

DANGEROUS WEAPONS: THE CARO-KANN

DAZZLE YOUR OPPONENTS!



**JOHN EMMS
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EVERYMAN CHESS

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Preface

It's difficult to think of another opening which has done more to shake off its 'solid' tag than the Caro-Kann. These days, many players who employ the Caro-Kann do so with the intention of reaching sharp dynamic positions, rich in possibilities for both sides and with a guarantee of counterplay for Black. Crucially, there now seem to be viable options which allow players to achieve this goal. For example, whereas once virtually everyone played 3...Bf5 against the Advance Variation, nowadays 3...c5 is an enticing and dynamic alternative. In the Panov-Botvinnik Attack, 5...Nc6 is acknowledged as a good alternative to the super-solid 5...e6. In the main lines of the Classical Variation (4...Bf5), Black players have discovered they can 'safely' spice things up by castling kingside rather than queenside. Finally, in some of the very main lines of the Smyslov Variation (4...Nd7), Black breaks all the 'solid' rules by not castling at all – all in the quest for dynamic play!

I hope you enjoy reading this book, and feel moved to try out at least some of the ideas covered within these pages, whether you are attacking the Caro-Kann as White or attacking *with* the Caro-Kann as Black!

Finally, I'd like to thank my co-authors Richard Palliser and Jovanka Houska, for their dedication, enthusiasm and for inspiring me with all their ideas. Thanks also go to Jeremy Silman and Peter Wells for their invaluable help and advice.

John Emms
Hildenborough
October 2010

Series Introduction

The original concept behind *Dangerous Weapons* was to take a major chess opening and to approach it in a completely different way: to concentrate on variations that are ambitious, sharp, innovative, disruptive, tricky, enjoyable to analyse; ones not already weighed down by huge mountains of theory, and ones unfairly ignored or discredited. To me this seemed like an author's paradise, which I'm sure contributed somewhat towards the inspiration behind this series!

The main motivation behind studying major openings in such a way is to be able to present the reader (not forgetting the author!) with a considerable number of fresh, hard-hitting opening weapons for both White and Black; in some cases to create repertoires and in others to enhance and rejuvenate existing ones.

What is a Dangerous Weapon?

For the purpose of choosing opening variations for this series, a *Dangerous Weapon* usually fits into one or more of these overlapping categories:

1. Moves that create complex, original positions full of razor-sharp tactics and rich positional ideas where creative, attacking play is rewarded; moves which are new, rare or fresh, leaving plenty of scope for research.

It should be pointed out that even though mainline theory produces a vast number of wonderfully complicated positions, these opening variations lose out heavily in the 'danger' stakes. No matter how sharp and difficult the position, the opening phase is nowhere near as hazardous for your opponent if he is able to fall back on that comfort blanket known as theory. I've played plenty of incredibly sharp lines without any real fear simply because of reasonable book knowledge and some solid home preparation. Apart from a few exceptions, in *Dangerous*

Weapons the emphasis has generally been on non-theoretical lines, where your opponent is left to his own devices at an early stage.

2. Moves that are highly ambitious; ones which aim for total domination.

Perfect for those not satisfied with a quiet theoretical edge as White and eager to search for a big advantage or even a direct refutation, albeit at some risk; or for those as Black who prefer to strive for the initiative at any cost, preferring this over a manageable disadvantage or sterile equality.

3. Moves that have been previously ignored, discarded or discredited by theory, perhaps unfairly so or maybe for the wrong reasons.

Discredited lines can be especially dangerous – the psychological element cannot be ignored. Facing an opening like this, I find myself asking the question, ‘Why is he playing this variation if it is meant to be bad?’ Often there is a very good reason (a logical improvement, perhaps, which overturns a previous assessment), and in any case how are you supposed to remember a hypothetical 15-move refutation when you only browsed it in a book once, and that was a few years ago?

4. Moves that are visually shocking; moves which seem to contradict the laws of the game.

Disregarding the question of objective merit for the moment, there’s no doubt that a crazy-looking move has at the very least some psychological value. Unleashed on an opponent, it can produce a range of emotions: uncontrolled laughter, perhaps followed by over-confidence; anger (at being insulted by such a move) followed by over-aggression; or perhaps discomfort, followed by timidity. Of course you may instead encounter understanding followed by objectivity – you have to pick and choose your opponents.

Dangerous for Whom?

It would be difficult, probably impossible, to guarantee that every single variation in this book is 100% sound. You have to understand that in some cases ‘dangerous’ can mean ‘dangerous for both sides’. What I do expect, or at least hope, is that your opponent’s ride throughout the opening should be far bumpier than yours!

Guiding you Through

Throughout the book there are various icons together with explanatory notes to emphasize significant points. They should be fairly self-explanatory, but here's a brief summary:



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This signifies a game, variation, sub-variation or position where the Dangerous Weapon has produced the desired effect.



BEWARE! Pointing out immediate danger for the player using the Dangerous Weapon.



ROLL THE DICE! Signifying a variation or sub-variation which is perhaps more suited for games with short time-limits or for players who enjoy taking risks.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This indicates a transposition to a different opening variation. Using different move orders to reach a desirable position or to trick your opponent into something with which he is unfamiliar is becoming a weapon of increasing value.

As the title suggests, *Dangerous Weapons* may not be for the faint-hearted! More than anything, it is aimed at players of all levels who like to be entertained, those who are happy to try out fun-to-play openings at their local chess club, on the Internet, in tournaments, wherever they choose to play.

Good luck studying and playing your *Dangerous Weapons*!

John Emms
Everyman Chess

Chapter One

The Active Queen

Richard Palliser

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Qd5!
(Diagram 1)

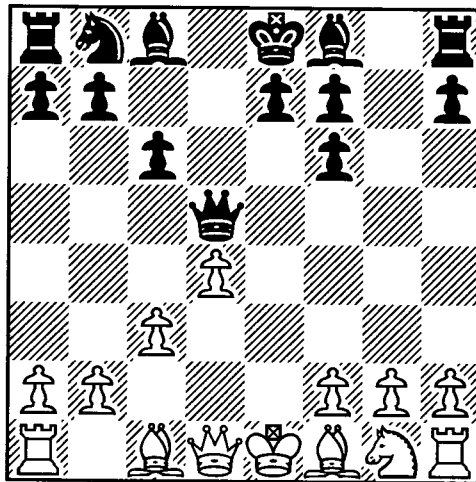


Diagram 1 (W)

The Bronstein-Larsen Variation is quite a rare guest in grandmaster praxis these days, although it remains a dangerous line both there and especially at club level, thanks to Black's active development and potential attacking chances down the g-

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file. The chief theoretical problem is 6 c3, which has become firmly established as White's main move. Play usually continues 6...Bf5 7 Nf3 followed by 8 g3 and 9 Bg2, erecting a solid defensive barrier on the kingside.

I'm not convinced that the main line after 6 c3 is all doom and gloom for Black, but wouldn't it be nice to surprise White on move 6? Hurling the queen into the centre of the board generates early pressure against g2 and will throw most opponents straight on to their own resources. White can still play for a fianchetto, but many players have been worried by Black's aggressive intentions and so aimed to force the queen back after 7 Ne2. However, Black most certainly has no intention of meekly retreating, as shown by a rather high-level encounter.

□ **B.Spasky** ■ **Y.Seirawan**

GMA World Cup, Barcelona 1989

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Qd5!?

As he reveals in *Chess Duels with the Champions*, Seirawan came to this game determined to mix things up right from the word go. No doubt also keen to avoid any preparation, the long-time American no.1 avoided 6...Bf5 with the text his big idea: 'I just put my queen in the middle of the board in Scandinavian style and say: "Go ahead. Try to find an advantage."'

7 Ne2

The 10th World Champion realizes the point of Black's play and prepares to develop his king's bishop after first placing the knight on f4. Indeed, as we will see further in the Looking a Little Deeper section, Black might meet 7 Nf3 with 7...Rg8!? (**Diagram 2**), tying White's light-squared bishop down. White might thus look to the queenside with 8 Be3 Nd7 9 Qb3, but after 9...Nb6! 10 c4!? (ambitious; more solid for White would be 10 Qxd5 Nxd5 11 Bd2, but after, say, 11...Be6 12 0-0-0 Nb6 Black has sufficient counterplay) 10...Qh5 11 0-0-0?! (more consistent would have been 11 a4! keeping matters rather unclear, such as after 11...Bh3!? 12 a5 Bxg2 13 Bxg2 Rxb2 14 Nd2 Nd7 15 Qxb7 Rb8) 11...Bh6 12 Re1 Be6 13 Qb4 0-0-0 14 b3 Rd7 15 Nd2 Rgd8 Black's forces exerted plenty of pressure and left him slightly for choice in S.Kagan-M.Basman, Birmingham 1977.

7...e5! (Diagram 3)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Not only does Black prevent White's knight from settling on f4, but he also gets in a strong central challenge. We might be just seven moves into the game and yet, thanks to his active 6th and 7th moves, we can already talk about Black having obtained comfortable play.

Black has also tried to develop, but this isn't recommended here, as it allows White to reveal the point of his 7th move: for instance, 7...Bf5?! 8 Nf4 Qe4+ (Black can also lose time retreating his queen, but 8...Qd6 9 Qb3 Qc7 10 Bc4 e6 11 Nh5! Nd7 12 Bf4 still gave White a rather pleasant pull in L.Kovacs-M.Pinto, Budapest 1997) 9 Be3 Qc2 10 Qxc2 Bxc2 11 Nd3! Rg8 12 Kd2 Bxd3 13 Bxd3 Rxc2 14 Bxh7 Nd7 15 Rag1 Rxc1 16 Rxc1 left White with the bishop-pair and a potentially-dangerous outside passed h-pawn in W.Zielinski-E.Spaete, correspondence 1997.

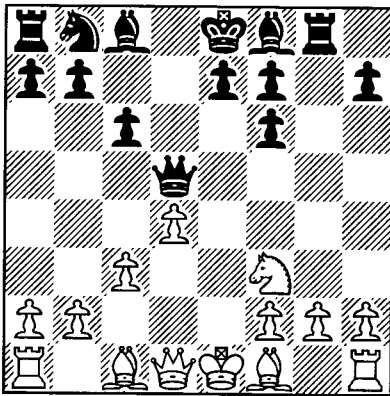


Diagram 2 (W)

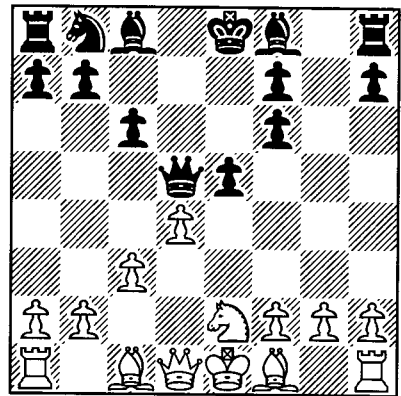


Diagram 3 (W)

8 Be3

Seirawan later faced 8 Qb3, with which White may hope one day to exploit his superior pawn formation. However, Black's activity fully makes up for his structural deficiencies and it's hard to see this as more than a drawing ploy by White. The game A.Sokolov-Y.Seirawan, Rotterdam 1989, continued 8...Qxb3 9 axb3 Be6 10 b4 Nd7 11 Be3 a6 (Black wants to fix White's own doubled pawns and to castle, but he might also fight against the knight's development with Nisipeanu and Stoica's suggestion of 11...h5!?) 12 Ng3 and here a draw was agreed. Both sides' light-square weaknesses balance each other out, although play might, of course, continue. Still, in the later game F.Diaz Vichi-R.Martin Molinero, correspondence 2005,

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after 12...0-0-0 13 Bd3 Nb6 (the solid choice, but a more ambitious try would be to open lines with 13...c5!? 14 bxc5 Nxc5 when the arrival of the knight on b3 looks a little awkward for White, but he must surely allow that as 15 Bf5?! Bxf5 16 Nxf5 Nd3+ 17 Ke2 Nxb2 18 Rhb1 Nc4 looks like a slightly speculative pawn sacrifice) 14 0-0-0 Nd5 (Diagram 4)

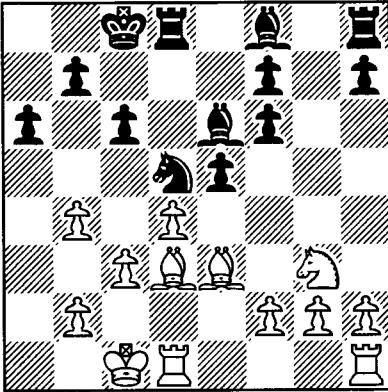


Diagram 4 (W)

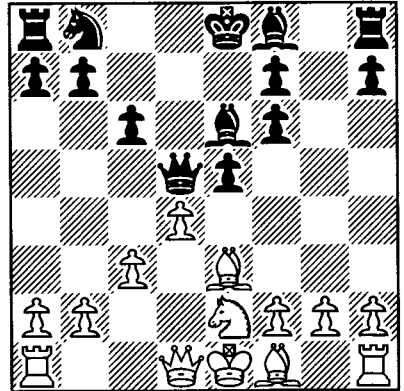


Diagram 5 (W)

15 Nf5 Kc7 16 Rhe1 White realized that further progress wasn't easy and so proposed a draw after all. Indeed, Black looks pretty comfortable here. He might produce an opposite-coloured bishop scenario with a double exchange on f5 and e3, but more dynamic would be to flick in ...Rg8 before going ...Ra8 and ...a5.

Returning to the position after 11...a6, White has also freed his king's bishop with 12 Nc1, but after 12...0-0-0 13 Nd3 Bd5 14 f3 Rg8 (exploiting the tactics down the e-file with 14...Nb6!? 15 dxe5 Nc4 looks like a logical alternative) 15 Kf2 Bd6 16 Be2 Rde8 Black enjoyed decent counterplay with his kingside pawns mobile in V.Kotronias-R.Wojtaszek, Greek Team Championship 2006.

I dare say that White might also regroup his knight without delay, and after 8 Ng3 Black is again probably best advised to develop with 8...Be6, when play is likely to transpose to the notes to White's 9th move, below.

8...Be6! (Diagram 5)

The correct square for the bishop, increasing Black's control over the a2-g8 diagonal. Instead on f5 it would enable Ng3 to come with tempo and 8...Bg4 9 Qd2 Nd7 10 h3 Bxe2?! (it still wasn't too late to go back with 10...Be6) 11 Qxe2 Rg8 12 Qh5 left Black's light squares a cause for concern in Y.Tangelder-M.Wortel, Leiden 1998.

9 Qc2?!

This is slow and White can't even castle next move thanks to the pressure against a2. A more challenging approach is 9 f4, as we'll see in our next game. Play can also lead there after 9 Ng3 Nd7 and then 10 f4, but in F.Gerhardt-A.Nickel, correspondence 1992, White preferred to mix his plans: 10 f3 0-0-0 11 Qa4?! exd4! 12 cxd4 (12 Qxd4 also isn't a panacea for White, because after 12...Qa5! the a-pawn is taboo and 13 Ne4 Nc5! 14 Qxf6 Nxe4 15 fxe4 Rg8 gives Black fantastic pressure for the pawn) 12...Kb8 13 Qc2 h5! and in typical Bronstein-Larsen style Black had seized the initiative with a timely advance of his h-pawn.

9...Nd7 10 a3



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This takes the pawn off prise, but leaves White's queenside light squares in a rather ugly state. Rarely does one see a World Champion in such trouble after just 10 moves as White!

Perhaps already Spassky would have been better employing a more radical course of action: 10 Ng3!? exd4 11 Bxd4 0-0-0 12 Bd3!? Qxg2 13 0-0-0 Qd5 14 b3 and in return for the pawn White's pieces exert some pressure, although I would still prefer Black after 14...Qa5 – after all, his is slightly the safer king.

10...0-0-0 11 0-0-0 (Diagram 6)

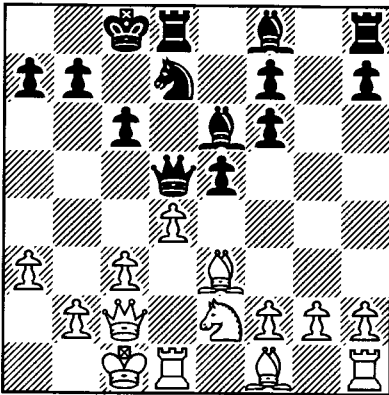


Diagram 6 (B)

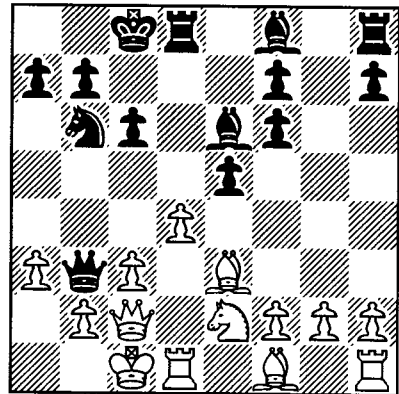


Diagram 7 (W)

11...Nb6

Black increases his light-square grip, but now White can make some exchanges. As

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Seirawan later pointed out, he should have exploited his queen and bishop battery with 11...Qa2! 12 Qb1 Qb3 13 Qc2 Nb6 (**Diagram 7**), thereby obtaining an improved version of the game. Indeed, this would have left Black on top, partly because 14 dxe5 drops an exchange to 14...Qxc2+ 15 Kxc2 Bb3+ 16 Kxb3 Rxd1, and here Black might even eschew the exchange in return for maintaining good light-square and central play with 15...Rxd1!? 16 Kxd1 fxe5.

Thus White probably has to grovel with 14 Ng3!, but after 14...Na4!? (Seirawan) the pressure is mounting. Indeed, 15 Be2 (wisely avoiding 15 Bd3? Nxb2!, but White might settle for a small disadvantage with the safe 15 Qxb3 Bxb3 16 Rd2 Nb6) 15...Bxa3!? (15...Qa2!? is also tempting, but White appears to have enough for a draw after 16 Qxa4! Bb3 17 Qxa7 Qa1+ 18 Kd2 Qxb2+ 19 Ke1 Bxd1 20 Bxd1 Qxc3+ 21 Bd2 Qxd4 22 Qa8+) 16 bxa3 (calm; the alternative is 16 Qxb3 Bxb3 17 bxa3 Bxd1 18 Bxd1 Nxc3 when Black should be at least okay in the resulting unbalanced endgame with good ongoing activity, as well as a rook and two pawns for the two bishops) 16...Qxa3+ 17 Kd2 exd4 18 Bxd4 (**Diagram 8**) and here Black has at least a draw with 18...Bb3 19 Qf5+ Be6, but might well play for more with 18...Nxc3!?

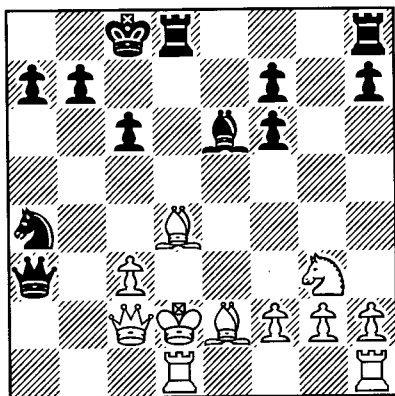


Diagram 8 (B)

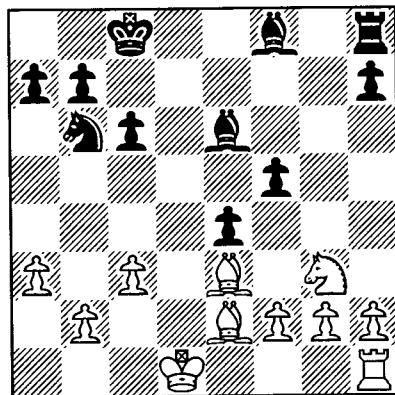


Diagram 9 (B)

Should these tempting complications be okay for White after calm defence (never so easy to undertake over the board, though, unlike in the comfort of one's arm-chair), Black might prefer a slower approach after 14 Ng3, such as with 14...Qa2 1 Qb1 Qxb1+ 16 Kxb1 when both 16...Nd5 and 16...Nc4!? should retain a small pull.

12 dxe5!

Spassky seizes his chance to get the queens off.

12...Qxd1+ 13 Qxd1 Rxd1+ 14 Kxd1 fxe5

With his slightly superior development and safer king, not to mention extra centre pawn, Black retains a small advantage, but not a large enough one to generate any real winning chances against such a strong player as Spassky.

15 Ng3! f5

Otherwise White would have conquered the f5-square after 16 Bd3, but now Black's central pawns are forced to advance a little earlier than they would have liked to.

16 Bd3 e4 17 Be2 (Diagram 9) 17...c5?!

Now White will establish his knight on f4 and Seirawan soon decided that there wasn't much point in continuing. White has recovered well, but with 17...Rg8! Black could have continued to pose a few problems, since 18 Rg1?! (the calm 18 f3 Nd5 19 Bc1! is probably a better defence, but this position would hardly have been completely dead) 18...Bd6 would have continued to prevent the manoeuvre of the knight to f4 and actually been quite awkward for White.

18 Nh5 ½-½

□ **S.Tiviakov** ■ **L.Nisipeanu**

FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Qd5 7 Ne2 e5 8 Be3 Be6 9 f4! (Diagram 10)

A somewhat more challenging move than Spassky's 9 Qc2. That said, even Tiviakov's choice fails to dent the notion that Black is fine here: his queen continues to radiate power from the middle of the board and he is hardly opposed to an exchange on e5, undoubling his f-pawns.

9...Nd7

Annotating for ChessBase, the Hungarian Grandmaster Peter Lukacs draws attention to the idea of 9...e4!? followed by ...f5. This retains the doubled f-pawns, but does clamp down against White's slightly cramped pieces. Lukacs gives 10 b3 (10 Ng3 f5 also seems fine for Black, such as after 11 c4 Qa5+ 12 Kf2 Nd7 followed by ...Nf6, and 10 f5!? Qxf5 11 Nf4 Bd6! shouldn't give White more than enough positional compensation) 10...f5 11 c4 Qa5+ (**Diagram 11**) 12 Bd2 Qd8 (12...Qb6!? with

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the idea of ...Bb4 also looks quite reasonable; certainly the long exchanging line 13 Bc3 Bb4 14 Qd2 Na6! 15 c5?! Qa5 16 a3 Bxc3 17 Nxc3 0-0-0 18 Nxe4 Qxd2+ 19 Nxd2 Rxd4 20 Bxa6 bxa6 looks good for Black despite his structure being shot) 13 Bc3 Rg8 which he feels is unclear, although I would slightly prefer to take Black; one good deployment being ...Qe7, ...Na6 and ...0-0-0.



Diagram 10 (B)

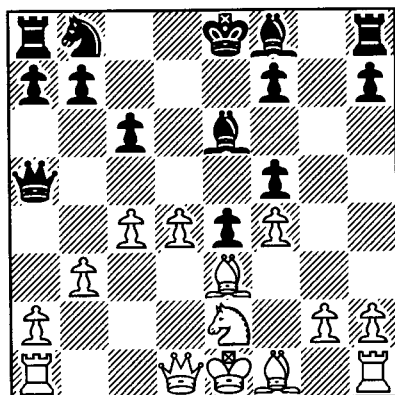


Diagram 11 (W)

Thus 9...e4!? deserves serious consideration. White might avoid this option with a 9 Ng3 Nd7 10 f4 move order, but then he can't play à la Tiviakov and must settle for taking play into our next note.

10 dxe5

After 10 Ng3 play has transposed to the game N.Grandelius-M.De Verdier, Stockholm 2007, where again I quite like Lukacs' idea of 10...Bh6!? (10...0-0-0 is a simple and good alternative, since 11 dxe5 Qxd1+ 12 Rxd1 fxe5 13 fxe5 Bg7 gives Black full equality, but 10...exd4 11 Qxd4 Bc5 12 Qxd5 Bxd5 13 Bxc5 Nxc5 14 c4 gave Grandelius an edge in the game) 11 c4 (Lukacs only mentions the less aggressive 11 Qd2 when 11...exd4 12 Bxd4 0-0-0 gives Black good counterplay) 11...Qd6 12 dxe5 (12 fxe5 Qb4+ 13 Qd2 Qxd2+ 14 Kxd2 Bxe3+ 15 Kxe3 fxe5 also looks about equal) 12...Qxd1+ 13 Rxd1 fxe5 14 Nh5 0-0-0 and this must be fine for Black.

10...fxe5

Nisipeanu is happy to rely on his active pieces. Black might also consider the arguably simpler 10...Qxd1+!? 11 Rxd1 fxe5 12 fxe5 Bxa2. The Romanian may have been put off by 13 Nd4 which creates some problems for the errant bishop, but after 13...Bd5! (**Diagram 12**) the position just appears quite double-edged: will

White seize the initiative or will his e-pawn become a serious weakness? One critical line runs 14 Nb5! 0-0-0! 15 Nxa7+ (15 Nd6+ Bxd6 16 exd6 Rhe8 and ...Ne5 seems fine too for Black) 15...Kb8 16 Nb5 Nxe5 17 Ba7+ Kc8 18 Bb6 Rd7 19 Ra1 Kb8 and White doesn't have more than a repetition.

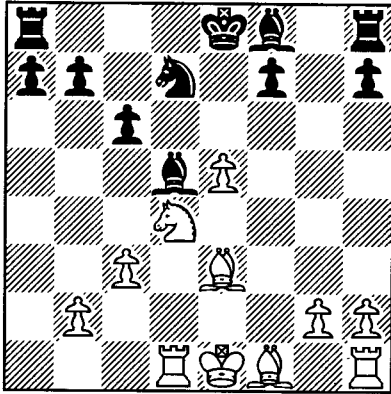


Diagram 12 (W)

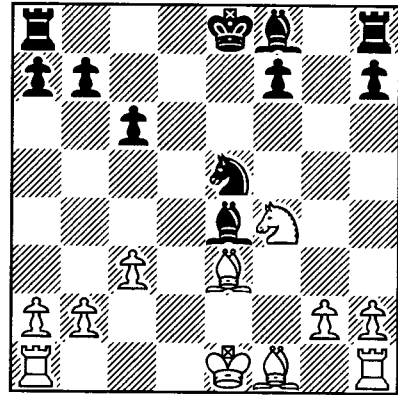


Diagram 13 (W)

11 Qxd5 Bxd5 12 fxe5 Nxe5 13 Nf4 Be4 (Diagram 13)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Once again we find Black having obtained a decent position through good handling of his light-squared bishop. Here it radiates power from a key central location and can always be reinforced if needs be by ...f5.

14 Be2

Annotating in *Informant 91*, Nisipeanu and Stoica consider the attempt to shift the bishop with 14 Rd1 Bh6 15 Rd4 and after 15...f5 16 Be2 Rg8 17 Rf1 Ng4 18 Bg1 Ke7 rightly conclude that Black's ongoing activity maintains a rough balance.

14...0-0-0! 15 0-0

Tiviakov plays it safe and who can blame him after spotting 15 Bxa7 Bh6 16 Rf1?! (probably too ambitious, but 16 0-0 Rd2 would regain the pawn with good play) 16...Rhe8 17 Rd1 Bd3! (Lukacs) with strong central pressure.

15...Bh6 16 Bd4 Rhe8

Once again Black's pieces flow to good squares and if anyone must be careful, it's White. Not wanting to be pushed back by a combination of ...Nd7 and ...c5, Tiviakov responds forcefully on the kingside...

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17 Nh5!? Bd3!

...only for Nisipeanu to counter in the same vein in the centre.

18 Bxd3 Nxd3 (Diagram 14)

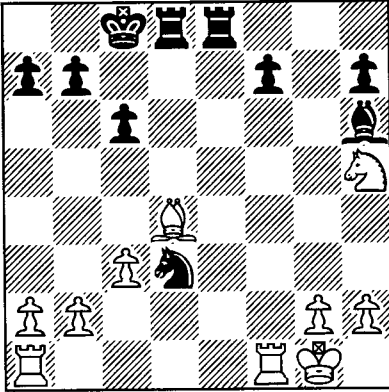


Diagram 14 (W)

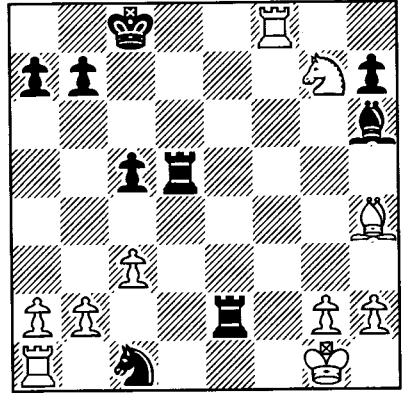


Diagram 15 (B)

19 Rxf7

Black would have met the alternative pawn snatch, 19 Bxa7, in the same way with 19...c5!, after which, for example, 20 Rf5! (good defence, whereas the greedy 20 Rxf7?! Be3+ 21 Kf1 Bc1! looks quite scary for White) 20...Re2!? 21 Bxc5 Nxc5 22 Rxc5+ Kb8 23 Kh1 Rxb2 (Nisipeanu and Stoica) would have maintained good compensation with Black set to double on the seventh.

19...c5

The point of Black's creative play: not only is White's bishop attacked, but there is also the threat of ...Bc1 to attend to.

20 Bf6! Rd5 21 Ng7?!

Finally Tiviakov loses his footing in the tactics. White had to avoid 21 Ng3?! Be3+ 22 Kf1? Nc1! with a huge mate threat, but he should have preferred 21 g4!. This looks a little loosening, but after 21...Rg8 22 Ng3 Rxd4 23 Rxh7 Black doesn't appear to have a killer blow. Nisipeanu and Stoica give 23...Bf4 (23...Bc1!? 24 b3 Nf4 is another try, but after 25 Kf2! White holds firm) 24 Kg2 Rg6 25 c4 Rf5 26 Bc3 Bxd3 27 hxg3 Rf2+ 28 Kh3 Rf3 with ongoing compensation, but no more than that.

21...Re2 22 Bh4!

Good defence as White prepares to harass Black's bishop with Nf5.

22...Nc1!

Once again we see a powerful leap to the eighth rank, cutting off the a1-rook and increasing the threats.

23 Rf8+ (Diagram 15) 23...Kd7?!

Now White can ease his woes with an exchange of rooks. Thus, as he later pointed out, Nisipeanu should have preferred 23...Kc7! 24 Bg3+ (24 Ne8+? Kc6! only lands up costing White serious material, since the bishop on h6 is taboo after 25 Rf6+ Kd7 because of White's back-rank weakness) 24...Kd7 25 Rf1 (25 Rf7+? Re7 26 Rxe7+ Kxe7 traps the white knight) 25...Rxb2 26 Raxc1 Bxc1 27 Rxc1 Rxa2 with some advantage in the endgame thanks to Black's active rooks and queenside majority.

24 Rd8+! ½-½

At this point Nisipeanu accepted a draw offer which took him through to the next round, but in a non knock-out situation he might have continued: 24...Kc6 25 Rxd5 Kxd5 26 Nf5 Bf4 and Black's active pieces continue to supply more than enough for the pawn. Nisipeanu and Stoica offer 27 Rb1 Kc4 28 Bg3 Bd2 29 b4 b6, maintaining a small plus, but here Black may do even better with 27...Nd3!? 28 Rd1 Kc4, continuing to make good use of the king.

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Qd5!? (Diagram 16)

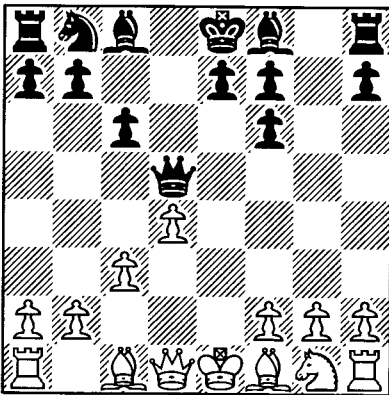


Diagram 16 (W)

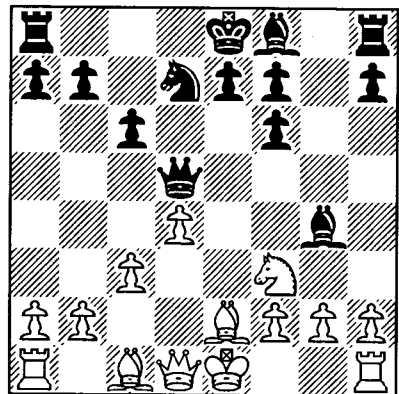


Diagram 17 (W)

The active subject of this chapter, although Black can also consider, on top of 6...Bf5, both 6...h5!? and 6...Nd7 – see our next chapter.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

Having examined 7 Ne2, the choice of noted theoreticians Vasilios Kotronias and Sergei Tiviakov, as well as Boris Spassky, we must turn our attention to White's various alternative schemes against our Scandinavian-like queen deployment:

A: 7 Nf3

B: 7 Be3

C: 7 Qb3

D: 7 Qf3

E: 7 c4!

A) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Qd5 7 Nf3 Rg8!

The logical follow-up, increasing the pressure against g2.



ROLL THE DICE! Black might prefer to rule out any notion of a kingside fianchetto with 7...Bg4!? 8 Be2 Nd7 (Diagram 17), which doesn't fully equalize as the queen can be targeted, but might be a good try against an opponent inexperienced in general Bronstein-Larsen themes.

Here practice has seen:

a) 9 c4 Qa5+ (increasing the pressure against c4 and f3 with the 9...Qe6!? 10 Qb3 Nb6 of T.Brueckner-U.Osieka, Wittlich 1985, is a good alternative; here an advance of the a-pawn would have led to a pretty murky situation, whereas 11 Be3 Bxf3 12 gxf3 0-0-0 13 0-0-0 Bh6 14 Rhe1 Bxe3+ 15 fxe3 Rhg8 was pretty comfortable for Black in the game) 10 Bd2 Qc7 11 0-0 Rg8 12 Re1 0-0-0 (**Diagram 18**) gave Black standard Bronstein-Larsen counterplay in J.Filipek-J.Schalkx, Ghent 2001. With both the ...e5-break and an advance of the h-pawn on the agenda, White tried 13 d5!?, but now 13...e6! 14 Qa4 Kb8 would have given Black good play with ...Nc5 on its way.

b) 9 h3! Bh5 10 c4 Qa5+ (10...Qe6!? is again possible, but a little more risky with the light-squared bishop having been pushed aside; indeed, 11 d5! cxd5 12 cxd5 Qe4 13 Be3 should work out slightly in White's favour) 11 Bd2 Qc7 leads to similar play to variation 'a'. White continued pretty aggressively in I.Provotorov-S.Grishchenko, Miass 2007, and after 12 0-0 (12 Bc3 Rg8 13 g4 Bg6 14 Qd2 0-0-0 15 Qe3 e6 16 c5 Bg7 17 0-0-0 Rge8 18 Nh4 f5! was okay too for Black in G.Pirisi-M.Pinto, Budapest 1997) 12...e5!?, (understandably Black has no wish to fall under a strong attack after 12...0-0-0 13 b4! Nb6 14 c5 Nd5 15 b5, but the text may not be

wholly sufficient for equality) 13 d5 Bg6 14 Nh4 f5 15 Bc3 Be7 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 Nxc6 hxc6 18 f4 f6 Black had his fair share of the chances in an unbalanced middlegame. However, small improvements for White are not too hard to find here – 13 b4!? for one – and this is one reason why 7...Rg8 might be preferred.

c) Plugging the g-file with 9 O-O Rg8 10 Bf4 O-O-O 11 Bg3 is an understandable reaction, as in A.Tosoni-D.Rombaldoni, Marche Estate 2003. Now 11...Nb6 12 Qc1! gives White a pull, so Black should prefer 11...f5! (**Diagram 19**) followed by ...Bh6, while intending to meet 12 h3 with 12...Bxh3!, not that this is quite so strong in view of 13 Qc1!. Play might continue 13...Bg4 14 Qf4 Qd6 15 Qe3 Qd5 16 Qf4 Qd6 with an early repetition, although I would be sorely tempted by 13...Rxc3!? 14 fxc3 Bg4 with good value for the exchange.

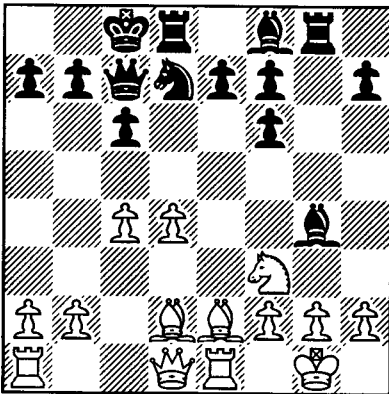


Diagram 18 (W)

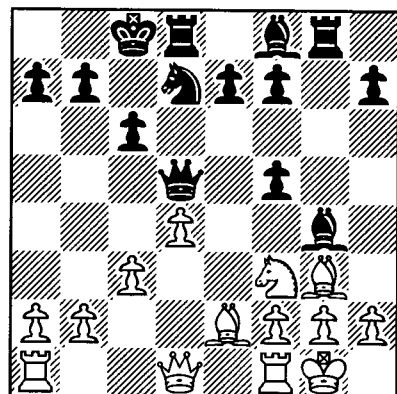


Diagram 19 (W)

d) White has also run slightly scared of any attack with 9 Qb3, but after 9...Qxb3 10 axb3 Rg8 11 Be3 (11 b4!? e6, with the idea of 12 b5 c5, also seems fine) 11...a6 (preventing White from undoubling his pawns with b4-b5) 12 Nh4 Bxe2 13 Kxe2 e6 14 g3 Bd6 15 Nf3 Ke7 16 Nd2 f5 17 Nc4 Bc7 18 Kf3 Nf6 Black continues to hold his own in the queenless middlegame, A.Litwak-A.Berelovich, Eupen 2007.

Returning to 7...Rg8 (**Diagram 20**):

8 g3

White carries out one of the main ideas behind 6 c3, the kingside fianchetto, but after his useful semi-waiting moves Black is in a position to pin the knight. Before we come on to that, we should explore the alternatives:

a) 8 c4!? Qh5 (the most active square for the queen and probably the best one; in-

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

stead 8...Qe4+ 9 Be3 will just force Black to lose further time with the lady) 9 Qb3 reaches quite a curious situation in which neither light-squared bishop can develop freely. The game R.Watson-D.Faldon, correspondence 1986, continued 9...Nd7 10 Be3 (White might like to go 10 g3, but after 10...Nb6 11 a4!? Be6! Black seems to be okay, since 12 a5 Nxc4! 13 Bxc4 Bxc4 14 Qxb7 Qxf3 15 Qxa8+ Kd7 forces White to give perpetual), and now I would go 10...Bh6!? (10...Nb6 11 a4! Bg4 12 Be2 Rb8 gave Watson an edge in the game and a number of reasonable alternatives to his slightly hasty 13 d5!?) 11 Bxh6 (or 11 0-0-0 Nb6 12 Bxh6 Qxh6+ 13 Kb1 Bf5+ 14 Ka1 0-0-0 with easy counterplay) 11...Qxh6 12 g3 Qh5!, threatening to check on a5 with quite an unclear situation.

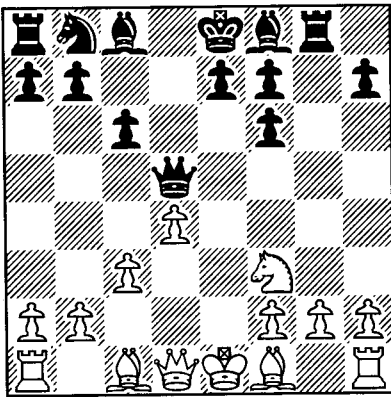


Diagram 20 (W)

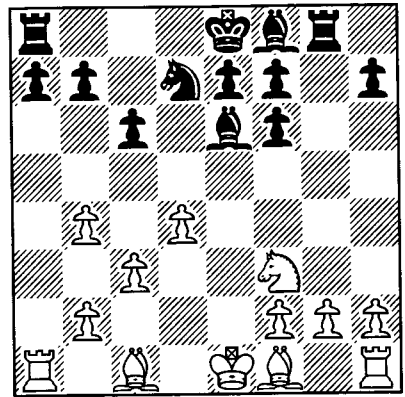


Diagram 21 (W)

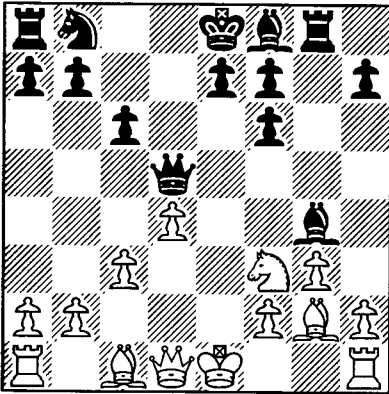
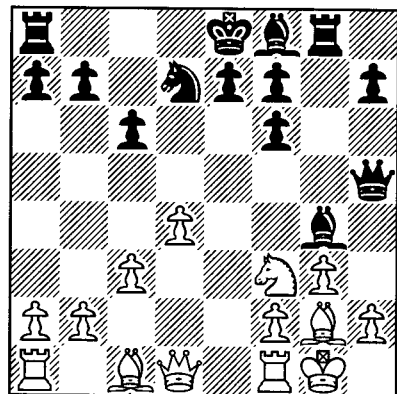
b) The simple approach 8 Qb3!? Qxb3 (8...Nd7 9 Qxd5 cxd5 10 Bf4 should be a little better for White) 9 axb3 Be6 10 b4 Nd7 (**Diagram 21**) is considered by Seirawan to give White a small edge, but I wouldn't be too unhappy as Black. He is set to increase his light-square control with ...Nb6 and ...Bd5, and after, say, 11 Bf4 (alternatively: 11 c4 Nb6 12 b3 Bf5 13 b5 is quite a critical try, but after 13...e6 14 bxc6 bxc6 Black should have enough counterplay to offset his structural concerns, as ...Bb4 and/or ...a5-a4 may follow; and after 11 Be3 Nb6 12 b5 cxb5 13 Bxb5+ Bd7 14 Bd3! Rxg2 15 Bxh7 Bc6 Black enjoyed sufficient counterplay in O.Zimina-D.Rombaldoni, Marcha Estate 2003) 11...Bd5!? 12 Bg3 f5 13 b5 Bh6 Black develops counterplay along typical Bronstein-Larsen lines.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: Another important choice is to develop with 8 Be3, which we'll consider in the main line of our next section, Line B.

8...Bg4

This looks natural, but Black might also follow in the footsteps of a Ukrainian super-talent with 8...Bf5!? 9 Bg2 Qc4. Indeed, 10 Bf1 (10 Qb3!? Qa6 11 Be3 Nd7 12 c4 looks more critical, as in J.Pierrot-L.Moreda, Buenos Aires 2003, although after 12...Nb6 and ...Be6 Black is probably sufficiently entrenched on the light squares) 10...Qe6+ 11 Qe2 Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 Nd7 13 O-O Bg4 14 Re1 e6 15 Kg2 O-O-O 16 Nh4 Bxe2 17 Rxe2 Bd6 18 Nf3 Nb6 gave Black enough counterplay with his f- and h-pawns in M.Andersen-I.Nyzhnyk, Kemer 2007.

9 Bg2 (Diagram 22)**Diagram 22 (B)****Diagram 23 (W)****9...Nd7**

Thematic and best. It's possible that some readers might be tempted by 9...Qe4+, but after 10 Be3 Bh6 11 Qe2 (White might also play for more with an ambitious idea of the silicon monster's: 11 O-O!? Bxe3 12 Qb3 Bxf3 13 Qxb7, although after 13...Kf8 14 Rfe1 Bxg2 15 Rxe3 Qd5 16 c4 Qd7 17 Qxa8 Kg7 Black's light-square play most certainly should not be underestimated) 11...Bxe3 12 Qxe3 Qxe3+ 13 fxe3 Nd7 14 Nd2 White had a small pull thanks to his superior structure and central control in H.Kahrs-E.Spaete, correspondence 1997.

10 O-O

White should probably flick in 10 h3!? when 10...Qe6+ (10...Be6 11 O-O Qh5 is the alternative, albeit probably not quite enough for equality after 12 Nh4 Qxd1 13 Rxd1 Nb6) 11 Be3 Bf5 is a logical counter, preventing White from going short. Hence 12 Qb3 might well be seen, but after 12...Nb6 13 Qxe6 Bxe6 14 b3 Bd5 15 c4

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Be4 the position should be about equal; ...e6 and then possibly ...a5-a4 will follow.

10...Qh5! (Diagram 23)

Now there won't be a second opportunity for h2-h3.

11 Re1 0-0-0 12 Qd3

White tries to flee the awkward pin, but Black is actively placed here and after 12...e5 enjoyed good counterplay in P.Ekaworawong-D.Carless, correspondence 2003.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Qd5 7 Be3 (Diagram 24)

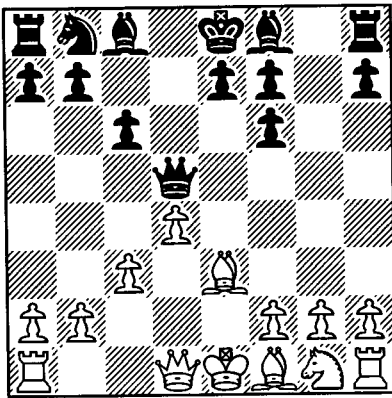


Diagram 24 (B)

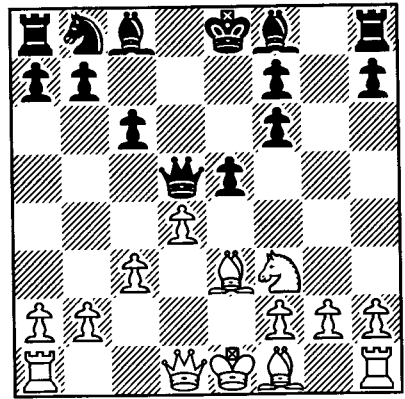


Diagram 25 (B)

This appears a more challenging approach than Line A, holding back the knight for the time being.

7...Rg8!?

Black continues as per Line A, although this approach is a little more risky with White still able to develop his knight to e2. A solid alternative is 7...Bf5, but then I haven't found an entirely reliable way for Black to play after both 8 Ne2 and 8 Qd2!?



ROLL THE DICE! Black might give some thought to 7...e5!?, though, angling to take play back into the realm of both Spassky-Seirawan and Tiviakov-Nisipeanu in the event of 8 Ne2.

One critical test must be 8 dxe5 fxe5 9 Nf3 (9 Qxd5 cxd5 10 0-0-0 Be6 11 f4 is an alternative way to attack Black's centre, but one fairly well met by 11...Bh6) 9...Qxd1+ 10 Rxd1 f6 11 Bc4 with good development, but is this really so bad for Black after 11...Nd7 and 12...Nc5? It's certainly not so clear how White increases the pressure. Perhaps this explains why 8 Qd2 was tried in R.Hlavac-E.Stertkuhl, German League 2007, although after 8...Bf5 9 Ne2 Nd7 10 Ng3 Bg6! Black appears to have enough counterplay, with both ...0-0-0 and ...f5 on the agenda.

I dare say that the natural 8 Nf3! (**Diagram 25**) is thus the critical test when Black mustn't neglect his development too much: 8...e4? 9 Nd2 f5 10 Bc4 Qd6 11 0-0 followed by f3 would most certainly not be the way to go. Instead Black should meet 8 Nf3 with 8...Nd7 (8...Bg4 9 dxe5 Qxd1+ 10 Rxd1 fxe5 11 h3! Bxf3 12 gxf3 gives White a pull with his bishop-pair) 9 Qc2 (White can also play more simply with 9 Be2 Rg8 10 0-0, but then 10...Nb6 introduces the idea of ...Bh3 and gives Black reasonable counterplay) 9...exd4 (not ideal, but neither is maintaining the tension with Bd3 on its way) 10 Nxd4 Ne5, relying on his active, central pieces to offset his kingside holes, although this may well not be enough for equality after the aggressive 11 Rd1!.

8 Nf3

White may do better to bring his knight towards f4 with 8 Ne2!?, since now 8...e5 9 Qc2! hits h7 and favours White. Thus Black should again prefer to pin with 8...Bg4 (**Diagram 26**)

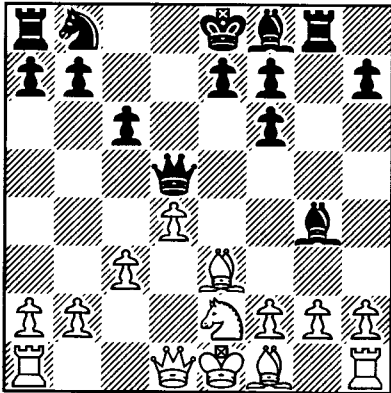


Diagram 26 (W)

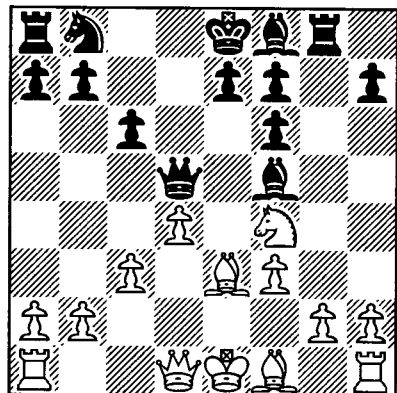


Diagram 27 (B)

and then:

a) 9 h3 Bxe2 10 Qxe2 (10 Bxe2!? Qxg2 11 Bf3 Qxh1+ 12 Bxh1 Rg1+ 13 Ke2 Rxd1 14

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Rxd1 gives White decent play for his pawn, but probably no more than that despite his powerful bishops after 14...f5 15 d5 e6) 10...e6 (delaying this for 10...Nd7!? deserves attention, after which 11 c4 Qa5+ 12 Qd2 Qa4! continues to pose some problems for White's king and light-squared bishop) 11 0-0-0?! (as pointed out by Lukacs, White should really prefer to play more slowly with 11 Qd2 when Black should fight against the c4-advance with 11...Na6! 12 f3 Qa5 13 Bd3 f5 14 0-0 Nc7, intending 15...Nd5 with reasonable counterplay in a typically strategically-complex middlegame) 11...Qxa2 12 Qh5 h6 failed to give White quite enough for his pawn in B.Filipovic-E.Bukic, Banja Luka 1983; Black's kingside pawns might be split, but his structure is by no means so easy to break down.

b) White's next idea was 9 Qd2 e6 10 Nf4 Qa5 and now battling for the initiative with 11 f3! (11 Bd3 e5 12 Ne2 h5 was preferred in N.Rogers-H.Brookshear, Chicago 1991, but here White once again suffered a rush of blood to the head and 13 0-0-0?! Qxa2 14 dxe5 Nd7 led to nothing more than a rather murky situation) 11...Bf5 12 g4 Bg6 13 h4 looks promising for him. Thus Black must either play 9...Bxe2 10 Qxe2 e6, as per variation 'a', or try 9...e5!? 10 Ng3 Nd7.

c) 9 Qc2 Bf5!? 10 Qd2 Na6 11 Ng3 Bg6 12 b4 e5 13 f4! gave White an edge in S.Kudrin-D.Josenhans, Philadelphia 1992, but again Black might prefer to exchange on e2. He can also play à la Josenhans, but then go 10...Nd7 when 11 Ng3 Bg6 12 c4 was presumably Kudrin's idea. However, 12...Qd6 13 0-0-0 e6 shouldn't be more than a little better for White; Black can get the queens off with ...Qb4, although he might prefer to strike out with ...b5.

d) Avoiding the exchange of bishop for knight with 9 f3! Bf5 10 Nf4 (**Diagram 27**) looks like the critical test. Indeed, after 10...Qd6 11 g4 Bh6 12 Qd2 Be6 (wisely avoiding 12...Bg6?! 13 h4!) 13 Bd3 White has an undoubted pull. That said, Black's position is pretty resilient and White is still to decide what to do with his king. The game M.Salm-A.Zilberberg, correspondence 1989, continued 13...Rh8 14 Nh5 Bxe3 15 Qxe3 Na6! 16 Bxa6 bxa6 17 Ng7+ Kd7 18 Nxe6 and here White decided that the double-rook ending didn't promise him much, so offered a draw. Later 18 Qd3 a5 19 Kd1 was tried in L.Mauro-A.Crawley, correspondence 2004, but this doesn't seem too bad for Black after, say, 19...Rag8 (19...a4!? 20 Kc2 a3 21 b3 a5 is another approach, making good use of those doubled a-pawns) 20 Nxe6 fxe6 21 Kc2 h5. Before returning to 8 Nf3, we should note that again White might prefer 8 Qb3 Qxb3 (8...Nd7!? might now be considered too, since after 9 Qxd5 cxd5 Black is ready to break with 10...e5 and 10 0-0-0 Nb6 11 Nf3 Nc4 12 Bf4 e6 gives him counterplay on both flanks) 9 axb3 Be6 10 b4 Nd7 when 11 Nf3 transposes to a position considered in note 'b' to his 8th move in Line A.



BEWARE! White might, though, elect to push his queenside pawns without delay when Black must be alert: **11 c4!?** **Nb6??** is no longer advisable on account of **12 d5!**, exploiting the pin down the a-file to win a piece.

Thus Black should meet 11 c4 with 11...Bf5!, preparing central counterplay, and after 12 Kd2!? e5 13 Kc3 a6 (Black might also have met White's creative and ambitious play with 13...b5!?, opening lines against the king, such as with 14 c5 exd4+ 15 Bxd4 a5) 14 Ne2 Be6 a positionally-complex struggle arose in S.Nyysti-M.Karttunen, Belgrade 2002.

8...Nd7 (Diagram 28)

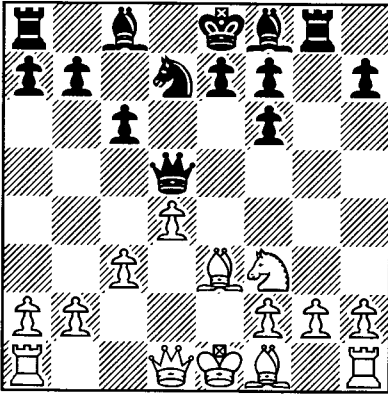


Diagram 28 (W)

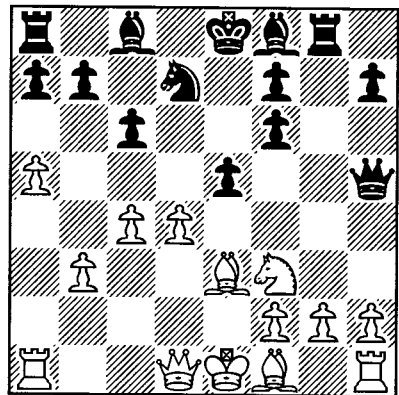


Diagram 29 (W)

9 g3

White remembers one of the key ideas behind 6 c3, but he has also employed a number of different approaches:

- We considered 9 Qb3 Nb6! and the model game Kagan-Basman in the notes to Spassky-Seirawan.
- 9 Qc2 is arguably more critical, taking aim at h7. However, after 9...Qh5 (I'm less of a fan of 9...f5 10 c4 Qd6 11 c5!) 10 c4 Nb6 11 0-0-0 Bf5 12 Qd2 Black would have been okay in L.Mooren-P.Giulian, correspondence 1978, had he increased his light-square play by preparing a queen and bishop battery with 12...Bg6!.
- 9 Nd2 forces through the c4-break, but after 9...Nb6 10 c4 Qa5 11 Qb3 (H.Mueller-E.Spaete, correspondence 1997) 11...Bf5 12 0-0-0 0-0-0 and 13...e5 Black

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has decent counterplay.

d) 9 a4!? Nb6 10 b3 is an ambitious try to pose problems for Black's pieces on the queenside, but after 10...Qh5 (10...Bg4 11 Be2 e5 12 a5 Nd7 13 a6! slightly favoured White in M.Van Delft-M.Schuetze, Hamburg 2003, but Black might consider flicking in the provocative 10...Qa5!? and only then going 11 Bd2 Qh5) 11 c4 e5 12 a5 Nd7 (**Diagram 29**) the key central break again appears to secure Black sufficient counterplay in an unclear middlegame.

9...Nb6 10 b3

White wants to keep control of the c4-square, but this comes at a further cost in terms of time.

10...Bg4 11 Bg2 e5! (Diagram 30)

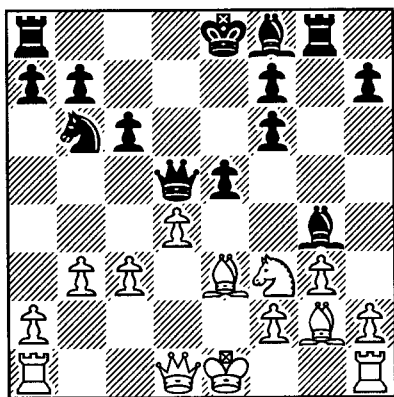


Diagram 30 (W)

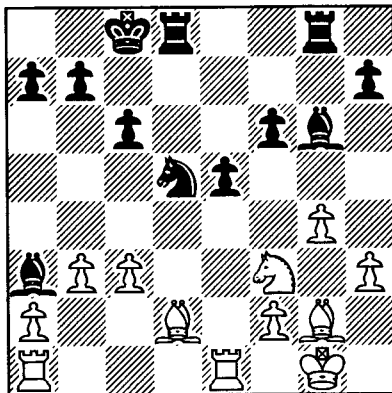


Diagram 31 (W)

Thematic and strong. In R.Adamson-J.Todd, Las Vegas 1995, Black strangely eschewed this break and after 11...0-0-0 12 c4 Qe4 13 Nh4! Qxg2 (13...Qe6!? 14 Qd2 Bh6 15 0-0 Bg5 might have been a better try) 14 Nxg2 Bxd1 15 Rxd1 e5 16 Ke2 Bb4 17 Nh4 White enjoyed a pleasant edge thanks to the weakness of f5.

12 dxe5

Now the game starts to slide away from White. Indeed, he had to take the bull by the horns with the brave 12 h3! Bh5 13 g4, not that this would have been at all clear as Black certainly has a few tempting possibilities in this unclear position. *Rybka* draws attention to the temporary piece sacrifice 13...0-0-0 (13...Bg6 14 0-0 e4 15 Nh4 Qe6 is a slower approach, but White is slightly for choice after 16 c4 f5 17 f3!) 14 0-0 Qe6!?, with the idea of 15 gxh5 exd4 16 Nxd4! (16 Bxd4? Qxh3 17 Ne1 c5 regains the piece

with advantage, and 16 cxd4?! Bd6! is risky for White, because 17 Kh1 Rxc2 18 Kxg2 Rg8+ 19 Ng5 fxg5 gives Black strong pressure for the exchange) 16...Qe4 17 Qf3 Rxd4 18 Qxe4 Rxe4, regaining the piece with rough equality.

12...fxe5 13 h3 Bh5

The pin gives Black a good game. Probably White should now go 14 g4, since he was quickly worse in N.Ristic-M.Pasman, Groningen 1977, after 14 Qxd5?! Nxd5 15 Bd2 0-0-0 16 0-0 f6 17 g4 Bg6 18 Rfe1 Ba3! (**Diagram 31**) and Black's bishops dominated.

C) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Qd5 7 Qb3 (Diagram 32)

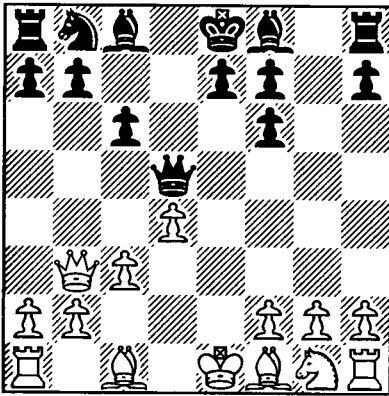


Diagram 32 (B)

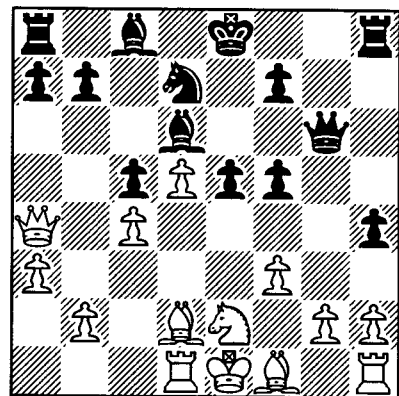


Diagram 33 (W)

A solid choice, but, as we have seen, an early exchange of queens should not unduly trouble Black. Notably the text was White's choice when needing only a draw to progress in no lesser game than S.Rublevsky-R.Ponomariov, 6th matchgame, Elista Candidates 2007:

7...Nd7

Sensible development.



BEWARE! Black might want to keep the queens on, but this isn't advisable: 7...Qe4+?! 8 Ne2 Nd7 (8...e5 9 Be3 Nd7 10 Ng3 is also rather good for White) 9 Be3 Nb6 10 Ng3 (10 Nf4!? might have been even stronger) 10...Qg6 11 c4 f5 12 Bd3 Bg7 13 0-0-0 left Nimzowitsch's doubled f-pawns a cause for concern in P.Leonhardt-A.Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1907.

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Nimzowitsch wasn't yet the positional maestro in 1907 and neither was he four years later when he attempted to improve with the ugly 7...e6?! in P.Leonhardt-A.Nimzowitsch, Karlsbad 1911. There's no need to block in the important light-squared bishop, and after 8 Ne2 Qxb3 9 axb3 Bd6 10 Ng3 Nd7 11 Be2 Bc7 12 Bf3 Leonhardt enjoyed a small but pleasant advantage.

However, the text isn't forced and Black might prefer 7...Qxb3 8 axb3 Bf5 (8...e5?! 9 Nf3 leaves Black a little shaky in the centre) 9 Nf3 Nd7 with no more than a small pull for White. The game R.Yankovsky-R.Lovkov, St Petersburg 2007, continued 10 b4 e6 11 Bf4 Nb6 12 Nh4 Be4! 13 f3 Bc2 14 Ra3 a6 15 Kd2 Bg6 16 Nxc6 hxc6 and having held White up on the queenside, Black enjoyed very comfortable play.

8 Nf3

The misguided 8 Bc4?? Qxg2 leads nowhere for White, but he does have some better alternatives:

- a) 8 Qxd5 cxd5 reaches an Exchange Caro structure in which Black's doubled f-pawns give him a good central grip. Moreover, the half-open g-file ensures that the game is far from dead, and after 9 Bd3 h5 10 Ne2 e6 11 h4 Bd6 12 Nf4 f5! 13 Be2 Nf6 Black was fine in R.Marconi-N.Zimninski, correspondence 1991.
- b) 8 Ne2 might just be met by 8...Nb6, but one has to admire Black's dynamic interpretation in L.Du Bois-W.Gray, correspondence 1991: 8...e5!? 9 c4 Qe4 10 f3 Qg6 11 Bd2 h5! 12 Rd1 h4 13 a3 c5!? (development with 13...b6 and ...Bb7 was also reasonable) 14 d5 f5 15 Qa4 Bd6 (**Diagram 33**) and Black's dynamic kingside pawns gave him a good game.

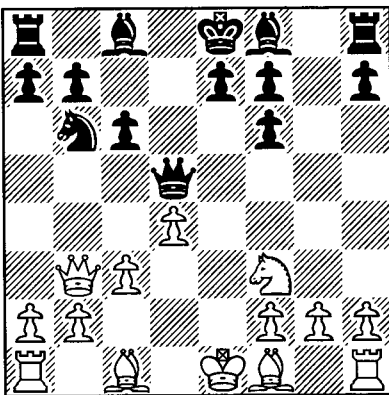


Diagram 34 (W)

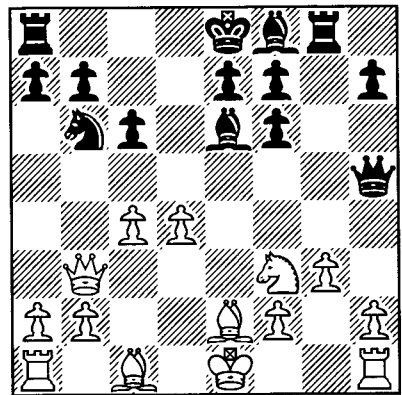


Diagram 35 (W)

c) After 8 Be3 a more solid approach with 8...Nb6 9 Ne2 Be6! saw Black trying to force the queens off on his own terms, with full equality in P.Fontaine-J.Schalkx, Liege 1998.

8...Nb6 (Diagram 34) 9 c4

Rublevsky decides to keep the queens on, quite possibly because he considered 9 Qxd5 Nxd5 10 Bd3 Bg4 to be rather comfortable for Black.

9...Qh5

A reasonable square for the queen, staying in touch with the fourth rank while also giving Black some kingside options. Instead 9...Qe4+ 10 Be3 e6?! (10...Bf5!? improves, offering a pawn for some pressure with 11 c5 Nd5 12 Qxb7 Rc8) 11 Bd3 Qg4 12 Ke2!? h5 13 h3 Qg8 14 a4! had failed to convince in the earlier J.Knudsen-W.Gray, correspondence 1994.

10 Be2 Bg7?!

Dare I say that Ponomarev's lack of Bronstein-Larsen experience became clear at this point? He probably didn't like the look of 10...Be6 11 d5! cxd5 12 c5, although this might not be so bad for Black after 12...d4! 13 Nxd4 Qxe2+ 14 Kxe2 Bxb3 15 axb3 Nd5.

However, Black should have given very serious attention to 10...Rg8!, since his king can always hide in the centre or run to the queenside. Then 11 g3 (11 Rg1 is also possible, but this way there is less of a threat to move the knight from f3; play might continue 11...Bh6 12 Bxh6 Qxh6 13 a4 Nd7 when the position is roughly equal, although plenty of play remains even after 14 Qe3 Qxe3 15 fxe3 f5) 11...Be6 (Diagram 35) 12 d5!? (White might also play more simply with 12 Bf4, but after 12...Qa5+ 13 Bd2 Qf5 and ...0-0-0 Black should be fine) 12...Bg4 (again Black can also take the queens off with 12...cxd5 13 c5 d4 14 Nxd4 Qxe2+ 15 Kxe2 Bxb3 16 axb3 Nd5, relying on his strong central knight to hold things together) 13 dxc6 bxc6 14 0-0 e5 reaches quite an unclear situation. Black does have undoubted queenside and king issues, but I feel that the pressure down the d1-h5 diagonal fully compensates for them. Play might continue 15 Qe3 Nd7 16 Rd1 Bc5 17 Qe4 Rc8 and with ...f5 next up Black enjoys definite counterplay.

11 Be3 0-0 12 0-0 e5

Black's only real advance, but Rublevsky responds well by keeping control of the light-square situation.

13 Qc2! Bf5 14 Qd1 Bg4 15 h3 Bxf3 16 Bxf3 Qg6 (Diagram 36)

Comfortably better, White might now have redeployed his queen with 17 Qb3, but based on the match situation Rublevsky was happy to make an easy repetition

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with 17 Bh5 Qe4 18 Bf3 Qg6 19 Bh5 Qe4 and ½-½.

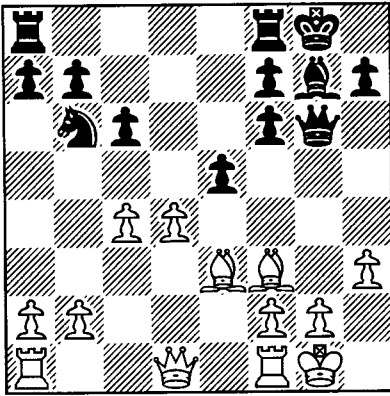


Diagram 36 (W)

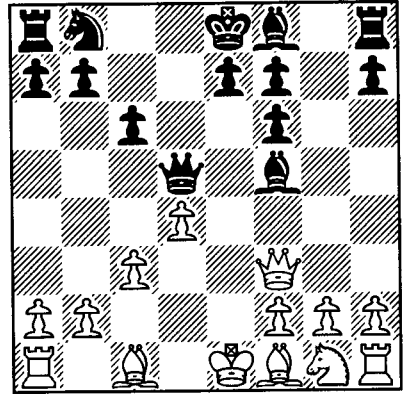


Diagram 37 (W)

D) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dx e4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Qd5 7 Qf3

This is even less of an inspired choice than Line C, since the lack of pressure against b7 means that Black can develop his light-squared bishop without delay.

7...Bf5 (Diagram 37) 8 Qxd5

White's invariable choice. He doesn't have to improve Black's central pawn mass, but neither has 8 Bc4 Qxc4 9 Qxf5 Nd7 10 Ne2 e6 11 Qf3 Rg8 12 O-O Bd6 (N.Lakos-A.Gara, Szeged 2005) nor 8 c4 Qxf3 (8...Qd7!? followed by ...Na6 would be an attempt to make White regret keeping the queens on) 9 Nxf3 e6 10 Bd2 Nd7 11 Nh4 Bg6 12 Nxc6 hxc6 13 Bc3 Bg7 14 O-O-O f5 15 Be2 O-O-O (K.Krasiuk-Y.Shvayger, Odessa 2009) brought him any advantage. Note how Black often shouldn't fear the loss of the bishop-pair, even if the queens are off. In true Bronstein-Larsen, fashion by forcing the trade of knight for bishop to take place on g6, he obtains a very compact mass of kingside pawns with good dynamic potential.

8...cxd5 9 Bf4

White develops as per the Exchange Caro, but he might first deploy his knight:

a) 9 Nf3 Nc6 10 Nh4 (this doesn't lead anywhere; again Black might now allow the exchange on g6, but here we see him preferring to expand in the centre) 10...Bd7!? 11 Bd3 (White might have tried to cross Black's plans with 11 f4! when I suspect that Black intended 11...e6 12 Bd3 f5 followed by a minority attack with ...Rb8 and ...b5) 11...e5 12 Be3 Rc8!? (Diagram 38) 13 O-O (after 13 Bf5 exd4 14 cxd4 Nb4 Black

would have had enough play down the c-file to compensate for his hideous king-side) 13...e4 14 Be2 Be7 was fairly pleasant for Black in B.Kamber-A.Vajda, Winterthur 2004. The double advance of the e-pawn to e5 is always strategically risky, but here Black was able to push on to e4 before expanding further with ...f5.

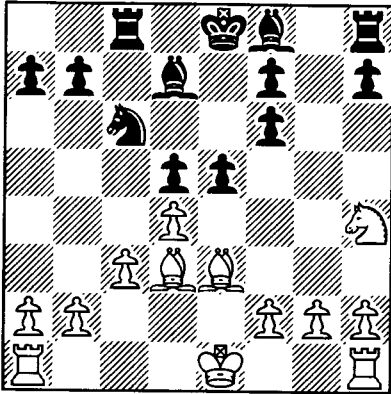


Diagram 38 (W)

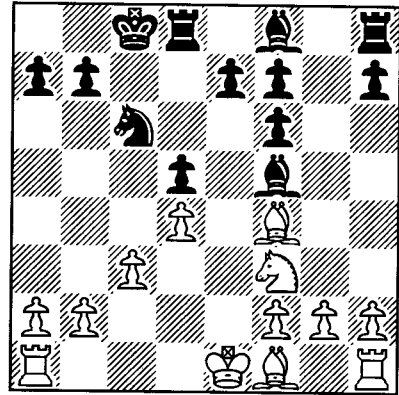


Diagram 39 (W)

b) 9 Ne2 Nc6 10 Ng3 Bd7!? (again there was nothing too wrong with 10...Bg6: I dare say that 11 f4!? put Black off, but after 11...h5! both 12 h4 e6 13 f5?! Bd6 and 12 f5 h4 13 fxg6 hxg3 14 gxf7+ Kxf7 15 Bf4 Rxh2 16 Rxh2 gxh2 17 Bxh2 Bh6 would have been fine for him) 11 Be3 e5 12 dxe5 fxe5 13 0-0-0 Be6 14 Bd3 0-0-0 15 Bf5 h5! 16 h4 Be7 was slightly more pleasant for Black thanks to his strong centre in T.Mirabile-D.Josenhans, Long Island 1995.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! One of the main attractions of the Bronstein-Larsen is Black's mobile h-pawn. Indeed, it's notable just how often a swift advance of the this pawn causes problems for White, especially when his knight is on g3.

9...Nc6 10 Nf3 0-0-0! (Diagram 39)

Black doesn't have to move his king just yet, but playing for a quick ...e5 looks like the most promising approach. Of course, kingside expansion with 10...Rg8!? 11 Bg3 h5 can't be a bad alternative and after the 12 Be2 of A.Khaled-A.Salem, Abu Dhabi 2006, Black might have played 12...Be4!?, intending 13 Nh4 e5! 14 dxe5 fxe5 15 Bxh5 Be7 with full compensation for the pawn.

11 Be2 Rg8 12 0-0

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Not ideal, but there wasn't a particularly good way to defend g2. Indeed, it's already fully clear which side is calling the shots.

12...e5! 13 Bg3

Possibly White had earlier missed that 13 dxe5 fxe5 14 Nxe5? Nxe5 15 Bxe5 fails to 15...Re8, skewering his bishops.

13...Bd6 14 b4 Be4

We've followed the game M.Sonter-M.Pacher, Olomouc 2009, in which Black's kingside pressure was already beginning to mount.

E) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Qd5 7 c4!? (Diagram 40)

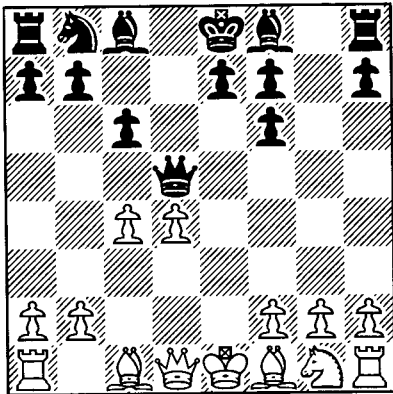


Diagram 40 (B)

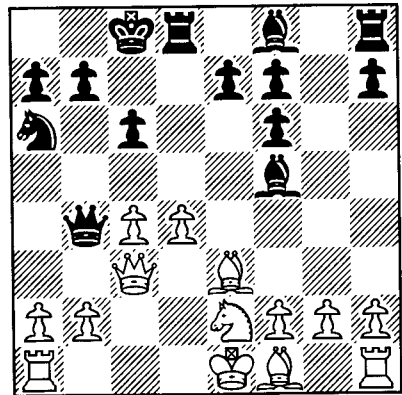


Diagram 41 (W)

Along with Line D this has been White's least popular choice thus far in practice against 6...Qd5, possibly because moving the c-pawn again looks a little loosening. However, the critical text move has been chosen by a few grandmasters and thus far White has scored quite highly, so Black must be well prepared here!

7...Qe4+

Black wants to keep the queen active and envisages a quick ...e5. He has also retreated with 7...Qd6!? when 8 Ne2 (following 8 Nf3 Black might play 8...Rg8!?, as per Line A, go 8...Bg4!?, intending to sacrifice a pawn for an early initiative with 9 Qb3 Na6! 10 Qxb7 Qb4+ 11 Qxb4 Nxb4, or with 8...Qb4+ throw in a slightly awkward check for White to counter) 8...Bf5 (the immediate 8...Na6!? also deserves serious consideration) 9 Qb3 Na6! (the less energetic 9...Qc7 10 Be3 Nd7 11 Ng3

Bg6 12 h4 h5 13 0-0-0 e6 14 Bd3 echoed a line of the Scandinavian and was a little better for White in D.Pavasovic-I.Efimov, Trieste 2007) reaches a position sorely in need of a test or two:

- a) 10 Qxb7? Qb4+ 11 Qxb4 Nxb4 reveals Black's main point: he will invade on c2 with some effect, such as in the case of 12 Ng3 Bg6 13 Kd2 Nc2 14 Rb1 0-0-0.
- b) 10 Bf4?! e5 11 Be3 Qb4+ 12 Nc3 0-0-0 also gives Black promising early activity.
- c) Thus White's best may be the more restrained 10 Be3, but after 10...Qb4+ 11 Qc3 (11 Nc3 is well met by 11...Qxb3 12 axb3 Nb4) 11...0-0-0 (**Diagram 41**) Black shouldn't have any problems with ...e5 once again high on the agenda, as well as an advance of the h-pawn should White move his knight to g3.
- d) Such typical themes are also likely to arise after 10 Ng3 Bg6 (10...Qb4+? 11 Qxb4 Nxb4 12 Nxf5 Nc2+ 13 Kd2 Nxa1 14 Kc3 would trap Black's knight with some advantage) 11 Be3 Qb4+ 12 Qc3 when it might already be time for 12...h5!?
- e) Lastly, do note that White can't revert back to a fianchetto here: 10 g3? Nb4 11 c5 Qd5 would make good use of the newly-weakened long diagonal.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Retreating with 7...Qd6!? echoes the Chigorin Defence and, while in need of proper testing, should offer Black a decent-enough game from what I can see.

8 Be3 e5 (Diagram 42)

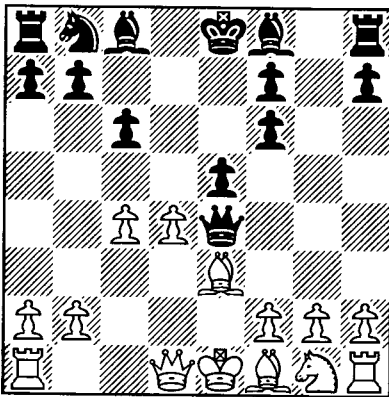


Diagram 42 (W)

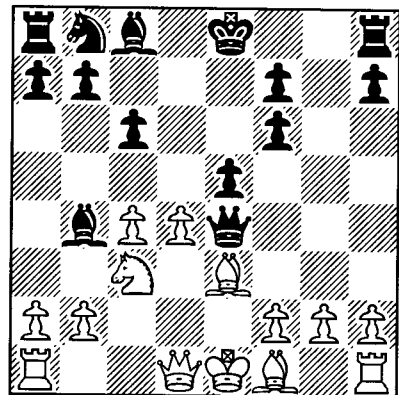


Diagram 43 (B)

Clearly the move that Black would like to make work. Instead 8...Bf5 9 Ne2 Qc2 10 Qxc2 Bxc2 might not be so bad for him, but must be at least a little better for

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White. Neither is 8...Bh6 sufficiently dynamic, and after 9 Qd2 Rg8 10 Ne2 Bxe3 11 fxe3 Na6? 12 Nf4! c5 13 Bd3 Black was already somewhat worse and no doubt regretting the early activation of his queen in O.Zambrana-I.Teran Alvarez, Ayamonte 2006.

9 Ne2

The young Italian IM Denis Rombaldoni, a leading proponent of 6...Qd5, has also faced 9 a3!? and after the 9...Bf5 (9...Na6 10 Ne2 transposes to our next note) 10 Ne2 Nd7 11 Ng3 Qc2 12 Nxf5 Qxf5 13 Bd3 of A.Delchev-D.Rombaldoni, Reggio Emilia 2005, Black had to try 13...e4 14 Bc2 Qg6 15 Qe2 0-0-0, thereby obtaining counterplay on the kingside.

9...Bb4+

Black develops as actively as possible. Instead 9...Na6 appears well met by 10 a3! (10 Nc3 Qg6! 11 a3?! Bf5 12 d5 Nc5 already saw Black seizing the initiative in Y.Liou-Y.Norowitz, US online league 2009) 10...Qh4 11 Nc3 Bg4 12 Be2 Bxe2?! (12...Rg8 improves, but 13 g3 Qh3 14 Ne4 Be7 15 f3 still turns out a bit better for White) 13 Qxe2 Bg7 14 0-0-0 0-0 15 Qf3 which left White in control and somewhat better in W.Spoelman-L.Hofland, Amsterdam 2006.



BEWARE! Remember that whenever Black plays ...e5 in the Bronstein-Larsen, he must aim to avoid landing up in a static situation in which White can exploit the hole on f5. Often that means playing very actively, but here Black must temper his activity to an extent and not forget to develop his queenside forces.

10 Nc3 (Diagram 43)

Clearly critical, whereas 10 Bd2 Na6 11 f3 Qe3 12 a3 Bxd2+ 13 Qxd2 Qxd2+ 14 Kxd2 Be6 15 Kc3 0-0-0 16 b4 Nc7 gave Black sufficient counterplay in A.Mack-McDonald Ross, British League 2001.

10...f5?!

Rombaldoni's choice, continuing to play as actively as possible, but this only plays into White's hands. Thus Black has also tried 10...Bxc3+ 11 bxc3 Nd7 12 Qd2 (12 Qb1!?, with the idea of 12...Qxb1+ 13 Rxb1 Nb6 14 Bd3 Be6 15 c5, may be a better way to get the queens off) 12...Nb6 13 f3 Qg6 which is a more positional course, but after the 14 a4 Be6 15 d5! cxd5 of F.Verduyn-J.Schalkx, Belgian League 2005, White might have settled for the simple 16 Bxb6 (16 cxd5!? Nxd5 17 Bb5+ Kf8 18 Bh6+ Kg8 offered no more than reasonable compensation in the game) 16...axb6

17 cxd5 Bd7 18 Bd3 f5 19 0-0, thereby maintaining a small pull.

Another solid and by no means stupid choice is 10...Bf5!?, which really deserves further investigation. Indeed, after 11 Qb3 Na6 12 0-0-0 Bxc3 13 Bd3 Qg4 14 Qxc3 Bxd3 15 Qxd3 0-0-0 16 h3 Qd7 17 Qe4 Qe6 White was restricted to a small edge in W.Pajeken-M.Schuetze, German League 2008. Moreover, here Black might explore 11...a5!? (**Diagram 44**), with the idea of 12 a3 exd4 13 axb4 dxc3 14 bxc3 0-0 followed by 15...Nd7 with good counterplay.

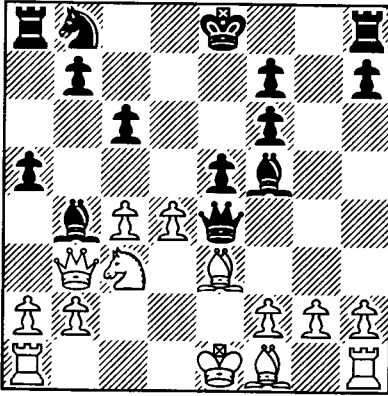


Diagram 44 (W)

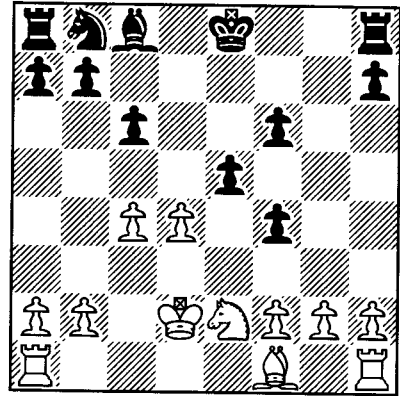


Diagram 45 (W)

11 Qe2!

Forcing the pace, although White later demonstrated a second strong continuation: 11 Rg1!? Rg8 12 g3 (12 a3! Bxc3+ 13 bxc3 might be even more dangerous, as pointed out by Lukacs) 12...exd4 13 Qxd4 Qxd4 14 Bxd4 Be6 15 a3 Be7 16 0-0-0 gave White a pleasant edge in M.Turov-M.Thejkumar, New Delhi 2010.

11...f4

Not ideal, but I haven't found anything better: 11...exd4 12 Bxd4 Qxe2+ 13 Bxe2 Rg8 14 g3 and 11...Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 f4 13 Bd2 Qxe2+ 14 Bxe2 are also both somewhat in White's favour.

12 Bd2 Qxe2+

White's main point is that 12...Qxd4 13 0-0-0 Be7 14 Be1!? f3 (14...Qc5? 15 Ne4 Qb6 16 c5 Bxc5 17 Nf6+ is completely crushing) 15 gxf3 Qf4+ 16 Bd2 Qf5 17 h4 gives him an overwhelming initiative.

13 Nxe2 Bxd2+ 14 Kxd2 f6 (**Diagram 45**)

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We've followed the game P.Charbonneau-D.Rombaldoni, La Roche sur Yon 2006, in which 15 Re1 left White with pleasant pressure and a good alternative was Ftacnik's 15 Nc3!?.

Conclusion

It's hard to explain why meeting the critical 6 c3 with 6...Qd5 hasn't gained significant attention before. I can only suggest that it's because the Bronstein-Larsen remains so unexplored and underrated in general. Activating the queen thus has made many white players feel a little uncomfortable, as we have seen, and appears to be in decent theoretical health.

Perhaps holding back the development of the king's knight with the subtle 7 Be3 promises White a small pull, but even there Black shouldn't be too unhappy. Moreover, the critical 7 c4 is far from a refutation, with 7...Qd6 badly unexplored and improvements possible too after 7...Qe4+.

Chapter Two

The Charging h-pawn

Richard Palliser

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 h5!?
(Diagram 1)

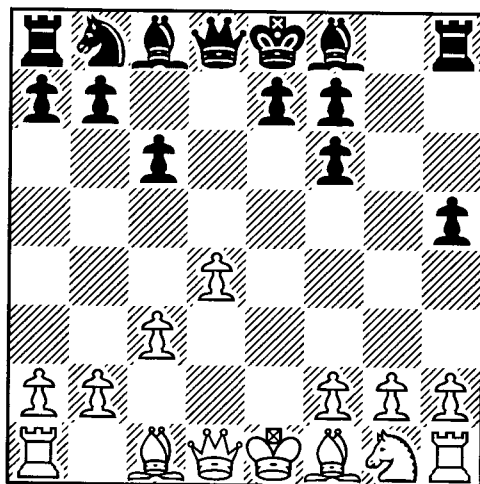


Diagram 1 (W)

To the uninitiated this may appear even more outrageous than the 6...Qd5 of our last chapter, but as every Bronstein-Larsen player knows, the early advance of the h-pawn is a key weapon in Black's armoury. Here he aims to dissuade any notion

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of a kingside fianchetto, while relying on his greater understanding of this most unbalanced structure away from the more theoretical main line of 6 c3 Bf5.

Advancing the h-pawn this early is risky, but definitely scores highly on shock value. With precise play White can obtain a small pull, although those worried by such an outcome should note that Black might begin with a third underrated 6th-move possibility, namely 6...Nd7, keeping the h-pawn in check for a move or two. However, it's the immediate 6...h5!? which Black would really like to make work, and once again we find that both the leading Romanian Grandmaster, Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu, and the former long-time American no.1, Yasser Seirawan, have been happy enough to dabble in the resulting complex positions. Moreover, not too long after I had finished the first draft of this chapter, I was pleased to see Nigel Short taking up this dynamic early advance.

□ **A.Naiditsch** ■ **Y.Seirawan**
Vlaardingen (rapid) 2005

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 h5!? 7 Nf3

Natural development from White, who now threatens to continue his favourite development scheme with 8 g3, 9 Bg2, etc.

7...h4 (Diagram 2)

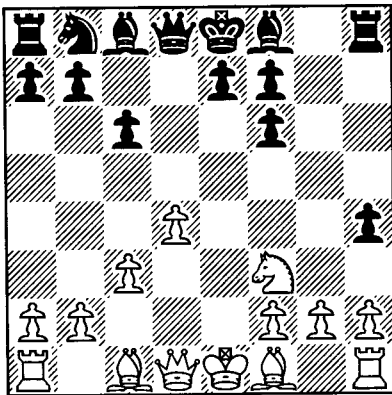


Diagram 2 (W)

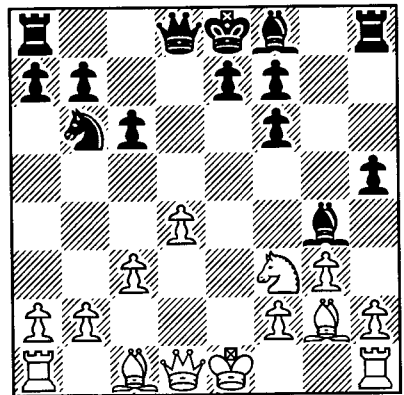


Diagram 3 (W)

Logically continuing Black's plan. A surprising number of alternatives have been

tested at this point, but one has to be unimpressed by the like of 7...Bg4 8 h3 Bxf3 9 Qxf3, ceding the bishop-pair for insufficient compensation.

The only alternative worth investigating is 7...Nd7!? 8 g3 (of course, White doesn't have to fianchetto, but in any case Black will go ...Nb6, develop his light-squared bishop to one of e6 or f5, and push ...h4; one game saw White postpone the fianchetto by just a move, but after 8 a4 a5 9 g3 Nb6 10 Bg2 Be6 11 0-0 Qd7 the players unhelpfully agreed an early draw in B.Khetsuriani-I.Khurtsilava, Nikea 2005) 8...Nb6 9 Bg2 Bg4 (**Diagram 3**), placing the bishop on a more active square than that which it reaches in the closely-related 6...Bf5 main lines.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This position can also come about via the move order 6...Nd7 7 Nf3 Nb6 8 g3 h5 9 Bg2 Bg4 – a sequence which we will consider further in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

At this point practice has seen:

a) 10 Qc2 Qd7 11 Nh4 0-0-0 12 a4 Qe6+! 13 Qe4 Qc4 14 a5?! Rd6! saw one Russian Grandmaster seizing the initiative in D.Driamin-M.Turov, Nizhnij Novgorod 1999.

b) The related 10 Qd3 Qd7 11 Nh4 was tried in E.Kakkanas-I.Khurtsilava, Kirykos 2005, again intending to drive the bishop back with h3. However, I can't explain why Black now rejected 11...e5!? (11...0-0-0 12 h3 Be6 and ...Bd5 is hardly a bad alternative either) 12 0-0 (12 h3? Be6 would only leave White's king in trouble, with h3 an issue as well as ...Bc4) 12...0-0-0 with strong pressure down the d-file.

c) 10 Qb3 Qd5!? (playing by analogy with our last chapter, but there was nothing wrong with 10...Qd7 11 0-0 Be6) 11 Nh4 Qd7 12 a4!? Be6! 13 Qc2 Bd5 14 a5 Bxg2 15 Nxc2 Nd5 16 a6 b6 17 Bd2 e6 18 Nh4 Be7 (**Diagram 4**) prepared ...f5 and gave another grandmaster sufficient counterplay in an unclear middlegame, L.Gorin-A.Kharitonov, Internet 2006.

d) Thus it makes sense for White to kick the bishop without delay, but 10 h3 Be6! (the correct retreat, whereas 10...Bf5 11 Nh4 Be6 12 0-0 Qd7 13 Kh2 Bd5 14 Re1 Bxg2 15 Nxc2 0-0-0 16 a4! saw White taking over the initiative in D.Petukhov-A.Muromtsev, Saratov 2008) 11 b3 (11 0-0 Qd7 12 Kh2 is an alternative, and after 12...0-0-0 13 a4 Bc4! 14 Re1 Qf5 Black should have enough light-square and central counterplay) 11...Bd5!? (Black plays in a very creative spirit, but there was nothing much wrong with the routine 11...Qd7 12 c4 0-0-0 followed by ...Bf5 and ...e5 if necessary) 12 Qe2 (12 0-0 and then 13 c4 would have been a more critical test) 12...h4! (**Diagram 5**) 13 g4 (wisely avoiding 13 Nxc4? Rxc4!, which works as White

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is yet to castle) 13...a5!? (the less ambitious 13...Qd6 14 Bb2 f5, meeting 15 c4 with 15...Qb4+ 16 Qd2 Qxd2+ 17 Kxd2 Be4, was a reasonable alternative) 14 Bb2 Qd6 gave Black counterplay right across the board in A.Karlovich-I.Khurtsilava, Athens 2004.

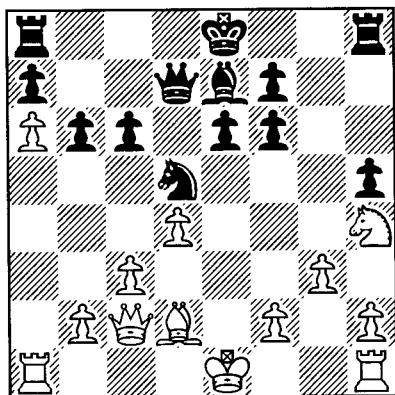


Diagram 4 (W)

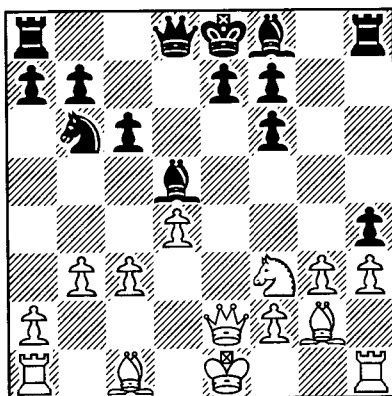


Diagram 5 (W)

8 Bf4

Naiditsch takes the e5-square under control, but it must be more critical to target f7 with 8 Bc4 Nd7 9 Qb3, as White did in P.Anisimov-D.Panchenko, Essentuki 2003. This position should be closely compared with the critical 7 Bc4 variation – see our next illustrative game. The solid defence is 9...e6 10 Bd2 Qc7 followed by ...Nb6 and a timely ...c5, but here I also wonder about 9...Rh7!? (**Diagram 6**), calmly covering f7 and so refusing to entomb the light-squared bishop. That said, with 10 h3 (unfortunately for White, 10 Bd3?! is well met by 10...Nc5! and 10 Nxh4? by 10...b5) 10...Nb6 11 Bd3 Be6 12 c4 Rh8 (or 12...Rg7 13 Kf1!) 13 a4! White manages to seize a definite pull.

Practice has also seen 8 h3, which lets the bishop out and after 8...Bf5 9 Bc4 (9 Qb3 Qb6 must be fine for Black) 9...e6 10 Bf4 Nd7 11 Bd3 Bxd3 12 Qxd3 Nb6 Black enjoys a comfortable position in which his cramping h-pawn is most certainly an asset, F.Sierra Canosa-N.Chadaev, Aviles 2004.

8...Nd7

There's nothing wrong with this, but Black might also consider 8...h3!? 9 g3 Bg4 10 Be2 Qd5 with decent counterplay. Moreover, to borrow a phrase from Raymond Keene, the h3-pawn will remain lodged like a fishbone in White's throat for many

moves to come. White might manage to avoid being mated on the kingside, but even in any endgame Black's well-advanced, clamping h-pawn may well cause him problems.

9 h3 Nb6 (Diagram 7)

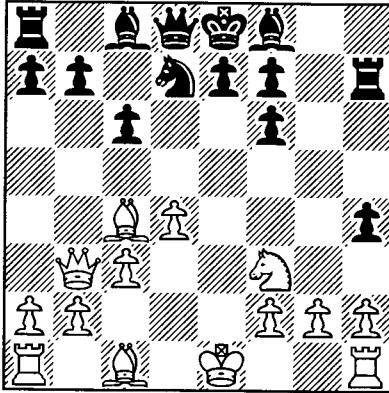


Diagram 6 (W)

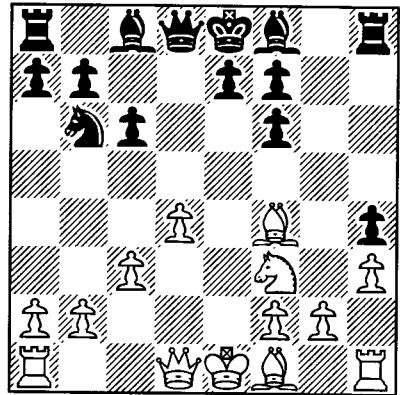


Diagram 7 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Naiditsch might have been rated over 2600 at the time of this game, but he has failed to react well to 6...h5. Already Black has quite a comfortable position, being ready to increase his light-square grip with 10...Be6 or even 10...Qd5.

10 c4

Battling for control of the a2-g8 diagonal and trying to keep Black's knight out of play. Moreover, I dare say that the young German star was keen to avoid a line like 10 Bd3 Be6 11 0-0 Qd7 followed by ...0-0-0 and ...Rg8 with an easy position for Black to handle, especially at a fast time control.

10...Bf5 11 Bd3

As we've seen before, White can often fight for the initiative with 11 Qb3!? Qd7 12 a4. Here I dare say that Naiditsch might have considered such a measure with more time on the clock, but still after 12...Qe6+! 13 Be2 Qe4 Black shouldn't have any problems.

11...Qd7 12 Be3

Necessary prophylaxis, but a sure sign that something has gone wrong for White.

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Instead after 12 Qc2? Bxd3 13 Qxd3 Qe6+ the c4-pawn would have dropped off, and no better would have been 12 O-O? on account of 12...Bxh3!, removing a vital part of the king's defensive shield, since White can hardly contemplate 13 gxh3 Qxh3 14 Re1 when 14...Qg4+ 15 Kf1 Qxf4 is but one strong continuation. Finally, do note that 12 Bxf5? Qxf5 would have left White unable to save both his bishop and c-pawn.

12...0-0-0 (Diagram 8)

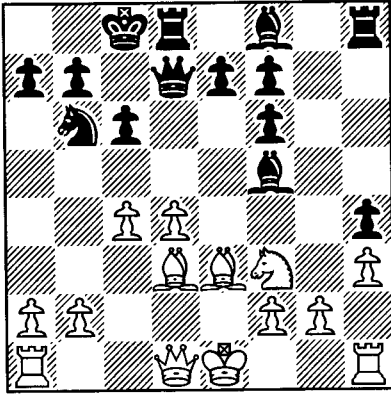


Diagram 8 (W)

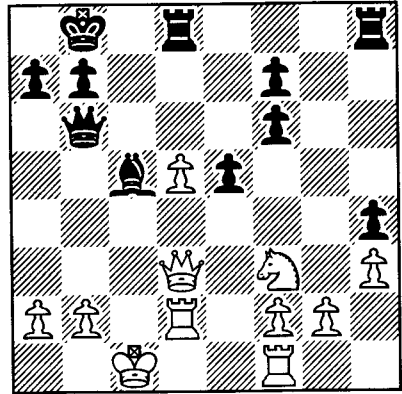


Diagram 9 (B)

Seirawan mobilizes his remaining queenside forces. It must have been tempting too to advance with 12...e5!?, although after 13 Bxf5 Qxf5 14 Qb3! (14 dxe5 Nxc4 15 exf6 Bb4+ 16 Kf1 Nxe3+ 17 fxe3 Qxf6 looks pleasant for Black with his clearly superior minor piece) 14...0-0-0 15 O-O-0 White should be able to restrict Black to nothing more than light pressure against g2.

13 Qc2?!

Losing time, thereby enabling ...e5 to come with greater force. White should have either retreated his bishop to e2 or gone 13 Bxf5 Qxf5 14 Qb3 when 14...e5 would transpose to our last note.

13...Bxd3 14 Qxd3 e5 15 0-0-0 Qe6!

Seirawan is quick to create threats with his growing initiative.

16 d5!?

A radical defensive idea, changing the structure and implementing a minor piece exchange, but by no means a bad one considering the fast time limit. Instead 16

Qc3 would have led to wholesale exchanges: 16...Nxc4 17 dxe5 Rxd1+ 18 Rxd1 Nxe3 19 fxe3 fxe5 20 Qxe5 Qxe5 21 Nxe5 Bc5 and the ending must be pleasantly better for Black, with his clamp against g2 and bishop-for-knight advantage.

White might also have avoided the central fork with 16 Qe4, but after 16...Nxc4 17 dxe5 Rd5! Black would have retained the initiative.

16...cxd5 17 Bxb6 Qxb6 18 cxd5

Naiditsch has emerged from the exchanges with a passed pawn and his king should be safe enough (on b1 if need be), but f2 is weak and one can certainly see that d5-passer being surrounded and lost.

18...Kb8 19 Rhf1 Bc5 20 Rd2 (Diagram 9) 20...Bd4?!

Seirawan plays to surround the d-pawn, but there were two more promising avenues:

a) 20...Rhe8! would have overloaded the white forces and after 21 Re2 (trying to hold up ...e4; 21 Nxh4? does nab a pawn, but 21...e4 22 Qe2 e3 sees Black regaining it with a large advantage) 21...Rd6 22 Nxh4 Red8 23 Rc2 Rxd5 24 Qb3 Qe6 Black would have maintained a strong initiative thanks to his safer king and superior coordination.

b) Black didn't even have to give up his h-pawn to remain somewhat on top: 20...Rdg8!? would have left White losing a pawn and after 21 Kb1! (21 Qe2?! Rxd5 22 Nxe5 tries for a tactical solution, but 22...Qc7 23 Rc2 Qxe5! 24 Qxe5+ fxe5 25 Rxc5 Rh2 26 Rc3 Rd8 leaves one of the vulnerable white pawns set to drop) 21...Rxd5 22 d6 Rd8! (22...Rxf2 23 Rxf2 Bxf2 24 Qf5 doesn't seem so clear with Delroy rampant) 23 Nxh4 Rxd6 24 Qxd6+ Bxd6 25 Nxd6 Bb4 26 Rc2 Qe6 Black's queen, allied to his mobile central majority, has the upper hand over the white rooks.

21 Qb3?

Giving Black a second chance, but after such a creative opening I dare say that both players were already low on time. Correct was the straightforward 21 Nxd4! Rxd5 22 Qe4 Rxd4 23 Rxd4 when 23...Qxd4 24 Qxd4 exd4 25 Kd2 Rg8 26 Rg1 Rg5 27 Kd3 would have enabled White to hold the rook ending with ease. Thus Black would probably have preferred 23...exd4, but after 24 Kb1 and 25 Rd1 White should be able to draw in any case; Black's pawns are just too weak.

21...Qxb3 22 axb3 Rxd5?

Seirawan hurries to win the weak pawn, but throws away all his advantage in the process. Black should have preferred 22...Bb6!, avoiding exchanges and retaining all the advantages of his position: for example, 23 Kb1 e4 24 Nh2 f5 and with his

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centre pawns rolling, Black would have enjoyed a large advantage; or 23 Rdd1, enabling 23...e4 to be met by 24 Nd2, but after the calm 23...Kc7! White lacks a good move with ...Kd6 and ...Rdg8 on their way.

23 Rfd1 Rb5

Easy to criticize, but 23...Rhd8 24 Kb1! followed by Nxf4 and Nf5 would have given White decent counterplay, and 23...Rg8 24 Nxd4 exd4 25 Rxd4 Rxd4 26 Rxd4 Rxd4 27 Rxh4 Rxf2 28 Rh8+ Kc7 29 Rh7 would have forced wholesale exchanges with a dead draw.

24 Nxd4 exd4 (Diagram 10) ½-½

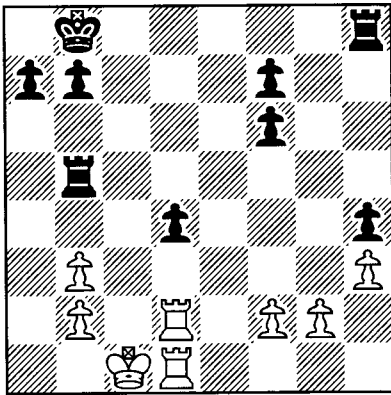


Diagram 10 (W)

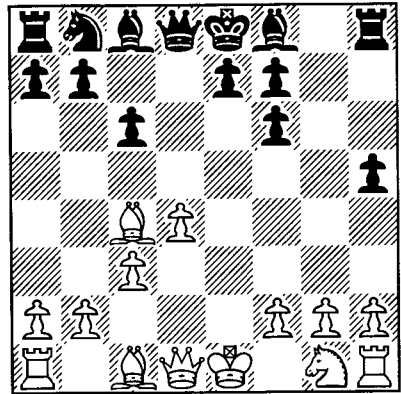


Diagram 11 (B)

There's nothing left to play for, both sides being ready to munch pawns and liquidate the kingside, and 25 Rxd4 Rg5 26 Rd8+ Rxd8 27 Rxd8+ Kc7 28 Rf8 Rg7 can hardly qualify as a winning try for Black.

That all seemed quite pleasant for Black, so we should now turn our attention to the critical test of the early h-pawn advance, 7 Bc4.

□ H.Tiemann ■ J.Mannermaa

World Correspondence Championship 2002

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 h5 7 Bc4 (Diagram 11)

Logically taking aim at f7.



BEWARE! As in so many openings, Black must beware an early disaster occurring with a double attack on b7 and f7, as would happen after 7...Bf5? 8 Qb3.

7...Nd7

Best. Black prepares to block in his light-squared bishop for the time being, but matters are far from being all doom and gloom after this. He has also investigated a number of alternatives at this point, but has unsurprisingly not scored well with such approaches as 7...Qc7 8 Be3 (the more common 8 Ne2 also gives White a very pleasant edge) 8...Bf5, after which 9 Nf3 h4 10 Qe2 e6 11 O-O-O Bd6 12 g3! hxg3 13 hxg3 Rg8 14 Nh4 saw White opening the kingside to his advantage in R.Lau-K.Goehring, German League 1984.

8 Qb3!

The consistent follow-up. Just like 7 h4, which we will cover in Line A2 below, 8 h4 fails to fully convince and 8...Nb6 9 Be2 Rg8! gave Black good counterplay with g2 no less weak than h5 in V.Pesotsky-An.Timofeev, Peterhof 2009.

However, a critical alternative is 8 Ne2, as endorsed by Jeremy Silman in *The Dynamic Caro-Kann* (Summit Publishing, 1989), a work which remains the source for the Bronstein-Larsen aficionado. Silman went so far as to consider 6...h5 dubious, but after 8...Nb6 matters aren't too clear in my view:

a) White has usually kept his bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal with 9 Bb3 (**Diagram 12**), leading to a further divide:

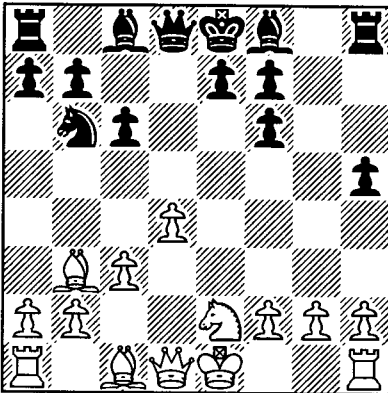


Diagram 12 (B)

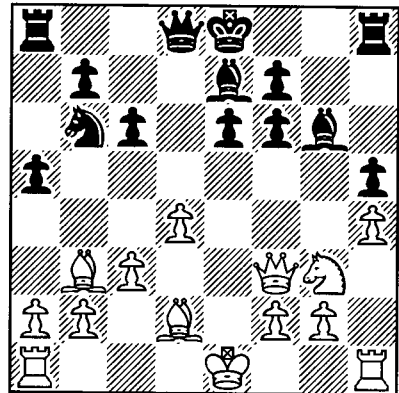


Diagram 13 (W)

a1) One has to agree with Silman that 9...Bg4 10 h3 Bxe2 11 Qxe2 e6 12 Be3 Qc7 13

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0-0-0 gave White a pleasant pull with his bishop-pair in T.Wedberg-J.Eising, Amsterdam 1984, but Black needn't be so compliant.

a2) The older game L.Barden-E.Bhend, Amsterdam Olympiad 1954, saw Black prefer 9...Bf5 and after 10 Ng3 (White may do better with 10 0-0 h4 11 Nf4, but this hardly seems fatal for Black after 11...Qd7: 12 d5 fails to blow the second player out of the water on account of 12...h3 13 g3 0-0-0, and 12 h3 0-0-0 13 Qe2 Nd5 should give Black decent-enough kingside counterplay) 10...Bg6 11 h4 e6 (11...Nd5!? and ...Qc7 was also possible) 12 Qf3 Be7 13 Bd2 a5! (**Diagram 13**) Black's active flank play gave him decent counterplay. Indeed, I can't resist showing the remaining moves of this old masterpiece. Not only does Black handle the opening in a most dynamic manner, but he also goes on to demonstrate classic Caro-Kann light-square play: 14 a3 (14 a4 might have been better and roughly equal after 14...Qc7 15 Ne4 Bxe4 16 Qxe4 Nd5) 14...a4 15 Ba2 Nc8! 16 Ne2 Qb6 17 Bc1?! (too passive; he had to take his chances after 17 0-0-0) 17...Nd6 18 Nf4 Be4 19 Qe2 Qa5 20 Bd2 Qb5! 21 Qxb5 cxb5! (increasing the queenside clamp and should the light-square bishops come off, Black will invade on c4) 22 f3 Bf5 23 Kf2 Kd7 24 Rae1 Rag8 25 Bc1 Nc4 26 Re2 Bd6 27 Rd1 Rd8 (White has defended well, but now, as is so often the case when one lacks an active plan, begins to crack) 28 Rg1 Kc6! 29 Ke1?! Rdg8 30 Kf2?! e5! (**Diagram 14**)

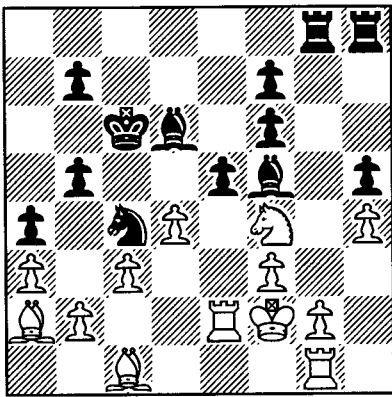


Diagram 14 (W)

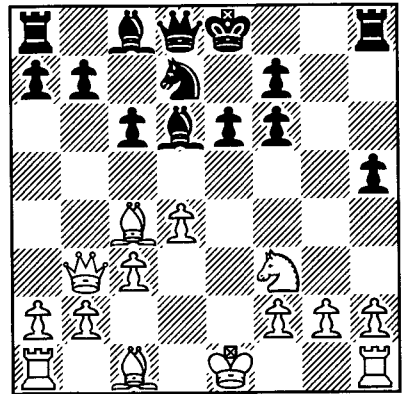


Diagram 15 (W)

31 Bxc4 bxc4 32 Nxb5? Rxb5 33 g4 Rxb4 0-1.

a3) I'm slightly less keen on beginning with 9...h4, though, since 10 Qd3! takes control and favours White: for example, 10...Qd7 (10...h3 11 g3 Bg4 12 f3 frustrates

Black's light-squared bishop) 11 Nf4 Bh6?! 12 Ng6! was a rather powerful blow in N.Rossolimo-D.Marovic, Malaga 1968; the main point being that 12...Bxc1 13 Nxh8 Bxb2 14 0-0! Bxa1 15 Qh7 sees White regaining his material with a dangerous on-going attack.

b) Silman's alternative suggestion 9 Bd3 was later tested in A.Barnsley-G.Yakobson, correspondence 1996, but after 9...h4! 10 0-0 h3 11 g3 e5 the position was no more than rather unclear. The game actually came to an early halt after 12 Qc2 Be6 (12...Qd5!? 13 Be4 Bf5 14 f3 Bxe4 15 fxe4 Qe6 looks like a playable alternative) 13 f4!? exd4 14 Nxd4 Bc5, presumably in view of the long forcing line 15 Re1 Bxd4+ 16 cxd4 Qxd4+ 17 Be3 Qd7 18 f5 0-0-0 19 fxe6 Qxd3 20 Qxd3 Rxd3 21 exf7 Rf8 22 Bxb6 axb6 23 Re8+ Rd8 with a drawn ending.

Returning to the critical 8 Qb3:

8...e6

Those who've studied the notes to Naiditsch-Seirawan might wonder about 8...Rh7?! here, but White's knight can develop to a better square than f3 and 9 Ne2! Nb6 10 Bd3 Rh8 11 0-0 Be6 12 c4 Qd7 13 a4! saw Black coming under heavy pressure in L.Coelho-J.Pelikian, Brasilia 2003.

9 Nf3

White's invariable choice, but another game from South America saw him prefer 9 Bf4 Nb6 10 Bd3 and after 10...Qd5 (even better is the somewhat more active 10...e5! 11 Be3 Rg8, pressuring g2 and preparing to develop actively with ...Be6 and ...Nd5) 11 Nf3 Qxb3 12 axb3 Nd5 13 Bd2 Bd6 14 g3 b6 15 b4 Bb7 Black's solid and sensible approach left him close to equality in J.Pierrot-M.Tempone, Mar del Plata 2001.

9...Bd6 (Diagram 15)

Black has more often preferred the move order 9...Nb6, but after 10 Be2 Bd6 White doesn't have to castle and transpose to the notes to his 10th move below. Indeed, he might well select 11 c4, keeping open the option of going long. Thus in F.Ljubicic-D.Colovic, Makarska 1994, Black preferred 10...Qc7, but after 11 0-0 Bd7 12 a4 Nd5 White might have seized the upper hand with the vigorous 13 c4!, since 13...Nf4?! 14 Bxf4 Qxf4 15 Qxb7 Rb8 16 Qxa7 Rxb2 17 Rfe1 wouldn't have given Black enough for the pawn.

10 0-0 Nb6 11 Bd3

Both players were rated 2490 in this high-level correspondence game and I'm certain that Tiemann also scrutinized 11 Be2!?, after which 11...Qc7 (11...Nd5 is the alternative, but White must have an edge after 12 g3 whether Black tries the solid

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12...Qb6 or goes in for 12...Rg8 13 Kh1) 12 c4 c5 gives White some additional possibilities, although Black may still be able to get away with 13 Be3 cxd4!? 14 Bxd4 e5.

11...Qc7

Unfortunately for Black, neither is 11...Nd5 12 c4! Nf4 13 Bxf4 Bxf4 14 Rfe1, lining up d4-d5, sufficient for equality.



ROLL THE DICE! At least Mannermaa's choice forces White to be quite precise, but it does seem that Black is unable to equalize after 7 Bc4 Nd7 8 Qb3. Many white players have not responded anywhere near so critically as Tiemann when stunned by 6...h5, but those not prepared to risk this as Black should give serious consideration to the safer 6...Nd7 move order.

12 c4!

Forcing a crisis and one which should be slightly in White's favour thanks to his superior development.

12...c5 13 Be3 (Diagram 16)

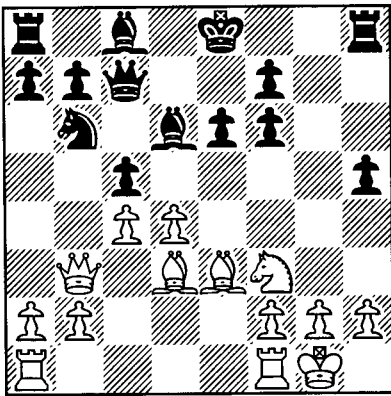


Diagram 16 (B)

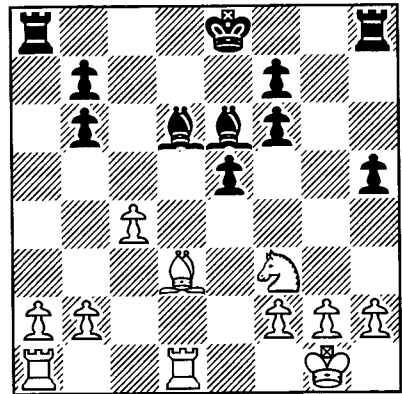


Diagram 17 (W)

13...cxd4

Black might like to maintain the tension, but 13...Bd7 14 a4! is a bit awkward too.

14 Bxd4?!

Tiemann must have underestimated Black's next. Instead White had to boldly sacrifice a pawn to maintain the upper hand: 14 Nxd4! Bxh2+ (14...Bd7 15 Nb5 Bxb5 16 Qxb5+ Ke7 is the safe option, but rather pleasant for White with his bishops) 15 Kh1 Be5 (or 15...Bd7 16 Nb5 Bxb5 17 Qxb5+ Nd7 18 Be4! with the initiative) 16 Nb5 Qc6 (16...Qe7 runs into 17 Nxa7 Rxa7 18 Qxb6) 17 f4 Rg8 18 Rf3 Bb8 and Black's blocked up queenside grants White superb play for his pawn.

14...e5! 15 Bxb6

White increases his structural advantage with this trade, but Black is able to hold on thanks to his strong dark-squared bishop. Instead 15 Be3 Be6 would have given Black good counterplay, but Tiemann must have wanted to blow Black away with 15 c5!?. However, following 15...Bxc5 16 Rac1 (or 16 Qb5+ Nd7 17 Bxc5 Qxc5 18 Qa4 Qe7 and 19...Kf8, restricting White to no more than enough play for the pawn) 16...exd4 17 Qb5+ Nd7 18 Rfe1+ Kf8 19 b4 while White will regain his piece, the position can hardly be described as anything but unclear after 19...b6 20 bxc5 Nxc5.

15...Qxb6 16 Qxb6 axb6 17 Rfd1 Be6 (Diagram 17)

Black's structure might be a mess, but he has the two bishops and a handy central majority. Moreover, while all the b- and f-pawns are doubled, they have opened the a- and g-files for counterplay; factors which the Finn makes good use of.

18 Be4 0-0-0 19 Nh4 Bc5 20 Nf5 Kc7 21 a3

Trying to take control of the d4-square, but Black is in time to counter. Indeed, the only real way in which Black might lose this ending would be to exchange all the rooks, trade bishop for knight on f5 and then discover that the opposite-coloured bishop ending isn't such an easy draw with White able to create a dangerous outside passed pawn.

21...Rhg8! 22 b4

With 22...Rg5 on its way there was nothing better, but now exchanges follow as the game begins to fizzle out.

22...Rxd1+ 23 Rxd1 Rg4 24 Bf3 Bxf5 25 bxc5 Rxc4 26 cxb6+ Kxb6 27 Bxh5 Bg6 28 Bf3 (Diagram 18)

Tiemann might have hoped to obtain a few chances with his passed h-pawn, but by continuing to defend actively Mannermaa now held without any difficulty:

28...Kc7 29 Be2 Ra4 30 Rc1+ Kd6 31 Rc3 f5! 32 g3 f4 33 h4 fxg3 34 fxg3 f5 35 h5 Bf7 36 h6 Ra8 37 g4 fxg4 38 Bxg4 Rh8 39 Rh3 Bg6 40 Kf2 ½-½

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 (Diagram 19)

At this point Black must decide how bold he is feeling:

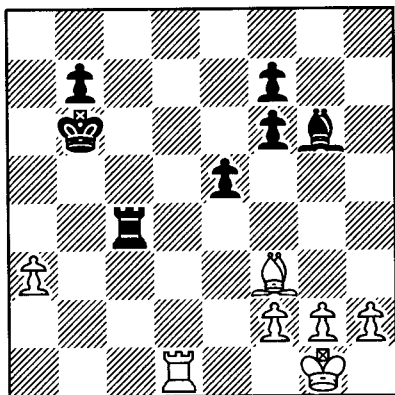


Diagram 18 (B)

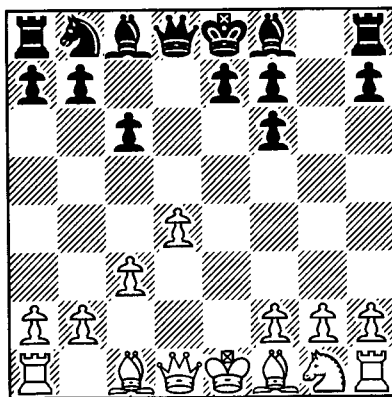


Diagram 19 (B)

A: 6...h5!?

B: 6...Nd7

Of course, the latter can hardly be described as a dull choice. Firstly, this is the Bronstein-Larsen Variation and, secondly, a rapid h-pawn advance remains high on the agenda in any case.

A) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 h5!?

Having already examined natural development with 7 Nf3 in Naiditsch-Seirawan and the critical 7 Bc4 in Tiemann-Mannermaa, we turn our attention to White's less-common alternatives, focussing chiefly on:

A1: 7 Ne2

A2: 7 h4

White has also begun by developing one of his bishops, but such an approach should not be too critical:

a) 7 Bf4 might be met by 7...h4, but then White doesn't have to transpose to Naiditsch-Seirawan and might again prefer 8 Bc4. Thus 7...Bf5 8 Nf3 h4 has been a more common reaction in the limited existing practice, transposing to a position which Seirawan could have had if he had preferred 8...Bf5 to 8...Nd7. The game M.Womacka-R.Ovetchkin, online blitz 2006, continued 9 Qb3 Qb6 10 Be2 Nd7 11 0-0 e6 12 Rfe1 Qxb3 13 axb3 a6 14 b4 Rc8 15 Nd2 Nb6 16 Nb3 Nd5 17 Bd2 and while Black was very solid, White did enjoy a small edge.

Thus I would prefer to meet 7 Bf4 in the style of our last chapter with 7...Qd5!? (**Diagram 20**), and after 8 Qf3 (more critical must be 8 Nf3, although then Black has a few options including 8...Bg4 9 Be2 Nd7) 8...Bg4 9 Qxd5 cxd5 10 Bb5+ Bd7 11 Bxd7+ Kxd7! 12 Nf3 Nc6 Black had no problems whatsoever with his minority attack set to be launched in A.Goetz-H.Hepting, Germany 1995. Here I also wonder about 7...Qb6!? 8 Qd2 Bf5 followed by ...h4, ...Nd7 (or maybe even ...Na6-c7), and ...0-0-0 with a decent-enough set-up.

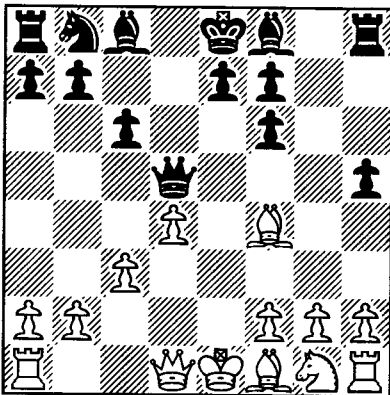


Diagram 20 (W)

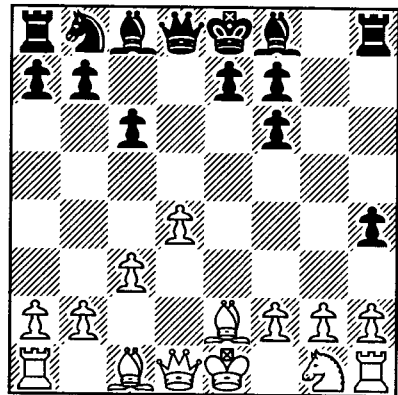


Diagram 21 (W)

b) 7 Be3 is rare, but was the recent choice of a 2700-player. Now:

b1) 7...Bf5 8 Nf3 h4 9 Qb3 Qb6 is similar to Womacka-Ovetchkin, except that usefully Black can always break the tension by retreating his queen to c7. Moreover, after 10 0-0-0 e6 11 Bd3 (M.Makropoulou-T.Lematschko, Manila Women's Olympiad 1992) 11...Bxd3 12 Rxd3 Nd7 he most certainly hasn't any problems.

b2) In the high-level encounter, E.Alekseev-N.Short, Havana 2010, Black preferred

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the immediate 7...h4!? and after 8 Qb3 Nd7 9 0-0-0 Qb6! 10 Qc2 Qa5 11 Kb1 Nb6 12 Bd3 Nd5 the position was about equal, as Short was able to meet 13 Bd2 with 13...Bh6. More critical was surely 9 d5!? when Gawain Jones, in his excellent notes for the ChessPublishing website, analyses the line 9...a5!? 10 0-0-0 a4 11 Qc2 Qc7 12 dxc6 bxc6 13 Nf3 Bh6 (logical enough, but Black might delay this with 13...Nb6!?) 14 Bxh6 Rxh6 whereupon he observes that 'perhaps White is better, but it's likely that the stronger player will triumph in such an unbalanced position' and I have to agree.

c) 7 Be2 merely encourages Black to make an advance he is happy to make, but some reasonably strong players have been happy to debate the position after 7...h4 (**Diagram 21**):

c1) 8 h3 Be6!? (preventing Qb3, although there's nothing much wrong with 8...Bf5) 9 Nf3 Nd7 10 Bd2 Qc7 11 c4 0-0-0 12 Qa4 Kb8 gave Black good counterplay with both ...Bh6 and ...Nb6 on their way in P.Johansen-A.Borisenko, Arta 2004.

c2) 8 Bf3 Be6!? (here especially 8...Bf5 is a less-creative but very sensible approach, and after 9 Ne2 e6 10 0-0 Bd6 11 Bf4 Bxf4 12 Nxf4 Black should just develop with 12...Nd7, whereas 12...Qc7?! 13 Nh5! was a bit awkward in M.Van Delft-A.Bakin, Moscow 2006) 9 Ne2 Bd5 10 Nf4 Bxf3 11 Qxf3 e6 12 0-0 Nd7 13 Re1 Qa5 14 Be3 0-0 15 c4 Qf5 (**Diagram 22**)

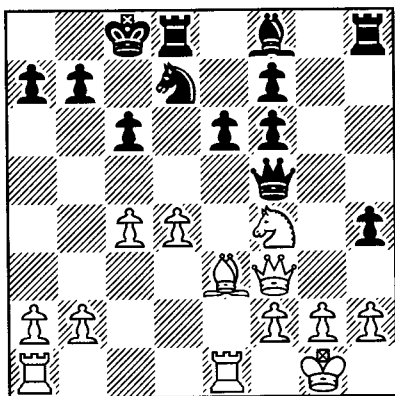


Diagram 22 (W)

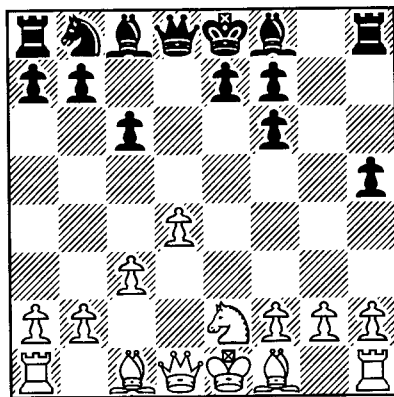


Diagram 23 (B)

was comfortable for Black in F.Cuijpers-D.Campora, Dieren 1985, but White might have posed more problems with an advance of the b-pawn.

c3) Perhaps straightforward development with 8 Bf4 is the best try and 8...Bf5 (a

good alternative is 8...Nd7!? à la Seirawan) 9 Nf3 e6 (9...Nd7! improves, enabling 10 Qb3 Qb6 11 Nd2 to be met by 11...e5) 10 Qb3 Qb6 11 Nd2 c5? 12 Nc4 Qxb3 13 axb3 was most certainly too ambitious from Black in S.Janovsky-Mi.Tseitlin, Hastings 1991/92.

d) 7 Bd3 prevents ...Bf5, but after 7...h4! and an early ...Rg8 or ...h3 Black will have good counterplay: for example, 8 Bf4 Nd7 (I would also be tempted by 8...Qd5!? 9 Qf3 Be6) 9 f3 (9 Nf3 is arguably more natural, but still fine for Black after 9...h3 10 g3 Nb6 11 0-0 Bg4) 9...Nb6 10 Ne2 Nd5 and White's lead in development didn't amount to very much at all in K.Valko-J.Nesterov, Hungarian League 2007.

A1) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 h5 7 Ne2 (Diagram 23)

Rather committal, especially with the knight unlikely to want to go to g3.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This position has been reached more often via a 6 Ne2 h5 7 c3 move order, although White's 7th move in that sequence is still pretty rare and hardly considered critical.

7...h4

This seems sensible and looks best, although Black has also employed 7...Bf5!?, tempting the knight to g3:

a) 8 h4 Nd7 9 Ng3 Bg4 10 Be2 Bxe2 11 Qxe2 Qa5 12 0-0 0-0-0 13 Be3 e6 14 b4 Qc7 15 a4 Bd6! gives Black sufficient counterplay in a rather sharp situation, K.Mahdi-J.Plachetka, Austrian League 1990. Note that 16 Nxh5? is well met by 16...Rh7 17 b5 Rdh8 18 g4 Rg8 19 Kh1 f5 20 f3 Nf6! with a huge attack.

b) 8 Bf4 Nd7 9 Ng3 Bg6 10 Bd3 Qa5 also gave Black decent counterplay with ...e5 on the agenda in E.Liebert-W.Pommerel Brouwer, correspondence 1987.

c) The critical test must be 8 Ng3 when the solid choice is 8...Bg4 9 Qb3 Qb6, but this is probably insufficient to equalize after 10 Bc4!, as 10...e6? 11 h3 rather embarrasses the bishop.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: Thus Black should prefer 8...Bg6!? and after the critical continuation 9 h4 Nd7 10 Be2 Qa5 (Diagram 24) we've reached a key pawn sacrifice variation, which more normally arises from 6...Bf5 7 Ne2 Nd7 8 Ng3 Bg6 9 h4 h5 10 Be2 Qa5.

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This must really fall outside our coverage here I'm afraid, but may well already be in many Bronstein-Larsen fans' repertoires.

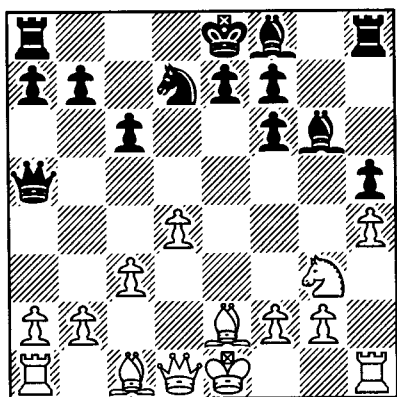


Diagram 24 (W)

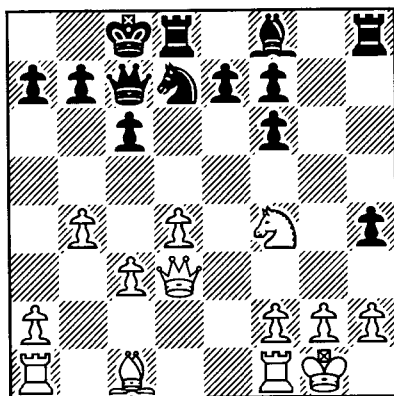


Diagram 25 (W)

8 Qc2

White plays to restrict Black's light-squared bishop, but practice has also seen:

a) 8 h3 eliminates any notion of ...h3 once and for all, but after 8...Bf5 9 Nf4?! (9 Qb3 Qb6 10 Nf4 looks like a better way of sorting out the kingside situation) 9...e5 10 Nd3 exd4 11 cxd4 Qxd4 12 Be2?! Nd7 13 Be3 Qe4! Black had the extra pawn and much of the compensation in Y.Pavlovski-I.Berdichevski, Internet 2006.

b) 8 Qb3 is a little early and doesn't need to be met by 8...Qb6. Instead 8...Nd7! 9 Bd2 Nb6 10 0-0-0 Be6 saw Black seizing the initiative in C.Dullaert-W.Pommerel Brouwer, correspondence 1993.

c) 8 Bf4 Nd7 (once again I'm quite a fan of this Seirawanesque approach, although the 8...Bg4 9 Qd2 Qd5 of K.Pulik-W.Szumilo, Rabka 2002, is a decent alternative) 9 Qd3 Nb6 10 0-0-0? Qd5 saw White neglecting Black's light-square play at his peril in P.Floegel-W.Pommerel Brouwer, correspondence 1990, and he didn't last long after 11 b3 Bf5 12 Qe3 e6.

8...Qa5

Black insists on developing his bishop to f5, although I'm not too sure why he has thus far avoided both 8...Nd7 and especially 8...h3!?, with the idea of 9 g3 Qd5.

9 Nf4 Bf5 10 Bd3

More critical might be 10 Qb3, as in P.Timagin-S.Ershova, St Petersburg 2000, although after 10...Qc7 11 Be2 Bh6! Black still had sufficient counterplay.

10...Bxd3 11 Qxd3 Nd7 12 0-0 0-0-0 13 b4 Qc7 (Diagram 25)

This typically unbalanced position was reached in J.Pogats-L.Tipary, Hungarian Championship, Budapest 1951, which continued 14 b5 Bh6 15 Qf3 Bxf4 16 Bxf4 e5 17 bxc6 Qxc6 with chances for both sides, and Black might have done even better with 14...e5!?

A2) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 h5 7 h4

Holding Black up on the h-file for good and possibly still dreaming of a kingside fianchetto, but the resulting weakening of g4 will give Black decent counterplay.

7...Bg4

Very natural, although once again those happy to transpose to the pawn sacrifice variation might prefer 7...Bf5 8 Ne2 Nd7 9 Ng3 Bg6.



ROLL THE DICE! We should also take note of the surprising 7...Qd5!?, taking play into the 6...Qd5 variation, but with both h-pawns advanced.

Unfortunately this appears to slightly play into White's hands since he can target h5, and after 8 Be3 e5 (8...Rg8 would be consistent with Line B of our last chapter, but after 9 Ne2 there's nothing much better than 9...e5 when 10 dxe5 fxe5 11 Qxd5 cxd5 12 Ng3 Bg4 13 Be2 will collect the h-pawn in any case) 9 Nf3 Bg4 10 Be2 Nd7 (**Diagram 26**) White has 11 dxe5!? (11 Qb3 Qxb3 12 axb3 a6 13 b4 Rg8 14 g3 0-0-0 gave the Romanian no.1 enough counterplay in J.Jackova-L.Nisipeanu, Bucharest 2008) 11...Qxd1+ (11...fxe5 12 Qxd5 cxd5 13 Rd1 Be6 14 Ng5 begins to exert some pressure) 12 Rxd1 fxe5 13 Ng5 with an edge, as pointed out by Gawain Jones on ChessPublishing.com.

8 Qb3

An important alternative is 8 Be2 when if Black doesn't want to debate the pawn sacrifice 8...Bxe2 9 Nxe2 (9 Qxe2 Qd5 10 Nf3 Rg8 11 c4 Qf5 seems fine for Black, after which Silman points out the thematic undermining thrust 12 g3 e6 13 Bd2 Nd7 14 0-0-0 b5!) 9...Nd7 10 Nf4 (White doesn't have to go after the pawn without delay, but 10 Bf4 e6 11 Bg3 f5 12 Kf1 Nf6 13 Be5 Bd6 was okay for Black in C.Horvath-Mi.Tseitlin, Kecskemet 1985) 10...Qa5, he might consider 9...Qd5!?, which led to rough equality after 10 Nf4 Qe4+ 11 Qe2 Qxe2+ 12 Nxe2 Nd7 13 Be3 Bh6 14 Bxh6 Rxh6 in J.Scholze-A.Serbinenko, correspondence 1989; the ...e5 break compensating for the weakness of h5.

Here too 8...Rg8!? (**Diagram 27**) very much has the right to exist, and I'm surprised

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that this hasn't been seen more. Certainly 9 Bf4 Qd5 10 Nf3 Nd7 11 Qb3 Nb6 was fine for Black in R.Kastner-G.Yakobson, correspondence 1990.

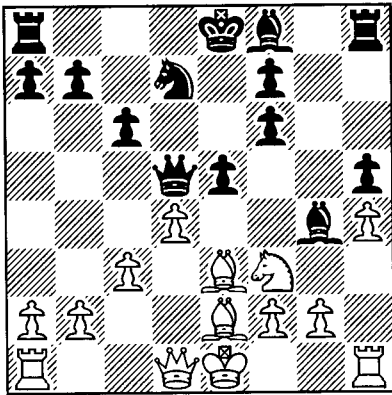


Diagram 26 (W)

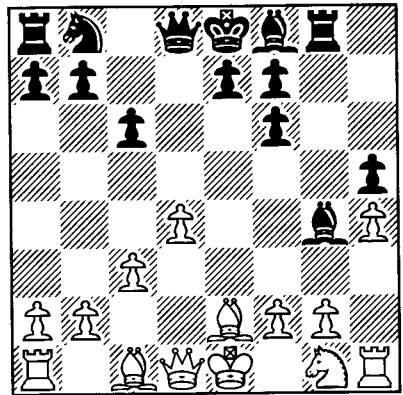


Diagram 27 (W)



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: Again White might also play 8 Ne2, reaching a position which comes about too from a 6 Ne2 h5 7 h4 Bg4 8 c3 move order.

No lesser game than D.Yanofsky-B.Larsen, Dallas 1957, continued 8...Nd7 9 Qb3 (more recently White has preferred 9 Qc2 in a couple of games, but here I can't see too much wrong with 9...e5!? 10 Be3 Qc7) 9...Nb6 10 Bf4 Qd7 11 0-0-0 Be6! 12 Qc2 a5 13 Ng3 Qd5 with promising queenside play for Black.

8...Qc7!?

The adventurous choice in keeping with our *Dangerous Weapons* ethos, but some might prefer the more solid 8...Qb6 9 Bc4 e6, after which 10 Bf4 Nd7 11 Ne2 0-0-0 12 f3 Bf5 13 Kf2 Bg6 was roughly even in E.Schmittziel-M.Tseitlin, Budapest 1990.

9 g3

9 Bc4 e6 10 Ne2 had been seen in H.Suradiradja-K.Shirazi, Wellington 1978, and now Black should secure his bishop's retreat while preventing Bf4 with 10...Bd6!.

9...Nd7 10 Bc4 0-0-0! (Diagram 28)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! When White meets 6...h5 in quite a slow vein, it's impressive just how often Black is easily able to gain an early initiative.

Here White is already in trouble whether or not he takes on f7, and after 11 Bxf7 Qd6 (11...e6!? 12 Bg6 Bd6 is also pretty tempting) 12 Be3 Bh6 13 Bxh6 Rxh6 14 Bc4 e5 Black had more than enough for the pawn in G.Carlsson-G.Yakobson, correspondence 1996.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Nd7 (Diagram 29)



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This is a sneaky move order, bypassing any Bc4 problems and hoping to transpose after 7 Nf3 Nb6 8 g3 h5!? to a position which we considered in the notes to Black's 7th move in Naiditsch-Seirawan.

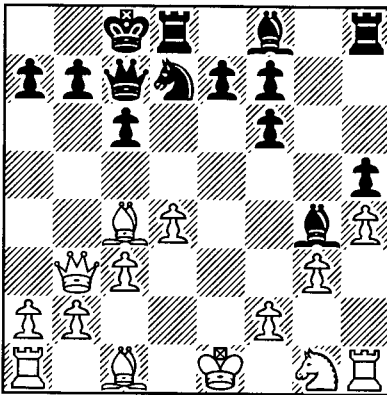


Diagram 28 (W)

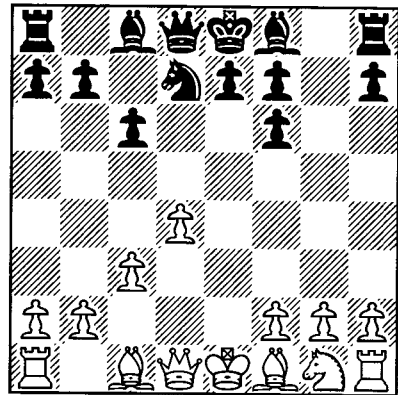


Diagram 29 (W)

At this point we will focus our attention on:

B1: 7 Nf3

B2: 7 Bd3

Again, though, White has also tried a number of lesser options when surprised by Black's rejection of 6...Bf5:

a) 7 Bc4 merely loses a tempo and after 7...Nb6 8 Bd3 (or 8 Bb3 h5 9 Ne2 h4!? 10 Qd3 e5 11 Qf3?! Qe7 12 dxe5 fxe5 13 0-0 Rg8 which gave Black decent attacking prospects in Y.Piskunov-M.Turov, Krasnodar 2005) 8...Qd5 9 Qf3 Be6 10 Be4 Qd7 11 Ne2 0-0-0 12 h3 Bd5 Black had no problems whatsoever in Y.Dembo-E.Danielian, Gothenburg 2005.

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b) 7 Ne2 Nb6 (by analogy with Line A1, 7...h5!? 8 Nf4 h4 also makes a fair degree of sense) 8 Ng3 Qd5! 9 Qh5 Qxh5 10 Nxh5 Bf5 11 Bd2 0-0-0 12 Be2 Rg8 (**Diagram 30**) is rather unimpressive for White, I.Madl-S.Lalic, Pula 1994.

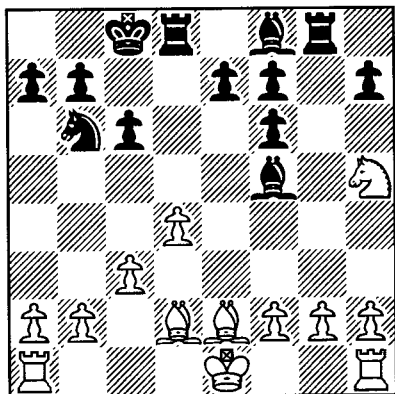


Diagram 30 (W)

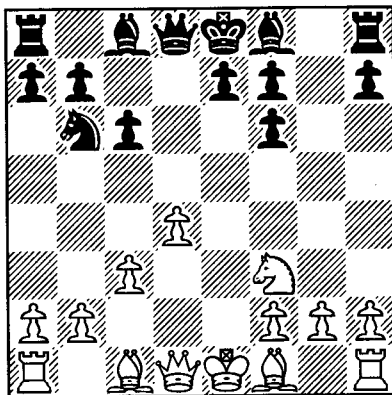


Diagram 31 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Just because the queen didn't go to d5 on move 6 doesn't mean that Black should forget all about that option. Indeed, should either a2 or g2 be a little sensitive early on then ...Qd5 may well be the best approach.

c) 7 Qh5 is a rather radical attempt to cross Black's plans, but after 7...Nb6 8 Bd3 Be6 9 Ne2 (K.Skaperdas-K.Stoumbos, Athens 2006) 9...Bc4!? 10 Bxc4 Nxc4 11 0-0 Qd5 Black again seems fine.

d) 7 Be3 is rare and a little mysterious in this particular position, and after 7...Nb6 8 Bd3 Qd5! 9 Qf3 Qxf3 10 Nxf3 Bg4 11 Nh4 e6 12 f3 Bh5 13 Ke2 Nd5 14 Bd2 0-0-0 15 Rad1 Bg6 16 Nxf6 hxf6 Black had equalized with straightforward play in L.Ftacnik-A.Jakubiec, Czech League 2003.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: It's also worth noting that White has opted to fianchetto without delay on occasion, but after 7 g3 Nb6 8 Bg2 h5 9 Nf3 (9 h4 Bg4 10 Nf3 Qd5 must be fine too for the second player; ...Bf5-e4 and ...f5 being one plan) 9...Bg4 Black has once again achieved his desired transposition.

B1) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Nd7 7 Nf3 Nb6 (Diagram 31) 8 g3

White's usual choice, but on occasion he has been known to abandon the consistent plan of a kingside fianchetto:

a) 8 Bd3 Bg4 (both 8...Qd5 and 8...Rg8!? deserve serious consideration too) 9 Qe2 (Black could also have no complaints after 9 h3 Bh5 10 g4?! Bg6 with ...Qd7, ...0-0-0 and ...h5 on its way in P.Ardovsky-M.Turov, online blitz 2005) 9...Qd7 (once again I might well prefer 9...Qd5!?, and if 10 Be4 then 10...Qh5 11 h3 f5) 10 0-0 0-0-0 11 Re1 e6 12 a4 Nd5 13 a5 Bd6 14 a6 b6 15 Be4 Rhg8 led to a typically unbalanced opposite-side castling situation in P.Le Bled-R.Martin Molinero, correspondence 2002.

b) 8 Be2 Bf5 (dare I say that once again 8...Qd5!?, intending 9 0-0 Rg8, is very much an option?) 9 0-0 Qc7 10 Nh4 Bg6 11 f4!? targeted the g6-bishop in T.Van Bommel-K.Lundberg, correspondence 2002, and now keeping it in play with 11...Be4!? looks like a decent alternative to the standard 11...f5.

c) 8 Bf4 Nd5 9 Bg3 Bg4 10 Be2 e6 11 Qb3 Qb6 12 0-0 0-0-0 13 Rfe1 Bd6 saw the grandmaster fail to obtain any real advantage against solid black play in S.Tiviakov-M.Turov, St Petersburg 1993.

d) A somewhat more ambitious idea is 8 a4!?, hoping for an early initiative: 8...Bg4 (8...Qd5!? to meet 9 a5 with 9...Nc4 is untested but perhaps a better try) 9 a5 Nd5 (Diagram 32)

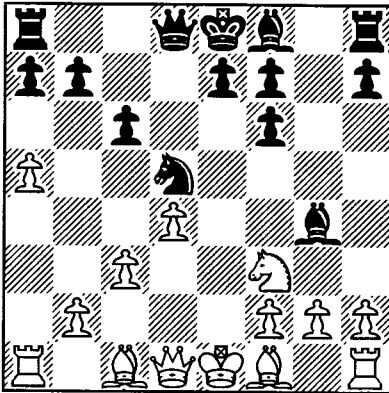


Diagram 32 (W)

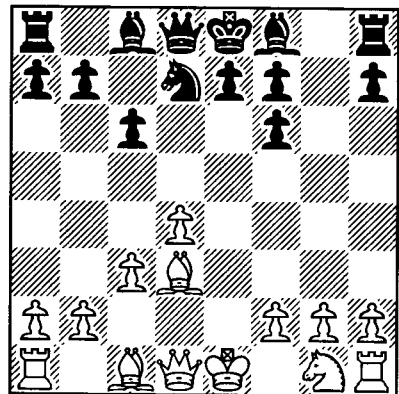


Diagram 33 (B)

10 c4 (this seems more testing than 10 Bc4 when Black would usually move the queen to c7; instead 10...Qd7 allows some tactical tricks, although 11 h3 Bh5 12 a6 b6 13 Ne5!? fxe5 14 Qxh5 exd4 15 cxd4 Qe6+ 16 Be3 Qe4 maintained a rough bal-

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ance despite them in N.Doroftei-R.Martin Molinero, correspondence 2003) 10...Nc7 (it would be nice to make 10...Nb4 work, but 11 Qb3 e5 12 c5! is in White's favour) 11 Be2 was seen in J.Schenning-S.Lalic, Haarlem 1994. That continued 11...e6 12 0-0 Qd7 13 Qb3 0-0-0 14 Be3 with a typically unbalanced middlegame, albeit one slightly in White's favour, so here Black may wish to consider holding back ...e6 until after 11...Qd7! 12 0-0 Rg8 13 Be3 Qf5.

Returning to 8 g3:

8...h5!?

Black wastes no time involving his h-pawn after all, and he has now reached the desired transposition to the notes to Black's 7th move in Naiditsch-Seirawan.

B2) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6 5 Nxf6+ gxf6 6 c3 Nd7 7 Bd3 (Diagram 33)

White abandons any notion of a fianchetto in favour of classical development.

7...Nb6



BEWARE: Black is advised not to get involved in the tempting 7...Rg8?! because of 8 Ne2 when 8...Rgx2? 9 Ng3 sees White picking up the exchange for clearly insufficient compensation.

8 Ne2

An attempt to avoid being pinned, as happens after 8 Nf3 Bg4, which takes play back into note 'a' to White's 8th move in Line B1. Here, though, we must also consider:

a) One might generously say that 8 Qf3 Be6 9 Bf5 attempts to remove some of the dynamism from the black position, but it fails to impress and 9...Bxf5 10 Qxf5 Qd5 (10...e6! 11 Qf3 Qd5 followed by ...Rg8 might gain a tempo) 11 Qxd5 cxd5 12 Nf3 e6 13 Bf4 Rg8 gave Black no problems whatsoever in N.Jakubovics-S.Lalic, Hastings 1995/96.

b) 8 Qc2 Qc7 9 Ne2 h5 10 Be3 h4 (more adventurous souls might wish to consider playing on both flanks with 10...Nd5! 11 Bd2 a5) 11 0-0-0 Bg4 12 h3 Bxe2 13 Qxe2 0-0-0 14 Qf3 Bh6 gave up the bishop-pair, but still left Black close to equality with his queen's rook bound for g8 in J.Figueiras-R.Martin Molinero, correspondence 2003.

8...h5!? (Diagram 34)

This disruptive advance is very in keeping with the ethos of this chapter, although

Black has more often preferred simple development with 8...Bg4.

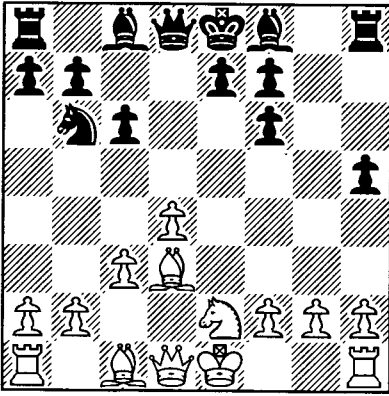


Diagram 34 (W)

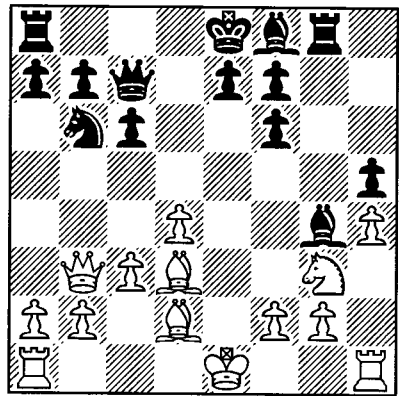


Diagram 35 (B)

9 h4

White halts the pawn and fixes it as a weakness on h5. He has also tried 9 Nf4 Bg4 10 f3, but after 10...Bc8 (back to base, but the bishop will return and, moreover, it's not clear that the inclusion of f3 is particularly helpful to White) 11 Qe2 Bh6! 12 Be3 Bxf4 13 Bxf4 Be6 14 g3 Qd7 Black had decent counterplay across the board in L.Da Costa Junior-P.Schuster, correspondence 2006.

9...Rg8!

White might hope that h5 will become a target, but of course in turn Black can target g2.

10 Ng3 Bg4 11 Qb3?!

With hindsight I dare say that White would have preferred to get involved in the complications: 11 f3! Bd7 12 Nxh5 Rxg2 13 Nf4 Rg8, reaching quite an unclear position. The h-pawn may eventually become dangerous, but in the short term Black is all set to open lines against the white king with ...e5.

11...Qc7 12 Bd2 (Diagram 35)

Black was already pretty comfortable by this point in J.Zeberski-R.Wojtaszek, Poraj 2003, and now took advantage of his pressure down the g-file with 12...Be6 13 Qc2 Rxg3!? 14 fxg3 Qxg3+ 15 Kf1 Nc4 16 Re1 O-O-O, thereby obtaining some attacking chances and full compensation for the exchange.

Conclusion

The daring 6...h5 works well against an opponent who has only studied 6 c3 in conjunction with a kingside fianchetto. After all no lesser player than Naiditsch was quickly worse following 7 Nf3 h4. Critical is 7 Bc4 Nd7 8 Qb3 when unfortunately I have been unable to find a way to equalize, although Black's cause is certainly then by no means a hopeless one.

I've long been aware of the underrated possibilities of both 6...Qd5 and 6...h5, but must confess that I'd never seriously considered 6...Nd7 until starting work on this book. However, it appears to be a third fully-playable alternative to 6...Bf5 and one which again gives Black easy counterplay with his h-pawn in the event of 7 Nf3 Nb6 8 g3 h5.

Chapter Three

Annoying the Caro-Kann Bishop

John Emms

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2 (Diagram 1)

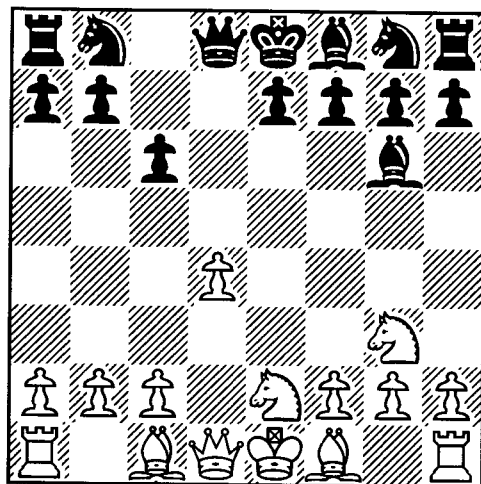


Diagram 1 (B)

In many respects 6 N1e2 represents White's most logical attempt to gain an advantage against 4...Bf5. In comparison to the main line (6 h4 h6 7 Nf3 Nd7 8 h5 Bh7 9 Bd3) White's aim is to harass the Caro-Kann bishop rather than just swap it

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off for its counterpart. The first thought is simply Nf4xg6 to gain the bishop pair. However, this in itself isn't enough to unduly worry Black, since in many positions he is willing to concede the bishop pair, especially if he gains an open h-file in return.

The real thrust behind White's idea is to combine Nf4 with h2-h4, giving the bishop a hard time. In a nutshell, White's goal is either to force an exchange under the most favourable circumstances, or to build an initiative if Black spends time safeguarding his bishop with ...h6 and ...Bh7.

First of all, let's see what can happen if Black more or less ignores what White is doing.

□ **Y. Shabanov** ■ **M. Boehnisch**

World Senior Championship, Bad Zwischenahn 2003

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2 e6 7 Nf4 Nf6

There's a real possibility that this natural developing move is a mistake. In the next game we'll look at the much stronger 7...Bd6!

8 h4! (Diagram 2)

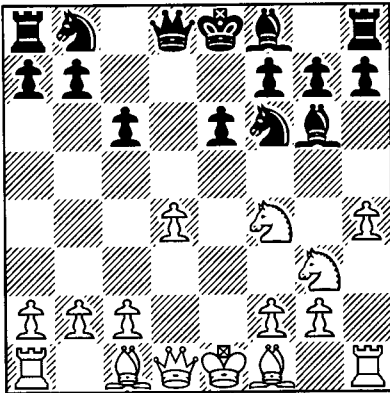


Diagram 2 (B)

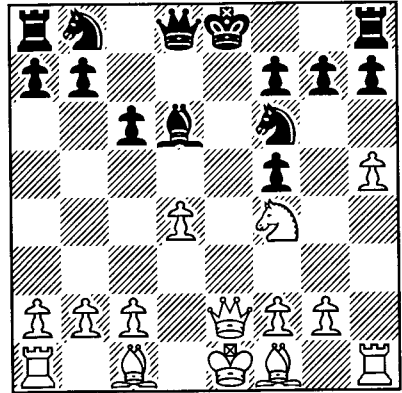


Diagram 3 (B)

Of course! White wants to make life as uncomfortable as possible for the light-squared bishop. In contrast to the main line with 6 h4 (or 6 Nf3 Nd7 7 h4), Black

cannot play ...h6 without committing positional suicide.

In comparison, 8 Nxf6 hxf6, whilst playable, is rather toothless. As a general note, *if Black is forced to give up the bishop pair, the exchange on g6 opening up the h8-rook provides the best possible circumstances for him to do so.*

8...Bd6

Somewhat bizarrely, Black can move his e-pawn for a second time in quick succession with the paradoxical 8...e5!?. What's more, there's a good argument to suggest that this is his best move!

After 9 dxe5 Black has a choice:

a) 9...Qxd1+? 10 Kxd1 Ng4 11 Be3! Nxe3+ 12 fxe3 and Black is forced to make a very undesirable move with his h-pawn. This should be compared to 6...Nf6 7 Nf4 e5 (Line D); here the extra h2-h4 certainly helps White.

b) 9...Qa5+! 10 c3 Qxe5+ 11 Qe2 (11 Be2!?) 11...Nbd7 12 h5 Bc2 13 Be3 Ba4 14 Nd3 Qe6 15 Rh4! Bb5 16 Bd4 Qxe2+ 17 Bxe2 with an edge for White, D.Sellos-J.Massot, Le Touquet 1977.

Another option worth considering after 8...e5 is 9 Qe2!? Qxd4 10 c3 Qd6 11 h5 Bc2! 12 Rh4!.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Always keep an eye open for this creative way to develop the king's rook. This opportunity occurs more often than you might think.

9 h5!

Why not? Let's grab that bishop pair.

9...Bf5 10 Nxf5 exf5

Black searches for rapid counterplay with ...0-0 and ...Re8(+), but White's next move throws a spanner in the works.

10...Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxf5 maintains Black's Caro-Kann structure, but 12 Bd3 must be at least a little better for White. For example, 12...Qg4 13 Be2 (13 Qxg4 Nxf6 14 f3 Nf6 15 h6 is enough for a safe edge) 13...Qf5 14 Rh4!? (here's that rook development again!) 14...e5 15 dxe5 Qxe5 16 h6! g5 17 Bc3 Bb4 18 Bxb4 gxh4 (S.Lalic-P.Roberts, Edinburgh 1989) and here 19 Bd6! would leave White with great play for the exchange.

11 Qe2+! (Diagram 3)

This check is difficult for Black to meet, and more convincing than 11 Bc4 0-0.

11...Be7

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11...Qe7 12 Qxe7+ Kxe7 leads to a prospectless ending for Black. Often an inferior pawn structure is compensated by the bishop pair, but here it's White who has the two bishops! What's more, after 13 Bd3 Black has trouble defending the f5-pawn.

11...Kd7!? is less accommodating, but 12 Qd3! is still nice for White after 12...Qe7+ 13 Be3 Ne4 14 O-O-O! intending 14...Bxf4 15 Bxf4 Nxf2 16 Qxf5+ Qe6 17 Qa5! b6 (or 17...Nxd1 18 Qc7+ Ke8 19 Bc4!) 18 d5! bxa5 19 dxe6+ Ke7 20 exf7 Nxd1 21 Bc4!, etc.

12 Be3

It's possible that the greedy-looking 12 Qe5! is even stronger. One possible line is 12...O-O 13 Be3 g6 (otherwise how does Black protect f5?) 14 hxg6 hxg6 15 Nxc6! fxc6 16 Bc4+ Rf7 (Tompá) and now 17 Qg3! Nd5 18 Qxc6+ Rg7 19 Qe6+ Rf7 20 Rh6 is very strong and probably winning for White.

12...O-O 13 O-O-0 (Diagram 4)

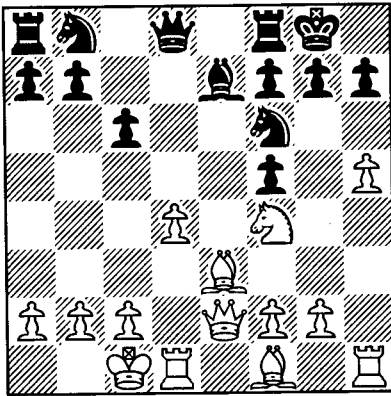


Diagram 4 (B)

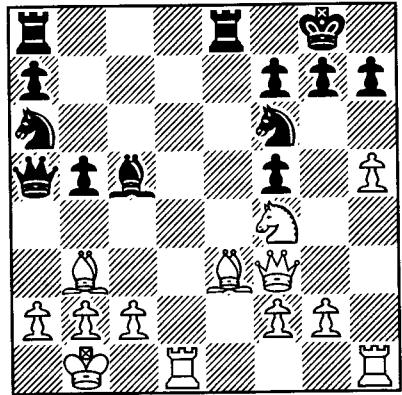


Diagram 5 (W)

White enjoys a clear advantage:

1. He has the healthier pawn structure;
2. He has an unopposed light-squared bishop; and
3. He can easily attack Black on the kingside.

Let's see how Shabanov does it:

13...Na6 14 Kb1 Re8 15 Qf3 Qa5 16 Bc4!

This bishop proves to be a real killer on the light squares. Such is its power on this diagonal that White is even prepared to allow Black a free tempo with ...b5. Around this stage Black was probably wishing his f5-pawn was back on e6.

16...b5 17 Bb3 c5 18 dxc5 Bxc5 (Diagram 5) 19 Nd5

19 Qb7! was immediately decisive, planning 19...Rf8 20 Bxf7+! Kh8 21 Ng6+!. White's choice in the game can hardly be faulted though, as all roads lead to Rome.

19...Ne4 20 Qxf5 Nd6 21 Qf3 Nc4 22 h6 Bxe3 23 fxe3 Rad8 24 Bxc4 1-0

24...bxc4 25 Qg4 wins very quickly.

In this next game, Black is much wiser to White's early ambitions. Although White eventually comes out on top, this represents a solid way for Black to play.

□ S.Fedorchuk ■ M.Kludacz
Bethune 2006

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2 e6 7 Nf4 Bd6! (Diagram 6)

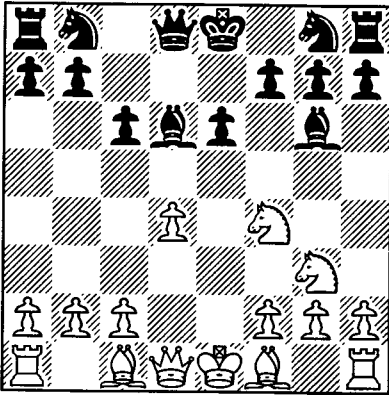


Diagram 6 (W)

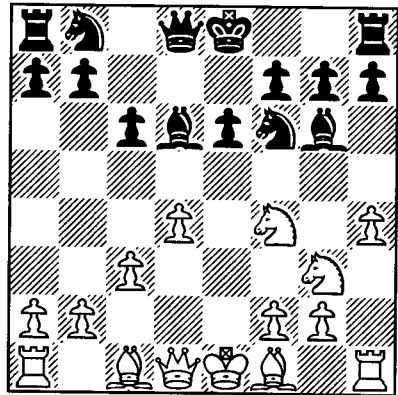


Diagram 7 (B)

This is a key defensive resource for Black. The idea is to hit the knight on f4 as quickly as possible so as to induce a trade on g6 before things become uncomfortable with h4-h5. Basically, if Black is going to give up the bishop pair, he wants to do so under the least unfavourable terms.

8 c3!

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

This was given as the main line in Kasparov and Shkarov's *The Classical Caro-Kann*, and more recently it has been favoured by Ukrainian GMs Volokitin, Efimenko and of course Fedorchuk. Incidentally, anyone who's seriously interested in the 4...Bf5 Caro-Kann should try to get a copy of this brilliant book. Even though it's nearly 20 years old, it's still a must-have for Caro players.

If White wants to continue with h4-h5, and this is surely the most ambitious approach, then 8 c3 is the move to play. The key point is that it safeguards the c-pawn so that ...Qc7 can be answered by Qf3, and this allows White to keep the tension.

White would love to be able to play the immediate 8 h4, but 8...Qc7! has proved to be a more-than-adequate response after either 9 Nxd6 h4 10 Ne4 Bf4 or 9 h5 Bxc2!

8...Nf6

The commonest choice. Alternatives will be covered later.

9 h4! (Diagram 7)

This is the consistent follow-up to White's previous move. Now 10 h5 is a positional threat.

9...Bxf4

Black chooses the least complicated option, making sure that the light-squared bishop survives at least for the moment. However, the cost of giving up the dark-squared bishop is a permanent one and can't be ignored.

The most principled move must surely be 9...Qc7, and this is covered later.

10 Bxf4 h6 11 h5

White continues aggressively. Later on we'll also cover 11 Be2, which might objectively be stronger.

11...Bh7 12 Qb3!?

A tricky move, because Black's most natural response...

12...Qb6?!

...is not the best.

12...Qe7 is not quite as clumsy it looks, even though ...Nbd7 becomes difficult to arrange. Still, after 13 Be2 0-0 14 c4 a5 15 0-0 a4 16 Qc3 White enjoys a small advantage, M.Palac-R.Ruck, Sibenik 2009.



BEWARE! 13 Bd6?? is playing with fire, and indeed after 13...Qxd6! 14 Qxb7 0-0 15 Qxa8 Qc7 White gets burned!

However, I believe that Black's strongest reply to 12 Qb3 is the intermezzo 12...Nd5! which seems to force the bishop off the diagonal. For example, 13 Bd2 (the key point is that 13 Qxb7? Nxf4! 14 Qxa8 Qb6 is very uncomfortable for White; 13 Be5!? is better, but 13...f6! 14 Bxb8 Rxb8 is still acceptable for Black) 13...Qc7! 14 c4 Nf6 15 Qa3 Na6 16 b4!? (perhaps something more solid like 16 Be2 Qe7 17 Qxe7+ Kxe7 18 Bc3, looking for long-term chances with the bishop pair, is called for) 16...0-0 17 b5 cxb5 18 cxb5 Nb8 19 Rc1 Qd8 20 Bb4 Re8 21 Bd6 Nd5 with an unclear and roughly equal position, I.Nataf-P.Genov, French League 2007.

13 Qa3! (Diagram 8)

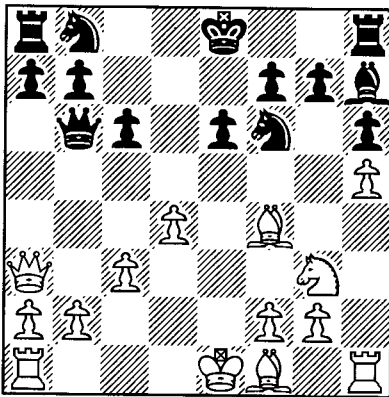


Diagram 8 (B)

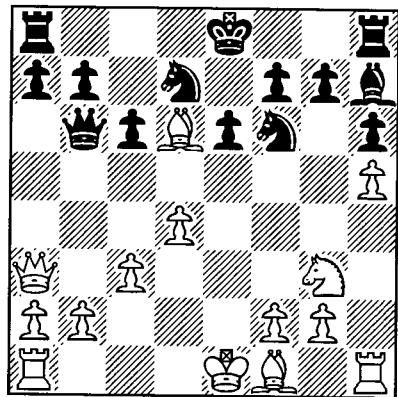


Diagram 9 (B)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This move is really annoying for Black, who is starting to feel the pressure mounting on the dark squares. A more pressing concern is Black's inability to castle into relative safety on the kingside.

13...Nbd7 14 Bd6! (Diagram 9)

A powerful move, not only slowing down Black's ...c5 ambitions but also preparing to answer 14...0-0-0 with the surprising 15 Bb4! when the threat of Ba5 nets at least a pawn.

14...e5?

The wrong pawn break. After this move Black has little chance of dislodging the d6-bishop. What's more, with the position opening up, Black's king will have to flee to the queenside but it will never find permanent safety there for obvious reasons.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

14...Rc8! intending ...c5 keeps Black's disadvantage within manageable proportions. For example, 15 Rd1 (15 b4!? and 15 Qb3!? are interesting alternatives) 15...c5! 16 dxc5 Nxc5 17 Rh4! (again we see the rook developed in this creative way) 17...Nce4 18 Nxe4 Nxe4 19 Rd4 Nxd6 20 Rxd6 Qc5 (D.Kryakvin-M.Panarin, Krasnoyarsk 2007) and here 21 Qxc5 Rxc5 22 Rhd4 0-0 23 g4 leaves White with the more active pieces.

15 Be2!

Fedorchuk is only too happy to sacrifice a pawn for the initiative, and 15 Bc4 with similar intentions was just as strong.

15 dxe5? Ng4! was the tactical justification behind Black's previous move.

15...exd4 16 cxd4 Qxd4 17 0-0 (Diagram 10)

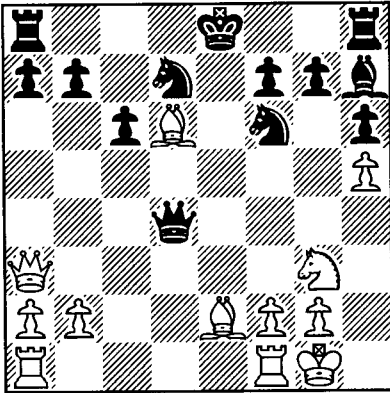


Diagram 10 (B)

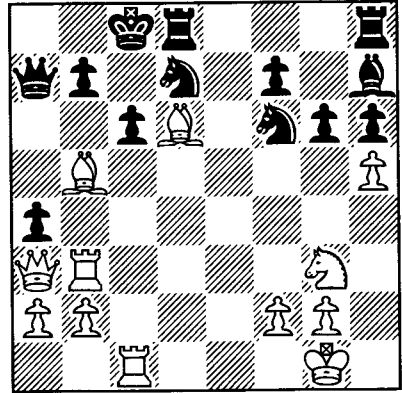


Diagram 11 (W)

It doesn't take a genius to work out that Black is in all sorts of trouble here, with little hope of surviving the oncoming attack.

17...0-0-0 18 Rfd1 Qb6 19 Rac1 g6?

This only makes things worse.

20 Rc3!

Threatening the trap the queen with 21 Rb3. Black is forced to create another weakness.

20...a6 21 Rb3 Qa7 22 Rc1

22 Qa5 intending 22...Ne8 23 Rxb7! is also good enough for victory.

22...a5 23 Bb5 a4 1-0 (Diagram 11)

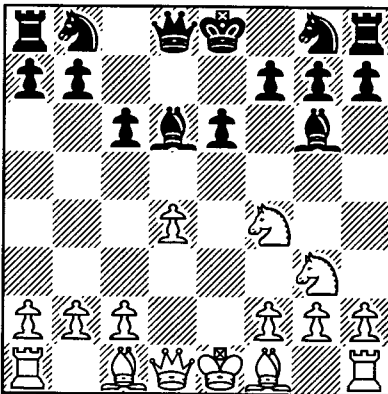
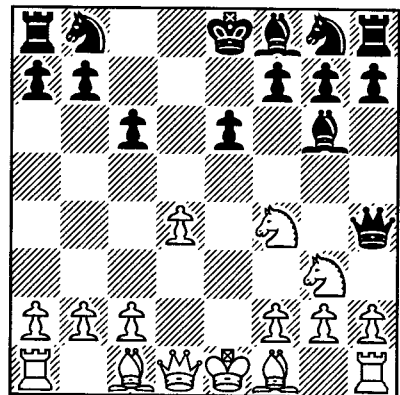
I'm not sure how the game actually concluded, since the final moves on the official database make no sense at all. Suffice it to say, 24 Bxc6 is completely crushing, and there's a good chance this move was actually played by Fedorchuk.

Looking a Little Deeper**1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2**

We now consider Black's four main moves:

A: 6...e6**B: 6...h6****C: 6...Nd7****D: 6...Nf6****A) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2 e6**

The main line, and the move which is usually recommended to Black players.

7 Nf4 Bd6 (Diagram 12)**Diagram 12 (W)****Diagram 13 (W)**

Alternatively:

a) 7...Nf6 8 h4! was covered in Shabanov-Boehnisch.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

b) 7...Qc7 has very similar intentions to 7...Bd6, and indeed a transposition is more than likely after 8 c3 Nf6 9 h4 Bd6.

c) Flohr's move 7...Qh4!? (**Diagram 13**) provides a creative solution of how to deal with the h-pawn's advance: block it with the queen! This has been tried by some strong grandmasters, and I do feel it's quite playable, albeit a bit risky if White follows up dynamically enough.

One modest-looking try with a bit of bite is 8 Be2 Nd7 9 Be3 Bd6 10 Qd2!, as played in one of the earliest games in this line, A.Novopashin-S.Furman, Leningrad 1963. In view of possible knight moves and Bg5 ideas, Black felt obliged to retreat with 10...Qe7 but this wasn't ideal and 11 Nxc6 hxc6 12 Ne4 was better for White.

My feeling is that 8...Nf6!, intending to meet 9 Be3 with 9...Nd5, is a wiser option for Black. Then one crazy line worth investigating is 9 c3 Nbd7 10 Nf5!? Bxf5 11 g3 Qh6 12 Nxe6 Qg6 13 Nc7+ Kd8 14 Nxa8.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! My other thought was why not 8 Bc4 here? This bishop move is rarely played in this particular position, but with the black queen flying away from the centre, there does seem to be some logic behind the plan of ganging up on e6.

If 8...Nf6 my idea is 9 Qe2! (**Diagram 14**) followed by something nasty happening on e6.

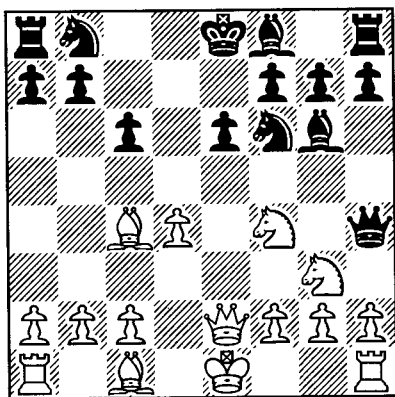


Diagram 14 (B)

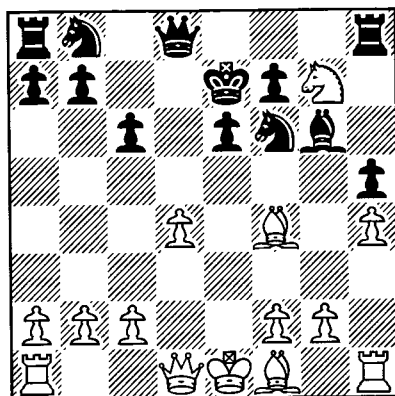


Diagram 15 (W)

For example, 9...Nbd7 (or 9...Bd6 10 Nxe6!) 10 Bxe6! fxe6 11 Nxe6 Ne4! (White wins the queen after either 11...Be7? 12 Bg5 or 11...Kf7? 12 Ng5+!) 12 Ng5 Ndf6 13

N3xe4 Nxe4 14 0-0 0-0-0 15 g3 and White regains the piece and remains a pawn up. 9...Be7 is probably wiser, but even here sacrifices on e6 exist. 10 0-0 0-0 11 Nxe6!? fxe6 12 Qxe6+ Bf7 13 Nf5! Qh5 14 Nxe7+ Kh8 15 Qd6 Bxc4 16 Ng6+ Qxg6 17 Qxf8+ Ng8 18 Bf4! is one interesting possibility.

A much safer move for Black is 8...Bd6!, transposing to a line that is reached via 6 Bc4. Here 9 Qf3 Bxc2 10 Ngh5! looks like an interesting gambit to me, but unfortunately Black can also play the inconsiderate 9...Nf6!. In view of this, perhaps White should settle for 9 Ngh5! Bxh5 10 Qxh5. For example, 10...Qxh5 11 Nxh5 g6 12 Nf4 Nf6 13 Nd3 Nbd7 14 0-0 a5 15 a4 Nd5 16 c3, G.Kasparov-V.Topalov, Leon 1998. Practice suggests that White's bishop pair doesn't offer him a meaningful advantage in these positions, but the fact that Kasparov was willing to enter this endgame must mean something.

Let's return to 7...Bd6.

8 c3

Previously we've seen that 8 h4 is effectively met by 8...Qc7!.

8 Nxg6 is perhaps not quite as toothless here, since after 8...hxg6 White has 9 Ne4!. Nevertheless, Black is holding his own after either 9...Be7 or 9...Nf6.

8 Ngh5!? is a more challenging way to grab the bishop pair, since Black doesn't get the open h-file for his rook as compensation. For example:

a) Kasparov and Shakarov give 8...Nf6 9 Nxg7+ (other moves are harmless) 9...Ke7 10 h4 (10 Ngh5?? is impossible in view of 10...Nxh5 11 Nxh5 Qa5+, but 10 c3 Bxf4 11 Bxf4 h5 12 Qb3 also looks promising) 10...Bxf4 (10...h5?? 11 Ngxe6!) 11 Bxf4 h5 **(Diagram 15)** trapping the knight, but 12 Qf3 intending 12...Kf8 13 Nxe6+ fxe6 14 0-0-0 looks very dangerous for Black – White certainly has more than enough play for the piece here.

b) If 8...Kf8!? 9 Be3 Nf6 I like 10 Nxf6 Qxf6 11 g3! planning Bg2, 0-0, c2-c4, etc.

c) 8...Bxh5 has been the commonest choice. For example, 9 Nxh5 g6 10 Ng3 Nf6 11 c3 Nbd7 12 Bc4 Qc7 13 Qf3 0-0-0 14 0-0 with a small plus for White, Z.Efimenko-R.Smith, Dresden Olympiad 2008. These positions are certainly more promising for White than the similar ones with Nxg6 and ...hxg6. To put this into context, in this position Black would love to be able to slide his h7-pawn pawn one square horizontally to g7!.

8...Nf6

Alternatively:

a) 8...Qc7 is likely to transpose, either to the main line after 9 Qf3 Nf6 10 h4 Nbd7, or the note on 8 Ngh5 after 9 Ngh5 Bxh5 10 Nxh5 g6 11 Ng3 Nf6 12 Qf3 Nbd7 13 Bc4.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

b) 8...Nd7 9 h4 Qc7 10 Qf3 Ngf6 is also a transposition to the main line.

c) 8...Qh4!? 9 Ngh5 Bxh5 10 Qxh5 Qxh5 11 Nxh5 g6 12 Nf4 is similar to Kasparov-Topalov, above.

Does White have an alternative after 8...Qh4? How about 9 Qb3!? here, trying to force a weakness on the queenside? White's idea is 9...Bxf4 10 Qxb7 Bxg3 11 hxg3! Qxh1 12 Qxa8 with favourable complications. If 9...b6 White could trade on g6 safe in the knowledge that at least some concession on the queenside has been induced. Another possibility that occurred to me was 10 Nge2!? intending g2-g3 and Bg2, against which Black might consider 10...Be4!?

9 h4 Qc7

As we saw earlier, Black's main alternative is 9...Bxf4 10 Bxf4 h6. In Fedorchuk-Kludacz we looked at 11 h5 Bh7 12 Qb3, but fellow Ukrainian GM Andrei Volokitin has preferred 11 Be2 (**Diagram 16**).

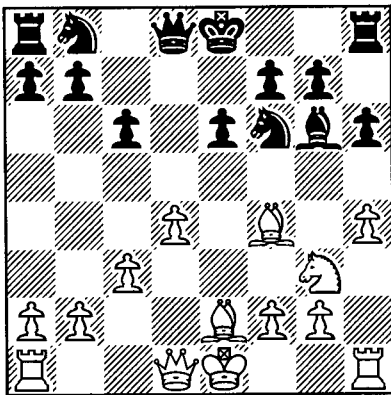


Diagram 16 (B)

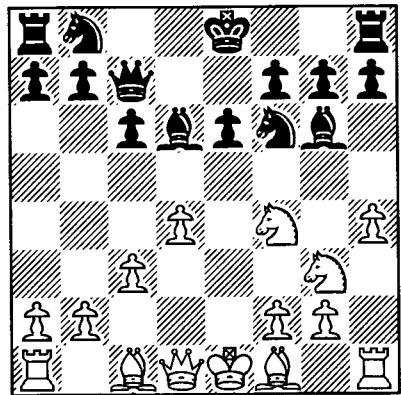


Diagram 17 (W)

White's idea is simply to improve the positioning of his worst-placed minor piece – the knight – and rely upon the bishop pair and dark-square dominance for some kind of edge: 11...0-0 (Volokitin notes the line 11...Nd5 12 Bd2 0-0 13 c4 Nf6 14 Bc3 Nbd7 15 Qd2 Qc7 16 0-0 Rfd8 17 Qe3 and assesses this as '+/=') 12 Nf1!? Nd5 13 Bg3 Nd7 14 Nd2 N7f6 15 0-0 (or 15 h5!? Bf5 16 0-0 with a slight edge – Volokitin) 15...Ne4 16 Nxe4 Bxe4 17 Re1, A.Volokitin-B.Predojevic, German League 2008. This isn't totally comfortable for Black, and it's worth examining a few more moves to see how Volokitin continued to improve his position: 17...a5 18 Qd2 Ne7 19 h5 Qd7 20 Bf1 Bf5 21 Qf4 a4 22 c4 Bh7 23 Rad1 Nf5 24 Bh2 Rad8 25 d5! cxd5 26 cxd5 exd5

27 Qb4 d4 28 Bb5 Qd5 29 Re5 Qd6 30 Qxa4 and by now Black was under considerable pressure.

Let's return to the position after 9...Qc7 (**Diagram 17**).

White has a choice of two moves here:

A1: 10 Qf3

A2: 10 h5!?

A1) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2 e6 7 Nf4 Bd6 8 c3 Nf6 9 h4 Qc7 10 Qf3

White protects the f4-knight and is ready to move with the h5 advance.

10...Nbd7

Black ignores White's 'threat', as the bishop is eyeing a new home – on c2!

If 10...Nd5 11 Nxd5 exd5 12 h5 Black must play 12...Qe7+! since 12...Bc2 13 Kd2! Ba4 14 b3 is strong. I still prefer White after 13 Be3 Be4 14 Nxe4 dxe4 (or 14...Qxe4 15 Qxe4+ dxe4 16 g4!) 15 Qf5 O-O 16 g4! Nd7 17 g5.

11 h5 Bc2 12 h6! (Diagram 18)

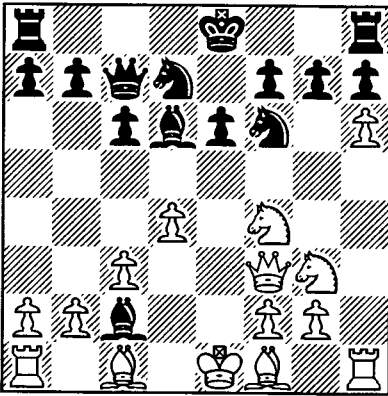


Diagram 18 (B)

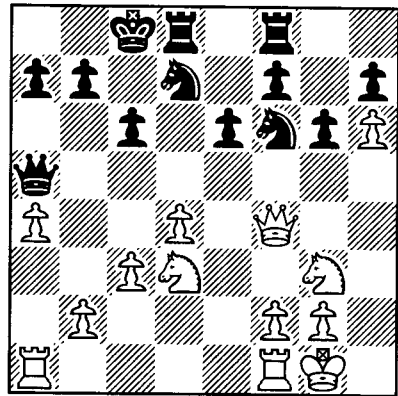


Diagram 19 (B)

The pawn continues! I definitely feel that it's worthwhile provoking some dark-squared weaknesses in Black's camp.

12...g6!

Black keeps things as tight as possible.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

12...gxh6 13 Bd3 Bxd3 14 Nxd3 Rg8 15 Nh5 gives White good compensation for the pawn, Kr.Georgiev-J.Gralka, Sofia 1979.

13 Bd3

Somewhat surprisingly, there's no obvious way to exploit the positioning of Black's light-squared bishop, so White moves towards another plan.



BEWARE: If 13 Be3?! intending Rc1, Black can seize the initiative in the centre with 13...e5!. For example, 14 dxe5 Nxe5 15 Qe2 Ba4! 16 b3 Bb5 17 c4 0-0-0! 18 0-0-0 Nd5!.

13...Bxd3 14 Nxd3 Qa5

Blacks prevents Bg5 so that he can castle long without having to worry about this.

14...0-0 15 Bg5 Nd5 16 Ne4 f5 17 Nxd6 Qxd6 18 0-0-0 Rae8 was S.Fedorchuk-V.Sanduleac, Avoine 2006, and here 19 Rhe1 preventing ...e5 looks like the most logical continuation for White.

15 Bf4!

It makes sense to trade these bishops, in order to emphasize Black's dark-squared weaknesses.

15...Bxf4 16 Qxf4 0-0-0!

16...0-0 17 0-0 looks better for White. It sounds funny to say it, but Black must always be wary of mating possibilities on g7!

17 0-0 Rhf8

So that the knight can move.

18 a4 (Diagram 19)

This position is quite unclear. With b2-b4-b5 an obvious plan, White can expect to attack more quickly than Black, and he will try to prove that this is a more important factor than the vulnerable pawn on h6.

A.Karpatchev-I.Khenkin, Dresden 2006, continued 18...Nh5 19 Nxh5 Qxh5 20 b4 g5 21 Qe3 f5!, intending ...Rf6 whether or not White captures on e6. This position still looks unclear, but it strikes me that White could improve with 19 Qe3!. If then 19...Nxg3 20 Qxg3 Qh5 White's queen is more favourably placed, and after 21 b4 Qxh6 22 b5 White's faster attack has every chance of becoming more important than the pawn deficit.

A2) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2 e6 7 Nf4 Bd6 8 c3 Nf6 9 h4 Qc7 10 h5! (Diagram 20)

White sacrifices a pawn in order to ruin Black's structure. This was actually White's choice in the stem game, and I feel it is still relevant today despite the fact that everyone seems to play 10 Qf3.

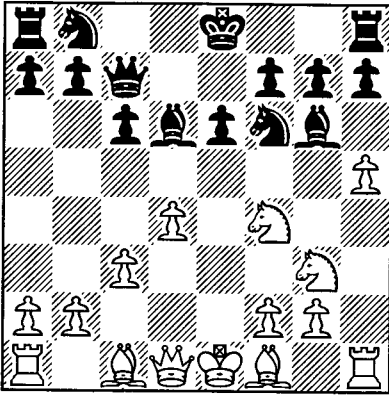


Diagram 20 (B)

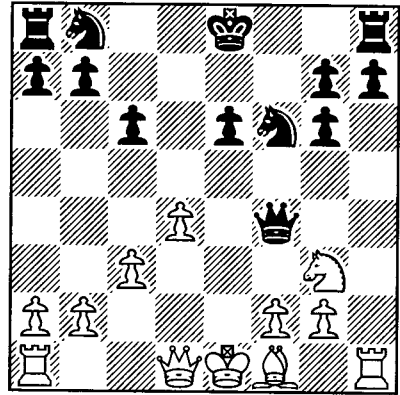


Diagram 21 (W)

In fact 10 h5 remains relatively untested, so I'm relying mainly on analysis here.

10...Bxf4

Is this forced? Apparently not!

I spent some time considering the bizarre and as yet untested 10...Bc2!?. I think that a critical line runs 11 Nxe6! fxe6 12 Qxc2 Bxg3 13 fxg3 Qxg3+ 14 Qf2 (is 14 Kd1 Ng4 15 Qb3 really possible?) 14...Ne4 15 Qxg3 Nxg3 16 Rh4 Nxf1 17 Kxf1 0-0+ 18 Ke2 with a slight edge for White in this ending.

11 Bxf4 Qxf4 12 hxg6 fxg6 (Diagram 21) 13 Bc4!?

13 Qd2 was White's choice in the stem game, I.Boleslavsky-T.Petrosian, Zürich 1953: 13...Qxd2+ (13...Qd6 is also reasonable) 14 Kxd2 Nbd7 15 Re1 Kf7 16 Bc4 Rae8 17 Bb3 c5 18 Ne4 Nxe4+ 19 Rxe4 Nf6 20 Re5 cxd4 21 cxd4 Re7 22 Rhe1 Rhe8 23 Kd3 h6 24 f4 and, with progress difficult for either side, a draw was agreed.

In his notes to that game, Bronstein wrote of 13 Qb3: 'Perhaps Petrosian had been fondly hoping that Boleslavsky would fall for 13 Qb3. The move played dispels his illusions of 13 Qb3 Ng4 14 Qxe6+ Kd8.'

Let's take a closer look, with the help of modern-day computers: 13 Qb3 Ng4 14 Be2! (instead of 14 Qxe6+ Kd8) 14...Qxf2+ 15 Kd1 Ne3+ 16 Kd2 Nxg2! (Lukacs offers 16...Qxg3 in ChessBase, but 17 Rh3! Qxg2 18 Rxe3 Nd7 19 Qxe6+ Kd8 20 Rf1 gives

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

White a strong initiative) 17 Raf1 Qxg3 18 Qxb7 Qg5+ 19 Kc2 Ne3+ 20 Kb1 Qd5! (20...Nxf1 21 Rxf1 Qe7! 22 Qc8+ – not 22 Qxa8? Qc7! – 22...Qd8 23 Qxe6+ Qe7 24 Qc8+ is perpetual check) 21 Bd3 (21 Qxa8?? Qe4+) 21...Nxf1 22 Rxf1 Qd7! 23 Qxa8 Ke7 (**Diagram 22**) and White's queen is in danger of being trapped. It's not looking good when *Rybka* is suggesting ideas like 24 Ba6 Qc7 25 Bb7. So, overall, it appears that 13 Qb3 is a bit too risky, even by 'Rolling the Dice' standards!

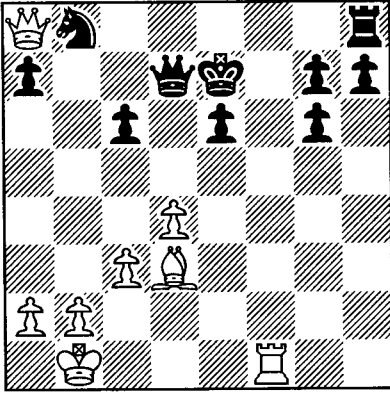


Diagram 22 (W)

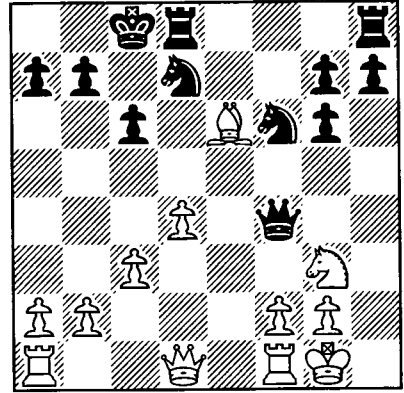


Diagram 23 (B)

Returning to 13 Bc4, White's aim is simply to grab on e6, restoring the material balance, and then count on his superior pawn structure.

13...Nbd7

If 13...0-0 White can safely play 14 Bxe6+ Kh8 and now the key move 15 Qd2!. An exchange of queens removes White's king from the danger on the e-file, while 15...Qd6 16 Bb3 Re8+ 17 Kf1 is also pleasant for White.

Black can hold on to his pawn with 13...Qd6, but only temporarily, and this retreat feels wrong. Simply 14 0-0 followed by Re1 must be nice for White.

14 Bxe6 0-0-0 15 0-0 (Diagram 23)

White's structure certainly gives him the better endgame after 15 Qd2 Qxd2+?! 16 Kxd2, but 15...Qd6! is less accommodating.

After 15 0-0 we've reached a critical position. Undoubtedly White has the healthier pawn structure, which on its own would promise a clear edge. The question is, can Black engineer enough activity on the kingside to compensate for this?

Here are just a few possible lines:

a) 15...Kb8 (unclear – Lukacs) 16 Qc2 Rhe8 17 Rae1 Qh4 18 Re2 Ng4 19 Bxg4 Qxg4 20 Rfe1.

b) 15...h5 16 Re1 h4 (after 16...Ng4 17 Bxg4 hxg4 18 Re4 Black has the amazing resource 18...Rh1+!!, but then 19 Nxh1! Qxe4 20 Ng3 still favours White!) 17 Nf1 Kb8 18 Qc1 Qd6 19 Qg5.

c) 15...Rhe8 16 Re1 Kb8 17 Qc2 Re7 18 Re2 Rde8 19 Rae1.

In all these lines Black is getting very close to equality, but if pushed I would still prefer to be White.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2 h6?!

Black's desire to keep his light-squared bishop is misguided here. The time spent on ...h6 and...Bh7 allows White to build up a potent initiative.

7 Nf4 Bh7 8 Bc4! (Diagram 24)

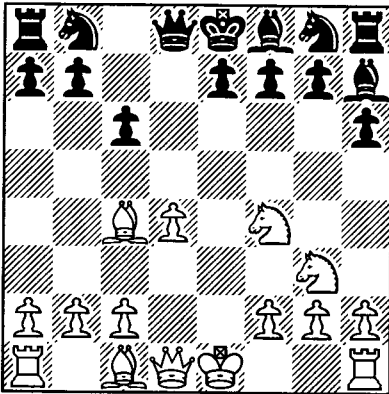


Diagram 24 (B)

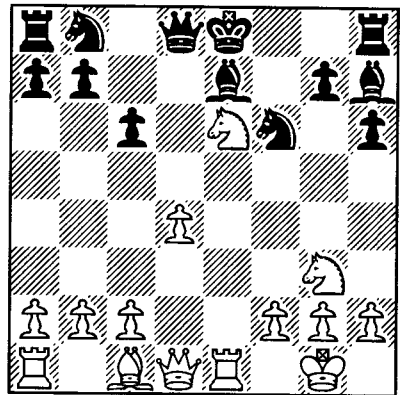


Diagram 25 (B)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Black will find it very difficult to continue his development without playing the natural ...e6, but this advance invites very promising piece sacrifices on that square.

8...Nf6 9 0-0!

Planning simply Re1, to add further firepower to sacrifices on e6.

9...e6

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

Black can of course try to delay ...e6 for as long as possible, but as far as I can see there is no way to fully solve his problems.

For example, 9...Nbd7 10 Re1 Nb6 11 Bb3 a5 12 a3 a4 13 Ba2 Nbd5 14 c4! Nxf4 15 Bxf4 g5 (by no means ideal, but there are still problems with 15...e6 – White no longer has any piece sacrifices, but that doesn't matter because the straightforward 16 d5! is strong) 16 Be5 Bg7 17 Qf3, Zhu Chunhui-Wu Shaobin, Beijing 1995. White plans Nf5 and enjoys a significant advantage here.

10 Re1

Black can see the sacrifice on e6 coming, but there is little he can do to prevent it.

10...Be7

The problem with 10...Nd5? is that 11 Bxd5! cxd5 12 Qh5 wins at least a pawn in view of the double attack on d5 and e6. Maybe Black's best chance is the Bronstein-like 10...Bg8!?

11 Bxe6!

11 Qe2! is also strong, intending 11...O-O 12 Nxe6! or 11...Nd5 12 Ngh5 and if 12...O-O there follows 13 Bxd5 cxd5 14 Qe5!.

11...fxe6 12 Nxe6 (Diagram 25) 12...Qd7 13 Nxd7+ Kf7 14 Ne6 Na6 15 Bxh6

This was played in E.Prandstetter-M.Kratochvil, Ceske Budejovice 1992. With four pawns for the piece, and the black king lacking any pawn shelter, White enjoys a clear advantage.

C) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2 Nd7 (Diagram 26)

This is much better than 6...h6?!, but it still carries considerable risk. By not committing his e-pawn Black keeps open the possibility of ...e5 as well as ...e6. On the other hand, he's inviting some trouble by delaying any kingside development by yet another move.

7 h4

White induces ...h6 and then uses a similar plan to the one seen against 6...h6, i.e. Nf4, Bc4, a quick initiative in the centre and possible sacrifices on e6.

This line can be compared to 6...e6, where the same plan is less effective as Black's kingside development is quicker. For example, 6...e6 7 h4 (instead of our 7 Nf4) 7...h6 8 Nf4 Bh7 9 Bc4 Nf6 10 O-O Bd6! and here Tal's sacrifice 11 Nxe6 fxe6 12 Bxe6, which he unleashed against Botvinnik in 1960, is known to be speculative at best. The key point is that Black doesn't spend a tempo on ...Nd7 in that line.

The alternative against 6...Nd7 is 7 Nf4 e5 8 Nxd7 hxg6, and here I feel White's best

chance of an edge lies with 9 Qe2!? (rather than 9 dxe5 Qa5+! 10 Bd2 Qxe5+). For example, 9...Qe7 (or 9...Qa5+ 10 Bd2 Bb4 11 c3 Be7 12 dxe5 Qxe5 13 0-0-0) 10 dxe5 Qxe5 11 Bf4 Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 and White will try to make full use of the bishop pair. The fact that the position (and the light squares) has opened up with the exchange of centre pawns certainly helps, although it should be said that Black does sometimes choose to play like this (see Line D).

7...h6 8 Nf4 Bh7 9 Bc4!? (Diagram 27)

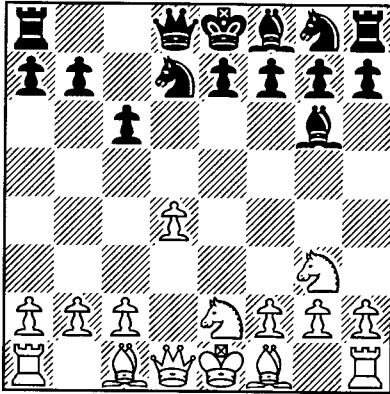


Diagram 26 (W)

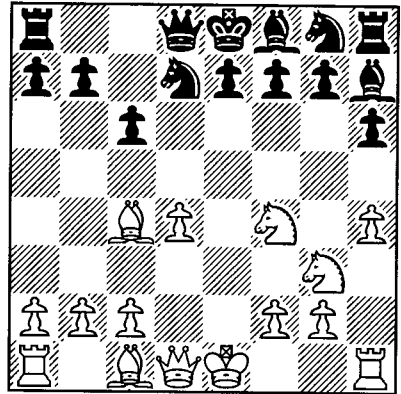


Diagram 27 (B)

Once again White's idea doesn't involve trading the light-squared bishops. That said, 9 Bd3 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 is a decent option here. For example, 10...e6 11 Bd2 Ngf6 12 0-0-0 Qc7 13 Nfh5 0-0-0 14 Qf3 Rg8 15 Kb1 Be7 16 Rhe1 with a slight edge for White, A.Volokitin-F.Vallejo Pons, Mainz (rapid) 2003.

9...Ngf6

The commonest choice, but Black has two key alternatives here:

a) 9...e6!? is risky but, as far as I can see, not as bad as its reputation. 10 Qe2 (the sharpest; 10 c3 Ngf6 11 Qe2 Bd6 12 Bxe6!? fxe6 13 Nxe6 Qe7 14 Nf5 Bxf5 15 Nxc7+ Kf7 16 Nxf5 Qxe2+ 17 Kxe2 is unclear, P.Keres-F.Olafsson, Bled 1961) and now:

a1) 10...Bd6 is strongly met by 11 Ngh5! (Kasparov).

a2) 10...Ngf6 11 Bxe6 fxe6 12 Nxe6 Qe7 13 Nc7+ Kf7 14 Nxa8 Qxe2+ 15 Nxe2 Bd6 16 Bf4 Bxf4 17 Nxf4 Rxa8 18 0-0-0 was only clearly better for White after 18...Re8?! 19 Rhe1 Rxe1? 20 Rxe1 (G.Sapkaroski-B.Jankov, Struga 2002). If Black doesn't make the typical mistake of exchanging his remaining rook, I don't think that White's advantage is significant.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

White can also consider 11 O-O!?. For example, 11...Bd6 (if 11...Nb6, as well as 12 Bb3, 12 Nxe6 fxe6 13 Bxe6 looks interesting) 12 Bxe6! fxe6 13 Nxe6 Qe7 14 Re1 Kf7 15 Qc4 Nd5 16 Ng5+ hxg5 17 Rxe7+ Bxe7 18 Bxg5 Rhe8 19 Qb3 and White was better in A.Karpatchev-J.Bourdin, Sautron 2002.

a3) I can't find any games with 10...Nb6!? (**Diagram 28**) and yet this could be a critical move! As far as I can see, 11 Bxe6 fxe6 12 Nxe6 Qe7 13 Nc7+ Kd7 14 Nxa8 Qxe2+ 15 Nxe2 Nxa8 can only be described as unclear.

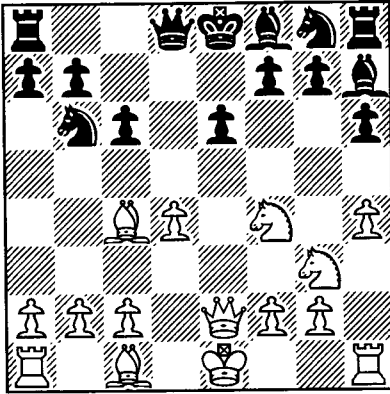


Diagram 28 (W)

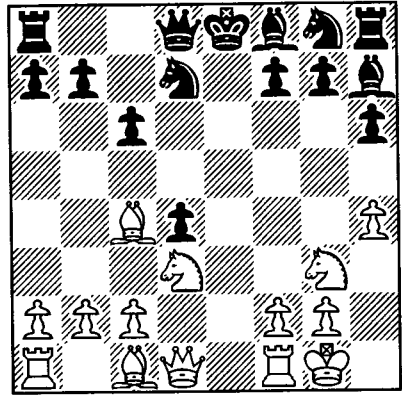


Diagram 29 (B)

Perhaps White should prefer a real sacrifice with 11 Nxe6! fxe6 12 Bxe6 followed by O-O. The bishop on e6 is a hugely impressive piece and this does look like quite promising long-term compensation. For example, 12...Be7 13 c3 Nf6 14 O-O Qc7 15 Re1 Kf8 16 Qf3 followed by Bf4.

b) 9...e5 was Botvinnik's choice when facing Tal in their 1960 world championship match. Now:

b1) 10 Qe2 Qe7 11 dxe5 Qxe5 12 Be3 Bc5 13 Bxc5 Qxe2+ (M.Tal-M.Botvinnik, Moscow 1960) and here Tal gives 14 Ngxe2 Nxc5 15 O-O-O Nf6 16 Nd4 with a small edge for White. Black must surely be very close to equality, if not already there.

b2) The pawn sacrifice 10 Nd3! exd4 11 O-O (**Diagram 29**) was suggested by Tal, and this does look more challenging:

b21) 11...Ngf6 12 Nh5 Nxh5 13 Qxh5 Qf6 (or 13...Bg6 14 Re1+ Be7 15 Qe2 – Kasparov/Shakarov) 14 Re1+ Be7 15 Qe2 Nb6 16 Bb3 Bxd3 17 cxd3 Rd8 18 Bf4 is given by Kasparov and Shakarov. Even though Black can finally organize castling after 18...Rd7 19 Be5 Qg6, I think White can retain the initiative with 20 Qf3 O-O 21 Re4!.

b22) Kasparov and Shakarov don't mention 11...Qxh4!?, perhaps because it just

looks too greedy to be any good. Modern computers, however, are especially keen to justify such pawn grabbing, and it's true that after 12 Re1+ Ne7 there's nothing devastating for White, even though Black is clearly under some pressure after 13 Nf4.

10 0-0 Nb6

Planning ...Nd5 and only then, once the bishop is blocked, ...e6.

If 10...e6 White should again line up a sacrifice on e6 with 11 Re1!, intending 11...Be7 12 Bxe6! fxe6 13 Nxe6. Black can take prophylactic measures with 11...Qb6 after which sacrifices are less effective (though still tempting). However, after the simple 12 c3 0-0-0 13 a4! White can use Black's queen as a hook to gain time for a queenside attack.

11 Bb3 (Diagram 30)

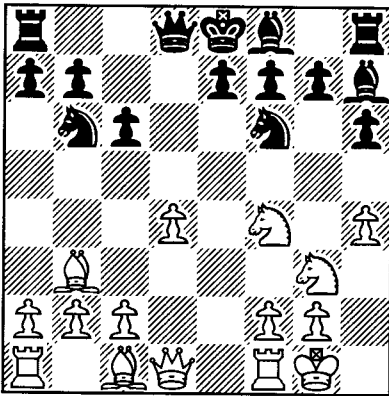


Diagram 30 (B)

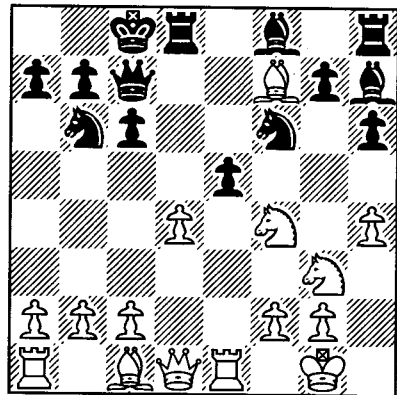


Diagram 31 (W)

Now:

a) 11...Nbd5 is consistent but 12 Nxd5 looks good for White after either 12...Nxd5 13 c4 Nf6 14 d5 (L.Poitras-S.Fairbairn, Sackville 2001), or 12...cxd5 13 Ba4+! Nd7 14 Qf3 e6 15 c4!.

b) 11...Qc7!? looks better to me. The key point is that after 12 Re1 (12 Qe2 is a decent back-up solution for White) Black doesn't actually have to defend his f-pawn before castling long, as demonstrated by Petrosian: 12...0-0-0! 13 Bxf7 e5! (Diagram 31) 14 Be6+ Kb8 15 Nd3 Rxd4 with a roughly equal position, G.Ravinsky-T.Petrosian, Moscow 1950.

Kasparov and Shakarov suggest that 14 Ne6 (instead of 14 Be6+) 14...Qxf7 15 Nxd8

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Kxd8 16 dxe5+ Nfd5 'offers White more chances'. The only practical example I could find was H.Behling-I.Smuts, correspondence 2001. White eventually won, but overall the position still looks very unclear: 17 c3 (17 a4!?) 17...Bc5 18 Be3 Bxe3 19 Rxe3 Qe7 20 h5 Rf8 21 Re1 Kc8 22 Qg4+ Kb8 23 Rad1 Nf4 24 Ne4 Rf5 25 g3 Nxh5 26 f4 g6 27 Nd6 Rf8 28 f5 Qg7 29 f6 Qh8 30 f7 Nc8 31 Qd7 1-0.

D) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 N1e2 Nf6 (Diagram 32)

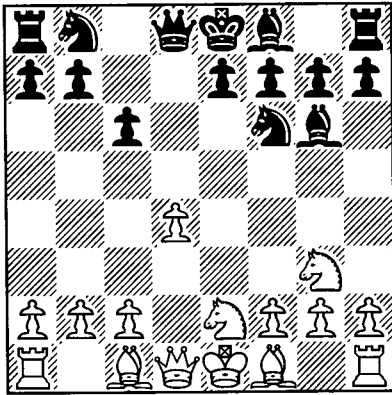


Diagram 32 (W)

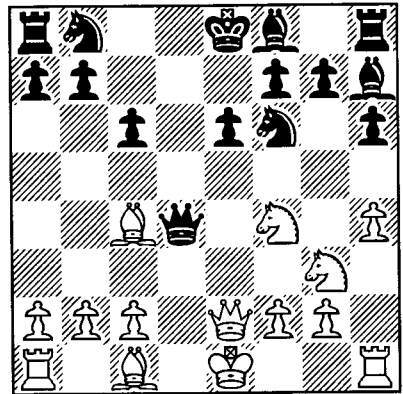


Diagram 33 (W)

As with 6...Nd7, Black keeps the option open of playing ...e5. However, rightly or wrongly, 6...Nf6 enjoys a much better reputation.

7 Nf4

The other main line is 7 h4 h6 8 Nf4 Bh7 9 Bc4 e6! intending to meet 10 O-O with 10...Bd6, as we've seen before. Black also virtually always plays 10...Bd6 in reply to 10 Qe2, White's other aggressive try.

There's certainly nothing wrong with 10...Bd6 against 10 Qe2, but I haven't been able to find anything remotely nearing a refutation of 10...Qxd4!? (**Diagram 33**). This must have been regarded as too greedy, but maybe greed pays here!

The most obvious try to me is 11 Bxe6 fxe6 12 Nxe6 followed by Nc7+, but 12...Qg4! 13 Nc7+ Kf7 14 Nxa8 Bd6! seems to convincingly refute this.

There's also 11 Nxe6 fxe6 12 Qxe6+ Kd8 13 Be3 to consider, but here Black can even try 13...Qd7 14 Rd1 Bg8 15 Rxd7+ Nbx7 16 Qf5 Bxc4 with a great deal of material for the queen.

If this gambit of the d-pawn really is more speculative than previously thought,

10...Qxd4 could well become a key development in this line.

7...e5

This move doesn't need any preparation because Black can regain the pawn with ...Qa5+.

Another sensible option for Black is 7...Nbd7 8 Bc4 (8 h4 e5 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Qe2 Qe7! is solid for Black, since 11 h5?? can be met by 11...Bxc2 when capturing allows mate in 2) 8...e5 (8...e6 9 h4!; or 8...Nb6 9 Bb3 Qd7 10 0-0 Rd8 11 c3 Nbd5 12 Nd3! Bxd3 13 Qxd3 g6 14 Bg5 Bg7 15 Rfe1 with a slight edge for White, T.Radjabov-G.Kamsky, Bazna 2009) 9 Nxc6 hxc6. This is similar to the next note except there is less pressure on the d4-pawn, and White can use this to his advantage by playing 10 0-0!. Following 10...Be7 11 dxe5 Nxe5 12 Bb3 Qxd1 13 Rxd1 0-0 14 Re1 Bd6 15 Bg5, S.Tiviakov-R.Ruck, Budva 2009, Black hasn't quite equalized and faces a tough defence against White's bishops.

8 dxe5 (Diagram 34)

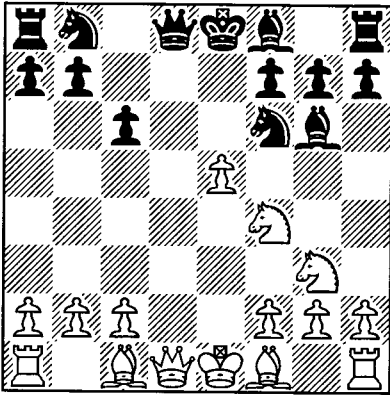


Diagram 34 (B)

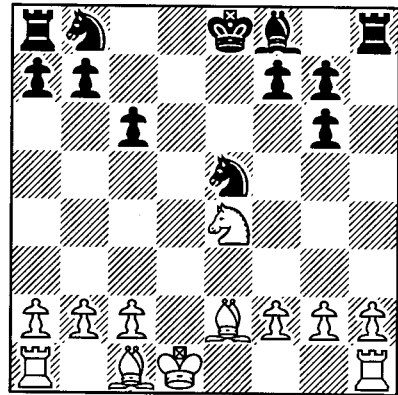


Diagram 35 (B)

The alternative is 8 Nxc6 hxc6 and now:

a) 9 dxe5 Qa5+! (9...Qxd1+ 10 Kxd1 Ng4 transposes to 8...Qxd1+) 10 Bd2 Qxe5+ 11 Qe2 Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 Nbd7 13 0-0 0-0-0! 14 Rad1 Nb6 was another Tal-Botvinnik game (Moscow 1964). In comparison to Tiviakov-Ruck, above, Black is much more actively placed and enjoys full equality.

b) 9 Be3 Nbd7 (Black is also very close to equality after 9...exd4 10 Bxd4 Bb4+ 11 c3 Qe7+ 12 Qe2 Bd6 13 0-0-0 Qxe2 14 Bxe2 Nbd7 15 Bc4 0-0 16 Rhe1 Rfe8, S.Tiviakov-E.Agrast, Bastia/Ajaccio 2008) 10 Bc4 Bd6 11 Qe2 Qe7 12 0-0-0 exd4 13 Bxd4 Qxe2

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14 Bxe2 Bc5! and with the exchange of bishops Black manages to equalize.

Although 8 dxe5 is perhaps not objectively stronger than 8 Nxc6, it does at least keep more tension in the position.

8...Qa5+

Black can also regain the pawn via 8...Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1 Ng4 10 Nxc6 hxc6 11 Ne4 Nxe5 12 Be2 (**Diagram 35**) but grandmasters have been less keen to play this position as Black. A key difference between this and the previous note is that it's not so easy for Black to arrange queenside castling. Also, White's king will find a nice home on c2. For example, 12...Be7 (the problem with 12...Nbd7 is 13 f4!, although maybe Black should still consider this and play 13...f5) 13 c3 O-O 14 Kc2 Nbd7 15 Bf4 Nf6 16 Nxf6+ Bxf6 17 h4 Rfe8 18 g3 Nd7 19 Rhe1 Nb6 20 Bf3 Rad8 21 Rxe8+ Rxe8 22 Be3, V.Yemelin-V.Burmakin, St Petersburg 1998. White can press for a long time in this endgame; it's certainly not a comfortable one to have to defend.

9 c3 Qxe5+ 10 Be2!

Definitely the most interesting, and the most challenging too in my opinion.

10 Qe2 Nbd7 11 Nxc6 hxc6 12 Bf4 Qxe2+ 13 Bxe2 is quite comfortable for Black as White's bishop pair cannot get going; e.g. 13...Nd5 14 Bd2 N7f6 15 Bf3 O-O-O 16 O-O-O Bc5, S.Tiviakov-V.Ivanchuk, Kallithea 2009.

10...Nbd7 11 O-O O-O-O 12 Qa4 Bc5 (**Diagram 36**)

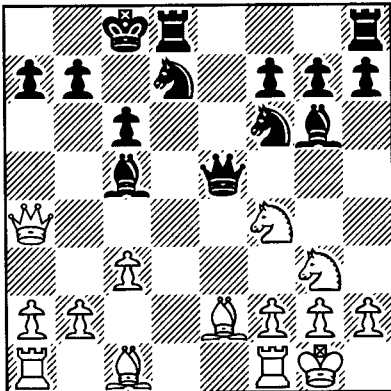


Diagram 36 (W)

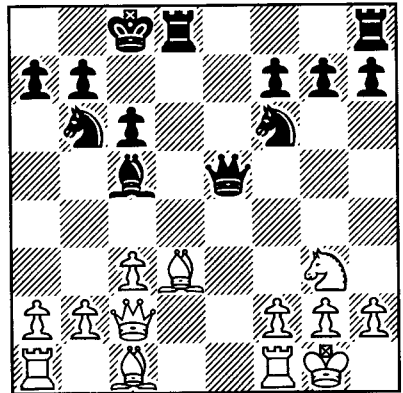


Diagram 37 (B)

13 Nd3!

A good move: White wins the bishop pair, but avoids giving Black counterplay in the form of an open h-file.

13 Nxc6 hxg6 14 Bf4 Qe7?? and now the standard combination 15 Qxc6+! bxc6 16 Ba6 mate would be a nice way to achieve a miniature. Unfortunately for White, Black can immediately utilize his newly activated rook by playing 14...Rh4!, and 15 Bxe5 Rxa4 16 Bxf6 Nxf6 17 b4 Bd6 18 Bc4 Ra3 (18...Be5!?) 19 Bxf7 Rxc3 only reaches an unclear endgame, T.Stepovaia Dianchenko-T.Molchanova, St Petersburg 2009.

13...Bxd3

Black has to avoid 13...Qd6? 14 Bf4!.

14 Bxd3 Nb6 15 Qc2 (Diagram 37)

This is a very interesting and unbalanced position. White can count on his bishop pair in an open position, and also a better protected king. On the other hand, Black will hope that his actively placed pieces will grant him a full share of the chances.

Let's follow the game M.Palac-B.Jobava, Kusadasi 2006:

15...Nbd5

In a previous game, Jobava had begun kingside activity with the sharp 15...h5!? and reached a decent position with level chances after 16 Bf5+ Kb8 17 Bg5 Rde8 18 Qd2 Nc4 19 Qf4 Qxf4 20 Bxf4+ Bd6, E.Sutovsky-B.Jobava, Rethymnon 2003. It's very possible that he feared an improvement over that line, and that's why he deviated here.

The most obvious try is the very sharp 16 b4!? (Diagram 38)

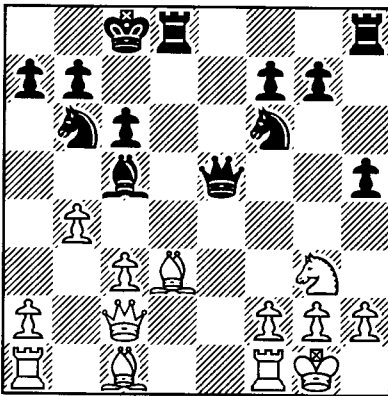


Diagram 38 (B)

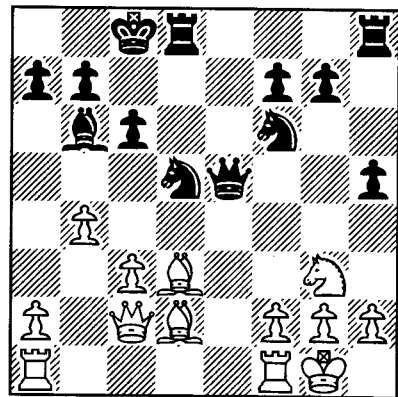


Diagram 39 (W)

and now:

a) 16...Bxb4 17 cxb4! Qxa1 18 Bf5+ Nfd7 (or 18...Nbd7 19 b5) 19 b5! Qe5 20 bxc6 bxc6, and here White can play 21 Bb2 or 21 Qxc6+ Kb8 22 Ba3 with dangerous play for the exchange in either case.

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b) 16...Bd6 17 Bd2 (17 f4!?) 17...h4!? 18 Rfe1! hxg3 19 Rxe5 gxh2+ 20 Kh1 Bxe5 21 Re1 Bc7 22 c4 Kb8 23 Bc3. It's still very complicated but not easy for Black to attack; e.g. 23...Ng4 24 Bf5!.

c) 16...h4!? is playable and leads to a very interesting position after 17 Bf5+ Kb8 18 bxc5 hxg3 19 hxg3! (White should avoid 19 cxb6 gxf2+ 20 Rxf2 Qxh2+ 21 Kf1 Qh1+ 22 Ke2 Rhe8+ which looks very dangerous) 19...Qxc5 20 Be3 Qa5. White's bishops enjoy the open spaces and Bh3 is an option to block the h-file. Overall I slightly favour White, but Black is active and the position still looks very unclear.

16 Bd2 h5 17 b4 Bb6 (Diagram 39)

Palac now played 18 Rfe1 and after 18...Qd6 19 Rad1 h4 20 Ne4 Nxe4 21 Bxe4 Bc7 22 g3 hxg3 23 hxg3 he later went on to win, although at this stage Black, with counterplay on the h-file, appears to be okay. The problem for White in the game was that the desirable 19 Nf5 could be met strongly by 19...Bxf2+! 20 Kxf2 Ng4+, and similarly 20 Nf5 by 20...Bxf2+! 21 Kxf2 Ng4+.

In view of this, 18 Rae1! might well be an improvement, because 18...Qd6 19 Nf5! is now not only possible but also very strong. 19...Qd7 is met by 20 Rd1! so that 20...Nxb4 loses to 21 cxb4 Qxd3 22 Ne7+ Kb8 23 Bf4+. White indirectly protects the d3-bishop and prepares c3-c4, which is very awkward for Black to meet. If 20...Bc7 21 c4 Nf4 22 Bxf4 Bxf4 23 g3 Be5 24 Rfe1 Black is under pressure.

Bearing this probable improvement in mind, Jobava's initial choice of 15...h5 could well be Black's best option.

Conclusion

Of course there's no way that 4...Bf5 is going to be refuted any time soon, but in my opinion 6 Nge2 represents a good alternative to the main line. White's plan is straightforward; it's also very dangerous against both inaccurate defence (for example 6...h6?! or 6...e6 7 Nf4 Nf6?!) and risky defence (6...Nd7).

Against the main line, 6...e6 7 Nf4 Bd6, I like the deceptively quiet 8 c3. Following 8...Nf6 9 h4 Qc7 White has a good choice between the logical 10 Qf3 and the interesting pawn sacrifice 10 h5!?. Both these moves lead to sharp, unclear positions where White can definitely fight for the advantage.

Against the solid 6...Nf6, my suggestion to liven things up after 7 Nf4 e5 is 8 dxe5 Qa5+ 9 c3 Qxe5+ 10 Be2! keeping the queens on the board. This opposite-side castling position following 10...Nbd7 11 0-0 0-0-0 12 Qa4 Bc5 13 Nd3! is very interesting, and requires accurate play from both players.

Chapter Four

Opposites Attract

John Emms

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Ng5 Nf6 6 Bd3 e6 N1f3 Bd6 8 Qe2 h6 9 Ne4 Nxe4 10 Qxe4 (Diagram 1)

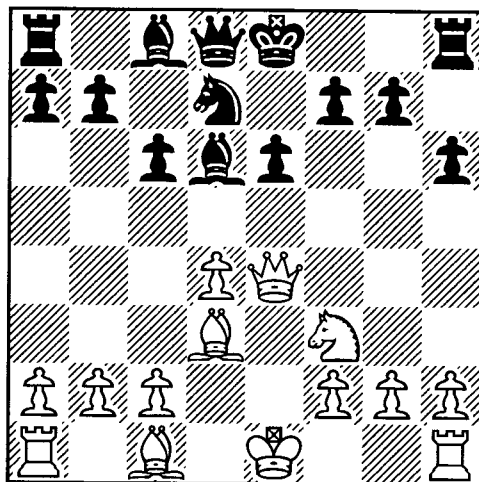


Diagram 1 (B)

In this chapter I've considered a little nuance for White in arguably the main line of the 4...Nd7 Caro-Kann. The main coverage here is of 10...Nf6 11 Qe2 Qc7, and now the idea of 12 O-O!? followed by the plan of b2-b3 and Bb2 (instead of the

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usual 12 Bd2 and queenside castling). To provide some balance I've also covered, in less detail, the main line 10...Qc7 11 0-0 and a recent novelty there.

Let's swiftly move on to a game which I think demonstrates some of the reasons the plan of short castling and a queenside fianchetto deserves consideration.

□ I.Madl ■ K.Koczó
Hungarian League 2006

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Ng5 Nf6 6 Bd3 e6 N1f3 Bd6 8 Qe2 h6 9 Ne4 Nxe4 10 Qxe4 Nf6 11 Qe2 Qc7 (Diagram 2)

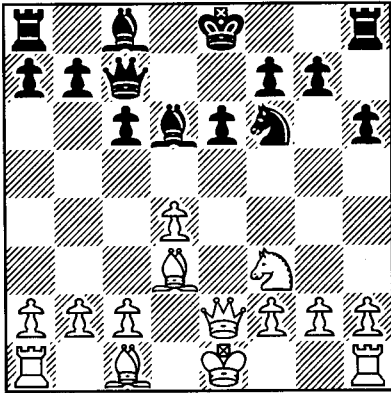


Diagram 2 (W)

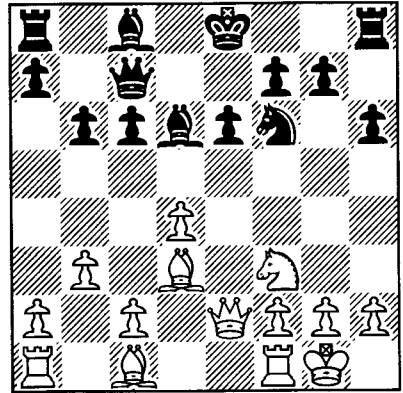


Diagram 3 (B)

Black's queen move, the main line after 11 Qe2, is almost always a precursor to queenside development with ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...0-0-0.

12 0-0!?

This is White's unusual idea; that is, if you are allowed to call castling kingside 'unusual'!

The main line, and by far the most popular choice, is 12 Bd2 b6 after which both sides castle queenside; for example, 13 0-0-0 Bb7 14 Ne5 0-0-0. There's also the critical alternative 14...c5!? 15 Bb5+ Ke7!.

Given that by playing 11...Qc7 Black is already suggesting that he will castle long

(although, as we'll see later, he's certainly not committed to this), why not sharpen the battle by heading in the other direction?

12...b6

Black continues with the normal plan. Alternatives will be covered later on.

13 b3!? (Diagram 3)

This a key move. With Black's pawn standing on h6, the f4-square under his control and his king heading to the queenside, White's dark-squared bishop won't find much action on its home diagonal. At first sight the bishop might seem passively placed on b2, sitting behind the d4-pawn, but there are three factors to remember:

1. If Black castles queenside, White will no doubt look to start a pawn-storm on that wing. An obvious idea is c2-c4 followed by either d4-d5 or c4-c5; in either case the bishop on b2 could easily spring into life.
2. Whichever side Black chooses to castle, the only real pawn break to challenge White's centre is ...c5, especially as he will want like to liberate his b7-bishop. However, this pawn move also liberates *White's* bishop.
3. Even though it is blocked by the d4-pawn, the b2-bishop does indirectly control the key e5-square.

13...Bb7 14 Bb2 0-0-0 15 Ba6!

White employs a typical anti-fianchetto plan, forcing the exchange of bishops. It could be argued that the b7-bishop is doing little at the moment, but counterplay with ...c5 was about to happen. In any case, the bishop is a key defender, and Black's king never looks completely safe once it's off the board.

15...Nd5 16 Bxb7+ Kxb7 17 g3 Ne7 18 c4! (Diagram 4)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! I like White's position. Because of Black's less-than-perfect defensive formation in front of his king, there are promising attacking possibilities involving a4-a5, c5 and even d5. In contrast, Black has only one active idea – the rather slow ...Ng6 followed by ...h5-h4.

18...Ng6 19 a4 Bb4

Trying to slow White down, but it doesn't work.

20 Rfc1

Planning c5, possibly followed by Rc4.

20 Ne1 intending Nd3 to chase away the bishop also looks promising. For example,

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20...h5 21 Nd3 Be7 22 a5 h4 23 axb6 axb6 24 c5! (intending Nb4) 24...b5? (24...Ra8 is more resilient) 25 Nb4 Ra8 26 d5! and Black is in real trouble in view of 26...exd5 27 Nxd5!.

20...Qe7

Perhaps Black should have played 20...h5 here, because 20...Qe7 fails to discourage White from pushing the c-pawn and Black just ends up losing time. After 21 c5 h4 22 Rc4 hxg3 23 hxg3 a5 24 cxb6 Qxb6 25 Rac1, with ideas of Rxc6 in the air, White is doing well. Even so, this still looks preferable to what Black gets (or doesn't get) in the game.

21 c5! (Diagram 5)

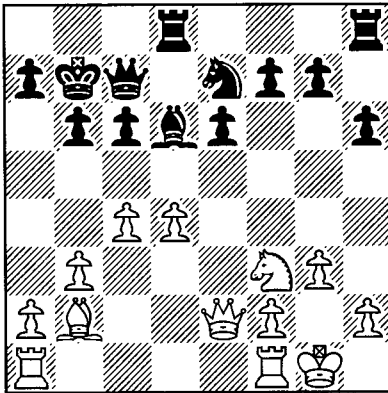


Diagram 4 (B)

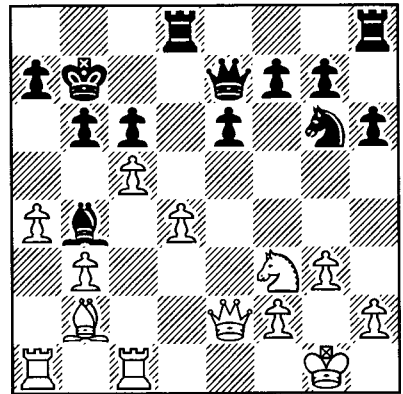


Diagram 5 (B)

Anyway!

21...Rd5

Black can't take the pawn: after 21...bxc5 22 dxc5 Bxc5 23 Qc4 Rd5 24 b4! Bxb4 25 Qxc6+ Kb8 26 Bxg7 there is no hope for survival.

22 Rc4! a5 23 cxb6 Kxb6 24 Bc3 Bxc3 25 Rxc3 Rc8 26 Rac1

Black's counterplay has completely failed to get off the ground, and all he is left with is the grim prospect of having to defend his shaky king.

26...Qb4 27 Qc2 Qd6 28 Rc5! Kb7 29 b4!?

The simple 29 Qc3! looks even stronger. For example, 29...Qc7 30 Nd2 Ne7 31 Nc4 Ra8 32 b4 Rxc5 33 bxc5 Nd5 34 Qe1, etc.

29...Rxc5

Probably 29...axb4 is a better defence, with White keeping a significant advantage after 30 Qc4 Rxc5 31 Qxb4+ Kc7 32 Rxc5 Rb8 33 Qc3.

30 bxc5 Qd5 31 Qc3 Ra8 32 Qb2+ Kc8 33 Rb1 Qd7 34 Nd2! Ne7 35 Nc4 Nd5 36 Nd6+ Kd8 37 Qc2

Decisively threatening both 38 Rb7 and the rather mundane 38 Qh7.

37...Nb4 38 Qh7 Kc7 39 Qxg7 f5 40 Qe5 Rg8 41 Nc4+ 1-0

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Ng5 Ngf6 6 Bd3 e6 N1f3 Bd6 8 Qe2 h6 9 Ne4 Nxe4 10 Qxe4 (Diagram 6)

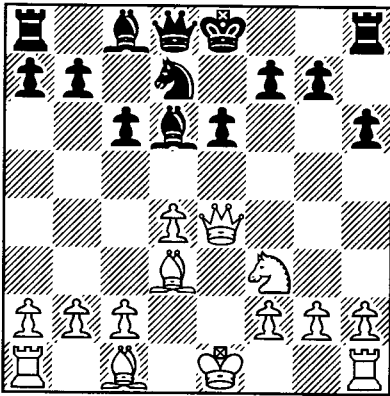


Diagram 6 (B)

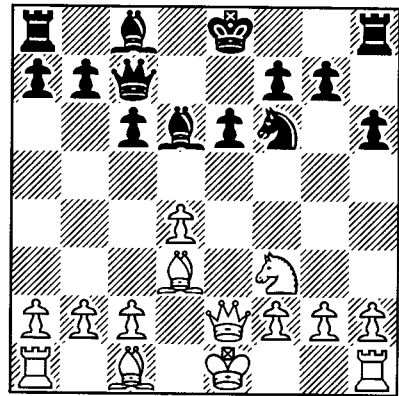


Diagram 7 (W)

Now we'll consider Black's two main options:

A: 10...Nf6

B: 10...Qc7

10...c5 has also been played, and by some very strong grandmasters (Karpov included), but the general consensus is that challenging the centre without developing first is risky. An important line is 11 0-0 Nf6 (11...Qc7 12 Re1 transposes to Line B) 12 Qh4! cxd4 13 Re1 Bd7 14 Nxd4 Qa5 15 Be3 and Black is already under pressure; the key point being that 15...0-0 is impossible because of 16 Bxh6.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

A) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Ng5 Ngf6 6 Bd3 e6 N1f3 Bd6 8 Qe2 h6 9 Ne4 Nxe4 10 Qxe4 Nf6 11 Qe2

11 Qh4 is also played here. The difference between this and 10...c5 11 0-0 Nf6 Qh4 is the possibility of Karpov's amazing 11...Ke7!, which in view of the threatened 12...g5 more or less forces the unclear pawn sacrifice 12 Ne5 Bxe5 13 dxe5 Qa5+ 14 c3 Qxe5+ 15 Be3.

11...Qc7 (Diagram 7)



DANGEROUS WEAPON: If 11...0-0 White should stick to the same plan: not of castling kingside, but of castling in the opposite direction to Black!

Very few Black players have been willing to enter this line, because after 12 Bd2 Qc7 (12...c5 13 dxc5 Bxc5 14 0-0-0 Qc7 reaches the same position) 13 0-0-0 c5 14 dxc5 Bxc5 (Diagram 8),

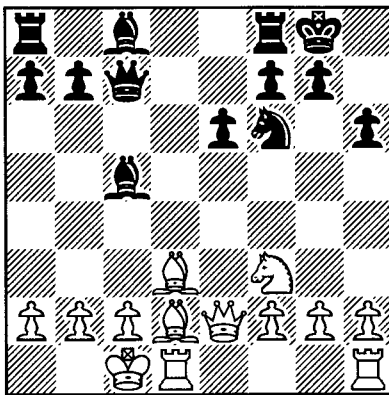


Diagram 8 (W)

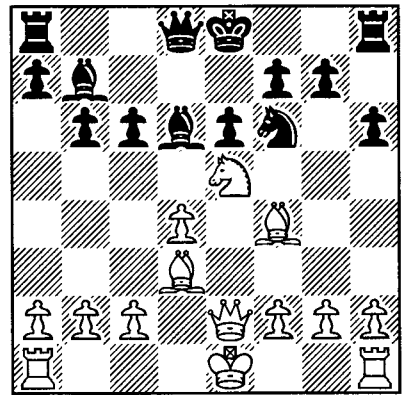


Diagram 9 (B)

White's attacking chances on the kingside are considerable, especially in view of the helpful hook on h6 which is just begging to be exploited by g4-g5.

15 Ne5 b6 16 g4! Bd6 17 f4 Bb7 18 Rhg1 Rac8 19 g5 hxg5 20 Rxg5 Ba6 21 Rxg7+! Kxg7 22 Qg2+ 1-0, V.Baklan-A.Matzat, Bad Zwosten 1999, is a typical grandmaster-versus-amateur crush. Of course Black can defend better, but overall this is a very promising line for White.

Other moves for Black include:

a) 11...c5 12 dxc5 Qa5+ (if 12...Bxc5 13 Bd2 Qb6 White can play 14 0-0-0 since 14...Bxf2?! 15 Rhf1 Bc5 16 Ne5 is very dangerous) 13 Bd2 Qxc5 14 0-0-0 Bd7 15 Kb1

0-0-0. Black has 'succeeded' in castling the same side as White, but the exchange of the centre pawns has somewhat exposed Black's king, and White enjoys a typical edge here. For example, 16 a3 (or 16 Be3 Qa5 17 Nd2) 16...Bc6 17 Be3 Qa5 18 Nd4!, M.Dorin-L.Moreda, Buenos Aires 1997.

b) 11...Qb6 more or less prevents long castling, but at a cost of misplacing the queen, who gets in the way of the desirable ...b6, ...Bb7 plan. After 12 0-0 0-0 13 b3! (this move again) Black's best option may well be 13...Qc7 but that would just leave him a tempo down on the variations considered in Line A2.

c) The most important alternative for Black is the immediate 11...b6, which normally transposes to the traditional main lines with Bd2 and 0-0-0. I'll offer two alternatives to this:

c1) 12 0-0 could transpose to Line A1, but doesn't have to: 12...Bb7 13 b3 0-0 (13...Qc7 is the transposition) 14 Bb2 c5 15 dxc5 Bxc5 16 Rad1 Qe7 17 Ne5 Nd5 (17...Rad8 looks safer) 18 Be4 (18 Qg4!? Nf6 19 Qh4) 18...Rfd8 was a position I reached against Keith Arkell at the 1993 British Championship. Black is close to equality, but 19 Nd3! would have caused a few problems. For example, 19...Ba3 (if Black allows the exchange on c5, the bishop pair promises White an edge) 20 Ba1! Rac8?! (20...Bc6! holds on) 21 c4! when both 21...Nf6 22 Bxf6! gxf6 23 Qg4+ Kf8 24 Bxb7 Qxb7 25 Qh4 and 21...Nb4 22 Bxb7 Qxb7 23 Qe5! spell trouble for Black.

c2) 12 Ne5 Bb7 13 Bf4!? **(Diagram 9)**.

White exploits Black's delay in playing ...Qc7 to develop the bishop more actively than normal. 13...Qc7 14 Bg3 0-0-0 15 0-0-0 (15 0-0 would be more consistent with our overall strategy, but it does kind of run into 15...h5! – we need to remain a little flexible!) 15...Rhe8 16 Kb1 Re7 (Black has to protect the soft spot on f7 before he can think about playing ...c5) 17 f4 Kb8 18 Rhe1 c5 19 dxc5 Qxc5 20 Bf2 (White could also leave the bishop on g3 and try to line up f4-f5 ideas; in any case White's strong knight on e5 promises him a small edge) 20...Qc7 21 Bh4 Ree8 22 g3 Rg8 23 Ng4 Be7 24 Bxf6 Bxf6 25 Nxf6 gxf6 26 Be4 Bxe4 27 Qxe4 and White is still a bit better, J.Friedel-J.Becerra Rivero, Tulsa 2008.

Let's return to the main move, 11...Qc7.

12 0-0

Black's two main options here are:

A1: 12...b6

A2: 12...0-0

A1) 12...b6

Here I'll look at some possibilities which weren't covered in the Madl-Koczo game.

13 b3 Bb7 14 Bb2 (Diagram 10)

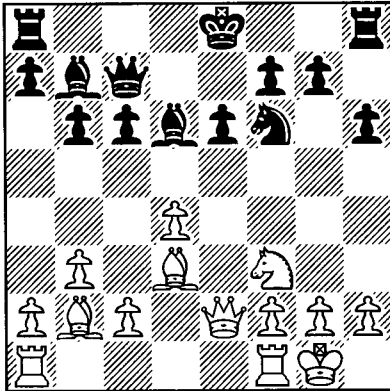


Diagram 10 (B)

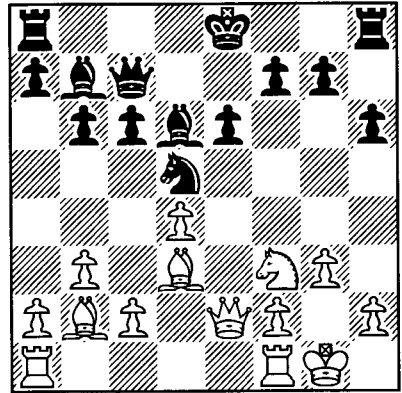


Diagram 11 (B)

14...0-0-0

Alternatively:

a) There's still time for Black to change his mind and castle short, and here 14...0-0 transposes directly to Line A2.

b) 14...c5!? looks riskier than 14...0-0 followed by ...c5, in view of 15 Bb5+!? Bc6?! 16 dxc5 Bxc5 17 Ne5 Bxb5 18 Qxb5+ Ke7 19 Rad1 which is uncomfortable for Black.

However, Black can improve on this by borrowing an idea from one of the main lines. After 15...Ke7! Black's king isn't as awkwardly placed as it initially looks, especially as ...Rfd8 followed by ...Kf8 is a natural plan; for example, 16 dxc5 Qxc5 17 Ne5 Rhd8 18 Rad1 Kf8, etc.

Strange as it may seem, objectively White might even be better off forgoing the check in favour of 15 dxc5 Qxc5 when 16 Rad1 0-0 17 Ne5 transposes to Line A2.

c) Another interesting possibility for Black is 14...Nd5!?, positionally threatening 15...Nf4 and intending to answer 15 Be4 with the annoying 15...Nf6. The threat is easily parried by 15 g3 (**Diagram 11**), but the resulting position may be critical.

It seems that Black is just going to lose valuable time when White plays c2-c4. Although this is certainly true, this loss is counterbalanced by the fact that White has been forced to weaken the long diagonal by playing g2-g3, which adds more power to the ...c5 advance. Here are some possible lines:

c1) 15...h5!? (g2-g3 also invites this pawn lunge, although of course it carries some risk) 16 c4 Nf6 and here I like the pawn sacrifice 17 c5! bxc5 18 dxc5 Bxc5 19 Rac1 with promising compensation. Also interesting is 17 Rac1 (preparing c4-c5) 17...c5 18 b4!, rather than 18 d5 0-0-0 19 dxe6? Qc6!.

c2) 15...0-0 16 c4 Nf6 17 Rad1 Rfe8 (17...c5 at once allows 18 d5! intending 18...exd5 19 Bxf6 gxf6 20 Nh4!; 17...Rfd8 is a decent alternative though) 18 Bb1 c5 19 dxc5 Bxc5 (now ...Qc6 is threatened; White wisely transforms the position via exchanges) 20 Bxf6! gxf6 21 Be4! (crucially forcing the exchange of Black's light-squared bishop) 21...Rad8, S.Berger-P.Boettcher, Berlin 2007. White can try to make something of Black's slight weakness on the kingside, but Black should be okay here.

Returning to 14...0-0-0, I feel that objectively White's strongest move here is 15 Ba6!, as we saw in the illustrative game Madl-Koczko. However, I also spent some time considering a sharper possibility for White:

15 c4!?

I think this idea is definitely worth considering, if nothing else to demonstrate some pawn-storming ideas on the queenside which also arise in similar positions.

A third possibility for White is 15 a4 a5 and only now 16 Ba6!. He could also play 16 c4 but after 16...c5! 17 dxc5 Bxc5 I suspect that the fixed structure on the queenside helps Black's defense.

15...c5 16 b4! (Diagram 12)

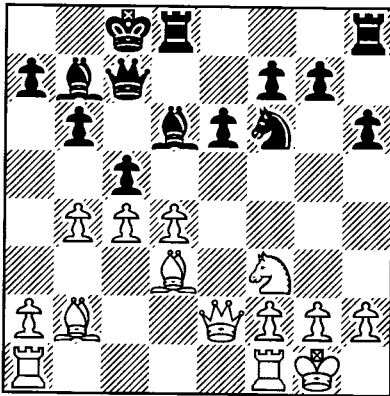


Diagram 12 (B)

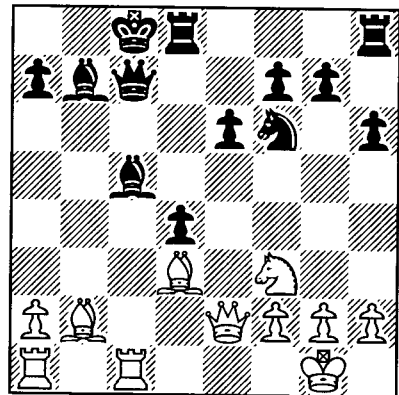


Diagram 13 (B)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! White's best chance of success is to play ultra-aggressively on the queenside. He must be willing to sacrifice pawns to open lines.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

After the mundane 16 dxc5?! Bxc5 Black suddenly becomes active and gains a considerable amount of counterplay on the kingside.

For example, 17 a3? intending b4 is rudely met by 17...Rxd3! 18 Qxd3 Ng4! 19 h3 (or 19 g3 Qc6) 19...Rd8 20 Qc3 Bd4!.

17 Ne5 is undoubtedly stronger, but I feel that 17...h5! still leaves Black with at least enough counterplay to be happy. It's positions like these which really do highlight the strength of 15 Ba6! to exchange those light-squared bishops.

Returning to **16 b4!**, my suspicion is that Black can find a way to defend and reach an 'unclear' position from here. However, there are some pitfalls to negotiate and over the board I feel that White's position is the easier to play. Below is just a brief summary of the many possible continuations:

a) 16...cxd4 17 c5! (a second pawn is sacrificed; we must open up lines!) 17...bxc5 (if 17...Bxf3 White wins the exchange with 18 cxd6! Bxe2 19 dxc7 Bxd3 20 cxd8Q+ Rxd8 21 Rfd1) 18 bxc5 Bxc5 (again 18...Bxf3 is met by 19 cxd6!) 19 Rfc1! (**Diagram 13**) with a difficult position for Black to defend. If 19...Kb8 there follows 20 Ba3 Rd5 21 Rab1! and Black is struggling with all sorts of pins.

b) 16...cxb4 17 c5! (again!) 17...bxc5 18 dxc5 Bxc5 19 Rac1 with dangerous pressure down the c-file. However, this looks like a better option for Black than the previous line, as there are some possibilities for counterplay down the open d-file.

c) 16...Bxf3!? 17 Qxf3 cxd4 18 c5! bxc5 19 bxc5 Bxh2+! (19...Bxc5 20 Rfc1 Rd5 21 Rab1 intending Ba3 looks very good for White) 20 Kh1 Be5 21 Rab1 Rd5 22 Ba3. White's attacking ideas include Ba6+ followed by Rb7, or just Bc4, but the position is still far from clear. For example, one defensive resource for Black is to give up the exchange (say, on d5) in order to get rid of one of White's bishops.

A2): 12...0-0 (Diagram 14)

Black abandons the typical plan of queenside castling and chooses to go short. This certainly seems to be a safer response than 12...b6, and the position now resembles a typical French Rubinstein (3...dxe4) where Black will aim to achieve equality with the ...c5 pawn break.

13 b3!?

Once again, the same idea! Because the bishop has a limited future on the c1-h6 diagonal, I like the plan involving a queenside fianchetto.

In practice White has more often played 13 c4 first. Here's a recent example: 13...b6 14 b3 Bb7 15 Bb2 c5 (or 15...Rfe8 16 Rad1 Rad8 17 Ne5 c5 18 dxc5 Bxc5 with an equal position, S.Ter Sahakyan-R.Zelcic, Plovdiv 2008) 16 dxc5 (16 Ne5!?)

16...Bxf3!? 17 Qxf3 Bxh2+ 18 Kh1 Be5 19 Bxe5 Qxe5 20 cxb6 axb6 with an unbalanced but roughly level position, B.Savchenko-K.Sasikiran, Moscow 2010.

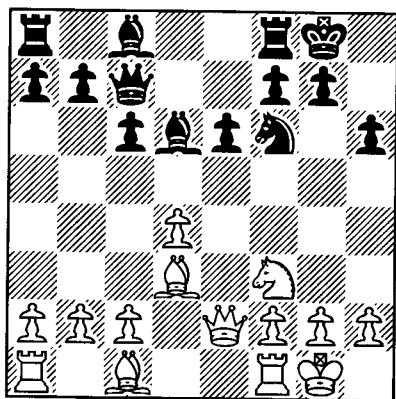


Diagram 14 (W)

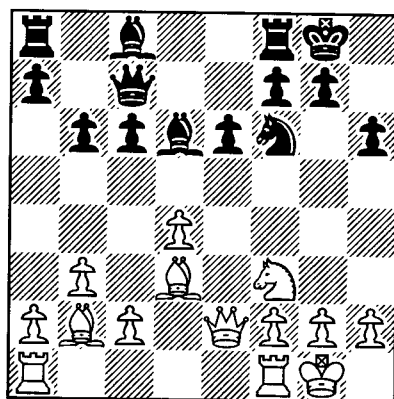


Diagram 15 (B)

I prefer delaying c2-c4 or even omitting it altogether in some lines. The pawn on c2 does give the d3-bishop solid support and thus reduces potential counterplay on the d-file.

A third option for White is to head towards a typical IQP position. For example, 13 Ne5 c5 14 c3 Rd8 15 Re1 b6 16 Bd2 Bb7 17 Rad1 cxd4 18 cxd4 Rac8 19 Bf4 with roughly level chances, C.Sandipan-H.Koneru, Visakhapatnam 2006.

13...b6 14 Bb2 (Diagram 15)

14 Ne5!? Bb7 15 Bb2 reaches the main line without allowing the possibility on Black's next move, while 14...c5 15 Bb2 cxd4 16 Bxd4 Bb7 17 Rad1 reaches a similar position.

14...Bb7

14...Nd5!? is an idea we've already come across in a similar position. Black plans either ...Nf4 or ...Nb4, and 15 Be4 is annoyingly met by 15...Nf6 (assuming Black is happy to repeat moves).

The critical response might well be 15 Qe4 f5 (15...Nf6 16 Qh4!) 16 Qe1!? Nf4 17 Rd1 Nxd3 18 Rxd3 with an unclear position. Black has succeeded in exchanging White's light-squared bishop, but at a cost of accepting permanent weaknesses on e5 and e6.

15 Ne5

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

I consider this to be the natural follow-up to White's previous play. Now that it's indirectly supported by the bishop on b2, the knight is a stronger piece on e5.

15 c4 would transpose to 13 c4, above.

15...c5 16 dxc5 Qxc5

16...Bxc5 is also met by 17 Rad1.

17 Rad1 Rad8 (Diagram 16)

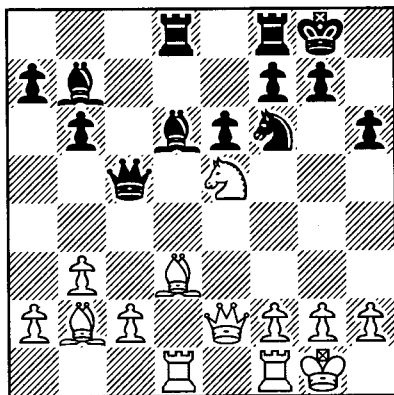


Diagram 16 (W)

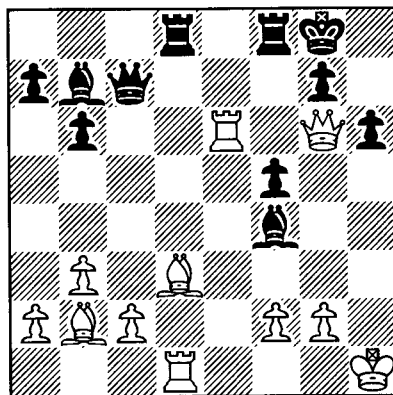


Diagram 17 (B)

Black is close to equality here. However, White has a slight initiative and I feel that his position is the easier to play. One idea to keep in mind is Ng4, opening up many attacking possibilities on the kingside.

The game P.Plakalovic-K.Petzold, Rethymnon 2003, provides an example of how White can slowly build up the pressure if Black defends inaccurately: 18 c4 Ba8 19 Rfe1 Rfe8 20 Bb1 Kf8?! (20...Qc7 looks more solid) 21 Rd3 Bb8? (a blunder; 21...Qc7 was still okay for Black) and here 22 b4 Qc7 23 Rg3 gave White a strong attack but 22 Rxd8! Rxd8 23 Nxf7! would have been crushing after 23...Kxf7 24 Qxe6+ Kf8 25 Bxf6 or 23...Qc6 24 Be4! Nxe4 25 Nxd8.

If White doesn't want to commit the c-pawn, another possibility is 18 Rfe1. If 18...Qc7 (18...Rfe8!? is probably wiser) White can play 19 Ng4!. For example, 19...Nxc4 20 Qxc4 Bxh2+ (20...f5 is met by 21 Qg6; or 20...e5 by 21 Kh1!? followed by f2-f4) 21 Kh1 f5 22 Qg6 Bf4 23 Rxe6 (**Diagram 17**).

Black is under pressure, with 24 Rde1 followed by Re7 being among White's threats. Notice how useful it is to have the c-pawn back on c2!

After 23...Qf7 24 Rf6! Qxc6 (24...Qe7 allows mate with 25 Bc4+ Kh8 26 Qxh6+! Bxh6

27 Rxf6) 25 Rxf6 Rf7 26 Rxf7+! Rxf7 27 Bc4+ Kh7 28 Rxd8 White has a big advantage since neither capture on g2 works: 28...Rxf2? 29 Rh8+ Kg6 30 Rg8+, or 28...Bxf2+ 29 Kg1 Rg4 30 Rh8+ Kg6 31 Rg8+, etc.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Ng5 Nf6 6 Bd3 e6 7 Nf3 Bd6 8 Qe2 h6 9 Ne4 Nxe4 10 Qxe4 Qc7

In the early days of this line, invariably Black played 10...Nf6 because there appeared to be far too much danger involved in allowing White the opportunity to play Qe4-g4. Nowadays, after the discovery of numerous defensive resources, 10...Qc7 is fully accepted as a playable option for Black.

11 0-0 (Diagram 18)

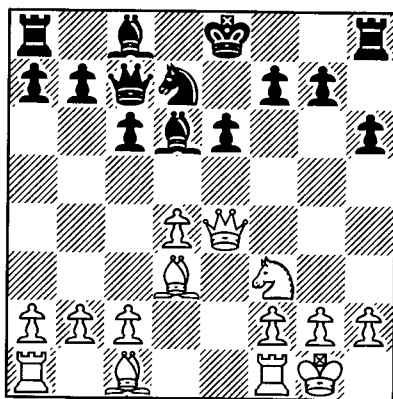


Diagram 18 (B)

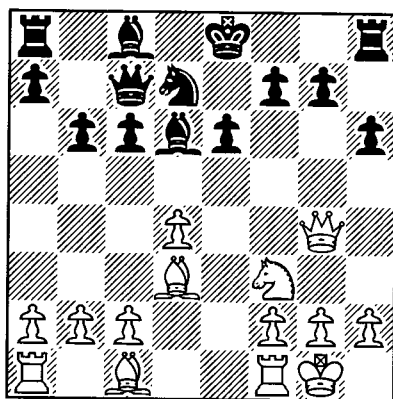


Diagram 19 (B)

The immediate 11 Qg4 is also played, but the text is slightly more flexible. In particular, it avoids the possibility of 11...Kf8 12 0-0 c5.

11...b6

11...c5 12 Re1! has scored well for White. For example, 12...Nf6 (or 12...c4 13 Bf1 Nf6 14 Qe2 b5 15 a4!, breaking Black's pawn chain, R.Ponomarev-R.Antonio, Istanbul Olympiad 2000) 13 Qh4 (preventing 13...0-0 in view of 14 Bxh6!) 13...Bd7 14 dxc5 Bxc5 15 Ne5 Bd6 16 Nxd7 Qxd7 17 Be3 with a clear edge for White, E.Rodriguez Guerrero-D.Garcia Roman, Mislata 2007. He has the two bishops, and Black still can't castle kingside.

11...Nf6 12 Qe2 transposes to Line A, but White can play more aggressively with 12 Qh4!?. Notice that the Karpovian 12...Ke7? is misguided here, as the h8-rook is no

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longer protected by a queen on d8, so ...g7-g5 ceases to be a threat. Instead Black is forced to prepare queenside castling. For example, 12...b6 13 Bg5!? Nh7 14 Bd2 Bb7 15 Ne5 Nf6 (or 15...Bxe5 16 dxe5 Qxe5 17 Bc3) 16 Qg3 Rg8 (J.Blokhuis-R.Akesson, Barcelona 2003) and here simply 17 Rfe1 looks reasonably promising for White; e.g. 17...c5 18 dxc5 Qxc5 19 a4!? 0-0-0 20 a5, or 17...0-0-0 18 b4.

12 Qg4! (Diagram 19)

White should play this move, not only because he can, but also because less active play may justify Black's decision to avoid ...Nf6. For example, a line such as 12 b3 Bb7 13 Bb2 c5 14 Qe2?! (14 Qg4 is still better) 14...0-0! demonstrates a key benefit of keeping the knight on d7. The typical 15 dxc5 is met strongly by the recapture 15...Nxc5! hitting the bishop on d3 and also threatening ...Bxf3 followed by ...Bxh2+.

12...Kf8

The main move. Black relinquishes castling rights but keeps his pawn structure intact. He will continue to develop normally (with ...Bb7, ...c5, etc), try to exploit the slightly awkward position of White's queen and hope to sort out issues regarding king safety and rook development later on.

Alternatively:

a) Initially 12...g5 was Black's main choice, but Anand's 13 Qh3 Rg8 14 Re1! (Diagram 20), with various sacrificial ideas, has seemingly put paid to this option. For example:

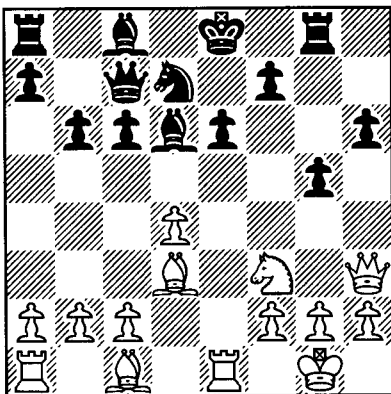


Diagram 20 (B)

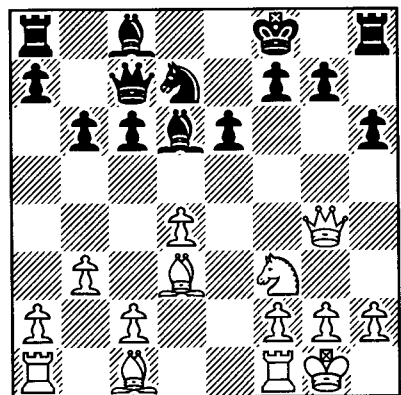


Diagram 21 (B)

a1) 14...Bf8 15 Qf5 Bg7 16 h4 Kf8 17 Qh3 Rh8 18 hxg5 hxg5 19 Qg4 c5 20 Bxg5 cxd4 21 Rad1! Bb7 22 Rxe6! fxe6 23 Be7+! Kxe7 24 Qxg7+ Kd6 25 Nxd4! Qc5 26 Bf5

26...Qe5 27 Nf3+ and White soon won in V.Anand-V.Bologan, Dortmund 2003.

a2) 14...g4 15 Qxh6 gxf3 16 Rxe6+! fxe6 (or 16...Be7 17 Rxe7+ Kxe7 18 Bf4 Qb7 19 Re1+) 17 Qxe6+ Be7 (if 17...Kf8 then 18 Bh6+) 18 Qxg8+ Nf8 19 Bg6+ Kd7 20 Bf5+ Ke8 21 Bh6 Qd6 (or 21...Bxf5 22 Re1) 22 Bxf8 Bxf8 23 Re1+ Kd8 24 Qf7 Be7 25 Bxc8 Rxc8 26 Qxf3 with four pawns for the piece, as analysed by Anand.

b) 12...Rg8 has been played a few times. White should probably accept the pawn offer with 13 Bxh6. I find it difficult to believe that Black gets enough compensation. For example, 13...Nf6 14 Qg5 Bf8 15 Qh4 gxh6 16 Qxf6 Bb7 17 Ne5 Bg7 18 Qf4 with some advantage for White, A.Shimanov-E.Meduna, Pardubice 2006.

c) Recently 12...Bb7!?, simply ignoring the threat to g7, was tried in the GM-clash P.Negi-P.Harikrishna, Wijk aan Zee 2010. After 13 Qxg7 Rf8 14 Re1 0-0-0 15 Kh1 Kb8 16 a4 Rg8!? 17 Qxf7 Rdf8 18 Qxe6 Nf6 19 Bxh6 Bc8 20 Qe2 all the computers will tell you that White is winning easily. They are probably right of course, but back in 'real life' the position remains ridiculously unclear. The game continued eventfully with 20...Rf7 21 Ne5 Ng4 22 Nxg4 Bxg4 23 f3 Bc8 24 f4 Rh7! 25 Bxh7 Qxh7 26 Qh5 Rg6 27 Re8! Rxh6 28 Qg4 Rxh2+ 29 Kg1 Rh1+ 30 Kf2 Qxc2+ 31 Ke3 Qb3+! 32 Ke4 Qc2+ 33 Ke3 Qb3+ with a draw by perpetual check.

It's strange to think that no other grandmasters had previously offered this gambit, and certainly it will be interesting to see whether there are further developments in the future with 12...Bb7.

13 b3 (Diagram 21)

Once again, White develops the bishop on b2!

13...Bb7

After 13...c5 14 Bb2 e5 White has most often played 15 dxc5 Nxc5 16 Bf5, probably with a slight edge.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! 15 d5 Nf6 16 Qh4 is a promising alternative. For example, 16...Bd7 (the tactical point is 16...Nxd5 17 Nxe5! Bxe5 18 Bxe5 Qxe5 19 Qd8+, while 16...Bg4 is met by 17 Ng5) 17 c4 Re8 18 Rae1 Nh7?! 19 Bxh7! Rxh7 20 Ng5 Rh8 21 f4! with a strong attack, A.Barnsley-J.Soza de la Carrera, correspondence 2006.

14 Bb2 Nf6 15 Qh4

A good example of the potential of Black's counterplay was demonstrated in the GM-clash E.Sutovsky-P.Svidler, Novi Sad 2009: 15 Qh3 Nd5! (we've seen this idea before, accepting a probable loss of time to induce White into weakening the long

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diagonal) 16 g3 c5 17 dxc5 Bxc5 18 Ne5 Nf6 19 Rae1 Rd8 20 Bg6? (this tempting move fails; instead White should play 20 Qh4) 20...Ba8! (a sneaky retreat, setting up ...Qb7) 21 Bh5 (21 Bxf7? loses immediately to 21...Qb7, while 21 Nxf7 Qb7 22 Re4 Nxe4 23 Nxd8 Ng5 24 Nxb7 Nxh3+ 25 Kg2 Ng5 will leave Black a piece ahead – Sutovsky probably miscalculated this line while considering 20 Bg6) 21...Nxh5 22 Qxh5 Qb7 23 Re4 Kg8! 24 Rfe1 Rd2 25 Nd3 f5 and Black won.



BEWARE! This is a sharp reminder of what can happen to White if he neglects to take Black's potential counterplay down the long diagonal seriously enough.

15...Nd5!

This is considered by most to be the best move.

The main alternative, 15...c5!?, is entertaining but ultimately probably a bit better for White. For example, 16 dxc5 Qxc5 17 Bxf6 (White can aim for a very slight positional edge with 17 Bd4 Qa5 18 Bxf6 gxf6 19 Be4 Bxe4 20 Qxe4) 17...gxf6 18 Qxf6 and here 18...Qh5! is Bologan's amazing idea (**Diagram 22**).

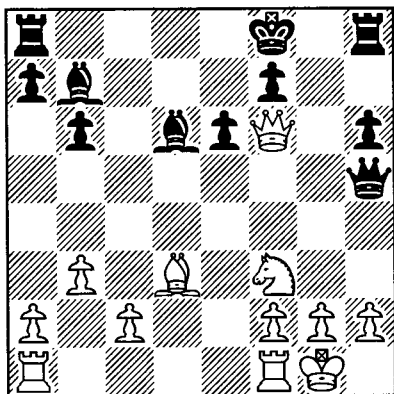


Diagram 22 (W)

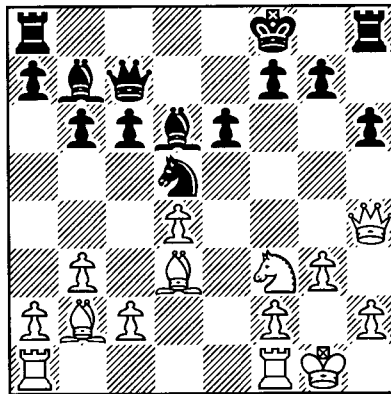


Diagram 23 (B)

Now:

- 19 Qxh8+ is inadvisable: 19...Ke7 20 Bg6! (the only move) 20...Qxg6 21 Qc3 Rg8 22 g3 Qe4 23 Kg2 and White is tied up, I.Nataf-J.Le Roux, Val d'Isere 2004.
- 19 Be2! Rg8 (or 19...Bxf3 20 h3 Qe5 21 Qxe5 Bxe5 22 Bxf3 Bxa1 23 Bxa8 with some winning chances for White, S.Karjakin-V.Bologan, Tomsk 2006) 20 g3 Rg6 21

Qh4 Qc5, A.Barnsley-H.Wunderlich, correspondence 2007. Here, as well as the game's 22 c4 Qc6 23 Rad1, White can consider the immediate 22 Rad1 and if 22...Qxc2 23 Rxd6 Qxe2 there follows 24 Nd4 Qe4 25 Qxe4 Bxe4 26 Re1.

16 g3!? (Diagram 23)

This novelty was played by Polish GM Bobras against his fellow countryman and grandmaster Wojtaszek, a game we will now follow. The motive behind 16 g3 seems obvious enough, to keep the knight out of f4. The main idea, however, is only revealed on the next move.

If Black now chooses 16...c5, we can compare it to 15 Qh3 Nd5 16 g3 c5. In this case, after 17 dxc5 Bxc5 18 Ne5 Nf6 the queen is undoubtedly better and more actively placed on h4 than on h3, and White may well keep the edge in a tense position after something like 19 Rfe1 Rd8 20 Rad1.

The main lines are 16 Rfe1 Nf4 and 16 Ne5 g5 17 Qg4 Nf4 (or 17 Qg3 Nf4) with unclear play in all cases.

16...Nb4

This seems to force off the light-squared bishop, since 17 Be4 can be met by 17...f5. However...

17 Be2!? Nxc2 18 d5! (Diagram 24)

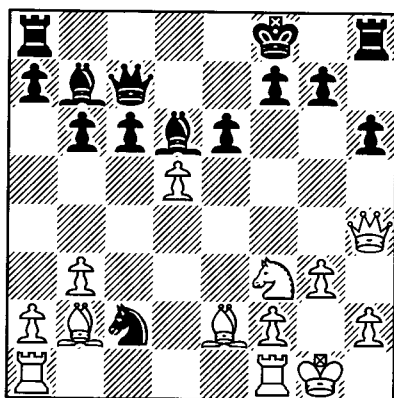


Diagram 24 (B)

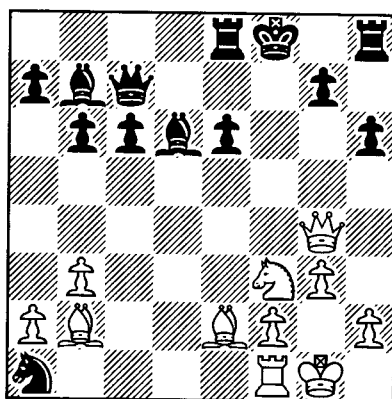


Diagram 25 (W)

White has to go 'all in'. If 18 Rac1? Nb4 Black will follow up with ...Nd5 which, as Neil McDonald on ChessPublishing.com puts it, 'would drain the energy from White's position'.

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18...Nxa1

18...cxd5? is impossible because of 19 Rac1 and the knight is lost.

If 18...exd5 19 Rac1 Nb4 20 Qg4 Rg8 21 a3 Na6 22 b4 and White definitely has compensation in view of his activity and Black's lack of coordination. One possible line could be 22...Re8 23 Rfe1 Re4 24 Qh5 Nb8?! (24...Qd8! looks better) 25 Bd3 Rxe1+ 26 Rxe1 Nd7? 27 Nh4! threatening various nasty things, including 28 Qxf7+!. Of course Black can defend better than this, and overall the positional just looks very unclear.

19 dxe6!

White is temporarily a whole rook down, but with the shield of the e6-pawn gone, Black's king will now come under genuine threat.

19...Re8

Another possible line is 19...Nc2 20 Qg4 fxe6 (if 20...f6 21 Nh4; or 20...Rg8 21 exf7 Qxf7 22 Bc4!) 21 Qxe6 Re8 22 Qf5+ Qf7 23 Qxc2 'with at least full compensation for the exchange' – McDonald.

20 Qg4 fxe6 (Diagram 25)

(P. Bobras-R. Wojtaszek Warsaw 2010) This is a critical position. Bobras played 21 Nh4 Kg8 22 Bc4?, but after 22...Bc8 23 Ng6 h5! 24 Qe4 Rh6 25 Rxa1 Qf7 Black had successfully unravelled and went on to convert his material advantage.

22 Qg6! is an improvement in this line. Black's best defence seems to be 22...Qf7!, after which 23 Qxf7+ Kxf7 24 Bh5+ Ke7 25 Ng6+ Kd7 26 Nxh8 Rxh8 27 Bxg7 Rg8 28 Bxa1 looks equal.

However, White has a much stronger option than 21 Nh4. By playing 21 Rd1!, as suggested by McDonald, White doesn't commit the knight, threatens Rxd6 and has a myriad of attacking possibilities. For example:

- a) 21...Re7 22 Nh4 h5 23 Ng6+ Kg8 24 Qd4!.
- b) 21...Rd8 22 Nd4 Bc8 23 Nxc6!.
- c) 21...Rg8 (defending g7, but Black no longer has the resource of ...h5 followed by ...Rh6) 22 Bxa1 c5 23 Bb5 Re7 24 Nh4 'and Black's game is tottering' – McDonald.

Conclusion

After 10...Nf6 11 Qe2 Qc7, I think that 12 O-O followed by b2-b3 and Bb2 is an interesting alternative to the main line. In fact, if Black goes ahead with the usual

plan of ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...0-0-0 I'm convinced that White has good chances of gaining an advantage with either the logical Ba6 plan (as in Madl-Koczó) or the more complicated pawn-storming idea of c4, b4, etc.

Kingside castling looks like a much safer bet for Black, after which the position resembles a Rubinstein French. White can aim for a slight edge with the plan of b2-b3, Bb2 and Ne5. After ...c5 and an exchange of pawns in the centre, Ne5-g4 becomes an attacking possibility. A key defensive resource that both sides must remember is ...Nd5, threatening ...Nf4 and accepting a loss of time in order to induce a weakness with g2-g3.

10...Qc7 11 0-0 b6 12 Qg4! leads to very sharp play. Theoretically Black seems to be holding his own at the moment, as long as he chooses 15...Nd5!. However, Bobras's 16 g3!? Nb4 17 Be2 is an interesting gambit which demonstrates that even in this main line White's possibilities are far from exhausted.

Chapter Five

The Subtle 4...a6

Jovanka Houska

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 a6!? (Diagram 1)

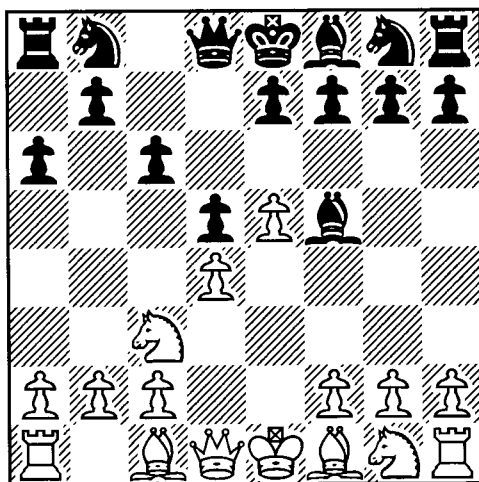


Diagram 1 (W)

4 Nc3 in the Advance Variation leads to some of the most hair-raising lines of the Caro-Kann. 4...e6 is accompanied by long lines of theory and often Black has to suffer an onslaught of the white pawns. Chess is in a modern age of massive technological advancements, and there is now the risk that the latest *Rybka, Fritz* or

Shredder, in combination with the human mind, may uncork a devastating novelty that will leave you hopelessly and utterly lost... against anyone!

Of course 4...e6 is the most principled move and those sufficiently prepared and confident should definitely lock horns with White in these main lines. However, for those who wish to play a trickier game, with some slight nuances compared to the main line, 4...a6 may be the move for you.

So what does 4...a6 have going for it? Well, it is most definitely not a move to feel embarrassed about. In fact, it boasts some notable adherents: former world champion Anatoly Karpov and grandmasters Alexander Morozevich, Alexander Riazantsev, Vadim Malakhatko and Vladimir Burmakin to name just a few.

The big idea of 4...a6 is actually very simple: Black prepares the typical launch of ...c5 counterplay by eliminating the possibility of any Bb5 or Nb5 ideas. Hitting out rapidly in the centre is very much standard in the normal 4...e6 lines, but there White can use the b5-square to slow Black down. For example, a typical continuation in the main line is the following:

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 e6 5 g4 Bg6 6 Nge2 c5 7 h4 h5 8 Nf4 Bh7 9 Nxh5 cxd4

Here White can either play 10 Qxd4 Nc6 11 Bb5 or 10 Nb5, in both cases making use of the b5-square. In the main line with 4...a6, Black no longer has to worry about these possibilities.

Let's take a look at two games with 4...a6 and see how things can pan out.

□ **G.Filev** ■ **A.Braun**

European Championship, Plovdiv 2008

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 a6 5 Be3 (Diagram 2)

The principled and natural reaction to 4...a6. White uses the extra move to further his development whilst still very much keeping open the possibility of a kingside attack.

5...e6 6 g4!?

When White has played 4 Nc3 in the Advance Variation, one can usually expect g2-g4 to be thrown in at some stage. White hopes that by seizing as much space as possible on the kingside, he will make it as difficult as possible for Black to develop his pieces. Of course there is also the issue of intimidating the opponent by rolling forwards with the pawns!

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6 Nge2 Nd7 7 Ng3 Bg6 8 Bd3 Ne7 9 Qd2 c5 10 dxc5 Bxd3 11 cxd3 Nxe5 isn't too bothersome for Black, B.Ling-S.Kolar, Ostrava 2002.

6...Bg6 7 Nge2

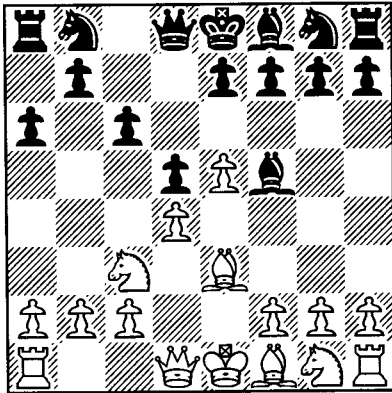


Diagram 2 (B)

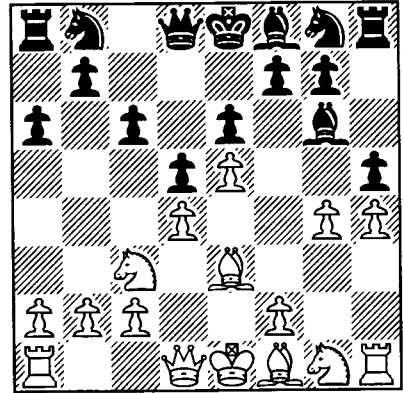


Diagram 3 (W)

The main choice. White plans to reach one of the major positions in the 4 Nc3 variation, but with Be3 and ...a6 thrown in. At first sight, Be3 appears to be a more useful move than ...a6. After all, one is taught that in the opening development is vital, and attacking with many pieces is better than attacking with just a few. However, as previously mentioned there is a key point to Black's strategy. White's play is often based on Bb5+ or Nb5, which Black has handily taken the time out to prevent.

The immediate 7 h4 allows Black to determine the pawn structure with 7...h5! **(Diagram 3).**

For example, 8 g5 c5 9 Nge2 Nc6 10 Nf4 Nge7 (this move is key – it is not necessary to retreat the bishop!) 11 Nxg6 Nxg6. There is considerable pressure against the d4-pawn. For instance, after 12 Bg2 Black has the visually stunning 12...cxd4 13 Bxd4 Nxh4! 14 Rxh4 Qxg5 and Black recovers the piece with added interest (15 Rh2 is met by 15...Qf4!).

If 12 Bd3 Black has 12...cxd4! 13 Bxg6 dxc3 14 Bd3 cxb2 15 Rb1 d4 16 Bd2 Qd5 17 Rh3 Ba3 and White is already lost. Finally, after 12 Be2 cxd4 13 Bxd4 Qc7 the e5-pawn will fall.

7 Bg2 is swiftly met by 7...h5. For example, 8 h3 hxg4 9 hxg4 Rxh1 10 Bxh1 Nd7 11 Nge2 f6 (undermining the pawn chain) 12 Nf4 Bf7 13 Qe2 fxe5 14 dxe5 Qc7 and

Black soon won the e5-pawn in B.Le Roy-F.Doettling, Evry 2008.

If White, after starting so aggressively with g2-g4, chooses to continue meekly, Black should try to determine the pawn structure as soon as he can.

7...c5! (Diagram 4)

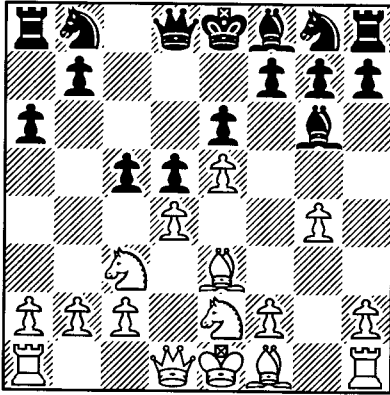


Diagram 4 (W)

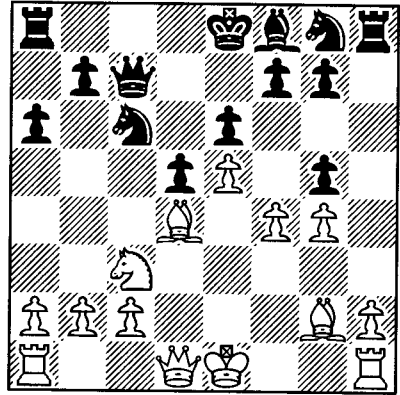


Diagram 5 (W)

The simplest way of playing the position: hit at the base of the pawn chain!

7...f6 is GM Burmakin's speciality, but I like the main line the best.

8 h4

This is probably the best try, although things are by no means clear. Alternatively:

a) 8 f4 and 8 dxc5 are both investigated in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

b) 8 Nf4 is simply met by 8...Nc6 which makes it difficult for White to find a good move. 9 dxc5 loses to 9...d4, and after something like 9 h4 Black has the convincing 9...cxd4 10 Bxd4 Nge7. The bishop is not yet under threat as after 11 h5 Black has 11...Bxc2; and after, say, 11 Rc1 Black plays the calm 11...Nxd4 12 Qxd4 Nc6 13 Qd1 Nxe5 14 h5 Be4 and White's position has fallen apart.

White is forced to play 9 Nxc6 hxg6 10 Bg2 cxd4 11 Bxd4 Qc7, and after the defensive 12 f4 Black can undermine the centre with 12...g5! (Diagram 5).



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Even though Black has not yet developed many pieces, his sound pawn structure holds his position together very nicely.

After 13 fxg5 Nge7 Black will regain the e-pawn and emerge with a fantastic

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structure, while White is left regretting his opening choices. Alternatively, after the tempting 13 f5 Nxd4 14 Qxd4 Bc5 White's position is just too loose. Following 15 Qa4+ b5! 16 Nxb5 Qxe5+ 17 Kd2 Kf8 Black sidesteps the attack and it is White who will suffer the consequences of having an open king.

8...h5

The best reaction to h2-h4. In the grand scheme of things, losing the h5-pawn does not matter. White will not only have to sacrifice time and energy to win it, but once the knight lands on h5 it is actually very difficult for it to rejoin the action. This is especially relevant as the battle is often won in the centre.

9 Nf4 Ne7!? (Diagram 6)

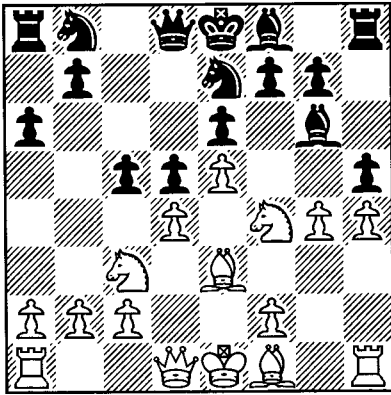


Diagram 6 (W)

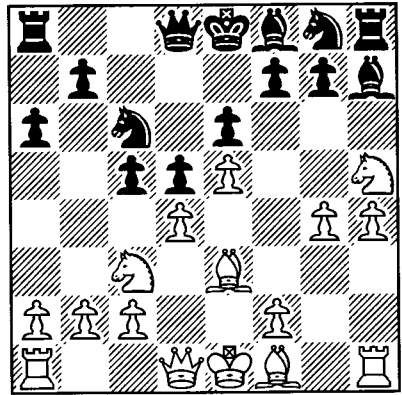


Diagram 7 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This worked out very well in the game, and I think it is perhaps slightly trickier than the main move.

9...Bh7 is the main line. As in the usual 4...e6 variation, Black gives up the h-pawn in order to tie the knight to the kingside. The rationale is that the pawn can be regained at any time if White wishes to get the h5-knight back into the game. Some lines:

a) 10 g5 does not achieve anything: 10...cxd4 11 Bxd4 Nc6 12 g6 (tempting, but Black's position is a rock) 12...Bxg6 13 Nxxg6 fxxg6 14 Ne2 Qc7 (the queen accepts a defensive role for the time being) 15 Nf4 Qf7 16 Qd2 Nge7, D.Sengupta-G.Prakash, Mumbai 2003. Once Black has re-routed the knight to f5 he shouldn't have any problems at all.

b) 10 N_xh5 N_c6 (**Diagram 7**) piles pressure on the d4-pawn:

b1) The move Rh1-h3 is often seen in lines with 4...e6 but here 11 Rh3 doesn't make too much sense – the rook is not heading anywhere worthwhile: 11...cxd4 12 Bxd4 Nge7 13 Ne2 Nb4! (Black targets a new soft spot – the pawn on c2) 14 Rc3 Rc8 15 Bc5 and now Black had the stunning 15...Rxc5! 16 Rxc5 Nec6. White is forced to return the exchange but is still struggling against Black's initiative: 17 Rxc6 Nxc6 18 Nd4 Qb6 19 Nb3 Bg6 and with ...Nb4 in the works Black was soon winning in E.Inarkiev-D.Palo, Halkidiki 2001.

b2) 11 Bg2 Nge7! and Black will regain the sacrificed pawn after, say, 12 Ne2 cxd4 13 Bxd4 Ng6. Or if 12 Qd2 Black has the simple 12...Nb4 13 Rc1 cxd4 14 Bxd4 Nec6 and White's exposed king will lead to trouble.

10 N_xg6

Just to show how easily White can go wrong, after 10 Bg2? cxd4 11 Bxd4 Nbc6 the bishop on d4 and the pawn on g4 are looking extremely vulnerable. Following 12 N_xg6 N_xg6 13 g5 Q_c7 Black has a fantastic position, not to mention a material advantage very soon.

If 10 g_xh5, 10...Bf5 is simple and good.

10...N_xg6 11 g_xh5

The aggressive 11 Bg5 is well met by 11...Be7 12 g_xh5 cxd4! (12...Nf8 is the fallback option) 13 h_xg6 (13 Qxd4 Nc6 14 Qd1 Ngxe5 is better for Black) 13...dxc3 14 g_xf7+ Kf8 15 Bxe7+ Qxe7 16 bxc3 Nc6 17 Qe2 Rxh4 18 Rxh4 Qxh4 and Black is slightly better.

11 g5 is another logical move, but it fails to 11...cxd4 12 Bxd4 Nc6 and the e-pawn drops.

11...N_xh4 (**Diagram 8**) 12 f4?

Positionally this move looks very suspect: if White doesn't manage to start active operations then Black will just be left with a lovely outpost on f5. Alternatively:

a) If 12 dxc5, then 12...Nf5 is more than good enough to win back the pawn with added benefits.

b) 12 Bh3, trying to prevent the knight reaching f5, fails to 12...cxd4 13 Bxd4 Nc6 and because of all the possible forks White's position is very shaky.

c) 12 Qg4 was played recently against me. Black can reply with 12...cxd4! forcing 13 Bxd4 (the point is that if 13 Bg5 Black has the tactical strike 13...Qxg5!) 13...Nf5 14 0-0-0, as in M.Burrows-J.Houska, British League 2010. Here Black should play 14...Nc6 (rather than my 14...Nxd4) 15 Be3 Nxe5 16 Qa4+ (16 Qe2 Nxe3 17 fxe3 Bb4

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gives Black a very satisfactory position) 16...Nc6 (the safest) 17 Qg4 Nxe3 18 fxe3 Qb6 19 Bg2 and now in order to safely castle without giving back the pawn, Black should embark on the following queen manoeuvre: 19...Qb4 20 Qg5 Qe7 21 Qg4 f5 followed by ...0-0-0.

12...Nc6! 13 Bf2?

13 dxc5 was forced, although then 13...d4 14 Bf2 dxc3 15 Bxh4 Qxd1+ 16 Rxd1 Rxh5 is more than good enough for Black.

13...cxd4! 14 Bxh4 Qa5 (Diagram 9)

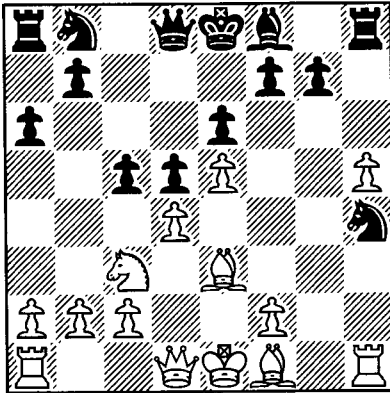


Diagram 8 (W)

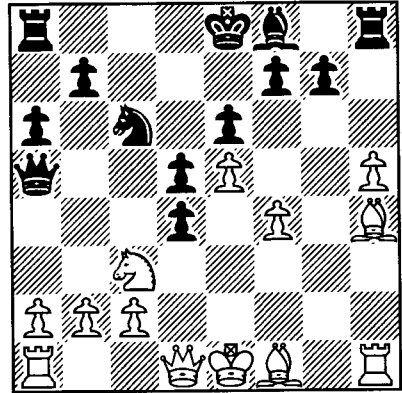


Diagram 9 (W)

Regaining the piece. Now Black is much better.

15 Rh3 dxc3 16 bxc3 Be7 17 Bf2 0-0-0

White's two bishops are handicapped by the poor structure and the fact that they must always guard their monarch.

18 Qg4 Qa4!

White's pieces are scattered around the board with no purpose whatsoever, so Black can afford to be materialistic.

19 Be2 Rhg8 20 Kf1

White rushes to get his king somewhere safe but it's no good.

20...Qxc2 21 Bd3 Qa4 22 Re1 Kb8 23 Rg3 d4!? (Diagram 10)

In standard fashion, Black opens up the position to get at the white king, but perhaps the materialistic 23...Qxa2 might be preferable as it's not clear what White is

doing. 24 Bh7 fails to 24...Rh8 25 Qxg7 Qc4+ 26 Kg2 Bh4 and Black is winning, while after 24 Kg1 it's now time for 24...d4!

24 cxd4 Nxd4 25 f5

Now it gets messy, but the unsafe position of White's king remains a significant factor.

25...exf5 26 Bxf5 Bc5 27 Rd3 g6!! (Diagram 11)

A critical blow to White, whose position is about to fall apart.

28 hxg6

28 Be4 is the only way for White to continue, but even so after 28...gxh5 29 Qf4 Rg4! he is in trouble. For example, 30 Qf6 (or 30 Qxf7 Rxe4 31 Rxe4 Qb5 32 Ree3 Nc2, winning) 30...Rd7! 31 e6 Nxe6 32 Qe5+ Ka8! intending to meet 33 Bxc5 with 33...Qb5 when 34 Qh8+ is not a problem due to 34...Rd8!

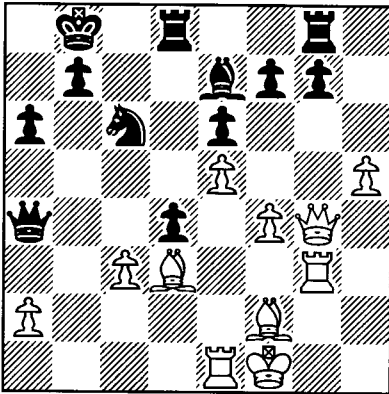


Diagram 10 (W)

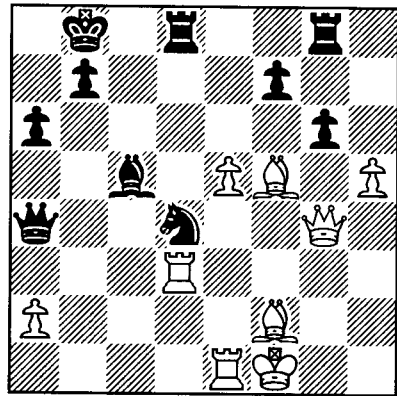


Diagram 11 (W)

28...fxg6 29 Be4 Rgf8

Once the heavy pieces join in the attack, White's king is in big trouble.

30 Qg3 Ka7?!

30...Rxf2+ 31 Qxf2 Rf8 32 Qxf8+ Bxf8 would have been a simpler win.

31 Kg2 Qxa2 32 Rf1 g5 33 Rc3 Bb6 34 Qe3 Rf4 35 Rc2 Rg4+ 36 Kh3 Rh8+ 37 Kxg4 Qe6+ 0-1

White is being checkmated.

□ A.Fier ■ K.Rasmussen
Beijing (rapid) 2008

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 a6 5 Nce2 (Diagram 12)

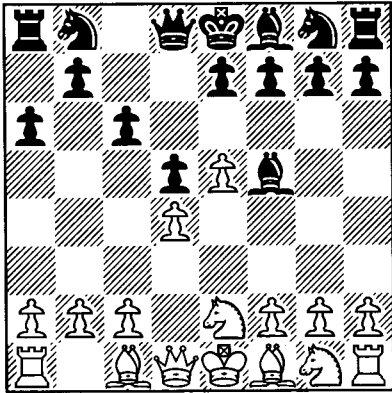


Diagram 12 (B)

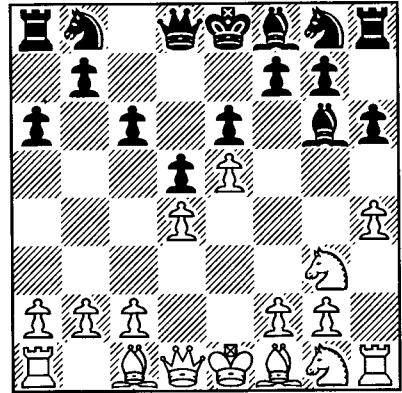


Diagram 13 (W)

The other critical option for White. Black has spent a move on the innocuous-looking 4...a6, so in turn White takes time out to bolster the pawn centre while also relocating the knight to the kingside. This line is more solid in the sense that White is only playing for an advantage in space rather than an all-out attack.

5...e6 6 Ng3

6 f4?! is dubious. Moves such as this never make much sense. By hurrying with the f-pawn, White limits the capabilities of his dark-squared bishop. After 6...c5 7 Ng3 Bg6 8 Nf3 Nc6 9 c3 cxd4 10 Nxd4 Nxd4 11 Qxd4 Ne7 12 Qf2 Nf5, as played in I.Brikov-A.Kuzin, Tula 2004, Black intends to exchange most of the minor pieces and dominate the c-file.

6...Bg6 7 h4!

Again the most challenging.

If White doesn't establish a space advantage but develops with 7 Nf3, Black should continue with the natural 7...c5. For example, 8 h4 (or 8 dxc5 Bxc5 9 Bd3 Nc6 and after the exchange on g6 Black should play ...Nge7 followed by ...Qb6) 8...h5!? (now that the knight stands on the inferior f3-square, Black has the opportunity to stop

the pawn on h4) 9 Be2 Nc6 10 c3 cxd4 11 cxd4 Qa5+ 12 Bd2 Bb4 13 Rc1 Nge7 with a very comfortable position for Black.

7...h6 (Diagram 13)

7...h5 is riskier. After all, the h5-square can become a bit of a sore point. A. Shirov - A. Morozevich, European Team Ch., Crete 2007, continued 8 Nh3 c5 9 Nf4 Ne7 10 c3 cxd4 11 cxd4 Nbc6 12 Be2 Qb6 13 Be3. The opening moves have been very logical, but Black still faces the issue of where to castle and how to develop the bishop on f8. In the game Morozevich attempted to resolve the situation dynamically, but after 13...Bf5 14 Nfxh5 Qxb2 15 0-0 Qa3 16 Bg4 Bxg4 17 Qxg4 0-0-0 18 Qf3! g6 19 Qxf7 gxh5 20 Qxe6+, with open files against the black king and a strong passed pawn, the position is probably favourable for White.

8 N1e2!

White prefers to avoid h4-h5 and keep the bishop on g6, with the logic that once Nf4 arrives it does so with tempo. In addition, this keeps open ideas of a knight hop into h5.

If 8 h5?! Bh7 White should follow up with 9 Bd3 otherwise Black is left with a laser-like bishop on h7. There follows 9...Bxd3 10 Qxd3 c5 11 dxc5 (if 11 c3 Nc6 12 Be3 cxd4 13 cxd4 Nb4 14 Qb3 Rc8 and White has a few problems to solve with regards to his king safety) 11...Bxc5! 12 Nf3 Qb6! (Diagram 14).

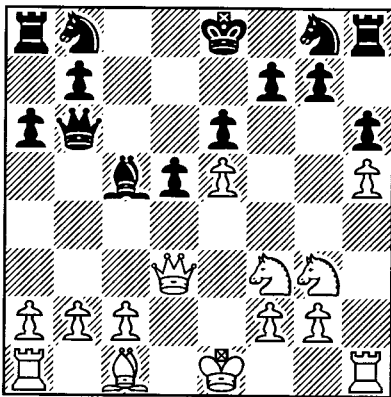


Diagram 14 (W)

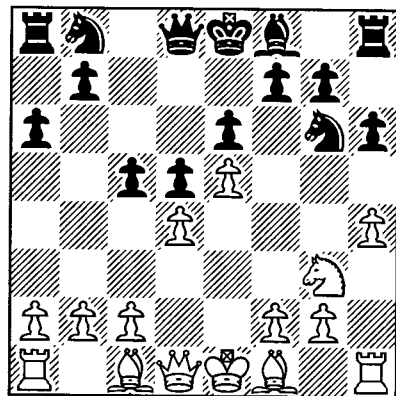


Diagram 15 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This is the correct move order. In order to make progress White is forced to castle kingside – a highly risky strategy!

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12...Ne7 was the choice of the very strong Spanish GM Vallejo Pons, but 13 Be3 would allow the white king to reach safety on the queenside. The game actually continued 13 0-0 Nd7 14 Bf4 Qc7 15 Rfe1 0-0-0 leading to a very complicated position, E, Gerigk-F. Vallejo Pons, Heidelberg 2009.

12...Qb6! is stronger: 13 0-0 Ne7 14 a3 Qc7 15 b4 (a very risky move in the long-term; if White fails to gather momentum, then positionally he will be lost) 15...Ba7 16 Bb2 Nd7 17 Rac1 Rc8 18 Rfd1 Qc4 and Black will establish a vice-like grip on the c4-square to give him a solid advantage, M. Molner-E. Gaillard, New York 2007.

8...c5

Black is not afraid of swapping the bishop for a knight, so after 8...Ne7 9 Nf4 he can play 9...c5!? 10 Nxc6 Nxc6 (**Diagram 15**).

Now:

a) 11 h5 Ne7 and if White now grabs the pawn with 12 dxc5 Nd7 13 b4, banking on opening up the position for his bishop pair, Black should begin undermining the position with 13...a5!. For example, 14 c3 axb4 15 cxb4 Nc6 16 Qd2 (it is something of a success for Black if White has to defend the b4-pawn with the queen; if 16 Bd2 Ndx5 17 Be2 Be7 and Black's strong structure is more than a match for White's bishop pair) 16...b6 17 b5 Na5 (threatening 18...Nb3 so White is forced to commit his pawns even further) 18 c6 Nxe5 19 Qd4 Qc7 20 f4 (after 20 Bf4 Bd6 Black should not have any problems – he has active pieces and the c6-pawn is nicely contained) 20...Nec4 gives Black a very pleasant position. He will play for ...f5, fixing the pawn weakness on f4 and ensuring the development of the dark-squared bishop on f8.

b) 11 c3 cxd4! (probably the best reply) 12 cxd4 Bb4+ (**Diagram 16**).

This is the point – a set of bishops are exchanged off: 13 Bd2 Qb6! 14 a3 Bxd2+ 15 Qxd2 Nc6 16 Rd1 0-0 17 h5 (Black has a very comfortable position because it's difficult for the white bishop to cross to the dangerous b1-h7 diagonal) 17...Nge7 18 Be2 Na5!? and Black goes on the offensive. If 19 Bd3 Rfc8 20 Rh4 Nc4 21 Bxc4 Rxc4 22 Rg4 Kh7 Black has good control of the c-file and it is very difficult for White to attack with anything other than his rook.

c) 11 Bd3 cxd4 (Black does not waste time worrying about weakening the pawn structure; the g6-pawn will fall but Black gains a more important asset – a thorn on d4!) 12 Bxc4 fxc4 13 Qg4 (if 13 Qxd4 Black should play 13...Qc7 14 Be3 Nc6 15 Qg4 Qf7 16 f4 – the e-pawn must be protected – 16...Bb4+ 17 c3 and now Black has 17...d4 18 cxb4 dxe3 threatening the b4-pawn as well as the tactical trick 19...Nxe5!) 13...Qd7 14 Qxc4+ Qf7 15 Qxf7+ Kxf7 and Black won this favourable

endgame in A.Shirov-V.Anand, Leon (rapid) 2001.

If 15 Qg4 (instead of 15 Qxf7+) then 15...Nd7! is quite tricky, as after 16 Qxd4 Bc5 17 Qd2 0-0 18 0-0 Qg6 Black enjoys a tremendous position. He has fantastic piece coordination and can bear down on the open f- and c-files. White, on the other hand, has a barrel load of weaknesses.

Returning to 8...c5 (Diagram 17):

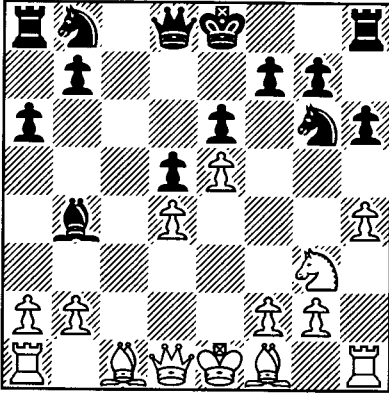


Diagram 16 (W)

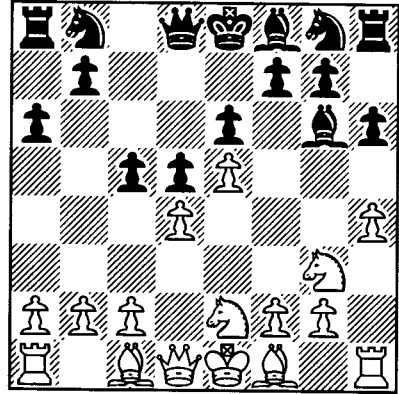


Diagram 17 (W)

9 c3?!

This move is too passive, and better is 9 Nf4 Ne7! which would transpose to the above note.



ROLL THE DICE! After 9 Nf4 Black can also choose to keep his bishop by retreating with 9...Bh7, and this move leads to a complicated game.

a) Simplifying on c5 favours Black: 10 dxc5 Nd7 11 Bd3 Bxd3 12 Nxd3 Nxc5 13 Nxc5 Bxc5 14 Qg4 g6 15 h5. It looks as if White is developing an attack, but after 15...g5 16 f4 Black has the nifty resource 16...Qc7 targeting the e5-pawn.

b) 10 c4!? Nc6 11 cxd5 Nb4! (the counter-attack starts) 12 Bc4 exd5 13 Bb3 c4 14 a3 and now:

b1) 14...Nd3+ 15 Nxd3 Bxd3 16 Bc2 was preferable for White in J.Michielsen-H.Grooten, Hoogeveen 2004, as Black has no good squares for his pieces.

b2) 14...g5! (the counter-attack must continue) 15 hxg5 hxg5 16 axb4 gxf4 17 Ba4+ (after 17 Bxf4 cxb3 18 Qxb3 Qd7 White has some compensation but it is not clear

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how dangerous it will be) 17...b5 18 Bxf4 bxa4 19 Qxa4+ Qd7 with a very murky position. White has some compensation for the piece as it is not so easy for Black to unravel his forces. Then again, it may be difficult for White to maintain his attacking energy.

9...Nc6 10 a3

Applying 'normal' Advance Caro-Kann techniques, White wishes to seize space and at the same time prevent any ...Bb4+ or ...Nb4 ideas which could prove somewhat irritating (for example, 10 Nf4 Bh7 11 Bd3 Bxd3 12 Qxd3 cxd4 13 cxd4 Nb4 14 Qd1 Rc8 gives White a headache). However, this is probably too slow.

10...Rc8 (Diagram 18)

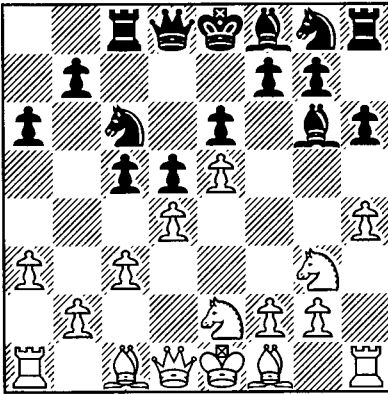


Diagram 18 (W)

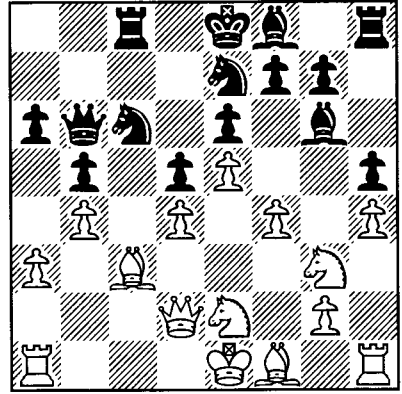


Diagram 19 (B)

11 f4?!

In light of what I've previously said about White's plans, this move definitely looks out of place.

If 11 Nf4 Bh7 12 Be3 (on 12 Be2, 12...Qb6 looks very strong) 12...Qb6 13 b4 cxd4 14 cxd4, Black has the interesting piece sacrifice 14...Nxb4!? 15 axb4 Bxb4+ 16 Ke2 Ne7 17 Qa4+ Nc6 18 Kf3 0-0 (now White must deal with the pressure against the d4-pawn, and 19 Rd1 allows Black to break with 19...f6!) 19 Nge2 Na5, threatening 20...Bc2 and leading to a very complicated position. Rather like a Spartan Warrior, White's king looks to be leading his army. Very noble but not very safe! Here 20 Ra2 is met by 20...Nc4 when White is still tangled up.

11...cxd4 12 cxd4 Nge7 13 Bd2 h5!

A typical grandmaster move: White has refused to seize space with h4-h5 and has

not bothered to swap the light-squared bishops, so Black secures the f5-square for the knight.

14 Bc3 b5 15 Qd2 Qb6 16 b4? (Diagram 19)

Once White makes this committal move, both sides start rearranging their pieces: Black to occupy c4 and White to occupy c5.

16...Nb8 17 Nc1 Qc6 18 Nge2 Nf5 19 Nb3 Be7

Suddenly White finds himself tied down so he decides to run with the king to the queenside and hope that a knight on c5 will create an impenetrable defence.

20 0-0-0

20 Nc5 fails to 20...Bxh4+.

20...Nxf4 21 Kb2

After 21 g3 Nf5 22 Nc5 0-0 23 Bh3 Nd7 24 Bxf5 exf5 Black has the better chances because of White's vulnerable king.

21...Nd7 22 Nc5 Nb6 23 Nc1 Nf5 24 Rh3 0-0 25 N1b3 Nc4+ 26 Bxc4 dxc4 (Diagram 20)

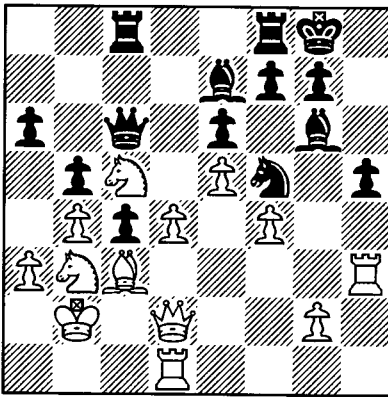


Diagram 20 (W)

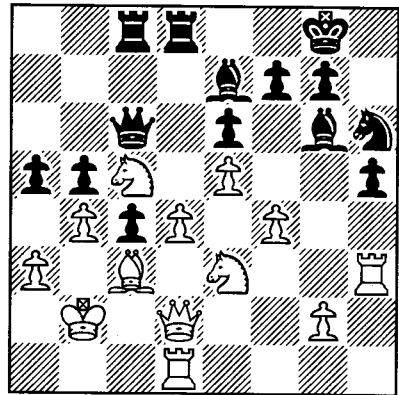


Diagram 21 (W)

White has been completely outplayed. Not only is he a pawn down, he is also on the defensive!

27 Na1 Rfd8 28 Nc2 Nh6 29 Ne3 a5! (Diagram 21)

This breakthrough is devastating, so White attempts to stir up some counterplay.

30 f5 Nxf5 31 Nxf5 Bxf5 32 Rxh5 Bg4 33 Rdh1 Bxh5 34 Rxh5 Bxc5

Eliminating any hope for White.

35 bxc5 b4 36 axb4 axb4 37 Bxb4 Rb8 38 Kc3 Qa4

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38...Rxb4 39 Kxb4 Rb8+ 40 Kc3 Rb3+ 41 Kc2 Qe4+ would have led to mate, but that's just nit-picking.

39 Qb2 Qd1 40 Rh4 Qd3 mate (0-1)

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 a6

Here we will cover the following options:

A: 5 Bd3

B: 5 g4

C: 5 Be3

5 Nce2 was considered in the illustrative game Fier-Rasmussen. White has played other moves less frequently, including:

a) 5 Nge2 e6 6 Ng3 Bg6 7 Bd3 c5 8 Nce2 Nc6 9 f4 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 cxd4 11 Nxd4 Nxd4 12 Qxd4 Rc8! 13 f5 Rc4 14 Qd3 Qb6 with excellent counterplay for Black, A.Kosteniuk-A.Karpov, Manises (rapid) 2002.

b) 5 h4 h5 6 Bd3 Bxd3 7 Qxd3 e6 8 Bg5 Qc7 9 Nf3 c5 10 0-0 Nc6 11 Ne2 cxd4 12 Nxd4 Nxd4 (12...Nge7 13 Rfe1 Nxd4 14 Nxd4 Nc6 15 Nxc6 Qxc6 was solid enough in V.Anand-A.Karpov, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2000) 13 Nxd4 Bc5 14 c4!? Ne7 15 cxd5 Qxe5! 16 dxe6 Qxd4 17 exf7+ Kxf7 18 Qf3+ Kg6 19 Rad1 Qg4 20 Qxb7 Ra7 21 Qb3 Rf8 and White didn't quite have enough for the piece, D.Petrosian-D.Arutinian, Yerevan 2008.

A) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 a6 5 Bd3 (Diagram 22)

5 Bd3 signals a change in mentality. With 4 Nc3, White was intending to blast Black off the board, but now with 5 Bd3 he is content with a slight pull and easier play. He hopes, by exchanging Black's light-squared bishop, that he can make better use of his space advantage on the kingside. However, I am not sure things are as simple as White supporters would have us believe, for three reasons:

1. The exchange of bishops eliminates one of White's most dangerous attacking pieces.
2. It also solves some of Black's problems due to overpopulation on the kingside.

3. White has played the 'dubious' 4 Nc3. In standard Advance Variation positions White is seeking to support his pawn centre with c2-c3, or to destabilize the position and/or gain space with c2-c4.

I believe that these three factors more than compensate for White's temporary advantage in space.

5...Bxd3 6 Qxd3 e6

White now has a multitude of choices, to which Black invariably reacts the same way – push for ...c5!

7 Nf3

The most logical move. Alternatively:

a) 7 Nge2 c5 and now:

a1) If 8 dxc5 Black should play 8...Nc6 9 Qg3 Nge7 10 Bg5 and now the resource 10...Nf5! (**Diagram 23**).

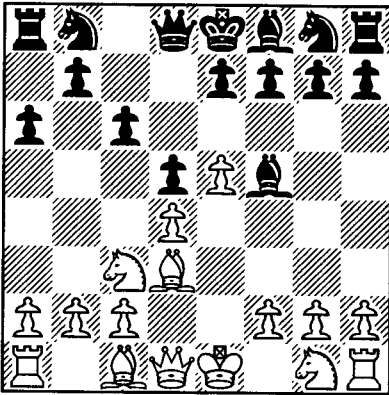


Diagram 22 (B)

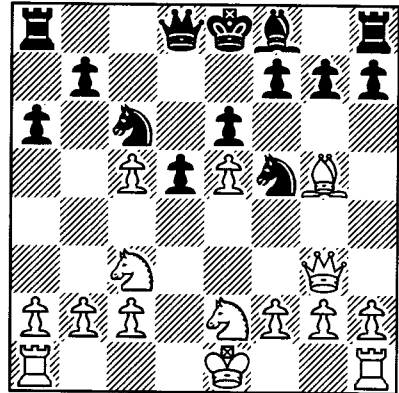


Diagram 23 (W)

E.Llobel Cortell-A.Karpov, Manises (rapid) 2001, continued 11 Bxd8 Nxc3 12 hxg3 Rxd8 13 f4 Bxc5 14 O-O-O Ke7 15 g4?. Here Black can undermine the centre with 15...g5!, although Karpov did gain a small advantage after 15...h6 due to the open c-file and the doubled g-pawns.

a2) After 8 O-O Nc6 9 Be3 Nge7 Black's knight is heading for f5. If White tries to prevent this with 10 Ng3 there follows 10...cxd4 11 Bxd4 Nxd4 12 Qxd4. The series of exchanges on d4 favours Black, and as the centre is closed he can even think of starting action on the kingside with a timely ...h5.

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b) Anticipating ...c5 isn't too challenging for Black: 7 Nce2 c5 8 dxc5 Nd7 9 Nf3 Nxc5 10 Qd1 Ne7 11 0-0 Ng6 with a comfortable position, E.Simon Padros-F,Levin, Barcelona 2005. 8 c3 cxd4 9 cxd4 Nc6 10 Nf3 Bb4+ is also a pleasant position. The key issue is who can control the c-file, and as long as Black piles the pressure on the d4-pawn the battle will be well balanced.

c) White can try to prevent ...c5 with 7 Be3, but the move is still playable: 8...c5! 8 dxc5?! (Black is strategically fine after this, as the e-pawn becomes vulnerable) 8...Nd7 9 f4 Bxc5 10 Bxc5 Nxc5 11 Qg3 g6 12 f5 (the only way to make sense of White's play, otherwise Black has tremendous squares for his knights) 12...exf5 13 0-0-0 Ne7, and here the immediate 14 Nxd5 would be a big mistake because 14...Nxd5 15 c4 Rc8! wins for Black.

d) 7 f4 c5 8 Nf3 (8 f5 fails to 8...Qh4+) 8...Nc6 9 Ne2 g6 (the f5 advance should be prevented) 10 c3 h5 11 g3 Nh6 12 Be3 c4! (**Diagram 24**).

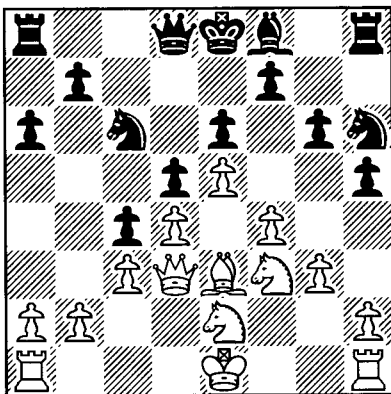


Diagram 24 (W)

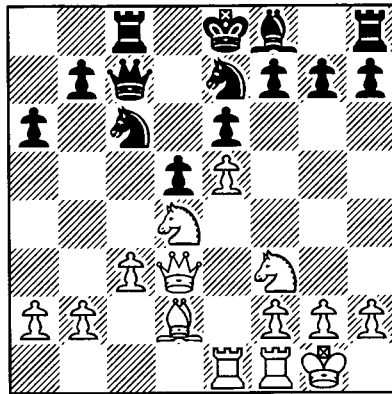


Diagram 25 (B)

A deep move. Black foresees that White's only way to generate activity will be on the kingside, so in turn he establishes his attacking potential on the queenside. This closure is particularly attractive because White has played f2-f4, defining how his kingside pawns will advance.

Black's play in J.Zwanzger-F.Doettling, Fürth 2002, is instructive: 13 Qc2 b5! 14 h3 Nf5 (another fine move – the knight needs to be relocated so that it does not interfere with the future opening of the h-file) 15 Kd2 Be7 16 g4 Ng7 (this is the whole point! White's attack has been stopped for a while and soon it will be Black's turn to start on the queenside) 17 Ng3 h4 18 Nf1 b4 and Black enjoys a pleasant initiative on the queenside.

7...c5 8 Ne2 Nc6

8...cxd4 9 Nxd4 Ne7 is more accurate, avoiding the possibility of 10 cxd4.

9 c3 cxd4 10 Nxd4

10 cxd4! is better.

10...Nge7 11 0-0 Rc8 12 Bd2 Qc7 13 Rae1 (Diagram 25) 13...Nxd4!

Black begins to nicely set up counterplay on the queenside, whereas White is pre-occupied with starting something on the other wing.

14 Nxd4 Nc6 15 f4 g6

In true Karpovian style, the attack is prevented.

16 Nf3?!

The radical continuation 16 f5!? had to be tried. The following series of moves is forced: 16...gxf5 17 Nxf5 exf5 18 Qxf5 Nd8 19 Qf6 Rg8 20 e6 fxe6 21 Rxe6+! Kd7 22 Rfe1 Qc5+ 23 Be3 Nxe6 24 Bxc5 Bxc5+ 25 Kh1 Nc7 26 Qf7+ Kc6 27 Qxh7 Rce8, reaching an unclear position. Black has many pieces for the queen, but the passed pawns may become a little troublesome.

16...Qb6+ 17 Kh1 Be7 18 b3 Qb5 19 Qb1 0-0 20 Be3 a5

This is A.Kosteniuk-A.Karpov, Manises (rapid) 2002. Black is doing well and will soon follow up with ...a4 probing for weaknesses.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 a6 5 g4 (Diagram 26)

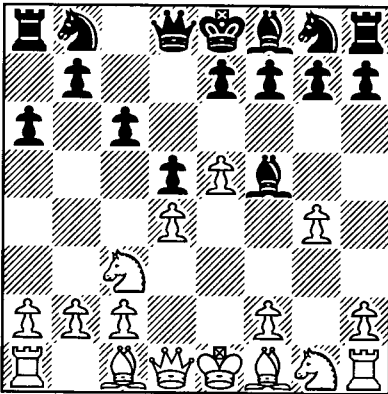


Diagram 26 (B)

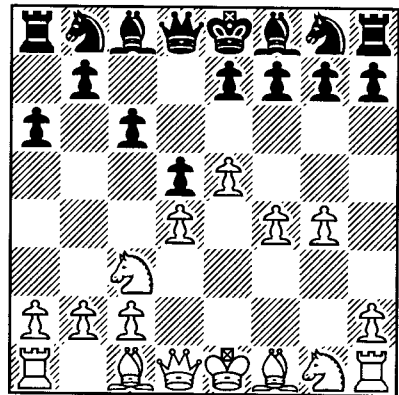


Diagram 27 (B)

Forcing the bishop backwards is perhaps the most critical try.

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5...Bd7

5...Bc8 is also very interesting. For example if 6 Bg2?!, then 6...h5! should be played. The bishop should not be developed on this diagonal as it is actually needed to challenge the f5-square!

After 5...Bd7 we consider:

B1: 6 f4

B2: 6 Be3

B1) 6 f4 (Diagram 27)

A popular theme for White in the Advance Caro-Kann is to seize as much space as possible with the intention of completely smothering Black in the middlegame. The flip-side to this strategy is that White is in danger of two things:

1. Over-extending and leaving himself with a dangerously loose king; or
2. Allowing Black to fix the pawn structure with a well-timed ...h7-h5.

6 f4 was played against me by Jack Rudd at this year's British Championship, a game we shall now follow:

6...e6!?

Black solidifies the centre before embarking on any pawn breaks, but the immediate 6...h5 is also worthy of consideration.

7 Be3

7 Nge2 can be met by 7...h5!? (7...c5 is also possible) and now:

a) If White closes the position with 8 g5, then 8...c5 is possible. If 9 g6 Black can play 9...Qh4+ 10 Ng3 when it is safe to capture the pawn. Following 10...fxg6 11 Bd3 Black can play the calm 11...Rh6 followed by the straightforward plan of blockading on the f5-square.

b) 8 gxh5 c5 9 Ng3 cxd4 10 Qxd4 Nc6 11 Qf2 Nh6 12 Bd3 (J.Van Cappellen-S.Kasparov, Internet blitz 2006) and here Black can play 12...Nb4 making it hard for White to find a safe haven for his king. After 13 a3 (what else? 13 Bd2 is met by 13...Rc8 and the bishop on f8 is soon coming to c5 with deadly effect) 13...Nxd3+ 14 cxd3 Rc8 15 Bd2 Qh4 and White has a very uncomfortable position.

7 Bg2 looks somewhat bizarre, as it allows 7...Qh4+. After 8 Kf1 c5 I can't see how Black can be in any trouble.

6 Be3 Qc7

The most natural. My plan is simply to exchange a set of minor pieces to ease space worries, develop and then counter-attack by exploiting the semi-open c-file.

8 Nf3

Trying to clamp down with 8 Na4 should be met by 8...b6 with the normal ideas.

8...c5 9 Bg2 cxd4 10 Nxd4 Nc6 11 Nb3 Na5 (Diagram 28)

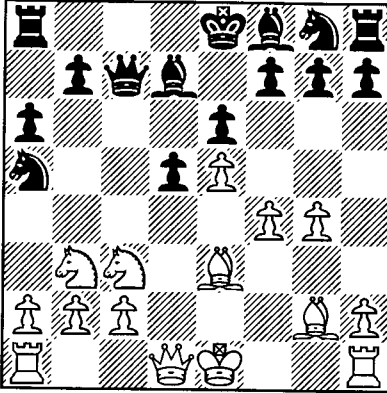


Diagram 28 (W)

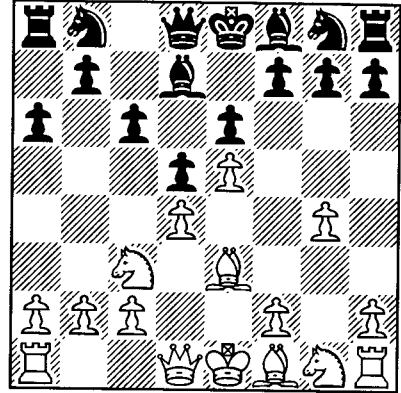


Diagram 29 (W)

Continuing with the objectives and at the same time inviting complications. 11...g5 is an interesting alternative.

12 Bxd5? exd5 13 Nxd5 Qc6 14 Qd4??

This just loses.

14 Bb6 Nc4 15 Nc7+ Kd8 leaves White with nothing.

14 Nxa5 had to be played, but 14...Bb4+ 15 Nxb4 Qxh1+ 16 Kd2 Qe4 17 Nd3 Bb5 looks very pleasant for Black.

14...Nxb3 15 axb3

Black is a piece up. The game concluded 15...Ne7 16 c4 Bxg4 17 Rg1 Nf5 18 Qd3 Nxe3 19 Nxe3 Qf3 0-1, J.Rudd-J.Houska, British Championship, Canterbury 2010.

B2) 6 Be3 e6! (Diagram 29)

The best continuation. 6...h5!? is not so successful after 7 g5! (7 gxh5?! is probably a bad decision: 7...e6 8 Bd3 c5 9 Nf3 Nc6 10 dxc5 Rxh5 11 Qe2 g6 with a very comfortable position for Black, B.Bellahcene-E.Reinhart, Bischwiller 2009) 7...Bf5 and here 8 Bd3! is a little uncomfortable, as after 8...Bxd3 9 Qxd3 either e5-e6 or g5-g6 will be very strong.

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7 Qd2

White continues as normal.

With 7 Na4 White is trying to suffocate Black by preventing ...c5.



BEWARE! Black should do his utmost to secure the pawn break ...c5; otherwise he will be completely squashed for space.

Following this logic we get 7...b6 8 c3 (again preventing ...c5) 8...Qc7 (**Diagram 30**) (again preparing ...c5!).

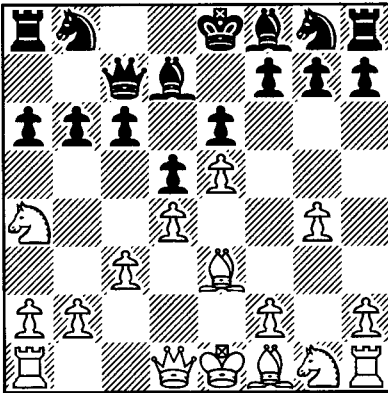


Diagram 30 (W)

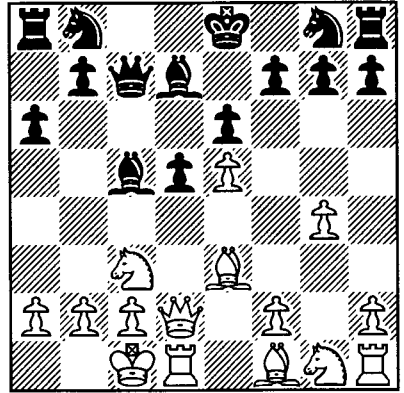


Diagram 31 (W)

It's all going according to plan so far, but if White again tries to prevent the break, with 9 b4, then 9...a5! is very strong.

If 7 Bg2 there follows 7...Qc7 8 Nf3 c5 and Black has achieved the breakthrough. After 9 Qd2 cxd4 10 Nxd4, with the bishop on g2 Black can play 10...h5! 11 g5 Nc6 12 Nxc6 (if White plays the principled 12 g6 fxg6 Black can still re-route his knight to the strong f5-square) 12...Bxc6. An important point to note here is that 13 g6 allows 13...d4! winning material.

7...c5 8 dxc5 Qc7 9 0-0-0 Bxc5! (Diagram 31)

The c-pawn must be recaptured as the c-file is a big source of counterplay. This improves over 9...Bc6 10 Bd4 Nd7 11 Qe3 h5 12 g5 Ne7 13 Bd3 g6 14 Nge2 Bg7 15 f4, when Black struggled to find any counterplay in H.Steingrimsson-V.Malakhatko, Differdange 2007.

10 f4 Ne7 11 Bg2

White has nothing after 11 f5 Bxe3 12 Qxe3 exf5. He can hardly do too much damage with most of his pieces on the back rank!

11 Nf3 is met by 11...Bb4!

11...Bb4 12 Nge2 Bb5

With 12...Bb5 Black plans exchanges and White will be forced to weaken his king.

C) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 a6 5 Be3 e6 6 g4 Bg6 7 Nge2 c5!

In the illustrative game Filev-Braun we looked at the critical 8 h4. We now consider two other serious tries for White:

C1: 8 f4!?

C2: 8 dxc5

C1) 8 f4!?

This is an interesting pawn sacrifice. White aims to further his development and draw the black queen out into the open.

8...Qh4+

Rejecting the gambit and offering our own one is also possible: 8...Nc6 9 dxc5 Nh6! (9...Qh4+ 10 Bf2 Qxg4 11 Qd2 transposes to 10...Nc6, below) 10 Rg1 Nb4 11 Rc1 Be7, threatening to displace the white king with a check on h4, with unclear play.

9 Bf2! Qxg4 (Diagram 32)

At first sight it appears that White has simply blundered a pawn through careless play, but in actual fact things are quite murky. The queen is blatantly misplaced on g4 and White gets very fast development.

10 Qd2 Nd7!?

This may be the best. Alternatively:

a) 10...f6! is an interesting try for Black.

b) 10...Nc6 11 dxc5 Nb4! (this move is very risky) 12 Rc1 Rd8 13 Rg1 Qh5 14 Nb5! and although Black later won the game, White had a dangerous initiative at this point in D.Kanovsky-A.Braun, Rogaska Slatina 2009.

11 Rg1 Qh5 12 Ng3 Qh6 13 0-0-0 cxd4 14 Bxd4 Ne7 15 Be3

If 15 Kb1 Black should play 15...Rc8, a counter-attacking move which also prepares the developing ...Nf5 because of the pressure on c2.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

15...Bf5 (Diagram 33)

Black must be wary of sacrifices on d5. Of course he cannot allow f4-f5, but 15...Nf5?? unfortunately runs into 16 Nxd5!.

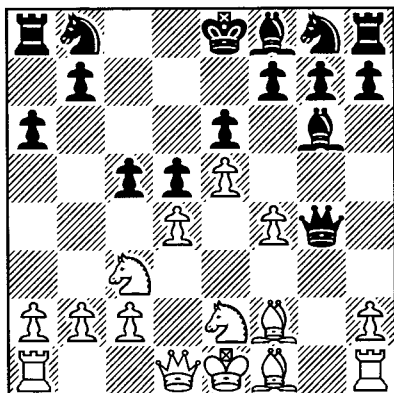


Diagram 32 (W)

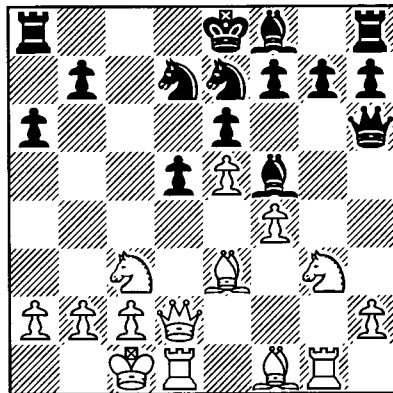


Diagram 33 (W)

16 Kb1

If 16 Nxf5 Nxf5 17 Nxd5 exd5 18 Qxd5 Qc6 and Black defends.

16...Rc8 17 Bd3 Bxd3 18 Qxd3 Qxh2

It's safe for the time being to capture the h2-pawn.

19 Rd2 Qh3 20 Nce4

20 f5 fails to 20...Nxe5.

20...Nc6

With a complicated position.

C2) 8 dxc5

Releasing the tension in the centre is tempting but has some drawbacks. The e5-pawn is weakened and so White must refocus from attacking the bishop with h4 to more double-edged ideas involving f4-f5. This is something White is not necessarily best prepared for.

8...Nd7 (Diagram 34)

P.Charbonneau-Wu Shaobin, Bled Olympiad 2002, continued 8...Nc6 9 Bg2 Nxe5 10 Nf4 Nf6 11 g5 Nfg4 (11...Nfd7 is perhaps more to the point, but Black stands well anyway) 12 Qe2 Nxe3 13 Qxe3 Nc4 14 Qd4 Qxg5 and Black had an amazing

position with a great pieces and a strong centre. However, 9 f4! transposing to Line C1 looks like a better bet for White.

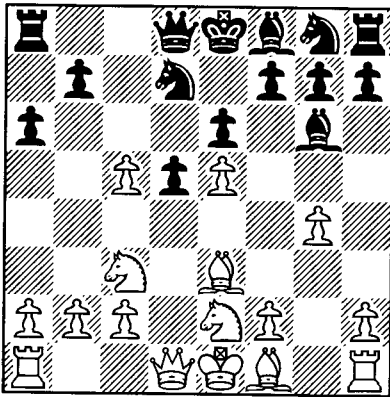


Diagram 34 (W)

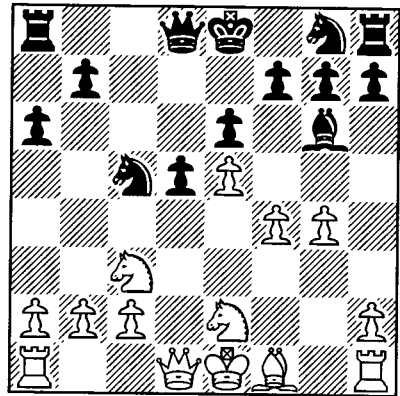


Diagram 35 (W)

9 f4

If White chooses to hold on to the c-pawn with 9 b4, Black should play the obvious 9...Nxe5. This move has the added bonus of hitting the g-pawn, thus making it impossible for White to attack the knight for the time being.

Let's follow the game P.Smironov-V.Burmakin, Nefteyugansk 2002: 10 Nd4 Nf6 (again Black develops with tempo, although I must admit that 10...h5, fixing the pawn structure and securing the f5-square, looks more in keeping with the nature of the Caro-Kann) 11 g5 (a useful point is that if 11 h3 Black can simply develop with 11...Be7, as after 12 f4 Black has the rather handy move 12...Ne4!, with a raging initiative) 11...Ne4 12 Nxe4 dxe4 (a good choice, securing the f3-square) 13 Bg2 b6 (Black begins to undermine the queenside pawn wedge) 14 0-0 bxc5 15 bxc5 Be7 (now that the pawn structure has been destroyed, Black concentrates on getting his king to safety) 16 h4 0-0 17 Qe2 Qc7 18 Rad1 Bxc5 19 Bf4. Here Black blundered with 19...Rad8? 20 Bxe5 Qxe5 21 Nc6 and White picked up an exchange. However, 19...Nf3+ 20 Qxf3 exf3 21 Bxc7 fxc2 would have been good for Black.

If White plays 9 Nd4 intending to meet 9...Nxe5 with the aggressive 10 f4, Black replies instead with 9...Bxc5. The GM clash A.Delchev-R.Dautov, Calvia Olympiad 2004, continued 10 Bg2 h5! (stopping White's initiative in its tracks; now it is up to White to do something very creative with his lead in development) 11 Qe2 hxg4 12 0-0-0 Ne7 13 h3. Now instead of 13...gxh3 14 Bxh3 Bxd4 15 Bxd4 Rh7, which gave White compensation for the material deficit, 13...Bxd4 14 Bxd4 Nf5 would have

been much better. Black gets rid of the dangerous dark-squared bishop and keeps his healthy pawn structure.

9...Bxc5 10 Bxc5 Nxc5 (Diagram 35) 11 Qd4

This is a difficult position for White:

- a) 11 f5 doesn't achieve much. After 11...exf5 12 Nxd5 Ne7 White's position is starting to look very shaky.
- b) 11 h4 is probably the only move that keeps White in the game. After 11...Be4 12 Nxe4 Nxe4 13 Bg2 Qa5+ 14 c3 0-0-0 Black will play ...h5 to undermine the g4-pawn and secure the f5-square. Even if he loses a pawn after an exchange on e4, Black will have an amazing position because of White's exposed king.

11...Qh4+ 12 Ng3 Rc8

Again, as the f5 push is futile, White must castle queenside and find other ways to keep the position going.

13 0-0-0

After 13 Be2 Nh6 the g-pawn falls.

13...Qxg4 14 Qf2 Qh4 15 Kb1 Nh6 16 Bd3 Nxd3 17 cxd3 0-0

Black is a pawn up and holds all the long-term trumps, A.Muzychuk-V.Malakhatko, Warsaw 2009.

Conclusion

4...a6 usually provokes two reactions: sheer aggression or a change to positional subtlety –there is no happy medium! We can classify the aggressive tries as 5 Be3 and 5 g4, whereas 5 Nce2 and 5 Bd3 follow a more positional approach. In every single variation Black is relying on two factors:

1. Because White has played Nc3, the ...c5 pawn break will be all the more potent.
2. If given the chance, Black will almost always aim to fix White's pawn structure.

Keeping these points in mind will help to make Black's position simple to play.

Let's deal with the aggressive 5 Be3 first, which is probably the most likely move that one will face. White, not really considering the subtlety of 4...a6, carries on as normal with his idea of playing for g2-g4, N1e2-f4 and h2-h4. Black should most definitely target the weak d4-pawn – this is White's Achilles' heel. Safe in the knowledge that he has already pre-empted White's counter-attack using the b5-square, Black can utilize tactics involving the weakness of the c2-pawn and forks against d4 and e5.

After the standard sequence 5 Be3 e6 6 g4 Bg6 7 N1e2 c5! White is faced with a choice: he can hunt the bishop with moves such as 8 h4 or 8 f4; alternatively, he can resolve the tension in the centre with 8 dxc5 before embarking on active operations. Against 8 h4 Black's best reaction is 8...h5, seizing space and forcing White to play 9 Nf4. Black has a pleasant choice at this moment: he can sacrifice a pawn with 9...Bh7 or play our *Dangerous Weapon* 9...Ne7 which directly engages White in combat. So far none of the continuations have been promising for White. Although Black gives up the bishop pair, the pressure on the d4-pawn is immense and this makes the position very difficult to play for White.

Releasing the central tension with 8 dxc5 does not look too promising either. Black aims to regain either the e5- or c5-pawn and to exploit the airy king position, in particular the h4-e1 diagonal. The only continuation that is a little bit troublesome for Black is 8 f4. Black should accept the offered pawn, retreat the queen to h6 and develop his knight to d7, all the time being vigilant to sacrifices on d5.

This brings us to White's other aggressive option on move five: the pawn push 5 g4. This move makes sense in that if White is going to be so blatantly aggressive, why not do so from the start? This approach certainly slows down Black's counterplay against d4. However, there is also a disadvantage. Black's light-squared bishop can hide behind its own pawns, which leaves White without a bishop to target. Also, White may be in serious danger of over-extending himself. A note of caution though: Black *must* secure the ...c5 pawn break – the c-file is needed as a source of counterplay!

Of the more 'positional' options, 5 Nce2 is the most popular, with White still aiming to inconvenience the f5-bishop. After 5...e6 6 Ng3 Bg6 7 h4 Black should reply with the safer 7...h6 and keep in mind that White has ideas of establishing a knight on h5 as well as seizing space with h4-h5. After Nf4, Black need not be afraid of swapping the bishop on g6 for this knight, especially as he can concentrate on demolishing White's centre with ...c5 followed by ...cxd4. Alternatively, for a wilder game Black can choose to retreat the bishop to h7. In fact, this method should be preferred if White wastes times with moves such as c2-c3 instead of lunging directly for the bishop. However, Black must play dynamically should White transform the position with an immediate c2-c4.

Finally, 5 Bd3 is a quieter fifth-move alternative. After White's posturing with 4 Nc3, it does seem out of character to switch to a calmer approach, but such is life. After the necessary exchanges, Black should still play for ...c5 and secure his position against any f4-f5 ideas. If he can do this, Black should be fine.

Chapter Six

Don't Let Black have all the Fun!

Richard Palliser

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c4!? (Diagram 1) and 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 c4!?

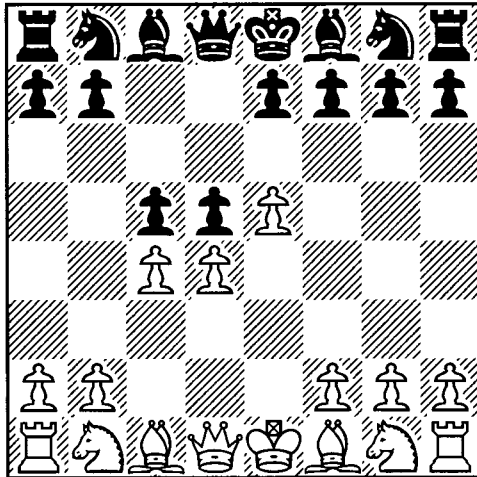


Diagram 1 (B)

The last two decades have witnessed something of a revolution in the Advance Variation. No longer can one count on Black replying classically with 3...Bf5 as the dynamic 3...c5 has firmly established itself as an important alternative. Indeed, it

was even recommended as the sole option against 3 e5 in co-author Houska's popular 2007 work *Play the Caro-Kann*.

So what should the enterprising Advance player do against Black's bid to obtain an improved version of the French? Throughout the nineties White generally went in for 4 dxc5 followed by trying to cling on to the extra pawn in the case of 4...Nc6. That remains a critical line, but giving Black decent dynamic compensation will by no means suit everyone. Thankfully help is at hand should White be happy to meet fire with fire in the shape of the uncompromising 4 c4!? (or 4 Nf3 followed by 5 c4).

Our challenging approach based around an early c2-c4 was scarcely known back at the Millennium, but has subsequently become fairly popular at grandmaster level. At lower levels, though, Black is still often taken by surprise by White's counter-aggression. Moreover, not only does White blow open the position and so guarantee an interesting struggle, but he also has good prospects of emerging with the advantage. What more could one ask for from a *Dangerous Weapon*?

□ V.Bologan ■ F.Doettling
French League 2006

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3

As we will see in the theoretical section, there is a debate over whether to start with the flexible text or the immediate 4 c4. It basically comes down to a question of which defences one most wants to avoid, but for now we will just note that Black often meets the immediate pawn push with 4...Nc6, after which 5 Nf3 leads back into our main game.

4...Nc6 5 c4! (Diagram 2)

White has also exchanged on c5 and tried 5 Bb5, but it is the text which has become established as the critical test, immediately placing Black's centre under counter-pressure.

5...Bg4

As we will see, Black's main move is 5...cxd4, but what could be more natural than the far from uncommon text? One reason behind 3...c5 was to counter-attack against d4 and so it is logical to deploy the bishop actively. Unfortunately, Black's concept appears to be rather risky if White responds powerfully with...

6 cxd5!

...ignoring the pin and luring the black queen into play.

6...Qxd5?!

Provoking complications. The German Grandmaster was no doubt aware that he was sacrificing the exchange, but presumably thought that he would be able to round up the knight on a8 – something which he never actually manages to do.

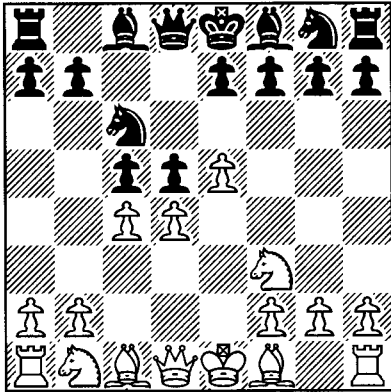


Diagram 2 (B)

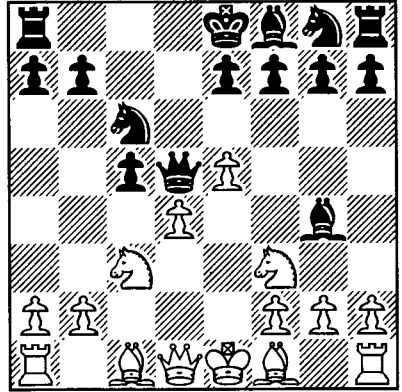


Diagram 3 (B)

Capturing the other pawn is even worse, though: 6...Nxd4? 7 Nxd4 Bxd1 8 Bb5+ Qd7 9 Bxd7+ Kxd7 10 e6+ and White will emerge clearly ahead, such as after 10...Kc8 (or 10...fxe6 11 Nxe6 Bc2 12 Nxc5+ with an extra pawn) 11 Kxd1 cxd4 12 exf7 Nf6 13 Nd2 Nxd5 14 Nf3 when d4 is falling and it will take Black some time to eliminate the menace on f7.

Thus Black has tried to improve with the move order 6...Bxf3! 7 Qxf3 Nxd4, which is a much better try. That said, even here White will obtain a dangerous initiative for his pawn, as we'll see in our next illustrative game, Baklan-Sharapov.

7 Nc3! (Diagram 3)

Doettling had earlier faced 7 Be2 and after 7...cxd4 8 Nc3 Qa5 9 Nxd4 Rd8 10 Bxg4 Rxd4 11 Qe2 e6 he had sufficient play in M.Carlsen-F.Doettling, online blitz 2006.



BEWARE! Meeting Black's ambitious 3...c5 system with a rapid c2-c4 requires White to continue energetically in the battle for the centre and the initiative. Indeed, he must often be prepared to delve into complications or sacrifice a pawn, rather than develop mechanically and leave Black without any problems.

7...Bxf3

Invariably played. I dare say that the queen might retreat, but 7...Qd8?! 8 d5! Bxf3 9 Qxf3 Nxe5 (J.Rabatin-A.Melone, Fermo 2009) 10 Bb5+ Nd7 11 d6! gives White a highly-dangerous initiative. Perhaps 7...Qe6 is a slightly better idea than that, although after the dynamic and forcing 8 d5! Bxf3 9 gxf3 Qxe5+ 10 Be3 Nd4 11 f4 Qd6 (11...Qf6 holds the pawn for the time being, but leaves Black's development rather gummed up following 12 Qa4+ Kd8 13 Bh3) 12 Bxd4 cxd4 13 Qxd4 I much prefer White's initiative over Black's superior structure. Note the problems Black faces down the a4-e8 diagonal once his light-squared bishop has been exchanged.

8 Nxd5!

Consistent and good, although a number of fairly strong players have preferred 8 gxf3 Qxd4 9 Be3. This suggests that it is not only black players who are insufficiently prepared for this sharp variation, but the reader should be fully armed for the forcing play introduced by 5...Bg4. Here we need just note that Black has two good responses:

a) 9...Qxd1+ 10 Rxd1 e6 11 Bb5 Rc8 12 Ke2 a6 13 Bxc6+ Rxc6 14 Rd2 Be7 15 Rhd1 Rc7 16 Ne4 f6 gave White no more than some play for his pawn in M.Corvi-I.Khenkin, Frascati 2005.

b) Moreover, I can't see why Black shouldn't grab a second pawn with 9...Qxe5!? 10 Qb3 0-0-0! and after the 11 Qxf7 of S.Vysochin-I.Rozum, St Petersburg 2009, John Watson has pointed out that by returning the pawn with 11...Nh6! 12 Qc4 Nf5 13 Qxc5 Qxc5 14 Bxc5 e6 Black can maintain a pretty pleasant structural advantage.

8...Bxd1 9 Nc7+ (Diagram 4)

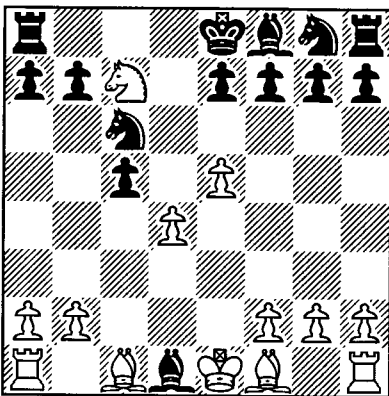


Diagram 4 (B)

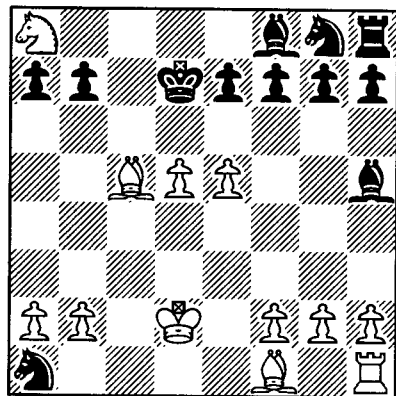


Diagram 5 (B)

9...Kd8

Play is very similar in the event of 9...Kd7 10 Nxa8 Bh5 11 d5!. Annotating in *In-formant 96*, Bologan offers 11...Nb4 (11...Nxe5? 12 Bf4 would only give Black a choice between 12...f6 13 Rc1 b6 14 b4! and seeing the knight supplied with an escape route by 12...Ng6 13 Bb8!) 12 Be3 Nc2+ 13 Kd2 Nxa1 14 Bxc5 (**Diagram 5**), which he assesses as a clear advantage to White. I would go even further and say that White's advantage is pretty much decisive, despite his cornered knight and the fact that he is currently a piece down! Play might continue 14...b6 15 Be3 e6 16 Bb5+ Kd8 17 d6 f6 18 Nc7 Bf7 19 f4 and while White's knight has rejoined the fray with some effect, Black's is about to perish.

Here 12...b6 is hardly much of an improvement in view of Watson's 13 Bb5+! (this appears even stronger than 13 Bc4, which would echo White's play in the note to Black's 12th in our main game, below) 13...Kc8 14 a4! when one has to like White. Watson offers up 14...Nc2+ 15 Kd2 Nxa1 16 Rxa1 g5 17 a5, 'virtually winning', to which I would only add 14...Nxd5 15 a5 e6 16 axb6 axb6 17 b4!? and again the cornered steed looks much more like an attacker than a helpless prisoner.

10 Nxa8 Bh5

Somewhat less common has been 10...Bg4, which should be met in the same manner, viz. 11 d5! (11 dxc5 e6 12 Be3 perhaps gives White an improved version of the note to his 11th in our main game, as Black's light-squared bishop can be targeted with tempo, but I'm far from certain that this promises him any advantage) 11...Nb4 12 Be3. The brutal encounter T.Burg-C.Heredia Serrano, Groningen 2008, concluded 12...Nc2+ 13 Kd2 Nxa1 14 Bxc5 b6 15 Nxb6 axb6 16 Bxb6+ Kc8 17 Ba6+ (White is two pieces down, but the exposed black king is no match for his bishops and rook) 17...Kb8 18 Rc1! (**Diagram 6**) 18...h5 (missing the threat; he had to go 18...g6, although after 19 Rc5! Bh6+ 20 Kc3 Bf4 21 Bc7+ Ka7 22 Ra5 White would have crashed through with aplomb in any case) 19 e6! 1-0; it's mate on c8.

11 d5!

Another exclam and another warranted exclam. White continues in forceful fashion, whereas the slower 11 dxc5?! e6 12 Be3 Kc8 13 Bb5 Nge7 14 0-0 Kb8 15 Nb6 axb6 16 cxb6 Nd5 was surely at least slightly in Black's favour in M.Erdogdu-B.Yildiz, Turkish Championship, Ankara 2007, although White managed to complicate and later won.

11...Nb4

Just as in the notes to Black's 9th, 11...Nxe5 12 Bf4 f6 13 Rc1 b6 14 b4! is very good for White. Bologan adds 14...e6 15 dxe6 Bd6 16 Bxe5 fxe5 17 bxc5 Bxc5 18 Be2 Bg6

19 Rd1+ Ke7 20 Rd7+! Kxe6 21 Rxa7 and the extra exchange should decide.

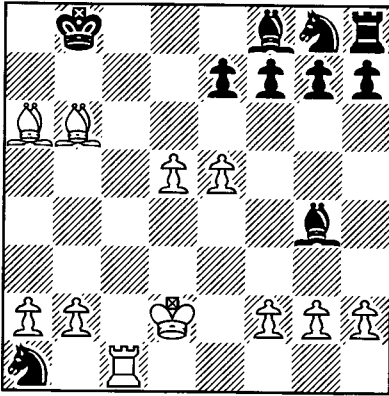


Diagram 6 (B)

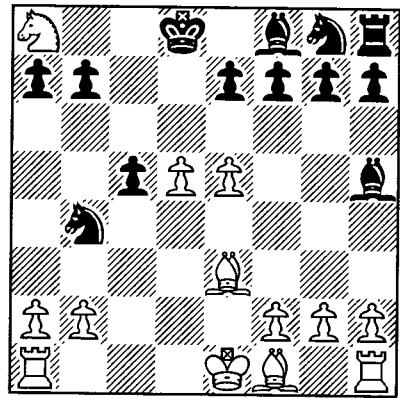


Diagram 7 (B)

12 Be3 (Diagram 7)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! White offers a whole rook to go after the black king and rescue his own knight from the corner. This appears very dangerous for Black and in seven subsequent games which I found from this position the second player managed just +1 =1 -5.

12...Nc2+

The second time that he reached this critical position that stubborn leading Caro-Kann expert, Igor Khenkin, preferred 12...b6!?, which might well be a better try. That said, after 13 Bc4! (White can no longer develop his light-squared bishop with check, unlike in the related position with the black king on d7, but he might settle for 13 Rc1!? with the idea of 13...Nxd5 14 Rc4! Nxe3 15 fxe3 Kc8 16 Ra4 Kb8 17 g4 Bg6? 18 Bg2, saving the knight and threatening a rather powerful sacrifice on b6) 13...Nc2+ (13...Nh6? 14 Kd2! Bg6 15 Rac1 leaves Black's knight in just as much danger as White's) 14 Kd2 Nxe3 (once again after 14...Nxa1? 15 Rxa1 White is all set to ram his a-pawn down the board and 15...f6? 16 e6 Be8? 17 b4 1-0 was the crushing miniature R.Mamedov-M.Helbig, Neustadt an der Weinstrasse 2009; here Black does better with 15...Kc8, although after 16 b4!? Kb8 17 Nxb6 axb6 18 bxc5 one has to agree with Wells that White has a vicious attack) 15 Kxe3 (15 fxe3!? followed by a2-a4-a5 might be even stronger) 15...Nh6 16 h3 Nf5+ 17 Kd2 Nd4 18 b4

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

e6 19 d6 (**Diagram 8**) one can hardly believe that Black was happy with his stubbornness or preparation in R.Edouard-I.Khenkin, Andorra 2006. The German Grandmaster actually went on to win after 19...Nc6 20 f4 g5!, but I have serious doubts that he would have been successful had Edouard spotted the calm 21 bxc5!? gxf4 22 cxb6 Rg8 23 Bf1! Nxe5 24 bxa7 when, despite the exposed white king, Black shouldn't have enough for the exchange.

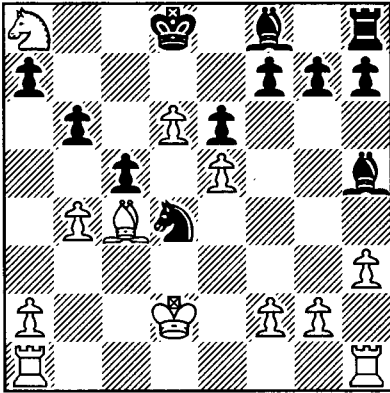


Diagram 8 (B)

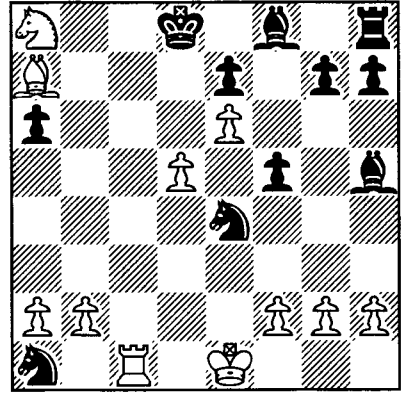


Diagram 9 (B)

13 Kd2 Nxe3!?

Black hopes to obtain some counterplay against the white king. He has also grabbed the rook, but after 13...Nxa1? 14 Bxc5 one has to like White's chances, as borne out by the limited practice:

a) 14...f6 15 e6 f5 16 Bxa7 Nf6 saw the wily Khenkin scramble a draw in H.Vedder-I.Khenkin, Almelo 2006, but White has a number of strong possibilities here, not least Bologan's 17 Ba6!! bxa6? 18 Rc1 Ne4+ 19 Ke1 (**Diagram 9**) 19...Nd6 (desperately trying to cover c8, but White can remove the knight from d6) 20 Bb6+ Ke8 21 Nc7+ Kd8 22 Nb5+ Ke8 23 Nxd6+ exd6 24 Rc8+ Ke7 25 Bd8+ Ke8 26 Bg5 mate.

b) 14...b6 15 Nxb6 g6 (with Black's bishop on h5, not g4, 15...axb6? 16 Bxb6+ Kc8 17 Ba6+ Kb8 18 Rc1 would now force mate) 16 Nc4 Bh6+ 17 Ne3 left White two pawns to the good with Black's knight unable to escape in R.Shanmugam-N.Adams, Budapest 2006.

c) 14...Bg6 15 Bxa7 Nf6!? 16 exf6 exf6 (C.Balogh-J.Boguszlavskij, Hungarian League 2007) 17 Bb6+ Kc8 18 Ba5 Nc2 19 Nb6+ is similarly superb for White, whose knight has rejoined the fray whereas its counterpart remains in danger.

14 Kxe3

I must confess that I can't decide whether this is better than the tempting alternative 14 fxe3!? (**Diagram 10**), keeping White's king protected. However, it's safe to say that White is doing very well in either instance. The pawn recapture was preferred in I.Nataf-J.Ragnarsson, Reykjavik 2010, where 14...g5 (14...Kc8 15 Rc1 b6 16 b4! should be a familiar theme by now) 15 Rc1?! (Bologan's calmer 15 Be2 Bxe2 16 Kxe2 Bg7 17 e6 improves, but White might even reject that in favour of 15 h4!?, angling to bring the rook into play and obtain a cramping pawn on g5; Black can avoid such a fate with 15...g4, but after 16 Rc1 Bg7 17 Rxc5 Bxe5 18 Bd3 White should be in time to rescue his knight via the c7-square) 15...Bg7 16 e6!? (16 Rxc5 Bxe5 17 Bd3 Nf6 18 Bf5 e6 19 dxe6 Bd6 might not be so clear, but again one can certainly make a decent case for flicking in 16 h4!?) 16...Nf6 17 Bd3 b6? (slow and Black had to take his chances in 17...Nxd5 18 exf7 Bxf7 19 Rxc5 Kd7, which would hardly have been all that clear) 18 b4! Nxd5 19 bxc5 Be5 20 cxb6 axb6 21 Bf5! left White somewhat on top despite the destruction of his centre.

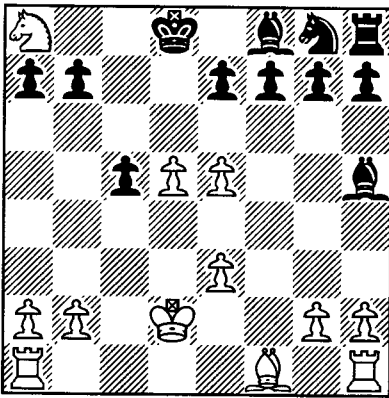


Diagram 10 (B)

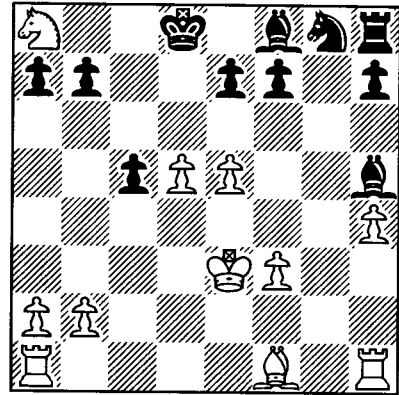


Diagram 11 (B)

14...g5 15 h4! g4



DANGEROUS WEAPON! The opening has not panned out well for Black and now he must obstruct his light-squared bishop; the problem with 15...gxh4 16 Rxh4 Bg6 being 17 Ra4 when again White rescues his knight with purposeful play down the a-file.

16 f4!

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

Another simple but strong move from Bologan, an expert on the Advance Variation with both colours. White's king will be safe enough on f2 and while Black develops his kingside, White will take over the initiative by opening lines against the black king.

16...gxf3 17 gxf3 (Diagram 11) 17...Bh6+

Doettling opts for play against White's centre, a sensible if slow approach, especially when one considers that 17...Kc8 18 Rc1 Kb8 (18...b6 19 b4! sees the pawn armada sweep all before it after 19...Kb8 20 bxc5 Kxa8 21 c6) wouldn't have trapped the knight on account of 19 Rxc5 b6 20 Rc6.

18 Kf2 Bf4 19 Re1 f6

I wonder if the German Grandmaster dared to hope that he was getting back into the game at this point. Black's dark-squared bishop is strong, but so too will be White's bishop on the light squares.

20 Bh3! fxe5

This walks into a powerful rejoinder, but finding an improvement is no easy task, as shown by the likes of 20...b6 21 b4! cxb4 22 Re4 Bxe5 23 Rc1 and 20...Bg6 21 Be6 Bxe5 22 Rxe5! fxe5 23 Rc1 b6 24 b4, and in both cases White's initiative down the c-file is a decisive one.

21 Rc1! Bxc1 22 Rxc1 (Diagram 12)

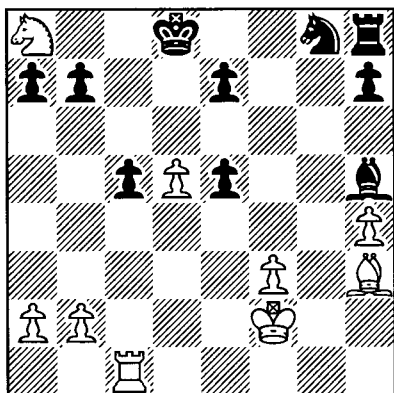


Diagram 12 (B)

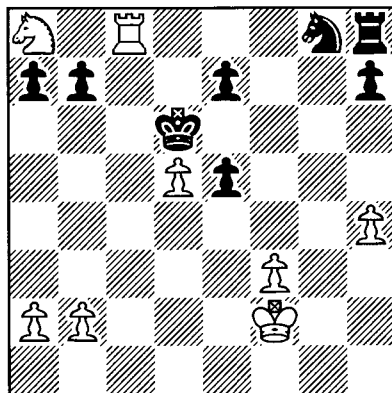


Diagram 13 (B)

Once again the c-file is key. Indeed, now White is even a pawn in arrears, but his three remaining pieces combine perfectly.

22...Be8?

Not the stiffest defence. Doettling should have tried 22...Nf6 and after 23 Rxc5 e6! (23...Nd7? 24 Rc7 Be8 25 Rxb7 breaks through) 24 Nc7 Ke7 25 Nxe6 Kd6 26 Rc7! White's initiative remains the dominant feature of the position, although Black can most certainly fight here, beginning with 26...Rb8.

23 Rxc5 Bd7 24 Bxd7 Kxd7 25 Rc7+ Kd6

The pin will prove decisive after this, but 25...Kd8 26 h5! Nf6 (this might be delayed, but Black will eventually run out of moves) 27 Rxb7 Kc8 28 Rxe7 would also have led to a likely victory for White.

26 Rc8! (Diagram 13) 26...Kxd5 27 a4 Ke6 28 Rf8 Kd7 29 b4 b6 30 b5 Kd6 31 Rd8+ Kc5 32 Ke3 Kb4 33 Kd3! 1-0

Finally Black accepted that his cause was a hopeless one with White all set to exploit the fact that his knight very much lives and will return to the action with 34 Nc7.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Despite making natural moves Doettling stumbled into a pretty bad position rather quickly. White's early play had to be precise, but after 12 Be3! his initiative already promises him clearly the better chances.

□ **V.Baklan** ■ **E.Sharapov**

Dubai 2010

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 c4 Bg4 6 cxd5 Bxf3!

Whether through ignorance or preparation, Black elects not to sacrifice the exchange on a8 with 6...Qxd5?! 7 Nc3 Bxf3 8 Nxd5 Bxd1 9 Nc7+. Instead he bags a pawn, which must count as the critical try, although White will still emerge with a dangerous early initiative.

7 Qxf3 Nxd4 (Diagram 14) 8 Qd1!



BEWARE! The queen must go back to base, as 8 Qe4? fails to maintain White's powerful-looking centre in view of the undermining 8...f5!.

8...Qxd5

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Again critical. On occasion Black has preferred to sidestep the check on b5, but that comes at the large cost of leaving the powerful pawn on d5 and cannot be recommended:

a) 8...Qd7? 9 Be3 0-0-0 10 Nc3 e6 11 Bxd4 exd5!? 12 Be2! h5 13 Rc1 gave White a crushing attack in F.Bentivegna-A.Caruso, Assisi 2003.

b) 8...a6? 9 Nc3 e6 10 dxe6!? (hardly forced; 10 Be3 Ne7 11 Bxd4 cxd4 12 Qa4+! Qd7 13 Bb5 axb5 14 Qxa8+ Nc8 was messy but surely good for White in D.Gormally-J.Gilbert, Coulsdon 2005, but I'm at a loss to explain why two grandmasters have rejected 10 d6!: 10...f6 11 f4 Nc6 12 Bd3 Nh6 13 0-0! looks highly dangerous for Black) 10...Nxe6 11 Qa4+ b5 12 Qe4 Nd4 13 Be3 left White dominating proceedings in T.Luther-V.Hansen, Dresden 2006.

9 Bb5+

The point of White's play, displacing the black king while developing at full speed.

9...Kd8 10 0-0 (Diagram 15) 10...Qxe5!?

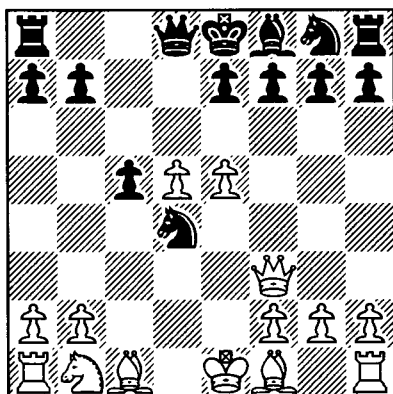


Diagram 14 (W)

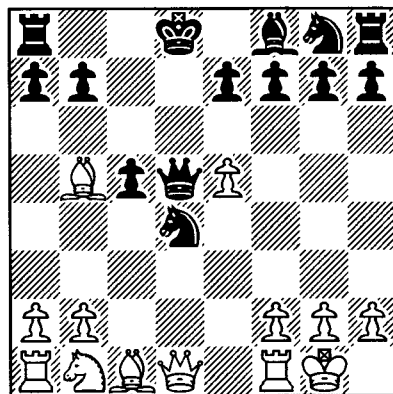


Diagram 15 (B)

This immediate capture had been suggested by Stohl in his notes to E.Sutovsky-I.Miladinovic, European Championship, Plovdiv 2008. There Black had preferred the more common 10...e6 and after 11 Nc3 Qxe5 12 b4! (vigorously ripping open lines; Miladinovic had earlier faced 12 Re1 when 12...Qd6 13 Be3 Nf6 14 Bf1 Rc8! 15 h3 h5 16 g3 Qd7 failed to give White enough for his pawns in O.Sepp-I.Miladinovic, European Team Championship, Heraklio 2007) we must consider:

a) 12...cxb4? is surely asking too much, grabbing a third pawn but loosening the

defence of the key central knight. Stohl's analysis continues with 13 Re1 Qd6 14 Bf4! (**Diagram 16**) 14...Qb6 (14...Qxf4? 15 Re4 would spell huge problems for both members of Black's royalty) 15 Re4! Bc5 16 Na4 Qxb5 17 Nxc5 Qxc5 18 Rc1 and White will regain his piece with an overwhelming attack.

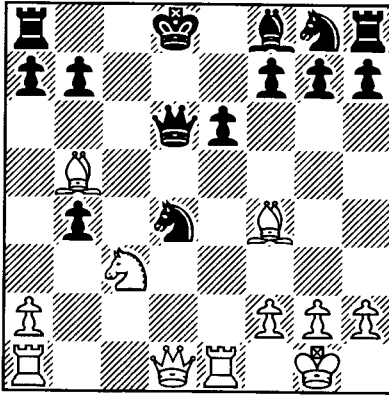


Diagram 16 (B)

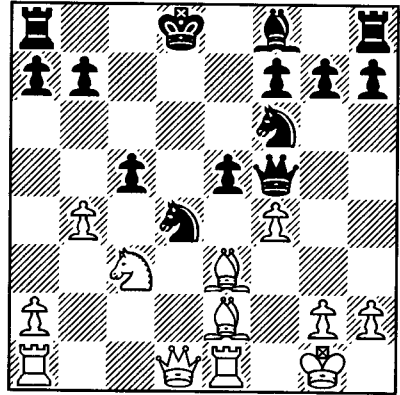


Diagram 17 (B)

b) Likewise, 12...a6? 13 Re1 Qc7 14 bxc5 Bxc5 15 Be3 left Black in huge trouble with his knight no longer stable in A.Berescu-D.Svetushkin, Bucharest 2005, and after 15...Qe5 (unfortunately for Black, 15...e5? fails to the cute 16 Bxd4 Bxd4 17 Qxd4+! exd4 18 Re8 mate) 16 f4!? (playing for the attack, but rather good too would have been 16 Ba4!?, threatening 17 Ne2 and meeting 16...Ke7 with 17 Bf4!) 16...Qd6 17 Ne4 Qd5 18 Nxc5 Nxb5 White had a number of strong continuations available, including 19 Qa4.

c) Thus Sutovsky-Miladinovic saw Black develop at top speed with 12...Nf6, but even so following 13 Re1! (earlier White had gone in for 13 f4 Qc7 14 Be3 in T.Fogarasi-S.Nagle, Budapest 2004, but here 14...Kc8! 15 Rc1! Kb8 would have given White no more than reasonable play for his pawns) 13...Qh5 (Black hopes for an early repetition; instead only after 13...Qc7 14 Be3 e5 would White have gone 15 f4!, and here 14...Kc8 is no longer so effective in view of simply 15 bxc5 Nf5 16 c6) 14 Be2 Qf5 15 Bd3 Qh5 16 Be2 Qf5 White was surely right to keep the game going with 17 Be3! e5 18 f4 (**Diagram 17**).

At this point 18...h5? was far too ambitious a lunge and should have been punished by the simple 19 fxe5 Qxe5 20 Bf2 Bd6 21 g3 when White's central attack would have outclassed anything which Black might have mustered on the king-

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side. However, even after the superior 18...Qc2! 19 Rc1! Qxd1 20 Rxd1 White's initiative would have remained virulent. Sutovsky gives the further 20...Nd7 21 fxe5 Nxe2+ 22 Rxe2 cxb4 23 Nb5 in his notes and despite the ongoing two-pawn deficit, White's attack down the central files should prove the telling factor.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! At first sight Black's knight might appear quite strong and secure on d4, but as shown by these lines, White is quick to undermine it. Moreover, once the knight becomes unstable, so too does Black's whole position.

We now return to 10...Qxe5:

11 Re1!?

Forcing Black to commit his queen looks like a sensible approach. In the only previous example White had preferred the equally sensible 11 Nc3 and after 11...e6 play had transposed to aforeconsidered lines in Berescu-Svetushkin. However, Black might have preferred 11...Nf6!? when 12 b4 gives him some extra options. Possibly critical is 12...Nd5!? (12...cxb4 13 Be3 bxc3 14 Ba4 Nd5 15 Bxd4 Qd6 16 Qb3 leaves Black three pawns ahead, but I would take White's initiative here) 13 Bb2!? (13 Nxd5 Qxd5 14 bxc5 e5 leaves the d4-knight fairly well entrenched) 13...Nxc3 14 Bxc3 e6 15 Re1 Qd5 16 Bd3 (**Diagram 18**) with ongoing compensation. Only further tests will reveal whether 11 Nc3 should be preferred to Baklan's choice.

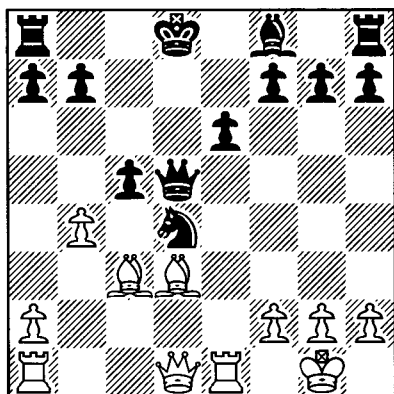


Diagram 18 (B)

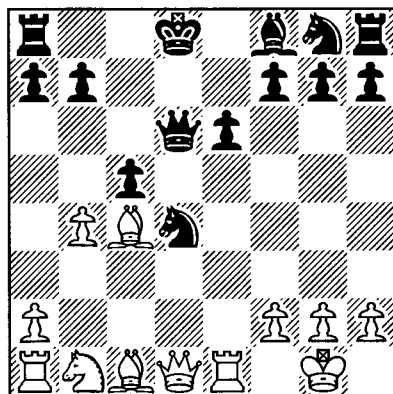


Diagram 19 (B)

11...Qd6

Blocking the d-file makes sense, although again only future games will reveal if this is Black's best try. The queen cannot, of course, go to h5 à la Miladinovic, but

Black might consider 11...Qf5!? 12 Nc3 (fighting against ...e5 ideas with 12 Na3!? comes strongly into consideration too) 12...Nf6 (the immediate 12...e5 runs into 13 f4!) 13 Bc4 e5!? 14 Bxf7 Kc7, returning one pawn to strengthen the knight's defences. That said, even here White shouldn't be too unhappy after, say, 15 Nd5+ Nxd5 16 Bxd5 thanks to his safer king and the holes in Black's position.

12 Bc4 e6 13 b4! (Diagram 19)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Once again this lever is key as White battles to undermine Black's best piece. Assessing White's compensation is not easy in this position, but I would be surprised if he did not have at least enough for his pawns.

13...Nf6

Snatching the pawn was possible as the d4-knight can retreat to f5, although after 13...cxb4!? 14 Bb2 Nf5 15 Qb3 (unfortunately for White, the tactics after 15 g4? Qxd1 16 Rxd1+ Nd6 17 Rxd6+ Bxd6 18 Bxg7 Rc8 turn out in Black's favour) 15...Kc8 (too slow; probably Black's king has to stay where it is for the time being, although even after 15...Qb6 16 Nd2 Nf6 matters look quite risky for him, with 17 Bxe6!? fxe6 18 Rxe6 one dangerous idea) 16 Nd2! Nge7 (16...Qxd2? 17 Rad1 Qf4 is flattened by 18 Bxe6+! fxe6 19 Qxe6+) 17 Ne4 Qb6 18 Rac1 there's suddenly no good defence against White's supremely well co-ordinated forces.

14 Bb2 Qd7

This seems pretty sensible, keeping the queen in touch with the knight while enabling the bishop to recapture on c5.

15 Nd2 Ke8

Sharapov decides that his king will be safest back on its start square, but in this fascinating position he must have considered a number of alternatives, including:

a) 15...Kc8 16 Rc1 Nc6 plugs the c-file for the time being, but after 17 b5 (17 Nf3!? Qxd1 18 Rxd1 is another approach, preparing to regain at least a pawn with Ne5 or Ng5) 17...Nd4 18 Nf3 Nxf3+ 19 Qxf3 White's compensation persists in the shape of his well-positioned diagonal-moving pieces and ready-to-launch a-pawn.

b) However, somewhat less prudent is 15...cxb4? in view of 16 Re3! Nf5 17 Rd3 Nd5 18 Nf3 and White's central break is too strong.

c) The machine tries to make a case for 15...b5 16 Bf1 cxb4?! giving Black an improved version of our last variation, but after 17 Re3! Nf5 18 Bxf6+ gxf6 19 Rd3 Bd6 20 g4 Rg8 21 Kh1 Ke7 22 gxf5 I'm far from convinced that Black's three pawns give him enough for the piece.

16 Nf3 (Diagram 20)

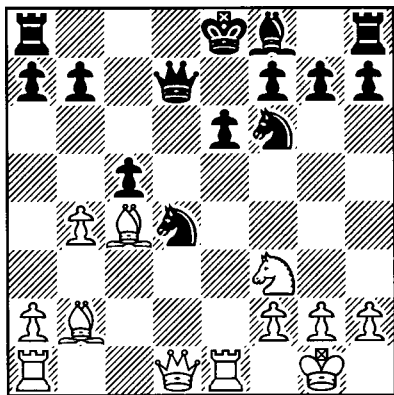


Diagram 20 (B)

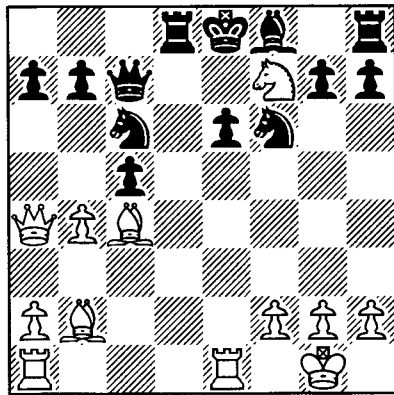


Diagram 21 (B)

16...Rd8?

Underestimating the coming leap as well as his vulnerability along the a4-e8 diagonal. A better try was to retreat with 16...Nc6 when 17 Qb3 Be7! (wisely avoiding 17...cxb4? 18 Rad1 Qc7 19 Ng5! and a big hit on e6) 18 Rad1 Qc7 19 bxc5 would have retained decent compensation, not least due to the pressure against e6 and Black's ongoing issues with king safety.

Another superior try would have been 16...Nxf3+!? 17 Qxf3 Be7, although here too with 18 a4 Kf8 19 b5 Rd8 20 Rad1 Qc8 21 a5 White would have retained decent compensation with his extra rook playing a handy role.

17 Ne5! Qc7 18 Qa4+ Nc6

And so the knight retreats in any case, but neither was 18...b5 a panacea in view of 19 Bxb5+ Nxb5 20 Qxb5+ Nd7 21 Qa4! and the pin is a severe problem for Black.

19 Nxf7! (Diagram 21)

I dare say it was this powerful blow which the Ukrainian Grandmaster had missed when he centralized his rook.

19...Kxf7

The knight had to go and 19...Qxf7 20 Rxe6+ Be7 21 Rae1 would also have left Black defenceless with 21...Kf8 running into 22 Rxf6!.

20 Bxe6+ Ke8

Even here Sharapov may have harboured some hopes of survival, as there doesn't

appear to be a killer discovery, but Baklan had realized that there was no hurry to regain the material.

21 b5! Ne7?!

Black is crushed after this, but 21...Be7 22 bxc6 Qxc6 23 Qxa7 Kf8 24 Bc4 would only have allowed him to limp on for a short while longer.

22 Be5

Now that's what I call a bishop-pair!

22...Qb6 23 Qc4 Nfd5 24 Bg3 1-0

There's no defence to White's pressure down the central files.

A Question of Move Order

Both Bologan and Baklan might have begun with 4 Nf3 and only then gone 4...Nc6 5 c4, but many other grandmasters have preferred the immediate 4 c4. This rather begs the question: which move order is better?

Unfortunately this isn't such an easy question to answer: plenty of grandmasters can be found on both sides of the debate and I must confess that my own opinion shifted more than once during the writing of this chapter.

Overall, it only seemed sensible to consider both 4 c4 and 4 Nf3 here, especially as theory is still in its infancy in a number of critical lines with both move orders. Moreover, both 4 c4 Nc6 5 Nf3 and 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 c4 reach the same critical variation (Line B1 below). Thus the choice is really whether one is happier to allow Black the options of 4 c4 e6 and 4...cxd4 5 Qxd4 Nc6 or to debate the variations 4 Nf3 Bg4 and 4...cxd4.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: I've done my best to group the following material as clearly as possible, but unsurprisingly transpositions between 4 c4 and 4 Nf3 do rather abound. Indeed, do please keep an eye open to such transpositional possibilities at all times!

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 (Diagram 22)

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Finally, it's time to get down to some specifics in a bid to answer the question: just which is the correct move order? Thus we must examine both:

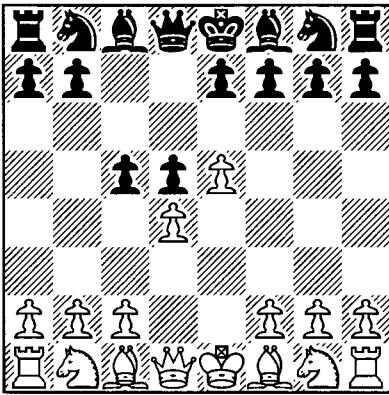


Diagram 22 (W)

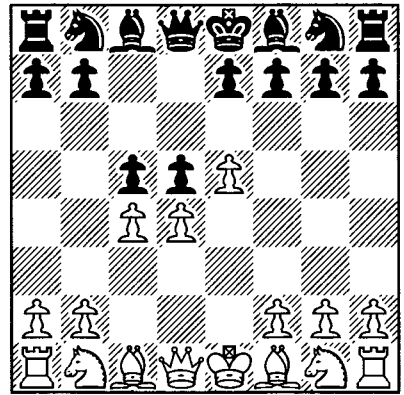


Diagram 23 (B)

A: 4 c4!?

B: 4 Nf3

A) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c4!? (Diagram 23)

White wastes no time blowing open the centre. There are now more than 150 games on my database with this move, although it continues to surprise some 3...c5 practitioners and was not considered, unlike 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 c4, in Podgaets and Karpov's 2006 *Caro-Kann Defence: Advance Variation and Gambit System*. Less surprisingly one cannot find any trace of 4 c4 in either Jacobs' 1997 *Caro-Kann Advance* or Gallagher's 2002 *Starting Out: The Caro-Kann* – two popular works which some club players may still be relying upon.

At this point we must discuss both:

A1: 4...cxd4

A2: 4...e6



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: Along with 4...cxd4, Black's joint most popular move and one recommended by co-author Houska in *Play the Caro-Kann* is 4...Nc6. Practice has shown that various gambits of the d-pawn give White nothing after 5 cxd5 Qxd5, so he should prefer 5 Nf3, taking play into the very important Line B1, below.

Finally, I suppose that the odd shocked opponent might go 4...dxc4?!, but this just looks like a good Queen's Gambit Accepted for White with his strong centre well advanced after 5 d5 Nd7 6 Nf3.

A1) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c4 cxd4

This time it's Black who decides to lure White's queen forwards...

5 Qxd4!

...and I feel that White should be happy to be provoked.



ROLL THE DICE! I believe that the text grants White a pleasant edge, but a number of strong players have preferred 5 Nf3. That can lead to fascinating complications and ones which it's hard to resist exploring.

At this juncture Black has often headed for Line B1 with 5...Nc6, but now is probably the best time for 5...Bg4! (**Diagram 24**).

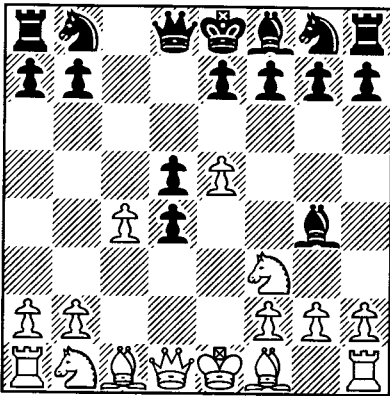


Diagram 24 (W)

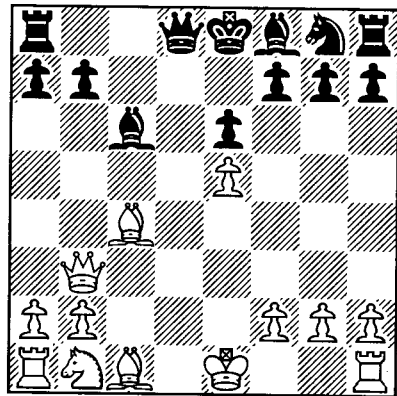


Diagram 25 (W)

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White has tried a number of moves here, which is testimony to the problems he faces obtaining an advantage. While it scores highly on creative appeal, I'm not totally convinced by Njiboer's 6 e6!?, which leaves us with:

a) 6 Qxd4?! Bxf3 7 gxf3 Nc6! 8 Qxd5 offers Black a number of continuations: he might challenge White to prove his compensation after 8...Nd4 9 Bd3!? (fighting for the initiative and to avoid being pushed back by 9 Qe4 f5!) 9...Qxd5 10 cxd5 Nxf3+ 11 Ke2 Nxe5 12 Bb5+ Nd7, as he did successfully in J.Hammer-E.Thingstad, Oslo 2009; with 8...e6! 9 Qxd8+ (even worse is 9 Qe4?! Bb4+ 10 Bd2 Bxd2+ 11 Nxd2 Qa5 12 0-0-0 0-0-0!), which saw Black regaining the pawn with the upper hand in J.Hector-I.Khenkin, German League 2008) 9...Rxd8 10 f4 Nh6 11 Be3 Nf5 Black obtained full compensation for his pawn in D.Sharma-I.Khenkin, Bad Wiessee 2009; and even better might be 8...Qc7!? 9 f4 e6 10 Qe4 0-0-0 11 Nc3 f5! which forced White on to the defensive in E.Najer-D.Fridman, Netanya (rapid) 2009.

b) 6 Qb3 Bxf3 7 Qxb7 Nd7 8 gxf3 e6 9 cxd5 reaches quite a sharp position, but one where I suspect that most Dangerous Weapons players would rather be on the black side. The all-grandmaster clash N.Vitiugov-K.Chernyshov, Russian Team Championship 2007, continued 9...Qc8! 10 Qxc8+ Rxc8 11 Nd2 Nxe5 12 Bb5+ Ke7 13 f4 Ng6 14 Nb3 Kf6! with a mess, and the simpler 9...Rb8 10 Qxa7 Bb4+ 11 Bd2 Nxe5 looks fine too for the second player.

c) 6 Qa4+! Bd7! (invariably played, no doubt because 6...Qd7 7 Qxd7+ Nxd7 8 Nxd4 gives White an early initiative and good chances for an edge) 7 Qb3 dxc4 8 Bxc4 e6 9 Nxd4 Nc6 10 Nxc6 Bxc6 (**Diagram 25**) has received quite a bit of testing at GM level, but Black ought to be able to complete his development without anything too nasty occurring: for example, 11 0-0 Bc5 12 Bb5 (White improved with 12 Nc3 Ne7 13 Bb5 in I.Cheparinov-A.Delchev, Spanish Team Championship 2010, but Black still didn't have any problems after 13...0-0 14 Bf4 Nd5) 12...Qb6 13 Bxc6+ Qxc6 14 Nc3 Ne7 15 Na4 0-0 16 Bg5 h6 17 Bxe7 Bxe7 was fine for Black with the e5-pawn vulnerable in P.Ponkratov-K.Landa, Russian Team Championship 2010.

d) Thus White should probably play as he does with ...Nc6 on the board instead of ...cxd4, namely 6 cxd5! Qxd5 7 Nc3, although this is less promising than in Bologan-Doettling. At this critical juncture practice has seen:

d1) 7...Qa5 8 Bb5+ Nc6 9 Bxc6+ (keeping the queens on, but 9 Qxd4!? Bxf3 10 gxf3 Qxb5 11 Nxb5 Nxd4 12 Nxd4 0-0-0 13 Be3 may be more promising) 9...bxc6 10 Qxd4 Bxf3 11 gxf3 e6 was V.Iordachescu-R.Zelcic, Dresden 2003, and now Watson's 12 Be3 would have retained a pull.

d2) If Black wants to play solidly then 7...Qd7 8 Bb5 Nc6 is another reasonable bet,

after which 9 Qxd4 Nxd4 (9...Bxf3 10 Qxd7+ Kxd7 11 gxf3 is also quite solid for Black, but White's bishops and initiative should slightly outweigh his fractured pawns) 10 Nxd4 (10 Bxd7+ Bxd7 11 Nxd4 Rc8 should be okay for Black, although it's surprising that this hasn't been tested) 10...Rc8 11 Bxd7+ Bxd7 12 O-O e6 13 Be3 f6! restricted White to a small pull in Y.Dembo-Xu Yuhua, Beijing (rapid) 2008.

d3) However, Black should really note the differences with Bologan-Doettling and take up the challenge with 7...Bxf3! 8 Nxd5 Bxd1 9 Nc7+ (a rather too clever idea is 9 e6?!, aiming to gum up Black's development; I have my doubts that Black can't just take on e6 immediately, but even stronger is 9...Bg4! 10 Nc7+ Kd8 11 Nxa8 Bxe6 12 Bf4 Nc6, as demonstrated by my co-author in L.Trent-J.Houska, British Championship, Torquay 2009, and after the game's 13 Bb5 Black could have retained the upper hand with 13...Nf6 followed by ...Nd5, as pointed out by John Watson) 9...Kd7! (the king is safe enough here and doesn't prevent the rook from eventually swinging across into play) 10 Nxa8 Bc2 (**Diagram 26**) and now:

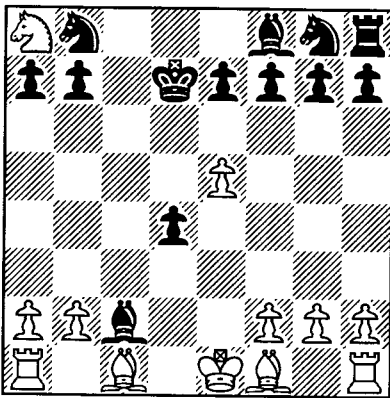


Diagram 26 (W)

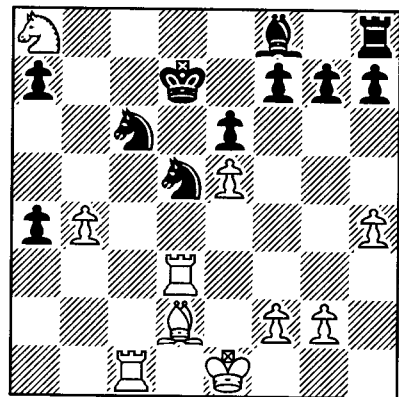


Diagram 27 (W)

d31) A further benefit of having the king on d7 was revealed by 11 e6+? Kxe6! 12 Bf4 (12 Nc7+ Kd7 13 Nd5 would have rescued the knight, but after 13...e5 one has to like Black with two dominating central pawns for the exchange) 12...Nc6 13 Kd2 Bg6 14 Bb5 Kd7 which left Black well on top in R.Robson-I.Khairullin, Moscow 2009.

d32) Better is 11 Bd2 Nc6 12 Rc1 d3! (cementing the bishop in place; in his excellent contribution for the ChessPublishing website John Watson notes the line 12...Be4?! 13 e6+! Kxe6 14 f3 Bg6 15 Ba6! and White will extricate his knight with some advantage), reaching quite a critical position. More tests are needed, but my suspicion is that Black should be doing okay with White's knight badly entombed

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for once. The only example I could find was E.Najer-I.Khairullin, Moscow 2010, which continued 13 h4! (only by eliminating the pawn on d3 can White shift the annoying bishop) 13...e6! (keeping control of the position and the knight bottled up on a8 is key; instead 13...Nxe5? 14 Rh3 e6 15 f4 Nc6 16 Bxd3 Bxd3 17 Rxd3+ Kc8 18 b4 would be very good for White) 14 Rh3 Nge7 15 Bxd3 Bxd3 16 Rxd3+ Nd5 17 b4 b5! 18 a4! (both sides battle for the all-important queenside) 18...bxa4 (**Diagram 27**) 19 b5 (this pretty much leads to a repetition and so those who want to make 5 Nf3 work really need to find an improvement here; one idea is John Watson's 19 Ke2!?, but after 19...a3 I haven't found more than a likely draw, such as after 20 Rxa3 Bxb4 21 Bxb4 Ndx b4 22 Nc7 Kxc7 23 Rxa7+ Kb6 24 Rxf7) 19...Nxe5 20 Rc7+ Ke8 21 Rc8+ Kd7 22 Rc7+ Ke8 23 Rc8+ Kd7 1/2-1/2.

Finally, we can return to 5 Qxd4 (**Diagram 28**), which on the current evidence looks like the best try. Now, with apologies to the reader, there is a further divide:

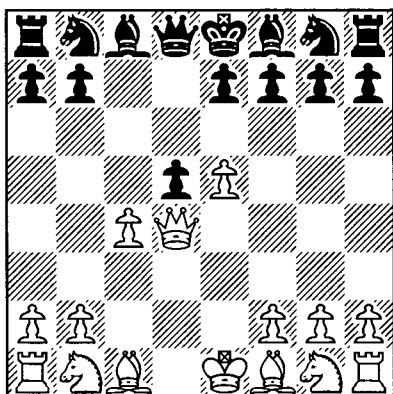


Diagram 28 (B)

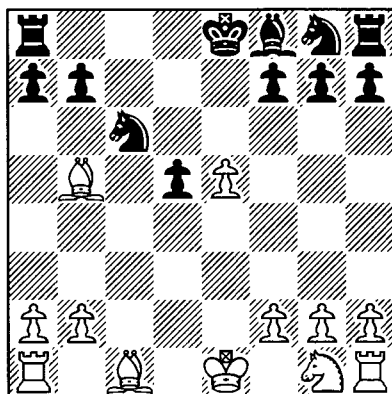


Diagram 29 (B)

A11: 5...e6

A12: 5...Nc6!?

The former is the solid response, the latter a dynamic pawn sacrifice in keeping with the uncompromising spirit of 3...c5. There are a couple of minor alternatives:

a) 5...dxc4?! again fails to convince and after 6 Qxd8+ Kxd8 7 Bxc4 Nc6 (7...Ke8?! 8 Nc3 menaces ideas of Nb5 and Nd5) 8 Bf4 (the quieter 8 Nf3 Bg4 9 Nbd2 is also plausible) 8...g5!? 9 Bg3 Bg7 10 Nc3! White manages to seize the initiative, as he will at least regain his pawn after 10...Nxe5 11 Rd1+ Bd7 12 Bxe5 Bxe5 13 Nf3.

b) 5...Be6!? is not as bad as it may appear, but after 6 cxd5 (a decent case can be made too for the Gunderam-style 6 c5!? Nc6 7 Bb5, fighting to keep a hold on d4) 6...Nc6 7 Qd1 Qxd5 8 Qxd5 Bxd5 9 Nc3 e6 (M.Muzychuk-D.Swiercz, Wroclaw 2009) 10 Nxd5 exd5 11 Bb5!? (**Diagram 29**) 11...a6 (11...Bb4+ 12 Bd2 Bxd2+ 13 Kxd2 Nge7 14 Nf3 is quite pleasant for White) 12 Bxc6+ bxc6 13 Nf3 Ne7 14 Bd2 Ng6 15 Rc1 White should be a little better with the plan of O-O, Rfe1, b2-b4 if required and Nd4.

A11) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c4 cxd4 5 Qxd4 e6 (Diagram 30)

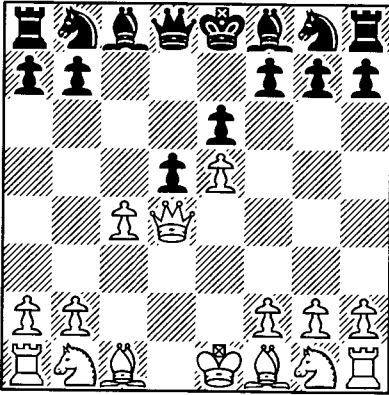


Diagram 30 (W)

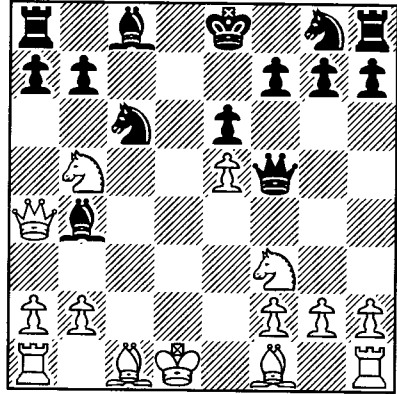


Diagram 31 (B)

6 cxd5

Naturally White pushes ahead in the centre before Black gets in his hit with ...Nc6.

6...exd5

This leads to a structure with some counterchances for Black, but in which I'd always slightly prefer White due to his cramping e5-pawn and control of d4. Thus Black should again consider 6...Nc6!? at this stage:

a) As in the main line, 7 Bb5 looks natural, but after 7...Qxd5! 8 Qxd5 exd5 it's not so easy for White to keep control with his well-placed queen gone and Black enjoying free development with such moves as ...Bg4, ...Bb4 and ...Nge7. The game A.Steiner-U.Arndt, Berlin 2008, continued 9 Nc3 Nge7!? (Black pursues quite an independent approach, but there was nothing wrong with 9...Bb4 10 Bd2 Nge7 11 Nf3 Bg4) 10 Bg5 Be6 11 Nf3 a6 12 Ba4 b5 13 Bb3 h6 14 Be3 g5 15 O-O-O Rd8 16 Bc5 Bg7 and while I wouldn't have developed in such fashion as Black, he did enjoy decent counterplay in any case.

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b) Thus John Watson's untested idea of 7 Qa4!? looks best. He continues with 7...Qxd5 (7...exd5 8 Bb5 Bd7 9 Nf3 a6 10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 0-0 is another logical line stemming from the tireless American analyst; White will follow up by fighting to control the central dark squares with Nb1-d2-b3 and I slightly prefer his chances) 8 Nf3 Bb4+ 9 Nc3! (9 Bd2 Bd7! gives Black easy play with the idea of 10 Bxb4? Qe4+) 9...Qe4+ (critical, but perhaps Black might prefer to develop while ganging up on e5 with 9...Bxc3+ 10 bxc3 Nge7; however, this does leave his dark squares a little vulnerable and 11 Be2 Bd7 12 Qb3! gives White chances for a pull, especially if Black continues rather routinely with 12...Qxb3 13 axb3 Ng6 14 Be3) 10 Kd1 (and not, of course, 10 Be2?? Bxc3+ 11 bxc3 Qxa4, which would be rather embarrassing) 10...Qf5 11 Nb5! (**Diagram 31**) when it is White who has seized a dangerous initiative, despite his king's early walk.

7 Nc3 Nc6

I dare say that play is likely to transpose in the event of 7...Be6 with 8 Nf3 Nc6 9 Bb5.

8 Bb5 Be6

In Xu Tong-D.Elorta, Manila 2008, Black kicked the bishop straight away and after 8...a6!? 9 Qa4 Nge7 10 Bg5 Bd7 11 Nxd5? White's play would have been shown up as overly ambitious had Black found either 11...Rc8 or 11...Qb8. Thus White should probably get involved in the critical 9 Bxc6+ bxc6 10 Nf3 with good chances to emerge with an edge after 10...Ne7 11 0-0 Nf5 12 Qf4; one plan being Na4, Bd2 and Rac1, another Ne2-g3/d4.

9 Nf3 Nge7 (Diagram 32)

Black must lose further time bringing his knight to f5, as the dark-squared bishop and knight can't both be placed on e7.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! It's obvious that White's cramping pawn on e5 continues to interfere with Black's smooth development. The Advance Variation has turned out well!

Indeed, White should emerge with an edge, as he has in the two practical tests thus far:

a) 10 Bg5 h6 11 Bh4!? (11 Bxe7 Bxe7 12 0-0, as proposed by Lukacs, would have been a safer choice) 11...Qa5 (Black should have taken up the challenge with the uncompromising 11...g5! 12 Bg3 g4) 12 0-0 Nf5 13 Qd3 a6 14 Ba4 b5?! (only now does Black push one of his knights' pawns and it turns out to be too ambitious) 15 Bb3 Nxe4 16 Nxe4 Nxe5 was Z.Topalovic-J.Petrov, Pula 2000, and now the simple

17 Qe2 followed by regaining the pawn on d5 would have favoured White.

b) The prophylactic 10 Qd1 Nf5 11 0-0 looks a more reliable course and in P.Wells-P.Marusenko, Treforst 2008, White quickly increased his positional plusses with 11...Bc5 (11...Be7 would have prevented White's next, but after 12 Bd3 and 13 Ne2 White would have obtained a pull in any case) 12 Bg5! (**Diagram 33**) 12...Qd7?! 13 Rc1 h6 14 Na4!.

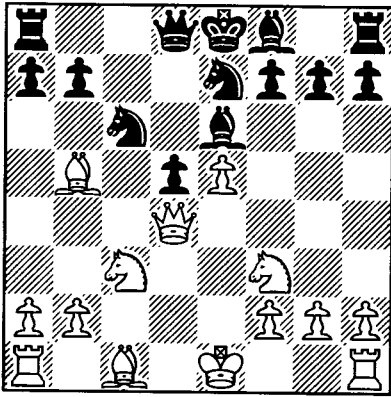


Diagram 32 (W)

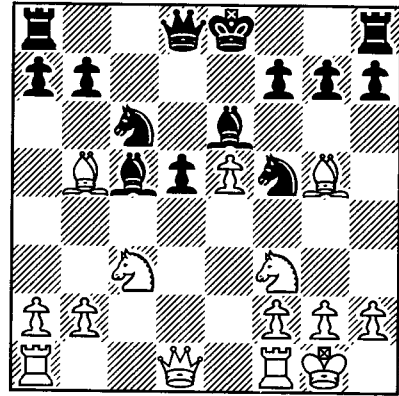


Diagram 33 (B)

c) The queen might also retreat with 10 Qd3, intending to quickly gang up against d5 with 10...Nf5 (10...a6!? 11 Ba4 b5 is less compliant, but then 12 Bb3 d4 13 Bxe6 fxe6 14 Ne2 looks like a decent-enough version of an Open Lopez for White) 11 0-0 Be7 12 Rd1.

Overall, it seems that White's queen turns out to be a strength not a target on d4 in this variation, but Black may do better with the virtually untouched 6...Nc6 or by playing that leap a move earlier, as we must now consider.

A12) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c4 cxd4 5 Qxd4 Nc6!?

A more enterprising choice than 5...e6, wasting no time attacking the queen while pressing e5.

6 Qxd5 (Diagram 34)

White must capture as something like 6 Qd3?! d4 would only see Black seizing the initiative and at no material cost.

6...Qxd5

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Black decides to restore material parity, but not hurrying to do so deserves attention too:

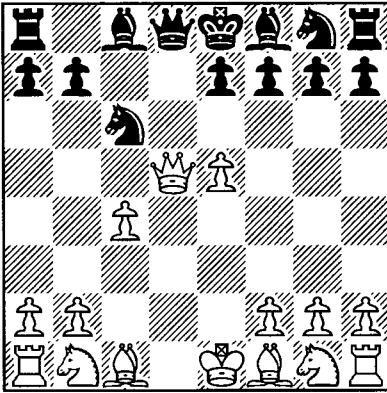


Diagram 34 (B)

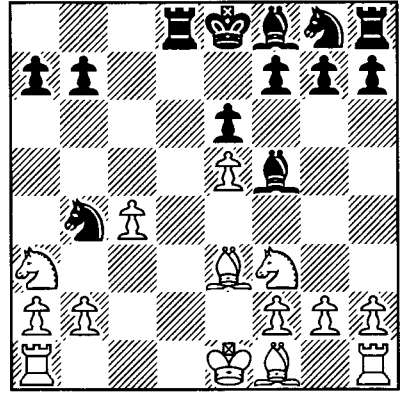


Diagram 35 (B)

a) 6...Qc7 7 Nc3! (prudent; otherwise, 7 f4?! Bf5 8 Nc3 e6 9 Qd1 Rd8 just gives Black great play for his pawn and 7 Nf3 Bg4 is also pretty pleasant for the second player) 7...e6 8 Qe4 Qxe5 saw Black regaining his pawn without allowing the creation of a potentially awkward bridgehead on d5 in T.Gietl-M.Menacher, German League 1997, but after 9 Qxe5 Nxe5 10 Nb5 Bb4+ White could have obtained an edge with 11 Ke2! Ke7 12 a3 Ba5 13 b4, with the idea of meeting 13...a6 with 14 Bb2 f6 15 bxa5 axb5 16 cxb5 Rxa5 17 a4.

b) 6...Bf5!? 7 Nf3 e6 saw Black determined to gambit in A.Tate-A.Zatonskih, Gibraltar 2009.



BEWARE! Tate was determined to keep the queens on, but after 8 Qb5? Bc2! found his royal family rather embarrassed. Indeed, it's not only a knight invasion on c2 which can cause White huge problems.

Thus White must opt to exchange and after 8 Qxd8+ Rxd8 9 Be3! the onus is on Black to demonstrate sufficient compensation. He would like to activate his knight, but 9...Nb4 (9...Bb4+ 10 Nbd2 Nge7 is perhaps more prudent, since Black will regain his pawn on e5, but 11 a3 Ba5 12 Be2 Ng6 13 0-0-0 Bc7 14 Nb3 keeps White's nose in front) 10 Na3 (Diagram 35) 10...Nd3+ 11 Bxd3 Bxd3 (unfortunately for Black, 11...Bxa3? 12 Bxf5 Bxb2 13 Rb1 Bc3+ 14 Ke2 exf5 15 Rxb7 only gives

White an extra pawn and the initiative – development counts!) 12 O-O-O! Bxa3 13 bxa3 Bxc4 14 Rxd8+ Kxd8 15 Bxa7 is a long line which doesn't seem to equalize. There are opposite-coloured bishops present and Black can securely post a piece on d5, but I haven't found a way for him to fully neutralize White's initiative, with ideas of Kb2 and Rc1, Ng5 and even Nd4-b5 on the cards.

7 cxd5 (Diagram 36)

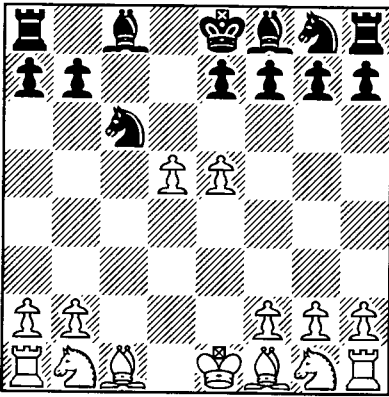


Diagram 36 (B)

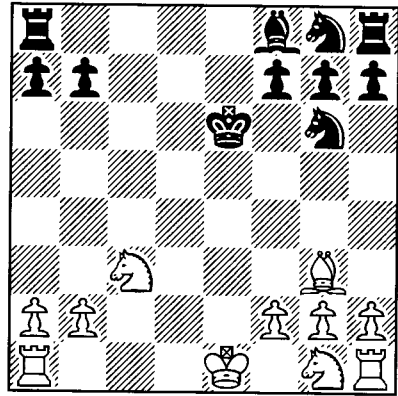


Diagram 37 (B)

7...Nxe5

Black can also regain the pawn with 7...Nb4 8 Na3 Nxd5, but then White has a few paths towards a likely edge, including 9 Nf3 a6 10 Bd2 and 9 Bc4!? e6 10 Nb5 a6 11 Bxd5 axb5 12 Be4.

8 Bf4

The choice of the only grandmaster to have reached this position, but the closely related 8 Nc3 Nf6 (8...Bf5 9 Bb5+ Kd8 might also be met by 10 Bf4, although 10 Be3 Nf6 11 f4!, intending Ng1-f3-e5 gave White a pull in S.Haslinger-P.Marusenko, Hastings 2006/07) 9 Bf4 Ng6 10 Bg3 might be even more precise. In any case, the cramping pawn on d5 poses certain problems and should supply a pull. Here in A.Muzychuk-H.Astrup, Calvi 2005, Black avoided the check with the sensible 10...a6, but still failed to equalize after 11 Nf3 Bf5 12 O-O-O! Rc8 13 Bd3 Ne4 14 Rhe1! Nxg3 15 hxg3 with strong pressure down the central files.

8...Ng6 9 Bg3 e6

Removing the bridgehead, but committing Black's king to a walk and I'm not convinced that this was the lesser evil.

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10 Bb5+!

Simple and strong, although a decent case might also be made for 10 Nc3!? a6 11 0-0-0.

10...Bd7 11 Bxd7+ Kxd7 12 dxe6+ Kxe6 13 Nc3 (Diagram 37)

White's smoother development and safer king promises him a pull, which soon developed into a strong initiative after 13...Rd8?! 14 Nf3 Bb4 15 0-0 Bxc3 16 bxc3 f6 17 Nd4+! Kf7 18 Nb5 in O.Korneev-J.Ramos Aldoradin, Parla 2007.

It seems that the early exchange of queens fails to quell White's bid for an early initiative, but future tests may reveal a viable way for Black to delay regaining his pawn back on move 6.

A2) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c4 e6 (Diagram 38)

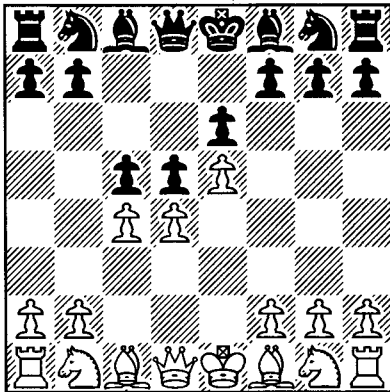


Diagram 38 (W)

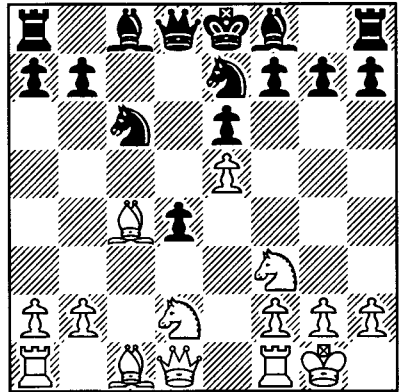


Diagram 39 (W)

Blocking in the light-squared bishop for the time being, but Black knows that the centre is likely to open.

5 cxd5!

Just as in the closely-related Line A12 (4...cxd4 5 Qxd4 e6) this makes a lot of sense, but 5 Nf3 is a good alternative when Black has usually transposed to Line B1 with 5...Nc6. Otherwise, the independent approach 5...dxc4 6 Bxc4 (promising, but White can also play more simply with 6 Nc3 when 6...Nc6 7 dxc5 Qxd1+ 8 Kxd1 Bxc5 9 Ne4 looks quite pleasant for him: for example, A.Shabalov-I.Figler, Peabody 2007, continued 9...Bb6 10 Nd6+!? Kf8 and now 11 Bxc4! Bxf2 12 Rf1 Bc5 would

have enabled White to consider maintaining his bind with 13 Bf4!?, as well as the forcing and seemingly quite strong 13 Ng5) 6...cxd4 (I dare say that White might also have met 6...Nc6 with 7 0-0!? Nxd4 8 Nbd2, again with decent compensation) 7 0-0 Nc6 8 Nbd2 Nge7 (**Diagram 39**) 9 Ne4!? Nf5 10 Bf4 gave White plenty of play for his pawn in A.Cabrera-F.Diaz Franco, Sauzal 2004.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: Remember that transpositions are rife in this variation! Indeed, here 5...cxd4 6 Nxd4 would take play into Line B2 and a position we will consider below via the move order 4 Nf3 cxd4 5 Nxd4 e6 6 c4.

White can also meet 5...cxd4 with 6 cxd5, but then 6...Qxd5 7 Qxd4 Qxd4 8 Nxd4 a6 9 Nc3 Ne7 should be okay for Black who has decent squares for his pieces.

5...exd5

An important alternative is 5...Qxd5, but after 6 Nc3! (6 Nf3 cxd4 7 Qxd4 is less challenging, as we noted above) 6...Qxd4 7 Qxd4 cxd4 8 Nb5 one has to like White's early initiative. The game P.Marusenko-A.Jain, Treforest 2009, saw the experienced Ukrainian IM switch to the white side and after 8...Na6 (8...Bb4+ 9 Bd2 Bxd2+ 10 Kxd2 Na6 11 Nf3 Nh6 12 Nd6+ Ke7 13 Nxd4 gives White an edge too) 9 Nf3 Bc5 10 a3! Ne7 11 b4 Bb6 12 Nd6+ Kf8 White might have simply regained his pawn while retaining all his positional plusses with 13 Bb2.

6 Nc3 Nc6

Black retains the central tension, rather than take play back into Line A12 with 6...cxd4 7 Qxd4. Instead 6...c4 appears to ask too much of his undeveloped troops and after either 7 b3 Bb4 8 Bd2 or Watson's 7 Nf3 Bb4 8 Be2 Ne7 9 0-0 Bf5 10 a3, with the idea of 10...Ba5 11 b4!, White is for choice. Likewise, 6...Be6 7 Nf3 Nc6 8 Bb5 h6?! 9 0-0 g5 was too ambitious in C.Doran-S.McCullough, British Championship, Canterbury 2010, and after 10 dxc5! Bxc5, 11 Na4!? would have been even stronger than the game's 11 Nd4.

7 Bb5 (Diagram 40)

Yet another untested line stemming from the indefatigable Watson is 7 Nf3!? with the idea of 7...Bg4 8 Bb5 cxd4 9 Qxd4 Bxf3 10 gxf3, sacrificing structural niceties to further White's lead in development. This deserves attention, although I suspect that Black's position is sufficiently solid after 10...Nge7 11 Be3 a6 12 Bxc6+ bxc6 followed by ...Qd7 and ...Nf5.

7...a6

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Once again Black can take play back into our last section with 7...cxd4 8 Qxd4, which was actually how Wells-Marusenko began. The more ambitious text had been Marusenko's earlier choice in S.Haslinger-P.Marusenko, Hastings 2007/08, which we will now follow:

8 Bxc6+ bxc6

Now 9 Nf3 Bg4 would enable Black to reveal why he held back on the trade on d4, but White's king's knight can go to another square.

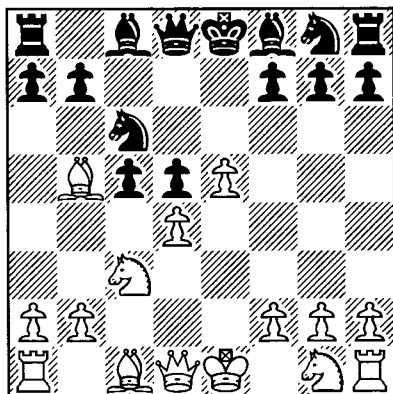


Diagram 40 (B)

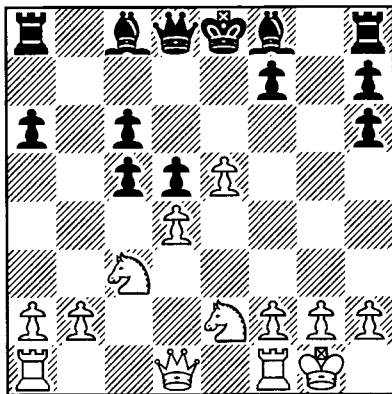


Diagram 41 (B)

9 Nge2! Nh6?

We haven't seen this move before in this type of structure for the simple reason that it's rarely advisable. Unlike in certain lines of the Advance French, Black can't get away with allowing the shredding of his kingside as the centre is far from stable. That said, I also quite like White after 9...cxd4 10 Nxd4!? (10 Qxd4 would be a safer option, with an edge) 10...c5 11 Nb3 when Black's advanced centre comes under rapid pressure in the case of both 11...Bb7 12 0-0 d4 13 Na4 and 11...d4 12 Qf3! Be6 13 Ne4.

Probably Black's best approach is 9...Ne7!?, after which 10 dxc5 Ng6 11 Nd4 Qc7 12 0-0 Bxc5 13 f4 0-0 14 Be3 f6 was fine for him in the later game P.Bobras-K.Urban, Warsaw 2008. However, White should have kept the tension and after 10 0-0 Nf5 11 Bf4 he must be a little better with ideas of exploiting the weakened c5-square (after an exchange on c5 or d4) with Rc1 and Na4.

10 Bxh6 gxh6 11 0-0 (Diagram 41)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Caught out in the opening, Black has tried to respond aggressively in keeping with his earlier choice of 3...c5, but already finds himself badly behind in development and highly vulnerable to the white knight-pair.

11...cxd4?!

The knight was bound for the dangerous f4-square, but now Black is going to be decimated down the e-file.

12 Nxd4 Qc7?! 13 Rc1 Be6 14 Qh5 Kd7 15 Na4 Rg8 16 Rxc6 Qa7 17 Rxe6! 1-0.

Brutal if straightforward play from Haslinger. Overall, it seems that White should be fairly happy to see Black try but fail to keep the centre closed with 4...e6.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3 (Diagram 42)

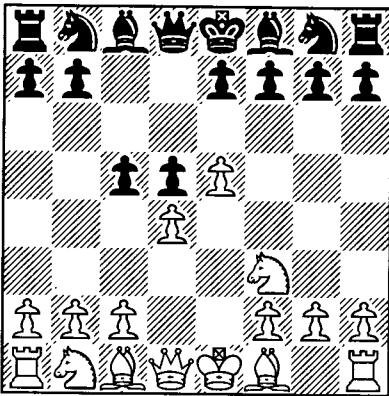


Diagram 42 (B)

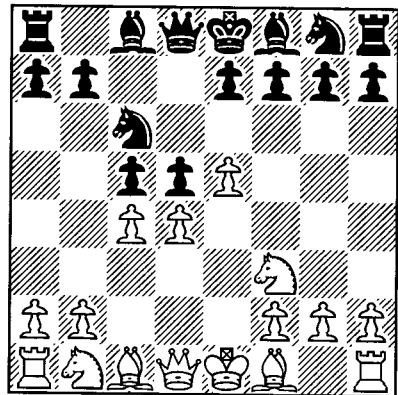


Diagram 43 (B)

White keeps c2-c4 in reserve for a move and prepares to recapture on d4 with his knight. At this point we will chiefly consider:

B1: 4...Nc6

B2: 4...cxd4

Two minor options make no sense: 4...e6?! 5 c3 is an Advance French with an extra tempo for White (hardly what Black wanted when he went 1...c6), and 4...Bf5?! exposes the bishop without pinning, thereby making 5 c4 all the more effective.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: However, Black's second most popular choice after 4...Nc6 and arguably his best is 4...Bg4!?, taking play not back into the realm of Bologan-Doettling after 5 c4 Nc6, but rather intending 5...cxd4, reaching a position which we considered back in Line A1.

I covered a number of options there for White, but without managing to offer him more than a choice of unclear positions to debate. Thus here I also explored non-c4 paths in 5 Bb5+ and 5 dxc5 without unfortunately being particularly impressed by either.

B1) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 c4! (Diagram 43)

At this stage we considered the provocative 5...Bg4 in both Bologan-Doettling and Baklan-Sharapov. White must respond accurately, but Wells' judgement on the move remains apt in that Black 'seems wise not to encourage undue complexity.' Thus Black has more often preferred to open the centre without delay.

5...cxd4

Black can also support his centre with 5...e6 after which 6 cxd5 exd5 7 Bb5 Bd7 8 0-0 should give White an edge, but there is a simpler method. Indeed, 6 Nc3 is an important alternative and one which should cut down the white player's workload. The main point is that 6...cxd4 7 Nxd4 takes into Line B2. Black's only real alternative is 6...dxc4, but following 7 dxc5 Qxd1+ 8 Kxd1 Bxc5 9 Ne4 White will regain his pawn with an edge, as we saw back in the notes to White's 5th move in Line A2.

6 Nxd4

Invariably played, but White might also sacrifice.



ROLL THE DICE! I have my doubts that the gambit 6 cxd5!? Qxd5 7 Nc3 Qa5 8 Nxd4 Qxe5+ 9 Be3 (Diagram 44) is entirely sound, but in the limited practice thus far White has scored pretty well with this approach.

The game E.Tomilova-B.Kharashkina, Elista 2003, continued 9...Nf6 (alternatively, 9...Nxd4?! forces the queens off, but 10 Qxd4 Qxd4 11 Bxd4 Bd7 12 Nb5 gives White a pretty useful initiative, and 9...e6 10 Bb5 Bd7 11 Qa4 Rc8 12 Bxc6 Bxc6 13 Nxc6 bxc6 14 Qxa7 saw him regaining his pawn with an edge in S.Crouan-D.Le Goff, Guingamp 2009) 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Qf3 Bd7 and now 12 0-0-0 (12 Bb5?! was

well met by 12...Nd5 in the game) 12...e6 13 Bd4 looks like decent compensation, as shown by the plausible continuation 13...Qg5+ (13...Qh5 improves, but perhaps White might then play slowly with 14 Qxh5 Nxh5 15 Ba6 Nf6 16 Rhe1 Be7 17 Ne4) 14 Rd2 Be7 15 Be2 Rd8 16 h4! Qa5 17 Qg3 0-0 18 Be5, taking control of the dark squares.

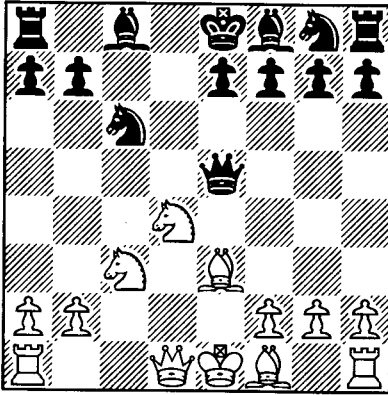


Diagram 44 (B)

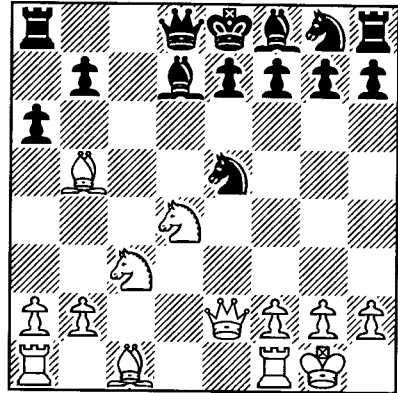


Diagram 45 (B)

I should also mention that in practice Black has sometimes preferred to decline the gambit with 7...Qd8 8 Nb5 Bg4 9 Nbx d4 Bxf3 10 Nxf3 Qxd1+ 11 Kxd1, which is a more solid approach and one advocated by Podgaets and Karpov. However, White shouldn't be too unhappy here: his bishop-pair and free development at least make up for his centralized king position.

Returning to 6 Nxd4 and now we must note:



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: Black's most prudent choice at this juncture is 6...e6, which we will consider under the move order 4...cxd4 5 Nxd4 e6 6 c4 Nc6 in Line B2.

6...dxc4

Forcing simplification, but at the cost of ceding a pleasant edge. Likewise the rarely-seen 6...Nxd4 7 Qxd4 dxc4 8 Qxd8+ Kxd8 9 Bxc4 looks quite nice for White who soon enjoyed a strong initiative after 9...e6 10 0-0 Bc5?! 11 Nc3 Ke7 12 Rd1 in B.Warszawski-M.Cajbel, Ustron 2009. What happens, though, if Black grabs the pawn on offer?



DANGEROUS WEAPON! White should be very happy to see 6...Nxe5 7 cxd5 Qxd5?! 8 Nc3, developing with tempo and preparing to make good use of the vulnerable b5-square.

One has to like White's compensation here and after 8...Qd8 (or 8...Qa5 9 Bb5+ Bd7 10 0-0 which Wells rightly observes 'looks quite perilous for Black') 9 Bb5+ (9 Bf4!? might be even stronger with the fiendish idea of 9...Nc6?! 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 12 Rd1+ Ke8? 13 Nb5!; here Black does better with 9...Ng6, but 10 Bb5+ Bd7 11 Qf3!? Nxf4 12 Qxf4 still supplies dangerous compensation) 9...Bd7 10 0-0 a6 11 Qe2! (**Diagram 45**) 11...Nc6?! 12 Nxc6 Bxc6 13 Bxc6+ bxc6 14 Qc4 Qc8 15 Na4 Black's weaknesses and undeveloped kingside soon told in T.Miettinen-S.Haggren, Helsinki 2008.

Black does better to ignore the pawn and prefer 7...Nf6 when play rather resembles Line A12. Here the queens are still on, of course, and again White should be able to make use of his cramping d-pawn, as he did with 8 Nc3 (the simpler 8 Bb5+!? Bd7 9 Nc3 Bxb5 10 Ndx b5 a6 11 Bf4! is also promising, M.Perunovic-I.Miladinovic, Kragujevac 2009) 8...a6 9 Qa4+! Bd7 10 Qb3 (**Diagram 46**) 10...b5 (better than exposing the queen to attack down the c-file and after 10...Qc7?! 11 Be2 b5 12 0-0 g6 13 Bf4! Nf3+ 14 Bxf3 Qxf4 15 Rad1 White enjoyed a strong attack in R.Van Kampen-O.Huseyn, Kemer 2009) 11 Bf4 Ng6 in S.Solovjov-A.Kharitonov, St Petersburg 2005, and now 12 Be3! was correct, as 12...b4 13 Na4 Qa5?! (or 13...Nxd5 14 Qxd5 Bxa4 15 Qb7 e6 16 Bxa6 Rb8 17 Qe4 with a pull) 14 Nc6! would have maintained control with the idea of 14...Qxd5? 15 Bc4.

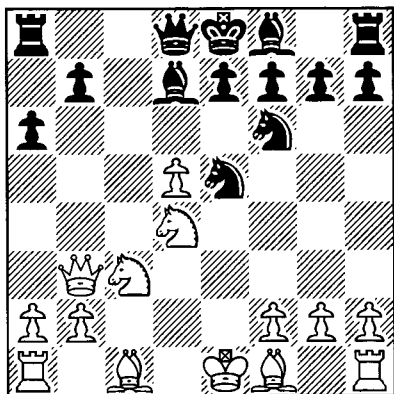


Diagram 46 (B)

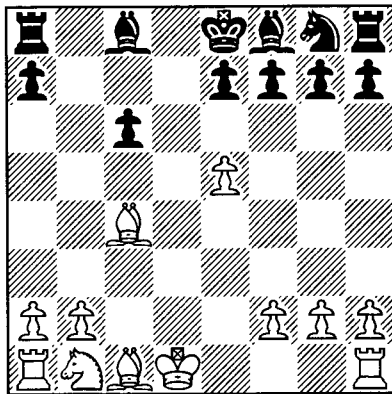


Diagram 47 (B)

7 Nxc6 Qxd1+ 8 Kxd1 bxc6 9 Bxc4 (Diagram 47)

Taking stock after the exchanges we can see that White's king is hardly misplaced and that he can aim to target the vulnerable black queenside. Black, for his part, must really aim to race his knight to d5.

9...Bf5

Taking the bishop outside the pawn chain before going ...e6. This does, however, remove a queenside defender, although in any case I haven't found a way to dent the notion that White enjoys a pleasant edge:

a) 9...e6 10 Nc3 Ne7 11 Bd2 (11 Ke2 Nd5 12 Rd1 Rb8 13 Ne4 is another approach, keeping control, after which 13...h6 14 b3 Bb4 15 Bd2 Bxd2 16 Rxd2 Ke7 17 Rc1 left Black facing a fairly grim defensive task in S.Solovjov-An.Timofeev, Peterhof 2009) 11...Nd5 12 Ne4 Be7 13 Rc1 Bd7 14 Bb3 **(Diagram 48)** 14...Rb8 15 Nc5 Bxc5 16 Rxc5 Ke7 17 Ke2 left White with a fairly pleasant two-bishop grind in M.Yeo-M.Armstrong, British League 2007.

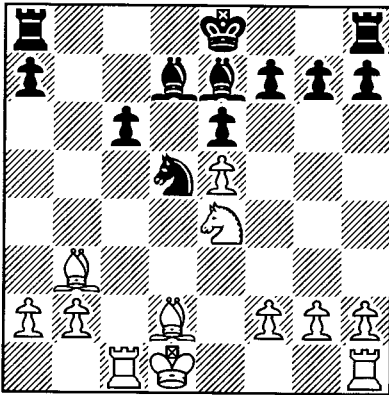


Diagram 48 (B)

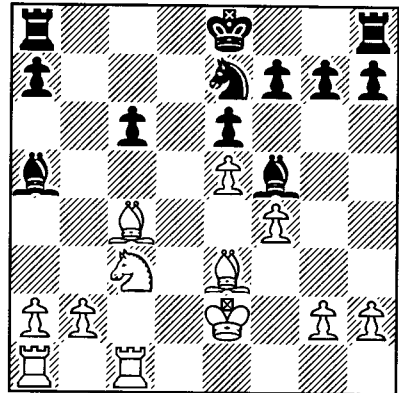


Diagram 49 (B)

b) 9...g6 10 Nc3 Nh6 11 Ke2 (the more ambitious 11 h3!? Nf5 12 g4 Nd4 13 Be3 is likely slightly in White's favour too) 11...Bg7 12 f4 g5!? was a decent try to mix things up in A.Muzychuk-A.Ushenina, Ljubljana 2007, but with 13 fxg5!? Ng4 14 e6! fxe6 15 Bf4 0-0 16 Rhf1 (Watson) White could have retained an edge.

10 Nc3

White has also done fairly well by developing his knight to d2, but there is nothing much wrong with it on c3, preventing ideas of ...Bf5-e4-d5 and hoping one day to reach c5.

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10...e6 11 Be3 Bb4

A second active bishop deployment. Instead 11...Rb8 12 Bb3 a5 13 Rc1 Bb4 14 Ke2 Ne7 15 Na4 was similar and slightly better for White in R.Felgaer-B.Altamirano, Buenos Aires 2004, and the more radical 11...f6 should also fail to equalize after, say, 12 exf6 Nxf6 13 Ke2 Be7 14 Rac1. Finally, 11...Ne7 12 Ke2 Ng6 13 f4 Rb8 14 Ng3 gave White a pull too in J.Todorovic-I.Miladinovic, Cetinje 2010.

12 Rc1

A good case can also be made for putting the other rook on c1. Indeed, it's worth taking a look at F.Nijboer-G.Schroll, European Championship, Plovdiv 2008, where 12 Ke2 Ne7 13 Rhc1!? Ba5 14 f4 (**Diagram 49**) 14...Nd5?! turned out not to be the panacea Black was hoping for on account of 15 Nxd5! cxd5?! (15...exd5 was better, but after 16 Bb3!? Bg4+ 17 Kf2 Bd7 18 Ba4 White would have had pressure and a grip) 16 Bb5+ Kd8 17 Rc6 and suddenly Scholl found himself facing a strong attack.

12...Ne7 13 Ke2 (Diagram 50)

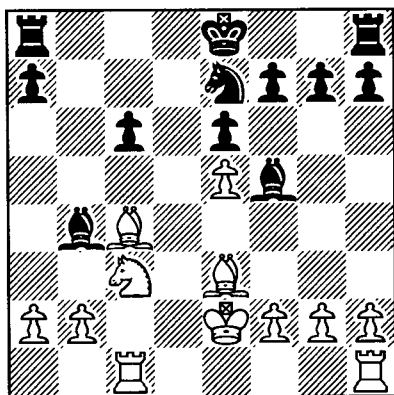


Diagram 50 (B)

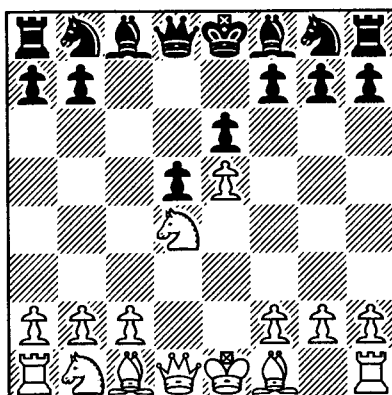


Diagram 51 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! White's centralized forces create a good impression and already Black must play accurately to draw.

One surprisingly entertaining grandmaster example continued 13...0-0 (13...Bxc3?! 14 Rxc3 Nd5 15 Bxd5 cxd5 16 Rc7 would only help White) 14 Ba6!? (there was nothing much wrong with the simpler 14 a3 Ba5 15 Na4) 14...Rfd8 15 a3 Ba5 16 b4 Bb6 17 h3 h6 18 Rhd1 g5!? 19 a4! Bh7 20 Bxb6 axb6 21 Bb7! Rxd1 22

Rxd1 Ra7? 23 Rd7 Kf8 24 a5! Ke8? (24...bxa5 25 b5 cxb5 26 Nxb5 would have won the exchange, but Black had to try this) 25 axb6 Ra3 26 Rd6! Rxc3 27 Ba6 Rc2+ 28 Kd1 Rb2 29 b5 1-0, I.Cheparinov-S.Conquest, Pamplona 2004.

B2) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3 cxd4

A solid approach and quite a respectable one at that.

5 Nxd4

The most natural recapture. Despite his choice of fourth move White might also consider 5 Qxd4, but after 5...e6 followed by ...Ne7 and ...Nbc6 Black should obtain an acceptable-enough version of the French.

5...e6 (Diagram 51)



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: There's no getting away from transpositions in this variation! Here, for instance, 5...Nc6 6 c4 would take play back into Line B1, although then Black's most popular move, 6...e6, would actually return play to this section.

Instead the French-like text aims to keep the central situation under control and obtain counterplay against d4 and e5.

6 c4

The most active move and the one most in keeping with the ethos of this chapter, but those happy to manoeuvre might wish to consider the alternatives:

a) 6 Nd2 is very similar to a line of the French Tarrasch (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 c5 4 Nf3 cxd4 5 Nxd4) except that White's e-pawn is already on e5. That may give White a small edge and in no lesser game than T.Radjabov-M.Carlsen, Bilbao 2008, 6...Nc6 7 N2f3 Nge7 8 Bd3 Bd7 9 0-0 Ng6 10 Nxc6 (10 Re1 Be7 11 c3 0-0 seems fine for Black since this way White would lack a particularly good plan) 10...bxc6 11 c4! Be7 12 Be3 Qb8! 13 Bxg6 hxg6 14 Qc2 a5 15 Rfc1 0-0 restricted White to a small pull at most.

b) 6 Bd3 Nc6 7 Nxc6 bxc6 also has some similarities with a line of the Tarrasch, as well as the Taimanov variation of the Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nc6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d5). Just as in variation 'a' I suspect that White may have a small edge, but Black is very solid and should gradually equalize, although 8 0-0 Ne7 9 c4 (John Watson's aggressive idea of 9 Be3!? Ng6 10 Qh5 Qc7 11 f4 deserves attention) 9...Ng6 10 Qe2 (**Diagram 52**) 10...Be7 (Watson appears to prefer 10...Bc5!?, intending a typical French-like break with 11 Kh1 0-0 12 f4 f6!) 11

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f4 0-0 12 Nd2 a5 (12...Qb6+!? 13 Kh1 Ba6 was perhaps a better idea, angling for a well-timed trade on c4 and pressure down the b- and d-files) 13 Nf3 Ba6 14 Be3 gave White control and an edge in S.Karjakin-N.Short, 1st matchgame, Kiev (rapid) 2008.

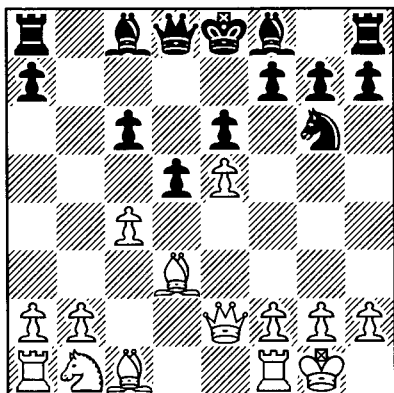


Diagram 52 (B)

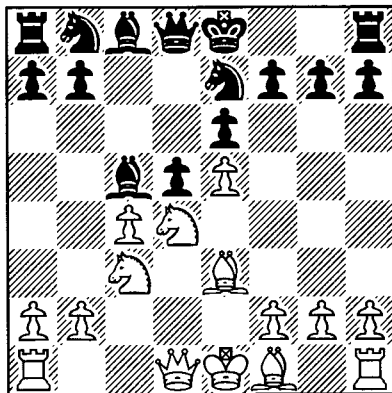


Diagram 53 (B)

6...Nc6

By some margin the most common course, albeit with a number of games reaching this position via a 4...Nc6 5 c4 cxd4 6 Nxd4 Nc6 move order. Black doesn't have to develop his queen's knight, but in any case I'm not certain that he can fully equalize:

- 6...Bc5!? 7 Nc3 Ne7 8 Be3! (**Diagram 53**) 8...Bxd4! (Black is alert and so avoids both 8...0-0? 9 Nxe6! and 8...Qb6 9 a3!, with the idea of 9...Nbc6? 10 Na4 Qa5+ 11 b4) 9 Bxd4 0-0 10 cxd5 exd5 11 Bb5!? Bd7 was S.Karjakin-N.Short, 5th matchgame, Kiev (rapid) 2008, and now the straightforward 12 0-0 Nbc6 13 Bxc6 bxc6 14 Bc5 (Watson) would have left White on top.
- 6...Bb4+ 7 Bd2 Bxd2+ 8 Qxd2 Ne7 9 Nc3 0-0 10 0-0-0 Nbc6 11 f4 Nxd4 12 Qxd4 Qa5 13 Kb1 gave White a small but clear edge in V.Bologan-M.Okkes, European Club Cup, Kallithea 2008.
- 6...dxc4 7 Bxc4 (White should prefer 7 Nc3!, not hurrying to recoup the pawn) 7...Qa5+!? 8 Nc3 Qxe5+ grabbed a pawn in O.Bitic-M.Portada, Dubrovnik 2008. White has a handy lead in development here, but after 9 Be3 Nf6 10 0-0 Be7 11 Ncb5 Nc6 12 Re1 0-0 that only gave him at best sufficient compensation.

7 Nc3! (Diagram 54)

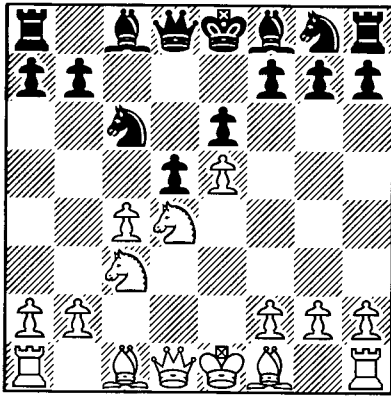


Diagram 54 (B)

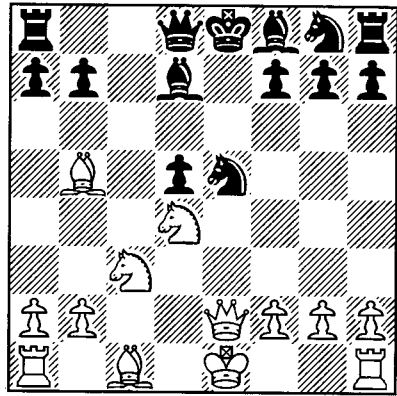


Diagram 55 (B)



BEWARE! White must be careful how he chooses to part company with his e-pawn. Black hardly dare capture it after the text, whereas 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 Bd3?! dxc4! 9 Bxc4 Qa5+ 10 Nc3 Qxe5+ 11 Be3 Bc5 left White with insufficient compensation in G.Jones-J.Speelman, British League 2008.

At this point we reach a further but final divide:

B21: 7...Bc5 and Others

B22: 7...Bb4

The latter has been Black's standard choice, but he has also tested a number of alternatives, as we will see first.

B21) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3 cxd4 5 Nxd4 e6 6 c4 Nc6 7 Nc3 Bc5

This takes control of d4, but White will be able to trade that for other advantages.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! White should be very happy to see 7...Nxe5? as 8 cxd5 leaves a dangerous initiative; the main point being that 8...exd5? (8...Bc5 is better, but rather good for White: 9 Bb5+ Kf8 10 0-0) 9 Bb5+ Bd7 10 Qe2 (Diagram 55) 10...Qe7 (the only way to avoid losing a piece) 11 Nxd5 Qd6 12 Bxd7+ Kxd7 13 Qb5+ Kd8 14 0-0 supplies a crushing attack.

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This may help to explain why Black has explored all of:

a) 7...Qb6 has similar aims to 7...Bc5, but doesn't weaken g7. That said, with 8 Nxc6 bxc6 9 cxd5 Bc5 (not essential, but 9...exd5 10 Bd3 gives White easy development and 10...Bb7?! 11 0-0 Ne7 12 Qa4 already left him very much in the driving seat in C.Koepke-M.Haubold, Boeblingen 2008) 10 Qd2 (here, both to keep the option of reaching the g-file in mind and to fight for the dark squares with something like Na4, Rb1 and b2-b4) 10...exd5 11 Bd3 (**Diagram 56**) White obtains an edge and after 11...d4?! 12 Na4 Bb4 13 Nxb6 Bxd2+ 14 Kxd2! axb6 15 b4 it was clear that he had won the battle for the queenside in A.Motylev-M.Haubold, Mainz (rapid) 2008.

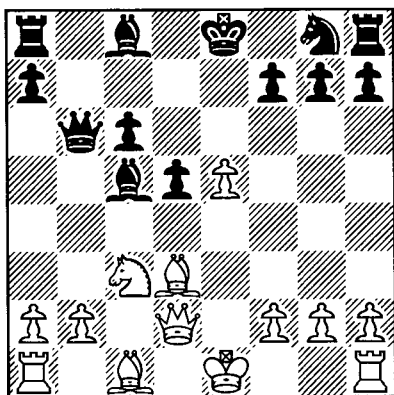


Diagram 56 (B)

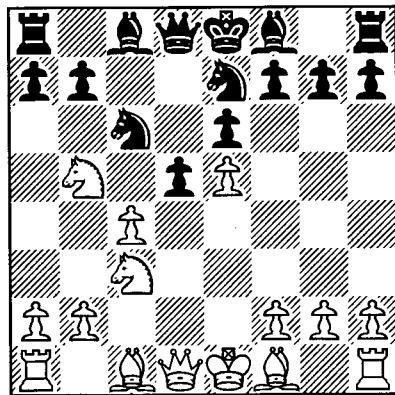


Diagram 57 (B)

b) 7...dxc4 8 Nxc6 Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1 bxc6 is quite a simplistic approach. White's superior development and structure gives him a pleasant pull after 10 Bxc4!, as we saw in note 'a' to Black's 9th move in Line B1, but 10 Ne4 Ba6! wouldn't be so effective.

c) 7...Nxd4 8 Qxd4 Ne7 is also a little too simplistic for my taste, and after 9 cxd5 Nxd5 10 Nxd5 Qxd5 11 Qxd5 exd5 12 Bd2 Bd7 13 Bc3! 0-0-0 14 0-0-0 Be6 15 Bd4 Kb8 16 Bd3 Black found himself fighting an uphill battle with his IQP and against White's superior bishops in K.Niemi-J.Parkkinen, Espoo 2008.

d) 7...a6?! is slow and after 8 cxd5 exd5 9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 Bd3 Bc5 11 0-0 Ne7 12 Na4! Ba7 13 Qc2 White was quick to exploit his positional trumps in B.Macieja-K.Urban, Poznan 2005.

e) Initially I thought that 7...Nge7?! was the best of the bunch, as 8 cxd5 Nxd5 9 Nxc6 bxc6 gives White nothing more than a small pull. However, then I noticed that 8 Ndb5! (**Diagram 57**) had been the choice of one of my favourite players, Tiger Hillarp Persson. His game with T.Willemze (Hoogeveen 2007) continued

8...Nxe5 (hard to criticise, as something like 8...Nf5 9 cxd5 Nxe5 10 Bf4 f6 11 Bxe5 fxe5 is scarcely an improvement for Black) 9 Qa4 N7c6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 Nxd5, re-gaining the pawn with some advantage and soon a piece for insufficient compensation following 11...Bd6 12 Be3 Bg4 13 f4! 0-0!? 14 fxe5 Nxe5 15 Be2.

8 Nxc6

As 8 Nb3 Bb4 only helps Black obtain central counterplay, White is best advised to exchange on c6, thereby reducing the immediate pressure against e5.

8...bxc6 9 Qg4! (Diagram 58)

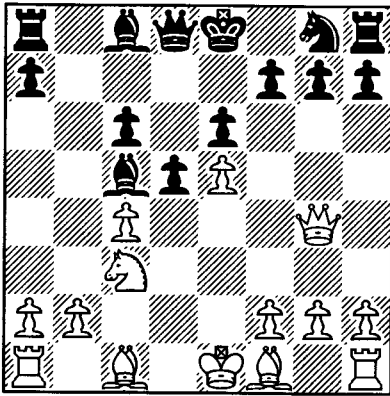


Diagram 58 (B)

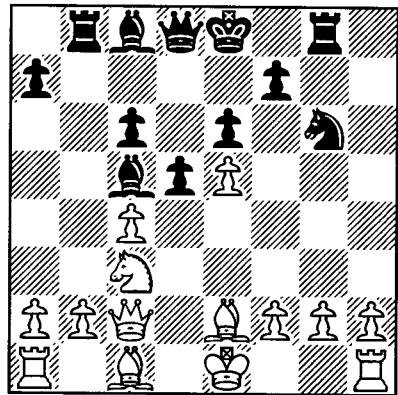


Diagram 59 (B)

This Winawer-like probe makes a lot of sense now that Black's bishop is on c5, but even 9 Bd3 should supply a small edge. Then 9...dxc4 (or 9...Ne7 10 0-0 Ng6 11 Na4 Be7 12 f4 0-0, as in T.Stepovaia Dianchenko-M.Magomedov, Belorechensk 2005, and now 13 Qc2! would maintain control and an edge) 10 Bxc4 Bxf2+?! (I'm also rather suspicious of 10...Qh4?! 11 Qe2 Bxf2+ 12 Qxf2 Qxc4 13 Bg5 with some initiative on the dark squares for White, but Black might restrict White to just a pull with 10...Qxd1+ 11 Nxd1 Bd4 12 f4) 11 Kxf2 Qh4+ 12 g3 Qxc4 saw Black go pawn-grabbing in V.Iordachescu-K.Arkeil, Port Erin 2003, but after 13 Qd6! f6?! 14 Rd1 Kf7 15 Rd4! Qa6 16 Qc7+ Ne7 17 exf6 gxf6 18 Ne4 I dare say that he was already sorely regretting his greed.

9...Kf8

Black's most common and best try, as we can see from considering alternatives:

a) 9...g6?! is rarely a good idea in such positions, creating long-term dark-square weaknesses and after 10 Bd3 Ne7 11 0-0 h5 12 Qe2 Bb7 13 Bg5 those weaknesses

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were already haunting Black in P.Svidler-W.Falkenstein, Darmstadt (simul) 2000. b) 9...Ne7!? 10 Qxg7 Rg8 11 Qxh7 gives Black some play for the pawn, but surely not enough, unlike in the Poisoned Pawn variation of the Winawer. The high-level correspondence game, Y.Dothan-I.Dolgov, correspondence 2007, continued 11...Rb8 (11...Qb6 12 Qc2 Rb8 13 g3 Bd4 was preferred in O.Bitl-P.Bodiroga, Zupanja 2008, and now 14 Na4!? Qc7 15 f4 c5 16 Nc3 Bd7 17 Bd2 Bc6 18 Bg2 should be safe enough for White) 12 Qc2 (co-author Houska once played this way as Black, but with the important difference that in her game with Haslinger the c-pawns had been exchanged, thereby permitting 12...Nc6; deprived of that option, Black doesn't appear to be able to do more than regain the pawn without equalizing) 12...Ng6 (12...Bd4 13 Bd2 Bxe5 14 0-0-0 d4 15 Na4 is also in White's favour; that kingside pawn mass should not be underestimated) 13 Be2 (**Diagram 59**) 13...d4 (13...Nxe5 may improve, but 14 Qh7 Rf8 15 0-0 retains the upper hand and there's also the materialistic 15 Bh6!?) 14 Ne4 Nxe5 15 Bf4! d3 16 0-0-0 Bd4 17 Bxe5 Bxe5 18 Rxd3 Qa5 19 b3 Rxd3 20 Kb1 and it was clear that Black had come up short, being down a pawn and with the less well-coordinated forces.

10 Bd3 Ne7

Black can try to keep lines closed with 10...f5, but 11 exf6 Nxf6 12 Qe2 Kf7 13 Bg5 (K.Niemi-J.Tuovinen, Helsinki 2005) should be a little better for White. So too is 11 Qg3!? with good chances to retain control, as was demonstrated by 11...Ba6 12 cxd5 Bxd3 13 Qxd3 cxd5 14 0-0 Ne7 15 Bg5 h6 16 Bxe7+ Bxe7 17 Nb5 with an ongoing pull in R.Rabiega-G.Battaglini, Berlin 2007.

11 0-0 Ng6 12 Re1 (**Diagram 60**)

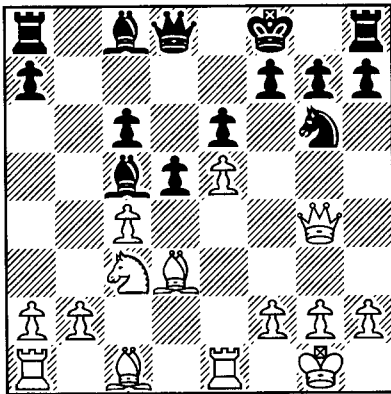


Diagram 60 (B)

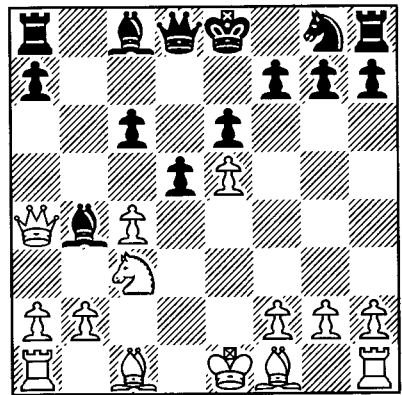


Diagram 61 (B)

White has developed along aggressive but classical lines and can claim an edge. The game E.Najer-D.Yevseev, Russian Team Championship 2006, continued 12...Qh4 (behind in development and with his king on f8 Black tries to get the queens off, but now White is able to exploit those c-file weaknesses) 13 Qxh4 Nxb4 14 Bd2 Ng6 15 Na4! Be7 (15...Bd4 would be well met by 16 Bb4+ Ke8 17 Bd6) 16 cxd5 cxd5 17 Rac1 and White's advantage continued to grow.

B22) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3 cxd4 5 Nxd4 e6 6 c4 Nc6 7 Nc3 Bb4

Black's most popular continuation and that recommended by Houska.

8 Nxc6

Once again White has nothing better than this exchange.

8...bxc6

And Black in turn should recapture, since 8...Bxc3+?! 9 bxc3 bxc6 10 Qg4 would take awkward aim at g7.

9 Qa4! (Diagram 61)

Best in my view. White has again tried 9 Qg4, but after 9...d4! 10 a3 (essential, as 10 Qxg7? dxc3 11 Qxh8? cxb2+ is clearly one to avoid) 10...Bf8 (this is the difference with the 7...Bc5 line; Black's bishop is able to return home to cover the king-side) 11 Ne2 c5 12 Nf4 Qc7 Black should be okay with decent counterplay against e5, as indicated by Houska.

Recently White tested 9 Bd3 in K.Markidis-I.Kudriashova, Rethymnon 2010, but this seems less effective than in Line B21. Black can choose between the solid 9...Ne7 and the critical 9...d4!? 10 a3 Ba5 11 b4 dxc3 12 Bxa5 Qxa5, snaffling a pawn or two for some compensation, whereas 9...Qa5?! 10 0-0! Bxc3 11 bxc3 Qxc3 12 Rb1 gave White dangerous compensation in the game.

9...Bxc3+

This enables Black to defend c6, but leaves him quite weak on the dark squares. Thus he should give attention to the alternatives, especially 'c':

a) 9...Qb6 defends both pieces, but enables White to develop with tempo and after the active 10 Be3!? (the simple 10 cxd5 exd5 11 Bd3 is a pleasant alternative) 10...d4 11 Bxd4 Qxd4 12 Qxb4 Qxe5+ 13 Be2 c5 (M.Feygin-L.Ogaard, Kemer 2007) 14 Qa5 Ne7 15 Na4 (Iordachescu) Black remains on the defensive.

b) 9...a5 reveals that the c6-pawn is actually pretty much taboo on account of 10 Qxc6+?! Bd7 11 Qb7 d4 12 a3 Ne7! 13 Qe4 Bc6 with promising compensation for Black. However, by exchanging the queens with 10 cxd5 Qxd5 11 Qxb4! axb4 12

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Nxd5 White emerges with an edge, as was demonstrated by the further 12...cxd5 (12...exd5 13 Be3 controls some key central squares and supplies a pull) 13 Bd2 b3 14 a3 Ba6 15 Rc1 (**Diagram 62**) 15...Kd7 16 Bxa6 Rxa6 17 h4 (17 Rc3!? Rb6 18 0-0 followed by probing with Rf3/Rg3, not to mention ideas of Bb4, looks like an improvement) 17...Ne7 18 Rh3 of E.Najer-D.Chuprov, Tomsk 2006, although Black did manage to draw.

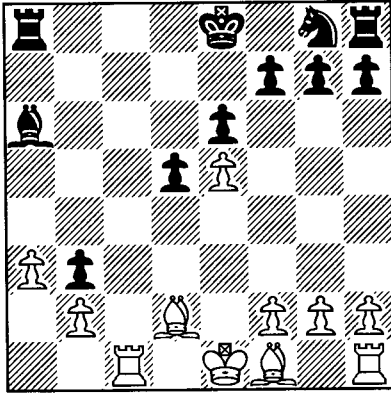


Diagram 62 (B)

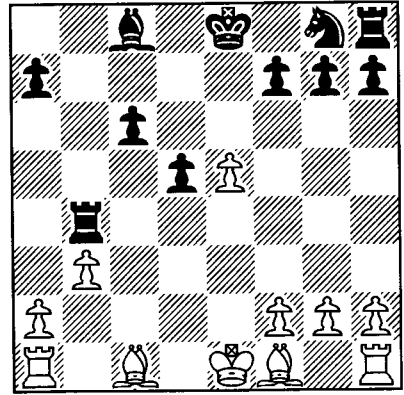


Diagram 63 (B)

c) 9...Rb8!? was untested when proposed in *Play the Caro-Kann*, but has since received some attention. Now 10 Qxc6+? is definitely inadvisable on account of 10...Bd7 11 Qa6 Qc7! and Houska's analysis demonstrates that 10 Qxa7 Rb7 11 Qa4 Qc7 12 f4 Ne7 gives Black good play for the pawn. Thus White should again exchange and after 10 cxd5 we have:

c1) 10...Qxd5 11 Qxb4 Rxb4 12 Nxd5 exd5 (likewise 12...cxd5 might be met by 13 b3 and 13 f3 Ne7 14 b3 Bd7 15 Ba3 also gave White an edge in R.Alarcon Bahamondes-D.Romero Araya, Santiago 2010) 13 b3! (**Diagram 63**) retains a pull, after which 13...Re4+?! 14 Kd2 Rxe5 15 Bb2 f6!? (a little desperate, but 15...Rg5 16 h4 Rg6 17 h5 Rg5 18 Re1+ Kd8 19 h6 f6 20 hxg7 Rxg7 21 Bd4 would have given White very strong pressure for the price of just one pawn) 16 Bxe5 fxe5 17 Rc1 Kd7 18 Rc5 didn't give Black enough for the exchange in M.Van Wissen-T.Willemze, Dutch League 2007.

c2) 10...exd5!? is Houska's recommendation, continuing to offer a pawn, but after 11 a3! (chasing down the dark-squared bishop looks like the best policy; practical tests have demonstrated that 11 Qxc6+ Kf8 12 a3 Ne7 13 Qa4 Ba5 14 b4 Bb6 gives Black sufficient compensation, and I also wouldn't be too keen to become em-

broiled in 11 Qxa7 Rb7 12 Qa4 Qc7) 11...Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 Qc7 13 Bf4 (13 Qd4 Ne7 14 e6 Nf5 is at least okay for Black) 13...Be6 (**Diagram 64**) White definitely has chances to be better with his bishop-pair. Black does have something of a light-square blockade, but after the 14 Bd3 Ne7 15 0-0 0-0 16 Qc2 h6 of M.Erdogdu-G.Timoshenko, Kalamaria 2008, and then 17 Be3! c5 (otherwise the bishop would land on c5) 18 f4 g6 (18...c4?! 19 Bh7+! Kh8 20 f5 is dangerous) 19 Qf2 White's dark-square pressure should not be underestimated and I definitely prefer his chances. Here Black might also have met the threat to h7 with 16...Ng6!?, but then 17 Bg3 c5 18 c4! dxc4 19 Bxc4 Bxc4 20 Qxc4 would have opened the position to White's advantage, as 20...Nxe5? fails to 21 Qd5 and a killer pin.

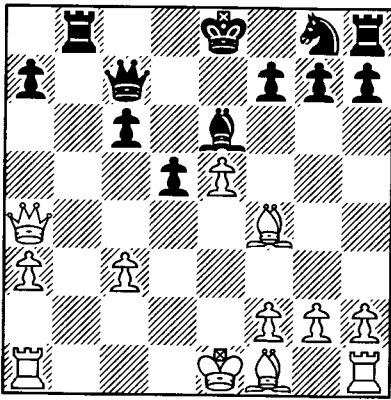


Diagram 64 (W)

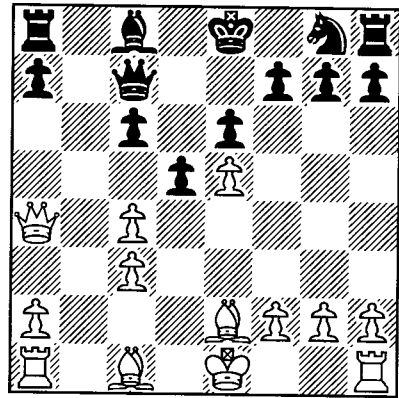


Diagram 65 (B)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! 9...Rb8 may well be Black's best defence, but even so by avoiding greed White has good chances of emerging with the upper hand.

We now return to the exchange on c3:

10 bxc3 Qc7

At least this attacks e5, whereas 10...Ne7?! 11 Ba3 0-0 12 Bd3 just looks rather unpleasant for Black who is stuck in something of a bind. In D.Eggleston-P.Kemp, British League 2010, he attempted to break out with 12...f6 (Black preferred to dig in with 12...Re8 13 0-0 a5 in M.Erdogdu-E.Ozturk, Antalya 2008, but after 14 cxd5 exd5 15 Rfe1 Be6 16 Rab1 there was no doubting White's superiority), but 13 Qb4 (13 0-0!? is likely even stronger with the idea of 13...fxe5 14 cxd5 exd5 15 Bxh7+! when the queen will swing across to h4) 13...Rf7 14 exf6 gxf6 15 0-0 Ba6 16 Rad1

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saw White maintaining control and some pressure.

11 Be2 (Diagram 65)

White relies on the counter pressure against c6 to keep Black off e5, but 11 f4!? Ne7 12 Ba3 should also promise him the upper hand.

11...Bd7

Instead 11...Ne7 was preferred in R.Dzenis-I.Dolgov, correspondence 2008, where 12 f4 0-0 13 Ba3 a5 14 Bd6 Qa7 15 cxd5 cxd5 16 Qd4 Re8 gave White a pull, but Black was pretty solid and managed to hold. However, as per our main line, White might prefer to meet 11...Ne7 with 12 0-0!? when 12...Qxe5 13 Re1 Qxc3 14 Ba3 looks like decent compensation for the two pawns. Black must really block the a3-f8 diagonal and by returning one of the extra pawns with 14...Bd7 15 Rac1 Qd4 16 Qb4 c5! 17 Qxc5 Qxc5 18 Bxc5 he may gradually be able to equalize.

12 0-0!

A bold and promising sacrifice, but not an essential one. I dare say that white players may have been put off 12 f4 by 12...c5 13 Qa3 Ne7, but even here 14 Be3 Rc8 15 0-0 looks a little better for White; Rab1 and Qa6 may follow.

12...c5

Declining the offer, but we must also consider the critical 12...Qxe5. Then there is no need for White to spend a tempo on 13 Rfe1, so he'll probably go 13 Ba3! and after 13...Ne7 (13...Qxe2? 14 Qb4 graphically highlights Black's dark-square difficulties) 14 Qb4 Ng6 15 Rfe1 a5 16 Qc5 one has to like White's ongoing pressure. Just where will Black's king manage to hide?

13 Qa6 Ne7 14 Ba3 (Diagram 66)

The position resembles a Winawer where White's bishop-pair and central pressure supply a pull. That said, the Russian Grandmaster Alexander Kharitonov has twice been happy to defend the black cause:

a) The slightly risky 14...dxc4 was his first try in E.Inarkiev-A.Kharitonov, Moscow 2006, and after 15 Bf3 Rb8 16 Qd6 Rc8 17 Rab1 Nd5! 18 Qxc7 Rxc7 19 Rb8+ Bc8 Black was fine. However, White has a number of possible and decent improvements, including 15 Rfd1!? with the idea of 15...0-0 16 Qd6, and 15 Rfe1 Nd5 16 Bxc4, keeping Qd6 ideas in reserve.

b) Whether Kharitonov was so happy with the later 14...Rc8?! 15 Rab1! Qxe5? (underestimating White's attacking chances, but improvements are hard to come by; perhaps Black has to try 15...dxc4!? 16 Bxc4 Qxe5, but I would still happily take White after 17 Rfd1 Bc6 18 Qxa7 Qg5 19 Bf1 0-0 20 Bxc5) 16 cxd5 Nxd5 17 Bb5! Rc7 18 Rfe1 (**Diagram 67**) in A.Danin-A.Kharitonov, Saratov 2006, is debatable. Indeed,

White has excellent attacking chances here and if 18...Qf5? was really played, Danin should have been able to find the crushing 19 Qd6.

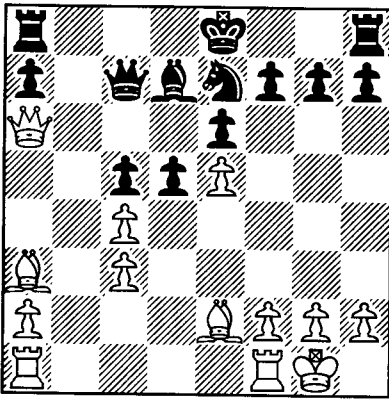


Diagram 66 (B)

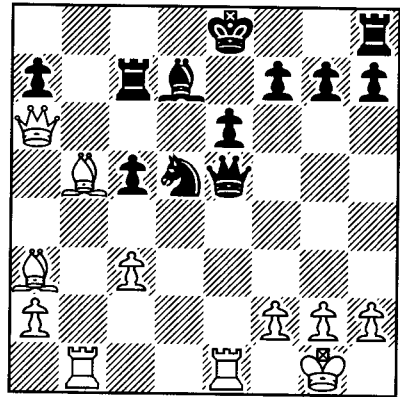


Diagram 67 (B)

Conclusion

An early c2-c4 is a very critical challenge of the ambitious 3...c5 in the Advance Variation. The theory is still being fleshed out, but the early signs are undoubtedly encouraging for White. He is usually the player enjoying most of the fun and Black's more aggressive tries, such as 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 c4 Bg4, can easily backfire.

Perhaps Black should settle for a solid defence with an early ...e6, but this will not please many 3...c5 aficionados. As for White, we still have the 'which move order?' question to answer. There has been much testing of the critical line 4 Nf3 Bg4 5 c4 cxd4, but until White finds something there I would advocate beginning with 4 c4. Indeed, the recapture 4...cxd4 5 Qxd4 just looks like quite a promising one on the current evidence.

Chapter Seven

Tackling The Three Knights: Part I

Jovanka Houska

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4!? (Diagram 1)

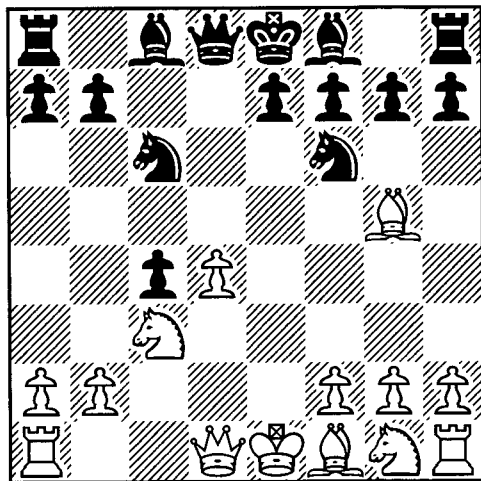


Diagram 1 (W)

6 Bg5, or as I call it, the Three Knights Variation, is White's attempt to steer clear from the complex endgame that may result after 6 Nf3 Bg4. The Three Knights is becoming incredibly popular and is in fact the most frequent response to 5...Nc6.

From the outset White puts pressure on the centre and forces Black to make a decision. The main two replies for Black are 6...e6 and 6...Be6, but there is another option for Black that offers rich play...

Our *Dangerous Weapon* is 6...dxc4!?. Black immediately liquidates in the centre and gives White a choice between two main options. 7 Bxc4 prepares to sacrifice the d4-pawn, whereas 7 d5 seizes space in the centre. This chapter is devoted to 7 Bxc4, while the next one focuses on 7 d5 (and briefly looks at 7 Nf3).

□ A.Naiditsch ■ Bareev

World Blitz Championship, Moscow 2009

1 c4 c6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4 7 Bxc4 h6!? (Diagram 2)

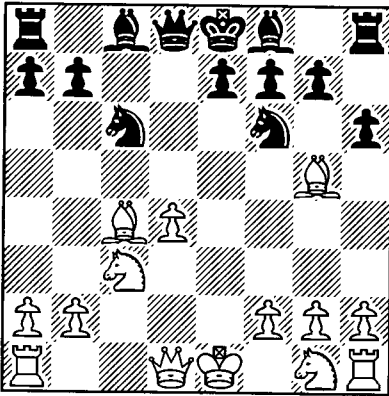


Diagram 2 (W)

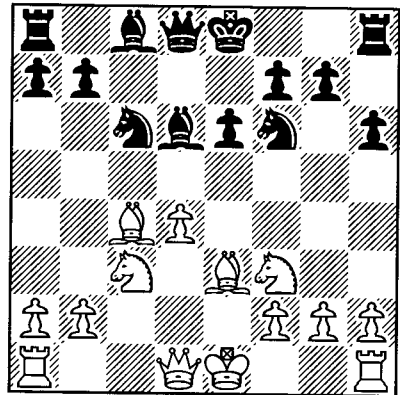


Diagram 3 (W)

Our *Dangerous Weapon*! This is the hot new move that has been scoring tremendously well, and in high-level games.

Previously Black had usually either taken the gambit with 7...Qxd4, or played 7...e6.

8 Be3

The main reply. The other options, 8 Bh4, 8 Bxf6 and 8 Bf4 will all be considered in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

After 8 Be3 we have reached a version of the famous Isolated Queen's Pawn (IQP)

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position, but with the move 7...h6 thrown in for good measure. So what difference does this make? Well, if we compare this to other Panov lines we notice a few distinguishing features:

1. White has determined the development squares for *both* his bishops very early. The fact that he has developed his dark-squared bishop is particularly relevant, as crucially it allows Black to develop his dark-squared bishop to its optimal square d6 (in normal lines the bishop must be developed to e7 to neutralize White's Bg5).
2. The bishop on e3 may become a target in the middlegame for a black knight on d5 or g4. In addition, Black's light-squared bishop will have no problems developing onto the long diagonal (a8-h1 via b7) because White has spent time moving his dark-squared bishop rather than castling as quickly as possible and occupying aggressive posts with the rooks.
3. Should White wish to relocate the queen and bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal in the standard attacking manner, he will first have to play the preparatory move a2-a3 and then re-route the bishop via Ba2-b1 or Bb3-c2. All this is pretty standard, but it is a lengthy procedure which gives Black plenty of time to prepare for this manoeuvre.

However, a word of warning: there has been a small price to pay. By playing ...h7-h6 Black has weakened his king slightly, and this may make him vulnerable to dangerous piece sacrifices on h6. Black should be particularly aware of this threat and ideally he should seek to re-route the c6-knight to f5.

8...e6 9 Nf3 Bd6! (Diagram 3)

The best place for the bishop. It should go to d6 to give the c6-knight a route to head to either d5 or f5 via e7. Black should not concede control of the e5-square too easily either.

For these reasons, 9...Be7?! is inaccurate. After 10 0-0 0-0 the move 11 Ne5! is very troublesome for Black. Now it is problematic for him to develop the light-squared bishop – a factor that helps White enormously.

10 0-0 0-0

All the 'automatic' moves have been played and now White must decide where to place his queen, which in turn affects his future plans.

11 Qe2 (Diagram 4)

White has a number of alternatives at this point:

- a) 11 Qd2 allows 11...Ng4 followed by either ...b6 or ...a6 and ...b5.
- b) 11 h3 contains a subtle idea.



BEWARE: Black's Achilles' heel in this position is his imperfect kingside defensive pawn formation, which means that the h6-pawn is vulnerable to sacrifices. 11 h3 is prophylaxis against the knight jumping into g4, and this allows White to play 12 Qd2.

The game J.Friedel-E.Bareev, Las Vegas 2009, continued normally with 11...b6, but now White played the inaccurate 12 Rc1, which looks logical but is wrong.

Note that in IQP positions, the maxim 'chess is timing' could never be truer. One move can make the difference between a fierce initiative and a defensible position with promising long-term prospects.

As mentioned, 11 h3 had a purpose and that was to play 12 Qd2! (Diagram 5) and:

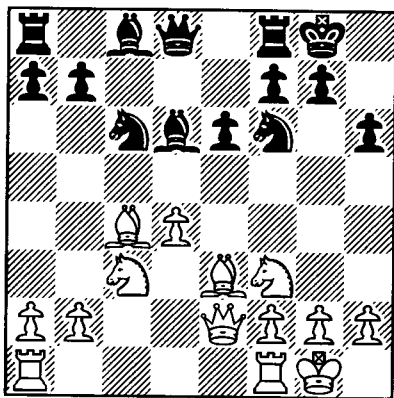


Diagram 4 (B)

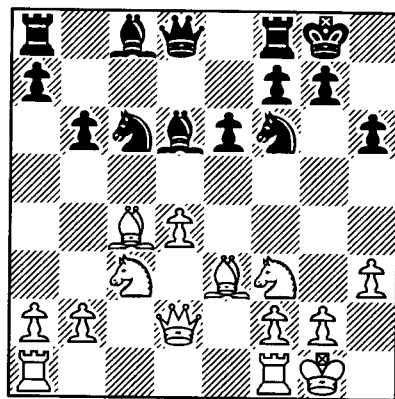


Diagram 5 (B)

b1) 12...Bb7



ROLL THE DICE! Things can now suddenly become wild because, as IM Irina Krush points out, White can play 13 Bxh6!?

After 13...gxh6 14 Qxh6 Black has a choice:

b11) 14...Re8 15 d5 exd5 16 Nxd5 (16 Qg5+ is stronger and gives White perpetual check at the very least) 16...Nxd5 17 Bxd5 (if 17 Ng5 Qf6 defends; or 17 Rad1 Re6 and Black again defends comfortably) and here Black has 17...Bh2+ 18 Kxh2 Qxd5 when he is fine.

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b12) 14...Nb4 is a sophisticated defence based on preventing White from bringing more pieces into the attack with d4-d5: 15 a3! Rc8 (if 15...Nbd5 White can activate the light-squared bishop: 16 Bd3 Bf4 17 Ng5 and White has a strong initiative – he is threatening to bring a rook into the attack with Rae1 or exchange one of the key defenders on d5) 16 Ne5 Nbd5 17 Bd3 allows White a perpetual, but this is probably Black's best defence.

b2) 12...Re8!? is an interesting prophylactic measure, preventing the sacrifice on h6 as the bishop can retreat to f8.

b3) 12...Ne7!? is again prophylaxis, but with the added advantage of fulfilling Black's aim in the position (transferring a knight to f5 or d5): 13 Ne5 (13 Bxh6 is again not so effective after 13...gxh6 14 Qxh6 Nf5! – there are too many defenders and far too few attackers, and after 15 Qg5+ Kh8 16 d5 Rg8 17 Qd2 Qf8 White is in big danger of being defeated along the g-file) 13...Bb7 (Black is once more threatening ...Nf5) 14 Bd3 (14 Bxh6 gxh6 15 Qxh6 Nf5 doesn't work either – Black has too many pieces surrounding his king) 14...Nf5!? (**Diagram 6**). Black is not concerned with static positional factors. Remember, as White is saddled with an IQP, Black can focus on opening the position for his bishops. After 15 Bxf5 exf5 16 Qc2 Ne4 17 Nxex4 Bxe4 Black should now aim to control the c-file.

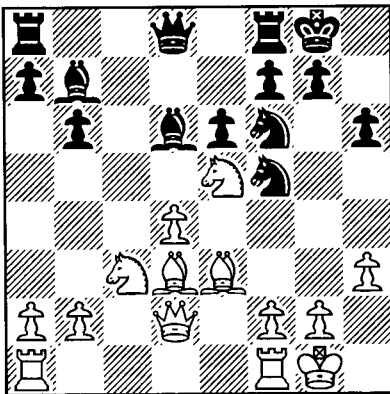


Diagram 6 (W)

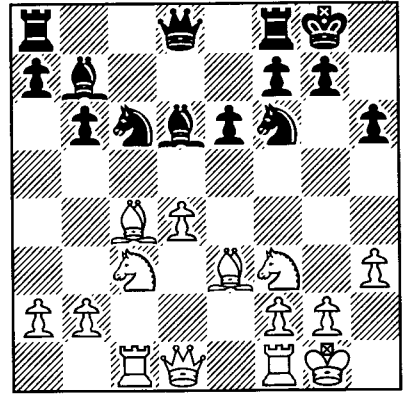


Diagram 7 (W)

Let's return to the Friedel-Bareev game, and the less challenging 12 Rc1 Bb7 (**Diagram 7**).

Here it's too late for 13 Qd2 as Black can reply 13...Rc8!, meeting 14 Bxh6 with the sly 14...Ne7!. Black can safely pick up the material after 15 Bd3 Bxf3 (eliminating

another potential attacker) 16 gxf3 gxh6 17 Qxh6, and here 17...Ng6 obstructs the bishop and in turn threatens 18...Bf4 winning more material.

The game continued instead with 13 Qe2 Rc8 14 Rfd1 Nb4! (Black relinquishes control over e5 at the right moment, to secure the d5-square) 15 Ne5 Nbd5 16 Bd3 Nxe3 (removing the potentially dangerous bishop) 17 Qxe3 (17 fxe3 is the more usual way of handling this particular exchange of pieces, but after 17...Qe7 White's knight is somewhat awkwardly placed on e5) 17...Qe7 (simple and logical – Black connects the rooks before commencing any form of action) 18 Bb1 Rfd8 19 a3 Nd5!. Black sets about exchanging minor pieces, slowly diluting White's dynamic potential and at the same time increasing the pressure on the weak d-pawn. Black has the makings of a strong, stable position.

c) 11 Re1 has been played recently. Black should simply carry on as usual: 11...b6 12 Qe2 Bb7 13 Rad1 Ne7 (the plan is very much the same – control the f5- and d5-squares) 14 Ne5! (the best plan) 14...Rc8 (**Diagram 8**) and now:

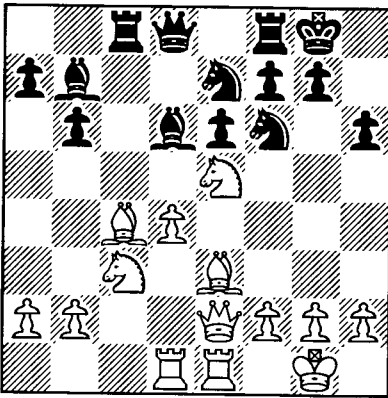


Diagram 8 (W)

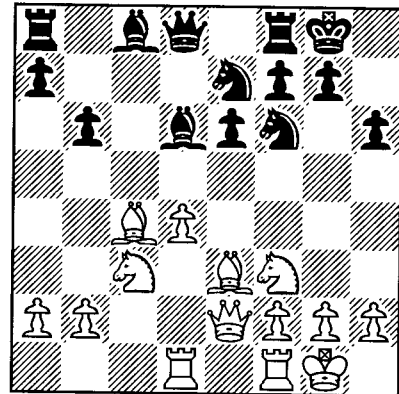


Diagram 9 (W)

c1) 15 Bc1 retreats the bishop so it is safe from capture, but this allows Black to secure some favourable exchanges: 15...Ned5 16 Nxd5 Bxd5 17 Bxd5 (17 Bd3 allows Black to pick up a pawn with 17...Bxa2) 17...Nxd5 18 Qg4 f5! (a beautiful move – Black forces the white queen back and is prepared to weaken the e6-pawn slightly in order to secure exchanges and dominate the c-file) 19 Qf3 (or 19 Qg3 Bxe5 20 Qxe5 Re8 and Black has the same objectives) 19...Bxe5 20 Rxe5 Qd7 and Black enjoys a favourable position on account of the weak d4-pawn and his control of the c-file, A.Butnoriuss-B.Grachev, Rijeka 2010.

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c2) 15 Bb3 is the best move – White is wise to the danger. 15...Ned5 16 Qd3 Nxc3! (this looks like the most promising continuation; 16...Qe7 was played in T.Petrosian-P.Prohaszka, Rijeka 2010) 17 bxc3 Be4 18 Qd2 Bf5 (Black must guard against sacrifices on h6) 19 c4 Ne4 20 Qb2 Qc7 21 h3 (White must safeguard the h-pawn now that ...f6 is in the air; 21 f3 is met by 21...Nc5) 21...Rfd8 with a complicated position.

Let's return to the main game, and 11 Qe2:

11...b6 12 Rad1 Ne7! (Diagram 9)

The most accurate move order.

12...Bb7 allows White to exchange off his weakest point if he so chooses, with 13 d5. As we are playing to keep the central tension or exchange minor pieces to make use of our static advantage, Black would do best to cut out this possibility, full stop!

13 Ne5 Bb7

The natural moves have been completed, and now both sides must develop a series of 'little' plans to help improve their respective armies.

14 Rd3?

White starts to get tangled up. He wants to swing the rook over to the kingside or to double on the d-file, but this whole manoeuvre looks clumsy. Alternatively:

a) After 14 Bc1 Rc8 15 Bb3 a draw was prematurely agreed in A.Brkić-R.Zelčić, Zadar 2009. Let's play a few more moves: 15...Ned5 16 Bd2 Qe7. If White commences aggressive actions with a move like 17 f4?!, then Black has 17...Nxc3 18 bxc3 Ne4!. One of the disadvantages of having a bishop on b3 is that it allows this annoying knight jump.

Alternatively, 17 Bc2 Rfd8 18 Rfe1 (18 f4 is still premature because of 18...Nb4 and ...Ba6 ideas) 18...Bb8 19 a3 (it is difficult to recommend a plan for White, especially as the dark-squared bishop has no good role to play) 19...Nxc3 20 Bxc3 and now Black can exchange a further set of minor pieces with 20...Bxe5 21 dxe5 Nd5. Here 22 Qe4 is met by 22...g6 after which White must give up his bishop pair with an inferior position.

b) 14 Bd3 Rc8 (getting ready to play ...Bb8 should Black need to retreat the bishop, and more importantly taking control of the c-file) 15 f4 Nf5 and Black has a very nice position.

c) 14 Rfe1 Rc8 transposes to the note on 11 Re1.

14...Rc8 15 Rfd1 Nf5 (Diagram 10)

16 Bf4??

A big blunder, no doubt caused by the blitz time limit.

Here are two improvements for White, but Black is already doing well:

a) 16 R3d2 Qe7 17 Bd3 Nd5 18 Nxd5 (18 Bxf5 is no good: 18...exf5 19 Nxd5 Bxd5 20 b3 Rfe8 and White's knight is marooned in the centre) 18...Bxd5 19 b3 Rfd8. Black's pieces are nicely centralized, he controls the c-file and has ideas such as ...Nh4 or ...Nxe3 up his sleeve, whereas the knight on e5 is still vulnerable to attack.

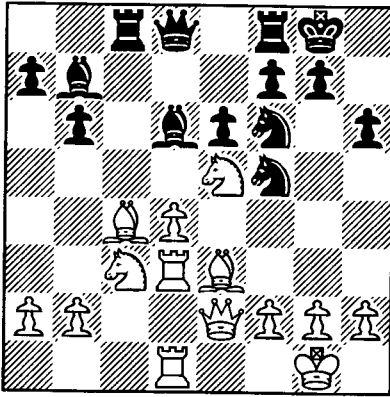


Diagram 10 (W)

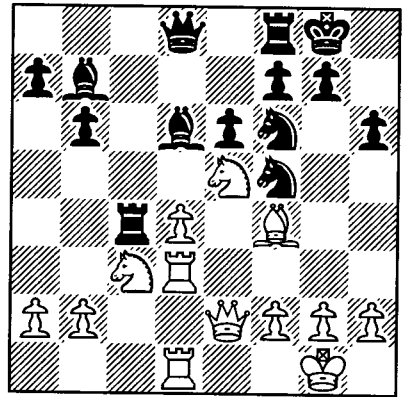


Diagram 11 (W)

b) 16 Bc1 (freeing up the third rank for attacking purposes) 16...Qe7 17 Rh3 (White actually threatens very little for the time being, as the knight on f5 is a wonderful defender) 17...Rfd8 18 g4!? (White must begin to throw pieces forward otherwise his whole army just becomes disjointed) 18...Bxe5 19 dxe5 Rxd1+ 20 Qxd1 Ne4 (Black has a big advantage) 21 Nxe4! (after 21 gxf5 Rxc4 the tempting 22 f6 fails to 22...Qc5! threatening the devastating capture on f2, and 23 Be3 Qxe5 leaves White with very little) 21...Rxc4 22 Nf6+ (22 gxf5 Rxe4 leaves White's position gaping with holes) 22...gxf6 23 gxf5 Qd7!! The queen is immune because of mate on the back rank, and Black has a fantastic position.

16...Rxc4! (Diagram 11)

After this blow, White's position completely falls apart. It makes sense; tactics normally follow sound strategy.

17 Nxc4 Bxf4

With two pieces for a rook, Black enjoys a very solid advantage. In desperation,

A) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4 7 Bxc4 h6 8 Bh4

Here Black can play the solid 8...e6 (A1), or grab the pawn with 8...Qxd4 (A2).

A1) 8...e6

The safe choice, reaching a typical IQP position.

9 Nf3 (Diagram 13)

If White tries to force matters with 9 d5, there follows 9...exd5 10 Qe2+ (after 10 Nxd5 g5 it is White's king which is the more vulnerable, due to ...Bb4+ ideas; or 10 Bxd5 Be7 and Black has equalized very comfortably) 10...Be6 11 Bxd5 Nd4! (with the bishop on d4 hanging, this knight jump is very powerful) 12 Bxf6 Qxf6 13 Qe4 Bc5 and the position is better for Black as he is the quicker to get castled!

9...Be7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Rc1 b6

Black develops in standard fashion.

12 a3 Bb7 13 Ba2 Nd5

Exchanging a set of minor pieces is always a good plan against the IQP.

14 Bxd5 Bxh4 15 Be4 Bf6 16 Qa4 Rc8!

The c-file should be challenged.

17 Rfd1 Qe8 18 Ne5 Bg5 19 Rc2 Na5

This led to an equal ending in A.Naiditsch-Le Quang Liem, Moscow 2010.

A2) 8...Qxd4 (Diagram 14)

Black grabs the d-pawn on the grounds that it gives him a favourable version of the 7...Qxd4 line, which usually continues 8 Qxd4 Nxd4 9 0-0-0 e5 10 f4 Bg4 11 Nf3 when Black has a choice between 11...Bxf3 and 11...Nxf3. The insertion of ...h6 and Bh4 helps Black in a subtle way, and the reason for this will become clear later on.

If Black captures this pawn, play becomes extremely complicated. *Readers are well advised to study these lines very carefully.*

9 Qxd4 Nxd4 10 0-0-0 e5 (Diagram 15)

We have now reached a critical position. White *must* begin to undermine the strong knight on d4. He can do this either in the normal fashion with 11 f4, or with 11 Nf3.

11 f4

11 Nf3 is not as effective. 11...Nxf3 and now:

a) 12 gxf3?! allows Black to consolidate with 12...Be6 13 Bxf6 (if 13 Bb5+ Black can

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intercept the check with 13...Nd7) 13...gxf6 14 Bb5+ Ke7. Black is not afraid of keeping the king in the centre, as it is quite safe there.

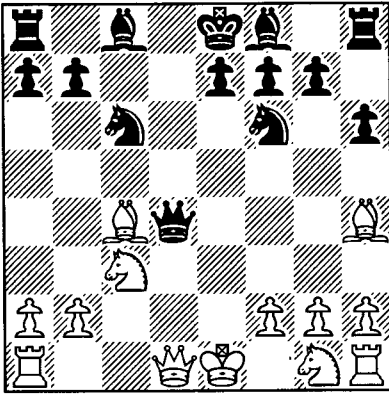


Diagram 14 (W)

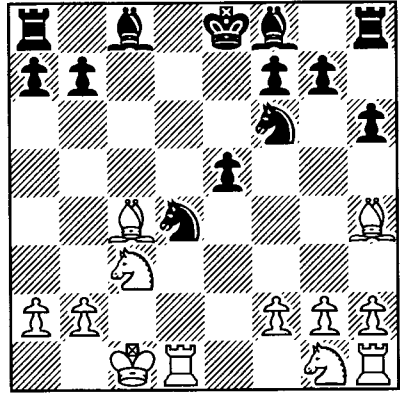


Diagram 15 (W)

b) If 12 Bb5+ Black should defend with 12...Bd7 13 Bxf6 Bxb5 14 Nxb5 Rc8+ (this intermediate check is the key to defending the position) 15 Kb1 gxf6 16 Nxa7 Rd8. In view of the open position and weak pawns, Black's bishop will be more powerful than White's knight.

c) 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 Bb5+ (13 Nb5 looks menacing but Black has the calm 13...Nd4 14 Nc7+ Kd7 15 Nxa8 Kd6 and the knight on a8 will be lost) 13...Ke7 14 Nd5+ Kd8 (there are no effective discovered checks because of ...Nd4) 15 gxf3 Bd6 16 Rd2 (White prefers to double on the d-file and keep Black caged in; instead 16 Nxf6 Ke7 leads to a draw by repetition) 16...Be6 17 Rhd1 Bc5 18 Nb6+ Ke7 19 Nxa8 Rxa8 (Black has plenty of compensation for the exchange – White's pawn structure is weak and Black's bishop, soon to arrive on d4, will simply be a monster) 20 Bd7 Bxa2 21 Bg4 Bd4 22 f4, L.Aronian-D.Stellwagen, Wijk aan Zee 2009. Sensing a disadvantage because of Black's monster bishop on d4, Aronian was quick to offer a draw, which was accepted.

11...Bg4 12 Nf3 (Diagram 16)

This knight must be exchanged, but the question is with which piece?

12...Bxf3



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: 12...Nxf3 would end up transposing into the normal 7...Qxd4 line after 13 gxf3 Bxf3 14 fxe5 Bxh1 15 exf6, with an exceedingly complicated but theoretical position.

13 gxf3 Rc8! 14 fxe5

If White retreats with 14 Bf1, then 14...Bd6 is the best choice. For example, 15 Kb1 Rd8 (supporting the strong knight on d4) 16 Nb5 (after 16 fxe5 Bxe5 Black will consolidate his position and White only has the bishop pair as compensation for the material deficit) 16...Bb8 17 fxe5 Nxf3 18 Rxd8+ Kxd8 19 exf6 Nxh4. With so few pieces on the board, the only one in danger is White. He must play very dynamically to offset the oncoming pawn deficit.

14...Rxc4 15 exf6 Ne6 (Diagram 17)

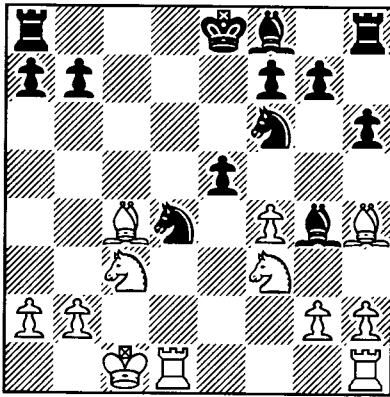


Diagram 16 (B)

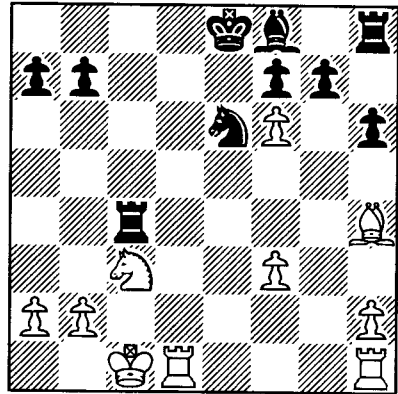


Diagram 17 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! The difference between 7...Qxd4 and 8...Qxd4 is revealed. On h4 White's dark squared bishop is under attack and forced to retreat. In the analogous position without ...h6 and Bh4, White can continue more actively with 15 Rhe1.

16 Bf2 gxf6

Black will play ...Bb4 followed by ...Rg8, with as many active pieces as possible. 17 Bxa7 Bb4 18 Rd3 (on 18 Kc2, removing a potential attacker with 18...Bxc3 is the best choice) 18...Rg8 19 Kc2 Rg2+ 20 Kb3 Rh4 is an example of how Black should continue.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4 7 Bxc4 h6 8 Bf4?! (Diagram 18)

This is dubious. White tries to reinforce his control of one of his 'strong' squares,

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e5. The idea is that if White gets a piece (preferably a knight) to e5, unless Black has a decent counter he will be in trouble. However, 'timing is everything' and this move allows Black to develop his dark-squared bishop with tempo on d6. As every move counts in an IQP position, any benefit 8 Bf4 brings is heavily outweighed by the free time it gives Black.

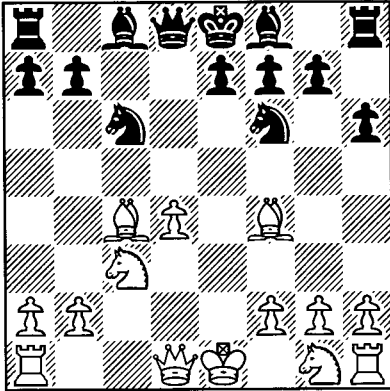


Diagram 18 (B)

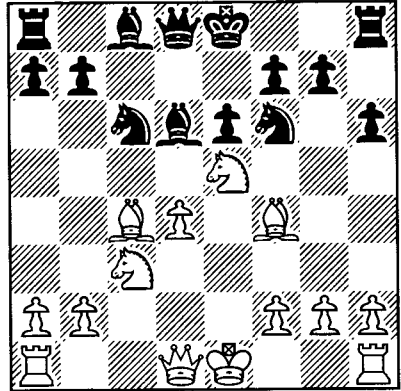


Diagram 19 (B)

8...e6 9 Nf3 Bd6!

Naturally!

10 Be3?!

This doesn't work out too well. White has two alternatives:

a) 10 Be5?! tries to make sense of White's eighth move: 10...0-0 11 Qe2 (sooner or later White will have to support the dark-squared bishop, either with a rook or queen) 11...a6! (where possible, it is always better to develop in this manner; although Black accepts a weakness of the c5-square, the control of c4 can become a factor of long-term significance) 12 0-0 (12 a4 is ineffective; Black gains the b4-square and can simply play 12...b6) 12...b5 13 Bd3 Bb7 threatening 14...Nb4. Now: a1) If 14 Ne4, exchanging a set of minor pieces to generate some control of the d6-square, there follows 14...Bxe5 15 dxe5 Nd7 16 Rad1 (16 Nd6 fails to 16...Ndx5) and now Black can still play 16...Ndx5 17 Nxe5 Nxe5, since 18 Nc5? doesn't work because of the rather cool 18...Nf3+! 19 Kh1 Qc7 and Black is better.

a2) If 14 a3, Black can exchange with 14...Nxe5 15 Nxe5 (15 dxe5? would be a mistake due to 15...Bxf3) 15...Qb6. Black enjoys an advantage here because not only does he possess the bishop pair, his position is also easier to play.

b) 10 Ne5!? (**Diagram 19**) is another move which attempts to make sense of 8 Bf4. The onus is on Black to prove that this knight jump is premature: 10...0-0 11 0-0 (if 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Be3?, Black simply plays 12...Qc7 13 Qe2 Rb8 and White has difficulty castling; after 14 h3 Qb6 15 Rb1 Black can iron out his pawn structure with 15...Nd5) 11...Qe7 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Bxd6 Qxd6 14 Qd3 c5 and Black has equalized easily.

10...0-0 11 Qd2 (Diagram 20)

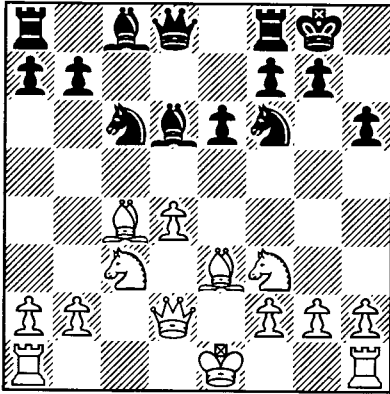


Diagram 20 (B)

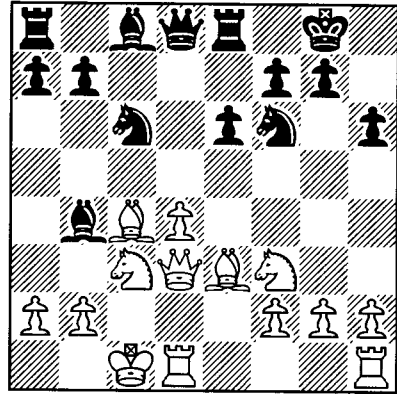


Diagram 21 (B)

This is wrong. The queen does not belong on d2 so early in the game. Moreover, as long as Black has the retreat square f8 for the bishop and the knight on f6 is guarded, White does not threaten any Bxh6 sacrifices.

A standard continuation would be 11 0-0 b6 12 Rc1 Bb7 13 a3 Rc8 14 Ba2 Ne7 (as we've seen before, a typical idea after ...Bd6 is to re-route the knight to f5 where it eyes the d4-pawn and the dark-squared bishop sitting on e3) 15 Ne5 Nf5 16 Qe2 Qe7 17 Rfd1 Rfd8 and it is difficult for White to construct an effective plan.

11...Re8 12 0-0-0?

Rather ambitious.

12 0-0 is far more logical. With no piece about to jump into the e5-square, Black can safely play 12...b6 13 Rac1 (if 13 Bb3 Bb7! with the idea of playing ...Na5 at the right moment; or 13 d5 Ne5 14 Nxe5 Bxe5 15 dxe6 Bxe6 and Black has a slight edge on account of the well-placed bishop on e5 and his superiority on the d-file) 13...Bb7 14 Qe2 (in order to defend the rather vulnerable f3-knight, White must

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

waste a further move; as we know in IQP positions, timing is everything!) 14...Rc8 15 Bb5 Qc7. Again Black has a very comfortable position. The rook on e8 will relocate to d8 and Black will continue with the objective of exchanging minor pieces and putting pressure on the d4-pawn.

12...Bb4 13 Qd3 (Diagram 21)

We have been following no lesser game than T.Radjabov-V.Anand, Nice (rapid) 2009. Anand's 13...Bxc3 14 Qxc3 Bd7 15 Kb1 Rc8 soon led to a favourable endgame, but Black should play the more aggressive 13...Nd5!? putting pressure on the c3-knight. After 14 Bd2 (if 14 Nxd5 exd5 15 Bb3 g6! and suddenly White has enormous problems with the light squares around his king) 14...Bxc3 15 Bxc3 (15 bxc3 looks very weakening) 15...b6 16 Kb1 Bb7 (with the idea of jumping in with ...Ncb4) 17 Rhe1 Rc8, Black has ideas of ...Ncb4 or ...Qd6 intending ...Nf4.

C) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4 7 Bxc4 h6 8 Bxf6 exf6 (Diagram 22)

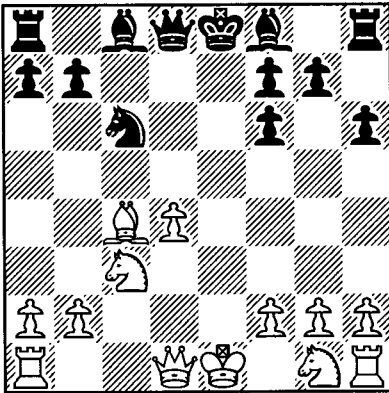


Diagram 22 (W)

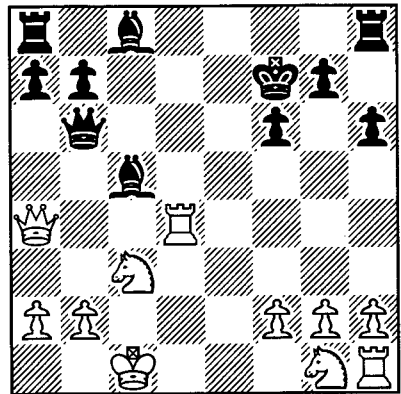


Diagram 23 (W)

Let's deal with the obvious. White swaps a bishop for a knight to lump this pawn structure on Black. So why does Black actively encourage this exchange? Well, not only is Black left with the bishop pair (a handy factor when the position is open), the open c- and e-files will give him plenty of play and there is an easy point to attack (d4). Black is firmly banking on the fact that the d-pawn will not only tie White's pieces to its defence, but it is a pawn that Black can actively aim to capture. White hopes that the d-pawn will hammer home a victory; Black hopes that the pawn is dead wood.

9 Nf3

The correct place for the knight.

9 Nge2 is positionally weaker because White needs to challenge Black on the open e-file: 9...Bd6 10 0-0 0-0 11 Re1 a6 (covering the b5-square just in case) 12 Rc1 (as 12 Ng3 drops the pawn on d4, it is not easy for White to continue with his development; if 12 h3 Bf5 13 Rc1 Re8 the knight is completely misplaced on e2) 12...Bf5 13 d5 Ne5 and White has a headache over his piece coordination.

If White sets out to refute Black's play with 9 Qb3, Black can respond in kind with 9...Nxd4! (9...Qe7+ followed by 10...Nxd4 is also entirely possible). Then 10 Bxf7+ Ke7 11 Qa4 Kxf7 12 0-0-0 Qb6 13 Rxd4 Bc5 (**Diagram 23**) followed by the development of the light-squared bishop and the centralization of the rooks leaves Black with a completely safe position and a fantastic bishop pair.

9...Bd6 10 0-0 0-0 11 h3

Otherwise 11...Bg4 may be somewhat irritating.

11...Bf5 12 Bd3

White tries to exchange a set of bishops but the key problem with this is that the more minor pieces he exchanges, the more vulnerable the isolated d-pawn becomes.

12...Qd7! (Diagram 24)

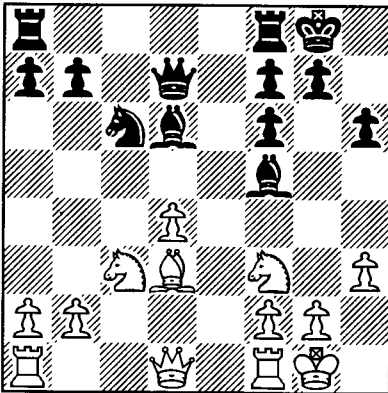


Diagram 24 (W)

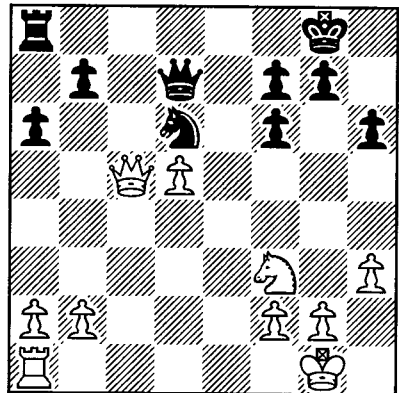


Diagram 25 (W)

It is always nice to let the opponent know that you are prepared to exchange pieces, but only on your terms!

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

13 Bxf5 Qxf5 14 Qb3 Na5 15 Qa4 Rfc8!

Occupying the c-file.

16 Nb5?!

This move makes Black's task easier, as now he can force a series of exchanges that will simply benefit him.

16 Rac1 can be met by 16...a6 preparing ...b5 followed ...Nc4, and answering 17 Nh4 with 17...Qg5.

16...Nc4 17 Rfc1 a6 18 Nxd6

This exchange is again forced, as after 18 Nc3 Black can simply play 18...Nxb2 19 Qb3 Nd3 winning a pawn.

18...Nxd6 19 Qb4 Qd5!

Centralizing the queen so it becomes a potent piece.

20 Rc5 Rxc5 21 Qxc5

If 21 dxc5 Ne4 22 Rc1 Rc8 and Black will win the c-pawn anyhow.

21...Qe6 22 d5 Qd7 (Diagram 25)

V.Ivanchuk-L.Aronian, Nice (rapid) 2009. This position looks like it could end in a draw, but in practical terms it is not so easy for White. Firstly, the d-pawn is weak; secondly, the black knight is a perfect blockader on d6; thirdly and very importantly, the c-file is practically Black's for the taking. In the game, Aronian gradually took over and ended up winning: 23 Rd1 Rc8 24 Qb4 Rc4 25 Qb3 Qa4 26 Qxa4 Rxa4 27 a3 Kf8 28 Kf1 Re4 29 b3 Ke7 30 Nd4 Kd7 31 a4 Re8 32 Rc1 Re5 33 Rc5 Ne4 34 Rc1 Nd2+ 35 Kg1 Rxd5 36 Ne2 Nxb3 37 Rb1 Nc5 38 a5 Kc7 39 Nf4 Rf5 0-1.

Conclusion

After 7 Bxc4 our *Dangerous Weapon* is the increasingly popular 7...h6!?. This forces White to reveal his intentions, and White's eighth move tells Black exactly what he has in store!

8 Be3 leads to an IQP position where Black intends to develop his pieces on their optimal squares: ...Bd6, ...b6, ...Bb7 and rerouting the c6-knight to f5 or d5 via e7. Black must, however, be constantly aware of sacrificial possibilities on h6, and he should aim to target the white bishop on e3. As seen in the illustrative variations, piece exchanges are favourable to Black on account of the static pawn weakness on d4.

8 Bf4?! is dubious as it allows Black to develop his bishop to d6 with tempo. To make sense of this move, White can aim to establish a minor piece on e5, but the problem with this approach is that it allows Black to liquidate some of the pieces. Equally, 8 Bxf6?! doesn't really work. As well as handing over the bishop pair to Black, White cannot make any good use of the 'extra' d-pawn and Black has no problems at all.

8 Bh4 is perhaps the most complicated continuation. Black can grab the d4-pawn and exploit the insertion of ...h6 and Bh4 by playing 13...Rc8!, or simply choose the more solid 8...e6.

Chapter Eight

Tackling The Three Knights: Part II

Jovanka Houska

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4!? (Diagram 1)

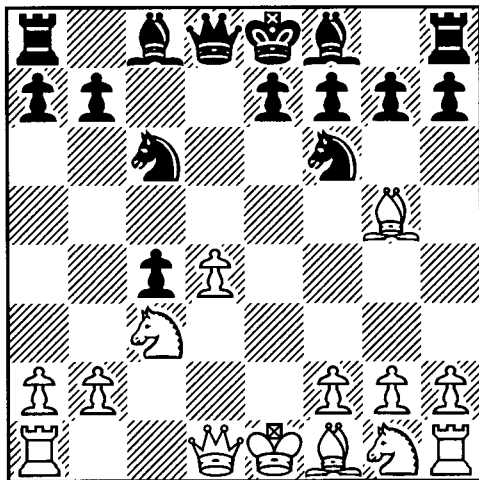


Diagram 1 (W)

In this chapter we focus on White's other main choice against 6...dxc4. With 7 d5 White seizes space in the centre and gets ready to exploit it. White is willing to remain a pawn down in some lines in order to displace the black pieces. He can, at

the cost of giving up the bishop pair, regain the sacrificed pawn at almost any stage. However, he would prefer to regain the pawn without this cost.

The downside of this plan is that, not only must White play accurately in order to regain the pawn without giving up the bishop pair, but also White's space advantage can be challenged by the pawn push ...e7-e6. In addition, the isolated queen's pawn may become somewhat of a liability in the future.

Black can answer 7 d5 in two ways: 7...Ne5 or 7...Na5. Both moves can lead to sharp positions in which the players must be vigilant to tactical possibilities.

□ M.Ulibin ■ D.Berczes
Winterthur 2009

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4 7 d5 Ne5 (Diagram 2)

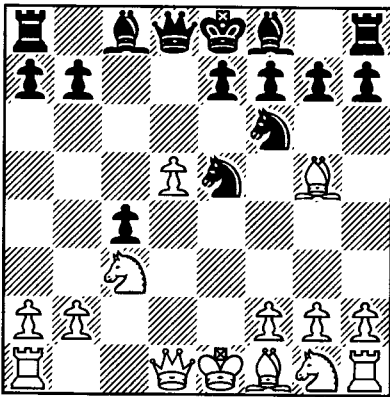


Diagram 2 (W)

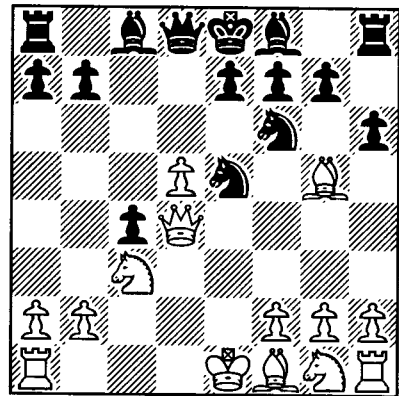


Diagram 3 (W)

This is Black's most natural choice, but one that has been assessed as dubious by some sources in the past. Play is dynamic and tricky for both sides.

7...Na5 is considered in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

8 Qd4

This is the main point of White's plan; after playing d4-d5 White can now use the d4-square to harass the black knight.

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The legendary Tarrasch preferred 8 Bf4, but this move does seem somewhat illogical and 8...Ng6 9 Bg3 e6 gives Black few problems. For example, 10 Bxc4 exd5 11 Bxd5 Nxd5 12 Nxd5 and now Black has 12...Bd6 to immediately neutralize White's initiative. After 13 Nf6+ Qxf6 14 Bxd6 Ne7 Black is fine.

8 Bxc4 is covered in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

8...h6! (Diagram 3)

The critical try. Black returns the pawn and is even prepared to give up extra material in order to gain time and open files against the white king.

8...Nd3+?! is somewhat riskier because if White navigates the waters carefully he should emerge from the position with an advantage. 9 Bxd3 cxd3 and now:

a) The tempting 10 Bxf6 is known to be strategically bad after 10...exf6. The point is that the d-pawn is not only easily blocked, but also a hindrance – White is forever tied down to its defence. M.Botvinnik S-Flohr, Leningrad 1933, continued 11 Qxd3 Bd6 12 Nge2? (the knight does not stand well here, as it simply blocks the e-file) 12...0-0 13 0-0 Re8 14 Rad1 Bg4 and Black follows up with ...a6, ...Qd7 and ...Rac8 with a great position. White is completely tied to defending the d5-pawn, whereas Black can achieve his optimum set-up, play around the d5-pawn, probe for weaknesses in White's position and secure favourable exchanges that will be to his benefit in an endgame.

b) White should not waste time capturing the dead pawn but instead play 10 Nf3!. Holding on to the pawn with 10...Bf5! is Black's best response. White's advantage lies in his huge lead in development and it is this factor which makes the position dangerous for Black.

Black has a move that almost neutralizes White's attack: 11 0-0 Qb6! (other moves are insufficient) but 12 Qf4! is the best response and one that lands Black in some trouble: 12...h6 (12...Bd7 fails to 13 Ne5) 13 Bxf6 Qxf6 14 Ne5 and White has an extremely pleasant position.

9 Bf4 (Diagram 4)

Alternatively:

a) 9 Qxe5 is considered in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

b) 9 Bh4 Ng6 10 Bg3 transposes to the main game.

c) 9 Be3 Qc7 leads to a dynamic position after 10 Bf4 Nfd7 11 Nb5 (innocuous moves such as 11 Be2 don't work because of 11...g5 12 Bg3 Bg7 13 0-0-0 Qc5 and White must give up the bishop pair in order to regain the pawn) 11...Qa5+ 12 Nc3 Ng6 13 Be3 b5 and Black will aim to target the weak d5-pawn.

By the way, 9...Nd3+ is also good enough. After 10 Bxd3 cxd3 11 Nf3 White is not threatening anything so Black can alleviate the pressure with 11...e6.

9...Ng6!

No other move is possible.

10 Bg3

White prefers to hang on to the bishop pair. If 10 Bxc4 Nxf4 11 Qxf4, Black can guard against any future piece jumps to b5 by playing 11...a6. To paraphrase the words of Joe Gallagher, White has a lead in development but if nothing happens to Black while he is attempting to fianchetto and castle, he can look to the future with some confidence. Play continues with 12 Nf3 g6 (**Diagram 5**) (12...g5!? is also an interesting shot, seizing as much space as possible and developing with tempo).

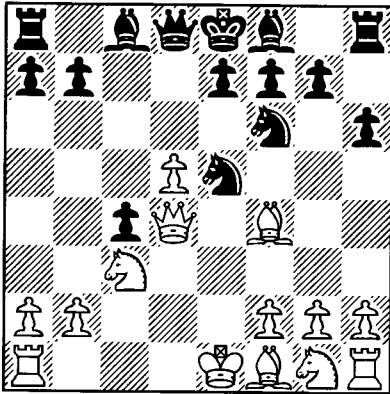


Diagram 4 (B)

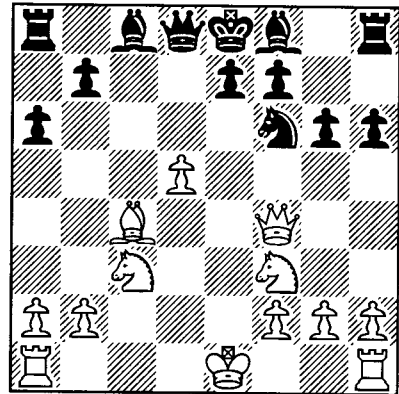


Diagram 5 (W)

Black will develop his kingside, put pressure on the d5-pawn and control the c-file. The only thing he must be wary of is a d5-d6 pawn push that may suddenly open up the position in White's favour.

Here White has some choices:

a) The immediate 13 d6 looks a bit scary but calm defence should give White absolutely nothing: 13...Bg7 14 Rd1 O-O 15 O-O g5 (the queen must be removed from f4!) 16 Qg3 exd6 17 Rxd6 Qc7 and the reason why the queen had to be dislodged from f4 becomes clear: if the queen had remained there, White would have had the tactical strike Rxf6. Probably more to the point is 13 Ne5!?, threatening d5-d6.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

b) 13 0-0 Bg7 14 d6 was played in R.Vaganian-J.Ehlvest 1995; here Black can defend with 14...Qxd6 15 Qxd6 exd6 16 Rfe1+ Kf8 17 Rad1 Ne8. Alternatively, if 14 Rad1 Black plays 14...Qd6 with a satisfactory position.

10...e5!? (Diagram 6)

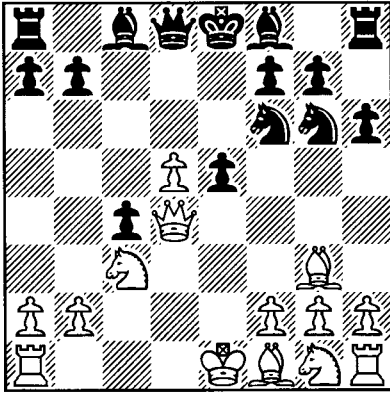


Diagram 6 (W)

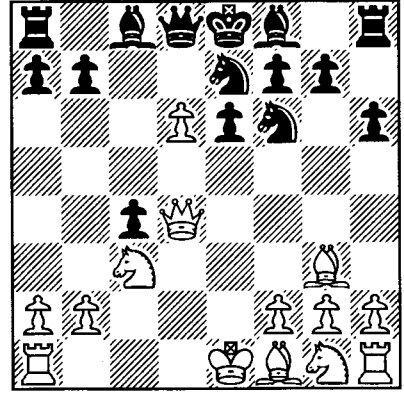


Diagram 7 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! An interesting counter-strike! Black sacrifices a pawn to gain the bishop pair and begin an attack in a unique way

More usual is 10...e6, which is also rich in possibilities:

- a) 11 Bxc4 is a bit dull but things are completely fine for Black after 11...exd5 and:
 - a1) 12 0-0-0?! Be7 13 Nxd5 Nxd5 14 Bxd5 (14 Qxd5 does not work either, as the white king is too exposed; after 14...Qxd5 15 Bxd5 Black should play the star move 15...Bf5!, when 16 Bxb7 fails to 16...Bg5+ 17 f4 Nxf4 and now 18 Bxa8 is impossible due to 18...Ne2 mate) 14...0-0 gives White a bigger headache than Black because of the open c-file and the misplaced bishop on g3.
 - a2) 12 Nxd5 fails to 12...Bb4+, when life is easier for Black due to White's misplaced king.
 - a3) 12 Bxd5 Nxd5 13 Nxd5 Bd6 and Black will be castling shortly with no problems.
- b) White can spice things up with 11 d6!? but here Black has the fantastic move 11...Ne7! (**Diagram 7**), re-routing the knight to a better square. 12 Rd1 and now:
 - b1) 12...Ned5 13 Qe5 (threatening to win a piece on d5) 13...Nd7 14 Qd4 leads to a repetition after 14...N7f6 when White is again obliged to defend the d6-pawn. In-

stead, 14 Qe2?! Nxc3 15 bxc3 g6 reached a very complicated position in V.Anand-Y.Seirawan, Amsterdam 1992. Black will aim to play around the huge d6-pawn, using the strength of the dark-squared bishop to put pressure on the c-pawn, whereas White will seek to exchange the dark-squared bishop and use his extra space to squeeze the life out of Black.

b2) 12...Nf5! is much better:

b21) 13 Qc5 is recommended by Thomas Ernst, but after 13...Bd7 14 Bxc4 Rc8 15 Qb4 Rc6! 16 Bb5 (16 Nb5 fails to 16...Nxc3 followed by ...a6) 16...Rb6 Black is well on his way to winning the d6-pawn.

b22) 13 Qxc4! with a final split:

b221) Things turn wild after 13...Nxc3 14 Nb5 Nd5!. Following 15 Nc7+ Nxc7 16 dxc7 Black is forced to play 16...Qxd1+ 17 Kxd1 Nxh1 18 Qa4+ Ke7!. Although the black monarch is safe in the centre, the game remains incredibly complicated (18...Bd7??, for example, would throw the game away after 19 Bb5).

b222) If Black does not fancy entering complications he can take time out to defend against the white knight jumping to b5: 13...a6 (now Black threatens to take the bishop on g3) 14 Be5 Bxd6 15 Bxd6 Nxd6 16 Qc5 Ke7 and amazingly all is safe here for Black. White doesn't have the machinery to do any damage. After 17 Nf3 b6 18 Qa3 Bb7 Black will soon centralize his rooks and escape with his king to safety.

Back to the main game, and 10...e5!?.

11 Bxe5 (Diagram 8)

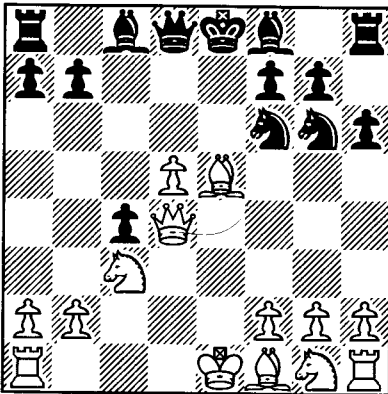


Diagram 8 (B)

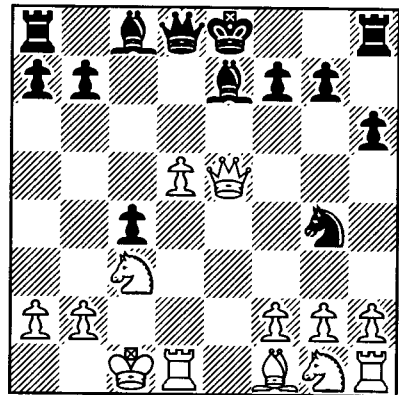


Diagram 9 (W)

If White wishes to play it safe with 11 Qxc4, the game calms down after 11...Bd6

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

12 Nf3 0-0 13 Bd3. However, this last move allows Black to make another pawn lunge due to a fork trick on e4: 13...b5!? (13...Bg4 is also good enough) 14 Nxb5 Qa5+ 15 Nc3 Rb8 and White must return the pawn or else his queen gets trapped.

11...Nxe5 12 Qxe5+ Be7 13 0-0-0 Ng4!? (Diagram 9)

A stunning move. Black breaks all the principles of development and goes on the offensive with one piece.

14 Qxg7!?

Alternatively:

a) 14 Qg3 loses to 14...Bh4.

b) Retreating with 14 Qe2 leaves the queen awkwardly placed: 14...0-0 15 h3 Re8 (threatening a discovered attack with ...Bg5+) 16 Qc2 Nf6 17 Bxc4 a6 18 Kb1 b5 19 Bb3 (the bishop is misplaced here, but the drawback of 19 Bd3 is that White loses control of the d5-pawn – after 19...b4 20 Ne4 Bb7 Black wins the pawn and retains the initiative) 19...b4 20 Ne4 Bf8! (provoking the exchange of the knights) 21 Nxf6+ (after 21 Ng3 Bb7 22 Nf3 Qb6 Black is getting ready to prepare the ...a5-a4 advance and for the time being the d5-pawn is worthless) 21...Qxf6 22 Ka1 Bd7! and ...a5-a4 is coming with devastating effect.

14...Bg5+!

The king must be pushed one square away from the action.

15 Kb1 Bf5+ 16 Ka1

16 Bd3 may be more accurate; it's certainly a special move! After 16...Bxd3+ 17 Rxd3 Bf6 18 Qxg4 cxd3 19 Ne4 Bd4 20 Nf3 Qxd5 we reach a crazy position.

16...Bf6

The white queen is trapped.

17 Re1+

White was banking on this move, but Black can reply with the unexpected:

17...Qe7! (Diagram 10)

A very obvious but nonetheless magnificent intervention.

18 Qxh8+

If 18 Rxe7+ Kxe7 19 d6+ Black can simply play 19...Ke8. The white queen is still trapped, and after 20 Qxh8+ Bxh8 21 Nh3 Rc8 (defending the c-pawn) 22 Be2 Kd7 23 Rd1 Rc5 Black is ready to take the h2-pawn with an advantageous position.

18...Bxh8 19 Rxe7+ Kxe7 (Diagram 11)

Black is a pawn down but he enjoys great prospects. He has active pieces which, if

we're honest, White cannot claim to have. To add further to White's woes, his extra pawn will shortly be recaptured.

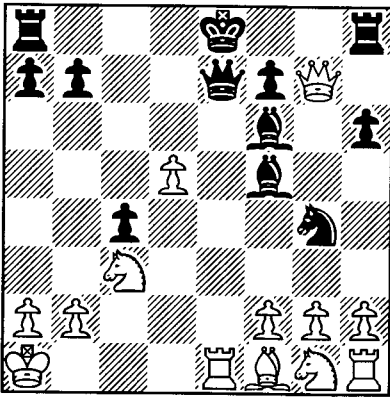


Diagram 10 (W)

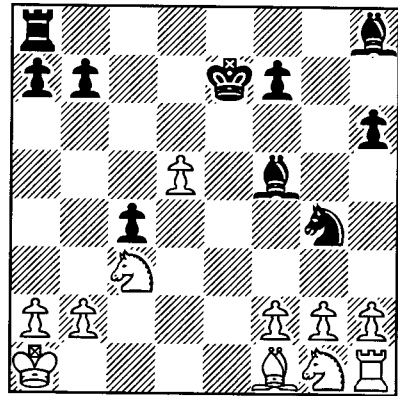


Diagram 11 (W)

20 Nh3 Rc8

Of course the c-pawn must be protected.

21 Be2 Ne5

The knight must not be exchanged and instead heads for d3.

22 Rd1 Nd3

With White's pieces so uncoordinated it is actually very difficult to suggest a rescue plan.

23 g4 Bh7 24 a3

White is wasting too much time.

24 f4! is perhaps better: 24...b5 25 f5 Nxb2 26 Kxb2 b4 27 Kc2 Bxc3 28 d6+ Kd7 29 Nf4 and at least one of the bishops is locked out of the game for a while.

24...Rc5!

The d-pawn is dead, but at the same time Black sets up a vicious little trap...

25 f4?? (Diagram 12)

White does not sense the danger and blunders into a lost endgame.

25 d6+ is best, when perhaps there are some saving chances for White. After 25...Kd8 26 Bxd3 cxd3 27 f4 Bxc3 28 bxc3 Rxc3 29 f5 Rxa3+ 30 Kb2 Ra4, Black will aim to dismantle White's kingside pawns and free the bishop from its cage.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

25...Nxb2! 26 Kxb2 Rb5+

Black recovers the piece, and White has no compensation for the two bishops.

27 Kc1 Rb3 28 d6+ Kd8!

Not 28...Kd7?, as 29 Na4 would cause Black some problems.

29 Nd5 Bb2+ 30 Kd2 Rxh3 31 f5 h5!

Disrupting the white pawn chain.

32 Rb1 c3+! (Diagram 13)

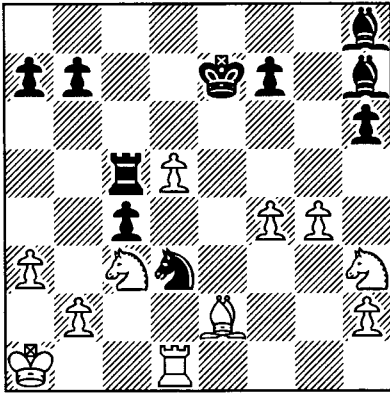


Diagram 12 (B)

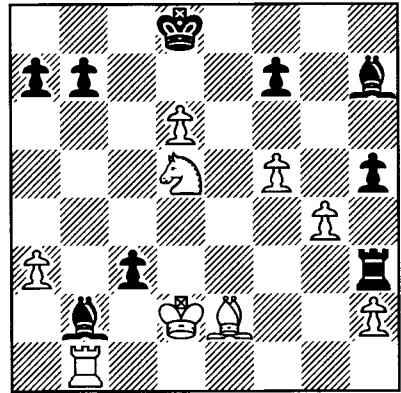


Diagram 13 (W)

White is clearly losing, even though he can struggle on for some time on account of the d6-pawn.

33 Kc2 hxg4 34 Bxg4 Rxh2+ 35 Kb3 c2 36 Rxb2 c1Q

As well as his stunning opening idea, Black has also played the endgame very naturally to achieve a winning position with little effort. The final moves were:

37 Rxh2 Qb1+ 38 Rb2 Qd3+ 39 Nc3 Qxd6 40 Kc2 Qf4 41 Rb4 Bxf5+ 42 Bxf5 Qxf5+ 43 Kd2 Qf3 44 Rd4+ Ke7 45 a4 f5 46 Ne2 Kf6 47 Rf4 Qa3 48 Rh4 b6 49 Rd4 Ke5 50 Rh4 a6 51 Rc4 Qb3 52 Rh4 Qa3 53 Rc4 b5 54 axb5 axb5 55 Rc8 Qd6+ 56 Kc2 f4 57 Rc3 b4 58 Rd3 Qc5+ 59 Kd2 Ke4 60 Rh3 Qf2 61 Rb3 f3 0-1

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4 7 d5 (Diagram 14)

7 Nf3 h6! 8 Bxf6 exf6 9 Bxc4 Bd6 transposes to Line C of the previous chapter (7 Bxc4 h6 8 Bxf6). Or if 8 Bh4 g5 9 Bg3 Be6 and it is not so easy for White to regain his pawn, as indicated by Lars Schandorff.

We now look at options for both White and Black in more detail. 7...Ne5 is our *Dangerous Weapon*, but we should also investigate 7...Na5.

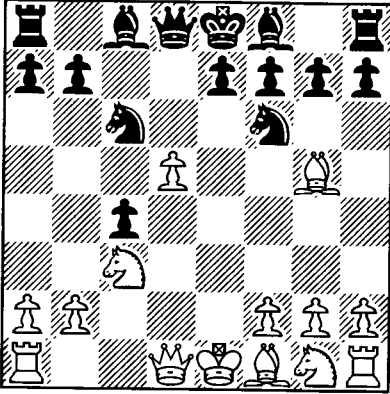


Diagram 14 (B)

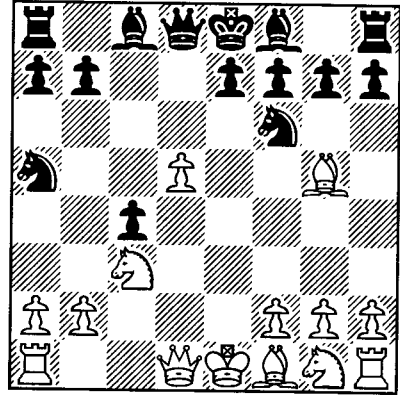


Diagram 15 (W)

A: 7...Na5

B: 7...Ne5

A) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4 7 d5 Na5 (Diagram 15)

At first sight this move looks illogical. However, although Black's knight is poorly placed, it is actually very tricky for White to exploit this factor. White can try and trap the knight by playing b2-b4 immediately. He can also play 'normal' moves such as 8 Nf3 or 8 Bxc4 and hope that his space advantage and lead in development will offer something tangible.

8 b4

8 Bxc4?! Nxc4 transposes to the line 7...Ne5 8 Bxc4 Nxc4 (see Line B1). Note that most players who are unfamiliar with theory when faced with 7...Na5 will choose to regain the pawn with 8 Bxc4.

If 8 Nf3 then 8...a6! is the best move. 8...e6 is a little bit loose and in addition 8...a6 sets a small trap. If White continues limply with 9 Be2, Black replies with 9...b5! and from now on White must play very precisely or else he will eventually be a

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

pawn down for very little: 10 O-O Bb7 11 Bd2 (White correctly plays against the misplaced knight; if 11 Ne5 Black should simply carry on with 11...g6 – moves such as 12 d6 can be ignored with 12...Bg7 when Black is one move away from safety and a concrete advantage) 11...g6 12 Qe1 Bg7 13 Nd1 c3 14 Bxc3 Nc4 and here a draw was agreed in S.Arslanov-P.Lomako, Serpukhov 2009, although there is still plenty to play for. White must probably swap off the knight on c4 as it is just too powerful, but the weakness of the c4-pawn will be more than offset by the weakness of the d5-pawn and the presence of the bishop pair.

8...cxb3 9 axb3 Bd7! (Diagram 16)

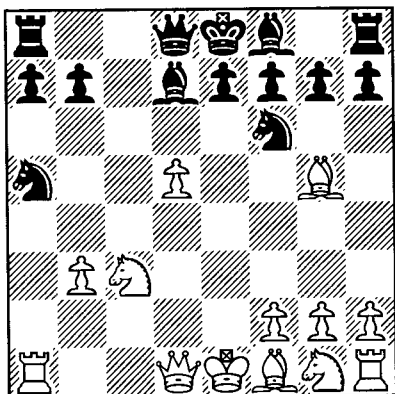


Diagram 16 (W)

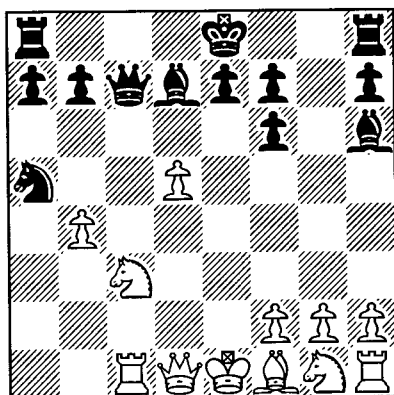


Diagram 17 (W)

The absolutely *vital* point: b3-b4 will be met by ...Rc8, attacking the c3-knight and guaranteeing the c4-square for the knight on a5.

10 b4

Alternatively:

a) 10 Bxf6?! gives Black another potential long-term advantage for something not so tangible: 10...gxf6 11 b4 (careless moves like 11 Nf3 hand Black the initiative; after 11...Rc8 12 Ne4 Qb6 Black is very much better – he will play ...Bg7 followed by ...O-O and his pieces have fantastic potential) 11...Qc7!? 12 Rc1 (if 12 Nb5 Qe5+ 13 Ne2 e6! and the threat of 14...Bxb4 makes the position extremely unpleasant for White) 12...Bh6! (**Diagram 17**) (developing with tempo) 13 bxa5 Bxc1 14 Qxc1 Rc8 15 Nge2 Qxa5 16 g3 Bg4 17 Qd2 Bf3 18 Rg1 O-O and White's pieces are all tied up. It is difficult for him to continue his development without dropping any more material. Indeed, Black's next move will be 19...Rfd8 to gobble up the d5-pawn.

b) If White continues normally with 10 Bd3, Black can simply play the effective 10...e5 11 Nge2 (11 dxe6 Bxe6 is also more than okay for Black) 11...Bb4 12 0-0 h6 (otherwise 13 Ne4 will be unpleasant). Black can be very satisfied with his position. All that is left for him to do is to support the knight on a5 with ...b6 and start controlling the c-file.

10...Rc8

Play becomes complicated after this move. There are plenty of tricks for both sides to watch out for.

11 Nb5

Or 11 Rxa5 Rxc3 12 Ne2 Rc4 13 Qb3 (pawn grabbing with 13 Rxa7 runs into 13...e6) 13...Qc7 14 Rxa7 e5! (energetic positions call for energetic measures!) 15 Ra8+ Bc8 16 Bd2? Ne4 and White suffers from a whole manner of problems. After 17 Qa4+ Black has the calm 17...Kd8 when even the nasty ...Bc5 is in the air.

11...Nc4 12 Nxa7 (Diagram 18)

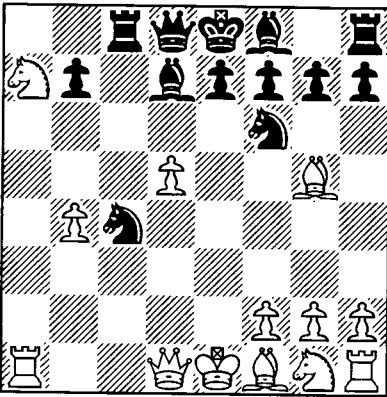


Diagram 18 (B)

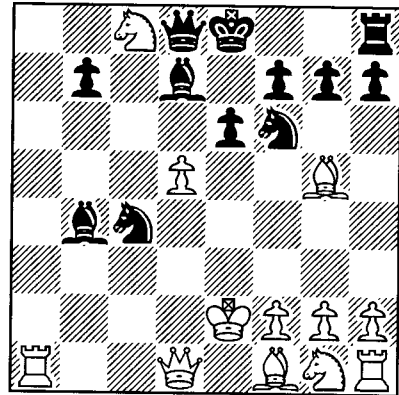


Diagram 19 (B)

12...e6!



DANGEROUS WEAPON! A great move! Now the rook is untouchable as 13 Nxc8 Bxb4+ 14 Ke2 (Diagram 19; a picturesque position to have straight out of the opening!) 14...Qxc8 15 Bxf6 (15 dxe6 is met by 15...Bb5!) 15...gxf6 16 Qb3 Bd6 17 dxe6 Bxe6 18 Qb5+ Bd7 19 Qb3 0-0 would leave White with a miserable position.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

13 Qb3 Qc7!

Threatening a check on e5.

14 Bxf6?

A natural mistake, but if 14 Nf3 Nxd5 15 Nxc8 Bxb4+ the fun begins: 16 Kd1 Na5 17 Qc2 Nc3+ 18 Kc1 Qxc8 19 Bd2 Qc5 20 Be3 and now instead of 20...Ba3+, 20...Qd5 threatening 21...Nb3+ would have easily won in the game J.Schoellmann-H.Eitel, German League 1999.

14...gxf6 15 Nf3 Ne5!

Threatening ...Nxf3+ followed by ...Qe5+.

16 Rd1

On 16 Be2 there's the powerful 16...Nxf3+ 17 gxf3 Qe5 18 Rb1 Rc3 19 Qb2 exd5. Black is a pawn up and White's king is so unsafe that his position is untenable.

16...Nxf3+ 17 gxf3

Forced, otherwise the b4-pawn drops.

We have been following the game A.Pyhala-H.Kallio, Lahti 1997. Here Black blundered with 17...Qf4?, but 17...Qe5+ would have been winning! 18 Be2 Ra8! (the knight is trapped) 19 Qa3 (19 dxe6 fxe6 20 Rxd7 is a desperation sacrifice to secure some checks, but even so this is not enough after 20...Kxd7 21 Qa4+ Kc7 and White is completely lost) 19...exd5 and White's position is a shambles. His king is stranded in the centre because castling kingside is problematic in view of ...Bd6, and the knight on a7 is miserably pinned down.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4 7 d5 Ne5

Now we consider:

B1: 8 Bxc4?!

B2: 8 Qd4!

B1) 8 Bxc4?! Nxc4

Black should secure the bishop pair. Please note that this position can also be reached via 7...Na5 8 Bxc4 Nxc4.

9 Qa4+ Bd7 10 Qxc4

Now Black has two very pleasant options.

10...b5!? (Diagram 20)

When the position is as open as this, it is not surprising that Black can play so extravagantly. However, he can also play the simple 10...e6!? neutralizing the strong pawn on d5 and relying on the long-term advantage of the bishop pair.

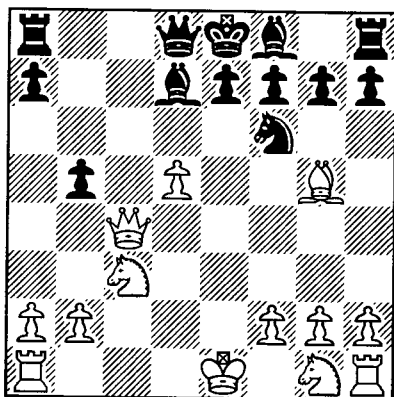


Diagram 20 (W)

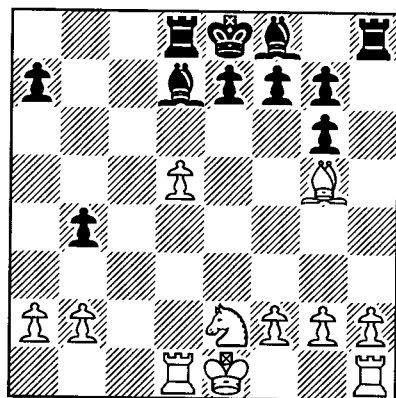


Diagram 21 (W)

11 Qe2

The pawn is immune from capture: 11 Nxb5 Rc8! (the queen is driven backwards) 12 Qe2 (12 Qd3 with the aim of protecting d5 is met by 12...Qb6 13 a4 a6 14 Be3 Qb7 15 Nc3 Qxb2 16 Rc1 Nxd5 17 Qxd5 Rxc3 with a safe position and an extra pawn) 12...Qa5+ 13 Nc3 Nxd5 leaves Black with a fantastic position.

11 Qd4 can be answered by 11...Qb6, with the idea of exchanging queens with advantage.

11...Qb6 12 Rd1 b4 13 Ne4 Nxe4 14 Qxe4

Here Black can unravel with:

14...Qg6!

This forces the exchange of queens; otherwise Black will play ...h6 winning material.

15 Qxg6 hxg6 16 Ne2 Rd8 (Diagram 21)

The d5-pawn can be targeted from more than one angle; one imaginative idea is ...Rh5!. After 17 Be3 Bb5 18 Nd4 Rxd5 19 Nxb5 Rxb5 20 Bxa7 e5 21 Be3 Ra5 Black has an advantage on account of the weak a2-pawn. The d5-pawn will also fall after 17 Ng3 Bc8 (intending ...Bb7) 18 Bd2 a5 19 a3 and here 19...Rh4! is a brilliant way of protecting the vulnerable b-pawn.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

B2) 8 Qd4! h6!

In Ulibin-Berczes we considered bishop retreats. Now let's take a look at a critical line: capturing the knight.

9 Qxe5 hxg5 10 Bxc4

The obvious 10 Qxg5 allows Black to protect the c4-pawn with 10...b5, as 11 Nxb5 is met by 11...Rb8 when either White must give up two pieces for the rook or the b2-pawn falls.

10...Bd7! (Diagram 22)

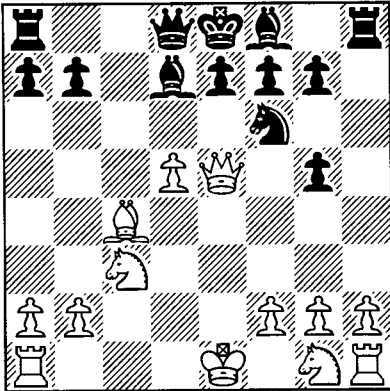


Diagram 22 (W)

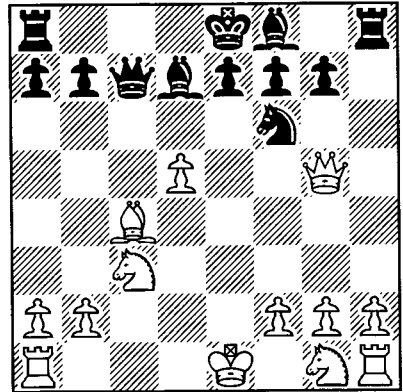


Diagram 23 (W)

The most accurate move.



BEWARE! Black must be a little bit careful here, as a move such as 10...g6 allows 11 Nb5! picking up an exchange.

Now White can play:

B21: 11 Qxg5?!

B22: 11 Nf3

B23: 11 Nge2

After a move like 11 Bb3, Black plays 11...g4 12 Nge2 Qb8 forcing a favourable endgame.

B21) 11 Qxg5?!

This is dubious because of:

11...Qc7! (Diagram 23)

Hitting both the bishop on c4 and h2-pawn.

12 Bb3

On 12 Bb5 Black can hit the d5-pawn: 12...Rh5 13 Bxd7+ Qxd7 14 Qg3 Nxd5. Black's active pieces give him a slightly preferable position, and if 15 Rd1 Qe6+ 16 Nge2 Nxc3 17 Qxc3 Rd5! (exchanging one of the attackers) 18 Rxd5 Qxd5 19 0-0, the lack of attacking pieces on the board allows Black to take the a2-pawn: 19...Qxa2 20 Rd1 e6 21 Qc7 Qa4 and Black is defending.

12...Rhx2 13 Rxh2 Qxh2 14 0-0-0 g6!

Threatening 15...Bh6 winning the queen.

15 Nf3

15 Kb1 is still met by 15...Bh6.

15...Bh6 16 Nxb2 Bxg5+ 17 Kb1 Bf4 18 Nf3 Kf8

The game S.Kindermann-T.Balogh, Baden 1999, was agreed drawn here but Black retains good prospects based on the weak d5-pawn.

B22) 11 Nf3 Qb6 (Diagram 24)

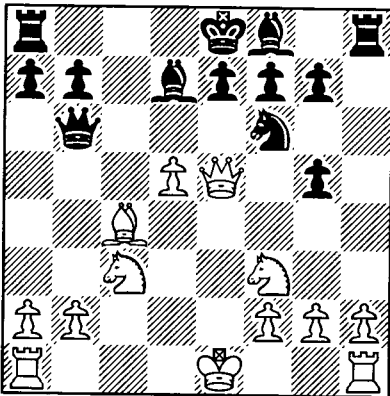


Diagram 24 (W)

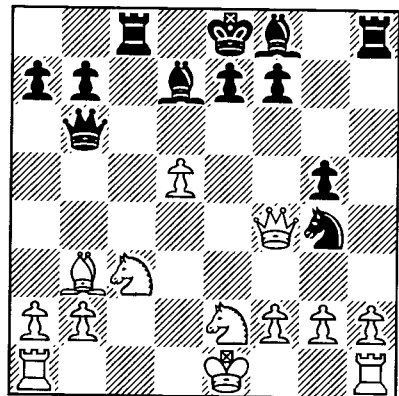


Diagram 25 (W)

12 0-0

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

If 12 Nxg5 Rc8 13 Bb3 Black has the simple tactic 13...Qxf2+ 14 Kxf2 Ng4+ which again gives him a very pleasant endgame.

12...g4 13 Nd4

Now Black can go a little crazy:

13...Rh5! 14 Qf4

Here Lars Schandorff points out the very strong:

14...e5!

With the idea of playing ...Bd6! After 15 dxe6 (15 Rfe1 fails to 15...0-0-0 picking up material) 15...Bd6 16 exd7+ Kf8 (White has no good place to retreat the queen) 17 Na4 Qc7 18 Nb5 Bxf4 19 Nxc7 Bxh2+ 20 Kh1 Bxc7+ 21 Kg1 Bh2+ 22 Kh1 b5 Black wins a piece.

B23) 11 Nge2 Rc8!

This is a good reply to 11 Nge2.

12 Bb3 Qb6 13 Qxg5

After this move Black swings into action, using the open files to attack:

13...Ng4 14 Qf4 g5! (Diagram 25)

The dark-squared bishop makes its way into the game.

15 Qd4

After 15 Qg3 Bg7 16 h3 f5 it is difficult for White to find a move as all his pieces are tied up:

a) Castling into the attack is foolhardy: 17 0-0 f4 18 Qf3 Ne5 19 Qe4 f3 wreaks havoc on the kingside.

b) After the defensive 17 Rf1 Be5 18 Qd3, Black plays 18...Nh2 19 Rh1 and now 19...g4 creating further weaknesses. If White attempts to trap the h2-knight with 20 Ng3, 20...Qb4 threatening ...Rxc3 is a good response: 21 Rc1 f4 22 Rxh2 fxg3 23 fxg3 Qd6 and Black's attack is promising.

15 Qf3? loses to 15...Nhx2 followed by a check on f3.

15...Qxd4 16 Nxd4 Bg7 17 Nde2

Now instead of 17...b5, as played in D.Howell-R.Buhmann, Balatonlelle 2005, Black should simply take the pawn on h2. After 17...Nhx2 18 Kd2 b5 Black should follow up with ...a5 and do everything he can to increase the scope of his bishop pair.

Conclusion

Against the dynamic 7 d5, Black has two pleasant options. Our 'main' *Dangerous Weapon* is 7...Ne5, but 7...Na5, which is analysed in the Looking a Little Deeper section, is also very satisfactory.

After 7...Ne5 8 Qd4 Black must tread carefully. The best reply is 8...h6!, counter-attacking the bishop. White has two approaches here: he can preserve the bishop pair or give it up and hope that the d5-pawn will be a serious thorn in Black's side. Should he try to preserve the bishop pair with 9 Bf4 Ng6! 10 Bg3, Black has the amazing resource 10...e5! returning the extra pawn and relying on the open files to stir up magnificent counterplay.

If White decides not to go to the effort of preserving the bishop pair and instead chooses 9 Bf4 Ng6! 10 Bxc4 (or even earlier, 9 Qxe5), play becomes quieter but Black still retains good chances. After 10 Bxc4 Nxf4 11 Qxf4 Black should simply guard the b5-square with ...a6 and fianchetto his kingside bishop. The only danger Black should be aware of is the pawn thrust d5-d6, but ...g5 in order to play ...Qc7 after an exchange on d6 is a good defensive resource.

9 Qxe5 is not held in high regard, as after 9...hxg5 10 Bxc4 Black has the accurate 10...Bd7! protecting against 11...Nb5 threats. Black will rely on two things. Firstly, the g5-pawn cannot be taken immediately because of 11...Qc7! hitting the loose bishop on c4 and the-h2 pawn. Secondly, Black is more than ready to sacrifice the g5-pawn in return for a massive attack on f2. In Line B23 Black plays 11...Rc8, 12...Qb6 and 13...Ng4! regaining the sacrificed pawn with a fantastic position.

Chapter Nine

Mixing ...Nc6 and ...g6

John Emms

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Nf3 g6!? (Diagram 1)

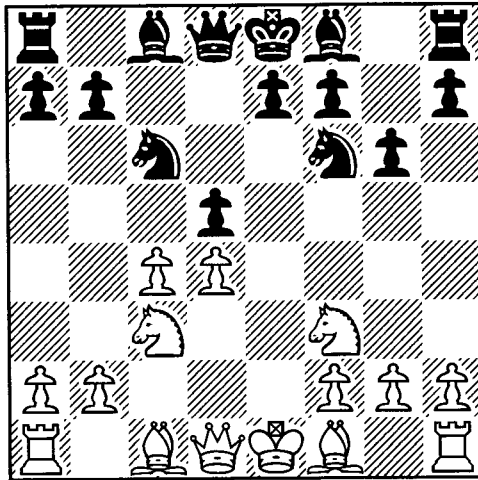


Diagram 1 (W)

5...g6 is definitely the move Black would most like to play against the Panov-Botvinnik Attack. After all, a kingside fianchetto is surely the most logical way to meet a line which is almost certainly going to reach an IQP position. If White continues normally, there's every chance of Black gaining equality or even more.

There's only one problem, but it's a big one. Instead of playing 'normally', White throws a giant spanner into the works with the very strong 6 Qb3!. This early aggression is difficult to meet unless Black is willing to sacrifice his d-pawn with 6...Bg7 7 cxd5 0-0, which is the main line after 5...g6. Of course it's playable for Black, but perhaps unsurprisingly theory considers it to be better for White, and overall Black's results haven't been wonderful.

Is there another way for Black to achieve ...g6? Yes there is, with the little-played 5...Nc6 5 Nf3 g6! (**Diagram 1**), and this line is the subject of this chapter. The advantage it shares with 5...g6 is that pedestrian play by White leads to nothing (and often less than nothing). What's more, 7 Qb3 is no longer a problem in view of the convincing reply 7...Na5!.

Of course, if it were that simple then everyone would be playing 5...Nc6 6 Nf3 g6, or maybe no-one would be playing 6 Nf3 in the Panov-Botvinnik Attack! The truth is that White does have challenging ways to meet this line, and one of these is considered in the game below.

□ **S.Giddins** ■ **J.Emms**

Isle of Man Open, Port Erin 1999

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Nf3 g6



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This position is more usually reached via the Symmetrical English, and indeed the actual move order of this game was 1 Nf3 c5 2 c4 Nc6 3 Nc3 g6! 4 e3 Nf6 5 d4 cxd4 6 exd4 d5.

I'm not sure how many players use both the Caro-Kann and the Symmetrical English, but those who do could have two *Dangerous Weapons* for the price of one!

7 cxd5 Nxd5 (**Diagram 2**) 8 Qb3!

7 cxd5 Nxd5 8 Qb3! and 7 Bg5 are considered to be the two key critical tests of 6...g6. The only other move which in any way challenges Black after 7 cxd5 Nxd5 is 8 Bc4. Here 8...Nxc3 9 bxc3 (9 Qb3!) 9...Bg7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Re1 Qc7 is a fairly decent Grünfeld type position for Black, but in view of White's transpositional possibility of 9 Qb3 the theoretical recommendation for Black has been 8...Nb6 9 Bb3 Bg7 (**Diagram 3**).



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: This will transpose to a playable but fairly harmless line against the Grünfeld: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 e3 0-0 6 cxd5 Nxd5 7 Bc4 Nb6 8 Bb3 c5 9 0-0 cxd4 10 exd4 Nc6.

For example, 10 d5 Na5 11 0-0 0-0 12 Re1 (or 12 Bg5 Bg4 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Qxf3 h6 15 Be3 Nac4 16 Bc1 Rc8) 12...Bg4 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Qxf3 Nxb3 15 axb3 Re8 16 Be3 Nc8! 17 h4 h5 18 Ra4 Nd6 with a roughly equal position, G.Kuzmin-R.Keene, Zagreb 1975. Or 10 Be3 0-0 11 0-0 Na5 12 Bc2 Nac4 13 Qe2 Bg4 14 Be4 Nd6 and Black can apply typical pressure against d4, P.Gilruth-A.Yermolinsky, Philadelphia 1999.

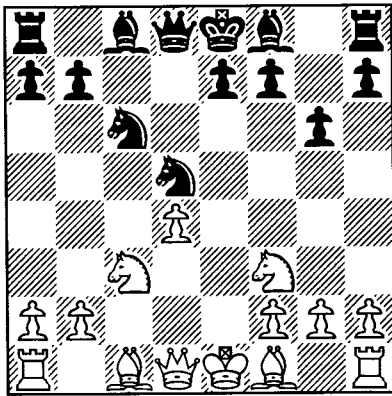


Diagram 2 (W)

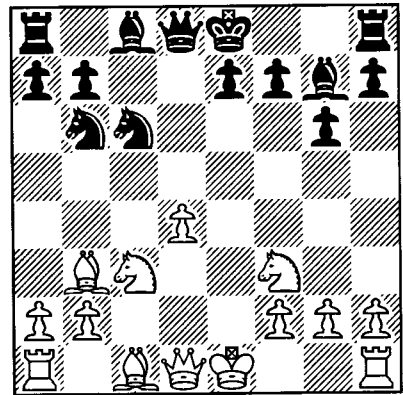


Diagram 3 (W)

If 10 0-0 (instead of 10 d5) I think that Black should avoid 10...Nxd4?! 11 Nxd4 Qxd4 12 Qxd4 Bxd4 13 Nb5 Be5 14 Re1, with strong pressure for White, and instead choose 10...0-0 with a probable transposition after 11 d5 Na5.

8...Nxc3

I really don't like 8...Nb6? here. White has time to play 9 d5! forcing the c6-knight into a sorry retreat back to b8.

9 Bc4! (Diagram 4)

This zwischenzug is a key point behind White's previous move. By attacking f7 before recapturing on c3, White is trying to induce some kind of concession from Black.

9 bxc3 Bg7 10 Be2 0-0 11 0-0 Qc7 is another Grünfeld type position which Black should welcome. What's more, in this particular case Black can exploit the posi-

tion of White's queen to gain time for queenside counterplay. For example, 12 Rd1 (or 12 Bg5 Be6 13 Qa3 Rfe8 14 Rab1 Rac8 15 Rfd1 Bd5 16 Rb5 e6 17 Bh4 a6 18 Bg3 Qd8 19 Rbb1 Qa5! 20 Qb2 b5 with a firm grip on the queenside, B.Saad-E.Ghaem Maghami, Abu Dhabi 2009) 12...Be6 13 Qa3 (or 13 d5 Na5 14 Qa3 Bg4) 13...Rfd8 14 Bg5 Rd7 15 Nd2 Rc8 16 Ne4 Rd5 17 Qc1 Qa5 with excellent counterplay for Black, H.Hunt-A.Summerscale, British League 1999.

Of course Black would be even happier to see 9 Qxc3?! Bg7, after which White's d-pawn soon begins to feel uncomfortable.

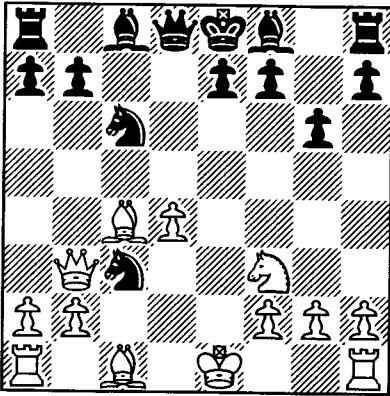


Diagram 4 (B)

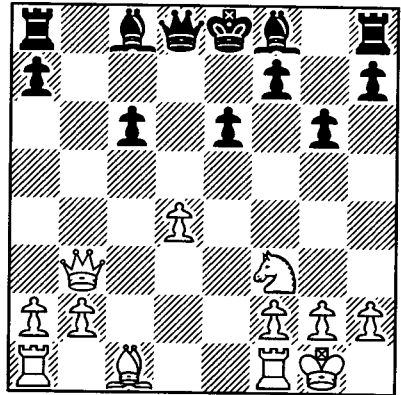


Diagram 5 (B)

9...Nd5!

I feel that if Black is going to take the plunge and play 6...g6, then 9...Nd5 is the consistent choice, heading for an imbalanced position.

A key nuance behind White's previous play is that 9...e6 10 bxc3 Bg7 can be met by the awkward 11 Ba3!. While it's true that Black has reasonable chances to equalize after 11...Bf8, overall my feeling is that 12 Bxf8 Kxf8 13 0-0 must be slightly more comfortable for White. Furthermore, there are fewer possibilities for Black to gain real counterplay.



BEWARE! Trying to hold on to the extra piece leads to disaster after 9...Ne4?? 10 Bxf7+ Kd7 11 Qe6+. 9...Bg7? also fails, to 10 Bxf7+ Kf8 11 bxc3 Na5 12 Qd5.

10 Bxd5 e6 11 Bxc6+

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

Virtually the unanimous choice. If 11 Be4 Black can choose between 11...Bg7 and the disruptive 11...Bb4+!? which more or less forces 12 Kf1.

11...bxc6 12 0-0 (Diagram 5)

Let's briefly summarize the position:

1. White enjoys a lead in development.
2. Both sides have a pawn weakness: d4 for White and c6 for Black.
3. Black possesses the long-term potential advantage of the bishop pair.
4. Black might find it difficult, at least initially, to find a role for his light-squared bishop, *but it is an unopposed bishop*. If Black can successfully arrange ...c6-c5, the bishop may come to life with great effect.
5. Black enjoys good control of the light squares. Conversely, White can hope to exploit some dark-squared holes in Black's camp.

Overall, I think we can safely say that the position is dynamically imbalanced, and regardless of whether or not White enjoys a theoretical edge, the position is rich enough to offer both sides ample opportunities to outplay their opponents.

12...Qd5!

I like this move because generally Black is happy to allow an exchange of queens on d5, especially as this would strengthen his pawn structure after ...cxd5. Also, without a light-squared bishop, or a knight ready to go to c3, it's not easy for White to push away Black's well centralized queen.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Over the next few moves White makes a series of apparently sensible decisions and commits no obvious mistakes. Yet in just seven moves time Black enjoys a clear advantage! This kind of thing can happen in strategically imbalanced positions.

13 Qc2

Later on I'll cover some alternatives for White, including 13 Bf4 and 13 Qc3.

13...Bg7 14 Bf4 0-0 15 Be5 (Diagram 6)

White continues to play logically. An exchange of dark-squared bishops is certainly undesirable from Black's perspective, and yet avoiding it seems to entail a concession.

15...f6!

This looks ugly at first sight, but I was very much taking the long-term view (although not that 'long', judging by how quickly play progresses). It's worth noting

that a typical objection to this advance – that it weakens e6 – isn't valid here because of Black's solid grip on the light squares.

16 Bg3 Bb7 17 Rfe1 Rfe8 18 Re3 (Diagram 7)

A crucial position has arisen. I've got the bishop pair, but at the moment both are blocked by pawns and neither one is influencing the game. Black could unleash his dark-squared bishop with ...f7-f5, but this would be a serious positional concession, leaving White with a nice juicy outpost on e5. So instead I aimed to liberate the bishop on b7 with ...c6-c5:

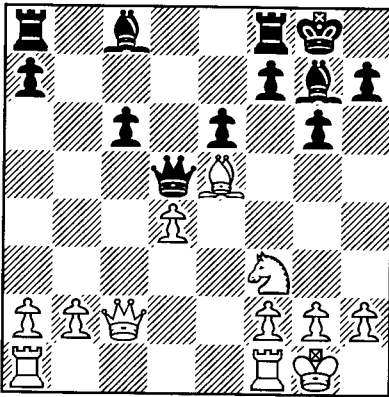


Diagram 6 (B)

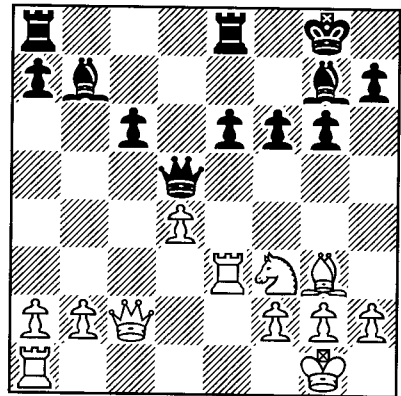


Diagram 7 (B)

18...Rac8! 19 Rc3

This prevents the advance. The alternative way to do so was with 19 b4. One possibility against this is 19...a5, and if 20 a3 axb4 21 axb4 Ra8! 22 Ree1 Bf8 the b4-pawn becomes a major headache for White. 20 bxa5 is probably wiser, but Black can respond in a number of ways, including simply 20...c5!?

19...Bf8!

Again threatening ...c7-c5. This time White has no good way of preventing the advance, as 20 Rc1 leaves the a2-pawn hanging.

20 a3 c5!

Just in time. Any delay would have been met by 21 Rc1!.

21 dxc5 Rxc5 22 Rxc5 Qxc5 23 Qxc5 Bxc5 (Diagram 8)

The situation has clarified and it's easier to see that Black is in command. The position has opened up and there are pawns on both sides of the board – just the

Now the simple threat of ...Bb2 is impossible to meet.

37 Ne4

Or 37 Nb3 Bb2 38 Bc1 Bxc1 39 Nxc1 Kc4 40 Ke3 Kc3 and White can do nothing against the threat of ...Kb2.

37...Bb2 38 Bd2 f5 39 Nc3+ Kc4

There is still time to mess things up: 39...Bxc3?? 40 Bxc3 Kc4 41 Be5 Kb3 42 Bd6 Kxa3 43 Kf2 leaves Black a pawn up, but with no chance of making any further progress due to the opposite-coloured bishops.

40 Nxb5 axb5

White has eliminated one of Black's bishops but it's too late. Black will clean up the queenside pawns.

41 g4 fxc4+ 42 Kxg4 Bxa3 43 Kg5 Bxb4 44 Bf4 Bf8 45 Kf6 b4 46 Kf7 b3 47 Be5 Bb4 0-1

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Nf3 g6

In this position White's two main tries are considered to be:

A: 7 Bg5

B: 7 cxd5

Alternatives shouldn't give Black too much to worry about:

a) 7 Be2 is toothless, since after 7...Bg7 8 0-0 0-0 (**Diagram 10**) we reach a reversed QGD Tarrasch, which is considered to be harmless. Here are some examples, from many:

a1) 9 h3 Bf5 10 Be3 dxc4 11 Bxc4 Rc8 12 a3 Ne4 13 Ba2 Nxc3 14 bxc3 Na5, T.Sammalvuo-P.H.Nielsen, Dresden Olympiad 2008.

a2) 9 Re1 Bg4 10 cxd5 Nxd5 11 h3 Be6 12 Bf1 Rc8 13 Bg5 h6 14 Be3 Kh7 (or 14...Nxc3 15 bxc3 Na5 16 Qc1 Kh7 17 Qa3 Qc7, A.Obodchuk-K.Georgiev, Poikovsky 2001) 15 Rc1 Nxc3 16 bxc3 Na5, J.Speelman-B.Alterman, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

In all these cases Black enjoys a full share of the chances and the possibility to take the initiative in the centre or on the queenside.

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b) 7 Bd3 Bg7 8 0-0 0-0 is similar to 7 Be2, above. White usually plays 9 h3 to avoid the pin, after which either 9...b6 intending 10 Bg5 dxc4 11 Bxc4 Bb7 12 Re1 Rc8, or 9...dxc4 10 Bxc4 Na5 11 Be2 Be6 is typically solid for Black.

c) 7 Qb3?! is much less effective here than after 5...g6 6 Qb3, simply in view of 7...Na5! after which White is struggling to equalize.

d) 7 c5! (**Diagram 11**) isn't a bad move, but it does compare unfavourably to, say, 7 Bg5 Be6 8 c5 because here Black will look to play ...Bg4 in one go and put pressure on d4. For example, 7...Bg7 (7...Bg4!? and 7...a6 preventing Bb5 are decent alternatives) 8 Bb5 0-0 (I quite like 8...Bg4! here, bypassing 8...0-0 9 h3 and not fearing the complications after 9 Qa4 Bxf3 10 Bxc6+ bxc6 11 Qxc6+ Nd7 12 gxf3 Bxd4) 9 h3! (if 9 0-0 Bg4! 10 Bxc6 bxc6 and White will have problems holding his centre together; e.g. 11 h3 Bxf3 12 Qxf3 Nd7! 13 Be3 Rb8 14 Rab1 e5, etc) 9...Ne4 10 0-0 Bf5 11 Bf4 (J.Doery-G.Pieterse, Wijk aan Zee 1987) and here 11...Qa5 12 Bxc6 bxc6 looks roughly equal.

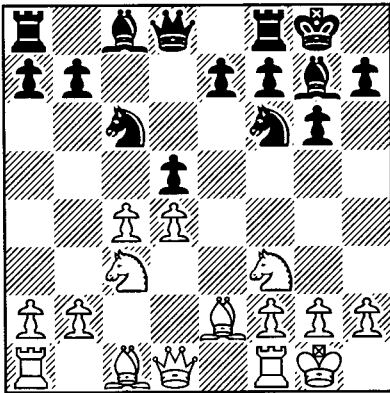


Diagram 10 (W)

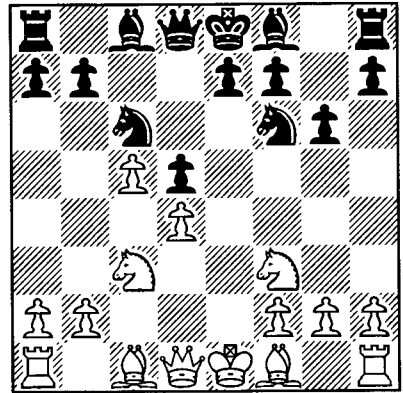


Diagram 11 (B)

A) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Nf3 g6 7 Bg5

This puts considerable pressure on the d5-pawn. How should Black react?

7...Be6! (Diagram 12)

This bishop move is seen surprisingly often in various Panov positions. For example, both Anand and Dreev have played 6 Nf3 Be6!?, after which 7 Bg5 (I suspect that 7 c5! is more challenging) 7...g6!? would transpose to our line. There's also 6 Bg5 Be6!?, which is perhaps the best known example.

Not only does the bishop provide the d5-pawn with some much needed protection, it also puts pressure on c4 and so adds to the central tension. The e7-pawn is blocked, but this isn't a concern for Black because the dark-squared bishop is planning to fianchetto.

The main alternative is 7...Ne4, but 8 cxd5 Nxc3 9 bxc3 Qxd5 10 Qb3! is known to be slightly better for White.

8 Bxf6!

If White wants to compromise Black's pawn structure, he must play this move now, before Black has a chance to play ...Bg7. Alternatively:

a) Playing c4-c5 is less effective if White doesn't capture on f6 first: 8 c5 Bg7 (8...Ne4!?) 9 Bb5 O-O (again 9...Ne4!? comes into consideration) 10 Bxc6 (if 10 O-O then 10...Ne4!) 10...bxc6 11 Ne5 Qc7 12 Rc1 Ne4! (**Diagram 13**) (this idea, again!) 13 Bf4 g5 14 Bg3 (F.Velikhanli-S.Nadir, Abu Dhabi 2003) and here 14...f5! would have left Black with a strong initiative.

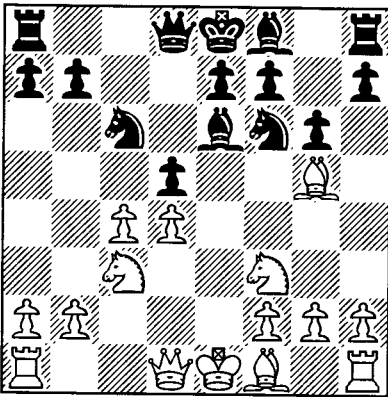


Diagram 12 (W)

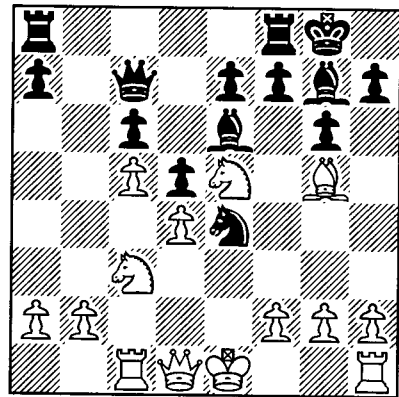


Diagram 13 (W)

b) 8 Be2 is harmless, and is likely to transpose to a reversed QGD Tarrasch. For example, 8...Bg7 9 O-O O-O 10 cxd5 (if 10 c5 Ne4 11 Be3 Black can play 11...Nxc5!? 12 dxc5 d4; alternatively, 10 Rc1 Rc8 11 b3 Qa5 was equal in Y.Zilberman-V.Golod, Israeli League 1999) 10...Nxd5 11 Qd2 Rc8 12 Bh6 Nxc3 13 bxc3 Bd5 14 Rfe1 e6 15 Rad1 Qa5 with decent counterplay for Black in E.Grivas-M.Hebden, Kopavogur 1994, which increased after 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Qe3?! Ne7!.

Note that Black must be careful to avoid losing a piece with 8...dxc4?? 9 Bxf6! exf6 10 d5 here, and in various similar positions.

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c) 8 Qb3!? (**Diagram 14**) appears as if it shouldn't work at all in view of the obvious reply 8...Na5, but the position after 9 Qb4 isn't as unpromising for White as it initially looks.

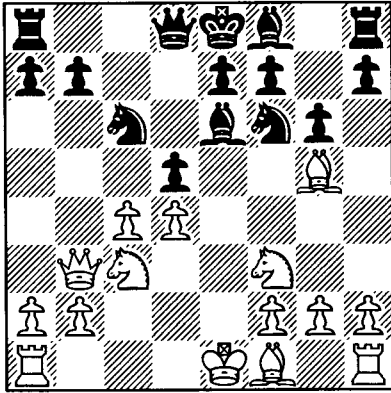


Diagram 14 (B)

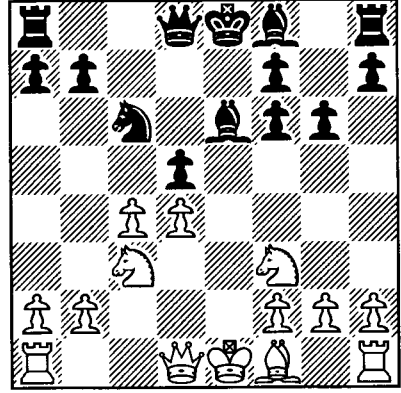


Diagram 15 (W)

c1) 9...dxc4 10 d5 Bd7 11 0-0-0 Qb6 12 Qa3 e6!? 13 d6 Ng4 14 Ne4 Bg7 was very unclear in B.Medak-A.Brkcic, Bizovac 2009.

c2) 9...Nxc4 10 Bxc4 dxc4 11 d5!? Bd7 (11...Nxd5 12 Qb5+ Qd7 13 Qxd7+ Kxd7 14 0-0-0 Kd6 is clearly very risky, although I haven't yet found a refutation) 12 0-0 Bg7 13 Rfe1 and here Black should probably just play 13...0-0. For example, 14 Rxe7 a5 15 Qd6 Bf5 16 Qxd8 Rfxd8 17 Rxb7 Rab8 18 Rxb8 Rxb8 with decent compensation in view of the two bishops and pressure against b2.

c3) 9...Bg7!? intending 10 cxd5 Nxd5 11 Qb5+ Kf8!? is another idea worth considering.

Returning to the main move, 8 Bxf6:

8...exf6 (Diagram 15)

Here White needs to decide whether to maintain or release the tension in the centre. The main two choices are:

A1: 9 Be2

A2: 9 c5

Again there are alternatives which need to be considered:

a) 9 Qb3 Bb4! (the bishop isn't always fianchettoed!) and now:

a1) After 10 a3 Bxc3+ 11 Qxc3 Black can choose between 11...0-0 12 c5 Re8 13 0-0-0 Bg4, and 11...dxc4 12 Bxc4 Bxc4 13 Qxc4 Qe7+ 14 Qe2 Rd8 15 Rd1 Rd6! after which Black can further pressure d4 with ...g5-g4, ...h5, etc.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! There are many positions where White has a d-pawn in the centre which appears to be an 'extra' pawn because of Black's doubled f-pawns. However, often this pawn proves to be a liability and vulnerable to attack.

a2) 10 Be2 allows a forcing sequence which looks at least equal for Black: 10...dxc4! 11 Bxc4 Nxd4! 12 Nxd4 Qxd4 13 Bxe6 Bxc3+! 14 bxc3 Qe4+! 15 Kf1 fxe6 16 Re1 Qd3+ 17 Kg1 0-0-0 18 Qxe6+ Kb8.

b) 9 cxd5 Bxd5 10 Bb5 Be7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Nxd5 Qxd5 13 Qe2 Bd6 14 Rfd1 (R.Debarnot-S.Makarichev, Amsterdam 1974) and here I feel that 14...Rac8! intending 15 Bc4 Qh5 16 h3 Rfe8 or 15 Qc4?! Qh5! gives Black sufficient counterplay.

c) 10 c5 Bg4! 11 Bb5 Bxf3 12 gxf3 0-0 13 0-0-0 Bxc3 14 Qxc3 Qc7 15 h4 (**Diagram 16**) was agreed drawn in D.Sermek-F.Bistric, Makarska 1996. White was the higher-rated player so it's very possible he simply didn't fancy his position. After 15...h5 16 Qd2 Kg7 17 f4 f5, for example, Black's kingside looks resilient, and there's always going to be good counterplay against White's shaky-looking structure.

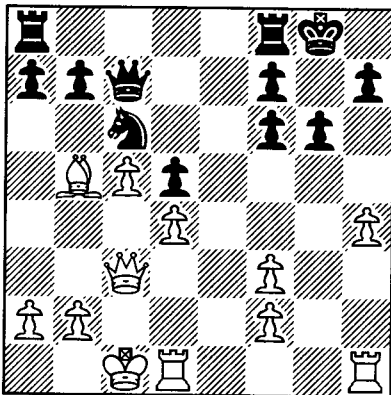


Diagram 16 (B)

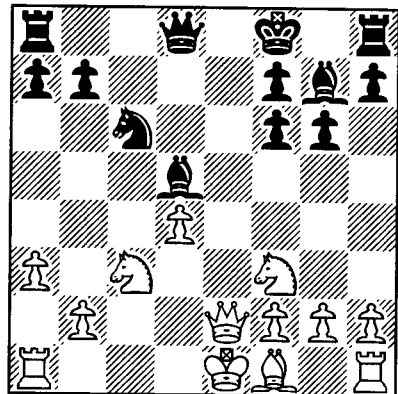


Diagram 17 (W)

d) 9 a3 (preventing ...Bb4 and also supporting b2-b4 after c4-c5, but rapid development is quite important here) 9...Bg7 10 cxd5 (if 10 c5 then 10...Bg4! and later

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...f5 hitting d4) 10...Bxd5 11 Qe2+ ½-½, A.Poluljahov-M.Panarin, Krasnodar 2004, was another quickly agreed draw in a game where, significantly, White was the higher-rated player. Here I like the move 11...Kf8! (**Diagram 17**). For example, 12 Nxd5 Qxd5 (or 12...Qa5+!? 13 Qd2 Qxd5 14 Be2 f5 intending ...Bf6 and ...Kg7) 13 0-0-0 f5 14 Qb5 (otherwise White's king will likely be more vulnerable than Black's; also note that 14 Qc4?! Qxc4+ 15 Bxc4 Rc8 16 Kb1 Nxd4 wins a pawn) 14...Rd8 15 Qxd5 Rxd5 16 Bc4 Rd8 17 d5 Ne5 18 Nxe5 Bxe5 19 Kc2 Ke7 followed by ...Kd6 firmly blocking the d-pawn. Black, whose bishop enjoys more scope, certainly isn't worse here, although a draw is the most likely outcome.

A1) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Nf3 g6 7 Bg5 Be6 8 Bxf6 exf6 9 Be2

Keeping the tension in the centre for at least one more move (remember that 9...dxc4 is impossible because of 10 d5). However, by playing Be2 White more or less commits to an exchange of central pawns, as after c4-c5 the bishop is best placed on b5 (see Line A2).

9...Bb4! (Diagram 18)

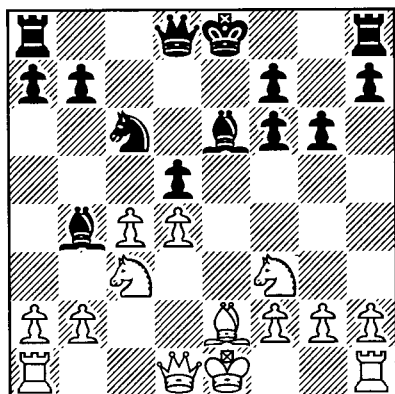


Diagram 18 (W)

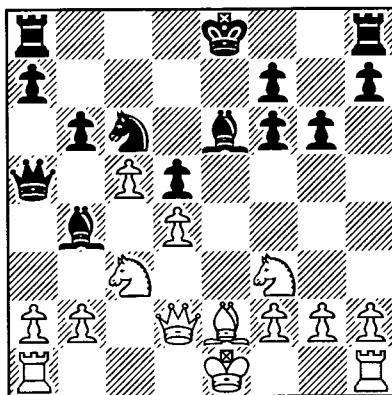


Diagram 19 (W)

I like this move, although I do feel that 9...Bg7 10 0-0 0-0 is playable too. For example:

a) After 11 cxd5 Bxd5 Black will follow up with ...f5 and the pressure on d4 will be difficult to meet.

b) 11 c5 f5 (11...Bg4!? intending 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Bxf3 f5 also looks promising) 12 Bb5 f4 13 Bxc6 bxc6 14 Ne5?! (if 14 Qd2 Bg4!? 15 Qxf4 Bxf3 16 gxf3 Qb8! 17 Qd2 Qb4 18 Rad1 Rfe8 and Black has very good compensation for the pawn; perhaps 14 h3! preventing ...Bg4 is White's safest option) 14...Bxe5! 15 dxe5 Qg5 (15...Qb8!?) 16 Re1 Bh3 17 g3 fxc3 18 hxc3 Rfe8 19 Qd4 Qf5 20 Re3 Rab8 21 b4 f6 22 exf6 Rxe3 23 Qxe3 Qxf6 and Black is better, V.Ivanov-G.Jakobson, correspondence 1998.

c) 11 Qd2 was played in a rare high-level encounter, J.Speelman-V.Korchnoi, Reykjavik 1988: 11...dxc4 (this capture is playable now due to a tactical resource) 12 d5 Ne5! 13 Nxe5 fxe5 14 Bxc4 Bf5 (Speelman mentions 14...f5!? intending ...Bf7 to keep pressure on d5) 15 d6 Qh4 16 Bb3, and here 16...Qd4 17 Rad1 Qxd2 (17...Bg4!? 18 Qg5! Bxd1 19 Rxd1 is dangerous) 18 Rxd2 would have been equal according to Speelman. After 18...Rfd8 19 Rfd1 Kf8 it's really not clear how strong or weak White's d-pawn will become.

10 cxd5

10 c5 isn't nearly as effective here as in similar positions, because Black is actively placed and ready to hit back with ...b6. For example, 10...Qa5 11 Qd2 b6! (**Diagram 19**).

This is a key move, smashing the pawn wedge. White will be left with pawn weaknesses on the queenside: 12 cxb6 axb6 13 0-0 0-0 14 Qf4!? Bxc3 15 bxc3 Kg7 16 h4 h6 17 Bd3 Rfc8 18 Rae1 Qa7 (18...Nd8!?) 19 Nh2 Qc7 20 Qf3 Ra3 21 h5 g5 22 Qd1 Rxc3 23 f4 Nxd4 and Black went on to win in D.Bryson-A.Summerscale, Scottish Championship 1999. My feeling is that White's play on the kingside was a bit too hopeful here, but in any case Black is assured of good counterplay against the weaknesses on the queenside.

Against 10 0-0 I don't see any need to get involved in the complications of 10...dxc4 11 d5! Bxc3 12 Bxc4 (or 12 dxe6), or 10...Bxc3 11 bxc3 dxc4 12 Nd2. Instead 10...0-0 is solid enough: 11 c5 (11 cxd5 Bxd5 transposes to the main text) 11...Bxc3 12 bxc3 b6! (again we see this move, challenging White's pawn formation) 13 Qa4 Qc7 14 Qa3 Na5 15 Rab1 Rfe8 16 Rb2 Bg4 17 Qb4 Rab8 18 cxb6 axb6 19 h3 Bf5 20 Bb5 Rec8, A.Kislinsky-V.Malakhatko, Kiev 2003. Once again Black gets significant action on the queenside.

10...Bxd5 11 0-0 0-0 12 Rc1



DANGEROUS WEAPON! 12 Nxd5 Qxd5 13 Qd3 Rad8 (**Diagram 20**) is one of those deceptive positions where White's pseudo-extra d-pawn proves to be a liability.

Let's follow the instructive game A.Brkcic-E.Dizdarevic, Rabac 2004, where Black

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systematically attacks the pawn: 14 Rfd1 Ba5! (planning ...Bb6) 15 Qb5 Bb6 16 Qxd5 Rxd5 17 Bc4 Rd7 18 Bb5 (if 18 d5 Rfd8 19 Rd2 Ne5 20 Nxe5 fxe5 and Black will expand with ...Kg7, ...f5, ...e4, etc) 18...Rfd8 19 Rd2 Rd5 20 Bxc6 bxc6 21 Kf1 g5! 22 h3 h5! 23 g4 hxg4 24 hxg4 Bxd4 and Black went on to win.

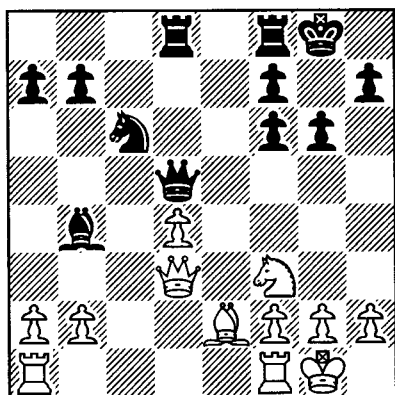


Diagram 20 (W)

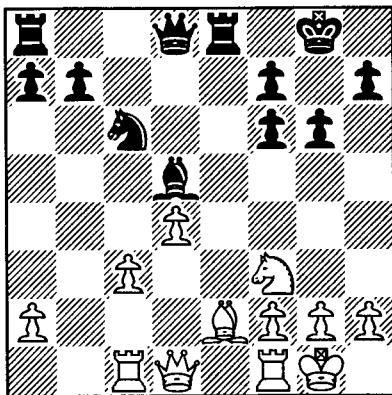


Diagram 21 (W)

12...Bxc3

I also quite like 12...Ba5 here, again planning ...Bb6. White can respond with 13 Nxd5 Qxd5 14 Bc4 but 14...Qd6 looks okay for Black.

13 bxc3 Re8 (Diagram 21)

We've been following the game G.Shahade-L.Shamkovich, Saitek US Masters, Hawaii 1998. I feel that Black is at least equal here. White's d-pawn now has some support from a colleague on c3, but Black is pretty active. The d5-bishop is well placed and can't be dislodged easily. Black can look to follow up with ...Rc8 and ...Na5 fighting for squares on the queenside. The game continued:

14 Bb5 Rc8 15 Nd2 a6

Perhaps Black rejected the tactical shot 15...Bxg2! on account of 16 Kxg2 Qd5+ 17 Qf3 Qxb5 18 Ne4, but 17...Qg5+! 18 Kh1 Qxd2 is good for him.

16 Bc4 Na5 17 Bxd5 Qxd5 18 Nb3 Nc4!

Black's light-squared grip promises him an edge.

19 Re1 b6 20 Rc2 Nd6 21 Rxe8+ Rxe8 22 Re2 Rc8 23 Re3 Kg7 24 Qe2 a5 25 h3 a4 26 Nc1 b5 27 Kh2 b4 28 Qe1 Qc4 29 Ne2 b3 30 axb3 Qxb3

Black's passed a-pawn gives him a decisive advantage, which turned into a win.

Notice how the doubled f-pawns provided the black king with rock-solid protection here, allowing Black to pursue activity on the queenside without having to worry about counterplay on the other wing.

A2) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Nf3 g6 7 Bg5 Be6 8 Bxf6 exf6 9 c5 (Diagram 22)

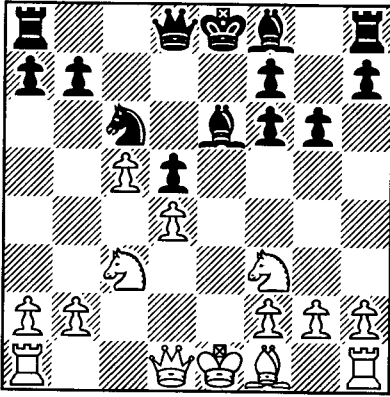


Diagram 22 (B)

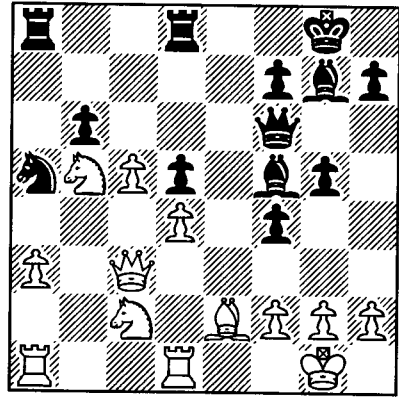


Diagram 23 (W)

The most challenging move, and the one which is usually recommended. White plans to follow up with Bb5, h2-h3 (to prevent ...Bg4) and 0-0, keep a grip on the centre and then slowly make progress on the queenside.

Some previous sources assessed this position as clearly in White's favour, but my feeling is that this was based on fairly flimsy evidence and I hope the analysis in this section proves otherwise. It's interesting (and promising!) that both Speelman (who chose 9 Be2) and Ehlvest (who has played 9 cxd5) were not totally convinced by the attractions of 9 c5.

9...Bg7

Virtually the unanimous choice, but I think that already Black has interesting alternatives here:

a) 9...a6!? helpfully prevents Bb5 and this allows the c6-knight to take a more active role in putting pressure on d4. A typical continuation is 10 Be2 Bg7 11 0-0 (11 h3 would transpose to the main text) 11...0-0 (or 11...f5 12 Qd2 Qf6 13 Rfd1 f4 14 b4 0-0 15 Rab1 g5 16 b5 axb5 17 Bxb5 with an unclear and roughly equal position,

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S.Brynell-J.Speelman, German League 1998) 12 a3 (perhaps 12 h3 is more useful at this moment) 12...f5 (12...g5! intending ...g4 followed by ...f5 looks even stronger to me) 13 Qd2 Qf6 14 Rfd1 f4 (preparing ...g5) 15 b4 Rfd8 16 b5 axb5 17 Nxb5 g5 18 Ne1 Bf5 19 Nc2 Na5 20 Qc3 b6 (**Diagram 23**) with very active play for Black, P.Vozka-M.Zurek, Czech League 1997. Notice how Black's counterplay in this line often involves pushing his kingside pawns forward to destabilize White's f3-knight and thus also the defence of the backward d4-pawn.



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: The Brynell-Speelman game actually arose from the move order 6...a6!? 7 Bg5 Be6 8 Be2 g6 9 Bxf6 exf6 10 0-0 Bg7 11 c5 f5. 6...a6 is a Speelman speciality and certainly worthy of consideration as a dangerous weapon in its own right.

b) Given that White often prevents it with his next move, why not play 9...Bg4!? here? (**Diagram 24**)

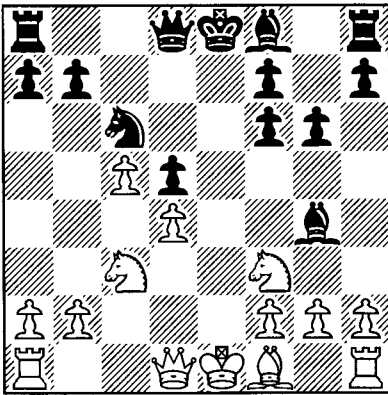


Diagram 24 (W)

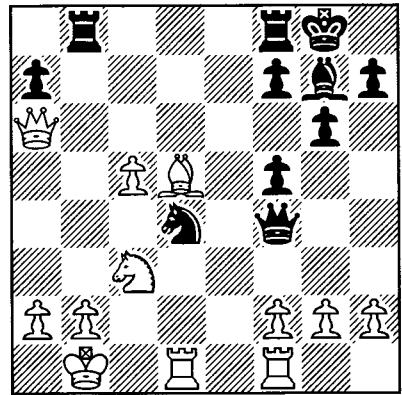


Diagram 25 (B)

This novelty is positionally well motivated, as it loosens White's defence of d4. I certainly feel it's at least worthy of consideration. Logically, the most testing lines would be those where White targets d5, and yet these seem to offer Black strong counterplay.

Here are some sample lines, so far based only on analysis, to investigate further:

b1) 10 Qe2+ is met by 10...Be7!.

b2) 10 Qb3 Bxf3 11 gxf3 Nxd4 12 Qa4+ Nc6 13 0-0-0 Bxc5 14 Rxd5 Qe7 intending 15 Ne4 0-0! 16 Rxc5 f5.

b3) 10 h3 Qe7+! 11 Be2 Bxf3 12 gxf3 Bg7!? and Black is prepared to answer 13 Nxd5 with 13...Qd7.

b4) 10 Be2 Bg7 11 Qb3!? 0-0! 12 0-0-0 (12 0-0 Bxf3 13 Bxf3 Nxd4 14 Qxd5 f5, and if 15 Qxb7? Rb8 with excellent play for Black; or 12 Qxb7 Bxf3 13 Qxc6 Bxg2 14 Rg1 and now 14...Qb8!) 12...f5 and Black's pressure against d4 again assures him of excellent counterplay. One nice line runs 13 Qxb7 (Black is fine after either 13 Nxd5 Bxf3 14 Bxf3 Nxd4 or 13 Qxd5 Qxd5 14 Nxd5 Rad8) 13...Bxf3 14 Bxf3 Nxd4 15 Bxd5 Rb8 16 Qa6 Qg5+ 17 Kb1 Qf4 18 Rhf1 (**Diagram 25**) 18...Rxb2+!! 19 Kxb2 Rb8+ 20 Bb7 (if 20 Bb3 Nxb3 21 axb3 Qb4 wins, while 20 Ka3 allows 20...Nc2 mate) 20...Ne2! 21 Qxe2 (21 Kc2 is better but White is still in some trouble after 21...Nxc3) 21...Qb4+ 22 Kc1 Qxc3+ 23 Qc2 Qa3+ 24 Kd2 Rd8+ 25 Ke2 Re8+ 26 Kd2 Bh6+ 27 f4 Qe3 mate!

Clearly there's a lot more which could be analysed here, but to me 9...Bg4 looks at the very least an interesting option for Black.

10 h3

Black always seems to castle in reply to 10 Bb5, after which 11 h3! would reach the next note. But once more I found myself wondering about the positionally desirable 10...Bg4!?. Let's consider a few lines:

a) In reply to 11 Qe2+, I really like the idea of 11...Kf8! 12 Bxc6 (otherwise d4 might become a real problem) 12...bxc6 13 0-0 Rb8 14 b3 f5 15 Rad1 Rb4! 16 Qe3 Bxf3 17 gxf3 Bf6 followed by ...Kg7, when we reach a type of position that White really needs to avoid.

b) 11 Qb3 0-0! 12 0-0-0 (or 12 Qxd5 Bxf3 13 gxf3 Nxd4) 12...Bxf3 13 gxf3 f5! and again I prefer Black's position.

c) 11 Qa4 0-0! (**Diagram 26**) 12 Bxc6 bxc6 13 Qxc6 Re8+ 14 Kf1 Bxf3 15 gxf3 f5 16 Qxd5 Qh4 and Black enjoys a tremendous initiative against White's vulnerable king.

d) 11 0-0 (the safest) 11...0-0 is usually reached via the move order 10 Bb5 0-0 11 0-0 (rather than 11 h3!) 11...Bg4!. This position also looks fine for Black. For example, 12 Bxc6 bxc6 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Qxf3 f5 15 Rfd1 Qh4 (or 15...Rb8 16 Rab1 Qa5, LGerzhoy-Wang Yi, Oropesa del Mar 2001) 16 Qd3 Rab8 17 b3 Rfe8 and I like Black's activity.

In conclusion, 10...Bg4 looks like an idea worth pursuing. There seems to have been a bit of a blind spot about this possibility, or at least the idea of playing ...Bg4

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so early, before White prevents it with h2-h3. In fairness, though, even after 10 h3 I feel that Black's position contains a fair amount of dynamism.

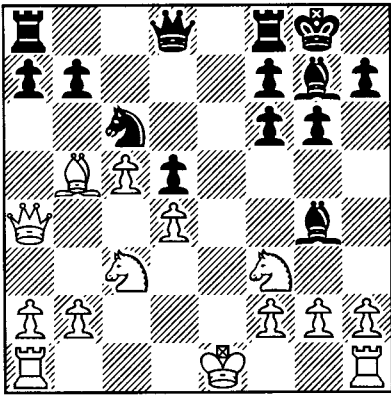


Diagram 26 (W)

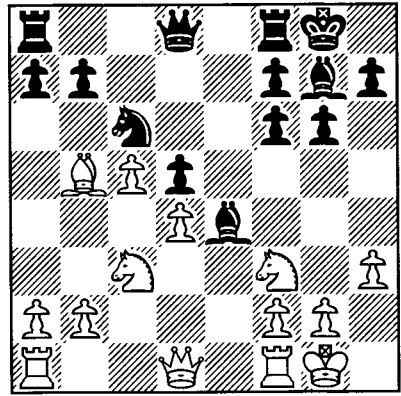


Diagram 27 (W)

10...a6!?

The battle in the centre, and around d4 in particular, continues. Black reacts to 10 h3 with some prophylaxis of his own, preventing Bb5.

White's early optimism in this line probably arose from the stem game, I.Zaitsev-L.Shamkovich, Moscow 1967, which went 10...0-0 11 Bb5! Rc8 12 0-0 f5 13 Qd2 h6 14 Bxc6 bxc6 15 Ne5 Qh4 16 f4. Indeed, this depressing position is one to avoid, but I do feel that there are possibilities for Black even after 10...0-0 11 Bb5.

When I studied this position with GM Chris Ward a few years ago, our main focus was on 11...Bf5!? 12 0-0 Be4! (**Diagram 27**), with Black aiming to exchange these minor pieces via a different route. Looking at this position again today, it still seems reasonable for Black and an interesting way to play. For example, 13 Bxc6 bxc6 14 Re1 Bxf3 (14...Re8!?) 15 Qxf3 f5 16 Rad1 Rb8 17 b3 Qa5 with decent counterplay – once again d4 is a soft spot in White's position.

If White avoids the exchange of minor pieces, Black may have to sacrifice his bishop on e4, but he does get considerable play in return. One possible line is 13 Ne1! a6 14 Bxc6 bxc6 15 g4! (trapping the bishop) 15...Qc7!? 16 f3 Qg3+ 17 Ng2 f5! 18 fxe4 fxe4 (**Diagram 28**).

I think that this position is still very unclear, despite the fact that Black currently has only one pawn for the piece. The h3-pawn could be dropping off, and mean-

while d4 remains a concern for White:

a) If 19 h4? there follows 19...Rab8 20 Rb1 Rb4! forcing 21 Ne2 Qxg4.

b) *Rybka* analyses 19 Ne2 Qxh3 20 Nef4 Qg3!? 21 Rc1 Rae8 22 Rc3 e3 23 Ne2 Qxg4 24 Rf4 Qh5 when all three results are still possible.

Returning to our main choice, 10...a6.

11 Be2 (Diagram 29)

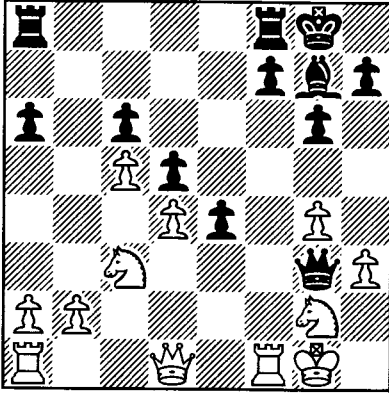


Diagram 28 (W)

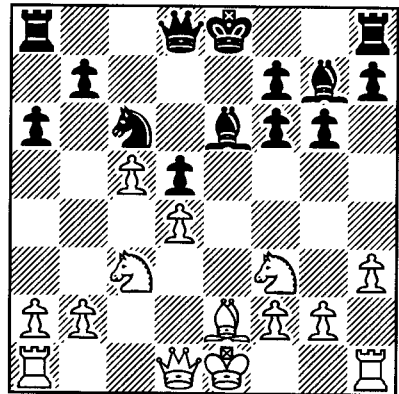


Diagram 29 (W)

From my sources, the total sum of experience from this position is 11...g5!? and then, you've guessed it, draw agreed(!), D.Sermek-E.Dizdarevic, Ljubljana 1997.

If 12 0-0 Black can continue his activity on the kingside with either 12...f5 (or even 12...h5!?) with a vigorous battle in the making where I feel Black enjoys a full share of the chances. Against the less committal 12 Qd2 Black can also consider 12...h5 or 12...Qc7 intending ...b6.

Going back a move, 11...f5 intending ...Qf6 is also consistent, and this position can easily be compared to those arising after 9...a6, above. Possible continuations include 12 Qd2 Qf6 (or 12...0-0 13 0-0 b6) 13 Rd1 0-0 (13...f4 14 0-0 g5 is another idea) 14 0-0 h6 (14...g5!?) 15 Rfe1 g5 with roughly level chances.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Nf3 g6 7 cxd5 Nxd5 8 Qb3 Nxc3 9 Bc4 Nd5 10 Bxd5 e6 11 Bxc6+ bxc6 12 0-0 Qd5!

The problem with 12...Bg7 is that, as we see below, despite initial appearances it's not clear whether the bishop always belongs on this diagonal! Having said that,

For example, 14...Qb6?! (instead of Abergel's stronger 14...Re8!) 15 Bh6! Ba6 (perhaps Black should at least grab a pawn with 15...Qxb2) 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Rfb1! Rad8 18 b3 Rd5 19 Rc1 Rfd8 20 h3 R8d6 21 Rc5 Qd8 22 Rac1 left Black weak on the dark squares and with little prospect of counterplay in M.Vukic-A.Kaspi, Tyniste 1995. This is certainly something to avoid!

c) 13 Qa3!? Qe7 initially looks harmless, but 14 b3! has proved to be an annoying option:

c1) 14...c5 15 Bg5! f6 16 Bf4 g5 17 Bg3 g4 18 Nd2 cxd4 19 Bd6, as played in J.Cooper-G.Quillan, British League 1998, looks perilous for Black.

c2) Black should probably fall back on 14...Qxa3 15 Bxa3 f6 (or 15...a5) but I feel that White must have an edge here. This has somewhat dampened my enthusiasm I had got for 12...Bg7 after seeing the Vallejo game.

Returning to 12...Qd5 (**Diagram 32**):

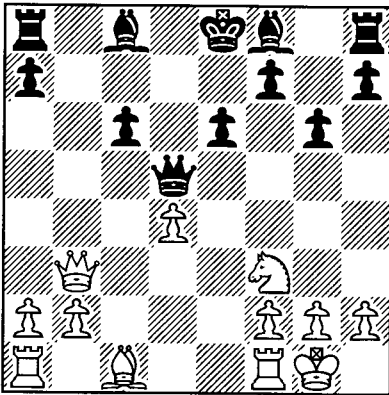


Diagram 32 (W)

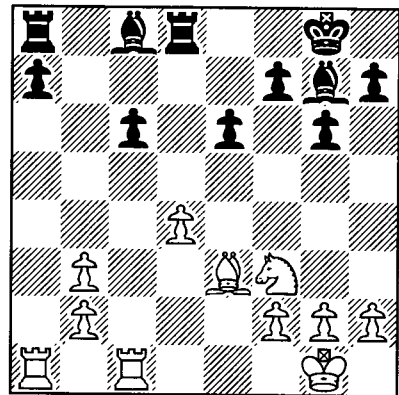


Diagram 33 (W)

13 Bf4

White develops the bishop and plans to create a typical queen and bishop battery with Qe3. He hopes that the open a-file will provide more than enough compensation for the doubled b-pawns if Black takes the opportunity to trade queens.

13 Bf4 is the move Peter Wells chose when he prepared to play this line against me, and this is the game we are following in the main text.

As well 13 Qc2, which was covered in my game against Stephen Giddins, there are a number of different possibilities for White. For example:

a) A few months after my game against Wells, Peter Heine Nielsen repeated this

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line but chose 13 Bg5 here. However, after 13...Qxb3 (13...Bg7 14 Qa3 transposes to note 'a' to Black's 11th move) 14 axb3 Bg7 15 Be3 O-O 16 Rfc1 Rd8! (**Diagram 33**) I was fine.

In fact, this is a good example of how natural moves can lead White nowhere. The game continued 17 Ne5 (17 Rxc6 Bb7 18 Rc7 Bxf3 19 gxf3 Bxd4 20 Bxd4 Rxd4 21 Raxa7 Rxa7 22 Rxa7 Rd3 23 Kg2 Rxb3 should be drawn – White's safest bet is to give up the b2-pawn straight away and defend the 4v3 on the kingside) 17...Bd7 18 h3 Be8 19 Nxc6 Bxc6 20 Rxc6 Bxd4 21 Bxd4 Rxd4 22 Rc7 a6 23 Ra4?! Rd1+ 24 Kh2 Rd2 25 Rf4 Rf8 26 Ra7 e5 27 Rf3 e4 28 Rf6 Rxb2 29 Rfxa6 Rxf2 30 Re7 Rb8 31 Rxe4 Rxb3 and later I was able to convert my pawn advantage, P.H.Nielsen-J.Emms, Esbjerg 2000.

b) 13 Qc3!? is a serious option. White still plans Bf4 and Qe3, but figures that it's worth a tempo to avoid ...Qxb3 and also to see where Black's dark-squared bishop is going. The usual continuation is 13...Bg7 14 Bf4 (note that White can play 14 Qa3! when objectively Black's best move is probably 14...Bf8 allowing a repetition of moves) 14...O-O 15 Rfc1 Rd8 and now:

b1) 16 Bc7 Rd7 17 Be5 f6! (remember: avoid the exchange of bishops!) 18 Bg3 Bb7 19 Qe3 Bf8! (preparation for ...c5) 20 a3 (20 h4!?) 20...a5 21 Rc3 a4 22 Re1 (J.Rukavina-A.Beliavsky, Sombor 1972) and here I like the pawn sacrifice 22...c5! 23 dxc5 e5. White's minor pieces have been, temporarily at least, shut out of the game, and Black has good chances to regain the c5-pawn and then claim an advantage.

b2) 16 Qe1! (**Diagram 34**).

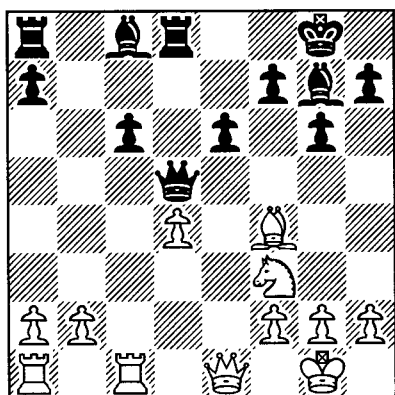


Diagram 34 (B)

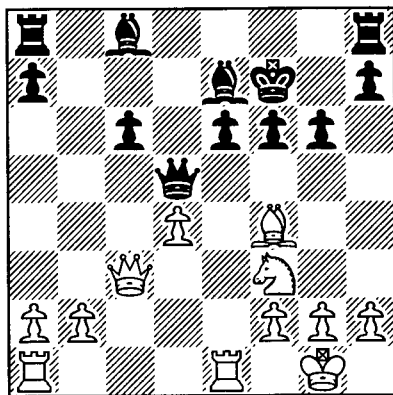


Diagram 35 (W)

This is a clever move, intending Rc5. Against 16 Qe3, 16...Bxd4 would have been

possible, but here 17 Nxd4 Qxd4 18 Rd1 Qf6 19 Be5 Rxd1 20 Rxd1 Qe7 21 Qc3 leaves Black really struggling on the dark squares.

The game A.Graf-S.Kaphle, Berlin 2008, continued instead with 16...Qf5 17 Qe3 Bb7 18 h3 c5!? 19 Rxc5 Bxd4 20 Qxd4 Rxd4 21 Rxf5 Bxf3 22 Be3 gxf5 23 Bxd4 Bd5 24 a3 with an uncomfortable endgame for Black, despite the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

The problems Black faced against 13 Qc3 stemmed from his lack of control of e5 and c5. This got me thinking about two new tries for Black in place of the automatic 13...Bg7. Firstly, there's **13...Be7!?**. True, this allows 14 Bh6 but Black can develop his king, as he so often does, on f7. For example, 14...f6 15 Rfe1 Kf7 16 h4 Bd7 17 a3 Rhb8 and Black is well coordinated.

Another possibility is the immediate **13...f6!?**. For example, 14 Re1 Kf7 15 Bf4 Be7 (**Diagram 35**).

This can be compared to 13 Bf4 f6 (see below). In all cases *Black's main priority should be to sufficiently cover the e5- and c5-squares*.

c) 13 Qa4 Qb5 14 Qc2 Bg7 15 Bf4 0-0 16 Rac1 Ba6 17 Rfd1 Rfd8!? 18 Ne5 (or 18 Qxc6 Qxc6 19 Rxc6 Be2 followed by ...Bxf3 and ...Bxd4) 18...Rac8 19 Nxc6!?! (risky, but just about okay) 19...Bf8 (threatening ...Bb7) 20 a4 Qb6 21 d5! Rxd5 22 Rxd5 exd5 23 Be3 Qb7 24 b4 Bxb4 25 Qb2 Rxc6 26 Rxc6 Qxc6 27 Qxb4 ½-½, J.Nunn-R.Dzindzichashvili, Hastings 1977/78.

d) 13 Qxd5 cxd5 14 Bf4 improves Black's structure, but White is hoping for some quick action down the c-file. However, Black can cover the key squares, and I think that accurate play should defuse any temporary initiative and even give Black long-term chances. For example, 14...f6 15 Rfc1 g5 16 Bg3 Be7 17 Rc3 (17 Rc7 Bd8! covers everything) 17...Kf7 18 h4 gxh4 19 Nxh4 Ba6 20 Rc6 Bb5 21 Rc7 Rhc8 22 Rac1 Rxc7 23 Rxc7 Ke8 24 b3 a5 25 f4 Bd3 26 f5 exf5 27 a4 Ra6 28 Be1 f4 and by this stage White was struggling to equalize in L.Szabo-B.Ivkov, Medina del Campo 1980.

13...Be7 (Diagram 36)

The bishop keeps control of the key diagonal. If 13...Bg7? then 14 Qa3! Bf8 (what else?) 15 Qe3! is exactly what White wants.

13...f6!?! has similar motives to the text move. A.Rotstein-B.Golubovic, Cannes 1996, continued 14 Qe3 (14 Qxd5 cxd5 transposes to note 'd' above) 14...Be7 15 Rfe1 (15 h4 is also possible – compare with the main text) 15...g5 16 Bg3 h5!?! (Black can also play more solidly with 16...Kf7 17 Rac1 Bb7; in fact, I think I prefer this approach) 17 h4 gxh4! 18 Nxh4 Kf7 19 Rac1 Bd7 20 Qf4 Rhg8 21 Nf3 Kg7 22

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Bh4 Kh7 23 Qe4+ Qxe4 24 Rxe4 Rg7 25 Re3 Rb8 26 b3 Rb5 27 Rc4 Rd5 and the game was eventually drawn. Notice how Black kept all the important squares covered here, making it difficult for White to make any progress at all. And in the long term, those two bishops are always lurking!

Exchanging on b3 is always a consideration, but in this particular position it feels a bit premature. For example, 13...Qxb3 14 axb3 Bg7 (or 14...f6 15 Nd2!? followed by Nc4) 15 Bd6!. Compare this to my game against Peter Heine Nielsen, above, where this move was impossible.

14 Rfc1 f6 15 h4!? (Diagram 37)

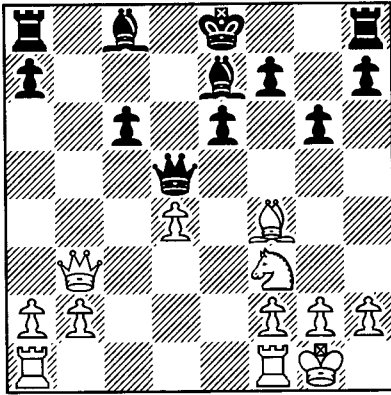


Diagram 36 (W)

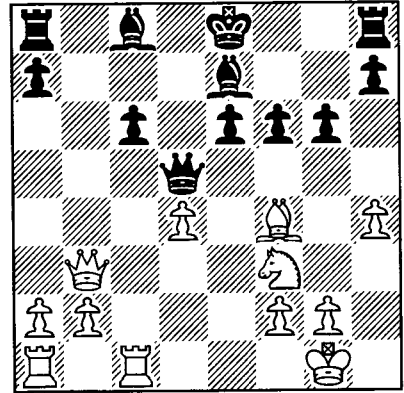


Diagram 37 (B)

‘Multi-dimensional: I wanted to prevent Black seizing back some space with ...g5; I had visions of pushing h4-h5 in the event that he might castle – see the game! I also wanted to leave the queen on b3 for another move to hinder ...Bb7. Also I had an idea against 15...Kf7.’ (Wells, annotating for ChessBase)

I feel that 15 Rc3 g5! 16 Bd2 Bd7 17 h3 Bd6 18 Qc2 Kf7 19 Rb3 Rab8 20 Bc3, as in the game L.Espig-M.Becker, Halle 1982, is fine for Black, as long as he plays 20...Bc7 instead of falling, as Becker did, for 20...h5?? 21 Ne5+! fxe5 22 dxe5 Rxb3 23 axb3 Be7 24 Rd1.

15...Bd7!

Aiming for ...Rc8 and the desirable ...c5.

Peter was intending to answer 15...Kf7 with 16 Qxd5! cxd5 17 Rc7. This is one scenario where the queen exchange is the right idea for White. With his bishop awkwardly pinned, Black can no longer banish the rook with ...Bd8, and after 17...Rd8

18 g4! followed by g5 White will create a strong outpost for his pieces on e5.

15...Qxb3!? looks more playable here than it did a couple of moves ago. For example, 16 axb3 Bb7 17 Nd2! (17 Ra4 Kf7 18 Rca1 achieves nothing after 18...a6, and in fact White must work hard to prevent Black from seizing the advantage with ...c5) 17...Kf7 18 Nc4 Rhd8, although after 19 Be3 (19 Na5?! Rxd4!) 19...Rd7 20 Ra4 I still slightly favour White.

16 Qe3 Rc8 17 Rc3 (Diagram 38)

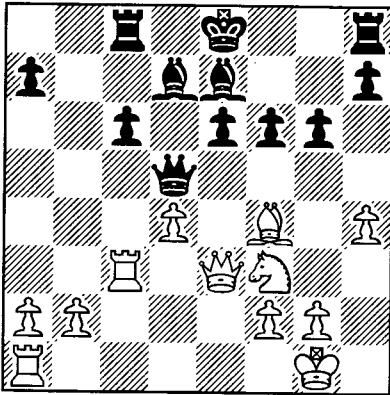


Diagram 38 (B)

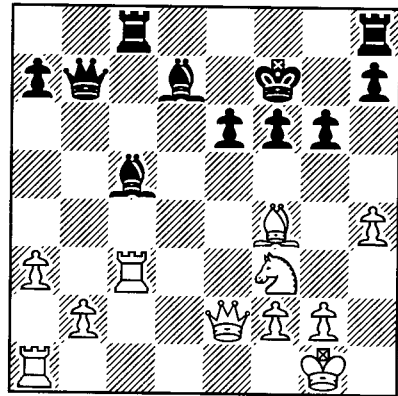


Diagram 39 (W)

17...Kf7!

'I thought at the time [17...Kf7] would have been better, but in fact it seems to solve more of Black's difficulties than I had realized. That is why, despite both my and John's praise for 15 h4 after the game I am awarding it no more than a '!'. It seems that I can no longer prevent ...c5 and must take solace in the fact that at least Black will open the centre with his king in the vicinity.' (Wells)

In the game I got it wrong with 17...0-0?! and some energetic play by White left me in an uncomfortable position after 18 Bh6 Rfe8 19 Rac1!, crucially preventing the freeing ...c5 which, as we saw in my game against Stephen Giddins, can lead to an advantage for Black. I took on a2 (otherwise White just enjoys a clear positional edge), but 19...Qxa2 20 h5! Qd5 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 Rc5! was a very thematic exchange sacrifice to win the dark squares. After 22...Bxc5 23 Rxc5 Qd6 24 Qd3 Kf7 (24...f5 was 'better' but too horrible to contemplate!) 25 Ne5+! fxe5 26 Qf3+ Kg8 27 Qf6 Re7 White had a winning attack: 28 Qxg6+ (28 Rc3! mates quickly) 28...Kh8 29 Qf6+ Kh7 30 Bf8 Rxf8 31 Qxf8 Be8 32 Rc3 exd4 33 Rh3+ Kg6 34 Rh6+ and 1-0, P.Wells-J.Emms, Southend 2000.

We've already seen ...Kf7 being played in similar positions. The key point is that *the king is actually safer on f7 than on g8, and crucially it provides extra support to the e6-, f6- and g6-pawns*. With this set-up Black could even claim that he has simply castled one rank up the board!

18 a3

Peter felt that the pawn sacrifice with 18 Rac1 Qxa2 no longer looks completely sound. Even so, I still feel this might be White's best course, since after 19 h5 he does get decent compensation, even though it compares unfavourably to our game.

18...c5!

Remember: if you are able to play this move, it's usually a good idea to do so.

19 dxc5 Bxc5 20 Qe2 Qb7! (Diagram 39)

With his king in the centre, Black must still be careful here. For example: 20...Bb6 21 Rd1 Qb7 can be met by 22 Ne5+!? fxe5 23 Qxe5 with a strong attack; or 20...Bb5 21 Qc2 with an annoying pin.

After the prophylactic 20...Qb7!, however, Black has everything covered. White remains active, but Black has managed to successfully break free with ...c5. If he is careful to avoid accidents, Black will enjoy long-term chances afforded by the bishop pair and the possibility to expand with ...e5.

Conclusion

Judging from the evidence of this chapter, I believe that the critical test of 5...Nc6 6 Nf3 g6 is 7 cxd5 Nxd5 8 Qb3 Nxc3 9 Bc4 Nd5 10 Bxd5 e6 11 Bxc6+ bxc6 12 0-0 Qd5. There's no doubt that Black needs to tread carefully here. On the other hand, as I've stressed before, these positions contain a great deal of dynamic imbalance, and in a sense White has to play just as accurately as Black.

A key point for Black to remember in this line is that he needs to adequately protect the e5- and c5-squares. Also, if Black can achieve the ...c5 break then there's every chance that his two bishops will start to dictate matters, as they did in my game against Stephen Giddins. The opposite scenario is my game against Peter Wells, which is something that needs to be avoided!

White's other main attempt, 7 Bg5, should be met by 7...Be6! 8 Bxf6 exf6, and overall I feel that Black has less to fear in this line. If White captures on d5, his 'extra' d-pawn often proves to be more of a weakness than a strength. The theoretic-

cal recommendation is 9 c5, but I think that Black can gain decent counterplay with either ...a6 followed by an advance on the kingside or the seemingly neglected idea of an early ...Bg4 before White prevents it with h2-h3.

Finally, it's worth mentioning again a practical advantage of playing 5...Nc6 6 Nf3 g6. If White doesn't choose a critical line, Black equalizes comfortably and gains very easy counterplay.

Chapter Ten

Challenging the Two Knights

Jovanka Houska

1 e4 c6 2 Nf3 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6!? (Diagram 1)

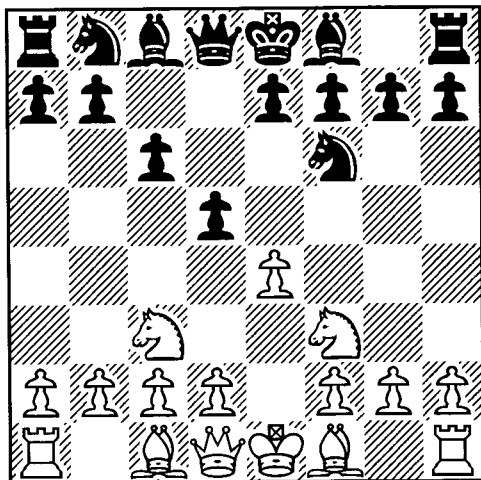


Diagram 1 (W)

The Two Knights has always been a popular variation in club and tournament play, probably due to its simplicity, the natural plans for White, and the fact that if he doesn't achieve much from the opening, at least he gets either the bishop pair

or extra space. Even top grandmasters such as Nigel Short and Judit Polgar have introduced it into their repertoires with some success.

After 3 Nc3 Black usually plays 3...Bg4 which is met by 4 h3. Then Black normally gives up the bishop pair unless he enters into a very wild position should he retreat the bishop with 4...Bh5. Alternatively, after 3...dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 we get a standard position where White has the usual space advantage, and temporarily shutting in the light-squared bishop may not be to the liking of all Caro-Kann players.

However, there is another option which recently caught my attention: **3...Nf6!** (**Diagram 1**). This confrontational move practically forces White to close the position straightaway with e4-e5. With the closing of the pawn centre (something most Caro-Kann players absolutely love), the dynamic energy transfers to the pieces and wing pawn advances. For White, this means seizing as much space as possible, but for Black the goal is even simpler (and true to Caro-Kann ideals): he just has to secure the freeing ...c5 pawn break, and sometimes even the ...f6 pawn break.

Once Black is aware of the potential pitfalls, the positions are relatively easy to play. Furthermore, since this variation has been unfairly dismissed out of hand as an inferior version of the French Defence (because Black takes two moves to play the ...c5 break), 3...Nf6 will be all the more surprising for the White player.

Let's begin by considering two games in which Black successfully employs 3...Nf6:

□ **M.David** ■ **J.Gilbert**
Coventry 2005

1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e5 (Diagram 2)

The critical try: if White wishes to play for an advantage, this is the only way forward.

4...Ne4 5 Ne2

5 d3 is examined in the next game, while 5 Be2 and 5 Nxe4 are considered in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

5...Qb6! (Diagram 3)

An important move, forcing d4.



BEWARE! Black has moved the knight twice already, and we don't really want it to go traipsing around the board for no good reason. So d2-d3 had to be stopped, and what better way is there than threatening mate on f2?!

6 d4

The only serious move.

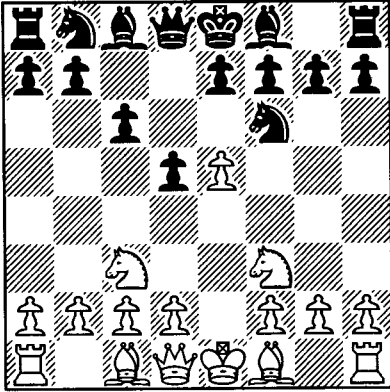


Diagram 2 (B)

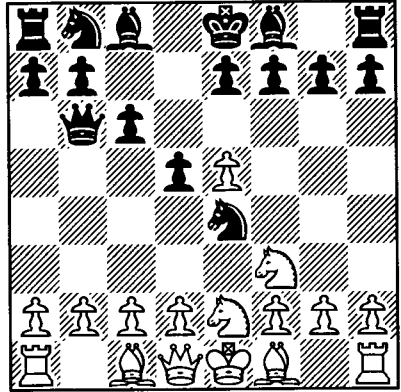


Diagram 3 (W)

I didn't even consider 6 Ned4 until I faced it in a blitz game, but the refutation is relatively straightforward: just chase away the white knight! 6...c5 7 Nb3 c4 8 Nbd4 Nc6 (the pressure on the d4-knight starts to become intolerable) 9 c3 Bg4 and it's all got a bit too much for the knight on d4. After 10 d3 cxd3 11 Bxd3 Nxe5 White has little compensation for the material deficit. 6 Nfd4 comes to the same thing after 6...c5 7 Nf3 c4 8 Ned4 Nc6 9 c3 Bg4.

6...e6!? (Diagram 4)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This is a very interesting idea. Because 6...e6 is very much an offbeat line, most of the time we will be in unknown territory – a perfect surprise weapon!

The main line actually runs 6...c5 7 dxc5 Qxc5 8 Ned4. Some commentators believe this to be uninspiring for Black but the situation is not so clear here either. After 8...Nc6 9 Bb5 Black should play 9...Bd7!, a key move which over-protects the c6-square. This makes much more sense than 9...a6? 10 Bxc6+ bxc6 11 0-0 Qb6 12 e6

fxe6 13 Bf4 g6 14 Be5 Nf6, which was better for White in R.Fischer-F.Olafsson, Yugoslavia 1959.

So, 8...Bd7 10 Be2 (10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 e6 is not possible due to 11...Bxe6 and the bishop cannot be taken because of the mate on f2) 10...f6! (picking up a pawn; returning to the theme of mate on f2, if 11 exf6 Black has 11...e5 and White must give up material) 11 0-0 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 fxe5 13 Nf3 Qd6 (White has compensation for the pawn due to a lead in development, but must play very accurately in order to maintain equality) 14 c4 e6 15 cxd5 exd5 16 Re1 and now instead of 16...Rd8 as in B.Kovanova-O.Dolgova, Dagomys 2008, 16...Be7 would have posed more problems for White.

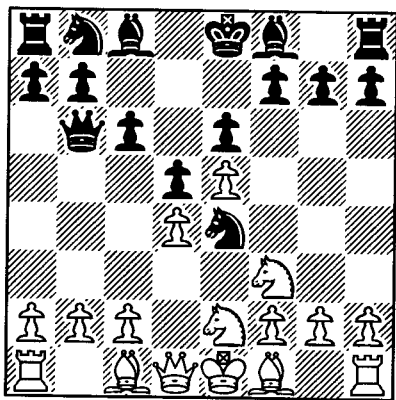


Diagram 4 (W)

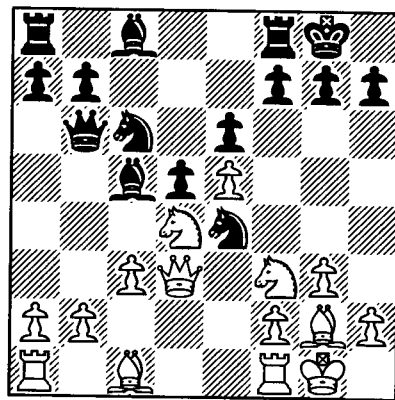


Diagram 5 (B)

In a recent game, White chose what looks like a more challenging option: 10 0-0! e6 (or 10...Nxe5 11 Nxe5 Bxb5 12 Rb1, with good compensation) 11 Be3 Qb4 12 c4! and White is very active, D.Svetushkin-K.Landa, Rijeka 2010.

Returning to 6...e6, the first question is, how will White develop?

7 g3!?

This move allows Black easy play. More testing alternatives are considered in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

7...c5 8 Bg2 cxd4 9 0-0

9 Nfxd4 is met by 9...Nc6 attacking the e-pawn. In answer to this, 10 Bxe4?! is dubious. Giving up the light squares is one positional concession too many, and after 10...dxe4 11 Nxc6 bxc6 Black is better.

9...Nc6 10 Nexd4 Bc5 11 c3 0-0 12 Qd3 (Diagram 5) 12...f6

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This works well in the game but perhaps it forces the issue too soon, especially when we consider that it is not that easy for White to find a purposeful move!

12...Bd7 is one way to exploit this fact: 13 Be3 Qxb2 (13 Bf4 is met in the same way) 14 Rfb1 Qa3 15 Rxb7 Bxd4 16 Bxd4 Nxd4 17 Qxd4 (the only move, as 17 Nxd4 fails to 17...Nc5) 17...Nc5 18 Rbb1 Rac8 (Black gets ready to line up on the weak c-pawn, so White's next move is forced) 19 c4 dxc4 20 Qxc4 Bc6! 21 Ne1 Bxg2 22 Kxg2 Rfd8 with the more pleasant position for Black on account of his active pieces.

Waiting with 12...h6 is another possibility, and this time Black still guards the b7-pawn: 13 Rb1 (protecting the b-pawn) 13...Bxd4 14 cxd4 Bd7 15 Be3 Rfc8 16 Rfc1 Na5. White cannot let Black dominate the c-file, but Black is threatening to exchange a set of rooks and win material.

13 exf6 Rxf6 (Diagram 6)

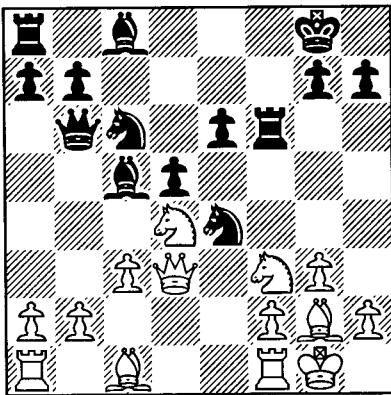


Diagram 6 (W)

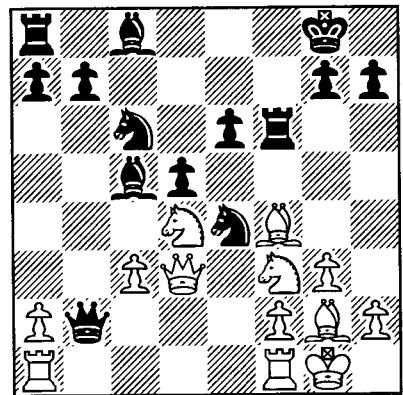


Diagram 7 (W)

14 Bf4?

An ill-judged move – the pawn is not poisoned.

14 b4 had to be tried: 14...Nxd4 15 Nxd4 (if 15 bxc5 Black has 15...Nxf3+) 15...Bxd4 16 cxd4 (16 Qxd4 Qxd4 17 cxd4 Bd7 18 Bf4 Rc8 19 Rac1 Rff8 leads to an equal position) 16...Bd7. If White exchanges on e4 he will be left with permanent problems on the light squares. However, the presence of the two bishops does make this position tenable for White.

14 b3 would be a mistake, as 14...e5 15 Nxc6 Bxf2+ 16 Kh1 bxc6 17 Nxe5 Bf5 is fantastic for Black.

14...Qxb2 (Diagram 7) 15 Rab1?

15 Rac1 had to be tried in the hope that Black plays 15...Qxa2, when 16 Ng5 Nxg5 17 Bxg5 Rf8 gives White some compensation for the material deficit. However, much stronger is the striking 15...Rxf4! 16 gxf4 Nxf2 (this is the point) 17 Qb1 Qxb1 18 Rxb1 Ne4 19 Rfc1 and here Black has the stunning 19...g5!, a wonderful move. The g-pawn is untouchable due to the pressure on the d4-knight.

15...Qxc3

Now it's all over.

16 Qxc3 Nxc3 17 Nxc6 Nxb1 18 Rc1 Ba3 0-1

A very easy game for Black.

□ **I.Pogrebissky** ■ **R.Kholmov**
Tbilisi 1949

1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e5 Ne4 5 d3

Another likely continuation. White forces the issue and counts on the doubled pawns being an asset rather than a hindrance.

5...Nxc3!

Naturally!

6 bxc3 (Diagram 8)

What happens next is purely a matter of choice. Black can play the position like a French and reason that while it takes two moves to play ...c5, it will take just as long for White to play d4. Alternatively, he can continue in a more 'Caro' way:

6...Bg4!?

The French approach with 6...c5 is considered in the Looking a Little Deeper section.

7 h3!

Challenging the bishop is definitely the best option.

7 d4 presents no problems: 7...e6 8 Bd3 (after 8 Rb1 Black can clamp down on the c3-pawn with 8...b5) 8...c5 9 0-0 c4 10 Be2 Be7 11 Ne1 Bf5 and Black was doing well in B.Grachev-D.Martynov, Moscow 1997. White's minor pieces are ineffective, jammed in by his poor pawn structure. Black, on the other hand, enjoys easy development and should perhaps seek to castle queenside as the king can be easily protected there.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

7...Bxf3

7...Bh5 is also playable but not normally advisable, as White can (and should) play the positional sacrifice 8 e6!? fxe6. For example, 9 Rb1! b6 (strangely enough, the natural 9...Qc7 is a mistake as after 10 Be2 White threatens 11 Ng5 when Black would either have to let the white knight into e6 or lose the b7-pawn) 10 Be2 Qd6 11 Ng5 and White has compensation for the pawn on account of his lead in development and Black's lack of coordination.

8 Qxf3 e6 (Diagram 9)

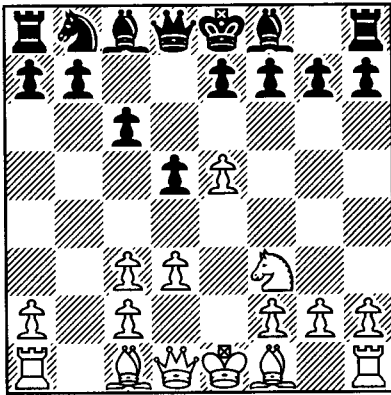


Diagram 8 (B)

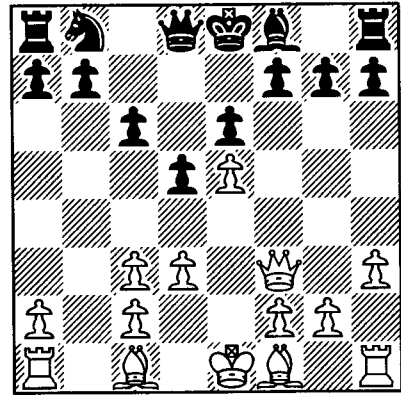


Diagram 9 (W)

White has the bishop pair, but Black is very solid. He is looking to force White to play d4 and then to seal down the c-pawns by playing a timely ...b5 followed by ...Nb6. If he achieves this, he gains virtually complete control over the queenside.

9 Be2

Mok Tze Meng-C.Koneru, Kuala Lumpur 2005, continued 9 Rb1 Qc7 10 Qe2?! (this looks somewhat bizarre; 10 d4 gives Black the chance to seal the pawn structure with ...c5-c4, so 10 Be2 is probably best) 10...Be7 (10...Nd7 11 d4 b5 may be an idea; 12 a4 is not very effective as Black can simply play 12...bxa4 13 Qa6 Nb6 when the knight cannot be shifted very easily) 11 g3 Nd7 12 f4 h5 13 Bg2 g6 14 0-0. Now, instead of the game's 14...Kf8 which walks straight into an attack, Black should think about castling queenside. It will be very difficult for White to execute a successful attack here, as the queenside pawns are simply too ineffective.

9...Be7

C.Weiss-P.Schmidt, Aschach 1997, is equally instructive and similar to the main game: 9...Nd7 10 d4 Be7 11 Qg3 g6 12 Bh6 (this move is met calmly by...) 12...Bf8 13

Bd2 Bg7 (Black prepares to undermine the centre and open some lines to his advantage) 14 O-O O-O 15 f4 Nb6! (the knight is heading for c4, where it will exchange itself in return for a semi-open d-file) 16 Qf2 Nc4! 17 Bxc4 dxc4 18 g4 f5 19 exf6 Bxf6 20 Rab1 b5 21 Qe2 Qd5 22 Rf3. Here 22...Rad8! (instead of the game's 22...Rae8) is best, preparing a pawn break with ...e5 or ...c5. Then 23 Re3 is met by 23...e5 24 fxe5 Bg5 25 Rg3 Bxd2 26 Qxd2 Qxe5 and the open position of White's king gives Black good practical chances.

10 Qg3 g6 11 O-O Nd7 12 Re1 Qa5 13 d4 h5 14 Qd3 b5 (Diagram 10)

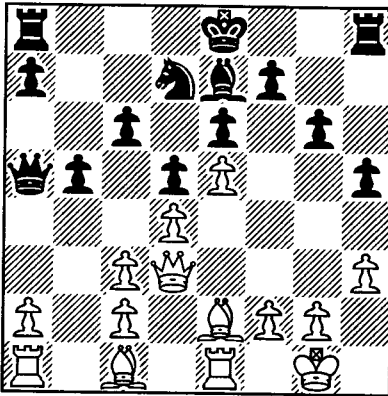


Diagram 10 (W)

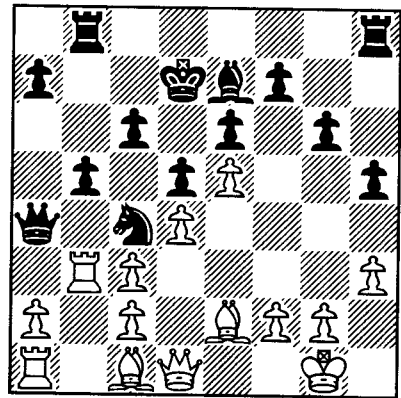


Diagram 11 (W)

This is the perfect strategy for Black: keep the position closed and gain control of the queenside.

15 Bd2

Unaware of Black's objectives, White plays too automatically.

However, the thematic 15 a4 is also unsatisfactory: 15...Rb8 16 Bd2 (after 16 Ba3 Bxa3 17 Rxa3 Nb6 18 Rea1 Nxa4, although the knight is somewhat sidelined on a4, crucially so are the white rooks) 16...bxa4 17 c4 dxc4 18 Bxa5 cxd3 19 Bxd3 a3 20 Bc7 Rb2 21 Bd6 Bxd6 22 exd6 a2 and although the a2-pawn will fall, so will the d6-pawn and it is White who will be struggling for the draw.

15...Qa4 16 Reb1 Nb6 17 Rb3 Nc4

Stage one has been completed: Black has a wonderful knight resting on c4. Now he simply needs to coordinate his forces even further to orchestrate another breakthrough.

18 Bc1 Rb8 19 Qd1 Kd7! (Diagram 11)

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

Of course the black king is perfectly safe nestled in the centre!

20 Bd3 Rhc8 21 Qf3 Ke8 22 g4 hxg4 23 hxg4 c5!

Black's play has been very easy so far. All that is left is to consolidate his advantage with further 'improving' moves.

24 Qe2 a6 25 Kg2 g5 26 Bh7

If White plays 26 Qf3 trying to prevent the transfer of the rooks to the kingside, Black should play 26...Kd7 anyway: 27 Qxf7 Rf8 28 Qg7 (28 Qh5 Rh8 29 Bh7 Rbf8 30 Qg6 Nxe5! is very good for Black) 28...Rg8 29 Qf7 Rbf8! (Black rearranges the rooks until the knight sacrifice on e5 is devastating) 30 Qh5 Rh8 31 Qg6 Rfg8 32 Qf7 and now Black can play the decisive 32...Nxe5! 33 dxe5 Qxg4+ 34 Kf1 Qd1+ with mate to follow.

26...Kd7 27 Qf3 Rf8 (Diagram 12)

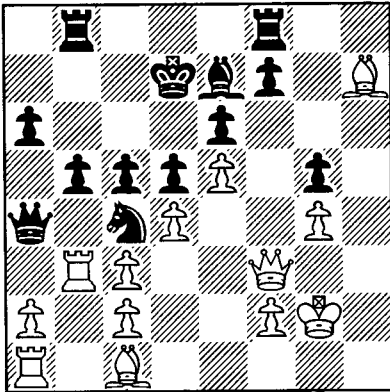


Diagram 12 (W)

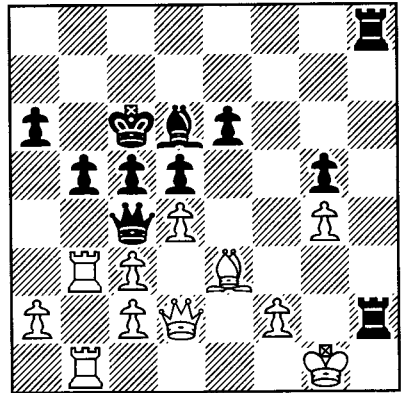


Diagram 13 (B)

Now the prospect of ...f6 rears its poisonous head.

28 Bd3 Kc6 29 Rab1 f6 30 Qe2?

This makes things easy for Black. 30 exf6 Rxf6 31 Qe2 Rg8 is still unpleasant for White, but at least he doesn't have any obvious weaknesses for Black to target.

30...fxe5 31 Bxc4

To avoid further weaknesses White exchanges off the black knight. However, the downside of this is that Black's queen is activated.

31...Qxc4 32 Qxe5 Bd6 33 Qe1

33 Qxe6 just loses to 33...Rbe8, while against 33 Qxg5 Black has the crushing 33...Rxf2+! 34 Kxf2 Rf8+ when White will have to return the material with interest to avoid being mated.

33...Rh8 34 Be3 Rh2+ 35 Kg1 Rbh8 36 Qd2 (Diagram 13) 36...R8h4

Black's position has become overwhelming. Now it's only a matter of time before White succumbs. In fact, 36...Rh1+ 37 Kg2 R8h2+ 38 Kf3 e5 would have been a quicker way to win: if 39 dxe5 Rh3+ and Black checkmates.

37 Qd3 Rxc4+ 38 Kf1 Qxd3+ 39 cxd3 c4!

This move is decisive.

40 dxc4 dxc4 41 R3b2 Ba3

Winning material and sealing victory.

42 Ke2 Bxb2 43 Rxb2 Rg1 44 a4 g4 45 axb5+ axb5 46 Ra2 g3 47 Ra6+ Kb7 48 Rxe6 gxf2 49 Bxf2 Rgg2 50 Rf6 b4 51 cxb4 c3 0-1

This game may have been played over 60 years ago, but the motifs and strategies are incredibly instructive.

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3 Nf6

We shall now look at options in more detail.

4 e5

As mentioned previously, this is White's best attempt to secure the advantage. Other options include the following:

a) 4 d3 is a little dull, but at least Black can be comforted by the fact that this leads to nothing for White after 4...dxe4 5 dxe4 Qxd1+ 6 Kxd1 Bg4 7 Be3 Nbd7 8 h3 Bh5 9 g4 Bg6 10 Bd3 e5 11 Nh4 Bc5. After castling queenside Black has no problems whatsoever.

b) 4 exd5 cxd5 5 d4 (White tries to steer the game into an 'exchange' Caro-Kann) 5...Bg4! 6 Be2 Nc6 7 0-0 e6 8 Bf4 Be7 (Black's play is both natural and good) 9 Ne5 (White tries to strike, but the exchanges favour Black) 9...Bxe2 10 Nxe2 0-0 11 c3 Nxe5 12 Bxe5 b5 and Black, who is getting ready for a minority attack, already has a pleasant position, K.Haznedaroglu-I.Rausis, Haarlem 2000.

4...Ne4 (Diagram 14)

Now we consider:

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

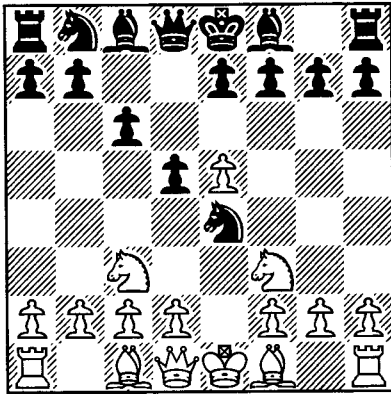


Diagram 14 (W)

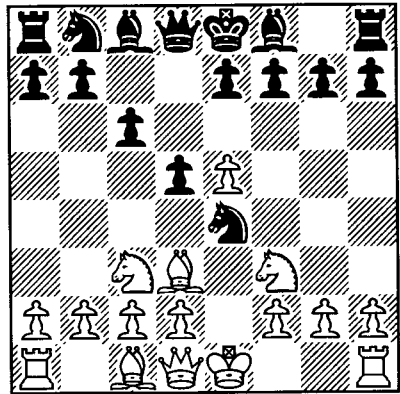


Diagram 15 (B)

A: 5 Nxe4

B: 5 Be2

C: 5 Ne2

D: 5 d3

Alternatively:

a) 5 d4 Bg4 6 Bd3 Nxc3 7 bxc3 e6 8 0-0 Be7 9 Rb1 Qc7 10 c4 0-0 11 h3 Bh5 12 Qe2 Nd7 13 Be3 dxc4 14 Bxc4 b5! 15 Bd3 Nb6 with good light-squared counterplay for Black, J.Klovans-I.Khenkin, Hockenheim (rapid) 1997.

b) The odd-looking 5 Bd3? (**Diagram 15**) was tried against me in a blitz game. It's probably best to reply with 5...Nc5 6 Be2 d4! (this is the point – otherwise White will play d2-d4 and it will look as though the only piece Black knows how to move is the knight!) 7 Nb1? (White is forced to play the committal 7 b4 Ne6 8 Ne4 and now Black should undermine the b4-pawn with 8...a5 so that after 9 bxa5 Qxa5 10 0-0 Nd7 the e-pawn is vulnerable) 7...d3. After this strong move, Black enjoys a massive advantage. For example, 8 Bf1 Bf5 9 c3 Qd5 and Black wins a piece with the unpleasant threat of ...Qe4+.

A) 1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e5 Ne4 5 Nxe4

This gives White nothing.

5...dxe4 6 Ng5 Qd5 7 d4

7 d3 comes to the same thing, but 7 d4 is more forcing.

7...exd3 8 Bxd3 (Diagram 16)

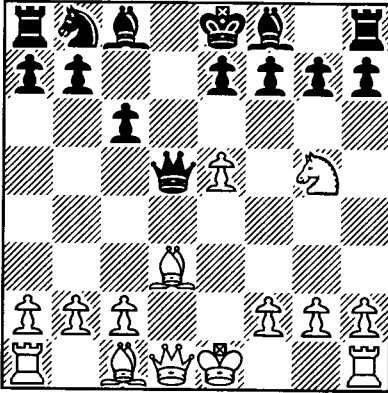


Diagram 16 (B)

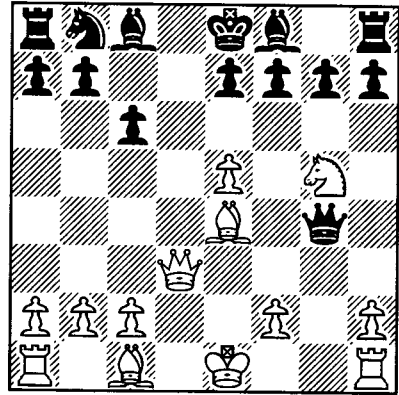


Diagram 17 (B)

8 Qxd3 doesn't work out too well after 8...Qxe5+ 9 Be2 Qf5 (the black queen starts a game of chase with its counterpart) 10 Qg3 h6 11 Nf3 g6 (Black is not swayed by the material on offer and concentrates on developing the rest of his pieces) 12 Bd3 (12 O-O Bg7 13 Bd3 Qg4 is also pretty good for Black) 12...Qg4 13 Qe5 Qe6 and Black is a solid pawn up, D.Isonzo-R.Dautov, Porto San Giorgio 1997.

8...Qxg2

A risky-looking option, but also the most principled because at least White now has an exposed king.

8...Qxe5+ obviously gives White compensation in the form of very fast development, and it takes the accuracy of a computer to provide a resilient defence: 9 Be3 h6! (the knight must be chased away; after 9...g6 10 Bc4 e6 White advantageously recovered the pawn with the trick 11 Qd8+! in N.Rossolimo-L.Szabo, Hastings 1949/50) 10 Nf3 Qa5+ 11 c3 Bg4 12 Qb3 Qc7, and if 13 Bf4 Black has 13...Qb6 consolidating his position.

9 Be4 Qg4 10 Qd3 (Diagram 17) 10...h6



BEWARE: Black must drive the knight away. Instead the terrible 10...g6?? allowed 11 Qb3 in L.Mkrtchian-E.Bystryakova, Sochi 2005, and White soon won.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

11 Nf3 Na6 12 Be3 Nb4!

One-shot tricks keep Black in the game. All other tries are insufficient.

13 Qc4 Bf5! 14 Nd2

Now Black can protect the knight:

14...e6

If White plays 15 a3 there follows 15...Bxe4 16 Nxe4 Qf3! (important, otherwise Nd6+ picks up the queen) 17 Rg1 b5! and Black simplifies the position further.

Black is also doing fine after 15 f3 Qh4+ 16 Bf2 Qh5.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e5 Ne4 5 Be2 (Diagram 18)

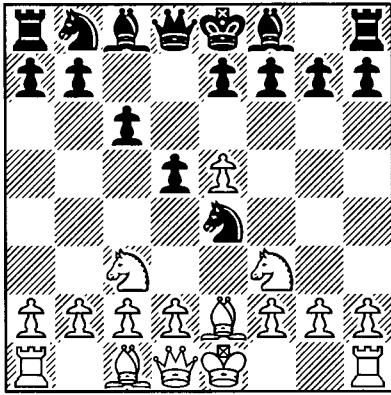


Diagram 18 (B)

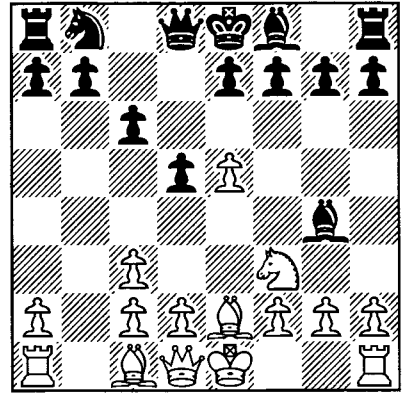


Diagram 19 (W)

With 5 Be2, White doesn't even pretend to try and trap the knight. He solely counts on the fact that Black will take two moves to play ...c5, and that this will give White a more favourable version of the French.

5...Nxc3

5...Bf5?! is quite rightly considered dubious. The bishop is just vulnerable on f5 and White should hit out immediately with 6 Nh4!.

After 5...Nxc3, Black's strategy all depends on how White chooses to recapture.

6 bxc3

After 6 dxc3 Black has two options:

a) 6...g6 7 c4 Bg7 (Black should simply ignore the c4-pawn) 8 h3 0-0 9 0-0?! (this

careless move allows Black the opportunity to play...) 9...d4 10 Bf4 c5 11 Qd2 Nc6 12 c3 dxc3 13 Qxc3 Be6, L.Mavrigh-S.Slipak, Mendoza 2002. Black is aiming to entrench a knight on d4 and target the potentially weak e5-pawn.

b) 6...Bg4 is also a principled way to play. Black's idea is to swap off the bishop for the knight and then exploit the closed nature of the position to the full. White's next move prevents this swap: 7 Ng5! Bxe2 8 Qxe2 e6 9 Bd2 (9 Qh5 is simply a cheap shot – the bishop will not be badly placed on g7) 9...Nd7 10 0-0-0 Be7 11 Nh3 Nb6, F.Kroeze-M.Okkes, Enschede 2003. Black's king will remain safely in the centre until he has relocated his army to make an effective attacking force. The knight is heading for the important c4-square and Black plans to push the a-pawn (followed by a rook lift to the b-file) to provoke a pawn weakness on the queenside.

6...Bg4! (Diagram 19)

The best means of development.

7 0-0

Another critical try is 7 h3 Bxf3 8 Bxf3, getting the bishop pair. However, a small problem for White is that the light-squared bishop is misplaced on f3, and he needs to invest time relocating it to a better diagonal. For example, 8...e6 9 0-0 Qc7 10 d4 Nd7 11 Be2 Be7 12 c4 (White tries to open up the position as quickly as possible; if 12 Bd3 c5 Black seeks to close the position in order to make best use of the knight, and after 13 Qg4 g6 14 Bh6 c4 15 Be2 Bf8 he stands fine) 12...0-0 13 Be3 dxc4 14 Bxc4 c5 15 Qe2 cxd4 16 Bxd4 Rac8 17 Bd3 Nc5 and after exchanging one of White's bishops Black gains easy equality.

7...e6 8 Rb1 (Diagram 20)

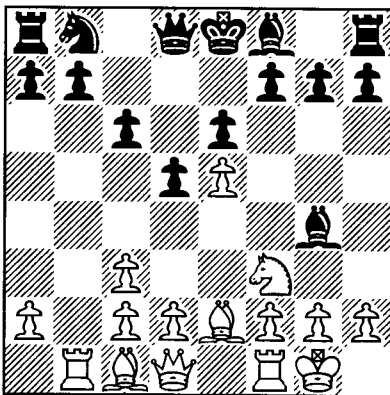


Diagram 20 (B)

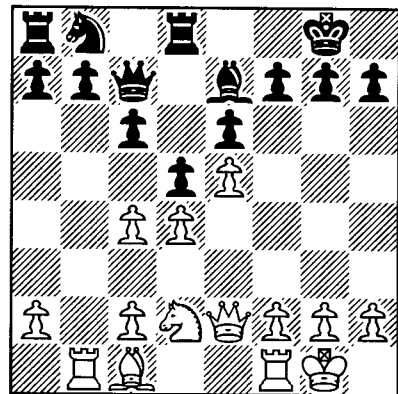


Diagram 21 (W)

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

A dangerous idea – White plans to orchestrate a rook lift from the b-file to the kingside. There is one drawback to this plan: it takes a considerable amount of time and so Black can prepare for it.

8...Qc7 9 d4 Be7 10 c4 0-0 11 Nd2 Bxe2 12 Qxe2

Here 12...Nd7 13 Rb3 gave White the easier position to play in J.Riff-C.Marcelin, Montpellier 2006. But...

12...Rd8! (Diagram 21)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! This critical move puts pressure on the d-pawn and interferes with White's piece coordination.

As this is all new, one can only speculate as to how White may react. Below are some possibilities:

- a) 13 c5 is met simply by 13...b6, and Black will soon be exploiting White's pawn weaknesses on the queenside.
- b) 13 Rb3?! (the rook lift can be a potent idea but not here!) 13...dxc4 14 Nxc4 b5! and the d4-pawn is loose.
- c) 13 Bb2 is possible but this gets in the way of White's idea of playing Rb3. Here 13...Nd7 14 f4 g6 gives Black a very satisfactory position.
- d) 13 Nf3 again interferes with the plan of Rb3. After 13...Nd7, if White plays 14 Be3 there follows 14...Nb6 15 c5 Nc4 with the idea of disrupting the white pawn wedge with ...b7-b6. For example, 16 Nd2 Nxd2 17 Qxd2 b6 18 f4 (18 cxb6 axb6 is also very nice for Black) 18...bxc5 19 dxc5 d4!? 20 Bxd4 Bxc5 21 c3 Rd5 and Black will exchange on d4 and obtain a pleasant advantage.
- e) 13 Nb3 tries to prevent ...c5 but Black aims to achieve this anyway – at the right time of course! 13...Nd7 14 Be3 dxc4 15 Qxc4 Rac8 16 c3 Nb6 17 Qe2 Na4 18 Rfc1 c5 and it is Black who is on the offensive.
- f) 13 Re1 (White tries to be as flexible as possible) 13...c5! (Black starts tearing apart White's pawn centre) 14 cxd5 Rxd5 15 dxc5 Na6 16 Ne4 Nxc5 and Black is better on account of White's weak c-pawn.

C) 1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e5 Ne4 5 Ne2 Qb6 6 d4 e6

7 g3 was covered earlier in the illustrative game David-Gilbert. Now we consider two more testing moves:

C1: 7 Nfg1

C2: 7 Ng3!

C1) 7 Nfg1 (Diagram 22)

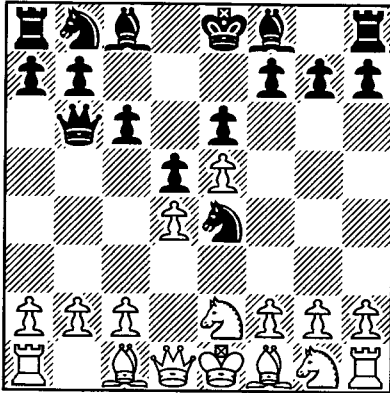


Diagram 22 (B)

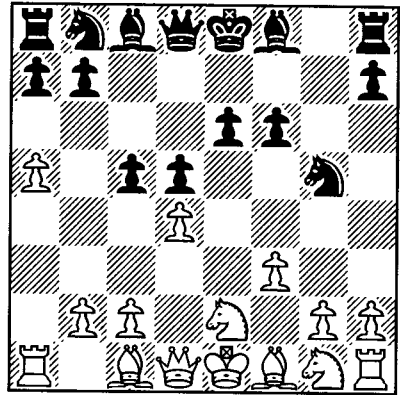


Diagram 23 (W)

This move looks very funny but is tricky nonetheless. White casts the net around the knight on e4.



BEWARE! The knight may be an 'octopus' on e4 but there aren't too many squares available for it.

7...f6!?

Giving the knight an escape square on g5.

8 f3 Ng5 9 exf6

Alternatively:

a) 9 Bxg5?! is uninspiring. Not only does White squander his dark-squared bishop, he doesn't really have anything to show for it either except for problems on the queenside! 9...fxg5 10 Nh3 (if 10 Qc1 Black should simply ignore the threat to the pawn and play 10...c5) 10...Be7 11 Qc1 (the b-pawn must be defended, and if 11 b3 Black continues logically with 11...c5 12 c3 Nc6 13 Qd2 0-0 when White's pieces are in a real bind) 11...c5!. The best form of defence is counter-attack and the weak-

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

ness of White's dark squares is starting to tell.

b) Should White desire to get rid of the pesky queen with 9 a4, Black should react normally with 9...c5 10 a5 Qd8 11 exf6 gxf6 (**Diagram 23**).

Black should not be afraid of capturing the pawn this way, of course. Play is sharp and both sides must proceed accurately, but White is undeveloped and Black can look forward to good long-term prospects in the centre:

b1) If White tries to unbalance the game even further with 12 Bxg5 fxf6 13 h4, Black should play the calm 13...Nc6 14 hxg5 Qxg5 15 Nh3 Qg7. His king may be somewhat exposed for the time being but White's pieces are quite uncoordinated and, furthermore, the white king is not so well hidden in the centre either!

b2) 12 Be3 is met by 12...c4!. As the centre and kingside are so unstable, Black must try to create a haven for his king on the queenside, in preparation for the counter-attacking pawn break ...e5. For example, 13 Nc3 Nc6 14 Nge2 Bb4 (hitting the a5-pawn and preparing for White's threatened f3-f4; Black must be wary of playing 14...Bd7 because of 15 f4 Nf7 after which White can disturb Black's pawn structure with 16 f5) 15 Ng3 Nf7 16 Be2 h5!. Chess is not a kind game, and White mustn't be allowed an easy ride! Now the white knight will be pushed back by ...h4 and Black will get ready to secure his king.

9...gxf6 (Diagram 24)

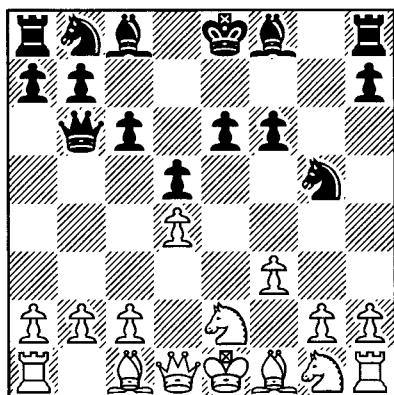


Diagram 24 (W)

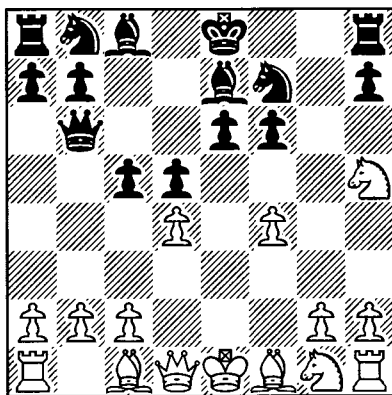


Diagram 25 (W)

Let's take stock of the position. Black is seeking to exploit White's loss of time in the opening and the weakening of the dark squares with f2-f3. He also has some

healthy central pawns and is planning to unravel on the queenside with ...c5 followed by ...Nc6 and ...Bd7. On the flipside, the black king is visually airy and the knight on g5 does stand a little oddly on the fringes of the position.

10 Ng3

The game becomes wild after this move.

10 h4 doesn't make a whole lot of sense, as Black simply retreats: 10...Nf7 11 Nf4 and now Black can hit out with 11...e5 when it is the white king who will suffer more. If 12 Nh5 Be7 13 Ng7+ Kd8 White will get nowhere attacking the enemy with just a knight!

10...c5 11 f4 Nf7 12 Nh5

12 f5 is not dangerous because of 12...cxd4 and Black is only a short way from castling queenside with a dangerous attack.

12...Be7 (Diagram 25) 13 f5!?

Ruining the black structure at a cost of a pawn.

13...exf5 14 Nf3 Nc6 15 c3 cxd4! 16 Nxd4

Or 16 cxd4 Ng5 17 Be3 Qxb2 and Black is a safe two pawns up.

16...Nxd4 17 Qxd4

After 17 cxd4 Ng5 Black will consolidate and have a monster on e4.

17...Qxd4 18 cxd4 Bd7

The pawns are not pretty, but Black is a pawn up and it is not clear how White will regain it. For example, 19 Bd3 Nd6 20 O-O Rg8 21 Ng3 Rc8 22 Bf4 Ne4 and the extra pawn remains.

C2) 7 Ng3! (Diagram 26)

This is probably the best option. White is hoping to generate an attack along the h-file and to use the g5-square to target the traditional weakness on f7.

7...c5

This is the logical response.

7...Nxc3 is riskier: 8 hxg3 h6! (Black must safeguard against the scary threat of Ng5; the attack is simply too dangerous for mortals to defend against) 9 Bd3 (9 Ng5 is no longer dangerous and can be met by the calm 9...Be7 forcing White to beat a retreat) 9...c5 10 c3 Bd7! (10...Nc6 is probably inaccurate as Black should really aim to exchange the bad 'French' bishop) 11 dxc5! (White begins to push back the black pieces) 11...Bxc5 12 Qe2 Nc6 13 b4 Be7 14 O-O! and Black is a little

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

cramped – it is not easy for him to coordinate his rooks.

8 Bd3

Forcing the exchange. Alternatively:

a) 8 Nxe4 dxe4 9 Ng5 cxd4 gives Black no problems.

b) 8 c3 Nc6 9 Bd3 Nxd3 10 hxg3 cxd4 11 cxd4 (11 Ng5 is met by the simple 11...dxc3 12 bxc3 Nxe5 13 Nxh7 and here Black is better after the calm 13...Kd8) 11...Bb4+ (**Diagram 27**) and now:

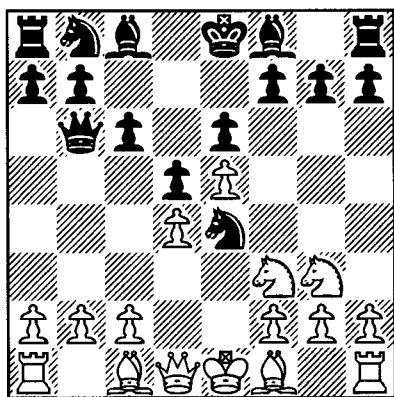


Diagram 26 (B)

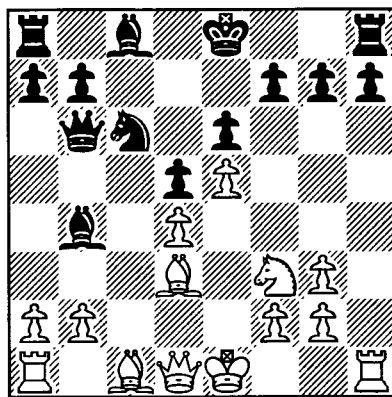


Diagram 27 (W)

b1) 12 Bd2 Nxd4 13 Nxd4 Qxd4 14 Qa4+ Bd7 15 Qxb4 Qxd3 and if 16 Qxb7 Black plays 16...Rc8 with a dangerous initiative.

b2) 12 Kf1 preserves the bishops. After 12...h6 13 g4 Bd7, all the logical moves have been played and now the issue is how to continue developing the pieces:

b21) If 14 g5 Black should swiftly move to the queenside: 14...0-0-0 15 gxh6 gxh6 16 Be3 (the d-pawn must be defended) 16...Be7 17 Qd2 Kb8. White cannot start an attack with 18 a3?! as Black replies with 18...Na5! heading for the c4-square, and following 19 Rb1 h5 he has the better position.

b2) 14 Be3 0-0-0 15 a3 Be7 16 b4 Kb8 (removing the king from the open file is always a good safety measure) 17 g3 Rc8 (Black should not rush with breaking open the position; instead he should seek to put his pieces on their most active squares) 18 Kg2 Rhe8. It is important for the black rook to leave the h-file in order to reduce the potential sting from g4-g5. Now Black has ideas of playing ...Rc7 followed by doubling the rooks on the c-file; or ...a6 with the idea of exchanging the light-

squared bishops with a very comfortable game.



ROLL THE DICE! Another possibility is **14...Be7!?**. The idea is to play **...Nb4** to exchange the irksome light-squared bishop. It's riskier than **14...0-0-0**, though, as after **15 a3** Black probably should go pawn hunting with **15...Qxb2**, with an unclear position.

8...Nxg3 9 hxg3 cxd4!

Black accepts White's challenge and enters the complications.

9...h6 10 Ng5 Be7? would be a mistake: **11 Nxf7 Kxf7 12 Qh5+ Kg8 13 Qe8+ Bf8 14 Qxc8** and Black has problems.

10 Ng5!

10 Nxd4 gives White nothing after **10...Bc5 11 c3 Nc6**, when Black is fine.

10...Nc6! (Diagram 28)

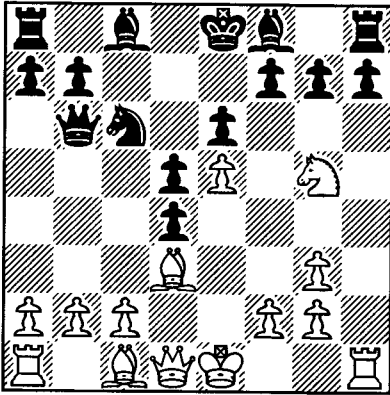


Diagram 28 (W)

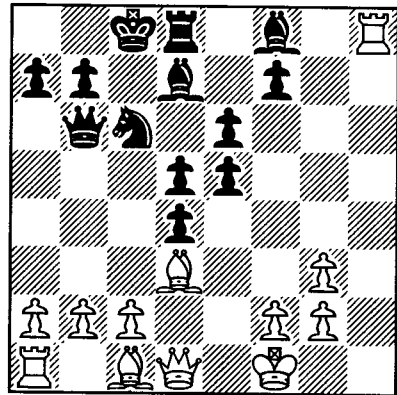


Diagram 29 (W)

A cool move! The idea is that after...

11 Nxh7

...Black sacrifices an exchange:

11...Bd7 12 Nf6+ gxf6 13 Rxh8 0-0-0

Threatening **14...Bb4+** winning the rook.

14 Kf1 fxe5 (Diagram 29)

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

Black has two pawns for the exchange and a mighty pawn wedge in the centre, which makes his position much more pleasant to play. After 15 a4 f5 16 Bg5 Be7 17 Rxd8+ Bxd8 18 Bxd8 Nxd8 19 b3 e4 20 Be2 e5 Black's pawn centre continues to gain in strength.

D) 1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e5 Ne4 5 d3 Nxc3 6 bxc3 c5

This is the 'French' reply. 6...Bg4 was covered earlier in Pogrebisky-Kholmov.

7 d4

The most natural continuation for White.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! On 7 Be3 Black can gambit a pawn with 7...Nc6!. After 8 Bxc5 Qa5 9 Be3 Black has the stunning idea 9...d4! (Diagram 30). The d-pawn is poisoned and Black regains the pawn. This tactic is a very useful to remember!

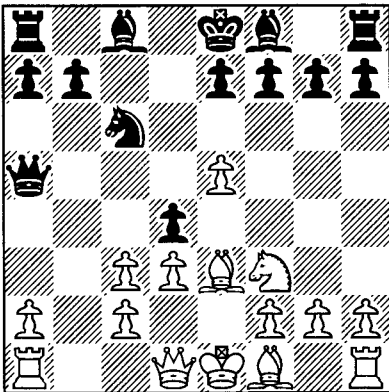


Diagram 30 (W)

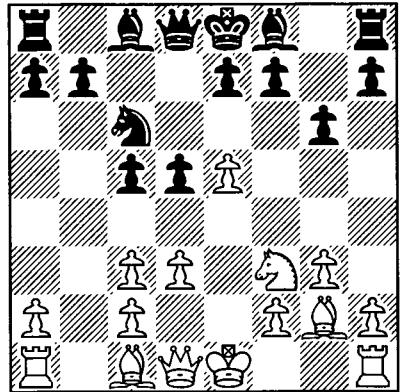


Diagram 31 (W)

M.Taimanov-N.Kopylov, Leningrad 1947, continued 10 Bd2 dxc3 11 Bf4 and now instead of the game's 11...Bg4 Black should play 11...h6 intending ...g5, so that if 12 d4 there follows 12...Be6 13 Be2 g5 14 Bg3 g4 15 Nh4 Rd8 and the d-pawn will fall. After 7 Be2 I don't see any White advantage at all if Black switches to the Caro move 7...Bg4. For example, 8 0-0 Nc6 9 Bf4 e6 10 Rb1 Rb8 11 h3, M.De Agustin-M.Gomez Pose, La Coruna 1999. Now that there is no threat of e5-e6, Black can safely maintain the light-squared bishop with 11...Bh5.

If White chooses 7 g3 Nc6 8 Bg2, I like 8...g6 (**Diagram 31**).

White has one weakness in the position, and this is the e5-pawn. *If he is tied down to the defence of this pawn, he can neither start an attack nor adequately prevent Black's forces from regrouping for a counter-attack.*

9 Be3 hitting c5 can be met by 9...Bg7 with a counter-attack on e5. Now:

- a) After 10 0-0 d4 Black will castle into safety and begin his counter-attack on the e5-pawn withQa5 etc.
- b) 10 Bxc5 runs into 10...Qa5 11 Be3 and now Black strikes with the familiar 11...d4!.
- c) 10 d4 is the most natural continuation, but after 10...Qa5 11 Qd2 Bg4 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Bxf3 e6 Black exerts considerable pressure on the d4-pawn and on the c-file.
- d) 10 Qe2 Qa5 11 Bd2 Bg4 (hitting the e5-pawn) 12 d4 Qa4 (the e5-pawn has been defended, but now d4 has become a new target of attack) 13 Be3 cxd4 14 cxd4 Qb4+ 15 Qd2 Qc4 and White is struggling to castle.

Returning to 7 d4:



TRICKY TRANSPOSITION: The position after 7 d4 is usually reached via a line in the Alekhine which is considered fairly harmless: 1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 Nc3 Nxc3 4 bxc3 d5 5 d4 c5 6 Nf3.

7...c4!? (**Diagram 32**)

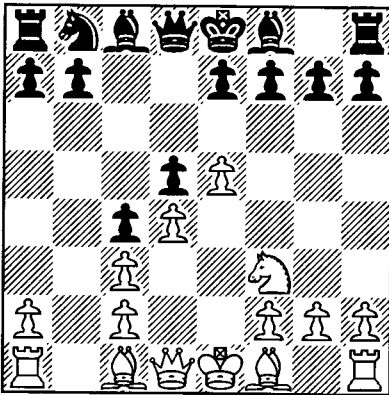


Diagram 32 (W)

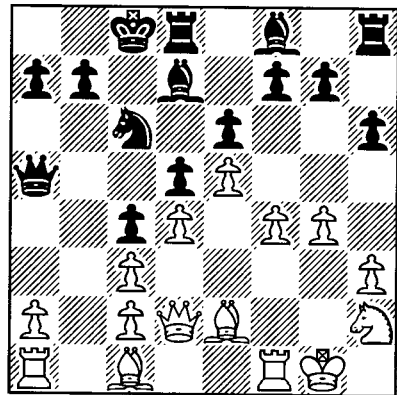


Diagram 33 (B)

If Black chooses to close the position, it will all come down to who can manoeuvre the best.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

A promising alternative is the more commonly played 7...Nc6. Maintaining the dynamic tension offers Black chances for a more tactical game. For example, 8 dxc5 e6 (8...Bg4 is now met by 9 Rb1) 9 Bd3 Bxc5 10 O-O Qc7 with a pleasant French. Black has the long-term plan of utilizing the c-file, but there is some danger. He should be very wary of castling kingside for the time being and instead focus on improving his minor pieces and making the correct exchanges. After 11 Re1 Bd7 12 Rb1 h6 Black intends to castle queenside and organize an attack on the kingside whilst keeping focus on the weak c3-pawn.

8 Be2 is more natural than 8 dxc5. After the typical 8...Bg4 9 Rb1 Qd7 White can try to complicate with 10 c4!?, but 10...dxc4 11 d5 Bxf3 12 Bxf3 Nxe5 13 Be2 O-O-O 14 f4 Ng6 15 O-O e6 was a convincing response from Black in V.Baklan-O.Almeida Quintana, Solsones 2004.

8 Be2 h6

A useful preparatory move, guarding the g5-square before the black king heads east.

9 O-O Nc6 10 h3 Qa5 11 Qd2 Bd7 12 Nh2 O-O-O 13 f4 e6 14 g4 (Diagram 33)

This was played in A.Dimovska-R.Kovacevic, Obrenovac 2002. White's position is only superficially active. The fact of the matter is that Black's king is untouchable and he can look forward to breaking on the kingside if the opportunity presents itself or winning the c3-pawn through manoeuvring the knight to b5 via c6-a7-b5 and swapping off the dark-squared bishops with a timely ...Ba3. In fact, Black did successfully carry out the latter plan in the game.

Conclusion

3...Nf6 leads to interesting and strategically rich play. In some lines it resembles a hybrid of the French and Caro-Kann in the sense that Black often has perfectly reasonable choices regardless of whether the light-squared bishop stays behind or goes in front of its own pawn chain.

White's best chance for an advantage is to close the position with 4 e5. After 4...Ne4! the very essence of the variation is that Black is willing to spend two tempi in order to close off the pawn centre and ensure a very simple mode of development and counter-strike with ...c5.

After 4...Ne4, Black must take care to ensure two things: firstly, that the knight doesn't get trapped in the centre; and secondly, that the knight doesn't get

thrown around the board like a ragdoll. That is not our aim! This is why if White plays 5 Ne2, Black must prevent d2-d3 by threatening mate with 5...Qb6. After the virtually forced 6 d4 Black can continue with what is considered the main line, 6...c5; or play our *Dangerous Weapon*, 6...e6, which aims for a more controlled ...c5. White's most challenging response to 6...e6 is to force an exchange of knights on the g3-square with 7 Ng3! and 8 Bd3. White aims to use the g5-square to launch an immediate attack on the weak f7- and h7-squares. However, Black can neutralize this plan with some care by challenging the centre with ...c5. It should also be noted that if White tries to trap the knight by retreating his own knight back to g1, Black can create an escape route with ...f6.

If White doesn't wish to enter into complications, the main alternative is the simpler 5 d3 aiming to utilize the small space advantage accorded by his pawn structure. After the exchange of knights Black has a pleasant choice. The immediate 6...c5 aims to close the position and fix the weakness of the doubled c-pawns should White advance the d-pawn. The other option is to continue in Caro-Kann style and develop the bishop outside the pawn chain with 6...Bg4, as seen in the illustrative game Pogrebissky-Kholmov. As with most closed positions in the Caro-Kann, Black is not afraid of exchanging this bishop for a knight. Black is happy to do this, safe in the knowledge that White is saddled with a tangible weakness in the shape of doubled c-pawns. This factor also means that Black is unafraid of leaving his king in the centre or castling queenside. In fact, Black is vastly superior on this side of the board.

Of the minor lines, 5 Be2 Nxc3 6 bxc3 is the most challenging because White has the dangerous idea of preparing d2-d4, c3-c4 and lifting the queen's rook to the kingside where Black's monarch is a little vulnerable. However, analysis shows that if Black plays accurately with a timely ...Rd8 followed by ...c5 pressuring the d4-pawn, it is only White's pawn structure that will be vulnerable to attack.

Chapter Eleven

Advancing in Instalments

John Emms

1 e4 c6 2 d3 d5 3 Nd2 e5 4 Ngf3 Nd7 5 d4! (Diagram 1)

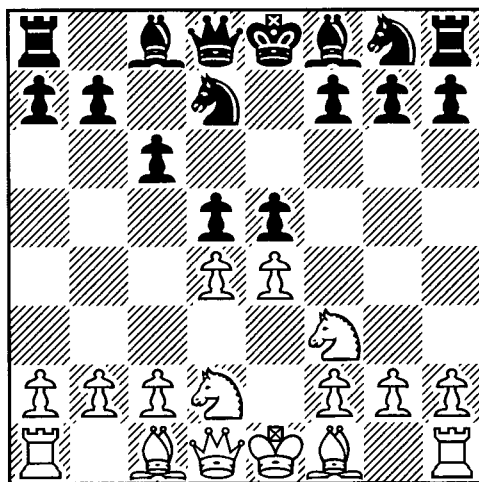


Diagram 1 (B)

I must admit that my initial intention for this chapter was to cover 4...Nd7 5 g3 Ngf6 6 Bg2 Bc5!? (rather than the normal 4...Bd6 or 6...Bd6) as an interesting option for Black against the King's Indian Attack. One of the points of 6...Bc5 is that after the typical 7 0-0 0-0 White has to be careful about playing Re1 because of

pressure against f2. One idea for Black is to rapidly seize space on the queenside. For example, 8 h3 Re8 9 c3 dxe4 10 dxe4 a5 11 Re1 b5 12 Nh4 a4 13 Nf1 Qb6 as in P.Andreev-S.Arun Prasad, Uxbridge 2009, or 8 c3 dxe4 9 dxe4 a5 10 Qc2 b5 11 a4 bxa4! 12 Rxa4 Ba6 13 c4 Re8 14 Ra2 Bb7 15 b3 Nb8! 16 Nb1 Na6 as in A.Stephan-J.Houska, London 2009; in both cases Black enjoys active play.

However, I was stopped in my tracks by 5 d4. Of course I was previously aware of this move and knew that it posed a few problems, but somehow I managed to convince myself that if I looked hard enough I would be able to find a decent enough solution for Black.

The problem was I could only find promising ideas for White, not Black. The harder I looked, the less I liked Black's position and in the end I felt I had to give up on 4...Nd7. I made a U-turn, and now present a different *Dangerous Weapon*: 5 d4!

The idea behind 5 d4 is to completely change the character of the game. Rather than accepting a slow KIA set-up, White wants to open the position up and exploit his lead in development.

But wait a minute. Lead in development? Hasn't White just lost a move by playing d4 in two instalments? How can he expect to gain any advantage after this? I could certainly understand someone asking these questions, and there is definitely a paradoxical element to 5 d4.

White can justify the double d-pawn advance on two counts:

1. The tension in the pawn centre favours White. If Black releases the tension via exchanges, White can develop with gain of time. If White releases it, Black is more or less forced to accept a strategic weakness.
2. In either case, Black's knight on d7 isn't a happy piece. In an open position it is passively placed and interferes with Black's queenside development. This is a key difference between 4...Nd7 5 d4 and 4...Bd6 5 d4; I'm convinced the latter line is perfectly okay for Black.

Let's begin by looking back at one of the very first outings with 5 d4 (in fact *the* earliest one in my database). It just happens to be a characteristically violent attacking performance from none other than Mikhail Tal!

□ **M.Tal** ■ **V.Smyslov**

Candidates Tournament, Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade 1959

1 e4 c6 2 d3 d5 3 Nd2 e5 4 Ngf3 Nd7 5 d4! dxe4 6 Nxe4 exd4 7 Qxd4 Ngf6 8 Bg5

(Diagram 2)

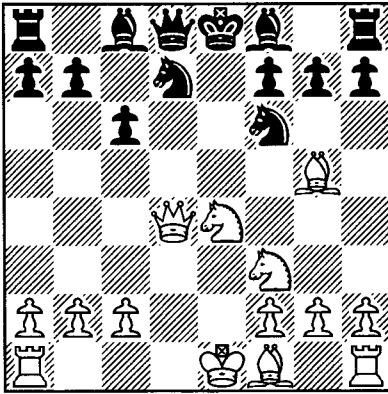


Diagram 2 (B)

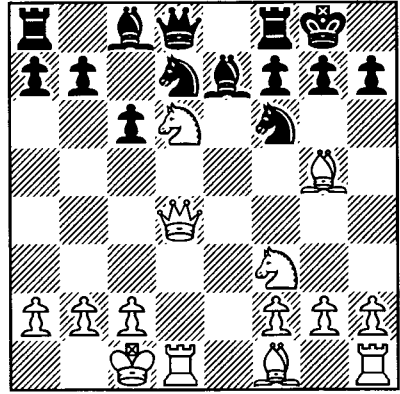


Diagram 3 (B)

Tal has played the opening in typical style (well, at least from move 5 onwards!). White develops quickly and will hope to convert his lead into a significant initiative.

Alternatives such as 7 Bc4 and 8 Nd6+ will be covered later on, but for now let's just enjoy a fine attacking game played by 'the Wizard from Riga'.

8...Be7 9 0-0-0

9 Nd6+ is tempting, but after 9...Bxd6 10 Qxd6 Black can simplify with 10...Ne4!. Even so, I feel that 11 Bxd8 Nxd6 12 Bc7, with the two bishops in an open position, should be slightly in White's favour. Luckily for us, Tal was looking for something more substantial.

9...0-0 10 Nd6 (Diagram 3) 10...Qa5!

Smyslov looks for counterplay on the queenside.

Against 10...Nd5 Tal gives 11 Bxe7 (or the more aggressive 11 h4) 11...Qxe7 12 Nxc8 Raxc8 13 Bc4 'with a slightly better position'.

A more recent game continued 10...Bxd6 11 Qxd6 Qa5 12 Bc4 Ne4 13 Qf4 Nxc5 14 Nxc5 Ne5 15 Bb3 with strong pressure for White, P.Schalkwijk-T.Avant, correspondence 2000. After 15...h6 16 Rhe1 Nd3+!? (or 16...hxc5 17 Qxe5 Qxe5 18 Rxe5) 17 cxd3 Qc5+ 18 Kb1 hxc5 either 19 Qg3 intending Re5, or 19 Qe5 is advantageous for White.

11 Bc4 b5

If 11...Nb6 12 Bxf7+ (12 Bb3!?) 12...Rxf7 13 Nxf7 Kxf7 14 Rhe1 Nbd5 15 Qe5 'White's attack is very dangerous' – Tal. In this line *Rybka* prefers 15 c4.

12 Bd2! (Diagram 4)

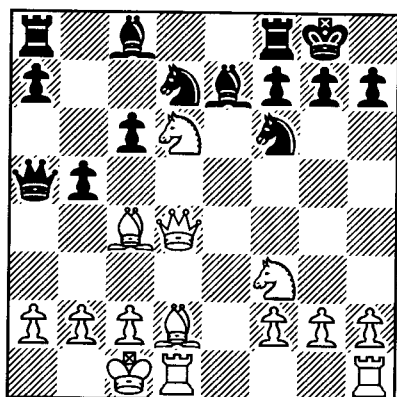


Diagram 4 (B)

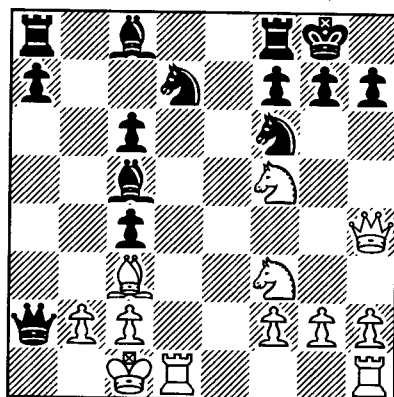


Diagram 5 (W)

This is an extremely creative piece sacrifice. Tal realizes that a knight on f5 paired with a bishop on c3 will make an irresistible attacking force.

12...Qa6

Smyslov is willing to enter the complications.

Black can bail out with 12...Qa4, accepting a slightly worse ending after 13 Nxc8 Raxc8 14 Bb3 Qxd4 15 Nxd4 (Tal).

13 Nf5!

There's no going back now, especially as 13 Bb3?? would lose immediately to 13...c5!

13...Bd8

Another critical line is 13...Bc5 14 Qh4 bxc4 15 Bc3! Qxa2 (**Diagram 5**).

After 16 Rxd7 Bxd7 there's the very pretty 17 Nh6+ Kh8 18 Qxf6! mating (Tal), while if 16...Nxd7 White wins with 17 Qg5 or even the ultra-flashy 17 Qh6.

Of course modern day computers unfortunately (though hardly surprisingly) have a nasty habit of spoiling these masterpieces. That said, they only 'spoil' them in the sense that defensive resources are sometimes uncovered that render the initial sacrifice unsound from a purely objective viewpoint (which is definitely not the same as unsound from a practical viewpoint!).

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

Here *Rybka* shows that the decoy 16...Bb4! is an effective defence. For example, 17 Nh6+ Kh8 18 Qxf6 (or 18 Nxf7+ Rxf7 19 Rxf7 Bxc3 20 Rf8+ Ng8 21 Rxcg8+! Kxcg8 22 Qd8+ with perpetual check) 18...Qa1+! 19 Kd2 gxf6 (revealing the point: the bishop is pinned by a bishop!) 20 Nxf7+ Kg7! 21 Rxa1 Bxc3+ 22 Kxc3 Bxd7.

Of course it works both ways, and *Rybka* also demonstrates how the attack can be strengthened by 16 Nxc7! (instead of Tal's suggested 16 Rxd7). The position is crazily complicated but Black still has many problems to solve. For example:

16...Kxc7? 17 Qg5+ Kh8 18 Rxd7!; or 16...Rd8 17 Nf5! Qa1+ 18 Kd2 (incredibly Black doesn't have an effective discovered check) 18...Nf8+ 19 Ke2 Re8+ 20 Ne3; or finally, 16...Bxf2 17 Qf4! (rather than 17 Qxf2?? Ne4!).

14 Qh4 bxc4 15 Qg5 Nh5

After 15...g6 16 Nh6+ Kg7 17 Bc3 Qxa2 18 Rhe1 'Black would be squeezed in a vice-like grip' – Tal.

16 Nh6+ Kh8 17 Qxh5 (Diagram 6)

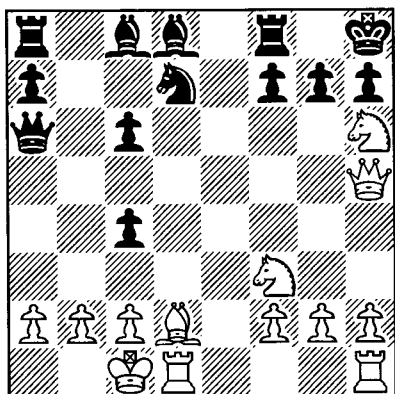


Diagram 6 (B)

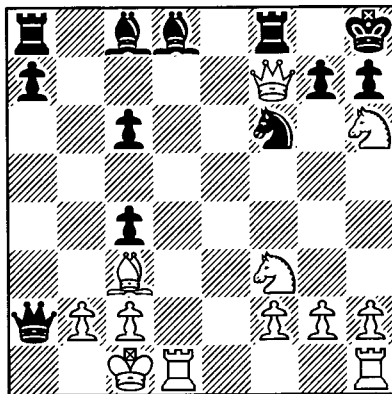


Diagram 7 (B)

17...Qxa2

17...Qxh6 loses to 18 Bc3+ f6 (or 18...Bf6 19 Qxh6 Bxc3 20 Ng5!) 19 Qxh6 Rg8 20 Ng5! Rxc5 21 Qxc5 Qb5 22 Qh6, threatening both 23 Rxd7 and 23 Rhe1.

However, seizing the key long diagonal with 17...Bf6! is a much better defence, backed up by the line 18 Bc3 Bxc3 19 Ng5 Bxb2+! 20 Kxb2 gxh6 21 Qxh6 Qb5+ 22 Kc1 Qf5 (Nunn).

Instead 17...Bf6 18 Nxf7+ Kg8 19 N7g5 h6 20 Ne4 Qxa2 21 Nxf6+ Nxf6 22 Qa5 Qxa5 23 Bxa5 is roughly equal.

Finally, 17...Bf6 18 Ng5 Bxg5 19 Qxg5 f6 20 Qg3 Qxa2 21 Bc3 leads to a winning attack for White after 21...gxh6? 22 Rhe1!, as indicated by D'Costa. However, 21...Ne5! 22 Bxe5 fxe5 23 Nf7+ Kg8 24 Nh6+ Kh8 25 Nf7+ is only perpetual check.

18 Bc3! Nf6?

It's still not too late for 18...Bf6!

19 Qxf7! (Diagram 7)

Now it's all over, as White wins an exchange and a pawn by force. Probably the strain of having to play accurate defence, move after move, finally took its toll and led to Smyslov missing this relatively straightforward back rank tactic.

19...Qa1+ 20 Kd2 Rxf7

Or 20...Qxd1+ 21 Rxd1 Rxf7 22 Nxf7+ Kg8 23 Nxd8, winning.

21 Nxf7+ Kg8 22 Rxa1 Kxf7 23 Ne5+ Ke6 24 Nxc6 Ne4+ 25 Ke3 Bb6+ 26 Bd4 1-0

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 d3 d5 3 Nd2 e5 4 Ngf3 Nd7

White can also play 5 d4 (instead of the normal 5 g3) against Black's most common choice, 4...Bd6, and it's a decent option if White enjoys playing against the IQP. However, White cannot expect any theoretical advantage in this line because Black's development is much more active. For example, compare 5...exd4 6 exd5 cxd5 (recently Black has also played 6...Nf6! 7 dxc6 Nxc6 with some success) 7 Nxd4 Nc6 8 N2f3 Nf6 9 Be2 0-0 10 0-0 with Line A; here Black's pieces, in particular the queen's knight, are much happier.

5 d4! (Diagram 8)

Black's two main options at this point are:

A: 5...exd4

B: 5...dxe4

In fact, alternatives to these two moves are very rare indeed. Here are a few possibilities:

a) 5...Ngf6?! 6 exd5 Nxd5 (or 6...e4 7 dxc6 bxc6 8 Qe2) 7 dxe5 Qc7 8 c4 N5b6 9 Qe2 and White plans g2-g3 followed by Bg2. I can't believe that Black has any meaningful compensation here.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

b) I spent some time considering the Latvian-style 5...f5?! (**Diagram 9**).

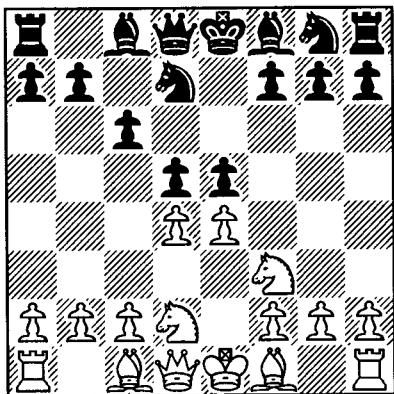


Diagram 8 (B)

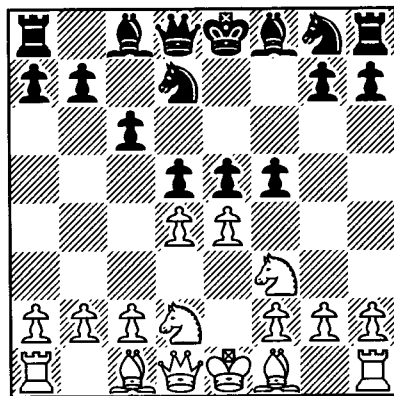


Diagram 9 (W)

This is certainly a move which would shock, and it would be fun if it worked, but it seems to me that White keeps an advantage if he chooses correctly: 6 exd5! (rather than 6 exf5?! e4 or 6 Nxe5?! Nxe5 7 dxe5 fxe4, both of which are fine for Black) 6...e4 7 dxc6! bxc6 8 Ne5 Nxe5 9 dxe5 Qa5 10 c3 Qxe5 11 Nc4 Qe6 (11...Qd5 can also be met by 12 Qa4 threatening Nb6 and intending Bf4 followed by Rd1) 12 Qa4 Bc5 (or 12...Nf6 13 Nb6!) 13 Bf4 and White has the initiative. The point is that the natural developing move 13...Nf6? can be answered very convincingly by 14 Bd6!.

c) 5...f6!? (**Diagram 10**).

This move looks really ugly, and I'm not sure I should have even considered it! When I began to, frustratingly I found it difficult to come up with a complete bust. A logical line runs 6 exd5 cxd5 7 dxe5 fxe5 8 Bb5 Bd6 9 0-0 Ngf6 10 Nc4! Qc7 11 Nxd6+ Qxd6 12 Nxe5 Qxe5 13 Re1 Ne4 14 f3 0-0 15 fxe4 dxe4 which, although better for White, isn't as convincing as you'd expect it to be.

Against 6 c4 Black has the ridiculous option of 6...f5!, the point being that if 7 exd5 e4 8 dxc6 bxc6 9 Ne5 Nxe5 10 dxe5 Qa5 White's pawn on c4 hurts him.

A less forcing way to play is 6 Bd3 Bd6 (6...f5!? 7 exd5 e4 8 dxc6 bxc6 9 Nxe4 fxe4 10 Bxe4 must be a good piece sacrifice for White) 7 0-0 Ne7 8 c4, which is clearly an edge for White, but maybe not much more!

d) Black's most sensible-looking alternative to pawn captures is 5...Bd6!?, which is similar to 5...exd4 in that Black ends up with an IQP: 6 exd5 cxd5 7 dxe5 Nxe5 8

Nxe5 Bxe5 (Diagram 11).

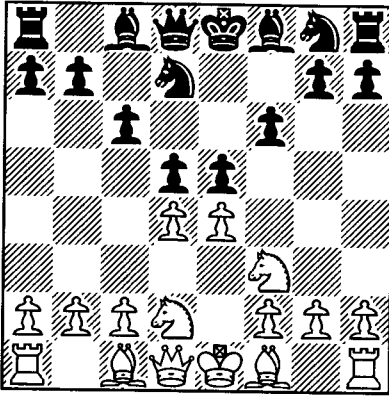


Diagram 10 (W)

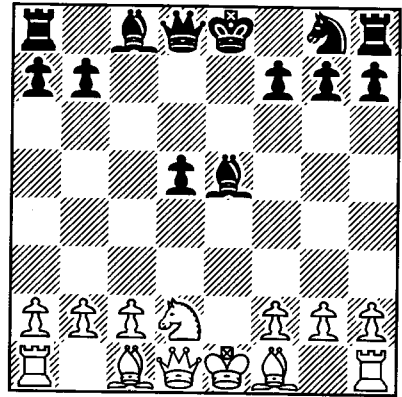


Diagram 11 (W)

Now:

d1) 9 Bb5+ Bd7 10 Qe2 Bxb5 11 Qxb5+ Qd7 12 Qe2!? 0-0-0! (I feel that this is stronger than 12...Qe7 13 Nf3 Bf6 14 Be3! Qe6 15 0-0-0 Ne7 16 Rhe1, with a clear advantage for White in D.Isonzo-E.Bonazzi, Bratto 2004) 13 Nf3 Bc7 14 0-0 Nf6 15 Be3 Rhe8 16 Qd3 a6. Black's king is slightly less secure than White's, but there's no doubting Black's piece activity, which more or less compensates for this.

d2) 9 Nf3! Bf6! (if 9...Bd6 then 10 Bb5+ is annoying for Black) 10 Bd3 Ne7 11 0-0 0-0 12 c3 Bf5 (after 12...Bg4 13 h3 the bishop has to retreat back the way it came, since 13...Bh5?? 14 g4! Bg6 15 g5 traps the f6-bishop) 13 Re1 Qd7 14 Be3 with a small edge for White.

A) 1 e4 c6 2 d3 d5 3 Nd2 e5 4 Ngf3 Nd7 5 d4 exd4 6 exd5 cxd5 (Diagram 12)

Black accepts an IQP position. While it's true that White has expended a tempo playing d2-d3-d4, it could be argued that Black's early release of the tension also loses some time. Besides, Black's queen's knight really feels much more at home on the active c6-square in IQP positions. On d7 it blocks the c8-bishop and Black is much less likely to gain the piece activity he requires to fully offset the structural weakness of the IQP.

The only other real option for Black is 6...c5, against which White should react aggressively with 7 Qe2+! Qe7 (forced, otherwise Black loses a piece) 8 Ne4!

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DANGEROUS WEAPON! 8...Ne5? is met very convincingly by 9 Bf4!. For example, 9...Nxf3+ 10 gxf3! Nf6 11 d6 Qe6 12 Bh3! Qxh3 13 Nxf6+ Kd8 14 Qe8 mate!

Black should play 8...Ngf6 (**Diagram 13**). Now:

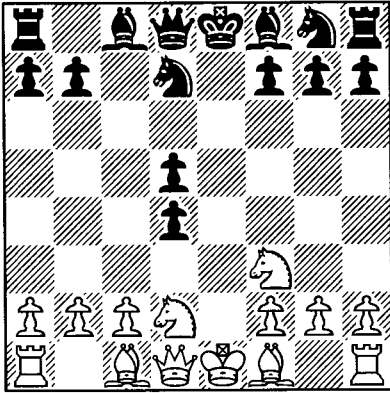


Diagram 12 (W)

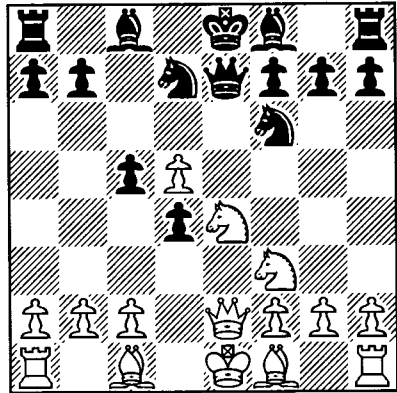


Diagram 13 (W)

a) 9 Nd6+ Kd8 10 Qxe7+ Kxe7 11 Bf4!? Nxd5 12 Bg3 N7f6 13 0-0-0 Be6 14 Re1 Nh5 15 Nxf7!? Kxf7 16 Ng5+ Kf6 17 Rxe6+ Kxg5 18 Re5+ Kf6 19 Rxh5 Nb4 20 Bh4+ Kg6 21 g4! Bd6 22 h3 Nc6 23 Bd3+ Kf7 24 Rf5+ Ke6 25 Re1+ Kd7 26 Rf7+ Kc8 27 Re6 and Black resigned in this hopeless position, J.Bonin-L.Braun, Long Island 1992.

15...Nxc3 is stronger, but White keeps an edge after 16 hxg3 Kxf7 17 Ng5+ Kf6 18 Rxe6+ Kxg5 19 Re5+ Kf6 20 Rxd5.

12...g6 13 Ng5 f6 14 Ngf7 Ke6! is a suggestion from by *Rybka* (who else would suggest such a way to play?!) and this might also be an improvement.

b) 9 Nfg5!? (threatening 10 Nd6+) 9...Nxe4 10 Nxe4 Nf6 11 Nxf6+ gxf6 12 Qxe7+ Bxe7 (**Diagram 14**) was played in the game U.Dirr-G.Lorscheid, Munich 1993. This feels a bit better for White because of Black's ruined kingside structure. Here I would be tempted to play 13 Bd3! to restrict the c8-bishop (the game's 13 Bf4 Bf5! 14 Bb5+ Kd8 15 0-0-0 a6 16 Bd3 Bg6 was unclear). After, for example, 13...Rg8 14 Kf1 (or even 14 Bf4 intending 14...Rxc2 15 Bg3) 14...h5 15 Bf4 Bd7 16 Re1 I'm really beginning to like White's position.

7 Nxd4 Ngf6

7...Bc5 rather invites 8 N2b3. Now:

a) 8...Bb6 9 Qe2+!? Ne7 (if 9...Qe7 then 10 Nf5! Qxe2+ 11 Bxe2 g6 12 Nd6+ Ke7 13 Bf4 and White is better) 10 Bg5! sets up an awkward pin. Black can break it via 10...h6 11 Bh4 g5, but of course after 12 Bg3 0-0 13 0-0-0 White will enjoy attacking on the kingside with h2-h4.

b) 8...Ne7!? is probably wiser:

b1) Grabbing the dark-squared bishop is definitely tempting, although this does allow Black to solve the problem of his d7-knight. Indeed, 9 Nxc5 Nxc5 10 Be2 0-0 11 0-0 Nf5 12 Bf3 Ne4 wasn't bad for him in S.Foglar-W.Wiese, correspondence 1963.

b2) I prefer keeping the tension with 9 Bd3 0-0 10 0-0. Once again Black's knights are less than optimally placed for an IQP set-up.

8 Qe2+! (Diagram 15)

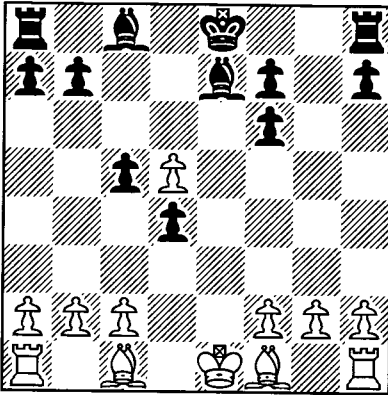


Diagram 14 (W)

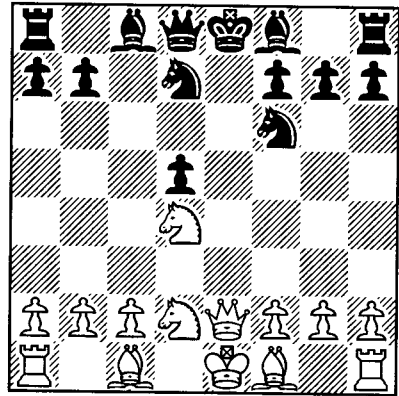


Diagram 15 (B)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! It was the discovery of this idea which made me believe that Black's position was uncomfortable rather than just a touch worse or even equal.

The check is an annoying one to meet. It looks like Black must either allow his dark-squared bishop to be exchanged or lose his castling rights.

Other moves have been played in practice, but my feeling is that they don't test Black as much. For example:

a) 8 Be2 g6!? 9 0-0 Bg7 10 N2f3 a6 11 Bf4 0-0 12 c4 dxc4 13 Bxc4 Nb6 14 Bb3 Nfd5 with an equal position, G.Ligterink-H.Bohm, Amsterdam 1978.

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b) 8 Bb5 Be7 (why not 8...a6 here?) 9 0-0 0-0 10 Nf5 Bc5 11 Nb3 Qb6 12 Bd3 Re8 13 Nxc5 Nxc5 14 Be3 Qc7 15 Bd4 Nxd3 16 Qxd3 Ng4 17 Qg3 Qxg3 and ½-½, M.Heika-V.Burmakin, Schwarzach 2000. A good practical decision from the grandmaster playing Black, as White has an undoubted edge after either 18 Nxc3 or 18 fxc3!?

8...Be7

Against 8...Qe7 White can make Black's life awkward with 9 Nb5!, which more or less forces 9...Kd8. White cannot avoid the exchange of queens, but after 10 Nb3 Qxe2+ 11 Bxe2 Black's king isn't particularly well placed in any case, and of course neither is the knight on d7. I think that Black is in for an uncomfortable queenless middlegame here.

One possible line is 11...a6 (if 11...Nc5 then 12 Be3!) 12 Nc3 Bb4 13 Bd2 Re8 14 a3 Bd6 (or 14...Bxc3 15 Bxc3 Kc7 16 f3! restricting the f6-knight and allowing Kf2) 15 0-0-0 Kc7 16 Bf3 Nb6 17 Be3 and the pressure is mounting.

9 Nf5! (Diagram 16)

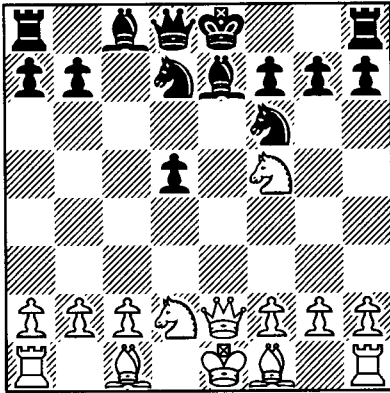


Diagram 16 (B)

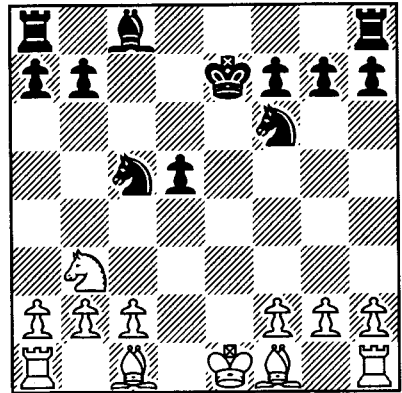


Diagram 17 (B)

White prevents Black from castling and prepares to exchange off Black's traditionally good bishop. In fact, no other follow-up would make sense after White's previous move.

9...Nc5!

This is a good move, exploiting the fact that 10 Nxc3?? Kf8 wins the knight (11 Nh5 Bg4!).

9...g6?! 10 Nxe7! Qxe7 11 Nb3 Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 would leave Black with long-term concerns over his dark-squared weaknesses (made worse by ...g6) as well the issue

of how to combat White's bishop pair.

In contrast, 9...g6?! 10 Nd6+? Kf8 11 Nxc8 captures the wrong bishop. Black has lost his castling rights, but after 11...Rxc8 12 Nb3 Kg7! it's White's king who has more to fear.

10 Nxe7 Qxe7 11 Qxe7+ Kxe7 12 Nb3! (Diagram 17)

This move gains time, since Black will be reluctant to exchange on b3 and activate White's a1-rook.

Despite (or maybe because of!) the simplifications, I like White's position here; not so much because of the isolated d-pawn (it can be defended easily enough) but because White's dark-squared bishop, without a counterpart, could easily cause Black quite a few problems in the future.

Here are a few possible variations, with White retaining an edge in all cases:

a) 12...Nxb3 13 axb3 Bf5 14 c3 Rhe8 15 f3! (this is a key move; the king is safe and well placed on f2) 15...Kf8+ 16 Kf2 a6 17 Be3.

b) 12...Ne6 13 Be3 Bd7 14 f3 Rhe8 15 Kf2 a6 16 Bd3.

c) 12...Na4 (restricting the c1-bishop, but not for long) 13 f3! (again we see this move) 13...Re8 14 Kf2 Bd7 15 Nd4 Rac8 16 b3 Nc5 17 Ba3 and once more the bishop's power is beginning to be felt.

B) 1 e4 c6 2 d3 d5 3 Nd2 e5 4 Ngf3 Nd7 5 d4 dxe4 6 Nxe4 Ngf6!? (Diagram 18)

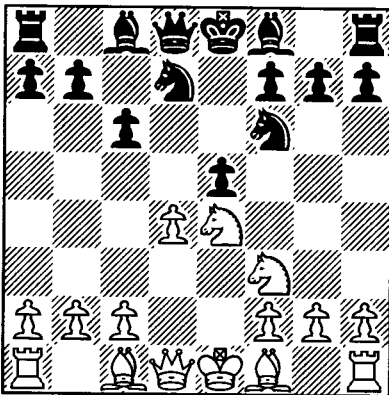


Diagram 18 (W)

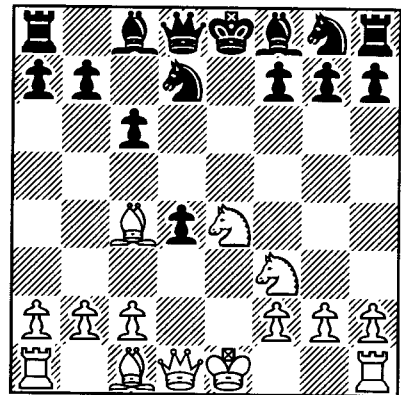


Diagram 19 (B)

Most players have chosen 6...exd4 here (see below). My feeling is that 6...Ngf6, although certainly risky, might be of equal value. Even so, White has good chances

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of gaining an advantage in either case.

We've already covered 6...exd4 to some extent in the Tal-Smyslov game. Here I'll just consider some extra possibilities:

a) 7 Qxd4! was Tal's choice, and I think that this is the strongest move. For example, 7...Ngf6 8 Nd6+ (a decent alternative to Tal's sharper 8 Bg5!?) 8...Bxd6 9 Qxd6 Nd5 10 Bg5 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qc5 12 Qxc5 Nxc5 13 c4 Ne7 14 Be3, B.Just-W.Jordaan, correspondence 2003. White's bishop pair offers him a safe edge in this queenless middlegame.

b) 7 Qe2 Bb4+! 8 c3 dxc3 9 bxc3 (there is no convincing discovered or double check) 9...Be7 10 Nd6+ Kf8 and 'it is not clear if White has enough compensation for the pawn, because his queen is blocking the f1-bishop's path and stops the development of his kingside' – Tal.

c) 7 Bc4!? (**Diagram 19**) is a sharp attempt to gain more from the opening. It's certainly a dangerous move and difficult to meet, but I suspect that Black should be okay if he defends accurately. For example:

c1) 7...Ndf6 8 Neg5 Nh6 (8...Qe7+!? 9 Kf1 Nd5 might be a stronger defence) 9 O-O Be7 10 Nxd4 O-O 11 c3 was better for White in L.Ljubojevic-D.Marovic, Umag 1972. Black's knight on h6 isn't a particularly happy piece here, but the attempt to improve it with 11...Nf5?! only made matters worse after 12 Nge6! Bxe6 13 Nxe6 Qxd1 14 Rxd1.

c2) 7...Nb6! was originally suggested by Tal, and this move still seems to be the most challenging defence. Despite trying hard, I haven't been able to find anything really convincing for White. Some possibilities:

c21) 8 Bxf7+ (**Diagram 20**) leads to perpetual check, as indicated by Tal: 8...Kxf7 9 Ne5+ Ke8 (9...Ke7 10 O-O is very dangerous for Black) 10 Qh5+ g6 11 Nxc6 hxc6 12 Qxc6+ Kd7 13 Qf5+ Ke8 14 Qg6+, etc.

c22) 8 Qe2 Bb4+! (not 8...Nxc4, when 9 Nf6 is double check and mate!) 9 c3 Nxc4 10 Qxc4 Be7 11 Nxd4 Nf6 looks equal.

c23) 8 Bb3!? Bf5! 9 Neg5!? (9 Nfg5 Nh6 10 O-O Be7 11 Qf3 Qd7 12 Re1 O-O was solid enough for Black in J.Ross-D.De Vera, correspondence 1998) 9...Qe7+! 10 Be3!? dxe3 (10...O-O-O! 11 Nxd4 Nh6 12 O-O Qf6! also has to be considered) 11 Bxf7+ Qxf7 12 Nxf7 exf2+ 13 Kxf2 Bc5+ 14 Kg3 Kxf7 15 Ne5+ Ke6 16 Re1 Bd6 17 Qd4 Nf6 (**Diagram 21**).

This is an absolutely bizarre-looking position in which a deadly discovered check is prevented by a deadly pin! If 18 Kh4 there could follow 18...g5+! 19 Kxg5 Ne4+ 20 Rxe4 Rag8+ 21 Kh5 Bxe4 22 Qxe4 Bxe5 23 Re1 Nd7 24 Qc4+ Kd6 25 Qb4+ and the

best White can hope for is perpetual check.

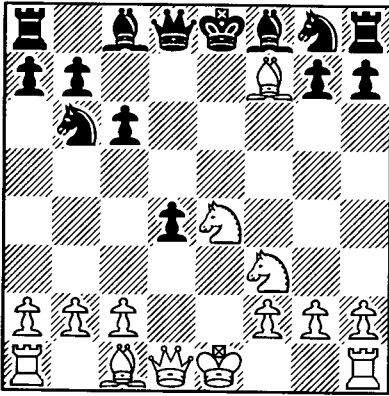


Diagram 20 (B)

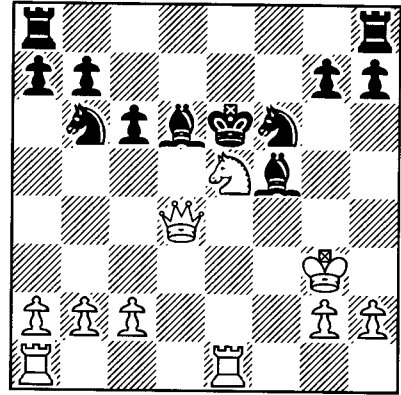


Diagram 21 (W)

There could easily be improvements for both sides in this sequence, but my overall feeling is that White's compensation after 8 Bb3 Bf5! is speculative, and so 7 Qxd4 is objectively a stronger move than 7 Bc4.

Returning to the position after 6 Nxe4, it seems that Black has no other alternatives:

For example, 6...f5? 7 Neg5 e4 is refuted by 8 Bc4! intending 8...exf3 9 Bf7+ Ke7 10 0-0!. Black's king is horribly exposed and I wouldn't be surprised if White's advantage is already decisive.

6...Qc7?! protects the e5-pawn but is too slow. After the obvious and strong 7 Bc4! White is eyeing up Ng5 possibilities, and ...Qc7 doesn't really help Black here. For example, 7...exd4 8 0-0 Nb6 9 Re1! threatens Nf6+ followed by mate on e8, and Black is dangerously behind in development.

7 Nxf6+

I can't find any examples of 7 Qe2! in this position. Black must be very careful, but with accurate defence I think he can just about equalize. For example, 7...Nxe4 (I like White's position after 7...Qe7 8 Bg5 exd4 9 Nd6+ Kd8 10 Qxe7+ Kxe7 11 Nxc8+ Rxc8 12 Nxd4) 8 Qxe4 Bd6! 9 dxe5 Nxe5 (intending 10 Nxe5 Qa5+) 10 Bf4! Qa5+! 11 Bd2 (against 11 c3? Black has the tactical shot 11...Bf5!, and after 12 Qe3 0-0-0! White is the one with problems) 11...Qd5 12 Qxd5 cxd5 13 Nxe5 Bxe5 14 0-0-0 0-0 15 Be3 Be6 16 Be2 and the isolated d-pawn offers White the tiniest hope of an edge.

7...Qxf6 (Diagram 22)

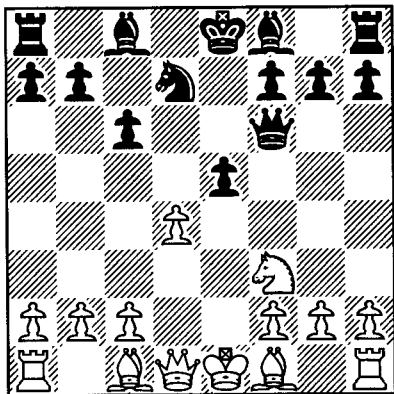


Diagram 22 (W)

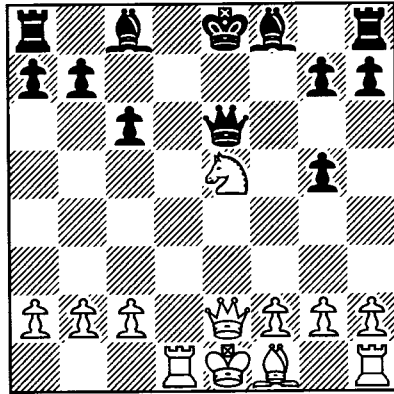


Diagram 23 (W)

8 Bg5

Gaining time by attacking the queen is the most obvious choice, but White can also consider delaying this move:

a) 8 Bc4 Bd6! (Black should avoid 8...exd4?! 9 Bg5, after which 9...Qd6 10 Qe2+ Be7 11 0-0-0 is very dangerous) 9 Bg5 (after 9 Ng5 0-0 10 Qh5 Black must play 10...Qg6! rather than fall for 10...h6? 11 Ne4 Qe7 12 Bxh6!) 9...Qg6 10 dxe5 Qe4+! 11 Be2 Bc7! and Black equalizes.

b) 8 Bd3 exd4 9 Bg5!? (Black is okay after 9 0-0 h6! – otherwise he would be in some trouble – 10 Re1+ Be7 11 Qe2 Nc5) 9...Qe6+ 10 Kd2 f6! 11 Re1 Ne5 12 Nxe5 fxe5 13 f4 Bb4+ 14 c3 dxc3+ 15 bxc3 Bd6 16 fxe5 Be7 and Black seems to be surviving, although the position is still very unclear.

8...Qe6!

This feels stronger than 8...Qd6 which allows White to gain a key tempo by attacking the queen with Rd1: 9 Qe2! f6 10 dxe5 Nxe5 11 Rd1 Qe6 12 Nxe5 fxc5 (Diagram 23) (12...fxe5?? loses immediately to 13 Rd8+ Kf7 14 Qf3+) 13 Qh5+ g6 14 Qxg5 Bb4+ 15 c3 Bd6 16 f4 Bxe5 17 fxe5 0-0 with compensation for the pawn, S.Nadyrhanov-B.Shovunov, Krasnodar 1998.

However, I think White can improve in this line with 13 Qe3! which poses more problems than 13 Qh5+. For example, 13...Bd6 (if 13...Be7? 14 Bc4!) 14 Rxd6 (14 Nxc6 Qxe3+ 15 fxe3 Bc7 16 Nd4 also looks better for White) 14...Qxd6 15 Ng6+ and

I like White's position after either 15...Be6 16 Nxh8 0-0-0 17 Bd3 Rxh8 18 0-0 or 15...Qe6 16 Nxh8 Ke7 17 Bd3 Qxe3+ 18 fxe3 Be6 19 Bxh7 Rxh8 20 Bd3.

9 dxe5 f6

Black would rather recapture on e5 with the knight, but obviously that's not to be recommended at the moment!

10 Bf4 fxe5

10...Nxe5 11 Nxe5 fxe5 12 Qh5+ wins a pawn.

11 Bg3 (Diagram 24)

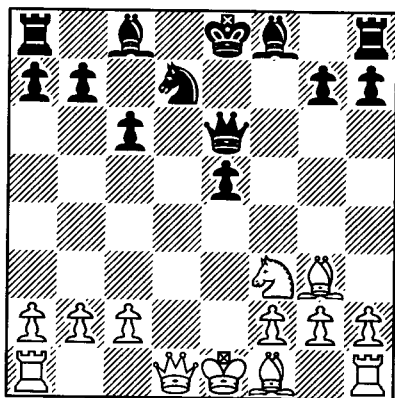


Diagram 24 (B)

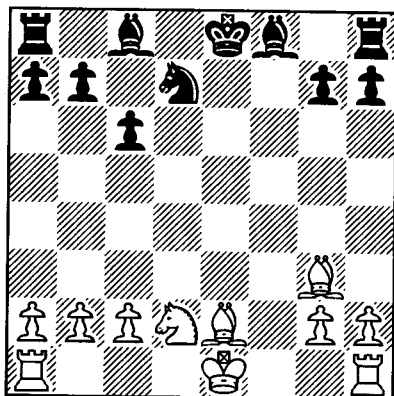


Diagram 25 (B)

11 Ng5 also comes into consideration. For example, 11...Qf6 12 Be3 and now 12...Nb6! is a better choice than 12...Bc5 13 Ne4! or 12...Be7 13 Bc4!

After 12...Nb6 White can choose between 13 Bd3 Bf5 14 0-0 0-0-0 15 Bxf5+ Qxf5 16 Qf3 Qxf3 17 Nxf3 Bd6 18 Rfe1, with a small edge in view of the slight weakness on e5, and 13 Qh5+!? g6 14 Qe2 followed by 0-0-0, with a more complex position which also looks a bit better for White.

11...e4!?

If Black develops with 11...Be7 White can respond with the awkward-to-meet 12 Nd2!. This move sets up Bc4 (thus preventing 12...0-0) and also prepares to answer knight moves with Qh5+.

12 Nd2! e3

After 12...Nf6 13 Bc4 Qf5 14 Qe2 Black's e4-pawn will be a target.

13 fxe3 Qxe3+ 14 Qe2 Qxe2+ 15 Bxe2 (Diagram 25)

I'm pretty sure that White has an edge here. His lead in development must count for something despite the queen exchange, especially in view of the wide open centre and clear open diagonals for the bishops.

Conclusion

As far as I can see, not only is 5 d4 a good alternative to 5 g3, it might well be White's best move, full stop. There seems to be no easy way for Black to reach an equal position.

White is certainly a bit better after 5...dxe4 6 Nxe4 exd4 7 Qxd4, simply because he doesn't even have to follow the complications of Tal-Smyslov – both 8 Nd6+ and 9 Nd6+ appear to be sufficient for a typical bishop-pair edge. The reasonably unexplored 6...Nf6 might be a place to look further, but I'm fairly confident White should be at least a bit better after 7 Nxf6+ Qxf6 8 Bg5.

After 5...exd4 6 exd5 cxd5 7 Nxd4 Ngf6, I feel that White can cause Black problems with the disruptive 8 Qe2+!. I think this is an important move, because against anything else Black has reasonable chances of gaining equality.

Chapter Twelve

Stealing White's Fun After 2 Ne2

Richard Palliser

1 e4 c6 2 Ne2 d5 3 e5 d4!? (Diagram 1)

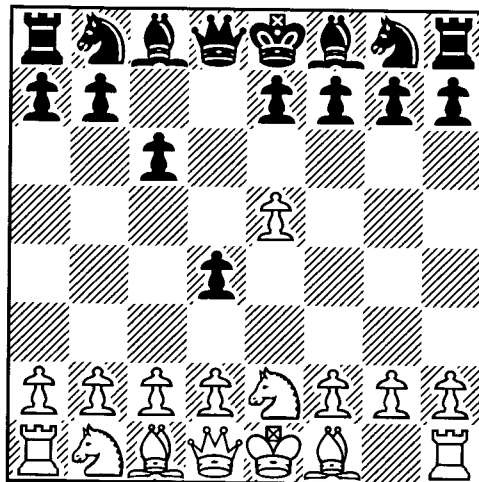


Diagram 1 (W)

Inspired by the example of Nigel Short, 2 Ne2 has gained a number of adherents and can no longer be considered a creative but not wholly correct sideline. With careful play Black should emerge with an equal share of the chances after 2...d5 3

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e5 c5 4 d4, but one thing is clear: White has the greater share of the fun.

Rather than have to defend accurately to prevent White from obtaining a dangerous early initiative, wouldn't it be nice to take him on at his own game? White's system has two downsides: the e5-pawn is unsupported for a move and his knight looks a little ugly on e2. He is quick to solve those problems in the main line, but will find it much harder after 3...d4!?, immediately preparing to surround e5. Not only is ...Qd5 on its way, but ...c5 and ...Nc6 too should White dally. That helps to explain the attraction of yet another creative pawn push in 4 b4, but even that is hardly a panacea for White, as was demonstrated by a recent game between two French Grandmasters.

□ T.Abergel ■ R.Edouard
Cappelle la Grande 2010

1 e4 c6 2 Ne2 d5 3 e5 d4!?



BEWARE! Black underestimates White's system at his peril. Moreover, 2 Ne2 must have its dangers, otherwise it would never have attracted Nigel Short to its ranks.

Short has employed the variation with some success over the years and to appreciate the potential dangers Black faces with classical development, we need only witness the brutal encounter, N.Short-M.Mchedlishvili, Kolkata 2009: 3...c5 4 d4 Nc6 5 c3 cxd4 (if Black wants to develop his bishop to g4, rather than to f5, he may be better off with the immediate 5...Bg4) 6 cxd4 Bg4 7 Nbc3 e6 8 Be3 Nge7 9 f3 Bf5 10 g4! Bg6 11 Nf4 a6 12 Rc1 (already Black is in something of a bind and his attempt to lash out on the kingside only leads to his demise in the centre) 12...h5 13 Bg2 hxg4 14 fxg4 Bh7 15 0-0 (**Diagram 2**) 15...Ng6?! 16 Nfxd5! Nh4 17 Bh1 exd5 18 Nxd5 Bg6 19 Rxc6!! bxc6 20 Nf6+ gxf6 21 Bxc6+ Ke7 22 exf6+ Kd6 23 Qa4 Kc7 24 Rc1 Qd6 25 Bxa8+ Kb8 26 Qe8+ 1-0.

Now we can better appreciate Black's radical advance in the centre, aiming to give White a taste of his own medicine by leaving him with gummed-up development.

4 b4!?

Abergel remains true to his earlier choice and prevents ...c5 while aiming to surround the d4-pawn. White might instead shore up the defence of e5 with 4 f4, but few have yet touched this, probably because it leaves the knight looking a little misplaced on e2. Sensible development with 4...c5 5 Ng3 Nc6, possibly followed by

a Gurgendidze-style ...g6 and ...h5, seems quite comfortable for Black. However, I would be sorely tempted to try something more radical, such as 4...Nh6 5 Ng3 g5!? 6 fxg5 Ng4, breaking up White's centre, and 4...Qd5!? might even be the best of the bunch, since then 5 Ng3 (as essayed in M.Fierro Baquero-M.Narciso Dublan, La Massana 2010, where 5...Nh6 6 c4 Qd7 7 d3 c5 8 Be2 was okay for White) 5...g5 (**Diagram 3**) gains in strength, as 6 fxg5 Nd7 will recoup the pawn with interest.

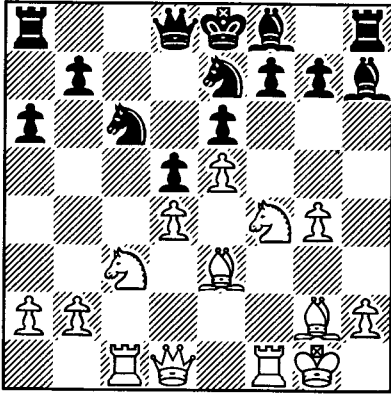


Diagram 2 (B)

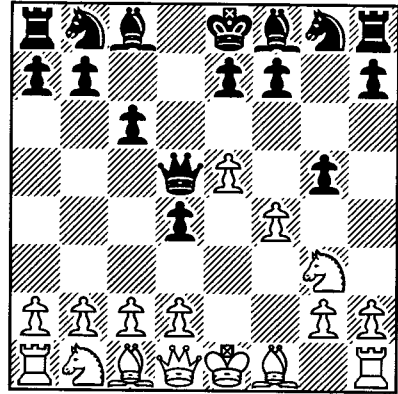


Diagram 3 (W)

As 4 g3? drops a pawn to 4...Qd5, White tried to sort out his kingside with 4 Nf4 in J.Parkin-W.Rutherford, Glenrothes 1996, but 4...g5! (keeping this in reserve with 4...Qc7!?) is also pretty tempting: for example, 5 Qe2 g5! 6 Nd3 Bf5 – suddenly ...Nd7 is a large threat – 7 c3! dxc3 8 dxc3 Nd7 9 Bxg5 Bh6!? 10 Bxh6 Nxh6 11 f4 O-O-O with promising play for the pawn in view of Black's superior development; and in a recent encounter, 4...e6 5 Qe2 Qc7 6 c3 c5 7 cxd4 Nc6! 8 dxc5 Bxc5 9 Nd3 Nd4 gave the former Women's World Champion full compensation for the pawn in Hou Yifan-M.Chiburdanidze, Jermuk 2010) 5 Nd3 Qd5 (**Diagram 4**) 6 b3?! (6 Qf3 holds on to the pawn for the time being, but offers Black a pleasant choice between 6...Qxf3 7 gxf3 Nh6 and just 6...Bg7) 6...Bg7 7 c4 Qe4+ 8 Qe2 Qxe2+ 9 Bxe2 Bf5 10 Bb2 Bxd3 11 Bxd3 Bxe5 saw Black netting a pawn.



DANGEROUS WEAPON! 3...d4 really does gum up White's kingside development and he can easily find e5 either undermined or plain falling should he try to sort out his kingside pieces. Moreover, ...Qd5 is one powerful queen centralization.

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

We will examine a further attempt to develop the kingside, namely 4 Ng3, in the Looking a Little Deeper section, but for now we must return to the critical 4 b4:

4...f6! (Diagram 5)

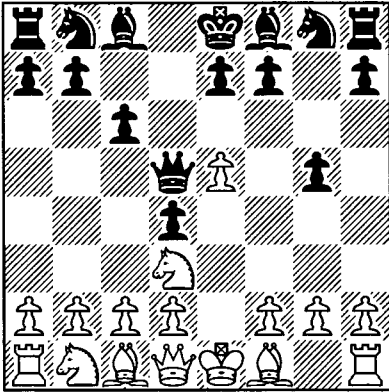


Diagram 4 (W)

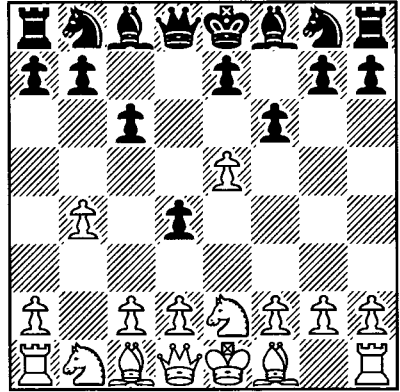


Diagram 5 (W)

Black immediately challenges the central bridgehead. In previous games he had preferred 4...a5, hoping to remove the b4-pawn and thus get in ...c5 after all. Such an approach is tempting, but I'm not wholly convinced by 5 Bb2! d3?! (this just gives White everything he wants; Black should prefer 5...axb4, angling to activate the queen after all with 6 Nxd4 Qd5, and neither does 6 Bxd4 e6 7 Bb2 Nd7 seem especially clear) 6 Nf4! dxc2 7 Qxc2 e6 (as pointed out by Gawain Jones, 7...axb4 8 e6! would cause serious disruption) 8 b5! Ne7 9 Nc3 Ng6 (Diagram 6), which Abergel had been fortunate enough to face on two previous occasions. White's extra space and lead in development give him the upper hand, and after 10 Nh5! (a dangerous gambit, although 10 Nxg6 hxg6 11 Be2 cxb5 12 Nxb5 Nc6 13 0-0 was hardly such a bad outcome for White in the earlier T.Abergel-M.Gagunashvili, Cappelle la Grande 2007) 10...Nd7 11 Be2 Ndx e5 12 0-0 f5 13 Kh1! Qh4 14 bxc6 bxc6 15 f4! Ng4? 16 Bxg4 Qxg4 17 Ne4! White had already managed to turn his virulent initiative into the gain of material in T.Abergel-D.Housieaux, French League 2009.

5 f4

Easy to criticize, but what else could White do? He hardly wants to give up the centre with 5 exf6 Nxf6 when 6 Bb2?! e5 7 Ng3 Be6 would leave Black with a very pleasant advantage indeed. Here 6 c3!? improves, although after 6...e5 (Black may also wish to explore the structurally-crazy 6...d3!? 7 Nf4 Bg4! 8 f3 Bf5 9 g4! g5 –

futuristic chess if ever one saw it) 7 Ng3 Qd5 (7...a5!?) 8 Na3 b5! I would again prefer to take Black; not only are ...Bd6 and ...0-0 on their way, but so too is a queen-side hit with ...a5.

I dare say that creative opponents – and one requires a certain creative bent to venture 2 Ne2 – might try to gambit with 5 Bb2!? fxe5 6 f4, but after 6...exf4 (6...c5!?, with the idea of 7 fxe5 Qd5 8 bxc5 Nc6, should also tempt Black) 7 Nxd4 Nf6 8 Bc4 Qd6! Black seems to be able to maintain sufficient control of the centre.

5...fxe5 6 fxe5 Qd5 7 Bb2 c5! (Diagram 7)

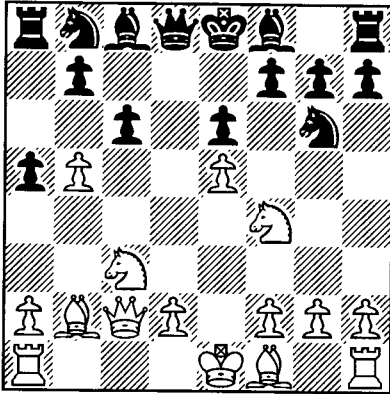


Diagram 6 (W)

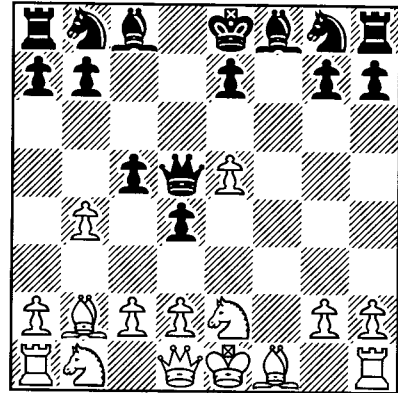


Diagram 7 (W)

This is the star move and the real point of Edouard's novelty. Black offers to temporarily go a pawn in arrears, but will achieve easy development and the complete destruction of White's centre.

8 bxc5 Nc6 9 d3

Trying to find improvements in his notes to this game for the ChessPublishing website, Gawain Jones explored 9 Nc1, but after 9...Nh6! 10 c4 Qxe5+ 11 Be2 Bg4 I have to agree with him that Black remains for choice.

9...Qxe5 10 c3!

White must open the centre in a bid to make sense of his pieces, otherwise Black would simply capture on c5 and after ...e5 find himself a pawn up for clearly insufficient compensation.

10...Qxc5!

The theme of Black's play is the restriction of the white pieces, so the text must be

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

correct, whereas the greedy 10...dxc3 11 Nbxc3 Qxc5 12 Ne4 Qa5+ 13 Bc3 Qd8 14 Nf4 would offer White free piece play and good play for his pawn.

11 cxd4?

A strange decision. One would expect Abergel to have been fed up with his knight gumming up his development on e2. Thus he should have exchanged it, although after 11 Nxd4! Nf6!? (holding back on the exchange, as 11...Nxd4 12 cxd4 Qb6 gives White an improved version of the game if he goes 13 Qb3 Nf6 14 Be2 with ideas of Nc3-b5, as well as Bf3; this isn't easy to assess, but should enable White to claim rough equality) 12 Be2 (the immediate 12 Nxc6 avoids any possibility of doubled d-pawns, but gives Black a pleasant choice of recaptures; taking with the pawn to open the b-file is tempting, but the simple 12...Qxc6 13 Nd2 g6 14 Nf3 Bg7 looks to be slightly in Black's favour, as ...Nd5 or ...Ng4 will follow) 12...e5!? 13 Nxc6 Qxc6 (**Diagram 8**) 14 0-0 Be7 (14...Be6 isn't quite so effective on account of 15 Bh5+!) 15 Kh1 0-0 there is no doubt that Black enjoys comfortable equality, having easy development and decent control of the centre.

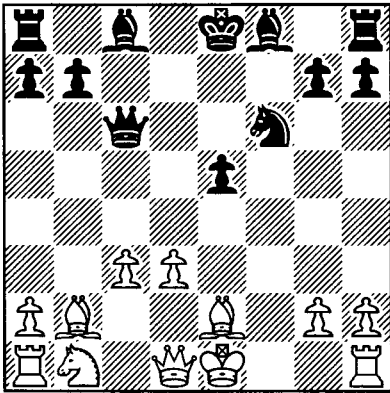


Diagram 8 (W)

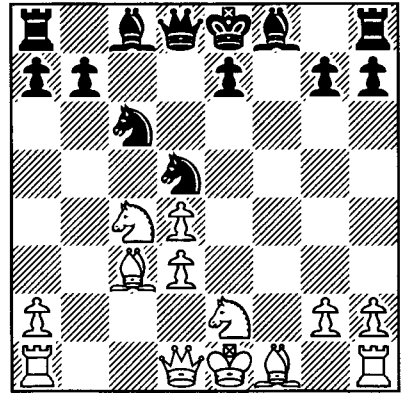


Diagram 9 (W)



DANGEROUS WEAPON! With a series of accurate defensive moves after 4...f6 White may be able to maintain rough equality, but such a scenario was hardly his aim when he sought an early initiative with 2 Ne2.

11...Qb6! 12 Bc3

Now 12 Qb3 would no longer be anywhere near so good on account of 12...Qxb3 13 axb3 Nb4, emphasizing all the holes in White's position. That said, the text is

hardly ideal either, with Black all set to occupy the d5-square.

12...Nf6 13 Na3 Nd5 14 Nc4 Qd8 (Diagram 9)

One can imagine Fischer tersely passing judgement on White's position as 'grim'. Not only have Abergel's bishops failed to fire, but his structure is shot. When did you last see a grandmaster so positionally bankrupt after just 14 moves as White?

15 Qd2!?

Jettisoning the front d-pawn in a bid to develop. Instead 15 Bd2 g6 would have left Black calling all the shots, and d4 would have remained in huge trouble too after 15 Qb3 Nxc3 16 Qxc3 e5!.

15...Nxc3

Hardly bad, but keeping the exchange in reserve with 15...e6!? would have been even stronger, viz. 16 Ne5 (16 g3 Nxc3 17 Nxc3 Bb4 illustrates Black's main aim: ...Qxd4 will follow with some effect) 16...Nxe5! 17 dxe5 Be7 18 g3 0-0 19 Bg2 Nxc3 20 Nxc3 Qd4, leaving White extremely vulnerable on the dark squares.

16 Nxc3 e6 17 Be2 Qxd4

White obtains a bit of counterplay after this and so 17...Bb4! (Jones) 18 Rf1 Qxd4 19 Rc1 Qh4+ 20 Kd1 Bd7 was an even cleaner way to cash in, leaving Black a pawn up and with the bishop-pair for very little.

18 Rb1 Bc5 19 Rf1 Rf8 20 Nb5! (Diagram 10)

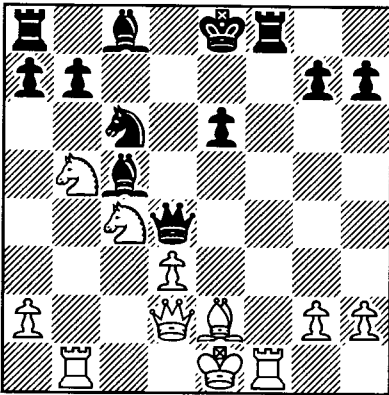


Diagram 10 (B)

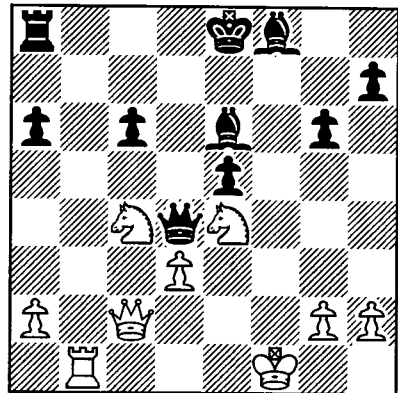


Diagram 11 (B)

White is still somewhat worse, but Abergel has realized that his only chance is to create some threats before Black untangles his queenside.

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20...Qd8 21 Bh5+ g6 22 Rxf8+ Bxf8 23 Bf3 a6!

The only way to stay on top, as 24 Qf4 was such a powerful threat.

24 Bxc6+ bxc6 25 Nc3 Qd4

Back again and, of course, Black remains the clear favourite despite his slightly shaky structure.

26 Ke2 e5 27 Ne4 Bg4+ 28 Kf1 Be6

A mysterious retreat and the bold 28...0-0-0! would have been stronger, leaving White without a good way to defend d3. He can fight on with 29 Qe3 Qxd3+ 30 Qxd3 Rxd3 31 Nxe5, but after 31...Re3 32 Nxg4 Rxe4 Black should win the end-game with care thanks to his superior minor piece and extra pawn.

29 Qc2 (Diagram 11) 29...0-0-0?

Another baffling decision. Either Jones is right that there was a relay error or an epic time scramble was by now underway after such a creative and no doubt slowly-played opening.

30 Qb3?

Dropping d3 and missing his chance with 30 Nxe5!. Even if down to just seconds, one would expect Abergel to have found such a shot.

30...Qxd3+ 31 Kf2 Qxb3 32 axb3 Rd3 33 Ke2 Rd4 34 Ned2 Bh6 35 Nf3 Re4+ 36 Kf2 Kc7 37 Rd1 Be3+?

This surely wasn't played!

38 Kf1? Bd4 39 Re1 Rf4 40 Ke2 Bc3 41 Rd1 c5 ½-½

And presumably after further adventures, White somehow swindled a draw. A strange end to the game, but from the parts that made sense Black's opening was most certainly a success!

Looking a Little Deeper

1 e4 c6 2 Ne2 d5 3 e5 d4!? (Diagram 12)

Having considered the critical 4 b4 in Abergel-Edouard, we must now turn our attention to those other moves which a white player, undoubtedly shocked by 3...d4, might well come up with.

4 Ng3

White's most popular choice in the limited practice thus far, although whether

this is better than the afore-considered 4 f4 and 4 Nf4 is open to doubt. Of course, White can also look first to the queenside and of the following variations, 'b' and 'c' may well receive more attention in the future:

a) 4 c4?! was mentioned by Jeroen Bosch in the forum section of *Secrets of Opening Surprises 8*, but 4...f6 (White might have prevented ...Qd5, but Black can still take aim at e5 with 4...Nh6!? 5 d3 g6) 5 exf6 Nxf6 6 d3 e5 7 Ng3 Bb4+ 8 Bd2 Be7 gives Black a pleasant spatial advantage, W.Muhren-A.Van Beek, Dieren 2003.

b) 4 Na3!? Nh6 (I can understand why Black wasn't so keen on 4...c5 5 Nf4 when the white pieces begin to make sense, but there was no good reason to reject 4...Qd5!?!; presumably Black was put off by 5 f4 Nh6 6 c4!, but after 6...Qd8 7 Ng3 he might calmly develop or become embroiled in the complexities of 7...g5!? 8 fxg5 Ng4 9 Be2 Nxe5 10 d3) 5 c3 c5 6 Ng3 Nc6 7 Bb5 saw White developing quite sensibly for once in 'WindPower'-'Tatar', online freestyle 2007, and would have been about equal had Black kept his structure intact with 7...Bd7 (**Diagram 13**).

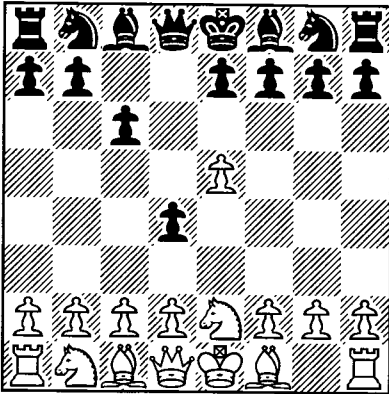


Diagram 12 (W)

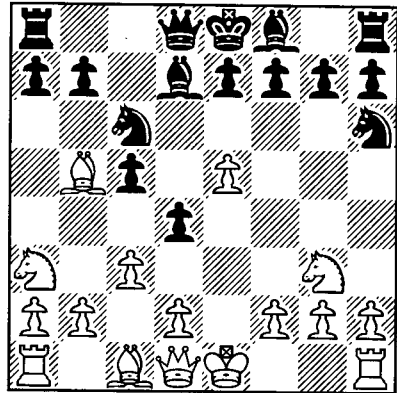


Diagram 13 (W)

c) 4 c3 c5 (4...d3 5 Nf4 Bf5 is a safe alternative, as 6 Qf3 Nd7 7 Nxd3 e6 8 Be2 Qc7 will regain the pawn with equality) 5 Ng3?! (the vigorous 5 b4!? was proposed by Gawain Jones in his notes to Abergel-Edouard; it's logical enough, although 5...Qd5 should be fine for Black, with 6 d3 Qxe5 7 bxc5 Qxc5 8 Nxd4 Nc6 one plausible line leading to rough equality) 5...Qd5! (in practice Black has only tried 5...Nc6 6 f4, which can't be bad for him; 6...Nh6 and even Dziuba's 6...h5!? are logical-enough continuations, but 6...g5 can be met by 7 Bc4!? gxf4 8 Bxf7+! Kxf7 9 Qh5+ when there's no way out of the early perpetual) 6 f4 g5 thematically undermines the white centre and after 7 Bb5+ (7 fxg5?! Qxe5+ 8 Qe2 Qxg5 9 Ne4 Qd5 10 Na3

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Nc6 doesn't give White anywhere near enough for his pawn) 7...Nc6 8 Qf3 Qxf3 9 gxf3 gxf4 10 Ne4 Bg7 11 Nxc5 Bxe5 Black must be at least a little better, with an extra pawn and White's queenside gummed up.

4...Qd5! (Diagram 14)

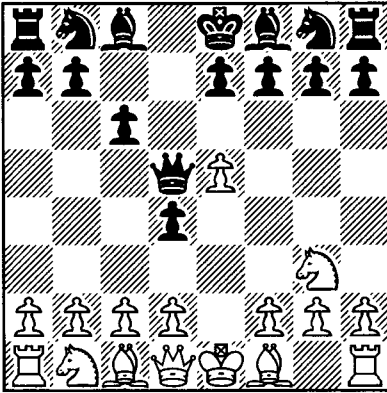


Diagram 14 (W)

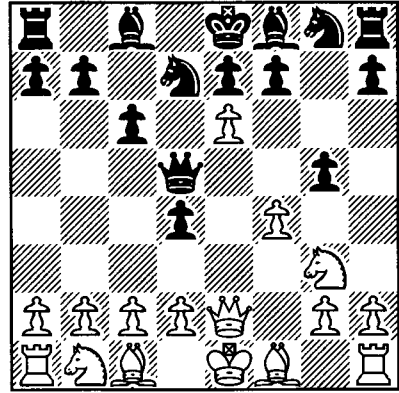


Diagram 15 (B)

Strong, but no means the only tempting possibility. Indeed, Black can also take aim at e5 with 4...Qa5, as was seen in the highest-rated contest thus far with 4 Ng3. That continued 5 Qe2 g6 6 f4 Bg7 7 c3 Nh6! 8 cxd4 0-0 9 Nc3 Na6 and Black enjoyed plenty of compensation for his pawn in E.Paetz-E.Dizdarevic, Solin 2006.

5 Qe2

White's last facilitated this, whereas 5 f4 g5! looks to be in Black's favour, as we saw in the notes to Abergel-Edouard.

5...Nd7 6 f4

White might like to go 6 e6, but 6...fxe6 (6...Nc5!? 7 exf7+ Kxf7 followed by expanding in the centre can't be bad either) 7 d3 e5 8 c4 Qd6 fails to give him enough compensation.

6...g5!?



DANGEROUS WEAPON! Black should always be looking to make the undermining thrust ...g7-g5 work in this variation. Here it provokes complications, but ones which are in Black's favour if anyone's.

7 e6!? (Diagram 15)

Naturally White abstains from 7 fxg5 Nxe5 8 Qe4 when Black's best might be the simple 8...Qxe4+ 9 Nxe4 h6 10 d3 hxg5 11 Bxg5 f5 12 Nf2 Bg7 with easy development, an extra centre pawn and potential kingside pressure. The text is much more critical, especially as 7 c4?! doesn't convince here on account of 7...Qe6, preparing to surround the e5-pawn after all with 8 d3 (8 f5?! Qxe5 9 d3 h6 failed to give White anything for his pawn in G.Smith-M.Broom, British League 2003) 8...gxf4 9 Bxf4 Bg7 (Bosch).

7...fxe6



ROLL THE DICE! Those keen to attack and complicate at any opportunity may wish to explore the daring 7...gxf4!? 8 exd7+ Bxd7, offering a piece in return for the initiative and a powerful central pawn mass.

At this juncture, White's knight can go one of two ways:

a) 9 Ne4 0-0-0 10 Qf3 (10 d3 e5 11 Nbd2?! is too slow and after 11...f5 12 Ng5 Nf6 13 Nc4 Re8 Black's goals become clear: he will shift the knight from g5 and force through a dangerous ...e5-e4 push) 10...f5!? 11 Nf2 Qf7 12 Na3 (this may be too ambitious, but even after the undermining 12 c3!? dxc3 13 Nxc3 e5 14 d3 Nf6 Black has a certain grip) 12...e5 13 Bc4 Qg6 14 0-0 Nf6 (**Diagram 16**) looks like pretty decent compensation to me. White's pieces are far from well coordinated and he remains badly hampered by Black's dominant central pawns.

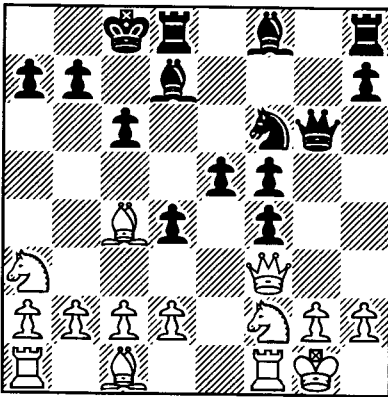


Diagram 16 (W)

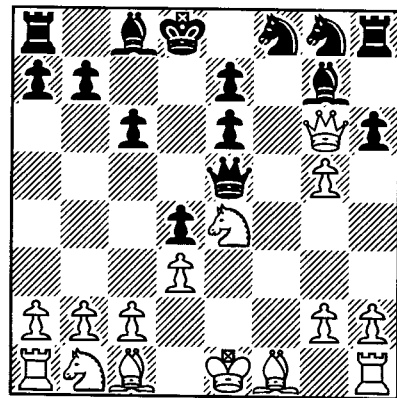


Diagram 17 (W)

b) 9 Nh5 Bh6! (a case can even be made for a further sacrifice with 9...0-0-0!? 10 Nxf4 Qg5, but the text seems quite effective; Black would like to play ...Qg5 and

Dangerous Weapons: The Caro-Kann

...e5, taking over the centre and trapping the knight on h5) 10 Qf3?! (this fails to rescue the knight, but 10 d3? f3! would be even worse for the first player)
10...Qxf3! 11 gxf3 Bf5 12 d3 e5 and Black will regain his piece with the upper hand.

8 Qh5+ Kd8 9 fxf3 h6!

Black wants to open kingside lines. Moreover, is his king really any less safe than White's on e1? On the contrary, I would say!

10 d3 Bg7 11 Qg6

After 11 g6 Be5 12 Be2 Ngf6 13 Qh3 Rg8 14 0-0 Rxf6 I quite like Black's chances, congested though his central situation currently is, but possibly White should try this.

11...Qe5+

Not bad, but again I believe that 11...Be5! would have been strong: for example, 12 gxf6 (or 12 Ne4 hxg5 13 Nxf6 when Black can cover e6 and f7 with some ease: 13...Nf8 14 Qe4 Rxh2 and White loses a pawn) 12...Ngf6 13 Nh5 Bc7 14 Nxf6 Nxf6 15 Qg5 e5 and Black's central pawn mass must at the least fully compensate for White's extra pawn. Indeed, ...Be6 and ...Kd7 will follow, after which ...Rdg8 will increase the kingside pressure.

12 Ne4 Nf8 (Diagram 17)

In this highly-original position a draw was unfortunately agreed in E.Reina Guerra-F.Arauz Alonso, correspondence 2008. Play might have continued 13 Qf7 hxg5 14 Bxg5 Bh6! 15 Be2 Nd7 with a mess in which both sides have their trumps.

Conclusion

Over the years several Caro-Kann practitioners have discovered that the tricky variation 2 Ne2 d5 3 e5 c5 4 d4 has a certain bite, but I can't see a good reason why Black shouldn't steal White's fun with 3...d4. Indeed, we should really finish with a final symbol:



DANGEROUS WEAPON: In the limited practice thus far Black has scored +6 =6 -2 with 3...d4, a move which should perhaps be adorned with an exclaim, not just highlighted as interesting!

Index of Variations

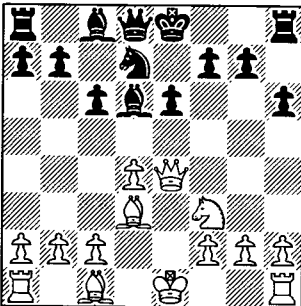
Main Line

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3

(or 3 Nd2 dxe4 4 Nxe4)

3...dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nf6

4...Nd7 5 Ng5 Ngf6 6 Bd3 e6 7 N1f3 Bd6 8 Qe2 h6 9 Ne4 Nxe4 10 Qxe4



10...Qc7 – 103

10...Nf6 11 Qe2 Qc7 12 0-0

12...b6 – 93, 98

12...0-0 – 100

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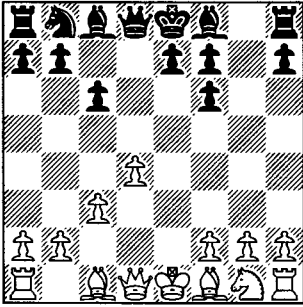
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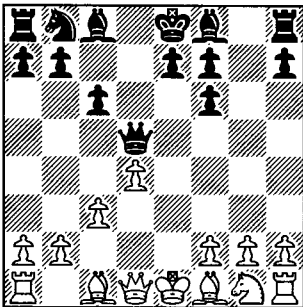
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6...Nd7

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7 Ne2 – 10, 15

7 Nf3 – 20

7 Be3 – 24

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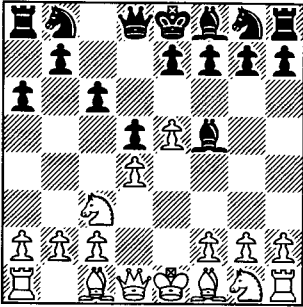
7 Qf3 – 32

7 c4 – 34

Advance Variation

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5

3...Bf5 4 Nc3 a6



5 Be3 – 111, 131

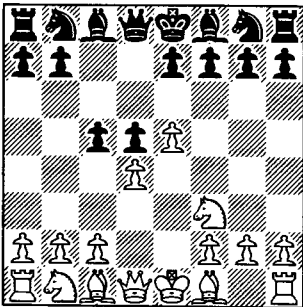
5 Nce2 – 118

5 Bd3 – 124

5 g4 – 127

4 c4

4 Nf3



4...cxd4 5 Nxd4 e6 6 c4 Nc6 7 Nc3

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7...Bc5 – 173

7...Bb4 – 177

4...Nc6 5 c4 Bg4 (5...cxd4 – 166) 6 cxd5

6...Qxd5 – 138

6...Bxf3 – 145

4...cxd4

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5 Qxd4

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5...Nc6 – 159

Panov-Botvinnik Attack

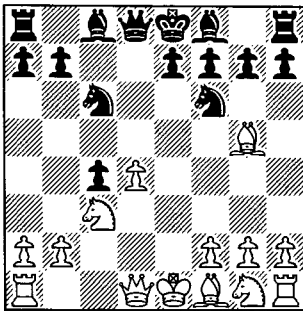
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6 Nf3 g6

7 cxd5 – 219, 237

7 Bg5 – 226

6...dxc4



7 Bxc4

7 d5

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7 Nf3

7...h6 8 Be3 – 183

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8 Bf4 – 193

8 Bxf6 – 196

Other Lines

1 e4 c6 2 Nc3

2 d3 d5 3 Nd2 e5 4 Ngf3 Nd7 5 d4

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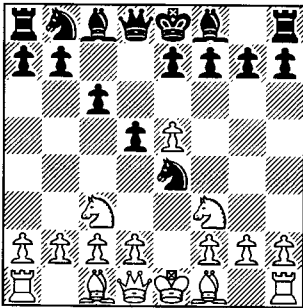
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2...d5 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e5 Ne4



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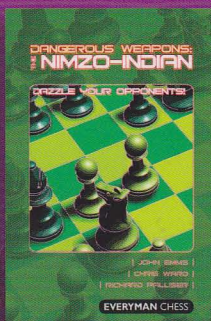
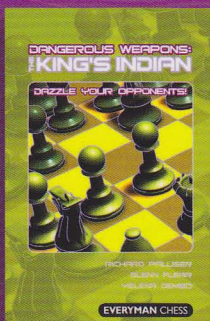
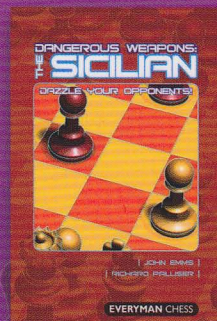
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