

**Sharpen Up
Your Chess**

**Boost Your
Chess Results!**

Armin Juhasz

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Armin Juhasz

Thinkers Publishing 2023



Key to Symbols

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

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Preface

Shortly after his first publication, Armin Juhasz recommends his second book to the reader. Because the previous volume, *1.d4! The Chess Bible*, was so well received, the success of the current book, *Sharpen Up Your Chess!*, is likely to be no surprise. Why can we safely assume that this will be another popular volume? The answer is simple: it is another kind-spirited, helpful work designed to support the development of chess enthusiasts in a complex way. And last but not least, it's quite entertaining.

The set of topics, examples, advice and drills, together with the related solutions and explanations of problems that often present themselves to all of us, take us into an interesting, colorful world. This is a world where even simply watching should be worth the reader's while, and where those who are keen to learn and practice will find a lot to turn them into successful players.

Despite his young age, Armin is becoming an increasingly prominent figure in the Hungarian and international chess world, even if not exactly in the way I initially thought he would be. I recall how he and his brothers Kristof and Agoston joined our chess club as youth players about five years ago. I myself started playing chess in the MTK chess club almost 50 years ago, and now I am club president and head coach there. MTK is perhaps the most significant Hungarian sports club with a chess history. A number of legendary players, including world champion candidate and chess Olympic champion Laszlo Szabo (1917-1998) and Lajos Portisch (1937-), the nine-times Hungarian champion Maria Ivanka (1950-) and the Polgar sisters Zsuzsa, Zsofia and Judit all played in our club.

From the first moment of our acquaintance, the commitment of the three Juhasz brothers to chess could be felt immediately. First Kristof and then Armin became International Masters, both at an impressive speed. In Armin's case, however, a slight change in his career plans started to take shape soon afterwards. In addition to his continuing interest in competitive chess, he became more and more captivated by the fascinating intersections of classical chess history and contemporary chess practices, and at the same time he began teaching his younger brother and, somewhat later, other talented youngsters. The results have been outstanding. Armin is able to share with his disciples his own motivation, the joy of discovery and understanding, coupled with a critical view of ourselves as well as the capacity for self-improvement. In this new book, the young author now offers all this to you.

In conclusion, I would like to paraphrase the words in the title “Sharpen Up”. In my interpretation, it means this: have curiosity about this book, develop an understanding of it, find pleasure in it, incorporate the knowledge you find here into your existing knowledge and use this enhanced competence successfully! That’s all I can wish you for this book!

Gabor Kallai Grandmaster and FIDE Senior Trainer
Budapest, 2023

Introduction

Dear Reader,

These days most chess books are about openings, specific variations, computer analyses -- this is what the world has become. But let's pause and think about it more deeply. In the past, the world's most successful books wanted to give readers more than this. For example, Aron Nimzowitsch's 1925 book *My System* – a real classic often referred to with great respect and professional humility by the older generation – wanted to convey a full concept of strategic chess. Instead of discussing specific theoretical lines, it analyzed such middlegame topics as the importance of the center, play on open files, and exchanges. The book proved to be a real global success for its author.

Another outstanding book of the 20th century is *Zurich International Chess Tournament*, from 1953. Its author is David Bronstein, who finished second in that tournament. This book analyzes the games played in the tournament in detail, and it can provide extremely useful and original ideas even for a modern chess player. We can learn how to analyze a game in detail, find out how grandmasters choose their opening lines in a given competitive situation, whether a particular sacrifice was correct, whether it was the right decision to accept the draw offer in the final position, and of course the list is much longer.

But what is more important? To know perfectly all the theoretical lines of the King's Indian Defense or just to be aware of how Najdorf defeated Taimanov in the Mar del Plata variation? What plan did Geller weave against Gligoric in a closed-center position? How did Gligoric beat Euwe in a drawish rook endgame?

This dilemma has been researched for many years and there is probably no clear answer. Everyone needs something different to make progress in chess. However, if we still want to answer the question, the answer is you need both! A contemporary chess player's theoretical knowledge and education in openings is of course assumed, but without knowing general chess culture, famous players and their games, this may not be worth much. From my coaching point of view, I find that the two need to be combined. Openings are easy to learn even alone, because in today's world there are plenty of video series, elaborate material and repertoire books for professionals, club players and beginners alike. However, here too it is a good idea to consult your coach: what opening does he or she recommend? Which

opening suits your style and personality, and into which one should you invest more time and energy? I write in detail about mastering the openings using a seven-step system in my previous book (*1.d4! The Chess Bible*). I would also recommend my book to those who don't necessarily want to learn just 1.d4 openings, but also to those who want to understand the need to learn openings in general.

However, we are not going to focus on a particular opening now. Instead, this book wants to present a particular concept on a topic that no one has written about in such a complex way yet. We learn to sharpen up our chess and handle the positions that arise from it. This book will improve your situational awareness, give new ideas and, finally, give you a new perspective that will help you achieve better results.

Why sharpen up our chess? As a coach and a player, I have observed that for many players, bad technique and destroying winning situations are the most annoying things about chess. Well, if we play sharply, even the first mistake of the opponent can be fatal and we can exploit it with accurate calculation of variations. Thus, there is no need for a Karpovian endgame technique, with the help of which, say, an isolated-pawn position should be won. The second reason why it's worth playing more sharply is that it's simply more interesting and I think an average club player can get more pleasure from a nice sacrifice or an attack than from converting a pawn advantage on the queenside.

Unfortunately, you can see more and more grandmasters who are already past their best years and a little burnt out, wanting to beat their opponents with mechanical technical play. I think the best approach against these players is to shock them with sharp play, new situations and brave attacks in order to provoke mistakes.

So, if you feel that any of the following statements applies to you, then you will definitely find this book helpful:

- My technique is weak in positionally winning situations
- I'm tired by the end of the game and I'm making mistakes
- I don't like endgames
- I am good at calculating variations, but I don't know how to take advantage of that
- I play a lot of chess, I train, I study, but the expected results do not come
- I feel insecure against players with a higher rating.

Of course, this book doesn't guarantee success in itself, but you'll definitely get a new approach to chess, together with fresh ideas and practical tips. Most of the

examples in the book are from recent games, so you will have up-to-date and immediately usable material in front of you.

For the best results, I suggest reading the chapters in the order you find them in the book.

I wish you a good reading experience and if you play an exciting and important game as a result of this book, please share it with me by sending it to armin.juhasz13@gmail.com.

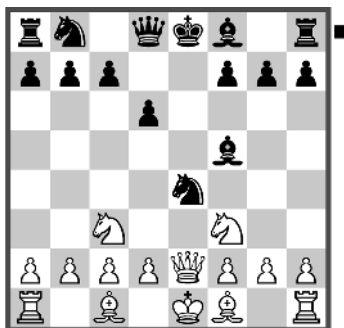
Armin Juhasz, 2023



Grandmasters Get Tricked

As before, we will analyze games of relatively few moves in this chapter, with the important difference that now all the victims are grandmasters! Yes, even the best ones can make mistakes, and sometimes quite big mistakes!

Grandmasters are generally famous for their universal chess knowledge. We know that they are well-versed in openings, middlegames and endgames. They are familiar with classic games, can predict standard plans and have a lot of experience. That said, we also know that everyone has certain weaknesses. We can remember the example of the 15th World Champion, Viswanathan Anand, who lost one of his games in just six moves against Grandmaster Zapata. Do we remember the final position?



Anand resigned here with Black after 6. ♔e2

I want to show you games that are more recent but less well-known than this one. Have fun studying the games and remember, anyone can be defeated! The sharper the position, the greater the chance that a strong player goes wrong.



COACH'S TIP

Check your favorite player's games and see in how many moves his or her fastest win and defeat happened! You'll see interesting and educational games this way

Game 13

♁ Ma Qun (2621)
 ♚ Raznikov, Danny (2494)
 ♁ Groningen 2014

Have you ever seen a 2600 grandmaster losing in 10 moves in a classical game? Now you will!

1. c4 c5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4. d4

4. g3!? is also a very common move.

4... cxd4 5. ♘xd4 e6



Position after: 5... e6

This is the first critical opening position of the game. White can choose from many setups.

6. a3!?

A prophylactic move to stop ...♗b4.

A) 6. e4?! is imprecise since we transpose to an unfavorable line of the

Sicilian Taimanov variation (1.e4 c5 2. ♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.c4 ♘f6 6.♘c3). 6... ♗b4! Black has great play here in my opinion.

B) 6. ♘db5 used to be the main line, but according to modern theory this is harmless for Black. 6... d5



Position after: 6... d5

B1) 7. cxd5 exd5 8. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 9. ♖xd5 That would be too greedy because 9... ♗b4+ 10. ♗d2 ♖e7 [10... ♗e6!? also works] 11. ♘c3 0-0



Position after: 11... 0-0

gives Black active play for the pawn. Let me share a great example where GM Portisch won with nice tactics. 12. ♗g5 ♖c7 13. e3 ♗e6 14. ♖d2 ♖a5 15. ♗h4 g5 [♘ 15... ♗ac8 16. ♗e2 g5 17. ♗g3 ♗fd8 18. ♖c1 ♗xc3+ 19. bxc3 ♘d4!→] 16. ♗g3 ♗fd8 17.

♔c2 ♕xc3+ 18. bxc3 [18. ♖xc3?? ♗b4+] 18... ♗b4 19. ♖e4?? [19. ♖b2 ♗xa2 20. ♕e2 ♖xc3+ 21. ♖xc3 ♗xc3] 19... ♗xa2 20. ♖b4 ♖d1+! 0-1 Suba, M (2525) – Portisch, L (2625) Thessaloniki 1984.

B2) 7. ♕f4 e5 8. cxd5 exf4 9. dxc6 bxc6 10. ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 11. ♖d1+ ♕d7∞ The bishop pair compensates Black for having a weaker king.

C) 6. ♕f4 is a pretty modern idea which has been played by GM Bacrot several times.

D) 6. g3 is currently the main line at the top level. It can get really sharp very soon. 6... ♖b6! 7. ♗db5 ♗e5 8. ♕f4 [8. ♕g2 a6 9. ♖a4 ♖b8∞] 8... ♗fg4 9. ♖a4 g5 10. ♕xe5 ♖xf2+ 11. ♔d1 ♗xe5 12. ♗c7+ ♔d8 13. ♗xa8 ♖d4+ 14. ♔c2 ♗xc4



Position after: 14... ♗xc4

15. e4 [15. ♔b3 ♗d2+ 16. ♔c2 ½-½ Cordova, E (2609) – Bruzon Batista, L (2653) Saint Louis 2018] 15... ♖d2+ 16. ♔b3 ♖xb2+ 17. ♔xc4 ♕g7 18. ♖a5+ b6 19. ♖xg5+ f6 20. ♖b5 ♕a6 21. ♖xa6 f5 22. ♖xa7 ♖xc3+ 23. ♔b5

♖c6+ 24. ♔b4 ♖c3+ 25. ♔b5 ♖c6+ 26. ♔b4 ♖c3+ 27. ♔b5 ½-½ Amin, B (2686) – Lupulescu, C (2656) chess.com 2020.

6... ♕e7

6... ♕c5!? would be the other main line.

7. g3

7. e4 seems more logical to me. 7... 0-0 8. ♗f3 White retreats with the knight to control the d5 square with the queen on d1. [8. ♕e2 d5!



Position after: 8... d5!

9. exd5 exd5 10. 0-0 ♗xd4 11. ♖xd4 dxc4 12. ♖xc4 ♕e6=] 8... ♖c7 9. ♕e2 b6 10. 0-0 White has a small edge.

7... ♖b6!?

An ambitious line in the spirit of the 6.g3 variation.

7... 0-0 8. ♕g2 a6 9. 0-0 ♖c7 10. b3 d6 11. ♕b2 ♕d7 12. ♖c1 ♗xd4 [12... ♖ac8?! 13. ♗d5!↑] 13. ♖xd4± Kurajica, B (2521) – Ramirez Medina, V (2251) Santa Cruz de La Palma 2018.

8. $\text{N}b3$

The beginning of a wrong plan.

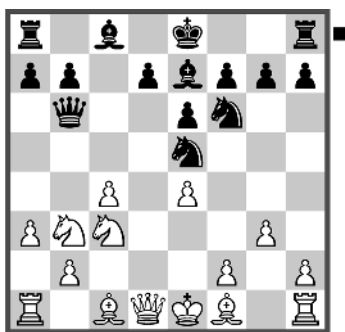
8. $\text{N}db5!?$



Position after: 8. $\text{N}db5!?$

places the knight on the correct square in this line. 8... $d5?$ [8... $\text{N}e5!$ 9. $\text{Q}f4$ $\text{N}fg4$ 10. $e3$ $a6\infty$] 9. $\text{Q}e3!$ $\text{K}d8$ 10. $cxd5$ $exd5$ 11. $\text{N}xd5$ $\text{N}xd5$ 12. $\text{K}xd5\pm$ Moroni, L (2547) – Gandrud, V (2346) Caleta 2018.

8... $\text{N}e5!$ 9. $e4??$



Position after: 9. $e4??$

9. $c5$ was the best option. 9... $\text{Q}xc5$ 10. $\text{N}xc5$ $\text{K}xc5$ 11. $\text{Q}g2$ $d5$ 12. $0-0$ 13. $\text{Q}f4$ White has enough compensation for the pawn, but no more than that.

How would you play as Black? Search for an active and threatening move.

9... $\text{N}fg4!$

Black comes up with an original attack featuring a combo of the queen and two knights.

10. $c5?$

10. $\text{K}e2$ was a better try because it loses only a pawn. 10... $\text{K}xb3$ 11. $f4$ $\text{Q}c5$ 12. $fxe5$ $\text{N}xe5\rightarrow$

10... $\text{K}xb3!$

Black wins material at the end of the variation.

10... $\text{K}xb3!$ 11. $\text{K}xb3$ $\text{N}f3+$






Position after: 11... $\text{N}f3+$

12. $\text{Q}d1$ [12. $\text{Q}e2$ $\text{N}d4+$ 13. $\text{Q}e1$ $\text{N}xb3\rightarrow$] 12... $\text{N}xf2+$ 13. $\text{Q}e2$ $\text{N}d4+$ 14. $\text{Q}xf2$ $\text{N}xb3$ 15. $\text{K}b1$ $\text{N}xc1$ 16. $\text{K}xc1$ $\text{Q}xc5\rightarrow$ Black has two extra pawns and the bishop pair.

0-1

Game 14

 Harshavardhan, GB (2343)
 Bogdanovich, Stanislav (2562)
 Chennai 2020

I played more positionally against an experienced GM opponent: 6. ♘d2 0-0 7. a3 ♘xc3 8. ♘xc3 ♚e7 9. b4 e5 10. d5 ♘d8 11. e3 ♘g4 12. ♘e2± Juhasz, A (2406) – Ilincic, Z (2388) Budapest 2016.

6... d5

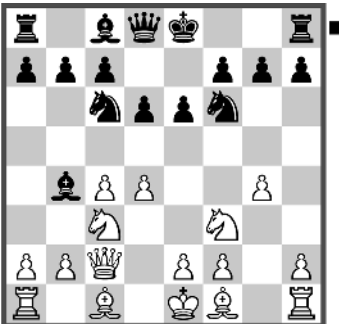
1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♘b4 4. ♚c2 ♘c6

Not the most popular move, but I think Black wanted to play a game without long theoretical lines. The following two are considered to be the main moves.

A) 4... 0-0

B) 4... d5

5. ♘f3 d6 6. g4!?



Position after: 6. g4!?

White is ready to play a sharp game. A brave decision against a strong GM, but my general advice is to play in your own style whoever your opponent is.

A) 6... ♘xg4 7. ♚g1 e5 8. d5 ♘xc3+



Position after: 8... ♘xc3+

9. ♚xc3!N [9. bxc3?! ♘e7 10. h3 ♘f6 11. ♚xg7 ♘f5= Draganic, V (2321) – Mijovic, A (2191) Petrovac 2015] 9... ♘e7 10. h3 ♘f6 11. ♚xg7 h6 [11... ♘g6? 12. ♘g5!±] 12. ♚g1± White has the easier game.

B) 6... h6 7. g5 [7. h3!?! also comes into consideration] 7... hxg5 8. ♘xg5 ♚e7

B1) 9. 0-0-0?! ♘xc3!



Position after: 9... ♘xc3!

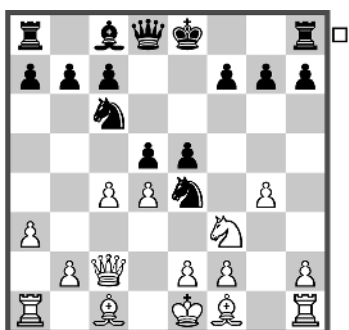
10. bxc3 [10. Kxc3 Nxe4! 11. Qxe7 Nxc3 12. bxc3 Qxe7] 10... e5 11. h4 Qd7 Indjic, A (2623) – Savic, M (2535) Novi Sad 2018.

B2) 9. h4 ±

7. a3 Qxc3+

7... Qe7 would be very passive. 8. g5! Nh5 9. cxd5 exd5 10. Qb3! Black has no good way to defend the d5-pawn.

8. Qxc3 Ne4 9. Qc2 e5?!



Position after: 9... e5?!

Bogdanovich started to play too confidently at this point.

9... 0-0 10. Qg2 f5 would lead to a sharp game with around equal chances.

10. Qg2!

White has no time to waste; developing the pieces is the most important thing now.

10... Qxg4 11. cxd5

11. Nxe5 Nxf2!



Position after: 11... Nxf2!

12. Qxf2 Kh4+ 13. Qe3 [13. Qg1? Qe1+ 14. Qf1 Qh3] 13... Qh6+ 14. Qf2 Kh4= Now a move repetition could bring the game to a quiet close.

11... Qxd5 12. Nxe5



Position after: 12. Nxe5

How would you handle this tactical mess?

12... Qxd4??

Black hangs a piece, so the game is over after one mistake! This is why sharp chess can be dangerous even against a grandmaster.

A) 12... ♔f5 13. ♖xc6 bxc6 14. ♔e3±

B) 12... ♖xd4! 13. ♙xe4 ♖c2+! 14. ♙xc2 [14. ♚f1?? ♙d1#] 14... ♙xg2



Position after: 14... ♙xg2

15. ♙a4+□ [15. ♖f1?? ♔h3→+] 15... c6
16. ♙xg4 ♙xh1+ 17. ♚d2 ♖d8+ 18.
♖d3 0-0∞ It's a complicated fight
where both sides have their attacking
options.

13. ♖xg4!+–

This backward knight move was most probably missed by the Ukrainian GM. The knight secures the f2-square so the game is over.

1-0

Game 15

- ♚ Raghunandan, Kaumandur (2424)
♜ Kotic, Dragan (2488)
♁ Budapest 2019

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♖c3 ♖f6 4. e5

4. ♔g5!? ♔e7 5. e5 ♖fd7 6. h4 This line, called the Alekhine-Chatard Attack, is another sharp way of playing the position.

4... ♖fd7 5. f4 c5 6. ♖f3 ♖c6 7. ♔e3

We have reached one of the tabiya positions of the French Defense Steinitz variation.

7... cxd4

A) 7... a6 8. ♙d2 b5 is more common at the club level, with the idea of winning space on the queenside. Here I personally prefer 9. ♖d1 with the idea of c3 to further strengthen the strong center.

B) 7... ♔e7 8. ♙d2 0-0



Position after: 8... 0-0

This is also possible, with a common trap. Do you know what the best move here for White is?

B1) 9. 0-0-0? c4! Black's attack is quicker, for example: 10. f5 b5

(see analysis diagram next page)



Position after: 10... b5

11. ♖h6 [11. ♗xb5? ♜b8 12. ♗c3 ♜a5 13. g4 ♙a3!→; 11. ♗e2 b4→] 11... b4! 12. ♗b5 exf5→ Noe, C (2533) – Bauer, C (2624) Budva 2019.

B2) 9. dxc5! ♗xc5 10. 0-0-0 It's just a normal French position.

8. ♗xd4 ♙c5

8... ♜b6!? is a more forcing line. 9. ♜d2 ♜xb2 10. ♜b1 ♜a3 11. ♙b5 ♗xd4 12. ♙xd4 a6 13. ♙xd7+ ♙xd7 14. ♜b3 [14. ♜xb7 ♙b4] 14... ♜e7 15. ♜xb7± Aronian, L (2763) – Vallejo Pons, F (2693) Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden 2019.

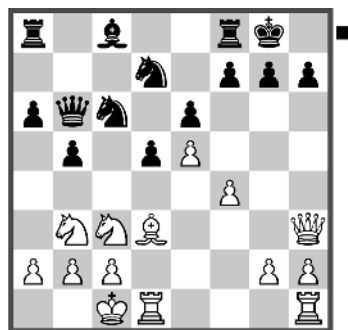
9. ♜d2 0-0 10. 0-0-0 a6 11. ♗b3

11. ♜f2!? is a more common move. 11... ♙xd4 12. ♙xd4 b5↖

11... ♙xe3 12. ♜xe3 b5 13. ♙d3 ♜b6 14. ♜h3!

White sets a trap for Black.

(see diagram next column)

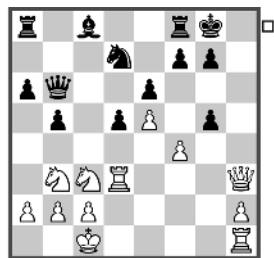


Position after: 14. ♜h3!

14. ♜xb6 ♗xb6 15. ♗e2 This was a more positional plan, with the idea of ♗bd4.

14... g6?

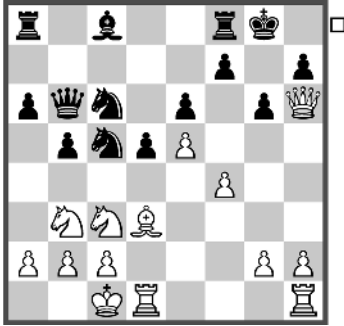
14... h6 was the better way to stop the mate. 15. g4 [15. ♙b1 ♗c5 16. ♜e3 ♗a4∞] 15... ♗b4! 16. g5 ♗xd3+ 17. ♜xd3 hxg5



Position after: 17... hxg5

18. ♜g3 [18. fxg5? ♗xe5 19. ♜g3 ♗g6±] 18... gxf4 19. ♜xg7+!? ♙xg7 20. ♜g4+ ♙h8 21. ♜h5+ ♙g7 22. ♜g5+ ♙h8 23. ♜h6+ ♙g8= From the b6-square the black queen controls the g1-square, so the white rook cannot join the attack.

15. ♖h6 ♘c5??



Position after: 15... ♘c5??

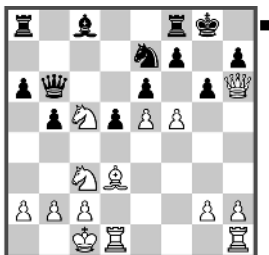
A typical but careless move! How can White break through?

15... f5 was the best defense. 16. ♔b1! A prophylactic move to avoid ... ♖e3 check. [16. h4? ♖e3+ 17. ♔b1 ♘dxе5! ♢] 16... ♜a7 17. h4↑ White has a very promising attack.

16. f5!

Black is defenseless.

16. f5! ♘e7 [16... gxf5 17. ♙xf5! exf5 18. ♘xd5+-; 16... exf5 17. ♘xd5 ♖d8 18. ♘f6+-] 17. ♘xc5



Position after: 17. ♘xc5

[17. f6? ♘xd3+ 18. ♜xd3 ♘f5 would keep Black alive] 17... ♖xc5 18. f6+-

1-0

Game 16

♗ Stefansson, Hannes (2573)
 ♜ Salomon, Johan (2319)
 ♁ Caleta 2015

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♙b4 4. ♘f3

A flexible move in the Nimzo-Indian Defense, which keeps the options open for White. He can play with ♙g5, e3, g3 or even ♖c2.

4... b6

A) 4... d5 would be a transposition to Carlsen's main weapon against 1.d4, the Ragozin Defense.

B) 4... c5!? has been the most common move in recent times.

5. ♙g5 ♙b7 6. ♘d2!?

Very fashionable in the 1990s. Kasparov played this system, with the idea of e4.

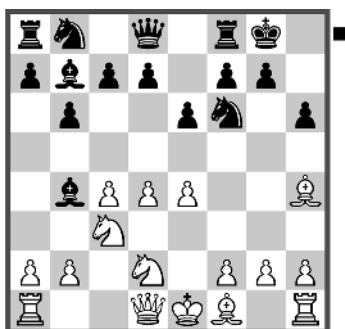
6... h6 7. ♙h4 0-0

[RR: 7...e5 is actually a strong move that places Black in the driver's seat. The idea is that after 8.dxe5 ♙xc3 9.bxc3 g5

10. ♖g3 ♘h5 followed by ... ♔e7, and Black regains the pawn with a better pawn structure.]

8. e4!?

White sacrifices a pawn for the initiative. Black has to take it, otherwise the white center will be too strong.



Position after: 8. e4!?

8. e3 d6 gives Black an easy game.

8... g5

An ugly move but this is the only active way to get rid of the annoying pin. Now, however, the g5-pawn gives White an obvious hook to attack.

9. ♖g3 ♖xe4

9... ♖xc3 10. bxc3 ♘xe4 11. ♘xe4 ♖xe4 12. h4! White gains strong attacking chances. 12... d6 13. hxg5 ♔xg5 [13... hxg5 14. ♖d3→] 14. ♖h5 ♔g6 15. ♖h4?! [15. ♖f4! was even stronger] 15... ♖f5 16. ♖f4 e5 17. ♖xh6 ♔g4?! [17... ♔g7 18. ♖e3∞]

18. ♔xg4+ ♖xg4 19. ♖g5± Carlsen, M (2862) – Xu, G (2126) chess.com INT 2014.

10. h4 ♖f5!

Not the most popular move, but I personally prefer it because the f6-knight will be more secure if the white queen moves to f3.

10... ♖g6 is more common. 11. hxg5 hxg5 12. ♔f3 ♘c6 13. ♖xc7± Jianu, V (2556) – Pop, A (2286) Olanesti 2016.

11. hxg5 hxg5 12. ♔f3

12. ♖e5?! had been played previously. 12... d6!

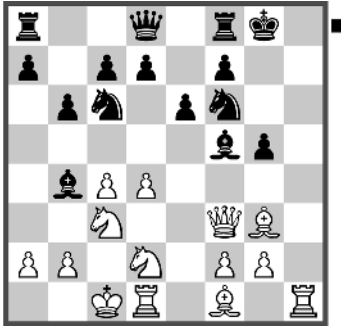


Position after: 12... d6!

[12... ♘c6 13. ♔f3!↔ Pecurica, M (2192) – Petrisor, A (2441) Paracin 2014] 13. ♖xf6 [13. ♔f3? dxg5 14. ♔xa8 exd4 15. ♘cb1 d3+; 13. ♖g3 ♘c6⌞] 13... ♔xf6 Black is doing great.

12... ♘c6 13. 0-0-0

(see diagram next page)

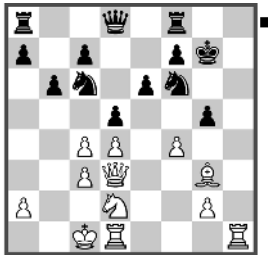


Position after: 13. 0-0-0

13... ♞h7?!

A solid defensive move, but a bit passive.

A) 13... d5? loses control of the e5-square. 14. ♙d3! ♙xc3 [14... ♞xd4? 15. ♚e3+–] 15. bxc3 ♙xd3 16. ♚xd3 ♙g7 17. f4!



Position after: 17. f4!

17... g4 18. f5!+– White's attack will be decisive.

B) 13... ♙g7?! 14. ♙d3 ♙xc3 [14... ♞xd4? 15. ♚e3 White makes a strong double attack. The knight is hanging on d4 and so is the important defensive pawn on g5.] 15. bxc3 ♙xd3 16. ♚xd3 ♙h8 17. ♞f3 White enjoys great

compensation. He has the easier game, while Black faces a pretty tough job trying to defend this position.

C) 13... ♚e7! looks very logical to me. This move connects the rooks and later the queen can join the game more easily.

14. ♙d3?!

14. ♞de4! would be smart in view of Black's last inaccuracy. The queen and the knight can be very strong together in the attack. They complement each other perfectly. 14... ♙xc3 [14... ♚e7 15. d5!±] 15. ♞xc3 ♞f6 16. ♙d3±

14... ♞xd4!

Black accepts the challenge.

15. ♚h5??

Stefansson miscalculates in a super-sharp position. In these kinds of positions a single mistake can decide the game.

15. ♚e3



Position after: 15. ♚e3

was the only move.

A) 15... ♖xc3 16. bxc3 ♘c6 17. ♙xf5
exf5 18. ♙xc7! ♚f6 [18... ♚xc7?? 19.
♚h3!+–] 19. ♚h3 ♚g6=

B) 15... ♙c5 16. ♙xf5



Position after: 16. ♙xf5

16... ♘xf5 [16... ♘b3+?? 17. axb3
♙xe3 18. ♙xh7+ ♚g7 19. fxe3+–
White has four minor pieces for the
queen! A quite unique position; 16...
exf5? 17. ♘d5+–] 17. ♚d3 f6 18.
♘de4= White has some compensa-
tion for the two pawns but I still like
Black. I believe he can defend success-
fully and gain the advantage. Now
18... ♚f7! keeps the seventh rank se-
cure.

15... ♙xd3 16. ♘de4

This was White's idea. It seems the d3-
bishop can't save the h7-knight. Can you
solve this problem?

(see diagram next page)



Position after: 16. ♘de4

16... ♘e2+!

All other moves are losing. Black de-
flects the knight from c3.

17. ♘xe2

17. ♚d2 ♙xe4+– White can't recapture
because of the pin.

17... ♙xe4+–

White resigned. The bishop successfully
defends the h7-knight, so White has no
hope of finishing his plan. Black has two
extra pawns and the bishop pair.

0-1

Game 17

♙ Bachmann, Axel (2645)
♚ Pragganandhaa, Ramesh. (2442)
♜ Douglas 2016

1. d4 ♘f6 2. ♖f4

This move is pretty popular nowadays. There is less theory than in 2.c4, that's for sure.

2... g6

2... d5 was the move in the first game of this book.

3. ♘c3!?

A modern version of the London System in the style of the Jobava-Rappoport system. The main drawback of this move is that the knight blocks the c2-pawn. White breaks the rule set by Philidor, who said the pieces belong behind the pawns.

3... d5

Black stops White from playing e4.

3... ♖g7 4. e4 d6 would be very similar to a normal Pirc, but with the bishop on the unusual f4-square. I think this is better for Black but still the position is very complex. 5. ♔d2 ♘c6! 6. 0-0-0 0-0 ♞ A sharp, tense position has arisen after only six moves.

4. ♔d2

White prepares to castle queenside and then play ♖h6 at the right moment.

A) 4. e3 ♖g7 5. h4! This is the sharpest option for White, which had already been tested by Carlsen, Aronian and Karjakin at the highest level.

B) 4. ♘b5 ♘a6 5. e3 is a more positional option.

4... ♖g7 5. ♖h6 0-0



Position after: 5... 0-0

6. ♖xg7

6. f3 c5!? [6... ♖xh6!? 7. ♔xh6 c5 This is a clever but risky option. Black quickly creates counterplay in the center.] 7. ♖xg7 ♔xg7 8. e3 ♘c6 9. 0-0-0 This would transpose to the game.

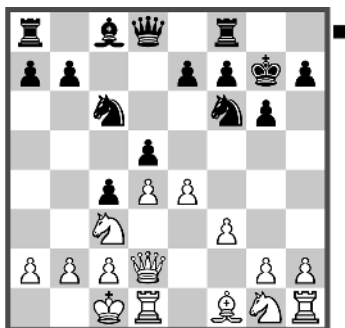
6... ♔xg7 7. 0-0-0 c5 8. e3 ♘c6 9. f3

9. dxc5 ♔a5 Black easily wins back the pawn and will later have great play along the c-file.

9... c4!?

Black closes the center to start a strong pawn storm on the queenside.

10. e4



Position after: 10. e4

10... b5!

According to the famous principle that in a position with castling on opposite wings, the speed of the attack is the crucial actor.

10... ♖b8?! 11. exd5 wins the c4-pawn.

11. exd5

11. ♘xb5 ♖b8 12. ♘c3 ♙a5 Black has great compensation for the pawn. His attack is quicker, thanks to his active pieces and the weak pawn on b2.

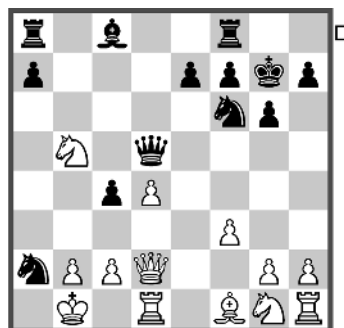
11... ♘b4

11... ♘xd5 12. ♘xb5 ♙a6 13. ♙xc4 ♙xb5 14. ♙xb5 ♙b6 15. ♙xc6 ♖ab8 16. b3 ♙xc6 Black will follow up with ...♖fc8 and ...a5-a4 to get great compensation for the two pawns.

12. ♘xb5

12. a3 This move weakens the protective pawn phalanx in front of the monarch. 12... ♘bxd5 13. ♘ge2 ♖b8↑ Next will come ...b4.

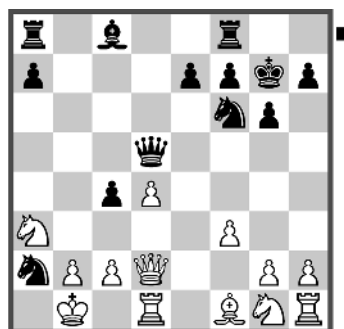
12... ♘xa2+ 13. ♙b1 ♙xd5!



Position after: 13... ♙xd5!

Perfect calculation. The queen not only joins the attack but also protects the a2-knight with a discovered-check motif and threatens to take on b5.

14. ♘a3



Position after: 14. ♘a3

A) 14. ♙xa2?? loses the queen: 14... c3+! 15. b3 cxd2+.

B) 14. ♘c7?! is a nice fork but White has no time to actually capture the prey. 14... ♖b7



Position after: 14... ♖b7

15. ♘xa8?? [15. ♙xc4 ♖b8 16. b3 ♖xc7 17. ♚xa2 a5→] 15... c3→

C) 14. ♘c3 ♘xc3+ 15. ♖xc3 ♙a6→ Simple attacking moves like ... ♖ab8, ... ♗b5, ... ♘d5 and possibly ...c3 at the right moment will wrap up the game for Black.

Now, how would you continue Black's attack?

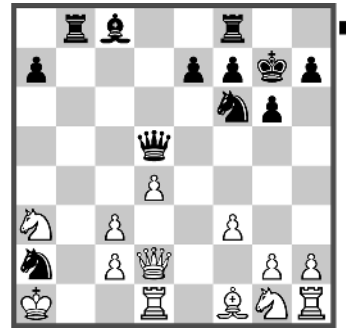
14... c3!

Black has managed to carry out his plan of eliminating the defender pawns. From now on, the pieces take center stage.

15. bxc3

15. ♖f4 ♘b4 16. ♙c4 ♖b7 17. ♖c1 cxb2 18. ♖xb2 ♖b8→ Black's attack is clearly quicker.

15... ♖b8+ 16. ♚a1



Position after: 16. ♚a1

Try to find the best way to attack the king on a1.

16... ♖a5!

Black aims for the typical mating net where the b8-rook cuts off the escape route from the king and the queen mates on the a-file.

17. ♚xa2 ♘d5!

Black has too many attackers. White is helpless.

18. ♘e2

A) 18. c4 ♘c3+ 19. ♖xc3 ♖xc3→




B) 18. ♙b5 ♘xc3+ 19. ♖xc3 ♖xc3→

18... ♙e6

A great game by the Indian chess prodigy.

0-1


Game 18






 Banusz, Tamas (2614)
 Mihok, Oliver (2508)
 Ajka 2020



1. d4  **2. Nf3** **c5** **3. d5** **b5**

Black tries to complicate the position by playing the ...b5 move, which is usually good in the Benoni structures.

4. c3!?

A modern approach which has been recently tried by Gelfand, Berkes, Demchenko and Sedlak. The move secures the a5-e1 diagonal from ...a5+ and prepares a4.

A) 4. c4 **e6** [4... b7!? is also a possibility] This would transpose to the Blumenfeld Counter-Gambit. Black sacrifices a pawn to get a strong center, for example: 5. **dxe6** [5. g5 is the move which I personally prefer as White] 5... **fxe6** 6. **ccb5** **d5** 7. **e3** d6 8. e2 **0-0** 9. **0-0** b7 with the plan of ...e5-e4 in the future.

B) 4. g5 is considered to be the main line. White develops actively and is ready to ruin Black's pawn structure with xf6.
















C) 4. e4 is also a very interesting try for White.

4... b6

A) 4... b7 5. **e4!**



















Position after: 5. e4!

5... xe4 6. xb5 a5 [6... **g6** 7. **0-0** g7 8. e1 d6 9. f1 **0-0** 10. g5± Bauer, C (2623) – Mathieu, P (2214) Biel 2020] 7. a3 f6 8. **d6** e4 9. f4 b6? 10. **dxe7** xe7 11. xb8!

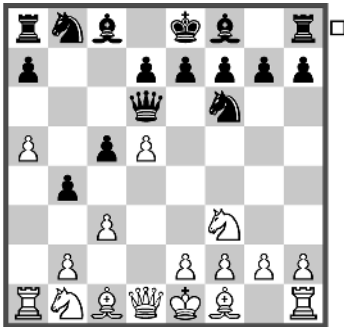


Position after: 11. xb8!

11... xb8 12. xd7+ f8 13. c4 d8 14. fe5+ Berkes, F (2648) – Esipenko, A (2492) Zurich 2017.

B) 4... **g6** 5. **e4** xe4 6. xb5 g7 7. **0-0** **0-0** 8. e1 f6 9. **c4** **d6** 10. c3 bd7 11. g5 b6 12. c6± Sedlak, N (2608) – Milanovic, D (2454) Valjevo 2018.

5. a4 **b4** 6. **a5** d6



Position after: 6... ♔d6

The beginning of a long queen journey. As we saw previously in the Dreev – Loiacono game, this is not generally advisable.

7. c4

7. cxb4 ♔xd5! [7... cxb4?! 8. ♔c2 ♕b7 9. e4±] 8. ♔xd5 ♖xd5 9. bxc5 ♗a6±

7... e6 8. ♗bd2

A) 8. dxe6?! saves the pawn but Black will be in the driver's seat. 8... ♔xd1+ 9. ♔xd1 dxe6±

B) 8. e4 would be a possible idea to speed up the development. 8... ♗xe4 9. ♕d3 exd5 10. cxd5



Position after: 10. cxd5

B1) 10... ♔xd5 11. ♔e2 f5 [11... ♕b7? 12. ♗g5 f5 13. f3±] 12. ♗bd2 White wins back a pawn on e4.

B2) 10... ♗f6! 11. 0-0 ♕e7 12. ♖e1 0-0 13. ♗e5!± White plans ♕f4 and active piece play. Black still has to waste a few tempi to find a reasonable spot for his queen.

8... exd5 9. cxd5 ♔xd5

9... ♗xd5 10. ♗c4 ♔c6 [10... ♔e6?? drops a piece: 11. ♗g5 ♔f5 12. e4+–] 11. e4 ♗c7 12. ♕d3 White is ahead in development.

10. e4!



Position after: 10. e4!

Winning time on the misplaced queen on d5.

10... ♔h5?

A) 10... ♗xe4?? would lose too much time. 11. ♕c4! ♔f5 [11... ♔b7 12. a6!

♔c6 13. ♖xf7+! ♔xf7 14. ♘e5+-] 12. 0-0



Position after: 12. 0-0

What a perfect illustration of the time vs. material debate. In this position time clearly has more value than material because if Black does not manage to castle in time he will lose a large amount of material. 12... ♘d6 [Black has no time for the natural 12... ♖e7 13. ♘xe4 ♔xe4 because 14. ♖d5+- wins the a8-rook] 13. ♖e1+ ♖e7 14. ♖e5 ♔g6 [14... ♔g4 15. ♖d5 ♘c6 16. h3 ♔g6 17. ♘e4+-] 15. ♖d5 ♘c6 16. ♘e4 ♘xe4 17. ♖xe4+- Black is in huge trouble.

B) 10... ♔e6! was the best try, hoping to win time with a possible ...d5 move. 11. ♖e2 [11. ♖c4?! d5!↑] 11... ♖a6 12. ♖xa6 ♘xa6



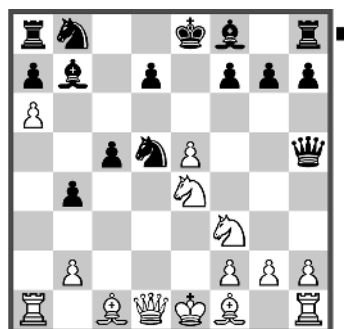
Position after: 12... ♘xa6

13. 0-0 A complicated fight where White has enough play for the pawn.

11. e5 ♘d5

11... ♘g4 12. ♘c4 ♖a6 13. ♔d5 ♘c6 14. ♖g5±

12. ♘e4 ♖b7 13. a6



Position after: 13. a6

Pawns are the soul of chess, Philidor said. The a-pawn definitely did its job well in disturbing Black's development. All White's moves are coming with gain of tempo.

13... ♖c6 14. ♘g3! ♔g4 15. h3 ♔e6 16. ♖c4+-

The first move of the f1-bishop creates a deadly pin and decides the game.

16... ♖e7 17. 0-0 d6

17... 0-0 18. ♔b3 d6 19. ♖d1+- White wins the knight on d5.

18. ♖e1

18. exd6!? was an easy win too. 18... ♙xd6 19. ♘f5 ♙f6 20. ♙d3



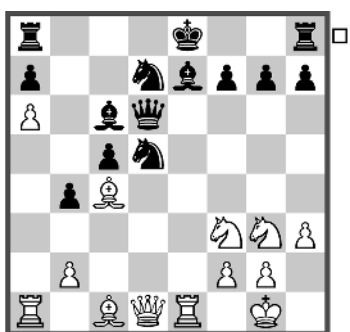
Position after: 20. ♙d3

20... 0-0 [20... ♘c7 21. ♙g5+-] 21. ♙xd5 ♖d8 22. ♘xe7+ ♙xe7 23. ♙g5+-

18... ♘d7

18... 0-0 loses a piece. 19. exd6 ♙xd6 20. ♘f5 ♙d7 21. ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 22. ♙xd7 ♘xd7 23. ♖xe7+-

19. exd6 ♙xd6



Position after: 19... ♙xd6

20. ♘f5

A very convincing victory by the Hungarian grandmaster. A great example of pawn sacrifices in 1.d4 openings.

1-0

Game 19

♙ Gordievsky, Dmitry (2603)
 ♚ Tahbaz, Arash (2484)
 🌐 Moscow 2019

1. ♘f3 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. g3 d5 4. b3

A super-solid move that protects the c4-pawn and frees the b2-square for the bishop.

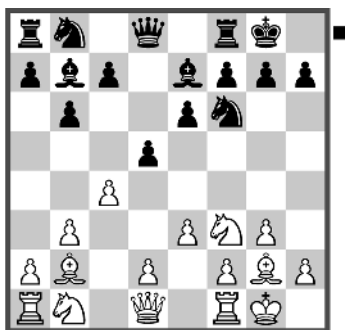
4. ♙g2 is the recommendation of the great book by GM Adrien Demuth, *The Modernized Reti*.

4... ♙e7 5. ♙g2 0-0 6. ♙b2 b6

6... c5!? has been the most popular move recently.

7. 0-0 ♙b7 8. e3

Usually it is not a good idea to play e3 and g3 at the same time because it might create weak light squares, but here Black is very far from being able to exploit that factor. The game continuation clears the e2-square for the queen.



Position after: 8. e3

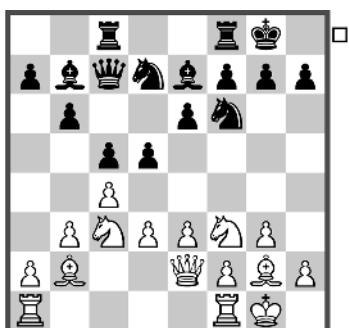
8... c5 9. ♖c3 ♜bd7

9... dxc4!? 10. bxc4 ♘c6 11. ♚e2 White has a small central edge.

10. ♚e2 ♖c8

10... ♚c7 11. ♘h4 dxc4 12. bxc4 ♘e8 13. f4 ♙xg2 14. ♘xg2 ♙f6 15. f5 ♚c6 16. fxe6 fxe6 17. ♘f4 ♘c7 18. d3 ♙xc3 19. ♙xc3 e5 20. ♘h3 ♘e6 21. ♚g2± Caruana, F (2802) – Anand, V (2791) Shamkir 2015.

11. d3 ♚c7



Position after: 11... ♚c7

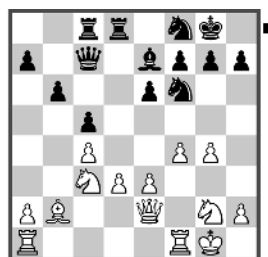
Both sides have completed their development, now it's time for a good plan. GM Gordievsky finds an aggressive one. What would you do?

12. ♘h4!

White opens the path for the f-pawn and is ready to gain space on the king-side.

12... dxc4 13. bxc4 ♙xg2

13... ♖fd8 14. f4 ♙xg2 15. ♘xg2 ♘f8 16. g4



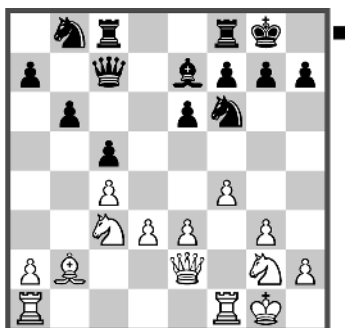
Position after: 16. g4

[16. e4!?!±] 16... ♘e8 17. g5 g6?! Black weakens the long dark diagonal. [♞17... ♘d6] 18. ♘e4 ♘d7 19. h4± Mamedov, R (2641) – Foisor, S (2212) Las Vegas 2015.

14. ♘xg2 ♘b8

Black improves the placement of his knight. The plan is ...♘b8-c6-b4 or e5.

15. f4



Position after: 15. f4

15... ♖cd8

15... ♘c6 16. g4 ♘d7 17. f5 ♙f6 18. ♘f4 ♖ce8 19. ♘b5 ♙b8 20. ♙xf6 ♘xf6 21. g5 ♘d7 22. f6



Position after: 22. f6

A) 22... g6 23. ♙g2 ♘ce5!∞ [23... ♘de5 24. ♙h3 ♙h8 25. d4!±]

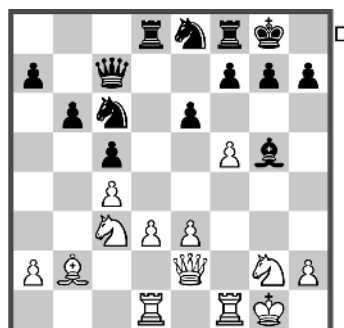
B) 22... gxf6? 23. ♙g2! ♘ce5 24. gxf6+ ♘g6 25. h4 ♘xf6 26. h5± White wins a piece, Margvelashvili, G (2530) – Li, R (2564) chess.com INT 2017.

16. g4!? ♘c6 17. ♖ad1 ♘e8 18. f5 ♙f6 19. g5

White continues his aggressive play.

19. ♘e4 ♙xb2 20. ♙xb2 ♘d6 With every exchange Black makes White's attack weaker.

19... ♙xg5



Position after: 19... ♙xg5

20. fxe6

20. ♘e4!? ♙f6 [20... ♙h6?! 21. f6! e5 22. ♙h5 White has a strong attack] 21. ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 22. ♙xf6 gxf6 23. ♘f4 I would certainly prefer White here.

20... fxe6 21. ♖xf8+ ♙xf8 22. ♙g4

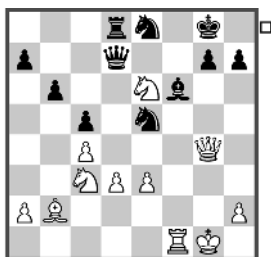


Position after: 22. ♙g4

22... ♙e7??

Black makes a mistake in a sharp position. He did not calculate well under pressure.

A) 22... ♖f6 was a solid option, to block the f-file. 23. ♘f4 ♙d7 24. ♘xe6+ ♔g8 25. ♚f1 ♘e5



Position after: 25... ♘e5

26. ♙h3 [26. ♙f5?? ♘d6 27. ♙h3 ♚e8! suddenly Black is winning] 26... ♘c7 27. ♚xf6!? gxf6 28. ♙g3+ ♔h8 29. ♘xd8 ♙xd3! [29... ♙xd8? 30. ♘e4±] 30. ♘b7 ♘xc4∞ A super-sharp position.

B) 22... ♘e5 23. ♙xe6 [23. ♙xg5?? ♘f3+ wins the queen] 23... ♖f6 24. ♘f4 ♙f7 25. ♙f5 ♔g8= Normality returns to the board.

23. ♙f3+!

White wins a piece on c6.

23. ♙f3+ ♔g8 24. ♙xc6+–

1-0

Game 20

♖ Iturrizaga, Eduardo (2625)
♜ Flom, Gabriel (2494)
🌐 Biel 2019

1. c4 g6 2. d4 ♖g7 3. e4 c5

3... d6 4. ♘c3 ♘f6 would transpose to the King's Indian Defense.

4. ♘f3

4. d5!? is the standard move in such situations, leading to a delayed Benoni structure.

4... ♘c6

I consider this move a bit risky. Black wanted to avoid the classical Maroczy structure, which is considered to give a small plus to White and in my opinion is easy to play.

4... cxd4 5. ♘xd4 ♘c6 6. ♖e3 ♘f6 7. ♘c3



Position after: 7. ♘c3

7... d6 [7... ♘g4 was the pet line of the famous Danish Grandmaster, Bent Larsen 8. ♖xg4 ♗xd4 9. ♖d1±] 8. ♙e2 0-0 9. 0-0±

5. dxc5!

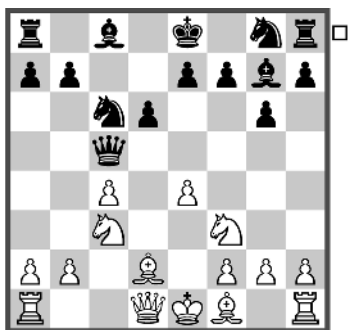


Position after: 5. dxc5!

White knows the best line and he is ready to play an open position.

5. d5 ♗d4 Now Black can play ...d6 and ...♙g4.

5... ♖a5+ 6. ♙d2 ♖xc5 7. ♗c3 d6?



Position after: 7... d6?

A typical move but not perfectly timed.

7... ♗f6 is better because it keeps an eye on the central squares. 8. ♙e2 0-0 9. 0-0 e6 10. ♖c1 b6 11. ♙f4 ♗e8 12. a3 ♖e7 13. e5± Neiksans, A (2566) – Chirila, I (2561) Saint Louis 2019.

8. ♗d5!

White recognizes the weakness of the c7-square and immediately goes for it. Black's main problem is the queen misplaced on c5.

8... ♗d4

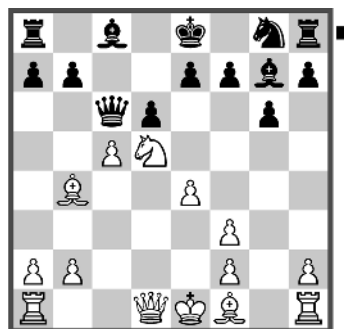
A) 8... ♙xb2? 9. ♖b1+–

B) 8... ♗d8?! 9. ♙b4! ♖c6 10. c5!+– White wins more time with the ♙b5 threat.

9. ♙b4 ♗xf3+ 10. gxf3

Nothing was wrong with 10. ♖xf3: 10... ♖c6 11. c5!+–.

10... ♖c6 11. c5



Position after: 11. c5

11... ♖e6?

Black falls into the main trap. It was a really bad day for GM Flom.

11... ♖d7 was objectively the best attempt but White can simply win a pawn with 12. ♖b5 ♜c8 13. ♖xd7+ ♜xd7 14. cxd6+–.

12. ♖b5!+–

The rest is just a matter of technique. Funnily, I found another grandmaster game with the same exact position.

12... ♖xd5

12... ♜xb5 13. ♘c7+ White gives a nice family fork.

13. ♖xc6+ ♖xc6 14. cxd6 ♖xb2

14... ♜d8 15. ♜b3 exd6 16. 0-0-0 ♖e5 17. ♜e3 a5 18. f4 axb4 19. fxe5 ♜c8 20. exd6 ♘f6 21. ♜d4 ♖xe4+ 22. ♙d2 1-0 Heberla, B (2553) – Jakubowski, K (2531) Bialystok 2016.

15. ♜b1 ♖e5 16. dxe7

White has a queen and a pawn against two minor pieces. That is an overwhelming advantage.

(see diagram next column)



Position after: 16. dxe7

16... g5 17. ♜c1 ♘xe7 18. ♖xe7 ♙xe7 19. ♜xg5+ f6 20. ♜g7+ ♙e6 21. ♜xb7

21. f4 was the quickest way to win. 21... ♖xf4 22. ♜g4+ ♙e5 23. ♜f5+–

21... ♖xb7 22. ♜xb7

1-0

Game 21

♙	Solak, Dragan	(2593)
♜	Bajarani, Ulvi	(2485)
♁	Konya 2019	

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♘d2

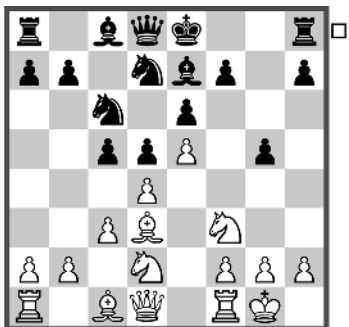
3. ♘c3 In my opinion this is the best way to play as White. To those who are interested I would recommend GM Pentala Harikrisna's book *Beat the French Defense with 3. ♘c3*.

3... ♖e7

A) 3... ♖f6 leads to more closed positions.

B) 3... c5 is the most active move in the position.

4. ♖gf3 ♖f6 5. e5 ♖fd7 6. ♔d3 c5 7. c3 ♖c6 8. 0-0 g5!?



Position after: 8... g5!?

The most ambitious move for Black, in the spirit of our book. Bajarani follows the main principle and attacks on the wing only when the center is closed. 8...g5 is a relatively new move, first played by Grandmaster Hans Ree in 1984.

9. ♖b1

White clears the c1-h6 diagonal for the c1-bishop.

A) 9. h3?! would only help Black's attack. For example: 9... h5 10. dxc5 g4 11. ♖d4 ♖cxe5 12. ♖2b3 gxh3 13. gxh3 ♖xc5 14. ♖xc5 ♔xc5

(see analysis diagram next column)



Position after: 14... ♔xc5

15. ♔e3? [15. ♖f3 ♖f6 16. ♖xe5 ♖xe5+] 15... ♖h4 16. ♖f3 ♖g8+ 17. ♔h2 ♖g4+ 0-1 Kreyssig, B (1899) – Edouard, R (2659) Wroclaw 2014.

B) 9. dxc5! is the best for White. Against a wing attack we should strike in the center. 9... g4 10. ♖d4



Position after: 10. ♖d4

10... ♖dxe5 [10... ♖cxe5 11. ♖2b3 ♖xc5 12. ♔c2 h5 13. ♖e2 ♖c6 14. ♔f4 ♖xb3 15. ♖xc6 bxc6 16. axb3± Safarli, E (2691) – Fodor, T (2494) London 2016] 11. ♔b5 ♔d7 12. ♖2b3 h5 13. ♖e1 ♖g6 14. c4 dxc4 15. ♔xc4 ♖ce5 16. ♔e2 ♔c6 17. ♖xc6 ♖xd1 18. ♖xd1 ♖xc6 19. ♔e3± Navara, D (2738) – Shachar, E (2391) Caleta 2019.

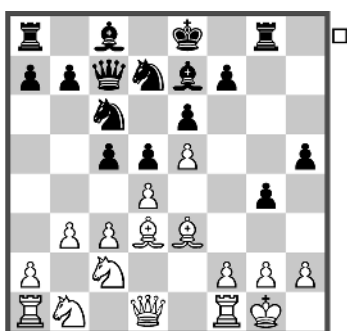
9... g4 10. ♖e1 h5 11. ♔e3

11. ♘c2!? is the other main move.

11... ♕b6

Black tries to weaken White's pawn structure, but I think the queen is misplaced on b6.

12. b3 ♖g8 13. ♘c2 ♕c7

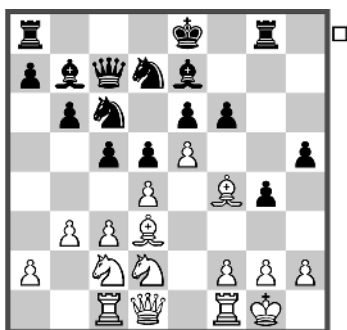


Position after: 13... ♕c7

14. ♘d2

14. f4!? was a strong option, to support the central pawns and prepare an f4-f5 breakthrough in the future.

14... b6 15. ♖c1 ♗b7 16. ♗f4 f6?!



Position after: 16... f6?!

A risky attempt to open up the center with the king still on e8.

A more reliable plan was 16... 0-0-0 17. ♕e2 ♔b8. Black intends to play ... ♘f8-g6.

17. exf6 ♕xf4 18. fxg7 ♔xe7

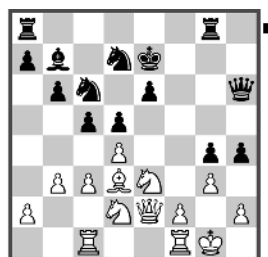
18... ♕g5 is a possible attempt to avoid the king move, but it would make the queen passive. 19. ♕e2 ♕xe7 20. ♖fe1↑ White has the easier game.

19. g3

19. ♕e2 prepares ♖ce1 with direct pressure on the e6 pawn.

19... ♕f6

19... ♕h6!? was a better move, with the idea of ...h4 at the correct moment. 20. ♕e2 h4 21. ♘e3



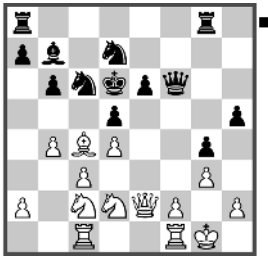
Position after: 21. ♘e3

21... ♖af8! [21... ♔d6 22. dxc5+ bxc5 23. ♘g2 hxg3 24. fxg3∞] 22. ♘xd5+ [22. ♗f5 ♘ce5! Black begins a nice attack] 22... ♔d8 23. ♕e3! [23. ♘f4? e5!

24. dxe5 ♘xc5→] 23... ♖xe3 24. ♗xe3 cxd4 25. cxd4 ♗xd4=

20. ♖e2 ♔d6 21. ♙b5

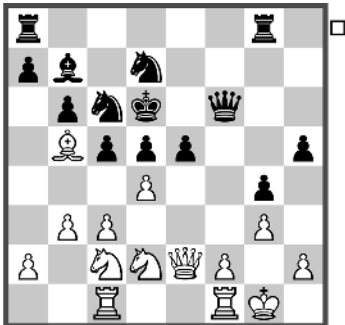
21. b4!? was a tempting candidate move because Black could not push ...c4 and keep the center closed, which would be ideal for him if it were possible. 21... ♔c7 [21... c4? 22. ♙xc4!



Position after: 22. ♙xc4!

22... dxc4?? 23. ♗e4++-] 22. bxc5 bxc5
23. ♙b5↑

21... e5?



Position after: 21... e5?

Over-ambitious play, which succeeds only in helping White's attack. How should White proceed now?

21... a6 22. dxc5+ bxc5 23. ♙xc6 ♙xc6
24. b4± White wants to control the d4-square.

22. dxc5+!

White takes the right pawn.

22. dxe5+? ♗xc5 Black is still in the game. His plan is ...♖ae8, ...♔c7 and ...♔b8. If White is not careful enough he can be even worse at the end of the day. Also, I dislike the capture on e5 because it brings the black knight closer to the weak f3-square.

22... ♗xc5

22... bxc5 23. c4+- White wins the fight for the e4-square.

23. ♗e3 a5

23... ♗e7 24. c4 d4 25. b4 ♗d7
[25... dxe3 26. bxc5+ ♔c7 27. fx3+-]
26. ♗d5+-

24. ♖fd1+-



Position after: 24. ♖fd1+-

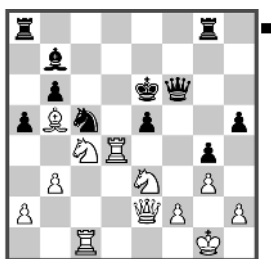
The entrance of the rook decides the game. The black king is just too weak. White is threatening to play ♞xd5 in order to open the d-file.

24... d4

24... ♞ad8 is too slow. 25. ♞xd5 ♞xd5
26. ♞e4++ –

25. ♞dc4+ ♞e6 26. cxd4

26. cxd4 ♞xd4 27. ♞xd4!



Position after: 27. ♞xd4!

27... exd4 28. ♞xg4++ – White wins the queen.

1-0

Game 22

♁ Alekseev, Evgeny (2635)
 ♂ Gleizerov, Evgeny (2493)
 ♁ Yekaterinburg 2019

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. ♞d3

A sideline against the French Defense which can confuse Black if he is not well prepared. I played 3. ♞d3 in my latest French game as White and won quite quickly.

3... c5

The most active option.

A) 3... ♞f6 is not so precise here since White will get a better version of the Tarrasch variation (3. ♞d2). 4. e5 ♞fd7
5. f4 c5 6. c3 ♞c6 7. ♞f3±

B) 3... dxe4 4. ♞xe4 ♞f6 5. ♞f3 leads to a French Rubinstein type of position.

4. exd5 exd5

4... ♞xd5 seems like a good double attack because it hits both the d4- and g2-pawns, but White has a great antidote. 5. ♞c3!



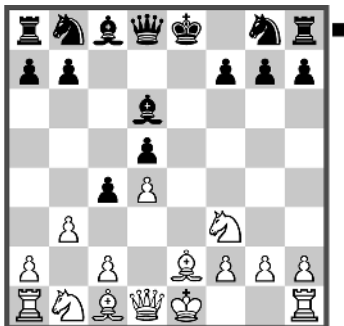
Position after: 5. ♞c3!

5... ♞xd4 [5... ♞xg2?? 6. ♞e4+ – traps the queen] 6. ♞b5 ♞d8 7. ♞f4 ♞a6 8. ♞f3 White has great compensation for the pawn. He has a development advantage and much more active pieces.

5. ♖f3 c4

5... ♖c6 6. 0-0 cxd4 7. ♙b5 ♖ge7? [7... ♙d6 8. ♖xd4 ♖ge7 that would be more accurate] 8. ♖xd4 ♙d7 9. ♜e1±
Juhasz A – Eros, Kalocsa 2020.

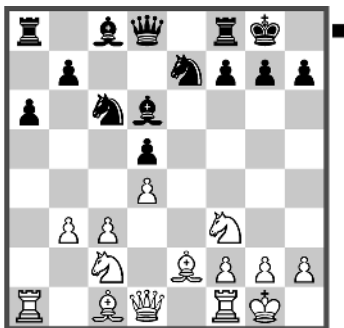
6. ♙e2 ♙d6 7. b3!



Position after: 7. b3!

A typical move to get rid of the space-grabbing c4-pawn.

7... cxb3 8. axb3 ♖e7 9. 0-0 ♖bc6 10. ♖a3 0-0 11. c3 a6 12. ♖c2



Position after: 12. ♖c2

In my opinion White stands a little better because of his stronger pawn structure.

12... ♜b8 13. ♖e3 b5 14. ♙d3



Position after: 14. ♙d3

14... h6

14... ♜e8?! would leave the f7-pawn unprotected. 15. ♖g5!



Position after: 15. ♖g5!

15... g6 [15... h6?? 16. ♙h7+! ♔f8 17. ♖xf7! ♔xf7 18. ♜f3+ ♔e6 19. ♙f5+ ♔f7 20. ♙xc8+ ♔g8 21. ♙e6+-] 16. ♖g4 ♙xg4 17. ♜xg4± White has great attacking options.

15. ♙c2!

When Black plays ...h6, this move becomes even stronger since after ♖d3 White can provoke additional weakening moves around Black's king.

15... a5 16. ♖d3 f5

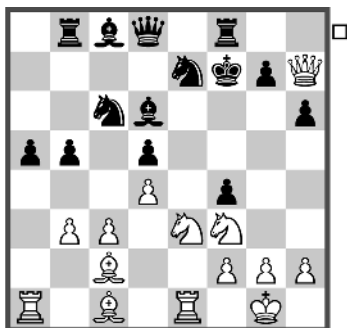
16... g6 17. ♖e1±

17. ♖e1 f4??

That is much too risky, as it weakens the b1-h7 diagonal.

17... ♖f6 looks safer, with the idea of ...♖e6. The rook would be more effective on e6 because from there it can control the only open file.

18. ♖h7+ ♔f7



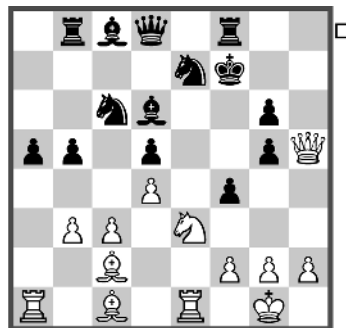
Position after: 18... ♔f7

19. ♘g5+!

The Russian Grandmaster finds the correct way to open up the position.

19. ♘f5!? would also come into consideration, but after 19... ♘xf5 20. ♙xf5 ♖f6 I can't see any way to mate the black king.

19... hxg5 20. ♖h5+ g6



Position after: 20... g6

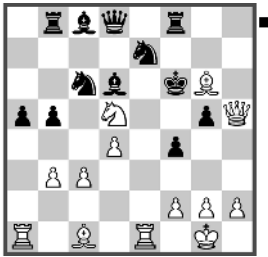
20... ♔g8?? falls into a typical mating net: 21. ♙h7+ ♔h8 22. ♙g6+ ♔g8 23. ♖h7#.

21. ♖h7+??

White misses the winning tactic. Of course the game move was very tempting, but Black can be close to winning if he plays correctly.

21. ♙xg6+! was the only winning move. 21... ♔f6 [21... ♘xg6 22. ♖h7+ ♔e8 23. ♖xg6+ ♔d7 24. ♘xd5+–] 22. ♘xd5+!! I think this is the move that Alekseev did not consider.

(see analysis diagram next page)



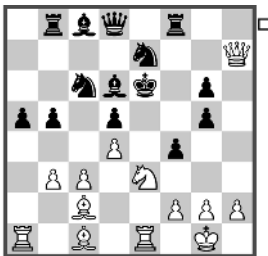
Position after: 22. ♖xd5+!!

22... ♜xd5 23. ♙e8! White creates a winning mating net on the light squares. 23... ♚g7 [23... ♜xe8 24. ♜xe8 ♙c7 25. ♜g8+–] 24. ♙g6+ ♚h8 25. ♙h6+ ♚g8 26. ♙xc6+– White has two pawns for the knight and huge attacking potential.

21... ♚e8??

Black in turn makes a mistake.

21... ♚e6!



Position after: 21... ♚e6!

That is hardly a normal move – stepping into the line of a discovered check – but it was the only correct move and could have enabled Black to completely turn the tables.. 22. ♜xd5+ [22. ♜f5+ ♚d7 23. ♜xd6 ♚xd6+–] 22... ♚xd5 23. ♙b2

♙f5+– I don't see how White can mate the king on d5.

22. ♙xg6+

22. ♜xd5 also wins. For example: 22... ♙f5 23. ♙xf5 gxf5 24. ♙g6+ ♚d7 25. ♙e6+ ♚e8 and now 26. h4!



Position after: 26. h4!

undermines the black pawn structure and tries to win the struggle for the f4-square. 26... gxf4 27. ♙xf4 ♙xf4 28. ♙xc6+ ♚f7 29. ♙f6+ ♚g8 30. ♜xe7+–

22... ♚d7

22... ♜xg6 23. ♙xg6+ ♚d7 24. ♜xd5 ♜e7 25. ♙e6+ ♚c6 [25... ♚e8 26. ♜f6+ ♜xf6 27. ♙xf6+–] 26. ♜xe7+ ♙xe7 27. ♙xe7 ♙xe7 28. ♜xe7+– White has two extra pawns.

23. ♜xd5!

White grabs the second pawn for the piece and opens the path for the e1 rook.



Position after: 23. ♞xd5!

23... ♞a7 24. ♖xa5!

The rook collects the third pawn for the knight and tries to deflect the overloaded queen from d8.

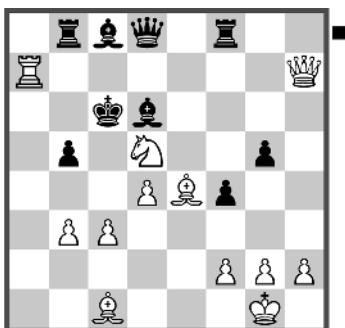
24... ♚xa5

24... ♞ac6 25. ♚h3+ White mates in three moves.

25. ♖xe7+ ♚c6

25... ♙xe7 26. ♚xe7+ ♚c6 27. ♙e4+

26. ♖xa7+ ♚d8 27. ♙e4



Position after: 27. ♙e4

The mate is unavoidable.

27... ♖h8 28. ♚g7

1-0

Game 23

♙ Nagy, Gabor (2511)
 ♚ Czebe, Attila (2385)
 ♁ Budapest 2021

1. d4 d6!?

A tricky move order, which we have already discussed in the first chapter.

2. ♞f3 g6

Black plays in the style of the Modern Defense.

2... ♙g4!?

is an interesting option. White has several choices here but I think the most aggressive one is the most precise. 3. e4 ♞f6 4. ♞c3 e6 5. h3 ♙h5 6. ♚e2 c6 7. g4 ♙g6 8. h4



Position after: 8. h4

White launches a dangerous attack. For example: 8... h5 9. g5 ♖fd7 10. ♔h3↑ Rapport, R (2720) – Danielsen, H (2488) Reykjavik 2016.

3. e4 ♘f6 4. ♘c3 ♔g7

The game has transposed into the Pirc Defense.

5. ♔e2 0-0 6. 0-0

White goes for one of the most positional lines. I like to call this setup the Karpov variation because the 12th World Champion played it with great success.

6... a6

A) 6... ♘c6 is Nakamura's favorite line, provoking d4-d5. 7. d5 ♖b8 Black will continue with ...c6.

B) 6... c6 is the most common idea.

7. ♖e1

7. a4 is a common move, but it weakens the b4-square. Since Black's ...b5 is not a real threat (as we will see in the game soon) it's better for White to develop than to waste time on the pawn move.

7... b5?!

(see diagram next column)



Position after: 7... b5?!

A common opening mistake at the club level. But from a grandmaster? Pretty surprising. Maybe the move order tricks in the beginning of the game confused the experienced Hungarian GM.

7... ♘c6 is the best move, which has been played by Carlsen a few times. 8. d5 ♖a7 9. a4±

8. e5!

The correct punishment for Black. By advancing the b-pawn Black weakened the h1-a8 diagonal.

8... ♘e8

8... dxe5 9. ♘xe5 With ♔f3 coming next, this is really unpleasant for Black.

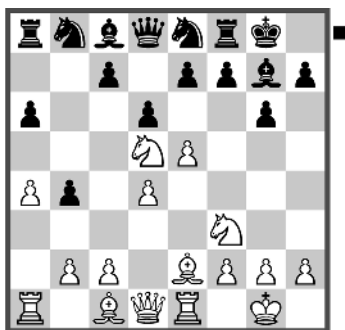
9. a4

White cleverly provokes Black to advance his pawns even more. Remember, pawns don't go backwards!

9... b4

9... bxa4 10. ♖xa4 White enjoys an easy game. The a6-pawn is a long-term weakness and the white pieces are more active. Next, I would place my bishop on g5.

10. ♖d5



Position after: 10. ♖d5

10... a5??

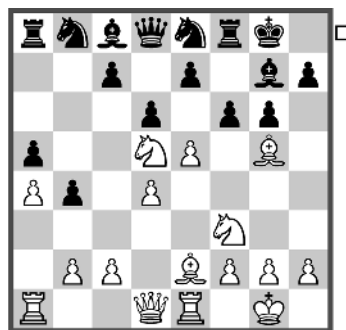
Again a non-developing move, which turns out to be a losing decision.

10... ♖c6 was the only playable option.
11. a5!? [11. ♙c4!?↑] 11... ♜b8 12. ♙c4 ♚h8 13. h3 ♞xa5?! [13... dxe5 14. dxe5±] 14. ♞xe7 ♚xe7 15. ♜xa5
White's advantage is clear, Rapport, J (2362) – Atalik, E (2458) Vandoeuvres-Nancy 2019.

11. ♙g5!

The last minor piece finds a perfect square to attack from.

11... f6



Position after: 11... f6

Can you find White's winning line?

11... ♞c6? is already too late. 12. ♙b5 ♙d7 13. ♙xc6 ♙xc6 14. ♞xe7+ ♚h8 15. ♞xc6+—

12. ♞xe7+!

White goes for a temporary knight sacrifice. The best decision, requiring precise calculation.

12. exf6 exf6 13. ♙f4 This line gives White a clear positional edge, but the game continuation is more forcing.

12... ♚xe7

12... ♚h8 13. exf6 ♞xf6 14. ♙b5+—
White has an extra pawn and a superior position.

13. ♙c4+

13. exf6 with the idea of ♙c4+ wins in similar fashion to the game.

13... ♚h8 14. exf6+—



Position after: 14. exf6+-

14... ♔d7 is the only move to save the queen, but it loses precious time. 15. fxg7+ ♘xg7 16. ♖e7 ♚c6 17. ♙h6+-

15. ♚xe1 ♘xf6 16. ♚d2

16. ♚e7!? ♘bd7 17. ♙b5+-

16... ♙g4 17. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 18. ♘g5 ♘d7 19. h3 ♙f5 20. ♘f7+

The game is over. White wins decisive material.

14... ♚xe1+

Black will lose even more material so he resigned. A flawless victory.

1-0