

Attacking the Spanish

By

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Attacking the Spanish

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

16...♖h4 17.h3!

The immediate 17.fxg4?? would of course see White get mated after 17...♖xg4† 18.♔h1 ♜f3† 19.♔g1 ♕h3.

17...♖xh3 18.fxg4 ♖xg4† 19.♔h2 ♖h3†

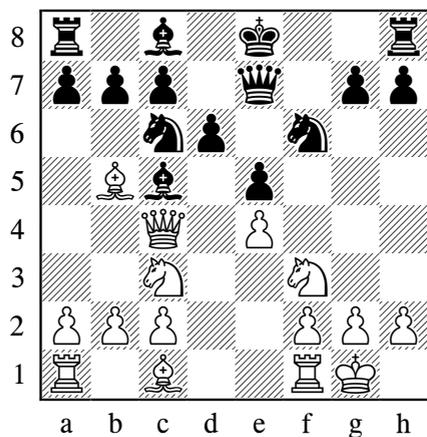
19...♜f8 20.♞a3 forces Black to take the draw with 20...♜f3 anyway.

20.♔g1 ♖g4†

½–½

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

D312) 9.♘c3



This is White's most popular continuation, and probably his best try for a theoretical plus. The knight is headed for d5 at the earliest opportunity.

9...♕d7

Black unpins his knight in preparation for the following sequence.

10.♘d5

If White tries to prepare this with 10.♕g5?! there follows 10...a6! 11.♕xc6 (of course there is no time for 11.♘d5?? as 11...axb5 hits the queen) 11...bxc6 with an excellent position.

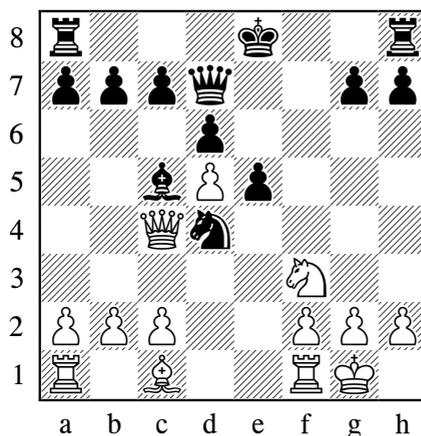
10...♘xd5 11.exd5 ♘d4

Black has no real choice, as the alternatives would leave the knight severely misplaced.

12.♕xd7†

White can change the move order with 12.♘xd4 ♕xd4 13.♕xd7† ♖xd7 leading to line D3122).

12...♖xd7



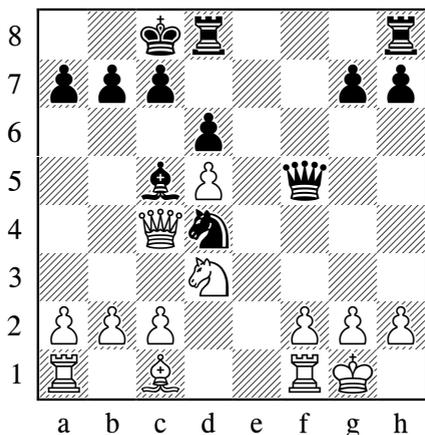
White must now decide whether to grab a pawn with D3121) 13.♘xe5 or exchange knights with D3122) 13.♘xd4.

D3121) 13.♘xe5

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

13...♖f5 14.♘d3 0–0–0

Black can regain his pawn with 14...b5?! 15.♞e1† ♔f7 16.♖c3 ♖xd5, but after 17.♕e3 his position is quite unpleasant. The text is much more in the spirit of the Schliemann.

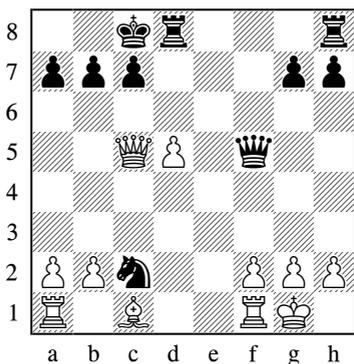
**15.a4**

15.♔h1 b5!? 16.♖c3 ♜xd5 was equal in Melia – Shukurova, Kusadasi 2006. Black's active pieces compensate the slight weakening of his king's shelter.

15.♘xc5 dxc5 16.♞xc5 should not be at all dangerous for Black, as long as he makes the right choice:

In Kozhuharov – Inkirov, Fouesnant 2007, he was successful with 16...♞xd5? 17.♞xa7 ♜e8?! 18.♙e3?? ♘e2† 19.♔h1 ♞a5! 0–1, but White could easily have improved with 18.♞a8† ♘d7 19.♞xb7 with a winning position.

Therefore Black should prefer 16...♘xc2:



White has no chance of an advantage, for example:

17.♞b1 ♞xd5† leaves Black more actively placed.

17.♞xa7 ♘xa1 18.♞a8† ♘d7 19.♞xb7 ♘c2 does not give White any real compensation for the rook, as only his queen is attacking.

17.♙f4!? ♞xf4 18.♞xc2 ♞xd5 is equal.

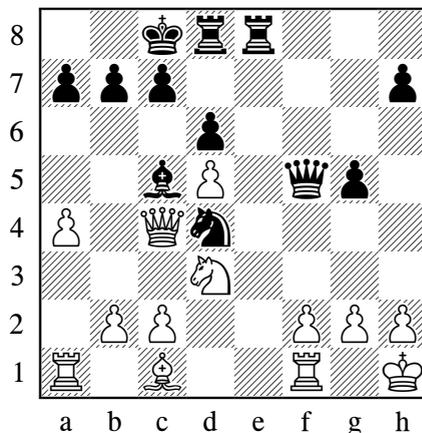
15...♞he8 16.♔h1!

It is important to position the king away from the checking range of the knight.

16.♘xc5? dxc5† 17.♞xc5 ♞xd5 18.♞xa7? (18.♞c4 was mandatory, although even here 18...♘xc2 regains the pawn while keeping a much more active position) 18...♘e2† 19.♔h1 ♞a5! trapped the queen in Meshcheriakova – Agrest, Stockholm 2008.

16...g5!

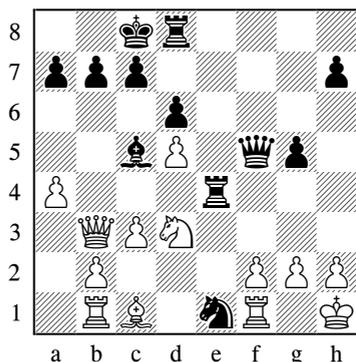
The slow 16...a6 can be met by 17.f3 ♙a7 18.c3 ♘e2 19.♘f4±. The text is designed to prevent this possibility.



We now follow the model game Mamedyarov – Radjabov, Baku 2008.

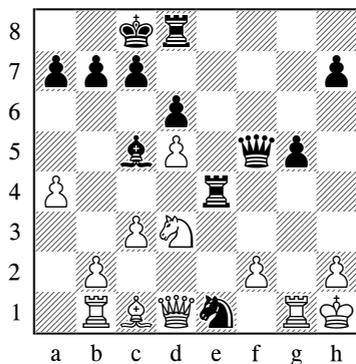
17.♙e3

White gets into trouble after:
17.c3? ♘c2 18.♞b1 ♜e4 19.♞b3 ♘e1!



Black must utilise all eight ranks if he is to maximise his initiative!

20. ♖d1
 20. ♗xe1?? ♖xf2! wins.
 20. ♗xc5? dxc5 21. f3 ♖e2 is not much better for White.
 20... ♗g2!
 20... ♖xd5 21. ♖xe1 ♖xd3 22. ♗xg5 ♖xe1†
 23. ♖xe1 ♗xf2 is only equal.
 21. ♖g1
 White loses after 21. ♗xg2 ♖h4!, or 21. b4 ♗h4!.
 21... ♗e1!
 21... ♗h4 22. ♖xg5 (22. ♗xg5 ♖xd5) 22... ♖f7 gives Black a smaller advantage.



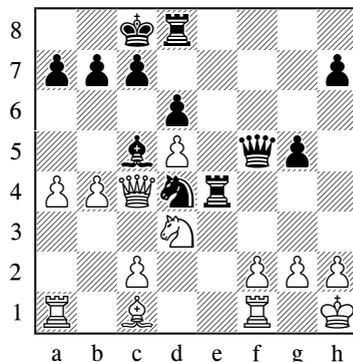
The knight's return to this unusual destination makes a nice impression.

22. ♗xe1
 22. ♗xg5 ♗f3 23. ♗xd8 ♗xg1+.
 After 22. ♖xg5 ♖h3 23. ♗xe1 ♗xf2 24. ♗g2 ♖e1† 25. ♖xe1 ♗xe1 26. ♗xe1 ♖e8 27. ♖g1

- ♖f5 28. ♖a1 ♖xd5† 29. ♗g2 ♖e2 White is unlikely to survive.
 22... ♗xf2 23. ♖f3 ♖f8 24. ♖xf5† ♖xf5 25. ♖f1
 25. ♗g2 ♗xg1 26. ♗xg1 ♖xd5 27. ♗e3 ♖xa4
 25... ♖xe1 26. ♖xe1 ♗xe1†

Black has excellent winning chances in the ending.

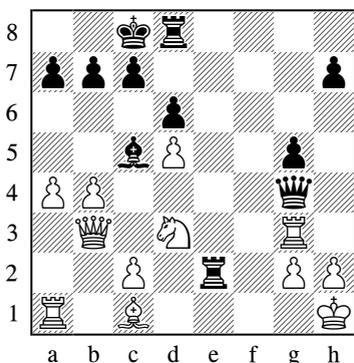
We must also examine the consequences of the critical 17.b4 when I recommend 17... ♖e4!. (At first I liked the look of 17... ♗f3! but the problem turned out to be 18. ♗xc5 dxc5 19. ♖a3! when White should maintain some advantage.)



The tactics work out well for Black, although of course the position is very complicated. The following variations illustrate his possibilities quite nicely.

- a) 18. ♗b2?! ♗c6†
 b) 18. ♖e1 ♖h4 19. bxc5 ♗f3 20. ♖xh4 ♗xh4+
 c) 18. ♖c3 ♗e2 19. ♖g7 (19. ♖d2 ♗d4 20. ♖a3 ♖xd5 21. ♖xg5 ♖f7†) 19... ♗d4 20. ♖xg5 ♖xg5 21. ♗xg5 ♖g8†
 d) 18. f3 ♗xf3 19. ♖b3
 Alternatives are no better:
 19. ♖a2 ♖e2 20. ♖xf3 ♖g4+
 19. ♖xf3 ♖xf3 20. gxf3 ♖xc4 21. bxc5 dxc5†

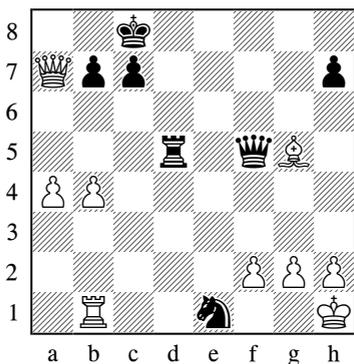
19...♞e2 20.♘f4
 20.♙xc5 ♘d4 21.♔g1 ♙xb3 22.♞xf5 ♙xa1
 23.♙e6 ♞e8 24.♙xg5 ♙xc2-+
 20.♞xf3 loses beautifully after 20...♞g4
 21.♞g3:



21...♞e1†!! 22.♙xe1 ♞e2 23.h4 ♞xe1†
 24.♔h2 ♞g1† 25.♔h3 ♞h1† 26.♔g4 ♞xh4†
 27.♔f3 ♞f8† with mate in a maximum of
 four more moves.
 20...♘d4 21.♞h3 gxf4 22.♞xf5† ♙xf5
 23.bxc5 dxc5

Black stands clearly better.

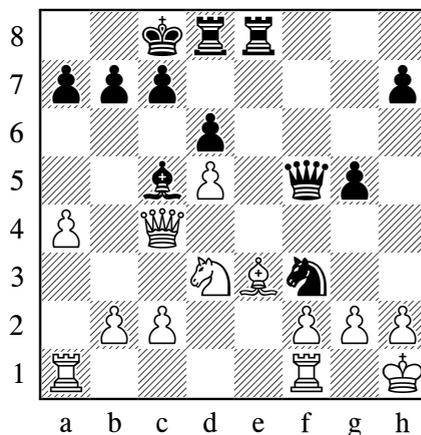
e) 18.♙xc5! seems to be the only way for
 White to maintain the balance. My analysis
 continues: 18...dxc5 19.♞xc5 ♞xd5 20.♞xa7
 ♙xc2 21.♞b1! ♞e1 22.♞xe1 ♙xe1 23.♙xg5!



This is the key move which enables White
 to force a draw. 23...♞xb1 24.♞a8† ♔d7
 25.♞d8† ♔c6 26.♞e8† ♔b6 27.♙e3† c5

28.bxc5† ♞xc5 29.♞d8† ♔a6 30.♞a8† ♔b6
 31.♞d8†=

17...♙f3!



The other option was 17...♞e4 18.♙xc5
 dxc5 19.♞xc5 ♞xd5 when Black has some
 activity to show for the pawn. Play might
 continue 20.♞c3 ♙e2 21.♞g7 ♙f4 22.♞fd1
 ♞xd1† 23.♞xd1 b6 with some, though perhaps
 not quite enough, compensation.

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

18.♙xc5

Of course 18.gxf3?? loses to 18...♞xf3†
 19.♔g1 ♞e4.

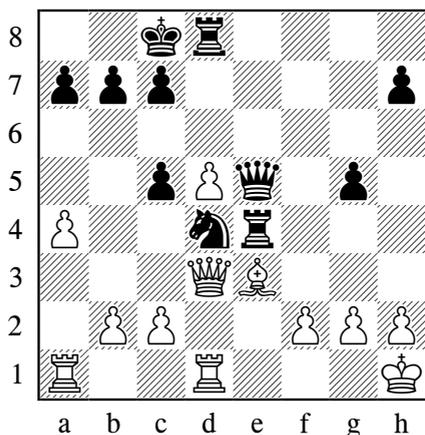
18...dxc5 19.♞fd1

19.♞xc5 ♞d6 20.♞b5 should also lead to a
 draw after: 20...♞e4! 21.gxf3 ♞xf3† 22.♔g1
 ♞e4 (or immediately 22...♞g4† 23.♔h1 ♞f3†)
 23.♞fd1 ♞xe3 24.fxe3 ♞xe3† 25.♔g2

19...♞e4 20.♞f1

White must take care to avoid 20.♞xc5? ♞h4
 21.gxf3 ♞xf3† 22.♔g1 ♞d6 with a winning
 attack.

20...♘d4 21.♞d3 ♞e5



Black's active, centralised pieces make a nice impression.

22. ♖xg5

22.c4!? was possible although 22...♖e8 would leave Black with enough for the missing pawn.

22...♖e8 23. ♔d2 ♜h4 24.h3 ♞xd5 25.c4 ♞c6

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

26. ♞g3

The evaluation would be the same after 26.♖a3 ♖g8 27.♞f1 ♔f5 28.♖f3 ♔d4 29.♖c3 ♔f5=

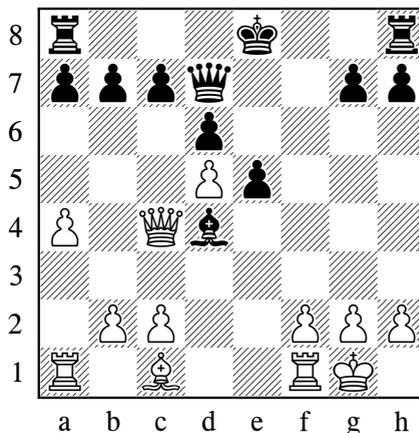
26...♔f5 27. ♞d3 ♔d4 28. ♞g3 ♔f5 29. ♞d3 ♔d4 30. ♞g3 ♔f5

½–½

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

We may conclude that Black is presently holding his own after 13.♔xe5, although he should definitely make sure he comes to the board well prepared.

D3122) 13. ♔xd4 ♔xd4 14.a4!



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

14...a6

Black prepares a retreat square on a7.

15. ♔e3

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

15...♔xe3

Obviously it would be far too risky for Black to venture 15...♔xb2? 16.♖ab1 b5 (after 16...♔d4 17.♔xd4 exd4 18.♖xb7 White will emerge with an extra pawn) 17.♞a2!? ♔d4 18.♔xd4 exd4 19.axb5±.

16.fxe3 0-0-0

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