

GRANDMASTER GAMBITS

1e4

RICHARD PALLISER AND SIMON WILLIAMS

EVERYMAN CHESS

www.everymanchess.com

About the Authors

Richard Palliser is an International Master and the editor of *CHESS Magazine*. In 2006 he became Joint British Rapidplay Champion and in 2019 finished third in the British Championship. He has established a reputation as a skilled chess writer and written many works for Everyman, including the bestselling *The Complete Chess Workout*.

Simon Williams is a Grandmaster, a well-known presenter and a widely-followed streamer, as well as a popular writer whose previous books have received great praise. He is much admired for his dynamic and spontaneous attacking style.

Contents

About the Authors	3
Foreword	6
Introduction	7
1 Key Ideas for White	11
2 Kickstarter: An Outline of the 1 e4 Repertoire	63
3 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4	73
4 Petroff, Philidor, Latvian and Elephant	122
5 Sicilian Defence	156
6 French Defence	181
7 Caro-Kann Defence	206
8 Pirc Defence	216
9 Modern Defence	266
10 Black Lion Defence	301
11 Other Fianchettoes	329
12 Scandinavian Defence	350
13 Alekhine's Defence	389
14 Nimzowitsch Defence	404
Index of Variations	424
Index of Complete Games	431

Foreword

This book continues the collaboration between Chessable and Everyman Chess, a collaboration that makes sure chess lovers can enjoy learning their favourite opening in their favourite format, be that with Chessable's videos and MoveTrainer, or via good, old paper format.

The idea of *Grandmaster Gambits* came to me a long time ago. I wanted to create a super-exciting and aggressive repertoire that would hold up to the test of theory. Throughout my chess career I have experimented with interesting and novel gambit ideas, and it is now time to share those ideas with the reader.

This project only became possible thanks to Richard Palliser. It is one thing having an idea but the hardest task is always implementing that idea. Richard put a lot of painstakingly hard work into taking some of my more outrageous concepts and making them playable. His opening theory work is something quite special and I must thank him for making this project possible.

I hope you digest the information in these pages with both the exploration and rigour they deserve, beginning by learning the key ideas from the introductory games and the 'Kickstarter' outline of the repertoire, ahead of gradually delving deeper as you deem fit.

The opening ideas are meant to be super aggressive, giving you the initiative from move one after 1 e4, often surprising your opponent and placing them immediately on the back foot. Some of the variations are more mainline than others, but Richard and I have taken a lot of time picking variations that will give you good practical results and a fun game. After all, we should have fun whilst crushing our opponents!

Simon Williams,
Godalming, August 2021

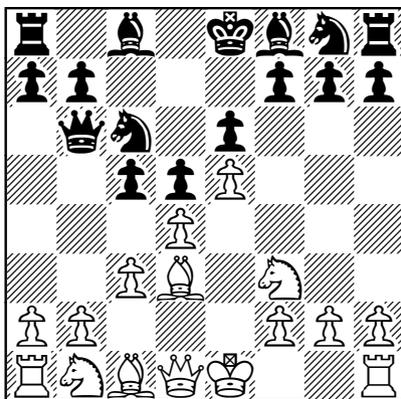
Introduction

Welcome to *Grandmaster Gambits: 1 e4* where we present some of Simon's favourite attacking and sacrificial lines!

1 e4 e5

In this repertoire for White we begin by tackling the 'big four', which means that as well as the Open Games, we'll be taking a good look at the ever-popular Sicilian. After 1...c5, 2 b4!? should stun your opponents at club level and is a pretty underrated gambit, as we'll see.

Against the French, 1...e6, it's not so easy to gambit early on, so we'll settle for a space advantage with the easy-to-play Advance variation, 2 d4 d5 3 e5. Play tends to continue 3...c5 4 c3 ♘c6 5 ♗f3 ♚b6 when we rather like 6 ♕d3.



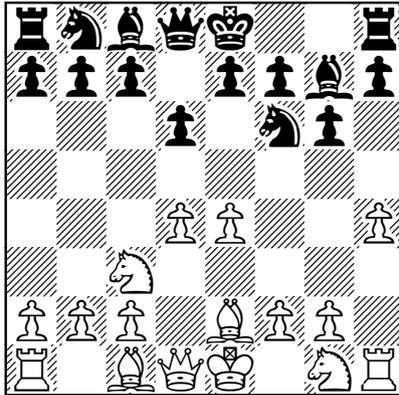
Here 6...cxd4 7 O-O!? is a modern twist on the famous Milner-Barry Gambit and one deployed by Magnus no less.

Black's final big four move is 1...c6, the Caro-Kann. Even quite experienced practitioners of that venerable opening may be stunned by 2 ♕c4!? d5 3 ♕b3, Simon's favourite Hillbilly Attack and ever inch a gambit.

We'll then present some more of Simon's favourite attacking and sacrificial lines as we complete the repertoire with that first move which was best by test according to the great Bobby.

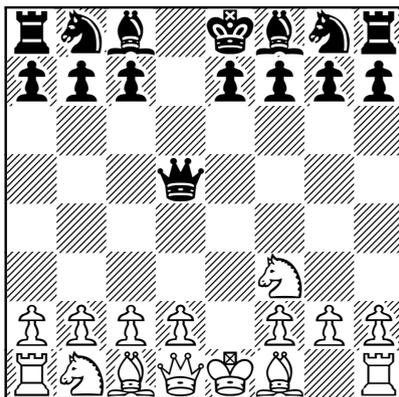
Grandmaster Gambits: 1 e4

After 1...d6 2 d4 ♘f6 (this can be delayed if Black is a Modern player, but after 2...g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 White can still go 4 ♙e2 followed by h4, as covered in Chapter Nine) 3 ♘c3 g6 4 ♙e2 is a modest little move, but with a venomous follow-up in mind: 4...♙g7 5 h4.



Here we go, putting Harry to immediate use. White simply wants to blast ahead with h5. Black doesn't have to head for Pirc waters after 1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3, with Simon's sometime favourite 3...e5, the Black Lion, a pretty respectable alternative these days. Here we'll opt for a route one approach: 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 and now not one of the main lines, but making White's main pawn break without delay in 6 f4, which has arguably been underestimated by theory and most certainly can early cause trouble for the black king.

As well as 1...d6, arguably the most important remaining first move we'll cover, at least from a practical perspective, is the Scandinavian, 1...d5 2 exd5. Here after both 2...♘f6 and 2...♖xd5 we recommend 3 ♘f3.

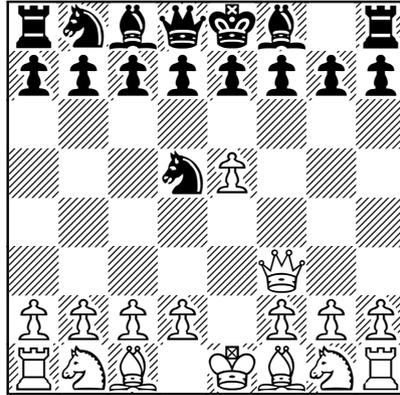


This denies Black his or her favourite lines and is a move which both gives White fairly easy play and can lead to some pretty aggressive play, especially in the critical continua-

tion 3...♗g4 4 ♖e2 ♘c6 5 0-0 0-0-0 6 h3.

Chapter Eleven rounds up Black's fianchetto alternatives to a ...g6-based approach, including 1...a6, 1...g5 and especially 1...b6, Owen's Defence. Here White has an aggressive and simple set-up available: 2 d4 ♗b7 3 ♘c3 e6 4 ♖d3 when we won't be developing the knight to the standard f3 post, but rather going ♗ge2, remaining flexible, refusing to obstruct the f-pawn and hoping to obtain an early central initiative with a d5 advance.

Against the Alekhine, 1...♗f6, we have a surprise in store: 2 e5 ♘d5 3 ♚f3!?, which is likely to surprise even quite experienced Alekhine practitioners.



White enjoys some early pressure against f7, prevents 3...d6 and the queen may slide across to a fine spot on g3.

Finally, 1...♘c6, the Nimzowitsch Defence, is most simply met by 2 ♗f3, angling to transpose back to the 1 e4 e5 part of the repertoire. Black may, though, prefer something independent, as we'll see in our final chapter.

Returning to 1...e5:

2 ♗f3 ♘c6

Just so you're not stranded when Black avoids this standard choice, we've also presented lines against his alternatives, not least those involving countering the Petroff, 2...♗f6, with 3 d4.

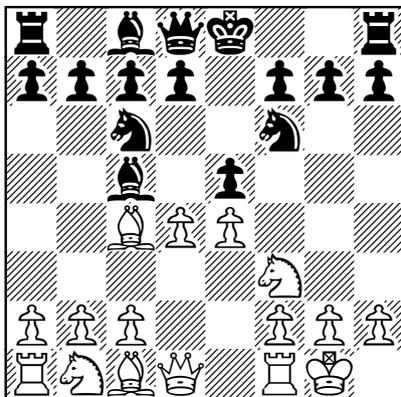
3 ♖c4

Classic development as White prioritises rapid development, which a subsequent gambit will but speed up even further.

3...♖c5

Black's big alternative is 3...♗f6, the Two Knights Defence, when a famous double-gambit is our plan, 4 d4!? exd4 5 0-0.

4 0-0 ♗f6 5 d4!



Yet again the d-pawn is sacrificed to seize a strong, early initiative however Black takes on d4.

As for studying this course, we recommend that you should first play through the following illustrative games which introduce our key gambit lines. Do then familiarise yourself with the Kickstarter overview of the repertoire before undertaking some more detailed study of each variation in turn.

And, above all, have fun! Indeed, these gambits, all of which have their supporters in the GM ranks, are not just decent practical weapons, which should catch out plenty an opponent at an early stage, but also most enjoyable lines to play and have in your repertoire.

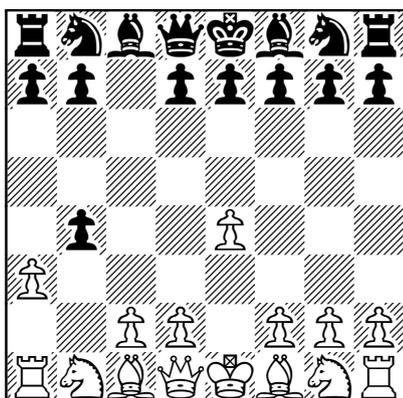
Richard Palliser,
York, August 2021

Chapter Two

A Kickstarter: An Outline of the 1 e4 Repertoire

1 e4 e5

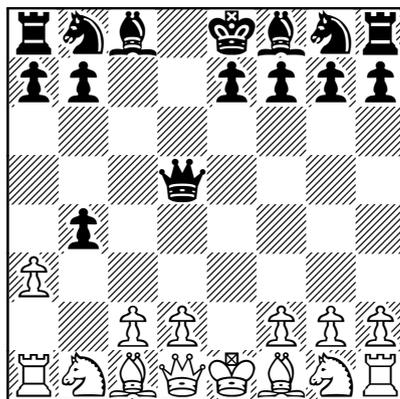
One of Black's two main moves. Against the other, the Sicilian, 1...c5, the Wing Gambit with 2 b4!? already presents a challenge and aims to exchange a wing pawn for a central one. Acceptance is critical and normal, but after 2...cxb4 3 a3 Black faces a choice.



In any event, White will obtain some compensation thanks to his pressure down

the long dark-square diagonal and the a-file:

a) 3...d5 4 exd5 ♖xd5 is the main line.

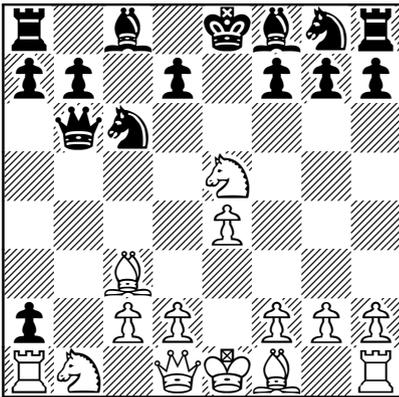


Naturally White avoids the huge threatened check: 5 ♖f3 e5 6 axb4 ♙xb4 7 c3 (7 ♖a3!? is another move order, as in Williams-Dragon, London Chess Classic Open 2015, where 7...♗c6 8 ♖b5 ♗d8 9 c3 ♙e7 10 d4 exd4 11 ♙f4! seized a powerful early initiative) 7...♙e7 8 ♖a3 (a key idea

throughout the Wing Gambit; the arrival of a knight on b5 is often not so easy for Black to meet) 8...♖c6 9 ♖b5 ♗d8 10 d4. This rips open lines to supply lasting compensation.

b) 3...b3 4 cxb3 d5 5 exd5! strives to open lines, despite material equality having been restored, with 5...♖f6 6 ♖f3 ♗xd5 7 ♙b2 ♗c6 8 ♗c3 supplying swift and easy development, as 8...♙g4 9 h3 isn't too dangerous a pin, after which ♙c4, ♗e1 and 0-0 may well follow.

c) 3...e5 4 ♖f3 ♗c6 5 ♙b2 takes immediate aim at e5 while preparing 5...♗b6 (5...♖f6 is Harikrishna's twist against which White should be happy enough to expand in the centre with 6 ♗xe5 ♗e7 7 d4) 6 ♗xe5!? bxa3 7 ♙c3 a2.

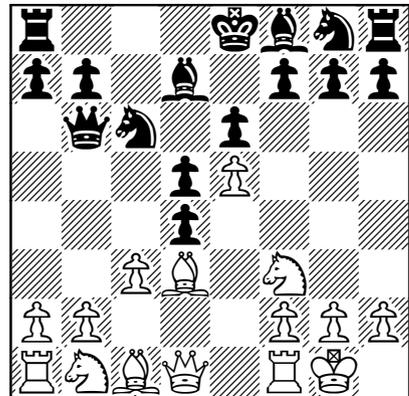


This may look rather annoying in view of the potential fork with ...♗e6, but White is ready to sacrifice: 8 ♗xf7! ♗xf7 9 ♙c4+ ♙e8 10 ♗xa2 with pretty attractive play for the piece in view of the much safer king and Black's vulnerable kingside.

d) 3...bxa3 4 d4 sees White not hurrying to recapture, although after 4...d6 he should go 5 ♗xa3 when 5...♖f6 6 ♙d3 ♗c6 7 c3 usefully shores up the centre. Whether Black goes for an ...e5 or a Pirc-type set-up,

White will continue with ♗e2, 0-0 and f4, setting up quite a powerful centre and attacking chances on the kingside.

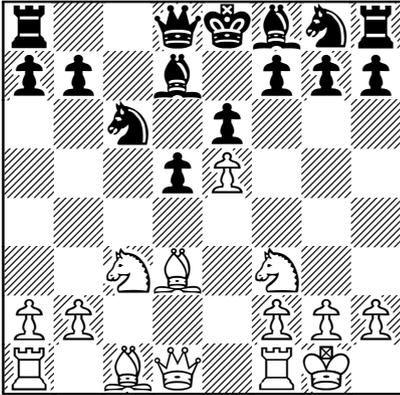
Against the French, 1...e6, straightforward development and the Advance variation is our preference: 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 (standard; instead, 3...b6 4 c3 sets a trap and while Black can still exchange the light-squared bishops, 4...♗d7 5 h4!? ♙a6 6 ♙xa6 ♗xa6 7 h5 c5 8 ♗e2! seized a lot of space in Movsesian-Tibensky, Slovakian Championship, Kaskady 2002; White can play on both fronts and f4-f5 is a key pawn break) 4 c3 ♗b6 5 ♖f3 ♗c6 6 ♙d3. This is the famous Milner-Barry Gambit, but after 6...cxd4 7 0-0 ♙d7 rather than recapture, we're going for a modern twist, developing and relying on the lasting compensation granted by the pawn on e5.



This is also a rare position in the repertoire where you have a choice between 8 ♗e1 and 8 ♗bd2!?, as in Carlsen-Harikrishna, Saint Louis Blitz 2020, no less, where White soon obtained pressure down a half-open b-file and full control of the key d4-square after ♖b3.

After 4 c3 play often transposes following 4...♗c6 5 ♖f3 if Black touches the

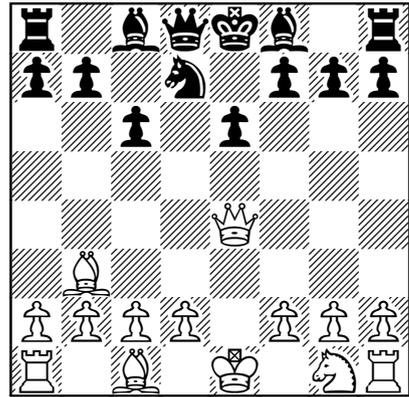
queen. Instead, 5...♔d7 (or 5...♖ge7 6 ♔d3 cxd4 7 cxd4 ♖f5 8 ♔xf5 exf5, claiming an early structural advantage and swift enough development with 9 ♖c3 ♔e6 10 ♔g5; now ♖e2-f4 is one idea, h4 and even ♗h3-g3 another) 6 ♔d3 cxd4 7 0-0! dxc3 (7...♗b6 transposes to 4...♗b6) 8 ♖xc3 supplies decent compensation.



Black is rather cramped by the fine bridgehead on e5 and with, for instance, 8...♖ge7 9 ♔g5 a6 10 ♗e1 White enjoys active and easy development, as we'll see in Hector-Renner, LGA Cup, Nuremberg 2008. A tactical blow may occur on the kingside or just calm queenside expansion with ♗c1, a3, b4 and ♖a4-c5.

1...c6 2 ♔c4!? d5 3 ♔b3 is the Hillbilly Attack, Simon's pet line against the Caro-Kann. When Magnus surprised Wesley So with the gambit, the American star declined the pawn, but 3...dxe4 4 ♗h5 is critical. White's play is a little crude, perhaps, but not to be underestimated and do note the power exerted by the light-squared bishop: 4...e6 (4...g6 5 ♗h4 ♖f6 6 ♖c3 ♔f5 7 f3! exf3 8 ♖xf3 is another important line, as in Berg-Hillarp Persson, Swedish Championship, Sunne 2015; d3 may blunt the

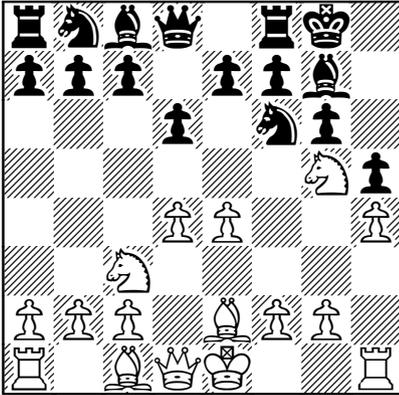
bishop on f5 and after that or d4, White is all set to attack with 0-0 and ♔h6 should Black castle short, while in any case ♖g5 may cause problems) 5 ♖c3 ♖f6 6 ♗h4 leaves White with both f3 gambit ideas and those of simply regaining the pawn with 6...♖bd7 7 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 8 ♗xe4.



♖f3, 0-0 and d4 may follow and White has far from given up on ideas of using the actively-placed queen to obtain a kingside attack.

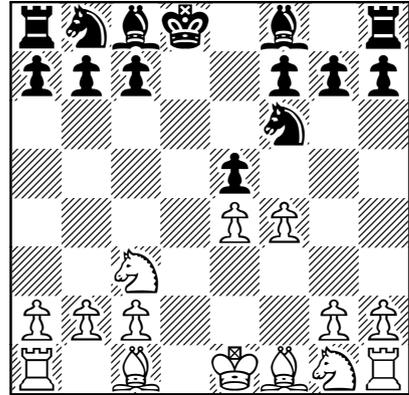
1...d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 is our favourite set-up and now Black must decide whether to fianchetto and play the Pirc, or aim to counter in the centre. 3...g6 is the former approach when 4 ♔e2 is not such a modest move, as White wants to be able to advance Harry straightaway and in two immediate steps, which he can now that he controls the h5-square: 4...♔g7 5 h4! h5 (Black's safest move, halting Harry; 5...0-0?! 6 h5! already spells trouble for the black king, while 5...h6 closes lines, but runs into the powerful 6 h5 g5 7 f4! gxf4 8 ♔xf4 when ♖f3 will follow and White will likely castle long; instead, 5...c5 is Black's main alternative to 5...h5 when 6 dxc5 ♗a5 7 ♔d2. immediately breaks the pin, after which h5 and ♖h3

may well follow) 6 ♖f3 0-0 (6...♗c6 aims for central counterplay, but 7 d5 doesn't entail too much positional risk and after 7...♗e5 8 ♗xe5 dxe5 9 ♕g5 the then world champion, Garry Kasparov no less, was poised to take control of the position with ♖d2 and f3 in Kasparov-Speelman, Paris Immopar (rapid) 1990) 7 ♗g5.



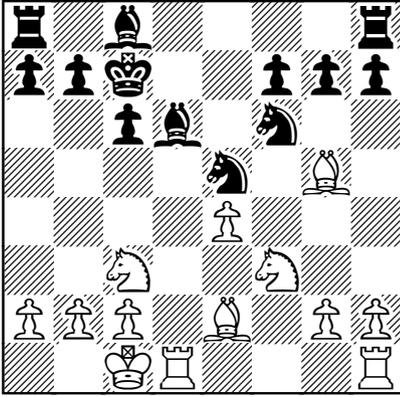
White wastes no time bringing the knight to this fine post and 7...c6 (Black hints at thematic Pirc counterplay with ...b5; 7...♗c6 is probably more critical, but White should still be fairly happy so long as he remembers 'exchanges to open lines in the centre': 8 ♕e3 e5 9 dxe5! – 9 d5 ♗d4! is what Black is hoping for – 9...♗xe5 10 ♖d2 leaves White set to castle long then push his f-pawn and attack) 8 a4 restrains ...b5 and we saw White make a good case for this in Barua-Nikolic, Biel Interzonal 1993. Alternatively, 8 0-0 followed by ♕e3 ignored Black's queenside expansion and led to another very instructive display in Neubauer-Lehner, Austrian Bundesliga 2017. In both lines note that once White is developed and has control of the central situation, he may well still look to attack the black king, be that with e5-e6 or f4-f5.

Instead of 3...g6, 3...e5 is the Black Lion when a simple and by no means unaggressive approach is 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 6 f4!?, immediately striving to open lines towards the uncastled black king.



Now 6...♗bd7 will take play into our next line (see 3...♗bd7), but Black's most popular choice has been to pin and aim for active counterplay: 6...♕b4 7 ♕d3 ♗c6 8 ♗f3 ♖e8 maintains piece control of e5, but White is happy to exchange if it means seizing the initiative: 9 fxe5 ♗xe5 (9...♗g4? 10 ♕g5+ is a pretty disruptive check) 10 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 11 ♕f4 leaves White able to castle on either side and doubled c-pawns shouldn't prove an issue, as we saw in Turner-Fernandez, British Online Championship 2020.

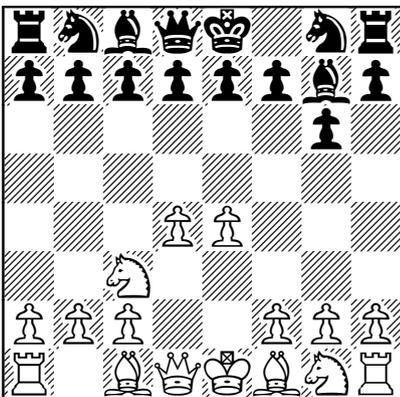
3...♗bd7 can also be met by 4 f4, since there's no need to fear the immediate counter: 4...e5 5 dxe5 dxe5 6 fxe5! ♗xe5 7 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8. Play has transposed to a position which can also arise after 3...e5. White wants to challenge the knight on e5 with ♗f3, as well as to develop rapidly with ♕g5 and 0-0-0(+): 8 ♕g5 c6 9 ♗f3 ♕d6 10 0-0-0 ♗c7 11 ♕e2 sees White developing along model lines.



Is 12 ...d6 13 ...fd1+ already a threat? Well, yes – see Spassky-Eliet.

3...c6 4 f4 is consistent too when 4...♖a5 5 ♔d2 immediately breaks the pin and once again White should be happy to swap twice on e5: 5...e5 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 fxe5 ♗g4. Here there's a strong idea which isn't dissimilar to our anti-Alekhine approach: 8 ♖f3! ♗xe5! 9 ♖g3. Once again, this is a fine spot for the queen and even threatens to win on the spot with ♗b5 or ♗d5.

Wherever allowed after 1 e4 we want to continue with 2 d4 and 3 ♗c3 (OK, not after 1...c6 and 1...e6), as we will against the Modern: 1...g6 2 d4 ♔g7 3 ♗c3.



White enjoys quite an aggressive set-up, as well as ideal central play. Now Black may take play back into Pirc waters with ...d6 and ...♗f6, but he can also prefer something independent:

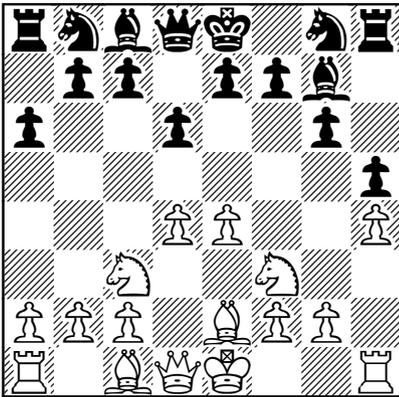
a) 3...c5 is the infamous Sniper, a line aggressive players should welcome, since White can open the centre and quickly reach a favourable, unbalanced position: 4 dxc5! ♖a5 (4...♔xc3+ 5 bxc3 ♖a5 is the big alternative, but White can now compete for the dark squares while aiming to favourably return the pawn with 6 ♖d4 ♗f6 7 ♖b4!) 5 ♔d2 ♖xc5 6 ♗d5! is a strong leap which seizes an early initiative due to Black's misplaced queen. Can you spot the immediate threat? It's 7 ♔b4 ♖c6 8 ♔b5 and while Black can dodge that, his cause is not to be envied, as we'll see in Line B3.

b) 3...d5!? is relatively rare, but worth knowing about, just so it doesn't knock you off your chair; with 4 exd5 ♗f6 5 ♔c4 White makes it as hard as possible for Black to regain the pawn – we are happy to return it, but on our terms.

c) 3...c6 4 ♔e2 continues our standard development method against the kingside fianchetto. Black can counter forcefully in the centre, but White should not mind the resulting semi-closed centre: 4...d5 5 e5. In contrast to the Gurgienidze variation, where f4 is played, here White is very flexibly placed on the kingside and may even be able to involve Harry, as he did in Tomczak-Heberla, Polish Team Championship, Katowice 2019.

d) 3...d6 (Black's main move) 4 ♔e2 is surprisingly flexible and many Modern players now take the chance to head for Pirc waters with 4...♗f6. If they prefer 4...c6 or 4...a6, White can very much bring Harry

into play: 5 h4! h5 6 ♖f3.



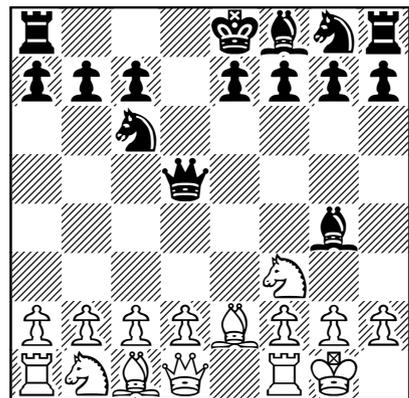
Black has avoided coming under pressure after h4-h5, but is far from completely out of the woods with White's knight looking to settle on g5 at the right moment. White also won't face any queenside counter by lying down: 6...b5 7 a4! b4 8 ♖d5 is, indeed, pretty aggressive and may well see White emerging with a useful enough lead in development, as we'll see in Chapter Nine.

The reversed Grob or Borg is pretty rare, and doesn't require White to recalibrate too much: 1...g5 2 d4 h6 3 ♖c3 ♗g7. Here's there's no need for 4 ♗e2 and 4 h4! already asks serious questions of Black's overextended kingside, as we'll see at the start of Chapter Eleven.

That chapter also tackles in the St. George and Owen's Defence. The latter does nothing to prevent our favourite, aggressive set-up: 1...b6 2 d4 ♗b7 3 ♖c3 e6. Here White should bolster e4 and develop the king's knight flexibly with ♖ge2: 4 ♗d3 ♗b4 (or 4...♖f6 5 ♖ge2 c5 when 6 d5! is a strong gambit, as we'll see in Speelman-Basman, British Championship, Brighton 1984) 5 ♖ge2 leaves White all set to go a3 and castle, with both the e5 and d5 ad-

vances very much still on the agenda.

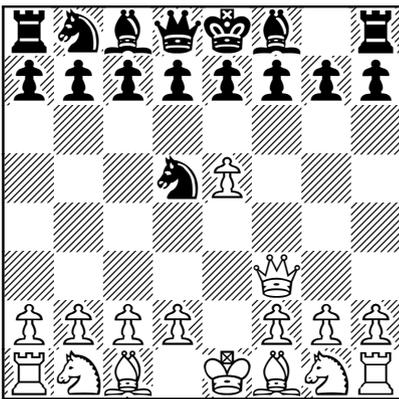
Much more popular and important is 1...d5 2 exd5. Our priority against the Scandinavian is to deny Black his favourite lines, rapidly complete kingside development and then hit back in the centre – with some force: 2...♗xd5 (2...♖f6 3 ♖f3 ♖xd5 prepares to meet 4 ♗e2 with 4...♖f4, but White is hardly too inconvenienced having to advance in the centre before housing the king: 4 d4 ♗g4 5 ♗e2 e6 6 0-0 when h3 and c4 followed by ♖c3 are high on the agenda and Black can easily find himself a little low on counterplay) 3 ♖f3 ♗g4 (a critical counter; instead, 3...e5?! 4 ♖c3 doesn't really cut it for Black with the d4 break high on White's priority list, but 3...♖f6 is far from terrible when White can very much think kingside first: 4 ♗e2 ♗g4 5 0-0; this leaves Black with a few different set-ups, but in every case White's plan is easy to remember: h3, to ask a question of the bishop, then d4 and probably c4 before ♖c3, taking over the centre and even quickly crashing through with d5 if Black is careless) 4 ♗e2 ♖c6 5 0-0.



White continues to adhere to the kingside first policy and provokes an aggressive

counter: 5...0-0-0 6 h3! (avoiding any issues after ...♖h5) 6...♗h5 (6...♗xf3 7 ♗xf3 ♖d7 8 c3! is a very useful, multi-purpose advance; White may go d4, but he is actually more looking to attack after b4 and/or ♖a4, as occurred in Vachier-Lagrave-Papaioannou, European Team Championship, Warsaw 2013) 7 ♖c3. Once Black goes long, White shouldn't be thinking d4 and c4, but rather attack! After driving the queen back, White is all set to open lines with a highly tempting gambit approach: 7...♖d7 8 b4!?. White very much has the black king in his sights and even after 8...♗xf3 9 ♗xf3 ♖d4 10 a4, ♖b5 was already something of a threat in Decoster-Hopman, Belgian League 2017.

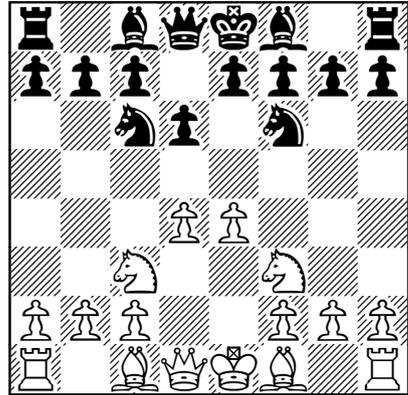
1...♖f6 2 e5 ♖d5 3 ♖f3!?...



...is a pet line of Simon's which should throw even experienced Alekhine players. Black can no longer go 3...d6 and may find himself in an unfamiliar set-up: 3...e6 4 ♖c3 ♖xc3 5 dxc3 ♖c6 6 ♖g3 ties Black down a little to g7 and will see White looking to castle long and exert early pressure down the half-open d-file, as we'll cover in Chapter Thirteen.

1...♖c6 2 ♖f3 (for those determined to be independent against the Nimzowitsch,

we'll also take a brief peek at 2 b4 at the start of Chapter Fourteen, where we also take a quick look at 1...e6 2 d4 c5) 2...d6 3 d4 ♖f6 4 ♖c3 is quite a classical set-up from White, but that doesn't mean we have to continue in an overly positional vein.



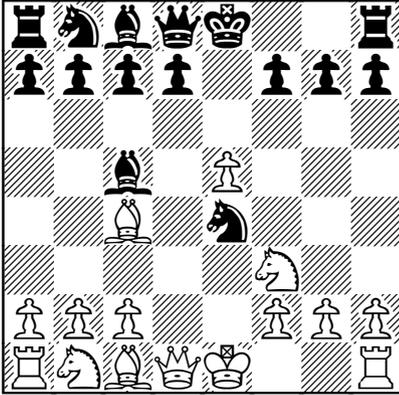
Indeed, 4...g6 (or 4...♗g4 5 ♗e3 when White will look for an early h3 ♗h5; g4 advance, as well as to seize the initiative with a timely d5 push) 5 ♗b5 sees White prepare to mess up Black's pawns, after which 0-0 and e5 will seize a useful space advantage.

Returning at last to 1...e5:

2 ♖f3 ♖c6

Black's main move, hoping for a Ruy Lopez. The rock-solid Petroff Defence, 2...♖f6, can be challenged with 3 d4!?: 3...♖xe4 (3...exd4 4 e5 ♖e4 5 ♖xd4 is another important line, with rapid and easy development for White: 5...d5 6 exd6 ♖xd6 7 ♖c3 ♖c6 8 ♖f4! places the queen on an aggressive square, which a ♗b5 ♖xb5; ♖xb5 exchange might exploit, as could a kingside attack, as with 8...g6 9 ♗e3 ♗g7 10 0-0-0) 4 dxe5 (bold, critical, and fun!) 4...♗c5 (4...d5 is somewhat more solid when 5 ♗e3!?) before ♖bd2 may catch some Petroff players out; indeed, White can and will challenge the

knight on e4, with 5...♙e7 6 ♖bd2 0-0 7 c3 preparing ♗c2, which may even be followed by 0-0-0) 5 ♙c4!?



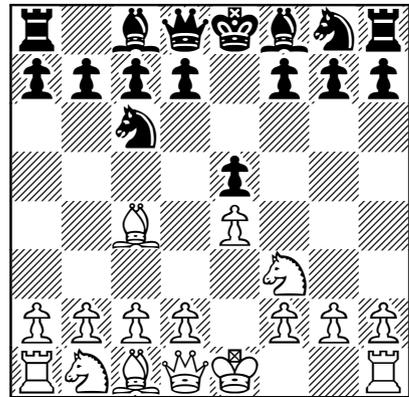
This is a remarkable position considering we're in one of the openings with the most solid of reputations. The critical line runs 5...♖xf2 (5...♙xf2+? 6 ♙f1 threatens ♗d5 and is quite awkward for Black) 6 ♙xf7+! ♙xf7 7 ♗d5+ ♙g6 8 ♗xc5! ♖xh1 9 ♖c3. Black is a rook ahead, but that's the end of the good news for him. His knight likely won't make it out of the corner, ♖d5 and ♗c4 are both big threats, and just look at the king on g6! Indeed, the defensive task proved too much even for a great modern-day defender, as we saw in Almasi-Giri, Beijing Sportaccord (blindfold/rapid) 2011.

Philidor players can be surprised with 2...d6 3 ♙c4!? when 3...♙e7 (3...h6?! has been surprisingly common, but 4 d4 exd4 5 c3! dxc3 6 ♖xc3 is an excellent version of a Scotch Gambit for White, and 3...♖f6 4 d4!? exd4 5 ♖xd4 ♖xe4 6 ♗e2 rips open the e-file to also offer decent gambit-play) 4 d4 exd4 5 ♖xd4 isn't a gambit, but after 5...♖f6 6 ♖c3 0-0 7 ♙f4 White can hardly complain about his development and may castle on either side.

Latvian Gambitteers are a little thin on the ground these days and after 2...f5?! can be surprised with 3 exf5!?, which is relatively rare and also a good try for some advantage. One key line runs 3...e4 4 ♖e5 ♖f6 5 ♙e2! followed by the discombobulating ♙h5+.

The Elephant Gambit, 2...d5!?, is arguably slightly more respectable, not that White can be at all unhappy after the active sequence 3 ♖xe5 ♙d6 4 d4 dxe4 5 ♙c4 ♙xe5 6 ♗h5! followed by picking up the bishop-pair.

3 ♙c4



Good, old Italian play as White takes aim at f7.

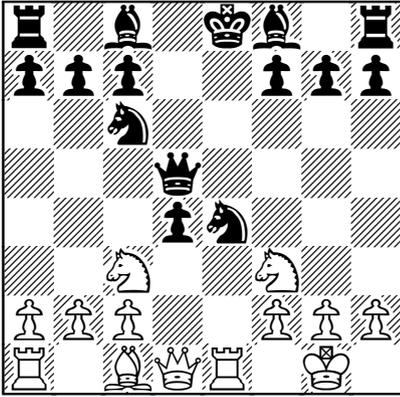
3...♙c5

This is certainly Black's main move these days.

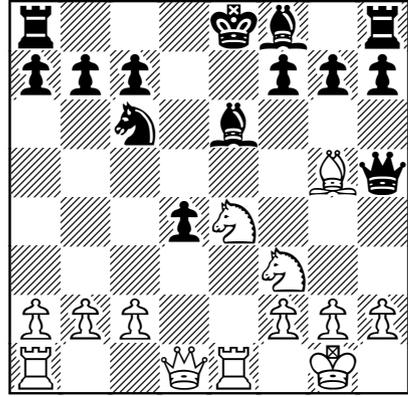
Instead, 3...♙e7 is slightly passive and can even be met by 4 d4 exd4 5 c3!?, with active development and full compensation even in the event of 5...♖a5 6 ♙e2 dxc3 7 ♖xc3 d6 8 0-0 ♖c6 9 ♗a4 followed by e5.

A somewhat more important alternative is the Two Knights Defence, 3...♖f6, when 4 d4 exd4 5 0-0 is consistent with our approach after 3...♙c5. Black can grab

a second pawn, but 5...♖xe4 (5...♙e7 6 ♖xd4 ♖xe4 7 ♖f5 is also rather attractive for White and 5...♙c5 6 e5 is one route to the famous Max Lange Attack – see the notes to Black’s fifth move after 3...♙c5, below) 6 ♖e1 d5 7 ♙xd5! ♗xd5 8 ♖c3 is an important tactical sequence to regain the pawn.



This is a venerable gambit, but quite a modern line is 8...♗h5 (the other big main line is 8...♗a5 9 ♖xe4 ♙e6 when 10 ♙d2! is a little twist and if 10...♗d5 11 ♙g5 as White doesn’t have to hurry to place a knight on g5 in these lines and here prevents castling while preparing the tactical idea 11...h6 12 ♙f6!, and if 12...gxf6? 13 ♖xf6+, forking king and queen; in general we recapture with the knight on e4, but not after the solid 8...♗d8 when 9 ♖xe4+ ♙e7 10 ♖xd4 regains the pawn and sees the tactics working for White after 10...f5 11 ♖f4 followed by a structure-shattering exchange on c6) 9 ♖xe4 (with some rather large threats) 9...♙e6 (9...♙e7 10 ♙g5 is similar when 10...♙e6 11 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 12 ♖xd4 generated early and heavy pressure down the central open files in Chigorin-Janowski, Paris 1900) 10 ♙g5!.

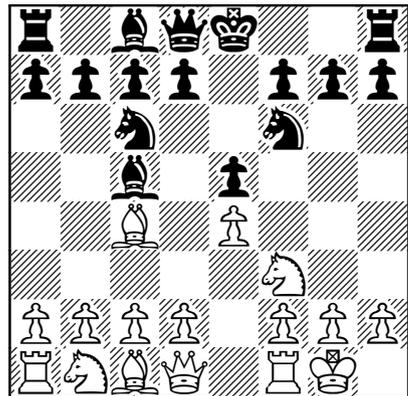


Again, White has the idea of 10...h6 (10...♙d6 is more critical when a modern twist is 11 h4!?, which should surprise even experienced and well booked-up opponents; White involves Harry while keeping his options open) 11 ♙f6!, which after the continuation 11...♗f5? 12 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 13 ♗xd4 already left Black in serious trouble in Li Chao-Wang Yu, Dresden Open 2018.

4 0-0

Already the king is safe and a gambit brewing...

4...♖f6



5 d4! ♙xd4

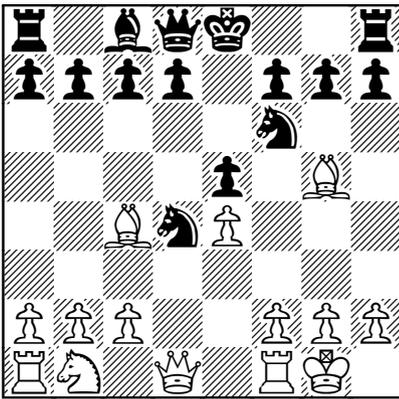
This capture is one of the points behind

a 3...♙c5 move order. Instead, 5...exd4 6 e5 introduces the famous Max Lange Attack, where White enjoys active and fairly promising play after the exchanging sequence 6...d5 7 exf6 dxc4 8 fxg7 ♖g8 and then 9 ♙g5.

6 ♖xd4 ♗xd4

Now your opponents are likely to be ready for the direct 7 f4, but maybe not also...

7 ♙g5!?



...which carries a dastardly idea:

7...h6

Critical, if far from forced.

7...♚e7 8 ♘c3 c6 9 f4! ♚c5 10 ♙xf7+ ♙xf7 11 fxe5 either regains the piece or leaves White with a strong, lasting initiative after 11...♗e6+ 12 ♙h1 ♚xe5 13 ♙xf6 gxf6 14 ♖f5, in view of Black's king position and undeveloped queenside.

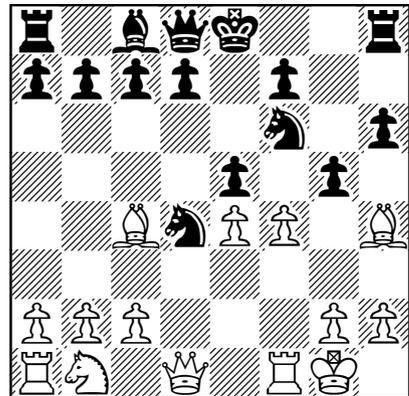
7...d6 8 f4 (again, the key pawn lever) 8...♙e6 9 fxe5 dxe5 10 ♗a3 also supplies decent compensation. The pressure down the f-file is not to be sniffed at, with 10...♚e7 11 c3 ♗c6 12 ♙h1 ♖d8 13 ♚e2 h6

14 ♙xf6 gxf6 15 ♖f2 leaving White with the much happier king position in Movsesian-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

8 ♙h4 g5

8...d6 would be more prudent when 9 f4 ♙g4 forces exchanges: 10 ♙xf6 ♙xd1 11 ♙xd8 ♖xd8 12 ♖xd1, but even here things remain rather unclear, as we can see from 12...♗xc2 13 ♗c3 ♗xa1 14 ♖xa1 exf4 15 ♗d5. White will emerge with two minor pieces for the rook and two pawns. He will play to pressure the black kingside, especially f7, and it's actually not so easy for Black to activate his rooks.

9 f4!!



The stunning point. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!

9...d5!

Probably best, as 9...gxh4? 10 fxe5 leaves both black knights hanging, and 9...gxf4?? is cleaned up by 10 ♖xf4! exf4 11 ♚xd4.

10 exd5 gxf4 11 fxe5

Once again we find White regaining his piece with interest, Christiansen-Bachmann, Chess24 Banter Blitz Cup 2019.

20...♙xh8 21 ♖xh8+

Fittingly Black has been completely undone down the h-file and only here did he resign in Shabalov-Bhat, Alexandria VA 1996, in view of:

21...♙g7 22 ♙f6 mate

Line A1

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 d4 ♗e4

Black's most popular choice when he is likely to be expecting 4 ♙d3...

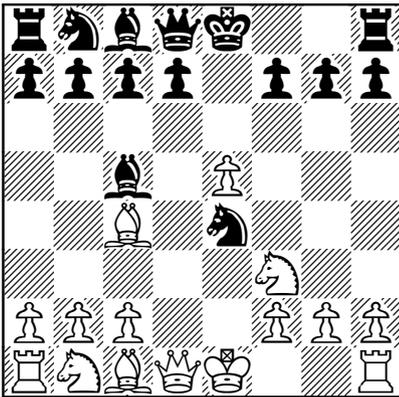
4 dxe5

...much less so this sharp capture.

4...♙c5

Clearly the critical move, if not one for the faint-hearted.

5 ♙c4!



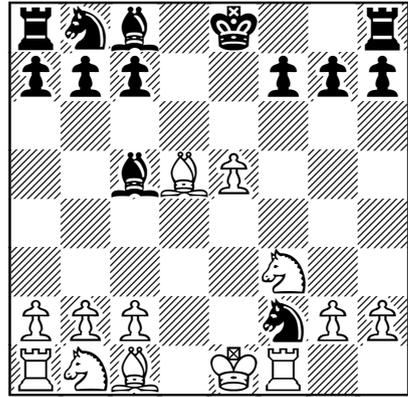
White wastes no time teeing up play against f7 and now Black has to tread quite a narrow path.

5...♗xf2!

Greedy, and best.

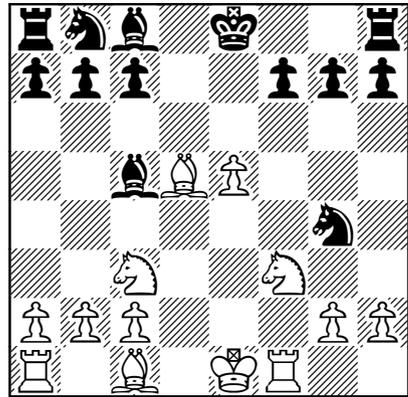
We saw back in Almasi-Giri that 5...♙xf2+? 6 ♖f1 would be pretty unwise for Black, while on occasion he has sought to disrupt White with 5...d5? 6 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 7 ♙xd5 ♗xf2 (7...♙xf2+ 8 ♖f1 f5 9 exf6 ♗xf6 10 ♖xf2 ♗xd5 11 ♖e1+ transposes to a po-

sition which can also arise from our previous variation and which we've already analysed) 8 ♖f1.



It is possible to create an escape route for the knight, but White can still be quite happy:

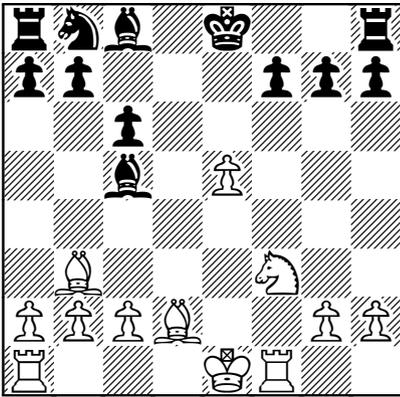
a) If 8...♗g4 9 ♗c3!...



...and only then ♗g5 or 9...c6 (9...♗e3 10 ♙xe3 ♙xe3 might seem annoying, but after 11 ♗h4! 0-0 12 ♗f5 ♙g5 13 ♗e4 ♙d8 14 ♗d4! White's initiative is just very strong with e6 a large threat, and here 12...♙xf5 13 ♙xb7! would win material) 10 ♙b3 ♗d7 11 ♗e4! ♙e7 12 ♗fg5. This left one of the heroes of our repertoire, the dangerous

Swedish Grandmaster Jonny Hector, doing very well after 12...♖dxе5 13 ♖xf7 ♜f8 14 ♜fd6+ ♗d7 15 ♜xf8 ♙xf8 16 ♙f4! followed by 0-0-0 in Hector-Moen, Oslo 2016.

b) 8...c6 9 ♙b3 ♜e4 10 ♜bd2 ♜xd2 11 ♙xd2. Apart from arguably the exchange of queens, this is a dream Open Game scenario: a cramping bridgehead on e5, a handy lead in development and pressure against f7:

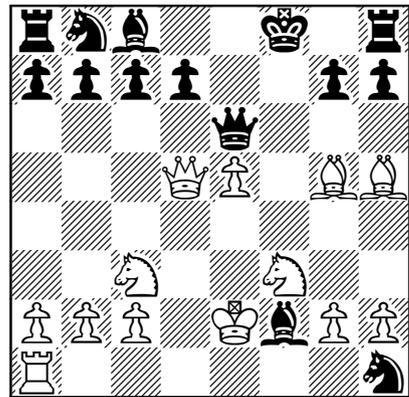


11...h6 (the only real way to prevent ♜g5) 12 ♜h4! ♙e6 (12...♜f8 13 0-0-0 ♜a6 14 ♜f5 is also all very easy for White, who after 14...♙xf5 15 ♜xf5 ♜d8 16 ♜df1 ♜d7 17 e6! fxe6 18 ♙xe6 enjoyed a lasting, powerful initiative thanks to his superior coordination and bishop-pair in Zinchenko-Fayard, Cappelle-la-Grande 2009) 13 ♙xe6 fxe6 14 ♜g6 ♜g8 15 ♜f4 ♙e7 (Maze-Bluvshstein, Montreal 2008) 16 0-0-0 ♜d7 17 h4!. A simple way to keep up the pressure. Black cannot bring a rook to f8, a cramping h5 is coming and after 17...g5 (17...♙d4? fails to 18 ♙b4+ c5 19 ♜xd4 cxb4 20 ♜g6+ ♙e8 21 ♜xb4 and 17...♜xe5? 18 ♜fe1 ♜g4 19 ♜xe6 would be rather unwise too for Black) 18 hxg5 hxg5 19 ♜d3 ♙d4 20 ♜fe1 White has retained full control and will be-

gin to increase the pressure after ♜e4 and ♜h1.

6 ♙xf7+! ♙xf7

Likewise, after 6...♙f8? White should go 7 ♜d5 ♜xh1 when he can do even better than 8 ♜xc5+ with 8 ♙h5!. Black is practically forced into 8...♜e7 (or 8...♙f2+ 9 ♙e2 ♜e7 10 ♙g5, transposing) 9 ♙g5 (everything comes with tempo) 9...♙f2+ 10 ♙e2 ♜e6, but even this isn't ideal for him since after 11 ♜c3 White will regain a piece, leaving him with dangerous compensation for the exchange.



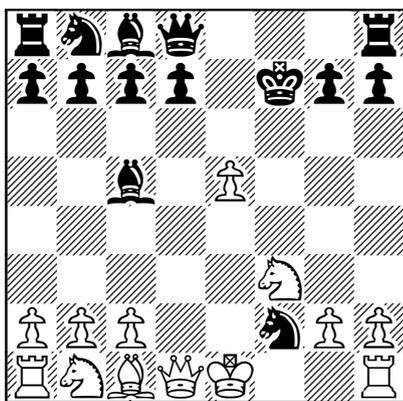
White has even scored 4/4 from here in practice:

a) 11...♜c6 12 ♜xh1 threatens ♜f1, as well as ♙xf2, and after 12...♜xd5 13 ♜xd5 Black even loses if he goes 13...♙b6? on account of 14 ♜h4! followed by ♜f1 or 14...g6 15 ♙h6+ ♙f7 16 ♜f1+ ♙e6 17 c4!, and if 17...gxh5 18 ♜f6+ ♙xe5 19 ♜f3+ ♙e4 20 ♜c3 mate.

b) 11...h6 12 ♙d2 g6 13 ♜xh1 ♙b6 14 ♜f1 pretty much forces 14...♜xd5 15 ♜xd5 (15 ♜h4+!? is also fairly effective) 15...gxh5 16 ♜h4+ ♙e8 17 ♜f6+ ♙d8 18 ♜g6, which trapped the rook to leave White clearly for choice after 18...d6 (and not 18...♜e8? 19

♖xe8 ♕xe8? 20 ♜f8 mate) 19 ♜xh8 ♙e6 20 b3 ♜c6 21 exd6 cxd6 22 h3! when Black's kingside continued to collapse in Nogga-E.Popov, correspondence 2012.

c) 11...g6!? (engine-approved) 12 ♙h6+ ♕e8 (12...♙g8? 13 ♜g5! ♜xd5 14 ♜xd5 leaves Black powerless to prevent ♜f6 mate) 13 ♜g5! (continuing to force the pace) 13...♜xd5 14 ♜xd5 gxh5 (or 14...♙b6 when White has at least 15 ♜f6+ ♕e7 16 ♙g7 gxh5 17 ♜d5+ ♕e8 18 ♙xh8, and if 18...♜f2 19 ♜f1 followed by ♜xb6 or 19...♜g4? 20 ♜f7! ♜c6 21 ♙g7 and wins) 15 ♙g7 d6! (15...♜f8? 16 ♜xc7+ ♕e7 17 ♙xf8+ ♕xf8 18 ♜xa8 only leaves White left with a rook) 16 ♜xh1 (the simplest option, pretty much forcing Black's next) 16...♙h4! 17 ♙xh8 ♙g4+ 18 ♜f3 ♜a6 19 exd6 cxd6 20 ♜d1 ♜c8 21 c3. This still looks quite good for White. Black has defended tremendously to get this far, but remains somewhat worse, with White set to go ♙f6, h3 or even just ♙d4.



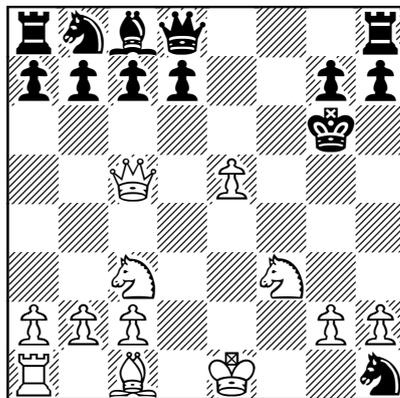
7 ♜d5+ ♕g6!

Black must be bold and go forwards so, not allow 7...♕e8? 8 ♙g5 ♙e7 9 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 10 ♕xf2 with a very pleasant initiative for White, as we've already seen.

8 ♜xc5!

It's high time to remove the bishop and keep forcing the pace.

8...♜xh1 9 ♜c3



White is now threatening not just ♜c4 and ♜h4+, but also ♜d5.

9...h6!

The best defence. We saw in Almasi-Giri that 9...d6?! 10 ♜c4 leaves Black walking a tightrope, but he can transpose to our main line here with 9...♜c6 10 ♜c4 h6 11 ♜d5.

10 ♜c4

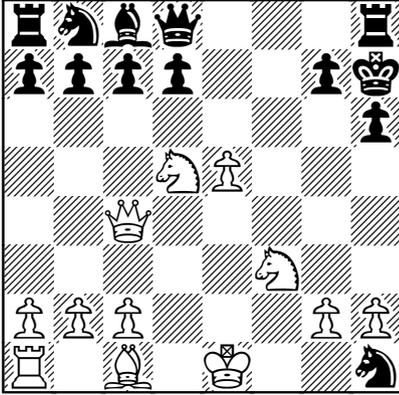
It makes sense to relocate the queen and harry Black. You may also wish to consider the move order 10 ♜d5!? when play transposes below after 10...♜c6 11 ♜c4 and 10...♕h7 11 ♜c4, while giving Black the chance for 10...d6?! which would take us back into the realm of Almasi-Giri after 11 ♜c4.

10...♜c6!?

This brave move was Levon Aronian's recent choice.

You might well have expected 10...♕h7 instead, finally getting the king to safety. White has nothing better after 11 ♜e4+ ♕g8 (11...g6? 12 ♜d5 would be good for White) than 12 ♜d5+ ♕h7 13 ♜e4+ and a repetition, so the move is 11 ♜d5!, threat-

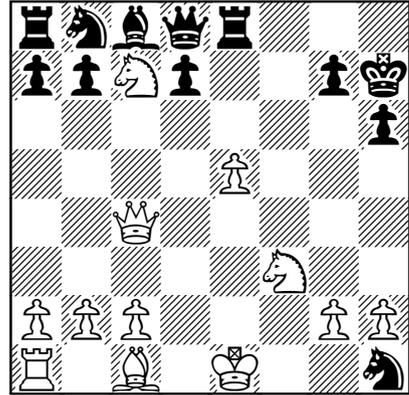
enig ♖f6+!, not mentioned by Cyrus Lakdawala in his most recent and largely impressive resource for Petroff players (*The Petroff Defence*), and forcing Black to defend accurately:



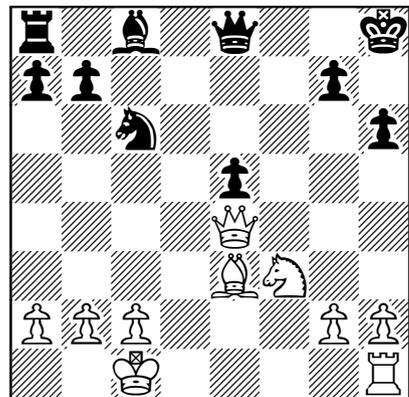
a) 11...♗f8? loses to 12 ♖e4+ ♕h8 (or 12...g6 13 ♖e3! g5 14 ♔d2 followed by 0-0-0 with far too strong an initiative) 13 ♙xh6! gxh6 (13...d6 14 ♙g5 is also pretty hopeless, a strong grandmaster and leading Petroff exponent having to give up after 14...♖e8 15 ♗h4+ ♕g8 16 ♘e7+! ♕f7 17 ♗h5+ ♕e6 18 ♖g4+ ♕f7 19 e6+! in Sveshnikov-Fridman, Tallinn 2013, in view of 19...♙xe6 20 ♖f4+) 14 ♖g6 with a deadly slow-motion style attack, and if 14...d6 15 ♖xh6+ ♕g8 16 ♖g6+ ♕h8 17 ♘f6 ♗xf6 18 exf6 ♖g8 19 ♗h5+! ♗h7 20 ♖e8+ ♖g8 21 f7.

b) 11...♗e8! (the right square) 12 ♘xc7 (with Black's rook on e8, 12 ♖e4+ ♕h8 13 ♙xh6!? gxh6 14 ♖g6? now fails to 14...♗e6, and if 15 ♘f6 ♖xf6!, so here White must prefer 14 ♖f4! when he has enough play to force a draw after 14...♗e6 15 ♘xc7, and if 15...♖xc7 16 ♖f8+ ♕h7 17 ♖f7+, etc; that's why we prefer the materialistic text, although we should note that leading theoretician Alexander Motylev has tried 12

♙xh6!? with the idea of 12...gxh6 13 0-0-0, but 12...♙xh6! may not leave White with quite enough compensation after 13 ♖f4+ g5 14 ♖e3 d6 15 0-0-0, far from terrible though his practical chances would be – we've certainly seen far worse tries to retain maximum confusion on the board) and:

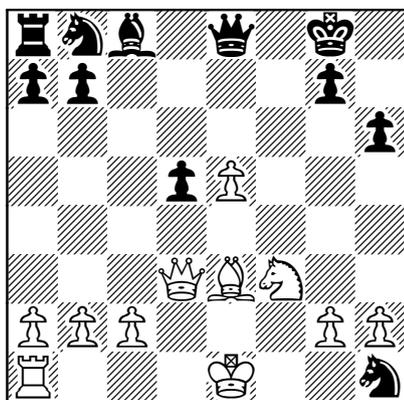


b1) 12...d6 (natural enough, if not forced and play transposes after 12...♘c6 13 ♖e4+ ♕h8 14 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 15 ♙e3 d6 16 0-0-0) 13 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 14 ♖e4+ (once again a useful check to restrict Black's bishop) 14...♕h8 15 ♙e3 ♘c6 (there's another transposition after 15...dxe5 16 0-0-0 ♘c6 17 ♗xh1) 16 0-0-0 dxe5 17 ♗xh1.



White has regained his piece, Black his pawn. Despite the isolani on e5 and his slightly weakened kingside, Black should be able to hold and has twice in correspondence play, although those games did suggest that the position is far from dead: 17...♖h5 (17...♗f7!? would be a brave move to make over the board; Black is OK, though, after 18 ♜xe5 ♖xa2, so Romm-Sekretaryov, correspondence 2013, continued 18 ♜f1 ♖xa2!? 19 ♜g5 ♙f5 – an only move and not one you'd want to stake the mortgage on OTB – 20 ♜xf5 ♖a1+ 21 ♜d2 ♜d8+ 22 ♜e2 hxg5 when 23 ♜f2! ♖xb2 24 ♜xg5 ♜f8+ 25 ♜g3 was very much an idea, maintaining maximum imbalance while threatening ♜h5+) 18 ♜h4 (continuing to fight against ...♙f5) 18...♙e6. Now 19 ♜d1 ♙g4!? 20 ♜g6+ ♜g8 21 ♜d6 ♙f5 quickly became rather sharp, if roughly balanced in Domanov-Retamoza, correspondence 2010. Instead, 19 h3!? is worth a thought, preparing ♜d1 while setting a little trap: 19...♜d8?? 20 ♜g6+ ♜g8 21 g4!, which snares the black queen and so picks up a piece.

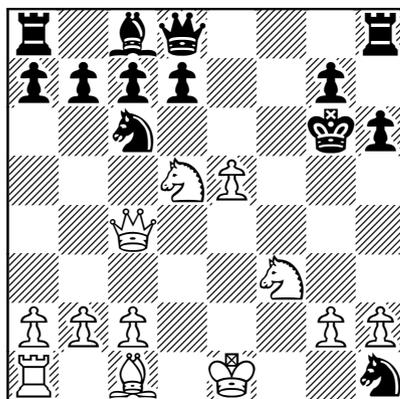
b2) 12...d5!? 13 ♖d3+ ♜g8 14 ♜xe8 ♖xe8 15 ♙e3 is similar – White is a piece down, but the knight is still stuck on h1.



The best defence seems to be 15...♗f7 16 0-0-0 ♜c6, as in Van Leeuwen-Zajontz, correspondence 2015, where after 17 ♖xd5 ♙e6 18 ♖b5 ♙g4 19 ♖b3 ♖xb3 20 axb3 ♜xe5 21 ♜xh1 they agreed a draw, which was no surprise in a high-level correspondence encounter. If you did somehow reach this position, you'd hopefully be somewhat ahead on the clock and might try to grind away after 21...♜xf3 22 gxf3 ♙xf3 23 ♜f1 ♙c6 24 c4!? ♜e8 25 ♜d2, angling for ♙d4, ♙c3 and b4-b5.

Returning to 10...♜c6!?:

11 ♜d5!



White introduces the threat of ♜h4+. Instead, 11 ♜h4+ ♜h7 12 ♖e4+ ♜g8 leaves nothing better than the repetition with 13 ♖d5+ ♜h7 14 ♖e4+, etc.

11...d6!

Accurate defence.

It's too late for the seemingly obvious because of 11...♜h7?? 12 ♜f6+!, which would force resignation in view of 12...gxf6 (or 12...♜g6 13 ♜h4 mate) 13 ♖f7 mate.

In an earlier game Black had tried 11...♜e8? 12 ♖e4+ ♜f7, but this allows a tactic which should be familiar from Almasi-Giri: 13 ♙xh6! ♜e6! (the only real try;

13...gxf6? 14 ♖h7+ ♕f8 15 0-0-0 followed by ♜f1 is a killer) 14 ♔g5! (even stronger than the 14 ♖g5+ ♗xg5 15 ♔xg5 ♜xe5 16 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 17 ♘xc7 of Piorun-Socko, Polish Championship, Poznan 2015) 14...♗f8 (14...♘e7? 15 ♔xe7 ♜xe7 16 ♖g5+ forces mate) 15 ♘xc7 ♗b4+ (otherwise, 15...♜b8? fails to 16 ♗h7! followed by 0-0-0 and ♜f1 or if 16...♗b4+ 17 ♔d2 and ♖g5+, while 15...♗c5 16 0-0-0 sees the tactics working for White: 16...♘f2 17 ♗f4+ ♔g8 18 ♘xe6 dxe6 19 ♜d2 followed by ♔h4 when he will regain the piece and emerge two pawns ahead) 16 ♗xb4 ♘xb4 17 ♔e2! ♜b8 (or 17...♜c6 18 ♘xa8 ♜xc2+ 19 ♔d2 when both black knights hang in view of the threat of ♘c7) 18 ♘xe6 dxe6 19 ♜xh1. This once again sees White recouping his material with a two-pawn advantage.

12 e6!

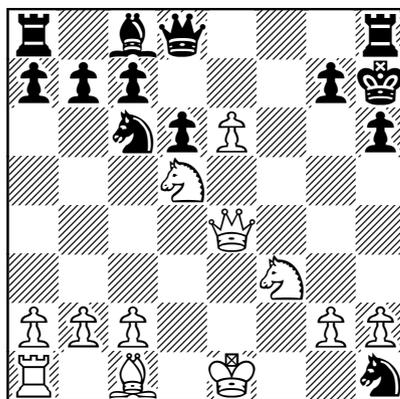
A familiar motif to keep Black bottled up. Instead, White repeated moves with 12 ♘f4+ ♔h7 13 ♗d3+ ♔g8 14 ♗d5+, etc, in Nepomniachtchi-Aronian, Skilling Open (rapid) 2020, but at that point Nepo was one up with only one game left in the second set of their quarter-final match.

12...♔h7

The point behind Black's last and the only real move, with 12...♔xe6? failing to 13 ♘f4+ ♔h7 14 ♗e4+! ♔f5 15 ♗xf5+ ♔g8 16 ♗d5+ ♔h7 17 ♗d3+! (keeping the black rook bottled up in the corner before completing development) 17...♔g8 18 ♔e3, after which White cannot be prevented from picking up the stray knight after 0-0-0, leaving him clearly for choice with the safer king and two pieces for the rook and pawn.

13 ♗e4+!

An important check. The e-pawn needs support.



13...♔g8

Another only move, since 13...g6? 14 e7 wouldn't be wise for Black, and if 14...♘xe7 15 ♘xe7 ♜e8? 16 ♗xg6+ ♔h8 17 ♗xh6 mate.

14 e7

Pushing on before Black can blockade then begin to untangle after ...♘e7.

14...♗e8 15 ♔e3!

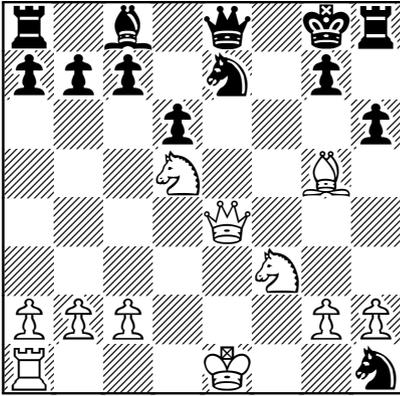
Another precise move, first mentioned by Lakdawala in his *The Petroff Defence* where he thought "Black stands only slightly worse". Should White cash in immediately with 15 ♘xc7 Black has 15...♔f5!, and if 16 ♗d5+ ♗f7 17 ♘xa8 ♗xd5 18 e8♗ ♔h7 when in view of Black's very active pieces White has to force a draw with 19 ♖g5+! hxg5 20 ♗h5+ ♔g8 21 ♗e8+, etc.

15...♔d7

At least this develops a piece, whereas the greedy 15...♜b8? allows White a pleasant choice between 16 0-0-0 and the simple and direct 16 ♘xc7 ♗xe7 17 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 18 ♔xa7! ♘c6 19 ♔xb8 ♘xb8 20 ♔e2 ♔f5 21 c3 when White will emerge a pawn ahead after collecting the stranded knight.

However, Black might desperado his queen's knight with the risky or brave-

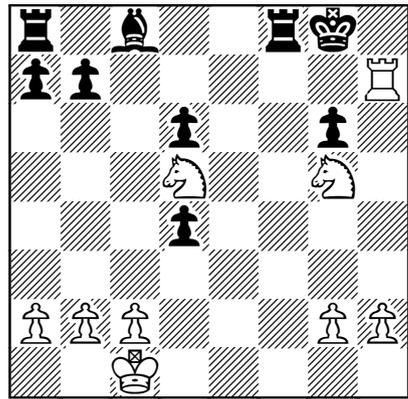
looking 15...♖xe7?!. We should note that unfortunately after 16 0-0-0 ♔f8 17 ♘xc7 Black is OK in view of the powerful resource 17...♙f5!, and if 18 ♚f4 ♜c8! 19 ♘xe8 ♜xc2+, but White should not be concerned as there's a fairly pleasant choice between the simple 16 ♚xe7, followed by ♔d2 and picking up the cornered knight, and the somewhat more complex but very dangerous 16 ♙g5!.



The point of this delightful sacrifice is revealed after 16...hxg5 (16...♙f7 17 ♘xe7 hxg5 18 ♘xg5+ transposes) 17 ♘xe7+ ♔f7 18 ♘xg5+ when Black has to find 18...♙f6 19 0-0-0 g6 to stay afloat. For the second time in the game we see Black having to create a retreat square for his king to escape from the third rank. Now 20 ♚f4+ ♔e7 (20...♔g7? 21 ♚d4+ cleans Black up) 21 ♜e1+ ♔d7 22 ♜xe8 ♜exe8 23 ♘h7 leaves White with excellent practical chances thanks to the famed queen and knight attacking duo and 20 ♘d5+!? ♔g7 21 ♚b4! might be even stronger.

White calmly remains a rook down, but threatens both ♚c3+ and ♜e1: 21...c5 (21...♚e5? 22 ♘f3! is the further important point: 22...c5 23 ♚d2 ♚e8 24 ♚c3+ ♔h6 25

♜e1, which leaves Black's sub-optimal king position the key factor of the position; indeed, he is quite lost here, 25...♚f8 failing to 26 ♜e4! g5 27 ♚e3 ♚f5 28 ♜h4+ ♔g7 29 ♚c3+ and wins) 22 ♚d2! (renewing the threat of ♜e1, and not 22 ♚c3? ♚e5) 22...♜f8 23 ♜xh1 (it's high time to recoup some material as 23 ♜e1 ♚a4 only helps Black) 23...♚a4 (23...♚e5 24 ♜e1 ♚d4 25 ♜e7+ comes to the same) 24 ♜e1 ♚d4 25 ♜e7+ ♔g8 26 ♚xd4! cxd4 27 ♜h7!.



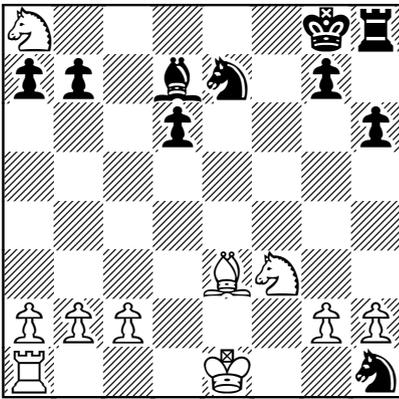
White has regained a piece while maintaining the initiative with his active and well coordinated forces. Mate in one is the threat, so 27...♜f1+ (27...♜f5 28 ♘e7+ ♔f8 29 ♘xf5 either wins along the back rank or more slowly with 29...gxh5 30 h4 ♔g8 31 h5) 28 ♔d2 ♔f8 (as 28...♜f2+? 29 ♔e1 doesn't help, the only other real try is 28...♙g4!? 29 ♘e7+ ♔f8 30 ♘xg6+ ♔g8 31 ♘e7+ ♔f8 when White should fearlessly go 32 ♔d3!, which, importantly, dodges the threat of mate on d1 and after 32...♜e8 33 ♘g6+ ♔g8 34 ♜h8+ ♔g7 35 ♜xe8 ♜d1+ 36 ♔c4! ♘xg6 37 ♜g8+ ♔f5 38 ♘e4! White should be winning the endgame) 29 ♜c7 ♜f2+ (the defence is not at all easy, as we can see too from 29...♔e8!? 30 ♜e7+ ♔f8 31 g4!, threatening ♔e2 or if

31...♙xg4 32 ♖h7+ ♕g8 33 ♜df6+) 30 ♖e1 ♜f5 (the rook has to stay on the f-file; 30...♜xg2? 31 ♜f7+! ♖e8 32 ♜e7+ ♕f8 33 ♖h7+ ♕g8 34 ♜df6+ ♖h8 35 ♖f8! leaves Black powerless to prevent mate on h7 or with 35...♜xh2 36 ♖xg6 mate) 31 ♖h7+ ♖e8 would be good defence, but even here after 32 ♖hf6+ ♕f8 33 ♜h7 White must be doing very well thanks to the powerful bind generated by his superbly-placed knights.

16 ♖xc7

It's time to cash in before Black simply goes ...♜c8.

16...♜xe7 17 ♜xe7 ♖xe7 18 ♖xa8



Taking stock, White has regained the rook, but in view of his own trapped knight, he should only emerge slightly for choice.

18...♖f7 19 ♖c7 ♜c8 20 ♙xa7 ♜xc7 21 ♖d2 ♖g3 22 hxg3 ♖f5 23 ♙f2

While the g-pawns are doubled, one of them is an extra pawn and White can aim to combine playing actively (♜f1 and g4-g5) with an advance of his queenside majority, probably best begun with b3 and c4.

Line A2

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖f6 3 d4 ♖xe4 4 dxe5

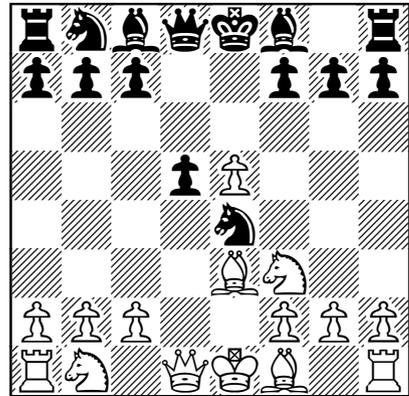
Our favourite capture, of course, and

one which may gain you some time on the clock, it being about six times less popular than the main line, 4 ♙d3.

4...d5

Black elects or knows to avoid all the fun of 4...♙c5 5 ♙c4, preferring this somewhat more popular response and standard Petroff central advance.

5 ♙e3!?



An old pet line of Jobava's and a move which may surprise even booked-up opponents. Indeed, you won't find it in Lakdawala's 2019 work *The Petroff Defence* or his earlier *The Petroff: Move by Move*. White develops the bishop before going ♖bd2. Instead, 5 ♙d3 ♖c5 is very solid for Black and while White's main move, 5 ♖bd2, is a decent try for the advantage, it can become pretty theoretical, whether Black exchanges on d2, goes 5...♖c5 or even tries Fabiano Caruana's 5...♜d7!?

5...♙e7

A solid choice, as well as that of Alexander Grischuk's and also Black's most popular response in the limited practice there's been thus far with 5 ♙e3. It's far from obligatory though:

a) Black might continue his light-square