

Experts vs the Sicilian

2nd edition

Edited by: Jacob Aagaard & John Shaw

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Preface

GM John Nunn had a lot of success with his trilogy *Beating the Sicilian 1, 2 and 3*. Others have tried to follow suit, but none with the same success. (The latest being Nigel Davies with *Taming the Sicilian*, where the White repertoire was based on g3-lines against almost everything.)

It was with this knowledge that Ari Ziegler and Jacob Aagaard discussed the idea of a repertoire book against the Sicilian in 2003, while developing the idea of a new chess publishing company. The discussions (leading to this book) ended with the idea of contacting strong players who had specialist knowledge in the lines in question. It was our conviction that this would give the reader the best possible insight into the finer points of a particular line. As experienced players and opening book writers we know that important finesses are missed if you do not:

1. Use a lot of time analysing the games, instead of just believing the players' own analysis.
2. Have prior knowledge of the system.

It is obviously not easy to get many busy chess players to deliver up-to-date material all at the same time. However it was also not as difficult as we feared. Alexander Raetsky and Peter Wells were playing tournaments at the time of the deadline, but still managed to deliver with only a week's delay. And this despite serious computer problems for both!

It has been interesting to learn how differently some very strong players view opening theory, and see how this has made itself apparent in their contributions. At one extreme there is Viktor Gavrikov with his dense theoretical style, at the other Peter Heine Nielsen with his ideas-based approach. This is not a matter of playing strength or necessarily style of play. These two GMs are the two highest rated players contributing to this book, and are both renowned theoreticians. For this reason we decided that it did not make any sense to make huge changes to the style chosen by the different contributors. Clearly a lot of general editing has been done, but we made no particular effort to limit the diversity of the book's authors.

We hope you will find this book enlightening and entertaining.

Glasgow, October 2nd 2004

Jacob Aagaard

John Shaw

Foreword to the revised 2006 edition

As we wanted to re-typeset to a bigger format when we had to reprint this book, we decided to insert the corrections of both language and chess moves we had encountered since the book was first published. In essence, the book is the same as the 2004 edition, but a lot of minor changes and a few updates will hopefully make it an improved edition.

The updates compared to the first edition do not only include improvements for White, but also for Black. We have tried to present the reader with an honest picture of the development of the lines over the last two years, but not upheld ourselves to the obligations of delivering a bullet proof repertoire. We found this approach the most honest and hopefully the readers will do so too.

In that connection we would like to thank Mikhail Golubev for revising his chapter on the Dragon.

Glasgow, June 1st 2006

Jacob Aagaard

John Shaw

The writers

Grandmaster Thomas Luther vs. the Najdorf

37-year-old Thomas Luther from Erfurt in Germany (where Martin Luther went to university) is twice German champion and a regular member of his country's Olympiad team, including 2000 when they were close to winning the tournament, but in the end had to settle for silver medals.

Although this is Thomas' first contribution to a chess book, his 20 years of playing 6.♗g5 against the Najdorf at a high level cannot but impress.

Grandmaster Mikhail Golubev vs. the Dragon

Mikhail Golubev is a strong 36-year-old grandmaster from Ukraine who mainly considers himself a journalist. He is known as a diligent chess writer and the author of some well-received opening books.

Mikhail contributes often to *New In Chess Yearbook* with theoretical surveys, and mainly on the Sicilian Dragon. In recent years a great number of books on the Dragon have been published, but none caught the attention of the editors of this book as Golubev's small book, *Easy Guide to the Dragon*.

We are very happy that Mikhail accepted our invitation to contribute to this book.

International Master Jacob Aagaard vs. the Sveshnikov & several minor lines

Jacob Aagaard is 32 years old, born in Denmark, but resident in Glasgow, Scotland. His best results are his two GM-norms, both attained in 2004. Jacob has written many chess books. Especially close to heart is the Excelling at Chess series of 5 books, from which the first, *Excelling at Chess*, won book of the year at chesscafe.com, while the final two received even better reviews.

Jacob is also the author of *Easy Guide to the Sveshnikov* (Everyman Chess 2000).

Grandmaster Peter Wells vs. the Classical Sicilian

Peter Wells is 41 years old and has for many years been one of the best players in England. During his work for this book he found time to take second place in the British Championship. At the publication date of this book Peter will represent England at the Olympiad.

Peter's participation is a real scoop for this book. His reputation as a chess opening author is unchallenged. Kasparov, with his usual diplomacy, said about Peter's book on the Semi-Slav, that he could not understand how such a weak player could write such a great book. His recent book on the Trompowsky (Batsford 2003) was called "the finest opening book I've ever seen" by IM Jeremy Silman, and received universal acclaim as well as a nomination for book of the year at www.chesscafe.com.

In 1998 Peter wrote *The Complete Richter-Rauzer* together with Viacheslav Osnos. He plays the Classical Sicilian often and with good results.

Grandmaster Sune Berg Hansen vs. the Taimanov and the Kan

Sune Berg Hansen is 35 years old and has been one of Denmark's strongest grandmasters for many years. He has competed in several Olympiads and once in the World Championship. He is well known in Denmark for the high quality of his chess annotations, and as the daily chess and poker columnist for the large newspaper Politiken. His article in this book is his first larger contribution to a chess book. His great knowledge of opening theory will become apparent to anyone who reads his work in this book.

Grandmaster Peter Heine Nielsen vs. the Accelerated Dragon

Peter Heine Nielsen is 33 years old and currently Scandinavia's number one. Peter has won many international tournaments, ahead of such players as Ivanchuk, Short, Svidler and Beliavsky. He

also won a bronze medal at the 1994 Olympiad in Moscow.

Peter co-authored the book *The Sicilian Accelerated Dragon* in 1998 with fellow Dane Carsten Hansen. They are currently contemplating an updated edition.

Grandmaster Viktor Gavrikov vs. the Scheveningen

Viktor Gavrikov is 47 years old and famous on the tournament circuit for his vast knowledge of opening theory. As a player he has competed at the highest level for many years, and won games against players such as Karpov, Beliavsky, van Wely, Lautier, Andersson and Adams. Currently he contributes theoretical articles to ChessBase Magazine and is working on a book on the middlegame.

Viktor has played the Keres Attack with both colours, but does not consider himself a true expert. However his contribution to this book suggests otherwise.

International Master Jan Pinski vs. the Kalashnikov

Jan Pinski is a 27-year-old journalist, currently working hard on uncovering corruption in his native Poland, as well as on his next chess book. Jan has written a number of chess books, the first being *The Kalashnikov Sicilian* with Jacob Aagaard. In an e-mail to the editors Jan states, "It is incredible that I played this line for so long without being punished!"

Grandmaster Alexander Raetsky vs. the Four Knights.

44-year old Alexander Raetsky very recently made his first grandmaster norm after 9, 10 and 11 rounds of the Biel Open 2004, but was unfortunately given one and not three norms for the effort. He has for a long time been one of the best players in his home region of Voronezh in Russia, where for the last five years he has organized one of the largest open tournaments in the world.

Alexander is also the author of several chess books, most often with his close friend Maxim Chetverik, as well as a contributor to New In Chess Yearbook. Among his books is *Meeting 1.e4*, which is a repertoire book with the main line being the Four Knights Sicilian, an opening he has played regularly since.

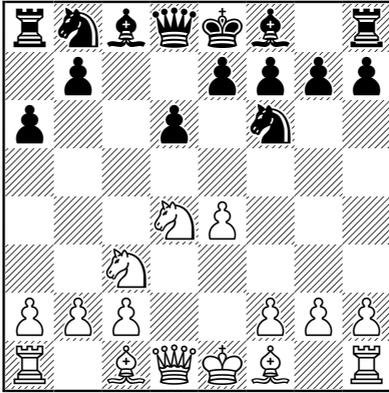
Alexander was finally awarded the grandmaster title in 2005 after making the final norm in Cappelle le Grande, France, where you should be able to find him each year.

Grandmaster John Shaw vs. several minor lines.

John Shaw from Scotland has represented his country in many international team tournaments, including Olympiads. He has written two opening books for Everyman Chess and was awarded the grandmaster title in 2006.

The Najdorf

- By Thomas Luther



The Najdorf System is one of the most popular systems of the Sicilian Defence. It arises after the moves **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6**. The Argentine Grandmaster M. Najdorf played it for the first time in a tournament game in the 40s.

Nowadays it is seen in every level of tournament. Many World Champions, including Fischer and Kasparov, used it as their main defence against 1.e2-e4. In many variations an uncompromising battle arises where every move has great importance. It is a very practical choice if Black wants to play for a win from the very beginning of the game. In our times many moves from the older games belong only to history, because strong computer programs show that they are incorrect. Nevertheless, in some lines White just crushes Black's set-up. I will give some examples where I show the reader some basic ideas (for example the Nc3-d5 sacrifice), and I try to show the connection of different variations and the tricks of move orders.

This book recommends 6.g5. I have played this move for nearly 20 years now and I have won many games with it. There are relatively few recent games in the 6.g5 line, because 6.e3 is more popular right now. However when

comparing the results of these two variations we see that 6.g5 is doing fine.

There are some specialists in this line and I have annotated some of their best games. Among many others I want to mention GMs Short, Timman, Kotronias and Sulskis for their great efforts.

The most important lines are the Poisoned Pawn variation (6...e6 7.f4 Bb6), which is the most critical line and the main line (6...e6 7.f4 Bbd7 8. Bf3 Bc7 9. 0-0-0 Qe7) and now 10. Qd3. These two lines dominate at the moment in tournament practice. Other formerly well-known lines, like the Polugayevsky Variation (6...e6 7.f4 b5), are rarely met nowadays.

I have checked most variations given in this chapter with my computer. But soft- and hardware are developing fast, and sooner or later improvements will be found. If you are uncertain about a position after reading this book I truly advise you to check it with your computer.

In the beginning I will give some sidelines. Each of them is dangerous if White does not know what to do. I start with 6...Bbd7 (the usual move which is played in almost all other games here is 6...e6). Black's idea is to avoid getting double pawns on the f-line, and maybe later there could be an e7-e5 in one move. In most of the games Black just plays e7-e6 on the next move and the game transposes to another line. Really not recommendable is this idea in connection with 7...Bb6. Black is just too far behind in development to do so. The following game is a perfect example of how White should deal with this plan.

Game 1

Stripunsky - Granda Zuniga

New York 1998

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.g5 Bbd7

6...h6 7.Qxf6!

7.f4 Bb6?!

7...e6 is of course the move, transposing to 6...e6 7.f4 Bbd7.

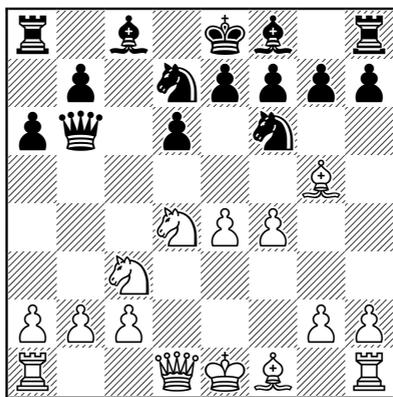
7...h6? 8.♙xf6 ♖xf6 9.e5 dxe5 10.fxe5 ♜d5 11.e6±

7...b5? also does not really work. After 8.♙xf6 ♖xf6 9.e5 b4 10.♜cb5! – Nunn. White has a strong position. Here are some lines:

10...♜e4 11.e6 ♖b6 12.exf7+ ♜d8 13.♖f3 d5 14.0–0, axb5?! 15.♖xe4!+-

10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♙g4 (Nunn gives 11...axb5 12.exf6 gxf6 13.♖f3 ♙d7 14.♜e6+-) 12.♖d3± axb5 13.exf6 exf6 14.♖e4+ ♖e7 15.♙xb5+ ♙d7 16.♙xd7+ ♜xd7 17.♜e6!!+-

Let's return to 7... ♖b6?! .



8.♖d2 ♖xb2

Otherwise Black's play does not make a lot of sense.

9.♖b1 ♖a3 10.♙xf6!

White uses his lead in development by this immediate action.

10...gxf6

Forced. 10...♜xf6 11.e5 ♜g4 12.♜d5 is pretty hopeless for Black. 12...♖c5 (12...♖a7 13.♖b3 ♖xa2 14.♖c3 ♙d7 15.♖c7+- or 12...♖b8 13.♜c6 ♖xa2 14.♖d1±) 13.♜b3 ♖c6 14.♜a5 ♖c5 Now the weaker player could have won if he played 15.♜xb7+-, but respect for the grandmaster made him repeat moves, Bindrich - Zagrebely, Dresden 2000.

11.♜d5 ♖b8

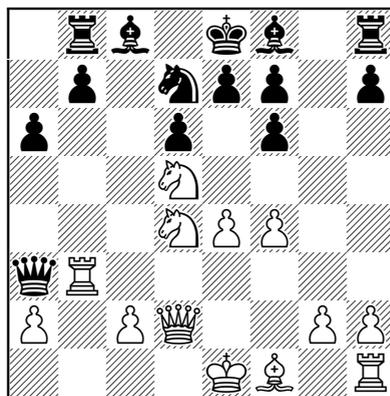
Other moves are no better, or maybe even worse.

11...♖xa2 12.♖b4 ♜d8 (12...b5 13.♜c7+

♜d8 was Zunker - Holfelder, Bruchkoebel 2002. Now 14.♜xa8 ♙b7 15.♙c4! wins.) 13.♖b3 ♖a1+ 14.♜f2 e6 15.♖b1 ♖a2 16.♙c4 a5 17.♖c3 ♜c5 18.♜c6+ bxc6 19.♖xf6+ ♜e8 20.♜c7+ ♜d7 21.♖xf7+ ♙e7 22.♙xa2 1–0 Garbarino - Sabas, Buenos Aires 1982.

11...♖c5 12.♜b3 ♖c6 13.♜a5 ♖c5 14.♜xb7 ♖b8 15.♜xc5 ♖xb1+ 16.♜f2 ♜xc5 17.♖a5+- **12.♖b3!**

White needs to bring his pieces into action. Worse was 12.♜c7+ ♜d8 13.♜xa6 bxa6 14.♜c6+ ♜c7 15.♜xb8 ♜xb8 16.♙c4 ♜c6±.



12...♖a4

After this there is not a lot to talk about. White is simply much better.

12...♖c5 13.♖c3 ♖a7 14.♙xa6!+- does not work, but 12...♖xa2!? has been suggested, and is in fact the only way for Black to play on. Still, analysis assisted by a computer indicates that White has the advantage. 13.♙c4! is of course the move. Now we have:

a) 13...♖a1+? This only helps White. 14.♜f2 ♖xh1 White now has a winning combination with 15.♜c7+ ♜d8 16.♖a5! b6 17.♜de6+ fxe6 18.♜xe6+ ♜e8 19.♖h5 mate.

b) 13...♜c5? 14.♖xb7! (14.0–0!? ♜xb3 15.♙xb3 ♖a3 16.♖f3, is also tempting, but winning the queen is more convincing.) 14...♖b1+ 15.♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 16.♜e2 ♖xh1 17.♖a5+-

c) 13...e6 14.♜c7+ ♜d8 15.♖c3! (15.0–0 ♖a4! and it is not possible to find more than

equality for White. This shows the old truth that an advanced soldier behind enemy lines can do a lot of damage.) 15...♖c5 16.♞xb7 ♞b1† 17.♞xb1 ♞xb1† 18.♔e2 ♞xh1 19.♞a5 ♔d7 20.♖cb5! and the White attack crashes through.

d) 13...♞a4 14.♞c3 ♖c5 15.♖b6 ♞a2 16.0–0 ♖xe4 17.♞e1 ♖c5 18.♞b4 and the black queen is trapped.

13.♙xa6! e5!?

13...bxa6 14.♞c3!+- Vitolinsh - Arakas, USSR 1978.

13...♞xa2 14.♞c3 e6 15.♖c7† ♔d8 16.♙c4 is of course not playable for Black. There is nothing that justifies the weakening of the king's position.

14.♞b4 ♞xa2

14...♞a5 15.♖b3 looks good for White. 15...♞xa2 16.♙b5 with a crushing attack.

15.♖b3 bxa6? 16.♞c3! 1–0

Black resigned. His queen is trapped after 16...♞a8 17.0–0 a5 18.♞b5 a4 19.♖c7† ♔d8 20.♖c1.

Another old sideline is 7...♖c6. It came to popularity after GM Shabalov played it. Funnily it was also GM Shabalov who started crushing this line.

Black wants to achieve a Rauzer-like set-up and make use of White's early f2–f4. In fact the early f4 gives White the chance to kick Black's knight on f6 with e4–e5. Since White has better development the tactics should go fine for him, and they do so. In the game below GM Adams shows fine technique and gains a great advantage. Only a silly blunder, which had nothing to do with the opening, cost him half a point.

Game 2

Adams - Anand

Linares 1997

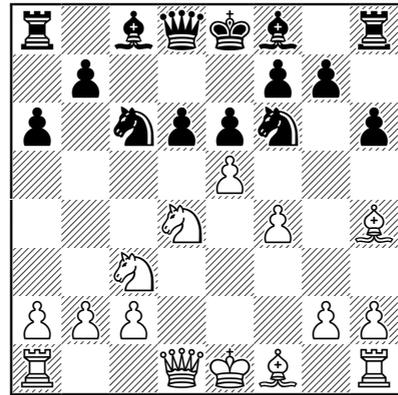
1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 ♖c6

Usually in the Najdorf the ♖b8 is going to d7, compared to the Rauzer where Black sets up with, d6, ♖f6 and ♖c6.

8.e5!

Here Black wants to make use of the early f2–f4, so after the “normal” Rauzer move 8.♞d2 h6 9.♙h4 (9.♙xf6 ♞xf6 is not attractive for White either) 9...♖xe4 is very strong. But this is not a Rauzer, but a Najdorf, where White is prepared for an early e4–e5.

8...h6 9.♙h4



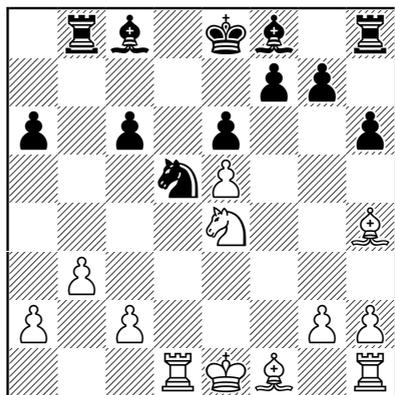
9...dxe5

9...♖xd4 keeps the pawn structure on the queenside intact, but Black has to commit his kingside with g7–g5. 10.♞xd4 (10.exf6?? falls into a nice trap: 10...♖f5! This was discovered by Adorjan. 11.fxg7 ♞xh4† 12.g3 ♖xg3 13.gxh8=♞ ♖e4† and notwithstanding his two queens, the white king will soon be checkmated.) 10...dxe5 11.♞xd8† ♔xd8 12.fxe5 g5 13.♙g3! ♖d7 14.0–0–0 ♙g7 15.♙e2 (for some reason this natural move is not in Kosten's book *Easy Guide to the Najdorf*) 15...♔e7 16.♙h5! (f7 is the weakest point in Black's territory) 16...♞f8 (16...♖xe5 does not work here. 17.♞he1 f6 18.♙xe5 fxe5 19.♞f1! ♙f6 20.♖e4 ♞f8 21.♞f2! and White is clearly better.) 17.♖e4 ♖xe5 18.♞he1 f5 19.♖c3 f4 20.♙f2 b6 21.♙xb6 ♙b7 22.♙c5† ♔f6 23.♞xe5 1–0 Luther - Senff, Cappelle la Grande 2001.

10.♖xc6 ♞xd1† 11.♞xd1 bxc6 12.fxe5 ♖d5

Also possible is 12...♖d7! but Black still has a passive position. 13.♖e4 g5 14.♙g3 ♙g7 15.♖d6† ♔e7 16.♖c4 a5 17.h4. This is a very strong move: White wants to weaken the

g5-pawn and trade his passive rook. Now it is difficult for Black to develop his last pieces, as can be seen by the following lines: 17...a4 (17...♙a6 18.♗xa5 ♜hc8 19.♙xa6 ♜xa6 20.♗c4 ♜xa2 21.hxg5 hxg5 22.♜h5 ♜h8 23.♜xg5±) 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.♜xh8 ♙xh8 20.♙e2±
13.♗e4 ♜b8 14.b3



14.c4?! allows a tricky piece sacrifice: 14...♜xb2!
 15.cxd5 ♙b4† 16.♗d2 exd5†
14...♙e7

14...g5?!. Making the check on b4 happen is not worth weakening the structure. 15.♙g3 ♙b4† 16.♗e2! and by threatening c2-c4 White obtained a big advantage in Brodsky - Rechel, Groningen 1993.

15.♙g3!

This move certainly secures an advantage for White. Black has too little space for his pieces. This is more important than just the usual good/bad bishop stuff. Worse is 15...♙e7 ♗xe7, and with a weak pawn on e5, White can never be better.

15...0-0 16.♙e2

16.c4?!. White should be careful with pawn moves: 16...♗b4 17.♜d2 ♜d8 with counterplay.
16...a5

16...♗e3 hunting the g2-pawn is not good for Black: 17.♜d2 ♗xg2† 18.♗f2 ♗h4 19.♗f6†! Without this move White would have nothing. 19...gxf6 20.♙xh4 ♙c5† 21.♗f3 fxe5 22.♙f6 and after ♙d3 and ♜g2 White has a dangerous attack.

17.c4 ♗b4 18.♜d2!

It is important to protect the a-pawn since it keeps Black's knight out of the game. Huzman gives: 18.0-0 ♗xa2 19.♜a1 ♗b4 20.♜xa5 ♗c2 and Black has good counterplay against the b3-pawn.

18...♜d8 19.♜f1!

Another brilliant move by Adams. The king stays in the centre to cover the important squares.

19...♜xd2 20.♗xd2 ♗a6

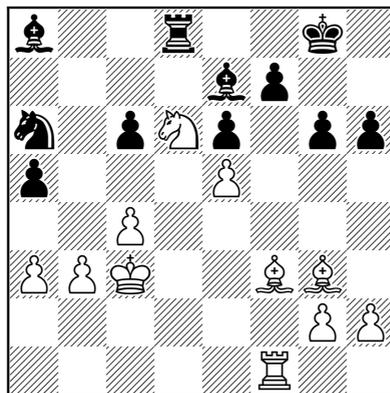
20...♗xa2 Now this is different. The white king dominates the knight on b4 after: 21.♜a1 ♗b4 22.♜xa5 the position is ±.

21.♙h5

Forcing Black to weaken the kingside structure.

21...g6 22.♙f3 ♙b7 23.♗c3 ♜d8 24.♗d6 ♙a8 25.a3??

This spoils all the previous achievements. After protecting the knight on d6 once more, White's victory would have been only a question of time. 25.♜d1! was the right move.



25...f5!

Now Black has counterplay.

26.b4 g5 27.h3 ♙f8 28.c5 ♜b8

28...♙g7 29.♗c4 does not change much.

29.♙h5

29.♜a1 with the idea 30.♗c4 was recommended after the game.

29...♗c7 30.♙f3 ♗a6 31.♙h5 ♗c7 32.♙f3

½-½

White could have played on, but probably he was frustrated with his 25th move.

Now we turn to the above-mentioned game from GM Shabalov. Instead of heading for an ending, as in the previous game, Black can burn his bridges and crack White's centre with 9...g5.

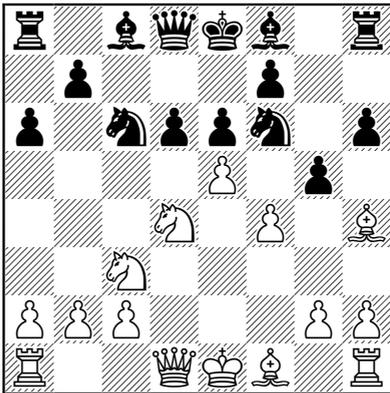
White has to play carefully and have some theoretical knowledge about the position. With the right move order White can prevent Black building up a strong centre. He has to take the d5 knight *before* he takes the one on c6. As soon as White castles the black king is under a strong attack.

Game 3

Shabalov - Browne

Las Vegas 1997

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 ♘c6 8.e5! h6 9.♙h4 g5



Black acts concretely against White's centre and the game becomes very tactical. Since White has better development, tactics should work in his favour.

10.fxg5 ♘d5

10...♘h7 Knights need to be placed in the centre! 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.exd6 with advantage for White.

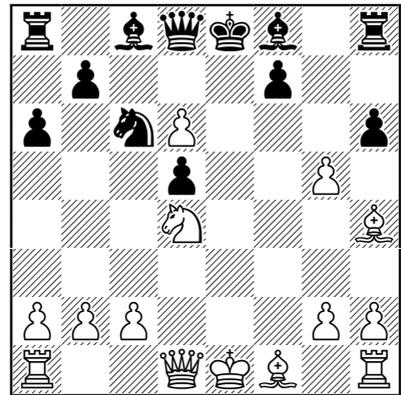
Of course not 10...hxg5?? 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.♙xg5 and Black loses a piece.

11.♘xd5

It is important to take first on d5 and later on c6, so that Black does not have the option to take with a later c-pawn on d5.

11...exd5 12.exd6

The best. Other moves like e5-e6 have been tried, but without much success.



12...♙xd6

12...♙xd6 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♙d4 White plays this move because he wants to protect his bishop on h4 and then play g5-g6. 14...♙e7† 15.♙e2 ♙e5 16.♙a4 ♖b8 17.g6 (when White achieves this Black is usually busted) 17...♙d6 (17...♙b4†. This was once recommended as equalising, but I think White is still better. 18.♙xb4 ♖xb4 19.gxf7† ♔xf7 20.0-0† ♔g7 21.♙f2 ♖xb2 22.♙d3 After lots of exchanges Black still has problems, his pieces are not coordinated. A possible line could be: 22...♖f8 23.♖ae1 ♙c3 24.♖e7† ♔g8 25.♙c5 ♖xf1† 26.♔xf1 ♙g4 27.♖c7 ♖xa2 28.♖xc6 ♙d1 29.♙e3 ♖a3 30.♖xa6 ♖xa6 31.♙xa6 ♙xc2 32.♙xh6 and good technique should bring White the full point.) 18.gxf7† ♔f8 19.♙f2 ♖xb2 20.0-0 ♖h7 21.♔h1 ♖xf7 22.♙d4 With a decisive attack in McDonald - Danner, Budapest 1996.

Instead of 16...♖b8, there is also the option of 16...♙d6. This is met by a surprisingly strong move:

17.♙g3! Now we have the following options:

a) 17...♙xg3† 18.hxg3 ♖xg3† 19.♔f1 Both c6 and h6 are hanging, besides Black's king is in danger. White is clearly better.

b) 17...♙d7 18.gxh6 with advantage for White, was Luther's recommendation. In practice another more turned out to be quite poisonous. 18.♖h4 ♖b8 19.0–0 ♙xg3 (19...♖xb2 20.g6 fxg6 21.♙e5 ♖xe5 22.♙xa6±) 20.hxg3 ♖e5 (20...♖c5+ is the only move according to Fritz, but White has a sensational attack after 21.♔h2! ♖xc2 [21...♖e3 22.♖ae1 ♖xg5 is objectively better, but the endgame after 23.♙g4† ♔d8 24.♙xd7 ♖xh4† 25.gxh4 ♔xd7 26.♖xf7† ♔d6± is still a pawn up for White - not a bad result of the opening!]) 22.♖ae1 and Black has no defence: 22...♙e6 23.gxh6 ♔d7 24.♙g4 f5 25.♖f6+) 21.g6! fxg6 (Black has various chances to go into endgames as this one: 21...♖e3† 22.♔h2 0–0 23.♖xf7 ♖xf7 24.gxf7† ♔xf7 25.♖f1† ♔g8 26.♖f6 ♖g5 27.b3 Objectively Black is just lost, but in practice he might score between 10 and 20%.) 22.♖ae1± The outcome of the opening is clearly in White's favour. Without having sacrificed anything she has a strong attack against the completely naked black king, and many weak black pawns to attack. Dworakowska – Areshchenko, Gibraltar, 2005.

c) 17...0–0!? is an interesting attempt of improving. White should probably play 18.gxh6 (18.0–0–0 ♖b8 does not seem appealing.) 18...♙xg3† 19.hxg3 ♖xg3† 20.♔f1 ♙f5 21.♖d4 Now Black played 21...♖ae8?, which should have lost in one move to 22.♙g4!!, in Dworakowska - Calotescu, Gothenburg 2005. Better is 21...♔h7 when White is better after for example 22.♙d3 ♙xd3† 23.♖xd3† ♖xd3† 24.cxd3±.

13.♖e2†

The point of White's play. White gets the clearly better game now.

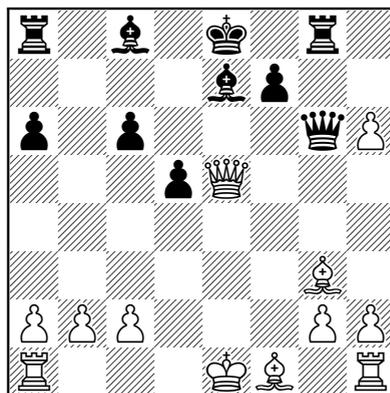
13...♙e7 14.♔xc6

Of course not 14.0–0–0? ♖f4†+.

14...bxc6 15.♙g3! ♖g6

15...♖b4† 16.c3 and, thanks to ♖e2, the b2-pawn is protected.

16.♖e5! ♖g8 17.gxh6!



Finally! White secures his extra pawn.

17...♖xc2

17...♙f5!? 18.♙e2! ♙xc2 19.0–0 and with his king in the centre Black is helpless against all the threats.

17...♖xh6 With this move Black is just accepting to play a pawn down. 18.♙f4 ♖g6 (18...♖e6 19.♖xe6 ♙xe6 20.g3 was seen in Luther -Abreu, Havana 2001. Black had no compensation for the pawn.) 19.0–0–0± With a safe king and an extra pawn White has a clear advantage.

18.♙e2 ♖g5

Desperation! 18...♖g6 19.♙h4! is very uncomfortable for Black.

19.♖h8†! ♔d7 20.♖c3+

This finishes all Black's hopes.

20...♖xc3†

20...♖e4 21.0–0 ♖xe2 22.♖ae1 and the various threats cannot be parried anymore.

21.bxc3 ♙f6 22.0–0

After this move everything is clear. The passed pawn on h6 decides the game.

22...♙xc3 23.♖xf7† ♔e6 24.♖af1 ♙d7 25.♙h4 ♖g6 26.♙h5

1–0

Now after 26...♖xh6 27.♙g4† White wins a piece, so Black resigned.

The early ♖c7 is another sideline. Black wants to play b7-b5 without allowing e4-e5. If White

does not react to this plan and slowly develops, Black will kick White's knight on c3 by playing b7-b5-b4. Black is doing fine if White has to move this knight to e2 or a4. There are many tactical lines but I cannot recommend them. Basically, if White gets the chance to take on f6 and Black has to recapture with the g-pawn White should do it. The arising position is more common in the Rauzer Defence, so I advise the reader to study this chapter as well.

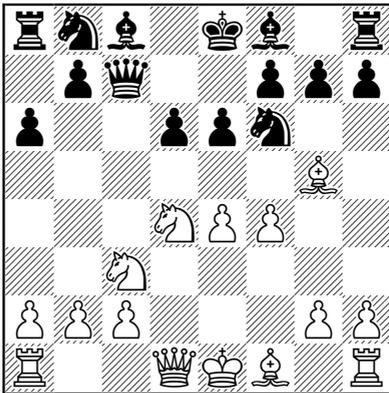
Game 4

Khalifman - Lautier

Moscow 2001

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 ♖c7

With this move Black wants to trick White in his set-up. If he goes for ♖d1-f3 and castling queenside Black quickly plays b7-b5-b4. Since at this early stage of the game there is no ♗d5 - sac possible the c3-knight has to be moved backwards, which is a big concession.



8.♙xf6

On the other hand there is the chance to break Black's pawn chain, since Black has not played either ♗b8-d7 or ♙f8-e7. In my opinion, this is the most principled way to treat the ♖c7-line.

8.♖f3 is often played in this position. 8...b5 (Black decides not to enter one of the main lines by playing 8...♗bd7 or ♙e7.) 9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.e5 d5 (10...♙b7 11.♖h5 with the idea of ♗d4xe6

and White is better here.) 11.exf6 b4 12.♗xd5 exd5 13.0-0-0 ♙b7 and, after studying this position for some time, I came to the conclusion that White should not risk this piece sacrifice.

8...gxf6 9.♖d2

9.♙e2 is another way of setting up the pieces for White. Generally I do not think the white king belongs on the kingside. 9...♗c6 10.♗b3 b5 11.0-0 ♙b7 and Black will castle queenside and aim for the standard break d6-d5.

9...b5

Pushing the b-pawn is in the spirit of the variation. The drawback is that the black king will never find a safe spot on the queenside.

9...♗c6 10.0-0-0 ♙d7 11.♗b1 h5 12.♙c4 0-0-0 13.♗xc6 ♖xc6 14.♙b3 ♗b8 15.♞hf1± was seen in Topalov - Anand, Dortmund 1997.

10.♙d3

10.a3 ♙b7 11.♙e2 with the idea of castling kingside is another option, but Black can even stop this plan by playing ♖c7-b6.

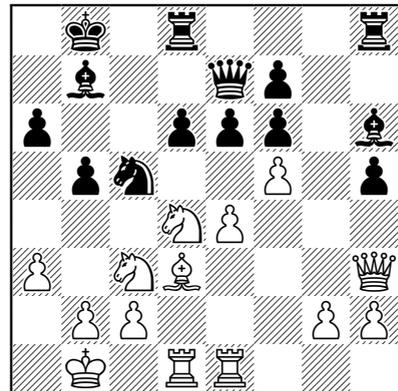
10...♙b7 11.0-0-0 ♗d7

Black cleverly keeps the knight because it will be strongly placed on c5. After 11...♗c6 12.♗xc6 White is better.

12.♞he1 0-0-0 13.f5 ♗c5 14.a3

White has to secure the c3-square for his knight.

14...♗b8 15.♗b1 h5 16.♖e3 ♙h6 17.♖h3 ♖e7



18.♖f3

1/2-1/2

Here the players agreed a draw. In my opinion White could have continued the game. Instead of 18.♖f3 I prefer:

a) 18.b4 OK, it is not everybody's taste to open one's king, but getting rid of the c5 knight is worth it. 18...♗xd3 19.♞xd3 ♞de8 20.♞ed1 with pressure. Or:

b) 18.♙e2 Hitting on h5. 18...e5 (18...♗xe4? 19.♗xe4 ♙xe4 20.♙f3 and White wins) 19.♗b3 ♗xe4 20.♗d5 ♙xd5 21.♞xd5 and White has good compensation. He has play on the light squares and against Black's king.

Great players have their own openings is an old saying which is difficult to fulfil in our time, since most of the sensible (and even most of the stupid) moves from the starting position have been played already. However GM Polugayevsky invented 7...b5, played it and published a lot of analysis on it, so this system took his name: the Polugayevsky Variation. The idea is to kick the c3 knight as early as possible. White is forced to take counter measures and the game develops in a very tactical way. What was a tremendous workload back in the 70s and 80s can now be done quickly with a computer program. Nevertheless the work of GM Polugayevsky will always be remembered.

Game 5

Leko - Ghaem Maghami

Yerevan 2001

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 b5

This is the aggressive move that was played and analysed deeply by the Russian GM Lev Polugayevsky.

8.e5

The only way to deal with b7-b5 successfully. Otherwise Black just manages to kick White's knight with b5-b4.

8...dxe5

8...h6? (this move does not promise Black much here) 9.♙h4 g5 10.fxg5 ♗h7 11.♞h5 hxg5 12.♙g3 ♙g7 13.0-0-0 and White had

a big advantage in Kasparov - Ehlvest, Baku 1978.

9.fxe5 ♞c7

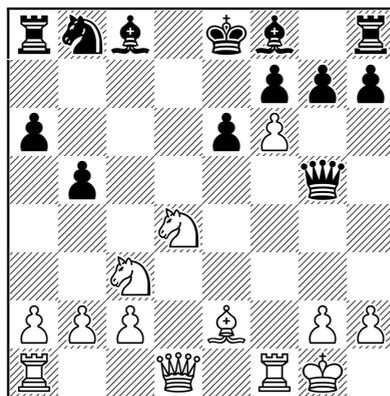
The idea behind Black's play. He does not lose material, but White gains a lot of time.

10.exf6

There is also 10.♞e2 but it is not in the spirit of White's set-up.

10...♞e5† 11.♙e2 ♞xg5 12.0-0

12.♞d3 is considered as the main alternative here. Bringing the white king out of the line of fire is, in my opinion, the better option.



12...♞a7

Black's defence is based on this idea: the rook goes to d7.

12...♞e5 was for a long time considered the main line, but is now less popular in practice. It is considered in the next game.

Not the natural 12...♙b7? 13.♙f3 when Black's position cannot be saved:

a) 13...♙xf3 14.♞xf3 ♞a7 (14...♙c5 15.♞xa8 as in Bisset - Martinez, e-mail 1994 offers Black no compensation) 15.♞ad1 ♞e5 16.♞fe1 ♞xf6 17.♞g3 ♗d7 18.♗d5 ♞d8 19.♗c6 and White wins.

b) 13...♞e3† 14.♗h1 ♙xf3 15.♞xf3 ♞e5 16.♞d2! ♙d6 17.g4 b4 18.♗f5!! After this Black is done for. 18...♙c7 19.♞e1 ♞xh2† 20.♞xh2 ♙xh2 21.fxg7 ♞g8 22.♗d5 ♗d7 23.♗xh2 ♗d8 24.♗de7 1-0, Stripunsky - Jaracz, Poland 1995.

c) 13...♞a7 14.♗xe6!! An absolute stunner.

14...fxe6 (14...♞e3† 15.♔h1 fxe6 16.fxg7! and it is the end of the world) 15.f7† ♔e7 16.♞d4 The key move. At best Black will be an exchange down with a ruined position. 16...♔xf7 17.♙xb7† ♔e8 18.♞e4 ♜xb7 19.♞xg5 ♞d7 20.♞e5 1–0, Kaechmann - Hamburg, Ruhrgebiet 1999.

13.♞d3 ♞d7 14.♞e4 ♞e5

14...♞d5?! is worse than the text. The game Sulskis – Stoczek, Isle of Man 2002 went as follows: 15.c3 ♞c6 16.♞xc6 ♞xc6 17.♞e3 ♙b7 18.♙f3 and Black still could not free his position from White's attack.

15.♞f3!

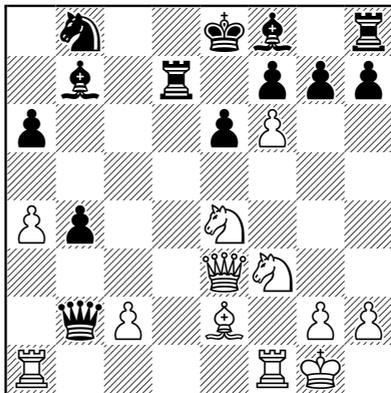
15.c3?! ♙b7 16.♙f3 ♙xe4 17.♙xe4 gxf6 and White does not have enough compensation for the pawn.

15...♞xb2

As in many tactical lines Black is forced to take some material.

After 15...♞c7 16.♞e3 ♙b7 17.c4 ♙xe4 18.♞xe4 gxf6 19.cxb5 ♞b6† 20.♔h1 axb5 21.a4!. White simply has a great attack for no risk at all. The game Vasquez – Arancibia, Maipu 2003 was soon 1–0.

16.♞e3 ♙b7 17.a4 b4



After 17...♞b4 Black could not solve all his problems following 18.c4 ♙xe4 19.♞xe4 ♞c5† 20.♔h1 b4 21.♞f4 ♙d6 (a serious commitment, but 21...♞c6 22.♞ad1 ♞f5 23.♞e3 ♞xd1 24.♞xd1 ♞xf6 25.♞b6 is no fun either) 22.fxg7 ♞g8 23.♞h6 ♙e5 24.♞xh7 ♞xg7 25.♞h8† and

soon 1–0 in Rodriguez Cespedes - Stangl, Biel 1988.

17...♙xe4 does not solve Black's problems. 18.♞xe4 ♙c5† 19.♔h1 gxf6 20.axb5 and White wins back the material and keeps a clear advantage.

18.♞ab1

18.c3 This move is an old recommendation. The text is better. 18...♙xe4 19.♞xe4 gxf6 and the best White can get is a repetition by following Black's queen with his rooks.

18...♞xc2

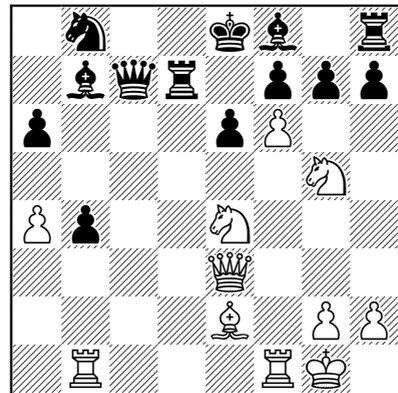
18...♞a3 19.c3 Only now does White play this move. Black cannot finish his development and is in trouble.

19.♞fg5! ♞c7

Black is in serious trouble as any computer shows. Nowadays any program can analyse this tactical position far better than any human.

19...h6!? does not help either. 20.♞bc1 ♞xc1 21.♞xc1 hxg5 22.♞g3 ♞c6 23.♙xa6 and White wins.

19...g6 20.♞fc1 ♞a2 21.♙c4 and White wins again...



20.♞xb4!

Opening up the position, after this blow there is no longer a defence.

20...♙xe4 21.♞xe4 ♙xb4

Allowing a nice finish.

22.fxg7 ♞g8 23.♞f6† ♔d8 24.♞xg8 ♙c5 25.♞f6! ♙xe3† 26.♔h1 ♔c8 27.♞xd7

1–0

In the next game we shall continue analysing the Polugayevsky Variation. Compared to a line like 7...Nbd7 it might seem less relevant. But first of all many club players really like to play this way, as there is something macho about it. Secondly, the knowledge necessary for playing an opening is not necessarily always centered around the critical lines.

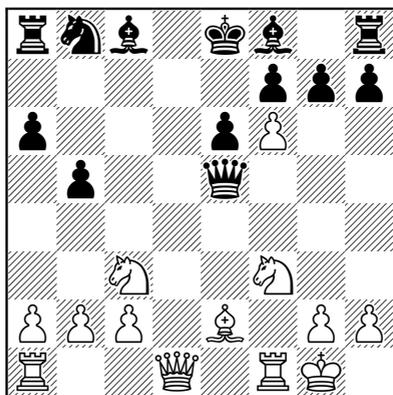
Game 6

Wosch - Nordin

e-mail 2001

Sometimes a relatively weak player (here 2000 elo) plays at the level of a grandmaster for the entire length of a game. This is the case with this wonderful game. Some might think that this is because of computer assistance, as it is an e-mail game, but looking this game over with my own computer does not suggest this at all. On the contrary!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 b5 8.e5 dxe5 9.fxe5 ♖c7 10.exf6 ♖e5† 11.♙e2 ♗xg5 12.0-0 ♖e5 13.♗f3



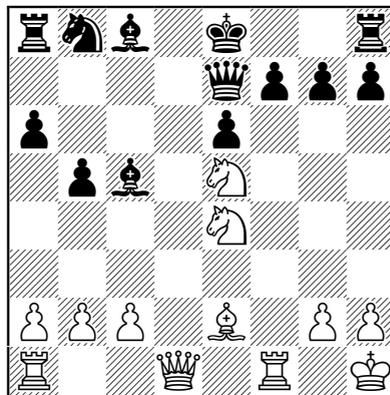
13...♙c5†

13...♗xf6 14.♗e4 ♖xb2 15.♗fg5 and, with most of his pieces in the starting position, Black is helpless against White's various threats.

13...♖e3† 14.♗h1 ♗d7 15.♙e1 ♖a7 16.fxg7 ♙xg7 17.♖d6 was played in a blindfold rapid game between Leko and Ivanchuk. It seems that White still has some pressure here.

14.♗h1 ♗xf6 15.♗e4 ♖e7 16.♗e5!

The most dangerous. 16.♗fg5 f5! has proven to be nothing. 17.♙h5† g6 18.♗xh7 ♗f7! and Black was OK in several games.



16...f5?

Now this does not work. 16...0-0 is the only move. Now White should play 17.♗xf7! and then we have:

a) 17...♗c6? 18.♙h5!± is no good for Black. I have analysed the following line 18...♙d4 19.c3 ♙e5 20.♖g4! with a winning attack. 20...♙d7 21.♗h6† ♗h8 22.♙f7 ♙xf7 23.♗xf7† ♗g8 24.♗h6† ♗h8 25.♗g5 g6 26.♙f1! ♙f8 27.♗hf7† ♗g8 28.♖h4 and Black has no defence.

b) 17...♙b7!? is an alternative. 18.♙d3. Nunn's suggestion. (18.♗xc5 ♖xc5 19.♖d6 ♖xd6 20.♗xd6 ♙xf1† 21.♙xf1 ♙d5= was played in Bartoli - Innorta, e-mail 1998) 18...♙xf7 19.♙xf7 ♖xf7 (19...♗xf7 20.♖h5†±) 20.♗xc5 ♙d5 21.♗e4 ♖g6 22.♖e2 and I think White has good chances for achieving an advantage here. He has ideas of ♗e4-c3 and a2-a4, creating further weaknesses in the Black camp.

c) 17...♙xf7 18.♗xf7 ♗xf7 19.♙h5† ♗g8 (19...g6 20.♗xc5 ♙a7 21.♗e4 ♗g7 22.♙f3 ♙d7 23.♖e1± Kover - De Almeida, corr. 1980.) 20.♗xc5 Now we have the following options:

c1) 20...♖xc5 21.♖d8† 1-0. Lukas - Feist, corr. 1997. Black probably overlooked 21...♖f8 22.♙f7†!+-.

c2) 20...♗c6 21.♖f3 ♙d7 22.♗xd7 ♖xd7 23.♙d1± Schneider - Riedmueller, corr. 1996.

c3) 20...♖d7? 21.♗xe6!± Beliavsky - Polugaevsky, Moscow 1979.

c4) 20...♖a7 21.♗d3! A new idea, but not a very surprising one, as the alternatives are less encouraging. (21.♗e4 ♖d7 22.♖e2 ♗c6 23.c3 ♗e5 24.♖f1 ♗b7= Denaro - Bosco, corr. 1990, and 21.♖d4 ♖c7! 22.♗e4 ♖xc2 23.♖f1 ♗d7!± Mauro - Soranzo, corr. 1990.) 21...♗c6 22.♗f3 ♗d4 (22...♗b7? 23.♖g1! ♖a8 24.♗c5±) And now White has many ways to proceed. 23.♗e4± is probably easiest. Of course Black can fight for a draw in such an endgame, he is only slightly worse, but certainly White would accept this position from the opening.

17.♗h5† g6 18.♗xg6 hxg6 19.♗xg6† ♗f8 20.♗xc5 ♖h6!

The alternatives are not cheerful. 20...♗g7 is met strongly with 21.♗xe6! ♗xe6 (No better fate is to be found after 21...♗xg6 22.♗f4! [22.♖xf5?! ♗xf5 23.♖d3† ♗xe6 24.♖e1† ♗f7 25.♖xe7† ♗xe7 26.♖e4† ♗e6 27.♖xa8±] 22...♗g7 [22...♗h6 23.♖h5†+-] 23.♖f3!). This manoeuvre is not that easy to find, but very logical. Black has no way to bring his pieces to the defence of the king. 23...♖e5 [23...♖d7 24.♖d3 ♖c6 25.♖c3 ♖d7 26.♖f3+-] 24.♗g3† ♗f6 25.♖f3 ♖h6 26.♗h5† ♗e6 [26...♖xh5 27.♖xh5 and Black has no way to survive the attack] 27.♖d1 and the black king cannot escape.) 22.♗xf5 ♖h4 (22...♗xf5 23.♖xf5 ♖h4 24.♖d6! transposes) 23.♖d6 ♗xf5 24.♖xf5 ♖e8 25.♖af1 ♖a7 26.♖5f4 ♖d8 27.♖c5 ♖c7 28.♖h5 1-0. Uboldi - Lalanne, San Antonio de Padua 2001.

20...♖xc5 21.♖d8† ♗g7 22.♖g5 with a winning attack. A crucial line is 22...♖xh2† 23.♗xh2 ♖e5† 24.♗g1 ♖f6 25.♖g3 ♖xg6 26.♖c3†+-.

21.♗h5

Probably the best move.

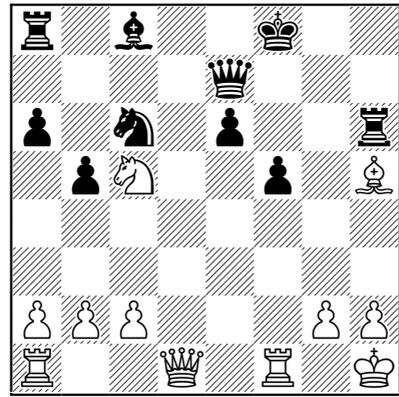
21.♖g4!? ♖xc5 22.♖g5 ♖xg6 23.♖xg6 ♖a7∞

21.♗xe6† ♗xe6 22.♗xf5 ♗f7 looks unclear to me.

21...♗c6!

21...♖xc5? 22.♖d8† ♗g7 23.♖f3 ♖xh5 24.♗g3† ♗f7 25.♖g8† ♗e7 26.♗g7† ♗f6 (26...♗d6 27.♖f8† ♗d5 28.♖d1† and White

wins the queen.) 27.♖f7† ♗e5 28.♖g3† ♗d5 29.♖d1† and it is all over.



22.b4!

This move makes a lot of sense: White sacrifices his extra pawn to derail the knight. If this or the alternative 22.♗e4! is stronger I do not know. The position needs a lot of independent analysis before anything can be said with certainty. I have tried to give some variations here that I believe are critical, however they cannot be said to be conclusive in any way.

22...♗b7 (22...e5?! is the computer's first choice, but after 23.g4!? [Seems strange, but it works!] 23...♗d4 24.♖d2 ♖g7 25.c3 ♗b7 26.♖ae1! White has a very strong attack) 23.♖g4!? ♗d4 (23...♖d8 24.♗g3 ♗e5 25.♖f4 ♖g7 26.♖ae1 ♖xh5 27.♖xe5 ♖h6 28.♖fe1±) This position is probably critical. I have tried to outline the possibilities here, but cannot give full conclusions.

a) 24.♖ad1!? ♗xc2 25.♖d3 ♖h7 (25...♗d5 26.♗g3 ♖h7 27.♗g5 ♖d7 28.♗h3! ♖h7 29.♗g6 ♖xg6 30.♖xg6 ♖xg6 31.♖xg6±) 26.♗g5 ♗g8 27.♖h4 ♗g7 28.♗g3 ♖f8=

b) 24.c3? ♗c2 25.♖ad1 ♗e3 26.♖f4 ♖xh5 27.♖xe3 ♖h4+-

c) 24.♗g3! ♖f6 25.♖f4 e5 26.♖f2± The following analysis might be correct, but chances are that they are a bit too long to be bulletproof. 26...f4 27.c3 ♗e6 28.♖ad1 ♖d8 29.♖b6 ♖xd1 30.♗xd1 ♗xg2† Far from the only option here. 31.♗xg2 ♖xh2† 32.♗g1!? (32.♗xh2 ♖h4†=)