

Cheparinov's 1.d4!

A Complete Repertoire for White

Volume 2

The Slav Defense

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Volume 2

The Slav Defense

Ivan Cheparinov

Thinkers Publishing 2022



Key to Symbols

!	a good move	±	White stands slightly better
?	a weak move	∓	Black stands slightly better
!!	an excellent move	±	White has a serious advantage
??	a blunder	∓	Black has a serious advantage
!?	an interesting move	+−	White has a decisive advantage
?!	a dubious move	−+	Black has a decisive advantage
□	only move	→	with an attack
N	novelty	↑	with initiative
⊙	lead in development	↔	with counterplay
⊙	zugzwang	Δ	with the idea of
=	equality	△	better is
∞	unclear position	≤	worse is
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material	+	check
		#	mate

Table of Contents

Key to Symbols.....	4
Preface.....	7
Chapter 1 – Rare 3 rd moves	9
Chapter 2 – The Noteboom Defense	27
Chapter 3 – Rare 4 th moves	49
Chapter 4 – Slav with 4...a6	xx
Chapter 5 – Slav with 4...dxc4 5.a4 --.....	xx
Chapter 6 – Slav with 4...dxc4 5.a4 ♖f5 6.♗e5 --	xx
Chapter 7 – Slav with 4...dxc4 5.a4 ♖f5 6.♗e5 e6.....	xx
Chapter 8 – Slav with 4...dxc4 5.a4 ♖f5 6.♗e5 ♘bd7 7.♗c4 --	xx
Chapter 9 – Slav with 4...dxc4 5.a4 ♖f5 6.♗e5 ♘bd7 7.♗c4 ♔c7	xx
Chapter 10 – 4...e6 5.♙g5 ♘bd7, The Cambridge Springs	xx
Chapter 11 – The Botvinnik Defense	xx
Chapter 12 – The Moscow Defense	xx

Preface

Welcome to Volume 2 of *Cheparinov's 1.d4!*.

In the second part of the series, I am sharing my knowledge about the Slav Defense. I am confident that the book contains many new and interesting ideas and I have tried to provide you with the best practical options. Objectively speaking Black looks good in many lines but in practice things may look different. While I cannot promise you a big advantage in each line, I do believe you will have the best practical chances during the game.

Writing the second volume was very challenging for me. The Slav encompasses a wide but solid body of theory. Black has plenty of options and finding advantages and practical chances was not easy at all. In any case. From amateurs to very strong players, I believe that every chess player will appreciate this book.. While the Covid pandemic gave me a lot of free time to concentrate on the book, I am very happy to see that many tournaments are back. This means that my book can be useful and you may actually be able to apply some of the ideas in your games.

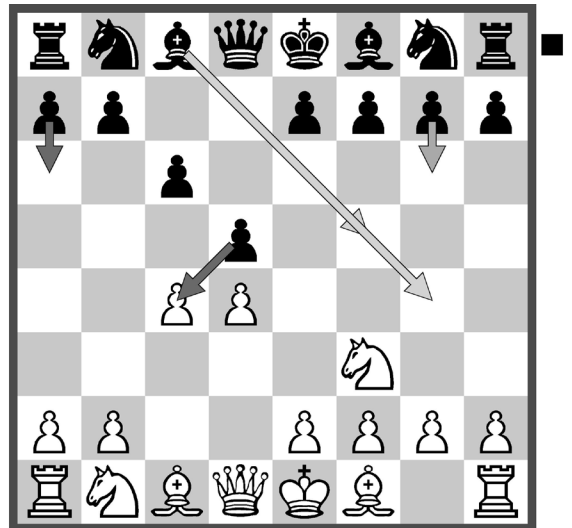
The best way to use this book is to first examine the lines on an actual board and then check them with an engine. I hope this method of study increases your understanding of the positions that arise from the Slave. This book can be a very important starting point for building your 1.d4 repertoire.

Ivan Cheparinov
December 2021



Rare 3rd Moves

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♞f3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – Rare 3rd Moves

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3. ♘f3

a) 3...-- 11

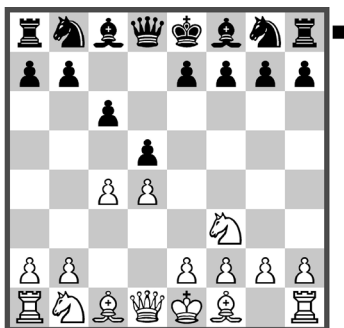
b) 3...dxc4 4.e3 b5 17

c) 3...dxc4 4.e3 ♙e6 23

a) 3. f3 -- alternatives

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3.  f3


We begin by examining early deviations by Black.

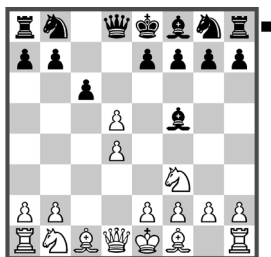


Position after: 3.  f3





3... a6

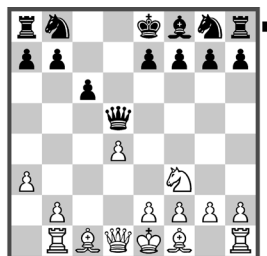
This rare move usually transposes to other lines.

A) 3...  f5? It is too early for Black to develop the bishop. 4. cxd5






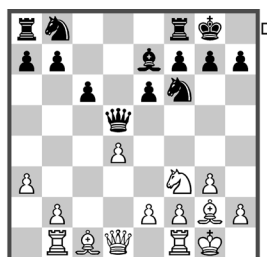
Position after: 4. cxd5

A1) After 4...  b1 5.  xb1  xd5 6. a3 White just wants to develop by g3- g2.









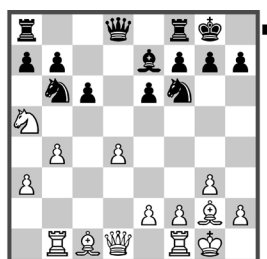
Position after: 6. a3

6...  f6 7. g3 e6 8.  g2  e7 9. 0-0 0-0





Position after: 9... 0-0

White is much better for example: 10.  e5  d8 11. b4  bd7 12.  c4!  b6 13.  a5!



Position after: 13.  a5!

The knight is perfectly placed there. 13...  d7 14.  c2±

A2) 4... cxd5 5. ♖b3



Position after: 5. ♖b3

Black is already in danger.

A2.1) Black is just a pawn down after 5... ♗c6 6. ♗c3 ♗f6 7. ♖xb7 ♗d7 8. ♖b3 ♗b8 9. ♖d1±.

A2.2) If 5... ♖c7 6. ♗c3 e6 then 7. ♗b5! ♖b6 8. ♗f4 ♗a6 9. ♗c1 +.

A2.3) 5... ♖c8 6. ♗c3 e6 7. ♗f4 Threatens ♗b5 which is impossible to stop. 7... ♗c6 [Bad is 7... a6 In view of 8. ♗a4!] 8. ♗b5!

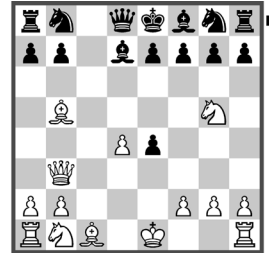


Position after: 8. ♗b5!

8... ♗b4+ 9. ♖d1 ♖f8 10. ♗c1± White dominates.

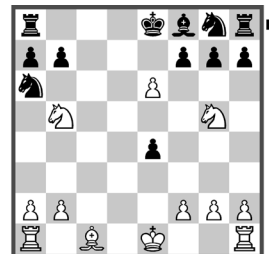
A2.4) 5... ♗c8 is very passive. 6. e4! The most direct way to take the

initiative. 6... dxe4 7. ♗b5+ ♗d7 [If 7... ♗d7 then 8. ♗e5 e6 9. d5±] 8. ♗g5!



Position after: 8. ♗g5!

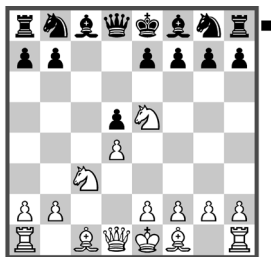
[Not as good is 8. ♗e5 e6 9. d5 ♖a5+ 10. ♗c3 ♗xb5 11. dxe6 f6 when the knight on g5 would be better in this position!] 8... e6 [8... ♗h6 9. ♗c4 e6 10. d5±] 9. d5! Now White has a big initiative. 9... ♖a5+ [9... exd5 10. ♖xd5 ♗h6 11. ♗c3±] 10. ♗c3 ♗xb5 11. ♖xb5+ ♖xb5 12. ♗xb5 ♗a6 13. dxe6+—



Position after: 13. dxe6+—

White is nearly winning.

B) 3... ♗g4? Another developing move which gives White a lot of free tempos. 4. ♗e5 ♗c8 All other bishop moves will be met by 5.cxd5 cxd5 6. ♖b3. 5. cxd5 cxd5 6. ♗c3



Position after: 6. Nc3

The simplest way to take the advantage is just to develop. [Also tempting is: 6. e4!?.] 6... Nf6 7. Qf4 e6 8. e3± This is very similar to the exchange Slav, but with free tempos for White.

C) 3... g6 This move is similar to the Schlechter system. In most cases it will just transpose. 4. Nc3 Qg7 [4... Nf6] 5. cxd5 cxd5 6. Qf4



Position after: 6. Qf4

Eventually Black must play ...Nf6 and transpose to Schlechter.

4. Nc3

The most principled.

4... dxc4?!

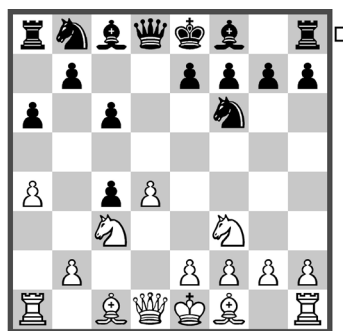
The only difference in playing ...a6 so early is that Black threatens to take the c4-pawn.

Instead, 4... Nf6 transposes to the Chebanenko.

5. a4

White stops ...b5 and threatens e4 or e3.

5... Nf6

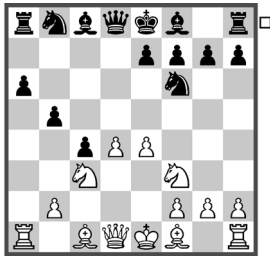


Position after: 5... Nf6

6. e3

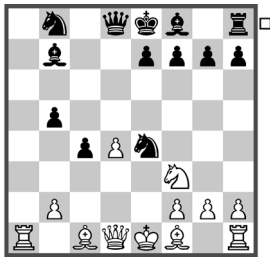
I prefer this solid option.

Another more direct option is 6. e4!? b5 when Black must sacrifice an exchange, otherwise his position will be very passive. 7. axb5 cxb5

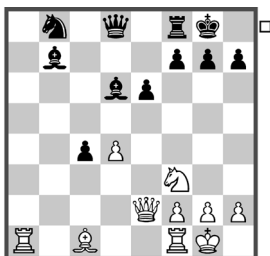


Position after: 7... cxb5

A) The position after 8. Nxb5 axb5 [worse is 8... $\text{Nxe4}!$ 9. Qxc4 e6 10. O-O ; or 8... Qb7 9. Nc3 Nxe4 10. Qxc4] 9. Qxa8 Qb7 10. Qa1 Nxe4

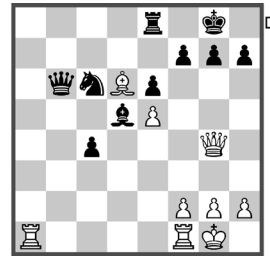
Position after: 10... Nxe4

does not look so clear. Black has certain compensation for the exchange, but on the other hand White is still on the better side. For example: 11. Qe2 e6 12. O-O Qd6 13. b3! Nc3 14. Qc2 Nxe2+ 15. Qxe2 O-O [15... $\text{Qd5}?!$ 16. Ne5] 16. bxc4 bxc4

Position after: 16... bxc4

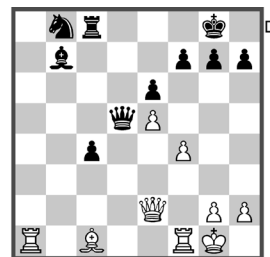
A1) Of course not 17. Qxc4? because of 17... Qxf3 18. gxf3 Qh4 turning the tables.

A2) 17. $\text{Qa3}!$? Qd5 18. Ne5 [18. Qxd6 Qxd6 19. Ne5 Nc6 is nothing special.] 18... Qxe5! 19. dxe5 Qe8 20. Qg4 Nc6 21. Qd6 Qb6 ±.

Position after: 21... Qb6 ±

Black has very good chances to survive.

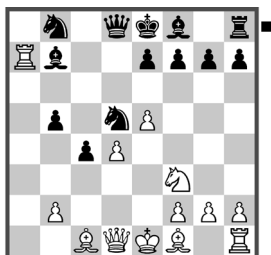
A3) 17. Ne5 Qxe5 [17... Nc6 18. Qd1 ±] 18. dxe5 Qd5 19. f4 Qc8 ±

Position after: 19... Qc8 ±

Black definitely has chances to save the day here.

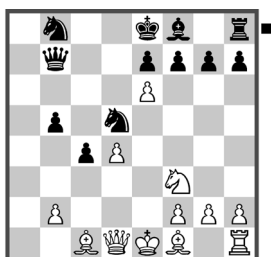
B) 8. $\text{e5}!$? An interesting intermediate move which saves the pawn on e4 but gives the black knight the d5-square.

8... ♘d5 9. ♘xb5 axb5 [Bad is 9... e6
10. ♘c3 ♙b4 11. ♙d2± with a clear
advantage for White.] 10. ♖xa8 ♙b7
11. ♖a7!? An interesting option.



Position after: 11. ♖a7!?

White is ready to return the exchange
in order to take the advantage. [After
11. ♖a1 e6 12. ♙e2 ♘c6= Black has
compensation for the exchange.] 11...
♙b6 12. ♖xb7 ♙xb7 13. e6!



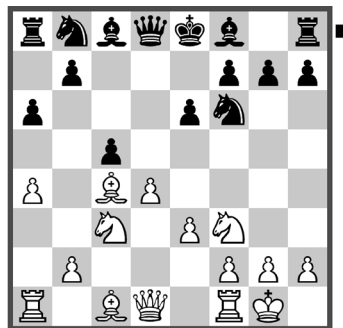
Position after: 13. e6!

With this move White stops the devel-
opment of the black pieces. 13... fxe6
14. ♘g5! It seems that White has a
serious initiative, although the posi-
tion remains very complicated and
needs future analysis.

6... e6 7. ♙xc4 c5

Now the position is very similar to a line
that we will discuss later. The only dif-
ference is that Black played ...a6 which
looks useless and is just a loss of tempo.

8. 0-0



Position after: 8. 0-0

8... ♘c6

If 8... cxd4 9. exd4 ♙e7 then 10. d5! is
very strong.



Position after: 10. d5!

10... exd5 11. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 12. ♙xd5
0-0 13. ♙b3 ♘d7 14. ♙e3± with a big
advantage.

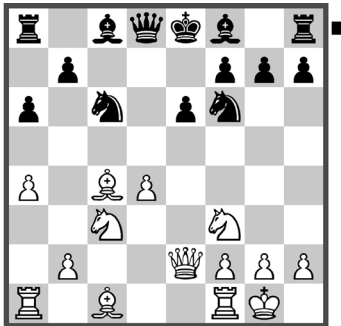
9. ♙e2

The most principled continuation. Another option is: 9. d5 exd5 10. ♖xd5 ♗xd5 11. ♙xd5 ♙d6 12. ♚b3 0-0 13. ♙d2±.

9... cxd4

If Black avoids taking on d4 with 9... ♙e7?! then 10. dxc5 ♙xc5 11. e4± is very strong.

10. exd4



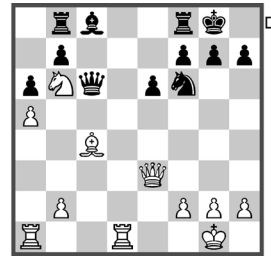
Position after: 10. exd4

10... ♙e7

It is very dangerous to take the pawn by 10... ♗xd4 11. ♗xd4 ♚xd4 because of 12. ♖d1 ♚b6 [12... ♚g4? loses immediately in view of 13. ♗d5! ♗xe2 14. ♗c7+ ♚e7 15. ♙xe2 ♖b8 16. ♙f4 ♗d7 17. ♖ac1+; or 12... ♚c5 13. ♙e3±.] 13. ♙e3 ♙c5 14. a5 ♚c6 15. ♙a4 ♙xe3 16. ♚xe3 0-0 17. ♗b6 ♖b8

(see analysis diagram next column)

White has a lot of options here. One of which appears to be 18. ♙b3±.



Position after: 17... ♖b8

11. ♖d1

Black is behind in development of his pieces. For example:

11... ♗b4

A) If 11... 0-0 then 12. d5! exd5 13. ♗xd5±

B) Or 11... ♗d5 12. ♗e5 0-0 13. ♚f3±

12. ♗e5 0-0

White has several plans here. I prefer

13. ♚f3±

with the idea of ♚g3 or h3.

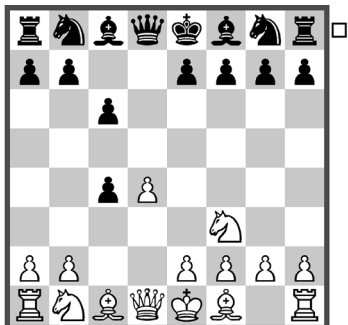


Position after: 13. ♚f3±

b) 3...dxc4 4.e3 b5

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. ♘f3 dxc4

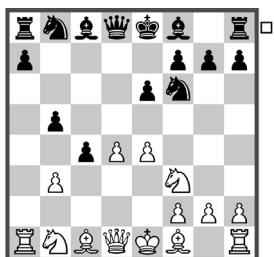
This line is not very popular nowadays. I believe it is very suspicious of Black, but White still needs to know a lot.



Position after: 3... dxc4

4. e3

Worse is: 4. e4?! b5 5. a4 because of 5... e6 6. axb5 cxb5 7. b3 ♘f6



Position after: 7... ♘f6

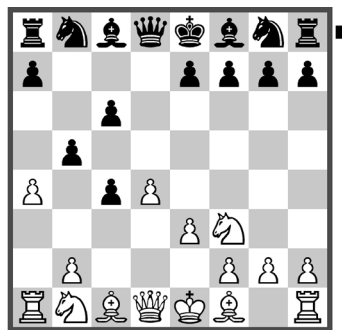
and the pawn on e4 is under attack.

4... b5

The favorite move of GM Igor Khenkin.

4... ♗e6 It will be examined in the next chapter.

5. a4



Position after: 5. a4

5... e6

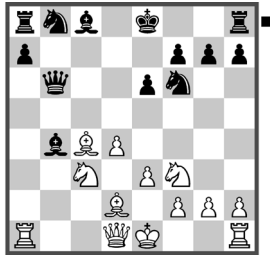
The most accurate move order for Black.

In case of 5... ♘f6 6. axb5 cxb5 the difference between 5... ♘f6 and 5... e6 can be seen after 7. ♘c3! When White attacks the b5 pawn. If Black had played 5... e6 instead of 5... ♘f6 he could play ... ♗b4.



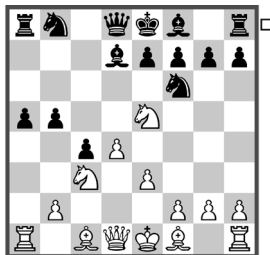
Position after: 7. ♘c3!

[White can transpose to the main line with 7. b3 e6.] 7... ♔d7?! Looks very risky. [Another way to protect the pawn is: 7... ♖b6 8. b3 e6 9. bxc4 bxc4 10. ♔xc4 ♔b4 11. ♔d2±.



Position after: 11. ♔d2±

The queen on b6 is not ideal for Black.] 8. ♘e5 Now the threat is ♖f3. 8... a5 Clears space for the rook. [8... ♖b6?! 9. b3.]



Position after: 8... a5

A) Black is more or less fine after 9. b3 e6 10. bxc4 ♔b4 11. ♔d2 bxc4 12. ♖f3 [or 12. ♔xc4 ♘c6=] 12... ♗a7 13. ♔xc4 0-0 14. 0-0 ♖c7 15. ♗fc1 ♖e7=

B) 9. ♖f3 ♗a6

(see analysis diagram next column)



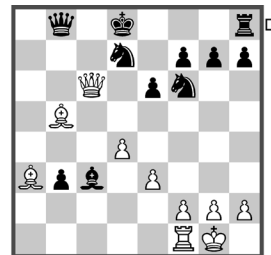
Position after: 9... ♗a6

B1) Unclear is 10. b3 cxb3 11. ♘xd7 ♘bxd7 12. ♔xb5 ♗b6 13. ♗xa5 e6



Position after: 13... e6

For example: 14. 0-0 ♔b4 15. ♗a8 ♗b8 16. ♔a3 ♔xc3 17. ♗xb8 ♖xb8 18. ♖c6 ♔d8!



Position after: 18... ♔d8!

19. ♗b1 [Or 19. ♖xc3 ♖xb5 20. ♗c1 ♖b7 21. ♖a5+ ♖b6 22. ♖c3 ♖b7= with a draw.] 19... ♖c8 20. ♖d6 b2 [Also unclear is 20... ♗e8

21. ♖xb3 ♕a5∞] 21. ♔e7+ ♕c7
 22. ♗d6+= with a draw.

B2) An interesting and positional option for White is 10. ♕e2!? e6 11. ♗g3∞.



Position after: 11. ♗g3∞

It is difficult for Black to develop.

B3) 10. g4! A very concrete continuation. 10... ♖c6 [If 10... h6?! strong is: 11. ♖xd7 ♗xd7 12. ♗f5! e6 13. ♗xb5 ♗xb5 14. ♖xb5 ♕b4+ 15. ♕d2±; or 10... ♕e6 11. ♖xb5! ♕d5? 12. ♕xc4!+-



Position after: 12. ♕xc4!+-

A nice little tactic! 11. ♖xd7 ♗xd7
 12. g5!



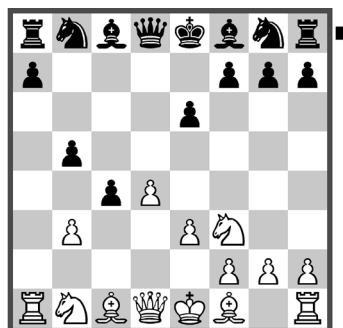
Position after: 12. g5!

Forcing the knight to go back. 12... ♖g8 [In case of 12... ♖b4 13. ♗g3! Is very strong] 13. ♖xb5 e6 14. ♕xc4 ♕b4+ 15. ♔f1+- Black is nearly lost.



Position after: 15. ♔f1+-

6. axb5 cxb5 7. b3



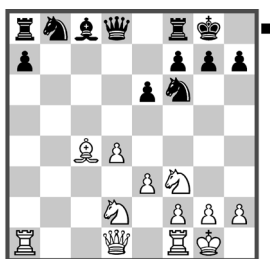
Position after: 7. b3

Now 7. c3 is not the same because of 7... b4 .

7... f6

The new fashion. Black wants to develop without exchanging the black-squared bishops.

7... b4+ This move is much more popular in practice. Black wants to quickly develop his pieces with a gain of tempo. 8. d2 xd2+ 9. bxd2 a5 Is similar to the Noteboom system. This move has been played many grandmasters. [White has an easy game after 9... f6 10. bxc4 bxc4 11. xc4 0-0 12. 0-0±



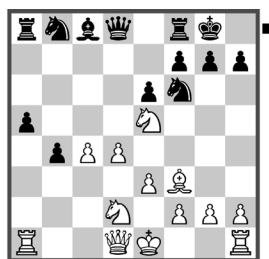
Position after: 12. 0-0±

The pawn on a7 is very lonely and can be attacked very easy by White's heavy pieces. Sarana, A (2636) – Esipenko, A (2620) chess.com 2019.] 10. bxc4 b4 To me this position looks very dubious for Black. In my opinion White's center is much stronger than Black's two passed pawns as they can be weaknesses in the future.



Position after: 10... b4

11. e5! It is important to start with this move which prohibits ... b7 due to a4+ . 11... f6 12. e2 [White achieve nothing after 12. a4+ fd7 .] 12... 0-0 [Again bad is: 12... b7? because of: 13. a4+! fd7 14. c5!± when Black is in serious trouble.] 13. f3 An important tempo.

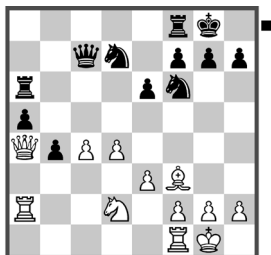


Position after: 13. f3

A) 13... a7 14. 0-0 c7 15. a4 d7 [Now 15... bd7? is bad in view of 16. c6 ; also bad is 15... b7? 16. xb7 xb7 17. b3± .] 16. xd7 bxd7 17. fc1± White's position is easier to play. Rapport, R (2444) – Boros, D (2494) Budapest 2010.

B) 13... a6 14. 0-0 c7 15. a4

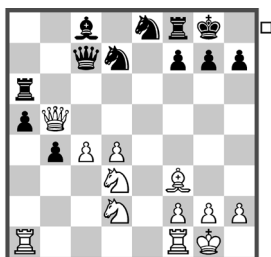
B1) If 15... ♔d7?! 16. ♖xd7 ♜bxd7
The difference compared to 13... ♗a7 is that sometimes in case of ...♜b6 White can respond with ♖b5 attacking the black rook on a6. 17. ♗a2!



Position after: 17. ♗a2!

Now White has time to consolidate. 17... ♗b8 18. ♗fa1± Black's position is very difficult.

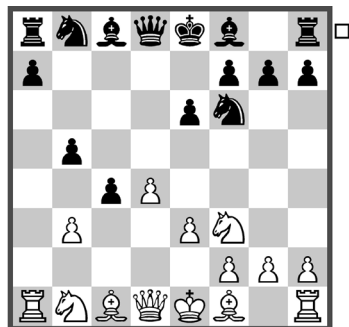
B2) 15... ♜bd7 16. ♜d3 This is the perfect position for the knight. 16... e5 The only active plan for Black. 17. ♖b5! Threatens ♜b4. 17... exd4 18. exd4 ♜e8



Position after: 18... ♜e8

[In the game Shipov, S (2575) – Popov, V (2440) St Petersburg 1997, Black played: 18... ♗a7?! and after

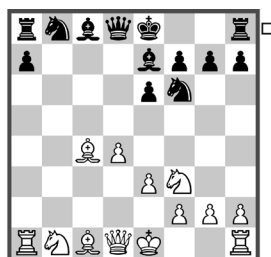
19. c5 ♗d8 20. ♜b3± got into serious trouble.] 19. ♖g5 [White can fall into a nice trap after 19. c5? ♗h6! which attacks h2 and threatens ...♔a6!; but also possible is: 19. ♗fc1 ♜d6 20. ♖g5 h6 21. ♖g3±] 19... h6 20. ♖g3± White keeps the advantage.



Position after: 7... ♜f6

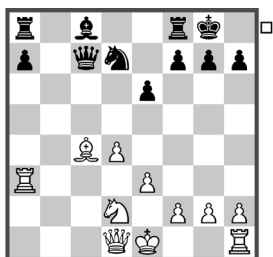
8. bxc4 bxc4 9. ♔xc4 ♔d6

If 9... ♔e7

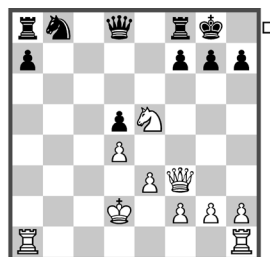


Position after: 9... ♔e7

10. ♜e5! might be very interesting for White. 10... 0-0 [Probably better is 10... ♖c7 when White still gains a small advantage after 11. ♔a3 ♜fd7 12. ♜xd7 ♜d2 ♔xa3 14. ♗xa3 0-0

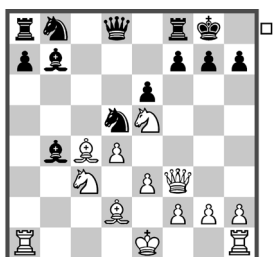


Position after: 14... 0-0



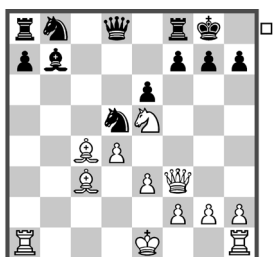
Position after: 16... exd5

15. 0-0±.] 11. ♔f3! ♘d5 12. ♘c3 [Another attractive option is: 12. ♙xd5!? exd5 13. 0-0 a5 14. ♙a3±] 12... ♙b4 13. ♙d2 ♙b7?!



Position after: 13... ♙b7?!

[If 13... ♙xc3 14. ♙xc3 ♙b7?



Position after: 14... ♙b7?

15. ♙b4!+–; probably better is: 13... ♘b6 14. ♙d3 a5 15. 0-0 ♙a6 16. ♙xa6 ♗xa6±.] 14. ♘d5 ♙xd2+ 15. ♙xd2 ♙xd5 [15... exd5 16. ♙b5!± stopping ...♘c6!.] 16. ♙xd5 exd5

Kramnik, V (2710) – Huebner, R (2605) Biel 1993. White is much better here after 17. ♗hc1±.

10. 0-0

Or 10. ♙a3 0-0 11. 0-0.

10... 0-0



Position after: 10... 0-0

11. ♙a3!

I think it is important to exchange the black-squared bishops.

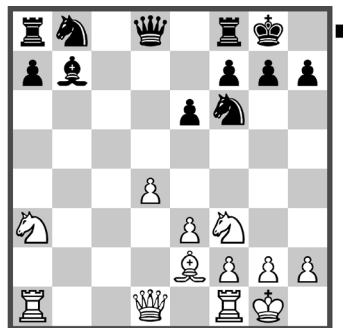
11... ♙xa3

Or 11... ♙b7 12. ♘bd2 ♘c6 13. ♙xd6 ♗xd6 14. ♗a4±.

12. ♖xa3 ♜b7 13. ♜e2±

The position is only slightly better for White, but it is very pleasant to play.

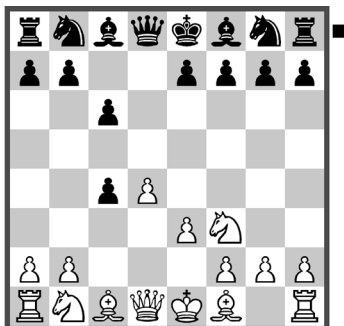
White has no risk and a very easy plan. The next moves can be ♖c4, ♔a4.



Position after: 13. ♜e2±

c) 3...dxc4 4.e3 ♜e6

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. ♖f3 dxc4 4. e3



Position after: 4. e3

4... ♜e6

The most popular move.

5. ♖c3!?

I prefer this move.

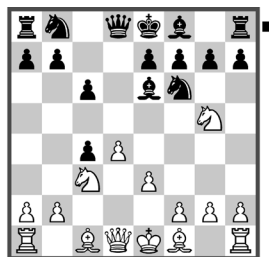
White does not want to regain the pawn at once but to develop and exploit the strange position of the bishop on e6.

White has some other options in 5. a4 or 5. ♖bd2 b5 6. a4.

5... b5

Black tries to defend his pawn on c4 at all costs. Definitely the most critical continuation.

The alternative is 5... ♖f6 6. ♖g5! When Black has different options.



Position after: 6. ♖g5!

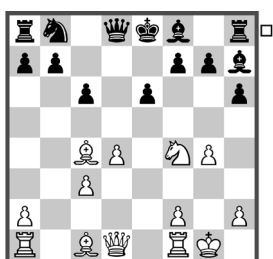
A) After: 6... ♜f5 7. ♜xc4 e6 8. e4 ♜g6 9. 0-0 White has a serious initiative. 9... h6



Position after: 9... h6

A1) Also good is: 10. Nf3!? Qxe4 [10... Nxe4 11. Ne5] 11. Nxe4 Nxe4 12. Qb3 Nd6 13. Qxe6 → with a serious attack.

A2) 10. Nh3! Is very attractive. 10... Nxe4 [Or 10... Qxe4 11. Nxe4 Nxe4 12. Nf4 →] 11. Nf4 Nxc3 12. bxc3 Qf5 13. g4! White goes all in! 13... Qh7

Position after: 13... Qh7

[If 13... Qe4 then 14. Qe1 Qd5 15. Qd3 g5 16. Nxd5 cxd5 17. Qb1 Qc7 18. Qb3 ± Black cannot protect both pawns on d5 and b7.] 14. Qxe6! White has a crushing attack. For example: 14... fxe6 15. Nxe6 Qf6 16. Qe1 Qd6 17. d5+ →.

B) Very passive is 6... Qg4 7. f3 Qh5 8. Qxc4 e9 9. e4 ± White has a strong

center and the bishop on h5 is out of the game.

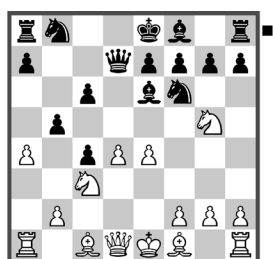
C) Another option is: 6... Qd5 7. e4 h6 8. exd5 hxg5 9. dxc6 Nxc6 10. d5 Ne5

Position after: 10... Ne5

11. Qxg5! White has a very serious initiative.

D) 6... Qd7 7. e4! White gains more space.

D1) If 7... $\text{b5?!$ 8. a4! is strong.

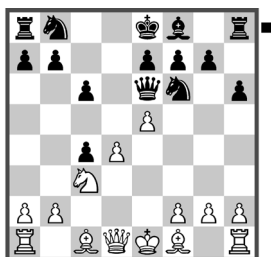
Position after: 8. a4!

The threat to take b5 and play d5 after that is very serious. 8... b4 [8... Qg4 9. f3 Qh5 White has plenty of good options here. Most of all I like 10. g4! Qg6 11. axb5 cxb5 12. f4 h6 13. Nf3+ → when Black faces big

problems.] 9. ♖e2 h6 10. ♗xe6
♕xe6 11. f3± Followed by ♗f4.

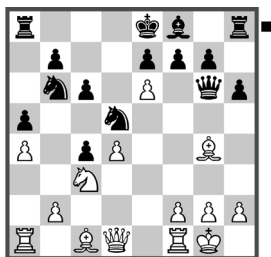
D2) There is little difference after
7... ♖a6 8. ♙e2.

D3) 7... h6 8. ♗xe6 ♕xe6 9. e5
Black's position seems very suspi-
cious to me as he lags in develop-
ment.



Position after: 9. e5

9... ♗d5 [Probably slightly better is
9... ♗bd7 but still after 10. ♙e2
♗d5 11. 0-0 ♗7b6 12. a4 a5 13.
♙g4 ♕g6 14. e6→



Position after: 14. e6→

Black's position is critical.] 10. ♙xc4
♕d7 11. 0-0 e6 12. ♗e4±



Position after: 12. ♗e4±

With a very big advantage for White
in: Gelfand, B (2691) – Zilberman, Y
(2513) Tel Aviv 1999.

E) 6... ♕c8 7. ♙e2 I believe this is
better as White just wants to develop
his pieces as quickly as possible.



Position after: 7. ♙e2

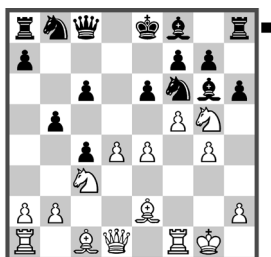
[If 7. e4 b5 8. a4 ♙g4 This is the dif-
ference compared to 6... ♕d7. Now
the bishop can escape to d7. 9. f3
♙d7 10. axb5 cxb5 11. e5 h6 12. ♗h3
♗h7 13. d5 e6∞]

E1) 7... ♙g4 8. f3 ♙h5 9. e4± The
black bishop is stuck on h5 again
which seems very dangerous. 9... b5
because of 10. 0-0



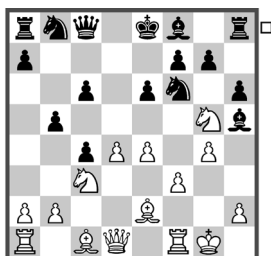
Position after: 10. 0-0

10... e6 [Or 10... h6 11. ♘h3 ♕g6 12. a4 b4 13. ♘b1 e6 14. ♘f4 ♕h7 15. ♕xc4± with a clear advantage for White.] 11. g4! h6 [After 11... ♕g6 12. f4! h6 13. f5



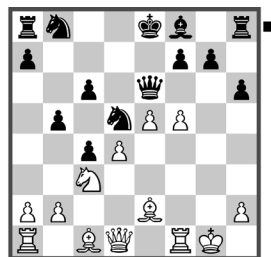
Position after: 13. f5

with a very dangerous initiative. For example: 13... exf5 14. gxf5 hxg5 15. fxg6 fxg6 16. e5 ♖h3 17. ♗f2±.]



Position after: 11... h6

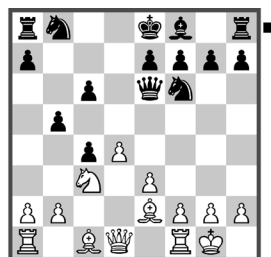
12. ♘xe6! ♖xe6 13. gxh5 Black's position is extremely dangerous. 13... ♕b4 [13... ♘xh5? 14. f4 ♘f6 15. e5 ♘d5 16. f5



Position after: 16. f5

16... ♖d7 17. ♕h5+→] 14. ♔h1→ The next move is ♗g1.

E2) 7... b5 8. ♘xe6 ♖xe6 9. 0-0



Position after: 9. 0-0

Black is vastly underdeveloped. Now the idea is to open the position with b3. 9... ♘bd7 10. b3 cxb3 11. axb3↑ White has a very strong initiative.

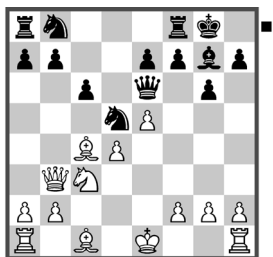
E3) 7... ♘a6 Looks to slow after 8. 0-0 ♘c7 9. e4 g6



Position after: 9... g6

10. ♔f4! White's chances are definitely better here.

E4) 7... g6 seems logical. The other moves are 8. e4! The most direct approach. [Also good is 8. ♘xe6 ♙xe6 9. ♙a4±.] 8... ♙g7 [Worse is 8... b5 9. e5 ♘d5 10. ♘xe6 ♙xe6 11. a4±] 9. e5 ♘d5 10. ♙xc4 0-0 [After 10... ♘xc3 White has 11. ♙xe6.] 11. ♘xe6 ♙xe6 12. ♙b3±

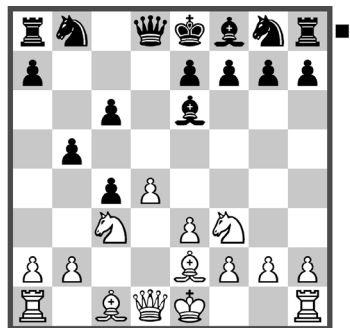


Position after: 12. ♙b3±

White has a serious advantage.

6. ♙e2!

I really like this approach. White is trying to develop very quickly and open the position with b3 at the right moment.

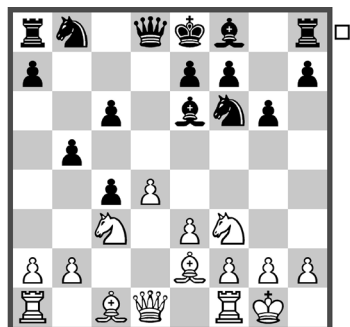


Position after: 6. ♙e2!

There are many games with 6. a4 b4 7. ♘e4 ♘f6. In my opinion it is unclear if White is better here.

6... ♘f6 7. 0-0 g6

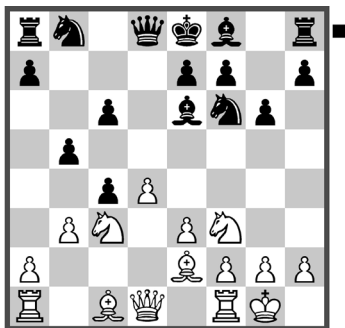
The rest of the moves seem very slow to me. For example 7... ♘bd7?! 8. ♘g5! ♙f5 9. e4 ♙g6 10. f4 h6 11. f5± and White is much better.



Position after: 7... g6

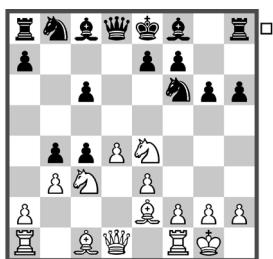
8. b3!N

An important novelty! White opens the position immediately.



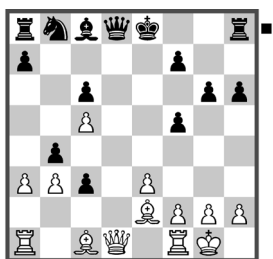
Position after: 8... b3!N

In the game Wang, Y (2656) – Zhang, P (2657) Shandong 2007 White played: 8. Ng5 Qc8 9. b3 and after 9... h6 10. Nge4 b4



Position after: 10... b4

11. Nxf6+ exf6 12. Ne4 f5 13. Nc5 c3 14. a3 Qxc5 15. dxc5 the position was very unclear.



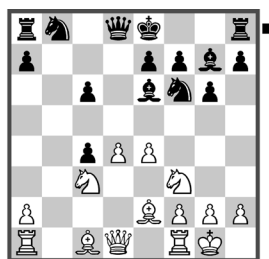
Position after: 15... dxc5

Now Black could play 15... Qxd1 16. Qxd1 Qa6 17. Qf3 Nd7 ! 18. axb4 [or 18. Qxc6 0-0-0; 18. Qd6 Ne5] 18... Qb5 ∞ with very unclear complications.

8... cxb3

The most principled move.

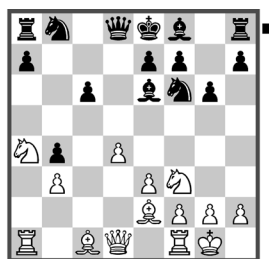
A) Black is just worse after 8... Qg7 9. bxc4 bxc4 10. e4!?



Position after: 10... e4!?

Probably the best! 10... 0-0 11. Qe3 Qa5 12. Rc1 The Ng5 threat looks very unpleasant.

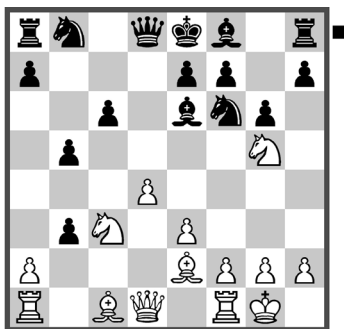
B) 8... b4 9. Na4 cxb3 [9... c3 ?! 10. a3 a5 11. Nc5 +] 10. axb3 † and White has an easy game.



Position after: 10... axb3†

9. ♖g5!

The whole point!

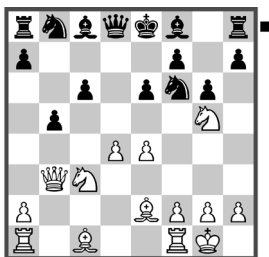


Position after: 9. ♖g5!

9. axb3 ♕g7∞

9... bxa2

9... ♕c8 10. ♖xb3 e6 11. e4! White has a very nice game here in my opinion.



Position after: 11. e4!

A) Bad is 11... ♕g7? in view of 12. e5 ♖d5 13. ♖ce4 0-0 14. ♖h3 h6 15. ♖f3 h5 16. ♖fg5+– with a nearly winning attack.

B) Possible is 11... b4 12. e5! ♖d5 [worse is 12... bxc3?! 13. exf6 ♖xf6 14. ♖xc3±; or 12... ♖xd4 13. ♖b5!

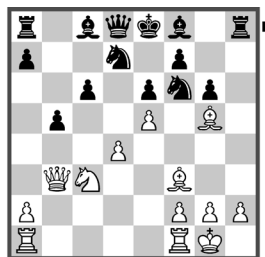


Position after: 13. ♖b5!

13... ♖xe5 14. ♕b2 ♖xg5 15. ♖c7+ ♔d8 16. ♖xa8±] 13. ♖ce4 h6 14. ♖h3↑.

C) 11... h6 12. e5! White must go forward.

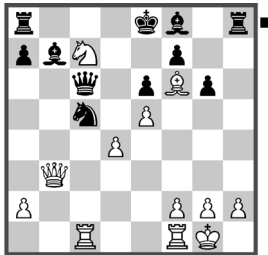
C1) Worse is: 12... hxg5?! 13. ♕xg5 ♖bd7 14. ♕f3! A nice intermediate move. White needs to play with precision.



Position after: 14. ♕f3!

14... ♖c7 Aiming for h2! 15. ♖xb5! ♖b6 [White has very strong play after 15... cxb5 16. ♕xa8 ♖b8 17. ♕c6 ♖d5 18. ♕xd5 exd5 19. ♖fc1±.] 16. ♕xc6! ♖xc6 17. ♖ac1 ♖c5 [17... ♖b7 18. ♖c7+ ♔d8 19. ♖g3!±] 18. ♕xf6 ♕b7 19. ♖c7+!

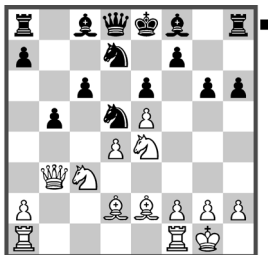
(see analysis diagram next page)



Position after: 19. ♞c7+

Another important move! 19... ♞xc7 20. ♙xh8 ♞xb3 21. ♜xc7 ♞a5 22. ♙f6± Black is still fighting, but I believe white is clearly better. For example: 22... ♙a3 23. ♜b1 ♙d5 24. ♜b5! ♞c4 25. ♜b3 ♙f8 26. ♜h3 ♞b6 27. ♜h8+.

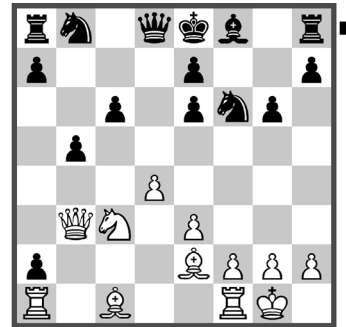
C2) 12... ♞d5 13. ♞ge4 ♞d7 14. ♙d2↑ White has a nice initiative.



Position after: 14. ♙d2↑

10. ♞xe6 fxe6 **11.** ♚b3

Black is three pawns up for the moment, but it is clear that White's initiative is very dangerous.

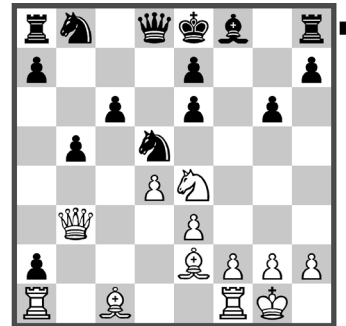


Position after: 11. ♚b3

11... ♞d5

11... ♙f7 12. e4↑

12. ♞e4↑



Position after: 12. ♞e4↑

Threatens ♞g5 and ♙g4.

White's initiative is very strong. The weak black pawns and the poor position of the black king give White excellent chances.