

Opening Repertoire Strategic Play with 1 d4

Milos Pavlovic



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About the Author

Milos Pavlovic is a grandmaster and former Yugoslav Champion. He has two medals from the European Senior Championships and has won many European tournaments, including very strong events, such as Biel. He has also been a trainer of many prominent players. He is also a prolific author, having written over 20 books.

Contents

About the Author	3
Introduction	6
1 The Queen's Indian Defence	7
2 The Hedgehog	43
3 The Romanishin Variation	69
4 The Classical Catalan	105
5 Lines with 3...c5 and the Tarrasch	133
6 Solid Third Moves for Black	158
7 The King's Indian Defence	174
8 The Dutch Defence	210
9 The Modern and Rare Lines	222
Index of Variations	270
Index of Complete Games	277

Introduction

This book is about positional chess. It focuses on variations and positions favored by grandmasters who are known for playing in a clear strategic style. In these variations forced lines play almost no role at all. The emphasis is on understanding how to develop the pieces to their best squares and which pieces should be traded. It is about dynamic pressure that often is not easily visible, mostly driven by a deep understanding of chess strategy in preference to rote memorization.

There is something of a tendency today (possibly fuelled by the development of engines) for players to try to outplay opponents from the opening by learning forced sharp lines. However, in my opinion, it is also possible to achieve this aim by improving your understanding of classical chess and learning how to play good moves for the entire game and not just the opening.

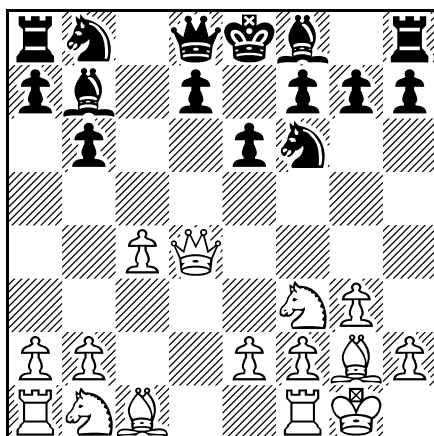
This book will enable you to build a rock solid repertoire based on 1 d4 and show you how to exert pressure for the entire game.

Milos Pavlovic,
Belgrade,
April 2023

Chapter Two

The Hedgehog

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗f3 e6 3 g3 b6 4 ♙g2 ♘b7 5 0-0 c5 6 c4 cxd4 7 ♚xd4



We've entered a position that more often arises from Reti and English move orders, but due to our specific move order with 3 g3 in this book we must tackle it. I also find it important to analyse this system, because the resulting positions are pretty much required understanding for the entire g3 fianchetto plans.

Let us first determine what this position is about. Black has swapped his c-pawn for the white d-pawn, which is generally a good deal. Also, his pieces are flexible and can easily be moved around. On the other hand, we can notice potential pressure along the d-file, while White still has a pawn on c4 in the centre and slightly the faster development.

Question: Why is it called the Hedgehog?

Answer: Because the usual approach here for Black is to keep a pawn on d6, often also go-

ing ...a6 (Black's main pawn breaks are ...b5 and ...d5), when the bristles on a6, b6, d6 and e6 will keep White's pieces away from the fifth rank.

Question: Is the Hedgehog a popular line?

Answer: Yes, it's very popular, but it requires deep understanding to play well, not least over how to generate play within a small space.

We should identify two sub-variations and some important ideas here:

a) After 7...d6 8 ♘c3 ♙e7 White has many plans, but I decided to analyse 9 ♙g5 here when White is ready to give up the bishop-pair in return for gaining rapid play in the centre, not least against d6.

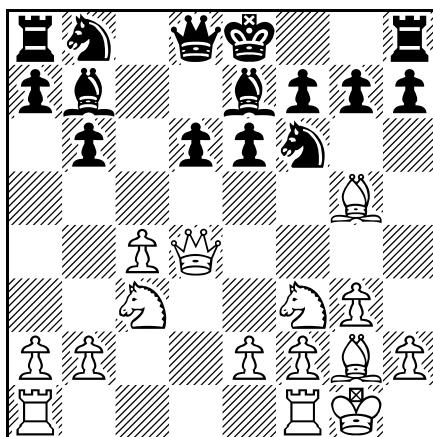
b) 7...♘c6 8 ♚f4 is a more classical approach from White and in recent years Black has often been happy to develop the queen's knight quickly to c6 rather than place it on d7.

Game 14
U.Andersson-Y.Gruenfeld
Lucerne Olympiad 1982

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 b6 4 ♙g2 ♙b7 5 0-0 c5 6 c4 cxd4 7 ♚xd4 ♙e7 8 ♘c3 d6

Black's main approach. He will keep his pawn structure in a formation with e6, d6, b6 and a6, looking at the right moment to open the position in his favour. White has many ways to counter such play, including my recommendation which is very much in keeping with our general strategic approach.

9 ♙g5



The idea behind this move is to develop quickly and by taking on f6 White can easily increase the pressure against the d6-pawn.

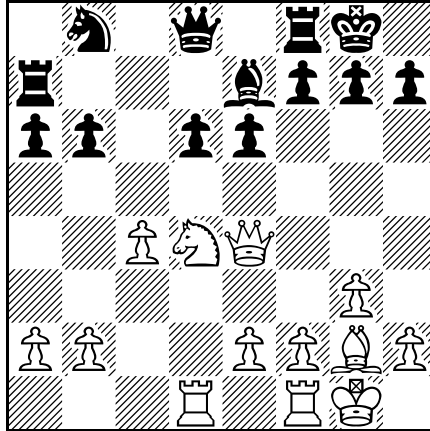
9...a6

The normal reaction, ruling out any notion of ...a6.

10 ♖xf6 ♗xf6 11 ♔f4

By eliminating the knight on f6, White be quick to get in ♖e4 and bring a rook to d1.

11...0-0 12 ♖ad1 ♗e7 13 ♘e4 ♗xe4 14 ♔xe4 ♖a7 15 ♘d4



This is a typical position, with two pairs of pieces having been exchanged and the position quite complex from a strategic perspective. White will use his better development and look towards placing his knight on c6 while keeping its counterpart in a passive role on b8.

15...♗c8

Black can use a different idea in 15...♖c7 16 b3 ♖c5 when 17 a4! is a good idea. We will see this motif regularly in this line, as White simply blocks any ...b5 attempts. After 17...♗c7 18 ♖d2 ♗h8 19 ♗b1 ♘d7 20 ♖fd1 ♗f6 21 e3 ♗c8 22 ♖c2 ♖c7 23 ♖dd2 h6 24 h3 ♖d8 25 ♗h2 ♗f8 26 ♗h1!? in G.Meier-V.Iordachescu, French Team Championship 2011, White was definitely looking towards the c6-square. We can safely say that White has the better chances here, since Black's position is a bit passive with no real prospect of active play.

16 b3 ♖e8

In another game Black handled things slightly differently, but White's key motifs were still the same: 16...♗c5 17 a4! ♖c7 18 ♖d2 ♗e5 19 ♗b1 ♖fc8 20 ♖fd1 ♘d7 21 b4!.

This is one of the points behind White play. The idea is to go b4-b5, taking firmly the c6-square under control. After 21...g6 22 b5 axb5 23 cxb5 d5 24 ♘c6 the position was better for White in L.Kavalek-P.Velikov, Solingen 1984.

17 ♖d2 ♖c7 18 e3 ♗f8 19 ♗b1 ♘d7 20 ♖fd1 ♗f6 21 a4!

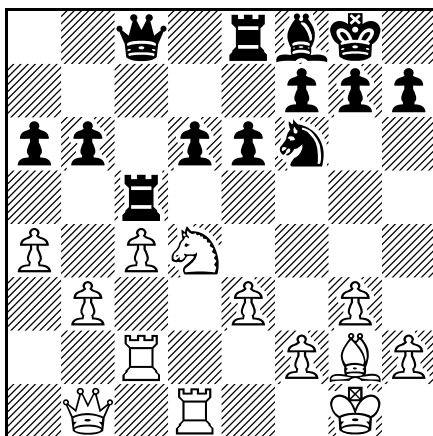
Not only stopping ...b5, but seizing some useful space at the same time. We can notice here that attempts such as ...a5 at some moment are not so good because after a later b2-b4 White will generate play against b6 and the b5-square can also become a problem for Black.

21...♖c5

Opening Repertoire: Strategic Play with 1 d4

Black is interested in going ...d5 at some moment.

22 ♖c2



The threat is now b3-b4.

22...e5 23 ♘e2!

When White played 18 e3 it may have appeared a waste of time, but it was not and we can clearly see here that it is important to have a useful retreat square on e2 in case of ...e5.

23...b5 24 axb5 25 ♘c3! bxc4 26 b4 ♖c7 27 ♘d5 ♘d5 28 ♙xd5

White has transformed things into having much the better position. The bishop on d5 is tremendous and the pawn on b4 will advance, while the black pawn on c4 is not dangerous at all.

28...♙b8 29 b5 ♖c5 30 b6 ♖ec8 31 e4 g6 32 ♙b4 ♖c6 33 ♖b1 ♖c8 34 ♙a4 1-0

Black pieces are badly placed and with the queen coming to d7, White is completely winning.

Game 15 U.Andersson-L.Portisch Reggio Emilia 1989

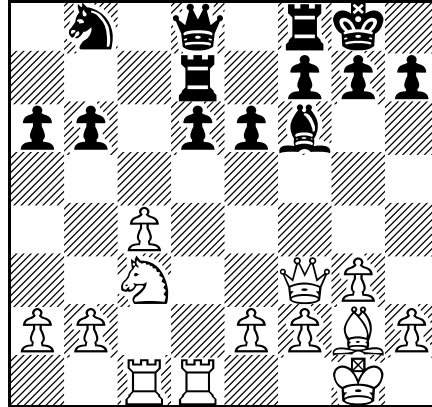
1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 b6 4 ♙g2 ♙b7 5 0-0 c5 6 c4 cxd4 7 ♙xd4 ♙e7 8 ♘c3 d6 9 ♙g5 a6 10 ♙xf6 11 ♙f4 ♙xf3

This is yet another idea. Instead of waiting for a knight to appear on e4, Black decides to take the one on f3, which might otherwise come to d4, as we saw in the previous game.

12 ♙xf3 ♙a7 13 ♖fd1 0-0 14 ♖ac1

A logical set-up. Both rooks are on good squares and the idea is b2-b3 followed by bringing the knight to e4.

14...♖d7



He may also prefer to develop more straightforwardly: 14...♘d7 15 b3 (the tactical point is that 15 ♖xd6 ♘e5! gives Black the better play) 15...♗b8 16 ♗d3 ♙e7 17 e3! ♜c8 18 a4 ♞ac7 and now in Z.Ribli-M.Hoffmann, German League 1994, White could have played 19 ♘e2!, with the same plan as in the previous game, bringing the knight to d4 and trying to get the b4-b5 pawn push in.

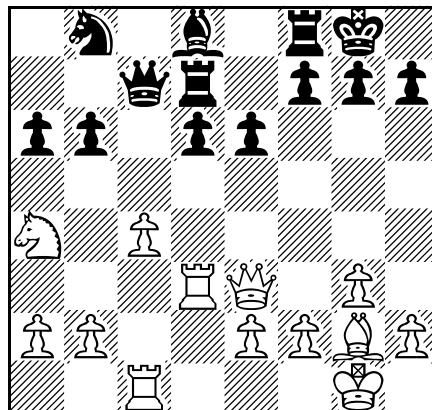
15 ♗e3 ♗c7 16 ♘a4!?

White is gaining momentum here, as the rook on d7 is awkwardly placed and defending the pawn on b6 is no easy task.

16...♞dd8

Black is ready to trade b6 for the pawn on b2, but we will see that it is activity that matters the most.

Black has also been known to defend the pawn on b6. Indeed, 16...♙d8 was seen in Z.Ribli-L.Ftacnik, German League 1991, where White should have played 17 ♞d3!, which would have been strong.



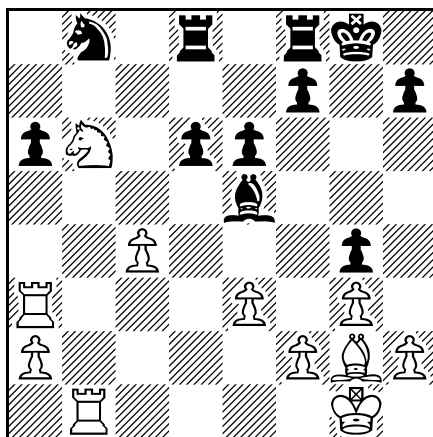
Opening Repertoire: Strategic Play with 1 d4

This highlights the two weak pawns on d6 and b6, and Black is faced with a passive position.

17 ♖xb6 ♜xb6 18 ♞xb6 ♙xb2 19 ♜b1 ♙e5

In D.Bunzmann-M.Duppel, German League 2005, Black played in a similar manner: 19...♙f6 20 ♙b7 ♜fe8 21 ♜d3 ♜e7 22 ♞a8 ♜ed7 23 e3 ♙f8 24 ♙g2. This is a strange looking position, but it is obvious that White has the greater activity and chances to further improve his pieces, while Black is in a passive position. White counts on the weak pawn on a6 and another important aspect here is that knight will be stuck on b8 for a long time.

20 e3 g5 21 ♜d3! g4 22 ♜a3



Clearly pointing out what Black's main problem is here: the pawn on a6.

22...♜fe8 23 h3 gxh3 24 ♙xh3 ♙g7 25 ♙g2

Black has managed to further simplify things, but the queenside situation is still unresolved and White maintains firm pressure.

25...♙f6 26 ♜d1 ♙g7 27 ♙f1 ♙e7 28 ♜a4 ♙f6 29 ♙b7 ♜e7 30 ♙xa6 ♜a7 31 ♙b5 ♜b7 32 ♞a8 d5! 33 ♜d3 dxc4 34 ♙xc4 ♜xd3

Better chances to survive were offered by 34...♞c6! and after 35 ♜b3 ♜db8 36 ♜xb7 37 f4 ♙d8 by keeping the knight locked down on a8, Black has good chances to draw the game.

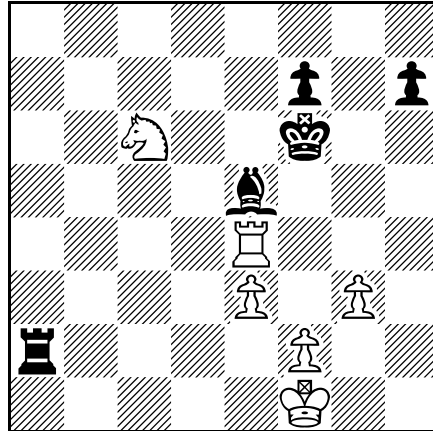
35 ♙xd3 ♞d7 36 ♙e4 ♜b2 37 ♞c7

White has managed to get his pieces out and during the process collected an important pawn on a6.

37...♙e5 38 ♞xe6+! ♙f6

Taking the knight would be wrong: 38...fxe6 39 ♜a7 ♜d2 40 ♙c6 and White is two pawns up.

39 ♞d8 ♞c5 40 ♜c4 ♞xe4 41 ♜xe4 ♜xa2 42 ♞c6



White is a pawn up and while the remaining pawns are all on one side, his pawn structure is the better one and the knight is superior to the bishop in this position.

42...♙d6 43 ♖d4 ♜c5 44 ♗f4+ ♚g7 45 ♝c4 ♜f8 46 ♗d4 ♜c5 47 ♝c4 ♜b6 48 g4

It is not at all easy to defend this endgame, especially in the sense that Black's chances to activate his bishop are rather small.

48...f6

Perhaps it was better to keep this pawn on f7.

49 ♞e7 ♜d2 50 ♜b4 ♜c5 51 ♞f5+ ♚g8 52 ♜b8+ ♜f8 53 ♞d4

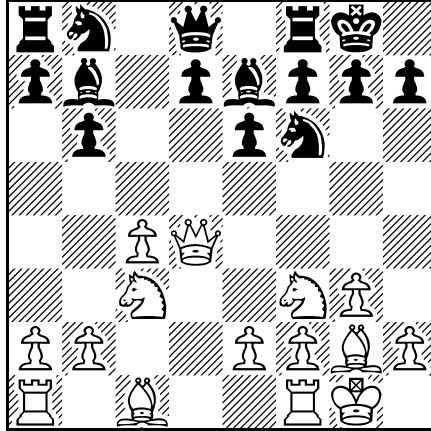
Now it is already difficult to establish an effective defensive strategy.

53...♙f7 54 ♜b7+ ♚g6 55 ♞e6 ♜a3 56 ♜g7+ ♚h6 57 ♗f7 ♚g6 58 ♜a7 ♜b4 59 ♜g7+ ♚h6 60 ♜g8 ♜c3 61 ♞g7 ♚g6 62 ♞f5+ ♚f7 63 ♜g7+ ♚f8 64 ♜xh7 1-0

Game 16
E.Kengis-A.Shabalov
 Jurmala 1985

1 d4 ♞f6 2 ♞f3 e6 3 g3 b6 4 ♜g2 ♜b7 5 0-0 c5 6 c4 cxd4 7 ♜xd4 ♜e7 8 ♞c3 0-0

Compared to the previous games, Black keeps his pawn on d7, waiting to see how White will set up.



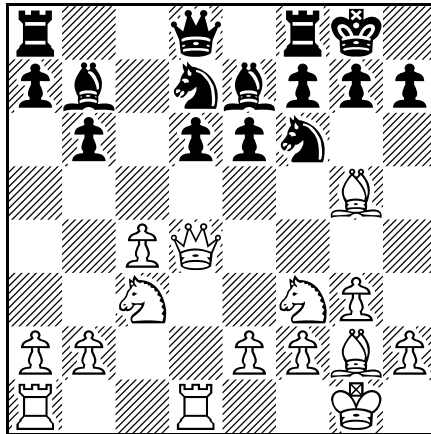
9 Rd1

A natural choice, centralising the rook as White clearly shows his intention to control the centre.

9...d6 10 g5

Already it is clear that the threat is to take on f6, and I should add that taking back with the g-pawn is not an option for Black here. Indeed, this is not a Sicilian and the dynamics here are completely different.

10... Nbd7



This is an ideal defensive set-up in some ways, but there is a problem here for Black.

Question: Why would such play be ideal for Black?

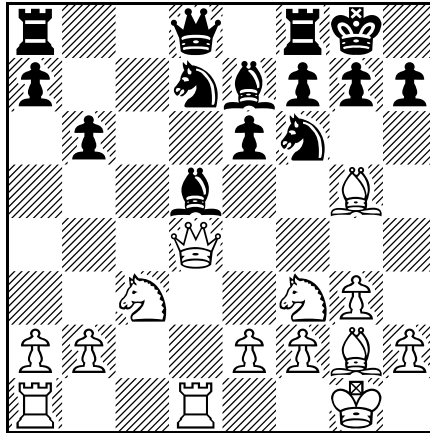
Answer: Because now if White takes on f6, the knight can recapture, keeping the bishop on

e7 to control the d6 point. This is also Black's ideal piece formation in the Hedgehog – none of the pieces disturb each other and they're all functional.

11 ♖b5!

The key is that the a-pawn is not yet on a6 and White can profit from this omission.

11...d5 12 cxd5 ♗xd5 13 ♖c3



White has successfully provoked ...d5 and the point of such play is to open the position, because obviously it is White who is the better developed. On the other hand, Black has no weaknesses and his position is still solid.

13...♗c6

Black has some other options here:

a) 13...♗b7 14 ♖a4 ♗d5 and now in P.Maletin-D.Bocharov, Khanty-Mansiysk 2012, White could have tried 15 ♖ac1 ♗c5 16 ♖g4. Even exchanges do not bring Black much needed equalising chances: 16...♗xg5 17 ♗xg5 ♖f6 18 ♗xd5 exd5 19 ♖h4 h6 20 ♗f3 and White has a typical edge. It's not much, but there is an ongoing small initiative.

b) 13...h6 14 ♗xd5 exd5 15 ♗f4 ♖c8 16 ♖ac1 ♖xc1 17 ♖xc1 ♗c5 18 ♖d3 ♖e7 19 ♗d2 ♗e4 20 ♗e1 offers White an edge as well, C.Bauer-V.Gunina, Internet (rapid) 2018.

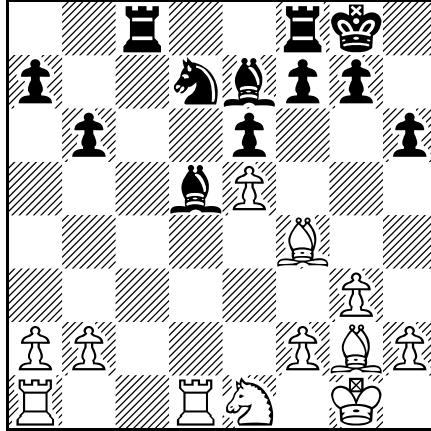
14 ♖c4 ♖c8

The idea is to move away from a pin on the d-file towards the b7-square.

Black can opt for another idea in 14...♖c8, but then there's 15 ♖a6!. This is an important point and Black will have problems covering all his weak squares: for example, 15...♗d5 16 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 17 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♖xa7 and Black does not have enough for the sacrificed pawn, M.Andersen-A.Kunte, Abu Dhabi 2018

15 e4 ♗c5

In another game Black tried 15...h6 16 ♗f4 ♗b7 17 ♖xc8 ♖axc8 18 e5 ♗d5 19 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 20 ♗e1!



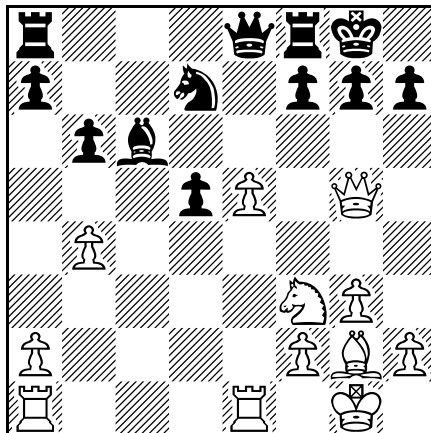
This covers the entry square on c2 and targets Black's bishop and knight on the d-file. After 20...Tfd8 21 Qxd5 exd5 22 Txd5 Qc5 23 Taad1 Txd5 24 Txd5 Black again did not have enough for the sacrificed pawn in V.Kramnik-L.Aronian, Monaco (blindfold) 2007.

16 e5 Qd5 17 b4! Qd7?!

Not a good reaction.

The best defence was 17...Qxc3, although even here after 18 Qxc3 Qa4 19 Qe3 Qxg5 20 Qxg5 Qxg2 21 Qxg2 Qc3! 22 Tdc1 Qb7+ 23 Qg1 Qd5 24 Qe4 g6 25 Qh4 h5 26 Qe4 Black still has not managed to equalise. The knight will land on the strong d6-square from where it will generate threats.

18 Qxd5 exd5 19 Qh4 Qxg5 20 Qxg5 Qe8 21 Te1



White is much better here. The knight is heading towards the d4-square and his domination in the centre is obvious.

21...h6 22 Qg4 Qe7 23 Tac1 Tac8 24 Qh4!?

It is exceedingly difficult to find a defence now for Black.

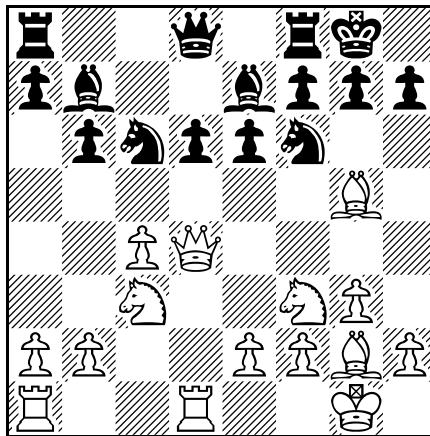
24...♖e6 25 ♘f5 g6 26 ♘xh6+ ♔g7 27 ♖g5 ♜h8 28 ♜xc6!

The final blow.

28...♜xc6 29 ♙xd5! ♖xd5 30 ♘f5+ 1-0

Game 17
R.Svane-A.Zhigalko
Skopje 2019

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 b6 4 ♙g2 ♙b7 5 0-0 c5 6 c4 cxd4 7 ♖xd4 ♙e7 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 ♜d1 d6 10 ♙g5 ♘c6



This is yet another possible reaction. Black gets ready to sacrifice a pawn.

11 ♖f4

A typical square for the queen, as we have already seen.

11...♖b8

Black is hoping that this pawn sacrifice will give him counterplay or that he will be able to reinforce the defence by placing a rook on d8.

12 ♜d2

White is bringing additional pressure to bear on the d6-pawn.

Taking the pawn is also possible: 12 ♙xf6 13 ♜xd6 ♘a5 14 ♜ad1. Black hopes that the pressure on the c4-pawn will bring him equal chances and after 14...♖c7 15 ♜d7 ♖xf4 16 gxf4 ♙c6 17 ♘g5 ♙xd7 18 ♙xa8 ♙xc3 19 ♜xd7 ♙xb2 20 ♙e4 h6 21 ♘f3 ♘xc4 we can say that Black had managed to equalise in I.Nepomniachtchi-V.Kramnik, Moscow 2016.

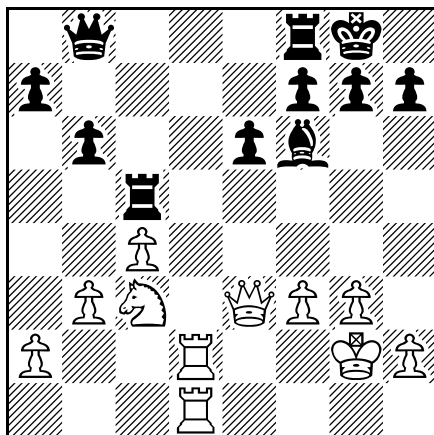
12...♘e5

A typical defensive idea. Black uses his knight to cover the d6-pawn.

13 ♜ad1

Still insisting on pressure down the d-file.

White can try a different strategy in 13 ♖xe5 dxe5 14 ♜h4 ♙xg2 15 ♙xg2 ♜b7+ 16 f3 ♜ac8 17 ♜ad1 e4! (White wanted to take on f6 then bring the queen on e4, playing with good knight versus bishop and a majority on queenside) 18 b3 exf3+ 19 exf3 ♜c5 (Black has managed to create certain weak spots on the kingside) 20 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 21 ♜e4 ♜b8 22 ♜e3.



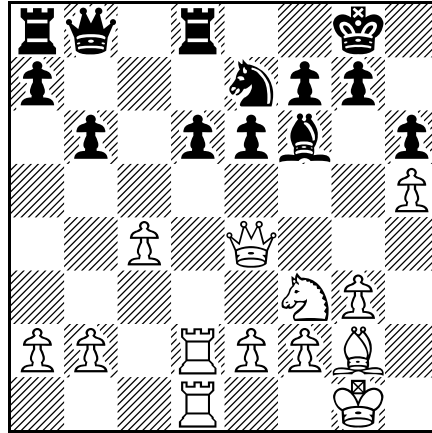
This is an interesting position. In short, it is OK for Black, but it is not so easy to find moves for him, whereas White has two strong rooks on the d-file and three against two majority on the queenside, which is always important asset. We can find similar positions in many Catalans and some other openings as well. After 22...♙xc3 23 ♜xc3 h5 24 ♜d7 complicated but remarkably interesting and instructive play arose in A.Karpov-I.Smirin, Moscow 1988.

13...♘g6

An alternative is misguided, namely 13...♘h5?! 14 ♜h4 ♘xf3+ 15 ♙xf3 and now Black lost at once with 15...♙xf3? 16 ♙xe7 when White won quickly in L.Pantsulaia-Y.Solodovnichenko, Konya 2016, Instead it was better to go 15...♘f6 16 ♙xb7 ♜xb7 17 ♜d4, although even here White still preserves the better chances.

14 ♜e3 ♜d8 15 h4 ♘g4 16 ♜d4 ♘f6 17 ♙xf6 18 ♜e3 h6 19 h5 ♘e7 20 ♘e4 ♙xe4 21 ♜xe4

Again, we have a certain resemblance with the Andersson-Gruenfeld game as the knight is heading towards d4. Here the black knight on e7 is not so well placed unless Black manages to get in ...d5, which is not so easy to do because the bishop on g2 is so powerful.



Question: How is such a position to be evaluated with opposite-coloured bishops, as we have here?

Answer: In this position we can say that it is White who has better bishop, as it exerts far greater pressure than its counterpart.

21...d5

Black is trying to neutralise the pressure.

22 cxd5 ♖xd5 23 ♘d4

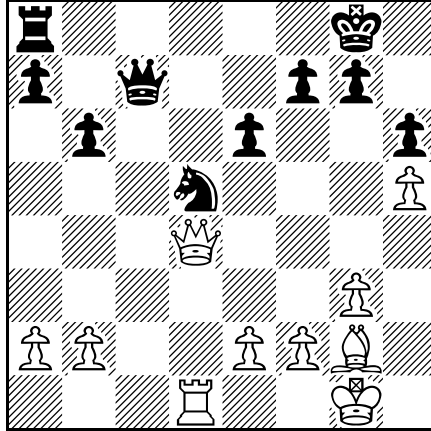
White could also have tried 23 ♖xd5!? ♘xd5 and now there are two possibilities, in the first of which White spurns material to continue increasing the pressure:

a) 24 ♖b1!? plays for a win due to the superior activity of White's pieces. After 24...♖e8 25 e4 ♘c7 26 ♖c1 ♙d8 27 ♖c2 it's an unpleasant position for Black to defend.

b) 24 ♘d4 (threatening to take on e6) 24...♖e8 25 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 26 ♖xd5 ♖xe4 27 ♙xe4 ♖e8 28 ♙d3 ♙f8 29 b3 ♖e5! 30 ♖xe5 ♙xe5 31 ♙g2 and it's probably going to be a draw.

23...♙xd4 24 ♖xd4 ♖c7 25 ♖d3

Missing an important idea. Indeed, White had a better option here in 25 ♖xd5! ♘xd5 26 ♖d4.



Black is not able to keep his knight safely on d5 anymore. Moreover, after 26...Txe8 27 Qxd5 exd5 28 Qxd5 Black loses a pawn, because 28...Txe2? 29 Qa8+ Qh7 30 Td8 wins for White, whose pawn on h5 helps a lot in this regard.

25...Txd4 26 Qxd4 Tc8 27 Qe4 Qf8 28 Td3 f6 29 Tc3 Qd8 30 Txc8 Qxc8 31 Qd6 Qf7 32 Qd3

It's now equal. Neither side can realistically create the better chances.

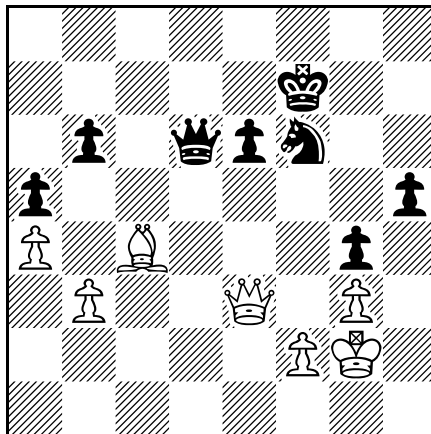
32...Qc1+ 33 Qh2?!

33 Qg2! was the correct move with roughly equal play.

33...Qg5

White now loses a pawn.

34 Qd7 Qxh5+ 35 Qg1 Qc5 36 Qb5 g5 37 b3 a5 38 a4 Qc8 39 Qd6 Qc1+ 40 Qg2 Qc5 41 Qb8 Qg7 42 Qc4 Qc6+ 43 Qg1 Qd5 44 e4 Qe7 45 e5 Qd5 46 exf6+ Qxf6 47 Qb5 Qc5 48 Qb7+ Qf8 49 Qd3 Qd6 50 Qc4 h5 51 Qf3 Qf7 52 Qe3 g4 53 Qg2 Qd7 54 Qb5 Qf6 55 Qc4



The bishop is not worse than the knight here and White held the draw.

55...♘d7 56 ♖h6 ♘f6 57 ♗g5 ♗c5 58 ♖f4 ♕e7 59 ♗b8 ♘d7 60 ♗g8 ♗f5 61 ♙b5 ♘e5 62 ♗e8+ ♕d6 63 ♗d8+ ♕c5 64 ♗c7+ ♕b4 65 ♗xb6 ♗e4+ 66 ♕f1 ♕c3 67 ♗xa5+ ♕c2 68 ♗e1 ♗h1+ 1/2-1/2

Game 18
T.Radjabov-L.Bruzon Batista
 Tromsoe 2013

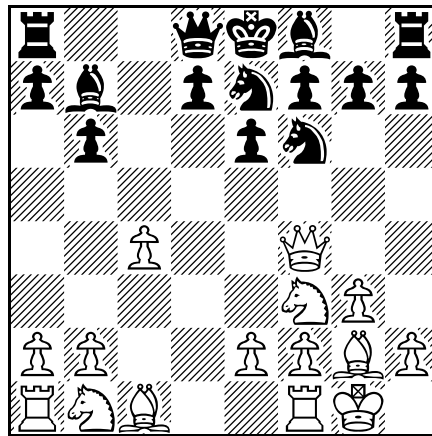
1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 b6 4 ♙g2 ♙b7 5 0-0 c5 6 c4 cxd4 7 ♗xd4 ♘c6

This is another way of handling the Hedgehog. Black prefers fast development and will deal later with the d7-pawn. Perhaps it will stay on d7 or get to d5 in one move. On the other hand, White can adopt the usual strategy rook of bringing a rook to d1, and so on.

8 ♗f4

Again we see this typical reaction, placing the queen on its best square.

8...♘e7



A bit of an unusual reaction. Black is targeting the strong position of the queen on f4 and only after driving the queen away will he complete development.

9 b3 ♘g6 10 ♗d2

The queen is forced to retreat all the way to d2 (going to e3 would run into 10...♙c5), and that's exactly what Black wanted, but the cost is that the knight on g6 is a little strangely placed.

10...♙e7

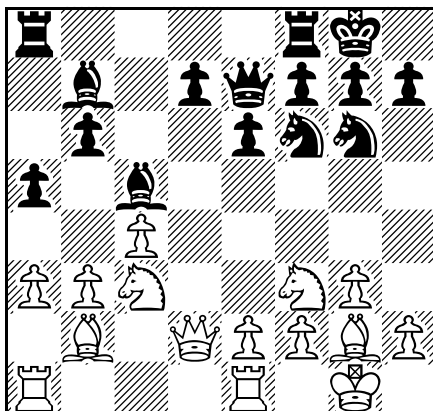
Not the only idea here and the alternatives are also important:

a) 10...d5 11 cxd5 ♗xd5 is a logical plan, but it is not necessarily an equalising method. After 12 ♙b2 ♖c8 13 ♖d1 ♙b4 14 ♗xd5 ♙xd5 again White has 15 ♘e1!. This motif is im-

Opening Repertoire: Strategic Play with 1 d4

important to remember and we've already seen it in the Queen's Indian chapter. The knight heads for a strong post on d3 and with 15...♙xg2 16 ♖xg2 ♙e7 17 ♘c3 0-0 18 ♜ac1 ♜fd8 we've followed U.Andersson-B.Kurajica, San Sebastian 1994. Here White could have tried the aggressive 19 ♘b5 a6 20 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 21 ♘c7 a5 22 ♘d3 when we can safely say that initiative in this endgame belongs to him.

b) 10...♙c5 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♙b2 ♜e7 (Black waits to see what to do with the pawn on d7; logical now would be to place the rooks on c8 and d8 followed by ...d5) 13 a3 a5 was seen in S.Ernst-E.L'Ami, Wijk aan Zee 2012, and now in my opinion the best move is 14 ♜fe1!?



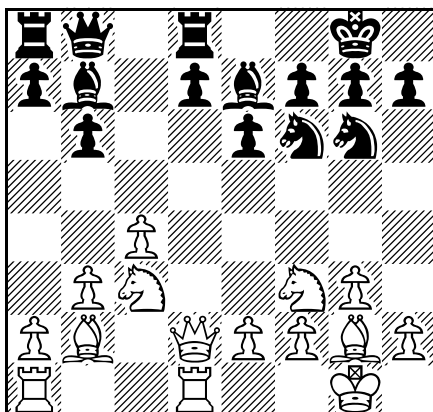
Here I analysed a few ideas:

b1) 14...♘g4 15 e3 f5 16 ♘a4 ♜ab8 17 h3 ♘f6 18 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 19 b4 ♙xf3 20 ♙xf3 ♙e7 21 ♜ac1 and White has some pressure.

b2) 14...♜fd8 15 e4 gives White a space advantage.

b3) 14...d5 15 cxd5 ♘xd5 16 ♘a4 secures White the bishop-pair.

11 ♙b2 0-0 12 ♘c3 ♜b8 13 ♜fd1 ♜d8



Black sometimes plays in such a manner, leaving the pawn on a6 and aiming for ...d5. The queen on b8 defends the bishop on b7, which will help when the position starts to open with ...d5.

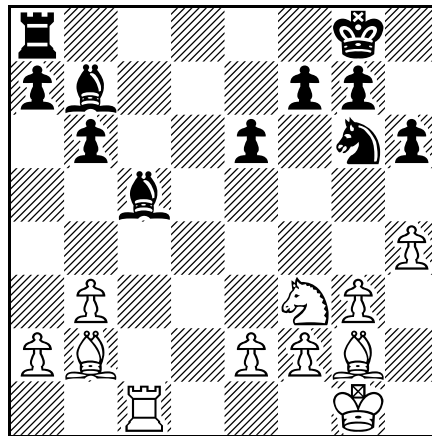
Question: When entering such positions what are the important aspects to consider?

Answer: It helps to take a good look at the entire position, looking at which pieces are and are not well placed. That way here we can appreciate that the entire manoeuvre to bring the knight to g6 hasn't especially helped Black as the knight achieves little on the kingside.

14 ♖c2 d5 15 cxd5 ♘xd5 16 ♗xd5 ♝xd5 17 ♞xd5 ♙xd5 18 h4

White could also have tried 18 ♗d4 ♙xg2 19 ♚xg2 ♙c5 20 ♖e4 ♖e8 21 h4 h6 22 ♗f3. Although the position is simplified, it is not equal as White has some initiative, as well as the more active queen and minor pieces.

18...h6 19 ♝c1 ♖b7 20 ♖c7 ♙c5 21 ♖xb7 ♙xb7



White can still create some play here mainly by manoeuvring the knight to d3.

22 ♗e1

It was better to go 22 h5! ♗f8 and only then 23 ♗e1 ♙xg2 24 ♚xg2 ♝d8 25 ♗d3 ♙d6 26 ♝c6. Such positions still offer White some chances to be better.

22...♙xg2 23 ♚xg2 h5!

This is equaliser is an important move to remember.

24 ♝d1 ♗f8 25 ♗d3 ♝d8 26 ♝c1 ♙d6 27 ♚f3 f6 28 ♝c6 ♗g6 29 ♝c4 1/2-1/2

It's hard to make any progress as White does not control enough space to create any real pressure.