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Beating the Hedgehog System

Using a Space Advantage in the Chess Opening

New In Chess 2023

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Preface

Our book is based on a Chessable course we made on the Hedgehog System which was published in August 2022. Accordingly, this is a joint venture between Chessable and New in Chess. This was our very first Chessable work, we were enthusiastic about it and motivated to make something nice. So, we were extremely happy when one of our readers wrote to us, calling it 'a hidden gem of a course'.

The system presented here has been Hanna's main weapon in the Sicilian for several years. She has gained a lot of practical experience in it. The Hedgehog System became popular in the 1970s and Laszlo witnessed the rapid development of this set-up, so he has been teaching this system for more than 40 years.

Our book targets devotees of the English and (or) Sicilian Kan (or Taimanov). The title, *Beating the Hedgehog System*, indicates that this is a White repertoire, providing a straightforward path without alternatives for the first player. In the Hedgehog, the middlegame is an integral part of the opening, and our work is for at least 50% a middlegame study. The system is very complex: on the one hand, the play is usually positional, based on prophylactic thinking. On the other hand, if Black can achieve a breakthrough (...d6-d5), then suddenly wild tactical complications arise. However, understanding and learning this set-up is much easier than the sharp Sicilian variations (Najdorf, Dragon) where the lines are often long and forced, and analysis with engines is unavoidable. In the Hedgehog, in general, an inaccurate move does not lead to a quick catastrophe.

Studying the book, the reader can learn how important the small details are in this system. One of the Chessable users summarized it as follows: 'I am way more aware of how to develop my heavy pieces in the late opening phase of any closed/semi-closed position I might get.'

We hope our book will be very useful not only for club players but for professional players as well.

Laszlo Hazai,
Hanna Ivan-Gal,
Budapest, January 2023

Introduction

1.c4

This is the starting point of the English Opening. White starts his fight for the centre, not allowing the immediate 1...d5. He prepares, according to the Philidor rule, 2.♘c3.

1...c5

Black is playing for symmetry by fighting against 2.d4.

2.♘f3

Nevertheless, White still prepares for 3.d4 to take back with the knight on d4.

2...♘f6

Following the symmetry, Black develops the kingside knight and waits with the other knight. As we will see later, the flexibility of the queenside is of high importance.

3.d4

White takes over the centre.

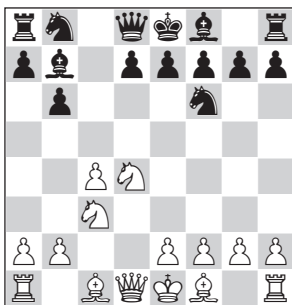
3...cxd4 4.♘xd4 b6

Black fianchettoes the bishop to fight against e2-e4.

5.♘c3

This is the natural place of the knight in the English Opening. White prepares 6.e4.

5...♗b7



By developing the bishop on the long diagonal, Black now controls the vital e4-square.

6.f3

White takes up the gauntlet; he wants to play 7.e4 by all means.

6...e6

Black opens the diagonal for his dark-squared bishop.

7.e4 d6



This is the typical Hedgehog pawn structure with the strong white central pawns on c4 and e4 versus Black's e6- and d6-pawns. In addition, in most cases Black will play ...a7-a6 as well, creating the tabiya position of the real Hedgehog.

8.♘e2

The white bishop belongs to e2; on d3, it would weaken the pressure along the d-file.

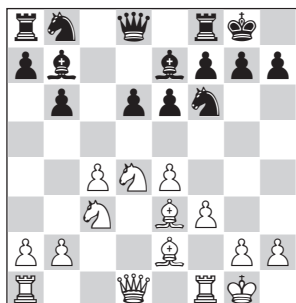
8...♘e7

Black's plan is to develop the bishop on e7, followed by ...0-0.

9.0-0 0-0

This is a quiet, positional system without any sharp kingside attacks, at least not in the early phase of the opening.

10.♘e3



This is the starting point of our analysis. The best place for the dark-squared bishop is on e3, controlling the two important g1-a7 and c1-h6 diagonals.

10...a6

This is the typical Hedgehog pawn structure. White has a strong pawn centre with the c4- and e4-pawns, and the black pawns are in 'defensive

mode' on a6, b6, d6 and e6. It looks rather passive at first sight, since only one knight is on the 6th rank, and the other black pieces have to be satisfied with the 7th and 8th ranks. However, the situation is much more complex than that. In the old dogmatic world, even the best players overestimated the importance of the space advantage. Only in the 1970s did young players such as Ljubojevic, Andersson, Psakhis, Ftacnik, Adorjan start to play this system with good results, finding new modern ideas of obtaining counterplay. Later, almost all the best players adopted it, like Kasparov, Karpov, Hübner, Portisch, Ribli and many others. Nowadays, many leading players use it with White or Black.

Knowledge of the Hedgehog is very important not only for fans of the English Opening, but also for those who play the Sicilian with White or Black. It may arise from the Sicilian Kan (Neo-Paulsen) via 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 d6, or the more sophisticated 6...♞c7 7.a3 b6 8.♙e3 ♙b7 9.f3 d6 move order. On 5.♙d3, 5...♙c5 6.♘b3 ♙e7 7.c4 d6 reaches the Hedgehog position. Another main line is 5...♘f6 6.0-0 ♞c7 7.♞e2 d6 8.c4. We can get a Hedgehog structure also from the Sicilian Taimanov (Paulsen) Variation after 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘b5 d6 6.c4, followed by ...a7-a6.

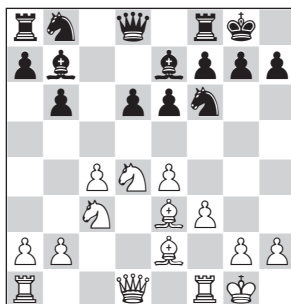
You may think that if Black plays 2...d6, aiming for the sharp Najdorf, Dragon, Sicilian Four Knights, or the Scheveningen, then he can avoid this structure. Not necessarily, because after 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.f3 e6 6.c4, we have again the same structure. Even after the Moscow Variation 3.♙b5+ ♙d7 4.♙xd7+ ♞xd7 5.c4 e6, we have the pawn structure again. There is another main line in the English where we can reach the Hedgehog, but with a bishop on g2: 1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.♘f3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.♙g2 ♙b7 6.0-0 ♙e7 7.d4 cxd4 8.♞xd4 d6.

So there are a lot of openings where knowledge of the Hedgehog is very important. It may even arise from the Queen's Indian and the King's Indian! Nevertheless, understanding the Hedgehog helps a player to improve his overall play, by learning about the manoeuvring battle, precise move orders, attack and counterattack, central breakthrough, wild tactical complications, and how to hold the position without ruining it. In this book, there are chapters on typical games and typical ideas that explain the complex character of this wonderful middlegame.

CHAPTER 1

The early 10...♞bd7

1.c4 c5 2.♢f3 ♢f6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♢xd4 b6 5.♣c3 ♤b7 6.f3 e6 7.e4 d6 8.♠e2
 ♠e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♠e3



10...♞bd7

10...a6 is more flexible, ruling out the a2-a4 plans and leading to the main line.

The knight is less flexible on c6 than on d7. On c6 it can be a target after ...♞c7 and ♜c1. There are lots of tactical threats based on the motif on the c-file. If 10...♞c6, 11.♞d2 and now:

A) 11...a6 transposes to 10...a6;

B) 11...♞e5. The target is the c4-pawn. 12.♞fd1 (the usual set-up for the rooks is on d1 and c1) 12...♞c8 (12...a6 transposes to 10...a6; 12...♞b8. The queen is fine here, but first Black has to develop his a8-rook to c8. Now the rook on a8 looks imprisoned: 13.♞ac1±. The queen on b8 disturbs the cooperation between the black rooks, and the rook on a8 cannot be mobilized) 13.♞db5 (one of the pawns will fall, but Black gets the c4-pawn) 13...♞xc4 14.♠xc4 ♜xc4 15.♢xd6 ♠xd6 16.♞xd6 ♞xd6 17.♞xd6±. The e4- and f3-pawns make the black minor pieces lame ducks. The diagonal of the b7-bishop is closed, and the f6-knight also bites on the wall of these pawns;

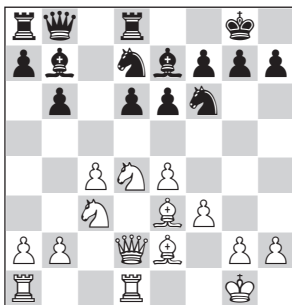
C) 11...♢xd4 12.♠xd4±. The centralized bishop dominates the board. In case of the typical ...d6-d5 push, White can close the centre by e4-e5;

D) 11...♞c8 12.♞fd1 a6 (12...♞e5 – 11...♞e5; now we have reached the typical Hedgehog pawn structure) 13.♞ac1 (this is the ideal set-up for the white rooks) 13...♞e5 – 10...a6.

11.a4

White starts his offensive on the queenside. The plan is a4-a5, creating weaknesses in the black pawn structure. This can only be effective in case of 10... ♖bd7; otherwise ... ♖c6 will fight for the vital b4- and a5-squares.

11. ♖d2 ♖b8 (11... a6 – 10... a6; weaker is 11... ♖e5 transposing to the 10... ♖c6 line. 11... ♖c8 is already a mistake: 12. ♖db5! punishes Black immediately, creating a double attack against the a7- and d6-pawns. 12... ♖e5 13. ♖fd1 – 10... ♖c6. The a8-rook belongs on c8, and after that comes the typical queen manoeuvre ... ♖d8-c7-b8). 12. ♖fd1 (the d6-pawn cannot be protected by a pawn, so it can be a long-lasting target) 12... ♖d8



analysis diagram

13. ♖e1 (leaving the d-file in case of a ...d6-d5 push) 13... ♖f8 (the knight is heading for g6, where it can control some dark squares) 14. ♖g3 (White wants to put more pressure on the d6-pawn) 14... ♖g6 15. ♖ac1 (White finishes his development, putting his last piece on the right square) 15... ♖d7 (the rook is usually

passive on d7; the knight belongs there) 16. ♖f1 (this is a well-known prophylactic move. The bishop on f1 is not vulnerable anymore) 16... ♖d8 (Black hardly improves his position with these back-and-forth moves) 17. ♖h1±. This is the other prophylactic move to bring the king to a safer place, Zhuravliov-Magerramov, St Petersburg 1992.

11...a6

A) 11... ♖c8 forgets about the weakness of the a7-pawn: 12. ♖db5±, with a double attack, winning a pawn. The Hedgehog set-up is not complete without ...a7-a6. 12... ♖e5 13. ♖xa7 ♖xc4 14. ♖xc8 ♖xe3 15. ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 16. ♖d4 ♖xf1 17. ♖xf1±. White has good chances to create a remote passed pawn on the queenside;

B) 11... ♖c5 runs into b2-b4, winning two extra tempi for White: 12. b4! ♖cd7 13. a5! bxa5 14. ♖xa5 (White has to take back on a5 with a piece, keeping the flexibility of the b4- and c4- pawns) 14...d5 (this is the typical counterblow in the centre, as the b4-pawn is vulnerable) 15. c5±. The protected passed pawn on c5 is very strong, and the threat is c5-c6, with a fork;

C) 11...a5. Black closes the queenside and his knight on c5 can be a strong blockading piece. On the other hand, this move irreversibly weakens the b5-square: 12. ♖db5 (White now has a wonderful knight on b5 that attacks the weak d6-pawn) 12... ♖b8 (12... ♖c5 13. ♖e1!±/ ♖d1, and the

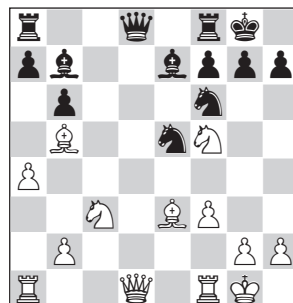
d6-pawn is in a big trouble, as the b5-knight is too dangerous)
 13.b3 (White wants to bring his rook to the d-file via the second rank) 13...♖d8 (overprotecting the d6-pawn) 14.♙a2 14...♞c5 (the black knight has arrived at the ideal blockading square) 15.♗d2±. White's next plan is ♜c2/♗fd1/♙f4 to put a lot of pressure on the d6-target;

D) 11...♞e5. Black runs into the foray f3-f4. The set-up with 10.f3 is rather positional and White's chances lay on the queenside. However, in some cases he can change the course of the game with the f3-f4 advance on the kingside: 12.f4 ♞c6 (12...♞ed7 13.♙f3 (the bishop on f3 takes an optimal position) 13...♜c7 14.♗c1 ♗ac8 15.f5 (if Black cannot protect the e6-pawn with a piece, his pawn structure becomes weak and vulnerable) 15...e5 16.♞d5 ♙xd5 17.cxd5+-. The white knight jumps to c6 and Black has no chance to come out of passivity) 13.♞xc6 ♙xc6 14.♜c2±. White has opened a wide front, so he already has chances in the centre and on the kingside;

E) 11...♙e8 prepares the central push ...d6-d5, opening the e-file for the rook. 12.a5 bxa5 13.♞b3 a4 (fighting against ♞xa5) 14.♞xa4 d5 (the typical central breakthrough has arisen) 15.exd5 exd5 16.c5±. If White can blockade the crucial d4-square, the b7-bishop and the f6-knight remain passive;

F) The immediate freeing move 11...d5 is less effective, if White has

a strong knight jump to f5: 12.exd5 exd5 13.♞f5! (as a rule, the knight is wonderful on f5!) 13...dxc4 14.♙xc4 ♞e5 (Black is attacking the bishop by centralizing his knight) 15.♙b5 (White had to make a decision: which diagonal to give up? From b5, the bishop controls the d3-square and the a4-e8 diagonal)



analysis diagram

15...♞g6 (15...♙c5 doesn't allow White to grab the bishop pair, but at the same time ruins the pawn structure on the queenside: 16.♙xc5 bxc5 17.♗e1±. White has a better pawn structure on the queenside because of the weak a7- and c5-pawns. The white pieces are more active; the e5-knight has to leave the centre) 16.♜xd8 (White wants to liquidate to an endgame, where he obtains the bishop pair) 16...♗fxd8 (16...♙xd8 (Black wants to keep his bishop alive) 17.♗fd1±. The white pieces dominate the board) 17.♞xe7+ (exchanging the dark-squared bishop for the knight is a big achievement for White. The b7-bishop remains fairly passive, as it has no good squares on the long diagonal) 17...♞xe7 18.♙f2

(White has the bishop pair in an open position with the pawns 3 vs 3 on the kingside and 2 vs 2 on the queenside. Without central pawns, the bishops can find a lot of open diagonals) 18... ♘fd5 19. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 20. ♖ac1±. White has a small, but long-lasting advantage in the endgame.

12.a5!



White destroys the flexible Hedgehog structure, and the a6-pawn becomes a weakness on the semi-open a-file.

12...bxa5

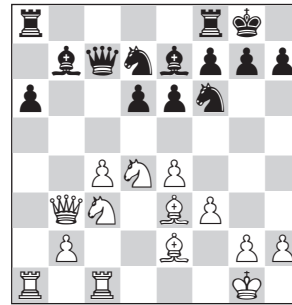
A) 12...d5 is again strongly met by the previous motif of ♘f5! 13.cxd5 exd5 14. ♘f5! dxe4 (14...bxa5 15.exd5±. White has a virtual pawn majority, and his d5-passed pawn is very strong) 15.axb6 (it is far from easy to eliminate this dangerous passed pawn) 15... ♘c5 16. ♘xc5 ♘xc5 17. ♗d6±. The white pieces are more active and the remote passed pawn on b6 gives White good prospects in the endgame;

B) 12...♖e8. There is a big fight on the queenside, and Black has no time for preparatory moves to create a counterattack in the

centre: 13.axb6 ♘xb6 14. ♘b3 (the knight will be ideally posted on a5) 14... ♗c7 15. ♘a5 ♘c8 (Black wants to save his bishop, but by leaving the long diagonal it gets into a miserable position) 16.b4 (now the knight on b6 is vulnerable and it doesn't do anything useful) 16... ♘bd7 (Adla-Cordova, Spain tt 2017) 17. ♗d2±/♖fc1, preparing the breakthrough on the queenside by b4-b5 or c4-c5;

C) 12... ♗c7 13.axb6 ♘xb6 (the knight is not well-placed here and can easily be attacked) 14. ♗b3

C1) 14... ♘bd7 15. ♖fc1



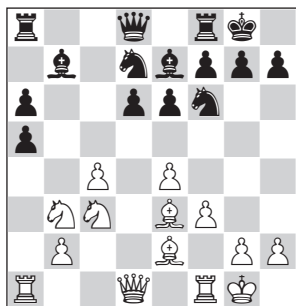
analysis diagram

C11) 15... ♗h8. Black wants to follow the famous Fischer plan with ...♖g8 and ...g7-g5. 16. ♗a2 (clearing the way for b2-b4) 16... ♖g8 17.b4 g5 (after 17... ♗b8 18. ♘a4, White has a big advantage on the queenside) 18. ♗b2 (the queen can be very effective on the long diagonal) 18... g4 19.f4±, and Black failed to open the g-file, so his strategy proved to be pointless;

C12) After 15... ♖fe8, retreating the queen to d1 is a good strategy, as it is rather vulnerable on b3: 16. ♗d1±;

C13) 15...♖fc8 (16.♗d1±. White can easily protect his c4-pawn by b2-b3, but in the long run he has to prepare b2-b4, and after that, b4-b5 or c4-c5.

C2) 14...♟fd7 15.♖fc1 (the white rooks belong on the queenside) 15...♖fc8 16.♗d1±. White has a better pawn structure, and the b6-knight cannot find its best place. **13.♟b3**



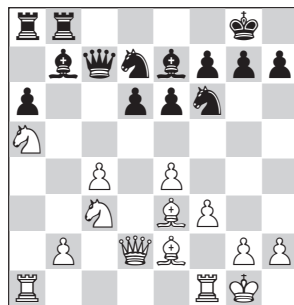
The knight can be very useful on a5, attacking the b7-bishop and blocking the weak a6-pawn.

13...♖b8

Preparing the retreat of the bishop to a8. Controlling the semi-open b-file is of high importance since White's major plan is b2-b4.

A) After 13...♗c7, the b7-bishop gets into trouble: 14.♟xa5 ♖fb8 (Black can save the bishop by 14...♟c8, but he has to pay a heavy price. It is very passive on c8, disturbing the connection between the rooks. 15.♗d2 (meanwhile the white rooks are now connected) 15...♖b8 16.♖fc1 ♟c5, running into the following tactical blow: 17.b4! ♟b7 (Likavsky-Dudukovic,

Belgrade 2006; 17...♖xb4 18.♟b5+—, winning the exchange) 18.♟d5! (a beautiful positional piece sacrifice!) 18...exd5 19.cxd5 ♗d7 20.♟c6 ♖a8 21.♖xa6 ♖xa6 22.♟xa6+—. White has only two pawns for the piece, but the black army is completely disorganized!) 15.♗d2



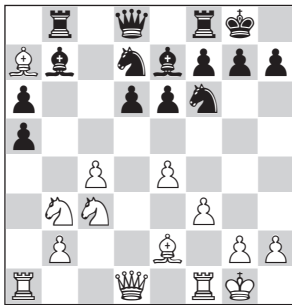
analysis diagram

15...♟c8 (saving the bishop's life, but putting it in prison; 15...♟c6 (opening the b-file for the rook, but the bishop becomes exposed) 16.♖fc1 ♟c5 (16...♟f8? is usually just a waste of time: 17.♟d5!. This typical tactical blow, using the pin on the c-file, was overlooked by many strong players. 17...♗c8 (17...exd5 18.cxd5+—) 18.b4 ♟b7 (Schlosser-Lappalainen, Stockholm 2003/04) 19.♟xf6+ ♟xf6 20.c5+—. White now creates a powerful passed pawn on the c-file) 17.b4 ♖xb4 18.♟b5±. White is winning the exchange) 16.♖fc1 ♟c5 17.b4 ♖xb4 18.♟b5! (by this small combination, White wins the exchange; the b4-rook is now trapped) 18...axb5 19.♗xb4 (Black can only get one pawn for the exchange) 19...bxc4 20.♟xc4+— Jo.Horvath-Schäfer, Böblingen 2001;

B) 13...a4, fighting against ♖xa5. 14. ♖xa4 h5. This is the so-called Ljubojevic plan. Black wants to sacrifice his h-pawn via ...h5-h4-h3. This would weaken the white king's defence, and later ...d6-d5 may be played to activate the black pieces and open the long diagonal for the light-squared bishop. 15. ♖f2±, defending against the advance ...h5-h4.

14. ♖xa5

14. ♖a7.

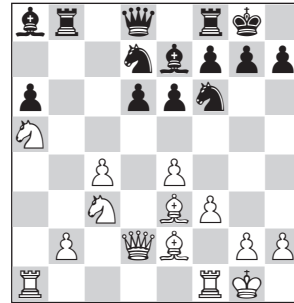


analysis diagram

This subtle intermediate move deserves serious attention. The rook has to leave the important b-file, and the bishop can retreat to d4 or f2, improving the situation a bit. 14... ♖c8 (14... ♖a8 15. ♖f2 (15. ♖e3 would be a repetition of moves. White can start a psychological war. This may work very well against a much higher rated opponent, but if Black wants to win, he has to take a bigger risk) 15...a4 (15... ♖b8 16. ♖xa5 ♖a8 – 14... ♖c8) 16. ♖xa4 ♖c7 17. ♖d2±/ ♖fc1/ ♖a5) 15. ♖xa5 ♖a8 16. ♖f2 ♖b8 (16... ♖c7 17. ♖d2 ♖fd8 (Black wants to prepare the ...d6-d5 push) 18. ♖fc1±, and White will not

allow this) 17. ♖d2±, preparing the advance on the queenside by ♖a4/b2-b4.

14... ♖a8 15. ♖d2



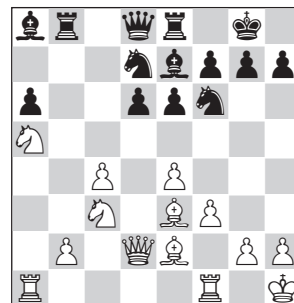
Protecting the b2-pawn and indirectly preparing the b2-b4 push.

15...h5

A) 15...d5? is now premature: 16. cxd5 exd5 17. exd5 ♖c5 18. ♖xc5 ♖xc5 19. ♖fd1!±, overprotecting the extra pawn on d5;

B) 15... ♖c5?! runs into White's main threat of b2-b4: 16. ♖fb1! (the big threat is now b2-b4, and the knight has to go backwards) 16... ♖b4 17. b3!±, and the b4-rook will be captured or chased away;

C) 15... ♖e8 16. ♖h1.



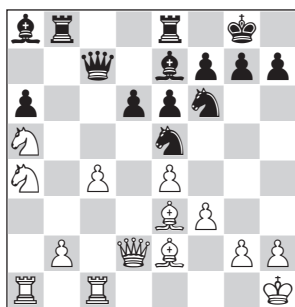
analysis diagram

This is a very important prophylactic move that avoids

the possible threats on the g1-a7 diagonal.

C1) 16...♙f8. Now the bishop is not disturbing the rook on the e-file anymore, and the threat of ...d6-d5 becomes more real. However, White has time to prepare against this push. 17.♙a7 (the rook has to leave the important b-file) 17...♖c8 18.♙d4 ♖c7 (18...d5? 19.cxd5 exd5 20.♙xa6+—, and the rook is hanging on c8) 19.b4 d5 (Black finally decides to blow up White's mighty pawn centre) 20.c5 (the knight on a5 and the pawns on b4 and c5 give White an enormous edge on the queenside. On the other hand, Black now takes over in the centre. Who comes first?) 20...dxe4 21.♗xe4 ♗xe4 (21...♙xe4 22.fxe4 ♗xe4 23.♙e1±/♙xa6, winning back the pawn, and the connected passed pawns will decide the battle) 22.fxe4 ♙xe4 23.♙xa6± Black's central pawns are no match for the b4- and c5-pawns;

C2) 16...♖c7 17.♖fc1 ♗e5 18.♗a4.

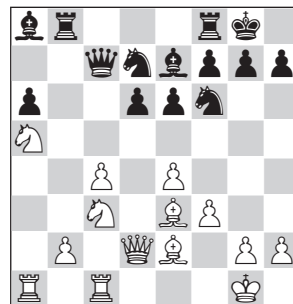


analysis diagram

Both knights are on the edge of the board. They work very well, but White has to be alert against any surprises in the centre. 18...

h5 (18...♖d8. The queen simply cannot find its place. 19.♙a7 (the rook has no squares on the b-file) 19...♗xe4 (Black has a lot of hidden tactical resources in petto; 19...♖c8 20.♙b6 ♖d7 21.♙d4±. The well centralized bishop on d4 fights against ...d6-d5, and 22.♗b6 is a big threat) 20.fxe4 ♙g5 21.♖e1 ♙xc1 22.♙xb8 ♙e3 (it seems that the b8-bishop is trapped...) 23.♖a3 ♙d4 24.♖d2 (however, Black cannot hold his bishop on the g1-a7 diagonal anymore) 24...♙xb2 25.♖b3±, protecting his own bishop and attacking the opponent's) 19.b4 h4 (the battering ram wants to break the gate) 20.b5 h3 (there is an exciting pawn race; who comes first?) 21.gxh3 axb5 22.cxb5 ♖d8 23.b6±. White's advantage on the queenside outweighs Black's counterchances on the other flank;

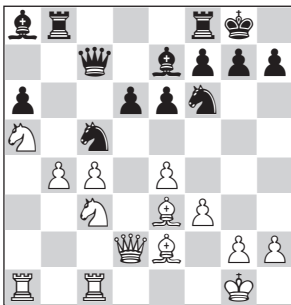
D) 15...♖c7. As we'll see later, the queen will be rather unsafe on the c-file. 16.♖fc1! (this is the right square for the rook, as there are a lot of tactical motifs when the c-file is opened)



analysis diagram

D1) 16... ♖fd8?. By taking away the d8-square from the queen, Black creates a nice tactical possibility for his opponent. 17. ♖d5! (opening the c-file with great effect!) 17... exd5 18. cxd5, and the queen cannot run away: 18... ♖c5 19. b4 (winning back the sacrificed piece) 19... ♖fd7 (19... ♖cxe4 20. fxe4 ♖d7 21. ♖c6±, and the fantastic c6-knight leaves Black in real trouble, Pogorelov-Petukhov, Voronezh 1999; 19... ♖b6 20. bxc5 dxc5 21. ♖c4 21... ♖b4 22. ♖xa6+–. White has a wonderful pawn centre with the d5- and e4-pawns and the material advantage, Gy.Horvath-Lizak, Zalakaros 2007) 20. bxc5 ♖xc5 21. ♖xa6 22. ♖d4±. White has won a pawn, and the a8-bishop is completely out of play, Gulko-Shapiro, Stratton Mountain 1999;

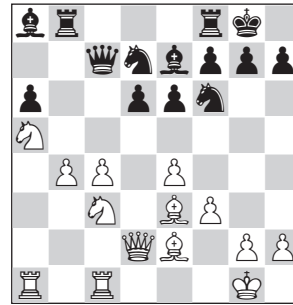
D2) 16... ♖c5? runs into the typical attacking move 17.b4.



analysis diagram

17... ♖cd7 (17... ♖xb4 18. ♖b5 axb5 19. ♖xb4 bxc4 20. ♖xc4. White has won the exchange, and the weak d6-pawn is not adequate compensation. 20... ♖fd7 (20... ♖b8 21. ♖a5. White is an exchange up,

so he is happy to exchange pieces, especially the queens. 21... ♖xa5 22. ♖xa5+–. White is an exchange up for only one pawn, and his pieces are much more active, Jo.Horvath-Jurek, Aschach 2017) 21. ♖a5 (the same idea as before; exchanging queens is favourable for White) 21... ♖xa5 22. ♖xa5 f5 (Black is seeking counterplay on the kingside) 23. exf5 ♖xf5 24. ♖b3+–. Black has only one pawn for the exchange, and this is not enough. The white rooks will penetrate soon, Ibragimov-Ermenkov, Chania 1993)



position after 17... ♖cd7

18. ♖d5! (this beautiful positional piece sacrifice is a well-known motif here) 18... exd5 (18... ♖d8 19. ♖xe7+ ♖xe7. White has the bishop pair, which gives him the better chances. 20. ♖f4 (provoking a weakening move in Black's pawn structure) 20... e5 (now the black pawns lose their flexibility in the centre) 21. ♖e3 h6 (against a possible ♖g5) 22. ♖d1 ♖e8 23. c5, and White is winning because of the pin on the d-file, Rausis-Freckmann, Baden-Baden 1993) 19. cxd5 ♖d8 20. ♖c6 ♖e8 21. ♖xa6±. White has

only two pawns for the piece, but Black's fate is sealed;

D3) 16...♖bd8. The rook is much worse here than on b8. 17.b4 d5 (one has to reckon with this freeing move in every position in the Hedgehog) 18.cxd5 ♙xb4 19.dxe6 fxe6 20.♘d1! (this is an effective way to solve the problem of the pin. Now the black queen is counterattacked, and the a5-knight is well-protected) 20...♙b8 21.♙a2±. Both the a6- and e6-pawns are hanging, and there is a nasty threat of ♜cb1, pinning the b4-bishop, Middelburg-Lemmers, Groningen 1999;

D4) 16...♘b6. The knight is misplaced here. 17.b4! (Black has closed the b-file with his unfortunate knight move, so White takes the opportunity to advance his b-pawn. The b4- and c4-pawns are very flexible. Sometimes, c4-c5 or b4-b5 may be played, creating a dangerous remote passed pawn) 17...♞fd8 18.b5! (this time the b-pawn advances, forcing Black to open the c-file against his own queen) 18...axb5 19.cxb5±, creating a strong remote passed pawn;

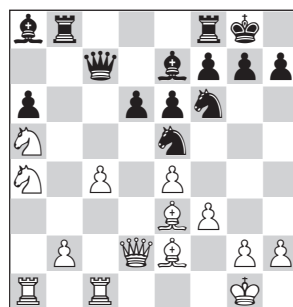
D5) 16...♞bc8 (Leventic-Bozinovic, Croatia tt 2005) 17.♙h1 (since Black has no real threats, White uses the time to improve his position. The king leaves the dangerous g1-a7 diagonal) 17...♙b8 18.b4±, and White has created the best pawn formation with the b4- and c4-pawns;

D6) 16...♙d8 just loses two tempi for nothing: 17.♙h1±. White uses the extra tempi to improve his

king's position, leaving the g1-a7 diagonal in any case;

D7) 16...h5 is one of the best plans for Black, but here it is White who comes first on the queenside: 17.b4! ♘e5 (17...h4? allows the typical knight sacrifice again! 18.♘d5! (we have already seen this well-known blow, but it still gives us pleasure!) 18...exd5 19.cxd5 ♙d8 20.♘c6! (this is the point, and now White gets back some material) 20...♙xc6 (20...♙e8 21.♞xa6 ♜c8 22.♞a7±. White has only two pawns for the sacrificed piece, but the black pieces are extremely passive) 21.dxc6±, and White is winning back the piece with interest) 18.b5!, creating a strong passed pawn on b5, and forcing Black to open the c-file. 18...axb5 19.cxb5±. White has an indisputable advantage on the queenside;

D8) 16...♘e5 17.♘a4.



analysis diagram

In this special variation, the knights on the edge of the board look rather effective, as they help the breakthrough b2-b4-b5 or c4-c5.

D81) 17...♙xe4 is an incorrect sacrifice with the idea of making