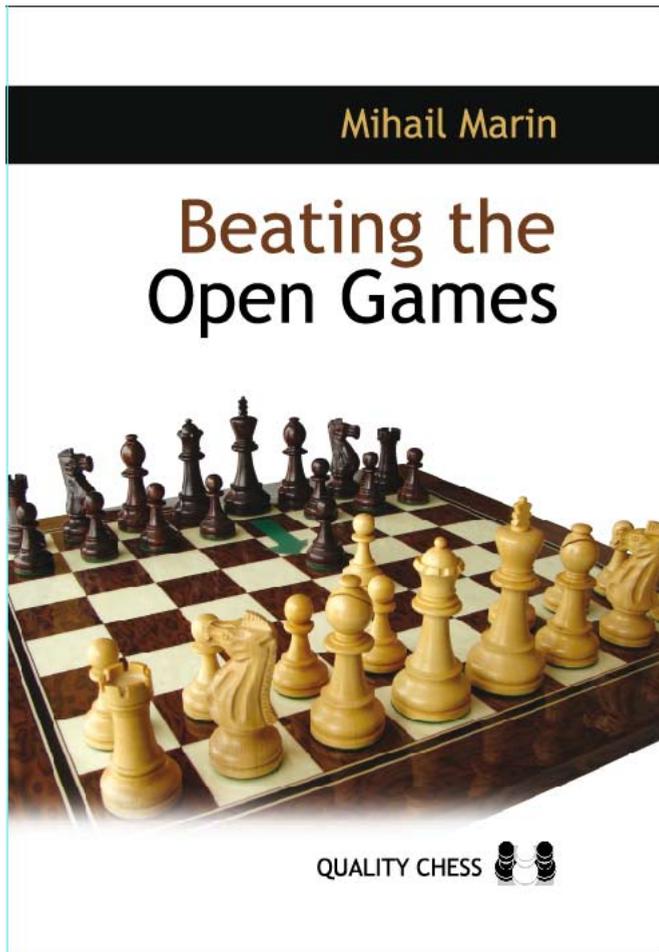


Update for

Beating the Open Games

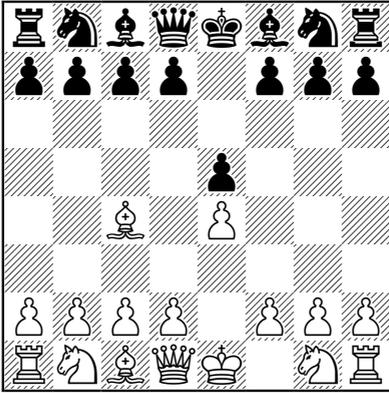
by Mihail Marin



This is a free Internet update to the first edition of Beating the Open Games by Mihail Marin. The material included is in the second edition of the book. The only update not included in this file is the Evans Gambit Chapter, as the entire chapter can be found online at www.qualitychess-books.com as a sample PDF of the second edition of the book.

The Bishop's Opening

1.e4 e5 2.♘c4



This opening is just as old as the King's Gambit and the Italian Game. It was regularly employed by Greco and was part of Philidor's system of thinking (see also his ideas about not blocking the f-pawn too early, mentioned on page 14). Later, it was submitted to thorough practical examination in the matches between Cochrane and Staunton (1841 and 1842). In modern times, Larsen frequently resorted to this opening in order to avoid theory, while Kasparov tried it in several rapid games.

Theoretically, moving the bishop while the knight is still on g1 might look like a violation of the rules of development. However, Black cannot take immediate advantage of it because 2...♗g5?! is useless in view of 3.♘f3! when 3...♗xg2 allows 4.♖g1 ♗h3 5.♘xf7†.

So why is this interesting opening covered in the shortest chapter in the whole book? The answer is quite simple: given the structure of our repertoire, 2.♘c4 will most likely transpose elsewhere in the book, be it to the King's Gambit (if White plays f4 at some moment), or one of the numerous variations of the Italian Game (if he refrains from such a brave action). You can also refer to my comment on page 42 about the Vienna Game.

Basically, we should just develop the knights normally and play ...♘c5 at some moment, but

it is important to know the most restricting move order. I would recommend:

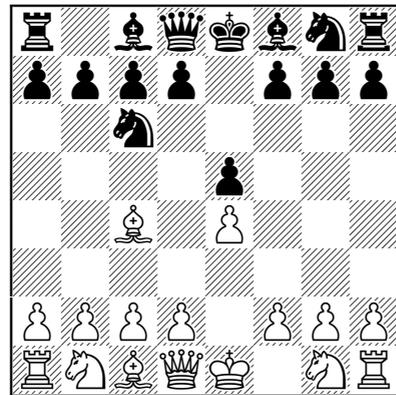
2...♘c6

If 2...♘c5 White could consider 3.♗g4 when Black cannot answer in the same style as White would have done against 2...♗g5, with 3...♘f6, because f7 is hanging after 4.♗xg7. It is easy to convince ourselves that each way of protecting the g7-square has drawbacks. For instance, 3...g6 weakens the dark squares, which can be felt after the bishop's departure.

Players who intend to play the Petroff defence (2.♘f3 ♘f6) are more or less forced to play 2...♘f6 in order to avoid learning such a complicated opening as the Italian game. In modern times, White almost always answers 3.d3, when 3...♘c6 followed by ...♘c5 leads to well known paths.

However, I would be worried that in case of the romantic 3.d4!? we would have to learn some additional lines.

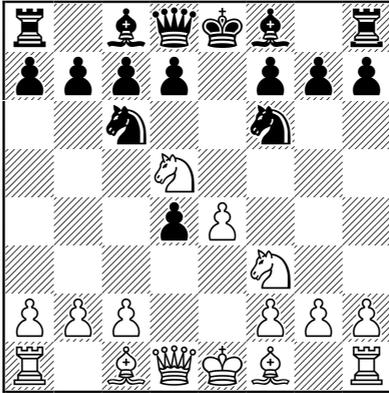
After 2...♘c6 White cannot give the game an independent character.



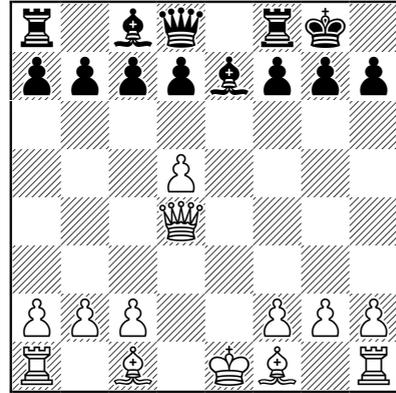
3.f4 ♘c5 4.♘f3 d6 leads to the King's Gambit. 3.♘f3 is an immediate transposition to the Italian game, while moves such as 3.♘c3 or 3.d3 only delay the moment of such a transposition. Black simply plays ...♘f6 and ...♘c5.

Belgrade Gambit

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4 exd4
5.♘d5!?



6.♘xd4 ♘xd5 7.exd5 ♘xd4 8.♙xd4 0–0
offer Black very easy play.



The first player who tried this in a recorded game is Richter, back in 1938, but the variation probably owes its name to the fact that in the '40s it was played in several games between Yugoslav players.

Almost all I knew about it before writing these lines was that Black should not embark on sharp lines (such as 5...♘xe4 6.♙e2 f5 7.♘g5 or 5...♘xd5 6.exd5 ♘b4† 7.♙d2), which would indeed transform the position into a dangerous gambit, but play the solid developing move:

5...♙e7,

which, as we shall see, will transpose to a structure typical of the relatively inoffensive Ponziani Opening.

White still needs to justify his early knight jump to the centre. Both ...♘xe4 and ...♘xd5 should be permanently considered, while an exchange on e7 or f6 would just improve Black's development. Compare with the following line from the English Opening: 1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘b4 3.♘d5 ♙e7 4.d4 d6 5.e4 ♘f6, where Black loses a whole tempo (and does not capture any pawn on the way!) in order to provoke such a tense situation in the centre.

Returning to the Belgrade Gambit, we should know that the simplifications after

In order to complicate the fight White would need to castle long, but if he develops the dark-squared bishop then 9...♙f6 would be unpleasant. The only way to defend the b2-pawn would be 10.♙b4, but then 10...a5 would offer Black a strong initiative, precisely on the wing where the white king has planned to go. Therefore, White has to play the more modest

9.♙e2

when play may continue

9...♙f6 10.♙d3

10.♙d1?! is too passive and hands the initiative to Black. For instance 10...d6 11.0–0 ♙f5 12.♙d3 ♙d7 13.c3 ♗fe8 14.a4 ♙e4≠ Sax – Karpov, Tilburg 1979.

10...d6 11.0–0 ♗e8 12.♙f3

White has to place his bishop on this relatively passive square because 12.c3, preparing the development of the other bishop, would offer Black some initiative after 12...♙f5!≠.

12...g6 13.c3

13.♙b3!? planning ♙d2 and ♗a1 can be met by 13...a5 14.a4 b6 15.♙d2 ♙e5= Liska – Florian, Ostrava 1957. The most probable result is a draw.

13...♙f5 14.♙c4 a6 15.♙e3 b5 16.♙b3 ♙e5=

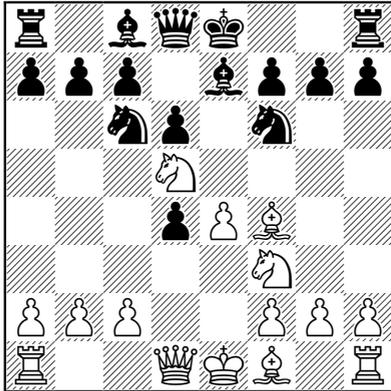
Black has little to fear, Padevsky – Smyslov, Alekhine Memorial 1956.

Instead of immediately capturing on d4, White should try to maintain his slight initiative in the centre with

6. ♖f4

when the natural answer is

6...d6



restricting the activity of the enemy bishop and leaving it exposed.

The gambit continuation 6...0-0!? 7. ♖xc7 ♜e8 is playable, but after having spoiled Black's structure White can hope for a small positional advantage with 8. ♖e2.

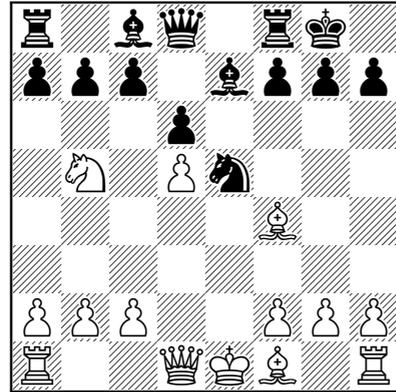
7. ♘xd4 0-0

Now Black should refrain from immediate simplification with 7... ♘xd5 8. exd5 ♘xd4 9. ♜xd4 because this would offer Black the opportunity of castling long, with some attacking chances. 9... ♖f6 would not prevent this because of an intermediate check on the e-file.

8. ♘b5

In order to justify his previous play White has to move again with an already developed piece. The permanent threats of ... ♘xe4 and ... ♘xd5 leave him little choice. However, we should not wonder that Black will soon have excellent development.

8... ♘xd5 9. exd5 ♘e5



This is the position that resembles the Ponziani Opening. White has a space advantage in the centre in a basically symmetrical position, but is slightly underdeveloped.

The over-ambitious plan of preparing to castle long with:

10. ♜d2

can be strongly met by:

10... ♖g4!?

Curiously, a rare move.

11. ♘d4

Another knight move, with the aim of over-defending the f3-square. 11. ♖e2 ♖xe2 12. ♜xe2 ♖f6= is very comfortable for Black.

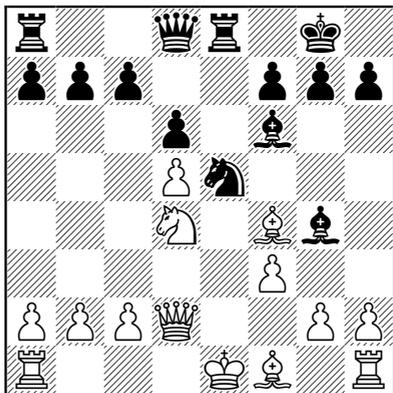
The attempt to block the d1-h5 diagonal with 11. f3? fails tactically to 11... ♖h4†! (but not 11... ♖xf3? because of the intermediate 12. ♖xe5!) 12. ♖g3 (12. ♖d1 is met by the echo-line 12... ♘xf3!†) 12... ♖xf3!†

It would make some sense to insert the moves 11. h3 ♖h5 before playing 12. ♘d4 but Black can open play in his favour with 12... c5! 13. dxc6 ♜b6 when after 14. cxb7 ♜xb7 15. c3 ♜fe8= White would have serious problems completing his development.

11... ♖f6 12. f3

Now 12. h3 can be met by the intermediate 12... ♜e8!, threatening to win the queen, when White faces serious problems. For instance: 13. ♖e3 ♖h5 14. g4 ♖g6 15. g5 (15. 0-0 loses the central pawn to 15... ♖e4†) 15... ♖xg5!-+

12...♖e8!



It appears that the g4-bishop is not willing to retreat yet.

13.0-0-0 ♖g6 14.♖b1

Against 14.fxc4 Black can choose between 14...♖e4 and 14...♖xf4.

14...♖d7!?

There is nothing wrong with 14...♖xf4.

15.♖e3 c5! 16.♖b3

16.dxc6 bxc6 opens the b-file, which would offer Black excellent attacking chances in view of his better development.

16...b5

Black has a strategically superior position and a promising attack, Horak – Dolmatov, Cacak 1991.

In view of all this, White's safest continuation on the 10th move might seem to be

10.♖e2,

but now Black can take advantage of the exposed position of the f4-bishop with

10...♖g6 11.♖g3

11.♖e3 allows Black to obtain a strong initiative with 11...♖g5! 12.♖xg5 ♖xg5 13.g3 (13.♖xc7? is bad because of 13...♖xg2 14.♖f3 ♖g5 15.♖xa8 ♖e8+ with a decisive attack) 13...♖h3 when 14.♖xc7?! leaves White badly underdeveloped after 14...♖ac8 15.♖b5 ♖e5 planning ...♖fe8.

11...f5!

White's dark-squared bishop starts feeling more and more uncomfortable.

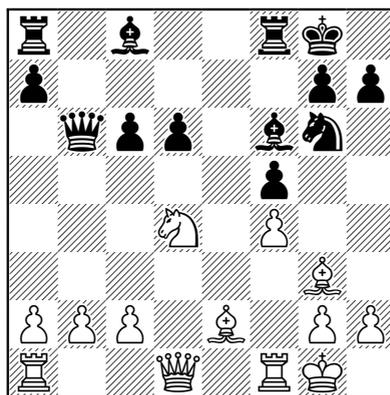
12.f4

12.f3 would allow Black to dominate the dark squares after 12...f4 13.♖f2 ♖f6.

12...c6

The better developed player should open the position.

13.dxc6 bxc6 14.♖d4 ♖b6 15.0-0 ♖f6



16.♖f2

After 16.c3 ♖xb2 all White could try to prove would be some compensation for the pawn, but not more.

16...c5 17.♖b5 ♖xf4 18.♖c4+ ♖e6 19.♖xe6+ ♖xe6 20.♖xd6 ♖fd8 21.♖xb6 axb6 22.♖ae1 ♖f8

Black's pieces are more active and the enemy queenside is submitted to strong pressure, Kummerov – Aleksandrov, Bundesliga 2003.

At the present stage of theory the Belgrade Gambit hardly offers White more than equality. Quite justly so, since by refusing the gambit Black can easily highlight the artificiality of White's approach.

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♟c3 ♟f6 4.d4 exd4 5.♟d5! ♟e7

	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
1	♟xd4 ♟xd5	exd5 ♟xd4	♟xd4 0-0	♟e2! ♟f6	♟d3 ² d6	0-0 ♟e8	♟f3 ³ g6	c3 ⁴ ♟f5	♟c4 a6	♟e3 b5 ⁵	=
2	♟f4 d6 ⁶	♟xd4 0-0 ⁷	♟b5 ⁸ ♟xd5	exd5 ♟e5	♟d2 ♟g4!?	♟d4 ⁹ ♟f6	f3 ¹⁰ ♟e8!	0-0-0 ♟g6	♟b1 ¹¹ ♟d7?! ¹²	♟e3 c5! ¹³	+
3	...	...	...	...	♟e2 ♟g6	♟g3 ¹⁴ f5!	f4 ¹⁵ c6 ¹⁶	dxc6 bxc6	♟d4 ♟b6	0-0 ♟f6 ¹⁷	∞/=
4	♟c4 ¹⁸ 0-0	0-0 ¹⁹ d6	♟xd4 ²⁰ ♟xd4	♟xd4 ²¹ ♟xd5	♟xd5 ♟f6	♟d3 c6	♟b3 ²² ♟e6 ²³	c3 ²⁴ ♟xb3	axb3 ♟e8 ²⁵	♟e3 a6 ²⁶	=

1 9.♟d3?! With the king in the centre, leaving the e-file undefended looks like playing with fire. 9...♟f6 10.♟f4 ♟e8† 11.♟f1 d6 12.g4 ♟e5 13.♟f3 and now in Pokojowczyk – Ziembinski, Poznan 1971, the simplest way to maintain the initiative would have been 13...c6!.

9.♟e3?! ♟f6 10.♟b4 a5 11.♟a3 d6 12.0-0-0 (Consequent but risky. Abandoning the initial plans and re-directing the king to the kingside would be safer. 12.♟d3 ♟d7 13.0-0 b5 14.c3 c5!? Black will get a backward pawn on d6, but his queenside pressure will lead to “complete” simplification. 15.dxc6 ♟xc6 16.♟ad1 b4! Taking advantage of the exposed placement of the enemy queen. 17.cxb4 axb4 18.♟xb4 ♟a4 19.♟b3 ♟a8 20.♟b5 ♟xb5 21.♟xb5 ♟b8 22.♟d5 ♟xd5 23.♟xd5 ♟xa2 24.♟xd6 ♟axb2 25.g3 h5 ½-½ Nguyen – Mahesh Chandran, Negombo 2003.) 12...♟d7 13.♟e2 ♟e8 (The straightforward 13...b5 14.♟he1 b4 15.♟d3 a4 16.♟d4 b3 deserves attention. Black has a strong initiative, while his king is in absolute safety.) 14.♟d3 ♟e7 15.♟f3 ♟e5 16.c3 ♟g5 (Black should not be in a hurry to exchange his active bishop. After, say, 16...a4, it would be White who would have to play 17.♟d4 in order to avoid trouble, when Black can maintain some tension with 17...♟g5† 18.♟e3 ♟h4† eventually followed by ...♟g4, when White would remain under pressure on both wings.) 17.♟xg5 ♟xg5†

18.♟d2 ♟h4 19.♟d4 ♟xd4 20.♟xd4 ♟e5= Timmerman – Langeweg, Hilversum 1983. There is not much play left, although Black later outplayed his opponent.

2 10.♟d1?! d6 11.0-0 ♟f5 12.♟d3 (12.c3 ♟e8 13.♟e3 ♟e4 14.♟d3 ♟d7 15.a4 a5 16.♟b5 c6 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.♟d3 ♟ab8 19.♟xe4 ♟xe4 20.♟c2 d5† Black has a strong centre and exerts pressure along the b-file, R. Rodriguez – Torre, Hong Kong 1982; 12.a4 ♟d7 13.a5 c5 14.c3 ♟fe8 15.♟e3 ♟e4 16.♟d3 ♟f5 17.♟xe4 ♟xe4† Black has an active position, Thiel – Unzicker, Germany 1998.) 12...♟d7 13.c3 ♟fe8 14.a4 ♟e4† Sax – Karpov, Tilburg 1979.

3 12.c3 ♟f5!† 13.♟xf5 ♟xe2 14.♟b1 ♟e5 15.♟d3 ♟d7 16.♟e3 ♟ae8 17.♟fe1 ♟a4 18.♟d2?! Black's position was quite active, but this move gives up a pawn for nothing. 18...♟xa2† Radojic – Pirc, Novi Sad 1945.

4 13.♟b3?! (Δ♟d2 and ♟ae1) 13...a5 14.a4 b6 15.♟d2 ♟e5= Liska – Florian, Ostrava 1957.

5 16.♟b3 ♟e5= Padevsky – Smyslov, Alekhine Memorial 1956.

6 6...0-0!? 7.♟xc7 ♟e8 8.♟e2±

7 7...♟xd5 8.exd5 ♟xd4 9.♟xd4 ♟f6 10.♟e3†

8 8.♗c3 loses too much time to be good. 8...♞e8 9.♙b5 ♗d7 10.0–0 ♗f8 We have reached a position typical for the Steinitz system of the Ruy Lopez, but with two extra tempi for Black! (due to ♗c3–d5–c3) 11.♞e1 g6 12.♗xc6 bxc6 13.♗c4 ♗g7 14.♞d2 ♗g4 15.♗g5 ♞b8 16.♙b3 ♗e6 17.♞ad1 ♞b4 18.♗a4 a5 19.♗xe6 ♞xe6 Black has a comfortable position, Fabian – Pachman, Kosice 1961.

9 11.♗e2 ♗xe2 12.♞xe2 ♗f6= is very comfortable for Black.

11.f3? ♗h4†! (11...♗xf3? 12.♗xe5!) and now 12.♗g3 ♗xf3! and 12.♗d1 ♗xf3! are both good for Black.

11.h3 ♗h5 12.♗d4 (12.♗e2 ♗xe2 13.♞xe2 ♗f6 14.0–0–0 ♞d7 15.g4 ♞fe8 16.♗e3 g6 17.♞he1 ♗g7 18.f4 ♗f3! 19.♞xf3 ♞xb5 20.c3 ♞e7 21.♗d2 ♞ae8 Black is at least equal, Hoffmann – Balinov, Seefeld 2001) 12...c5! 13.dxc6 ♞b6 14.cxb7 ♞xb7 15.c3 ♞fe8

10 12.h3 ♞e8! 13.♗e3 ♗h5 14.g4 ♗g6 15.g5 (15.0–0–0 ♗e4†) 15...♗g5!–+

11 14.fxg4 ♞e4 or 14...♗xf4.

12 14...♗xf4

13 16.dxc6 bxc6† or 16.♗b3 b5† Horak – Dolmatov, Cacak 1991.

14 11.♗e3 ♗g5! 12.♗xg5 ♞xg5 13.♞d2 (13.♗xc7? ♞xg2 14.♗f3 ♞g5 15.♗xa8 ♞e8†–+; 13.g3 ♗h3 14.♗xc7?! ♞ac8 15.♗b5 ♞e5 ♗...♞fe8.) 13...♞xg2 14.0–0–0 ♞xf2 (Not only grabbing a second pawn, but also making the e5-square available for the knight and preparing the return of the queen to c5. 14...♗f5 15.h4 ♞e4 16.h5 ♗f4 17.♞he1 ♗xe2† 18.♞xe2 ♞c4 19.♗d4 White's centralization and Black's instability make the position unclear, Kovacik – Castiglione, Slovakia 2002.) 15.♞df1?! (15.♗xc7 ♞b8 16.♗b5 ♞e8†) 15...♞h4 16.♗xc7 ♗h3† Paalman – Khmelniker, Dieren 2005.

15 12.f3 f4 13.♗f2 ♗f6

16 This is the most logical continuation, but Black can do without the immediate opening the position, too. 12...♗f6 13.c3 ♞e8 14.0–0 a6 15.♗d4 (15.♗a3 c5 16.♗c2 b5 17.♞d2 ♗d7† Bloch – Kolarov, Siegen 1970) 15...♗xd4† 16.cxd4 ♗d7 17.♞e1 ♞f6 The c7-pawn is somewhat vulnerable, but White has many weaknesses on light squares, too. 18.♞d2 ♞e4 19.♞ad1 ♞f7 20.♞c1 ♞c8 21.♗c4 ♗e7† Black has successfully defended his own weakness and put pressure on White's d5-pawn, I. Almasi – Bezgodov, Balatonbereny 1996.

17 16.♗f2?! (16.c3 ♞xb2=) 16...c5 17.♗b5 ♗xf4 18.♗c4† ♗e6 19.♗xe6† ♗xe6 20.♞xd6 ♞fd8 21.♞xb6 axb6 22.♞ae1 ♗f8† Black's pieces are more active and the enemy queenside is submitted to strong pressure, Kummerov – Aleksandrov, Bundesliga 2003.

18 White aims to complete the development of his kingside as soon as possible. Black should do the same, ignoring the central tension for the time being.

19 We are familiar with the fact that the early development of the queen's bishop in combination with the capture on d4 would leave the b2-pawn vulnerable:

7.♗f4 d6 8.♗xd4 ♗xd4 9.♞xd4 ♗xd5 10.♗xd5 ♗f6 11.♞b4 a5 12.♞a3 As usual in such cases, the queen lands on a passive square in order to defend the b2-pawn. 12...c6 13.♗b3 a4† Squillante – Bisguier, Columbus 1977.

7.♗xd4 is also premature because after 7...♗xd5 8.♗xd5 ♗xd4 9.♞xd4 ♗f6 10.♞d3 c6 11.♗b3 Black can take advantage of the enemy king's presence in the centre to carry out this thematic break without the time-consuming preparation ...d6 and ...♗e6, as in the main line. 11...d5! 12.0–0 (12.exd5 ♞e8† 13.♗e3 Otherwise, White's position would be simply too dangerous, with his king in the centre and the e- and d-files wide open. 13...♗xb2

14.♖b1 ♖a5† 15.♔f1 ♕f6 16.d6 ♕f5⌘
 12...dxe4 13.♗xe4 ♜e8 14.♗f3 ♕e6 15.c3 ♗a5
 16.♕e3 ♗b5 17.♕xe6 ♜xe6 18.♞ab1 ♗c4 (18...
 a5 19.♞fd1 ♞e7⌘ Morris – Wedberg, New York
 1991) 19.♞a1 a5 20.a4 ♗b3 21.♗e2 ♞ae8⌘
 White is in no immediate danger, but his position
 certainly looks uncomfortable, Prie – Spassky,
 Angers 1990.

20 The threats 8...♕g4 or 8...♗e5 leave White
 little choice, but now the position will be
 simplified.

21 9.♗xe7?! ♗xe7 10.♗xd4 ♗xe4 11.♗c3 ♗c6
 12.♗b4 ♕e6⌘ White has no compensation for
 the pawn, Haahr – Samaritani, Denmark 1989.

22 White has managed to retrieve the temporarily
 sacrificed pawn and retain some advantage in
 space. However, in absence of knights this is not
 too relevant, just as in the Ponziani structures.
 Besides, Black can simplify the position even
 more.

23 It is best to hurry with this move. Otherwise
 after, say, 12...♞e8 13.c3 ♕e6 the enemy
 bishop could avoid the exchange and become
 a dangerous attacking piece with 14.♕c2 when
 after 14...g6 15.f4! Black does not have time to
 equalize completely with 15...d5 because of 16.f5
 dxe4? 17.♗xd8, while after 15...♗b6† 16.♔h1
 d5 17.e5 the queen's departure from the kingside
 can make the situation dangerous.

24 13.c4?! prevents the exchange of bishops,
 but weakens the c4-pawn and the long diagonal.
 13...a5 14.♕c2 g6 15.♕f4 (This move leads to a
 disadvantage, but it is already not easy to complete
 development. 15.f4?! ♗b6† 16.♕e3 ♗b4 leaves
 the c4-pawn in trouble. Maybe 15.♞d1 ♗b6
 16.♞b1= is best.) 15...♕xb2 16.♞ab1 ♕e5
 17.♕xe5 dxe5 18.♞xb7 ♗xd3 19.♕xd3 ♞fd8⌘
 Lopez Pereyra – Cabrera, Sauzal 2004.

13.♕xe6 fxe6 (Δ...d5) 14.f4 e5! (The position
 resulting after 14...d5 15.e5 ♕e7 might be equal,
 but why give White the slightest attacking
 prospects on the kingside?) and now 15.f5 d5 or
 15.♗b3† d5 in both cases Black has achieved full
 equality.

25 With so little material left on the board, Black
 has no problems coordinating his forces, despite
 his relative lack of space. The d6-pawn is not
 weaker than the e4-pawn, while the f6-bishop is
 stable and active.

26 16.f3 ♞e6 17.♞ad1 ♗c7 18.♕d4 ♞ae8 19.♞f2
 h6 20.♕xf6 ♞xf6 21.♗d4 ♞fe6 22.c4 ♗a5
 23.♞fd2 ♗g5 24.♗f2 ½–½ Lesiege – Gligoric,
 Montreal 1998. The veteran proved the solidity
 of Black's position against a much younger
 opponent.

Spanish Exchange

Line A is to footnote 145, p274, and replaces all the text after 18.♖g3 with Line A. Table on page 248:

Line B and C are early deviations of line 20 in the tables as they are in the first edition. After 8.♙e3 ♖e7, I still consider 9.♗bd2 to be the main line, so B and C should be inserted before line 20.

Line D is inserted after line 20, as a late deviation.

Line E was adapted from the postscript and is related to lines 15 and 16.

Line A

18...♗f7 (Black clears the g-file and brings the king closer to the centre at the same time. The slightly artificial 18...♙c8?! 19.c4 fxc3 20.hxc3 ♙b7 did not entirely justify itself after 21.a4± Grodzensky – Naivelt, corr. 1995. In the previous edition I gave 18...♙e8 19.♙e1 ♗f7. The current game was played a couple of months later and I decided that centralizing the king immediately is better.) 19.a4! This is White's only active possibility. After opening the a-file he will be able to generate tactical threats such as ♙a7 and ♗xd6. Black should hurry with his counterplay. 19...♙g8 20.♗f2 A draw was agreed here in the game Milu – Marin, Romanian Team Championship 2006. A more forceful drawish continuation would have been 20.axb5 ♙xf3† 21.♗xf3 fxc3 22.♗xd6 (22.hxc3? ♗f4†) 22...♗f4† 23.♗f1 g2† 24.♗f2 ♗h3† 25.♗e3 cxd6 26.bxa6=. After 20...♗f2 play might have continued 20...♙c5† 21.♗f1 fxc3 (another possible repetition is 21...♙h3† 22.♗e2 ♙g4=) 22.hxc3 ♙d6 and White has no reason to avoid the repetition of moves.

Line B

9.dxe5 fxe5 10.♗bd2 0–0 11.♙b3† ♗h8 12.♙xb7

This brave capture leads to interesting complications, which end in a draw by perpetual.

White's initiative after 12.♗g5?! is only temporary. 12...♙e8 13.f3 (13.♙xb7? ♙g6 Threatening ...♙fb8. 14.♙b3 h6 leaves the knight terribly misplaced.) 13...♙c8 14.♗e6 ♙f6 15.♗c5 b6 16.♗d3 ♙e6 17.♙c2 c5± (I rejected 17...♗g6 because of 18.b4 ♗f4 19.♙xf4 exf4 20.e5?, overlooking the elegant 20...♙xe5! 21.♗xe5 ♙f5±) This looks like a logical reaction to Black's threatened ...♗g6, but is tactically unsound. 18.f4? exf4 19.♗xf4 ♗f5!! (A fantastic blow, which did not cross my mind during the game. 19...♙f7?! 20.e5 ♙xe5 21.♗e4↑; 19...♙xf4?! 20.♙xf4 ♙xf4 21.♙xf4 ♙c6= Sofronie – Marin, Romanian Championship 2006) 20.exf5 ♙xf5±

12...♙e6

The standard reaction, keeping the enemy queen captive. Black threatens ...♙d7 followed by ...♙fb8.

The following tempting attack is not entirely sound: 12...♙d7 13.♙b3 ♙xf3 14.♗xf3 ♙xf3 15.gxf3 ♗g6 16.♗h1 ♙h3 17.♙d1 ♗h4 18.♙g1 ♗xf3 19.♙g2 ♙f8 Black threatens ...♙f6-g6, but after 20.♙a4! the weakness of his back rank will not allow him to carry out his plan in optimal form.

13.♙fd1

It makes some sense to keep this rook for defensive purposes, but after 13.♙ad1 ♙e8 14.b4 Black has 14...a5!?

13.c4 ♙b8 14.♙xa6 ♙a8=

13...♙e8

13...♙d7?! 14.♗xe5 ♙xe5 15.♗c4 ♙d6

16. ♖xd6 cxd6 17. ♗xd7 ♕xd7 18. ♖xd6± offers White more than sufficient compensation for the sacrificed piece.

14.b4

This move is necessary in order to ensure White of some stability on the queenside.

14. ♕a7 c5 (threatening ... ♖c6) 15. b4 cxb4 16. cxb4 ♗g6 17. ♕c5 ♖f4☞ After the bishop's departure from the kingside, this knight has become very active.

14.c4=

14... ♗g6 15. ♕a7

The queenside situation is rather unusual. Two of White's pieces are trapped, but there is no obvious way to attack them. Therefore, Black should look for counterplay on the other wing.

15... ♕g4 16. ♖h1 ♕xf3 17. ♖xf3 ♗xe4 18. ♖xd6 cxd6 19. ♗xe7 ♖xf3 20. gxf3 ♗xf3† 21. ♖g1 ♗g4† 22. ♖f1 ♗c4†

White cannot avoid a draw because

23. ♖e1?

drops a rook to

23... ♗xc3†

Line C

10.h3 ♕h5 11.c4

The start of an interesting plan suggested by Kindermann, aiming to weaken Black's queenside structure. Its main drawbacks are the weakness of the d4-square and Black's possible counterplay along the f-file.

11...c5 12.b4 b6 13.bxc5 bxc5 14. ♖bd2 0-0

This position can also arise via the move order 9.h3 ♕h5 10. ♖bd2 0-0 13.dxe5 fxe5 14.c4, etc.

One fine point behind White's strategy is that after the straightforward 14... ♖c6 15. ♗a4 Black faces problems installing his knight on d4 without exchanging queens, which favours White, who will forget about kingside dangers. 15... ♗d7 16. ♖fb1 ♖d4

17. ♗xd7† ♖xd7 18. ♖e1 This was analyzed by Kindermann. Indeed, it seems that Black has not achieved full equality: 18... ♖hb8 19. f3 ♖b6 20. ♖f2 (20. ♖d3? ♖c2) 20... ♕f7 21. ♖d3 ♖ab8 22. ♖c1! and suddenly the threat ♕xd4 becomes very unpleasant. It is interesting to notice that White's knights control all the important squares along the b-file, making Black's rook activity rather sterile. Much weaker than 22. ♖c1! is 22. ♕xd4?! cxd4 23.c5? ♖xb1 24. ♖xb1 ♖xb1 25. ♖xb1 ♕c4 26. ♖b2 ♕xa2☞.

15. ♗a4!

15. ♖b1 ♖c6☞

15... ♗c8 16. ♖h2

16. ♗a3 ♕xf3 17. ♖xf3 ♖xf3 18. gxf3 ♗xh3☞ 19. ♕xc5? ♖f8!-+

16. ♖e1? ♕e2☞

16. ♖h2 avoids the immediate threats, but releases the pressure against the centre, offering Black more freedom of action. 16... ♗e6 17. ♖ab1 h6 18. f3 ♖fd8 19. ♖b2 ♕f7 20. ♖g4 ♖g6 21. g3 h5 22. ♖f2 ♖f4 (22...h4 23.g4 ♖f4☞) 23.h4 Now in Baklan – Kallio, Batumi 2002, Black could have obtained excellent play with 23... ♕e7☞, with pressure along the d-file and the possibility of transferring the knight to d4 or exchanging it on d3, depending on the circumstances.

16... ♖g6

The spectacular 16... ♖f5 is not so effective after 17. ♖fe1 (17.exf5?! e4†) 17... ♖d4 18. ♕xd4 cxd4 19.c5!.

17. ♗a3!?

17.g4?! ♕xg4 18.hxg4 ♗xg4 19. ♗d1 (19. ♖g1 ♗h5† 20. ♖g3 ♖f4 21. ♕xf4 ♖xf4 22. ♖g2 ♖xf3 23. ♖xf3 ♗g4† 24. ♖f1 ♗xf3☞) 19... ♖f5 20. ♖g5 ♖xg5 21. ♗xg4 ♖xg4☞ Shaw – Ashton, Gibraltar 2006.

17... ♕xf3

The threat against the c5-pawn is not real yet, but it is not easy for Black to make neutral, useful moves. His main problem is that the queen, which is very useful for keeping the

enemy kingside under pressure, is not well placed on c8 as it disrupts the coordination of rooks.

17...♖b8 18.♖ab1 (18...♙xc5? ♙xc5 19.♗xc5 ♙xf3 20.♜xf3 ♖xf3 21.gxf3 ♜f4+) 18...♖b4 19.♗d3 and White has stabilized the position. The knight jump to f4 does not improve Black's position after the simple ♙xf4.

The attempt to improve the queen's position with 17...♗e6?! is strongly met by 18.g4 ♙xg4 19.♜g5!, while on d7 the queen does not stand well either, because of possible pins along the d-file.

18.♜xf3 ♖xf3!? 19.gxf3 ♗f8 20.♗d3
20.♖g1 ♗xf3 21.♖g4 (21.♗d3 ♜f4 22.♗f1 ♗xe4) 21...♜f4 22.♖g3 ♗xe4 23.♙xc5 (23.♖ag1 ♜e6) 23...♖f8 24.♙xd6 cxd6 25.♗xd6 ♜e2=

20...♜h4☞

Black will have a pawn for the exchange, the more solid pawn structure and the safer king's position.

Line D

11...b5

I faced this line in a rapid game and simply did not have time to remember my analysis from the first edition and that we were following the game Nisipeanu – Bruzon. I just saw that the knight is vulnerable on c4 and attacked it! I was very surprised when, soon after the game, I realized my forgetfulness, but now I believe that both lines are more or less equivalent.

12.dxe5

Caught by surprise, the soon-to-be under-16 World Champion tries to maintain the initiative.

12.♜a5 ♗c8 leaves the white kingside slightly vulnerable.

12.♜cd2 exd4 (12...♜h8 13.♗c2 ♗d7 14.c4 exd4 15.♜xd4 ♜g6 16.cxb5 cxb5 17.♜f5± Meier – Holzke, Germany 2006) 13.cxd4 (13.♙xd4 c5) 13...f5 14.e5 f4 15.exd6 cxd6=

12...bxc4

A nice forced variation leading to a draw was possible: 12...♙xf3!? 13.♗b3! (13.♗xf3? fxe5+; 13.gxf3?! fxe5) 13...♙xe4 14.♜xd6† (14.exd6 ♜d5 15.dxc7 ♗xc7 16.♜b6 ♖ad8=) 14...♙d5 15.c4 ♙e6=

13.exd6 cxd6 14.b3

14.g4 ♙g6 15.♜d2 d5↔

14...f5↔ 15.e5?!

15.exf5 ♜xf5 16.♗e2 ♜xe3 17.fxe3 cxb3 18.axb3 ♗b6=

15...f4 16.♙c1

16.exd6 ♜g6 17.♙d4 ♜h4 18.♜h2 ♗xd6†

16...♜g6 17.♗xd6 ♙xf3 18.♗xd8

18.gxf3 ♗g5† 19.♜h2 ♜xe5+↔

18.♗e6† ♖f7 19.gxf3 ♗g5† 20.♗g4 ♜xe5 21.♗xg5 ♜xf3† 22.♜g2 ♜xg5 23.f3 ♖e8 24.♖f2 ♖e1 25.♙b2 ♖xa1 26.♙xa1 ♖d7 27.h4 ♜e6 28.bxc4 ♜c5+↔

18...♖axd8 19.♙a3

19.gxf3 ♜xe5 20.♜g2 ♖f6†

19...♙d5 20.♙xf8 ♜xf8+↔

Chirila – Marin, Braila (rapid) 2007

Line E

15...♙e6!?

Until here I played almost without thinking, although I had spent a couple of minutes on writing down the moves and enjoying the feeling of finding myself on familiar territory. After my opponent's last move I stopped for a while, trying to remember some of my old experiments with the slightly awkward 15...♙h5, which had eventually brought me success but without any connection with the objective merits of the move.

I decided that I was too grownup for such eccentricities and that I should simply follow the book recommendation. Therefore, I took my bishop and retreated it to e6, not realizing that I had almost produced a novelty (the move had in fact been played only once before). In just a flash I thought that the bishop stands

much better here than on d7, keeping an eye on the important c4-square and avoiding a possibly unpleasant pin along the d-file, which were enough arguments to make me sure that this was precisely the move I had recommended in the book!

Although such a memory slip is slightly irritating from a personal point of view, I believe that in chess (as in any other science) forgetting specific details can enable general progress if just the perception of the whole is correct.

It is too early to give a definitive verdict on my last move, but I do not see a clear refutation of it, while generally speaking my thoughts were entirely correct: e6 is the best square for the bishop, especially since White's next move is not dangerous.

16. ♖g5

Immediately after the game my opponent criticized this move. However, in the event of a neutral course of events Black is in a better position than in the lines given in the theoretical part. For instance:

16. ♖h2 ♖af8 (forcing White to define his kingside intentions) 17. f3 (now Black does not need to fear a concentrated attack against the e5-pawn by means of ♖df3 and ♖g4) 17... h5 18. h4 c5 19. c4 ♖b8 (The start of a radical regrouping. The generally desirable 19... ♖e7 would have allowed 20. f4 leading to unclear complications after 20... exf4 21. e5 ♖g6.) 20. ♖c1 ♖ff8 21. ♖a3 ♖fd8 (by putting pressure on the d-file, Black indirectly defends the c5-pawn) 22. ♖hf1 ♖a8 23. ♖c2 (defending the a2-pawn in order to make the threat cxb5 and ♖xc5 real) 23... b4 24. ♖b2 Now, in the game Beikert – Rodin, Pardubice 1997, Black should have finally carried out the thematic transfer of the knight to c6 with 24... ♖e7 25. ♖e3 (25. f4? would be weak because of White's badly placed rooks, which can be felt after 25... exf4 26. e5 ♖f5→) 25... ♖c6 and Black has a great position.

16... ♖d7 17. ♖f3

The only logical follow-up to the previous move. Against virtually any other move, Black would drive the enemy knight away with ...h6, obtaining a position from the theoretical section with a bonus of one useful move.

17. f4? would win the exchange but lose the game after 17... exf4! 18. ♖xf6 gxf6 19. ♖gf3 fxg3→ with the strong threat ...♖f4†.

17... c5

In principle, the exchange on f6 greatly favours Black, whose central pawn would be reinforced. However, for the time being I did not want to spend a tempo on 17...h6, which would also slightly weaken my rook's pawn. During the game my opponent was afraid of the following line: 18. ♖xf6 gxf6 19. ♖gf3 f5 (!) but after 20. ♖e1 f4 21. g4! ♖f7 22. c4± followed by ♖c1 with pressure against the c5-square and, indirectly, the e5-pawn, only White can be better.

18. ♖e1

A logical consequence of my opponent's fears, as mentioned in the previous comment. However, it should be said that the move itself is not bad. White removes the rook from a relatively exposed square (sometimes tricks based on ♖xe5 do not work because of ...♖xe5, when the rook would remain en prise) and places it on a central file. The possible usefulness of this move will be shown in a later comment.

18... a5

With the strong positional threat ...a4, which invites White to concrete action.

19. c4 b4 20. a4 bxa3

The only way to fight for the initiative.

21. ♖xa3 ♖e7?!

But now it was absolutely imperative to force the exchange on f6 with 21...h6! 22. ♖xf6 gxf6 when after 23. ♖gf3 ♖e7 followed by ...♖c6 Black's strong centre and the weakness of the b3-pawn offer him a stable advantage.

22. ♖d3!

White uses the first opportunity to release the generally unfavourable kingside tension. Black has to be careful now about all kind of tricks based on ♕xc5.

22...♖c6 23.♗f3!

Another strong move, putting the other central black pawn under pressure, too.

When playing 21...♗e7 I calculated only 23.♕xc5? ♕xc5 24.♞xd7 ♞xf2† 25.♜h1 ♗d4+.

23...a4?!

It was rather disappointing to find that the effects of the generally desirable knight jump 23...♗d4?! are not that rosy for Black after the simple 24.♗xd4! (I had initially calculated only something like 24.♗xe5 ♕xe5 25.♕xc5 ♗e6!?) 24...cxd4 25.♕xd6 ♞xd6 (or 25...cxd6 when 26.f4↑ would leave the f6-rook rather misplaced) 26.f4↑ and Black cannot consolidate his centre. We can see here that the rook is well placed on e1, supporting the e-pawn. By advancing the a-pawn I desperately tried to maintain the initiative, failing to understand that I was just helping my opponent to get rid of his weak b3-pawn. It would have been wiser to remove the tactical threats once and for all with the calm 23...♕e8!?, as suggested by Neboisa Ilijin, when Black's position might still be preferable.

24.bxa4 ♞xa4 25.♞a1!

The most consistent answer. White defends against the temporary threats without making any positional concession.

I vaguely hoped for 25.♕xc5 ♕xh3† 26.♜xh3 ♕xc5 although after 27.♜g2 White does not have any special worries.

25...♞f8

It was not too late to deviate from my initial plans with 25...♗b4!? when after 26.♞b3 the position remains unclear.

26.♕b2! ♗d4

When I played ...a4, I had calculated 26...♞xa1 27.♕xa1 ♞a8 “with initiative for Black”, failing to notice a trick that was hanging in the air: 28.♕xe5!±

27.♞da3

My opponent later explained that after the badly played opening he had decided he would offer a draw the moment he felt he was not worse. In fact, White is already better: he has neutralized Black's initiative, and enjoys the better structure.

Therefore, I had no reason to reject the draw offer.

½–½

Grigoryan – Marin, Turin (ol) 2006

Four Knights Scotch

Table on page 190:

Line A is inserted after Line 6. Remove the “!” from 15...Bg4 in line 5 and change the comment in footnote 33 to “This is the approved theoretical continuation, but, based on my own experience, I believe it is not the best.”

Line B comes, not surprisingly, after line A.

Line C - after line 9.

For Others - Scotch:

Line D - Before line 4, which “loses” the move Bd3 and gets a “...” instead. Change the whole comment from footnote 18 to “Completely inoffensive.”

Line E - After line 4.

Line A

16. ♖xg4!

In the first edition I underestimated this move, which leads to a minimal but stable advantage for White.

16... ♜xg4 17. ♙xd8 ♞axd8

In the similar line with a previous exchange on d5, Black can play 17... ♙xh2? but here it just loses material to 18. ♖h1 ♞axd8 19. ♙f5+.

18.g3!±

This is not a good moment to transpose to the similar lines resulting after 14.cxd5 cxd5 15.♞c1 ♙f4 16.♞c2. For instance: 18.cxd5 ♞xd5! 19.♙e2 ♙xh2† 20.♖h1 ♞d4 21.b3 ♙d6 22.♙xg4 ♞xg4 23.♞xc6 ♞h4† 24.♖g1 ♙h2† 25.♖h1 ♞e2‡

18... ♜e5?!

Just making things worse.

18... ♙e5 (or any other bishop retreat) 19.cxd5 cxd5 leads to a position similar to that from the game Brunello – Marin, where the pawn exchange in the centre was carried out on the 14th move.

19. ♙e2 d4 20.gxf4 d3 21.fxe5 dxc2 22.♞c1 ♞d2 23.♜c3 ♞xe5 24.♖f1±

Black’s counterplay has been extinguished and White has every chance to convert his material advantage into a win.

Line B

15... ♙d6

In the light of Black’s micro-problems arising after 15... ♙g4 16. ♖xg4, I suggest this rare move as a simpler way to comfortable play.

16. ♙xf6

I believe that this is a good moment for White to strive for equality.

16.h3 leaves the bishop vulnerable on h4. 16...dxc4 (the premature 16...g5?! 17.♙g3 ♙xg3 18.fxg3 leaves Black hanging along the f-file, for instance 18... ♖xg3 19.♞cf2 ♙xh3 20.♖f3!) 17. ♙xc4 ♜d5 18. ♖f3 ♙f5 19. ♞e2 ♞xe2 20. ♖xe2 ♙e6‡ It is getting harder and harder for White to meet ...g5.

16. ♙g3 ♙xg3 17.hxg3 ♙g4 18. ♖c1 (18. ♖d2 ♞ad8‡) 18...d4 19. ♖f4 ♖xf4 20.gxf4 ♜h5 21.g3 ♙f3‡ Pedersen – Hebden, Mallorca 2004.

The attempt to transpose to the lines with an earlier exchange on d5 with 16.cxd5? does not work because after 16... ♙xh2† 17. ♖h1 ♜xd5 18.g3 White’s h4-bishop is as trapped as Black’s bishop! 18... ♙h3 (18... ♜b4? 19. ♙h7†!+-) 19. ♞e1 ♞xe1† 20. ♖xe1 ♜b4‡

16... ♖xf6 17.cxd5 cxd5=

Black’s pair of bishops is a fair match for White’s stability on the light squares.

Line C

16.♖c2!?

Having opened the c-file does not force White to place his rook on an advanced position. In order to understand the subtleties of this position, the reader should refer to the similar variation without the insertion of the moves 14.cxd5 cxd5. In the current position, Black is deprived of the possibility of opening the d-file with counterplay in the centre, but in many lines the knight is hanging on a4, because the fourth rank is empty. These important differences do not change the general evaluation of the position as comfortable for Black, but play generally takes an independent course.

16...♞d6

Here, 16...♗g4 seems to offer Black a wider choice than in the position without the exchange on d5. 17.♞xg4 ♖xg4 18.♗xd8 ♗xh2†! (The only chance to maintain the balance. 18...♞exd8?! 19.g3 ♗e5 20.♞d1 ♞ab8 21.b3± White has the more compact structure and enjoys great stability on the light squares. Black's pieces are not fully coordinated and he has no active plan available. In Brunello – Marin, Edinburgh Quality Chess (rapid) 2007, Black went down painfully.) 19.♗h1 ♞axd8 20.g3 (20.f3 ♖e3 21.♗xh2 ♖xc2 22.♗xc2 ♞e2 23.♗b3 ♞d2! Black secures the d-file and frees the other rook from its defensive tasks. 24.♞e1 ♗f8 followed by ...♞d6 and Black is certainly not worse. White's position is solid but passive. With the fourth rank open, 20.♗f5? does not work because of 20...♗d6 21.♗xg4 ♞e4!♣.) 20...♗xg3 21.fxg3 ♖e3 22.♞d2 ♖xf1 23.♗xf1 g6 24.♗g2 ♗g7 25.♖c5♞ /± Black has a small material advantage, but his pawns are not dangerous. At the same time, the queenside majority will soon become dangerous. Personally, I would ignore the engines' evaluation of the position as favourable for Black and prefer White.

17.♗g3

17.h3 leaves the bishop misplaced on h4 after, say, 17...♖e4♣.

17...♗g4!

An important moment. With the d-file secured, White can answer 17...♗xg3 18.hxg3 ♗g4 with 19.♞d2±, maintaining a harmonious position and the better structure.

18.♞d2!

18.♗xf4? would lose material after 18...♞xf4 19.f3 ♞xa4 20.fxg4 ♖xg4♣.

18...♖h5!

Black does not release the tension.

19.♗xf4 ♖xf4♣

Black's pressure against the enemy kingside will most probably provoke a significant weakness such as f3, enabling further development of his counterplay.

Line D

7.♗d3 0–0

This move order is frequently employed by players who do not wish to avoid White castling long, as in the line below.

8.♗g5

8.0–0 d5 transposes to the main line of the Four Knights Scotch.

8...d5 9.♞f3

9.e5? ♞e8 10.f4 (10.♞e2 ♖g4=) 10...♖g4 11.♞e2 f6 12.exf6 gxf6 13.h3 (13.♗h4 ♞h5→) 13...fxg5 14.hxg4 ♗xg4 15.♗xh7† ♗g7 0–1 Candela – Korneev, Spanish Team Championship 1997.

9...dxe4

9...d4 10.a3 (10.♗xf6 gxf6 11.a3 dxc3 12.axb4 cxb2 13.♞b1♞) 10...♗e7 11.♖e2 ♗g4 12.♞g3 ♗xe2 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.♗xe2± White's more flexible structure and good control of the light squares offer him a long-term advantage. As for his king, it will reach absolute safety after castling artificially, Ouwendijk – Roggeveen, Vlissingen 2006.

10.♗xe4 ♗g4 11.♞d3

11. ♖xf6 ♗xf3 12. ♗xd8 ♗xe4 13. ♗xc7 ♗xg2+

11. ♖f4 ♖e8 12. 0-0 ♗xc3 13. bxc3 ♖xe4 14. ♖xe4 ♗xe4 15. ♗xd8 ♖xd8 16. f3 ♗d2= 17. ♖ad1? ♗e6+ Δ♖d5, ♗c4 18. ♖f2? ♗xf3+!-+

11. ♖xg4 ♗xg4 12. ♗xd8 ♖axd8 13. 0-0 ♖d6=

11...h6

11... ♖e8 12. 0-0 ♗xc3 13. ♗xh7!

11... ♗xc3+ 12. bxc3 ♖e8 13. f3!?

12. ♖xd8 ♖axd8 13. ♗xf6 gxf6=

Black's pair of bishops and his general activity compensate for the structural defects.

Line E

10. ♗g5 0-0 11. 0-0-0

By castling long, White has accelerated the centralization of his major pieces, but his king will be more vulnerable than Black's.

11...c6 12. ♖he1

12. ♗a4 ♗d7 13. c3 ♖e8 14. ♗c2 h6 15. ♗f4 ♖a5 16. ♖d3 ♗d6 17. ♗e3 c5 18. ♖d1 ♖ab8+ Thesing – Valenta, Pardubice 1996.

12...♗d6 13.h3

13. ♖e3 h6 14. ♗f4 (14. ♗h4 ♗g4+ 15. ♖h3? ♗xf2-+) 14... ♖e8 15. ♖d2 ♗e6 16. ♗xd6 ♖xd6 17. h3 ♖ab8 18. ♗e2 c5 19. ♗g3 ♖b6 20. b3 c4+ Alonso – Gildardo Garcia, Capablanca Memorial 1993.

13...h6 14. ♗h4

Zakic suggested 14. ♗d2 as an improvement, but after 14... ♗d7 15. ♗b1 ♗e5 we can feel that White's pieces lack breathing space.

14...♖b8 15. ♖f3 ♖b4

15... ♗e6!? (Δ... ♗e7) 16. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 17. ♖xf6 gxf6 18. ♗e2 c5 saves some time compared to the game.

16. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 17. ♖xf6 gxf6

Black's pair of bishops and his queenside pressure compensate for the structural defects.

18.a3

White's activity along the fourth rank was irritating, but the advance of the a-pawn will create a comfortable target for Black.

18. ♗e2 c5 19. c3 ♖a4 20. ♗b1 ♗e6=

18...♖b8 19. ♗e2 c5 20. c3 ♖b6 21. ♗g3 c4!

Once the knight has moved away from the d4-square, the strategic drawbacks of this pawn advance are less significant than the attacking chances it yields.

22. ♗c2 ♗e6 23. ♗h5 ♗h8!

23... ♖fb8? 24. ♗xf6+ ♗g7 25. ♗xd5± Zakic – Gligoric, Nis 1998, 25... ♖xb2? 26. ♗b4±

24. ♖e2

24. ♗xf6 ♗f4+ 25. ♗b1 ♖fb8±

24. ♖d2 ♖fb8 25. ♗d1 ♗xa3!+

24...♖fb8 25. ♗a4

25. ♗b1 ♗xa3+

25...♖a6 26. ♗c2 ♖ab6=

Four Knights Spanish

Table on page 80: This line comes after line 8 in the first edition's tables.

14.h3

White adopts a very flexible approach, intending to keep the central structure intact for as long as possible. I faced this move shortly after having delivered the manuscript for the first edition of the book and the game was inserted in a short postscript.

14...♖g6 15.g3 h6

Once the danger of the manoeuvre ♖h4-f5 has been removed, Black continues making useful moves. After the transfer of the knight to g6, the central break ...d5 is a less adequate reaction to g3 than in the main line, because of the undesired opposition of the e1-rook and the black queen along the e-file.

16.♗g2

Surprisingly, this position has not been met in practice before, although both players' play has been quite logical so far. For the first time in the game, I had to think independently.

16...♖c7!?

Not an easy choice. Most of Black's pieces were situated on what can be considered optimal squares already and my main concern was to prevent my position from losing harmony. The obvious drawback of my move is that it removes the queen from the kingside, which might look like a concession after White blocks the centre and my subsequent counterplay is based on f7-f5. However, I was not satisfied with the main alternative, which was 16...♗f8. White would then decline the obstinate invitation to block the centre and instead try to strengthen his pressure with, say, 17.♖h2 eventually followed by f4.

17.d5

My opponent decides to take advantage of the queen's relocation. White's choice is not a bit easier than Black's, which is typical for strategically complicated positions. Under the new circumstances, 17.♖h2 could have been met by 17...d5!↑ when the removal of the

queen from the e-file proves useful.

It is here that White should look for an improvement. I am pretty sure that White's play so far has been very logical, but blocking the centre is hardly a solution as the near future will prove.

17...♖h7 18.c4

The decisive factor when making my choice between 16...♖c7 and 16...♗f8 was that after 18.h4 f5 19.h5 the knight can retreat with 19...♖e7 over-defending f5 and planning ...♗f8. This made me feel that Black's plan had a certain fluency: the queen had done her job on e7 and then cleared this square for the knight.

18...♗f8

There was nothing wrong with the immediate 18...f5! but I intended to put psychological pressure on my opponent. This proved to be a correct policy, judging from his answer.

19.g4

White's nerve cracks under the pressure. His last move radically prevents ...f5, but chronically weakens the f4-square. For the sake of truth it should be said that after 19.♗a3 f5♣ Black's play looks preferable.

19...♖e7 20.♗e3 ♖g5 21.♖d2!?

A further concession. The lesser evil would have been 21.♖xg5 hxg5 22.a5♣ but by refraining from the exchange on g5 White probably hoped to carry out the thematic break f2-f4 in a favourable way. However, after the voluntary retreat of the knight, Black's kingside pressure becomes threatening.

21...♖f6 22.♗a3

We can see that White is well acquainted with Lein's favourite plan of transferring the rook to the kingside along the third rank. However, the unfavourable kingside configuration prevents him from taking full advantage of this manoeuvre.

22...♗d7!?

Abstractly speaking, a natural move, but from a practical point of view the most difficult move in the game. Before starting concrete kingside operations, Black intends to complete his development, putting the a4-pawn under some pressure at the same time. Opening of the kingside immediately could have led to unclear consequences, for instance:

22...h5 23.gxh5 ♘f4 24.♙xf4 ♚xf4 25.♖g3∞ and White is ready to counterattack on the wing where Black was supposed to be better.

Or 22...♘f4 23.♙xf4 ♚xf4 24.♘f1 followed by ♘g3 when the black queen would start feeling uncomfortable.

23.♚a1!?

White over-defends the a4-pawn and creates a pin along the a1-h8 diagonal, in the hope of playing f4 at the right moment. However, the removal of the queen from the centre will become a telling factor. Somewhat better would

have been 23.a5 although after 23...♖ae8 Black would comfortably complete his development and be ready to open the kingside.

23...h5! 24.f3

The difference is that after 24.gxh5 ♘f4 25.♙xf4 ♚xf4 the d2-knight would be hanging, preventing White from starting his counterplay based on ♖g3.

24...♖ae8! 25.♖b1 ♙c8

Black has regrouped optimally and has a strategically won position. Given the closed character of the position, White could have put up stubborn resistance but, demoralized by the unfavourable course of events, my opponent soon blundered.

26.♖f1 ♘f4 27.♙xf4 ♚xf4 28.♖f2? ♚g3

In view of the threat ...♘h3† (which could also follow in the case of 29.f4), White resigned in Canda – Marin, Turin (ol) 2006.

Giuoco Pianissimo

Page 160 table.

Lines A and B start with the deviation 7.d4, so insert after Line 1.

Line C is a White move 8 option, and line D a Black move 8 deviation from line C.

Line E is another White move 8 alternative

A - 7.d4

After White has castled, occupying the centre does not allow Black an early counterblow, as was the case in the classical main line. However, the tempo lost by moving the d-pawn twice makes the last move completely inoffensive.

7...d6!

This simple developing move is the best answer to White's relatively unprepared action in the centre. Since White is not fully developed he will face problems maintaining the integrity of his centre.

Black should refrain from an early counter-attack in the centre. For instance, 7...exd4 8.e5 d5 9.exf6 dxc4 10.fxg7 ♖g8 11.♞e1† ♕e6 would lead to a relatively unfavourable form of the Max Lange Attack. The insertion of the moves c3, ...a6 and ...♙a7 rather favours White, who can immediately question Black's domination in the centre with 12.♙g5 ♖d5 13.cxd4 followed by ♗c3, while the kingside has been irreparably damaged anyway.

8.h3

White's practical problems derive from the fact that he has to keep both his central pawns defended. His last move prevents ...♙g4, which would increase the pressure on the d4-pawn.

8.♙g5, aiming to release the pressure against the e4-pawn, prematurely defines the bishop's intentions. 8...h6 9.♙h4 g5 (More ambitious than 9...♞e7, which is also playable and eventually offered Black adequate counterplay after 10.♞e1 ♙g4 11.d5 ♗b8 12.♗bd2 g5 13.♙g3 ♗bd7 14.♗f1 ♗f8 15.♗e3 ♙xe3 16.♞xe3 ♗g6 17.♙e2 ♙d7 18.♗e1 h5 19.f3 g4 20.♙f2 ♖g8 Heim – Gschnitzer, Eppingen 1988.) 10.♙g3 (The thematic sacrifice 10.♗xg5? hxg5 11.♙g5 does not work,

because Black has not castled yet and can use his rook to chase away the bishop. 11...♞g8 12.♙h4 ♖g4 13.g3 ♖xh4 14.gxh4 ♙h3 15.♞e1 ♖d7+ followed by castling long. White has nothing to show for his material deficit. This is by no means Black's only way to refute the sacrifice, but is probably the most "human". 10.dxe5 gxh4 11.exf6 ♞xf6 followed by ...♙g4 and castling long offers Black easy play and attacking chances.) 10...♗xe4 11.dxe5 Otherwise, White will be a pawn down without enough development to gain adequate compensation. 11...♗xg3 12.hxg3 dxe5 13.♞xd8† ♗xd8 14.♙xf7 e4 15.♗h2 ♖f8 16.♙b3 e3+ White is still underdeveloped, while his kingside is under attack.

Immediately releasing the tension in the centre with 8.d5 offers Black easy play. 8...♗e7 9.♙d3 h6 10.c4 0-0 (The slightly extravagant 10...g5 11.♙e3 ♗g6 is time-consuming and fails to put the enemy kingside under serious pressure. 12.♗c3 ♗f4 13.♗e2 ♗6h5 14.♗g3 ♗g7 15.♞c1± Deev – Conquest, Lyngby 1990.) 11.♗c3 ♗h7 Justifying the move ...h6. Clearing the way of the f-pawn with ...♗e8 would cause some temporary problems of coordination along the back rank. 12.b4 f5 13.exf5 ♙xf5 14.♙xf5 ♗xf5 15.♗e4 ♗f6= The move...h6 proves useful again, by preventing ♗eg5-e6. Black has active kingside play.

In fact, h3 might not be entirely necessary at this point of the game if White wants to maintain the tension, but will become so slightly later. For instance: 8.♞e1 0-0 (8...♙g4 is premature because after 9.♗bd2, threatening to drive the bishop away with h3 and g4, 9...exd4 is not without risks in view of 10.e5! dxe5 11.♗xe5! when Black will lose his right to

castle.) Now, 9.♖bd2 is not possible, because of 9...exd4. 9.♙g5 also fails to maintain White's domination in the centre after 9...h6 10.♙h4 g5 11.♙g3 (White is not well enough developed to sacrifice with 11.♖xg5 hxg5 12.♙xg5 because of 12...♖g7 13.♗f3 exd4 followed by either ...♖xe5 or ...♖xd4.) 11...♗e8 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♗xd8 ♗xd8= Black has achieved normal development, having neutralized White's space advantage in the centre. 14.♖xe5? does not work because of 14...♖xe5 15.♙xe5 ♙xf2!†.

8...0-0 9.♗e1 h6

Preparing ...♗e8 by preventing ♖g5.

10.♙e3

10.♙f1 is too slow and forces White to release the tension after 10...♗e8 11.d5 ♖e7 12.♙e3 (Matulovic recommends 12.c4, but Black can continue as in the game with 12...♖h7 13.♖c3 f5 14.exf5 ♙xf5. If we compare with the variation 8.d5 above, we can notice that Black's king's rook is slightly misplaced and will have to return to f8. Doesn't this mean that Black has simply lost two tempi? In fact, it does, but White has done far worse. He spent this time weakening his king's position with h3 and retreating the bishop to a passive square. After all, he might also have to return the bishop to d3...) 12...♙xe3 13.♗xe3 ♖h7 14.♖bd2 ♗f8 15.c4 f5 16.exf5 ♖xf5 17.♗e1 ♖g5 18.♖xg5 ♗xg5 Black's kingside play develops easily. 19.♖f3 (Occupying the e4-square with 19.♖e4?! would leave the even more important d4-square undefended. 19...♗g6† Δ...♖d4) 19...♗f6 20.♗d2 (White cannot start his queenside attack yet: 20.b4? ♖h4!† 21.♙e2? ♙xh3-+) 20...b6 21.♗ac1 (Again, it is too early for 21.b4 because after 21...a5 White cannot maintain the integrity of his structure with 22.a3 axb4 23.axb4? because of 23...♗xa1 24.♗xa1 e4-+) 21...a5 Black has managed to arrange his queenside pawns optimally and can now concentrate on the kingside. 22.♗c3 ♙d7 23.♙d3 ♖h4 (This looks a bit premature to me. I would prefer 23...♗f7† followed

by ...♗af8 and eventually ...g5 and ...♗g7.) 24.♖xh4 ♗xh4= Damljanovic – Matulovic, Niksic 1997.

10...♗e8

Black would lose a piece without sufficient compensation after 10...♖xe4?! 11.d5 ♖a5 12.♙f1.

11.♖bd2 exd4 12.cxd4 d5!

The simplest way to blast White's centre into pieces. After 12...♖xe4?! 13.♗b3! Black needs to play the awkward looking 13...♗d7, causing himself problems developing the queenside. 13...♗f6? is bad because of 14.♙xh6! when Black's delay in development is obvious.

13.e5!?

The only way to muddy the waters.

13...dxc4 14.exf6 ♙f5!

Development at any cost!

14...♗xf6?! 15.d5 ♙xe3?! 16.dxc6! leaves the bishop pinned.

15.fxg7 ♖xd4 16.♖xd4

16.♙xh6 offers Black very active play after 16...♗f6. White's material advantage is temporary and Black's domination in the centre might become threatening.

16...♙xd4 17.♖xc4 ♙xg7 18.♗f3 ♙e4 19.♗g3 ♗e6 20.f3 ♙g6 21.♙f2

½-½

Inkiow – Am. Rodriguez, Minsk 1982. Black's active bishops compensate for the kingside weaknesses (and cover them, too!). The main thing to be prevented is a knight jump to e5. Therefore:

21...♗e7=

looks like the best move.

B - 8.dxe5

A simplistic approach. Since maintaining the tension in the centre is a far from easy task, White hopes to retain some initiative by opening play at once. However, it is not easy to achieve such an aim without satisfactory development.

8...♖xe5!

It is important to eliminate the f3-knight.

After 8...dxe5 9.♖xd8† Black has to play the passive 9...♗xd8, since 9...♗xd8?! simply loses a pawn to 10.♙xf7 and if 10...♗xe4 then 11.♙d5±, weakening the e5-pawn.

9.♗xe5 dxe5 10.♖f3

White intends to make use of the availability of this square in order to build up some pressure against Black's kingside.

10.♖xd8† ♗xd8 offers White very little. 11.♙g5 (11.♗d2 ♗e7 12.♗f3 ♗xe4 13.♗xe5 ♙e6 14.♙xe6 ♗xe6 15.♗f3 ♖ae8 16.♙f4 ♗d7 17.♖ad1† ♗c8= Orlov – Sivokho, St Petersburg 2001. The absence of the f3-knight makes itself felt after 11.♙xf7?! ♖f8 12.♙c4 ♗xe4, when the f2-square is under strong pressure. 13.♙e3 ♙xe3 14.fxe3 ♖xf1† 15.♙xf1 ♙e6 16.♙d3 ♗f6 and Black is not worse.) 11...♗e7 12.♗d2 h6 (12...♙e6 13.♖ad1 ♖hd8 14.♙xe6 ♗xe6 15.♙xf6 ♗xf6 16.♗f3 ♗e6 17.♖fe1 f6 is also plain equal, Nun – Flear, Dortmund 1989.) 13.♙h4 ♙g4 An irritating move, preventing the occupation of the d-file. 14.♖fe1 (14.h3 ♖ad8! drives the knight away from the f5-square. After 15.♗b3 Black can play 15...g5 16.♙g3 ♙e6= without fearing any ghosts.) 14...♖ad8 15.♗f1 g5! Once again this move is not dangerous for Black, because the g3-square will be physically unavailable to the knight, while ♗e3 will always be met by ...♙xe3. 16.♙g3 ♙e6 17.♙xe6 ♗xe6 18.♖e2 ♖d3 19.♖ae1 ♖hd8± Popa – Godena, Verona 2006. White has little to show against Black's authoritarian control of the d-file.

10...0-0 11.♙g5

This move has never been played, but should be taken into account because it is White's only attempt to justify his previous strategy.

11.♙e3 ♙g4 12.♖g3 ♙xe3 13.♖xe3 ♖d6 14.f3 ♙e6 15.♗d2 ♖fd8 16.♖f2 ♖d7 17.♙xe6 ♖xe6 18.♗f1 ♖ad8± Smagin – Aseev, Tashkent 1984.

11.♗a3 b5 12.♙b3 ♙g4 13.♖g3 ♙e2 14.♙h6 (14.♖e1 ♗xe4) 14...♗h5 15.♖xe5 gxh6±

Cicak – Lobzhanidze, Wiesbaden 2000.

11...h6!

Being well developed, Black does not need to fear the structural defects.

12.♙xf6

The attempt to win a tempo with 12.♖d1 would be strongly met by 12...hxg5! 13.♖xd8 ♖xd8, threatening ...♙g4 followed by ...♖d1†(#). White is underdeveloped and his queen is vulnerable. 14.♙b3 (14.h3 g4! puts the f2-pawn in danger. Or 14.♗a3 ♖d2 15.♖f1 b5 16.♙b3 ♙b7 followed by ...♖ad8 with strong pressure.) 14...♙g4 15.♖g3 ♙e6 16.♗a3 ♙xb3 17.axb3 ♖d2± Black has occupied the only open file and the second rank. His chances are not worse, despite his minimal material deficit.

12...♖xf6 13.♖xf6 gxf6 14.♗d2

Otherwise, Black would take the initiative in the centre with ...f5.

14...♙g4!

Winning an important tempo in the fight for the open d-file. We can see how efficient the a7-bishop is in preventing the generally desirable f3.

15.h3 ♖ad8 16.♗b3

16.♗f3 ♙xf3 17.gxf3 ♖d2±

16...♙d7

The knight has been prevented from transferring closer to the f5-square, so the bishop returns to the queenside.

16...♙h5? 17.g4 ♙g6 18.♖fe1±, followed by ♗g2 and f3, would leave the g6-bishop permanently out of play. White would practically be a piece up on the other wing.

17.♖fd1 b5 18.♙e2 ♙c6 19.♙f3 ♙b6=

Black's active bishops compensate for the structural defects.

C - 8.h3

This move can transpose to the main line if both sides wish, but play can also take an independent character.

8...d6

Black does not deviate from the natural course of the game.

9. ♖e3

This move cannot be found in any opening books. However, it has caused Black some trouble in games between strong players over the last few years. White's idea is that Black cannot afford to play symmetrically: ♖xa7 is a much more unpleasant threat than ...♖xb3. The former would provoke the undesirable misplacement of one of Black's pieces, while the latter can be answered comfortably with either ♗xb3 or axb3. Therefore, Black will be practically forced to open the f-file with ...♖xe3, offering White a strong centre and possibilities of attacking along the f-file.

To a certain extent the move is similar to Korchnoi's revolutionary 9...♖e6. However, there is a minor difference that in theory slightly favours Black: White develops his bishop before having moved his knight. In practice, this is not so easy to take advantage of, though.

9... ♖xe3

9...♖e6 10.♖xe6 Just one of the possible continuations. (10.♗bd2 is likely to transpose to the main game. If Black refrains from the exchange on e3 with, say, 10...♗e7 the a7-bishop would remain passive after 11.d4.) 10...fxe6 11.♖xa7 ♖xa7 12.♗bd2 ♗d7 13.d4 ♗f6 14.♗b3 ♗b6 15.♖ae1 ♗a5 16.♗c2 ♗c6 17.♗b3 ♗a5 18.♗d1 ♖aa8 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.♗e2± Black's doubled pawns gave him lots of trouble in Nevednichy – Pavasovic, Sibenik 2005.

10.fxe3

It will not be easy for Black to challenge White's domination in the centre. Besides, the pressure along the f-file is likely to become annoying in the long run.

10... ♖e6

10...♗e7?! allows 11.♗h4! ♗g6 12.♗f5 with strong kingside pressure, as in Harikrishna – Sokolov, Hoogeveen 2005.

11. ♗bd2 ♗e7

I believe this is a good square for the queen, allowing optimal cooperation with the knights.

11...♗d7 12.d4 ♖xb3 13.♗xb3 ♖fe8 14.♖ae1± maintains White's domination in the centre.

11...♖xb3 12.♗xb3 b5 13.d4 ♗d7 14.♖f2 (14.a4!±) 14...♗a5 15.♗c2 c5 16.dxc5?! (16.d5!± would have led to a similar situation as after Black's inaccuracy in the main game) 16...dxc5 17.c4 ♗e7 18.♖af1 ♗b6 19.b3 ♗c6± With the d-file open, White cannot concentrate on his kingside attack, Nevednichy – Jovanic, Nova Gorica 2006.

12.d4 ♖xb3 13. ♗xb3 ♖ab8

Black has to play this slightly passive move.

13...exd4 14.exd4 (14.♗xb7 dxe3!) 14...♗xe4 fails to equalize after 15.♗xe4! ♗xe4 16.♗xb7 (16.♖ae1 ♗f5 17.♗e5 ♗h5 is less clear) 16...♖ab8 17.♗xc7 ♖xb2 18.♗xd6 ♗e3† 19.♗h2 ♗xc3 20.♖ac1 ♖c2 21.♖xc2 ♗xc2 22.d5±.

14. ♖ae1 b5

Once White's queen's rook has abandoned the a-file, this move is entirely justified because a4 is less dangerous. Finally, Black can give some meaning to the rook's placement on b8 by initiating a massive regrouping.

14...g6?! A stereotypical plan. Black intends to transfer his king's knight to g7, as in the Czech Benoni. This plan also works in some lines of the Chigorin Ruy Lopez, but with the f-file under pressure Black will not manage to play ...f5 and his knight will remain passive. 15.♖f2 ♗h5 16.g4 ♗g7 17.♖ef1 ♗d8 18.♗h2 (18.d5!±) 18...♗de6 19.d5 ♗g5 20.c4 ♗xf3† 21.♖xf3± Black has no constructive plan and has to play a defensive game, although he later had a winning position in Nevednichy – Marin, Romania 2007.

15. ♖f2

15.♗h4 is inoffensive because of 15...g6!.

15... ♗d7 16. ♖ef1 ♗d8 17. ♗c2

After 17.d5 c6! White cannot support his d5-pawn efficiently and will soon lose his domination in the centre.

17...c6!

An important move. 17...d6 would be met by 18.d5± when 18...d5 19.dh2! leaves the knight misplaced on g5.

18.b3 d6

Black has regrouped harmoniously and has little to fear.

19.c4

Threatening to win more space in the centre, but Black is prepared for this.

19...exd4 20.exd4 c5±

Black has equalized completely, because

21.d5!?

can be met by

21...d4±

followed by ...d6-e5.

D - 8...d5!?

If Black is not entirely satisfied with the suggested improvement over my game against Nevednichy, then this move is a radical way to cross White's intentions. Generally, it is considered that opening the centre so soon is unfavourable for Black, because of White's combined pressure along the e-file and a2-g8 diagonal. However, after having lost one tempo on a pawn move (h3), White has considerably diminished his dynamic potential, which makes Black's position entirely playable.

9.exd5 dxd5 10.ee1 e6!?

It is always pleasant to ignore the opponent's threats.

However, the more neutral 10...f6 is entirely sound, too. 11.dbd2 (11.d4 exd4 12.cxd4 da5 13.d3 dxb3 14.xxb3 c6 15.f4 f7 We can see that f7-f6 has not really weakened Black's position, while the f6-pawn restricts White's bishop and king's knight. 16.g3 f5 17.a4 b6 18.xb6 dxb6 19.e2 d8 20.ea1 fd7 21.f4 g5 22.c1 f7 23.b3 dc8± After patient manoeuvring Black is ready to assault

the d4-pawn, De la Paz Perdomo – Short, Ottawa 2007.) 11...h8 12.de4 (12.d1 is too passive and allows Black to place his pieces more actively in the centre. 12...d6 13.dg3 e6 14.d4 exd4 15.cxd4 fe8 16.a3 g8 17.de4 f8 18.d3 xe1± 19.dxe1 d8± Again, the d4-pawn is submitted to strong pressure, Sivokho – Romanov, Minsk 2006.) 12...e6 Black has a space advantage in the centre and White's attacking attempts have little chance of success. 13.dg3 d7 14.dh4 ad8 15.h5 f7 16.f3 de7 17.c2 d5 18.h5 f7 19.f3= White is obviously not playing for a win, Xu Yuhua – Short, Ji Nan 2003.

11.d3

White has to resort to such unnatural moves.

11.de5? is impossible because of 11...de5 12.xe5 xf2±.

11.dbd2? leaves the f4-square at Black's mercy. 11...d4 12.e6 (12.d4 d3 13.e3 dxc1 14.e6 exd4 15.cxd4 fe6 16.xc1 dxd4±) 12...fe6! Black keeps his knight on an active position, opening the f-file for his king's rook at the same time. 13.de4 dxd3 14.f1 (14.g5 does not prevent trouble on f2: 14...xf2! 15.dxf2 xf2± 16.fxf2 xg5±) 14...xf2 15.dxf2 xd1 16.xd1 e4 17.d4 e5±

11.dg5 f6 12.e2 ad8 13.de6 fe6± leaves White badly underdeveloped and in danger around the f2-square.

11...e8

I prefer this developing move to 11...b5, which is probably not bad either. 12.e2 b4 13.d1 f6 14.d4 f7 15.dxe5 de5± Arizmendi – Cruz, Andorra 2004.

12.dg5!?

12.d4 would finally force 12...f6=, but only after having developed the knight far from the kingside, thus reducing White's attacking potential on that wing.

12...f6 13.e2 ad8 14.de6 fe6=

Once the rook has moved away from the f-file,

this is the logical answer. Black's hyperactivity compensates for White's almost unchallenged pressure along the a2-g8 diagonal.

E - 8.♙e3

The ideas behind this move are similar to those of 8.h3 d6 9.♙e3.

8...d5!

The most logical answer.

After 8...♙e3 9.fxe3 d6 White can continue his development with 10.♖bd2, leaving for later the generally useful move h3 (which enables ♖h2-g4). For practical reasons this might eventually save a whole tempo over the line 8.h3 d6 9.♙e3.

9.exd5 ♖xd5 10.♙xa7 ♞xa7

White is only too happy to force the enemy rook to occupy such a square. However, the lack of harmony in Black's camp is temporary and White is not so well developed either. Besides, the exchange of the dark-squared bishops has deprived White of an important attacking piece, while leaving the f4-square vulnerable.

11.♞e1

11.d4 ♖f4!? (11...exd4 12.♖xd4 ♖ce7 13.♖d2 c5 14.♖4f3 b5= is a simpler way to activate the rook, winning some space on the queenside at the same time) 12.dxe5 (12.d5 ♖a5 leaves the d5-pawn vulnerable) 12...♖xe5 13.♖xe5 (13.♞xd8?! ♖xf3† 14.gxf3 ♞xd8) 13...♞g5! 14.g3 ♖h3† 15.♙g2 ♞xe5 16.♞e1

Black has an active position, but the temporary passivity of the a7-rook suggests he should be prudent. 16...♞f5 17.♞f3 ♞xf3† 18.♙xf3 ♖g5† 19.♙f4 ♖h3† 20.♙f3 ♖g5† White has nothing better than agreeing a draw by repetition, because 21.♙g2?! allows Black to complete his development with gain of time after 21...♙h3† 22.♙h1 ♞aa8, while the king feels miserable on h1.

11...♖f4 12.d4

The structure resulting from this move does not offer White anything special, but it is hard to suggest better alternatives.

12.♖xe5? loses material to 12...♞g5!-+.

Defending the d3-pawn with 12.♙c2 looks passive and offers Black the time he needs to complete his development. 12...♙g4 13.h3 ♙h5 14.♖bd2 ♞a8

12...exd4 13.cxd4 ♙g4 14.♖c3 ♞a8 15.♞e4 ♞f6 16.♖d5 ♖xd5 17.♞xg4

17.♙xd5 ♙xf3

17...♞ad8 18.♞d2 ♞fe8=

Black has little to fear. He has a harmonious placement of pieces and satisfactory stability in the centre.

18...♞d6?! is worse because it allows White to take control of the open e-file. 19.♞e1 g6 20.♞ge4 ♞dd8 21.♖e5± Zagrebelny – Aleksandrov, Moscow 2004.

Giuoco Pianissimo

Line 1 Giuoco Pianissimo

This line is a footnote to 6...♔a7 from the first header of the tables on page 160.

6...0-0

Black can also start with this move, which in most cases would lead to a transposition. The following is a recent game of mine where play took an independent course.

7.♙g5 h6 8.♘h4 ♕e7!?

Since White has not castled short yet, it is dangerous to play 8...g5?!. For instance: 9.♙g3 d6 10.♘bd2 ♙g4 11.h3 ♘h5 12.♖e2 ♙g6 13.h4 ♘h5 14.hxg5 ♘xg3 15.fxg3 hxg5 16.0-0-0 ♘g7 17.♘c4 f6 18.d4 exd4 19.cxd4 ♔a7 20.♘e3 ♖e8 21.♙c2 ♖e7 22.e5, Ivanchuk – Marin, Ciudad Real (blitz) 2007.

9.♘bd2 d6

When I looked at the whole variation, shortly after my blitz game against Ivanchuk, I planned to play 9...♘h5 10.♙g3 ♘xg3 11.hxg3 d6=, but during the game I did not feel like opening the h-file too soon.

10.♙g3

He was probably worried about ...♘h5 all the same, but I believe that this voluntary bishop retreat is too passive to offer White an advantage.

10...♖e8

10...♘h5 transposing to another blitz game M. Zaitsev – Harikrishna, playchess.com 2004, allows 11.♘xe5 ♘xe5 12.♙xe5 dxe5 13.♖xh5 ♖xd3 14.♖xe5± when Black's compensation does not look sufficient.

11.♘f1 ♙f8

This was the first round of the tournament and, not being entirely sure about my form, I aimed to keep the position closed for as long as possible. This strategy eventually proved correct for this specific game, but objectively speaking Black could have fought for the initiative already.

11...d5!? 12.♖e2 a5! 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♙xe5 a4 15.♙c2 a3 16.b3 ♘g4 17.♙g3 dxe4 18.dxe4 ♙f6↑

12.♘e3 ♙e6 13.♙h4!?

This is a good moment to put the knight in a pin again, but this bishop has moved quite a lot already.

13...g6!

Not fearing the pin. 13...♙e7?! 14.♙xe6 fxe6 15.♖b3 ♖d7 16.0-0±

14.♘d2

14.♙xe6 ♖xe6 15.♘d5 ♙g7 16.0-0 ♘b8= Δ...♘bd7.

14...♙g7 15.♖f3

Black seems to be under pressure, but White's development is a bit artificial. Black only needs to find a way to over-defend his f6-knight.

15...♘b8!? 16.♙c2 ♘bd7 17.g4

My opponent was inclined towards a slow course of events, too.

The dynamic alternative was 17.d4, putting the e6-bishop in immediate danger of being trapped with d5. However, Black can maintain his stability with: 17...♘f8 18.0-0-0 ♘8h7 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.♘dc4 ♖e7 (20...♖c8!? 21.♘xe5 ♙xa2) 21.♘d5 ♙xd5 22.♖xd5 ♖e6 23.♖c5 b6 24.♖xc7 ♖ec8 25.♖xc8† ♖xc8 26.b3 b5 27.♘d2 ♘g5 28.♖e3 ♙f8= Black has an active position and his king is much safer than its colleague.

17...♘f8 18.♘f5 ♘8h7!

18...gxf5? would lead to decisive white attack after 19.gxf5 ♙d7 20.♖g1+–

19.♘g7!?

It was tempting to eliminate this bishop, but the truth is that White releases the pressure too soon.

19.♖g1!? c5∞

19...♘g7†

Black is better developed and has active possibilities in the centre and on the queenside. White does not have a clear attacking plan on the kingside, Tiviakov – Marin, Reggio Emilia 2007/08.

Line 2 Greco

The lines starting with 6.e5 expand on what was footnote one (in Classical main line tables, page 145).

1.e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♗c6 3. ♙c4 ♙c5 4.c3 ♗f6 5.d4 exd4 6.e5

This move is probably unjustly considered as inoffensive. Having failed to understand this when preparing the first edition, I happened to be confronted with it in practice under the pressure of time. My last round opponent from Reggio Emilia 2007/08 had just added this line into his repertoire. Unfortunately, I had no time to prepare properly, because I had finished my previous game (with Korchnoi) quite late and the last round was scheduled in the morning.

6...d5 7.♙b5

7.exf6?! dxc4 would lead to an unfavourable form of the Max Lange Attack, because the move c3 is by far less useful than 0–0.

7...♗e4 8.cxd4 ♙b6 9.♗c3 0–0 10.♙e3 ♙g4 11.♗c2

White can avoid the deviation mentioned on the 13th move with 11.♙xc6 bxc6, but this exchange consolidates Black's centre too soon. 12.♗a4 (12.♗c2 f5!? As can be seen from a later comment, this move is not possible in the absence of the exchange on c6. 13.exf6 ♗xf6 14.♗e5 ♙f5 15.♗a4 c5 16.♗xd5 ♗d6↑) 12...f6 13.exf6 (13.♗xc6 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♙xf3 15.gxf3 fxe5 16.dxe5 ♙xe3 17.fxe3 ♗xf3♣ Macieja – De la Paz, Merida 2005.) 13...♙xf3 14.fxg7 ♗e8 15.gxf3 ♗xf2! 16.♗xf2 ♗h4↑ 17.♗e2 ♙xd4 18.♗e4 (18.♗d1 ♗f4→) 18...♙xe3 19.♗xe3 ♗xe4↑! 20.fxe4 ♗e8 21.♗hg1□ (21.♗d2 ♗f4↑ 22.♗c3 ♗xe4 23.♗xe4 ♗xe4 24.♗hg1 ♗e3↑ 25.♗c2 ♗e2↑ 26.♗c3 c5→; 21.♗ag1 ♗xe4↑ 22.♗xe4 ♗xe4↑ 23.♗d2 c5↑) 21...♗xe4↑ 22.♗xe4 ♗xe4↑ 23.♗d2 = De la Paz.

11...♙xf3

11...f5? 12.♗xd5!

In the first round of the same tournament, Ni Hua faced the less principled answer

11...♙f5 12.♗b3 ♗e7 13.♙e2 c6 14.0–0 f6 15.exf6 (15.♗h4 ♗xc3 16.♗xc3 fxe5 17.dxe5 d4 18.♗c4↑ ♗d5♣) 15...♗xf6 16.♗e5 (I was slightly worried about 16.a4!±) 16...♗g6 17.♗a4 ♗xe5 18.♗xb6 axb6 19.dxe5 ♗g6 20.♙h5 (20.♙xb6 ♗g5 21.g3 ♗d2 22.♗c3 ♗xf1 23.♙xf1♣ Black's pawns are too immobile for my taste.) 20...♗e6 21.f3 ♗c5 22.♙xc5 bxc5 23.♗xb7 g6 24.♙g4 ♙xg4 25.fxg4 ♗e8 26.♗f7 ♗xf7 27.♗xa8↑ ♗e8 28.♗xe8↑ ♗xe8∞ Ni Hua – Navara, Reggio Emilia 2007/08.

12.gxf3 ♗g5 13.♙xc6 bxc6

After this move, Black's position is at least dangerous.

14.0–0–0!?

The most ambitious continuation. 14.♗a4?! ♗xf3↑ 15.♗e2 f6!? 16.e6 ♗g5 17.♗xc6 ♗e8!♣ Sveshnikov – Balashov, USSR 1985.

Against 14.♗f5 I had prepared 14...f6!? (14...♗e6 has been played in no fewer than three games between the same players: Alonso – Valdes, Cuba 2005. Cuban analysis in *Chess Informant* claims that Black is doing fine, but I did not like the kingside pressure exerted by White.) 15.0–0–0 (15.exf6 h6!; 15.♗d1 ♙xd4!♣ 16.♗xd4? fxe5♣) 15...g6 16.♗g4 ♗c8 17.♗xc8 ♗axc8 18.f4 ♗e6∞

14...♗xf3 15.♗e2!

This move was new to me. Sveshnikov recommended 15.♗f5 ♗h4 16.♗g4 ♗g6 17.h4 f5 18.exf6 ♗xf6 19.h5 ♗f4 20.♗h4♣ but after 20...♗e6↑ I see no compensation for White.

15...♗h4

15...♗g5 16.f4 ♗e4 17.♗xe4 dxe4 18.f5→

16.♗hg1

With his bishop isolated on the queenside, Black faces serious problems stopping White's slow but logical attack.

16...♗d7!?

This move, completing development before anything else, is Black's best chance to obtain a viable position, although White has plenty of play anyway.

16...♟f5?! 17.♞g4 ♞c8 18.♙h6!±

16...f6?! The plan initiated by this move will fail by just one tempo. 17.♞h5! (17.exf6?! ♞xf6! 18.♙g5 ♞f7 19.♙xh4 ♞f4†) 17...♟g6 18.♞g3, White's attack develops by simple means. 18...♞e8!? (18...♞f7?! 19.e6 ♞e7 20.f4 f5 21.♞xf5 ♟f8 22.♞g4 ♟xe6 23.f5+; 18...fxe5?! 19.♞h3 ♞f6?! 20.♞g1!+ with a decisive attack in Ni Hua – Marin, Reggio Emilia 2007/08. 19...♞f6 seems to be the losing move, but the fact that 19...♟f7 is the only way to prolong the fight speaks for itself about Black's situation.) 19.f4 (19.♞h3 ♟f8 20.f4∞) 19...fxe5 20.fxe5∞ Black has managed to stabilize the position, but his kingside remains under pressure.

17.♞h5

17.♞g4 ♟f5 18.♞dg1 ♞e6∞

17.♙g5 ♞f5!? (In fact, I overlooked this resource. 17...♟g6 18.h4→; 17...♟f5 18.♞g4 g6 19.♞d3→) 18.♞g3 (18.♙xh4 ♞f4† 19.♞e3 ♞xh4 20.f4 f5∞) 18...♟g6 (18...♞ae8 19.♞h5→) 19.h4!? ♟xh4 20.♙xh4 ♞f4† 21.♞e3 ♞xh4 22.f4∞

17...♟f5

17...♟g6? 18.♞g3→

18.♙h6 ♟xh6 19.♞xh6

19.♞xg7† ♟xg7 20.♞g5† ♟h8 21.♞f6† ♟g8 22.♞g1† ♟g4 23.h3 h5= 24.hxg4?

♟h7! 25.g5 ♞e6 26.g6† ♟h6 27.♞g5† ♟g7 28.gxf7† ♟xf7 29.♞xh5† ♟e7 30.♞g6 ♞f7∞

19...f6 20.e6 ♞e7 21.♟e2∞

Line 2 Greco

13...♟xf3†! 14.♟e2 ♟xd4† 15.♙xd4
♙xd4!

15...bxc6 16.♙xb6 axb6 17.♞he1 ♞g5 18.♟f1 ♞h5 19.f4 f6 Fernandez Garcia – Izeta

Txabarri, Bilbao 1987.

16.♙xb7

16.♙xd5 ♙xc3 17.♞ad1 ♙xe5 18.♙xf7† ♞xf7 19.♞xd8† ♞xd8 20.♞b3 c5 21.♞d1 ♞xd1

22.♟xd1 b6 23.♞d5 ♙xb2 24.♞a8† ♞f8 25.♞xa7 ♞f6 26.♞e7 h6=

16...♞b8 17.♙c6 ♞h4 18.♟e1

18.♟f1? ♞h3† 19.♟e2 ♞xb2 20.♞xb2 ♙xc3 21.♞c1 ♞g4† 22.♟f1 ♙xa1 23.♞xa1 ♞c4† 24.♟g2 ♞xc6+

18.♞af1 ♞h5† 19.♟e1 ♞xe5† 20.♟d1 ♞b6∞

18...♙xe5∞

King's Gambit

This text should be at the end of the King's Gambit chapter in the first edition, and the theory comes after the theory section of this chapter.

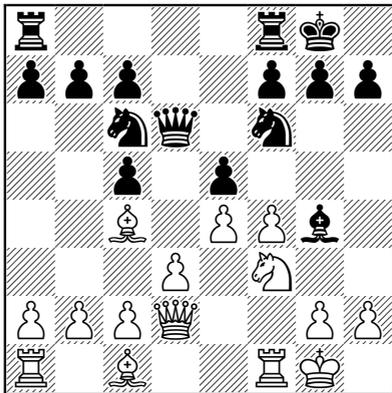
However, there are situations when the notions of development and 'common sense' have a much deeper meaning.

9...♖d6

We have examined only natural moves so far. Since the King's Gambit is not quite a natural opening it is hardly surprising that at times highly extravagant moves work out rather well.

This is the case with:

10.♗d2!?



This move is almost unexplored; it has been played in just two correspondence games and passed unnoticed until it was recently analyzed by Olivier Renet on chesspublishing.com.

When I first heard about a 'rather problematic' 10.♗d2, for a long time I could not figure out in which line White could play it. I was confused because I was considering positions where the c1-bishop was developed already. Does it make any sense for White to block his own development?

Beyond superficial evidence and prejudice, it does. The queen fulfils many

important tasks on d2. It defends the f4-pawn and prevents an eventual exchange of the c4-bishop with ...♘a5. Moreover, it unpins the knight, increasing the pressure against e5. This latter aspect is relevant in case of the natural developing move 10...♞ad8, when White can exchange on e5 twice followed by ♗g5. This simple operation would leave him with two dominating bishops, while Black's minor pieces would be rather misplaced.

Another unsuccessful try is 10...♘d7, with the obvious aim of consolidating the e5-pawn. White answers with 11.♘g5, when there is no satisfactory way to parry the unexpected threats of 12.♘xf7 ♞xf7 13.♙xf7† ♔xf7(?) 14.fxe5 and the more trivial 12.h3, harassing the bishop.

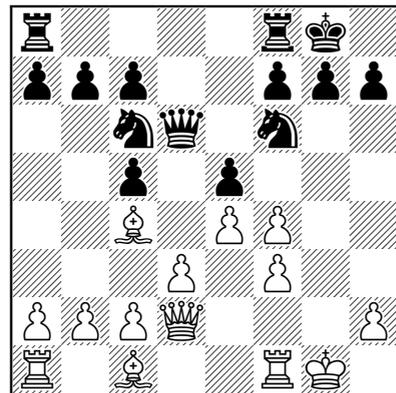
Clearly, the f3 knight has to be removed with:

10...♙xf3

but after

11.gxf3!

White's centre has become even more impressive than before.

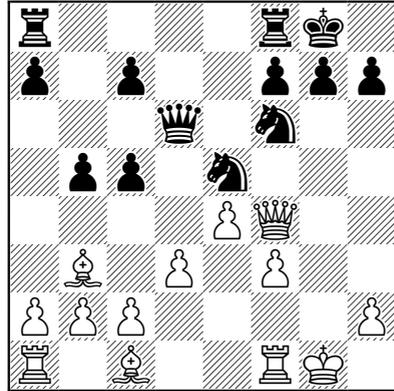


White threatens the apparently simplistic 12.f5 (for instance, after the natural developing move 11...♖ad8) followed by a slow but hard to parry attack with ♖h1, ♜g1, ♚g2, etc, as pointed out by Renet. Black could transfer his king's knight to f4, but his stability would be limited and his counterplay almost nonexistent.

Prolonged analysis has convinced me that, for the second move in a row, Black has to release the tension:

11...exf4 12.♞xf4

Similarly to 10...♞xf3, the capture on f4 looks like a clear concession: White has been helped to clear the way for the bishop's development and his position looks very promising.



It now becomes clear that the generally active light-squared bishop is slightly vulnerable. If it were placed more 'passively' on e2, White could have arranged to meet the threatened ...c4 with d4 somehow.

Black's queenside operation pursues two main goals. The bishop will be cut off from the rest of its army on a4 or (more desirably for Black) on a2, while the e4- and f3-pawns will lose the support of their colleague on d3. These two elements combined with the harmonious cooperation of Black's knights and queen would leave White's kingside slightly vulnerable.

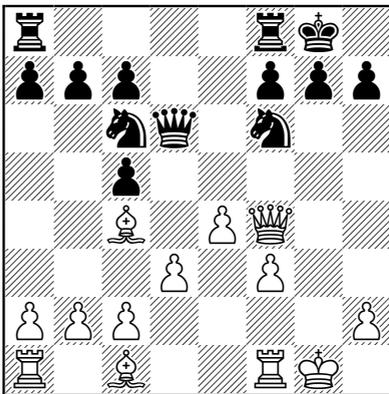
We can also notice that the consequences of the early development of White's queen have not vanished completely. The queen stands in the way of both the c1-bishop and the f-pawn, thus offering the e5-knight temporary stability. Besides, she is vulnerable to the knights' attacks (and will be so after ♚g3 or ♚h4, too), which will make the problems with advancing the central pawns slightly more persistent than expected. These elements add meaning to the move ...exf4, which only partly allows White to solve his development problems.

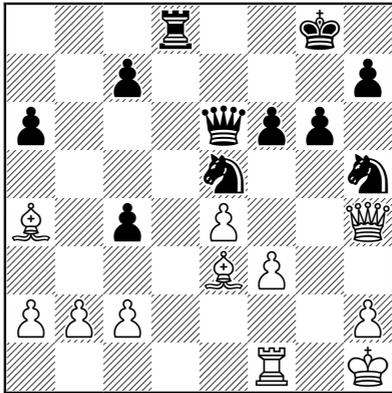
In order to understand both sides' resources, we shall discuss a few typical situations.

It is well known that a bishop pair in combination with a strong centre is likely to offer a large long-term advantage. If allowed to play ♞e3, ♖h1, ♜g1, ♚g3 and f4-f5, he would be simply winning. What's more, his solid queenside structure seems to leave Black little chance for counterplay.

And yet, things are not so one-sided. Black has a way to take advantage of his main trumps: slightly better development and a space advantage on the queenside, both being direct consequences of White's ♖a4xc5.

12...♖e5 13.♞b3 b5





Without the support of the light-squared bishop, White's central pawns are not easy to advance. A rushed f3-f4 would leave the e4-pawn chronically weak. Moreover, the pawns can become subject to attack with a later ...f5, or be blocked with ...g5 and ...♖f4. The whole kingside structure bears a strong similarity to the configuration on the opposite wing from one of the main lines of the classical Nimzo-Indian (♗a2, c3, d4). In that case, White also has a pair of bishops, which are more harmoniously placed than here. Decades of practice have not yet answered the question whether the hanging pawns are strong or just vulnerable.

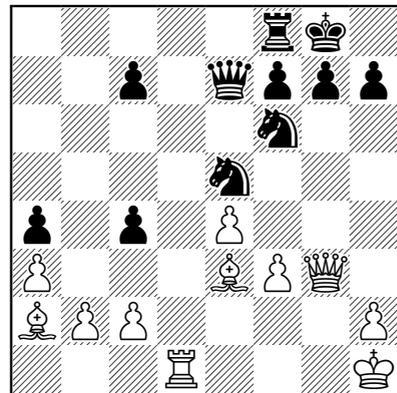
We should also note that the a4-bishop is relatively active, but completely immobile. The attempt to reroute it with c3 and ♗c2 would leave the d3-square at the mercy of the e5-knight.

It would be too optimistic to claim an advantage for Black. The bishop pair remains a terrible weapon and should be kept under control permanently. Besides, Black's queenside structure is weak. I would predict a draw as the most probable result, although there are two possible scenarios. The peaceful result can be achieved either by mutual conservation of the status quo or by a perpetual check if White

embarks on active operations far from his own king, leaving His Majesty poorly defended.

There is one important element Black should be aware of. Generally, an exchange of queens would abruptly tilt the balance in White's favour, sometimes even if this would mean losing a pawn. The cooperation between the queen and the knights is proverbial, especially in the neighbourhood of the enemy king. In the endgame the white king could be centralized rapidly, while the creation of a passed queenside pawn would prove of decisive importance.

After this warning, let's examine an example featuring an even more clear success of Black's strategy.



The main difference consists of the passivity of the light-squared bishop. In certain cases, White could free it by means of ♗xe5 and ♗xc4, but this would leave the f4-square chronically weak, offering Black excellent play.

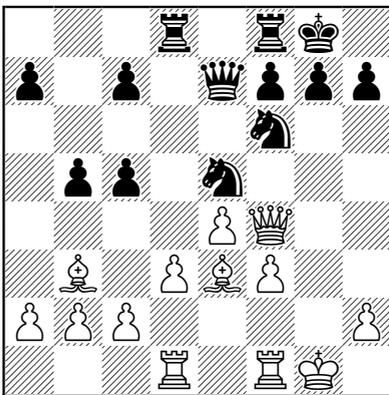
In the diagrammed position Black can start improving his position slowly with 21...g6, followed by ...♗h5. Usually, Black is not willing to advance the g-pawn when there is an enemy dark-squared bishop on the board. However, White's attack is not too dangerous here, because the other bishop cannot join the fight.

Black enjoys what I would call 'dynamic

stability' in the centre. The e5-knight is not easy to drive away or exchange. 22.♔d4 is answered with 22...♖d8. White would have to play 23.♖d2 and exchange rooks, which would just increase the probability of perpetual check. 22.♕f4 is worse because of 22...♗h5, when 23.♞g5 does not work because of 23...f6 followed by ...♗xf4 and ...g5. This would lead to absolute stability for the remaining knight.

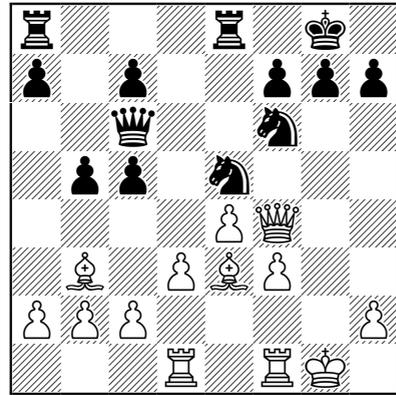
Finally, 22.f4? is just bad because of 22...♗xe4! taking full advantage of the vulnerability of the enemy queen. Black has won a pawn and things work out well for him tactically. For instance: 23.♞g2 ♗d7 24.♖xd7 (24.♕xc4? drops one of the bishops after 24...♗d6+. I will also mention a hidden detail. At a certain moment, Black has a choice regarding which rook to place on d8. This variation strongly advocates playing ...♖ad8, in order to prevent the rook from remaining hanging on a8.) 24...♞xd7 25.♞xe4 ♖e8 26.♞f3 ♞f5+ White's lack of coordination leaves his bishops rather vulnerable.

I will now highlight two important aspects of the play preceding the advance c5-c4.



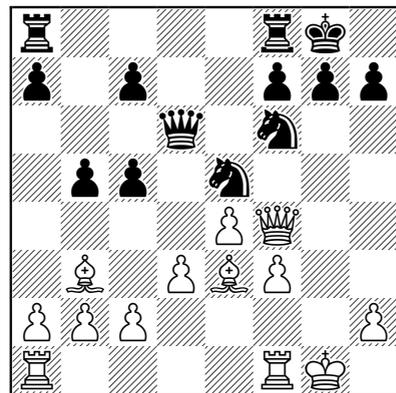
The exposed position of the queen deprives White of the possibility of opening play in the centre with 16.d4? in view of the intermediate move 16...♗g6! followed by ...c4, trapping the bishop.

However, the bishop's captivity on b3 is relative, as proven by the following example.



Apparently, Black has prepared ...c4 in an optimal way. He has denied ♕a4 (after dxc4, bxc4) without having to weaken his queenside structure by advancing his a-pawn. However, the lack of pressure against the d3-pawn allows White to maintain the integrity of his structure with 16.a3! c4 17.♕a2 followed by d4, c3 and ♕b1, with a crushing advantage in the centre.

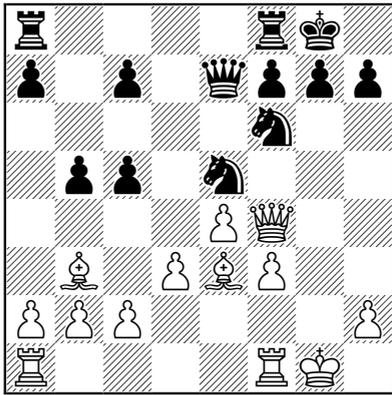
In the above example Black delayed concrete action for too long. A premature advance of the c-pawn can also have unfavourable consequences.



The position (arising after White's 14.♕e3)

is not ripe for 14...c4?! yet. Black loses stability in the centre after 15.dxc4 bxc4 16.♞ad1 ♞e7 17.♙a4. For instance:
 17...♞ad8 18.♙d4±
 Or 17...♘h5 18.♞g5! which practically forces the undesirable exchange of queens. Black lacks one tempo (...g6) to be able to transpose to a familiar situation with 18...f6. 18...♞xg5† 19.♙xg5 f6 20.♙e3±

I recommend the prophylactic
14...♞e7!?
 creating the threat 15...♘fd7 followed by 16...c4 17.dxc4 bxc4 18.♙a4 ♘b6. The immediate 14...♘fd7 would reveal Black's intentions too soon. White would complete his development with 15.♞ad1 when after 15...♞e7 (renewing the threat) the absence of pressure against the d3-pawn would enable the already familiar 16.a3!



After 14...♞e7 White plays:
15.♞ad1
 Preventing ...♘fd7. Black can take advantage of the enemy rook's presence on d1 with
15...♞ad8
 when after a later ...c4 dxc4 he can exchange one pair of rooks, leaving the f3-square vulnerable and the enemy queen tied to its defence. This will offer Black the time needed to regroup and achieve entirely adequate play.
 10.♞d2 leads to fascinating play, rich

in possibilities for both sides, which is characteristic for the King's Gambit in general. After working on this chapter, I felt that this 'prehistoric' opening is not simpler to play or analyse than the refined modern lines of the Ruy Lopez...

Theory

- 10.♞d2!?**
 10...♘d7 11.♘g5 Δ 12.♘xf7 ♞xf7 13.♙xf7† ♘xf7(?) 14.fxe5 Δ 12.h3
- 10...♙xf3**
 10...♞ad8 11.fxe5 ♘xe5 12.♘xe5 ♞xe5 13.♞g5±
- 11.gxf3!**
 Δf5, ♘h1, ♞g1, ♞g2 Renet
- 11...exf4**
 11...♞ad8 12.f5
- 12.♞xf4 ♘e5 13.♙b3**

In order to maintain chances for an advantage, White should keep both his bishops. 13.♙e3 ♞e7! (more precise than 13...♘xc4 14.dxc4 ♞e7, which offers White some initiative after 15.♞f5) 14.♞ad1 (14.♙b3 b5 transposes to the main line) 14...♘xc4 (Black can wait one more move with 14...♞ad8, without fearing being taken out of the mainstream) 15.dxc4 b6=

13...b5 14.♙e3
 14.♞g3 prepares f4, but Black's action is faster. 14...c4 15.dxc4 (15.f4 ♘eg4 16.e5 ♞c5† 17.♘h1 cxb3 18.exf6 ♘xf6 19.♞g1 g6 20.cxb3 ♞ad8†) 15...bxc4 16.♙a4 ♘h5 (Black initiates the typical kingside regrouping. Alternatively, he can activate his rooks first. 16...♞ab8 17.♘h1 ♞fd8 18.♞b1 ♘h5 19.♞h4 g6 20.♙e3 ♞e6 21.♙xa7!? ♞a8 22.♙c5 ♞d2 23.♞e1 ♘xf3 24.♞xf3 ♞g4 25.♞xd2 ♞xf3† 26.♞g2 ♞xg2† 27.♘xg2 ♞xa4 28.a3 c3 29.♘f3 cxb2 30.♞xb2 ♞c4=) 17.♞h4 g6 18.♙h6 (18.f4 ♞b4 19.b3 cxb3 20.cxb3 ♞xe4) 18...♞fd8 19.♘h1 ♞e6 20.♞ad1 ♞xd1 21.♞xd1 f6 22.♞f1 (22.♞f2 g5! ×♙h6, ×f4; 22.♘g2? loses material unexpectedly to 22...♞a6 23.b3 ♘f7 followed

by ...cxb3 and a deadly check on e2) 22...♖d8 23.♙e3 a6=

14.♗g5 c4 15.♙f4 ♖fd7 16.dxc4 bxc4
17.♙a4 f6 18.♗g3 ♖b6
14.♗h4 c4 15.dxc4 (15.f4 ♖g6) 15...bxc4
16.♙a4 ♗b4± 17.b3? cxb3 Δ...♗d4†, ×♙a1
14.♙h1 a5 15.a3 c4 16.dxc4 a4 17.♙a2
bxc4 is similar to the main line.

14...♗e7!?

Δ15...♖fd7 followed by 16...c4 17.dxc4
bxc4 18.♙a4 ♖b6.

14...♖fd7 15.♙ad1 15...♗e7 (Δ...c4) 16.a3!
14...c4?! 15.dxc4 bxc4 16.♙ad1 ♗e7 17.♙a4
17...♙ad8 (17...♖h5 18.♗g5! ♗xg5† 19.♙xg5
f6 20.♙e3±) 18.♙d4±

14...♙fe8 15.♙ad1 ♗c6 16.a3! c4 17.♙a2
17...♙ad8 18.d4±

14...♖fd7 15.♙ad1 ♗e7 16.a3 c4 17.♙a2±

15.♙ad1

15.♙h1 ♖fd7 16.♙g1 c4 17.dxc4 bxc4
18.♙a4 ♖b6 19.♙c5!? (19.♗g3 g6 20.f4 ♖xa4
21.fxe5 ♙fe8) 19...♗xc5 20.♙xg7† ♙xg7
21.♗g5† ♙h8=

15...♙ad8

15...♖fd7 16.a4 c4 17.♙a2±

16.♙h1

The most consistent answer. White places his king further away from the f3-square, ensuring that an eventual knight capture of that pawn would not come with check. At the same time, active operations along the g-file are enabled, putting additional pressure on Black.

The exposed position of the queen deprives White of the possibility of opening play in the centre with 16...♖g6! followed by ...c4, trapping the bishop.

16.♗g3 a5 17.a3 (17.d4 cxd4 18.♙xd4 ♖c6)
17...c4 18.dxc4 (18.d4 ♖xf3† 19.♗xf3 cxb3
20.e5 ♖d5 21.cxb3) 18...a4 19.♙a2 ♙xd1
20.♙xd1 bxc4=

16.♗g5 c4 17.f4 (17.♙f4 ♖g6 18.dxc4
bxc4 19.♙xc4? ♖xf4 20.♗xf4 ♗c5†-+;
17.dxc4? ♙xd1-+) 17...♖g6 18.♙c5 ♗d7

19.♙xf8 (19.dxc4 ♗xd1 20.♙xd1 ♙xd1†
21.♙g2 ♖xe4 22.♗g4 ♙d2† Δ...♖xc5)
19...cxb3 20.♙xg7 (20.♙c5?! ♖xe4 21.dxe4
♗xd1 22.♙xd1 ♙xd1† 23.♙g2 bxa2 24.♗g4
♙d8-+) 20...♙xg7 21.axb3∞ h6 22.♗g2 ♙g8
23.♙h1 ♙h7 24.♗f2 ♖g4±, Δ...f5 25.♗xa7?
♖xh2! 26.♙xh2 ♗g4-+

16.♙g2 induces some differences compared to 16.♙h1. The f3-pawn is better defended and a future ...♙xd1 would not be check. On the dark side, there is no white attack building along the g-file, while the king is exposed to other checks (such as ...♖h4 or ...♙g6). 16...a5 (Since there is no pressure along the g-file, Black could also consider 16...♙d7!?. Black can do without inserting the ...a5 and a3 moves, too. 16...c4 17.dxc4 bxc4 18.♙a4 ♙d6 etc.) 17.a3 c4 18.dxc4 bxc4 (18...a4 does not work out so well now. 19.♙a2 ♙xd1 20.♙xd1 bxc4 21.♙d4± ♙d8?! 22.♙c5! This move is possible only because the white king does not find himself on the back rank.) 19.♙a4 ♙d6! With the king on h1, this move would not be possible because of ♙c5. Black can fight for the d-file now and in some cases consolidate his e5-knight with ...cxd6. 20.♗g5 (20.♙c5 ♖h5! 21.♗e3 ♙g6† 22.♙h1 ♗h4 23.♙g1 ♙d8±; 20.♙xd6 ♗xd6 21.♗f5 g6 22.♗g5 c6 23.♙f2 ♗e6 24.♙d4 ♖fd7 25.♗g3 f5±) 20...h6 21.♗f5 (21.♗h4 ♖g6 22.♗g3 ♖h5 23.♗g4 ♖gf4† 24.♙h1 f5±) 21...g6 22.♗h3 (22.♗f4 g5 23.♗f5 ♖g6= leaves Black with absolute kingside stability. The weakness of the light squares is not so relevant, because the light-squared bishop is too far from them.) 22...♙xd1 23.♙xd1 c3!? 24.b3 ♗xa3 25.♙h1 (25.♙xh6 ♗a2 26.♙c1 ♖d3! wins the c2-pawn) 25...♗e7 26.♙xh6 ♙d8 27.♙e1 ♙d2!±

16.a3 c4 (16...♙b8 17.d4) 17.dxc4 ♙xd1
18.♙xd1 bxc4 19.♙a2 (19.♙a4 ♖h5 20.♗f5
g6 21.♗h3 f5) 19...♖h5 20.♗f5 g6 21.♗h3
♙b8 (21...♙d8 22.♙xd8† ♗xd8 23.♗f1 c3
24.bxc3 ♗f6; 21...♗f6 22.♙h1 a5 23.♗f1 a4)
22.b3 cxb3 23.♙xb3 c5 24.♗f1 (24.♙d5 ♗f6)

24...♞c8 25.♙d5 ♜h4↗

16...a5 17.a3

17.a4 deprives the bishop of the a4-square and basically offers Black an additional tempo. 17...c4 18.dxc4 ♞xd1 (another way to use the extra tempo is 18...bxc4 19.♙a2 c5, preventing ♙d4) 19.♞xd1 bxc4 20.♙a2 g6=

17...c4 18.dxc4 ♞xd1 19.♞xd1 a4 20.♙a2 bxc4 21.♙d4

21.♞g3 g6 (21...♞e8 22.♙d4; 21...c3!?) 22.f4? (22.♙g5 ♞e6 Δ...♗h5, ...f6; 22.♙d4 ♞d8; 22.♙f4 ♗h5 23.♞g5 f6 Δ...♗xf4 and ...g5) 22...♗xe4! 23.♞g2 ♗d7 24.♞xd7 (24.♙xc4? ♗d6→) 24...♞xd7 25.♞xe4 ♞e8 26.♞f3 ♞f5↗

21...♞d8 22.♞d2 ♗h5 23.♞e3 g6 24.♙c3

White can win a pawn after 24.♙xe5 ♞xd2 25.♞xd2 ♞xe5, but his kingside weaknesses and lack of harmony prevent him from keeping both wings under control. 26.♞c3 (26.♙xc4 ♞xb2↗; 26.c3 ♞b5 27.♞e2 ♗f4 28.♞xc4 ♞d7 29.♞d4 ♞h3=) 26...♞g5 27.♙xc4 ♞c1† 28.♗g2 ♗f4† 29.♗f2 g5↖

24...♞xd2 25.♙xd2 ♞e6 26.♙c3 ♞f6 27.♞f2

27.♙d4 ♗f4

27.♙xc4? ♗xc4 ×♞e3

27...♞f4

Or 27...♞g5 when after 28.♞d2! Black should refrain from 'winning' the f3-pawn. In the absence of queens, White's a-pawn will be impossible to stop (after ♙xc4 and b3). 28...♞f6!

28.♙d2 ♞f6= 29.f4?! g5 30.♙c3 ♗xf4

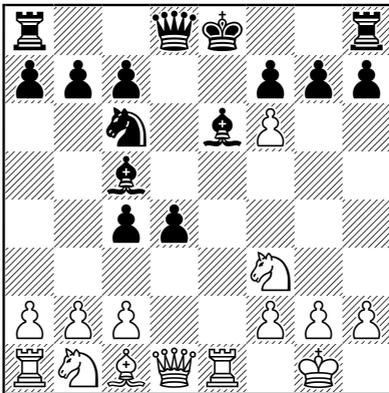
31.♙xc4 ♞d6 32.♙f1 c5↗

Black will improve his kingside position slowly, with ...♗g7-g6, h5, g4 putting the enemy king in some danger. Placed on stable dark squares, the knights are not weaker than the bishops.

Max Lange Attack

The lines cover early deviations on the Max Lange Attack: table of theory on page 135

This chapter would not be complete without taking into account two earlier deviations. I am not sure whether they are directly related to Max Lange's (and, later, Marshall's) original idea, but since the structure is very much the same, I have decided to examine them here rather than in the chapter dedicated to the Two Knights Defence.



So far we have focused only on 9.♘g5, but we have not discussed the objective merits of moving an already developed piece while the opposite wing is undeveloped. White's justification is that after the more or less forced 9...♗d5 (there was a very strong threat against e6), he can initiate queenside development with a knight move towards the centre (10.♘c3), which is entirely in accordance with general principles. If we take into account that ♘c3 will be with tempo, there is little doubt left about the correctness of 9.♘g5.

Nevertheless, it is hardly surprising that analysts have searched for other ways to develop.

9.fxg7 ♖g8 10.♗g5

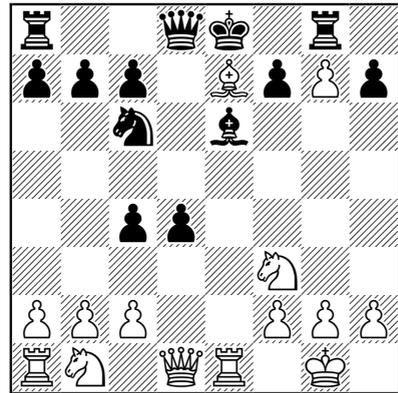
This also wins a tempo, without having to move the f3-knight for a second time. Any queen move would leave her exposed after either ♖c3 or ♖bd2, while Black still cannot castle long. Therefore, Black is practically forced to answer:

10...♗e7

But after:

11.♗xe7

Black faces a choice.



Should he give up the d4-pawn or the right to castle?

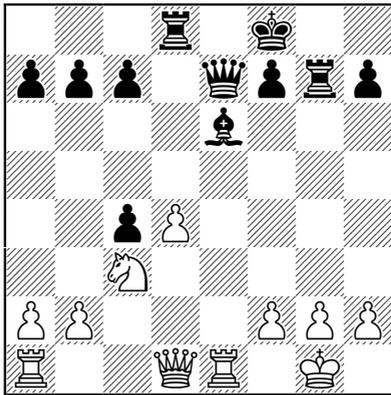
11...♗xe7!

This is the correct answer! Practice has shown that 11...♗xe7?! fails to preserve the integrity of Black's impressive centre, while leaving the king insecure. White's strongest continuation is: 12.♞e4 (12.♘bd2 is less dangerous. For instance, 12...♗d5 13.b3 cxb3 14.axb3 ♞xg7 15.♘e4 and now in Müller – M. Hoffman, Germany 2006, Black should have unpinned his bishop with 15...♗f8 when White's

compensation for the pawn remains within bearable limits.) 12...d3 13.♖bd2± Black's central pawns will soon disappear, opening files for White's major pieces, while Black's coordination is rather poor.

12. ♖xd4 ♖d8!

The only favourable way to pin the knight. After 12...0-0-0?! the black queen remains undefended, allowing 13.♖xc6 bxc6 14.♗f3±. **13.c3 ♖xd4 14.cxd4 ♖xg7 15.♖c3 ♖f8!?**



White is slightly better coordinated, but the queenside and central pawn configuration favours Black. Besides, the threats along the g-file should not be underestimated. The position remains complicated with approximately equal chances.

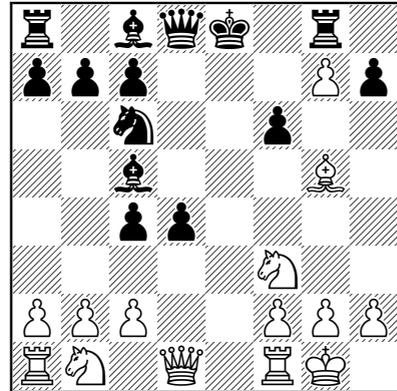
This variation does not look dangerous for Black, but White has a trickier move order at his disposal. Instead of checking with the rook on the 8th move, he can immediately play:

8.fxg7 ♖g8 9.♔e7

It is easy to establish that 9...♔e7 is no longer satisfactory. After 10.♔xe7 ♗xe7 White can capture on d4 without fearing the pin along the d-file. From this point of view the absence of the moves 8.♖e1† and 8...♔e6 clearly favours White. If Black captures with the king then 8.♖e1† would just transpose to a previously mentioned line that is unfavourable for Black.

However, 9...♔e7 is not forced anymore. Without a bishop hanging on e6, Black can play:

9...f6!?



This looks precarious: Black willingly gives up the right to castle and weakens several light squares. However, there are a few elements that justify his decision. First of all, the light squares will be relatively easy to defend, because only one light-squared bishop remains and it belongs to Black. In addition, White's development is incomplete, and avoiding an exchange of dark-squared bishops has left Black's domination in the centre unchallenged. Finally, the slightly awkward advance of the f-pawn is simply a result of a process of elimination. Black is worse after either a queen move or ...♔e7, which leaves him with just one possibility.

As for the safety of the king, the following line is quite surprising.

10.♖e1† ♖f7 11.♔h6

White has defended his far advanced pawn and is ready to start an attack with ♖h4 and ♗h5.

11...♔g6!

Much better than 11...♔f5?! 12.♖h4 ♔g6 13.♗f3! ♖e8 14.♖d2±. My confidence in the 'process of elimination' increased abruptly when I discovered that the exotic 11...♔g6 was playable. White cannot afford to lose the bishop

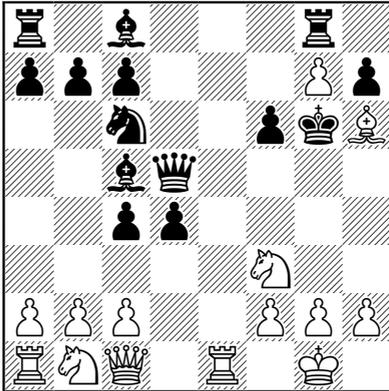
and/or the g7-pawn, which forces him to play:

12. ♖c1

when after

12... ♗d5

Black's better development, superb centralization and pair of bishops compensate for the relatively vulnerable situation of the king.



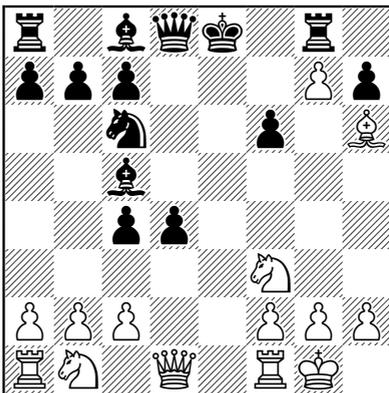
Black is not worse.

However, this does not exhaust the subject. Once again, White can do better than mechanically checking on e1, which only improves the position of the black king, as we have just seen.

The immediate

10. ♕h6!

is far more dangerous.



Now 10... ♕f7? is bad because of 11. ♖h4, threatening ♗h5†, and if 11... ♗d5 then 12. ♖c3 with a winning attack.

Black should prepare to castle long:

10... ♗e6 11. ♖e1 ♗e7 12. ♗e2 ♕f7

White's attack is considerably slowed down because of the impossibility of activating the queenside pieces in an efficient way. The c3-square is denied to the knight, while the d-file is not available to the rook.

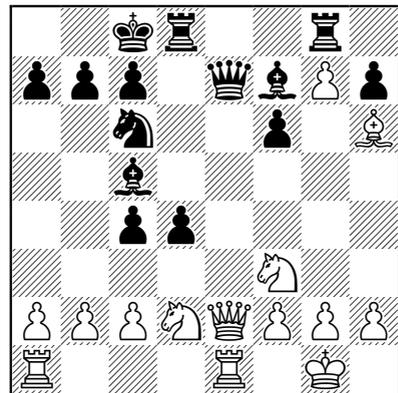
White can force a repetition of moves with 13. ♗d2, or develop slowly with

13. ♖bd2

when after

13... 0-0-0

the position remains complicated and with chances for both sides.



The character of the fight is to a certain extent similar to that from the 'genuine' Max Lange Attack. However, I will mention some small differences that favour Black: White's knights do not enjoy stability on e4, while Black has managed to retain the bishop pair.

Theory

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0-0 ♗f6
5.d4 exd4 6.e5 d5 7.exf6 dxc4 8.fxg7 ♖g8
9.♙g5 f6?! 10.♞e1† ♗f7 11.♙h6

11.♙h4?! ♗xg7! 12.♗bd2 ♞d5

The spectacular 11.♗e5† ♗xe5 12.♞xe5 leaves White's pieces hanging after 12...♙e7! (12...fxg5 13.♞xc5 ♙e6 was Slingerland – Turov, Dieren 2005, and now 14.♞f3† ♗xg7 15.♞xb7±) However, White has sufficient resources to force a draw. 13.♞h5† ♗xg7 14.♞h6† ♗f7! (14...♗h8? 15.♞xe7 ♞xe7 16.♙xf6†+–) 15.♞xh7† ♖g7 16.♞h5† ♖g6! (16...♗g8? 17.♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.♞e8†+–) 17.♞h7† ♖g7 18.♞h5† ♖g6 ½–½ Alekhine – Frygasas, Paris 1931.

11...♗g6!

11...♙f5?! 12.♗h4 ♙g6 13.♞f3! ♞e8
14.♗d2±

12.♞c1

12.♞d2?! ♙b4

12.♙f4?! ♗xg7 13.♗bd2 ♗h8?! 14.♗xc4
♞d5 15.♗cd2 ♙f5 16.c3 ♙b6∞

12...♞d5 13.c3!?

White threatens to make the c3-square available for his knight, which practically forces Black to block the centre.

13.♞f4?! ♙d6 14.♗h4† ♗f7 15.♞d2 ♙d7

13.♗h4† ♗f7 (Believe it or not, 13...♗h5!?) seem to be playable, too. Now 14.♞f4 ♞d6 leads nowhere, while 14.g3 ♗e5 15.♙f4 ♖xg7 16.♗d2 ♞e7 leaves White with problems developing his attack. For instance: 17.♞d1† ♙g4 18.f3 d3† 19.♗g2 ♗g6 Personally, I consider this variation more of a curiosity rather than a suitable over-the board method of play.) 14.♗d2 (14.♞f4?! ♙d6! 15.♞f3 ♞xf3 16.♗xf3 ♗g6) 14...♞h5! 15.♗df3 (15.♗e4 ♞xh4 16.♗xc5 ♗g6 17.♙f4 ♖xg7∞ 18.♞e8?! ♗f7! [Δ...♖xg2] 19.♙g3 ♞g5 and White's pieces are hanging) 15...♙d6 (15...♖xg7 is premature because of 16.♙xg7 ♗xg7 17.♞f4 ♙d6 18.♞e4±) 16.♞d2 (16.♙f4

♖xg7 17.♙xd6 cxd6 18.♞f4 ♙h3 19.g3 ♙d8 20.♗xd4?! ♖g4 21.♗xc6 ♖xf4 22.♗xd8† ♗f8 23.gxf4 ♞xh4 Δ24.♞e3 ♞g4† 25.♖g3 ♞d7 26.♗xb7 ♙f5 27.♗a5 ♞b5–+; 16.h3 ♙d7 17.g4? ♙xg4 18.hxg4 ♞xg4† with a split: 19.♗h1 ♞h3† 20.♗g1 ♖xg7† 21.♙xg7 ♖g8!–+ or 19.♗f1 ♞h3† 20.♗e2 ♖ae8† 21.♗d2 c3†!→) 16...♙d7 17.c3 (17.h3 c3!); 17.♙ad1 ♖ae8∞) 17...d3 18.b3 b5∞ Black has consolidated his centre and will play ...♖xg7 soon, with excellent compensation for the exchange. His bishops are much better placed than the enemy knights.

13...d3 14.♗h4† ♗f7

14...♗h5?! is worse now because of 15.♞f4! ♙d6 (15...♞d6?! fails to 16.♞xc4, which was not possible in the similar line without the moves c3 and ...d3) 16.♞xf6 ♙xh2† 17.♗xh2 ♞d6† 18.♞xd6 cxd6 19.♙f4 ♗xh4 20.♙xd6 ♖xg7 21.♗d2±

15.♗d2 ♞h5 16.♗df3

White has achieved some stability on the kingside, but the whole set-up looks a bit rigid.

16...♙d6 17.b3

17.♞e4 ♙d7 18.♞xc4 ♖g8†

17...b5 18.g3

18.a4 ♗e5!

18...♙d7

Black has completed his development and threatens ...♖xg7.

19.a4?!

This attempt to question Black's superiority in the centre is unsound.

19...cxb3 20.axb5 ♞xb5 21.c4 ♞h5!

21...b2 22.cxb5 bxc1 ♞ 23.♞exc1 ♗e5
24.♗d4∞

22.♞b1 ♖ab8 23.♞d2 ♖gd8! 24.c5 ♙e5
25.♗xe5†

25.♙g5 ♗xg7 26.♞xd3 ♙h3 27.♞e4 ♙c3!
28.♞xc6 fxg5 29.♞xc7† ♗g8!–+

25...♗xe5 26.♙f4 ♙c6

Line 2 (instead of 10.♖e1†)

10.♙h6! ♕e6

10...♗f7? 11.♗h4 ♖d5 12.♗c3+–
10...♙f5?! 11.♖e1† ♗f7 12.♗h4 ♕g6
13.♖f3±

11.♖e1 ♖e7 12.♖e2

12.♗bd2 0–0–0 13.♗xc4 ♖f7

12...♙f7 13.♗bd2

13.♖d2 wins some time for the activation of the queen, but temporarily blocks the knight’s development. 13...♙e6 14.♖f4 (14.♖e2 ♙f7=) 14...0–0–0 15.♗bd2 ♖f7 16.♖e4 ♙d5 17.♖xh7 ♗b8 18.♖f5 ♙b4 Black has put both enemy knights under pressure. He will eventually sacrifice an exchange on g7, with strong threats against the kingside.

13.♖xe7† ♙xe7 14.c3 (14.♗bd2 0–0–0 transposes to the main line) 14...d3 15.♗bd2 ♙d5! ♗...♗f7

13.♖f1 leaves the d2-square available, but releases the pressure against the d4-pawn, allowing: 13...♗e5! 14.♗bd2 0–0–0 15.♗xe5 fxe5 16.♗e4 ♖e6 17.♗g5 ♖g6 18.♗xf7 ♖xf7 19.♖xe5 ♙d6 20.♖a5 (20.♖e4 ♙xh2† 21.♗xh2 ♖h5† 22.♗g1 ♖xh6 23.♖xc4 ♖xg7=) 20...♖g6 21.♖c1 ♖de8 22.♖xa7?! ♗b8 23.♖a4 (23.♖a5? ♙b4!–+) 23...♖e6 24.♙f4? ♙xf4 25.♖xf4 ♖e8–+

13...0–0–0 14.♖e4

White tries to maintain the tension.

14.♖xe7 ♙xe7 15.♗e4 ♖d5, with the threat ...♖h5, wins a tempo for Black compared to the main line.

14...♖xe4

Black could apply the same method with 14...♙g6. For instance, if 15.♖g4† ♖d7 16.♖xd7† ♖xd7 17.♗e4 ♙e7 he would have the extra tempo ...♗d7, enabling ...♗d8-f7. However, this variation is not forced. The continuation from the main line restricts White’s options more.

15.♗xe4 ♙e7 16.♖ad1 ♖d5

♗...♖h5

17.♗g3

17.g4 ♙g6 18.♗h4?! ♗e5

17...♙g6

White cannot bring new forces to support the far advanced pawn. The position is dynamically balanced.

Line 3 (instead of 9.♙g5)

9.fxg7 ♖g8 10.♙g5 ♙e7 11.♙xe7 ♖xe7!

11...♗xe7?! 12.♖e4 (12.♗bd2 ♖d5 13.b3 cxb3 14.axb3 ♖xg7 15.♗e4, Müller – M. Hoffman, Germany 2006, 15...♗f8!) 12...d3 13.♗bd2±

12.♗xd4 ♖d8!

12...0–0–0?! 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♖f3±

13.c3

White’s attempt to avoid pawn weaknesses with 13.♖e4 looks highly artificial. Two of his pieces are still on their initial squares, while the developed rook becomes vulnerable in the centre. The complications initiated with 13...♖xg7 14.♗c3 ♖xg2?! are not entirely clear. After the more or less forced variation 15.♗xg2 ♙d5 16.♖g4 ♙xe4† 17.♗xe4 ♗xd4 18.♖e1 ♗e6 White’s position looks more pleasant, despite the missing pawn.

Black should play the more restrained 13...♖f6, increasing the pressure in the centre.

13...♗xd4 14.cxd4 ♖xg7 15.♗c3 ♗f8!?

15...♖g5?! 16.♖f3 c6 17.♗e4±

16.♖f3

16.♖a4 ♖xd4 ♗17.♖xa7 ♖xg2†! 18.♗xg2 ♖g5† 19.♗h1 ♙d5† 20.♖e4 ♙xe4† 21.♗xe4 ♖xe4 22.♖xb7 ♖f5 23.♖a8† ♗e7 24.♖a3† with a probable draw.

16.♖e4 ♖g5 17.♖f3 (17.g3 c5 ♗...♙f5) 17...♙g4 18.♖g3 ♙f5 19.♖e5 ♖h5 20.♖f4 ♖g4 21.♖xg4 ♙xg4 22.♖ae1 ♖g6=

16...c6

16...♖xd4?! 17.♖xb7

17.♖e4 ♖g6 18.♖ae1 ♖f6=