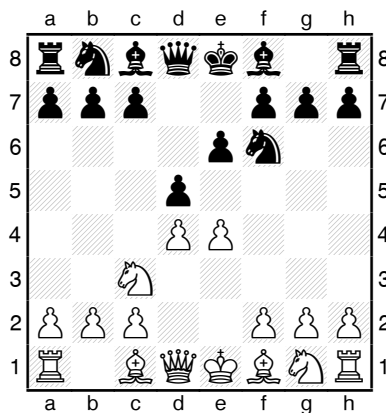
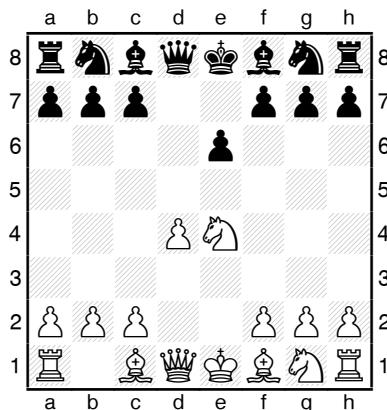


Classical & Rubinstein [C10–C14]

Written by GM Neil McDonald



As its name suggests, the **Classical** is an old and well respected variation of the French Defence. Nevertheless, the theory is developing at a fast rate thanks to the ideas of young Grandmasters like Morozevich. As will be seen, some long-neglected variations are now regarded as giving Black excellent counter chances. 4 ♗g5 is White's most popular move, immediately pinning the knight.



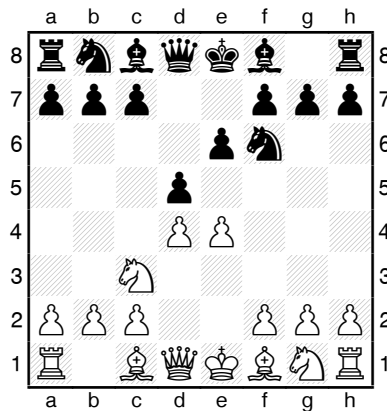
First the good news. By playing the **Rubinstein** you cut-out a lot of theory. Since it is equally playable against 3 ♘c3 or 3 ♘d2 , it means that you don't have to spend days and months looking at the latest novelties in the Winawer or the Tarrasch. Instead you can go out and get a life! You can rest assured knowing that the next time you sit down at a chess board there will still be a solid opening position waiting for you after 1 e4 . All the important developments will be supplied to you on this site. It is only essential that you learn what to do against a couple of the sharp variations.

Now the bad news. If you are happy with a solid, decent position as Black, then fine; however, it's not a terribly exciting way to play! Instead of aiming for a blocked centre position full of tension and counter chances, albeit with a space disadvantage, Black tries to dissolve the centre.

All the games given in [blue](#) can be accessed via ChessPub.exe, simply head for their respective ECO code.

Contents

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗f6



3...dxe4 4.♗xe4 ♗d7 (4...♗d7 Fort Knox 3..dxe4 4 ♗xe4 ♗d7 [C10]) 5.♗f3 ♗gf6 Rubinstein
3...dxe4 4 ♗xe4 ♗d7 [C10]

4.♗g5

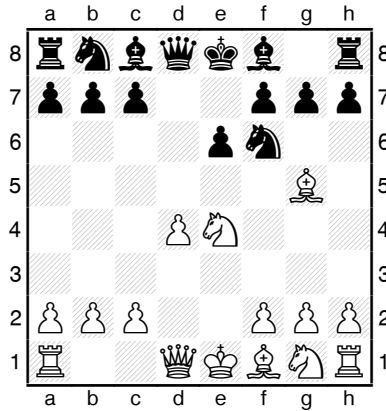
4.e5 ♗fd7 5.f4 (5.♗ce2 c5 Classical 4 e5, 5 ♗ce2 [C11]) 5...c5 6.♗f3 ♗c6 7.♗e3 Classical 4
e5 ♗fd7 5 f4 [C11]

4...dxe4

4...♗b4 5.e5 h6 Classical McCutcheon 4 ♗g5 ♗b4 [C12]

4...♗e7 5.e5 ♗fd7 Classical 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 [C14]

5.♗xe4



5...♙e7

5...♘bd7 6.♗f3 Classical 4 ♙g5 dxe4: 5...♘bd7 [C11]

6.♙xf6 ♙xf6

6...gxf6 Classical 4 ♙g5 dxe4: 6...gxf6 [C11]

7.♗f3

Classical 4 ♙g5 dxe4 6..♙xf6 [C11]

Press F5 to toggle the Navigation Pane, then click on the appropriate bookmark to go straight to that section.

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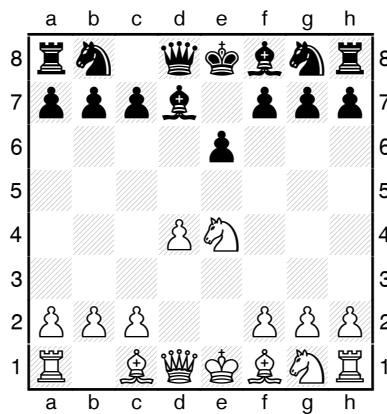
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Fort Knox 3..dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bd7 [C10]

Last updated: 18/02/02 by Neil McDonald

1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 ♘d2 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♗d7

The Fort Knox Variation.



5 ♘f3 ♗c6

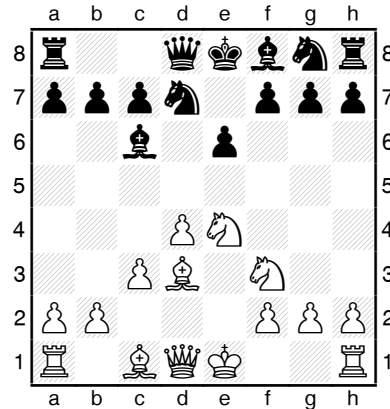
This manoeuvre looks odd, but finding a decent role for the queen's bishop has always been a headache for Black in the French Defence and particularly so after 3...dxe4. Therefore Black activates his problem piece first of all.

6 ♗d3 ♘d7

Or 6...♘f6 7 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6? Here Black has to play 8 ♗g5! ♗xf3 9 ♗d2!! The point. Black's queen is trapped as taking on d4 obviously loses to the check on b5. [Gelashvili,T-Patuzzo,F/Golden Sands BUL 2000](#).

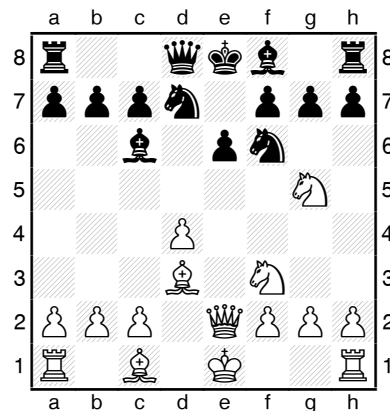
7 0-0

7 c3!? This is a restrained method of play, as normally White aims for c4 at some point to establish a more significant space advantage.



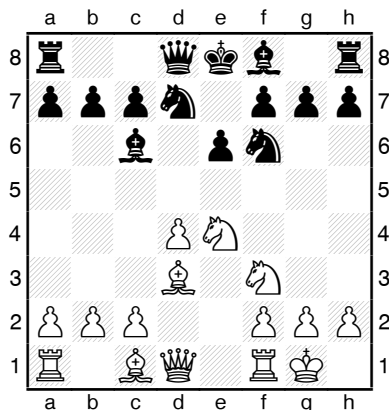
7...d6 8 dxf6+ dxf6 (8...xf6?? 9 g5 xf3 10 d2! is a trap I fell into in a similar position about 18 years ago. Although I won the game after 10...xg2 11 xf6 xh1 etc. I wouldn't recommend it for Black.) 9 0-0 xf3 10 xf3 with a very slight plus for White. [Adams,M-Rozentalis,E/Beograd 1999](#).

7 e2 d6 8 eg5



8...xf3 This is more or less forced as 9 xf3 Objectively 9...c6 10 0-0 d6 Black was blown away after 11 e1 c7? This leads to difficulties. He should have played (11...e7! defending e6 and f7. Then after 12 h3 0-0-0 looks OK for Black.) 12 h3! The trap is sprung! Black is suddenly without a good continuation. Castling kingside is ruled out by the attack on h7, while castling queenside drops f7. Black decides to attack the knight but... 12...h6? 13 xe6+! and White was winning in [Sermek,D-Foisor,O/Porto San Giorgio ITA 1999](#).

7...d6

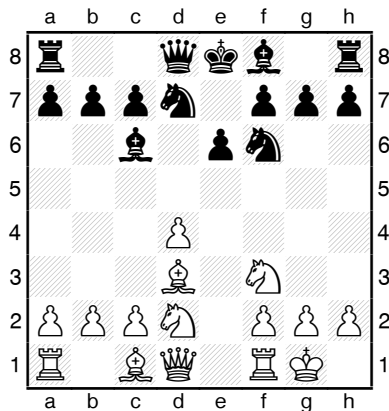


Or 7... Qe7 8 Qc2 Ngf6 9 Ncg5 h6? 10 Nxe6! This type of disruptive sacrifice is well known in Caro-Kann lines. [Antal,G-Varga,Z/ Budapest HUN 2000](#).

7... Qxe4 Black immediately clarifies the situation. 8 Qxe4 c6 9 Ne5?! This simplification is very welcome to Black. 9... Nxe5 10 dxe5 Qxd1 11 Bxd1 Ne7 and Black had already equalised in [Karlsen,T-Rozentalis,E/Gausdal NOR 2001](#).

8 Ng3

Or 8 Ned2!? White avoids exchanges as these would free Black's slightly cramped position and heads via c4 for e5 with his knight. At least that is the idea at the moment— after Black's reply White comes up with a very interesting alternative.



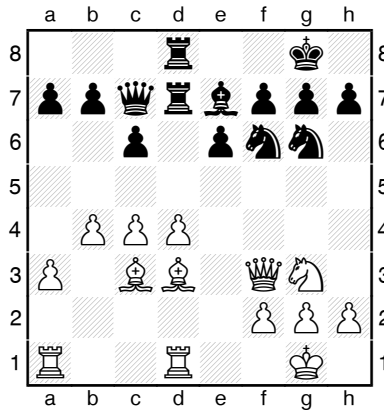
8... Nd5?! Black acts fast to stop White playing Nc4 and Ne5 in comfort. I give this move an exclamation mark in *Mastering the French* but it may be a mistake! 9 c4!? A new idea. Instead I give the following lines in *Mastering the French*: 9... Nf4? Black carries on with the standard knight move seen in the extracts in the note above, but here the simple retreat 10 Qc2 Qe7? 11 Nb3 Ng6 12 Na5! Now Black is in deep trouble as he can't let White play Nxc6 smashing his queenside pawns followed by Be4, Qa4 etc. [Ledger,A-McDonald,N/ Birmingham ENG 2001](#).

8... Qe7 9 Qe2

White wants to put his king's rook on d1, but as Black intends Bxf3 at some point, this may just amount to a wasted tempo.

9...0-0 10 ♖d1 ♗xf3 11 ♕xf3 c6 12 b3 ♖c7 13 c4 ♜ad8 14 ♗b2 ♜fe8 15 ♗f1 ♝f8 16 a3 ♞g6 17 b4 ♜d7 18 ♗d3 ♜ed8 19 ♗c3

The battle lines are draw. White wants to expand on the queenside and open lines for his bishop pair, while Black restrains the white centre and puts pressure on d4.



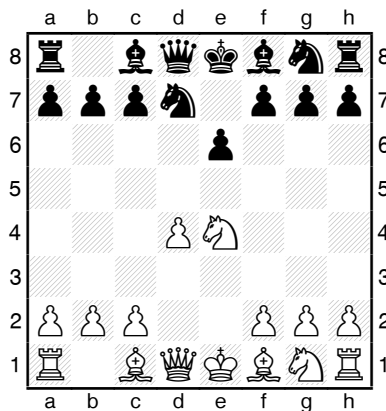
19...♔f8!!

A brilliant positional move. Black wants to challenge White's queen with ... Qf4, but first he moves his king as 19...♖f4? 20 ♗xg6 ♕xf3 21 ♗xf7+! would be an intermediate check winning a pawn. [Gdanski,J–Rustemov,A/Solingen GER 2000](#).

Rubinstein – 3...dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 [C10]

Last updated: 07/04/02 by Neil McDonald

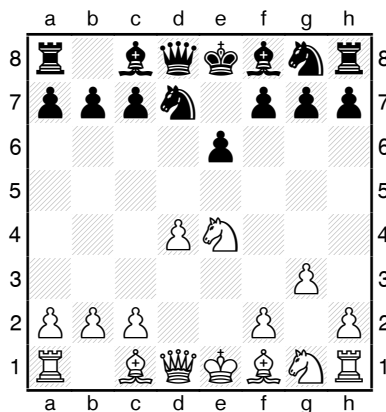
1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 ♘d2 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7



5 ♘f3

The natural developing move.

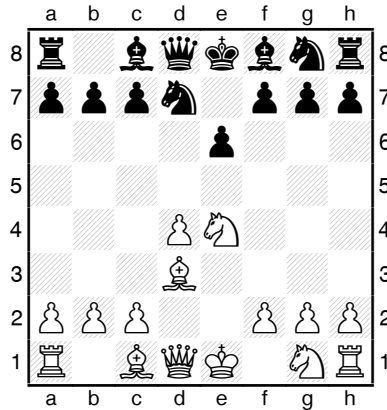
5 g3 This quiet move contains a lot of poison.



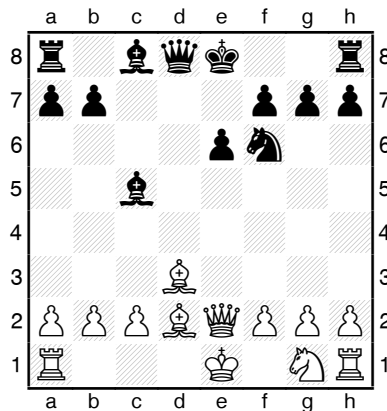
5...♘gf6 (Or 5...♙e7 6 ♙g2 ♘gf6 Assuming he plays carefully and neutralises the pressure against b7, Black still has great difficulty creating any winning chances. This seems to frustrate Morozevich in the game [Fressinet,L–Morozevich,A/Cannes FRA 2002.](#))
6 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7 ♙g2 c5 8 ♘f3 ♜b6 9 0-0 ♙d7 Speelman's idea is to relieve the

pressure on the long diagonal by offering an exchange of bishops on c6. This is logical, but White finds a way to exploit the black queen's position to gain a lasting advantage. 10 a4! ♖c6? Maybe 11 a5 ♜c7 12 a6. Whichever way Black responds to this advance his queenside will be seriously loosened. Things are made much more dangerous for him by the fact that he is still two moves away from castling kingside. [Macieja, B–Speelman, J/New Delhi IND 2000.](#)

5 ♖d3!? An attempt to inject new life into the position by avoiding the 'universal' 5 Nf3. It is highly aggressive: White plans to mobilise the queenside pieces as quickly as possible and castle queenside. A good practical plus about 5.Bd3 is that it doesn't just allow a transposition to super solid Classical territory after 5.Nf3 Ngf6 6.Nxf6+Nxf6 etc– instead the knight stays on g1 while White develops his queenside. Therefore Black can't with impunity switch his move order between the Rubinstein and Classical– if say for example he likes the 4.Bg5 dxe4 Classical Variation, but he doesn't want to face 4.e5, he might try the 3...dxe4 Rubinstein move order instead. Then however 5.Bd3! keeps him well and truly in the Rubinstein. Of course on the minus side there are drawbacks associated with leaving the knight on g1.



5... ♖gf6 6 ♜e2 c5! The attack on d4, which is thematic in the 5 Nf3 mainline, makes even more sense when the pawn is undefended by the knight. 7 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 8 dxc5 ♖xc5 9 ♖d2!? This is the real novelty as Nf3 would transpose back to known lines.

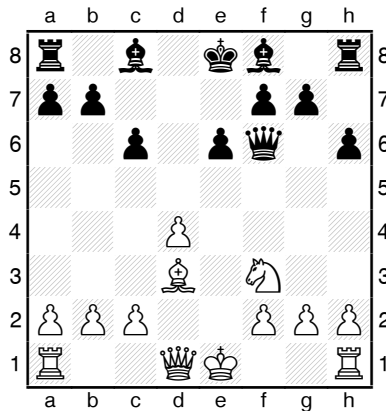


9...0-0 10 0-0-0 White offers to gambit a pawn in enterprising fashion.

- a) A critical alternative was 10...♔d5!?
- a1) However, attention has switched to 11 ♖b1!? defending a2 when after 11...♗xg2 (Best may well be 11...e5!) 12 ♘f3 ♗xf2 13 ♗e5! White developed a vicious attack after 13...♕e7 in [Khalifman,A–Bareev,E/Wijk aan Zee NED 2002](#).
- a2) Now with 11 ♕c3!? White developed a big attack in [Sadler,M–Miles,A/ ch–GBR \(Playoff\) Hove ENG 1997](#).
- b) 10...♗c7!? The best square for the queen. Besides supporting action on the queenside it has influence over the important e5 and f4 dark squares. 11 ♘f3 b6 12 ♘e5 ♕b7 13 ♖b1 ♗fd8 14 f4 ♗d4! Provoking White's reply that creates a weakness on the light squares and so makes an exchange sacrifice viable in [Nedev,T–Supatashvili,K/Leon ESP 2001](#).

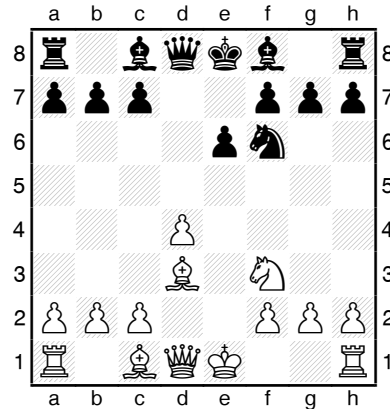
5...♘gf6 6 ♘xf6+

Instead 6 ♕g5 h6 7 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 8 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 9 ♕b5+ c6 10 ♕d3



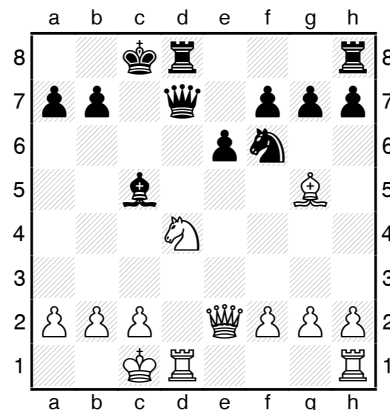
10...♕d3 11 0-0 The most ambitious move— White intends to mate Black with a queenside pawn attack. 11...♕d6 12 c3!? White secures his centre and clears the way for his queen to enter the attack on the queenside. Instead 12...0-0-0 13 ♖e1 c5? 14 ♕e4! [Van den Doel,E–Van Wely,L/Amsterdam NED 2001](#).

6...♘xf6 7 ♕d3



7 c3 A quiet move, keeping the tension in the centre, but it can lead to surprisingly sharp play. 7...♙e7 The alternative is the immediate 8 ♙d3 0-0 9 0-0 b6 10 ♖e2 ♙b7 11 ♙f4 with equal chances in [Emms,J-Arkell,K/Scarborough ENG 1999](#).

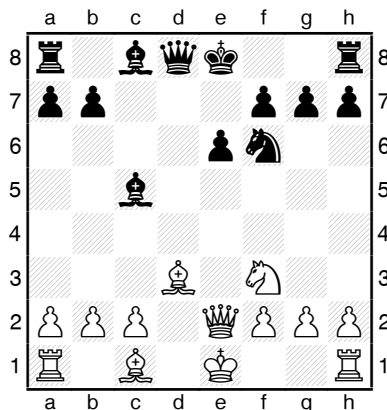
Or 7 ♙g5 ♙e7 (Here 7...c5 what follows should be closely compared with similar lines with the moves h7–h6 and Bh4 thrown in, which are analysed in the Classical 4.Bg5 dxe4 5.Nxe4 Nbd7 electronic book. 8 ♙b5+ ♙d7 9 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 10 ♖e2 cxd4 11 0-0-0 ♙c5 12 ♗xd4 0-0-0!?) A bold move as Black's kingside appears exposed on the queenside, but it brings the queen's rook into the game and adds more pressure to d4. Compare play here with the similar Pavlovic–Antic in the Classical 5...Nbd7 electronic book mentioned above.



) 8 ♙d3 a6?! Black wants to avoid double pawns on f6, rule out Bb5 and also achieve the c7–c5 freeing move. The French is a great opening, but that is asking for just too much! He could still play 9 ♖e2 c5?! 10 dxc5 ♖a5+ 11 c3 ♖xc5 12 0-0 b6 13 ♗e5! ♙b7 14 ♖fe1 ♖d5 And Black hadn't quite equalised from the opening in [Nenashev,A–Slobodjan,R/Seebad Heringsdorf GER 2000](#).

7...c5 8 dxc5 ♙xc5 9 ♖e2

This is White's most aggressive set up, which aims to castle queenside and then, after ...0-0, launch a direct attack on Black's king with g4 etc.

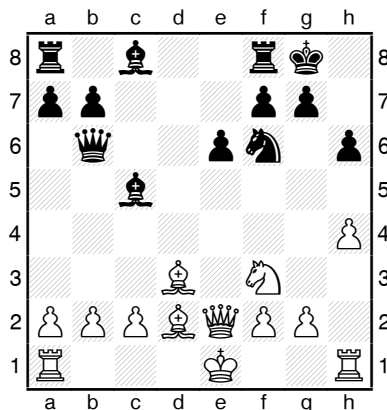


9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖e2 b6 11 ♘g5 ♘b7 12 ♜ad1 ♚c7 13 ♙xf6 gxf6 14 ♙e4 The big question here is whether Black should initiate the exchange of bishops. The evidence suggests the answer 'yes'— see [Emms,J–Ledger,A/Redbus KO, Southend ENG \(1.2\) 1999](#).

9...0-0 10 ♘g5 h6 11 h4

Not 11 ♙xf6?! as giving up the dark squared bishop made things very easy for Black in [Zelcic,R–Speelman,J/Leon ESP 2001](#).

11...♚a5+ 12 ♘d2 ♚b6!?



13 0-0

If 13 0-0-0?! ♘g4! is Rublevsky's idea, which looks good for Black according to some analysis by Speelman in Informator 68. However, castling kingside here is hardly consistent with White's aggressive opening play.

13...e5!?

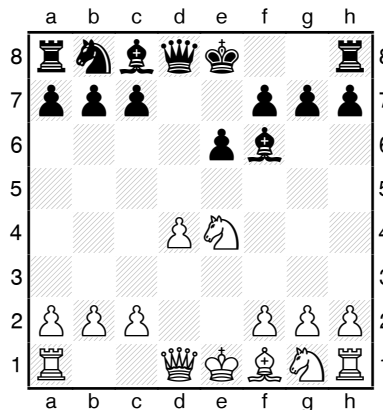
As we have seen above, this pawn advance, whether or not as a sacrifice, always seems to give Black dynamic chances. [Ponomariov,R-Speelman,J/It, Pamplona ESP 1997](#).

Classical 4 Bg5 dxe4: 6..Bxf6 [C11]

Last updated: 10/03/02 by Neil McDonald

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗f6 4 ♕g5 dxe4 5 ♗xe4 ♕e7 6 ♕xf6 ♕xf6

This is one of the most solid ways for Black to handle the Classical. It is a long term favourite of Bareev.



7 ♗f3

White has given up his important dark squared bishop for a knight, but as compensation his own knight on e4 is splendidly placed.

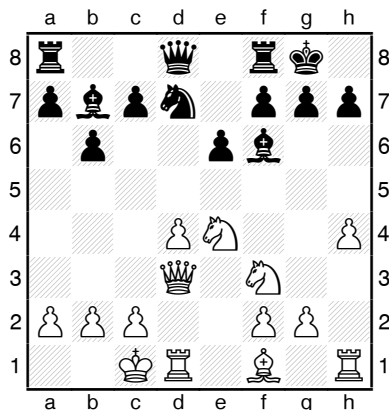
7...♗d7

Instead 7...0-0

a) 8 ♖d2 ♕e7 9 0-0-0 ♖d5!?

This is the move that gives delaying Nbd7 independent value. As every Classical player knows, the white knight is beautifully placed on e4– it can't really be attacked by f7–f5 so it can only normally be challenged by Nd7 and Nf6 or by b7–b6 and Bb7. Ivanchuk's move immediately dislodges it by attacking a2. 10 ♗c3 ♖a5 11 a3 This move is typical of Ponomariov's careful positional style. He is looking for long term pressure rather than lunging forwards with the immediate (11 ♗e5 which allows 11...♕b4!) 11...♗d7 12 ♖b1 and White had some advantage in [Ponomariov,R–Ivanchuk,V/Moscow RUS 2002](#).

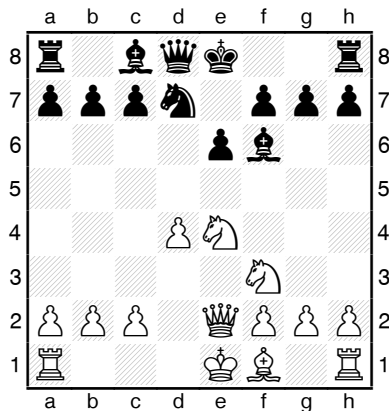
b) 8 ♖d3 White adopts his most aggressive plan which is to castle queenside and begin a direct assault on the kingside. Black has to try to generate counterplay with ...c5. 8...♗d7 9 0-0-0 b6 10 h4 ♕b7



11 ♖eg5 g6 12 ♕e3 White defends g5 again and so threatens 13 h5. 12...c5!? Black sacrifices a pawn to distract White from his attack. Instead 13 dxc5 ♕e7 14 h5 White quite rightly prefers to pursue his own attack rather than snatch pawns. The position was nicely balanced in [Reinderman,D–Gurevich,M/Interteam ch, Antwerp BEL 1998](#).

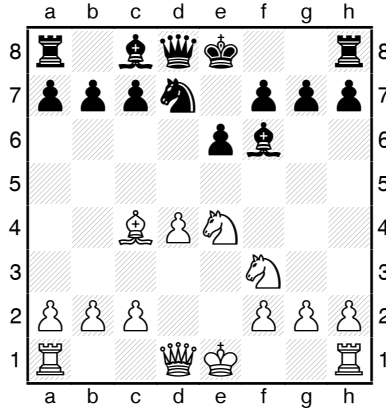
8 ♕d2

8 ♕e2?! Polgar tries to take Bareev out of his theoretical preparation with this unusual move— in principle a good strategy in a rapid play game. The problem is that it simply isn't a good idea to shut in the king's bishop.

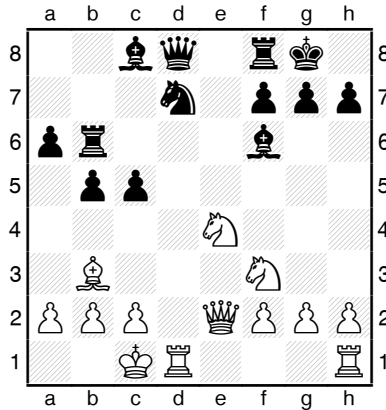


8...0-0 9 0-0-0 b6 10 h4?! The three precious tempi which White spends advancing the h pawn are used by Black to free his position in the centre. 10...♗b7 11 h5 c5! Black can afford to laugh at the potential pin on the d file as White's bishop is still entombed on f1. He quickly seized the initiative in [Polgar,J–Bareev,E/ Cannes FRA 2001](#).

8 ♔c4

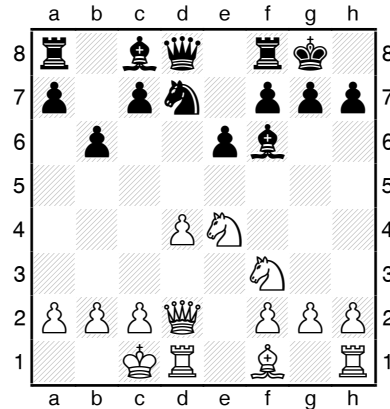


8...a6 Black is keen to get the maximum benefit from the tempo saved in avoiding immediate castling. Svidler on the other hand, tries to exploit the black king. A very sharp battle ensues. 9 ♔e2 If he played 9...b5 10 ♘d5!? Svidler comes up with an interesting way to prevent Bb7. 10...♖b8 11 0-0-0 0-0 12 ♙c6 ♗b6! 13 d5 This looks good, but the problem is it opens an attack on b2 ... 13...exd5 14 ♙xd5 c6 15 ♙b3 c5!! A brilliant example of the interaction of strategy and tactics. Black equalised in Svidler,P–Gurevich,M/Esbjerg DEN 2000.



Finally, one of the good things about Black's move order is that the natural 8 ♙d3 can be answered with 8...c5!

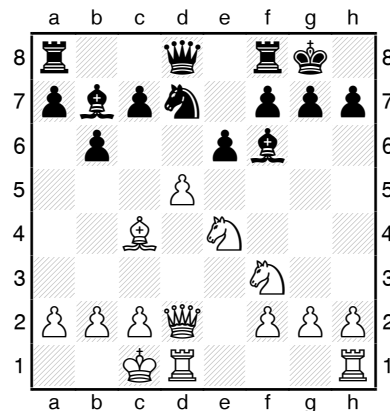
8...0-0 9 0-0-0 b6



9...♙e7 10 ♖c3!? Here is a new move designed to upset Bareev! The idea is to deter the freeing moves e6–e5 or c7–c5. 10...♘f6 11 ♗xf6+ ♙xf6 12 ♙d3 ♖d6 13 ♚b1 ♜d8 14 h4 a5 15 ♖e1! This is a fine retreat which avoids an unfavourable queen exchange after ... Qb4 and prepares to recentralise the queen. White had some advantage in [Kasparov,G–Bareev,E/Bosna SuperGM 2000](#).

10 ♙c4 ♙b7!? 11 d5!?

An ambitious move.



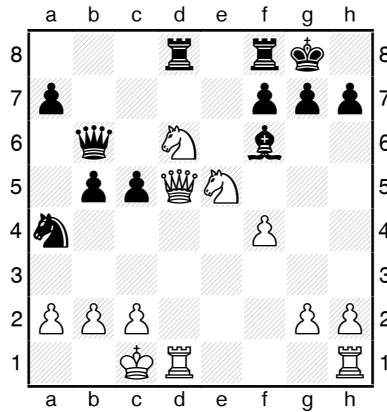
11...b5!

Gurevich's handling of the black pieces is much more enterprising and dynamic than Huebner's suggestion of 11...e5 after which White could speculate with 12 g4!?

12 ♙b3 c5! 13 ♘d6! ♙xd5 14 ♙xd5 exd5 15 ♖xd5 ♘b6! 16 ♖e4

Instead 16 ♖f5!? was played with success in [Almasi,Z–Tukmakov,V/TCh–CRO 2001](#).

16...♞a4 17 ♞e5 ♚b6 18 ♚d5 ♜ad8 19 f4!

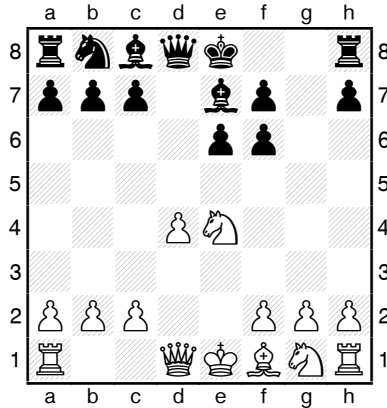


White stabilises his central position with unclear play in [Van den Doel, E–Gurevich, M/Hoogeveen NED 1999](#).

Classical 4 Bg5 dxe4: 6..gxf6 [C11]

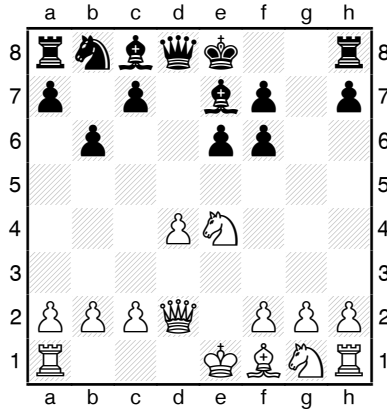
Last updated: 18/02/02 by Neil McDonald

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗f6 4 ♙g5 dxe4 5 ♗xe4 ♙e7 6 ♙xf6 gxf6!?



7 ♘f3

Or 7 ♙d2 White avoids the immediate 7 Nf3 so that he has the chance to gain space with the pawn advance f4. However, this idea proves harmless after Morozevich's careful development. 7...b6! If White had played 7 Nf3, then he could answer 7...b6 with the dangerous deployment 8 Bc4! Bb7 9 Qe2. Here the same plan would just leave him a tempo down, as he has already committed his queen to d2.



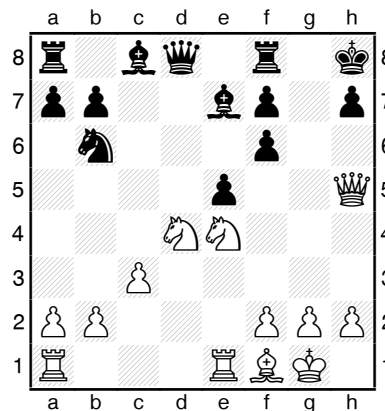
8 g3 ♗b7 9 ♗g2 ♖c8! This meets the threat of 10 Nxf6+. 10 f4 0-0! The black king may look slightly vulnerable here in view of the broken kingside pawns, but the centre is never stable enough for White to embark on an all out attack. In particular, Black is soon exerting strong pressure on d4. 11 ♗f3 ♜c6 12 0-0-0 ♝d8 13 ♖g2! The battle isn't going in White's favour so he is wise to force an early simplification and equality. [Topalov,V–Morozevich,A/Sarajevo BIH 2000](#).

7...a6!

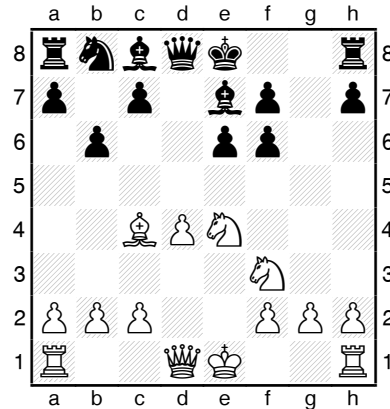
This is a dynamic way to handle the position. Certainly it makes life less comfortable for White than after 7...b6. Now 8 Bc4 can be answered by 8...b5, gaining time by attacking the bishop and then 9 ...Bb7. Furthermore, a bishop exchange with Ba6, as occurs in the ...b6 line, is ruled out here.

Instead 7...♞d7 8 ♗c4 c5 9 0-0 After this quiet response Black seems to equalise. 9...0-0 10 ♝e1 ♞b6 11 ♗f1 cxd4 12 ♞xd4 ♚h8 13 c3 e5 Black has successfully dissolved the white pawn centre and now aims to gain space and dislodge the white knights. Rather than allow this Shirov stakes everything on a kingside attack. 14 ♖h5!?

[Shirov,A–Short,N/Las Vegas USA 1999](#).



Alternatively 7...b6?! In my opinion this is too passive. 8 ♗c4! In this game White achieves a good position with the simplest of means. He centralises his pieces, exchanges off light squared bishops and then exploits the holes that appear in Black's centre when he tries for counterplay. Meanwhile Black is unable to generate the slightest winning chances.

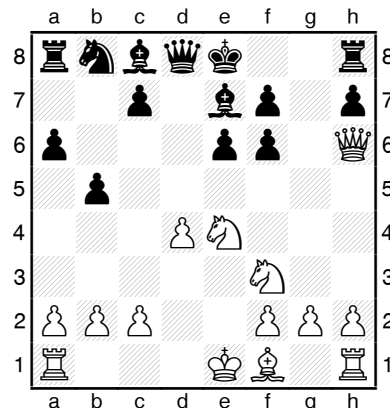


8...♙b7 9 ♖c2 c6 Black stabilises the centre to prevent any breakthrough such as 10 0-0-0 and 11 d5. 10 0-0-0 ♖c7 11 ♜he1 ♞d7 12 ♙b1 0-0-0 13 ♙a6! This exchange of bishops is very annoying for Black. It softens up his light squares on the queenside and so makes a counterattack against the white centre with ...c5 much less attractive for him, as further light square weaknesses appear. Thus Black is deprived of one of his main ideas in this type of position—elimination of the d4 pawn with ... c5. [Sokolov,A–Andersson,U/It, Bar YUG 1997.](#)

8 g3

It may seem strange that White should 'sacrifice' the dark square bishop and then continue quietly, but this fianchetto received the highest seal of approval when it was adopted by Kasparov. White has four alternatives:

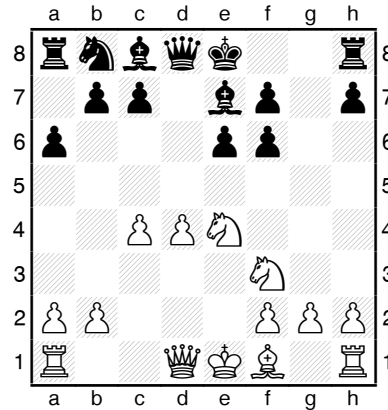
8 ♖d2 b5 9 ♖h6? White is provoked by his opponent's neglect of development into an attempt to land an immediate blow against the black kingside. However, White's own pieces aren't yet ready for action and cannot support the queen. Morozevich recommends a more gradual build up with 9. 0-0-0.



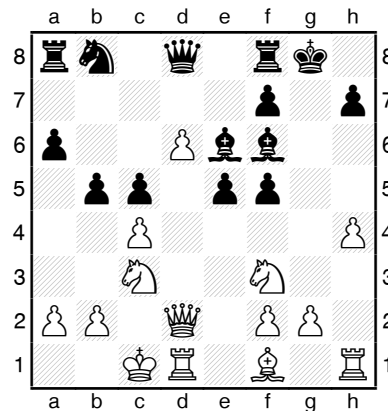
9...♙b7 10 ♙d3 ♞d7 11 ♞g3 (Or 11 0-0-0 This is Wedberg's attempted improvement on the Sutovsky game mentioned above. However, Black's accurate reply seems to be the complete answer to White's misguided attack. 11...f5! 12 ♞eg5 ♙xg5+ 13 ♞xg5 ♖f6!

After the exchange of queens Black's king will be entirely safe and he will have very strong pressure on g2. . [Wedberg,T–Nielsen,P/New York USA 2000.](#)) 11...f5 and Black quickly seized the initiative in Sutovsky–Morozevich, Pamplona 1999.

8 c4 This is the most direct way to prevent Black's plan of 8...b5. The drawback is that after the next three moves Black's dark squared bishop is beginning to look a very impressive piece.



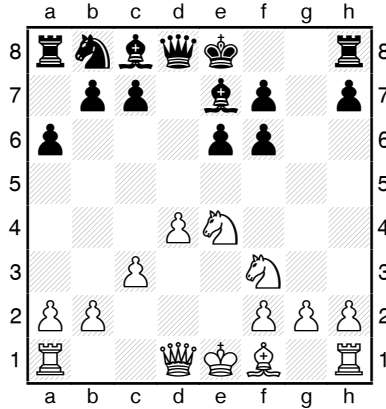
8...f5 9 ♖c3 ♗f6 10 ♕d2 c5 11 d5 0-0 12 0-0-0 e5 (12...♗g7 13 h4 exd5 After this White's knight dominates the centre. Perhaps he should have tried the wild looking 14 ♖xd5 ♖c6 Black's bishop enjoys an excellent diagonal pointing at b2. If the pawn on b7 would just vanish then Black would have enormous pressure with Rb8. Unfortunately for him it takes two moves to play b7–b5 and b5xc4, and meanwhile White's initiative in the centre and on the kingside would grow too threatening. 15 h5 h6 16 ♗h3 f4 Morozevich prevents the rook going to g3 but it costs a pawn and eventually the game. However, Black was already in big trouble in [Shirov,A–Morozevich,A/Astana KAZ 2001.](#)) 13 h4 White create s a base on g5 for the knight in case of ...e4. He also clears the way for the entrance of the rook into the game via h3, as occurs in the game. 13...b5 A logical counterattacking move, but it isn't followed up properly. 14 d6 ♗e6!



(14... ♖c6? Black forgets Nimzowitsch's maxim that 'the passed pawn is a dangerous criminal that should be kept under lock and key!' Instead 15 d7! This pawn will tie Black down

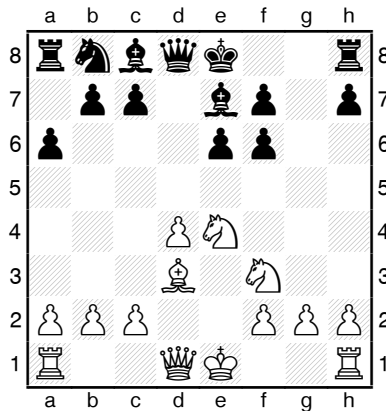
to such an extent that White will be able to generate a decisive initiative on the kingside. [Shirov,A–Topalov,V/ Sarajevo BIH 2000](#)) 15 ♖d5? White has to act fast or else he will be crushed by Nc6 and Nd4. (However, the wild 15 g4!? aiming for 15...fxg4 16 ♖g5 looks a better try to me.) 15...♗xd5! (Radjabov realises that the 'Dragon' bishop is his most important piece and so avoids its exchange after 15...♖c6 16 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 when 17 ♗g5+ looks unclear.) 16 ♗xd5 ♖d7 The passed pawn is firmly blockaded and there is no long term answer to the positional threat of e5–e4 followed by fatal pressure on b2. [Belotti,B–Radjabov,T/Saint Vincent ITA 2001](#)

8 c3 A new idea, but it seems pretty harmless.

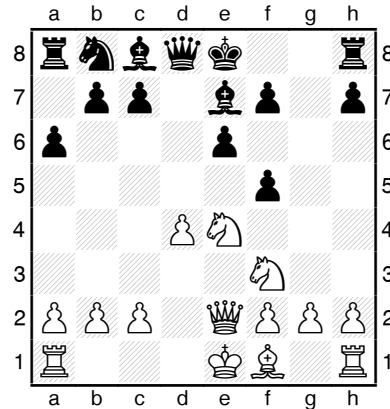


8...f5 9 ♖c5 0-0 10 ♗c4? b5 11 ♗b3 Now White can no longer defend c5 with b2–b4. [Svidler,P–Morozevich,A/Birmingham ENG 2001](#).

8 ♗d3 Rather than 8 Bc4 aiming overtly for d5 or 8 Qd2 planning the aggressive 0-0-0, White simply develops his bishop. This move contains more venom than is immediately apparent.



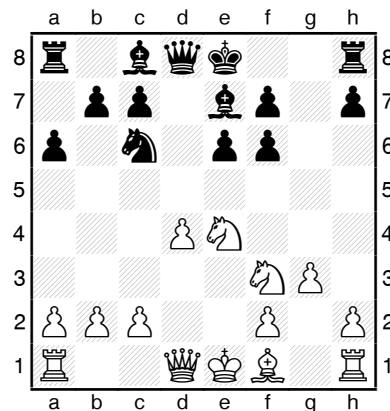
8...f5 This begins Black's natural freeing method, but things aren't so simple. 9 ♖g3 c5 10 dxc5?! After the liquidation of his last centre pawn White finds he has no way to put pressure on the black centre. [Stefansson,H–Morozevich,A/Reykjavic ISL 1999](#). Finally 8 ♗e2 b5 (Black can play more directly with 8...f5!?)



9 ♞ed2 c5 Short argues that against 8.Bd3 the plan of f7–f5 and c7–c5 turned out OK in the game Stefansson–Morozovich, so why not employ it here? [Stefansson,H–Short,N/Reykjavik ISL 2002.](#)) 9 g3 ♞b7 10 ♞g2 is a different move order by White to reach the position after 10.Qe2 below. Thus Ponomariov used it against Gurevich in the game discussed in the notes to 10... Nd7 below. I assume this move order is to deprive Black of the option of 8...Nc6 as in the Leko game of the next note, for after 8.Qe2 Nc6 9.0-0-0 looks strong, with ideas of 10.d5! However, Short's 8...f5 might be a good antidote.

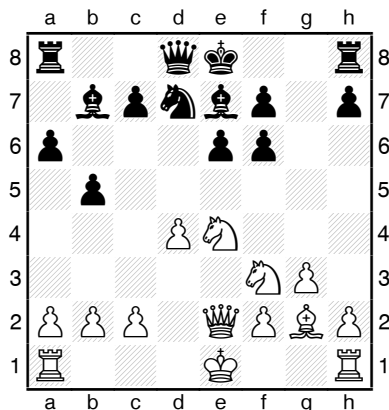
8...b5

Or 8... ♞c6 !? This is the most direct move as already White has to consider how to meet an attack on his centre with e6–e5, which could quickly lead to simplification and a draw as in the game– of course, whether Leko considers that to be a problem is doubtful!

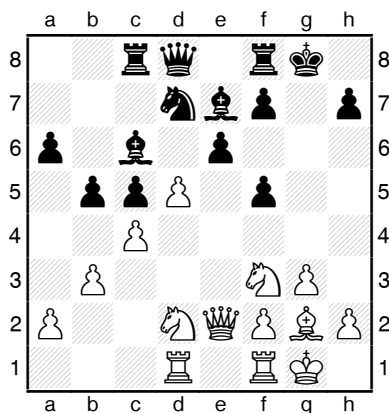


9 ♞c3 h5 ! White isn't going to be left in peace to build up his game with Bg2, 0-0 and d4–d5. 10 ♞g2 h4 11 0-0 hxg3 12 hxg3 e5 13 dxe5 ♞xd1 14 ♞axd1 fxe5 with simplification in [Leko,P–Morozovich,A/Dortmund GER 2001.](#)

9 ♞g2 ♞b7 10 ♞e2 ♞d7



Via a transposition, 10...♔d5 11 c3 ♘d7 12 b3 to prevent Bc4 and so allow 0-0. 12...0-0 13 0-0 f5 14 ♘ed2 c5 Black breaks with c7–c5 and in contrast to the main game Kasparov–Gurevich the white rook isn't already on d1- White has played b2–b3 instead. Therefore White doesn't seem to have as much pressure on the centre – there is no potential pin on d file. However, Ponomariov manages to use the difference to his advantage– the white b pawn proves useful in supporting an advance in the centre. 15 c4 ♔c6 16 ♖ad1 ♜c8 17 d5! [Ponomariov,R–Morozevich,A/Moscow RUS 2001](#).



11 0-0 0-0 12 ♜fd1

12 ♜ad1 Against Gurevich, Kasparov played the more accurate 12 Rfd1 and emerged with the advantage. 12...♔d5! The bishop is rock solid on this square and frustrates all White's attempts to breakthrough in the centre. Black has made a series of natural developing moves and already seems slightly better– a sure sign that White's opening plan has failed. [Polgar,J–Morozevich,A/Wijk aan Zee NED 2000](#).

12...♔d5 13 c3

Compared to the Polgar game mentioned above, White's a2 pawn is still defended, so he can prepare to chase the bishop from d5 with c3, planning b3 and c4, without worrying about Bxa2. Gurevich responds by attempting to equalise with a quick c5, but of course with his queen on the same file as the white rook there is always going to be some danger.

13...f5 14 ♖ed2 c5 15 dxc5 ♗xc5?

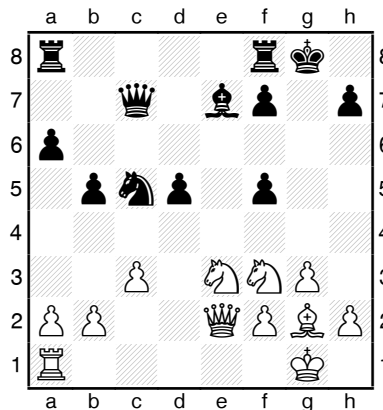
This gives Kasparov the chance to play one of his trademark positional sacrifices. Instead 15...♗xc5 looks solid enough, for example 16 ♗b3 ♕f6!

16 ♗f1!

Now the pin on the d file means that Black cannot escape having his pawn structure wrecked.

16...♕c7 17 ♖xd5! exd5 18 ♗e3

and the World No1 had a dangerous initiative in [Kasparov,G–Gurevich,M/Sarajevo BIH 2000](#).



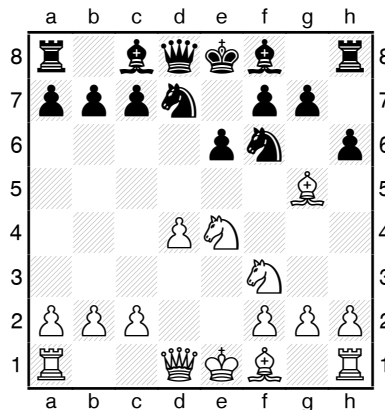
Classical 4 Bg5 dxe4: 5...Nbd7 [C11]

Last updated: 18/02/02 by Neil McDonald

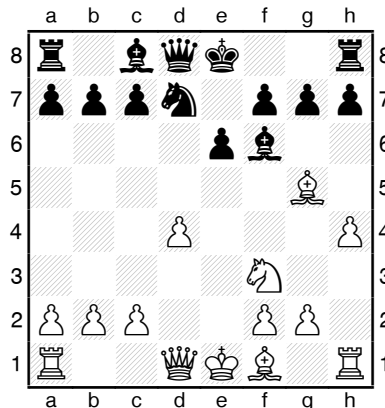
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6

The position at move seven in the main game can also be reached via the move order 3...dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7 5 ♘f3 ♘gf6 6 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7 ♔g5 h6 (while 7...c5 would also be possible here—for details of lines with this move order, have a look at the Rubinstein electronic book.)

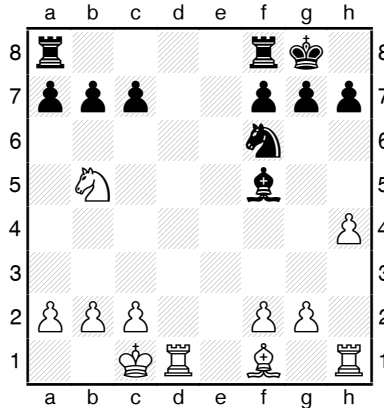
4 ♔g5 dxe4 5 ♘xe4 ♘bd7 6 ♘f3 h6



Or 6...♔c7 7 ♘xf6+ ♔xf6 8 h4! This is the only way that White can keep some tension in the position.

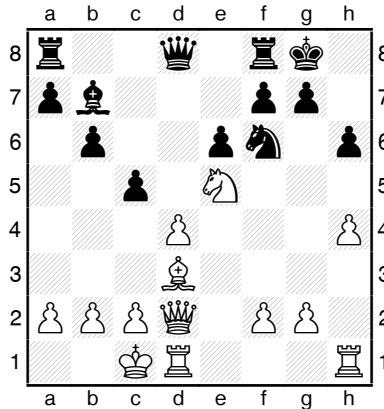


a) 8...0-0 An attempt to instil some life into the position with 9 ♖d2 e5 10 ♗xf6 ♜xf6 11 0-0 exd4 12 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 13 ♘xd4 ♗f6 14 ♗b5 ♕f5!



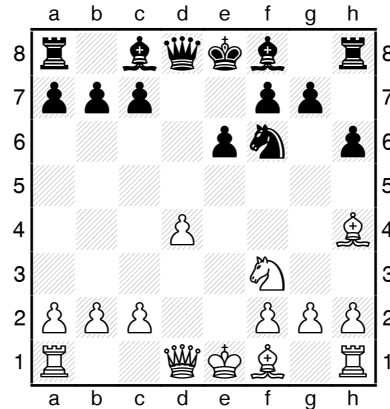
15 ♕d3 (Naturally not 15 ♘xc7? ♜ac8 when it's death on the c file.) 15...♕xd3 16 ♜xd3 ♜fc8! This is clinical defence. Black doesn't weaken himself with ...c6 until he is ready to defend his second rank with ... Rc7. [Lutz,C-Korchnoi,V/Zurich SUI 1999](#).

b) 8...h6 9 ♗xf6 Perhaps White could have maintained a semblance of advantage with 9...♗xf6 10 ♜d2 b6 11 0-0-0 ♕b7 12 ♗e5 0-0 13 ♕d3 c5! Black must strike at the centre or else he will be flattened on the kingside by a quick g4 and g5.

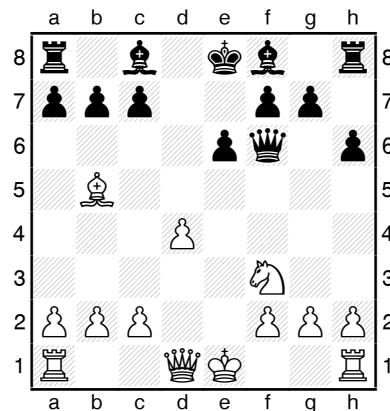


14 dxc5 ♜c7 15 ♜he1 with a tense position in [Anand,V-Korchnoi,V/Wijk aan Zee NED 2000](#).

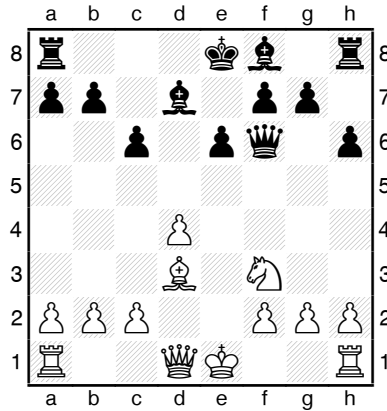
7 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 8 ♕h4



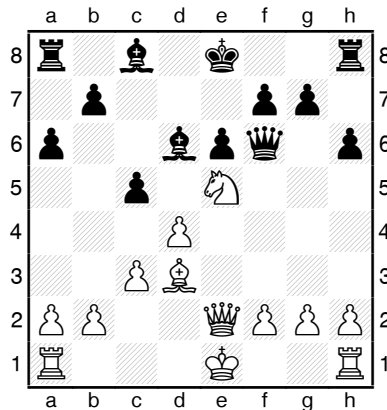
8 ♖xf6 At first glance it is hard to believe that this simplifying move can set Black any real problems, let alone beat the reigning FIDE World Champion. 8...♗xf6 9 ♕b5+ White gives a check to force Black to block the c6 square and so prevents him from developing with Bd6, 0-0, b7–b6 and Bb7, when the light squared bishop enjoys an excellent diagonal.



9...c6 10 ♕d3 a6 As always in this type of centre Black rejoices in the two bishops at the same time as wishing he didn't have a bad bishop on c8! In fact there is no paradox here as the two bishops will prove a blessing or a curse to Black according to how successfully he manages to unwind his game. Anand prepares an immediate c6–c5 to eliminate White's d pawn. (An important alternative is 10...♕d7!? Korchnoi avoids the attempt to gain immediate counterplay. The simple bishop move has hardly ever been seen before. At first sight this fact doesn't seem at all strange as the bishop will remain boxed in for a while. However, Korchnoi wants to castle queenside. He has judged that his king will be safer there than on the kingside, where he has to watch out for the idea of Qe2 and Qe4.

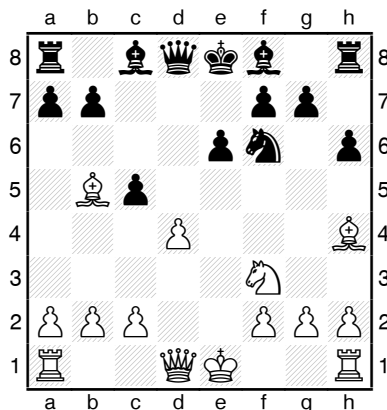


11 ♖e2 ♗d6 12 0-0-0 White could castle kingside and aim for an attack, but Black could always liquidate with c6-c5. 12...0-0-0 13 ♘b1 ♘b8 14 ♙e4 g5! A player with the experience of Korchnoi knows better than to sit still while his opponent builds up with c2-c4 and Rhe1. [Svidler,P-Korchnoi,V/Biel SUI 2001.](#)) 11 c3 c5 12 ♗e5 ♗d6 13 ♖e2! This simple move which defends e5 improves on Topalov's Advanced Chess game against Shirov at Leon 2001 which went

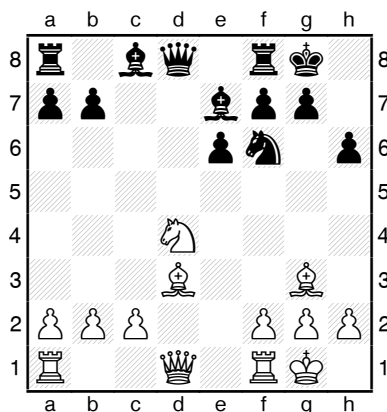


(13 ♖a4+ etc.) 13...cxd4 14 cxd4 ♗d7 15 0-0 and White was strongly placed in the centre in Topalov-Anand, Sparkassen Cat XX1 2001. Another alternative is 8 ♗c3 as in [Gallagher,J-Markos,J/Leon ESP 2001.](#)

8...c5 9 ♗b5+



9 ♖d3 cxd4 10 ♘xd4 ♙e7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♙g3



12...♙d7? (This is too passive. The immediate 12...♗b6! makes it less easy for White to find a good way to defend the b2 pawn as 13 ♘b3 decentralises the knight.) 13 c3 ♗b6 14 ♗e2 Black's hesitation at move 12 has allowed White to develop smoothly and defend b2. 14...♙d6 15 f4! White realises that control of the e5 square is more important than any apparent weakness created in his kingside pawn structure. The knight becomes inviolable on d4 and Psakhis is unable to find any constructive plan. Ponomariov,R–Psakhis,L/Ohrid MKD 2001.

9...♙d7 10 ♙xd7+ ♗xd7

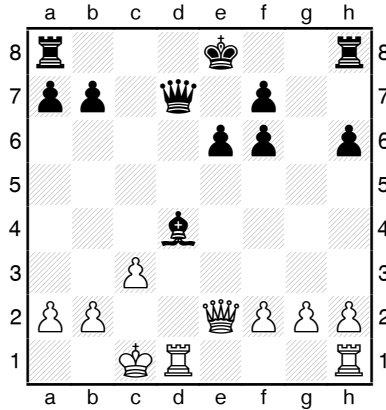
This position without the moves h7–h6 and Bh4 thrown in has been assessed as equal by theory. the addition of these moves may favour White in a miniscule way, as Black's pawn would be better on h7 than h6 in the resulting endgame, but this is of trivial significance. Black never seems to have any problems in what follows.

11 ♗e2

Or 11 0-0 cxd4 12 ♙xf6 gxf6 13 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 14 ♘xd4 0-0-0 The black king is no longer a target and so goes to the queenside where it will be best place to counter White's queenside pawn majority in the future. [Leko,P–Shirov,A/Linares ESP 2001](#).

11...cxd4 12 0-0-0 ♙c5 13 ♘xd4!? ♙xd4 14 ♙xf6 gxf6 15 c3

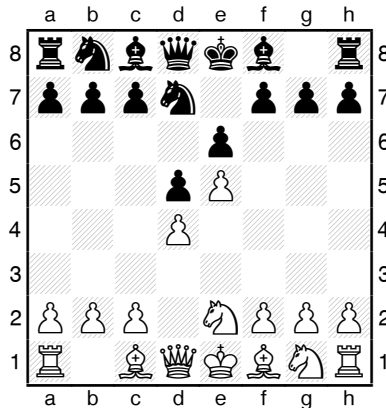
This is the point: White regains his piece whilst maintaining important positional advantages– namely his better pawn structure and safer king. [Pavlovic,M–Antic,D/Herceg Novi YUG 2001](#).



Classical 4 e5 Nfd7 5 Nce2 [C11]

Last updated: 18/02/02 by Neil McDonald

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 $\text{Nce2!?$

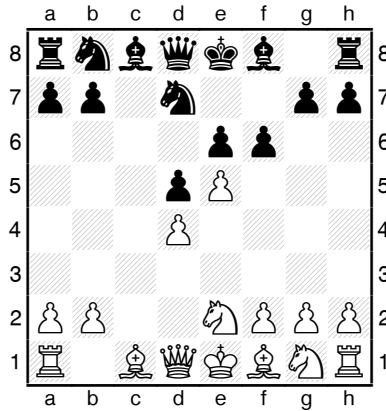


5...c5 6 c3

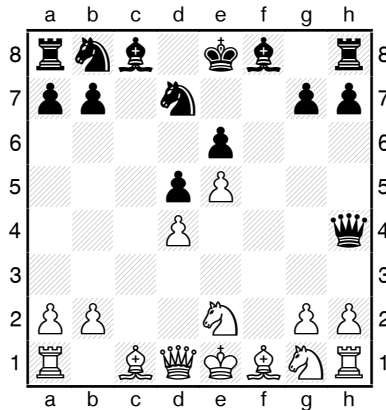
Here 6 f4 allows 6...cxd4 but then 7.Nxd4 gives White the initiative in the centre, even if his d pawn has disappeared. So play might transpose to the mainline below after 6... Nc6 7 c3 –when White has sidestepped the f7–f6 line of the next note. This was the way the Macieja–Ivanchuk game below began.

6... Nc6

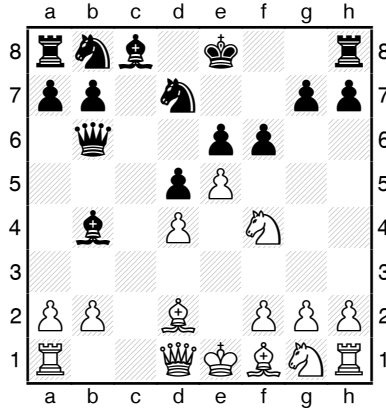
Or 6...cxd4 7 cxd4 f6 Black besieges White's centre head on...



8 ♖f4 ...and White counter attacks against the weakness created on e6. (Alternatively 8 f4 fxe5 9 fxe5 ♖h4+)



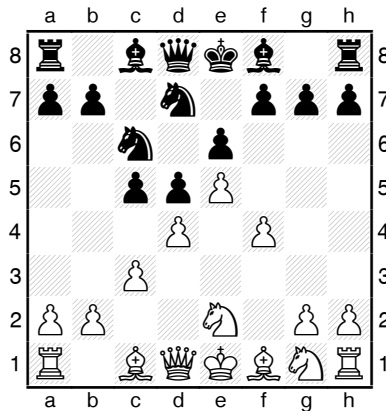
10 ♖g3 ♗b4+ 11 ♔f2 0-0+ 12 ♖f3 ♘c6 13 ♗e3 ♘dx5! Violent measures are called for—if White is allowed to consolidate with moves like Be2, Rf1 and Kg1 Black's position would soon become uncomfortable due to his lack of space— in particular his knight on d7 has no good centre squares and is shutting in the bishop on c8. Therefore sacrificing this knight makes a lot of sense. [Morozevich,A–Gurevich,M/Moscow RUS 2001](#)) 8...♗b4+ 9 ♗d2 ♖b6



(Black would be slightly worse after 9... ♖xd2+ 10 ♗xd2 ♕e7) 10 ♘xb4 ♗xb4+ 11 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 12 ♕xd2 ♕e7 (12... ♕f7! Compared to the Anand–Bareev game, Black saves a tempo by putting the king on f7 straightaway. Secondly, he realises that with the king on f7 there is no need to waste a move on Bd7– the bishop can come out to a more active square. 13 exf6 gxf6 14 ♖f3 ♖c6 15 ♘b5 ♖b6 16 ♘xc6? ♖c4+! A clever zwischenzug. If now the white king drops back to c1 as in the Anand game it will obstruct his queen's rook. Therefore it has to advance to the third rank. The black pieces will gain time for manoeuvres by harrassing it. 17 ♕c3 bxc6 Sax,G–Atalik,S/Bled SLO 2001.) 13 exf6+ gxf6 14 ♖e1 ♖b6 15 ♖f3! ♖c6 16 ♘b5! This is Anand's idea. By exchanging bishop for knight he will be able to prevent the black centre ever expanding with e6–e5. This will allow him to exert heavy pressure on e6. Anand,V–Bareev,E/Shenyang CHN 2000.

7 f4

It could be said that White has transposed from the Classical set up to the Tarrasch, but whenever do you see the queen's knight on e2 in the Tarrasch? Therefore, although it's the Tarrasch centre, all the variations are a little different.



7... ♗b6

A completely different approach is 7...b5 Black immediately mobilises his queenside pawns. 8 a3! This move was introduced into international chess by Alexei Shirov about ten years ago. And then as Black against Anand he had to face his own invention! The idea is to take the sting out of Black's projected b5–b4 advance by replying axb4.

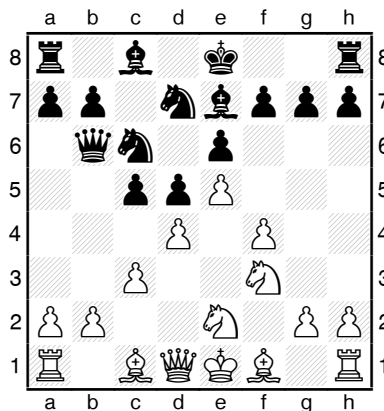
a) Or 8...c4 Morozevich decides to close the queenside as a prelude to an expansion there with a5 and b4. 9 ♖f3 ♗b6 10 g4 f5 Perhaps this should have waited until White's f5 advance was a genuine threat for example (10...a5 11 ♗g3f5) 11 gxf5 exf5 12 ♕g2 ♕e7 13 0-0 h6 14 ♖f2 ♕e6 15 ♕f1 g5? This plausible move is refuted in fine style. 16 fxg5 hxg5 17 h4!! This is a brilliant positional move which sucks all the dynamism from Black's kingside pawns and gains control of the dark squares f4 and g5. [Anand,V–Morozevich,A/Frankfurt GER 2000](#).

b) 8...a5!? followed by Ba6 etc. would continue black's plan of gaining space on the queenside.

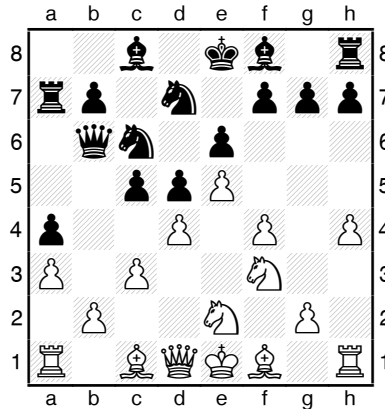
c) 8...cxd4 9 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 10 cxd4 b4 11 a4 ♕a5?! This prevents White from gaining space with 12 a5, which would deny the black knight the b6 square, and also prepares Ba6 to exchange off his bad bishop. Nevertheless, the queen isn't entirely happy on a5. Another approach would be 12 ♕d2 ♕e7 13 ♗f3 0-0 14 ♕b5! and White had a bind in [Anand,V–Shirov,A/Leon ESP 2000](#).

Finally very interesting is 7...♕e7!? Ivanchuk cunningly leaves his queen on d8. 8 ♗f3 0-0 9 a3 a5 Stopping White's queenside expansion with b2–b4 is one of the key elements of Black's opening system. 10 h4?! Exactly what Ivanchuk was hoping for. White carries on with the standard plan as used by Anand and others in this line after Qb6. However, in this case Black can exploit the fact that his queen is still on d8. 10...f6! [Macieja,B–Ivanchuk,V/Moscow RUS 2001](#).

8 ♗f3 ♕e7



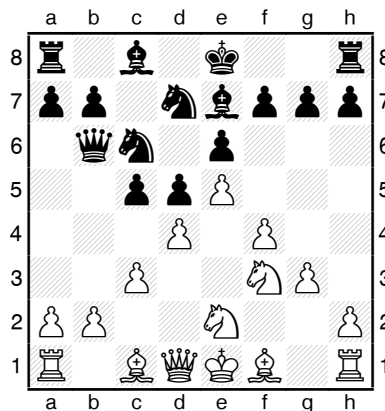
8...a5!? Black decides to leave his bishop on f8. Instead 9 a3 a4 10 h4 White plays the same moves as in the Anand–Shirov game, but in that game Black had already castled. 10...♖a7!? An amazing move. Black anticipates a possible fork in the future on c7 and so moves his rook out of the way. Also, by leaving his kingside untouched he is also not presenting a clear target for the white attack.



11 f5!?! Naturally an aggressive player like Arakhamia cannot resist these provocations. On the other hand, Black has three pieces in play four if you envisage a role for the rook on a7! and White only two, so why exactly should Black be mated by the attack? 11...exf5 12 ♖f4 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♔a5+! A necessary zwischenzug as (13...♗d8 14 ♘xd5 just loses material.) 14 ♙d2 ♗d8 15 ♙d3 (Now however 15...♘d5 ♘dxe5! is fine for Black.) 15...♘b6 16 ♗c2 g6 17 h5 g5?! This eventually leads to a hair raising attack on Black's king. Much more solid was 18 ♘c2 f4 19 ♙xh7 ♘c4! Just when it seems White's attack is becoming overwhelming Black's counterplay kicks in. The kingside structure now has some affinity with the King's Gambit. [Arakhamia,K-Volkov,S/Port Erin IOM 2000.](#)

9 a3

9 g3

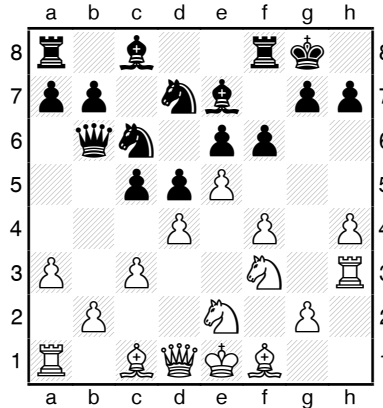


9...a5 The white knights are solidly defending d4. Therefore, Black elects to leave the centre untouched and seek counterplay on the queenside. 10 h4 a4 11 ♙h3 ♘db8 12 h5?! In the Hastings bulletin Lalic said he avoided (12 0-0 as he thought Black could then block the kingside with 12...h5 However, after the game he established that 13 ♘g2 followed by g4 would have allowed him to break things open. Therefore, the

pawn move in the game was superfluous. [Lalic,B–Speelman,J/Premier Hastings ENG 2000.](#))

9...0-0 10 h4!? f6 11 ♖h3!

All according to plan.



11...a5!?

This restrains White from expanding with b2–b4.

Instead 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♖a5! 13 b4 ♖c4 14 ♖c3 (14 ♖g3 a5 15 ♔d3 f5 and if White had a pawn on c3 then 16 Ng5 would be a strong attacking move, whereas with no pawn on c3 16 ♖g5? ♗xd4 is just bad for White.) 14...a5 15 b5 ♖f7 16 ♔d3 ♖f8 17 h5 ♔d7 18 ♗c2 fxe5 19 fxe5 ♖xf3! Black finds another way to exploit the weakness on d4. The exchange sacrifice destroys all White's hopes of an attack and leaves him with a crumbling centre. [Konguvel,P–Vuckovic,B/Biel SUI 2001.](#)

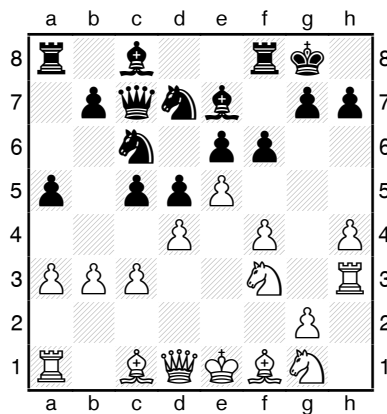
11...♖a5? After White's response Black is unable to put any pressure on d4. This means that Anand can build up his attack on the kingside without any distractions, as Shirov's attempted counterplay on the queenside is too slow. It was better to play 12 b4! cxb4 13 axb4 ♖c4 The knight looks excellent on this square, but what exactly does it do? If you compare the position here with that in the Konguvel note immediately above after you will see that here White has a pawn on a3 rather than c3. This means that White's centre is much more stable which allows him to develop a decisive attack. 14 ♖g3 and White's onslaught proved unstoppable in [Anand,V–Shirov,A/Frankfurt GER 2000.](#)

12 b3

This prevents Black from gaining control of a light square complex on the queenside with a5–a4, when Na5 would follow aiming to play Nb3 or Nc4.

12...♗c7 13 ♖eg1!

Very provocative to say the least! This looks slow, but Anand plans a quick redeployment of his pieces with Bd3 and Ne2, when he safeguards his advanced centre and can begin to pressurise Black.



Instead 13 ♔c2?! b6! 14 ♕d2?! ♕a6 15 a4 ♖ac8 16 f5? After a series of feeble defensive moves White suddenly lashes out. Naturally the logic of the position ensures that his position soon collapses. 16...fxe5 17 fxe6 e4! A well calculated combination. [Jamrich,G–Schneider Zinner,H/Budapest HUN 2001](#).

13...a4

This already has the forthcoming sacrifice in mind. Instead Shipov suggests that Black can quietly complete his development with 13...b6 14 ♕d3 ♕a6 as there is no mate after 15 ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 16 ♖g5+ fxg5 17 hxg5+ ♔g8 18 ♗h5 ♕xg5! etc. Compare the Jamrich extract above.

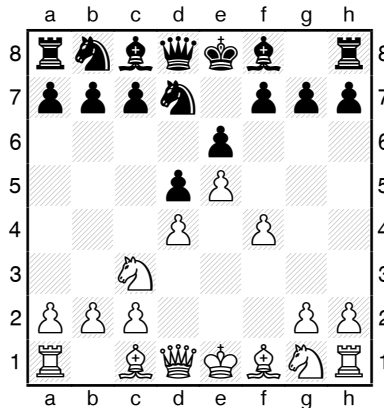
14 b4 fxe5 15 fxe5 ♗dx5!

The only way to free his game. The sacrifice led to obscure complications in [Anand,V–Shirov,A/Tehran IRI 2000](#).

Classical 4 e5 Nfd7 5 f4 [C11]

Last updated: 10/03/02 by Neil McDonald

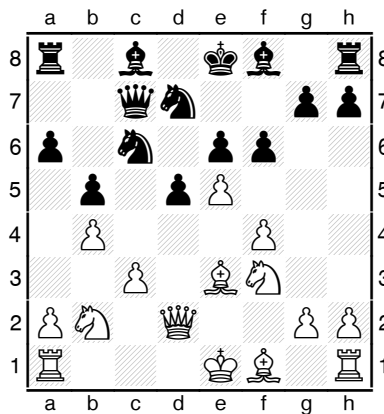
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 f4



5...c5 6 ♘f3 ♘c6

Or 6...a6 7 ♗c3 ♖b6

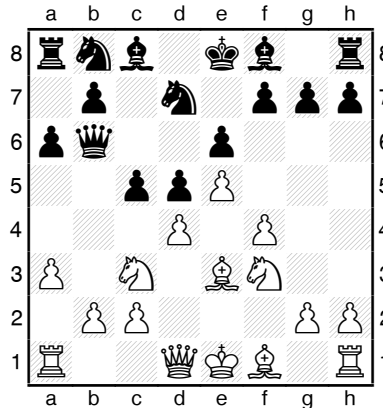
a) 8 ♘a4 ♖a5+ 9 c3 cxd4 10 b4 ♖c7 11 ♖xd4 ♘c6 12 ♖d2 b5 13 ♘b2 f6!? Rather than play on the queenside with ...a5 ideas, the young Russian launches a frontal attack against White's centre.



14 exf6 (Instead in Informator 73 Morozevich recommends 14 a4 which tries to exploit Black's neglect of the queenside. However, after 14...♖b8 things don't seem much

different to the game.) 14...♞xf6 15 ♕d3 ♕d6 16 0-0 0-0 17 a4 ♜b8 18 axb5 axb5 19 ♞d4? This not only leads to the weakening of the f4 pawn but also, after the exchange of knights, allows the black bishop to become influential on b7, where it supports ...Ne4. Even in apparently quiet positions such a positional error can have grave consequences. Morozevich suggests 19 Nd1 in order to reroute White's poorest piece to activity on f2. Then the position is balanced. [Lutz,C–Morozevich,A/Elista \(ol\) 1998.](#)

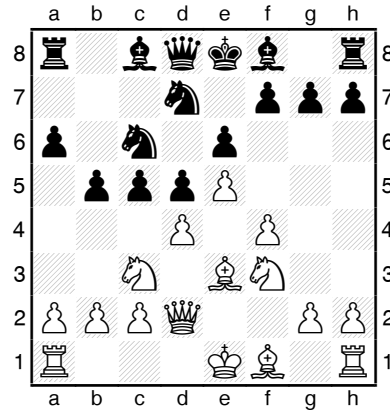
b) 8 a3! This looks like a strong improvement on 8 Na4—see Lutz–Morozevich in the note before. One idea is that 8...Qxb2?? now loses the queen to 9 Na4. Another is that b4 is a useful move in some variations.



8...♞c6 (Of course if 8...♜xb2?? 9 ♞a4) 9 ♕e2 ♜a7! A fine retreat—Black wants to play Bc5 without being disturbed by Na4 as occurs after (9...cxd4 10 ♞xd4 ♕c5 11 ♞a4 ♜a5+ 12 c3 ♕xd4 13 ♕xd4 ♞xd4 14 ♜xd4 b6 15 ♕d1 ♜b5 16 b4 a5 17 ♞b2 The dust has settled and White has a very pleasant position. In particular the black knight on d7 is a dreadful piece—it has been deprived of all its natural deployment squares, such as b6 and c5. The black bishop is also passive.. Topalov–Korchnoi/Dos Hermanas 1999.) 10 ♜d2 cxd4 11 ♞xd4 ♕c5 12 ♜d1 0-0 13 0-0 b5! Black now achieve s at least an equal position, but White is too well centralised to be in any real danger. [Berg,E–Radjabov,T/Malmoe SWE 2001.](#)

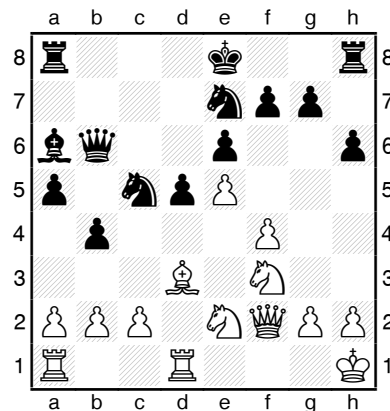
7 ♕e3 cxd4

7...a6 8 ♜d2 b5!/? This is one of Black's most attractive options if he wishes to avoid the sharp mainline. He gains space on the queenside and prepares to play Qb6 without having to worry about Na4 in reply.



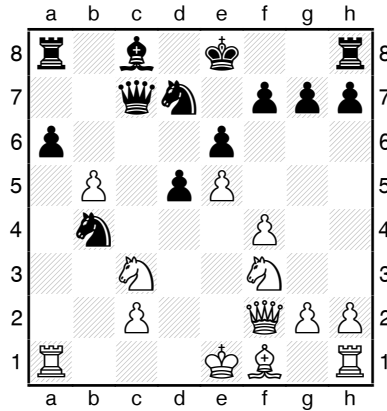
9 dxc5 ♖xc5 10 ♖xc5 ♘xc5 11 ♔f2 ♗b6 This has been regarded as one of Black's soundest variations in the Classical, but with his next move White tries to blast him away with an unexpected pawn sacrifice.

a) Or 12 ♖d3 b4 13 ♘e2 a5 14 0-0 ♖a6 15 ♔h1 ♘e7 16 ♗fd1 h6 Black prepares to castle kingside whilst avoiding the Greek Gift



(16...0-0? 17 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 18 ♗h4+ ♔g8 19 ♘g5 with a dangerous attack for White.) 17 b3?! (More natural was 17 ♘ed4 though after 17...0-0 I can't see any problems for Black, who has already made a lot of progress on the queenside.) 17...0-0 18 ♘fd4 ♗fc8 19 g4?! This is White's idea: a direct pawn storm against the Black king. Unfortunately for him the central situation isn't stable enough to justify this advance. [Przedmojski,R–Vysochin,S/Polanica Zdroj POL 2000](#).

b) 12 b4 12...♘d7!? Declining the pawn sacrifice works out well. Instead (12...♘xb4 13 ♗b1 ♘c6 14 ♖xb5! This is White's idea. He regains his material and breaks up Black's queenside. It appears that in order to castle safely Black will have to sacrifice at least one pawn. [Skrzypnik,M–Hanley,C/Halkidiki GRE 2000](#).) 13 a4 The only consistent move as otherwise White has needlessly weakened his queenside. 13...♘xb4 14 axb5 ♗c7! An excellent decision. Black avoids the exchange of queens and so keeps the white king as a target. [Tissir,M–Vysochin,S/Cappelle la Grande FRA 2001](#).



8 ♖xd4 ♗c5

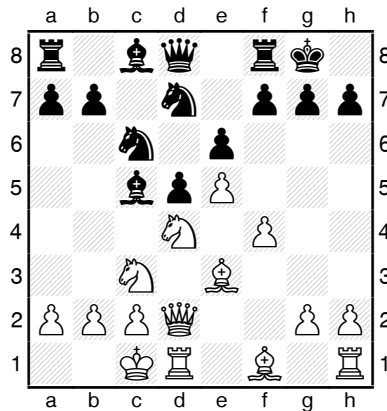
Black can also try the risky

8...♗b6!? 9 ♗d2 ♗xb2 accepting the poisoned pawn. As yet here is no definite verdict on this sacrifice.

9 ♗d2 0-0

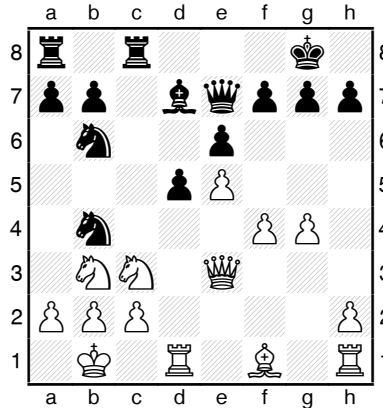
This is the fighting move.

10 0-0-0



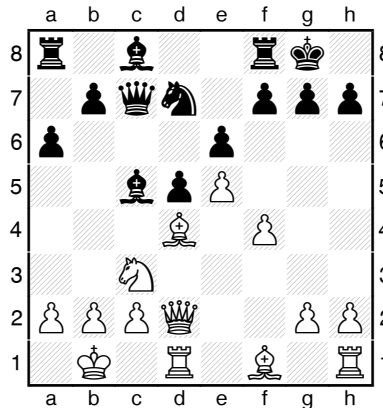
10 g3 It is one of Kasparov's greatest gifts that he always finds ways to force his opponents to think in the opening rather than rely on their memory, even in thoroughly analysed systems. 10...♗e7!? 11 0-0-0 Deterred by (11 ♗g2? ♖b6 aiming at c4 Kasparov elects to castle queenside. He can claim that Black's queen isn't best placed on e7.) 11...♖b6 Rather than advancing the queenside pawns with a7–a6, Nx4 and b7–b5 Shirov decides to attack with his pieces. This turns out well, but there is a critical moment at move 18 below. 12 ♖b3 ♗xe3 13 ♗xe3 ♗d7 14 ♖b1 ♗fc8 15 g4!

♞b4 Black clears the c file for his rooks. His attack looks more potent than White's with its quiet pawn advances, but don't be deceived— once the pawns reach a certain point they stop being quiet and usually become deadly! Therefore Black needs activity at all costs, even if it involves sacrifices [Kasparov,G–Shirov,A/ Astana KAZ 2001](#).



10...a6 11 h4

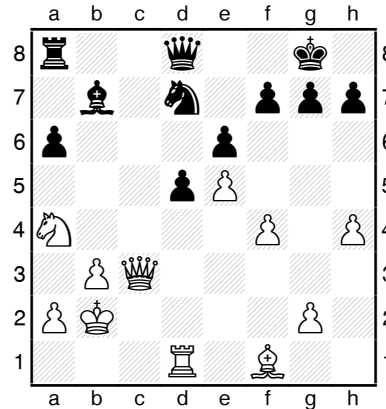
11 ♔b1?! It turns out the game will be decided by competing attacks on opposite wings, so this casual 'safety first' move is just too slow. 11...♞xd4 12 ♙xd4 ♚c7



13 ♚f2?! White continues to play in a passive style and eventually finds himself swamped on the queenside. 13...b5 Meanwhile Black activates his pawns. [Zahariev,Z–Ivanisevic,I/Chania GRE 2000](#).

11...♞xd4

Instead 11...♙xd4 12 ♙xd4 b5 13 ♖h3 b4 14 ♞a4 ♚a5 15 b3 ♞xd4 16 ♚xd4 ♙b7 17 c3 ♖fc8 18 ♔b2 bxc3+ 19 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 20 ♚xc3 ♚d8!

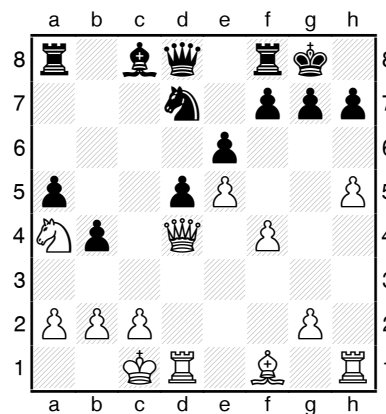


(Much more challenging than 20... ♖xc3+ 21 ♜xc3 when White has an excellent endgame. By keeping the queens on the board Black hopes to prove that the white king is a target in the middlegame.) 21 g3? A perfectly obvious move most players would play it in a blitz game without any thought. White defends h4 and looks to have good prospects with his dark square control. Surprisingly however things aren't that simple. Black can quickly generate counter chances against the white king with a combination of the moves Rc8, a6–a5, Bc6 and a5–a4. Alternatives are analysed in [Fogarasi,T–Bricard,E/ Paris 1995](#).

12 ♙xd4 b5 13 ♜h3

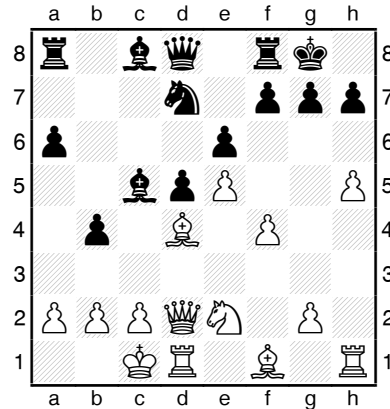
Probably more accurate than 13 h5 e.g. 13...b4

a) Or 14 ♜a4 ♙xd4 15 ♖xd4 a5 Black decides to consolidate his queenside, but he could have tried



(15...f6!? This move seems OK after 13 Rh3 in the first note above– so we have to consider what difference it makes with a white pawn on h5 rather than rook on h3. It may favour Black e.g. 16 h6 g6 and Black's king seems secure whilst the white centre is becoming loose.) 16 ♙b5 This plan of preventing Ba6 is well known from the 13 Rh3 line. [Resika,N–Schneider Zinner,H/Budapest HUN 2001](#).

b) 14 ♜e2



14...a5 15 ♖e3 ♗c7 16 ♔b1 It was more consistent to play 16 h6 here, or simply (16 ♕xc5 ♜xc5 17 ♞d4 when 17...♕a6 can be answered by 18 f5. It is curious that Topalov deploys his pieces in an aggressive manner but then makes no attempt to attack. Not surprisingly, with every move Black's position becomes stronger.) 16...♕a6 17 ♕xc5 ♜xc5 18 ♞g3 ♜fc8 19 ♞c1 a4 20 ♕xa6 ♞xa6 21 ♞hd1 Now White had to think purely about defence in Topalov–Morozevich/Sarajevo 1999.

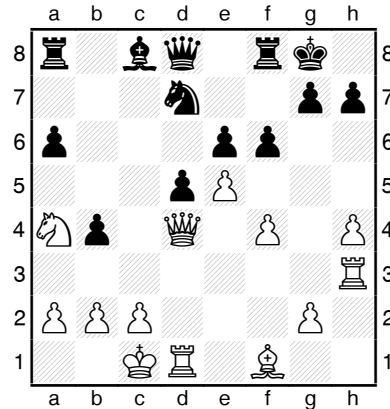
Alternatively 13 ♕xc5 is GM Apicella's pet system. 13...♜xc5 14 ♗d4 ♗c7 15 a3 White's plan unfolds. He takes a move to safeguard against b5–b4 and is now ready to attack on the kingside beginning with f4–f5. 15...♕d7 16 f5 ♜fc8!! This shows Gurevich's brilliant understanding of chess. He never had any intention of e6xf5: He realises that keeping a strong centre is far more important than preventing White from advancing his pawn to f6. 17 f6 gxf6 18 exf6 ♔h8 19 ♔b1 ♞ab8 The pawn on f6 looks tremendous, but where are the pieces to support White's attack? Meanwhile all Black's forces are ready to storm down the b and c files after a6–a5 and b5–b4. [Apicella,M–Gurevich,M/Clichy FRA 2001.](#)

13...b4 14 ♜a4

White does best to block the black queenside pawns.

14...♕xd4 15 ♗xd4 f6

This is the consistent move: having driven the white knight to the edge of the board Black counterattacks against the weakest looking point in White's position without having to worry about the possible response Nc3xd5 with a fork on d5 if the knight is captured. The critical line– is Black alive or dead?



Instead 15...a5 16 ♕b5! The best plan is to rule out 16...Ba6 which would ease Black's game considerably by exchanging bishops. 16...♖b8 (Of course not 16...♗a6? 17 ♗xd7 ♜xd7 18 ♘b6 winning the exchange.) 17 ♗d3 So White has taken two moves to get his bishop to d3, but on the other hand ...Ba6 has been frustrated. 17...♗b7 (Instead 17...♜c7!? 18 h5 ♗b7 19 ♖e3 ♗c6 20 ♘c5 ♘xc5 21 ♜xc5 ♖fc8 22 f5 ♗b5! Black has sufficient pressure on the queenside to offset White's space advantage on the king's wing. [Fedorov,A–Akopian,V/Moscow RUS 2002.](#)) 18 f5! A very dangerous move. The threat of a kingside attack bullies Black into accepting a bad endgame. [Fedorov,A–Korchnoi,V/Batumi GEO 1999.](#)

16 ♜xb4

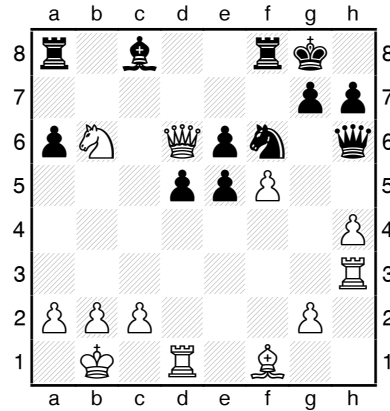
For the next few moves we are following the game Kasparov–Short, Amsterdam 1994, which seemed to deal a fatal blow to the idea of 15...f6. White doesn't seem to have much choice.

16...fxe5 17 ♜d6 ♜f6 18 f5 ♜h6+ 19 ♔b1 ♘f6!

So far the game has followed Wedberg–Brynell.

20 ♘b6

This is why 19...Nf6 was previously rejected– it looks as though White will now win a piece. However, this verdict proves entirely wrong. White could also try the untested



20 ♔d3! as a possible refutation of Black's opening. 20...exf5! I think this is Black's best response, though there are three other moves worth considering— see [Analysis White–Analysis Black/Gravesend 2001](#).

20...♘e4!

Not 20...♖a7 21 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 22 ♔xe6+

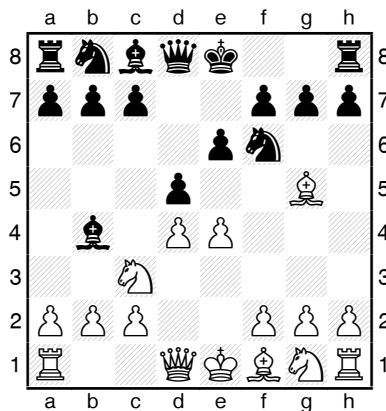
21 ♕c7 ♝f7!

Black saves the piece. This whole line is very controversial and complex. [Wedberg,T–Brynell,S/ch–SWE Linkoping SWE 2001](#). See also [Further Analysis–Further Analysis, Gravesend 2001](#).

Classical McCutcheon 4 Bg5 Bb4 [C12]

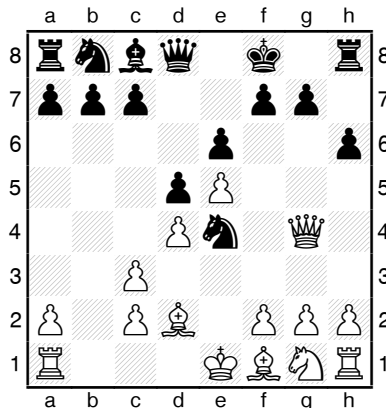
Last updated: 18/02/02 by Neil McDonald

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗f6 4 ♕g5 ♖b4



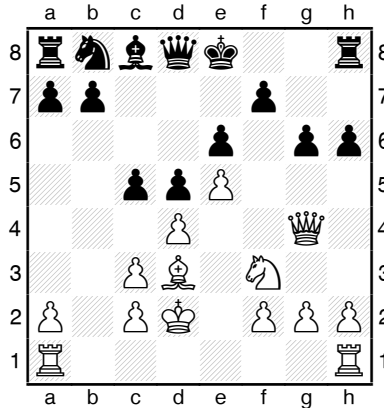
5 e5 h6 6 ♕d2 ♕xc3 7 bxc3 ♗e4 8 ♔g4 g6

Black concedes a weakness in the dark squares on the kingside, but on the plus side he keeps the option of castling queenside. Instead 8...♔f8

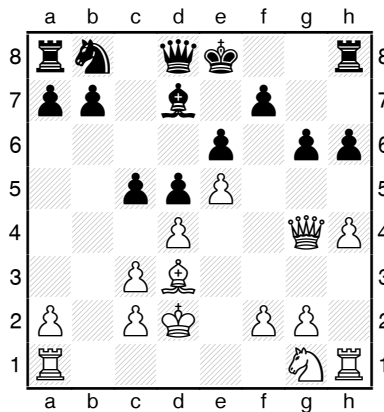


9 ♕d3 (More natural is 9 ♗f3) 9...♗xd2 10 ♔xd2 c5?! Black misses the chance to play (10...♗g5+!?) 11 h4 ♗c6 12 ♗f4 c4! Black correctly closes the position before White has the chance to win d4 for his knight with dxc5. [Gdanski,G–Talla,V/Ostrava 1998.](#)

9 ♔d3 ♖xd2 10 ♕xd2 c5 11 ♘f3



11 h4 ♔d7!? A very rare idea in this actual position, although it is well known after 11 Nf3—see below. The looming advance 12 h5 normally persuades Black to play Nc6.

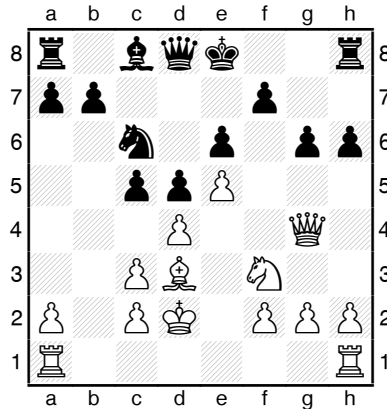


12 h5 g5 13 f4 ♖c6 14 fxg5 ♗xg5+ 15 ♗xg5 hxg5 16 ♔e3! The only good way to defend d4. 16...g4!! A fine positional move. The g4 pawn becomes a target but Short is well aware that this is better than allowing White to play g4 himself, when the h5 pawn would become a decisively strong protected passed pawn. [Leko,P–Short,N/Batumi GEO 1999](#).

11...♔d7!

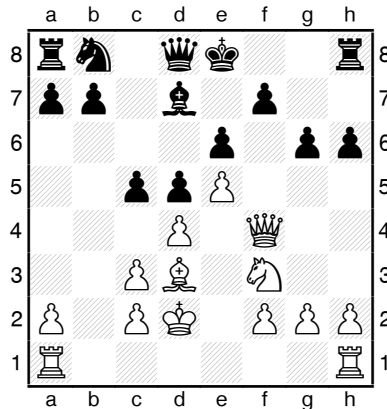
In this game we see Black's best plan of development. He deploys the bishop to c6, where it defends b7 and helps to hold together the queenside. Then the knight comes out to d7 so as to answer any future dxc5 move, clearing d4 for the white knight, with counterplay ...Nxc5 etc.

11...♖c6 I have designated this the 'old fashioned' way to handle the position but in fact it is equally as popular as 11...Bd7.

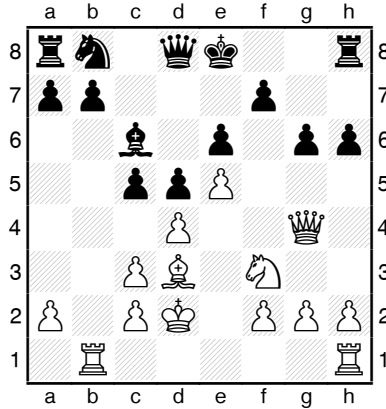


12 dxc5?! White wants to use the d4 square as an outpost for his knight. This isn't necessarily a bad idea, but in the follow up Black is allowed to carry out a favourable simplification. 12... ♖a5 13 ♗f4 ♘xc5 14 ♘d4 ♘xd4 15 cxd4? (A very serious mistake. Instead 15 ♗xd4! keeps control as naturally Black won't want to exchange into a bad endgame after 15... ♗xd4? 16 cxd4) 15... ♗a5+ 16 ♔e3 b6! Now Black will exchange bishops with Ba6 which will both expose the white king to attack and allow the weaknesses on the c file to be exploited. [Lanc,A–Glek,I/Stare Mesto 1992.](#)

12 ♗f4



12 ♗ab1 ♘c6 This is Black's optimum deployment of the bishop, but the drawback for an ambitious player is that it seems White can now force a draw.



13 ♔xg6 fxg6 14 ♖xc6+ ♗e7 Can Black avoid the draw? Analysis in the following game reference suggests 'no'. 15 ♗c8+ ♗d8 16 ♗e6+ With a repetition. Drawing with Black is fine according to the theoreticians, but this game does dent my enthusiasm for 11... Bd7. [Stefanova,A–Hamdouchi,H/Pulvermuele GER 2000](#).
 12 h4 ♔c6 13 ♖h3?! White evidently has some grand attacking scheme with Rf3 in mind after retreating the knight, but it never materialises in the game. [Gashimov,V–Vysochin,S/Bydgoszcz 1999](#).

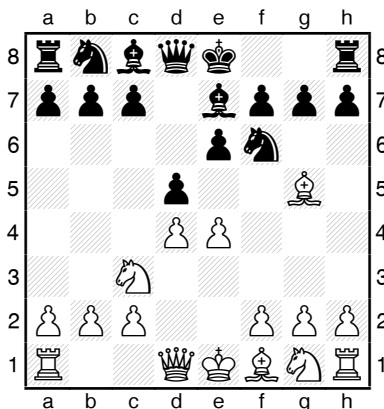
12...♔c6 13 h4 ♘d7 14 ♖he1 ♗e7

and Black had good prospects in [Degraeve,J.M–Gurevich,M/Belfort 1998](#).

Classical 4 Bg5 Be7 [C14]

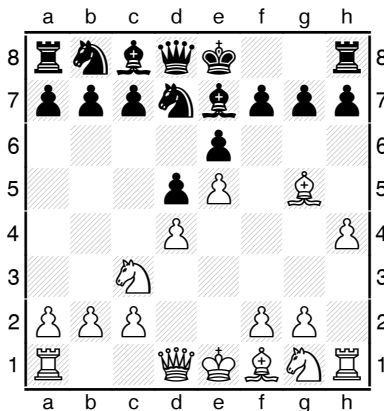
Last updated: 07/04/02 by Neil McDonald

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7



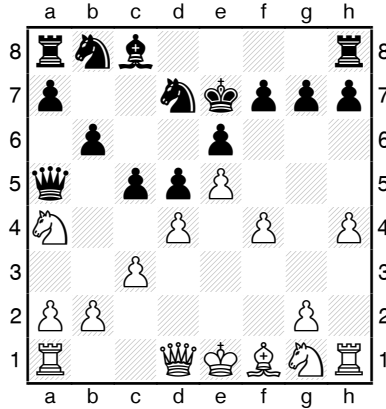
5 e5 Nfd7 6 Bxe7

6 h4 The Alekhine–Chathard Attack. White offers a pawn for an immediate initiative.



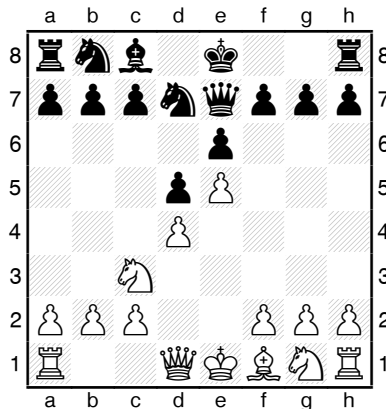
6...c5! This seems to be the most usual choice of the strongest players. Black responds to the pawn offer by counterattacking against d4. (Acceptance of the pawn can lead to obscure play, for example 6... Bxg5 7 hxg5 Bxg5 8 Nh3 Bxe7 9 Nf4 Nc6 10 Ng4 Nxd4 11 0-0 Nf5 12 Nfxd5 exd5 13 Nxd5 Bxe5 with complications in Khalifman–Gulko, Reykjavik 1991.)

- a) Or 7 ♞b5 ♝xg5?! ($7...f6!$ with good chances for Black in a wild position is given in the notes to Rogers–Schneider below.) 8 ♞d6+ ♚e7 9 ♞h5! A precise move– White hits the f7 square immediately. [Rogers,N–Schneider,I/Penn State USA 2002.](#)
- b) 7 ♝xe7 7... ♚xe7 (Black could also try the highly speculative $7...♞xe7!?$ 8 ♞b5 0-0 9 ♞c7 cxd4 10 ♞xa8 f6 when he can hope to pick up the knight in the corner later on or if Nc7 then $a7-a6$ keeps it trapped.
-) 8 $f4$ ♞b6 9 ♞a4 ♞a5+ 10 $c3$ $b6!$ This is the key move. The white knight proves badly placed on a4 where it soon becomes a target. [Nataf,I–Ulibin,M/Stockholm SWE 1999.](#)



6... ♞xe7

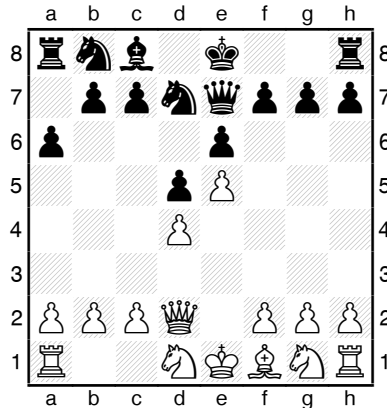
This exchange of bishops is double edged. White gets rid of his so called 'bad' bishop before it can become obstructed by the wall of pawns he is setting up on the dark squares in the centre. On the other hand, Black can be pleased to have eased his cramped position by an exchange of pieces. This latter consideration is the reason that some White players prefer the system with 4 e5 rather than 4 Bg5, so that the dark squared bishops remain on the board.



7 f4

Since the position is fairly closed White has time to bolster his centre with another pawn move before completing his development. This is just as well as in due course Black plans to put heavy pressure on the e5 pawn with moves like ...c5, undermining the supporting d4 pawn, and ...f6.

Instead 7 ♕d2!? An interesting idea— White avoids the standard f2–f4. 7...a6 (Not 7...c5 8 ♖b5 and Black is in deep trouble.) 8 ♘d1 If you want proof of Philidor's maxim that 'pawns are the soul of chess' then this is it! Her majesty the queen gives up her seat for the knight, who in turn is moving back wards so that the humble pawn on c2 can advance one square. And all this just to make sure White keeps a pawn on d4.



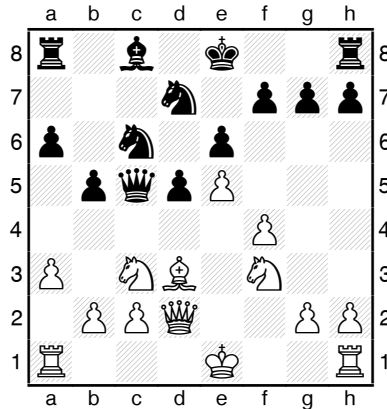
8...c5 9 c3 ♘c6 10 f4 The pawns have been given a clear run to strengthen the centre and constrict the enemy knights. 10...cxd4 11 cxd4 g5?! Black tries to take advantage of what he perceives as White's lack lustre development by provoking an immediate crisis. 12 fxg5 h6 13 ♘f3 hxg5 14 ♘f2! Excellent! The knight emerges to restrain Black's g pawn which kills the dynamism in his opponent's position. [Sakaev,K–Volkov,S/New Delhi ITA 2000](#).

7...0-0

Seeing that

7...c5 runs into trouble after 8 ♘b5! threatening to jump in at either d6 or c7, it seems sensible to whisk the king away to safety. Nevertheless, castling gives White attacking chances based on a sacrifice, as will be seen below. Therefore, Black sometimes prefers to leave his king in the centre for the moment and try

7...a6 Black delays kingside castling in favour of queenside action. One of the plus points is that Greek Gift ideas are ruled out. 8 ♘f3 c5 9 ♕d2 ♘c6 10 dxc5 ♕xc5 11 ♘d3 b5 12 a3!



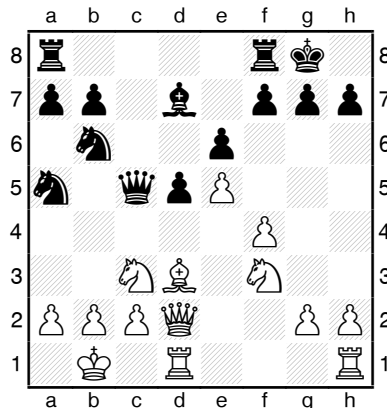
(Black's system really shows its teeth if White castles queenside. The advancing pawns will soon become menacing to the white king for example 12 ♖e2?! b4 13 0-0-0?! a5 etc.) 12...♗b7 13 ♖f2 b4!? Korchnoi takes immediate action on the queenside. 14 ♖a4? The knight is horribly placed here. It remains shut out of the game for 24 moves until finally White makes a losing blunder in exchanging it off! (Correct was 14 axb4 ♖xb4 15 ♖d4) 14...♖xf2+ 15 ♔xf2 a5 16 ♗b5 ♔e7! Naturally in the endgame the black king stays in the centre. [Polgar,S-Korchnoi,V/Amsterdam NED 2001](#).

8 ♖f3 c5 9 ♖d2 ♖c6 10 dxc5 ♖xc5 11 0-0-0 ♖b6

Since the black minor pieces are so far away from the kingside, White can contemplate a so-called Greek gift sacrifice. The basic idea is Bd3, Bxh7+ and (after ...Kxh7) Ng5+ followed by Qd3 aiming at Qh7+, if allowed, or Qh3. But first of all White makes a consolidating move with his king.

12 ♔b1 ♗d7 13 ♗d3 ♖a5!?

Black ignores the threatened sacrifice since he judges that he has enough defensive resources. Instead he plans to strengthen his own attack with 14... Nac4 with ideas of ...Qb4. Therefore White is more or less compelled to test the sacrifice.



14 ♗xh7+!?

leading to a complex sacrificial game in Glek,I–Morozevich,A/ch–RUS, St Petersburg
RUS 1998.