

M. Shyam Sundar
The Arkhangelsk
Ruy López
Repertoire for Black



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Author

M. Shyam Sundar

Editorial board

Goran Arsović, Zoran Arsović, Vitomir Božić,
Aleksandar Matanović, Igor Žvegljić

Design

Miloš Majstorović

Editorial Assistant

Daniela Aćimović

Editing and Typesetting

Jelena Arsović

Proofreading

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General Manager

Vitomir Božić

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From the Author

This book is a Black repertoire against the Ruy López. We will be focusing on the Arkhangelsk (Möller) Defence.

In the modern world where computers keep getting stronger and stronger, openings need to be updated on a daily basis. After the emergence of NNUE engines, the style of play has changed drastically. Players started to sacrifice material for long term compensation/initiative trying to pose as many practical problems as possible so that it becomes difficult for opponents to solve all the problems over-the-board in the given time control.

So let me explain what I have done in the book you are holding in your hands, dear readers. Please, do not get carried away with the computer's assessment all the time! We should not forget that we are not playing correspondence chess where the opponent has lots of time to ponder and refute our lines! In a tournament game, it is a different scenario! I believe it is important to choose the openings/positions where we feel comfortable. It is equally important to choose and study some model games in the openings we play. At Least that's how I train in my academy, Chess Thulir.

I would like to thank Chess Informant for giving me the opportunity to write my maiden book! It is a quite emotional moment as well since I grew up studying the books from this Publisher. I would also like to thank my parents and my brother who played a vital role in shaping me as a person and as a chessplayer. Also, extended thanks to my wife and my 1 year-old daughter whose smile was more than good enough to keep me in a happy mood after a tiring day.

Special mention to my hero and inspiration Vishy Anand for writing the foreword for this book.

I would like to quote one of my favourite sayings that had been on my mind ever since I have signed this project.

One individual may die for an idea, but that idea will, after his death, incarnate itself in a thousand lives - Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

The same way, ideas suggested in this book may die at some point or the other. However, I hope that the approach behind the moves may not die!

Dear readers, I hope you will enjoy my work and if you like you can also adapt the modern-day approach of working on openings. Good luck on your chess journey!

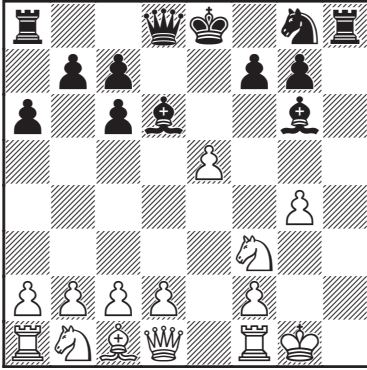
GM M. Shyam Sundar
January 2022.

I have worked with Shyam Sundar and know him to be a creative and diligent analyst. Here he gives you a combative working repertoire in the Ruy López. Study it critically and you will benefit from the unusual ideas he exposes you to.

Viswanathan Anand
15th World Chess Champion

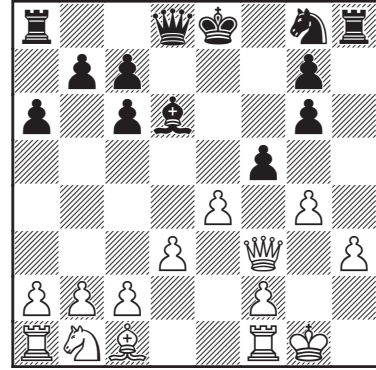
Warm up Positions

CHAPTER 1



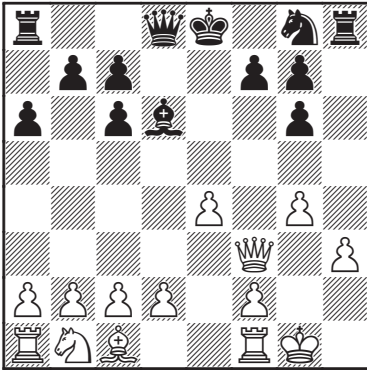
The white king is too exposed.
How can Black punish him?

(page 27)



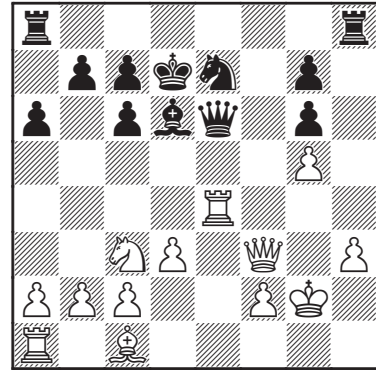
Black obtains excellent counter-chances by
means of an unexpected move!

(page 30)



Find a fresh idea for Black at this point.

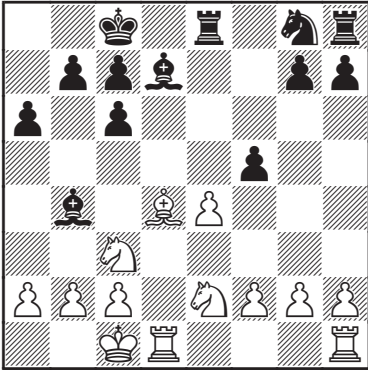
(page 29)



Is Black able to retain the initiative?

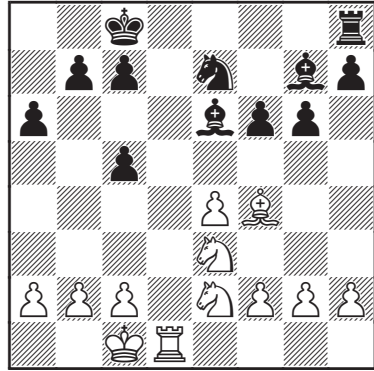
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CHAPTER 2



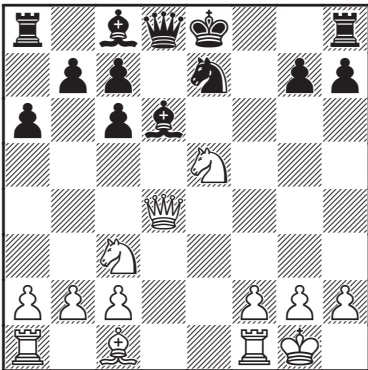
White exerts serious pressure along the diagonal. How can Black defend himself?

(page 37)



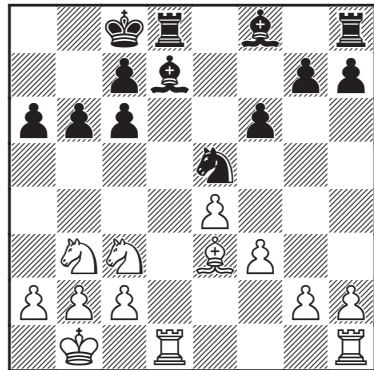
Where should Black place his rook?

(page 41)



How can Black make use of the white queen's poor position?

(page 39)

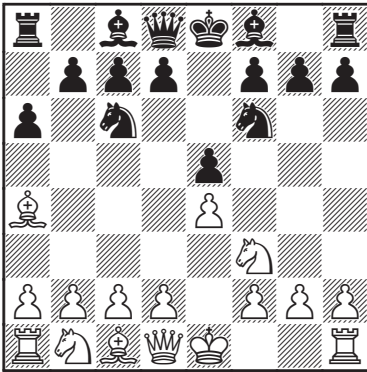


How should Black proceed in order to seize as much space as possible?

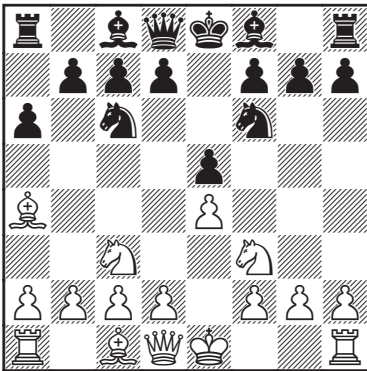
(page 41)

5. ♘c3 ♙c5

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



5. ♘c3

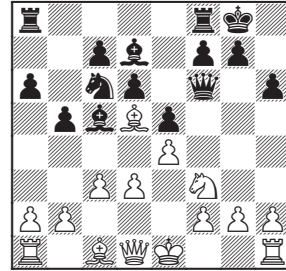


Again we stick to direct

5... ♙c5

delaying the b5 pawn push.

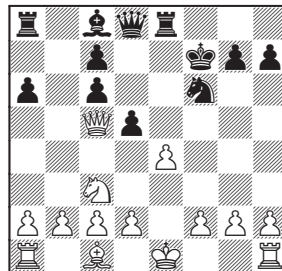
5...b5 Let us have a quick look at the dream position for White when playing 5. ♘c3: 6. ♙b3 ♙c5 7. d3 0–0 8. ♘d5 White delays castling for the moment. 8...h6 9. c3 d6 10. ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 11. ♙d5 ♙d7



12. ♖g1! → This is the point of delaying the castle as White now intends to play g4, g5 with decisive attack on the kingside to follow.

6.0–0

6. ♗e2 A rare move with the intention of defending the e4–pawn and planning to take on c6 followed by ♘e5. In general ♗e2 and ♘c3 do not go well together. 6...0–0 7. ♙xc6 (7.0–0 ♖e8= White's queen on e2 is not doing anything significant.) 7...bxc6 Here we recapture with the b–pawn since we need the d–pawn to reach either d6 or d5 based on the circumstances. Also, Black can push the pawn to a5 in order to play ♙a6 and exploit White's queen placement on the e2 square. 8. ♘xe5 The point of previous move. (8.0–0 ♖e8 with a fine position for Black; 8. ♘a4 ♙a7 9. d3 d5 with a pleasant position.) 8...♖e8 9. ♘xf7 (9. ♘f3 d5!) 9...♙xf7 10. ♗c4+ d5 11. ♗xc5

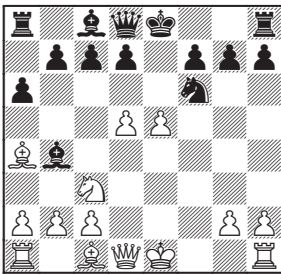


11...♖xe4↑;

6.♗xe5 The position is similar to the Four Knights 1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗c6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♘b5 ♘c5 where the inclusion of a6 and ♘a4 favours Black as sometimes bishop goes to d3 from b5 which is now not possible. 6...♗xe5 7.d4 ♘d6

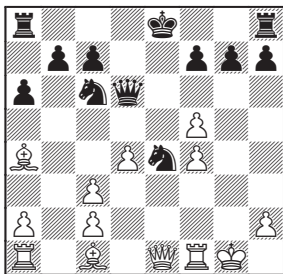
a) 8.f4 ♗c6 9.e5 ♘b4 with a pleasant position for Black. Here are some sample lines:

a1) 10.d5!?. A new move. 10...♗xe5 11.fxe5



11...♗xd5! One of the key differences between positions with the bishop on b5 and bishop on a4. 12.0-0 (12.♖xd5 ♘xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♖h4+ 14.g3 ♖xa4) ♗xc3 13.♖f3 0-0 14.bxc3 ♘c5+ 15.♔h1 d5+;

a2) 10.0-0!?. A new move. 10...♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♗e4 12.♖e1 (12.♖g4 g6 13.f5 d5+) 12...d5 13.exd6 ♘f5 14.g4 ♖xd6 15.gxf5

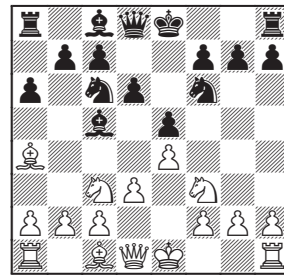


15...♖d5↑ Black will now castle queen-side with strong attack to follow against the white king;

a3) 10.exf6 ♖xf6 11.a3 (11.♘e3 This was tried way back in 1896!! 11...0-0 12.0-0 ♘xc3 13.bxc3 ♗e7= Georg Marco - Carl Schlechter, Wien 1896; 13...d5= was probably a better way to handle the position.) 11...♘xc3+ 12.bxc3 d5+ with a pleasant position for Black;

b) 8.dxe5 ♘xe5 9.0-0 0-0 10.♖d3 b5 11.♘b3 ♘b7+ with a fine position for Black, as in Raffaele Petruzzelli - Sergey Kireev, corr. 2006/07.

6.d3 d6



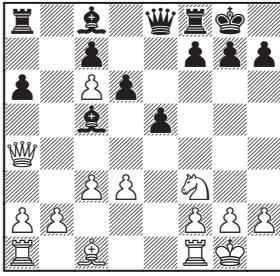
We postpone the decision of pushing b5 by defending the e5-pawn first. We shall look at various tries by White:

a) 7.♗d5?! ♗xd5 8.exd5 b5 9.dxc6 (9.♘b3 ♗a5+ Black is doing fine after capturing the light-squared bishop, as in Carles Diaz Camallonga 2444 - Leandro Sergio Krysa 2503, Barcelona 2018) 9...bxa4 10.c3 0-0 (10...a3!?)

a1) 11.h3 ♖e8 12.♖xa4 ♘f5 13.♖c4 e4 (13...♘xd3!?. is even stronger. 14.♖xd3 e4 15.♖e2 exf3 16.gxf3 ♖xc6) 14.♗d4 exd3+ 15.♘e3 ♘xd4 16.♖xd4 ♖xc6+ Hu Yu A 2095 - Anna Ushenina 2448, Shaoxing 2019;

a2) 11.♖xa4 ♖e8 (11...♖f6 followed by ♖g6 is also possible.)

a2a) 12.0-0!?. A new move.



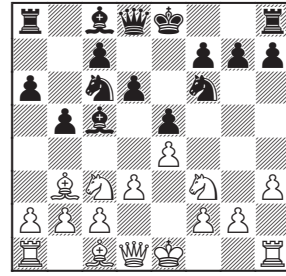
12...♙b6!? is a useful prophylaxis against d4/b4. (12...♙b7 allows White to play 13.♖g4!) 13.d4 ♘g4☞;

a2b) 12.b4 ♙b6 13.0-0 ♙b7 14.♖c2 ♙xc6 Michael Massoni 2304 - Viswanathan Anand 2817, Bastia (m/2-rapid) 2011;



Viswanathan Anand

b) 7.h3?! b5 8.♙b3

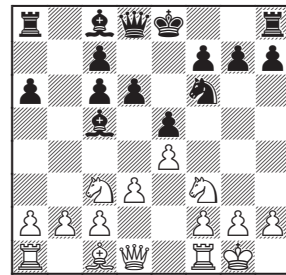


8...♗a5= with a very comfortable position;

c) 7.a3 This does not achieve much for White as Black has many ways to handle this position with success. 7...h6 (7...0-0 8.h3 ♗d4 9.♗xd4 ♙xd4 10.♗e2 ♙a7 11.0-0 d5 12.♗g3 ♙e6= Ramesh Babu Vaishali 2393 - Antoaneta Stefanova 2462, chess.com (Internet-blitz) 2020; 7...b5 8.♙b3 ♙g4= with ♗d4 to follow next and Black is fine here.) 8.♙e3 b5 9.♙b3 ♙xe3 10.fxe3 ♙e6=;

d) 7.♙xc6+ bxc6

d1) 8.0-0



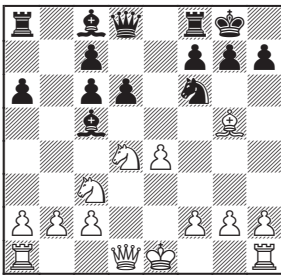
8...♙g4!? Of course! We do not refrain from playing this move! 9.h3 ♙h5 with a highly dynamic play;

d2) 8.h3 0-0 9.0-0 h6 (9...♖b8 10.b3 ♖e8 11.♙e3 ♙b6 12.♖e1 h6 13.♙xb6 cxb6= Eltaj Safarli 2598 - Dmitrij Kollars 2598, tornelo.com (Internet-rapid) 2021) 10.♙e3 ♙xe3 11.fxe3 ♖e7= Black can play d5 next with a balanced game;

d3) $8.\text{♞a4}$ ♙a7 $9.\text{♙e3}$ ♞xe3 ($9\dots\text{c5}=\text{Elisabeth Pähtz 2472 - David Howell 2663, España 2020}$) $10.\text{fxe3}$ $0-0$ $11.0-0$ $\text{♙d7}=\text{;}$ $11\dots\text{♞e7}=\text{}$ intending d5 is also a possible way to handle this position for Black;

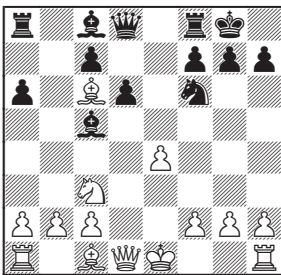
e) $7.\text{♙e3}$ b5 $8.\text{♙b3}$ ♞xe3 $9.\text{fxe3}$ $\text{♞a5}=\text{}$ Once again, Black is having a pleasant position;

f) $7.\text{d4!}?$ White just played d3, and next move he plays d4. White's point is that Black went for d6, and so the d4 advance is possible in order to get more space. $7\dots\text{exd4}$ Here are some sample lines: $8.\text{♞xd4}$ ($8.\text{♙xc6}+\text{bxc6}$ $9.\text{♞xd4}$ $0-0$ $10.\text{♙g5}$



$10\dots\text{d5!}\bar{\text{=}}$ with a fine position for Black.) $8\dots0-0$ $9.\text{♞xc6}$ bxc6

f1) $10.\text{♙xc6}$



$10\dots\text{♞g4!}\rightarrow\text{;}$

f2) $10.0-0$ ♞g4 ($10\dots\text{♙d7}$ is an alternative.) $11.\text{h3}$ $\text{♞e5}=\text{}$ with a fine position for Black;

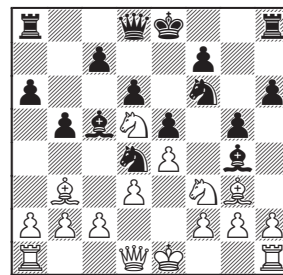
f3) $10.\text{h3}$ ♙d7 $11.0-0$ $\text{♞e8}=\text{;}$

g) $7.0-0$ b5 is the simplest way to equalise. ($7\dots\text{♙g4}$ $8.\text{h3}$ ♙h5 is an interesting alternative.) $8.\text{♙b3}$ ♞a5 considering other alternatives: ($8\dots\text{♙g4}$ is also possible.) $9.\text{♞h1}$ c6 $10.\text{h3}$ ♞a7 $11.\text{♞h2}$ $0-0=\text{}$ Viswanathan Anand 2735 - Veselin Topalov 2750, Las Palmas 1996 - 68/(296);

h) $7.\text{♙g5}$ h6

h1) $8.\text{♙xf6}$ ♞xf6 $9.\text{♞d5}$ ♞d8 $10.\text{c3}$ $0-0$ $11.0-0$ (If $11.\text{d4}$ ♙a7 with a fine position for Black.) $11\dots\text{♙g4}$ ($11\dots\text{♞e7}=\text{}$ Rauf Mamedov 2659 - Sergey Grigoriants 2542, Moscow (blitz) 2019; $11\dots\text{f5!}?\text{=}$ with a dynamic position.) $12.\text{h3}$ $\text{♙h5}=\text{}$ with a balanced game;

h2) $8.\text{♙h4}$ g5 $9.\text{♙g3}$ ($9.\text{♞xg5}?$ Black has enough resources to tackle the pin. $9\dots\text{hxg5}$ $10.\text{♙xg5}$ ♞g8 $11.\text{h4}$ ♙e6 Controlling the d5 square. $12.\text{♞f3}$ ♞g6-+) $9\dots\text{b5}$ ($9\dots\text{♙d7}$ $10.\text{♞d2}$ ♞e7 $11.0-0-0$ $0-0-0=\text{}$ with a balanced position.) $10.\text{♙b3}$ ♙g4 $11.\text{♞d5}$ ($11.\text{h3?!}$ ♙xf3 $12.\text{♞xf3}$ ♞d4 $13.\text{♞d1}$ $\text{a5}\bar{\text{=}}$) $11\dots\text{♞d4}$ This should give a fine position for Black if White does not have the following resource:

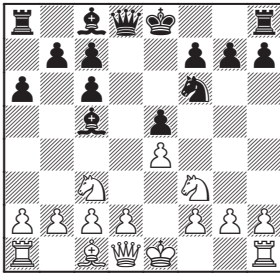


$12.\text{♞xd4!}$ ♙xd1 $13.\text{♞c6}$ with a pleasant position for White; $11\dots\text{♞a5}=\text{}$ As usual we stick to our principle of capturing the light-squared bishop.

$6.\text{♙xc6}$ dxc6

6...0-0

We once again keep the option of playing 6... b5 available. 7. ♖b3 d6 8. ♘d5 White plays c3 next followed by either d4 or a4 obtaining a pleasant position.



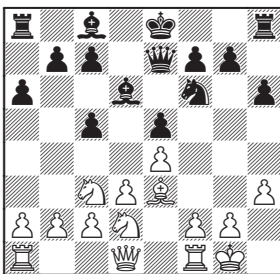
a) 7.0-0 ♖e7 8.d3 Transposes to Chapter 7;

b) 7. ♘xe5 ♙xf2+ (7... ♙d4!?) 8. ♙xf2 ♖d4+ 9. ♙f1 ♖xe5 10.d3 ♙e6 (10... ♖e7!? followed by ♙e6 also deserves attention.) 11. ♖f3 0-0-0 12. ♙f4 ♖a5∞ Sébastien Mazé 2550 - Michael Adams 2694, Gibraltar 2020;

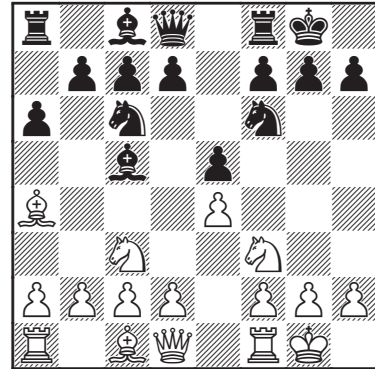
c) 7.d3 Transposes to Chapter 7;

d) 7.h3!?. Similar to the Delayed Ruy López Exchange as seen in Chapter 4, White wanted to avoid theoretical discussion and utilise the "Over the Board" approach.

However, this idea has a minor flaw. White has to be careful when castling short since Black's g5-g4 idea becomes very strong due to the committal h3-move. 7... ♖e7 We shall just examine a typical plan in such positions. 8.d3 h6 We keep the option open by delaying the castle as we launch the kingside offensive by playing timely g5. 9. ♙e3 ♙d6 10.0-0 c5 11. ♘d2



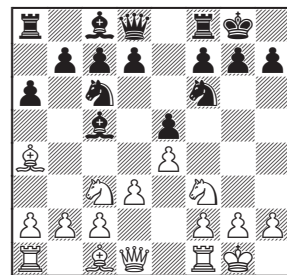
11...g5 → Black's attack is even more powerful due to White's pawn being on h3, Matysz Bartel 2635 - Vladislav Artemiev 2709,



7. ♙xc6

Similar to the 6. ♙c6 line we saw earlier with the difference being that both sides have castled now and Black's kingside offensive may not be strong. Here, White does not mind wasting a tempo by capturing on c6 since the position is closed in nature and Black cannot exploit it efficiently.

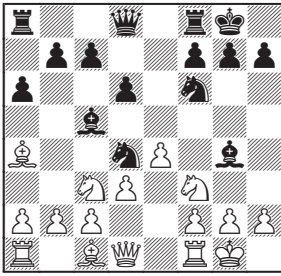
7.d3



7... ♘d4!?. As White plays ♘d5 followed by c3 as seen in the 6...b5 line, we can copy the same idea for Black! We shall now play c6 to control the d5 square. (7...d6 is another way to handle this position.)

a) 8. ♖xd4 ♙xd4 9. ♖h1 Planning to play f4, however Black is on time to counter in the centre. (9. ♗f3 c6 Not just controlling the d5–square but also planning to go for the d5 push.) 9...d5=;

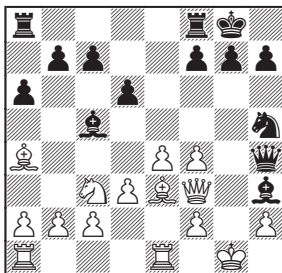
b) 8. ♗xe5 d6 9. ♗f3 ♙g4 Black will weaken White's pawn structure next, thus gaining a good play. Here are some sample lines:



10. ♙e3 White has to force Black to take on f3 as soon as possible. (10. ♙g5 c6♯ Controlling the d5–square and postponing the decision to capture on f3.) 10...♗xf3+!? A new move. (10...♙xf3 is also possible, Pavel Strnad – Grzegorz Długolecki, corr. 2018) 11.gxf3 ♙h3

b1) 12.d4 ♙a7 13.♗e2 d5 (13...♙xf1↑ We play for the initiative rather going for the material!) 14.e5 ♗h5♯;

b2) 12.♖e1 ♗h5 13.f4 (13.♖h1 f5♯) 13...♗h4 14.♗f3



14...♖h8!→ Freeing the g8–square for the rook;

c) 8.h3 ♗xf3+ (8...d6 is also a possible way

of playing this position. Here is a sample line: 9. ♗xd4 ♙xd4 10. ♗e2 ♙b6 11. ♗g3 c6=) 9. ♗xf3 d6

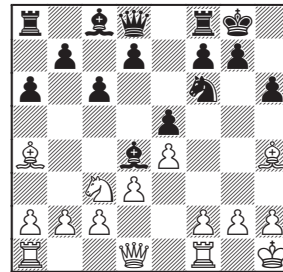
c1) 10. ♙g5 c6 Once again controlling the key d5–square. 11. ♙b3 h6 12. ♙xf6 (12. ♙h4 g5 13. ♙g3 g4♯) 12...♗xf6 13. ♗xf6 gxf6= with a pleasant position for Black;

c2) 10. ♙b3 h6 11. ♙e3 ♙xe3 12. ♗xe3 (12.fxe3 ♙e6=) 12...♗h5= Eberhard Thomae – Ernst Höhne, corr. 2018;

d) 8. ♙g5 8...c6

d1) 9. ♗xe5 d6 10. ♙xf6 (10. ♗f3 ♙g4♯ transposes to the previous variation; 10. ♗g4 ♙xg4 11. ♙xf6 ♙xd1 12. ♙xd8 ♙xc2♯) 10...♗xf6 11. ♗g4 ♗g6↑;

d2) 9. ♗xd4 ♙xd4 10. ♖h1 h6 11. ♙h4



11...a5!? with the intention of trapping the a4–bishop. 12.a3 (12.f4 exf4 13.♖xf4 g5++ Manlio Baviera – Yury Saevich, corr. 2020) 12...b5 13. ♙b3 a4 14. ♙a2 g5 15. ♙g3 d6♯ with a pleasant position for Black.

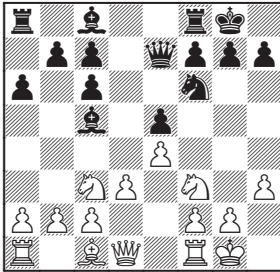
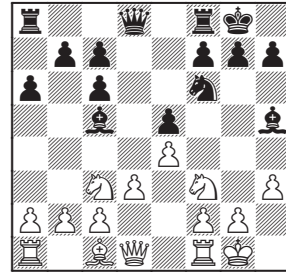
7. ♗d5 d6 (7...♗xe4 8.d3 ♗xf2 9.♖xf2 ♙xf2+ 10.♖xf2 d6=) 8.d4 ♗xd4 9. ♗xd4 ♗xd5♯ Sayantan Das 2431 – Igor Lysyj 2594, chess.com (Internet–blitz) 2020;

7. ♗xe5 ♗xe5 8.d4 ♙d6 9.f4 ♗eg4 10.h3 ♙b4 11.e5 d6 12.exf6 ♗xf6 13. ♗f3 ♙xc3 (13...d5!?) 14. ♗xc3 b5 15. ♙b3 ♙b7♯ with a fine position for Black, as in Prasanna V. Vishnu 2538 – Nils

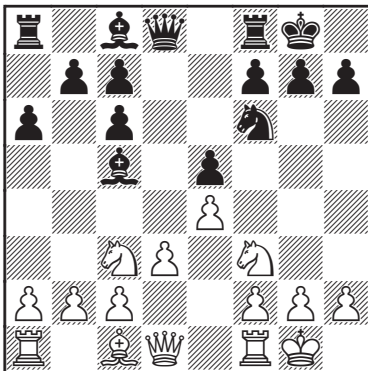
7...dxc6 8.d3

8. ♖xe5 ♜e8 (8... ♙d4!?) 9. ♗f3 ♖xe4=;

8.h3 ♜e8 is a typical way to play these positions. Black eventually transfers his knight to d4 by the ♖d7-f8-e6 route. (8... ♜e7 Not yet played in over the board event. 9.d3



9...♗e8!? We shall look at a rare yet interesting plan played in a correspondence game. 10. ♜e2 f6 11. ♙e3 ♙xe3 12. ♜xe3 a5!? Gaining space on the queenside. 13. ♖d2 ♖d6 14. ♜ae1 ♖b5!? 15. ♖e2 ♜b4 16. ♖b3 a4 17. a3 ♜e7 18. ♖d2 c5∞ Gerard Lonnee - Anton Visser, corr. 2017/18) 9.d3 ♖d7 10. ♙g5 f6 11. ♙e3 ♙f8 12. ♖e2 ♖c5= Eltaj Safarli 2639 - Bu Xiangzhi 2730, Riyadh (rapid) 2017

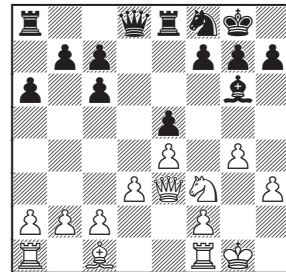


8...♜e8

8...♙g4!? is an interesting way to steer the game to a more dynamic mode. 9.h3 ♙h5

10. ♜e2! White now intends to play ♖d1-e3 and timely g4/♗f5. (10.g4 ♖xg4 11.hxg4 ♙xg4↑; 10. ♙e3 ♙d6 Logically we retain the bishop pair. 11. ♖b1 Knight was not doing much on c3, and so White logically transfers it to d2 to ease the pin on the f3-knight. 11...♖d7 12. ♖bd2 ♜e7 13.c3 h6 14.a4 a5 15. ♜b3 b6 16. ♜c4 c5= with a fine position for Black, as in Haraldur Haraldsson - Hannes Rada, corr. 2012/13)

a) 10...♜e8 is also possible. 11. ♖d1 ♖d7 12. ♖e3 ♙xe3 13. ♜xe3 ♙xf3 (13...♖f8 14.g4 ♙g6

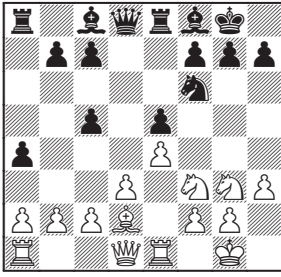


15. ♖xe5! ♜xe5 16.f4 ♜e7 17.f5± Vladimir Baklan 2614 - Aleksandr Karpatchev 2416, Deutschland 2018) 14. ♜xf3 ♖f8= with a balanced game;

b) 10...♖d7!? A new move. 11. ♖d1 ♙d6!? 12. ♖e3 ♖c5 13.g4 ♙g6 14. ♖f5 f6∞ with a highly complex game.

9. ♙e3

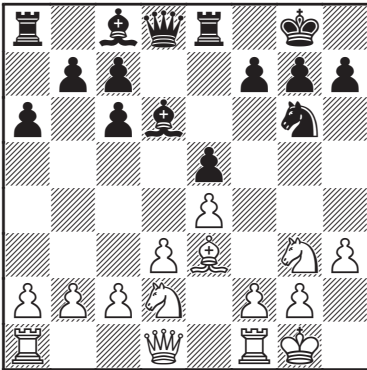
9.h3 a5 seizing space on the queenside. 10. ♙e3 (10. ♖e2 a4 11. ♖g3 ♙f8 12. ♜e1 c5 13. ♙d2



13...♞d7 Intending the ♞b8–c6 manoeuvre.
 14.♞e2 ♞b8 15.♙e3 b5 16.c3 ♞c6= Bratislav Jovanović - Zbigniew Szczepański, corr. 2017/18; 10.♙g5 h6 11.♙h4 a4 12.♞e2 b5 13.♞d2 ♞d6 14.♙g3 ♞d7 15.♙h2 ♙b6 16.a3 c5= Igor Goncharov - Anatoly Mishin, corr. 2016) 10...♞d7 11.♙xc5 ♞xc5 12.♞e1 ♞e7 13.d4 exd4 14.♞xd4 b6 15.♞e3 ♞e6 16.♞ad1 ♙b7 17.♞d4 ♞xd4 18.♞xd4 c5= Elena Stanila - Constantin Enescu, corr. 2018

9...♙d6 10.h3 ♞d7 11.♞d2 ♞f8
 12.♞e2 ♞g6 13.♞g3

White plans to play ♞f5 next, thus delaying development of the c8–bishop.



13...♞f4!?

A new move. Black will play ♞f6 next.

13...♙e6 14.♞f5 ♙f8 15.♞f3 Even though objectively the position is equal, it is much easier to play with White, as in Anish Giri 2764 - Ding Liren 2791, chess24.com (Internet-rapid) 2021



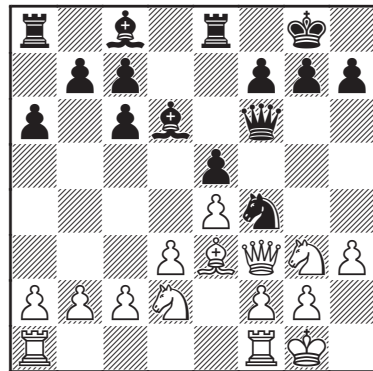
Anish Giri

14.♞f3

14.♙xf4 exf4 15.♞e2 ♞g5±;

14.♞f5 ♞f6 15.♙xf4 exf4 16.♞xd6 cxd6 with a very pleasant position for Black.

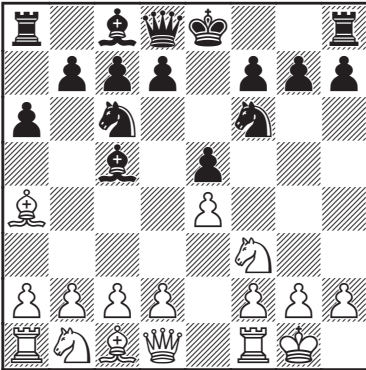
14...♞f6=



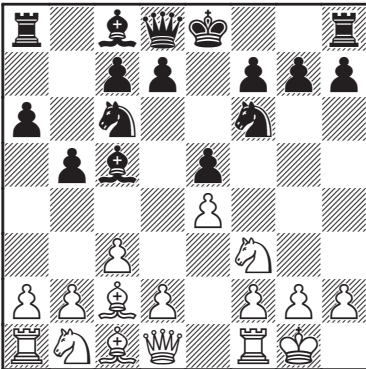
With a roughly balanced game.

6.c3 b5 7.♙c2 d5 8.ed5/d3

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4
 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙c5



6.c3 b5 7.♙c2



White's Ruy López bishop generally belongs on c2 and here White chooses to go right away to that square. However, that decision also has a minor drawback, since the bishop does not control the a2-g8 diagonal anymore.

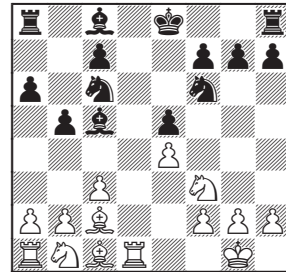
7...d5

Here we try to play aggressively trying to exploit White's previous move. In this chapter

we shall focus on 8.ed5 and 8.d3. Other important alternatives are 8.a4 and 8.d4 and will be dealt with in the next chapter.

8.exd5

8.d3!? White avoids theory and chooses "over the board" approach. 8...dxe4 (8...0-0 is an alternative.) 9.dxe4 ♙xd1 10.♖xd1



a) 10...♙b7 11.♘bd2 0-0-0 12.b4!? (12.♖e1= Dmitrij Jakovenko 2735 - Santosh Gujrathi Vidit 2707, Poikovsky 2018) 12...♙b6 13.a4 with some pressure;

b) 10...a5!? A new move. At first I did not understand the point behind this move as computer kept on suggesting it. I did not take it so seriously as sometimes computers suggest many such random moves in different positions. However, I decided to look deeply trying to understand the point. Basically, Black wants to stop White from expanding on the queenside and if possible Black will grab space by pushing his pawns even further. Here are some sample lines:

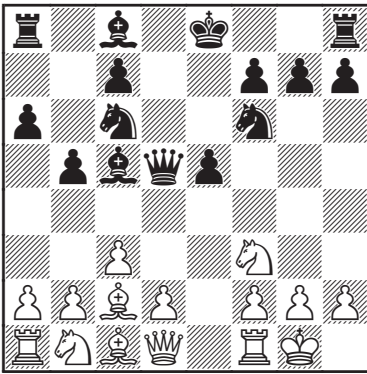
b1) 11.a4 b4 Black is fine here;

b2) 11.♙g5 h6 Forcing the issues. (11...0-0 is also possible.) 12.♙xf6 otherwise White's previous move will have no point. 12...gxf6 13.♖d5 (13.♙d3 ♖b8♣ with a healthy

bishop pair.) 13...♙b6 14.♖xb5 ♘e6∞ White is still underdeveloped on the queen-side and the rook stuck on b5-square. These factors give Black a very good compensation for the sacrificed pawn;

b3) 11.♘a3!? 11...♙a6 (11...♙xa3?! 12.bxa3 The bishop pair and open b-file give White a pleasant edge.) 12.c4!? (12.♙g5 ♘d7=) 12...♘b4! 13.cxb5 ♘xc2 14.♘xc2 ♙xb5 15.♘xe5 ♘xe4 16.♙e3 ♙d6= with dynamic equality.

8...♙xd5



9.d4

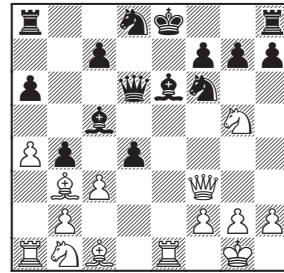
White logically opens up the centre.

9.♘xe5?? ♘xe5 10.d4 ♙b7 11.f3 ♙b6++ Dušan Stojić 2229 - Gary W. Lane 2371, Canberra 2009;

9.♙b3 This does not achieve much. 9...♙d3 The queen stands firmly on d3 depriving White from developing his pieces easily, so it has to be kicked away. 10.♙c2 ♙d5 Transposes to our main line; 10...♙d6!? Leya Garifullina 2330 - Ann Styazhkina 2280, Russia (ch-bltz) 2019;

9.a4 b4 10.d4 Similar to our main line with the inclusion of a4 and b4. 10...exd4 11.♙b3 (11.♖e1+ ♙e6 12.♙b3 ♙d6 Transposes to the main line in this variation.) 11...♙d6 (11...♙h5 12.cxd4↑ Leinier

Domínguez Pérez 2661 - Alexander Onischuk 2652, Poikovsky 2005 - 93/272) 12.♖e1+ ♙e6 Not yet played in over the board event. (12...♙f8 13.cxb4 ♙xb4 14.♘bd2↑ Vasilios Kotronias 2614 - Yannick Pelletier 2609, Kemer 2007) 13.♘g5 (13.♙xe6 fxe6 14.♘g5 0-0+ White is underdeveloped whereas Black, on the other hand, is fully developed and will soon take over the initiative.) 13...♘d8 (13...0-0-0!?) 14.♙f3



14...0-0! 15.♘d2 (15.♙xa8? ♘g4 This line is almost similar to the main line whereas the inclusion of a4 and b4 helps Black as the b3-bishop is undefended here. 16.g3 dxc3! 15...dxc3 16.♘de4 (16.bxc3? ♘g4++ Attacking both the f2- and h2-pawns.) 16...♙g4 (16...♙e5!?) 17.♘xf6+ ♙xf6 18.♙xf6 gxf6 19.♘e4 ♙e7 20.bxc3 ♙e6= with comfortable equality, as happened in Adam Korchut - Klaus Richter, corr. 2020; 20...f5!?;

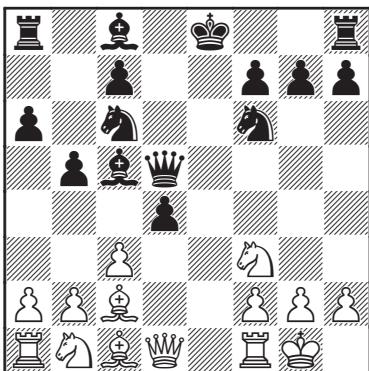
9.d3 White focuses on developing his pieces first before taking any concrete actions. 9...♙f5 Pressuring the d3-pawn and also keeping the options open for the black king. (9...0-0 is an alternative.)

a) 10.♙e2 0-0-0 Black already holds some edge. (10...♖d8 is also possible.) 11.a4 b4 12.d4 ♙xc2 13.♙xc2 exd4 14.cxd4 ♘xd4 15.♘xd4 ♙xd4 16.♙f4 ♖d7++ Alexandru-Bogdan Banzea 2405 - Ivan Schitco 2462, Arad 2019;

b) 10.d4!? ♙xc2 11.♙xc2 exd4 12.♖e1+

♙e7 (12...♖f8!?) 13.cxd4 0–0 14.♗c3 ♜d7= with a comfortable position for Black.

9...exd4



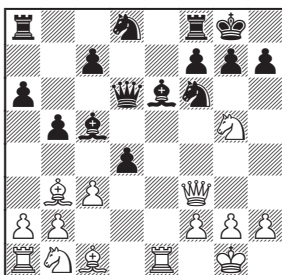
10.♞e1+

10.cxd4 ♗xd4 11.♞e1+ ♙e6 12.♗xd4 ♜xd4 13.♞e2 0–0♣ with a healthy pawn up, as occurred in Evgeny Postny 2605 - Arystanbek Urazayev 2429, lichess.org (Internet-blitz) 2020;

10.♙g5 ♙e6!?! (10...♙g4 Hou Yifan 2623 - Betül Cemre Yıldız Kadioğlu 2333, Kazan 2012) 11.♙b3 ♜d7 12.♙xe6 fxe6♣ Black has a healthy pawn and he will castle on the next move;

10.♙b3 ♜d6 11.♞e1+ ♙e6!?! (11...♗e7!?) 12.♗g5

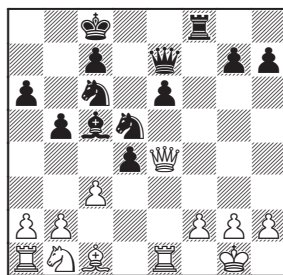
a) 12...♗d8 13.♞f3 We get similar position from the 9.a4 line with the inclusion of a4 and b4. Important difference is that now the b3-bishop is defended by the a2-pawn. However, despite that Black castles. 13...0–0



a1) 14.♞xa8!?! A new move. 14...♗g4 15.♞f3 (15.g3 dxc3↔) 15...♞xh2+ 16.♖f1 d3 17.♞h3! ♗e3+ 18.♞xe3 ♙xh3 19.♞xh3 ♞e5 20.♞xd3 ♞e8 21.♙e3 ♞h2∞ Though White has a rook and two minor pieces against the black queen and a pawn, the pieces on a1 and b1 are not yet developed and Black attains strong counterplay against White's king. In a practical game it is easier to play with the black pieces;

a2) 14.♙f4 ♞b6 15.♙e5 ♙xb3 16.axb3 dxc3 17.♗xc3 ♙xf2+ 18.♞xf2 ♞xf2+ 19.♖xf2 ♗g4+ 20.♖g3 ♗xe5 21.♞xe5 f6= Vasilius Kotronias 2486 - Dmitrij Kollars 2567, Aarhus 2019;

b) 12...0–0!?! Black is ready to give up the exchange to get the initiative. 13.♙xe6+ fxe6 14.♗f7 ♞e7 (14...♞d5!?) 15.♗xd8 ♞xd8 16.♞f3 ♗d5 17.♞e4 ♞f8∞



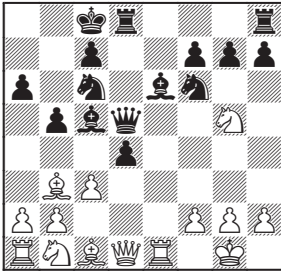
White's queenside pieces are yet to be developed and this important development factor gives Black a huge advantage in a practical game, as happened in Leinier Domínguez Pérez 2758 - Fabiano Caruana 2835, lichess.org (Internet-m/1-rapid) 2020; 17...♞f6!?

10...♙e6

10...♖f8!?

11.♙b3

11.♗g5?! 0–0–0 12.♗xe6 (12.♙b3



12... ♖f5! 13. ♗xe6 dxc3! 12... fxe6
13. ♕b3 ♖d6;

11. cxd4 ♗xd4 12. ♗xd4 ♕xd4

11... ♖d7

Another way to handle this position other than 11... ♖d6.

11... ♖d6 Transposes via 10. ♕b3.

12. ♗g5 ♗d8

It looks like Black's pieces are going back. However, White's queenside pieces are not developed, and it is difficult for White to get the initiative.

12... dxc3 13. ♖xd7+ (13. ♗xe6± is stronger than the text continuation.) 13... ♗xd7
14. ♗xe6 fxe6 15. ♕xe6+± Roberto Junio Brito Molina 2434 - Hampus Sorensen 2395, chess.com (Internet-blitz) 2021

13. ♖f3

13. cxd4 ♕xd4 with a healthy pawn up and Black is better here;

13. ♗xe6 ♗xe6

13... ♖b8

Rook is more useful on b8 as it can swing across the 3rd rank as well.

14. ♗xe6 ♗xe6 15. ♖f5

15. ♕g5 ♕e7 It is important to bring back the bishop to defend the kingside. 16. ♕xe6 fxe6 17. cxd4 0-0= with a comfortable position for Black.

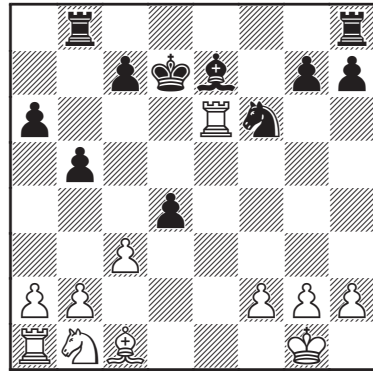
15... ♕e7 16. ♕xe6

16. ♗d2 c5

16... fxe6 17. ♖xe6

17. ♖xe6 0-0+

17... ♖xe6 18. ♖xe6 ♗d7=



Black's lead in development along with the centralised king secures him a pleasant edge in a practical game.

