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Introduction

Hello and welcome to *My First Opening Repertoire*.

What do you need to master the opening phase of the game successfully?

It all depends on your playing level and your experience. If you have only recently started playing chess or are looking for a compact start in the world of openings, this book is for you. It covers a repertoire for both colours, focusing on the most essential information. After studying the book, you will know how to open the game with White, playing the most popular move 1.e4. This book provides you with all you need to know to put pressure on your opponents. With Black, we need to be ready for the opposite scenario. We must anticipate what White may throw at us and prepare reliable and active counterpunches. We will study how to confidently battle 1.e4, 1.d4 and other first moves.

Let's discuss the structure of this book and how to use it. We start with a chapter about general opening principles. We want to play according to these concepts, as they apply in almost all cases. Always have these principles in mind – it pays off! If you encounter moves that you have never seen or look wrong to you, thinking about general principles helps.

The next step is to build a core repertoire, the basic moves for all the main openings. We apply the principles of opening play and see how they work against our opponents' various responses.

Let's have a look at how our repertoire is structured.

Part I: Repertoire for White

Section A: 1.e4 e5 Open Games – 6 Chapters

Section B: 1.e4 c5 Sicilian Defence – 5 Chapters

Section C: 1.e4 e6 (French) and **1.e4 c6** (Caro-Kann) – 2 Chapters

Section D: 1.e4: other first moves for Black – 3 Chapters

Part II: Repertoire for Black

Section E: 1.e4 c5 Sicilian Defence – 12 chapters

Section F: 1.d4 d5 Closed Games and other first moves – 5 chapters

For both sides, the emphasis is on moves you will usually face at the beginner and post-beginner levels. Therefore, we have the most detailed coverage of 1.e4 e5 for White (occurs approximately 50% of the time) and 1.e4 c5 for Black (occurs approximately 70% of the time). All lines are annotated with detailed explanations of plans and ideas. In addition, you may study the **Model Games** in **Part III**, which expand on the strategic concepts even more.

Please note that we have a reasonably substantial chapter count, but each chapter is focused on the main points and can be studied quickly. Each chapter consists of 1-4 variations. These variations are the most important to learn because they occur often or present a key concept you should know.

You will often encounter additional variations in the text, illustrating concepts and covering how they might continue after the main line ends. These lines can be studied on your first tour through the book but are not essential to get you started. You can focus on the main line first and, step-by-step, look through additional lines integrated into the text. Studying these lines is beneficial and recommended, but they can be studied later to deepen your knowledge.

After studying the core repertoire, you will confidently approach your games with potent weapons for both White and Black. After each game you play, you should analyse it to learn and to improve your game. One part should be to compare each game to your repertoire. Do you remember what you have prepared? Or did your opponent play something that was not covered? Did you employ the opening principles correctly? Working on and answering these questions will help you improve your opening play and make you a better player overall.

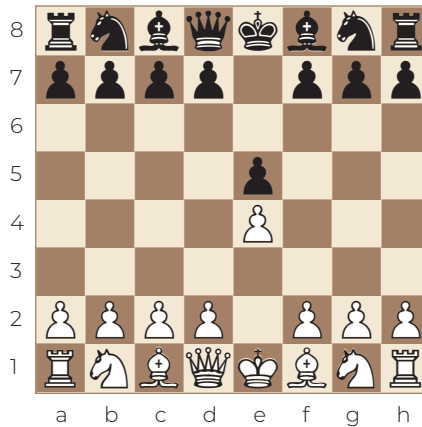
This book is based on the Chessbase course of the same name. We have made the necessary adaptations to make it fit better into this book format, and have also done a few updates on the course.

Alright, let's get to work and build your First Opening Repertoire!

SECTION A

Open Games

1.e4 e5



The symmetrical reply 1.e4 e5 is Black's most popular move. We played 1.e4 for a good reason, and Black argues that the same reasoning applies to the second player. Having a well-thought-out plan against 1...e5 is crucial because you will frequently face this move.

Let's discuss some possible concepts that White may go for. We have already studied the general opening principles in the previous section. How do we realize the opening objectives, like rapid development and control of the centre? White has a wide variety of options, but most of them boil down to a few key decisions.

A) Can we manage to build a full pawn centre? White would love to move the d-pawn to d4 and support it with the move c2-c3, aiming to keep a pawn on d4 after Black captures on d4.

B) White may play d2-d4 without a c3-pawn supporting the centre. If Black takes on d4, White recaptures with a knight.

C) White can play more modestly, not trying to play the pawn to d4 at all.

Let's compare and discuss these options. Plan **A** is difficult to realize in the early stage of the game. Lines like 1.e4 e5 2.c3?! d5! or 2...♘f6 are uninspiring, as Black has quick counterplay against e4. White has more sophisticated ways to play c3 and d4 later, though. This

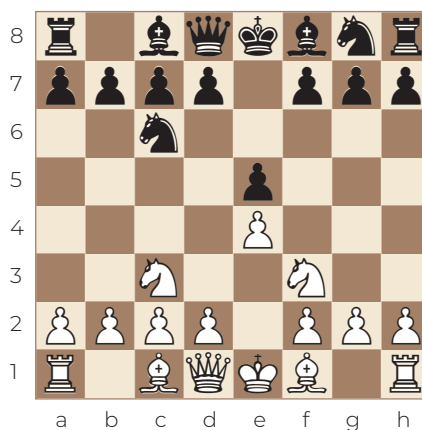
is a key idea in the Spanish Game/Ruy Lopez 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5, for example. The Ruy is a great opening, but there are better ones to start with, as the play often develops quietly and is based on complex strategic considerations. The same applies to plan **C**.

I suggest Approach **B** for our repertoire: opening the centre quickly with d2-d4. I suggest developing our king's knight first and then going for the d-pawn push. A sample sequence of moves is 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4, which is the subject of two subsequent chapters.

There are some strong arguments in favour of this concept. Here's an overview:

- We develop our pieces to natural, active squares. Our knights will be developed quickly, and we don't need to worry about our bishops. After the quick d2-d4, our c1-bishop will be ready to join in the game.
- It is a simple-to-learn concept that can be applied in almost all cases.
- We open the position quickly, which leads to games emphasizing tactics and attacks. This is the type of game where you want to improve your abilities and challenge yourself.
- Black might have done some opening study, but it was likely focused on other variations. Our opening concepts might be a surprise for them.

Let's talk about the chapter structure now. After 1.e4 e5 I suggest starting with **2.♘f3**, when **2...♘c6 3.♘c3**



3...♘f6 4.d4 is the line we aim for. We need to examine what happens in this main line and study earlier ways for Black to deviate.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 (Chapter 1) is Philidor's Defence, a passive alternative for Black. We fight it with a quick d2-d4, according to our general concept.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 (Chapter 2) is the Petroff Defence. We play 3.♘c3, which will often be answered with 3...♘c6, transposing after 4.d4 to Chapters 5 or 6.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♗c5 (Chapter 3) may look natural for Black, but we have the shocking reply 4.♗xe5!, which leads to favourable and fun complications.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 d6 and **3...♗b4 (Chapter 4)** are nice for White, too. Black's position is too passive in both cases.

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4 (Chapter 5) – Black avoids ...exd4 in this first chapter about the Scotch Four Knights. Black should take on d4 (next chapter), but we need to examine why the alternatives are inferior.

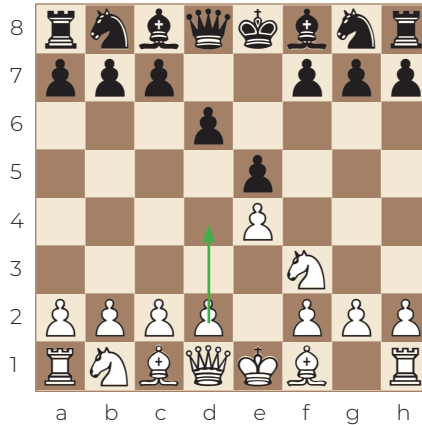
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4 exd4 (Chapter 6) is the main line of the Four Knights Variation of the Scotch Opening. This chapter covers Black's most reliable defence to our 1.e4 e5 concept. Even after Black takes on d4, they have to navigate some pitfalls.

Let's examine the dedicated chapters now!

CHAPTER 1

Philidor's Defence

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6



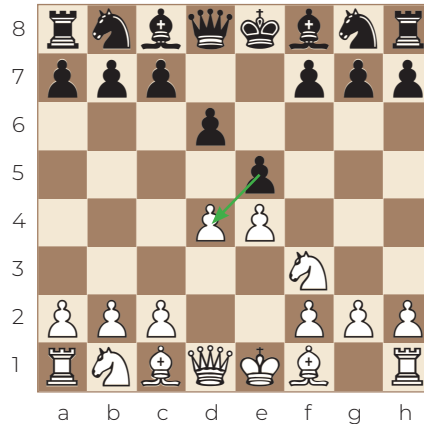
Black covers the attacked e5-pawn with their d-pawn. This defence is called 'Philidor's Defence', named after the strongest player of the 18th century, François-André Danican Philidor. He coined the famous quote 'Pawns are the soul of chess', which, for the first time, acknowledged that pawns and their formations play an integral role in chess.

He also advocated the defence 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6, which is the subject of the current chapter. The move 2...d6 defends the e5-pawn, but does not develop a piece and locks in the f8-bishop. Compared to Black's main options, 2...♘c6 or 2...♖f6, the king's bishop can't join in the game early on, for example, on the squares c5 or b4 (compare to lines like 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♗c5 or 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♖f6 3.♘c3 ♗b4).

Therefore, Philidor's Defence has the reputation of being slightly passive, as Black voluntarily limits their options. How do we play against it? White's main candidate moves are 3.♘c3, 3.♗c4 and 3.d4. While the first two are good moves that follow basic principles (development), the third option is the strongest. The immediate 3.d4 attacks Black's e-pawn and exerts more pressure, often leading to an inferior reply.

Let's investigate Black's options once the move is on the board.

3.d4



This is White's strongest move. We open the centre, prepare the development of the c1-bishop, and attack Black's e5-pawn. What should Black do now? Let's have an overview:

A) 3...♗g4? is a mistake, but still it is frequently played. Black goes for a tempting pin, but it falls short. Have you seen the famous 'Opera Game', contested between Paul Morphy and the duo of two noblemen during an opera performance in 1858? It started with this exact move sequence! We will see that Morphy's play from the 19th century is still recognized as the best way to punish Black's mistaken opening concept.

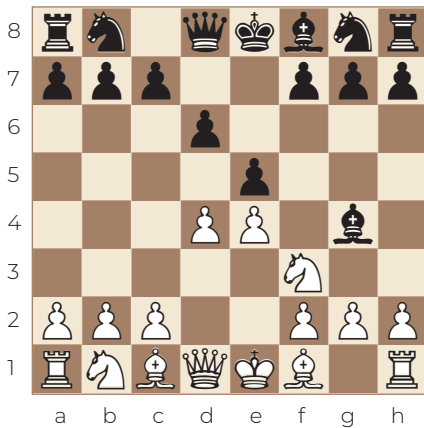
B) 3...exd4 is Black's best and most popular move. They give up the e5-pawn and decide to capture our d-pawn. After 4.♗xd4, White still enjoys some advantage, as we will see.

C) 3...♘c6 is much better than 3...♗g4?, but it gives us a wide range of good moves. I suggest playing 4.♘c3, which leads to a position that we investigate via 1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 d6 4.d4, with a nice advantage. White has some other good options, like the logical moves 4.♗c4 or 4.♗b5, but playing 4.♘c3 fits our concept best.

Please note that taking on e5 is not as promising as it looks at first sight. After 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.♖xd8+ ♕xd8, Black has lost his castling rights, but this is less of an issue after queens were traded. In general, I advise against trading on e5 in this central configuration (e4 and d4 versus e5 and d6), as we trade a more active pawn for a passive one and therefore help Black to gain scope for their pieces, in particular the king's bishop, which is limited by the d6-pawn.

D) Other moves are rare and are best met with healthy development: we play our knight to c3, develop the bishop to c4 and castle kingside next.

A) 3...♗g4?



Black pins our knight, but this move is a well-known mistake since Morphy's game from 1858! Let's check how to refute it.

4.dxe5!

We usually don't want to trade on e5, but this is an exception. It is important to see that concrete move sequences always beat general concepts – this is a good example. Let's check why the capture is strong.

4...♗xf3

Black gives up the bishop pair and speeds up our development, a welcome sight. The alternatives don't convince me either:

1) 4...dxe5? 5.♖xd8+ ♔xd8

6.♗xe5 is fantastic for White. We win the most important pawn on the board, spoil Black's castling rights and even gain time by attacking Black's g4-bishop;

2) Black can try 4...♗c6 or 4...♗d7, but in both cases, we can take on d6 and enjoy an extra pawn.

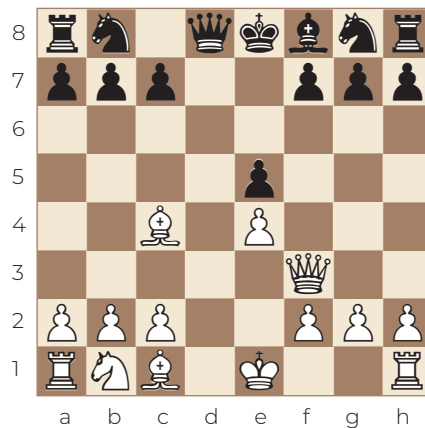
5.♕xf3

We keep our pawn structure intact and place our queen on an active square. After Black's logical reply, the queen's position will be put to good use.

5...dxe5

Black has restored material equality but will be in deep trouble after our natural reply:

6.♗c4



The ideal type of move. We develop our bishop to a great square and threaten mate! We will now focus on 6...♗f6, which is the most-played move and the one featured in the Opera game.

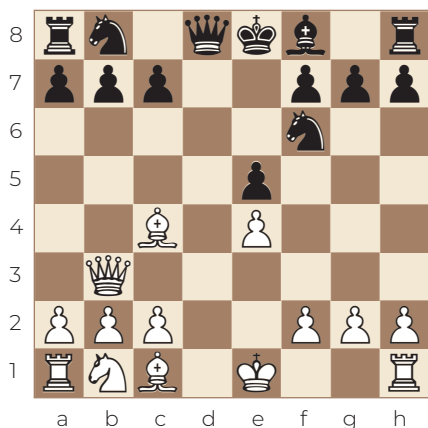
6...♗f6

Black develops a piece and stops the mate threat simultaneously. We will see that Black is in deep trouble after it, but there were no good alternatives.

A move worth talking about is 6...♖f6, when we reach an instructive moment. We should not trade the queens now, as 7.♕xf6? ♗xf6 helps Black to

develop. It is a lot stronger to keep the queens on the board, playing 7. ♖b3! instead. This move keeps the initiative as we attack Black's b-pawn. We are already ahead in development, an advantage that will increase even more after 7...b6 8. ♘c3, intending ♘d5 to attack Black's queen. White is in fantastic shape here.

7. ♖b3!



You shouldn't move the queen too often in the opening... unless it's good for you! This queen move is powerful, attacking both the b7-pawn and, even more importantly, the f7-pawn, with terrible consequences.

Black can't give up the f-pawn, as is shown by 7...b6?? 8. ♙xf7+ ♘d7 9. ♖e6#.

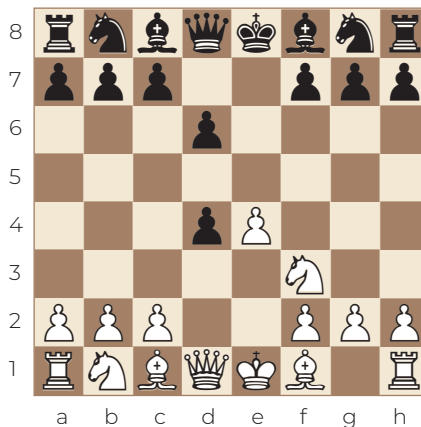
The relatively best solution is 7... ♖e7, as played in the famous Opera game. White has an excellent choice now; let's have a look:

1) 8. ♖xb7 wins a clean pawn and secures a large advantage;

2) 8. ♘c3 is Morphy's move, playing for an attack! I will briefly quote the concluding moves of the Opera game: 8...c6 9. ♙g5 b5 10. ♘xb5! cxb5 11. ♙xb5+ ♘bd7 12. 0-0-0 ♖d8 13. ♖xd7! ♖xd7 14. ♖d1 ♖e6 15. ♙xd7+ ♘xd7 16. ♖b8+!! ♘xb8 17. ♖d8#.

One of the most famous chess games of all time! It's well worth studying in detail, but I don't want to include a full analysis in the context of this course. The game has been covered hundreds of times, and you can easily find good analysis and videos on it.

B) 3...exd4



Black's best move. Black has no fully satisfactory way to keep the pawn on e5 and therefore captures our d-pawn.

4. ♘xd4

An easy move. We recapture the pawn and centralize our knight. A key idea of playing an early d4 is removing the e5-pawn to gain

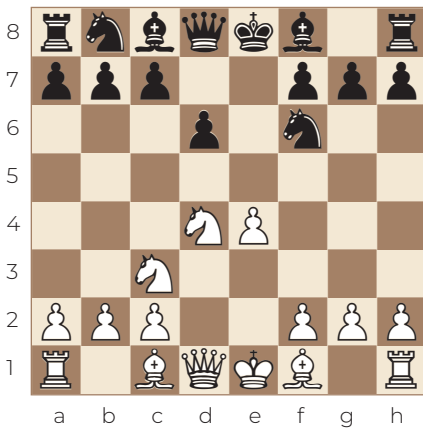
control of this central square for our knight.

4...♟f6

A logical choice and the most popular move. Black develops the kingside and attacks our pawn.

You may also meet the dubious 4...c5?, which leads to a structure that we will examine via 4...♟f6 5.♞c3 c5?, a similar idea. I suggest answering 4...c5? with 5.♞e2, which looks odd, but its idea will become clear once we examine 4...♟f6 5.♞c3 c5? 6.♞de2, which follows the same concept.

5.♞c3



Easy one: we cover the pawn and develop our knight. Now we examine Black's best move 5...♞e7 and the mistake 5...c5?, a short-sighted attack on our knight. Black has some rare alternatives, like 5...g6, 5...c6 or 5...♞c6 – against all these set-ups, we can play as we do against 5...♞e7, by developing our bishop to f4, followed by ♞d2 and 0-0-0.

B1) 5...c5?

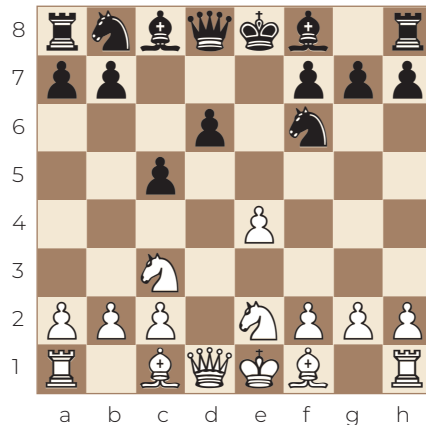
Black attacks our strong knight, but the cure is worse than the disease. Every pawn move involves a commitment and may weaken crucial squares or pawns.

Black's pawn push has two drawbacks: the d6-pawn can't be protected by a fellow pawn anymore, and it is a 'backward pawn' on a half-open file. We have good chances to put pressure on this pawn – ideas like a later ♞f4 and rooks to the d-file come to mind.

The second drawback is even more serious: Black has left the d5-square, a key central point, open for our pieces to use. Black can't control this square with a pawn anymore, and we have excellent chances to establish a strong piece on this outpost square.

First of all, our knight is attacked. Where to go?

6.♞de2

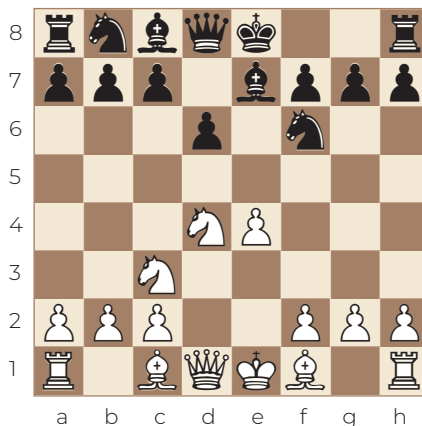


Why to e2? We block our own bishop's development, so it does not seem that logical to move the knight back. There is a major upside, though. Looking at the pawn structure, we see that Black has weakened the d5-square. This square would be ideal for our pieces, in particular for a knight. Our c3-knight is already connected to the square. Ideally, we want to do the same with our second knight as well. From e2, we can quickly reach d5 via the f4-square.

Compare this situation with 6.♘b3, when rerouting the knight to d5 is much more difficult. You could go via b3-d2-c4-e3, which takes ages. After 6.♘de2, a likely continuation is 6...♙e7 7.♘f4 O-O 8.♙c4, which demonstrates our basic idea. We have full control of d5 and Black suffers due to a bad bishop on e7 and a potentially weak d-pawn. To complete the picture: White has a strong alternative in 6.♙b5+, but I prefer the knight manoeuvre (♘d4-e2-f4) because of its instructional value.

B2) 5...♙e7

Black develops the bishop and prepares kingside castling. It is a modest set-up, but Black's position is rather solid. Both sides' forces are not in direct contact, which gives us a range of options.



6. ♙f4

White has some good alternatives, in particular 6.g3, intending ♙g2 and O-O. I have a different idea, though. The move I suggest is the most aggressive one. We plan to play ♖d2 and O-O-O next. With our king safely positioned on the queenside, we may attack the kingside by pushing our pawns (f3 and g4 comes to mind).

6...O-O

Black gets their king to safety.

7. ♖d2

We continue with our plan: secure our king on the queenside and attack on the other side of the board.

7...♘c6 8.O-O-O

We have completed queenside castling and are ready to attack on the kingside. A sample line to show this idea is 8...♘xd4 9.♖xd4 ♜e8 10.f3, followed by g4 and h4, the pawn storm on the kingside. It is difficult for Black to generate any counterplay.

Conclusion:

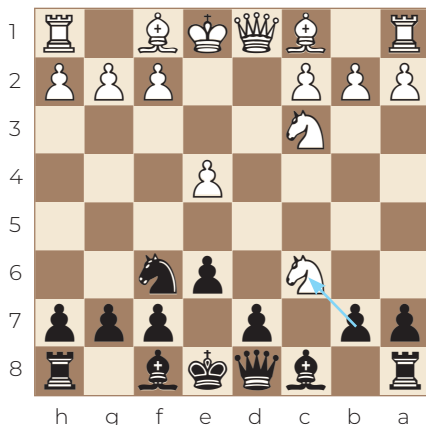
Philidor's Defence is fairly unpopular because it is too passive. Black's f8-bishop remains inactive for a while, compared to 2...♘c6, when Black often manages to develop the bishop to a better spot. Black's relatively best option is the capture on d4, leading to the

chapter's main line. I suggest aiming for 0-0-0 here, playing as aggressively as possible. Black's modest set-up invites more ambitious play, which we should happily go for.

This type of play is discussed in more detail in the Model Game Volokitin-Harikrishna in Part III of this book.



Four Knights Variation: 6. xc6

1.e4 c5 2. f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. xd4 f6 5. c3 c6
6. xc6



White captures our knight, the most popular choice against the Sicilian Four Knights. After our answer, the natural capture towards the centre, we will discuss the implications of the knight trade.

6...bxc6

Capturing towards the centre strengthens our central control and helps to prepare ...d5. Playing 6...dxc6? would also forfeit castling rights after 7. xd8+ xd8, so our choice is easy. Let's talk about the position after our correct move, though.

What is White's idea behind trading the knights? From a strategic point of view, the knight trade on c6 doesn't look very logical. White has moved their knight three times to capture a piece that has only moved once, a serious waste of time. In addition, we don't mind the change of our pawn structure, as the c6-pawn can be valuable to support our central expansion.

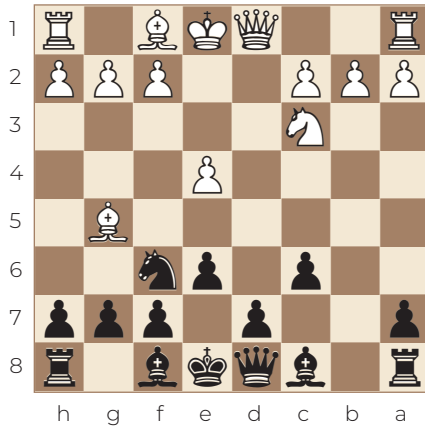
These points suggest that White needs a more direct justification for the trade. They have only one challenging continuation now, while the alternatives don't apply any pressure and give us a good game based on the strategic shortcomings of White's position. Let's consider:

A) 7.♗g5 pins our knight and has e4-e5 in mind, but it turns out that this idea is not to be feared. Our reply 7...h6 attacks the bishop, and White already has to be careful not to get into trouble!

B) 7.♗d3 is a healthy move to proceed with development. We enjoy a strong centre after 7...d5 and gain equal chances. Other moves can be answered with ...d5 and will likely become a worse version of line B. One example is 7.♗c4? d5, when White loses time with their bishop.

C) 7.e5! ♟d5 8.♞e4! is the only dangerous try; White pushes our knight to d5 but plans to chase it away with c2-c4 soon. This line is more or less mandatory at the master level, but rarely seen below that level.

A) 7. ♖g5



White pins our knight and has e4-e5 in mind. It looks dangerous at first, but we have an effective reply that sets multiple traps:

7...h6!

We have more than one good move at this point, but 7...h6! poses White a difficult problem, as the two most obvious replies are leading to a huge plus for us!

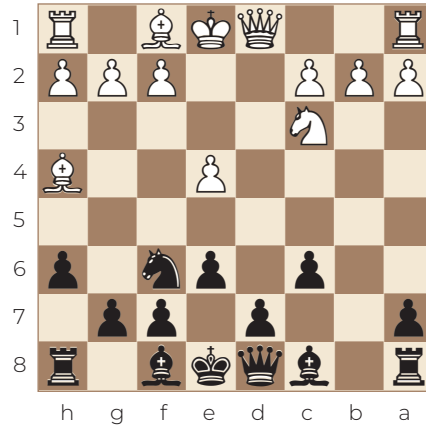
8. ♖h4?

White wants to maintain the pin, which leads to immediate problems. What other options does White have?

1) 8. ♖xf6? ♜xf6 is a strategic mistake, as it gives up the bishop pair and activates our queen. It has a powerful spot on f6, looking at the long diagonal to c3 and b2, which can easily lead to crushing tactics. The sequence 9. ♖d3 ♜b8! 10. ♜b1? ♜xb2! is an excellent example;

2) 8. ♖f4 is probably best, stopping ...♜b8 ideas. We are

in good shape after 8...d5, but White stays in the game. Compared to the alternatives, this is an accomplishment!



8... ♜b8!

A small move with devastating effect! White is in danger now, as there is no good way to handle the pressure on the b-pawn. Another problem for White is ...♜a5, which pins the knight and will often be combined with ...♖b4.

You might have wondered why we played 7...h6 8. ♖h4? ♜b8 instead of the immediate 7...♜b8, which looks very similar. This is a good move, but far less effective than our version. The reason is that White's bishop on g5 still has the option to retreat to d2, which is relevant in a line like 7...♜b8 8. ♜b1 ♜a5 9. ♖d2!, which defends successfully. We want first to push White's bishop to the worse square h4, improving our chances.

9.e5

A tempting move for White, in line with the previous play. It has one drawback: it leads to an awful position for White! To be fair, White has nothing great available; we are much better in any case.

1) 9.♖b1 ♗a5! was mentioned before. We threaten 10...♖xb2!, winning the house. After 10.♗d2 ♙b4 11.♙xf6 (11...♗xe4 was the threat) 11...gx6 12.♖d1 f5, we have a great position. Our f5-pawn will be traded for the e4-pawn when we have two centre pawns against none for White. Our bishop pair is a huge asset; particularly, the dark-squared bishop is strong. It has no counterpart and secures the dark squares. This is crucial, as many of our pawns are on light squares. The pawns and the bishop complement each other nicely. Our king is in the centre, but it is perfectly safe;

2) 9.b3? g5 10.♙g3 ♗a5 exploits White's queenside holes to the fullest. We have ...♙b4 and ...♗xe4 ideas to kill White.

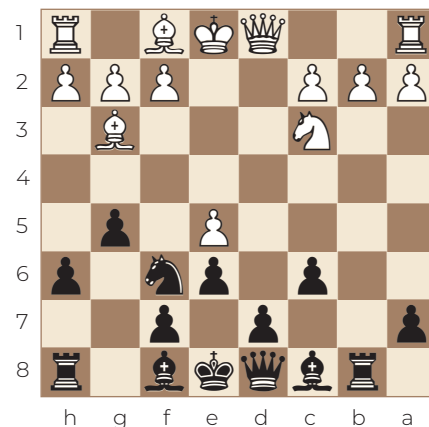
9...g5

We have an excellent alternative here: 9...♖xb2 10.exf6 g5! is great for Black, too. After b2 is gone, White's unprotected knight will be a big target after ...♗a5 and ...♙b4.

10.♙g3

After 10.exf6 gxh4, we attack f6 and b2 – White cannot keep them both. It's important to

stress how safe our king is behind the central pawn shield. We can easily develop the h8-rook to g8 and never need to castle.



10...♖xb2!

Boom! We don't need to move our knight away.

11.exf6

White could try 11.♗c1, but 11...♙b4! 12.♗xb2 ♗a5 or 11...♗a5! 12.♗xb2 ♙b4 leads to the deadliest pin you'll see today!

11...♙b4!

This is the cruncher! After 11...♗a5? 12.♙d2!! ♙b4 13.♗f3 White is under pressure but can still defend.

After the much better 11...♙b4, White is falling apart.

1) 12.♙d2 ♗xf6! (the difference to 11...♙b4?) 13.♗f3 ♗d4+! wins the house;

2) 12.♙e5 ♗a5 13.♗d4 ♖xc2 wins for Black;

3) 12.♗d3 ♗f6 13.♙d2 d5 14.a3 ♙a5 wins, as both ...d4 and ...♙a6! are deadly threats;

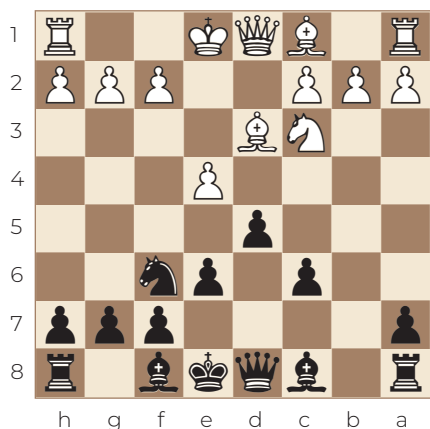
4) 12. ♖d4 is the toughest defence, but 12...c5 13. ♖e3 ♖a5 14. ♕d2 d5 leads to a crushing attack.

Conclusion: 7. ♗g5 is a move we are happy to see! It looks like an active choice, but White can easily come under fire early in the game.

B) 7. ♗d3

White plays a healthy developing move and prepares kingside castling. It doesn't exert any pressure on us, though. We are well-equipped to stake our claim in the centre.

7...d5



We are happy to advance our d-pawn, which is now supported by both the e- and the c6-pawns.

After 7...d5, White usually either captures our d-pawn or advances e4-e5, attacking our knight. These moves immediately clarify the central pawn formation, but White may

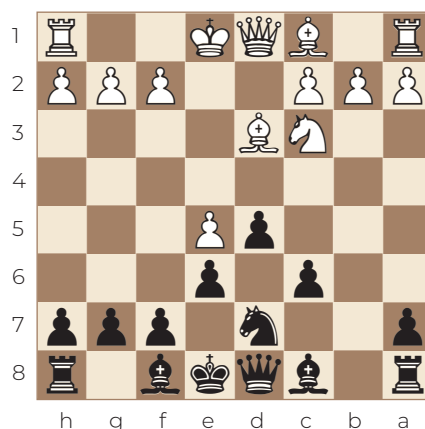
also keep the tension and play a developing move like 8.0-0, not yet determining the central pawn formation. In this case, we should keep our strong pawn triangle e6/d5/c6 and focus on completing kingside castling first.

After White's king has left the centre, the move ...♗b4 is less effective. I suggest 8...♗e7 to prepare ...0-0. What about the c8-bishop? There are two good ways to activate it: combining ...c6-c5 and ...♗b7, or aim for ...a7-a5 to prepare ...♗a6.

B1) 8.e5?!

A questionable decision, as we are well-positioned to deal with the advanced e-pawn.

8...♗d7



A retreat, but we attack White's e-pawn. This position is very instructive from a strategic point of view. You must clearly know what it accomplishes whenever you consider a pawn advance.

A pawn move is committal, as there is no way to correct this decision.

White's advance is unconvincing because it is difficult for our opponent to support the e-pawn properly. They have two developed pieces, but the bishop and knight don't connect to e5 in any way. White's knight is far from covering e5 and looks at squares we firmly control, like e4, d5 and b5. Imagine the following scenario: White's knight would be much better placed on f3, covering the e-pawn and potentially supporting an attack with ♘f3-g5.

In a way, White is trying to tell a story that doesn't add up. Let's see how it continues: White must support their e-pawn, leaving 9.♙f4 and 9.f4 to consider. We will focus on the bishop move, because our reply to it is especially instructive.

9.♙f4

White also has 9.f4 to cover the pawn, when Black has a good choice of moves. I like 9...♗b6, preventing White from castling and preparing ...♙a6 simultaneously. White can play 10.♘a4 ♗c7 to enable castling again, but White's knight is 'dim on the rim'. We continue with ...♙e7 and ...0-0. Note that our c8-bishop has a bright future after ...♙b7 and ...c5 when the long diagonal will open up later. If you are scared about White's

d3-bishop pointing towards your kingside, playing ...g6 is a consideration.

9...♗c7

We focus on our main target, White's e-pawn. There are two strong alternatives to mention:

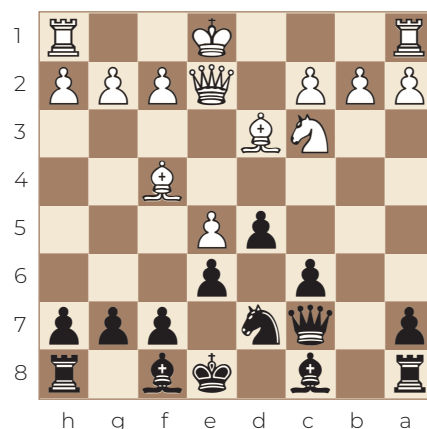
1) 9...♖b8 10.♖b1 ♗c7 is similar to our move.

2) The second one is 9...g5!? 10.♙g3 ♙g7, when we attack e5 with our bishop. White can't hold the e-pawn, just as after my suggestion.

I prefer the simpler queen move.

10.♗e2

White needed additional support, but it falls short after our strong reply. The alternative idea 10.♗h5 g6 11.♗e2 would be the same story.



10...f6!

A great move! White's bishop is unprotected, so they can't play 11.exf6?? due to 11...♗xf4. At first, 12.♗xe6+ ♘d8 13.♗xc6 ♖b8 looks scary, but our pieces and the extra material guard our king.

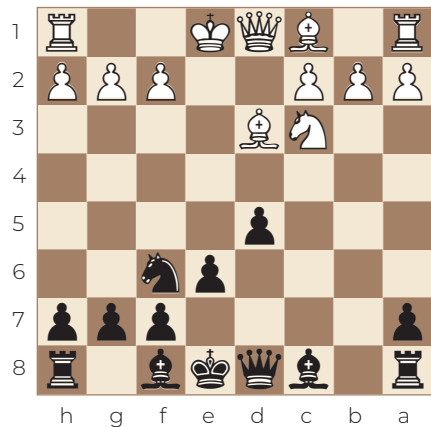
As White can't take on f6, we will win the e5-pawn and have a dominating central pawn mass. White's best try is 11. ♖h5+ ♘d8 (avoid 11...g6?? 12. ♙xg6+) 12. 0-0 ♜xe5, when they can hope to exploit our king position on d8. It is no real issue, though – our king is safe behind a wall of pawns and pieces.

Conclusion: The pawn advance 8.e5 is dubious, as White's pawn is more of a weakness than anything else. The resulting positions are complex but already favourable for us.

B2) 8.exd5

White trades their e-pawn for our c-pawn... we don't mind that at all, as we will have two centre pawns versus none.

8...cxd5



We take towards the centre, promoting our former b-pawn to a 'central powerhouse' – not a bad career, in just eight moves!

9.0-0

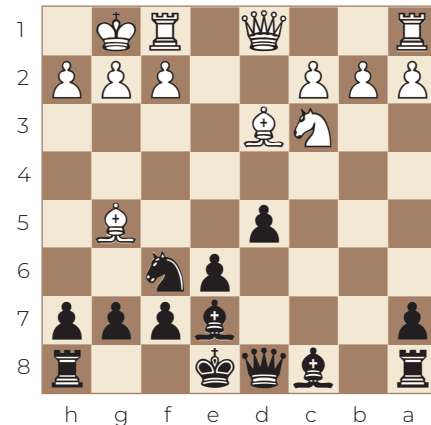
Very natural and by far the most popular move. White could also try 9. ♙g5, when I suggest 9... ♙e7 to break the pin. This will lead to similar positions to our main move, as White will castle kingside soon.

9... ♙e7

Where to put the bishop? I suggest e7, anticipating that White will probably play ♙g5. The alternative 9... ♙c5 is not bad at all, though.

In comparison, 9... ♙d6?! 10. ♖b5 or 9... ♙b4?! (we don't want to give up our bishop for the knight, and there is no pin anymore) make less sense.

10. ♙g5



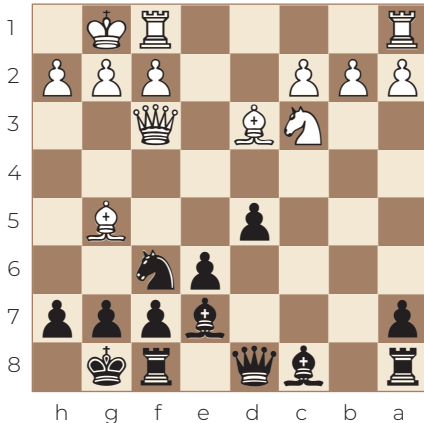
I want to focus on this move, as White may go for a typical attacking idea that I want to cover. White has other ways to develop, but we will always play ...0-0 and ... ♙b7 to complete our development. Our strategy will be similar to the one after the main move.

10...0-0

Playing 10...h6 first is a good alternative that might lead to the same outcome.

11. ♕f3

Let's discuss this attacking idea. White wants to play their queen to h3, lining up against h7. If Black doesn't pay any attention, a sequence like 11...♗b7 12.♕h3 ♖c8?? 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.♕xh7# could be the outcome! Of course, 12...h6 is a much better move. but in this situation, you always have to reckon with 13.♗xh6, which is tricky to handle. We have a better solution that makes our job easier.



11...h6!

Playing this move before White manages ♕h3 prevents possible sacrifices on h6. Let's look at two moves for White now and discuss how to continue after them:

1) 12.♗f4 ♗d6 is a key strategic idea. We want to fight for the

square e5 and ideally advance our e-pawn to get the two centre pawns rolling. The bishop trade also allows a later ...♖b8, activating our rook. The c8-bishop has a good spot on b7;

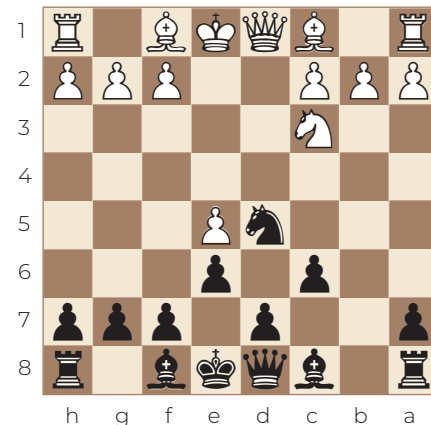
2) 12.♗h4 ♖b8 (or 12...♗b7) looks good. As in line 1, we have two basic ideas: try to play ...e5 or use the open files on the queenside. Moves like ...♖b8 or ...♕b6 attack White's b-pawn.

Conclusion: 8.exd5 cxd5 gives us an excellent pawn centre and long-term chances. White has active pieces but has to worry about our centre advancing after due preparation.

C) 7.e5

White goes for the most challenging move, attacking our knight.

7...♗d5



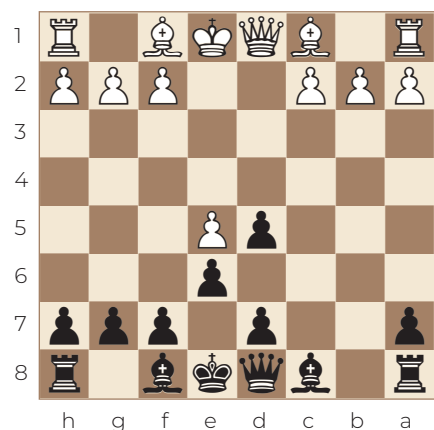
After our knight jump, we have reached an interesting moment. If you play a master, they will

almost certainly continue with 8. ♘e4!, the only challenging move and the whole point of playing 6. ♘xc6 in the first place. However, if you play a less experienced player, you will likely face 8. ♘xd5, which is a welcome sight. We will examine both moves.

C1) 8. ♘xd5

White strengthens our central presence, improving the career of our b-pawn even more!

8...cxd5

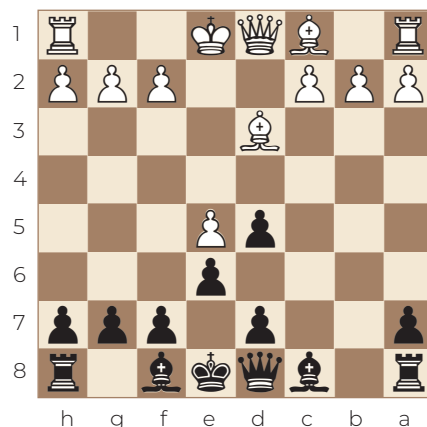


It's funny to see that we have started with the 'Four Knights' and are now down to 'Zero Knights'. Jokes aside, this position is comfortable for Black. Our centre is strong, and White's e-pawn can be easily attacked by a later ...d6. Our c8-bishop looks a bit sad at the moment, but we have a cool tactic you should know.

9. ♙d3

White's main move by a mile.

For the alternative 9. ♙e3, see Model Game 7.



White develops and prepares castling. So, where's the tactic I promised?

9... ♙a6!

Using this neat tactic, we activate our passive bishop.

10. ♙xa6

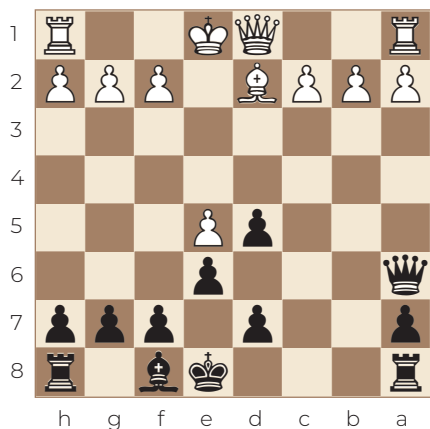
I want to show the justification of our bishop move on the board. Playing 10.0-0 ♙xd3 11. ♗xd3 is slightly better, but 11... ♗c7 12. ♙f4 ♗c8 prepares ... ♗c4 to activate our queen.

Note that we are not in a hurry to castle, as our king is safe on e8 at the moment. We will eventually play ... ♙e7 and ...0-0, but right now it is not yet necessary to complete castling.

10... ♗a5+

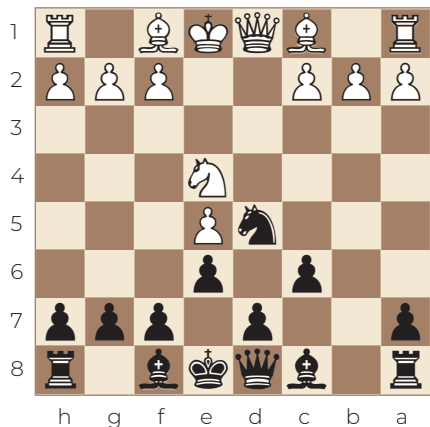
And we regain the material with a comfortable position. It's important to see that, in the long run, we have two half-open files that we can use to exert pressure on White's position.

11. ♖d2 ♔xa6



Imagine our rooks being positioned on c8 and b8, attacking White's pawns. White, on the other hand, has no clear target to go for.

C2) 8. ♖e4



Much more interesting than capturing on d5. White centralizes their knight and has c2-c4 in mind to challenge our best piece.

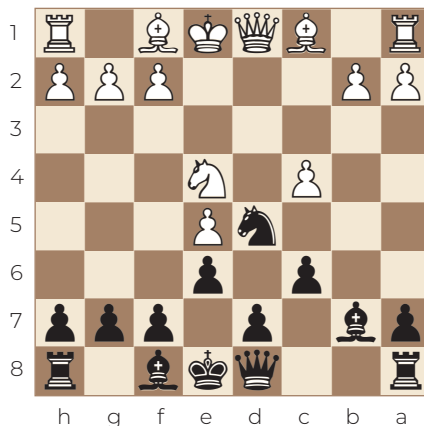
8... ♖b7

This looks odd at first. The bishop has little scope, but we

want to play ...c6-c5 to open the long diagonal.

9.c4

The most direct continuation. White can also focus on development with 9. ♖e2, when 9...c5 10.0-0 ♖c7 puts some pressure on e5. After 11.f4 c4!?, we introduce ...♖b6+ and ...♗e3 into the position, which leads to interesting play.

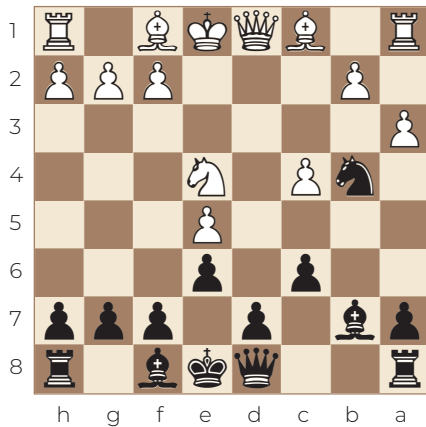


9... ♗b4!

This is important to remember. It's much better than a retreat!

10.a3

White can stop a possible ...c5 from us by playing 10.c5, but we have a different way to activate our b7-bishop. A good reply is 10...♖b8 11.f4 and now 11... ♖a6!, to trade the bishop. It's useful to play ...♖b8 first, as the queen is active on the b-file, while f4 does not help White much. Note that advancing the c-pawn gained a lot of space for White, but also handed us the d5-square for our knight!



What now? Do we have to retreat to a6?! Of course not!

10... ♖a5

Wow, that's an annoying move for White! They can't take our knight, and we threaten double checks(!), and on top of everything, the e5-pawn is attacked!

White's best try is to sacrifice the pawn by playing 11. ♖c3 ♕xe5+ 12. ♕e2, when we have to move the knight back to a6 after all.

That's not ideal, but we have snatched the most important pawn on the board! White has some play for the pawn, but we are happy with the opening result.

Conclusion:

The line 6. ♘xc6 is interesting for White if they have 6...bxc6 7.e5! ♘d5 8. ♗e4! in mind. These positions are complex and offer chances for both sides. Often, White does not go down this route but connects 6. ♘xc6 bxc6 with different ideas. These are either harmless, like 7. ♕d3, or dubious like 7. ♕g5, when we often take over the game quickly. It's crucial to remember that White needs to find a concrete justification for strengthening our centre, which can only be 6. ♘xc6 bxc6 7.e5 ♘d5 8. ♗e4 – everything else misses the mark.

of good technical play. White suffered from long-term pawn weaknesses that were expertly exploited.

Game 9 D32

Jaime Sunye Neto 2475
Garry Kasparov 2630

Graz World Teams Championship U26 1981

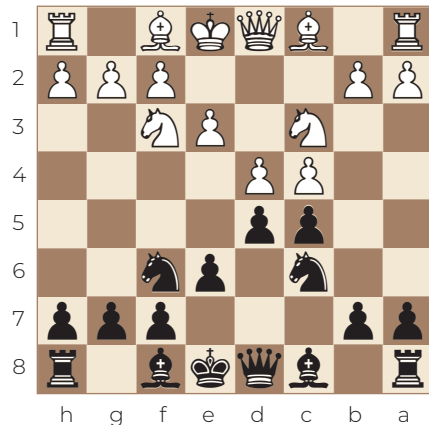
1. ♖f3

A word about the players and the context of the game. You will certainly know Garry Kasparov, the 13th World Champion. In 1981, he was 18 years old and a rising star. He won the world title four years later after two epic battles against Karpov. Kasparov's opponent, playing White, is Jaime Sunye Neto, one of the first Brazilian GMs.

1... ♟f6 2. c4 c5

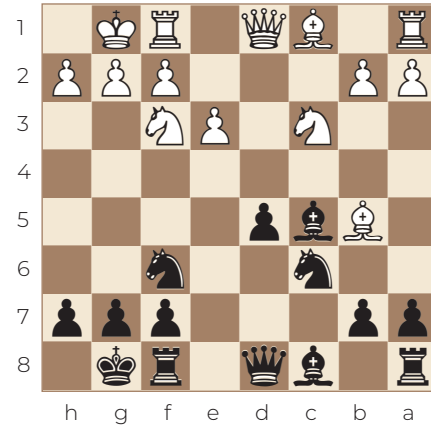
There are many ways to reach the Tarrasch Defence. This one is unusual, but we will get there quickly.

3. ♖c3 e6 4. e3 ♟c6 5. d4 d5



And we have arrived at the symmetrical Tarrasch.

6. cxd5 exd5 7. ♖b5 ♟d6 8. dxc5 ♟xc5 9. 0-0 0-0



We examined this position in Chapter 30. Let's discuss the strategy for both sides. It's all about Black's Isolated Queen's Pawn (IQP).

White wants to pressure the IQP and, ideally, win the pawn, but it's not easy to just line up pieces against it. It would be much easier after many minor pieces had been traded. Imagine the position without minor pieces – White would double rooks against d5, which is impossible to do with many minor pieces interrupting, to make sure that the IQP stays where it is. Advancing the IQP with ...d5-d4 is often a powerful idea. White wants to blockade the pawn by increasing their control of the square in front of it, d4. Black usually wants to avoid trades so that the structural

weakness of the IQP is less relevant – keep ...d5-d4 in mind. Often, this move not only gets rid of the potentially weak pawn but also opens the position favourably – placing all pieces actively and usually aiming for an attack on the kingside. We will witness these strategies in the game.

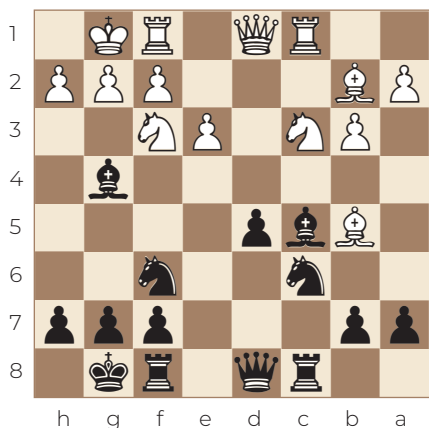
10.b3

A good set-up. White's bishop will help control the crucial square d4.

10...♗g4

The most active square for the bishop. it also clears the way for ...♖c8 to occupy the open file.

11.♗b2 ♖c8 12.♖c1



Always look for unprotected pieces. White's rook move eyes the c5-bishop.

12...♗d6

Kasparov secures the bishop.

The careless 12...♖e8??

13.♜xd5! shows the problem.

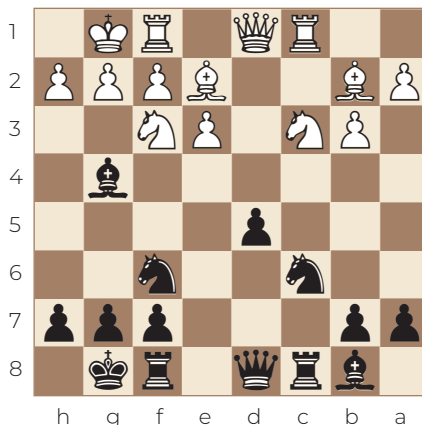
Black's bishop is also happy to be employed on the b8-h2

diagonal. We will see a key attacking idea in a moment.

13.♗e2

Sunye Neto breaks the pin and clears the way for his knight to b5, a common idea to get maximum control of d4.

13...♗b8



This is an important idea to know. The bishop occupies a safe position on b8 and uses its long-range capabilities against White's kingside. Playing ...♗d6 soon is the next step to creating serious threats!

14.♞b5

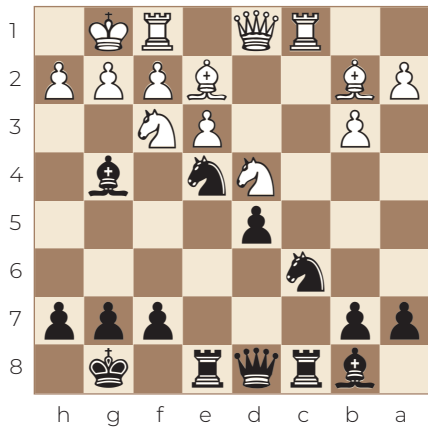
White stops ...♗d6 and prepares the knight tour to d4. However, this move has a drawback:

14...♞e4

There it is. White has lifted some pressure off d5, which allows the knight to be centralized now.

15.♞bd4 ♖e8

This piece set-up is an excellent example of how to develop actively when you play with an IQP.



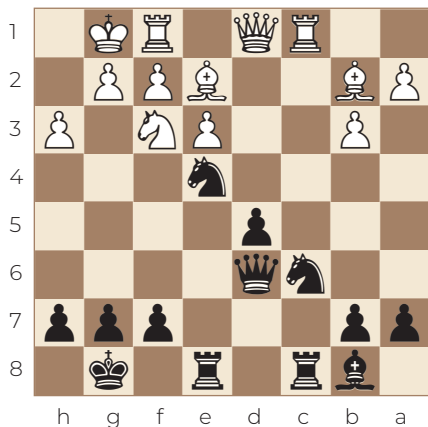
Note how all pieces are involved in the game. Little details like ...♖c8 first and only then ...♙b8 are important. Now the rook has a job on c8, covering c6.

16.h3 ♕xf3

Trading a minor piece is usually not on Black's agenda, but Kasparov has a concrete idea:

17.♗xf3 ♚d6

Kasparov didn't want to lose time setting up the battery against h2 – now Black only needs to distract the f3-knight to deliver checkmate.



18.♚d3

A strong move. White has spotted the next move for Black and prepares for it.

18...♗g5

OK, we have a mate threat! White needs to clear some space for his king.

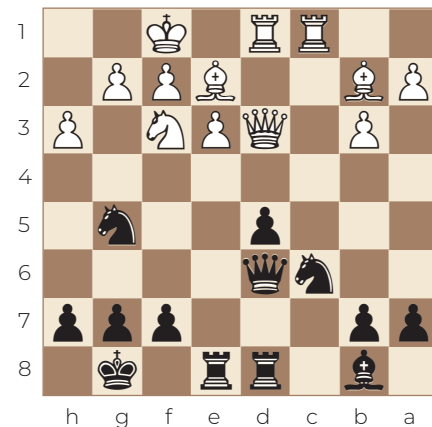
19.♖fd1

White played 18.♚d3 to enable this move.

19...♖cd8

It's important to see that 19...♗xf3? 20.♙xf3 ♚h2+ 21.♔f1 leads to nothing. At the end of this sequence, Black's d-pawn is doomed, and there are no more threats.

20.♔f1



White wants to clarify the situation. Now Sunye Neto threatens to take Black's knight, as there is no mate.

20...♗e4

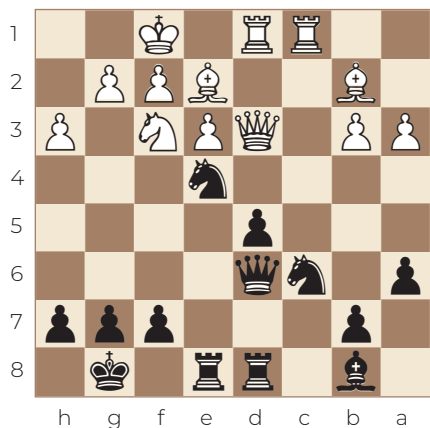
Keeping pieces on the board. Instead 20...♗xf3? 21.♙xf3 only helps White.

21.a3

A cautious move, preparing b3-b4. White's critical try was 21. ♖b5, which would have led to wild complications. Black's best reply is 21... ♗e6! 22. ♖xb7 ♜xf2!, setting the board on fire. White has to be careful now, as 23. ♙xc6?? ♗xe3 24. ♙d2 ♜e4 loses on the spot.

The computer finds 23. ♙e1! as the only good move, when 23... ♜e4! threatens 24... ♜g3+, so again White can't take on c6. The correct move is 24. ♙b5! ♜a5 25. ♖a6, when White is safe and probably slightly better due to the bishop pair. This whole sequence is very tough to anticipate – who would allow Kasparov of all people to sacrifice on f2 and try to dodge bullets afterwards?

21...a6



Okay, let's take away the ♖b5 option.

22. ♖c2 ♙a7

A secondary idea of playing ...a6. Here 22... ♖h6 was a noteworthy

alternative, again eyeing a sacrifice on f2.

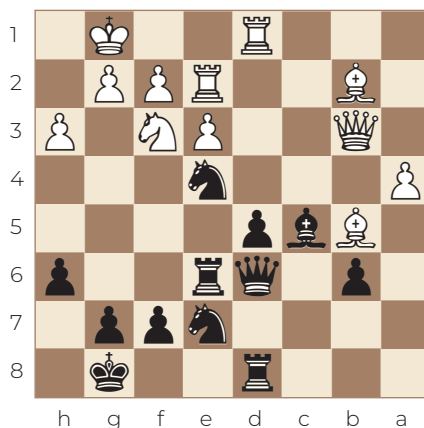
23. ♙d3 ♗e7 24. ♙e1 ♙d6

Kasparov tries to activate the rook on the sixth rank, the 'rook lift'. Over the next few moves, both sides go for smaller improvements.

25. b4 ♙e6 26. b5 axb5 27. ♙xb5

h6 28. ♙cd1 ♙d8 29. ♖b3 ♖d6

30. a4 ♙c5 31. ♙e2 b6 32. ♙g1 ♜e7



Kasparov wants to use this knight for the attack on the kingside.

33. ♜d4 ♙g6 34. ♙d3 ♖d7

The queen takes a look at the h3-pawn, so White needs to react.

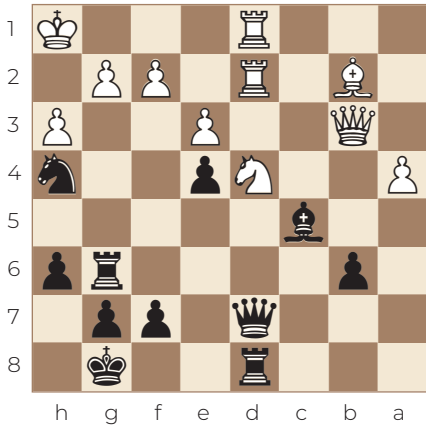
35. ♙h1 ♜f5

It gets a bit scary for White now. This position is tough to play in time trouble.

36. ♙xe4?!

This helps Black's attacking ambitions. It was better to play 36. ♜f3 to cover crucial squares like h4.

36...dxe4 37. ♙ed2 ♜h4



White is under heavy pressure.

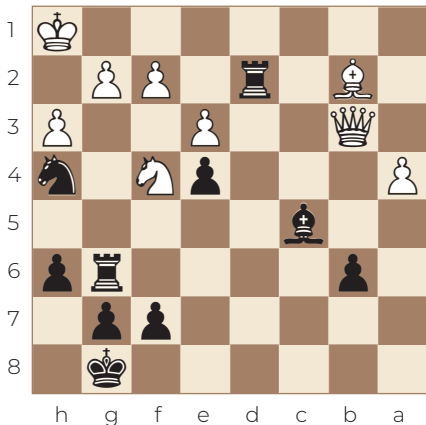
38. ♖e6?

The decisive mistake, but it's impossible now to see why that is so. Maybe White initially hoped for 38. ♖f3?!, but 38...exf3! 39. ♖xd7 fxg2+ 40. ♖h2 ♖f3# is a painful end.

The engine shows the best defence is 38.f4! when White remains on the defensive but is not tactically lost.

The next moves are all forced for both sides.

38... ♜xd2 39. ♖xd2 ♜xd2 40. ♖f4



White needs to save the knight and cover g2.

40... ♜g5 41. ♖g1

The king covers f2, and things look safe for White. It turns out that Black is winning, and Kasparov finished the game with wonderful tactics!

41... ♖f3+ 42. ♖f1

After 42. ♖h1 Black wins with 42... ♙xe3!!, when 43.fxe3 ♜dxg2!! 44. ♖xg2 ♜g3 is the stunning finale! A breathtaking variation! White's alternative 43. ♖e6 loses to 43... ♖xf2 44.gxf3 ♜f1+ 45. ♖h2 exf3 46. ♖xg5 ♙f4#, another great mating combination.

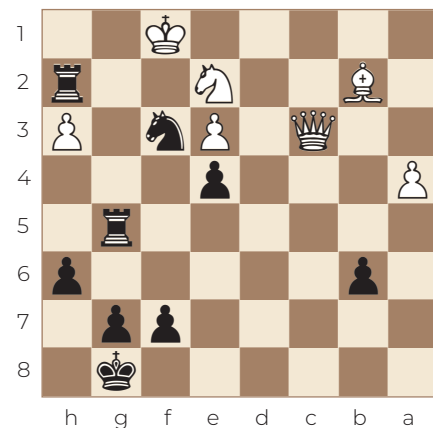
42... ♙xe3!! 43.fxe3

Do you want another cool mate? 43. ♖e2 ♖h2+ 44. ♖e1 ♜xg2 45. ♜xe3 ♖f3+ 46. ♖f1 ♜g1+! 47. ♖xg1 ♜d1+ and mate on the next move!

43... ♜dxg2!

Clearing d2 for the knight fork.

44. ♜c3 ♖h2 45. ♖e2



The amazing aspect of Kasparov's attacking play is that

now Black has no win based on checks or captures. He can't play 45...♖g2?, as then 46.♙c8+ ♕h7 47.♗f5+ forces a draw.

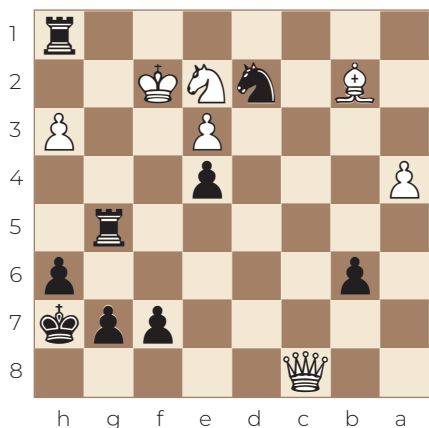
45...♕h7!!

A slow king move to stop the queen check and threaten 46...♖g2!.

46.♙c8

White is ready to check on f5 in case of 46...♖g2? 47.♗f5+, but Black has a different win now:

46...♖h1+ 47.♕f2 ♘d2!



This threatens ...♖f1#, and 48.♘g3 ♖h2+ 49.♕e1 ♘f3+ 50.♕f1 ♖xb2 is hopeless. Sunye Neto resigned because of this variation.

Conclusion:

This was one of Kasparov's best games and combinations! The game also perfectly illustrates that Black's active piece play offers good attacking chances on the kingside. Always keep in mind, when you have the IQP, to avoid exchanges and ensure that all your pieces are in play.

Game 10 D02

Michael Ehrke

2222

Luis Engel

2507

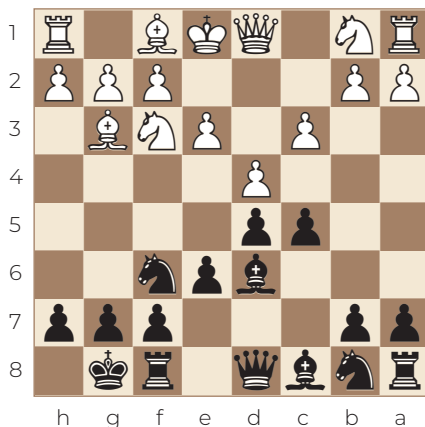
Tegernsee 2019

1.d4 ♘f6

We employ a different move-order, but there are many ways to reach the London System.

The London is popular on all levels. This game features two German players. Michael Ehrke is a veteran master-level player, and Luis Engel is a young general manager who decided not to pursue a professional chess-playing career. He would have had excellent prospects to become a mainstay in the German national team. Let's see how he plays against the rock-solid London System.

2.♘f3 d5 3.♗f4 c5 4.e3 e6 5.c3 ♗d6 6.♗g3 0-0



After a different move-order, we have reached a position we usually reach via 1.d4 d5 2.♗f4 e6 3.e3 ♗d6 4.♗g3 ♘f6 5.♘f3 0-0