

# Yearbook

NEW  IN CHESS 138

## Contributing Authors

Adams • Bosch • Dubov • Erwich • Flear • Fogarasi • Giri • Gledura • Gupta  
Hazai • Ikonnikov • Ilczuk • Jones • Krykun • Kuljasevic • l'Ami • Lukacs • Odegov  
Olthof • Panczyk • Ponomariov • Ris • Rodi • Saric • Schut • Shankland • Sokolov  
Stohl • K.Szabo • Timman • Tzermiadianos • J.van Foreest • Vilela • Warmerdam

***CHESS OPENING NEWS***

**Edited by Jan Timman**

# From the editor



## A big boost

In an earlier Editorial last year I wrote that the lockdown might have a negative effect on the development of young players like Alireza Firouzja and Jorden van Foreest. The results of the recent Tata Steel Tournament have proved me wrong; they both did very well. I take this opportunity to congratulate Jorden with his resounding success which will be a big boost for Dutch chess.

Van Foreest came to Wijk aan Zee extremely well prepared. A good example is his last-round game against Nils Grandelius when he was in a must-win situation. We have the game with his own comments, in the Survey by René Olthof.

Another sensation in Wijk aan Zee was Andrey Esipenko's victory over Magnus Carlsen. In fact this was just another example of how important deep opening preparation is these days. Esipenko was probably winning as early as move 14; a rare case where the World Champion was totally outprepared. The Survey is by Krisztian Szabo.

We also feature a sensation from the end of last year: Daniil Dubov's last-round victory over Sergey Karjakin in the Russian Championship. Everyone admired Dubov's queen sacrifice, but it was his provocative opening play with white that preceded the brilliant final. I had to think about the exhibition game Oleg Skvortsov played against Anand in Zürich four years ago, that I witnessed live. In that game, which is also featured in Yuriy Krykun's Survey, White also played the daring move 6.b4. It doesn't get the approval of the computer, but Black has to know exactly what he is doing.

**Jan Timman**

# Opening Highlights



## Daniil Dubov

The Russian keeps featuring on these pages, but we just had to show you what he has been up to now. Sergey Karjakin dominated the Russian Superfinal, one of very few top OTB events in 2020, until in the final round Dubov launched a sensational attack against him with **the obscure idea 5.d4 exd4 6.b4 in the Giuoco Piano**. This revived Italian weapon has already found followers, as you will see in (fresh IM!) Yuriy Krykun's Survey on page 144 which features Dubov's analysis of this game.

## Wesley So

Wesley So may be the biggest threat to Magnus Carlsen's online hegemony. His opening choices can be as tricky as the World Champion's – in the Speed Chess event he beat Magnus with the surprising 9. ♖f3 in the 7. ♘d5 Sveshnikov (see Jeroen Bosch's Survey on page 60) and he **held his own in a prickly old Tarrasch line** with black to win the Skilling Open. There, So introduced a subtle, modest, 'soft' weapon, as Viacheslav Ikonnikov explains in his Survey on page 189.



## Andrey Esipenko

The 18-year-old from Russia already has a massive amount of high-level experience. This showed at the just recently completed Tata Steel Tournament, where Esipenko put in a wonderfully mature performance, culminating in a sensational triumph over World Champion Magnus Carlsen. The new warrior with the disarming smile pulled this off with **the carefully prepared attack with ♗e2, ♗e3 and g2-g4 against the Scheveningen** which is the subject of Krisztian Szabo's Survey on page 55.

## Sam Shankland

The Caro-Kann is booming! Ruslan Ponomariov wrote a Survey on the latest craze, 2. ♘f3 and 3.d3 and the next queenless middlegame (page 94). Also **in the Exchange Variation** Black has found a way to **spice things up with the sharp move 7...e5!?** in one of the main branches. Luis Rodi's Survey on page 108 features an analysis by former American champion Sam Shankland of his game with Awonder Liang, where he played a creative antidote and soon had his youthful opponent on the ropes.



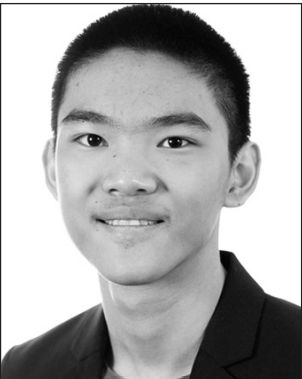


### Jorden van Foreest

The 21-year-old Dutchman proved that miracles are still possible in chess by sensationally winning the Tata Steel Tournament. Van Foreest's play was hugely flexible and creative, in active defence and, especially, in his openings. On the final day, against Nils Grandelius, he delivered with **a fantastic concept in the Najdorf with 6. ♖d3**, cooked up with his second Max Warmerdam (see below). René Olthof tells you all in his Survey from page 45 which features Jorden's own analysis.

### Jan-Krzysztof Duda

The Polish top GM, who put an end to Magnus Carlsen's 125-game non-losing streak in Stavanger, will never shun sharp opening variations. When in that same Norway Chess tournament, Aryan Tari ventured upon **a dubious-looking but dangerous line in the Deferred Jaenisch of the Ruy Lopez**, Duda went for a principled piece sacrifice and won quickly. Of course there is more to this line, and Robert Ris investigates from page 134.



### Jeffery Xiong

Blitz games have always offered good opportunities to sharpen up one's opening repertoire. In 2020 this was even more so than ever. From Jeffery Xiong's blitz games we can learn a lot about **how to cramp Black's style in the Exchange Slav**, as Tibor Fogarasi argues in his Survey on page 173. Even with fast time controls, the 20-year-old American managed to get his opponents into trouble with powerful strategic play on both wings, the way Alekhine liked to do it.



### Max Warmerdam

The 20-year-old Dutchman managed to earn the grandmaster title during the pandemic! He made two norms in two events held in the Italian town of Bassano Del Grappa. Next, he helped Jorden van Foreest as a second in Wijk aan Zee, concocting some great opening surprises like a brilliant resource for Black against MVL in Carlsen's Neo-Møller. In Bassano he introduced **an astonishing novelty on move 6 in the McCutcheon French!** See the Forum Section for both these inventions.



# Your Variations

## Trends & Opinions

### Forum

<b>GAMBIT</b>	Sicilian Defence . . . . .	Rossolimo Variation 3. ♖b5 . . . . .	Editorial team . . . . .	12
<b>HOT!</b>	Ruy Lopez . . . . .	Neo-Møller 5... ♙c5 . . . . .	Erwich . . . . .	13
	Ruy Lopez . . . . .	Berlin Defence 4.d3 . . . . .	Schut . . . . .	15
<b>SOS</b>	French Defence . . . . .	McCutcheon Variation 6. ♙f4 . . . . .	Warmerdam . . . . .	16
	Réti Opening . . . . .	Reversed Benoni 4...d4 . . . . .	Odegov . . . . .	18
	Grünfeld Indian Defence . . . . .	Exchange Variation 5. ♙d2 . . . . .	Schut . . . . .	20
<b>SOS</b>	Sicilian Defence . . . . .	Early Divergences 3. ♙c4 . . . . .	Boel . . . . .	22
<b>HOT!</b>	Sicilian Defence . . . . .	Najdorf Poisoned Pawn 7... ♖b6 . . . . .	Olthof . . . . .	24
	<b>From Our Own Correspondent by Erwin l'Ami . . . . .</b>			<b>27</b>

## Surveys

### 1.e4 openings

	Sicilian Defence . . . . .	Najdorf Variation 6.f4 . . . . .	Gupta . . . . .	40
<b>SOS</b>	Sicilian Defence . . . . .	Najdorf Variation 6. ♖d3 . . . . .	Olthof . . . . .	45
	Sicilian Defence . . . . .	Scheveningen Variation 6. ♙e2 a6 . . . . .	Szabo . . . . .	55
	Sicilian Defence . . . . .	Sveshnikov Variation 7. ♘d5 . . . . .	Bosch . . . . .	60
	King's Fianchetto . . . . .	4. ♙e3 Variation . . . . .	Vilela . . . . .	68
<b>GAMBIT</b>	French Defence . . . . .	Advance Variation 6. ♙d3 . . . . .	Jones . . . . .	78
	French Defence . . . . .	Tarrasch Variation 3... ♗f6 . . . . .	Tzermiadianos . . . . .	87
<b>SOS</b>	Caro-Kann Defence . . . . .	Early Divergences 2. ♗f3 . . . . .	Ponomariov . . . . .	94
<b>GAMBIT</b>	Caro-Kann Defence . . . . .	Fantasy Variation 3.f3 . . . . .	Ilczuk and Panczyk . . . . .	101
	Caro-Kann Defence . . . . .	Exchange Variation 4. ♙d3 . . . . .	Rodi . . . . .	108
	Caro-Kann Defence . . . . .	Advance Variation 4. ♗c3 . . . . .	Stohl . . . . .	118
	Ruy Lopez . . . . .	Berlin Defence 4.d3 . . . . .	Saric . . . . .	127
<b>SOS</b>	Ruy Lopez . . . . .	Early Divergences 4...f5 . . . . .	Ris . . . . .	134
<b>GAMBIT</b>	Italian Game . . . . .	Giuoco Piano 6.b4 . . . . .	Krykun . . . . .	144
<b>GAMBIT</b>	King's Pawn Openings . . . . .	Scotch Gambit 5.e5 . . . . .	Kuljasevic . . . . .	153

## 1.d4 openings

<b>HOT!</b>	Queen's Gambit Declined. . Early Divergences 4...a6/3...a6. . . . . Olthof . . . . .	163
	Slav Defence. . . . . Exchange Variation 6. ♗f4 a6 . . . . . Fogarasi. . . . .	173
	Slav Defence. . . . . Meran Variation 5.b3 . . . . . Sokolov. . . . .	180
	Tarrasch Defence. . . . . Semi-Tarrasch 4. ♗f3 c5 . . . . . Ikonnikov. . . . .	189
	Queen's Gambit Accepted. . Central Variation 3.e4. . . . . Flear. . . . .	196
	Nimzo-Indian Defence . . Rubinstein Variation 5. ♗d2 . . . . . Ikonnikov. . . . .	206
	Grünfeld Indian Defence. . Exchange Variation 7. ♗c4 . . . . . Gledura . . . . .	211

## Others

	English Opening . . . . . Symmetrical Variation 3.g3 d5 . . . . . Timman. . . . .	217
<b>GAMBIT</b>	Réti Opening . . . . . Réti Gambit 4...dxc4 . . . . . Adams . . . . .	224
	Réti Opening . . . . . Early Divergences . . . . . Lukacs and Hazai . . . . .	230

## Views

<b>Reviews by Glenn Flear . . . . .</b>	<b>238</b>
Jouez la Française Vol. 1 by Manuel Apicella. . . . .	238
Carlsen's Neo-Møller by Ioannis Simeonidis. . . . .	240
The Carlsen Variation by Carsten Hansen . . . . .	242
The Exhilarating Elephant Gambit by Jakob Aabling Thomsen & Michael Agermose Jensen . . . . .	244
<b>Solutions to Exercises . . . . .</b>	<b>246</b>

**HOT!** = a trendy line or an important discovery

**SOS** = an early deviation

**GAMBIT** = a pawn sacrifice in the opening

## Let's play!

The FORUM is a platform for discussion of developments in chess opening theory in general and particularly in variations discussed in previous Yearbook issues.

Contributions to these pages should be sent to: [editors@newinchess.com](mailto:editors@newinchess.com)

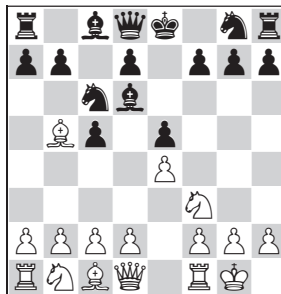
### And the winner is...

by the Editorial team

SI 31.1 (B30)

YB 137

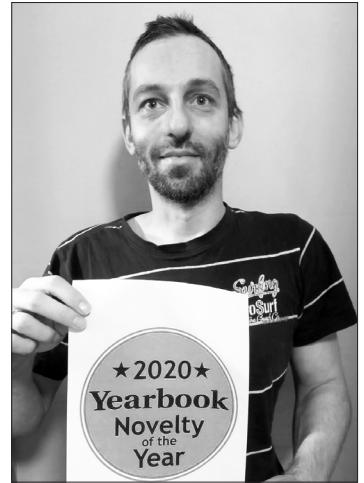
... Alexander Grischuk!  
After an exciting neck-and-neck race with Dutch rising star Jorden van Foreest the Russian super-GM won the coveted prize on the last day. That was on 31 January – the day Van Foreest beat Anish Giri in the play-off to win the Tata Steel Chess Tournament. Some consolation for the Dutchman at least!  
Grischuk's 5.d4 against Magnus Carlsen's original anti-Rossolimo approach with 4...♗d6 poses Black some tough questions.



### 5.d4!?

Please read Milos Pavlovic' Survey in Yearbook 137 (page 63) to find out more about this crazy line!

By the way, Grischuk said 5.d4 had been the first line of his engine, but it's still something else to try this out against the World Champion!



Alexander Grischuk

Magnus managed to salvage the draw at the Chessable Masters rapid where the Russian Candidate confronted him with his invention, but still 145 of the 611 voters (among whom several GMs and IMs and also former Correspondence World Champion Gert Timmerman) found 5.d4 dangerous and interesting enough to win the contest. Grischuk was leading all the way, but in the final few days of January, perhaps inspired by Van Foreest's imaginative opening play throughout the Tata Steel event, more votes kept coming in for the Dutchman and he was even in the lead at some point. However, the Russian still came out on top after a final spurt. Van Foreest ended on 141 votes. His nominated



novelty was 9.h4 in the Najdorf with 6.♖g1, with the amazing point 11.♖d1!!, which you can read about in Tibor Fogarasi's Survey in Yearbook 134 (page 55) and also Jeroen Bosch' Survey in Yearbook 137 (page 41).

Quite close on Jorden's heels (as it was in Wijk aan Zee!) was World No. 2 Fabiano Caruana with his audacious pawn thrust 9...e5 in the Krause Slav, against Ding Liren in a crucial game of the Candidates Tournament in Yekaterinburg which marked the watershed between non-Covid and Covid times in chess. With his novelty, Caruana, who won our prize in the years 2014 and 2018, was always only 10-15 votes behind – he ended on 129 votes. See Kaido Külaots' FORUM item in Yearbook 135 (page 12) for more on this. Yu Yangyi came fourth with his novelty 8.c6 against Wesley So in the Ragozin, which was a great contribution to China winning the Online Nations Cup (still 89 votes). The Chinese top GM wrote a Survey about this himself in Yearbook 136 (page 168). It was, by the way, the only novelty of this year's list that yielded the inventor a full point.

World Champion Magnus Carlsen (and NOTY winner in 2016) came fifth this time with the new concept of 8.♗c3 and 9.d4 in the Reversed Sicilian he put on the screen against Hikaru Nakamura in the Carlsen Tour Final Online rapid. Two novelties, in fact, but that didn't help the Norwegian this time (58 votes). So, Alexander Grischuk got sent the 350 euro prize for the Novelty of the Year 2020.

The others (excepting Yu Yangyi) neatly followed the ranking list of Tata Steel, which makes you wonder – if Grischuk had participated in Wijk aan Zee...??

For the record: there were 562 valid votes. No less than 44 votes were invalid this time, and 10 came too late – sending us 5 votes on 5 candidates really doesn't put you in a win-win but rather in a lose-lose situation, and 31 January really was deadline day. The raffle was won by George Pelekis – a free year's subscription to the Yearbook (four issues) goes to him.

---

### An astonishing idea in the Neo-Møller

by Frank Erwich

RL 12.5 (C78)

---

Jorden van Foreest, winner of the 83rd edition of the Tata Steel Chess Tournament, popped up with some remarkable opening ideas in Wijk aan Zee – you will find several instances already in this Yearbook. One of these was the following.

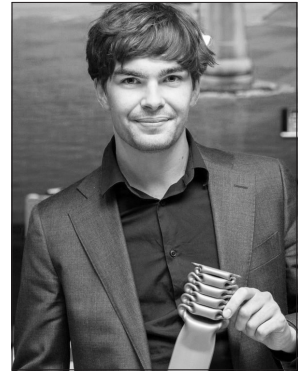
### Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

#### Jorden van Foreest

Wijk aan Zee 2021 (8)

**1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♗f6**

One round earlier against Tari, Jorden went for 4...♗c5 and, like in the game against MVL, he also opted for a set-up with the bishop on a7, but with the difference that his knight jumped to e7 instead of f6: 5.0-0 ♗ge7 6.c3 (6.♗xe5 ♗xe5 7.d4 is an interesting option as well, after which Jorden had probably planned 7...b5 8.♗b3 ♗xd4 9.♗xd4 d6 10.f4 c5) 6...♗a7 7.d4 ♗g6



Jorden van Foreest

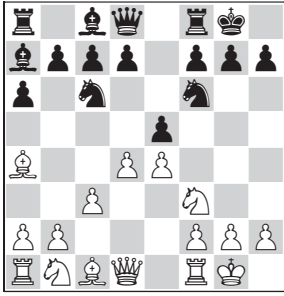
8.♗g5 f6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.d5 (10.♗e1 1-0 (60) Dominguez Perez-Nabaty, Netanya 2019) 10...♗ce7N (10...♗b8? (Paravyan-Krysa, Gibraltar 2020) and here, compared to the game, d5-d6 is a good idea since after 11.d6! cxd6?! 12.♗xa7 ♗xa7 13.♗xd6 Black's knight is hanging and so he has to spend a tempo on saving it. Moreover, in the game, the knight on e7 doesn't seem to be bad at all, as it supported the break ...f6-f5. 13...♗c6 14.c4±) 11.♗xa7 ♗xa7 12.d6 cxd6 13.♗xd6 b5! 14.♗b3+ ♗h8 15.a4 ♗b7 16.axb5 ♗b6 17.♗d1 axb5 (17...f5!?) 18.♗bd2 ♗b7 19.c4 f5 20.♗c2? fxe4+ 0-1 (32) Tari-J.van Foreest.

5.c3 was Giri's improvement on Tari's play in the second game of the playoff between Giri and Van Foreest. In this case Black has no time to go for a set-up with a bishop on a7 combined with a knight on e7: 5...♗ge7 6.d4 exd4 7.cxd4 ♗b4+ 8.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 9.♗xd2 d5 10.exd5 ♗xd5 11.♗xc6+ bxc6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♗c3N± ½-½ (37) Giri-J.van Foreest, blitz.

However, after 5.c3, it seems Black can still transpose to the main game. Both 5...♗f6 6.d4 ♗a7 7.0-0 0-0 and 5...♗a7 6.d4 ♗f6 7.0-0 0-0 lead to MVL-J.van Foreest.



5.0-0 ♖c5 6.c3 0-0 7.d4 ♗a7



This set-up is a speciality of GM Tamir Nabaty and regained interest when Carlsen went for this against Karjakin in Stavanger, 2018. Ioannis Simeonidis, the inventor of the system 1.e4 c5 2.♗c3 d6 3.d4, recently wrote a book about it and renamed this line Carlsen's Neo-Møller (see also Flear's review in the back of this Yearbook).

### 8. ♗g5

In three previous games, MVL, like Karjakin, had opted for 8.dxe5. The endgame after 8...♗xe4 9.♖d5 ♗c5 10.♗c2 ♗e7 11.♖d1 d5 12.exd6 ♖xd6 13.♖xd6 cxd6 is what Jorden and his second Max Warmerdam had expected to appear on the board. It was helpful by the way that Max was already familiar with this position (T.Hansen-Warmerdam, Porto Carras, 2018).

### 8...h6

Simeonidis recommends 8...exd4 9.cxd4 (9.♖c1, 9.e5 and 9.♞e1 are also under scrutiny) 9...h6 10.♗h4 which transposes to the important game Smirnov-Nabaty, Pardubice 2016: 10...d6 (10...g5, played by Jorden's younger brother Lucas at the age of 10, is too early: 11.♗xg5! hxg5 12.♗xg5 ♗xd4 13.♗c3 b5 (T.Yue-L. van Foreest, Maastricht 2011) 14.♗d5! bxa4 15.♖f3+--). 'Black is threatening ...b7-b5

and ...♗g4. Also ...g7-g5 is in the air and the e4-pawn is hanging. White has no time to defend against all the threats' – Simeonidis.

### 9. ♗h4



### 9...d6

Rarely played! The Online Database only counts 9 games until this game. Simeonidis dedicates one sentence to this move: '9...d6?! does not work here like in the 7...♗b6 system: 10.♗xc6 bxc6 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♗xe5+= Zieher-Tabatt, Saarbrücken 2013.' 9...exd4 is the main line, but according to Simeonidis, it is better to play this move without inserting ...h7-h6 as the position after 10.♞e1! 'is very difficult to handle.' Compared to 8...exd4, the h6-pawn appears to be unfavourable in the line 10...d6 11.♗xc6! dxc3 12.♗xc3 bxc6 (Sethuraman-Erdős, St Louis 2019) 13.h3! and here 13...♖d7 would be a good move with the pawn on h7 instead of h6, but things are different here.

### 10. ♗xc6

10.♖d3 g5 11.♗g3 ♗d7! is slightly better for Black. ♗xc6 can be answered by ...♗xc6 after which the e4-pawn is hanging. White has to reckon with tricks like ...♗xd4 or ...exd4 followed by ...g5-g4. Moreover, ...♗h5 to gain the bishop pair is also on Black's menu.

10...bxc6 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.♗xe5

12.♖xd8 ♞xd8 13.♗xe5 g5 14.♗g3 ♗b7= and 15...♗xe4 next.

### 12... ♖e7N 13. ♗xc6

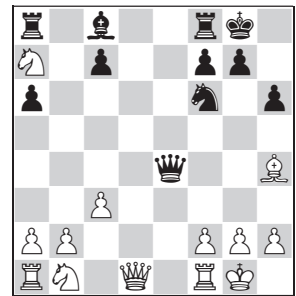
It seems that White will have to improve here. Three important alternatives are:

A) 13.♗f3 ♖xe4 14.♗xf6 gxf6 15.♗bd2 ♖f4. Black's pawn structure is very ugly, but his bishop pair in this open position may compensate for this;

B) 13.♗xf6 ♖xf6 14.♗f3. Here White is a pawn up in exchange for the bishop pair. Black has more comfortable play, but still, a pawn is a pawn! 14...a5 15.♗bd2 a4±;

C) After 13.♗g3 ♗xe4 14.♗xc6 ♖c5 15.♗xa7 ♖xa7 White also earns a pawn, while Black cannot compensate with the bishop pair here. However, Black can generate active play along the b-, d- or e-files with his queen and/or rooks. His pieces are better placed, but on the other hand, White has no real weaknesses. Probably this is White's best option to play for an advantage.

### 13... ♖xe4 14. ♗xa7



### 14... ♗h3!!

The point behind Black's play. Jorden, who was the one who found this move himself according to his second Max Warmerdam: 'He fell into one of the traps in this opening, and after that Black is immediately doing fine at least. I didn't

know too much about the position. I just knew Black is fine after 14...♔h3, and that's all. It turned out I still had to play quite accurately to draw.'

**15.gxh3 ♖fd8 16.♘d2?!**

White already has to think about equalizing and 16.♖e1 seems the easiest way to do this: 16...♖xh4 17.f4 (17.♘c6? ♖g5+ 18.♔h1 ♖d5+-) 17...♖xe1 18.♖xe1 ♖xa7 19.♘a3=.

Things are getting complicated after 16.♖c1; a sample line by Stockfish 12 is 16...♖xh4 17.♘c6 ♖d3 18.♖c2 ♖g5+ 19.♔h1 ♖xh3 20.f4 ♖h5 21.♘e5 ♖e3 22.♖g2 and now 22...♖e2 draws: 23.♖f2 (23.♖xa8+ ♔h7 24.♖g2 ♖xg2 25.♔xg2 ♘d5) 23...♖e1+ 24.♖f1 ♖e2, but Black can play for more with 22...♘e4. Crazy stuff!

**16...♖xh4 17.♖f3 ♖xa7**

**18.♘b3 c5!**

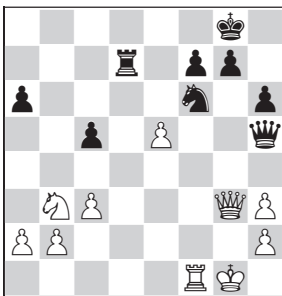
To get the rook on a7 to join quickly.

**19.♖g3 ♖h5**

19...♖c4 would have been better.

**20.♖ae1 ♖d5 21.f4 ♖ad7?!**

**22.♖e5 ♖xe5 23.fxe5**



**23...♘e4**

Jorden confessed his original plan here was 23...♖d5?, but he spotted in time that it would have lost to 24.♖xf6: 24...♖xe5 25.♖f4 (or 25.h4) 25...♖g5 26.♖g4+-.

**24.♖g4 ♖xg4+ 25.hxg4 ♖d5 26.♖e1?!**

With 26.♔g2! White could have tried to make Black's life difficult.

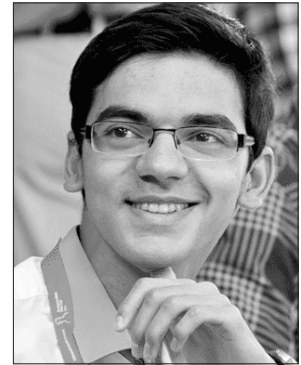
**26...♘d2! 27.♘xd2 ♖xd2 28.e6 fxe6 29.♖xe6 ♖xb2 30.♖xa6 ♖c2 31.♖c6 ♖xc3 32.♔g2 ♖a3 1/2-1/2**

### The silicon overlords weigh in

by Han Schut

RL 7.1 (C65)

YB 136



Anish Giri

In Yearbook 136, I analysed the novelty 10...♖e7 played by Carlsen against Nakamura in the Lindores Abbey chess24.com Rapid Challenge. In that article, I suggested 11.♔g2 as an improvement for White. During the Tata Steel Masters 2021, this move was played in the first round in the game Giri-Tari.

Giri was able to block the black g- and h-pawn with ♖h3/♔g2/f2-f3 (instead of ♖h3), making it possible for the white queen to roam Black's queenside. This eventually allowed Giri to break through and win.

In the post-game interview, Anish Giri explained that his team had deeply analysed this line a long time ago and that in many practice games, White was able to break Black's fortress.

Giri's theory was tested a few days later in the unofficial Computer World Chess Championships (the TCEC). The two 3600 Elo-rated silicon overlords Leela Chess Zero and Stockfish explored this line in two of their games. Leela Chess Zero's latest version (CERES) is about 100 points stronger than previous versions of LcO.

Both engine games highlight the importance for Black to control the h3-square with

the queen immediately. In the game Stockfish-LcO, this was done directly after 11.♘bd2 (instead of 11.♔g2) with the move 11...♖c8. In the game LcO-Stockfish, the two engines followed my recommendation until move 15 (11.♔g2 f5 12.♖e1 ♖xf3+ 13.♔xf3 f4 14.♘d2 g5 15.♖c3), after which Stockfish deviated with 15...♖d6 followed by ...♖e6 to eye the h3-square. Stockfish waited to fix the pawn structure on the kingside (...g4-g3), thereby preventing White from playing ♖h3. In the end, LcO was forced to blockade with the queen on h3 and was unable to enter Black's position. Both engine games ended in a draw.

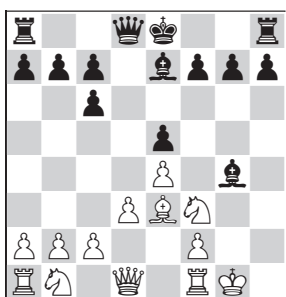
Giri's game showed us that if White can achieve a blockade with ♖h3/♔g2/f2-f3, Black's position is difficult to hold. The latest top engines improve on Tari's play by controlling h3 with an early ...♖e6; delaying the release of tension of the kingside pawn structure (...g4-g3), and castling queenside, thereby connecting the rooks (♖d8 protects ♖h8 after which f3xg4 is no longer a viable option). This prevents White from obtaining his ideal blockade, and the game remains balanced.

Matthew Sadler, who is commenting on the TCEC final on Twitter, tweeted: 'Really nice to see this sort of game after a top-level GM game. You have seen what strong human players can achieve and what the difficulties are, and then the engines come along and take things a level higher, and you understand it so much better!'

### Anish Giri Aryan Tari

Wijk aan Zee 2021 (1)

**1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♚f6  
4.d3 ♘c5 5.♙xc6 dxc6 6.0-0  
♙g4 7.h3 ♙h5 8.g4 ♚xg4  
9.hxg4 ♙xg4 10.♙e3 ♙e7**



Carlsen introduced this novelty in his game against Nakamura, Lindores Abbey online rapid 2020, which went 11.♟h1 f5 12.♞g1 h5 13.♘c3 f4 14.♙d2 g5+- 1-0 (33).

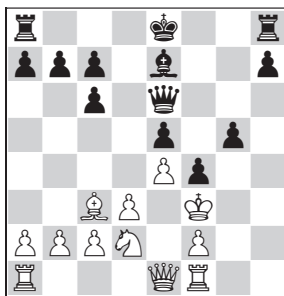
### 11.♟g2

In Yearbook 136, I asked the question: can White unpin himself? I suggested the text move.

Stockfish 20210113-LCZero 0.27.0d-Tilps-dje-magi, tcec-chess.com 2021, went 11.♘bd2 ♖c8 12.♟h1 f5 13.♙e1 ♙xf3+ 14.♚xf3 f4 15.♙c1 ♙h3+ 16.♘h2 0-0-0 17.♞g1 g5 18.♖c3 ♞d4 19.♖b3 ♞f8 20.♙d2 b6 21.♞g2. White has not been able to cleanly blockade the kingside. The game ended in a repetition of

moves on move 40 with Black exploiting White's vulnerable king.

**11...f5 12.♙e1 ♙xf3+ 13.♚xf3 f4 14.♙d2 g5 15.♙c3 ♙f6  
15...♙d6 16.♘d2 (16.♞h1 h5 17.♟e2 ♙e6! 18.f3 0-0-0 19.♘d2 g4 20.a4 ♞dg8=) 16...♙e6!**



Eyeing h3. 17.♟e2 h5 18.f3 g4 19.♘c4 ♙f6 20.♞h1 0-0-0 21.♙f2 ♘b8 22.♙g2 g3 23.♙h3 ♙e7 24.a3 ♞dg8 25.♞ag1 h4 26.b4 b6 27.♟f1 a5 28.♟g2 a4 29.♞b1 ♞d8 30.♘b2 b5 and with the white queen occupied with the defence of square h3, White was unable to break through: ½-½ (135) LCZero 0.27.0d-Tilps-dje-magi-Stockfish 20210113, tcec-chess.com 2021.

### 16.♘d2

Here Giri deviates from the line I recommended in Yearbook 136, which continued 16.♞h1 h5 17.♟e2 g4 18.f3 g3 19.♙f1 ♙e7 20.♙h3 ♟f7 21.♘d2 ♞ag8 and Black's two passed pawns give him ample compensation for the piece.

### 16...♙e7 17.♞h1 h5 18.♟e2 g4 19.f3 g3

19...♙e6? is now too late: 20.fxg4 hxg4 21.♙xh8+ ♙xh8 22.♙h4+-.  
**20.♟f1 h4 21.♞h3 a5 22.a4 b6 23.♟g2 c5 24.♙b1 ♟f7 25.b3 ♞ad8 26.♘c4 ♟g6 27.♙b2 ♞h5 28.♞ah1 ♞dh8 29.♙a1 ♟g7 30.♙b2 ♟g6 31.♙b1 ♞d8 32.♙e1 ♟g7 33.♙a1 ♞dh8 34.♘a3 ♟g6 35.♘b5**

**♙g7 36.♘c3 ♙d8 37.♘e2 ♞h7 38.♙e1 ♙d6 39.♙c3 c6 40.♙c4 ♞h8 41.♙a3 ♙f6 42.♙a6 ♞b8 43.♙c1 ♙h6 44.♙a7 ♙d8 45.♙b2 ♖c8 46.♙e7 ♙f8 47.♚xf4+ 1-0**

## Start making sense

by Max Warmerdam

FR 5.3 (C12)

The following game is from round six of the Vergani Cup, which was an over-the-board tournament that took place at the start of 2021 in Italy. I had not played a classical game since March, so I was really looking forward to playing again. The two tournaments held in Bassano Del Grappa seemed perfect to me. They both only lasted five days and were in the same place, making it easy for me to play many games. As I had one GM norm, I needed two more to obtain the grandmaster title. It is difficult to hope for scoring two norms back-to-back, but I did manage to do so in the end.

In the second tournament, I used a novelty in the McCutcheon Variation of the French, yielding me an important victory.

### Max Warmerdam Edoardo Di Benedetto

Bassano Del Grappa 2021 (6)

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♚f6  
4.♙g5**

I have always liked this move as I find it more practical to play than the Steinitz Variation starting with 4.e5. On the other hand, theoretically speaking 4.e5 is probably more challenging.

### 4...♙b4

My opponent goes for the McCutcheon Variation. The

# Inspiration

by Erwin I'Ami



In this column, Dutch grandmaster and top chess coach Erwin I'Ami scours the thousands of new correspondence games that are played every month for important novelties that may start new waves in OTB chess also. Every three months it's your chance to check out the best discoveries from this rich chess source that tends to be underexposed.

It is safe to say 2020 was not the best year for the chess world. Having said that, the various online initiatives, like the Magnus Carlsen Chess Tour, and the hype around the Netflix hit series Queen's Gambit are certainly inspiring. I hope 2021 will be a great mix between the gradual return of normal events and the continuation of online tournaments. Since there are currently so few OTB-games to look at, it is with even more anticipation that I look forward to the monthly games update by the ICCF. We start this quarter with a model game in the Najdorf. The English Attack continues to fascinate. The positions where Black pushes the h-pawn and White responds with ♖d5 ♙xd5 exd5 lead to very complicated strategic play. In the game at hand, Adam Dzwikowski introduces a fresh idea in a well-known position.

## A strategic conundrum

SI 14.8 (B90)

### Tunc Hamarat

#### Adam Dzwikowski

WC38/ct/2 ICCF

**1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙e3 e5 7.♗b3 ♙e6 8.f3 h5**

Introduced by the Russian grandmaster and theoretician Konstantin Sakaev in 1995. Nowadays, this move is taken for granted, but at that

time it was revolutionary. A fun fact is that the first two games in this line was played between the same players: Svidler and Sakaev.

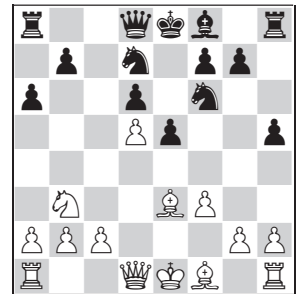
### 9.♗d5

This has become the standard reply, seen already in thousands(!) of OTB and correspondence games.

### 9...♙xd5

Sakaev went for 9...♗xd5 here originally, but 10.exd5 ♙f5 11.♙d3 ♙xd3 12.♖xd3 ♗d7 13.0-0-0 is rather unpleasant for Black, and hasn't been doing great in practice. The reason is that White has won a full tempo compared to lines with 9.♖d2, having recaptured on d3 in one go.

### 10.exd5 ♗bd7

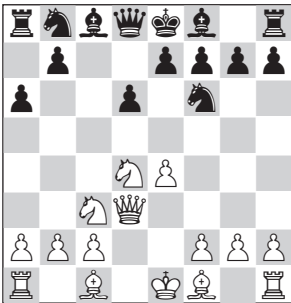


Strategically, this is an incredibly difficult position. Besides the completely unbalanced pawn structure, this line also often features castling on opposite flanks. Also throwing White's bishop pair in the mix, we have a great battle ahead! **11.♖d2 g6 12.♙e2** 12.0-0-0 ♗b6 is another major battleground. I believe the current status is that

# One out of twenty options

by René Olthof (special contribution by Jorden van Foreest)

- |    |             |             |
|----|-------------|-------------|
| 1. | <b>e4</b>   | <b>c5</b>   |
| 2. | <b>♘f3</b>  | <b>d6</b>   |
| 3. | <b>d4</b>   | <b>cxd4</b> |
| 4. | <b>♗xd4</b> | <b>♗f6</b>  |
| 5. | <b>♗c3</b>  | <b>a6</b>   |
| 6. | <b>♕d3</b>  |             |



What do you do when you are one of the underdogs in ‘the greatest chess show on earth’ and enter the final round half a point behind the sole tournament leader? That’s the dilemma Jorden van Foreest was facing at the 2021 Tata Steel Chess Tournament. From the outside it looked as if he chose a very sensible pathway: follow in the footsteps of the World Champion! In Round 9 Magnus had used the rare 6. ♕d3 against the Sicilian Najdorf to good effect against Nils Grandelius, so why not repeat this strategy and put the ball in the Swedish court? In his notes, the new kid on the Dutch block explains he had actually prepared this line before the tournament with his second Max Warmerdam and Carlsen just came up with the same plan.

## The frequency table

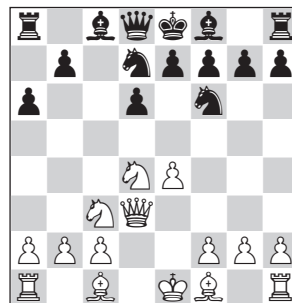
6. ♕d3 is one of over twenty options grandmasters have played against

the Najdorf. 6. ♕e3 and 6. ♕g5 battle vehemently for first place with over 80,000(!) games in the Online Database. Over the years Jeroen Bosch has dealt with various weird and alternative lines such as 6. ♗b3, 6. ♖g1, 6. ♗f3, 6. a3, 6. h4 and 6. ♗e2 in his SOS column in New In Chess Magazine. In the FORUM section of Yearbook 134 you will find the enigmatic 6. ♕d2 in games by Lucas van Foreest against Nodirbek Abdusattorov and... Nils Grandelius!

No SOS attention for 6. ♕d3 so far, so I decided to chart this virgin territory myself, using the classical Sicilian breakdown. What would be Black’s most promising approach?

## Najdorf lines with ... ♗bd7

6... ♗bd7 is both the most common and the most logical reply, opting to hit the queen from c5 or sometimes e5 (Games 1-5).



After 7. ♕e2 there is a crossroads between the provocative 7... b5 as in the magnificent main game, and staple moves like 7... ♗c5 or 7... e6, both presented in a game by Stefan Kuipers from Gibraltar 2015. The position after



7. ♖g5 usually arises from the move-order 6. ♖g5 ♗bd7 7. ♖d3!?. White prepares rapid queenside castling.

### Najdorf lines with ...e7-e5

Games 6-7 show the standard push ...e7-e5, expelling the knight from d4. If it is done immediately on move 6, it is best met by 7. ♗f5, exploiting the support the knight has from the queen on d3. The two Spanish grandmasters Vallejo Pons and Anton Guijarro had to deal with this line in 2014. This is certainly a viable option for Black.

### Scheveningen lines with ...e7-e6

Against his fellow Viking, Grandelius chose the solid 6...e6. Now 7. ♖g5 transposes to regular Najdorf main lines (6. ♖g5 e6 7. ♖d3). In Game 8 we see Carlsen adopt the prophylactic 7.a4. Fabiano Caruana has also played this. Carlsen's handling of the endgame is exemplary and breathtaking. In the notes I draw attention to 7. ♖g3 which can also arise after 6. ♖f3. Game 9 features the main move 7. ♖e2; the perfect opportunity to show a typical motif against an early ...b7-b5. The sudden thrust b2-b4 leaves Black with a serious pawn weakness on a6, but on the shadow side White's structure is severely damaged as well. Practice shows that the chances are approximately equal.

### Dragon lines with ...g7-g6

The first master game with 6. ♖d3 saw Black playing the Dragon – with a queen on d3 that would seem to make sense. Game 10 will teach you NOT to put the black knight on e5: Black got completely smashed. Games 11-13 are examples of White's strategy of castling queenside combined with f2-f4 against the set-up



Van Foreest-Grandelius after 7. ♖e2

with ...♗bd7. This gives rise to double-edged middlegame positions. Game 14 highlights the problems caused by the standard development of the queen's knight to c6 after 6...g6. Fedoseev, Karjakin and Keymer are among the black victims!

### Rauzer lines with ...♗b8-c6

We close off this Survey with Yury Averbakh. His handling of the black side of the Rauzer in the Moscow City Championship of 1957 (Game 15) is exemplary. He has now replaced Andor Lilienthal as the oldest living grandmaster ever. The Hungarian was the last surviving person from the original group of 27 grandmasters awarded the title by FIDE in 1950. He came to live 99 years and 3 days and died in 2010. Will Averbakh be the first grandmaster to reach the milestone of 100? We will know on February 8, 1922!

### Conclusion

6. ♖d3 is far less weird than some of the outlandish anti-Najdorf lines around and the successes attained by Carlsen and Van Foreest in Wijk aan Zee will doubtlessly give a further boost to its development. I do not see how this line can NOT take off!

## Najdorf lines

6...♟b7

Jorden van Foreest  
Nils Grandelius

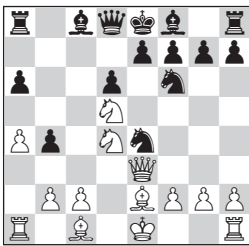
1

Wijk aan Zee 2021 (13)

1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4

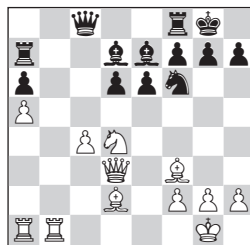
4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 a6 6.♟d3

It was this line which I had prepared for the tournament. Curiously Carlsen had already played this rare move against my opponent in Round 9. 6...♟b7 The game Carlsen-Grandelius featured the move 6...e6. The text move is the most popular and is possibly Black's best way of playing. 7.♟e2 b5 8.a4 ♟c5 A novelty, but in fact all of this had already been mentioned in a certain Chessable course. 9.♟e3 b4 10.♟d5 ♟cxe4



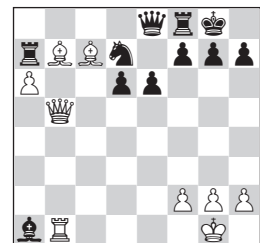
11.a5 It was this objectively dubious move that I was aiming for. Computers are not fond of it, but I thought that in a practical game it would be very hard for Black to find his way out of the mess. 11...♟xd5 12.♟xe4 e6 Another possibility is 12...♟b7. In my analysis I had devoted most of my time to that move. 13.0-0 Black is up a pawn, but he lacks development. His king can get quite vulnerable in the middle of the board. 13...♟d7 In my analysis before the tournament I had not looked at this move. However I was lucky that my second Max Warmerdam pointed this out as a possible move to me just before the game. 13...♟e7 is slightly odd, allowing ♟c6 and losing the bishop pair. 14.♟d2 It is quite surprising that White can start to slow-play the position. In other lines White was often

trying to get an attack, but now he simply aims to win back the sacrificed pawn. 14...♟e7 15.♟f3 15.♟f5 looks very tempting, but it runs into 15...♟f6! 16.♟xg7+ ♟f8 when White loses the stranded knight. 15...0-0 16.♟d3 Finally the white play starts to become clear. He would love to ruin the black pawn structure with ♟xd5 and follow it up by regaining the pawn with ♟xb4. 16...♟b8 Hanging on to the pawn is most sensible. Other moves give White a slight advantage. 17.c4! A sudden change of direction. It wouldn't surprise me if my opponent had only been counting on 17.♟xd5 when he would be in good shape. 17...bxc3 18.bxc3 It was here that my preparation ended. I knew that despite being down a pawn White should be in control. Black's pieces are quite awkwardly placed and c3-c4 is coming. 18...♟a7 This is a very natural move, but it turns out to be a big mistake. Black should have been looking for direct counterplay instead. After 18...♟f6! 19.c4 ♟a7! a funny situation arises where both knights are under pin by both bishops respectively. This would have resulted in massive trades leading to a drawish position. 19.♟fb1 ♟c8 20.c4 ♟f6



21.♟b5! It must have been this knight sacrifice that was underestimated by my opponent. I was not entirely sure about its objective strength during the game, but felt it should at least give sufficient compensation. As I learned after the game, the computers approve and give White a serious advantage. 21...axb5 22.cxb5 ♟xb5 It's hard to offer

Black better advice. At the cost of returning the piece at least he eliminates one of the dangerous passed pawns. 22...e5 was the move I was mainly calculating during the game. The idea is to play for ...♟f5, but it seems that White can simply ignore this: 23.b6 ♟f5 24.♟b5 ♟xb1 25.♟xb1 and despite the extra rook there is no defence against the passed pawns. 23.♟xb5 ♟d7 Perhaps 23...♟d5 would have offered Black better chances, but as a human such moves don't really cross your mind. The resulting position after 24.♟xd5 simply looks dreadful for Black. 24.♟b7 ♟d8 25.a6 ♟f6 26.♟a5 ♟e8 This was a critical moment in the game. I felt I should be close to winning with my passed pawns and strong bishops. I thought about simply moving the rook but then decided I didn't want to give Black any time to set up a defence. Instead I decided to go for something forcing, which turned out to be a mistake. 27.♟c7?! 27.♟a2! was simple and strong. After 27...♟d4 I didn't like the thought of the bishop finding a home on c5. Nevertheless, this strong bishop is easily exchanged and after that Black's position is left in dire straits. Especially the rook on a7 will be left in a cage for the remainder of the game. 28.♟d2 ♟c5 29.♟b4 and sooner or later the black defences will crumble. 27...♟xa1



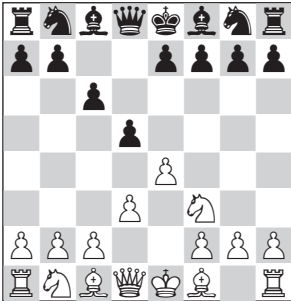
28.♟xa1? I barely considered 28.♟xd6, I thought it was unnecessary. As it turns out it was the only winning move! 28.♟xd6! ♟d4 29.♟xf8 ♟xf8. Here I stopped calculating – had I just



# To trade or not to trade?

by Ruslan Ponomariov

1. e4 c6
2. ♘f3 d5
3. d3



I started to play blitz and stream on Twitch in 2018. I remember I lost to a computer player in some strange Caro-Kann with 1.e4 c6 2.f4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♗xe4 ♘f6 5.d3 etc. Despite my disappointment, I usually try to keep a positive atmosphere and tried to analyse my mistakes with a view to play better next time.

I have a friend Andrii who works in the IT sector, and for his work he rents very powerful machines. As a hobby he likes to test and improve Lc0 in his free time. Versus the Caro-Kann, the main lines



Kirill Alekseenko

are 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♗xe4 ♗f5 and 3.e5, both of which the engine evaluates similarly with 56%. But according to Andrii's investigation, the third line recommended by Lc0 was 2.♘f3 d5 3.d3 with the possible continuation 3...dxe4 4.dxe4 ♗xd1+ 5.♗xd1 ♘f6 6.♗bd2 g6 7.♗c4 ♗g4 8.e5 ♘d5 9.h3 ♗f5 10.♗d4 etc., with a 52% evaluation. At that moment I didn't take it very seriously, but recently many top players have started to play like this! And now it's going to be the topic of my Survey.

What do white players have in mind when they play like this? I was taught that exchanging the queens reduces your attacking chances and limits your options. One of the best known examples is when Kramnik just started to play the Berlin in 2000. I am sure that Kasparov was uncomfortable without the queens, since he wasn't able to use his best abilities: his feeling for dynamic positions, fantasy, and calculation.

I can name a few opening lines with the same concept: 1.d4 d6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 dxe5 4.♗xd8+ ♗xd8; 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.♗xd8+ ♗xd8. Probably the most similar to our Caro-Kann is 1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e3!? ♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗xd1+ 7.♗xd1 etc. It's not a refutation, rather you are asking your opponent how good he is in all aspects of chess. Nowadays young players focus on opening preparation, improving their calculation and playing thousands of blitz games. Although the endgame is not always reached this way, this is also an important part of the chess culture.

For my investigation I have mainly analysed recent games with a classical time control, although in the online database you can find lots of banter blitz games with this line as well.

## Conclusion

I hope that my thoughts will give you more confidence to play simple positions

without queens versus technical players. For more flexibility, in the Game Section I have also proposed some other options, for instance if you need to play for a win with black.

How do you think the engine's evaluation will change if you take the queens from the board in the starting position?

### Exchange of queens

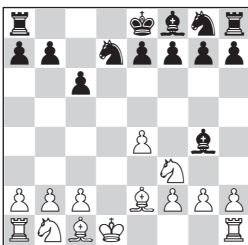
5...♙g4

Kirill Alekseenko

Yannick Pelletier

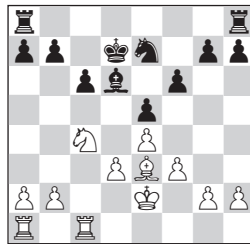
Budva tt 2019 (2)

**1.e4 c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.d3 dxe4 4.dxe4 ♖xd1+ 5.♗xd1 ♙g4** At first glance this is a very natural move. Black is finishing his development. Maybe he will be able to castle queenside with check. **6.♗e2 ♘d7 6...♗xf3** doesn't seem any better, e.g. **7.♗xf3 ♘d7 8.g3!** and the bishop goes to g2, and the king to e2. White has very simple play.



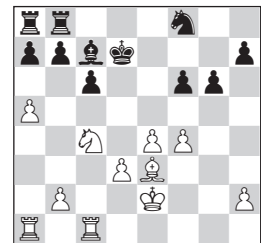
**7.♗e1!** I like this simple idea. White doesn't mind exchanging more pieces. **7...♗xe2+ 8.♗xe2 e5** Black doesn't sense any danger yet, and just tries to keep some symmetry. Two weeks later Black played more carefully: **8...♗gf6 9.♗d2 e6!** **10.♗d3** (probably White can improve with **10.a4!**±, trying to take some space on the queenside and not allowing Black to exchange more pieces so easily) **10...♗c5 11.♗xc5 ♗xc5 12.f4 0-0-0 13.e5 ♗d5 14.♗e4 ♗e7** (this structure from the Classical Caro-Kann with **4...♗f5** may be easier to hold) **15.c4 ♗b4 16.♗e3**

**16 17.a3 ♗c2 18.♗ad1 ♗xe3 19.♗xe3 f5 20.exf6 gxf6 21.g4 ♗c7 (21...f5!? 22.gxf5 exf5 23.♗g3 ♗hf8=) 22.♗g3 ♗c5+ 23.♗e4 ♗hg8 24.h3 a5** and Black was suffering slightly, but was able to make a draw versus his much higher rated opponent in Maghsoodloo-Daneshvar, Iran tt 2019. **9.f3 f6 10.♗d3 ♗c5 11.♗e3 ♗xd3 12.cxd3!** White is benefiting from each exchange. **12...♗d6 13.♗d2 ♗e7 14.♗c4 ♗d7 15.♗hc1**



Both sides have finished their development. The pawn structure looks similar to a Ruy Lopez Exchange Variation or a Rossolimo Sicilian in which Black has managed to exchange his doubled pawn. It looks like Black should be safe, because he doesn't have any weaknesses. However the biggest problem for Black is that his bishop is slightly passive and he doesn't have any real counterplay. Meanwhile White can benefit from the pawn structure to play on both sides of the board. The situation can become very unpleasant for Black after some careless play. **15...♗hb8** It's a bit hard to understand what Black wanted to achieve with this move. Probably his only strategy now is

to wait and avoid creating more weaknesses. It may be good to improve the position of Black's knight, but this is hard to execute: **15...♗g6 16.a4 ♗f8 17.♗d1! ♗e6 18.d4** or **15...b6 16.♗xd6!** (Δ **16.a4 c5** and **...♗c6**) **16...♗xd6 17.b4 ♗g6 18.a4 ♗hc8 19.♗c4**. Black has forced the exchange of his bad bishop, but he is still far from having solved all his problems. In the endgame, a bishop is more mobile than a knight, and now Black's pieces are restricted to the protection of the c6-pawn. **16.a4** Also a good idea was **16.g3!** **♗g6 17.♗xd6 ♗xd6 18.♗c4 ♗f8 19.d4 ♗e6 20.dxe5+ fxe5 21.f4!** **16...♗g6 17.a5 ♗c7 18.g3 ♗f8 19.f4** It's hard to say where Black has made a critical mistake, but with each move his position becomes worse. **19...exf4 20.gxf4 g6**



**21.♗g1** A strong idea was **21.f5!** **gxf5 22.exf5**, opening more lines for the rook and restricting Black's knight, e.g. **22...♗e8 23.♗d2 ♗xh2 24.♗h1 ♗d6 25.♗ag1+-** **21...♗e8 22.♗f3 a6 23.♗a3 ♗ad8 24.♗d4?!** At some moment in the game White fails to choose the most convincing path to convert his positional advantage. Why not,

# Living on the edge

by Viacheslav Ikonnikov

- |     |       |      |
|-----|-------|------|
| 1.  | d4    | d5   |
| 2.  | c4    | e6   |
| 3.  | ♘c3   | ♗f6  |
| 4.  | ♗f3   | c5   |
| 5.  | cxd5  | cxd4 |
| 6.  | ♔xd4  | exd5 |
| 7.  | e4    | dxe4 |
| 8.  | ♔xd8+ | ♕xd8 |
| 9.  | ♗g5   | ♖e6  |
| 10. | ♗xe6+ | fxe6 |

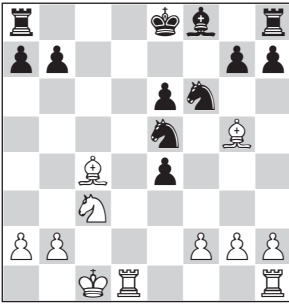


Two theoretical duels, Carlsen-So and Radjabov-So in the recent elite Skilling Open event, have revived the interest in a rare line of the Tarrasch Defence. Particular attention should be paid to the less common 7...dxe4 (instead of the more popular 7...♗c6 8.♖b5 dxe4). Thus, Black preserves the opportunity to develop the ♗b8 to a more active position, for example with ...♗b8-d7-c5, defending his weak e4- and e6-pawns and additionally creating threats like ...♗d3. In general, White's plan is to win back the pawn and play an endgame with the advantage of two bishops against the weak e6-pawn, while Black's plan is to complete his development with ...♖b4, ...♗e7, ...♗b8-d7-c5 (or ...♗c6) and, if possible, defend and hold the pawn.

In the diagram position White has three plans to develop further and simultaneously hinder ...♖b4: 11.♖g5, 11.♖c4 and 11.♖d2.

## The plan with 11.♖g5

This plan of quick development is connected with queenside castling followed by ♖c4 and ♗he1. The disadvantage of this plan is the possibility of extra counterplay for Black along the c-file, exploiting the 'too exposed' position of White's ♗c1. The most accurate move here is 11...h6! – Wesley So's 'weapon' which has the idea to force the white bishop to a less advantageous position (for example, 12.♖h4 g5, while 12.♖e3 prevents White's operations along the e-file) and also to force White to take on e4 with the knight and not with the rook, which would be in White's favour. Another advantage after 11...h6 12.♖xf6 gxf6 is that Black can quickly develop his kingside with ...♖g7 and ...♗h8(-c8) without wasting time on ...♗f7. Logically, after 11...h6 the most promising continuation for White is 12.♖xf6, since any bishop retreat leads to other similar variations with the for Black advantageous move 11...h6, while even in those variations, based on present practice (see the game Radjabov-So), Black holds the position after 12.♖xf6. Particular attention should be paid to the variations without 11... h6. Here l'Ami used a not very successful novelty after 13.♖c4 – 13...♗f7 instead of the already tried and tested move 13...♗e5. In Khairullin's game against Grachev, after 13...♗e5

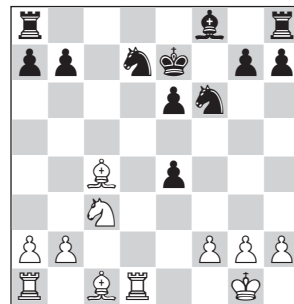


the move 14. ♖b5+ led to an early victory as a result of Black's unsuccessful play later on (16...a6 and 17...b5). In another game, Holt-Vitiugov, the interesting exchange sacrifice 14. ♖xe6 led to a fortunate victory for Black, but also here White had more than enough compensation. Black can hold the position in both lines, but he is already living on the edge. In another recent game by Duda against Le Quang Liem, White did not tempt fate and abandoned 13. ♖c4 in favour of 13. ♖b5. Again, Black kept the balance with some difficulties. But had Duda played 15. ♖c4!, the result of the game could have been different. All this spoke for the slight unreliability of the lines without 11...h6, but perhaps Tari's novelty 14... ♖b4! against Carlsen from the last Tata Steel Tournament (see the game Duda-Le Quang Liem) will change this point of view. The advantage of this move (as well as the continuation 11...h6!) is forcing the unloading exchange ♖xf6 gxf6, which is beneficial for Black. After 15... ♖e7 in Duda-Le Quang Liem White could have won back the e4-pawn by means of 16. ♜he1!? ♜f7 17. ♖c1 while maintaining the tension and the advantage of the two bishops.

### The plan with 11. ♖c4

This is a slower path in terms of piece development, connected with kingside castling, but here Black does not have as

much counterplay along the c-file against ♖c1. Here the current World Champion showed two interesting ideas against So. Firstly, after 13. ♖e3, the game turned into an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops but with a strong passed pawn on e6 for White. Most likely, with a longer time control, Black would have been able to hold the position, but in a rapid game it's not easy. Unlike 13. ♖e3, which leads to further exchanges and therefore increases the draw factor, another novelty of Carlsen against the same opponent, 13. ♜d1, leads to a tenser game.



This move is not intended to win back the pawn immediately, but to maintain the disorganization of Black's pieces. This is the first and only plan in this line where White does not seek to leave the bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal but transfers it to e2 to put pressure on the queenside through the possibility of f2-f3. In this game I think that before the mistake 18. ♘a4? Carlsen had several opportunities to increase his potential, for example with 17. ♖f4!? or 16.f3!?. Despite the result of the game, the move 13. ♜d1 is of great value since it gives White a wider choice of ways to play than with the more forced 13. ♖e3.

### The plan with 11. ♖d2

A modest move which might cause Black trouble, especially after Anish

Giri's novelty 12.0-0-0. Since Black will play 11...h6 after 11. ♖g5, White leaves this opportunity for later, avoiding exchanges. White's plan consists of initial preparation with ♗d2, 0-0-0, ♗b5, ♖he1 and ♜xe4 to win back the e4-pawn and then, with the advantage of the two bishops, move to a minor-piece endgame, which Giri won brilliantly against Le Quang Liem. In addition, the move 11. ♗d2 also prevents Black's favourable development with 11...♗b4 in view of 12. ♜xe4. Of course Black has opportunities to hinder this plan, but nevertheless the idea deserves attention and further development.

## Conclusion

First applied at high level by Romain Edouard and successfully employed by Wesley So, the move 11...h6 after 11. ♖g5 is the most reliable way for Black to achieve equality. And although the variations without ...h7-h6 have not been refuted yet, it seems that White has various additional opportunities here. Magnus Carlsen could not achieve an



Romain Edouard

advantage in the line with 11. ♗c4 and the result of his games rather follows from the subsequent play rather than from the opening. If we look at White's prospects in this line, then the plan with 13. ♖d1 looks more promising, with a wider range of opportunities for White, than the more forcing 13. ♗e3.

Of course, the least studied plan and accordingly the one with great potential, Anish Giri's 11. ♗d2 and 12.0-0-0, can be recommended to players with good endgame technique. This is the only variation to date where Black has not been able to show a clear way to equalize.

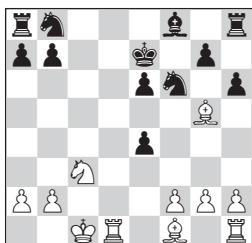
### The plan with 11. ♖g5

Teimour Radjabov  
Wesley So

Skilling KO rapid qf 2020 (2.1)

1. ♜f3 d5 2. d4 ♜f6 3. c4 e6 4. ♜c3  
c5 5. cxd5 cxd4 6. ♝xd4 exd5 7. e4  
dx4 8. ♝xd8+ ♗xd8 9. ♜g5 ♗e6  
10. ♜xe6+ fxe6 11. ♖g5 h6! A

new move introduced by Romain Edouard in July 2020. 12.0-0-0+ ♗e7



13. ♗xf6+ The most principled move.

A) Nothing significant is gained by 13. ♗h4 ♗f7 (also possible is 13...g5 14. ♗g3 ♗g7=) 14. ♖d8 g5 15. ♗g3 ♗g7 16. ♖xh8 ♗xh8 17. ♗b5 a6 18. ♗a4 b5 19. ♗c2 ♜c6 20. ♜xe4 ♜d4 21. ♖e1 ♜xe4 22. ♗xe4 ♖c8+ 23. ♗b1 ♜f5=, neutralizing the two-bishops advantage, Wojtaszek-Edouard, Biel 2020;

B) A day earlier, Radjabov tried 13. ♗e3. Objectively speaking, the move ...h7-h6 plays into Black's hands. If White plays ♗e3 then it's better to put the bishop there immediately, so that in the event of ...♜g4 or ...♜d5 White will have an intermediate check on g5. 13...♜c6 14.g3 ♖c8 15. ♗b1 (the ♗e3 isn't saved from exchange either

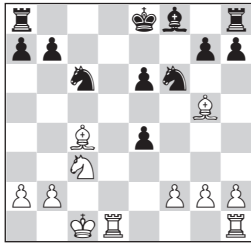
after 15. ♗g2 ♜d5 16. ♜xe4 ♜xe3 17. fxe3 g5 18. ♜d6 ♖c7 19. ♜b5 ♖c8 20. ♗b1 ♗g7=) 15...♜g4 16. ♖e1 (too slow, now the black pieces will be activated; perhaps stronger was 16. ♗h3 ♜xe3 17. fxe3 ♖d8 (17...g5? 18. ♜d5+±) 18. ♜xe4 ♖xd1+ 19. ♖xd1 g5 20. ♜c5 ♜e5 21. ♜xb7 g4 22. ♗g2 h5±) 16...♗f7 17. ♜xe4 ♗b4 18. ♖e2 ♜xe3 19. ♖xe3 ♜d4 20. a3 ♗e7 21. ♗g2 ♖hd8= Radjabov-So, Skilling KO rapid qf 2020 (1.2). 13...gxf6 14. ♜xe4 ♗g7 This is the advantage of the move 11...h6 – Black can quickly bring the ♖h8 into the game. 15. ♜g3 If 15. ♗b5 f5 16. ♜d6 ♜c6 17. ♖he1 ♖hf8 18. ♗xc6 bxc6=; Black's strong bishop compensates for the weakness of the c6-pawn. 15...f5 16. ♗d3 ♜c6 17. ♖he1 ♗e5 18. ♜xf5+ White



wins a pawn, but it will be difficult to keep it as the black king is very close. **18...exf5 19.f4 ♖ad8 20.fxe5 ♜hf8 21.♞e3 ♜d5 22.♞h3** Or **22.♞de1 ♖b4 23.♖b1 ♞c8+** 24.♞c3 ♞xc3+ 25.bxc3 ♖d3+, liquidating into an equal endgame. **22...♗xe5 23.♖c2 ♞xd1+ 24.♗xd1 ♞f6 25.♗e2 ♞b6 26.b3 ♞a6 27.♖b1 f4 28.♞h5 ♞e6 29.♖f5 ♞a6 30.♖b1 ♞e6 31.♖f5 ♞a6 32.♖b1 ½-½**

**Laurent Fressinet  
Erwin l'Ami**

Germany Bundesliga final 2019/20 (1)  
**1.d4 d5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.c4 e6 4.♗c3 c5 5.cxd5 cxd4 6.♞xd4 exd5 7.e4 dxe4 8.♞xd8+ ♗xd8 9.♗g5 ♖e6 10.♗xe6+ fxe6 11.♖g5 ♗e8 12.0-0-0 ♖c6 13.♖c4**



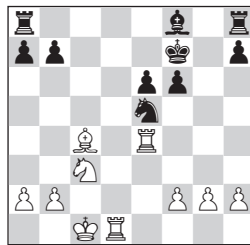
**13...♗f7N** A novelty, but probably not the best move here. Instead, if **13...♗e5!?**:

A) There was a very interesting exchange sacrifice: **14.♖xe6!** ♖d3+ **15.♗c2 ♗xf2 16.♖xf6 ♗xd1** (16...gxf6 **17.♞d7 ♞c8** (losing is **17...♗xh1?** **18.♗d5 ♞c8+** **19.♖b1 ♖g7 20.♞xb7!+-**; less strong is **20.♞xg7 ♞c6 21.♗xf6+ ♗d8 22.♞d7+ ♗c8 23.♞xh7+ ♞xe6 24.♞xh8+ ♗c7 25.♖d5+ ♗d6 26.♗e3±** and White still needs to demonstrate some technique) **18.♞f1±**) **17.♞xd1 gxf6 18.♞d7 ♞d8 19.♞xb7 ♞d6 20.♖c4** (also noteworthy is **20.♖d5 f5 21.♞xa7** 20...♞d4 **21.♖b5+** (21.♖e6 leads to repetition of moves after **21...♞d6**; if **21...♖c5**, **22.♖d5** and mate is not far off) **21...♗d8 22.♞xa7 ♞g8** (the bishop has left the a2-g8 diagonal and the black rook enters the game) **23.g3 ♞g5** Holt-Vitugov, Tromsø 2013;

B) **14.♖b5+** ♗f7 **15.♖xf6 gxf6 16.♗xe4 a6** (the wrong plan; Black

only helps White to put pressure on the e6-pawn. Necessary was **16...f5!**? **17.♗g5+ ♗f6 18.f4 ♗g6 19.♞d7 ♖e7 20.g3 e5**) **17.♖a4 b5 18.♖b3 ♖h6+** (another unnecessary move. The bishop has nothing to do on h6, and Black loses control of the squares c5 and d6) **19.♗b1 ♞hd8 20.♖c5 ♖c4** (forced; now the a6- and c4-pawns become easy prey for the white knight or king) **21.♖xc4 bxc4 22.♖b7 ♞xd1+ 23.♞xd1 ♗g6 24.♗c2 ♖f4 25.g3 ♖c7 26.♖d6 ♖b6** (not better was **26...♖xd6 27.♞xd6 e5 28.♞c6±**) **27.f4 e5 28.fxe5 fxe5 29.♗xc4 ♖d4 30.♞f1±** Khairullin-Grachev, Moscow 2015.

**14.♞he1 ♗e5 15.♖xf6 gxf6 16.♞xe4**



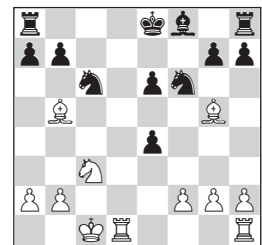
The delay of the move ...h7-h6 has led to a more advantageous capture on e4 by White's rook, with pressure on the e6-pawn.

**16...♖h6+ 17.♗c2 ♞hd8** There was no time for **17...♗xc4 18.♞xc4 ♞hd8 19.♞c7+ ♗g6 20.♞xb7±**. **18.♖b3 ♞xd1 19.♗xd1 ♞c8+** Perhaps going over to the defensive was the best choice now, e.g. **19...♞e8 20.♖c3** (insufficient is **20.f4 ♖d7**) **20...a6** (20...♖d7 **21.♖b5±**, winning the a7-pawn) **21.f4 ♖d7 22.f5 ♖c5 23.fxe6+ ♗g6 24.♞g4+ ♗f5 25.♞h4 ♗g5 26.♞b4 b5 27.♖e4+ ♗xe4 28.♞xe4 f5±** with some hope for Black to hold due to the opposite-coloured bishops. **20.♖c3 b5 20...♞c6 21.f4 ♖d7 22.f5 ♖c5 23.fxe6+ ♗xe6 24.♞b4 b6 25.♞d4±** with threats like **♞d7** and **♞h4**. **21.f4 ♖c4 22.♖xc4 bxc4 23.♖b5 ♞c5 24.♖d4** Perhaps Fressinet did not like Black's passed f-pawn with possible counter-chances after **24.♗xa7!** **f5 25.♞d4 e5 26.fxe5 ♞xe5 27.♞xc4 ♞e2+ 28.♗b3 ♞xg2±**. **24...e5 25.fxe5 ♞xe5?** 25...fxe5!

**26.♗f3 ♗e6!** **27.♞h4** (27.♗c3 does not work because of **27...♖g7!** and the c4-pawn is inviolable due to the discovered check with ...e5-e4) **27...♖e3 28.♗c3** (or **28.♞xh7 e4 29.♖d2 ♖xd2 30.♗xd2 ♞b5 31.♗c3 e3**) **28...h5 29.♞xc4 ♗d5 30.♞xc5+ ♖xc5 31.♖d2 e4±** with some chances to hold since the bishop is stronger than the knight in such positions. **26.♞xe5 fxe5 27.♖c6 ♗e6 28.♗xa7 e4 29.♖b5 ♖f4 30.g3 ♖e5 31.a4?** This is too early; now the a4-pawn will fall. Easily winning was **31.♖c3 e3** (31...♗f5 **32.a4+-**) **32.♗d1 ♖d4 33.♗e2 ♗e5 34.a4 ♗e6 35.g4** and Black will be unable to stop the passed pawns on both flanks. **31...e3 32.♖c3 ♖d6 33.♗d1 ♖c5 34.a5 ♖d4 35.♗e2 ♗b4 36.a6 ♗a5 37.♖e4 ♗xa6 38.♖d6 ♖xb2 39.♗xc4 ♖c1 40.♗xe3 ♗b5 41.♗f3 ♖c6 42.♗g4 ♖d6 43.♗f6 h6 44.♗e4 ♗e6 45.♖d5 ♖d2 46.g4 h5 47.gxh5 ♖c1 48.h4 ♖d2 49.♖c7+ ♗f6 50.♗f3 ♗f5 51.♖b5 ♖e1 52.♖d4+ ♗e5 53.h6 ♗f6 54.h5 ♖d2 ½-½**

**Jan-Krzysztof Duda  
Le Quang Liem**

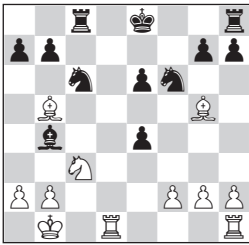
Skilling rapid prelim 2020 (2)  
**1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5 4.♗c3 c5 5.cxd5 cxd4 6.♞xd4 exd5 7.e4 dxe4 8.♞xd8+ ♗xd8 9.♗g5 ♖e6 10.♗xe6+ fxe6 11.♖g5 ♖c6 12.0-0-0+ ♗e8 13.♖b5N**



This new continuation looks promising. **13...♞c8 14.♗b1 a6** An unexpected move, but it looks like this helps White. Now that his king is already on b1 and Black doesn't have the ...♖c6-e5-d3+ manoeuvre, ♖c4 looks strong. A) Maybe Black should have considered **14...♖e7 15.♞he1 ♗f7**

16. ♖c1 a6 17. ♖a4 b5 18. ♖b3 ♖a5  
19. ♖c2∞ and White has two bishops  
and chances for an advantage;

B) A better option seems 14... ♖b4,  
which forces White to trade on f6.



Tari-Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2021,  
continued 15. ♖xf6 gxf6 16. ♖xe4  
f5 17. ♖g5 ♖e7 18. a3 ♖a5 19. f4 h6  
20. ♖f3 ♖hd8 21. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22. ♖d1  
♖c7=.

15. ♖a4 Better looks 15. ♖c4! ♖f7  
16. ♖xf6 gxf6 17. ♖d7+ (also possible  
is 17. ♖xe4 ♖e7 (17... ♖d8 18. f4±)

18. ♖d6+ ♖xd6 19. ♖xd6 ♖he8  
20. ♖e1 ♖e5 21. ♖b3 and the bishop  
is better than the knight, plus

Black has a worse pawn structure  
on the kingside) 17... ♖e7 18. ♖xe4  
♖cd8 19. ♖d6+ ♖g6 20. ♖xd8 ♖xd8  
21. ♖d1 b5 22. ♖b3 f5∞. 15... ♖e7

16. ♖xf6 Perhaps the bishop pair  
should have been saved by 16. ♖he1  
♖f7 17. ♖c1±. 16... gxf6 17. ♖xe4

♖g8 This inaccurate move gives  
some small chances to White; 17...  
f5!? with the idea ... ♖h8-g8-g6.

18. g3 More chances were offered  
by 18. ♖b3!? ♖xg2 19. ♖xe6 ♖d8  
20. ♖d5!±. 18... f5 19. ♖b3 ♖g6

20. ♖d6+ ♖xd6 21. ♖xd6 ♖e7

22. ♖hd1 ♖d8 23. ♖xd8 ♖xd8

24. ♖c1 ♖d7 25. ♖a4+ b5 26. ♖d1  
♖c6 27. ♖f3 ♖d4 28. ♖b7 e5

29. ♖c5 ♖d6 30. b4 a5 31. f4 31. a3  
axb4 32. axb4 ♖h6 33. h4 ♖g6=.

31... exf4 32. ♖d5+ ♖c7 33. ♖xd4

fxg3 34. hxg3 ♖xb7 35. ♖d5

♖c6 36. ♖c5+ ♖b6 37. a4 Easier

was 37. ♖xf5 axb4 38. ♖h5=.

37... bxa4 38. ♖xa5 ♖xg3 39. ♖xf5

♖h3 40. ♖a2 h5 41. ♖g5 h4

42. ♖g4 ♖b5 43. ♖f4 ♖h1 44. ♖a3

h3 45. ♖h4 ♖c6 46. ♖h5 ♖b6

47. ♖xa4 ♖a1+ 48. ♖b3 ♖h1

49. ♖h6+ ♖b5 50. ♖h5+ ♖b6

51. ♖h6+ ♖b5 52. ♖h5+ ♖b6 ½-½

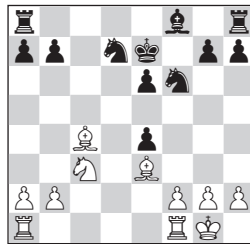
## The plan with 11. ♖c4

Magnus Carlsen

Wesley So

Skilling KO rapid f 2020 (1.1)

1. d4 ♖f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♖f3 d5 4. ♖c3  
c5 5. cxd5 cxd4 6. ♖xd4 exd5 7. e4  
dxe4 8. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 9. ♖g5 ♖e6  
10. ♖xe6+ fxe6 11. ♖c4!? ♖e7  
12. 0-0 ♖bd7 13. ♖e3N



Carlsen's new move, directed  
against ... ♖c5. White decides to  
exchange his dark-squared bishop  
in order to keep his light-squared  
bishop in an active position.

13... ♖c8 14. ♖b3 ♖c5 15. ♖xc5+

♖xc5 16. ♖fe1 g6 The best way to

develop his kingside. Worse was  
16... ♖f7 17. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 18. ♖xe4  
♖e7 19. ♖xe6 ♖hc8 20. ♖ae1± and

Black loses one more pawn on the  
queenside. 17. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 18. ♖xe4  
e5 19. f4 ♖g7 20. ♖ae1 ♖f8!?

Complicating his task; 20... ♖d6=.

21. fxg5 ♖f5 22. e6 ♖xb2 23. ♖d1

♖c7 Safer was 23... ♖c1 24. ♖e1

♖d4+ 25. ♖h1 ♖xd1 26. ♖xd1 ♖f8

27. g3 ♖d8=, not letting the white

rook enter the seventh rank.

24. g4 ♖f8 25. ♖g2 b5 This is the

idea behind his 20th move – So

is looking for active counterplay.

26. ♖e2 ♖c3 27. ♖e3 ♖b4 28. ♖ed3

a5 29. ♖d7+ ♖xd7 30. ♖xd7+ ♖f6

31. ♖b7 31. ♖xh7 a4 32. ♖d5 ♖d8

33. ♖d7 ♖e7 34. h4 ♖e5=.

31... a4 32. g5+! ♖xg5 33. ♖xb5+ ♖f5??

A terrible mistake. Necessary was

33... ♖f6 34. ♖xa4 (only a draw is

given by 34. ♖xb4 axb3 35. ♖f4+

♖e7 36. ♖xf8 ♖xf8 37. axb3 ♖e7

38. ♖f3 ♖xe6 39. ♖e4 g5 40. b4 h6

41. b5 ♖d6 42. ♖f5 ♖c5 43. ♖g6

♖xb5 44. ♖xh6 g4=) 34... ♖d6

35. ♖b3± and White's chances are

better than ever in this game.

34. ♖xb4 axb3 35. e7 bxa2 36. e8 ♖  
a1 37. ♖e7+ ♖h6 38. ♖h4+  
♖h5 39. ♖f8+ ♖g7 40. ♖f4+ g5  
41. ♖d6+ ♖g6 42. ♖f8+ ♖g7  
43. ♖xh5+ 1-0

Magnus Carlsen

Wesley So

Skilling KO rapid f 2020 (2.2)

1. d4 ♖f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♖f3 d5 4. ♖c3  
c5 5. cxd5 cxd4 6. ♖xd4 exd5

7. e4 dxe4 8. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 9. ♖g5

♖e6 10. ♖xe6+ fxe6 11. ♖c4 ♖e7

12. 0-0 ♖bd7 13. ♖d1N The older

move 13. ♖e1!? ♖c8 14. ♖b3 ♖c5

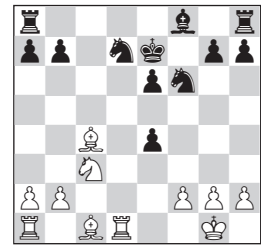
15. ♖e3 ♖xb3 16. axb3 a6 17. ♖a4 ♖f7

18. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 19. ♖xe4 ♖e7 leads

to quick exchanges and an equal

position, l'Ami-Williams, Douglas

2015.



A nice novelty. Black cannot  
play 13... ♖f7 due to the tactic  
14. ♖xe4!. 13... ♖c8 14. ♖e2! This

move performs three important  
tasks: support of possible f2-f3 or

g2-g4 pushes, and it also protects  
the ♖d1 against a pin in case of

the manoeuvre ♖c3-b5-d6. 14...  
a6 After 14... ♖c5 Black should

recon with 15. ♖b5 (or 15. ♖g5

h6 16. ♖xf6+ gxf6 17. b4 ♖d3

18. ♖xe4 ♖f4 19. ♖f3! with the

threats 20. ♖c5 or 20. ♖d6) 15...  
a6 16. ♖d6 ♖c6 17. ♖c4∞. 15. ♖e3

The immediate 15. ♖f4!? deserved

serious attention, e.g. 15... ♖c5

16. f3 exf3 17. ♖xf3∞. 15... ♖c6 If

15... ♖c5, 16. ♖ac1 with the idea

♖a4, e.g. 16... ♖c6 17. f3∞. 16. ♖ac1

Interesting was 16. f3!?. 16... ♖d8

17. ♖d4

A) White should have prevented

the move 17... ♖d6 with 17. ♖f4!?,

e.g. 17... ♖c5 (or 17... ♖b4 18. ♖xe4

♖xc1 19. ♖xc1 ♖xe4 20. ♖c4 ♖d6

21. ♖xe4 ♖xf4 22. ♖xf4∞ and the



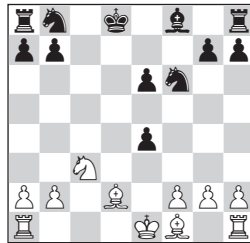
bishop is preferable in such positions) 18. ♖a4 ♗d5 19. ♗xc5 ♜xc5 20. ♜xc5 ♗xc5 21. ♙e5 with fine compensation;

B) It was possible to start active play on the kingside, making use of the pin on the d-file: 17.g4!? h6 18.h4 ♙c5 19. ♗d2∞.

17... ♗d6 18. ♖a4? Here the best way was to activate the ♙e2 by 18.f3! with sufficient compensation. Instead, Carlsen exchanges a couple of rooks, which plays into Black's hands. 18... ♜xc1 19. ♜xc1 ♙e7 20.g3 ♜d8 Gradually consolidating the position, So is now left with an extra pawn.

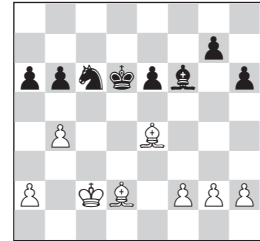
21. ♙e3 ♗d5 22. ♗g5+ ♗7f6 23. ♗c5 ♙xc5 24. ♜xc5 h6 25. ♙c1 ♗b4 Stronger was to centralize the knights even more with 25... ♗d7!? and ... ♙e5. 26. ♜c7+ ♜d7 27. ♜xd7+ ♗xd7 28. ♗d2 ♗fd5 29.a3 ♗d3 30.b3 ♗d6 The black king strives for d4 with the subsequent advance ...e4-e3. Unfortunately, the white bishops have nowhere to turn and the white king cannot help. 31.f3 ♗c5 32.fxe4 ♗xe4 33. ♙c1 e5 34.b4 ♗ec3 35. ♙f1 e4 36. ♗f2 ♙e5 37. ♙h3 b6 Also winning was 37... ♗d4! 38. ♙c8 b5 39. ♙xa6 ♗d3 40. ♙e1 (40.a4 ♗c2+) 40... ♗c2 41. ♙d2 ♗b1! (41... e3? 42. ♙xc3 ♗xc3 43. ♙xb5 ♗xb5 44. ♙e2=) 42. ♙f4 ♗xf4 43.gxf4 ♗c3+-. 38. ♙b2 ♗d4 39. ♙f1 b5 40. ♙e1+- ... 0-1 (61)

conveniently positioning his pieces – ...♙b4 and ...♗e7, and So proves this: 13. ♗b5 (better was 13. ♗xe4!? ♗xe4 14. ♜d4 ♜c8+ 15. ♙b1 ♗c3+ 16.bxc3 ♙xc3 17. ♜e4∞ with pressure on the e6-pawn) 13... a6 14. ♗d4 ♗bd7 15. ♙b1 ♜ac8 16.g3?! (White has little chance of winning back the e4-pawn, so it was better to open up the position further for the two bishops with 16.f3!?) 16... ♗g4 17. ♙h3 ♗df6= Duda-So, chess.com Speed blitz 2020.



11... ♗c6 Perhaps already an inaccuracy. To anticipate White's simple plan, the best development of the knight was ... ♗b8-d7-c5. 12.0-0-0 A new move in this position, but if we look at the move-order, then the previous 11. ♗d2 was also a novelty. Previously seen was 12. ♜d1 ♙e7 13. ♙b5 ♗d4 14. ♙a4 e5 15.0-0 a6 16. ♜de1 b5? (16... ♜d8 17. ♗xe4 ♗xe4 18. ♜xe4 ♗f3+ 19.gxf3 ♜xd2 20. ♜xe5+ ♗f6 21. ♜e8 g6∞) 17. ♗d1± Rajkovic-Nonkovic, Belgrade 2014. 12... ♙e8 13. ♙b5 ♜c8 Black can interfere with White's plans for example by 13... ♙c5!? 14. ♜he1 ♙xf2 15. ♜e2 e3 16. ♙xe3 ♙xe3+ 17. ♜xe3 ♙e7 18. ♙xc6 bxc6 19. ♜de1 ♜he8=. 14. ♜he1 ♗f7 15. ♙b1 ♗d4 16. ♙f1 ♙e7 17. ♗xe4 ♗xe4 18. ♜xe4 So White has fulfilled the first part of his plan and obtained the advantage of the bishop pair. Now it is necessary to exchange the rooks so that the king can participate in the game. 18... ♜hd8 19. ♜c1! ♜xc1+ 20. ♙xc1 ♙f6 21. ♜e1 a6 22. ♜d1 ♗c6? Going along with the opponent's plans. With rooks and with the strong ♗d4 it was difficult for White to strengthen his position. 23. ♜xd8 ♙xd8 24. ♙e3

Better was right away 24. ♗d3 with the idea ♙e4 when without Black's f-pawn the bishop will occupy a dominant position. 24... ♙f6 25. ♗d2! Black cannot be allowed to exchange bishops with ... ♗d4. 25... ♙e7 26. ♗d3 h6 27. ♙e4 ♗d6 28. ♗c2 b6 29.b4!



Fixing the a6- and b5-pawns for his bishop. 29...b5 30.a3 ♗c7 31.f4 ♗d8 32. ♗g6 e5 33. ♙e4 exf4 34. ♙xf4+ ♗d7 35. ♙f5+ ♗c6 36. ♙c8 ♗b7 37. ♙b3 ♗d4 38.a4 bxa4+ Otherwise a4-a5 would have followed, taking away the b6-square from the black king and fixing the pawn on a6 with the threat of ♙c8-g4-f3. 39. ♗xa4 ♗b6 40. ♙b3 ♗c6 41.h4! While the black king and knight are tied to the defence of the a6-pawn, Giri fixes the second weakness on g7. 41... ♗b6 42.h5 ♙f6 43. ♙h2 ♗d8? In a difficult position, Le Quang Liem gives up a pawn. If Black had just waited, then the white king would have moved to the kingside to collect the pawn on g7. For example: 43... ♗c6 44. ♙f4 ♗b6 45. ♗c4 ♗c6 46. ♙xb7+! ♗xb7 47. ♗d5 ♙e7 48. ♙e5 ♙xb4 (48... ♙f8 49. ♗e6+-) 49. ♙xg7 ♗d2 50. ♙f6! a5 51.g4+- with the idea g4-g5!. 44. ♗g1+ ♗c7 Not better was 44... ♗b5 45. ♗d7+ ♗c6 46. ♗c2 ♗d8 47. ♗d3 ♗b6 (the only way to get out of the pin) 48. ♙h2 ♗d8 49. ♙e5 ♙f6 50. ♙xf6 gxf6 51. ♗e4+--. 45. ♙xa6 ♗e6 46. ♗c4 ♗f4 47.g4 ♙e5 48.b5 g6 49.hxg6 ♗xg6 50. ♗d5 ♗g3 51.b6+ ♗b8 52. ♗e4 ♙e5 53. ♗f5 ♗f3 54. ♙e3 ♗h4+ 55. ♗e4 ♗g6 56. ♙xh6 ♙f2 57. ♙e3 ♗xe3 58. ♙xe3 ♗e5 59.g5 ♗d7 60.b7 ♗a7 61.g6 1-0

**The plan with 11. ♗d2**

Anish Giri

Le Quang Liem

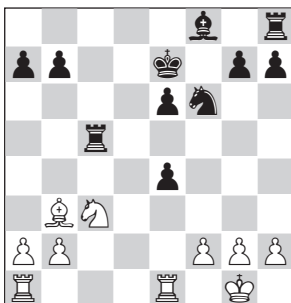
Skilling Open rapid prelim 2020 (4) 1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗f3 d5 4. ♗c3 c5 5.cxd5 cxd4 6. ♙xd4 exd5 7.e4 dxe4 8. ♙xd8+ ♗xd8 9. ♗g5 ♙e6 10. ♗xe6+ fxe6 11. ♗d2! After 11. ♙e3 ♙b4 12.0-0-0+ ♙e7, with an insignificant transposition we have landed into a position from the game Duda-So, chess.com Speed blitz 2020, three days earlier (19 November). The move ♙e3 does not prevent Black from

**Exercise 1**

position after 11. ♖c1-g5

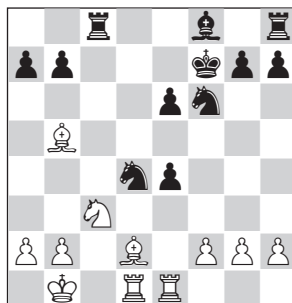
What is the best move for Black to simplify the position?

(solutions on page 252)

**Exercise 2**

position after 16. ♖f1-e1

What is the best defence, 16... ♖f7 or 16... ♘g6 ?

**Exercise 3**

position after 15... ♘c6-d4

To save the ♗b5, which is the better retreat, 16. ♗a4 or 16. ♗f1 ?

---

### Looking for material from previous Yearbooks?

Visit our website [www.newinchess.com](http://www.newinchess.com) and see under 'Games and Downloads' in the page footer. Here you can find games, Surveys and contributors from all our Yearbooks. Surveys are indexed by opening, by author and by Yearbook.

# The Carlsen Touch

by Glenn Flear



**Englishman Glenn Flear lives in the south of France. For every Yearbook he reviews a selection of new chess opening books. A grandmaster and a prolific chess author himself, Flear's judgment is severe but sincere, and always constructive.**

These troubled times have significantly changed the way that chess is being played. In case you hadn't noticed, not many over-the-board events were maintained, but a lot of online blitz and rapid tournaments have been taking place in the last year! For the elite, being under the spotlight, week in, week out, has led to more experimentation and a greater variety in the choice of openings. Magnus Carlsen has been at the forefront of this incessant chopping and changing, in the quest to seek novel ways to throw the opposition's preparation. Some of these efforts have caught on, with the Carlsen touch converting previously unfancied offbeat ideas into the latest fashion. A couple of the works this time illustrate this influence, as he was not only involved with their developments, but the authors have even named systems after him. In contrast, the Elephant Gambit has yet to come into his repertoire, but in future, with a couple of fellow Scandinavians trumpeting its merits, you never know!

*Manuel Apicella*  
**Jouez la Française! Vol. 1**  
Olibris 2020

Despite the English language still dominating the higher end of the opening monograph scene, every now and again a book

meriting attention comes out written in something other than Shakespeare's tongue. Hence this French work in the French language by a Frenchman. If my memory serves me well, this is my first examination of any francophone literature in this column. It's never too late to broaden one's horizons, so *pourquoi pas?* When an experienced GM writes about one of his pet lines, there's invariably something to learn, but as Apicella's approach is rather different from that of other authors, the benefits arising from his book are somewhat unexpected. It's arguably an opportunity for many of us to examine the French Defence from a fresh angle. Instead of fussing about the latest trends, he is more concerned with presenting a broader picture of how this opening pans out in practice. So 500-odd games have been selected and lightly analysed

