

Experts on the Anti-Sicilian

Edited by

Jacob Aagaard

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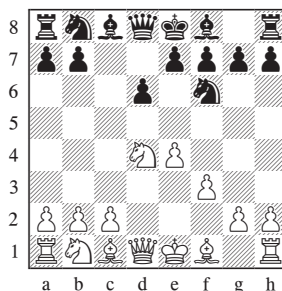
John Shaw



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Chapter 23

Colin McNab



Beating 5.f3 with 5...e5

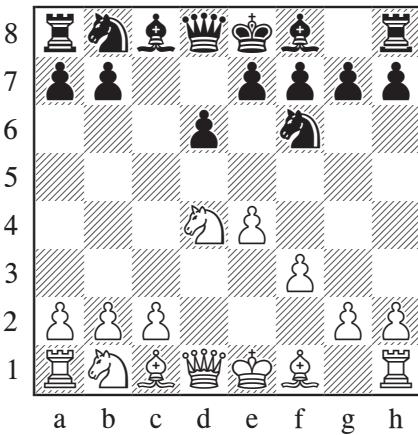
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.f3

5...e5

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B) 6.♘b3	422

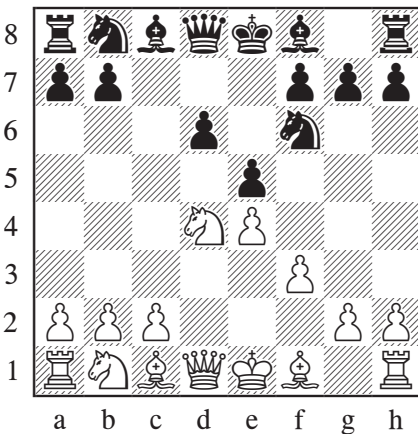
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.f3



Since White has played 3.d4 and 4.♘xd4, some might argue that this is not a true Anti-Sicilian. However, White's 5th move clearly sidesteps the main theoretical lines, and so the system deserves its place in this book.

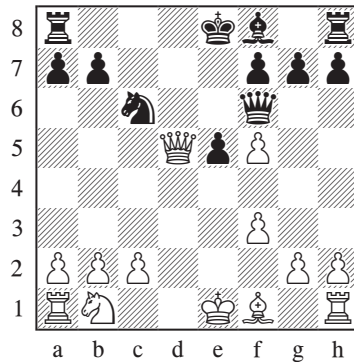
By avoiding 5.♘c3, White indicates his intention to play c2-c4 and head for a Maroczy Bind structure. Rather than meekly allow this, it makes sense for Black to deny White the necessary time to complete such a set-up by immediately harassing the white knight.

5...e5



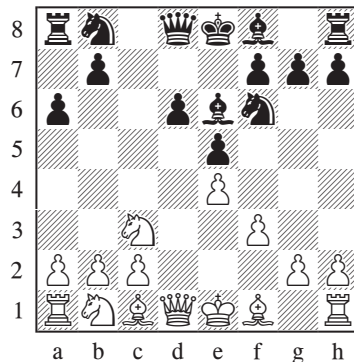
The main moves here are A) 6.♙b5† and B) 6.♘b3, but we shall look at a couple of rarer options first:

6.♘f5 is rare for good reason; after 6...d5 Black is already slightly better. Lin Chen – Xu Jun, Suzhou 2006, continued rather erratically: 7.♙g5 ♘c6 8.♙xf6 ♗xf6 9.♗xd5 ♙xf5 10.exf5



10...♗h4† 11.g3 ♗b4† 12.c3 ♗xb2 13.♗b3 ♗c1†! (13...♗xa1 14.♗xb7 is somewhat messy) 14.♙f2 0–0–0? (14...♙c5† 15.♙g2 0–0 is clearly better for Black) 15.♙a6! ♗d2† 16.♘xd2 ♗xd2† 17.♙f1 bxa6 18.♗d1 ♗e3 19.♗d5 The game has completely turned, and now White has a dangerous initiative.

6.♘b5 a6 7.♘5c3 ♙e6



8.♘d5

This seems to be the logical follow-up to

White's play so far, but he has some other options:

a) 8.♖d2 b5 9.♗b3 ♘bd7 10.a4 b4 11.♘d5 ♙xd5 (if Black is not up for a fight, he can force a draw by 11...♗xe4 12.fxe4 ♖h4† 13.♙d2 ♙xd5 14.exd5 ♖f4† 15.♙e1 ♖h4†) 12.exd5 ♙e7 The position looks quite like a normal Najdorf. 13.a5 ♖c7 14.♙e3 (White could try 14.♙a4 ♘c5!? 15.♙xb4 ♘xb3 16.♙xb3 ♖xa5† 17.♗d2 ♖xd5 18.♖xd5 ♘xd5 19.♙b7 and his active rook provides reasonable compensation for the pawn) 14...0–0 15.♖d2 ♙fc8 16.0–0–0? ♘xd5! Black had snatched an important pawn in Feller – Edouard, Lyon (rapid) 2008.

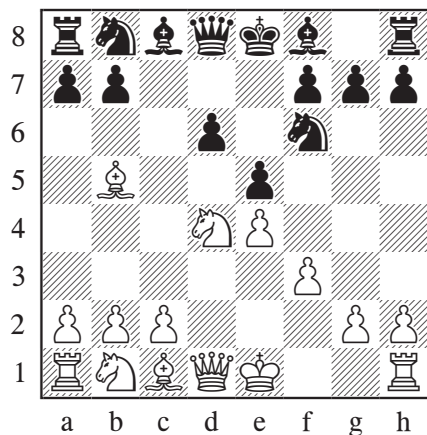
b) 8.♙g5 ♘bd7 9.♘d2 ♙c8 10.♘d5 ♙xd5 11.exd5 ♖b6 12.♘b3 ♙e7 13.♙c1 (This looks odd, but White had no wholly satisfactory way of dealing with the threat of ...♘xd5.) 13...0–0 14.c4 e4 The opening had obviously been a success for Black in Semina – Schiffer, Germany 2006.

8...♘xd5 9.exd5 ♙f5 10.♙d3 ♙g6
The simple 10...♙xd3 11.♖xd3 ♙e7 is also equal.

11.0–0 ♙e7 12.c4 ♘d7 13.♘c3 0–0 14.♙e3 ♙g5 15.♙xg5 ♖xg5 16.♙xg6 ♖xg6

This level position was soon agreed drawn in Fine – Eliskases, Semmering 1937.

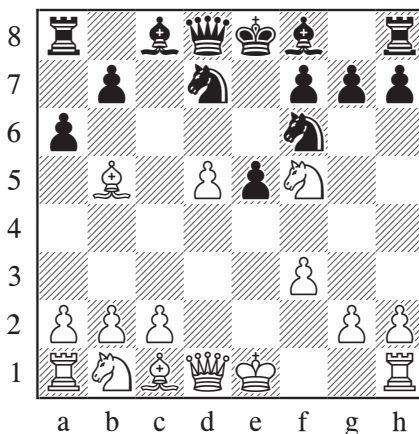
A) 6...♙b5†



6...♘bd7

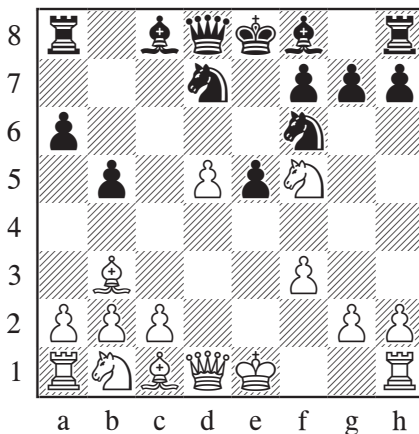
An example of what Black should avoid is: 6...♙d7 7.♙xd7† ♖xd7 8.♘f5 d5 9.♙g5! dxe4 10.♙xf6 ♖xd1† 11.♙xd1 gxf6 12.fxe4 This endgame is no fun to defend.

7.♘f5 d5 8.exd5 a6



Putting the question to the bishop, which chooses between A1) 9.♙a4 and A2) 9.♙xd7†.

A1) 9.♙a4 b5 10.♙b3



10...a5!

This has only been played in three out of nearly two hundred games, but I believe it to be the best move. Black prepares to kick the

bishop again, while keeping options open for his queen's knight.

That said, Black's usual choice also looks entirely acceptable: 10...♖b6 11.♗e3 ♕c5 12.♗c3 0-0 13.0-0 (or 13.♖d3 b4 14.♗a4 ♗xa4 15.♕xa4 ♕b7 16.♕d2 ♖c7 17.0-0 ♗fd8 and Black is regaining the pawn with a fine position, Sitnikov – Areshchenko, Evpatoria 2007) 13...♕f5 14.♖h1 ♕g6 Objectively, this position is probably balanced, but in practice Black has a great score from here.

11.c3

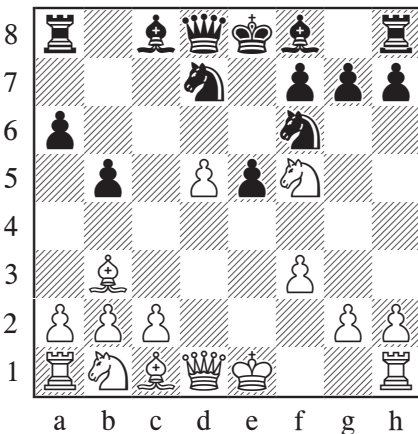
Other ways of saving the bishop are no better:

11.a4 ♗c5 12.♗e3 ♗xb3 13.cxb3 b4

11.d6 a4 12.♕d5 ♖a6! and Black has good compensation for the pawn.

11.a3 ♗c5 12.♗e3 ♗xb3 13.cxb3 was played in Lo Kin Mun – Goh Koong Jong, Singapore 2006, and now 13...♕c5 is favourable for Black.

11...♗b6

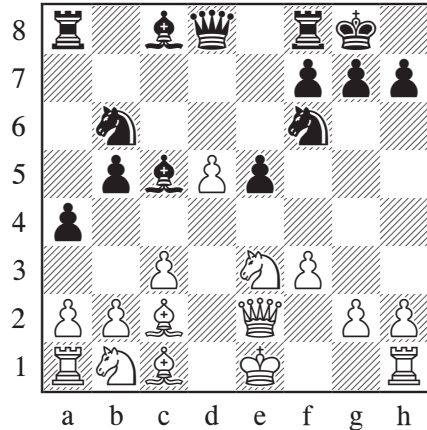


12.♗e3

12.♖d3 is probably best, aiming for equality:

12...a4 13.♕c2 ♗bxd5!? (Black insists on making the pawn sacrifice permanent; instead 13...♖xd5 would be level) 14.♖xb5 ♗d7 15.♖e2 ♖c7 16.0-0 ♕c5 † 17.♖h1 0-0 Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn.

12...a4 13.♕c2 ♕c5 14.♖e2 0-0

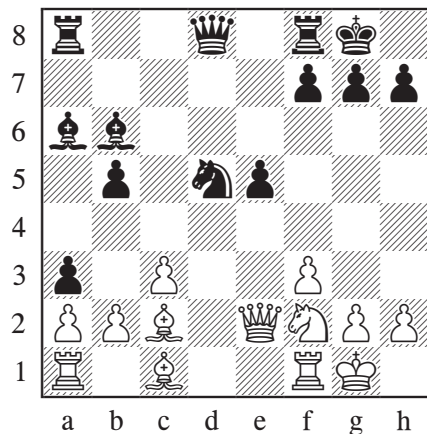


Black is now set to regain the pawn, with an edge.

15.♗d2

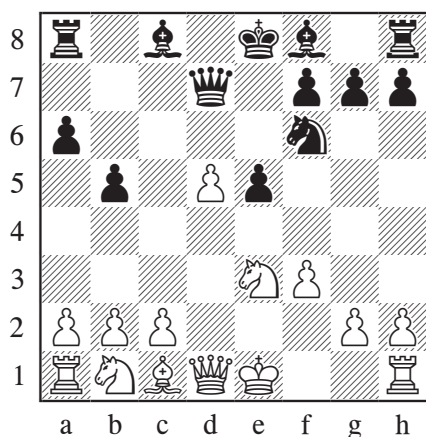
15.♖xb5 ♕xe3 (or 15...♖e7) 16.♕xe3 ♗bxd5 17.♕g5 ♕a6 is good for Black.

15...♗bxd5 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♗e4 ♕b6 18.♗f2 ♕a6 19.0-0 a3!



Black had a big advantage in Stoppel – Huebner, Athens 1969.

A2) 9.♙xd7† ♚xd7 10.♘e3 b5



11.♘c3

White has tried a wide variety of moves at this point:

11.a4 ♙b7 12.axb5 axb5 13.♞xa8† ♙xa8 14.♚e2 (14.0–0 ♙c5 15.♗h1 ♘xd5 16.♘xd5 ♙xd5= Horne – B.H. Wood, Hastings 1949) 14...♙e7 (the natural 14...♘xd5= seems simplest) 15.0–0 0–0 16.♞d1 ♙c5 17.♘c3 b4 18.♘e4 ♙xe3† 19.♙xe3 ♘xd5 20.c4 bxc3 21.♘xc3 ♘xc3 22.bxc3 ♚e6 23.c4 e4 ½–½ Bodnar – Andreev, Alushta 2005.

11.0–0 ♙c5 (Black develops solidly, but targeting the d-pawn more quickly by 11...♙b7 12.♘c3 b4 [or 12...♞d8] looks okay as well) 12.♘c3 0–0 13.♗h1 ♙xe3 14.♙xe3 b4 15.♘e4 ♘xd5= Ioseliani – Womacka, Germany 2000.

11.♚e2 ♙c5 12.c4 0–0 13.♘c3 bxc4 looks uncomfortable for White: 14.♙d2 ♙d4! 15.0–0–0? ♞b8 16.♙e1 ♚b7 17.♘xc4 ♘xd5 18.♘xd5 ♚xd5 19.♙c3 ♙e6 20.b3 ♞fc8 21.♙xd4 exd4 22.♞d2 ♚d6 0–1 De Graaf – Cipolli, e-mail 2002.

11.c4 ♙c5 12.♘c3 0–0 13.0–0 (more popular, but also riskier, is 13.♘e4 ♘xe4 14.fxe4 f5!? 15.♘xf5 ♚d8 16.♚g4 ♙xf5 17.exf5 bxc4 18.♚xc4 ♙d4 19.d6† ♗h8 20.♚d5 ♞b8 21.h4 ♚c8 22.d7 ♚c2 and White was in trouble in Leiros Vila–D. Popovic, e-mail 1999) 13...bxc4 14.♗h1 ♙xe3 15.♙xe3 ♙b7 16.d6 ♞fd8 17.♙b6 ♞e8 18.♙c7 e4 19.fxe4 ♘xe4 20.♘xe4 ♞xe4 21.♚d2 ♞ae8 22.♞ae1 h5 23.♗g1 ♞e1 ½–½ Chattarjee – Suvrajit, New Delhi 2010.

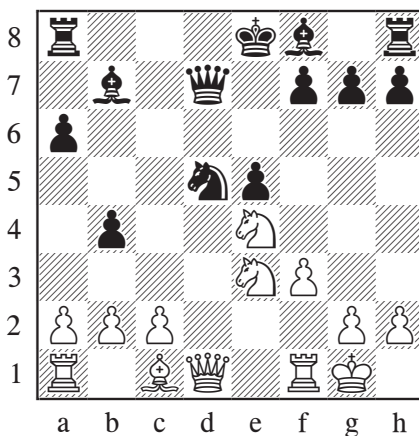
11...♙b7 12.0–0

Perhaps White should be looking to secure equality with one of the alternatives:

12.♚d3 b4 13.♘e4 ♘xd5= Papageorgopoulos – Atalik, Aegina 1996.

12.a3 0–0–0 (taking the king to the queenside seems strange to me; 12...♞d8 13.♚e2 ♙e7 looks a safer route to equality) 13.♚d3 (I think 13.♚e2! is more dangerous) 13...♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ½–½ Ghaem Maghami – Moradiabadi, Dresden 2005.

12...b4 13.♘e4 ♘xd5



14.♘xd5

Other options are:

14.c4 bxc3 15.♘xd5 ♙xd5 16.♘xc3 ♙c5†

17.♖h1 ♘c4⁺ Reichstein – Wojtkiewicz, Fredericksburg 1999.

14.♗c4 ♖c7 15.♗e2 was played in Gamsa – Soffer, Tel Aviv 1990, and now simply 15...♗e7N is at least equal.

14.♗d3!? (intending ♗d1) 14...♗xe3 15.♗xe3 ♖xd3 16.cxd3 ♗d8 17.♗fd1 f6 18.♗ac1 was roughly level in Schuster – Kosmol, e-mail 2002.

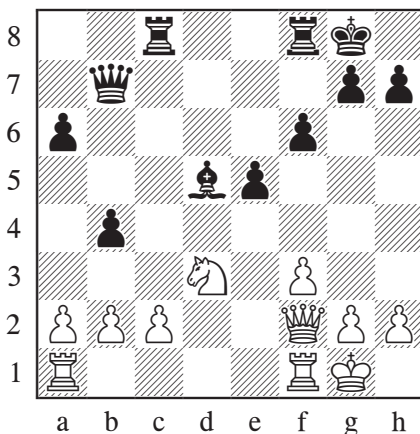
14...♗xd5 15.♗f2

15.♗e3 is natural, but it does not seem to quite equalize, for example: 15...♗e7 16.♗f2 (16.♗c5 ♗xe4 17.♖xd7⁺ ♗xd7 18.♗xe7 ♗xe7 19.fxe4 ♗hc8 gives Black a very pleasant rook ending) 16...♖c6 17.c4!? ♗xe4! 18.fxe4 ♗c8 19.♖d5 ♖xd5 20.cxd5 ♗c4⁺

15...♗c5 16.♖e2 0–0 17.♗e3 ♗e7

The two bishops give Black a lasting edge.

18.♗d3 f6 19.♗c5 ♗xc5⁺ 20.♗xc5 ♖a7 21.♖f2 ♗ac8 22.♗d3 ♖b7



Manolov – Sakaev, Elenite 1994. The exchange of a pair of bishops has not solved White's problems. Black retains much the better minor piece and a definite advantage.

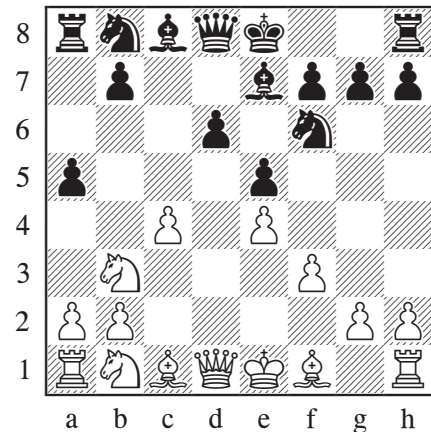
B) 6.♗b3 ♗e7

6...d5 is playable, but it has the drawback that the main line leads to an uninspiring endgame for Black: 7.♗g5 ♗e6 8.♗xf6 gxf6 9.exd5 ♖xd5 10.♖xd5 ♗xd5 11.♗c3 ♗e6 12.0–0–0 ♗d7 13.♗b5 ♗e7 14.♗c7 ♗h6⁺ 15.♗b1 ♗ad8 16.♗d5⁺ ♗xd5 17.♗xd5 ♗c5 18.♗c4 This occurred in R. Popov – Tshshkovsky, Krasnodar 1997, and several games since. Black should certainly draw this, but he might have to suffer for a while.

7.c4

7.♗c3 0–0 8.♗e3 ♗e6 9.♖d2 a5!? is similar to a line of the Najdorf, but with Black having saved a tempo by doing without ...a6.

7...a5!?



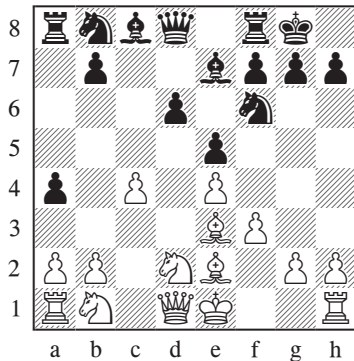
An aggressive idea, albeit one with positional aims. Black wants to play ...a4 and ...♖a5, then later activate his king's bishop with ...♗d8-b6.

8.♗e3

8.a4 leaves the dark squares looking very weak: 8...♗c6 9.♗e3 0–0 10.♗c3 ♗d7 11.♗d5 b6 (or 11...♗g5N 12.♗f2 b6=) 12.♗e2 ♗c5 With equality, Nyzhnyk – Hamitevici, Chotowa 2010.

8...a4

Also possible is 8...0-0 9.♙e2 a4 10.♘d3d2 and now:



a) 10...♗a5 11.0-0 ♙d8 is similar to our main line: 12.c5 (otherwise Black will play ...♙b6 with equality) 12...d5 13.exd5 ♘xd5 Chances are balanced, Szczepkowska – Wojtaszek, Wrocław 2010.

b) Black can switch his attention to the kingside with: 10...♘h5!N 11.♘c3 (the computer points out the possibility 11.g3 ♘f4!? with the idea 12.gxf4 ♙h4† 13.♙f2 ♙xf2† 14.♙xf2 ♗b6† and 15...♗xb2) 11...♙g5 12.♙g5 (after 12.♙f2 ♘f4 13.0-0 ♘c6 Black has good play) 12...♗g5 13.g3 ♘c6 Black looks to be at least equal. Note that 14.f4? fails to 14...exf4 15.♙xh5 fxg3 and the white position falls apart.

9.♘d3d2

9.♘c1 ♙e6 10.♘a3 ♘c6 11.♙d3 ♘h5 12.♘e2 ♙g5 13.♙f2 ♗a5† 14.♘c3 ♘f4 15.0-0 0-0 was approximately equal in Lima – L. Dominguez, Merida 2000.

9...♗a5 10.♙e2

Other moves lead to similar play:

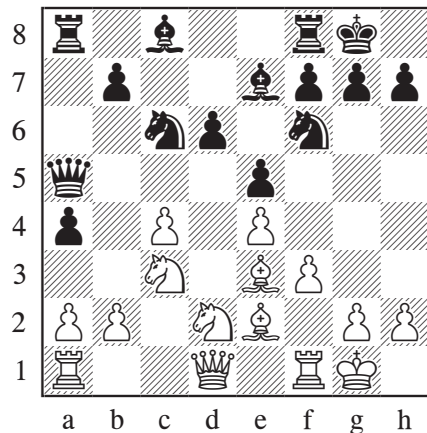
10.♗c2 ♘c6 11.♗c3 ♙d8 12.♙e2 0-0 13.♙f2 ♘d4 14.♙c1 ♗a7 The position is somewhat unclear, but Black certainly isn't worse. 15.♘a3

♙b6 (15...♙a5!? 16.♗d3 ♙b6 may be more accurate, as 17.♘b5 ♘xb5 18.cxb5 d5 then looks good for Black) 16.♘b5 ♘xb5 17.cxb5 d5 18.♙xb6 ♗xb6† 19.♗c5 Ivanchuk – Gelfand, Moscow (blitz) 2007. Now 19...♗d8! would secure equality.

10.♘a3 0-0 11.♙d3 ♙e6 12.0-0 ♙d8 13.♘b5 ♙b6 14.♗e2 ♙xe3† 15.♗xe3 ♘a6 16.♙fc1 (not 16.♘xd6? ♗c5! and Black will win material on the d-file) 16...♙fd8 With balanced chances, Deviatkin – Alsina Leal, Moscow 2011.

10...♘c6 11.0-0 0-0 12.♘c3

12.♘a3 ♙e6 13.♘b5 ♙d8 14.♙h1 ♙b6= Rublevsky – Gelfand, Moscow (blitz) 2007.

**12...♘d4!**

This assures Black of satisfactory play. The alternatives are less convincing:

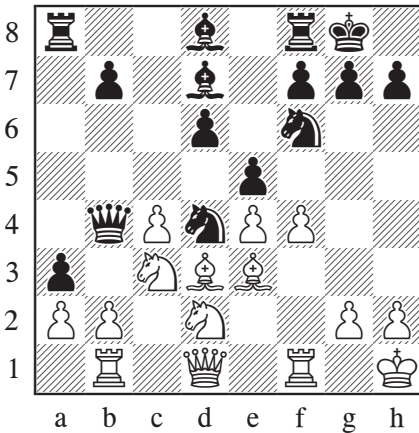
12...a3?! 13.♘b3 ♗b4 14.♙b1! axb2 15.♗d2 This is a bit risky for Black; his queen is not well placed.

If Black carries out his standard plan by 12...♙d8?! 13.♙h1 ♙b6 then the weakness of his a-pawn comes into play: 14.♙xb6 ♗xb6 15.♘xa4 ♗b4 16.b3 Black does not have enough compensation.

13.♔d3 ♖b4 14.♞b1 ♔d7 15.♕h1 ♔d8
16.f4

This looks a bit loosening; instead 16.♘d5
♘xd5 17.cxd5 would be equal.

16...a3



17.♞c1N∞

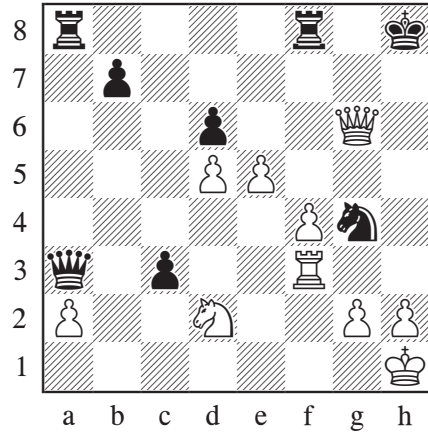
We have been following the game Z. Varga – Berkes, Hungary (ch) 2005, which instead continued 17.fxe5 dxe5 and only then 18.♞c1. The exchange of f4 for d6 favours Black who could now have claimed an edge with: 18...♘g4!N 19.bxa3 (After 19.♔g1? ♔a5! White would lose one of his knights, while 19.♘d5 axb2 20.♞xb2 ♞a3 is also promising for Black.) 19...♞xa3

After the text move many moves are possible with one bizarre illustrative line being:

17...♘g4 18.♔xd4 exd4 19.♘d5 axb2
20.♞xb2 ♞a3 21.♞b1 ♔c6 22.♞f3 ♔a5
23.e5

Of course there were alternatives before this, but now one forcing line is:

23...♔c3 24.♔xh7† ♕h8 25.♞c2 ♔xd5
26.cxd5 g6 27.♔xg6 fxg6 28.♞xc3 dxc3
29.♞xg6



29...♘f2†!

This gives White fewer options than 29...cxd2, which however should also draw.

30.♞xf2 cxd2 31.♞h6† ♔g8 32.♞g6†=

The game ends in a perpetual check.

Conclusion

5...e5 remains a fully viable response to 5.f3. In line A with 6.♔b5†, Black obtains full compensation for the sacrificed pawn, and it is often White who must take care to maintain equality. In the more strategical play of line B, Black's long-term plan of activating his dark-squared bishop tends to result in a balanced middlegame.