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Winning Quickly with 1.b3 and 1...b6

Odessky's Sparkling Lines and Deadly Traps

New In Chess 2020

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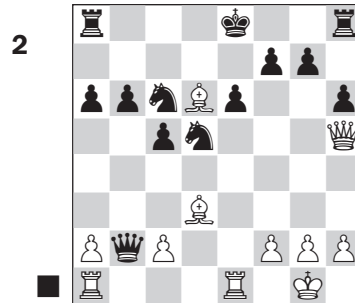
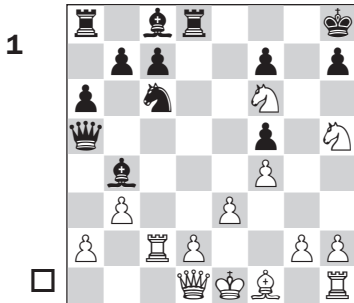
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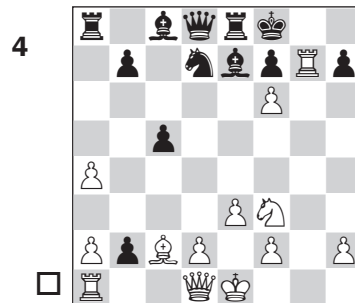
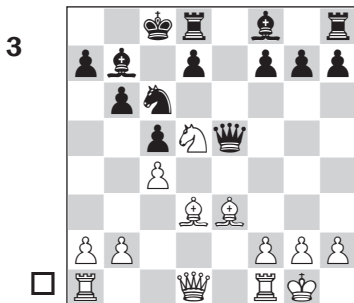
CHAPTER ONE

In place of a foreword: 12 diagrams



What would you play as White here?

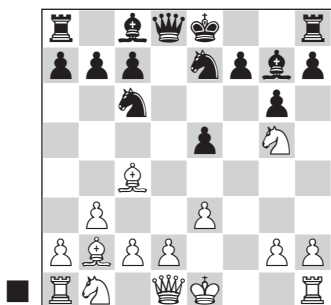
Captures on d5 or e6 are threatened, whilst 17...0-0-0 leads to immediate mate: 18..♙xa6+ ♖d7 19.♚xf7+ ♖xd6 20.♚xe6. What should Black do?



Assess the strength of the continuation 14.♙f4 ♚d4 15.♚a4.

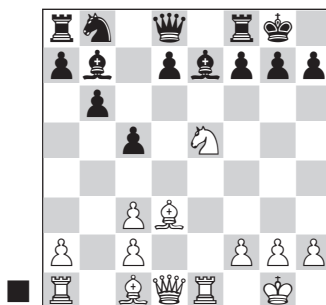
White plays and wins: 16.♚xf7+! ♖xf7 17.♙g5+ with mate in all lines. However, I played 16.♙g5, having in mind: 16...bxa1 ♚ 17.♙xh7#, 16...♙xf6 17.♚xf7+ ♖g8 18.♙b3 bxa1 ♚ 19.♚xh7+ ♖f8 20.♚xa1 and 16...♙xf6 17.♚xf7+ ♖g8 18.♙xh7+ ♖h8 19.♚h5! bxa1 ♚+ 20.♖e2 ♙f8 21.♚xf8+! ♚xf8 22.♙g8+! as happened in the game. Where is the hole in my calculations?

5



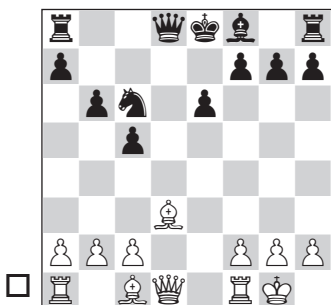
The f7-square is attacked. What can Black do?

6



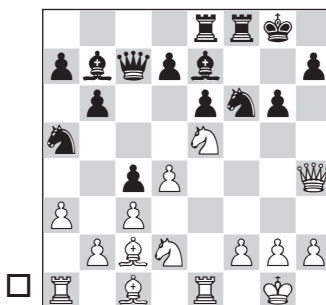
Find the only move for Black. When you've found it, show it to your nearest and dearest.

7



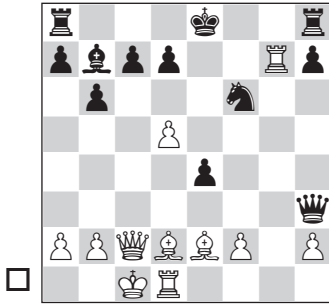
Assess the consequences of 12. ♖b5.

8



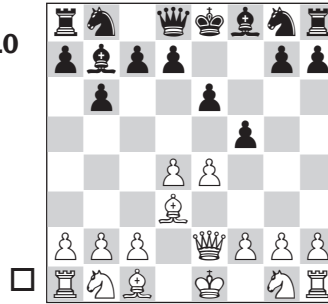
White's eyes are popping out at the numerous tempting possibilities. Choose one of them – the masterly choice, not a mistaken one.

9



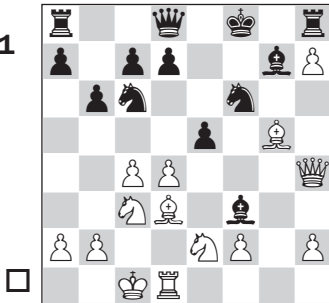
Play the tune, but without any false notes!

10



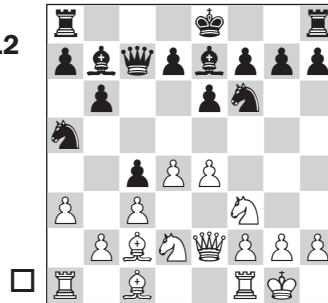
Find the strongest move for White. The answer ‘But doesn’t any move suffice?’ is not acceptable.

11



Inspiration can’t be trained. But you can provide the right prerequisites. Good music, gourmet food, good conversation, a stupid feel-good film. Whatever is convenient. Then give yourself half an hour, better still, an hour. Clear the room of strangers. Set this position up. White to play...

12



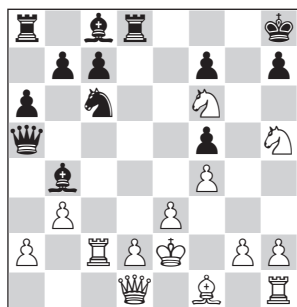
What plan should White choose? Describe its general characteristics. Then give concrete variations.

Solutions

The leitmotif of the first two examples is stereotyped thinking and the joy of overcoming it.

1. The main line of attack is the diagonal a1-h8. But after 18.♔a1? there is 18...♙xd2+ 19.♖f2 ♙xe3+! (this capture also refutes 19.♖e2) 20.♖xe3 (20.♖g3 ♙d4) 20...♗b6+. Alas, it is Black who wins: 21.♖f3 ♘d4+ 22.♖g3 ♘xc2 23.♗c3 ♗e3+. Also unconvincing are 18.♘d5?! ♗xd5 19.♗a1+ ♘d4, and 18.♘e8?! ♘d4 19.♗a1 f6!. Of course, one can play simply 18.♙c4 ♙e6 19.♘d5!. The win is close, but what is that compared with one's feelings after finding the following move? When a detachment of troops is marching, where should the commander be?

18.♙e2!!



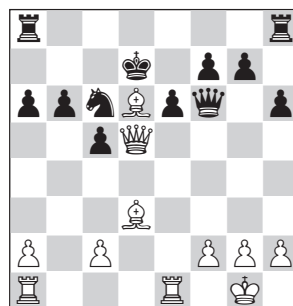
To the existing threat of ♗d1-a1 White has added another: ♗d1-e1-g3 ! In addition, the capture on d2 no longer gains a tempo.

Black, as a last hope, can give a check but then he must shake hands.

2. Those who thought they needed to find 17...♘d4 18.♗xd5 ♘e2+! are wrong. Would I really offer this position just for the sake of such a cheap trap? In fact, on 17...♘d4 White plays 18.♖ab1 ♗xa2 (now it is already useless to play 18...♗c3 19.♗xd5 ♘e2+ 20.♖xe2) 19.♗e5 0-0-0 20.♖xb6! with a very strong attack.

When the heavy guns open up, where should the commander be? Again, out the front, because the guns won't target any one individual!

17...♗f6! 18.♗xd5 ♘d7!!



Now, weak is 19.♗b3 ♘xd6 20.♗xb6? ♖hb8, but 19.♗c4 ♘xd6 20.♙e4 deserves attention. And, of course, White could add to the general insanity with his own act of madness: 19.♗xc6+!? ♘xc6 20.♙e5.

Who knows how this will all end... (spoiler alert: a draw, but this is not guaranteed).

The following examples demonstrate a standard device in non-standard circumstances. I am talking of a *zwischenzug*, where nobody expects it.

3. There is no argument that 14. ♖f4 ♗d4 15. ♗a4! is tempting. But is it any good? The threat is 16. ♗xa7! ♜xa7 17. ♜xb6, mate! Black can reply 15... ♗xd3 16. ♗xa7 d6, hoping White has no more than a draw in variations such as 17. ♗xb6 ♖d7 18. ♖fd1 ♗f5 19. ♗b5 ♜a7 20. ♜b6+ ♞c7 21. ♗a5 ♜c6 22. ♜d5+ ♞c8 23. ♗b5 ♜a7. It's a very shaky hope. But let us look a bit more closely at the position after 15... ♗xd3 16. ♗xa7.



analysis diagram

16... ♗xd5 does not work because of 17. ♗xb6!. But there is a *zwischenzug*: 16... ♙d6!! On 17. ♙xd6 now we do have 17... ♗xd5!. There is also no way to continue the attack after 17. ♜xb6+ ♞c7.

We have to admit that the idea of 14. ♖f4 ♗d4 15. ♗a4 is not justified.

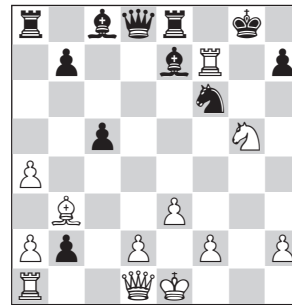
White should start with

14. ♗a4!

We still have a mate threat, e.g. 14... ♗xb2 15. ♖ab1 ♗e5 16. ♙f4, and if the queen retreats, then 17. ♗xa7! ♜xa7 18. ♜xb6#. Black must go over to defence in depth with 14... ♗b8, and then ... ♙f8-d6. But, of course, this is no way out.

4. The refutation of 16. ♜g5? is far from obvious:

16... ♜xf6! 17. ♖xf7+ ♞g8 18. ♙b3



Hopeless now is 18... bxa1 ♗ 19. ♖xh7+ and there are also few chances after 18... ♙h8 19. ♗b1! (but not 19. ♗h5 bxa1 ♗+ 20. ♙e2 ♗b1) 19... bxa1 ♗ 20. ♗xa1 ♙f5 21. ♗e5!.

18... c4!!

This looks like a fruitless attempt to prolong matters. White replies

19. ♙xc4 ♗c7 20. ♙b3

What has changed?

20... ♙h8! 21. ♗b1 ♗xh2!

This is the point. The square h7 is defended and Black wins.

It is a lot of work and effort to find the only correct path amongst a mass of options. If the reader was able to find this path independently (without computer help) without

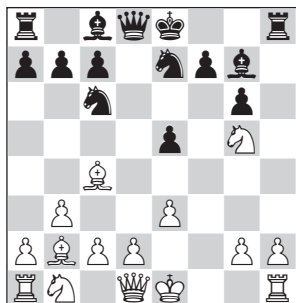
slipping anywhere, please accept my congratulations.

The following two examples are devoted to a rather rare chess technique. In theory, this technique was called the 'disappearing move.'

5. Not even eight moves each have been played, but Black is already struggling mightily. He can't be happy with 8...0-0? 9.0-0 and then 9...♟f5 10.♞xf7 ♜xf7 11.♙xf7+ ♝xf7 12.e4 or 9...♞d5 10.♞xf7 ♜xf7 11.♜xf7 ♝xf7 12.♞f3+ ♝e6 13.e4. Even worse is 8...♞d5? 9.♞xf7 ♝xf7 10.♞f3+ ♝e6, after which almost any move wins: 11.e4, 11.♞c3, even 11.♙a3.

There is some sense in 8...♞f5!? (with the idea of 9.♞xf7 ♞h4+ 10.g3 ♞xg3). But White replies 9.♙xf7+! ♝f8 10.♙a3+! ♞d6 11.♞e6+ ♙xe6 12.♙xe6 ♞h4+ 13.g3 and achieves a decisive advantage.

8...♜f8!! 9.♞xh7 ♜h8 10.♞g5



Returning to the position two moves ago, but without the h7-pawn and without castling rights!

Is this madness?

10...♞d5!

No, it's a brilliant idea. After 11.♞xf7? ♞h4+ 12.g3 ♞xg3+! 13.hxg3 ♜xh1+ 14.♙f1 ♙h3 Black wins thanks to the open h-file. After the immediate 8...♞d5? 9.♞xf7 ♞h4+ 10.g3 the attack would have been doomed to failure.

Probably, in reply to 10...♞d5 White should play

11.♞f3 ♞xg5 12.♙xd5

but after

12...♞d8

the battle is raging.

8...♜h8-f8!! That is a 'disappearing move'.

6. Tempting is 11...♙f6.

Unfortunately, it loses by force:

12.♞h5 g6 13.♞xg6 hxg6 14.♙xg6 fxg6 15.♞xg6+ ♝h8 (not 15...♙g7 in view of 16.♙g5 ♞c7 17.♜e7) 16.♜e3! ♙g7 (16...♙h4 17.♜e5!) 17.♜h3+ ♝g8 18.♞h7+! (not immediately 18.♙g5 ♜f6) 18...♝f7 19.♞h5+ ♝g8 20.♙g5! (now is the time) 20...♜f6 21.♜e1!.

There are other sensible candidate moves: 11...♞c6, 11...g6, 11...d6, 11...d5. They are all bad for one reason or another.

The only saving chance is the mind-blowing

11...♙h4!!

If 12.♞h5 g6 13.♞xg6 fxg6 14.♙xg6, then, as is easy to see, 14...♙xf2+ 15.♝h1 ♞h4!.

And if White plays 12.g3, then after 12...♙f6 Black's main idea becomes clear.



analysis diagram

The attack which worked above, 13. ♖h5 g6 14. ♘xg6 hxg6 15. ♙xg6 fxg6 16. ♖xg6+ ♔h8, is now more difficult, as the rook cannot come via e1-e3-h3, because of the pawn on g3. The rook's other two transfer squares, e4 and e5, are controlled by the black bishops.

This is all because of the 'disappearing move' 11... ♙e7-h4!!.

The following two examples are devoted to a topic which so far has no established name in theory. I would say that it is a braking effect; in other words, a situation in which a frantic forced variation seems to be the most obvious decision... but at the same time it would be nice to slow down, take a breath – or even stop altogether.

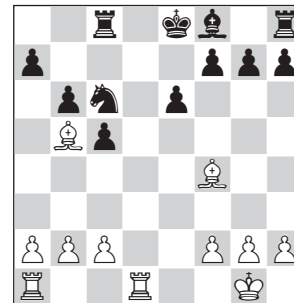
To shift the gear lever from running to leisurely walking – this is the 'braking effect', which can be very useful in the chessboard struggle.

7. White has a colossal lead in development for the sacrificed pawn. He is not even bothered by

the exchange of queens: 12. ♙b5 ♖xd1 13. ♖xd1 (of course not 13. ♙xc6+ ♖d7), since after 13... ♖c8 14. ♙f4 ♙e7 15. ♙a6 ♖d8 (15... ♖a8 16. ♙b7) 16. ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 17. ♙b5+ ♗f8 18. ♖d1 the queenside is completely undefended. In the near future, the pawns on a7 and b6 will be lost and then the white a2-pawn will advance to promote, without doubt.

Black loses even more quickly after 16... ♗xd8 17. ♖d1+ ♗e8 18. ♙b5 or 16... ♙xd8 17. ♙b5 ♗d7 18. ♖d1+.

Everything seems clear, and we can rush ahead. But in fact, we need to slow down and analyse more carefully the position after 12. ♙b5 ♖xd1 13. ♖xd1 ♖c8 14. ♙f4.



analysis diagram

It seems impossible that Black can save himself. But even so, 14... f6! 15. ♙a6 ♖d8 16. ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 17. ♖d1+ ♗e7!! allows him to continue resistance. White still has considerable compensation for the pawn, but he has lost a great part of his advantage.

The move 12. ♙b5?! is tempting, but that's all. The unhurried

12. ♙f4!

CHAPTER TWO

The opening 1.b3 (1...b6) and how to work with it

People write books to share success, and read books to learn success. No one is interested in experience, consisting entirely of failures. Failure is contagious, and paper sheets transmit this infection no worse than coughing or sneezing.

I left chess in 2012. I did not touch it for several years. Having accidentally learned about chess.com, I decided to test my strength in Internet blitz. I started from scratch. The board floated before my eyes, and my knee twitched.

Less than two months later, I crossed the grandmaster rating mark on this site. My opponents – among them lots of players with big names, strong, solid professionals – played chess better than me. Surprisingly though, I knew more. On a small island of chess theory (or rather, a chess garden overgrown with weeds and thorns) onto which I lured them, I was better equipped. Much better! About 30% of the games ended in wins around the 20th move. A quarter of the games simply ended in mate, or the opponents resigned one or two moves before mate.

In all games, I opened with the moves 1.b3 and 1...b6.

In itself, the move 1.b3 is second-rate. There should be no illusions about this. Yes, it is a move not lacking in ideas. The early fianchetto, an attempt to dominate the long diagonal, play on the dark squares. But at least four other opening moves are definitely stronger than 1.b3, and three others are roughly as good. At best, the move is no more than equal 5th-8th. A modest placing.

The move 1...b6 in reply to 1.e4 or 1.d4 is, strictly speaking, lousy. I need to explain why. There is the variation 1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 ♘b7 – this is a real predator. Black attacks the square e4. After every defence, a new attack on e4 follows. On ♗f1-d3 there is ...f7-f5, on ♖b1-c3 there is ...♗f8-b4 and on ♗d1-c2 – ...♗d8-h4. Finally, on f2-f3 there is ...♘g8-f6 (after ...f7-f5 has been played).

In other words, in reply to four defences of e4, there are five ways of attacking the square. This gives chances.

But in the variation 1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♗b7 Black does not manage to create a real battle for the square e4. White has saved the tempo which in the above line was spent on the move c2-c4, and this can be spent on, say,

♘g1-f3. And the pawn on c2, if Black insists (by means of the gormless bishop check on b4), can come to c3. It turns out that against only three attacks on e4 (♙b7, pawn f5 and ♘f6) there is a minimum of three defences: ♙d3, ♖e2 and ♘d2. The idea of a battle for e4 is dead and buried.

And there are no other ideas, at least none that can be seen on the surface.

And there is one other thing. The black king is vulnerable in the starting position. Active developing moves are great, but one must also prepare castling. We play not one, not two, but three moves in a row: 1...b6, 2...♙b7 and, say, 3...♘c6. We are no further forward. Without moving a centre pawn, the queen cannot leave d8 and so 'three noughts' is impossible. And the kingside hasn't moved at all. You want to start with the moves of the b7-pawn and c8-bishop, and yet castle kingside? Hmmm...

In summary, Black spends precious time in the opening, initiating a fight for the square e4. In addition, he is at least two tempi behind in preparing an escape for his king. And I said the move 1...b6 was lousy. No, it's a catastrophe.

Then the question arises: why? Why play moves that you know for sure are not the strongest? Why play, analyse, why in general get seriously involved with such an opening? And I have been studying the opening 1.b3 (1...b6) for more than 20 years. I've written dozens of articles in magazines and other publications, and two books. My mistake, three books.

Why?

The most popular answer is, of course, the collection of stories about 'Gufeld's bishop' and other such stuff. There is no need to explain to readers with Soviet upbringing what this is about; everyone knows that. Grandmaster Gufeld played ...g7-g6 and ...♙f8-g7, because he could not do otherwise. They were soul mates, Gufeld and the bishop. And another grandmaster put his knight on f5, marvelling at the actions of his own hand. 'Bondarevsky made me make this move.'

It is fog, tears, spiritualism. But what if, for a change, the truth is told?

We play chess in order to win. And what if the move b2-b3 (and also ...a7-a6, e2-e4, ...c7-c5, ♘g1-h3 and goodness knows what else) helps us do this? Such a player doesn't need other moves. There is no other motivation than the striving for victory. There is no mysticism, no internal voice, telling you 'Take me and put me on g7, you won't regret it'. There is only the opponent, the board, the pieces, and only that artificial conversation between eight pieces that we call moves.

There another question arises. How are we going to win, by starting the game with second-rate moves such as 1.b3 or 1...b6 ?

How?

This question is easier to answer than the previous one. You see, there is only one way to win at chess, bypassing the stage of fighting for an advantage or even for equality.

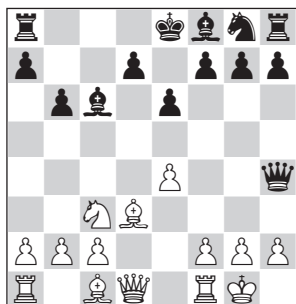
We are prepared to set traps!

Game 1

**1.e4 b6 2.d4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘b7 4.♙d3 c5
5.0-0 cxd4 6.♘xd4 ♘c6 7.♘xc6 ♙xc6
8.♘c3**

Instead of playing 8...♘f6 (or 8...♘e7, if you are disturbed by 8...♘f6 being answered by 9.e5), or 8...d6, or 8...♙c5 – yes, there are a few solid, neutral moves here – Black does nothing more, nothing less than throw his queen into the attack:

8...♚h4



His immediate plan is ...♘g8-f6-g4, the opponent replies h2-h3, and we play ...h7-h5. The knight cannot be taken, because of mate down the h-file, whilst if it is not taken, we follow up with ...♙f8-c5 or ...♙f8-d6, depending on circumstances, and we will see what happens.

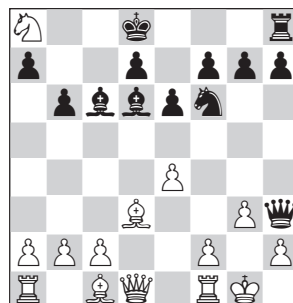
9.♘b5!

Our opponent is not a frightened child. This move is not just the strongest, it is winning. The threat is a check on c7. Playing 9...♖c8 is bad, taking on b5 pointless and returning the queen to d8 is stupid. But this is blitz, and the battle is raging.

9...♘f6 10.♘c7+ ♙d8 11.♘xa8 ♙d6

We are a rook down, but the knight is not getting out, so it's really an exchange. We remain optimistic.

12.g3 ♚h3



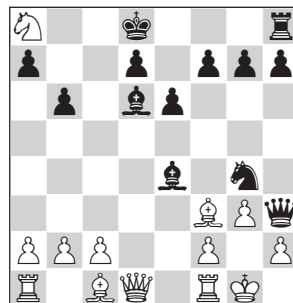
13.♙e2??

...♘f6-g4 was still a threat and on 13.f3 White probably did not like 13...♙xg3. Although this also wins: 14.♚e2. Even simpler are 13.♚e2 ♘g4 14.f3, and 13.♚f3 ♘g4 14.♚g2, and, of course, even 13.♙g5.

13...♙xe4 14.♙f3

Turning a daub into a picture. He also loses after 14.f3 ♘g4! 15.♖f2 ♙c5 16.fxg4 ♚g2#.

14...♘g4!



White resigns.

Statistics rule. In the position after 8...♚h4, roughly six out of every ten opponents of GM or master

strength do not play 9.♘b5. In the other four, they play it but reserve the right to mess up later. The overall score is about 6½ to 3½ in favour of the weaker side. I strongly doubt whether any classical opening would bring me such worthy service.

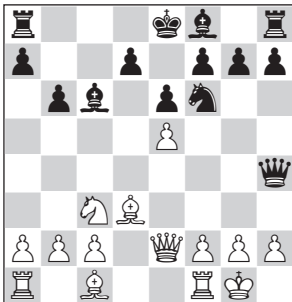
If 9.♘b5 is not played, the picture does not change. White has a large advantage, Black sets traps.

Game 2

1.e4 b6 2.d4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘b7 4.♙d3 c5 5.0-0 cxd4 6.♘xd4 ♘c6 7.♘xc6 ♙xc6 8.♘c3 ♖h4 9.♞e2

‘What if Black has prepared something after 9.♘b5 ? No, better to play more solidly and carefully.’

9...♘f6 10.e5



10...♘g4

Objectively stronger is 10...♘d5 11.♘xd5 (11.♘e4 ♘f4) 11...♙xd5, and if 12.f4 ♙c5+ 13.♙e3 (Bachmann-Limp, Sao Paulo 2003) 13...♙xe3+ 14.♞xe3 0-0 15.f5, then 15...♙f6!.

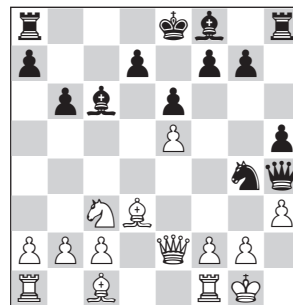
11.h3

So far, I have not had the chance to test my analysis: 11.♙f4 f5 (11...♙c5? 12.♙g3 ♞g5 13.♘e4) 12.♘b5 (12.h3 h5, and what will be

will be) 12...♙c5 13.b4! (too early is 13.♘c7+ ♙f7 14.♘xa8 ♘xf2! 15.♞xf2 ♞xf4 16.♘c7 ♙xf2+ 17.♞xf2 ♞xe5 18.♞g3 ♞xb2) 13...♙xb4 14.♘c7+ ♙f7 (the human instinct is to play 14...♙e7, but after 15.♘xa8 ♙xa8 16.♙b5 ♙c5 White wins with 17.♞d2! with a double attack on d7 and g5) 15.♘xa8 ♙xa8 (on 15...♞xa8 there is the unpleasant 16.♙b5) 16.♙xf5 exf5 17.♞c4+ ♙e8 18.♞xb4. It looks as though it is all over, but nothing of the sort: 18...♘h2!. The rook is attacked, and on 19.♞fe1 Black even wins: 19...♞g4. The only correct move is 19.e6! ♞g4 20.exd7+ ♘d8 21.♙c7+! ♙xc7 22.♞c3+ ♙c6 23.♞e5+ ♘xd7 24.♞xh2 f4 25.f3. The queen returns to the game (via h4 and f2) and White starts to realize the extra exchange.

But this verdict is not final. In the short run, Black’s tactical chances should not for a moment be underestimated.

11...h5



12.♙f4

Not 12.hxg4? hxg4 13.f4 g3, and mate next move. White continues to strengthen his defences and also

about the coincidence between the unimaginable, impossibly unrealistic, plots of Chinese medieval short stories and the tales of Indians living in the mountainous regions of Chile. Can the famous 'theory of stray plots' be repeated in chess?

The Kasparov team worked by themselves, but separately, two German amateurs rated about 2200 made the very same moves. Is birthright really important? Gens una sumus: we are one people, and isn't it exactly to cover such cases that movie credits always include the phrase 'all characters are fictitious, and any resemblance to living people or events is purely coincidental'?

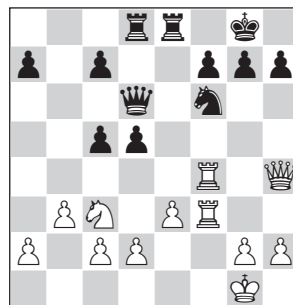
Or maybe it was not coincidence, and not chance, but deliberate borrowing? In that case, we can only pay tribute to the absence in Kasparov and his assistants of any analytical arrogance or snobbery. What they may have done is by no means theft, a misappropriation of intellectual property. On the contrary, it is hard work, to sift through thousands of tons of waste rock (that is, amateur games) in order to find one gem, cut it and present it to the public in all its splendour.

In the opening 1.b3 (1...b6), the situation with borrowings is ambiguous in nature. On the one hand, there is almost nothing to borrow from anyone. On the other hand (and for the same reason),

everything gets pressed into use, absolutely everything – not just ready-to-use ideas (the ideal, of course), but any fragments of ideas, scraps of thoughts, echoes of successful and failed combinations, anything will come in handy.

Anything that works is accepted, and it is strictly forbidden to turn up one's nose at games played in third-rate tournaments by little-known or completely unknown players. We are not proud.

I remember paying attention to a game Ferenc-Naes (Copenhagen 1997): 1.b3 e5 2.♖b2 ♘c6 3.e3 d5 4.♗b5 ♗d6 5.f4 ♕e7 6.♘f3 ♗g4 7.fxe5 ♗xe5 8.♗xc6+ bxc6 9.♗xe5 ♗xf3 10.♖xf3 ♖xe5 11.0-0 ♘f6 12.♘c3 0-0 13.♖f4 ♖d6 14.♖h4 ♗fe8 15.♗f4 ♗ad8 16.♗af1 c5 17.♗f3

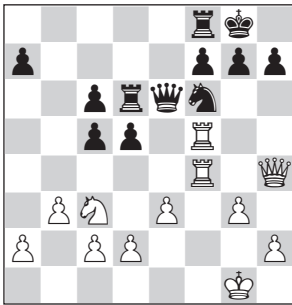


17...d4? 18.♗xf6! gxf6 19.♘e4 ♗xe4 20.♖xe4 dxe3 21.d3! ♖d4 22.♗xe3, winning.

White enjoyed a substantial and rare piece of luck. The knight on c3 is the main loafer in the position that occurs after a dozen moves; its usual destiny is to guard the

e4-square and wait for the moment when it will be possible to jump somewhere to the side. And here it enjoyed such a career.

I spent a decade waiting for an opportunity to repeat this idea. Finally I was lucky: **1.b3 e5 2.♟b2 ♘c6 3.e3 d5 4.♟b5 ♙d6 5.f4 ♖h4+ 6.g3 ♗e7 7.♘f3 ♙g4 8.fxe5 ♙xe5 9.♙xc6+ bxc6 10.♙xe5 ♙xf3 11.♖xf3 ♖xe5 12.0-0 ♘f6 13.♘c3 0-0 14.♖f4 ♗e6? 15.♖h4** (why not 15.♖xc7, incidentally?) **15...♜ad8 16.♜f4 c5** (tempting is 16...h6, so as to meet 17.♜af1 with the sharp fork 17...g5) **17.♜af1 ♜d6 18.♜f5 c6 19.♜1f4**

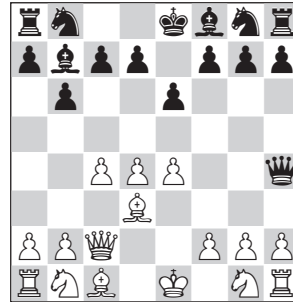


The pawn is on g3, so White is unable to manoeuvre his rooks to the g- and h-files. The exchange sacrifice is the last hope, but the simple 19...♘d7 would put the tin lid on White's ambitions. It is no coincidence that, instead of 19.♜1f4, the computer recommends immediately taking 19.♜xf6! with the nice trap 19...gxf6 20.♘a4 c4 21.♘c5 ♗e5? 22.♘d7! ♜xd7 23.♖g4+ and 24.♖xd7.

But my opponent replied **19...d4?**, and everything went as I had

prepared ten years earlier: **20.♜xf6! gxf6 21.♘e4 1-0.**

The immortal game Brunk-Berebora, Berlin 1998, left an indelible mark on the soul of everyone who has made the first move ...b7-b6 at least once in his life. Here is this short but memorable game: **1.c4 b6 2.d4 e6 3.e4 ♙b7 4.♖c2 ♖h4 5.♙d3**

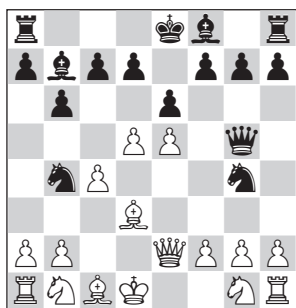


5...♘c6! Hungarian master Ferenc Berebora has no copyright on the ...♘b8-c6-b4 manoeuvre. For example, in the tabiya 1.d4 b6 2.c4 e6 3.e4 ♙b7 4.♙d3 anyone who is not inclined to go into the jungle of variations starting 4...f5 5.exf5 ♙xg2 can adopt the reasonable alternative 4...♘c6 5.♘f3 (or 5.♘e2) 5...♘b4 with the inevitable – and not disadvantageous – exchange of the knight for the bishop. But for the move ...♘b8-c6 to have such a devastating, directly disastrous effect on the position – in this, Berebora is certainly the first among equals.

6.d5 ♘b4! 7.♖e2 ♘f6! 8.e5 (or 8.♘c3 ♘xd3+ 9.♖xd3 ♙b4) **8...♘g4!** Not from an excess of feelings, but

for their real power do I put an exclamation mark against each of master Berebora's moves. The game is essentially over. All of f2, d3, and e5 are hanging. Not wanting to give up after eight moves, White voluntarily converts himself from an opponent to a co-author:

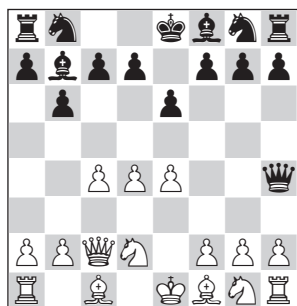
9.♔d2 ♖g5+! (not in any circumstances 9...♗xf2 10.♗f3 ♖f4+ 11.♔c3) 10.♔d1



trap against a famous English grandmaster, a participant in a World Championship match, so to speak. One should not flatter oneself (this grandmaster, as everyone knows, plays on the Internet for his own pleasure and often experiments, regardless of the consequences), but I want to show the game. It is not every day you manage to win in ten moves against a world-famous opponent.

Game 42

1.e4 b6 2.d4 e6 3.c4 ♘b7 4.♚c2 ♜h4 5.♞d2!?



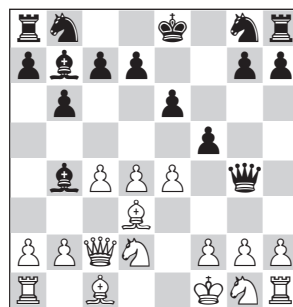
A rare move, but smart and poisonous. Its idea is twofold. Firstly, we do not have knights on d2 and f3 that duplicate each other. Rather, they will complement each other, as the ♞g1 may go elsewhere. The developed knight defends the e4-pawn and thereby deprives the enemy bishop lunge to b4 of some of its normal strength. Secondly, the knight on d2 can go to f3, and his partner can come to e2. It's not clear exactly how this benefits White, but, believe me, it does in some variations.

5... ♘b4

We create a threat of taking on e4 with check (e.g., in reply to 6.♞f3). Probably White is not losing after 6.d5 ♞f6 7.♘d3 ♞g4 8.g3 ♜f6 9.♞h3, but you will understand that such play is strictly for amateurs.

6. ♘d3 f5

In my first book, I wrote that the move 6...♜g4 is the only one that allows us to continue the fight for equality. A decade and a half later, I can say that I have changed my point of view. It is possible to deprive the opponent of castling (7.♞f3? ♜xg2 8.♞g1 ♜xf3, and on 7.g3, besides the usual 7...f5 8.f3 ♜h5, the computer's 7...♞c6 8.♞e2 ♜f3!? 9.0-0 ♘xd2 10.♘xd2 ♞f6 with the mate threat 11...♞e5! 12.dxe5 ♞xe4 also looks good), but Black's achievements end there. After 6...♜g4 7.♞f1 f5 (7...♞c6?! 8.♞df3!, and the set-up with the queen on g4 and the bishop on b4 loses all meaning) a critical position arises.



analysis diagram

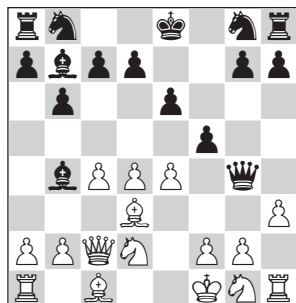
It looks as if Black, having completed the moves of the 'mandatory programme' (...♘f8-b4;

...f7-f5), has already achieved a lot and is ready to reap success. The capture on d2 and then e4 is threatened. 8.♖gf3 ♕xd2 9.♜xd2 is weak in view of 9...♜c6 10.f3 ♖h4 11.♖c3 ♜f6 12.d5 ♜e7 13.e5 ♜h5, and after 9.♕xd2? fxe4 10.♜e5 the punishment is instant: 10...♖xg2+! 11.♙xg2 exd3+ and 12...dxc2.

Relatively better is 9.h3 ♖h5 10.♕xd2 ♜f6 (but not 10...fxe4? 11.♕xe4 ♕xe4 12.♖xe4 ♜c6 because of 13.g4! ♖f7 14.♜e5) 11.e5 ♜e4 12.♕e3 ♜c6 13.♕xe4 (13.a3 ♜e7) 13...fxe4 14.♖xe4 0-0-0 with very decent compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

8.f3 ♖h4 9.exf5 is also unconvincing, although this continuation can be found in several games at a serious level. Instead of taking on d4, Black should play 9...♜c6! and the initiative is entirely on his side, for example, 10.fxe6 dxe6 11.♜e2 0-0-0 12.a3 ♜xd4! 13.♜xd4 ♕c5 14.♜2b3 ♕xd4 15.♜xd4 ♖xd4.

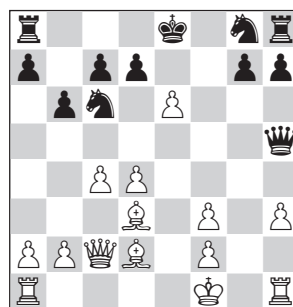
The right decision is **8.h3!**.



analysis diagram

White drives the queen off the fourth rank, then takes on f5

and in the concrete variations he turns out to be better: 8...♖g6 (even weaker is 8...♖h5 9.exf5 ♜c6 10.♜df3! – again this move, and again the bishop on b4 is left out in the cold – 10...♜f6 11.♜e2 ♕d6 12.♕d2 0-0 13.c5! ♕e7 14.fxe6 dxe6 15.♜f4) 9.♜gf3 (not 9.♜df3? fxe4 10.♜e5 for the familiar reason: 10...♖xg2+! 11.♙xg2 exd3+ and 12...dxc2) 9...♕xd2 10.exf5! ♖h5 (or 10...♖f6 11.♕xd2 ♕xf3 12.gxf3 ♜c6 13.fxe6 ♜xd4 14.exd7+ ♙xd7 15.♖a4+ c6 16.♔e1, and the two bishops dominate the board: 16...♜xf3 17.♕c3 ♖f7 18.♕e4!) 11.♕xd2! (after 11.♜xd2 ♜c6, as happened in a game Alexandrov-G. Szabo, Plovdiv 2008, Black still has the opportunity for counterplay) 11...♕xf3 12.gxf3 ♜c6 (12...♖xf3 13.♕e4) 13.fxe6.



analysis diagram

Suddenly, the black king turns out to be no better placed than his opposite number: the diagonals blow with an icy wind, and the position switches to finishing mode. We can extend the variation a little more: 13...♜xd4 (13...0-0-0 14.exd7+ ♙b8 15.d5 ♜d4 16.♖d1

layer of positions in this opening. The opponent, on the contrary, plays easily, and he does not need preliminary preparation, only common sense and general class of play.

It is equally important, in my opinion, to emphasize that the opening 1...b6 constantly provides the opponent with second and even third chances. The game just shown is a beautiful illustration. White didn't start the game at all in a fundamental way (5.c3 instead of 5.d5!, 6.♘bd2 instead of 6.♖e2 or 6.e5!?). But he pulled himself together, delved into the position, played energetically and accurately: 10.d5!, 11.e5, 12.♗xe4!. It remains only for Black to shrug his shoulders and accept that even after White fails to play the strongest moves in the opening, the initiative is still on his side, and even with the most stubborn defence we are not safe from defeat.

It is just that sort of opening.

I do not want to finish the book on a downbeat note. Let me show you my personal variation. I looked at something Miles had played, and added something imagined by myself. The result is something unconventional, interesting, raising a smile and bringing great creative satisfaction.

Like so much in our opening, the variation was born out of a simple trap.

Game 76

1.e4 b6 2.d4 e6 3.♗f3 ♘b7 4.♘d3 c5 5.c3 ♗f6 6.♖e2 ♙e7

This is not generally a move which we need to play early, but here we have to close the e-file. The hasty 6...♗c6 fails to 7.d5!.

7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3

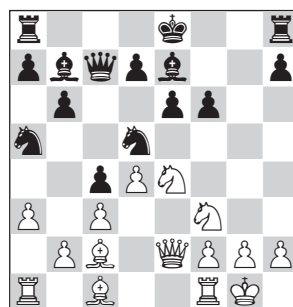
Sensible prophylaxis against 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 ♗b4.

8...♗a5 9.♗bd2 c4 10.♙c2 10.♗xc4 ♗xc4 11.♙xc4 ♗xe4 (or 11...♙xe4) is seen surprisingly rarely.

10...♖c7

It is hard to imagine that White can ruin such a position in just three moves, and even harder when these three moves will be the simplest and most obvious ones. But that's exactly what will happen.

11.e5 ♗d5 12.♗e4 f5! 13.exf6 gxf6!



To date, the number of my victories just over grandmasters and masters has exceeded three dozen (and the total number of victories cannot be calculated – the variation is wild and completely deservedly popular on the Internet).

I would like to quote all the won games, if only in moral

compensation for the humiliation that has accompanied us throughout the entire fourth chapter. I would not begrudge the space in the book.

But it's pointless to present all of the games, because they are of the same type. Black castles queenside, puts his rook on g8, like a cannon, and starts a mating attack. A mix of four basic techniques leads to success:

- a blow on g2. It can be a single blow, but it can also be a series of blows (after doubling the rooks on the g-file), or a blow with 'weight'. This refers to the battery on the long diagonal – the queen on c6, the bishop on b7 – with the eventual jump of the knight from d5 to c3, e3 or f4;
- advancing the f- and h-pawns.

If White thinks that the knight on g3 solves all his problems, then Black will help him overcome this misconception. Suppose White's h-pawn blocks on h4 – it is impossible to prevent the advance of the f-pawn. The knight will be driven from g3 one way or another, and the problems with g2 become even more acute;

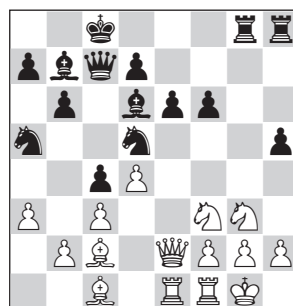
- a sacrifice of the exchange on g6. There is no need to explain anything about this. Simply mentally remove the bishop on c2 from the board (as well as any of the black rooks) and move the h7-pawn to g6. Do you see what has happened? With the bishop gone, the opponent does not have any

pieces that could at least somehow withstand the pressure on the light squares. And Black, in addition to everything else, gets a flexible and strong structure;

- the manoeuvre ...♖e7-d6-f4. By itself, the exchange of bishops does not interest us. The task is to get the knight to f4 so that it cannot be exchanged. Ideally, almost all the pieces – the queen on c6, the bishop on b7, the knight on f4, the rooks on g8 and g7 – should look at one point. Guess which one?

Let us examine a few examples.

– 14.♘g3 0-0-0 15.♙d2 ♖dg8
16.♗ae1 h5 17.♙c1 ♙d6.



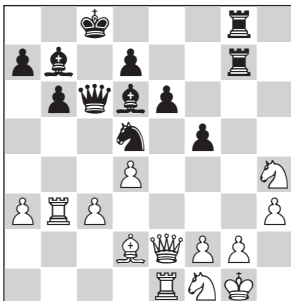
analysis diagram

A typical picture: White has connected his rooks, completed his development and can now resign with a clear conscience. But resigning on the 17th move, with material equality and a board full of pieces, is indecent. Therefore, he just waits for the end.

18.♘h4 (18.♘e4 ♙f4) 18...f5 19.♙d2 ♖b8 (there is no hurry) 20.♙c1 ♗g4 21.♘f3 h4 22.♘h1 ♙xh2+! 23.♘xh2 ♗xg2+! 24.♙xg2 ♘f4+ 25.♙g1 ♘h3#.

– 14. ♖h6 0-0-0 15. ♘ed2 ♜dg8 16. ♜fc1 (White has only just got ready for the advance b2-b4, whilst Black already has everything ready) 16... ♙d6! (so as after 17.b4 cxb3 18. ♙xb3 ♘xb3 19. ♘xb3 to have 19... ♙xh2+! 20. ♘xh2 ♜xg2+!) 17. ♜f1 (the threat was 17... ♙f4!) 17... ♜g6! 18. ♙e3 (or 18. ♙xg6 hxg6 19. ♙e3 ♙xh2+ 20. ♖h1 ♘xe3 21. fxex3 ♙f4+ 22. ♖g1 ♙xe3+) 18... f5 19. g3 ♘xe3 20. fxe3 ♙xg3 and, not having won easily in one of the dozens of possible ways shown earlier in this chapter, White resigned!

– 14. ♘h4 (does he really hope to give a check on h5?) 14... 0-0-0 15. ♘g3 ♜dg8 16. ♜b1 f5 17. ♘f3 h5 18. ♜e1 h4 19. ♘f1 ♙d6 20. ♙d2 ♜c6 (more accurate was 20... ♙f4!, and if 21. ♘e3, then 21... ♙xh2+! 22. ♘xh2 ♘f4 23. ♜f1 ♙xg2 24. ♘xg2 h3) 21. h3 ♜g7 (here too, Black missed 21... ♙xg2+! 22. ♘xg2 ♜g8+ 23. ♖h1 ♘xc3! 24. ♙xc3 ♜xf3+ 25. ♜xf3 ♙xf3#) 22. b4 cxb3 23. ♙xb3 ♘xb3 24. ♜xb3 ♜hg8 25. ♘xh4



analysis diagram

25... ♙xg2+! 26. ♘xg2 ♜xg2+. A serial blow, as promised. White resigned:

27. ♘xg2 ♘e3+ 28. ♖g1 ♜g2# or 27. ♖h1 ♘f4 28. ♙xf4 ♜g1+.

– 14. ♘g3 0-0-0 15. ♜e1 ♜dg8 16. ♙h6 ♙d6! 17. ♜ad1 (another game went 17. ♙e4 ♜g6!? 18. ♙xg6 hxg6 19. ♙d2 g5 20. h3 ♙f4 21. ♘e4 g4! 22. hxg4 ♙xd2 23. ♘exd2 ♜f4 24. ♜e4 ♜h6 25. ♘f1 ♘f4, winning) 17... ♙f4! 18. ♙xf4 ♘xf4 19. ♜e3 h5 20. h4 ♜g4 21. ♜d2 (21. ♙e4 ♙xe4 22. ♜xe4 ♘h3+) 21... ♘xg2! 22. ♘xg2 ♜hg8. White has no defence against a new blow on g3 – White resigned.

– 14. ♘g3 0-0-0 15. ♙e4 ♜dg8 16. ♙h6 ♙d6 17. ♜ae1 ♜g6!? 18. ♙xg6 hxg6 19. ♙c1 g5 20. h3

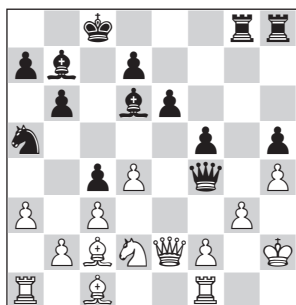


analysis diagram

20... ♙f4! (unconvincing was 20... ♙xg3?! 21. fxg3 ♜xg3 22. ♜f2 ♜xh3 23. ♜xg3 ♜xg3 24. ♖h2 ♜g4 25. ♖h3 f5 26. g3) 21. ♘h2 (or 21. ♙xf4 ♘xf4 22. ♙e3 ♙d5, and if 23. ♘e2, then 23... ♘xg2! 24. ♘xg2 g4 25. hxg4 ♜h2#, whilst if 23. ♘e4, then 23... ♘xh3+! 24. gxh3 ♜xh3 25. ♘g3 ♜xg3+ 26. fxg3 ♜xg3+ 27. ♖h1 g4) 21... ♙xc1 22. ♜xc1 ♘f4 23. ♜g4 ♙xg2 and White resigned.

– 14.♘g3 0-0-0 15.♙d2 ♖dg8 16.♜ab1 h5 17.♜fe1 h4 18.♘f1 f5 (not allowing the bishop to e4, although it is also possible to permit this: 18...♜c6 19.♙e4 f5 20.♘e5 ♘xc3!) 19.b4 (on 19.♘e5 I had prepared the thematic 19...♜xg2+ 20.♙xg2 ♘f4+ 21.♙g1 ♘h3#) 19...cxb3 20.♙xb3 ♘xb3 21.♜xb3 ♘f4 22.♙xf4 ♜xf4. The ♘f3 hangs and the opponent resigned after 23.♘1d2 ♜xg2+! 24.♙xg2 ♜g4+ 25.♙h1 ♜g8. Also nice is 23.c4 ♜xd4! 24.♘xd4 ♜xg2+ 25.♙h1 ♜hg8. To stave off the mate, White will have to cut off a piece of living flesh with each move.

– 14.♘h4 0-0-0 15.g3 ♜dg8 16.♘g2 f5 17.♘d2 h5 18.h4 (18.♘f3 ♜c6! 19.♘e5 ♘xc3!) 18...♘f4 19.♘xf4 ♜xf4 20.♙h2 (20.♘xc4 ♜xg3+) 20...♙d6!.



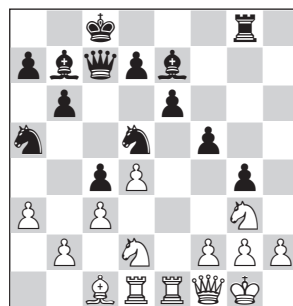
analysis diagram

White resigned. Taking on h4 is threatened and on 21.gxf4 Black gives mate in two.

– 14.♘g3 0-0-0 15.♘h5 ♜dg8 16.♙e3 ♙d6 17.g3 ♜c6! 18.♙h6 ♜g6!? 19.♙g7 (19.♙xg6 hxg6; 19.♙e3 f5) 19...♜xg7! 20.♘xg7 ♘f4! 21.gxf4 ♜g8 22.♙d1 ♜xg7+ 23.♙h1 ♘b3

24.♜b1 ♘d2!. It is rare that even the ♘a5 is involved in the attack. White resigned, not wanting to allow the variation to the end: 25.♜xd2 ♜xf3+ 26.♙xf3 ♙xf3#.

– 14.♙h6 0-0-0 15.♜fe1 ♜hg8 16.♜ad1 ♜g6 17.♙c1 ♜dg8 18.♘g3 ♙d6!? (believe me, this is not a blunder) 19.♙xg6 hxg6 20.♘e4 ♙e7 21.♘g3 (more tenacious was 21.h4) 21...g5 22.♜f1 g4 23.♘d2 (but here, he should have gone for 23.♘h4 f5 24.♘hxf5 exf5 25.♘xf5 ♜h8 26.g3) 23...f5.



analysis diagram

I would like to believe that Miles – a great master himself in constructing such positions – would have been pleased with me. The pawn structure from a7 to g4 really resembles the rings of a snake. Not the largest, but still impressive in size. 24.b4 (on 24.f3 the computer offers the direct 24...f4 25.♘ge4 ♘e3; but I would probably hesitate – after all, White is completely helpless with his extra exchange) 24...cxb3 25.c4 ♙a6 26.♙b2 ♙g5! (of course, not 26...♘xc4 27.♜c1) 27.♜d3 ♘xc4

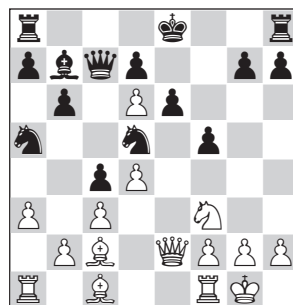
28.♖xb3 ♖b8 (again there is no hurry: 28...♖xb2 29.♞xa6+ ♖b8 30.♞b1) 29.♙c1 ♙xc1 30.♞xc1 ♗f4 31.♞f1 ♞b7 32.f3 ♗e3 33.♞f2 ♗exg2 and White resigned.

There is such a meme on the Internet: 'suspect dog'. I believe that in chess the corresponding term would be useful, if only to help the authors of books, articles and other specific texts. This is a situation where one of the players decides to force the game and somewhere in the middle (or maybe closer to the end), he suddenly realizes that the variation ends with a fall into the abyss. He tries frantically to bounce to the side – that's fine if he succeeds, but what if not?!

The line 1.e4 b6 2.d4 e6 3.♗f3 ♙b7 4.♙d3 c5 5.c3 ♗f6 6.♞e2 ♙e7 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.a3 ♗a5 9.♗bd2 c4 10.♙c2 ♞c7 11.e5 ♗d5 12.♗e4 f5 13.exf6 gxf6 followed by 14...0-0-0 leads to a difficult position for White. The computer does not agree with this, and considers the position approximately equal. But at the same time, it does not give any specific advice on saving the position.

I also do not know what can be suggested unless White tries a piece sacrifice: 14.♗e5!? fxe5 15.♞h5+ ♙d8 16.dxe5. For a short time, White becomes the attacking side. But there is no objective compensation for the sacrificed material.

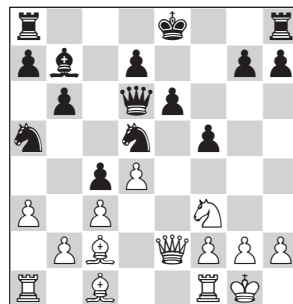
Another idea is more interesting: 13.♗d6+!? (instead of 13.exf6) 13...♙xd6 14.exd6.



analysis diagram

This is played against me more and more often. The essence of the move is clear: having overdone things on the previous two moves (11.e5 and 12.♗e4), White begins to realize that opening the g-file threatens his king, with serious trouble. And at the last moment, he turns to the side.

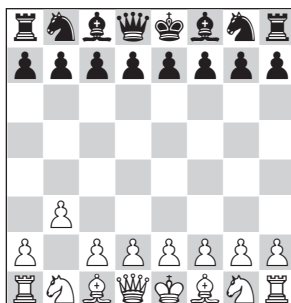
After 14...♞xd6 (14...♞c6 appears more subtle, but the variations 15.♗e5 ♗xc3 16.♞h5+ g6 17.♗xc6 gxf6 18.bxc3 ♙xc6 19.♙d1, 15.♗e5 ♗f4 16.♞f3 ♗e2+ 17.♙h1 and 15.♙xf5 0-0 16.♙c2 lead us nowhere), a critical position arises.



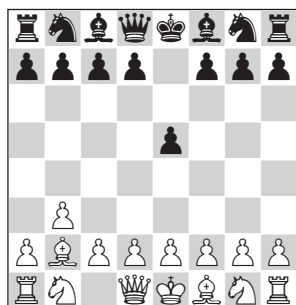
analysis diagram

Index of variations

1.b3

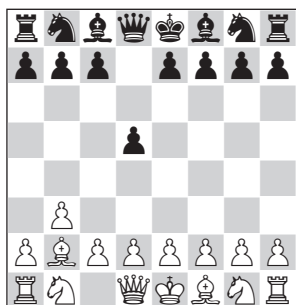


1.b3 e5 2.♖b2



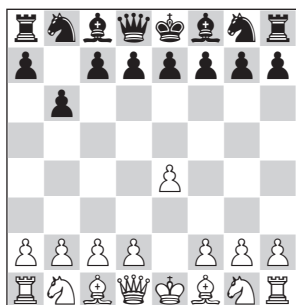
- 2...f6 Game 5
- 2...d6 3.e3
 - 3...♘c6..... Game 3
 - 3...g6 4.d4 ♖g7 5.dxe5
 - 5...♙xe5 6.♘c3..... Game 32
 - 5...♘d7 6.♘f3
 - 6...♘xe5 7.♘xe5 ♙xe5
 - 8.♘c3 Game 33
 - 6...dxe5 7.♙c4
 - 7...♘e7 8.♙xf7+ ... Game 23
 - 7...♘h6 8.h4 .. Games 34-35
- 2...♘c6 3.e3
 - 3...a6 Games 7-9
 - 3...g6 Game 21
 - 3...d6 Game 31
 - 3...d5 4.♙b5 ♙d6 5.f4 ♚e7 6.♘f3
 - 6...♙g4..... Game 6
 - 6...f6..... Games 38-41
 - 3...♙d6 Game 51
 - 3...♘f6
 - 4.♘f3
 - 4...d6 Games 24-25
 - 4...♙d6 Game 28
 - 4.♙b5 ♙d6 5.♘a3 a6 6.♙e2
 - 6...b5 Game 52
 - 6...♚e7..... Game 60

1.b3 d5 2.♘b2

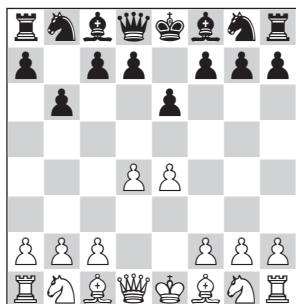


2...♙g4 3.f3 ♘h5 4.e4 dxe4 5.♚e2 c6
 6.♞c3 exf3 7.♞xf3 e6 8.0-0-0 ♞f6
 9.h3
 9...♙xf3.Game 20
 9...♞bd7. Games 10-13
 4...e6.Game 37
 2...c5Game 55
 2...♞f6 3.♞f3
 3...g6Game 45
 3...e6Games 46-47

1.b3 ♞f6 2.♘b2 g6 Games 29-30
 1.b3 a5 2.♘b2 a4 Games 58-59

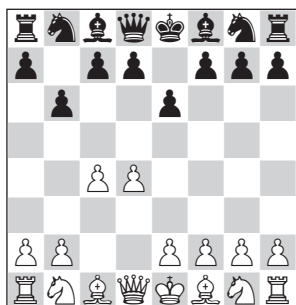
1.e4 b6

- 2.♘f3 e6 3.♘c3 ♘b7 4.a3 ... Game 26
 3.g3 ♘f6 4.d3 d5 5.♘bd2 dxe4
 6.dxe4 ♘b7
 7.e5 Game 18
 7.♘g2 Game 44

2.d4 e6

- 3.♘d3 ♘b7 4.♚e2. Games 61-63
 3.♘c3 ♘b7
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 4.♘c3 ♘f6 5.♘d3 c5
 6.0-0Game 50
 6.d5 Games 67-70
 4.♘d3 c5
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 8.♘c3 ♚h4Games 1-2
 8.c4 ♚h4. Games 56-57
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 6.♘bd2 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♘a6
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 8.a3. Games 76-82

1.d4 b6 2.c4 e6



3.♘f3 ♙b7 4.g3Game 54

3.a3Game 36

3.e4 ♙b7

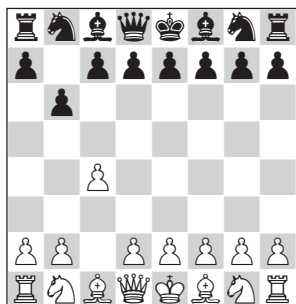
4.♞c2. Games 42-43

4.♙d3 f5 5.exf5

5...♙xg2.....Games 14-17

5...♙b4+Game 48

1.c4 b6



2.♘f3..... Game 19

2.♘c3Game 22