

Grandmaster Repertoire 3

The English Opening

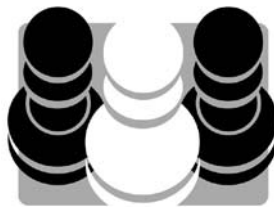
Volume One

By

Mihail Marin

with invaluable help from

Valentin Stoica



Quality Chess
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Publisher's Foreword

Creating the Grandmaster Repertoire series seemed a natural idea. There is a glut of opening books at the *Starting Out* level. These books have certainly been refreshing, but they have almost completely replaced high-level opening books.

As chess fans, we felt we were missing out, and because we can, we decided to do something about it.

The books in the Grandmaster Repertoire series are written by grandmasters, edited by grandmasters, and will certainly be read by grandmasters. **This does not mean that players who are not grandmasters cannot read them.** We have worked hard to make our books clear in their presentation and to make it possible for the readers to decide the depth to which they want to study them.

When we were young and trying to be up-and-coming, we understood that you do not have to remember everything in an opening book in order to use it. It is our hope that those readers who find this repertoire too extensive and detailed, will ignore many of the details. Even now that we are grandmasters, we see the bolded moves as what we want to memorize, and the notes as explanations and illustrations.

It is our conviction that you will eventually be more successful by playing the main lines, simply because they are based on better moves. Instinctively most players know this, but they fear losing to a prepared line and thus turn to unambitious systems, or unhealthy surprises. The opponent will not be able to use his preparation but, sadly, will not need it. These sidelines generally end in uninspiring positions almost automatically.

Possibly the main reason why high-level opening books have disappeared is the rise of databases. It has been assumed that there is no point in having traditional opening books anymore, as you can look it all up in the database. Some rather lazy authors have a system: collect a few hundred games from the database, give Fritz a few moments, then hit Print. Such books add nothing to chess literature. We have seen enough of them and have never wanted to add to that pile.

In these days of multi-million game databases, we all have access to information, what is lacking is understanding. In the Grandmaster Repertoire series, very strong players will share their understanding and suggest strong new moves that are in no one else's database.

We are excited about this new series and hope that the reader will share some of that excitement.

John Shaw & Jacob Aagaard

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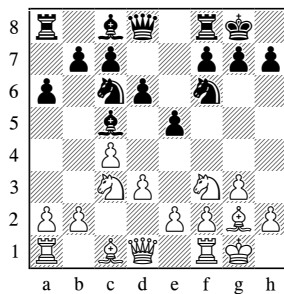
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Chapter 5

Karpov Variation



7...a6

Variation Index

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙c5 5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0

7...a6 8.a3

A) 8...♙a7 9.b4

A1) 9...♙f5

A2) 9...♙g4

B) 8...♘d4 9.♘e1!

B1) 9...c6

B2) 9...h6

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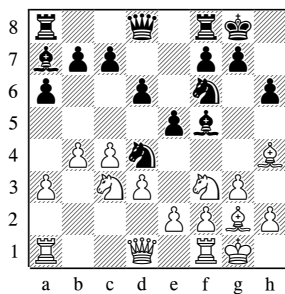
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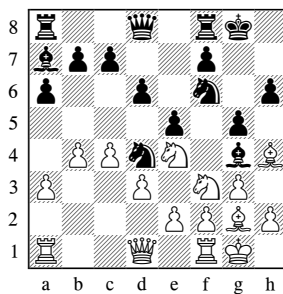
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A1) after 11...♘d4



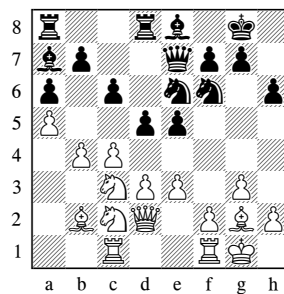
12.e3!!

A2) after 12...g5



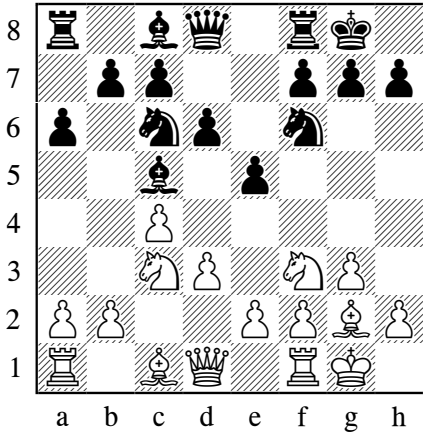
13.♘fxg5!!

B2) after 17...d5



18.c5!±

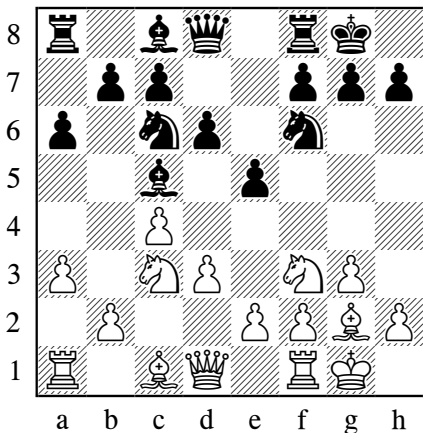
1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙c5
5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6



By refraining from ...h7-h6, Black intends to save a tempo compared to the variations examined in Chapter 3.

8.a3

8.♙g5 h6 9.♙xf6 ♗xf6 does not achieve much for White. His control over the light squares has been increased, but the c5-bishop can become a very dangerous attacking piece. Black only needs to move his queen out of the way and then push the f-pawn. 10.♘e4 ♕e7 11.♘xc5 dxc5 does not look troubling for Black. He has good central control and I do not see an active plan for White.



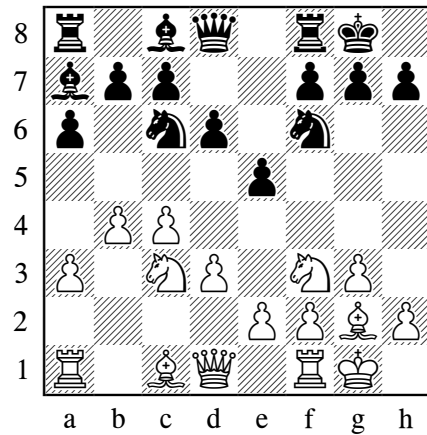
We now have A) 8...♙a7 and B) 8...♘d4.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙c5
5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a3)

A) 8...♙a7 9.b4

White uses his last “neutral” move, inviting Black to define his plans.

9...h6 would transpose to the normal lines examined above, but now we will examine the independent lines.



We have A1) 9...♙f5 and A2) 9...♙g4.

9...♘d4

This leads to a considerable loss of time.

10.♘xd4

This is the correct move.

If 10.♘e1?! h6 11.e3 Black can play the intermediate 11...♙g4! as in a sub-note of line B2.

10...♙xd4

10...exd4 11.♘d5 ♘xd5 12.cxd5± leaves White with the better structure and pressure along the c-file.

11.♙b2 c6 12.e3 ♙a7

This bishop has moved quite a lot already.

13.d4

Threatening to win space with d4-d5,

which would put the c6-pawn under serious pressure.

13...exd4 14.exd4

Renewing the threat.

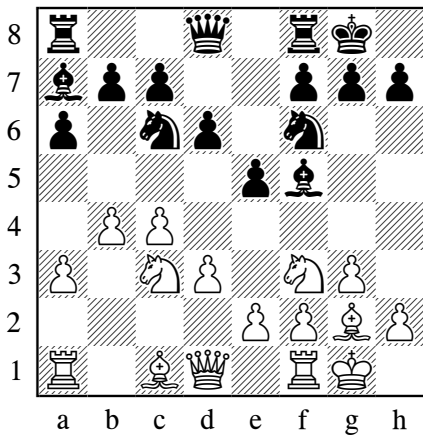
14...d5 15.c5 ♖f5 16.a4±

White has a promising queenside attack, while the a7-bishop is obviously misplaced.

9...♗e6 exposes the bishop to the knight jump ♖f3-g5. There has only been one game with this move between reasonably strong players. 10.♗b2 ♖e7 11.♖g5 ♗c8 12.e3 h6 13.♖f3 We are back into the normal paths, since Black has played ...h6, Spiridonov – Therkildsen, Nice 2000.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♖c6 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.♗g2 ♗c5 5.♖f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a3 ♗a7 9.b4)

A1) 9...♗f5



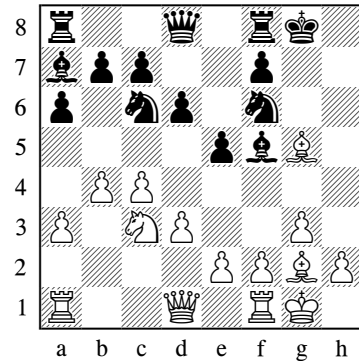
The development of the bishop to this square is hardly more constructive now than after ...h7-h6. The bishop is both passive and exposed at the same time.

10.♗g5 h6 11.♗h4!

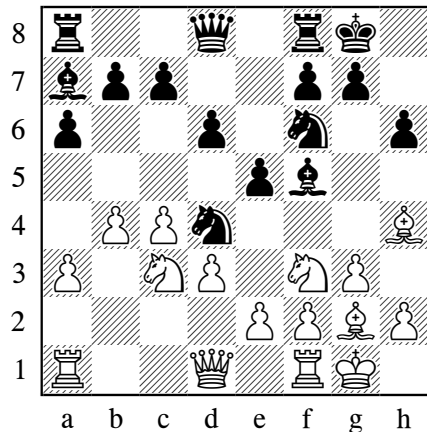
As we shall see, this is a recurring theme. The immediate exchange on f6 is inoffensive, but now the threat of ♖d5 is very unpleasant.

11...♖d4

Black intends to exchange the f3-knight to make ...g7-g5 a real threat. Of course, 11...g5? 12.♖xg5! hxg5 13.♗xg5 is bad for Black, who has no favourable way of freeing himself from the pin.



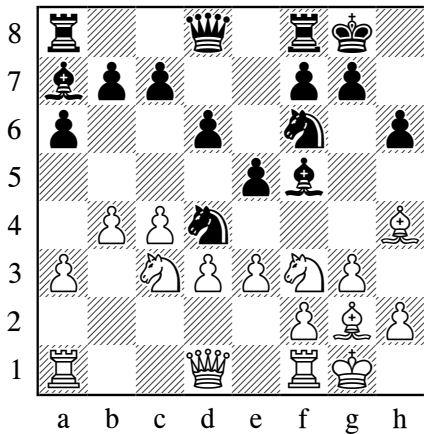
13...♖b8 (anticipating the threat ♖c3-d5) 14.♗xb7 ♖b7 15.♖d5 White threatens to win material by capturing on a8 and f6. 15...♗g7 is strongly met by 16.♗d2, threatening ♗g5xf6† followed by ♗d2-g5†, while 15...♗b8 16.♗c6 leaves him helpless against the threat of ♗c6xd7. 16...♗e6 17.♗xd7 ♗xd5 18.cxd5 White has a decisive material advantage.



12.e3!!N

This move, ignoring the threat of ...g7-g5, takes full advantage of the exposed position of the f5-bishop.

White did not get any advantage after 12.♙xf6 ♖xf6 13.♘h4 ♙c8 14.e3 ♘e6 15.♘e4 ♖d8 16.♗h5 f5= in Marin – Tomescu, Sovata 2003.

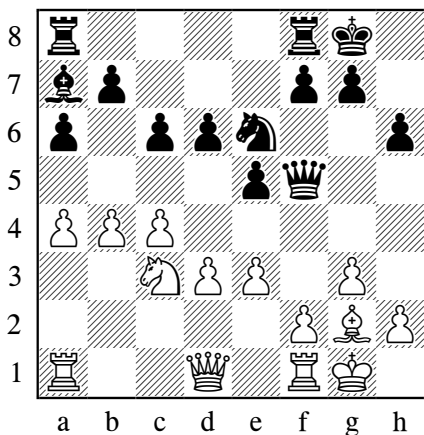


12...♘e6

After 12...♘f3† 13.♗xf3 the f5-bishop is hanging. 13...♙xd3 This does not bring any relief. 14.♘d5 ♙xf1 15.♗xf1 With a decisive attack.

12...g5 13.♙xg5 hxg5 14.exd4± leaves Black with many weaknesses.

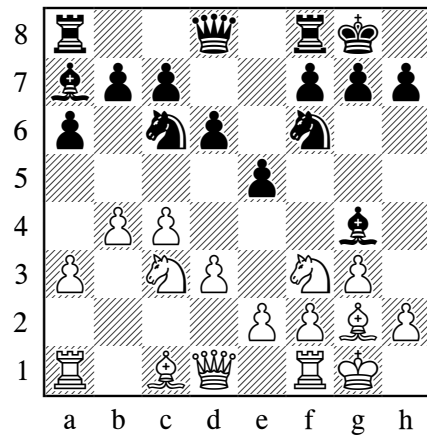
13.♙xf6 ♖xf6 14.♘h4 c6 15.♘f5 ♖xf5 16.a4±



Black's pieces are poorly coordinated, partly because the queen is awkwardly placed, while White's attack on the light squares develops naturally.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙c5 5.♘f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a3 ♙a7 9.b4)

A2) 9...♙g4



For a long time I feared that after this rarely played move White would have to play h2-h3, which is generally undesirable, as we already know. I discovered the tactics presented below only when preparing the material for this book.

10.♙g5!N

The reasons this standard manoeuvre is possible with the black bishop on g4 are less obvious than in the variation with 9...♙f5.

10...h6 11.♙h4 ♘d4

The other way to create the threat of ...g7-g5 is:

11...♙xf3 12.♙xf6!

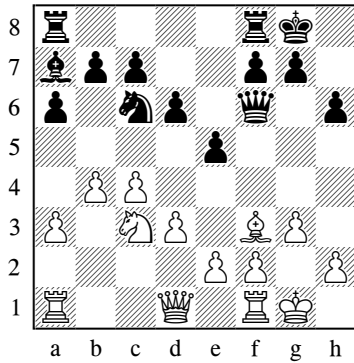
After this intermediate move White's control over the light squares is likely to be unchallenged.

12...♗xf6

12...♙xe2?! does not work because after 13.♙xd8 ♙xd1 14.♙xc7 ♙c2 White has

15.b5± putting the enemy queenside in danger.

13.♙xf3±



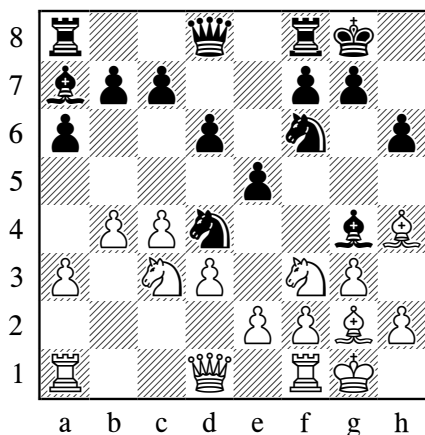
This certainly looks like a dream position for White, but does he have a real advantage? To reveal White's potential, we should continue the variation a few more moves.

13...♞ab8 14.♞b1 ♘d4 15.♙g2 c6 16.e3 ♘e6 17.a4 ♞e7 18.b5 ♞c7

Black proves that he is prepared to stand the queenside pressure.

19.♞f3±

White declares his intention to play on both wings. Apart from increasing the pressure against the c6-pawn, he plans to take control of the kingside light squares with g3-g4 followed by h2-h4, ♞f3-g3, ♙g2-e4, etc.



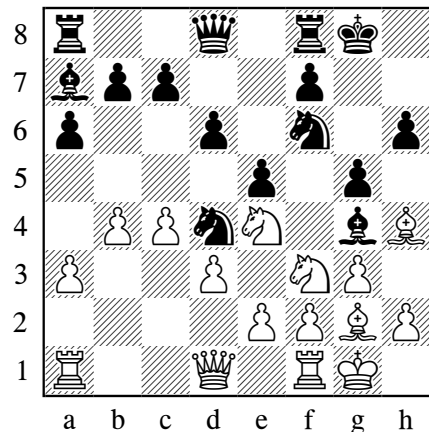
12.♘e4!

We shall understand later why this move should be preferred to the apparently more active 12.♘d5.

12...g5

This is the only way to question White's previous play, but it will put Black on the verge of disaster. Play now takes a fascinating course, requiring White to make a queen sacrifice.

The safer 12...♙xf3 fails to equalize after 13.♘xf6† ♞xf6 (It is generally desirable for Black to exchange queens to avoid major kingside dangers. 13...gxf6 14.♙xf3 ♘xf3† 15.exf3 ♙d4 16.♞a2 ♘g7 17.f4 ♞d7 18.♞f3± leaves White with very pleasant play.) 14.♙xf6 ♘xe2† 15.♘h1 ♘xg3† 16.fxg3 ♙xd1 17.♞axd1. Black now has the witty 17...♞ab8, preserving the b7-pawn and leaving White's extra bishop trapped, but after: 18.c5 gxf6 19.cxd6 cxd6 20.♞xf6± White retains strong pressure against both enemy wings. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops does not offer Black any relief, because his bishop is firing along on an empty diagonal.



13.♘fxg5!!

Although we have seen the sacrifice ♘f3xg5 before, the situation here is entirely different. Instead of a stable situation with an unpleasant pin, it leads to original play.

13...♖xe2†

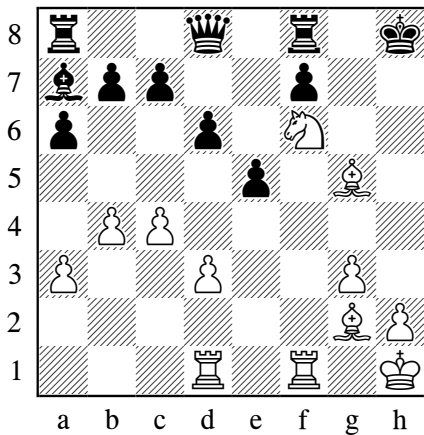
The operation initiated by this move is enabled by the bishop's presence on g4.

Had White played 12.♖d5, Black could have played 13...♖xd5, when 14.♖e4 would have been relatively best but not entirely satisfactory.

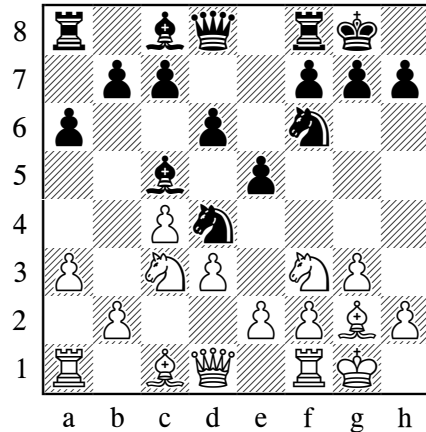
The way it is, capturing the knight with 13...♖xe4 can be met by 14.♖xe4. The positions from the two cases are almost identical, but in the latter situation Black's d5-knight is missing!

14.♖h1 ♖xg3† 15.fxg3!

The correct way of capturing, which opens the f-file for an attack.

15...♙xd1 16.♖xf6† ♔h8 17.♞axd1 hxg5 18.♙xg5±

The position has temporarily calmed down. Despite his material disadvantage, White has an irresistible attack. His next moves will be ♞f1-f5, ♞d1-f1, ♙g5-h4, ♙g2-e4 (perhaps after capturing on b7). The move order depends on Black's reactions. As a general rule, ...♞f8-g8 should be answered by ♙g5-h4 and ...♞d8-c8 by ♙g2-e4, preparing ♞f1-f5.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♖c6 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.♙g2 ♙c5 5.♖f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a3)**B) 8...♖d4**

Black clears a path for his c-pawn and invites White to simplify the position.

9.♖e1!

White avoids the exchange because the enemy knight is unstable in the centre.

Black has a choice between **B1) 9...c6** and **B2) 9...h6**.

(1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♖c6 3.♖c3 ♖f6 4.♙g2 ♙c5 5.♖f3 d6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 a6 8.a3 ♖d4 9.♖e1)**B1) 9...c6**