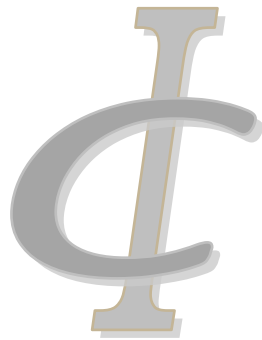


Institute of Chess

Revision Guide to

LEVEL 4



The contents were written and arranged by

GM Chris Ward
FM Desmond Tan.

This revision guide is dedicated to the memory of

IM Bob Wade OBE (1921 ~ 2008),

who devoted his life to chess.

Last Updated October 2010

Institute of Chess
Level 4 Coaching Course
by GM Chris Ward and FM Desmond Tan

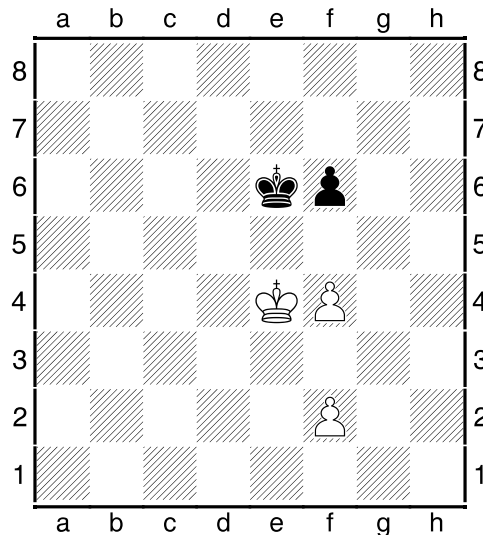
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Endgame Techniques

Zugzwang and Mutual Zugzwang

The term 'zugzwang' refers to the compulsion to move. Basically then it is when a player would rather maintain the current position, but in accordance with the rules is forced to move.



Above Black to play above offers the following variations:

- a) **1...Kd6 2 Kf5 Ke7 3 Kg6 Ke6 4 f5+ Ke5 5 f3 Kf4 6 Kxf6** and the most advanced f-pawn will promote;
- b) **1...Kf7 2 Kf5 Kg7 3 Ke6 Kg6 4 f5+ Kg5 5 f3** with the same outcome.
- c) **1...Ke7 2 Kd5 Kd7 3 f5** (effectively gaining the opposition) **Ke7 4 Kc6 Kf7 5 Kd7 Kg7 6 Ke7** and Black's f-pawn is lost.

Now let's study the same position but with White to play:

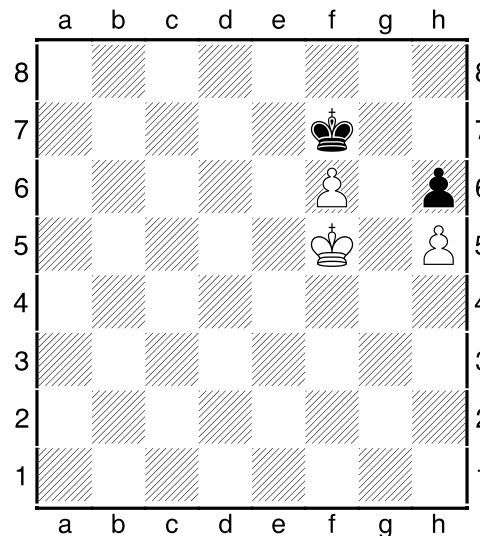
- a) **1 Kf3 f5! 2 Ke3** (After **2 Kg3 Kf6 3 Kh4 Kg6** there is no way through) **Kd5 3 Kd3 Kc5 4 Ke3 Kd5 5 Kf3 Ke6** (i.e. Black has accurately returned to square one where he is best prepared to prevent an invasion on either side.) **6 Kg3 Kf6 7 Kh4 Kg6 8 f3 Kh6** and there is no way through;
- b) **1 f5+ Kd6! 2 Kf4 Kd5 3 Kg4** (or **3 Kg3 Ke5 4 Kg4 Ke4**) **3...Ke4 4 f3+ Ke5** (This is 'zugzwang'. If Black were forced to move again then he would be lost but the reality is that it is White to play and so it's a draw.) **5 f4+ Ke4** and it is a white pawn that drops.

Our initial position is one of 'mutual zugzwang' because whoever is to move would far rather not and in terms of the result there is half a point at stake.

Just because there may not be many pieces left on the board does NOT mean that the position lacks complexity. Indeed in king and pawn endgames often great care must be taken.

Triangulation

With White to move in the endgame below for example, casual play would most certainly lead to a draw but serious consideration and the employment of an important technique would lead to a full point.



1.Ke5 Kf8

Just as though the h-pawns weren't present, the black king must retreat straight back so as to obtain the opposition should the white king now advance. A mistake is 1...Ke8? 2.Ke6 Kf8 3.f7 although as we soon see Black is destined for defeat anyhow.

2.Ke4

2.Ke6 Ke8 3.f7+? would see White completely missing the subtleties of this position. After 3...Kf8 the game is drawn e.g. 4.Kf6 stalemate.

2...Ke8

Remember 2...Kf7 3.Kf5 transposes to our initial position but with Black to move. As the white king then gains automatic access to g6, the win is easy.

3.Kf4 Kf8 4.Ke5

The uneducated might think that White is messing around. The reality is that he is cleverly triangulating.

4...Ke8

Or 4...Kf7 5.Kf5 winning as mentioned above i.e. 5...Kf8 6.Kg6 Kg8 7.Kxh6 Kf7 8.Kg5 Kf8 9.Kg6 Kg8 10.f7+ Kf8 11.h6 Ke7 12.Kg7 and the f-pawn will promote. The key point is that unlike its opposite number, the black king cannot move in triangles.

5.Ke6 Kf8 6.f7

Again the key to all of this is that it is now Black rather than White to play.

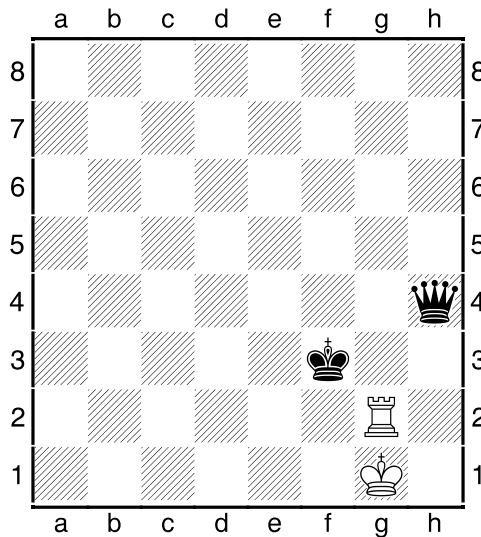
6...Kg7 7.Ke7 Kh7 8.Ke8

White could promote to a rook must not ruin all of his hard work with 8.f8Q?? stalemate!

8...Kg7 9.f8Q+

And White shortly mates.

The position below sees the white king and rook holed up in the corner putting up a stubborn defence against the attacking king and queen.



Black has carefully avoided any stalemate tricks by correctly bringing his king in close but leaving the queen slightly withdrawn. Now with White to play White's pieces are forced to part company:

1.Ra2

Regarding other options, placing the rook on the same coloured square as the king would make a fork even more obvious e.g. 1.Rg7 Qd4+ whilst as 1.Rh2 Qe1 mate demonstrates the rook is definitely forced to abandon the king.

1...Qd4+ 2.Kh1 Qh8+!

Black is correctly seeking out a fork in which the enemy king is checked along the straight line but the rook is attacked along the diagonal.

3.Kg1

After 3.Rh2 very appealing is 3...Qa1 mate!

3...Qg8+

Throughout a game of chess one is advised to keep an eye on the opponent's unprotected pieces just in case that situation can be exploited. Essentially that is what Black has done here.

Returning to our initial position and the relevance of this section comes into play if in fact it is Black to move. Yes, check out the crafty:

1...Qd4+ 2 Kh1

Or 2 Kf1 Qd1 mate.

2...Qh8+ 3 Kg1

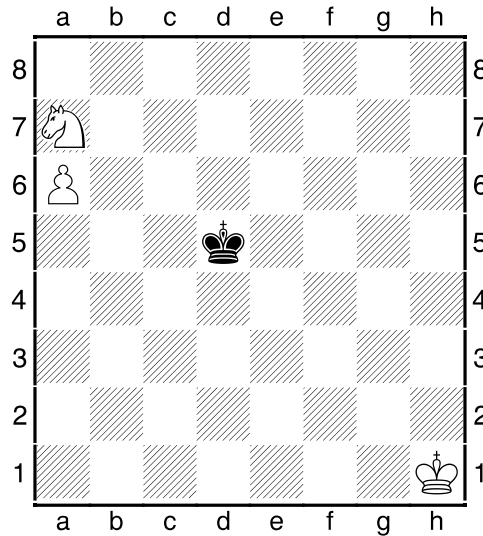
Or 3 Rh2 Qa1 mate.

3...Qh4

The uneducated would now think that Black has just reached the same position and made no progress. That of course could not be further from the truth. The black queen has 'triangulated' to reach our initial position but with White to move. As we have already seen from there, White would much rather pass. Yes he is in zugswang and all of his moves will lose.

Knights and Rook's Pawns

In the position below if White could manoeuvre his knight to b4 or c5, it would protect the a6-pawn and because of the threat of promotion remain immune to capture.

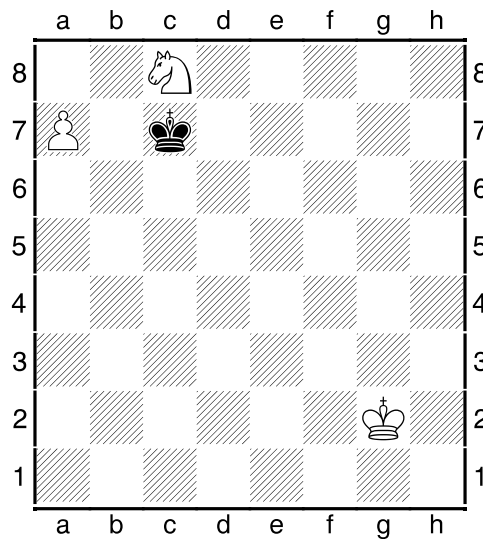


Unfortunately it can't and as it is the black king can force the white a-pawn to the 7th rank:

1 Nc8

Checking out the other alternatives we have 1 Nb5 Kc6 2 Kg2 Kb6 3 a7 Kb7 and 1 Kg2 Kc5 2 Nc8 Kc6 3 Kf3 (or 3 Nd6 Kb6! but it wasn't that difficult to spot!) 3...Kc7 4 a7. It just isn't possible for White to protect the pawn on the 6th rank.

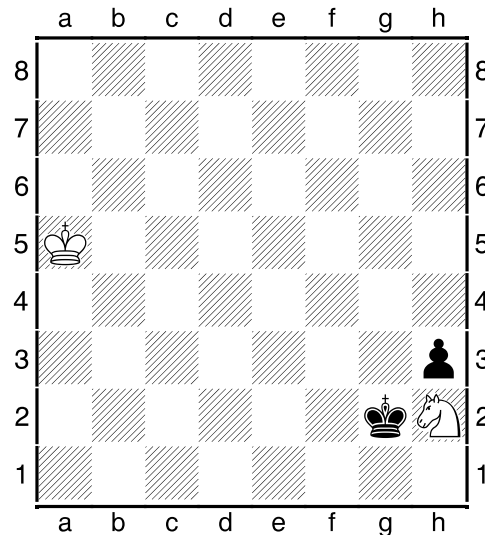
1...Kc6 2 Kg2 Kc7 3 a7



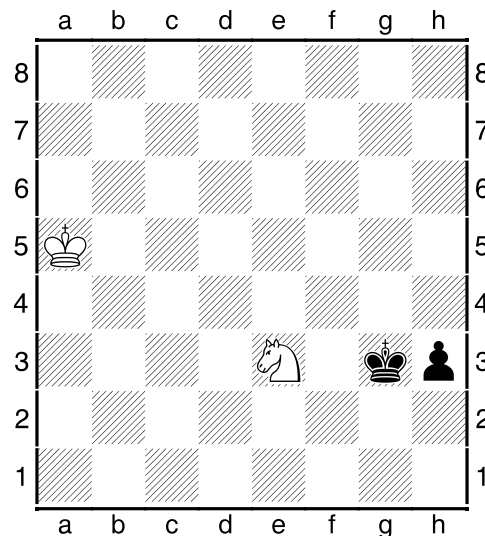
3...Kb7 4 Kf3 Ka8 5 Ke4 Kb7 6 Kd5 Ka8 7 Kc5 Kb7 8 Kb5 Ka8

Due to the danger of stalemate, White can make no progress and despite having a piece and a pawn extra the game is drawn. With regards my initial comments, if the pawn was guarded on the 6th rank or further back then White could combine his king and knight at his leisure to safely usher the pawn home.

In fairness even a bishop and rook's pawn won't defeat a lone king if the defender is on the case but the bishop doesn't control the 'queening' square. The long range bishop though is excellent at halting passed pawns. The same can't be said of the knight although the following may come as a surprise to some.



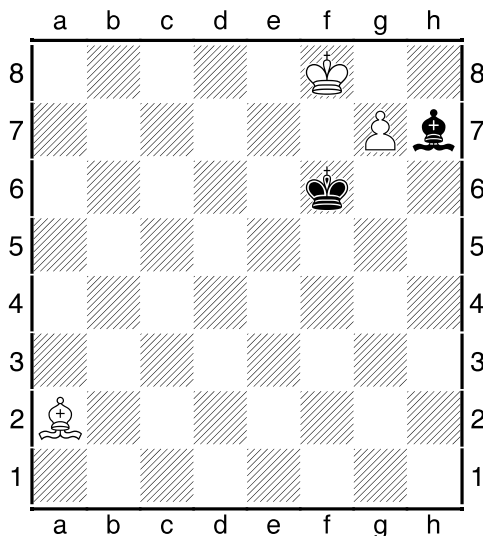
Yes, above the white knight needs to be able to give itself up for the dangerous h-pawn but of course it has restricted mobility. Nevertheless after **1.Ng4 Kg3 2.Ne3** leading to the position below you will notice that the super steed is on a satisfactory defensive track.



Play might continue **2...Kf3** (The point is 2...h2 3.Nf1+ Kg2 4.Nxh2) **3.Nf1 Kf2 4.Nh2 Kg2 5.Ng4 Kg3 6.Ne3** and we are going around in circles with the white knight proving very frustrating to Black.

Decoys and Deflections

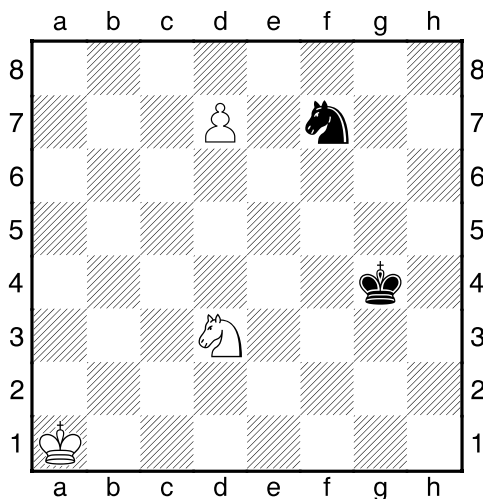
In the position below, in order to win White must achieve a successful promotion i.e. without Black being able to concede his bishop for it.



A simple and most satisfactory idea is to drive the black bishop off of the short h7-g8 diagonal and this can be achieved by the ‘deflecting sacrifice’ **1 Bb1!**

The bishop effectively acts as a decoy to lure its opposite number away from its main task. As the g8-square is covered by the white king, there are no other squares on the h7-g8 diagonal. Hence the black bishop is pushed away and after **1...Bxb1 2 g8Q** White should easily go on to win.

There is a similar theme in position below. White has a dangerous passed pawn on d7 but its promotion prospects are currently well monitored by the black knight on f7.



The black king is also descending on the main action area a lot faster than the white monarch and so it is up to the white knight to work some quick magic. As it happens it can do just that with the clever **1 Ne5+**!

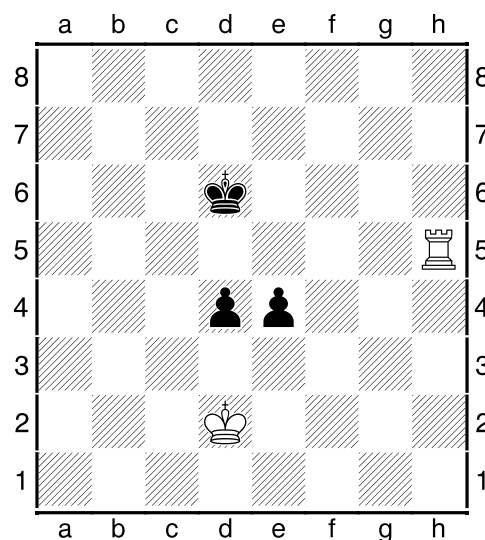
It's very rare to see a knight forking an enemy king and knight but that is exactly the case here. The point is of course that the white knight is working as a decoy. To move the black king would allow knight takes knight and a certain promotion whilst **1...Nxe5 2 d8Q** is of course what White was counting on.

It is always worth keeping an eye out for ways in which to lure away defenders from critical defensive tasks.

Rook vs. Two Connected Pawns

First up it is important to note that generally connected **pawns are superior to isolated pawns in rook endings** and I would like to again make the point that although they can't promote, **the value of pieces should never be under-estimated in endgames.**

Nobody can deny that in the position below Black's pawns look like a tasty duo. It is amazing though how weaker players can over-estimate their value in situations such as this.



The white rook is cutting off the black king and the next stage is getting the white king in on the act. Here a simple procedure is to approach the pawns from the side:

1 Kc2 Ke6

The pawn advances hold no future e.g. 1...d3+ 2 Kd2 Ke6 3 Ke3 Kd6 4 Kxe4 d2 5 Rd5+.

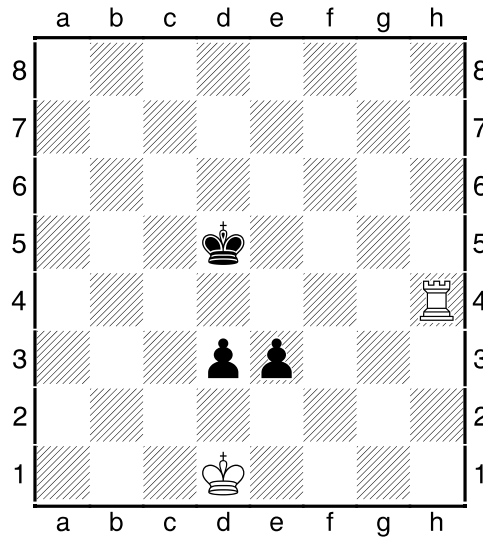
2 Kb3 e3 3 Kc4 e2 4 Rh1 Ke5 5 Kd3

Now White picks off one pawn and the other follows shortly e.g.

5...Kd5 6 Kxe2 Kc4 7 Kd2 Kd5 8 Kd3 Ke5 9 Rh4

It is true that pawns tend to become more relevant in endgames but never forget that a rook is worth 5 pts!

If we shuffle everything up the board one rank then obviously the same procedure would be applicable. Bringing all the pieces down one rank though requires White to employ more subtlety:



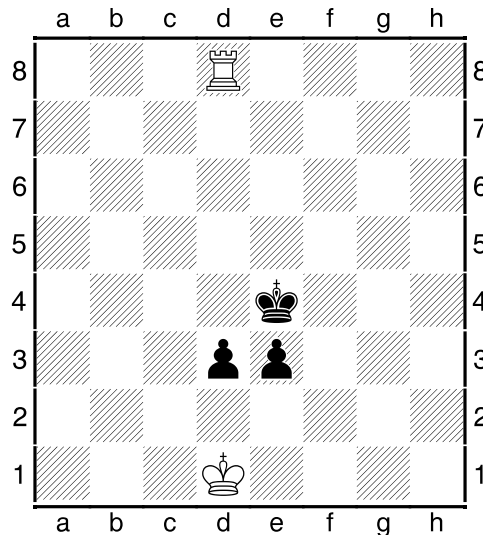
1 Rh8

In case you were wondering, clearly there isn't enough time to bring the king around now e.g. 1 Kc1 Ke5 2 Kb2 e2 3 Rh1 d2 when a disaster has occurred!

1...Ke4 2 Rd8

White's aim is to force Black to advance one of his pawns. That would then enable his king to slip into the gap.

2...Kf3!?



Note how 2...e2+ 3 Kd2 Kf3 4 Rxd3+ Kf2 5 Re3 loses easily and that instead Black has one sneaky trap to set.

3 Ke1!

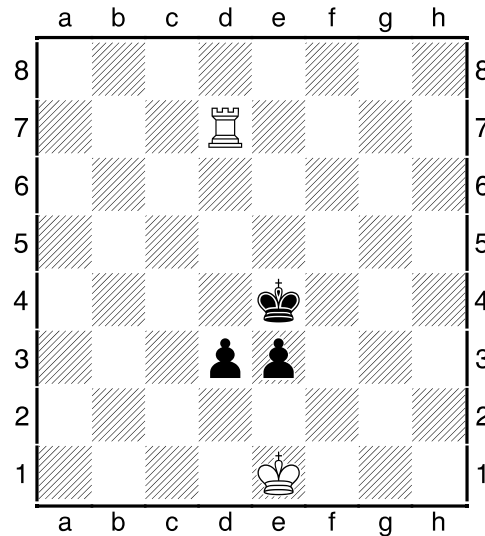
The simplest! Certainly White is advised to avoid 3 Rxd3? Kf2 when in view of ...e2+-e1Q he must concede his rook for the remaining pawn.

3...Ke4

Again advancing the pawns is of no use as 3...d2+ 4 Kd1 Kf2 5 Rf8+ Kg3 6 Ke2 Kg4 7 Rf1 demonstrates. Granted though, Black is going to be made to do something like that soon anyhow.

4 Rd7!

Now Black would rather ‘pass’ but in the rules of chess, alas such a ‘move’ is not allowed! The word ‘zugswang’ springs to mind!

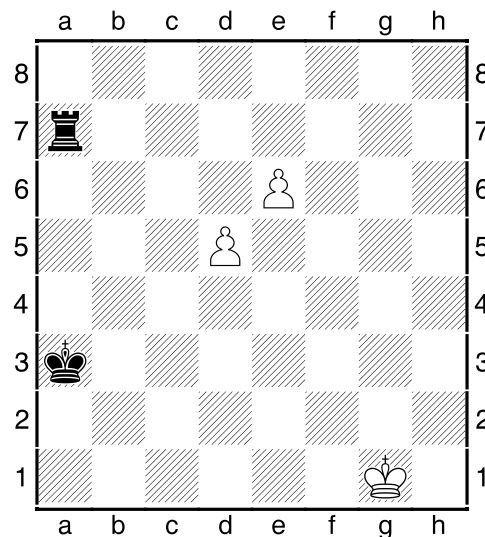


Black doesn't want to move

4...d2+ 5 Ke2 Kf4 6 Rd4+ Ke5 7 Kxe3

and the d-pawn is next.

We have just seen an example where a king and rook defeat a king and two connected pawns on the 6th rank. What then should we make of the frequently touted remark that “Two connected pawns on the 6th rank always defeat a rook”. Clearly that refers to instances where the defending king (i.e. the one paired with the rook) isn't on hand to help. Check out this following example:



With Black on the move he could hold up the pawns with ...Re7, after which his king would return to clean up. Alas the pawns get to go first:

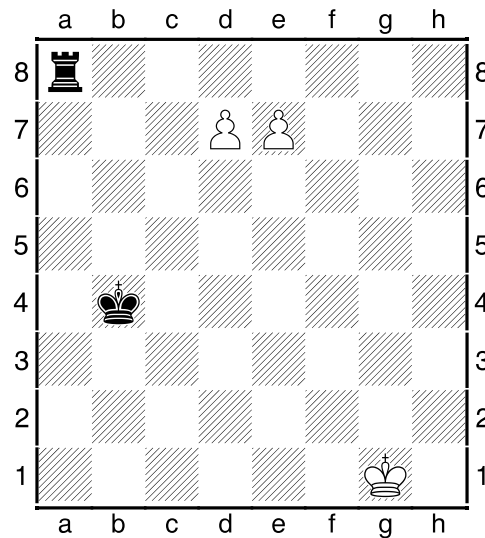
1 d6 Kb4 2 e7

Equally successful here would be 2 d7.

2...Ra8

If White wants to try and play on then 2...Ra1+ 3 Kf2 Rd1 4 e8Q Rxd6 or of course 2...Rd7 3 e8Q Rxd6 would survive longer but grovelling on in K+Q Vs K+R is no fun and should be a lost cause.

3 d7



1-0

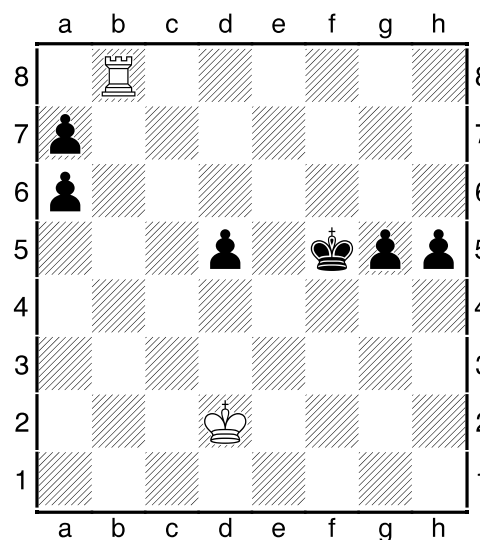
Either pawn is ready to promote. Having the white king up with the pawns will only help his cause but irrespective of that we can conclude:

Two connected pawns on the 6th rank will defeat a rook provided the rook can't win one of them immediately, the rook partnered king can't have a significant input and the king with the pawns isn't detrimentally placed.

Rook vs. More Pawns

The topics up for discussion in this section are situations in which the rook is up against several pawns. Of course there are millions of scenarios that could be dreamt up in this category but while factors such as how far advanced the pawns are, how strong in terms of connected/isolated they are etc are going to come into play, first up I'd have to observe that the title in itself is deceptive. One mustn't forget that we are really talking about K+R Vs K+P's. The king with the rook must be able to have a big role if the rook is to be triumphant.

Below even with White to play I'm sure that many would be tempted by Black's position and the chance to get some new queens! However let's investigate White's chances:



1 Ke3!

The first step in such situations is to identify the 'danger' pawns.

Though they are passed, clearly the doubled a-pawns are of little concern to White right now. This is because they are isolated and could only prove a threat if:

- They (or one of them) get further up the board.
- The black king can assist in their advance so that they are not just picked off as soon as the white rook gets behind them.
- The white king is nowhere to be seen i.e. is on the other side of the board and unable to return in time to help out.

The d-pawn is also not much to worry about but it is easy to envisage the connected h- and g-pawns having a big say. Hence the priority is to get the white king ready for action.

Note that it is nearly always beneficial for the rook-partnered king to be in close proximity to its enemy number. This reduces the influence it can have in ushering the pawns forward.

Also sensible here is 1 Ke2! but usually it makes more sense to centralise the king. On e3 the white king can get to the g- and h-files just as quickly as it can from e2 and on e3 obviously it has more 'shouldering' ability. The downside (not effective here) is that Black could try to distract the king by offering a pawn. Under different conditions ...d4+ could be a worthwhile sacrifice to gain time.

Before continuing, let's see what could happen if White ignored king activation in favour of non-priority pawn grabbing: 1 Ra8?! h4 2 Rxa7 Kf4 3 Rxa6?! h3 4 Ke2?! (a bit late!) 4...h2 5 Rh6 Kg3 (threatening ...Kg2 and ...h1Q) 6 Kf1 d4. With the white king and rook tied up there is no satisfactory way to halt this pawn. Black will win.

1...h4 2 Rd8

It's not so much the pawn that this rook is after but the chance to 'cut off' the black king.

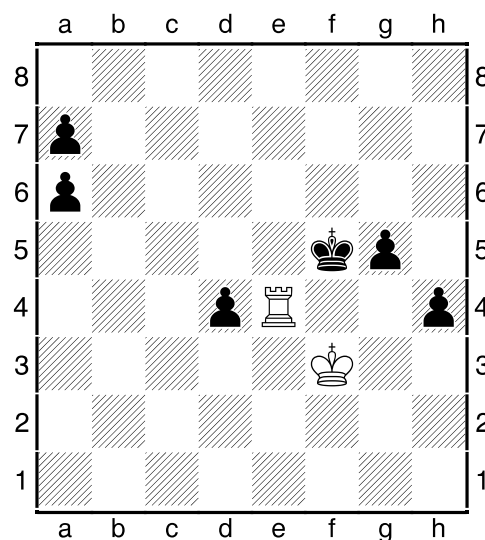
2...Ke5 3 Re8+ Kf5 4 Rd8

Showing who is boss! Of course this repetition is not necessary but it was useful to demonstrate that in contrast to belief of the majority of weaker players, it is White who is in the driving seat in this materially imbalanced situation.

4...Ke5 5 Kf3 d4 6 Re8+ Kf5

Upon 6...Kd5 7 Rg8 the h- and g-pawns drop quickly and the important thing is that the white king is still easily close enough to help out with the d-pawn and even the a-pawns.

7 Re4!



Excellent play! The rook is an absolute star.

7...d3

A different road would be 7...h3 8 Rxd4 h2 9 Kg2 Ke5 10 Ra4. White still has plenty of time and the only way that things could go wrong were if he were to dilly dally and the black king made it over the help an a-pawn with the white king still languishing on the kingside. In this variation that is a very unlikely outcome seeing as White is about to pick the a-pawns off in succession!

8 Rd4 a5

White has all the other pawns under lock and key and as I stated earlier, without the black king offering support, a solitary black a-pawn wouldn't become a concern for some while.

9 Rd5+!

It is always a good idea to look out for opportunities to force the opponent's king back and away from the action.

9...Kg6 10 Kg4!

To be honest, White can win pretty much however he likes now. Nevertheless this shows good technique. The a- and d-pawns are going nowhere and all resistance will be broken when the g- and h-pawns are eliminated.

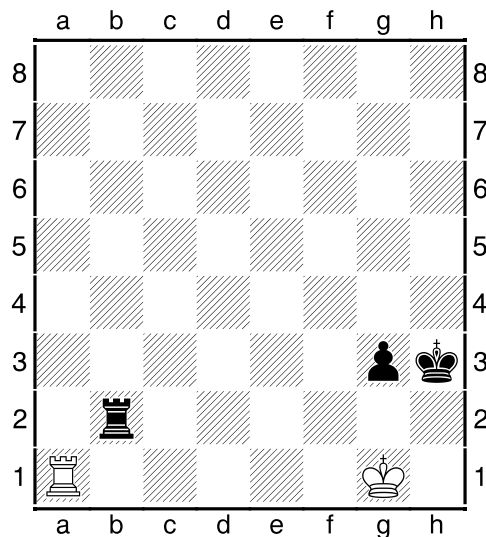
10...Kf6 11 Rxd3 a4 12 Ra3 Kg6 13 Rxa4 Kf6 14 Ra6+ Ke5 15 Kxg5 h3 16 Rxa7 h2 17 Rh7 1-0

It should be no revelation that the rook is a superb piece. Without a resignation all 5 black pawns would have been successfully removed!

Rook and Pawn vs. Rook

When defending against a rook's pawn or a knight's pawn a perfectly acceptable defence is to keep the king on the 'queening' square and the rook 'passively' guarding the back rank.

Below knight's pawn at least offers some cover from checks for the attacking king but providing the defender is sensible, still the winning chances are extremely limited:

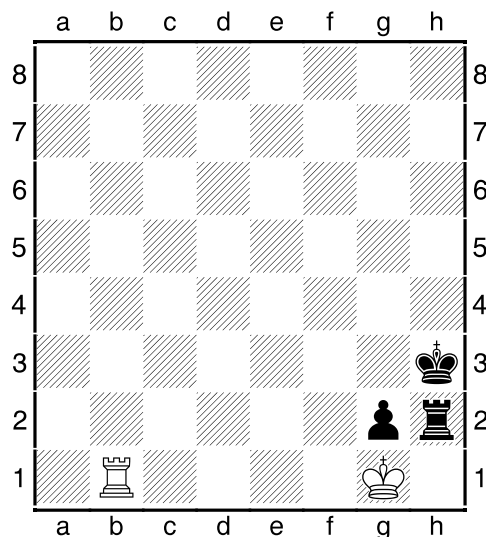


1 Rc1

Although it is generally better see active rooks that buzz all around the board checking the opponent's king, attacking pawns and all sorts, here the white rook remains comparatively passive. Under these conditions it is an adequate solution as of course to vacate the back rank now would allow Black a mating check!

1...Ra2 2 Rb1 Rg2+ 3 Kh1 Rh2+ 4 Kg1 Ra2

Ironically the only serious winning attempt is a more than serious losing attempt! Yes, check out the 4...g2?? illustrated below.



Black may be threatening ...Rh1+ but 5 Rb3+! Kg4 6 Kxh2 is what Black is looking for!

5 Rc1 g2 6 Rc3+ Kg4 7 Rb3

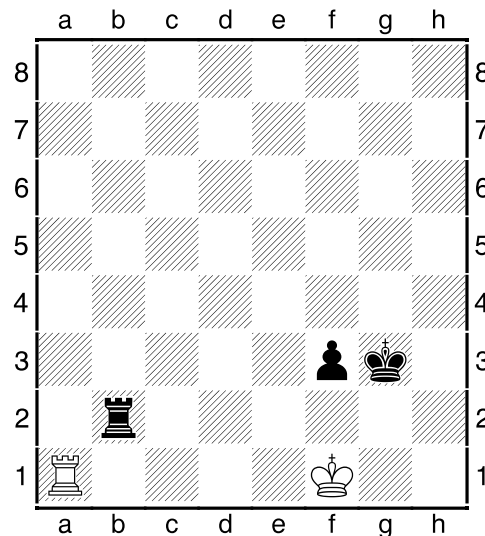
The other easy draw option was 7 Rc4+ Kh3 8 Rc3+ Kg4 9 Rc4+. The black king has nowhere to hide and 9...Kf3 10 Rc3+ Kf4 11 Rc4+ Ke3 12 Rc3+ Kd4 13 Rg3 bags that pawn.

7...Rc2 8 Ra3 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

The king is cut off from the pawn and hence there is no way for Black to make progress.

Similar situations but involving, c, d, e or f-pawns instead are far more tricky. Indeed the following example shows why the defender cannot afford to remain passive:

Overleaf the white rook prevents a black rook check to the left of his king but as the example has been nudged along a file to the left, Black has an extra option.



1 Kg1

The truth is that White is already lost in this position. It is clearly too late for the white rook to try and get active i.e. 1 Ra8 (hoping to check the black king from behind) 1...Rb1 mate whilst the consistently passive; 1 Rc1 Rh2 is what 1 Kg1 attempts (unsuccessfully) to avoid.

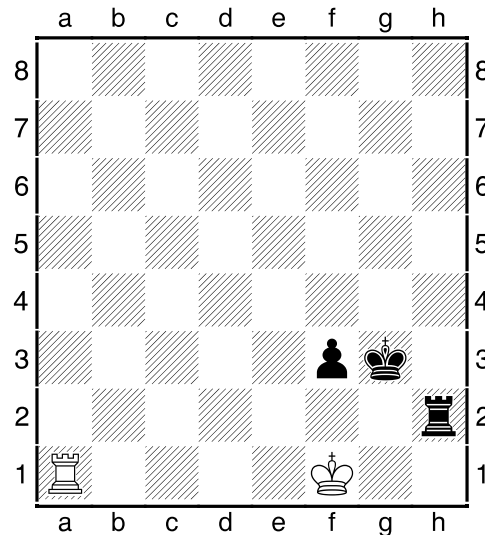
1...Rg2+!

1 Kg1 constituted White's best try as after 1...Rh2 at least he could pin the f-pawn with 2 Ra3. Of course Black could only be teasing or perhaps might find the winning plan of 2...Rb2 3 Ra1 Rg2+ 4 Kf1 Rh2 next time around!

2 Kf1

2 Kh1 Rh2+ 3 Kg1 f2+ 4 Kf1 Rh1+ transposes to the main line i.e. is curtains!

2...Rh2

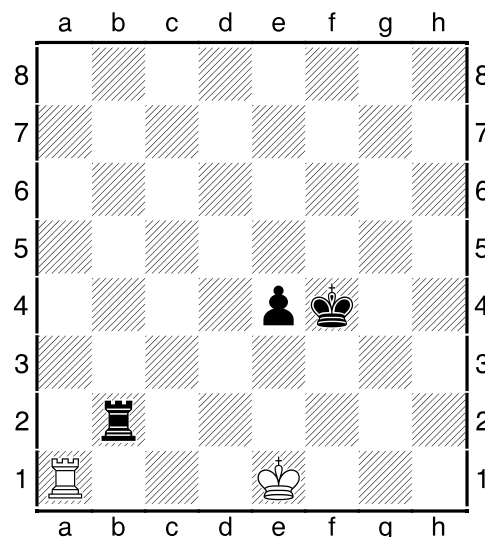


And here we see the critical difference between this situation and our previous two examples. The white rook is unable to cover the whole of the back rank as the black rook swings to the other side of the pawn in order to threaten mate on h1.

3 Kg1 f2+ 4 Kf1 Rh1+ 0-1

The conclusion then is that 'passive' defence does not work against what is loosely referred to as a centre pawn.

All is not lost though as there are other defensive techniques available and the one below is an important one to grasp:



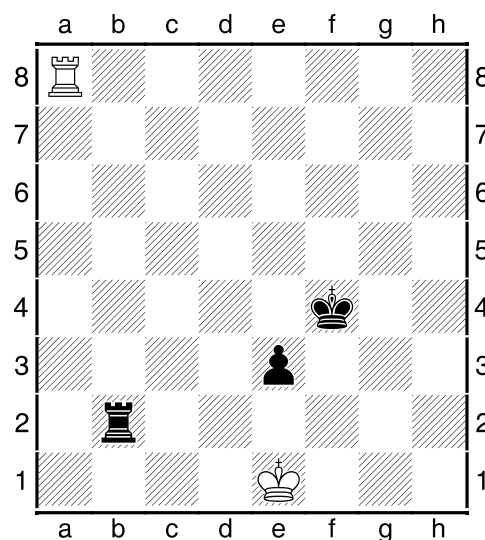
1 Ra3!

Known as the 'Philidor technique', the text prevents the enemy king from advancing. If it is allowed to do so then Black will win e.g. 1 Rc1? (the passive defence will fail) 1...Kf3 2 Ra1 (It is too late for 2 Rc8 now e.g. 2...Rb1+ 3 Kd2 e3+ 4 Kd3 Rd1+ 5 Kc2 e2 6 Rf8+ Kg4 7 Rg8+ Kf5 8 Rf8+ Kg6 9 Re8 e1Q) 2...e3 3 Rc1 Rh2 and just as we saw with the f-pawn in the last example, the white rook is powerless to help out.

1...e3

There is no other way for Black to try to progress. Where it is currently placed, the black rook stops the white king from advancing and even if it could have got to d3, White could have (though he wouldn't have been forced to) just swapped rooks in order to enter a drawn king ending.

This text carries the threat of ...Kf3, when the white rook will be forced to retreat. However whilst it could prevent the check on b1, the recurring theme is that it could do nothing about ...Rh2-h1.

2 Ra8!

White must continue actively and from here the white rook has fantastic chances for hassling the enemy king.

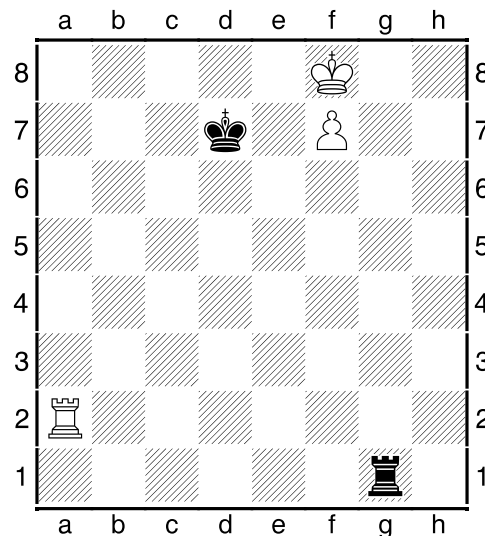
2...Kf3

The white rook was able to venture away because (aside from ...Kf3) there was no immediate threat i.e. 2...Rb1+ 3 Ke2 Rb2+ 4 Ke1 achieves nothing.

3 Rf8+ Ke4 4 Re8+ Kd3 5 Rd8+ 1/2-1/2

There is no hiding place for the black king.

The following simply requires an application of common sense:



1 Rh2!

White has got his pawn all the way to the 7th rank but in order for it to be able to take that final step, he needs to be able to extract his king. Clearly 1 Ra7+ Kd8 2 Ra8+ Kd7 is not going to budge the black king from the d-file as from the side the white rook can't control both d7 and d8 at the same time.

Cover for the king is the one stumbling block that white must overcome as demonstrated by the variation 1 Rd2+ Kc7 2 Ke7 Re1+ 3 Kf6 Rf1+ 4 Kg6 Rg1+ 5 Kf5 Rf1+ 6 Ke6 Re1+ 7 Kf6 Rf1+ 8 Kg7 Rg1+ 9 Kf8. Coming out too soon got White nowhere and whilst there is a crafty solution to this outlined in the next example, for now observe the simplicity of the text.

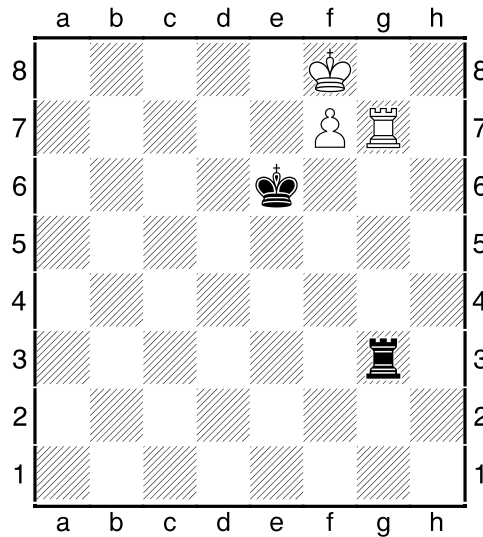
1...Rg3 2 Rh7

White's simple idea is to force the black rook off of the g-file so that his king can get out from in front of the pawn and hence 2 Rh8 Rg1 3 Rg8 Rf1 4 Kg7 Rg1+ 5 Kh6 Rh1+ 6 Kg5 Rg1+ 7 Kh4 Rh1+ 8 Kg3 Rg1+ 9 Kh2 would be equally successful.

2...Ke6

Upon 2...Rg1 3 Rg7 Rf1 4 Kg8, note that 4...Ke7 5 f8Q+ is double check!

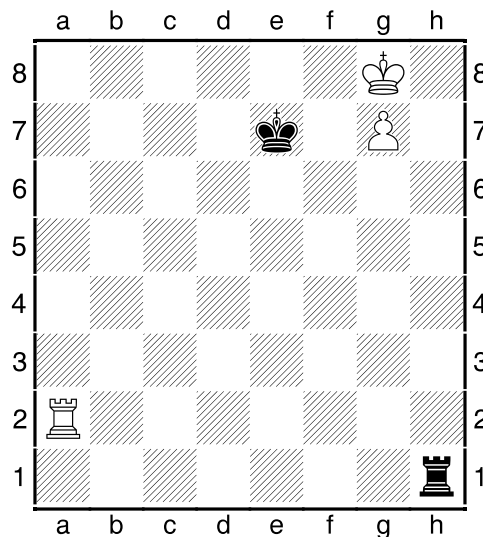
3 Rg7



3 Ke8 also wins although after 3...Ra3, in contemplating how to deal with the mate threat White should turn to 4 Rh6+! rather than under-promoting (with check) as a rook and knight vs. a rook is a theoretical draw.

3...Rf3 4 Kg8 1-0

Shifting everything along a file makes White's life more difficult and indeed requires him to know another important rook and pawn endgame technique:



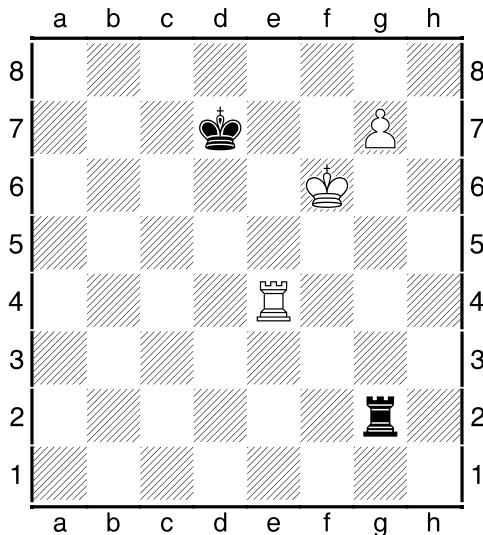
1 Re2+

As in our previous example 1 Ri2-i7-h7 would be a simple manoeuvre were the board 9 files wide! Due to the 8 by 8 width restriction though, White has to find a clever winning idea.

1...Kd7 2 Re4!

This is known as the 'Lucena' technique and Lucena's position then is all about building a bridge for the white king.

2...Rh2 3 Kf7 Rf2+ 4 Kg6 Rg2+ 5 Kf6



5...Kd6

The immediate 5...Rg1 transposes to the main line after 6 Re5! but at least with the text Black sets a trap.; The subtlety behind White's 2nd move is highlighted with the basic 5...Rf2+ 6 Kg5 Rg2+ 7 Rg4. On the 4th rank it is available to block checks.

6 Re6+!

Black was hoping for 6 Re5? Rxg7! when so long as the black king keeps tabs on the white rook i.e. 7 Re6+ Kd7 , the white king finds itself overworked.

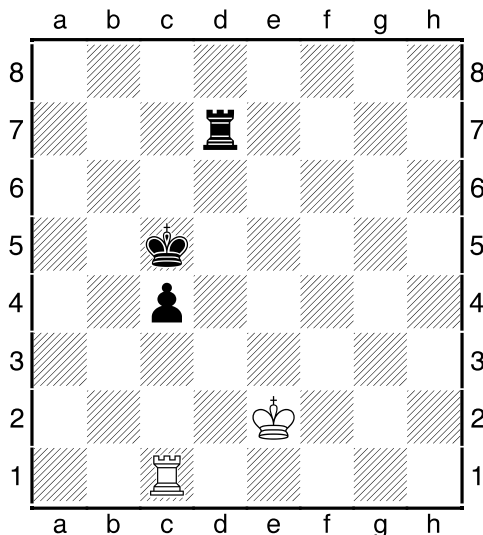
6...Kd7

6...Kd5 7 Re5+! is the same.

7 Re5! Rg1 8 Rg5 Rf1+ 9 Ke5 1-0

Promotion is imminent.

Cutting off the defending king is an important concept and equally important for the defender is the idea of 'breaking the barrier' as seen below:



If White does nothing then the black king and pawn will simply shuffle down the board and he will win in either of the last two ways that we have just covered.

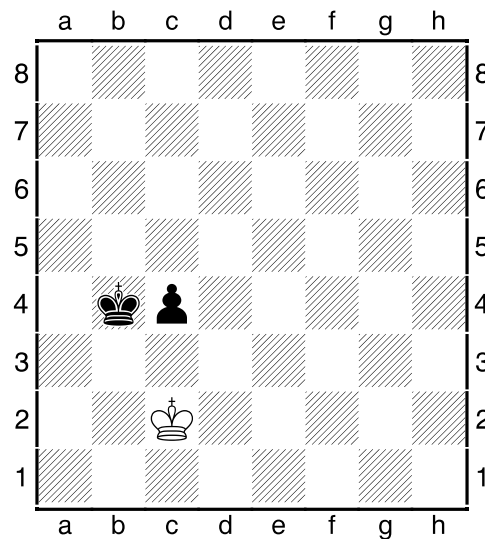
1 Rd1!

White then must do something and this is just the ticket!

1...Rxd1

Instead 1...Rh7, 2 Kd2 will have seen White achieve his aim and with the defending king back on the case, it's no surprise that he holds e.g. 2...Rh2+ 3 Kc3 Rh3+ 4 Kc2 Kb4 5 Rb1+ Kc5 6 Rb8.

2 Kxd1 Kb4 3 Kc2



$\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$.

The black king can't get in front of his pawn and is thus unable to usher it home.

Tactics and Positional Concepts

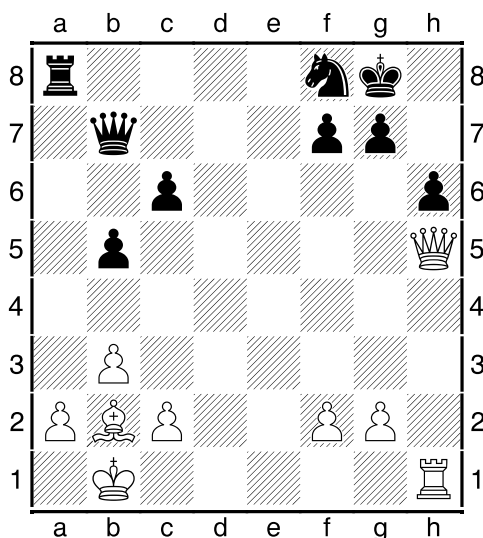
Destroying the Defensive Barrier

When middlegames occur in which there is opposite side castling, often there is exciting play in which both players are trying to attack the enemy king.

In the position below it would appear that the white monarch has moved to b1 after having castled queenside. Both sides have half-open rook's files for which to attack down but actually should the black queen make it down to a2 (i.e. backed up by the rook on a8) then mate still wouldn't be on the cards. The white king could slip back to c1 and the fianchettoed bishop on b2 is an excellent defender.

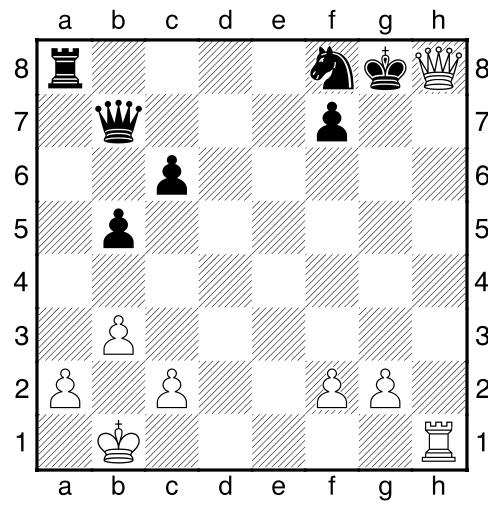
With White to move, he could attempt to deliver mate on g7 by immediately attacking the black pawn there with his queen (the obvious candidates being 1 Qe5 and 1 Qg4). Depending on how White does this, Black has a choice of available defences. He might block the b2-g7 diagonal by advancing his f-pawn or indeed block the g-file by parking his knight on g6. Alternatively the knight could offer protection from e6 and the conclusion may be that White should find another approach.

An alternative idea would to be to work with the h-file with the ultimate aim of delivering mate on h8. This could be attempted via a 'pawn storm' with White employing his g-pawn (and if required the neighbouring f-pawn too) to try to uncover the shell around the black king and well, specifically the h-pawn.



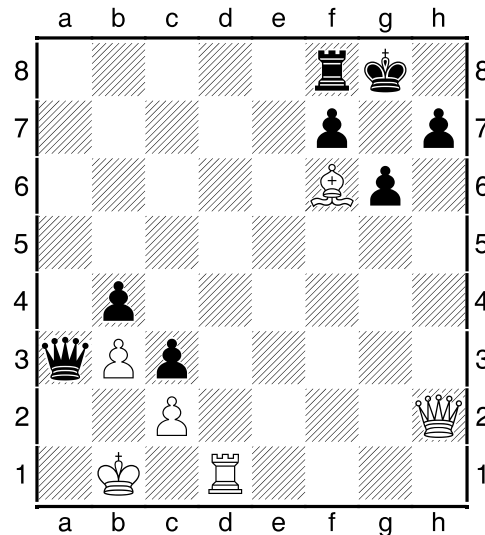
A valid plan but not as swift as an immediate sacrifice aimed at destroying the black pawn shield. Take a look at **1 Bxg7 Kxg7 2 Qxh6+ Kg8 3 Qh8 mate**. Truthfully I guess Black may have been able to survive longer by not accepting White's bishop sacrifice.

However although he might have avoided reaching the position below, his defensive shield would have been history!



Building a Combination

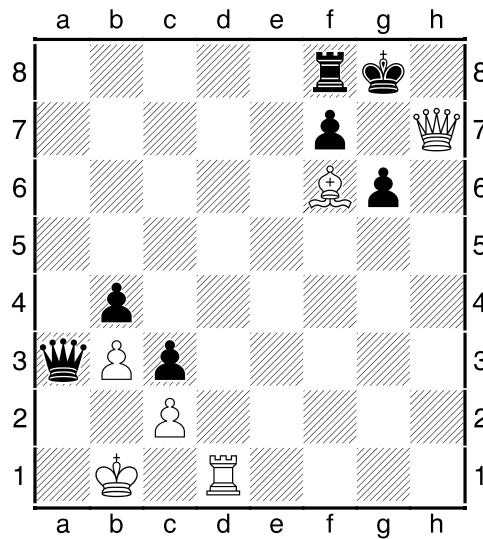
I thought that the time has come for us to put a sequence of moves together in order to deliver mate and so we have our first real combination. Take a few moments to get to grips with the position below.



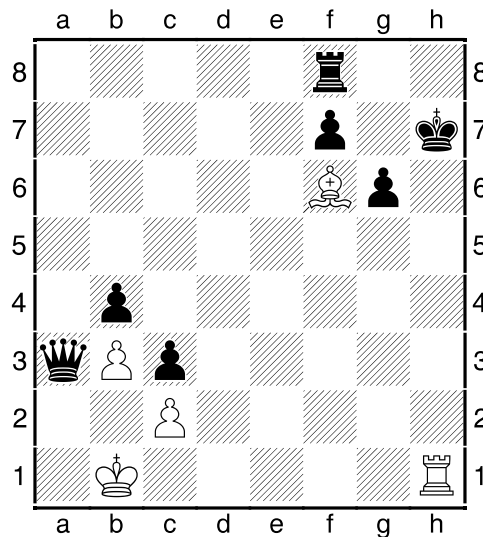
Let's talk about what we can deduce from this position:

- 1) Were it Black to move then he could mate his opponent immediately by nudging his queen down to b2 where it is offered support from the c3-pawn.
- 2) On the move, White's defensive options are limited. The only piece around to help guard the b2 square is his bishop through the continuation Bxc3. That would only be a temporary relief though as ...bxc3 simply replaces the old black pawn with a new one and White is faced with the same problem as before i.e. he is back to square one without his bishop!
- 3) White could try to exploit the big (strong players tend to describe such a square as 'big' even though strictly speaking it is the same size as all the others!) hole on g7 by 1 Qh6 but although Black can't actually cover the g7-square, as we have already established, he can get his mate in first on b2.

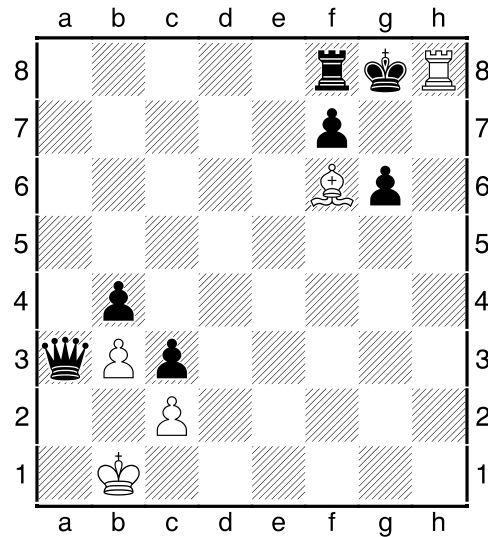
In fact provided White doesn't throw the towel in, he should discover a forced checkmate of his own through a process of elimination. Given that we have established 1 Bxc3 to be futile, to avoid being mated, he must give a check of his own. Hence **1 Qxh7+**, a sacrifice that must be accepted.



Black's only move is to take the queen and after **1...Kxh7**, again White must give a check. So **2 Rh1+** is played leading to the position below.



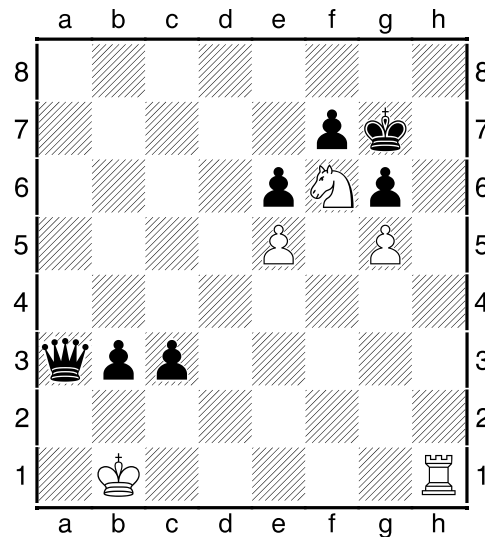
Forced then is **2...Kg8** but that's not the end of the checks though as there is one more to come. You've guessed it, **3 Rh8** is mate.



It may appear to be luck, but if you have made a mental note of this sequence (and there are plenty similar) then it could easily turn up in one of your own games. Particularly instructive is the manner in which it sort of combined the previous themes of destroying the defensive barrier and exploiting holes around the enemy king. White sacrificed to eliminate the h7-pawn shield and then homed in on the weak (i.e. as it was covered by an attacking piece but not a defensive one) h8-square.

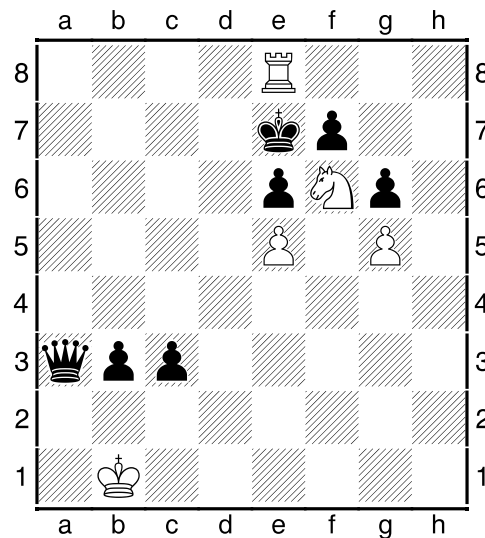
An Arabian Knight

Falling in line with the general understanding that knights aren't great in endings, it is also generally accepted that in endgames, a rook and a knight don't perform together as well as a rook and a bishop pairing. More often than not that is the case, but I did want to bring to your attention a couple of important exceptions.



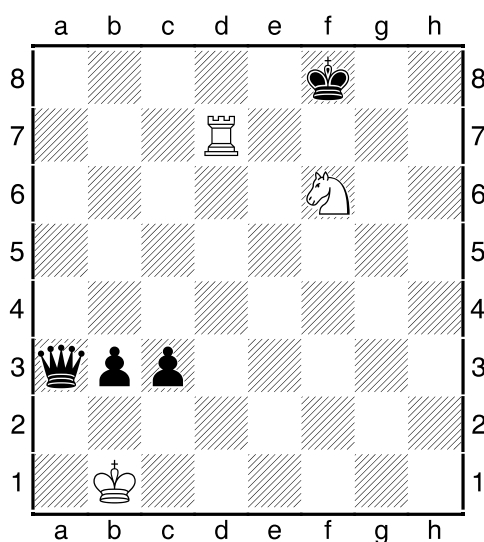
Above White faces a hopeless defensive task with the enemy queen and connected passed pawns poised to strike and deliver mate. However a knight embedded on f6 (or f3 if the situation was reversed) is a fantastic weapon. Combined with a queen there would be mates available left, right and centre. In fact though without even moving, from here the knight provides deadly support for even a rook:

1 Rh7+ Kf8 2 Rh8+ Ke7 (or 2 ..Kg7 3 Rg8 mate) 3 Re8 mate.



A knight parked on an outpost (a topic soon studied in more detail) deep in the heart of the opponent's position will always be a nuisance.

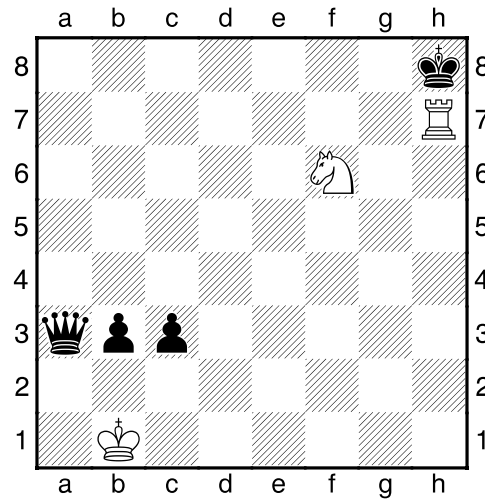
In that last example the white knight was parked on an outpost and certainly proved to be a nuisance. When a knight is behind enemy lines without support though, it can often become a liability and easily wind up trapped. The situation illustrated below though is another important case worth taking note of.



Over on the queenside there is the same scenario of Black about to deliver mate only this time in position the black king is not hemmed in by any of its own pawns nor inhibited by enemy ones. Indeed there is a lot of open space on the kingside and the concept of the white rook and knight combining to give mate seems unthinkable. A simple check like 1 Rd8+ would allow the black monarch to escape the back rank and the checks would soon dry up. The crafty readers amongst you (as well as those who have been playing close attention throughout the book!) may have observed that as the white king has no legal options, if White could arrange to jettison both his rook and his knight then a stalemate would result and he would have managed to salvage a draw. An 'on the ball' Black player though would be careful to ensure that that wouldn't happen but anyway I have digressed from my main point.

This particular alignment (and note the theme that follows wouldn't work if for example the rook and knight were budged a square to the left) allows the following sequence: **1 Nh7+ Ke8 2 Nf6+** The knight protects the rook and gives check. After **2...Kf8 3 Nh7+ Kg8 4 Nf6+** clearly White's aim is to continue checking in order to obtain a draw.

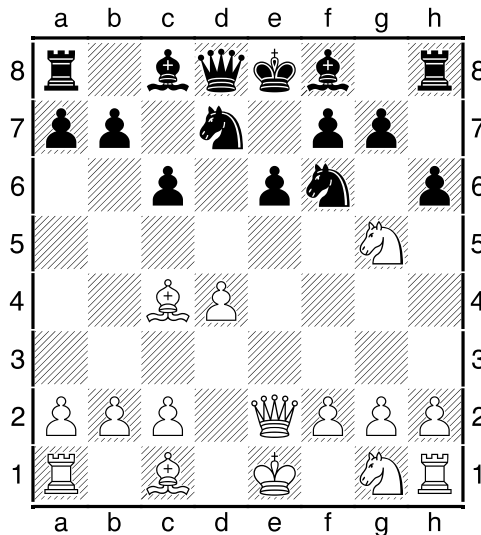
However if Black carelessly walks into **4...Kh8??** **5 Rh7** then he will have fallen for an ‘Arabian mate’.



It's common sense really but it is obviously better to obtain a draw by threefold repetition than to lose! In an otherwise bad position a sacrifice designed to achieve a perpetual check may not be as good as one that delivers mate but half a point is better than a big fat zero!

Sacrifices on f7 and e6

Beginners are warned in their first steps in competition play that White should ensure that he guards his f2-square and Black, as he moves second should be even more vigilant of his f7-square. In this course we are beyond the likes of 'Fool's mate' but it should be noted that particularly when the king is not castled, other tricks also exist. Take a look below:

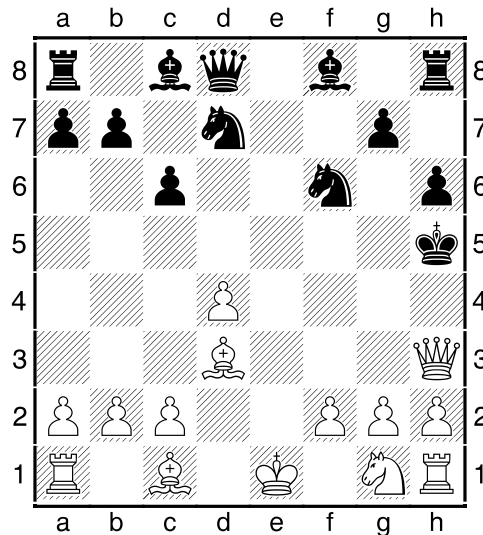


The white knight is attacked by the h6-pawn and an instinctive reaction might be to drop it back to f3 or e4. More likely though, White has played the way he has for a reason and with his queen and bishop lining up against e6 he has available a juicy sacrifice.

First of all though do note that 1 Nxe6? fxe6 2 Qxe6+ hoping for 2...Be7?? 3 Qf7 mate would have been nowhere near as effective because of 2...Qe7. Not only would Black not then get mated but he could force the queens off because of the e-file pin.

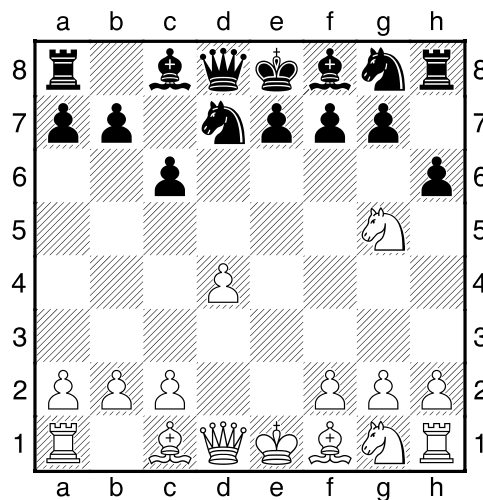
Instead though there is **1 Nxf7!**

It is ironic that because Black has a knight on d7, the inferior bishop on c8 isn't offering any support to what otherwise would be an inhibiting pawn on e6. As it is though after **1...Kxf7** the pawn and hence structure that White has targeted collapses like a house of cards with **2 Qxe6+ Kg6 3 Bd3+** spelling bad news for Black. Observe how the white bishop pair control so many squares between them and hence after **3...Kh5** the **4 Qh3** depicted below is in fact mate!

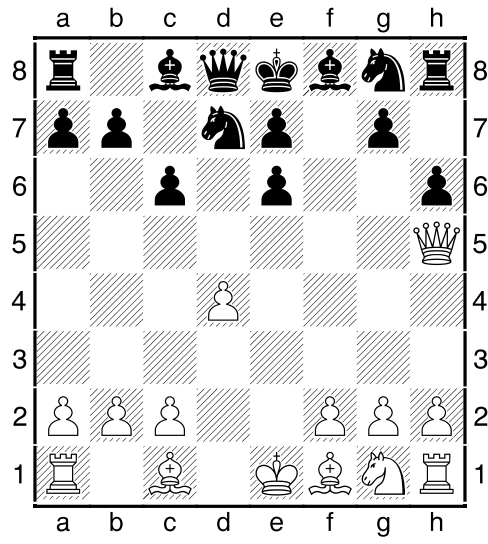


Clearly then when hoping to descend on e6, certainly consider a sacrifice on the guardian f7-pawn as well as the direct assault on the e-pawn.

Our next example sees the f7-pawn being lured away by a sacrifice that doesn't even pertain to gain a pawn for the offered piece.

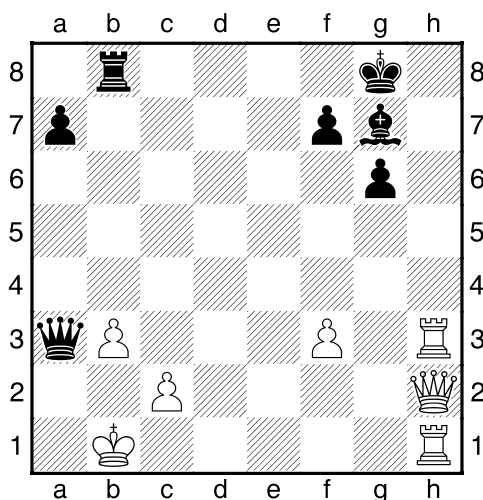


In the position above the white knight is attacked but White intends to expose Black's last move as a weakness by highlighting the fact that the black king is hemmed in. As it happens **1 Ne6!** could be worse for the black queen which does have escape squares available on b6 and a5. A disaster could befall him if he doesn't take the white knight invasion seriously and if he doesn't look out for checks then the **1...fxe6?? 2 Qh5+** as shown below would be very embarrassing. It's mate next go.

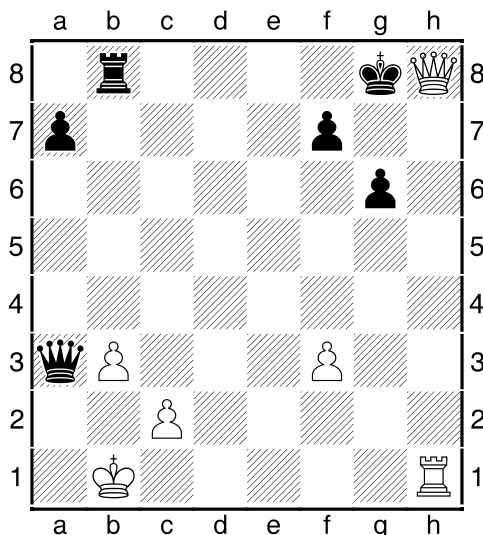


Eliminating the Fianchettoed Bishop

The phrase ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder’ is particularly relevant to the fianchettoed bishop!

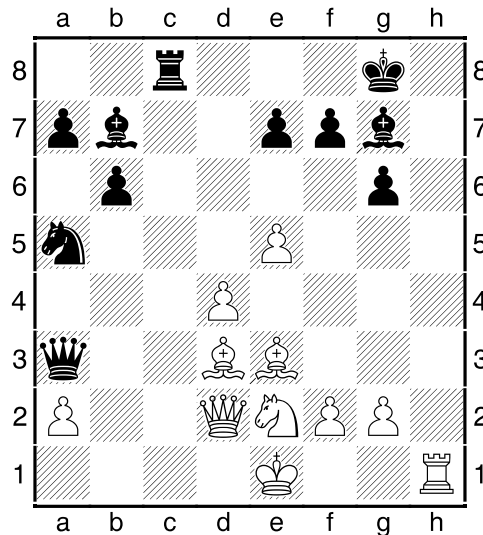


In the position above the bishop on g7 though all the way over on the kingside is proving to be an excellent attacking piece on the queenside and the black queen is raring to use its support over there to deliver mate on either a1 or b2. However it is not just its presence that is being felt but after the not too difficult to spot sequence **1 Rh8+! Bxh8 2 Qxh8 mate**, its absence is clearly noted too!



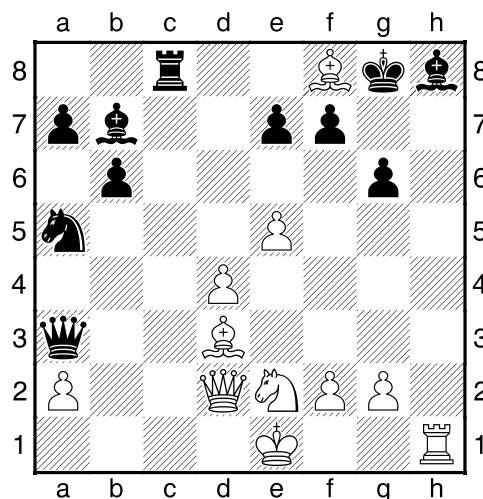
Frequently the fianchettoed bishop is simultaneously a good attacker and a good defender. However regarding its defensive role, the ironic twist is that as clearly a hole had to be created for it to be fianchettoed originally, it could be argued that so much defending wouldn't be required if the bishop hadn't been fianchettoed in the first place! Certainly an h2-h4-h5xg6 plan to open up the h-file wouldn't work if the black pawn were back on g7 but of course there may be other ways to provoke a g-pawn advance other than its voluntary inclusion for the purpose of a fianchetto.

Eliminating the bishop on g7 was the aim in the next two examples from my own games collection in which as White I was seeking to checkmate my opponent.



18 moves into the game Ward,C- Ledger,A, British Champs 1993 I had still not castled and indeed in the position above I had little intention of doing so. Instead I was concentrating all of my efforts on an attack down the h-file before my opponent could cause me severe problems on the queenside. However, even if I could ‘beam’ my queen up and then down onto h7, it was clear that wouldn’t be mate as Black’s dark-squared bishop controlled the vital square h8 and the king could escape to f8.

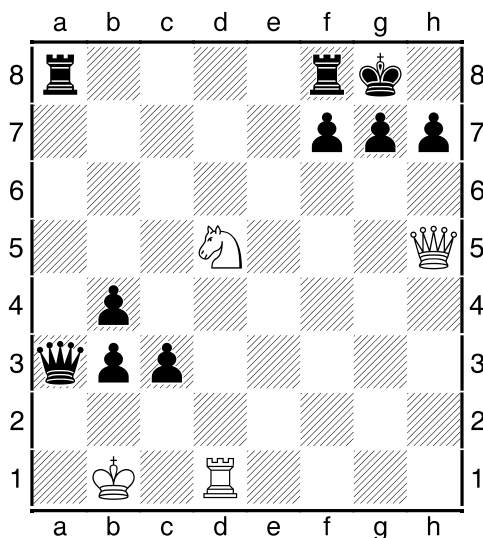
Therefore I knew that I had to exchange off that key defender and **19 Bh6** stood out a mile. Should Black swap off on h6 then my queen would swoop and mate would happen soon on h8. Instead then Black wisely avoided the trade with **19...Bh8** but up my sleeve I had the neat (if I say so myself!) tactical resource **20 Bf8!** shown below.



The most pertinent observation about the above is that **20..Rxf8 21 Qh6** would have forced mate on either h7 or h8 as Black doesn’t have time to move both his bishop and his rook. As **20 ..Kxf8 21 Rxh8+! Kg7 22 Qh6** mate was also fairly conclusive, Black had to come up with something else and the game ended through **20...f5 21 Rxh8+! Kf7** (or **21...Kxh8 22 Qh6_ Kg8 23 Qg7** mate) **22 Bxe7 Kxe7 23 Qg5+ Kd7 24 Rh7+ Kc6 25 Qf6+ Kd5 26 Qf7+ Kc6 27 Qd7** mate.

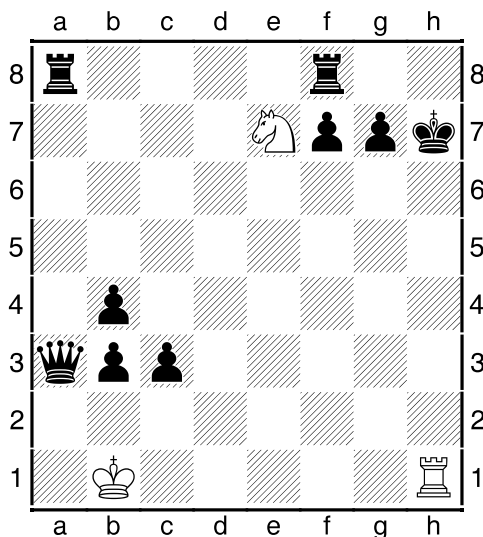
Exploiting the Restricted King

When a king is deprived of breathing space, alarm bells should start to ring.



Admittedly in the position overleaf the white king is in a bit of a grim situation but at least it is White to play!

At present the black monarch has just h8 to move to but after **1 Ne7+ Kh8** it has no breathing space whatsoever. All White need do is somehow get it to give check and **2 Qxh7+!! Kxh7 3 Rh1 mate** works a treat!

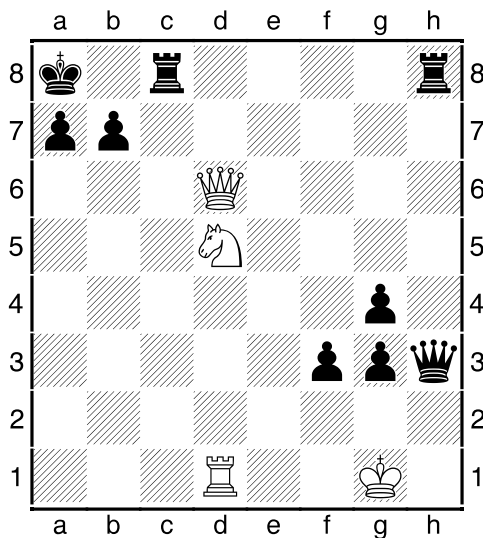


This type of formation is known as ‘Anastasia’s mate’ and I can testify it is a theme that does turn up now and again in practical play and is really enjoyable when you get to play it!

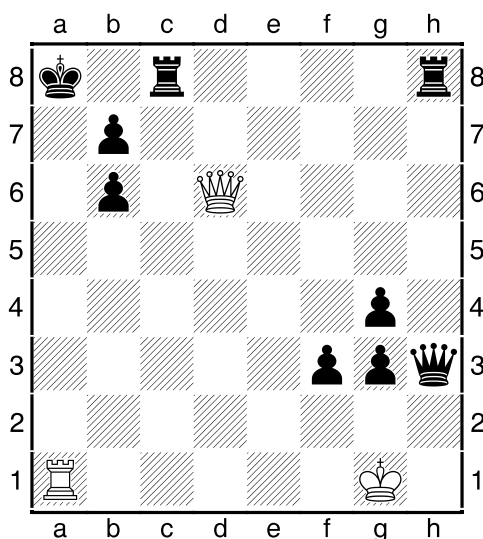
Incidentally had Black’s a8-rook started in the original position (on the previous page) on a7 where it covered the e7-square, then White should still not throw in the towel.

As his own king has no breathing space then if he could offload all of his remaining pieces then the result would be stalemate. For example in that instance (i.e. with the black rook on a7 rather than a8) 1 Nf6+ gx6 2 Rg1+ Kh8 3 Rg8+ and whichever way Black takes the rook, the kamikaze 4 Qxh7+ to follow would be a very appropriate sequence!

In the position below the black king may have a pawn shield but because of the white queen on d6, it can't move anywhere. No doubt its hope is that during the middlegame it won't have to move anywhere and instead can remain safely tucked away in the corner.



Alas **1 Nb6+!** (and note were the d1-rook on a1 instead then because the a-pawn would be pinned and this would already be mate!) **1...axb6 2 Ra1 mate** as shown below shatters that illusion.

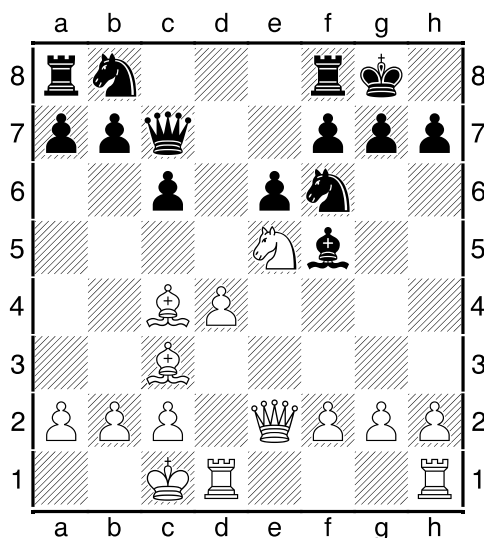


Incidentally it should be observed that 1 Nc7+ hoping to head for the same idea as the tactic of the example that follows won't be successful. After 1...Rxc7 2 Qd8+ rather than accepting the queen offer and getting back rank mated, the calm 2...Rc8 will thwart White's efforts.

The Development of a Combination: An Illustrative Game

What follows is one of my favourite games. It wasn't played against a fellow Grandmaster but rather against a club player when I was giving a simultaneous display at a local chess club. The format of such challenges is that the simultaneous giver (in this case me!) has but a few seconds on each move as he must continue moving around the room effectively competing against twenty or thirty opponents at the same time. Those opponents are not supposed to confer but in such a friendly atmosphere and on such a fun occasion, it is inevitable that comments are made about other games (note highly illegal in tournament play!).

At such a fast pace it would only be logical that my moves wouldn't be as accurate as in a normal competitive encounter but all the same I was more than pleased with the outcome.

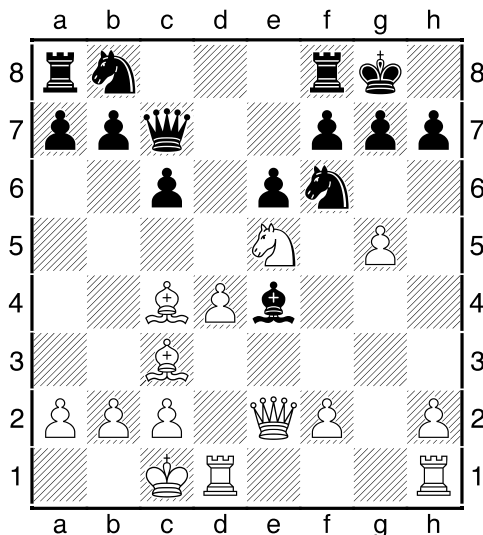


We pick up the action from the game Ward,C – Anon, Petts Wood simul, 1997 in the diagram above as I am (briefly!) considering my twelfth move. As White I have the two bishops for a bishop and a knight advantage and have a lead in development. With the kings on opposite sides, attacks are often the order of the day and I decided to kick mine off with...

12 g4

It's not that I believe that this pawn will deliver checkmate itself but rather the pieces that its advance will help bring into the attack.

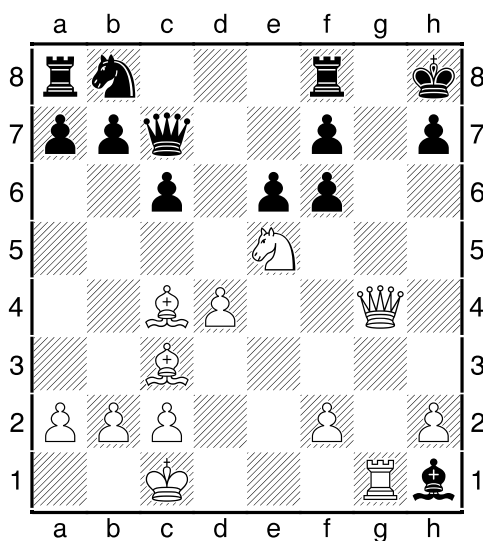
12 ..Be4 13 g5!



Reaching the position above, instead 13 f3 and 13 Rhg1 were more instinctive reactions but a quick calculation demonstrated to me that this exchange sacrifice would guarantee me creating a half-open g-file. Black must accept my rook offering as if he simply moves his attacked knight then his bishop would be left en prise.

13 ..Bxh1 14 gxf6

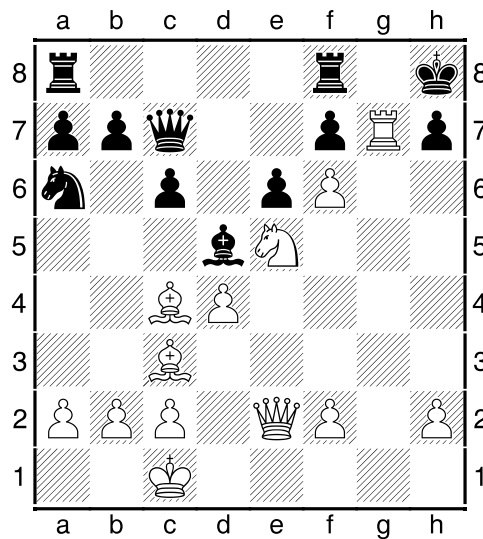
If Black had now left his bishop in the corner to be taken then he would have been material down as well as having to face a raging attack. The most basic of use for an open file though can be seen in the variation 14 ..gxf6 15 Qg4+ Kh8 16 Rg1. In the diagram below, as Black's rooks are not yet connected, there is nothing that he can do about mate on g7.



Hence instead Black played...

14...Bd5 and I responded with the natural 15 Rg1

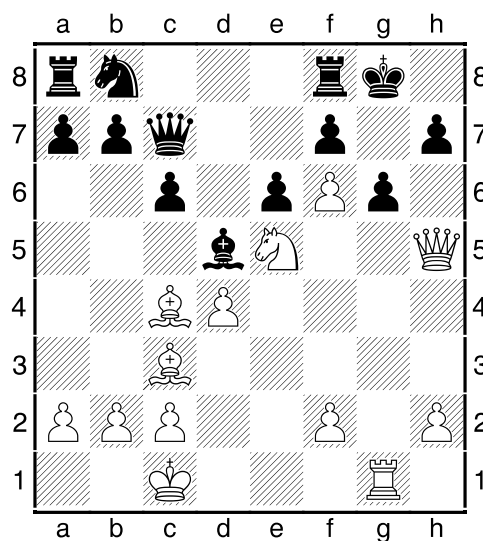
Now Black cannot allow an invasion on g7 and to demonstrate my point, after say 15 ..Na6 16 Rxf7+ Kh8 which would reach the position below.



From that hypothetical scenario, as well as a more mundane (but nevertheless successful!) attack on h7 via 17 Qd3, White can deliver mate after a sequence of checks: 17 Rxf7+ Kxh7 18 Qh5+ Kg8 19 Qg5+ Kh8 20 Qg7 mate.

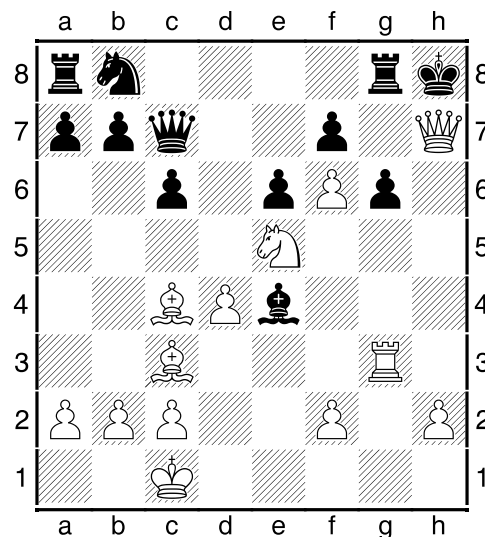
Instead then Black chose to keep the g-file closed with...

15...g6 when I took advantage of the pin on the g6-pawn with **16 Qh5** as shown below.



I was naturally eager to get my queen to h6 in order to deliver mate on the big hole g7. Although 16 Qe3 stood out as an obvious alternative, the idea of utilising the fact that the g-pawn was pinned and the possibility of a future sacrifice on g6 appealed too!

At this stage in the game I was half expecting/hoping for 16 ..Kh8 17 Qh6 Rg8 18 Rg3. Then the h7-square will be the focus of attention but after 18 ..Be4 instead of allowing the defence to 19 Rh3 or 19...g5, I could instead employ my favourite theme of 19 Qxh7+!!



Yes 19 ..Kxh7 20 Rh3 mate is very cool!

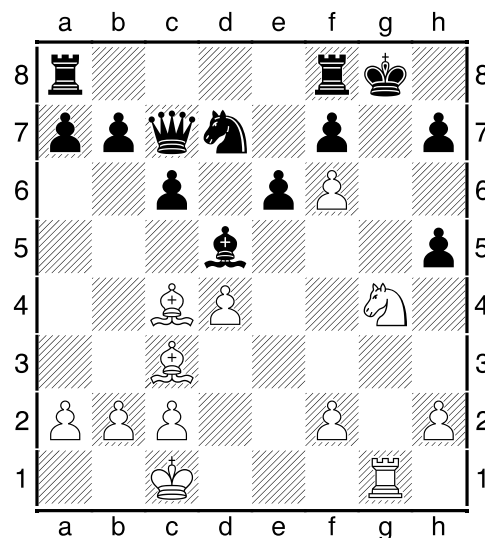
But that didn't happen with my opponent instead favouring
16 ..Nd7 and consequently my being unable to resist **17 Ng4**

Although nobody likes a show off, as this was supposed to be a fun rather than purely competitive occasion, I'm afraid that I couldn't resist setting up the trick that followed. Most straightforward would have been 17 Nxd7 as I could block a queen check on f4 with my bishop whilst 17 ..Qxd7 18 Qh6 couldn't be simpler.

I had observed that 17 Nxc6? fxc6 18 Rxc6+ wouldn't be successful because with 18 ..Kh8! available, Black is far from compelled to take the rook and get mated in two!

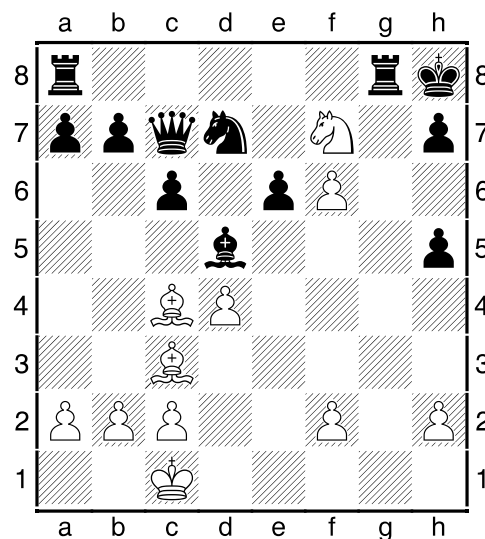
17...gxh5

Reaching the position below, one story within this encounter is that at this point I heard a lot of sniggering around the room as this move was being played. Could it really be that a Grandmaster had just blundered his queen?



Of course as it happens this is exactly what I had been hoping for although after 17 ..Kh8 instead I had observed that 18 Qh6 Rg8 19 Rg3 Nf8 20 Bb4 would leave me threatening to remove a vital defender.

18 Nh6+ Kh8 19 Rg8+ Rxc8



20 Nxf7 mate

An interesting variant of smothered mate!

The Outpost

Strictly speaking an outpost is a square which is protected by one side's pawn that but could never be attacked by an opponent's pawn. Typically they are lovely squares to park pieces (in particular knights) and the more central the outpost, the better. Now follows a particularly instructive game to demonstrate this point:

Fischer,R - Gadia,O
Mar del Plata , 1960

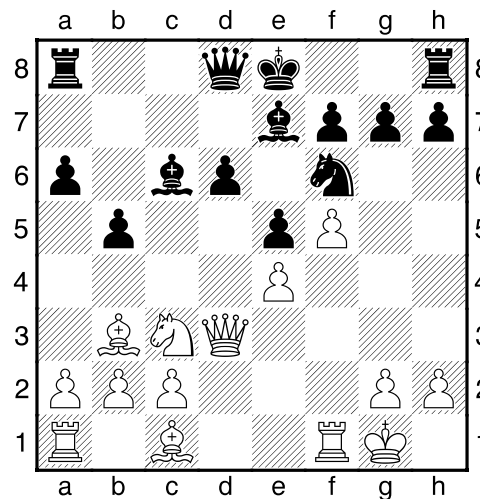
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Bb3 b5 8.0-0 Bb7 9.f4

Regarding the opening we have seen Bobby Fischer employ the sharp 'Sozin variation' against the 'Sicilian Najdorf'. He has been prepared to sacrifice his e-pawn in order to open lines against the uncastled black king but it is not tactics that are relevant to this section.

9...Nc6 10.Nxc6 Bxc6 11.f5

Pressurising the e6-pawn and seeking to effectively reactivate the currently shut out light-squared bishop along the b3-f7 diagonal.

11...e5 12.Qd3 Be7



From here onwards Fischer bases his whole middlegame plan on attempting to occupy the only outpost on the board with the piece that would benefit the most from it. Currently Black has a bishop and a knight scrutinising the d5-square and if White is going to be able to park his knight there long term then he must first eliminate those defenders.

13.Bg5!

As you should now know, I always advise being wary of using a bishop to pin a knight to a bad bishop in case there are some tactics involved in moving the knight away. Here though there aren't and White intends to swap off on f6 as soon as possible anyway.

13...Qb6+ 14.Kh1 0-0 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Bd5!

Phase two! 16.Nd5 Bxd5 17.Bxd5 would leave the bishop well placed but nowhere near as effective on the outpost as a knight. Instead then White forces a trade of bishops in order to secure the square for his steed.

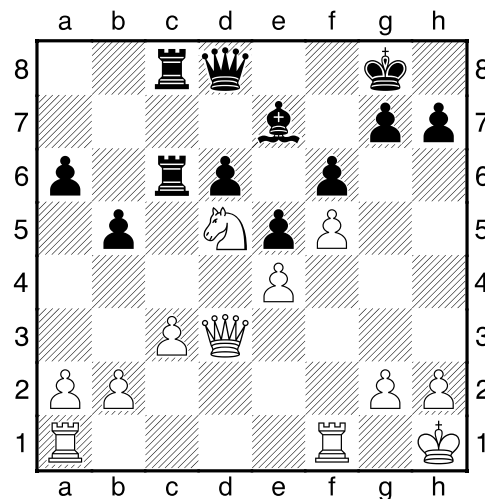
16...Rac8 17.Bxc6 Rxc6 18.Rad1 Rfc8 19.Nd5 Qd8 20.c3

Locking the black rooks out of the action on the c-file. Note how wonderful the knight is on d5.

20...Be7 21.Ra1

A plan of attacking on the kingside via a pawn storm or a 3rd rank rook swing must have been tempting but instead Fischer keeps things simple. He is planning a straight forward pawn break with the ultimate aim of his rooks penetrating via the a-file and ultimately doubling on the 7th rank.

21...f6



This good knight vs. bad bishop scenario is what White had in mind all along.

22.a4 Rb8?

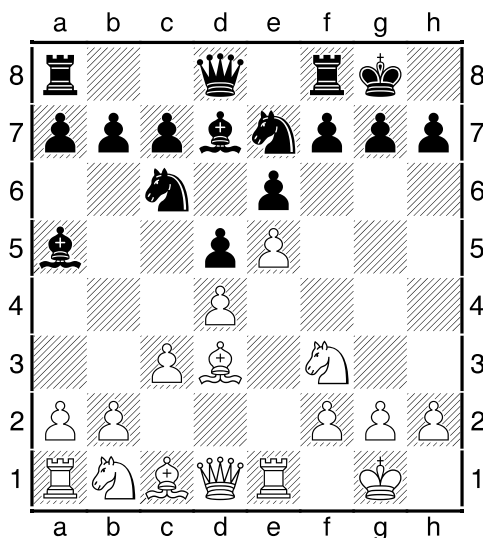
Black puts himself out of inevitable misery by overlooking the simple tactic that follows.

23.Nxe7+!

Only played because of the forthcoming fork.

23...Qxe7 24.Qd5+ 1-0

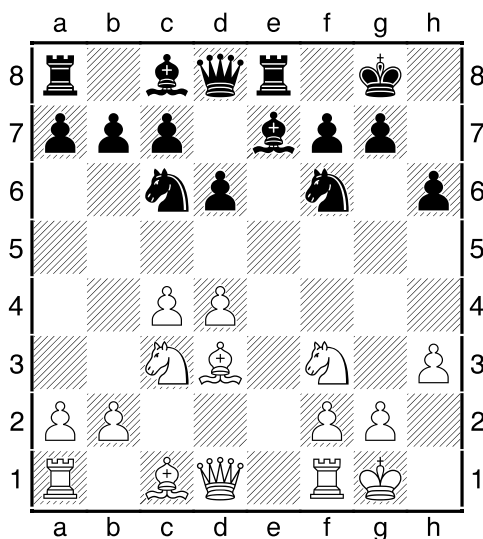
Utilising a Space Advantage



You may recognise the above from the discussion on the ‘Greek Gift’ in the level 3 course. Of this position I observed that White is blessed with a comfortable space advantage mainly afforded to him by the attractive pawn centre that he has built up and in particular by the pawn on e5. Black has been deprived the chance to settle a knight on f6 and with a fixed pawn on e6 he has a bad bishop locked inside his pawn structure.

All of those factors combined to make 1 Bxh7+ an attractive sacrifice e.g. 1...Kxh7 2 Ng5+ Kg8 3 Qh5. Even if he could get one there, a black knight couldn’t defend from f6 due to the e5-pawn, whilst the ‘bad’ bishop is obstructed by the e6-pawn and is thus unable to cover h7 through ...Bf5.

Now take a look at the next position that was reached in a game between the great Bobby Fischer and Grandmaster Florin Gheorghiu.:



A first glance might suggest that Black is level on material and has no structural weaknesses but a closer inspection reveals that he is going to struggle to adequately complete his development.

11.Re1

White will have no such problems with both his light and dark-squared bishops easily joining the game and not being short of options.

11...Bf8

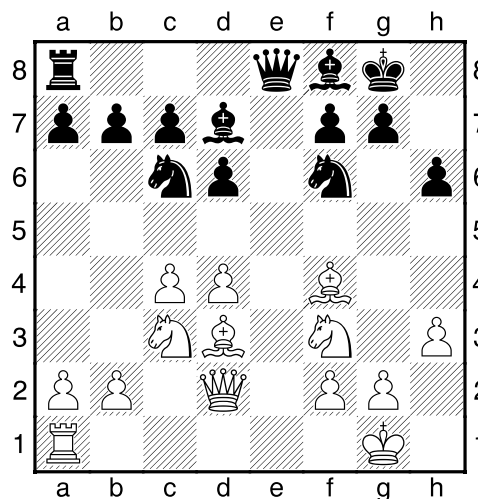
White has more space due to the more advanced nature of his centre pawns (i.e. the c-pawn included) with Black's pawn on d6 in contrast inhibiting the scope of his dark-squared bishop. Actually though it is Black's light-squared bishop that I would like to highlight in particular with reference to the way that White has prevented it from coming out to anywhere useful. Although generally we are advised against making silly wing pawn moves early in the game in preference to developing pieces, as it happens White played h2-h3 earlier than one might have expected in this game. An inspection of the c8-bishop's options explains why. Its opposite number on d3 prevents it being parked on f5 whilst ...Be6 would walk into the simple pawn fork d4-d5. With the h-pawn stopping ...Bg4 it just leaves the unattractive ...Bd7 that would make the black queen slightly suffocated and the a8-rook not much nearer the action.

Ultimately the key point to a space advantage is that the opponent is having to operate his whole army under cramped conditions. It therefore follows that the more 'fair' swaps that the defender can orchestrate the better off he is as he then has relatively more space to work in. Fischer is of course well aware of this but allows a set of major pieces to be swapped off, as he ultimately envisages dominating this open file.

12.Rxe8 Qxe8 13.Bf4 Bd7

The black rook and queen are now connected along the back rank but Black's next task is to somehow get his rook to the e-file. Not easy!

14.Qd2



14...Qc8

Upon 14...Qe7 hoping to sneak in ...Re8, White would of course have 15.Re1 highlighting the cramped nature of the black queen. Instead then Black tries to get his queen out via a bishop swap on f5.

15.d5 Nb4

Black would just love to swap this out on its own knight for White's light-squared bishop as then Black could get in ...Bf5 and then the queen could nudge up to d7 with in turn the rook then being freed to come to e8.

16.Ne4!

White doesn't allow that as 16...Nxd3 would run into 17 Nxf6+ wrecking Black's kingside pawn structure.

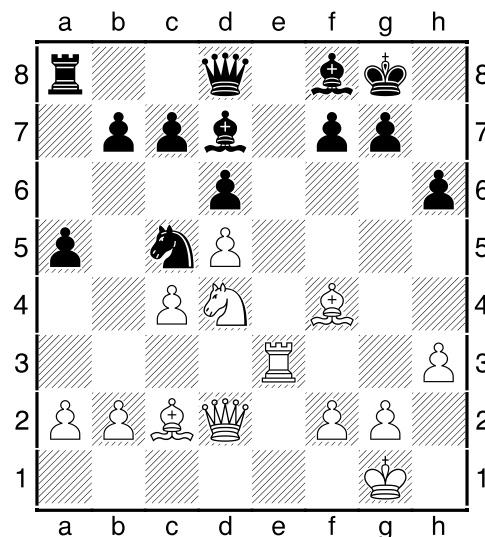
16...Nxe4 17.Bxe4 Na6 18.Nd4

Centralising the knight and preventing the ...Bf5 that Black would have loved to have played last go but couldn't because his knight was attacked.

18...Nc5 19.Bc2 a5

Black secures the knight on c5 (i.e. from b2-b4) but his other pieces remain passive.

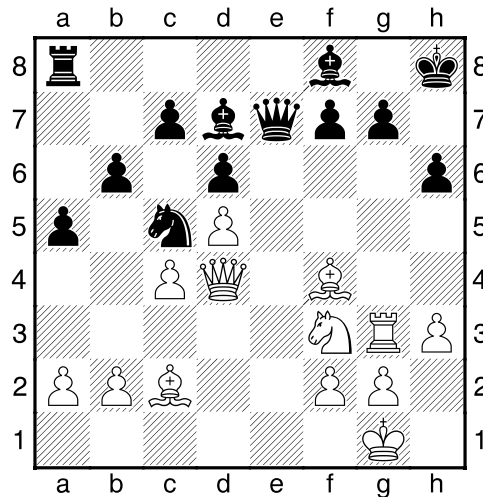
20.Re1 Qd8 21.Re3!



What this game superbly demonstrates is how the side with the space advantage is able to more easily transfer his pieces from one side of the board to the other. This flexible rook is about to switch to the kingside but only two turns ago it was still at home on a1. Indeed all of White's pieces have the ability to focus their attention on the kingside or the queenside but their opposite numbers are relatively speaking stuck in the mud. This is because they are obstructed by their colleagues due to having little available space in which to manoeuvre them.

21...b6 22.Rg3

Suddenly it seems that all White's pieces are joining a kingside attack with the simple Bxh6 threatened here due to the g-pawn being pinned. Referring to my previous comment, Black's queenside based pieces cannot help his defence any time soon.

22...Kh8 23.Nf3 Qe7 24.Qd4

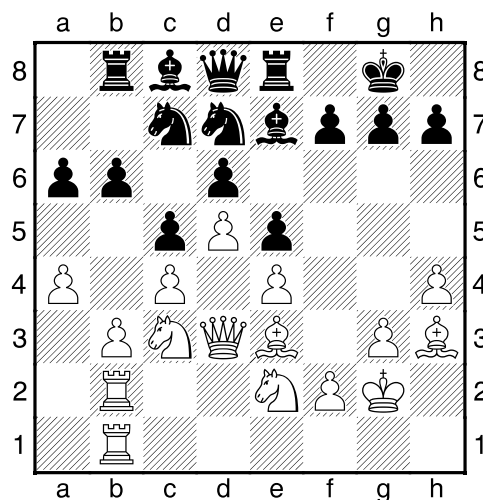
Once again the g7-pawn is pinned and now, not wishing to weaken the g6-square and indeed the c2-h7 diagonal with ...f6, Black makes an ugly looking move to stop Bxh6.

24...Qf6 25.Qxf6 gxf6 26.Nd4

Not least because of his large structural advantage White now has an excellent endgame and, as one might expect, Fischer now secures the full point comfortably.

26...Re8 27.Re3 Rb8 28.b3 b5 29.cxb5 Bxb5 30.Nf5 Bd7 31.Nxh6 Rb4 32.Rg3 Bxh6 33.Bxh6 Ne4 34.Bg7+ Kh7 35.f3 1-0

Below is another position in which White has a big space advantage.



This time it is the white pawn on d5 that restricts the movement of Black's pieces and you can see that whereas White can happily manoeuvre his army around his first three ranks at least, Black is pretty much limited to his own 1st and 2nd ranks only. That's not a lot of space in which to find good squares for two rooks, two bishops, two knights and a queen!

We are actually following the game Ward-Farleigh in which I had doubled my rooks on the b-file in order to prepare the pawn break b3-b4 that would seriously pressurise Black's queenside. As it happens it was all part of my master plan that Black wouldn't want that to happen and actually my true ambitions lay on the kingside.

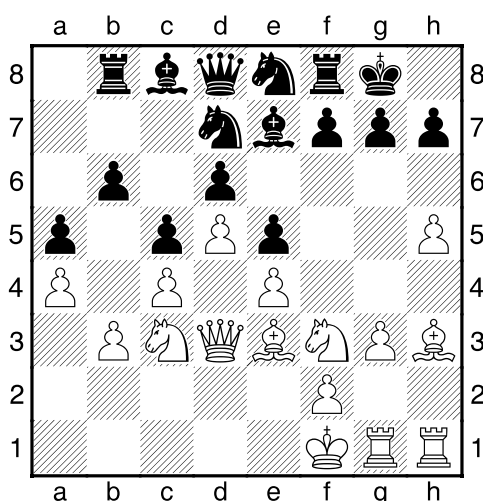
18...a5

This certainly prevents White from playing b3-b4 but with this Black abandons any plans he may have had regarding queenside counterplay with ...b5. Now White can set about getting something going on the kingside without having to face a backlash anywhere else.

19.Rh1 Bf6 20.Rbb1

Yes it is time to return the artillery to the kingside. It is said that with a space advantage comes better 'communication' between the kingside and the queenside and just as with our last example notice how quickly White can switch pieces from one side of the board to the other whilst for the opponent such a feat is either very time consuming or impossible.

20...Kf8 21.Ng1 Kg8 22.Nf3 Be7 23.Rbg1 Rf8 24.Kf1 Ne8 25.h5



25...Kh8

Black can only watch on as the White army marches towards him.

26.Bf5 Nef6 27.g4 Ng8 28.g5

Now Black is also severely cramped on the kingside! It is true to say that had Black already moved either of his h, g, or f-pawns then the white kingside pawn storm would already have reaped dividends regards creating open or half-open files against the enemy monarch. However time is something that White has plenty of and with various sacrifices in the offing too we are not far away from serious confrontation.

28...f6

As it happens fearing g5-g6 or Bxh7 or even further build up with the likes of Rg3, Black can't face waiting for the inevitable and so tries to buy himself a little more space in which to bring over some defensive resources.

29.Bxh7!

Alas it's too little too late for Black though who astonishingly doesn't manage to get a piece into his opponent's half of the board throughout the whole of this game!

29...Kxh7 30.g6+ Kh8 31.h6

Again due to the lack of space there was never the option for the black king to run over to the queenside but now it finds itself totally cornered.

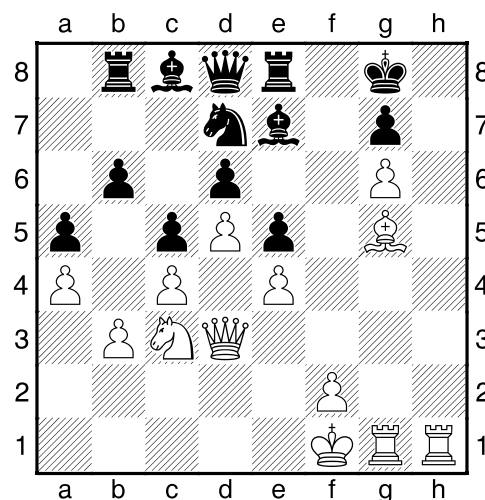
31...Nxh6 32.Bxh6 Re8

32...gxh6 allows mate in a number of ways with 33 Qd2 (or e3) being quicker than the obvious 33 g7+.

33.Ng5!

Threatening Nf7+ amongst over things!

33...fxg5 34.Bxg5+ Kg8

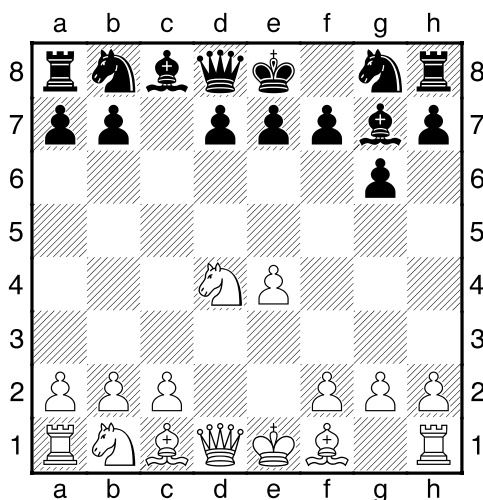


35.Rh8+ 1-0

And this should be a familiar tactic. If the rook is accepted then Qh3+-h7+-h8 mate ends the game.

The Maroczy Bind and the Hedgehog

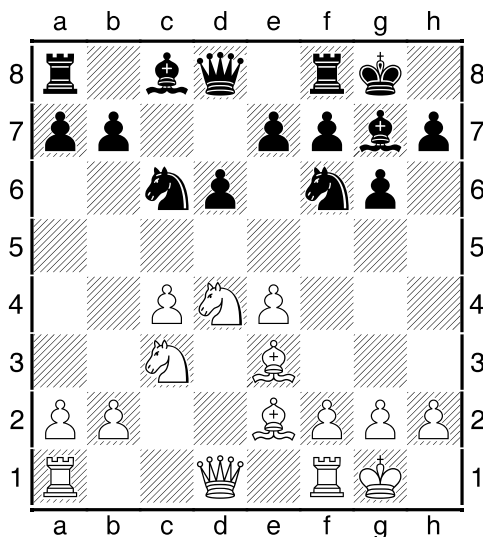
Check out the position below which could for example be reached via the moves **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Bg7** (The Hyper-Accelerated Dragon).



If they weren't aware of the concept of the 'Maroczy Bind', most players here as White would be wondering which piece they should develop next. Certainly adopting the 'Knights before bishops' rule and plumping for 5 Nc3 can't be bad but if White likes the idea of gaining more space and restricting his opponent then a vital middlegame concept is:

5.c4 first. Sure as soon as this is employed the concept of castling queenside is going to be less attractive to White but more typical would be a continuation such as

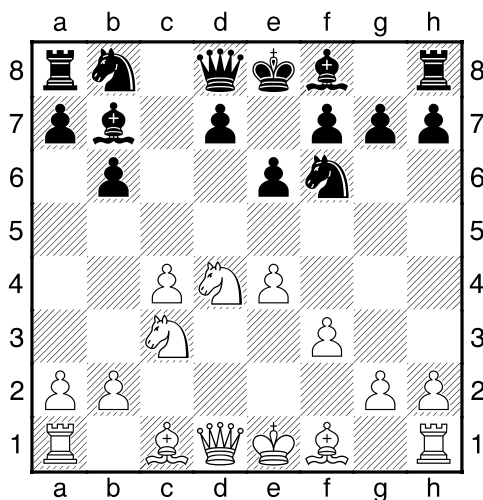
5...Nc6 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Nc3 d6 8.Be2 0-0 9.0-0



This is certainly not the end of the world for Black who has reasonable development and no obvious weaknesses in his camp. However note how the white 4th rank pawns prevent the black break ...d5 whilst the one on c4 keeps a typical queenside expansion involving ...b5 on ice. Furthermore White can look forward to eventually parking a knight on the d5-square which if taken by an enemy minor piece would allow a recapture with either pawn. The c-pawn if White wants to open up the c-file or the e-pawn if he wants to create a half-open e-file in which to pressurise the black e7-pawn.

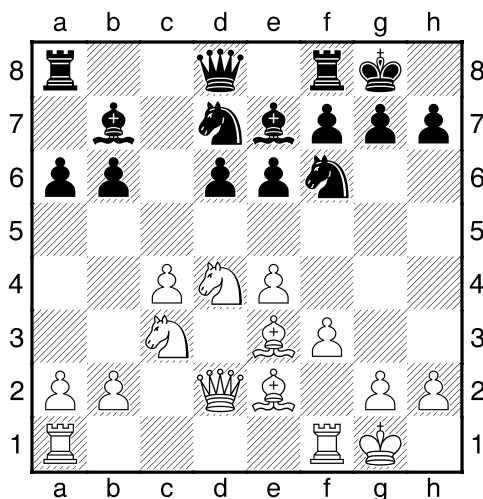
Following the sequence:

1.c4 c5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3 b6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nxd4 Bb7 6.f3 e6 7.e4



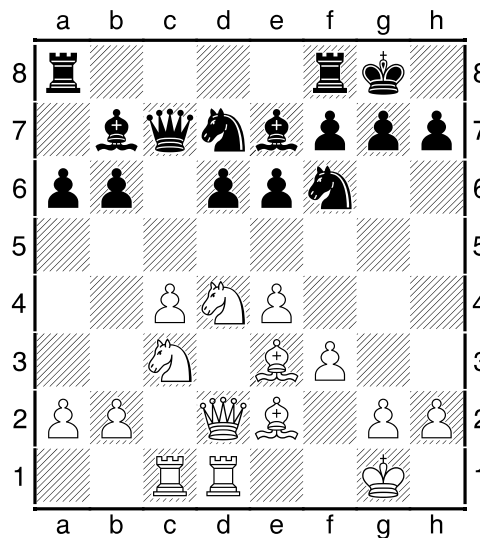
The position above would also see White having set up a bind on d5 with his c- and e-pawns. Note actually that here although Black has enough cover on d5 to force through that break, following 7...d5 8.cxd5 exd5 the advance 9 e5 would leave Black with an isolated pawn whilst 9 Bb5+ is also very awkward. Hence...

7...d6 8.Be2 Be7 9.0-0 0-0 10.Be3 a6 11.Qd2 Nbd7



When we see our first example of the system or set-up known as the 'Hedgehog'. This is so named because of the spikes or prickly 3rd rank black pawns that control all of those squares along his 4th rank. Clearly White retains a space advantage but years of experience has deemed that Black has just enough space to manoeuvre his pieces with the presence of that half-open c-file offering an important outlet.

Play might continue with **12.Rfd1 Qc7 13.Rac1** leading to the position below:



White has placed his rooks on fairly natural squares but he did have options. In the short term he may have a policy of just containing his opponent but ultimately he may need to have a plan of progression. He may want to pressurise the d6-pawn as much as he can or perhaps launch his own queenside pawns in order to challenge Black over there. Alternatively (and note Rfd1 might not fit in with this) he may want to expand on the kingside with the intention of attacking the black king but he should be warned. Black tends to remain solid in this system and looks to punish any over-pressing that White may do. In particular he will be constantly working on ways to break with either ...d5 or ...b5 and don't be surprised to see the black queen drop back to b8 to escape potential trouble from the white rook on c1 and possibly even to a8 if the f3-pawn ever advances thus leaving the e4-pawn as a target. First up Black needs to decide which squares he would like to place his rooks and a tense middlegame battle is on the cards.

Some Opening Study

A Practical 1 e4 e5 Lecture

The most common opening at junior level is the ‘Italian Game’:

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4

In this opening it is very important that attention is paid to the f7-square but I really don’t like to see precautionary moves such as 3...h6? played that have no bearing on the centre or development. I always try to encourage a ‘pawn break’ to be aimed for in the opening/middlegame (to later facilitate some action for the rooks) and in that instance 4 d4 or 4 0-0 intending 5 d4 would leave White placed very well.

The Black response 3...d6?! is also a little passive and after 4 Nc3 it should be noted that already 4...Nf6? 5 Ng5! would be pretty disastrous as there would be no satisfactory way for Black to guard f7. Incidentally a very attractive variation is 4...Bg4 5 h3 Bh5 6 Nxe5!! which after 6...Bxd1 would see Legall’s mate of 7 Bxf7+ Ke7 8 Nd5 mate. The importance of forcing the bishop back to h5 first is that instead of taking the queen, capturing the knight with the black knight would have protected the bishop. However now 6...Nxe5 7 Qxh5 Nxc4 would see the fork 8 Qb5+ regaining the piece and leaving White a good pawn up.

Illustrated below after **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4**, **3...Bc5** is a sensible reply.

However then it is important that Black is aware of such variations as:

4.c3 Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 (or 6.e5 d5 7.Bb5 Ne4 8.cxd4 Bb4+ 9.Bd2 Nxd2 10.Nbxd2 0-0 11.0-0 Bg4) **6...Bb4+ 7.Nc3** (or 7.Bd2 Bxd2+ 8.Nbxd2 d5!) **7...Nxe4 8.0-0 Bxc3!** (8...Nxc3?! 9.bxc3 Bxc3 is very risky because of both 10.Qb3 or 10 Ba3.) **9.d5 Bf6 10.Re1 Ne7 11.Rxe4 d6.**

If you want to play such positions as either colour then I would really recommend consulting a chess openings book for more details as such sharp openings could easily go horribly wrong or entertainingly right!

The main alternative is **3...Nf6** and first up is the commonly termed ‘fork trick’ if White defends the attacked pawn with **4 Nc3** (see the diagram below):

Yes, a very satisfactory reply is **4...Nxe4 5.Nxe4** (Note 5.Bxf7+ Kxf7 6.Nxe4 d5 7.Neg5+ Kg8 may inconvenience the black king, but he has two nice centre pawns, a potentially very powerful bishop pair, a half-open f-file for a rook or two later and the ability to hassle the white knights with the likes of ...e4 or ...h6) **5...d5 6.Bb5** (6.Bd3 dxe4 7.Bxe4 Bd6 is a little bit better for Black) **6...dxe4 7.Nxe5.**

Here White has a very serious material gaining threat on c6 but a very important idea to remember is **7...Qg5!**

Above note how the black queen attacks g2 as well as the knight and through to the bishop. Now for example after:

8.Bxc6+ bxc6 9.Nxc6 Black would be spoilt between trapping the c6-knight with ...Qc5 or taking on g2 and following that up with either ...Bh3 or ...Bg4.

Although competent players should know that in most openings early queen moves are not advised that same move crops up in the famous 'Oh My God!' trap after the moves:

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nd4?!

Although moving the same piece twice cannot be justified so early in the game, in the past this trap has been popular with tricky players out for quick wins. White should simply swap knights or else play 4 c3 Nxf3+ 5 Qxf3 when he threatens mate on f7 and is ready to build a nice pawn centre with d2-d4.

As soon as your opponent plays something different from the norm you should always take time to consider your options. Here worth avoiding is:

4.Nxe5? Qg5! 5.Nxf7 Qxg2 6.Rf1 Qxe4+ 7.Be2 Nf3 mate.

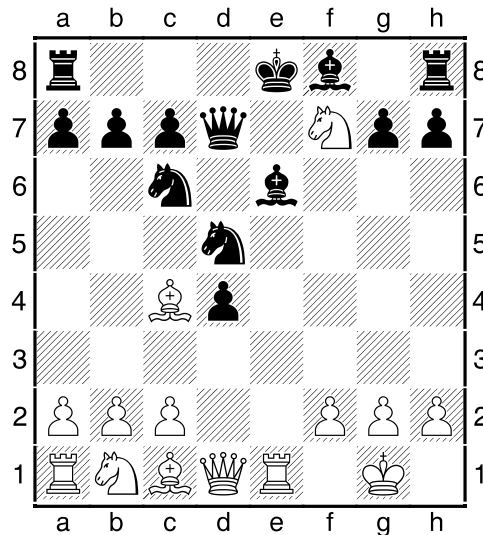
Returning to the moves **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6** and first up please be aware that 4 d4 exd4 5 e5 is best met with the important move 5...d5! ignoring for now the attack on the f6-knight to counter-attack the bishop on c4. Then 6 Bb5 Ne4 7 Nxd4 Bd7 is usual.

That variation is well worth paying attention to but arguably even more important is **4.Ng5** as illustrated below. This is an important position that many juniors in particular seem capable of reaching with either White or Black.

Although this move defies one of the opening principles, there is a clear threat to the f7-pawn and a likely fork of the black queen and rook. Certainly 5 Nxf7 looks good after either 4...Qe7? or 4...Nd5? which coincidentally are two bad moves that I have seen juniors play in the past! However please note that although 4...Bc5 may look equally ignoring of danger, in fact it is a variation known as the 'Trexler'. Now 5.Nxf7?! 5...Bxf2+ 6.Kxf2 Nxe4+ leaves the black queen likely to appear on h4 with a reasonable attack. Again this is an interesting line to consult the text books on but White players note that probably 5.Bxf7+ Ke7 6.Bb3 is a safer way to play.

Anyway the obvious way for Black to deal with the threat his f7-pawn is with **4...d5** although after **5.exd5** it must be observed that the natural **5...Nxd5?!** is actually an error. Many are familiar with the 'Fried Liver' variation of 6.Nxf7 Kxf7 7.Qf3+ (checking the king and attacking the knight on d5) 7..Ke6 8.Nc3. In truth this remains inconclusive but much stronger for White is:

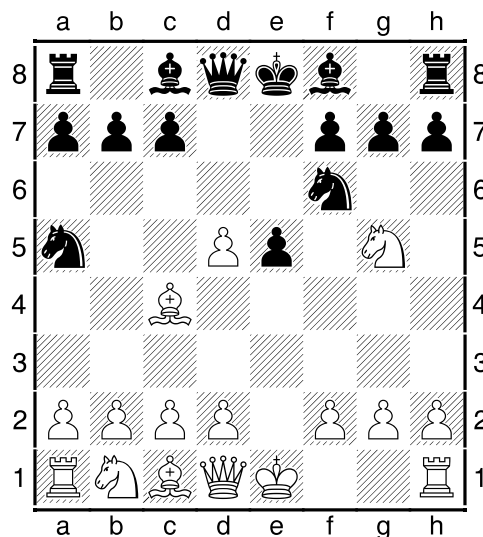
6.d4! exd4 (6...Nxd4 loses a piece to 7 c3) **7.0-0 Be6** (or 7...Be7 8.Nxf7! Kxf7 9.Qh5+ Ke6 10.Re1+ Kd6 11.Qxd5 mate) **8.Re1 Qd7 9.Nxf7!!** leading to the position overleaf.



The bishop on e6 is of course pinned and after **9...Kxf7 10.Qf3+ Kg6** (or **10...Kg8 11.Rxe6 Qxe6 12.Bxd5** with serious problems for Black along the d5-g8 diagonal!) **11.Rxe6+! Qxe6 12.Bd3+** Black will get checkmated.

The above lines and the concept of 6 d4! are very relevant to anyone thinking of playing 4 Ng5 as White but any opting to play this 'Four Knights Defence' as Black should note to stay away from 4...Nxd5?!. I understand that it is difficult to get to grips with not recapturing a pawn and centralising a knight but the fact is that two far better Black options are as follows:

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 Na5



After **6.Bb5+ c6** (If **6...Bd7** then **7.Qe2** is White's best move) **7.dxc6 bxc6 8.Be2** (An error is **8.Ba4?! h6 9.Nf3 e4 10.Ne5 Qd4!** when the black queen forks the two white minor pieces and after **11.Bxc6+ Nxc6 12.Nxc6 Qc5** traps the knight. Sure, White can essentially get three pawns for it but in the opening and middlegame, pieces are generally far more important.). **8...h6 9.Nf3 e4 10.Ne5 Bd6 11.d4 exd3 12.Nxd3** Black has some compensation for a pawn.

Returning to **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5** and another exciting move worth investing time on is **5...b5**

Again the focus in the position below is on luring the white bishop off of the worrying b3-f7 diagonal.

6.Bxb5

Otherwise Black's most likely follow up is ...Nd4 as is highlighted in other White options:

a) **6.Bb3 Nd4! 7.d6 Nxb3 8.dxc7 Qd5! 9.axb3 Qxg2 10.Qf3 Qxf3 11.Nxf3 Bb7 12.Ke2 Nd5** when this knight threatens to pick off the potentially troublesome pawn on c7 as well as a strong check on f4.

b) **6.Bf1 Nd4** (Also though **6...h6 7.Nxf7 Kxf7 8.dxc6 Bc5** is also an interesting possibility. White is up on pawns although it is Black that has one in the centre. Also his lead in development could prove very dangerous if he builds up an attack against f2 or h2. Moves such as ...Rf8, ...Kg8, ...Ne4 or ...Ng4 and ...Qh4 or ...Qd4 could figure.) **7.c3 Nxd5 8.cxd4** (A better move is **8.Ne4** when **8...Qh4 9.Ng3** is complicated! Chess isn't easy!) **8...Qxg5 9.Bxb5+ Kd8 10.Qf3 Bb7 11.0-0** (or **11.Nc3 exd4** allowing the black queen to defend d5.) **11...Rb8** when the threat of ...Nf4 is a very serious one.

6...Qxd5 7.Bxc6+ Qxc6 8.0-0 Bb7

Above Black has very good compensation for a pawn. Mate is threatened on g2 and even if White prevents that now, that is the area of the board where Black should ultimately scrutinise. He may follow up with the likes of ...Bc5 and ...0-0-0. Although the defensive pawn shell on the queenside could be better, White is in no position to launch an attack over there and a black g-pawn advance could help budge any obstructing future white piece on f3.

Before I forget I'd like to say a few more things about the so called 'fork trick'. Other examples of when it would work are the following situations:

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Bc5

4.Nxe5 Nxe5 5.d4 Bd6 6.dxe5 Bxe5 although it's not that bad for Black.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bb5 Bc5

5.Nxe5 Nxe5 6.d4 although again **6...Bd6** isn't such a problem for Black.

VERY IMPORTANT though is to note that

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 is **NOT** such an occasion

4.Nxe5?? Nxe5 5.d4 Nxc4 6.dxc5 and White is a piece down. I have seen more than one confused junior try this in the past but obviously the combination doesn't work if your own bishop is vulnerably placed!

Incredibly common in junior games is the opening sequence

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5

The same position below might be reached by the move order 3...Nf6 4.d3 Bc5 5.Nc3 d6.

4.d3 d6 5.Nc3

Stronger White players tend to accept that the Bg5 and Nd5 idea discussed below won't work and thus tend to favour 5.c3 Nf6 6.0-0 0-0 7.Nbd2 when they might transfer their knight to the kingside via f1 and g3.

5...Nf6

Although usually we are usually encouraged to castle fairly early in games, as the centre is closed this need not be a priority here. Now Black can actually benefit from:

6.Bg5

Instead 6.0-0 Bg4 would leave White reluctant to advance both his h- and g-pawns for fear of reprisal later (in other words in time Black may be able to challenge those pawns and get his pieces behind them!).

Preventing the pin with 6.h3 is time consuming and then 6...Be6 7.Bxe6 (7.Bb3 would be preferable as at least it doesn't gift Black a half-open file.) 7...fxe6 8.0-0 0-0 9.Bg5 Qe8 may see the black queen appear on the aggressive square g6 whilst ...Nh5-f4 could prove really dangerous. Having doubled pawns is not such a problem and at least guarantees a half-open file to aid in rook activity.

6...h6

What I hate to see our players walking into is the likes of 6...0-0? 7.Nd5 h6 8.Nxf6+ gxf6 9.Bxh6. Of course if you can have that sort of thing in your favour then you would be doing very well!

7.Bh4 g5 8.Bg3 Bg4

It is not a big concern that Black has advanced his kingside pawns as he can always castle queenside. For White though escaping the g4-d1 pin is not so easy.

Moving on and we have the Ruy Lopez or Spanish Opening:

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5

From here I can recall that a junior who had clearly been paying attention in a coaching session had the following game published in a national newspaper:

3...a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3

Rather than just placing the knight on c3, common in 1 e4 e5 openings is for White to try to build up a big pawn centre with c2-c3 and d2-d4.

8...d5

Here Black opted to sacrifice a pawn with the so called 'Marshall Gambit' rather than continuing with the solid alternative 8...d6.

9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Rxe5 c6 12.d4 Bd6 13.Re1 Qh4 14.h3

A better defence to the threat to h2 is 14.g3 although after 14...Qh3 Black has some very reasonable compensation for the pawn in the form of a lead in development and attacking chances against the white king.

14...Bxh3 15.gxh3 Qxh3 16.Nd2 Bh2+ 17.Kh1 Bg3+ 18.Kg1 Qh2+ 19.Kf1 Qxf2 mate.

More common at lower levels than at the very top is the 'Exchange variation' of:

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6

5.0-0

One of the main reasons that Black was able to play 3...a6 is that White wasn't actually really threatening to win a pawn i.e. 5.Nxe5?! Qd4 6.Nf3 Qxe4+ 7.Qe2 Qxe2+ 8.Kxe2 when Black would have a small advantage thanks to a potentially excellent bishop pair on an open board.

Instead 5.Nc3 is okay and after Black defends the e5-pawn, White should look to play d2-d4.

5...Bg4

What follows next is quite an exciting variation but it is far from forced. Indeed generally it's not great to rely on a pin to protect something and this is an exception. All the same the likes of 5...Bd6 or 5...Qd6 are also possible but note that something does have to be done about the e5-pawn as relying on the ...Qd4 idea won't work if a white rook is ready to pin the black queen to the king.

6.h3 h5!?

Of course this whole idea would not work were White not already castled.

7.hxg4?

Accepting the piece offering is asking for trouble as now Black gets a very dangerous open file against the white king. Safer is 7.d3 but then 7...Qf6 8.Nbd2 Bc5 would still see the pressure put on White. As the position changes Black must of course be careful to calculate that his bishop can't be taken but that aside ...Ne7-g6 would bring another piece into the attack.

7...hxg4 8.Nxe5 Qh4

Threatening mate on h1 (or h2) which is basically unavoidable!

9.f3 g3

It seems to me that a particularly common position in junior chess arises after

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6

In the above position we have already established that 4 Bc4 isn't brilliant because of the at least equalising 4...Nxe4! fork trick.

Instead 4.d4 exd4 5.Nxd4 Bb4 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.Bd3 d5 8.exd5 cxd5 9.0-0 0-0 10.Bg5 c6 is a standard line in the 'Four knights Scotch' but also common is:

4.Bb5 with comparisons to be made with the Ruy Lopez. Although it is not as straightforward in fact 4...a6 is playable but after 5.Bxc6 dxc6 6.Nxe5 Black must regain the pawn via 6...Nxe4 7.Nxe4 Qd4 when 8.0-0 Qxe5 9.Re1 Be6 10.d4 Qd5 11.Ng5 0-0-0 12.Nxe6 fxe6 is only a little bit better for White (i.e. because of the isolated e-pawn).

Instead 4...Bb4 is okay but more interesting is:

4...Nd4!? 5.Ba4 (or 5.Nxe5 Qe7 regaining the pawn) **5...Bc5 6.Nxe5 0-0 7.0-0 d6 8.Nf3 Bg4**. White is pawn up but with a capture on f3 imminent White will have a kingside full of holes that Black should look to exploit by transferring his queen to that area of the board.

There are plenty of other openings within 1 e4 e5 and to give just a couple of less fashionable ones we have:

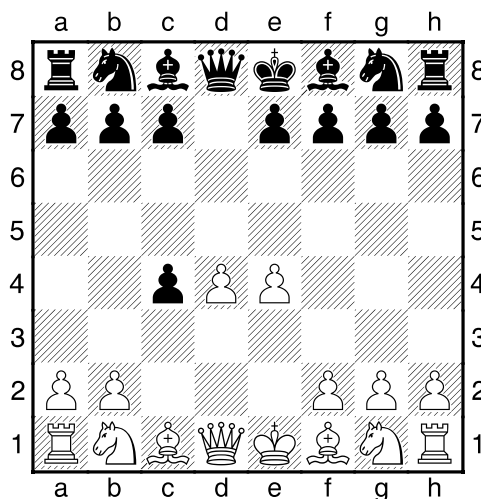
1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 f5 being the dubious Latvian Gambit. Modern opening theory gives **3.Nxe5 Qf6 4.d4 d6 5.Nc4 fxe4 6.Nc3** as better for White because of his handy lead in development.

In the Goring Gambit:

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.Bc4 cxb2 5.Bxb2 White sacrifices two pawns in order to get a nice lead in development. As is often the case with gambits, Black can opt to return the material to side-step any danger with

5...d5 6.Bxd5 Nf6 7.Bxf7+ Kxf7 8.Qxd8 Bb4+ 9.Qd2 Bxd2+ 10.Nxd2. Following those tactics the position is about level.

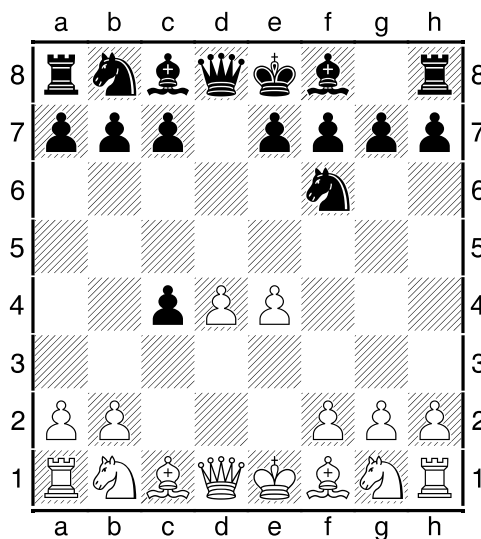
The Queen's Gambit Accepted: 3 e4



Following 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 the above position sees Black having accepted the 'gambit' and then White continuing with the sharpest response available. Far from being a mistake, at top level the QGA and has previously been employed by Kramnik and Anand and is notoriously difficult to break down. At competition level the most popular way of meeting it is slowly with the likes of 3 Nf3 and 4 e3. White quickly regains the (not so much of a) 'gambit' pawn but rarely obtains a significant advantage early on. Indeed such encounters can often be dull affairs and it is not uncommon to see games fizzling out into draws. Part of the reason for that is that White players shy away from the complications of 3 e4, possibly because they feel that it will be too much for them to learn or that one mistake could prove fatal.

After 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 Black has a few plausible responses of which the best waste no time in challenging White's domination of the centre. Generally accepted best are 3...Nc6, 3...c5, 3...Nf6 and 3...e5. We now look at the two most popular:

- A 3...Nf6
- B 3...e5
- A 3...Nf6

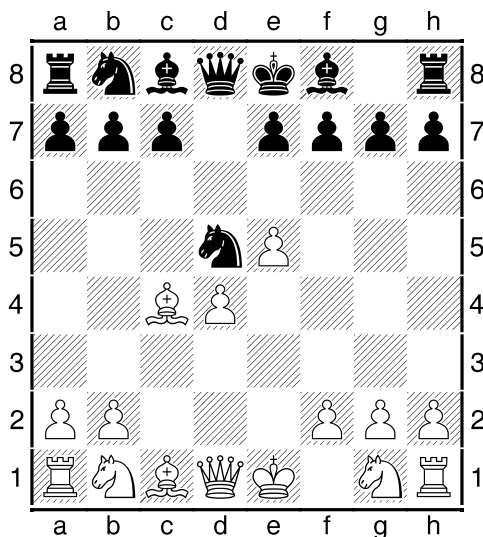


Immediately attacking the e4-pawn and thus forcing White to do something other than just recapture the c4-pawn.

4 e5

It is important to note that although White might prefer to keep his pawn on e4 for the time being, the sequence 4 Nc3?! e5! 5 d5 (after 5 dxe5 Qxd1+ Black can meet 6 Nxd1 with ...Nxe4 and 6 Kxd1 with ...Ng4) 5...b5! is to be avoided. The point is that White has more trouble regaining the just bolstered c-pawn given that he has to worry about his own e4-pawn.

4...Nd5 5 Bxc4



In this position Black would love to have time to play ...Bf5, ...e6 and ...c5 but with the standard Qb3 ready to throw a spanner in the works, alas that's just not possible. He does have a couple of choices though:

A1 5...Nc6

A2 5...Nb6

A1

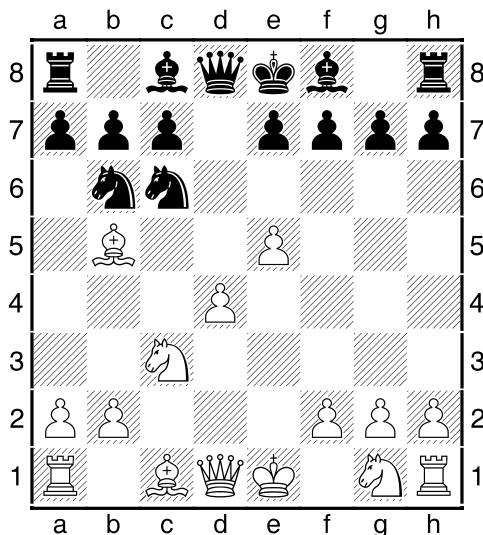
5 ... Nc6

6 Nc3

White could also play 6 Nf3 Bg4 and then 7 Nc3. Clearly 7...Nb6? would effectively then be a tempo down on our main line after 8 Bxf7+! as White would have the valuable Nc3 in for free. However the 'nibble' of 7...e6 8 0-0 Be7 9 Nxd5 exd5 10 Bb5 may not be that much and so instead we'll concentrate on 6 Nc3.

6 ... Nb6

7 Bb5



7 ... Bd7

The bishop couldn't be any more ambitious than that for the moment e.g. 7...Bf5?? 8 d5 a6 9 Ba4 Nxa4 10 Qxa4 b5 11 Qf4 winning a piece.

8 Nf3 e6

After the premature 8...Nb4?! White has available the thematic pawn sacrifice 9 e6!? to clog up the black kingside and free up the e5-square for a white knight.

9 0-0 Nb4

Feeling rather cramped, Black would love to exchange a few pieces. If this move is delayed then a2-a3 will prevent it forever.

If instead 9...Ne7 then the white bishop would take up immediate refuge on d3.

10 Be2

Logically with a space advantage White wants to avoid fair swaps and besides in the long run (assuming Black castles kingside) White wants this bishop aligned against h7.

10...Bc6 11 a3 N4d5

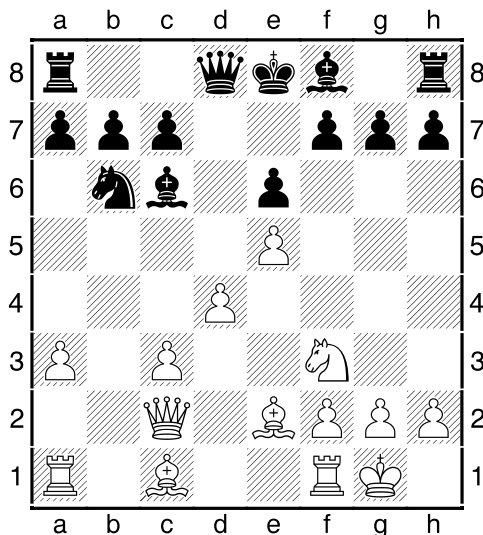
There is no denying that this is a very good square for Black but he has two knights, a bishop and a queen all vying for the right to sit there. The unlucky three will be comparatively redundant whilst White can happily use the equivalent e4-square to traffic pieces freely from one side of the board to the other.

12 Qc2!

Upon the immediate 12 Ne4 Black has the chance to free himself a little with 12...Nf4!? As the black knight on b6 is sort of superfluous, White doesn't really want it coming on as a substitute!

12 ... Nxc3

13 bxc3



Black traded on c3 because he feared the repercussions of Ne4. However the pawn recapture on c3 means that d5 is no longer an outpost and worse still White has an obvious middlegame plan of advancing these central pawns.

A2

5 ... Nb6
6 Bb3 Nc6
7 Nf3

Although 7 Ne2 is more common, this has been my own pet variation. Although it is the natural square for the knight to develop on, it does allow the forthcoming pin.

7 ... Bg4

It's really imperative that Black extracts this bishop before playing ...e6 and the only alternative 7...Bf5 can (if White so desires) be met by the sharp response 8 d5!?

8 Bxf7+

Amusingly an amazing number of games have been drawn via the repetitive sequence 8 Ng5 Bxd1 9 Bxf7+ Kd7 10 Be6+ Ke8 11 Bf7+.

Regarding the text, at first glance it looks as though Black has blundered and that this is a stunner. However it isn't quite as simple as that!

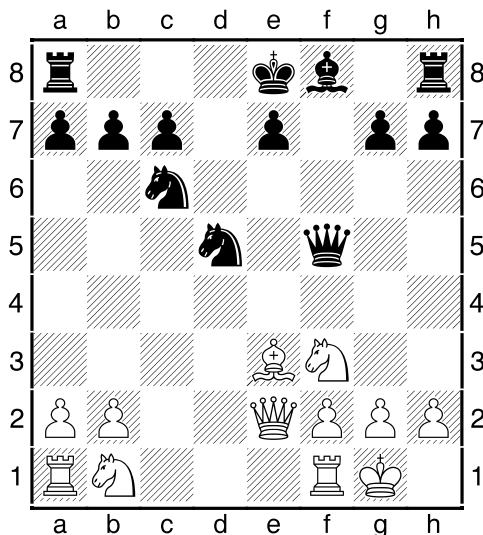
8 ... Kxf7
9 Ng5+ Ke8

And certainly not 9...Kg8?! 10 Qxg4 Qxd4?? 11 Qe6 mate.

10 Qxg4 Qxd4
11 Qe2!?

White had effectively forced the black king to move whilst netting a pawn but if he wants (as he does!) to keep the queens on (without them on the fact that Black can't castle is of less consequence), then it is going to cost him a pawn.

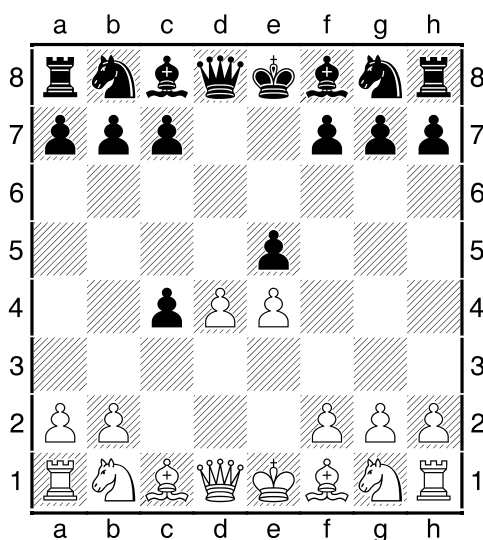
11 ... Qxe5
12 Be3 Nd5
13 Nf3 Qf5
14 0-0



In return for a pawn White has a good structure, harmonious piece development and three useful files to work with. His biggest trump card though is that in accordance with the laws of the game, Black is not allowed to castle!

B

3 ... e5



Throughout the years this has probably been the most popular Black response in tournament play. Black frees his dark-squared bishop whilst simultaneously striking out at the white centre. Note that White is not interested in taking this pawn now and entering an arguably inferior endgame.

4 Nf3

For the record whilst an instinctive response here might be 4 d5?!, in fact it is an error. Not only does it concede the c5-f2 diagonal to the enemy bishop but as I mentioned previously, the sequence 4...Nf6 5 Nc3 b5! is most satisfactory for Black who is more than happy to trade his b-pawn for White's e-pawn.

The main diversion now takes place here:

B1 4...Bb4+

B2 4...exd4

B1

4 ... Bb4+

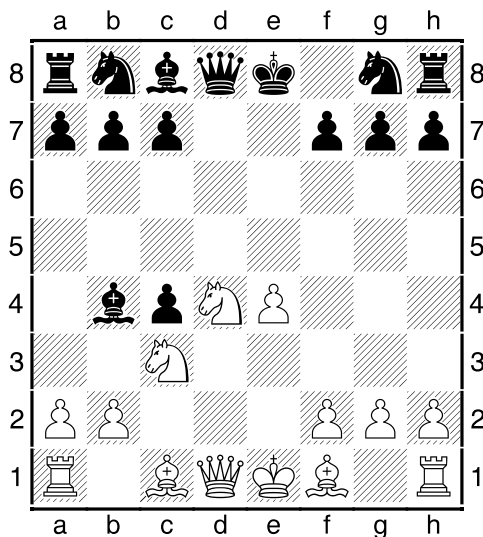
Aside from our two main lines, to aid in further understanding of this variation I do just want to briefly mention a couple of other possibilities:

a) 4...Bg4?! 5 Bxc4 Nc6, (or 5...Bxf3 6 Qxf3, when as mate is threatened on f7, rather than winning the pawn on d4, Black looks set to lose a pawn on e5) 6 Qb3!. White hits b7 and another tender point that in one practical game Black seemed not to notice: 6...Bxf3 7 Bxf7+ Kd7 8 Qe6 mate 1–0 Starostits,I-Gasparini,J Dos Hermanas 2004. Oops!

b) 4...Nf6 5 Bxc4 Nxe4 6 Nxe5 Nd6 7 Bb3 Be7 8 0–0 0–0 9 Nc3 Nc6 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Qf3 Bb7 12 Be3 Bf6 13 Rfd1 Qd7 14 Rac1 when in Ward,C - Adamski,J Copenhagen open 1998 White held all the positional cards (soon to be turned into a pawn advantage).

5 Nc3 exd4

6 Nxd4



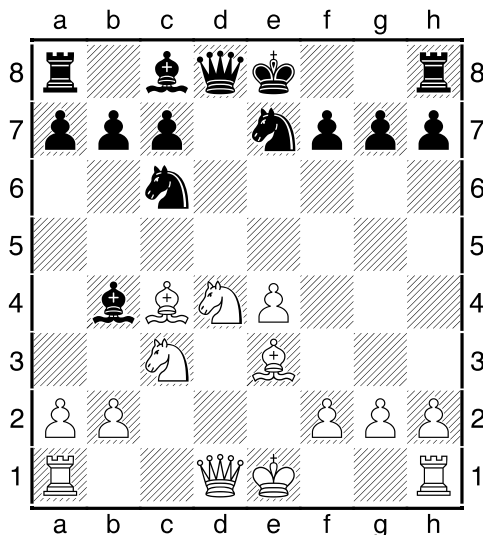
Some believe that 6 Qxd4 Qxd4 7 Nxd4 Nf6 8 f3 also offers White a little edge but I prefer the text, which by the way it should be noted carries the threat of Qa4+.

6 ... Ne7

6...c5 7 Ndb5 merely accentuates how offside Black's dark-squared bishop is. The d6-square is vulnerable and 7...Qxd1+ 8 Kxd1 Kd7 9 Bf4 Bxc3 10 bxc3 Nc6 11 Kc2 saw Black wind up in all sorts of trouble in Kasparov,G-Comp Elite privat Hamburg 1985.

7 Bxc4 Nbc6

8 Be3



8 ... **0-0**
9 **Ndb5 Bd7**
10 **a3 Ba5**
11 **b4 Bb6**
12 **Bxb6 axb6**
13 **f4**

White is boss on the queenside and the extra centre pawn offers him options on the kingside too.

B2

4 ... **exd4**
5 **Bxc4**

A bit more adventurous than 5 Qxd4. In the position above I cannot overstate how much of a target the f7-pawn could be. Take 5...c5 6 Ne5 Be6 7 Bxe6 fxe6 8 Qh5+ g6 9 Nxc6 for example.

5...Nf6 (Black must be careful with how he develops) walks straight into 6 e5 and course 5...Bg4? could be punished by either 6 Qb3 (especially in the case of 6...Bxf3?? 7 Bxf7+ Kd7 8 Qe6 mate!) or 6 Bxf7+! Kxf7 7 Ne5+.

Basically then that only leaves us with two serious candidates:

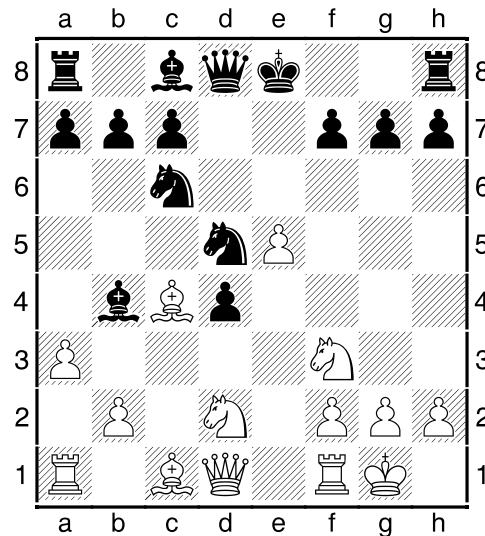
B21 **5...Bb4+**
B22 **5...Nc6**

B21

5 ... **Bb4+**
6 **Nbd2 Nc6**

After the stubborn 6...c5?! one only need take a look at the development situation to predict that Black could get punished for his greed and 7 Ne5 Nh6 8 0-0 0-0 9 Nb3 Qf6 10 Qh5 Re8 11 f4 Be6 12 a3 Bxc4 13 Nxc4 b5 14 e5 Qe6 15 Nd6 Rf8 16 Qf3 winning a piece in Sulypa, A Hollerbuhl, M Berlin 1998 seemed only fair!

7 0-0 Nf6
 8 e5 Nd5
 9 a3!?



9 ... Be7

An old text book line runs 9...Bxd2 10 Bxd2 0-0 (Upon 10...Be6 11 Bb5 White will most likely regain the d-pawn and retain his bishop pair.) 11 Bg5 Nde7 12 b4 and 'White has a clear advantage'. That's possibly a little harsh on Black but after 12...Bg4 13 Re1 it's not clear how Black can develop his major pieces whilst White has b4-b5 and Re4 available to help regain the d-pawn.

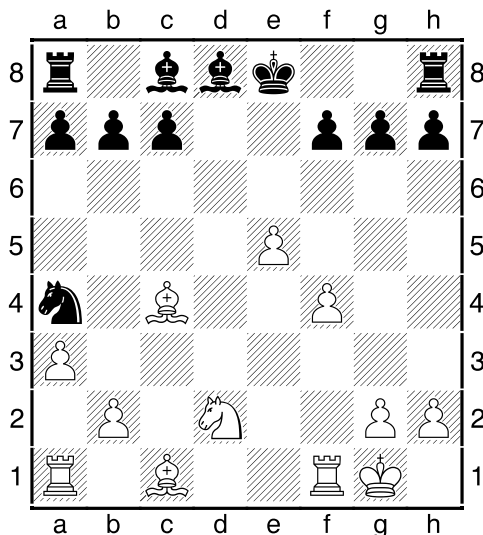
10 Qb3 Na5

10...Be6?! 11 Qxb7 Na5 12 Bb5+ Kf8 13 Qa6 leaves Black with more pawn islands and an inconvenienced king.

11 Qa4+ Nc6

Should he desire (and naturally I wouldn't recommend it!) White can simply repeat moves for a draw now but 11...c6 12 Ba2 b5 13 Qxd4 Be6 14 Ne4 leaving White in control of the centre and fewer weaknesses was just inferior.

12 Nxd4 Nb6
 13 Nxc6 Nxa4
 14 Nxd8 Bxd8
 15 f4



The middlegame was short but sweet and after a few exchanges White has emerged with a favourable endgame.

B22

5 ... Nc6
6 0-0

Stopping here for a sec to collect our thoughts, White does have a lead in development and may have it in mind to simply regain the d4-pawn but a lot of the problems that Black faces here revolve around the sensitive f7-pawn.

6 ... Be6

6...Bg4?! falls foul of 7 Qb3 whilst 6...Nf6 7 e5! is also awkward for Black who must be careful of his f7-pawn.

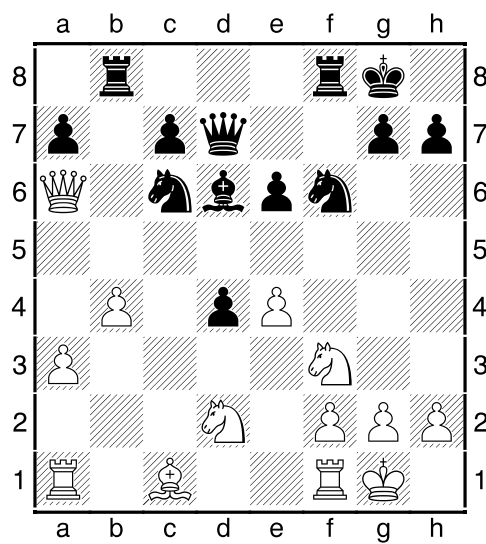
Simple tactics also include 6...Bc5 7 Ng5 Nh6 8 Nxf7 Nxf7 9 Bxf7+ Kxf7 10 Qh5+ when material equality will be restored but with Black retaining the weaker king. Upon 6...Bd6 7 e5! this pawn can't be taken because of the pin that would follow on the e-file.

7 Bxe6 fxe6
8 Qb3 Qd7

8...Qc8?! may look after both of the attacked pawns but does little to aid harmonious development. Indeed neither of 9 e5, 9 Rd1 or 9 Ng5 look much fun for Black to have face.

9 Qxb7 Rb8
10 Qa6 Nf6
11 Nbd2 Bd6
12 a3 0-0

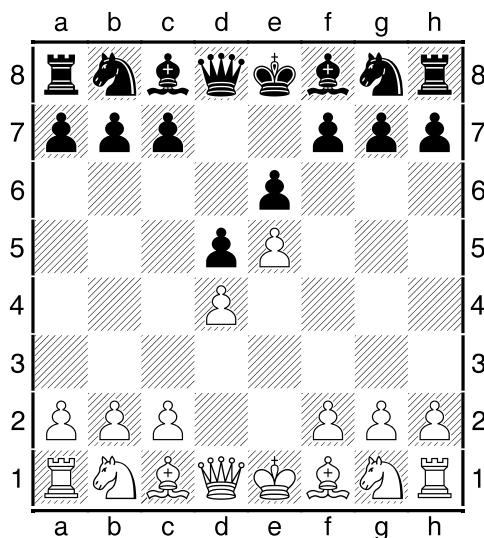
13 b4



White has the superior pawn structure although must be wary of his opponent's piece play.

The French Defence: Advanced Variation

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5



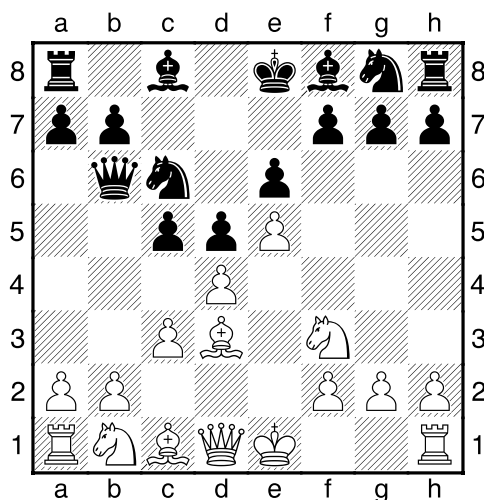
3...c5

A vitally important concept. Sometimes the pawn break ...f6 is made in the French Defence too with a similar aim of ensuring that White has something to think about in the centre.

4.c3 Nc6

It is also possible for Black to play 4...Qb6 first. The black queen is both comfortable and active here and although ...Nc6 looks likely to follow, an alternative positional plan is ...Bd7-b5 to offer the swap of bad for good bishop.

5.Nf3 Qb6 6.Bd3



This is the most active square for the bishop but if White plays this immediately then he must be prepared to sacrifice at least one pawn. The more conservative alternatives are considered next.

6...cxd4

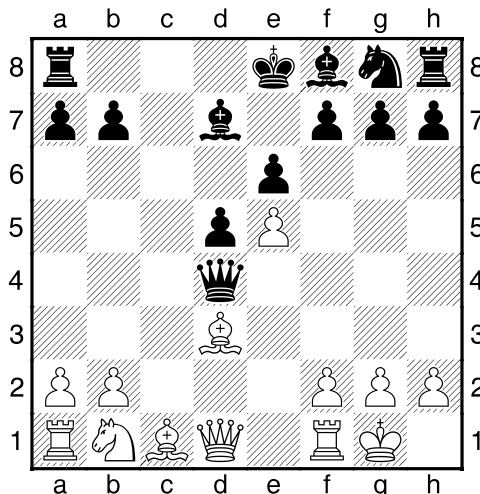
Inaccurate is 6...Bd7 because of 7.dxc5! The point is that after 7...Bxc5 White can guard his f-pawn with 8.0-0 and Black must be careful not to get one of his pieces trapped e.g. 8...Nge7?? 9.b4!

Note that in the French Defence White often has a pawn chain diagonally upwards from b2 or c3 but so long as e5 is well protected White would happily use the d4-square for something other than a pawn. A knight for example would be posted well there in the long run but again (barring deliberate gambits such as the one that follows!) the emphasis is on not losing the e5-pawn.

7.cxd4 Bd7 8.0-0

Now White is committed to gambit mode. 8 Be2?! to allow the queen to guard d4 would leave White a tempo down on the up next 6 Be2 variation whilst 8.Bc2?! is well met by 8...Nb4 hassling White's good bishop and facilitating the ...Bb5 that would activate Black's own bad bishop.

8...Nxd4 9.Nxd4 Qxd4



We have therefore seen White employ the 'Milner-Barry gambit' where the importance of 7...Bd7 is clear. Without it White would now have Bb5+ winning the black queen.

10.Nc3

If White would prefer to keep offerings to a minimum then 10.Qe2 is also possible with one possible future plan being Kh1 and f2-f4-f5.

10...Qxe5

The main text book alternative to Black is 10...a6!? This keeps to centre more closed and deprives White's pieces of the b5-square. For years the position after 11.Qe2 Ne7 12.Kh1 Nc6 13.f4 Nb4 14.Rd1 has been a point of debate especially amongst club players. The question is whether White has enough action for his sacrificed pawn?

11.Re1 Qb8

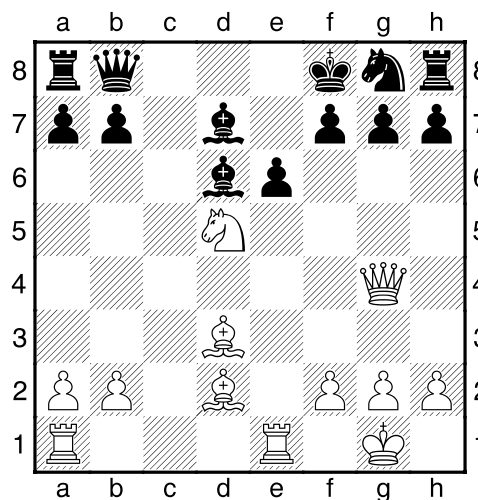
Given that the e6-pawn is pinned, Black could be forgiven for preferring 11...Qd6?! to keep an eye on the d5-pawn. However although he has two extra centre pawns he is seriously behind on development. Further attacks on his queen don't help the situation either:

12.Nb5 Qb8 13.Qf3 (now Bf4 with Nc7+ in mind is a serious threat.) 13...Bd6 14.Nxd6+ Qxd6 15.Bf4 Qb6 16.Qg3! (exploiting the lack of protection for the g7-pawn and especially the fact that Black is missing his dark-squared bishop) 16...g6 (16...Kf8 17.Bc7 Qc6 18.Rec1 Qa4 19.b3 Qd4 20.Be5 is winning for White too.) 17.Bc7 Qb4 18.Qe5 f6 19.Qxd5 Ne7 20.Rxe6! Bxe6 21.Qxe6 and given that Black can't castle and a major threat is Bd6, White has huge compensation for the exchange.

12.Nxd5 Bd6 13.Qg4 Kf8

13...Bxh2+? would be far too greedy as after 14.Kh1 as well as the threat to g7 Black needs to worry about not getting his h2-bishop trapped.

14.Bd2



Connecting the rooks and facilitating a possible future Bc3.

14...h5

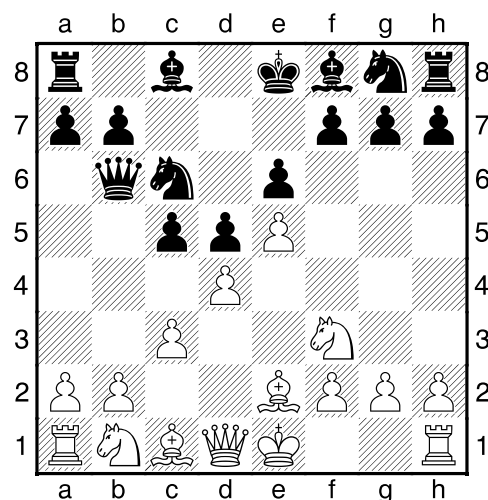
14...f5?! is too loosening and after 15.Qg5 exd5 16.Bc3 the attack to g7 is a serious problem. Following 16...Nf6 17.Bxf6 gxf6 18.Qxf6+ White could force a draw by perpetual check but 18...Kg8 19.Bxf5 would see him playing for a win and given the exposed nature of the black king and ridiculous position of Black's major pieces, with clear justification too.

15.Qh3

With a very double-edged middlegame.

Although d3 is the best square for White's light-squared bishop you have just seen why developing it there immediately requires White to be prepared to gambit a pawn or two. Now let's check out a different way of playing:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Qb6 6.Be2



The main alternative to this and 6 Bd3 is 6.a3 The early a-pawn advance seeks to clarify the tension in the centre through a challenging b2-b4 break. Interesting then is that if Black prevents this with 6...a5 then one option is for White to return to the realms of the Milner-Barry gambit via 7 Bd3 where the inclusion of the a-pawn advances would surely be in his favour not least because the b5-square can no longer be reclaimed via ...a6.

Instead 6...c4 is possible. Generally it is an error to take the pressure off of the centre so soon but now a2-a3 can be seen as detrimental to White who can't now easily look for a b2-b3 break. Indeed the b3-square is where Black might ultimately like to manoeuvre one of his own knights.

6...Nge7

Black's main plan now is to attack d4 as swiftly as possible with the blatant intention of winning one of White's important centre pawns. Essentially this knight then heads for f5 and can do so via here or h6, with or without the trade of pawns first. Specifically we have:

a) 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 Nh6 (Upon 7...Nge7 White can choose between the d-pawn defending Na3-c2 plan (as ...Bxa3 is now not possible) or the upcoming Nc3-a4 idea.) 8.Nc3 (Here 8.Bxh6?! is a mistake because after 8...Qxb2 there would be no realistic chance of trapping the black queen if it gets to take the rook in the corner. It is important to note the difference between ...Nge7 and ...Nh6. Now for example 8.Na3 would see White forced to sacrifice an a-pawn after 8...Bxa3 9.bxa3 Nf5 (There is no other way to defend the more important d4-pawn) 10.Be3 Qa5+) 8...Nf5 9.Na4 (There

was no satisfactory way for White to guard d4 but he can force away a piece that is attacking it.) 9...Qa5+ 10.Bd2 Bb4 11.Bc3 (White can't afford to trade his bad for Black's good bishop just yet as he would lose his d-pawn) 11...b5 12.a3 Bxc3+ 13.Nxc3 b4 14.axb4 Qxb4 15.Bb5 Bd7 16.Bxc6 Bxc6 17.Qd2 with possibly a very small advantage for White. There is still pressure against d4 but White has it adequately protected and the material imbalance is a knight for a bad bishop.

b) 6...Nh6 would also see the knight heading for f5 but here it is possible for White's dark-squared bishop to take it: 7.Bxh6 Qxb2?! (Instead then Black should settle for 7...gxh6 8.Qd2 (White needs to guard his b2-pawn now but should not concede dark-squared holes with b2-b3) when Black has the bishop pair but doubled isolated h-pawns.) 8.Be3! Qxa1 9.Qc2 cxd4 10.Nxd4 when the black queen is in serious danger of being trapped by Nb3 or by a simple castling and moving of the queen's knight.

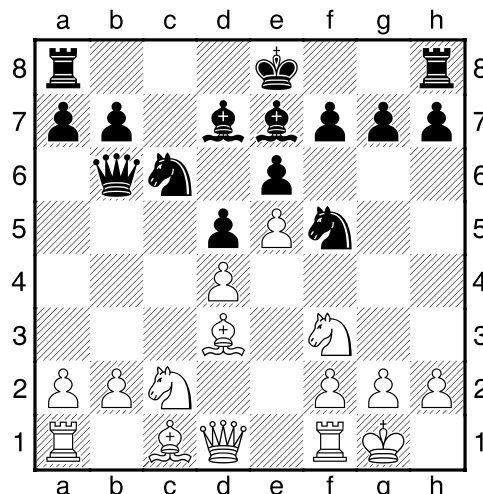
7.Na3 Nf5 8.Nc2 cxd4 9.cxd4 Be7

After 9...Bb4+, 10.Kf1 is the only check escape that doesn't end up losing a pawn. It's not that much of an inconvenience for White though who can effectively fianchetto his king via g2-g3 and Kg2. Meanwhile Black must be careful that his bishop doesn't get caught offside with no retreat e.g. in the event of g4 Nfe7 a3.

10.0-0 Bd7

10...0-0?! potentially asks for trouble and 11.Bd3 Nfxd4? 12.Nfxd4 Nxd4 13.Nxd4 Qxd4?? 14.Bxh7+ is simply disastrous!

11.Bd3



White isn't necessarily going to take that knight on f5 but he does have a space advantage and although Black will continue to pressurise d4 he must be careful not to fall for 11...Nfxd4? 12.Nfxd4 Nxd4 13.Be3 Bc5 14.b4! losing a piece.

The Sicilian Dragadorf

Here follows two annotated practical games to introduce a fairly new Sicilian variation:

Moreno Carnero, J-Del Rio Angelis, S

Spanish Champs, Mallorca 2001

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3

So Black has played the Sicilian Defence and in employing the swift pawn break d4 White has opted for an Open Sicilian rather than the any of the Anti-Sicilian lines.

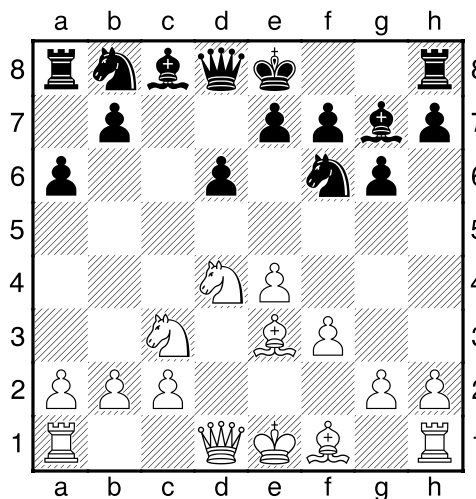
5...g6

Going for the fianchetto, it would appear that out of the numerous Sicilian variations, Black has selected to play the ‘Dragon Variation’.

6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3

Although this is far from forced, the so called Yugoslav Attack is considered to be the most critical test of the Dragon variation.

7...a6



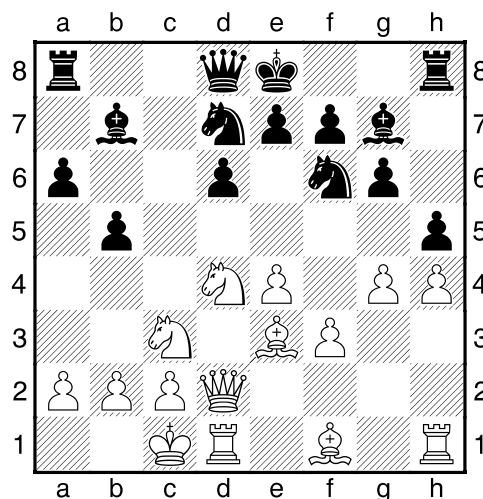
But suddenly an apparent change of heart! Instead of castling or developing his queen's knight on the natural c6-square, Black has taken time out to insert a move that is characteristic of the Najdorf Sicilian. In this relatively new variation Black decides to combine ideas of two of the main Sicilian lines. Most pertinently in the ‘Dragadorf’ Black fianchettoes his king's bishop as in the Dragon but deals with his queenside as in the Najdorf, namely with the likes of ...a6, ...b5, ...Nbd7 and ...Bb7.

8.Qd2 Nbd7 9.g4 b5 10.0-0-0

Originally the point of f3 when White thought that he has facing a standard Dragon variation was to support e4 and prepare for a kingside expansion. One of the important ideas for Black in the Dragadorf though is that the black king remains in the centre for some time, making an early White kingside attack less effective.

Temporarily the c6-square is weak though and a tactic that both sides need to get acquainted with is 10 Nc6 Qc7 11 Nxe7 based on 11...Kxe7 12 g5 when the f6-knight can't move because of the fork Nd5+. However after 11...Bb7!? things could become interesting via 12 g5 b4 13 Ncd5 Nxe5 14 Nxd5 Bxd5 15 Qxd5 0-0. White is a pawn up, has the bishop pair and the better pawn structure. Nevertheless Black's piece activity due to his lead in development leaves things in the balance.

10...Bb7 11.h4 h5!



Another key point. Black advances his own h-pawn to stop its opposite number in its tracks and thus slow down a White kingside initiative.

12.g5 Nh7

To be honest, this knight is Black's only really troublesome piece. The big question is whether or not it is too much of a handicap.

13.f4

With the h-file blocked, turning to an f-pawn advance is a logical progression. The drawback is that the e4-pawn is now a serious target and as an alternative, certainly 13 Nd5 suggested itself. Black could easily budge this knight but the likes of ...e6 incurs problems of its own (e. g. the weakening of the d6-pawn).

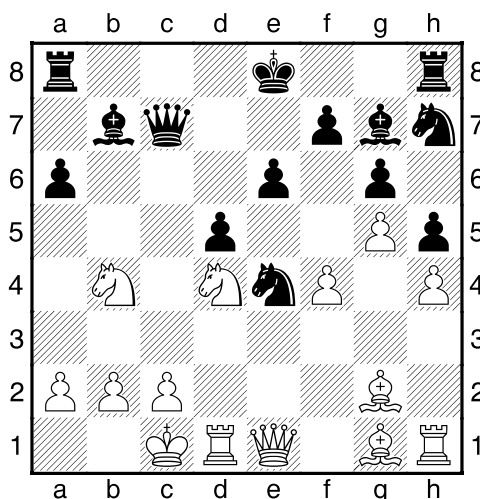
13...Nc5 14.Bg2 b4!

Although 14...Qa5 was certainly a candidate, this gets straight to the point.

15.Nd5 e6 16.Nxb4 Nxe4 17.Qe1 Qc7

A trade of e- for b-pawn was very nice for Black who with his last move now papers over the crack on c6.

18.Bg1 d5



Black is now very well placed in the centre and with the break f4-f5 firmly under control, it is now also safe to castle.

19.Nd3

The f-pawn was en prise and White dreams of putting the e5-square to good use.

19...0-0 20.Kb1 Rfc8 21.c3 Nf8

This position is joy for Black who now has time to return the offside steed to action.

22.Ne2 d4

Black had time for the likes of ...Rab8 and ...Nd7 but he sees a tactic along the g2-b7 diagonal.

23.Bxd4 Nxc3+ 24.Bxc3 Bxg2 25.Rg1 Bf3 26.Ne5 Bxe5 27.fxe5

And not 27.Bxe5? Qc2+ winning the knight.

27...Nd7 28.Rg3 Be4+ 29.Ka1 Nc5

Black isn't interested in the e5-pawn as then his own king would be in more danger.

30.Re3 Qb7 31.Rd4 a5 32.Nc1 Bf5 33.Rf4 Rd8 34.Rd4 a4 35.a3 Rxd4 36.Bxd4 Nb3+ 37.Nxb3 axb3

White must be very careful now. However there is more than the likes of ...Rxa3+ for him to watch over.

38.Re2 Ra4 39.Rd2 Qf3 40.Qd1

This is such a grim position for White who is close to being in zugswang. Observe 40.Bc3? Rxa3+! 41.bxa3 Qxc3+ 42.Rb2 Qxe1+.

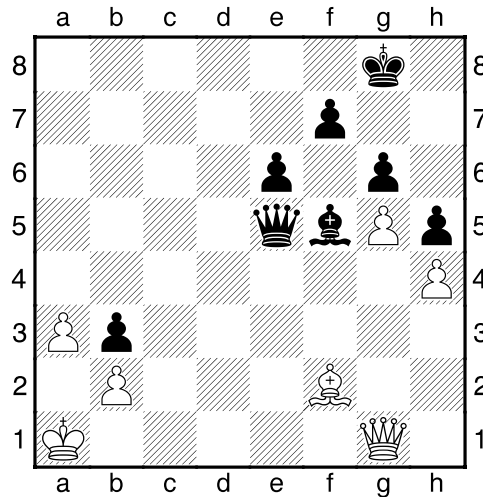
40...Qe4 41.Bc3 Qb7 42.Rd4 Rxd4 43.Bxd4

Beware 43.Qxd4?? Qh1+.

43...Qd5 44.Qg1

The only available move!

44...Qe4 45.Bf2 Qxe5 0-1



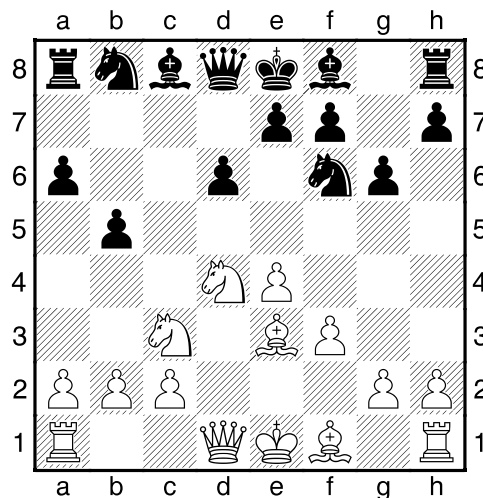
And White had had enough. His king remains trapped in the corner and so he can never consider advancing his a-pawn. Meanwhile his kingside pawns may be picked off with Black using passed pawns of his own.

Narayanan,S-Ward,C
Gibraltar Masters 2007

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 a6

The usual 'Dragadorf' move order is 6...Bg7 7.f3 a6 but I had something else in mind.

7.f3 b5



Yes, the 'Accelerated Dragadorf' of which the main idea is that for now Black saves a tempo on leaving his dark-squared bishop at home, instead giving priority to the text that prevents the Bc4-b3 lines.

8.Qd2

The downside of what normally may be deemed a premature ...b5 is that White can switch to a more positional mode by challenging Black's queenside play. When I was first developing this opening at home my main focus had been on the likes of 8.a4 b4 9.Nd5 but after 9...Nxd5 10.exd5 Black can comfortably continue with 10...Bb7 because White's queen isn't yet on d2 and so the b4-pawn isn't en prise.

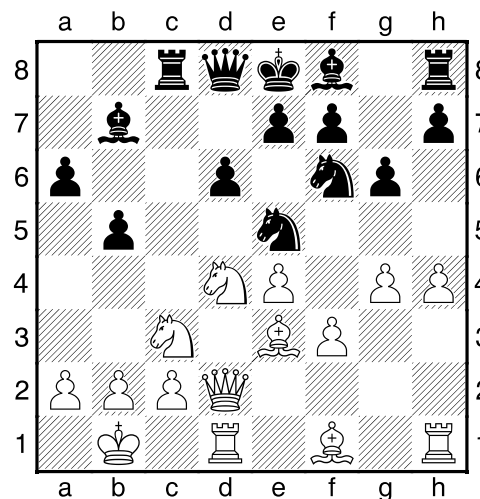
8...Bb7 9.0-0-0 Nbd7 10.Kb1 Rc8

As far as I was concerned this position was already a psychological success for the 'Accelerated Dragadorf' as after the simple 10...Bg7 we would have transposed to a perfectly fine line of the normal Dragadorf with 11.Bh6 Bxh6 12.Qxh6 Rc8 being (in my opinion!) of no serious threat to Black. However another advantage of leaving the bishop on f8 is that White isn't tempted by the simplifying Bh6 as it blatantly loses him a tempo. Hence my decision to continue with the text instead thus entering uncharted territory.

11.g4 Ne5

I wanted to vacate the d7-square for the other knight and although I gave a lot of thought to 11...Nb6 I was slightly concerned about the likes of 12.e5 dxe5 13.Ndxb5. Actually it looks as though 13...Qxd2 14.Rxd2 Nfd5! is good for Black but in general with the bishop on f8, Black must be alive to White's ideas of sacrificing on b5.; Certainly the concept of 11...b4 12.Nce2 e5 crossed my mind whilst the other move I contemplated was the simple 11...h6. The h-pawn advance has the benefit of hindering White's g4-g5 advance for a while but the negative side is that the g6 and e6 points feel a little weaker as a result.

12.h4



12...h5

With similar comments to those made in the previous game namely about this being a thematic push for lines such as this where Black isn't castled. The tension could be awkward if White gets in h4-h5 himself and the big bonus here is that the f6-knight won't have to settle for h7.

13.g5 Nfd7 14.f4

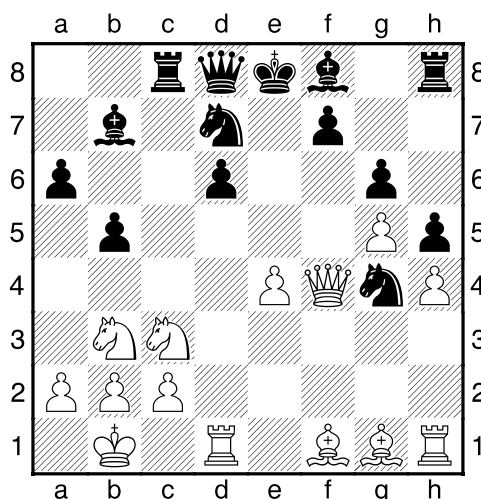
White's main plan now is to play f4-f5 and to ultimately try to get the knight to e6.

14...Ng4 15.Bg1

White's natural reaction is to preserve his so often vital dark squared bishop (whose absence could leave the Dragon bishop ruling supreme) but though I expected this, I certainly didn't consider it to be forced. With several possibilities available, I hadn't decided what I was going to do against the immediate 15.f5 but I'm not sure that it would have been the murky 15...gxf5 16.Nxf5 b4 17.Nd5 b3 18.axb3 e6 19.Bd4 Nde5 20.Qb4 Bxd5 21.exd5 exf5 22.Bxa6.

15...e5

The idea of this was to buy back the e5-square whilst preventing Whites f4-f5 plan for good. I'm sure that there are a few playable alternatives though and as well as 15...Bg7 and 15...Nc5 I also wondered about the variation 15...b4 16.Nd5 e6 17.Nxb4 a5 18.Nd3 Bxe4 before eventually plumping for the text.

16.Nb3 exf4 17.Qxf4

Upon 17.Bd4 Nde5 18.Qxf4 I was going to intercept any Nc5 ideas with 18...Qc7 and then make a decision next time on how to develop my dark-squared bishop. Although when I played ...e5 I considered that I was putting the bishop on f8 to good use as it guarded the d6-pawn, still my preference was to eventually turn it into a real 'Dragon' bishop on g7.

17...Rxc3!?

In truth this is far from necessary and any human would have a hard time convincing a computer engine that it is best! Nevertheless the good old exchange sacrifice obviously mixes things up and I genuinely believe that the shattered white queenside pawn structure twinned with the removal of a piece otherwise destined for d5 tenders Black very reasonable compensation.

18.bxc3 Qc7 19.Bd4 Nde5 20.Be2 Bg7 21.Bxg4

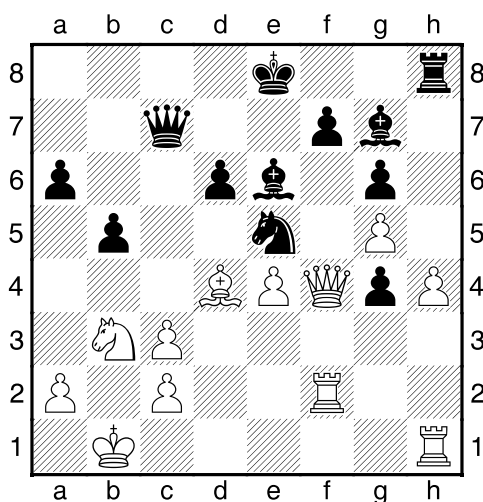
I wouldn't have castled if I thought that the h-file was going to be opened but as ...Bc8 could feature next this was the only opportunity that White had to ensure that I had to recapture on g4 with the pawn.

21...hxg4 22.Rdf1

Clearly 22.Bxe5? Bxe5 23.Qxg4 would be rather asking for trouble in view of 23...Qxc3 but I didn't really see the point in White's choice here. That said I'm not really sure how he should go about trying to make progress other than via an h4-h5 attempt that he soon turns to.

22...Bc8!

Although it was nice for the bishop to hit the e4-pawn, I was more interested in re-routing it to e6 from where it would remind the white knight that it shouldn't go too far a field in case a2 gets further scrutinised.

23.Rf2 Be6**24.Rfh2**

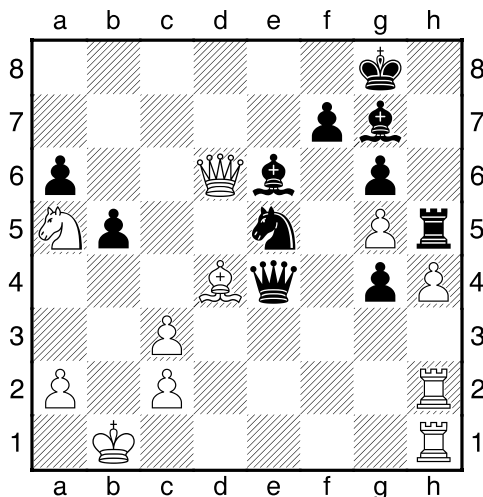
The immediate 24.h5? gxh5 25.Rfh2 fails to 25...h4! because of 26.Rxh4 Rxh4 27.Rxh4 Ng6.

24...Rh5!?

Stopping White's plan in its tracks! In truth when I sacrificed the exchange on c3 I expected to have a pawn on this square and thus having my rook free to engage in queenside activities. However the upside of having the rook seemingly as a blockader is that White needs to keep an eye on his h4-pawn. Moreover a key difference is the presence of a passed g-pawn which could and indeed does make a nuisance of itself. Ideally now White would like to manoeuvre his knight to g3 but given the threats to a2 that would undoubtedly surface, that is rather impractical.

25.Qc1 Kf8

25...f6 for is also a candidate although I didn't really think about that at all. Instead I pondered 25...a5 when later my opponent offered the variation 26.Qa3 Nc4 27.Qc1 Ne5 28.Qa3 Nc4 29.Qc1 as a route to a draw by repetition. However I proposed declining it via 27...(or 29...)Be5. Instead though I plumped for the text because I was starting to get rather short of time and wanted to both tuck my king away and protect my bishop.

26.Qa3 Qc6 27.Na5 Qxe4 28.Qxd6+ Kg8

When I played 25...Kf8 I envisaged this position arriving and had assessed that I would be doing more than okay as I was well centralised and held a trump card in my passed g-pawn.

29.Rd1 g3

Around here I really wished I had more time on the clock as the position felt critical and I knew that any mistake could be fatal. As it was I had virtually run out of my time resources and had to settle for the one minute increment that the time control was affording players each move.

30.Rhh1

Here for example White is threatening to win a piece via Rhe1 and frankly I think I did well now to quickly calculate the line that I did.

30...Qd5! 31.Qb8+?!

To his credit in the post mortem my opponent suggested that he played the text for a win but in fact it has the opposite effect as my initiative soon becomes clear. The variation that I had analysed was 31.Qxd5 Bxd5 32.Bxe5 Bxh1 33.Bxg7 Bf3 34.Rd3 Be2 35.Rd2 (35.Rxg3 Kxg7 36.Rh3 is arguably a minimal endgame edge to Black.) 35...Kxg7 36.Rxe2 Rxh4 37.Rg2 Rg4 when with the knight rather out of play I thought that I might be able to whip off the g5-pawn and cause some damage with my f- and g-pawns. For example something like 38.c4 Rxg5 39.cxb5 axb5 40.Nb3 f5 41.Nd4 f4! could easily occur when 42.Ne6+ Kf6 43.Nxg5 Kxg5 44.c4 Kg4 45.cxb5 f3 would see Black winning the race. Presumably White has some improvements though with 32 Rhg1! being the most obvious.

31...Kh7 32.Nb3 g2 33.Rhe1 Nc6 34.Qf4 Nxd4 35.cxd4 a5

The rook and g-pawn keep White occupied on the kingside whilst I now begin an attack in earnest on the queenside.

36.Re3 a4 37.Nc1 Qc4!

The d4-pawn is pinned and the text brings into play a b-file check as well as an attack on c2 whilst also facilitating the solid ...Bd5.

38.a3 b4! 39.Rg3 Bf5

It seems that Black has several strong continuations here but I felt particularly attracted to the line that I chose.

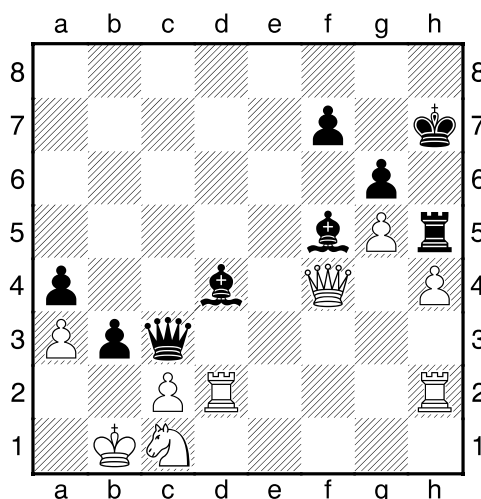
40.Rxg2 b3 41.Rdd2 Qc3!

A dinky move that completely paralyses White.

42.Rh2

There was nothing constructive for White to do and so he had little choice but to wait for Black's forthcoming progression.

42...Bxd4! 0-1



With mate now also threatened on b2 or a1, White now resigned as if he takes on d4 with either his queen or rook then ...Bxc2+ results in either mate or a huge material gain. From Black's point of view this is a beautiful position to finish with and it certainly wasn't a bad debut for the 'Accelerated Dragadorf'!