

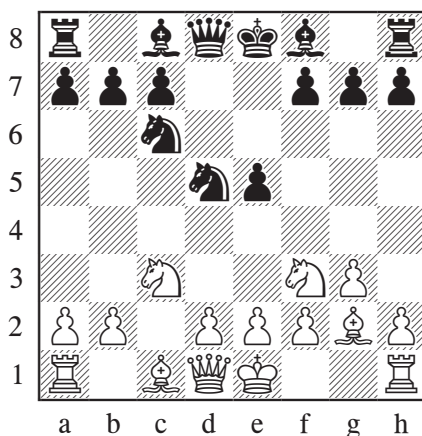
Appendix

The following appendix was compiled by the author two months after the publication of the book in August 2023. Thanks to those who sent questions and comments on the first edition of the book, as well as for the warm comments and five star reviews!

Chapter 1

Reversed Dragon Updates – Move 6 Alternatives

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♗f3 ♗f6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♗xd5 6.♙g2



In this position I only examined the most popular 6...♗b6 (apart from 6...♙c5, which is considered in Chapter 2). The point of the knight retreat is to stop White from playing d2-d4 too easily. There are a few other options which we can examine briefly.

6...♗xc3

6...♗de7?! seems a strange choice. 7.b4!? is one promising continuation.

6...♙e6?! is well met by 7.0–0 when d2-d4 is hard to stop. For instance: 7...♙e7 (7...♙c5?! 8.♗xe5! is even worse for Black; 7...♗b6 transposes to the 7...♙e6 line given in the notes on page 30, where we see that 8.d4! is strong.) 8.d4 exd4 9.♗b5 White will recapture on d4 next, with an obvious advantage. (9.♗xd4 is also promising.)

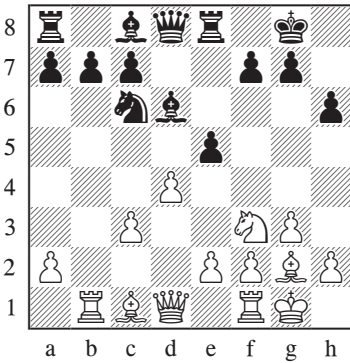
7.bxc3

White's advantage is not huge; but at the same time, there are reasons why most players have avoided exchanging on c3 in these positions (or on c6 in the Sicilian Dragon). The c3-pawn controls d4, supporting our central advance as well as stopping any future ...♗d4 ideas. As a bonus, we will have an open b-file to work with.

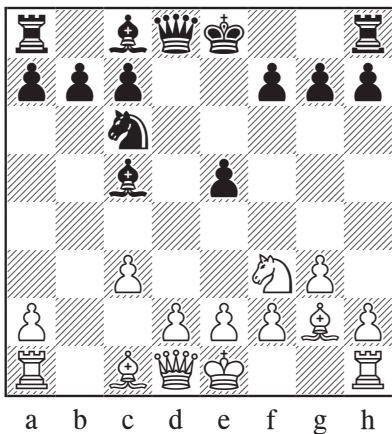
7...♙c5

7...e4 8.♘g1 f5 9.♘h3 is promising for White, who will castle and break up the enemy centre with d2-d3.

7...♙d6 doesn't change much. 8.0-0 0-0 9.d4 ♜e8 10.♞b1 h6



11.♞e1!? Next comes e2-e4. A correspondence game continued 11...♞f6 12.e4 ♙g4 13.♞xb7 ♙xf3 14.♞xf3 ♞xf3 15.♙xf3 exd4 16.cxd4 ♘xd4 17.♙g4 when White kept an edge due to the better structure and the pair of bishops in Kostner – Pulghc, corr. 2022.



8.♙b2!?

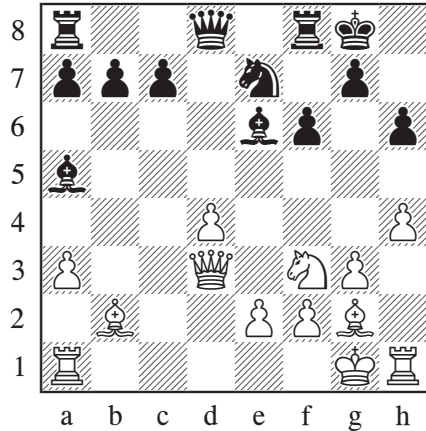
Insisting on the d2-d4 advance.

8.0-0 also offers chances for an edge.

8...0-0 9.d4 exd4 10.cxd4 ♙b4† 11.♙f1 ♙e6

White has a superb pawn centre, and just needs to unravel on the kingside.

12.h4! h6 13.♞d3 f6 14.a3 ♙a5 15.♙g1 ♘e7



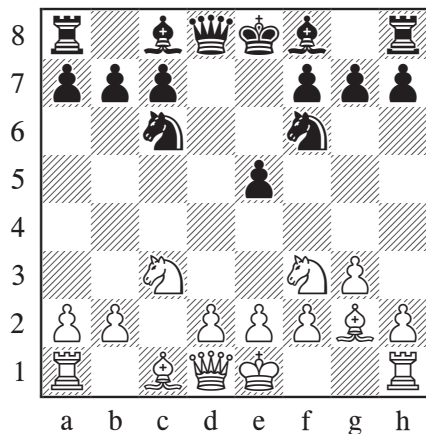
16.♙c3!? ♙xc3 17.♞xc3 c6 18.♙h2 ♞d7 19.♞ac1 ♞ad8 20.♞he1

White had an obvious advantage in Stockfish – Komodo, engine game 2021.

Chapter 1

Reversed Dragon updates – 6...♘f6!?

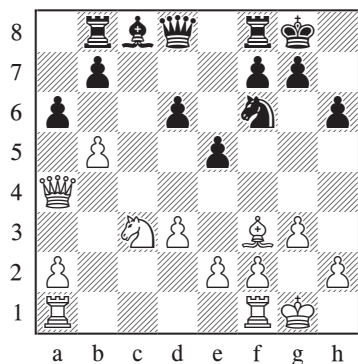
1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.♙g2 ♘f6!?



This is a relatively rare set-up, but several top players have tested it. Most notably, Carlsen used it to challenge Prag's English during the recent World Cup in Baku.

7.0-0

7.b4!? was the choice of India's big prospect to win a future World Championship. He seemed to be excellently prepared, following the top engine recommendation for quite some time: 7...♙d6 8.b5 ♘d4 9.♚a4 ♘xf3† 10.♙xf3 0-0 11.0-0 a6 12.d3 h6 13.♙a3 ♖b8 14.♙xd6 cxd6



This position was reached in Praggnanandhaa – Carlsen, Baku 2023, and now 15.♖fb1!N would have maintained some pressure for White.

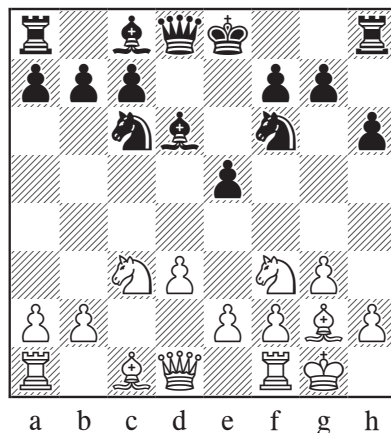
7...h6!

A deep prophylactic move! Black recognizes the need to protect against a ♙g5 pin as soon as White moves the d-pawn. By playing a useful move now, Black deprives White of the possibility of playing d2-d4 in one go.

7...♙d6?! 8.d4! gives us exactly what we want.

It should also be noted that 7...♙c5 is a mistake due to 8.b4!, when 8...♙xb4 9.♘xe5! is a typical tactic.

8.d3 ♙d6

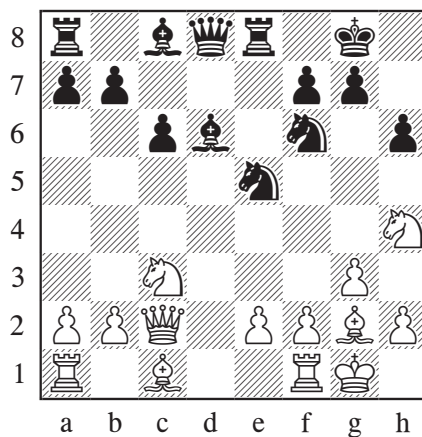


9.d4!

Still, that's what we want to do. Despite losing a full tempo, White obtains a comfortable small edge.

9...0-0 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.♘h4!? c6 12.♚c2 ♜e8

This position was reached in Puranik – Iniyani, Pune 2023. My suggestion would be:



13.♞d1N ♚e7 14.h3

We have reached our desired structure with a central pawn majority, and Black may have to cede the bishop pair after the knight goes to f5.

14.b3!? is a good alternative.

Bonus Chapter – Queen’s Indian

Introduction

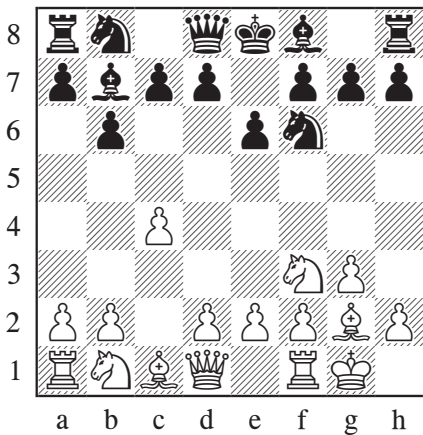
1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 b6

The fact that this move did not appear in the book was embarrassing for all concerned! I actually wrote a small chapter covering this move, but somehow failed to include it when delivering the rest of my files, and my editor also overlooked the omission. With this update, we will rectify the situation as best we can.

In the theoretical section we will also cover 3...a6 preparing ...b5.

4.♙g2 ♗b7 5.0–0

Our first few moves are easy enough. Now if Black plays 5...c5 we reach a Hedgehog, but we need to think about Black’s other main option:



5...♗e7

Black develops flexibly, inviting a transposition to a Queen’s Indian main line.

6.d4

As in some other places in this book, I am happy to transpose to a 1.d4 opening when the time is right. In the case of the Queen’s Indian,

we benefit from having avoided the popular and resilient 4.g3 ♗a6 variation.

6.b3 0–0 7.♗b2 is recommended in some repertoire books, and now 7...c5 is my first concern. Transposing to a Hedgehog with a quick d2-d4 would no longer suit us, as we have committed our bishop to b2. (As you will recall from Chapter 7, we prefer to develop this bishop to g5.) Instead, 8.e3 d5 9.♖e2 is the usual way for White to handle this line. Next comes ♗d1 and maybe d2-d4. This is a reasonable system which you may wish to explore further, although I don’t think believe that Black has any major problems. (9.cxd5 ♘xd5 seems solid for Black; I couldn’t find a strong idea for White here.)

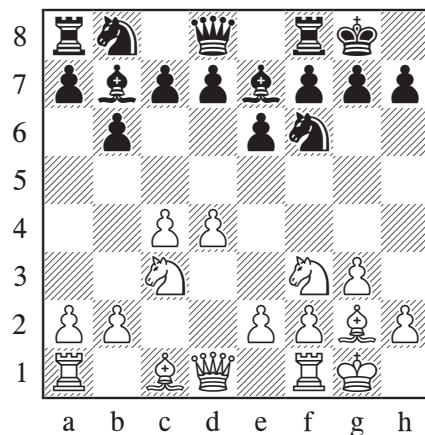
6...0–0

We have reached an important crossroads. Let’s review the main options to understand the pros and cons of each one, before getting to the one I am recommending.

Natural Development – 7.♘c3

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 b6 4.♙g2 ♗b7 5.0–0 ♗e7 6.d4 0–0 7.♘c3

Developing the knight is the most natural and popular continuation. Black’s idea is to meet it with:



7...♘e4!

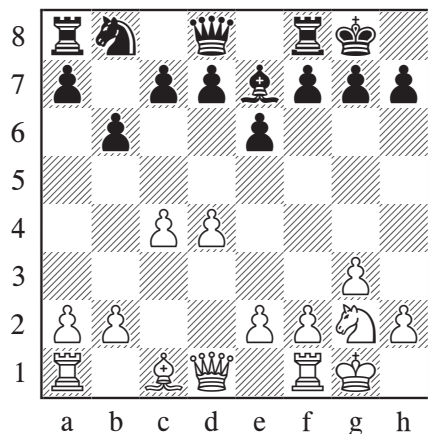
It is important for Black to play this before White takes further action, such as blocking the b7-bishop with d4-d5, or taking control over the e4-square with ♖c2. After the text move White can play moves such as 8.♙d2 or 8.♖c2 and have chances for a small edge, but it has to be said that exchanging a minor piece is helpful for Black, who lacks space. If we were to reach this position, then my recommendation would be:

8.♗xe4 ♙xe4 9.♗h4!?

It might sound counterintuitive after the above comment regarding piece exchanges, but exchanging two sets of minor pieces might actually be advantageous for White!

9...♙xg2 10.♗xg2

This line used to be favoured by classical players like Andersson and Petrosian. One of the points of White's play is that Black has two main pawn breaks in these positions – ...c5 and ...d5 – and after exchanging these two sets of pieces, both of those pawn breaks become less effective.

**10...d5**

This is the main line.

10...c5 11.d5! gives White some edge, with the knight heading for f4 at some point.

A move like 10...d6 allows 11.e4 when White takes over the centre.

11.♖a4! ♖d7

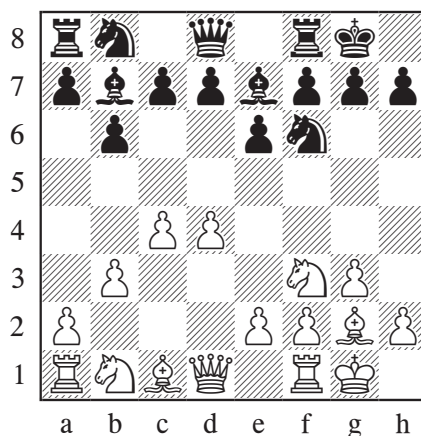
11...dxc4 12.♖xc4 c5 was Karpov's usual choice. The position is close to equal, but just marginally more comfortable for White after 13.♙e3 or 13.dxc5.

12.♖xd7 ♗xd7 13.cxd5 exd5 14.♙e3

White will place the knight on f4 and rooks on d1 and c1, with a small but safe edge. I could have made this my main recommendation, but I could not help feeling that it should be possible to put a bit more pressure on Black by delaying the development of the knight to c3, avoiding early simplifications. Of course, the idea of postponing ♗c3 is nothing new, and players have been testing various other moves for decades. See the following segment for an example.

A Patient Approach – 7.b3

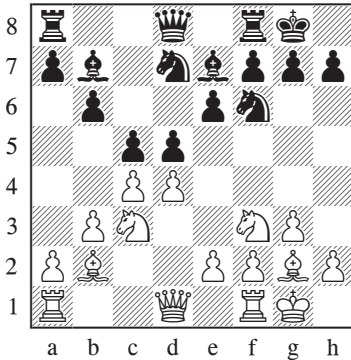
1.c4 ♗f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.g3 b6 4.♙g2 ♙b7 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.d4 0-0 7.b3



This move is favoured by some English Opening experts. This would be a convenient way to avoid a lot of Queen's Indian theory, but the move that spoiled it for me was:

7...c5!

The main line is 7...d5 8.♘c3 ♘bd7 9.♙b2 c5, and now the big idea for White is:



10.♗e1! This is indeed lovely. White practically forces a weakness on Black's camp. You cannot help falling in love with this idea when you see it, but unfortunately Black has a better option on move 7, to which we will now return.

8.dxc5!?

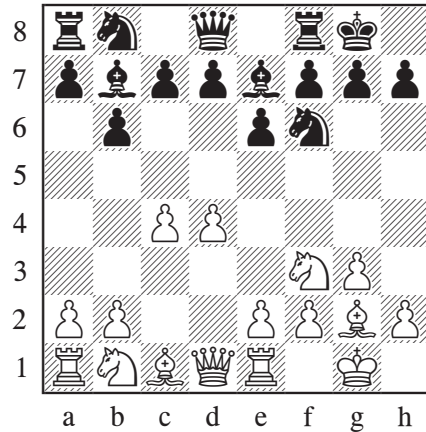
In the event that you wish to investigate 7.b3 a bit more, this is the move I would recommend looking at. Obviously White can also maintain the tension in some way, but in that case you are likely to reach a line of the Hedgehog that falls outside our repertoire.

8...bxc5

The asymmetrical pawn structure should lead to dynamically balanced positions, which I suspect to be slightly easier to play for White – or it might be my biased self talking. I'll let you decide for yourself.

Looking at the Centre – 7.♞e1

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.g3 b6 4.♙g2 ♙b7 5.0–0 ♙e7 6.d4 0–0 7.♞e1



This is pretty smart! Even though White is still not threatening e2-e4 yet, there are all sorts of scenarios in which the rook can play a useful role on this square.

7...d5

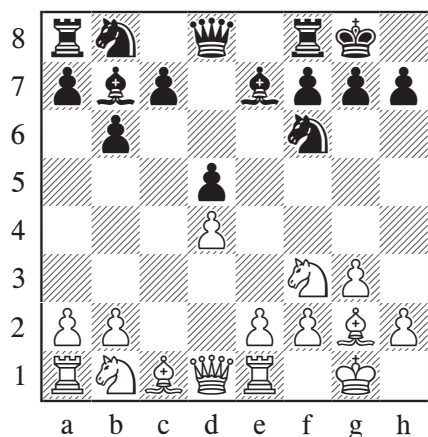
This is the main line.

Black has tried practically every possible alternative at some point. We will not go into details at this stage, but I would like to draw your attention to one interesting option: 7...♗e4! This used to be considered a mistake because of 8.♗fd2, and that was one of the main arguments in favour of 7.♞e1. Chess is never simple though, and I was surprised to discover that correspondence players have been defending this line for Black! The main line continues 8...d5 9.cxd5 exd5 10.♗xe4 dxe4 11.♘c3 f5 12.♙f4 ♙d6 when Black has decent counterplay and White has struggled to prove anything – although I should also point out that the engines evaluate the position somewhere in the region of +0.15 to +0.20, depending on which particular engine you use and the search depth. Let's call the position a small edge for White, but acceptable for Black.

8.cxd5 exd5

Remember that 8...♞xd5? only makes sense when there is a knight on c3. Here, 9.e4 makes the black knight look silly.

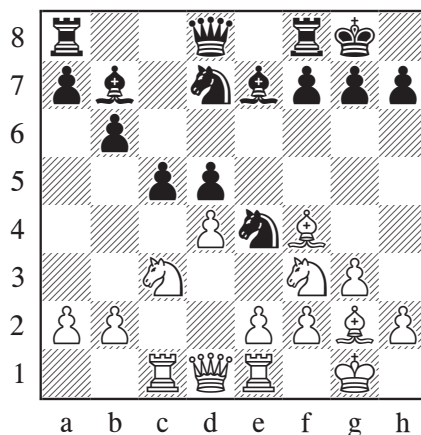
In the Queen's Indian, the positions arising after Black plays ...d5 deserve a book of their own. Kasparov, among others, has written extensively about them. The main line continues:

**9.♞c3 ♞bd7 10.♙f4 c5**

In these lines, the rook on e1 is not particularly useful. Obviously that's not the end of the story: White can argue that this central structure offers chances for an advantage, and that it was worth playing the suboptimal ♖e1 move to provoke the ...d5 advance. Nevertheless, Black does seem to be okay with precise play. One important line continues:

11.♞c1 ♞e4!

Practice and analysis has shown that Black gets enough counterplay. It is important to understand that White cannot conveniently consolidate the centre.

**12.e3?**

12.dxc5 is the main line, when 12...♞xc3 13.♞xc3 bxc5 is safe for Black.

12.♞xe4 dxe4 13.♞d2 ♞f6 is also known to offer Black enough counterplay.

The text move would be a desirable way to strengthen White's centre, but it has a serious flaw:

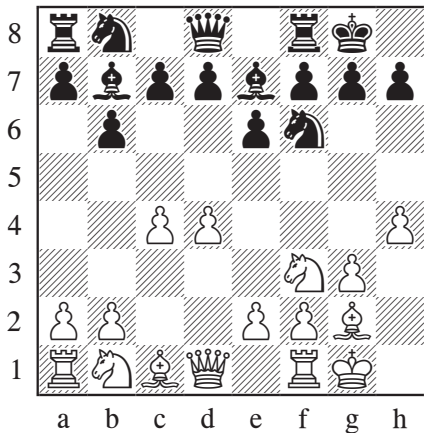
12...g5!

White must lose material for insufficient compensation.

The more I studied these lines, the more I saw that the engines were recommending a move which safeguarded the bishop on f4.

A Modern Solution – 7.h4!?

1.c4 ♖f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.g3 b6 4.♙g2 ♘b7 5.0–0
 ♚e7 6.d4 0–0 7.h4!?



I became extremely enthusiastic when I realized how interesting this cool move is! In the early stages of preparing this update, I wrote a Twitter thread on it. Although many strong players offered their opinions, most of which expressed scepticism, I am still convinced that the move is strong!

Further details will be given in the Theory Section, but for now I will just show why the typical advice of “respond to a flank advance by taking action in the centre” will not turn out well for Black in this instance.

7...d5?! 8.cxd5 exd5 9.♖c3 c5 10.♙f4 gives us a better version of the 7.♙e1 line; indeed, we have already seen how White must watch out for a timely ...g5 in this structure, so that explains why h2-h4 is a useful move. I will provide a few more details in the theoretical part.

7...c5?! is the other obvious pawn break but 8.d5 exd5 9.♗h2! is a great way to make use of the h2-h4 move. See the relevant note in the theoretical section for further details

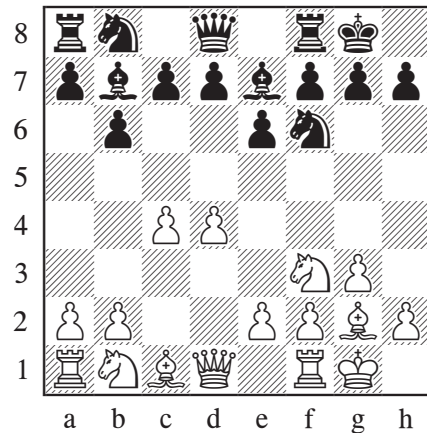
showing that White has an excellent version of a Modern Benoni.

Theory Section

1.c4 ♖f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.g3

We will analyse the Queen’s Indian set-up with A) 3...b6, followed by the less common B) 3...a6.

A) 3...b6 4.♙g2 ♘b7 5.0–0 ♚e7 6.d4 0–0

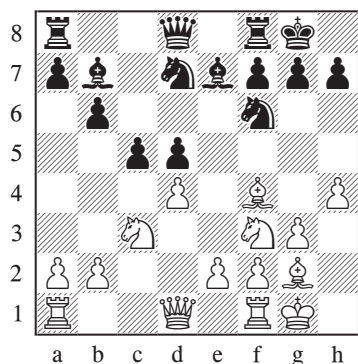


7.h4!?

As explained in the introduction, I really like this modern move! White keeps a range of options open, and it is surprising how often the pawn on h4 turns out to be useful.

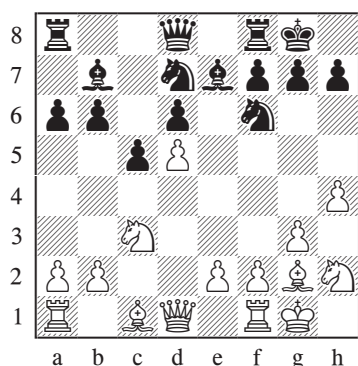
Although more games are being played from this position, there is still not really any established ‘theory’. It seems to me that **B1)** 7...h6 and **B2)** 7...c6 are Black’s most solid and possibly best continuations, so I will take these two moves as the main lines. First, let’s see how to deal with some other possibilities.

7...d5?! is a move we should be happy to see. 8.cxd5 exd5 (8...♗xd5 9.♙e1! threatens e2-e4, and if 9...♗f6 we can play 10.♗c3 with an excellent position.; 8...♙xd5 9.♗c3 ♘b7 10.♙e1! is the same thing.) 9.♗c3 c5 10.♙f4 ♗bd7



We saw a similar position in the 7...e1 line in the introduction. This is a better version, as h2-h4 is more useful than the rook move. Among other ideas, 11...c2! is my favourite, followed by e3fd1 with pressure in the centre.

7...c5?! is the other natural pawn break which turns out badly for Black. 8.d5! exd5 9.h2! d6 (9...d6 10.h3 c6 11.hxd5 gave White an obvious structural advantage in Kramnik – Bryakin, Internet [blitz] 2023.) 10.cxd5 b7 11.h3 c6 In Chigaev – Klekowski, Warsaw 2021, White could have obtained a serious initiative with:

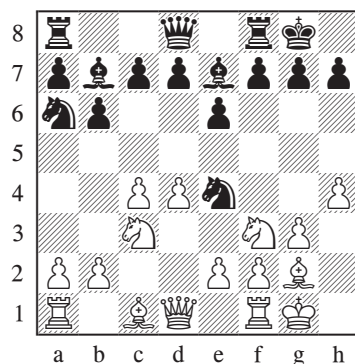


12.g4!N What a lovely way to make use of the earlier h2-h4 and h2 moves! 12...b5 13.e4 Black's counterplay with ...b5 is thematic for the Benoni structure, but White's kingside attack is much more relevant.

7...d6 is a reasonable move. I suggest meeting it with 8.h3 (8...e1!? is also worth considering) 8...h4 9.hxe4 gxe4 10.h1, based on the fact that ...d6 is not the most useful move after these minor-piece exchanges.

7...e8 is a flexible move. The choice is wide open, but 8...e1!? seems like a good way of returning the ball to Black's court.

7...a6 is an interesting, semi-useful waiting move. It's worth pointing out that the same move is a highly popular reply against 7...e1, so it's likely that many players will try it in this position as well. However, there is one significant drawback to the knight's placement on this square. 8.h3! (The immediate 8.a4?! would be premature due to 8...b4! and if 9.a5?! c5 Black has great play.) 8...h4



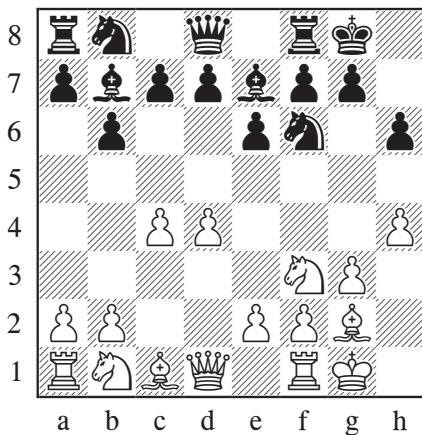
9.a4!N Black is under some pressure, as a4-a5 can be played whenever we feel like it. We are happy to accept doubled c-pawns, as the a6-knight will be blocked out of the game. And the ...c5 advance will not help, as we can simply play d4-d5 with a dominating pawn centre.

7...a5 stops our idea from the line above, but 8.h3 g4 9.c3 h4 10.cxc3 is a simple route to a slight edge. In the lines after 7.h3 g4 8.c3, White often plays h2-h4 at some point, but Black hardly ever opts for ...a5,

instead preferring a timely ...c5. (10.bxc3!? is also worth considering, using the queen's position on c2 to threaten ♖g5. Moreover, the ...a5 move is of no use in the resulting pawn structure.)

Finally, 7...♖c8 is another sensible move which is quite often played against 7.♞e1. A logical continuation is: 8.♜c3 ♜e4 9.♜xe4 (9.♞c2!? and 9.♙d2!? also deserve attention.) 9...♙xe4 10.♜e1 (10.♙g5!? is an interesting engine suggestion.) 10...♙xg2 11.♜xg2 White had a slight plus in Goganov – Saveliev, St Petersburg 2021. Compared to the line without ...h2-h4 and ...♞c8 included, here Black does not have the option of ...d5 followed by ...♞xd5.

A1) 7...h6



This is the top engine choice, or at least one of the top choices, depending on the engine and search depth. Black retakes control over the g5-square and challenges White to find some way of benefiting from the movement of the h-pawns.

8.♜c3!?!N

The old main line seems like a good choice to utilize the h2-h4 move.

8.♞e1 also deserves consideration. It's worth discussing a couple of possible continuations:

a) 8...d5

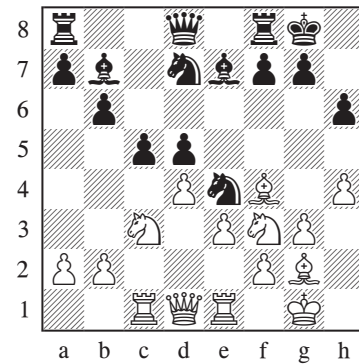
This is a move White would like to see.

9.cxd5 exd5 10.♜c3 ♜bd7

10...♜a6 11.♙f4 c5 12.♞c1 is also promising for White.

11.♙f4 c5 12.♞c1 ♜e4 13.e3!

Compared to the 7.♞e1 line, the inclusion of h2-h4 and ...h6 is a great help to White. Let's see what happens if Black ignores the warning:



13...g5?

13...♜df6 is a smarter choice, although 14.♜e5 left Black under some pressure in Gandrud – Christensen, Helsingor 2019.

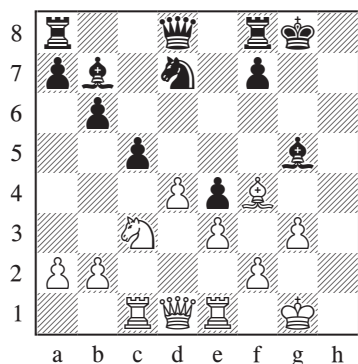
14.hxg5

14.♜xg5!?! hxg5 15.hxg5 is a strong alternative which is likely to transpose after Black recaptures on g5.

14...hxg5 15.♜xg5 ♙xg5

15...♜xg5 16.♜xd5 ♙xd5 17.♙xd5 ♜h3† 18.♜g2 ♜f6 19.♙xa8 ♜xf4† 20.exf4 ♞xa8† 21.♞f3 leads to an endgame which should be winning for White.

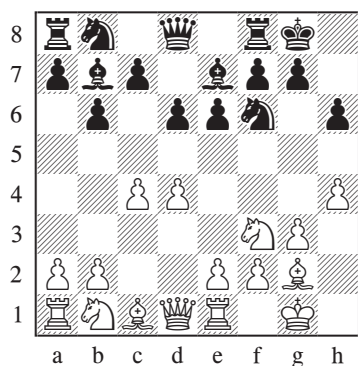
16.♙xe4 dxe4



17. ♖g4 f6 18. ♜b5!

Black is in deep trouble.

b) Black should try something else, and we could spend a lot of time running through the various possibilities and looking for scenarios where the movement of the h-pawns helps one side or the other. I will just mention 8...d6!? as a decent-looking option which is one of the top engine choices.



One logical continuation is 9. ♜c3 ♜e4 10. ♖c2, when 10...f5! is best. Black's kingside feels a little loose, and Black may have to resort to ...d5 in the near future (in response to ♜d2 or ♜h2 for instance), but it would take more detailed analysis to determine if White has any advantage. (It's worth pointing out that 10...♜xc3 is inaccurate due to 11. ♜g5!.)

8... ♜e4 9. ♖c2

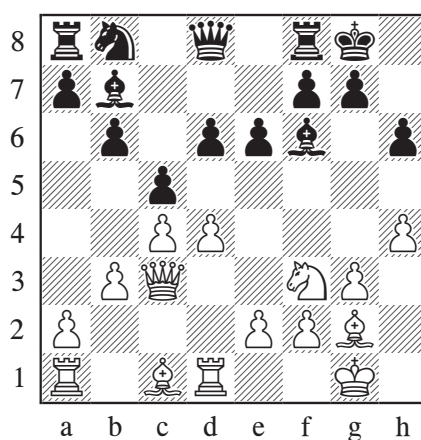
After 9. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 10. ♜e1 the inclusion of

h2-h4 and ...h6 seems like a micro-improvement for White compared to the usual variant, so you may wish to investigate this as well.

9... ♜xc3 10. ♖xc3

Compared to the usual theoretical line, it seems to me that White gains something from the inclusion of the h-pawn moves. The usual continuation (with pawns on h2 and h7) is:

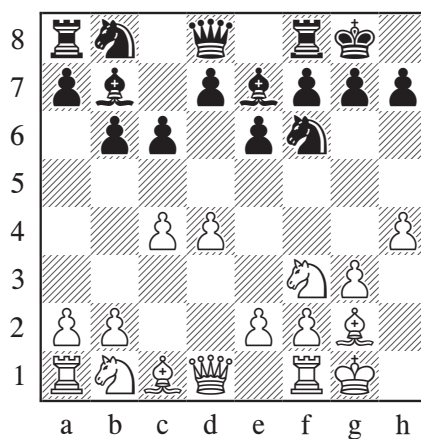
10...c5 11. ♝d1 d6 12. b3 ♙f6



13. ♖d3 ♜c6 14. e3

White stands slightly better. We will follow up with ♙b2 and ♖e2, after which ♜h2-g4 becomes a strong option.

A2) 7...c6

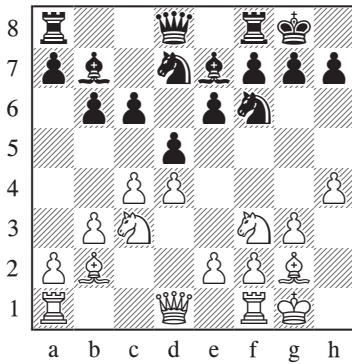


Although it is difficult to pinpoint a main line, the text move was proposed by Ponomariov in my Twitter thread discussing 7.h4, and a top-ten player messaged me privately saying he believes this move to be okay for Black.

8. ♖fd2!N

This surprising move enables us to force through a quick e2-e4.

8. ♖c3 is most natural, but Black is doing okay after: 8...d5 9.b3 (9. ♖d2!? is possible but 9...b5!? seems reasonable for Black.) 9...♗bd7 10. ♕b2

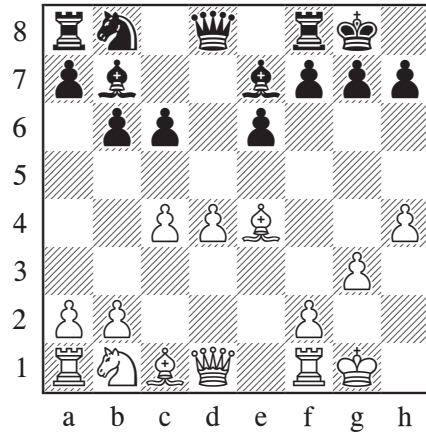


10...♗c8! (10...c5 was played in Bernadskiy – Ponomariov, Vrnjacka Banja 2023, when 11. ♖e1!N would have been promising for White.) 11. ♗c1 ♕a6 Black gets enough counterplay.

8...d5 9.e4 dxe4

9...dxc4 10.e5 ♖d5 11. ♖xc4 gives White some initiative.

10. ♖xc4 ♖xc4 11. ♕xc4



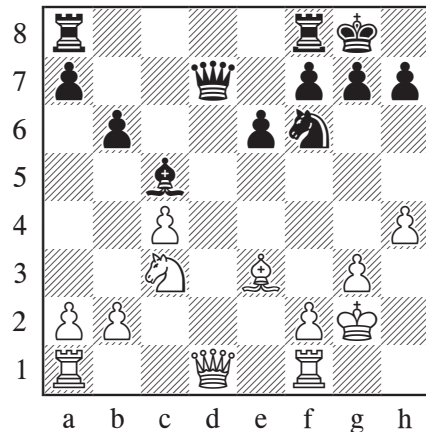
11...♖d7 12. ♖c3 ♖f6 13. ♕g2

This type of position can generally be regarded as slightly more comfortable for White, but still solid for Black, who will look to arrange ...c5.

13...♗d7 14. ♕e3 c5

14...♗ad8 allows us the typical option of 15.c5!? to prevent Black's pawn break.

15.dxc5 ♕xg2 16. ♖xg2 ♕xc5



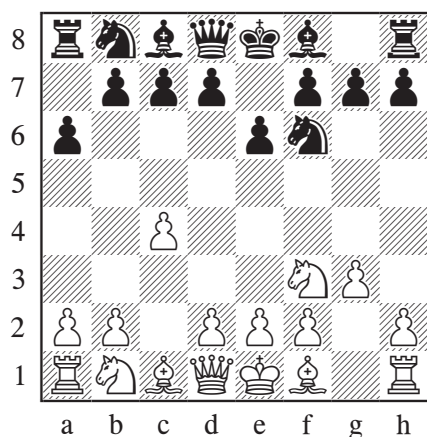
In the introduction to Chapter 1 we discussed structural considerations with regard to the central pawn majority, which is something we generally strive for in our repertoire. Here it is Black who has an extra pawn in the centre,

but White has a favourable version because the c-pawn is already on c4. (Refer to page 16, where I explained the advantages for Black of advancing the pawn to c5 in the same structure with colours reversed.)

17. ♖xd7 ♘xd7 18. ♜ad1 ♝fd8 19. ♙f4

The position is close to equal, but White's pieces are more active. The immediate threat is ♙c7, and ♘b5 ideas are in the air.

B) 3...a6



The Greek IM Ioannis Georgiadis reminded me of this move on Twitter, and I am grateful that he did! It is indeed a tricky little line.

4. ♙g2 b5

4...d5 can be met by 5.0-0, when 5...dxc4 transposes to Chapter 13. 6. ♖c2! is our choice, as you can see on page 373.

5.b3

Our best approach is to defend the c-pawn and ask what Black intends to do on the queenside.

5...♙b7

5...c5 6.0-0 ♙b7 transposes.

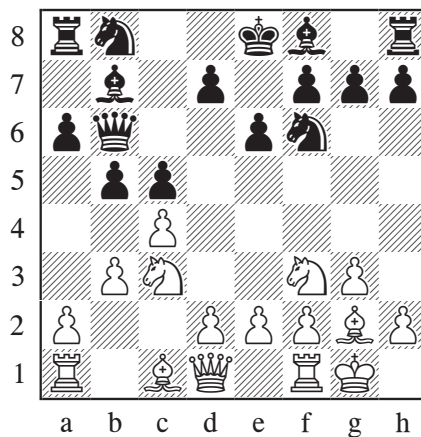
6.0-0 c5

Black usually chooses this move to take some central and queenside space.

6...d5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.a4 favoured White in Leela – Ethereal, engine game 2020.

7. ♘c3 ♖b6

7...b4 8. ♘a4 followed by d2-d4 gives us an easy initiative.



8.e3

Preparing d2-d4 is simple and good.

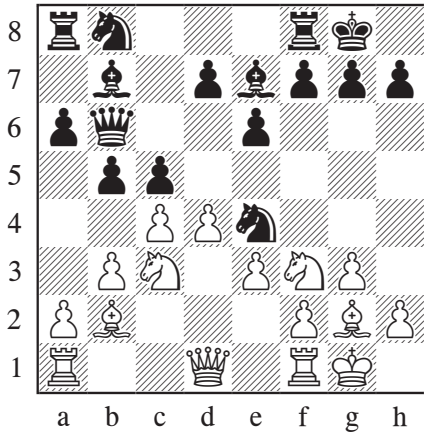
8. ♜e1!? is a decent alternative, intending e2-e4.

8...♙e7 9.d4 ♘e4

9...0-0?! 10.d5! gives White a clear advantage.

10. ♙b2 0-0

10...bxc4? is no good because 11. ♘xe4 ♙xe4 12.dxc5 hits g7.



11. ♖c2

11.d5!? can be considered here too.

11... ♖xc3 12. ♙xc3

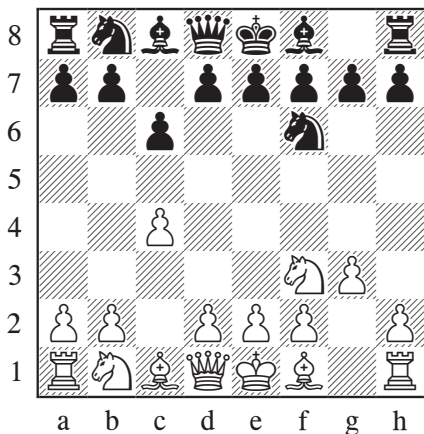
White has a pleasant advantage.

1.c4 c6 2. ♖f3 Update – 2... ♖f6

1.c4 c6 2. ♖f3 ♖f6

2...d5 is the only move order I considered in Chapters 11 and 12. Here we will check a possible attempt by Black to delay the central advance.

3.g3



3...g6!?

It was pointed out on the Quality Chess blog that this rare move order enables Black to switch to a King's Indian Defence where we have committed to a fianchetto set-up, avoiding the Classical Variation which I recommend in Chapter 9. It's a clever idea but there are a couple of issues with it. Firstly, there are not too many players who are equally comfortable playing both the Slav and King's Indian. Secondly and more importantly, the inclusion of the early ...c6 will make this a less comfortable version of a King's Indian, should Black decide to go for that option.

4.b3 ♙g7 5. ♙b2

We need to play like this to remain consistent with our repertoire versus the Slav-Grünfeld set-up from Chapter 11.

5...0-0

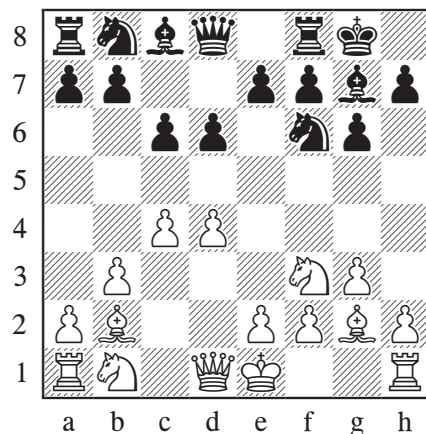
5...b5 is a weird engine suggestion, but I love White's centre after 6. ♙g2 bxc4 7.bxc4 as played in Trevisan – Da Silva, Cuiaba 2021.

6. ♙g2 d6!?

Black can, of course, still transpose to Chapter 11 with 6...d5.

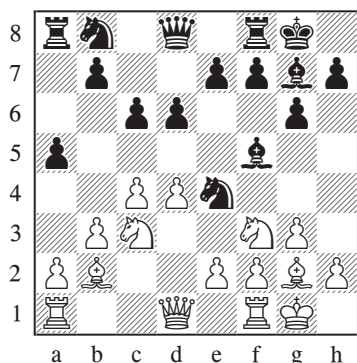
7.d4

Here we have it: a Fianchetto King's Indian, but a great version for White!



7...♘bd7

7...♙f5 8.0-0 a5!? is a solid line which has been seen a lot in online chess. (8...♖c8 is well met by 9.♙e1!, and if 9...♙h3 10.e4 White stands clearly better.) 9.♘c3 ♘e4

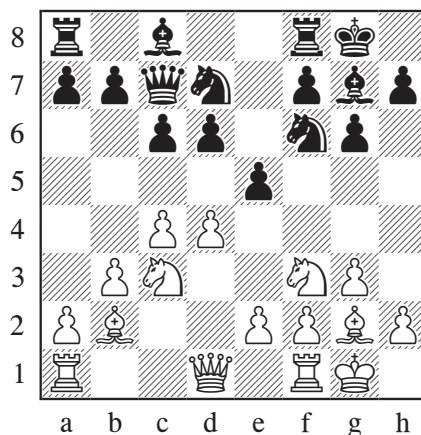


10.♙e1!? I love this useful waiting move. 10...♘xc3 11.♙xc3 ♙e4 12.a4!? (12.♙f1N is the typical idea we play for, and it is already available here.) 12...♘a6 13.♖d2 b6 14.♙f1! White was ready to follow up with ♘g5 in Yanchenko – Darini, Internet 2017.

8.0-0 ♖c7

8...♙e8 is a pet line of Firouzja in online blitz. 9.e3! is a clever response, preventing Black's desired ...e5 for the time being. If Black continues with a waiting move, we can also consider h2-h3 before finally developing the knight to c3. 9...♖c7 (9...e5?! 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.♘xe5 wins a pawn for insufficient compensation.) 10.♘c3 e5 11.♙c1 White has a pleasant edge.

9.♘c3 e5



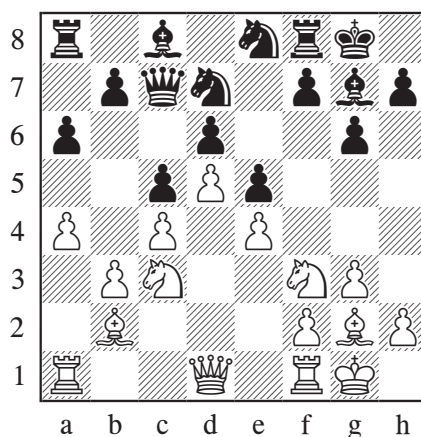
10.d5!?

There are other good options, but I like the directness of this one.

10...c5

Otherwise Black would have to reckon with the possibility of dxc6 followed by ♙a3.

11.e4 a6 12.a4 ♘e8



13.♙a2!?

We will see a few more instructive moves from a top Georgian GM.

13...h6 14.♙a1 ♘df6 15.♘e1

White had a big advantage in Pantsulaia – Alam, Dhaka 2022.

Chapter 13

English vs QGD Update – Tarrasch Defence

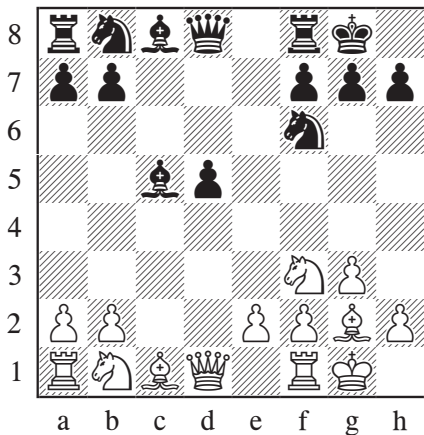
1.c4 ♖f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♙g2 c5 5.cxd5
exd5 6.d4

This move order is annoying for Tarrasch players to face. The idea is that White doesn't develop the knight to c3 yet, and intends a timely dxc5 followed by a2-a3 and b2-b4. Another advantage of delaying ♖c3 is that Black does not have the option of "Dubov's Tarrasch", as explained on page 368.

6...♙e7!?

In the book, I took it for granted that Black would play the obvious ...♖c6 move at an early stage. However, since we are making a point of delaying the development of the queen's knight, we should check if Black can benefit from doing the same.

7.0-0 0-0 8.dxc5 ♙xc5



9.a3

For the time being, nothing changes in the way White handles the position. Let's see a couple of ways in which Black can proceed while keeping the knight on b8 for the time being.

9...♗e4!?

This is a serious option which has been tested in correspondence play. It's similar to the main line I gave in the book, but here Black has castled instead of playing ...♖c6.

9...h6!? is the first choice of certain silicon brains. I actually noticed this move given by engines when I was first writing the chapter, but I didn't pay special attention to it. After all, I never intended to recommend developing the bishop to g5, so this pawn move appeared to be a waste of time. Upon further reflection, I think I now understand Black's deep concept: the idea is to wait for b2-b4 and strike back with a timely ...a5, without worrying about b4-b5 attacking the c6-knight. Sorry engines – I am still not impressed. 10.♖c3 gives White a nice version of a regular Tarrasch, and it looks like Black will either have to play ...♖c6 under worse circumstances or resort to weakening the queenside with ...a5.

10.b4

10.♗fd2!? is another typical response to the early ...♗e4, and after 10...♙e7 11.♗xe4 dxe4 12.♖c3 ♖d8 13.♙a4 White had a small initiative in Granara Barreto – Albano, corr. 2022.

10...♙e7 11.♙b2 ♙f6

We can proceed in the same way that I treat the similar position in the chapter.

12.♙xf6!?

12.♙c1!? is also mentioned in the book as a typical move in these positions.

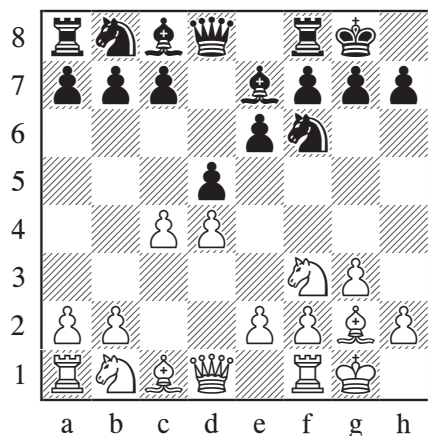
12...♙xf6 13.♙d4

Black is solid, as usual in the Tarrasch, but White keeps a safe edge with long-term chances against the isolated pawn.

Chapter 14

Catalan Transposition – 6...a5!?

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0–0
0–0 6.d4



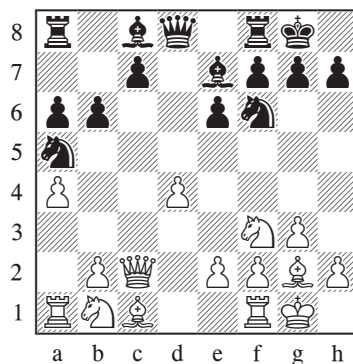
In Chapter 14 I considered 6...c6 and 6...dxc4, along with a few sidelines in the notes. An interesting alternative is:

6...a5!?

I studied this line from Black's perspective a while ago, and I was left with mixed feelings. On the one hand, against an unsuspecting opponent, Black may reach interesting positions with good counterplay. On the other hand, White can keep an edge with simple, typical Catalan moves.

The main line is 6...dxc4 7.♖c2 a6 8.a4, and now 8...♘c6 9.♗xc4 ♘a5!? 10.♖c2 b6 is an interesting sideline which I analysed in a note on page 403. Shortly before publication I emailed my editor, Andrew, to ask if it was possible to include an alternative recommendation here, but by that stage the book had already gone to the printer. I found nothing wrong with my recommendation (11.♘e5), which is best. However, in the event that this line becomes trendy, it is worth

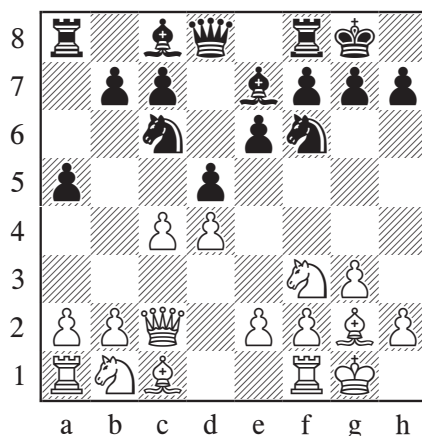
knowing as White that there is a very simple line that leads to a tiny edge, with virtually no memorization required.



11.♙d2!?! ♙b7 12.♙xa5 bxa5 13.♘bd2 From here, 13...♖c8! is Black's only way to get a decent position. And now, both 14.♘e5!?! and the simple 14.♗d3 lead to positions that are easier to play for White than for Black, even if they can objectively be called equal.

7.♗c2 ♘c6!

This is the best way to make sense of Black's previous move.



8.♙d2!?!N

A simple and thematic Catalan response. Now if the knight comes to b4, we have the c1-square available for the queen.

8.a3 dxc4 9.♖xc4 a4 followed by ...♗d7 and ...♘a5 is supposed to be the main line. I think White is a bit better here as well.

8...♗e4

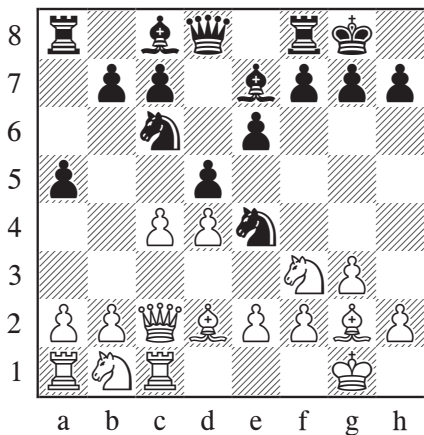
I consider this to be the most natural human reaction to our last move. The allure of the bishop pair is obvious.

8...♗b4 9.♖c1 is no problem for us.

The engines give 8...dxc4 9.♖xc4 ♗d5 as the best continuation, but I find this a bit depressing for Black. Take your pick between 10.♖a4!?, 10.♖d3!?, and 10.♖c1!?, all of which offer a slight edge for White.

9.♖c1

White is ready to complete development with ♗e1 and ♗b2. If Black tries ...♗b4, we can retreat the queen to d1 with no loss of coordination between the rooks.



9...♗d6

This is the engine recommendation, which I find a bit too artificial.

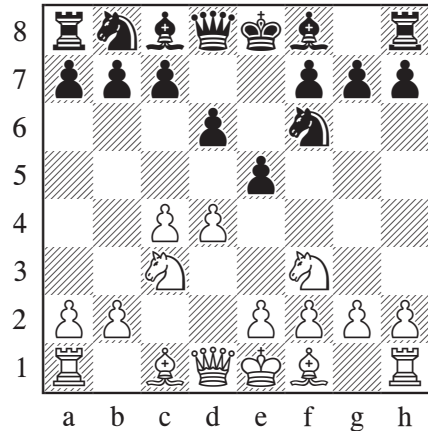
9...♗xd2 10.♗bxd2 gives us easy development and the dark-squared bishop will not be too badly missed.

10.♗a3!?, ♗d7 11.♖d1!

A nice prophylactic retreat. White has a typical slight plus, with good prospects on the queenside.

Old Indian

1.c4 ♗f6 2.♗c3 d6 3.d4 e5 4.♗f3



4...♗bd7

4...e4 5.♗g5 ♖e7 is another system, which modern engines do not rate highly. (Even worse is 5...♗f5?! 6.g4! ♗xg4 7.♗g2 with a great position for White.) 6.♖c2 ♗c6 (6...♗f5 7.f3! wins a pawn for insufficient compensation.) 7.♗e3 ♗f5 8.♗d5! Black has problems.

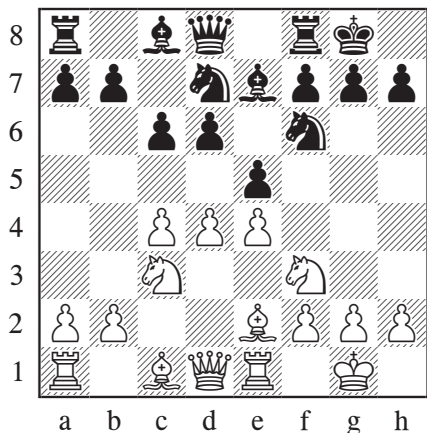
5.e4 ♗e7

This is the set-up that defines the Old Indian.

Black can still revert to a King's Indian with 5...g6.

6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8.♖e1

We used this set-up against some of the slow lines of the King's Indian. It works at least as well here.



8...♖e8

8...a6 is Black's other main idea, preparing to gain space on the queenside. 9.♙f1 b5 10.a3 is a good reaction, and after 10...♙b7 11.h3! we keep a nice edge. The last move prepares to develop the bishop to e3, or even g5, followed by ♗ac1.

9.♙f1 ♗c7

Another possibility is:

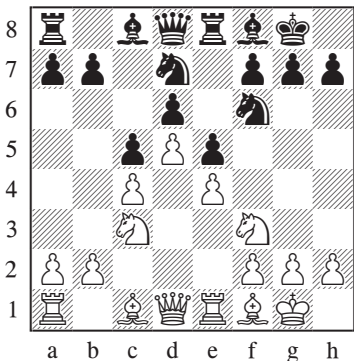
9...♙f8 10.d5!?

Closing the centre like this is often a good choice when we think that Black is ready to obtain counterplay with ...exd4.

10...c5

This is a typical reaction, otherwise White will always have the option of dxc6.

10...a5 can be met by 11.♖b1 ♖c5 12.b3 followed by a2-a3, when Black's knight will soon be driven back.



11.g3!

We touched on this concept in the King's Indian coverage on page 251 – see the 9...♗e7 line in the notes to variation B25 of Chapter 9. If we stop the ...f5 break, then the future belongs to White on the queenside. The last move prepares ♙h3 and ♖h4, while Black is at least a tempo down compared to a King's Indian. White has a considerable advantage.

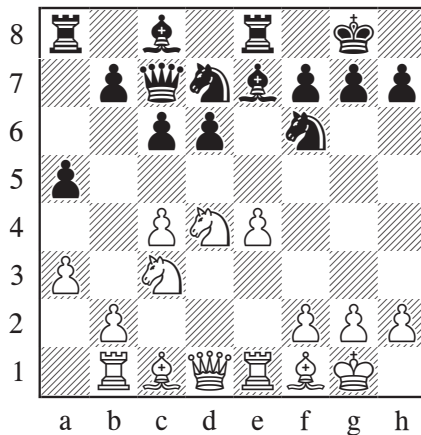
10.♖b1!?

White isn't afraid of ...exd4, so a useful waiting move is appropriate. This one helps to support a future queenside expansion with b2-b4.

10...a5 11.a3 exd4

If Black tries 11...♖f8 then it's a good time for 12.d5, as Black is a long way from creating any counterplay on the kingside.

12.♖xd4



12...♖c5

Other moves are possible, but White clearly has a nice position anyway. Essentially it's just a King's Indian with Black's bishop on a worse square.

13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 ♖a6?! 15.♙f4

White had a big advantage in Mikanovic – Hamilton, Kitchener 2007.