

starting out: the scotch game

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EVERYMAN CHESS



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Introduction

What is the Scotch Game?

The Scotch Game arises after the opening moves 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4. It's called the Scotch because it was first brought to light by a group of players from Edinburgh Chess Club, who used it in a correspondence match against London (1824-28). It turned out to be a successful debut, White winning the game in 60 moves.

Before the 1990s the Scotch Game had always been a reasonably popular 1 e4 e5 opening, without ever really threatening the perennial domination of the Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5). However, in the 1990s it received a major shot in the arm when Garry Kasparov began playing it with some frequency, injecting many new ideas from White's viewpoint and using it with success in world championship matches. World champions, especially Kasparov, dictate opening fashions, so the inevitable consequence of this was that the Scotch suddenly became much more popular at all levels of chess. Nowadays, thanks in no small part to Kasparov's contributions, the Scotch is seen as a very important opening weapon for White.

Why Play the Scotch Game?

First of all, the Scotch is a very well respected opening that you can rely upon – no one's going to come along and refute it in the next few years. It's also relatively easy to learn and can be played after little study; unlike the Ruy Lopez, Black doesn't have at his disposal a plethora of tricky sidelines. Despite this, the Scotch does offer a good variety of positions. Those interested in sharp, tactical battles will enjoy the complexities of the Mieses Variation, while less experienced players and those preferring quieter paths can look to the Scotch Four Knights.

Scotch Pawn Structures

By playing 3 d4 White forces Black to give up the centre immediately with 3...exd4. This leads to some typical Scotch pawn structures that I'll refer to throughout the book. I think it's worth briefly mentioning the most important ones here:

The Pure Scotch Centre

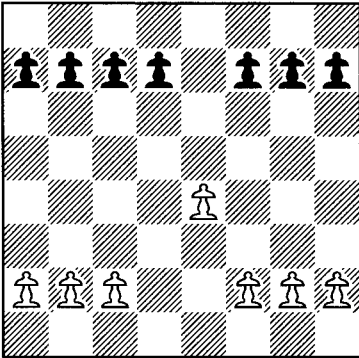


Diagram 1
The Pure Scotch Centre

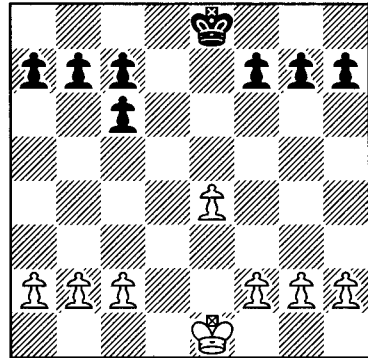


Diagram 2
The Majority Structure

The pawn structure in Diagram 1 arises immediately after White plays 4 Nxd4. The 'Pure Scotch' structure is inherently good for White. With the unopposed pawn on e4, White has greater influence in the centre and more space for his pieces (see Chapters 5-6).

The Majority Structure

The structure in Diagram 2 arises after an early knight exchange on c6, Black recapturing with his d7-pawn. In the long-term, White's undoubted structural superiority promises a major advantage. Nearly all king and pawn endings are winning due to his ability to create a passed pawn from his kingside pawn majority and Black's inability to do the same on the other side. This is a good exercise: try playing the position from Diagram 2 – you'll soon realise how difficult it is for Black to avoid defeat.

In the short term, however, things look quite rosy for Black. The open lines allow him to develop swiftly; the move ...dxc6, allowing the c8-bishop to move, certainly helps him on this count (see Chapter 4).

The Mieses Pawn Structure

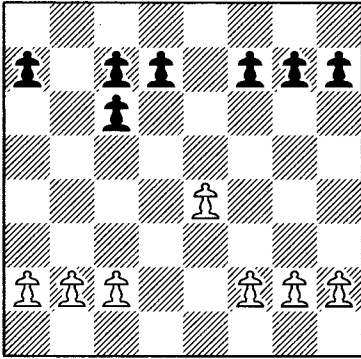


Diagram 3

The Mieses Pawn Structure

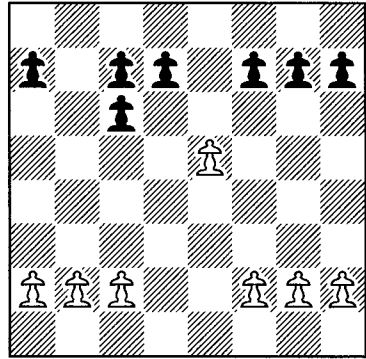


Diagram 4

The Mieses Pawn Structure

The pawn structure in Diagram 3 comes about if Black recaptures on c6 with his b-pawn. Capturing towards the centre allows Black the option of challenging White's e-pawn with ...d7-d5. If this is followed by an exchange on d5 and Black recaptures with the c6-pawn, it's actually Black who has more central influence, although in a traditional sense White's pawn structure is less vulnerable (see Chapter 1).

Very often White moves his e-pawn forward to e5 (see Chapter 2-3), leaving us with the pawn structure in Diagram 4.

Compared to the previous diagram White has a bit more space, the pawn on e5 acting to cramp Black's position. Very often Black will try to seek freedom by challenging White's pawn spearhead with either ...d7-d6 or ...f7-f6.

About this book

As part of Everyman Chess's *Starting Out* guide, this book is primarily aimed at players who have little or no experience in the Scotch Game and who wish to master the fundamentals. In each chapter I've begun by focusing on the early moves of the main variations, and it's here I have tried my best to cover as many eventualities as possible – it's not much good knowing the latest novelty at move twenty only to find that you are stuck when your opponent comes up with something different on move five! In some of the more theoretical and sharp lines I've delved a bit further, but this is by no means meant to be a totally comprehensive openings survey. For those wishing to become theoretical wizards in the Scotch I can recommend using this book in conjunction with studying the latest grandmaster games on computer databases (my own database has over 27,000 Scotch games!).

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

I've occasionally flirted with the white side of the Scotch, but the vast majority of my experience comes from playing the black side. In this book I've intended no particular bias for either, and throughout I've suggested possible repertoires for both White and Black.






The illustrative games have been selected more for their entertainment and instructional value than their theoretical relevance (you won't find too many draws or long endgames here!). In going for an informal approach, I've aimed to be light with attributions and game references throughout the text. However, I would like to mention here a few names (of many) that have contributed greatly to recent Scotch theory. Prominent Scotch players include Kasparov, Morozevich, Rublevsky, Sutovsky, Timman and Nataf, and one also cannot ignore the theoretical contributions from Wells, Gutman, Mikhalevski and Postny.

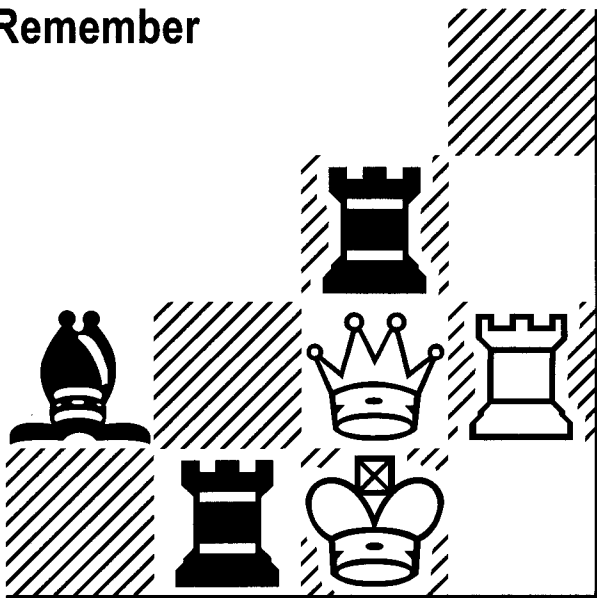
Good luck starting out on the Scotch!

John Emms,
Kent,
July 2005

Chapter One

Scotch Four Knights (4...Nf6 5 Nc3)

-  Introduction
-  Alternatives to 5 Nc3
-  5 Nc3 Bb4
-  5 Nc3 Bc5 and Other Fifth Moves for Black
-  Points to Remember



Introduction

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 (Diagram 1)

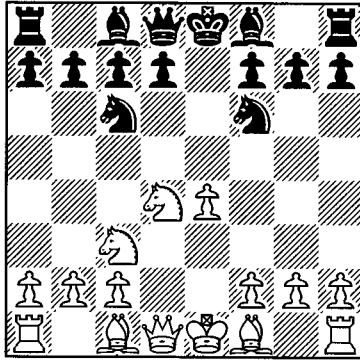


Diagram 1 (B)
The Scotch Four Knights

With 4...Nf6 Black immediately sets about attacking White's centre, basing his early counterplay very much on the e4-pawn. 5 Nc3, developing another piece, is perhaps White's most natural response, and this variation as a whole is known as the Scotch Four Knights.

Alternatives to 5 Nc3

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 (Diagram 2)

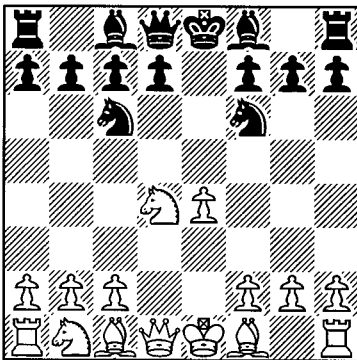


Diagram 2 (W)
Attacking e4

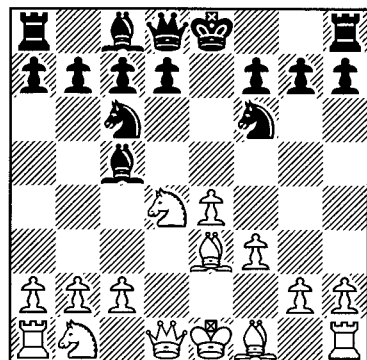


Diagram 3 (B)
Think of ...Qh4+

I think that this is as good a place as any to run through some of White's more unusual options at move five, that is anything excluding 5 Nc3 and the even more popular 5 Nxc6, which we'll discuss in Chapters 2-3. These weird and often not-so-wonderful tries by White do not crop up all that often on my data-base – 5 Nc3, the second most common move, occurs 15 times as often as 5 Bg5?!, the third most common move! However, at improver and club levels they are likely to be more widespread, so for those playing Black it's worth knowing a little something about them.

In a roughly ascending order of importance:

- a) 5 Bd3?? would be a good developing move were it not for the fact that it leaves a piece en prise to 5...Nxd4!. So, already we see the sort of problems Black creates by attacking the centre so quickly!
- b) 5 e5? would be nice if it worked, but it appears that Black can simply grab the pawn with 5...Nxe5. White can pin the knight with 6 Qe2, but 6...Qe7 is fine for Black as 7 Nf5 can be answered by 7...Qb4+! 8 Nc3 (8 c3 Qe4) 8...d6.
- c) 5 f3?! defends e4 but at a cost of weakening the king's position (opening up the e1-h4 and g1-a7 diagonals). Now an immediate strike in the centre with 5...d5 can't be bad, but Black can also attempt to take advantage of White's play with 5...Bc5!?. If the knight moves away from the attack then White won't be able to castle kingside due to the bishop's control of g1. White could try to support the knight by means of 6 Be3? (**Diagram 3**) but then Black can expose the weakness of 5 f3 with the combination 6...Nxe4! 7 fxe4 Nxd4 8 Bxd4 Qh4+!, and whichever way White gets out of check, Black will win his piece back with interest.



WARNING: Be very wary of playing moves like f2-f3 (or ...f7-f6) early on in the opening. Their negative features very often outweigh the positives.

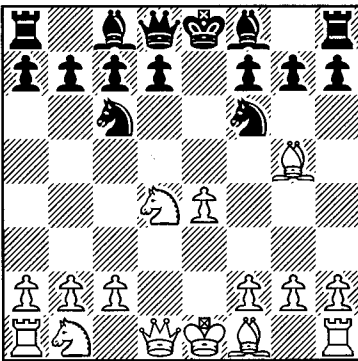


Diagram 4 (B)
Relying on the pin

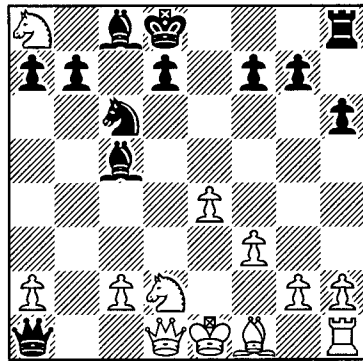


Diagram 5 (B)
Black wins the queen

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Instead 6 Nxc6! bxc6 7 Nc3 with the plan of castling queenside is what White should be looking for, after which Black should get back to the idea of striking in the centre with 7...d5!.

d) 5 Bg5?! (**Diagram 4**) deals with the attack on e4 by pinning the knight.

However, the only problem with relying on this pin is that it can easily be broken. Following the straightforward 5...h6! White must either allow Black to break the pin and win the e4-pawn or else exchange on f6, giving up one of his bishops and accelerating Black's development. Neither is particularly appetising for White:

d1) 6 Bh4 g5! looks good for Black, for example 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 Bg3 Nxe4 9 Qe2 Qe7! 10 Bxc7 Bg7 11 c3 d5 when Black's development is certainly further advanced than White's.

d2) After 6 Bxf6 Qxf6 it's clear that White already has some problems: the knight on d4 is attacked and if this moves then the b2-pawn is vulnerable. For example, 7 Nb5 Bc5! 8 f3 Qxb2! 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 Qxa1, and now the game S.Wedlock-D.Ledger, London 1995 ended very abruptly after 11 Nd2?? (**Diagram 5**), allowing the neat 11...Bf2+!!, winning the queen due to 12 Ke2 Nd4+!.

e) 5 Qd3 keeps both e4 and d4 protected, but it's not ideal for White that such a powerful piece has to perform these lowly tasks.

One question crops up while looking at all these alternatives: 'Does White even need to keep hold of the e-pawn?' After all, there are many lines in Open Games (1 e4 e5 openings) where the e-pawn is sacrificed in favour of speedy development. And there is always the risk of grabbing a pawn in front of your own king. So it makes sense to look at a move such as...

f) 5 Bc4!?, developing the bishop onto a dangerous diagonal and preparing to castle. While it's true that Black isn't forced to grab the e-pawn, this seems like the only real way of trying to punish White for his cheek. So 5...Nxe4 (**Diagram 6**) and now:

f1) 6 0-0 d5! (a good move, both defending the knight and gaining time by hitting the bishop) 7 Bb5 Bd7 8 Bxc6 bxc6 9 Re1 (threatening to win the pinned knight with f2-f3 so Black blocks the e-file) 9...Be7 10 f3 Nd6 11 Qe2 when it's true that Black is prevented from castling for the moment, but I would still prefer to have Black's extra pawn.

f2) 6 Bxf7+!? can come as a bit of a shock to those unfamiliar with this tactic; White exploits the traditionally vulnerable f7-point and the knight on e4 to win back the sacrificed pawn. However, following 6...Kxf7 7 Qh5+ g6 8 Qd5+ Kg7 the position is in some ways deceptive. At first sight Black's king looks quite exposed on g7, but a deeper look into the position sees that it's actually White who is struggling. 9 Qxe4? can be met by 9...Bb4+! 10 Kd1 Re8, while 9 Nxc6 Qe8! threatens both the knight on c6 and a discovered check on the e-file. White can escape via 10 Qe5+ Qxe5 11 Nxe5 but after, say, 11...Bc5 it's Black who is more active in the endgame.

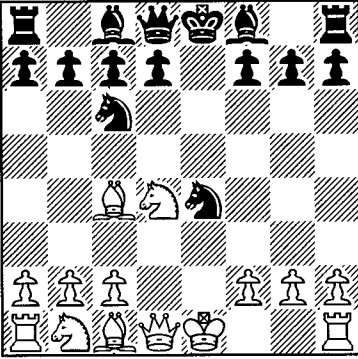


Diagram 6 (W)
Grabbing the e4-pawn

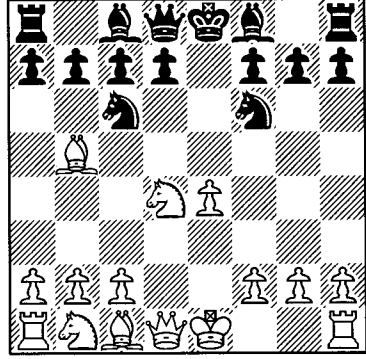


Diagram 7 (B)
Don't rule this out!



TIP: The traditional 'weak points' f2 and f7 are especially vulnerable in 1 e4 e5 openings. It pays to always watch out for tactics, including sacrifices, on these squares.

g) Finally, just when I thought I had everything covered, the idea of 5 Bb5!? (**Diagram 7**) suddenly occurred to me. It certainly looks a little odd, but it has a point that after 5...Nxe4 6 0-0 Black faces some problems as ...d7-d5 is ruled out and 6...Be7?! 7 Nf5! is awkward for Black on account of 7...0-0?? 8 Qg4!. So perhaps on this occasion Black should forgo capturing on e4 in favour of 5...Bc5!?. After 6 Be3? it's safe to play 6...Nxe4! as 7 0-0 0-0 leads nowhere for White, while 6 Nf5 can be met by 6...0-0 followed by a quick ...d7-d5. Of course Black is happy after 6 Nxc6 bxc6 as White has to expend a tempo moving the bishop again. That leaves 6 Nb3 when 6...Nxe4! 7 0-0! still gives White some play, so Black could opt for the safer 6...Bb6. This position reminds me of the one reached after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nb3 Bb6, except of course that White's bishop looks a little strange on b5!

Looking back at this section on fifth-move alternatives, it's certainly more substantial than I first expected it to be. On the other hand, Black doesn't really have much to worry about here, and normally a bit of common sense should see him through. White players who wish to spring an early surprise could give 5 Bb5 a whirl, though this is probably only good for a one-off.

5 Nc3 Bb4

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3

Finally we move onto 5 Nc3, sensibly developing the queen's knight and protecting e4.

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5...Bb4! (Diagram 8)

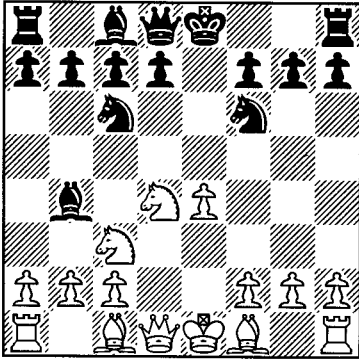


Diagram 8 (W)
Pinning the knight

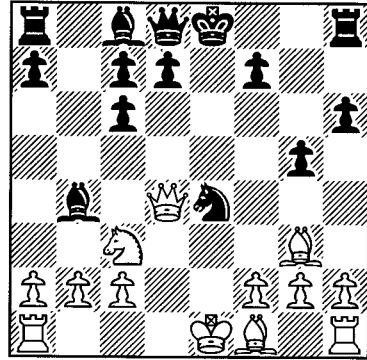


Diagram 9 (B)
A triple attack

What could be more natural? Black develops his bishop, prepares to castle and pins the knight on c3, thus renewing the attack on the e4-pawn. There are one or two alternatives, however, and these will be studied in the next section.

6 Nxc6!

With this move White finally gives up on the idea of trying to protect both e4 and d4 at the same time, and paves the way for Bd3.

Alternatives show how difficult it is for White to maintain the tension in the centre:

a) 6 Nf5?! 0-0! exposes White's extravagant play (three moves by the same piece in his first six). I'll leave the reader to work out why White is already in some trouble after 7 Bg5 d5!.

b) 6 Bg5!? is stronger here than it was on the previous move, White's idea being to move the queen and tuck the king into safety on the queenside. However, Black can still force the bishop to make a decision by playing 6...h6!. Now 7 Bxf6 Qxf6 is again quite uncomfortable for White; 8 Ndb5, attacking c7, can be answered by the calm 8...Ba5, when Black will certainly follow up with ...a7-a6, again hitting the poor knight. So White should probably enter the complications of 7 Bh4 g5!? (this is not forced but looks good) 8 Nxc6 bxc6 9 Bg3 Nxe4 when the e4-pawn has once again dropped off. However, that's not quite the end of the story as White can play 10 Qd4! (**Diagram 9**) with a triple attack on b4, e4 and h8. Even so, Black can utilise a familiar tactic to solve the problem with 10...Bxc3+ 11 bxc3 0-0! – the crucial point is that after 12 Qxe4 Black can regain his piece with 12...Re8 13 Be5 d5! 14 Qe3 f6. After 11...0-0 I prefer Black, who is a pawn ahead, but the position is not entirely clear as both kings could be safer.



NOTE: Pins and counter-pins on an open e-file are very common in Open Games.

c) 6 f3 has similar motives to 6 Bg5 but before developing the queenside White bolsters the e4-pawn. We've already seen how the early movement of this f-pawn offers Black some tactical possibilities based on the temporary weakness of White's king and again here White must be very careful. Now there's nothing wrong with the straightforward 6...d5, but also interesting is 6...0-0, for example 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bh4 Re8!. Now the natural-looking 9 Qd2? is punished by the neat tactic 9...Nxe4!, winning a pawn after 10 Bxd8 Nxd2+ 11 Kxd2 Rxd8.



NOTE: Tactics involving pins can work both ways. In this instance Black unleashed a discovered attack on the h4-bishop, the pinning piece.

Instead White should carry on with 9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 Qd3. Following 10...d5 11 0-0 White has managed to carry through his plan of queenside castling, but Black's pieces are active and he can be reasonably happy with his position.

6...bxc6! (Diagram 10)

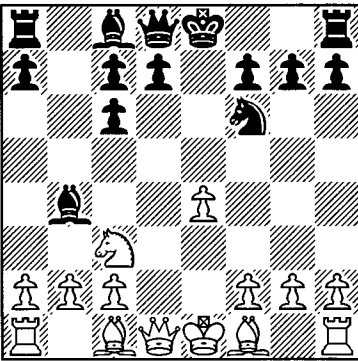


Diagram 10 (W)

Capturing towards the centre

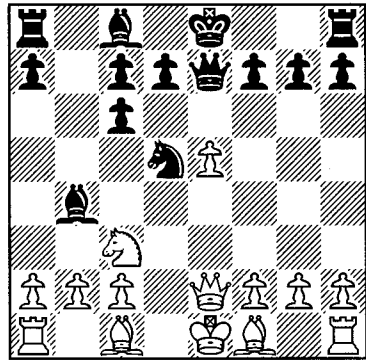


Diagram 11 (W)

Better development for Black

Now Black is ready to strike in the centre with ...d7-d5. You may have noticed that in all the variations above Black has played ...bxc6 rather than ...dxc6. As we will see later, this isn't always the recapture Black uses in the Scotch, and we will look at the pros and cons of ...bxc6 and ...dxc6 throughout the book. It suffices to say here that 6...dxc6?! 7 Qxd8+! Kxd8 8 Bd2 does Black few favours. His king is misplaced and he has no real compensation for White's better pawn structure. Note that 8...Bxc3 9 Bxc3 Nxe4 10 Bxg7 Rg8 11 Bd4 is pleasant for White, who has the bishop pair in an open position and remains with the better pawn structure.

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7 Bd3

Now there is no longer a d4-knight to worry about, this move, protecting e4 and preparing to castle, very much suggests itself. However, for those playing Black it's still worth checking out white alternatives:

a) 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 transposes to note 'b' to White's 6th move.

b) Playing as in the Mieses Variation (see Chapters *.*.) with 7 e5?! doesn't hit the mark here because Black's bishop has already escaped to b4 and thus following 7...Qe7! 8 Qe2 Nd5 (**Diagram 11**) Black's development is much more harmonious whilst White still has some problems developing his kingside.

c) 7 Bd2?! again attempts queenside castling, but White is a move too slow: 7...0-0! 8 Qf3? (White should still revert back to 8 Bd3) 8...Bxc3 9 Bxc3 Nxe4! 10 Qxe4 Re8 (that pin on the e-file again!) 11 Be5 d5 12 Qe3 f6 and Black wins his piece back with some interest, for example 13 f4 fxe5 14 fxe5 Qh4+! 15 g3 Qb4+! and ...Qxb2.

d) 7 Qd4!? is a much better attempt at queenside castling as it gains time by hitting the b4-bishop and intends to meet 7...c5 with 8 Qe5+. When the theory was developing on this move the 'main line' ran 7...Qe7 8 f3 d5 9 Bg5 c5 10 Bb5+ Kf8 11 Qd3! with quite a good position for White because 11...d4 12 0-0-0! dxc3? fails to 13 Qd8+!, winning the rook in the corner.

Instead of 8...d5, Black can try 8...Bc5, while also possible is 8...c5!?. For example, 9 Qf2 0-0 10 Bd2 d5! 11 0-0-0 d4 12 Nb1 Bxd2+ 13 Nxd2 Nd7 14 f4 Rb8 with a pleasant position for Black, I.Bondarevsky-D.Bronstein, Moscow 1945. Instead of 11 0-0-0, is it possible that White can play 11 a3 here? It's true that 11...Bxc3 12 Bxc3 dxe4 13 0-0-0 leaves Black a pawn to the good, but White does have a nice bishop pointing at Black's kingside from c3. If push came to shove, though, I think I'd still take Black.

7...d5 (Diagram 12)

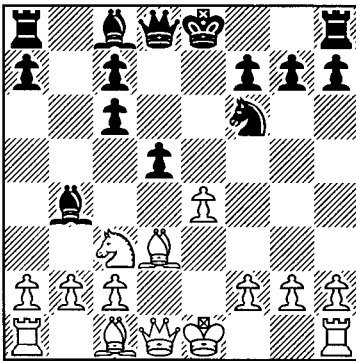


Diagram 12 (W)
More pressure on e4

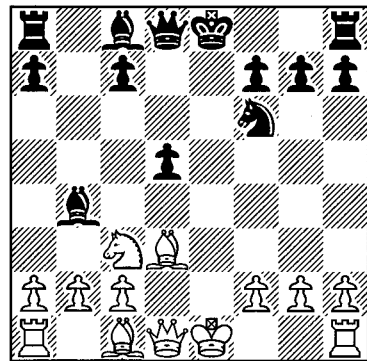


Diagram 13 (W)
Undoubled pawns

This strike, which Black has been preparing for the past few moves, is by far the most popular choice, but 7...d6!? (Game 1) and 7...0-0 (Game 2) are both reasonable alternatives.

8 exd5

With his e4-pawn under pressure from all angles, White decides to liquidate the tension. The other main option is to push with 8 e5 (see Game 3).

Against 8 0-0 Black could opt to mirror White with 8...0-0 with a probable transposition into a main line. However, I also can't see anything wrong with Black 'cashing his chips' with 8...Bxc3 9 bxc3 dxe4. It's true that White can use the pin on the e-file to regain his pawn with 10 Qe2 but it seems to be White who's trying to hold onto equality after, say, 10...0-0 11 Bxe4 Re8! 12 Bg5 Bf5 13 f3 Qe7.

8...cxd5 (Diagram 13)

Undoubling the pawns and creating a central pawn complex with his c- and d-pawns. This is by far the most usual choice for Black, but again there are alternatives:

a) The disruptive 8...Qe7+ is the subject of Game 4.

b) 8...Nxd5 appears at first sight to cause White some problems with the defence of c3, but in fact this is an occasion where White can sacrifice for the initiative with 9 0-0!, e.g. 9...Nxc3 10 bxc3 Bxc3 11 Ba3! and Black, with his king stuck in the centre, has some problems: 11...Bxa1? 12 Qxa1 f6? 13 Bc4! and there's going to be a very big check on e1.

9 0-0

9 Bb5+ doesn't achieve much after 9...Bd7 10 Qe2+ Be7 11 0-0 0-0, but 9 Qe2+!? is a serious alternative. Now 9...Be6?! 10 Bb5+ Nd7 11 Bc6! is awkward for Black, while 9...Qe7 transposes to Game 4. If Black wishes to keep the queens on the board he can play 9...Be7 after which White must decide which side to castle:

a) A.Istratescu-M.Krasenkow, Yerevan Olympiad 1996 continued 10 0-0 0-0 11 Re1 Re8 12 Bg5 Bg4! 13 Qe5 c6 14 Qg3 Bh5 15 Qh4 Bg6 and White's brief kingside initiative had been effectively neutralised, leaving a level position.

b) 10 Bg5!? 0-0 11 0-0-0 c6 (11...Be6 is also possible) 12 Rhe1 and White has an aggressive set-up. Still, with careful play Black seems to be okay, 12...Bb4 13 Qe5 Ng4! being one possible line.

9...0-0 10 Bg5! (Diagram 14)

A crucial move and White's only real try for an advantage. Now that Black has castled, he will be more reluctant to lunge forward to break the pin with ...h7-h6 followed by ...g7-g5 as this would obviously have repercussions against his king. Thus the pin is quite irritating, and one option Black must consider at some point is to expend a move 'unpinning' with ...Be7.

10...c6!

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Sensibly bolstering the d5-pawn. Another way of protecting d5 is with 10...Be6 – see Game 5.

10...h6? doesn't take into account the threat created with 10 Bg5. White continues 11 Bxf6! Qxf6 (or 11...gxf6 12 Nxd5! Qxd5?? 13 Bh7+!) 12 Nxd5 and now Black cannot regain his pawn with 12...Qxb2? as 13 Rb1 wins the bishop on b4. The unpinning 10...Be7!? allows the similar tactic 11 Bxf6 Bxf6 12 Nxd5! when 12...Qxd5?? again loses to 13 Bxh7+!. Black can regain his pawn with 12...Bxb2 although White still has the initiative after 13 Rb1.

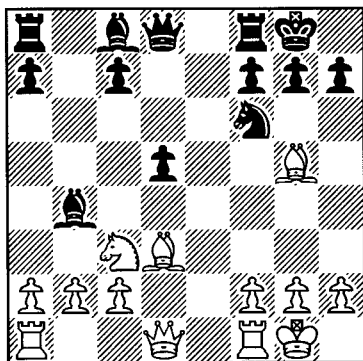


Diagram 14 (B)
Bg5: an annoying pin

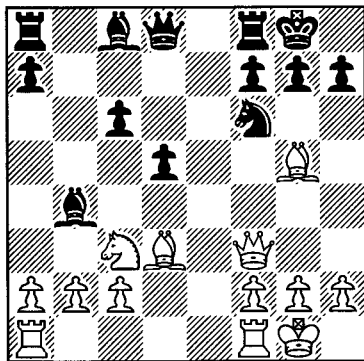


Diagram 15 (B)
Pressuring f6

11 Qf3 (Diagram 15)

The traditional main line: White moves his queen to the kingside where it further pressures the pinned knight. Alternatives for White include 11 Ne2 (Game 6) and 11 Na4 (Game 7).

After 11 Qf3 it's clear that for the moment White's pieces look more active than their counterparts. White is slightly ahead in development and his rooks are connected. On the other hand, Black's position has potential based on the firm grip the d5/c6 pawn complex gives him in the centre and the open lines for his pieces (the rooks can use the b- and e-files).

A big question mark remains about the pinned knight on f6. Black must decide whether to allow White the opportunity to inflict doubled pawns with Bxf6 or to do something about the 'threat' by playing ...Be7. Here I will look at the two most popular moves: 11...Bd6 (Game 8) and 11...Be7 (Game 9). Black can also consider moves such as 11...Rb8, 11...Re8 and even 11...h6, which are all similar in spirit to 11...Bd6.



WARNING: The pin on f6 mustn't be taken lightly. For example, 11...Bg4?? loses material after 12 Bxf6! Bxf3 13 Bxd8 Raxd8 14 gxf3.

Theoretical?

Even though it's taken us a few pages to reach this position, I believe that's only because I've gone through some of the more unusual possibilities for both sides with quite a fine toothcomb. In practice these first eleven moves are often trotted out by more experienced players without much reflection. You can hardly describe the line as theoretical, and this, together with the fact that both sides have easy piece play, makes this whole variation a good choice for improvers playing White or Black.

Statistics

Taking the position after 10...c6, I found over 2600 games on my database, with White scoring only 49% (the average score for White is around 54%). This is counterbalanced to some extent by the fact that on average the Black players were slightly higher rated, but theoretically speaking this line isn't meant to cause Black many problems. Another significant point is the ratio of draws over the whole database is a very high 50% (somewhere in the region of 30% would be normal), and this figure increases further if we only take games between grandmasters. However, the fact that the position is considered as 'drawish' at the highest levels, where play often verges on perfect, shouldn't discourage us lesser mortals from playing this way, and of course the drawing ratio tumbles down once we only examine games between lower-rated players.

Black players who would prefer to go down lesser-explored paths might wish to opt for 7...d6. This is certainly less 'drawish', although statistically speaking White is doing better against this move, scoring 61%.

Game 1

□ O.Bezman ■ V.Varavin

Russian Championship, Perm 1997

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4

Reaching the Scotch Four Knights with this move order is very common, although I should point out that Black also has the option here of playing 4...Bb4!?.

4...exd4 5 Nxd4 Bb4 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d6!? (Diagram 16)

Moving the d-pawn only one square is an appealing and underrated alternative to 7...d5; there is certainly more scope for original play with this move.

8 Bg5



NOTE: It can be argued that the Bg5 pin isn't so effective when Black hasn't castled because Black has a greater licence to break it by lunging forward with ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5.

As we see in this game, this doesn't necessarily expose Black's king when it hasn't committed itself to the kingside.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

8 0-0 has been more popular, with White being ready to answer 8...0-0 with 9 Bg5!. Instead Black can avoid this scenario with a favourable piece redeployment: 8...Ng4! 9 Be2!? (9 h3 Ne5 10 f4 Nxd3 11 cxd3 is very reasonable for Black, while 9 f3? fails to the neat trick 9...Bc5+ 10 Kh1 Nxe2!, as capturing on h2 allows ...Qh4 mate!) 9...Qh4! 10 h3 (Jan Pinski, author of the excellent book *The Four Knights*, gives 10 Bf4 Bxc3 11 Bg3 Qe7 12 bxc3 Nf6, intending to meet 13 f3 with 13...Nh5!) 10...Ne5 11 f4 Ng6! and Black has good counterplay. Notice here that there is the possibility of ...Bxh3, when gxh3, ...Qg3+ results in perpetual check. Note, however, that the immediate 11...Bxh3? (**Diagram 17**) is incorrect.

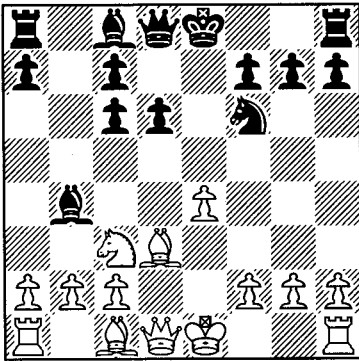


Diagram 16 (W)
Something different

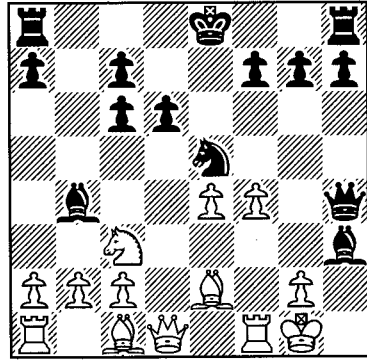


Diagram 17 (W)
Enticing but incorrect

With this enticing idea Black hopes for 12 gxh3?? Qg3+ 13 Kh1 Qxh3+ 14 Kg1 Bc5+ 15 Rf2 Qg3+. However, it fails to the very calm 12 Qe1! Bc5+ 13 Kh1! when, despite White's apparently airy king, Black loses a piece for insufficient compensation due to the double attack on h3 and e5.

8...h6 9 Bh4 Be6!?

Black is waiting for White to commit his king before lunging with ...g7-g5 and, with Black's king possibly staying in the centre, it makes sense to provide some sort of barrier on the e-file. I've found three games with this move and on each occasion it was the Russian GM Viktor Varavin playing Black, so you could say it's his speciality!

9...Qe7 has similar motives to 9...Be6, but note the following: 10 0-0 g5 11 Bg3 Ng4 (11...h5 12 e5! sees the problems Black can face on the e-file, 12...dxe5 13 Bxe5 Qxe5? losing to 14 Re1) 12 Bb5!! (**Diagram 18**).

This is a stunning way to exploit the queen on e7 – 12...cxb5 13 Nd5 Qxe4 14 c3 Qc4 15 b3 Qc6 16 Nxb4 Qd7 17 Re1+ Kf8 18 h3 Ne5 19 Bxe5 dxe5 20 Qf3 Rb8 21 Qf6 Kg8 22 Nc6 and, faced with the threats of Ne7+ and Nxb8, Black

was forced to resign in S.Arkipov-N.Muhamedzjanov, Naberezhnye Chelny 1993.

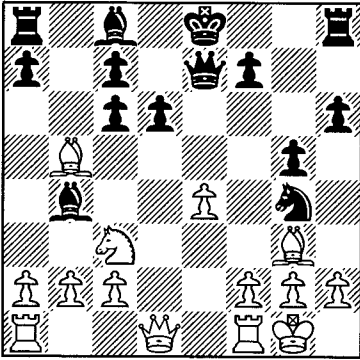


Diagram 18 (B)
12 Bd3-b5!!

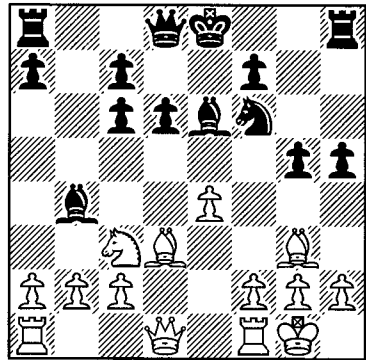


Diagram 19 (W)
Charge!

9...0-0 10 0-0! is the kind of thing that White is after, when ...g7-g5 is at best risky because it opens up Black's own king.

10 0-0?!

Giving Black the green light to begin an assault on the kingside; 11 f4! is the way to continue.

10...g5! 11 Bg3 h5! (Diagram 19)

Of course there is some risk involved in this pawn launch but Black's actions are quite justified in this instance. With Black's king still in the centre, opening up with 12 e5 looks logical, but 12...Ng4! 13 exd6 h4! 14 dxc7 Qd4 leaves the bishop on g3 without a safe square.

12 f4

Predictably White looks for some action down the f-file, but the flipside to this move is that Black obtains his own action down the g-file.

12...h4 13 Be1 gxf4 14 Rxf4 Nd7!

This knight is heading towards the juicy outpost on e5, while the way is now clear for Black's queen to enter the fray.



NOTE: An outpost is a square that cannot easily be attacked by enemy pawns.

15 Kh1 Qg5 16 Bd2 Rg8

The first major threat arises: mate on g2.

17 Qe2 Ne5 18 Raf1

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

Here White should probably make use of the discovered attack on Black's queen with 18 Rxf7!. Following the tactical sequence 18...Qxg2+ 19 Qxg2 Rxg2 20 Kxg2 Bxf7 (Pinski) Black's pieces are more active in this ending, but White is certainly still in the game.

18...Bg4 19 R4f3?? (Diagram 20)

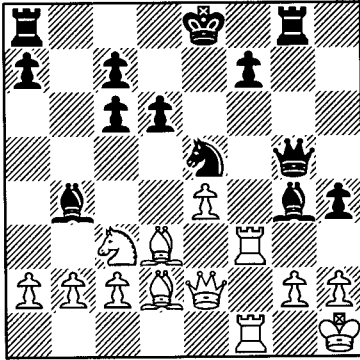


Diagram 20 (B)
An easy way to lose

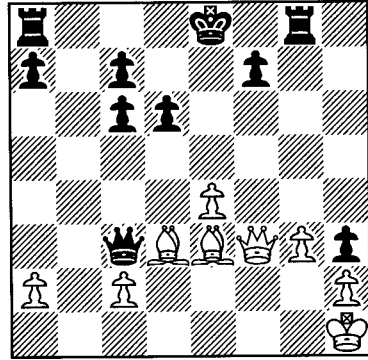


Diagram 21 (W)
Black plans ...Rb8-b1+

This 'self-pin' loses without a fight. 19 Qe1?? also loses after 19...Bf3!, when something big is happening on g2. However, White can struggle on with 19 Qf2! Bc5 20 Rf6! Qg7 21 Qxh4, as here 21...Bf3 can be met by 22 Qg3!. Instead the discovered attack on g2 with 21...Be2! wins some material, but Black still has some work to do after 22 g3 Bxf1 23 Rxf1.

19...Qg7 20 Be3 h3!

The defence of f3 collapses and Black ends up winning two rooks for two minor pieces – a decisive material advantage.

21 g3 Bxf3+ 22 Rxf3 Nxf3 23 Qxf3 Bxc3 24 bxc3 Qxc3 0-1 (Diagram 21)

Next up for Black is ...Rb8-b1+. Well down on material, White decides to throw in the towel. It's true that White gave Black a helping hand in this game, but I can certainly see the attraction of 7...d6.

Game 2

□ D.Reinderman ■ I.Sokolov

Dutch Championship, Amsterdam 1995

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 0-0!? (Diagram 22)

With this move Black commits his king but keeps his options open on whether to play ...d7-d5 or ...d7-d6.

8 0-0

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

a) 10...g5? wins a pawn but is asking for trouble as it leaves Black's king exposed: 11 Bg3 Bxc3 (it's too late for consolidation; 11...d6 12 e5! dxe5 13 Bxe5 is unpleasant for Black as 13...Rxe5?? loses to the discovered attack 14 Bh7+!) 12 bxc3 Nxe4 13 Qh5 Kg7 14 f4! when White opens the f-file for his rook and leaves Black with a major defensive headache.

b) 10...d6 11 f4! Bb7 and here I like the move 12 Ne2!, preparing Ng3 followed by Nh5 or Nf5. Now 12...g5 13 fxe5 Nxe4 was assessed as clearly better for Black in *Chess Informant*, but someone obviously missed the trick 14 g6! Qxh4 15 gxf7+, when it's *White* who is on top. Instead the game V.Georgiev-A.Shchekachev, Hallsberg 1991 continued 12...c5 13 Ng3! c4!? 14 Bxc4 Bc5+ 15 Kh1 Bxe4 16 Nh5 Qd7! (hoping for 17 Bxf6? Qh3!!) 17 Nxf6+! gxf6 18 f5! when Black's shattered kingside pawns promised White some advantage.

11 Qf3?!

This is standard in the main line, but it's not always necessarily good. Here I prefer the bold 11 f4!, preparing e4-e5. White doesn't have to worry about 11...Bc5+ 12 Kh1 Rxb2?? on account of 13 Na4!, so I don't really see anything better for Black than 11...d6. Now 12 e5? dxe5 13 fxe5 can be met by 13...Qd4+! (not 13...Rxe5 14 Bh7+! – you should know this trick by now!). However, instead White can follow up with the prophylactic 12 Kh1!, when the threat of e4-e5 becomes real again. The game J.Dulik-J.Malmstrom, correspondence 1997 continued 12...Bb7 (protecting the queen with the b8-rook) 13 e5! (anyway!) 13...dxe5 14 fxe5 Bxc3 15 bxc3 Rxe5 16 Rb1 Qe8 17 Bxf6 gxf6 18 Qf3 with a very strong position for White due once again to Black's shattered kingside pawns.



NOTE: Prophylaxis is the strategic idea of anticipating or preventing an opponent's threat before it exists. With Kh1 White eliminates the possibility of a later ...Qd4+.

11...g5! (Diagram 24)

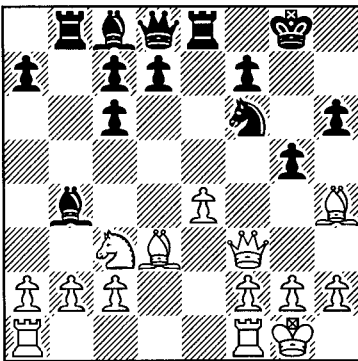


Diagram 24 (W)

Another ...g7-g5 charge!

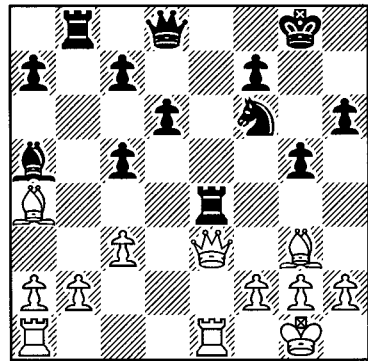


Diagram 25 (W)

A double attack on e3 and a4

Here this attack is justified as White doesn't have time to open up the kingside and thus exploit Black's weaknesses – the queen on f3 turns out to be awkwardly placed.

12 Bg3 d6 13 Na4?!

White wanted to prevent ...Bc5, which would have threatened to trap the queen with ...Bg4. However, as Korchnoi later suggested, 13 h3 would have been better.

13...c5 14 c3 Ba5 15 Rfe1?

After this move White is suddenly in big trouble. 15 Bc2, protecting the knight on a4, is stronger, while White could also consider the pawn sacrifice 15 e5!? dxe5 16 Qe3, when the knight plans to re-enter the game via c5.

15...Bg4! 16 Qe3 Bd7!

Targeting the unfortunately placed knight, which is on the edge of the board and lacking squares.

17 Bc2

17 b3 Bxa4 18 bxa4 Bxc3, forking both rooks, also wins a decisive amount of material.

17...Bxa4 18 Bxa4 Rxe4 (Diagram 25)

Simple stuff! The double attack on e3 and a4 forces White to give up his queen for a rook and knight.

19 Qxe4 Nxe4 20 Rxe4 f5!

Planning to trap the bishop with ...f5-f4.

21 Re6 f4! 22 Rae1 Rxb2 23 Bb3

Or 23 Re8+ Qxe8 24 Rxe8+ Kf7 25 Kf1 (to stop the back rank mate) 25...Rxa2 26 Bb3+ Kxe8 27 Bxa2 fxc3 28 hxc3 Bxc3 and Black's extra pawns on the queenside will be decisive.

23...Rxb3! 24 axb3 Kf7 0-1

A nice win for Black, but White could have made things more difficult with an early f2-f4.

Game 3

A.Tzermiadianos P.Frendzas

Athens 1996

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6

If White plays 5 Nxc6, he usually follows up with 6 e5 (see Chapters 2-3). However, in this game we simply reach the Scotch Four Knights via an unusual move order.

6 Bd3 d5 7 Nc3 Bb4 8 e5!? (Diagram 26)

In many ways this is White's most ambitious move because he keeps some pawn presence in the centre and forces Black's knight to move away from f6.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

However...

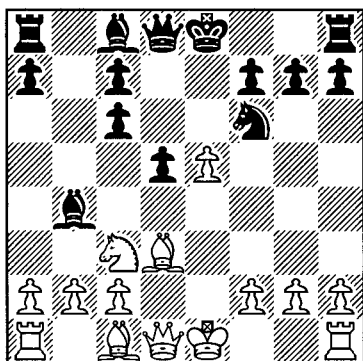


Diagram 26 (B)

White shows ambition

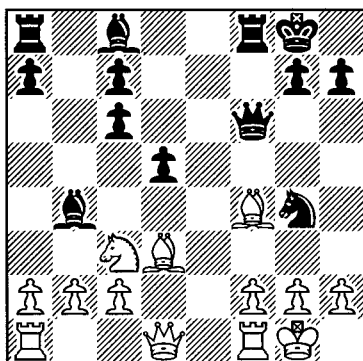


Diagram 27 (W)

Attacking down the f-file

8...Ng4!

An active square for the knight, from where it hits e5, f2 and h2.

8...Qe7 tries to utilise the pin on the e-file, but following 9 0-0! Qxe5? 10 Re1 it's actually White who's exploiting the pin! After 10...Ne4 11 Bxe4 Bxc3 12 Bxd5! Qxe1+ 13 Qxe1+ Bxe1 14 Bxc6+ Ke7 15 Bxa8 White emerges with a good extra pawn.

9 0-0

After 9 Bf4 it's tempting for Black to play 9...d4, but 10 Qf3! dxc3 11 0-0-0!, which has happened in quite a few games, gives White a strong attack. Instead I think Black should play 9...f6! when 10 exf6 0-0! 11 0-0 Qxf6 transposes to the game. In the game A.Davie-S.Gligoric, Dundee 1967 White played 10 h3 but following 10...Nxe5 11 Bxe5 fxe5 12 Qh5+ Kf8 13 Qxe5 Bd6 Black was slightly better. Despite having lost the right to castle, Black can tidy up his king's position with ...Qf6, ...g7-g6 and ...Kg7, while the advantage of the bishop pair is permanent.

9...0-0!

9...Nxe5?? is another example of the power of the pin on the e-file; White wins a piece following 10 Re1 Qe7 11 f4! Bg4 12 Be2 Bxe2 13 Rxe2. After 9...0-0, however, the threat to the e-pawn becomes real.

10 Bf4

Well, not quite real. After 10 h3 Nxe5 White can regain his pawn with 11 Bxh7+! Kxh7 12 Qh5+ Kg8 13 Qxe5, although Black certainly has no problems in this position. On the other hand, defending the e5-pawn with 10 f4?? is a blunder that allows Black to win in an eye-catching fashion: 10...Bc5+! 11 Kh1

Qh4 12 h3 Qg3!! 13 hxg4 Qh4 mate!

10...f6!

Opening up the kingside to Black's advantage. It is crucial to add further pressure to e5 as White was threatening to banish the knight back to h6 with h2-h3 and then to shatter Black's kingside pawns with Bxh6.

11 exf6 Qxf6! (Diagram 27) 12 Bg3

Grabbing the c7-pawn with 12 Bxc7? is rather gluttonous and can be punished by 12...Bc5!. After 13 Bg3 Nxf2! 14 Bxf2 Bxf2+ 15 Kh1 Qh4 Black will continue to attack with ...Bg4 and possibly ...Bg3.

12...Bc5

Adding further pressure to f2. Black can also oppose bishops immediately with 12...Bd6. Here the game Y.Afek-Z.Gyimesi, Kecskemet 1994 continued 13 Be2 Ne5 14 Na4 Be6 15 Qd2 Ng6! 16 Rae1 Nf4! 17 Bd1 Rae8 18 c3 c5 when Black's more active pieces and pressure along the half-open f-file promised him a slight advantage.

13 Qd2 Rb8 14 Rab1 Bd6 15 Be2 Ne5 16 Nd1

The knight wasn't doing very much on c3 so White decides to re-route it to e3. However, Black's next move prevents this.

16...d4! 17 Kh1?! (Diagram 28)

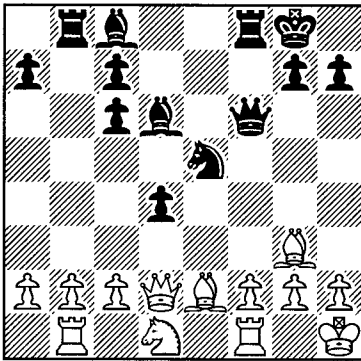


Diagram 28 (B)

White drifts

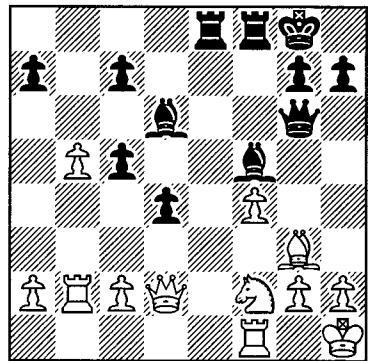


Diagram 29 (W)

Planning ...Re3

The immediate 17 Qxd4?? loses to the discovered attack 17...Nf3+!, so White moves his king in order to threaten the d4-pawn. However, this is all a bit too slow, and I prefer 17 b3!, planning to bring the knight back into the game via b2. Then it can challenge Black's powerful knight from d3 or c4.

17...c5! 18 b4?

This move does White no favours at all – the pawn on b4 cannot capture on c5

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

due to the pin on the b-file. Again 18 b3 followed by Nb2 was the right way forward.

18...Bf5! 19 b5 Qg6!

Targeting c2.

20 f4 Ng4 21 Bxg4 Qxg4 22 Nf2

Finally the knight has reached a (slightly) better square, but now the bishop on g3 is suffering...

22...Qg6 23 Rb2 Rbe8! (Diagram 29)

Planning ...Re3 followed by a doubling of rooks on the e-file. Black's advantage is beginning to become serious, but White's next move doesn't really help matters.

24 Nd3? c4! 0-1

A sudden end; if the knight moves then ...c4-c3 forks queen and rook, so Black wins a piece.

Game 4

□ I.Radulov ■ J.Pinter

Pernik 1978

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4 exd4 5 Nxd4 Bb4 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d5 8 exd5 Qe7+!?

As far as I can see, this move is a bit of a 'spoiler' because White is more or less forced to offer an exchange of queens (see how the alternatives fare below). In practice 8...Qe7+ isn't seen that often because, firstly, White is probably a tiny bit better in the resulting endings and, secondly, Black hardly needs to run away from the main lines.

9 Qe2!

Avoiding an exchange of queens without making some concession proves to be impossible, for example:

a) 9 Be2 Nxd5! (the point – now 10 0-0?? loses a piece to 10...Bxc3 11 bxc3 Nxc3) 10 Bd2 Bxc3 11 bxc3 Ba6 12 Kf1 Bxe2+ 13 Qxe2 Qxe2+ 14 Kxe2 0-0-0 and if anything Black is a bit better, S.Movsesian-J.Stocek, Trencianske Teplice 2002.

b) 9 Be3 is another move that can be met by 9...Nxd5!. If White now castles then Black simply captures the bishop on e3. 10 Qf3!? is more interesting, with 10...Nxc3? losing to 11 Qxc6+ and 10...Nxe3 11 Qxc6+ also looking good for White. GM Lev Gutman gives the line 10...Bd7 11 0-0 Nxc3, but here 12 Rfe1! looks like a good move, 12...0-0 13 bxc3 giving White some advantage on account of 13...Bxc3?? 14 Bd2!. So all in all Black should probably favour 10...0-0 11 0-0 Nxe3 when he should be fine regardless of whether White immediately recaptures on e3 or plays Re1.

9...cxd5 (Diagram 30)

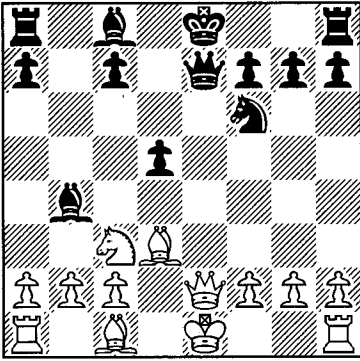


Diagram 30 (W)
A trade of queens

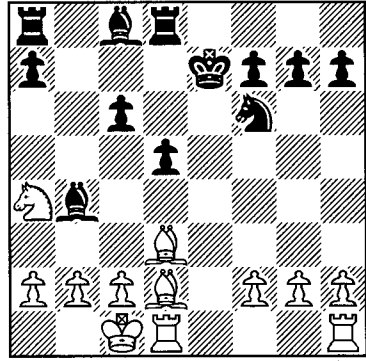


Diagram 31 (B)
Offering a bishop trade

Black's other option here is the more active 9...Nxd5, which does however leave him with the doubled isolated c-pawns. Now a few games have continued 10 Qxe7+Kxe7 11 Bd2 Nxc3 12 a3! Ba5 13 b4! with White securing an edge after either 13...Bxb4 14 axb4 – White's bishop pair and better structure outweigh Black's extra pawn – or 13...Bb6 14 Bxc3.

10 Qxe7+ Kxe7 11 Bd2 c6 12 0-0-0

A typical position for the 8...Qe7+ variation. White can claim that Black's pawns are slightly more vulnerable but on the other hand Black has good piece play and control of the central squares.

12...Rd8

Black will later play ...Nd7 in the fight to control c5 and so it might be more accurate to play 12...Be6!? so that the knight move doesn't block the bishop on c8. The game S.Rublevsky-M.Magomedov, Russia 1993 continued 13 Rhe1 Rhe8 14 h3 Kf8 15 Na4 Bd6 16 Be3 Nd7 with a level position.

13 Na4! (Diagram 31)

White wants to exchange the dark-squared bishops and thus give himself the option of plonking his knight on the c5-outpost.



NOTE: The c5-outpost can often be an important positional feature in the Scotch Four Knights.

13...Bd6 14 Be3!

Continuing the battle for the c5-square.

14...Kf8 15 h3 h6 16 Rhe1 Nd7 17 c4 Bb4 18 Bd2 Bxd2+ 19 Rxd2 Bb7 20 Bf5!

Logical play by White, who plans Bxd7 followed by Nc5. This old game does

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

demonstrate well how White can try to squeeze as much as possible from this ending.

20...Nb6! 21 Nc5 Bc8 22 Bxc8 Raxc8 23 cxd5 cxd5 24 Rc2 Re8 25 Rxe8+ Kxe8 26 b3 Ke7 27 a4! Kd6 28 Nb7+ Ke5 29 a5! Rxc2+ 30 Kxc2 (Diagram 32)

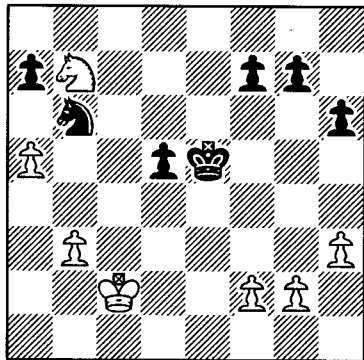


Diagram 32 (B)

Dangerous a- and b-pawns

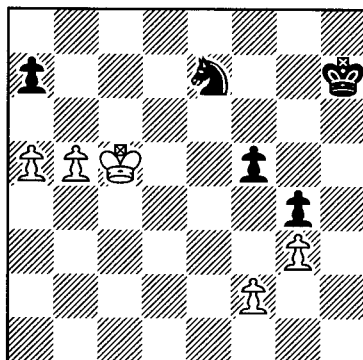


Diagram 33 (B)

The knight's no good

At first sight this ending looks pretty level, but what swings it very much in White's favour is that his pawn majority (a- and b- versus a-pawn) is much more dangerous than Black's passed d-pawn – White has the possibility of creating a decisive outside passed pawn.

30...Nc8 31 Kd3 f5 32 b4! g5 33 b5 h5 34 Nd8! g4 35 hxg4 hxg4 36 g3 Kd6 37 Kd4 Ne7

Or 37...Kd7 38 Nc6 Kd6 39 a6! (Minev) when the sacrifice on a7 will be decisive, for example 39...Ke6 40 Nxa7 Nxa7 41 b6 Nc6+ 42 Kc5.

38 Nf7+ Ke6 39 Kc5! d4

The power of White's pawns is seen in the variation 39...Kxf7 40 b6 axb6+ 41 axb6, when Black cannot prevent White from queening.

40 Ng5+ Kf6 41 Nh7+ Kg7 42 Kxd4! Kxh7 43 Kc5 (Diagram 33)

Again threatening b5-b6.



NOTE: It's well known that lone knights are very poor defenders against passed pawns, especially ones on the edge of the board.

43...Nc8 44 Kc6 f4 45 Kd7 fxg3 46 fxg3 Nb6+ 47 axb6 1-0

After 47...axb6 48 Kc6 White captures on b6 and promotes his b-pawn.

Game 5

□ G.Oppici ■ A.Miotto

Correspondence 1990

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4 exd4 5 Nxd4 Bb4 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bg5 Be6

Even though most players prefer to protect d5 with 10...c6, there's also something to be said about this natural move. In some ways it's actually more ambitious because Black can aim to get his centre going with an immediate ...c7-c5.

11 Nb5!? (Diagram 34)

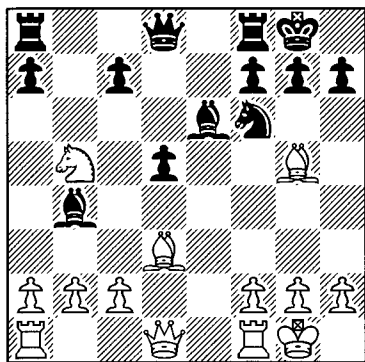


Diagram 34 (B)
Preparing Nd4

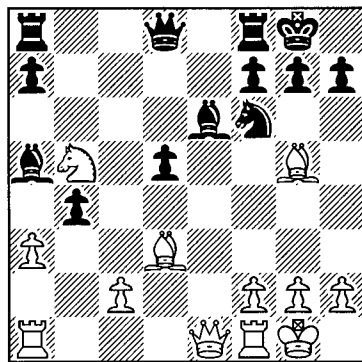


Diagram 35 (B)
14 Qe1! – an important discovery

Exploiting that, without ...c7-c6, the b5-square isn't covered. Now the knight may jump into d4, while another possibility is to advance on the queenside with a2-a3 and b2-b4.

11...c5

Preventing Nd4, although Black can also retreat his b4-bishop into safety before this advance. After 11...Be7 12 Nd4 Qd6 13 Re1 c5 14 Nf5 Bxf5 15 Bxf5 Rfe8 16 Qf3 White was probably a tiny bit better in R.Kowalczyk-R.Polak, correspondence 1962 – the two bishops must count for something.

12 a3 Ba5 13 b4!?

Seemingly offering a trade of two sets of pawns, but there is more to this move than first meets the eye.

13...cxb4

13...Bb6 looks reasonable, but what happens after capturing on b4?

14 Qe1! (Diagram 35)

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

This move, which according to my database was introduced by Oppici in an earlier correspondence game, breathed new life into this variation, and it later gained popularity when Russian GM Yuri Yakovich annotated one of his games for *Chess Informant*. Earlier it had been assumed that White simply plays 14 axb4 Bxb4 15 Nxa7 which is equal after 15...h6 16 Nc6 Qd6 17 Bxf6 Qxc6.

14...Qe7?!

The point of White's previous move is seen in the line 14...bxa3?! 15 Bxf6! gxf6 (forced because 15...Bxe1? 16 Bxd8 leaves White a piece ahead) 16 Qe3, when suddenly White has a nasty-looking attack against Black's king – Qh6 and Rxa3 followed by a swinger to the kingside are on the horizon. With 14...Qe7?! Black tries to keep control of both b4 and f6, but the queen becomes overloaded.



NOTE: An overloaded piece is one that has too many defensive duties – it cannot cope with all of them at the same time.

I would be a bit nervous allowing my kingside pawns to be shattered, so I would probably concentrate on defending f6. In V.Malakhov-A.Grischuk, Moscow 1996 the rising Russian star played sensibly with 14...h6 15 axb4 Bb6 16 Bh4 Re8 when there's not much wrong with Black's position.

15 Nd4!

Now there are ideas of both Nc6 and Nf5.

15...Rac8 16 Nf5 Qd7?

Black should have swallowed his pride by retreating to d8. With 16...Qd7 Black plans to meet 17 Bxf6 with 17...Bxf5!, but White has something more devastating in mind...

17 Nxc7!! Kxc7 18 Bxf6+ Kxf6 19 f4! (Diagram 36)

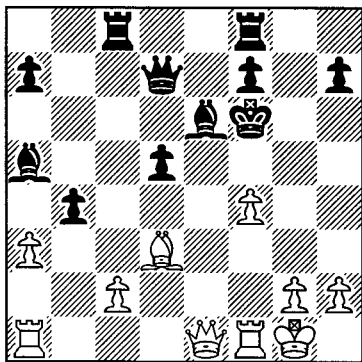


Diagram 36 (B)
The threats mount

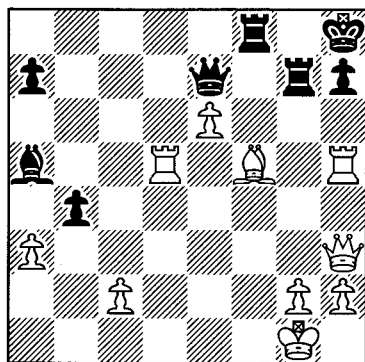


Diagram 37 (B)
Time to resign

Threatening both Qh4+ and f4-f5. Now 19...Bf5 20 Qe5+! Kg6 21 Rf3! (Oppici) leaves Black in big trouble due to the threat of Rg3+, so Black is forced to retreat his king.

19...Kg7 20 f5 f6

After 20...Kh8 21 Qh4 Rg8 I like the cheeky queen sacrifice 22 Qxh7+! Kxh7 23 fxe6+ Kg7 24 exd7 Rc7 25 Bf5, when the protected passed pawn on d7 gives White excellent winning chances.

21 fxe6 Qe7 22 Qh4

White has regained his sacrificed piece and still maintains a strong attack. Faced with the threat of Qxh7 mate, Black should retreat his king to h8 but chooses an inferior defence.

22...Kg8?! 23 Rf5 Rc7

23...Qxe6? loses to 24 Rg5+!

24 Rh5 f5 25 Qg3+ Kh8 26 Bxf5 Qf6 27 Rd1 Rg7 28 Qh3 Qe7 29 Rxd5 1-0 (Diagram 37)

One possible finish is 29...Bb6+ 30 Kh1 bxa3 31 Rd7! a2 32 Qc3! Qf6 33 Rxh7+ Rxh7 34 Rxh7+ Kg8 35 Qg3+ and it's mate next move.

Game 6

□ **A.Ivanov** ■ **E.Liss**

European Club Cup, Tyniste 1995

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4 exd4 5 Nxd4 Bb4 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bg5 c6 11 Ne2

There is certainly some logic to this move, with White's plan being to activate the knight on the kingside via d4, f4 or g3. This is a typical idea in the Scotch Four Knights, but in this particular position the fact that it fails to present Black with any immediate problems means that he can reorganise his pieces under no real pressure.

I was actually sitting on the next board while this game was taking place (Alexei Ivanov and I were playing for the same team) and I must admit that I was impressed by Black's play here.

11...h6 12 Bh4 Bd6! (Diagram 38)

An excellent redeployment of the bishop, which was no longer doing anything on b4. White must be careful as Black already carries a threat.

13 Nd4

Carrying on with the knight manoeuvre, eyeing up the c6-pawn and the f5-square. 13 Ng3?? drops a piece after 13...g5!, while 13 c3? allows Black to carry out his threat: 13...Bxh2+! 14 Kxh2 Ng4+ 15 Kg3 g5! and White is in real trouble, for example 16 Rh1 Qd6+! 17 f4 Re8! and ...Re3+ is up next.



NOTE: This ...Bxh2+, Kxh2, ...Ng4+ combination crops up quite often in the Scotch Four Knights.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

13...c5

Now 13...Bxh2+?? 14 Kxh2 Ng4+ loses to 15 Qxg4! Bxg4 16 Bxd8 when White is a piece ahead.

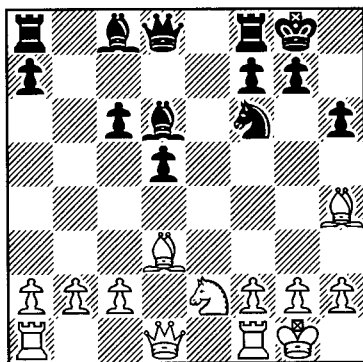


Diagram 38 (W)

An active post for Black's bishop

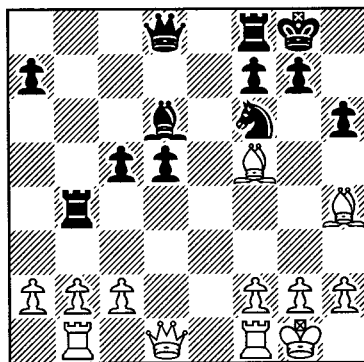


Diagram 39 (W)

Black plays ...Rb8-b4!

14 Nf5

In view of what happens in the game, it's worth White players looking at the alternative 14 Nb5 here. At first I thought 14...Be5, hitting b2, was simply good for Black, but it's not so clear after 15 Re1! Bxb2 16 Rb1 a6 17 Rxb2 axb5 18 Bxb5. Instead of 18...Be5, 18...Be7 and 18...Bb8!? have been seen in practice, both giving a roughly level position.

14...Bxf5 15 Bxf5

White has finished his knight manoeuvre and has gained the bishop pair. However, it's all been a bit time consuming, and Black now produces an excellent plan to neutralise White's bishops.

15...Rb8!

Hitting b2, but there is more to this move than just that...

16 Rb1?!

An obvious reply to Black's threat, but White is probably worse now. Instead 16 b3?! allowed Black to gain a clear positional advantage in the game C.Lutz-A.Yusupov, Munich 1992: 16...Be5 17 Rb1 Qd6! 18 Bg3 (what else?) 18...Bxg3 19 hxg3 Rfe8 20 Re1 Rxe1+ 21 Qxe1 Re8 22 Qd2 Qe5 23 Qf4 Qc3!. With White's dark-squared bishop off the board, he is particularly vulnerable on the dark squares, especially on the queenside.

As we see in the main game, this material situation of major pieces and knight versus major pieces and light-squared bishop often seems to favour Black in this line. In view of this, White should probably seek the sanctuary of a posi-

tion with opposite-coloured bishops after 16 Bxf6 Qxf6 17 Qxd5 Rfd8, although even here, after say 18 Qf3 g6 19 Be4 Qxf3 20 Bxf3 Rxb2, it's Black who has any advantage that's going.

16...Rb4! (Diagram 39)

Demonstrating another positive feature on ...Rb8. By attacking h4 Black forces White to concede his one advantage in the position – the bishop pair.



TIP: The manoeuvre ...Rb8-b4 is a common idea for Black in the main line of the Scotch Four Knights.

17 Bg3

17 g3?? is inadvisable on account of the bishop-trapping 17...g5!, while it's too late now for 17 Bxf6 Qxf6 18 Qxd5?? due to 18...Rd4!, when the queen cannot stay defending the bishop on f5.

17...Bxg3 18 hxg3 Qb8!

Inducing dark-squared weaknesses on the queenside.

19 b3 Qe5 20 Qf3 g6 21 c3 Rb6 22 Bc2 Re8 (Diagram 40)

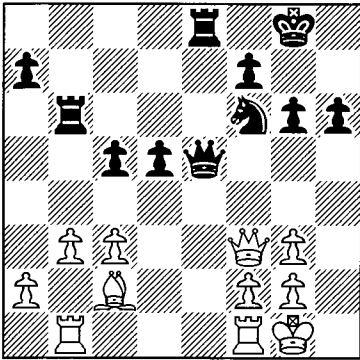


Diagram 40 (W)
Black is in control

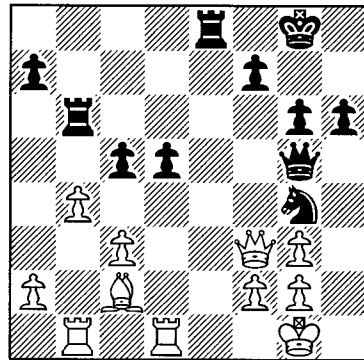


Diagram 41 (W)
...Qh5-h2 is Black's plan

Black has a very pleasant position: his pieces are more active and White struggles both to defend his dark-squared weakness and to create a useful role for his remaining bishop.

23 b4? Qg5!

Suddenly White also has to worry about ...Ng4 followed by ...Qh5-h2! For example, 24 bxc5 Rxb1 25 Rxb1 Ng4! 26 Ba4 Re7 and ...Qh5 is coming.

24 Rfd1 Ng4! (Diagram 41) 25 Qxd5?

White collapses under pressure, but it was already looking rather grim for him in any case. 25 Rxd5 is more resilient, but after 25...Rbe6! (threatening to

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

mate on the back rank) 26 Rf1 Re1! 27 Rxc5 (or 27 Bd3 f5! followed by ...Qh5) 27...Rxf1+ 28 Kxf1 Nh2+ 29 Kg1 Nxf3+ 30 gxf3 hxg5 Black, the exchange for a pawn ahead, should win the ending.

25...Re1+! 0-1

26 Rxe1 Qxd5 is obviously hopeless for White. Black's direct play in this game certainly looks like an effective antidote to 11 Ne2.

Game 7

□ M.Kobalija ■ V.Ivanov

Moscow 1996

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d4 exd4 5 Nxd4 Bb4 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bg5 c6 11 Na4!?

Although this move had been played a few times earlier, I believe it was the French GM Joel Lautier who really popularised it in the early 1990s. On this occasion it's certainly not a case of 'knight on the rim – grim!' On a4 it controls the c5-square which, as we saw in Game 4, can be an important point. White may continue with a2-a3 (or c2-c3) and b2-b4 to obtain a grip on the dark squares on the queenside. Another positive for White is that the way is now clear for c2-c4, which nibbles away at Black's centre. Regardless of whether Black captures on c4 or allows White to capture, he is left with a potential pawn weakness.

11...h6 12 Bh4 Re8

Sensibly Black concentrates on active piece play. Redeploying the bishop with 12...Bd6 is also fine, but in the game J.Lautier-I.Sokolov, Correze 1992 White showed how the Na4 plan can work against inaccurate defence: 12...Be7 13 Re1 Be6 14 c3! (now Bc2 followed by Qd3 is one idea) 14...Re8 15 Bc2 Rb8? (planning to meet Qd3 with ...Ne4, but...) 16 Qd4! a5 17 Re3 Qc7 18 Rae1 c5 19 Qd3 g5? (19...Kf8 is necessary) 20 Bg3 Bd6 21 Rxe6! and after recapturing on e6 there will be a big check on g6.

Black can improve earlier with 15...Nd7 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 but then 17 Qd3! Nf6 18 Qd4! still gives White a little nibble on account of his control of c5. Due to games such as Lautier-Sokolov unsurprisingly there was somewhat of a Scotch Four Knights revival at GM level.

13 c4 (Diagram 42)

White opts for a strike on Black's central pawns. Staking a claim for the dark squares on the queenside is the other main plan: 13 c3 Bd6 14 b4 a5! 15 a3 Be5 16 Ra2 Qc7 with a roughly level position, V. Schneider-V.Inkiöv, Lausanne 2004.

Mixing Qf3 and Na4 here leads to some embarrassment for White after 13 Qf3? g5! 14 Bg3 Bg4!. In fact White can avoid losing material with the ingenious 15 Bc7!, although 15...Bxf3 16 Bxd8 Raxd8 17 gxf3 Nh5 followed by ...Nf4 is hardly what White desires!

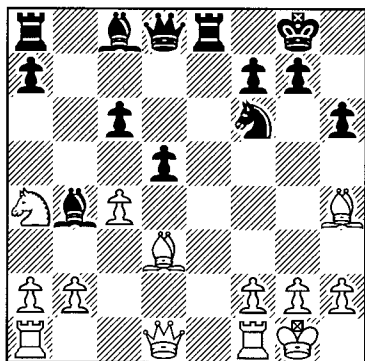


Diagram 42 (B)
Nibbling at the d5-pawn

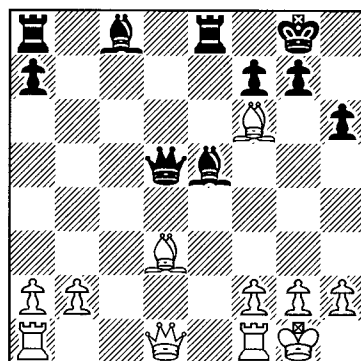


Diagram 43 (B)
Who is being tricked?

13...Bd6

Again we see this effective redeployment of Black's dark-squared bishop, which now points menacingly towards White's king.

14 cxd5

Or:

a) 14 Qc2? allows a trick that we've seen before: 14...Bxh2+! 15 Kxh2 Ng4+ 16 Kg3 Qd6+ 17 f4 g5! and Black wins after, say, 18 Bf5 gxh4+ 19 Kxg4 Qg6+!

b) 14 Rc1 Bf4! 15 Rc2 Qd6! (an effective way to break the pin) 16 Bg3 Bxg3 17 hxg3 Bg4 18 Qc1 (not 18 f3? Qxg3! 19 fxg4 Nxc3 and White must give up his queen to avoid mate on h2) 18...d4 and Black had no problems in N.Pedersen-M.Hebden, Calvia Olympiad 2004.

14...cxd5 15 Rc1!

Looking for some action down the newly opened c-file. After 15 Nc3 Black can deal with the threat of Nxd5 with 15...Be5. This level position has occurred a few times in practice, but remarkably in P.Svidler-V.Malaniuk, St Petersburg 1993 the soon-to-be super-GM only lasted a couple of further moves. Svidler played the 'combination' 16 Nxd5?? Qxd5 17 Bxf6 (**Diagram 43**), planning to meet 17...Bxf6?? with 18 Bh7+. However, following 17...Bb7! he was forced to resign as he was losing a piece!

15...Bf4!

Playing the same way as in note 'b' to White's 14th move.

16 Rc5

Instead M.Golubev-M.Marin, Romania 2001 continued 16 Rc6 (threatening to cripple Black's pawns with Bxf6) 16...Re6 17 Rxe6 Bxe6 and here 18 Nc5?! allowed Black the trick 18...Bxh2+! as 19 Kxh2 Qd6+ 20 Kg1 Ng4! 21 Bg3 Qxc5

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

leaves Black a pawn ahead.

16...Qd6 17 Bg3

White can grab a pawn with 17 Bxf6 Qxf6 18 Rxd5 but after 18...Bb7 I would be a bit worried about those black bishops pointing at White's king.

17...Bxg3 18 hxg3 Bd7 19 b4! (Diagram 44)

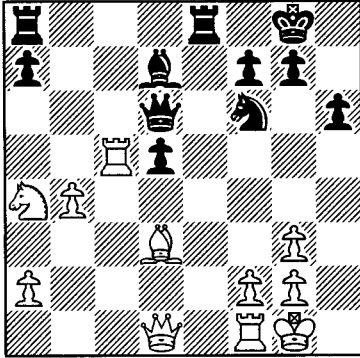


Diagram 44 (B)
Using the c5-outpost

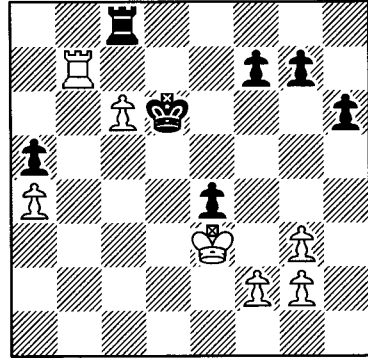


Diagram 45 (B)
Black must be accurate

This not only protects the rook (...Bxa4 was the threat) but also gets White's pawn majority motoring.

19...Bxa4?!

Black takes the easy option of simplifying the position to prevent White from ever achieving Nc5, but the resulting position gives White a small but definite advantage. It's difficult to believe that Black is worse after Pinski's recommendation of 19...Rad8 20 a3 Qe5 – his pieces are active and well centralised.

20 Qxa4 Qe5 21 b5!

An excellent move, advancing on the queenside and snuffing out any counterplay via ...Ng4 and ...Qd4. Now the position simplifies to a double rook ending where White has an edge due to his dangerous queenside pawns.

21...Ne4 22 Bxe4 Qxe4 23 Qxe4 dxe4 24 Rc7 Reb8 25 Rb1!

Not allowing Black the chance to trade pawns after 25 a4?! a6!. After 25 Rb1 a6? White can simply push with 26 b6!.

25...Rb6 26 a4 a6 27 Rc6!

The only way to maintain winning chances.

27...Rxc6 28 bxc6 Rc8 29 Rb6 a5 30 Kf1

Now both kings rush to the scene.

30...Kf8 31 Ke2 Ke7 32 Ke3 Kd6 33 Rb7 (Diagram 45) 33...Rc7?

After 33...Rxc6 34 Rxf7 Rc4 35 Rxc7 Rxa4 Black has very good drawing chances in the rook ending.

34 Kxe4 1-0

Perhaps Black lost on time here. The pawn ending after 34...Kxc6? 35 Rxc7+ Kxc7 36 Kd5 Kb6 37 Kd6 is winning for White – Black eventually runs out of pawn moves on the kingside and has to give way with his king, thus losing the pawn on a5. However, Black can keep the game alive with 34...Rxc6 35 Rxf7 Rc4+ and ...Rxa4.

Game 8

□ E.Berg ■ P.Leko

Under 16 Olympiad, Canaries 1995

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d5 8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bg5 c6 11 Qf3 Bd6

Offering White the chance to capture on f6, although it makes sense to wait until Black spends a tempo with ...h7-h6 to force the bishop to make a decision.

12 h3

Preventing the possibility of ...Bg4. Strictly speaking this is not a worry at the moment (the immediate 12...Bg4?? loses material to 13 Bxf6!) but obviously there are some lines when ...Bg4 works. Even so, 12 h3 is hardly forced, with White having a number of different options. For example, 12 Rfe1 Rb8 13 Na4 (or 13 Rab1 h6 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Qxf6 gxf6 16 Ne2 Be5 with an equal position, B.Rogulj-D.Pavasovic, Pula 2001) 13...h6 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Qxf6 gxf6 16 Rad1 Bg4 17 f3 Be6 (**Diagram 46**) and a typical Scotch Four Knights ending was reached in J.Nunn-S.Sulskis, Moscow Olympiad 1994. This type of position is generally considered as level, and it's simply a matter of taste whether one prefers White's healthier pawn structure or Black's active bishop pair.

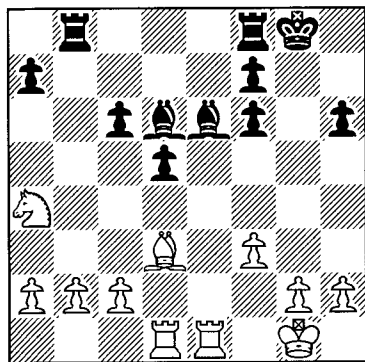


Diagram 46 (W)
A typical ending

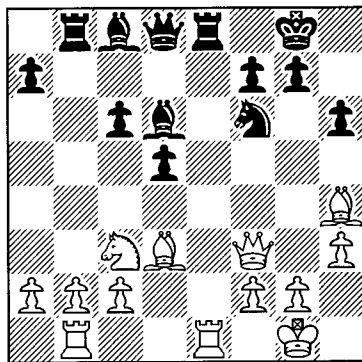


Diagram 47 (B)
15 Rfe1!? – offering a pawn

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

12...Rb8 13 Rab1 h6 14 Bh4!?

White keeps the option open of capturing on f6, but doesn't go ahead with it just yet. 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Qxf6 gxf6 is an equal ending, while accepting the doubled pawns with queens on after 14...gxf6? is asking for trouble – Black's king is hardly likely to survive. 14 Bf4 is also possible, 14...Re8 15 Ne2 c5 16 c3 Bb7 17 Bxd6 Qxd6 leading to a level position in P.Acs-P.Lukacs, Budapest 1995.

14...Re8

14...Rb4!? forces the bishop to make a decision, after which 15 Bxf6 Qxf6 16 Qxf6 gxf6 gave another typical endgame position in E.Berg-T.Wedberg, Stockholm 2000.

15 Rfe1!? (Diagram 47)

I don't think this move is entirely sound – White doesn't seem to get enough for the pawn. However, the Swedish GM Emanuel Berg was confident enough to repeat 15 Rfe1 after this game, so it has to be taken seriously. Actually, if White doesn't want to sacrifice a pawn then perhaps he has already made a mistake because finding a good alternative to 15 Rfe1 is surprisingly difficult. For example:

a) 15 b3 g5! 16 Bg3 g4! 17 Qd1 (17 hxg4?? Bxg4 traps the white queen) 17...gxh3 18 Qd2 Kg7 with an unclear position in W.Mazul-P.Murdzia, Lublin 1999 as both kings are exposed. However, Black does have that extra pawn, so probably he has some advantage.

b) 15 Ne2?! g5! (again!) 16 Nd4! (16 Bg3?? g4! 17 hxg4 Bxg4 and once more the queen drops off) 16...Rb6 17 Bg3 g4! 18 Qd1 gxh3 and Black is better.



WARNING: In Qf3 lines White must be wary of his queen suddenly running into trouble with ...Bg4 or ...g7-g5-g4.

15...Rxe1+ 16 Rxe1 g5!?

If Black wants to grab the b2-pawn then this is the best preparation. After the immediate 16...Rxb2? 17 Bxf6! Black is forced to capture with the g-pawn as 17...Qxf6?? loses a piece after 18 Re8+.

17 Bg3 Rxb2

It makes no sense to decline the pawn now that Black has weakened himself with ...g7-g5. 17...Kg7? 18 b3! Qc7 19 Ne2 Bd7 20 Bxd6 Qxd6 21 Ng3 left. White an edge due to Black's weaknesses in E.Berg-P.Petran, Budapest 1999.

18 Ne2 c5?!

Keeping the white knight out of d4, but in fact it might be more accurate to play 18...Kg7!?. Then 19 Bxd6 Qxd6 20 Ng3 can be met by 20...Qf4!, while 19 Nd4 doesn't prove to be dangerous after 19...c5! 20 Nc6 Qc7 21 Bxd6 Qxd6 22 Ne7 (or 22 Nxa7 Bd7) 22...Be6!.

19 Bxd6! Qxd6 20 Ng3 (Diagram 48)

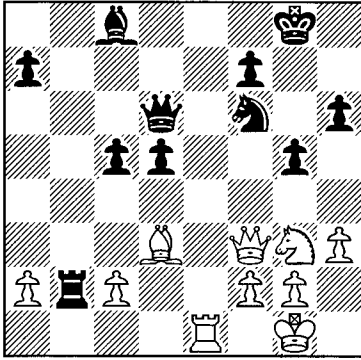


Diagram 48 (B)
Black to play and lose!

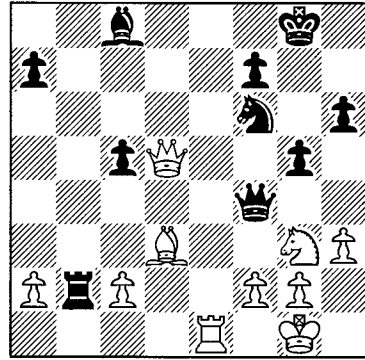


Diagram 49 (B)
21 Qf3xd5!!

20...Qf4??

This plausible move meets with a brilliant refutation. Probably the first thing I should point out is that White is threatening 21 Qxf6!! Qxf6 22 Re8+ Kg7 23 Nh5 mate, while 20...Kg7?? doesn't help on account of 21 Qxf6+!!.

In my 2000 book *Play the Open Games as Black* I confidently stated that 'the simple 20...Bd7 would have been sufficient to give Black a virtually winning position.' However, on reflection I admit that this declaration may have been a little rash, as Black's kingside weaknesses are not insignificant, and White can continue to annoy Black with niggling threats. For example, 20...Bd7! 21 Bf5! Bc6!? 22 Qc3 Rb8 23 Re6!? fxe6 24 Qxf6 Rb1+ 25 Kh2 Re1 26 Qg6+ Kf8 27 Qxh6+ Ke8 28 Bg6+ Kd8 29 Qxg5+ Kc8, although by no means forced, does show that there is plenty of life left in White's position – this line looks very unclear.

21 Qxd5!! (Diagram 49)

The queen is immune due to 21...Nxd5 22 Re8+ Kg7 23 Nh5 mate, so White wins back his pawn and, more importantly, Black's position collapses.

21...Be6 22 Qd8+ Kg7 23 Qe7 Kg8 24 Bf5!

White crashes through by using the interference theme. After 24...Bxf5 25 Qxf6 everything is hanging.

24...Qd2 25 Rxe6! Rb1+ 26 Kh2 Qd1

Or 26...fxe6 27 Bxe6+ Kh8 28 Qf8+ Kh7 29 Bf5 mate.

27 Nf1! Qxf1 28 Qd8+ 1-0

White mates after 28 Qd8+ Kg7 29 Qxf6+ Kf8 30 Qh8. Although Peter Leko hadn't quite made it into the world's elite at this early stage, this was still very much a shock result.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

Game 9

□ A.Ardeleanu ■ L.Vajda

Iasi 1999

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d5
8 exd5 cxd5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bg5 c6 11 Qf3 Be7

Even though this retreat looks passive, in many ways 11...Be7 is Black's most ambitious move because he doesn't give White the option of going into the level (and some would say drawish) endgame with Bxf6, ...Qxf6, Qxf6, ...gxf6.

12 Rae1! (Diagram 50)

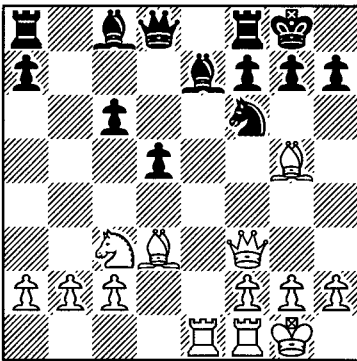


Diagram 50 (B)

Looking for e-file action

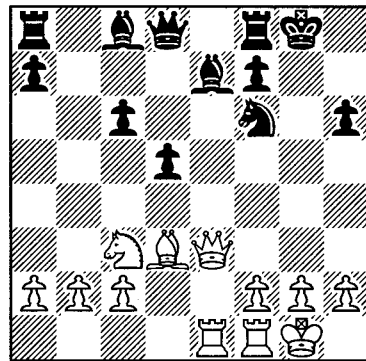


Diagram 51 (B)

Hitting e7 and h6

The most aggressive move, grabbing the open e-file and hitting the bishop on e7. 12 Rfe1 is also possible (as is the slower and preventative 12 h3), but we will see later in the game why it's worth having a rook on f1 rather than a1.

12...h6!?

Objectively speaking I believe there's nothing wrong with this move, but now White can force an immediate draw if he wishes and Black must also play accurately not to end up with a losing position, so unless Black knows exactly what to do and is happy with a draw this isn't a good practical choice.

There's something to be said for 12...Rb8, hitting the b-pawn and, as we've seen before, introducing the option of ...Rb4. Also very playable is the prophylactic 12...Re8!?, defending the bishop and possibly preparing to oppose rooks on the e-file. White now often brings his knight round for some kingside action although he sometimes flicks in h2-h3 first.

13 Bxh6!?

This move leads to some fireworks but is certainly not forced. White can keep the tension in the position with 13 Bh4, 13 Bf4 or even 13 Bc1!?. (demonstrat-

ing one reason for having the a-rook on e1 – the rooks remain connected).

13...gxf6

Otherwise Black has simply lost a crucial defensive pawn, while after 13...d4? 14 Ne4 gxf6 15 Nxf6+ Bxf6 16 Qe4! Black must give up a rook with 16...Re8 to avoid mate on h7.

14 Qe3! (Diagram 51)

The point of White's previous play: the double attack on e7 and h6 means that Black loses another vital pawn in front of his king.

14...Re8?

After this very plausible move Black is probably already losing. In fact it seems that Black has only one way to achieve a draw. For example:

a) 14...Bd6? 15 Qxh6 Bg4 (or 15...Rb8 16 Re3 Rb4 17 Rf3! Ne4 18 Bxe4 dxe4 19 Rf6! threatening Rxd6 and Qg5+ followed by Rh6 mate) 16 Re3! (preparing Rfe1 followed by Re5!) 16...Rb8 (16...d4 17 Ne4! wins) 17 Rfe1 Rxb2 18 Re5! Bxe5 19 Rxe5 **(Diagram 52)** and Black is helpless, e.g. 19...Ne4 20 Bxe4 f5 21 Re6! fxe4 22 Rg6+ Kf7 23 Rg7+ Ke8 24 Qg6+ with mate next move.

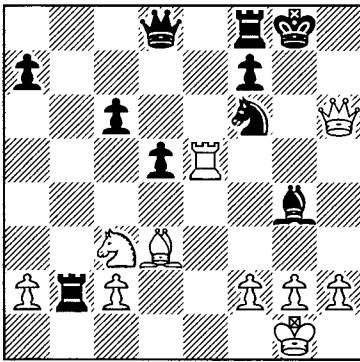


Diagram 52 (B)
Rg5 is coming

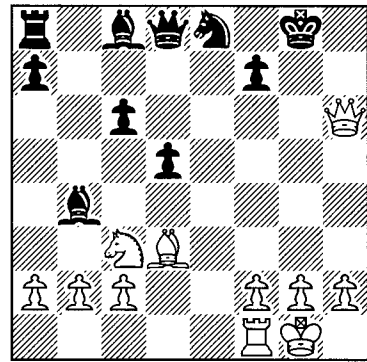


Diagram 53 (W)
A typical mating mechanism

b) 14...d4! 15 Qxh6 Qd6!, preventing Re5, has been given as the drawing method by more than one source and I can't find anything new to disprove this. White has a few options but with best play it always ends up with perpetual check. Play continues 16 Qg5+ Kh8 and now:

b1) 17 Qh6+ Kg8 18 Qg5+ Kh8 is a simple draw by perpetual check.

b2) 17 Qh4+ Kg7 18 Ne4? (18 Qg5+ still draws) 18...Nxe4 19 Qxe4 Rh8! and White has no time to take on e7 due to the mate threat on h2.

b3) 17 Rxe7!? Qxe7 18 Ne4 Ng8! 19 Qh5+ Kg7 20 Nf6 Nxf6 21 Qg5+ Kh8 22 Qh6+ is another perpetual, although if Black is feeling brave (foolish?) he

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could try 20...Kxf6!? 21 Qh4+ Ke6 22 Re1+ Kd7 23 Rxe7+ Nxe7 24 Qxd4+ Ke8. b4) 17 Re5 Ng4! is better for Black after either 18 Qxe7 Qxe7 19 Rxe7 dxc3 or 18 Qh5+ Qh6 19 Qxh6+ Nxh6 20 Rxe7 dxc3 – in either case White doesn't have enough for the piece.

b5) After 17 f4 Ng8 18 Rxe7 dxc3 19 Re3 Pinski gives some long lines of analysis that do appear to be good for White, the main line running 19...Qf6 20 Qc5 Bg4 21 h3 Bd7 22 Re5 cxb2 23 Rh5+ Nh6 24 g4! Kg8 25 g5 Qd8 26 Qc3 f6 27 Rxxh6 Qb6+ 28 Kh2 b1Q 29 Rg6+ Kh8 30 Rxf6!. However, after the greedy but obvious-looking 17...dxc3! I can't find anything for White other than perpetual check with Qh6-g5-h6 because 18 Re3? Ng8! is good for Black, while after 18 Rxe7 Qxe7 White still has to make do with the perpetual check.

15 Qxh6

Now Re5, threatening Rg5+, would be a killer, so Black is forced to prevent this. However, simply moving the e7-bishop doesn't work, for example 15...Bb4 16 Rxe8+ and Black must capture with the queen, allowing White to play the decisive Qxf6, as 16...Nxe8 (**Diagram 53**) allows a typical checkmating mechanism: 17 Bh7+! Kh8 18 Bg6+! Kg8 19 Qh7+ Kf8 20 Qxf7 mate.

15...Qd6 16 Qg5+

The immediate 16 Re3! is the way to continue the attack, but White decides to repeat moves first.

16...Kf8 17 Qh6+ Kg8 18 Re3! (**Diagram 54**)

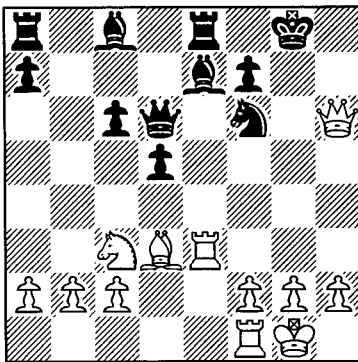


Diagram 54 (B)
Threatening Rg3+

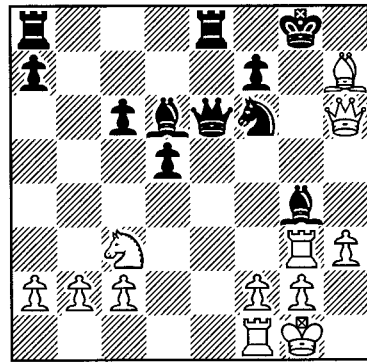


Diagram 55 (B)
The coupe de grâce

Now the threat is 19 Rg3+ Bg4 20 Rxg4+! Nxg4 21 Qh7+ Kf8 22 Qh8 mate.

18...Bg4 19 Qg5+

Again White repeats the position before proceeding with the winning line.

19...Kf8 20 Qh6+ Kg8 21 Rg3!

The threat is Rxc7 and Black is running out of defensive moves.

21...Qe6

Or:

a) 21...Qb4 22 h3 Bd6 23 Bh7+! Nxc7 24 Rxc7, winning the queen.

b) 21...Qe5 22 Nd1! (threatening Ne3) 22...Qh5 (22...d4 is met by 23 f3!, while 22...Bc5 23 Ne3! Bxe3 24 fxe3 is another line that justifies White's keeping a rook on f1) 23 Qxh5 Nxc7 24 Rxc7+ (Mikhalevski) sees Black surviving to the endgame, but White's two-pawn advantage should see him winning easily.

22 h3 Bd6

22...Bf8 forces White to work a bit harder, but 23 Qh4 Bd6 24 Re3 Be5 25 Rfe1! Nd7 26 hxc4 d4 27 Qh7+ Kf8 28 Rxe5! Nxe5 29 Qh8+ Ke7 30 Qxe5 (Mikhalevski) is winning for White as 30...dxc3 runs into 31 Qc7+.

23 Bh7+! (Diagram 55)

Forcing Black to give up his queen – 23...Kh8 allows 24 Bf5+.

23...Nxc7 24 Rxc7 Qxc7

Otherwise it's mate with Qg7.

25 hxc4 Re6 26 Qd2 Rb8 27 b3 1-0

White has a material advantage of queen and two pawns for rook and bishop – this will be decisive in the long run.

5 Nc3 Bc5 and Other Fifth Moves for Black

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bc5!? (Diagram 56)

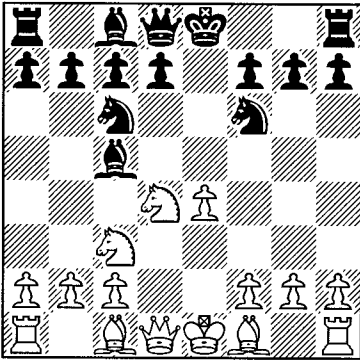


Diagram 56 (W)
Black plays 5...Bc5

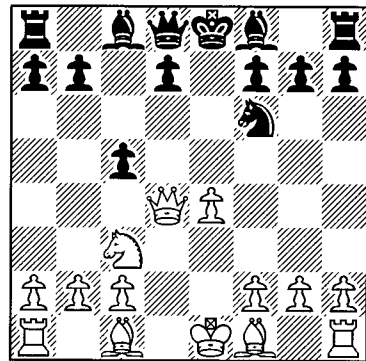


Diagram 57 (W)
An impetuous lunge

After attacking the e4-pawn with 4...Nf6, Black now switches his attentions to

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d4. While 4...Bc5 has always been popular, the same cannot be said for 4...Nf6 5 Nc3 Bc5. Perhaps this is because Black no longer has the option of ...Qf6, but in my opinion this line is underrated and is a good way for Black to avoid theory.

The solid but passive 5...d6 is studied in Game 10, and the 'unbelievable' 5...Nxe4!? can be seen in Game 11. Before proceeding with 5...Bc5, let's take a brief look at less challenging options for Black:

a) 5...Be7? moves the bishop and prepares to castle but does nothing to contest White's centre. Even if White develops peacefully, his central superiority will promise him an advantage, but direct play with 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 e5! leaves Black in some trouble.

b) 5...d5? is an aggressive but premature challenge on White's centre, refuted by 6 Bb5! Bd7 (or 6...dxe4 7 Nxc6 and White wins material) 7 exd5 Nxd4 8 Bxd7+ Qxd7 9 Qxd4 when White has a clear extra pawn.

c) 5...Nxd4?! is a common mistake based on the misconception that White's queen will be vulnerable in the centre of the board and Black can gain time by attacking it. The truth is that after 6 Qxd4 White's development has accelerated and the monarch is actually quite well placed on this occasion (note there is no ...Nb8-c6 available for Black!). Black should probably accept his disadvantage and develop quietly with ...d7-d6, ...Be7 and ...0-0, but it's worth pointing out another frequent error which I've seen many times in games involving inexperienced players. With 6...c5?! (**Diagram 57**) Black apparently gains time by hitting White's queen, but the positives of ...c7-c5 (gaining a tempo and controlling d4) are outweighed by the negatives (weakening the d5- and d6-squares and creating a backward d-pawn).

Let's look at the straightforward continuation: 7 Qe3 (blocking the c1-bishop for the moment, but the queen plans to move to g3) 7...d6 8 Bb5+ Bd7 9 Bxd7+ Qxd7 10 0-0 Be7 11 Qg3 0-0 12 Bh6! Nh5 13 Qf3 Nf6 14 Bf4 and White will continue with Rad1, adding pressure to the vulnerable d6-pawn – a direct consequence of Black's 6th move.

6 Be3

The most logical way forward – White protects d4 and incidentally creates a threat of Nxc6 followed by Bxc5, winning a piece. An important alternative is 6 Nxc6 (58%), which is discussed in Game 12, while White can also play:

a) 6 Nf5!? makes more sense against 6...Bc5 than against 6...Bb4 as Black has more difficulties organising an effective ...d7-d5 break. Even so, following 6...0-0 7 Bg5 even here Black can attempt to exploit the vulnerability of the f5-knight with 7...d5!?, for example 8 Nxd5 Bxf5 9 Bxf6 Qe8! 10 f3 Bxe4! 11 fxe4 Qxe4+ 12 Be2 Bd4!.

b) After 6 Nb3!? Black can reach lines from Chapter 6 with the retreat 6...Bb6, but here it looks more logical to pin the knight with 6...Bb4. Then 7 Bd3 d58 exd5 Nxd5 looks at first sight more than okay for Black due to the pressure on

c3, but appearances are a bit deceptive as White can continue with a surprisingly dangerous pawn sacrifice in 9 0-0! Nxc3 10 bxc3 Bxc3 11 Ba3! (**Diagram 58**).

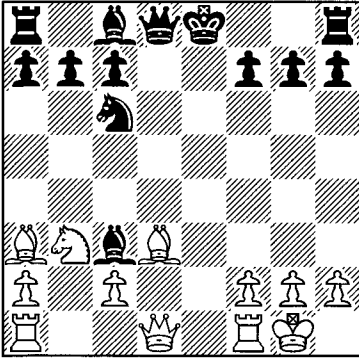


Diagram 58 (B)
Stuck in the middle

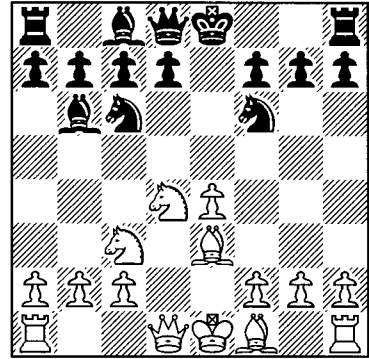


Diagram 59 (W)
6...Bb6

For example, 11...Be6 (the materialistic 11...Bxa1 12 Qxa1 is obviously extremely risky) 12 Rb1 Bb4 (Y.Afek-J.Votava, Rishon Le Zion 1992) and here White is probably slightly better after 13 Bxb4!? Nxb4 14 Nc5 Nxd3 15 cxd3 Bd5 16 Nxb7 Qg5 17 Qe2+ Kf8 18 f4 or 15...0-0 16 Nxe6 fxe6 17 Rxb7. If Black wishes to avoid grabbing the pawn, he could play more conservatively with 7...0-0 8 0-0 Re8 etc, but it's clear to me that 6 Nb3!? is more dangerous than it first appears.

6...Bb6 (Diagram 59)

Dealing with the threat of Nxc6 followed by Bxc5 (the blunder 6...0-0?? occurred an amazing 35 times on my database, although perhaps even more surprisingly White punished Black with 7 Nxc6! on only 24 of those occasions!). Other moves that have been tried include:

a) 6...d6? 7 Nxc6! bxc6 8 Bxc5 dxc5 saddles Black with the so-called 'Irish pawn centre' – tripled isolated pawns. Generally these are pretty bad for your health!

b) 6...Nxd4 7 Bxd4 Qe7!? (7...b6 8 Bxc5 bxc5 9 e5! Ng8 10 Qf3 is clearly unpleasant for Black, and 7...Bxd4 8 Qxd4 d6 9 0-0-0 gives White a typical edge) 8 Be2! Bxd4 (or 8...0-0 9 e5! and once more the knight is forced to retreat) 9 Qxd4 d6 10 0-0-0 gives White the characteristic advantage associated with possessing the 'pure Scotch' structure (the small centre). The old game B.Milic-Z.Krzisnik, Belgrade 1952 continued 10...0-0 11 f4! Re8 12 Bf3 Bg4 13 h3 Bxf3 14 gxf3 Red8 15 Rhg1 c6 16 Rg5 and White had promising attacking chances down the half-open g-file.

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c) 6...Bb4!? (**Diagram 60**) appears illogical because Black has effectively lost a tempo over the 5...Bb4 line.

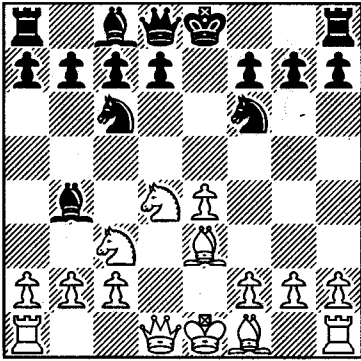


Diagram 60 (W)
Giving White a tempo

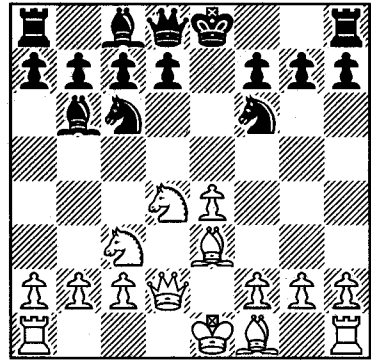


Diagram 61 (B)
The 'English Attack'?

However, it's not clear how useful White's extra move (Bc1-e3) is – in some cases the bishop may even prefer to be on c1 as on e3 it may get hit by ...Ng4 or (after ...d5 and exd5) ...Nxd5. For example, 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 Bd3 d6 9 f3 (9 0-0 Ng4!? is Black's idea) 9...d5! 10 exd5 Nxd5! 11 Bd2 0-0 12 0-0 Rb8 13 Nxd5 cxd5 and Black had equalised in J.Votava-M.Hebden, Rishon Le Zion 1992. It strikes me that one possible way for White to utilise the extra Be3 is with 8 Qd4!?, planning a quick 0-0-0.

7 Nxc6

Alternatively:

a) 7 Be2 is to me too pedestrian, and following 7...0-0 8 0-0 Re8! Black, with pressure in the centre, already has a comfortable position. Now 9 Bf3 can be answered by 9...Ne5! and 9 f3 runs into 9...d5. So in R.Vedder-H.Klip, Belgian League 2000 the game continued 9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 Bxb6 axb6 11 Bf3 Ra5! (a bit of lateral thinking) 12 Qd2 Rae5 13 g3 d5 and if anything Black was slightly better.

b) 7 g3 allows White to defend e4 with the light-squared bishop and is thus stronger than 7 Be2. After 7...0-0 8 Bg2 d6 9 h3 Re8 10 0-0 Bd7 11 Re1 h6 (G.Lane-M.Hebden, London 1994) White can claim to have the traditional structural advantage, but Black probably has just enough pressure on the centre to maintain equality.

c) Unlike the previous two possibilities, 7 Qd2!? (**Diagram 61**) is a very serious try for an advantage.

White prepares to castle queenside before proceeding with f2-f3 and g2-g4-g5 with an 'English Attack-style' offensive on the kingside.



NOTE: The English Attack is a system of development in open Sicilians which was devised by some English grandmasters in the 1980s. White plays Be3, Qd2, 0-0-0, f2-f3 followed by a kingside pawn offensive with g2-g4-g5 and possibly h2-h4-h5.

In B.Reefat-M.Hebden, Dhaka 1995 the Leicester GM played too passively, and following 7...0-0 8 0-0-0 Re8 9 f3 d6?! 10 g4! Nxd4 11 Bxd4 Be6 12 Rg1 Bxd4 13 Qxd4 c5 14 Qd2 Qa5 15 a3 a6 16 g5 Nd7 17 f4 b5 18 f5! it was becoming increasingly obvious that Black was in real trouble.

Instead of 9...d6, Black can challenge White's centre with the sharp 9...d5!? when 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Bxb6 axb6 was fine for Black in P.Hrvacic-F.Berebora, Split 1998. Pinning the knight with 10 Bb5! looks more critical, after which 10...Bd7!? 11 exd5 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 Bxb5 13 Nxb5 Qxd5 14 Bxb6 Qxb5 15 Be3 is perhaps a bit better for White due to his bishop-for-knight advantage, while the same could be said about 10...dxe4 11 Nxc6 Qxd2+ 12 Bxd2 a6!? 13 Ba4 Bd7 14 Nb4 Bxa4 15 Nxa4 a5 16 Nxb6 cxb6 17 a3 axb4 18 Bxb4.

7...bxc6 8 e5

The only real try for something out of the opening. 8 Bxb6 axb6 9 Bd3 0-0 10 0-0 Re8 followed by ...d7-d5 shows that Black has no difficulties if White plays it quietly.

8...Bxe3

Going backwards is not an option: 8...Ng8?! 9 Qg4 and Black has to make some concessions due to the attack on g7.



WARNING: In 1 e4 e5 openings, if you are forced to play the retreat ...Nf6-g8 early on in the game it usually means that something has gone wrong.

9 fxe3! (Diagram 62)

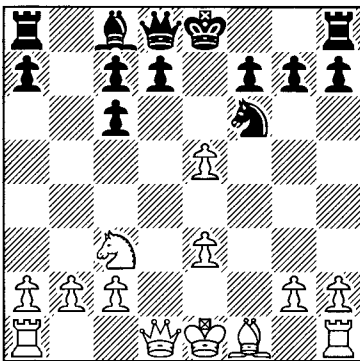


Diagram 62 (B)
...Nd5 or ...Ng8?

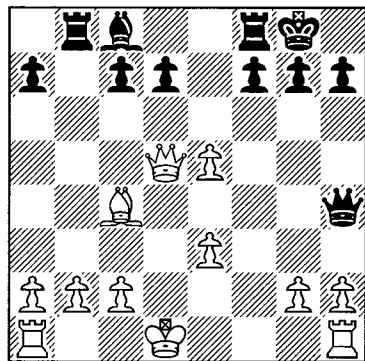


Diagram 63 (W)
Real compensation

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White can prevent Black from castling with 9 exf6?! Bh6 10 Qe2+ Kf8 but following 11 fxg7+ Bxg7 12 Qd2 Rb8 13 0-0-0 d5 Black's centre and raking bishop pair more than made up for this in P.Muningis-P.Bobras, Zagan 1995.

9...Nd5!

Black is more or less obliged to sacrifice a pawn. Again 9...Ng8?! is met by 10 Qg4!.

10 Nxd5 cxd5 11 Qxd5

It's true that White is not forced to accept the pawn offer. Jan Pinski suggests 11 Qd4!? (preventing ...Qh4+) 11...0-0 12 0-0-0 when White isn't a pawn ahead, but at least he has managed to move his king into relative safety – chances are roughly equal.

11...Qh4+! 12 Kd1

White is forced to move his king, as 12 g3?! Qb4+ 13 Qd2 Qxb2 was favourable for Black in H.Faust-J.Rauber, Pizol 1997.

12...Rb8 13 Bc4 0-0 (Diagram 63)

White has an extra pawn, but it is doubled and isolated on the e-file and White's king is far from safe. All in all, Black has enough compensation, for example:

a) 14 Qd4 Qg5! (but not 14...Qxd4+? 15 exd4 Rxb2?? 16 Bb3! followed by Kc1, winning material) 15 g3 d6! (logically trying to open files in the centre) 16 exd6 cxd6 17 Kd2 Qa5+ 18 Qc3 Qh5 19 h4 Be6! 20 g4! (20 Bxe6? fxe6 with ideas of ...Rf2+ and ...Rfc8) 20...Bxg4 21 Rag1 d5 22 Bd3 with an unbalanced but roughly level position, M.Andres Mendez-S.Slipak, Buenos Aires 1995.

b) 14 b3!? (White plans to safeguard his king with Kc1-d2) 14...Qg5 (14...Rb6 15 Kc1 Qe7 16 Rf1 d6 17 Kb2! dxe5 18 Rad1 Rd6 19 Qc5 saw White successfully returning the pawn to coordinate his pieces in J.Rohl Montes-V.Ramon, Santa Clara 1998) 15 Qd4 c5 16 Qf4 Qxg2 17 Rf1 Bb7 18 Kc1 Bd5 19 Kb2 Bxc4 20 Rg1 Qc6 21 Qxc4 Rb4 again with approximately level chances, N.Rozkov-V.Petukhov Bor 2000.

Theoretical?

Hardly – I can only find seven games reaching the position after 12...Rb8. Straying from the well-trodden paths would be the main reason for choosing this variation for Black, although objectively speaking White is probably a bit better in the lines with 6 Nxc6 or 6 Be3 Bb6 7 Qd2!?

Statistics

Overall 5...Bc5 has scored only 40% in around 600 games. White has scored 58% with 6 Nxc6 and 62% with 6 Be3, but significantly Black's score increases to 50% if he chooses 6 Be3 Bb6!.

Game 10

□ A.Krutko ■ S.Dzhambulatov

Dagomys 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6

Solid, safe, but uninspiring. Black stabilises his position by ruling out e4-e5 for the foreseeable future but puts absolutely no pressure on White's position and thus allows him to enjoy the benefits of the 'pure Scotch' centre without any real hassle.

6 Bc4 Be7 7 0-0 0-0 8 h3

Preventing both ...Bg4 and ...Ng4, but there's also nothing wrong with the straightforward 8 Re1.

8...Nxd4

Black understandably seeks to relieve some of the pressure via exchanges, but this strategy only works to some extent.

Black can also use the 'fork trick' 8...Nxe4 9 Nxe4 d5 to simplify the position, but following 10 Nxc6! bxc6 11 Bd3 dxe4 12 Bxe4 Black's obvious pawn weaknesses on the queenside promise White a lasting advantage. More ambitious is 8...Ne5!?, against which White should play 9 Be2, intending at some point to kick the knight away with f2-f4. Instead 9 Bb3?! allows Black to create counterplay on the queenside with 9...c5!, for example 10 Nf3 c4! 11 Nxe5 (11 Ba4? a6! and the threat of ...b7-b5 is virtually impossible to meet) 11...cxb3 12 Nf3 bxc2 13 Qxc2 Be6 and Black has the bishop pair and some activity with ...Rc8.

9 Qxd4 Be6 10 Be3!

White is in no hurry to change the favourable pawn structure with 10 Bxe6 fxe6. The game A.Gonzalez Pruneda-F.San Claudio Gonzalez, Norena 2001 continued 11 e5 Nd7! 12 exd6 cxd6 13 Qg4 Rf5 14 Re1 Ne5 15 Qe2 Bh4 16 Be3 Qd7 when Black suddenly had quite active piece play.

10...Qd7 11 Rad1 Bxc4 12 Qxc4 Qc6 13 Qd3! (Diagram 64)

White has allowed two sets of minor pieces to be traded, but stops short of exchanging queens, which would have certainly eased Black's problems. Now White will simply increase the pressure with Bd4 and Rfe1.

13...Rae8 14 Bd4 Bd8 15 Rfe1

Black has made the most of his limited space and with 15...Re6 and ...Rfe8 he could keep his disadvantage to a minimum. Instead he opts for an ill-timed strike at White's e4-pawn.

15...Nd7?! 16 Nd5! f5? (Diagram 65)

This loses a pawn due to tactical reasons.

17 Qb3! Kh8 18 exf5 Rxe1+ 19 Rxe1 Nf6

After 19...Rxf5 White wins with 20 Re8+ Rf8 21 Qg3! Bf6 22 Bxf6 gxf6 23 Nxf6! Rxe8 24 Nxe8 when Black cannot prevent Qg7 mate. Thus Black re-

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mains a pawn down with a miserable position.

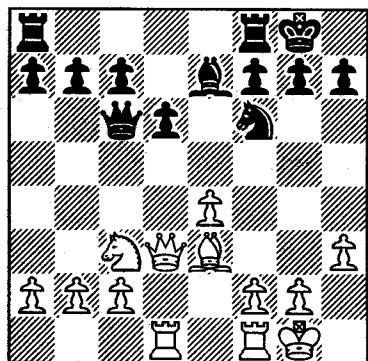


Diagram 64 (B)
Enough exchanges!

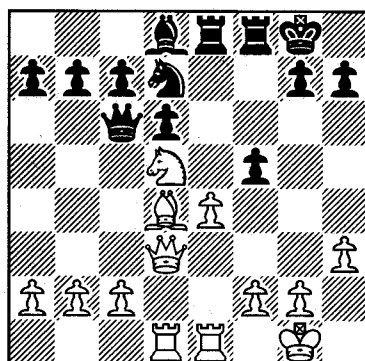


Diagram 65 (W)
Losing a pawn

20 Nf4 b5 21 Ne6 Re8 22 Qg3 Qd7 23 b4 Qf7 24 Qc3 Kg8 25 Qc6 g6 26 Re3 Qd7 27 Qf3 g5 28 Bb2 d5 29 Nxd8 Rxe3 30 fxe3 Qxd8 1-0

Following 31 Bxf6 Qxf6 32 Qxd5+ and Qxb5 White has three extra pawns. A good illustration of the problems Black faces against the 'pure Scotch centre'.

Game 11

□ D.Adla ■ A.Acebal Muniz

Oviedo, 2000

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nxe4! (Diagram 66)

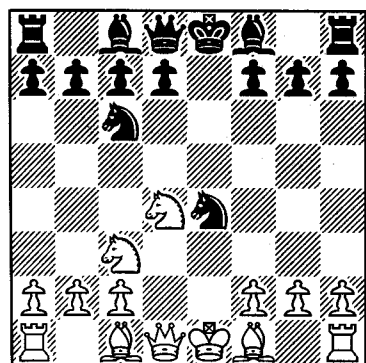


Diagram 66 (W)
A shocking move

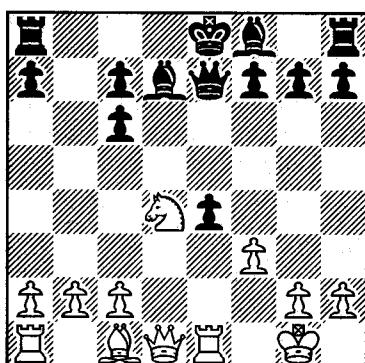


Diagram 67 (B)
Rxe4 or fxe4?

It's quite unbelievable that this move is even possible, but it is, and it would come as a nasty shock to White players who had not seen it before and were looking forward to a nice, cosy Scotch Four Knights game. Objectively speaking it's not actually very good – Black wins his piece back but reaches a rather poor position. I would only really recommend it as a surprise weapon in quick-play or blitz games, and I'm only really including it here so that White players know what to do when facing it.

6 Nxe4

6 Nxc6?! is not a refutation. After a neat series of 'desperado' moves with 6...Nxc3 7 Nxd8 Nxd1 8 Nxf7 Black has a choice between the unclear consequences of 8...Nxf2 9 Nxh8 Nxh1 10 Bd3 and the simpler 8...Kxf7 9 Bc4+ Kf6 10 Kxd1 c6 (Euwe) preparing ...d7-d5 with equality.



NOTE: A desperado is a piece, attacked or trapped, which inflicts as much damage as possible on the opponent's position before it is captured.

6...Qe7

This is the point: White cannot break the pin without leaving d4 en prise, and Black will be able to regain his piece with ...f7-f5 or ...d7-d5.

7 f3!

Alternatively:

a) Returning the piece immediately with 7 Be2?! isn't dangerous. Following 7...Qxe4 8 Nb5 Bb4+! 9 c3 Ba5 White has some play for the pawn, but this can hardly be viewed as a refutation of 5...Nxe4.

b) If White is looking for a quiet way to play then 7 Qd3!? may be a good option:

b1) 7...d5 8 Nxc6 bxc6 9 f3 and now Black should probably be content with the slight structural disadvantage entailed after 9...dxe4 10 Qxe4, as the greedy 9...f5? 10 Qc3! Bd7 11 Bg5 Qe6 12 0-0-0 fxe4 13 fxe4 looks very promising for White, for example 13...dxe4? 14 Bc4 Qf5 15 h4 (Pinski) when Rhf1 will be decisive.

b2) 7...Nxd4! 8 Qxd4 f5 9 Bd3 fxe4 10 Bxe4 Qb4+! 11 Qxb4 Bxb4+ 12 c3 Bc5 (Pinski) and Black will follow up with ...0-0, ...c7-c6 and ...d7-d5 with equality.

7...d5 8 Bb5 Bd7 9 Bxc6 bxc6!

9...Bxc6? 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 0-0 dxe4 12 fxe4 is a worse version for Black as castling queenside is now illegal.

10 0-0 dxe4 11 Re1! (Diagram 67)

I prefer this move to 11 fxe4 as White keeps the option open of recapturing on e4 with the rook. P.Carlsson-C.Johansson, Hallsberg 1999, continued 11 fxe4!? c5! 12 Nf5 Qe6 13 Bf4 0-0-0 14 Qf3 Bc6 15 Ng3 (15 Rae1!?) 15...h5! with good counterplay for Black.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

11...f5?

Trying to hang onto the extra pawn is much too greedy here, and Black's punishment is swift in coming. Far more to the point is 11...0-0-0! 12 Rxe4 Qf6 when we reach a rather deceptive position. At first sight Black's horrible queenside weakness looks as though it should give White a clear plus, but as Nigel Davies points out, matters are not so simple because of Black's bishop pair and speedy development. The game U.Zak-A.Mikhalevski, Israel 1996 continued 13 Qe2 c5 14 Nb3 Qb6 (14...Bc6 15 Rf4! Qg6 16 Rg4 Qd6 17 Bf4 Qd7 18 Qa6+ Kb8 19 Na5 Ba8 20 Be3 g6 21 Rb4+! cxb4 22 Bxa7 mate, J.Conde Ponderoso-J.Stacey, correspondence 1998, is a demonstration of White's attacking possibilities here) 15 Be3 Bd6 16 Qf2 f5 17 Rh4 Be7 18 Rc4 Qb5 19 Bxc5! Qxc4 20 Bxe7 Rde8 21 Qxa7 when White, with two pawns for the exchange, had some advantage in a complex position due to Black's shaky king.

12 fxe4 fxe4 13 c3!

Preparing to meet 13...0-0 with 14 Qa4. Still, Black should probably go for this as what happens in the game is a bit of a disaster, to say the least!

13...c5? 14 Qh5+!

Suddenly Black has no good way to deal with this check as 16...g6 15 Qd5 threatens both Qxa8 and Rxe4.

14...Qf7 15 Rxe4+ Be7 (Diagram 68)

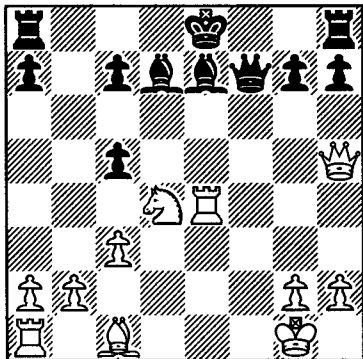


Diagram 68 (W)
White to play and win!

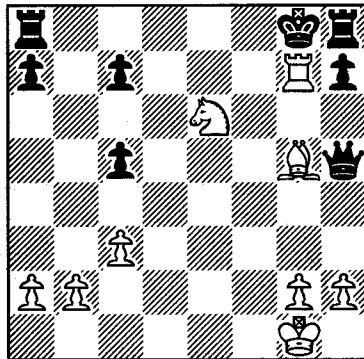


Diagram 69 (B)
A pretty mate

16 Rxe7+!!

This is a killer.

16...Kxe7 17 Bg5+ Ke8

Or 17...Kf8 18 Rf1, pinning and winning.

18 Re1+ Be6 19 Rxe6+ Kf8 20 Re7!

Not the only way to win, but the prettiest.

20...Qxh5 21 Ne6+ Kg8 22 Rxc7 mate (Diagram 69)

Game 12

□ A.Miles ■ A.Sorin

Matanzas 1995

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bc5 6 Nxc6 bxc6

6...dxc6?! 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 is not an appetising endgame for Black.

7 Bd3

After 7 Bc4 Black should probably continue as in the main game with 7...d6 8 0-0 Ng4!. Also, as we've seen previously, 7 e5 Qe7 8 Qe2 is less favourable for White when Black's dark-squared bishop has escaped from f8. After 8...Nd5 White should probably consider 9 Ne4. Instead 9 Nxd5 cxd5 10 Bf4 Rb8! is pleasant for Black, especially as 11 0-0-0 can be met by 11...Ba3!! 12 bxa3 Qxa3+ 13 Kd2 Qb4+ 14 Ke3 Qe4+ and ...Qxf4+.

7...d6

With his bishop on c5 instead of b4, it pays for Black to be more restrained with his d-pawn. After 7...d5 8 0-0 Black has less pressure on e4 than normal so White is not obliged to exchange on d5. White is better after both 8...0-0 9 Bg5 and 8...dxe4 9 Nxe4 Nxe4 10 Bxe4.

8 0-0

White has a couple of reasonable alternatives here:

a) Against 8 Bg5 I like the idea of adopting Varavin's idea from Game 1: 8...h6 9 Bh4 Be6!? with the idea of meeting 10 0-0 with 10...g5! 11 Bg3 h5!.

b) With 8 Na4!? White plans to eliminate Black's dark-squared bishop before doing anything else. Naturally Black doesn't want to saddle himself with tripled pawns, so he can play:

b1) 8...Bb6 9 Bg5 0-0 (again 9...h6!? 10 Bh4 Be6 planning 11 0-0 g5 12 Bg3 h5!? should be considered) 10 0-0 h6 11 Bh4 Re8 12 Nxb6 axb6 13 f4 Bb7 14 c4 c5 15 Qc2 and White had an edge in E.Rozentalis-M.Adams, Koge 1997.

b) 8...Nd7 9 Nxc5 Nxc5 10 Be3 Nxd3+ 11 Qxd3 0-0 12 0-0 Re8 13 Rfe1 c5 14 Bd2 Bb7 with equality, V.Gurevich-M.Hebden, Cappelle la Grande 1996.

8...Ng4! (Diagram 70)

An important move, repositioning the knight and incidentally threatening to win immediately with ...Qh4. Following 8...0-0 9 Bg5! h6 10 Bh4 the annoying pin on the f6-knight gives Black a long-term problem.

9 Bf4

The other possibility is to chase the knight away immediately with 9 h3. M.Ginzburg-A.Sorin, Salta 1995 continued 9...Ne5 10 Na4 Bb6 11 Be2 (White can hardly claim any advantage if he allows an exchange on d3) 11...g5!? (aggressive stuff, otherwise White captures on b6 and continues with f2-f4) 12

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

Nxb6 axb6 13 f4 gxf4 14 Bxf4 Qf6 15 Bh5 Be6 16 a4 Rg8 17 Kh1 Qh4 with an unclear position – Black has reasonable counterplay on the kingside.

9...g5!?

Again Black plays in the style of Varavin (see Game 1). Now after 10 Bg3? Black shouldn't think twice before playing 10...h5!

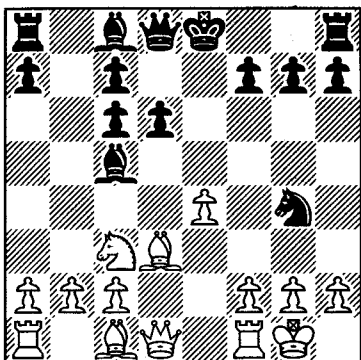


Diagram 70 (W)
Rerouting the knight

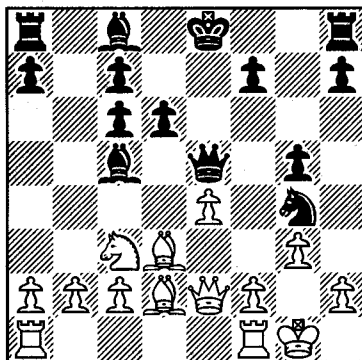


Diagram 71 (B)
An important moment

10 Bd2 Qf6 11 Qe2 Qe5 12 g3 (Diagram 71) 12...Qe6?!

Planning to attack h2 again with ...Qh6, but now White is able to harass Black's dark-squared bishop. In his notes to this game Miles suggested the improvement 12...a5! and this certainly worked out well for Black in the later game B.Szuk-S.Husari, Budapest 1999: 13 Nd1?! h5! 14 Ne3 Qxb2! (why not?) 15 Nc4 Qg7 16 Ne3 Ne5 17 Bc3 g4 18 Kg2 h4 19 Nf5 Bxf5 20 exf5 f6 21 Bc4 Ke7 22 Be6 hxg3 23 fxg3 Rxh2+!! and White resigned on account of 24 Kxh2 Qh6+ 25 Kg2 Qh3 mate. Instead of the unfortunate Nd1-e3 plan, I think White should play more directly with 13 Kh1!, planning f2-f4.

13 Na4! Bd4

13...Nxb2 14 Kxh2?? Qh3+ 15 Kg1 Qxg3+ 16 Kh1 Qh4+ 17 Kg1 Bg4 18 Qe1 Bf3 is winning for Black, but 14 Nxc5! puts a spanner in the works, for example 14...Qh3 15 Bc3! Rg8 16 e5! Bg4 17 f3 Qxg3+ 18 Qg2.

14 c3 Qh6 15 h4 Bf6 16 e5! (Diagram 72)

Taking away the e5-square for Black's pieces and exploiting the fact that White's queen and Black's king sit on the same file. Now 16...dxe5 17 f3 leaves Black's knight with no place to go, and 16...Bxe5 17 f3! Nf6 18 Bxg5 Qg7 19 f4 also wins a piece.

16...Nxe5 17 hxg5 Bxg5

Or 17...Qh3 18 gxf6 Bg4 19 f3! (Miles) 19...Qxg3+ 20 Qg2 Nxf3+ 21 Rxf3 Qxf3

22 Re1+ and White's bishop and knight outweigh Black's rook and two pawns. Still, this looks like a more resilient option than the game continuation.

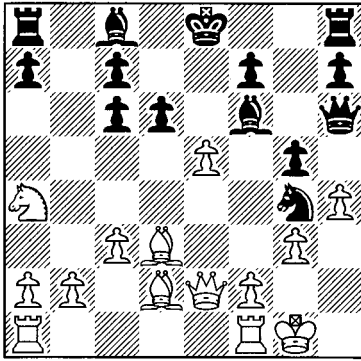


Diagram 72 (B)
Trouble on the e-file

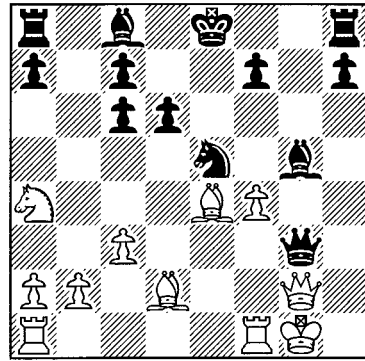


Diagram 73 (B)
Black must lose something

18 f4! Qh3 19 Be4! Qxg3+ 20 Qg2! (Diagram 73)

Eliminating all counterplay and winning material. Miles finishes off the game with typical efficiency.





20...Qxg2+ 21 Bxg2 Bh6 22 fxe5 Bxd2 23 Bxc6+ Bd7 24 Bxa8 Bxa4 25 exd6 cxd6 26 Rf2! Bg5 27 Re1+ Kf8 28 Bd5 Be8 29 Rf5 f6 30 Rf3 h5 31 c4 h4 32 Rb3 Bf4? 33 Rxe8+! 1-0

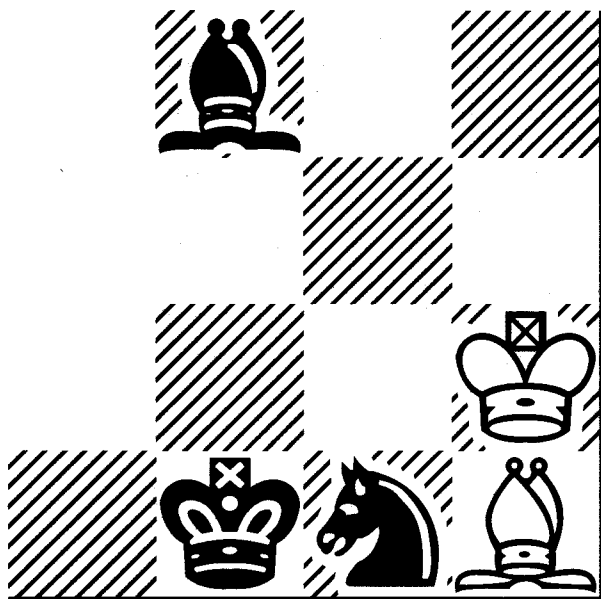
Points to Remember

- 1) The Scotch Four Knights is an ideal choice for the improving player, whether playing White or Black. The variations are neither too complex nor theoretical, both sides develop easily and the open positions are ideal for honing tactical skills.
- 2) From a theoretical point of view, the main line holds no real fears for Black.
- 3) Black players looking to avoid the main line have reasonable alternatives in the shape of 7...d6 (see Game 1) and 5...Bc5 (see the second section).
- 4) Apart from 5 Nxc6, moves other than 5 Nc3 shouldn't cause Black any problems, and some of White's options actually leave him worse.

Chapter Two

Mieses Variation: Introduction and Main Line with 8...Nb6

-  Introduction and Sidelines
-  White Plays 9 Nd2
-  White Plays 9 Nc3
-  Points to Remember



Introduction and Sidelines

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 (Diagram 1)

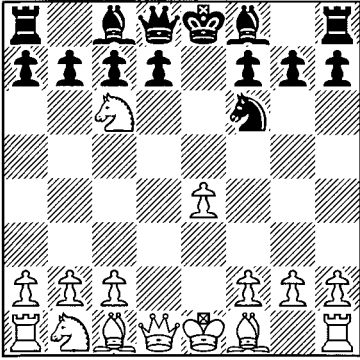


Diagram 1 (B)

White captures on c6

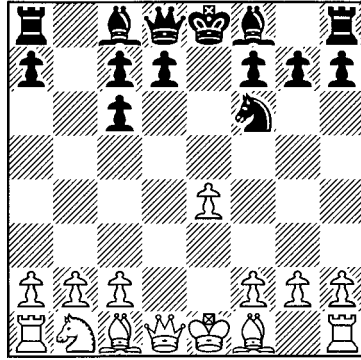


Diagram 2 (W)

Black recaptures correctly

This capture introduces a variation that was named after the German-born grandmaster Jacques Mieses, who wasn't actually the originator (Joseph Blackburne played it earlier) but did play it many times at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. 5 Nxc6 is White's most popular move, and it's easy to explain why. There are two massive positives of trading knights on c6:

- 1) White gets rid of the perennial problem of having to protect the knight in the centre.
- 2) Black's queenside pawn structure will become compromised.

5...bxc6! (Diagram 2)

I hope by now that you are not taking a second glance at 5...dxc6?!. Following 6 Qxd8+! Kxd8 and now, say, 7 Bd3 Black has lost his castling rights and he faces an uphill battle against White's superior pawn structure, against which he has no real compensation. With 5...bxc6, however, Black is already in pole position to challenge the centre with ...d7-d5, reaching very similar positions to those discussed in Chapter 1.

6 e5!

In many ways this is the logical follow-up to White's previous move. Before Black has a chance to play ...d7-d5 (thus giving his knight the extra options of the d7- and g4-squares), he is forced to move it from its favourite defensive post.

6...Qe7!

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Well, not quite yet! By pinning the e5-pawn to White's king, Black deals with the threat and adds one of his own, to the e5-pawn. As far as immediate knight moves go, of course going back to base with 6...Ng8?! looks wholly undesirable. This leaves 6...Nd5 (see Game 14) and 6...Ne4 (see Game 15). By the way, alternatives to 6 e5 are covered in Game 13.

7 Qe2!

White follows suit, protecting the e5-pawn, breaking the pin and thus forcing Black to move the knight.

In truth White really had no other option. Following 7 Bf4?! Black can gain vital time by attacking the bishop with 7...Nd5!, and after 8 Bg3 Black could even contemplate grabbing a pawn with 8...Qb4+ 9 Nd2 Qxb2. The move 7 f4 looks fairly natural, but then Black can pursue his attack on the e5-pawn with 7...d6. This more or less forces 8 Qe2 but after exchanges White will be left with an extremely vulnerable pawn on e5. For example, 8...dxe5 9 Qxe5 (or 9 fxe5 Ng4) 9...Qxe5+ 10 fxe5 Ng4 11 Bf4 Bc5! (threatening ...Nf2) 12 Be2 Rb8! and now 13 b3 is met by 13...Bd4 while 13 h3 is answered by 13...Ne3, with Black having a clear plus in either case.

7...Nd5

The only move, right? Or is it? I was just about to write off the woeful-looking 7...Ng8!? (**Diagram 3**) before I was shocked to discover that, not only has it been played quite a few times, but also by grandmasters and a former world champion (Emanuel Lasker, no less!).

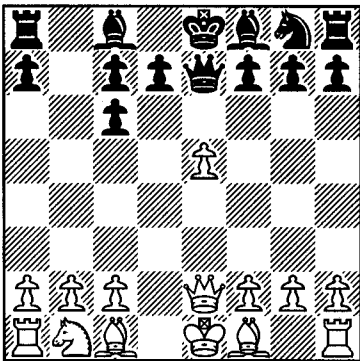


Diagram 3 (W)

7...Ng8 – played by a legend!

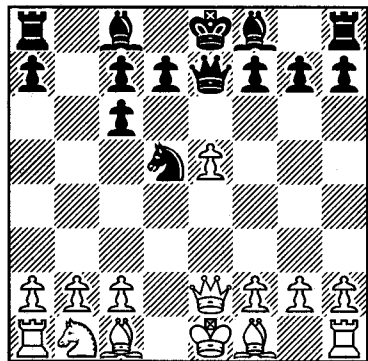


Diagram 4 (W)

An exchange of inconveniences

If I were defending its corner I would say that Black is avoiding the hassle of the knight being attacked on d5 with c2-c4 and plans to continue with ...g7-g6, ...Bg7 and ...Nh6 (and possibly ...Nf5). Not such a bad argument when you think about it, but surely White has at least one way to claim some advantage.

For example, 8 b3!? g6 9 Ba3 Qe6 10 Bxf8 Kxf8 11 Nc3 f6 12 f4 d5 (V.Savon-Y.Razuvaev, USSR Championship 1972) must be a bit better for White. The game's 13 exd6 isn't bad, but White could also consider 13 0-0-0, planning to obtain a dark-squared clamp on the queenside with Na4-c5.



TIP: Don't be too quick to dismiss strange-looking moves.

It's worth having a good look at the position after 7...Nd5 (**Diagram 4**). In the main line of the Scotch Four Knights considered in Chapter 1, both White and Black were able to move freely and after 10 moves both sides had castled and developed most of their pieces. However, a quick glance at Diagram 3 tells us that this just doesn't happen in the Mieses Variation. By playing 6...Qe7 and thus inducing 7 Qe2, Black has succeeded in disrupting not only White's kingside development but also his own. Peter Wells, who wrote an excellent book on the Scotch (sadly this is out of print), summed up the situation perfectly by labelling it as 'an exchange of inconveniences'. Black's decision to bring about these mutual development problems is influenced by two major factors:

- 1) Black has the upper hand in the standoff between the two queens; Black's queen is free to move whereas White's queen must stay guarding the e5-pawn, at least until it is further defended or Black's queen no longer attacks it.
- 2) After the almost inevitable c2-c4, trying to kick the knight off its central perch, Black has the very important possibility of playing ...Ba6, pinning the c-pawn to the queen.

Black hopes to exploit these two factors to prove that his piece play and the temporary vulnerability of the e5-pawn compensates for White's possibly long-term advantage of a healthier pawn structure.

8 c4

It's very natural to try and force the knight away from the centre with this pawn move. It's true that White can consider delaying c2-c4, but then he runs the risk of allowing Black further options other than ...Nb6 and ...Ba6. For example:

a) 8 b3 Qe6! (bringing ...Bb4+ into the equation) 9 c4 Bb4+! 10 Bd2 Bxd2+ 11 Nxd2 Nb4! 12 Nf3 c5! (**Diagram 5**)

and now the knight can re-route to the c6-square where it eyes both the vulnerable e5-pawn and the potential outpost on d4, M.Sibarevic-I.Subasic, Skender Vakuf 1980.



NOTE: Finding a good home for his knight is one of Black's major issues in this line. If this problem is solved successfully then Black more often than not ends up with a perfectly playable position.

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b) 8 h4!? (**Diagram 6**) looks at first sight like a beginner's move, but it's actually an invention from the creative Dutch GM John Van der Wiel, an expert on the white side of the Scotch. White's almost child-like idea is to bring the h1-rook into play via h3, and this can lead to some pretty bizarre positions, for example 8...f6 9 c4 Ba6 10 Rh3 fxe5 11 Ra3 Nb4 12 Nc3 Qxh4 13 g3 Qd4 14 Rxa6 Nxa6, J.Van der Wiel-J.Timman, Amsterdam 1987. Perhaps unsurprisingly, though, not many White players have followed Van der Wiel's lead.

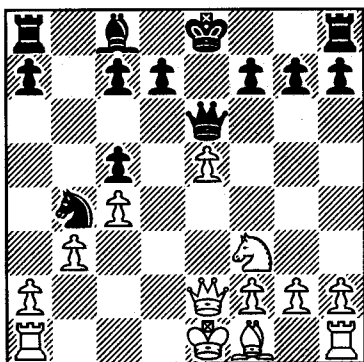


Diagram 5 (W)
A route for the knight

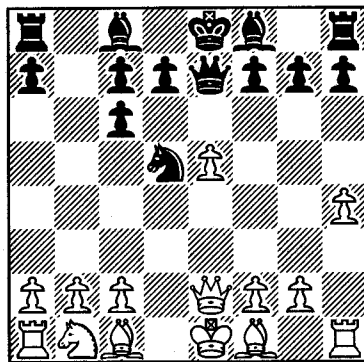


Diagram 6 (B)
Looking for rook action

c) The non-committal 8 Nd2 is certainly a possibility, but it creates a couple of problems for White if he wants to continue with c2-c4: firstly, Black now has the option of ...Nf4; secondly, the idea of ...Nb4 also increases in strength because White has to deal with the threat of ...Nc2+. Black probably does best by playing 8...g6! and now:

c1) 9 c4 Ba6 transposes to 8 c4 Ba6 9 Nd2, while Black can also consider 9...Nf4 10 Qe4 Ne6.



NOTE: The e6-square is generally an effective post for the black knight in this line. Here it is difficult to attack, it blocks White's e5-pawn and has considerable influence in the centre.

c2) 9 Ne4!? Bg7 10 c4 Ba6!? (10...f5 also looks reasonable) 11 f4 (11 Bg5 can be met by the simple 11...Qxe5) 11...0-0 12 Qd1? (White must play 12 g3) 12...Nxf4! 13 Bxf4 Bxe5 14 Bg5 f6 15 Bh6 Bxb2 and Black was winning in V.Mehta-J.Jaluvka, correspondence 1996.

c3) 9 Nf3 Qb4+! 10 Qd2 (10 c3 Nxc3! is the point of Black's previous move) 10...Rb8! 11 c4 Qxd2+ 12 Bxd2 Nb4 13 Kd1 c5! and the knight can happily head back to c6, J.Schoellmann-A.Mikhailchishin, Bled 1995.

d) 8 g3!? (**Diagram 7**) is perhaps the best of White's alternatives – White

plans to fianchetto the f1-bishop, and this move also supports the possible f2-f4 advance.

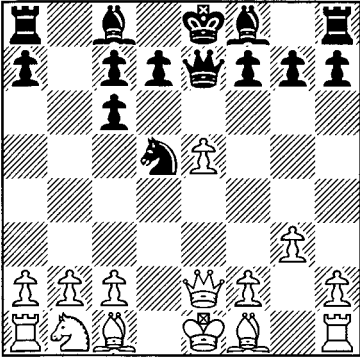


Diagram 7 (B)
Planning Bg2

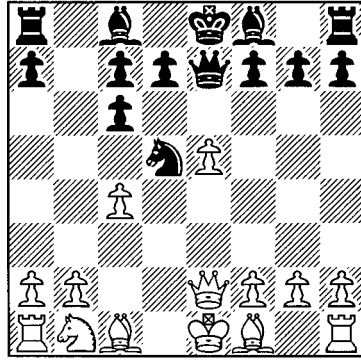


Diagram 8 (B)
White plays c2-c4

There are many transpositional possibilities; for example, 8...g6 9 c4 Ba6 10 b3 transposes to 8 c4 Ba6 9 b3 g6 10 g3, while 8...f6 9 c4 Ba6 transposes to 8 c4 Ba6 9 g3 f6. One option I like for Black here is 8...Qe6!? and now:

d1) 9 Bg2 Bc5! gives the knight the extra option of retreating to e7. Black will continue with ...0-0 and ...Re8, pressuring the e5-pawn.

d2) 9 c4 Nb6 10 b3 – see the line 8 c4 Nb6 9 g3 Qe6 10 b3.

d3) 9 h4!? (planning Bh3) 9...Nb4! 10 a3?! (10 c4, preventing ...Qd5, is stronger, but Black can still annoy White with 10...Qf5!) 10...Qd5! 11 Rg1 Ba6 12 c4 (J.Diaz-W.Arencibia, Las Tunas 1996) and now Wells's suggestion of 12...Bxc4 13 Qxc4 Qxc4 14 Bxc4 Nc2+ and ...Nxa1 leaves Black on top.



NOTE: ...Qe7-e6, allowing the f8-bishop to develop along the f8-a3 diagonal, is a typical idea for Black.

So overall, the general consensus seems to be that it makes more sense for White to play c2-c4 without delay. Let's move back to 8 c4 (**Diagram 8**).

Now Black has two main options here: the retreat 8...Nb6 is the subject of the next section, while the pinning 8...Ba6 is covered in Chapter 3. Other black options are less serious:

a) 8...Nb4 plans ...c6-c5 and ...Nc6, but before Black can do this White can send the knight onto a poor circuit with 9 a3! Na6 10 b4!, leaving the steed miserably placed on a6. White keeps some advantage after, say, 10...g6 11 Bb2 Bg7 12 g3 0-0 13 f4 d6 14 Bg2!.

b) The disruptive 8...Qb4+ has been played on a few occasions, with Black's

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idea being 9 Nd2 Nf4 when the knight finds a good square on e6. However, the loss of time entailed by moving the queen allows White to keep some advantage, for example 10 Qe4 Ne6 11 g3!? Bb7 12 Bg2 0-0-0 13 a3 Qb6 14 0-0 c5! 15 Qd3 Bxg2 16 Kxg2 Qb7+ 17 Kg1 Nd4 18 b4!, J.Sullivan-G.McDonald, correspondence 2000.

Game 13

□ P.Brochet ■ M.Hebden

French League 1998

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 Bd3 (Diagram 9)

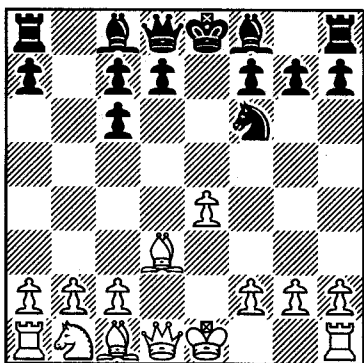


Diagram 9 (B)
The modest 6 Bd3

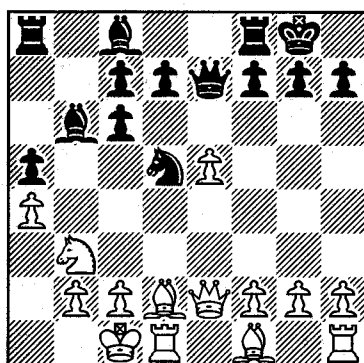


Diagram 10 (B)
A choice of good moves

A modest, sensible move. White defends e4, develops a piece and prepares to castle while keeping the idea of e4-e5 in reserve. 6 Bd3 is a typical move for White players unsure of their theory, or ones unwilling to enter the complexities of 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2.

Other ways of defending e4 include the following:

a) 6 Nc3 is likely to transpose to lines considered in Chapter 1 following 6...Bb4 or 6...d5 7 Bd3 Bb4.

b) 6 Nd2 looks less logical to me than 6 Bd3 purely because it blocks the c1-bishop. Nevertheless, it certainly can't be described as a bad move. Naturally 6...d5 is a reasonable response, while it's also possible for Black to delay this advance in favour of with 6...Bc5, for example 7 e5!? Qe7! (clogging up White's development) 8 Qe2 Nd5 9 Nb3 Bb6 10 Bd2 a5 11 a4 0-0 12 0-0-0, as in S.Tartakower-Em.Lasker, New York 1924 (**Diagram 10**) and now both Alekhine's suggestion of 12...f6 and Euwe's of 12...Re8, intending ...d7-d6, look fine for Black.

6...d5!

The most natural move – Black immediately contests the centre. Black can play in a more reserved manner with ...d7-d6 followed by a kingside fianchetto, but it's worth pointing out here that 6...Bc5?! is inaccurate because of 7 e5!. The knight is forced to move away from f6 because 7...Qe7?! can be met by 8 0-0!, when the e5-pawn is immune due to Re1.



WARNING: Answering e4-e5 with ...Qe7 is usually much less effective if White has already developed his bishop to d3. Firstly, the reply Qe2 no longer blocks in the bishop and, secondly, White has the option of 0-0, answering ...Qxe5 with Re1.

7 e5!?

The most ambitious move, but objectively not necessarily the best. Safer options include:

a) 7 Nc3 Bb4 transposes to Chapter 1.

b) 7 Qe2!? dxe4!? (structurally a concession, but at least Black bags the bishop pair; White's idea is to meet 7...Be7 8 0-0 0-0 with 9 e5 Nd7 10 f4, when the e5/f4 complex gives White the foundations for a kingside attack) 8 Bxe4 (the nuance 8 Nd2 can be met by 8...Bb4! 9 Bxe4 0-0! 10 c3 Bd6 11 Bxc6 Rb8 when Black has great piece activity in return for his pawn; in the game T.Gruber-M.Euwe, Vienna 1921 White wisely returned the pawn by allowing 12 0-0! Bxh2+ 13 Kxh2 Qd6+ 14 Kg1 Qxc6) 8...Nxe4 9 Qxe4+ Qe7 10 Qxe7+ Bxe7 11 0-0 Bf5 12 Bf4 0-0-0 (**Diagram 11**) with a roughly balanced position, the active bishop pair sufficiently compensating Black for his poor queenside structure, J.Granda Zuniga-B.Ivkov, Cienfuegos 1985.

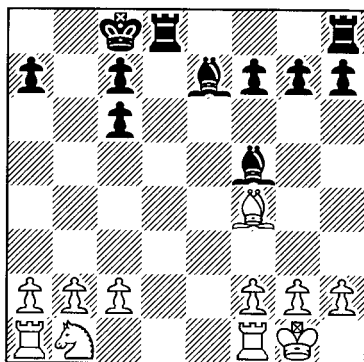


Diagram 11 (W)

Structure versus the bishop pair

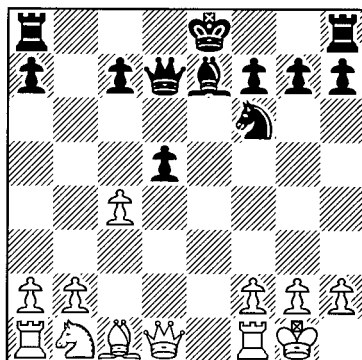


Diagram 12 (B)

Nibbling at d5

c) 7 exd5 (this looks very sensible) 7...cxd5 and now:

c1) 8 0-0 Be7 9 c4! (making use of the fact that the b1-knight hasn't been de-

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veloped in order to challenge the centre; 9 Nc3?! 0-0 10 Bg5 c6 would give Black an improved version of Chapter 1, with Black's bishop being more handily placed on e7) 9...0-0!? (both 9...d4 and 9...c6 are also playable) 10 cxd5 Nxd5! 11 Be4 Be6 (H.Stevic-A.Beliavsky, Bled 2002) when Black's slight lead in development and the possibility of play down the half-open b-file offers enough compensation for his compromised structure,

c2) The paradoxical 8 Bb5+!? deserves a mention if only because it isn't quite as bad as it looks. White flagrantly breaks an opening principle by moving a bishop twice in three moves, but the fact that a few grandmasters have been willing to try this means that it has to be given a little respect. White's idea is that after 8...Bd7 9 Bxd7+ Qxd7 10 0-0 Be7 he begins attacking the centre with 11 c4! (**Diagram 12**).

Now 11...d4 is playable, while R.Zelcic-J.Emms, Montecatini Terme 1996 continued 11...0-0 12 cxd5 Nxd5 13 Nc3. Here I should have continued active piece play with 13...Rfd8!, as the game continuation 13...c6?! 14 Be3 Bf6 15 Rc1 Rfb8 16 Nxd5 cxd5 17 Bd4 Bxd4 18 Qxd4 leaves Black slightly worse – the d5-pawn is blockaded and vulnerable, and White can look for some action down the c-file.

7...Ng4! 8 0-0 Bc5!

Continuing to play with ambition. Now both sides must play very precisely. 9 Bf4 f6! 10 exf6 0-0! looks very pleasant for Black, while the following line is worth remembering: 9 h3? Nxe5! 10 Re1 Qf6 11 Qe2 0-0! 12 Qxe5 Qxf2+ 13 Kh1 Bxh3!! 14 gxh3 Qf3+ 15 Kh2 Bd6 and Black wins easily.

9 Qe2! Qe7!

Black must continue to create threats. It only takes one pedestrian move (e.g. 9...0-0?) after which White plays 10 h3! and Black is forced into retreat with 10...Nh6, giving White the pleasant option of shattering Black's kingside pawns with 11 Bxh6.

While the theory of this line was still developing, a few games saw Black play in the hyper-aggressive 9...Qh4 10 h3 h5, but M.Krakops-D.Sluckers, Latvia 1992 poured some cold water over this idea. Following 11 Nd2 Qg3 12 Nf3 h4 13 b4! Bb6 14 c4 dxc4 15 Be4! Bd7 16 e6! fxe6 17 b5! Black was in some serious trouble.

10 Bf4 g5! (**Diagram 13**)

Again Black must carry on annoying White with threats, otherwise White will simply continue with h2-h3. 10...Bd4?, hitting both b2 and c3, looks like a serious consideration, but here White can make use of a pin down the e-file: 11 c3! Bxe5? 12 Bxe5 Nxe5 (or 12...Qxe5 13 Qxe5+ Nxe5 14 Re1 f6 15 f4) 13 Re1 f6 14 f4, winning material.

11 Bg3?

A natural enough reaction, but after studying Game 1 this move should send some alarm bells ringing – there are many similarities.

White should sacrifice a pawn with 11 Bd2! Nxe5 12 Re1. Now after 12...Nxd3 13 Qxd3 Be6 14 Bc3 followed by Nd2-b3 Black's weaknesses on both sides of the board promise White reasonable play. 12...Bd6! has been played a few times and looks like a stronger choice. For example, 13 f4 gxf4 14 Bxf4 f6 15 Nd2 0-0 16 Qf2 Rb8 17 Rab1 Qg7 (G.Richards-K.McLaughlin, correspondence 2002) when it's true that Black's structure could be better, but I suspect that this doesn't quite compensate White enough for the pawn deficit.

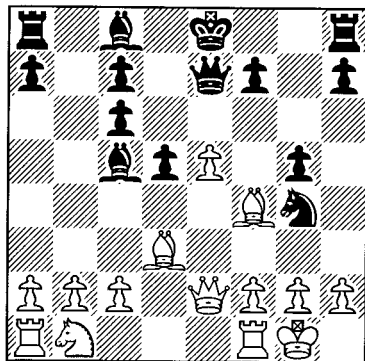


Diagram 13 (W)
Aggression required

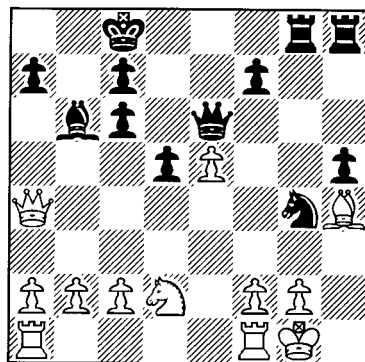


Diagram 14 (W)
Facing the firing line

11...h5!

Naturally! Suddenly White is facing a menacing attack against his king, with Black planning to meet 12 h3 with 12...h4!

12 Ba6 Bxa6 13 Qxa6 Bb6 14 Qa4 Qe6 15 h4 0-0-0! 16 Nd2 gxh4 17 Bxh4 Rdg8 (Diagram 14)

Black has tremendous activity and open lines against White's king, added to which the e5-pawn is about to drop. Unsurprisingly White lasts only a few more moves.

18 Qf4 Nxe5 19 Rfe1 Ng6! 20 Rxe6? Nxf4 21 Rf6 Nxc2 0-1

Game 14

□ J.Van Zandwijk ■ M.Kocur

Hoevelte 2003

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Nd5 (Diagram 15)

The most natural-looking response to 6 e5, but it's surprising how much the easy development of both sides seems to favour White more than Black.

7 c4!

In many ways it makes sense to push the knight back to b6 as soon as possible, although it's true that Black does achieve some counterplay against the c4-

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pawn.

White's other serious try for an advantage is with the straightforward 7 Bd3!?, preparing to castle. Now 7...Bc5 8 0-0 0-0 9 Nd2! illustrates how normal development from both sides favours White, who intends to follow up with Ne4, Qh5, something to g5 etc. with an awesome attack, made all the stronger because Black's knight is denied access to the f6-square due to the pawn spearhead on e5.

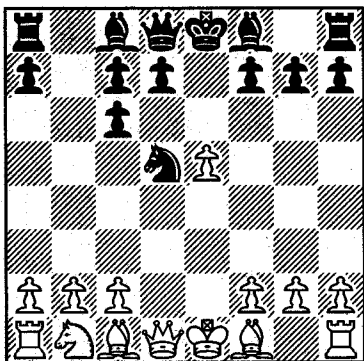


Diagram 15 (W)
Black plays 6...Nd5

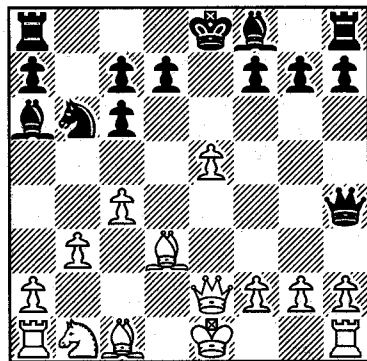


Diagram 16 (B)
Black can mix it up

Instead Black does better by challenging the e5-pawn immediately: 7...d6! 8 exd6 Bxd6! (choosing instant piece activity over pawn structure; something like 8...cxd6 9 0-0 Be7 10 c4 Nf6 11 Nc3 is safer but still a bit better for White – he has a kind of improved version of the structure seen in Chapter 1) 9 0-0 Qh4! (more activity!) 10 g3 Qh3 11 Re1+ Be6 12 Nd2!. Here the game G.Gottardi-J.Vitomskis, correspondence 1996 continued 12...0-0?! 13 Ne4 Be7 14 Ng5! Bxg5 15 Bxg5 Rd6 16 Qd2 h6 17 Be3 when Black's obvious queenside weaknesses were really beginning to come into play. Instead of castling queenside, Black should safeguard his king with 12...0-0. He remains active, but White still keeps an edge after 13 Ne4! – the move Ng5 is in the air and White can always fend off Black's queen with Bf1-g2. Meanwhile, those queenside weaknesses won't go away.



NOTE: In the Mieses Variation Black often chooses to weaken his structure even further in the search of piece activity. In the previous variation this meant choosing 8...Bxd6 over 8...cxd6.

7...Nb6

We've already seen how ...Nb4, planning ...c6-c5 and ...Nc6, can be successfully met: 7...Nb4? 8 a3! Na6 9 b4!, completely sidelining the knight. White retains a clear plus after, say, 9...Qe7 10 Bb2 d6 11 Bd3! dxe5 12 0-0 (threatening

Bxe5) 12...f6 13 f4!.

8 Bd3 Ba6!

Black's best bet is to go after the c4-pawn. 8...Bc5 9 0-0 0-0 10 Nc3 (planning Ne4, Qh5 etc.) once again demonstrates how precarious Black's position can become after 'normal' development.

9 Qe2

Following 9 0-0!? I believe Black should be brave and grab on c4: 9...Bxc4 10 Bxc4 Nxc4 11 Qg4!? Nxe5! (11...Nb6 12 Bg5 Be7 13 Bf4! – S.Velickovic – gives White definite compensation, especially since 13...0-0? is met by 14 Bh6!, winning material) 12 Re1 Qe7! 13 Qd1 (13 Qe2? Nd3!) 13...g5! (the only way to deal with the threat of f2-f4) 14 f4 gxf4 15 Bxf4 Bg7 16 Nd2 0-0 and though White clearly has some play, I can't see anything devastating and Black does have two extra pawns, D.Pinasco-L.Gavrileteanu, correspondence 1999.

9...Qh4!

Continuing to knock White off his stride by attacking c4.

10 b3! (Diagram 16)

10 Nd2?! Bb4! 11 b3 Qd4! saw the justification of Black's play in the game V.Charushin-I.Rausis, correspondence 1990. The point is that 12 Rb1 can be met very effectively by 12...Nd5! (Rausis), suddenly bringing this knight back to life.

10...Qd4!?

This move in conjunction with Black's next prevents White from castling, but the game continuation shows that it may well not be worth the hassle because Black loses valuable time with both his queen and dark-squared bishop.

Igor Rausis gives the line 10...Bb4+ 11 Bd2 Bxd2+ (now 11...Qd4?? can be answered by 12 Bxb4! Qxa1 13 Bc3, trapping the queen) 12 Nxd2 0-0 13 0-0 f6! (Black must challenge e5 at some point) 14 Nf3 Qh5 15 Rfe1 fxe5 16 Nxe5 Qxe2 17 Rxe2 when White has a small but long-term advantage associated with his superior pawn structure and minor pieces.

11 Bb2 Bb4+ 12 Kf1

White had no choice as 12 Nd2?? would have left b2 hanging.

12...Qh4 13 a3 Be7 14 Nd2 0-0-0!? 15 h3 Qh6 16 Nf3 (Diagram 17)

Both sides have more or less completed their initial development. White has lost his castling rights, but this is no big deal as his king can reach relative safety after g2-g3 and Kg2. Of more importance is the relative activity of the minor pieces. All three of White's are working well, whereas Black has to work overtime trying to bring his a6-bishop and b6-knight back into the game. Both of these pieces are at the moment effectively shackled by White's b3-c4 pawn duo. With this in mind, I suspect Black's best idea here is to at least solve the problem of the bishop with 16...c5, intending ...Bb7. However, White still keeps some advantage after 17 g3 Bb7 18 Be4!.

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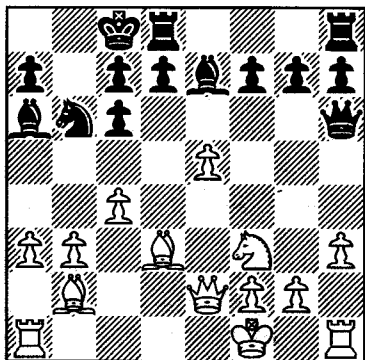


Diagram 17 (B)

Who has the better minor pieces?

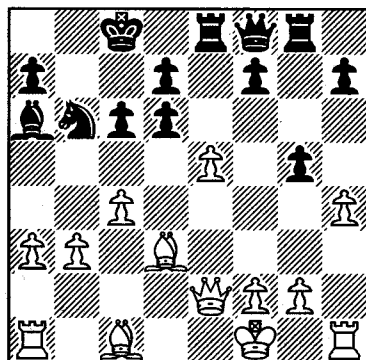


Diagram 18 (W)

White loses control



NOTE: The activity of Black's knight and light-squared bishop plays a very significant role in the Mieses Variation. Black has to be very wary of the possibility of their becoming sidelined on a6 and b6.

16...Rhg8 17 Bc1!?

17 g3 and Kg2 also makes sense. After 17 Bc1 Black's next move is forced as 17...Qe6?? 18 Nd4! traps the queen in mid-board.

17...g5 18 Nd4

The immediate 18 h4! looks even stronger.

18...Rde8 19 h4!

Suddenly the rook on h1 sees some action, and Black's queen is running out of useful squares.

19...Bd6 20 Nf5 Qf8 21 Nxd6+ cxd6 (Diagram 18)

The game has become quite complex as the pawn spearhead on e5 is falling. Even so, White could have kept a clear advantage here with 22 hxcg5!, seeking some h-file action for the rook, for example 22...dxe5 23 Bf5 Kb7 24 Kg1 d5 25 Rxh7 Rg7 26 Rh6 dxc4 27 Qf3!. Instead White loses the plot completely with his next two moves.

22 Bxcg5? Rxe5 23 Qd2??

White is still better after 23 Qf3!.

23...Qg7!

Oops! Suddenly there is the double threat of ...Rxcg5, hitting a1, and ...f7-f6. There is nothing White can do.

24 g3 Rxcg5! 25 hxcg5 Qxa1+ 26 Kg2 Qe5 27 f4 Qd4 28 Rxh7 Nxc4! 0-1

A win for Black, but we can safely say that this had little to do with his choice of opening.

Game 15

□ A.Morozevich ■ A.Bezgodov

Russian Cup, Tomsk 1998

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Ne4!?

If Black wishes to avoid the main lines with 6...Qe7, then I think 6...Ne4 is a slightly better bet than 6...Nd5. On the e4-square the knight has more possibilities – it can reroute to c5 and possibly e6. Nevertheless, with sensible play White should be able to keep a small advantage.

7 Nd2!

White has played several moves here, including both 7 Qf3 and 7 Qd4, but I like the simplicity of the text move. White offers an exchange of knights, banking on the fact that a reduction in the number of minor pieces will not affect his long-term structural advantage.

7...Nc5

In F.Vallejo Pons-V.Korchnoi, Vera 2004 the veteran GM opted to exchange on d2, but following 7...Nxd2 8 Bxd2 d5 9 Bd3 Qh4 10 0-0 Bc5 11 c4! 0-0 12 Rc1 White was ready to nibble away at Black's queenside pawn weaknesses.

8 Be2!?

Typically Morozevich is not afraid of offering a pawn sacrifice. The safer, and possibly objectively stronger, way of handling things is with 8 Nf3. For example, 8...d5 9 exd6 cxd6 10 Be3 Ne6 11 Be2 Ba6!? 12 0-0 (12 Bxa6 Qa5+ is Black's idea) 12...Bxe2 13 Qxe2 Be7 14 c4! 0-0 15 Rad1 and again White had a structural edge in D.Pavasovic-Z.Basagic, Celje 2004.

8...Be7?!

Hindsight is always 20/20, but given what happens to Black in the game, there is a serious argument for greed with 8...Qg5!. Following 9 0-0 (or 9 Nf3 Qxg2 10 Rg1 Qh3) 9...Qxe5 10 Re1 Qf6 (Mikhalevski) White has no good way to exploit the discovered check. Obviously there is some compensation on offer, but this looks like a much better scenario for Black than the game continuation.

9 0-0 0-0 10 Nb3!

Offering another exchange, and this time Black cooperates.

10...Nxb3 11 axb3! (Diagram 19)

Suddenly the a1-rook is activated, bearing down on the pawn weakness at a7.

11...d5 12 exd6 Bxd6?!

An instructive error. Black hopes that by capturing with the bishop he can engineer some activity on the kingside, but on this occasion it is easily neutralised by White's precise play. Straightening out his pawn structure to some extent with 12...cxd6 would have kept White's advantage to a manageable level.

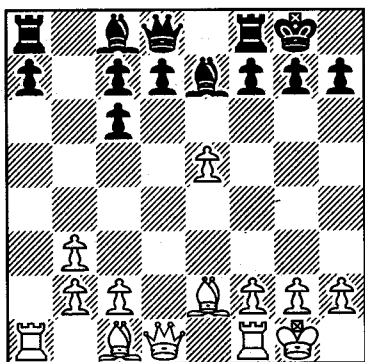


Diagram 19 (B)
Obtaining an open a-file

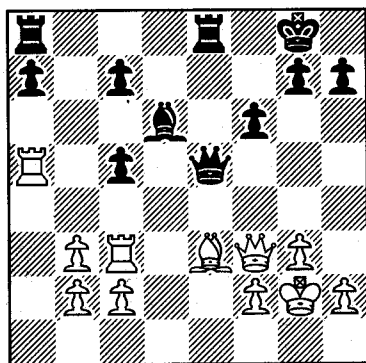


Diagram 20 (B)
The c5-pawn is doomed

13 Ra4!

Directly exploiting the change in the structure after White's 11th move. The rook is exceedingly well placed on the fourth rank: it prevents Black from creating threats with ...Qh4 and in some lines prepares to offer an exchange of bishops with Bf4.

13...Bf5 14 Bd3

White is happy to offer exchanges.



NOTE: Pawn weaknesses generally become more significant as more pieces are traded.

14...Bxd3 15 Qxd3 Qf6 16 g3 Rfe8 17 Kg2 Bc5 18 Rf4 Qe6 19 Rd1 Bd6 20 Rc4 c5 21 Qf3

Nothing dramatic is happening, and this suits White. Slowly but surely Black's queenside pawns become bigger and bigger targets. Black's next move plans to challenge White's rook with ...Rb4, so White puts a stop to this.

21...Rab8! 22 Bd2! f6 23 Ra1! Rbd8 24 Be3 Qe5 25 Rc3 Ra8 26 Ra5 (Diagram 20)

Winning the c5-pawn. It's the beginning of the end for Black.

26...Qe4 27 Bxc5 Qxf3+ 28 Kxf3 Be5 29 Re3 Bxb2 30 Rxa7 Rxe3+ 31 Kxe3 Rxa7 32 Bxa7 Kf7 33 Kd3 Ke6 34 b4 c6 35 Bd4 Bc1 36 Be3 Bb2 37 Kc4 Kd7 1-0

Black's only chance in this ending was to avoid the exchange of bishops and a transposition into a losing pawn ending, but after 38 c3! followed by Kb3 etc. Black's bishop actually finds itself trapped. Not the usual fireworks from Morozevich, but very effective nevertheless.

White Plays 9 Nd2

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5
8 c4 Nb6

Black chooses to retreat the knight rather than to pin the pawn with 8...Ba6.

9 Nd2 (Diagram 21)

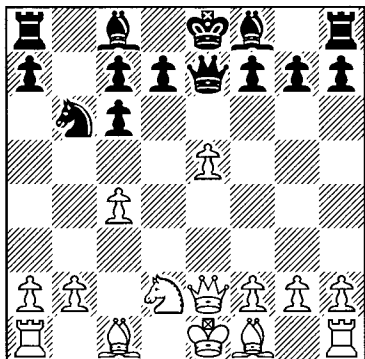


Diagram 21 (B)
White plays 9 Nd2

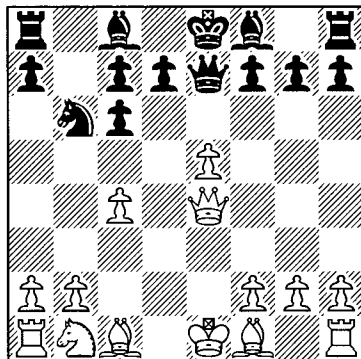


Diagram 22 (B)
Premature

9 Nd2 was originally White's most popular option at move nine. It protects c4 and is essentially a flexible move – White waits to see how Black reacts before deciding whether to play b2-b3, g2-g3 or a combination of the two. White also keeps the option open of moving the queen to e3 or e4 in order to develop the f1-bishop conventionally.

The modern 9 Nc3 is covered in the next theoretical section, while other options for White include:

a) 9 b3 is covered in Game 16.

b) 9 Qe4?! (**Diagram 22**)

intends a quick Bd3 and 0-0, but Black can exploit the fact that the queen is temporarily undefended to rectify things in the centre: 9...d5! 10 cxd5 cxd5 forces White to lose yet more time with the queen.

c) 9 g3!?, planning Bg2, is clearly a serious option for White. Against this I like the move 9...Qe6! – it makes sense to pressure the c4-pawn now that White is virtually committed to playing Bg2. White has two main replies:

c1) 10 Nd2 Bb4 (10...Bb7!? – planning ...c6-c5 – 11 Bg2 Bb4 is also tempting; 12 b3? is answered by 12...Bc3! so White is virtually forced to sacrifice the c4-pawn, albeit for some compensation) 11 a3 Bxd2+ 12 Bxd2 a5!? 13 Qe4!?

(White should play 13 a4!) 13...Ba6 (preparing to meet b2-b3 with ...a5-a4!) 14

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

c5 Bxf1 15 Kxf1 (15 cxb6? Bc4 16 bxc7?? is met by 16...Bd5!) 15...f5! 16 Qd4 Nd5 17 Kg2 0-0 18 f4 Rfb8 with a very pleasant position for Black, S.Aleksieva-A.Rizouk, Malaga 2002.

c2) 10 b3 a5 11 Bg2 a4 12 Bb2 Bb4+ 13 Nd2 transposes to Game 19.

9...Qe6

Traditionally this queen move, giving the f8-bishop some air, has been Black's most popular choice, but there are quite a few very playable alternatives. For example:

a) 9...a5!? is covered in Game 17.

b) 9...g6!? plans to exert very quick pressure on the e5-pawn, but this move is very risky as White can play 10 Ne4!, eyeing up the f6-square. Now 10...Bg7 11 Bg5! Qb4+ 12 Qd2 Qxd2+ 13 Kxd2 is unpleasant for Black; he can grab a pawn with 13...Bxe5 but following 14 Nf6+ Bxf6 15 Re1+ Kf8 16 Bxf6 White's domination of the dark squares is very apparent.

c) 9...Bb7!? introduces another plan of action for Black: early queenside castling followed action in the centre. Meanwhile, the b7-bishop can be activated by ...c6-c5, for example 10 b3 0-0-0 11 Bb2 c5 12 0-0-0 d6 13 exd6 Qxd6!, once again choosing piece activity over pawn structure (**Diagram 23**).

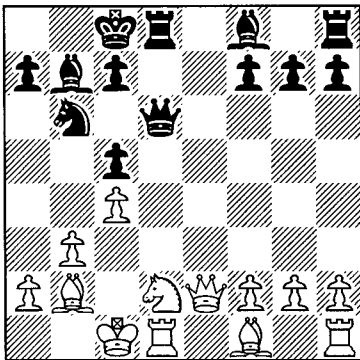


Diagram 23 (W)
Whose king is safer?

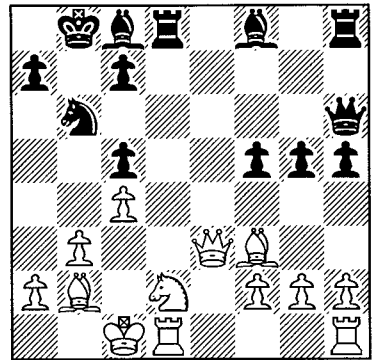


Diagram 24 (W)
Take my rook!

Now M.Chandler-M.Adams, Hastings 1991/92 continued 14 Qg4+ Kb8 15 Be2 h5! 16 Qf5 Qh6 17 Bf3 Bc8! 18 Qe4 f5 19 Qe3 g5!! (**Diagram 24**) 20 Qe5 (20 Bxh8 Qxh8 gives Black fantastic compensation on the dark squares) 20...Bd6 21 Qf6 g4 22 Be2 Qf4 23 f3 Rhe8 and Black was in complete control. Interestingly, despite the fact that White's queenside pawn structure is stronger than Black's in the traditional sense, Black's does a better job of covering its king – it's White's king who is more vulnerable.

Inspired by the game above, I tried this line out for Black, but in S.Smagin-

J.Emms, Copenhagen 1992 my opponent came up with an imaginative way of solving his kingside development problems: 14 h4! h5 (14...Rg8! followed by ...g7-g6 is stronger) 15 Rh3! Qh6 16 Re3 Bd6 17 g3 followed by Bh3+. White has managed to activate his pieces effectively and stands better due to Black's long-term structural problems on the queenside.

d) 9...d5!? (or 9...d6, which usually transposes) is an attempt by Black to sort out the situation in the centre and mobilise his forces very quickly, and this seems a very reasonable approach. For example, 10 exd6 cxd6 11 b3 Bg4! 12 f3 Be6 13 Bb2 d5 14 cxd5 Nxd5! (activity over structure!) 15 0-0-0 has been played a few times and now after either 15...a5 or 15...Qg5 Black's piece movement compensates for White's better pawn structure.



TIP: 9...d5 (or 9...d6) is a good line to play for those who enjoy active piece play and are not so concerned with positional niceties such as pawn structures.

10 b3

Planning Bb2 and possibly 0-0-0.

10 Qe4!? makes some sense now that the queen is protected by the knight on d2, White planning to continue with Bd3 and 0-0. The game A.Motylev-M.Adams, Neum 2000 continued 10...Ba6 (typically pressuring c4) 11 a3 (11 Bd3? drops a pawn after 11...Bb4! 12 b3 Bc3, while after 11 c5 Bxf1 12 cxb6 Ba6 13 bxc7 Bc5 14 Nf3 Bb6 – Adams – Black regains his pawn) 11...Be7 12 Bd3 d5! 13 exd6 cxd6 14 Qxe6 fxe6 15 b3 Bf6 16 Ra2 d5 (**Diagram 25**) and Black had succeeded in solving his central problems.

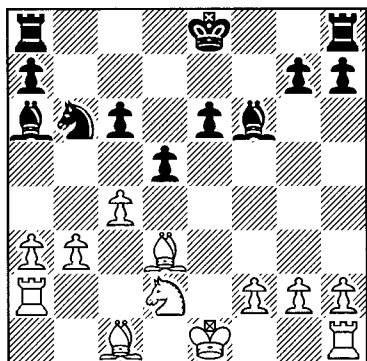


Diagram 25 (W)
Central influence

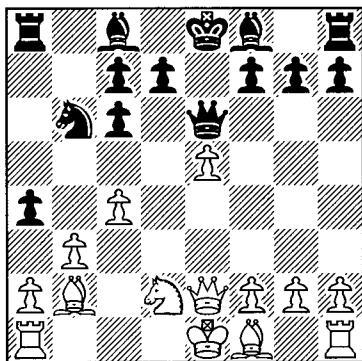


Diagram 26 (W)
An important position

10...a5

The typical reaction to b2-b3 – Black seeks some a-file action with ...a5-a4. However, Black can also choose to develop his f8-bishop.

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a) 10...Be7 11 Bb2 0-0 and here White can play positionally with 12 g3, after which a few games have continued 12...d5 13 exd6 cxd6 14 Qxe6 Bxe6 15 Bg2 d5 16 cxd5 cxd5 17 0-0 when White's slightly better structure gives him some kind of edge. Another option for White is to play more ambitiously with 12 0-0-0, although following 12...d5! 13 exd6 cxd6 14 Qf3 d5 15 Bd3 Qh6 there's no disputing that Black has a certain amount of counterplay.

b) 10...Bb4 11 Bb2 0-0 12 0-0-0 d5 (12...Qe7 and 12...a5 have also been played) 13 exd6 Qxd6 14 Nf3 Qh6+ 15 Qe3 Qxe3+ 16 fxe3 Re8 (G.Kasparov-J.Piket, Dortmund 1992) and here Kasparov assesses 17 Nd4! Bg4 18 Be2 Bxe2 19 Nxe2 Rxe3 20 Nd4 as an edge for White.

11 Bb2 a4 (Diagram 26)

The consistent follow-up to Black's previous move. Instead G.Kasparov-A.Karpov, World Championship (Game 16), Lyon 1990 (a game that helped to catapult the Scotch back into fashion) continued 11...Bb4 12 a3 Bxd2+ 13 Qxd2 d5 14 cxd5 cxd5?! 15 Rc1 when White had achieved a clear advantage from the opening. Instead 14...Nxd5!? at least gives Black a nice knight in the centre, while earlier Kasparov suggests 13...0-0.

After 12...a4 White has two main ways to try and complete his development. 12 g3, intending Bg2 and 0-0, is covered in Game 19, while 12 Qe3, intending to develop the f1-bishop classically, is studied in Game 18.

Theoretical?

The positions are sharp but not particularly theoretical – there aren't many variations that need to be memorised. A good understanding of the positional elements should be sufficient.

Statistics

On my databases 9 Nd2 has scored 52% in over 500 games. Predictably 6...Nd5 has scored a miserable 32%, but 6...Ne4 has fared better (45%).

Game 16

□ B.Macieja ■ A.Kosten

European Club Cup, Izmir 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Nb6 9 b3

A typical move for White, lending extra protection to the c4-pawn and preparing to support e5 with Bb2. Playing b2-b3 this early, however, does give Black the opportunity to begin a rapid attack on the queenside.

9...a5!? (Diagram 27)

Just because I'm giving this move as the 'main line', doesn't necessarily mean that it's the best reply to 9 b3, but it's certainly both the most logical and the most ambitious. Black plans some immediate a-file action via ...a5-a4, and White must play very carefully over the next few moves.



TIP: The move ...a7-a5 is a typical reaction to b2-b3.

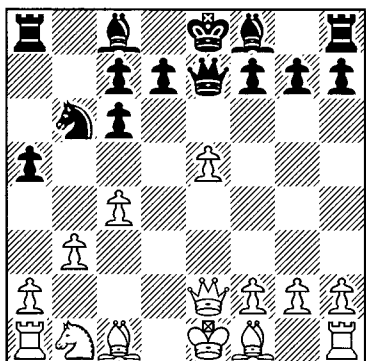


Diagram 27 (W)
Planning ...a5-a4

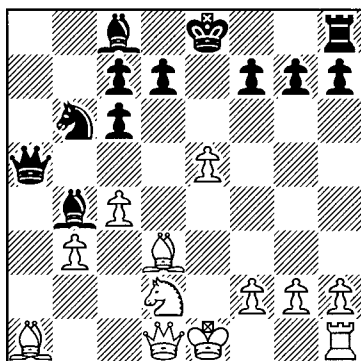


Diagram 28 (W)
No castling for White

Alternatives for Black include:

- a) 9...Qe6 is likely to transpose back into the theoretical section after, say, 10 Bb2 Bb4+ 11 Nd2 or 10...a5 11 Nd2.
- b) 9...g6, preparing a quick-fire attack on the e5-pawn with ...Bg7, 0-0 and ...Re8 certainly makes some sense, for example:
 - b1) 10 Bb2 Bg7 11 g3 0-0 12 f4! (12 Bg2?! Re8 13 f4 f6! shows that White mustn't take his duties of defending e5 too lightly) 12...f6 13 exf6 Bxf6 14 Qxe7 Bxe7 15 Bg2 d5 (Pavasovic) looks fairly balanced.
 - b2) However, 10 g3! Bg7 11 f4!? (Mikhalevski) is a sneaky move order for White, who keeps the option open of playing both Ba3 and Bh3(!). As far as I can see, White keeps some advantage in all lines, for example: 11...d6 12 Bg2; 11...f6 12 Ba3 Qe6 13 Bh3!; or 11...0-0 12 Ba3! c5 13 Bg2 Rb8 14 Nc3 d6 15 0-0 dxe5 16 Rae1.

10 Bb2

Shirov gives the imaginative line 10 Ba3 c5 (10...Qe6 11 Bxf8 Rxf8 looks like a reasonable alternative if Black is slightly nervous about having his king on d8) 11 Nc3 a4! 12 Nb5 Kd8, and assesses the resulting position as clearly better for Black! *Fritz* doesn't agree, but then again the computer is always going to put too much emphasis on the fact that Black has lost his castling rights. I won't argue with Shirov's assessment, mainly because to induce ...Kd8 White has had to misplace his pieces, and Black can even try to utilise his king move by following up with ...g7-g6, ...Bg7 and ...Re8!.

Of course 10 a4!? puts an end to Black's early fun on the queenside, but the

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insertion of a2-a4 and ...a7-a5 looks like it should benefit Black, who for a start receives a juicy outpost on b4.

10...a4 11 Nd2 axb3 12 axb3 Rxa1+ 13 Bxa1 Qa3

By staying on e7 (as opposed to moving to e6) Black's queen is now able to join the early action on the queenside. White must now be very careful, for example 14 Bc3?? Qc1+ or 14 Bd4? c5! 15 Be3 Qa1+ 16 Qd1 Qxe5.

14 Qd1! Bb4 15 Bd3 Qa5 (Diagram 28)

The pressure on d2 prevents White from castling, which is a good job from Black's point of view since if White were able to solve his development problems his superior pawn structure and minor pieces would begin to tell.

16 Ke2 d6!

In a few games Black has added pressure to the c4-pawn with 16...d5, but I believe that trying to open the e-file is a more urgent priority for Black, especially with White's king being stuck on e2.

17 f4

17 exd6? is asking for trouble and is well met by 17...0-0!, when the threat of ...Re8+ looms large: 18 dxc7? Re8+! 19 Ne4 f5 and Black wins.

Perhaps White's strongest move here is 17 Nf3!?, for example 17...Bg4 18 Qc2! (18 exd6 again looks too greedy, e.g. 18...0-0 19 dxc7? Re8+ 20 Kf1 Re1+!) 18...dxe5 (Black has won a pawn but that's not the end of the story; White's pieces are beginning to coordinate) 19 h3! (19 Be4 0-0! returns the pawn very favourably: 20 Bxh7+ Kh8 and Black has tremendous play, e.g. 21 Bd3 e4! 22 Bxe4 Re8 with threats of ...Bf5 and ...f7-f5) 19...Bxf3+ (now 19...Bh5 20 Be4 0-0?! is not so effective after 21 Bxh7+! Kh8 22 g4!) 20 gxf3 Nd7 21 Rd1 Nf6 22 f4! exf4 23 Bf5 0-0 (E.Sharapov-A.Nechaev, Ukrainian Championship 2003), and here 24 Bxf6 gxf6 25 Bxh7+ Kh8 ends up in a bizarre opposite-coloured bishops position where Black is a pawn up but his five pawns occupy only two files!

17...dxe5 18 fxe5 Bg4+ 19 Nf3 Nd7!

Rerouting the knight to a more favourable location and gaining time in the process by hitting e5.

20 Kf2 Nc5! 21 Bc2 Ne6

As we've already seen more than once, the knight is very happily placed on e6.

22 h3 Bxf3 23 Qxf3 Qa2!

Here the queen causes White all sorts of problems.

24 Qe4

The pawn-grabbing 24 Qxc6+? backfires after 24...Ke7 25 Qe4 Rd8 (Postny) when ...Rd2 will be decisive: 26 Kg3 Rd2 27 Rc1 Ba3 etc.

24...Ke7 25 Kg3?

It was understandable that White wished to break the pin on the second rank, but the only way to hold on was with 25 Rd1 Rd8 26 Rxd8 Kxd8 27 Bd4.

25...Rd8! 26 Qh4+ (Diagram 29)

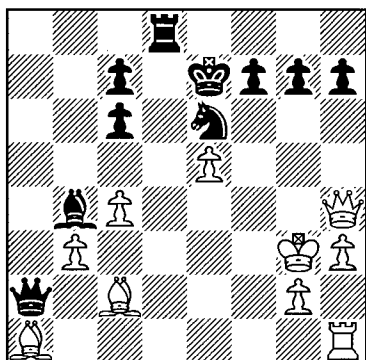


Diagram 29 (B)
Black misses a win

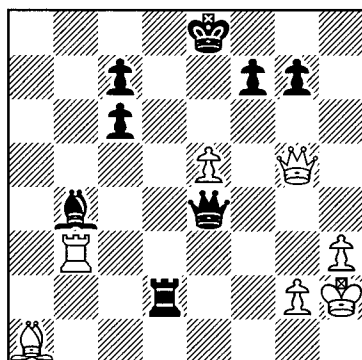


Diagram 30 (B)
A blunder looms

26...Kf8?

Missing a forced win with 26...g5! (Postny), for example 27 Qxh7 Rd2 28 Rf1 Qxc2 29 Rxf7+ Ke8 30 Qg8+ Bf8 and White has run out of checks. Even so, the game continuation still maintains a substantial advantage – Black's pieces are far better coordinated than White's.

27 Qxh7 Rd2 28 Be4 Qxb3+ 29 Kh2 Qxc4 30 Rb1 Ng5! 31 Qh8+ Ke7 32 Qh4 Qxe4 33 Qxg5+ Ke8 34 Rb3 (Diagram 30) 34...g6??

A losing blunder, perhaps induced by time trouble. After 34...Rd1! Black is still in control, for example 35 Bc3 Be7! 36 Rb8+ Kd7 37 Qg3 Bc5! (Postny) when the threat of ...Bg1+ is difficult to meet.

35 Bc3! The bishop on a1 has been a pain in White's backside for almost the entire game, but now it's the hero!

35...Bxc3 36 Rb8+ Kd7 37 Rd8+ 1-0

It's mate after 37...Ke6 38 Qf6. Despite the final result it looks like that Black secures good counterplay after 9 b3 a5!?

Game 17

□ T.Fogarasi ■ M.Hebden

Cappelle la Grande 1993

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 5...bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Nb6 9 Nd2 a5!? (Diagram 31)

This is the move I recommended in *Play the Open Games as Black*. We've already seen ...a6-a5 as a typical answer to White's b2-b3, but how about playing it even before White nudges his b-pawn forward?

There are at least three factors that make the ...a7-a5 lunge desirable for

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

Black here:

- 1) It acts as a serious prophylactic measure against b2-b3.
- 2) After the typical ...Ba6, hitting c4, the bishop is protected by the rook on a8 – an important feature in many tactical lines.
- 3) Black even has the rather cheeky idea of playing ...a5-a4 followed by ...Ra5!?, imaginatively using the fourth rank to attack White's e5-pawn.

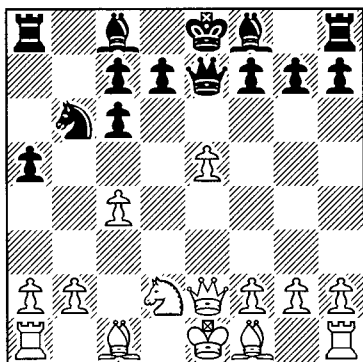


Diagram 31 (W)
Recommended by me!

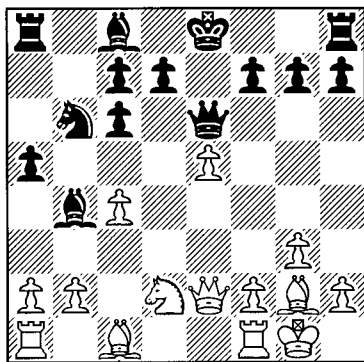


Diagram 32 (B)
Pawn on offer

10 Qe4

Planning to develop the f1-bishop and castle kingside. This looks sensible, but given the non-forcing nature of Black's previous move, it's unsurprising that White has a few other options here:

a) 10 b3 looks incredibly inviting for Black, but after 10...a4 11 Bb2 we have actually transposed to Game 16.

b) 10 g3 must again be considered, and now:

b1) 10...a4!? 11 Bg2!? Ra5 12 0-0! (a promising pawn sacrifice) 12...Ba6 13 Rb1! Rxe5 14 Qd3 Qd6? (Black should relieve some of the pressure by trading a pair of rooks with 14...Re1, although after 15 b3 – Rublevsky – followed by Bb2 there's no doubt that White has some compensation) 15 Qc3 Be7 16 Ne4 Qe6 17 Bf4! left White clearly better in S.Rublevsky-P.Svidler, Frankfurt (rapid) 2000 – 17...Rxe4 18 Bxe4 Qxe4 19 Qxg7 Rf8 20 Rbe1 Qg6 21 Rxe7+! Kxe7 22 Re1+ is winning for White.

b2) 10...Qe6 11 Bg2!? (11 b3 a4 12 Bb2, transposing to Game 19, is a reasonable option) 11...Bb4 12 0-0! (**Diagram 32**) and now:

b21) 12...Bxd2 13 Qxd2 will leave White with typical compensation for the pawn regardless of which way Black captures on c4. J.Lautier-J.Emms, Harpleinge 1998 continued 13...Qxc4 14 b3 Qb4 15 Qxb4 axb4 16 Bd2 Nd5 17 Bxd5

cxd5 18 Rfc1 c6 19 Bxb4 and here I should have played 19...f6! (Lautier). Following 20 exf6 gxf6 21 Re1+ Kf7 22 Re7+ Kg6 23 Bd6 Ba6! 24 Rxd7 Rhd8 25 Rxd8 Rxd8 26 Bc5 d4 it's White who has the extra pawn, but it's difficult to see Black losing this position.

b22) Black can delay capturing on d2 for a move with 12...0-0!?, for example 13 f4 Bxd2 (13...f5!?) 14 Bxd2 Qxc4 15 Qf2 and here Black should slow down White's f4-f5 advance with 15...Re8.

c) Given that the queen on e4 is not only a target for ...f7-f5 and ...d7-d5, but also ...Na4-c5, there's something to be said for White playing 10 Qe3!? instead. Now after 10...Qe6 11 Bd3 Ba6 12 b3 Bb4 White can continue with 13 0-0 as 13...Bc3 14 Bf5! Qxf5 15 Qxc3 leaves him better. Likewise, 10...a4 11 Bd3 Ra5 achieves little after the straightforward 12 Nf3. Perhaps Black should play as in the main game with 10...g6!?. It's true that White has the additional possibility here of 11 Ne4 and that following 11...Bg7 12 Nf6+!? Kf8! (**Diagram 33**) Black has lost his castling rights. However, it's not clear whether White is justified in using so much time to force Black's king to move, and Black is ready to undermine the knight with a swift ...d7-d6.

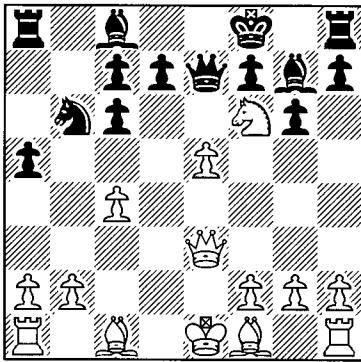


Diagram 33 (W)
Black plans ...d7-d6

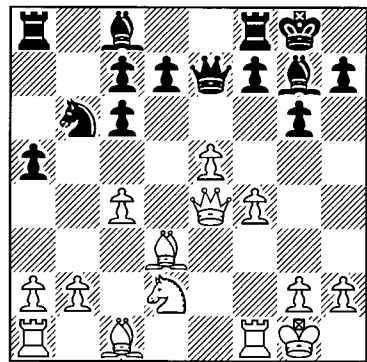


Diagram 34 (B)
Too ambitious

10...g6 11 Bd3 Bg7

In my debut game with the 9...a5 variation I played 11...Na4 with the typical idea of rerouting the knight to the desirable e6-square, gaining a tempo on the white queen along the way. In R.Lau-J.Emms, Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 1992 my opening was a success story after 12 0-0 Nc5 13 Qe2 Bg7 14 Nf3 Ne6 15 h4?! (White should make do with the less ambitious 15 Bd2) 15...0-0 16 h5 d6! 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 exd6 Qxd6! (activity over structure!) 19 Rd1 Nf4 20 Bxf4 Qxf4 – Black's bishop pair and pressure on the dark squares (especially b2) more than make up for his compromised queenside structure.

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Just a few days later, however, the same opponent came up with a significant improvement on White's play: 12 Nb3! (simply preventing the plan!) 12...Bg7 13 0-0 0-0 14 Re1 Bb7 15 Rb1 f5 16 exf6 Qxf6 (R.Lau-J.Emms, Copenhagen Cup [rapid] 1992) and here the cool 17 Re2! would have kept some advantage. All in all it pays Black to keep the ...Na4-c5-e6 manoeuvre in reserve.

12 0-0 0-0 13 f4? (Diagram 34)

An instructive positional misjudgement. White is playing very ambitiously on the kingside, but Black's next move exposes the flaws in White's plan. Instead White should play more conservatively with 13 Nf3!, for example 13...Ba6 14 Bg5 f6! 15 Bh4!? (or 15 exf6 Qxe4 16 Bxe4 Bxf6 17 Bxf6 Rxf6 18 b3 d5!) 15...Qe6 16 c5 Bxd3 17 Qxd3 fxe5!? and here N.Jakubovics-B.Hague, British League 2001 continued 18 Ng5? Qc4 19 Qh3 Qxc5 20 Nxf7 Rf5! 21 g4 Rf4 22 Bg5 Nd5! with a clear plus for Black. Instead, 18 cxb6! e4 19 Qe3 exf3 20 Qxe6+ dxe6 21 bxc7 Rac8 22 Bg3! e5 23 Rfe1 should fizzle out into a draw.

13...d5! 14 Qe2

14 exd6 Qxd6! leaves White lacking in effective development, while the f4-pawn would surely now rather be back on f2! In I.Sofronie-L.Vajda, Sovata 1999 the players agreed a draw after the further moves 15 Qf3 Bg4! but Black must have been feeling in a generous mood as White is already somewhat worse. For example, 16 Qxg4 Qxd3 (compare the bishops!) 17 Qf3 Rad8, planning to meet 18 Qxc6 with 18...Bd4+ 19 Kh1 Be3!.

14...f6!

Breaking up White's centre before he has time to consolidate.

15 exf6 Qxe2 16 Bxe2 Bxf6 17 cxd5 cxd5 18 Nf3 Bg4 (Diagram 35)

Time for reflection. White's opening strategy has failed completely: his centre is gone; he has problems developing the rest of his queenside and Black's pieces are menacingly active. Even Black's pawns are not looking too bad!

19 a4

Depressing, but how else does White activate the a1-rook?

19...c5 20 Bd2 c4

There doesn't seem to be anything wrong with 20...Bxb2 here, as 21 Rab1 Nxa4 22 Bb5 can be met by 22...Bxf3 23 Rxf3 Rab8!.

21 Kh1 Rfe8 22 Bd1 Nd7 23 Bc3 Bxc3 24 bxc3 Re3 25 Rc1 Nc5 26 Ne5 Be6 27 Nc6 Nd3 28 Rb1 Bf5

28...Nf2+ 29 Kg1 Ne4 looks even stronger.

29 Kg1 Rae8 30 Bf3?

30 Nd4 is the only chance.

30...Nxf4! 31 Rb7 Bd3 32 Ra1 Nh3+! 33 gxh3 Rxf3 34 Ne7+ Kh8 35 Nxd5 Re5! 36 Kg2 Rf8! (Diagram 36) 0-1

Black threatens both 37...Rxd5 and 37...Rg5+ 38 Kh1 Be4 mate.

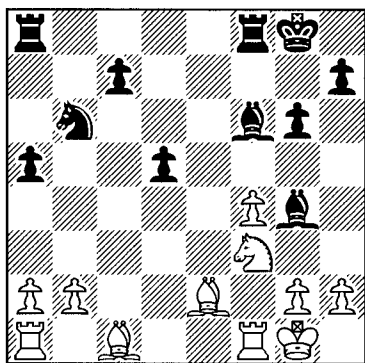


Diagram 35 (W)

It's all gone pear-shaped!

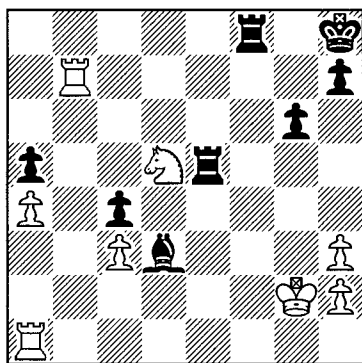


Diagram 36 (W)

Time to resign

Game 18

□ T.Fogarasi ■ V.Varavin

Kobanya 1992

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5
8 c4 Nb6 9 Nd2 Qe6 10 b3 a5 11 Bb2 a4 12 Qe3 Bb4!

As the following notes illustrate, it pays Black to keep the option open of playing ...a4-a3. In P.Svidler-I.Sokolov, Groningen 1995 Black prematurely released the tension with 12...axb3?! 13 axb3 Rxa1+ 14 Bxa1 and following 14...Bb4 15 Bd3 d6 16 0-0 dxe5 17 Bxe5 f6 18 Bf4 Qxe3 19 Bxe3 White kept some advantage due, as usual, to his more favourable pawn structure.

13 Bd3

With this move blocking the third rank, White no longer has the option of meeting ...a4-a3 with Bc3, and this causes some niggling problems. For this reason White may prefer the more reserved 13 Be2!?

13...d6!?

Now Black is threatening ...a2-a3, answering Bd4 with ...c6-c5. A more recent game, R.Zelcic-I.Ivanisevic, Bosnia 2004, continued interestingly with 13...d5 14 0-0 Ba6 15 Nf3!? dxc4 16 Nd4! Qh6! 17 Qxh6 gxh6 18 Nxc6 c3 19 Bxa6 cxb2 20 Rad1 and here Ivanisevic points out the attractive possibility of 20...Be7!?, planning to meet 21 Bb7 with 21...axb3! 22 Bxa8 bxa2 (**Diagram 37**) when the two pawns on the seventh rank are worth more than a rook.

14 0-0-0!?

There is obviously risk involved in 'castling into a storm' but at least White's bishop has a1 if pestered by ...a4-a3. 14 exd6 Qxe3+ 15 fxe3 cxd6 is fine for Black, especially after 16 Bxg7?! Rg8 17 Bd4 c5 18 Bf6 Rxg2 (Baklan/Koutsin).

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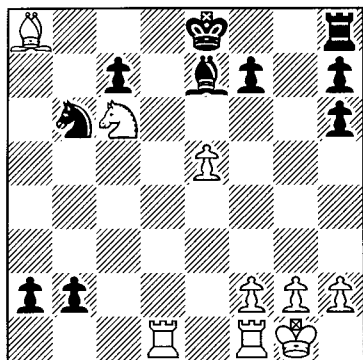


Diagram 37 (B)
Seventh Heaven!

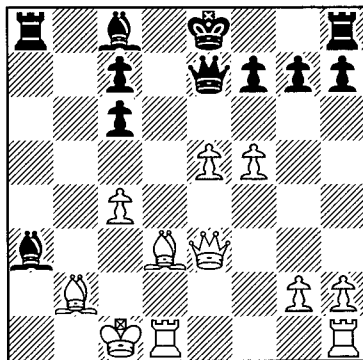


Diagram 38 (W)
Lacking in defenders

14...axb3 15 axb3 d5!

Consistently nibbling away at White's rather flimsy-looking pawn guard.

16 f4?!

Aggressive stuff, but White only succeeds in pushing Black's queen onto a more favourable post. Peter Wells suggests an improvement in 16 Qg5!, when 16...0-0 17 Qh4! h6 18 cxd5 Bxd2+ 19 Rxd2 cxd5 20 f4 at least gives White some 'counterplay' on the kingside.

16...dxc4 17 f5?

17 Nxc4 is stronger, although following 17...Nd5 (Wells) I would still remain worried about my king on c1.

17...Qe7 18 Nxc4 Nxc4 19 bxc4 Ba3! (Diagram 38)

Simple stuff – Black eliminates a key defender and the position of White's king is looking more and more draughty. Structurally White is doing well, though!

20 Rd2 Qb4 21 Qe4?

This loses immediately, although it's already difficult to suggest a good way forward for White.

21...Rb8! 22 Kd1

Desperately giving up a piece, but there is no satisfactory way to continue. 22 Qxc6+ Bd7 is decisive, while after 22 Bxa3 Qxa3+ 23 Kd1 Black can simply whip off the rook in the corner with 23...Qa1+ 24 Ke2 Qxh1.

22...Bxb2 23 e6 0-0 24 Ke2

Or 24 f6 g6 25 e7 Re8, and if 26 Rf1 Black could play 26...Bxf6 27 Rxf6 Rxe7.

24...fxe6 25 fxe6 g6 26 Rb1 Rf2+! 27 Kxf2 Qxd2+ 28 Kf3 Rb3 0-1

An illustration of the dangers White sometimes faces when castling long.

Game 19

□ T.Nedev ■ J.Tisdall

European Club Cup, Panormo 2001

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Nb6 9 Nd2 a5

Using a slightly different move order, but the game transposes after White's 12th move.

10 g3 Qe6 11 b3 a4 12 Bb2

The move order highlighted in the introduction was 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Nb6 9 Nd2 Qe6 10 b3 a5 11 Bb2 a4 12 g3.

12...Bb4 13 Bg2 a3!?

This is very committal and, given that the opening of the a-file usually promises counterplay, it also seems illogical. But 13...a3 isn't necessarily bad; it just requires the correct follow-up. Nevertheless, I believe Black has a safer and objectively stronger alternative in the shape of the flexible 13...0-0! 14 0-0 d5, retaining all possible options of counterplay. Here the game P.H.Nielsen-R.Dautov, Bad Lauterberg 1991 continued 15 Nf3?! a3! 16 Bd4 (following 16 Bc1 Bc3! 17 Rb1 dxc4 18 Qc2 Black can safely capture on e5, as after 18...Bxe5 19 Re1 Black has the resource 19...Qf5!) 16...c5 17 Be3 Ba6 when the pressure against c4 left Black well placed. Dautov suggested 15 f4 as an improvement, but also felt that following 15...Qg6! 16 Nf3 Qh5, intending ...Ba6, Black maintains adequate counterplay.

14 Bd4 (Diagram 39)

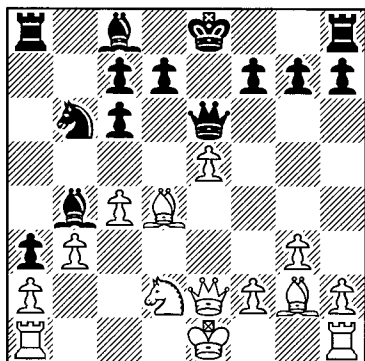


Diagram 39 (B)
Blocking the a-file

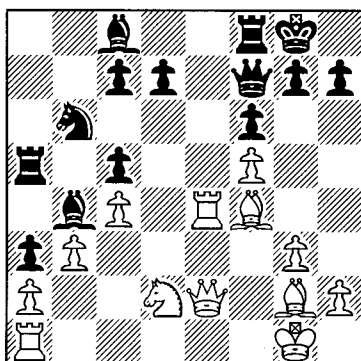


Diagram 40 (B)
Even worse than it looks!

Naturally not 14 Bc1?, immediately losing a pawn to 14...Bc3!

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14...Ra5?!

By breaking the pin on the c6-pawn, Black threatens to push the bishop off the a1-h8 diagonal with ...c6-c5. However, this plan smacks of a certain amount of artificiality, and White certainly shows it no respect in this game.

Perhaps Black shouldn't worry at all about the rook on a8. In the game I.Mastoras-J.Barkhagen, Gausdal 1992 he continued ambitiously with 14...c5!. Following 15 Bxa8 Nxa8 16 Be3 Bb7 17 f3 0-0 18 0-0 Qxe5 19 Qd3 d6 20 Rae1 Nb6 objectively it's difficult to believe that Black has quite enough compensation for the exchange, but in a practical sense White's position is not that easy to play and the presence of the light-squared bishop on b7 could induce a few nervous moments.

15 0-0!?

Offering a pawn sacrifice, although after 15 Rd1!, planning to meet 15...c5 with the simple 16 Ba1, I'm not sure I see what Black's idea is.

15...c5 16 Be3 Qxe5 17 f4!

Black has won a pawn, but his pieces on the queenside are at least temporarily missing the main action. Unsurprisingly White plays energetically to try to exploit this 'power play'.

17...Qe7 18 f5! f6!

Allowing f5-f6 is asking for trouble.

19 Rf4!? 0-0?

Black must have simply overlooked White's sneaky idea, otherwise he would have surely played 19...Bc3!, planning to block the e-file with ...Be5.

20 Re4 Qf7

After 20...Qd8 21 Qh5! White plays Rh4 followed by a Bxh6 sacrifice.

21 Bf4! (Diagram 40) 1-0

At first sight resignation looks a bit premature, but in reality there is no good answer to the double threat of Re7, trapping the queen, and Bxc7. One possible continuation is 21...Bc3 22 Bxc7 Bxa1 23 Bxb6 Ra6 24 Re7 Rxb6 25 Rxf7 and now 25...Rxf7 is met by 26 Qe8+ and Bd5+, while 25...Kxf7 26 Bd5+ also wins for White.

White Plays 9 Nc3

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 5...bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Nb6 9 Nc3 (Diagram 41)

I never really understood why this move was originally much less popular than 9 Nd2; after all, it does look more natural not to block the c1-h6 diagonal. In 1999 and 2000 Garry Kasparov scored three instructive wins with 9 Nc3. Somewhat inevitably its popularity has soared ever since.

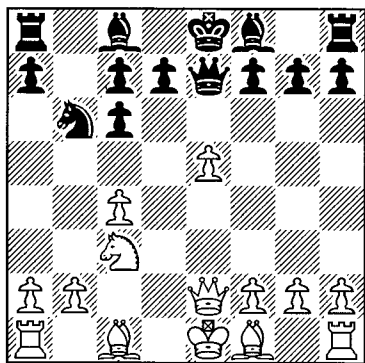


Diagram 41 (B)
White plays 9 Nc3

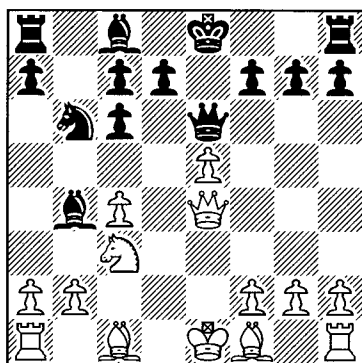


Diagram 42 (W)
10...Bb4 – the popular choice

9...Qe6

If there is a weakness in 9 Nc3, it's that, unlike 9 Nbd2, it doesn't address the problem of the c4-pawn. The text move is a logical attempt to exploit this factor, but Black does have other options here:

- 9...a5 is covered in Game 20.
- 9...g6 10 Ne4! transposes to 9 Nbd2 g6 10 Ne4!.
- 9...Ba6 10 Qe4 Qe6 transposes to note 'c' to Black's 10th move, while White can also consider 10 b3.
- 9...Bb7 plans a quick attack on e5 with ...0-0-0 and ...Re8, but the game A.Motylev-Zhang Zhong, Linares 2001 illustrated an effective course for White: 10 Bd2! 0-0-0 11 0-0-0 Re8 12 f4 f6 13 exf6 gxf6 14 Qh5! and White will continue with Bd3 etc.



NOTE: With the knight on c3, White more often than not develops the c1-bishop classically rather than via a fianchetto.

10 Qe4

By far the most popular move – White prepares to develop the f1-bishop and to castle kingside.

Playing in a similar fashion to lines with 9 Nd2 is rare but possible. The miniature G.Botterill-M.Corden, Birmingham 1975 is worth seeing: 10 b3!? Bb4 (10...a5!?) 11 Bb2 0-0 12 0-0-0 Re8 (again 12...a5!? is tempting) 13 Qc2 Qxe5! 14 Nd5 Ba3! 15 Bxa3 cxd5 16 c5 Qa1+ 17 Kd2 Qd4+ 18 Kc1 Qa1+ with a cute perpetual check.

10...Bb4 (Diagram 42)

By preventing b2-b3, Black continues his attack on the c4-pawn. However, it's

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well worth looking at alternatives here:

a) 10...d5 is a safe way for Black to play, but after 11 exd6 cxd6 12 Bd3 Qxe4+ 13 Bxe4 Bb7 14 b3, which has been seen in a few games, White has that typical structural edge.

b) Now that White has lost the option of playing Ne4, the move 10...g6!?, planning ...Bg7 and ...0-0, certainly comes into serious consideration, and following the typical 11 Bd3 Bg7 12 f4 0-0 13 0-0 Ba6 14 b3 d5! Black can't have complaints over his position. More ambitious for White is the immediate 11 f4!?, the point being to answer 11...Bg7 with 12 c5 Nd5 13 Bc4!. In J.Dworakowska-Li Ruofan, Moscow 2004 Black instead played 11...d5, the game continuing 12 Qc2!? dxc4!? (12...Bg7 13 cxd5 cxd5?! 14 Nb5! is White's idea) 13 Ne4 f5 14 exf6 (14 Nf6+!?) 14...Bb4+ 15 Kf2 0-0 with a crazy-looking position which is difficult to assess.

c) 10...Ba6 may well simply transpose to the main line after 11 b3 Bb4 Bd2, but there are a couple of independent lines. Firstly, White has the added possibility of 11 c5!? Bxf1 12 cxb6 leading to a very complex position, for example 12...f5!? 13 Qe3 Bxg2 14 Rg1 f4! and here 15 b7 Rd8 16 Qxa7 Qxe5+ 17 Be3 fxe3 18 b8Q Bc5 is crazy but perhaps better for Black!



WARNING: With an unprotected bishop on a6, Black always has to be wary of White's tactical possibility of c4-c5.

Secondly, after 11 b3 Black can avoid going back into the main line by playing 11...0-0-0, planning a quick attack on e5 with ...Re8. Now 12 c5? Bxf1 13 cxb6 d5! 14 exd6 Qxe4+ 15 Nxe4 Bxg2 16 bxa7 Kb7 17 Nc5+ Ka8! has worked out well for Black in more than one game, so White should make do with 12 Bb2 and now:

c1) 12...Bb7 (eliminating c4-c5 ideas) 13 0-0-0 Re8 14 f4 d5! 15 cxd5! cxd5 16 Qc2 with perhaps a small advantage for White, G.Kasparov-M.Adams, Internet 2000.

c2) 12...Re8 13 f4 f6 14 0-0-0 fxe5 15 c5!? (White could have also played this at move 13 or 14) 15...Bxf1 16 cxb6 Ba6 17 bxa7 Kb7 with a messy position that typifies variations with the c4-c5 tactic. The recent game D.Pavasovic-D.Rogic, Bizovac 2005 continued 18 Rhe1 Bd6 19 a8Q+!? Rxa8 20 fxe5 Be7 with a roughly balanced position.

11 Bd2

So that White is free to play b2-b3.

11...Ba6!

It makes no sense to change plans now. 11...0-0?! 12 Bd3! is very pleasant for White after, say, 12...f5 13 exf6 Rxf6 14 0-0-0 Qxe4 15 Nxe4.

12 b3

12 c5 Nc4! is fine for Black.

12...Bxc3

Again, the only consistent continuation – Black gets rid of the piece defending the queen in preparation for his next move. 12...0-0?! 13 Bd3! f5 14 exf6 Rxf6 15 0-0-0 (**Diagram 43**) is again very pleasant for White.

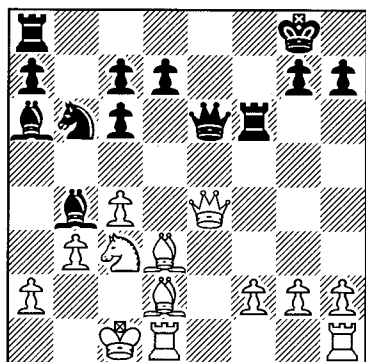


Diagram 43 (B)
Pleasant for White

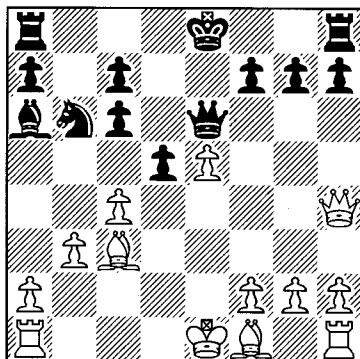


Diagram 44 (B)
Kasparov's innovation

13 Bxc3 d5!

The whole point of Black's preceding play. Of course White would like to keep the queenside structure intact by capturing en passant, but this would leave the queen hanging on e4.

14 Qh4! (Diagram 44)

This was Kasparov's innovation which injected new life into the 9 Nc3 variation. Theory had run 14 Qf3 dxc4 15 Be2 0-0 16 0-0; Kasparov's move plans a similar action, but the fact that the queen covers c4 helps White in many variations. The position after 14 Qh4 is discussed in Game 21.

Theoretical?

This is a complex and fast-growing variation, so inevitably it's worth knowing some theory.

Statistics

9 Nc3 has scored 56% in over 400 games.

Game 20

□ S.Rublevsky ■ L.Vajda

Budva 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5
8 c4 Nb6 9 Nc3 a5 (**Diagram 45**)

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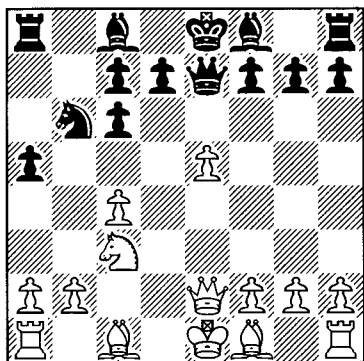


Diagram 45 (W)

Again ...a7-a5

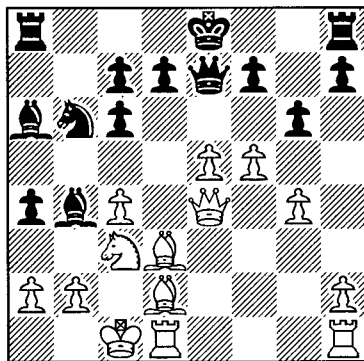


Diagram 46 (B)

Gasping for air

We've already spoken about the attributes of this move and, just as against 9 Nd2, it's also an option against 9 Nc3.

10 f4

Unsurprisingly, White has quite few alternatives here:

- a) 10 Qe4 has been the most popular move, but it's not necessarily the best. The point is that Ne4 is no longer an option so Black is free to fianchetto on the kingside: 10...g6! 11 Bd3 Bg7 12 f4 0-0 13 0-0 Ba6, which has been seen in a few games, shouldn't hold too many worries for Black, who is ready to strike back in the centre with either f-pawn or d-pawn.
- b) 10 b3 has been played more than once, even though it seems to invite 10...a4!. Now the game A.Murariu-L.Vajda, Bucharest 2002 continued 11 Bb2? Qb4! 12 Qc2 axb3 13 axb3 (or 13 Qxb3 Na4!) 13...Rxa1+ 14 Bxa1 Qa5! and by hitting both a1 and e5, Black forced the win of a crucial pawn. Instead White should avoid tricks on the a-file with 11 Rb1!; O.Maiorov-D.Frolov, Orel 1997 continued 11...axb3 12 axb3 Qe6 13 Qe4 g6 14 Bd3 Bg7 15 f4 0-0 16 0-0 and here I believe Black should continue with 16...d5!.
- c) 10 Bd2!? is a tricky move that has been used by some very strong grandmasters – White's point is to meet 10...g6?! with 11 Ne4! and a possible Bc3. Here are a couple of possible lines:
 - c1) 10...Qe6 11 Qe4 Ba6 12 b3 and now, having induced White's queen to e4, it's safe for Black to continue with ...g7-g6, ...Bg7, ...0-0 etc.
 - c2) 10...a4!? (waiting to see how White proceeds) 11 0-0-0!? Ba6 12 Qe4 Qe6 (12...g6!? – Adams – is clearly another option) 13 f4 g6 14 g4!? and here T.Radjabov-M.Adams, FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004 continued 14...Bb4? 15 f5! Qe7 16 Bd3 (**Diagram 46**) when White's space advantage on the kingside was beginning to assume menacing proportions.

In his note to the game in *Chess Informant*, Mickey Adams indicated that Black should instead play 14...Qxg4 when 15 e6! fxe6 (15...Qxe6? 16 Qd4! hits h8 and threatens Re1) 16 Qe5! Rg8 17 Qxc7 leads to immensely complex variations.

10...Ba6

10...g6?! is still premature after 11 Ne4! – following 11...Bg7 White can consider 12 Be3 with the idea of Bc5. However, 10...a4!? is again a consideration. Another Vadja encounter (G.Antal-L.Vajda, Budapest 2002) continued 11 Qe4 (11 Bd2!?) 11...Ba6 12 Bd2 (12 b3!?) 12...g6 13 Bd3 Bg7 and here White should continue with 14 0-0-0, reaching a typically unclear position. Instead White played 14 0-0?, only to be shocked by the tactic 14...Nxc4! 15 Bxc4 Qc5+ 16 Be3 Qxc4, leaving Black with an extra pawn.

11 b3

White is happy to play this move now that Black has committed himself to ...Ba6 – the bishop gets in the way of Black's tactics down the a-file.

11...Qe6

As White is keeping the e4-square vacant for a possible Ne4, Black decides to avoid ...g7-g6 and develop the f8-bishop classically.

12 Bb2 Bb4 13 0-0-0 a4

This move is predictable given that White has committed his king to the queenside.

14 Ne4!

This knight is well placed here: there's the possibility of Ng5 harassing the queen, and, as we see in the game continuation, this isn't the only option for the knight.

14...axb3 15 axb3 Bb7

As it was virtually impossible for Black to arrange an effective ...d7-d5 strike and sacrifices on c4 were ineffective, the bishop was actually doing very little on a6 except blocking the a8-rook.

Black must be careful not to castle too early. Here 15...0-0?! rather walks into an attack after 16 Qh5!, preparing both Ng5 and f4-f5.

16 Qf2 Qe7

Lining up the idea of ...Ba3, but also allowing an enticing tactical opportunity for White.

17 Nd6+! (Diagram 47)

Exploiting the centralised position of Black's king by opening the e-file. Of course, the fact that the b6-knight becomes en prise also helps.

17...cxd6 18 exd6!

18 Qxb6?, attacking two bishops, looks tempting, but 18...Bc5! 19 Qxb7 0-0! (Postny) suddenly turns the tables; White's queen is lacking squares (...Ra7 is

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the immediate threat) and White's king will become the subject of a violent attack. For example, 20 Bd4 (preventing ...Ra7) 20...Bxd4 21 Rxd4 dxe5 22 Rxd7 Qa3+ 23 Kd1 Qb2! 24 Rd2 Rfd8 25 Bd3 Qa1+ and ...Qxh1 wins.

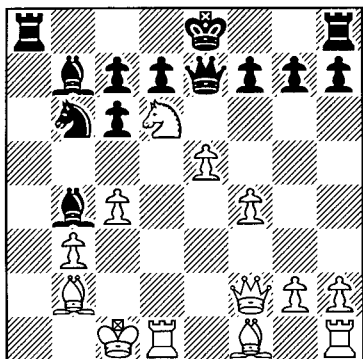


Diagram 47 (B)
The fireworks begin

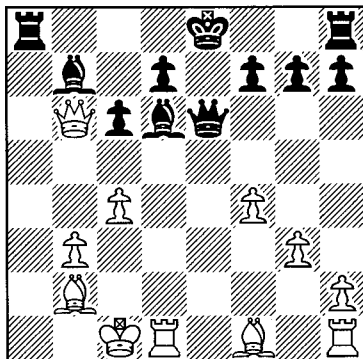


Diagram 48 (B)
Too calm?

18...Qe6!?

Oddly enough, Rublevsky had already reached the position after 18 exd6 in a previous encounter: 18...Qd8 19 Bxg7 f6! (not 19...Rg8?? 20 Qe2+!) 20 Be2! (threatening Bh5 mate) 20...Kf7! and now:

a) 21 Bxh8? c5! 22 Bh5+ Kg8 23 Qh4 Ra1+! 24 Kb2 Ra2+!! (Postny) and Black wins, e.g. 25 Kxa2 (or 25 Kc1 Be4!) 25...Qa8+ 26 Kb2 Nxc4+! 27 bxc4 Qa3+ 28 Kc2 Be4+ etc.

b) 21 Qg3! (again threatening Bh5) 21...h5? 22 f5! (eyeing up g6) 22...Qe8 (S.Rublevsky-Zhang Zhong, Moscow 2004) and here White missed a beautiful win with 23 Rhe1!! (Barsky) threatening Bxh5+, for example 23...Bxe1 24 Rxe1 Ra1+ 25 Kd2 Rxe1 26 Qg6+! Kg8 27 Qxe8+ Kxg7 28 Qg6+ Kf8 29 Qxf6+ Kg8 30 Qg5+ Kf7 31 Qe7+ Kg8 32 f6 and White mates.

Brilliant stuff, but not the end of the story. Instead of the weakening 21...a5, Black can very much keep the game alive with 21...Ra5!, protecting the h5-square, when all three results remain possible.

19 Qxb6 Bxd6!

After 19...Ba5 White plays 20 Qd4! with an extra pawn and a dominating position (20 Qxb7? 0-0! gives Black undeserved counterplay).

20 g3?! (Diagram 48)

A remarkably calm continuation given the circumstances, and it certainly did the business in this game, but I suspect that White has something better here. The first move to consider is the obvious 20 Qxb7, but following 20...Qe3+! 21

Kb1 Rb8 Black's counterplay is very threatening, for example 22 Qa6 Rxb3! 23 Rxd6 0-0! and despite the fact that White has two extra bishops, it's quite revealing that *Fritz* seems to like Black's position! Another computer-assisted variation that I can't help giving is 23 Qc8+? Ke7 24 Qxh8 Be5!! 25 fxe5 Qc3 (**Diagram 49**) and White's extra material counts for nothing as Black is about to mate.

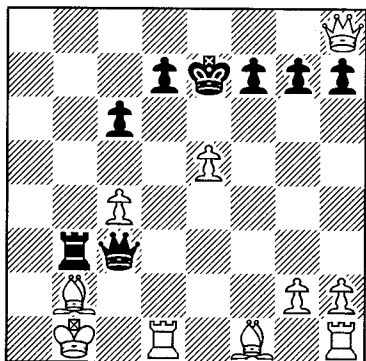


Diagram 49 (W)
The end

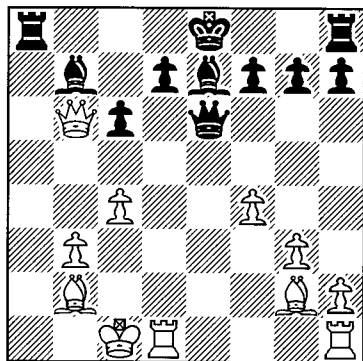


Diagram 50 (B)
It's all over

In the final analysis, perhaps 20 Bd3!? is White's best bet, the subtle point being to answer 20...0-0 with 21 Qd4! Qh6 22 Qxd6! Qxd6 23 Bxh7+ Kxh7 24 Rxd6 when White has a favourable ending.

20...Be7??

After all the previous imaginative play, I'm not sure what possesses Black into playing such a duff move, after which White has more than one straightforward way to win.

20...0-0? loses to 21 Qd4!, but the logical 20...Ba3! promises Black a strong attack on the white king. For example, 21 Bxa3 Rxa3 22 Qxb7 0-0 or 21 Qxb7 Bxb2+ 22 Kxb2 Qf6+ 23 Kc2 0-0 – in both cases the position of White's king looks perilous.

21 Bg2! (Diagram 50) 21...Bd8

Equivalent of resignation. Perhaps Black had missed that 21...0-0 is answered by the simple 22 Rhe1!, e.g. 22...Qg6 23 Rxe7 Rfb8 24 Rxd7 and Black has completely run out of gas.

22 Qxb7 1-0

An incredibly complex game, highlighting the rich possibilities for both sides after 9 Nc3.

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Game 21

□ D.Pavasovic ■ D.Mastrovasilis

Topola 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 5...bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Nb6 9 Nc3 Qe6 10 Qe4 Bb4 11 Bd2 Ba6 12 b3 Bxc3 13 Bxc3 d5 14 Qh4 dxc4 15 Be2 (Diagram 51)

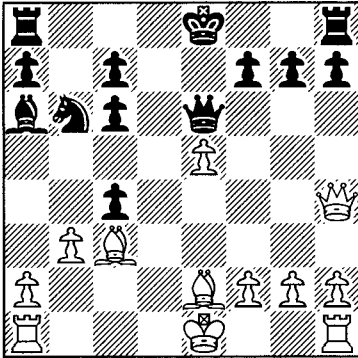


Diagram 51 (B)
No need to capture

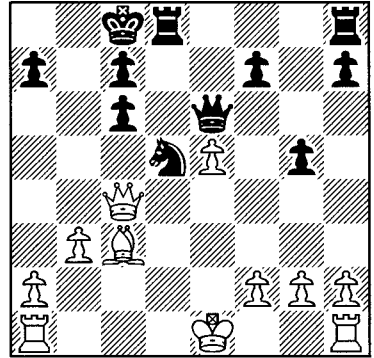


Diagram 52 (W)
King protects pawns

This is the point of White's play – there is no need to recapture on c4. Whereas before the pressure on the a6-f1 diagonal worked for Black, now it's White who's exploiting the pin, making it very difficult for Black to hold onto his extra pawn. White hopes that in the near future he can regain his pawn, leaving him with a clear structural superiority. Without wishing to delve too deeply into the latest theoretical wrinkles, it's worth pointing out that White has recently experienced success with the super-refined 15 Rc1!?, for example 15...0-0 16 Be2 and now:

a) 16...Nd7 17 f4 f6 18 0-0 fxe5 19 Bg4! Qe8 20 Qh3 Nc5 21 Bb4 with a clear plus for White – Macieja.

b) 16...Nd5 17 Ba1!? Nb4 18 bxc4 Rad8 19 0-0 Nd3 20 Rc3 Nxe5 21 Re3 was favourable for White in the very recent game T.Radjabov-S.Karjakin, Dos Hermanas 2005. The rest of the game between these two young stars is worthy of note: 21...Ng6 22 Qg5 Qd7 23 h4 f6 24 Qa5 Qc8 25 Rg3 Qe6 26 Re3 Qc8 27 Re1 Nxh4 28 Rh3! Ng6 (the reason I included the rest of the game was to show off the line 28...Nf5 29 Bg4 g6 30 Bxf5 gxf5 31 Rg3+ Kh8 32 Qe5!!) 29 Qh5 Qe6 30 Qxh7+ Kf7 31 Rg3 and Black threw in the towel.

15...Nd5

There are other possibilities but this move has to come sooner or later as Black has no good way to break the pin and soon runs out of constructive waiting moves.

16 Bxc4

The stem game in this line, G.Kasparov-M.Adams, Sarajevo 1999, continued 16 Bd4 c5?! 17 Bxc5 Nc3 18 Bxc4 Qxe5+ 19 Be3 Ne4! 20 0-0 Bxc4 21 bxc4 0-0 22 Rfe1! and Black experienced problems down the e-file. However, a later game demonstrated how Black should play against this move: 16...Qf5! 17 0-0 Nf4 18 Bf3 0-0 with decent counterplay for Black, A.Morozevich-J.Piket, Internet 2000. Here White erred with 19 Rfd1? (19 Rfe1 is stronger), allowing 19...cxb3. Now 20 axb3 is met by 20...Be2! (Mikhalevski), the point being that 21 Bxe2 Qe4! 22 Bf3 Ne2+! wins the queen.

16...g5!?

Using a decoy trick on the queen in order to secure the f4-post for the knight in future variations. 16...Bxc4 is a more solid option for Black, but after 17 Qxc4 White has some sort of edge.

17 Qd4

Naturally White's queen must remain defending the c4-bishop; 17 Qxg5?? loses a piece after 17...Bxc4 18 bxc4 Nxc3. The move 17 Bxd5, however, is possible; E.Sutovsky-H.Stefansson, Reykjavik (blitz) 2004 continued 17...cxd5 18 Qxg5 c5 19 0-0-0 19...d4! 20 Bb2 h6 21 Qh5 Bb7 when White had an extra pawn in the bank but Black had a more potent bishop.

17...Bxc4 18 Qxc4

18 bxc4? Nf4! leaves White in a bit of a fix. Castling either side allows a devastating fork on e2, while 19 g3 can be met by 19...Rd8! when 20 Qxa7? Qxc4! is winning for Black.

18...0-0-0!? (Diagram 52)

The earlier game G.Kasparov-J.Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2000 had continued 18...Nf4 19 Qxe6+ Nxe6 (Black's strong knight doesn't quite compensate fully for the poor queenside structure) 20 0-0-0! Ke7 21 Rhe1! (planning to attack Black's weaknesses with Re4-a4/c4) 21...Rhd8 22 Rxd8 Rxd8 23 Re4! Rd5 24 Kc2! c5! 25 Ra4 Nd4+ 26 Bxd4 cxd4 27 Rxa7 Kd7 28 Kd3 when the world number one went on to convert his advantage.

With 18...0-0-0 at least Black's king will be able to defend the weak queenside pawns in the endgame. On the other hand, the pawns don't exactly return the favour so the king has to survive the middlegame!

19 Bd4

19 0-0 Nf4 20 Qxe6+ (20 Qa6+!?, keeping the queens on the board, is an interesting suggestion from Brod) 20...Nxe6 gives a better version (for Black) of the endgame described in the previous note, and I would assess this position as equal. The game R.Mamedov-S.Karjakin, Calvia Olympiad 2004 is an illustration of how tricky that knight on e6 can become: 21 Rac1 Rd3 22 Rfd1 Rd5 23 Kf1 Rhd8 24 Re1 h5 25 g3?! g4! 26 Kg2 Ng5! 27 e6 Nxe6 28 Bf6 Rg8 29 Re4 Rg6 30 Be5? Nc5 when the double threat of ...Nxe4 and ...Nd3 cost White more material.

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19...c5!?

Black wishes to play ...Qg4 but without allowing Qa6+, so first he diverts White's queen. 19...Kb7 is the more solid option.

20 Qxc5

Certainly not 20 Bxc5?? Qxe5+!

20...Qg4! 21 Qxa7

Now both kings become increasingly exposed.

21...Qe4+ 22 Be3

This is forced, as 22 Kf1? Nf4! is embarrassing for White.

22...Nf4 (Diagram 53)

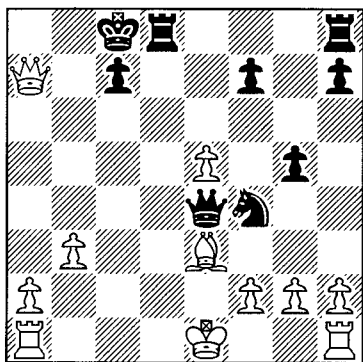


Diagram 53 (W)

Both kings are under attack

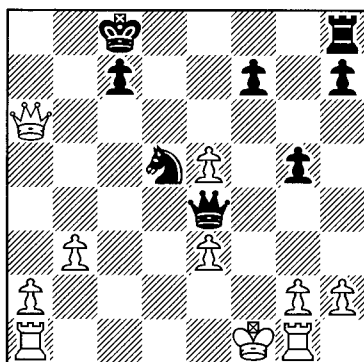


Diagram 54 (B)

Don't try to be a hero!

23 Qa6+

23 f3 Nxcg2+ 24 Kf2 Qxe3+ 25 Qxe3 Nxe3 26 Kxe3 Rhe8 is assessed as equal by Ivan Markovic. Following 27 Ke4 f6 28 Kf5 Rxe5+ 29 Kxf6 Ra5 White has remained a pawn ahead, but the obvious activity of Black's rooks points to a likely draw.

23...Kb8 24 Rg1 Rd3!

Planning an exchange sacrifice on e3. White was ready to meet 24...Nxcg2+?? with 25 Rxcg2 Qxcg2 26 Ba7+ with a typical mating mechanism that is worth remembering: 26...Ka8 27 Bb6+! Kb8 28 Qa7+ Kc8 29 Qxc7 mate.

25 Kf1

This is the type of position where any computer engine worth its salt would have a field day with all the incredibly complex variations. Evgeny Postny gives the following mind-boggling *Fritz*-assisted analysis: 25 Qa7+ Kc8 26 Kf1 Rd6! (preventing Qa6+ and threatening ...Qd3+) 27 f3 Qd3+ 28 Kf2 Qc2+ 29

Kg3 Ne2+ 30 Kg4 Rd4+!! (White's king somehow escapes after 30...h5+ 31 Kxg5 Qg6+ 32 Kh4 Rd4+) 31 Bxd4 h5+ 32 Kxg5 Qd2+! 33 Kh4! (after 33 Be3? Fritz exclaims 'mate in nine!': 33...Qd8+ 34 Kf5 Qd7+ 35 Kg5 Rg8+ 36 Kh4 Rg4+! 37 Kh3 Rg3+ 38 Kh4 Qe7+ 39 Kxh5 Qxe5+ 40 Kh4 Qh8+ 41 Bh6 Qxh6) 33...Qf4+ 34 Kh3 Qf5+ 35 Kh4 Qf4+ and the game ends in perpetual check.

25...Rxe3! 26 Qb5+ Kc8 27 fxe3 Nd5 28 Qa6+! (Diagram 54)

With the queen and knight lurking around White's vulnerable king, he correctly errs on the side of caution and delivers a perpetual check. 28 Re1??, planning to meet 28...Nxe3 with 29 Rxe3, loses to the simple 28...Qf5+ 29 Ke2 Nc3+.



NOTE: The queen and knight combination is often referred to as the deadliest attacking force in chess. The two pieces work so well together because their differing movements complement each other perfectly.

28...Kb8 29 Qb5+ Kc8 30 Qa6+ ½-½

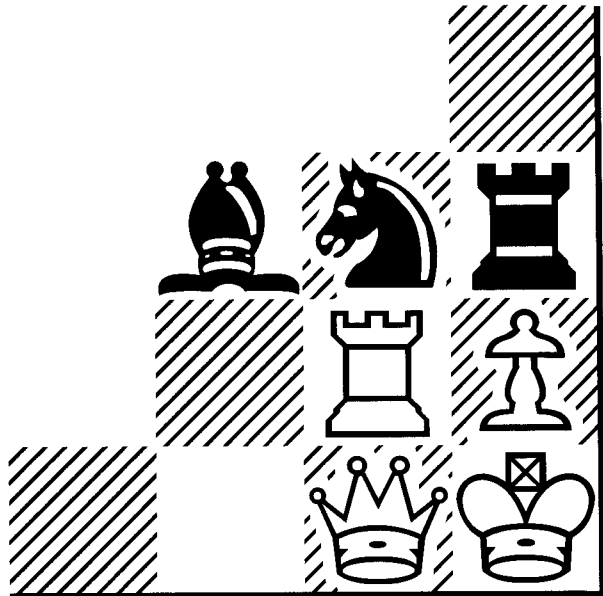
Points to Remember

- 1) The Mieses Variation is both more ambitious and much more complicated than the Scotch Four Knights. At the risk of making a sweeping generalisation, I would say that from White's point of view the Mieses appeals more to advanced players.
- 2) In the main lines, restricting the development of your opponent's pieces can be just as important as finding good squares for your own.
- 3) Often the game becomes a struggle between Black's greater piece play and White's superior structure. Black often chooses to damage his own structure even further in the search for greater activity.
- 4) 6...Qe7! is a crucial move for Black – after either 6...Nd5 or 6...Ne4 he must accept a disadvantage (although 6...Ne4 looks stronger than 6...Nd5).

Chapter Three

Mieses Variation: Main Line with 8...Ba6

- Introduction
- White Plays 9 b3
- 9 g3 and other Ninth Moves for White
- Points to Remember



Introduction

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Ba6 (Diagram 1)

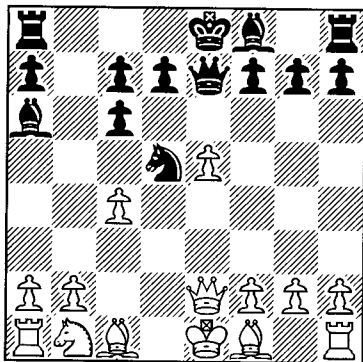


Diagram 1 (W)
The Mieses Variation with 8...Ba6

For those of you who like action, 8...Ba6 is a more ambitious and aggressive move than 8...Nb6 – instead of simply retreating the knight, Black develops another piece and gives himself the opportunity of castling queenside. So far all good news for Black, so why isn't 8...Ba6 noticeably more popular than 8...Nb6? The reason for this is that some Black players are put off by its committal nature. Of course at this moment in time the bishop is active in the sense that it's crucially pinning the c4-pawn. However, even though the knight is invulnerable at the moment, once White defends the e5-pawn and moves his queen from the f1-a6 diagonal, the knight will probably have to move in any case. Moreover, as we witnessed more than once in the previous chapter, in the long term there are many positions where the bishop is poorly placed on a6, biting on the granite-like b3/c4 pawn structure. Black has to try to use both his initial activity and the vulnerability of the e5-pawn to the full in order to avoid winding up with a prospectless position, and this required urgency in Black's game gives rise to some very complex variations.



WARNING: The variations discussed in this chapter are sharper and more theoretical than any others encountered in this book. These lines are not for the feint-hearted.

In the first section we will cover White's main move here, 9 b3, while the second section is devoted to ninth move alternatives for White.

White Plays 9 b3

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Ba6 9 b3 (Diagram 2)

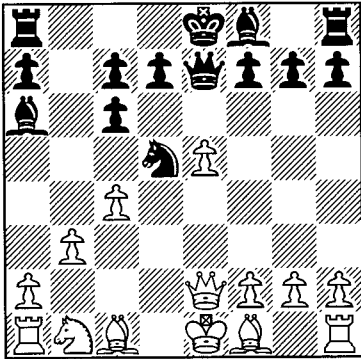


Diagram 2 (B)
White plays 9 b3

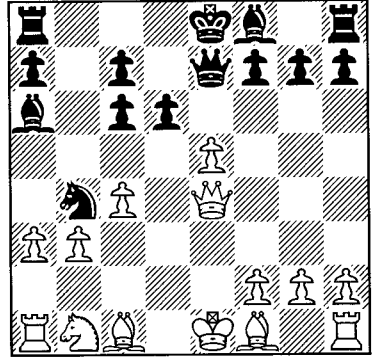


Diagram 3 (B)
An inglorious end for the knight

A very sensible move, protecting c4 and planning either Bb2 to support e5 or even Ba3.

9...g6

Black's most popular reply, preparing ...Bg7. However, there is a range of enticing alternatives here. 9...Qh4!?, 9...0-0-0 and 9...g5!?, will be covered in Games 22-24, while other options include:

a) 9...d6? 10 Qe4! is awkward for Black. The only knight move that doesn't allow Qxc6+ is 10...Nb4, but then 11 a3! (**Diagram 3**) leaves it embarrassed on that square.



WARNING: Black players have to be very wary of the knight getting trapped on b4 in this line, as there is no escape route via a6.

b) 9...Qb4+!? 10 Bd2 Qb6 redeploys the queen and prepares to develop the f8-bishop. This line can be compared to 9 b3 g6 10 f4 Qb4+ 11 Bd2 Qb6 12 Qe4 (see Game 25), the difference being the omission of the moves f2-f4 and ...g7-g6. I believe that White can use this to his advantage with 11 Qe4! (without ...g7-g6 there is no ...f7-f5 to worry about) 11...Nb4 12 Nc3 when the threat of a2-a3 causes Black some problems.

c) 9...f6!? hasn't been played very often, but it's certainly better than 9...d6. Now 10 Bb2 Nf4 11 Qe3 fxe5 12 Bxe5 Ne6 doesn't look bad for Black. Instead

10 e6!? (we'll see more of this move in this chapter) 10...0-0-0 11 g3 transposes to the note to White's 11th move in Game 23, while in I.Nataf-H.Rolletschek, Austria 2000 White kept an edge after 10 g3 fxe5 11 Bg2 Nf6 12 0-0 Qe6 13 Bb2 Bd6 14 Nd2 0-0 15 Rae1 Rae8 16 Bc3 Qe7 17 Nf3 e4 18 Nd2 e3 19 Qxe3 Qxe3 20 Rxe3 Rxe3 21 fxe3.

10 f4!? (Diagram 4)

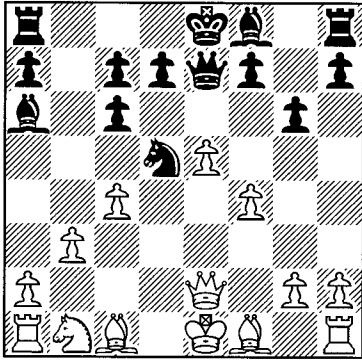


Diagram 4 (B)
Ambitious play

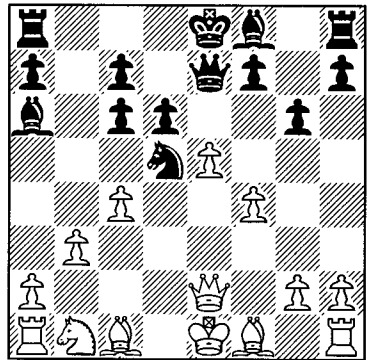


Diagram 5 (W)
Any takers?

Both sides continue fearlessly. With e5 protected by a pawn, White is now ready to move his queen off the f1-a6 diagonal and thus attack the d5-knight for real.

White has some important alternatives here. 10 g3 and 10 Bb2 Bg7 11 g3 transpose to the next section (under 9 g3), while 10 Bb2 Bg7 11 Nd2 transposes to 9 Nd2 g6 10 b3 Bg7 11 Bb2 (also covered in the next section).



NOTE: There are quite a few transpositions to look out for in the 8...Ba6 Mieses.

This leaves the possibility of 10 Ba3!?, which has been tried out once by Kasparov. I believe the reason he hasn't repeated it is because of 10...d6!. The critical line is 11 exd6 Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 Bg7! 13 cxd5 Bxe2 14 Kxe2 Bxa1, reaching a very similar complex position to the one described in the note to White's 10th move in Game 24 with the largely irrelevant difference that the pawn is on g6 rather than g5.

Going back to 10 f4, Black now has a number of different options which are covered in the games section: 10...Qb4+ is studied in Game 25, 10...Bg7 in Game 26, and 10...f6!? in Game 27.

Black's other options include:

a) 10...Qh4+?! (Black wants to play ...Bb4+ but this seems inconsistent with

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

9...g6) 11 g3 Bb4+ 12 Bd2 Qe7 and now probably the simplest way for White to keep an edge is with 13 Bxb4 Qxb4+ 14 Qd2. The endgame after 14...Qxd2+ 15 Kxd2 Ne7 16 Nc3 is clearly more pleasant for White – for one thing Black finds it difficult to get his a6-bishop back into the game.

b) 10...g5!? is a typically imaginative idea from Vassily Ivanchuk, Black's motivation for a second consecutive move of the g-pawn being to undermine the protection of e5. One of Black's ideas is that 11 Ba3 Qd8 12 Bxf8? can be met by 12...Nxf4!. Instead the game D.Pavasovic-I.Balinov, Pula 2003 continued 11 fxc5!? Bg7 12 Bb2 0-0?! 13 Qe4! Qxc5? (13...f5 is stronger but 14 gxf6 Nxf6 15 Qh4 d6 16 Bd3 – Pavasovic – is still clearly in White's favour – 16...dxe5 allows 17 Bxh7+!) 14 cxd5 Bxe5? (14...Rae8!?) 15 Bxe5 Rae8 16 h4 Qc1+ 17 Kf2 and Black's attack ran out of steam. Pavasovic, a renowned expert on the white side of the Scotch, also gives the line 12...Nf4!? 13 Qe4 Ng6 14 Nd2 Nxe5 15 0-0-0! Qxc5 16 c5! Bb7 17 h4 Qe7 18 Nc4 with obvious compensation for White.

c) Those Black players looking for some fresh territory to analyse could do worse than study 10...d6!? (**Diagram 5**).

I can't find a single example of this move on my database, which is a bit of a surprise as, with 10...f6, it looks incredibly logical to attack e5 in this way. It's worth pointing out that 11 exd6? can be met by 11...Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 Bg7! and ...Bxa1. It's true that White can force the d5-knight to move by moving the queen from e2, but with ...Nf6, ...Nb4 and ...Nb6 amongst Black's options, there is certainly room for investigation here.

Theoretical?

I'm afraid so – there's no easy way out. Those playing White especially need to know what they're doing when facing the sharp 9...Qh4 and 9...0-0-0.

Statistics

Overall with 9 b3 White has scored 57% in just over 1000 games – a reasonably healthy score. 9...0-0-0 and 9...Qh4 are the moves most likely to lead to decisive results; each has a draw ratio of less than 30%.

Game 22

□ H.Bellmann ■ E.Leppek

Correspondence 1999

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5
8 c4 Ba6 9 b3 Qh4!?

An incredibly sharp idea, introducing the possibility of both ...Bb4+ and ...Qd4. Behind 9...g6 this has actually been Black's most popular move. I find this a bit difficult to take in because, as long as White plays a few accurate moves, it's he and not Black who has all the fun. Then again, chess players are known for their gambling tendencies...

10 a3! (Diagram 6)

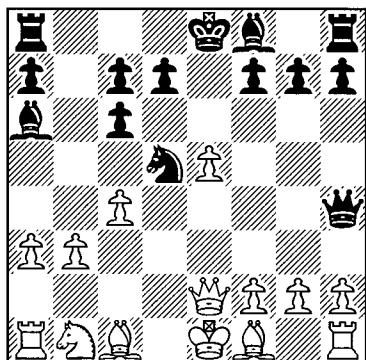


Diagram 6 (W)
Ripping up the rulebook

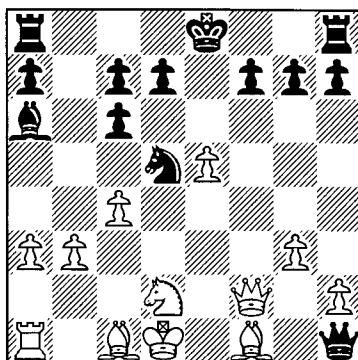


Diagram 7 (B)
More exciting than the Lopez!

White rips up the openings rulebook to play an outwardly ‘irrelevant’ pawn move, but the reality is that it’s worth expending another tempo to rule out any ...Bb4/...Nb4 possibilities for Black.



NOTE: Again we see this recurrent theme running though the Mieses Variation. Restricting your opponent’s development is just as important as carrying out your own.

10 g3?? Qd4! 11 Bb2 Bb4+! has caught out more than one player (is this the reason why 9...Qh4 is so popular?). White’s only real alternative is 10 Bb2 Bb4+ 11 Kd1! (11 Nd2?! Nc3 is good for Black as 12 Qd3 is met by 12...Ne4!), which hardly looks appetising for White. However, it’s careless to write off such positions as bad for White – we see the white king on d1 more than once in this chapter, and Black still has issues over piece coordination. Theory runs with 11...Nf4 12 Qe4! (12 Qf3 Ne6 is more than comfortable for Black, whose knight has reached its favourite square) 12...Qxf2 13 Bd4 Qh4 14 c5! Qh5+ 15 g4 Qxg4+ 16 Kc2 Be2! 17 Bxe2 Qxe2+ 18 Qxe2 Nxe2 (Black has two extra pawns but his bishop is trapped) 19 Bf2 0-0 20 a3 Bxc5 21 Bxc5 Rfe8 22 Re1 Rxe5 23 Nc3 Rxc5 24 Rxe2 with a roughly equal ending, F.Izeta Txabarri-R.Alvarez Ibarra, Elgoibar 1991.

10...Bc5! 11 g3!

This offer of a sacrifice is more or less forced, as after 11 Bb2 both 11...Nf4 12 Qf3 Ne6 and 11...Ne3!? look fine for Black.

11...Bxf2+! 12 Qxf2!

12 Kxf2? Qd4+ is a less attractive way of losing the rook.

12...Qe4+ 13 Kd1!

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It's not the time to suddenly go all materialistic with 13 Kd2 – 13...Qxh1 14 Bg2 Qxh2 15 cxd5 cxd5 looks better for Black than the main line.

13...Qxh1 14 Nd2 (Diagram 7)

Not your everyday position, and a bit more exciting than the mainline Lopez! Black is an exchange and a pawn ahead but his queen is lacking squares and his two minor pieces have seen better days. Play now takes on a very forcing nature.

14...Nc3+?!

Forcing a slight simplification by exchanging knights, but to me the resulting positions look particularly grim for Black. Alternatively:

- After something like 14...Ne7? 15 Nf3! Black is in serious danger of getting his queen trapped.
- 14...0-0 15 Kc2! (this is stronger than 15 cxd5 Bxf1 16 Qxf1 Qxd5) 15...f6 (or 15...f5 16 Bb2 f4 17 cxd5 fxg3 18 Bxa6! Qxa1 19 Qxg3 Qh1 20 e6 g6 21 Qe5 – Wells – and White forces mate) 16 e6! (blocking any attempt by Black to open files for his rooks) 16...dxe6 17 Bh3 Rfe8 18 Nf3! e5 19 Bb2 Qxa1 20 Bxa1 and White went on to win in I.Nataf-D.McMahon, Mondariz 2000.
- 14...f5!? (planning an immediate rescue job on the queen with ...f5-f4 – this may be Black's best bet) 15 cxd5! (15 Kc2 f4! 16 gxf4 Nxf4! 17 Qxf4 Rf8 18 Qh4 Rxf1 19 Nxf1 Qxf1 was less fun for White in S.Plukkel-J.Van Ruitenburt, Nijmegen 2002) 15...Bxf1 16 Qxf1 Qxd5 17 Bb2 0-0 18 Kc2 d6 19 Re1 and, although I still prefer White, his advantage has been minimised, B.Macieja-M.Kaminski, Zakopane 2000.

15 Kc2 Ne4 16 Nxe4 Qxe4+ 17 Bd3 (Diagram 8)

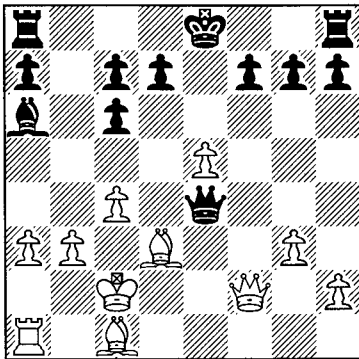


Diagram 8 (B)
Only two choices

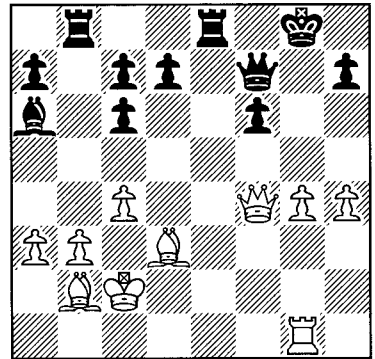


Diagram 9 (B)
Black is out of tricks

17...Qg4

17...Qxe5, opening a route to Black's king, is asking for trouble: 18 Bb2 Qg5 19 h4! Qh6 20 Re1+ Kf8 21 Rf1 and it's unlikely that Black will survive the onslaught. Bricke gives the following convincing analysis: 21...Qe6 22 Bf5 Qe7 23 Re1 Qd8 24 h5 h6 25 Bg6! f6 26 Qc5+ Kg8 27 Re7 Qf8 28 Qe3 when Black is facing total paralysis.

18 Bf5 Qh5 19 h4 f6 20 exf6 gxf6

P.Kotsur-D.Frolov, Tomsk 1997 ended swiftly after 20...0-0 21 g4! Qe8 22 Bb2 gxf6 23 Rg1! h6 24 g5 fxc5 25 Qd4 Qe7 26 Qh8+, when Black resigned on account of 26...Kf7 27 Qg7+ Ke8 28 Re1! – another poor advert for 9...Qh4.

21 Bb2

21 Qe1+ followed by g3-g4 is another promising way to play.

21...0-0 22 g4 Qf7 23 Rg1!

White's attack plays itself – the obvious idea is g4-g5.

23...Rab8 24 Qf4!

Nipping any counterplay in the bud. 24 g5? allows the big hit 24...Rxb3!

24...Rfe8

Or 24...d5 25 g5! dxc4 26 gxf6+ Kh8 27 Rg7 cxb3+ 28 Kc1 Qc4+ 29 Qxc4 Bxc4 30 Rxh7+ 1-0 D.Dochev-M.Gigov, Velingrad 2004 – 30...Kg8 31 f7+ mates.

25 Bd3! (Diagram 9)

Preventing ...Re2. Black has run out of tricks and has no answer to the problems surrounding his own king.

25...d5 26 Bxf6 Re6 27 Qg5+ Kf8 28 Rf1! Ke8 29 Bg7 Qg8 30 Rf8+ Qxf8 31 Bxf8 Kxf8 32 Qf5+ Ke7 33 Qxh7+ 1-0

33...Kd6 drops a piece to 34 c5+, while after 33...Kd8 34 Qh8+ Re8 35 Qf6+ Re7 36 h5 White's pawns race home.



WARNING: 9...Qh4 is only suitable for those who enjoy taking risks and living on the edge.

Game 23

□ J.Dworakowska ■ K.Dabrowska

Polish Women's Championship 2000

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Ba6 9 b3 0-0-0 (Diagram 10)

A very natural option – Black moves his king into safety (this is a relative term; of course things could be rosier for Black on the queenside) and prepares to pepper the e5-pawn with ...Re8.

10 g3!

10 Bb2 is possible but 10 g3 is more flexible. As we see later, the dark-squared bishop is often developed via a3.

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

10...f6!?

Nibbling away at e5. Black has a couple of important alternatives:

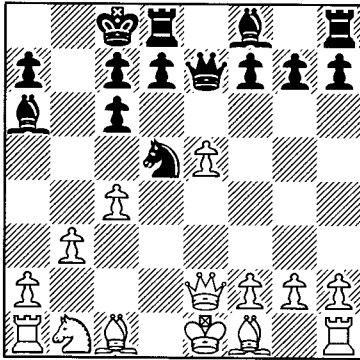


Diagram 10 (W)
Back to sanity

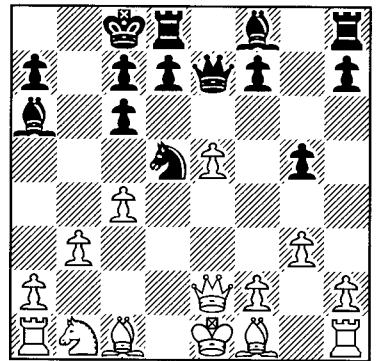


Diagram 11 (W)
Lunging with ...g7-g5

a) 10...Re8 has traditionally been the most popular move, and was the choice of Karpov when he faced Kasparov in this line. Play normally continues 11 Bb2 f6 12 Bg2 (12 Qd2 is also possible) 12...fxe5 and here White plays one of 13 0-0, 13 Nd2 or even 13 Qd2 (planning Qa5) with reasonably good compensation for the pawn. Black's knight will eventually be forced to retreat, leaving both white bishops bearing down on Black's position. White can play Re1, after which Black has problems defending e5 (...d7-d6 may leave c6 en prise).

b) 10...g5!? (**Diagram 11**) is an interesting option for Black (we'll cover the general move ...g7-g5 more deeply in the next game).

Now 11 Bg2 Bg7 12 Bb2 leads to note 'b' to White's 10th move in Game 24, while Karpov suggests playing in a similar fashion to Game 24 with 11 h4!?. In B.Macieja-A.Karpov, Warsaw (rapid) 2003 the ex-world champion and 4...Nf6 expert found a convincing answer to 11 Ba3 in the shape of 11...Nb4! 12 Bb2 Bg7 13 Bg2 Nd3+! 14 Qxd3 Bxe5.

11 Bg2

As we saw in note 'a' to the previous move, White is quite happy to let go of the e5-pawn, confident that the positional factors will promise him more than sufficient compensation.

Another way of sacrificing the e-pawn which we haven't come across so far is 11 e6!?, planning to disrupt Black's queenside structure even further. For example, 11...dxe6 (of course 11...Qxe6?? loses a piece after 12 Qxe6 dxe6 13 cxd5 but 11...f5!?, planning a possible ...Qf6, has been played and looks quite interesting) 12 Bg2 Nb4 13 0-0 Bb7 14 a3 Nd3 15 Be3, as in G.Vescovi-E.Matsuura, Rio de Janeiro 2000.

11...fxe5 12 0-0 (Diagram 12)

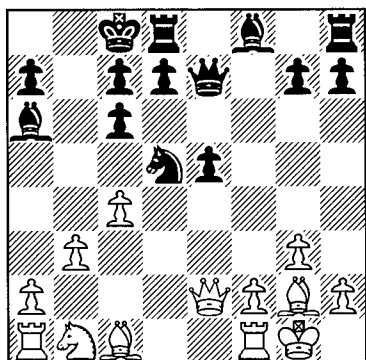


Diagram 12 (B)
Positional compensation

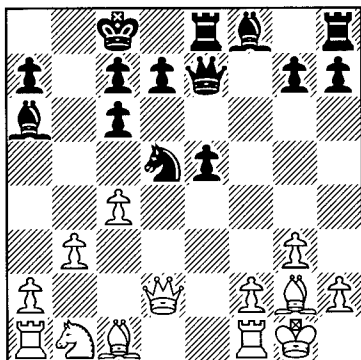


Diagram 13 (B)
Planning Qa5

12...Re8?!

Giving the e5-pawn added protection, but Black is mixing her systems here. As White forgoes Re1 and Bb2, there really isn't any need for this move – Black is better advised spending the tempo on arranging counterplay. One option is 12...Nf6, moving the knight out of trouble and possibly preparing to block out White's g2-bishop with ...e5-e4. In this case the rook may well be better placed on d8, supporting a possible ...d7-d5.

A more daring attempt at gaining counterplay is with the immediate 12...e4!?. At first it looks as though White can simply grab this pawn, but Black has tricks based on ...Qf6, hitting the rook on a1. For example:

a) 13 Qd2 (White heads straight for the queenside attack) 13...Nf6 14 Qa5 Kb7 15 Bf4! d5 16 Nc3 Nh5! 17 cxd5 (17 Be3? Qb4! is Black's idea) 17...cxd5 18 Nxd5 Qc5 19 Qxc5 Bxc5 20 Rfc1 Bd4 was very unclear in the game S.Collins-F.Jenni, European Team Championship, Plovdiv 2003. It might seem that 21 Rxc7+ is strong, but after the calm 21...Kb8! Black doesn't fear the discovered check and nearly all White's pieces are en prise! Only *Fritz* can find a way out of the mess: 22 Nb4 Bb7 23 Rc8+!! Kxc8 24 Bh3+ Rd7 25 Bxd7+ Kxd7 26 Rd1 with a roughly level ending!

b) 13 Qxe4!? Qf6!? 14 cxd5 Bxf1 15 Bxf1 Bc5! (a crucial in-between move; 15...Qxa1? 16 dxc6 dxc6 17 Ba6+ Kd7 18 Be2! – Mikhalevski – leaves Black's king in huge trouble) 16 Qc2 Bd4! (16...Qxa1? again loses after 17 Ba6+ Kb8 18 Qxc5 Ka8 19 Be3 Qxb1+ 20 Kg2 Qe4+ 21 f3) 17 Nc3! (17 dxc6 Qxc6! is good for Black) 17...Bxc3 18 Bg5! Qxg5 19 Qxc3 Kb8 (19...Qxd5?? loses to 20 Ba6+ Kb8 21 Qb4+) 20 dxc6 dxc6 21 Qb4+ Ka8 22 Bg2 Rd6 23 Qc4 Qf6 24 Rc1 Qd4 25 Bxc6+ Kb8 26 Qc2 Qd2 27 Qc5 Qd4 28 Qc2 Qd2 ½-½ Schwarzertod-

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

D.Hassell, correspondence 2001. As far as I can see, an extremely accurately played game from both sides!

13 Qd2! (Diagram 13)



NOTE: The Qe2-d2-a5 manoeuvre is very common in this line.

13...Nb6

White also has excellent play after 13...Nf6 with 14 Qa5 Kb7 15 Ba3 Qe6 16 Bxf8 Rhxf8 17 Nc3 e4 18 Rae1! d5. Now, having induced ...d7-d5, I like the slightly paradoxical 19 Rd1!. White's idea is Na4, forcing ...Nd7 and thus leaving d5 weak. It's difficult to find a decent defence for Black, for example 19...Rd8 20 Na4 Nd7 21 cxd5 cxd5 22 Rxd5! Bxf1 23 Rxd7! and Black can resign. 19...Nd7 is more resilient, but the complications after 20 Rfe1 Nb6 21 cxd5 cxd5 22 Nxd5 Qf5! 23 Qc5! c6 24 Rxe4!! seem to favour White.

14 Qa5 Kb7 15 Ba3

A crucial idea in White's attack. The careless 15 Bb2? allows Black to force the exchange of queens with 15...Qb4!.

15...Qf6

White's ample attacking possibilities are illustrated in the variation 15...Qf7 16 Bxf8 Rhxf8 17 Nc3 (planning Rad1 and Ne4, when ...d7-d6 can be met by the crushing Rxd6!) 17...d5, and now I really like the move 18 Rab1!! (Diagram 14), planning Na4.

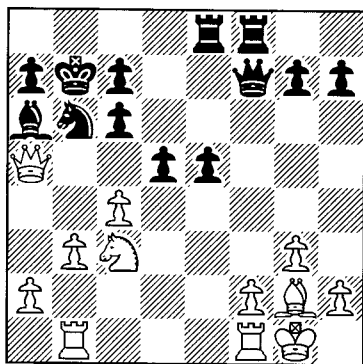


Diagram 14 (B)
18 Rab1!!

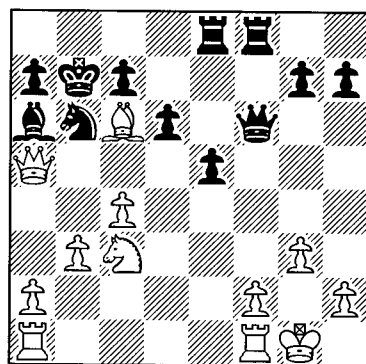


Diagram 15 (B)
Game over

For example 18...e4 19 Na4! Nd7 20 Bh3! and Black's position collapses.

16 Bxf8 Rhxf8 17 Nc3 d6

Giving up a vital defensive pawn is the equivalent of resignation, but at the

end of the day it's difficult to come up with a better suggestion – White's attack just looks too powerful. For instance, 17...d5 18 cxd5!? (18 Rab1!, as in the previous note, also can't be bad) 18...Bxf1 19 dxc6+ Ka8 20 Rxf1 Qd8 21 Nb5 Qb8 22 Rd1 Rd8 23 Rd7!.

18 Bxc6+! (Diagram 15) 18...Kxc6 19 Qxa6 e4 20 Nd5 Qe5 21 Rad1 Rf7 22 a4 Kd7 23 Nxc7! e3 24 Nxe8 1-0



TIP: White shouldn't be afraid of sacrificing his e-pawn in the 9..0-0-0 variation.

Game 24

□ J.Smeets ■ J.Timman

Amsterdam 2002

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Ba6 9 b3 g5!? (Diagram 16)

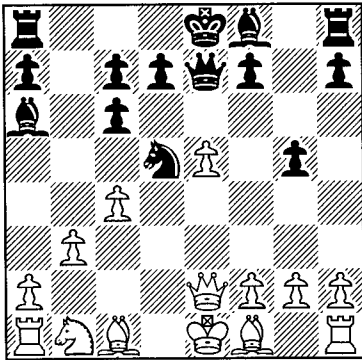


Diagram 16 (W)

Not one square but two!

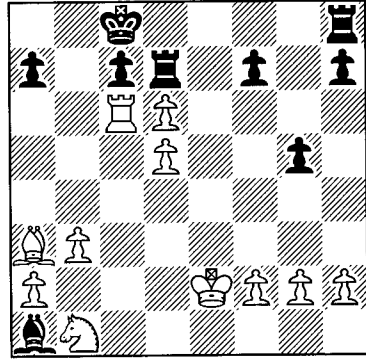


Diagram 17 (W)

An equal mess!

Startling, but after seeing some of the ideas in this chapter, readers shouldn't be too surprised by anything anymore! Vishy Anand brought this move into prominence when he introduced it in his 1995 world championship match against Kasparov. Funnily enough, Kasparov was still able to play in the exact way as what he had intended against 9...g6 (see note 'a' to White's 10th).

The main positive of 9...g5 (apart from preparing ...Bg7) is that it prevents White from supporting the e5-pawn with f2-f4. Furthermore, it supports the knight jump from d5 to f4. The dark side of ...g7-g5 (especially when compared to ...g7-g6) is that it seriously weakens the kingside. Even if Black's king finds sanctuary on the queenside, this doesn't necessarily stop White from attacking Black's weaknesses on the other side of the board.

10 h4!?

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A radical attempt to immediately exploit the weakening in Black's camp; this move was advocated by Olympiad gold medallist Sam Collins in *An Attacking Repertoire for White*. Despite the fact that it has been played on fewer occasions than 10 Ba3, 10 g3 and 10 Bb2, I agree with him that it's a very dangerous try for White – I certainly can't find an easy path to equality for Black.

Less outrageous tries by White include:

a) 10 Ba3 is what Kasparov played against Anand in the stem game in this line. After the 'flashy' 10...Qxa3?! 11 Nxa3 Bb4+ 12 Qd2 Bxd2+ 13 Kxd2 Nf4 14 h4 White is left with a typically pleasant ending. Instead the critical line, which has been played quite a few times now, seems to be 10...d6! 11 exd6 Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 Bg7! 13 cxd5 Bxe2 14 Kxe2 Bxa1 15 Rc1! 0-0-0 16 Rxc6 Rd7 (**Diagram 17**) with a totally unclear but roughly balanced endgame.

b) 10 g3 Bg7 11 Bb2 (or 10 Bb2 Bg7 11 g3) looks like a good, sensible approach from White. Now 11...0-0?! 12 Bg2 Rae8 13 0-0 Bxe5 14 Bxe5 Qxe5 15 Qxe5 Rxe5 16 cxd5 Bxf1 17 Kxf1 cxd5 leads us to the type of endgame (bishop and knight versus rook and two pawns) discussed in detail in the next theoretical section. However, with the pawn on g5 instead of g6, White should be looking to exploit Black's frailties on the kingside, and 12 Nd2! , preparing 0-0-0, comes to mind. White's opening play was certainly a success story in the game V.Kotrotsos-K.Kokolias, Athens 2004: 12...Nb4 13 0-0-0! Nxa2+ 14 Kb1 Nb4 15 h4! when suddenly Black's 9th move wasn't looking so clever – the a-pawn is a small price to pay for the opportunity to strike at Black's weakness on the kingside.

However, Black can do better than this. Instead of castling into a storm on the kingside, logically it makes more sense for Black to play 11...0-0-0! (**Diagram 18**) when the weaknesses created by ...g7-g5 seem less relevant.

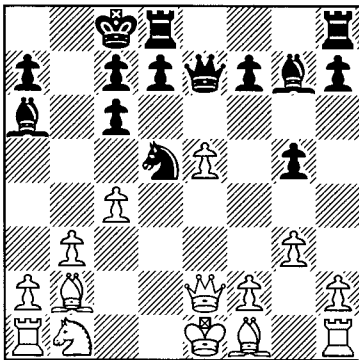


Diagram 18 (W)

The correct side to castle

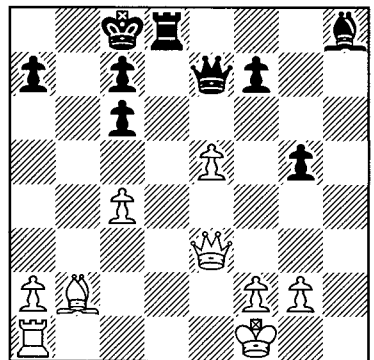


Diagram 19 (B)

A structural plus

After 12 Nd2 Nb4!, sacrificing the a-pawn with 13 0-0-0 is probably now a bit too extravagant, while after 13 Nf3 c5! (typically vacating c6) 14 Bg2 Bb7 (Wells) there's nothing wrong with Black's position. 12 Bg2 Rde8 13 0-0 Bxe5 14 Qxe5 Qxe5 15 Bxe5 Rxe5 16 cxd5 Bxf1 17 Kxf1 cxd5 again gives us the typical ending discussed in more detail in the next theoretical section. Finally, I can't find any examples of the risky 12 h4!? here but this looks like it could be worth a punt too.

10...Bg7 11 Bb2

Naturally White must prevent ...Bxe5.

11...Nf4

Making use of the f4-post, but Black has a few alternatives here:

a) 11...gxh4 temporarily wins a pawn, but not many strong players would consider this move. The pawn on h4 is very weak and could drop off at any moment, and the rest of Black's structure on the kingside isn't a pretty sight.

b) 11...h6!? 12 Qe4 Nb6 (12...Nf4!?) 13 hxg5 hxg5 14 Rxh8+ Bxh8 15 Nd2 d5 16 Qe3 dxc4 17 Nxc4 Bxc4 18 Bxc4 Nxc4 19 bxc4 0-0-0 20 Kf1! (**Diagram 19**) gave White a considerable advantage due to his structural superiority and safer king in J.Smeets-H.Jonkman, Amsterdam 2002 – an encounter that occurred two rounds before our main game.

Obviously the Scotch, and in particular 10 h4, was a lucky charm for the young Dutch player in this tournament.

c) 11...0-0-0 with the idea of giving up on g5 in return for winning the e5-pawn, may be Black's best here. Play continues 12 Nd2 and now:

c1) 12...Nb4 13 0-0-0! (this idea again!) 13...Nxa2+ 14 Kb1 Nb4 15 Qe3! c5 16 hxg5 is assessed by Palac in *Chess Informant* as a clear plus for White and it's difficult to disagree. Black has captured a relatively useless a-pawn whereas White has got rid of the g5-pawn and is ready to boost his phalanx on the kingside with f2-f4.

c2) 12...Rde8! (securing the win of the e5-pawn as 13 Nf3? can be met by 13...g4!) 13 hxg5 Nf4! (13...Bxe5?! 14 Bxe5 Qxe5 15 Qxe5 Rxe5+ 16 Kd1 Nf4 17 Nf3 is a typically nice ending for White – Black's pieces are less active than they look, while his pawns are a total mess) 14 Qg4 Bxe5 15 0-0-0 f6 16 Nf3 Bxb2+ 17 Kxb2 Ne6 18 gxf6 Qxf6+ 19 Kb1 just about kept the balance for Black in M.Palac-G.Giorgadze, Pula 1997 – again it's the usual battle of structure against activity.

12 Qe3!

Hitting a7 and thus giving Black a problem over which side to castle.

12...h6 13 Nd2 Ng6 14 Nf3 (**Diagram 20**) 14...gxh4

This seems to be inconsistent with Black's earlier 12...h6, bolstering the g5-pawn. However, it's not easy to come up with a useful alternative for Black. 14...g4 is met by 15 h5! when 15...gxf3 16 hxg6 fxg6 17 gxf3 g5 18 Bd3 (Palac)

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

clearly favours White, and 14...0-0 15 hxc5 hxc5 16 Bd3 is also discouraging from Black's point of view. Probably it's already safe to say that the opening has been a success for White.

15 0-0-0 0-0 16 Qd4 Rad8!?

By protecting d7 with this rook, Black is happy to let White chomp on a7 and c7 in order to get rid of the e5-pawn. 16...Rfd8 is the alternative, but Black's position doesn't look great after the simple 17 Bd3.

17 Qxa7 Nxe5 18 Qxc7!

The point of Black's previous play is that 18 Qxa6? suddenly runs into a winning attack after 18...Ra8 19 Qb7 Nxf3, for example 20 Bxg7 Kxg7 21 gxf3 Rxa2 22 b4 Qf6 with decisive threats.

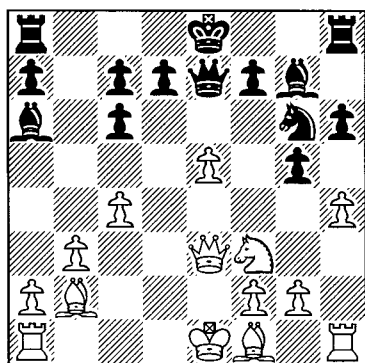


Diagram 20 (B)
g5 under pressure

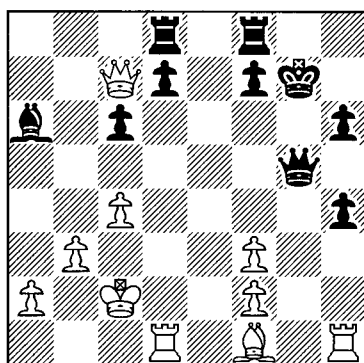


Diagram 21 (B)
Good for White



WARNING: White must always play with some care when castling queenside in the Mieses Variation, as his king isn't overly well protected there.

18...Nxf3 19 Bxg7 Qg5+ 20 Kc2 Kxg7 21 gxf3 (Diagram 21)

The smoke has cleared and White remains better due to his structure, a slightly safer king and a superior bishop.

21...d5!

From a clearly grotty position Timman begins to fight back. This is definitely the best move as Black must try to get his bishop back into play.

22 Rd4! Bc8! 23 Rhxh4 Bf5+ 24 Kb2 Bg6!

Black has successfully managed to relocate his bishop, and for the first time in the game it's actually better placed than White's on f1. However, White has a clear extra pawn and should win.

25 Qf4! dxc4 26 Bxc4 c5! 27 Rxd8 Rxd8 28 Kc3?

Now Black can draw. The immediate 28 a4! was the way to go. Following 28...Rd2+ 29 Ka3! (but not 29 Kc3?? Rc2 mate!) 29...Rxf2 we arrive at a position identical to the one reached in the game after Black's 31st move.

28...Rd1! 29 a4 Rc1+! 30 Kb2! (Diagram 22)

White has to be careful. After 30 Kd2?? Rc2+ White runs into a mating net, e.g. 31 Ke1 (or 31 Ke3 Qe7+!) 31...Qg1+ 32 Bf1 Qxf2+ 33 Kd1 Qxf1 mate.

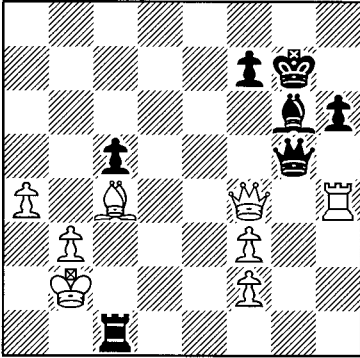


Diagram 22 (B)
Black can draw

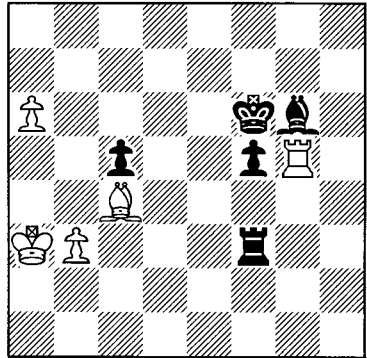


Diagram 23 (B)
The a-pawn's a winner

30...Rc2+?

Black could have drawn with 30...Rb1+! 31 Ka2 Ra1+! 32 Kb2! (32 Kxa1?? allows mate after 32...Qg1+ 33 Kb2 Qb1+ 34 Ka3 – or 34 Kc3 Qc2 – 34...Qa1) 32...Rb1+ 33 Ka2 Ra1+! with a perpetual check. I wonder whether Timman missed this or whether he saw it but made a huge misjudgement on the resulting ending? In any case, I imagine time trouble played a part here.

31 Ka3! Rxf2 32 a5!

Black wins both the pawns on the kingside, but White's a-pawn is a runner.

32...Rxf3 33 Qxg5 hxg5 34 Rg4 f5 35 Rxg5 Kf6 36 a6! (Diagram 23) 1-0

There's no stopping the a-pawn, for example 36...Rh3 37 a7 Rh8 38 Rxg6+! Kxg6 39 Bd5. On first impressions it looks to me like 11 h4!? is a good answer to 10...g5.

Game 25

□ T.Nedev ■ Z.Gyimesi

European Team Championship, Plovdiv 2003

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5
8 c4 Ba6 9 b3 g6 10 f4 Qb4+

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

A slightly awkward check, forcing White to think again about where to develop his dark-squared bishop.

11 Bd2 Qb6

11...Nxf4?? loses a piece to 12 Qe4.

12 Qf3

Alternatively:

a) 12 Qe4 f5! 13 Qf3 (13 exf6+? Kf7! gives Black far too much counterplay) 13...Nb4 14 Kd1 Bb7 15 Nc3 c5 reaches a position very similar to the main text, the only difference being that Black has a pawn on f5 instead of f7 – I'm not exactly sure who if anyone this favours.

b) 12 Nc3!? is an important try for an advantage – Black has to be wary of winding up after exchanges with a useless bishop on a6: 12...Bb4 13 Qd3! (13 Qf3 has been played a few times, but Black gains a useful tempo on the white queen when redeploing his light-squared bishop, and 13...Nxc3 14 Bxc3 Bb7 15 0-0-0 c5 16 Qe3 Bxc3 17 Qxc3 0-0-0 has done okay for Black) 13...Bxc3 (critical, as it wins a pawn, but objectively perhaps Black should put up with the slight disadvantage incurred after something like 13...Nxc3 14 Bxc3 Qa5 15 Bxb4 Qxb4+ 16 Qd2) 14 Bxc3 Nxf4 15 Qd2 Ne6 16 0-0-0 0-0-0 17 Ba5 when White had excellent positional compensation for the pawn deficit in V.Vukovic-D.Bлагоjevic, Yugoslavia 1993.

12...Nb4!?

The most ambitious move, after which White is virtually forced to move his king. 12...Qd4 is safer, although in S.Rublevsky-G.Vescovi, Poikovsky 2003 White maintained an edge after 13 Nc3 Nxc3 14 Qxc3 c5 15 Bd3 Bb7!? 16 Qxd4 cxd4 17 0-0 d6 18 Rae1.

13 Kd1! (Diagram 24)

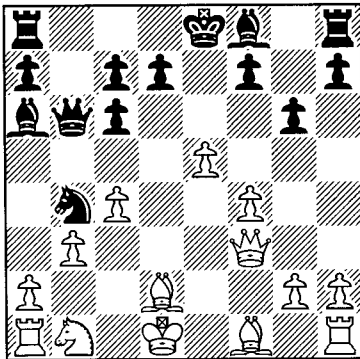


Diagram 24 (B)
Using the king

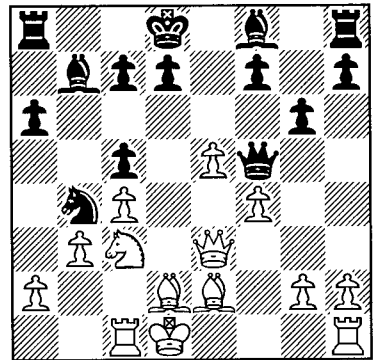


Diagram 25 (B)
The pawn is now poisoned



NOTE: In the 8...Ba6 Mieses, early king moves from either side are certainly not out of the question.

White's king is relatively safe on d1 and now Black has to do something about the immediate threat of a2-a3. In any event, alternatives for White (13 Qe4 f5! 14 exf6+ Kf7 or 13 Na3) are not particularly appetising.

13...Bb7 14 Nc3 c5 15 Qe3!

The game R.Fontaine-D.Marciano, French League 2002 actually turned out well for Black after 15 Nd5 Bg7 16 Bxb4 cxb4 17 Kc2 Bxd5 18 cxd5 0-0 19 Bc4 d6! 20 Rae1 Rae8! – White is a touch vulnerable on the dark squares. With 15 Qe3 White keeps his options open and Black still has problems finding a useful role for his perennially difficult knight.

15...Qe6 16 Nb5 Kd8?!

A nice echo of White's 13th move, but probably a mistake all the same. According to Joel Lautier 16...Na6! is stronger, 17 Kc2 Bg7 18 Re1 0-0 19 Bd3 f6 leading to an unclear position in J.Lautier-R.Fontaine, French League 2003.

17 Be2! a6 18 Nc3 Qf5 19 Rc1 (Diagram 25) 19...Bxg2? 20 Rg1

Now retreating the bishop allows White to trap the queen: 20...Bb7 21 a3 Nc6 22 Bg4. Black avoids this fate, but instead the bishop becomes trapped.

20...Qh3 21 a3 1-0

After 21...Nc6 22 Qf2 White picks up the bishop for free.

Game 26

□ A.Goloshchapov ■ A.Moiseenko

Ordzhonikidze 2000

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Ba6 9 b3 g6 10 f4 Bg7 (Diagram 26)

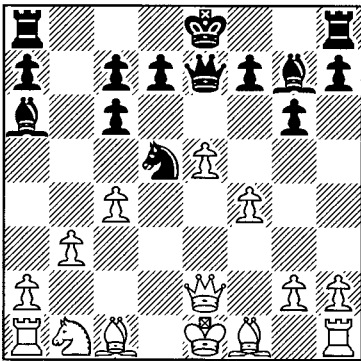


Diagram 26 (W)
The 'popular' move

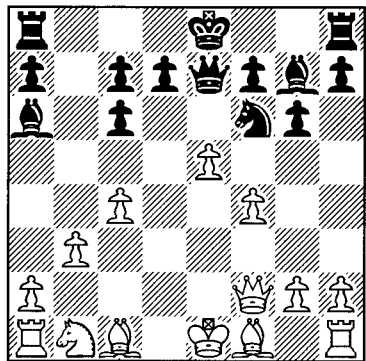


Diagram 27 (W)
11...Nf6

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

This is actually the move that has been played the most here, even though it has been condemned in some quarters as it makes no direct pawn attack on White's centre. It's true that 10...Bg7 would be the first move that most players would look at if given this position.

11 Qf2!

This is the consistent follow-up to 10 f4 (but note that 11 Qd2?? Nxf4! 12 Qxf4 Bxe5 is not the way to do it). Delaying this in favour of pedestrian development does White no favours, for example 11 g3 0-0 12 Bg2?! f6! 13 Bb2? fxe5 and, with ...Rae8 up next, White is already in some trouble.

11...Nf6 (Diagram 27)

Black has two other options for his knight:

a) 11...Nb4!? looks ludicrously risky given that White can trap the knight with 12 a3!, but it may just about be playable on account of 12...Bxe5! 13 fxe5 Qxe5+ 14 Kd1!? (14 Qe2 Nc2+ 15 Kd1 Qxe2+ 16 Bxe2 Nxa1 17 Bb2 also looks promising for White) 14...Qxa1 15 axb4! Qxb1 16 Qe3+ Kd8 17 Qc3 Re8 18 Bd3 Qa2 19 Bb2 Bxc4!! (in N.Zdebskaja-K.Matseyko, Kharkiv 2005 Black was forced to resign after 19...c5 20 Kc2 cxb4 21 Qf6+ Kc8 22 Ra1) 20 bxc4 c5! and Black's ingenious bishop sacrifice had just about kept him in the game in J.Lautier-A.Mikhalevski, Paris 2000.

b) The other possibility for Black is 11...Nb6, a move many Black players would be reluctant to play.



NOTE: White often views the retreat of the knight to b6 as a minor victory in 8...Ba6 lines. This is because in the main Black's 8th move was specifically designed to avoid this option.

That said, nothing is more important than concrete factors, and while certainly not forced, it's worth checking out the variation 12 Ba3 d6!? 13 c5!? Bxe5! 14 fxe5 Qxe5+ 15 Kd2 Qxa1 16 Kc1! Bxf1 17 Rxf1 Rf8 with another complex position, S.Ganguly-N.Babu, Mumbai 2003.

12 Be2 Ne4!?

The earlier game J.Van der Wiel-A.Beliavsky, Groningen 1994 continued 12...d6 13 Bf3 0-0 14 0-0! Bb7 (14...dxe5 15 Ba3!) 15 Bb2 Nd7 16 exd6 cxd6 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Nc3 when White had a safe edge.

13 Qe3 f5

In his notes to this game, Goloshchapov suggests 13...Nd6!? 14 0-0 Nf5 with Black's knight continuing its vulture-like circling around White's e-pawn.

14 Ba3 d6

14...Qe6 15 Nd2 Nxd2 16 Qxd2 0-0-0 17 Qa5 Bb7 has been played in a few games. Here I like the greedy 18 Qxa7!; I can't find anything for Black other than challenging e5 with 18...d6, but then 19 c5! transposes to the next note.

15 Nd2 (Diagram 28)

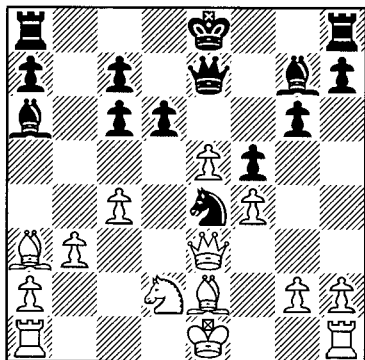


Diagram 28 (B)
In trouble already

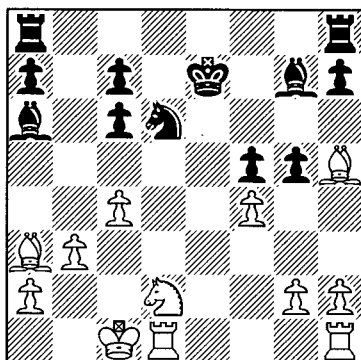


Diagram 29 (B)
Stuck in the middle

15...g5?

A mistake, but Goloshchapov's analysis indicates that Black's position was pretty grotty in any case. For example, 15...Nxd2 16 Qxd2 0-0-0 17 Qa5 Bb7 18 Qxa7 Qe6 19 c5! dxe5 20 Bc4! Qe7 21 0-0 exf4 (or 21...e4 22 Rad1 Bd4+ 23 Kh1 Qf6 24 Bb4! followed by a2-a4-a5-a6) 22 Rae1 Bd4+ 23 Kh1 Be3 24 Bb4! with the basic but very effective plan of a2-a4-a5-a6! So, in the final analysis, Black's opening play has been a failure.

16 exd6 Nxd6

Or 16...cxd6 17 Nxe4 Qxe4 18 Qxe4+ fxe4 19 0-0-0! and Black is beginning to fall apart, e.g. 19...gxf4 20 Bh5+ Kd7 21 Bg4+ Kc7 22 Bxd6+ Kb6 23 Bxf4.

17 Bh5+ Kf8 18 Qxe7+ Kxe7 19 0-0-0 (Diagram 29)

Black's king is caught in a terrible crossfire between White's two bishops and two rooks. In fact Black does well to delay the inevitable as long as he does.

19...gxf4 20 Nf3 Rhc8 21 Rhe1+ Kf8 22 Nd4 Kg8 23 Nxc6 Kh8 24 Bf3 Bb7 25 Bxd6 cxd6 26 Ne7 Bxf3 27 Nxc8 Bxd1 28 Re8+ Bf8 29 Kxd1 Kg7 30 Nxd6 30...Rxe8 31 Nxe8+ Kf7 32 Nc7 f3 33 gxf3 Bd6 34 Nb5 Bxh2 35 Nxa7 h5 36 Ke2 h4 37 Kf2 h3 38 Nc6 Bf4 39 Nb4 Bd2 40 Nd3 f4 41 Kg1 1-0

I suspect the 'popularity' of 10...Bg7 is caused by many Black players not knowing the theory and thus just playing the most 'natural' move. After 11 Qf2! Black has quite a few problems to solve.

Game 27

□ S.Grayland ■ K.McLaughlin

Correspondence 1999

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

8 c4 Ba6 9 b3 g6 10 f4 f6!? (Diagram 30)

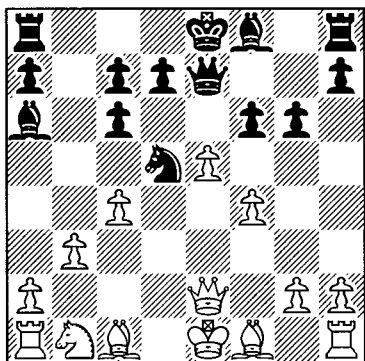


Diagram 30 (W)
Nibbling at the centre

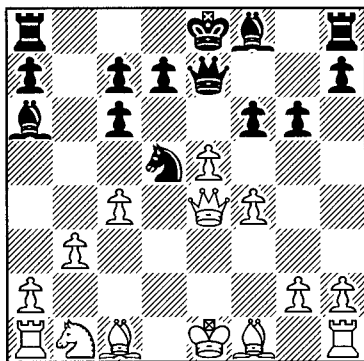


Diagram 31 (B)
The best queen move

10...f6 is a logical move because without more ado Black steps up the pressure against e5. Revealingly, this move has Kasparov's approval – he's even been willing to sit on Black's side of the fence against one of his favourite openings.

11 Ba3!?

This was Kasparov's choice when he faced Karpov in the stem game for 10 f4 f6, but White certainly has other options here. The first point to make is that 10 f4 was the prerequisite for White to move his queen off the f1-a6 diagonal, so it seems fair to start with a couple of queen moves.

a) 11 Qf2?! doesn't seem to hit the mark. Although Black is forced to drop his knight back to the relatively undesirable b6-square, the pressure on e5 is growing in importance. Furthermore, after 11...Nb6, 12 c5? runs into 12...Qxc5! because following 13 Qxc5 Bxc5 14 Bxa6 Black has 14...Bd4! trapping the rook in the corner. Meanwhile, after 12 Ba3 Qe6! White is beginning to fall dangerously behind in development; exchanging on f8 merely brings Black's rook ominously to the same file as White's queen.

b) 11 Qe4 (**Diagram 31**) makes more sense, especially as Black no longer has the option of playing ...Nf6.

So 11...Nb6 (or 11...Qc5!?) 12 Bb2 Bg7 13 Nd2 (13 c5 Bxf1 14 cxb6 Ba6 15 bxc7 fxe5 16 fxe5 d5! 17 Qa4 Bb5 regains the c7-pawn; the cheeky line 18 Qxa7!? Rxa7 19 c8Q+ Kf7 20 e6+! Qxe6+ 21 Qxe6+ Kxe6 is not unfavourable for Black) 13...fxe5 14 fxe5 0-0-0 15 0-0-0 (15 c5 Bxf1 16 cxb6 Ba6 17 bxa7 Kb7 is typically unclear) 15...Rhe8 16 Nf3 Kb8 17 Bd3 Bb7 18 Qe2 with a roughly level position, Y.Dembo-M.Savic, Herceg Novi 2001.

c) If White is looking for a quick transposition to an endgame then 11 exf6 is the move to play. For example, 11...Qxe2+ 12 Bxe2 Bb4+! (an important dis-

ruptive move; 12...Nxf6 13 Bb2! Bb4+ 14 Bc3! – Rublevsky – will leave White with an edge after an exchange on c3) 13 Bd2 Bxd2+ 14 Nxd2 Nxf4! (the point of 12...Bb4+: instead of a pawn on f4, White is left with a slightly vulnerable one on f6) 15 Rf1 Nxe2! (another Kasparov improvement; 15...Nxc2+ 16 Kf2 Nf4 17 Bg4! gave White a powerful initiative in S.Rublevsky-V.Tseshkovsky, Russian Championship 2003) 16 Kxe2 Kf7 17 Kd3 Rae8 when it's unclear whether the pawn on f6 will prove to be a strength or a weakness. In T.Radjabov-G.Kasparov, Linares 2004, the young GM from Baku (not Kasparov!) made the strange decision to sacrifice it with 18 Rae1!?, and following 18...Rxe1 19 Rxe1 Kxf6 White struggled to make a draw. Much more challenging is 18 g4!? (as played by Pavasovic), intending g4-g5, although the position remains unclear as the f6-pawn is very well blocked and Black can answer g4-g5 with ...h7-h6, creating counterplay on the h-file.

11...Qf7

The line 11...c5 12 g3! fxe5 13 Bg2! (Kasparov) looks nice for White, but Black has a serious alternative in the shape of 11...Nb4!?. Kasparov dismissed this move with the slightly paradoxical 12 Bb2!?, and his variations 12...c5 13 Nc3! fxe5 14 a3 and 12...fxe5 13 a3 Nd5 14 Qxe5 Nf6 15 Be2 Bg7 16 Nd2 are indeed convincing from White's point of view. However, in the game E.Sutovsky-P.H.Nielsen, Reykjavik 2004, the Danish number one came up with the strong reply 12...Bh6! (**Diagram 32**), hitting the f4-pawn.

The game continued 13 a3!? Nd5 14 exf6 (Postny suggests the risky-looking 14 g3 0-0 15 exf6 Qf7 16 Nd2 but 16...Rae8 17 Ne4 Rxe4! 18 Qxe4 Re8 19 Be5 Nxf6 followed by ...d7-d6 looks like a very effective answer to me) 14...Qxe2+ 15 Bxe2 Nxf4! 16 f7+ Kxf7 17 Bxh8 Rxh8 when White had chalked up an exchange for a pawn but was seriously lacking in development, while Black's pieces were beginning to look very menacing.

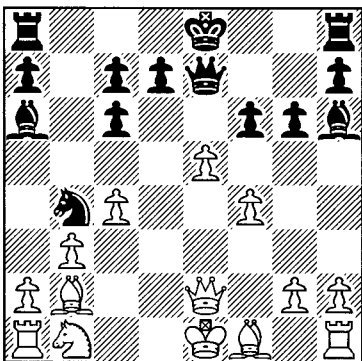


Diagram 32 (W)
12...Bf8-h6!

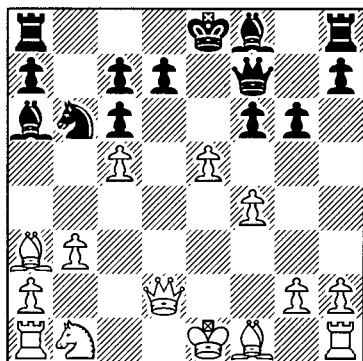


Diagram 33 (B)
13 c5!? – the sharpest route

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

12 Qd2!?

It's always tempting to play a discovered check, but 12 exf6+ is dealt with by another impressive piece of analysis from Kasparov: 12...Kd8 13 Qd2 Qxf6! 14 Bb2 Qe6+ 15 Be2 Bb4 16 Nc3 Re8 17 0-0-0! Bxc3 18 Bxc3 Qxe2 (18...Nxc3?! 19 Qxc3 Qxe2?? loses to 20 Rhe1 followed by Qf6+) 19 cxd5 when the queens come off and an equal opposite-coloured bishops ending is reached. Trying to improve on Kasparov's old analysis is a tough job, even with *Fritz* helping you out, but perhaps White can consider 15 Kd1!?, intending to meet 15...Nf6 with a quick Bd3 and Re1.

12...Nb6

12...Ne7!? has been condemned on account of 13 Qa5 but 13...fxe5! 14 Qxa6 Qxf4 15 Nd2 Qd4 16 Rc1 Nf5, as played in at least four correspondence games, seems to give Black promising play for his piece sacrifice.



NOTE: Correspondence games are a rich source for discovering new and important opening ideas for over-the-board players, as these games are generally very thoroughly researched and analysed by the players involved.

13 c5!? (Diagram 33)

Continuing to play in the sharpest possible manner.



NOTE: With the light-squared bishops on f1 and a6, and the black knight on b6, c4-c5 is a major tactical weapon for White.

13...Bxf1 14 cxb6



NOTE: When White has that typical choice between capturing on b6 and f1, he virtually always opts for the former. Otherwise Black establishes a monster knight on the d5-outpost.

14...Ba6!

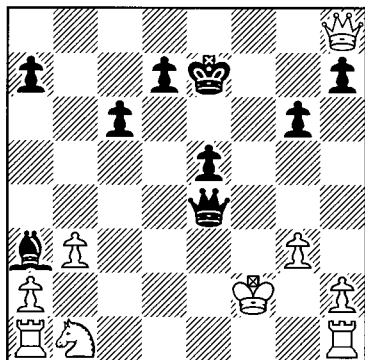
In the stem game, G.Kasparov-A. Karpov, Tilburg 1991, Karpov was bamboozled by the complications, and 14...axb6? 15 e6!! dxe6 (or 15...Qxe6+ 16 Kxf1 Bxa3 17 Nxa3 Rxa3 18 Re1) 16 Bxf8 Rd8 17 Qb2! Bxg2 18 Qxg2 Kxf8 19 Qxc6 Rd6 20 Qc3 led to a winning position for White. Black's other plausible move here is 14...Bxa3 but then White has the powerful zwischenzug 15 b7!; following 15...Rb8 16 Nxa3 Ba6 17 0-0-0! Bxb7 (17...Rxb7? 18 e6!) 18 Rhe1 0-0 19 Qxd7 (Kasparov) there's no disputing White's advantage.

15 bxc7 fxe5!

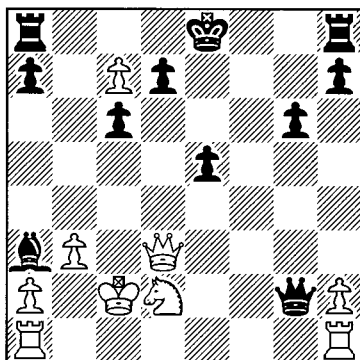
Still following Kasparov's old analysis! 15...Bxa3 16 Nxa3 0-0 17 0-0-0 gives White a clear plus.

16 Qa5 Qxf4! 17 Qxa6 Qh4+ 18 Kd1!

After 18 g3 Qe4+ 19 Kf2? Bxa3 20 c8Q+ Rxc8 21 Qxc8+ Ke7 22 Qxh8 (Diagram 34)

**Diagram 34 (B)**

Take my rooks!

**Diagram 35 (W)**

Another 'unclear' assessment

White temporarily goes two rooks up, but Black wins them both back after 22...Bc5+ 23 Kf1 Qf3+ 24 Ke1 Qxh1+ 25 Kd2 Qxh2+ 26 Kd1 Bd4 (Davies).

18...Qd4+ 19 Kc2

19 Nd2 Qxa1+? 20 Ke2 Qxh1 21 c8Q+ Rxc8 22 Qxc8+ Kf7 23 Qxd7+ Kg8 24 Qe6+ Kg7 25 Qxe5+ is good for White, for example 25...Kg8 26 Qe6+ Kg7 27 Bb2+! Kh6 28 Qh3+ Kg5 29 Ne4+ Kf4 30 Qf3 mate. However, instead Black should play 19...Bxa3, and following 20 c8Q+ Rxc8 21 Qxc8+ Ke7 22 Qxh8 Qxa1+ 23 Ke2 Qxh1 24 Qxe5+ Kf7 25 Qf4+ Kg8! only Black can win.

19...Qe4+ 20 Qd3

A winning attempt! 20 Kd1 acquiesces to a perpetual check following 20...Qd4+.

20...Qxg2+ 21 Nd2 Bxa3 (Diagram 35)

Finally Kasparov's 1991 analysis comes to an end here with a great big 'unclear' sign. Fortunately, there are always brave correspondence players willing to road test these positions.

22 Rhe1

22 Qa6? Bb4! is good for Black as 23 c8Q+ Rxc8 24 Qxc8+ Ke7 25 Qxh8 Qxd2+ 26 Kb1 Qd3+ 27 Kb2 Bc3+ leads to mate.

22...0-0 23 b4! Rf2 24 Qxd7 (Diagram 36)

Recommended by Peter Wells, who gives 24...Rxd2+ 25 Qxd2 Qxd2+ 26 Kxd2 Bxb4+ 27 Kc2 Bxe1 28 Rb1!, which is winning for White. However, Black has a very effective response...

Probably White should play 24 Rf1! (Davies), for example 24...Rxd2+ 25 Qxd2 Qxd2+ 26 Kxd2 and now I like 26...Rc8! 27 Rab1 (threatening Rf3) 27...c5! 28 bxc5 Rxc7 29 Rb8+ Kg7 30 Re8 when a draw is the most likely result.

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

24...Qd5!

Forcing the exchange of queens, after which only Black has winning chances.

25 Qxd5+ cxd5 26 Kb3 Rxd2 27 Kxa3 Rc8 28 Rac1 e4 29 Ka4 Rf2 30 Rc5 Rf7 31 Rxd5 Rxc7 32 Rxe4 Rc2 33 h4 Rxa2+ 34 Kb3 Raf2 35 Kc3 R2f5 36 Rc5 Rf4 37 Rxf4 Rxf4 38 Ra5 Rf7 39 Kd4 Kf8 40 b5 Ke8 41 Kd5 Kd8 42 Ke6 Rb7 43 Ra6 Rb6+ 0-1 (Diagram 37)

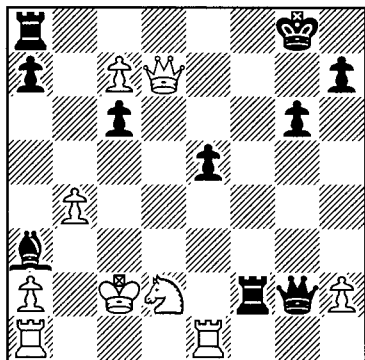


Diagram 36 (B)

Black has a convincing reply

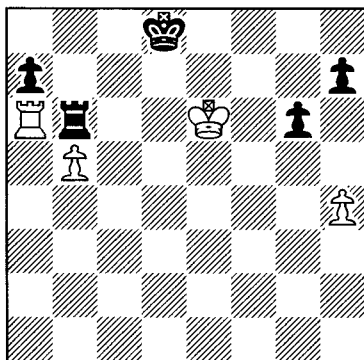


Diagram 37 (W)

Confused?

I'm confused by the finish of this game. According to my database, the game ends here as a black win. This is certainly the case after 44 Rxb6? axb6 45 Kf7 Kd7 46 Kg7 Ke6 47 Kxh7 Kf7!. For example, 48 Kh6 Kf6 49 Kh7 g5! 50 hxg5+ Kxg5 and Black wins the b5-pawn, or 48 Kh8 g5! 49 h5!? g4 50 h6 g3 51 h7 Ke7! 52 Kg7 g2 53 h8Q g1Q+ 54 Kh6 Qh2+ 55 Kg7 Qxh8+ 56 Kxh8 Kd6 etc.

However, I'm at a loss to see how Black wins after 44 Kf7! Rxb5 (I'll leave the reader to work out why White draws after 44...Rxa6 45 bxa6) 45 Rxa7. For example, 45...Rb4 46 h5! gxh5 47 Ra5 h4 48 Rh5, or 45...Rh5 46 Ra4 Kc7 47 Kf6 and how does Black make progress if White keeps his rook on the fourth?

A bizarre finish to a intriguing game that shows both the depth of Garry Kasparov's opening analysis and the importance of correspondence games to opening theory.

9 g3 and other Ninth Moves for White

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Ba6 9 g3 (Diagram 38)

The mirror image and the main alternative to 9 b3, although there are also transpositional possibilities. As well as 9 g3, White has tried quite a few different moves here:

a) 9 f4?! Qb4+! forces White to move his king, and 10 Kf2 Bc5+ 11 Kf3 or 10 Kd1 Bc5 is pushing things a bit too far, even by White's standards in this line!

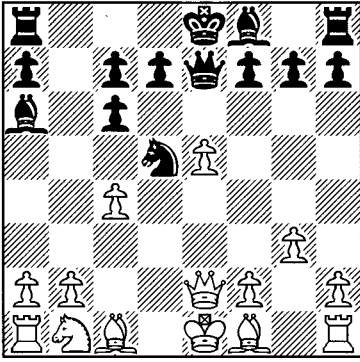


Diagram 38 (B)
White plays 9 g3

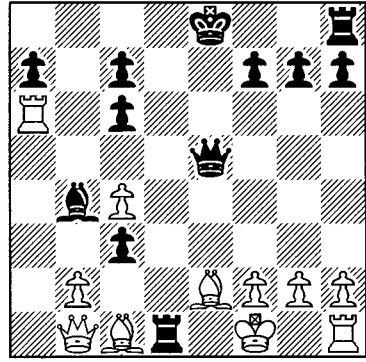


Diagram 39 (W)
16...Rd8-d1+!

b) 9 h4!? f6 transposes to 8 h4 f6 9 c4 Ba6 – see the previous chapter.

c) The first thing to note about 9 Qe4?! is that Black can force a repetition with 9...Nf6 10 Qe2 Nd5, so it's certainly not a winning attempt by White. Fortunately for ambitious Black players, there are also suitable alternatives. Karpov has played 9...Nb6 with success, while 9...Nb4!?, planning to meet 10 a3? with 10...d5!, is also worthy of note. The game E.Andreev-V.Baklan, Alushta 1997 continued 10 Nc3 Rd8 (preparing ...d7-d5) and now:

c1) Baklan and Koutsin give the delightful line 11 a3 d5! 12 Qb1 Qxe5+ 13 Be2 d4! 14 axb4 dxc3 15 Rxa6 Bxb4 16 Kf1 Rd1+!! (**Diagram 39**) 17 Bxd1 c2 and Black wins.

c2) 11 Bf4 (the game continuation) 11...d5! 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 Nxd5? (this loses, but White's position was grotty in any case) 13...Nxd5 14 Bxa6 (or 14 Qa4+ Qd7 15 Qxa6 Bb4+) 14...Qb4+ 15 Qxb4 Bxb4+ 16 Bd2 Bxd2+ 17 Kxd2 Nb4+ and Black won the bishop on a6.

d) 9 Nd2!? is a very flexible move; White commits himself to neither fianchetto at the moment and avoids hairy lines such as 9 b3 Qh4!?. However, as with 8 Nd2, the negative features of this move are that, firstly, Black now has the option of ...Nf4 and, secondly, ...Nb4 gains in strength because of the threat of ...Nc2. Black can immediately make use of the latter idea with 9...Nb4 10 Nf3 c5!, with the typical rerouting plan of ...Nc6. The move 9...0-0-0!?, intending ...Re8 and ...f7-f6, has also been played many times, while the other main option for Black is 9...g6. Now many games have continued 10 b3 Bg7 11 Bb2 Nb4!? 12 Nf3 c5 13 g3 0-0 14 Bg2 d5! with good counterplay for Black. However, instead of 12 Nf3, I quite like the look of 12 Ne4!? (**Diagram 40**).

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

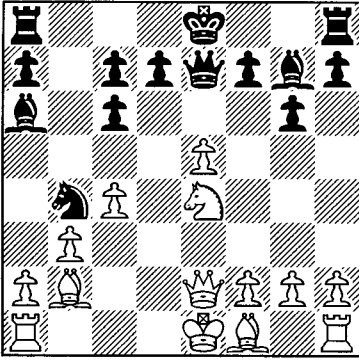


Diagram 40 (B)

Nd2-e4 – better than Nf3?

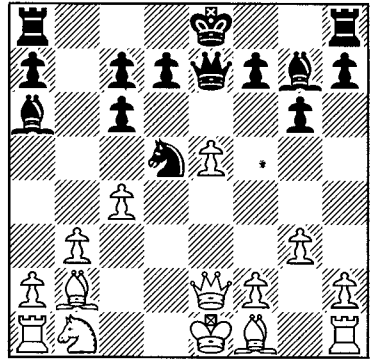


Diagram 41 (B)

Which side to castle?

My point is to meet 12...0-0 13 f4 d5! with 14 a3! dxe4 15 axb4 Qxb4+ 16 Qd2 when again White can point to some structural compensation.

9...g6

Alternatively:

a) 9...0-0-0!? 10 b3 reaches Game 23.

b) 9...f6! can be met by 10 e6!?, an idea we've come across before. For example, 10...dxe6 11 Bg2 Kf7!? 12 0-0 Rd8 13 b3 g6 14 Re1 Bg7 15 Ba3 Qd7 16 Nd2 when White's positional advantages outweighed Black's extra pawn in M.Magomedov-M.Khachian, Yerevan Olympiad 1996.

10 b3

This position is often reached via the move order 9 b3 g6 10 g3. White's other options include:

a) 10 Nd2 Bg7 11 f4 0-0! (planning ...f7-f6) 12 Qe4 Nb6! 13 Be2 (or 13 c5 Bxf1 14 cxb6 Bh3! 15 bxc7 d5! 16 Qe2 f6 when Black is extremely active) 13...f6! 14 exf6 Qxf6 (Pinter) and White's position looks ready for the scrap heap.

b) 10 Bg2!? Bg7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Re1! (12 f4? drops a pawn after 12...Qc5+!) 12...Rae8 13 Na3 Nb6 14 Qc2 Qc5 15 Bf4 Bxe5 16 Bh6 Bg7 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Qc3+ Kg8 (Van der Wiel) when White has some compensation for the pawn.

10...Bg7 11 Bb2 (Diagram 41) 11...0-0

11...0-0-0 can easily lead to a similar ending to the one reached in the main line after 12 Bg2 Rhe8 13 0-0! Bxe5 14 Qxe5 Qxe5 15 Bxe5 Rxe5 16 cxd5 Bxf1 17 Kxf1 cxd5, and indeed this actual position has been reached quite a few times in practice. The main difference to the main line is that Black's king stands on c8 rather than g8. It's difficult to tell who this slight difference favours. As Peter Wells mentions, on one hand Black's king can give more sup-

port to its queenside pawns; on the other the king is more vulnerable to tactics. M.Golubev-D.Borissenkov, Ukraine 1999 is an illustration of how play may develop: 18 Nc3 c6 19 Rc1! Kb8 20 Na4 Rde8 21 Nc5 R5e7 22 b4 Kc7 23 Bf3 Kd6 24 Nd3 Rb8 25 Rc3 with a small advantage for White – Black is tied down but remains very solid.

12 Bg2! Rae8 (Diagram 42)

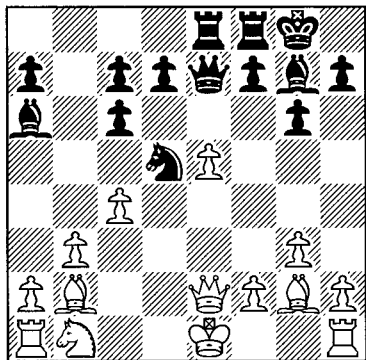


Diagram 42 (W)
Ganging up on e5

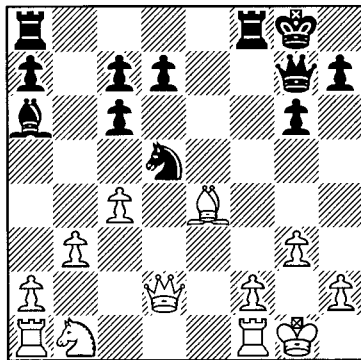


Diagram 43 (B)
A rook en prise?

If Black wishes to enter the rook and two pawns versus bishop and knight ending, then this is the correct rook to move to e8. After 12...Rfe8 13 0-0 Bxe5 14 Qxe5 Qxe5 15 Bxe5 Rxe5 16 cxd5 Bxf1 17 Kxf1 cxd5 White can move into the normal lines via 18 Nc3 c6, but there's also the additional possibility of grabbing a pawn with 18 f4!? Re3 19 Bxd5. It's true that Black's rooks become quite active, but it still might be worth the hassle for White. Kasparov gives 19...Rae8 20 Nd2 Re2 21 Rd1 Rxb2 22 Bg2 when Black has regained the pawn but now his rook on h2 is temporarily out of play.

Another option for Black is 12...f6!? when the typical 13 e6!? is certainly possible. Instead the game M.Geryk-R.Cervenka, correspondence 1998 is worth seeing: 13 0-0 fxe5 14 Qd2 e4!? (14...Nb6?! 15 Ba3 d6 16 Bxc6 gives White a pleasant edge) 15 Bxg7 Qxg7 16 Bxe4 (Diagram 43)

16...Ne3!? (16...Qxa1?! 17 Bxd5+ cxd5 18 Nc3 Qxf1+ 19 Kxf1 – Tairi – is probably better for White) 17 Re1 Ng4 18 f3 Nf6 19 Nc3 (19 Bd3 Nd5!! 20 Be4 Nf6 – Tairi – is a very cute repetition) 19...Nxe4 20 Nxe4 (White has a plus as the knight is stronger than the bishop; now 20...Rxf3 is risky on account of 21 Nc5) 20...d6 21 Ng5 Rae8 22 Rxe8 Rxe8 23 Re1 Re7 24 Qb4 Bc8 25 Rxe7 Qxe7 26 Ne4 (the queen and knight work their magic) 26...Kf7 27 Qb8 Bh3 28 Qh8! and Black threw in the towel as he is losing at least a pawn.

13 0-0 (Diagram 44)

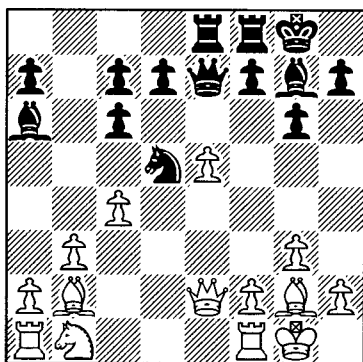


Diagram 44 (B)
Offering an endgame

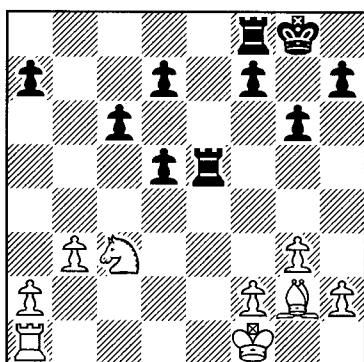


Diagram 45 (W)
The Scotch Mieses endgame

13...Bxe5

Entering into a forcing tactical sequence that finally leads to the ending in question.

If Black wishes to avoid the ending he can play 13...Nb6!?, for example 14 Re1 f6 15 e6!? (this should be second nature to readers by now!) 15...Qd6 (15...Qxe6 16 Qxe6+ Rxe6 17 Rxe6 dxe6 18 Bxc6 is pleasant for White) 16 Ba3 c5 17 Nc3 Rxe6 18 Qc2 with typical compensation for the pawn, N. Halyavskiy-A.Gutov, Moscow 2004.

14 Qxe5 Qxe5 15 Bxe5 Rxe5 16 cxd5 Bxf1 17 Kxf1 cxd5 18 Nc3

18 f4!? is less accurate now in comparison to the variation with 12...Rfe8. The point is that after 18...Re3 19 Bxd5 Black has time to play 19...Rd3! when 20 Be4 Rd1+ leaves White with some massive back rank problems. I was just about to write off 18 f4 completely when I spotted that the amazing 20 Bf3! has been played and in fact looks best! The point is that 20...Rd1+ is prevented and 20...Rxf3+? 21 Ke2! traps the rook. Instead M.Geryk-T.Koci, correspondence 1998 ended in a neat repetition of moves after 20...Re8 21 Kf2 a5! 22 Be2 Rde3 23 Bd1 Rd3 24 Be2.

18...d4? (Diagram 45)

18...d4? is bad on account of 19 Nd5!, threatening both Nxc7 and Nf6+ followed by Nxd7.

This intriguing ending, in which Black has a rook and two pawns against bishop and knight, has already occurred many times in practice. Objectively speaking I would say that the assessment lies somewhere between level and a small advantage for White, but it should be stressed that all three results remain very possible.

White's main game plan consists of most or all of following:

- 1) Preventing Black's rooks gaining any real activity. In particular, preventing them from infiltrating down the e-file.
- 2) Preventing a rook exchange, which would seriously swing the game in Black's favour. In the long run, without a rook on the board White would find it difficult to both attack Black's pawns and defend his own. This is a generalisation of all two minor pieces versus rook endings.
- 3) Attacking Black's a-pawn with the rook, thus tying down one of Black's rooks.
- 4) Creating a bind on the queenside with b3-b4 and possibly Na4-c5-d3.

Black's strategy is less complex as it tends to be more reactive. For example, in some cases b2-b4 can be met by ...a7-a5 as an exchange on a5 liberates Black's d7/c6/d5 phalanx and gives him three (!) passed pawns. By keeping his rooks doubled on the e-file Black obviously restricts White's ambitions, while it's also useful for the black king to venture to somewhere like d6, supporting his pawns.

This ending is discussed further in Game 28.

Theoretical?

Nowhere near as much as 9 b3, although Black can still mix things up with ...0-0-0. Of course a good understanding of the typical ending will be handy.

Statistics

With 9 g3 White has scored an excellent 63% in just over 300 games. In the actual ending that arises after 17...cxd5 (only just over 50 games, but this discounts the similar endings mentioned earlier), White has a win/draw/loss ratio of 39%/30%/31% – an overall score of 54%.

Game 28

□ S.Rublevsky ■ J.Geller

Russian Team Championship 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 Qe7 7 Qe2 Nd5
8 c4 Ba6 9 g3 g6 10 b3 Bg7 11 Bb2 0-0 12 Bg2 Rae8 13 0-0 Bxe5 14 Qxe5
Qxe5 15 Bxe5 Rxe5 16 cxd5 Bxf1 17 Kxf1 cxd5 18 Nc3 c6 19 Rd1

Preventing ...d5-d4 and intending, in the long term, to attack Black's a7-pawn with Rd4-a4.

19...Rfe8

A very natural reaction, as now White has to do some preparatory work to prevent Black's rooks infiltrating down the e-file. However, given that White is able to do this, there is an argument for Black searching for counterplay elsewhere. Peter Wells suggests a general advance of the kingside pawns starting with 19...f5 with the hope of opening some lines for the rooks.

In the recent game J.Geller-D.Jakovenko, Russian Team Championship 2005

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Black tried a different idea with great success: 19...Rb8!? 20 Bf3 (after 20 Rd4 Black heads back with 20...Rbe8! when the only way to prevent ...Re1 is with 21 Rd1) 20...a5! 21 Rd4 Kf8 (21...Rb4!? looks good) 22 Na4 (22 Ra4! makes more sense) 22...Ke7! 23 Nc5 Kd6 24 Nd3 Re7 25 Rh4 f5 26 Ra4 Rb5 27 h4 h6 28 Rf4? Re4! (**Diagram 46**).

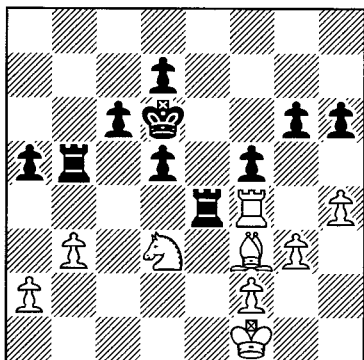


Diagram 46 (W)
Off with the rooks

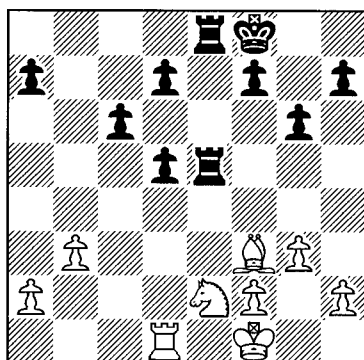


Diagram 47 (B)
No rook action for Black

This forces the exchange of rooks, as 29 Bxe4? dxe4 30 Nc1 g5 leaves White's rook very embarrassed. I'll give the encounter in full as it's quite a model game from Black's point of view: 29 Bd1 Rxf4 30 Nxf4 g5 31 hxg5 hxg5 32 Nh3 g4 33 Nf4 a4! 34 Ke2 c5 35 Kd3 a3! 36 Bc2 Rb8 37 Kc3 d4+ 38 Kc4 Rb4+ 39 Kd3 Kc6 40 Ng6 d5 41 Ne5+ Kd6 42 f4 gxf3 43 Nxf3 Rb8 44 Ke2 Ke6 45 Ng5+ Kf6 46 Nf3 Re8+ 47 Kf2 Re3 48 b4 Rc3 49 Ba4 Rc4 50 Bb3 Rxb4 51 Bxd5 Rb2+ 52 Kf1 Rc2 53 Ne1 Rc3 54 Ke2 Rxc3 55 Nf3 Ke7 56 Nd2 Kd6 57 Bb3 Ke5 58 Nc4+ Ke4 59 Nd6+ Kf4 60 Bc2 d3+! 61 Bxd3 Rg2+ 62 Kd1 Rxa2 and White resigned on account of 63 Nc4 Ra1+! 64 Kc2 a2 65 Kb2 Rd1!.

20 Bf3

Slowly but surely! White plans to block the e-file with Ne2, thus freeing his rook of the job of preventing ...Re1.

20...Kf8 21 Ne2! (Diagram 47)

It's easy for White to drift into a worse position, for example 21 b4?! Ke7 22 Na4 Rb8 23 Rd4 a5! 24 bxa5 Ra8 25 Nb2 Rxa5 26 a4 Kd8 27 Nd3 Re8 28 Nc1 Rc5 29 Rd1 Rc3 30 Kg2 Ra3 and it was Black who was in control in J.Gonzalez Diaz-J.Fernandez Saavedra, Vila Real 2001.

21...Ke7?!

In general it's good for Black to centralise his king, but perhaps this is a mistake. 21...Rb8 22 Rd4 a5 23 Ra4 Rb5 (Postny) is a more active way of playing the position.

22 Rd4! Rb8 23 Ra4 Rb7 24 b4!

White is gradually creating a bind.

24...Kd6 25 a3 Re8?!

According to Postny Black should have liberated his rook on b7 with 25...Kc7 26 Nd4 Kb8 intending ...Rc7-c8-e8 etc. It's obvious that White maintains a clear advantage here, but in the game this soon becomes decisive.

26 Nd4 h5 27 Nb3!

Turning the screw – this knight is headed for c5.

27...Re7 28 Nc5 Rc7 29 h4 Re5 30 Ra6 Re8 31 Be2!

Rublevsky continues to play the ending in an exemplary fashion. The only piece not shifting its weight here was White's king, but by using his bishop as an e-file blocker, White rectifies this problem.

31...Ke5 32 Ke1! d6 33 Nd3+ Ke6

33...Kd4? fails to 34 Kd2 (intending Ra4 and b4-b5 with mate!) 34...Ke4 35 f3+ Kf5 36 b5 (Rublevsky).

34 a4 Rb8 35 b5! Rb6

Or 35...c5 36 Bf3 d4 37 Bc6 (Postny) and White will continue with Kd2 and Nf4-d5 with complete domination.

36 Ra5!

Consistent to the end, White avoid rook trades.

36...cxb5 37 axb5 Rbb7 38 Bf3 Rc3 39 Kd2 Rb3

Allowing a neat tactical trick, but Black's position was already disintegrating.

40 Bxd5+! Kxd5 41 b6+ Kc4 42 Ra4+! 1-0

White wins following 42...Kb5 43 bxa7!. Wonderful technique from Rublevsky – a model of how to play this Scotch Mieses endgame as White.

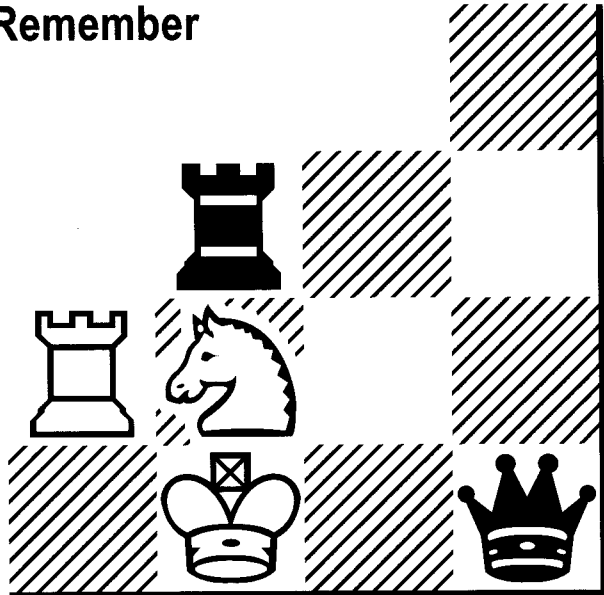
Points to Remember

- 1) The lines in this chapter are incredibly sharp and quite theoretical. Black has many options so White players really need to know their stuff. Those who can't face up to this problem should probably play 9 g3 instead of 9 b3 or, for an even easier life, stick to 5 Nc3.
- 2) More than in any other chapter, quality of development is more important than quantity. In many positions it's very easy to believe that White is getting slaughtered by Black development-wise. However, often some of Black's pieces are poorly placed and are no more effective than the white ones still at home.
- 3) Black must always look out for opportunities to find meaningful roles for his two major problem pieces: the knight and the light-squared bishop.
- 4) White must not be afraid to sacrifice the e-pawn, confident in the knowledge that the positional factors nearly always provide sufficient compensation.

Chapter Four

4...Bc5 5 Nxc6

- ▨ Introducing 4...Bc5
- ▨ White Plays 5 Nxc6: Introduction
- ▨ 7...Be6 and Kasparov's 8 Na4
- ▨ Seventh Move Alternatives for Black
- ▨ Points to Remember



Introducing 4...Bc5

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 (Diagram 1)

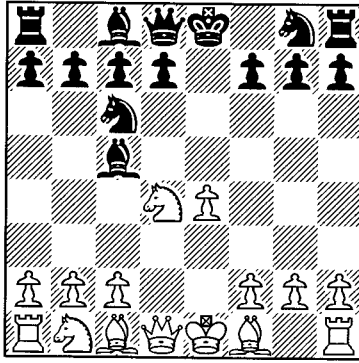


Diagram 1 (W)
Black plays 4...Bc5

Finally we move onto the second of Black's two main options at move four: 4...Bc5. Unlike with 4...Nf6, Black bases his immediate counterplay on d4 rather than e4. 4...Bc5 looks very sensible; it fulfils the ideals of a good developing move because it both places the bishop on a traditionally active square and gains time by creating a threat. White has a few ways of dealing with this: here we'll study 5 Nxc6; Chapter Five covers 5 Be3, and Chapter Six covers 5 Nb3 and less common moves.

White Plays 5 Nxc6: Introduction

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 (Diagram 2)

5 Nxc6 is perhaps the simplest answer to the threat to d4; as with the Mieses Variation, White exchanges knights and thus completely eliminates the problem. Unlike the Mieses, however, there is no follow-up of e4-e5 as there is no knight to hit on f6. In fact, for a long time 5 Nxc6 was considered innocuous and was played quite rarely, but then Kasparov injected new life into the system when he used it in his 1993 World Championship match with Nigel Short.

5...Qf6! (Diagram 3)

This was the reason for the initial reluctance to take 5 Nxc6 seriously. By throwing in this in-between move, threatening mate on f2, Black forces White to play a slightly awkward reply, thus disrupting his smooth development.

I've rejected 5...dxc6?! in similar positions, and I'm afraid the same applies here. After 6 Qxd8+ Kxd8 we reach a much inferior version (for Black) of an

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endgame that, as you will see, is reached quite a few times in this chapter – the fact that Black's king is stuck in the middle does him no favours at all.

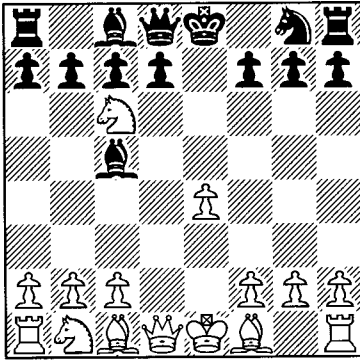


Diagram 2 (B)
The easy option

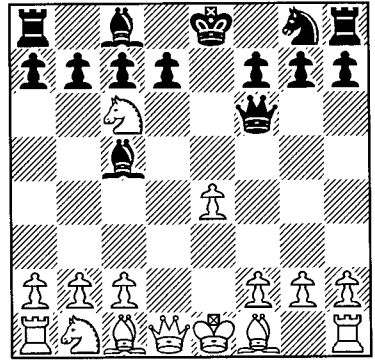


Diagram 3 (W)
Threatening mate

However, 5...bxc6!?, although not that popular, cannot be dismissed lightly. After, say, 6 Bd3 d6 7 Nc3 Nf6 we actually reach a position that has already been covered in Game 12. Black also has the option of developing his king's knight in another fashion, for example 7...Ne7!? 8 0-0 Ng6!? 9 Kh1 (R.Kasimdzhanov-A. Graf, Namangan 2000) and here the 2005 FIDE World Champion suggests 9...0-0 10 f4 f5 as a possible route for Black to take.

6 Qd2

This is by far White's most popular way of dealing with the threat to f2. It's true that the queen looks awkwardly placed in the line of the c1-bishop; on the other hand, White can use the fact that they reside on the same diagonal to play a later Qf4 or Qg5, offering an exchange of queens (we will see later why this is often desirable). Other options for White include:

- a) 6 Be3?! is covered under the move order 5 Be3 Qf6 6 Nxc6.
- b) If White is looking for an immediate exchange of queens he can try 6 Qf3!?. Now the only way for Black to avoid a trade is with 6...Qxc6!?, but this loses time and White can gain a further tempo with Nc3 followed by Bb5. Instead Black does better by exchanging, but should he capture on f3 or allow a trade on f6?
- b1) 6...Qxf3 has the advantage of compromising White's pawn structure on the kingside, so this certainly looks sensible, but it's interesting that in the game V.Tseshkovsky-A.Morozevich, Moscow 2004 White still managed to achieve an advantage: 7 gxf3 bxc6 8 Rg1 Ne7 9 Be3! (9 Rxc6? Ng6! traps the rook on g7) 9...Bb6?! (the immediate 9...Bxe3 is stronger) 10 c4! Bxe3 11 fxe3 0-0 12 f4 Rb8 13 b3 d6 14 Nc3 f6 15 c5! Be6 16 0-0-0 (**Diagram 4**)

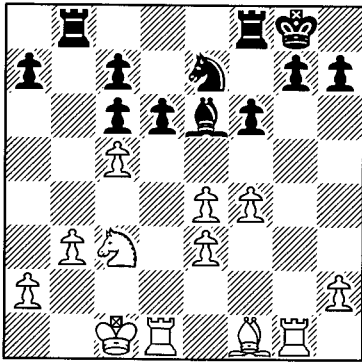


Diagram 4 (B)
Under pressure

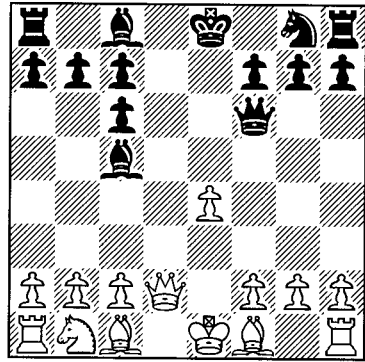


Diagram 5 (W)
6...dxc6!

when Black's pawn structure was under some pressure – 16...dxc5 is met by 17 Na4 c4 18 Nc5!

b2) 6...dxc6 allows White to exchange queens on f6 to give him a queenless middlegame with the desired pawn structure (see the Introduction) but at least after 7 Qxf6 Nxf6 Black's rapid development offers some meaningful compensation for this. In the recent game Z.Varga-J.Gustafsson, Budapest 2004, White instead opted for 7 Nd2, planning to recapture on f3 with the knight. The game continued 7...Be6 8 Bc4!? Qxf3 9 gxf3 Ne7!? 10 Bxe6 fxe6 11 Nc4 0-0 when Black could point to some pressure down the half-open f-file.

c) 6 Qe2 is similar to 6 Qd2 in that it blocks a bishop. Naturally Black can continue with 6...dxc6, but in the old game L.Barczay-L.Lengyel, Kecskemet 1968, Black found a way of exploiting the queen's position: 6...bxc6 7 Nc3 a5! 8 Be3 Ba6 9 Qd2 Bxe3 10 Qxe3 Bxf1 11 Rxf1 Ne7 12 0-0-0 d6 13 f4 0-0 when Black could look forward to counterplay against White's king down the b-file.

d) 6 f4 has the advantage over 6 Qd2 and Qe2 in that it doesn't block White's development. On the other hand, the weakening of the g1-a7 diagonal is a cause for concern. For example, 6...dxc6! 7 Nc3 Nh6! (preparing ...Ng4) 8 Qf3 (certainly not 8 h3?? Qh4+!) 8...Qh4+ 9 g3 (or 9 Qg3 Qxg3+ 10 hxg3 Ng4! with good counterplay) 9...Bg4! 10 Qg2 Qh5 11 Be2 0-0-0 when Black's swift development was causing problems in L.Barczay-O.Romanishin, Dortmund 1982.

6...dxc6! (Diagram 5)

The point! Black's previous move eliminated the possibility of a queen exchange on d8 and thus set up the recapture on c6 with the d-pawn, giving us the 'majority pawn structure'. This is a major departure from the pawn structures discussed in previous chapters (see the Introduction).

Black's major alternative is to adopt the Mieses pawn structure with 6...bxc6!?

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

– this is the subject of Game 29. 6...Qxc6!?, maintaining the pure Scotch structure, is rarely played but certainly not bad. That said, the queen is not particularly well placed on c6. After 7 Bd3 Nf6 8 0-0 0-0 White can continue normally with 9 Nc3, a queen move and then the development of the c1-bishop. A more ambitious idea, which has been played a few times, is 9 b4!?, for example 9...Bd4 10 c3 Bb6 11 c4! Bd4 12 Nc3 when White will continue with Bb2.

7 Nc3 (Diagram 6)

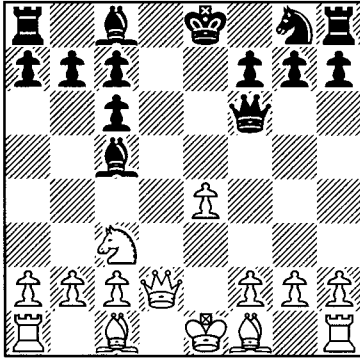


Diagram 6 (B)
The starting point

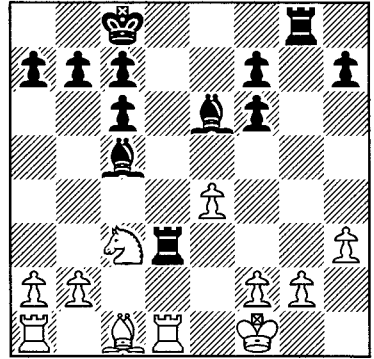


Diagram 7 (W)
Piece activity wins!

The most flexible move, leading to the main starting position for the 5 Nxc6 variation. In the next two sections we will deal with Black's array of options here, including 7...Be6, 7...Ne7, 7...Bd4 etc.

An early illustration of Black's counterplay in this line can be seen in the following example: 7 Bd3 Be6 8 0-0 (8 Nc3! transposes to the next section under 7 Nc3 Be6 8 Bd3) 8...0-0-0! 9 Nc3 Nh6! (9...Ne7 is also possible) 10 Qf4 Ng4! 11 h3? (White should have captured on f6) 11...Ne5! 12 Qxf6 gxf6 13 Rd1 Rhg8 (Black's structure could be better but his piece activity is overwhelming!) 14 Kf1 Nxd3! 15 cxd3 Rxd3!! (**Diagram 7**) 16 Rxd3 Bc4 17 Ke2 Rd8 18 Bh6 Rxd3 and Black converted his extra pawn in Z.Varga-V.Tkachiev, Rabac 2004.

Statistics

White has scored 55% with 5 Nxc6 over approximately 2700 games. This score increases to 59% if we just take games continuing 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 bxc6.

Game 29

□ P.Svidler ■ V.Milov

Moscow 2001

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 bxc6!? (**Diagram 8**)

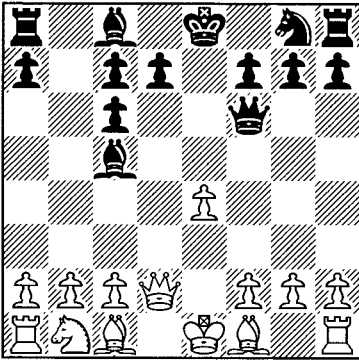


Diagram 8 (W)
A solid recapture

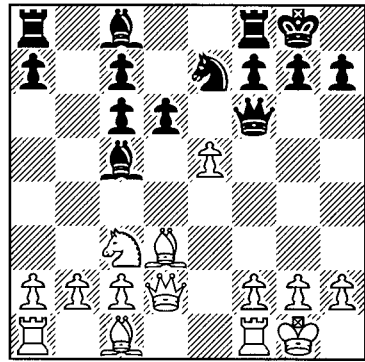


Diagram 9 (B)
10 e4-e5!

Choosing to create the Mieses pawn structure. Now White cannot count on such a sizeable structural advantage in the endgame. On the other hand, with the d-pawn blocking the light-squared bishop, Black's development doesn't progress as rapidly as with 6...dxc6. Though 6...bxc6 is far less popular than 6...dxc6, it's noticeable that elite GMs including Kramnik and Short have been willing to fight Black's cause here.

7 Bd3

One of White's objectives here is to hunt down Black's dark-squared bishop with Nc3-a4, and in fact this plan can be carried out immediately with 7 Nc3 d6 8 Na4 – Morozevich has favoured this move order. A typical position is reached after 8...Bb6 9 Bd3 Ne7 10 0-0 0-0. White will capture on b6 and Black will recapture with the a-pawn. White enjoys the bishop pair and slightly more space, but Black's position is super-solid.

7...Ne7 8 Nc3 d6

Black can also delay moving the d7-pawn. In some cases it may advance to d5, while there are also benefits in keeping the d6-square vacant. D.Sadvakasov-V.Kramnik, Astana 2001 continued 8...0-0 9 0-0 Ng6!? 10 Na4 and here, instead of 10...Bb6, Kramnik opted for 10...Bd6!?, planning to activate his forces with ...Re8, ...Bb7 and ...c6-c5.

9 0-0 Bb6

Black has to watch his step here. Many players have opted for the natural-looking 9...0-0?, but this is actually a mistake on account of the tactical hit 10 e5! (**Diagram 9**). Whichever way Black captures on e5, he loses a piece: 10...dxe5?? 11 Ne4 and Nxc5, or 10...Qxe5?? 11 Re1 Qf6 12 Ne4 Qh4 13 g3 Qh5 14 Nxc5 and Rxe7. So instead Black must move his queen, for example 10...Qe6 11 exd6 Bxd6 (11...cxd6 12 Re1 Qd7 13 Ne4 is also good for White as

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13...Bb6 can be answered by 14 Nxd6!, planning to meet 14...Qxd6?? with 15 Bxh7+!) 12 Re1 Qd7 13 Ne4 Ng6 14 Nxd6 cxd6 15 b3 Bb7 16 Bb2 gave White a pleasant advantage in M.Kobalija-M.Sorokin, Tomsk 2004 (the bishop pair, a slightly better structure).

10 Kh1

White could have continued à la Morozevich with 10 Na4, but Svidler prefers to keep this in reserve. 10 Kh1 releases the pin on f2 and thus prepares kingside expansion with f2-f4. The solid way for Black to meet this is with 10...0-0 11 f4 Ng6!, so that f4-f5 can be answered by ...Ne5, securing a good square for the beast. Instead Milov decides to strike back with ...f7-f5.

10...Qh4 11 f4 f5!? 12 b3!

Given that the f4-pawn is currently blocked and the queen is also in the way on d2, a queenside fianchetto clearly makes sense, even more so given that Black can no longer blunt the diagonal with ...f7-f6.

12...fxe4 13 Nxe4 0-0 14 Bb2 Bg4?

The wrong choice according to Svidler, who prefers 14...Bf5! 15 Rae1 Rae8.

15 Ng5! (Diagram 10)

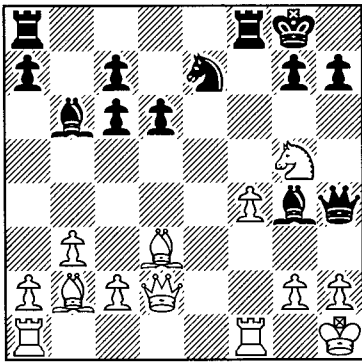


Diagram 10 (B)

Pointing at the black king

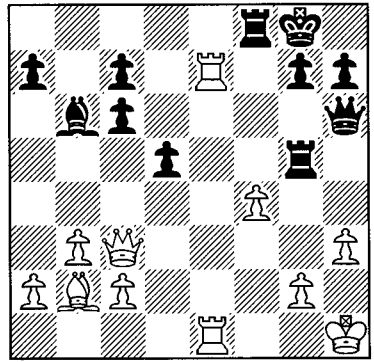


Diagram 11 (B)

Re6 is coming

15...Nf5

The threat of mate (...Ng3) forces White to part with his two bishops, but this slight concession is secondary to the problems Black now experiences on the long a1-h8 diagonal. Reasonable alternatives to 15...Nf5 are hard to find, for example:

a) 15...h6 16 Bh7+! Kh8 17 Qc3 Rf6 18 Qxf6!! gxf6 19 Bxf6 mate.

b) 15...Bf5 16 Rae1! (planning to meet 16...Bxd3 with 17 Rxe7!) 16...Rae8 17 Bc4+ d5 and now Svidler's 18 Ba3! looks strong.

16 Bxf5 Rxf5 17 Qc3 Qh6 18 Rae1!

White continues his single-minded assault on the tender g7-pawn, with Re7 next on the agenda.

18...Raf8 19 h3! Be2!

Using a tactical resource to stay in the game.

20 Rxe2 Rvg5 21 Re7! d5 22 Rfe1! (Diagram 11)

Preparing the possibility of Re6 and breaking the pin on the f-file, thus threatening fvg5. Now after 22...Rxf4 23 Re8+ Kf7 White has a few ways to win, the simplest being to employ the 'mega-skewer' 24 Bc1. Svidler gives another winning variation in 22...d4 23 fvg5! dxc3 24 gxh6 cxb2 25 Rvg7+ Kh8 26 Rge7! Bd4 27 Re8 Kg8 28 Rxf8+ Kxf8 29 Rb1.

22...Rg6 23 R1e6

23 f5! (Svidler) is stronger, for example 23...Rgf6 24 Qg3! R6f7 25 R1e6! Qh5 26 Qvg7+!! Rvg7 27 Rvg7+ Kh8 28 Rg5+.

23...Rgf6!

23...Rxe6? loses to 24 Rvg7+! Kh8 25 Rg6+! d4 26 Qxd4+! Bxd4 27 Bxd4+.

24 Rxf6 Rxf6 25 Qe5 d4?

Considering all the previous hassle, it's quite understandable that Black wishes to close the long diagonal, but in fact this was a time-trouble error in a very difficult position. 25...Bc5 26 Rxc7 Bf8 (Svidler) is more resilient, although White should still win.

26 Ba3! Qh4

26...Qxf4 27 Re8+ Kf7 28 Qh5+ g6 loses after 29 Qxh7+ Kxe8 30 Qe7 mate.

27 Re8+ Kf7 28 Rf8+ Kg6 29 f5+ 1-0

White mates after 29...Kh5 30 Qe2+ Kg5 31 Bc1+ Kxf5 32 g4+! Kg6 33 Qe4+.

7...Be6 and Kasparov's 8 Na4

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Be6

Traditionally this has been Black's most popular move; he can now meet Bd3 with queenside castling, securing relative king safety and activating the a8-rook on the open d-file.

8 Na4! (Diagram 12)

Kasparov introduced this clever move in his 1993 match with Nigel Short, thus catapulting the 5 Nxc6 variation into the forefront of Scotch theory. 8 Na4 is a typically imaginative creation from Kasparov. Using traditional opening guidelines it would be very easy to dismiss this move out of hand. After all, White is repositioning his only developed minor piece, and to the edge of the board at that (the 'knights on the rim are grim' brigade would have a field day). But once again in the Scotch we see the principle of disrupting the opponent's development at work.

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

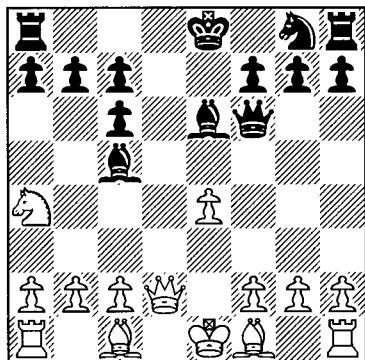


Diagram 12 (B)
Kasparov's 8 Na4!

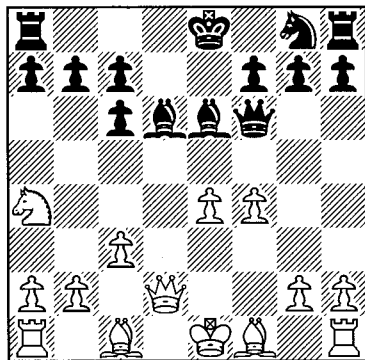


Diagram 13 (W)
...Bf8-c5-d4-e5-d6!

There are two major objectives Black would like to achieve in the near future:

- 1) To castle queenside, ensuring king safety and offering the licence to attack (possibly with pawns) on the other side of the board.
- 2) To make sure the dark-squared bishop remains on the desirable a7-g1 diagonal.

After 8 Na4 Black is only able to achieve one of the aims, and he must decide which one is more important.

Solid development with 8 Bd3 is certainly possible, even if this does allow Black to carry out his objective with 8...0-0-0. Here are a couple of possible lines:

- a) 9 Qe2 (sensibly allowing the c1-bishop to develop) 9...Bd4!? 10 Bd2 and now both 10...Ne7 and 10...Nh6!? are possible, but I quite like Black's approach shown in P.Preux-G.Flear, Creon 1998: 10...g5!? (Black wishes to prevent White from expanding with f2-f4) 11 0-0-0 Ne7 12 Kb1 h6 and Black plans to continue with ...Ng6.
- b) 9 Qf4!? Qxf4 10 Bxf4 Ne7 11 Bg3! (preparing to meet ...Ng6 with f2-f4) 11...Bb4! 12 0-0 Bxc3 13 bxc3 c5 was roughly level in P.Leko-J.Srokowski, Kecskemet 1992. White has succeeded in reaching an endgame and even has the bishop pair, but Black is well coordinated and has inflicted a structural weakness on White's queenside.



NOTE: Qd2-f4 (or Qg5), offering the exchange of queens, is a common weapon for White in this variation. In general the exchange of queens favours White – Black's rapid development becomes less threatening without the queens on the board, and White's superior pawn structure gains in significance.

8...Rd8

A natural move – Black gains further time by hitting White's queen and prepares the way for ...Bd4. However, of course queenside castling is now out of the question (unless Black can somehow achieve this 'by hand' with ...Kd7-c8 – not a likely scenario!).

Black's main alternative is to retreat from the a7-g1 diagonal with 8...Bd6 – this is covered in Game 30. Alternatives are less desirable:

a) 8...Bb6? meekly surrenders what is considered Black's best minor piece. After, say, 9 Bd3 0-0-0 10 Nxb6+ axb6 11 Qe2 White will continue with 0-0 and perhaps f2-f4, or even a quick a2-a4-a5, opening up the queenside. In any case, positionally speaking White has everything going for him: the better pawn structure and the bishop pair in a fairly open position.

b) 8...Bd4 is the move Black would like to play, but unfortunately the bishop can be harassed: 8...Bd4?! 9 c3! Be5 10 f4! Bd6 (**Diagram 13**) and it's easy to see that Black's circuit with the bishop has only helped White's expansion plans. Now White should play 11 Qf2!, preparing the development of the c1-bishop and threatening a fork with e4-e5.



WARNING: The immediate 11 e5? looks very tempting, but Black has the tactical trick 11...Bxe5! 12 fxe5 Qh4+! and ...Qxa4. This tactic is a recurring theme in this chapter.

9 Bd3

White would love to trade queens, but 9 Qf4?! is a bit too early. After 9...Qd4! White is forced to play 10 Nc3, as 10 Nxc5?? Qd1! is an embarrassing mate.

9...Bd4 10 0-0 (Diagram 14)

The idea of 8...Rd8 was to secure the bishop on d4. However, the harassing 10 c3?! is still playable (and indeed perhaps critical) and is covered in Game 31.

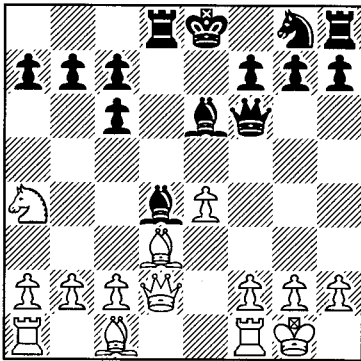


Diagram 14 (B)
Intending c2-c3

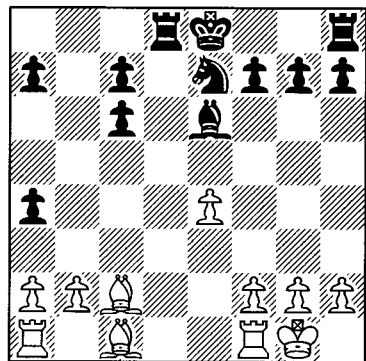


Diagram 15 (B)
Doubled doubled pawns!

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

Following 10 0-0, the move c2-c3 is very much on the agendas. Black usually secures the position of his bishop on the long diagonal by playing 10...a6, preparing ...Ba7 (see Game 32), or 10...b5, trying to force the knight back to c3 (see Game 33). Other moves have enjoyed less success:

a) 10...Ne7?! (Short's choice against Kasparov in the stem game) 11 c3! and now 11...Bb6 is an admission of failure, while 11...Be5 runs into 12 f4!. So Black's choices are limited:

a1) 11...a6!/? (remarkably this is not complete nonsense as Black wins his piece back) 12 cxd4 Qxd4 13 b3! Qxd3 (or 13...Qxa1 14 Nc3! with the idea of Ba3) 14 Qxd3 Rxd3 15 Nc5 Rc3 16 Nxb7 f6 17 Bf4 Bc8 18 Na5 and Black's queenside pawn structure was beyond repair in A.Vouldis-U.Garbisu, Rotterdam 1998.

a2) 11...b5! 12 cxd4 Qxd4 13 Qc2! Qxa4 (both 13...Qxd3 14 Qxd3 Rxd3 15 Nc5 Rd8 16 Bf4! and 13...bxa4 14 Be2 – Kasparov – are promising for White) 14 Qxa4 bxa4 15 Bc2 (**Diagram 15**) is a position that has been reached quite a few times in practice. Black has an extra pawn but his woeful queenside structure means that he will be the one praying for a draw in this endgame.

b) 10...Qh4!/? (Black's idea is to mix things up after 11 c3 with 11...Be5 12 f4 Bc4) 11 Qf4! Qh5 (planning 12 Qxc7?? Be5) 12 Qg3 Ne7 13 Be3! Bf6 (13...0-0 14 Bxd4 Rxd4 15 Qxc7! Ng6 16 Nc3 left Black struggling to justify his pawn deficit in J.Lautier-O.Korneev, Spain 1998) 14 h3 0-0 (Z.Polgar-Xie Jun, Jaen 1996) and now I can't see anything wrong with Blatny's suggestion of 15 Qxc7 – again I suspect that Black doesn't have enough for the pawn.

Theoretical?

After the hideous complexities of the Mieses Variation, this will seem like a walk in the park. Even so, there's slightly more to learn with 7...Be6 than with other Black options at move seven.

Statistics

White has scored well with Kasparov's 8 Na4 – 62% in nearly 400 games.

Game 30

□ D.Pavasovic ■ O.Korneev

Nova Gorica, 2002

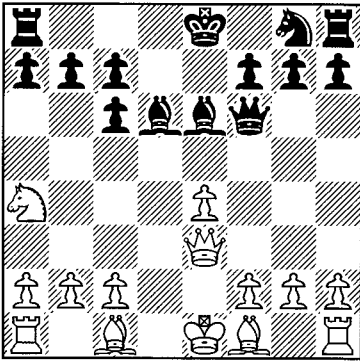
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Be6 8 Na4 Bd6

Instead of trying to maintain the bishop on the a7-g1 diagonal with 8...Rd8 and 9...Bd4, Black retreats his bishop to d6 and thus prepares ...0-0-0.

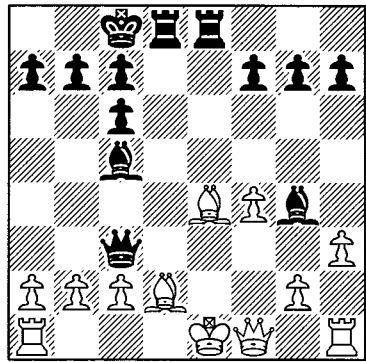
9 Qe3! (**Diagram 16**)



NOTE: As with the Mieses Variation, routine development often plays second fiddle to moves apparently flouting development principles but containing concrete objectives.

**Diagram 16 (B)**

Not another queen move?

**Diagram 17 (W)**

Slaughtered down the middle

The point is that Black is prevented from castling queenside on account of Qxa7, and 9 Qe3 also allows the idea of Nc5 to come into play.

It seems to me that Black has fewer problems to solve after the standard 9 Bd3 0-0-0. After 10 0-0 I like the idea of 10...Qe5!, threatening mate on h2. White is forced to play 11 g3 (11 f4?? drops a piece to 11...Qd4+) but then Black can continue with 11...h5 and ...h5-h4. 10 Qa5!?, with ideas of Qxa7 and Bg5, is more threatening, but Black can play 10...Kb8!, ready to answer 11 Bg5 with 11...Qd4! (Wells), and 12 Bxd8?? with 12...Bb4+!

9...Nh6

An enticing move as it's difficult to resist the temptation to gain time via the threat of ...Ng4. Nevertheless, White's next move does sideline this knight, a problem which Black subsequently fails to address.

9...Ne7 is a natural alternative, while I quite like the look of the ambitious 9...Qe5!?, introducing the idea of ...Qa5+ and also freeing up the f6-square for the knight. A couple of practical examples:

a) 10 f4 Qa5+ 11 Nc3 0-0-0 12 Bd3 Nf6! 13 Bd2 Bc5 14 Qe2? (White must play 14 Qg3!) 14...Bg4! 15 Qf1 Rhe8 16 h3?? Nxe4! 17 Bxe4 Qxc3!! (**Diagram 17**) and White resigned in J.Zorko-R.Licardo, Porec 2003 – an example of the horrors awaiting White if he fails to dampen Black's development advantage!

b) 10 Bd3 Nf6! 11 Bd2 Ng4! 12 f4! Qf6 13 Qg3 Qd4! 14 Nc3 g5! 15 h3 gxf4 16 Bxf4 Nf2!? 17 Rf1 Bxf4 18 Qxf4 Nxd3+ 19 cxd3 Rg8 and Black has reasonable counterplay, J.De Souza-L.Goncalves, correspondence 1996.

10 h3!

This little pawn move prevents ...Ng4, but there's more to it than that!

10...Qg6 11 g4!?

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White's last four moves would no doubt make the development purists shudder, but there is cast-iron logic behind them. Now Black cannot arrange a quick ...f7-f5 and finds it incredibly difficult to find a meaningful role for the h6-knight.

11...0-0?!

Given White's previous two moves, castling short does seem a touch provocative, more so since Black could have exploited the downside of 11 g4 by playing 11...0-0-0!, with 12 Qxa7?? now running into 12...Qxe4+!.

12 Bd2 b5

Trying to obtain some sort of counterplay on the queenside, as it's likely that White's king will end up here. The other option is 12...f6, giving a knight a square on f7. However, after 0-0-0 White will play f2-f4, leaving Black's piece horribly bunched up on the kingside.

13 Nc3 b4 14 Ne2 Rae8 15 0-0-0!? (Diagram 18)

Raising the stakes by offering the pawn on a2. 15 g5?, trapping the knight, looks enticing, but Black wouldn't think twice about playing 15...Nf5! 16 exf5 Bxf5 and ...Bxc2, when White's development policy could come back to haunt him.

15...Bxa2 16 f3 Bc4?

Allowing White to simplify into a winning position.

16...f6? prevents g4-g5 and gives the knight a square on f7, but is too slow. After 17 b3! White traps the a2-bishop with Kb2. I think the dynamic 16...c5! is Black's chance to stay in the game, the point being to answer 17 b3 with 17...Qf6, and 17 g5?! with 17...Nf5! 18 exf5 Qxf5 19 Qd3 Qxd3 20 cxd3 Bd5; Black has two pawns for the piece and White must tie himself up in knots with 21 Ng1 if he wants to keep the f3-pawn. Instead White should probably continue with 17 Nf4! but after 17...Qf6 Black is hanging in there.

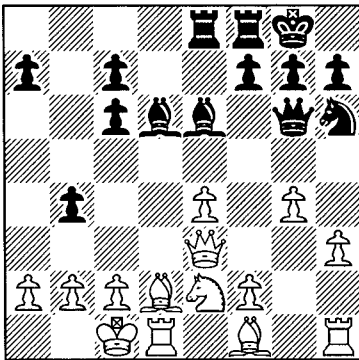


Diagram 18 (B)

Pawn on offer

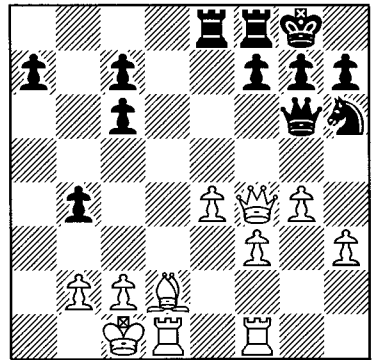


Diagram 19 (B)

Game over for that knight

17 Nf4! Bxf4 18 Qxf4 Bxf1 19 Rhxf1 (Diagram 19)

In the space of a couple of moves Black's position has collapsed: g4-g5 is still a major threat, while the b4-pawn is also hanging.

19...c5

19...f6 20 Bxb4 Rf7 21 h4! (Collins) sees Black tied up in knots. Instead Korneev prefers to sacrifice the poor knight on h6 but gets nowhere near enough compensation.

20 g5 Qa6 21 Kb1 Qa5 22 gxh6 Re6 23 Qg5! Rxh6 24 Rg1 Rg6 25 Qe5 Qb5 26 Be3 Qe2 27 Bxc5 Rg2 28 Rxc2 1-0

An instructive example of how one poorly placed piece (in this case the knight on h6) can spoil things for the rest of the army.

Game 31

□ I.Nataf ■ J.Lautier

Clichy 2001

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Be6 8 Na4 Rd8 9 Bd3 Bd4 10 c3!? (Diagram 20)

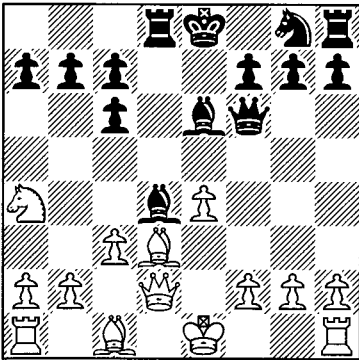


Diagram 20 (W)
That's not allowed!

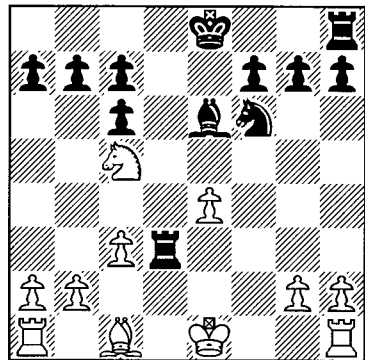


Diagram 21 (B)
The trapper trapped?

This is the move that 8...Rd4 was supposed to prevent. It's clearly critical because if Black doesn't fancy entering the following tactical sequence his bishop is forced off its favourite diagonal.

10...Bxf2+!?

The point of 8...Rd8 is revealed – after captures on f2 Black wins his piece back due to the hanging bishop on d3. Looking at alternatives, allowing a trade with 10...Bb6?! is clearly undesirable, while 10...b5?! 11 cxd4 Qxd4 12 Bc2! bxa4 13 Qxd4 Rxd4 14 Be3 leaves Black with trashy queenside pawns, S.Rublevsky-V.Kupreichik, Kurgan 1995 continuing 14...Rb4 15 a3 Rxb2 16

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Bxa4 with a clear plus for White.

On the other hand, 10...Be5!? looks like a reasonable option. The natural way to exploit this move is with 11 f4!?. Indeed, following 11...Bxf4? 12 Qxf4 Qxf4 13 Bxf4 Rxd3 14 Nc5! Rd8 15 Bxc7 Rc8 16 Be5 White was doing very well in A.Klimansky-O.Ustinov, Alushta 1999. However, 11...Bc4!, exploiting the pin on the d-file, suggests itself. After 12 fxe5 Black can choose between 12...Qxe5 and 12...Qg6!?, when 13 Nc5 Bxd3 14 Nxd3? (14 Qg5!?) is answered by 14...Qxe4+.

11 Qxf2 Rxd3 12 Qxf6!

White must get his move order right: 12 Nc5?? loses to 12...Rd1+!

12...Nxf6 13 Nc5! (Diagram 21)

The sting in the tail – White regains the pawn and leaves Black's queenside shattered.

13...Rd8 14 Nxb7 Rb8 15 Nc5 Rb5!?

This move basically amounts to an ambitious exchange sacrifice. It has been tried few times in practice, but Nataf's direct and precise play in this game casts real doubt on its value.

Black can play it safe with 15...0-0. White's obvious structural superiority on the queenside must give him some sort of edge, but Black can engineer some counterplay against White's own weakness – the e-pawn. The game A.Kovchan-A.Korobov, Evpatoria 2002 continued 16 0-0 Rfe8 17 b3 Bg4 18 h3 Bh5 19 Rxf6! gxf6 20 Nd7 Kg7 21 Nxb8 Rxb8 22 Be3 a6 23 Bd4 Re8 24 Re1 (Diagram 22)

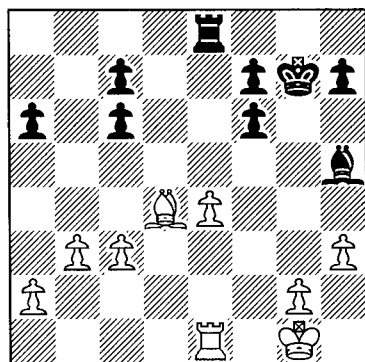


Diagram 22 (B)

A dodgy pawn formation

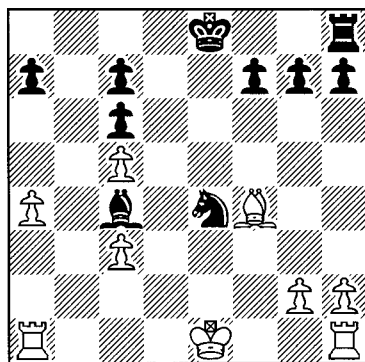


Diagram 23 (B)

A powerful opening novelty

when White had even managed to increase his structural edge. However, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops meant that Black was able to bail out to

a draw: 24...Bg6 25 e5 fxe5 26 Rxe5 Rxe5 27 Bxe5+ f6 28 Bxc7 Bb1 29 a3 Kf7 30 Kf2 Ke6 31 Ke3 Ba2 32 b4 Bd5 33 g3 Bg2 34 h4 Bh3 35 Kd4 Kd7 36 Bf4 Kc8 37 Bh6 Kd7 38 Bg7 h5 39 Bxf6 Kc8 40 Kc5 Kb7 41 a4 Bg4 42 c4 Bd1 43 Be5 Be2 44 Bf4 ½-½.

16 b4 Nxe4! 17 a4!

But not 17 Nxe4? Re5!.

17...Rxc5 18 bxc5 Bc4 19 Bf4! (Diagram 23)

This was a strong opening novelty and it's still theoretically very important.

Some previous games had continued 19 Be3 0-0 20 Bd4 Rb8! (threatening ...Rb2) 21 0-0-0 (this is legal!) 21...Be2! 22 Rhe1! (22 Rde1? Bd3!) 22...Bxd1 23 Rxe4 Bb3 and it's probably a draw, although it's White who's having to prove this.

19...0-0!

19...Nxc3? loses a piece to the skewer 20 Rc1.

20 Bxc7!

The blatant point behind White's previous move – the c7-pawn is removed and, more importantly, Black no longer has the option of ...Rb8.

20...Re8! 21 0-0-0! Nf2

If Black doesn't want to take back the exchange he can play 21...Nxc5!?, but following 22 Rd8! Rxd8 23 Bxd8 Nxa4 24 Kc2 (Murey) it's clear that only two results are in the equation – a draw and a white win.

22 Rd4!

It's more important to get Black's bishop than the knight. In the ensuing end-game Black must spend precious time getting his knight back into the action.

22...Nxb1 23 Rxc4 Nf2 24 Bb6!! (Diagram 24)

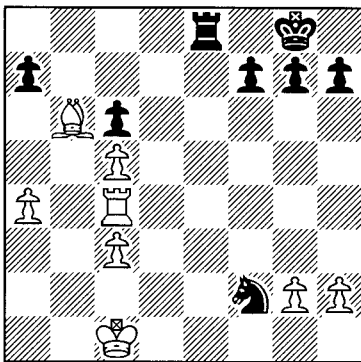


Diagram 24 (B)
Offering the bishop

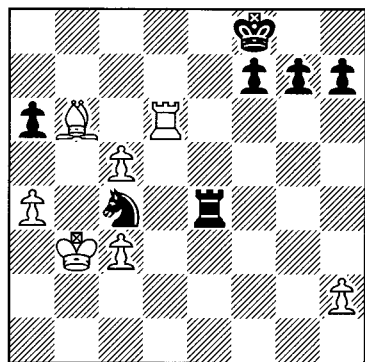


Diagram 25 (W)
A chance to win

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

Brilliant play by Nataf, who gives the following convincing analysis:

a) 24...axb6?! 25 cxb6 Nd3+ (or 25...Ne4? 26 Rxe4!! Rxe4 27 b7 Re1+ 28 Kc2 Re2+ 29 Kb3 Re8 30 a5 etc.) 26 Kc2 Ne5 27 Rc5! f6 28 a5 Rb8 29 c4! Kf7 30 Rxe5!! fxe5 31 c5! and Black is powerless to prevent a5-a6 etc.

b) 24...Re7 25 Rd4! and White will continue with Rd6xc6.

24...a6 25 Rd4 Kf8 26 Kc2 Re3 27 Kb3!

With the simple plan of Kb4-a5xa6 – an idea Black's next move prevents. Nevertheless, White's queenside continues to be far more dangerous than Black's on the other side of the board.

27...Nd3 28 Kc4 Ne1 29 Rd6 Re4+ 30 Kb3 N_xg2 31 Rxc6 Ne3 32 Rd6

After 32 Bc7! White wins the race between the c-pawn and the f-pawn: 32...f5 33 Rxa6 f4 34 Bd6+ Kf7 35 c6 f3 36 Ra7+ Kg6 37 Bg3! (underlining the power of the bishop over the knight in such endings) 37...Rc4 38 c7 Kf5 (38...Rc6? 39 Ra6!; 38...Rc5 39 Bf2) 39 Ra8 (Nataf) and White wins.

32...Nc4! (Diagram 25) 33 Rd4?

White could still win with 33 Rd7!, for example 33...Ne5 34 Ra7 Nc6 35 Rxa6 Ke7 36 Ra8 f5 37 a5 f4 38 a6 f3 39 a7 f2 40 Re8+! (Nataf).

33...Rxd4 34 cxd4 Ne3 35 Kb4 Ke7 36 Ka5 Kd7 37 Kxa6 Kc6 38 Ka7 f5 39 a5 Nc2 40 a6 Nxd4 41 Kb8 Nb5 42 h4 f4 43 Ba5 f3 44 Be1 Kxc5 45 Kb7 Nd6+ 46 Kc7 Nb5+ 47 Kb7 Nd6+ 48 Kb8 Nb5 49 Kb7 ½-½

A theoretically important game – 10 c3 has to be taken very seriously.

Game 32

□ R.Altrock ■ A.Kranzl

Correspondence 2000

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Be6 8 Na4 Rd8 9 Bd3 Bd4 10 0-0 a6

Dealing with the positional threat of c2-c3 by creating a little bolt-hole for the bishop back on a7.

11 Qa5! (Diagram 26)

Again deciding to set Black immediate concrete problems – White's threats include Qxc7 and Bg5. Alternatively:

a) 11 Nc3 Ne7 12 Ne2 Bb6 13 Qf4 Ng6! (allowing further structure wreckage for the sake of activity – we'll deal more with this concept in the next section) 14 Qxf6 gxf6 15 Ng3 h5! 16 Be2 h4 17 Nf5 0-0! 18 Be3 Bxe3 19 Nxe3 Rd4! (Short) gives Black enough activity to compensate for his undoubted weaknesses.

b) 11 Qf4 Rd7 12 Re1 a5!? 13 Qxf6 Nxf6 14 Be3 b6 15 f4 Bxe3+ 16 Rxe3 Rd4 17 Nc3 with perhaps a slight edge for White, P.Wells-A.Sherzer, Hungarian League 1995.

11...Qe7

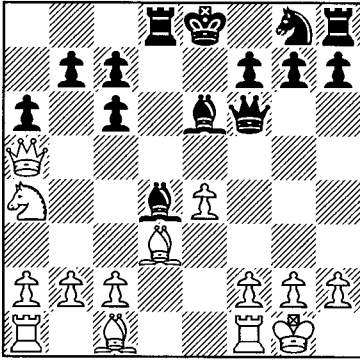


Diagram 26 (B)
Going pawn happy!

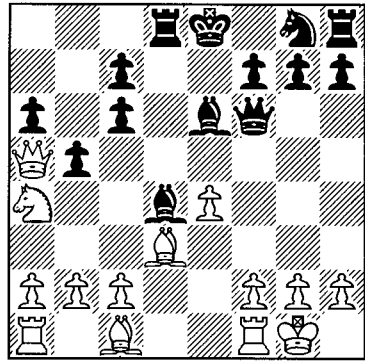


Diagram 27 (W)
11...b7-b5!?

Covering c7 and c5, and dealing with the threat of Bg5. The sequence 11...Rd7?! 12 Nc5! illustrates one of the ideas of 11 Qa5, while 11...Qe5?! 12 Qxe5 Bxe5 13 Be3 b5 14 f4! (Kasparov) is also favourable for White. However, Black has two major alternatives, both offering a pawn sacrifice:

a) 11...b6!? 12 Qxa6 Bc8 13 Qa7 b5 14 Nc5 Qe5 15 Be3! Bxe3 16 fxe3 Nf6 (Kasparov assessed this as unclear, but...) 17 Be2! 0-0 18 Nd3 Qxe4 19 Bf3 Qe7 20 Qc5! Qxc5 21 Nxc5 with a favourable ending for White, D.Pavasovic-D.Flores, Oz.com (blitz) 2000 – White's bishop and knight work well and there is the possibility of creating a dangerous passed pawn with b2-b3 and a2-a4.



NOTE: Even blitz games can be theoretically important!

b) 11...b5!? (**Diagram 27**) 12 Nc3 Bb6 13 Qxa6 Nh6 14 Be3! Bc8! (not 14...Bxe3? 15 Qxc6+!) 15 Qa3 Bxe3 16 fxe3 Qg5! (16...Qe5 17 Be2! – anticipating ...Ng4 – 17...Rd6 18 Rad1 0-0 19 Rxd6 cxd6 20 Rd1! was better for White in G. Kasparov-A.Yusupov, Horgen 1994) 17 Be2! Qxe3+ 18 Kh1 Qb6! and Black was okay in A.Fester-J.Morgado, correspondence 1999 (Kasparov gives 18...Ng4 19 Nxb5! cxb5 20 Bxb5+ Bd7 21 Bxd7+ Rxd7? – 21...Kxd7 is more resilient – 22 Qa8+ Rd8 23 Qc6+ Rd7 24 Rad1, winning for White).

12 Bg5

Leko suggests 12 Bf4, but 12...Rd7 13 Rad1 Nf6 14 c3 Ba7 looks OK for Black. 12...Nf6!

A major improvement on both 12...f6 13 Bf4 and 12...Bf6 13 Bxf6 Nxf6 14 f4 (Kasparov). Crucially, Black is not afraid of 13 e5? on account of 13...Rd5!.

13 Rae1 h6 14 Be3 (**Diagram 28**)

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

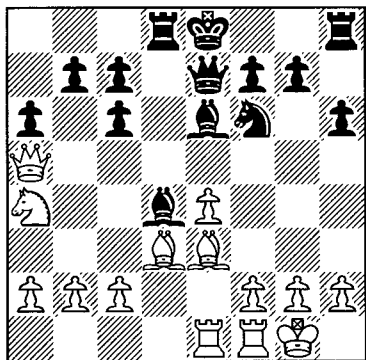


Diagram 28 (B)
Off with the bishops?

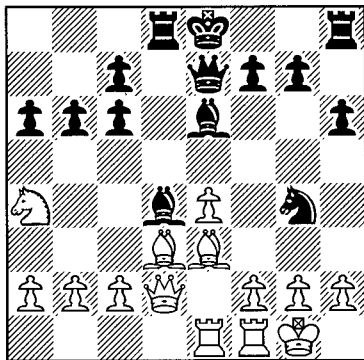


Diagram 29 (W)
15...Nf6-g4!

Trying to exchange Black's best minor piece. Leko gives 14 Bh4 g5 15 Bg3 Rd7 as unclear, while Black could also consider sacrificing a pawn with 15...b6!? 16 Qxa6 Nh5 intending ...Nxg3 followed by ...h6-h5-h4 etc.

14...b6!

14...0-0 15 Bxd4 Rxd4 16 Nc3 leaves White with a safe structural edge.



NOTE: One of White's main positional goals in this line is to trade off the dark-squared bishops, thus relieving Black of his favourite minor piece. Very often much of Black's counterplay disappears with this trade.

15 Qd2?!

Following Leko's choice from an earlier game, but running into a nasty surprise. It seems that Black builds up an initiative in any case, so White should at least grab a pawn for his troubles. After 15 Qxa6 0-0 16 Bxd4 Rxd4 17 Nc3 Black can try 17...Ng4, or 17...Nd7, intending ...Nc5.

15...Ng4! (Diagram 29)

Instead P.Leko-P.Lukacs, Hungary 1994 continued 15...c5 16 Bxd4 Rxd4 17 Nc3 c4?! 18 Qe3 c5 19 Be2 0-0 20 f4! when White was perfectly set up to utilise his kingside pawn majority. Leko's 17...Bc4! 18 Nd5 Qd8! is a better way for Black to play, but Kranzl's 15...Ng4! is even stronger. The point is that after the natural 16 Bxd4 Black has the very strong 'intermezzo' 16...Qd6!, for example 17 e5 Qxd4 18 Nc3 Nxe5 19 Re4 Qd6 or 17 g3 Qxd4 18 Nc3 Ne5! with Black gaining material in either case.

16 Bf4 g5! 17 Bg3 h5!

So White has failed in his quest to exchange bishops and, worse still, he now faces an onslaught against his castled king.

18 h3 h4! 19 Bh2

19 hxg4? hxg3 would be disastrous for White; 20 c3 Qf6! 21 cxd4 (Diagram 30)

21...Rh1+! 22 Kxh1 Qh8+ 23 Kg1 Qh2 mate is one pretty finish.

19...Nxb2 20 Kxb2 c5 21 Qc1 Be5+ 22 Kg1 g4 23 hxg4 h3 24 g3!

White must try to keep things closed.

24...b5 25 Nc3 h2+ 26 Kg2?

An inexplicable mistake. 26 Kh1! Bxg4 27 f4! keeps White in the game.

26...Bxg4 27 Rh1 Bh3+! (Diagram 31)

Black is winning after 28 Kf3 Qf6+ 29 Ke3 Bd4+, or 28 Kxb2 Qh4! 29 f4 Qg4! 30 fxe5 Bf1+! 31 Kg1 Qxg3+ 32 Kxf1 Qf3+ 33 Kg1 Rxb1 mate.

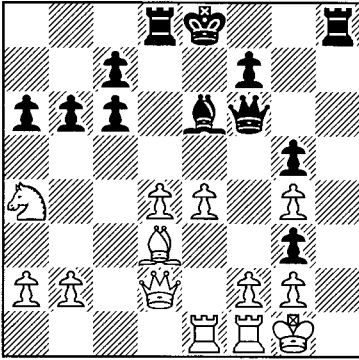


Diagram 30 (B)
Mate in three

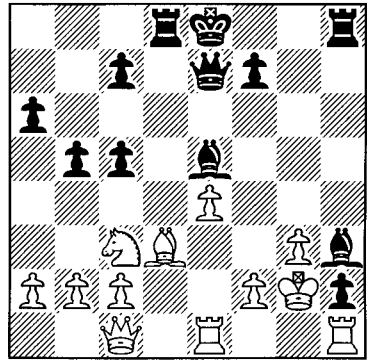


Diagram 31 (W)
Punishment for 26 Kg2?

Game 33

□ A.Averjanov ■ E.Egorov

Tula 2001

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Be6 8 Na4 Rd8 9 Bd3 Bd4 10 0-0 b5

Hoping to force the knight back to c3, thus ruling out c2-c3.

11 c3!? (Diagram 32)

White plays it anyway! The quieter option is 11 Nc3 Ne7 12 a4 a6, which has cropped up a few times in practice. In J.Van der Wiel-P.Van der Sterren, Dutch Championship 1998, White sensibly induced trades of both the queens and the dark-squared bishops, holding a small plus after 13 Qf4 Qxf4 14 Bxf4 Rc8 15 Rfe1 0-0 16 Be3.

11...bxa4

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

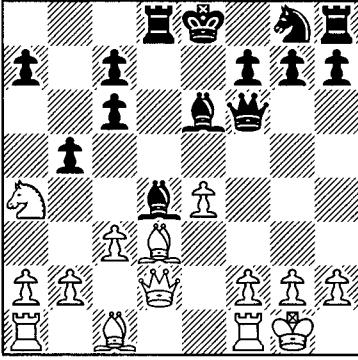


Diagram 32 (B)
Tit for tat

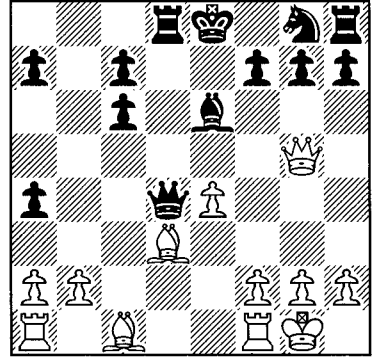


Diagram 33 (B)
13 Qg5 – not the only move

After 11...Be5, the sequence 12 f4 bxa4 13 fxe5 Qxe5 has been played a few times, but 12 Nc5!, not worrying about tactic on h2, has proved to be more successful. For example:

a) 12...Bxh2+ 13 Kxh2 Qe5+ 14 Qf4 Qxc5 15 Be2 Qd6 16 a4! when White's positional advantages outweigh the pawn deficit – in all likelihood White will reclaim this pawn in the near future.

b) 12...Bc4 13 Qe2 Bxh2+ 14 Kxh2 Qd6+! (14...Qe5+ 15 Kg1 Qxc5 16 Bxc4 Qxc4 17 Qxc4 bxc4 18 Be3 Nf6 19 f3! – Wells – and White will follow up with Rd1-d4 or even b2-b3) 15 e5! (now 15 Kg1 is met by 15...Bxd3!) 15...Qxc5 16 Bxc4 Qxc4 17 Qxc4 bxc4 18 Re1 Ne7 19 Re4 Rd5 20 f4 g5 21 Rxc4 and once again White's structural plus was significant, S.Grayland-S.Smith, correspondence 1998.

12 cxd4 Qxd4

Again we have the scenario with Black being a pawn ahead but with horrible queenside weaknesses. On this occasion, however, White's task is complicated due to tactical problems.

13 Qg5 (Diagram 33)

At first sight the only move, but 13 Rd1!? is also possible, the point being to meet 13...Bg4 14 Re1 Qxd3 with 15 Qg5!, hitting both g4 and g7 and thus regaining the piece. Instead C.Siefring-K.Frey Beckman, correspondence 2000 continued 14...Ne7 15 Re3 f5 16 exf5 Bxf5 17 Bxf5 Qxd2 18 Bxd2 Rxd2 and now Frey's suggestion of 19 Rae1!? 0-0 20 Be6+ Kh8 maintains a pull for White, despite the pawn deficit.

13...Qf6?

A poor solution to Black's problems, leading to a pretty miserable ending. Instead Black should look to alternatives 'c' and 'd'.

- a) 13...Qxd3? loses the exchange after 14 Qxg7 Qd4 15 e5!.
- b) 13...Nf6? 14 Be3! Qxd3 15 Qxg7 Rg8 16 Qxf6 Qxe4 17 Bg5! with a winning position for White, R.Perez-F..De la Paz, Santa Clara 1995.
- c) 13...h6!? 14 Qg3 Nf6 15 Bc2! (now the difference is that after 15 Be3?? Qxd3 16 Qxg7 Rg8 17 Qxf6 Qxe4 there is no Bg5 so White is actually losing – 18 g3 Bd5!) 15...Nxe4 16 Bxe4 Qxe4 17 Qxg7 Rh7! when Black should be okay because White will find it very difficult to avoid the exchange of queens because of ...Bc4 ideas, for example 18 Qf6 Bc4! 19 f3 Qd4+.
- d) 13...a3!?, exploiting the pin on the b2-pawn, is perhaps the most annoying move to meet. After 14 Be3 Qf6! 15 Qxf6 Nxf6 16 Bc2 axb2 17 Rab1 Bxa2 18 Rxb2 Bc4 19 Ra1 (J.Magem Badals-U.Garbisu de Goni, Spanish Championship 1999) White still had obvious compensation, but at least Black had managed to get rid of White's queenside pawns.

14 Bc2! a3

Too late!

15 Qxf6 Nxf6 16 b3! (Diagram 34)

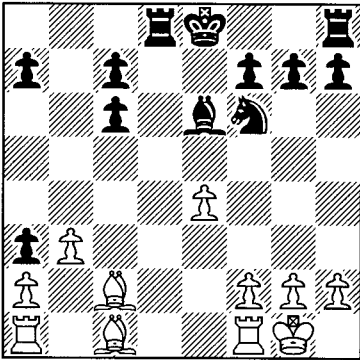


Diagram 34 (B)

Bxa3 is next up

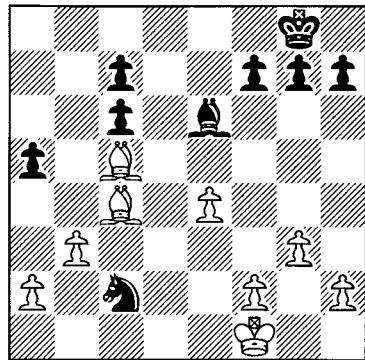


Diagram 35 (B)

Corralling the knight

Now White will simply equalise the material count with Bxa3, leaving Black to suffer in a depressing ending.

16...0-0 17 Bxa3 Rfe8 18 Rfd1 Nh5 19 Rxd8 Rxd8 20 Rd1 Rxd1+ 21 Bxd1 Nf4 22 g3 Nd3 23 Be2 Ne1

Trying to add some confusion to an otherwise fairly straightforward technical win for White, but this knight never makes it out of enemy territory.

After the standard 23...Ne5 White can concentrate on eliminating Black's a-pawn: 24 Bc5! a5 25 Bd4 f6 26 Bc3 a4 27 bxa4 Bxa2 28 a5! etc.

24 Bc5 a5 25 Kf1 Nc2 26 Bc4! (Diagram 35)

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

White is happy to offer an exchange of bishops as all the resulting endgames are winning, for example 26...Bxc4+ 27 bxc4 f6 28 Ke2 Kf7 29 Kd2 Nb4 30 Bxb4 axb4 31 c5! followed by Kd3-c4, or 26...Nb4 27 Bxe6 fxe6 28 Bxb4 axb4 29 Ke2 and again Kd3-c4.

26...Bg4 27 f4 Bf3 28 e5 g6

I like the variation 28...Nb4 29 Bxb4 axb4 30 Kf2 Bg4 31 Ke3 c5 32 Ke4 c6 33 e6! fxe6 34 Ke5 Kf7 35 Kd6 when Black's entire queenside will disappear.

29 Kf2 Bd5 30 Ke2 f6

Desperation!

31 exf6 Kf7 32 Kd2 Nb4 33 Bxb4! axb4 34 Kd3 Kxf6 35 Kd4 Kf5 36 Bxd5 cxd5 37 Kxd5 1-0

After 37...Kg4 38 Kc5 Kh3 39 Kxb4 h5 40 a4 Kxh2 41 a5 White easily wins the promotion race.

Seventh Move Alternatives for Black

So far we have only concentrated on 7...Be6, but Black has quite a few alternatives to this move.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Ne7 (Diagram 36)

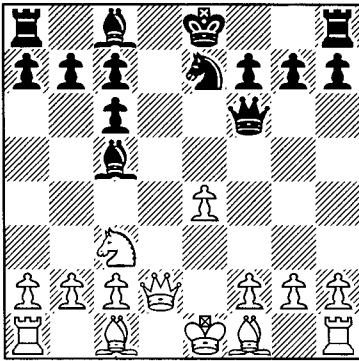


Diagram 36 (W)
7...Ne7

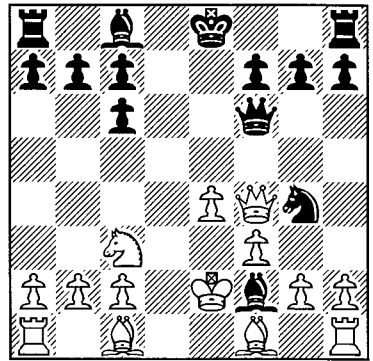


Diagram 37 (B)
Winning a piece?

7...Bd4 and 7...Qe7 are covered in Games 34-35, while other black options include:

a) 7...Qg6 spends a tempo to prepare ...Nf6, but is it really worth moving the queen again if White can force a trade with 8 Qg5! here? Probably not.

b) 7...Nh6 plans to activate the knight via g4. We've already seen that h2-h3 is

a reliable method of dealing with this idea, but 8 Qf4!? is also possible and has been played by Scotch expert Sergei Rublevsky, for example:

b1) 8...Qe7 9 Be3! (again White offers the trade of dark-squared bishops)
9...Bd6 10 Qg5! f6 (or 10...Ng4 11 Qxe7+ Kxe7 12 Bd4) 11 Qh5+ Nf7 12 f4! and White will follow up with Bd3 and probably 0-0, S.Rublevsky-I.Ibragimov, Russian Championship 1996.

b2) 8...Ng4!? 9 f3! (9 Qxf6 gxf6! 10 Nd1 f5! leaves Black very active) and now:
b21) 9...Qxf4 10 Bxf4 Ne3 (or 10...Nf2 11 Na4!) 11 Na4! Nxc2+ 12 Kd2 Nxa1 13 Nxc5 b6 14 Na6 (Rublevsky) with a winning advantage for White – the knight on a1 is doomed.

b22) 9...Bf2+ 10 Ke2 (**Diagram 37**) is assessed as winning for White by Rublevsky due to the attack on g4 and f2.

In fact Black can save himself with 10...Bd4!, intending to meet 11 fxe4? with 11...Bxc3 12 bxc3 Qxc3. So instead I think White should settle for 11 Qxf6 Nxf6 12 Be3! with a typical endgame pull.

c) 7...Bd7!? is the unpretentious brother of 7...Be6. It's been tried by a few notable players and looks okay. For example, 8 Bd3 0-0-0 9 Na4!? Bd6 10 Qa5!? and now 10...Kb8! is possible, as 11 Bg5 Qd4 12 Bxd8?? gets hit by 12...Bb4+!.
8 Qf4!? (**Diagram 38**)

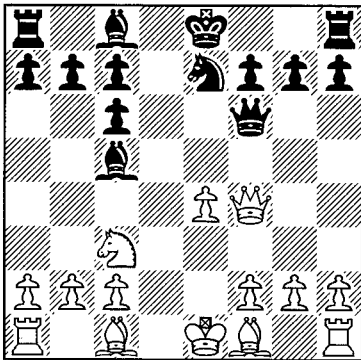


Diagram 38 (B)

Rushing headlong into the endgame

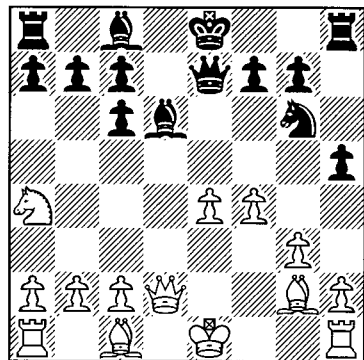


Diagram 39 (W)

Planning ...h5-h4

Trying to expose the negative features of 7...Ne7 (when compared to 7...Be6):

- 1) Black is in no position to meet the threat of ...Qxc7 with ...0-0-0
- 2) With the knight on e7, Black no longer has the option of ...Qe7.
- 3) If White captures on f6, Black will be forced to compromise his pawn structure even further with ...gxf6.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

As we shall see, however, this third problem might not be such a problem after all!

Though 8 Qf4 is very logical, White does have other options. 8 Bd3 is possible, when 8...Bd4!? transposes to 7...Bd4 8 Bd3 Ne7 – see Game 34. More typical is 8...Be6 9 0-0 0-0-0, when 10 Na4 should be met by 10...Bd6 (rather than 10...Bd4?! 11 c3 Be5? 12 Qe3! when Black is in some trouble).

8 Na4!? isn't totally necessary now that Black is further away from castling long, but it's still not to be dismissed: 8...Bd6 9 f4 Ng6!? 10 g3 (you should be getting used to 10 e5? Bxe5 11 fxe5 Qh4+ by now!) 10...Qe7 11 Bg2 h5!? (**Diagram 39**) 12 Qf2 h4 13 Bd2 Bg4! 14 0-0 hxg3 15 hxg3, when the open h-file secured Black some counterplay in B.Macieja-P.H.Nielsen, Bundesliga 2002.

Going back to 8 Qf4, Black has to decide whether or not to avoid the exchange of queens. 8...Qe6 is covered in Game 36, 8...Be6 (and 8...Ng6) in Game 37, while less important options include:

- a) 8...Qd6 9 Be3! Bb4 10 Qxd6 cxd6 11 0-0-0 has been played a few times, with White enjoying a small edge.
- b) 8...Qxf4 9 Bxf4 Bd6 is again a tiny bit better for White, who can choose between 10 Be3 and 10 Bxd6 cxd6 11 0-0-0.

Theoretical?

7...Ne7 is a better option for Black players wishing to avoid theory because the main line reaches an endgame where general principles are much more important than learning a few moves. On the other hand, 7...Bd4 is the flavour of the moment so it's possible a reasonable chunk of theory will develop here.

Statistics

White has scored 53% against 7...Ne7, the revealing statistic here being the abnormally high 50% draw ratio. However, 7...Bd4 has done remarkably well for Black, scoring 56%. It will be interesting to see whether this success rate will continue after its 'honeymoon period'.

Game 34

□ T.Radjabov ■ G.Sargissian

Antalya 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Bd4!? (**Diagram 40**)

A touch of high-class prophylaxis, Black demonstrating that once again routine development principles often don't apply in the Scotch. Black is very happy to expend a tempo on another bishop move if it means that Qf4 is ruled out due to ...Bxc3+ and Na4 loses most of its sting because it hits thin air. At the time of writing 7...Bd4 is the move of the moment. Whether it will remain so is difficult to tell, but it has certainly acquired the support of many elite grandmasters.

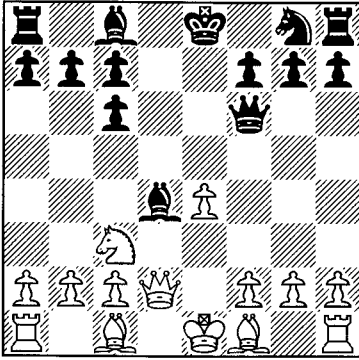


Diagram 40 (W)
7...Bd4 – a new direction

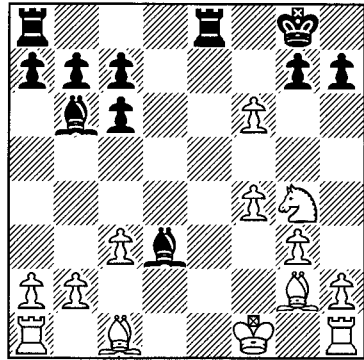


Diagram 41 (W)
Mate!

8 Bd3

Planning a swift 0-0 followed by Ne2, hitting the bishop on d4. Here's a brief overview of alternatives:

- a) 8 Na4 can be met by 8...a6!, giving the bishop a nice retreat square on a7.
- b) 8 Bc4 Be6!? 9 Bxe6 fxe6 10 0-0 0-0-0 gave Black reasonable counterplay in I.Nataf-A.Beliavsky, Silivri 2003. Play continued 11 Qe2?! Bxc3! 12 bxc3 Qxc3 13 Rb1 Nf6 14 f3 Rd4!, planning to answer 15 Bb2 with 15...Qc4!
- c) 8 f4?! Nh6! 9 e5 (9 h3? Qh4+!) 9...Qh4+ 10 g3 Qd8 11 Bg2! (11 Ne2? Qd5! left White's rook severely embarrassed in A.Danin-J.Geller, Vladimir 2002) 11...0-0 12 Ne4 f6! 13 c3 Bb6 14 Qxd8 Rxd8 and White was in some trouble in D.Batsanin-P.Smirnov, Togliatti 2003. After 15 Bd2 fxe5 16 0-0-0 Ng4 17 fxe5 Bf5 the e5-pawn was ready to drop off, but 15 exf6? is no improvement: 15...Bf5! 16 Nf2 Re8+ 17 Kf1 Ng4! 18 Nxc4 Bd3 mate! (**Diagram 41**) is one line illustrating the damage Black's development advantage can cause.



TIP: In this variation the move ...Nh6 is often an effective way to meet an early f2-f4.

d) 8 Nd1!? can be classed as a 'super-finesse' – White eliminates the idea of ...Bxc3 and defends f2, thus paving the way for Qg5. But come on, is this retreat really a serious try for an advantage? 8...Be6 9 Qg5 Qg6!? 10 f3 f6 11 Qxg6+ hxg6 12 Be3 0-0-0 13 Bxd4 Rxd4 (I.Nataf-J.Dorfman, French Championship 2004) suggests not – Black is pretty active and has a half-open h-file too.

8...Ne7 9 0-0 Ng6 10 Ne2!?

Alternatively:

a) 10 Kh1 (planning f2-f4) 10...Ne5 and now one possible (but by no means

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forced) sequence is 11 Be2 Ng4 12 Nd1 Qd6 13 f4 Nxh2!? 14 Kxh2 Qh6+ 15 Kg3 Qg6+ 16 Kh2 Qh6+ with a perpetual check, S.Rublevsky-A.Onischuk, Poikovsky 2002. In J.Kozamernik-D.Pavasovic, Ljubljana 2004, the Slovenian GM, here on the Black side of the Scotch, wasn't satisfied with this prospect against a lower-rated player. Instead he opted for 13...h5!? and following 14 e5! Qd8 15 Bf3?? Nxh2! (**Diagram 42**)

the game was over even quicker – this time with a black win!

b) A few games have continued 10 Qe1!? Ne5 11 Be2 and now both 11...g5!? (clamping down on the f4-square) and 11...h5!? (lining up ...Ng4) have been played with reasonable success.

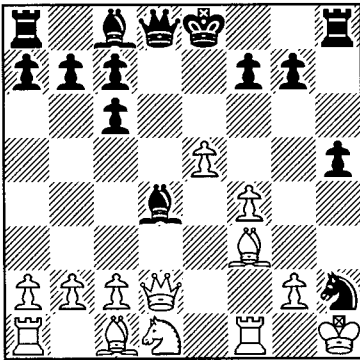


Diagram 42 (W)
15...Ng4xh2!

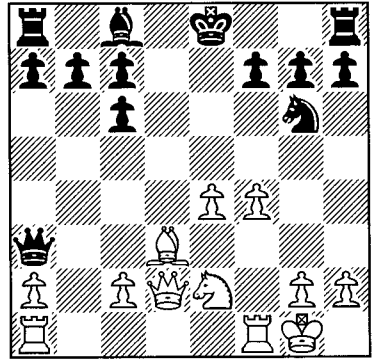


Diagram 43 (W)
How much compensation?

10...Bb6

Can Black grab the pawn on b2? Most Black players have trusted that White gets enough compensation, but one or two uncompromising souls have been brave enough to face the consequences. J.Smeets-A.Beliavsky, Maribor 2004 continued 10...Bxb2!? 11 Bxb2 Qxb2 12 f4 Qa3 (**Diagram 43**). Here White lurched forward with the committal 13 f5 and following 13...Ne5 14 Qg5 Bd7! 15 Qxg7 Qc5+ 16 Kh1 0-0-0 17 Qf6 h5 White had regained the pawn but Black was now very well coordinated, with a dominant knight on e5. White should probably only play f4-f5 (and f5-f6!) if Black commits his king to the kingside. In this respect, Mikhalevski's suggestion of 13 Rab1, making it difficult for Black to develop the c8-bishop, deserves consideration, while 13 Ng3 also can't be bad.

11 Ng3

A few games have continued 11 Nf4 Ne5 12 Be2 0-0 13 Qc3 Re8, which looks roughly level.

11...h5!? (**Diagram 44**)

An attempt to mix things up a bit. Black could have also continued solidly with 11...Ne5.

12 Be2 Bg4!

Preparing to meet 12...h4 with 13 Nh5 Qe5 14 Qg5, when grabbing on e4 probably entails too much risk.

13 Qg5 Qxg5 14 Bxg5 f6 15 Bd2 Ne5 16 Bxg4

This assures Black of counterplay down the h-file, but it's not easy to suggest an alternative for White; 16 Kh1? h4! certainly isn't one.

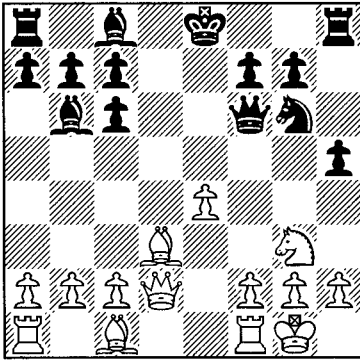


Diagram 44 (W)

11...h5 – mixing things up

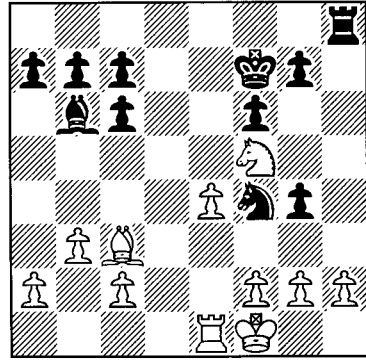


Diagram 45 (W)

Watch your h-pawn!

16...hxg4 17 Bc3 Rd8 18 Rad1 Kf7 19 Nf5 Rhe8 20 b3 Ng6 21 Rxd8 Rxd8 22 Re1 Nf4 23 Kf1 Rh8! (Diagram 45)

A reminder that White's king cannot stray too far from the h2-pawn, The game now ends in a neat (but obviously not compulsory) repetition.

24 Kg1 Rd8 25 Kf1 Rh8 26 Kg1 ½-½

Game 35

□ I.Nataf ■ A.Kharitonov

Koszalin 1999

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Qe7

Preparing to develop the knight on its best square with ...Nf6.

8 Qg5!?

Exploiting the fact that Black no longer attacks f2 in order to offer a queen exchange and hit the g7-pawn.

8...Nf6

After this move White obtains some advantage, so it's worthwhile considering

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alternatives. Exchanging on g5 accepts a small and typical disadvantage, while

8...f6!? has been tried more than once. After 9 Qh5+ g6 10 Qf3 Black's kingside looks ugly, but it seems that White has no real way to exploit this. Following 10...Be6 11 Be3 0-0-0 12 Bxc5 Qxc5 13 Bd3 h5!? (preventing 14 0-0-0? due to 14...Bg4!) Black had no reason to complain in I.Nataf-R.Fontaine, Val d'Isere 2004.

9 Be3!

Once again White tries to exchange off the dark-squared bishops. The g-pawn is most certainly poisoned – 9 Qxg7? Rg8 10 Qh6 Bxf2+! is embarrassing for White (11 Kxf2?? Ng4+!).

9...Bb4?

It's unsurprising that Black wishes to keep the bishops on the board, but this is not the way to do it. 9...Bd6 is stronger, although 10 Bd4! 0-0 11 0-0-0 h6 12 Qh4 b5 13 Bd3 Nd7 14 Qxe7 Bxe7 15 f4 left White with a pleasant endgame plus in S.Tiviakov-E.Van den Doel, Leeuwarden 2002.

10 e5! (Diagram 46)

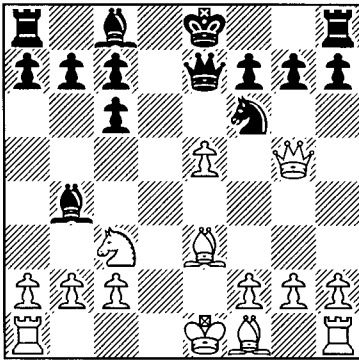


Diagram 46 (B)
10 e4-e5!

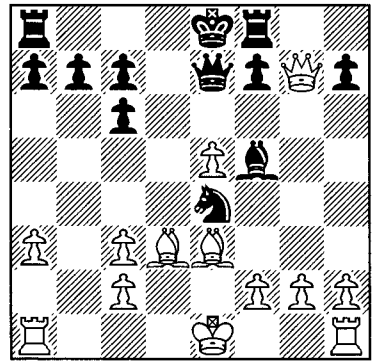


Diagram 47 (B)
No defence

10...Ne4?

Another mistake, and now Black is in real trouble. Black has to play 10...Ng4, even if 11 Qxg7! Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 Qxe5 13 Qxe5+ Nxe5 14 Bd4 f6 15 0-0-0 Kf7 16 Be2 (I.Ibragimov) promises White a substantial endgame advantage – the bishops look particularly strong here.

11 Qxg7! Rf8 12 a3! Bxc3+

12...Nxc3? loses to 13 axb4 Qxb4 14 Bh6! Nd5+ 15 c3, and 12...Ba5 13 Bd3 Nxc3 14 Bd2 (Mikhalevski) is also grim for Black, 14...Qc5 losing after 15 b4

Bxb4 16 axb4 Qxb4 17 e6!.

13 bxc3 Bf5

Or 13...Nxc3 14 Bh6!.

14 Bd3! (Diagram 47)

Perhaps Black had underestimated the strength of this simple move, which rules out 14...0-0-0? due to 15 Bxe4! Bxe4 16 Qg4+! f5 17 exf6+ Qd7 18 Qxe4. Without having the resource of castling long, none of the tactics works for Black and he's simply losing more material.

14...Bg6 15 Bxe4! Bxe4 16 Bh6 1-0

White wins the exchange after 16...0-0-0 17 Qg4+! Qe6 18 Qxe6+ fxe6 19 Bxf8 or 17...f5 18 exf6+ Qd7 19 Qxd7+ Kxd7 20 Bxf8.

Game 36

□ J.De la Villa Garcia ■ M.Illescas Cordoba

Pamplona 1999

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Ne7 8 Qf4 Qe6!? (Diagram 48)

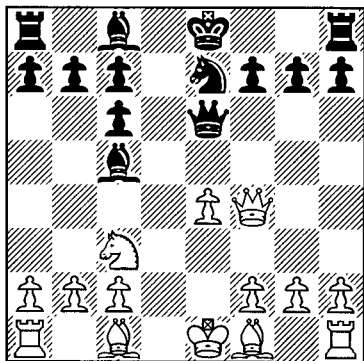


Diagram 48 (W)
Offering the c7-pawn

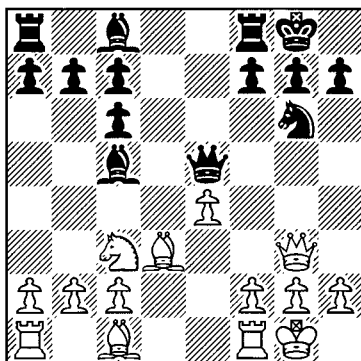


Diagram 49
I've changed my mind!

Provocatively offering the c7-pawn for the sake of keeping the queens on the board. Should White accept the offer?

9 Bd3

Playing it safe. I would imagine that if White really hopes for an advantage here, then 9 Qxc7!? is critical. Then 9...Bd6 10 Qa5 b5 11 Be3! 0-0 12 0-0-0 worked out well for White in S.Rublevsky-A.Beliavsky, Moscow (rapid) 2002, as did 9...0-0 10 Qg3! f5 11 e5! f4 12 Bxf4 Qf7 13 Ne4 Bd4 14 0-0-0! (A. Motylev-A.Beliavsky, Yugoslavia 2000).

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The Ukrainian GM Oleg Romanishin has played this gambit a few times, and recently he has opted for 9...Bb4 10 Bd2 Bxc3 11 Bxc3 Qxe4+ and now:

a) 12 Be2 Nd5! (12...Qxg2 looks too greedy after 13 0-0-0) 13 Qe5+ Qxe5 14 Bxe5 0-0 15 c4 Re8 16 Bd6 Nb6 17 b3 Bf5 18 Rd1 a5 and Black had just about enough counterplay to offset White's advantage of the bishop pair, L.Bergez-O.Romanishin, Paris 2004.

b) 12 Kd2!? Qd5+ 13 Kc1!? Bf5! 14 Qxb7 Rd8 15 Bd3 Bxd3 16 cxd3 Qg5+ 17 Kc2 0-0 when White's slightly airy king provides some compensation for Black, F.Manca-O.Romanishin, St Vincent 2004.

9...Ng6 10 Qg3

Planning to meet 10 Qxc7 with 10...Ne5! when White has to deal with the threat of ...Bb6, trapping the queen.

10...0-0 11 0-0 Qe5! (Diagram 49)

What's going on? Wasn't it just a few moves ago that Black was even willing to sacrifice a pawn to keep the queens on the board? And now he decides he wants a trade after all. No wonder chess can be so confusing! Well, the crucial point was that White was planning to offer a trade of bishops with Be3. As we've seen many times before, this is a vital weapon in his struggle for an advantage, and Black is quite correct to fight for the future of his dark-squared bishop – on this occasion it's even worth trading queens to do so. 11...Qe5 prevents Be3 and at the same time offers a queen exchange under Black's terms – the knight is activated via e5.

12 Qxe5 Nxe5 13 Be2 a5!

Gaining space on the queenside and, more importantly, offering the bishop a retreat hole on a7 in case of Na4.

14 Bf4 f6 15 a4 Be6 16 Rad1 Rae8! (Diagram 50)

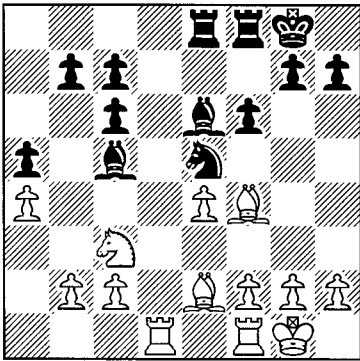


Diagram 50 (W)
An irrelevant open file

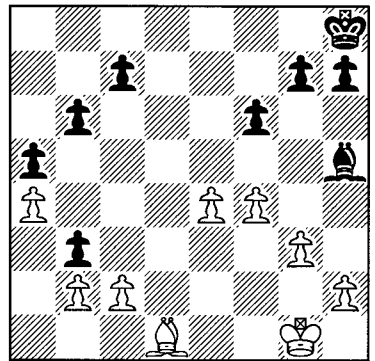


Diagram 51 (W)
36...Be8-h5!!

I really like this move. It would be all too easy for Black to play the natural 16...Rad8, allowing White to chop off some rooks down the d-file, bring his king to the centre, snuff out Black's counterplay and gradually try to realise his extra kingside pawn. With 16...Rae8 Black realises that for the moment control of the d-file is largely irrelevant and that he needs to keep the rooks on the board. The rook on e8 indirectly supports the knight on e5, with Black preparing to increase the pressure down the e- and f-files with a timely ...f6-f5.

17 Nb1 Bf7 18 Nd2 Re7 19 Bxe5?!

Black's position was already comfortable, but there was no need for White to hand him the bishop pair too.

19...Rxe5 20 Bd3

Illescas suggests getting rid of one of Black's bishops with 20 Bc4!?. Following 20...Bxc4 21 Nxc4 Rxe4 22 Nxa5 Rxa4 23 Nxb7 Bb6 24 Nd8! Ra2 25 Rfe1 Rxb2 26 Re2 converting the extra pawn would be a very tough job for Black.

20...Bh5 21 Rde1 Re7 22 Nc4 b6 23 Nd2 Rd8 24 Nb3

White is really struggling with this knight – it simply can't find a decent square.

24...Bd6 25 Bc4+ Kh8 26 f3 Be8!

Eyeing up the a4-pawn.

27 Rd1 Red7 28 Be2 Bf4 29 g3?

A mistake, but White's position was getting more and more difficult.

29...Be3+ 30 Kg2 Rxd1 31 Rxd1 Rxd1 32 Bxd1 c5 33 f4 c4!?

There's absolutely nothing wrong with the simple 33...Bxa4, but the text does lead to a delightful finish albeit with some help from White.

34 Kf3 Bg1 35 Kg2?

35 Nd2 is necessary, even if Black keeps excellent winning chances after 35...c3! 36 bxc3 Bxa4 (Illescas) – the a-pawn will be a major threat.

35...cxb3 36 Kxg1 Bh5!! 0-1 (Diagram 51)

An exquisite finish – Black wins a piece. A fine game from Black – a model of how to play this ending.

Game 37

□ **J.Magem Badals** ■ **A.Kovalev**

European Team Championship, Batumi, 1999

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Ne7 8 Qf4 Be6!? (Diagram 52)

Another concept, which we've touched on before: Black allows an exchange of queens and even a ruination of his kingside pawn structure at the same time, relying on rapid development, good piece activity and open lines to provide sufficient compensation. 8...Be6 was first played in a high-profile game by Alexei Shirov against Anand but, contrary to the general belief, it wasn't the

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result of home preparation. In fact Shirov had been influenced by an earlier game between Kasparov and Topalov, where the Bulgarian GM introduced a similar idea with 8...Ng6. However, at the board Shirov couldn't quite recall the details of the Kasparov-Topalov game and in his confusion played 8...Be6. The result was a strong novelty which has been repeated by many top-class GMs! White is still pretty much obliged to exchange queens, and with 8...Be6 Black achieves even quicker development than with 8...Ng6.

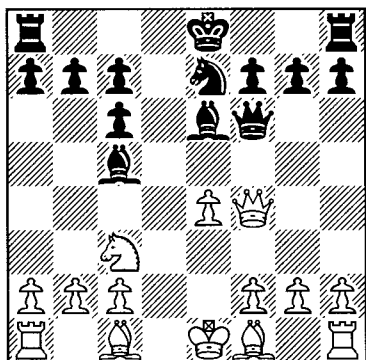


Diagram 52 (W)

Accepting further weaknesses

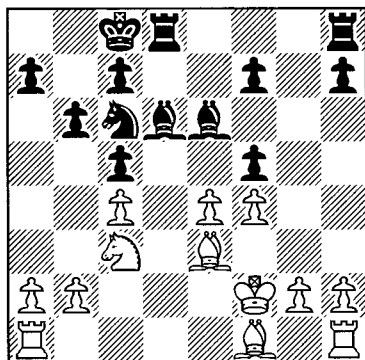


Diagram 53 (W)

e4-e5 or exf5?

9 Qxf6 gxf6 10 Na4

We've seen this move so many times before – White pushes the bishop off its favourite diagonal.

V.Anand-A.Shirov, Linares 1997 continued 10 f4 f5 11 Bd2 0-0-0 12 0-0-0 Rhg8 13 g3 h5! and Black had reasonable counterplay.

10...Bb4+!

Black wants to induce c2-c3 before dropping his bishop back to d6 so that then there will be a threat of ...b7-b5, trapping the knight on a4.

11 c3

After what I've said before about the dark-squared bishops, I can't really let this move pass without mentioning 11 Bd2, which to me does look more logical. That said, following 11...Bxd2+ 12 Kxd2 0-0-0+ 13 Bd3 b6 14 Rae1 c5 15 Kc1 Nc6 Black's pieces were coordinating quite well in D.Pavasovic-Z.Hracek, Rabac 2004. Even so, if there's an edge to be found for White in this line, I suspect it's somewhere in here.

11...Bd6 12 Be3

Controlling c5 and so dealing with the threat of ...b7-b5.

12...b6 13 f4 0-0-0 14 Kf2

14 f5?! temporarily pushes the bishop back but leaves Black with a juicy outpost on e5 (...c6-c5 and ...Nc6-e5 is an enticing plan).

14...c5!

Black is beginning to enjoy the fruits of provoking c2-c3; now White has to be wary of ...Bd7.

15 c4 Nc6

Eyeing the d4-outpost. Despite his dodgy pawn structure, Black can feel quite happy with his position.

16 Nc3 f5! (Diagram 53) 17 exf5

Probably not a mistake, but with Black's pieces looking more active it might have been wiser to keep the position blocked, even if this meant blunting White's kingside pawn majority. In fact, in a later high-profile game, Deep Fritz-V.Kramnik, Manama 2002, the computer varied with 17 e5 and after 17...Bf8 18 b3 Nb4! 19 a3?! Nc2 20 Rc1 Nxe3 21 Kxe3 Bg7, planning ...f7-f6, Kramnik won quite easily – it's comforting to know there are still certain positions where even the top machines struggle. Instead of 19 a3?!, Kramnik suggests 19 Rc1, assessing the line 19...Be7 20 a3 Nd3+ 21 Bxd3 Rxd3 22 Rhd1 Rxd1 23 Rxd1 c6 24 Kf3 h5 as level.

17...Bxf5 18 Rd1 Rhe8 19 Nd5 Nb4 20 a3?

20 Nxb4 cxb4 (Motwani) and now 21 Be2 was the way to stifle Black's counterplay.

20...Nc2! 21 Bc1 Nd4 (Diagram 54)

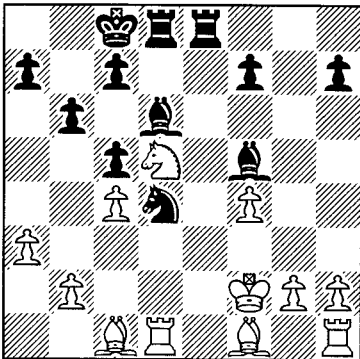


Diagram 54 (W)
A tale of two knights

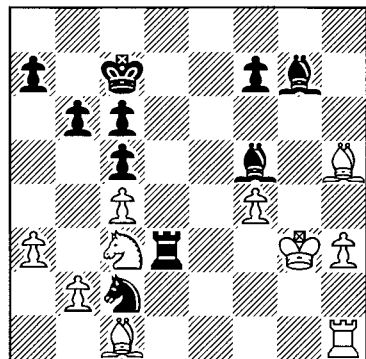


Diagram 55 (W)
Beginning of the end

Both knights look well placed, but the big difference is that White's knight can be eliminated with ...c7-c6. The main advantage Black has is that his pieces find excellent posts in the centre while White's struggle to do the same.

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**22 Be3 c6 23 Nc3 Bg4 24 Rd3 Bf8 25 h3 Bf5 26 Rd1 Nc2 27 Rxd8+ Kxd8
28 Bd2 h5! 29 Be2 h4!**

Fixing White's pawns on the kingside. Now White's only way to utilise his majority is with g2-g3 or g2-g4, but this leaves him with split pawns.

30 Bf3 Kc7 31 g4 hxg3+ 32 Kxg3 Bg7 33 Bh5 Rd8! 34 Bc1 Rd3+ (Diagram 55)

Black's rook infiltrates, signalling the beginning of the end for White. Perhaps it would have been less painful if he had allowed a neat mate with 35 Kh4 Bf6.

35 Kf2 Bd4+ 36 Ke2 Bxc3 37 bxc3 Rxc3 38 Bxf7 Nd4+! 39 Kd1

Or 39 Kf2 Rc2+ 40 Ke3 Re2 mate.

39...Bc2+!

This is decisive – White must lose material.

40 Ke1

40 Kd2 loses a rook after 40...Rd3+ 41 Ke1 Rd1+.

40...Be4! 41 Bd2 Nf3+ 42 Ke2 Nxd2 43 Kxd2 Rd3+! 44 Ke2 Rd7! 0-1

The final tactic. With both rook and bishop attacked, White throws in the towel.

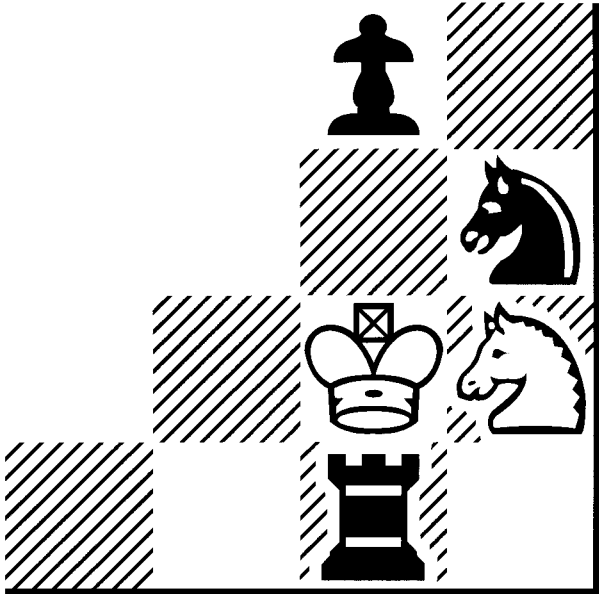
Points to Remember

- 1) The 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 variation often quickly winds up in an endgame (or, perhaps more precisely, a queenless middlegame) after an early Qf4 or Qg5. It's in White's interest to provoke such an exchange in order to dampen Black's development advantage and increase the importance of White's superior structure. Black players who prefer fighting with the queens on the board should seriously consider 6...bxc6 or 5...bxc6, while White players who are not especially keen on endgames should probably stick to 5 Be3 or 5 Nb3.
- 2) For White in particular, routine development is often less important than moves that seemingly flout traditional opening principles but perform concrete objectives – moves such as Nc3-a4, Qd2-a5 and Qd2-e3 are commonly seen. Game 30 is a particularly good illustration of this theme.
- 3) Black's dark-squared bishop on c5 is generally his best minor piece and a major source for his counterplay. White normally tries to either trade off this bishop or else force it from the a7-g1 diagonal with Nc3-a4 or Be3.
- 4) In the 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 line Black often tries to castle queenside. The four pawns on the a-, b- and c-files offer good protection for the king, and Black is free to use his kingside pawns in an attack on the other side of the board.

Chapter Five

4...Bc5 5 Be3

- ▨ Introducing 5 Be3
- ▨ Black Plays 7...Ne5
- ▨ Seventh Move Alternatives for Black
- ▨ Points to Remember



Introducing 5 Be3

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 (Diagram 1)

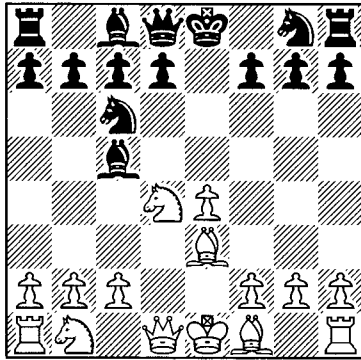


Diagram 1 (B)
White plays 5 Be3

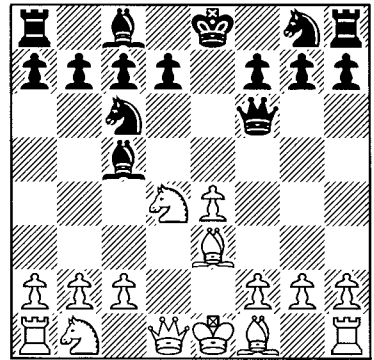


Diagram 2 (W)
Hitting d4 again

Traditionally 5 Be3 has been the choice of most players, and it's easy to see why. Not only does White develop a piece and protect the knight on d4, he creates a threat himself: Nxc6 followed by Bxc5.

5...Qf6! (Diagram 2)

Upping the ante by again hitting d4 – Nxc6 is no longer a threat as it can be met by ...Bxe3. The queen is actively placed on f6, and now there's also the possibility of a later ...Qg6.

Other moves are playable but less challenging:

a) 5...Nxd4 6 Bxd4 Bxd4 7 Qxd4 – we dealt with similar positions in the second section of Chapter 1; basically this simplification does Black no favours.

b) 5...Bb6 is a sensible-looking way of dealing with the Nxc6 threat. Indeed, after the natural 6 Nc3 Black can transpose to Chapter 1 with 6...Nf6, and 6...Nge7 is also playable. From White's point of view, perhaps a more testing reply is 6 Nf5!. The exchange of dark-squared bishops isn't such a bad thing for Black, but the tempo expended on ...Bb6 makes it difficult for him to challenge White's 'pure Scotch' centre. For example, 6...Bxe3 7 Nxe3 (the knight is well placed on e3, holding up ...d7-d5) 7...Nf6 8 Nc3 0-0 9 g3!? d6 10 Bg2 Bd7 11 0-0 Qc8 12 Re1 left Black with a solid but very passive position in E.Sveshnikov-J.Barle, Ljubljana 1994 – White's niggling space advantage given by the pure Scotch centre cannot be underestimated.

6 c3

By far the most popular move. White secures the knight on d4 but at a cost of

taking away the natural developing square for the c3-knight. Alternatively:

a) 6 Nb5!? is a very interesting way of sharpening the position at this early stage – see Game 38 for more details.



NOTE: Nd4-b5, attacking the c7-pawn, is a very common way for White to exploit Black's early queen move.

b) 6 Nxc6?! allows Black to inflict White with doubled isolated e-pawns after 6...Bxe3! 7 fxe3, hardly a desirable situation for White. Now 7...Qxb2!? is interesting, while Black players who wish for something a bit safer could try 7...bxc6, planning to meet 8 Qd4 with 8...c5! 9 Qxf6 Nxf6 10 Nc3 Bb7, and 8 Bc4 with 8...d5! 9 exd5?? Qh4+!.

6...Nge7! (Diagram 3)

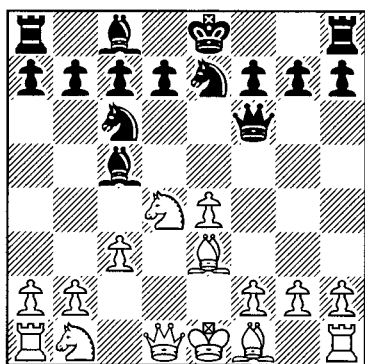


Diagram 3 (W)

Black plays 6...Nge7

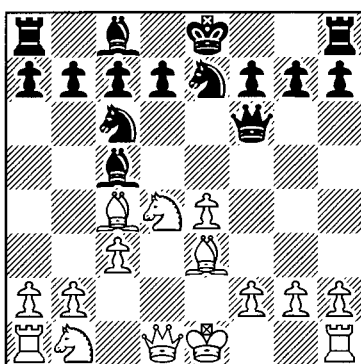


Diagram 4 (B)

7 Bc4 – the main move

6...d6 is also possible, but 6...Nge7 is more flexible – in many lines Black can hope to liquidate White's centre with ...d7-d5. Black's main alternative here is 6...Qg6!?, which is covered in Game 39.



NOTE: Nudging the queen from f6 to g6, hitting both the g2- and e4-pawns, is a typical idea for Black in this line.

7 Bc4! (Diagram 4)

Placing the bishop on the most active diagonal and making it more difficult for Black to achieve the ...d7-d5 break.



NOTE: We have now reached the main starting position for the 4...Bc5 5 Be3 Scotch.

In the next section we will deal with Black's most popular move here, 7...Ne5, while the final section covers Black's seventh move alternatives.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

Before moving on, here's a quick run through a few white alternatives to 7 Bc4:

a) 7 g3, preparing Bg2 is covered in Game 40.

b) 7 Be2 is an unassuming developing move that does nothing to prevent Black from carrying out his plan, and following 7...0-0 8 0-0 d5! Black can be more than satisfied with his opening's work. The point is 9 Nd2?, protecting e4, simply loses a pawn after 9...Nxd4 10 cxd4 Bxd4, while 9 Nb5?! doesn't work after 9...Bxe3! 10 Nxc7 (or 10 fxe3 Qe5!) 10...Bf4! 11 Nxa8 dxe4 (**Diagram 5**)

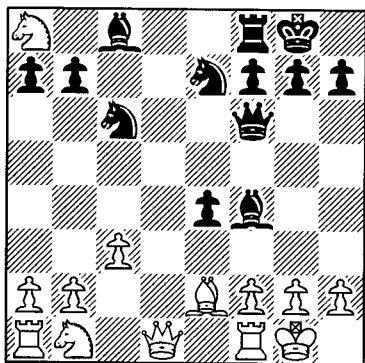


Diagram 5 (W)
The knight is stranded

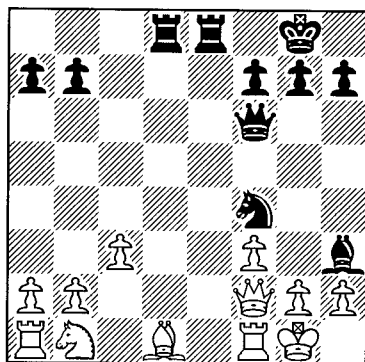


Diagram 6 (W)
A massacre!

when Black will soon win the stranded knight on a8 and end up with a material advantage.



NOTE: There are quite a few tactical lines where the white knight ends up on a8. The assessments of these positions usually depend on whether it can return to safety or whether Black can round up this piece.

White should probably make do with something like 9 Nxc6 Qxc6 10 Bxc5 Qxc5 11 Nd2 but following 11...Be6 or 11...Rd8 Black has no problems at all.

c) 7 Qd2 plans Nb5, as now White is able to recapture on e3 with the queen. However, in the game M.Lupu-A.Miles, Cappelle la Grande 1994, some dynamic play from England's first grandmaster exposed the flaws in White's plan: 7...0-0 8 Nb5 Bxe3 9 Qxe3 d5! (utilising his better development) 10 Nxc7 Rb8 11 Nxd5 (after 11 exd5 both 11...Ne5 and 11...Nf5 are promising) 11...Nxd5 12 exd5 Nb4!! 13 Qd2 (or 13 cxb4 Qxb2 14 Qc3 Re8+ 15 Kd1 Qxf2 with a very strong attack for Black, who plans ...Bg4+ and ...Rbc8) 13...Re8+ 14 Be2 Bg4 15 f3 Nxd5! 16 0-0 (16 f3g4 Ne3! and the ideas of ...Rbd8 and ...N3g2+ are decisive; 16 Qxd5 Rbd8 17 Qxb7 Qh4+! 18 g3 Qh6 19 f3g4 Qc1+

20 Kf2 Qe3+! 21 Kg2 Qxe2+ 22 Kh3 Rd6! and White is getting mated) 16...Nf4!
17 Bd1 Rbd8 18 Qf2 Bh3! 0-1 (Diagram 6)

The final position is not pleasant viewing for White players!

Statistics

My database contains over 6000 games with 5 Be3, White scoring 55%. Looking at alternatives from the main line, 6...Qg6 has scored very well (54% as Black), but this is only taking 300 games into account.

Game 38

□ L.Kritz ■ P.Hohler

Triesen 2005

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 Nb5! (Diagram 7)

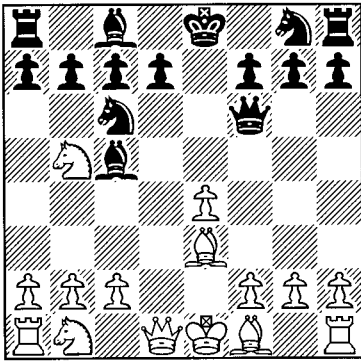


Diagram 7 (B)
Blumenfeld's 6 Nb5!

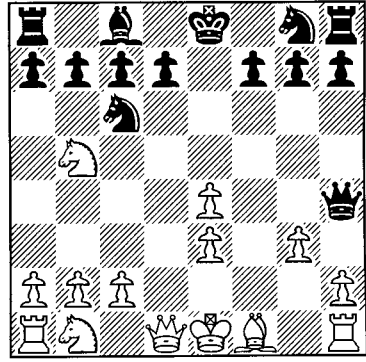


Diagram 8 (B)
Stick or twist?

A seemingly bizarre move that has received either very little or no coverage. It's true that we've already seen the idea of Nb5 in this chapter, but here not only can Black inflict doubled e-pawns on White with ...Bxe3, he can also safely defend the c7-pawn with his queen. According to the *Oxford Companion to Chess*, 6 Nb5 is a 'discredited line of the Scotch Game introduced by Blumenfeld in 1904.' So why has it recently been played with success recently by ex FIDE World Champion Ruslan Ponomarev plus Scotch experts Nataf and Zelcic? Do they know something we don't?

6...Bxe3 7 fxe3 Qh4+!?

If Black's queen is heading back to d8, it's probably worth inducing the slightly weakening g2-g3 first by throwing in this check. Here, however, Black is intending something sharper.

7...Qxb2? is a bit too greedy: 8 N1c3 simply threatens both Nxc7+ and Rb1.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

The move 7...Qe5, however, is an important option. If White now proceeds routinely, Black will simply drive away the b5-knight leaving White with no compensation for his eyesore on the e-file. However, 8 Nd2! suddenly threatens Nc4. The fact that Black's best move is probably 8...Kd8! illustrates that maybe 6 Nb5 has to be taken seriously after all.

8 g3 (Diagram 8) 8...Qxe4!?

The 'safe' way for Black to play is 8...Qd8 9 Qg4! (anything else allows Black to consolidate) and now the old game R.Spielmann-A.Rubinstein, Stockholm 1919 continued 9...g6 10 Qf4 d6 11 Bc4 Be6 12 Bxe6 fxe6 13 0-0 Nge7 14 N1c3 Ne5 15 Nd4 Kd7! 16 Qf6 Qg8 with an unclear position. Instead of 14 N1c3, I quite like the idea of 14 Nd4!?, the point being to answer 14...Kd7 with 15 Nxe6! when 15...Kxe6? 16 Qg4+ Ke5 17 Nd2 sees Black's king marching up the board to its probable demise. Earlier on, instead of 9...g6, the move 9...Kf8 has been played a few times. Despite the fact Black has lost his castling rights, this may well be a better bet. Crucially, after 10 Qf4 d6 11 Bc4 Ne5 12 0-0 the lack of ...g7-g6 allows Black to play 12...Nf6!

9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 Qxh1 11 Qd6!?

Bringing the a8-knight back into play – the immediate threat is Qc7+.

11...Nf6 12 Nd2 (Diagram 9)

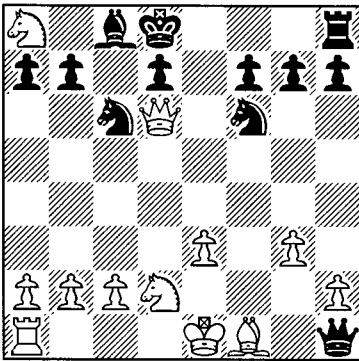


Diagram 9 (B)
A crucial moment

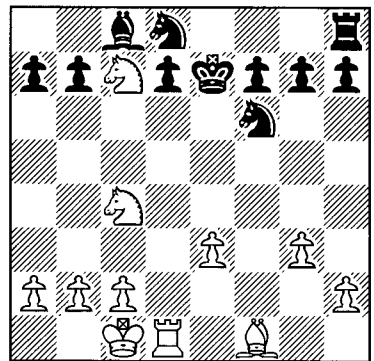


Diagram 10 (W)
On the wrong track

A critical moment. White is about to castle queenside when the attack on Black's king becomes quite dangerous. Black would like to simplify the position (a queen exchange would be wonderful) when the stranded knight on a8 would become vulnerable.

12...Qd5

This is certainly not the only move:

a) 12...Ne8 13 Qf4 Qd5 was assessed by Keres as a clear advantage for Black, but following 14 0-0-0 things are far from clear, for example 14...Qe5 (14...Qxa2 15 Nb3! f6 16 Bb5! also looks good for White) 15 Qxf7 Qb8 16 Ne4 Qxa8 17 Bh3 and if Black has to play Fritz's suggestion of 17...Nb8 here then I don't rate his chances.

b) J.Mieses-E.Sergeant, Hastings 1945 continued 12...Ne4!? 13 Qc7+ Ke7 14 0-0-0 Nxd2 15 Bb5 Qd5 16 Bxc6 bxc6 and here 17 Qxa7! (Davies) looks good for White – the d2 knight will drop off and the knight on a8 is able to re-enter the game. However, perhaps Black can improve his play with 16...Qxc6!?, as 17 Qe5+? Kd8 18 Qxg7 Re8 19 Rxd2 b6 sees Black picking up the knight on a8.
13 Qc7+ Ke7 14 0-0-0 Qe5

Trying to ease his position by exchanging queens, even if this means letting White's a8-knight back into the game. 14...Qxa2? 15 Nb3 sidelines the black queen. One (certainly not forced!) variation is 15...a5 16 Nb6 a4 17 Nd4 Qa1+ 18 Kd2 Qxb2 19 Nf5+ Ke6 20 Qd6+ Kxf5 21 Bd3+ Kg4 22 Qf4+ Kh3 23 Bf5+ Kg2 24 Qf1+ Kxh2 25 Qf2 mate!

15 Nc4! Qxc7 16 Nxc7 Nd8? (Diagram 10)

Black wants to challenge the knight with ...Ne6, but this allows the other knight to become a monster on d6. 16...Kd8 is much stronger, although White retains some advantage after 17 Nb5 d5! (otherwise Nd6 kills the c8-bishop) 18 Bg2 (F.Guez-S.Justum, French League 2002) 18...Ke7 19 Bxd5 Nxd5 20 Rxd5 Be6 21 Rc5.

17 Nd6! Ne6?

Black's only chance was to admit his mistake with 17...Nc6!.

18 Ncb5!

Oops! Suddenly White is playing Na7, winning the poor bishop on c8.

18...Ng4 19 Nxa7 Nxe3 20 Naxc8+ Kd8 21 Nxf7+ Kxc8 22 Nxb8 Nxd1 23 Kxd1 1-0

I wonder if we'll be seeing more of Blumenfeld's 6 Nb5!? in the future? It certainly looks worth a punt as White.

Game 39

□ V.Baklan ■ D.Van Leent

Hoogeveen 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Qg6!? (Diagram 11)

An ambitious alternative to 6...Nge7. Black attacks the e4-pawn immediately and also introduces the option of ...Nf6. On the other hand, the queen is even further away from the defence of the sensitive c7-pawn, and in many lines White attempts to exploit this.

7 Qf3!?

I suspect that White's best tactic against 6...Qg6 is to proceed actively. As well

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

as defending e4, the queen on f3 covers the bishop on e3. White's plan is to play Nb5 and, after ...Bxe3, to recapture with the queen. Here are one or two other options:

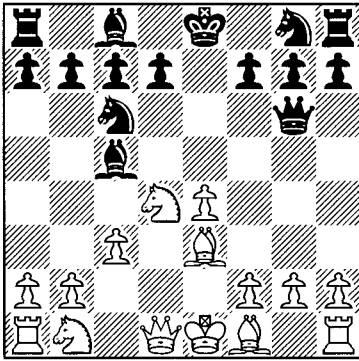


Diagram 11 (W)
The ambitious 6...Qg6

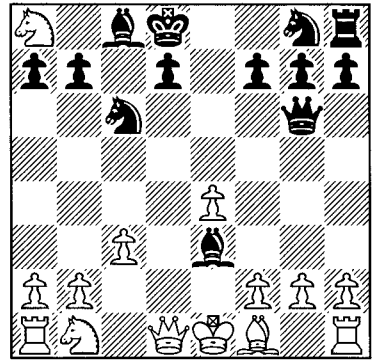


Diagram 12 (B)
Difficult to assess

a) The slightly weakening 7 f3 shouldn't cause Black any real problems, for example 7...Nge7 8 Nf5 Bxe3 9 Nxe3 0-0 has been played more than once, Black's plan being a quick ...f7-f5 break.

b) 7 Nd2 is the most natural-looking way to deal with ...Qxe4, but 7...Nf6! looks like a good response. One possible line is 8 Nf5!? Bxe3 9 Nxe3 0-0 10 Bd3 d5!.

c) The move Nd4-b5 is always a serious consideration, and it's no different here: 7 Nb5!? Bxe3! 8 Nxc7+ (8 fxe3 forces Black to play 8...Kd8! with a typically unclear position – Black's king is stuck in the centre, but White's doubled, isolated e-pawns make an ugly impression and this cannot be underestimated) 8...Kd8 9 Nxa8 (**Diagram 12**) after which Black retreats his dark-squared bishop (c5 and h6 are reasonable choices). Material-wise White is an exchange for a pawn ahead, and *Fritz* loves White's position. However, the knight on a8 is trapped and may well be lost. Perhaps objectively the position could be assessed as 'unclear', but it seems that not many are prepared to play this sort of position as White.

d) 7 Qe2! is a very tricky move, after which Black must be very careful. For example, 7...Qxe4?? loses to 8 Nxc6 Bxe3 9 Nd4!, and 7...Nf6?? is no better – 8 Nxc6! Bxe3 9 Ne5! Qg5 10 Nf3. Probably Black's best bet is 7...Nxd4!, e.g. 8 Bxd4 Bxd4 9 cxd4 Ne7 10 Nc3 0-0 11 0-0-0 and now Black can play 11...c6 intending ...d7-d5, or even 11...d5!? 12 exd5 Re8, a pawn sacrifice favoured by Romanishin.

7...Nge7?

At first sight this is a useful developing move, but unfortunately it pays no

attention to White's concrete threat of Nb5, and Black soon finds himself in hot water. There are many plausible alternatives for Black; I believe the following two are his best bets for a playable game:

a) 7...Nxd4!? 8 cxd4 (8 Bxd4!? is possible too) 8...Bb4+ 9 Bd2 (after 9 Nc3 I like the pawn sacrifice 9...d5!? 10 exd5 Bg4 11 Qg3 0-0-0 followed by ...Nf6 etc.) 9...Bxd2+ 10 Nxd2 Ne7 11 Bc4 with perhaps a small advantage for White.

b) 7...Ne5!? 8 Qe2 (**Diagram 13**)

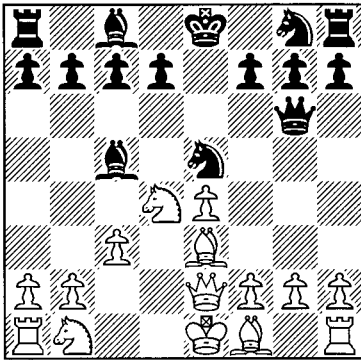


Diagram 13 (B)

A critical line

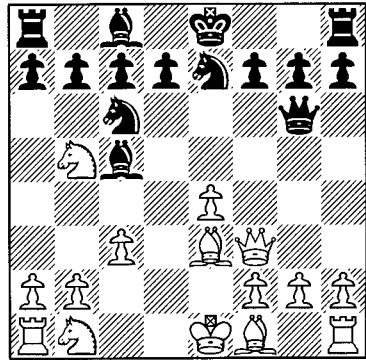


Diagram 14 (B)

c7 under fire

8...Nh6! (the e-pawn is poisoned: 8...Qxe4? 9 Nb5! Bxe3 10 Nxc7+ Kd8 11 Nxa8 and White also picks up the bishop on e3; 8...Nf6 9 Nb5! is still a problem for Black) 9 f4!? (now 9 Nb5 can be met by 9...Bb6 or 9...Qb6) 9...Neg4 10 f5 Qf6 11 Bg1! 0-0 12 Nd2 Ne5 13 0-0-0 (R.Ponomariov-I.Sokolov, Istanbul Olympiad 2000). Here Ponomariov claims a clear advantage for White, but following Postny's suggestion of 13...Qe7 intending ...f7-f6 and ...Nhf7, Black's position doesn't look bad – certainly the knight on e5 is well placed.

8 Nb5! (Diagram 14)

Of course!

8...Bxe3 9 Qxe3!

This is much stronger than 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 Bh6.

9...Kd8

As we've seen before, sadly for Black the only way to protect c7 is with the king. Black could offer a pawn sacrifice with 9...0-0 10 Nxc7 Rb8, but following, say, 11 Nd2 d6 12 Qg3! it's difficult to speak of any compensation.

10 Nd2 f5?

You would have thought that Black would try to keep things closed with his king in the centre.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

11 0-0-0! d6?

Now White wins by force. The last chance was 11...a6.

12 Nc4! (Diagram 15)

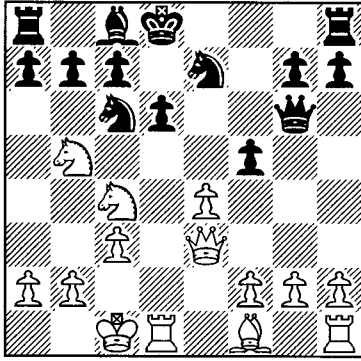


Diagram 15 (B)
Lining up Nxd6

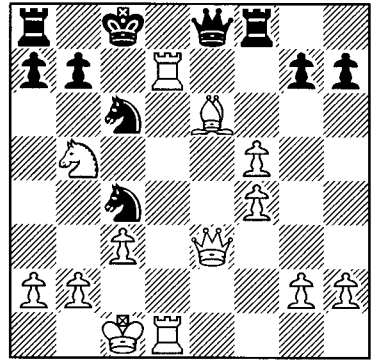


Diagram 16 (B)
Next up, it's mate

Lining up a decisive sacrifice on d6 – there's nothing Black can do about this.

12...Bd7 13 Ncxd6! cxd6 14 Rxd6 Qe8 15 Bc4 Ne5

Or 15...Nc8 16 Rxd7+ Kxd7 17 Rd1+ Ke7 18 Qc5+ Kf6 19 Qxf5+ with total devastation.

16 Rhd1 N7c6

16...Nxc4 loses to 17 Rxd7+ Qxd7 18 Rxd7+ Kxd7 19 Qd4+.

17 Be6 Rf8 18 f4 Kc8 19 exf5 Nc4 20 Rxd7! 1-0 (Diagram 16)

Spoilsport! It would have been more gentlemanly to allow 20...Nxe3 21 Rd8 mate.



NOTE: Despite this result, 6...Qg6 is a tricky move that could be a good practical weapon.

Game 40

□ P.Charbonneau ■ E.Bacrot

FIDE World Championship, Tripoli 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 g3

The most popular alternative to 7 Bc4. On g2 the bishop protects e4 and makes it difficult for Black to play ...d7-d5. The only problem is, it's not there yet...

7...d5! (Diagram 17)

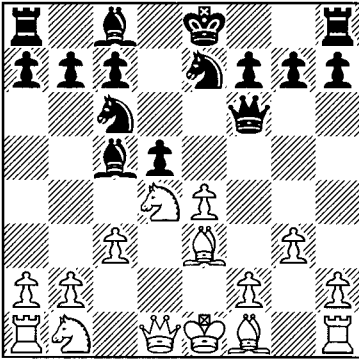


Diagram 17 (W)

7...d7-d5!

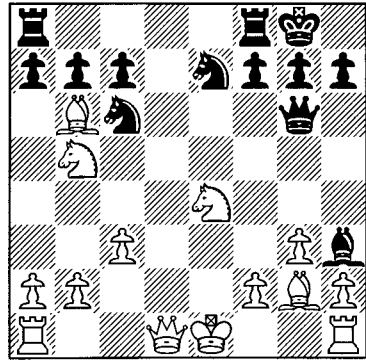


Diagram 18 (W)

12...Bc8-h3!!

Black takes full advantage! Other moves are possible, but it does seem like a good idea for Black to liquidate White's advantage in the centre while he can.



TIP: If Black can arrange an early ...d7-d5 in this line, it's usually beneficial because White loses the advantage of the 'pure Scotch' centre.

8 Bg2 dxe4

Black has a couple of other possible trades in the centre:

a) 8...Nxd4 9 cxd4 Bb4+ 10 Nc3 Bxc3+ 11 bxc3 dxe4 12 Bxe4 0-0 13 0-0 c6 has been played quite a few times (including by Karpov) and is a very solid way for Black to continue.

b) 8...Bxd4 9 cxd4 dxe4 10 Nc3 Bf5 11 Nxe4 (11 d5!? 0-0-0 12 Qb3 is an interesting way for White to mix things up) 11...Bxe4! 12 Bxe4 0-0-0 and now the game G.Ligterink-V.Korchnoi, Dutch Championship 1977 continued 13 d5? Nxd5!, winning a pawn as 14 Bxd5 is answered by 14...Qf5. 13 Qb3 is stronger, but 13...Qe6! virtually forces an exchange of queens, and following 14 Qxe6+ fxe6 Black has pressure on the d4-pawn and a nice outpost on d5 – enough compensation for White's bishop pair.

9 Nd2

9 Nb5!? can be answered by 9...Bxe3! 10 Nxc7+ Kf8 11 fxe3 Rb8 when if anything I prefer Black due to his better pawn structure. Black can either follow up with ...g7-g6 and ...Kg7 or else activate the h8-rook with ...h7-h5.

9...Bb6!?

A prophylactic measure against Nxe4. 9...Bxd4 10 cxd4 Bf5! 11 Nxe4 transposes back to note 'b' to Black's 8th move.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

10 Nxe4 Qg6 11 Nb5?!

Once again the attraction of this move is greater than its actual strength, although it takes a stunning move from Black to show why. After 11 0-0! Bg4 12 Qa4 0-0 13 Nc5! White was a touch better in E.Sveshnikov-L.Yurtaev, Podolsk 1990 – after 13...Bxc5 White can regain his piece with 14 Nxc6!.

11...0-0 12 Bxb6

Expecting 12...cxb6 13 0-0 with a slight plus for White but...

12...Bh3!! (Diagram 18)

A brilliant in-between move exploiting White's uncastled king. In fact Bacrot cannot be credited for discovering this idea because it had actually been played before. It's possible he found it independently, but more likely it's the product of diligent research.

13 Nf6+!

An excellent response – the only way to stay in the game. Now 13...gxf6? 14 Bxh3 Qe4+ 15 Kd2! cxb6 16 Qg4+! demonstrates one of the points of 13 Nf6+! – a queen exchange is forced so White's king is reasonably happy in the centre.

13...Qxf6! 14 Bxh3 cxb6 15 0-0 Rad8 (Diagram 19)

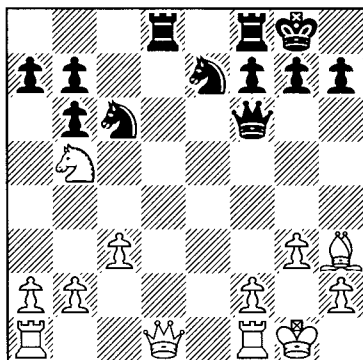


Diagram 19(W)
Black is slightly better

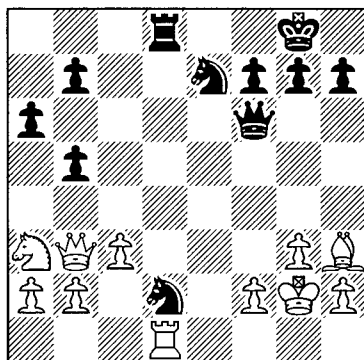


Diagram 20 (W)
What's the threat?

The smoke has cleared and Black has an edge due to his control of the d-file and White's slightly uncoordinated minor pieces. In particular, White struggles to find a meaningful role for his knight.

16 Qb3 a6 17 Na3 b5!

Sidelining White's knight by preventing Nc4.

18 Rad1 Ne5!

And now the threat is ...Nf3+ followed by ...Nd2.

19 Rxd8 Nf3+!

For the second time in the game Black plays a very useful in-between move.

20 Kg2 Rxd8 21 Rd1 Nd2! (Diagram 20) 22 Kg1??

This blunder loses immediately. Due to back rank problems, Black's previous move actually didn't threaten ...Nxb3, and White can save the game with the unlikely move 22 Nb1! (Postny), for example 22...Qc6+ 23 Kg1 Nf3+ 24 Kh1!. Despite a promising-looking position Black doesn't have anything better than a perpetual check with 24...Nh4+ 25 Kg1 Nf3+ 26 Kh1 Nh4+ as White is threatening to consolidate with Bg2.

22...Qd6! 0-1

There is no defence to the double threat of ...Nxb3 and ...Nf3+ followed by Qxd1 – White loses at least an exchange.

Black Plays 7...Ne5

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4 Ne5
(Diagram 21)

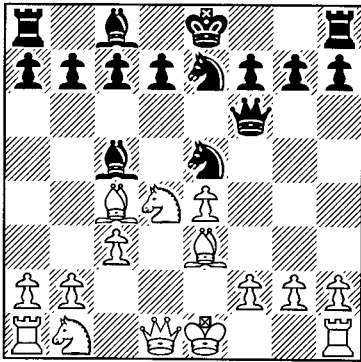


Diagram 21 (W)
7...Nc6-e5

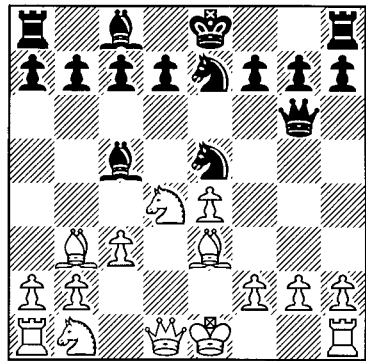


Diagram 22 (W)
Hitting g2 and e4

Black's most popular move, centralising the knight and gaining time by hitting the bishop on c4. Other options for Black are discussed in the next section.

8 Be2!

Due to tactical reasons this is regarded as a best retreat here. When compared to the innocuous 7 Be2, White can point to the fact that he can regain some time in many lines with f2-f4, attacking the e5-knight.

8 Bb3 is an outwardly attractive option. After all, on b3 the bishop does keep an eye on the d5-square. However, Black can continue with 8...Qg6! (**Diagram**

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

22) with a double attack on g2 and e4. Play may continue 9 0-0 Qxe4 (9...d5!? is also possible, the point being that 10 exd5?? actually loses immediately to 10...Bh3! 11 g3 Qe4!) 10 Nd2 (or 10 Nb5 Qc6!) 10...Qg4! 11 Nb5 Bxe3 12 fxe3 (12 Nxc7+? Kd8 13 Nxa8 Bxd2! is winning for Black, as 14 Qxd2 allows 14...Nf3+) 12...Qxd1 13 Raxd1 Kd8 14 Bxf7 d6 (P.Meitner-S.Rosenthal, Vienna 1873) when Black can be reasonably happy with his position. With the queens off the board his king is safe in the centre; he has a strong knight on e5 and can follow up with ...Bg4.

8...Qg6

This double attack on g2 and e4 is by far the most common continuation here, and even alternatives often simply transpose, for example:

a) 8...0-0 9 0-0 Qg6 transposes to note 'c' to Black's ninth move, while 9...d5 is covered in note 'c'.

b) 8...d6 9 0-0 (9 f4 Ng4! 10 Bxg4 Qh4+) 9...Qg6 is another way to reach the main line.

c) 8...d5!? 9 0-0! and now:

c1) 9...Qg6 transposes to Game 41.

c2) 9...dxe4?! 10 Nb5! is good for White: 10...Bxe3?? 11 Nxc7+ Kf8 12 Qd8 is a checkmate to keep in mind and, using the same theme, 10...Bd6 is met by 11 Bc5!.

c3) 9...0-0!? and now White can advance in the centre with 10 f4!? N5c6 11 e5. Funnily enough, 11...Qg6? has been played in quite a few games, including a couple of GM clashes, but *Fritz* immediately points out that 12 f5! wins material.

9 0-0 (Diagram 23)

9 Nb5? Bxe3! 10 Nxc7+ Kd8 11 Nxa8 Qxg2 12 Rf1 Bf4 is a very poor version for White of the typical Nb5 idea – Black will simply follow up with ...b7-b6 and ...Bb7.

9...d6

Bringing the c8-bishop into play. If Black wants to play ...d7-d6 rather than ...d7-d5 it makes sense to do so now because White must think about ...Bh3. There are three alternatives that are worth mentioning:

a) 9...d5 is covered in Game 41.

b) For 9...0-0 10 Nd2 d5 see Game 42.

c) I can find hardly any mention of 9...Qxe4 (**Diagram 24**) in earlier Scotch works, which is a bit surprising because, after all, a pawn is a pawn!

That said, this pawn grab is of course risky at best. The first thing to note is that, in comparison to the line 8 Bb3 Qg6 9 0-0 Qxe4!, the bishop is better on e2 than on b3. This is shown in the continuation 10 Nb5!? Qc6? 11 Bxc5 Qxc5 12 Qd4!. Instead Black should play 10...Bxe3 11 Nxc7+ Kd8 12 Nxa8 Bh6, although after 13 Re1 this may be a good Nxa8 line for White.

Perhaps more convincing for White is 10 Nd2! Qg6 (10...Qh4 11 N4f3!) 11

Bh5!, for example 11...Qd3 12 N4f3! Bxe3 13 Nxe5 Qxd2 14 Bxf7+ Kf8 15 fxe3 Qxe3+ 16 Kh1 Qxe5 17 Bh5+. Now 17...Nf5 loses to 18 Re1, and 17...Kg8 18 Qf3 Qf6 19 Qe3 is also winning for White.

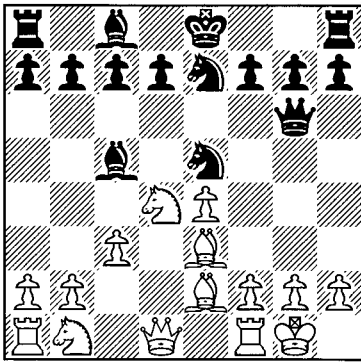


Diagram 23 (B)

Resisting the temptation for Nb5

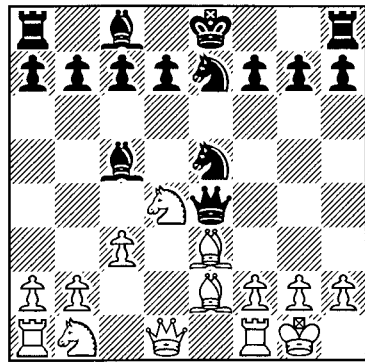


Diagram 24 (W)

Grabbing the e4-pawn



TIP: It's always worth questioning why certain moves are dismissed or even ignored by general opening theory.



NOTE: Be2-h5, attacking the queen on g6, is a very common weapon for White in this line.

10 f3

The most solid continuation – the e-pawn is protected and White can now answer ...Bh3 with Rf2. Alternatively:

a) 10 Kh1!? is covered in Game 43.

b) 10 Nb5?! Bh3! 11 Bf3 0-0-0! (**Diagram 25**)

is good for Black, for example 12 Bxc5? dxc5 13 Qe2 Nxf3+ 14 Qxf3 Rd3! and White can resign.

c) Following 10 Bh5!? Black can safely capture on e4: 10...Qxe4! 11 Nd2 Qh4! 12 Nb5 0-0! 13 Nxc7 Rb8 14 Bxc5 dxc5 when White has regained the pawn, but if anything Black has an edge due to his better coordinated pieces.

d) 10 f4!? is a dangerous pawn sacrifice: 10...Qxe4 11 Bf2 Bxd4! (11...N5g6? 12 Nd2! Qxf4 13 Nb5 threatens both Bxc5 and Nxc7+) 12 cxd4 N5g6 13 Nc3 Qxf4 14 Nb5 0-0! 15 Nxc7 Rb8 has been seen in quite a few games, and this looks okay for Black. For instance, 16 d5 (threatening Bxa7) 16...b6! 17 Bxb6 Qg5 18 Bd4 Nf5 when White has regained his pawn but again Black is well coordinated.

Starting Out: the Scotch Game

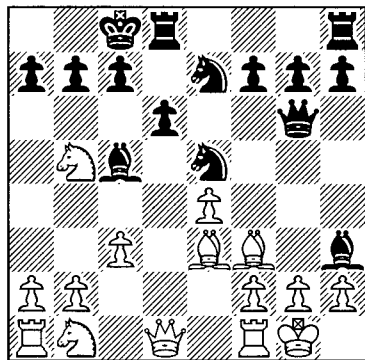


Diagram 25 (W)
Good for Black

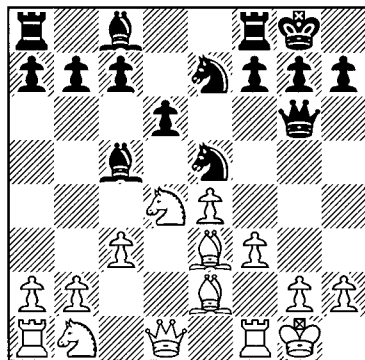


Diagram 26 (W)
The main line

10...0-0 (Diagram 26)

Reaching an important position for the 5 Be3 line, one that has been reached many times in practice. This position is discussed further in Game 44.

Theoretical?

Not overly so – it helps that both sides' development schemes are fairly natural. Some knowledge of the various e4-pawn sacrifices would be handy though.

Statistics

White has scored 53% in over 1110 games against 7...Ne5. For Black, 9...d6 (50%) has scored far better than the sharper 9...d5 (35%).

Game 41

□ A.Cena ■ R.Almeida

Correspondence 1996

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4 Ne5 8 Be2 Qg6 9 0-0 d5 (Diagram 27)

A very tempting move, especially since ...Bh3 is now on the agenda.

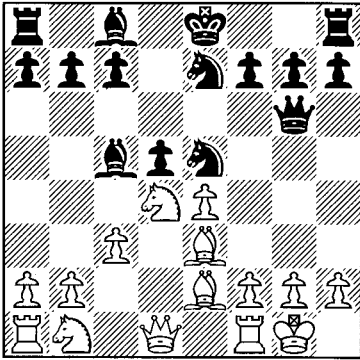
10 Bh5!

This bishop move, attacking the queen on g6, has been mentioned before as a common idea for White. Here it involves a very promising pawn sacrifice. Alternatives are less threatening for Black:

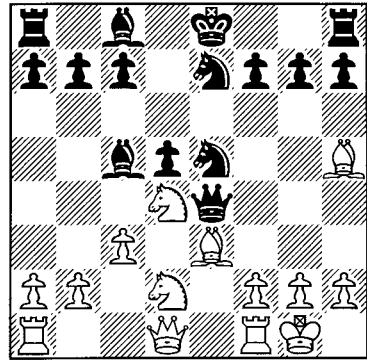
a) 10 Nb5?? Bh3! is winning for Black, for example 11 Nxc7+ Kf8! 12 Bf3 dxe4! 13 Bxe4 Qxe4 14 gxh3 Qg6+! 15 Kh1 Qc6+ and ...Qxc7.



WARNING: Once the black queen is on g6, White must always be wary of ...Bh3.

**Diagram 27 (W)**

9...d7-d5

**Diagram 28 (B)**

Queen under fire

b) 10 exd5?! Bh3! 11 Bf3 0-0-0! is very nice for Black – the d5-pawn is dropping and Black is very active.

c) 10 Kh1!?, preventing ...Bh3, is a tricky move that's been tried in a few games. White's idea is to answer 10...dxe4 with 11 Nb5!, threatening Nxc7+ followed by Qd8 mate. Now 11...Bb6? loses material after 12 Bxb6 Qxb6 13 Qd4!, while 11...Bd6 12 Bc5! is good for White. Geenen gives some interesting analysis after 10...Qxe4 11 b4 (or 11 Nb5!? Bh3!?), but perhaps Black's best course of action is 10...0-0!?, for example 11 Nd2 Ng4! 12 Bxg4 Bxg4 13 f3 Bd7 looks okay for Black. The game A.Grosar-D.Cepon, Slovenia 1992 continued 14 Nf5! Nxf5! 15 Bxc5 dxe4! 16 fxe4 (or 16 Bxf8 Ne3!) 16...Ng3+!! 17 hxg3 Bg4! 18 Nf3 Qh5+ 19 Kg1 Qxc5+ 20 Qd4 Qe7 and if anything Black was better due to White's kingside pawn weaknesses.

10...Qxe4

Grabbing the pawn, but Black has more than one alternative:

a) 10...Bg4 11 Bxg6! Bxd1 12 Bxf7+ Kxf7 13 Rxd1 Nc4 (or 13...dxe4 14 Nd2 and the e4-pawn is dropping off) 14 b4! Bb6 15 Nd2 has been played a few times in practice and looks better for White.

b) 10...Qf6 11 Nb5! Qb6 (11...Bxe3? 12 Nxc7+ Kf8 13 fxe3 exploits the attack down the f-file to win material) 12 Bxc5 Qxc5 13 N1a3! when White's idea is to answer virtually anything with the strong move Qd4!.

11 Nd2!? (Diagram 28)

The typical follow-up to Bh5: White gains more time by attacking the queen.

As always, Nd4-b5 is serious consideration: 11 Nb5!? Bxe3 12 Nxc7+ Kd8 13 Nxa8 Bc5 reaches one of those typical positions which is devilishly difficult to assess.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

11...Qd3

11...Qh4 12 Bxf7+! Nxf7 13 N4f3! regains the piece and leaves White with a very strong bishop on c5.

12 N4f3! Bxe3!?

12...Bd6 13 Nxe5 Bxe5 14 Bc5! has been played a few times – with Re1 up next White has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn. 12...Nxf3+ 13 Qxf3! is also very dangerous for Black.

13 Nxe5 Qxd2 14 Qf3 (Diagram 29)

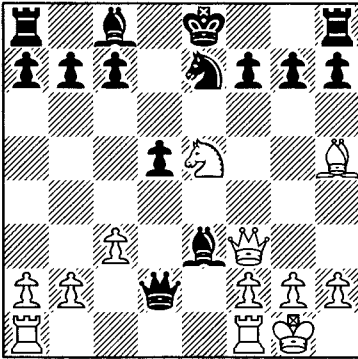


Diagram 29 (B)
One way out

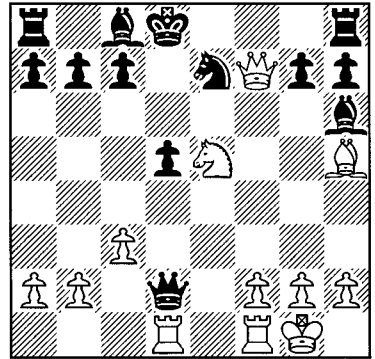


Diagram 30 (B)
The end approaches

14 Bxf7+ is very enticing, for example:

a) 14...Kd8? 15 Qf3! Bh6 16 Rad1 Qf4 17 Rxd5+! Nxd5 18 Qxd5+ Ke7 19 Re1 has been seen in a few correspondence games – White has a crushing attack.

b) 14...Kf8! is a much tougher nut to crack: 15 fxe3 Qxe3+ 16 Rf2 Qxe5 and White has a few attractive discovered checks, but nothing decisive.

14...Bh6?

A decisive mistake. Black can stay very much in the game with 14...0-0! 15 Bxf7+ Kh8. Now 16 Qxe3 Qxe3 17 fxe3 Bf5! is probably only a bit better for White. The move 16 fxe3, threatening to trap Black's queen with Rf2, is more ambitious, but things are still far from clear after 16...Qxb2!.

15 Qxf7+ Kd8 16 Rad1! (Diagram 29)

Unsurprisingly Rxd5+ will be decisive.

16...Qxb2 17 Rxd5+! Nxd5 18 Qxd5+ Ke7 19 Nc6+! bxc6 20 Re1+ 1-0



NOTE: If White knows what he's doing, 9...d5 is a very risky move for Black to play.

Game 42

□ S.Rublevsky ■ Peng Xiaomin

Yerevan Olympiad 1996

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4 Ne5 8 Be2 Qg6 9 0-0 0-0 10 Nd2 d5!? 11 Bh5!

You should be getting used to this move by now!

Another option is the tricky 11 Nf5, but 11...Bxf5 12 Bxc5 Bh3 13 Bf3 Rfe8 is okay for Black, and after 12 exf5 Qb6 13 Bxc5 Qxc5 the f5-pawn is vulnerable.

11...Qf6

11...Qd6 is also possible, although this generally leads to the same position after 12 f4! N5c6 13 e5 Qh6.

12 f4! (Diagram 31)

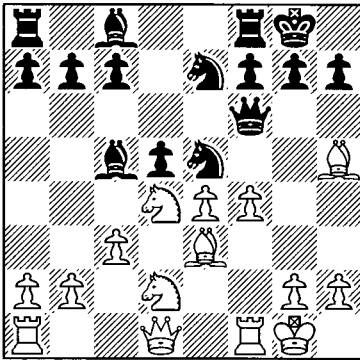


Diagram 31 (B)

12 f2-f4!

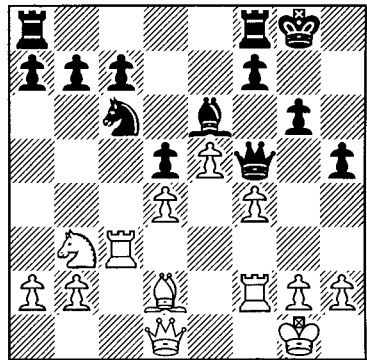


Diagram 32 (B)

Planning Rc3-g3-g5!



NOTE: If White can arrange to meet ...d5 with f2-f4 and e4-e5 it usually makes sense. The f4/e5 pawn wedge gives White a pleasant space advantage on the kingside.

12...N5c6 13 e5 Qh6 14 N2b3 Bxd4 15 cxd4! Nf5 16 Bd2!

16 Bc1? can be answered by 16...Ncx4! 17 Nxd4 Qb6.

16...Qe6

Black can grab the d4-pawn with 16...Ncx4 but then 17 Nxd4 Nxd4 18 f5! gives White the makings of a very nasty kingside attack, for example 18...Qb6 19 Be3 c5 20 Bxd4 cxd4 21 Qd2 and White intends to follow up with f5-f6.

I can't resist quoting Rublevsky's 16...g6 17 Bg4 Ncx4? 18 Nxd4 Nxd4 19 f5! Qg7 20 f6 Qh8 21 Bh6!, when White will checkmate the queen in the corner with Bg7!

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

17 Rf2 g6

Now 17...Nfxd4? runs into 18 Nxd4 Nxd4 19 Bb4!.

18 Bg4 h5 19 Bxf5! Qxf5 20 Rc1 Be6 21 Rc3! (Diagram 32)

Imaginative – White plans Rg3-g5 followed by a devastating f4-f5.

21...Rac8?

Black isn't alert to Rublevsky's idea.

22 Rg3! f6

Forced, but now Black's kingside is severely compromised.

23 Nc5 Nd8 24 exf6 Kh7

24...Rxf6? 25 Rg5! leaves the queen totally embarrassed, while 24...Qxf6 25 Nxe6 Nxe6 26 f5 is a simple but effective breakthrough.

25 Rg5 Qxf6 26 f5! Bxf5 27 Rgxf5! Qxf5

Desperately giving up the queen. After 27...gxf5 28 Nd7! Qf7 29 Nxf8+ Qxf8 30 Qxh5+ it's game over.

28 Rxf5 Rxf5 29 Qe1 Nf7 30 Qe6 Nd6 31 Nd7 Ne4 32 Qe7+ Kg8 33 Bh6 1-0

After 33...Rf7 34 Qe6! the g6-pawn drops and Black's defences collapse.

Game 43

□ S.Minyeyvtsev ■ M.Lacrosse

Borgerhout 2002

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4 Ne5 8 Be2 Qg6 9 0-0 d6 10 Kh1!? (Diagram 33)

Preventing ...Bh3 and once again offering Black that enticing pawn on e4.

10...Qxe4!

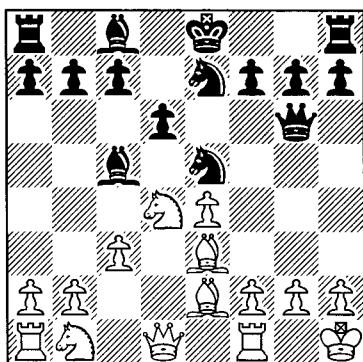


Diagram 33 (B)
That enticing e4-pawn

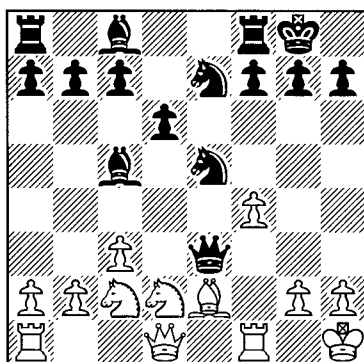


Diagram 34 (B)
Caught in a trap

The proof of the pudding is in the eating (or something like that!). If Black wants to play it safe he can try 10...0-0 when White can defend e4 with 11 f3 or 11 Nd2. However, one line that is certainly worth pointing out is 11 f4!? Qxe4!? 12 Nd2!! Qxe3 13 Nc2! (**Diagram 34**) when Black's queen is caught. However, this is not the end of the story – after 13...Ng4! 14 Nxe3 Nxe3 the position is still not totally clear as Black picks up quite a bit of material.

11 Nd2 Qg6 12 Nb5!

12 Bh5 Bg4! 13 Bxg6 Bxd1 14 Bxf7+ Kxf7 15 Raxd1 is fine for Black.

12...0-0!

The safest approach – Black returns the pawn in order to complete his development. 12...Nd5? is certainly not the answer after 13 Bxc5! dxc5 14 Nf3!.

13 Nxc7 Rb8

An interesting juncture. Just looking at the pawn structure, White has a slight advantage due to the isolated pawn on d6. However, I'm inclined to believe that Black's better coordinated pieces fully compensate for this.

14 Bh5?!

14 Bf4, which has been seen in a few games, is stronger, when Black usually chooses between 14...Bf5 or 14...Bd7, intending ...Bc6.

14...Qf5! (Diagram 35)

Threatening to trap the knight with ...Qd7.

15 Nb5 Nd3!

Suddenly White has problems covering all his weak points (h5, b5, b2). White decides on a temporary piece sacrifice. The problem is that temporary becomes permanent!

16 Qe2?! Bxe3 17 Qxe3 Qxb5 18 Be2 Bf5! 19 Ne4

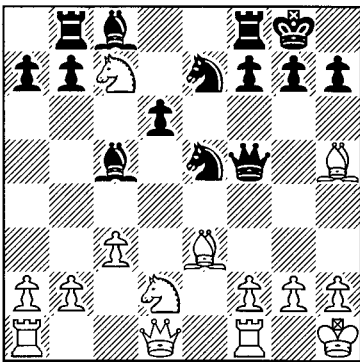


Diagram 35 (W)
Threatening ...Qf5-d7

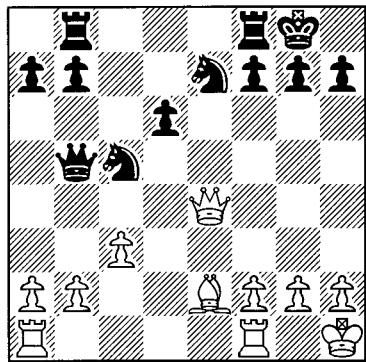


Diagram 36 (W)
White makes a mistake

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

19...Bxe4 20 Qxe4 Nc5! (Diagram 36) 21 Bxb5?

White had to play 21 Qxe7, even if 21...Qxb2 22 Qxd6 Ne4! 23 Qf4 (23 Qd3 Qxa1!) 23...Qxe2 24 Rae1 Nxf2+! 25 Qxf2 Qxf2 26 Rxf2 Rfe8 (Motwani) leaves Black a clear pawn up with excellent winning chances in the rook endgame.

21...Nxe4 22 Rfe1 d5! 23 f3 Nd6! 24 Rxe7 Nxb5

Black has retained his extra piece and has an easily winning position. After playing a few extra moves White eventually resigned (0-1).

Game 44

□ A.Haecker ■ B.Latzke

Unterkochen 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4 Ne5 8 Be2 Qg6 9 0-0 d6 10 f3 0-0 11 Nd2

11 Kh1!? usually leads to the main text after 11...d5 12 Nd2. If White tries the tricky 12 Nf5 Black has 12...Nxf5! 13 Bxc5 dxe4! 14 fxe4 (not 14 Bxf8?? Ne3!) 14...Nh4! when White must defend the g2-pawn with his rook (15 g3?? loses to 15...Qxe4+). If White is looking for something different, then 11 c4!?, clamping down on d5 and planning to develop the knight on c3, may be the way to go.

11...d5 (Diagram 37)

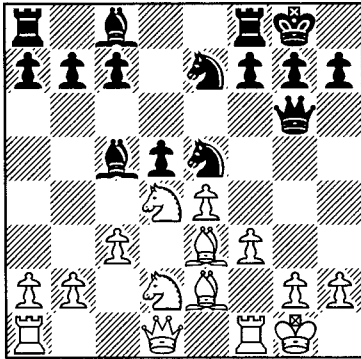


Diagram 37 (W)

...d7-d6-d5!

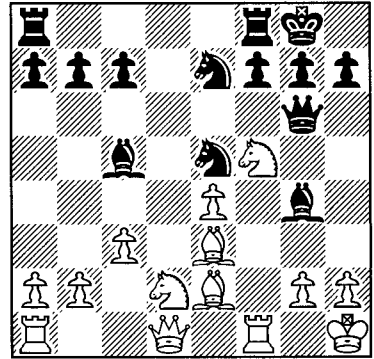


Diagram 38 (B)

Nf5 – an easy mistake

This is perfectly justified, despite the fact that Black has 'lost' a tempo with ...d7-d6 and then ...d6-d5. Note that White's extra move f2-f3 isn't necessarily helpful – for one thing the dangerous option of Bh5 is ruled out. That said, in D.Pavasovic-A.Beliavsky, Silivri 2003 Black demonstrated a perfectly good alternative plan: 11...Bb6!? 12 Nc4 Nxc4 13 Bxc4 Be6! 14 Bd3 f5!.



TIP: When fighting against the pure Scotch centre, apart from ...d5, Black's other pawn break is ...f5.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

a) 7...b6!? is considered in Game 45.

b) White is generally happy if Black captures on d4 early, as he can recapture with the c-pawn, erecting a strong e4/d4 pawn centre. Here is no exception: 7...Nxd4 8 cxd4! Bb4+ 9 Nc3 and White can be pleased with his position.

c) 7...Qg6? has been played quite a few times, but it's an inaccurate move order. White can take advantage with 8 Nxc6! Qxc6 (8...Qxg2 9 Rf1 Bxe3 10 Nxe7 will simply leave White a piece ahead) 9 Bxf7+! Kxf7 10 Qh5+ Ng6 11 Qf5+! Ke8 12 Qxc5 Qxe4 13 Nd2 (V.Ivanchuk-B.Gulko, Reykjavik 1991) when it's easy to forget that Black can never castle so his king is stuck in the centre.

8 0-0 Bb6!? (Diagram 40)

By retreating the bishop Black cuts out any tactics involving an undefended bishop on c5. 8...d6 performs a similar function, but following 9 Nxc6! Nxc6 10 Bxc5 dxc5 11 f4 White has managed to manipulate the pawn structure to his advantage. If Black wishes to protect his bishop on c5, then 8...b6 is better.

Black does have the serious option of transposing into the previous section with 8...Ne5 9 Be2 Qg6, while another possibility is 8...Qg6 9 Nd2 and now:

a) 9...Bxd4! 10 cxd4 d5 11 exd5 Nb4 12 Nf3 Nbx5 13 Ne5 Qb6 looks roughly level, A.Shabalov-L.Kaufman, Mashantucket 1999.

b) 9...Ne5 10 Nf5! (previously I've given this move a hard time but here it looks good) 10...Nxf5 11 exf5 Qc6 12 Bxc5 Qxc5 13 Bb3 d5 14 Re1 and White was better in V.Smyslov-N.Ioseliani, Prague 1995. With the bishop actively placed on b3 rather than e2 White can make good use of the pawn on f5. One possible line is 14...Nd3 15 Re3! Nxb2 16 Qh5 Nc4 17 Rh3 h6 18 Rg3 Nxd2 and now White wins with 19 f6! (Smyslov). The move 19 Qxh6?? also looks adequate until you discover the fantastic resource 19...Qxc3!!.

9 Na3!?

Given that 9 Nd2 drops a pawn on d4, White develops the knight in another way. From a3 the knight may drop back to c2 to add extra support to d4. In some circumstances White may also play Nab5 (despite Black's ...Bb6, in certain lines the c7-pawn can still be vulnerable).

White can also offer the exchange of bishops here with 9 Nc2!?, when Black's most solid is to play 9...d6, preparing to recapture on b6 with the a-pawn.

9...d6!? (Diagram 41)

The main choice, making room for the c8-bishop to develop. This position is discussed in Game 46.

Black has a few other possibilities here that are worth mentioning:

a) 9...Nxd4!? 10 Bxd4! (10 cxd4 d5! 11 exd5 Rd8 is Black's idea) 10...Bxd4 11 cxd4 d5! (breaking up White's centre) 12 exd5 Nf5 13 Nc2 with a small plus for White, L.Oll-Peng Xiaomin, Beijing 1997. White's extra pawn is doubled, but it's not that easy for Black to win it back.

b) 9...Rd8?! (preparing ...d7-d5) 10 Ndb5! Ne5 (or 10...a6 11 Nd6!) 11 Qh5 h6

12 Bxb6 cxb6 13 f4 Nxc4 14 Nxc4 was nice for White in A.Zapata-J.Rodriguez Talavera, Seville 1992.

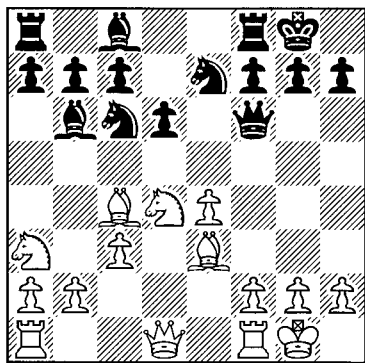


Diagram 41 (W)
Black remains solid

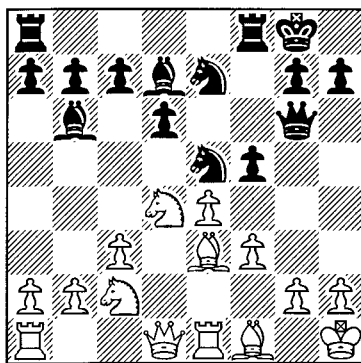


Diagram 42 (W)
The ...f5 break

c) 9...Qg6!? (planning to meet 10 f3?! with 10...Rd8! as White can no longer play Ndb5) 10 Re1 Ne5 11 Bf1 d6 12 Nac2 Bg4 13 f3 Bd7 14 Kh1 f5! (**Diagram 42**) with reasonable counterplay, A.Scarani-M.Scacco, correspondence 1999.

Theoretical?

Not particularly, although it's worth remembering why 7...Qg6 is no good.

Statistics

Black has scored 44% over 850 games with 7...0-0 and a surprisingly healthy 54% over 200 games with 7...b6.

Game 45

□ T.Nedev ■ A.Shirov

Calvia Olympiad 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4 b6!?

A typically imaginative idea from the English GM Jon Speelman, who's never been one to respect traditional opening theory. Black protects the c5-bishop and plans ...Bb7, and possibly even ...0-0-0.

8 0-0 Bb7 9 f4!?

An aggressive response. The violent but probably unsound pawn sacrifice 9 b4!? Nxd4 10 cxd4 Bxb4 has been played a few times, while more popular is 9 Nb5 0-0-0 10 Bxc5 bxc5.

9...0-0-0 10 b4! Bxd4

Black's only other option is 10...Nxd4!? 11 bxc5 Ne6.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

11 cxd4 Nxb4 12 a3 Nbc6 13 Nc3 (Diagram 43)

White's pawn sacrifice is very dangerous. If Black does nothing he is likely to be mowed down in the centre, which explains Shirov's decision.

13...d5! 14 Nxd5 Nxd5 15 Bxd5 Rxd5!

The point. At the cost of an exchange, White's impressive pawn centre has been shattered.

16 exd5 Ne7 17 Qg4+ Qf5 18 Qxf5+!

The pawn on g7 is most certainly poisoned: 18 Qxg7? Rg8 19 Qe5 Qh3! and Black is winning, for example 20 Rf2 Nxd5 21 g3 (21 Bc1 Nxf4!) 21...f6 22 Qe4 Nc3 23 Qc2 Rxg3+, or 20 g3 Rxg3+! 21 hxg3 Qxg3+ 22 Kh1 Bxd5+ (Postny).

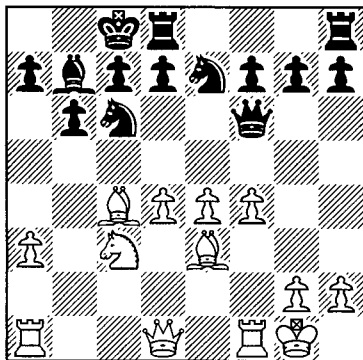


Diagram 43 (B)
An imposing pawn centre

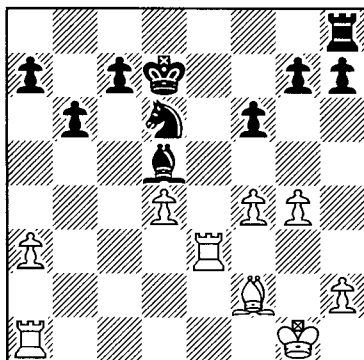


Diagram 44 (W)
Enough compensation

18...Nxf5 19 Bf2 Kd7 20 Rfe1 f6 21 g4 Nd6 22 Re3 Bxd5 (Diagram 44)

Black has a pawn and some excellent light-squared control – enough compensation for the exchange, but probably no more.

23 Rae1 Re8 24 f5 Ne4 25 Rc1 a5 26 Bg3 c6 27 Rb1 b5 28 Be1 a4 29 Bb4 g6 30 Rf1 Ng5! 31 Kf2 Ne4+ 32 Kg1 Ng5 ½-½

Game 46

□ T.Fogarasi ■ L.Karsa

Hungarian League 1992

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Qf6 5 Be3 Bc5 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4 0-0 8 0-0 Bb6 9 Na3 d6 10 f4! (Diagram 45)

The tricky 10 Ndb5!? has been played quite a few times. Black needs to be careful here, for example 10...a6 11 Nxd6! Rd8? fails to 12 e5! Nxe5 13 Ne4!. Instead Black should play 11...Bxe3! 12 Nxc8 Raxc8 13 fxe3 Qg6 (N.Vink-M.Solleveld, Leeuwarden 2001) when White is a pawn ahead but those doubled e-pawns are again a sorry sight.

10...Ng6

Given that Black is soon reduced to a passive position (the perennial problem when fighting against the pure Scotch centre), this might be a good place to look for an alternative. Perhaps 10...Be6, e.g. 11 Be2 d5! 12 e5 Qg6 13 Nac2 Nf5 14 Bf2 Nfxd4 15 Nxd4 Nxd4 16 cxd4 Bf5 with an unclear position, S.Bjornsson-B.Thorsteinsson, Iceland 1999 – White's kingside pawn majority is well blockaded.

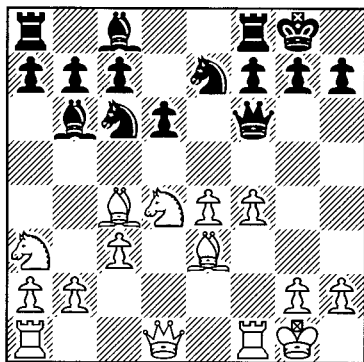


Diagram 45 (B)

Gaining space

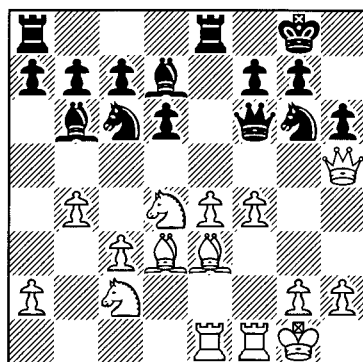


Diagram 46 (B)

Building up the pressure

11 Nac2 Na5 12 Be2!

12 Bd3 c5! 13 Nf3 c4! gives Black undeserved counterplay.

12...Re8 13 b4 Nc6 14 Bd3 Bd7 15 Qh5 h6 16 Rae1 (Diagram 46)

White has gradually built up a pleasant position, and Black is reduced to the waiting game. His next move doesn't help matters.

16...a6?! 17 Kh1 Re7 18 Ne2 Na7 19 Bxb6 cxb6 20 Ne3 Bc6 21 Nd5 Bxd5 22 Qxd5 Nc6 23 g3

White's advantage is clear – Black has vulnerable pawns on both d6 and b6.

23...Rc7 24 a4 a5 25 Qb5! axb4 26 cxb4 Re7 27 Qxb6 Rxa4 28 b5 Nb4 29 Bb1 Ra8 30 Rd1! Qb2!

With d6 dropping, Black sees a glimmer of counterplay...

31 Qxd6 Qxe2 32 Qxb4 Rc7!

I'm sure the next stage of the game was influenced by severe time pressure, as the crowd are now treated to a massive blunder-fest. 33 Rde1! sees off the queen and eliminates the danger.

33 e5? Nf8?

33...Ra2! 34 Bxa2 Rc2 and the threat of mate on the second rank has White

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

scrambling for a draw after 35 Bxf7+! Kh7! 36 Bxg6+ Kxg6 37 Rf2!! (but not 37 Rd6+? Kh5 38 g4+ Kxg4! 39 Rg1+ Kh5! – **Diagram 47** – and Black mates – incredible!) 37...Qxd1+! (37...Qxf2? 38 Qe4+! Kh5 39 Qf5+ g5 40 Qh3+ Kg6 41 Rd6+ and now it's White's turn to give mate) 38 Kg2 Qd5+ 39 Kg1 Qd1+ with a perpetual check.

34 b6?? (Diagram 48)

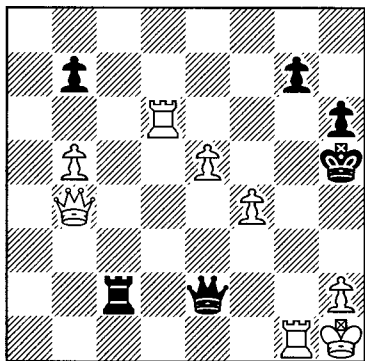


Diagram 47 (W)
It's Black who wins!

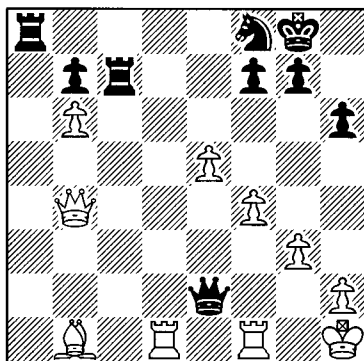


Diagram 48 (B)
Throwing it away?

Now 34...Ra2! 35 Bxa2 Rc2 wins after 36 Bxf7+ Kh7! 37 Rf2 Qxf2 38 Qe4+ Kh8.

34...Rc4?? 35 Qe7 Ra2??

Finally Black sees the idea, but unfortunately it now loses! Amazingly, however, Black can now draw by switching the order of moves: 35...Rc2!! 36 Bxc2 Ra2. It looks like White must have something here, but the best *Fritz* can come up with is 37 Qh4 Rxc2 38 Qh3 Qe4+ 39 Kg1 Qe3+ with another perpetual.

36 Bxa2 Rc2 37 Qxf7+ Kh7 1-0




White mates after 38 Qg8+ Kg6 39 f5+! Kh5 40 Bf7+ Kg4 41 Rf4+ Kh3 42 Rh4.

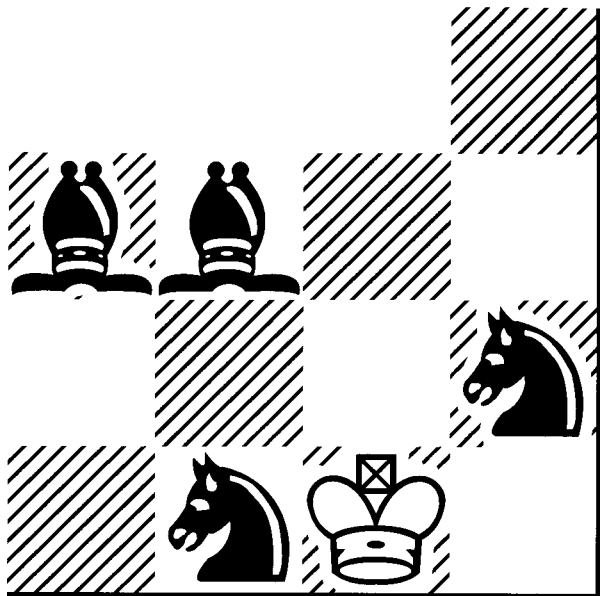
Points To Remember

- 1) After 5...Qf6, both sides must always be ready to calculate the consequences of an early Nd4-b5 by White.
- 2) The move ...Qf6-g6, attacking e4 and g2, is very common in this line. Likewise, White often harasses the queen with Be2-h5.
- 3) There are a few sharp lines where White offers his e4-pawn as a sacrifice.
- 4) In the positional lines we usually get a situation with the pure Scotch centre. If Black cannot arrange an effective ...d5 or ...f5 break he sometimes ends up in a passive position (see Game 46).

Chapter Six

4...Bc5 5 Nb3 and Others

-  Introduction
-  Illustrative Games
-  Points to Remember



Introduction

In dealing with the threat to d4 after 4...Bc5, so far we've considered capturing (5 Nxc6) and protection (5 Be3). White's only other option is to move the knight, and in this chapter we will cover this. By far the most important way is with 5 Nb3. Even the most hardened 5 Nb3 advocates would admit that this square isn't the most ideal location for the knight, but crucially for the development battle, White regains some time by attacking the bishop on c5. The other option here is 5 Nf5, which on the surface looks like a very aggressive move. However, as we see in Game 47, it's Black who seems to have all the fun here.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nb3 (Diagram 1)

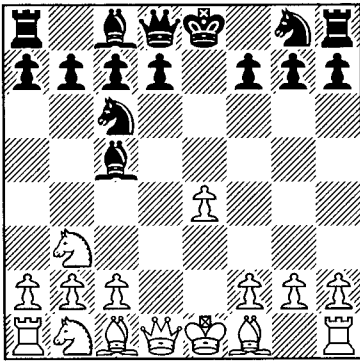


Diagram 1 (B)
Regaining lost time

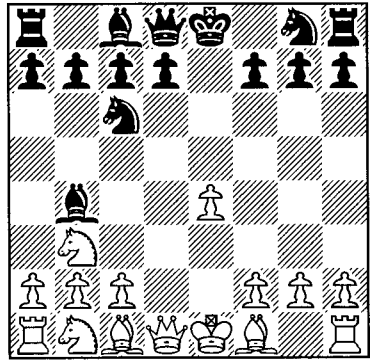


Diagram 2 (W)
A spoiler

Apart from 5 Nf5 (Game 47), White's alternatives are limited:

- a) 5 c3 takes away the c3-square for the knight, so it's logical for Black to revert to attacking e4. The move 5...Nf6! looks fine, for example 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 and here Black can continue with either 7...d5 or 7...d6 8 0-0 Ng4!.
- b) Following 5 Nf3 Black can utilise his small development advantage to equalise comfortably: 5...Nf6 6 Bd3 (6 Nc3? Ng4! would be very embarrassing for White!) and now 6...0-0 7 0-0 d5! or simply 6...d6.

5...Bb6

It's most natural to keep the bishop on its favourite diagonal, but Black has another option here in the shape of 5...Bb4+!? (Diagram 2), which has similar motives to 4...Bb4+!? in Chapter 7. For example:

- a) 6 c3 Be7 sees the point to Black's 5th move. The c-pawn has been lured to where the b1-knight normally goes – in many ways White would prefer to have

the pawn back on c2. One way for White to get around this problem is with 7 c4!?, taking a vice-like grip over the d5-square and preparing Nc3. For example, 7...Nf6 8 Nc3 0-0 9 Be2 Re8 10 0-0 a5! 11 a4 d6 12 Be3 Nd7 (L.Ljubojevic-S.Gligoric, Niksic 1978) when White's space advantage promises him a slight edge, but Black is very solid and has some good squares on the queenside – he can play ...b7-b6, ...Bb7 and perhaps ...Nc5 and/or ...Nb4.

b) 6 Bd2 a5! 7 a3 (7 Bxb4?! axb4! merely gives Black some action for his a8-rook) 7...Be7! 8 Nc3 Nf6 also looks okay for Black, e.g. 9 Bb5 0-0 10 0-0 a4! 11 Nc1 (or 11 Bxa4 Nxe4!) 11...d5!.. Now 12 Bxa4?? loses material after 12...d4! 13 Bxc6 dxc3!, while 12 exd5 Nxd5 gave Black good counterplay in E.Sveshnikov-R.Berzinsh, Riga 2003 (13 Nxa4 is answered by 13...Nd4!).

6 a4



NOTE: The a-pawn lunge is a crucial part of White's strategy in this line. White threatens to trap the bishop with a4-a5 and thus forces Black to make a small concession on the queenside.

Some players start with 6 Nc3, but transpositions to the main line are likely, for example 6...d6 7 a4 a6.

6...a6 (Diagram 3)

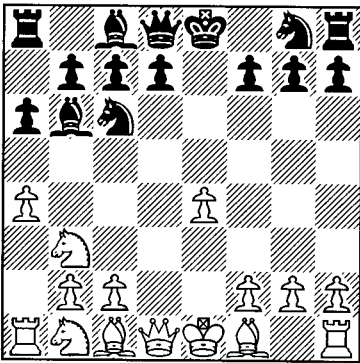


Diagram 3 (W)
Giving the bishop air

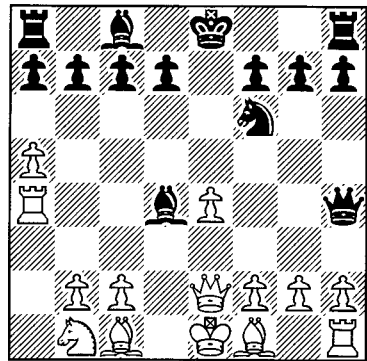


Diagram 4 (B)
Rook action

Giving the bishop a little bolthole at on a7. The main two alternatives, 6...a5 and 6...Qf6, are covered in Games 48-49, while 6...Qh4?! 7 Qe2! is not such a good idea for Black. Now 7...a6 8 g3 simply gains time by attacking the queen and prepares Bg2. Meanwhile 7...Nf6 8 a5! Nd4 9 Nxd4 Bxd4 10 Ra4! (**Diagram 4**) illustrates another point behind White's a-pawn advance – the a1-rook may suddenly enter the action!

Starting Out: The Scotch Game



NOTE: The idea of activating the a1-rook via a4 crops up quite often in this line.

7 Nc3 d6

7...Qf6 8 Qe2 transposes to 6...Qf6 (see Game 49). 7...Nf6!? is another natural move, although then Black must be ready to face the pin with 8 Bg5. It's worth pointing out, though, that after 8...d6 the immediate attempt to exploit the pin with 9 Nd5? runs into the tactic 9...Bxf2+! 10 Kxf2 Nxe4+!

8 Nd5

Demonstrating another positive of 6 a4: by inducing Black to move his a-pawn, White now gains further time as Black hardly wants to allow White to ruin his pawn structure with Nxb6, which would leave d6 very weak.

8...Ba7 9 Be3

We've seen this idea quite a few times before – White simply wishes to trade off Black's most active minor piece. There are a couple of more adventurous options:

a) 9 Bg5!? can be met by 9...f6, but much more ambitious is 9...Qxg5! 10 Nxc7+ Ke7 11 Nxa8 Nf6 12 Qd2 Qe5! (Rublevsky) when even though Black isn't winning the knight in the corner, he has fantastic counterplay.

b) The game G.Camacho-L.Valdes, Cuba 1998 soon became a myriad of complications: 9 Qf3!? Ne5!? 10 Qg3 Ng4! 11 Qc3!? Nxf2 12 Qxg7 Qh4! (12...Nxb1? 13 Bg5! is winning for White) 13 Nxc7+ Kd7 14 Nxa8 Nxb1+ 15 g3 Qxh2 (Diagram 5).

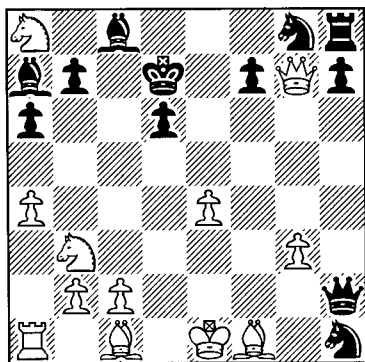


Diagram 5 (W)
What's going on??

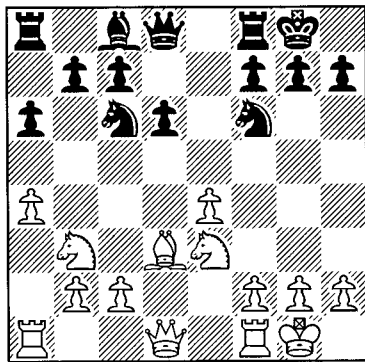


Diagram 6 (B)
A typical position

Of course this is certainly not forced from 9 Qf3 (there are quieter options for both sides) but it certainly looks like good fun to investigate!

9...Bxe3 10 Nxe3 Nf6 11 Bd3 0-0

If Black is unhappy keeping this structure he could liquidate the centre immediately with 11...d5!?

12 0-0 (Diagram 6)

This position has been reached quite a few times in practice. White hopes that his pure Scotch centre will promise him a small edge, but Black is not without counterplay (see Game 50).

Theoretical?

Not really. The main line given above is very positional and no major revelations have been discovered in recent years. It will be interesting to see if there are more games with 9 Bg5 and 9 Qf3.

Statistics

5 Nb3 has scored 50% over approximately 1800 games. There aren't too many games with 5 Nf5 d5!, but Black has scored a very impressive 64% here.

Illustrative Games

Game 47

□ Mayer ■ Tangra

playchess.com 2001

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nf5?! d5!

Ignoring the attack on g7 to grab the initiative with both hands.

6 N \times g7+

6 exd5 Bxf5 is already good for Black because 7 dxc6?? loses to the tactic 7...Bxf2+!. In fact White can save himself with 7 Qe2+! because 7...Nce7 8 Qb5+! regains the piece. However, after 7...Nge7! 8 dxc6 0-0! Black's development advantage is already looking very dangerous.

6...Kf8 7 Nh5

7 exd5?? allows 7...Kxg7! 8 dxc6 Bxf2+!. Instead 7 Nf5 doesn't lose immediately, but 7...Bxf5! 8 exf5 Qh4 followed by ...Re8+ is hardly appetising for White.

7...Qh4! 8 Ng3

As Peter Wells points out, there must be something wrong with White's strategy when six of his first eight moves are by the same piece!

8...Nf6! 9 Be2

The game J.Minchin-W.Wayte, London 1900 is a good illustration of the power of Black's attack: 9 exd5? Bg4! 10 f3 Re8+ 11 Be2 Nd4! 12 Nc3 Bxf3! and White can already resign in view of 13 gxf3 Nxf3+ 14 Kf1 Qh3 mate.

9...Rg8! (Diagram 7)

There's absolutely nothing wrong with regaining the pawn with 9...dxe4, but Black is obviously sensing a quick kill.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

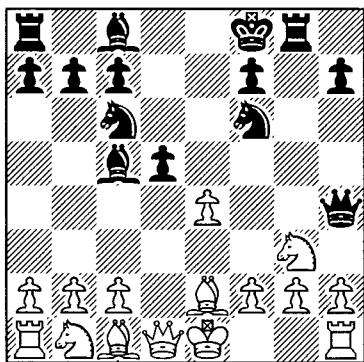


Diagram 7 (W)
Black goes for it

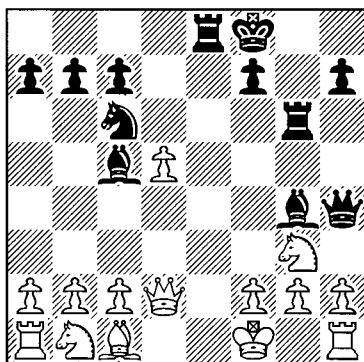


Diagram 8 (W)
Everyone's invited!

10 exd5?

Taking one liberty too many, although to be fair White already had to tread very carefully. For example, 10 0-0? runs into a decisive attack after 10...Ne5! (threatening ...Ng4) 11 Nd2 Rxd3!! 12 hxg3 Qxg3 13 Kh1 Qh4+ 14 Kg1 dxe4. Relatively best is Benes' suggestion of 10 Nc3!?, although I still like Black's position after the straightforward 10...dxe4.

10...Ng4! 11 Bxg4 Bxg4 12 Qd2

Or 12 f3 Re8+ 13 Kf1 Nd4!, threatening 14...Nxf3 15 gxf3 Bh3 mate and answering 14 fxg4 with 14...Qf6+.

12...Re8+ 13 Kf1 Rg6! (Diagram 8)

Now 14 dxc6 is met by 14...Rd6!.

14 Nc3 Nd4! 15 Na4

15 h3 allows the pretty 15...Be2+!, e.g. 16 Kg1 Nf3+! 17 gxf3 Qxg3 mate.

15...Nf3!! 16 Qc3

Or 16 gxf3 Bh3+! 17 Kg1 Rxd3+! 18 hxg3 Qxg3 mate.

16...Bd4 17 Qb4+ Kg8 18 h3 Rf6! 0-1

It would have been kinder to allow the elegant mate after 19 hxg4 Qxg3!! 20 fxd3 Nh2.

Game 48

□ C.Nilsson ■ K.Holmgren

Correspondence 1988

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nb3 Bb6 6 a4 a5 (Diagram 9)

When compared to 6...a6, the advantage this move has is that it prevents White from gaining more space on the queenside with a4-a5; as a consequence

the possibility of Ra4 is eliminated. On the other hand, strange though it may seem at the moment (it's currently protected three times), the a5-pawn may become vulnerable!

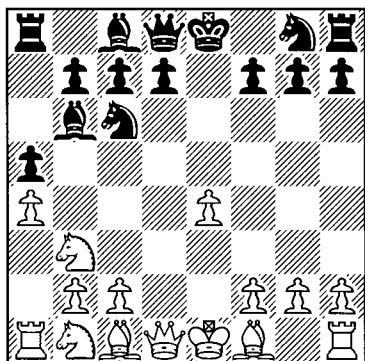


Diagram 9 (W)
Black plays 6...a5

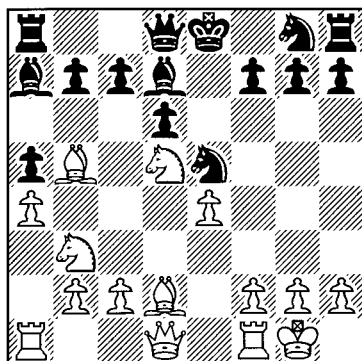


Diagram 10 (B)
Not fearing ...c7-c6

7 Nc3 d6?!

After this plausible move Black soon finds himself in difficulties. The idea of 7...Qf6!, threatening mate on f2, is stronger. After 8 Qe2 there's nothing wrong with 8...Nge7, but 8...Nb4! is another way of taking the sting out of Nd5, for example 9 Nd5 Nxd5 10 exd5+ Ne7 11 h4!? h6. Now the 'trick' 12 Bg5?? hxg5 13 hxg5 fails due to 13...Qxf2+! – an easy one to miss. Instead Jeroen Piket gives the line 12 Rh3! d6 13 Rf3 Qe5 14 Qxe5 dxe5 15 c4, planning c4-c5.



NOTE: Like the a1-rook, the rook on h1 often sees some early action along its original file in the 5 Nb3 Bb6 line.

8 Nd5 Ba7 9 Bb5!

Illustrating another dark side of 6...a5 – the b5-square becomes available for White. Suddenly the safety of the a5-pawn becomes a worry.

9...Bd7 10 0-0 Ne5

10...Nge7 looks more natural, although then 11 Bg5! keeps up the pressure. With 10...Ne5 Black introduces the threat of ...c7-c6, or so it seems...

11 Bd2!! (Diagram 10)

This move, which I believe was introduced by Van der Wiel, seems to have consigned this particular line to the dustbin.

11...c6

In the stem game (J.Van der Wiel-B.Gulko, Amsterdam 1987) Black decided to trust the validity of White's piece sacrifice, but after 11...Nf6 12 Bxa5 Nxd5 13

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exd5 White was a pawn ahead for no compensation.

12 Bxa5 b6

Alternatively:

a) 12...Qh4 13 Nc7+ Ke7 14 Bb4!

b) 12...Bxf2+!? 13 Rxf2 Rxa5 14 Nxa5 Qxa5 15 Nc3 cxb5 16 axb5 (Van der Wiel) and Black is unlikely to survive, for example 16...Qc7 17 Ra8+ Bc8 18 b6! Qc5 19 Nb5! Qxb5 20 Rxc8+ Ke7 21 Rc7+ Nd7 22 e5! d5 23 Qg4 g6 24 Rxd7+ Qxd7 25 Rxf7+!

13 Bc3 cxd5

13...cxb5 14 f4! is similar to the game. According to Van der Wiel, Black's best chance is with 13...f6! when he gives 14 Bxe5! fxe5 (or 14...dxe5 15 Bc4! cxd5 16 Qxd5 Nh6 17 Rfd1) 15 f4! cxd5 16 fxe5 Bxb5 17 axb5. This position must be winning for White: Black's king is stranded in the centre and I couldn't think of a worse-placed piece than the bishop on a7!

14 f4! (Diagram 11)

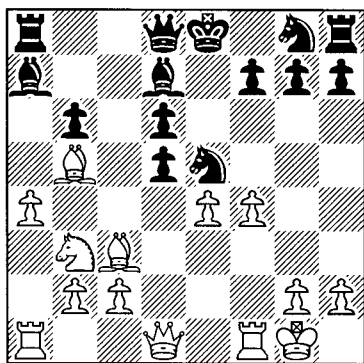


Diagram 11 (B)

14 f2-f4!

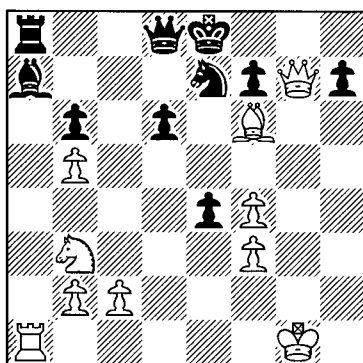


Diagram 12 (B)

Resignation – a good decision

14...Nc4

This loses without any fight. 14...Ng6 15 Bxg7 N8e7 is more resilient, although after 16 Bxh8 Nxh8 17 exd5 Black's position is hardly appetising.

15 Bxg7 Ne3 16 Qd3 Nxf1 17 Bxh8

The knight on f1 is trapped.

17...Nxh2 18 Qg3 Nf3+ 19 gxf3 Ne7 20 Bf6 dxe4 21 Qg7 Bxb5 22 axb5 1-0 (Diagram 12)

Black can barely move a single piece, for example 22 axb5 Kd7 23 Qg4+ Kc7 24 Nd4! threatening Nc6.

Game 49

□ S.Djurovic ■ D.Rajic

Novi Sad 1988

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nb3 Bb6 6 a4 Qf6

Taking the opportunity to force White to play a slightly awkward move (blocking the f1-bishop) to deal with the threat to f2.

7 Qe2 a6

Strictly speaking a4-a5 isn't winning a piece as Black has the resource ...Nd4, but it still makes sense to give the bishop a retreat square. For example, 7...Nge7 8 a5! Nd4 9 Nxd4 Bxd4 10 c3 Bc5 11 e5! and now the only way to avoid the bishop being trapped with b2-b4 is by playing 11...Qc6!, preparing to meet 12 b4? with 12...Bxb4!. However, after 12 Nd2!, planning Nb3 or Ne4, I still prefer White.

8 Nc3 Nge7

Otherwise Nd5 is very nasty.

9 Nd5 Nxd5 10 exd5+ Ne7 11 a5 Ba7 12 h4!? h6 13 Bd2!? (Diagram 13)

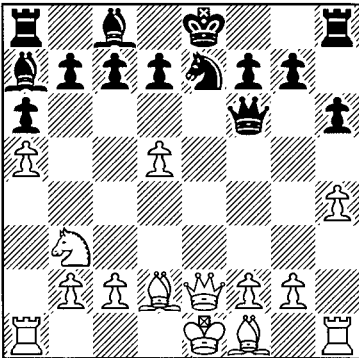


Diagram 13 (B)
Offering the b2-pawn

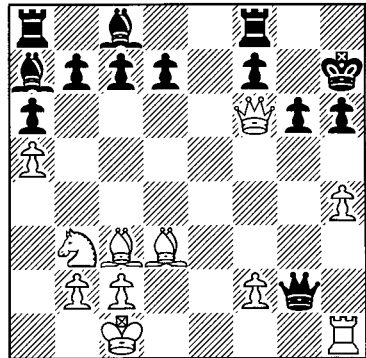


Diagram 14 (B)
Another example of 'take my rook!'

13 Bg5?? again fails to the tactic 13...hgx5 14 hxg5 Qxf2+!, but both 13 Ra4!? and 13 g4!? are alternatives.

13...0-0?

Surprisingly a very big mistake – now Black is probably already losing. There are a couple of stronger alternatives:

a) 13...d6 14 Bc3 Qf4 15 g3 Qg4 16 Qxg4 Bxg4 17 Bxg7! Rh7 18 Bd4 Bf3 19 Rg1 Bxd4 20 Nxd4 Bxd5 21 Bh3! gave White an edge in P.Hertel-G.Bruckel, correspondence 1988 – both his pieces and his pawn structure are better than Black's.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

b) 13...Qxb2!? is naturally very risky, but there is no trivial way to exploit Black's queen. Klein-H.Ahman, correspondence 1974 continued 14 Rh3! Qxc2 15 Rc1 Qf5 16 Bb4!? Bxf2+!? 17 Kd1! (17 Qxf2? Qe4+!) 17...Qxd5+ 18 Rd3 Qe6 19 Qxf2! Qg4+ 20 Kc2 and now 20...Qxb4? allows White to trap the queen with 21 Rd4 Qa3 22 Ra1. Even so, the game's 20...d6 21 Kb2 was hardly clear – Black has four pawns for the piece but of course White remains incredibly active.

14 Bc3! Qd6 15 0-0-0 Nxd5

What else? 15...Nf5 runs into 16 g4! and 15...Ng6 16 h5 Nf4 loses after 17 Qg4 f6 18 g3! Nxd5 19 Rxd5! Qxd5 20 Bc4.

16 Rxd5!

This wins by force.

16...Qxd5 17 Qg4 g6 18 Qf4 Kh7 19 Bd3 Qxg2

Forcing White to work a bit harder than 19...d6 20 Qf6 Rg8 21 Bxg6+! 1-0 W.Chowaniec-Wisniewski, correspondence 1989.

20 Qf6!! (Diagram 14)

White plays this anyway!

20...Qxh1+ 21 Kd2 Be3+!

The only way to keep the game going; otherwise it's mate on g7.

22 fxe3 Qh2+ 23 Kd1 Qh1+ 24 Kd2 Qh2+ 25 Kc1 Qg1+ 26 Bf1!

Black can only prevent mate by giving up his queen, but this leaves him in a hopeless position.

26...Qxe3+ 27 Kb1 Qxc3 28 bxc3 d6 29 Nd4 Bg4 30 Bc4 c5 31 Bxf7 1-0

Game 50

□ J.Hector ■ B.Kristensen

Vejele 1994

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nb3 Bb6 6 a4 a6 7 Nc3 d6 8 Nd5 Ba7 9 Be3 Bxe3 10 Nxe3 Nf6 11 Bd3 0-0 12 0-0 Re8

12...Ne5, planning to answer 13 f4 with 13...Nfg4!, has also been played here.

13 f3 Bd7!?

I can't find any other examples of Black playing this move here, which is a little strange as it works out so well in this game.

Black's usual move is 13...Be6. White can point to a space advantage due to the pure Scotch centre, but Black can often gain counterplay on the dark squares. One more recent encounter continued 14 c4 a5!? (gaining the b4-square as an outpost) 15 Rf2 Nd7 16 f4 f6 17 Rd2 Qb8! (using the same manoeuvre as in the main game) 18 Kh1 Qa7 19 Nd5 Rac8 when White's advantage was minimal, S.Rublevsky-A.Naiditsch, Dortmund 2004.

14 c4 Qb8! (Diagram 15)

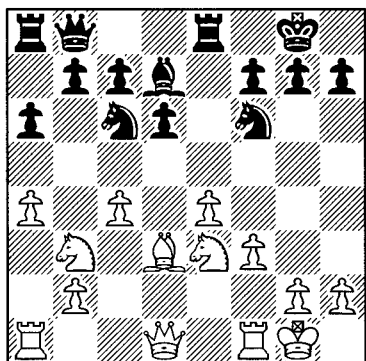


Diagram 15 (W)

...Qd8-b8!

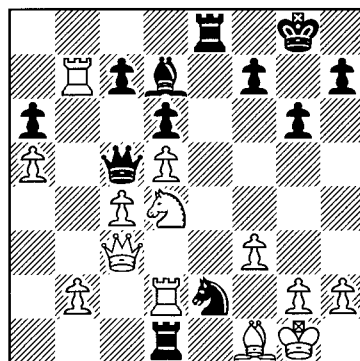


Diagram 16 (W)

Pins and forks

An imaginative idea – Black plans ...Qa7. It turns out that the queen is very influential on the long a7-g1 diagonal.

15 Rf2 Qa7 16 Nd5 Nxd5!

Demonstrating an advantage of 13...Bd7 over 13...Be6. With the bishop on e6 this exchange would have run into a pawn fork.

17 exd5?

On 17 cxd5 Ne5 18 Qd2 Black can gain counterplay with 18...f5! based on the tactical trick 19 exf5 Bxa4!! 20 Rxa4 Nxd3 21 Qxd3 Re1+. Even so, I still prefer 17 cxd5 because Black now gains very strong counterplay down the e-file.

17...Nb4 18 Bf1 Re3 19 a5 Rae8 20 Nd4 g6?

Black can gain material with 20...Re1! 21 Qxe1 Rxe1 22 Rxe1 Qxd4. It's true that White can regain the piece with 23 Re7! Ba4 24 b3 Kf8 25 Re4 but following 25...Qc5 26 bxa4 g6 (Donev) White's queenside weaknesses promise Black a clear advantage.

21 Ra3 Re1 22 Qd2 Qc5!? 23 Rb3 Na2 24 Rxb7 Nc1! 25 Qc3?

White had to try 25 b3.

25...Rd1 26 Rd2 Ne2+! (Diagram 16)

Winning. Perhaps White had missed this neat way to exploit the numerous pins, or more probably, Black's crucial 28th move.




27 Rxe2 Rxe2 28 b4 Ree1! 29 Qxe1 Qxd4+ 30 Qf2 Qxc4 31 h3 Bb5! 32 Kh2 Qxf1 33 Rb8+ Kg7 34 Qb2+ Kh6 35 Qc2 Qg1+ 36 Kg3 Qe1+ 37 Kh2 Qe5+ 38 g3 Qd4 0-1

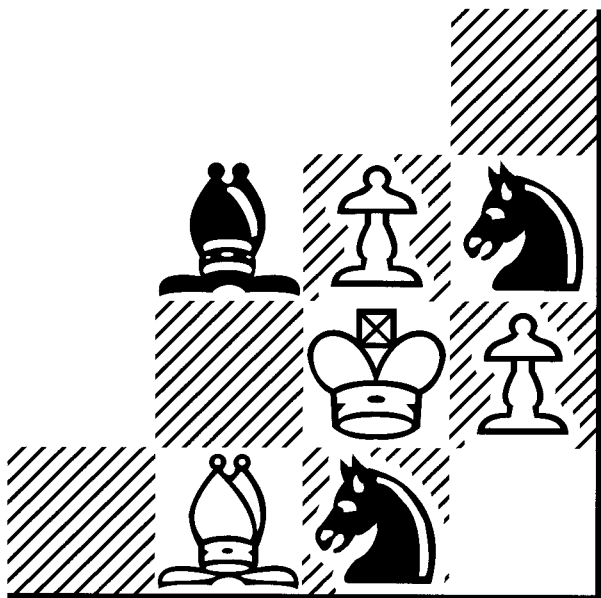
Points to Remember

- 1) In contrast to routine development principles, in the 5 Nb3 Bb6 lines White's rooks sometimes play important roles on their original files. In particular, after a2-a4-a5 White has the option of Ra4.
- 2) The 'spoiling' 5...Bb4+ looks like a perfectly good alternative to the more natural 5...Bb6.
- 3) The way to deal with 5 Nf5 is with 5...d5!

Chapter Seven

Rare Lines

-  Introduction
-  Fourth Move Alternatives for Black
-  Points to Remember



Introduction

So far we've covered 'only' 4...Nf6 and 4...Bc5. I say 'only', but from club level upwards a White player would expect to face one of these two moves around 90% of the time. In this final chapter we'll take a look at an assortment of rare fourth move options for Black.

Theoretically speaking, the two most important of these are 4...Bb4+ and 4...Qh4!?. The move 4...Qf6 is certainly sensible (this often transposes to 4...Bc5), and 4...g6, planning ...Bg7 also has some sound reasoning behind it. There are one or two other possible moves, but these are less of a threat and White can usually rely on typical development and his pure Scotch centre to give him a comfortable edge.

Fourth Move Alternatives for Black

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bb4+!? (Diagram 1)

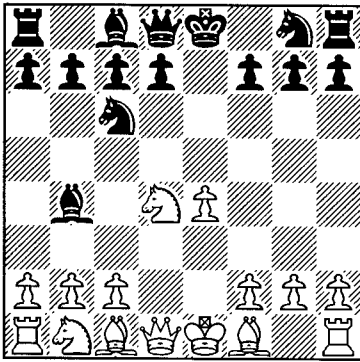


Diagram 1 (W)
Check!

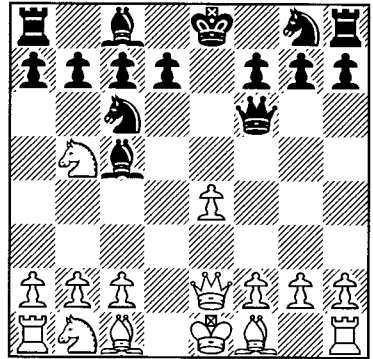


Diagram 2 (B)
...Bb6 or ...Qd8?

'Putzer sees a check ... putzer plays a check!' However, these 'putzers' include quite a few grandmasters such as Peter Leko and Tony Miles; the English GM made 4...Bb4+ his own variation and scored very well with it.

The point of 4...Bb4+ is to induce the move c2-c3, after which the bishop retreats. At first sight c2-c3 may look like a simple gain of tempo for White, but in fact in some lines the pawn gets in the way there. In particular, White has lost the chance to play the natural move Nc3. Generally White will try to put c2-c3 to good use, whereas Black will try to steer the game into lines where the lack of a Nc3 option hurts White.

4...Qh4!? is covered in Games 51-52, while 4...g6 is the subject of Game 53. In

a roughly descending order of importance, here's a selection of other possibilities for Black:

a) 4...Qf6!? very often transposes to 4...Bc5 lines after 5 Be3 Bc5 or 5 Nxc6 Bc5!. White's only dangerous independent try against 4...Qf6 is 5 Nb5!?, hitting the perennial weak spot on c7. Black should react with 5...Bc5! 6 Qe2 **(Diagram 2)** and now:

a1) 6...Bb6 7 N1c3 Nge7 8 Be3! Ba5! (Black must stay defending c7) 9 0-0-0 has been seen quite a few times. The 'main line' runs 9...a6 10 Nd5! Nxd5 11 exd5 axb5 12 Bd4+! Qe7 13 dxc6 dxc6 14 Qxe7+ Kxe7 15 Bxg7 Rg8 16 Bd4 Bb6! when Black's activity just about makes up for his structural deficiencies, V.Kupreichik-I.Nei, USSR 1975.

a2) The 'undeveloping' 6...Qd8!? is a paradoxical choice, but not a bad one once you consider White's own awkward development scheme. One enticing way for White to continue is with 7 Qg4!? which can lead to massive complications after 7...Nf6!, for example 8 Qxg7 Rg8 9 Nxc7+ Ke7 10 Nd5+ Nxd5 11 Bg5+ Kd6 12 Qh6+ f6 and Black seemed to be doing well in A.Sommerfeld-W.Wisskirchen, correspondence 1986; or 8 Nxc7+!? Qxc7 9 Qxg7 Rg8 10 Qxf6 Bd4 11 Qh4 Nb4! with definite compensation.



TIP: 4...Qf6 may be a good choice for Black players wishing to avoid the 4...Bc5 5 Nb3 lines.

b) 4...Nge7 is reasonable – Black plans ...Nxd4 followed by ...Nc6. The line 5 Nc3 Nxd4 6 Qxd4 Nc6 7 Qe3! (the queen will find a nice home on g3) 7...Bb4 8 Bd2 0-0 9 0-0-0 d6 10 Qg3 has been played a few times, with White enjoying a small advantage. A plausible alternative for Black is 7...g6, but in the game Comp Kallisto-Ye Rongguang, The Hague 1997, the computer found a very effective response in 8 Bd2 Bg7 9 Nd5!, planning to oppose bishops with Bc3. Now 9...Bxb2? 10 Bc3 Bxa1 11 Bxa1 seriously damages Black's health, as 11...Rf8 runs into 12 Bf6!.



WARNING: Trying to transpose back into ...g6 lines with 5...g6?? has a terrible flaw: 6 Bg5! Bg7 7 Nd5!! Bxd4 8 Qxd4!! Nxd4 9 Nf6+ Kf8 10 Bh6 mate! (Diagram 3)

c) 4...d6 is a solid but uninspiring move that may well be the choice of a player unsure of theory and just trying to get out of the opening alive. We've already dealt with similar positions in Chapter 1, and indeed after the natural 5 Nc3 Nf6 we have transposed to Game 10.

d) You would never have guessed it, but according to my database 4...Nxd4 has been Black's most popular move after 4...Bc5 and 4...Nf6! In Chapter 1 we dealt briefly with why this early knight exchange in the centre doesn't really do Black any favours, but it should be mentioned that at least here Black has the option of playing 5 Qxd4 Ne7! planning ...Nc6, with similar or possibly identical lines to note 'b'.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

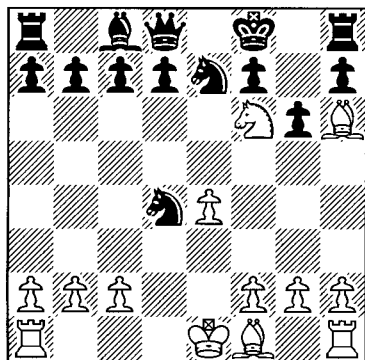


Diagram 3 (B)
Checkmate!

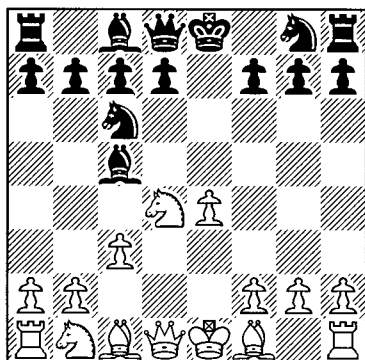


Diagram 4 (W)
White has 'gained' a move

e) The ambitious 4...d5?! immediately strikes in the centre, but unfortunately for Black it just doesn't work: 5 Nxc6! bxc6 6 exd5, and here 6...cxd5 7 Bb5+! Bd7 8 Qxd5 wins a pawn, so Black is forced to accept pawn weaknesses with 6...Qxd5. Now I like the move 7 Bd3! followed by 0-0 – the pawn-grabbing 7...Qxg2? can be answered by 8 Qe2+! followed by Be4.

5 c3!

The only way to try to punish Black, as 5 Bd2 Qe7! achieves little. That said, those White players happy with a Scotch Four Knights can play 5 Nc3 Nf6.

5...Bc5 (Diagram 4)

The more passive 5...Be7 is covered in Game 54.

6 Be3

It makes sense to play Be3 because in the 4...Bc5 5 Be3 lines the move c2-c3 is usually very useful.

However, 6 Nxc6 is also a significant option: 6...bxc6 7 Bd3 d6 8 0-0 Nf6 brings us to a type of position where, with the pawn on c2, White would normally play Nc3. Here 9 Bg5 is, as we've seen in a similar position in Chapter 1, premature due to 9...h6! 10 Bh4 g5 11 Bg3 h5! when suddenly White is facing an enormous kingside attack. Instead White should probably play 9 Nd2, waiting for 9...0-0 before playing 10 Nb3 Bb6 11 Bg5, with perhaps a slight edge.

6...Bb6! (Diagram 5)

Ruling out the threat of Nxc6. In contrast, 6...Qf6? wouldn't be the smartest ever move – Black has landed up in Chapter 5 but a whole tempo down!

Getting back to 5...Bb6, in Game 55 we'll cover the energetic 7 Qg4!?, which was introduced to great effect by Kasparov. If White wishes to continue more positionally, here are a couple of alternatives:

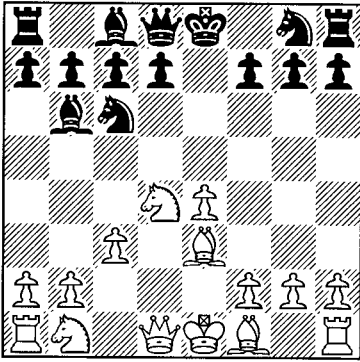


Diagram 5 (W)
Safeguarding the bishop

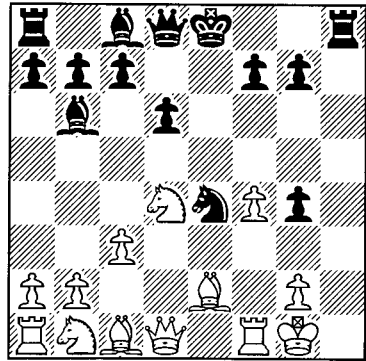


Diagram 6 (W)
...Qh4 is coming fast

a) 7 Nf5!? Bxe3 8 Nxe3 Nf6! and now 9 Nd2 allows Black easy equality with 9...d5!, so White should probably opt for the more ambitious 9 f3, planning to keep a grip on d5 with c3-c4 and Nc3.

b) 7 Bc4 is a level-headed move if White is looking for a quieter game, although Black's chances do seem quite reasonable here. For example, 7...d6 8 0-0 and here simply 8...Nf6 looks okay, not fearing 9 Nxc6 bxc6 10 e5!? on account of 10...dxe5 11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 12 Bxf7 Bxe3 13 fxe3 Ba6. It's even possible for Black to play in Miles's fashion with 8...Ne5!? 9 Be2 Nf6. In *ChessPublishing.com* Paul Motwani gives the line 10 f4 Neg4 11 Bc1 h5!? 12 h3? Nxe4! 13 hxg4 hxg4 (**Diagram 6**) when ...Qh4 will give a mating attack. Obviously not forced(!), but an illustration of Black's counterplay in this underrated line.

Theoretical?

The very nature of 'rare moves' suggests that they have little or no theory behind them. However, those insisting on playing 4...Qh4 should be warned that this move is in fact quite theoretical. No such problems with 4...Bb4+, but those playing 4...Qf6 have to be ready to transpose to 4...Bc5 lines.

Statistics

The best scorers for Black are 4...Qh4 and 4...Bb4+, which both score 48%. Funnily enough 4...Nf6 and 4...Bc5 only score 46%, but hey, what do statistics prove?

Game 51

□ S.Karjakin ■ V.Malinin

Sudak 2002

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Qh4!? (**Diagram 7**)

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

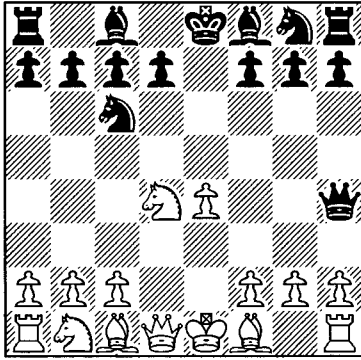


Diagram 7 (W)
Provocative

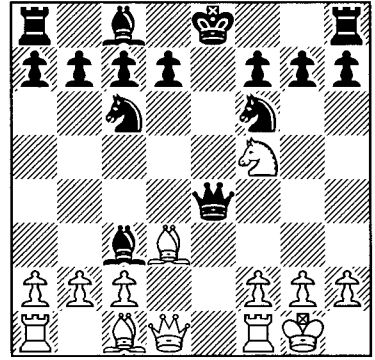


Diagram 8 (B)
Delaying bxc3

Black takes the counterattack on e4 to the extreme. I was very close to awarding this move a '?!', but perhaps that would have been a bit harsh. Nevertheless, I cannot really recommend 4...Qh4 to Black players. It's true that it's very tricky, and if White is unprepared it can come as a bit of a shock. However, as far as I can see, if White is prepared it's he who has all the fun, whereas Black has to grovel in a miserable position, with only an extra pawn to comfort him.

4...Qh4 has acquired a large body of theory (Lev Gutman devoted an entire 272-page book to it!), and it would be wide of the mark to dismiss 4...Qh4 out of hand in a theoretical sense. However, practically speaking I just don't think it's a good choice, especially now as White's best lines are becoming widely known. For White players, I will content myself with providing what are generally considered the antidotes.

5 Nc3!

The immediate 5 Nb5, hitting c7, is also logical, but 5 Nc3 has the advantage of limiting Black's tricks.

5...Bb4

The only consistent follow-up – Black reinstates the threat to the e4-pawn. It's now very difficult for White to protect the e-pawn without making an awkward move (6 Qd3), so sacrificing the pawn is the most logical step.

5...Bc5 6 Be3! leaves the queen looking rather silly on h4, and Black already has to be wary of Nf5 and Nf3 (6...Nge7?? loses immediately to 7 Nf3 Qh5 8 g4!, and 6...Nf6?? to 7 Nf5). Following 6...d6 one obvious way for White to continue is 7 g3 followed by Bg2.

6 Be2!

6 Ndb5?! Qxe4+ 7 Be2 transposes to the next game, but 6...Ba5! followed by ...a7-a6 is much stronger.

6...Nf6!?

Black's alternative, 6...Qxe4, is covered in the next game.

7 0-0!

A good move, although 7 Nf5!? Qxe4 8 Nxc3 Kf8 9 Bh6 Kg8 10 0-0 Qg6 11 Qc1 also looks promising.

7...Bxc3

Black is committed to grabbing material. It's too late to change tactics with 7...0-0?? due to 8 Nf5!, trapping the queen, while 7...d6 8 Nf3 Qh5 9 Nd5! is favourable for White.

After 7...Nxe4 White can choose between 8 Nd5!? and 8 Nf5, e.g. 8...Nxc3 9 bxc3 Qf6 10 cxb4! Qxa1 11 b5 Nd8 12 Ba3! Qf6 13 Ne7 c6 14 Re1 Ne6 15 Bf3 d5 16 bxc6 bxc6 (N.Fercec-D.Sermek, Pula 1997) and now 17 Nxd5! (Gutman) is winning for White after 17...cxd5 18 Bxd5 Rb8 19 Bc6+.

8 Nf5! Qxe4 9 Bd3 (Diagram 8) 9...Qg4

Gutman provides some convincing analysis against 9...Qe5 with 10 bxc3 0-0 11 Re1 Qa5 (or 11...Qxc3 12 Rb1 and Bb2 is coming) 12 Rb1 d5 13 Rb5! Qxa2 14 Nxc3!! (not the first time we'll see this move) 14...Kxc3 15 Bh6+! Kxh6 16 Qd2+ Kh5 17 Qf4! and Black is completely busted. For example, 17...Ng4 18 h3 Nxf2 19 g4+! Nxc3 20 hxc3+ Bxc3 21 Kf2 followed by Rh1+. See what I mean about White having all the fun?

10 f3 Qa4

10...Bd4+? 11 Kh1 suddenly leaves Black's queen without any good squares.

11 bxc3 0-0

The natural move, but it allows a crushing reply.

In R.Kasimdzhanov-E.Vladimirov, Namangan 2000 there was a brave attempt to resurrect this line for Black with 11...Kf8, but after 12 Qe1 Ne8 (12...d6 13 Nxc3! Kxc3 14 Qg3+ Kf8 15 Bh6+ Ke7 16 Bg7! Be6 17 Qg5 is virtually winning for White – M.Müller) 13 Qg3 d6 14 Nxc3! Rg8 15 Bh6 Rxc3 16 Rae1! Ne5 17 f4 Nxd3 18 cxd3 Black was in an horrific bind.

12 Nxc3!! (Diagram 9)

This move again! Black can hardly refuse the offer.

12...Kxc3 13 Bh6+! Kxh6

After 13...Kg8 14 Qd2 (threatening Qg5+) 14...Qh4 15 Bg5 Black can already resign, while in the stem game (J.Vukovic-Mozetic, correspondence 1991) Black saw what was coming and so gave up a rook with 13...Kh8 14 Bxf8.

14 Qd2+ Kh5!

Black's king is ready to die on its shield. 14...Kg7 15 Qg5+ Kh8 16 Qxf6+ Kg8 17 Qg5+ Kh8 18 Qh6 is a typical mating pattern – Black cannot deal with the threats to f8 and h7.

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

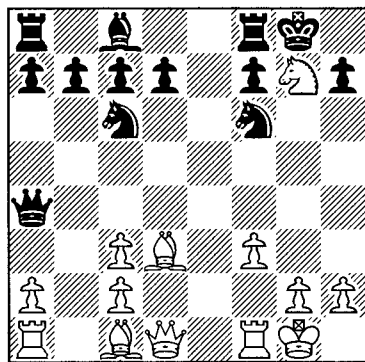


Diagram 9 (B)

Nf5xg7!!

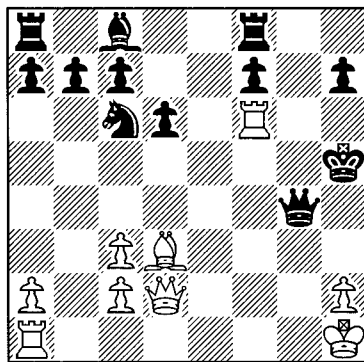


Diagram 10 (B)

18 Rf6 – the most precise

15 g4+ Nxc4

15...Kh4 allows 16 Qh6+ Nh5 and mate next move.

16 fxg4+ Qxc4+ 17 Kh1 d6 18 Rf6! (Diagram 10)

18 Be2 would have done the job for us mere mortals, but Karjakin is much more clinical.

18...Qg5 19 Be2+ Bg4 20 Bxc4+ 1-0

20...Kxc4 21 Rg1+ is mating.

Game 52

□ T.Oral ■ M.Kantorik

Slovakian Team Championship 2000

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Qh4 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Be2 Qxe4 7 Ndb5!

This move should be second nature to prospective Scotch players by now. Unfortunately for Black, the only way to defend the c7-pawn is with his king:

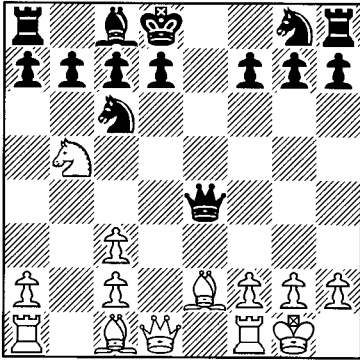
7...Ba5? sees the bishop being overloaded after 8 Nxc7+!, while a queen retreat to e5 runs into f2-f4.

7...Bxc3+ 8 bxc3 Kd8 9 0-0 (Diagram 11)

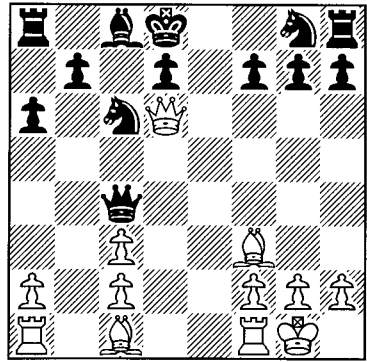
So Black has an extra pawn, against which White has serious and very long-term attacking chances against Black's stranded king. In a practical sense, a fair trade? I don't think so.

9...a6

Or 9...Nf6 10 Rb1 a6 11 Nd4 Nxd4 12 cxd4 Re8 13 Bf3 Qg6 14 Bf4 d6 15 Qc1 (J.Van der Wiel-L.Pliester, Enschede 2003) with a typical scenario for this line. White is under no real pressure to do anything dramatic – Black's problems are not going to miraculously disappear.

**Diagram 11 (B)**

A fair trade?

**Diagram 12 (B)**

Any takers?

10 Bf3!?

Many games have continued 10 Nd4 but here White has a stunning idea in mind.

10...Qc4?

In view of White's following move, it looks like Black should prefer 10...Qg6, when White continues as normal with 11 Nd4.

11 Nd6!!

Just as in the previous game, this knight is not completely happy unless it's sacrificing itself!

11...cxd6 12 Qxd6 (Diagram 12)

Black is a whole piece ahead, but who would want to play this position? He is desperately lacking in development, and White's threats will be coming thick and fast (Black already has to reckon with Qf8+). One positional reason for Black's predicament is that he is woefully weak on the dark-squares – Be3-b6+, and Bf4 followed by Qc7+ and then Bd6 are both life-threatening problems.

12...Nf6

12...Nge7 13 Bf4! (Motwani) leaves Black on the precipice, for example 13...g5 14 Qc7+ Ke8 15 Bd6 and Re1 is up next.

13 Be3

Now White's threat is 14 Bb6+ Ke8 15 Rfe1+. The move 13...Qb5 is an inadequate defence in view of 14 Rab1 Ne8 15 Qa3! Qc4 16 Bb6+ Nc7 17 Rfe1 Re8 18 Qd6! Ne7 19 Re5! and Rc5.

13...Ne7 14 Rfe1 Nfd5 15 Bxd5! Nxd5 16 Qxd5! 1-0

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

A fitting finish to the game: 16...Qxd5 17 Bb6 emphasises the dark side of ...a7-a6!

Game 53

□ J.Emms ■ A.Summerscale

London 1997

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 g6 (Diagram 13)

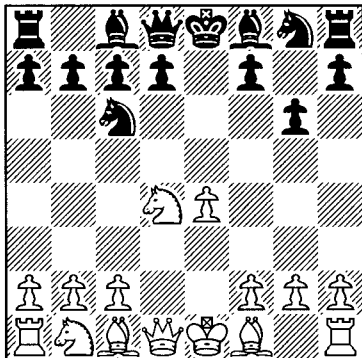


Diagram 13 (W)

4...g6

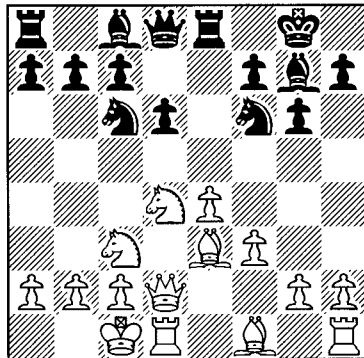


Diagram 14 (W)

Larsen's Variation

There's a certain amount of logic to this move, as from g7 the bishop will bear down on d4.

5 Nc3

Clamping down on d5 with 5 c4!? Bg7 6 Be3 is a more positional option for White.

5...Bg7 6 Be3

The most aggressive approach: White plans to play in Yugoslav Attack style with Qd2, 0-0-0, f2-f3 followed by h2-h4-h5 etc.

6...d6

Black can also develop his knight on e7, with 6...Nge7 7 Qd2 0-0 8 0-0-0 d6 9 h4! being a typical continuation. More challenging is 6...Nf6, the point being that after 7 Qd2 0-0 8 0-0-0 Re8 9 f3 Black can utilise the time saved on omitting ...d7-d6 to play an immediate 9...d5!?, leading to very complex play. If White wishes to exploit Black's move order, then 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 e5 looks logical – 8...Ng8 9 Bd4 Qe7 10 Qe2 is perhaps a touch better for White.

7 Qd2 Nf6 8 f3 0-0 9 0-0-0 Re8 (Diagram 14)

The actual move order of this game was 1 e4 d6 2 d4 e5 3 Nf3 exd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Qd2 0-0 8 0-0-0 Re8 9 f3 Nc6, but I've tweaked it to discuss 6th move options for Black. This line is known as Larsen's Variation,

named after Denmark's most famous player, Bent Larsen. It's very similar to the main line Dragon, the only difference being Black has a half-open e-file instead of a half-open c-file. As with the Dragon, the position can become incredibly sharp very quickly.

9...Nxd4 10 Bxd4 Be6 is the alternative approach for Black, who aims to counterattack with ...c7-c5 and ...Qa5.

10 h4 Ne5 11 Bh6! Bh8 12 h5?!

Here I suffered from an attack of over-excitement. I knew I wanted to play Bg5 and h5, queen around to the h-file, and mate. In the heat of the moment I didn't check to see whether the move order mattered or not and quickly lunged with my h-pawn. The line 12 Bg5! and only then h4-h5 is stronger, after which I believe White has a very strong attack.

12...Nxb5!

Of course Black just grabs this pawn!

13 g4 Ng3 14 Rh3 Nxf1 15 Rxf1

White's attack down the h-file looks extremely dangerous, but Black's has just as much potential and he has the cushion of an extra pawn too.

15...c5! 16 Nf5!

Throwing more wood onto an already blazing fire. Black actually does well to ignore this knight and continue with the counterattack – 16...gxf5 17 gxf5 presents White with a devastating attack down the g-file.

16...Nc4 17 Qd3 Be6 18 Bf4 Qb6 19 b3 (Diagram 15)

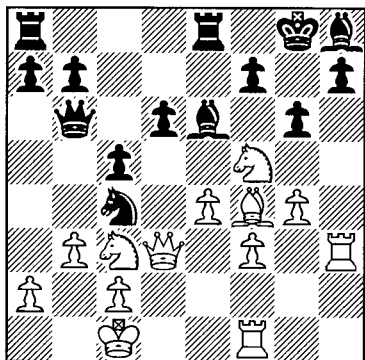


Diagram 15 (B)
A critical moment

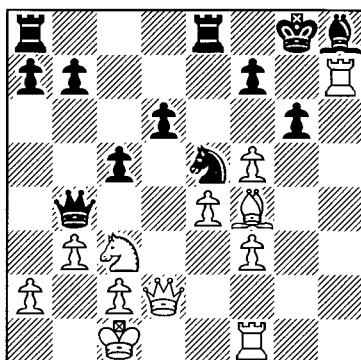


Diagram 16 (B)
Rh3xh7!!

19...Ne5?

At this point I felt extremely relieved that I wasn't facing 19...Qb4!. Aaron had been concerned about the line 20 Nh6+ Kf8 21 Bxd6+ Nxd6 22 Qxd6+ Re7, although after the game he couldn't remember why. In fact this may be

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

White's best course, although it's obvious Black stands well here. Following some strange knight manoeuvring with 23 Nb1 Qa5 24 Ng8!? Kxg8 25 Qxe7 Qxa2 White's material plus is small change compared with the magnitude of Black's attack.

After 19...Ne5 I felt that White was better again for the first time since move 12.

20 Qd2!

Back in its favourite position, the queen is ready to jump to the h-file with damaging effect. For example, 20...Qa5 21 Rxh7! Kxh7 22 Rh1+ Kg8 23 Qh2 and White mates after 23...Nd3+ 24 Kb1 Bxc3 25 Qh7+ Kf8 26 Qh8+ Bxh8 27 Rxh8. Black sensibly eliminates the troublesome knight, but all the threats remain.

20...Bxf5 21 gxf5 Qb4?

21...h5 is the only way to defend.

22 Rxh7!! (Diagram 16)

I own up; the only reason why I included this game was to show off this sacrifice!

22...Kxh7 23 Rh1+ Kg8 24 Rxh8+! 1-0

And this one too! After 24...Kxh8, 25 Bxe5+ Rxe5 26 Qh6+ Kg8 27 f6 and Qg7 mates.

Game 54

□ A.Gysi ■ J.Simmelink

Correspondence, 1997

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bb4+ 5 c3 Be7 6 Nxc6

The immediate 6 Bc4 is also possible, and can easily transpose to the text. Another solid option is 6 Bd3, for example 6...d6 7 0-0 Nf6 8 h3 0-0 9 Nd2 with a small edge for White, L.Stein-Y.Averbakh, Moscow 1959.

6...bxc6 7 Bc4! d6!?

This allows White to win a pawn and even displace Black's king, but it's not as bad as it looks!

The alternative is 7...Nf6 8 e5! and now:

a) 8...Ne4 9 Qf3! d5 10 exd6 Nxd6 11 0-0! 0-0 12 Bd3 has been played a few times, with White enjoying a structural edge on the queenside.

b) 8...Nd5!? 9 Bxd5 cxd5 10 Qxd5 Ba6 gives Black a fair amount of compensation for the pawn in the shape of his active bishops. A more practical choice for White is 9 0-0 Nb6 10 Bd3 (or 10 Bb3) after which Black should contest the centre with 10...d6.

8 Qb3!

Of course!

8...Nf6 9 Bxf7+ Kf8 10 Be6! (Diagram 17)

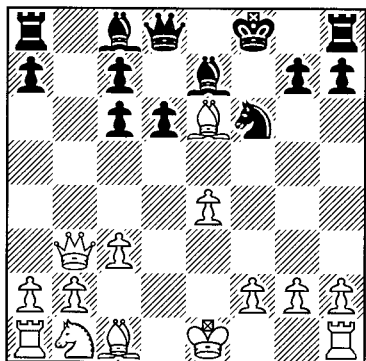


Diagram 17 (B)
Giving back the pawn

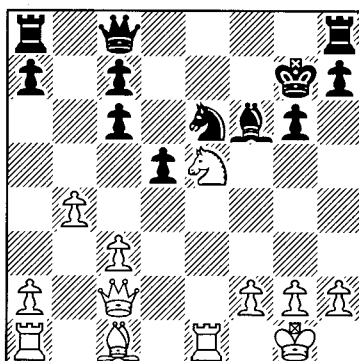


Diagram 18 (B)
With Nxc6 and Ng4 in mind

Trading these bishops is a wise move, as on f7 White's bishop was actually quite vulnerable. For example 10 Nd2?!, trying to hold onto the extra pawn, is met by 10...d5!. In that case the best White can do is 11 e5 Kxf7 12 exf6 Bxf6 13 0-0 Re8, which is obviously okay for Black.

10...Nxe4 11 Bxc8 Qxc8 12 0-0 d5 13 Nd2 Nc5

Given Black's future problems, there's an argument for 13...Nxd2 14 Bxd2, although I still prefer White's safer king and better structure.

14 Qc2 g6?

After this move Black is hampered by problems with the dark squares for the rest of the game. 14...Bd6 is stronger.

15 Re1 Bf6 16 b4! Ne6

Now Black no longer has the resource of ...Qf5, offering a queen swap to relieve the pressure.

17 Nf3 Kg7 18 Ne5! (Diagram 18) 18...Bxe5

Black was surely hoping to keep this bishop, but as well as Nxc6, the idea of Ng4 was also on the agenda.

19 Rxe5 Re8 20 Bb2!

Planning c3-c4, after which those dark squares are really going to hurt Black.

20...Qd7 21 Rae1 Kg8 22 c4! Rab8

Or 22...d4 23 c5! followed by Qc4.

23 a3 Re7 24 cxd5 cxd5 25 Qb3 Rd8 26 Qc3!

Threatening Rxe6 and thus inducing Black's next move.

26...d4 27 Qb3!

Starting Out: The Scotch Game

Now the knight has no pawn shield and Black's position is on the verge of collapse. **27...Rde8 28 Rd5 Qc6 29 b5 1-0**

After 29...Qb6 30 Rxd4! White has won a pawn and all his advantages remain.

Game 55

□ G.Kasparov ■ W.Unzicker

Zürich 2001

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bb4+ 5 c3 Bc5 6 Be3 Bb6 7 Qg4

A typically dynamic novelty from Kasparov. Black must deal with the threat to the g7-pawn, and White's queen will sit nicely on g3, eyeing that c7-pawn.

7...Qf6 8 Qg3 (Diagram 19)

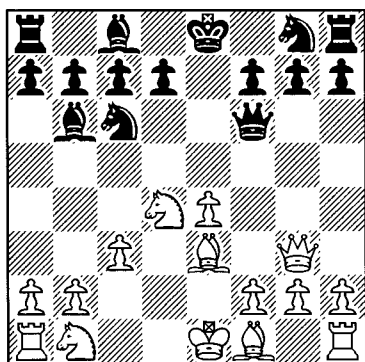


Diagram 19 (B)
Eyeing up c7

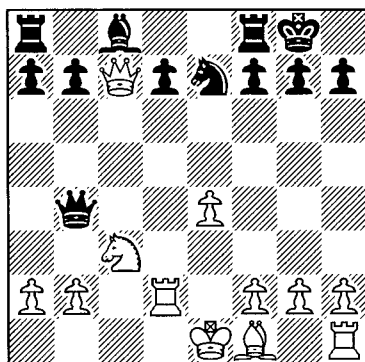


Diagram 20 (B)
No fancy stuff

Planning a possible Nb5.

8...Nxd4?

This pawn grab is as bad as it looks, and I'm sure Kasparov had his responses very well prepared. In more recent games Black has tried 8...Qg6 9 Nd2 Nge7. Now following 10 Nb5!? Qxg3 11 hxg3 Bxe3 12 Nxc7+ Kd8 13 Nxa8 Bxd2+ 14 Kxd2 b6 15 Nxb6 axb6 the material imbalance gives a roughly level ending. Instead Sam Collins suggests 10 0-0-0 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 0-0 12 Bd3, which looks a touch better for White.

9 cxd4 Bxd4 10 Bxd4 Qxd4 11 Nc3 Ne7

Giving back the pawn, but this could hardly have been Black's intention when taking on d4. The problem is that 11...d6 12 Rd1 Qe5 13 f4 leaves Black in big trouble as the g7-pawn is dropping (13...Qf6 is met by 14 Nd5). Black's other try is 11...Nf6 but then 12 Rd1 Qb6 13 e5! Nh5 14 Qg5! Qg6 15 Qh4! leaves Black in a real fix. The threat is Nd5, but 15...c6 is hardly an answer on account of 16 Ne4! 0-0 17 Nd6 when Black can barely move.

12 Qxc7 0-0 13 Rd1 Qb4 14 Rd2! (Diagram 20)

Very calm. White eliminates Black's only source of counterplay (...Qxb2), leaving him with the unsolvable problem of how to develop the queenside without his position collapsing.

14...Ng6 15 Be2 f5!?

Black chooses to go down fighting...

16 Bc4+ Kh8 17 Nd5! Qa4 18 exf5 Rxf5 19 0-0 Qc6 20 Bb3 Qxc7 21 Nxc7

Despite the exchange of queens, Black is totally lost. He simply cannot get his c8-bishop and a8-rook developed effectively before the serious threats mount.

21...Rb8 22 Re1 b6 23 Nb5! Bb7 24 Nd6 Rff8 25 Nf7+ Kg8 26 Rxd7 1-0

Points to Remember

- 1) 4...Bb4+ is not as silly as it looks, as White's tempo gain with c2-c3 is not necessarily beneficial.
- 2) I'm afraid I can't bring myself to recommend 4...Qh4. However, it is a very tricky move, and White players should stick to the lines considered here.
- 3) 4...Qf6 is a perfectly acceptable move if Black is happy to transpose into 4...Bc5 lines after 5 Nxc6 Bc5! and 5 Be3 Bc5!.

Index of Variations

Scotch Four Knights (4...Nf6 5 Nc3)

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bb4

5...d6 – 46; 5...Nxe4 – 46

5...Bc5

6 Be3 – 46

6 Nxc6 – 46

6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bd3 d5

7...d6 – 17; 7...0-0 – 17

8 exd5

8 e5 – 17

8...cxd5

8...Qe7+ – 17

9 0-0 0-0 10 Bg5 c6

10...Be6 – 18

11 Qf3

11 Ne2 – 18; 11 Na4 – 18

11...Be7 – 18

11...Bd6 – 18

Mieses Variation: Introduction and Main Line with 8...Nb6

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5

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6...Nd5 – 60; 6...Ne4 – 60

7 Qe2 Nd5 8 c4 Nb6 9 Nd2

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9...Qe6

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Mieses Variation: Main Line with 8...Ba6

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9...g6

9...Qh4 – 100; 9...0-0-0 – 100; 9...g5 – 100

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4...Bc5 5 Nxc6

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