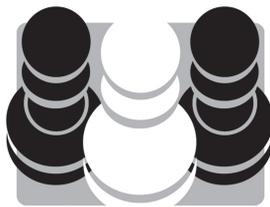


Grandmaster Repertoire

**1.e4 vs
The Sicilian I**

By

Parimarjan Negi



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Series Introduction

Several years ago, Nigel Short once gifted me an opening book with the wry comment, “I expect this doubles your chess library.” While that was a slight exaggeration, it is true that I never depended much on opening books for my theoretical knowledge. This scepticism for written material is often rooted in the fact that the modern openings are so fluid, constantly changing, with variations evolving every week. How can a static book keep pace with ideas that are developed, replaced, and forgotten on a weekly basis?

In this series, I aim to provide a foundation and structure around which you can develop a lifelong repertoire with 1.e4. I hope a good number of my recommendations will withstand the relentless assaults of time, but I am realistic enough to know that many of the bright novelties and variations will eventually wither away. However, even if some of the finer details will eventually have to be revised in the future, I believe that the core selection of recommended lines will remain valid for a long time to come.

There is a process by which I have developed my own repertoire, as laid out in this series. In several critical positions I have discussed the pros and cons of different options, and explained why I eventually chose one over the other. Apart from remembering the moves themselves, I hope you will also absorb something of this process, so that you will be able to find your own ideas to react to whatever new developments may come along.

The selection of recommended systems against Black’s various defences has followed a logical pattern, taking into account the structure of the whole repertoire. Throughout the process, I have aimed for active, fluid positions, sometimes sacrificing material but always remaining fundamentally sound. There are a number of long, forcing lines, which are necessary to justify any suggestion these days, but I have endeavoured to show that even seemingly abstract moves are still based on strategic, human principles. To make the best possible use of this book, I encourage you to pay attention to all such explanations, with the aim of building a framework of interconnected ideas in your own mind.

Parimarjan Negi
New Delhi, July 2014

Preface

In my first book, my aim was to present a repertoire built around an interlinked set of ideas, and the moves were often just an extension of the explanations and themes. You might notice some changes in style in the present volume – mostly because the opening being tackled here is a completely different type of beast.

I have tried a few different set-ups against the Najdorf, but the aggressive 6.g5 has always been my main weapon. It is one of the most concrete theoretical lines out there and, with the advent of correspondence databases and modern computers, it has been analysed to such astonishing depths that one may wonder if there is anything new to discover at all. Some of the lines are long, and I cannot promise to find a logical explanation for all of them, besides the simple fact that they do work.

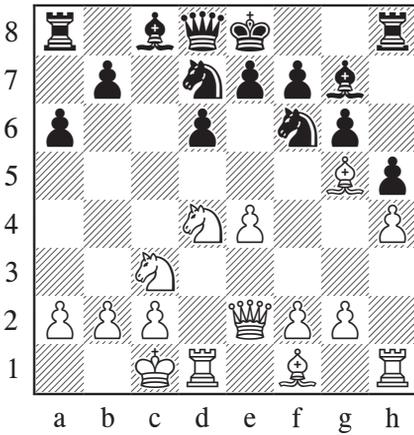
Despite the forcing, tactical nature of our subject, I am pleased to say it is not just about following the computer's suggestions. As you make your way through the book, you will find that the recommendations against different variations will fit together as a coherent whole. For instance, both the 6...b7 and 6...e6 7.f4 b7 lines are dealt with in a similar manner with e2. The queen move may not seem like the most natural response, but once you see the flow of development with 0–0–0 and f2-f4, followed by e4-e5 or g2-g4, you will realize that the two lines have many recurrent ideas, with White essentially trying to achieve the same goals.

The Poisoned Pawn stands alone as the most hotly-debated variation in the Najdorf. But despite thousands of games – many of them from the correspondence realm – there are a surprising number of new ideas waiting to be explored, and I have highlighted the most promising of the ones I discovered. It will always be hard to prove an advantage against the most precise, computer-generated defences, but the important thing is to realize that you can always pose new problems, even when the theory seems incredibly far advanced. And while a correspondence player with plentiful time and a powerful computer might navigate the pitfalls, it will be practically impossible for an over-the-board player to do the same.

This method of exploration is a constant process that does not have to end with this book. Sooner or later my new suggestions will be tested as well, but if you continue your investigations in a similar vein, you will discover your own original methods to pose problems for your opponents.

Several other variations have rich histories, but they are less challenging for us than the Poisoned Pawn. In most cases, White will build a powerful attack, and will be able to choose from a plethora of exciting options. I hope that after reading this book, you will not only understand how to handle the opening, but that you will also have an improved sense for the initiative and how to exploit it.

C2) 9...h5



At first it appears that White can just build a quick central initiative with f2-f4, followed by a pawn advance to e5 or f5, while if Black castles, the weaknesses caused by the ...h5 move might be felt. Initially the computer seemed to endorse that view, but then Nakamura played this way with Black, and showed that the above assessment might be unfounded. One important point is that f2-f4 will give Black the excellent g4-square for his knight, while any ♘d5 threats can be prevented by placing the other knight on b6.

10.♘b1

The idea of connecting this move with the rather striking novelty on the next turn is not something I came up with directly.

First I tried 10.f4N, with the idea of meeting 10...♖c7 with: 11.g4!? (11.♙b1 transposes to 11.f4 in the note to White's next move in the main line below.) The idea was to prevent Black's knights from using the g4-square, and I noticed that 11...hxg4 would run into the strong 12.h5!. (In this version White's f2-f4 move proves far more useful than ♘b1, as occurs in the main line.)

So far so good, but then I realized that Black had a good answer in 11...♘b6!, guarding

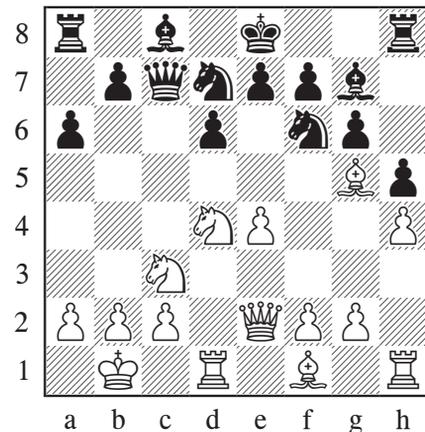
against any ♘d5 ideas, while the ...♙xg4 threat spoils White's plans completely. I analysed this a bit further but did not get anywhere, so I began to think of other ways to implement the g2-g4 idea. Ideally, we want to meet ...hxg4 with h4-h5, while avoiding the problems caused by a timely ...♘b6.

10...♖c7

10...b5? 11.♘c6! ♖c7 12.♘xe7 is a nasty trap.

10...♘b6? doesn't work either due to 11.e5±.

10...0-0?! is too committal, and after 11.f3→ White's kingside initiative will be swift.



11.g4!N

This seems like the ideal moment to go for the g2-g4 plan.

I found no advantage for White after the more obvious attacking try:

11.f4 ♘b6!

Again this knight move plays a key role in the defence. Now the critical move is obviously: 12.e5

12.f5 ♘g4! 13.♖h3 ♖c5 14.♘b3 ♖f2 15.♖d3 ♘e5 16.♖d4 ♖xd4 17.♘xd4 ♘c6 was fine for Black in Solak – Nakamura, Rhodes 2013.

12...dxe5

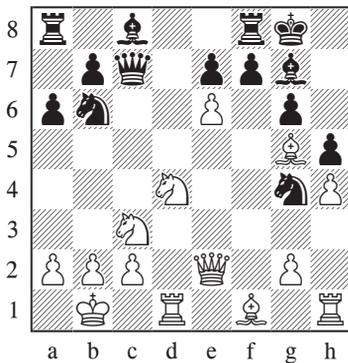
12...0-0?! gives White too many options, one example being 13.exf6 exf6 14.f5→.

13.fxe5 ♖g4!?

13...♗fd5 is safer, and 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.e6 0-0 16.♖c4 fxe6 17.♗xc7 ♗xc7 18.♗xe7 ♗e8 seems playable for Black. The main line also works well though.

14.e6 0-0

The position looks dangerous for Black, but it is hard to maintain the pawn on e6.



15.g3!?

15.exf7† ♗xf7∞

15...♗h8!

15...♗xd4 is met by 16.exf7† ♗xf7 17.♗xd4±, but now Black really is threatening to take on d4.

16.♗h3

16.exf7 e5! 17.♗b3 ♗f5 seems fine for Black.

16...♗xd4 17.♗xd4 ♗xe6 18.♗xg4 ♗xg4

19.♖xe7 ♖xe7 20.♗xe7 ♗fe8

White has no more than a faint initiative in the endgame.

Returning to the position after 11.g4!N, Black may try **C21) 11...♗b6** or **C22) 11...hxg4**.

C21) 11...♗b6

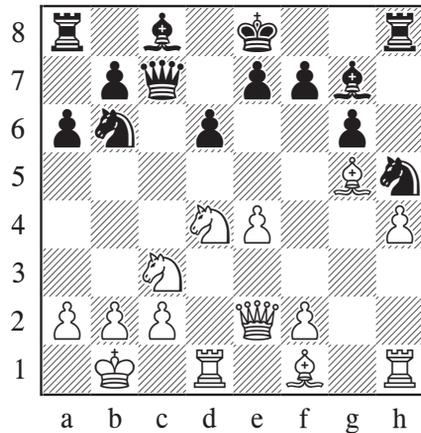
This is much less effective than it was in the similar position after 10.f4N ♖c7 11.g4!?. With the pawn back on f2 here, the prospect of a bishop arriving on g4 is far less annoying.

12.gxh5 ♗xh5

After 12...♗g4 13.f3 ♗xh5 14.♗h3± Black's bishop is stuck out of play.

12...♗xh5 13.♗f5! gxf5 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 15.♖xh5 ♗xc3 16.♗g1! White invades through the kingside.

The changed landscape on the kingside seems to favour White. Kingside castling is out of the question for Black, and White can improve his position in anticipation of plans involving ...0-0-0.



13.♗d5!?

White has more than one good way to continue. Another is:

13.♗g1 ♗d7 14.♗e3!?

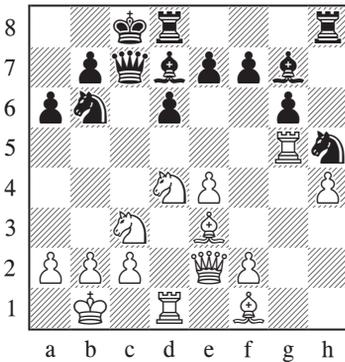
Anticipating long castling.

14...0-0-0

After 14...♗c8 15.f4 Black's king is permanently stuck in the centre, and White will prepare to break through, either along the g-file or with e4-e5. 15...♗c4 seems like the obvious try to get counterplay, but White can react powerfully with: 16.♗d5 ♖a5 17.♗g5! ♖a4 18.e5! e6 19.♗c1! dxe5 20.fxe5 exd5 21.e6 fxe6 22.♗xe6 ♗f7 23.♗h3±

15.♗g5!?

This move prepares a possible rook lift to a5! Another useful point is:



15...♙h6 16.♚f3!

If Black takes on g5, the knight recapture will give White more than enough compensation. This could be an interesting position to explore further, but since the main line gives White an edge by simpler means, there is no need to delve any deeper into it here.

13...♘xd5 14.exd5 ♘f6

14...0-0? is too dangerous due to 15.♙g2 followed by ♙f3, destroying the blockade on the kingside.

14...♙e5 15.♗e3 ♔f8 (15...f6 16.♙d3!±) 16.♙e2 followed by f2-f4 also looks grim for Black.

15.♙g2

It is not easy for Black to develop further, as his king will not be safe on either side of the board.

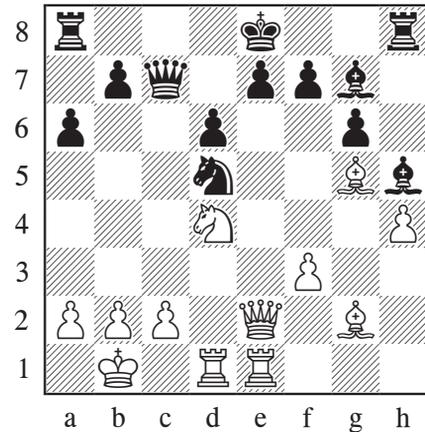
15...♙g4 16.f3 ♙h5

The bishop may be misplaced here, but it seems like the best try to stabilize the kingside to prepare castling.

17.♗he1 ♘xd5

This allows a nice tactical sequence. 17...0-0 is no better due to the simple 18.♗xe7±.

Objectively Black's best continuation may be 17...♔f8, although 18.♙h3± leaves White in control.



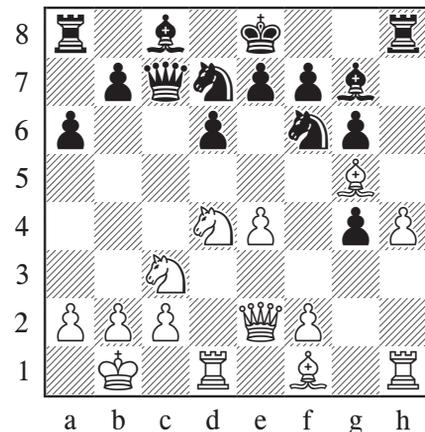
18.♙e6! fxe6 19.♗xe6 ♘b4

19...♘f6 20.♙xf6 ♙xf6 21.♗xf6 leaves Black's king in danger.

20.♗xe7† ♗xe7 21.♗xe7† ♔f8 22.♗xb7 ♘c6 23.♗xd6 ♘a5 24.♗b4±

White is close to winning. He has three pawns for a piece, his rooks are absolutely dominating, and the black knight is close to being trapped.

C22) 11...hxg4



12.h5!

The key idea. White is looking to create entry points for his knights.

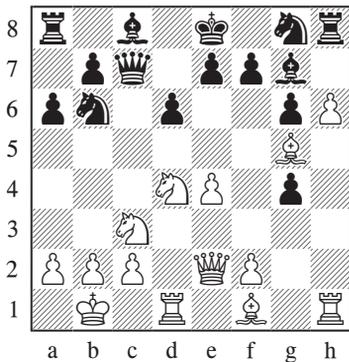
12...♗xh5

Other moves can be brushed aside with relative ease.

12...b5? 13.♔g2± creates threats on the long diagonal while defending the rook in preparation for hxg6.

12...gxh5 is similar to the main line, but keeping another pair of rooks on the board only serves White's purpose. 13.♘f5 ♕f8 14.f4!? (White can also play 14.♔g2 ♖b8 15.f4, by analogy with the main line.) 14...gxf3 15.♖xf3 ♘e5 16.♗f4 ♕xf5 17.exf5 White has a useful initiative. In the position without the rooks on h1 and h8, Black can get away with 17...0–0–0, but here it runs into 18.♕xf6 exf6 19.♘d5 ♖c6 20.♖h3! and White wins.

12...♘b6 13.h6! ♘g8 (13...♕f8 14.♕xf6±)



14.a4! White intends to chase away the knight and plonk his own horse on d5. (14.♗d2 ♕e5 also looks pretty good for White, but the position is messier.) 14...♕xh6 (14...e6? 15.hxg7! ♖xh1 16.♘db5!+–) 15.a5 ♘d7 16.♘d5±

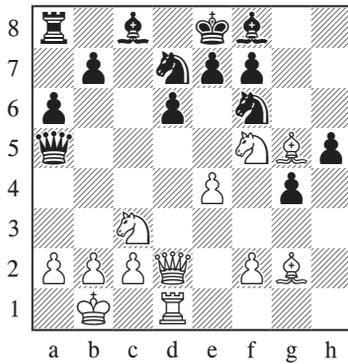
12...♖a5 13.♗d2!?

Other moves can be analysed, but this is the simplest.

13.h6 ♖xg5 14.hxg7 ♖xh1 15.♘d5 is a fun position to explore, but there is no need for it.

13...♖xh5 14.♖xh5 gxh5 15.♘f5 ♕f8
15...♕h8 16.♘xe7↑
16.♔g2

Compared with the main line below, the inclusion of the moves ...♖a5 and ♗d2 is clearly in White's favour. It is harder for Black to arrange ...e6, while White's queen move sets up attacking ideas involving ♕h6, or possibly even with ♖e1.



16...♖b8 17.f4

17.♖e1!? can also be considered.

17.e5 does not quite work: 17...♖xe5 18.♘xe7 ♕xe7 19.♖e1 ♖c5 20.♖xe7† ♕xe7 21.♘d5† ♕e6 White has many entertaining ways to give a perpetual, but the win proves elusive.

17...gxf3 18.♕xf3 b5

Otherwise it is hard to see the point behind putting the queen on a5 and rook on b8.

19.♗f4 b4 20.♘d5±

13.♖xh5 gxh5 14.♘f5

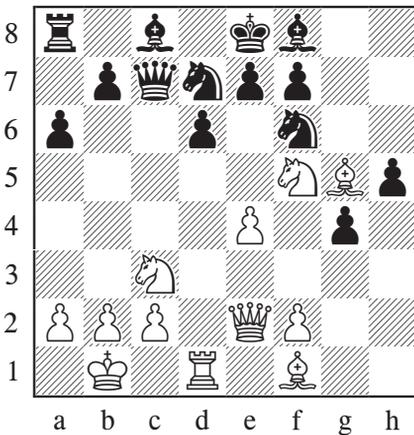
The knight is majestically placed here.

14...♕f8

There is nothing else. After 14...♕h8? 15.♘xe7! Black's position collapses, while 14...♕f8 is not much better after 15.♖e3!± followed by ♕h6.

We have reached a critical position. Retreating the bishop to f8 looks ugly of course, but

White needs to prove if his initiative is worth the flashy double pawn sacrifice. As you will see in the following lines, it will be hard for Black to untangle and complete his development, despite the existence of moves like ...e6 which seem so obvious. And even if Black manages to complete his development, it should not be too hard for White to recover the loose kingside pawns, so we are not taking too big a risk.



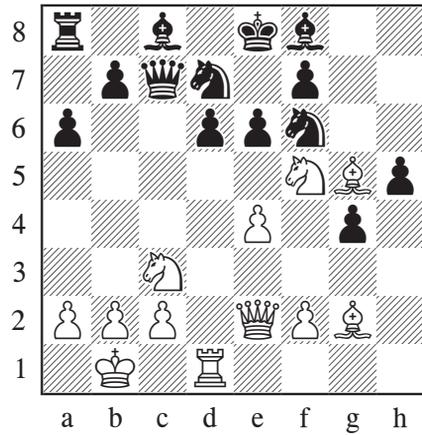
15.♙g2

This calm developing move prevents ...b5 and prepares f2-f4. It also prepares a nice way to deal with ...e6.

If White could establish a pawn on f4 then Black would be busted, but he can always take en passant of course. For example: 15.f4 gxf3 16.♖xf3 ♘e5 17.♖f4 ♙xf5 18.exf5 0-0-0 19.♙xf6 exf6 20.♘d5 ♖c6 21.♘xf6 ♖f3= I have included this line mainly to show that White is perfectly safe even when Black manages to complete his development, but of course we should make it as hard as possible for him to do this. Returning to the main line, Black has three main tries: **C221) 15...e6**, **C222) 15...♖b8** and **C223) 15...♖c5!**

15...♘b6? is more or less refuted by 16.♘xd6† exd6 17.♙xf6± followed by ♘d5.

C221) 15...e6



This is the first logical move to consider. Retreating the knight doesn't seem too inspiring, but we can do better.

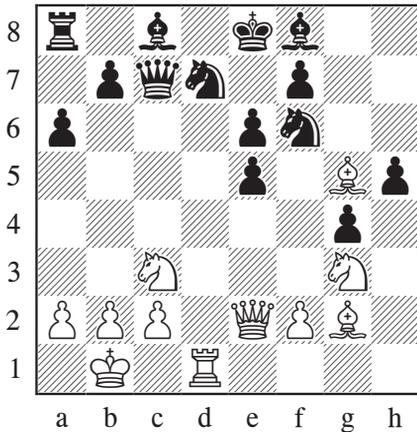
16.e5!

This is particularly effective after Black has committed to ...e6, as there will be more open lines around his king.

16.f4!? is quite a sweet idea too, but it will most probably transpose to the later variation C223: 16...gxf3 (16...exf5 17.exf5† ♙e7 18.♖e1 ♖d8 19.♙d5! followed by ♖c4 is an amazing example of domination.) 17.♙xf3 ♖c5 This position is covered later via the move order 15...♖c5 16.f4 gxf3 17.♙xf3 e6. (Black had better avoid 17...♘g4 18.e5! ♘gxe5 19.♙xh5→, or 17...exf5 18.exf5† ♙e7 19.♙xh5→.)

16...dxe5 17.♘g3

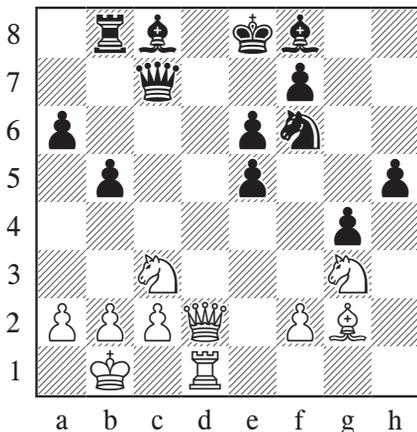
Now we're three pawns down! But all of our pieces are participating in the game, which certainly cannot be said about the opposition. Black's position is incredibly difficult, and it is hard to play even single moves, while White's tactical options abound. Here are a few illustrative lines.

**17...Bb8**

17...♞h7 18.♙h4 f5 19.♜xh5 ♖f7 20.f3!± and White opens up the kingside.

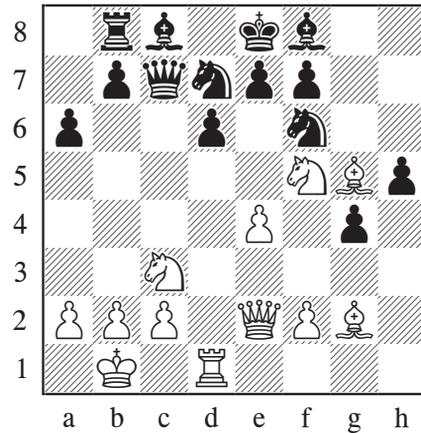
17...♙e7 18.♞d2! ♞b8 19.♙xf6! ♜xf6 20.♞h6+– and White just wins the knight.

17...♞b6 can be met by 18.♜a1♞, avoiding any tricks and asking Black how he intends to develop his pieces.

18.♞d2 b5 19.♙xf6! ♜xf6

20.♙c6†! ♜d7 21.♙xd7† ♞xd7 22.♞g5 ♞e7 23.♞xe5 ♞b6 24.♜c4±

White is absolutely dominating.

C222) 15...Bb8

This seems like a natural way to continue development. Now we have a pleasant choice between a forcing continuation and a more patient one.

16.f4

The more violent option is 16.e5!? ♜xe5 (16...dxe5 17.♞e3 is more dangerous for Black) 17.♜xd6† exd6 18.♙xf6 ♙e6. White has excellent compensation here, but it wasn't easy to prove an advantage against the computer. The position can be explored further, but I tend to prefer the more measured build-up.

16...gxf3

It is hard to imagine Black tolerating the pawn on f4. For instance, if 16...e6 then 17.♞e1!?!↑ leaves him facing too many tactical threats involving e4-e5.

17.♙xf3 b5

17...e6 allows a familiar response: 18.e5! dxe5 19.♜g3± White has an even better version of variation C221 above.

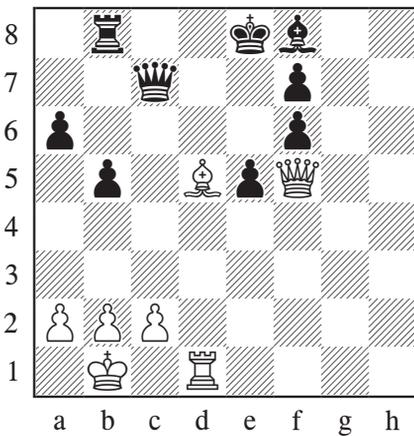
17...♞c5 is covered under the move order 15...♞c5 16.f4 gxf3 17.♙xf3 ♞b8 – see the notes to Black's 17th move in variation C223 below.

18.e5!? dxe5

18...♗xe5 19.♗xd6† exd6 20.♗xf6 ♕e6 21.♗xe5 dxe5 22.♗d5 (22...♗d5!?) 22...♗xd5 23.♗xd5 gives White a long-term initiative, which is only enhanced by the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

19.♗d5 ♗xd5 20.♗xd5 ♗f6 21.♗xf6 exf6 22.♗xh5 ♗xf5 23.♗xf5

Compared with the last note, Black has a more compact structure with a pawn on f6 instead of h5. Nevertheless, White keeps a persistent initiative. A possible continuation is:



23...♖b6 24.♗xf7†!

An important detail.

24...♗xf7 25.♖d7† ♗xd7 26.♗xd7†±

Black will have to work hard to construct a reliable fortress in the endgame.

C223) 15...♕c5!

This seems like the best defensive move, cutting out the e4-e5 tricks. The queen is better on c5 than on a5, since the future plan of ...♖b8 and ...b5 will not cut the queen off from the centre.

16.f4

This is the simplest way to continue, but there are a lot of other more sophisticated

methods as well. I will mention a few of the more interesting possibilities that could be explored more deeply:

16.♗h4 e6 17.♖e1! is an ambitious try. White may even follow up by putting a second knight en prise on d5.

After 16.♖e1 e6 I found nothing better than 17.♗d2 transposing to 16.♗d2 below.

An extremely complicated position results from:

16.♗d2!? e6

16...♖b8 17.♗e3 ♗a5 18.♗h6

17.♖e1

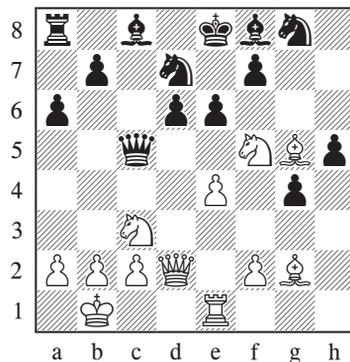
How should Black continue his development?

17...♗g8!

A most unnatural defence for a human, but probably necessary since it frees the d7-knight and avoids being hit by e4-e5.

17...exf5? 18.exf5† ♗d8 19.♗d5 ♗g7 20.b4! wins.

The logical 17...♖b8 runs into our typical, beautiful idea of 18.e5!! dxe5 19.♖d1! ♗c7 20.♗g3 when Black is completely tied down.



18.♗e3 ♗c7

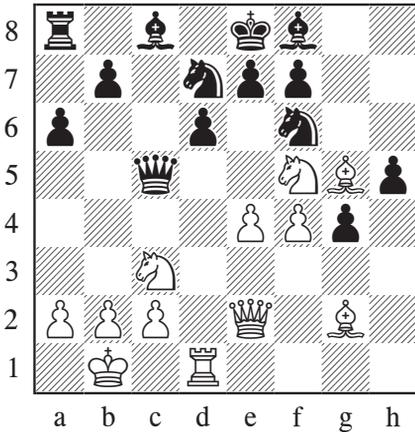
There are various options that deserve attention here. One possible continuation is:

19.f4 gxf3

19...♗gf6 20.♗d4†

20. ♖xf3 ♜e5 21. ♖g2!? ♜f6 22. ♜g7† ♖xg7
23. ♖xg7

White has a strong initiative with pressure on the dark squares.



16...gxf3

16... ♖b8?! gives White a few good options, the simplest being: 17. ♜xd6†! exd6 18. e5 dxe5 19. fxe5 ♜h7 20. ♖f4±

17. ♖xf3 e6

This seems like the most logical way, as Black has to try and get rid of the knight.

After 17... ♖e5 18. ♖h4† the queen will easily be driven away, so Black's last move doesn't have much point.

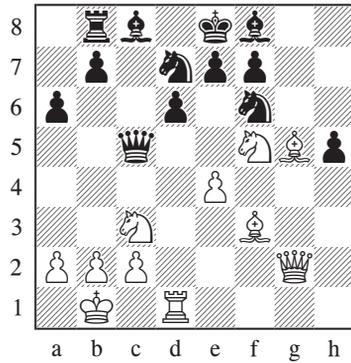
17... ♜e5 18. ♖xf6 exf6 19. ♜d5± is excellent for White.

17...♖b8

This move prepares ...b5-b4, but it gives White a lot of time. I like the idea of invading on the kingside with:

18. ♖g2!
18. ♖xh5!? is also quite dangerous. 18...e6 19. ♖e3 (19. ♜d5 often runs into the following defence: 19...exd5 20. exd5† ♜e5! 21. ♖xf6 ♖xf5 22. ♖xe5 ♖xc2† 23. ♖xc2 ♖xc2† 24. ♜xc2 dxe5) 19... ♖e5 20. ♖d4

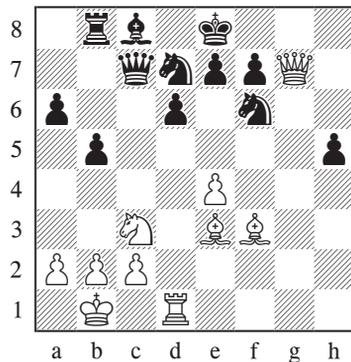
♖f4 21. ♖f1 ♖g5 22. ♖f3 ♜e5 (22...exf5 23. e5!±) 23. ♖e3 ♖g6 24. ♖g1 ♖h7 25. ♖g5 ♜fd7 26. ♖h5 The analysis can continue, but White clearly has the initiative.



18...b5

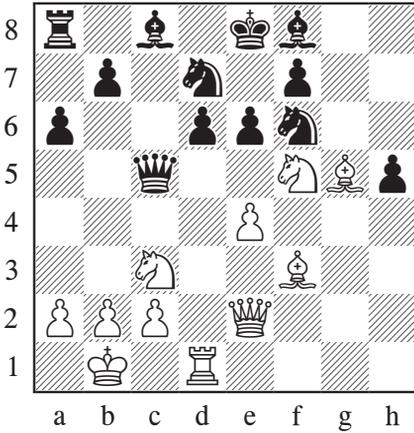
Black is not helped by 18...e6 19. ♖e3 ♖e5 20. ♜g7†±.
19. ♖e3 ♖c7
19... ♖e5 20. ♖d4 ♖e6 21. ♜e2! ♖b7 22. ♜f4 ♖c4 23. b3 ♖c6 24. ♖d3±
20. ♜g7† ♖xg7
20... ♜d8 21. ♜xh5±
21. ♖xg7

Now White gets an excellent initiative on the dark squares:



21... ♜e5 22. ♖d4! ♜xf3
Or 22...b4 23. ♖xe5 bxc3 24. b3 ♖e6 25. ♖d4 intending e4-e5.
23. ♖h8† ♜d7 24. ♖xf6 exf6 25. ♖xf6 ♜e5 26. ♖xe5±

Let's return to the more critical 17...e6.



18.♙e3!

Other moves such as 18.♙xh5 and 18.♞f1 lead to interesting play, but the text move is the most critical.

18...♞e5

18...♞c7 19.♘g3 (19.♘h6!? is a dangerous alternative.) 19...♘e5 (19...h4 20.♘h5 ♘xh5 21.♙xh5 ♘e5 [21...♘f6 22.♙g5!↑] 22.♞f2±) 20.♘h5 ♘xh5 21.♙xh5 ♙d7 22.♞f2! Black still cannot castle due to ♙b6, while 22...♙c6 is met by 23.♞f1± intending ♙g5, maintaining the pressure.

19.♘h6!?

Creating a lot of tactical tricks, so Black is practically forced to give up his crucial dark-squared bishop. A few other moves are also promising to explore further:

19.♙d4 ♞f4 20.♞f1!? exf5 21.exf5† ♔d8 22.♞c4 leads to some crazy complications; White may indeed have excellent compensation, but there's no need to sacrifice a piece.

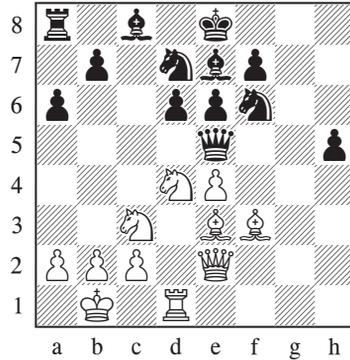
19.♘d4

This nondescript move also gives White decent compensation. Black has a lot of options, so I'll settle for giving a few sample lines.

19...♙e7

19...b5 20.♘c6±

19...♘g4 20.♙xg4 hxg4 21.♞xg4 It is not easy for Black to complete development while keeping White's pieces from invading through the kingside.



20.♞g1!? ♘g4

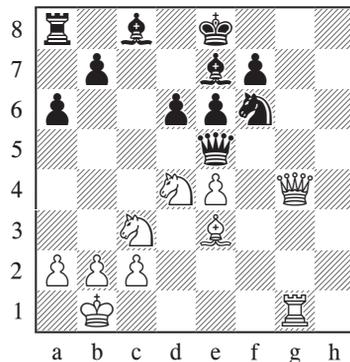
Or 20...♞a5 21.♞g5 ♞c7 22.♙xh5 ♘e5 23.♘f3 and White keeps some initiative.

21.♙xg4 hxg4 22.♞xg4

This might look okay for Black, but he is still under some pressure. Particularly the black queen finds it hard to find a safe haven.

22...♘f6

22...♞h8 23.♞g2! leads to strong threats: 23...♙f6 24.♘f5! exf5 25.♘d5 ♘c5 26.♞g8† ♞xg8 27.♞xg8† ♘d7 28.♘xf6† ♘c6 29.exf5 b5 30.♞f8±

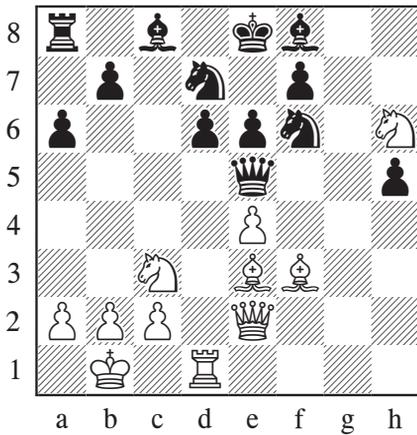


23.♞g7! ♙f8

23...♙d7 24.♞h8†+-

24. ♖g2 ♙d7 25. ♗de2!

Black has annoying problems in the centre.

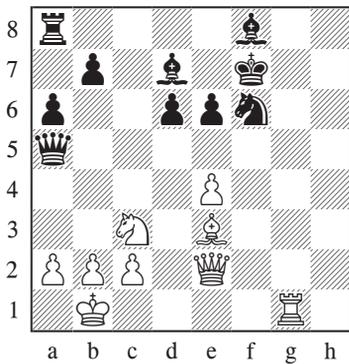


19... ♙xh6

After 19... ♙e7 20. ♖g1! Black's queen is being shooed away: 20... ♖a5 21. ♗xf7! ♙xf7 22. ♖g5 ♖c7 23. ♙xh5+–

19...b5 allows the same type of sacrifice: 20. ♗xf7! ♙xf7 21. ♙d4 ♖f4 22. e5 dxe5 23. ♙e3±

19... ♖a5 20. ♖g1! ♗e5 21. ♙xh5 (21. ♗g8!? ♗xg8 22. ♖xg8 ♙d7 23. ♖f2♞ is also unpleasant for Black.) 21... ♙d7 22. ♗xf7 ♗xf7 23. ♙xf7+ ♙xf7



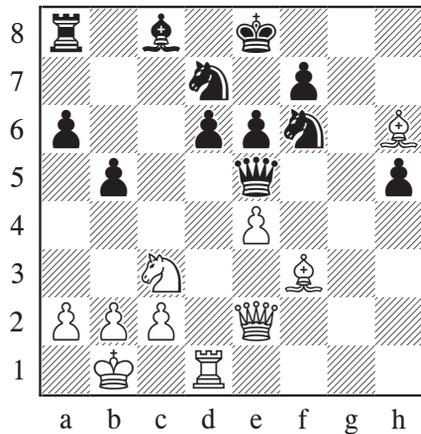
24.e5! ♖xe5 (24...dxe5 25. ♖f1!±) 25. ♖g5± The black queen is trapped rather spectacularly in the middle of the board!

20. ♙xh6

Now Black's dark squares are glaringly weak. As long as he doesn't escape with ...0–0–0, he will continue to suffer.

20...b5

Or 20... ♖g3 21. ♖f1 ♗e5 22. ♖d1!? ♗xf3 23. ♖xf3 ♖g6 24. ♙c1 and Black will struggle to defend his dark squares.



21. ♖g1!

Most other moves allow Black to complete his queenside development and get castled.

21.a3 ♙b7 22. ♖d2 0–0–0! 23. ♙f4 ♖c5 24. ♙xd6 ♗e5! 25. ♙xc5 ♖xd2 26. ♖xd2 ♗xf3 27. ♖d3 ♗xe4 would be fine for Black.

21. ♙e3 ♙b7 22. ♙d4 ♖f4 gives White nothing better than repeating with 23. ♙e3.

21...b4

21... ♙b7 22. ♖g5±

22. ♗d1 ♖b8

22...a5? 23. ♖g5 ♖d4 24.e5 wins for White.

After 22... ♗g4 23. ♙xg4 hxg4 24. ♖xg4♞ the weak dark squares make Black's position unpleasant.

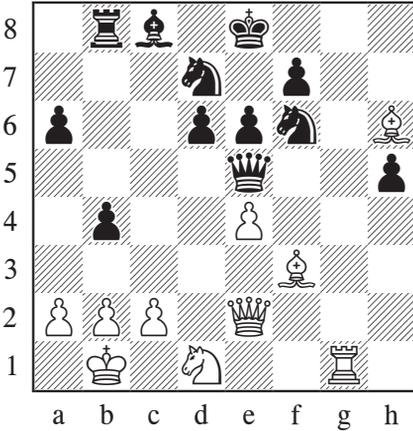
The text move abandons all hope of castling, leaving White with several ways to develop his initiative.

26...♘eg4

26...♙b7 27.♖g8†±

27.♙xg4 ♘xg4 28.♖h7!? ♚b5 29.♚d2♞

We have gone a bit deeper than necessary, but the general picture is clear: White has enduring compensation and Black must defend with great care.



23.♖g5

White can also go for 23.♖g7!? immediately, for instance: 23...♙b7 24.♖f2 ♚b5 25.♖d3♞ and there is no easy way for Black to solve his problems.

23...♚d4 24.♖g7 ♘e5

24...♙b7 25.♙e3! ♚e5 26.♖g5 traps the queen.

25.♙e3 ♚c4 26.♚g2

