

The Modernized Najdorf

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**The Modernized
Najdorf**

Milos Pavlovic

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Key to Symbols

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

Preface

The Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian Defence is so popular that the total number of games played in this line exceeds the number of games played in many complete openings! It has been the favourite line of many world champions and grandmasters. Famous lines such as the Poisoned Pawn, the Polugaevsky Variation, the Sozin, the English Attack, to name just a few, are known to all chess players as belonging to the Najdorf Sicilian.

Championed by young American Bobby Fischer, the Najdorf line gained popularity and with time it became the most popular Sicilian. Even when Fischer lost a game to Spassky in the Poisoned Pawn line during their 1972 world championship match in Reykjavik, somehow the Najdorf didn't lose its popularity. On the contrary, a new generation of players simply continued to work on the line, with Kasparov in first place and followed by many strong grandmasters.

Perhaps the secret for such popularity should be sought in the amazing flexibility that the Najdorf offers. Often Black can choose between ...e6 setups or ...e5; even ...g6 is often played. You don't find such a variety of ideas in other Sicilians. It is considered one of the top three best lines against 1.e4, the other two being the Berlin and the Marshall, both belonging to the Ruy Lopez opening.

With Black in the Najdorf I have always tried to implement the ...e5 reaction any time I considered it suitable. In Sicilians Black doesn't often have a chance to have a pawn on e5; only in the Najdorf does Black frequently have this possibility at his disposal.

From Kotov, Najdorf himself and Bronstein to Polugaevsky, Fischer, Tal, Gligoric, Portisch, Kasparov, Nunn, Ljubojevic, Timman, these and many others have made serious contributions in this line. Among today's younger generation Vachier Lagrave and Nepomniachtchi head the many standard-bearers of the Najdorf. It is important also to mention players who contributed with the white pieces: Karpov, Geller, Velimirovic, Anand, Short, and even Fischer himself, who often played the Sozin line. Many others too have been trying to find the ultimate weapon against such a strong line.

Sometimes it is a new positional idea and sometimes a tactical one, depending on players' styles, but the Najdorf is very resilient and new efforts by one side are countered by new efforts from the other. It just goes from strength to strength.

I used to play it with both colours, and that experience helped me to write this book. Going through an amazing number of complex lines, deciding which line to put in this book and which to leave out is a big job but as I analyzed it often from the White side somehow such decisions came easier to me.

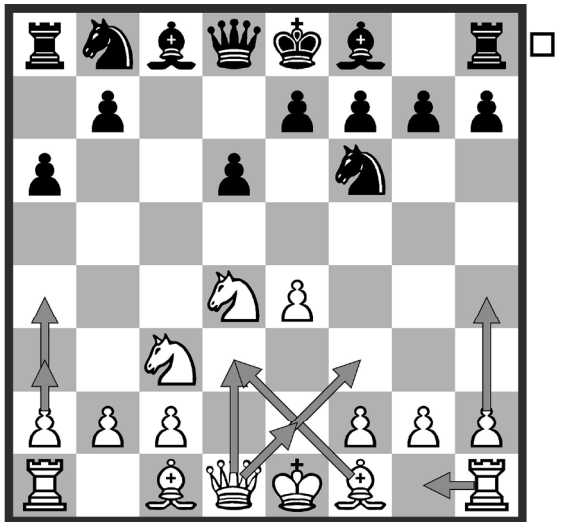
Learning the Najdorf will help all players to understand Sicilians in a better way. Different aspects of chess such as defence, attack and sacrifice, positional themes and tactical storms, can be found in my book.

Milos Pavlovic
Belgrade 2018



6th Move Sidelines

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6



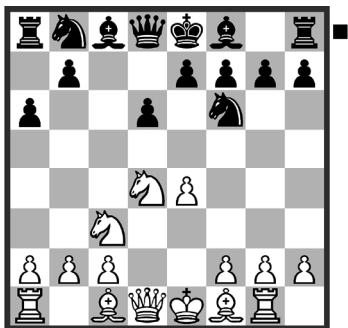
Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – 6th Move Sidelines

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 a6	
a) 6.♞g1 e5 7.♗b3 ♙e6 8.g4 d5 9.exd5	9
b) 6.♞g1 e5 7.♗b3 ♙e6 8.g4 d5 9.g5.....	11
c) 6.♙d3.....	13
d) 6.♞d3 ♗bd7 7.♙e2 g6 8.♙g5	18
e) 6.♞d3 ♗bd7 7.♙e2 g6 8.0-0.....	20
f) 6.♞e2	22
g) 6.♞f3 ♞b6.....	25
h) 6.♞f3 ♗bd7	27
i) 6.a3	29
j) 6.a4	33
k) 6.h4	37

a) 6. ♖g1 e5 7. ♞b3 ♞e6 8. g4 d5 9. exd5

1. e4 c5 2. ♞f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♞xd4
♞f6 5. ♞c3 a6 6. ♖g1



Position after: 6. ♖g1

I remember that in my youth we wanted to find new ideas against the Najdorf and this was one of the moves that we experimented with.

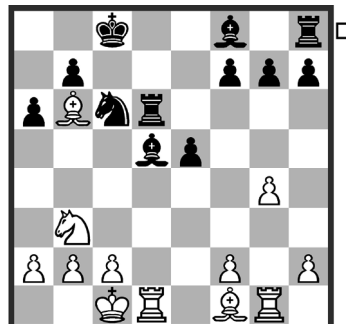
Bobby Fischer had already introduced 6. h3, which is now very popular again and will be treated as one of the main lines, so 6. ♖g1 came as an interesting idea later found also by others. It seems that Black has nothing to fear in the resulting endgames, as we will see.

6... e5 7. ♞b3 ♞e6 8. g4 d5 9. exd5

This move leads to a forced endgame.

9... ♞xd5 10. ♞xd5 ♞xd5 11. ♞e3
♞c6 12. ♞xd5 ♞xd5 13. 0-0-0 0-0-0
14. ♞b6 ♖d6

(see diagram next column)



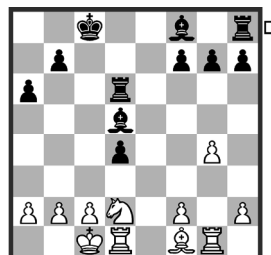
Position after: 14... ♖d6

15. g5

A) 15. ♞c5 ♖d8 16. ♞b6 ♖d6 leads to a draw.

B) 15. c4 ♞e4 16. ♖xd6 ♞xd6 17. ♞d2 ♞g6 18. a3 ♞c7 19. ♞xc7 ♞xc7 20. ♖g3 h5 ♞f4 Black is very active. 0-1 (38) Bizopoulos, A (2150) – Klimov, A (2451) Vung Tau 2008.

C) 15. ♞d2 ♞d4 16. ♞xd4 exd4

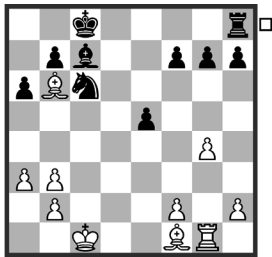


Position after: 16... exd4

17. ♞c4 [17. ♞b1 ♞e7 18. ♞c4 ♖hd8
19. ♖ge1 ♞h4 20. ♖e2 ♞xc4 21.
♞xc4 ♖f6 22. ♖f1 d3 23. cxd3 ♖xd3

Again Black is fine.] 17... ♖xc4 18. ♗xc4 ♜f6 19. ♜gf1 ♜f4 20. f3 ♔c7 21. ♔b1 g6 22. ♜de1 b5 23. ♗d5 ♗d6. The rook on f4 is standing nicely and we can conclude that Black's chances in this endgame are equal.

D) 15. a3 In this endgame, one of the ideas for Black is to retreat ... ♗e6, provoking g5 which will give him additional assets for counterplay. 15... ♗xb3!? An interesting concept to make a quick draw. [15... ♗e7 16. g5 ♗e6! 17. ♜xd6 This game ended in an early draw but it illustrates the motif of provoking g5. ½-½ Rosso, P - Myakonikikh, D corr. 2009.] 16. ♜xd6 ♗xd6 17. cxb3 ♗c7

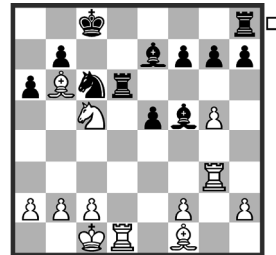


Position after: 17... ♗c7

18. ♗e3 ♘d4 19. ♗xd4 ½-½ Van Foreest, J (2605) – Sasikiran, K (2661) Sitges 2016. For example 19... exd4 20. h4 ♗d8 21. h5 ♗h4 22. ♜g2 ♜e8 is satisfactory for Black.

E) 15. c3 ♗e7 16. g5 ♗e6 17. ♜xd6 ♗xd6 18. h4 h6! 19. g6 f6 20. ♗g2 h5 21. ♘c5 ♗xc5 22. ♗xc5 ♔c7 Another good endgame for Black. ½-½ (26) Korin, V – Yurov, A corr. 2010.

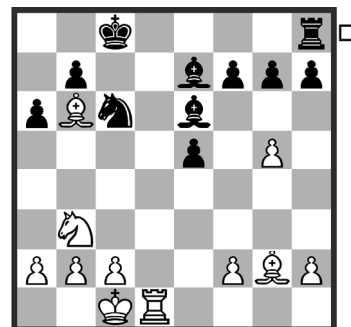
F) 15. ♜g3!? A clever move. 15... ♗e7 16. g5 [16. ♜gd3 ♘b4 17. ♜c3+ ♗c6 is very acceptable for Black; 16. h3 ♗d8 17. ♗c5 ♗g5+ 18. ♔b1 ♜d7 and Black can also be happy here. 19. ♜gd3 ♜hd8 20. ♗b6 e4!↗] 16... ♗e6 17. ♘c5 ♗f5!



Position after: 17... ♗f5!

One of the important motifs here. 18. ♜xd6 ♗xd6 19. ♗h3 g6 20. ♘e4 ♗c7 21. ♗xf5+ gxf5 22. ♗xc7 ♔xc7 23. ♘f6 e4 24. ♜h3 ♔d6! 25. ♜xh7 ♜xh7 26. ♘xh7 ♔e5 Again Black enjoys full equality. Active play is an important theme to remember.

15... ♗e6 16. ♗g2 ♜xd1+ 17. ♜xd1 ♗e7



Position after: 17... ♗e7

One of the typical positions in this endgame.

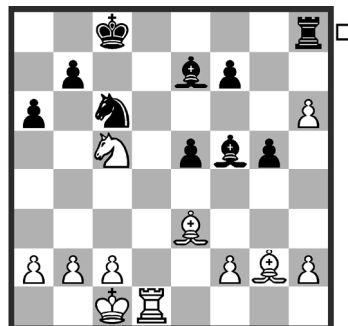
18. ♖e3

18. h4 h6! 19. ♘c5 ♕f5!? [19... hxg5 20. ♘xe6 fxe6 21. hxg5 ♕xg5+ 22. ♔b1 ♖h2 Black is all right. ½-½ (41) Simmelink, J – Bernal Varela, N corr. 2005]
20. ♖e1 g6 21. ♕xc6 bxc6 22. ♖xe5 ♕d6 23. ♖e1 hxg5 24. hxg5 ♕f4+ 25. ♔b1 ♕d2 26. ♖d1 ♕xg5 Black is fine.

18... ♕f5 19. ♘c5 h6 20. gxh6 g5

(see diagram next column)

21. ♘e4!



Position after: 20... g5

21. ♘d3 f6 22. h4 e4 23. ♘c5 ♕xc5 24. ♕xc5 gxh4 Black is better.

21... ♖xh6 22. ♘xg5 ♖g6 23. h4 f6 24. ♕h3 ♕xh3 25. ♘xh3 ♖g4 26. h5 ♖h4 27. ♘g1 ♖xh5

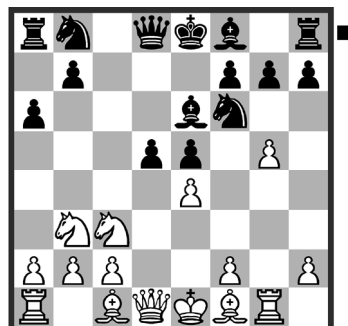
With equal play.

b) 6. ♖g1 e5 7. ♘b3 ♕e6 8. g4 d5 9. g5

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 a6 6. ♖g1 e5 7. ♘b3 ♕e6 8. g4 d5 9. g5

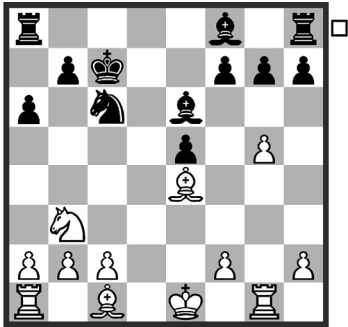
(see diagram on the right)

This represents another way of handling the endgame.



Position after: 9. g5

9... ♖xe4 10. ♘xe4 dxe4 11. ♔xd8+ ♔xd8 12. ♙g2 ♔c7 13. ♙xe4 ♘c6



Position after: 13... ♘c6

14. ♙d2

Planning to castle queenside.

A) 14. ♙e3 ♖d8 15. ♘c5 ♙xc5 16. ♙xc5 h6 17. gxh6 ♖xh6 18. ♖xg7 ♖xh2 Black is active in this endgame. ½-½ (36) Landa, K (2542) – Nevostrujev, V (2466) St Petersburg 1999.

B) 14. f4 g6!? 15. fxe5 h6! 16. h4 ♘xe5 17. ♙f4 ♙d6 18. ♘c5 ♙f5 19. 0-0-0 ♙xe4 20. ♘xe4 ♘d3+ 21. ♖xd3 ♙xf4+ 22. ♔b1 hxg5 23. hxg5 ♖h4 Black has no problems.

14... h6!

Black tackles White's structure, a good plan in this position.

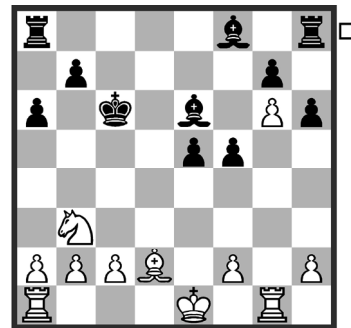
15. g6

White causes no difficulties with 15. h4 hxg5 16. hxg5 ♖h4 17. f3 a5.

15... f5!

15... fxg6 16. ♖xg6 ♙f7 17. ♖g3 This endgame favours White. 0-1 (67) Zivkovic, S (2313) – Arsovic, G (2478) Belgrade 2007.

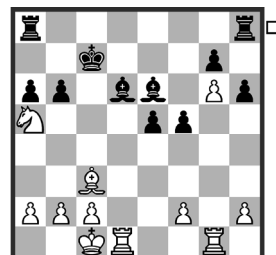
16. ♙xc6 ♔xc6



Position after: 16... ♔xc6

17. ♙c3

17. ♘a5+ ♔c7 18. ♙c3 ♙d6 19. 0-0-0 b6



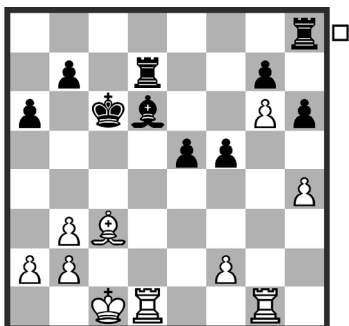
Position after: 19... b6

This is absolutely fine for Black, for example: 20. ♘b3 ♖he8 21. f4! e4 22. ♖xd6 ♔xd6 23. ♙xg7 ♙xb3 24. axb3 ♖e6 25. h4 ♖g8 26. ♙e5+ ♖xe5! 27. fxg5+ ♔g5∞.

17... ♖d6 18. 0-0-0 ♗xb3!

The bishop pair is of no importance here.

19. cxb3 ♖ad8 20. h4 ♖d7



Position after: 20... ♖d7

21. ♖ge1

21. h5 b5 22. ♖ge1 ♖hd8 23. ♔b1 e4
24. ♗a5 ♖e8 White has fixed the weakness on g7 but Black has an easy endgame anyway.

21... e4 22. ♔c2 b5 23. h5 b4! 24. ♗d2

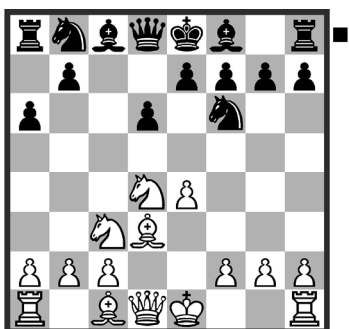
24. ♗d4 ♖hd8 25. ♗e3 ♗e5

24... ♗c5

Black has a plus.

c) 6. ♗d3

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4
♘f6 5. ♘c3 a6 6. ♗d3



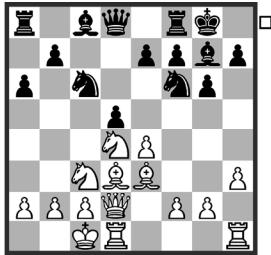
Position after: 6. ♗d3

An interesting move order. I remember some old game in which Portisch lost as Black in this rather rare line. I opted for the ...g6 set up because when we compare it with the 6.f4 line, which we will also analyze later, Black here has many more options.

6... g6 7. f4

Certainly not the only move, but it has to be said when White has a bishop on d3 he usually follows up with an attack based on f4, 0-0 and ♔e1-♔h4.

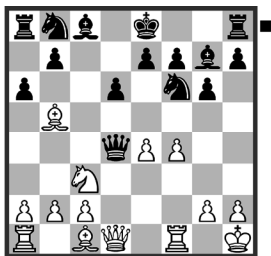
A) 7. h3 ♘g7 8. ♙e3 0-0 9. ♖d2 ♞c6
10. 0-0-0 d5



Position after: 10... d5

11. ♞xc6 bxc6 12. ♙h6 ♖a5 13. ♙xg7
♜xg7 14. b3 ♜b8 15. ♜he1 ♖a3+ 16.
♜b1 d4 17. e5 ♞d7 18. ♞e2 ♞b6 19.
♜a1 c5 Black has a good position. ½-½
(25) Short, N (2660) – Gelfand, B (2695)
Dortmund 1997.

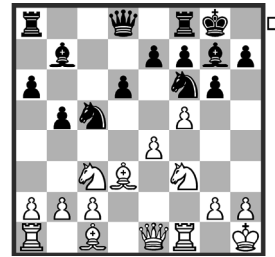
B) 7. 0-0 ♘g7 8. ♙h1 [8. f4? Is a well-
known mistake, worth remembering:
8... ♖b6 9. ♙h1 ♖xd4 10. ♙b5+



Position after: 10. ♙b5+

10... ♞fd7! Black wins; this has hap-
pened in GM games at least once!] 8...
0-0 9. f4 b5 10. ♞f3 ♙b7 11. ♖e1
♞bd7 12. f5 ♞c5

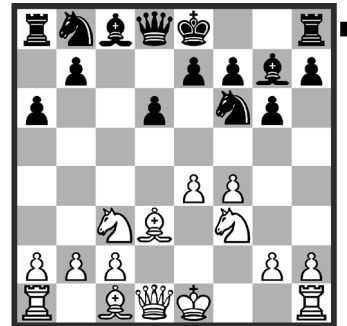
(see analysis diagram next column)



Position after: 12... ♞c5

13. a3 [The typical attack plan doesn't
work here: 13. ♖h4 b4 14. ♞d5 ♞xd5
15. exd5 ♞xd3 16. cxd3 ♙xd5 and
Black has no worries.] 13... e6 14. ♖h4
♞fxe4! The advantage is with Black.

7... ♘g7 8. ♞f3

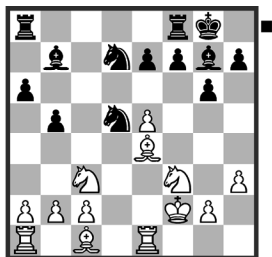


Position after: 8. ♞f3

8... 0-0

Another interesting plan here is 8...
♖b6!?. Preventing White from castling
is a perfectly logical option. 9. ♖e2 0-0

A) 10. ♖f2 Exchanging queens helps
Black a lot in this type of position. 10...
♖xf2+ 11. ♜xf2 b5 12. ♜e1 ♙b7 13.
h3 ♞bd7 14. e5 dxe5 15. fxe5 ♞d5
16. ♙e4

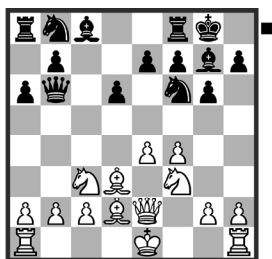


Position after: 16. ♔e4

16... ♖xc3! [Or 16... ♖7b6 17. a4 with an interesting endgame ahead. ½-½ (38) Gdanski, J (2535) – Wahls, M (2579) Germany 2000] 17. ♔xb7 ♖a7 18. ♔e4 [18. ♔c6 ♖a4↖] 18... ♖xe4+ 19. ♖xe4 ♖c7 20. ♖e2 ♖fc8 21. c3 ♖c5 Black has fine play.

B) 10. ♖b1 ♖c6 11. ♔e3 ♖a5 12. 0-0 ♔g4 13. h3 ♔xf3 14. ♖xf3 ♖d7 15. ♔d2 ♖ac8 16. g4 ♖c5 Black's counterplay is working well. 0-1 (44) Patterson, R (2107) – Nakamura, H (2771) Victoria 2012.

C) 10. ♔d2

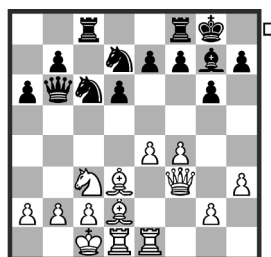


Position after: 10. ♔d2

C1) 10... ♖xb2!? 11. ♖b1 ♖a3 12. ♖b3 ♖c5 13. ♖a4 ♖c7 14. ♖b6 ♖a7 15. ♔e3 This looks rather dangerous, but Black has an idea in

mind... 15... ♖c6 16. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 17. ♔xa7 ♖xa7 18. 0-0 ♖d7 19. ♖h1 ♖c6 20. ♖f2 ♖c5 Black enjoys useful compensation. 0-1 (41) Papp, J (2130) – Rowson, J (2527) Pula 2002.

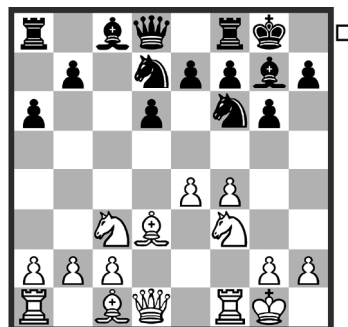
C2) 10... ♖c6 11. 0-0-0 ♔g4 12. h3 ♔xf3 13. ♖xf3 ♖ac8 14. ♖he1 ♖d7



Position after: 14... ♖d7

15. e5?! dxe5 16. ♖d5 ♖d8 17. ♔c3 exf4 18. ♔xg7 ♖xg7 19. ♖xf4 e6 Black is simply a pawn up. 0-1 (33) Guliev, L (2389) – Idani, P (2496) Urmia 2015.

9. 0-0 ♖bd7

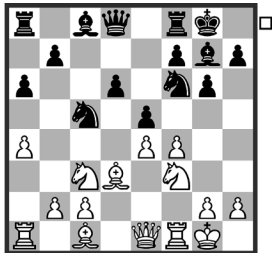


Position after: 9... ♖bd7

10. ♔e1

Alternatively White can try to slow down Black's play on the queenside:

10. a4 ♘c5 11. ♔e1 e5!?



Position after: 11... e5!?

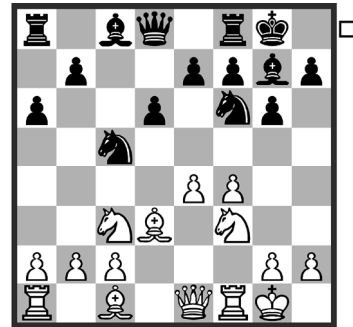
A) 12. fxe5 ♘xd3 13. cxd3 dxe5 14. ♔h4 [14. ♕e3 ♖e8 15. ♖d1 ♘g4 16. ♕g5 f6 17. ♕h4 ♕e6 18. h3 ♔b6+ 19. ♔h1 ♘h6↖] 14... ♕e6 15. ♕g5 ♔b6+ 16. ♔h1 ♘h5↖

B) 12. ♔h4 d5! 13. fxe5 ♘fxe4 14. ♔e1 ♘xc3! [≤ 14... ♘xd3 15. cxd3 ♘xc3 16. bxc3 ♕f5 17. ♕g5!N ♔b6+ 18. ♕e3 ♔c7 19. ♔d2 ♖ac8 20. ♕d4 ♖fe8=] 15. ♔xc3 [15. bxc3 ♕g4↗] 15... ♘xd3 16. cxd3 ♔b6+ 17. d4 ♕f5↗

10... ♘c5

(see diagram next column)

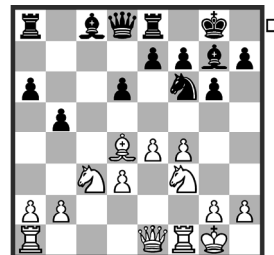
11. ♔h4



Position after: 10... ♘c5

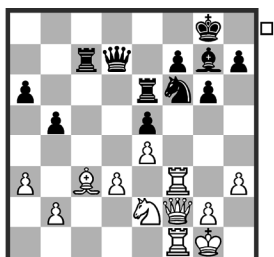
One of the usual reactions.

11. ♕e3 ♘xd3 12. cxd3 b5 13. ♕d4 ♖e8



Position after: 13... ♖e8

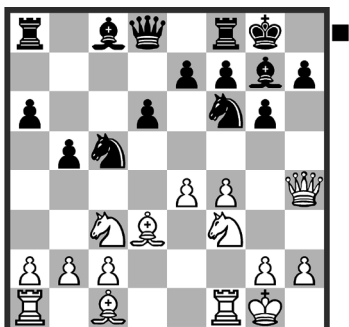
Black has the bishop pair and pawn activity on the queenside, which is more than enough to say that Black is doing fine. Let's extend the analysis: 14. ♘e2 [14. ♔h1 b4 15. ♘e2 a5 16. a3 ♕a6 17. ♘c1 e5 18. fxe5 dxe5 19. ♕xe5 b3!↗] 14... ♕g4 15. h3 ♕xf3 16. ♖xf3 e5 17. fxe5 dxe5 18. ♕c3 ♖e6 19. ♔f2 ♖c8 20. ♖f1 ♔d7 21. a3 ♖c7



Position after: 21... c7

It seems that Black has managed to equalize the chances.

11... b5



Position after: 11... b5

12. f5

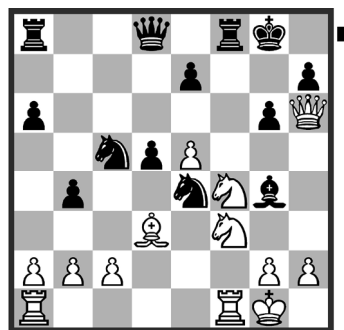
The typical attacking move, and the only logical way to continue. But White is not sufficiently prepared for such action.

12. e5 dxd3 13. cxd3 d7 14. d4 b6 15. b3 b4 16. e4 d5 17. a3 f5 18. e1 b6 Black is more than fine here.

12... b4 13. e2

13. d5 dxd5 14. exd5 dxd3 15. fxg6 fxg6 16. cxd3 b6+ 17. h1 b7 18. h6 dxd5 19. g7 g7 20. xe7+ f7

13... d5!? 14. e5 fe4 15. fxg6 fxg6 16. h6 xh6 17. xh6 g4 18. f4



Position after: 18. f4

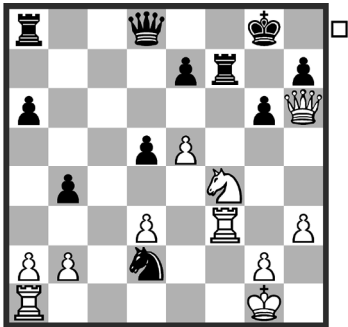
18... f7

18... dxd3!? 19. cxd3 b6+ 20. h1 e3 21. dxe4 xf4 22. xf4 xf4 23. exd5 d8 24. ad1 e4=

19. h3 xf3 20. xf3 dxd3!N

An improvement on 20... f8 21. xf8+ axf8 22. dxd5 xf3 23. gxf3 g5 24. xe7+ f7 25. c6 and White is slightly better. ½-½ (44) Wege, J (2277) – Bekker Jensen, S (2462) Reykjavik 2015.

21. cxd3 d2!



Position after: 21... Nxd2!

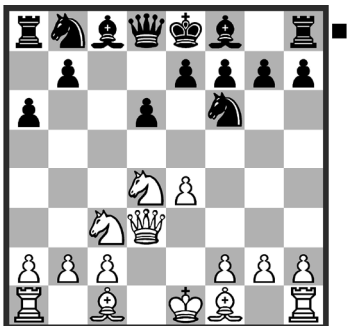
A surprising and effective tactic.

22. Rf2 Qb6 23. Qh4 Rf8 24. Kh2
Qe3

The tactical operation has gained Black the advantage.

d) 6. Qd3 Nbd7 7. Be2 g6 8. Bg5

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4
Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Qd3



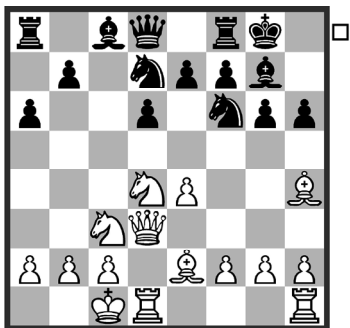
Position after: 6. Qd3

This is a new attempt to confuse the usually well-prepared Najdorf players, but it does not seem very logical to me. I consider it weaker than any other early queen move at this point, but still it has to be treated seriously.

6... Nbd7

This appears to be the most reasonable response.

7. Be2 g6 8. Bg5 Bg7 9. 0-0 h6 10.
Nh4 0-0



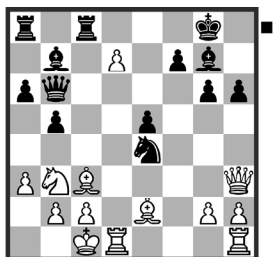
Position after: 10... 0-0

We have castling on opposite sides, which means a sharp game.

11. f4

A direct attempt, but not the only move here.

A) 11. ♔e3 ♖c7 12. f4 e5 13. fxe5 dxe5 14. ♘b3 b5 15. ♘d5 ♘xd5 16. exd5 ♕d6 17. a3 ♙b7 18. ♙e1 ♖fc8 19. ♙b4 ♕c7 20. ♙c3 ♕b6! 21. ♕h3 ♘f6 22. d6 ♘e4 23. d7

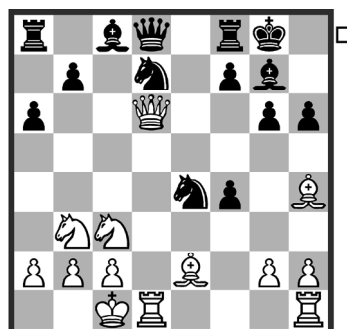


Position after: 23. d7

23... ♖xc3! Typical play. 24. bxc3 ♖d8 Black is much better. 0-1 (38) Vallejo Pons, F (2698) – Grischuk, A (2792) Dubai 2014.

B) 11. ♔b1 ♕c7 12. ♕e3 b5 13. g4 ♙b7 14. g5 hxg5 15. ♙xg5 b4 16. ♘d5 ♙xd5 17. exd5 ♘xd5 18. ♕e4 ♘7f6 19. ♙xf6 ♘xf6 20. ♕g2 ♖fc8 21. h4 e5 22. h5 exd4 23. ♙d3 ♘xh5→ 0-1 (28) Oparin, G (2604) – Nepomniachtchi, I (2751) Zurich 2017.

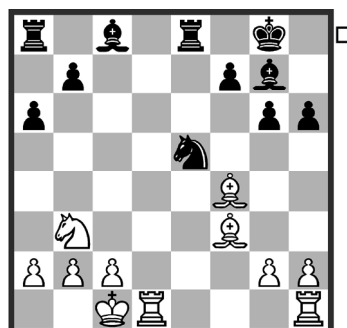
11... e5 12. ♘b3 exf4 13. ♕xd6 ♘xe4



Position after: 13... ♘xe4

The next moves are quite forced.

14. ♙xd8 ♘xd6 15. ♙e7 ♖e8 16. ♙xd6 ♙xc3 17. ♙f3 ♙g7 18. ♙xf4 ♘e5

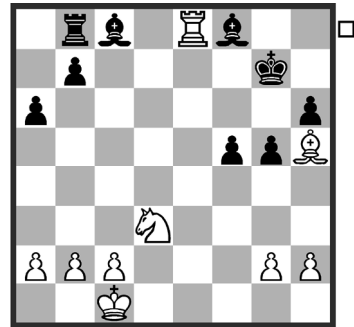


Position after: 18... ♘e5

To me this position looks satisfactory for Black. Let's continue for a few more moves:

19. ♖de1 ♜b8 20. ♘c5 g5 21. ♙g3 f5
22. ♙xe5 ♜xe5 23. ♘d3 ♜xe1+ 24.
♜xe1 ♙f8 25. ♜e8 ♚f7 26. ♙h5+
♚g7

White simply doesn't have enough to concern Black here.



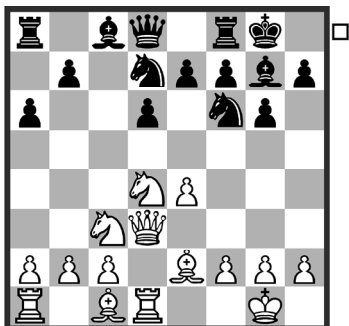
Position after: 26... ♚g7

e) 6. ♚d3 ♘bd7 7. ♙e2 g6 8.0-0

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4
♘f6 5. ♘c3 a6 6. ♚d3 ♘bd7 7. ♙e2
g6 8. 0-0

A slower, more solid plan.

8... ♙g7 9. ♜d1 0-0



Position after: 9... 0-0

We have the so-called Dragadorf, a mixture of the Dragon and the Najdorf,

which in this case looks to me quite pleasant for Black.

10. ♚e3

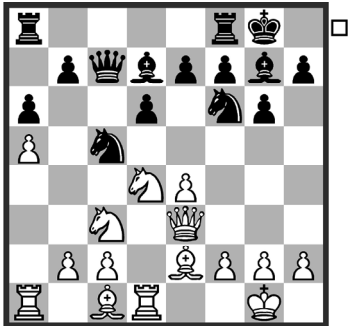
In this little explored position there are a few other ideas:

A) 10. ♚g3 ♚c7 11. ♚h4 [11. a4 b6 12. ♙e3 ♙b7 13. ♚h4 ♜fe8 14. f3 ♜ac8∞] 11... b5 12. a3 ♙b7 13. ♙g5 ♜fc8 14. ♜d2 ♚d8 15. ♜ad1 ♚f8∞

B) 10. h3 ♘c5 11. ♚f3 ♙d7 12. a4 ♚c7 13. a5 ♜fe8 14. ♙e3 ♜ac8 15. ♜a3 e5 16. ♘b3 ♘e6∞

C) 10. ♙g5 ♜e8 11. ♚e3 ♚c7 12. h4?! b5 13. h5 ♙b7 14. a3 ♜ac8 15. h6 ♙h8 16. f3 d5! Black's position is clearly preferable. 0-1 (44) Anikeev, V – Gorokhov, S corr. 2011.

10... ♔c7 11. a4 ♘c5 12. a5 ♙d7



Position after: 12... ♙d7

What we have here is another positional plan against Dragon/Najdorf set-ups.

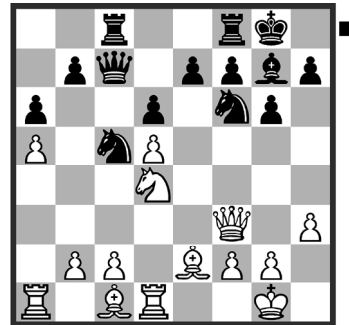
13. h3 ♖ac8

Black uses his standard assets to create counterplay.

14. ♙f3

14. ♙f3 ♖fe8 15. ♘d5 ♘xd5 16. exd5 e5 17. dxe6 ♘xe6=

14... ♙c6 15. ♘d5 ♙xd5 16. exd5

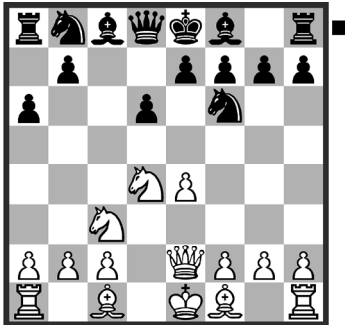


Position after: 16. exd5

16... e5! 17. dxe6 fxe6↔

f) 6. ♕e2

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4
 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 a6 6. ♕e2



Position after: 6. ♕e2

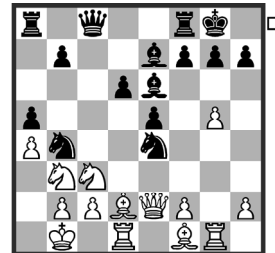
One of the new lines against the Najdorf, and quite logical. White is aiming for a fast 0-0-0, when the queen on e2 will not be in the way of his other pieces, and nor will it be a potential target in this early phase of the game.

6... e5

Whenever possible, or, to be more precise, whenever I feel that ...e5 has the most potential, I will suggest it – as this is in my opinion the real essence of the Najdorf.

7. ♗f5

7. ♗b3 ♖e6 [Interesting is: 7... ♖e7 8. ♖d2 ♖e6 9. 0-0-0 0-0 10. ♖g1 a5 11. a4 ♗c6 12. ♖b1 ♗b4 13. g4 ♕c8 14. g5 ♗xe4!



Position after: 14... ♗xe4!

Black has seized the advantage. A notable combination, that represents one of many possible ideas for counterplay.] 8. ♖d2 ♗bd7 9. 0-0-0

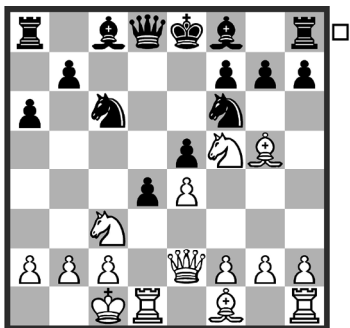


Position after: 9. 0-0-0

9... b5!? [9... ♖e7 is worse: 10. ♖g1 b5 11. g4 ♗b6 12. f4 exf4 13. g5 ♗fd7 14. ♖xf4 White quickly grabbed the initiative. 1-0 (42) Gormally, D (2477) – Van Delft, M (2393) London 2017] 10. ♖b1 ♕c7 11. ♖g1 ♖c8 A perfectly logical plan that gives Black counterplay.

7... d5 8. ♖g5 d4 9. 0-0-0 ♗c6

(see diagram next page)

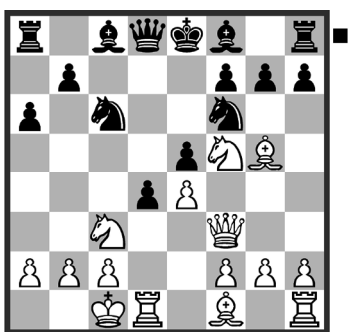


Position after: 9... Nc6

10. ♖f3

White's setup is very aggressive, but not necessarily strong.

A sharp alternative is 10. f4 ♖a5 11. fxe5 dxc3 12. exf6 ♙e6 13. ♖d5 ♖xa2 14. bxc3 gxf6 15. ♙xf6 ♖g8 16. ♙d2 ♖g6 17. ♙h4 f6. It seems that Black's chances are by no means worse here. 0-1 (51) Anikin, V – Sherwood, H corr. 2014.



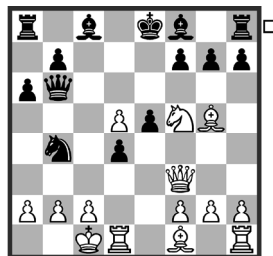
Position after: 10. ♖f3

10... ♙e6

Interesting sidelines are:

A) 10... ♖a5!? is another good move, for example after 11. ♙xf6 dxc3 12. ♙xg7 ♖xa2 13. bxc3 ♙xf5 14. ♙xf8 ♙e6 15. ♙c5 ♖g8 16. h3 ♖g6 17. ♙d3 ♖a5 Black is getting on top.

B) 10... ♖b6 11. ♘d5 ♘xd5 12. exd5 ♘b4



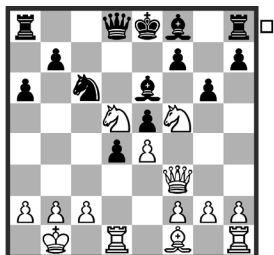
Position after: 12... ♘b4

B1) 13. ♘xd4 ♙c5 14. ♘b3 [After 14. ♘e6!? fxe6 15. ♙c4 exd5 16. ♖he1 ♖c7 17. ♙xd5 ♙e3+ 18. ♙b1 ♖f8 19. ♖xe3 ♖xc2+ 20. ♙a1 ♖xd1+ 21. ♖xd1 ♘c2+ 22. ♙b1 ♘xe3 Black is ahead.] 14... ♖g6 15. ♖d2 ♘xa2+ 16. ♙b1 ♖xg5 17. ♙xa2 0-0 Black is doing well. ½-½ (53) Bujdak, P – Le Duigou, J corr. 2014.

B2) 13. ♙d2!? ♖f6 14. g4 h5 15. ♖b3 [15. ♖e4 ♘xa2+ 16. ♙b1 ♘c3+ 17. bxc3 ♖b6+ 18. ♙a2 ♖a5+ Draw by perpetual.] 15... hxg4 16. ♘xd4 ♖b6 17. a3 exd4 18. ♙xb4 ♙xb4 19. ♖xb4 ♖xb4 20. axb4 ♙e7 21. ♖xd4 ♙d6 The endgame looks balanced.

11. ♘d5

11. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 12. ♘d5 ♜d8 13. ♔b1 g6



Position after: 13... g6

14. ♘fe3 [14. ♘g3 ♖g7 15. ♖c4 ♘a5 16. ♖b3 0-0 17. h4 f5 18. ♘c7 ♖xb3 19. ♘xa8 fxe4 20. ♜g4 ♜f4 21. ♜h3 ♖d5 Black is much better.] 14... ♖g7 15. ♘g4 f5 16. ♜b3 ♖xd5 17. exd5 ♘a5 18. ♜a3 ♜c8 19. ♘xe5 ♖xe5 20. ♜e1 ♜c7 21. ♖d3 ♔f7 22. ♜xe5 ♜xe5 23. ♜xa5 ♜hd8 Again White is facing tough times. ½-½ (60) Peczely, S (2197) – Cao, J (2309) Gyor 2014.

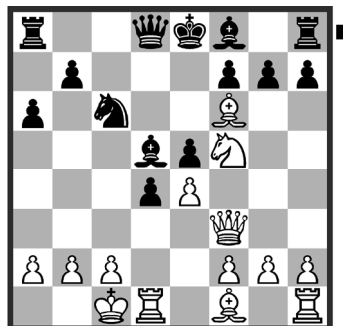
11... ♖xd5 12. ♖xf6

(see diagram next column)

12... ♜xf6!

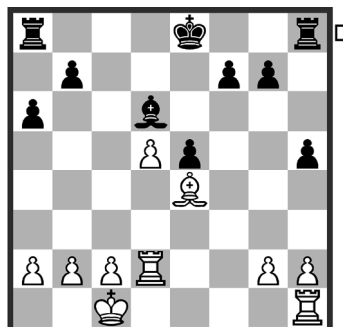
If 12... ♖xe4 13. ♜xe4 ♜xf6 14. ♘xd4 ♘xd4 15. ♜xd4 g6 16. ♖c4 ♖h6+ 17. ♔b1 0-0 18. ♜d7 the position favours White.

1-0 (37) Czebe, A (2487) – Vojtek, V (2295) Slovakia 2011.



Position after: 12. ♖xf6

13. exd5 ♘e7 14. ♘xe7 ♖xe7 15. ♜e4 ♖d6 16. ♜xd4 ♜xf2 17. ♜d2 ♜f4 18. ♖d3 ♜xe4 19. ♖xe4 h5!



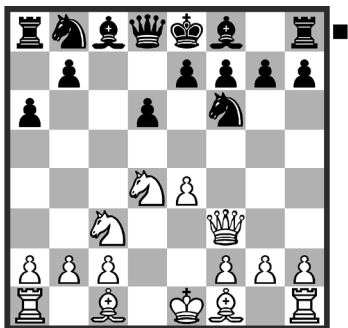
Position after: 19... h5!

With the obvious idea of ...g6 followed by ...f5. Black surely has better chances in this endgame of opposite-coloured bishops.

g) 6. ♔f3 ♕b6

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 a6 6. ♔f3

is a long way behind the action.



Position after: 6. ♔f3

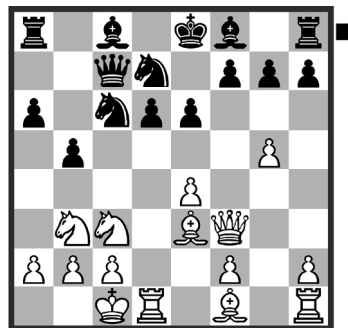
Another new attempt, probably the most logical of the early queen moves. An important aspect of this move is that it prevents the thematic Najdorf idea ...e5. I offer two ideas for Black; both look logical, but the positions are rather complex.

6... ♕b6

Driving a knight away is a common idea in the Sicilian, and in this position I think it makes sense. The queen on f3 blocks the pawn on f2, which helps Black to achieve fast development.

7. ♘b3 e6 8. g4 ♘c6 9. g5 ♘d7 10. ♙e3 ♔c7 11. 0-0 b5

We have a sharp position in which we can see a certain disadvantage of the early queen move to f3: the pawn on f2

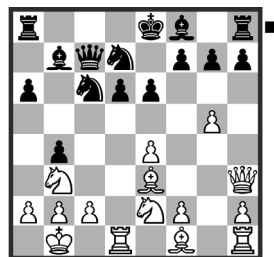


Position after: 11... b5

12. a3

Preventing ...b4 but on the other hand allowing different counterplay.

A) 12. ♔b1 b4 13. ♘e2 ♙b7 14. ♔h3



Position after: 14. ♔h3

A1) 14... ♘ce5?! I am not sure about this move, although Black won a game with it. It simply provokes White to play f4. 15. ♘g3 ♖c8 16. ♖c1 ♘b6 17. f4 ♘ec4 18. ♙xb6! ♘xb6 19. g6 fxg6 20. ♔xe6+ ♔e7 21. ♔g4 White's position is superior. 0-1 (53) Van den