

**Ioannis Simeonidis**

# **Carlsen's Neo-Møller**

A Complete and Surprising Repertoire  
Against the Ruy Lopez

**New In Chess 2020**

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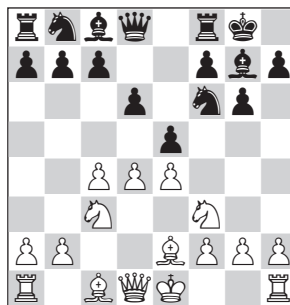
# Preface

In every opening there is a position that demonstrates the ideal set-up for both sides. Not all variations lead to this position. There are only a few for each side. Adopting the ideal approach means for me that the system I choose to play will be one of the few systems in that opening that can lead to an ideal position from my point of view, and therefore I will reject the other moves as a choice for my opening repertoire.

Of course, that does not mean that I intend to go for dubious moves that only contain traps and have surprise value but a poor positional basis. The idea is to go for the objectively best moves. I was never a fan of either modest or dubious systems.

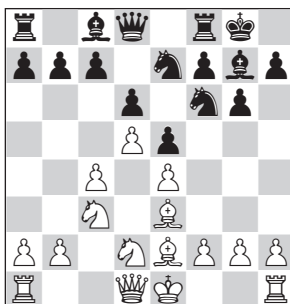
But what are the criteria for such an ideal approach? The moves have to be logical. The system has to obey the golden rules of opening play: occupation of the centre and quick development. No concessions! I refuse to lose tempi and will go for the most logical and ambitious set-up, having the ideal position of the system in mind. Following the plan with a maximum of accuracy is the objective. Part of the approach is adopting systems in which the most natural human response is not the best.

A perfect example of following this approach as White is the Gligoric Variation of the King's Indian Defence: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♙e2 0-0 6.♗f3 e5.



After 7.♙e3 (the Gligoric Variation) 7...♘c6?! 8.d5 ♗e7 9.♗d2 White achieves the ideal set-up. First 7.d5 also gives White the opportunity to achieve the ideal set-up later on. But 7.0-0 does not! Now White has already castled kingside and after 7...♘c6 8.d5 ♗e7, 9.♙e3 runs into 9...♗g4. Now 10.♙g5 is not with tempo and Black can play 10...f5. That means that

I usually play the Gligoric Variation and the Petrosian Variation (7.d5) and not the main line with 7.0-0 against the King's Indian Defence.



This is the ideal position for White. All of his pieces are actively placed and looking in different directions, and he has various possible pawn pushes to try to conquer more space, for example 9...♘d7 10.b4± or 9...c5 10.g4±.

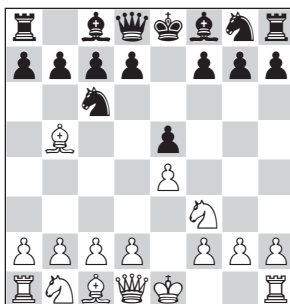
My aim in this book is to achieve such an ideal position with black in the Ruy Lopez, where my pawns occupy a sufficient part of the centre and my pieces are active or at least potentially so. Of course, this is much more difficult to achieve for the second player than for the first player! But in Carlsen's Neo-Møller Variation, the subject of this book, I believe I have found a way for Black to achieve this against the Ruy Lopez, and as you will see this approach stands up to analysis.

Ioannis Simeonidis  
Athens, November 2020

# Introduction

## The Spanish Torture

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5!

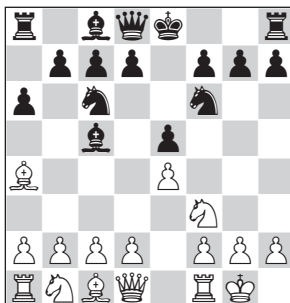


The notorious ‘Spanish Torture’ means that Black has to defend a slightly worse but solid position for a very long time without having the chance to break free by simplifying the position with exchanges.

In the 1930s, according to Savielly Tartakower, having to defend the black side of the Ruy Lopez was a torture. In the 1960s for Bobby Fischer it was like milking a cow. His favourite game was to torture Black in the Ruy Lopez. Bent Larsen suggested that the Open Variation (3...a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4) was the correct way to handle the Ruy Lopez with black. Later on, Anatoly Karpov tortured his opponents with both colours!

At the time, no top player would play any kind of system with ...♙c5 against the Ruy Lopez. In the 1990s, Garry Kasparov was the first World Champion who had to face these ...♙c5 systems. Thanks to the games of Vladimir Malaniuk, the Arkhangelsk Variation (3...a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♙b3 ♙b7) became popular, and later on, in 1994, Vladislav Tkachiev started using the Neo-Arkhangelsk, where Black plays 6...♙c5 instead of 6...♙b7 and doesn’t fianchetto the queen’s bishop. Suddenly all these systems started to develop, with top players like Viswanathan Anand, Alexei Shirov, Michael Adams and Alexander Onischuk leading the way. In 1995, Anand used the Neo-Arkhangelsk in his World Championship Match against Garry Kasparov. In 1996 the Møller move-order – that is, playing 5...♙c5 immediately without the inclusion of the moves 5...b5 and 6.♙b3 – started to be used as a way to reach the Neo-Arkhangelsk by players like Vasily Ivanchuk, Shirov, Malaniuk and Onischuk. The evolution had begun!

3...a6 4.♘a4 ♝f6 5.0-0 ♘c5



### The ...♘c5 complex in the Ruy Lopez

It is in the nature of the Ruy Lopez for White to seize the centre by playing c2-c3 followed by d2-d4. For Black, placing the dark-squared bishop on c5 against the Ruy Lopez was always controversial, as White can now play c2-c3 and d2-d4 with tempo. Can Black afford playing the ambitious ...♘c5 at any stage in the Ruy Lopez without ending up in an inferior position?

### Applying the ideal approach with black

In the Møller, compared to the Neo-Arkhangelsk, Black has not committed to ...b7-b5 yet. Black has made no concessions and is getting ready for the ideal set-up with ...0-0 and ...d7-d6. All the black pieces stand on the best possible squares while he hasn't committed to the weakening move ...b7-b5, which only improves the placement of White's light-squared bishop.

Still, White has played his bishop to b5 to threaten ♘xc6 at certain moments. Can White punish Black for ignoring this? White can also try to punish Black with ♘g5 ideas, exploiting the absence of the dark-squared bishop on e7.

In the closed lines of the Ruy Lopez, White usually manages to take control in the centre and keep the tension. This is a price Black has to pay for his temporary king safety and easy plans. Black will have to submit to the Spanish Torture later on.

In the Møller Variation, White will manage to take the centre too, but will not be able to keep it! Black applies huge pressure on White's centre and has concrete ways to break free and release the tension. The system's uniqueness is based on the unconventional type of play that arises. It is one of the sharpest and most principled systems, based on concrete tactics but good and solid, and so far undetected by the majority of the chess world. It's a new attempt to stop the Spanish Torture once and for

all, based on the ideal opening approach. If Black makes no concessions, White will not manage to get an advantage and torture him.

The only question is whether the black set-up can be refuted. What is the price Black has to pay for all this? He has to enter a series of complications without fear or prejudice and play ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5 at the right moment despite the fact that he has already castled kingside. The most amazing part is that everything works, which confirms that this natural set-up has a solid positional base and deserves its place among the most serious and most reliable set-ups against the Ruy Lopez.

Nowadays, 20 years later, the young generation, Magnus Carlsen, Fabiano Caruana et al, have adopted the ...♠c5 complex against the Ruy Lopez as an active way of playing, cutting the Gordian knot with a sword. Pure Møller set-ups have long been a rare guest in top-level events. This changed in 2018 when Carlsen adopted it against Sergey Karjakin. Up till then, only Tamir Nabaty had used the system regularly and Onischuk had played it in just a few games. Soon after, Laurent Fressinet, Igor Lysyj and Antoaneta Stefanova started following Carlsen's move-order.

But the development of this system has just started. Caissa still holds many secrets from us. As Bobby Fischer said, 'Chess is the search for truth' and this is exactly what I have tried to do in this book: to find out the truth about the Møller Variation, or better: Magnus Carlsen's Neo-Møller! It is Black's most uncompromising system against the Ruy Lopez.

My intention is to provide a repertoire for Black after 1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♞c6 3.♞b5 a6 4.♞a4 ♞f6, with the general idea to place the black bishop on c5 on the next move, refraining from ...b7-b5 unless it is necessary. We also cover the Exchange Variation, to provide a complete repertoire for Black against the Ruy Lopez.

Up to now the Møller was used as a clever move-order to transpose to a more favourable version of the Neo-Arkhangelsk. After 5.0-0 ♠c5 6.c3, 6...b5 was considered practically the only move for Black – other moves were considered dubious. The originator of this line, Anders Møller, played 6...♞a7!? 7.d4! ♞xe4?! in 1902. This does not equalize, but I guess the correct move, 7...0-0, looked scary to him in view of 8.♞g5!. However, against the main line 5.0-0, the basic position in this repertoire occurs after 5...♠c5 6.c3 0-0 7.d4 ♞a7 (which after 8.♞g5 can transpose to the 'scary' line above). Black's seventh move is our alternative to 7...♞b6, which has also been played. We want to keep the bishop safer and retain the opportunity to play ...b7-b5, although, as we will see, it is often wise to refrain from this push! The Møller Variation is characterized by the moves 5...♠c5 6.c3 b5, so I think it is appropriate to call the line 5...♠c5 6.c3 0-0 7.d4 ♞a7 the Neo-Møller!

In the year 2018, Carlsen deployed the Neo-Møller as Black against Karjakin – with success. This game motivated me to take a fresh look into this position and create this repertoire.

My interest in this line began 30 years ago, in the early 1990s, when I was looking for ...♠c5 systems against the Ruy Lopez from the black side. In the old days, all we had was a chessboard, pen and paper. No engines, just games on paper. It was very hard to analyse these sharp positions that looked losing from a human perspective. Also, you would have to be a very strong human player.

All these ...♠c5 systems against the Ruy Lopez were a mystery to me. Even later, when chess programs came to assist us in analysing such positions, the result was poor. The positions were too complicated even for computers. Again, not a lot of progress was made in many systems.

Only lately, in the past three years, the computing power has reached a level where sophisticated programs like Houdini, Komodo and Stockfish are able to come much closer to the truth than before. The recent release of Stockfish 12 with neural networks embedded was another big step forward for chess. Now we can shed more light on all these difficult positions, and come closer to the truth.

Of course there are still many positions that can't be properly evaluated by engines. This problem will not be solved any time soon, since it is impossible to create the correct algorithm that enables the engine to find the best moves in any given position. But computing power will continue to increase, so more and more difficult positions will be evaluated correctly. In the opening it will always be a problem for engines to evaluate positions correctly. There are simply too many pieces on the board!

At present, tournament players face a much more demanding situation compared to the past. In the old days you could learn a dubious opening or gambit and be successful with it for a long time. Now, on the next day (or even immediately after the game with a mobile phone) you can find the refutation of such a gambit in a few minutes. Therefore, investing time to learn a dubious opening is no longer a good idea. Soundness has become an issue. This is the reason why especially in master games we see all those Berlins and Marshalls. It seems that correct openings are more fashionable nowadays. No one wants to get into a worse position from the opening. Another big problem is the fact that there is too much information. Sure, you can find all these games, but which game is the correct one to follow?

### **How to read this book**

The main body of this book consists of two parts with seven chapters each. In the first part, we discuss the main line of the Neo-Møller with



6.c3 0-0 7.d4 ♖a7. The second part contains all the deviations for White on the 5th and 6th moves. In the third part, we deal with the Exchange Variation from Black's perspective. The fourth part contains Exercises and Solutions to these exercises, which will hopefully serve to help the reader digest the material.

### For club players

Against the moves 8.♗g5 and 8.dxe5, Black doesn't have much choice. The lines are sharp here, and you have to work on the positions in order to perform well in tournaments. Against White's other efforts, for example 8.♙e1, I suggest, whenever it is possible, to play one of two lines for Black, both of which are equally good. Those who play the Arkhangelsk and Neo-Arkhangelsk or the Møller with 6...b5 will feel at home in this repertoire. Berlin and Marshall players will have an easy time to adjust as well. There are many transpositions from the Berlin, especially in the 5.d3 systems, and in many positions we have Marshall-type play where Black is a pawn down but has very active pieces.

The critical moments for the club player are those where he has to make the following decisions:

- 1) When to play ...b7-b5 ?
- 2) When to play ...h7-h6 ?
- 3) When to play ...g7-g5 ?
- 4) When to play ...exd4 ?
- 5) When to play ...0-0 or ...d7-d6 or ...d7-d5 ?
- 6) When to play ...dxc6 or ...bxc6 ?

You don't have to learn both repertoires in the chapters in which two repertoires are suggested. I suggest you go with the one that looks easier to you.

### For correspondence players

You can trust the analysis. As for computer games, it is possible to improve after a certain point. You can also follow human games, but here in general you should look for improvements early on in the game.

### How the book was made

Until two years ago, there was no path to equality available to Black in the ...♗c5 complex. Everything changed in 2018 when Carlsen took the 8.dxe5 line out of business in his game against Karjakin. This game inspired me to enter a deep search into the 8.♗g5 line, looking for a way for Black to equalize, in order to create a repertoire based on the general idea of not playing ...b7-b5 if possible.

I mostly used Houdini 6.03 as an analysis engine, but later I checked my analyses with Komodo, Stockfish and Stockfish derivatives as well. Difficult positions were checked in the ChessBase engine cloud with the best available machines. Also I would like to thank my Engine Room friends Stables and Basse1999 for making available to me their Xeon machines for many hours, so I was able to double-check my analysis.

Not much can be found in chess literature about the Neo-Møller, so I tried to investigate the position from my own perspective. My number one priority was to create a sound repertoire that could stand the test of time and can be used on a regular basis in practical play. It looked strange to me that a natural move like 5...♙c5 could be dubious. I was sure that there had to be a path leading to sound and interesting positions.

Yes, it is true that it looks like Black is overextending. This is the reason why this variation is so sharp. Black is trying to place his pieces on the best possible squares so that if White plays passively, Black can press for an advantage. That means that White has to accept the challenge and go for 6.c3 followed by 7.d4 ! But with that, he creates a chaotic position, because he can't really hold the centre without making concessions. In the end we will have tactical fireworks that may lead to a draw.

For me it is amazing that Carlsen's Neo-Møller is so rich, and I was also amazed that it has been hidden so long from the public eye, while this is a sound and reliable system with plenty of unknown theory behind it!

Ioannis Simeonidis  
Athens, November 2020

## CHAPTER 2

# Refutation refuted: 8. ♖g5 exd4 9.cxd4

1.e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♙b5 a6 4. ♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙c5 6.c3 0-0  
7.d4 ♙a7 8. ♙g5 exd4 9.cxd4



In this chapter we will examine White's most natural response 8. ♙g5. 9.cxd4 (or 10.cxd4 if 8...h6 9. ♙h4 is inserted) was considered the refutation of the Neo-Møller for some time. It looked like the best choice for White until Tamir Nabaty neutralized it with a queen sacrifice!

**Anton Smirnov**

2478

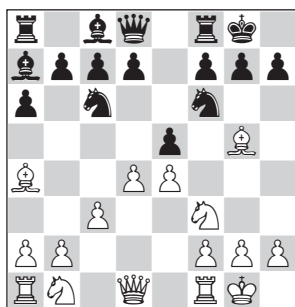
**Tamir Nabaty**

2622

Pardubice 2016 (6)

**1.e4 e5 2.♞f3 ♜c6 3.♙b5 a6**

3...♞f6 4.d3 ♙c5 5.♙g5 d6 6.♞bd2  
0-0 7.c3 a6 8.♙xc6 bxc6 9.d4 exd4  
10.cxd4 ♘a7 11.0-0 h6 12.♙h4 (Yu  
Yangyi-Wang Hao, Huai'an rapid  
2017) transposes to the main game!  
In Chapter 11 and 13 we will see  
other examples in which Black gets  
a similar or favourable version of  
the Berlin Defence after playing the  
Møller.

**4.♙a4 ♜f6 5.0-0 ♙c5 6.c3 0-0 7.d4  
♘a7 8.♙g5!**

The most principled and most dangerous move, to which I have devoted the next five chapters. What makes the Neo-Møller so unique is the type of play that arises in these positions. Just the fact that Black after kingside castling plays ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5 is at least worrying! Can such a strategy be effective? We teach beginners to do just the opposite: 'You can go ...h7-h6, but don't weaken your king with ...g7-g5!' It is definitely risky, and this is the main reason why

this system was not popular and did not have a name. It was just a risky and suspicious sub-variation of the Møller.

The position is too complicated even for engines and no human player wants to take such a risk unless he knows exactly what he is doing. But if the human player knows the position is sound and knows how to counter White's threats, the idea of catching the opponent unprepared in such a mess is very appealing. A bad move can lead to instant disaster!

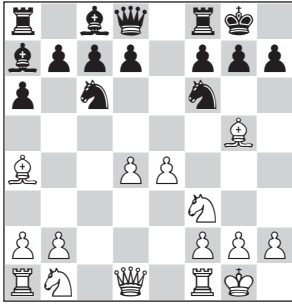
**8...h6**

8...exd4!. We plan to reach the position from the game via this move-order. There is no OTB-game with 8...exd4 in the MegaBase!

The reason we plan to adopt the 8...exd4 move-order is mainly to confront the move ♖e1, which will be discussed in Chapter 6. The position that Black will have to play after 8...h6 9.♙h4 exd4 10.♞e1 is very difficult to handle. Also the number of attempts White has makes the position impractical and difficult to play for Black.

Furthermore, Black has extra options against White's set-ups, which you will find in Chapters 3 and 4. White has an extra option as we will see in Chapter 5, but that causes no problems for Black.

In conclusion, 8...exd4 is the more correct and precise move: 9.cxd4 (for 9.♞c1 see Chapter 3, for 9.e5 see Chapter 4 & 5 and for 9.♞e1 see Chapter 6)



analysis diagram

9...h6! 10. ♖h4 d6 11. ♖xc6 bxc6  
12. ♗bd2 (12. ♖c1 g5 13. ♗xg5  
hxc6 14. ♖xg5+ ♔h7 15. ♖d1 ♖b8  
transposes to the ♖c1 variation,  
Chapter 3) 12... ♖e8 13. ♖a4 ♖d7  
14. e5 g5 transposes to the game  
Smirnov-Nabaty.

### 9. ♖h4 exd4

9...d6?! does not work here like in  
the 7... ♖b6 system: 10. ♖xc6 bxc6  
11. dxe5 dxe5 12. ♗xe5± Zieher-  
Tabatt, Saarbrücken 2013.

### 10. cxd4



Up to now 10. cxd4 looked like the  
killer line of the 7... ♖a7 system (or  
9. cxd4 if Black uses the 8... exd4  
move-order). Sutovsky's games  
seemed to take the line out of  
business! Nabaty did not give up  
and came up with a great novelty.

This is one of the most important  
games in the 8. ♖g5 variation. It  
involves a queen sacrifice and  
precise play is required from  
both sides. The position is very  
dangerous for White too!

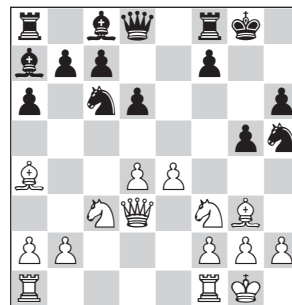
### 10...d6

Black is threatening ...b7-b5 and  
... ♖g4. Also ...g7-g5 is in the air and  
the e4-pawn is hanging. White has  
no time to defend against all the  
threats.

### 11. ♖xc6!

A) 11. ♖d3 is a tricky move. White  
is planning to put his queen on  
g6 later on if Black falls for the  
trap! 11...g5! 12. ♖g3 (12. ♗xg5  
hxc6 13. ♖xc6 ♗xd4 14. ♗c3 c6  
15. ♖ae1 ♔g7 16. ♖g3 ♗h5 17. ♖h4  
f6 18. ♖e3 ♖h8 19. ♖d1 ♖e8 20. f4  
b5 21. ♖f2 c5 22. ♗d5 ♖f7 23. g4  
♖b7 24. gxh5 ♖he8 25. ♖xd4  
cxd4 26. ♖h1 f5 27. ♖g2+ ♔h7  
28. ♖b3 ♖g8 29. ♖f3 ♖ae8—  
+ Van der Velde-Visser, cr  
2017) and now:

A1) 12... ♗h5!? is an interesting try:  
13. ♗c3



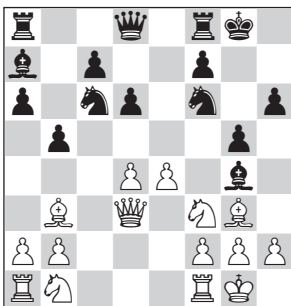
analysis diagram

A11) 13...f5! 14. ♖xc6 (14. exf5  
♔h8! 15. ♗d5 ♖xf5 16. ♖c3 ♖e4  
17. ♖xc6 bxc6 18. ♗b4 c5! (activating the

a7-bishop!) 19.dxc5+ ♜f6 20.♞xf6+ ♞xf6 21.♜d2 ♜xg3 22.hxg3 ♘h7 23.cxd6 cxd6 24.♞ad1 ♞af8 25.♜f3 ♘e4=) 14...bxc6 15.♞c4+ ♝h8 16.exf5 ♞b8 17.♞xc6 ♜g7 (Black has more than enough activity for the pawn) 18.f6 ♜f5 19.♜d5 ♘b7 20.♞c4 ♘xd5 21.♞xd5 ♞xf6 22.♞ac1 ♞f7 23.♞c6 ♘b6 24.b3 ♞g8 25.♞ce1 ♞bf8 26.♞e4 a5=;

A12) The more direct 13...♜xg3 looks OK too: 14.fxg3! (14.hxg3 b5 15.♘b3 g4 16.e5 ♝g7) 14...♜e5! (a nice trick, exploiting the pin! Exchanging pieces is in Black's favour in this position) 15.♞d2 c6! (with the idea ...♞b6) 16.♝h1 ♜xf3 17.♞xf3 ♘g4 18.♞ff1 ♞b6 19.♘d1 ♘d7=.

A2) After 12...b5? comes the trap. The usual ...b7-b5 followed by ...♘g4? does not work here: 13.♘b3 ♘g4?



analysis diagram

14.e5!± dxe5? 15.♞g6+--;

A3) 12...g4! is a solid choice: 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.♜h4 ♞b8 15.♜d2 (15.b3?! ♞b4) 15...♞xb2 16.♜c4 ♞b5 17.♞ae1 ♞e8 18.e5 dxe5 19.♘xe5 ♘e6=.

B) 11.d5 ♜e5 12.♜xe5 dxe5 13.♜d2 b5 14.♘b3 ♘b7 15.a4 ♞d6 (Black is

ready to break White's centre with ...c7-c6!) 16.♞e2 c6! 17.♞fd1 cxd5 18.exd5 ♜xd5 19.♜e4 ♞e6 20.♘xd5 ♘xd5 21.♞xd5 ♞xd5 22.♜f6+ gxf6 23.♞g4+ ♝h7 24.♞f5+ ♝g8 25.♞g4+ =;

C) 11.♞e1 ♘g4! transposes to Chapter 6;

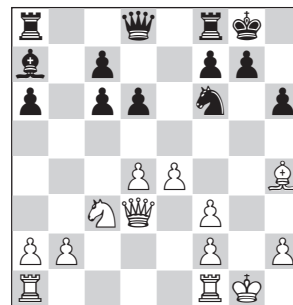
D) The natural 11.♜c3 has a trap but after the correct 11...♘g4! (11...b5?! does not work here! After 12.♘c2 ♘g4 (12...g5 13.♜xg5+–) 13.♜d5 g5 14.♞d3! gxh4 15.e5+–) only White can get into trouble:



analysis diagram

D1) 12.♜d5? g5!±;

D2) 12.♞d3 ♘xf3 13.♘xc6 bxc6 14.gxf3



analysis diagram

14...g5 15.♘g3 ♜h5⇒ 16.d5 ♞d7 (16...f5 17.exf5 ♞f6 18.dxc6 ♞xf5

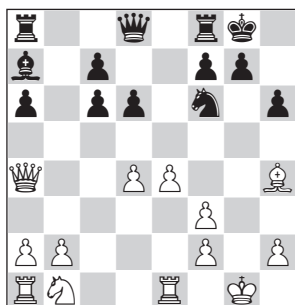
19. ♖ad1 ♖xf3 20. ♖xf3 ♖xf3 21. ♖g2 ♖af8=) 17.dxc6 (17. ♖g2 c5 18.e5 dxe5 19. ♗xe5 ♖ae8 20. ♗g3 f5=) 17... ♖h3 18. ♖h1 f5 19.exf5 ♗xf2=;

D3) 12. ♗xc6 bxc6 13. ♖a4 ♗xf3 14.gxf3 g5 15. ♗g3 ♖d7=.

E) 11.h3?! g5!⇒.

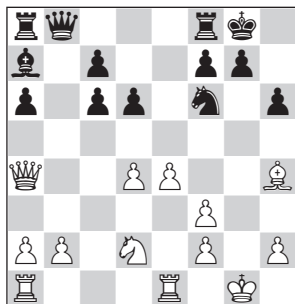
**11...bxc6 12. ♖bd2**

A) 12. ♖e1 ♗g4⇒ 13. ♖a4 ♗xf3 14.gxf3.



analysis diagram

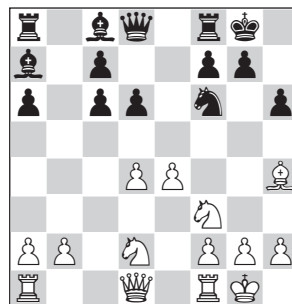
Already Black can hope for more than equality: 14... ♖b8! (14...g5!?N 15. ♗g3 h5 (15... ♖h5!?) 16. ♖d2 (16. ♖c3 ♖f6 17. ♖ad1 ♖xf3 18. ♖e3 ♖g4 19. ♖xc6 ♖f4=) 16... ♖g7 17. ♖ac1 ♖e6 18.d5 cxd5 19.exd5 ♖g7 20. ♖g2 ♖e8 21. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8=) 16.h3 ♖d7 17. ♖g2 c5=) 15. ♖d2 (15. ♗xf6 ♖xb2! 16. ♖a3 gxf6?)



analysis diagram

15... ♖b5 (15... ♖h5!?) 16. ♖xb5 axb5= Alekseev-Nozdrachev, Yaroslavl 2019;

B) 12. ♖c1 g5 transposes to 9. ♖c1, Chapter 3: 13. ♖xg5 hxg5 14. ♖xg5+ ♖h7 15. ♖d1 ♖b8.



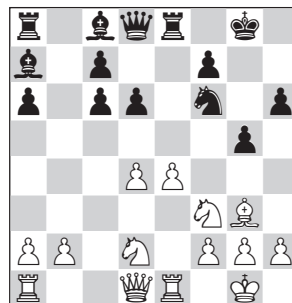
White manages to hold everything and 16.e5 is a serious threat:

**12... ♖e8!**

12...g5?! 13. ♖xg5! hxg5 14. ♗xg5 ♗xd4 15. ♖f3 ♗xb2 16. ♖b1 ♖d7 17. ♖xb2 (17.e5 ♗xe5 18. ♖xe5 dxe5 19. ♗xf6 ♖xd1 20. ♖bxd1±) 17... ♖xe4 18. ♗h6→ Sutovsky-Bartel, Biel 2015.

**13. ♖a4!**

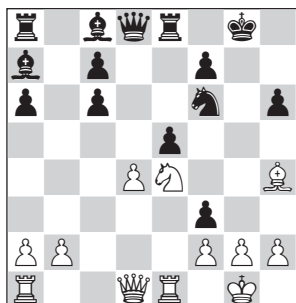
13. ♖e1 (13.e5 dxe5 14.dxe5 g5⇒) 13...g5 14. ♗g3



analysis diagram

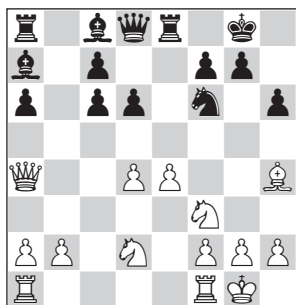
14...g4 (14... ♖h5!?) is the engines' choice: 15. ♖c4 d5 16.exd5 ♖xe1+

17. ♖xe1 ♜xg3 18.hxg3 cxd5 19. ♘ce5  
 ♘b6 20. ♘c6 ♖d7 21. ♘fe5 ♖d6  
 Ivers-Opasnost, playchess.com  
 2019) 15. ♘h4! gxf3 16.e5 dxe5  
 17. ♘e4



analysis diagram

17... ♘xe4! (like in the main game  
 Black sacrifices the queen) 18. ♘xd8  
 ♜xf2 19. ♖xf3 ♜xd8 20. ♖xf2 ♘xd4=  
 Sasikiran-Puranik, Douglas 2019.



### 13... ♘d7!

Only move! After this game came  
 to my attention, I had no doubt  
 that Black's set-up was sound. If  
 an opening system is good then  
 somehow everything works!

13...g5?! 14. ♘xg5 hxg5 15. ♘xg5  
 ♖e6 (15... ♖b8 16. ♖ae1 ♖e6 17.e5+–  
 Sutovsky-Onischuk, Poikovsky  
 2010) 16.f4 ♖f8 17.f5+– Sutovsky-  
 Nabaty, Gibraltar 2012.

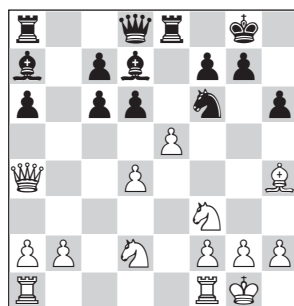
### 14.e5

If 14. ♖fe1 c5! and now:

A) 15. ♖c4 cxd4 16.e5 dxe5 17. ♘e4  
 ♖e6 18. ♘xf6+ gxf6 19. ♖xe5 ♖c6  
 20. ♖d3 ♖f8 21. ♖d5 ♖d6+;

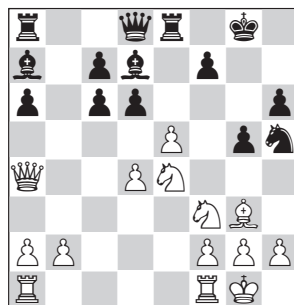
B) 15. ♘xf6 ♘xa4 16. ♘xd8 ♖axd8  
 17.d5 ♘b5 18. ♖ac1 ♘d3 19.b3 (19. ♖c3  
 c4 20.b3 f5+–) 19...f5=;

C) 15. ♖xa6 cxd4 16. ♖d3 g5  
 17. ♘xg5 hxg5 18. ♘xg5 ♖e5 19. ♘h4  
 ♖e7 20. ♖f3 ♘g7= Huuskonen-  
 Kuosmanen, cr 2018.



### 14...g5 15. ♘xg5

15. ♘g3 is not consistent. Now Black  
 is slightly better: 15... ♘h5 16. ♘e4?

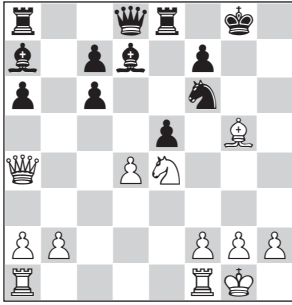


analysis diagram

16...f5!–+ 17.exd6 fxe4 18.dxc7 ♖c8  
 19. ♘e5 ♘xg3 20.hxg3 ♖xc7–+ Yu  
 Yangyi-Wang Hao, Huai'an rapid  
 2017.

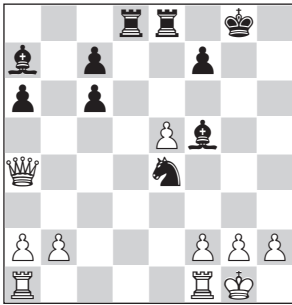
### 15...hxg5 16. ♘xg5 dxe5 17. ♘e4





**17... ♖xe4! 18. ♗xd8 ♜axd8 19. dxe5 ♗f5! ♞**

After 19... ♖xe5?! 20. ♖xa6 White is better since he can take control with ♜ad1 next.



Black's position is not worse. It is only fair to say that whoever is better prepared will win. Among correspondence players, it will end in a draw.

### 20. ♖xa6

Grabbing a pawn and at the same time clearing the way for the a-pawn.

A) With 20.g4 White weakens the f3-square: 20... ♗g6 21. ♜ad1 ♘d2! (White has to give up the exchange) 22. ♜fe1 ♘f3+ 23. ♗f1 ♘xe1 24. ♜xd8 ♜xd8 25. ♗xe1 ♜d4! (the pawn on f2 is the target) 26. ♖xa6 ♗b6 27. h4 ♜e4+ 28. ♗f1 ♜d4=;

B) 20. h3 ♜xe5 21. ♖xa6 ♗b6. These kind of positions are very complicated for both sides and it is very easy to blunder if unprepared: 22. ♗h2 ♜a5 23. ♖e2 ♜d2 24. ♖f3 (White has managed to hold onto the f2-pawn, but the b2-pawn will fall and so will the a-pawn) 24... ♜xb2 25. ♜ae1 ♘d6 26. a3 ♜a2 27. ♜e7 ♜5xa3 28. ♖f4 ♗g7=;

C) 20. ♜ac1 is another interesting try: 20... ♜xe5 21. ♖xa6 ♗b6 22. ♜xc6 ♘d2! 23. ♜xb6 (only move; 23. ♜fc1? ♜de8–+) 23... ♘xf1 24. ♜h6 ♜e1 25. f3 ♗h7 26. ♖f6 ♜de8 27. h4 ♜e2. Black is threatening 28... ♘e3! so White has nothing more than a perpetual: 28. ♖d8+ ♗g7 29. ♖d4+ ♗f8 30. ♖d8+=;

D) 20. ♜ae1 ♜xe5 21. ♖xa6 ♗b6 22. h3 ♜d2 23. b4 ♗e6 24. ♗h2 ♗xf2 25. ♜e2 ♗g3+ 26. ♗g1 ♗g7! (a cold-blooded move. Now the threat is 27... ♜d4 or 27... ♗d5!) 27. ♜xd2 (only move) 27... ♘xd2 28. ♜d1 c5! 29. bxc5 ♘e4 30. ♖a8 ♗f2+ 31. ♗h2 ♗xc5 32. a4 ♗d6 33. ♗g1 ♗c5+=;

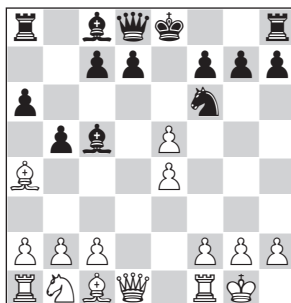
E) 20. ♖xc6 ♜e6 21. ♖xc7 ♗b6 22. ♖c4 ♜g6 (Black has multiple threats) 23. e6 ♜xe6 24. ♜ae1 ♜d2 (even if you know the position is equal if both sides play the best moves, this position looks uncomfortable for White) 25. h3 ♜xb2 26. a4 ♜xf2 27. ♗h2 ♗g7 28. a5 ♗c5 29. ♜xf2 ♗xf2=.

**20... ♗b6 21. a4! ♜d2**  
21... ♘d2 is also OK for Black: 22. a5 ♗d3 23. ♖b7 ♗d4 24. ♜ad1 ♗xf1 25. ♜xd2 ♗b5 26. g3 ♜b8 27. ♖xc7 ♗xe5=.

## CHAPTER 10

# The pseudo-sac 6.♘xe5: 6...♘xe5 7.d4 b5 8.dxe5

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙c5 6.♘xe5  
♘xe5 7.d4 b5 8.dxe5



In this chapter we are going to examine another sharp attempt for White to refute the Møller starting with 6.♘xe5. White wins the piece back with tactics, but as it turns out they rather work in Black's favour.

I remember working on the game Short-A.Onischuk, Wijk aan Zee 1997. At the time, chess engines could not see much and no theory existed, so what was really going on was a mystery to me. Nowadays modern chess engines provide very accurate evaluations to this kind of positions.

**Steve Berger**  
**Jan Gustafsson**  
 Böblingen 2002 (9)

2312  
 2554

it seriously: 10...♖xf2 11.♗xf2  
 ♕xf2+ 12.♗xf2 ♖h4+ 13.♗f1 ♕xd5  
 14.♗xd5

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4  
 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♕c5 6.♘xe5 ♘xe5 7.d4 b5  
 8.dxe5

This position can occur only in the Møller and not in the Neo-Arkhangelsk since there the white bishop is already on b3.

8...♘xe4



9.♙d5?!

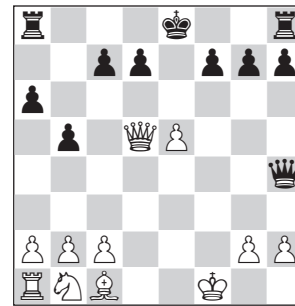
A) 9.♙g4 ♕b7 10.♙xg7? (10.♙b3 ♙e7) 10...♙h4!-+;

B) 9.♙b3 is the main move. After 9...♕b7 White has several options but nothing seems to work!



analysis diagram

B1) 10.♙d5 leads to a very unbalanced position. We have to take



analysis diagram

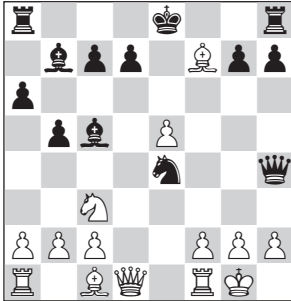
14...0-0 15.♘d2 ♙xh2 16.♘f3 ♙h5  
 17.♙e3 (17.♙d2 ♙h1+ 18.♘g1 ♙h5  
 19.♘f3 ♙h1+ 20.♘g1 ♙h5 21.♙c3  
 d6 22.a4 ♗ad8 23.axb5 axb5=  
 Magnum-Kerveros, playchess.com  
 2019) 17...d6 18.♗f2 ♗fe8 19.a4 dxe5  
 20.axb5 ♗ad8 21.♙c5 axb5= Saren-  
 Stefanova, Moscow 2006;

B2) 10.♙h5 ♙e7 (10...0-0!?N)  
 11.♘c3 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 0-0-0 13.♙f4  
 g5 14.♙g3 f5 15.exf6 ♙e4 16.♙f3  
 ♙xf3 17.gxf3 ♗hf8= Dzhumaev-  
 Gareyev, Tashkent 2007;

B3) 10.♙g4 ♙e7 11.♘c3 (11.♙xg7?  
 0-0-0 12.♙xf7 ♙xe5 13.♙f4  
 ♙e8 14.♙e3 ♗f8 15.♙h4 ♕xe3  
 16.fxe3 ♗xf1+ 17.♗xf1 ♙g6-+  
 Von Rosenberg-Schmitz, cr 2008)  
 11...♘xc3 (11...f5 12.exf6 ♘xf6 13.♙g5  
 0-0-0= Escobar Forero-Henriquez  
 Villagra, Linares 2019) 12.bxc3  
 0-0-0 (12...h5 13.♙f5 g6 14.♙f6  
 ♙xf6 15.exf6 d5 16.a4 0-0-0=  
 Pavlicek-Lombart, cr 2012) 13.a4  
 (13.♙g5= Kobalia-Belozarov, Tomsk  
 2004) 13...♙xe5 14.axb5 axb5=  
 Halvax-Rabiega, Graz 2010;

B4) 10. ♖d2 ♖h4 (10... ♗xd2 11. ♖xd2 0-0=) 11. ♖f3 f5 12. ♗xe4 ♗xe4=;

B5) 10. ♗c3 ♖h4!? (10... ♗xc3 N would be my choice now. It is a simpler alternative, e.g. 11.bxc3 0-0 or 11... ♖e7!?) 11. ♗xf7+ (11. ♖f3 0-0=; 11...0-0-0!? could be playable too)



analysis diagram

11... ♖xf7! (11... ♖e7 12. ♗e3 ♗xe3 13.fxe3 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♖e4 15. ♖f2 ♖af8? (15... ♖xe5=) 16. ♖h5± Short-A.Onischuk, Wijk aan Zee 1997) 12. ♖xd7+ ♖g8 (12... ♖e7?? 13. ♖f5+ ♖g8 14. ♗xe4±) 13. ♗e3 (13. ♖e6+ ♖f8-+) 13... ♖e7-+.



**9... ♗b7!**

The best!

9... ♖h4!? 10. ♗e3 c6 11. ♖d3 bxa4 12.f4?! (12. ♗c3 ♗xe3 13. ♗xe4 ♗b6 14. ♗d6+ ♖f8 12... ♖g4 13. ♗xc5

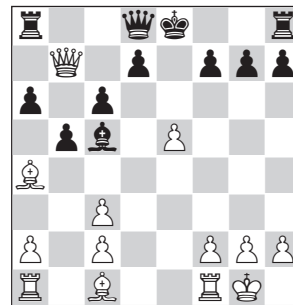
♗xc5 14. ♖c4 ♗e6-+ Brooker-Lorenti, cr 2002.

**10. ♖xb7 c6**



White's queen is trapped! Black can catch it with ... ♖a7.

**11. ♗c3 ♗xc3 12.bxc3**

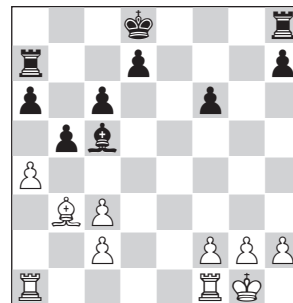


**12... ♖a7?!**

12...0-0!-+.

**13. ♗g5 ♖xg5 14. ♖b8+ ♖d8**

**15. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 16. ♗b3 f6 17.exf6 gxf6 18.a4**



### 18...d5

Now the ♖b3 is trapped like in the game Winter-Capablanca, Hastings 1918/19!

19. ♖fd1 ♜c7 20. ♗e1 ♜d6 21. ♗ed1 ♜e6 22. ♗e1+ ♜f7 23. axb5 axb5

24. ♗xa7+ ♜xa7 25. ♗a1 ♜c5 26. ♗a6 ♗c8 27. g3 ♜e6 28. ♜g2 ♜d6 29. ♗a1 ♗e8 30. ♜f3 ♜c7 31. ♗d1 ♗e5 32. g4 ♗e4 33. h3 ♜d6 34. ♗d3 ♜c5 35. ♜g3 ♜d6 36. ♗f3 ♜e6 37. ♗f5 ♗e5 38. ♗f3 ♜d6 39. ♜g2 c5 0-1

### Conclusion

9. ♗d5 falls into a trap. The shocking 9...♜b7!! kills the line instantly. White's queen gets trapped after taking the bishop.

9. ♜b3 is the standard move here and after 9...♜b7 White has several attempts. The position is pretty sharp, so Black must be ready to enter complications. 10. ♜d5 leads to a very unclear position where Black has a rook and pawns versus two minor pieces, with chances for both sides.