvious but insufficiently energetic move loses the rest of Black's edge. I fully agree with Gelfand that Black had to proceed with:

24...♘d4! 25.♗xd4 (25.♕f2?! ♗xf5 does not look promising for White) 25...exd4 26.♘e4 ♕xf5 27.♕d3





27...♗f1! 28.♖xf1 ♕xf1† 29.♕xf1 ♖xf1† 30.♔g2 ♖e1 And this endgame is rather unpleasant for White – at least he would have to work to save half a point.

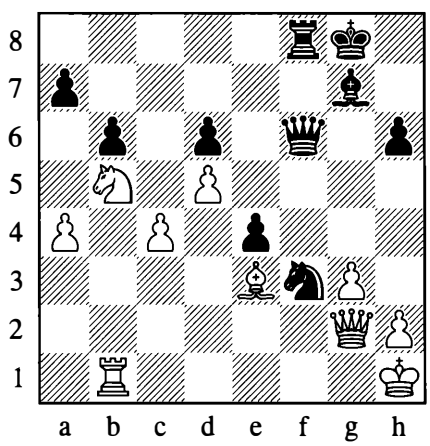
25.♕g2 ♗xb1 26.♖xb1

Black has regained the exchange but lost the initiative. Still I was hoping for the best and somewhere around here I declined a peace offer.

26...e4 27.♘b5!

Boris correctly strives for some activity.

If 27.♘e2 ♖f7!? he would still be on the defensive.



27...♕e7

27...♖f7 would pose more practical problems. Still, after 28.♗f4 ♕g6!? 29.♘xd6! (29.♕e2 is bad due to 29...♗e5 30.♗xe5 ♘xe5) 29...♖xf4 30.gxf4 ♕xd6 31.♕g4 ♔h7 32.a5! the position would be about balanced: rook plus pawn is no worse than bishop and knight due to the insecure position of the black king. Even so, Black has some chances, I guess.

28.♕h3!

As we used to say in the pre-computer era "this move leads to a position of dynamic balance".

28...a6 29.♘a3 ♘d4 30.♕g4 ♘f5

Or 30...♔h8 31.♖d1 ♘f5 32.♘c2 is about level.

31.♘c2 ♕e5!?

It's Black's turn to take care about maintaining equality and this centralizing move is up to the task.

32.♗f4

An interesting and forced draw could be the result of 32.♖xb6 ♕c3 33.♕xe4 ♘xe3 34.♘xe3 ♕e1† 35.♔g2 ♕e2† 36.♔h3 ♕h5† 37.♕h4 ♕f3! 38.♖b3 (38.♘g2 ♖f5) 38...♖f5! 39.♘xf5 ♕xf5† 40.♕g4 ♕f1† 41.♔h4 ♕f6†, with perpetual check.

32...♕c3 33.♕e2 ♖e8

Probably the best solution is to keep the tension. After 33...♕f3† 34.♕xf3 exf3 35.♘e3!? Black could still experience some difficulties in the endgame.

Now 34.♖xb6?! ♕d3 would lead to unnecessary risk for White.

34.♘e3 ♘xe3 35.♗xe3 ♕d3 36.♕xd3 exd3 37.♗f4 with an equal endgame looks rather logical.

Here I offered a draw, which Boris accepted after some thought. Right after the game I was really disappointed at missing such a golden opportunity on the 22nd move. Besides, a win would have equalized my lifetime score of decisive games with Borya, which remains at 8:7 in his favour now. Still I think it was a tense battle in which both of us had our ups and downs.

½–½

Ioannis Nikolaidis – Ilya Smirin

Panormo 2001

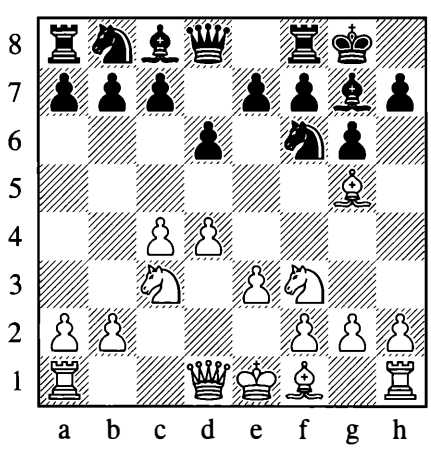
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.♘f3 0–0

If Black is going to play the KID it may be more flexible to start with 4...d6. In this case after 5.♗g5 and the subsequent exchange of this bishop for the knight with ...♘h5 he may choose a plan with queenside castling. This happened, for instance, in the following game: 5...h6 6.♗h4 g5 7.♗g3 ♘h5 8.e3 e6 9.♕c2 ♕e7 10.♗e2 ♘c6 11.♘d2 ♘xg3 12.hxg3 ♗d7 13.0–0–0 0–0–0 14.♔b1 ♔b8 And the black king is relatively safe; (½–½, 34) Moiseenko – Cheparinov, Kemer 2007.

5.♗g5 d6

Another direction here is 5...c5 6.d5 (after 6.e3 cxd4 7.exd4 d5! Black is OK, as practice has shown) 6...b5!? in the style of the Benko Gambit.

6.e3



White plays the opening in quite a timid way. He has developed the bishop on g5 and after that put his pawn on e3, not on e4 as is usual in the KID. But this scheme is clearly not without venom, and Black should play actively and precisely not only to get counterplay but just to try to equalize. Despite White's setup not being overambitious, he enjoys free development and his pawn centre has no weak spots – the pawn on d4 is well defended. OK – all these are common words. Now we will look at some concrete examples.

6...h6

Of course, Black may choose different setups here, but the main question is whether to prepare ...e5 or to play ...c5 now or slightly later. I prefer the second option. The immediate 6...c5 is possible and may often lead to a transposition of moves. It happened in the following game:

7.♗e2 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♗g3 ♘h5 10.dxc5!?

White changes the pawn structure, trying to exploit the weakening of Black's king.

10...♘xg3 11.hxg3 dxc5 12.♕c2 e6

Of course not 12...♘c6? 13.♘xg5 hxg5? 14.♕h7# – as I said earlier, White's setup has its venom.

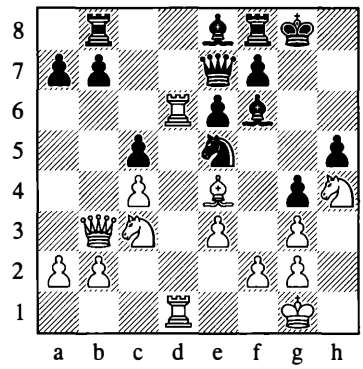
13.♖d1

13.g4!? ♘c6 14.a3 seems to me to be a more aggressive and better continuation. 14...a6 15.♘d2 (I think that Alexey Kuzmin's proposal 15.♗d3!?, with the idea of queenside castling and trying to create threats against the black king, deserves serious attention) 15...♖b8 16.g3 b5 17.♘ce4 b4 18.a4 b3! 19.♘xb3 ♘b4 20.♕b1 ♗b7 21.0–0 ♗xe4 22.♕xe4 ♕c7; (½–½, 31) M. Gurevich – Fedorov, Stockholm 1997.

13...♕e7 14.0–0 ♘c6 15.♖d2 g4 16.♘h4 h5 17.♖fd1 ♘e5 18.♗d3 ♗d7 19.♗e4 ♗e8

Black has completed his development and stands well with the two bishops. Control of the d-file does not promise White anything concrete, and his knight is badly placed on h4.

20.♕b3 ♖b8 21.♖d6 ♗f6



22.♘d5?

This tactical attempt proves to be in Black's favour.

22...exd5 23.♘f5 ♕xd6 24.♘xd6 dxe4 25.♘xe4 ♗g7 26.♖d6 ♗c6 27.♘f6† ♗xf6 28.♖xf6 ♔g7 29.♖f5 f6 30.♖xh5 ♖h8 31.♖xh8 ♖xh8

(0–1, 45) Beim – Smirin, Tel Aviv 1996.

7.♗h4 c5 8.d5 g5 9.♗g3 ♘h5 10.♘d2

10.♗d3 is considered to be the most aggressive continuation nowadays – the bishop eyes the black king. In my opinion, the following encounter may serve as a good example of Black's action in this case:

10...f5!?

To fight for the initiative, Black agrees to an additional weakening of his already compromised king.

11.♘d2 ♘xg3 12.hxg3 ♘d7 13.♘f3 ♘f6

The knight arrives to help its monarch.

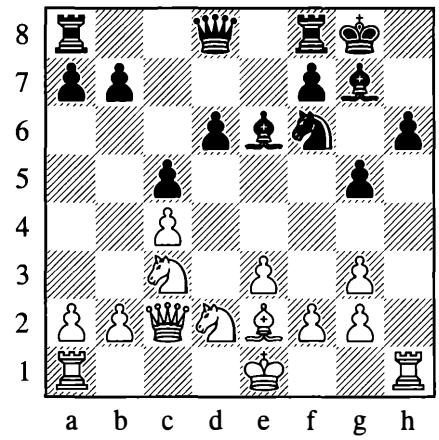
14.♕c2 ♘g4 15.♘h2 ♘e5 16.♗e2

(1–0, 45) Agrest – Nithander, Copenhagen 2007. Now after 16...f4 Black would be fine – he has active pieces and his king feels reasonably comfortable.

10...♘xg3 11.hxg3 ♘d7 12.♕c2 ♘f6

I think it was better to act as in the previous game – 12...f5!? 13.♗d3 (or 13.♗e2 ♘f6) 13...♘e5 14.♗e2 f4 15.exf4 gxf4 16.gxf4 ♖xf4 17.g3 ♖f8 18.f4 ♘g4, and again my sympathies lie with Black in this complicated position.

13.♗e2 e6 14.dxe6 ♗xe6



15.♘de4?!

White could have strengthened his grip over the centre by means of 15.♖d1!?, with better prospects – it's hard to see compensation for the weaknesses on d6 and d5 and the somewhat exposed king on g8. An important point is that the freeing attempt 15...d5? does not work due to 16.♘b3.

15...♘xe4 16.♘xe4

Now Black has time to try to open the position for his bishops.

16...b5

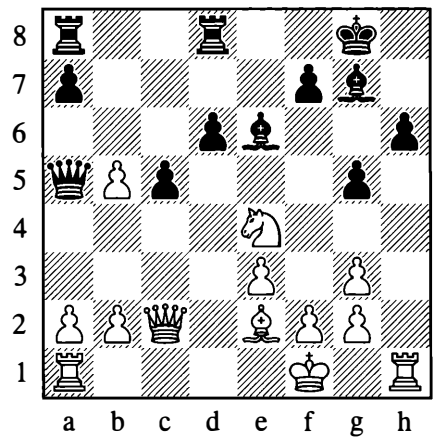
A tempting but objectively doubtful pawn sacrifice.

Sometimes one should play simple chess – after 16...♕a5† 17.♕d2 (stronger is 17.♔f1 ♖fd8 18.f4 gxf4 19.gxf4 d5 20.cxd5 ♗xd5, with an unclear position in which both sides have their trumps) 17...♕xd2† 18.♔xd2 d5! 19.♘xc5 dxc4 20.♘xe6 fxe6 21.♖af1 ♖ad8† 22.♔c2 ♖d6 23.f4 c3! With the idea 24.bxc3 ♖c8 25.c4 ♖a6, and Black would enjoy a risk-free advantage in the endgame.

17.cxb5 ♕a5†

17...♖c8, preparing ...d5, looked like a reasonable alternative.

18.♔f1 ♖fd8



19.a3?

This continuation is too slow and soft.

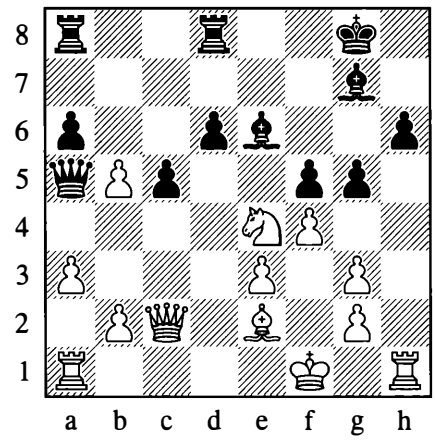
After the energetic 19.f4! White would have an edge, though in a rather complicated position. After both 19...f5 or 19...♕b4 he would react with 20.♘c3, with an extra pawn and play against the black king.

19...a6 20.f4

20.bxa6 understandably did not appeal to Ioannis – after 20...♖ab8 21.♘c3 d5 22.f4 d4 his position would be under enormous pressure for just two pawns.

It was possible to sacrifice a rook: 20.♖xh6!? ♗xh6 21.♘f6† ♔f8 (dangerous is 21...♔g7 22.♘h5† ♔f8? [22...♔g8=] 23.♕h7) 22.♕h7 ♔e7 23.♕xh6 ♖h8 24.♘h7 ♖ag8 25.♕f6† ♔d7 26.♗d3 axb5 27.♔g1 with an unclear position – just an illustration of a possible tactical outbreak.

20...f5



21.fxg5!?

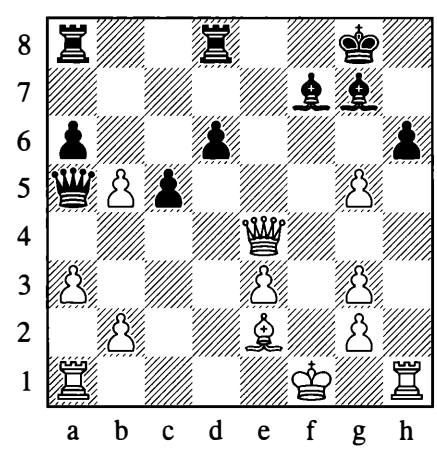
A correct sacrifice, although I did not think so during the game...

The quiet alternative 21.♘c3 axb5 22.♘xb5 was possible, but after 22...♖ab8 23.a4 ♕b4 24.♔f2 d5! Black would obtain a promising position. Nikolaidis decided to take an active approach instead.

21...fxe4 22.♕xe4

White has enough pawns for a bishop, but the pawn structure fails to impress. Much more important, however, is that the black king is facing a surprisingly strong attack – mainly because the queen is stuck on a5.

22...♗f7

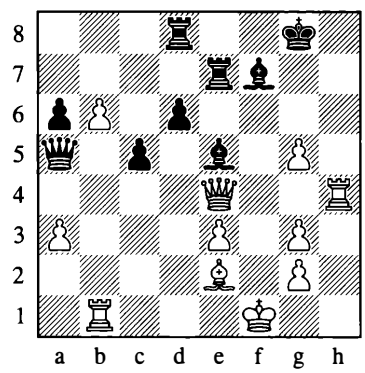


23.♗d3

Houdini's suggestion 23.♖xh6! indeed seems to be more worrying for Black. It has just one drawback: it would be almost unreal to make this move over the board.

Now 23...♗xh6 24.gxh6 ♔f8 25.♕f4 ♕d2 26.♕f6 looks very dangerous for Black.

So the best option seems to be: 23...♖a7! 24.♖h4 ♗xb2 25.♖b1 ♗e5 26.b6 ♖e7



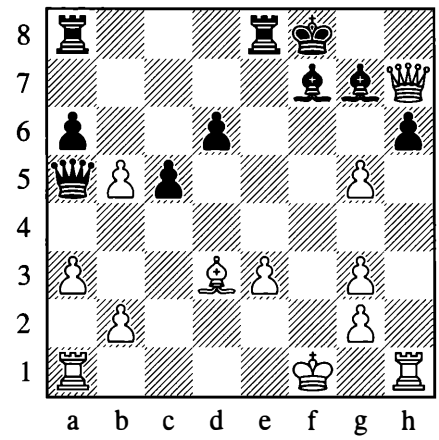
Intuitively I would take Black in this wild position, even though the silicon brain believes otherwise.

23...♖e8?

In such a sharp and unbalanced position any mistake may cost dearly. Without any reason, Black has forced the white queen to go to h7 – but it was heading there anyway.

The correct move seems to be 23...c4!?, striving for activity and threatening the bishop on d3. After 24.♗c2 d5 (24...hxg5 25.♔g1! and the a1-rook will join the attack from f1) 25.♕h7† ♔f8 26.gxh6 ♗xb2 27.♖b1 ♗e5 28.♕f5 ♕c3 29.h7 ♗h8 another crazy position would arise, and again I would prefer Black. But of course this is just a sample line.

24.♕h7† ♔f8



25.♖xh6?

I recall that I was counting on this move.

Meanwhile the following quiet move would be very strong:

25.♔g1!

The rook will tease Black from f1, while the white king is in safety. Suddenly Black has no satisfactory defence. For instance:

25...♕d2

Or: 25...hxg5 26.♖f1 ♖a7 27.♕g6+–

26.♖f1 ♕xe3† 27.♔h2 ♕xg5 28.♗g6 ♖a7 29.♖f5± ♕g4

Only 29...♕xf5 30.♗xf5 axb5 leaves chances for a draw.

30.♖hf1 ♖ee7 31.b6 ♖ab7 32.♖1f4 ♕d1 33.♗xf7 ♖xf7 34.♕g6 ♕b3 35.♖xf7† ♖xf7 36.♖xf7† ♕xf7 37.♕xf7† ♔xf7 38.b7

The pawn sneaks to the prized 8th rank.

25...♕d8!

Finally, the queen joins the defence. The white king is stuck on f1 and this is enough to completely turn the tables.

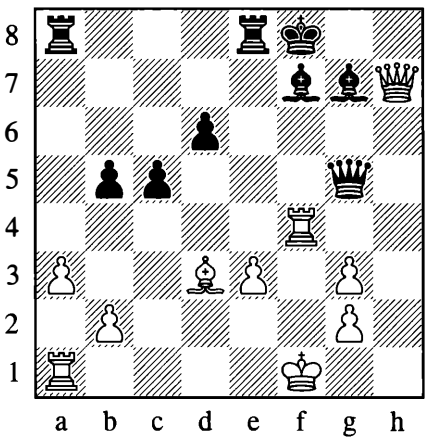
26.♖h4

Other moves are hardly better.

The computer's suggestion 26.♖g6!? ♗xg6 27.♕xg6 fails to save White after 27...♖a7 28.♔g1 ♖f7 29.♗c4 d5 30.♖d1 ♖e5

31.bxa6 ♖xg5. Pawns are pawns, but an extra rook is an extra rook.

26...♕xg5 27.♖f4 axb5



Now everything is clear – White is heading downhill to lose the game.

28.♔g1 ♖a7 29.♖af1 ♖xe3 30.♗g6 ♖ee7 31.♗h5 ♖ac7 32.♖4f3 ♕h6 33.♕f5 ♔g8 34.g4 ♗xh5 35.gxh5 ♖e5 36.♕g4 ♖g5 0–1

Chapter 9

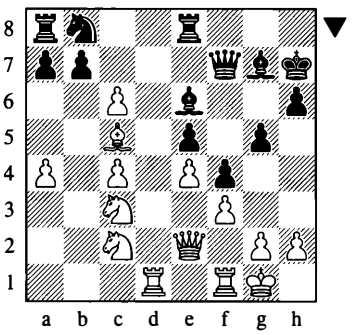
Materialism



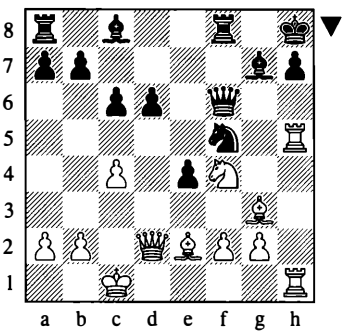
I was very happy when I saw these old photos in a Russian article. 64, the magazine, were happy to allow us to use them for this book. I would like to thank Maxim Notkin for his help with this.

Test yourself against the book

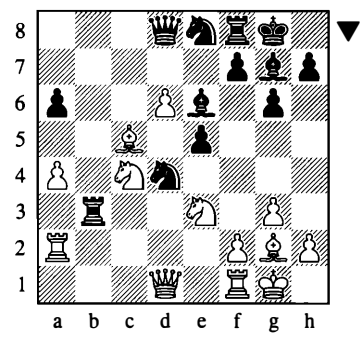
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



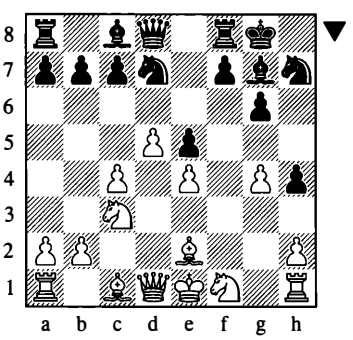
I missed something simple here
(see page 281)



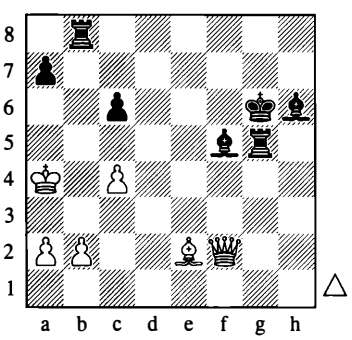
What is Black's strongest move? (see page 291)



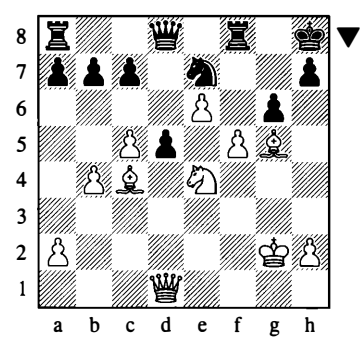
Basic tactics. Black wins.
(see page 275)



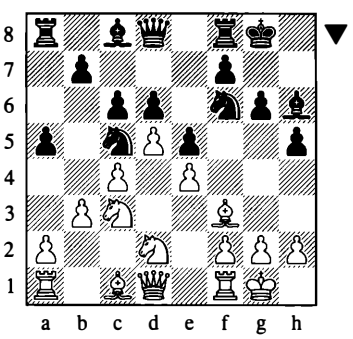
Basic King's Indian strategy. What is the natural move?
(see page 283)



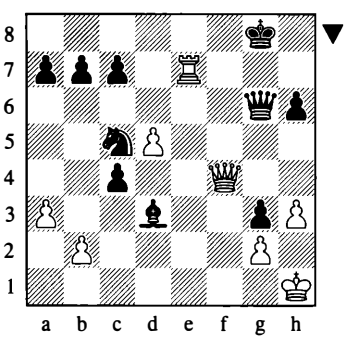
What is White's tactical resource? (see page 293/94)



How can Black refute the white attack?
(see page 277)



Simple chess. What is natural here? (see page 284)



Black's best move? (which worked wonders!)
(see page 299)

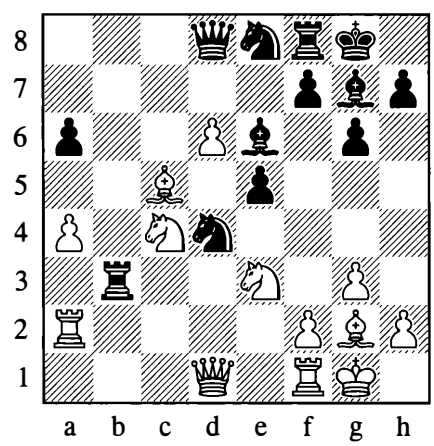
This is a bit of an odds and ends chapter, with four games that I really wanted to include in this book, but which did not really fit into other chapters. In the first two games the bishops are a factor, but I did not really want to put them in the chapter about bishops. The last two games are a mess. One thing that all four games have in common is that I managed to win material in them. Hence the theme of materialism.

However, this topic is not just a poor man's excuse to include four nice games, but also a chance to make an important point: the dynamic approach to the King's Indian is about upsetting the balance of the game, which can be done by taking material as well as giving it.

Just before finishing this book, I played a tournament in Sweden where I was able to come up with a little combination:

Johan-Sebastian Christiansen – Ilya Smirin

Stockholm 2016



26...♖xe3! 27.fxe3 ♗xc4 28.exd4 ♗xa2 29.dxe5 ♗e6

Black has won a piece. My opponent tried to create a bit of counterplay, but it was not enough to compensate for the lack of material.

30.♕d4 ♗d7 31.♗d5 ♕g5 32.♗xf7† ♖xf7 33.♕c4 ♗f5 34.d7 ♘c7 35.♖xf5 gxf5 36.e6 ♘xe6 37.♕xe6 ♗f6 38.♗e3 f4 39.♗xf4 ♕c5† 40.♔g2 ♕e7 41.♕g4† ♗g7
0–1

I want to win games. Whether this is achieved by winning material or sacrificing is less relevant.

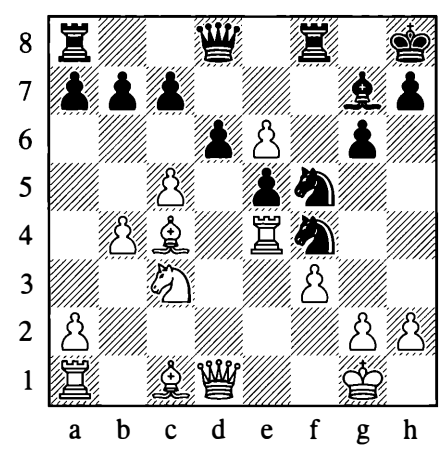
The following game is a wonderful example of Black accepting material and defending by astonishing tactics.

Loek van Wely – Teimour Radjabov

Biel 2007

This game is a fine victory for Radjabov, but I should point out that Van Wely is a great fighter and he tried very hard to beat his opponent with ambitious and risky play.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 ♘h5 10.♖e1 f5 11.♘g5 ♘f6 12.f3 ♔h8 13.♘e6 ♗xe6 14.dxe6 ♘h5 15.c5 ♘f4 16.♗c4 fxe4 17.♖xe4 ♘f5



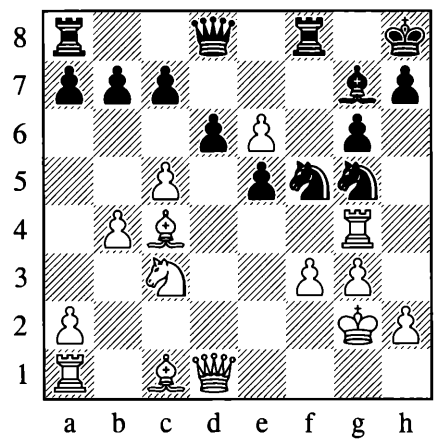
The position is roughly balanced after the opening, but Van Wely plays it as if he is better. Only because Radjabov reacted with

great moves was he able show that this is not the case.

18.g3!? ♘h3† 19.♔g2 ♘g5 20.♖g4!?

Provoking his opponent into winning material.

20.e7 ♕xe7 21.♘d5 ♕d8 22.♗xg5 ♕xg5 23.♘xc7 was the safe continuation, but Black is also fine after: 23...♘e3† 24.♖xe3 ♕xe3 25.♘xa8 e4 26.f4 ♖xa8 27.cxd6 ♖d8, and White's advantage is almost non-existent.



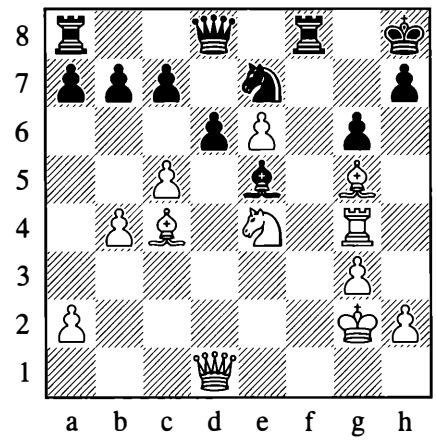
20...♘xf3!

Radjabov does not really have a choice. But as a King's Indian player, it does not hurt his aesthetic sense to play this move!

21.♔xf3!

21.♕xf3? ♘h4† 22.gxh4 ♖xf3 23.♔xf3 e4†! 24.♘xe4 ♗xa1 would only give White two pieces for the queen. The e6-pawn is not strong enough to make up for this difference.

21...e4† 22.♘xe4 ♗xa1 23.♗g5 ♘e7† 24.♔g2 ♗e5



Both players had no doubt predicted this position at move 20. I guess that Van Wely had already then seen the very creative idea he played in the game:

25.♖f4!?

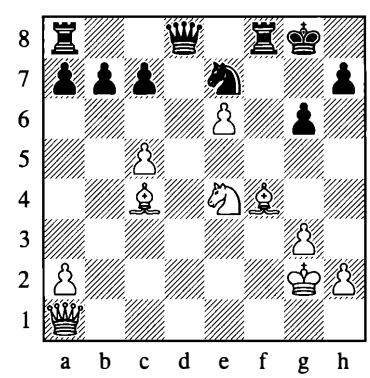
Fighting for control of the dark squares – White tries to sacrifice another exchange.

25...♗xf4

Radjabov accepts the challenge. 25...♖f5!? was more defensive, but also playable.

26.gxf4?

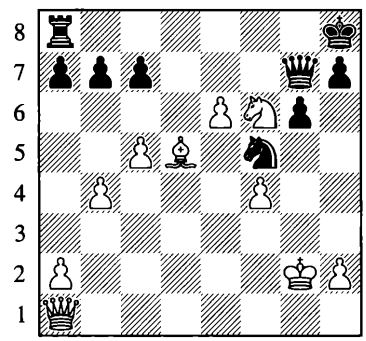
But this is wrong. 26.♗xf4 was the right move, when the position is still in dynamic balance. 26...dxc5 (or 26...♖xf4 27.♕a1† ♔g8 28.gxf4 ♕f8 and White will give a perpetual with the knight on f6 and h5, as in so many lines) 27.♕a1† ♔g8 28.bxc5



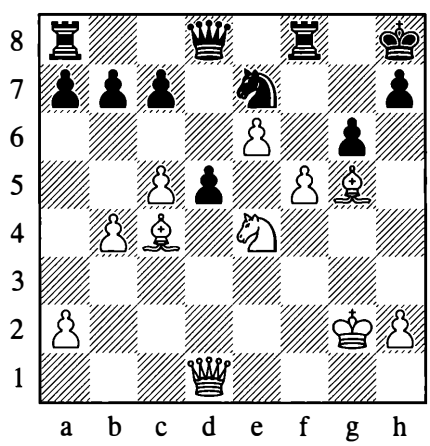
White is threatening ♗h6, so Black has no choice but to play 28...♖xf4 29.gxf4 ♕f8 and the game ends in a perpetual after 30.♘f6† ♔h8 31.♘h5† and so on.

26...d5! 27.f5?!

Van Wely continues down the most ambitious path, but it does not hold up, so White should have played 27.♕a1† ♔g8 28.♗h6, although after: 28...♘f5 29.♗xf8 ♕xf8 30.♘f6† ♔h8 31.♗xd5 ♕g7



32.♕e5 c6 33.♗e4 ♘e7 The position is very close to lost for White.

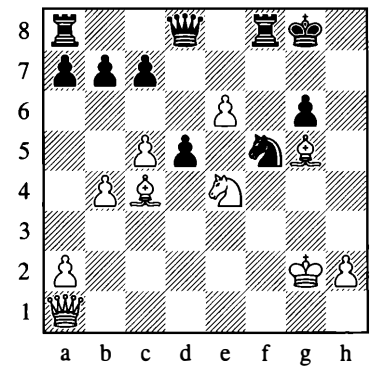


27...h6!!

27...♖xf5 28.♕d4† ♔g8 29.♗h6 looks very dangerous for Black, but surprisingly he is OK after 29...♕f8 30.♗xf8 ♖axf8, when he has two rooks for the queen. The position is in balance.

28.♕d4†

I do not know if Van Wely considered 27...h6, but if he had then he could have seen that 28.♗xh6 ♘xf5 29.♕a1† ♔g8 30.♗g5 was the critical line:



Now 30...♘e7 is the most obvious move. The variation continues with: 31.♗b3 c6 (31...dxe4 32.♗h6 ♘f5 33.e7†) 32.♘f6† ♖xf6 33.♕xf6 ♕f8 34.♕xe7 ♕xe7 35.♗xe7 ♖e8 36.♗d6 ♖xe6 37.♔f2 and Black will have a difficult defence in the endgame.

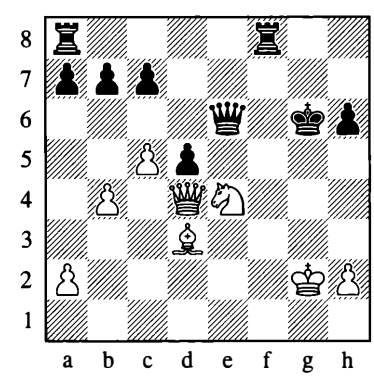
But Radjabov had seen further and found 30...♘e3†!!, which turns the position on its head.

After 31.♗xe3 dxc4 32.♗h6 ♕e7, White does not have significant compensation.

And after 31.♔g1 ♕e8 the attack crashes to earth quite quickly as well. For example: 32.e7 ♖f5 33.♗xe3 dxc4 34.♘f6† ♖xf6 35.♕xf6 ♕f7 36.♕e5 ♖e8 37.♗g5 ♕f5 and Black wins.

28...♔h7 29.fxg6† ♔xg6 30.♗xe7 ♕xe7 31.♕xd5

Or 31.♗d3 is met by 31...♕xe6!.

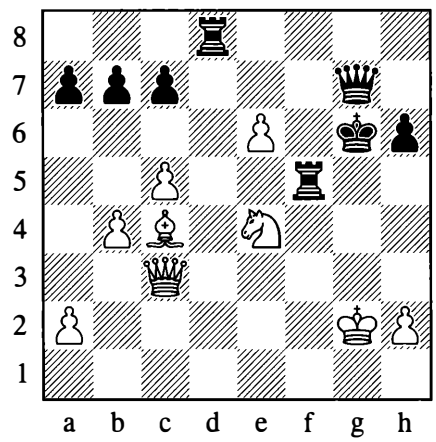


This looks very dangerous for Black until you start considering how White should continue and see that there is nothing. 32.♘g3† ♔f7 33.♗f5 ♕e8 34.♕xd5† ♔g7 35.♕d4† ♖f6 36.♘e4 ♕f7 and the attack is coming to an end.

31...♖ad8

The attack is over.

32.♕e5 ♖f5 33.♕c3 ♕g7



34.♕g3† ♔h7 35.♕xg7† ♔xg7 36.♔g3 ♖d4 0–1

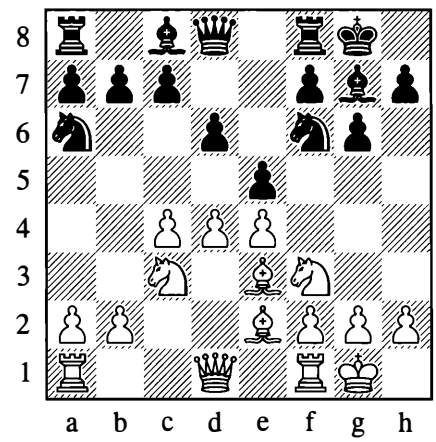
The first main game of this chapter is from the last round of an open tournament in the Israeli coastal city of Ashdod. My opponent was a future grandmaster and fellow member of the national team, Maxim Rodshtein. We both needed a win to tie for first place.

My Games

Maxim Rodshtein – Ilya Smirin

Ashdod 2006

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘a6 8.♗e3



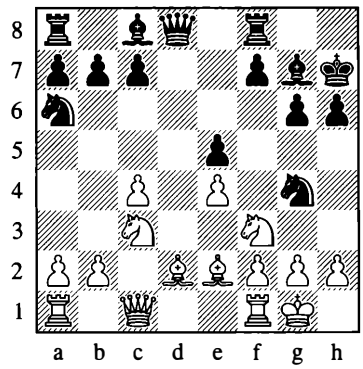
8...h6

An experimental move. The idea of this modest prophylactic move is to prepare ...♘g4 without White being able to reply with ♗g5. I played this move a few times with good results, but now I think that this loss of time is not fully justified.

9.♘e1!?

This original move was invented by Russian grandmaster Denis Yevseev.

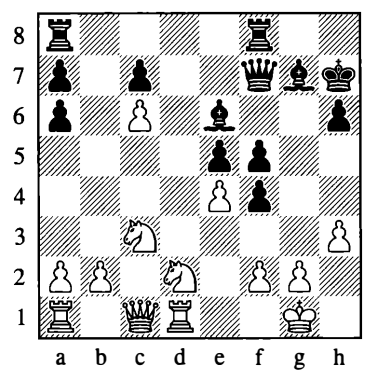
9.dxe5 ♘g4 is more natural and was played by Boris Gelfand against me in the Blitz World Championship. Here is this interesting game: 10.♗d2 dxe5 11.♕c1 ♔h7



12.♖d1

In my opinion, better here is 12.h3 ♘f6 13.♘xe5 and with a slight transposition of moves a position has arisen from the game Wantola – Smirin, Ohrid 2009, in which I had the worse position, despite winning in the end. Surprisingly, even in home analysis I did not find equality after 13.♘xe5.

12...♕e8 13.h3 ♘f6 14.♗e3 ♘h5 15.c5 f5 16.♗xa6 bxa6 17.♘d5 ♕f7 18.c6 ♗e6 19.♘c3 g5 20.♘d2 ♘f4 21.♗xf4 gxf4



22.♔h2 ♗f6 23.exf5 ♗xf5 24.♘de4 ♕g6 25.♖d7† ♔h8 26.f3 ♖g8 27.♕f1 ♗xd7 28.cxd7 ♖ad8 29.♖d1 ♗h4 30.♘a4 ♗e7 31.♖d2 ♕c6 32.♕d1 ♖g6 33.♖d5 ♗d6 34.♘ac5 ♖dg8 35.g4 fxg3† 36.♔g2 ♖d8 37.b4 a5 38.b5 ♕b6 39.a4 ♗xc5 40.♖xc5 ♖g7 41.♖d5 ♕e6 42.♘c5 ♕f5 43.♕d3 ♕xh3† 44.♔xh3 g2 45.♕e3 g1=♕ 46.♕xg1 ♖xg1 47.♘e6 ♖dg8 48.♖d2 ♖h1† 49.♖h2 ♖d1

½–½ Gelfand – Smirin, Rishon Le Zion 2006.

Playing the "symmetrical prophylactic" move 9.h3 is not a very good idea – after 9...exd4 10.♘xd4 (10.♗xd4!?) 10...♖e8 11.f3 (better is 11.♗f3, but it does not bring an opening advantage either after 11...♘c5 12.♕c2 ♘h7!, with the idea 13...♘g5) 11...♘h5 the drawbacks of 9.h3 become obvious.

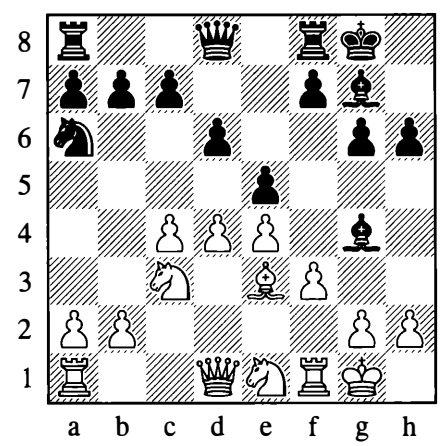
9...♘g4!

The correct reply, based on simple tactics.

After 9...exd4?! 10.♗xd4 c6 11.♘c2 (this and the next moves are possible as a result of 9.♘e1) 11...♖e8 12.f3 ♘c7 13.♕d2 d5 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.e5 White has obtained an indisputable edge, mostly because of the bad position of the knight on c7; (1–0, 34) Yevseev – Loginov, Kazan 2005.

10.♗xg4 ♗xg4 11.f3

Of course Black would welcome 11.♕xg4?! exd4.



11...♗c8!

This is stronger than the natural 11...♗d7 12.♕d2 ♔h7 13.♖d1; (1–0, 25) Golod – Areshchenko, Port Erin 2007, and the unfortunate position of the bishop on d7 is already making itself felt.

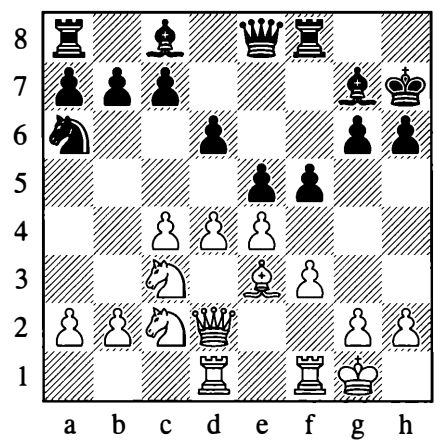
12.♕d2 ♔h7 13.♖d1 ♕e8

In my opinion Black's position is perfectly respectable and the bishop pair fully compensates for the opponent's supremacy in the centre. As Tarrasch used to say: "The future belongs to he who has the bishops." In this particular game he proved to be right!

14.♘c2

White could close the centre: 14.d5 f5 15.♘d3 f4 16.♗f2 g5 17.♕e2, but it would lead to a dangerous kingside attack after 17...♕g6 18.c5 g4 19.♔h1 ♗f6 20.b4 ♖g8.

14...f5



15.b4?!

My young opponent (Maxim was 17 when this game was played) does not sense the potential danger.

He should have opted to be more active on the kingside: 15.exf5 gxf5 16.f4 e4 17.b4 (or 17.d5 ♘c5 18.♗d4 ♖g8 19.♗xg7 ♖xg7) 17...c6 and Black, with two bishops and potential pressure along the g-file, is OK. But White has his own trumps (good minor pieces, some space advantage), so in my opinion the chances are approximately even.

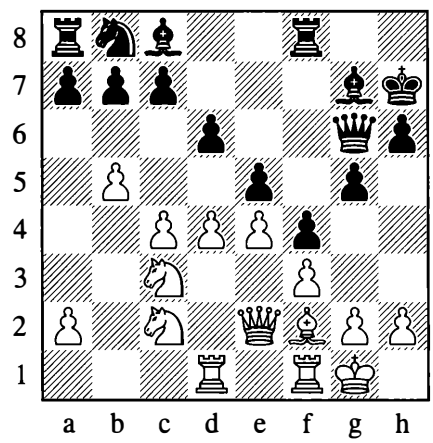
15...f4 16.♗f2 g5

Starting a rather standard kingside attack, which gains in strength here because White's light-squared bishop has already gone.

17.♕e2

Slightly more precise was 17.b5 ♘b8 18.♘d5 ♕f7 with complicated play, but over the board I would definitely choose Black.

17...♕g6 18.b5 ♘b8



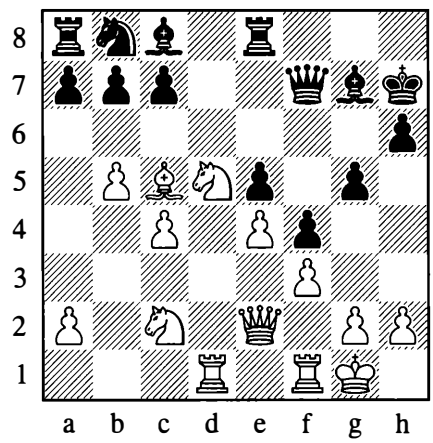
An interesting picture. In the middlegame all of Black's queenside pieces are on their initial positions, yet there is hardly any way for White to exploit this fact. White's pieces and pawns look active, but somehow they lack the energy to deliver a substantial blow. Black, in contrast, is not very active yet, but he will soon start a quick action against the white king. The absence of White's light-squared bishop is also telling – the pawn on c4 may easily become a weakness. To put it simply, Black's undeveloped army is better coordinated than his counterpart's fully developed one.

19.dxe5

Or 19.♘d5 ♖f7 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.♗c5 ♗e6 (21...♘d7!? is not bad either, after which the following interesting continuation is possible: 22.♘xc7 [better is 22.♗b4] 22...♘xc5 23.♘xa8 g4 24.♔h1 b6 25.♖d8 ♗b7 26.♖b8 g3

27.h3 ♕d6! 28.♖e8 ♘d3 and Black dominates the board) 22.♘cb4 g4, with promising prospects.

19...dxe5 20.♗c5 ♖e8 21.♘d5 ♕f7



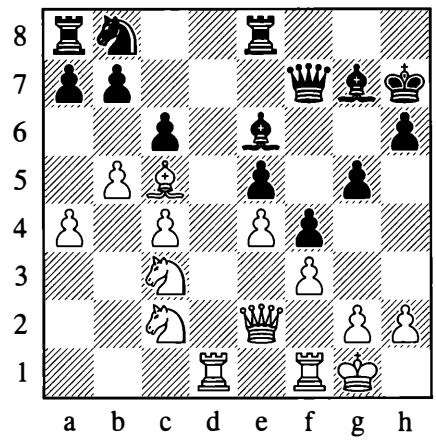
Max has made all the active moves and Black is still undeveloped, but what should White do now? Rodshtein could not find the right answer, but it was not an easy task.

22.a4?

Out of inertia, White makes another active move. Alas, it proved to be his last active one in the game.

Perhaps he should have played the defensive 22.♘a3 instead, protecting in advance the weakest link in White's camp – the c-pawn. But even then Black would be fine after 22...♗e6 23.♖d2 ♘d7 (or 23...c6 24.♘b4 ♘d7 25.♗d6 ♘b6) 24.♗b4 ♘b6.

22...c6 23.♘c3 ♗e6



Now it's my turn to attack some targets in White's camp, and the pawn on c4 is already doomed!

24.bxc6?

An oversight.

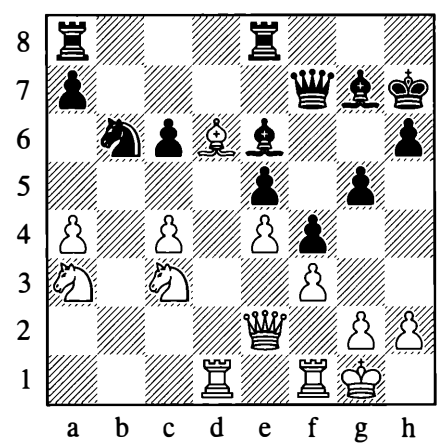
Houdini recommends parting with the pawn immediately with 24.♕f2 ♗xc4 25.♖fe1 or 24.♘a3 ♘d7 25.♗d6 ♘b6 26.bxc6 bxc6 27.♕f2 ♗xc4. This says a lot about the problems White is facing.

24...bxc6?

Of course not the immediate 24...♗xc4? 25.cxb7.

But neither of us noticed 24...b6! 25.c7 ♗xc4, with a quick win.

25.♘a3 ♘d7 26.♗d6 ♘b6



27.c5?

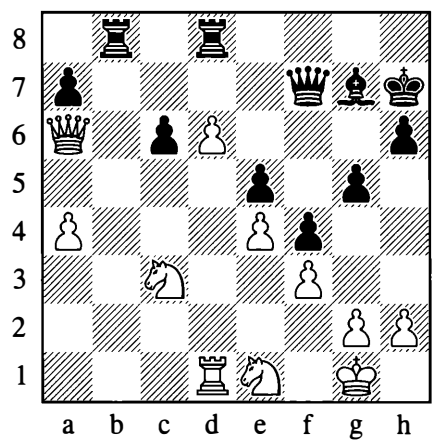
In trying to save a pawn, my opponent loses even more material.

His prospects were already not bright, but after the correct 27.♖fe1 ♘xc4 28.♘xc4 ♗xc4 29.♕f2 I would still have a lot of work to do to convert the extra pawn.

27...♘c4

Now the loss of the exchange is inevitable.

28.♘c2 ♘xd6 29.cxd6 ♗c4 30.♕f2 ♗xf1 31.♕xf1 ♖ab8 32.♘e1 ♖ed8 33.♕a6



33...♕b3 34.♕d3 ♗f8

The d6-pawn will disappear very soon, so further resistance is pointless. White resigned. His active position fell apart with surprising speed!

0–1

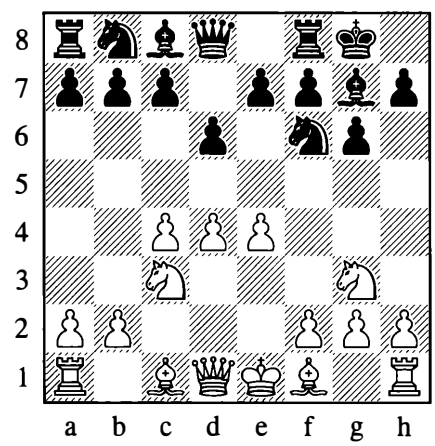
In the next game I managed to win the exchange. The way I exploited it was to continue to play energetically and use the extra firepower to my advantage.

David Anton Guijarro – Ilya Smirin

Yerevan 2014

This game was played in the 9th round of the European Championship in Yerevan. We both were in the leading group and so the result of the game was very important from a sporting point of view.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘ge2 0–0 6.♘g3

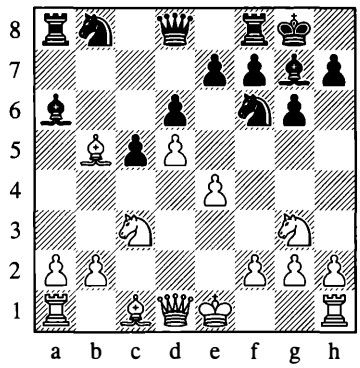


Usually White chooses this variation to avoid well-trodden paths. The evident drawback is that the knight moves twice in a row as early as the sixth move. But the KID setup allows White to do that without visible damage. Still, I do not quite understand the idea behind this knight manoeuvre, even though I have to admit that statistically White does reasonably well here.

6...♘bd7

Black is flexible in his choice of continuation.

One of my games went *à la* the Benko Gambit: 6...a6 7.♗e2 c5 8.d5 b5 9.cxb5 axb5 10.♗xb5 ♗a6



11.0–0 ♗xb5 12.♘xb5 ♘e8 13.♕c2 ♘a6 14.♘e2 ♘ec7 15.♘bc3 ♕d7 16.b3 ♘b4 17.♕b1 f5 18.a3 ♘ba6 19.♖a2 ♖ab8 20.♖b2 ♘b5 21.♕d3 ♘ac7 22.♖b1 ♘xc3 23.♘xc3 fxe4 24.♘xe4 ♖f5 25.♘c3 ♗xc3 26.♕xc3 ♘xd5 27.♕c4 e6 28.♗d2 ♘c7 29.b4 ♕a4 30.♕d3 ♖d5 31.♕c3 ♘b5 32.♕f6 ♖xd2 33.♕xe6† ♔g7 34.♕e7† ♔g8 35.♕e6† ♔g7 ½–½ Serper – Smirin, Philadelphia 1996.

7.♗e2 h5

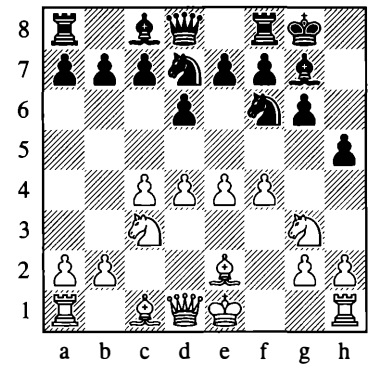
A somewhat risky but logical move, stressing the disadvantage of the knight's position on g3.

8.♘f1

I am not sure this is a 100 per cent healthy idea – this knight makes too many moves in the opening.

8.♗e3 e5 9.d5 a5 10.a3 ♘c5 11.h4 ♘g4 12.♗xg4 ♗xg4 13.f3 ♗d7, with excellent play for Black, was the game Nabaty – Smirin, Skopje 2013.

The best continuation was played by Viorel Bologan at the end of 2015: 8.f4!

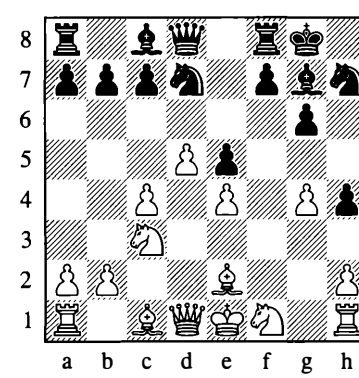


This active and logical move makes Black worry about his kingside, which was weakened by the advance of the h-pawn. In the game Bologan quickly gained an overwhelming advantage:

8...e5

The other plan is 8...c5 9.d5 b5!? trying to obtain counterplay by acting in the spirit of the Benko Gambit (well, we have already seen something like that). But it does not seem to equalize after: 10.cxb5 a6 11.a4 ♕a5 (11...axb5 12.♗xb5 ♘b6!?) 12.♗d2 h4 13.♘f1 axb5 14.♘xb5 ♕b6 15.♕c2 ♗a6 16.♘e3 ♗xb5 17.♗xb5 ♕xb5 There is hardly anything better. 18.axb5 ♖xa1† 19.♘d1 The compensation for the queen is clearly insufficient.

9.fxe5 dxe5 10.d5 h4 11.♘f1 ♘h7 12.g4



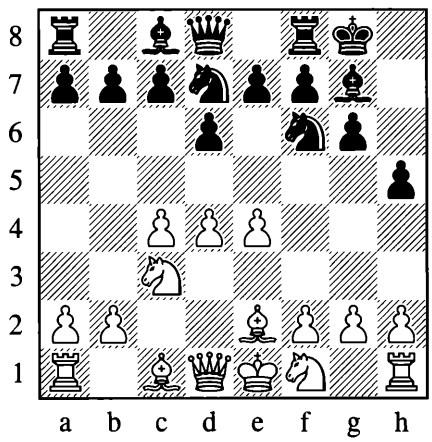
12...c6?

There was no good alternative to: 12...♗f6! 13.♗e3 ♗g5 14.♕d2 (or 14.♗f2 ♗e7!? with

the idea ...♗c5) 14...♗xe3 15.♘xe3 ♘g5, with an interesting position. White has an obvious space advantage, but Black controls some important dark squares and, thanks to that, he may count on counterplay.

13.h3 ♖e8 14.♗e3 g5 15.♘d2 ♘df8 16.♘f3 ♗f6 17.♕b3 ♘g6 18.0–0–0 ♕a5 19.c5 ♘f4 20.♗c4 ♕c7 21.d6 ♕d7 22.♗xf4

1–0 Bologan – Al Sayed, Qatar Masters 2015.



8...c6!?

I had prepared this move before the game.

8...a6 9.♘d2 c6 10.0–0 b5 11.a3 had already happened in one of David's games: 11...♗b7?! As is well known, this bishop usually belongs on the c8-h3 diagonal in the KID. 12.♖e1 e5 13.d5 cxd5 14.cxd5 ♖c8 15.h3 ♗h6 16.♗f1 ♔g7 17.♘b3 etc.; (1–0, 66) Anton Guijarro – Naroditsky, Al Ain 2013.

8...e5?! 9.d5 ♘c5 10.♗g5 ♕e8 11.♘d2 would play into White's hands: he reaches a very convenient piece setup after all.

9.♘d2?

But this is already too much. The knight moves as if it is constantly searching for a better fate – in chess this rarely pays off.

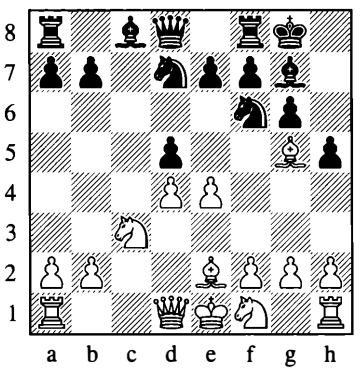
9.♗g5

This was the move to play. After that Black may continue:

9...d5!?

9...♘h7 10.♗e3 e5 11.d5 c5 would be a more standard approach.

10.cxd5 cxd5



11.e5

11.exd5 would of course be met by 11...♘b6. 11...♘e4 12.♘xe4 dxe4 13.♘d2 f6 14.exf6 exf6 15.♗f4 f5 16.♘c4 ♘b6 17.♘e5 ♔h7

All these moves are logical. Black has good prospects – his pawn chain looks attractive and his pieces are well placed.

9...e5 10.d5 a5

My opponent probably underestimated this move – now it became clear that White has just lost one or two tempos compared with the usual lines (when the knight goes to d2 by the route g1-f3-d2).

11.0–0 ♘c5 12.b3

If 12.♕c2 ♗h6 there would arise a comfortable position for Black from the game Petrosian – Geller, Moscow 1949, with two "extra" moves, ...c6 and ...h5, which makes it even more pleasant for Black.

12...♗h6 13.♗f3 ♘d3

Black rarely obtains such a great position out of the opening in the KID.

14.♕c2

14.♗a3 would look clumsy, but perhaps the idea of keeping the dark-squared bishop deserved some attention. At least I thought during the game that Anton Guijarro would play it.

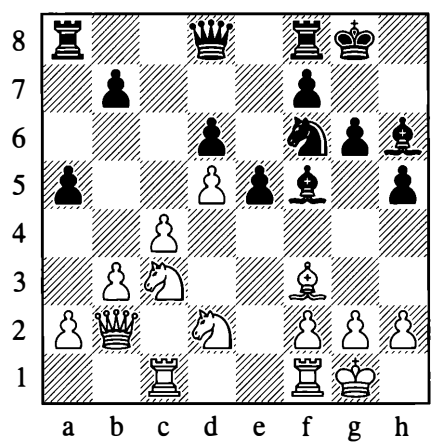
14...♘xc1

It felt great to eliminate this bishop – a very important piece in the KID.

15.♖axc1 cxd5 16.exd5

My opponent did not want to suffer after: 16.cxd5 ♗d7 17.a4 ♖c8 18.♖b1 b5! Understandably he decided to sacrifice the exchange instead.

16...♗f5 17.♕b2



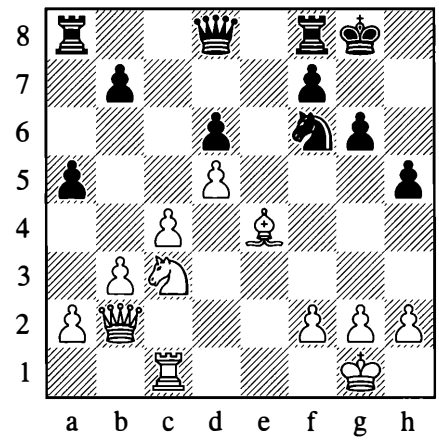
17...e4

During the game I hesitated over whether to win the exchange or to proceed with 17...♘d7!?, which was also strong. But in the end, greed took over.

18.♘dxe4

Or 18.♗e2 e3 19.fxe3 ♗xe3† 20.♔h1 ♘d7 21.♖ce1 ♘c5 was hardly better – Black's pressure is very strong.

18...♗xe4 19.♗xe4 ♗xc1 20.♖xc1



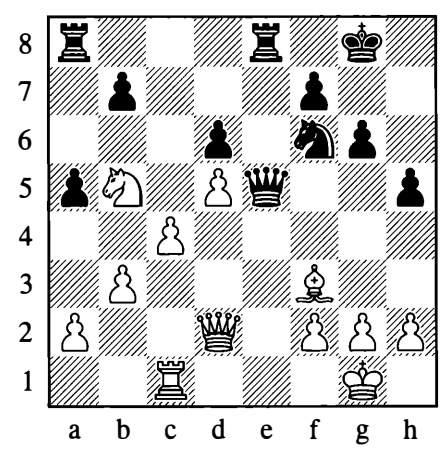
White is left with just a pawn for the exchange, but Black will still have to work to convert his minimal material advantage. White's problem is the passive bishop on e4. If we were to imagine this bishop as being on e3, for example, Black would have no advantage at all, to say the least.

20...♕e7

After "winning" the opening part of the game, I relaxed a little – this habit has cost me dearly during my career.

20...♖e8 21.♗f3 ♖e5 22.h3 ♕e7∓ would be more accurate – Black will probably exchange a pair of rooks, thereby increasing his domination on the dark squares.

21.♗f3 ♕e5 22.♕d2 ♖fe8 23.♘b5



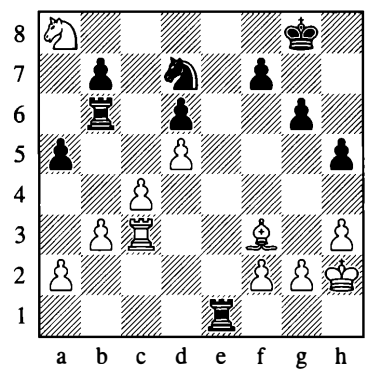
White is trying to create counterplay by means of c4-c5. The d6-pawn demands some attention now.

23...♖e7 24.h3

24.c5 dxc5 25.d6 ♖d7 26.♖e1 ♕f5 would lead nowhere.

24...♘d7 25.♘c7

A curious, yet at the same time logical, variation could arise after: 25.♕c3 ♕xc3 26.♖xc3 ♖e1† 27.♔h2 ♖a6 28.♘c7 ♖b6 29.♘a8

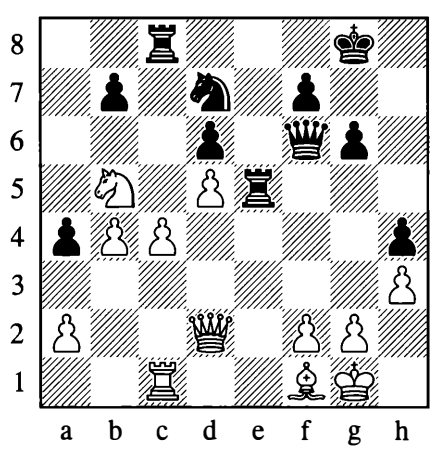


29...♖b4! 30.a3 ♖a1! 31.axb4 axb4 32.♖e3 ♖xa8 It's very unlikely that White can hold this ending – the difference in the activity of the pieces is too great.

25...♖c8 26.♘b5 a4 27.b4 ♕f6!?

The queen vacates e5 for the rook.

28.♗e2 ♖e5 29.♗f1 h4!



This move cramps White's kingside.

30.♘d4

30.♕d4 ♖ce8 31.c5 would be no better – after 31...dxc5 32.bxc5 ♖e1 33.♕d2 ♖xc1 34.♕xc1 ♖e5 35.♕c4 ♖f5! 36.c6 bxc6 37.dxc6 ♘b6 38.♕c2 ♕a1 White's counterplay attempt would fail.

30...♖e4 31.♘b5 b6

To avoid having to worry about a possible c4-c5.

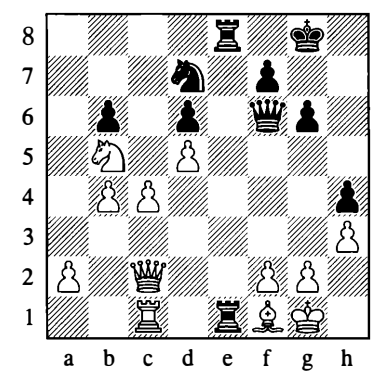
32.♘c3

The following variation reflects the essence of the position well:

32.♕c2 ♖ce8

Black gives up the pawn on a4, but activates his pieces and creates concrete threats.

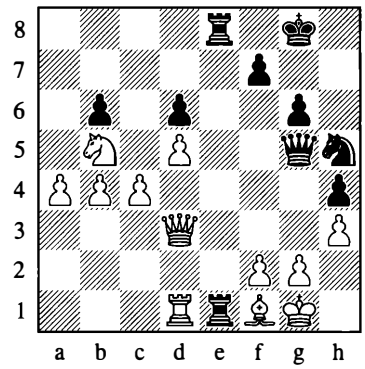
33.♕xa4 ♖e1 34.♕c2



32...♕f4! 35.♖d1 ♘f6 36.a4

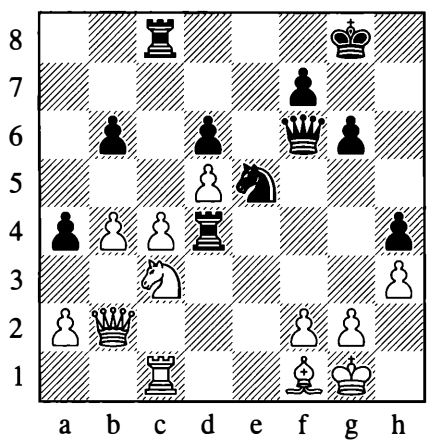
36.♘d4 ♖8e4 37.♘f3 ♖xc4 38.♘xe1 ♖xc2 39.♘xc2 ♘e4 40.f3 ♘g3 would lead to a lost position. With such a weak king, White has no chance of building a fortress, for instance: 41.a4 ♕e5 42.a5 bxa5 43.bxa5 ♕c3 44.♗d3 ♕xa5 etc.

36...♘h5! 37.♕d3 ♕g5!



The decisive regrouping.
38.♘xd6 ♘f4 39.♕f3 ♖xd1 40.♘xe8 ♖e1
White may as well resign.

32...♖d4 33.♕b2 ♘e5!



A similar scheme: Black sacrifices a pawn or two but penetrates into the opponent's camp and attacks the king.

34.♘xa4 ♕f4

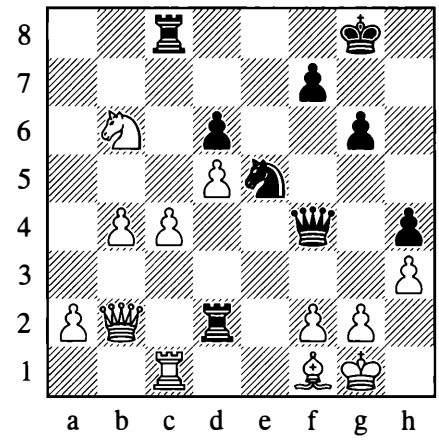
Now we can see that the pawn on h4 plays an important part in the attack, preventing 35.g3.

35.♘xb6

There is nothing better left.

35...♖d2

The beginning of the end.



36.♕c3 ♕xf2† 37.♔h1 ♖e8

Or 37...♖b8 38.c5 ♘d3 39.♘c4 (39.♖b1 ♘e1) 39...♘xc1 40.♘xd2 ♘xa2 would win faster according to the silicon brain.

38.c5 ♖xa2

The simplest.

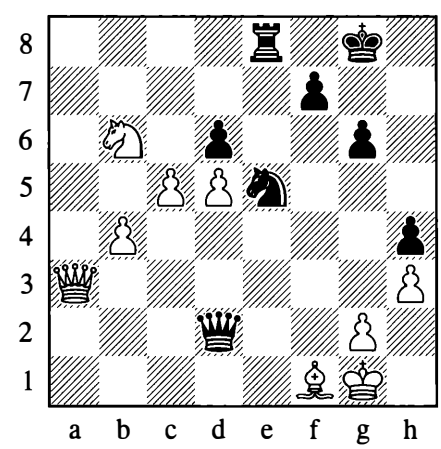
39.♖e1 ♖a3

Instead 39...♔h7 40.cxd6 ♘f3 would bring down the curtain at once, but there was time pressure...

40.♕xa3

40.♕c1 was slightly more resilient, but after 40...♔g7 41.♖e2 ♖c3! 42.♕e1 ♕d4 White is still doomed.

40...♕xe1 41.♔g1 ♕d2!



This precise move puts the opponent in a kind of zugzwang.

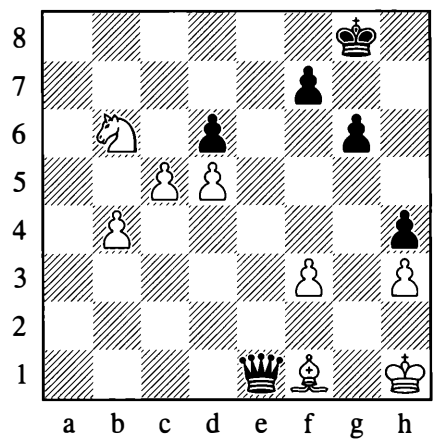
42.♕a4

What else?

42...♕e3† 43.♔h1 ♘f3! 44.♕xe8†

Or 44.gxf3 ♕xf3† 45.♔g1 ♕g3† 46.♔h1 ♖e1 47.♕b5 ♕xh3† 48.♔g1 ♕g3† 49.♔h1 h3, with inevitable checkmate.

44...♕xe8 45.gxf3 ♕e1



White resigned. To the credit of David Anton Guijarro, after this tough loss he won his final two games and took second place in the tournament.

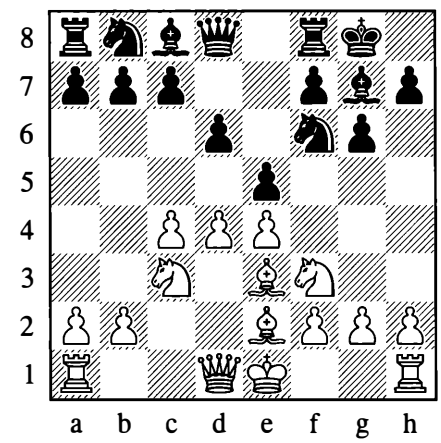
0–1

The following game is really chaotic. I managed to fend off the attack and stack up extra material. But like many good thrillers, there is a great twist at the end.

Evgeny Postny – Ilya Smirin

Acre 2013

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.e4 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.♗e3



A very popular continuation. White delays castling and tries to arrange his pieces first.

7...♘g4

Starting immediate action against the bishop on e3.

The main point of 7.♗e3 can be seen in the variation 7...♘c6?! 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘d2 and White has obtained an ideal setup – after an eventual c4-c5 the d2-knight will reach the very desirable c4-square at once.

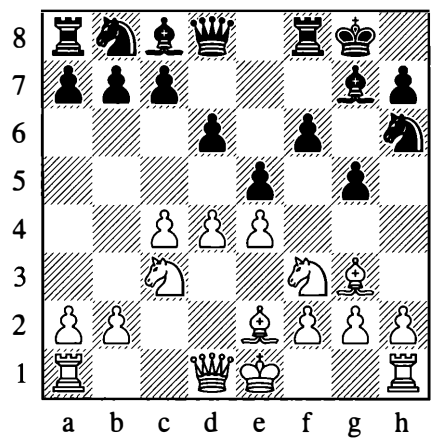
I played 7...♘bd7 against Gelfand in a game you will find elsewhere in the book (page 261).

7...c6, 7...♕e7 or 7...h6 (with the idea 8.dxe5 ♘g4) are other continuations here. The last two moves have a dubious reputation nowadays.

8.♗g5 f6 9.♗h4 g5

The other popular and logical continuation is 9...♘c6 10.d5 ♘e7 11.♘d2 ♘h6, managing without the double-edged ...g6-g5. I usually prefer the move I made in the game.

10.♗g3 ♘h6



Black's setup (c7-d6-e5-f6-g7-h6) looks slightly curious, and reminds one of checkers. But it has a clear idea: to restrict the activity of the bishop on g3 and to strengthen the pawn on e5. Black's pawn formation on the kingside is not fixed and may become quite mobile, as actually happens in the game.

11.h3

White wants to keep his knight on f3 – hence this prophylactic move against ...g5-g4.

On a few occasions I have faced the two other main continuations – 11.d5 and 11.dxe5 – which both lead to different types of positions.

Here is one example: 11...dxe5 12.♕xd8 ♖xd8 13.♘d5 ♘a6 14.♘e7† ♔f7 15.♘xc8 ♖axc8 16.♖c1 ♘c5 17.♘d2 a5 18.f3 ♗f8 19.♗f2 ♖d7 20.h4 g4 and Black was fine; (½–½, 58) Roiz – Smirin, Tel Aviv 2002.

11...exd4

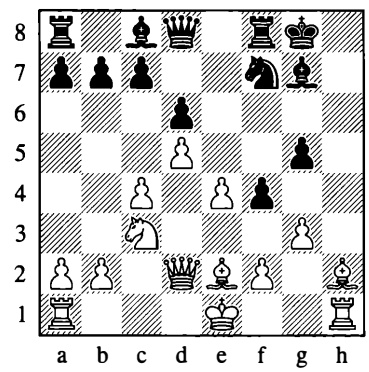
In my opinion it's the right decision to open up the centre and to start piece play.

11...♘c6 12.d5 ♘d4?!

This was played by Kasparov once:

13.♘xd4 exd4 14.♕xd4 f5 15.♕d2 f4 16.♗h2 ♘f7 17.h4 h6 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.g3?

However, after the correct 19.f3 ♘e5 20.0–0–0 White would be better, as future practice has shown.



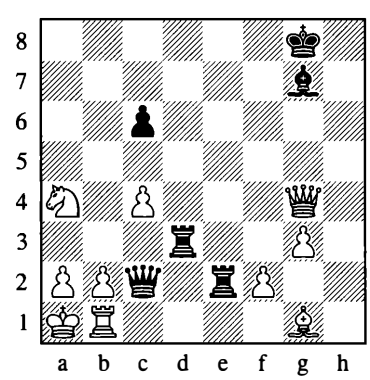
19...f3! 20.♗xf3 ♘e5 21.♗e2 g4

Very nice: now both white bishops, especially the dark-squared one, are inactive, to put it mildly. That more than compensates for two sacrificed pawns.

22.♗g1 c5

Black went on to win in great style...

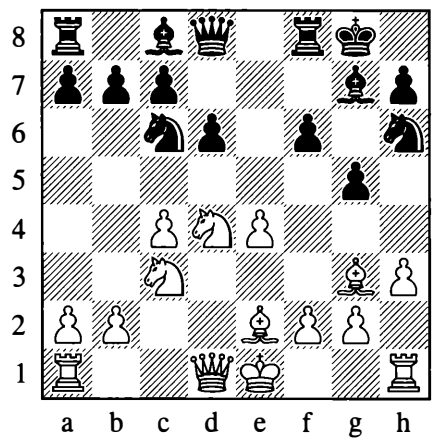
22...c5 23.dxc6 bxc6 24.0–0–0 ♗e6 25.♕xd6 ♕g5† 26.♔b1 ♕g6 27.♔a1 ♖ab8 28.♖h5 ♕xh5 29.♕xe6† ♔h8 30.♕e7 ♘f3 31.♗xf3 ♖xf3 32.♘a4 ♖e8 33.♕xa7 ♕e5 34.♕b6 ♕xe4 35.♕b4 ♕c2 36.♖b1 ♖d3 37.♕c5 ♖e2 38.♕h5† ♔g8 39.♕xg4



39...♕xb1†

0–1 Speelman – Kasparov, Madrid (rapid) 1988.

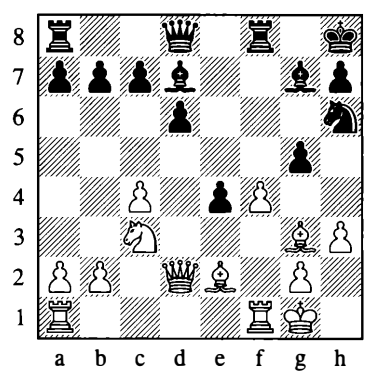
12.♘xd4 ♘c6



13.h4

The most principled approach – White wants to make use of the opponent's weakened king shelter.

Once I won a near miniature after:
13.0–0 ♘xd4 14.♕xd4 f5 15.♕d5† ♔h8 16.f4 ♗d7!? 17.♕d2 fxe4



18.♘xe4?

Correct was 18.fxg5 ♘f5 19.♗f4, with a sharp and unclear situation. Now there comes severe punishment.

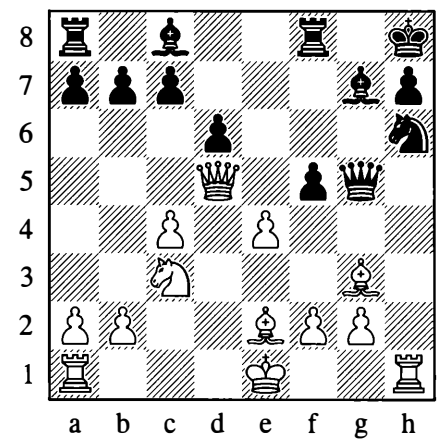
18...♘f5 19.♗h2 gxf4 20.♗xf4 ♗c6 21.♗f3 ♘d4 22.♗g5 ♕e8 23.♖ae1 ♕g6 24.♔h1 ♖ae8

0–1 Gershon – Smirin, Israeli Team Championship 2007.

13...♘xd4 14.♕xd4 f5

This leads to a very dynamic position in which concrete variations will prevail over positional considerations.

15.♕d5† ♔h8 16.hxg5 ♕xg5



17.♖h5?!

Not the best decision – the rook is kind of hanging in the air now.

I would suggest 17.c5 ♗d7 18.cxd6 ♗c6 19.♕a5 cxd6, with a tense and interesting struggle. Optically I like Black's chances here because White's king is still stuck in the centre.

17...♕g6 18.♕d2

Now queenside castling is possible, but White has no time for it: 18.0–0–0 fxe4 19.♘xe4 (somewhat better is 19.♖dh1 e3! 20.♘d1, but that too does not solve all White's problems) 19...♗e6 20.♕d3 ♗f5∓

18...fxe4 19.♘d5

Evgeny tries to complicate matters, but objectively his situation is already suspect: he is a pawn down and the black pieces

may parry the threats against the king while simultaneously counterattacking. But those are just words, which need to be backed up by strong play.

19.0–0–0? was just losing due to 19...e3! 20.♕xe3 ♖e8 21.♕d3 ♖xe2 22.♕xe2 ♗g4 (the rook on h5!).

19...♘f5 20.0–0–0 c6

The exchange 20...♘xg3 21.fxg3 seems to be premature – the f5-knight looks strong at the moment.

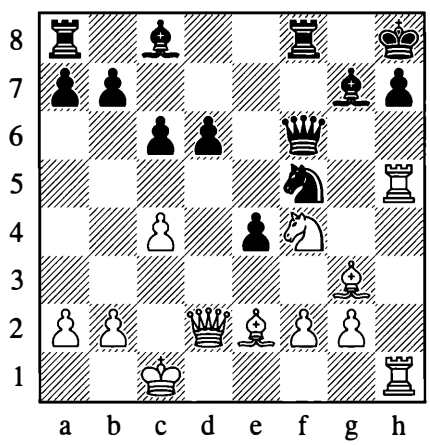
21.♘f4

Houdini briefly suggests 21.♘c7. Come on!

21...♕f6

A battery against the king on c1 has been built. White's chances lie only in the attempt to create something serious against my own king.

22.♖dh1

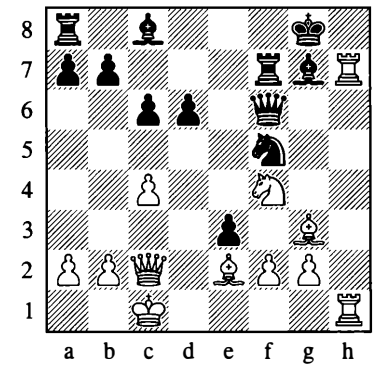


22...h6?!

Too cautious a move for such a sharp situation. However, it would probably be made by the vast majority of players. It would require deep penetration into the position, and a lot of guts, to play the computer's suggestion: 22...e3! 23.♖xh7† ♔g8

Nevertheless, it seems to leave White facing defeat – Black prevails in all variations. Such as:

24.♕c2 ♖f7!

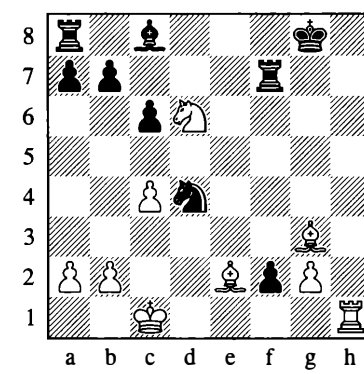


25.♖xg7†

Or 25.♘h5 ♕xb2† 26.♕xb2 ♗xb2† 27.♔xb2 ♔xh7–+.

Or 25.♖7h5 ♘d4 26.♕h7† ♔f8 27.fxe3 ♘xe2† 28.♘xe2 ♕xb2† 29.♔d1 ♕a1† 30.♔d2 ♕xa2†.

25...♕xg7 26.♘h5 ♘d4 27.♘xg7 ♘xc2 28.♘e8 exf2 29.♘xd6 ♘d4



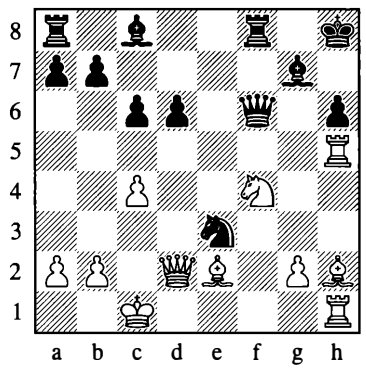
30.♗d3 f1=♕† 31.♖xf1 ♖xf1† 32.♗xf1 ♘f5 etc.

23.♗h4?

Now Evgeny in his turn did not guess correctly. He should have moved the bishop more modestly: 23.♗h2! When Black has a choice:

After the prophylactic and wrong 23...♔g8? 24.g4 ♘d4 25.♖g1! White's attack suddenly becomes too strong: 25...♘e6 (or 25...♖f7 26.g5 hxg5 27.♖hxg5) 26.♘xe6 ♗xe6 27.g5 hxg5 28.♖hxg5 ♖f7 29.♗h5 ♖d7 30.♖g6+–

23...e3!? 24.fxe3 ♘xe3 deserves attention, but after:

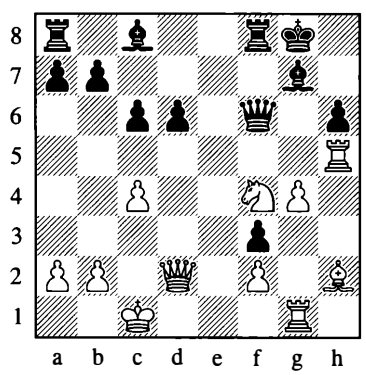


25.♗g1! ♘g4 26.g3 ♔g8 27.♖5h4 ♕g5 28.♗d4! White would hold initiative.

23...♘d4 24.♗d1 ♔g8 25.g4 ♘f3

25...♕f7 26.♔b1 ♕xc4 27.♖g1, with a mess.

26.♗xf3 exf3 27.♖g1



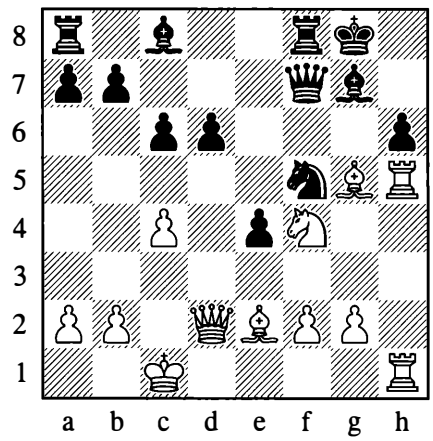
White seems to have full compensation for the pawns. Still, I believe Black may hold his own here:

27...♕d4 28.g5 ♕xc4† 29.♔b1 ♗f5† 30.♔a1 ♗e5 31.gxh6† ♔h7 32.♘h3! ♗xh2 33.♘g5† ♔h8 34.♖xh2 ♕d5

And so on.

Of course, I have shown these variations for the sake of seeking the truth. It would be totally unrealistic to see them during the game.

23...♕f7 24.♗g5 ♔g8

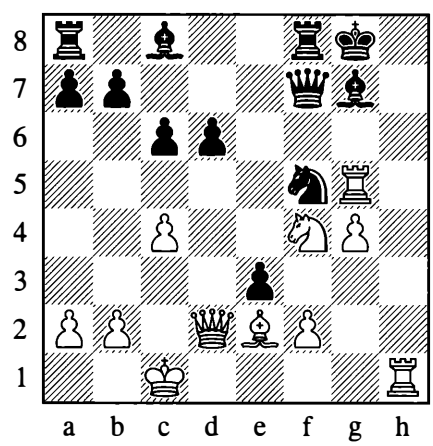


White cannot break the shield around the black king with pieces only, and on the very next move the g-pawn joins the attack – but it is already too late.

25.g4 hxg5 26.♖xg5 e3?

Too optimistic.

Correct was the calm 26...♘d4 27.♘h5 ♘e6 28.♖f5 ♕e7 29.♘xg7 ♘xg7 30.♖xf8† ♕xf8 31.♕h6 ♗e6 32.g5 (32.♕h7† ♔f7 33.♖h6 ♕e7 34.♕g6† ♔f8) 32...♕f4† winning.



27.♕c3?

White returns the favour.

Correct was the simple 27.fxe3 when there is a split:

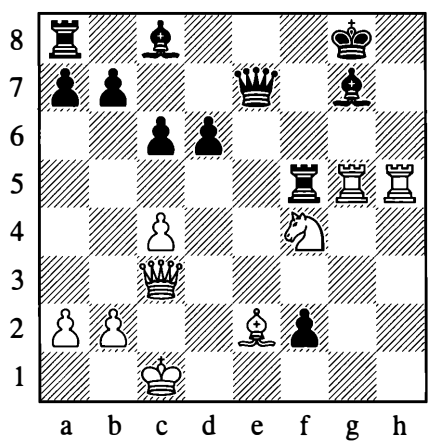
27...♕e7 28.♖xg7† ♕xg7 (28...♘xg7? 29.♘g6) 29.gxf5 I would prefer to be White here.

27...♘g3 28.♗d3 ♘xh1 29.♕h2 ♖d8 30.♕h4! Neither of us saw this. 30...♘f2 31.♖xg7† ♕xg7 32.♕xd8† ♕f8 33.♕g5† With a perpetual.

27...♕e7!

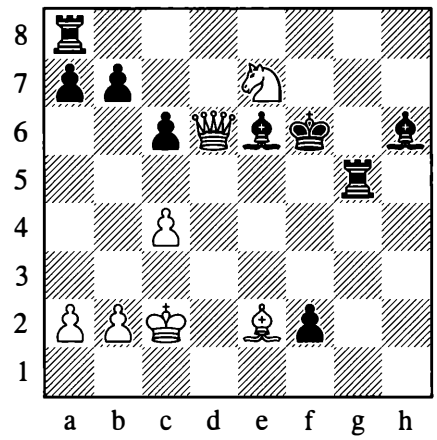
From now until the 41st move, I suddenly started to play flawlessly.

28.♖hh5 exf2 29.gxf5 ♖xf5



30.♖h8† ♔xh8 31.♘g6† ♔h7 32.♕h3† ♗h6 33.♘xe7 ♖xg5 34.♕d3† ♔g7 35.♔c2 ♗e6 36.♕xd6 ♔f6!

The end of a forced line. Now White has to give up the knight to neutralize the f-pawn, and Black gets an awful lot for the queen.



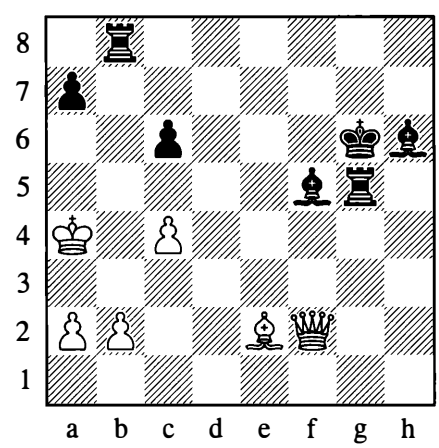
37.♕h2 ♖h8 38.♘xc6 ♗f5† 39.♔b3 bxc6 40.♕xf2 ♖b8†

Perhaps 40...c5 was the simplest solution.

41.♔a4 ♔g6?

In an attempt to coordinate Black's forces, I underestimated the potential of the two remaining white pieces. Also I have to give credit to Postny for not losing his fighting spirit, but setting and exploiting the trap instead.

41...♖d8 42.♕h2 ♗f8 43.♕h8† ♔f7 was one of the winning options. Black's pieces will soon develop a deadly attack against the opponent's king.



42.♗h5†!!

An excellent trick I have to admit.

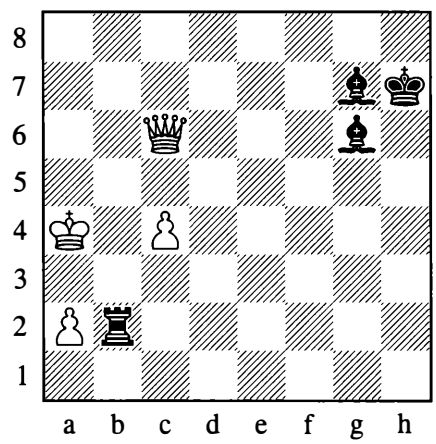
42...♖xh5

42...♔xh5 43.♕h2† ♔g6 44.♕xb8 or 42...♔h7 43.♕xa7† ♗g7 44.♕xb8 ♖xh5 would be no better.

43.♕g3† ♔h7 44.♕xb8

If Black were able to keep both remaining pawns he would still have winning chances, but that's impossible.

44...♗g7 45.♕xa7 ♖h2 46.♕c5 ♗g6 47.♕xc6 ♖xb2



48.♕h1† ♗h6 49.c5 ♖xa2† 50.♔b5 ♖b2† 51.♔a5 ♖b1 52.♕h3 ♖a1†

A draw was agreed. I remember my disappointment after the game, but *c'est la vie*. Evgeny, for his part, fully deserved to get something out of it.

½–½

In the final game of this chapter, I again manage to get the advantage of the two bishops, and get a lot out of the light-squared bishop. White tries to gain counterplay through pure aggression. In the chaos that ensued, I gained a material advantage and eventually managed to win the game after a few twists and turns.

Ronen Lev – Ilya Smirin

Ramat Gan 1992

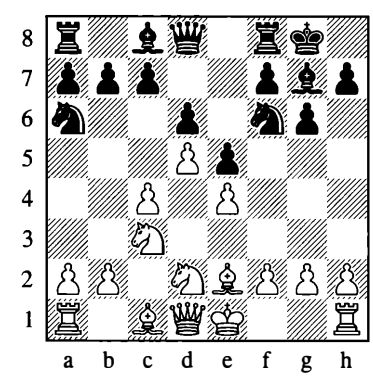
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.d5 ♘a6

One possible way to react to the Petrosian System.

More popular moves here are 7...a5 or 7...♘bd7 in connection with 8.♗g5 h6 9.♗h4 g5 10.♗g3 ♘h5. Now a possible continuation is: 11.h4 ♘xg3 12.fxg3 gxh4? (much better is 12...g4) 13.♘xh4 ♕g5 14.♗g4! ♘f6 15.♗xc8 ♕xg3† 16.♔f1 ♖fxc8 17.♘f5 ♕f4† 18.♕f3 ♕xf3† 19.gxf3 With an overwhelming advantage; the knight on f5 just paralyses Black.

8.♗g5

The more principled continuation seems to be 8.♘d2!?, stressing the drawbacks of Black's 7th move (...a7-a5 is impossible now, and intending to answer 8...♘c5? with 9.b4).



(a) After the logical 8...♗h6 White has a strong

and ambitious measure at his disposal: 9.h4! ♘c5 10.h5 ♗xd2† 11.♕xd2 ♘fxe4 12.♘xe4 ♘xe4 And now after both 13.♕e3 or 13.♕h6 we would probably not find many volunteers to play as Black here. Indeed, to be under attack with weak dark squares around the king, and without counterplay, is too high a price for a mere pawn.

(b) 8...♘e8 9.♖b1

Also now 9.h4!? is an attractive option: 9...f5 10.h5 with a confrontation on the kingside. After 10...♘f6 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.exf5 gxf5 13.♘f3 I would probably prefer White's chances in this complex position. The rook on h1 has become very active without making a single move.

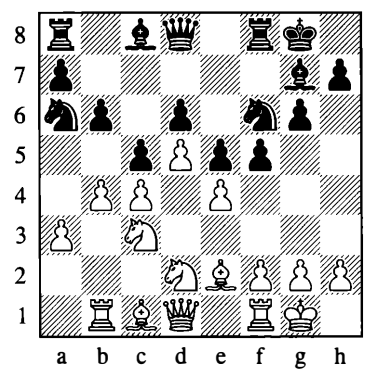
9...f5 10.b4

This happened in one of my games:

10...♘f6 11.0–0 c5 12.a3

12.dxc6!?, to make the game more open by means of 12...bxc6 13.b5, deserves attention.

12...b6

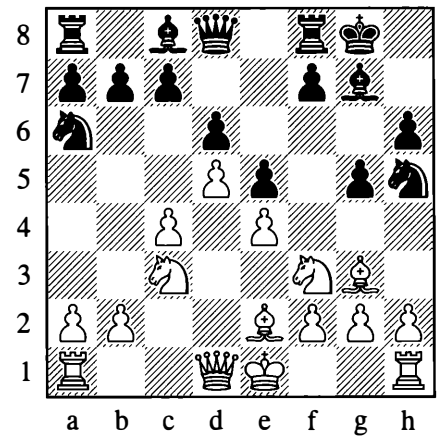


Black is OK: his position is solid on the queenside and active on the opposite wing.

13.♗d3 f4 14.♗e2 g5 15.g4!? h5 16.h3 ♖f7 17.f3 ♘b8 18.bxc5 bxc5 19.♕a4 ♗d7 20.♕c2 ♗c8 21.♕a4 ♗d7 22.♕c2 ♗c8

½–½ Illescas Cordoba – Smirin, Oviedo (rapid) 1993.

8...h6 9.♗h4 g5 10.♗g3 ♘h5



Black reacts by analogy with the variation 7...♘bd7 8.♗g5.

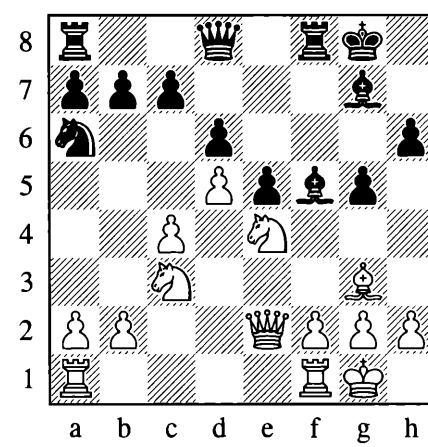
11.♘d2

If 11.h4 Black may reply 11...♘xg3 12.fxg3 gxh4!? 13.♘xh4 ♕g5. Now we can see the difference between the knight positioning on a6 instead of d7: 14.♗g4? is impossible and Black stands well according to practice.

11...♘f4 12.0–0 f5 13.exf5 ♘xe2†

It's important to exchange the strong bishop and leave White with the passive one.

14.♕xe2 ♗xf5 15.♘de4



White's knight has occupied the excellent outpost on e4. So does he have a positional

advantage? I do not think so. White's bishop is badly placed on g3, and to free it White will have to play f2-f3 and/or h2-h3. We will soon find out where this may lead.

15...♕e8 16.♖fe1

In the following game of mine we can see the ideas for both sides:

16.f3 ♕g6 17.h3 h5 18.♘f2?! ♘c5 19.♖ad1

19.b4? ♘d3

19...a5

Now it's obvious that Black has an awesome position: all his pieces are well placed and ...g5-g4 is in the air.

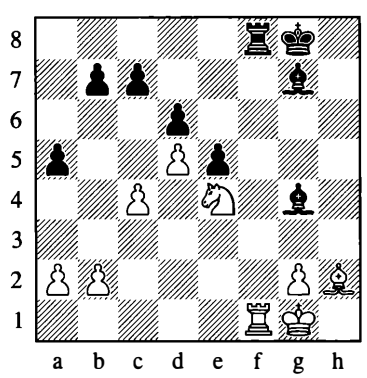
20.♗h2 g4!

As usual, White lacks one tempo – if he could play g2-g4 now and reoccupy e4 with the f2-knight he would be fine. "If" is the key word here.

21.fxg4 hxg4 22.hxg4 ♗d7 23.♘ce4 ♘xe4 24.♕xe4 ♕xe4 25.♘xe4 ♗xg4 26.♖xf8† ♖xf8 27.♖f1?

After 27.♖e1 White could count on drawing this worse endgame.

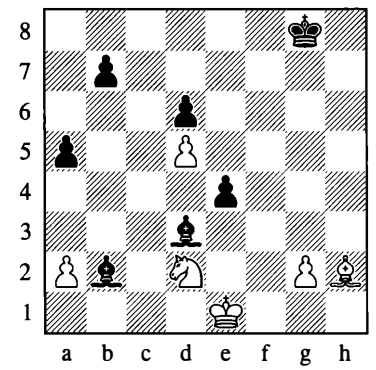
Now, without rooks, nothing can prevent the black bishops from showing their full strength.



27...♖xf1† 28.♔xf1 ♗f5

That's it: the knight has to retreat.

29.♘d2 ♗d3† 30.♔e1 e4 31.c5 ♗xb2 32.cxd6 cxd6



0–1 Ivanov – Smirin, Los Angeles 2000. White resigned due to 33.♗xd6 e3 34.♘f3 ♗c3† 35.♔d1 e2†.

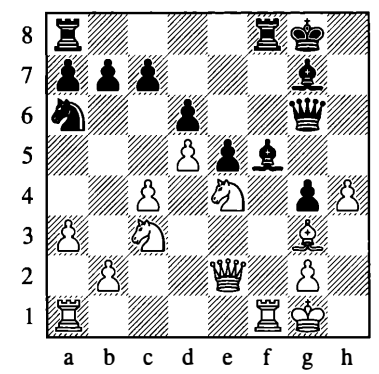
In my opinion better is:

18.a3

Preparing b2-b4. In this case Black may continue:

18...♘b8!?

Premature is: 18...g4?! 19.fxg4 hxg4 20.h4



This is a very desirable setup for White: his knight is still on e4, and thanks to the pawn on h4 it may go to g5 in some cases. Black has nothing better than to exchange it, but it damages his pawn structure: 20...♘c5 21.♘xc5 dxc5 22.♖ad1 a6 (22...e4? 23.♘b5) 23.♖fe1 And White will restore the knight's presence on e4. The attempt 23...e4?! is not good due to 24.♕e3! ♗d4 25.♖xd4 cxd4 26.♕xd4, with overwhelming compensation for the exchange.

19.c5 ♘d7

This knight is heading toward f6.

20.cxd6 cxd6 21.♕b5!?

21.♗f2 ♘f6 22.♖ac1 (or 22.♘xf6† ♖xf6 23.♘e4 ♖f7 and Black has nothing to worry about) 22...♘xe4 23.fxe4 (23.♘xe4?! g4 is dangerous for White) 23...♗d7 and I would even prefer Black here – he has more dynamic possibilities.

21...g4 22.fxg4 hxg4 23.h4 ♘f6

With a double-edged position.

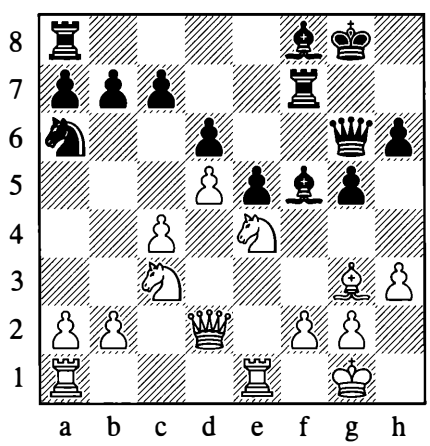
16...♕g6 17.♕d2

Stopping ...h6-h5 for a while.

17...♖f7

With the idea of bringing the bishop to e7 via f8, and carrying out the desirable advance of the h-pawn.

18.h3 ♗f8

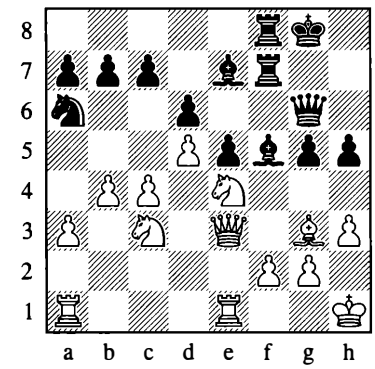


19.c5

This may not be bad, but it is a strategically risky decision – now the position becomes much more open and the pair of black bishops will appreciate that.

19.f3 ♗e7 20.♗f2 h5 21.g4?! This is dubious here due to the vulnerability of the pawn on f3 (the drawback of 17.♕d2). 21...hxg4 22.hxg4 ♗xe4 23.fxe4 (a must) 23...♖af8 etc.

Perhaps Lev should have preferred more static play, for instance: 19.a3 ♗e7 20.b4 h5 21.♔h1 (21.b5 ♘b8 22.c5 h4 23.♗h2 g4 24.hxg4 ♗xg4 looks good for Black) 21...♖af8 (or 21...h4 22.♗h2 g4 23.hxg4 ♗xg4 24.♖e3!?) 22.♕e3!?



And despite the menacing look of Black's army on the kingside, White has his trumps. His position on the kingside is solid enough, and the black knight is still inactive. Meanwhile White is going to start activity on the queenside, connected first of all with the usual c4-c5. In other words, this is a complex position of approximate dynamic balance.

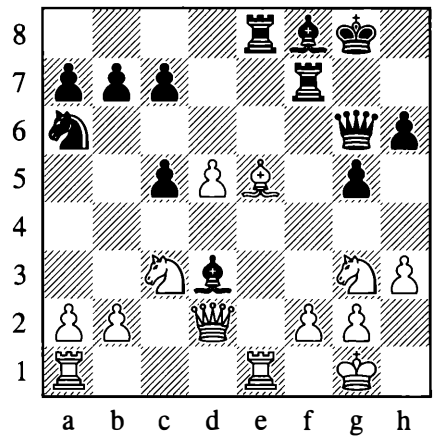
19...dxc5

I wanted to keep the knight – it seemed to me that its potential jump to b4 or c5 (after ...c5-c4) might be annoying for White.

19...♘xc5 20.♘xc5 dxc5 21.♗xe5 c4 was a good alternative. White's pieces are centralized, but the black forces are quite active and his king feels relatively safe despite the bishop on e5 owning the key diagonal.

20.♗xe5 ♖e8 21.♘g3 ♗d3

Black could continue 21...♘b4 22.♘xf5 ♕xf5 23.♗g3 ♖d8 with a balanced position. But I saw no reason to part with my beloved pair of bishops.



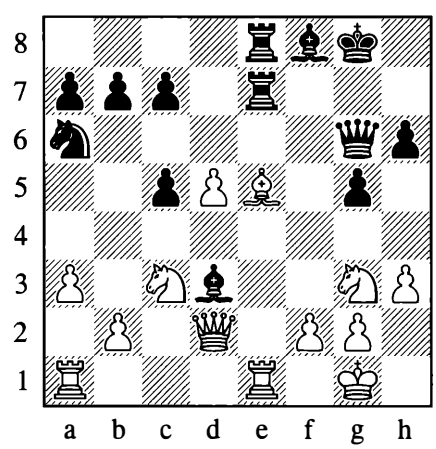
22.a3!

A timely prophylactic move.

The possible complications after 22.♖ad1?! ♘b4 23.♗xc7!? ♖xe1† 24.♖xe1 ♖xc7 25.a3 ♖d7 26.axb4 cxb4 27.♘a2 (what else?) 27...a5 28.♖e6 ♕f7 would be clearly in Black's favour – the knight on a2 is misplaced to say the least (note 29.♕xd3? is bad after 29...♕xe6).

22...♖fe7

After 22...c4 23.♗d4! ♖xe1† 24.♖xe1 ♘c5 25.♖e8 White's active pieces cause Black trouble, for instance: 25...♘b3 26.♕e3 ♘xd4 27.♕xd4 b6 28.♖e6 ♕g7 29.♕g4, with the initiative.



23.f4?

Tantamount to hara-kiri; this move ruins White's position.

The only way to proceed was 23.♖e3! ♖xe5 (here 23...c4? is bad: 24.♖ae1 ♘c5 25.♗xc7!) 24.♕xd3 ♕xd3 25.♖xd3 c4 26.♖d4, with more or less equal chances in the endgame.

23...c4 24.♘ce4 ♖f7

Probably Ronen underestimated this move. Now White's minor pieces are hanging in the air, despite seemingly being the active ones.

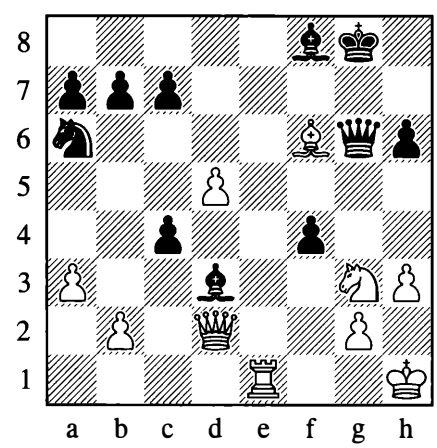
25.♔h1

25.fxg5 would not save White either: 25...♕b6†! 26.♔h2 (26.♘f2 ♖xe5 27.♖xe5 ♖xf2 28.♕xf2 ♗c5 29.♖e8† ♔h7) 26...♖xe5 27.♘f6† ♖xf6 28.gxf6 (28.♖xe5 ♖f2) 28...♕xf6, with a decisive gain of material.

25...gxf4

White has to give up some material.

26.♘f6† ♖xf6 27.♗xf6 ♖xe1† 28.♖xe1



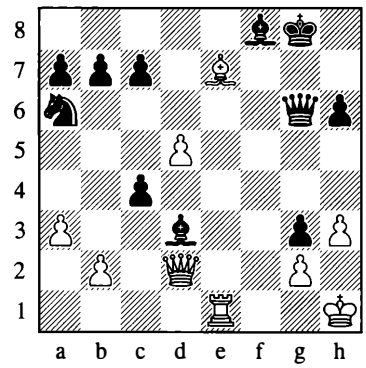
28...fxg3?!

Sloppiness. Instead 28...♕xg3 29.♗e5 ♗d6 would win effortlessly.

29.♕f4?

Lev failed to spot my mistake.

He should have played: 29.♗e7!



29...♗xe7 (after 29...♗g7 then 30.♕f4 is strong – White has counterplay) 30.♖xe7 ♕f6 31.♕e1 ♕f1† 32.♕xf1 ♗xf1 And in this ending White has some drawing chances thanks to the active rook.

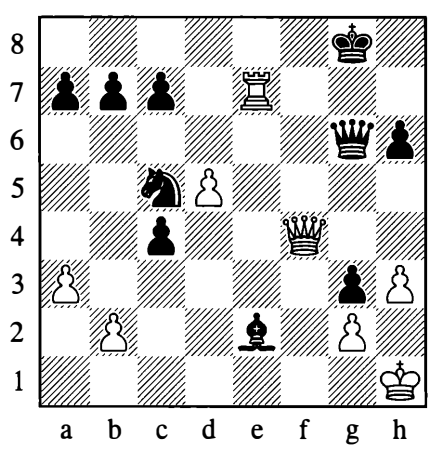
29...♘c5?

A second consecutive error, and a much more serious one.

After the correct 29...♗d6 30.♗e5, and only now 30...♘c5 31.♗xd6 cxd6, Black would obtain an easily winning position.

30.♗e7 ♗xe7 31.♖xe7 ♗e2!

The only move, by the way.

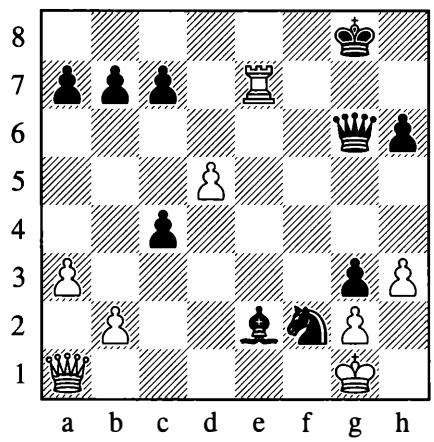


32.♕c1??

This incredibly passive move does not promise any chances for survival and even loses on the spot.

Meanwhile the natural 32.♕e3 ♕b1† 33.♕g1 ♕xg1† 34.♔xg1 ♗d3 35.♖xc7 b6 36.♖xa7 would lead to a probably drawn endgame – a rook plus a pawn may match the opponent's bishop and knight.

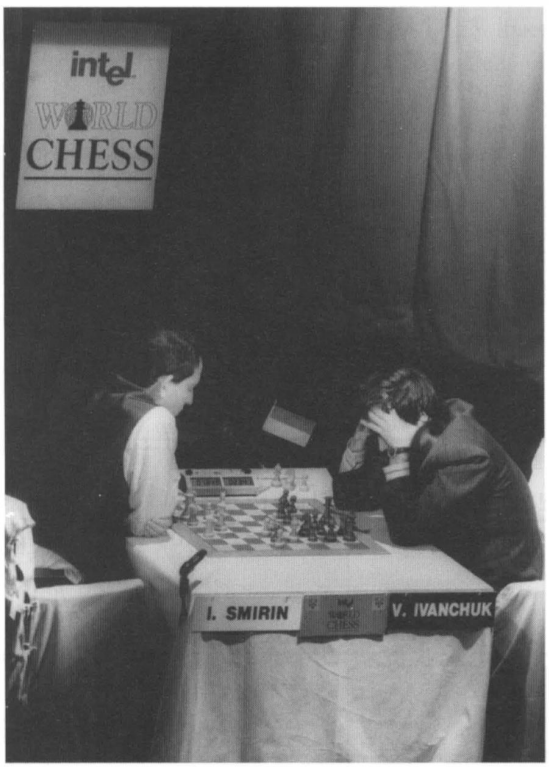
32...♘d3 33.♕a1 ♘f2† 34.♔g1



34...♘xh3† 35.gxh3 ♕b6†
0–1

Chapter 10

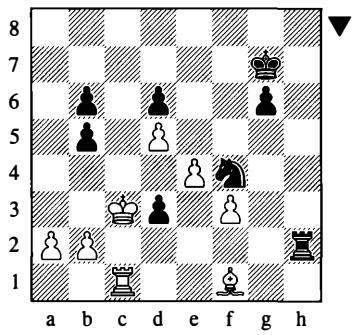
Endgames



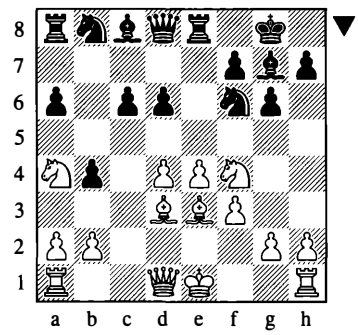
I had many games against the great Vassily Ivanchuk, although in this book they only made it into the notes

Test yourself against the book

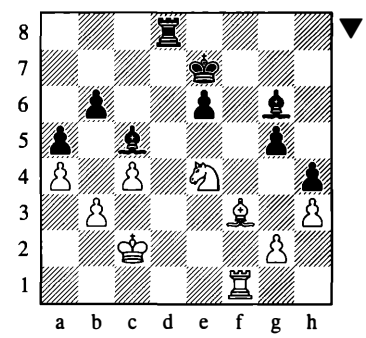
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



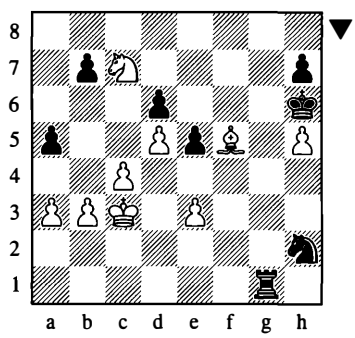
Accuracy is important in the endgame (see page 307)



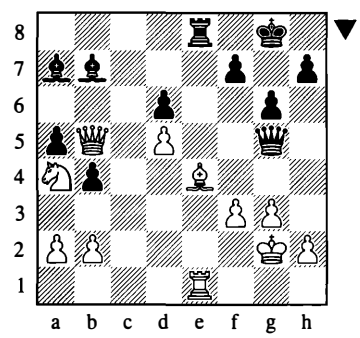
What had White missed? (see page 325)



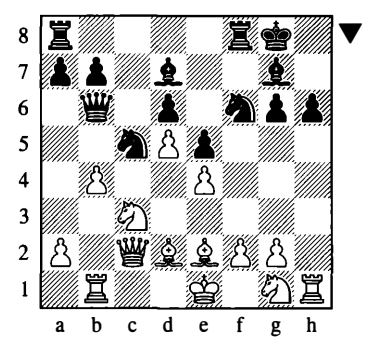
Endgame magic! (see page 303)



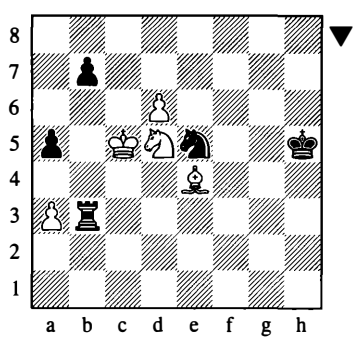
Black to play (see page 319/20)



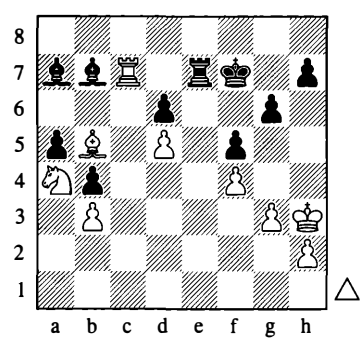
I missed not one but two wins here! (see page 326/27)



Black has a nice tactic (see page 305)



How can Black prevent the counterplay (see page 321)



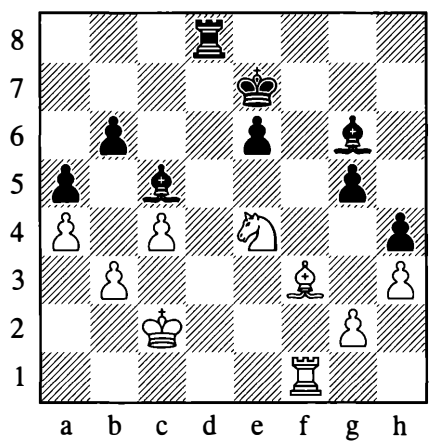
But later I was lucky thatBrunello missed the best move on move 40 (see page 328)

The King's Indian is a combative opening in which the middlegame can go on and on and on. Frequently, when an ending is reached, it is so non-standard that it still has many dynamic traits similar to the middlegame, as you will see from the four games I have chosen from my own collection.

But first, here is a great modern example of a dynamic KID endgame.

Fabiano Caruana – Hikaru Nakamura

Wijk aan Zee 2013



This is the type of endgame any King's Indian player would be aiming for. White is passive, desperately holding on, while Black enjoys lots of dangerous ideas with his strong bishop pair. In the game Nakamura found a wonderful dynamic solution.

54...g4!!

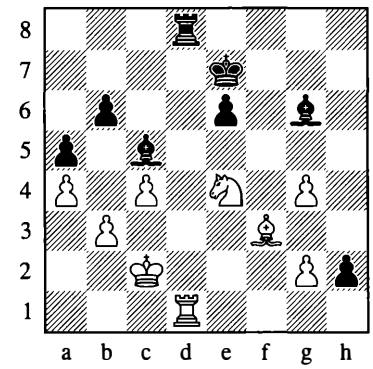
Undermining the white defence on the light squares.

55.hxg4 h3! 56.♖d1

56.gxh3 ♖f8 57.♔d3 ♖f4! and White loses a piece.

56...♖f8?!

The best move was: 56...h2!

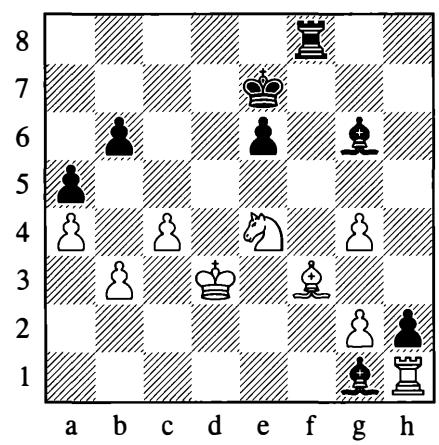


Winning directly, as 57.♖h1 ♖d4 wins a piece and 57.g3 loses to 57...♖f8 58.♗h1 ♖f2† 59.♔c3 ♖e2 60.♘xc5 bxc5 61.♖d2 ♖xd2 62.♔xd2 ♔f6 63.♔e3 ♔g5, followed by ...♗c2 and it's all over.

57.♔d3

57.♔c3 would also have lost, but slowly. For example after: 57...♗xe4 (57...hxg2 58.♗xg2 ♗b4† 59.♔d3 ♖f2 60.♗h1 ♖b2 also wins) 58.♗xe4 h2 59.g3 ♖f2 60.g5 ♖e2 61.♗h1 ♖e3† 62.♔c2 ♗d6 and White is too passive to hold in the long term.

57...h2 58.♖h1 ♗g1



59.♔e2 ♗xe4 60.♗xe4 ♔f6 61.♗f3 ♖d8 0–1

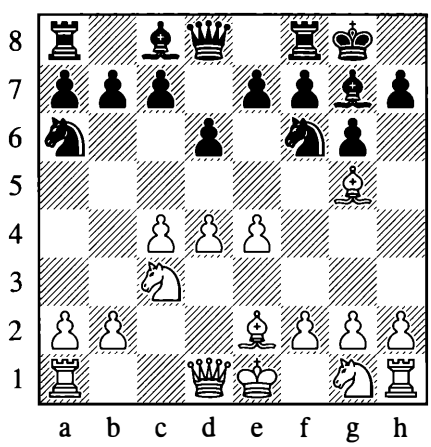
My Games

Yuri Yakovich – Ilya Smirin

Saint-Vincent 2000

This game was played in the last round of the very first European Individual Championship in the Italian resort of Saint-Vincent. Today such championships have become part of the annual chess calendar. My opponent in this game was an experienced Russian grandmaster. Nowadays Yuri is well known as a chess coach as well.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♗g5 ♘a6



A relatively modern way to fight against the Averbakh System. It was first employed by Igor Glek in 1988.

7.h4

This aggressive move became popular in the 1990s. Its main proponent was Evgeny Bareev.

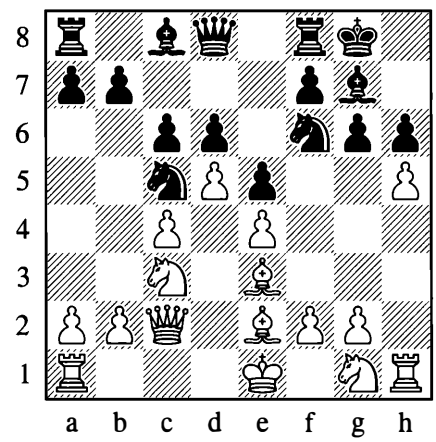
7...e5

7...c5 8.d5 ♘c7 is another way to continue, but I preferred a more typically King's Indian move.

8.d5 h6 9.♗e3 ♘c5 10.♕c2 c6

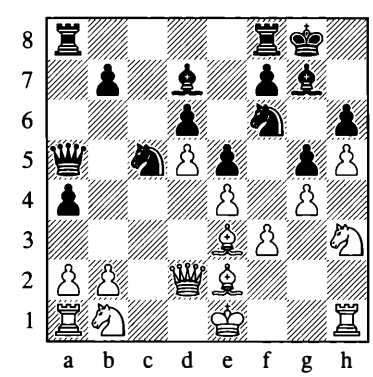
The variation 10...♘g4 11.♗xg4 ♗xg4 12.f3 ♗d7 13.h5 g5 14.g4 shows one of the main ideas of 7.h4 – to nip in the bud Black's play on the kingside, and leave him with a half-dead bishop on g7.

11.h5



11...cxd5

11...g5 was the choice of Garry Kasparov, and he managed to draw with creative play: 12.f3 a5 13.g4 ♗d7 14.♘h3 a4 15.♕d2 cxd5 16.cxd5 ♕a5 17.♘b1



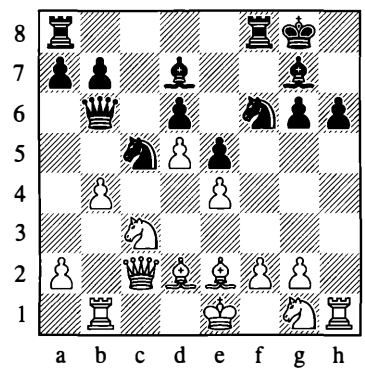
17...♘fxe4!? 18.fxe4 ♘xe4 19.♕xa5 ♖xa5 20.♘c3 ♘g3 21.♖g1 ♘xe2 22.♔xe2 e4 23.♖ac1 f5 24.gxf5 ♖xf5 25.♘f2 ♗e8 26.♖h1 ♗b5† 27.♘xb5 ♖xb5 28.♖c8† ♔h7 29.♖d1 ♖xb2† 30.♖d2 a3; (½–½, 48) Bareev –

Kasparov, Linares 1992. Despite that game, his move is not to my taste – I usually do not like to allow White to seal the queenside in such a way.

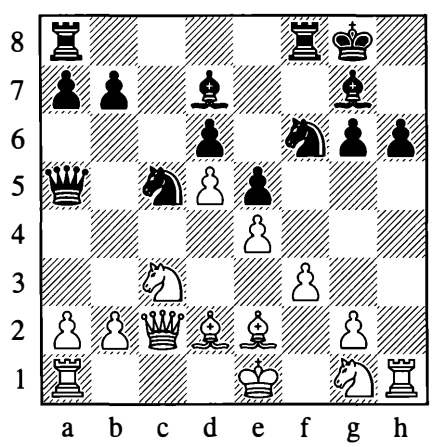
12.cxd5 ♕a5 13.♗d2 ♗d7 14.hxg6 fxg6 15.f3

After this move the central pawn on e4 is secured, but in the future the weakening of the black squares might tell. Besides, the knight on f6 now gets access to h5, from where it aims to go to g3 or f4. I would prefer:

15.♖b1 ♕b6 16.♗e3 (16.b4? allows a big punch:



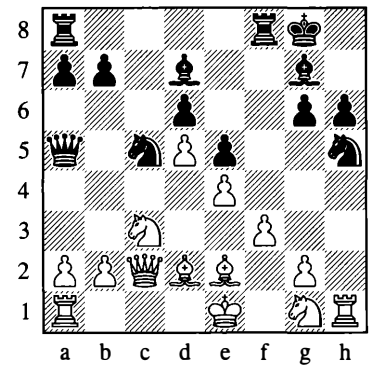
16...♘cxe4 17.♘xe4 ♖ac8! 18.♘c3 ♘g4–+ The pawn on f2 is defenceless and with it the white king.) 16...a5 17.♘h3 With complicated play in Hauchard – Hebden, Cappelle la Grande 1998.



15...♖ac8!

I prepared this move at home.

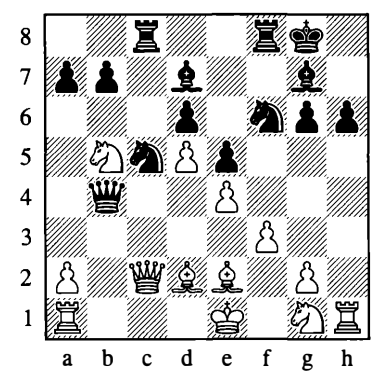
15...♘h5?! is too early:



16.b4! ♕xb4 17.♘b5 ♕a4 18.♕xa4 ♘xa4 19.♘xd6 was played in Yakovich – S. Bekker Jensen, Gothenburg 2000, which Yuri Yakovich won convincingly. Indeed, exchanging the b2-pawn for the pawn on d6 is clearly in White's favour.

16.♖b1

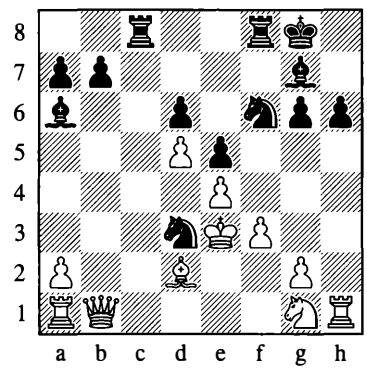
After 16.b4? ♕xb4 I was intending to sacrifice my queen:
17.♘b5



17...♕xb5! 18.♗xb5 ♗xb5

It's clear from the very first glance that Black has overwhelming compensation and is about to win. Still, I would like to demonstrate one pretty line:

19.♕b1 ♘d3† 20.♔e2 ♗a6 21.♔e3
21.♗xh6 ♗xh6 22.♖xh6 ♔g7 23.♖h4 ♖c1–+



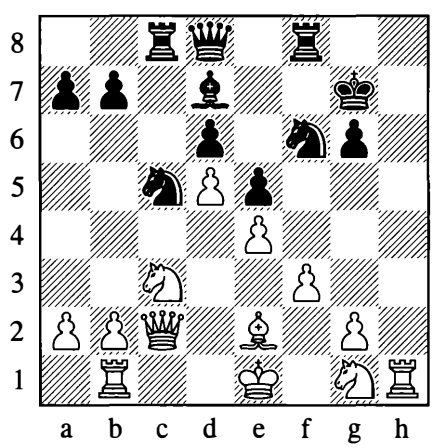
21...♘g4†! 22.fxg4 ♘f2 23.♗e1
23.♘f3 ♘xg4#
23...♘xg4† 24.♔d2 h5!

Despite having a queen for only a bishop, White is absolutely helpless.

16...♕d8 17.♗xh6

Otherwise White would suffer with even material (...♘h5 is coming). Now he has an extra pawn as consolation.

17...♗xh6 18.♖xh6 ♔g7 19.♖h1



So, Black's compensation consists of: a lead in development; White's king is stuck in the centre of board; the dark squares around it are weak; and Black will soon seize the h-file. More than enough for one small pawn!

19...♘h5?!

Better options were 19...♖h8 20.♖xh8 ♕xh8 21.♗f1 b5! or the immediate 19...b5!? – "wide" play was required to disturb the opponent from both wings.

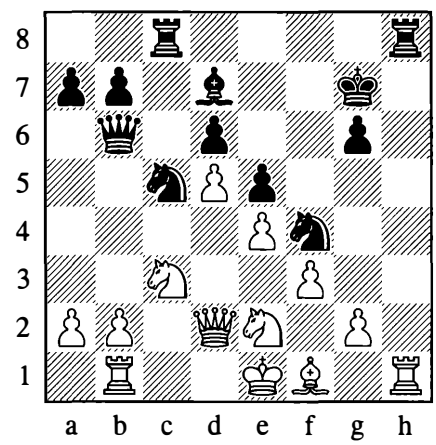
20.♕d2 ♖h8 21.♗f1

To develop the knight from g1.

21...♕b6

21...♘g3? does not work: 22.♖xh8 ♕xh8 23.♕g5

22.♘ge2 ♘f4



23.♖xh8 ♘cd3† 24.♔d1 ♖xh8 25.♘xf4 ♘xf4 26.♔c2

Worse is 26.g3 ♕g1 27.gxf4 ♗h3!∓.

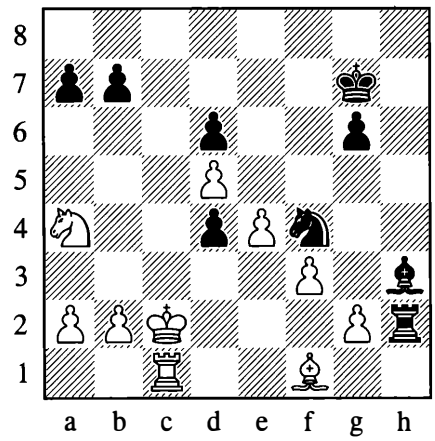
26...♖h2 27.♖c1 ♗h3

The pawn on g2 is under heavy fire, but White can withstand that.

28.♘a4?

This gives Black new hope, whereas 28.♘e2 ♘xg2 29.♕g5 ♘e3† 30.♔b1 ♘xf1 (30...♗xf1? loses nicely to 31.♕e7† ♔h6 32.♖c8! with unavoidable checkmate) 31.♕e7† ♔h6 32.♕h4† led to perpetual check by force.

28...♕d4! 29.♕xd4 exd4



Black's advantage is obvious in this endgame – White's minor pieces are passive and the extra pawn on g2 will fall next move.

30.♔b3

It's true that after 30.e5!? the g-pawn would be held, and after 30...♗d7 (or 30...dxe5 31.♔b3 ♗xg2 32.♗xg2 ♖xg2 33.d6 ♔f6 34.♘c5) 31.♔b3 ♗xa4† 32.♔xa4 dxe5 33.d6 ♔f6 34.d7 ♔e7 35.♖c5 White would have good drawing chances, but such moves can only be made by computers.

30...♗xg2

Less good was the immediate 30...b5? 31.♗xb5 ♗xg2 32.♗d7! ♔f6 (32...♗xf3? 33.♖f1) 33.♗g4 ♔e5 34.♖c8 and White is OK.

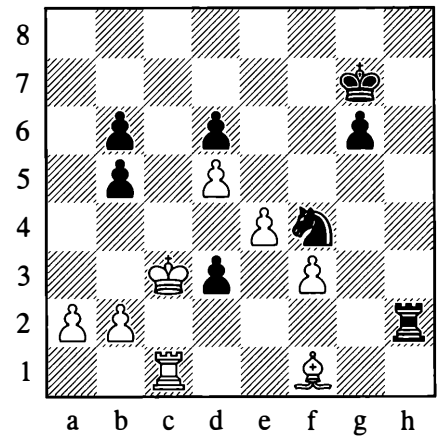
31.♗xg2 b5

I liked this *zwischenzug* during the game, but the simple 31...♖xg2 32.♖c7† ♔f6 33.♖xb7 ♖f2 was probably stronger. I doubt White can hold: 34.♖xa7 (34.♔c4 d3 35.♔b3 ♖xf3 36.♘c3 g5 37.♖d7 g4–+) 34...♖xf3† 35.♔c4 d3 36.♔c3 ♖f1! and Black should be winning.

32.♘b6 axb6 33.♗f1 d3

Or 33...♖f2!? 34.♗xb5 ♖xf3† 35.♔c4 d3∓.

34.♔c3

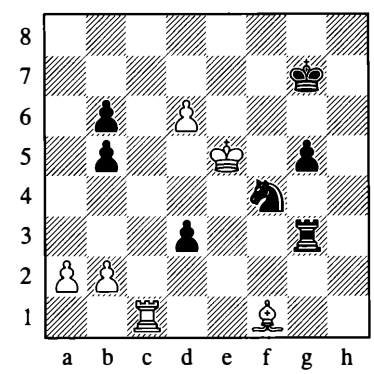


In my opinion this endgame is quite interesting and instructive. Dear reader, I would like to spend some of your time analysing it.

34...♖h1?

Now the bishop is pinned, but again White can overcome that.

A more direct approach would do the job:
34...♖f2! 35.♔d4 ♖xf3 36.e5 dxe5† 37.♔e4
37.♔xe5 d2 38.♖d1 ♖xf1 39.♖xf1 ♘d3†
40.♔e6 ♘e1 and the d-pawn queens.
37...♖g3 38.♔xe5 g5 39.d6



39...♔f7! 40.♖d1
40.♖c7† ♔g6! 41.d7 ♖e3† 42.♔d4 d2–+
40...♔e8 41.b4 ♔d7
The resulting position is easily winning for Black.

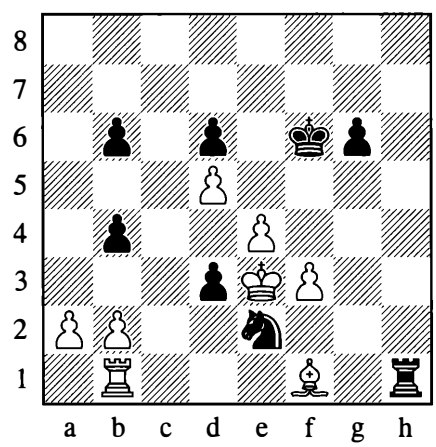
35.♖d1?!

After 35.♖b1 ♘e2† (35...♔f6? 36.♗xd3) 36.♔d2 ♔f6 37.♖d1 ♘f4 38.♔e3 ♔e5 39.♗e2! ♖h2 40.♗xd3 ♖xb2 41.♖d2 White could perhaps hold despite the opponent's total domination of the dark squares.

35...♔f6 36.♔d4

Probably the sudden counterattack 36.♔b4 ♘h3 37.♔xb5 ♘f2 38.♖xd3 ♖xf1 (38...♘xd3 39.♗xd3 ♖h3 40.e5†! dxe5 41.♗e4 and it looks like a draw) 39.♖d2 could have saved Yuri.

36...b4 37.♖b1 ♘e2†! 38.♔e3



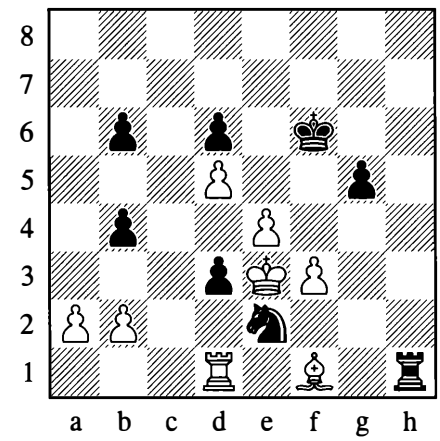
38...g5?

Centralization with 38...♔e5 was called for, and after 39.a3 b3 40.♖d1 ♘f4 41.♖c1 ♖h2 42.♗xd3 ♖xb2 43.♗f1 g5 the dominance of Black's forces would decide the outcome. We were both in time trouble and this partly explains our numerous mistakes in this endgame. But speaking honestly, there were a few too many mistakes.

39.♔f2 ♘f4

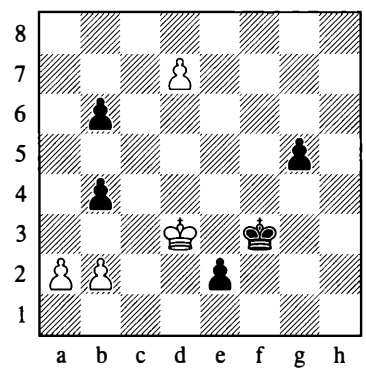
39...♔e5 40.♔e3 b5 leads to a kind of mutual *zugzwang*, and after 41.b3 (the only move) 41...♘c3 42.♖e1 ♘xa2 43.♔xd3 g4! 44.fxg4 ♖g1 I would have retained a close-to-winning advantage – all the black pieces are active and the usefulness of the bishop on f1 is not great, to put it mildly.

40.♔e3 ♘e2 41.♖d1!



41...♘f4?

An unfortunate waste of time, whereas:
41...♘g3 42.♔f2 ♘xf1 43.♖xf1 ♖xf1† 44.♔xf1 ♔e5 45.♔e1
led by force to a queen ending:
45...♔f4 46.♔d2 ♔xf3 47.e5 dxe5 48.d6 e4 49.d7 e3† 50.♔xd3 e2



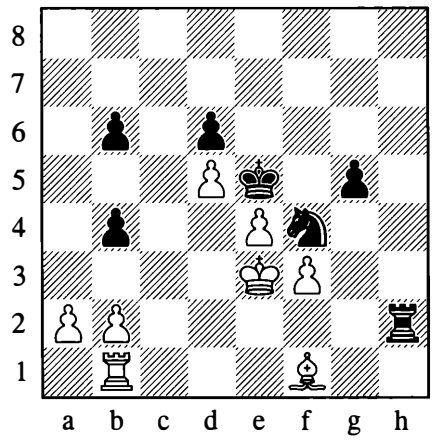
51.d8=♕ e1=♕ 52.♕f6†
52.♕xg5? ♕e2† 53.♔d4 ♕e4# A nice picture!
52...♔g4 53.♕xb6 ♕b1† 54.♔c4 ♕xa2†
Black has excellent winning chances.

42.♖b1 d2

42...♔e5 allows 43.♗xd3.

But still possible was 42...♘e2 43.♖d1 ♘g3.

43.♔xd2 ♖h2† 44.♔e3 ♔e5



Despite being a pawn down, Black is still the superior side in the endgame that has arisen, but now his advantage is hardly enough to win.

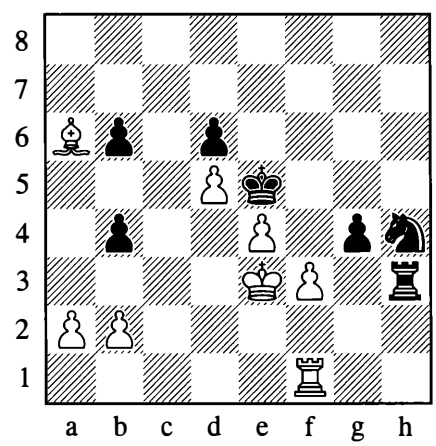
45.♗a6 ♘g2† 46.♔d3

Not 46.♔f2? ♔f4 47.♔g1 ♔g3–+.

46...♘h4

46...♔f4 47.♖g1 ♘e3 (47...♔xf3 48.♖f1† ♔g3 49.♖f6 with strong counterplay) leads after 48.♖xg5! ♔xg5 49.♔xe3 ♖xb2 50.♗c4 ♖c2 51.f4† ♔f6 52.♗b3 to a fortress position – draw.

47.♔e3 ♖h3 48.♖f1 g4



The last chance.

49.♗e2??

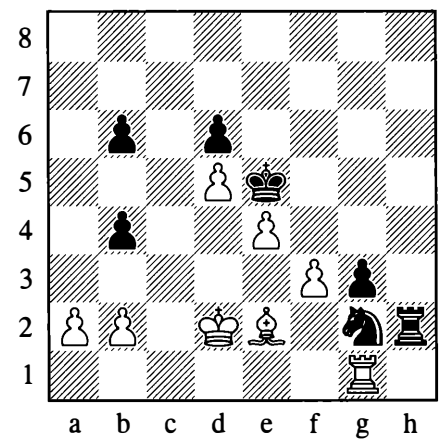
Luckily for me, Yuri was the last one to commit an error in this game.

49.♗c8! ♖xf3† was required and the variation 50.♖xf3 gxf3 51.♗h3 f2 52.a3 bxa3 53.bxa3 ♘g6 54.♗g2 ♘f4 55.♗f1 ♘h5 56.♗g2 ♘f6 57.♔xf2 ♘xe4† 58.♔e3 ♘f6 59.♔d3 ♘xd5 60.♗f3 ♘c7 61.♔c4 leads to a peaceful outcome. That's not the case now.

49...♘g2† 50.♔d2

50.♔f2 ♘f4 51.fxg4 ♖h2† 52.♔g3 ♖g2† 53.♔f3 ♖xe2 was no better.

50...g3 51.♖g1 ♖h2



A triumph of the knight over the bishop – no one can protect the dark squares in White's position.

52.♗a6 ♔f4 53.e5

This is no worse than other moves – the g-pawn will promote soon.

53...♔xe5

Yakovich lost on time, but his position was hopeless anyway.

0–1

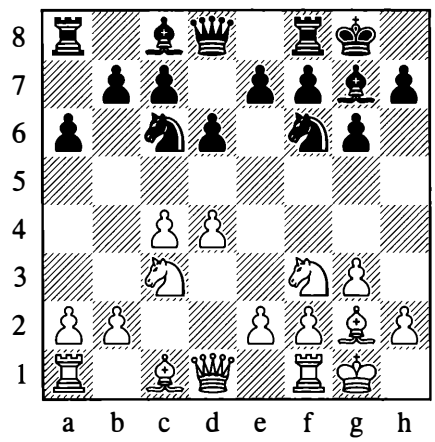
Mihail Marin – Ilya Smirin

Ramat Aviv 2000

1.c4 g6 2.♘f3 ♗g7 3.d4 ♘f6 4.g3 0–0 5.♗g2 d6 6.0–0 ♘c6 7.♘c3 a6

The most popular move – Black prepares to play on the queenside by means of ...b7-b5.

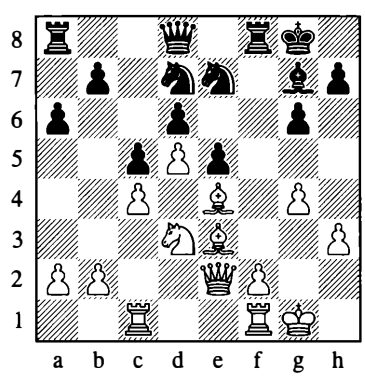
Later I mainly switched here to 7...♗f5.



8.h3

A prophylactic move against ...♗g4.

The immediate 8.e4 ♗g4 9.♗e3 is also possible. I was unable to equalize in the following rather ancient game: 9...♘d7 10.♘e2 e5 11.d5 ♘e7 12.♘e1 ♘b6 13.♖c1 c5 14.♘d3 f5 15.h3 ♗xe2 16.♕xe2 fxe4 17.♗xe4 ♘d7 18.g4!

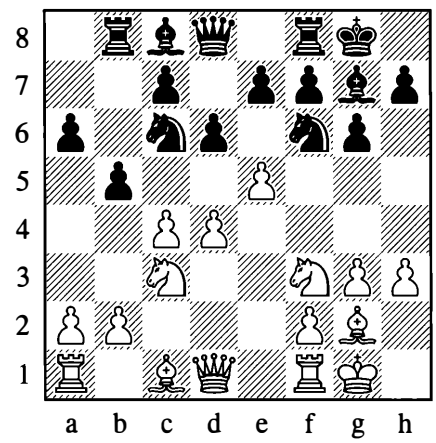


With the better position for White – the activity of the black pieces is restricted, Krasenkow – Smirin, Polanica Zdroj 1995.

8...♖b8 9.e4 b5

According to plan.

10.e5



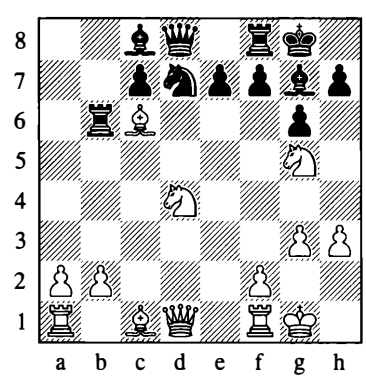
10...♘d7

This move leads to a complicated position.

I have never liked the simpler 10...dxe5 11.dxe5 ♕xd1 12.♖xd1 ♘d7 13.e6 fxe6 14.cxb5 axb5 15.♗f4 etc. – even though Black has decent results in practice.

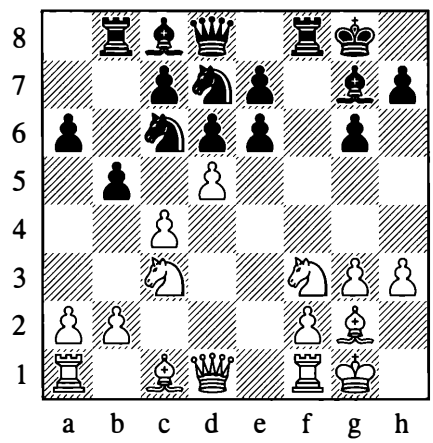
11.e6

White can fight for an advantage by means of the more or less forcing line: 11.cxb5 axb5 12.♘g5 dxe5 13.♗xc6 exd4 14.♘xb5 ♖b6 15.♘xd4



15...♘b8 16.♘de6 fxe6 17.♕xd8 ♖xd8 18.♗g2 and here the draw was concluded in the game Nogueiras Santiago – Smirin, Istanbul (ol) 2000. After the game I had a feeling that in the final position White could continue to play – I did not particularly like Black's pawn structure and the potential of the passer on a2.

11...fxe6 12.d5



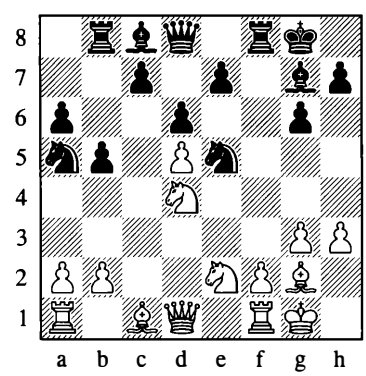
12...♘a5!?

Worse is:

12...exd5 13.cxd5

13.♕xd5† ♔h8 14.♕xc6? is impossible – after 14...♗b7 the queen is lost.

13...♘a5 14.♘d4 ♘e5 15.♘ce2!?



Black has an extra pawn, but what about the numerous holes in his position? He could not cope with the problems in the following encounter:

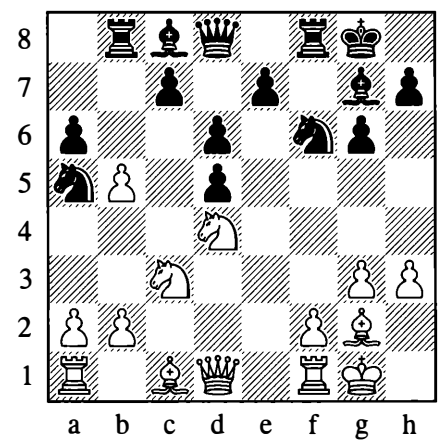
15...♗d7 16.♘f4 ♕c8 17.♘de6 ♖f7 18.♘xg7 ♔xg7 19.b3 c5 20.♗b2 ♔g8 21.♖c1 ♗f5 22.♕d2 b4 23.g4 c4 24.gxf5 c3 25.♗xc3 bxc3 26.♖xc3 ♕xf5 27.♘e6 ♘b7 28.f4 ♘d7 29.♖c7 ♘f6 30.♘d4

1–0 Goldin – Kosanovic, Belgrade 1988.

13.cxb5 exd5

The position arising is very complex and unbalanced. Black's queenside is seriously damaged, but he bases his hopes on the pawn majority in the centre and the potential activity of the pieces. However, these considerations are rather abstract and concrete variations will determine who will prevail.

14.♘d4 ♘f6



15.bxa6

Instead more promising was:

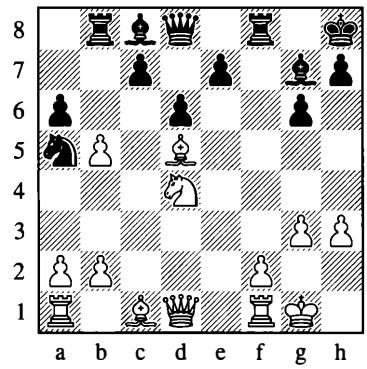
15.♘xd5

Eliminating the important pawn on d5 offers more chances to get an opening edge:

15...♘xd5

Bad is: 15...e5? 16.bxa6! Nice tactics. 16...c6 What else? (bad is 16...exd4 17.a7 – all Black's army cannot stop the single brave pawn on a7) 17.♘xf6† ♗xf6 18.a7 ♖a8 19.♘xc6 And so on... 1–0 Pigusov – Smirin, Las Vegas 1998.

16.♗xd5† ♔h8



17.b4!

In my opinion this is better than 17.bxa6 ♗xh3 18.♖e1 (18.a7 ♖a8) 18...c6! 19.♘xc6 ♘xc6 20.♗xc6 ♕b6 21.♗f3, with an unclear position.

17...c5 18.bxc6 ♖xb4 19.♗e3 ♘c4

Or 19...♗xh3 20.♕d2 ♖a4 21.♖fc1 with a kind of domination.

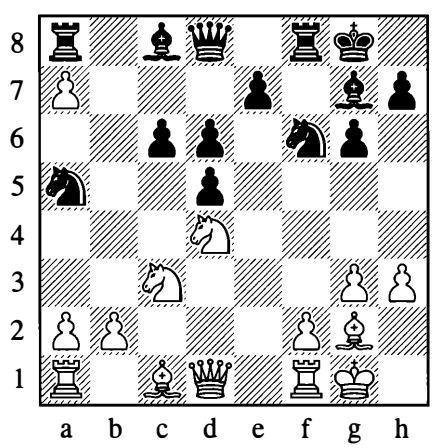
20.♖c1 ♘xe3 21.fxe3

White seems to be better – the c6-pawn is very strong.

15...c6

Now Black can be proud of his pawn centre!

16.a7 ♖a8



17.♘xc6?!

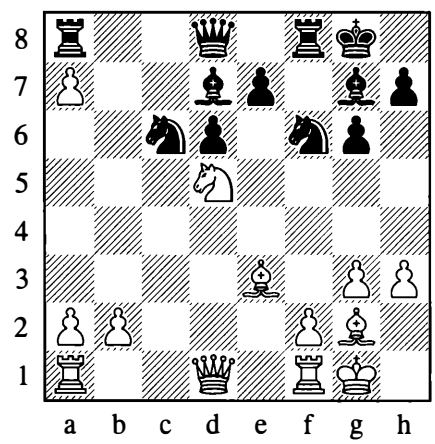
A radical attempt to destroy Black's centre and to open a diagonal for the g2-bishop. Still the price (a piece) is high. White would be better advised to try to undermine the opponent's central formation from the queenside:

17.b4 e5 18.♘b3 ♘xb3 (18...♘c4 19.♘xd5!) 19.axb3 with a rather unusual double-edged position. The game may continue 19...♕e7 20.b5 d4 21.♗xc6 ♖xa7 22.♘d5 ♕f7 23.♖xa7 ♕xa7 24.b6 ♕b8 and Black still has a strong centre, but the pawn on b6 may cause him a headache – the position is unclear in other words.

17...♘xc6 18.♘xd5

Of course not 18.♗xd5†? ♘xd5 19.♕xd5† ♔h8 20.♕xc6 ♗xh3 – the g2-bishop is White's main hope.

18...♗d7 19.♗e3



19...♘xa7!

The right decision.

Worse would be 19...♘xd5 20.♕xd5† ♔h8 21.♖ac1 ♖xa7 (21...♘xa7? 22.♕xa8 ♕xa8 23.♗xa8 ♖xa8 24.♖c7) 22.♗xa7 ♘xa7 23.♕b7 and White should be OK – the a-pawn may become very strong.

20.♗b6 ♕b8

Of course not 20...♕e8? 21.♘c7+–.

21.♗c7

Black would certainly welcome 21.♘xe7† ♔h8 22.♗xa8 ♕xa8 – White's king is under strong attack and his pieces are poorly coordinated.

21...♕e8 22.♖e1

White's active pieces create unpleasant threats, but Black manages to give back the material and liquidate into a favourable endgame.

Not 22.♘b6? ♗c6.

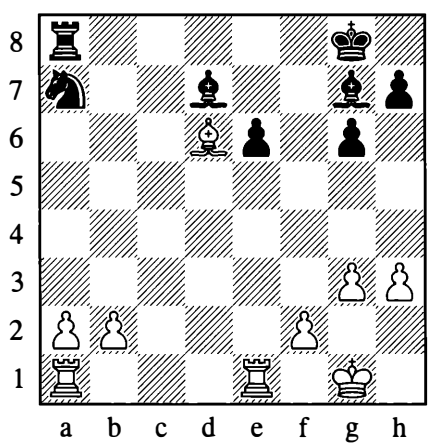
22...♘xd5 23.♕xd5† e6!

Black must avoid both 23...♕f7? 24.♖xe7 and 23...♔h8? 24.♕xa8 ♕xa8 25.♗xa8 ♖xa8 26.♖xe7.

24.♕xa8

24.♕xd6 loses to 24...♘b5.

24...♕xa8 25.♗xa8 ♖xa8 26.♗xd6



26...♘c6!

Nominally White even has some material advantage, but his position is much worse – the black pieces dominate the board. His bishops are very strong and the knight is on its way to d4. The white pawn duo at a2 and b2 is more of a weakness than an asset under the circumstances.

26...♗xb2? would be premature: after 27.♖ab1 ♗f6 28.♗e5 White activates his forces and is out of danger.

27.♖ed1

More resilient would be:

27.♗c5

Even though after:

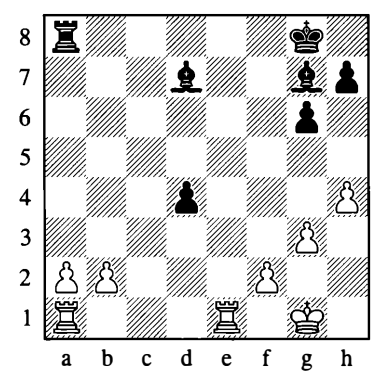
27...e5!?

The other option is 27...♘e5 28.♖e3 ♘c4 (in the event of 28...♗c6?! 29.♖d1 ♖xa2 30.f4 ♘f3† 31.♖xf3! ♗xf3 32.♖d8† ♔f7 33.♖d7† White forces the draw) 29.♖e2 ♘xb2 30.♖b1 ♘a4 31.♗b4 ♗d4, retaining winning chances.

28.h4

Or 28.♔g2 ♘d4 29.♗xd4 exd4 30.♖ed1 ♗f5 31.♖d2 ♖c8.

28...♘d4 29.♗xd4 exd4



Black would be much better – the passed pawn on d4, supported by two mighty bishops, is very strong.

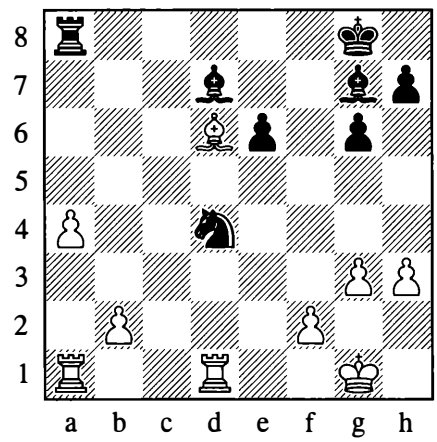
27...♘d4

This centralized knight looks in all directions.

Again the impatient 27...♗xb2? 28.♖ab1 ♗d4 (28...♖xa2? 29.♖d2) 29.♖b7 would just help White to activate his rook and to obtain counterplay.

28.a4

This is better than 28.♗c5 ♘e2† 29.♔f1 ♗b5 30.a4 ♗c4, and loss of material is unavoidable.



28...♗c6!

Played according to the same motto: "activity is more important than pawns". That's why I did not consider the capture on a4.

Indeed, 28...♗xa4? 29.♖a2 would be clearly in White's favour and a draw would be the most probable outcome.

29.a5?!

Losing an exchange by force.

The most stubborn defence was 29.f4. But even in this case after the precise 29...♗f3! 30.♖f1 ♘b3 31.♖xf3 ♘xa1 32.b3 ♗d4† 33.♔f1 ♖d8 Black should overcome the technical difficulties in converting his material advantage.

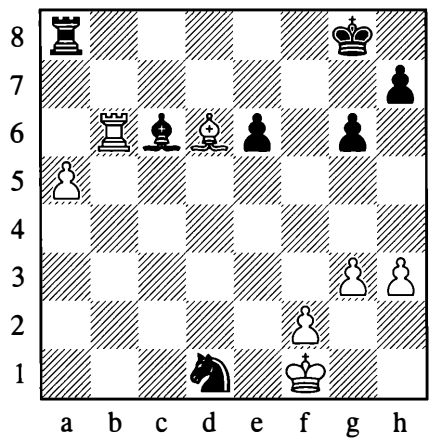
29...♘e2† 30.♔f1

30.♔h2 is not a remedy: 30...♗xb2 31.♖ab1 ♘c3 32.♖d2 ♘xb1 33.♖xb2 ♖d8! and so on.

30...♗b5 31.♔g2

Or 31.♔e1 ♘d4!.

31...♗xb2 32.♖ab1 ♗c6† 33.♔f1 ♘c3 34.♖xb2 ♘xd1 35.♖b6



35...♗f3?

An inaccurate move in slight time pressure.

35...♗d5 36.a6 ♘c3 would finish the game at once.

36.a6 ♘c3 37.a7!

I overlooked this. White keeps the a-pawn and even advances it to a7.

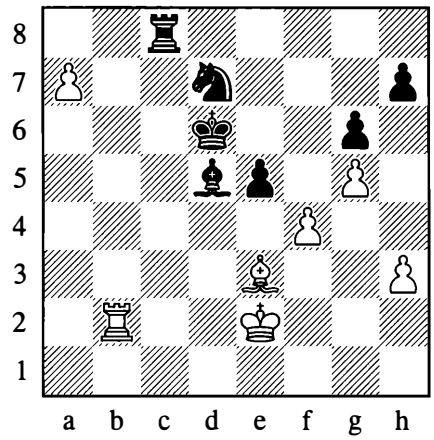
37...♗d5

Earlier I did not notice that 37...♖xa7? 38.♖b8† ♔f7 (or 38...♔g7 39.♗e5†) 39.♖f8† would cost Black a bishop.

38.♖b8† ♔f7 39.♗c5

It may seem questionable whether Black can win – the protected pawn on a7 and bishops of opposite colour cast such doubts. However, the a8-square is under firm control and the extra knight weighs heavily. Black should gradually win after consolidating his forces.

39...♘e4 40.♗e3 ♘f6 41.f4 ♘d7 42.♖b2 ♔e7 43.♔e2 ♖c8 44.g4 ♔d6 45.g5 e5!



The beginning of the end.

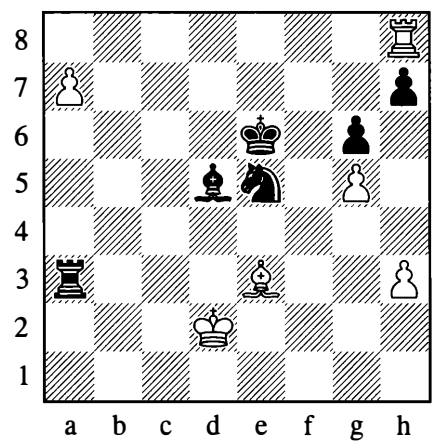
46.fxe5† ♔xe5

Black's king gains his freedom.

47.♖b4 ♖c2† 48.♔d3 ♖a2

The rook has managed to get behind the a-pawn – it guarantees the win.

49.♖b8 ♔d6 50.♖d8 ♖a3† 51.♔d2 ♔e6 52.♖h8 ♘e5



53.♖e8† ♔f5 54.♖f8† ♘f7

It would be a pity to get checkmated after the "logical" 54...♔e4?? 55.♖f4#.

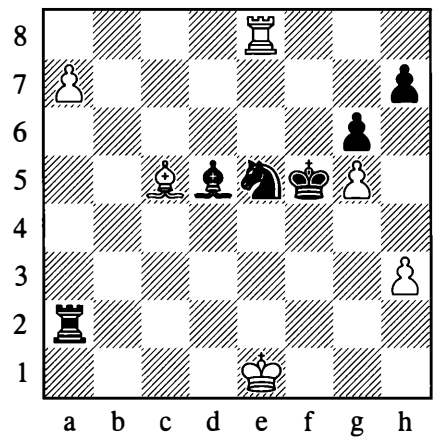
55.♔e2 ♔e4 56.♖e8† ♘e5

Now everything is OK.

57.♗c5 ♖a2† 58.♔e1

Or 58.♔d1 ♔d3 and now it's the white king in a mating net.

58...♔f5



White resigned due to: 59.♗e3 ♘f3† 60.♔d1 ♘xg5 61.♗xg5 (61.♖f8† ♘f7) 61...♗f3† 62.♔c1 ♔xg5

0–1

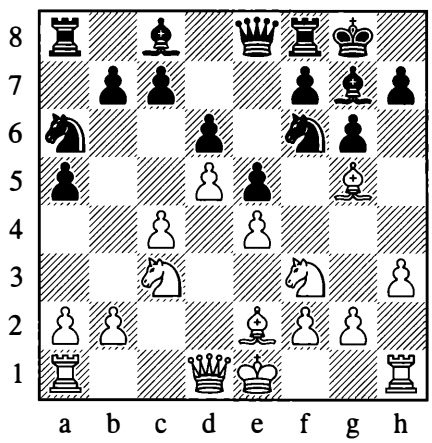
Christian Gabriel – Ilya Smirin

Pula 2000

This game was played in a Zonal tournament in Pula, Croatia. Both of us badly needed to win to keep our chances alive of qualifying for the Knockout World Championship.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.d5 a5 8.h3 ♘a6 9.♗g5 ♕e8

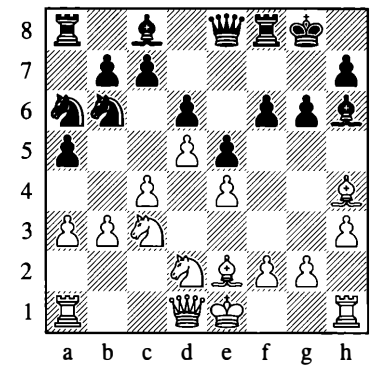
9...h6 10.♗e3 was played in my game with Kramnik in 1995, which you will find on page 52.



10.g4

Not so much an attacking move, but rather a try to squeeze Black on the kingside. Also, White is ready now to meet a future ...f7-f5 with the exchange gxf5, opening the g-file and trying to scare the black king.

Often White prefers 10.♘d2 here. The following game by Nakamura may serve as an example of Black's actions in that case: 10...♘d7 11.a3 f6 12.♗h4 ♘b6 13.b3 ♗h6!

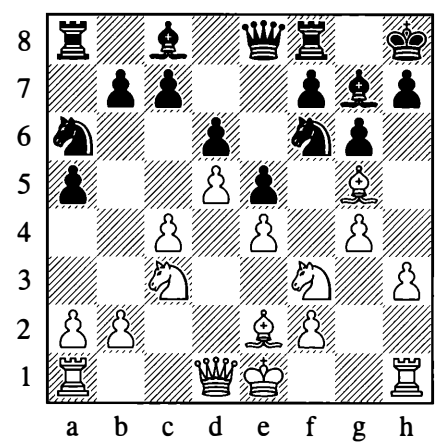


An important move – the KID bishop becomes active. 14.♖b1 ♘c5 15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 ♘ca4 17.♘b5 ♕d7 18.♕b3 ♔h8 19.♘f3 f5 20.0–0 fxe4 21.♘h2 ♗f4! 22.♗g4 ♕g7 23.♗xc8 ♖fxc8 24.♖fe1 g5 25.♗g3 ♕g6 With an extra pawn and an excellent position; Ostenstad – Nakamura, Rhodes 2013.

10...♔h8

With the idea that I managed to realize in the game – Black is going to play ...♘g8 and carry out ...f7-f5 and/or exchange the dark-squared bishops via h6.

Nowadays I would probably prefer a slightly different plan, starting with 10...♘d7. For instance: 11.♖g1 ♘dc5 12.h4 c6 13.h5 cxd5 14.h6 ♗h8 15.cxd5 ♗d7 and Black does not have much to complain about – the bishop on h8 is not shut in forever (hopefully), and meanwhile White has problems with the placement of the king; Piket – J. Polgar, Aruba 1995.



11.♘d2

Twelve years after this game, Anton Korobov demonstrated a deep and strong strategic idea in his game with me. This game deserves to be shown till the end:

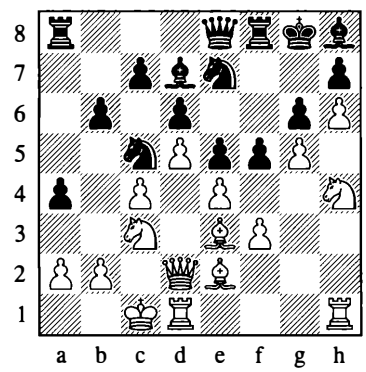
11.♗e3! ♘g8 12.g5 f5 13.h4!

This is the idea – now Black's kingside is severely cramped.

13...♘e7 14.h5 ♔g8 15.h6 ♗h8

This bishop is in complete misery.

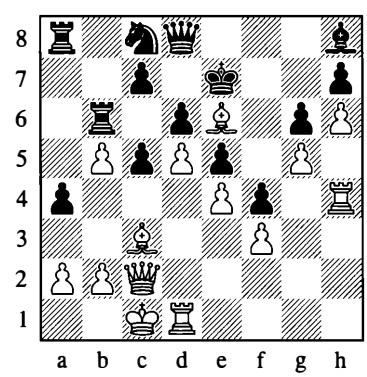
16.♘h4 b6 17.f3 ♘c5 18.♕d2 ♗d7 19.0–0–0 a4



20.♘g2 ♕f7 21.♘e1 ♖a5 22.♘d3 ♖fa8 23.♕c2 ♕e8 24.♘xc5 bxc5 25.♘b5 ♕d8 26.♗d2 ♖5a6 27.♗c3 f4

Trying to close the position as much as possible.

28.♗f1 ♘c8 29.♗h3 ♗xb5 30.cxb5 ♖b6 31.♗e6† ♔f8 32.♖h4 ♔e7



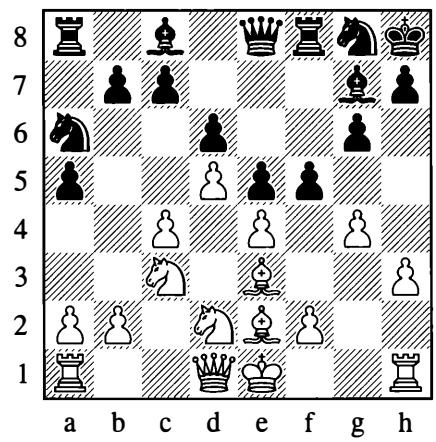
33.♖xf4! exf4 34.♗g7!

A beautiful combination – Black is helpless.

34...♘a7 35.♕c3 ♕f8 36.♗xf8† ♖xf8 37.♕a5 ♗xb2† 38.♔c2 ♖a8 39.♕xa4 ♗e5 40.♖b1

1–0 Korobov – Smirin, Eilat 2012.

11...♘g8 12.♗e3 f5



13.gxf5

In the event of 13.f3, trying to keep White's central pawn chain intact, I would proceed with 13...♗h6 14.♗xh6 (14.g5? f4) 14...♘xh6 with good and easy play – some dark squares in White's camp may easily become weak.

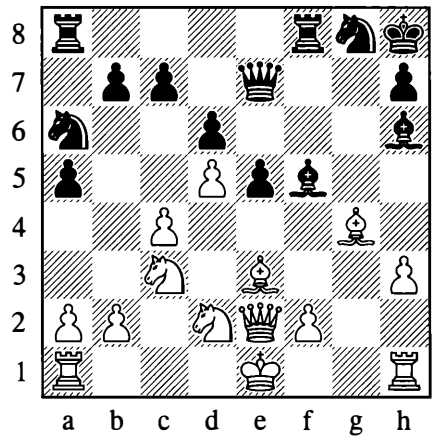
13...gxf5 14.exf5 ♗h6!?

An interesting alternative would be 14...♘e7, intending to recapture on f5 with the knight. After the possible continuation 15.♗h5 ♕d8 16.♘de4 (or 16.f6 ♗xf6 17.♘de4 ♘f5 18.♗g4 ♗h4) 16...♘xf5 17.♗g5 ♕d7 18.♕d2 b6!? 19.0–0–0 ♘c5 20.♘xc5 bxc5 a double-edged situation would arise. Indeed, both kings may easily find themselves under attack.

15.♗g4 ♕e7 16.♕e2

If White had tried to keep the extra pawn on f5 by means of 16.♕f3, I was going to proceed with: 16...♕h4!? (not 16...♘b4?! 17.0–0–0 ♘d3† 18.♔b1) 17.0–0–0 ♘e7 – Black will take on f5 and remain OK.

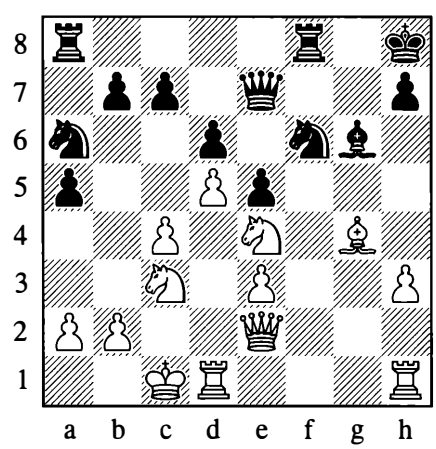
16...♗xf5



17.0–0–0

After 17.♗xf5 ♗xe3 (in the event of 17...♖xf5 18.0–0–0 ♗xe3 19.fxe3 ♘c5 20.♘de4 White would have some advantage due to the strong knight on e4 and the slightly vulnerable position of Black's king) 18.fxe3 ♕h4† 19.♕f2 ♕xf2† 20.♔xf2 ♖xf5† 21.♔e2 ♖af8 22.♖af1 ♖xf1 23.♖xf1 ♖xf1 24.♔xf1 ♘f6 the numerous exchanges would lead to a dull draw. But as I explained earlier, this outcome would hardly suit either player.

17...♗g6 18.♘de4 ♗xe3† 19.fxe3 ♘f6

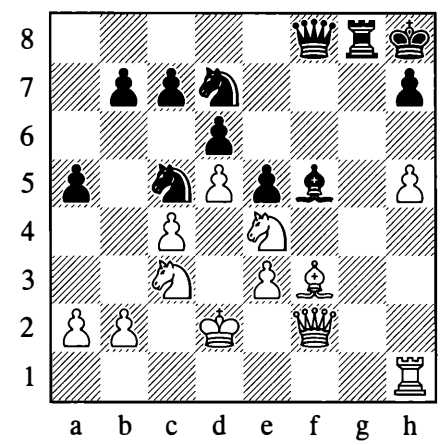


Black has a harmonious position – he may effectively challenge White's control over e4 with all his minor pieces. The bishop on g6 is really strong – it controls the very important b1-h7 diagonal and, just in case, covers the black king.

20.♗f3 ♘d7!? 21.h4 ♘ac5 22.h5 ♗f5 23.♖dg1 ♖g8

These manoeuvres are easy to understand. The next king move looks slightly unnatural, but it just shows that White has problems finding a decent positional plan. Indeed, Black's moves look more natural.

24.♔d2 ♖af8 25.♖g2 ♖xg2 26.♕xg2 ♖g8 27.♕f2 ♕f8!?



Indirectly applying pressure to the knight on e4.

28.♘xc5 ♘xc5 29.♗e2

After relinquishing control over e4, Gabriel hopes to defend himself in the forthcoming inferior endgame.

29...♗d7 30.♕xf8 ♖xf8 31.♖h2 ♔g7

Black's advantage is probably not too big, but it is obvious. All his pieces are slightly more active than their counterparts, and the pawn on h5 has become weak in the ending – the black king may easily threaten it.

32.b3

Or 32.h6† ♔g6 does not help.

32...♔h6 33.♗d1

White prepares to drive away the knight from c5 by means of a3 and b4, but in doing so he allows the black rook to penetrate.

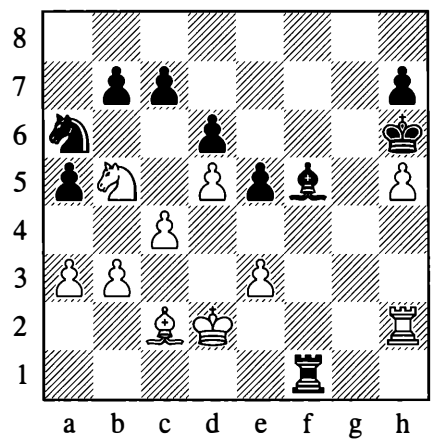
33...♖f1 34.♗c2

34.♗e2 ♖g1 35.♖f2 ♔g7 36.♖h2, trying to preserve status quo, was another way to defend.

34...♗g4 35.♘b5

Probably the immediate 35.a3 was more accurate.

35...♘a6 36.a3 ♗f5!



The key move. White faces a tough choice: to swap the bishops and lose the h-pawn or to allow considerable activity for the opponent's forces.

37.♗d1

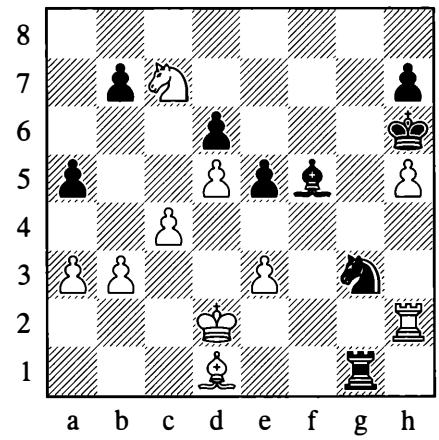
Gabriel picks the second option.

After the sample variation 37.♖g2 ♗xc2 38.♔xc2 ♖f7 39.♘c3 ♔xh5 40.♘e4 b6! 41.♔d3 ♘c5† 42.♘xc5 bxc5 he would hardly have real chances of survival – the extra pawn on h7 is very strong.

37...♘c5

Sacrificing a pawn for domination.

38.♘xc7 ♘e4† 39.♔e2 ♘g3† 40.♔d2 ♖g1!



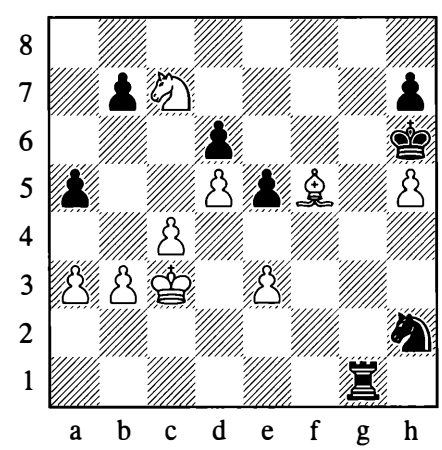
The strongest continuation.

41.♗c2!

From a practical point of view this is an absolutely correct exchange sacrifice.

Houdini recommends 41.♗e2 ♖a1 42.♘b5 ♘e4† 43.♔c2 (43.♔d3? ♖a2 with checkmate) 43...♖a2† 44.♔c1, but I do not believe such a passive defence could save the game.

41...♘f1† 42.♔c3 ♘xh2 43.♗xf5



The position is sharp – White has strong counterplay connected with c4-c5 to create a passed d-pawn. Concrete and precise play is required from both sides, especially from Black.

43...♘g4?

A big mistake – I picked the wrong square for the knight.

Correct was:

43...♘f1!

Attacking the e-pawn from a safe square.

44.c5

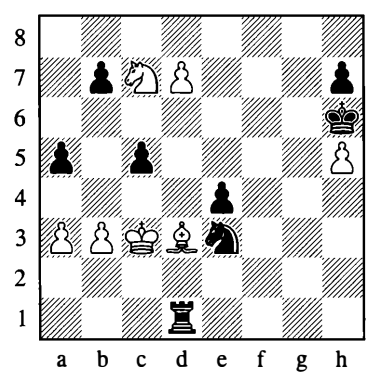
If 44.♘b5 ♘xe3 45.♘xd6 (45.♗d3 does not save White after 45...♖g2 and now 46.♗e4 ♖g3 or 46.♘xd6? ♘d1#) 45...♘xf5 46.♘xf5† ♔xh5 47.♘d6 Black proves to be just faster: 47...♔g4 48.♘xb7 e4! 49.♘c5 e3 50.♘d3 ♖d1 etc.

44.♔d3? ♖g3 would lose at once.

44...dxc5 45.d6 ♘xe3 46.d7

Perhaps 46.♗e4 ♖g7 47.♔d3 ♘g4 48.♔c4 ♘f6 49.♗xb7 is the most resilient continuation, but I suppose that after 49...e4 Black is still close to a win.

46...♖d1 47.♗d3 e4



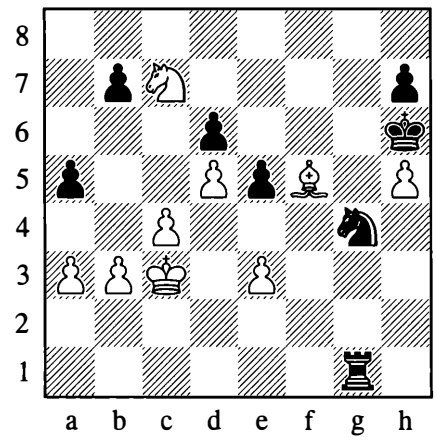
48.d8=♕ ♖xd3† 49.♕xd3 exd3 50.♔xd3 ♘g4 51.♔c4 ♔xh5 52.♔xc5 ♔h4

This knight ending should be winning – the h-pawn will decide the matter. For instance: 53.♘e8

Or 53.♘d5 ♔g5.

53...♔g5 54.♘g7 ♘e3 55.♔b6 ♘f5 56.♘e6† ♔g4

And so on.



44.♔d3?

White misses the chance to turn the tables.

After the simple 44.♗xg4 ♖xg4 45.♘e8 ♖g8 (the best try) 46.♘xd6 ♔xh5 47.♘xb7 ♔g6 48.c5 h5 49.c6 he would be on top in the pawn race: 49...h4 50.c7 h3 51.d6 h2 52.d7 h1=♕ 53.d8=♕ ♕c6† 54.♔d2 ♕g2† 55.♔d3 with serious winning chances. But luckily the German grandmaster did not spot this.

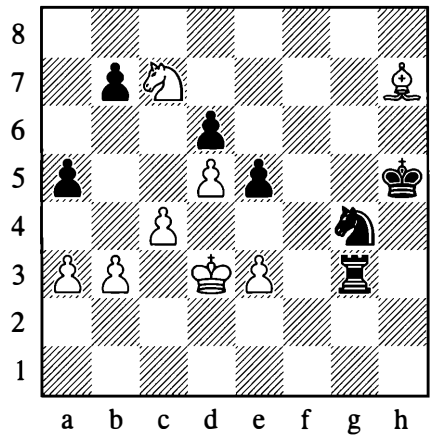
44...♔xh5 45.♗xh7?

The second error in a row; the h-pawn was not too dangerous yet.

Instead of being greedy, White should have proceeded 45.♘b5 ♔g5 46.♘xd6, attacking the key pawn on d6. In that case all three results would still be possible.

45...♖g3

Now the e3-pawn is doomed.



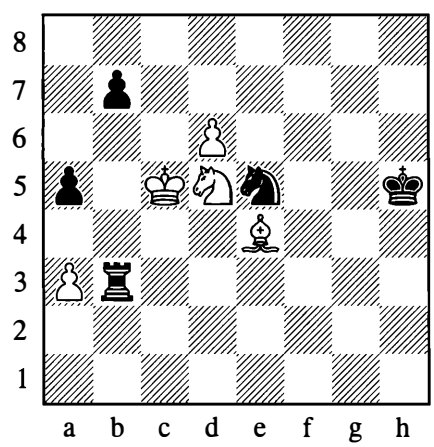
46.c5!

The only way to complicate Black's task.

46...♖xe3† 47.♔c4 dxc5 48.d6 e4

This move was begging to be played. At the same time this is the only way to keep the advantage.

49.♘d5 ♘e5† 50.♔xc5 ♖xb3 51.♗xe4



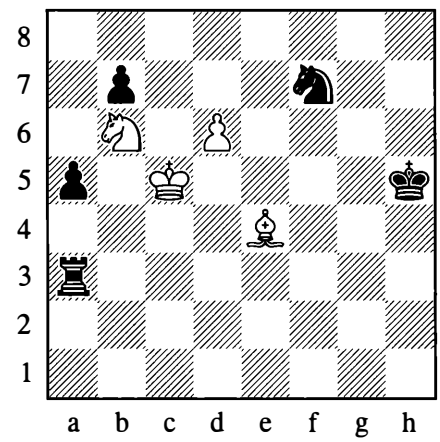
51...♖xa3?

This hasty capture could have thrown away the victory.

Correct was to consolidate the position first by inserting a check: 51...♘d7† 52.♔d4 ♖xa3 53.♘c3 (53.♗f5 ♖a4† 54.♔c3 ♘e5 55.d7 ♘c6 and the pawn on d7 is firmly stopped) 53...♖b3 54.♗f5 ♘b8 55.d7 ♘c6† 56.♔c4 ♖a3! 57.♘e4 ♘d8 58.♘c5 ♖e3 59.♔d5 ♔g5, and again the d-pawn cannot save White.

52.♘b6 ♘f7

After 52...a4 53.d7 ♘xd7† 54.♘xd7 ♖b3 55.♗d5 ♖b2 56.♔c4 White would be just in time: 56...b5† 57.♔c3 a3 58.♗b3 b4† 59.♔c4, with a draw.



53.♗xb7?

The losing mistake. Now White's forces lose coordination for a moment and this is enough for Black to prevail. It's curious that three times in this ending, starting from the 45th move, the capture of a pawn proved to be wrong!

White should have used his main trump instead: 53.d7! ♖c3† There is nothing better. 54.♔d4 ♖g3 55.♗xb7 ♘d8 56.♗d5 And Black cannot win – his king is too far away.

53...♖c3†!

The key check.

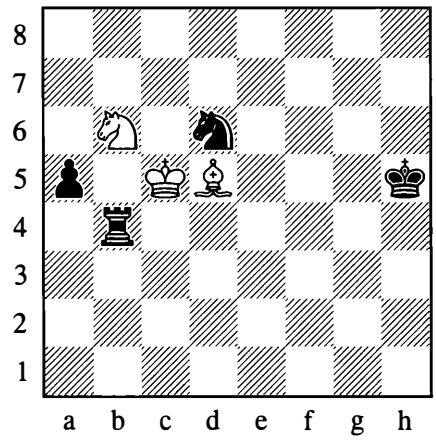
54.♔d4

54.♔d5 ♖b3 would not change anything.

54...♖b3 55.♗d5

Or 55.♔c5 ♘xd6 56.♗d5 ♖b4.

55...♖b4† 56.♔c5 ♘xd6



In this study-like position Black wins, despite having only one pawn left and his king temporarily not involved in the battle.

57.♘d7 ♘f5 58.♘e5

Black needs:

1. To preserve his a-pawn.
2. To consolidate his forces.
3. To move his only pawn forward.

He is able to do all this, but precise play is still required.

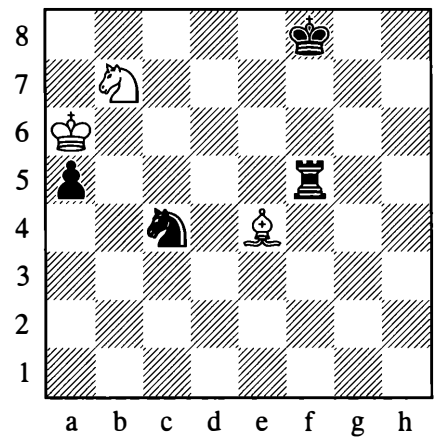
58...♘e3! 59.♗f7† ♔h6

59...♔g5 was stronger, but I instinctively wanted to hide from possible knight checks.

60.♗e8 ♖e4 61.♘f7† ♔g7 62.♘d6 ♖e5† 63.♔b6 ♖e6 64.♔c5 ♖e5†

A repetition of moves in time trouble to gain additional time on the clock.

65.♔b6 ♖d5! 66.♘b7 ♘c4† 67.♔a6 ♖f5 68.♗c6 ♔f8 69.♗e4



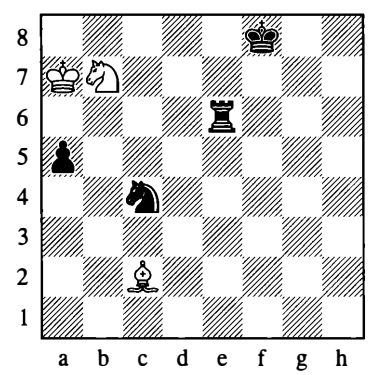
69...♖e5

Here Black had a prettier win: 69...♖h5!? 70.♗c2 ♖h6† 71.♔a7 ♖h4! 72.♔a6 (72.♗b3 ♘d2! 73.♘xa5 ♘xb3 74.♘xb3 ♖a4† 75.♔b6 ♖b4† 76.♔c5 ♖xb3 – a real study-like motif) 72...♘e3 73.♗b1 a4 and so on.

70.♗d3?!

Gabriel too had little time left.

Otherwise he would probably have played the more resilient:
70.♗c2! ♖e6† 71.♔a7



71...♖e3!

Apparently this is the only way to victory. After 71...♖h6? 72.♗b3 ♘d2 73.♘xa5 the game would be drawn. Interestingly, if White had a knight instead of a bishop (i.e. two knights versus rook and knight) in the

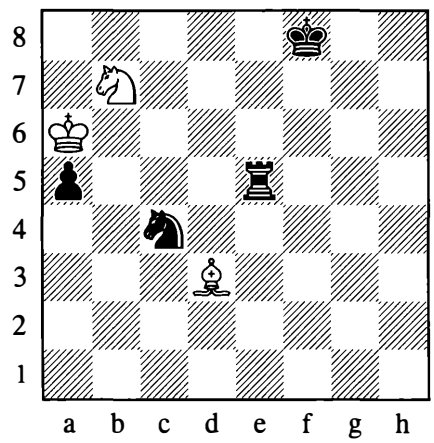
final position, then according to "ancient" computer programs he would lose in a few hundred moves! I remember seeing the computer's analysis of such an ending back in 1995. This conclusion is hardly relevant to a practical game though.

72.♔a6

Or 72.♘c5 ♔e7.

72...♔e7 73.♘c5 ♔d6

White is left with no hope.



70...♘b2

This decides the game at once – the a-pawn will cost White at least a piece, so he resigned. An interesting endgame!

0–1

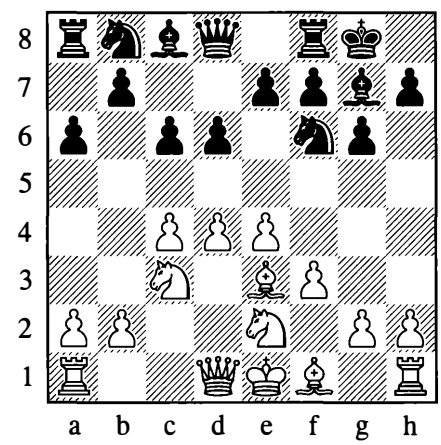
Sabino Brunello – Ilya Smirin

Helsingor 2015

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0–0 6.♗e3 c6 7.♘ge2

7.♗d3 a6 8.♘ge2 b5 was played in a well-known game between the K's in their last match for the crown: 9.0–0 ♘bd7 10.♖c1 e5 11.a3 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♗b7 13.cxb5 cxb5 14.♖e1 ♘e5 15.♗f1 ♖e8 16.♗f2 d5 17.exd5 ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ♕xd5 19.a4 ♗h6 20.♖a1 ♘c4 21.axb5 axb5 22.♖xa8 ♖xa8 23.♕b3 ♗c6 24.♗d3 ♘d6 25.♕xd5 ♗xd5 26.♘xb5 ♘xb5 27.♗xb5 ♗g7 28.b4 ♗c3 29.♖d1 ♗b3 30.♖b1 ♗a2 ½–½ Karpov – Kasparov, Lyon/New York 1990.

7...a6



I decided to play this line to surprise my opponent – I had never used it before. Also I wanted to test some advice, given to me by Vlad Tkachiev some 1½ years before the game, which was connected with the encounter Dreev – Wang Hao (you will find this game on the next page).

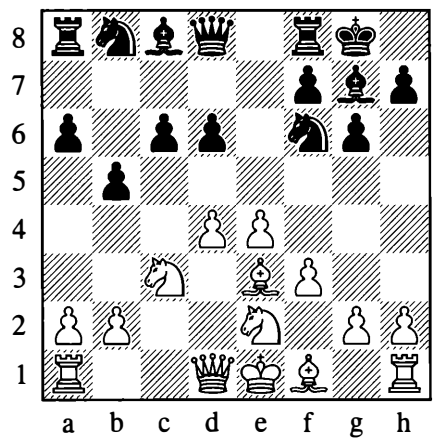
8.c5

This continuation is by far the most popular nowadays. The idea is obvious – to use the weakness of the b6-square and to underline the main drawback of my 7th move.

8...b5 9.cxd6

In my opinion 9.cxb6 ♘bd7 deserves attention. And now, let's say 10.♕d2 ♘xb6 11.♘g3 a5 12.♖c1 ♗a6 13.♗xa6 ♖xa6 14.♘d1 ♕d7 15.0–0 and White has no weaknesses and perhaps may claim some advantage.

9...exd6

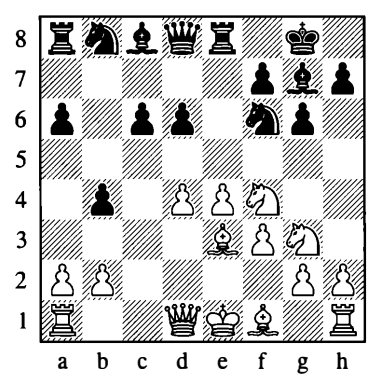


10.♘f4

The fashionable move. However, I would probably prefer the less creative "dull" continuation 10.♕d2 ♖e8 11.♘g3, holding the pieces together for a while.

10...b4

The immediate 10...♖e8 was played by Alexander Grischuk against the World Champion in the World Rapid Chess Championship – 11.♗e2 b4 12.♘a4 ♘d5!



13.♗c1 ♘b6 14.♘xb6 ♕xb6 15.♗e3 d5 16.♕d3 dxe4 17.fxe4 a5 18.♖d1 ♗a6 19.♕c2 ♗xe2 20.♘xe2 ♘d7 21.0–0 ♘f6 22.♘g3 ♘g4 23.♗f2 ♖ad8 24.e5 c5 25.dxc5 ♕c7 and Black was fine despite losing in the end, Carlsen – Grischuk, Dubai (rapid) 2014. The move I made in the game is associated with the same idea.

11.♘a4

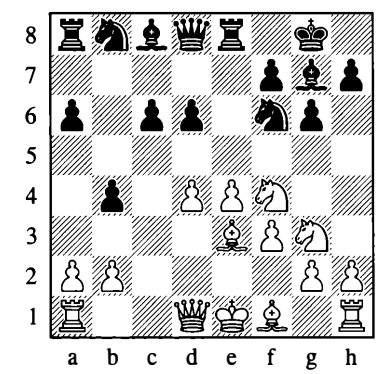
A rather optimistic choice.

11.♘ce2

This was probably safer, but even in this case Wang Hao gained better prospects against Dreev:

11...♖e8 12.♘g3?!

It would be fascinating to test the creative continuation 12.♕d2 ♕e7 13.♕xb4 ♘xe4! 14.fxe4 ♕xe4 15.♗d2 ♗xd4, with an interesting mess.



12...♘d5!

This is the tactical justification of Black's opening concept.

13.♗c1

This is Dreev – Wang Hao, Tromsø 2013 (1–0, 53) and now after the simple:

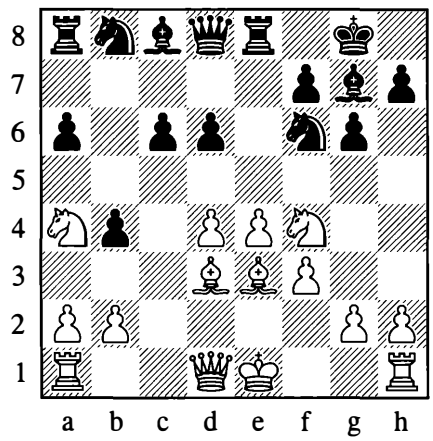
13...♘xf4 14.♗xf4 c5

White would fall behind in development and face serious problems.

11...♖e8 12.♗d3?!

Sabino does not sense the danger.

12.♗e2, transposing to the game Carlsen – Grischuk, should have been preferred.



12...♘d5!

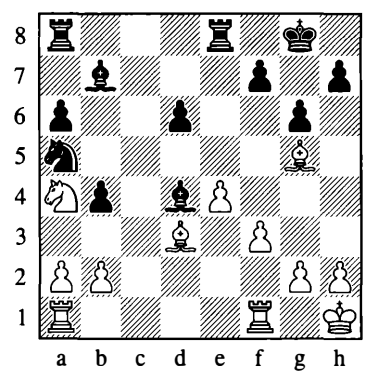
Following the instant classics.

13.♘xd5 cxd5 14.0–0 ♗b7

Black's position is a pleasure to see – two bishops fire at White's centre, and the knight will join them in no time. Meanwhile the knight on a4 is a silent witness to his army's opening fiasco.

15.♕b3 ♘c6 16.♔h1

Understandably Brunello did not want to enter the forced path by means of: 16.♕xd5 ♘a5 17.♕g5 ♕xg5 18.♗xg5 ♗xd4† 19.♔h1

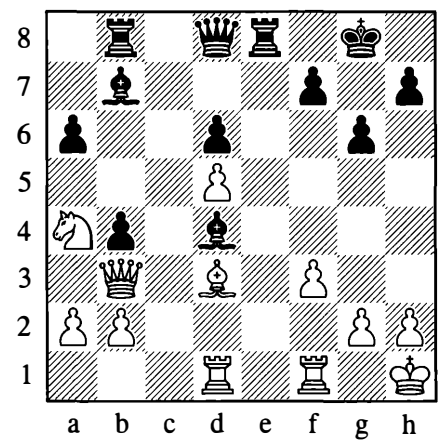


Indeed, after 19...♗c6 20.♗c2 ♘c4 21.♖fd1 ♗e5 22.♖ac1 ♗xa4 23.♗xa4 ♘xb2 24.♗xe8 ♘xd1 25.♗xf7† ♔xf7 26.♖xd1 a5 27.f4 ♗h8! 28.♖xd6 a4 29.e5 b3 30.e6† ♔g8 31.e7 b2 32.♖d8† ♔g7 33.♖d1 (or 33.h4 b1=♕† 34.♔h2 ♕e4!) 33...♔f7 he would be helpless.

16...♖b8

The simplest. Now the pawn on d4 is impossible to defend, and after that the difference in piece activity will be just too big.

17.♖ad1 ♘xd4 18.♗xd4 ♗xd4 19.exd5



19...♕h4

Eyeing the white king. The threat of ...♗e5 is very unpleasant now.

20.g3

Of course, White's position is no cause for optimism, but it was better to do without this move, which weakens the pawn shelter near the king.

More chances for resistance would be offered by the brave:

20.♕c4 ♖ec8 21.♕xb4

After that the best continuation for me seems to be:

21...♗c6

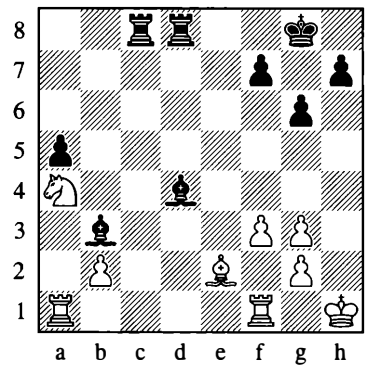
21...♗xd5 is met by 22.♕e1.

22.♕a3 ♗xd5 23.♕xd6 ♖d8 24.♕c7 ♖bc8 25.♕g3 ♕xg3 26.hxg3 ♗xa2 27.♖a1 ♗b3

28.♗e2

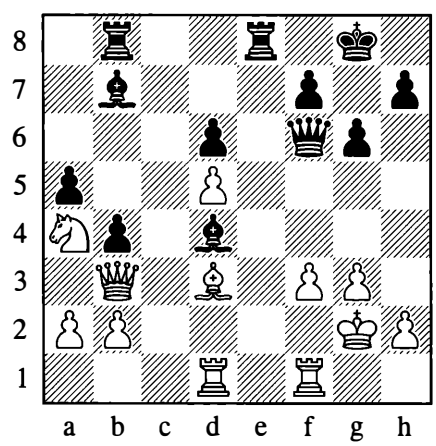
28.♗xa6? ♖c6! 29.♘c3 g5 would suddenly lead to checkmate.

28...a5



The resulting endgame is certainly bad for White, but he still would retain chances to hold. With queens on the board, his situation is even worse – various assaults against the white king are hanging in the air.

20...♕f6 21.♔g2 a5



After I made this move, Sabino became visibly sad – he has not even a shadow of counterplay and must await his fate. I was sure that the game would not last long and partially lost my concentration. As is often the case, this could have cost me dearly.

22.♖fe1

22.♗b5 was slightly better, but it would not change much.

22...♖xe1 23.♖xe1 ♕g5 24.♕c4 ♗a7!?

24...♕xd5 25.♕xd5 ♗xd5 would lead to a technically won endgame, but objectively I made a stronger move – the white king is under a strong attack and the knight on a4 cannot help.

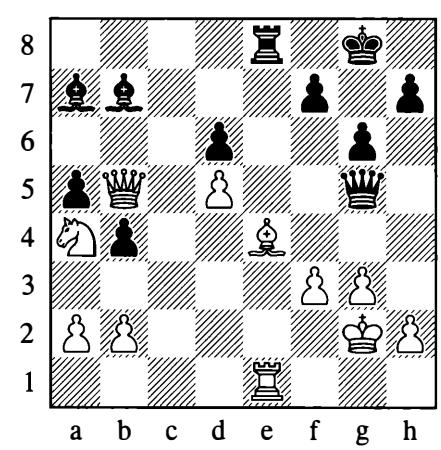
25.♗e4

Starting from this moment, I missed a few possibilities, each of which would have led to a quick win.

25...♖e8

25...♖c8 26.♕b5 ♕d2† 27.♕e2 (27.♖e2 ♕d1) 27...♕xe2† 28.♖xe2 ♖c1 29.♖c2 ♖g1† 30.♔h3 ♗a6!–+ and the white king is in a mating net.

26.♕b5



26...♖b8?

26...♗c6! 27.♕xc6 ♕d2† 28.♔h3 ♖e5, with an irresistible mating attack, would have won nicely.

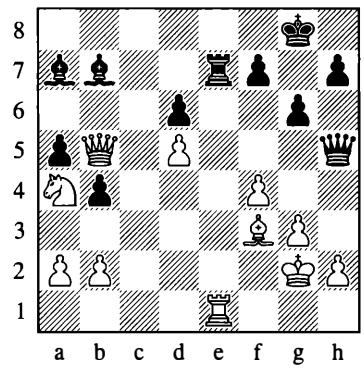
Not so fast, but also a pretty win, would result from:

26...♖e7 27.f4

27.♖e2 ♕c1 28.♘b6 ♕d1 29.♗d3 ♖c7 and White is just helpless.

27...♕h5 28.♗f3

28.f5 ♖xe4 29.♖xe4 ♕xf5 30.♖e8† ♔g7 31.♕xb7 ♕f2† 32.♔h3 ♕f1† 33.♔h4 ♕f5! and the extra rook cannot save the white king.

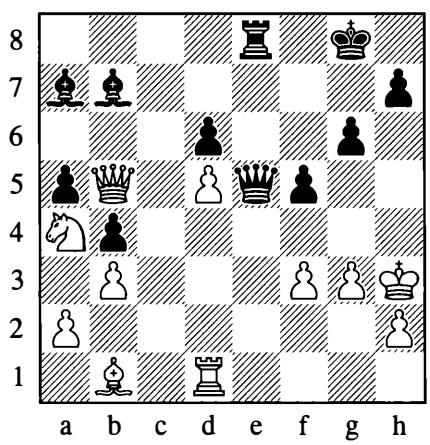


28...♗xd5!!

Black wins.

27.b3 ♕e5 28.♖d1 f5 29.♗b1 ♖e8 30.♔h3

The last line of defence.



30...♖e7

30...f4! 31.g4 ♗c8 32.♔g2 ♗xg4 33.fxg4 f3† 34.♔h1 ♕e2 35.♕xe2 fxe2 36.♖e1 ♗f2 would again have finished the game quickly.

31.f4 ♕e2 32.♕xe2

The position remains lost for White, but at least he has managed to exchange queens.

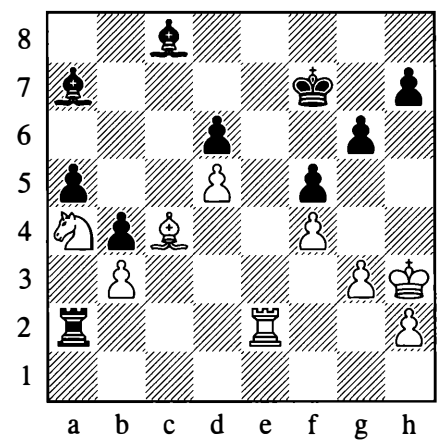
32...♖xe2 33.♗d3 ♖xa2 34.♗c4 ♗c8?

34...h6 35.♖e1 g5 36.fxg5 hxg5 37.♖e7 ♗g1 would still have finished the game quickly.

35.♖e1 ♔f7

35...♗d7, with the idea 36.♖e7?! ♗g1, would have been much stronger. Before the time control at move 40, I started to make mistake after mistake.

36.♖e2



36...♖a1?

36...♖xe2 37.♗xe2 ♗d7 should still be enough for a win, but as I said, I was completely disoriented.

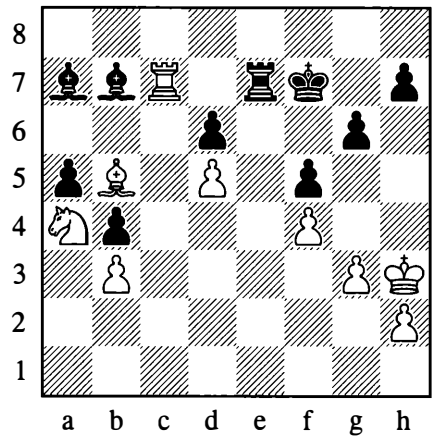
37.♗b5 ♗b7?

37...♖c1, preventing 38.♖c2, was the only correct move.

38.♖c2

Now suddenly White has good counterplay for the pawn.

38...♖e1 39.♖c7† ♖e7



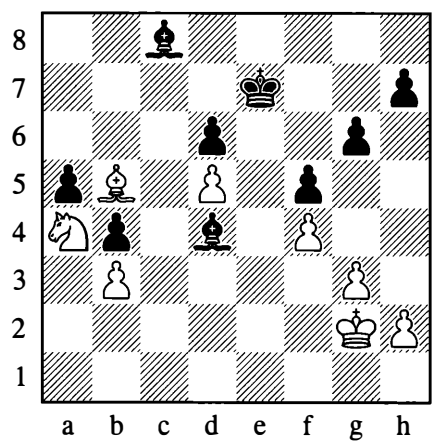
40.♖xe7†?

The 40th move... Meanwhile 40.♗d7! ♗c8 41.♖xa7 ♗xd7 42.♖xa5 ♗xa4 43.♖xa4 ♖e4 would have led to a draw.

40...♔xe7 41.♗c4

But even now it's very questionable whether Black can win, even with an extra pawn, the bishop pair and the knight being cut off: White has a kind of fortress.

41...♗d4 42.♔g2 ♗c8 43.♗b5!



43...g5!?

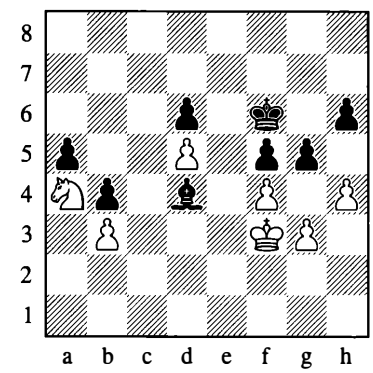
During the game, and also for a while afterwards, I believed that White would be able to set up a fortress if I did not do something drastic.

If 43...♔f6 44.h4 h6 45.♔f3 g5 46.hxg5† (46.h5!?) 46...hxg5 47.♔g2 ♗b7 48.♗c4 ♔g6 49.♔h2 ♔h5 50.♗e2† Black would be unable to storm the fortress. That's why I believed my 43th move was the best practical chance.

The critical line, however, comes after an exchange of bishops:

43...♗d7 44.♗xd7 ♔xd7 45.♔f3 ♔e7!

And not: 45...h6? 46.h4 ♔e7 47.♔g2 ♔f6 48.♔f3 g5

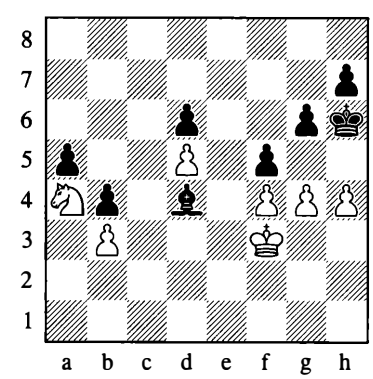


49.h5 The draw is evident; the strangled knight guards the c5-square – the only place for the black king to break through. For this reason we need to keep the h6-square clear for the king.

46.h4 ♔f6 47.♔g2 ♔g7 48.♔f3

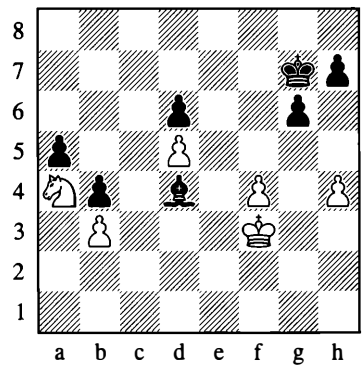
48.♔h2 ♔h6 49.♔g2 ♔h5 50.♔h3 h6–+

48...♔h6 49.g4

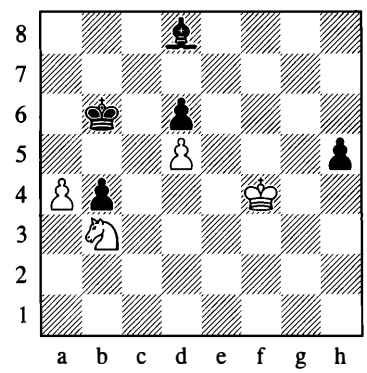


49...♔g7!

At first I analysed a more natural, but weaker, line: 49...fxg4† 50.♔xg4 ♔g7 51.♔f3

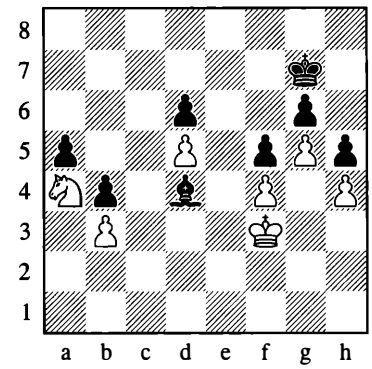


51...♔f6? (Even here Black can win with 51...h5! 52.♔e4 ♗f2 53.♘b2 ♗xh4 54.♘c4 ♗e1 55.♘xa5 h4 56.♘c4 h3 57.♔f3 h2 58.♔g2 ♗g3 59.♘xd6 ♗xf4 60.♘e4 ♔f7, as shown by Jacob Aagaard.) 52.♔e4 ♗f2 53.♘b2 ♗xh4 54.♘c4 a4 55.bxa4 h5 (55...♔e7 56.♘a5 ♔d7 57.f5 gxf5† 58.♔xf5 ♗d8 59.♘b3 h5 60.♘d2 ♔c7 61.♘b3 ♔b6 62.♔f4



I see no way for Black to win the game. For example: 62...♔c7 63.♔f5 ♔d7 64.♘d2 h4 65.♔g4 ♗e7 66.♘b3 ♔e8 67.♔h3 ♔f7 68.a5 ♗d8 69.a6 ♗b6 70.♔xh4 ♔f6 71.♘a5 ♔f5 72.♔g3 ♔e4 73.♘c6 b3 74.a7 ♗xa7 75.♘xa7 b2 76.♘b5 ♔xd5 77.♔f3 with an obvious draw.) 56.a5 ♔e7 57.a6 ♗f2 58.♘e3 b3 59.a7 b2 60.a8=♕ b1=♕† 61.♔f3 ♗xe3 62.♔xe3 Black has winning chances here, but nothing is guaranteed.

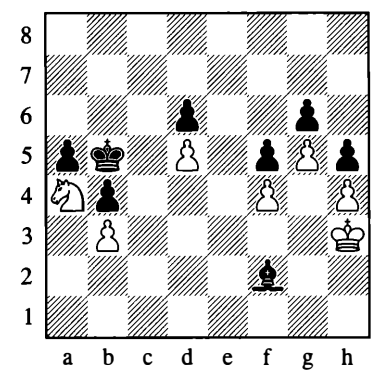
50.g5 h5!



51.♔g2 ♔f7 52.♔f3 ♔e7 53.♔g3 ♔d7 54.♔f3 ♔c7 55.♔g3 ♔b7 56.♔f3 ♔a6 57.♔g3 ♔b5

White is quickly running into *zugzwang*.

58.♔f3 ♗g1 59.♔g2 ♗e3 60.♔f3 ♗d2 61.♔g3 ♗e1† 62.♔h3 ♗f2



Black wins, as he is not afraid of losing the bishop.

63.♘b2 ♔c5! 64.♘d3† ♔d4 65.♘xf2 ♔c3

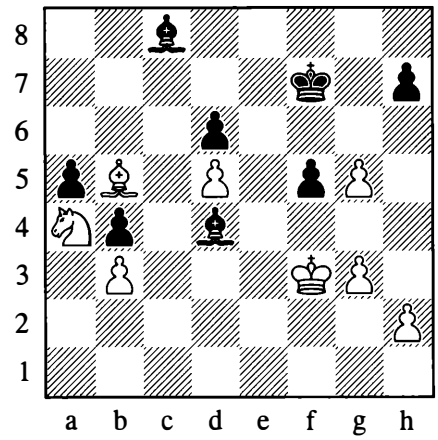
And so on.

44.fxg5

I gave back my extra pawn, but the fortress is no longer on the cards without the f4-pawn. Still, all this is hardly sufficient to win the game.

If 44.h4 gxf4 45.gxf4 ♔f6 the h-pawns are on the board, which is in Black's favour: 46.♔g3 ♔g6 47.♔f3 ♗b7 48.♗c4 ♗c3 49.♘b6 ♗e1, with good winning chances.

44...♔f7 45.♔f3



45...h6

An impatient move.

More chances would be promised by the simple 45...♔g6 46.h4 h6 47.gxh6 (bad is 47.♗e8† ♔g7 48.g6 ♗a6) 47...♔xh6 48.♔f4 ♔g6 49.♗e8† ♔f6 50.♗b5, and Black may try to win this, even though a draw is the most probable outcome.

46.gxh6 ♔g6 47.h3

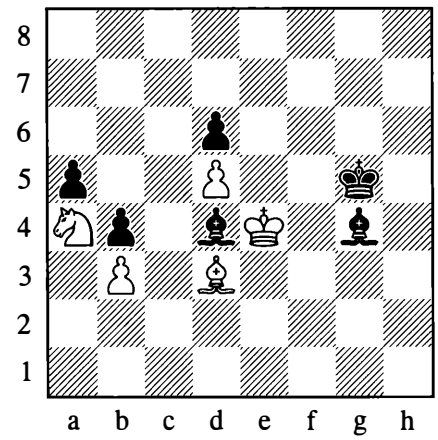
After the natural 47.♔f4 ♔xh6 48.♗d3 ♔g6 49.g4 ♗e5† 50.♔f3 the position is just equal.

47...♔xh6 48.g4?

In my opinion this mistake was caused by nerves.

48.♔f4 ♔g6 49.♗e8† ♔f6 50.♗b5 ♗b7 51.♗c4 ♗a8 52.g4 would still lead to a fairly easy draw.

48...♔g5 49.♗d3 fxg4† 50.hxg4 ♗xg4† 51.♔e4



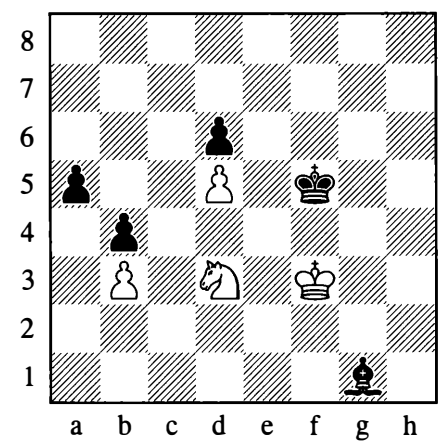
Black may again seriously count on converting his extra pawn. Nevertheless, the reduced number of pawns gives White hope.

51...♗g1!

An exact move.

After 51...♗a7 52.♘b2 ♗f5† 53.♔f3 ♗xd3 54.♘xd3 ♔f5 55.♘b2 ♔e5 56.♘c4† ♔xd5 57.♘xa5 the outcome probably would be a draw – after 57...♔d4 58.♘c6† the bishop on a7 will be taken by the white knight.

52.♘b2 ♗f5† 53.♔f3 ♗xd3 54.♘xd3 ♔f5



White is in *zugzwang*, and my king will finally penetrate.

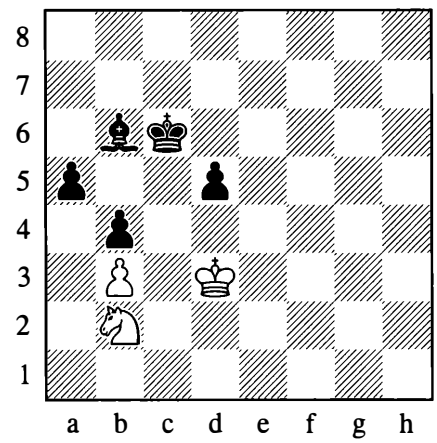
55.♘b2 ♔e5 56.♔e2

56.♘c4† ♔xd5 57.♘xa5 ♔d4 58.♔g2 ♗e3 59.♔f3 ♗h6 60.♘c4 ♗f8 61.♔e2 ♔c3 62.♘a5 d5 63.♔d1 ♗h6 would not save White either.

56...♔xd5 57.♔d3

Or 57.♘c4 a4.

57...♔c6 58.♘c4 ♗b6 59.♘b2 d5

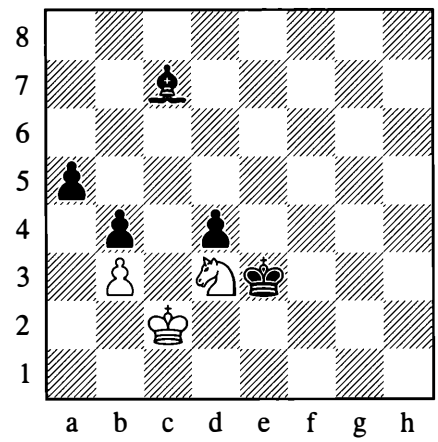


White loses because his knight will soon run out of good squares.

60.♘a4 ♗a7 61.♘b2 ♔d6 62.♘a4 ♔e6! 63.♘b2 ♔e5 64.♘a4 ♗d4

This knight is strangled again – the bishop dominates him. The rest is easy.

65.♔e2 ♔e4 66.♔d2 ♗e3† 67.♔c2 ♗f4 68.♘c5† ♔e3 69.♘b7 ♗c7 70.♘c5 d4 71.♘d3



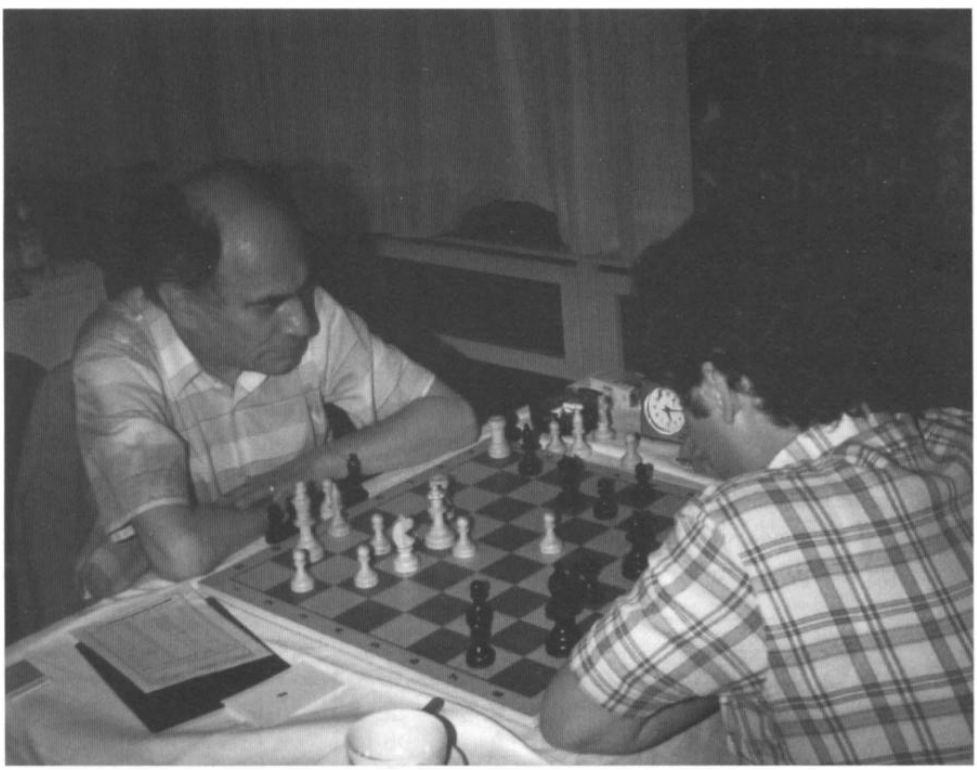
71...a4! 72.♘xb4 a3 73.♔d1 d3 74.♘a2 ♗a5 75.b4 ♗d8 76.b5 ♔d4 77.♔d2 ♗a5† 78.♔d1 ♔c4

Not a great game, of course, but the opening and endgame are quite interesting.

0–1

Chapter 11

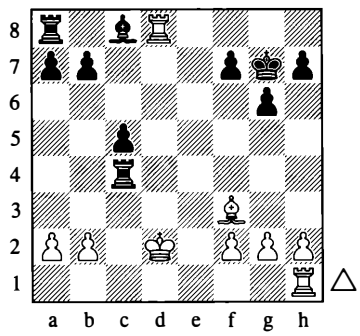
My Two Favourite Losses



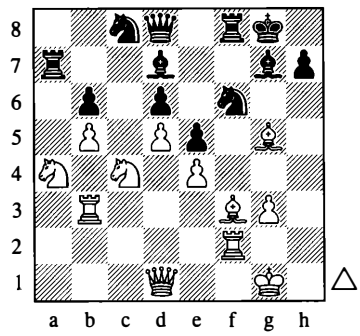
Mikhail Tal playing in Berlin 1986

Test yourself against the book

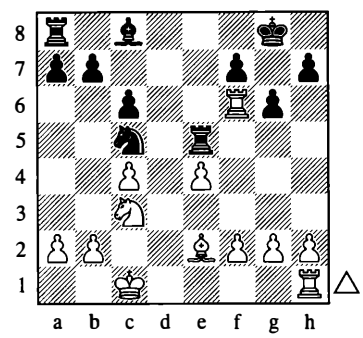
In this section you get a chance to train your King's Indian muscles and measure yourself against the variations in the book. Take as long as you like answering these questions. Some would want to make intuitive decisions, others to practise calculation. Both have their merits.



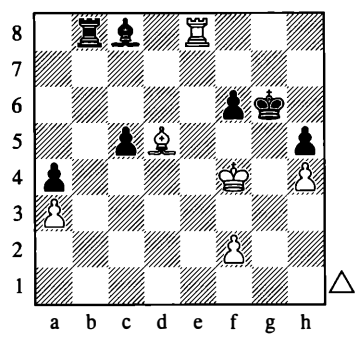
What is the most accurate technical move? (see page 337)



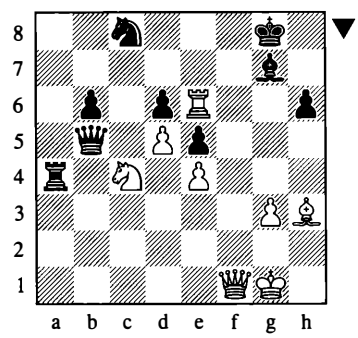
How should White organize the queenside? (see page 341)



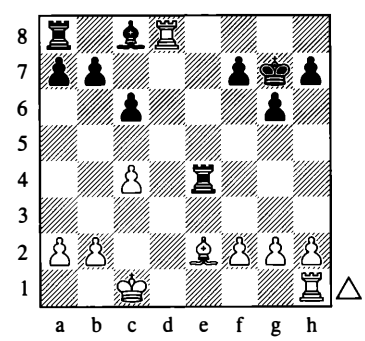
What simple move had I overlooked, giving Tal an advantage? (see page 336)



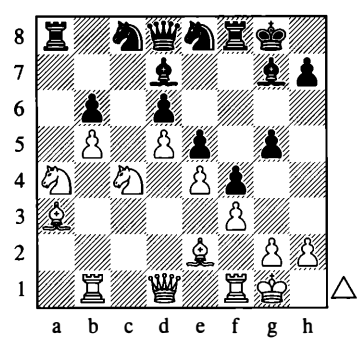
White wins the exchange with ♗e6, but how can he improve the position first? (see page 337)



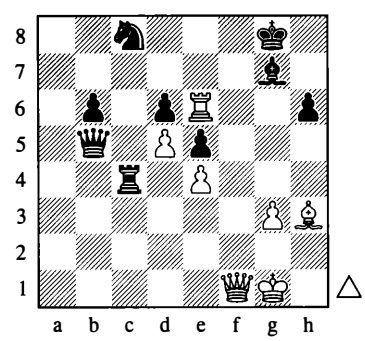
20 years passed before the defence was discovered. Can you find it? (see page 342/43)



How can White take the initiative? (see page 336)



Which great positional move did Kasparov make? (see page 339/40)



I did not find the defence, giving Kasparov an option to do what? (see page 343)

In this book I have given a collection of my best games in the King's Indian. This can give a somewhat lopsided impression, which is by no means my intention. When you live by the sword, you will at times die by the sword. I have played the King's Indian for decades and have of course suffered my share of undeserved and unlucky defeats. Of these, two are more memorable than any others.

Mikhail Tal – Ilya Smirin

Podolsk 1990

This was my only game with my chess hero Mikhail Tal. One of the first chess books I read was "*Vogon Ataki*" by Tal and Damsky. I read this book tens of times and I think it influenced my chess style. By 1990 Tal was already very ill: he looked much older than his age. Still he remained Tal – a true genius. In the USSR Team Championship in which we played this game he performed very well, and won three games with no losses, on Board 1. Alas, it was one of his last triumphs, and about two years later Mikhail passed away. The name of the Magician from Riga will remain in chess forever. As for me, this game occupies a very special place in my memory.

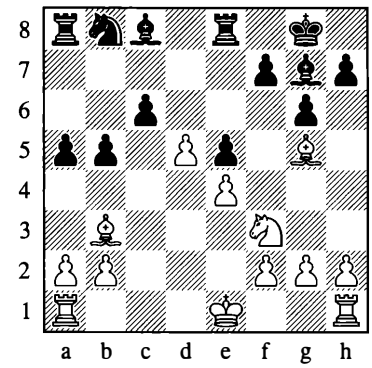
Most of the main games in this book are games I have won, but there are a few exceptions. The two in this chapter are the kindof games you want to lose; if you absolutely have to!

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.dxe5

The first surprise. Very often this move is made by players who have nothing against a draw. But Tal? Soon I realized that the matter is not so simple.

7...dxe5 8.♕xd8 ♖xd8 9.♗g5 c6

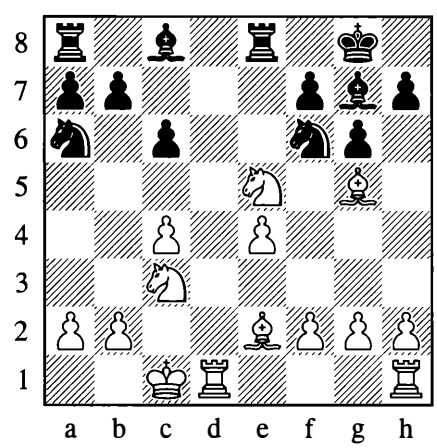
A few times I have played: 9...♖e8 10.♘d5 ♘xd5 11.cxd5 c6 12.♗c4 b5 13.♗b3 a5



One example is the following game, which I played in a match against four computer programs (which I won 5–3). Perhaps this was one of the last occasions on which a human prevailed over the silicon monster in chess. 14.a4 ♗d7 15.♘d2 bxa4 16.♗xa4 cxd5 17.exd5 ♗xa4 18.♖xa4 ♘d7 19.♗e3 ♗f8 20.♘c4 ♗b4† 21.♔e2 ♖ec8 22.b3 ♖ab8 23.♘xa5 ♗xa5 24.♖xa5 ♖xb3 25.♖d1 ♔f8 26.d6 ♖b7 27.♖c1 ♖xc1 28.♖a8† ♖b8 29.♖xb8† ♘xb8 30.♗xc1 ♔e8 31.♔d3 ♔d7 32.♗a3 f5 33.g3 g5 34.h3 h5 35.♔c4 ♔c6 36.♔d3 ♘d7 37.f3 ♘f6 38.g4 fxg4 39.fxg4 hxg4 40.hxg4 ½–½ Hiarcs 8 – Smirin, Internet 2002.

10.♘xe5 ♖e8 11.0–0–0 ♘a6

Not 11...♖xe5? 12.♖d8† ♖e8 13.♗xf6 ♖xd8 14.♗xd8.



12.♖d6!?

I knew the continuation 12.f4 h6 13.♗h4 g5 and so on, with good play for the pawn, which Black usually wins back. The move made by the ex-World Champion caught me completely by surprise. After the game I found out that it had been played for the first time in 1988. Mikhail Nekhem'evich noticed the move during a tournament in Tel Aviv in which he was participating, shortly before our encounter.

12...♖xe5?

I could not cope with the unexpected move and answered with one of the worst possible options.

The game that inspired Tal to play this variation continued:

12...♗e6 13.f3

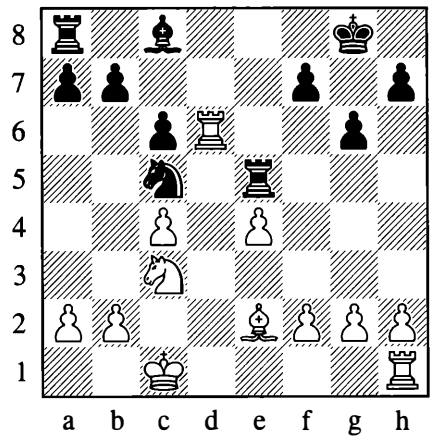
13.f4 h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♖hd1 ♗xe5 16.fxe5 ♖ac8 happened in a game by two legendary players: 17.♔d2 ♖e7 18.♔e3 ♖ce8 19.♖d8 ♔f8 20.h4 ♘c5 21.♖xe8† ♖xe8 22.b4 ♘d7 23.♔f4 ♔e7 24.♘d5† cxd5 25.cxd5 ♖c8 26.dxe6 fxe6 27.♖d2 ♖f8† ½–½ Korchnoi – Kasparov, Tilburg 1991.

13...♘c5 14.♗e3 ♘a6 15.f4 ♗f8 16.♖dd1 ♗b4 17.♗f3 ♘c5 18.♗xc5 ♗xc5 19.♖he1 (½–½, 39) Bruk – Lev, Tel Aviv 1990, and White had a healthy extra pawn which he was unable to convert later.

Still 12...♗e6 was the right choice, as was shown by Kasparov in the game above.

But 12...♘h5!? deserves attention as well.

13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.♖xf6 ♘c5 15.♖d6!

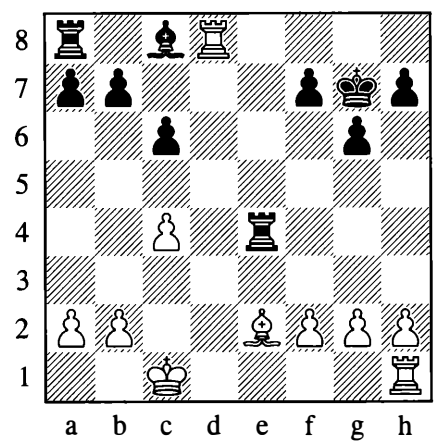


I missed this second rook trip to d6. Now Black's position quickly becomes critical.

15...♘xe4

Playing a pawn down would bring no greater joy.

16.♖d8† ♔g7 17.♘xe4 ♖xe4



18.♗f3!

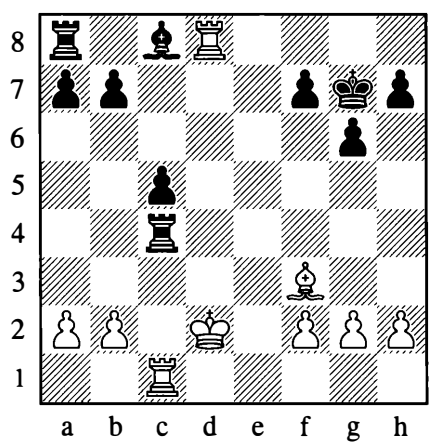
An important finesse. The ex-World Champion sacrifices a pawn to keep the c8-bishop firmly tied to the last rank. I was naive to count on 18.♗d3 ♖e7 19.♖d1 b6, when Black is more or less OK.

18...♖xc4† 19.♔d2 c5?

A second and decisive mistake. I wanted to create the possibility of exchanging a pair of rooks via d4, but this does not work.

More stubborn was:
19...b6 20.b3
20.♖c1 ♖xc1 21.♔xc1 ♗b7 22.♖d7 ♖b8 23.♖c7± was the line Tal proposed in *Chess Informant*.
20.♖e1 also promises White better prospects.
20...♖f4!?
Worse is 20...♖c5 21.♖e1 ♗b7 22.♖xa8 ♗xa8 23.♖e8 ♗b7 24.b4 ♖c4 25.b5 cxb5 26.♗xb7 ♖a4 27.♖e7 ♖xa2† 28.♔e3 and here the bishop is much stronger than three pawns – I think White should win.
21.♗xc6 ♖xf2† 22.♔e3 ♖e2† 23.♔f4
Not 23.♔xe2? ♗g4†.
23...♖b8
Black retains reasonable practical chances to hold this.

20.♖c1!



I underestimated the strength of this move. White simply exchanges the opponent's only piece that is able to do something. After that Black is left with an army of invalids.

20...♖xc1

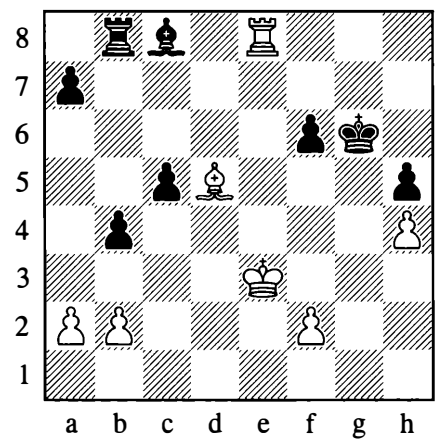
Slightly better was 20...♖d4† 21.♖xd4 cxd4, but even in this case after 22.♖c7 ♗e6 23.♗xb7 ♖d8 24.b3 Black will hardly be able to keep both weaknesses on d4 and a7 alive.

21.♔xc1

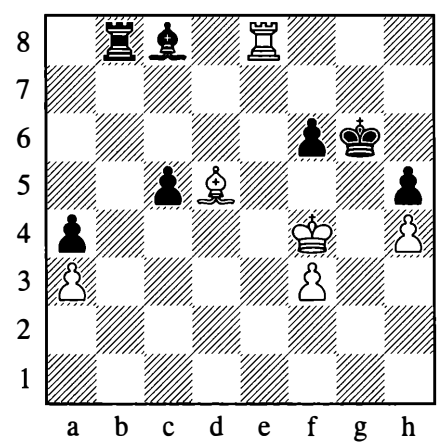
It is already more or less clear that the pinned bishop will cost Black at least an exchange.

21...h5 22.h4 ♖b8 23.♖e8 f6 24.♗d5 g5 25.g3 gxh4 26.gxh4 ♔g6 27.♔d2 b5
27...♗e6 would lose at once after 28.♗e4†!.

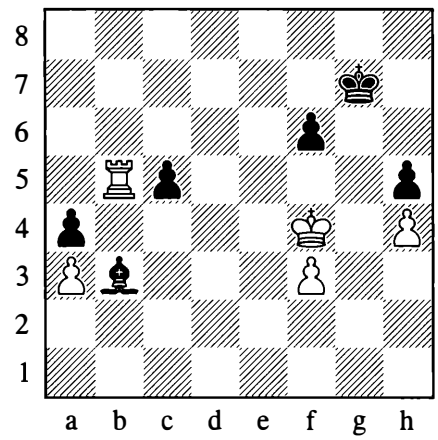
28.♔e3 b4



29.a3! bxa3 30.bxa3 a5 31.♔f4 a4 32.f3!
Zugzwang.



32...♔g7 33.♗e6 ♗xe6 34.♖xb8 ♗b3 35.♖b5



I resigned due to the loss of either the c-pawn or the h-pawn. A clean win by Mikhail (or Misha, as he was called by his numerous friends) Tal.

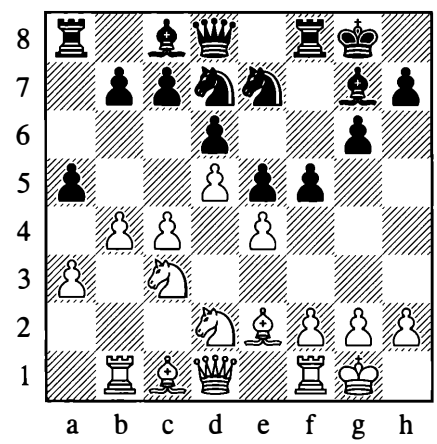
1–0

Garry Kasparov – Ilya Smirin

Moscow 1988

This game remains one of my most memorable encounters, even though I happened to be on the receiving end. The game was deeply annotated by Garry Kasparov twice: together with A. Nikitin in *Chess Informant* back in 1988, and in his recent book *Garry Kasparov on Garry Kasparov Part II: 1985–1993*. I have used some of his annotations here.

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘d2 a5 10.a3 ♘d7 11.♖b1 f5 12.b4

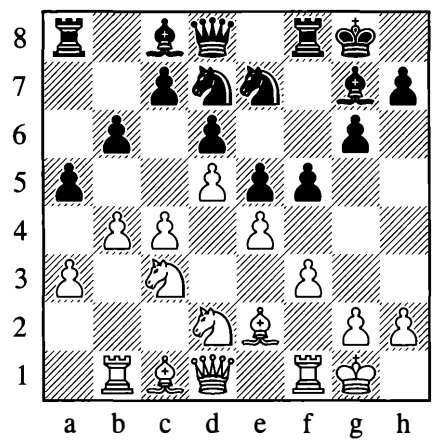


12...b6

As I remember, my preparation for this game lasted about 10 minutes. When I returned after the game I discovered the position after Black's 12th move was still on the board in my hotel room. Great preparation for my first encounter with the champion of the world! Actually the last move has been considered second-best for about 25 years. The reason is clear: Black prevents c4-c5 for a while, but after White does carry out this advance, it will gain in strength because of the pawn being on b6.

The main continuation here became:
12...♔h8 13.f3
Or instead 13.♕c2 ♘g8 (13...♘f6!? 14.f3 axb4 15.axb4 c6 is an interesting alternative) 13...b6, which I played later in 1988 against Gavrikov, see page 132.
13...♘g8
This was played several times by Kasparov himself. The most famous of these games you may find in the annotations to the game Kasimdzhanov – Smirin in this book, as well as those to Khalifman – Kasparov, Paris 1991 (see page 171).

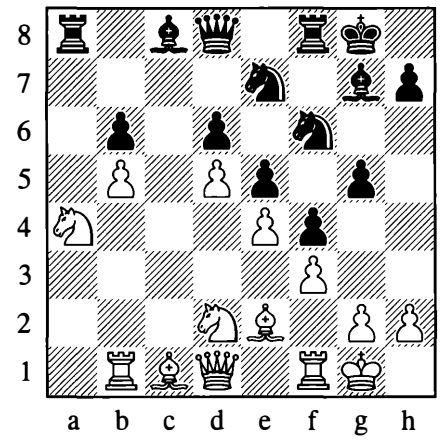
13.f3



13...f4
Black unambiguously reveals his plan – attack on the kingside by means of ...g5 etc.

The exchange of the dark-squared bishops deserved some attention: 13...♗h6 14.♘b3 ♗xc1 Still, after 15.♕xc1 axb4 16.axb4 f4 17.c5 bxc5 18.bxc5 ♘f6 19.♖a1 ♖b8 20.♕a3 White is ahead in creating concrete threats.

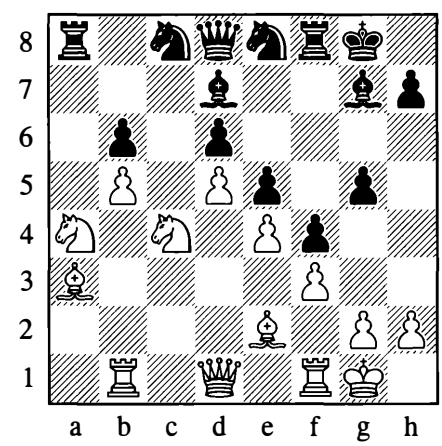
14.♘a4 axb4 15.axb4 g5 16.c5 ♘f6 17.cxd6 cxd6 18.b5



In the post mortem Garry Kimovich told me that he had thought that Black could not hold both of the weak pawns on b6 and d6, and that the game was basically over, but...

18...♗d7 19.♘c4 ♘c8
Eureka! Everything is defended and the battle continues.

20.♗a3 ♘e8



Black's pieces are quite passive at the moment, but they successfully withstand the opponent's pressure on the kingside. Meanwhile he is ready to play ...h7-h5, ...♖f6-g6 and ...g5-g4, which looks threatening. The World Champion decides to nip that in the bud.

21.g4!

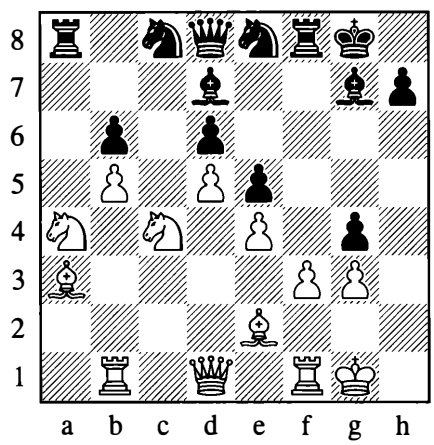
Trying to seal (or almost seal) the kingside. Now I faced a complicated choice: to take *en passant* or to leave it as it is.

21...fxg3?!

I agree with Kasparov – this is a dubious decision, even though he (and Nikitin) marked it as "the only move" in *Informant* back in 1988.

Correct is his latter recommendation: 21...h5 22.h3 ♖f7 (22...♖f6!?) 23.♔g2 ♗f8, with an unclear position – Black will play ...♖h7 and speculate, with the intention of opening the h-file at the appropriate moment.

22.hxg3 g4!



The only chance to create some counterplay – otherwise White would proceed ♘e3, g4, ♘f5 and so on.

23.♗c1!

Controlling g5.

23.fxg4 ♖xf1† 24.♔xf1 (if 24.♗xf1 then 24...♘f6, attacking the pawns on e4 and g4) 24...♕g5 25.♗c1 ♕g6 26.♗f3 ♘f6! would be welcomed by Black.

23...gxf3 24.♗xf3 ♘f6

Kasparov recommends 24...♕c7 as a more precise continuation.

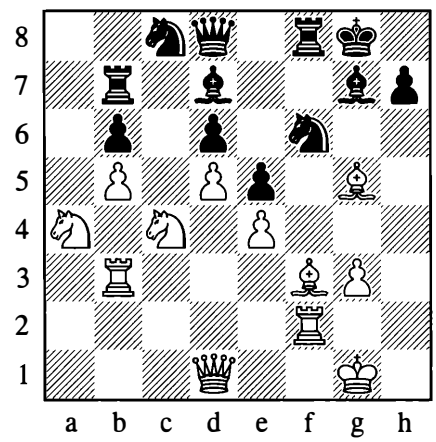
25.♗g5

An unpleasant pin – White has more space, and that allows him to set up his pieces very actively.

25...♖a7 26.♖f2 ♖b7!?

Overprotecting the pawn on b6, with the idea of freeing the queen from this function and playing ...♕e8.

27.♖b3



27...♖a7

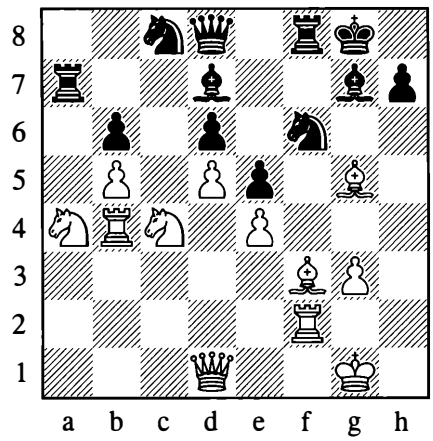
I do not remember why I did not fulfil my intention to play 27...♕e8: it was quite possible, attacking the pawn on b5 and trying to activate the queen via g6. After the probable 28.♗xf6 ♖xf6 29.♗h5 ♕e7 30.♖xf6 ♗xf6 31.♗g4 ♗g5 Black would still be worse, but his defence is hard to crack – White has problems activating the knight on a4. But the move made in the game is hardly worse – at least from a practical standpoint.

28.♖b1

Kasparov writes that he was in doubt as to whether he would win after 28.♘axb6!? ♘xb6

29.♘xb6 ♕xb6 30.♗e3 ♕a5 31.♗xa7 ♕xa7 32.b6, and he decided to repeat moves to save some time on the clock.

28...♖b7 29.♖b3 ♖a7 30.♖b4!



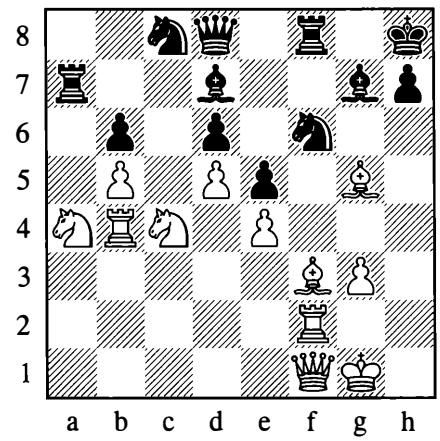
This rook cements the queenside, protecting virtually everything.

30...♔h8?!

A move made "just in case". True, Black has a limited number of ideas, but 30...♖b7 (why not continue to move the rook back and forth?) with the same intention to play ...♕e8 would be stronger – I am still not sure if White has more than a "pleasant position" after that.

I did not play the immediate 30...♕e8? due to 31.♘axb6 ♘xb6 32.♘xb6 ♗xb5 33.♗xf6 ♖xf6 34.♗h5, and Black loses the piece.

31.♕f1!



A very strong move, indirectly applying even more pressure against the knight on f6.

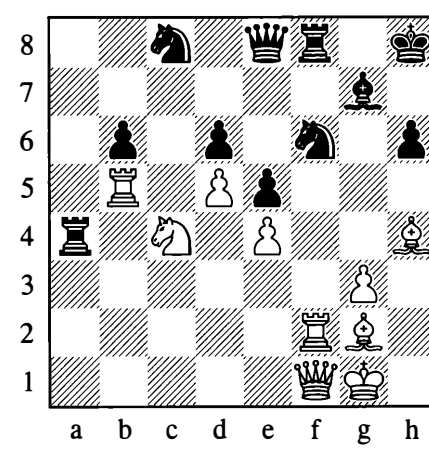
31...♗xb5

As I remember I still had some optimism at this point, hoping to somehow repel the champion's assault.

32.♖xb5 ♖xa4 33.♗g2

33.♗d1! ♖a1 34.♘e3 would be stronger – Black has no satisfactory defence after that, despite the pin on the first rank. But honestly speaking, to play this during a game is not very realistic, even for the World Champion.

33...h6 34.♗h4 ♕e8!

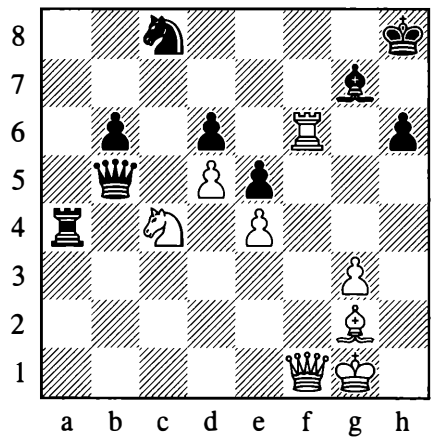


The only move which retains hope – passive defence would be doomed.

35.♗xf6 ♖xf6

Not 35...♕xb5? 36.♗xg7† ♔xg7 37.♖xf8.

36.♖xf6 ♕xb5



At this moment we both were in time trouble. Unfortunately, I do not remember exactly when Kasparov took his time and thought deeply about the position – now or before his 35th move? Anyway, after that he played very quickly and without hesitation.

37.♖e6!

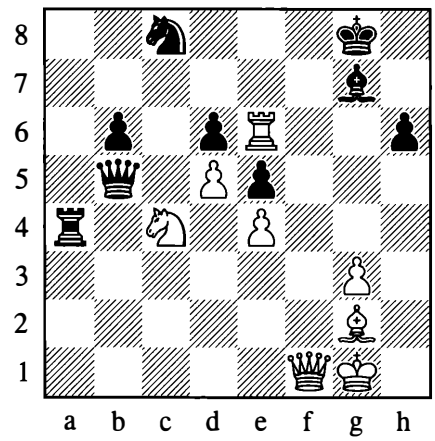
Again I do not remember exactly, but perhaps I did not see this.

37.♖f8†? ♗xf8 38.♕xf8† ♔h7 39.♕f7† would lead only to a draw (39.♗h3? is bad due to 39...♕c5† 40.♔g2 ♖a2† 41.♔h1 ♖a1†).

37...♔g8!

The only move – the king covers f7. The tension has reached its peak now. No one among the numerous spectators (several strong grandmasters among them) saw how White could continue the attack. Neither did I.

Of course, 37...♖xc4 38.♕f7 would lose on the spot.



38.♗h3!!

Just an amazing idea! Kasparov was visibly nervous and he made this move very fast. I think it's irrelevant that Gary Kimovich himself awarded the move a "?"in his book.

Yes, the computer's variation 38.♗f3 ♖b4 39.♗d1, "with an irresistible attack on the light squares" (Kasparov) is objectively much stronger – White is winning. Kasparov adds quite a few variations which you may find in his book. But first of all, it would be absolutely unreal to play this during a game, especially in time trouble. And even more importantly in my opinion: why replace the real beauty of chess with a computer's mathematics? Even for the sake of the truth...

38...♖xc4?

I was kind of disoriented, and in time trouble I made the most natural move – not seeing the beautiful refutation.

But I am not sure if I would have found the defence even with a couple of hours left on the clock (perhaps I would have done it just by a process of elimination). Indeed, it's absolutely extraordinary to see the only saving move is:

38...h5!! 39.♘e3

39.♖h6? does not work – 39...♗xh6 40.♗e6† ♔h8 41.♕f6† ♗g7 42.♕d8† ♔h7 43.♗f5† ♔h6 – the pawn on h5 covers the black king from a lethal check from h4.

39...♕xf1† 40.♗xf1

40.♔xf1 ♔f7 41.♘f5 ♗f8 and everything is protected.

40...♖xe4 41.♘f5 ♗f8 42.♗b5

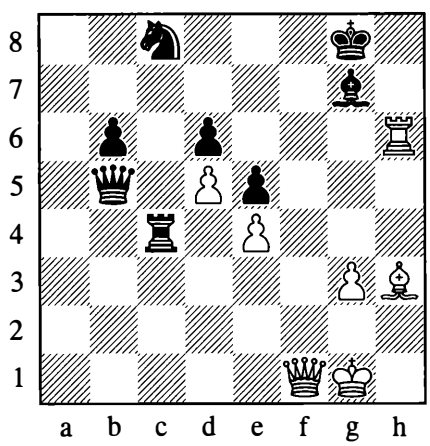
Or 42.♖e8 ♘e7! (another finesse) 43.♘xe7† ♔f7 44.♖xf8† ♔xf8 45.♘f5 h4 with equal chances.

42...♖e1† 43.♔g2 ♖c1 44.♖e8 ♔f7

Black successfully defends (Kasparov).

Needless to say, 38...h5!! was discovered in the computer era – the modern Houdini "sees" this move in a fraction of a second.

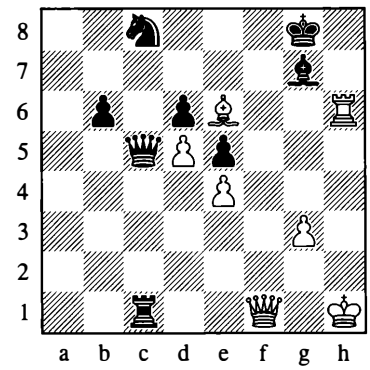
39.♖xh6!!



A bolt from the blue. I was astonished, but even if I hadn't been, it's too late for Black to do anything.

39...♗xh6

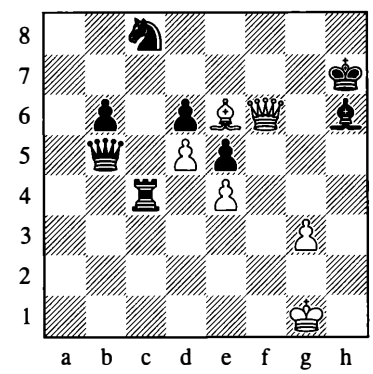
A picturesque checkmate with a pinned white queen would be the result of: 39...♕c5† 40.♔h1 ♖c1 41.♗e6#



Just beautiful, isn't it?

40.♗e6† ♔h8 41.♕f6†

I resigned due to the forced checkmate: 41...♔h7 (41...♗g7 42.♕h4†)



42.♕f7† ♗g7 43.♗f5† ♔h8 44.♕h5† ♔g8 45.♗e6† ♔f8 46.♕f7#

1–0

A real masterpiece by the then World Champion. Alexander Nikitin, who coached Kasparov for many years, wrote in his book that he considers this game one of the best in Kasparov's outstanding career. (By the way, I had a conversation with Nikitin a few days after this game, and he told me not to quit playing the KID, because I play it well. I have followed his advice until now!) I have to confess that I never gained such a creative impression from a lost game as I did from this one.

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