

King's Indian Killer: The Harry Attack

Richard Palliser and
Simon Williams



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About the Authors

Richard Palliser is an International Master and the editor of *CHESS Magazine*. In 2006 he became Joint British Rapidplay Champion and in 2019 finished third in the British Championship. He has established a reputation as a skilled chess writer and written many works for Everyman, including the bestselling *The Complete Chess Workout*.

Simon Williams is a Grandmaster, a well-known presenter and a widely-followed streamer, as well as a popular writer whose previous books have received great praise. He is much admired for his dynamic and spontaneous attacking style.

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Preface

I am not sure when my compulsive addiction to pushing Harry the h-pawn started. It may have been as a little child not being able to reach the centre of the board, or possibly as a grown adult trying to replicate some of Fischer's fantastic victories. Fischer loved using his h-pawn to crush Black's king in the Sicilian Dragon. Either way, my experimental teenage years lead me to a very odd discovery, the Harry Attack.

After many years struggling to find a good line against the Grünfeld, I started trying 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 h4!?, but it quickly became apparent that 4...c5! was a good response. Could this idea be improved on? Why, yes, with 3 h4! – the topic of this book! The main idea is that the standard Grünfeld move, 3...d5?!, is simply a mistake against 3 h4 as after 4 cxd5 White is already better. Black has to worry about the centre as well as h4-h5.

In a period of euphoria, I wanted to share this discovery with my fellow professional chess players. The standard response was for them to laugh and question my sanity. I recall one English grandmaster looking at me in a very peculiar way and going on to lecture me in similar manner as a mother would to her petulant child, "Simon you really need to play sensible chess, this h-pawn nonsense will get you nowhere!"

Well, fast forward 20 or so years and nearly all the top players in the world are using this little-known antidote to the ...g6 systems! An idea that pre-dated *AlphaZero*, yet only become popular once super-computers enabled us to look at chess through a new lens.

Within the pages of this book you will learn a unique way to face the King's Indian Defence, as well as the Grünfeld, Benoni and Benko, to name some of the set-ups Black can try. I must admit that Richard and I were actually a bit surprised that White seems to, theoretically speaking, gain an advantage in nearly all variations. The latest computer engines are also regularly suggesting 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 h4! as their top suggestion for White. This could really mean that this opening becomes even more commonplace at elite level.

When initially researching the Harry Attack, it didn't surprise me to discover that the late, great Mike Basman was the first strong player in my database to play 3 h4. In 1980 he wheeled out this move to gain a very nice and notable victory, as you'll soon see. A week before Mike's death I was able to visit him in hospital. The main thing he wanted people to remember him by was his unique way of looking at chess. He wanted future generations to not just follow the ideas of others, but to create their own wacky and wonderful systems.

I wholeheartedly hope that this book will give you the inspiration to go out there and look at chess in a unique and magical way. There is still beauty to be found on the board and you have the power to find that magic.

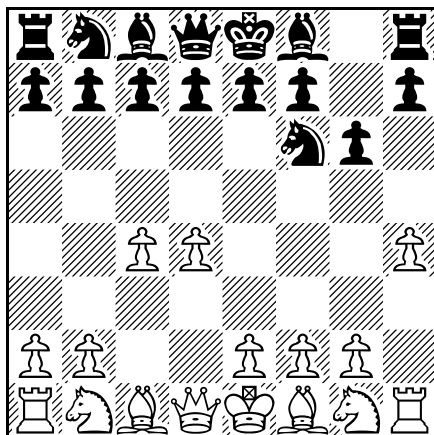
Simon Williams, Godalming, May 2023

Introduction

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6

This is, of course, a common position for the 1 d4 and 2 c4 player to reach, as Black lines up to play the King's Indian or Grünfeld. Now White usually develops a knight or sometimes reaches for the g- or f-pawn, but there's another pawn which can be pushed – and in a way which you may never have considered before!

3 h4!?



This is it. The Harry Attack or even the Williams Attack, as we might also call this advance of Simon's favourite pawn, Harry. Simon was the first grandmaster to play this bold advance, so we think you can safely think of the opening as the Williams Attack, if for some reason you don't like Simon's preferred name of the Harry Attack.

That debut game for Simon was back in the Swiss Open Championship of 2008 against FM Patrick Hugentobler. Simon's games and decent results with 3 h4 unsurprisingly soon led to others following suit, beginning with those ever-creative grandmasters Ivan Ivanisevic, Richard Rapport and Veselin Topalov. It wasn't until 2019 though, when Alexander Grischuk sprung 3 h4!? on Maxime Vachier-Lagrave at the Riga Grand Prix, that the interest level went up another notch. Grischuk repeated the move four times in the subsequent Paris Rapid and Blitz. The elite were quick to take note and at blitz even Magnus Carlsen and Ding Liren have wheeled out 3 h4!?, while Maxime Vachier-Lagrave has even been tempted over to the white side, as we'll see shortly.

What are White's aims with the bold, early advance of the h-pawn?

In short, White aims to take Black out of his comfort zone and away from his comfortable blanket of Grünfeld or King's Indian theory as early as move three. Already Black must decide: is 4 h5 an issue? That advance is certainly high on White's agenda, if not always as early as move four.

Sometimes White will get in h4-h5 then exchange on g6, opening up the h-file as the first stage in launching a strong attack, especially if Black has already castled. Other times Harry may even press on to h6, suffocating Black and causing problems for his dark-squared bishop and king.

It's important to be aware too that Grünfeld players will find it no easy task to break with ...d5 without allowing White a pleasant early initiative. We'll appreciate why a little more in the upcoming illustrative games, but first we should mention that 3 h4!? still very much packs a punch at all levels.

Rising Popularity

3 h4 was only seen in 91 games which made TWIC (The Week in Chess) in the course of 2021. Back in early 2022 when we first finished a course for Chessable on 3 h4 – the material which forms the basis of the expanded and updated repertoire you'll find in this book – there were only just over 200 games available on ChessBase's *Mega Database* and recent TWICs. When Richard came to update the course for this book, he found that a further 350 had been played in 2022 and 2023, a number which unsurprisingly continued to rise during the production stage.

Notably White won just over 50% of those 350 games (and just 15% were drawn), which is never a bad result, and with the likes of Parham Maghsoodloo, Wesley So – in an important game from the Chennai Olympiad no less – Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Wei Yi appearing on the white side. A special mention too to the highly-active Indian amateur M. Shah Ansh, who has racked up a whopping 48 recent games and counting with 3 h4 (many in Chess.com's Titled Tuesday Blitz events).

The other good news is that the Harry Attack continues to throw a great number of opponents into an early state of confusion, with plenty of black players still stumbling into inferior versions of the Grünfeld or suffering in the various Benoni (...c5) lines. Objectively, with care, Black should be able to obtain an unclear and playable position, such as with 3...♗g7 4 ♖c3 ♗d6 5 e4 ♗c6!?, as recommended by King's Indian expert Gawain Jones, which is though yet to really catch on. Moreover, even in those cases we still quite like White's aggressive set-up and chances.

We should also mention that 3 h4 will surely confuse King's Indian and Grünfeld players relying on older sources. For instance, there isn't any mention of it or the closely related 3 ♖c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 h4!? in Joe Gallagher's classic 2002 work, *Starting Out: The King's Indian* or his subsequent 2004 repertoire *Play the King's Indian*, and even Alexey Kovalchuk's thorough 2020 work *Playing the Grünfeld* failed to mention 3 h4.

Both your authors are also still very much wheeling out the Harry Attack, with one of

Simon's recent Titled Tuesday games continuing:

3...b6?!

A rare and not especially good choice.

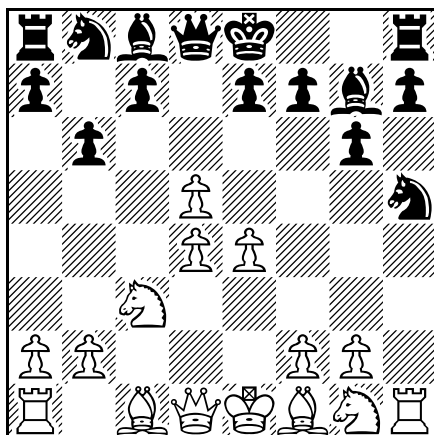
4 ♖c3 d5?! 5 h5!

Simply pushing past – and with some force.

5...♗xh5

5...dxc4 6 hxg6 fxg6 7 e4 also leaves Black with a bad version of a Grünfeld, and if 7...♙b7 8 e5 ♘d5 9 ♙xc4 when Black's kingside has been significantly weakened; something ♗f3-g5 may be quick to exploit.

6 cxd5 ♙g7 7 e4



Talk about a powerful centre and after just seven moves!

7...♙b7 8 g4!?

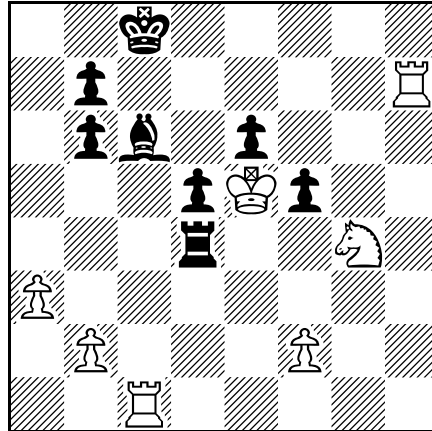
8 ♗xh5!? gxh5 9 ♖xh5 might have been even stronger, and if 9...♙xd4 10 ♘b5 ♙g7 11 ♗f3 when ♘g5 is a huge threat, menacing mate on f7, as well as ♗e6. Quite simply, Black's position is a wreck, with his kingside broken up (♙h6 and ♗bd4-f5 will both exploit this too), and king already in trouble.

8...♗f6 9 g5 ♗fd7 10 e5

With f2-f4 next up Black was already looking rather cramped, as well as under pressure in Williams-Foerster Yialamas, Internet (blitz) 2022.

Good luck with 3 h4, catching your opponents out at an early stage, and especially enjoy your early adventures with Harry!

Richard Palliser,
York, May 2023



Never forget to make full use of the most powerful piece in most endgames, the king!

30...♖xg4 31 ♔xe6 ♜f4

This is quickly shown to be hopeless, but even 31...♜e4+!? 32 ♔xf5 ♜e2 wouldn't save the day after 33 f4 ♜xb2 34 ♔e6 when White's active king allied to his powerful rooks and passed f-pawn should prove decisive.

32 ♜c2 ♔b8 33 ♔e5 ♜f3 34 ♜f7 1-0

White is about to acquire a passed f-pawn after all.

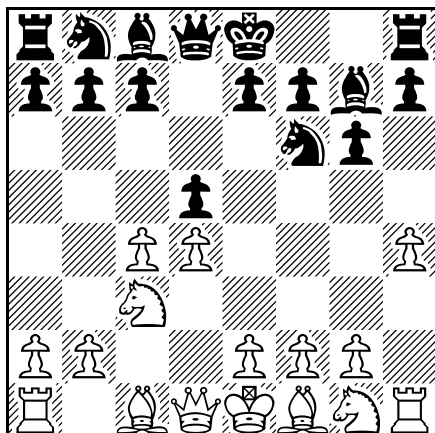
Game 2
S.Williams-K.Toma
British League (4NCL), Daventry 2023

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 h4!?

Here we go...

3...♘g7 4 ♘c3 d5?!

Yes, even in 2023 Grünfeld players are still trying to reach a version of their favourite opening so. They can manage to, but not obtain a good version.



5 h5!

Simon follows in Mike Basman's footsteps and blasts straight ahead, making good, immediate use of Harry.

5...♘h5 6 cxd5 c6 7 e4

Continuing to follow Basman-Grinberg as White prepares a strong pawn sacrifice.

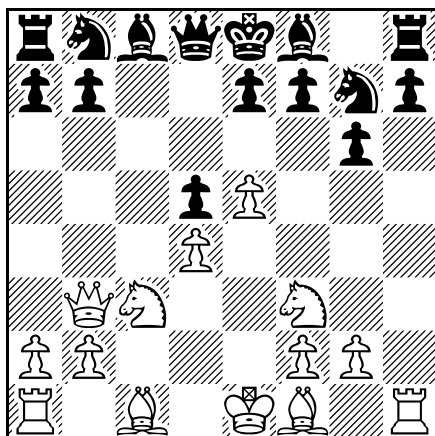
7...cxd5 8 e5! ♕f8

The same miserable retreat which Grinberg landed up settling for.

9 ♘f3 ♘g7!?

A small change of course, trying to avoid being gradually suffocated after 9...♘c6 10 ♖b3 e6 (10...♘g7!? 11 ♖xd5 would transpose to our main game here) 11 g4, as happened to Grinberg.

10 ♖b3!



Black has a rather unusual version of a North Sea Defence (1 d4 g6 2 e4 ♘f6!? 3 e5 ♘h5),

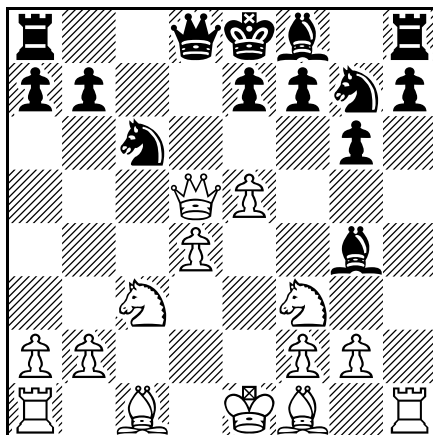
and leading in development White should want to keep Black tied up, with here the idea being again to leave Black rather passively placed after 10...e6 11 g4 or even 11 ♟h6.

10...♞c6!? 11 ♞xd5

There's no good reason not to take the pawn, especially if we consider that Black is still a few moves away from fully untangling her kingside.

11...♟g4

Trying to counter against d4. Instead, 11...♞xd5?! 12 ♞xd5 (with a certain threat) 12...♞e6 13 ♟e3 would leave White in full control and even with the handy option of b4-b5.

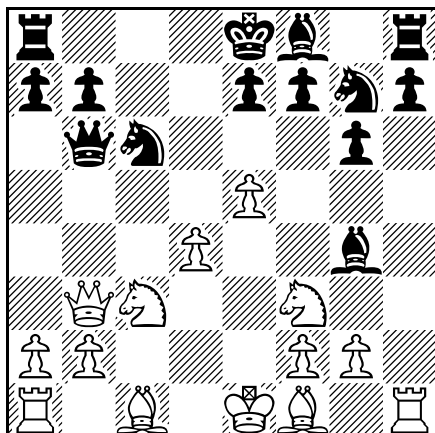


12 ♞b3?

A tempting retreat, but unfortunately Simon has mixed up his lines! The previous 4NCL season and also in the Northamptonshire town of Daventry, Richard had established a clear advantage with the fearless 12 ♞b5! ♞d7 (White also retains sufficient control after 12...♟xf3 13 gxf3 a6 14 ♞xb7 ♞xd4 15 ♞e4 followed by ♟e3 and ♞d1 or even 0-0-0) 13 d5 before going on to blunder horribly. We'll return briefly to this position and Palliser-Kolani, 4NCL (British League) 2022, in Line B of Chapter Three (see variation 'a3' in the notes to Black's sixth move there).

12...♞b6?

Returning the favour. Black needed to flick in 12...♟xf3 when White has various enticing possibilities, but even 13 d5!? (naturally not 13 ♞xb7? ♞b8 and 13 gxf3 ♞xd4 14 ♟b5+ ♞xb5 15 ♞xb5+ ♞d7 should be OK for Black, but 13 ♟c4!? carries a threat and then 13...♞e6 14 gxf3 ♞cxd4 15 ♞xb7 ♞b8 16 ♞e4 is just pretty unclear) 13...♞xe5 14 gxf3 (or 14 ♟f4!? ♟xg2 15 ♞a4+ ♞d7 16 ♟xg2 when White's active diagonal-moving pieces definitely supply some compensation for the two pawns) 14...♞f5! (trying to avoid having to contort after 14...♟xf3+ 15 ♞d1 f6 16 ♞b5! ♞e5 17 ♟d2 when again Black is two pawns up, but far from comfortably placed, in part due to the hole on e6) 15 ♞a4+! ♞d7 16 ♟d3 is no more than simply rather unclear, with play possibly set to end in a repetition after 16...♞d6 17 ♞d4 ♞f6 18 ♞a4+ ♞d7 (and not 18...♞d7? 19 ♞b5!) 19 ♞d4.



13 ♕e3

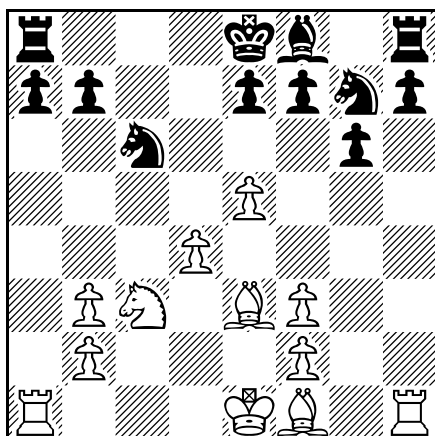
Shoring up d4, but doing so with 13 ♖xb6! axb6 14 ♕e3 would have been even stronger, and if 14...♕xf3 15 gxf3 ♜f5 16 0-0-0 when d4-d5, f3-f4 and ♕h3 are all high on the agenda and White's dominant centre should leave him clearly for choice.

And if you were wondering about 13 d5!? you're in good company, although here Simon was trying and failing to make the amazing idea 13...♕xf3 14 gxf3 ♖xb3 15 dxc6? work. Unfortunately after 15...♖b6 16 cxb7 (or 16 ♕e3 ♖xb2!) 16...♖xb7 17 ♕b5+ ♔d8 18 0-0 White's initiative doesn't seem to quite supply enough compensation (Black is currently queen for rook ahead).

13...♖xb3

Black sensibly inflicts a small degree of structural damage ahead of continuing her very Grünfeld policy to obtain counterplay against d4.

14 axb3 ♕xf3 15 gxf3



15...e6

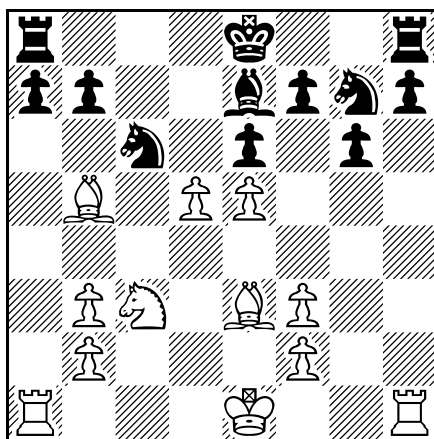
This feels a little passive though. Presumably Black was concerned by ideas of d4-d5 and yet after 15...♞f5 16 ♖b5 (16 d5 ♜xe3 17 fxe3 ♜xe5 18 ♖b5+ ♞d7 should be defensible, despite White retaining obvious compensation for the pawn after, say, 19 ♜h4!?) 16...e6 (Black is now ready to simply go ...♙g7 and ...0-0, if allowed) 17 d5!? exd5 18 ♜xd5 0-0-0! she would have been OK. You'd certainly be worried about castling queenside so up against such a dangerous attacker as Simon, but after 19 ♖xc6 (or 19 ♖c4 ♜xe5! 20 ♜xa7 ♜xf3+ 21 ♙f1 ♜xe3+ 22 fxe3 ♙b8 when the knight can always return via e5 and c6, and Black should be OK) 19...bxc6 20 ♜c3 ♜e8 Black's counterplay in the centre will offset the fall of a7, with 21 f4 f6! one fairly useful resource.

16 ♖b5

Unsurprisingly 16 d5!? exd5 (16...♜xe5? 17 ♖b5+ ♞d7 18 ♜e4 is now pretty much decisive, and if 18...0-0-0 19 ♜c1+! ♙b8 20 ♖xd7 ♖b4+ 21 ♙e2 ♜xd7 22 ♖f4+ ♙a8 23 ♜xh7! – a neat tactic to highlight the back-rank weakness) 17 ♜xd5 also tempted Simon and after 17...0-0-0 18 ♖c4! White should be slightly for choice with f3-f4 next up, or if 18...♜xe5? 19 ♜xa7.

16...♙e7?

It still wasn't too late to take play back into the note to Black's 15th move with 16...♜f5 or even go 16...♖b4!? when 17 ♙e2 0-0 18 ♜e4 ♙e7 19 ♜hc1 is probably no more than a pleasant position for White and a very solid one for Black.

17 d5!

Crashing through and very much seizing the initiative.

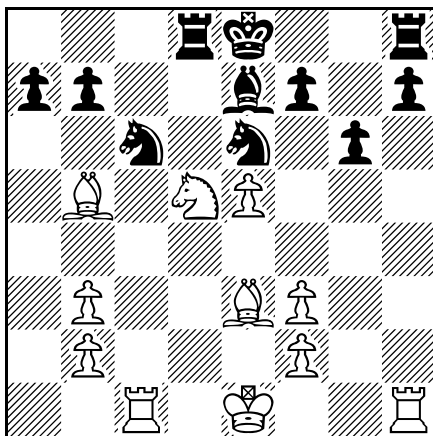
17...exd5 18 ♜xd5 ♙e6

18...♖d8!? is how the engines calmly prefer to defend, although after 19 ♜c1 0-0 20 f4 White must be clearly for choice, and if 20...♜f5 21 ♖d3!? ♜xe3 22 fxe3 followed by ♖e4, ♙e2 and b3-b4-b5, with ongoing pressure right across the board.

19 ♜c1!?

A simple method to increase the pressure and one played with a certain exchange sacrifice in mind, but objectively speaking Simon should have preferred 19 ♘b6! ♜b8 (or 19...♙b4+!? 20 ♖e2 0-0 when White might even spurn the exchange to threaten mate with 21 ♘d5!) 20 ♜xa7, thereby going a pawn to the good and also threatening ♜xb7. Black would do very well to survive after 20...♘ed8 21 f4 0-0 22 ♜a4! followed by f4–f5 and/or ♘d7.

19...♜d8?



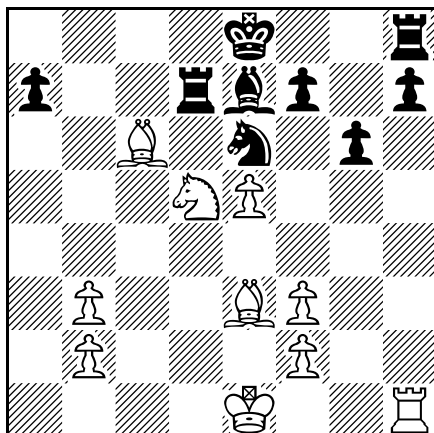
Underestimating White's concept. The English international and WFM needed to find 19...♜c8! when 20 f4!? (20 ♙xa7 ♜d8! 21 ♜xc6!? bxc6 22 ♙xc6+ still gives White decent compensation, but the position is now far from completely clear after 22...♙f8 23 ♙e3 h5) 20...a6 21 ♙d3 ♜d8 22 ♙e4 would have left White in full control and clearly for choice.

20 ♜xc6!

Boom!

20...bxc6 21 ♙xc6+ ♜d7

A rather grim but also forced decision in view of 21...♙f8? 22 ♙h6+ ♘g7 23 ♘xe7 ♙xe7 24 ♙xg7.



22 ♖xa7

Calmly acquiring a second extra pawn and while retaining a most powerful pin.

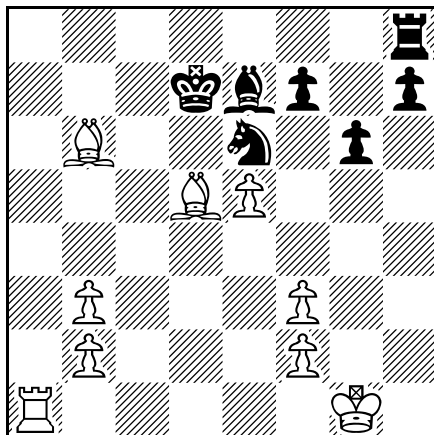
22...♖d8 23 ♖b6+ ♖c8 24 0-0!

A much stronger decision than taking on d7, since the black rook can scarcely run away.

24...♖xd5

24...♖b7!? was probably a better try when after 25 ♖c1 ♖g5 26 ♖e3 ♖xe3 27 ♖xb7+ ♖xb7 28 fxe3 White should be winning, but still has a bit of work to do.

25 ♖xd5 ♖d7 26 ♖a1!



Inviting the final piece to the party swiftly heralds the end.

26...♖b8 27 ♖a7+ ♖e8 28 ♖e3 1-0

Two pawns down and still quite passively placed, Toma had seen enough. 28...g5 would rule out f3-f4, but after 29 b4! ♖xb4 (and not 29...♖xb4? 30 ♖xe6 fxe6 31 ♖xe7+!) 30 ♖xe6 fxe6 31 ♖xg5 White should be winning easily enough.

Rewinding a little and it should be said that Simon's early non-GM opponents after 3 h4 did also show a remarkable desire to insist on an immediate reaction in the centre and Grünfeld-like play.

Game 3
S.Williams-A.Platel
Dieppe Open 2009

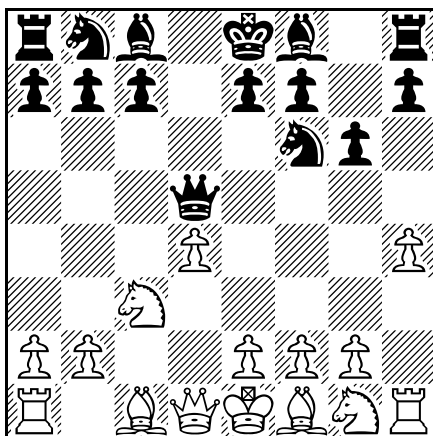
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 h4 d5?!

Not good, as we already know, but an advance which some Grünfeld players may stick with when surprised by 3 h4 at club level.

4 cxd5 ♙xd5?!

We've already noted that 4...♘xd5 5 h5 is very nice for White, but bringing the queen out so early can hardly be warranted.

5 ♘c3



Of course. White develops with tempo and will now follow up with e2-e4 unless Black tries a Scandinavian-style pin.

5...♙a5 6 ♙d2!

Another example of simple and strong play. Simon simply breaks the pin and creates future discovered attacks against the black queen. He can recall also being tempted by 6 h5!? ♘xh5 7 e4, which would offer fantastic play for a pawn, but there's no need to sacrifice one...just yet!

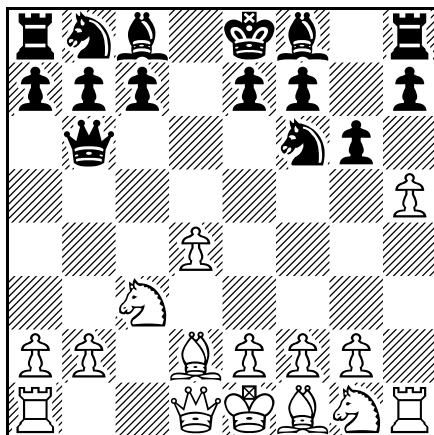
6...♙b6

A rather greedy choice, eyeing the pawns on b2 and d4.

The Scandinavianesque 6...c6 would have been safer, although after 7 e4 White has pretty much everything you could want from the opening: ideal central control and ideas

of quickly prising open the h-file with h4-h5. For example, 7...♙g7 8 e5! ♘d5 9 h5 when it would take a brave man to castle as Black, but otherwise h5-h6 may well jam up his development and White also has swift and easy development, not least with ♙c4.

7 h5!



Inspired play. Rather than defend d4 or b2, Simon dangles a third pawn before his opponent and, of course, Black can only take the pawns one at a time.

7...gxh5

Rather ugly, if engine-approved.

Simon had been hoping for 7...♘h5? when his big idea was 8 ♙xh5! gxh5 9 ♘d5 ♙d6 (9...♙c6? 10 e4 is even worse for Black with ♙b5 now a threat) 10 e4. White simply threatens ♙f4 and ♘xc7+, a threat which it's extremely hard to prevent, as 10...e5? 11 dxe5 ♙xe5 loses to 12 ♙c3 ♙xe4+ 13 ♘e2 when there are just far too many threats.

Alternatively, 7...♙xb2? would have been cleaned up by 8 ♙b1 ♙a3 9 ♘b5 and 7...♙xd4 8 ♘f3 ♙b6 (or 8...♙d8 9 hxg6 fxg6 10 ♙b3 when ♘e5 is all set to highlight Black's rather vulnerable light squares and kingside) 9 hxg6 fxg6 10 e4 or even 10 ♙h4!? just leaves White with a powerful initiative and excellent play for the pawn. Indeed, he might well quickly overwhelm Black with some combination of ♙c1, e4-e5, ♘g5 and ♘a4.

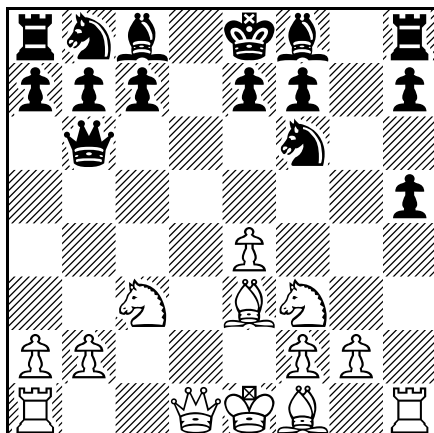
8 e4!

Offering a second pawn to further White's initiative while also threatening to dislodge Black's only developed minor piece with 9 e5.

8...♙xd4 9 ♘f3

With tempo.

9...♙b6 10 ♙e3



Another improving move with tempo and now Platel elects to grab a third pawn for his suffering.

10...♚xb2?!

Easy to criticise, but Black was set to suffer in any case, not least as 10...♚a5 11 e5 ♘e4? is pretty much impossible on account of the neat 12 ♚d5! ♚xd5 13 ♘xd5 ♙d8 14 0-0-0 with a ginormous initiative for White.

11 ♗d4

A fine square for the bishop, eyeing not just the black queen (♘d5 is huge threat), but also the rook on h8 after e4-e5-e6.

11...c5?!

This pretty much loses by force, but even after 11...♚a3 12 e5 ♘g4 13 e6! f6 (13...♘f6 14 exf7+ ♙xf7 15 ♗c4+ ♙e8 16 ♘g5 fast becomes a massacre) 14 ♗c4 White would have enjoyed superb compensation, with ♘d5 one idea, ♚b1 and ♘b5 another, and there's always ♚xh5 too to strike on the other flank.

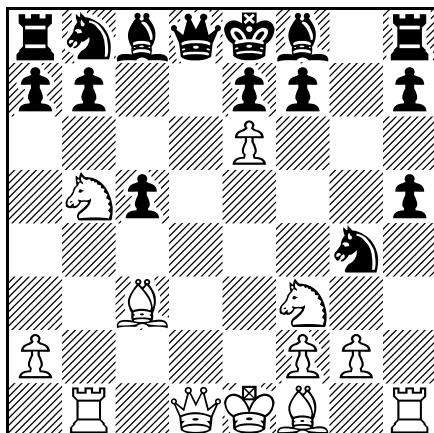
12 ♚b1 ♚a3 13 ♘b5!

Everything continues to come with tempo. Black's queen will make it back to base, but she only returns there to find the position in ruins.

13...♚a5+ 14 ♗c3 ♚d8 15 e5!

Naturally White does not object to an exchange of queens and potential snap mate on c7.

15...♘g4 16 e6!



Simon continues to roll forwards as the word ‘massacre’ rather springs to mind. Do observe too just how much of a fish bone this pawn quickly proves to be in the black king’s throat.

16...f6

16...♔xd1+? 17 ♖xd1 ♘a6 does cover c7, but there’s another rook hanging too: 18 exf7+ ♔xf7 19 ♙xh8.

17 ♔a4!

Threatening discovered check and mate, while also freeing d1 for the rook. 17 ♔xd8+ ♔xd8 18 ♖d1+ would have done the business too.

17...♘c6 18 ♖d1 ♔b6 19 ♙a5! 1-0

A neat finish, as if 19...♔xa5+ 20 ♔xa5 ♘xa5 21 ♘c7 mate.

We should now see what happens if Black decides to rule out h4-h5 by going 3...h5 himself.

Game 4

V.Mikhalevski-N.Iliagiev

Israeli Open Championship, Safed 2021

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 h4 h5

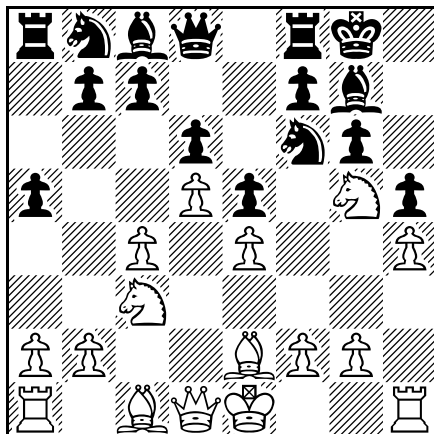
The young Israeli FM playing Black here is by no means the only opponent whose reaction to h2-h4 is to think: best stop h4-h5 as soon as I can. Blocking so cannot be a terrible choice, but the inclusion of h4 and ...h5 does allow White some handy extra options compared to normal lines.

4 ♘c3 d5

Opting for Grünfeld play after all and in a situation where Black won’t lose a pawn in

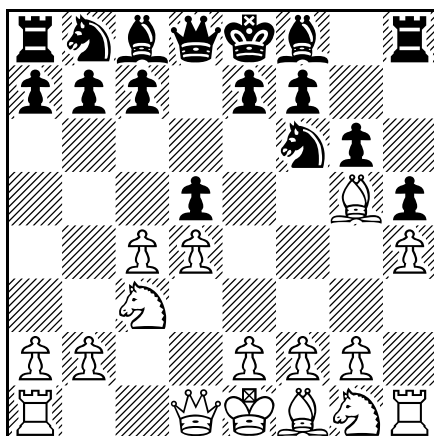
the centre or be overrun by h4-h5.

The alternative is 4...♘g7 5 e4 d6, which is likely to be the choice here of a King's Indian player. White now has a few tempting options, of which angling for an improved version of a Petrosian variation might be best: 6 ♖e2 (keeping Black out of g4; those who prefer something more immediately aggressive should consider both 6 ♘g5!? followed by ♗d2 and the Sämisch style 6 f3) 6...0-0 7 ♘f3. This is, of course, a main line King's Indian with h4 and ...h5 inserted and the difference can quickly be felt, not least in the event of 7...e5 8 d5 a5 (Black's main move in the position without the h-pawns advanced) 9 ♘g5!.



A fine spot for the knight, not least as Black may find himself rather vulnerable on e6 should he break with ...f5. White might continue simply with 0-0, but he can also, of course, angle for more aggressive play with ♖e3 and f2-f3, looking then to go ♗d2 and 0-0-0 or even g2-g4.

5 ♘g5!?



Forcing the pace. White simply prepares to shatter Black's structure and pick off d5. Depending on what experience you have against the Grünfeld, you may also wish to consider 5 cxd5 ♖xd5 and then either 6 e4 or 6 ♔d2!?. In both cases White will hope to eventually exploit the slight weakening of the black kingside caused by 3...h5.

5...♔g7

The most natural reply. In contrast, 5...dxc4?! 6 e4 does not look at all advisable for Black: for instance, 6...c5 7 d5 (or even 7 dxc5!?) 7...♔g7 8 ♔xc4 a6 9 a4. White retains control, most certainly has ideas of e4-e5 followed by d5-d6, and all the while Black is badly hampered by his inability to kick the bishop away from g5 with ...h6.

Just as without the h-pawns having been pushed, Black might consider too other more independent options and we'll examine both 5...♖e4 6 cxd5 and 5...c5!? 6 ♔xf6 exf6 7 cxd5 in Line C of Chapter Three.

6 ♖f3

Straightforward development as White clamps down further on the e5- and g5-squares, while asking Black: just how will you free your position with ...h6 not possible?

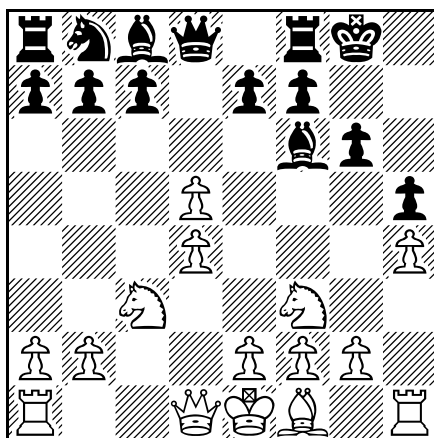
6...0-0!?

A pawn sacrifice. We'll explore the alternatives in Chapter Three and Line C.

7 ♔xf6

By no means forced, but obtaining an extra central pawn is rarely a terrible deal.

7...♔xf6 8 cxd5



And so we find Black with an unopposed dark-squared bishop, but also a pawn down and slightly cramped by that extra pawn on d5. In short, it's hard to believe that he should have sufficient compensation.

8...c5!?

Hitting back on the dark squares.

Previously 8...c6 had been seen in Solomon-Aizenberg, Petah Tikva 2020, when White should have accepted the offer: 9 dxc6 ♖xc6 10 e3. This shores up the extra pawn on d4

and looks pretty solid for White, who may simply complete development with ♖e2 and 0-0. A timely ♗b3 may also prove useful (not only is an eye kept on b7, but also f7, meaning that ♘g5 and even ♙d3 could be a bit awkward for Black), and even if he can get in ...e5, it doesn't seem that Black can come close to equality. For example, 10...♙g4 (or 10...♗a5 11 ♗b3 e5?! 12 d5 ♘e7 13 ♘d2! when Black's dark-squared bishop is shut out and White will begin to take over the board after ♘c4) 11 ♙e2 ♙xf3?! 12 ♙xf3 e5 13 d5! when Delroy the d-pawn looks like a rather useful asset indeed.

Likewise, 8...e6 9 dxe6 (9 ♗b3!? to support d5, pressure b7 and free a path for ♖d1 also comes into consideration) 9...♙xe6 10 e3 was typically solid for White in Plischki-Finek, Ceske Budejovice 2022, where 10...c5 11 ♘e4! cxd4 12 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 13 ♗xd4 left Black low on compensation with White able to quickly complete development with ♙e2 and 0-0.

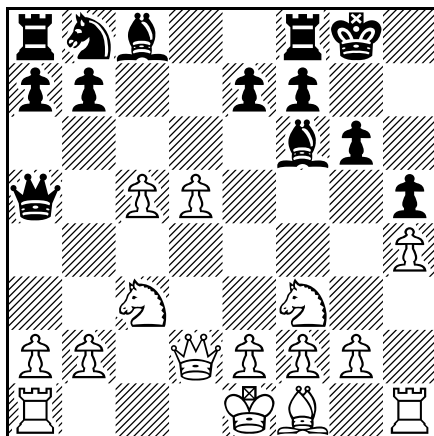
9 dxc5!?

This works out well, but once again 9 dxc6! was the route to a clear plus, as in our previous note to which 9...♘xc6 10 e3 would now transpose.

9...♗a5?!

9...♘d7! leaves Black two pawns down, but White can't hold on to both the extra units and 10 e4 (10 g3! ♘xc5 11 ♙g2 might yet retain a pull; Black's pieces are quite well coordinated, but a pawn is a pawn as they say) 10...♘xc5 11 e5 ♙g7 should leave Black with sufficient compensation, with both ...♗b6 and ...♙g4 on their way.

10 ♗d2!



Breaking the pin and so simply intending e2-e4, as well as ideas of just ♖c1 or even ♖d1.
10...♖d8 11 e3!?

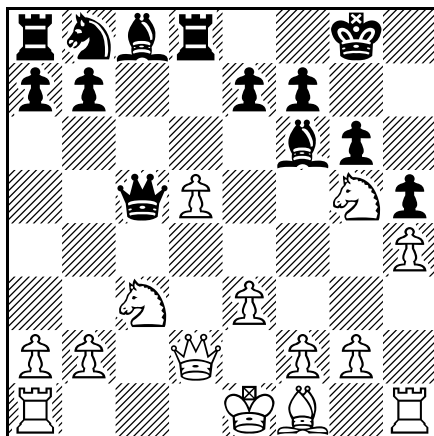
Keeping things tight at the back, although there was no especially good reason to reject the more ambitious 11 e4.

11...♗xc5?!

White quickly takes over after this. Once again, 11...♘d7! was indicated, although after 12 a3! (slyly preparing a certain potential fork with b2-b4) 12...♙xc3 13 ♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 14

bxc3 ♖xc5 15 c4 Black's lead in development may not give him quite enough for a pawn, in part because both ♖d1 and ♖d4 will help White to retain control.

12 ♖g5!



A powerful leap. Just because White has exchanged his early activity for an extra pawn doesn't mean that he can't still play actively. As the bishop earlier made good use of g5, so now does the knight. White avoids any issues with ...♗g4, threatens ♖ge4 and all the while Black would be ill-advised to exchange on g5 and so weaken his king position.

12...♗a5

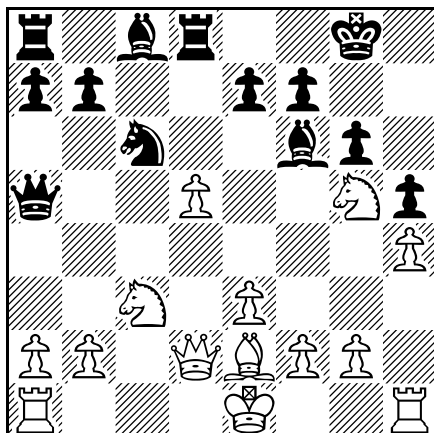
Scurrying away from ♖ge4 hits, not to mention ideas of ♖c1.

13 ♗e2

Simple chess. Mikhalevski prepares to complete development and then make good use of his knight being on g5 to advance in the centre.

13...♖c6!?

Note that while 13...♗xc3 14 ♗xc3 ♗xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♖xd5 would see Black regaining his pawn, after 16 ♗c4 ♖f5 17 e4 his rook isn't especially happy and it's also White who now leads in development. Indeed, after, say, ♖d1, 0-0, e4-e5 and f2-f4 Black might well find his pieces in a bit of a logjam.



14 ♖d1

And why not overprotect d5 before housing the king?

14...♘e5

The point of Black's play, but while he can eye the c4- and g4-squares, his minor pieces are about to become targets for the white pawns to begin their gradual roll down the board.

15 0-0 ♙f5 16 ♔h1

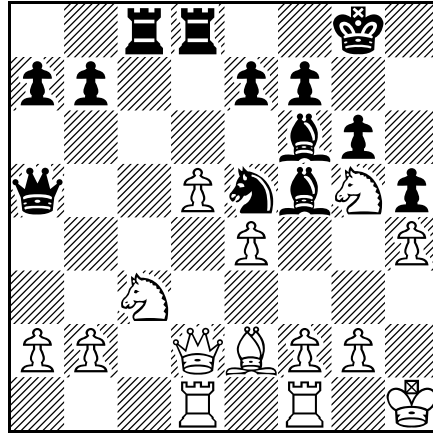
Prudently avoiding any checks on the g1-a7 diagonal, although even after 16 e4 ♙d7 17 f4!? ♘g4 18 e5 White would have been doing well on account of the fork-avoiding 18...♗b6+ 19 ♗d4!.

16...♝ac8

Arguably a bit too slow, but even after the engines' preference of 16...♗b6!? 17 e4 ♙d7 White appears to be doing well: 18 f4 ♘g4 19 ♙xg4 ♙xg4 20 ♘f3!. This keeps Black's bishops under control, prepares to roll forwards with e4-e5 and 20...♙xf3? 21 ♖xf3 ♙xh4 22 e5 would merely leave Black's remaining bishop in some trouble, not to mention his king.

17 e4

Here we go. White's play may not have appeared super-aggressive between move five and here, but with such an outpost on g5, not to mention an extra central pawn, he was always going to be looking for ways to first expand in the centre and then use that extra space to begin a direct attack after all.

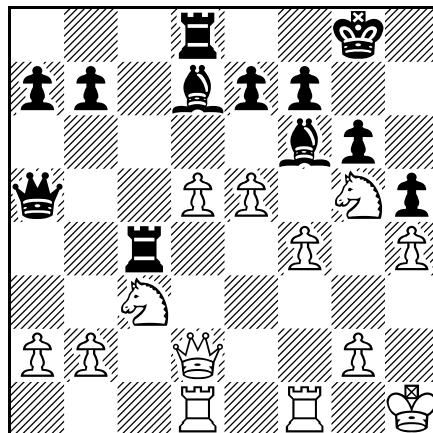


17...♙d7 18 f4! ♘c4 19 ♙xc4 ♜xc4

There goes White's second bishop, but the pawn tsunami is really building up force by this point.

20 e5

Logical and tempting, but it appears that 20 f5! would have been even stronger, preparing to crash through with d5-d6 or if 20...♜d4 21 ♜f4 ♜xd1 22 ♜xd1. Now e4-e5 is very much a threat, as is d5-d6, and 22...♜b4 23 ♜c7! would see some neat work by the white queen to retain a clear advantage after 23...♜b6 24 ♜xb6 axb6 25 fxg6 fxg6 26 ♙g1 on account of the still powerful centre.



20...♙xg5!

Good defence from Iliagiev and not 20...♙g7? 21 e6! fxe6 22 ♜d3 when White would have crashed through.

21 hxg5 ♙g4

Discombobulating, but even with his rook driven off the d-file, White is able to retain control and a clear plus.

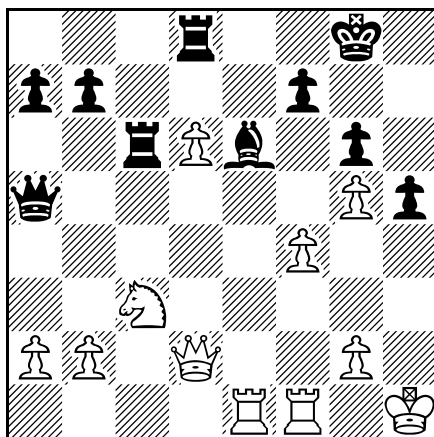
22 ♖de1

22 ♖c1! was likely more exact, as we'll see shortly.

22...♗e6 23 d6!?

A big decision. It turns out well, but objectively White should have preferred 23 ♖d1, and if 23...♗g4 24 ♖c1! b5 25 a3, thereby keeping Black's counterplay under control and aiming to only now edge forwards with d5-d6.

23...exd6 24 exd6 ♖c6



And there goes the d-pawn, but in return White is hoping to whip up a nasty attack.

25 ♖d1!?

White might like to go 25 ♖e3 ♖cxd6 26 ♗e4, but after 26...♖d4! he doesn't seem to have more than a draw, as with 27 ♗f6+ ♔g7 28 f5! ♗xf5 29 ♗e8+ ♔g8 30 ♗f6+, unless that is Black now falls for 30...♗h8?? 31 ♖xd4!.

25...♖cxd6 26 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 27 ♖xd6

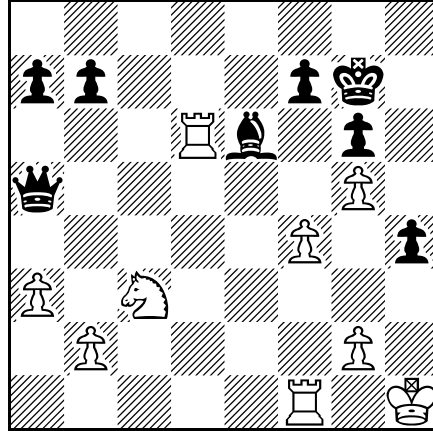
Talk about a transformation of the position! The engines now even fractionally prefer Black, but White's position is arguably the easier to play, in part because if he can establish his knight on f6, mating nets will always be in the air. Moreover, two rooks for just a queen cannot be such a bad deal.

27...♗g7 28 a3

Ruling out any notion of ...♖b4 or even ...b5-b4 as Mikhalevski refuses to rush.

28...h4!

Black's decision to try and expose the white king must be a good one, although we must not lose sight of the fact that his king too can easily become a target.



29 ♖d2!

Avoiding any issues on the second rank and also preparing his line-closing next.

29...h3 30 g3

And so Black has a certain fish bone of his own on h3, but White should never get mated so long as his rook covers g2.

30...♔a6 31 ♖e1 ♔c6+?!

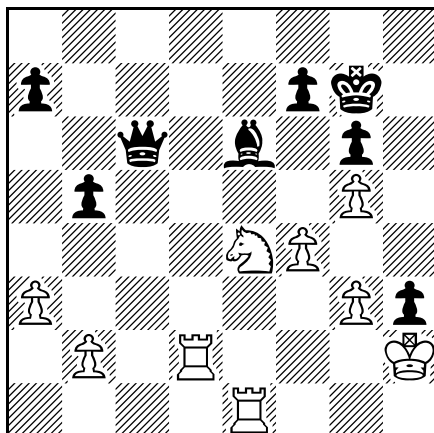
This only forces White's king on to a square where it can't easily be checked. Instead, 31...♔g4! is how the engines want to defend and then after 32 ♖h2 go 32...♔f3.

32 ♖h2 b5?

And just like that Black's position veers from worse to lost as Mikhalevski's judgement pays off. Good judgement we should add, since at least from a practical perspective White's chances with the two rooks against the queen and with potential mating nets were always decent.

Here 32...♔c4! was apparently required, preparing to throw a spanner in the works with ...♔d3, or if 33 ♖e4 ♔e6! and the defence is just about holding, as with 34 ♖d8 ♔c6!.

33 ♖e4!



Suddenly there's nothing preventing White from installing his knight in all its glory on f6 and then calmly invading along the back rank with a rook.

33...Qb6 34 Nf6 b4

34...Qf8 would try to run away, but also runs into 35 Rxe6! Qxe6 36 Qd8+ followed by mate or winning the queen.

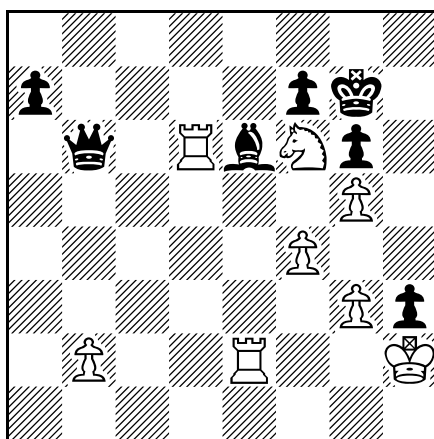
35 axb4 Qxb4 36 Qee2!

Calmly does it. Suddenly Qd8 is a very large threat.

36...Qb6

Missing a tactic, but 36...Qe7 37 Qe4 would have been followed by Qed4 and Qd8, 36...Qf8 37 Qd4 and Qed2 is also all over, and so is 36...Qa5 37 b4!.

37 Qd6!



Very pretty. The rook is clearly taboo in view of the check on e8, but declining it simply allows White to decisively double on the d-file.

37...♔b5 38 ♖ed2 1-0

There's simply nothing to be done about ♖d8 and the mating net, as 38...♔f8 39 ♖d8+ ♔e7 merely walks into a different one: 40 ♖g8 mate.

We might already conclude that 3 h4 causes certain problems for the Grünfeld aficionado, particularly if they insist on going ...d5 after all. Let's now move on to seeing how a King's Indian player might react.

Game 5
K.Alekseenko-M.Ragger
European Club Cup, Struga 2021

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 h4 ♗g7

Sometimes the immediate 3...c5 is seen, but after 4 d5 Black usually just goes 4...♗g7 with play transposing after 5 ♘c3.

4 ♘c3 c5

Striking out on the dark squares and played to assist the prospects of the fianchettoed bishop on g7. This is likely to be the choice of those with some experience of the Benoni.

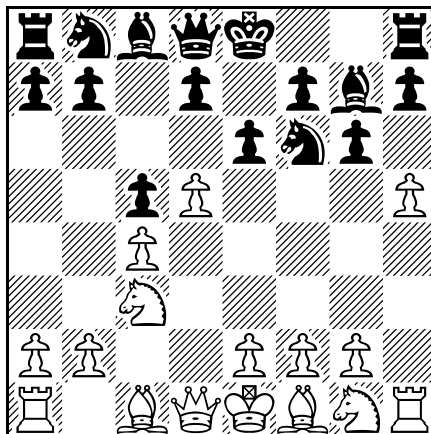
5 d5

Naturally White seizes space and pushes on. He is now ready to expand with e2-e4 and may even have ideas of h4-h5 on the agenda.

5...e6

Modern Benoni style. Now White can simply go 6 e4, but there is a very tempting alternative.

6 h5!



The exclamation mark is partly for courage and shock value, but the advance is also a

strong one. Indeed, we'll see that White quickly obtains full compensation, then more than that for the pawn.

6...♟xh5!

To avoid being somewhat worse, Black must accept. For instance, 6...a6? would be far too slow and after 7 h6 ♙f8 8 d6! White dominates the board, and continues to do so in the event of 8...♞b6 9 ♙f4 ♞xb2? 10 ♞h3 when ♞b1 is one threat, ♙e5 an even bigger one.

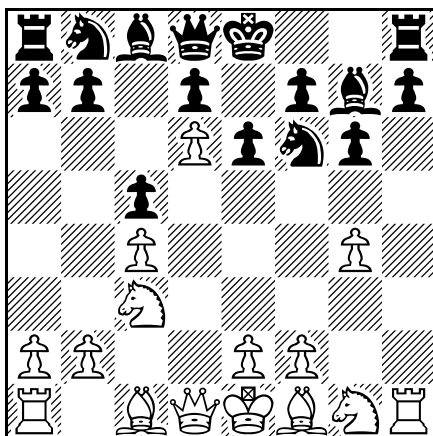
Slightly better for Black than 6...a6? is 6...d6?!, but 7 h6! ♙f8 8 e4 still leaves Black under the cosh, in part because there will always be mating ideas in the middlegame on g7.

We should also mention that 6...0-0?! 7 hxg6 (7 h6 achieves less when Black can simply retreat and stay on the key diagonal with 7...♙h8) 7...fxg6 prepares to meet 8 d6 with 8...b5!, which is suddenly all rather unclear. White can do much better, though, with simply 8 ♟f3, heading for g5 and also intending to meet any capture on d5 with ♟xd5.

7 g4!

Maximum aggression as White kicks the knight backwards before looking to jam up Black's development.

7...♟f6 8 d6!?



The aforementioned jamming up. White is all now set to expand with e2-e4 and f2-f4, with g4-g5 followed by ♙g2 and ♙f3 also very much an idea.

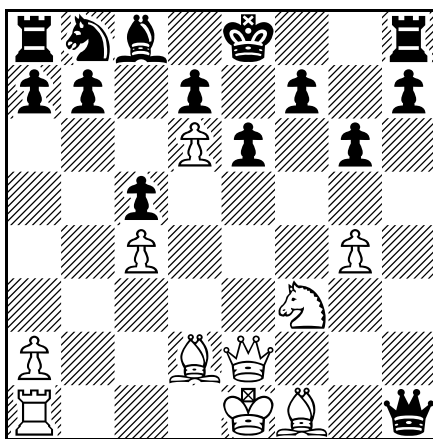
Here 8 g5!? ♟h5 9 ♙g2 tempts us too, we must admit, threatening ♟e4 even more than the immediate ♙f3. Black should probably react with 9...d6! 10 dxe6! (trying to make maximum use of the fianchettoed bishop on g2) 10...♙xc3+! (10...fxe6? 11 ♟e4! is a tactic which might easily claim some victims; either d6 is falling or Black set to fall into a trap: 11...d5 12 cxd5 exd5? 13 ♟xc5! ♞a5+?! 14 ♙d2, and if 14...♞xc5 15 ♞c1) 11 bxc3 fxe6. Now White might simply develop with 12 ♙e3!? and ♞d2, or be more direct with 12 ♙f3 when Black doesn't have to return the pawn, but 12...♟g7 13 ♙e4 ♟f5 14 ♟f3 would leave him behind in development and under ongoing pressure, with ♙f4 set to target d6 and aiming to force a rather weakening advance in ...e5.

8...0-0?

The Austrian Grandmaster is both an excellent theoretician and very strong player, but now finds himself clearly worse after just eight moves. Such is the strength of 3 h4!

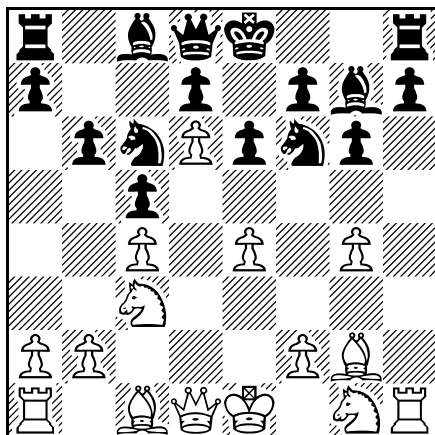
Instead, 8...♖xg4!? would have been critical when 9 ♖b5 ♖a6 10 e4 retains full compensation. White always has ♕e2 if needed and simply wants to continue annexing space with f2-f4, all the while as the monster pawn on d6 continues to badly interfere with Black's coordination. Note too how well placed that fine knight on d6 is, eyeing c7, overprotecting d6, and keeping Black's bishop out of d4.

After 8...♖xg4 you may also wish to explore 9 e4!? when Black might well be tempted into a forcing and critical line, 9...♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 ♜f6 and now it's time for White to have some fun: 11 f3! ♜xc3+ 12 ♕d2 ♜d4 13 fxg4! ♜xe4+ 14 ♜e2 ♜xh1 15 ♖f3.



White is the exchange and four pawns down, but Black's dark squares are shot and his queen far from happy. The immediate threat is 0-0-0 and ♕g2, with 15...f6! 16 0-0-0 g5 the only defence according to the engines. Here White can sacrifice on g5 then invade on e5 with the queen or even calmly go 17 ♕g2!? ♜h6 and only then 18 ♖xg5! fxg5 19 ♕c3 with full compensation for a rook and a possible repetition – but only if Black is able to walk such a defensive tightrope – after 19...♗g8 20 ♖h1 ♜f8 21 ♖f1 ♜xd6 22 ♕e5 ♜e7 23 ♕f6 ♜f8 24 ♕e5 ♜e7 25 ♕f6 ♜d6 26 ♕e5, etc. Definite food for thought.

Instead, 8...b6!? would perhaps have been the most sensible defence, when 9 ♕g2 ♖c6 10 e4 simply intends to steamroller Black with f2-f4 and e4-e5, thereby retaining good compensation.



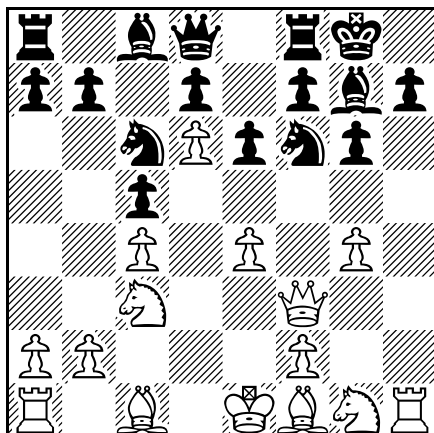
The critical line is probably 10...e5! when 11 g5 ♖h5 12 ♙xh5 gxh5 is by no means ridiculous and White can also hit back in the centre: 11 f4 ♙b7 (and not 11...exf4? 12 e5) 12 g5! ♖h5 13 f5. Yes, Black does have a firm grip on d4 and can even go 13...♖d4!, but 14 ♙f3! ♖g3 (14...♖xf3+? 15 ♙xf3 is almost positionally winning for White; ♙e3 and 0-0-0 may simply follow, if not ♖b5 or just ♙xh5 and f5-f6, thereby completely messing up Black's development and coordination) 15 ♙h3 ♖xf3+ 16 ♖xf3 ♖xe4 17 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 18 f6 forces Black to sacrifice a piece (otherwise, ♖xe5 will just clean him up), with 18...♙xf6! 19 gxf6 ♙xf6. Even here matters are rather unclear, but after 20 ♙h6 we'd be quite happy as White. Black does have four pawns for the piece, but ♙e2 and 0-0-0 are on their way, that superbly cramping d6-pawn still lives and Black's dark squares are likely to remain shot for the rest of the game.

Returning to 8...0-0:

9 e4

Thematic expansion and now e4-e5 is an actual threat, followed by the cheeky yet very strong ♙d3 (or ♙f3) and ♙h3.

9...♖c6 10 ♙f3!



Route one stuff, but very dangerous route one stuff at that.

10...h5?

This looks like a reasonable defensive try, but actually seems to lose pretty much by force. So would have 10...♖d4 11 ♗h3 ♘c2+? 12 ♔d1 ♘xa1 13 e5 when, for example, 13...h5 14 exf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘f3 is just a massacre, with ♕g5 but one huge threat.

As such, 10...b5! 11 ♗h3! (11 e5? ♘xe5! is the clever point when 12 ♗xa8 ♗b6 13 ♗g2 ♕b7 14 f3 bxc4 gives Black a huge amount of activity for a rook; we want to be having such fun, not finding ourselves on the receiving end of such a powerful initiative) 11...♕b7 is how the engines want to try and defend, although even here with 12 cxb5!? ♖d4 13 ♕g5! ♗e8 14 ♖c1 White is able to retain control and a large advantage. He might simply complete development with ♕c4 and ♖ge2, and there's also a certain threat of e4-e5.

11 gxf5!

Ripping open lines.

11...♖xh5

After 11...♖d4? White can do even better than go to h3, with 12 ♗g2! ♖xh5 (or 12...♖c2+ 13 ♔d1 ♖xa1 14 h6!, which is a killer in view of 14...♕h8 15 h7+! ♖xh7 16 ♗h3 and mates) 13 ♕e2! simply overwhelming: 13...♖c2+ (13...♖xe2 14 ♖ge2 doesn't exactly help the defence, with all of e4-e5 – the point is to meet ...♖xe5 with ♗xh5 – ♕g5 and ♖g3 sizeable threats) 14 ♖f1 ♖xa1 15 ♕xh5 gxf5 16 e5! and there just isn't a defence. Black can ward off the immediate mate with ♕h6, but after 16...f6 17 ♖e4 fxe5 18 ♕h6 ♗f7 19 ♖f3! the armada is simply overwhelming. White might be a rook and two pawns down, but he has five pieces in the attack and ♖xe5 followed by ♗g1 is about to wipe Black out.

12 ♕e2

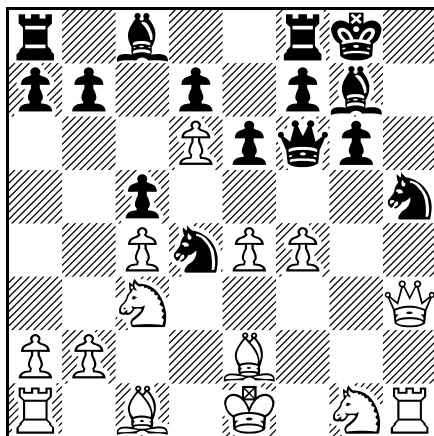
Simply intending to move the queen, then swipe the knight on the rim.

12...♖d4 13 ♗h3

Once again, 13 ♗g2!? might have been even stronger, and if 13...♖xe2 (13...♖c2+ 14 ♔d1 ♖xa1 15 ♕xh5 is pretty much crushing, and if 15...♗f6 16 ♕e2 ♗d4+ 17 ♕d2 ♗xd6 18

♖h3 ♜d8 19 ♘f3 when it would be amazing if Black could survive, with e4-e5 followed by ♙g5 or ♖h7+ and ♙h6 but one threat) 14 ♘gxe2 b5 15 ♙g5!. All of a sudden Black lacks a single good move, since he doesn't want to be cleaned up by e4-e5 or ♜xh5, but 15...f6 16 ♙h6! is a lovely silent sacrifice, and if 16...♙xh6 17 ♜xg6+ ♙g7 18 ♜xh5 followed by 0-0-0 and ♜dg1.

13...♜f6 14 f4!!



Highly thematic as White angles to suffocate Black with his pawn chain after e4-e5 and, yes, yet again White is quite happy to sacrifice the rook on a1 to speed up his attack.

14...♘c2+

Black decides that he might as well have a rook for his suffering, but now that suffering won't last for long.

The engines prefer 14...♘xe2!? 15 ♘gxe2 ♜e8, but even here 16 ♜f3 simply looks extremely strong, with White all set to castle long and invite his remaining pieces to the party: for instance, 16...a6 17 ♙e3 ♜b8 18 0-0-0 b5 19 ♜xh5! gxh5 20 ♘g3 and there's just no real defence for Black to the upcoming threats down the open g-file.

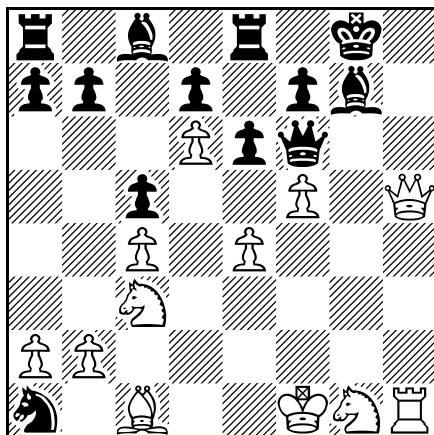
15 ♙f1 ♘xa1 16 ♙xh5 gxh5 17 f5!

The star follow-up and the main point behind Alekseenko's rook sacrifice. Black's queen is denied the use of g6, he can't really capture on f5 due to the resulting hole on d5, and, as such, is about to be cleaned up on the kingside.

17...♜e8

Likewise, 17...exf5 18 ♘d5 ♜xd6 19 ♙f4 ♜e6 20 exf5 overloads the black queen and wins, as does 17...b5 18 ♜xh5 ♜e8 19 ♙g5 ♜d4 20 f6! ♙xf6 21 ♜h7+ ♙f8 22 ♙h6+ ♙g7 23 ♜h8 mate.

18 ♜xh5



Once again, ♖g5 followed by ♜h7+ and f5-f6 is a deadly threat and there's simply no defence. Very rarely can such a strong player as Ragger have lost so brutally and with their queenside still largely untouched.

18...exf5 19 ♘d5 ♜d4

19...♜xd6 20 ♜h7+ (or even 20 exf5) 20...♙f8 21 ♙h6 is absolutely devastating, as is 19...♜g6 20 ♘e7+ ♜xe7 21 dxe7.

20 ♘e2 1-0

Even 20...♜d1+ (or 20...♜xe4 21 ♘f6+! ♙xf6 22 ♜h7+ ♙f8 23 ♙h6+) 21 ♙g2 ♜xh1+ 22 ♙xh1 is absolutely hopeless for Black, so badly exposed is his king and so great White's threats.

There were some fun lines in that brutal encounter, but sadly not every opponent will want to steer play à la Ragger into Modern Benoni style waters. As such, we should now examine what might be considered the main line of the Harry Attack, where Black plays the standard King's Indian moves and only then switches into a Benoni or even Benko structure.

Game 6

M.Vachier-Lagrave - P.Svidler
Sinquefield Cup, Saint Louis 2021

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 h4

Talk about a statement of intent in what was the opening round, and from the man who would go on to win the tournament.

3...♙g7 4 ♘c3 0-0

The main line. Svidler normally plays the Grünfeld, of course, but that just isn't really