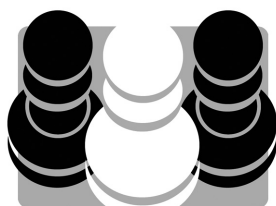


The Alterman Gambit Guide

Black Gambits 2

By
Boris Alterman



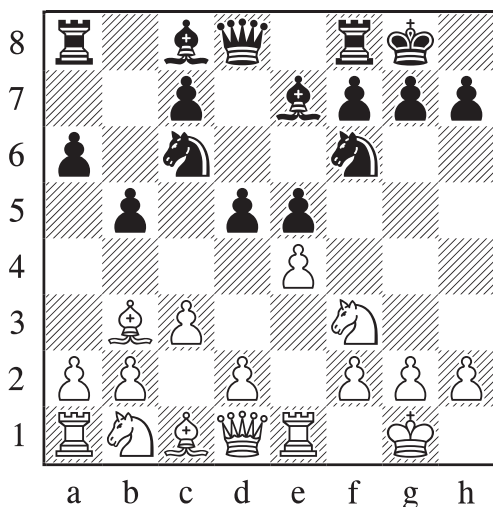
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Chapter 1

The Marshall Attack

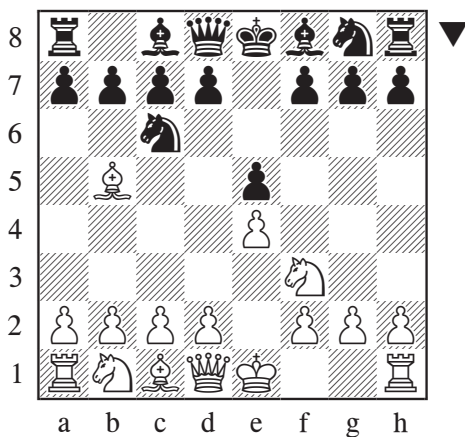


1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7
6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.c3 d5

Introduction

Frank James Marshall (1877-1944) of the USA was one of the chess world's first grandmasters. Apart from being one of the strongest players of his time, he left a lasting legacy to the chess world in the form of the Marshall Gambit in the Queen's Gambit, and even more significantly, the Marshall Attack against the Ruy Lopez. Despite constant attempts to refute it over the decades, the Marshall Attack continues to give headaches to Ruy Lopez players all the way up to super-GM level.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♗c6 3.♙b5



The Ruy Lopez (also known as the Spanish Opening) is one of the most enduringly popular openings at all levels of play. White's system is based on pressure: the bishop develops to a square where it attacks the c6-knight, which is a defender of the crucial e5-pawn. At the same time, White does not forget his aim of taking over the center with d2-d4, which may or may not be prefaced by c2-c3, depending on how Black plays.

3...a6

This pawn move may seem like a simple attack on the bishop, but it actually contributes to Black's central play. At some point in the near future Black will have to take some measures against the potential threat of ♙xc6 followed by ♞xe5. For the time being the threat is not real (see Chapter 2 for more details on 4.♙xc6) so the bishop usually retreats to a4. Once that has happened, Black will be able to insert the move ...b7-b5 to drive the bishop away as soon as ♙xc6 becomes a threat.

4.♙a4

4.♙xc6 dxc6 is the subject of Chapter 2.

4...♞f6

Black continues with his development and attacks the e4-pawn.

5.0-0

This natural move is the main line. It makes sense to castle early as White can afford to leave the e4-pawn hanging.

5...♗e7

Likewise, Black continues developing his pieces and gets ready to castle. It is interesting that both sides are happy to leave their e-pawns to their respective fates, since neither side can capture the opponent's pawn without losing their own.

5...♘xe4 introduces the Open Spanish, an important alternative which is outside the scope of the present book. Interested readers may wish to investigate the forthcoming *Grandmaster Repertoire* book which covers it from Black's side.

6.♖e1

White has several alternatives available on moves 5 and 6, and we will deal with the most important ones in Chapter, beginning on page 351.

6...b5

Now that White has defended his e-pawn, Black must also take measures to safeguard his central pawn.

7.♗b3

After a little dance, White's bishop lands on the active a2-g8 diagonal where it keeps an eye on the center and the f7-pawn.

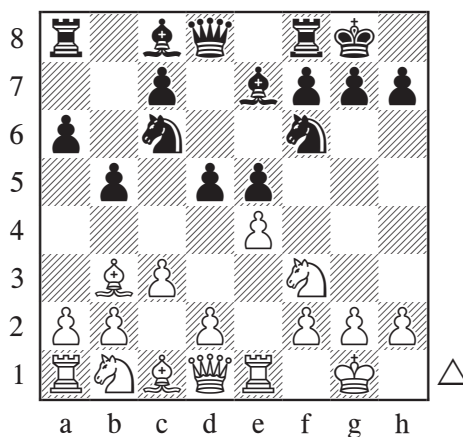
7...0-0

Signalling Black's intention to play the Marshall Gambit. The other big move is 7...d6, which keeps the center closed for the time being.

8.c3

This is the most traditional and principled move, aiming to construct a powerful pawn center. Nowadays many players prefer to avoid the Marshall altogether with moves like 8.a4, 8.h3 and 8.d4. These options can be found in Chapter 7.

8...d5!



Finally we arrive at the position that signifies the start of Marshall's infamous counterattacking system. Black's aggressive central thrust has a lot of logic to it. Black is slightly ahead in development, especially since White's pawn on c3 takes away the b1-knight's most natural developing square. By sacrificing the e5-pawn, he draws the white rook onto an exposed square which will enable him to gain additional time to start an attack later.

The Marshall Attack is one of the most important openings in the history of chess. So far it has defied all White's attempts to refute it, and for this reason it is a frequent guest at elite tournaments. Over the years its most notable adherents have included Spassky, Geller, Nunn, Adams, Short, Anand, Svidler, Kamsky, Shirov and others. Perhaps its greatest endorsement came from Garry Kasparov, who famously never allowed the Marshall to be played against him in a single game and instead resorted to various anti-Marshall systems.

9.exd5

Nothing else is likely to worry Black.

9.d3 is feeble, and 9...dxe4 10.dxe4 ♖xd1 just leads to a level endgame. Both sides are equally well placed in the center, and neither has the advantage.

9.d4!?

This is not theoretically dangerous, but at least it is a bit more lively.

9...♞xe4

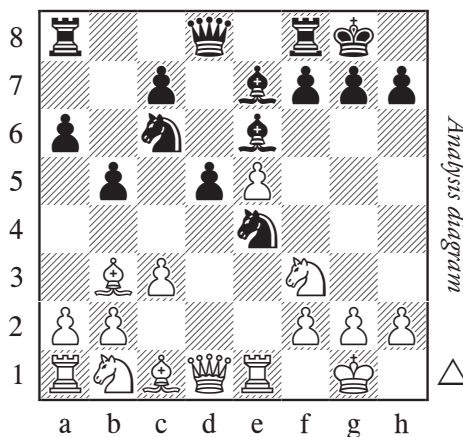
Black installs the knight on a strong central outpost.

There is a good alternative in 9...exd4 10.e5 ♞e4 11.cxd4 ♕f5, when Black should be at least equal.

10.dxe5

Gaining space on the kingside and uncovering an attack on the d5-pawn.

10...♕e6



The position resembles the Open Spanish. White's rook would not usually move to e1 so soon, although Black's bishop often prefers the active c5-square instead of e7. The critical continuation is:

11. ♖d4!?

11. ♖bd2 is a natural move, but after 11... ♖c5 12. ♙c2 d4! White can forget about any advantage.

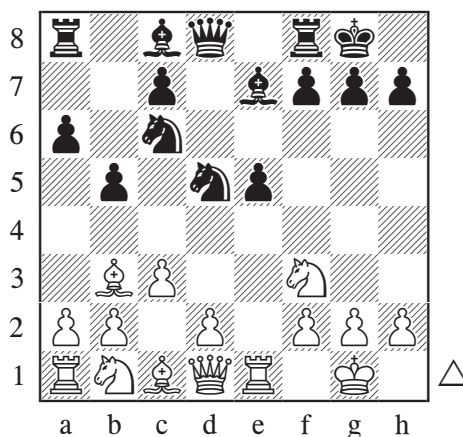
11... ♖xe5!?

Taking a pawn but sacrificing a piece.

12. f3 ♙d6! 13. fxe4 ♙g4

This position was first tested almost a century ago in 1913! Black has decent compensation and has scored roughly 50% since that time.

9... ♖xd5



10. ♖xe5

10. d4!?

Once again White can consider declining the gambit, although Black should be fine if he reacts correctly.

10... exd4 11. cxd4

Keeping a pawn on d4 while freeing the c3-square for the knight. 11. ♖xd4? is worse, and after 11... ♖xd4 12. ♗xd4 ♙b7 Black's easy development gives him the better chances.

11... ♙g4!

An important move. Others may see Black struggling to equalize, for instance:

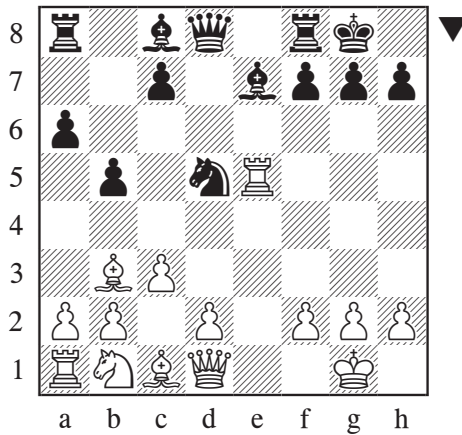
11... ♙f5?! 12. ♖c3! ♖db4?! 13. a3 ♖d3 14. ♖e3± Parligras – Gyimesi, Germany 2008.

11... ♙b4 12. ♙d2 ♙b7 13. ♖c3 ♙xc3 14. bxc3 ♖a5 15. ♙c2 ♖c4 16. ♙g5 f6 17. ♗d3 g6 18. ♙h6± Nisipeanu – Beliavsky, Pune 2004.

12. ♖c3 ♖f6 13. ♙e3 ♗d6 14. ♖c1 ♗ad8 15. a4 b4 16. ♖b1 ♖a5 17. ♙c2 ♖d5 18. ♗d3 g6 19. ♖bd2 ♖xe3=

Perez Candelario – Sargissian, Zafra 2007.

10... ♖xe5 11. ♖e5



The present position will be our main starting point (although we will return to the subject of the anti-Marshall systems in Chapter 7). White has gobbled the e-pawn and the knight on d5 is under attack. However, the rook is exposed in the center and once Black deals with the threat to his knight, he will be able to gain time with ...♙d6.

At this point we must make an important decision. To begin with, I must acknowledge that **11...c6** is by far the most popular move, and the one that enjoys the best reputation amongst theoreticians. Black keeps the knight in the center, and prepares ...♙d6 and ...♖h4 in the near future. Unfortunately it comes pre-packaged with a truly mind-boggling amount of theory, including numerous forced drawing lines and pawn-down endgames in which Black can hold a draw but has little chance to play for a win.

For this reason I decided it would be more interesting to focus on two less popular lines. Both of them contain a good deal of venom and are likely to come as a surprise to many opponents.

Games 1-4 will focus on **11...♗f6?!**, the move chosen by Marshall himself against Capablanca in a game that we will soon see. One of the primary aims of my *Gambit Guide* is to help the reader improve his arsenal of tactical and attacking motifs. The 11...♗f6 line has these in abundance, and for this reason alone it was worth including it in the book.

Despite its allure, I must make it clear that the 11...♗f6?! variation is not entirely sound, and if White plays accurately then he should be able to obtain a clear advantage. Nevertheless I found some improvements for Black in certain variations that were previously considered unfavorable for him. Overall I would consider Black's system a dangerous practical weapon, especially against an unsuspecting opponent.

Forgetting about beautiful attacks and sacrificial combinations for a moment, we must also keep theoretical soundness in mind. For this reason I have covered the slightly unusual but still respectable **11...♙b7?!** in games 5 and 6. This move leads to a noticeably different type of game in which Black strives for positional compensation in the center and on the queenside. Black's chances of scoring a quick checkmate are diminished, but he has good chances to maintain the balance even when White plays strongly.

After reading through the chapter the reader will be able to select whichever option he finds more appealing to use in his own games.

Game 5
Vladimir Kirpichnikov – Mikhail Steinberg
 Riga 1968

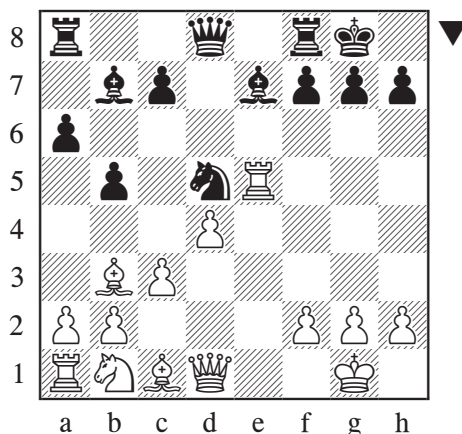
Mikhail Steinberg was one of the most talented players of Karpov's generation and the Ukrainian Kharkov chess school. When he played this game he was only 16 years of age. Unfortunately he never became a grandmaster, as his life was tragically cut short by leukaemia at the age of just 23.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♘xe5 ♘xe5 11.♗xe5 ♙b7!?

According to the database this was only the second time anyone had tested this move.

12.d4

This might seem like an automatic choice, but 12.♖f3! is a serious alternative which we will encounter in the next and final game of the chapter.



12... ♖d7

Black has a second reliable option here:

12... ♙f6 13.♖e1 ♖e8!

13...c5 14.dxc5 ♖e8 15.♘a3 ♖c7 16.♗xe8† ♗xe8 17.♙xd5 ♖d8 18.♙f4 ♖xf4 19.♖f3 ♖xf3 20.♙xf3 ♙xf3 21.gxf3 b4 22.♘c2 bxc3 23.bxc3 ♖c8± Anand – Short, Amsterdam 1993.

14.♙d2

After 14.♘a3 b4! 15.♘c4 bxc3 16.♘e5 ♖d6 17.♖e2 ♖e7 18.bxc3 ♘xc3 19.♖c4 ♖d5 Black had equalized in Mukhin – Romanishin, Vilnius 1971.

Also 14.♘d2 ♘f4 15.♘f3 ♙xf3 16.gxf3 ♖d6 gave Black good compensation in Jobava – Stern, Dresden 2007.

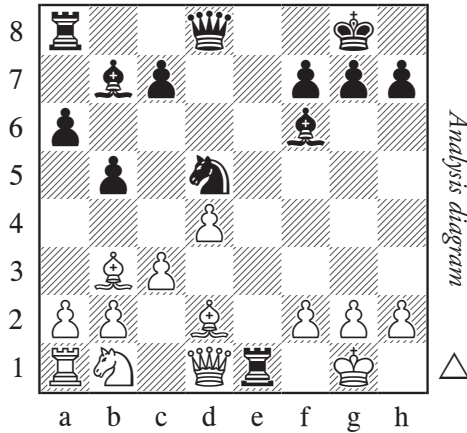
14... ♗xe1†

Three other ideas deserve a mention:

14...c5 does not equalize: 15.dxc5 ♗xe1† 16.♖xe1 ♖c8 17.♘a3 ♖xc5 18.♖d1±

14...a5 15.♘a3 b4 16.♘c2 ♗xe1† 17.♖xe1 a4 18.♙xd5 ♖xd5 19.♘e3± Anand – Hrcek, Germany 2002.

The untested 14... ♖d6! is interesting, and after 15.♖f3 c5 Black has promising compensation.

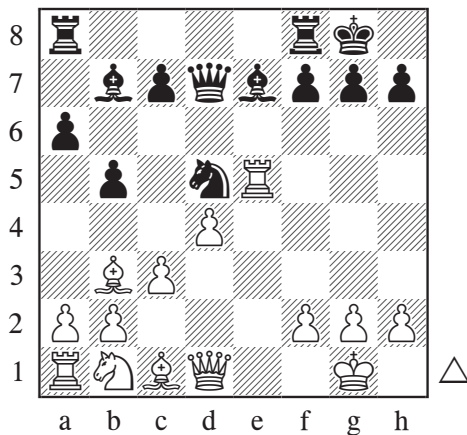


15. ♖xe1 b4

15... ♔d7!? intending ... ♖e8 looks reasonable as well.

16. a3 bxc3 17. ♗xc3 ♕xd4 18. ♖d1 c5

½–½ Kokarev – Stern, Rijeka 2010.



13.g3?

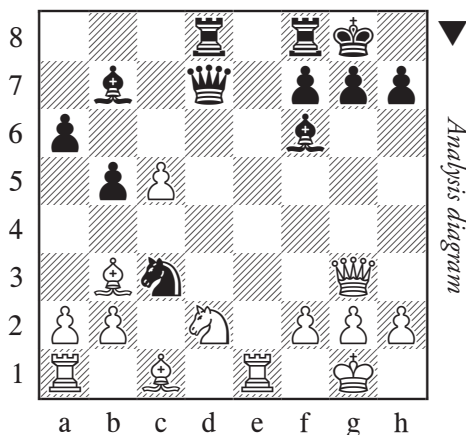
White goes badly astray – it is hard to guess his motivation for weakening the long diagonal. Here are some other examples of how the game may continue after better moves by White:

13. h3 ♕f6 14. ♖e1 ♖fe8 15. ♕d2 ♖xe1† 16. ♖xe1 ♖e8 17. ♖f1 ♗e7 (17... ♗b6!?) 18. ♗a3 c5! Black's position already looks better. 19. ♖d1 cxd4 20. ♕e3 ♗f5 21. ♕xd4 ♗xd4 22. cxd4 g6 23. ♗c2 a5 24. a4 bxa4 25. ♕c4 ♖b8 26. ♗e3 h5 ♞ Krnan – Tseitlin, Montreal 2004.

13. ♖f3 ♖ad8 14. ♗d2

Now Black has a strong tactical sequence which is worth remembering.

14...c5! 15. dxc5 ♕f6 16. ♖e1 ♗xc3 17. ♖g3



17...♖a4!

Stronger than 17...♜c6 18.bxc3 ♘xc3 19.♞b1 ♘xd2 20.♙xd2 ♞xd2 21.♞bc1 (21.♞e5!)= 21...a5 22.♞e7 ♞d3 23.f3 a4 24.♙e6 ♞d1† 25.♞xd1 ♜xc5† 26.♜f2 ♜xe7+ Faibisovich – Ivanov, Leningrad 1973.

18.♙xa4 bxa4 19.♗c4 ♜d5 20.♗b6 ♜xc5 21.♗xa4 ♜c6 22.♗c3 ♙h4 23.♜h3 ♞d6 24.♙f4 ♞f6 25.♗e2 g5 26.♙g3 ♙c8

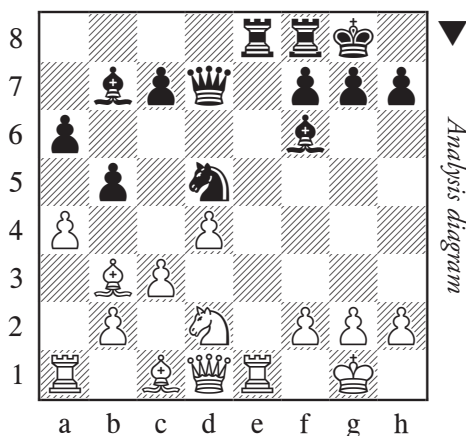
0–1 Dimitrov – Hebden, Cappelle la Grande 1989.

13.a4 ♙f6 14.♞e1 ♞ae8!

Playing for development.

14...b4 15.c4 ♗e7 16.d5 c6 17.d6 ♗f5 18.c5 looks dreadful for Black at first sight, but in the following game White soon went astray: 18...♞ae8 19.♙e3? (Better was 19.♗d2! ♞xe1† 20.♜xe1 ♞e8 when Black has some compensation, but White should have a clear advantage if he plays correctly.) 19...♗xe3 20.fxe3 ♜f5 Black was already better in Ciocaltea – Tseitlin, Kragujevac 1974.

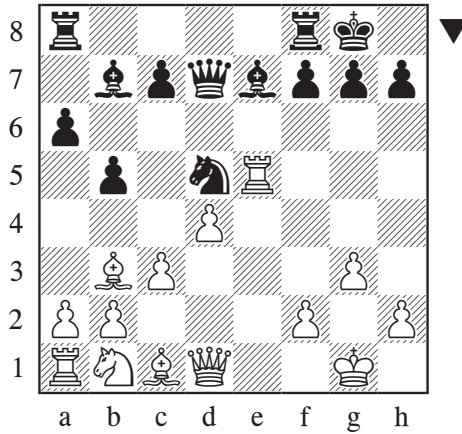
15.♗d2



15...♘f4!

Black has a strong initiative for a pawn.

13.♘d2!? is the computer's top choice. I think Black should respond aggressively with 13...♘f4 14.♘f3 ♘xg2! 15.♞xe7 ♞xe7 16.♔xg2 ♞ad8 as played in Tukmakov – Tseitlin, Odessa 1972. The position is difficult to assess. White has a material advantage of two pieces for a rook, but Black has some pressure on the long diagonal and White's king will not be safe for a long time. I believe Black has enough resources to maintain roughly equal chances.

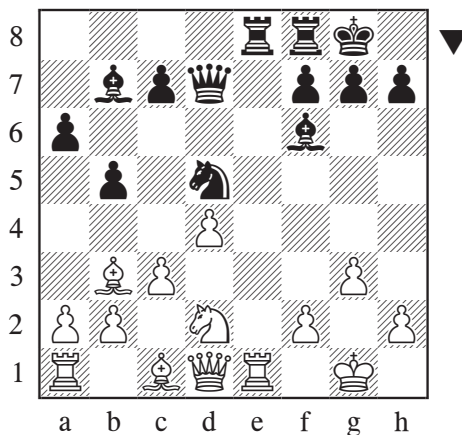


13...♘f6 14.♞e1 ♞ae8!

Blacks attack develops effortlessly, while White is still struggling to complete his development.

15.♘d2

15.e3 ♘xe3 16.fxex3 ♘g5 17.♞d3 c5! puts White under strong pressure in the center.



15...♘f4!

A powerful attacking move, although it is worth mentioning that there was a good alternative in 15...c5!, intending to meet 16.dxc5 by 16...♞c6! with unpleasant threats. (The immediate

15...♖c6 can be met by 16.♙xd5 ♜xd5 17.f3, with reasonable chances to defend.)

16.♞e3?

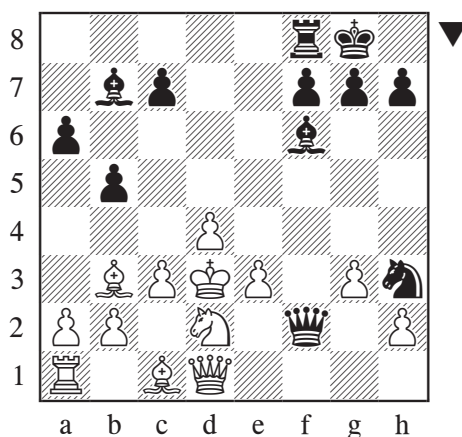
After 16.♞e8 ♞e8 17.gxf4 ♞e1†! 18.♞xe1 ♞g4† Black wins.

White's last chance to prolong the game was 16.d5, although Black will still have a strong initiative in a position with equal material.

16...♞e3 17.fxg3 ♘h3† 18.♙f1 ♞f5† 19.♙e2 ♞f2†

19...♙g2! and 19...♞e8! were even more conclusive, but the text is good enough.

20.♙d3



20...c5!

Bringing yet another fighting unit into the attack. White cannot even retreat his king to c2, as this would allow mate in one!

21.c4

21.♞e2 ♞f5† 22.e4 ♘f2† 23.♙c2 ♘xe4+

21...cxd4

0-1

White's position is a complete disaster so he resigned.

What we have learned:

- ❖ The 11...♙b7!? variation is relatively easy to learn and does not require much detailed theoretical knowledge.
- ❖ The central strategy with ...♙f6 and ...c5 can sometimes give rise to ...♘xc3 tactics.
- ❖ The bishop on b7 can become an extremely powerful attacking piece, especially if White is foolish enough to weaken himself on the long diagonal.
- ❖ The ...♘f4! sacrifice.