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Foreword by Evgeny Sveshnikov

The idea for this book belongs to Evgeny Ushakov, a great lover of chess. And what is it about? The reader can probably answer this question without any difficulty: it is about the opening stage in chess. Then another question arises: what is the opening? And what is the main difference here between a grandmaster and an amateur? This is an important question, because the book is aimed at a wide audience, mainly of amateurs.

Somehow the words of the great Soviet fictional comic hero, Ostap Bender, come to mind: 'Everything depends on each individual separately. For example, this blond in the third row, we can say plays well. But this brunette, let us assume, plays worse. And no amount of lectures is going to change this relationship of strength, unless each individual trains permanently...' But how should one train, if one has limited time and desire to study, but very much wants to be able to beat stronger players? The aim of this book is to help players improve their results, as a result of studying the opening. And we will try to approach this subject in the way that professional grandmasters do, with the sole difference that we understand that the amateur has limited time available. Therefore, we will try to choose opening systems not on the basis of which are objectively strongest, but on the principle of which are the most practical.

So what are the differences between grandmasters and amateurs? Firstly, in order to play chess well, a person needs various qualities:

1. He must be physically able to carry on the battle over the board for several hours. This requires a physically trained body, but general health is also vital.
2. He must have great chess knowledge, because chess is not only a sport, but also a science! This applies most of all to the endgame.
3. He must be able to calculate variations well, have good combinative vision, and know typical plans in various middlegame positions.
4. He must set himself a clear goal, towards which to strive.

In regard to the question of the comparison of grandmaster and amateur, it is far from always the case that the grandmaster has better combinative vision or ability to calculate variations, or even better knowledge of the endgame – especially younger GMs – than older amateurs. And the physical condition of many GMs leaves something to be desired. So in what does the GM's superiority over the amateur usually reside?

Above all, the GM's experience allows him to take the correct strategic decisions very quickly, even automatically. In this respect, one can compare a GM with a skilled craftsman. Here, one can recall Kortchnoi's comment on Tal, whom he

described as 'a player of great routine', but then added that he meant this as a compliment. I agree with Viktor Lvovich on this: what for many players was a piece of creativity, such as a piece sacrifice for the attack, or even just getting control of squares like d5 or f5, was for Tal just routine technique. It is well known that Tal was one of the best blitz players in the history of chess, and in 1988, became the first official World Blitz Champion, ahead of Kasparov and Karpov.

In general, practically all World Champions were brilliant blitz players, especially in their best years. Why especially when they were at their peak? Because at that time, when they were playing World Championship matches, they had an ideally worked-out opening repertoire (without which it is impossible to fight for the crown). An excellent repertoire and plenty of new ideas allowed them quickly and confidently to play the initial stage of the game.

I played a great many blitz games against Tal and Karpov. In the 1970s and 80s, it was impossible to compete with Karpov at blitz. One of his trainers, for example, was Sergey Makarichev, a strong GM and theoretician, but Karpov regularly crushed him in blitz matches, with scores such as 9-1 not being anything unusual. I was pretty good at blitz; for example, at Hastings 1977, I beat Petrosian (admittedly, Tigran Vartanovich was then almost 50, while I was half his age). I played masses of games against Tal, with only a small advantage on his side. But against Tolya, I regularly used to lose by an average of about 3-7. Admittedly, I did once win a 12-game match against him by a score of 6½-5½, but this was a thematic match, in which in every game we played the Sicilian Defence. With white I played 2.c3, and as Black the Chelyabinsk Variation. I knew these lines better than Karpov and thanks to that, I won. This was in 1986, at a training camp.

Of course, there have been brilliant blitz players who have not achieved any special successes at classical chess. For example, Genrikh Chepukaitis. I played a match of five-minute chess against him in 1977, and won without any special trouble. But if we had played with less than five minutes on the clock, the result could have been different. Thus, in 1992, I played a 100-game match against Valentin Arbakov, in which he gave me odds of two minutes against three. He won by plus-4. Immediately prior to this, I had beaten World Championship candidate Nigel Short 2-0 in classical chess. This was probably the moment when I was at my strongest. At that time, Arbakov was without doubt the *de facto* World Champion at blitz with a time control of 2-3 minutes and nobody could compete with him, so I consider my own result against him to be quite fair. Ognen Cvitan was also very strong, but Arbakov was stronger. I am convinced that, at that time, if Arbakov and I had played at five-minute chess, he would have had no chance, because he was weaker than me as a chess player in general. But he had a brilliantly worked out opening repertoire and various tricks specially developed for blitz (I mean perfectly legal tricks, not such stuff as castling and putting the rook straight on e1, or anything like that). Such special blitz techniques are discussed in Chepukaitis' book *Sprint at the Chessboard*, and I will not speak about them here; after all, I am an opening theoretician, not a blitz expert. I want to share with the reader only pure chess opening knowledge.

The main thing that distinguishes the grandmaster from the amateur is a deep knowledge of the opening stage of the game, which allows the former to study middlegame plans more easily, and, with the modern-day approach to opening study, even to penetrate to the study of typical endgames. In this book, we will study a concrete repertoire, geared towards the specific goal of achieving better practical results at the board in blitz and rapid chess. At the same time, one should appreciate that the repertoire takes into account the strength of one's opponents. Because this is aimed at a wide audience, principally of amateurs, we have tried to keep it as narrow as possible, so as to reduce the number of typical positions and structures resulting, and study them in more detail. In doing so, we should appreciate that we are taking a certain degree of risk, insofar as concerns the search for the objectively best move. We have set ourselves a different goal – to achieve practical results, which requires searching for more purposeful, practically favourable moves. We only need to find the levels of risk which allow one to play successfully against players of first category, candidate-master, master and GM levels.

I will remind you of the principles for playing the opening. There are eight of them, four for White and four for Black.

When playing **White**:

- 1) seize the centre,
- 2) develop pieces,
- 3) safety,
- 4) attack weaknesses.

For **Black** the principles are similar, but are formulated differently and are in a different order of importance:

- 1) fight for the centre,
- 2) safety,
- 3) develop pieces,
- 4) defend and don't create weaknesses.

Note: White in the opening tries to *seize* the centre, and Black *fights* for it, so as to try to prevent the opponent from carrying out his plans. White should attack weaknesses, Black strives *not to create* such weaknesses in his position.

This is the theory, but no grandmaster in the world plays purely theoretically, employing only the best moves. Everyone, even a World Champion, establishes their opening repertoire according to practical considerations, taking account of their physical condition, their ability to attack and defend, or to play the endgame. One must also decide what to strive for: a long positional struggle, or an attempt to test the opponent's knowledge of a sharp opening variation. And, of course, you must take into account concrete tasks in the tournament and in each game, and understand not only your own strengths and weaknesses, but also those of the opponent. It is very important to choose the right opening variation, in order to bring about a position that suits you and is unpleasant or inconvenient for the opening; and

it is also very good if the opponent's knowledge of the line chosen is inferior to your own.

The tenth World Champion, Boris Spassky, several times said that a knowledge of the opening can compensate for several other weaknesses. So, let us proceed to the matter in hand.

The tasks of White and Black in the opening are somewhat different, especially for professionals. Players usually start studying the opening with black, because a mistake for him is much more serious – a mistake can be equivalent to defeat, whereas the price of a mistake by White (I am not talking about blundering a piece or even a pawn) can be just a loss of the opening advantage. Professionals often study their black openings all the way into the ending. We will try to come close to this approach, at the cost of serious concessions, namely restricting the repertoire to something very narrow, but in return, studying our chosen systems very deeply. And since most players start with black, we will also adopt this order in this book: first a Black repertoire, then a White repertoire.

In choosing a white repertoire, we must understand that choosing only the best lines is too complicated, for example the Spanish 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5!, because this requires too much time.

Thus, as Black against 1.e4, we base our repertoire on Alekhine's Defence 1...♘f6!?. I myself have never played this, but my son Vladimir plays it very successfully. When Volodya was very young, we often used to speak with Grandmaster Bagirov, who lived close to us. Vladimir Konstantinovich told us that a fortune-teller once told him that he would become famous thanks to the fourth World Champion, Alexander Alekhine. He then decided to become an expert on Alekhine's Defence and he wrote a monograph on this opening. This book was a major breakthrough in the theory of the opening at the time, and even today, some 30 years later, it remains very interesting. Of course, many of the theoretical recommendations have aged. But we can still recall Bagirov's general conclusions. I played about 35 games against him in Alekhine's Defence (mainly rapid games) and Vladimir Konstantinovich made a small plus score, even though he was Black. I often managed to pose him problems in the opening, but he successfully solved them. He knew and understood the Alekhine better than anyone in the world!

To my mind, it is a little strange that this opening should bear the name of the fourth World Champion. Alexander Alekhine made great contributions to opening theory, but mainly in classical, solid openings. For example, he brilliantly handled the extended fianchetto system in the Queen's Gambit, successfully employing it in his World Championship match against Capablanca; it would be quite logical to call that the Alekhine System. In the Queen's Gambit, there is already a Lasker and a Capablanca system, and it would be sensible to name this system after Alekhine. It is true of course that Alekhine made some contribution to the development of the defence 1.e4 ♘f6, but he did not really take the line very seriously, unlike Bagirov, for whom it was his main opening weapon.

Almost half a century ago, in 1967, I discussed Alekhine's Defence with Vlas Mikenas, a great lover of the opening. He said: 'Alekhine's Defence would not be a bad opening, if it were not for the Four Pawns Attack. There Black has big problems.' Some 30 or 35 years later, I heard the same from Bagirov. However, Bagirov explained why the Four Pawns did not bother him. The truth is that, in this variation, Black has no fewer than eight possible continuations, in every one of which White, if he plays the wrong move, risks not only losing his opening advantage, but even standing seriously worse. On the other hand, a white player of 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♗f3 – a solid, quiet but very small plus. But one must understand that after this continuation, White loses part of his opening advantage, and, in addition, falls into well-prepared analysis. Black will know better the methods, devices, concrete variations, and will have more experience in playing the resulting positions. Therefore, as a rule, Black immediately finds himself enjoying a superiority in knowledge.

I myself, out of practical considerations, chose a different line – the Chase Variation 1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.c4 ♘b6 4.c5. From the viewpoint of opening principles, it is not bad. In some cases, play can transpose to a 2.c3 Sicilian or a Scotch Gambit Declined, but Black has a number of other possibilities and can obtain sharp play. As we will see, White has no advantage in this line, only practical chances. And in the Four Pawns, various new ideas have been found, with the result that in this line too, it is not so simple for White to break through. In general, computers have greatly widened our understanding of which positions can be defended.

So why have we chosen Alekhine's Defence 1...♘f6, and not, say, the Scandinavian 1...d5, which is also a forcing and strategically dangerous opening? We have done so out of practical considerations – because the Scandinavian has been played by a great many GMs and some variations have been analysed out right to the ending. On the other hand, 1...♘f6 is now quite unpopular, somewhat undeservedly so.

Amongst those players who have played Alekhine's Defence, we should also mention Rafael Vaganian and Ljubomir Ljubojevic, but I do not think that either of them studied the opening very deeply – in the main, they improvised at the board. Alexander Baburin has a different approach, and has studied the opening, using the computer. We will use many of his games in our book.

The chess content of this book is mainly the analyses of my son. My task has been to identify and assess the critical positions. Vladimir Sveshnikov (1986) is already a very strong theoretician. For example, I have never in my life had a trainer, but nowadays, I often get from Volodya interesting new ideas, which work really well in practice. They say 'Teacher, develop your pupil, so you will have someone to learn from!' And I have developed my own trainer! He played for the Latvian team at the Olympiad in 2010 in Khanty-Mansiysk and now he is one of the main

specialists (along with Tiviakov and myself) in the c3-Sicilian. Volodya is great at using computer information and can generate new ideas.

And now a few words about what we suggest as Black against 1.d4. At the end of the 1990s, I wrote an article about an opening repertoire against closed openings. It was based on one main idea: in reply to 1.d4 or 1.♘f3, Black puts his pawn on d5 and, at the first convenient moment, takes on c4 and starts trying to hang onto the pawn, so as to create counterplay on the queenside. Yes, in order to do so, we have to concede ground in the centre and we may come under attack, but if we manage to survive to an endgame, then our queenside pawns will promote. I have won dozens of games myself like this, including against even such a giant as Geller. Efim Petrovich attacked me in the centre and on the queenside, but in the end, I managed, by returning the extra pawn, to take play into an endgame, where my distant passed pawns on the queenside won the game.

But my repertoire never included the Queen's Gambit Accepted (QGA) 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4. Why? Because I believed that after 3.e3 White would recapture on c4 in one move, since Black cannot defend the pawn by means of ...b7-b5. Frankly speaking, the move 3...♙e6!? never entered my head. It was suggested by Volodya, using the latest researches in this opening. This scheme has become a complete opening in my overall repertoire. Of course, Black is taking a definite strategic risk, but from a practical viewpoint, this is a good opening. It is employed quite often, for example, by the Latvian grandmaster, Ilmar Starostits. Immediately, we narrow White's choices down as far as possible, and forcing play begins, which we have studied at home. And what should White do when faced with this surprise? He needs to regain the pawn, but how?

The size of the book does not permit us to examine every possible white continuation, so we have concentrated mainly on 1.e4 and 1.d4, which occur in about 80% of games. Even so, we do speak briefly about other schemes: 1.c4 and 1.♘f3, so that the reader will at least have an impression of the direction his work on these openings should take.

These and other variations are examined on the basis of concrete games, which we give in full. The book begins with a brief theoretical overview, in which Vladimir Sveshnikov explains the basic ideas of Alekhine's Defence and the QGA. Amateurs should at first just read these introductory pages and then go through the main games, after which they can already employ the openings in practice. But gradually you will probably wish to deepen your knowledge, and then it will make sense to analyse carefully the games suggested by the authors and also to consult the database. I hope this book will also be useful to professionals, because it contains many interesting analyses and novelties.

Why a repertoire for blitz? Because we are ready in the opening to take some risk, counting on the opponent not being able or ready to play the best moves. For best results, it is very good to have two variations in your repertoire as Black, so the

opponent's preparation will be more difficult. In addition, you can choose the character of battle in your preparation, and will have the opportunity to choose: against one opponent, a sharp variation, against another, a boring endgame. You will also be able to make a choice, based on your physical condition, and coordinate this choice with plans for a concrete game.

One of the main aims of this book is to acquaint the reader with my methods of creating an opening repertoire, so that you can then yourself independently add to and perfect it.

But this is not the only task. The authors have also tried to utilise a great deal of professional work on these openings. In addition, we have tried to find new ideas and concrete novelties. We have also tried to explain it all in plain language, with explanations and variations which are understandable to the amateur. How well we have succeeded is for the reader to decide.

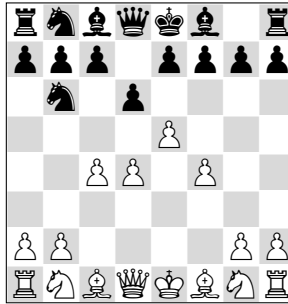
In conclusion, we would like to extend our thanks to International Master Vladimir Barsky for his great help in working on this book.

Evgeny Sveshnikov
Riga, October 2015

Chapter 5

The Four Pawns Attack

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.c4 ♘b6 4.d4 d6 5.f4



The Four Pawns Attack is considered one of the most dangerous lines for Black; maybe it even places the whole Alekhine's Defence in doubt. On the other hand, the price of every move here is exceptionally high and White cannot permit himself to play 'by general considerations' – the tiniest inaccuracy can lead at least to the loss of the initiative, if not to much more serious consequences.

We will look in detail in this chapter at the forcing variation 5...dxe5 6.fxe5 c5 7.d5 g6, in which White risks quickly falling into a bad position, if he does not proceed very accurately. But we will also draw the reader's attention to several alternatives, which, if you wish, you can study independently and thus obtain the chance to vary your lines.

Game 15

Michail Panarin 2486

Richard Polaczek 2365

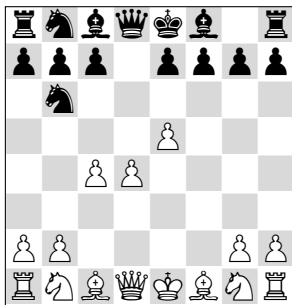
Playchess 2005

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.c4 ♘b6 4.d4 d6 5.f4 dxe5

It is worth considering 5...g6. The fact is that after 5...dxe5 6.fxe5 c5 7.d5 g6 White rarely puts his knight on f3, whereas now 6.♘f3 is a much more frequent guest, and then after 6...dxe5 7.fxe5 c5 8.d5 we get the possibility to bring the bishop out to g4. Thus, this move order offers a chance to trick a less experienced opponent. In addition, after 5...g6 there is also another interesting plan, involving bringing the bishop to e6; on this theme, you should study the games of GM Vladimir Sergeev.

Also possible is 5...♙f5, as GM Alexander Baburin has played many times.

6.fxe5

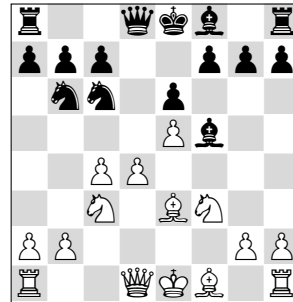


6...c5

Black immediately tries to break up his opponent's pawn centre.

Let us look briefly at another, more popular plan: 6...♘c6 7.♙e3 (the inaccurate 7.♘f3 allows Black immediately to include his queen's bishop in the attack on the centre: after 7...♙g4, as shown, for example, in the games Matinian-Bu Xiangzhi, Guimaraes 2012, and Malavazzi-Fier, Sao Paulo 2007, Black's chances are already superior) 7...♙f5 8.♘c3 (on 8.♘f3 the reply 8...♘b4 is

unpleasant, when White has to put his knight on the edge of the board – 9.♘a3) 8...e6 9.♘f3. Then Black has tried several schemes; in each one, we will point out the key games, which you may if you wish study independently.



analysis diagram

A) 9...♙d7, after which Black castles queenside and then tries to break up the white centre with such moves as ...f7-f6 and ...♙g4 (Naegeli-Euwe, Bern 1932; Gipslis-Kengis, Jurmala 1983);

B) 9...♙e7 followed by short castling and the central break ...f7-f6 (Olape-Baburin, Bled 2002; D.Zilberstein-Baburin, San Francisco 2007; Grischuk-Svidler, Odessa 2009);

C) Interesting is 9...♙g4 which can be quite unpleasant for an unprepared opponent, although objectively, Black has problems here (V.Onischuk-Kovalenko, Khanty-Mansiysk 2013; Bologan-Rozentalis, Mulhouse 2010; Pavasovic-Nakamura, Austria Bundesliga 2008; Jones-V.Sveshnikov, Reykjavik 2011; Illescas-Baburin, Gothenburg 2005).

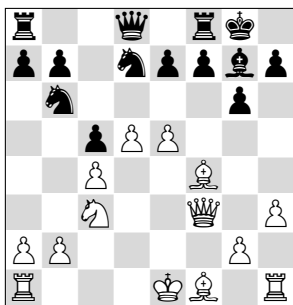
7.d5

Forced, since nothing good comes from 7.dxc5 ♙xd1+ 8.♙xd1 ♘a4! (somewhat weaker, although also possible, is 8...♘6d7 Khavin-Tolush, Moscow ch-URS 1944) 9.b3 ♘xc5 10.♘c3 (or 10.♙e3 b6) 10...♘c6 with the better chances for Black, Pouw-Van Zandwijk, Vlissingen 2003.

7...g6

Worse is 7...e6 8.♘c3 exd5 9.cxd5 ♖h4+ (9...c4 10.d6! is also better for White) 10.g3 ♖d4 11.♗b5+ ♗d7 12.♖e2 ♗e7 13.♘f3 ♖g4 14.0-0 – White has stabilised the game and has a clear positional advantage.

8.♗f4 ♗g7 9.♘c3 0-0 10.♘f3 ♗g4 11.h3 ♗xf3 12.♖xf3 ♘8d7



13.♖e3

On 13.♖g3, as in Karklins-V.Sveshnikov, Riga 2014, good is 13...♖b8 14.e6 ♗e5 15.exf7+ ♖xf7 16.♗xe5 ♘xe5 with the twin threats ♘f3 and ♘c4.

More accurate is the computer recommendation 13.♖e4, but then too, Black gets adequate play after 13...♖b8 14.e6 ♘e5 15.exf7+ ♖xf7 16.♗h2 (the threat was to take on f4, followed by 17...♘d3+, winning the queen) 16...♖d6 17.0-0-0 (or 17...♖f6 18.♗e2 ♖f5=) 17...♖af8 18.♗e2 ♖f4! 19.♗xf4 ♖xf4 20.♖e3 (not 20.♖xf4? ♘d3+) 20...♘bxc4 21.♗xc4 ♘xc4 22.♖e6+ ♖f7 with mutual chances.

13...♖b8 14.e6 ♘e5

Weaker is 14...♗e5 15.exf7+ ♖xf7 16.♗xe5 ♖xe5 17.♖xe5 ♘xe5 with approximate equality.

15.exf7+

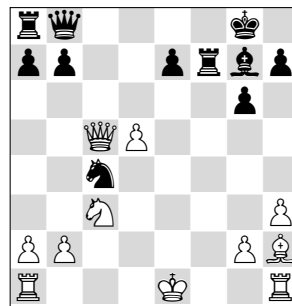
Black is also better after 15.0-0-0 ♘exc4 16.♖e4 (16.♗xc4 ♘xc4 17.♖e4 ♘d6 with an extra pawn for Black, Mijic-Titova Boric, Pula 1990) 16...♘d6, also with an extra pawn, Moraru-Grunberg, Romania tt 1994.

15...♖xf7 16.♗h2

In the game Lorincz-Mozes, Miskolc 1998, Black obtained a serious advantage after 16.♗xe5 ♗xe5 17.♗e2 (more tenacious is 17.♗d3 e6 18.dxe6 ♖f6) 17...♗d4 18.♖e6 ♖g3+ 19.♘d2 ♖xg2.

16...♘exc4 17.♗xc4 ♘xc4 18.♖xc5?

He keeps drawing chances after 18.♖e4 ♘d6 19.♖e6.



18...♖c8

Black misses the winning combination 18...♘xb2! 19.♗xb8 ♘d3+ 20.♘d2 ♘xc5 21.♗h2 ♖f2+ etc.

19.♖xc8+ ♖xc8 20.0-0 ♘xb2 21.♘xb2 ♖xc3

Stronger is 21...♖f2+ 22.♖b1 ♗xc3 with an attack.

22.♖b1 ♖f2 23.♗g1 ♖xg2

Immediately winning is 23...♖f4 with the threat to give mate with 24...♖b4+.

24.♗d4 ♖cc2 25.♖he1 ♗xd4 26.♖xd4 ♖b2+ 27.♖c1 ♖xa2 28.♖b1 ♖gb2+ 29.♖c1 ♖a1+

He also retains a decisive advantage after 29...♖h2, not exchanging the active rook.

30.♖xb2 ♖xe1 31.h4 ♖e5 32.♖c3 ♖g7 33.♖c4 ♖h6 34.♖f4 e6?

A blunder; evidently, Black counted on 35.dxe6 ♖xe6, with three extra pawns.

35.d6 b5+?

Correct was 35...♖e1 followed by ...♖d1 or ...♖c1-c8 with a drawn position.

36.♖c3?

Now White in turn misses his chance: after 36.♘d3 ♖e1 37.♘d2 ♖e5 38.♖d4 ♖f5 39.d7 ♖f8 40.d8 ♖ ♖xd8 41.♖xd8 he wins.

36...♖c5+ 37.♔d3 e5

37...g5!?

38.♗e4 exf4 39.d7 ♖c4+

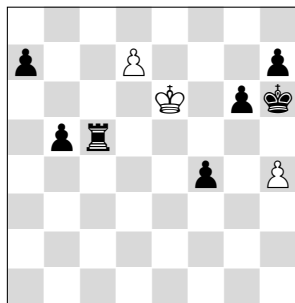
Simpler was 39...♖f5 40.d8♗ f3 41.♗d2+ ♗h5 42.♗d1 with equality.

40.♗e5

40.♗d3!?

40...♖c5+ 41.♗e6??

Another blunder – 41.♗e4 holds the balance.



41...♖c6+

He wins after 41...f3! 42.d8♗ ♖f5; after this, the white king remains shut completely out of play, and the queen on its own cannot cope with such a large number of passed pawns.

42.♗e5 ♖c5+ 43.♗e4 ♖c4+ 44.♗e5 ♖c5+ 1/2-1/2

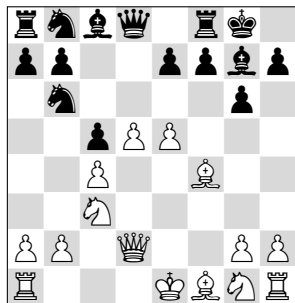
Game 16

Frederic Decoster 2305

Martijn Maddens 2047

Ghent 2012 (5)

1.e4 ♗f6 2.e5 ♗d5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 ♗b6 5.f4 dxe5 6.fxe5 c5 7.d5 g6 8.♗c3 ♗g7 9.♗f4 0-0 10.♗d2



The most popular and most principled move: White prepares long castling and is ready, if necessary, to defend the e5-pawn by means of ♗e3 and ♖e1.

10...e6

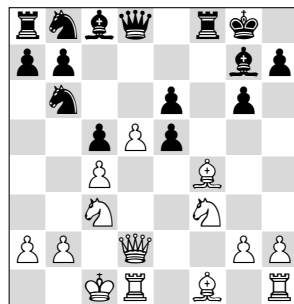
But Black has already evacuated his king and is ready for an immediate attack on the enemy pawn centre.

11.0-0-0 exd5

The alternative is 11...f6 12.♗f3 (12.d6!?):

A) Now the rare 12...exd5, as in the game Buchicchio-Tonon, Arvier ch-ITA 2002, does not give equality: 13.cxd5 fxe5 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.♗xe5 ♗8d7 16.♗f3! White should avoid exchanges. Black is fine after 16.♗xd7 ♗xd7 17.d6 ♗f6 (or 17...♗h4) or 16.♗g4 ♗f6 17.♗xf6+ ♗xf6. 16...♗f6 17.d6, and the strong passed pawn promises White the better chances;

B) 12...fxe5



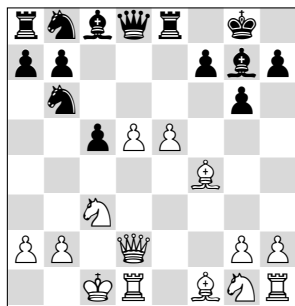
analysis diagram

13.♗xe5 It looks very strong to play 13.♗g5 ♗e8, as in the game Laine-Satosuo, corr. 2006. That continued as follows: 14.d6 ♗c6 15.h4 ♗d4 16.♗d3 ♗d7 17.♗xd4? cxd4 18.♗e4 ♗xc4 19.♗xc4 ♖c8, and Black soon won. However, after 17.h5! Black's position hangs by a thread. 13...exd5 (or 13...♗xe5 14.♗xe5 exd5 15.cxd5 ♗8d7 16.♗f3 ♗f6 17.d6 with advantage to White, McDonald-K.Sadler, corr. 2008) 14.♗xg7 ♗xg7 15.cxd5 ♗g4 16.♗e2

(more accurate is 16.♗g5! h6 17.h3 with the better chances for White) **16...♙xf3 17.♙xf3 ♘c4 18.♚e2 ♗d6**. The computer assesses the final position as better for White, which is probably correct objectively, although things are not so simple in practice. As the game Das-Shabalov, Ravana 2009, showed, Black's game is easier to handle – his knight blocks the passed e-pawn well, and the black pieces can become active on the dark squares, not allowing the opponent to exchange his light-squared bishop, whose activity is limited by his own passed pawn. Black can gradually prepare an attack on the queenside, thanks to his pawn majority there.

12.cxd5 ♙g4

The alternative is **12...♚e8**, after which White has three options:



analysis diagram

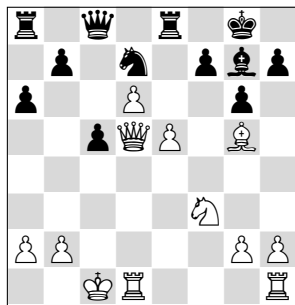
A) **13.♚e1 ♗a6** (also possible is 13...♙f5!? or 13...c4!? with counterplay) **14.♗f3 ♗b4** (14...♙f5!?) **15.♙g5 f6 16.♙h4** White should choose 16.exf6, and after 16...♚xe1+ 17.♗xe1 ♙xf6 18.♙xf6 ♚xf6 19.a3 his position would be preferable. **16...♙f5 17.♙b5 a6! 18.exf6 ♚xe1+** It was necessary to sacrifice the queen for two bishops: 18...axb5 19.f7+ ♗xf7 20.♙xd8 ♚exd8. Formally, Black's material compensation is insufficient, but he has a lot of pieces pointing at the queenside, where

the white king is placed. There is no defence against the threat of ...♗c4, ...♙xc3 followed by taking on a2, when the white position collapses. **19.♚xe1 ♙xf6 20.♚e8+ ♚xe8 21.♙xe8 ♗c4 22.♙f7+ ♗xf7 23.♚h6 ♗d3+ 24.♗d1 ♙g7 25.♗g5+ ♗f8 26.♗xh7+ ♗g8 27.♗f6+ ♗f7 28.♚g5 ♚h8 29.♗fe4 ♚e8 30.d6 ♗dxb2+ 31.♗c2** A terrible mistake; after 31.♗c1 the position would remain complicated, but equal. **31...♗xd6**, winning material and with it the game, Smith-Shabalov, Philadelphia 2007;

B) **13.♗f3 ♙g4 14.♙b5 ♗d7 15.e6**

On 15.♚he1 the simplest is 15...♙xf3 16.gxf3 ♙xe5, winning a pawn; White has some compensation, but hardly enough. In the game K.J.Lutz-Schnelzer, Germany tt 1994, there followed 15...a6 (instead of the exchange on f3) 16.♙xd7 ♗xd7 (preferable is 16...♚xd7) 17.e6 fxe6 18.dxe6 ♗f6 19.e7 (19.♚e2!?) 19...♚xd2+ 20.♚xd2 ♙xf3 21.gxf3 ♗f7 with rough equality. **15...fxe6 16.dxe6 ♙xe6 17.♗g5** (17.♚he1!?) **17...♙d4 18.♚he1 ♙c4** (18...♙f5!?) **19.♚xe8+ ♚xe8**, and here White began to go wrong: **20.♚e1** After 20.b3 ♙xb5 21.♗xb5 White obtains sufficient counterplay for equality. **20...♚f8 21.♗e6 ♙xe6 22.♚xe6 ♚e8 23.♚xe8 ♚xe8** – Black keeps an extra pawn, with good chances of success, Riedel-Schnelzer, Germany tt 1994.

C) **13.♙g5** is the strongest move in this position, which poses Black definite problems. **13...♚c7** This is more accurate than 13...f6 14.exf6 ♙xf6 15.♗f3 with the better position for White, Cox-Saint Jean, corr. 2003. **14.♙b5** A position with chances for both sides arises after 14.d6 ♚d7 15.♙b5 ♗c6 16.♗f3 ♚f5, Titzhoff-Andersen, corr. 2008. **14...♙d7 15.♗f3 a6 16.d6 ♚c8 17.♙xd7 ♗8xd7 18.♗d5 ♗xd5 19.♚xd5**



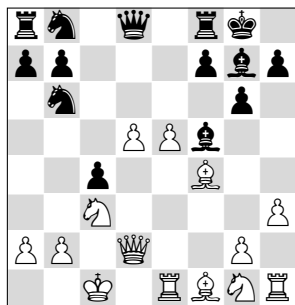
analysis diagram

19... ♖e6 Dubious is 19... ♗xe5?! 20. ♖he1 ♗g7 21. ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 22. ♖e1 ♗f8 23. ♗xb7. 20. ♗f4 ♗c6 21. ♗xc6 bxc6 22. ♖he1 with a small advantage to White, Necula-Reichert, corr. 2012.

13. ♖e1 c4

An interesting and quite rare move. Also possible is 13... ♗a6 14.h3 ♗d7 15. ♗f3 ♖e8, Morgan-Gray, corr. 1998. The final position is in White's favour, but dealing with all these complications at the board is not easy.

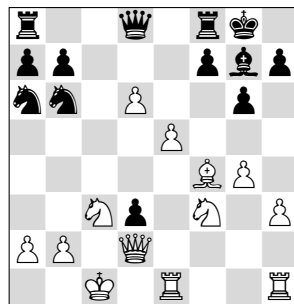
14.h3 ♗f5



15.g4

Let us also look at another continuation: 15. ♗f3 ♗a6 16.g4 Less good is 16. ♗d4 ♗d3 17.d6 ♗c5 18. ♗e2 ♖e8, and the black pieces develop great activity, for example: 19. ♗f3 ♗bd7 20. ♗d5 ♗xe5 21. ♗e7+ ♖xe7 22.dxe7 ♗xe7 23. ♗xe5 ♗xe5 24. ♗xb7 c3 25.bxc3 ♗xb7 26. ♗c2 ♗f5 27. ♗b4 a5 28. ♖xe5 axb4 29. ♖xc5 bxc3 30. ♗xc3 ♗b1+ 31. ♗d2

♖xa2+, and White resigned in Axelrod-Grunberg, Jerusalem 2005. 16... ♗d3 17. ♗xd3 White has also tried the immediate 17.d6 ♖c8 (17... ♗b4!?) 18. ♗g2 (White was obviously very frightened to open the c-file after 18. ♗xd3 cxd3) 18... ♗c5 19. ♗d4 ♗d7 with mutual chances – Cornette-Calvi, Balagne 2004, whilst after 19... ♗bd7 Black even has the advantage: from d7, the knight exerts pressure on the e5-pawn and frees the path of the b-pawn and the queen. 17... cxd3 18.d6



analysis diagram

A) Bad is 18... ♗b4 19. ♖e4! a5 20. ♗b1 ♖c8 21.a3 ♗c4 22. ♖xc4 ♖xc4 23. ♗g5 (getting the bishop out from attack with tempo) 23... ♗b6 24.axb4 axb4 25. ♗a2 with advantage to White;

B) 18... ♖c8 19. ♗b1 ♗c4 (he should not have given up the d3-pawn; correct is 19... ♗b4 with counterplay) 20. ♗xd3 ♗b4 21. ♗d1 ♗b6 22. ♖h2 ♗xb2 23. ♖xb2 ♖xc3 24. ♗d2 ♗c6 25. ♗xc3 ♗xc3 26. ♗b3 ♗xe5 27. ♖xe5, and Black resigned in Striebach-Schmidt, Germany tt 2008/09;

C) Very strong is the untried 18... ♗c5!. If now 19.b3, covering the square c4, then 19...a5, and the black position looks preferable – he already threatens ...a5-a4.

15... ♗d3 16. ♗xd3 cxd3 17. ♗xd3

Bad is 17. ♖e4 ♗a6 (the best square for the knight in this variation) 18. ♖d4 ♖c8 19. ♗xd3 f6 20.e6 f5 21. ♗e2 ♗xd4

22.♖xd4 ♖xd5 23.e7 ♖xh1+, and White resigned in Murey-Grunberg, Rohde 2002.

17...♘a6

In the game Lazic-Cosma, Kragujevac 1995, Black chose 17...♘c6, but it is not clear why he put the knight en prise – it is going to b4 anyway, and is excellently placed on a6.

18.d6 ♖c8 19.♖b1 ♘b4 20.♖d1

White has also tried 20.♖b5!? ♖c4 21.♙e3 ♘d3 22.♙xb6 (22.♘f3!?) 22...♖xb6 23.♖xb6 axb6 24.♘f3 ♘xe1 25.♖xe1 ♖f4 26.♖e3 ♖d8 27.♘d5 ♖xf3 28.♖xf3 ♙xe5 29.♘xb6 ♙xd6 with equality, Lazic-Cosma, Kragujevac 1995.

20...♘c4 21.♖h2

Very logical: White includes his rook in the defence along the second rank.

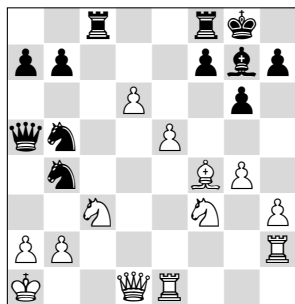
21...♖a5 22.♘f3 ♘a3+

Clearly worse is 22...♖c5 23.♖he2 with advantage to White, Movsesian-Franciscs, Czech tt 2005; and even stronger is 23.♖e4!.

23.♖a1

Equality results from 23.bxa3, for example: 23...♖xc3 24.axb4 ♖xb4+ 25.♖b2 ♖xf4 26.♖b3 ♖c5 27.♖xb7 ♙xe5 28.♘xe5 ♖xe5 29.d7 ♖d8 30.♖xe5 ♖xe5.

23...♘b5



24.♖d2

A mistake, although it is hardly likely that anyone could cope with this position over the board, without concrete

knowledge. Which makes this variation all the more attractive for Black.

The only move is **24.♘a4**, and then: **24...♘xd6 25.a3 25.exd6 ♖c2 26.a3 ♖xa4 27.♖b1 ♖b3 28.♖xc2 ♖a2+ 29.♖c1 ♙xb2+ 30.♖d2 ♙c3+ (or 30...♘xc2 31.♖xc2 ♙c3+ 32.♖d1 ♖xc2+ 33.♖xc2 ♙xe1 34.♘xe1 f6 with mutual chances) 31.♖xc3 ♖c8+ 32.♖xb4 a5+ 33.♖a4 ♖c4+ 34.♖xc4 ♖xc4+ 35.♖xa5 ♖c5+ with perpetual check. 25...♘d5 26.♙d2 ♖b5 27.exd6 ♖c4 28.♘c3 ♘xc3 29.♙xc3 ♙xc3 30.bxc3 ♖xc3 31.d7 (the assessment is not changed by 31.♖a2 ♖d8) 31...♖xa3+ 32.♖a2 ♖xa2+ (or 32...♖d3!?, keeping more pieces on the board) 33.♖xa2 ♖a5+ 34.♖b2 ♖b5+ 35.♖b3 (or 35.♖a2 ♖a5+, agreeing to perpetual check) 35...♖xd7 – both sides have chances.**

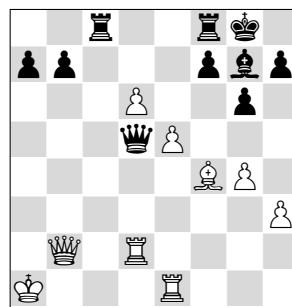
24...♘xc3 25.bxc3 ♘xa2 26.♖xa2 ♖xc3+ 27.♖b2 ♖xf3

White is a pawn down with an insecure king; Black's position is winning.

28.♖f2 ♖d5

Also good is 28...♖xh3!?, taking all the kingside pawns.

29.♖d2



29...♖c6?

Black had a precise path to the win: 29...♖a5+ 30.♖a2 (or 30.♖b1 ♖c4) 30...♖b4 31.d7 ♖xf4 32.dxc8 ♖ ♙xe5+ 33.♖xe5 ♖xe5+ 34.♖b2 ♖a5+ 35.♖a2 ♖xa2+ 36.♖xa2 ♖xc8 37.♖xa7 ♖c3 38.h4 ♖c4 etc.

30. ♖g5?

A mistake in return; unclear play follows after 30.d7 ♜cd8 31.♞d4.

30... ♞d7 31. ♖e7 ♜fe8 32. ♞b4 a5

Both 32...♜c6 and 32...b6 win.

33. ♞b2

More tenacious is 33.♞d4.

33... ♜c4 34. ♜d3 ♞b4 35. ♞b3 ♜xb3?

Missing the win, which could be achieved by 35...♞b5.

36. ♞xb3 ♜c8 37. ♖a2 a4?!

He could retain chances of success with 37...♖h8, and now after 38.e6 fxe6 not 39.♞xe6, which is no longer check, and in reply there follows 39...♞a4+ 40.♖b1 ♞a1#.

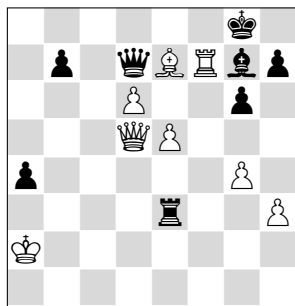
38. ♞d5 ♜c2+ 39. ♖b1

Or 39.♖a3 ♜c3+ 40.♖a2=.

39... ♜c3

39...♜h2!?

40. ♜f1 ♞b3+ 41. ♖a2 ♜e3 42. ♜xf7



Draw agreed – after 42...♜e2+ perpetual check is unavoidable.

On the basis of this example, it is clear that at move 12, Black has two interesting possibilities – 12...♜e8 and 12...♖g4. It looks as though White should have the advantage, but the position is very complicated and playing it requires a very large baggage of knowledge and accurate calculation of variations. In addition, one must not forget that Black has many other variations, where the required knowledge is equally great.

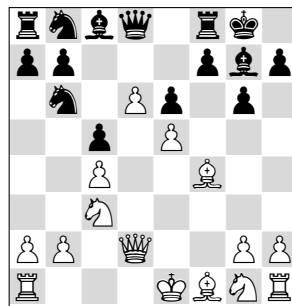
Game 17

Jean Olivier 2366

Mathieu Cornette 2366

Aix-les-Bains 2003 (11)

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 ♘b6 5.f4 g6 6.♘c3 dxe5 7.fxe5 c5 8.d5 ♖g7 9.♖f4 0-0 10.♞d2 e6 11.d6



This move is met with two or three times less often than 11.0-0-0, but the percentage score is not in Black's favour. In my view, it is quite an unpleasant move for Black.

11... ♘c6

11...f6 fails because of 12.♘f3 fxe5 (more tenacious is 12...♘c6) 13.♖g5! ♞d7 14.♘e4 ♞c6 15.♞c2 ♖d7 16.0-0 ♞c8 17.h4! ♞c6 18.h5 with a very strong attack, Vyskocil-Löffler, Austria Bundesliga 2007/08.

12. ♘f3 ♘d7

The correct manoeuvre: Black must develop and exert pressure on the enemy centre as quickly as possible.

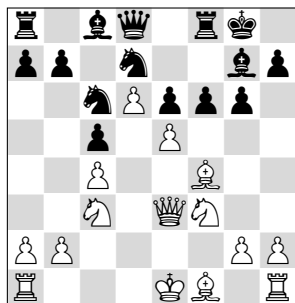
13. ♞e3

White has also tried 13.0-0-0 ♘cxe5 14.♘xe5 ♖xe5 15.♖xe5 ♘xe5 16.♞e3 (interesting is 16.h4!?, after which Black has a choice between 16...h5 or 16...b6 17.h5 g5 with a sharp game) 16...♘g4 (16...♞f6!?) 17.♞xc5 (17.♞g3!?) 17...b6 18.♞d4 ♞g5+ 19.♞d2 ♞xd2+ 20.♜xd2 ♖b7, Migot-Sergeev, Pardubice 2013.

13...f6

Only this move allows Black to count on equality. He does not equalise after

13...♗d4 14.0-0 f6 (even worse is 14...♖a5 15.h4 with an attack, Kraut-Sieglen, Stuttgart 1985) 15.h4!? fxe5 16.♗g5 ♖a5 17.♗d3 b5 18.h5 with dangerous threats, Finkel-Grunberg, Jerusalem 2013.



14.h4!?

Other continuations have been tried:

A) **14.0-0-0 ♗dxe5** (14...fxe5?! 15.♗g5 is in White's favour) **15.♗xe5 ♗xe5 16.♗xe5 fxe5 17.♖b1** In reply to 17.h4!?, both 17...b6 18.h5 ♗b7 19.hxg6 h6 and 17...♗d7 18.h5 ♗c6 19.hxg6 h6 are possible. In both variations Black's position looks dangerous, but without practical tests it is hard to give a precise assessment; the chances are about equal. **17...♗d7 18.h4 ♖f4 19.♖xc5 ♗d4 20.♖xd4 exd4 21.♗e4 b6 22.♖b4 ♖f8 23.♖e1 ♗c6 24.♗d3 ♖f4 25.h5 ♖e3 26.♖c2 ♖f8 27.hxg6 hxg6 28.♖h4 ♗xe4 29.♖xe4 ♖xe4 30.♗xe4 ♗d8 31.♗xg6 ♖xd6 32.♖d3**, and the players agreed a draw in Pinchon-Dumortier, corr. 2014;

B) **14.exf6** and now:

B1) Black does not gain equality from **14...♖xf6 15.♗g5 ♖f7 16.0-0-0 ♗d4**:

B11) The exchange sacrifice **17.♗xd4** is interesting: **17...cxd4 18.♖xd4 ♗xd4 19.♖xd4 ♖f2** It is worth considering 19...b6, so as to develop the queenside more quickly. Then there could follow 20.♗h6 ♗b7 21.♗xf8 ♖xf8 22.♖g1 e5 23.♖d2 ♖e6 24.♗e2 ♗c6 25.g3 with a small advantage to White. **20.♖xf2 ♖xf2 21.♗e3 ♖f6 22.c5** with good

compensation for the exchange, Hess-Mandt, Mittelrhein 2012;

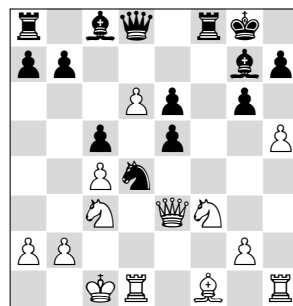
B12) Practice has also seen the quiet **17.♗d3 ♗xf3 18.gxf3 ♗d4 19.♖d2!** An inaccuracy, after 19.♖e2 White's chances are superior. **19...♗e5!** This is the point: now Black threatens to take on f3 with a tempo. **20.♖df1** Another inaccuracy; better was 20.f4 with mutual chances. **20...♗d7** (also better for Black is 20...♗xd3+!? 21.♖xd3 e5) **21.♗e4** (an oversight) **21...♗xc4 22.♖g2 ♗xd6**, and in the game Dubois-Otwinowska, Challes ch-FRA w 1990, Black emerged with two extra pawns.

B2) It is also worth studying the untried **14...♗xf6 15.♖xc5**. Worse is 15.♗g3 ♗g4 16.♖xc5 ♖f5 17.♖a3 ♗e3 18.♗d3, and after 18...♖f8 or 18...♖f7 the game turns out in Black's favour. **15...♗e4** Also worth considering is 15...♗g4 16.♗g5 ♖d7 17.♖a3 (17.0-0-0 b6 18.♖g1 ♗a6, and Black takes over the initiative; 17.h3 ♖f5 18.♖g1 ♗ge5 with counterplay for Black) 17...♗ce5 (17...♗d4!?) 18.♗e2 ♖c6 with mutual chances. **16.♗xe4 ♖xf4 17.♗d3 ♖b6** (there is also 17...♗xb2 18.♖b1 ♗g7 with a complicated position) **18.♖xb6** (on 18.♖f2 unpleasant is 18...♗b4) 18...axb6 with a position of dynamic equality.

14...♗dxe5 15.♗xe5 fxe5 16.0-0-0

An unclear game results from 16.h5 ♖xd6 or 16...e4 17.♗xe4 ♗xb2.

16...♗d4 17.h5



17...♟f5

An interesting alternative is 17...♞xd6!? 18.hxg6 h6.

18.♞xc5

Stronger was 18.♞e1 gxh5 19.♞xh5.

18...b6 19.♞f2

The computer's recommended exchange sacrifice is also worth considering: 19.♞a3 ♟g3 20.♟d3 ♟xh1 21.♞xh1.

19...♟b7 20.♟d3

On 20.hxg6 the reply 20...e4 is unpleasant.

20...♞c8?!

Correct was 20...♟xd6 21.♞c2 ♞f6 22.h6 ♞f4+ 23.♟b1 ♟f6 (somewhat worse is 23...e4 24.hxg7 ♞f8) 24.♟xg6 e4 – Black's position is more promising.

21.♟b1

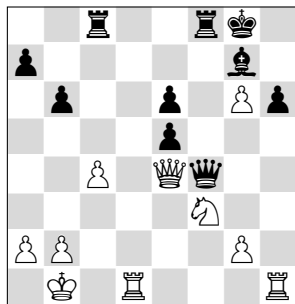
White misses the chances to obtain a clear advantage: 21.hxg6 h6 22.d7 ♞c7 (also insufficient is 22...♞c5 because of 23.♟xf5 exf5 24.♞d6 ♞e7 25.♞hd1 ♞d8 26.♞h4 ♞xh4 27.♟xh4 ♟f8 28.♞e6 ♟c6 29.♟d5 or 29.♟xf5) 23.♟xf5 exf5 24.♞d2 e4 25.♟g5! ♞xd7 26.♞xd7 ♞xg5+ 27.♟b1 etc.

21...♟xd6 22.hxg6 h6 23.♞e2 ♞f6 24.♟e4

Preferable is 24.♟d2!?. Now the initiative passes to Black.

24...♟xe4 25.♟xe4 ♟xe4+ 26.♞xe4 ♞f4

Better was 26...♞f5, with the idea after 27.♞he1 to exploit the pin – 27...♞xc4; even worse for White is 27.♞xf5? exf5.



27.♞xf4

White wrongly allows his opponent to activate his rook with tempo. Preferable is 27.♞h4!? ♞xe4+ 28.♞xe4 ♞f4 with mutual chances.

27...♞xf4 28.b3 ♞g4 29.♞d2 e4

Finally the black bishop breaks out.

30.♞h4 ♞xh4 31.♟xh4 ♞f8 32.g3?!

Voluntarily creating an object of attack; more tenacious is 32.♞d6.

32...♟e5 33.♞e2 ♟xg3 34.♞xe4 ♞f4 35.♞xf4 ♟xf4

White resigned.

As we have seen, the plan of 11.d6 with the idea of h4-h5 poses Black definite problems. However, the position remains double-edged and a clear path to an advantage for White is not obvious.

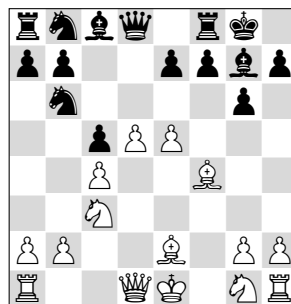
Game 18

Marius Moraru 2408

Mihai Grunberg 2375

Bucharest 1999 (13)

1.e4 ♟f6 2.e5 ♟d5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 ♟b6 5.f4 dxe5 6.fxe5 c5 7.d5 g6 8.♟c3 ♟g7 9.♟f4 0-0 10.♟e2



The idea of this move is very simple: White intends ♟f3 followed by short castling, but he starts developing with the bishop move, so as not to allow an immediate ...♟g4 by Black.

10...e6 11.♟f3

Another line that has been seen is 11.d6 ♟c6 12.♟f3 ♟d7 13.♞d2 ♟dxe5

14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 (or 14...♙xe5 with mutual chances, D.Roos-Polaczek, Belgium tt 2013) 15.0-0-0 ♙d7 16.h4. Here in the game Saliba-Soares, Sao Paulo 1996, a draw was agreed, although Black's chances are somewhat better.

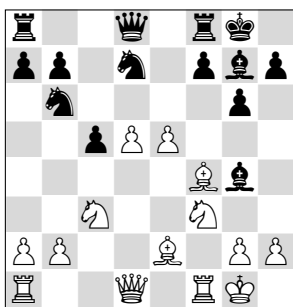
11...exd5 12.cxd5

Despite the fact that White specially played ♙e2 to stop the pin, Black now manages to bring his bishop out to g4 after all.

12...♙g4

Combining development with pressure against the key pawn on e5.

13.0-0 ♗8d7



Another black piece is included in the attack on the centre: already there is a threat of ...♙xf3 followed by the capture of the pawn on e5.

14.♞e1?!

Black is also better after 14.d6 ♙xf3 15.♙xf3 ♗xe5 16.♙xb7 ♞b8 17.♙d5 c4 or 14.♞e1 ♙xf3 (also possible is 14...♞e8, Pein-V.Sveshnikov, Riga 2014) 15.♙xf3 ♗c4 (the e5-pawn cannot be defended on that square, so White has to advance it) 16.e6 ♗de5 17.♙xe5 ♗xe5 – Black's chances are better.

Better is 14.♗d2 ♙xe2 15.♞xe2 ♞e8 16.♗f3 ♗xe5 (but not 16...c4 17.♞f2, Stanetskyy-Nogin, Kiev 2009, with advantage to White) 17.♗xe5 ♙xe5 (17...♗d7!?) 18.♙xe5 ♗d7 19.d6 ♗xe5 with rough equality.

14...♙xf3 15.♙xf3 ♗xe5 16.♙xe5 ♞e8 17.♞f2 ♙xe5 18.♞xc5 ♞c8

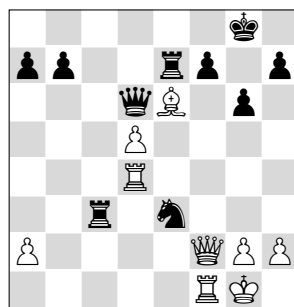
Also good is 18...♞h4!? 19.g3 ♙d4+ 20.♗g2 ♞xg3+ 21.hxg3 ♙xc5 with an extra pawn for Black.

19.♞f2 ♙xc3 20.bxc3 ♞xc3 21.♞ad1 ♞d6 22.♞d4 ♞e7 23.♙g4 ♗c4?!

23...h5 gives a decisive advantage.

24.♙e6 ♗e3

This is an inaccuracy, although, as it happens, it enabled Black to win in one move. Objectively stronger was 24...♗e5 25.♞e4 ♗f3+ 26.gxf3 fxe6 27.♞xe6 ♞xe6 28.dxe6 ♞xe6 29.♞xa7 ♞d5 with a small advantage.



25.♞d2?

White resigned, not waiting for 25...♞xh2+! 26.♗xh2 ♗xf1+ with decisive material gains.

But correct was 25.♞f6! ♗xf1 (the assessment is not changed by 25...♗f5 26.♞xf5 ♞c1+ 27.♞f1 ♞xf1+ 28.♗xf1 (only not 28.♞xf1? fxe6) 28...fxe6 29.dxe6 ♞a6+ 30.♗g1 ♞b6 31.♞xe7 ♞xd4+ 32.♗f1 ♞c4+ with equality) 26.♙xf7+ ♞xf7 27.♞xd6 ♞c1 28.h3 ♗d2+ 29.♗h2 ♗f1+ with perpetual check.

Conclusion: The move 10.♙e2 does not create any problems for Black. More likely, it is the opposite: now it is White who must show accuracy, to avoid falling into an inferior position.