

Chapter Eleven

An Early Lunge

Colin McNab

1 e4 g6 2 h4!? (Diagram 1)

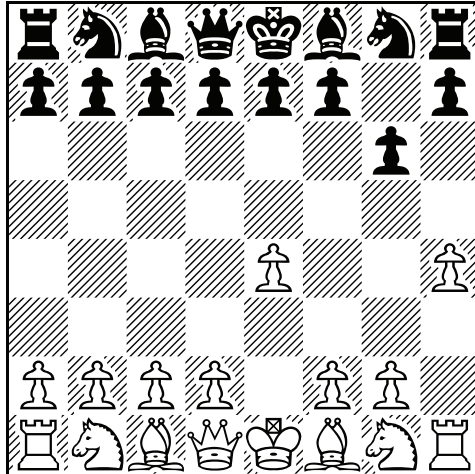


Diagram 1 (B)

Advancing on the kingside with h2-h4 (with a view to later playing h4-h5xg6) is a standard idea for White in many variations of the Pirc and Modern, although it is

not so common for it to be played quite this early. But for a player who uses the Modern move order 2 h4!? can be very irritating, since Black is immediately confronted with a dilemma.

Black can physically stop the pawn going any further by 2...h5, when White may hope to make use of the weakened g5-square as an outpost for a knight or bishop. On the other hand, Black may allow the h-pawn to advance, reacting in the approved manner to a flank attack with a counter in the centre. Indeed, the most frequently recommended response is 2...d5, but this option may not appeal to many players who having set out to play a Modern, do not want to find themselves in a type of Scandinavian Defence. Moreover, as we shall see in the following game, this line is not without its dangers for Black.

□ P.Ponkratov ■ V.Komliakov

Naberezhnye Chelny 2008

1 e4 g6 2 h4 d5 3 exd5 Qxd5

Black's alternatives here and on the next move will be covered later in the chapter.

4 Nc3 Qd8 5 h5 Bg7 6 Bc4 Nc6 7 Nf3 Nh6 (Diagram 2)

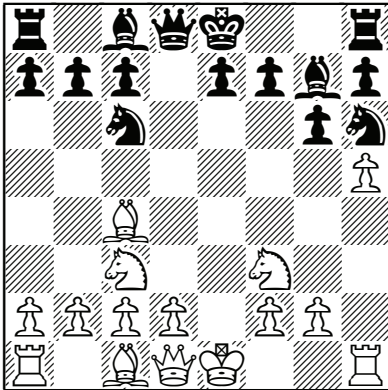


Diagram 2 (W)

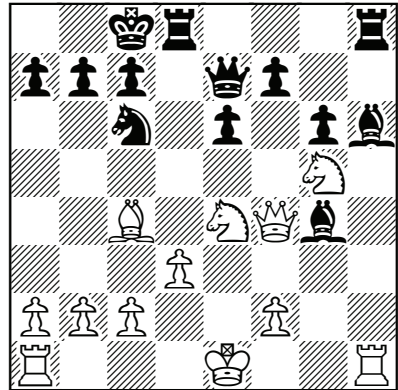


Diagram 3 (W)

8 d4!



DANGEROUS WEAPON! It may have looked as if Black had the d4-square under control, but his bishop is tied to the defence of the knight on h6, making this advance possible.

Dangerous Weapons: The Pirc and Modern

White's move is an improvement on the game I.Nepomniachtchi-V.Komliakov, Moscow 2006, which continued 8 d3 Bg4 9 Bxh6 Bxh6 10 hxg6 hxg6 (Black is already comfortable) 11 Qc1? Bh5! 12 Ng5 e6 13 Nce4 Qe7 14 g4? (14 f4 would at least avoid losing material, but 14...0-0-0 is very good for Black) 14...Bxg4 15 Qf4 0-0-0! (**Diagram 3**) 16 Rxh6 (after 16 Qxg4 Bxg5 17 Rxh8 Rxh8 Black threatens ...Rh1+) 16...Rxh6 17 Nxf7 Rh1+ 18 Kd2 Rxa1 19 Qxg4 (19 Nxd8 Qb4+ 20 Nc3 Rd1+ 21 Ke3 Qb6+ is crushing) 19...Rf8 20 Qxe6+ Qxe6 21 Bxe6+ Kb8 and Black was winning.



BEWARE! An open file is a two-way road. In this game it was Black who managed to benefit tactically from the h-file which White opened.

8...Bg4 9 d5 Bxf3

If Black tries to utilize the pin by 9...Ne5, White responds 10 Bxh6 Bxh6 11 hxg6 and now both 11...Bxf3 12 gxf7+ Kxf7 13 gxf3 Nxc4 14 Rxh6 and 11...hxg6 12 Qd4 Bxf3 13 Qxe5 f6 14 Qg3 are good for White.

10 Qxf3 Ne5

No better is 10...Nd4 11 Qd3 Nh5 12 Bf4 and White will castle queenside with a solid plus.

11 Bb5+! c6 12 Qe4! (Diagram 4)

Taking advantage of the insecure positions of the black knights.

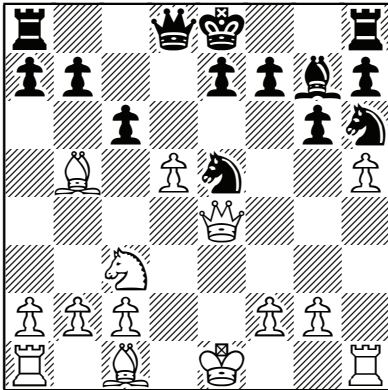


Diagram 4 (B)

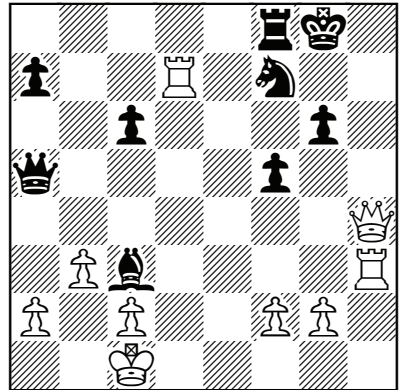


Diagram 5 (B)

12...f5

Perhaps Black should grasp the nettle with 12...cxb5!? 13 Bxh6 Bxh6 14 Qxe5 Rg8

when Golubev, writing in *Chess Today*, points out that 15 hxg6 Rxc6 16 Qh8+ Kd7 17 Qxh7 is not too clear. However White has a safer alternative in 15 Rd1, which should retain an edge.

13 Qe2 Nhf7 14 dxc6 Nxc6

After 14...bxc6 15 Ba4 White's bishop would find an ideal post on b3.

15 Bd2 0-0 16 Bxc6?!

Opening the b-file will allow Black to develop counterplay against b2. White should prefer 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 0-0-0 Nd4 18 Qd3 Nxb5 19 Qxb5 with long-term pressure because of Black's kingside weaknesses.

16...bxc6 17 0-0-0 Rb8 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 b3 Qa5 20 Rh3 Rfd8!

Black is willing to sacrifice a pawn for counterplay.

21 Qxe7

White could consider 21 g4!?

21...Rxd2?

This is just a blunder. Instead Golubev recommends 21...Re8! 22 Qh4 Rbd8! as very unclear.

22 Rxd2 Bxc3 23 Rd7

This forces Black to block in his king.

23...Rf8 24 Qh4! (Diagram 5)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! What a triumph for White's strategy of opening the h-file with h4-h5! Black is defenceless.

24...Kg7 25 Qh6+ Kf6 26 Qxf8 1-0

□ S.Sulskis ■ D.Dumitrache

Cappelle la Grande 2004

1 e4 g6 2 h4 h5 3 d4 c6 4 c4

Sulskis crosses Black's attempt to go into a Gurgendidze set-up, preferring to steer the opening along King's Indian lines.

4...d6 5 d5!?

Not a move that would have occurred to me, but Sulskis is known for his original opening play. The more conventional 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 (not 6 Bg5?! Qb6) 6...a6 7 Nh3 b5 8 Ng5 Nh6 9 f3 gives White some advantage. The game J.Eslon-M.Rivas Pastor, Coria 1994, continued 9...Nd7 10 Qc2 Rb8 11 0-0-0 bxc4 12 Bxc4 d5 13 Bb3 Nb6 14 Kb1 Bd7 15 Ka1 a5 16 Bc1 0-0 17 g4 Kh8 18 e5 with serious pressure (**Diagram 6**).

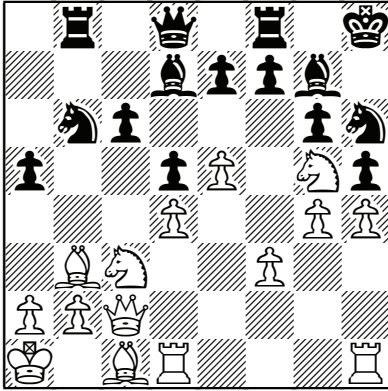


Diagram 6 (B)

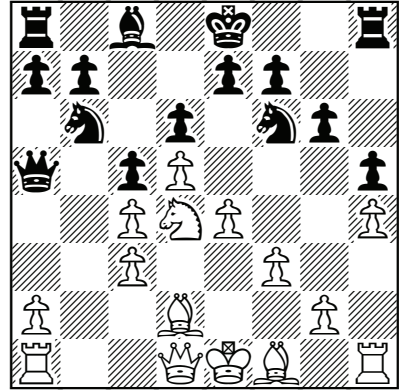


Diagram 7 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Note how White's excellent knight on g5 plays a key role in his promising kingside attack.

5...Bg7 6 Nc3 Bxc3+?!

This exchange is an ambitious way to play, but objectively not very good. The safer 6...Nf6 7 Bg5 Qb6 8 Qd2 is just a little better for White.

7 bxc3 Nf6 8 f3 Qa5 9 Ne2 Nbd7 10 Bd2 Nb6

Black is aiming to justify his 6th move by laying siege to the doubled c-pawns, but White has their defence in hand.

11 Nd4 c5 (Diagram 7) 12 a4!!

Black was hoping for 12 Nb3 Qa4 with good play against the pawns.

12...Nbd7

Of course 12...cxd4? loses to 13 cxd4 Qa6 14 c5 Nc4 15 Qc1.

13 Nb3 Qc7 14 Be2 Ne5 15 0-0 Bd7 16 Bf4 0-0-0

Black's lack of a dark-squared bishop means he can hardly contemplate castling kingside, but neither will his king be safe on the other wing.

17 Qc1 Kb8 18 Qe3 Rc8 19 Bg3 a5 20 Rfc1!

Moving the rook to the semi-open b-file was more obvious, but this 'mysterious' rook move is a clever preparation for the forthcoming attack.

20...Ka8 21 Nd4! (Diagram 8)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Again the knight is sacrificed on this square – Black must have felt that he was in a recurring nightmare.

21...b6

After 21...cxd4 22 cxd4 Black's knight is trapped and the further 22...Neg4 23 fxg4 Nxg4 24 Qd2 sees White ready to crash through with c4-c5 and/or e4-e5.

22 Bf1 Be8 23 Qe1!

By withdrawing the queen White threatens 24 f4 Neg4 25 e5, so Black now has no real alternative to accepting the sacrifice.

23...cxd4 24 cxd4 Ned7 25 Rab1 Qa7 (Diagram 9) 26 c5!

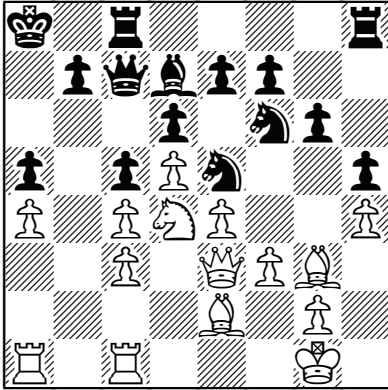


Diagram 8 (B)

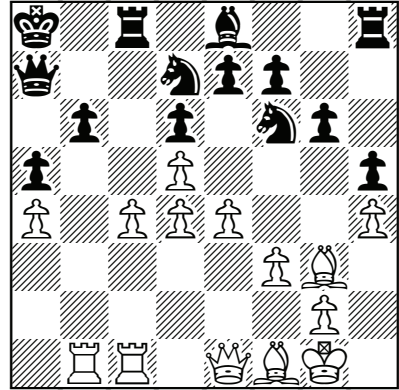


Diagram 9 (W)

With this breakthrough White undermines the defence of the black a-pawn, so that a subsequent Rb5xa5 will embarrass the black king and queen.

26...dxc5 27 Bb5 Nb8 28 dxc5 bxc5 29 Bxe8 Nxe8 30 Rb5 Nc7 31 Rxa5 Nca6 32 Rb1

The black pieces are totally tied down and White can slowly increase the pressure.

32...Rhe8 33 Qe2 c4+ 34 Bf2 Qc7 35 Rb6 Qe5 36 Qe1 Rc7

36...c3 37 Qe2 also leads to a quick mate.

37 Rxa6+ Nxa6 38 Rxa6+ Kb8 39 Qa5 1-0