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The resulting position is rather unclear. White’s extra piece is approximately balanced by his missing pawns, lack of development and ragged structure.

16...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h4}}} 17.h3!

The immediate 17.fxg4?? would of course see White get mated after 17...\textit{\texttt{xg4}}† 18.\textit{\texttt{h1 f3†}} 19.\textit{\texttt{g1 h3}}.

17...\textit{\texttt{xh3}} 18.fxg4 \textit{\texttt{xg4}}† 19.\textit{\texttt{h2 h3†}}

19...\textit{\texttt{f8}} 20.\textit{\texttt{a3}} forces Black to take the draw with 20...\textit{\texttt{f3}} anyway.

20.\textit{\texttt{g1 g4†}}

\(\frac{1}{2}–\frac{1}{2}\)

Based on the evidence of this game, it seems that after 9.b4?! the theoretical ball is presently in White’s court.

**D312) 9.\textit{\texttt{c3}}**

White must now decide whether to grab a pawn with **D3121) 13.\textit{\texttt{xe5}}** or exchange knights with **D3122) 13.\textit{\texttt{xd4}}**.

**D3121) 13.\textit{\texttt{xe5}}**

With this move White wins a pawn but loses some time.

13...\textit{\texttt{f5}} 14.\textit{\texttt{d3 0–0}}

Black can regain his pawn with 14...b5?! 15.\textit{\texttt{e1† f7}} 16.\textit{\texttt{c3 xd5}}, but after 17.\textit{\texttt{c3}} his position is quite unpleasant. The text is much more in the spirit of the Schliemann.
15.a4
15.\textbf{h}1 b5!? 16.\textbf{c}3 \textbf{x}d5 was equal in Melia – Shukurova, Kusadasi 2006. Black’s active pieces compensate the slight weakening of his king’s shelter.

15.\textbf{xc}5 dxc5 16.\textbf{xc}5 should not be at all dangerous for Black, as long as he makes the right choice:

In Kozhuharov – Inkirov, Fouesnant 2007, he was successful with 16...\textbf{xd}5? 17.\textbf{xa}7 \textbf{e}8?! 18.\textbf{c}3?? \textbf{e}2\textbf{h}1 \textbf{a}5! 0–1, but White could easily have improved with 18.\textbf{a}8\textbf{d}7 19.\textbf{xb}7 with a winning position.

Therefore Black should prefer 16...\textbf{xc}2:

White has no chance of an advantage, for example:

17.\textbf{b}1 \textbf{xd}5 leaves Black more actively placed.

17.\textbf{xa}7 \textbf{xa}1 18.\textbf{a}8\textbf{d}7 19.\textbf{xb}7 \textbf{c}2 does not give White any real compensation for the rook, as only his queen is attacking.

17.\textbf{f}4?! \textbf{xf}4 18.\textbf{xc}2 \textbf{xd}5 is equal.

15...\textbf{e}8 16.\textbf{h}1!
It is important to position the king away from the checking range of the knight.

16.\textbf{xc}5? dxc5 17.\textbf{xc}5 \textbf{xd}5 18.\textbf{xa}7? (18.\textbf{c}4 was mandatory, although even here 18...\textbf{xc}2 regains the pawn while keeping a much more active position) 18...\textbf{e}2\textbf{h}1 \textbf{a}5! trapped the queen in Meshcheriakova – Agrest, Stockholm 2008.

16...\textbf{g}5!
The slow 16...a6 can be met by 17.f3 \textbf{a}7 18.c3 \textbf{e}2 19.\textbf{f}4+. The text is designed to prevent this possibility.

17.\textbf{e}3
White gets into trouble after:
17.c3?? \textbf{c}2 18.\textbf{b}1 \textbf{e}4 19.\textbf{b}3 \textbf{e}1!
20...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&d1}}} \\
20...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xe1?? \&xf2! wins.}}} \\
20...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xc5? dxc5 21.f3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&e2}}}}} is not much better for White.} \\
20...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xg2?!}}} \\
20...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xd5 21.xe1 \&xd3 22.xg5 \&xe1†}}} \\
23...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xe1 \&xf2 is only equal.}}} \\
21...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&g1}}} \\
White loses after 21...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xg2 \&h4!}}, or 21.b4 \&h4!}. \\
21...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&e1!}}} \\
21...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&h4 22.xg5 (22.xg5 \&xd5) 22...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&f7}}}} gives Black a smaller advantage.} \\

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\hline
\textbf{8} & \textbf{7} & \textbf{6} & \textbf{5} & \textbf{4} & \textbf{3} & \textbf{2} & \textbf{1} \\
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\textbf{a} & \textbf{b} & \textbf{c} & \textbf{d} & \textbf{e} & \textbf{f} & \textbf{g} & \textbf{h} \\
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The knight’s return to this unusual destination makes a nice impression.

22...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xe1}}} \\
22...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xg5 \&f3 23.xd8 \&xg1†.}}} \\
After 22...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xg5 \&h3 23.xe1 \&xf2 24.g2 \&e1†}}} \\
25...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xe1 \&xe1 26.\&xe1 \&e8 27.\&g1}}}

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\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{8} & \textbf{7} & \textbf{6} & \textbf{5} & \textbf{4} & \textbf{3} & \textbf{2} & \textbf{1} \\
\hline
\textbf{a} & \textbf{b} & \textbf{c} & \textbf{d} & \textbf{e} & \textbf{f} & \textbf{g} & \textbf{h} \\
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\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&f5 28.a1 \&xd5† 29.g2 \&e2}}} White is unlikely to survive. \\
22...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xf2 23.f3 \&e8 24.xf5† \&xf5 25.\&f1}}} \\
25...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&g2 \&xg1 26.\&xg1 \&xd5 27.\&e3 \&xa4}}} is winning for Black. \\
25...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xe1 26.\&xe1 \&xe1†}}} \\
Black has excellent winning chances in the ending.

We must also examine the consequences of the critical 17.b4 when I recommend 17...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&e4!}}}. (At first I liked the look of 17...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&f3?!}} but the problem turned out to be 18.g2 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\&xg5 dxc5 19.a3!}} when White should maintain some advantage.)}

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\textbf{a} & \textbf{b} & \textbf{c} & \textbf{d} & \textbf{e} & \textbf{f} & \textbf{g} & \textbf{h} \\
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The tactics work out well for Black, although of course the position is very complicated. The following variations illustrate his possibilities quite nicely.

a) 18.g2?! \&c6†

b) 18.a2 \&h4 19.bxc5 \&f3 20.\&xh4 \&xh4†

c) 18.bxc5 \&e2 19.\&g7 (19.\&d2 \&d4 20.a3 \&xd5 21.\&xg5 \&f7†) 19...\&d4 20.\&xg5 \&xg5 21.\&c4 \&g8†

d) 18.f3 \&xf3 19.\&b3
Alternatives are no better:
19.\&a2 \&e2 20.\&xf3 \&g4†
19.\&xf3 \&xf3 20.gxf3 \&xc4 21.bxc5 dxc5†
19...\texttt{e}e2 20.\texttt{f}f4
20.\texttt{xc}c5 \texttt{d}d4 21.\texttt{g}g1 \texttt{xb}b3 22.\texttt{xf}f5 \texttt{xa}1
23.\texttt{e}e6 \texttt{e}e8 24.\texttt{x}xg5 \texttt{xc}2++
20.\texttt{x}f3 loses beautifully after 20...\texttt{g}g4
21.\texttt{g}g3:

The other option was 17...\texttt{f}f3 18.\texttt{xc}c5 \texttt{d}xc5 19.\texttt{xe}e4 \texttt{xd}5 when Black has some activity to show for the pawn. Play might continue 20.\texttt{xc}c3 \texttt{e}e2 21.\texttt{g}g7 \texttt{f}f4 22.\texttt{fd}1 \texttt{xd}1+ 23.\texttt{xd}1 \texttt{b}6 with some, though perhaps not quite enough, compensation.

Radjabov's choice is more incisive. Black threatens to transfer a rook to the h-file.

18.\texttt{xc}c5

Of course 18.gxf3?? loses to 18...\texttt{xf}f3+ 19.\texttt{g}g1 \texttt{e}4.

18...\texttt{d}xc5 19.\texttt{fd}1
19.\texttt{xc}c5 \texttt{e}d6 20.\texttt{b}b5 should also lead to a draw after: 20...\texttt{e}4! 21.gxf3 \texttt{xf}f3+ 22.\texttt{g}g1 \texttt{e}4 (or immediately 22...\texttt{g}4+ 23.\texttt{h}1 \texttt{f}3+) 23.\texttt{fd}1 \texttt{xe}3 24.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{xe}3+ 25.\texttt{g}2

19...\texttt{e}4 20.\texttt{f}1

White must take care to avoid 20.\texttt{xc}c5? \texttt{h}4 21.gxf3 \texttt{xf}3+ 22.\texttt{g}1 \texttt{d}6 with a winning attack.

20...\texttt{d}d4 21.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{e}5
Black's active, centralised pieces make a nice impression.

22.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xg5}

22.c4?! was possible although 22...\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}e8 would leave Black with enough for the missing pawn.

22...\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}e8 23.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}d2  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}h4 24.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xd5 25.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}c4  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}c6}

Black's activity provides full compensation for his small material investment, and I think that Mamedyarov was quite justified in repeating the position.

26.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}g3}

The evaluation would be the same after 26.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}a3  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}g8 27.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}f1  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}f5 28.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}d4 29.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}c3  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}f5=

26...\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}f5 27.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}d3  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}d4 28.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}g3  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}f5 29.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}d3  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}d4 30.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}g3  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}f5

½–½

This was an excellent game. In fact, I would find it difficult to fault a single move by either player.

We may conclude that Black is presently holding his own after 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xe5, although he should definitely make sure he comes to the board well prepared.

D3122) 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xd4  \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}xd4 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}a4!}

Tournament practice and analysis have demonstrated this to be White's most promising move. The text gains space on the queenside while also threatening to trap the enemy bishop.

14...\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}a6}

Black prepares a retreat square on a7.

15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}e3}

Black was intending ...0–0–0 with pressure against f2. White should therefore exchange off his opponent's strong bishop while conveniently opening the f-file and preventing short castling.

15...\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xe3}

Obviously it would be far too risky for Black to venture 15...:\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xb2? 16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}ab1 b5 (after 16...\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}d4 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xd4 exd4 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xb7 White will emerge with an extra pawn) 17.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}a2?! \textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}}}d4 18.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xd4 exd4 19.axb5=.

16.\textit{\textcolor{red}{$\textsf{\textbf{\textit{\textdagger}}$}}xe3 0–0–0}

We have reached a position with equal material, no minor pieces and symmetrical pawns. Black is close to equality, but White does control slightly more space as well as the only open file.