

The Queen's Indian Defense Main Line 4.g3 System

Maxim Chetverik

The Queen's Indian Defense: Main Line 4.g3 System

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ISBN 978-5-6041769-1-7

About the author

Maxim Chetverik, born in Voronezh in 1963, is one of Russia's biggest opening experts. He has written books published in Russian, English, French and German on the Catalan Opening, English Opening, Benoni System, Queen's Gambit Accepted, Sicilian Defense, Petroff Defense, Dutch Defense, Alekhine Defense and Albin Counter Gambit, as well as more general opening books and books on the games of Alekhine, Tal and Spassky.

He became an International Master in 2003 and is a regular tournament player to this day, as well as being a coach in his native Voronezh. His best tournament results include Budapest Open, 1st place, 1996, Open championship of Slovan Club, Bratislava, 1st place, 1998, Prague Open, 2nd equal, 2002, Kecskemet (Hungary) round robin tournament, 1st place, 2003, Stuttgart Open, 2nd place, 2009, Yaroslavl Open, 3rd place, 2015, and Olomouc (Czech Republic), 2nd place, 2017.



CONTENTS

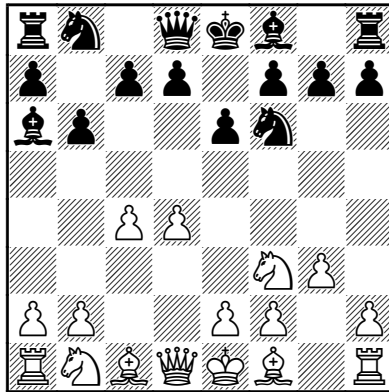
A HISTORICAL FOREWORD	5
PART I. The system with 4.g3 ♖a6	15
Introduction	15
<i>Chapter 1.</i> 5. ♖b3 variation	16
<i>Chapter 2.</i> 5. ♗bd2 variation	37
<i>Chapter 3.</i> 5. ♖c2 variation	63
<i>Chapter 4.</i> 5. ♖a4 variation	89
<i>Chapter 5.</i> 5.b3 b5 variation	121
<i>Chapter 6.</i> 5.b3 d5 variation	131
<i>Chapter 7.</i> 5.b3 ♖b7 variation	139
<i>Chapter 8.</i> 5.b3 ♖b4+ variation	148
PART II. Bogo-Indian hybrid lines	185
Introduction	185
<i>Chapter 9.</i> 4.g3 ♖b4+ variation	186
<i>Chapter 10.</i> 4.g3 ♖b7 5. ♖g2 ♖b4+ 6. ♗bd2 variation	200
<i>Chapter 11.</i> 4.g3 ♖b7 5. ♖g2 ♖b4+ 6. ♖d2 ♖e7 variation	215
<i>Chapter 12.</i> 4.g3 ♖b7 5. ♖g2 ♖b4+ 6. ♖d2 ♖xd2+ variation	223
PART III. The system with 4.g3 ♖b7	233
Introduction	233
<i>Chapter 13.</i> Miscellaneous after 5. ♖g2	235
<i>Chapter 14.</i> 5. ♖g2 c5 variation	247
<i>Chapter 15.</i> 5. ♖g2 d5 variation	258
<i>Chapter 16.</i> 5. ♖g2 ♖b7 6. ♗c3 0-0 variation	266
<i>Chapter 17.</i> Opocensky Variation	277
<i>Chapter 18.</i> Miscellaneous on move 7	308
<i>Chapter 19.</i> 7.d5 variation	318
<i>Chapter 20.</i> 7. ♖e1 variation	332
<i>Chapter 21.</i> 7. ♗c3 ♗a6 variation	351
<i>Chapter 22.</i> 7. ♗c3 d5 variation	362
<i>Chapter 23.</i> 7. ♗c3 ♗e4 8. ♗xe4 ♖xe4 variation	382
<i>Chapter 24.</i> 7. ♗c3 ♗e4 8. ♖c2 variation	388
Conclusion	414
<i>Players' index</i>	<i>415</i>

PART I

The system with 4.g3 ♖a6

Introduction

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♖a6

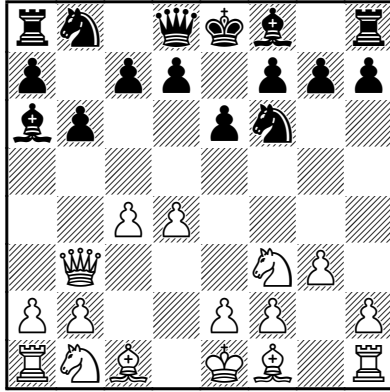


I have already introduced this move in game No. 3 of the historical introduction. Of white's replies, 5.♖b3 is analyzed in chapter 1, 5.♘bd2 in chapter 2, 5.♖c2 in chapter 3, 5.♖a4 in chapter 4, and the main continuation 5.b3 in chapters 5-8. Also, we need to define the move 5.♖g2 – whether it is an experimental gambit or just the carelessness of a white player mistaking 4...♖a6 for 4...♖b7. In this position the Czech master Mozny sacrificed the pawn at least twice, so he was clearly experimenting. The simplest continuation for black is to block the long diagonal: 5...♖xc4 6.♘c3 c6 7.♘e5 ♖a6 8.0-0 ♖e7 9.f4 0-0 10.g4 (Mozny – Petenyi, Czech Republic 2012) 10...d5 11.g5 ♘e8 12.♖f3 f6 13.gxf6 ♖xf6 and ♘e8-d6 – white's attack has reached a dead end and he has no compensation for the pawn.

Chapter 1

5. ♖b3 variation

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♙a6 5.♚b3



White defends his pawn on c4 while (at least temporarily) maintaining control over d5. Although 4...♙a6 has been around for donkey's years, 5.♚b3 in Megabase only dates back to 1981. That year, Geller's work on the Queen's Indian Defense appeared (in Russian – the English translation appeared in 1982) and the author didn't even consider the move ♚d1-b3. In recent years, however, elite players have adopted this line, which has led to a general peak in popularity.

In this chapter we examine in turn black's replies 5...c5 (game No. 4), 5...d5 (game No. 5), 5...c6 (game No. 6) and the main continuation 5...♘c6 (games No. 7-13). There is also a separate line c7-c5 after the bishop retreat 5...♙b7. In the game Riazantsev – Grigoriants

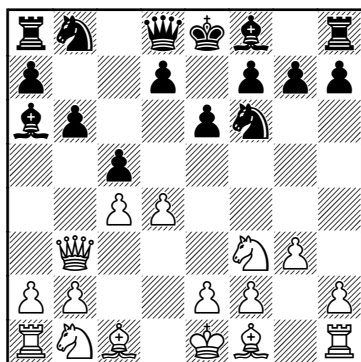
(Moscow 2006) we saw 6.♙g2 c5 7.d5 exd5 8.♘h4 g6 9.cxd5 d6 10.0-0 ♙g7 11.♚e3+!

KEY TIP. This is the only chapter to contain a check that interferes with the natural process of black's piece mobilization.

11...♚e7 12.♚xe7+ ♙xe7
13.♘c3 ♘a6 14.e4 ♘b4 15.e5 ♘e8?!
16.♙g5+ f6 17.exf6+ ♙xf6 18.♖ae1+
♙f7 19.♘e4 ♙xd5 20.♙xf6 ♘xf6
21.♘xd6+ ♙f8 22.a3 ♘c6 23.♙xd5
♘xd5 24.♘f3 with better chances.
In my view, Riazantsev was too early with e4-e5, as the variation 15...♘fxd5 16.a3 ♘xc3 17.♙g5+ ♙d7 18. ♙xb7 ♘e2+ 19.♙g2 ♖ab8 20.♙f3 ♘c2 21.♖ad1 ♘ed4 is more attractive for black.

**NO. 4 A. SHIMANOV –
VIACHESLAV ZAKHARTSOV**
Moscow 2015

1. ♘f3 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. d4 b6 4. g3
♙a6 5. ♖b3 c5



In this game (and in several others) we see the white queen come under attack from a black pawn. White should accept the challenge, as after 6. ♙g2 ♙b7 7. dxc5 ♙xc5 the queen on b3 is out of place.

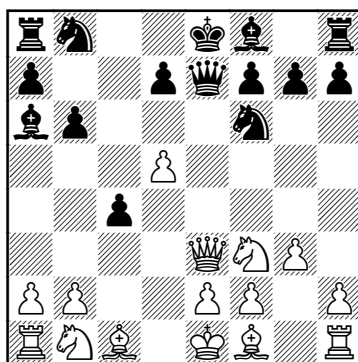
6. d5 exd5 7. cxd5 c4

This move means that the position will be unlike typical Queen's Indian structures. Even the rare move 7...b5!? is more likely to lead to a typical structure: 8. ♙g2 d6 9. 0-0 ♙e7 10. ♖e1 ♘bd7 11. a3 0-0 12. ♘c3 ♖b8 13. h3 ♖e8 14. ♖c2 ♙b7 15. e4 a6 (as expected!) 16. ♙f4 ♙f8 17. ♖ad1 (Kempinski – Duda, Chorzow 2013), and the debatable strategic decision 17...♘e5 18. ♘xe5 dxe5 in a normal position was certainly not forced.

If black prefers to go for a position akin to the Modern Benoni, then white can successfully employ the ♖b3-e3 maneuver: 7...d6 8. ♙g2 g6

9. 0-0 ♙g7 10. ♖e3+ ♙f8 (10... ♖e7 11. ♖xe7+ ♙xe7 fails to achieve full equality due to 12. ♖e1 and e2-e4) 11. ♘c3 ♘bd7 12. ♖f4 ♖c7 13. ♖a4 ♖b7 14. ♙f4 ♘e8 15. ♘e4 b5 16. ♖a3 b4 17. ♖e3 ♖b6 (Fressinet – Anastasian, Plovdiv 2008), and here 18. ♘fg5!? is promising with the idea ♘g5-e6.

8. ♖e3+! ♖e7



9. ♖d4

9. ♘c3 has also been played to great effect, for example, 9... ♖xe3 10. ♙xe3 ♙b4 11. ♙d4 ♘xd5 12. ♙xg7 ♖g8 13. 0-0-0 ♘e7 14. ♙e5 ♘bc6 15. ♘e4 0-0-0 16. ♘d6+ ♙xd6 17. ♙xd6 ♖g6?! (but not 17...♘f5?! due to 18. ♙h3, whereas 17...f6 retains the choice between ♘e7-f5 and ♘e7-g6) 18. ♖d2 ♘f5 19. ♙f4 ♙b7 20. e4 ♘b4 21. exf5 ♙xf3 22. fxg6 ♙xh1 23. gxf7, and black resigned (Epishin – Komarov, St. Petersburg 1997). 10... ♙b7 was probably more solid, freeing up a square for the knight.

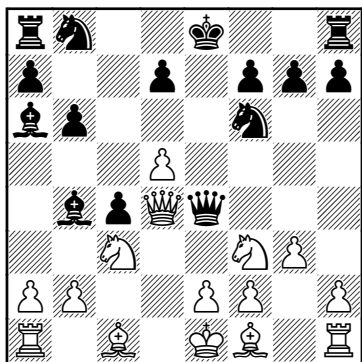
9... ♖e4

Unlike the previously played 9... ♖c5 10. ♘c3 this move allows the knight to be pinned without the

immediate exchange of queens. As the game goes on to demonstrate, however, this is a dubious benefit.

10. ♖c3 ♖b4

If 10... ♗xd4 11. ♘xd4 ♖b4 12. ♖d2 0-0 13. a3 ♖xc3 14. ♖xc3 greed gets punished – 14... ♘xd5? 15. ♖g2 ♖b7 16. ♘f5. Black should instead agree to defend an unpleasant position after 13... ♖c5 14. ♘f5 ♖e8 15. ♖f4 ♖b7 16. ♖d1.



11. ♖g2 ♗xd5?! 12. 0-0

Winning the exchange after 12. ♗xd5 ♘xd5 13. ♘d2 ♘xc3 14. ♖xa8 ♘a4 isn't so attractive as white's pieces are in an ugly formation.

12... ♖xc3 13. ♗xc3 ♘c6 14. ♖g5 ♗e6 15. ♖fd1 0-0 16. ♗a3! ♖b5 17. ♖d6 ♗xe2

If 17... ♗e7 then 18. ♘d2! followed by 19. ♘e4 is strong.

18. ♖xf6 gxf6 19. ♗c3 ♗e7 20. ♖d5 ♖a6 21. ♖e1 ♗d8 22. ♖h5 ♘e7 23. ♗a3

Shimanov's great play has deprived Zakhartsov of a piece, and it's unclear how black can strengthen his position. He may as well have raised the white flag at this point.

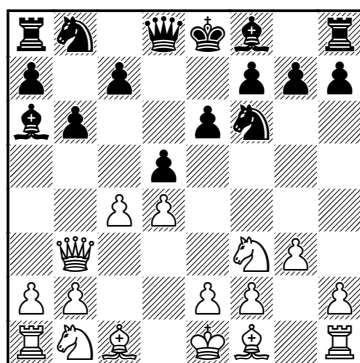
22... ♖b7 24. ♖xe7 ♖e8 25. ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 26. ♗c3 ♗e2 27. ♖f5 ♗d1+ 28. ♖f1 ♖e4 29. ♖xf6 d5 30. ♖f4 ♖e8 31. ♗f6 ♖g6 32. ♘e5 ♖e6 33. ♗d8+ ♘g7 34. ♘xg6 hxg6 35. ♖h4 g5 36. ♗xg5+ ♖g6 37. ♗e5+ ♖f6 38. ♖f4
Black resigned.

NO. 5 A. KOROBOV –

R. PONOMARIOV

Lvov 2014

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘f3 b6 4. g3 ♖a6 5. ♗b3 d5



This new attack on the pawn forces white to an exchange that lengthens the reach of black's bishop.

6. cxd5 ♗xd5

After 6... exd5 7. ♘c3 ♖e7 8. ♖g2 0-0 9. ♘e5 ♖b7 10. 0-0 (Vaganian – Spassky, Montpellier 1985) Vaganian provided an accurate assessment of the position – white has gained what he wanted while winning a tempo, while black has lost a tempo – which is what he was trying to avoid.

7. ♗c2

In the game Morozevich – Anand (Linares 2001) the Russian moved

his queen back to its starting position, avoiding being attacked with ♖b8-c6-b4. The game went 7. ♖d1 c5 8. ♗c3 ♖d8 9. ♕g2 ♕b7 10. 0-0 ♗bd7 11. ♕f4 ♕e7 12. dxc5 ♗xc5 13. ♖xd8+ (13. ♖c2!?) 13... ♗xd8 14. ♗e5 ♗d5, and 15. ♗xd5 exd5 16. ♖fd1 would guarantee white a lasting advantage. Black should probably have opted for 7... ♕b4+ 8. ♗c3 (after 8. ♕d2 c5 9. ♕g2 ♕b7 10. 0-0 0-0 11. ♕xb4 cxb4 the pawn majority is cancelled out by the blockade on white squares) 8... c5 9. ♕g2 cxd4 10. ♖a4+ ♖d7 11. ♖xb4 ♗c6 12. ♖a3 dxc3 13. bxc3 ♗d8 14. ♕g5 ♗a5 with an approximately equal position (Can – Volokitin, Jerusalem 2015); or the more promising 10... ♗bd7!? 11. ♖xb4 dxc3 12. ♖xc3 ♗c8 13. ♖d2 ♖e4 14. ♗h4 ♖c2. The black queen has profited from its centralized position, not having gone home unlike its white counterpart.

7... ♗c6

LANDMINE. There is a landmine throughout the long diagonal and an explosion is always on the cards! After 7...c5 8. ♗c3 ♖c6 9. ♕e3!? cxd4 10. ♕xd4 ♗bd7 11. ♕g2 e5? (Beliavsky – Palac, Celje 2004) Beliavsky failed both during the game and after, when he commented on it in *Chess Informant*, to notice the fantastic resource 12. ♕xe5!! ♗xe5 13. ♗g1! The battle Wojtaszek – Klauser (Zurich 2004) ended in disaster for black after 7... ♕b4+ 8. ♗c3 0-0 9. ♕g2 ♖b5?? 10. ♗e5 ♗d5 11. 0-0 ♕xc3 12. bxc3 due to the murderous c3-c4. On the other hand, 9... ♗c6 10. 0-0 ♖c4

11. ♖e1 ♖ad8 12. ♕e3 ♗d5 would have successfully blockaded the light squares.

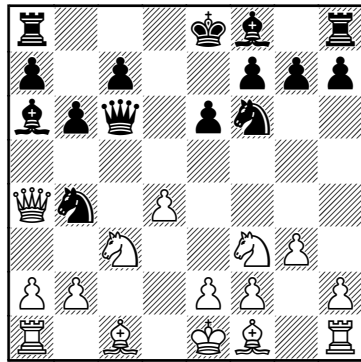
8. ♗c3

8. ♕g2? leads to the loss of a pawn, as after 8... ♗xd4 9. ♖a4+ ♖b5 the knight is poisoned due to the threat of mate.

8... ♗b4 9. ♖a4+

After 9. ♖d1 ♖f5 10. ♕g2 ♗c2+ 11. ♖f1 0-0-0 12. ♗h4 ♗xd4 13. ♖xd4 ♗xd4 14. ♗xf5 exf5 15. a3 ♗b3 16. ♖b1 ♕c5 17. ♕f3 ♖e8 (Tregubov – Duda, Doha 2015) black has compensation for the exchange, while after 11... ♗xa1 12. ♗h4 ♖c2 13. ♕xa8 ♖xd1+ 14. ♗xd1 ♗c2 he doesn't even need to prove his compensation.

9... ♖c6



10. ♖b3?

After 10. ♖xc6+ ♗xc6 11. e3 ♕xf1 12. ♖xf1 0-0-0 13. ♖e2 ♕d6 14. ♖d1 ♖he8 15. ♗g5 ♖d7 16. f4 ♕b4 17. ♕d2 ♕xc3 18. ♕xc3 h6 19. ♗f3 ♗e4 20. ♕e1 f6 21. ♖d3 ♗c5+ 22. ♖e2 ♗e4 the unappealing game Bacrot – Almasi (Eppingen 2014) ended as it should have, in a repetition of moves.

Korobov, as he himself admitted, failed to anticipate black's next move.

10...♗d3+! 11.exd3 ♖xf3
12.♖a4+ b5 13.♖xa6 ♖xh1
14.♖xb5+ ♗d7 15.d5 ♖b8

15...e5 is also interesting, as it partially closes the position. A possible continuation would be 16.♖b7 ♖d8 17.♖xc7 ♖b4 18.♖g5 f6 19.♖e3 ♖xd5 20.♖xa7 ♖c6 21.♖d2 0-0 – black has successfully completed his development, while the connected passed pawns are still at base camp.

16.♖c4 ♖d6?!

Again black can consider e6-e5, although an even stronger idea is 16...♗c5!? (17.a3 ♖d6 18.b4 exd5 19.♖xd5 ♖xd5 20.♗xd5 ♗e6).

17.dxe6 ♗e5 18.exf7+ ♔f8
19.♖e4 ♖xh2?!

An unexpectedly weak move from such a top player. Ponomarev avoids exchanging queens, but three moves later is forced to agree to such a swap in a far worse position.

20.d4 ♗xf7 21.♖f3 ♖e8+?!

The continuation 21...♔g8 22.♖c4 ♖f8 23.♖e3 ♖h3 24.0-0-0 doesn't seem inspiring for black, but it's still better than the actual line played.

22.♖e3 ♖h6 23.♖b5 ♖f6
24.♖xf6 ♖xe3+ 25.fxe3 gxf6
26.♗e4 ♖b4+ 27.♔e2 f5 28.a3 ♖e7
29.♗c5

With the help of 29.♖f1! fxe4 30.♖c4 h5 31.♖xf7+ ♔e8 32.♖f4 white would have acquired yet another pawn and the opposite-colored bishops would have posed no cause for concern.

29...♖xc5 30.dxc5 ♖g8 31.♖f1
♖xg3 32.♖xf5 ♔e7 33.b4 ♗g5?

Black's last chance was to exchange rooks: 33...♖g5 34.♖xg5 ♗xg5. The remote passed pawn would cause white trouble and the win would be far from simple.

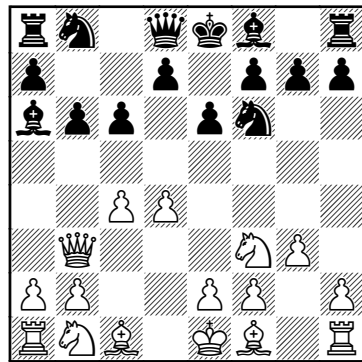
34.♖d5 h5 35.♖d7+ ♔f6 36.♖xc7
h4 37.♖c6 h3 38.b5 ♖g1 39.b6 axb6
40.cxb6 ♖b1 41.b7 ♖b2+ 42.♔d1 h2
43.♖c8 ♗h3 44.♔c1

Black resigned.

NO. 6 A. IPATOV – S. ZHIGALKO

Cappelle la Grande 2011

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 b6 4.g3
♖a6 5.♖b3 c6



Black wants to play d7-d5 when the exchange c4xd5 can be met with c6xd5.

6.♖g5

After 6.♖f4 d5 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.♖xb8 the automatic 8...♖xb8?? loses to 9.♖a4+, whereas 8...♖c4! 9.♖a4+ b5 10.♖c2 ♖xb8 11.b3 is an interesting sacrifice. The line 11...♖b4+ 12.♗bd2 ♗e4 13.bxc4 bxc4 with compensation for the sac (Khalifman) continued:

14. ♖a4+ ♔f8 15. ♕g2 ♖a5 16. ♖xa5 ♕xa5 17. 0-0-0 ♕xd2+ 18. ♖xd2 ♔xd2 19. ♔xd2, and the minor pieces are tangibly weaker than the rook and pawn.

So we have to abandon 8. ♕xb8 and switch to the example of Khalifman – Ibragimov (Plovdiv 2003): 8. ♔c3 ♕c4 9. ♖d1 ♔bd7 (9... ♔c6!?) 10. ♔d2 ♕a6 11. ♖a4 ♖c8 12. ♕g2 ♕e7 13. 0-0-0 14. ♖fc1 ♖b7. Khalifman here suggested 15. b4 b5 16. ♖b3 ♖b6 17. e4!? dxe4 18. ♔cxe4 (18. ♕e3!? ♕b7 19. d5 ♖a6 20. dxe6 ♖xe6 21. ♔dxe4 is no worse) 18... ♔d5 19. ♔c5!? ♔xf4 20. gxf4 ♖ad8 21. ♔f3 with the initiative.

6... ♕e7

In the game Navara – Sax (Sibenik 2012) black continued in the spirit of the 5...d5 6.cxd5 ♖xd5 variation and had no problems: 6...d5 7.cxd5 ♖xd5 8. ♔c3 ♖xb3 9.axb3 ♕b7 10. ♕g2 ♔d5 11. e4 ♔b4 12. 0-0 ♔d7 13. e5 h6 14. ♕e3 ♕e7 15. ♔d2 0-0 16. ♔c4 a5 17. ♖fd1 ♖ab8 18. ♔e4 ♔c2 19. ♖ac1 ♔xe3 20. fxe3 c5 21. ♔ed6 ♕xg2 22. ♔xg2. Instead of 8. ♔c3 it was probably better to exchange on f6, thereby justifying moving the bishop to g5.

7. ♔c3 h6 8. ♕xf6 ♕xf6 9. e4 d6

We now see the standard conflict between white's strong pawn center and black's bishop pair. Ipatov decides to gain more space.

10. e5 dxe5

If 10... ♕e7, then 11. d5! exd5 12. cxd5 ♕xf1 13. ♔xf1 0-0 14. dxc6 ♔xc6 15. ♖d1, but black still hasn't equalized even though he has freed up his position: 15... ♖b8 16. exd6 ♕xd6

17. ♖d5 ♔e5 18. ♔b5 ♔xf3 19. ♔xd6 ♔g5 20. ♔g2.

11. dxe5 ♕e7 12. ♔e4 0-0 13. ♖c3 ♔d7

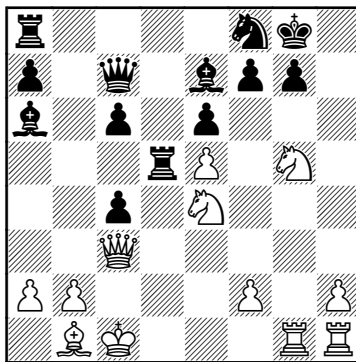
After 13...c5!? castling long is still anti-positional, while castling short will be less effective. Moreover, after ♔b8-c6 the outposts b4 and d4 become available.

14. 0-0-0 ♖c7 15. ♕d3 ♖fd8 16. ♕b1 ♔f8 17. ♖dg1 b5 18. g4 bxc4 19. g5 hxg5?

White's somewhat stubborn attack still needs to be treated with more respect. Zhigalko opens up the h-file but immediately gets tangled up. The correct continuation was 19... h5 20. ♔f6+ ♔h8 21. ♔xh5 ♖b6 with tangible counterplay.

20. ♔fxg5 ♖d5?

The line 20... ♖d7 21. ♖h3 ♖xe5 22. ♖h8+! ♔xh8 23. ♔xf7+ ♔g8 24. ♔xe5 ♖c7 25. ♖g3 leaves black with an uncomfortable position, but there was nothing better.



21. ♖f3

The beginning of an elegant attack with a pleasing geometric pattern. Yet

white could have wrapped up the game even more quickly with 21.♗xf7! ♕xf7 22.♗d6+ ♖xd6 23.exd6 ♖xd6 24.♖xg7+ ♕e8 25.♖f6.

21...♖xg5

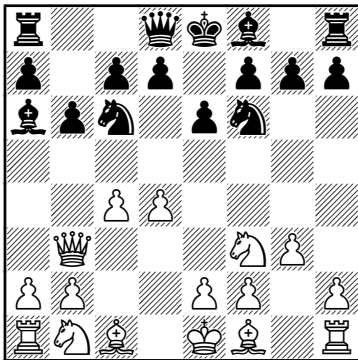
The computer proposes the “unhuman” 21...♖d8 in order to lure the knight to d6 (thereby preventing it from getting to f6) and only then exchanging the knight. Nevertheless, 22.♗d6 ♖xg5 23.♖xg5 ♖xe5 24.♖xg7+! ♕xg7 25.♖g1+ ♗g6 26.♖xg6 fxg6 27.♖g3 is enough to win.

22.♖xg5 ♗g6 23.♖hg1 ♖xe5 24.♗f6+! ♕f8 25.♖xg6! fxg6 26.♗d5+ ♖f7 27.♖a3+ c5 28.♖xc5+ ♕g8 29.♗e7+ ♕h8 30.♖xe5 ♖xe7 31.♖xg6 ♖h4 32.♖g5

32...♖h6 falls to 33.f4. **Black resigned.**

NO. 7 F. CARUANA – S. KARJAKIN Sochi 2012

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 b6 4.g3 ♖a6 5.♖b3 ♗c6



The main line here threatens to win a pawn with ♗c6-a5.

6.♖d2

White usually defends the pawn with 6.♗bd2 (games Nos. 8-13), but here he takes control of the a5 square.

6...♖b7

Nevertheless, 6...♖b8 7.♖g2 ♗a5!? delivers an interesting chance. After 8.♖xa5 bxa5 9.♖c2 c5 10.b3 cxd4 11.♗xd4 ♖b6 the black bishops become quite lively. Practice has seen 8.♖a4 ♖c8 9.b3 ♖b7 10.♖b4 c5 11.dxc5 ♗c6 12.♖c3 bxc5 (we have reached a typical Queen’s Indian structure) 13.0-0 ♖e7 14.♗bd2 0-0 15.♖fd1 d5 16.cxd5 exd5 17.e3 ♖a6 18.♖f1 ♖xf1 19.♕xf1 ♖d8, and the hanging pawns are fine for black (Matsuura – El Debs, Florianapolis 2016).

7.d5

7.♖c3 gives black the advantage of the two bishops for free: 7...♗e4 8.a3 ♗xc3 9.♖xc3 ♖e7 10.e4 f5!? 11.d5 exd5 12.exd5 ♖f6 13.♖e3+ ♗e7 14.♖b3 0-0 or 10.♖g2 ♖f6 11.e3 ♗e7 12.♖d3 c5 13.♗c3 cxd4 14.exd4 ♖c8 15.♗b5 d5 16.cxd5 (Ehlvest – Ivanchuk, Elista 1998) 16...♖xd5 17.♗xa7 ♖c4 18.♖c2 ♖c7 19.♖a4+ ♖d7 20.♖xd7+ ♕xd7 21.♖c1 b5 22.b3 ♖xa7 23.bxc4 ♖c8 – white has to fight for a draw here.

7...♗e7

According to Sakaev, the immediate knight retreat is more ambitious than 7...exd5 8.cxd5 ♗e7 9.d6 cxd6 with approximately equal chances.

8.dxe6 fxe6 9.♖c3

Caruana diverges from the plan to exchange bishops adopted by German GMs Bunnmann and Kunin. Black is fine as his pieces are harmoniously placed, such as in the example