

Play 1 e4 e5: A complete repertoire for Black in the Open Games

by Nigel Davies



There is no doubt that playing the Open Games is one of Black's most reliable and yet aggressive ways of meeting White's favourite opening move, 1 e4. Experts also agree that playing these fundamental openings is a crucial step in the development of a chess player, while moving up to the highest level it provides the battleground for countless duels between the World's top players. It's true that some Black players are put off by the seemingly endless number of variations they can be faced with, as White can choose a between the King's Gambit, Vienna Game, Scotch Opening, Bishop's Opening and a number of wild and offbeat gambits. However, in Play 1 e4 e5! Nigel Davies provides a complete answer to this perennial problem by offering a concise and practical repertoire for the Black player, whilst crucially including a dependable defence to the Ruy Lopez - White's most popular attacking try. Davies is the perfect choice for this subject, having been battle-hardened by years of international competition in these openings.

- *A complete defence to 1 e4
- *Written by a 1 e4 e5 expert
- *All of White's tries are covered
- *Includes White's main weapon, the Ruy Lopez

Nigel Davies is both an experienced Grandmaster and chess trainer. A former British Open Quickplay Champion, Davies is the author of several successful chess books and is highly experienced in chess publishing. Previous works for Everyman Chess include Alekhine's Defence and The Trompowsky.

Play 1 e4 e5!
by Nigel Davies

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INTRODUCTION:

'Black proclaims by his symmetrical reply 1...e5 his firm decision to cross swords as quickly as possible with his adversary and (in spite of 'the move') to meet him on an equal footing in the centre of the board, whereas a passive reply such as a King's or Queen's Fianchetto (1...g6 or 1...b6) would allow White to occupy the centre immediately and for good by 2 d4.

'After the typical moves 1 e4 e5 we frequently see a lively struggle, seeking in particular to gain the mastery in the centre.

'Each move in the initial stage must be telling, in other words, it must contain some threat of an immediate nature (attack on a pawn, an effective pin of a piece, unpinning, counter-attack, etc.), and a game of chess of this type resembles an encounter between two fencers where thrust and parry follow and offset each other.'

- Saviely Tartakower (A Breviary of Chess)

1...e5 is arguably the simplest and most logical reply to 1 e4, taking space in the centre and opening diagonals for the queen and bishop. It has been played by every world champion in the history of the game, and many of them played nothing else. Yet despite this great pedigree, many players, especially at club level, are simply afraid to play it! Why? Because of the ocean of possibilities. Besides various forms of the Ruy Lopez, there are a number of other major openings, not to mention a bunch of dangerous gambits.

This was my thinking for many years. I occasionally played 1...e5 but, with a view to 'avoiding' sharp theoretical lines, I usually played the Pirc or Modern Defence. The turning point came when the former Soviet Champion Lev Psakhis once explained to me that an extensive grounding in the Ruy Lopez was essential if you want to develop your game. He added that in Russia it was said that the one failing of Lev Polugaevsky was that he never received this education.

From that moment I resolved to start playing more games with 1 e4 e5 and to phase out the Modern Defence, with which my results against strong players were lacklustre. My results with Black against 1 e4 improved and within two years I gained the Grandmaster title. I attribute much of this achievement to Psakhis' advice and my belated education in the classics.

In writing this book my primary goal was to pass on this great lesson, and provide a simple enough 1...e5 repertoire to make playing this move a practical proposition for club players. Accordingly I have adopted a 'keep it simple' solution to most of White's options, while presenting a really challenging response to the dreaded Ruy Lopez. The Keres Variation (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Nd7) has been giving White some major headaches and has been adopted by the likes of Ponomarev, Beliavsky, and others. Should the reader subsequently want to try a different form of Closed Ruy Lopez, then acquiring a new line will not take much additional effort. This, in fact, is one of the great things about playing 1...e5 - Black isn't forced to stick to a few

narrow channels or long sequences of only moves but can easily broaden his creative palette with new variations.

The way I suggest you study this book is to play through the main games once, relatively quickly, and then start playing the variation in actual games.

Playing an opening in real games is of vital importance - without this kind of live practice it is impossible to get a 'feel' for the kind of game it leads to.

There is time enough later for involvement with the details; after playing your games it is good to look up the line.

It remains for me to wish you luck with your future 1...e5 career. I hope this move helps develop your game as much as it helped mine.

Nigel Davies
Southport, UK
September 2005

CHAPTER 1: RUY LOPEZ: KERES VARIATION: 12 Nbd2

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0
9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Nd7 12 Nbd2

We begin with the thoughts of Paul Keres:

«While preparing for the Candidates' Tournament in Curacao 1962, I gave further thought to this position:

(1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0
9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4).

I had been a long-time follower of this defence and wished to remain faithful to it in this tournament. It was therefore necessary to look for possible new systems and examine the latest experiences of the other masters. That the position of the diagram could be easily reached caused me to examine it thoroughly under a magnifying glass. Clearly, Black must think strategically: he cannot solve his problems tactically. Question: What are Black's strategic possibilities? Anyone who has played the Chigorin Defence to the Ruy Lopez (which is what this system is most often called) knows that Black's only chance is counterplay against the centre square d4. He has two ways of approaching this. First, Black can increase the pressure on d4 move by move, eventually forcing White either to exchange centre pawns or to close the centre with d4-d5. Second, Black can open the centre by a double exchange on d4 and look for counterplay through the harmonious cooperation of his pieces. But he must see to it that the initiative he attains by good piece play is not just temporary, else White will obtain a definite positional advantage because of his good pawn on e4 against the weak Black pawn on d6. Therefore, Black usually rejects that double exchange and tries to increase the pressure on d4 by 11...Qc7 followed by 12...Nc6. But is 11...Qc7 necessary? Black protects the attacked e-pawn, but does little to increase the pressure on d4. Perhaps he can protect the e-pawn in a different way, while initiating pressure on d4 without loss of time. This train of thought led me to test the move 11...Nd7. This move has some advantages in comparison with 11...Qc7. First, it frees the f6-square for the bishop, which will put pressure on d4 supported by the subsequent ...Nc6. Second, the queen is not committed too soon and may also help in the siege of d4 by moving to b6. Third, Black's f-pawn is free to move to f5 if White should decide to play d5. But 11...Nd7 also has its disadvantages. On d7, the knight stands to a certain extent in the way of the other pieces. If White plays Nbd2-f1-e3, Black's d5 and f5 will be inadequately guarded, and in some variations Black's useful pressure on e4 is lacking. Nevertheless, I decided to examine the move more closely and work out some strategic plans.»

The big new idea for Black in the Keres Variation is to meet 12 Nbd2 with 12...exd4 (rather than the traditional 12...cxd4), after which 13 cxd4 Nc6 14 d5 reaches a kind of Benoni position. Damljanovic-Ponomarev is an important game for this line as it features the correct way for Black to get counterplay

against the 15 Nxe5 and 16 f4 plan (17...Bh4!). Much worse is 17...f5?, which I played in my first game with the Keres in Butunoi-Davies, in which I was heavily influenced by the games of Mr Graf (formerly Nenashev). After I'd already played 17...f5? I discovered the devastating coup of 22...Nh4 23 Be4!!, which leaves Black in a hopeless position and turns theory on its head. In Anand-Ponomariov White precedes f2-f4 with 16 a4.

This may become significant in the note to White's 20th move (20 Rf1) in which the queen's rook might come into play via a3, though 22...Nd7! looks like a good defence before this comes up. There's also a case for playing 16...Bb7 in preparation for a later ...f7-f5. Schulze-Davies, on the other hand, is a good illustration of the perils of meeting a2-a4 with the mistaken ...b5-b4. Instead of capturing on e5, White can also preserve knights with a retreat to h2; although this seems passive he's then ready to kick the knight out of e5 with f2-f4 whilst avoiding any exchanges. Rowson-Davies was a good illustration of the complexity of this line of play. Although I won White could have improved as late as move 31 and Black in turn has improvements such as 20...Qd7!?. The last word on this line has yet to be spoken. White has a couple of 14th move alternatives in 14 e5 and 14 Nf1.

The former is examined in the game Ariel-Graf in which Black's attempts to win come close to rebounding. The solid way to deal with 14 Nf1 is seen in Dvoirys-Graf, while in Froeyman-Kazhgaleyev Black plays for complications and almost comes unstuck in the process.

Summary

In this highly complex and double-edged variation Black is holding his own very well. The important things to know are, firstly, not to meet a2-a4 with ...b5-b4, and to be careful about trying to undermine White's centre with one of Graf's patented ...f7-f5 ideas. The plan with ...Be7-h4 looks much better.

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 14 e5 - Ariel-Graf
 14 Nf1
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 17...f5 - Butunoi-Davies

□ **Damljanovic,B**

■ **Ponomariov,R**

European Team Championship, Plovdiv

2003

[Nigel Davies]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.Nbd2 exd4!? Graf's approach, creating an imbalance in the pawn structure.

[Keres' interpretation was to play 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 Nc6 , with positions much akin to a standard Chigorin Defence.]

13.cxd4 Nc6 14.d5 Nce5 15.Nxe5 Nxe5 16.f4 The most direct approach, setting up a broad pawn centre.

[16.a4 Rb8 17.axb5 axb5 18.f4 is very similar - see Anand-Ponomariov.]

16...Ng6 17.Nf3 Bh4! In my view this is the only way for Black to play.

[17...f5? has been played by some very strong players but, as far as I'm concerned, it was refuted in Butunoi-Davies.]

18.Nxh4

[One of the points of Black's play is to meet 18.Rf1 with Bg3! , hitting the pawn on f4 in a way that is difficult to meet. Neelotpal-Deepan, Visakhapatnam 2004, continued 19.f5 (19.Ne1 is met by Qh4 ;and 19.Ng5 by h6) 19...Ne5 20.Ng5 h6 (20...Nd7 is not bad either) 21.Nf3 (21.f6 hxg5 22.Bxg5 g6 is unconvincing in this position, but with a2-a4 and ...Rb8 inserted White could play Ra1-a3) 21...Nxf3+ 22.Qxf3 Be5 23.g4 Bd7 24.Kh1 a5 25.Rg1 g5! 26.h4 f6 , blockading the kingside with approximately equal chances.]

18...Qxh4

[Not 18...Nxh4? because of 19.f5! , catching the knight offside.]

19.f5 The only way to make a fight of it, but this is risky because it gives Black the e5-square.

[After 19.Rf1 Black can force a draw with Bxh3 (19...f5 20.e5 dxe5 21.fxe5 Nxe5 22.Be3 looks risky to me) 20.gxh3 Qg3+ 21.Kh1 Qxh3+ etc, as in Leitao-Morovic Fernandez, Sao Paulo 2004.]

19...Ne5 20.Rf1 Bd7 Not the only move.

[Ashton-Mannion, British Ch., Scarborough 2004, went 20...Re8 21.a4 b4 22.Bf4 a5 23.Bh2 Ba6 24.Rf4 Qf6 25.Qh5?! (White is way too ambitious) b3! 26.g4? bxc2 27.g5 Nf3+ 28.Rxf3 Qxb2 0-1.]

21.Bf4

[After 21.f6 (which in retrospect might be the best) Black once again has the option of a draw with Bxh3 22.gxh3 Qg3+ etc. Again I think he should take it which is the one drawback of this line from a practical point of view. However, if White is set on a draw in any opening Black must take great risk to avoid it.]

21...Qe7 22.Qe1

[In Calistri-Skembris, Bastia 2004, White played 22.Qh5 , the game continuing f6 23.Kh1 b4 24.Rad1 Bb5 25.Rg1 g6 26.fxg6 hxg6 27.Qh4 Qh7 28.Qg3 Rae8 with good prospects for Black. With the knight cemented on e5 there isn't much to worry about on the kingside.]

22...f6 23.Qg3 Rfe8 24.b3 a5 Logically advancing his queenside pawn majority. Black is better here.

25.Bd1 Qd8 26.Bh5 Re7 27.Kh2 Be8 28.Bxe8 Qxe8 29.Rae1

[In reply to 29.a4 Black can play Rb8 , with pressure on the b-file.]

29...a4 30.Re3 b4 31.Qh4 Kh8 32.Bxe5 Rxe5 33.Qf4 axb3 34.axb3 Ra2 35.Rfe1 Kg8

36.Rg3 Ra7 37.Rge3 Qc8 38.Rg3 Qa6 39.Rge3

[After 39.h4 Black can evacuate his king with Kf8 and then meet 40.h5 with h6 . Meanwhile he'd

still have the advantage on the queenside with the possibility of creating a passed pawn via ...c5-c4.]

39...Qa2 40.Qf1 Ra5 41.Rg3 Qb2 42.Qf4 Ra7 43.Qf1 Re8 44.e5 White tries to create some counterplay before Black plants his queen on e5 and then doubles rooks on the a-file. Nice try, but in the final analysis it falls short.

fxe5! Ponomariov is up to the challenge.

[After either 44...Rxe5?! 45.Qb5]

[or 44...dxe5?! 45.d6 , White would be back in the game.]

45.f6

[Black is also defending solidly after 45.Qb5 Rf8 46.f6 g6 etc.]

45...e4 46.Rg5 Qd2 47.h4

[Against an opponent in desperate time-trouble it might have been worthwhile playing 47.Qf5 Qxe1 48.Qg4 . This looks very scary but Black can defend with Qa1 49.Rxg7+ Kh8 leaving White with nothing.]

[White is also quite lost after 47.Rxg7+ Rxg7 48.fxg7 Qxd5 etc.]

47...Rf7?!

[Black should play 47...h6 48.Rg4 Qxd5 with a win in sight. Now things become tricky...]

48.Qb5 Ref8 49.fxg7 Qf4+ 50.g3 Qf2+ 51.Kh3 Rxg7 52.Rxg7+ Kxg7 53.Qd7+ Rf7

54.Qg4+?

[It looks as if 54.Qxd6 is a much better try, for example after Qxe1 55.Qe5+ Rf6 56.Qe7+ Kg6 57.h5+ Kxh5 58.Qxh7+ Kg5 59.Qg7+ Kf5 60.g4+ Ke5 61.Qg5+ Kd4 62.Qxf6+ Ke3 63.g5 the queen endgame looks drawish because of White's powerful passed pawn.]

54...Kh8 55.Ra1

[55.Qxe4 Qf5+ 56.Kg2 Qxe4+ 57.Rxe4 Rf5 gives Black a winning rook endgame.]

55...Rf8

[55...Rf8 56.Qxe4 Qf5+ 57.Qxf5 Rxf5 leads to a winning rook endgame, as in the previous note.]

0-1

C96

□ **Butunoi,A**

■ **Davies,N**

Correspondence

[Nigel Davies]

2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.Nbd2 exd4 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.d5 Nce5 15.Nxe5 Nxe5

[Black can also consider playing 15...dxe5 as White's passed d-pawn can be blockaded and Black has a queenside pawn majority. Luther-Skembris, Turin 1996, continued 16.Nf1 c4 (16...Nf6 17.b3 Ne8 18.Bb2 f6 is another solid way to continue, as in Peptan-Olarasu, Timisu de Sus 1998) 17.Be3 Bb4 18.Re2 Bb7 19.Ng3 g6 with just a nominal edge for White.]

16.f4 Ng6 17.Nf3 f5? Graf's move, which is refuted in this game. Black invites White's pawns to march down the board in the hope that he can play around them with his active pieces. But the old truths about classical pawn centres hold good.

[17...Bh4 is the right idea as in Ponomariov's games against Damljanovic and Anand.]

18.e5 This advance is obvious and strong.

[Several White players have lost their nerve with 18.Qe2 and found themselves with the worse position after fxe4 19.Bxe4 Ra7! 20.Qc2 Bh4 . Enders-Graf, Heringsdorf 2000, continued 21.Re2 (21.Rf1 Raf7 22.Bxg6 hxg6 23.Nxh4 Qxh4 24.Qxg6 Rf6 25.Qd3 Bf5 26.Qe3 Rg6

also gave Black strong pressure for his pawn in Baramidze-Moreno Carnero, Hamburg 2003 ; and after 21.Bxg6? Bxe1 22.Bxh7+ Kh8 23.Nxe1 Qh4 Black wins material because he's hitting both h7 and e1) 21...Raf7! 22.Bxg6 hxc6 23.Nxh4 Qxh4 24.Qxg6 Rf6 25.Qe4 Qh5 26.Bd2 Bb7 and Black won back the pawn with strong pressure on the light squares.]

[White has tried one other move, namely 18.a4 , as in Nedela-Talla, Czech Republic 1990. Black mistakenly replied with b4? (18...fxe4 19.Bxe4 Nxf4 is better, with a nice position for Black) 19.e5 Bh4 20.Rf1 Bg3 (20...Bb7 21.Bb3) and now 21.e6! (21.Ng5 h6 22.Ne6 Bxe6 23.dxe6 dxe5 wasn't clear in the game) 21...Nxf4 (21...Bxf4 22.Bxf4 Nxf4 23.Qd2 Nh5 24.Rae1 is too strong) 22.Nd4! Nxh3+ 23.gxh3 cxd4 24.Bxf5 Qh4 25.Qg4 would have left Black with a monster e-pawn to deal with.]

18...dxe5 In for a penny, in for a pound - Black decides to give White TWO connected passed pawns rather than just the e-pawn.

[I think there's a better case to be made for the untried 18...Bh4 , though here too there's the problem of tackling White's e-pawn. After 19.Rf1 Bg3 White can play 20.e6! Nxf4 (20...Bxf4 21.Bxf4 Nxf4 22.Qd2 Ng6 23.Ng5 is very strong) 21.Nd4 Nxh3+ 22.gxh3 cxd4 23.Bxf5 , which is similar to my suggested improvement for White on Nedela-Talla (see previous note).]

19.fxe5 Bb7 20.d6 Bh4 21.Rf1! The right square for the rook.

[In Ponomariov-Beliavsky, Moscow 2002, White played 21.Re2 Bg3 22.b4 c4 (and not 22...cxb4 when 23.Bb3+ Kh8 24.Bd5 exchanges off Black's massive light-squared bishop) 23.Qd4 Qd7 24.Bd2 Rae8 when Black had blockaded White's pawns and was about to destroy them. The game continued 25.Rae1 Bxf3 26.gxf3 Re6 27.Kg2 Bxe1 28.Rxe1 , and now Nxe5! (rather than Beliavsky's 28...Qc6?) 29.Rxe5 Rxd6 would have won the bishop on d2.]

[Eliminating Black's bishop with 21.Nxh4 brings Black's queen into play. After Qxh4 (21...Nxh4 22.e6) 22.e6 Qg3 23.Re2 Nh4 24.Qd3 Nf3+ 25.Kf1 Nh2+ it's a draw by repetition.]

21...Bg3 22.Ng5 Qe8 This is desperate.

[Korneev-Graf, Jakarta 1997, had gone 22...Nh4 23.Qh5 h6 24.Ne6 Qb6 25.Qe2 Bxg2 with massive complications]

[but then I saw that 22...Nh4 23.Be4!! fxe4 24.Qb3+ and 25 Qxg3 was very strong. Without the bishop on g3 Black has no answer to White's powerful central pawn duo.]

23.Bxf5 Qxe5

[I could not find anything after 23...Rxf5 24.Rxf5 Bxe5 25.d7 , for example Qe7 (25...Qb8 26.Qh5) 26.Rf7 Bd4+ 27.Kh1 Qd8 28.Qh5 etc.]

24.Be6+ Kh8 25.Rxf8+ Rxf8 26.d7 Bh2+ 27.Kh1 Qg3 28.Qe2 Ne5 29.Bd2 Black's position is quite hopeless thanks to White's passed d-pawn and the fact that the bishop on h2 cannot be extricated.

1-0

C96

□ **Anand,V**

■ **Ponomariov,R**

Duel of the World Champions, Mainz

2002

[Nigel Davies]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.Nbd2 exd4 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.d5 Nce5 15.Nxe5 Nxe5 16.a4

Before steaming ahead with his central pawns White tries to soften up Black's queenside. But this doesn't make a substantive difference to the position if Black answers correctly.

Rb8

[Under Graf's influence I played 16...b4 in Schulze-Davies, and could have lost in a similar vein to

Butunoi-Davies.]

[But in view of a possible improvement for White on move 20, I think it's well worth considering 16...Bb7 . The idea is that by targeting the d5 pawn Black can try to undermine White's centre with ...f7-f5; for example 17.f4 Nd7 (17...Ng6 isn't good in this position, as after 18.Nf3 Bh4 19.Rf1 Bg3 20.f5 Ne5 21.Ng5 the obvious 21...h6 can be answered by 22 f6! hxg5 23 Bxg5 threatening Ra1-a3, amongst other things. In Fressinet-Le Roux, Val d'Isere 2004, Black tried Bh4 but lost quickly after 22.f6 g6 23.Qd2 Nd7 24.Nxh7 Bxf6 25.Nxf6+ Nxf6 26.Qh6 Nh7 27.Rf4 1-0) 18.Nf3 Re8 19.b3 (19.Bd2 Bf6 20.Ra2 g6 21.Kh2 Bg7 22.b3 Qc7 was fine for Black at this stage in Topalov-Adams, Cap D'Agde 2003) 19...Bf6 20.Rb1 Qb6 (20...Qc7 looks better with chances for both sides) 21.Kh2 g6 22.g4 Rac8 23.Kg3 was a game Fejzullahu-Adams, Izmir 2004, and now a5?! 24.axb5 Qxb5 25.b4! Nb6 (25...Rc7 26.Ba4 Qb6 27.Bxd7 Rxd7 28.Qa4 is even more unpleasant) 26.bxc5 Qxc5 27.Be3 landed Black in trouble, which he managed to get out of by accepting the offer of a draw (½-½).]

17.axb5 axb5 18.f4 Ng6 19.Nf3 Bh4 After

[19...f5? 20.e5 is horribly similar to Butunoi-Davies and should be avoided.]

20.Nxh4

[With the inserting of 16 a4 and 16...Rb8 the move 20.Rf1 becomes much more interesting. The idea is that after Bg3 White can play 21.f5 Ne5 22.Ng5!? h6? (22...Nd7! is correct, to regroup the bishop to e5 and the knight to f6) 23.f6! hxg5 24.Bxg5 with a strong attack, g6 being answered with 25.Ra3! . This requires further tests before the chances can be reasonably evaluated.]

20...Qxh4 21.f5

[After 21.Rf1 Black can (and should) force a draw in the traditional fashion with Bxh3 22.gxh3 Qg3+ etc.]

21...Ne5 22.Rf1 Bd7 23.Bf4 Ra8 24.Qd2 Qe7 25.b4

[25.b3 would stop ...Nc4 but Black would still stand very well after b4 followed by ...Bb5.]

25...Nc4 26.Qc3

[After 26.Qe1? Rxa1 27.Qxa1 , Black wins a pawn with cxb4 . If White were then to play 28.Rb1? he gets hit by Na3! .]

26...cxb4 27.Qxb4 White's pawn structure is more compact but Black's pieces are very active. The next move secures adequate counterplay.

Qf6! 28.Qe1 Qb2 29.Rc1

[And not 29.Bd3?? because of Qd4+]

[or 29.Qc1?? because of Rxa1 30.Qxa1 Qxc2 etc.]

29...Rfe8 Threatening 30...Bxf5.

30.Qf2 Ra3 This continued harrassment stops White from playing 31 Bd3.

31.Bb1 Qxf2+

[31...Qf6!? was possible here.]

32.Rxf2 f6 33.Rf3 Rea8 34.Bd3 Ne5 35.Bxe5 dxe5 A tacit offer of a draw which might have been influenced by the clock.

[35...fxe5 would keep the game going.]

36.Bf1

½-½

☐ Schulze,M

■ Davies,N

Correspondence

[Nigel Davies]

2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.Nbd2 exd4 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.d5 Nce5 15.a4 b4? These days I'm amazed that a strong player such as Graf would consistently weaken the c4-square in this variation. More amazing is that I copied his treatment without first switching my brain on...

[Black should choose between 15...Rb8 (see Rowson-Davies) and 15...Bb7.]

16.Nxe5 Nxe5 17.f4 Ng6 18.Nc4 a5 19.e5! This obvious move leaves Black in dire straits, so it's surprising that other moves have been played here.

[Iordachescu-Graf, Istanbul 2003, witnessed 19.b3 after which Ba6 20.Bd3 Bf6 21.Ra2 Bd4+ 22.Kh2 Ra7 23.g3 f6 24.Be3 Bc3 25.Bd2 Bd4 26.Be3 Bc3 27.Bd2 Bd4 was fine for Black and agreed drawn at this point.]

[In Bunyan-Davies, IECG World Championship Semi-Final 2003, White tried 19.f5!? , but Black was OK after Ba6! 20.fxc6 Bxc4 21.gxh7+ Kh8 22.Qg4 Qc8! 23.Qg3 Qd8! , inviting a draw by repetition which White should have accepted.]

19...Bb7 This position is deeply unpleasant for Black.

[I looked at 19...dxe5 20.fxe5 Bh4 but then 21.Re2 Ba6 22.b3 Bg3 23.Bxc6 hxc6 24.Qd3 keeps White's massive pawn centre.]

[Another possibility is 19...Ba6 , trying to evict the knight from c4, but after 20.b3 dxe5 21.fxe5 Bxc4 22.bxc4 Bh4 23.Re4 White has a big advantage.]

20.Qd3!

[I had been hoping for 20.Be4 , when Ba6 21.b3 f5 22.Bc2 Bxc4 23.bxc4 Bh4 24.Re2 Bg3 hits f4 and e5.]

20...f6

[I considered 20...Re8 but couldn't see how to get my pawn back after 21.exd6 Bf6 22.Rxe8+ Qxe8 23.Qe4]

[while 20...dxe5 is poor in view of 21.f5 b3 (or 21...e4 22.Rxe4 Qxd5 23.fxc6 Qxe4 24.gxh7+ Kh8 25.Qxe4 Bxe4 26.Bxe4 etc.) 22.Bb1 Qxd5 (or 22...e4 23.Qxb3 etc) 23.Qxd5 Bxd5 24.Nb6 , winning material.]

21.h4! Menacing h4-h5, which reduces me to desperation.

[21.e6 may also be strong. Black would be forced to play f5 but this would leave him with a very passive game.]

21...b3 22.Bb1

[I also thought that 22.Qxb3 was strong, for example Bxd5 23.h5 Nh4 24.exd6 Bxd6 25.Qd3 etc.]

22...fxe5

[Both 22...dxe5 23.d6]

[and 22...Re8 23.h5 Nf8 24.exd6 were hopeless.]

23.h5 Bh4 24.Re4? A big mistake for a correspondence game.

[White should play simply 24.Rf1 Rxf4 (or 24...e4 25.Qxb3) 25.Bxf4 .]

24...Nxf4! 25.Bxf4 Rxf4

[Not 25...exf4? , which leaves Black defenceless after 26.Re6 Bf2+ 27.Kf1 etc.]

26.Rxf4 exf4 27.Qxh7+ Kf8 28.Bg6 Qf6 Now both kings are in trouble!

[28...Bxd5 was less good thanks to 29.Qh8+ Bg8 30.h6 etc.]

29.Rd1

[Black can meet 29.h6 with Bxd5]

[and 29.Nb6 with Bf2+ 30.Kxf2 Qxb2+ etc.]

29...f3 30.h6 f2+ 31.Kf1 Ba6 32.Qh8+

[After 32.Qh8+ Ke7 33.Qxa8 Bxc4+ 34.Bd3 Qe5 35.Qb7+ there comes a draw by perpetual check.]

1/2-1/2

C96

□ **Rowson,J**

■ **Davies,N**

British League

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.Nbd2 exd4 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.d5 Nce5 15.a4 Rb8 Learning my lesson.

[For the mistaken 15...b4? as well as 15...Bb7 see Schulze - Davies]

16.axb5

[White can also play the immediate 16.Nh2 , which is very similar and will probably transpose. Shchekachev-Gustafsson, Velden 2004, went Ng6 17.Ndf3 (17.Ndf1 Bg5 18.Ne3 Nf6 19.Nf3 Bf4 20.axb5 axb5 21.b4 Re8 22.Nf1 Nd7 23.Bxf4 Nxf4 gave Black adequate counterplay in Bologan-Stefansson, Moscow 2004 ,while 17.g3 leads to very similar play to the main game) 17...Re8 18.Ra2 Bb7 19.b3 Bf6 20.Ng4 Bc3 21.Re3 b4 22.Bd2 h5 23.Ngh2 Bf6 24.a5 Bc8 25.Bd3 Nf4 26.Bf1 Nf8 27.Re1 N4g6 with a complex struggle in which Black stood no worse.]

16...axb5 17.Nh2 By avoiding the exchange on e5 White hopes to show that Black has too many knights for the single e5-square.

[17.Nxe5 was covered in Anand-Ponomarev]

[but White also has an alternative in 17.Nb3 . Chandler-Davies, British League 2004, continued Nxf3+ 18.Qxf3 Bf6 19.Na5 Qb6 20.Qg3 Bb7 21.Nxb7 Rxb7 22.Ra2 Be5 23.Qg4 when a draw was agreed. There's still a lot of play left here but post mortem analysis suggested that Black was no worse.]

17...Ng6 18.g3 A very ambitious plan from Rowson, hoping to deprive Black's knights of decent squares at the cost of weakening his kingside.

[18.Ndf3 Re8]

[and 18.Ndf1 Bg5 would be very similar to the references quoted after 16 Nh2.]

18...Nf6 19.h4 h5 This stops White's h-pawn in its tracks and gains more of a grip on the g4-square. However, it is certainly not Black's only move.

[There's a case to be made for pure piece play with, for example, 19...Re8 20.f4 (20.h5 Ne5) 20...Qd7!?, intending ...Qh3 in some lines. All of which will be immensely complicated...]

20.f4 Ng4

[Again Black had interesting alternatives in 20...Qd7 and 20...Re8. Even now I wouldn't like to hazard a guess as to which is the best, though I am suspicious of my play in the game.]

21.Ndf3 Qb6 22.Kg2 c4 Giving away the d4-square like this is hugely committal, although in a sense it is the logical follow-up to 20...Ng4.

23.Qe2 b4!? I felt that I had to play sharply before White consolidated and occupied the d4-square.

[23...Bf6 is a natural move but after 24.f5 N6e5 25.Nxe5 Bxe5 26.Nxg4 hxg4 27.Qxg4 I am more worried by the vulnerability of Black's kingside than the lost pawn.]

24.Nd2

[With the clock ticking faster than he would have liked, Rowson didn't like the look of 24.Nxg4 Bxg4 (24...hxg4 25.Nd2 is good for White) 25.Qxc4, when Black might try, for example, b3!? 26.Be3 Qd8 27.Bxb3 Bxf3+ 28.Kxf3 Qd7 with a lot of play for the two pawns. I'm not convinced this is good enough, but chess is a game rather than a science.]

24...c3 25.bxc3 Nxh2 26.Kxh2 Bg4 27.Qe3 Qd8!?

[Objectively speaking best might be 27...Qxe3 28.Rxe3 Bf6, when Black may have enough counterplay to offset the ragged nature of his pawns. But against an opponent who was running short of time it seemed reasonable to roll the dice.]

28.cxb4 Bxh4!? **29.gxh4**

[Declining the sacrifice is not a safe option as after retreating his king's bishop Black has ...h5-h4 ideas. A sample line is 29.Nc4 Be7 30.Bb2 h4 31.Qc3 hxg3+ 32.Kxg3 (32.Qxg3 Rxb4 33.Qxg4 Rxc4 34.Bd3 Rb4 35.Ra2 Bf6 looks okay) 32...Bf6 33.e5 Bxe5! 34.fxe5 Qh4+ 35.Kg2 Nf4+ with a winning attack.]

29...Qxh4+ 30.Kg1 Rfc8 31.Ra2??

[White had to play 31.Bd3, when Nxf4 32.Bf1 holds the kingside. With best play by White Black's compensation may be inadequate, though practice - as usual - is a very different matter.]

31...Rc3! The first of two hammer blows which decide the game.

32.Bd3

[32.Qxc3 Qxe1+ 33.Kh2 Qf2+ 34.Kh1 Nxf4 leads to mate.]

32...Rxd3! 33.Qxd3 Qxe1+ 34.Qf1 Qg3+ 35.Qg2 Qxg2+ 36.Kxg2 Nxf4+ 37.Kh2 Rxb4

Black is winning the endgame because of his two extra pawns, but he has to be precise because of the weakness of the pawn on d6.

38.Rc2 Ra4 39.Rc6

[39.Nc4 Bd1 40.Rb2 Rxc4 41.Bxf4 Rxe4 42.Bxd6 Rd4 would polish off the last of White's pawns.]

39...Nd3?!

[Even stronger was 39...Ra2, when 40.Rxd6 Nd3 wins a piece.]

40.Kg3 Nxc1 41.Rxc1 Rd4 42.Nc4 Rxe4 43.Nxd6 Rd4 44.Re1 Rd3+ 45.Kh2 f5 46.Re8+ Kh7 47.Nf7 Rxd5 48.Kg3 f4+! A little trick to get Black's pawns rolling.

49.Kh4

[49.Kxf4 Rf5+ and the knight drops.]

49...f3 50.Ng5+ Kg6 51.Ne4 Bd7 52.Re7 Bf5 53.Nf2 Kf6 54.Ra7 g5+ 55.Kg3 g4 56.Kh4 Rd2 57.Ra6+ Ke5 58.Ra5+ Kf4

0-1

C96

Ariel,D

Graf,A

New York Open

[Nigel Davies]

1998

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.Nbd2 exd4 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.e5 This hasn't been played very much but it isn't at all bad. White gets a kingside pawn majority and hopes this will provide attacking chances.

dx5 15.dxe5 c4 The sharpest move, giving Black the c5-square for his knight.

[However, it looks as if 15...Re8 is a very reasonable alternative, preparing to drop the knight on d7 back to f8]

[while another possibility is 15...Bb7 .]

16.b3 Nc5

[In an earlier game Mr. Graf (formerly Nenashev) had played 16...c3 , after which 17.Ne4 (17.Nf1 Nc5) 17...Ndx5 18.Nxe5 Qxd1 19.Rxd1 Nxe5 20.Nxc3 looked more or less equal in Stefansson-Nenashev, Komotini 1993. Presumably Kotronias and Ariel had some improvement in mind or felt that the final position was slightly better for White. But neither of them get very much.]

17.bxc4 Be6 18.cxb5

[Kotronias-Nenashev, Karditsa 1996, had gone 18.Ba3 bxc4 19.Re3 Rb8 (19...Rc8 looks like an improvement for Black, getting the rook behind his passed c-pawn) 20.Qe2 Nb4 21.Bxb4 Rxb4 22.a3 Rb7 23.Nxc4 and White was a pawn up. Of course Ariel couldn't expect a strong GM to repeat all the same moves and I suspect that 19...Rc8 was the improvement that Graf had in mind.]

18...axb5 19.a3 b4 With the queenside pawns getting liquidated White can kiss goodbye to his chances of winning an endgame. Nevertheless he manages to exchange off Black's active pieces and plays on with a nominal edge.

20.Re3 Qd7 21.Bb2 Rab8 22.axb4 Nxb4 23.Bd4 Rfc8?! Playing to win?

[23...Nxc2 24.Qxc2 Bf5 looks like a slightly more efficient way to continue. White has nothing without his light-squared bishop.]

24.Bb1 Nd5 25.Re1 Nf4 26.Bxc5 Rxc5 27.Qa4 Qxa4 28.Rxa4 Nd5 29.Ne4 Rcb5 30.Bd3 Rb4 31.Rxb4 Nxb4 32.Bb1 g6 33.Nd4 Bd7 34.Rc1 Rd8 35.Nd6?! After this the game fizzles out to a draw.

[White could have kept trying with 35.Rc7]

[or 35.Rc4 .]

35...Bxd6 36.exd6 Be8 37.Rc4 Nd5 38.Be4 Nb6 39.Rb4 Rxd6 40.Bc6 Bxc6 41.Rxb6
1/2-1/2

C96

□ Dvoirys,S

■ Graf,A

Moscow

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.O-O Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.Nbd2 exd4 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.Nf1 This typical 'Spanish' move is something of a rarity here, though quite playable. The knight is en route for either d5 or f5 and Black, meanwhile, must create counterplay in the centre.

cxd4 An equalizer. Black has tried a couple of alternatives here but only one of them looks interesting.

[The passive 14...Re8 led to an edge for White after 15.Ne3 Bf8 16.Nd5 h6 17.a4 Bb7 18.Ra3 cxd4 19.Nxd4 Nxd4 20.Qxd4 in Serrano-Harter, Lima 2002.]

[For the ambitious 14...Bf6 see Froeyman-Kazhgaleyev.]

15.Nxd4 Nxd4 16.Qxd4 Ne5 17.Qd1 Bf6 18.Ne3 Be6 19.Nd5 Bxd5 20.Qxd5 Rc8

White has two bishops and control of d5, but this is offset by Black's active pieces and play on the c-file.

21.Bb3 Rc5 22.Qd1 Nc4 23.Rb1 d5 24.exd5 Rxd5 25.Qf3 Rd3 26.Qe4

[Up to this point the entire game had followed Sanden-Barle, Balatonbereny 1994. That game had gone 26.Qb7 Na5 27.Qxa6 Nxb3 28.axb3 Rxb3 29.Bf4 h6 30.Bd6 Qa8 31.Qxa8 Rxa8 32.Be5 Bxe5 with a draw being agreed in this rook endgame. Was Dvoirys's move a prepared improvement or was he hoping to make a draw by repetition? Certainly he doesn't seem to trouble Graf too much.]

26...Rd4 27.Qc6 Rd6 28.Qf3 Rd3 29.Qe4 Rd4 30.Qc6 Qc8 Playing for a win!

[Black could repeat the position with 30...Rd6 .]

31.Qxc8 Rxc8 32.Rd1 h6 33.Rxd4 Bxd4 34.Kf1 g5 35.Bd1 Rc6 36.b3 Ne5 37.Bb2 Rd6

38.Be2 Bxb2 39.Rxb2 Nc6 40.Rc2 Kg7 41.Rc5 Nd4 42.Bg4 f5 Acceding to the inevitable.

[42...f5 43.Bxf5 Nxf5 44.Rxf5 Rd1+ 45.Ke2 Ra1 46.a4 bxa4 47.bxa4 Rxa4 is about as drawn as you can get.]

1/2-1/2

C96

□ **Froeyman,H**

■ **Kazhgaleyev,M**

French League

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5

10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.Nbd2 exd4 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.Nf1 Bf6

[A more ambitious move than 14...cxd4 , maintaining the tension in the centre and intensifying the pressure against d4. It's certainly understandable that Kazhgaleyev would want to play this way against a lower-rated opponent.]

15.Be3 Correctly reinforcing d4.

[In Garrido Dominguez-Fernandez Garcia, Dos Hermanas 2004, Black obtained good compensation for a pawn after 15.Bf4 Nxd4 16.Bxd6 Nxf3+ 17.Qxf3 Ne5 18.Qd1 Re8 19.Bxc5 Be6 20.Qxd8 Raxd8 21.Rad1 Rc8 .]

15...Bb7 16.Ng3

[After 16.Rc1 Re8 17.Bb1 cxd4 18.Nxd4 Nxd4 19.Bxd4 Be5 20.Ne3 Nf6 Black had equalized and a draw was agreed in David-Skembris, Cappelle la Grande 1999.]

16...Rc8 17.Rc1 Re8 18.Bb1

[White might also consider 18.Nf5 , hitting d6, though cxd4 19.N3xd4 Nb6 gives Black adequate counterplay.]

18...g6 19.b3 Apparently this is a new move, getting the b-pawn out of the way of the bishop on f6 and covering the c4-square.

[Anagnostopoulos-Skembris, Karditsa 1996, went 19.Qd2 Qe7 (I don't like the 19...c4 played in Marrero-Ramon, Havana 2004, because it takes all the pressure off d4; after 20.Nh2 Bg7 , instead of 21 f4, White should probably have played 21.Ng4 probing Black's kingside) 20.Rcd1 Rcd8 21.b3 cxd4 22.Nxd4 Nc5 23.Qc1 Nxd4 24.Bxd4 Bxd4 25.Rxd4 and now Qe5 (rather than 25...d5 26.e5 Ne6 27.Rg4 , which proved dangerous in the game) 26.Rdd1 Ne6 gives Black very adequate counterplay.]

19...Bg7!?

[The alternative 19...Nxd4 20.Nxd4 cxd4 21.Rxc8 Qxc8 22.Bxd4 would be equal, but Black wants to keep more play in the position. However, his continuously ambitious play soon proves to be quite risky.]

20.Qd2 Qa5 21.Qxa5 Nxa5 22.Red1 c4?! 23.Bd2 Nc6 24.bxc4 Nxd4 25.Nxd4 Bxd4

26.Bb4 Be5

[After 26...Bc5 27.Bxc5 Nxc5 28.cxb5 axb5 29.f3 White could claim a slight edge because of the weakness of the d6 pawn. By keeping the dark-squared bishops on Black hopes for more counterplay.]

27.cxb5 axb5 28.Rxc8 Rxc8 29.Bd3 Nf6 Giving up a pawn for counterplay.

[After 29...Bc6 30.Rc1 Black's position would be very unpleasant.]

30.Bxb5 h5 31.a4 h4 32.Ne2

[32.Bxd6 Rd8 should be avoided.]

32...Nxe4 33.Rc1 Rb8 34.Rc7?! Having played well up to this point White starts to go off track. Probably time-trouble was raising its ugly head.

[The simple 34.f3 looks better for White after Ng3 35.Nxg3 Bxg3 36.Be1 , White's passed a-pawn being the most significant factor in the position.]

34...Ba6 35.f4? This gives Black the advantage.

[35.Bxa6 Rxb4 36.Rc4 Rb1+ 37.Rc1 is equal.]

35...Bxb5 36.fxe5?? This is a blunder possibly caused by the advance of time trouble.

[White had to play 36.axb5 , when Rxb5 37.fxe5 Rxb4 38.exd6 Nxd6 offers drawing chances because the pawns are limited to the kingside.]

36...Bxe2 37.exd6 Nf6 38.Bc3 Nd5 39.Rc5? Missing his last chance.

[White had to try 39.Rc6!?, when Black has to find Kf8 (39...Nxc3 40.d7 Kg7 41.Rc8 Rb1+ 42.Kf2 Rd1 43.d8Q Rxd8 44.Rxd8 would be very difficult for Black to win) 40.Be1 Ke8 . Black is probably winning here but there are some technical difficulties to overcome.]

39...Nxc3 40.d7 Ba6 41.Rxc3 Kf8 42.Rc6 Bb7 43.Rb6 Ke7 44.a5 Kxd7 45.a6 Kc7

46.Rxb7+ Rxb7 47.axb7 Kxb7 The pawn endgame is winning for Black despite his distant king.

48.Kf2 Kc6 49.Kf3 Kd5 50.Kg4 Ke4 51.Kg5 Ke3 52.Kxh4 Kf4 53.g3+ Kf5 54.g4+ Kf4

55.g5 Kf5 56.Kg3 Kxg5 57.h4+ Kf5 58.Kh3 f6 A messy game in which the stronger player handled his clock better.

0-1

CHAPTER 2: RUY LOPEZ: KERES VARIATION: 12 OTHERS

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0
9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Nd7

Practical players have often chosen 12 dxc5 against the Keres - conventional wisdom claims that White gets an edge without having to know much theory. But thanks to Mr Graf it seems that Black is doing well after 13...Bb7, which prevents White from manoeuvring his pieces round at leisure. I have had this line in several of my own games and achieved quite good results. In Petrovic-Davies White started to run out of ideas and wrongly tried to force the issue with 21 Ng4?! and 22 Nh6+. White played much more solidly in Al Modiahki-Davies, but still didn't make much of an impression on Black's rock-like position.

Another simple plan for White is to close the centre with 12 d5, though the problem with this is that Black is well placed to force through ...f7-f5. In Fischer-Keres White tried to prevent this with 13 g4, only to run into 13...h5!, while in A.Hunt-Davies White did even worse with 13 b3, though Leko's 13 Nbd2 (given in a note) looks playable.

Kasparov-Ponomariov is a fascinating game for Keres Variation fans because Kasparov is seen to avoid the main lines with 12 Nbd2. I don't like Ponomariov's 12...cxd4 because it gives White's knight the c3-square. I therefore played the solid 12...Qc7 in Luther-Davies, and other moves also look reasonable.

Summary

12 dxc5 has had its terrors shorn by Graf's 13...Bb7 and is no longer a problem. Theory has hitherto considered 12 d5 to be a mistake, although Leko's 13 Nbd2 (see the note to White's 13th move in A.Hunt-Davies) turns what was thought to be a bad line into a playable one. Kasparov's choice of 12 b3 keeps plenty of tension in the position and I'm sure we haven't seen the last of it. But Black's chances seem very reasonable after either 12...Qc7, 12...Bf6 or even 12...Rb8.

Index

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0
9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Nd7 12 b3!?
 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 Nbd2 Bb7
 14 Nf1 - Petrovic-Davies
 14 Qe2 - Al Modiahki-Davies
 12 d5 Nb6
 13 g4 - Fischer-Keres
 13 b3 - A.Hunt-Davies
12...Qc7 - Luther-Davies
 12...cxd4 - Kasparov-Ponomariov

□ Petrovic,D

■ Davies,N

Correspondence

[Nigel Davies]

2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.dxe5 A simple line with which White hopes to maintain a slight initiative. **dxe5 13.Nbd2 Bb7!** Graf's favourite way of playing the position leaves Black with little to worry about, the pressure against e4 making it difficult for White to reorganize.

[After 13...f6 White gets the initiative with 14.Nh4 , for example Nb6 15.Nf5 Rf7 16.Nb3 Nb7 17.Be3 Qc7 18.Nd2 Bf8 19.a4 Be6 20.axb5 axb5 21.Rxa8 Nxa8 22.Qa1 with strong pressure in Dolmatov-Piket, Groningen 1993.]

14.Nf1 Immediately setting about bringing the knight to either e3 or g3.

[For 14.Qe2 and 14 b3 see Al Modiahki-Davies.]

14...Nc4 15.N3h2 Following a recent game of Shirov and leaving the f3-square open to White's queen.

[Black can meet 15.Ng3 with g6 , for example 16.b3 Nd6 17.Bh6 (17.h4 Ne8 18.Bh6 Ng7 19.h5 Qc7 20.Ng5 Nf6 left Black's defences well organized in Tal-Romanishin, Jurmala 1983) 17...Re8 18.Qd2 (18.h4 Bf8 19.Qd2 Qe7 20.Rad1 Rad8 21.h5 Bxh6 22.Qxh6 Nf8 23.Qe3 Nc8 was also very solid in Lobron-Romanishin, Indonesia 1983) 18...Qc7 19.Rad1 Rad8 20.Qc1 f6 21.Nh2 Nf7 22.Ng4 Nf8 23.Bxf8 Rxf8 24.Ne3 Rxd1 25.Rxd1 Rd8 26.a4 Bf8 27.axb5 axb5 28.Rxd8 Qxd8 29.c4 b4 30.Nd5 Bxd5 31.cxd5 Qa5 and with White's passed d-pawn firmly under control, Black had little to worry about in Balashov-Romanishin, Moscow 1983.]

[Another fairly harmless move is 15.b3 , after which Nd6 16.a4 Re8 17.N3d2 Bg5 18.Nc4 bxc4 19.Bxg5 Qc7 20.Nd2 cxb3 21.Bxb3 c4 was equal in Tzoumbas-Graf, Hania 1994.]

15...Nf6 Black prepares to exchange White's knight the moment it lands on g4.

[15...Qc7 16.Ng4 Rfe8?! (16...Nf6 is still possible) 17.Qf3 Bf8 18.Ng3 saw White get far more latitude on the kingside in Shirov-Kakhgaleyev, Bastia 2002. The game went Nd6 19.Bg5 Re6 20.Rad1 c4 21.Ne3 Nc5 22.Nd5! Bxd5 23.exd5 Ree8 24.Nh5 e4 25.Qg3 Kh8 26.Nf6! Re7 27.Bf4 Rd8 28.Nxe4 Ncxe4 29.Bxe4 with a good extra pawn.]

16.Qf3 A 'new move' at the time of the game.

[Ganguly-Thipsay, Jodhpur 2003, had gone 16.Qe2 Qc7 17.Ng3 Nd6 18.Bg5 Kh8 19.Rad1 Rad8 20.b3 Ng8 21.Bc1 c4 22.b4 a5 23.a3 axb4 24.axb4 Nf6 with White getting precisely nowhere.]

16...Qc7 17.Ng3 Nd6 The most economical way to defend f5, doing so without weakening the kingside, at least for the time being.

18.Nhf1 Nd7 Signifying a new stage in the struggle - Black's knight has done its job of temporarily guarding f5 and prepares to come to c5 after ...c5-c4. The text also frees Black's f-pawn to advance - note that since the e4-pawn is pinned against White's queen, ...f7-f5 is in the air.

19.Ne3 g6! Making both White's knights bite on granite, and threatening ...f7-f5. Black is certainly no worse here but my opponent refuses to give up on his pursuit of the initiative.

20.Qe2

[After 20.Nd5 Bxd5 21.exd5 f5 Black would have a firm blockade of the d5-pawn and a mobile kingside pawn majority.]

20...c4 21.Ng4?! Rather than face the prospect of defending passively, White tries to drum up play on the kingside and prepares an unsound piece sacrifice.

[He should have settled for the mundane 21.Rd1 when Nf6 is Black's most solid option.]

21...h5! Calling White's bluff.

22.Nh6+?! It's easy to criticize this move if you're not playing White but by now the alternatives are

far from pleasant.

[Black could meet 22.Nh2 with Nc5 , when 23.f3 (the safest way to meet 23.Nxh5 is with Ndx4 intending ...Rfd8 and ...Nc5-d3) 23...Rfd8 leaves Black better due to his nicely placed pieces and possibilities for invasion on d3.]

[22.Nxh5 would transpose into the next note after gxh5 23.Nh6+ Kg7 .]

22...Kg7 23.Nhf5+

[White's attack also runs out of steam after 23.Nxh5+ gxh5 24.Qxh5 (nor is 24.f4 Rh8 good enough) 24...Rh8 , for example 25.Rd1 Rh7 26.Be3 Rf8 27.Rd2 Kh8 regroups effectively and leaves Black ready to take the initiative with ...f7-f5.]

23...gxf5 24.Nxh5+

[Or 24.Qxh5 Rh8 etc.]

24...Kh8 25.exf5

[After 25.Ng3 Nf6 26.exf5 Qc6! Black also takes the initiative.]

25...Qc6! Throwing a spanner in the works.

26.Nf4

[The natural way to defend g2 is by playing 26.f3 , but this cuts White's queen off from the kingside. And after Rg8 27.Kh2 Bh4 or 27...Rae8 it would be Black who has the attacking chances on the kingside.]

26...Nf6 27.Qxe5 Rg8 28.f3

[28.Qxe7 Rxd2+ wins on the spot.]

28...Rxd2+!

[Black has a winning attack, which you have plenty of time to see in a correspondence game. 28...Rxd2+ 29.Nxd2 (29.Kxd2 Qxf3+ 30.Kg1 Rg8+ leads to mate) 29...Qxf3 30.Qe2 Qxh3 threatens both 31...Rg8 and 31...Ng4, both of which lead to terrible carnage.]

0-1

C96

☐ Al Modiahki,M

■ Davies,N

Port Erin

[Nigel Davies]

2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.dxc5 dxc5 13.Nbd2 Bb7 14.Qe2

[In another game of mine, Moreno Carnero-Davies, Isle of Man 2003, White played 14.b3 after which Re8 15.Nf1 Bf8 16.Bg5 f6 17.Bd2 Nb6 18.Ne3 c4 19.Qe2 Bc8 20.Red1 Qc7 21.b4 Nb7 22.a4 (after 22.Nd5 Nxd5 23.exd5 Nd6 the knight on d6 is superbly placed) 22...Be6 23.a5 Nc8 24.Nh4 Ne7 25.Nhf5 Rad8 left me very solidly placed.]

14...Qc7

[In retrospect it might have been better to play 14...Re8 before committing the queen. Kolev-Graf, Skopje 2002 went 15.Nf1 Nc4 16.Ng3 (16.Rd1 Qc7 17.b3 Nd6 18.c4 Nf8 19.Bb2 Bf6 20.Ne3 Ne6 21.Ng4 Nd4 22.Nxd4 cxd4 23.cxb5 axb5 24.Nxf6+ gxf6 was fine for Black in Shirov-Kazhgaleyev, Bastia 2002 - Black's kingside weaknesses can't be exploited and White's bishop pair is not an effective force here) 16...g6 17.Rd1 (17.Nh2 was played in Sargissian-Graf, Novgorod 1999, after which Qc7 was probably the best) 17...Qc7 18.Nh2 Nf6 19.b3 (19.a4 Nb6 20.axb5 axb5 21.Bg5 c4 22.Qf3 Rxa1 23.Rxa1 Nbd7 24.b4 h5 25.Nhf1 Nh7 26.Bxe7 Rxe7 27.Qe3 Re8 was fine for Black in Psakhis-Graf, Tilburg 1994) 19...Nd6 20.a4 Bc6 21.axb5 axb5 22.Bh6 Rxa1 23.Rxa1 Ra8 24.Rxa8+ Bxa8 25.Nf3 Nd7 26.h4 c4 27.b4 Ne8 28.Bg5 Ndf6 29.Qd1 Bc6 30.Qa1 Bd6 31.Qa6 Qb7 32.Qxb7 Bxb7 33.Nd2 h5 34.f3 Nh7

35.Bd8 (35.Be3 Be7 is very embarrassing: White can defend his h-pawn with the bishop for a while, but when Black's king comes to e8 he's forced to concede the bishop pair) 35...Nc7 36.Ngf1 Kf8 37.Ne3 Ke8 38.Bxc7 Bxc7 39.Kf2 Nf6 40.g3 Bb6 41.Ke2 Ke7 42.Bb1 Ne8 43.f4 Bc7 44.f5 Nf6 45.fxg6 fxg6 46.Bc2 Kf7 47.Nf3 Ke7 48.Ng5 Bb6 49.Kd1 Bc6 50.Ke2 Ba7 51.Kd1 Bb6 52.Ke2 Bd8 53.Kd1 Be8 54.Ke2 Kd6 55.Kf3 Be7 56.g4 hxg4+ 57.Nxg4 Nh5 58.Nh6 Nf4 59.Nhf7+ Bxf7 60.Nxf7+ Ke6 61.Ng5+ Kd7 62.Bd1 Bxg5 63.hxg5 Nh3 64.Ke3 Nxg5 65.Bg4+ Kd6 66.Bc8 Nh7 67.Bh3 Nf8 68.Kf3 Nd7 69.Bxd7 Kxd7 70.Kg4 Ke7 71.Kg5 Kf7 72.Kg4 Kg8 73.Kg5 Kg7 74.Kh4 Kh6 75.Kg4 g5 76.Kf5 Kh5 77.Kxe5 g4 78.Kf4 Kh4 79.e5 g3 0-1 - a nice grind by the expert in this line.]

15.Nf1 Nc4 16.b3 Nd6 17.c4 White wants to put his f1 knight on d5. But Black can do the same thing, routing one of his knights to d4.

Rfe8 18.Bb2 f6

[Instead of this Black can play 18...Bf8 19.Rad1 Bc6 20.Ne3 Qb7 , when in the game Short-Portisch, Tilburg 1988, White offered his e-pawn with 21.Ba1 , and after Nxe4 22.Ng4 Nef6 23.Nfxe5 Nxe5 24.Bxe5 Nxg4 25.Qxg4 g6 26.h4 had some initiative. Of course Graf would have been ready with an improvement on this; for example it may be better to play 21...Bxe4.]

19.Ne3 Nf8

[I didn't like 19...Nxe4 in view of 20.Nh4 , with dangerous attacking chances on the kingside.]

20.Nd5 Qd8 21.cxb5 axb5 I offered a draw which was accepted. Black is no worse here as he can bring a knight to d4.

1/2-1/2

C96

□ Fischer,R

■ Keres,P

Candidates Tournament, Curacao

1962

[Nigel Davies]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.d5 Keres modestly stated that this advance was, in his opinion, premature. Although it is often a good idea in the Closed Spanish, in this particular position Black quickly gets in ...f7-f5.

Nb6 13.g4 White attempts to prevent 13...f5, but is jumping from the frying pan to the fire. For the alternatives see Hunt-Davies.

h5! 14.Nh2 'By advancing his g-pawn White has significantly weakened the dark squares on the kingside. Naturally Black takes immediate advantage of this weakness.' - Keres.

hxg4 15.hxg4 Bg5! 16.Nd2 g6 17.Ndf3 Bxc1

[Keres also considered 17...Bf4 here. After the text White gets to stop Black's attack on the kingside by exchanging queens; unfortunately the endgame is also poor.]

18.Qxc1 Kg7 19.Qg5 Nb7

[In his notes Keres was somewhat critical of this move, suggesting in fact that 19...Bd7 was best in order to prevent a2-a4.]

[Interestingly, a game Blatny-Filip, Prague 1963, went 19...Qxg5 20.Nxg5 Bd7 21.Kg2 c4 22.Nh3 Nb7 , also with a clear advantage to Black. It is unlikely that White had 'prepared' this line, for in the days before computers even games from the Candidates weren't easy to get hold of!]

20.Qxd8 Rxd8 21.a4! Fischer makes the most of his chances. The threat is to play 22 a5 followed by 23 b4, closing the queenside. Keres decides that he cannot allow this.

bxa4 22.Bxa4 Nxa4 23.Rxa4 Bd7 24.Ra2 From what was a rather desperate situation White has now obtained some counterplay on the queenside. Keres finally manages to bring home the

point anyway, but Fischer's superb defence almost saves the day.

c4 25.Nd2 Bb5 26.Nhf1 Rh8 27.Ne3 Rh4 28.Kg2

[After 28.Ndxc4 Black plays Rah8 29.Kf1 (29.Kg2 Rh2+ 30.Kf3 R8h3+ 31.Ke2 Nc5) 29...Nc5 , when his initiative will at least pocket White's e4-pawn.]

28...Rah8 29.Nf3

[Here too 29.Ndxc4? Rh2+ 30.Kf1 Nc5 puts White in all sorts of trouble.]

29...Rh3 30.Nf1 Nc5 31.Ng3 Bd7 32.g5 f6 33.gxf6+ Kxf6 34.Re3 Ke7 35.Nd2 Rh2+

36.Kg1 Bb5 37.Ra1 R2h4 38.Kg2 Rf8 39.Rf3 Rb8 40.Kg1 Ra8 41.Ra5 Rc8 42.Ra3 Ra8

[Perhaps 42...Nd3 would have been better.]

43.Ra5 Ra7 44.Kg2 Nb7 45.Ra1 a5 46.Ngf1 Nc5 47.Ne3 a4

[47...Nxe4 runs into 48.Nxe4 Rxe4 49.Rh1 , suddenly developing all sorts of activity.]

48.Rh3

[Also worth considering is 48.Rg3 , when Kf7 could be answered by 49.Nexc4 Bxc4 50.Nxc4 Nxe4 51.f3!? Nxc3 52.Nxd6+ Kf8 53.Kxc3 followed by 54 Ne4. White would then have two connected passed pawns and a strong knight for the exchange. Could he actually be better?]

48...Rhx3 49.Khx3 Nd3 50.Ra2 Nxf2+ 51.Kg3 Nd3 52.Nexc4 Ra8 53.Nb6 Ra6 54.Nbc4

Nc5 55.Kf3 Ra8 56.b4 Nb3 57.Na3 Bd7 58.Kg2

[I don't see how Black would make progress after 58.Ndc4 Rh8 59.Rg2 - his knights hold the queenside, allowing him to go active with the rook.]

58...Bg4 59.Nac4 Rc8 60.Ne3 Bd7 61.c4 Rb8 62.b5 Nc5 63.Nd1 Kd8 64.Nc3 Ra8 65.Nf3

Kc7 66.Ng5 Kb6 67.Nf7 Rf8 68.Rf2 a3 69.Rf3?

[After 69.Nxd6 Black can play Rxf2+ 70.Kxf2 Kc7 71.Nf7 Nxe4+ 72.Nxe4 a2 , with a new queen about to be crowned.]

69...Bg4 70.Rf2?

[70.Rf1 would have been more tenacious.]

70...a2! 71.Nxa2 Nxe4 72.Rf1 Bf5 73.c5+

[73.Nh6 Bh3+ wins White's rook.]

73...dxc5

0-1

C96

□ **Hunt,A**

■ **Davies,N**

Blackpool

[Nigel Davies]

2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5

10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.d5 This was the first game in which I played the Keres system over the board, so White could hardly have expected my choice. Being new to the position he chooses the same move as Fischer.

Nb6 13.b3

[But here White plays less consistently than the American Grandmaster who went 13.g4 .]

[In the rapidplay match Leko-Adams, Miskolc 2005, White tried 13.Nbd2 so that after f5 14.exf5 Bxf5 15.Bxf5 Rxf5 16.Ne4 he could use the e4-square. Adams probably thought that after Qe8 17.Nfg5 Nb7 18.Ne6 he could evict the knight without much trouble, but it proved to be quite troublesome. In retrospect 16...h6 would have been safer, and 16...Nb7 would also keep a knight out of g5 for the time being. But the move I like most is 16...Kh8, making room for the queen on g8. White has some problems here with his d-pawn. Leko's 13 Nbd2 looks like the best move, but I don't think it is particularly threatening for Black.]

13...f5

[In Berczes-Jamrich, Budapest 2001 Black rejected the opportunity to play this logical move immediately. Play went 13...Bd7 14.Be3 Nb7 15.Nbd2 and now there finally came f5! , after which 16.Nf1 f4 17.Bc1 a5 18.N1d2 b4 19.c4 a4 20.Rb1 axb3 21.axb3 Qe8 22.Nh2 g5 23.Bd3 Qg6 gave Black a good game anyway.]

14.exf5 Bxf5 15.Bxf5 Rxf5 16.Re4 This looks aggressive, but the rook has no prospects on this square.

[A reasonable try would have been 16.Na3 , after which artificially isolating the d5-pawn with 16...c4 could have been met by 17 Be3, trying to put pressure on the c4-pawn. But Qd7 17.c4 Raf8 18.Bd2 Nb7 19.Kh2 Nd8 was pretty good for Black in Solomunovic -Blagojevic, Tuzla 1991]

16...c4 17.b4 Nb7 This position is close to winning for Black. The d5-pawn is firmly cut off from its comrades and Black can operate against both this and White's kingside.

18.Na3 Qd7 19.g4? This further aggressive gesture does not help matters. The weakness of White's kingside just adds to his troubles.

Rf7 20.Be3

[Black could meet 20.Ng5 with Bxg5 21.Bxg5 Raf8 22.Be3 Na4 23.Qd2 Rf3 24.Kg2 Qf7 , threatening various nasty things such as 25...Qg6 and 25...Rxh3.]

20...Na4 21.Nb1 It is true that this closes out the rook on a1 but it is not easy to defend all of White's weaknesses.

[White may have been concerned about 21.Rc1 being met by 21... a5, but I would probably have chosen to play in a similar way to the game with Raf8 22.Ne1 Bd8 , intending 23...Bb6. Sooner or later that pawn on d5 is going to come under the spotlight.]

21...Raf8 22.Nfd2 Bd8 23.a3 Bb6 24.f3 Nd8 25.Kg2 Qb7 There's no good way to meet this move. The knight on d2 obstructs the defence of the d5-pawn but is needed to defend f3.

26.Nf1 Rxf3! 27.Qxf3

[After 27.Nbd2 Black could finish with a flourish via Rf2+! 28.Bxf2 Rxf2+ 29.Kh1 Nxc3 , when White's entire position caves in.]

27...Rxf3 28.Kxf3 Qf7+

[Even more effective than the immediate 28...Qxd5 - White's king is first driven away from the protection of the rook.]

29.Ke2 Qxd5 30.Ng3

[30.Nfd2 Qd3+ 31.Kf2 Bc7 , threatening 32...d5, is not something you want the spectators to be watching.]

30...Qd3+ 31.Kf2 Qc2+ Black will pick up the rook on a1 with 32...Qb2.

0-1

C96

□ **Kasparov,G**

■ **Ponomariov,R**

Russia vs The World, Moscow

[Nigel Davies]

2002

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7 12.b3 This might be regarded as something of a compliment, with Kasparov avoiding the main lines altogether. In fact 12 b3 is sound and flexible, putting the onus on Black as to how to tackle White's centre.

cx d4!? I don't like this move very much as it frees the c3-square for White's knight.

[A similar objection might be made about 12...exd4 , although after 13.cxd4 Nc6 14.Nc3 (14.d5 Nb4 15.Nc3 Bf6 16.Bb2 Nxc2 17.Qxc2 ½-½ was Stein-Tal, Moscow 1964) 14...Bf6 15.Be3

cx d4 16.Nxd4 Nxd4 17.Bxd4 Bb7 Black obtained a solid position in Stein-Darga, Amsterdam Interzonal 1964.]

[Amongst the less direct options Romanishin's 12...Rb8 led to complex play after 13.Bb2 Nc6 14.d5 Na7 15.a4 (one of the points behind Black's 12th move is that 15.c4? bxc4 16.bxc4?? hangs the bishop on b2) 15...bxa4 16.Rxa4 c4 in Vitolinsh-Romanishin, Jurmala 1983.]

[12...Bf6 brought Black equality after 13.dxc5 (note that 13.d5 is worth considering now that Black can't so easily play ...f7-f5) 13...dxc5 14.Nbd2 Nb6 15.Nf1 Be6 16.Ne3 Qxd1 17.Rxd1 Rfd8 in Quinteros-Ivkov, Stip 1977]

[Last but not least there is the sensible 12...Qc7 , which was my choice in the game Luther-Davies.]

13.cxd4 Nc6 14.Nc3 exd4

[After 14...Nb4 White would play 15.Bb1 , when Black's accomplishment isn't easy to see.]

15.Nd5!

[15.Nxd4? Nxd4 16.Qxd4 Bf6 sees White gets diagonalized.]

15...Nde5 16.Nxd4 Nxd4 17.Qxd4 We have the kind of position that is often reached in the Spanish, although this one seems more favourable for White than most. He already has his knight well placed on d5, in front of Black's weak d6-pawn.

Bf6 18.Kh1

[After 18.Nxf6+ Qxf6 19.Kh1 (not 19.Bb2? Bxh3)Black could generate counterplay with 19...Qh4 .]

18...Bxh3?! It's good to be young, you don't worry about plunging into complications, even if these are unfavourable.

[18...Re8 is the sensible move, but Black would be worse after 19.Bb2 , for example.]

19.gxh3 Qc8 Forking c2 and h3 recovers the piece, but Kasparov can shatter his opponent's kingside.

20.Nxf6+ gxf6 21.Rg1+

[White must be careful because 21.Bd1? is answered by Qxh3+ 22.Kg1 Kh8! 23.Bf4 Rg8+ 24.Bg3 Rxd3+ 25.fxd3 Qxd3+ 26.Kf1 Rg8 with a winning attack.]

21...Kh8 22.Qe3 Qxc2 23.Qf4! Finding the weak spot in Black's whole plan.

Nd7 24.Qf5 Rg8 25.Be3 d5!? An ingenious trick which succeeds in confusing Kasparov enough to make him take a draw.

26.Qxd7?

[After the game Kasparov discovered that he could keep his advantage with 26.Qxd5! Rae8 (26...Ne5 27.Bg5! Nd7 28.Bh6! Rad8 29.Rxd8+ Rxd8 30.Rg1 puts Black's king in all sorts of trouble ; 26...Rad8 27.Rac1 Qe2 28.Qf5 leaves him horribly tied up ,while after 26...Qe2 27.Qxd7 there's no more perpetual.) 27.Rxd8+ Rxd8 28.Rc1 Qe2 29.Qd1 Qxd1+ 30.Rxd1 , when White has a clear endgame advantage.]

26...Qxe4+ 27.Kh2

[27.Kh2 Qe5+ produces a draw by perpetual check.]

1/2-1/2

C96

□ Luther,T

■ Davies,N

Port Erin

[Nigel Davies]

2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.O-O Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 O-O 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Nd7! 12.b3! This is how Kasparov played the position with White. It's by no

means clear that it's any better than the other moves, but it has been less explored.

Qc7 A solid and rather useful move, waiting to see what White will do next.

[For 12...cxd4 and various other alternatives see Kasparov-Ponomarev.]

13.d5 According to my database this is the first new move.

[In the game Zhang Zhong-Peng Xiaomin, Shanghai 2001, White played 13.Bb2 , but after Bf6 14.d5 Nb6 15.Nbd2 g6 16.Qe2 c4 , his bishop on b2 was rather misplaced. Luther's move is an interesting one. 12 d5 is dubious because of 12...Nb6 13 g4 h5!, but now Black's queen has wandered away from the kingside.]

13...Nb6 14.g4 c4

[I spent some time considering 14...h5 , but thought that White would have a dangerous initiative on the kingside after 15.gxh5 Bxh3 16.Nh2 followed by 17 Qf3. This prompted my decision to seek counterplay on the queenside - and not to be too sluggish about it lest White builds a massive attack on the kingside with Nbd2-f1-g3-f5.]

15.b4 Nb7 16.Nbd2 a5 17.Nf1 axb4 18.cxb4 Nd8

[It was difficult to know whether I should route this knight to the kingside or prevent the a2-a4 lever with 18...Na4 , but in the end I think I made the correct choice.]

19.Ng3 g6 20.Bh6 Re8 21.a4 Nxa4 22.Bxa4 Rxa4? I played this move quickly but it's a mistake.

[Black should play 22...bxa4 23.Rxa4 Qb7! , after which 24.Rxa8 Qxa8 leaves him better prepared to play ...f7-f5.]

23.Rxa4 bxa4 24.Qxa4 Bd7 25.Qa6! It was only after this strong move that I realized how dangerous the position was for Black. The big problem is that White is threatening to win the c4-pawn and, meanwhile, Black's pieces are penned in by the knight on d8. After some thought I decided to take the bull by the horns...

f5! I think this is the only move; Black sacrifices a pawn in order to gain a tempo for ...Nd8-f7. This, in turn, will mean the c-pawn's survival.

[After 25...Nb7 White can play 26.Rc1 Rc8 27.Rc3 followed by 28 Nd2, simply winning the c4-pawn. Meanwhile Black's knight would be very badly placed on b7 without access to either c5 or a5.]

26.gxf5

[Luther rejected 26.exf5 because he didn't want to weaken his d5-pawn, but this might have been a sterner test of Black's play. After Nf7 27.Be3 it will be wrong for Black to push his c3-pawn because White's queen would come to d3, with threats against Black's king.]

26...Nf7 27.Be3 Rb8 28.Rb1 c3 29.Qa2

[After 29.Qd3 I intended Bb5 30.Qc2 Qc4 when it is difficult for White to consolidate.]

29...Qc8

[Alternatively Black can play 29...gxf5 , but this transposes back into the game after 30.Nxf5 Bxf5 31.exf5 Qc8 32.Qc2 Qc4 etc.]

30.Qc2

[30.fxc6 hxc6 31.Qc2 would have led to a drawish endgame after Bxh3 32.Rb3 Qc4 33.Qxc3 Qxc3 34.Rxc3 Rxb4 35.Rc7 Bd8 etc.]

30...gxf5 31.Nxf5 Bxf5 32.exf5 Qc4 33.Nd2 Qh4! With my opponent in time-trouble, I decided upon the line which I felt caused the most practical difficulties. In retrospect it might also be the strongest move from an objective point of view.

[After 33...Qxd5 34.Qxc3 I think that White's passed b-pawn gives him an edge.]

34.Qxc3 Kh8 35.Kf1! After consuming most of his remaining time, White heads for the hills with his king.

[After 35.Kh2?! Ng5 White would have to find 36.Ba7! (36.Bxg5? Bxg5 gives Black a winning attack), but then 36...Ra8 37.Qe3 Nxh3 38.Qxh3 Qf4+ 39.Kh1 Qxd2 40.Be3 Qxd5+ 41.Qg2 e4 is nice for Black.]

35...Qxh3+ 36.Ke2 Qh5+ 37.f3 Bg5 It is important to exchange this passive bishop.

38.Ne4 Bxe3 39.Qxe3 Qxf5?!

[This seemed like a good idea at the time, but Black has a stronger move in 39...Ra8! . If White gets time to consolidate his king position, the passed b-pawn will be the most important factor.]

40.b5 Qd7

[40...Qc8 is also possible.]

41.b6 Qa4 42.Qb3 Qd4?

[It's difficult to know for sure in such a complex position, but I now think that 42...Qa6+ was better. One of the points is that 43.Qb5 (if 43.Kf2 Qb7)is answered by 43...Rxb6! etc.]

43.Qd3?! This may be the move that lets Black off the hook.

[I was preparing to meet 43.b7 with Kg7 , but this may be winning for White after 44.Qc2 , intending 45 Qc7.]

43...Qa4 44.Rb3 Qa1 45.Qb5 Nh6 46.Rb1

[46.Nxd6? would give Black a very dangerous attack after Rg8! etc.]

46...Qa2+ 47.Rb2 Qa1 48.Rb1

[It seems too late for White to play for a win because 48.b7 is answered by Nf5! with the threat of a fork on d4.]

48...Qa2+ 49.Rb2 Black can claim a draw by repetition with 49...Qa1.

1/2-1/2

CHAPTER 3: RUY LOPEZ: 9 OTHERS

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0

While it is true that the prophylactic 9 h3 is by far White's most popular choice at this point, it is by no means mandatory. Several alternatives are available, all of which lead to rich and complex 'Spanish' struggles.

The most direct and popular of these moves is 9 d4, when after 9...Bg4 White's main choice is between advancing the d-pawn (10 d5) and protecting it (10 Be3). The former has been the more common of the two, although the evidence suggests that 10...Na5 11 Bc2 Qc8! is a complete antidote. After 12 h3 Bd7 13 Nbd2 c6 14 dxc6 Qxc6 15 Nf1 the slightly unusual 15...Nb7!? (McShane-I.Sokolov) looks like an excellent move. White should probably avoid the 14 b4?! of Tseshkovsky-Romanishin as this gives him rather serious responsibilities on the queenside.

In the last couple of years 10 Be3 has experienced a resurgence of popularity with some new ideas emerging for White after 10...exd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5 Ne4. With this in mind I suggest the solid and sensible 10...exd4 11 cxd4 Na5 12 Bc2 c5, and will go as far as to practise what I preach.

In Swathi-Davies Black obtained a comfortable game after the popular 13 h3, whilst the right way to play against 13 dxc5 is illustrated in Marjanovic-Smejkal.

The deceptively quiet 9 d3 has appealed to some very strong players over the years, not least because it can be used as an anti-Marshall system where White meets 7...0 0 (intending 8 c3 d5) with 8 d3 and, after 8...d6, transposes to this line with 9 c3. In Emms-Short Black gets a reasonable game with 9...Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 Nbd2 Re8 12 Nf1 h6, but I wonder if he can't do better with Hebden's experimental 12...g6!? from Stefanova-Hebden.

A move we haven't heard much about of late is 9 a4, but when I recently faced this in a correspondence game I discovered that it was by no means easy to meet. Finally I decided that 9...Bd7 was probably best, as in Ljubojevic-Hjartarson. 12 Nf1 instead of 12 d5 is slightly more difficult for Black to meet but he seems to secure adequate counterplay there too.

Summary

Although Black has more than adequate resources against White's less usual 9th moves he does need to play with some care and accuracy. The reader should also note that these are likely to crop up with greater frequency than 9 h3 at club level thanks to the greater popularity of variations which avoid theory.

Index

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0
9 d4

9 a4 - Ljubojevic-Hjartarson

9 d3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 Nbd2 Re8 12 Nf1

12...h6 - Emms-Short

12...g6 - Stefanova-Hebden

9...Bg4 10 d5

10 Be3 exd4 11 cxd4 Na5 12 Bc2 c5

13 h3 - Swathi-Davies

13 dxc5 - Marjanovic-Smejkal

10...Na5 11 Bc2 Qc8 12 h3 Bd7 13 Nbd2 c6 14 dxc6 - McShane-I.Sokolov

14 b4 - Tseshkovsky-Romanishin

□ McShane,L

■ Sokolov,I

German Bundesliga

[Nigel Davies]

2002

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.d4

This immediate central advance has enjoyed some sporadic popularity amongst players looking to go their own way. But Black's next move gives him much earlier counterplay than he can normally expect in the Spanish.

Bg4 10.d5

[White's main alternative is 10.Be3 (which aims to meet Nxe4? with 11.Bd5) - see the games Swathi-Davies and Marjanovic-Smejkal. The text enjoyed a surge of popularity because of Oleg Romanishin's usage in the late 1970s.]

10...Na5 11.Bc2 Qc8! This neat finesse is why 11 d5 drifted back out of the limelight.

[After the immediate 11...c6 White can play 12.h3, when Bd7?! 13.Nxe5! dxe5 14.d6 'wins' the bishop pair.]

12.h3 Bd7 13.Nbd2 c6 14.dxc6 Natural and best.

[For 14.b4?! see Tseshkovsky-Romanishin.]

14...Qxc6 This would also be my chosen recapture, but it isn't Black's only move.

[In Khalifman-Beliavsky, USSR Championship 1988, Black played 14...Bxc6, after which 15.b4 (in his notes to the game Beliavsky assessed 15.Nf1 Nc4 16.Ng3 g6 as equal) 15...Nb7 16.Nf1 Nd8 17.Ng3 Ne6 18.Bb3 Rd8 19.Qe2 Ra7 20.Ng5 d5 produced a complex struggle with chances for both sides.]

15.Nf1 Nb7!? The first and only example I have of this move in my database; Black intends simply to bring the knight to c5. More usually he plays ...Rfe8 and ...Nc4, although not necessarily in that order. For example:

[15...Rfe8 16.Ng3 Rac8 17.Bb1 Nc4 18.Qe2 a5 19.b3 Nb6 20.Be3 Na8!? 21.c4 b4 22.a3 Nc7 23.axb4 axb4 24.Bg5 Ne6 was about equal in Nevostrujev-Smagin, Moscow 1992]

[15...Nc4 16.Ng3 (16.a4 Rfc8 17.Ng3 h6 18.Nh4 Be6 19.Nhf5 Bf8 20.Qf3 Nh7 21.a5 Qc7 led to complex play in J.Polgar-Anand, Monte Carlo 1993) 16...Rfe8 17.a4 (alternatives also leave Black with a solid game; for example 17.b3 Nb6 18.Bd2 Rac8 19.Rc1 g6 20.Bd3 Bf8 21.Bg5 Bg7 was King-Smejkal, Germany 2000 ; 17.Bd3 Rad8 18.Qe2 Nb6 19.Be3 Nc4 20.Bc1 Nb6 21.Be3 Nc4 22.Bc1 Ra8 ½-½ was Kaminski-Romanishin, Bad Endbach 1995 ;and 17.Nf5 Bxf5 18.exf5 Bf8 19.a4 Rab8 was Ligterink-Smejkal, Amsterdam 1979) 17...g6 18.Qe2 Bf8 19.b3 (19.Nh2 Be6 20.Qf3 Bg7 21.Rd1 h5 22.Bg5 Nh7 23.Bc1 Nf6 24.Bg5 Nd7 saw Black start to play for the full point in Movsesian-Bacrot, Sarajevo 2000) 19...Nb6 20.a5 Nc8 21.c4 bxc4 22.bxc4 Qc7 23.Bg5 Bg7 24.Bd3 Be6 25.Bxf6 Bxf6 26.Nf1 Ne7 and Black had some counterplay on the dark squares in Hanley-Hebden, Hastings 2002/03.]

16.N3h2 White begins to marshal his forces on the kingside in preparation for an attack. The knight might come to g4, while f3 is now free for the queen. Black, meanwhile, can play on the queenside and in the centre whilst his rock solid kingside proves to be a difficult nut to crack.

Nc5 17.Ng3 Rfe8 18.Qf3

[18.b4 Na4 (or 18...Ne6) 19.Bxa4 bxa4 would leave White's c3-pawn backward and somewhat weak.]

18...a5! 19.Nf5 b4! Cold bloodedly allowing White to take his dark-squared bishop.

[After 19...Bf8? White can break up Black's kingside with 20.Nh6+! gxh6 (20...Kh8 21.Nxf7+) 21.Qxf6.]

20.Nxe7+ Rxe7 21.Bg5 Re6 A simple and solid answer to the pin. Now White should probably have given up his aggressive ambitions by playing 22 Bd2, and in fact there was a case for not

having started them in the first place.

22.c4?! h6 23.Bd2 Qa6! Both threatening the c4-pawn and vacating c6 for his bishop. All Black's minor pieces are directing their fire against the pawn on e4.

24.Qe2 Bc6 25.f3 Nh5 Immediately taking advantage of the fact that White's queen no longer covers h5.

26.Ng4 Rg6 27.b3 Ne6 28.Qf2 Bd7 29.Kh2 Qc8 30.Ne3 Nd4 31.Bd3 Nf4 32.Bf1 Qc5 Black's pieces have arrived at beautiful squares. Besides the pressure against White's kingside he can prise open the queenside with ... a5-a4.

33.Rac1

[After 33.g3 Nh5 White would be forced to play 34.g4 , when Black's knight gets back to f4.]

33...Kh8 34.Nd5? Cracking under the pressure. White's attempt to get just one active piece results in immediate disaster.

Nxh3! 35.Qe3

[White gets mated after 35.gxh3 Nxf3+ 36.Qxf3 Qg1# .]

35...Nf4 36.Red1 Bh3! More trouble on h3!

37.Nxf4

[37.gxh3 Nxf3+ 38.Qxf3 Qg1# is the same theme as in the previous note.]

[White's best (and only) try was 37.Bxb4 , after which Nxd5! (37...axb4 38.Nxf4 exf4 39.Qxd4) 38.cxd5 Qxb4 39.Kxh3!? just about stays on the board (39.gxh3 Qa3 40.Qf2 is refuted by Qxa2!! 41.Qxa2 Nxf3+ 42.Kh1 Rg1# .)]

37...exf4

[Grandmaster Luke McShane now resigned, seeing that 37...exf4 38.Qxf4 gets smashed by Bxg2! 39.Bxg2 Qh5+ 40.Kg1 Ne2+]

[but 37...exf4 38.Qxf4 Qh5! is even more crushing: 39.Kg1 Ne2+ 40.Bxe2 Rxg2+ 41.Kf1 Rg4+ 42.Kf2 (42.Ke1 Qh4+ leads to mate next move) 42...Qh4+ , winning a whole queen.]

0-1

C91

□ **Tseshkovsky,V**

■ **Romanishin,O**

Tallinn (match)

[Nigel Davies]

1979

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.d4 Bg4 10.d5 Na5 11.Bc2 Qc8! 12.h3 Bd7 13.Nbd2 c6 14.b4?! A forcing move, but one which leaves White with queenside responsibilities.

[14.dxc6 is better, as in McShane-Sokolov.]

14...Nb7 15.dxc6 Qxc6 16.Bb2 Nd8! 17.Bd3 White's logical pawn lever is c3-c4, trying to eliminate the backward c-pawn.

[The game S.Clarke-S.Haslinger, British League 2002, varied with 17.a4?! , when Ne6 18.g3 Qb7 19.a5?! Bc6 20.Qe2 Ne8 21.c4 N8c7 22.Rac1 f6 gave Black an excellent game - he has a very solid position and b5 will fall under his control.]

[On the other hand, another reasonable way to play for c3-c4 is with 17.Rc1 Ne6 18.Bb1 .]

17...Ne6 18.c4 Qb7 19.a3 Calmly protecting the b4-pawn.

[The more forcing 19.c5 left Black solidly placed after dxc5 20.bxc5 Nxc5 21.Bc2 Rfd8 22.Bxe5 Rac8 23.Qb1 h6 in J.Polgar-Bruzon Bautista, Hoogeveen 2001.]

19...Nf4 British GM Mark Hebden has had this position on a few occasions.

[McShane-Hebden, Hastings 1997/98, featured 19...Rac8 20.Rc1 Nf4 , which allowed White to retreat the bishop to b1 without shutting in his rook. Even so Black didn't have any problems after

21.Bb1 Rfe8 22.c5 dxc5 23.bxc5 Bxc5 24.Bxe5 , and indeed after N6h5!? 25.Ba2 he caught White with Bxf2+! 26.Kxf2 Rxc1 27.Bxf7+ (27.Qxc1 Nd3+) 27...Kxf7 28.Qb3+ Be6 29.Ng5+ Kg6 30.Nxe6 Qb6+ 31.Bd4 Qxe6 32.Rxc1 Qxb3 33.Nxb3 Nd3+ , winning the exchange and the game.]

[In an earlier game (vs Nijboer, Linares 1995) Hebden had played 19...Bd8 , when 20.c5 dxc5 21.Bxe5 Re8 22.Bd6 c4 23.Bc2 Be7 24.e5 Bxd6 25.exf6 Bf8 26.Ne5 gave White the initiative.]

20.Bf1 Rac8 21.Rc1 Bc6 Attacking the e4-pawn, which provides an argument for playing 19...Nf4 before the retreat of White's bishop to b1 becomes convenient (i.e. before White plays Rc1).

22.g3 Ne6 23.cxb5 axb5 24.Bd3 Bd8 Bringing the bishop into the game via b6. Black is better here.

25.Qe2 Bb6 26.Rc2

[After 26.Nf1 Black could play g6 intending 27...Nh5 followed by 28...f5.]

[On 26.a4 he could have played an immediate Nh5 , as 27.Nxe5 (note that 27.axb5 can be met by Nxg3 28.Qd1 Nf4 29.bxc6 Qa7 with a tremendous attack) 27...Nxg3 28.Qf3 dxe5 29.Qxg3 bxa4 30.Qxe5? (30.Bxe5 is mandatory) is refuted by 30...Rfd8 31.Qg3 Qd7 .]

26...Nh5! 27.Kh2 Bd7

[After the immediate 27...f5 White could try to buy his way out of trouble with 28.Rxc6! (the continuation 28.a4 Nhf4! 29.gxf4 Nxf4 30.axb5 Bxb5 is just good for Black), when 28...Rxc6 29.exf5 Nef4 30.gxf4 Nxf4 31.Qe4 Bxf2 32.Rf1 looks quite good for White.]

28.Rxc8 Rxc8 29.Ng1

[Another interesting possibility is 29.Nxe5 , when Nhf4 30.gxf4 Nxf4 31.Nxd7 Nxe2 32.Nxb6 gives White compensation for the queen.]

[29.Nh4 , on the other hand, is bad because of Nef4 30.gxf4 Nxf4 31.Qf3 Bxf2 etc.]

29...g6 30.Nf1 Nd4 31.Qd1 Be6 32.Nd2 Bc4! Romanishin is playing with great power. Capturing on c4 would give Black a mighty passed c-pawn.

33.Bb1 Qa7 34.Kg2 Ne6

[Perhaps Black should have tried the more direct 34...d5 , when 35.exd5 Bxd5+ 36.Ngf3 Nxf3 37.Nxf3 Bxf2 38.Qxd5 Bxe1 39.Nxe1 Qe3 is strong.]

35.Nxc4 bxc4 36.Rf1

[36.Qxd6? runs into c3 (and not the immediate 36...Bxf2?! due to 37.Qxe5) 37.Bc1 Bxf2 38.Rf1 Bxg3 , protecting e5 and threatening all sorts of things.]

36...c3 37.Bc1 Nd4 38.Qd3 Nb3 39.Qxd6?? Throwing away a well-contested game.

[White should play 39.Ne2 Bd4 40.Bb2! when cxb2 41.Qxb3 is actually quite nice for White.]

39...Nxc1 40.Rxc1

[Or 40.Qd1 Qxa3 41.Qxc1 Qxb4 etc.]

40...Bxf2 41.Ne2 Bxg3! 42.Nxg3 Nxg3 43.Kf3

[Or 43.Rc2 Nxe4 44.Qxe5 Qe3 with a winning attack.]

43...Qxa3 44.Rc2 Nf1

[44...Nh5 45.Qd7 Qa6 might have been even more effective.]

45.Ba2 Qa7 46.Qxe5?

[The last chance to make a fight of it was with 46.Qf6 , but then Rf8 47.Qxe5 Qe3+ 48.Kg2 Nd2 49.Qxc3 (or 49.Rxc3 Qe2+ 50.Kg1 Nxe4) 49...Qxe4+ 50.Kf2 Qf4+ 51.Kg1 Nf3+ 52.Kf1 Re8 would anyway decide matters.]

46...Qd7

[46...Qe3+ 47.Kg2 Nd2 would have been easier.]

47.Qf4?

[47.Ke2 was best.]

47...Qd3+ 48.Kg4 Qd1+

[After 48...Qd1+ 49.Qf3 h5+ 50.Kf4 g5+ White loses his queen.]

0-1

C91

□ Swathi,G

■ Davies,N

Gibraltar

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.d4 Bg4

10.Be3 White simply protects d4, as Black can't play 10...Nxe4 in view of 11 Bd5. There are a couple of alternatives here which rarely come up in practice these days but require some attention nonetheless:

[10.h3 Bxf3 11.gxf3 (11.Qxf3?! exd4 12.Qd1 dxc3 13.Nxc3 Na5 14.Bc2 Re8 15.f4 b4 16.Nd5 Nxd5 17.Qxd5 c6 18.Qd3 g6 19.Kh1 Bf8 20.Rf1 was the famous game Bronstein-Keres, Budapest Candidates 1950, but here Black could have gained a clear advantage with Botvinnik's suggestion of d5 , after which 21.e5 Nc4 22.b3 Na3 23.Bxa3 bxa3 would leave White a pawn down for nothing) 11...Na5 12.Bc2 Nh5 13.f4 Nxf4 14.Bxf4 exf4 15.Nd2 (15.Qg4 Qc8 16.Qh5 g6 17.Qh6 Qe6 18.Kh2 Qf6 19.Rg1 Qh4 20.Qxh4 Bxh4 left Black a pawn up in the endgame in Van Riemsdijk-Cunico, Rio Claro 1998) 15...c5 16.Nf3 Nc6 (16...Bg5!?) 17.Qd2 cxd4 18.cxd4 Bf6 19.Rad1 Qa5 20.Qe2 Rac8 21.Bb3 Rfe8 left White with rather nebulous compensation for his pawn in Dubinin-Antoshin, Kislovodsk 1962.]

[10.a4 Qb8 (10...Qd7 11.d5 Na5 12.Bc2 c6 13.h3 Bh5 14.dxc6 Qxc6 15.Nbd2 is similar to 11 d5 except that Black's bishop is poorly placed on h5 - after Nb7 16.Nf1 Nc5 17.Ng3 Bg6 18.Nh4 Rfe8 19.Nhf5 Bf8 20.Qf3 White had the initiative in Panchenko-Savon, Moscow 1979. ; doubling White's pawns with 10...Bxf3 is not so good here because of 11.gxf3 Na5 12.Ba2! Nh5 13.f4 Nxf4 14.Bxf4 exf4 15.b4 Nc4 16.Bxc4 bxc4 17.Nd2 c5 18.bxc5 dxc5 19.d5 , which I think is better for White) 11.Be3 (11.Bd5 is well met by Qb6 ;and 11.axb5 axb5 12.Rxa8 Qxa8 is just harmless) 11...Na5 12.Bc2 Nc4 13.Bc1 c5 14.d5 bxa4 15.Qe2 Nb6 16.Nbd2 Bd7 17.c4 g6 left White struggling to justify his play in Tolush-Geller, USSR Championship 1958.]

[10.Qd3 Bxf3 11.gxf3 Na5 12.f4 (12.Bc2 Nh5) 12...Nxb3 13.axb3 Nd7 14.Na3 exd4 15.cxd4 c5 gave Black excellent counterplay in Tolush-Bronstein, USSR Championship 1958.]

10...exd4 11.cxd4 Na5 There seems to be nothing wrong with this straightforward, economical move.

[More aggressive players prefer 11...d5 12.e5 Ne4 in this position, with complications that most Ruy Lopez players will have studied.]

12.Bc2 c5 13.h3 The fashionable move.

[13.d5 isn't seen much these days because Black gets good counterplay: Nc4 14.Bc1 Nd7 **A)** note that Black should probably meet 15.Qd3 with Nde5 (15...Bxf3 16.Qxf3 sees White maintain the use of h3 for his queen, Formanek-Kaufman, New York 1979, continuing Qa5 17.Re2 Bf6 18.Qh3 Nde5 19.Nd2 Qc7 20.Nf1 with White for preference)when 16.Nxe5 Nxe5 17.Qg3 Bh4 18.Qf4 Qf6 looks equal ;

B) 15.h3 Bxf3 16.Qxf3 Bg5 (16...Bf6 is also not bad) 17.Bxg5 Qxg5 18.b3 Qe5 19.Qc3 Qxc3 20.Nxc3 Ncb6 brought about an equal endgame in Sznapiik-Milos, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984.]

[For 13.dxc5 see the game Marjanovic-Smejkal.]

13...Bh5 This seemed to make life more difficult for White than the immediate exchange on f3.

[Indeed I think that White has some initiative after 13...Bxf3 14.Qxf3 ; for example cxd4

(14...Nc6 15.dxc5 dxc5 16.Nc3 Nd4 17.Bxd4 cxd4 18.Rad1 Qb6 19.Ne2 Rac8 20.Bb1 Bb4 21.Rf1 Rfd8 22.e5 was better for White in Kobalia-Beliavsky, Tripoli 2004 ;and 14...Nc4 15.Nd2!? Nxd2 16.Bxd2 cxd4 17.Rad1 Nd7 18.Qd3 Ne5 19.Qxd4 recovered the pawn with a useful pair of bishops in Ehlvest-Golod, Chicago 2004) 15.Bxd4 Rc8 16.Bb3 Nc6 17.Qd1 a5 (17...Nxd4 18.Qxd4 Nh5 19.Nc3 Bf6 20.Qd2 Bg5 21.Qe2 Nf4 22.Qf3 Ng6 23.Red1 Bf6 24.Rac1 was more comfortable for White in Ivanchuk-Romanishin, Kharkov 2004) 18.Nc3 a4 19.Bd5 Nxd4 20.Qxd4 Qa5 21.a3 Nd7 22.Qb4 Qxb4 23.axb4 and Black's b-pawn was a serious problem in Grischuk-Tkachiev, Clermont-Ferrand 2003.]

[There is a case for playing 13...cxd4 14.Bxd4 before going Bh5 (because after 13...Bh5 White can try 14 d5). But after 15.g4 Bg6 16.Nc3 White seems to have the better of it (16.Nh4 Nc6 17.Nf5 Bxf5 18.exf5 Rc8 19.Bb3 d5 20.Nc3 b4 21.Bxf6 Bxf6 22.Nxd5 Bxb2 was fine for Black at this stage in Sandipan-Thipsay, Calicut 2003), for example 16...Rc8 17.Rc1 Nc6 (17...Nc4 18.Nd5 Nxd5 19.exd5 Bf6 20.Bxg6 fvg6 21.b3 was better for White in Kunte-Thipsay, Calicut 2003) 18.Be3 Re8 (18...Nb4 19.Bb1 d5 20.e5 Ne4 21.Ne2 Nc5 22.Bxc5 Rxc5 23.Rxc5 Bxc5 24.Nf4 Qb6 25.Rf1 Be4 26.a3 Nc6 27.Nxd5 Bxd5 28.Qxd5 Nd4 29.Kg2 Nxf3 30.Qxf3 left Black struggling in Kasimdzhanov-Adams, Tripoli 2004) 19.Nh4 (19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.exd5 Nb8 21.Bf4 Bf8 22.Rxe8 Qxe8 23.Nd4 Bxc2 24.Rxc2 Rxc2 25.Qxc2 Qe1+ 26.Kg2 Nd7 gave Black enough counterplay in Timofeev-Bacrot, Istanbul 2003) 19...Nd7 20.Nxg6 hxg6 21.Bb3 (21.Nd5 was played in another game in the Dominguez-Inarkiev 2004 Tripoli match, but I think Black is OK after Bg5 22.f4 Bh4 23.Re2 g5 24.f5 Bg3 , which is an improvement on Inarkiev's 21...Bh4) 21...Nc5 22.Nd5 Ne5 was Dominguez-Inarkiev, Tripoli (match) 2004, and now 23.Bc2 (23.f4 Ned3 was unclear in the game) 23...Nc4 24.Bd4 Ne6 25.Bb3 seems to keep a plus.]

14.Nbd2

[As I mentioned in the previous note, 14.d5 is possible here. But it looks as if Black can get adequate counterplay with Nc4 15.Bc1 Nd7 16.Qd3 Bf6 17.Nc3 Re8 .]

14...cxd4 The exchange made sense to me because Black's next move gains time on White's bishop.

[In Van Riemsdijk-Castro, Sao Paulo 1978, Black played 14...Re8 when I suggest 15.Qb1!? (15.d5 Bxf3 16.Qxf3 Nd7 17.b3 Bf6 18.Rad1 also seemed quite promising for White in the game), after which 15...cxd4 16.Nxd4 leaves the bishop on h5 out on a limb.]

15.Bxd4 Nc6 16.Nb3 Apparently a new move.

[R.Mueller-Renner, Bodensee 2000, had gone 16.g4 Bg6 17.Nf1 Nxd4 18.Nxd4 Qb6 19.Ne3 Rfe8 20.Ndf5 Bf8 with approximate equality. I do think that it makes sense for White to break the pin on the f3-knight.]

16...Qd7

[In a subsequent game Black varied at this point with 16...Rc8 , which also looks like a reasonable move. Manik-Socko, Czech Republic 2005, continued 17.Rc1 Nd7 18.Bb1 Nde5 19.g4 Nxf3+ 20.Qxf3 Bg6 21.Be3 Re8 22.Rcd1 Bf6 with Black for preference.]

17.Bxf6?! Because of Black's reply this looks like a mistake.

[17.Bc3 is better, after which Rac8 looks fairly equal.]

17...Bxf3! After the game White admitted to having overlooked this zwischenzug. Black is better now because of the coming pressure against the b2-pawn.

18.Qxf3 Bxf6 19.Rad1

[White is reluctant to go passive with 19.Rab1 . Indeed Black can answer with Ne5 20.Qg3 Nc4 , stepping up the pressure against White's queenside and b2.]

19...Qc7

[It could well be that the cold-blooded 19...Bxb2 is good. During the game I was worried about tricks based on 20.e5 , but then Nxe5 21.Qe2 Nc4 looks okay.]

20.Bb1 Bxb2 21.Qd3 Be5 22.f4!? Bxf4 23.e5 g6 24.exd6 Qb6+ 25.Kh1 Rad8 26.d7 Bb8

27.Qd5 Qc7 28.Kg1 Ne5?

[In retrospect I should have played 28...Qh2+ 29.Kf1 Ne5 , when 30.Rxe5 Bxe5 allows me to keep the queens on.]

29.Nc5? Missing a chance.

[White should have sacrificed the exchange with 29.Rxe5 , after which Qxe5 30.Qxe5 Bxe5 31.Nc5 leaves things far from clear in the endgame. After Bc7 32.Nxa6 Bb6+ 33.Kh1 (33.Kf1 Ra8 34.Nb4 Ra4 35.Nc6 Rf4+ is problematic) 33...f5 Black may be better but I doubt that he can win.]

29...Nc4! Getting back on track.**30.Ne4 Qh2+ 31.Kf2**

[31.Kf1 was a better try, but then Qf4+ 32.Ke2 Qe3+ 33.Kf1 Ba7 34.Rxe3 Nxe3+ 35.Ke2 Nxd5 36.Rxd5 f5 is far superior to the endgame reached in the note to White's 29th, the key difference being that Black keeps his a-pawn.]

31...Ba7+ 32.Ke2 Qxg2+ 33.Kd3 Qxh3+ 34.Kc2 Qh2+ White has lost her entire kingside and there's more coming.

0-1

C91

□ **Marjanovic,S**

■ **Smejkal,J**

Novi Sad

[Nigel Davies]

1984

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.d4 Bg4 10.Be3 exd4 11.cxd4 Na5 12.Bc2 c5 13.dxc5 This was popular during the 1980s and 90s.

[For the fashionable 13.h3 see Swathi-Davies.]

13...dxc5 This may seem obvious but it isn't the only move.

[13...Nc4!? has been tried in a few games, for example 14.cxd6 (14.Bc1 Qc7 15.h3 Bh5 16.Nbd2 was played in Gullaksen-Dannevig, Norway 1991, and now Ne5 17.g4 Nfxg4 18.hxg4 Bxg4 19.Re3 Bg5 would have been much more interesting than the 16...Nxd2 of the game) 14...Bxd6 15.Nbd2 (15.Bc1 Qc7 16.h3 Bh2+ 17.Kh1 Rfd8 18.Qe2 Bxf3 19.Qxf3 Be5 gave Black active play for the pawn in Nevanlinna-Solozhenkin, Jyvaskyla 1992) 15...Qc7 (also possible is 15...Nxd2 16.Qxd2 Bxf3 17.gxf3 Qe7 18.Bd4 Nh5 19.e5 Bb4 20.Qd3 g6 21.Re4 Rad8 22.Qe3 Ng7 23.Rg4 Ne6 , which gave Black good play in the game Morawietz-Haba, German Bundesliga 1996) 16.h3 Bxf3 17.Nxf3 Nxb2 18.Qe2 Nc4 19.Bg5 Nd7 gave Black good counterplay in Tal-Beliavsky, Moscow 1987.]

14.Nbd2

[Karpov's ideas man, Igor Zaitsev, has played 14.Nc3 in a few games, and in fact it looks quite interesting. After Nc4 15.e5 Qxd1 (15...Nd7 16.Bf4 Ndb6 17.Qe2 Qc8 18.Be4 Ra7 19.b3 Na3 20.Bc1 b4 21.Bxa3 bxa3 22.Nd5 Nxd5 23.Bxd5 Rd8 24.Rad1 was better for White in Zaitsev-Balashov, Moscow 2002) 16.Raxd1 Bxf3 (once again Keres might have shown the right way in his old game against Stoltz in Stockholm 1954, which saw 16...Nd7 17.h3 Nxe3 18.Rxe3 Be6 19.Be4 Ra7 20.Nd5 Bd8 21.Nf4 Nb6 22.Nxe6 fxe6 23.h4 h6 24.g3 Be7 with a comfortable game) 17.exf6 Bxd1 18.fxe7 Bxc2 19.exf8Q+ Rxf8 20.Bxc5 Rc8 (20...Rd8 21.b3 Nb2 22.Re2 Nd1 23.Nd5! put Black in all sorts of trouble in Zaitsev-Murawski, Koszalin 1997) 21.Nd5 Kh8 and a draw was agreed after 22.Nb6 in Zaitsev-Beliavsky, Minsk 1983, but White could have retained some pressure with 22 Nb4.]

[The other move to have been played is 14.Qe2 , but then Nc4 15.Nc3 Nd7 (15...Re8 is also quite good here, when 16.h3 Nxe3 17.Qxe3 Bxf3 18.Qxf3 Bd6 19.Rad1 Qc7

was agreed drawn in Dolmatov-Psakhis, USSR Championship, Minsk 1987) 16.a4 Nde5 17.Bf4 Bd6 18.Red1? b4 19.b3 Bxf3 20.gxf3 bxc3 21.bxc4 Qf6 led to a quick win for Black in Hartmann-Kavalek, German Bundesliga 1983.]

14...Nd7 The start of some artful regrouping; Black wants to play ...Re8 and then drop the knight back to f8 in order to defend his kingside. Meanwhile he has an active queenside pawn majority.

15.Qb1 The most testing move which intends 16 e5. The alternatives don't worry Black:

[15.h3 Bh5 16.Rc1 Re8 17.b3 Rc8 18.Bb1 Bf6 19.Qe2 Bb2 (19...Nc6 looks like a good alternative) 20.Rcd1 Bc3 21.e5 Nxe5 22.g4 Bg6 23.Bxg6 hxg6 24.Ne4 Nxf3+ 25.Qxf3 Bd4 (the immediate 25...Bxe1 looks better, for example 26.Rxd8 Rcx d8 27.Nxc5 Bd2 28.Nxa6 Bxe3 29.fxe3 Rd3 looks about equal) 26.b4 Nc6 27.bxc5 Re7 28.Bxd4 Nxd4 29.Qd3 Rd7 30.Nd6 Ne6 31.Qe2 Rxc5 32.Nb7 won the exchange but not the game in Tsheshkovsky-Dorfman, Moscow 1985.]

[15.Bf4 Re8 16.e5 Nf8 17.Be4 Rc8 18.Nf1 Ne6 (18...Qxd1 19.Raxd1 Ne6 looks fine for Black) 19.Bg3 Nd4 20.Ne3 Bh5 (and here 20...Bxf3 21.gxf3 Qd7 looks at least equal) 21.Nf5 Bxf3 22.gxf3 Nac6 23.Rc1 Qd7 24.Nd6 and now White had the initiative in Gulko-Adams, Groningen 1990.]

15...Re8 16.e5 Nf8 Consistently following the plan introduced by his 14th move.

17.Bf5

[17.h3 doesn't help much as it sends Black's bishop towards g6. Yudasin-Huzman, Haifa 1993, continued Bh5 18.Bf5 Bg6 19.Qe4 Bxf5 20.Qxf5 Qd7 (20...Qd5 is also good - after 21.b3 Nc6 22.Ne4 Rad8 23.Rac1 Ne6 24.Re2 g6 25.Nf6+ Bxf6 26.Qxf6 Ncd4 27.Nxd4 Nxd4 28.Bxd4 cxd4 White was on the negative side of the position in Chandler-Hodgson, Bath 1987) 21.Qc2 Qc6 22.a4 Ne6 23.Ne4 and a draw was agreed.]

17...Bxf5 18.Qxf5 Qd5 A nice square for the queen.

[Black has also tried 18...Qc8 but then 19.Qh5 Qe6 20.Ne4 Rac8 21.Bg5 Qg6 22.Qh3 gave White some initiative in Van Riemsdijk-Kosashvili, Novi Sad 1990.]

19.Ne4 Black's reply gives him a good game, hence attempts to improve:

[19.h4 is a bit of an empty gesture: Qe6 (19...Nc4 20.Nxc4 Qxc4 21.h5 h6 22.b3 Qe6 23.Qf4 Rad8 was also fine for Black at this stage in Chandler-Hawelko, Dubai 1986) 20.Qc2 (Black would welcome the exchange of queens with his potent queenside pawn majority; after 20.Qxe6 Nxe6 21.Ng5 Rad8 22.f4 Nc6 23.Nde4 Ncd4 24.Bxd4 Nxd4 25.Rf1 f6 26.exf6 gxf6 27.Nf3 Ne2+ Black won a pawn in Elseth-Kosashvili, Novi Sad 1990) 20...Rac8 21.Bg5 Nc6 22.Ne4 Nb4 23.Qb1 c4 24.Bxe7 Rxe7 25.Nd6 Rc5 26.Ng5 and a draw was agreed in Haba-Gabriel, German Bundesliga 1992, although Black could well have continued with Qd7 27.Ndx f7 Nd3 28.e6 Qd5 etc.]

[19.Red1 Rad8 20.Qc2 Nc6 21.Nb3 Nb4 22.Qb1 Qxd1+ 23.Qxd1 Rxd1+ 24.Rxd1 c4 25.Nbd4 Nxa2 won a pawn in Mortensen-Hjartarson, Gausdal 1987.]

[19.b3 Rac8 20.Rad1 Qe6 21.Qb1 c4 22.bxc4 Nxc4 23.Nxc4 Rxc4 gave Black a comfortable game in Innala-Salo, Finland 1991.]

19...Nc4 20.b3 Nxe3 21.Rxe3 c4 22.h4 More hope than an attack. Black's kingside is very secure, the important factor in the position being his queenside pawn majority.

cx b3 23.axb3 a5 The pawns are on the march!

24.Rd3 Qe6

[24...Qxd3? runs into 25.Nf6+ etc.]

25.Qxe6 Nxe6 26.Rd5 Reb8 27.g3 a4 28.Nd6 f6 This challenge both undermines the support of White's knight on d6 and opens up the game for his bishop.

29.Nxb5 axb3 30.Rb1 Nc5 31.Nbd4

[31.exf6 gxf6 32.Nfd4 looks like the best try, but Black's passed b-pawn still gives him the edge after Kf7 , for instance.]

31...Bf8 32.exf6 gxf6 33.Rxc5?! Perhaps this is the wrong decision.

[White may have had better drawing chances with 33.Nd2 although, admittedly, it isn't easy to let Black keep his powerful passed b-pawn.]

33...Bxc5 34.Rxb3 Rxb3 35.Nxb3 Bb6 If White managed to get his knights well anchored (for example with a knight on e4 and pawn on g4) he would probably be able to draw. Unfortunately it doesn't look as if he can achieve this.

36.Nbd2 Ra2 37.Kf1 Kf7 38.Ke2 Ke6 39.g4 Ba5 40.Kd3 Ra3+ 41.Ke2 Ra2 42.Ke3

[42.Kd3 Bxd2 43.Nxd2 Ke5 would allow Black to attack White's kingside pawns.]

42...Kd5 43.g5 f5 44.h5 Ra4 45.Kd3 Bxd2 46.Nxd2 Ke5 47.Nc4+ Kf4 48.g6 hxg6 49.hxg6 Ra6 50.g7 Rg6 51.Ke2 Rxc7 52.Ne3 Ra7 53.Ng2+ Ke4 54.f3+ Kd4 55.Kf2 Ke5 56.Ne1 Ra2+ 57.Ke3 f4+

0-1

C90

□ **Emms,J**

■ **Short,N**

Gibraltar

[*Nigel Davies*]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.d3

A quiet continuation with more than a drop of poison. White intends to play Nb1-d2-f1 and then Ng3 or Ne3, depending on the circumstances. Moving the d-pawn to d3 and then d4 might not be a loss of time as h2-h3 can often be dispensed with.

Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.Nbd2 Re8 A useful waiting move. Black puts some latent pressure on the e-file, lends protection to e5 and prepares to drop the bishop back to f8.

12.Nf1 h6 Another useful move, preventing White from pinning the knight on f6 with Bg5.

[Another playable move is 12...Bb7, for example 13.d4 (13.Ng3 Bf8 14.Nf5 d5 15.exd5 Qxd5 16.Bg5 e4 17.dxe4 Nxe4 soon petered out into equality in Lendwai-Kuzmin, Oberwart 2002)

13...cxd4 14.cxd4 Qc7 (there is a case here for 14...exd4) 15.d5 Rac8 16.Re2 Nh5 17.Ng3! Nxc3 18.hxc3 and White had exploited his omission of h2-h3 in Emms-Ashton, British Championship, Scarborough 2004. After Nc4 19.Bd3 Nb6 20.Be3 Bd8 21.Rc2 Qb8 22.Rxc8 Bxc8 23.Rc1 Bd7 24.Nd2 Be7 25.b4 Rc8 26.Rxc8+ Bxc8 27.Qc2 he had a clear advantage.]

[A lesser-known option which I like is Hebden's 12...g6, and this is featured in the game Stefanova-Hebden.]

13.d4 White can also delay this advance:

[13.Ne3 Bf8 14.h3 Nc6 15.Bd2 Be6 16.Bb3 d5 17.exd5 Nxd5 18.Ng4 f6 was fairly even in Yemelin-Jakubovic, Rijeka 2001.]

[13.Ng3 Bf8 14.d4 Nc6 15.h3 Bd7 (also good is 15...Qc7 16.Be3 Bb7 17.d5 Ne7 18.Nh4 g6 as in Zupe-Pavasovic, Mitte 2002) 16.Be3 cxd4 17.cxd4 Rc8 18.Rc1 exd4 19.Nxd4 d5 was only slightly better for White in Spraggett-Davies, British League 2004.]

13...exd4 The start of an active plan from Short which produces a double-edged and interesting game. Black can also play in a more orthodox vein:

[13...Qc7 14.d5 Nc4 15.a4 Bd7 16.b3 Na5 17.Ne3 c4 18.bxc4 Nxc4 was fine for Black in Adams-Kamsky, Dos Hermanas 1995.]

[13...cxd4 14.cxd4 Nc6 15.Ne3 (or 15.d5 Nb4 16.Bb1 a5, which is similar to the game) 15...Bf8 16.d5 Nb4 17.Bb1 a5 18.a3 Na6 19.b4 Bd7 20.Bd2 axb4 21.axb4 Qb8 22.Bd3 Qb7 and Black had adequate counterplay in Brodsky-El Taher, Dubai 2003.]

14.cxd4 Bg4 This seems to have been a new move at the time.

[In an earlier game, Kharlov-Galdunts, Kherson 1991, Black had played 14...Bf8 but after 15.b3

Nc6 16.d5 Ne5 17.Nxe5 dxe5 18.a4 White's passed d-pawn gave him the better prospects. Short's move is much more direct, trying to force White to play d4-d5 so that he can use the e5-square.]

15.d5 Nc4 16.h3 Bxf3 17.Qxf3 Nd7 18.b3 Bf6 19.Rb1 Nce5 20.Qd1 Ng6 Black's minor pieces do a good job of controlling the dark squares and hold the balance in the face of White's central pawn majority and two bishops.

21.Ne3 Bc3 22.Rf1 Nf6 23.Nf5 b4
 [Black should avoid 23...Nxe4 because of 24.Bxe4 Rxe4 25.Qf3 Re5 26.Nxg7! Kxg7 27.Qxc3 , with the better game for White due to Black's weakened king.]

24.Qf3 a5 25.h4 Ne7 26.Ne3 Ng6 27.Nf5 Ne7 28.Ne3 Ra7 29.h5 Kh8 30.Nc4 Nc8 31.Ne3
 [There might have been a case for 31.Bf4 , intending to meet Rae7 with 32.Ne3 , when in reply to Nxe4 there is 33.Nf5 .]

31...Nh7 32.g3 Black's reply seems to leave him at least equal.
 [Maybe White should have played 32.Nf5 so that after Ne7 33.Ng3 Black can't bring his queen to f6.]

32...Qf6 33.Qg4 Qg5 34.Kg2 Qxg4 35.Nxg4 Nf6 36.Nxf6 Bxf6 37.Bf4 Be5 38.Be3 Nb6
 Preparing ...a5-a4. Black is slightly better now.

39.Bd3 f5 40.f3 fxe4 41.fxe4 a4 42.Bb5 Rb8 43.Bc6 axb3 44.axb3 Nd7 45.Rf5 Bc3 46.Kh3 Ne5 47.Bf4 Rd8 48.Bxe5 Bxe5 49.Rbf1 Kg8 50.Bb5 Re7 51.Bd3 Ra8 52.Kg4 Bd4 53.R1f3 Ree8 54.Kh3 Ra1 55.Bb5 Rd8
 [Not 55...Rxe4?? 56.Rf8+ Kh7 57.Bd3 etc.]

56.Rf7 Rh1+ 57.Kg2
 [I don't understand why White didn't maintain material equality by protecting his h-pawn with 57.Kg4 .]

57...Rxxh5 58.Bd7 Bf6 59.Be6 Kh8 60.Rb7 Re5 61.Rf4 Re8 62.Kf3 R5xe6! A good winning try. Black gets more than enough compensation for the exchange.

63.dxe6 Rxe6 64.Rf5 Kh7 65.g4 Kg6 66.Rd7 Be5 67.Rf8 Rf6+ 68.Rxf6+ Kxf6 69.Rb7 Kg5 70.Rb6 g6 71.Rb7 h5 72.gxh5 gxh5 73.Rb8 h4 74.Rg8+ Kh5 75.Kg2 c4 76.bxc4 b3 77.Kh3 b2 78.Rg1 Bf6 79.Rf1 Be5 80.Rg1 Bf6 81.Rf1 Kg6 82.Rb1
 [As was the case with move 57, I think that White should have played 82.Kg4 . Now he comes close to losing.]

82...Kg5 83.Rf1 Kg6 84.Rb1 Kf7 85.e5 Bxe5 86.Kxh4 Ke6 87.Kg4 Kd7 88.Kf5 Kc6 89.Ke6 Bd4 90.Ke7 Kc5 91.Ke6 Be5
 [Or 91...Kxc4?! 92.Rxb2 etc.]

92.Kd7 Kxc4 93.Rxb2 Bxb2 94.Kxd6 A tough game.
 1/2-1/2

C90

□ Stefanova,A

■ Hebden,M

Gibraltar

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nf6 3.d3 Nc6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.0-0 0-0 6.Re1 d6 7.c3 Na5 8.Bb5 a6 9.Ba4 b5 10.Bc2 c5 11.Nbd2 Re8 12.Nf1 g6!? I quite like this move. Black prepares the traditional ...Be7-f8-g7 manoeuvre but by a subtly different move order.

[After the immediate 12...Bf8 White could play 13.Bg5 , but after 12...g6 that can be met with 13...Nh5.]

13.Ng3

[After 13.Ne3 Black no longer has to worry about a pin with Bg5 and can just play Bf8 .]
 [The main alternative is 13.h3 , when I quite like Skembris's Rb8!?, waiting another move before playing his bishop back to f8. (instead 13...Bf8 14.Bg5 h6 15.Bd2 Bg7 16.Ne3 Be6 17.Nh2 Nh5 18.Nd5 was slightly better for White in Tseshkovsky-Obukhov, Kurgan 1994)
 . Pancevski - Skembris, Skopje 2002, continued 14.Ne3 Bf8 15.Nh2 Bg7 16.Nhg4 Nxc4 17.hxc4 Be6 18.Qf3 Qh4!? 19.g3 Qh3 20.Bd1 Bh6 21.Be2 Bxe3!? 22.Bxe3 f5!? 23.exf5 gxf5 with sharp play.]

13...Bf8

[13...Qc7 14.h3 Be6 15.Bh6 Bf8 16.Qd2 Kh8 17.Bxf8 Rxf8 18.d4 cxd4 19.cxd4 Rac8 20.Bd3 Nc4 21.Bxc4 bxc4 22.Qc3 Kg8 23.dxe5 dxe5 24.Nxe5 Nd7 25.Nxd7 Qxd7 26.Rad1 Qa4 27.f4 Rfd8 28.Rxd8+ , Pilnik-Rossetto, Mar del Plata 1962, was eventually drawn.]

14.h3

[After 14.Bg5 Black can play h6 15.Bd2 Be6 , intending ...Nc6, ...Bg7 and ...d6-d5.]

14...Bg7 15.d4 cxd4 16.cxd4 exd4 The double exchange on d4 is a traditional way of gaining counterplay in such positions. Black has good diagonals for both his bishops and can put his rooks on the c- and e-files. It's true that his d6-pawn is weak, although it is by no means easy for White to get at it.

17.Nxd4 Qb6 18.Nf3 Bb7 19.Be3 Qd8 20.Bd4 I don't like this move as Black drives the bishop back, but finding an effective alternative is difficult. Black wants to play 20...d5, which is not at all easy to prevent.

Nc6 21.Bc3 b4 22.Bd2 Nd7 23.Bb3 Nde5?! Around here White seems to turn things around.

[Perhaps Black should play 23...Nc5 and meet 24.Bd5 with Rb8 . White would then have problems with the b2-pawn.]

24.Bd5 Rb8 25.Rc1 Nxf3+ 26.Qxf3 Qd7 27.Qb3 Nd4 28.Qd3 Bxd5 29.exd5 a5?

This might have been played too quickly.

[I think Black should hit the d5-pawn with 29...Rxe1+ 30.Rxe1 Qb7 .]

30.Rxe8+ Rxe8 31.Be3 Nf5!? The best try, allowing doubled pawns but creating pressure against b2.

[31...Nb5 is strongly met by 32.Rc6 .]

32.Nxf5 gxf5 33.Rc4? White, in turn, is too optimistic.

[It must surely be better to calmly defend the b-pawn with 33.b3 , leaving Black to figure out how to defend his weaknesses.]

33...Bxb2 34.Rh4 Bg7 35.Rf4 Bh6 36.Rxf5 Bxe3 37.fxe3 Qe7 The game is looking drawish now, but Hebden was probably ahead on the clock.

38.Rf3 Qe5 39.Qc4 Kh8 40.Rxf7 Qxe3+ 41.Kh2 Qe5+ 42.Kg1 Qc3 43.Qxc3+ bxc3 44.Rc7 Re3 45.Kf2 Rd3 46.Ke2 Rd2+ 47.Kf3 c2 48.g4 Rxd5 49.Rxc2 Rd3+ 50.Ke4 Rxh3 51.Rd2 Ra3 52.Kf5 Kg7 53.Rxd6 Rxa2

1/2-1/2

C90

□ Ljubojevic,L

■ Hjartarson,J

Szirak Interzonal

[Nigel Davies]

1987

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.a4

This is quite an interesting move which has been adopted by Kupreichik and Nunn. By first attacking Black's b-pawn White hopes to omit h2-h3.

Bd7 After studying this line during one of my correspondence games I came to the conclusion that

this is probably Black's best. I may be wrong, but I'm in good company, as Alexander Beliavsky appears to agree.

10.d4

[10.d3 Na5 11.Bc2 c5 12.Nbd2 (12.axb5 axb5 13.Bg5 Ng4 14.Bxe7 Qxe7 15.Nbd2 Rfb8 was fine for Black in Nisipeanu-Beliavsky, Ljubljana 2002) 12...Qb6!? (12...Qc7 13.Nf1 b4 14.cxb4 cxb4 15.Ne3 Be6 16.d4 Rfc8 17.h3 Nc4 18.Bd3 Nxe3 19.Bxe3 was better for White in Nunn-Xie Jun, San Francisco 1995) 13.Nf1 b4 seems to give Black good counterplay, the 'threat' being to drive White's bishop back to b1 with 14...b3.]

10...h6 Black prepares 11...Re8.

[10...Bg4 in this position loses a tempo (White's free advance of the a-pawn) compared to 9 d4 Bg4 and was a bit better for White after 11.d5 Na5 12.Bc2 Qc8 13.h3 Bd7 14.Nbd2 c6 15.dxc6 Qxc6 16.Nf1 h6 17.Ng3 Rfe8 18.Nh4 Bf8 19.Qf3 Re6 20.Nhf5 in Palac-Dervishi, St Vincent 2002. The extra tempo has finally resulted in a nasty pin on the a-file.]

11.Nbd2

[11.Na3 seems to be well met by Bg4!? (11...Re8 12.Bd2 Rb8 13.axb5 axb5 14.Nc2 Bf8 15.d5 Ne7 16.Nb4 was better for White in Kupreichik - Boudre, Val Maubuee 1989 ,but 11...Qb8 looks interesting here), for example 12.axb5 axb5 13.d5 Na5 (13...b4!? 14.dxc6 bxa3 15.bxa3 Qb8 is also interesting) 14.Ba2 Qc8 15.Qd3 (15.Nxb5 Bxf3 forces White to take with the pawn as 16.Qxf3 is answered by Nb3!) 15...c5 16.dxc6 Qxc6 .]

[Nor does 11.a5 appear dangerous after Re8 12.h3 Bf8 , when 13.d5 Ne7 14.c4 c5 15.Nc3 b4 16.Nb1 g6 17.Nbd2 Bg7 18.Nf1 Rf8 was fine for Black in Alvir-Lukacs, Austria 2001.]

11...Re8 12.d5 Releasing the tension gives White nothing.

[It is preferable to maintain the tension with 12.Nf1 Bf8 13.Ng3 (if 13.Bc2 exd4 and now 14.cxd4 is answered by Nb4) 13...Na5 14.Bc2 c5 15.d5 (15.dxe5 dxe5 16.Nf5 b4!? 17.cxb4 cxb4 18.N3h4 Be6 was fine for Black in Galliamova-Xie Jun, Groningen 1997 ,while 15.h3 g6 16.axb5 axb5 17.b3 Nc6 18.Bb2 Qc7 19.Bd3 Rxa1 20.Qxa1 Qb7 was equal in Mestel-Beliavsky, Lucerne 1985) 15...c4 16.h3 Nb7!? (trying to improve since 16...Rb8 17.axb5 axb5 18.Be3 Ra8 19.Ra3 Nb7 20.Qa1 Be7 21.Qa2 Rxa3 22.Qxa3 Qa8 23.Ba7 was a shade better for White in Ulibin-Beliavsky, Bled 2002) 17.Be3 Nc5 18.Nd2 Qc7 19.a5!? Nb7!? (19...g6 would have been sensible and much safer) 20.f4 Nxa5 21.Rf1 Nh7 22.Qf3 f6 23.Nh5 Kh8 24.Qf2 and White had good attacking chances for the sacrificed pawn in Bernhaupt-Davies, Correspondence 2004.]

[Also possible is 12.h3 when Vasiukov-Lukacs, Coimbatore 1987 went Bf8 13.Bc2 exd4 14.cxd4 Nb4 15.Bb1 bxa4 16.Ra3 g6 17.e5 dxe5 18.dxe5 Nfd5 19.Nf1 Nb6 with double-edged play.]

12...Na5 13.Bc2 c6 14.b4 Nc4 15.Nxc4 bxc4 16.dxc6 Bxc6 17.Qe2!? Rc8 18.Bd2

In subsequent games White tried to improve at this point, albeit without radically changing the assessment of this variation:

[18.Bb2 Bb7 19.Rad1 Qc7 20.Bc1 was Giaccio-Servat, Buenos Aires 1995 and now Black could have played d5 21.exd5 e4 22.Nd4 Bd6 with dynamic play.]

[18.Rd1 Qc7 19.Rb1 Bb7 20.Nh4 Bf8 21.Nf5 Re6 22.f3 d5 23.exd5 Nxd5 24.Qe1 Nf4 gave Black counterplay in Varga-Lukacs, Borsodtavho 1991.]

[18.Qxc4 is less than nothing for White after Bxe4 19.Qe2 Bxc2 20.Qxc2 d5 due to Black's strong centre.]

18...Bf8 19.Rad1

[Here too 19.Qxc4 Bxe4 favours Black.]

19...Bb7 20.Nh4 g6 21.a5 Bg7 22.Nf3 Qc7 23.Be3 d5

After this Black has a comfortable game.

24.Bb6 Qc6 25.Nd2?!

And now he is better.

[Perhaps White should play 25.Bc5 , but then Nxe4 26.Bxe4 dxe4 27.Nd2 Rcd8 28.Nxc4 Rd3

is very promising.]

25...d4! 26.cxd4 exd4 27.Bxd4 c3 28.Nf1 Nxe4 29.Qf3?!

[Relatively best was 29.Ne3 , although h5! (threatening 30...Nd2) would be strong.

(The immediate 29...Nd2 is less clear after 30.Bxg7 Kxg7 31.Qg4! .)]

29...Nd2 30.Rxe8+ Rxe8 31.Qxc6 Bxc6 32.Bxg7 Kxg7 33.Ne3? The losing move.

[White had to try 33.Rc1 after which Nxf1 34.Kxf1 Bb5+ 35.Kg1 Kf6 looks awful for White but might not be losing.]

[33.Nxd2 cxd2 34.h4 Re2 would be hopeless.]

33...Rb8 34.Rc1 Rxb4 35.Nd1 Rg4! 36.g3

[36.Ne3 Rg5 picks up the a5-pawn.]

36...Nf3+ 37.Kf1 Bb5+ 38.Kg2 Ne1+ 39.Kg1 Nxc2 40.Rxc2 Ba4? A serious slip which could have cost Black his well-earned victory.

[He should have played 40...Ra4 , when 41.Nxc3 Ra1+ 42.Kg2 Bc6+ 43.f3 Rxa5 is just technique.]

41.Rc1?

[Missing 41.Rxc3!! , when Bxd1? (41...Rg5 retains an edge, but nothing more) 42.f4 traps Black's rook next move with 43 h3.]

41...Bxd1

[41...c2 is also good because 42.Ne3 Rb4 43.Nxc2 Rc4 sees White lose his knight.]

42.Rxd1 c2 43.Rc1 Rc4 44.Kf1 Kf6 45.Ke2 Ke5 46.Kd3 Kd5 47.h4?!

[47.g4 is a slightly better try to hold the game.]

47...h5 48.f3 f6 49.Rxc2 Rxc2 50.Kxc2 Kc4 51.g4 f5 52.gxh5 gxh5 53.Kd2 f4 54.Kc2 Kb4 55.Kd3 Kxa5 56.Ke4 Kb4 57.Kxf4 a5

0-1

CHAPTER 4: RUY LOPEZ: FIFTH AND SIXTH MOVE ALTERNATIVES

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7

While I believe that 6 Re1 is White's best and most challenging move, a number of alternative developments have been tried at this stage. As with the 9th move alternatives, I don't think that Black has many problems if he knows what he's doing.

The most important of White's ideas is the Worrall Attack with 6 Qe2, a one-time favourite of Alekhine and Keres that was taken up more recently by Britain's Nigel Short. The point is that with the queen protecting e4 White can use the rook more effectively on d1 than the usual post on e1.

After 6...b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 c3 d6 White can choose between 9 Rd1 (Kaminski-Davies), 9 a4 (covered in the notes to Kaminski-Davies) and 9 d4. The latter move is by far the most complex and testing, although Black emerged in good shape from the line 9...Bg4 10 Rd1 exd4 11 cxd4 d5 12 e5 Ne4 in Vokac-Haba. Black's 16...Nd8 plan is particularly instructive, providing both restraint of White's kingside advance and effective counterplay.

In the Delayed Exchange Variation with 6 Bxc6 White has recently been trying (6...dxc6) 7 Qe1 again, but this doesn't cause Black much trouble. Five minutes before playing Jim Plaskett (Plaskett-Davies) I saw that my opponent played this line but discovered an effective antidote in one of Gligoric's games. From a theoretical point of view 7 Nc3 is more critical as Black should sacrifice a piece in the line 7...Bg4 8 h3 Bh5 9 g4 Nxc3, but this is very promising - as seen in Large-P.Littlewood. This leaves the quiet 7 d3, which contains some strategic pitfalls but looks completely innocuous against Bacrot's treatment - see McShane-Bacrot.

The Centre Attack with 6 d4 has experienced some sporadic popularity but dissipates the tension too quickly to cause Black difficulties. After 6...exd4 7 e5 Ne4 White got nothing in Kuijf-Balashov and soon found himself worse when he tried to get blood out of a stone. Timman's 7 Re1 (Timman-Spassky) is better, yet still fine for Black, who has the two bishops.

Spassky, like Keres and Alekhine before him, has experimented with 6 Nc3 and, in Spassky-Timman, even played it on move 5 in order to avoid his opponent's favourite Open Variation (5 0-0 Nxe4) and perhaps exploit a lack of knowledge of museum openings on the part of the Dutchman. However, it turned out that Timman knew exactly what he was doing.

Finally 5 d3, which Lau tried in Lau-Lukacs, no doubt motivated by the wish to escape his opponent's excellent main line preparation. But Lukacs knew what he was doing and crowned the game with a deep exchange sacrifice.

Summary

Black has more than adequate resources against all these unusual lines. Once again it is imperative to learn what to do in order to avoid being intimidated in a 'live' game, the most important games to study being Vokac-Haba and Large-P.Littlewood, simply because they require sharp and exact play on Black's part.

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□ Kaminski,M

■ Davies,N

Liechtenstein

[Nigel Davies]

1993

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Qe2 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.Rd1

This is quite an important junction. White has tried several alternatives:

[9.h3 has been a popular choice in recent times. In Yudasin-Khalifman, Dos Hermanas 1993 Black played very solidly with Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 , and after 12.Rd1 Bd7 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.Nbd2 Rfd8 15.Nf1 Be6 16.Rxd8+ Rxd8 17.Ng3 g6 could claim full equality. That he later lost the game had nothing to do with the opening.]

[9.a4 is an old move that I revived against Nigel Short, although Black equalized rather comfortably with Bg4 10.h3 Bxf3 (the books say that this voluntary surrender of the bishop is dubious, but after this game I think they are wrong) 11.Qxf3 Na5 12.Bc2 b4! 13.d4 (13.cxb4 Nc6 leaves b4 weak and the knight ready to hop into d4) 13...c5 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.Nd2 Qc7 16.Qe2 bxc3 17.bxc3 c4 and Black stood well in Davies-Short, Hastings 1987/88.]

[9.d4 is quite a major and complex alternative that has a game to itself in Vokac-Haba.]

9...Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.dxe5

[It's difficult for White to keep the tension here because 12.Nbd2 is met by cxd4 , when 13.cxd4 loses the bishop on c2.]

12...dxe5 13.Nbd2 Rd8 14.Nf1 Rxd1 15.Bxd1 Bb7 16.Bc2 c4 Apparently a new move, although I was unaware of this at the time.

[In the game Keres-Lilienthal, Leningrad-Moscow 1941, Black played the slightly odd 16...Rd8 17.h3 Nh5?! and after 18.g3 g6 19.Ne3 Nf6 20.Ng4 Nxc4 21.hxc4 Bc8 22.Nh2 Be6 23.Nf1 stood slightly worse. It makes much more sense for Black to play on the queenside, at least for the time being.]

17.Ng3 g6 18.Bg5 Nc6 19.Nd2

[In his 'Daily Telegraph' chess column Nigel Short suggested (somewhat flippantly?) 19.h4 , but after Nd8 , intending 20...Ne6, I prefer Black again.]

19...Nh5! 20.Bxe7

[20.Nxh5 Bxc5 gives Black the bishop pair.]

20...Nf4! 21.Qf3 Nxe7 White has serious problems here thanks to the strong position of the knight on f4 and Black's possibilities on the d-file.

22.Ne2

[22.Qe3 might improve, although I still like my position after Rd8 .]

22...Rd8! 23.Qe3

[23.Nf1 Nd3 24.Bxd3 Rxd3 leaves Black in control of the d-file, but anything would have been better than what now happens.]

23...Nxc2! A bolt from the blue.

24.Kxc2

[24.Qh6 Nh4 would only have prolonged White's suffering.]

24...Nf5 25.Qg5 h6 The point behind Black's combination. White can't keep covering the knight on d2, and his whole position falls apart.

26.Qf6 Rxd2 I must admit that I was pleased with the simplicity of this game, and it set me on course for a full conversion to the move 1... e5.

0-1

□ Vokac,M

■ Haba,P

Lazne Bohdanec

[Nigel Davies]

1994

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.Qe2

[As happens in this game, the text will usually transpose to the 5.0-0 Be7 6.Qe2 variation. One of the advantages of playing Qe2 a move earlier is that White avoids the Open Variation after 5 0-0 Nxe4.]

5...b5 6.Bb3 Be7 7.0-0 And here is the transposition.

[I have tried the independent 7.c3 0-0 8.d4 in this position but went off the idea after a couple of games I played in Serbia. After d6 9.Nbd2 (9.h3 Re8 10.0-0 Bf8 11.Bg5 h6 12.Bxf6 Qxf6 13.Bd5 Bd7 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.a4 Rab8 was also uninspiring for White in Davies-Pavlovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1988)Hebden played 9...Re8 against me in Vrnjacka Banja 1991, and after 10.0-0 Bf8 (10...Bg4 11.d5 Na5 12.Bc2 Bd7 13.Rd1 c6 14.dxc6 Bxc6 was also fine for Black in Sikula-Podat, Kiev 2002) 11.d5 Ne7 12.Rd1 Ng6 13.g3 h6 14.c4 Qd7!? 15.Bc2 Qg4 Black had developed some nasty threats on the kingside.]

7...0-0 8.c3 d6 9.d4 A sharp and direct move which needs accurate handling by Black.

[For 9.Rd1 , 9 h3 and 9 a4 see Kaminski-Davies.]

9...Bg4 This, in turn, is the most natural reply, exerting pressure on the d4-pawn.

[9...Bb7 10.Rd1 Nd7 11.a4 b4 12.a5 bxc3 13.bxc3 Bf6 gave White an edge in Henao-Hebden, Cuba 1993.]

10.Rd1 exd4 11.cxd4 d5 12.e5

[Bronstein later suggested 12.exd5 , but after Na5! (12...Nb4 13.h3 Bh5 14.Nc3 Re8 15.g4 Bg6 16.Ne5 favours White) 13.Bc2 Re8 Black will recover his pawn with a good game.]

12...Ne4 13.h3 White has a couple of alternatives here:

[13.a4 b4! (13...bxa4 14.Bxa4 Nb4 15.h3 Bh5 16.Nc3 Bg6 17.Be3 Rb8 18.Na2 was better for White in Short-Karpov, Linares (match) 1992) 14.a5 (14.h3 Bh5 will be similar) 14...Kh8 (not the immediate 14...f6? in view of 15.Qxe4) 15.Qc2 (15.h3 Bh5 16.Be3 f5 17.Rc1 f4! 18.Rxc6 fxe3 19.fxe3 Bxf3 20.gxf3 Bh4 21.Qg2 Bf2+ 22.Kh1 Bxe3 23.Rc2 Qh4 0-1 was the dramatic conclusion to Adams-Wells, London 1993) 15...Na7 16.Nbd2 f5 17.exf6 Nxf6 18.Re1 c5 19.Ne5 (19.dxc5 Rc8 gives Black excellent counterplay) 19...c4 (19...Rc8 looks fine for Black here, too) 20.Ndxc4 Rc8 21.Qd3 dxc4 22.Bxc4 Nb5 23.Bg5 (23.Nf7+? Rxf7 24.Bxf7 Nxd4 is winning for Black) 23...Bh5 24.Re3 Qxd4 25.Bxb5 Qxb2 26.Rb1 Rc1+ 27.Rxc1 Qxc1+ 28.Qf1 was J.Polgar-Spassky, Budapest 1993, and now Qc7! 29.Bxa6 Ng4 would have been good for Black.]

[13.Nc3 Nxc3 14.bxc3 Qd7 15.h3 Bh5 leads back into the game.]

13...Bh5 14.Nc3 Nxc3 15.bxc3 Qd7 16.Bc2

[White has also tried the sharp 16.g4 , although Black is fine there too. After Bg6 17.Ne1 (17.Bg5 Bxg5 18.Nxg5 f6 19.exf6 Rxf6 20.Ne4 Bxe4 21.Qxe4 was messy in Holmov-Podgaets, USSR 1978) 17...Na5 18.f4 Be4 (or 18...Nxb3 19.axb3 Be4 20.f5 c5 21.Be3 cxd4 22.Bxd4 Qc7 23.Nd3 f6 , as in Guliev-Iuldachev, Abu Dhabi 1999 - it is White's king that is becoming the weaker) 19.Nd3 c5 20.Nf2 (20.Nxc5 Bxc5 21.dxc5 Qc6 will recover the pawn with good counterplay) 20...Nxb3 21.axb3 f5 22.Nxe4 fxe4 23.dxc5 Bxc5+ and the chances were about even in Varavin-Onischuk, Alushta 1994.]

[On the other hand 16.Bf4 doesn't make much sense because it is yet another piece that obstructs the f-pawn. After Nd8 17.g4 Bg6 18.Bg3 Ne6 19.Kh2 Rae8 20.a4 f5 21.exf6 Bxf6 Black stood well in Socko-Liwak, Lubniewice 2002.]

16...Nd8 This may be Black's best - the knight heads for the nice blockading square on e6. If White

later advances his f-pawn Black will try to stop it in its tracks with ... f7-f5.

[The famous game Bronstein-Ulvestad, USSR-USA 1946, went 16...Bg6 17.Ne1 (17.Bxg6 hxg6 18.Bg5 is worth considering as, with only knights on the board, White can try to occupy c5) 17...Nd8 18.Nd3? (Instead of this planless move White should play 18.f4 , although this is nothing for White after Bxc2 19.Nxc2 f5) 18...Ne6 19.a4? (19.f4 was still the best) 19...Qc6 20.Bb2 Qc4! 21.a5 c5! and Black had the initiative.]

17.a4

[Reuben Fine pointed out that 17.Bxh7+ Kxh7 18.Ng5+ Bxg5 19.Qxh5+ Bh6 20.g4 f6 21.exf6 Rxf6 22.g5 Qf5 should win for Black.]

17...Ne6 18.g4 Bg6 19.Bf5 Qc6 20.Qe3 bxa4! Initiating counterplay on the queenside.

21.Ba3 Bxa3 22.Rxa3 Rab8 23.Nd2 f6 And now Black sets about opening up the kingside. The play on both flanks is very instructive - when White's pieces are drawn to the queenside there are fewer defenders available for the king.

24.Nf3 Rb3 25.Rda1 Rxa3 26.Rxa3 Be8 27.Ra1 g6 28.Bc2 fxe5 29.Nxe5 Qb6 30.Nd3

This looks like a slip.

[After 30.Rb1 Qd6 White can repeat the position with 31.Ra1 and ask how Black intends to play for a win.]

30...Bb5 31.Nc5 Nf4 32.Bxa4 Bxa4 33.Nxa4

[Not 33.Rxa4? Qb1+ 34.Kh2 Qf1 etc.]

33...Qf6 34.Nc5? Losing.

[White should play 34.Ra2 , when he is still hanging on.]

34...Qh4 35.Kf1

[35.Kh2 Nxb3 wins for Black.]

35...Nxb3 36.Qe6+ Kg7 37.Qe5+ Kh6 38.Qe3+ Ng5 39.Ke2 Rf3 40.Qe7 Qxf2+ 41.Kd1 Qg1+ 42.Kc2 Qxa1

0-1

C85

□ **Plaskett,J**

■ **Davies,N**

British League

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.Qe1 This looks quite odd, but White defends the e4-pawn whilst keeping the option open of playing d2-d4 in one move rather than first putting the pawn on d3.

[7.Qe2 has also been played here but Black seems to be fine after c5 , 8.Nxe5 being answered by Qd4]

[For 7.Nc3 see the game Large-P.Littlewood]

[and for 7.d3 see McShane-Bacrot.]

7...Nd7 I think this is the simplest and most economical approach for Black. However, the alternatives also seem fine:

[7...Be6 looks okay even though I don't especially like the position of the bishop on this square. In Plaskett-Sasikiran, Hastings 2000/01, White gained the advantage after 8.b3 Nd7 9.Bb2 f6 10.d4 Bd6 11.Nbd2 0-0 12.Qe2 b5?! (12...Qe8 is better) 13.c4 Bg4 14.h3 Bh5 15.c5 Be7 16.b4 , with lots of space. But Black can improve on his 12th move, as noted.]

[7...c5 rules out d2-d4 by White. After 8.Nxe5 Qd4 9.Nf3 Qxe4 10.Qxe4 Nxe4 11.Re1 Nf6 (11...Nd6 is also possible) 12.d4 (12.b3 b6 13.Bb2 Be6 14.Ng5 Bd7 15.c4 Kf8 was also fine for Black in Belikov-Kovalev, Alushta 2004) 12...Be6 13.dxc5 Bxc5 14.Be3 Bxe3 15.Rxe3

0-0-0 and Black may have had an edge in Blatny-Ehlvest, New York 2003, although he lost after having tried too hard to win.]

8.b3 0-0 While looking up my opponent's games I discovered that Plaskett had been playing 7 Qe1. I didn't have much time to prepare but saw that experts in open games liked to delay ...f7-f6 so as to prevent Nh4 manoeuvres.

[Plaskett-Pein, Southend 1999 had featured a quick win for White after 8...f6 9.Bb2 0-0 10.d4 exd4 11.Nxd4 Nc5 12.Nd2 Re8 13.Qe3 Bd6 14.f4 Bd7 (14...Nxe4 15.Nxe4 f5 16.Qg3 fxe4 17.Ne6 is crushing) 15.Rae1 Qe7 16.Qg3 Kh8 17.e5! 1-0. After fxe5 18.fxe5 Bxe5 19.Rxe5! Qxe5 20.Rf8+! Rxf8 21.Qxe5 Rae8 22.Qg3 White has a decisive material advantage, (but not 22.Qxc5?? Re1+ .)]

9.Bb2 Bd6 10.d3

[Blatny-Goldin, US Masters, Chicago 2002 went 10.d4 exd4 11.Nxd4 , when Qh4 (in the actual game 11...Re8?! 12.Nf5 Be5 13.Nc3 Nc5?! 14.Rd1 Qg5 15.f4! Bxf4 16.h4 Qg4 17.Nxg7 was good for White)would have been fine for Black after 12.Nf3 Qg4 13.h3 Qg6 14.Nh4 Qg5 15.Nf5 Nc5 , for example.]

10...Re8 11.Nbd2 Nf8 12.Qe3

[12.Nc4 Ng6 13.d4 exd4 14.Nxd4 Qg5 gives Black some play on the kingside.]

12...c5 Putting a stop to d3-d4, although Black can also allow this advance.

[In Glueck-Romanishin, Groningen 1990 Black achieved a nice game after 12...Ng6 13.d4 exd4 14.Qxd4 Bf8 15.Qc3 Qe7 16.Rae1 Qc5 17.Nd4 Qxc3 18.Bxc3 c5 19.Ne2 f5 , opening the position for his bishop pair.]

13.Nc4 Ng6 14.g3 b5 15.Ncd2

[15.Nxd6 cxd6 might even be slightly advantageous to Black]
[while 15.Na5 c6 16.Nxc6 Qc7 loses a piece.]

15...Nf8 16.a4 Bh3 17.Rfc1

[After 17.Rfe1 Ne6 18.Bxe5 Bxe5 19.Nxe5 Nd4 Black wins material, so White sets about protecting c2.]

17...f6 18.Kh1 Plaskett offered me the draw at just the right time. If anything Black's prospects are a little preferable here, but an early draw with Black is not a bad thing in a team event.

½-½

C85

□ **Large,P**

■ **Littlewood,P**

London

[Nigel Davies]

1983

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.Nc3 This was recommended by Len Pickett in his monograph on the DERLD (Delayed Exchange of the Ruy Lopez Deferred). It's a natural developing move, but what does White do about the pin on his king's knight?

Bg4 Black needs to know what he's doing in these lines and can't rely on simply playing natural moves.

[7...Nd7?! looks like an obvious sort of move but Black can come under pressure after 8.d4! , for example exd4 9.Qxd4 0-0 10.Bf4 Nc5 11.Qe3 Ne6 12.Rad1 Qe8 13.Bg3 f6 14.Nh4 b5?! 15.Nf5 and White was clearly better in Soltis-Halldanarsson, Haifa 1970.]

8.h3 Bh5 9.g4

[White has also tried the deceptively quiet 9.Qe2 . Wolff-Kavalek, USA Championship 1985, for example, went Qc8 (ruling out g2-g4) 10.Qe3 (10.d3 h6 11.Nd1 Nh7 12.g4 Bxg4 13.hxg4

Qxg4+ 14.Kh2 Qh5+ 15.Kg1 Qg4+ 16.Kh2 with a draw in Tal-Keres, Bled 1961) 10...Nd7 11.g4 Bg6 12.d4 f6 (12...exd4 13.Nxd4 Bc5 14.f4 f6 15.Qf2 and 16 Be3 gives White a clear advantage) 13.Ne2 h5 14.Nh4 Nf8 15.Nf5 hxg4 16.hxg4 exd4 17.Nexd4 Bc5 18.Qc3 (18.Nxg7+? Kf7 19.Ngf5 Ne6 and White faces some nasty pins) 18...Bxd4 19.Qxd4 Ne6 20.Qc4 Bf7 21.Qd3 g6 22.Nh6 Nc5 23.Qf3 Qe6 24.Rd1 Nd7 25.Nxf7 Kxf7 26.Qb3 (26.g5? Rh3 is horrible) 26...Ne5 27.Bf4 Qxb3 28.axb3 Ke6 29.g5 (29.Bxe5 offers better drawing chances) 29...Rh4 30.Bg3 Rxe4 31.Kg2?! (and here White had to try 31.gxf6) 31...f5 32.Re1 Rd8 33.Rad1 Rxd1 34.Rxd1 f4 35.Bh2 Kf5 36.Rd8 Kg4 37.Re8 Re1 38.f3+ Nxf3 0-1.]

9...Nxg4!? The fact that this sacrifice may be Black's best shows how important it is for Black to know what he's doing here.

[Vaskan-Klovans, USSR 1966, went as follows: 9...Bg6 10.Nxe5 Bxe4 (10...Nxe4 11.Re1 Nxc3 12.bxc3 0-0 13.Rb1 is quite awkward for Black because Rb8 can be met by 14.Nxc6 bxc6 15.Rxb8 Qxb8 16.Rxe7) 11.g5 Rg8 12.Re1 (12.gxf6 gxf6+ 13.Ng4 might be even stronger, although Black may have some compensation after f5 14.Nxe4 fxe4 15.Kh1 Qd6 , intending ...0-0-0 and ...f7-f5) 12...Bf5 13.Qf3 Be6 14.Nd3 Nd5 (14...Nd7 is well met by 15.Rxe6 fxe6 16.Qh5+ g6 17.Qxh7 Rf8 18.Qxg6+ with a growing number of pawns for the exchange) 15.Rxe6 fxe6 16.Ne5 Nf6 (16...Rf8 also looks good for White, for example 17.Qh5+ g6 18.Qxh7 Nf4 19.d3 Qd4 20.Bxf4 Qxf4 21.Qxe7+ Kxe7 22.Nxg6+ Kd6 23.Nxf4 Rxf4 24.Ne4+ when White's two passed pawns and anchored knight give him a clear advantage) 17.Kf1 Qd4 18.gxf6 Bxf6 19.Ng4 0-0-0 20.Qe4 Qb6 21.Nxf6 gxf6 22.Qxe6+ Kb8 23.d3 Rg6 24.Rb1 Rdg8 25.Be3 Qa5 26.Ke2 Qh5+ 27.Kd2 f5 28.Qf7 Qxh3 29.Ne2 R6g7 30.Qe6 Rg6 31.Qe5 Rf8 32.Nf4 1-0.]

10.hxg4 Bxg4 11.Kg2

[There is an interesting alternative in 11.Qe2 Qd6 12.Qe3 , giving up the exchange after Bh3 13.Nh4 Bxf1 14.Nf5 Qf6 15.Kxf1 . The resulting position sees White's king much safer and with two minor pieces for a rook and two pawns. Nevertheless I would prefer to play Black. Conquest-Stefansson, Hafnarfirdi 1992, went Bb4 (not 15...0-0-0? 16.Qa7!) 16.d3 g6 17.Nh6 Qe6 (17...0-0-0 is still met by 18.Qa7) 18.Qf3 (18.Bd2 might have been better, with the idea that if Black castles long White still has Qa7) 18...Rf8 19.Bd2 0-0-0 20.Re1 f5 21.Qh3 Kb8 22.a3 Bc5 23.Re2 Bd4 24.Bg5 Rde8 25.Nd1 Qa2 26.c3 Bc5 27.Kg2 (27.Ke1 was mandatory) 27...Qb1 28.Rd2 fxe4 29.Ng4 Rf5 30.Qh4 exd3 31.b4 (31.Nf6 is answered by Be7) 31...Bb6 32.Nf6 Rd8 33.Ne4 Rdf8 34.Bh6 (34.Qxh7 would have been better.) 34...Re8 35.Nf6 Rd8 36.Ne4 Rd7 37.a4 Qb3 38.a5 Ba7 39.Be3 Qd5 40.Bxa7+ Kxa7 41.f3 (41.Ne3 g5 42.Qg4 Rf4 43.Qxf4 gxf4 44.Nxd5 cxd5 gives Black too many pawns for the piece) 41...Qf7 42.Qf2+ Kb8 43.Qe3 g5 44.Ndf2 h5 45.Nxd3 g4 46.fxg4 hxg4 47.Ndc5 Rxd2+ 48.Nxd2 Qd5+ 49.Nce4 Rf4 50.c4 Qd8 51.Qc3 Qh4 52.Qg3 (if 52.Qxe5 Qh3+ 53.Kg1 g3! wins) 52...Qh7 53.Qe3 Rf8 54.Qg3 Rh8 55.Nf2 Qc2 56.Qxe5 Rd8 57.Nde4 Qxc4 58.Qe7 Rd4 59.Nf6 Rd2 60.N6e4 Rd4 61.Nc5 Qd5+ 62.Nfe4 Qf5 63.Kg3 Rd5 64.Qe8+ Ka7 65.Kh4 Re5 66.Qd8 Qh5+ 67.Kg3 Qh3+ 68.Kf4 Rd5 0-1.]

11...Bc5 In such a complex position it is difficult to know which is best. Here are the alternatives:

[11...Qd6 12.Rg1 0-0-0 13.Ne2 h5 14.Nh2 Be6 15.d3 g6 16.Kh1 c5 17.b3 Rhg8 18.Qe1 Qc6 19.f3 Kb8 20.Bd2 Rdf8 gave Black ongoing compensation for the piece in Blackstock-Pinter, Budapest 1977. I rather like the way Pinter played, relying on positional compensation for the piece rather than trying to force matters early on.]
 [11...h5!? 12.Qe1 (12.d3 might be best, when Black could switch to Pinter's plan with Qd6) 12...Rh6 13.Nh2 Rg6 14.Nxg4 Qd7 15.f3 hxg4 16.f4 exf4 17.Rxf4 g3 18.Rf1 0-0-0 19.Rh1 Rf6 20.e5 Rf2+ 21.Kxg3 Rf5 22.d3 Rxe5 23.Qxe5 Bd6 24.Qxd6 Qxd6+ 25.Bf4 Qg6+ 26.Kf3 Qf5 27.Rag1 g6 28.Rg5 Qd7 29.Rh7 Qe8 30.Rxg6 Kb8 31.Rgh6 Rc8 32.Rf6 Qe1 33.Rxf7 Qf1+ 34.Ke3 Qc1+ 35.Kf3 Qxc2 36.Bxc7+ Ka8 37.Bf4 Qxd3+ 38.Kf2 Qc2+ 39.Kf3

Qxb2 0-1 Pioch-Kachiani Gersinska, Baden-Baden 1993.]

[11...0-0 could be the least effective of Black's 11th move options as he can no longer use his mass of kingside pawns as a battering ram. After 12.Qe2 Qd6 (12...b5 13.Qe3 f5 14.exf5 Rxf5 15.Nxe5 also left Black struggling in Poloch-Hennel, Trnava 1979) 13.Qe3 f5 14.exf5 Rxf5 15.Nh2 Rf4 16.d3 Qg6 17.Qg3 Bh4 18.Bxf4 Bxg3 19.Bxg3 White's queen sacrifice had broken the attack and earned a clear advantage in Huenerkopf-Cladouras, Munich 1992.]

12.Rg1

[Perhaps White should have preferred 12.Qe1 , when Qf6 13.Nh2 Qh4 14.Nxg4 (14.f3 Bh3+ 15.Kh1 Qg5 16.Rg1 Bxg1 wins back enough material) 14...Qxg4+ is perpetual check.]

12...Qf6 13.d3 h5 14.Be3?

[14.Nb1 improves, the point being to put the knight on d2 and protect f3.]

14...Bb4! 15.Rh1 g5! 16.Nb1 h4 17.Rh2

[After 17.Rh3 there follows Bxh3+ 18.Kxh3 g4+! 19.Kxg4 Qe6+ etc.]

17...0-0-0 18.a3 h3+ 19.Kg3 Rdg8 20.Rh1

[In the event of 20.Kxg4 there follows Rh4+ 21.Nxh4 (21.Kg3 Qf4+!! leads to mate) 21...gxh4+ 22.Kxh3 Qe6+ 23.Kxh4 Be7+ 24.Bg5 Rxd5 and Black wins.]

20...h2 21.Rxh2

[Or 21.Kg2 Rh3 etc.]

21...Rxh2 22.Kxh2 Bxf3 23.Qc1 g4 24.Kg3 Rh8 25.axb4 Rh3#

0-1

C85

□ McShane,L

■ Bacrot,E

Biel

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.d3 A solid move, firmly protecting the e4-pawn while retaining the option of Nbd2. Ultimately White might try to play f2-f4 so that he can erode Black's pawn centre and open the f-file, but in doing so he must be careful not to unleash Black's bishops.

Nd7 8.Nbd2 0-0 9.Nc4 f6 Black solidly protects the e-pawn and can now try and bring the knight to d4 via c5 and e6.

10.Nh4 White's most direct move, trying to bring the knight to f5 and at the same time freeing the f-pawn to advance. The alternatives don't trouble Black too much:

[10.b3 c5 11.Bb2 Nb8! 12.a4 Nc6 is a typical manoeuvre for Black in such positions, bringing the knight in contact with the d4-square. After 13.Nfd2 Be6 14.a5 b5 15.axb6 cxb6 16.Ne3 b5 Black's position was already preferable in Ovetchkin-Smirnov, Nefteyugansk 2002.]

[10.Kh1 Nc5 (presumably White's idea is to wait for 10...c5 before playing 11.Nh4 so that Black's knight no longer has access to the c5-square, but in any case his position looks fine after Nb8 12.Nf5 Bxf5 13.exf5 Nc6) 11.Ng1 Ne6 12.Ne2 b5 13.Ne3 Bd6 (13...c5 14.Nf5 Nd4 is also a good way to play) 14.Nf5 c5 15.Be3 Nd4 16.Neg3 Be6 17.Nxd6 Qxd6 18.Qd2 Rad8 and Black was very comfortably placed in Drozdov-Sorokin, St Petersburg 2002.]

[10.d4 does not seem very logical after White's 7th move, and indeed exd4 11.Nxd4 Ne5 12.Ne3 Re8 13.c3 Bc5 14.Kh1 Qe7 15.Nef5 Qf7 saw improved conditions for Black's bishop pair in Kritz-Rabiega, Hoeckendorf 2004.]

[10.Be3!? is quite interesting, but I think Black can play c5 (10...Nc5 11.b4 Ne6 12.c3 c5 13.a3 Kh8 14.Qc2 cxb4 15.axb4 Qe8 16.Rfb1 was slightly better for White in Delgado-Matsuura, Osasco 2004) 11.Nh4 Nb8 12.Nf5 Bxf5 13.exf5 Nc6 with equality.]

10...Nc5 The most economical defence of the f5-square. Black is simply going to remove the knight when it lands there.

11.Nf5 This is probably best, although White has tried a couple of alternatives:

[11.Qf3 Rf7 (11...Ne6 12.Nf5 Nd4 13.Nxd4 Qxd4 14.Be3 Qd7 15.Qg3 Qg4 was equal and agreed drawn in Kovalevskaya-Turov, Moscow 2002) 12.Nf5 Bf8 13.Be3 Ne6 14.h4 b5 15.Nd2 c5 16.Qg3 Kh8 17.h5 Rd7 18.Nf3 Qe8 19.Qh4 Bb7 produced a complex position with chances for both sides in A.Ivanov-Shabalov, Virginia Beach 2002.]

[11.f4 exf4 12.Rxf4 g6 (12...g5 13.Nf5 gxf4 14.Qg4+ Kf7 15.Qh5+ is at least a draw for White) 13.Be3 a5 (13...Ne6 is also worth considering as 14.Rg4? Ng7! was already winning for Black in Hübner-Smyslov, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970) 14.Rf1 Ne6 15.a4 Ng7 16.Nf3 Be6 17.b3 c5 18.Bd2 b6 19.Bc3 Bxc4 20.dxc4 Qxd1 21.Raxd1 Rad8 was equal and later drawn in J.Geller-Balashov, Moscow 2002.]

11...Bxf5 12.exf5 After the exchange on f5 the position has changed. White no longer has the superior pawn structure and Black doesn't have the two bishops!

Qd7

[12...Qd5 13.Qg4 transposes to the position after White's 14th move in the main game. In Ivanchuk-Kramnik, Monaco 2002, play continued Rfe8 (13...Rad8) 14.Re1 e4?! (14...Rad8 is better here too) 15.Ne3 Qe5 (15...Qd4 16.f3 will win Black's e-pawn) 16.Nf1! (16.Nc4 Qd5 17.Ne3 Qe5 18.Nc4 forced a draw in Wedberg-Karpov, Oslo 1984) 16...Bf8 17.Ng3 Rad8 18.h4 Qd4 19.dxe4 Qc4 20.Be3 Nxe4 (20...Qxc2 21.Rac1 wins on the spot) 21.b3 Qxc2 (or 21...Qb4 22.a3 etc.) 22.Rec1 Qd3 23.Rd1 Qxd1+ 24.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 25.Qxd1 Nxc3 26.Qd3 and White duly converted his material advantage.]

13.Qf3 Qd5 14.Qg4 Rad8 Besides this and 14...Rfe8 (covered in the previous note), Black has a couple of alternatives:

[14...b5 15.Nd2 Rad8 16.Re1 Nd7 17.Ne4 c5 18.Be3 Nb6 19.b3 c4 20.dxc4 bxc4 21.Red1 was better for White due to his nicely centralized knight and Black's pawn weaknesses in Belkhodja-Kazhgaleyev, Issy les Moulineaux 2004.]

[14...e4 15.Re1 Rf7 16.Ne3 Qe5 (16...Qd4 17.f3) 17.Nf1 is painfully similar to Ivanchuk-Kramnik.]

15.Re1 Rfe8 16.a4?! I don't like this move because, after 17...b5, White is forced to undouble Black's pawns.

[16.Bd2 looks better with balanced chances after Bf8 .]

16...Bf8 17.b3 b5 18.axb5 cxb5 19.Ne3 Suddenly White's position has become quite difficult.

[19.Nd2 can be answered by e4 20.dxe4 (20.Nxe4 Nxe4 21.dxe4 Rxe4 is good for Black in view of White's weakened back rank) 20...Qd4 21.Ra2 Nxe4 and White is in trouble.]

19...Qd4 20.Ra2 Qxg4 21.Nxc4 e4 22.d4?! White tries to complicate when he should probably bite the bullet.

[22.dxe4 Nxe4 23.Rf1 looks more stubborn.]

22...Rxd4 23.Bb2 Rd6 24.Rea1 Ra8 25.Ne3 Nb7 26.c4 White has to try this before Black starts rolling forward with ...a6-a5.

bxc4 27.Nxc4

[27.bxc4 is strongly met by Rd2 , but this was nevertheless the best chance.]

27...Rd3! Winning the b3-pawn. The rest, to coin a phrase, is a matter of technique.

28.g4 Rxb3 29.Nd2 Rb6 30.Nxe4 Nc5 31.Ng3 Nb3 32.Rd1 Rd6 33.Re1 Rd2 34.Nf1 Rd3 35.Kg2 a5 36.Re4 Nd2 37.Re3 Rxe3 38.Nxe3 Nb3 39.Ra4 Bb4 40.h4 Rd8 41.Nc4 h6 42.Ra2 Nd2 43.Ne3 c5 44.Bc1 Nb3 45.Bb2 Rd2 46.Nc4 Re2 47.Kf1 Re4 48.Ne3 c4 49.Nd5 Re1+ 50.Kg2 Re2 51.Kf3 Nd4+

0-1

□ **Kuijf,M**

■ **Balashov,Y**

German Bundesliga

[Nigel Davies]

1993

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.d4 exd4 7.e5

[7.Re1 is dealt with in the game Timman-Spassky.]

7...Ne4 8.Nxd4 This (with 9 Nf5) is White's only try for any kind of pressure.

[8.Re1 Nc5 sees Black secure the bishop pair as well as a free and open game.]

8...0-0 9.Nf5 d5 10.Nxe7+

[White can also first play 10.Bxc6, but after bxc6 11.Nxe7+ Qxe7 Black's doubled pawns are mobile and can control valuable centre squares. Hjartarson-Spassky, Bayern 1991 went 12.Re1 Re8 13.f3 Nd6 14.Bf4 (14.b3 Nf5 15.Qd2 Qe6 16.Qf2 Bb7 17.Nc3 d4 18.Na4 Qe7 19.Bb2 Rad8 20.c3 dxc3 21.Bxc3 Rd5 gave Black a comfortable game in Marjanovic-Psakhis, Dortmund 1982) 14...Nf5 15.Qd2 Rb8 16.b3 h6!? (16...Rb4 17.c3 Rb6 18.Qf2 c5 is another good way to play the position for Black, as in Adams-Hebden, London 1989) 17.Nc3 Be6 18.Qf2 Qb4 (18...c5 is also a good move) 19.Bd2 Qd4 20.Na4 Qxf2+ 21.Kxf2 Nd4 22.Rac1 Bf5 23.g4 Bh7 24.c3 Nc2! 25.Re2 d4 and Black had counterplay.]

[In Ljubojevic-Karpov, Milan 1975, White played the harmless 10.exd6, after which Bxf5 11.dxe7 Nxe7 12.Bb3 Qxd1 (12...Nc5 13.Nc3 Nxb3 14.cxb3 Qxd1 15.Rxd1 Rad8 16.Bf4 ½-½ was Kramnik-Adams, Cap D'Agde 2003) 13.Rxd1 Rad8 was completely equal, although Ljubojevic was beautifully outplayed and later lost.]

10...Nxe7 11.c3 Nc5 12.Bc2 Bf5 13.Be3

[Kuijf-Van der Sterren, Holland 1992, had gone 13.Bxf5 Nxf5 14.Qc2 g6 15.g4 Ng7 16.Be3 Nce6 17.f4 f5 18.exf6 Qxf6 with a good game for Black because of the weakness of White's kingside.

The text improves but does nothing to alter the assessment of the position: Black stands well here.]

13...Ne6

[Kuijf-Van Gisbergen, Sas van Gent 1992, went 13...Bxc2 14.Qxc2 Ne6 15.Nd2 f5?! (15...c5 16.Nf3 Qc7 is a better plan, as in Aronson-Borisenko, Kharkov 1956) 16.exf6 Rxf6 17.Nf3 with a slight edge for White. But there's no need to even capture on c2.]

14.Bb3 c5 The d- and c-pawns give Black nice central control and a passed d-pawn is about to emerge. This really isn't a good line for White.

15.g4?! This weakening move is a really poor idea.

[Development with 15.Na3 was relatively best.]

15...Bxb1 16.Rxb1 d4 17.Bd2 Qb6 18.Qe2 Rad8 19.Kg2 Qc6+ 20.Kg3 b5 Black's c-pawn is about to join its neighbour on d4. And with White's king being his best developed piece, his position looks truly horrible.

21.f3 c4 22.Bd1 f5 23.h3 Ng6 Black plans to push the f-pawn.

24.cxd4 Nxd4 25.Qe1 f4+ 26.Kg2 Rfe8 27.Qf2 Nxe5 28.Bxf4 Nd3 29.Qg3 Ne2 Absolutely crushing. White could have spared himself the rest.

30.Bxe2 Rxe2+ 31.Kh1 Rf8 32.Bd6 Rf6 33.Bb8 Qb6 34.Rbd1 h6 35.Bc7 Qe3 36.Bd8 Rf8 37.Bh4 g5 38.Qd6 gxh4 White only has one check.

0-1

□ Timman,J
 ■ Spassky,B
 Hilversum
 [Nigel Davies]

1983

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.d4 exd4 7.Re1 b5 8.Bb3 d6 9.Bd5

[The famous Noah's Ark trap runs 9.Nxd4 Nxd4 10.Qxd4 c5 followed by 11...c4. With this in mind, in order to get his pawn back White has to surrender the bishop pair.]

9...Nxd5 10.exd5 Ne5 11.Nxd4 0-0 12.Nc3 White has several other options here:

[White's most important alternative is probably 12.a4 , trying to weaken Black's b-pawn. But Black is OK after Bg4 13.f3 (13.Qd2 Bd7 14.Nc3 b4 15.Nce2 a5 16.b3 Qb8 17.Ng3 Re8 18.Bb2 Qb7 19.Ndf5 Bf6 brought Black's pieces to nice squares in Velickovic-Abramovic, Belgrade 1984) 13...Bd7 14.Nc3 (14.f4 Ng6 15.Nc3 b4 16.Na2 Qb8 17.c3 a5 18.cxb4 axb4 19.b3 Bf6 and White's position was on the verge of collapse in L.Milov-Smagin, Podolsk 1990) 14...b4 15.Ne4 (15.Nce2 Bf6 16.b3 Re8 17.Bf4 Qb8 18.Qd2 Qb7 19.c4 bxc3 20.Nxc3 Qb4 21.Ne4? Qxd4+ 0-1 was the dramatic conclusion of P.Cramling-Balashov, Hastings 1985/86) 15...Re8 16.f4 Ng4 17.b3 Nf6 18.Nxf6+ Bxf6 19.Bb2 Rxe1+ 20.Qxe1 Qb8 , and Black was better in Makarichev-Kholmov, Tallinn 1983.]

[12.Bf4 Bb7 13.Ne2 Nc4 14.Nbc3 Bf6 15.Rb1 Re8 16.Qd3 Bxc3 17.Nxc3 Qf6 put White under pressure in Fressinet-Kramnik, Paris 2002.]

[12.f4?! Bg4 13.Qd2 Nc4 14.Qd3 Re8 15.Nd2 Bf6 16.Ne4 Bxd4+ 17.Qxd4 Qb8 was very comfortable for Black in Baron Rodriguez-Korneev, Elgoibar 2002.]

[12.b3 Bb7 13.f4 Nd7 14.c4 Bf6 15.Nc3 Nc5 16.Qd2 bxc4 17.bxc4 Qd7 gave Black easy equality in Van der Wiel-Smejkal, Vienna 1980.]

12...Re8 This looks like Black's most flexible move, keeping all his options open with the light-squared bishop.

[But 12...Bd7 13.a4 b4 14.Nce2 Re8 15.b3 (15.a5 Bf8 16.Qd2 Rb8 17.b3 Qh4 gave Black good counterplay in Movsesian-Macieja, Pardubice 1995) 15...Bf8 16.Bf4 Ng6 17.Be3 Qc8 18.Nc6 Ne7 19.Nxe7+ Rxe7 20.c4 bxc3 21.Rc1 Qb7 was fine for Black in Votava-Hracek, Pardubice 1995]

13.a4

[Here, too, White can play 13.b3 , although once again Black has a solid game. Berebora-Shereshevski, Budapest 1991, continued Bd7 14.Bb2 Bf8 15.f4 (15.Ne4 Qh4 16.Nf3 Nxf3+ 17.Qxf3 Qg4 was equal in Prasad-Iuldachev, Kelamabakkam 2000) 15...Ng4 16.Ne4 Nh6 17.Qd2 Qb8 18.Ng5 Qb6 19.Kh1 Ng4 20.h3 Nf6 21.Ndf3 h6 22.Bxf6 gxf6 23.Ne4 Bg7 24.Ng3 f5 25.Rxe8+ Rxe8 26.Re1 Rxe1+ ½-½.]

[13.Ne4 Bb7 14.Nf5 Qd7 15.Nxe7+ would be similar to the game, but without Black having a weak pawn on b4.]

13...b4 14.Ne4

[14.Na2 a5 leaves White's knight out of play on a2, but in Brendel-Motwani, Copenhagen 1991, he managed to get it back into action and achieve equality after 15.c3 Bb7 16.cxb4 Bxd5 17.bxa5 Rxa5 18.b4 Ra8 19.Nc3 .]

14...Bb7 15.Nf5 Qd7 16.Nxe7+ Rxe7 17.Bg5 Ree8 18.f3

[18.Qd4 is strongly met by Qg4! 19.Qd1 Qf5 when the threats of 20...Ng6 and 20...Bxd5 21 Qxd5 Nf3+ brought about White's speedy capitulation in Cucancic-Ladic, Medulin 1997.]

18...f5

[Another good move is 18...Qf5 , threatening to capture on d5.]

19.Ng3 Qf7 20.Qd4 a5 21.Rad1 h6 22.Bf4 Ng6 23.Nh5

[White should probably have played 23.Rxe8+ Rxe8 24.Nh5 , surrendering the e-file but

guarding the d5-pawn.]

23...Ne7?

[Black, in turn, should have temporarily conceded the e-file with 23...Rxe1+ 24.Rxe1 Kh7 , when White has to figure out how to defend d5. Now White unleashes a combination which comes within a whisker of winning the game.]

24.Bxh6! gxh6 25.Nf6+ Kf8 26.Nd7+ Kg8 27.Nf6+ Kf8 28.Nxe8 Kxe8 Black must protect the a7-square.

[After 28...Rxe8 29.Qa7 Bxd5 30.Qxc7 his pawn structure is falling apart.]

29.c4 bxc3 30.bxc3 Kf8 31.Re6 Ng8

[31...Bxd5?? walks into 32.Rf6 , winning Black's queen.]

32.Rde1 Bc8 33.Re8+ Qxe8 34.Rxe8+ Kxe8 35.Qg7 Ne7 36.Qxh6 Rb8

[After 36...Nxd5 37.Qg6+ Kf8 38.h4 Black has the same problem about how to stop the h-pawn.]

37.h4 Rb1+ 38.Kh2 Bb7 39.h5 Bxd5 40.Qg7? This mistake allows the former world champion to escape with a draw.

[White should play 40.Qh8+ , when Bg8 (40...Kd7 41.h6) 41.h6 Kd7 42.Qxg8! Nxc8 43.h7 leaves Black with an uphill struggle.]

40...Bg8 41.h6 Re1! Spassky has seen a positional draw whereby he puts his rook on e5 and eliminates the dangerous passed pawns by giving up both his minor pieces. Classy defence!

[Instead 41...Ra1 is risky due to 42.g4 .]

42.h7 Bxh7 43.Qxh7 Re5 44.Kg3 Rc5 45.Kh4 Nc8 46.f4 Nb6! 47.g4 fxg4 48.f5 Nd7 49.Qg6+ Kd8 50.Qg8+ Ke7 51.Qe6+ Kd8 52.f6 Nxf6 53.Qxf6+ Kd7 54.Qf7+ Kc6 55.Qb3 Re5 56.Kxg4 Kd7 57.Qb7 Rc5 58.Qa6 Re5 59.Kf4 Rc5 White can't make any progress.

1/2-1/2

C84

□ Spassky,B

■ Timman,J

France vs Holland, Cannes

1990

[Nigel Davies]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.Nc3 This development, a favourite of Siegbert Tarrasch, was later adopted by Sir George Thomas and then Paul Keres.

[Spassky no doubt opted for this specific order to avoid Timman's favourite Open variation (5 0 0 Nxe4), as White usually plays 5.0-0 Be7 and only then 6.Nc3]

5...Be7 6.0-0 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.Nd5 Keres played this way, but there are two other moves:

[Even the insipid-looking 8.d3 contains a drop of poison if Black is careless. After Na5 9.Ne2 0-0 10.Bd2 Black should prefer Nxb3 (and avoid 10...c5?! 11.Bxa5! Qxa5 12.a4 b4 13.Ng3 , which gave White a slight edge in Tischbierek-Vogt, East Berlin 1989) 11.axb3 Bb7 with equality.]

[8.a4 has been almost forgotten, although here, too, Black needs to play accurately: Bg4!? 9.axb5 Nd4 10.Rxa6 Rxa6 11.bxa6 Nxb3 12.cxb3 Qa8 should be considered, as in Bronstein-Lilienthal, Moscow 1945. Black has excellent compensation for the two pawns.]

8...Na5 Black finds a good way to neutralize this line.

[Another good continuation is 8...0-0 9.Nxe7+ Nxe7 10.d3 Ng6 , for example 11.a4 Bb7 12.axb5 (12.Ng5 h6 13.Nh3 d5 14.g3 c5 gave Black good play in Eslon-Korneev, Bilbao 2000) 12...axb5 13.Bg5 h6 14.Rxa8 Bxa8 15.Bxf6 Qxf6 16.Qd2 c5 with rather more than equality for Black in Steinbacher-Smejkal, Germany 1990.]

9.Nxe7

[In Campora-Ivkov, Torremolinos 1983, White played 9.d4 , but after Bb7 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.Nxf6+ (11.Nxe5 Nxb3 12.axb3 Nxd5 13.exd5 Qxd5 gives Black a two bishop endgame) 11...Bxf6 12.Qe2 Nxb3 13.axb3 0-0 14.b4 Qd6 15.c3 c5 he was already worse due to Black's bishops.]

9...Qxe7 10.d3

[White has also tried 10.d4 here, but this doesn't trouble Black unduly after, say, Bg4 . Zuckerman-Hjartarson, New York 1984, was quite an amusing game from Black's point of view, continuing 11.h3 Bh5 12.Bg5 0-0 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.Qd3 h6 15.Bxf6 Qxf6 16.Rfd1 Rfd8 17.Qc3 Bxf3 18.Qxf3 Qxf3 19.gxf3 Kf8 20.Kg2 Ke7 21.Kg3 (this king march will end badly) g5 22.c3 c6 23.Kg4 Nb7 24.Kh5 Nc5 25.Bc2 Ne6 26.a4 Nf4+ 27.Kg4 h5+ 28.Kxg5 Rg8+ 29.Kf5 f6 30.h4 Ng6 0-1. White will be mated after 31.Rh1 Nxf4+ 32.Rxf4 Rg5# .]

10...0-0 11.Bd2

[In earlier games Spassky had played 11.Bg5 , but without notable success. After h6 the game Spassky-Janosevic, Belgrade 1964, went 12.Bh4 (later 12.Bxf6 Qxf6 13.Nd2 Bd7 14.f3 Nxb3 15.axb3 a5 16.Qe2 a4 17.bxa4 bxa4 18.b3 axb3 19.Nxb3 Ba4 20.Ra3 Bxb3 21.Rxb3 Rfb8 22.Rxb8+ Rxb8 brought about stone cold equality in Spassky-Beliavsky, Tilburg 1981) 12...g5 (12...Bg4 is also a good move) 13.Bg3 Nh5 14.d4 Bg4 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.Qd3 Rad8 17.Qc3 Bxf3 18.Qxa5 Bxe4 19.Qxa6 Rd2 20.Qxh6 Nhg3 21.hxg3 Bxc2 22.Rad1! Rxd1 23.Rxd1 Bxd1 24.Qg6+ Kh8 25.Qh6+ with a draw by perpetual check.]

11...Nxb3 12.axb3 Nd7 13.Re1 c5

[Black can also play 13...Bb7 , when 14.d4? f5! sets White serious problems. Lengyel-Lukacs, Budapest 1993, went 15.dxe5 fxe4 16.Ng5 Qxe5 with a good extra pawn.]

14.b4 Bb7 15.bxc5 dxc5 16.Ba5 Rac8 17.Nd2 Rfe8 18.Nf1 Qe6 19.Ne3 Nb8!

This manoeuvre features more frequently in the Delayed Exchange. The knight heads for the outpost on d4.

20.Bc3 Nc6 21.b3 Nd4 Black has fully equalized.

22.Bb2 Rb8 23.f3 f6 24.Qd2 Red8 25.Qf2 Rd7 26.Reb1 Ra8 27.Bc3 Bc6 28.b4 cxb4

29.Bxb4 Bb7 30.h3 Rc8 31.Rb2 Qf7 32.Kh2 h6 33.f4 exf4 34.Qxf4 Qe6 35.Ra3 g5

36.Qf2?! Possibly missing Black's spectacular 37th, although it is possible that the former world champion was deliberately sacrificing the exchange.

[36.Qg4 is better, when Qe5+ 37.Kh1 is equal.]

36...Qe5+ 37.Kh1 Nf3! Threatening mate on h2 while attacking White's rook on b2. This costs White the exchange. **38.Qxf3 Qxb2 39.Qf5 Qxb4**

[Timman decides not to risk 39...Rf7 40.Nd5 Kg7 . White has compensation for the exchange after 41.c3 , but is it enough?]

40.Qxd7 Qxa3 41.Qxb7 Qa1+ 42.Kh2 Qe5+ 43.Kh1 Qa1+ 44.Kh2 Qe5+ 45.Kh1 Qa1+

$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

C77

□ Lau,R

■ Lukacs,P

Polaniza Zdroj

[Nigel Davies]

1986

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.d3

[After 5.0-0 Be7 6.d3 Black can reach similar positions to those in which White plays 9 a4, covered in Chapter 3. There can follow b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.a4 Bd7 9.c3 0-0 10.Re1 Na5 11.Bc2 c5 with easy equality, for example 12.Nbd2 Qc7 (or 12...Re8 13.Nf1 h6 14.Ng3 Bf8 15.h3 Qc7 16.Bd2 Be6 17.Nh4 d5 18.axb5 axb5 19.Nhf5 dxe4 20.dxe4 Rad8 21.Qc1 Kh7

, as in Bhend-Geller, Bern 1987) 13.Nf1 b4 14.Bg5 Rfb8 15.N3d2 h6 16.Bxf6 Bxf6 17.Ne3 Be6 18.c4 Bg5 19.Nb3 Bxe3 20.fxe3 , which was equal and agreed drawn in Pilnik-Gligoric, Buenos Aires 1955.]

5...d6

[I don't particularly like 5...b5 6.Bb3 Be7 in this position since Black cannot meet 7.a4 with a natural move like 7.. .Bd7 or 7...Bg4 because he hasn't moved his d-pawn yet.]

6.c3 g6 7.Nbd2

[Bronstein has experimented with 7.Bg5 , which found an imitator in your author. Davies-Lukacs, Vrnjacka Banja 1988, continued Bg7 (7...h6 8.Bh4 Bd7 9.Nbd2 Bg7 10.Nf1 Ne7 11.Bb3 c6 12.Ne3 Qc7 13.Qc2 0-0 14.d4 Rfe8 15.dxe5 dxe5 16.Bxf6 Bxf6 17.h4 Nc8 18.h5 g5 19.Rd1 was better for White in Bronstein-Dely, Moscow 1962) 8.Nbd2 0-0 9.Nf1 h6 10.Bh4 Ne7 (10...b5 11.Bb3 Nb8 , aiming to play ...Nbd7 and ...Bb7, looks like a better set-up, with equality) 11.Ne3 c6 12.Bb3 Kh7 13.Qd2 Ng4 14.0-0-0 g5?! 15.Bg3 f5 16.Nxf5 Nxf5 17.exf5 Bxf5 18.Qe2 Nf6 19.h4! g4 20.Ng5+ hxg5 21.hxg5+ Kg6 22.gxf6 Bxf6 23.f3 , which was good for White due to Black's exposed king.]

7...Bg7 8.Nf1 0-0 9.Ng3 Re8 10.0-0

[10.Bg5 is ineffective here because, after h6 , White can't retreat the bishop to h4.]

10...b5 11.Bc2 Bb7 12.Bd2 A developing move, although it isn't clear to me that the bishop is any better here than on c1. White has tried a couple of alternatives which seem rather more in keeping with the requirements of the position:

[12.h3 d5 (12...Nb8 is also possible here) 13.Nh2 d4 14.f4 Qe7 15.Kh1 exf4 16.Bxf4 h6 17.Qf3 Rad8 18.Qf2 dxc3 19.bxc3 b4 20.Rab1 Ba8 was okay for Black in Stoma-Azarov, Oropesa del Mar 1999, even though some of his moves looked a bit odd.]

[12.a4 Nb8 13.Bd2 Nbd7 14.Re1 c5 15.h3 Qe7 16.Bb3 Rec8 17.c4 b4 18.a5 Nf8 sent the knight en route to d4 with a very comfortable game for Black in Klenburg-Grinshpun, Beersheba 1998.]

12...Nb8! 13.Qc1 Nbd7 14.h3 d5 Black's pieces are optimally placed to effect the advance of his pawns. White is already on the back foot.

15.Bh6 c5 16.Bxg7 Kxg7 17.Qg5 Kh8 Sidestepping any tricks.

18.Rfe1 Qe7 19.exd5 Nxd5 20.Ne4 f6 21.Qh4 Rac8 22.a4 b4 With his kingside solid, Black commences action on the other flank. The c3-pawn is being marked out as a target.

23.a5 Bc6 24.Bb3 Kg7 25.Bc4 Bb7 26.Rac1 Nf4 27.g4? Running out of ideas, White lashes out. But this move constitutes a serious weakening of the kingside and, in particular, the f4-square.

h5 28.g5 f5 29.Ned2 The point behind 27 g4 was that with g4-g5 White could undermine Black's e-pawn. But he has paid far too much for this privilege, as we shall soon see.

Qd6 30.Re3 e4! The start of a really beautiful combination involving an exchange sacrifice. White has little choice but to go along with it.

31.Rce1 exf3!! 32.Rxe8 Rxe8 33.Rxe8 Ne2+ 34.Kh1

[34.Kf1 Ne5 35.Re6 Qc7 is similar - Black's queen is coming into the attack via a5.]

34...Ne5 35.Re6 Qc7 36.cxb4 Opening the c-file makes it easier for Black.

[White should play the immediate 36.Nb3 , when Black has to find f4 37.Rb6 Nxc4 38.Nxc5 (38.dxc4 Qd7) 38...Qxc5 39.Rxb7+ Kf8 40.dxc4 Qxa5 etc.]

36...cxb4 37.Nb3

[37.Rb6 can now be met by Bd5! 38.Rxa6 Nxd3!! 39.Ra7 Qxa7 40.Bxd3 Qxa5 , with decisive threats.]

37...f4 38.Nd2? Losing on the spot.

[White has to play 38.Rb6 , although Bd5! 39.Bxd5 Qc2 40.Rb7+ Kf8 41.Kh2 Qd1 is winning anyway.]

38...Qxa5 39.Kh2 Qa1 40.Re7+ Kf8 White is out of checks and he can't defend against the

threats to his king.

0-1

CHAPTER 5: RUY LOPEZ: EXCHANGE VARIATION

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6

Ever since Bobby Fischer revived this line in the 1960s, the Exchange Variation has enjoyed a consistent following among strong players. Most recently it has been GM Rozentalis who has championed White's cause. From Black's perspective the main problem has been in generating counterplay; all too often he finds himself in a miserable and rather passive endgame with few winning chances.

The solution I present in this chapter is still in its experimental stages but has received the backing of 1...e5 aficionados such as Alexander Beliavsky and Michael Adams. Both these grandmasters have been playing the primitive-looking 5...Qf6 with success and, on examining their games, it is easy to see why. Black is getting the kind of active counterplay that is unheard of in most of the standard lines.

After 6 d4 exd4, gaining time on Black's queen with 7 Bg5 (Potkin-Beliavsky and Hector-Beliavsky) really isn't much of a tempo, and the bishop can even become a target on this square. White does better to capture on d4 immediately, 7 Nxd4 (Reefat-Pavasovic) looking better than 7 Qxd4 (Hort-Romanishin, which is a transposition from 5...Qd6 lines). White has also played 7 e5, but putting the e-pawn on a dark square inhibits the action of White's bishop and weakens the light squares (see Holzwarth-Marco).

Can White delay or even omit d2-d4? In Khachiyan-Goldin White plays 6 d3 but after 6...Ne7 followed by 7...Ng6 Black had no problems. It looks as if 5...Qf6 could become a serious problem for Exchange Variation devotees.

Besides 5 0-0 White has two other moves in 5 Nc3 and 5 d4. After the former Black can still play 5...Qf6, as in fact he did in Pelikian-D.Schneider. The position that arose after 6 d4 exd4 7 Nxd4 Bd7 8 Be3 Qg6 can also be reached via 5 Nc3 Qd6, and a number of the examples given within this game come from that order of moves.

5 d4 is still played occasionally but it gives Black a comfortable version of the endgames that arise from this line. In Ljubojevic-Beliavsky we see Black successfully play for a win, although Ljubojevic made some mistakes before this happened.

Summary

5...Qf6 looks like an interesting way to meet both 5 0-0 and 5 Nc3, offering Black counterplay in a variation that often leaves him quite passively placed. Beliavsky's play against Ljubojevic was very instructive, allowing him to conjure up winning chances despite the scarcity of material. This is how Black plays for a win against the Exchange, with great patience, determination and a strong cup of coffee.

Index

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 dxc6 5 0-0

5 Nc3 - Pelikian-D.Schneider

5 d4 - Ljubojevic-Beliavsky

5...Qf6 6 d4

6 d3 - Khachiyani-Goldin

6...exd4 7 Bg5

7 Nxd4 - Reefat-Pavasovic

7 Qxd4 - Hort-Romanishin

7 e5 - Holzwarth-Marco

7...Qd6 8 Nxd4 - Potkin-Beliavsky

8 Qxd4 - Hector-Beliavsky

□ Potkin,V

■ Beliavsky,A

Russian Team Championship

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0

[5.Nc3 and 5 d4 are dealt with in the games Pelikian-Schneider and Ljubojevic-Beliavsky respectively.]

5...Qf6 6.d4

[For 6.d3 see the game Khachiyan-Goldin.]

6...exd4 7.Bg5

[7.Nxd4 , 7 Qxd4 and 7 e5 feature in the next (but one) three games.]

7...Qd6 8.Nxd4

[For 8.Qxd4 see Hector-Beliavsky.]

8...Be7

[Black can also play 8...Bd7 , when 9.Nc3 Be7 10.Bxe7 (10.Be3 Nf6 11.f3 leads back to the main game) 10...Nxe7 transposes to the note to White's 9th move.]

9.Be3 Maintaining the tension.

[Many Exchange Spanish players would be tempted to trade off Black's dreaded bishop pair with 9.Bxe7 at this point, but I think it gives Black an easy game. Fressinet-Adams, Bordeaux 2000, went Nxe7 10.Nc3 Bd7 (instead 10...0-0 11.Nde2 Rd8 12.Qc1 Bg4 13.Nf4 Ng6 14.Nxg6 hxg6 15.Qg5 Be6 16.Rad1 was a little better for White in Magem Badals-Adams, Pula 1997) 11.Nb3 Qxd1 12.Raxd1 0-0-0 (John Watson, in his book 'Surviving and Beating Annoying Chess Openings', gives the move 12...b6 in this position, claiming that White should not be any better - I agree with this assessment, Black will play ...c6-c5, making his queenside pawns quite dangerous, and White's knight on b3 looks very poorly placed) 13.Nd2 (Larry Kaufmann, in his book 'The Chess Advantage in Black and White', suggests 13.Nc5 here, which is an argument for playing ...b7-b6 a move earlier) 13...b6 14.Nc4 Be6 15.Ne3 c5 16.f4 f6 17.Kf2 Rd4 18.Kf3 Nc6 19.Ncd5 Re8 20.c3 Ra4 21.a3 Bf7 (21...Bd7 also looks reasonable here) 22.Nf5 Raxd4 23.Nxb6+ Kb7 and the game was eventually drawn.]

9...Nf6 10.f3 0-0 11.Nc3 Rd8 12.Qe2 c5 13.Nb3 b6 14.Rfd1 Qc6 15.Rxd8+ Bxd8 16.Rd1

Be6 Black is developing comfortably here, and White's knight on b3 has few prospects for the moment. I would prefer to play Black's position but, objectively speaking, it's just equal.

17.Bg5 h6 18.Bh4 Qe8 19.a4 a5 20.Nb5 Rc8 Defending against the threat of 21 Bxf6. White seems to have been doing the pushing but it's only a passing phase.

21.Nd2

[Attempting to set up a queenside blockade with 21.c4 would leave Black with the better game after Nh5 22.Bf2 (in the event of 22.Bxd8 Rxd8 23.Nxc7 there is Nf4 24.Qc2 Rxd1+ 25.Qxd1 Qxa4) 22...Nf4 23.Qc2 Bf6 , when the bishops are starting to come into their own.]

21...Nh5 22.Bxd8 Rxd8?!

[22...Qxd8 seems better, keeping c7 protected and aiming to bring the queen to g5. Now Black gets into difficulties.]

23.Nf1

[After 23.Nxc7 Qxa4 24.Nxe6 fxe6 Black's queenside pawn majority and active pieces count for more than the weakness of the e6-pawn. After 25.Nb3 Rxd1+ 26.Qxd1 c4 27.Nd2 Qd7 Black is in charge.]

23...Nf4 24.Qe1 Qe7 25.Rxd8+ Qxd8 26.Qd2 Qg5 27.g3

[In reply to 27.Nxc7 Black can play Bc4 28.Ne3 Be2 with the idea that 29.Kh1 (29.Kf2 Qh4+ 30.Kg1 repeats moves) 29...Nxg2 30.Qxe2 Nxe3 31.c4 Qe5 32.Nd5 Nf5 frees his knight and

earns equality.]

27...Nh3+ 28.Kg2 Qh5 29.Qe3

[White can improve here with 29.Qd8+ Kh7 30.Nd2 , when Ng5 31.h4 puts an end to Black's fun on the kingside.]

29...Ng5 30.Nd2

[30.Nxc7?! Bh3+ 31.Kf2 Bxf1 32.Kxf1 Qxh2 favours Black.]

30...Bh3+ 31.Kg1 Ne6 32.c3 f5 33.exf5 Qxf5 34.Qe4 Qg5 35.f4 Qd8 36.Qe2 Qd5 37.Ne4 h5 38.Na3? White slips up under pressure.

[38.c4 Qf5 39.Qd3 is better, when the position is balanced.]

38...Bg4! 39.Qe1 Bd1! 40.f5 Qxf5 41.Qxd1 Qxe4 42.Qxh5 Qe1+ 43.Kg2 Qd2+ 44.Kf1 Qxb2 This is winning for Black because his king is safe. Beliavsky conducts the technical phase very accurately.

45.Qe2 Qc1+ 46.Qe1 Qh6 47.h4 Kf7 48.Nb5 Qg6 49.Qe5 Qf6+ 50.Qxf6+ Kxf6 51.Ke2 c4 52.g4 Ke5 53.Ke3 Nc5 54.h5 Nxa4 55.g5 c6 56.Nd6 Nxc3 57.Nxc4+ Ke6 58.h6 Nd5+ 59.Kd4 gxh6 60.gxh6 Kf6 61.Ne5 a4 62.Nf3 a3 63.Nd2 a2 64.Nb3 Kg6 65.Na1 Kxh6 0-1

C68

□ **Hector,J**

■ **Beliavsky,A**

Malmö/Copenhagen

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Qf6 6.d4 exd4 7.Bg5 Qd6

[In Pinol-Hubschmid, Biel 2003, Black tried 7...Qg6 , but after 8.Qxd4 Bd6 9.Nbd2 c5 10.Qe3 Be6 11.e5 Be7 (11...Bf8 isn't pleasant but at least keeps material equality) 12.Bxe7 Nxe7 13.Qxc5 Black found himself a pawn down.]

8.Qxd4 Bg4!? An interesting move.

[In other games Black has played 8...Qxd4 9.Nxd4 Bd7 , for example 10.Nd2 (10.Nc3 is well met by h6 11.Bf4 0-0-0) 10...f6 11.Be3 0-0-0 12.f4 Nh6 13.h3 Bb4 14.c3 Bd6 15.Rae1 Rhe8 16.Kh1 c5 17.N4b3 b6 18.Bg1 Bc6 and Black had pressure against e4 in Denny-Mikhailchishin, Calvia 2004.]

9.Qe5+ Ne7 10.Bxe7 An ambitious but risky decision, giving up both bishops in order to try and gain some time.

[10.Qxd6 cxd6 11.Nbd2 looks safer, although even here Black's game is more comfortable thanks to the bishop pair.]

10...Qxe7 11.Nbd2 0-0-0 12.Qf4 h5 13.h3 Be6 14.Ng5!? White is still playing ambitiously, but this leads deeper into trouble.

[14.Rfd1 is more sensible.]

14...g6 15.Qe3

[After 15.Ndf3 Black can also pin with Bh6]

[and 15.Nxe6 is strongly met by Bh6 16.Qf3 Rxd2 etc.]

15...Bh6 16.f4 Kb8 17.Nxe6 fxe6 18.e5 Preventing Black from playing 18...e5, but this isn't the only pawn lever.

g5! 19.Nf3 White at least keeps hold of the e5-pawn, using the fact that the pawn on f4 will keep Black's bishop out of play. However, the game is going badly for White as now he's going to be a pawn down.

gxf4 20.Qe4 Rhg8 21.Rad1 Rd5 22.c4 Rdd8 23.Rxd8+

[Black also gains control of the d-file after 23.Kh1 Rd7 .]

23...Rxd8 24.Kh1

[White can try for counterplay with 24.Qg6 , but then Qc5+ 25.Kh1 Qxc4 26.Ra1! Bf8 27.Ng5 Bc5 28.Nxe6 Rd2 (28...Qxa2 29.Rxa2 Rd1+ 30.Kh2 Bg1+ produces a spectacular draw, but no more than that) 29.Nxc5 Qxc5 is good for Black.]

24...Qd7 25.Re1 Qd3 26.b3 a5 27.Re2 Kc8 Centralizing the king for the endgame.

28.Qxd3 Rxd3 29.Rd2 Re3 30.Kg1 a4 Softening up White's queenside.

31.bxa4

[After 31.b4 Black could play b6 , intending 32...Bf8.]

31...Rc3 32.Kf2

[Or 32.Rd4 c5 33.Re4 Rc1+ 34.Kh2 Rc2 etc.]

32...c5 33.h4 Rxc4 34.Rd3 Rxa4 35.Ng5 c4 The advance of Black's c-pawn signals the beginning of the end.

36.Rd4

[Black could meet 36.Rd2 with c3 , for example 37.Rc2 Bg7 38.Rxc3 Bxe5 39.Rc2 Kd7 leaves him two pawns up.]

36...Rxa2+ 37.Kf3 Ra3+ 38.Kxf4 b5 There's going to be no stopping Black's connected passed pawns.

0-1

C68

□ **Reefat,S**

■ **Pavasovic,D**

Calvia Olympiad

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Qf6 6.d4 exd4 7.Nxd4

[7.Qxd4 has been more popular, and rightly so. Black's queen proves to be effectively placed on f6.]

7...Bd7 8.Be3 0-0-0 9.Nd2 Nh6 10.f3 c5!? Already winning a pawn, although White does have some nebulous compensation in the form of the open b-file.

[If Black is of a more nervous disposition he can also transpose into the 5...Qd6 line with 10...Qg6 . After 11.Qe2 f5 12.e5 (12.Rad1 Re8 13.c3 Qh5 14.exf5 Nxf5 15.Nxf5 Bxf5 16.g4 Qg6 17.Qf2 h5 18.g5 h4 was good for Black in Swic-Marszalek, Jachranka 1987) 12...Re8 13.f4 Ng4 14.N4b3 Qh6 15.h3 Nxe3 16.Qxe3 b6 (16...Kb8 looks more solid) 17.Qd3 a5 18.Nc4 c5 19.Rad1 Qe6 (19...Qc6 is better) 20.Nd6+ Bxd6 21.Qa6+ Kb8 22.Rxd6 Bc8 23.Rxe6 Bxa6 24.Rxe8+ Rxe8 the endgame was about equal in Sellos-L.Lengyel, Val Maubuee 1988.]

11.Ne2 Qxb2 12.Rb1 Qe5 13.Qc1 Bb5

[Black might also consider 13...Nf5 with the idea of 14.Bf4 (14.Bf2 Bd6 15.f4 improves) 14...Nd4! . Pavasovic chooses a more solid way to play.]

14.c4 Bc6 15.Nb3 b6 16.a4 a5

[16...Bxa4? invites 17.Qa3! , when b5 18.Bxc5 leaves Black's game in tatters.]

17.Bf4 Qe6 18.Nxa5!? bxa5 **19.Qb2 Kd7?** Heading for the hills, but this looks like a mistake.

[Black should play 19...Bd6 , when 20.Rfd1 f6 (not 20...Qxc4 21.Qb8+ Kd7 22.Rxd6+ etc) 21.Bxd6 cxd6 22.Qb8+ Kd7 23.Qa7+ Ke8 24.Qxg7 Nf7 cobbles together a defence.]

20.Rfd1+ Bd6 21.e5? Returning the favour.

[The correct move is 21.Qxg7 , after which Nf5 22.exf5 Qxe2 23.Bxd6 cxd6 24.Qxf7+ Kc8 25.Qa7 leaves Black defenceless.]

21...Rb8 22.Qxb8 This was probably White's idea when he played his previous move, but he may have mis-assessed the resulting position.

[22.Qd2 is best, when Rxb1 23.Rxb1 Re8 favours Black but is still complicated.]

22...Rxb8 23.Rxb8 Nf5 24.Ng3 Nd4

[The greedy 24...Qxc4 is even stronger here, but many roads lead to Rome.]

25.exd6 cxd6 26.Kf2 Qxc4 27.Rd2 f6 28.Be3 Nb3 29.Rb2 Bxa4 30.Ne4 d5 31.R8xb3 dxe4 32.Rb8 exf3 33.R8b7+ Ke6 34.Rc7 Qh4+ 35.Kf1 Bb5+

0-1

C68

□ **Hort,V**

■ **Romanishin,O**

Tilburg

[Nigel Davies]

1979

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Qf6 I must admit to having 'doctored' the move order of this game for the sake of clarity.

[Romanishin actually played 5...Qd6 with the same position being reached after Black's 7th.]

6.d4 exd4 7.Qxd4 Qxd4

[In Wikstrom-Backman, Stockholm 2005, Black tried 7...Bg4 , but after 8.Nc3 Qxd4 (8...Bxf3 9.Qxf6 Nxf6 10.gxf3 is nice for White because his e- and f-pawns are more mobile than Black's queenside pawn majority) 9.Nxd4 0-0-0 10.Be3 Bb4 11.Nde2 Nf6 12.f3 Be6 13.Rfd1 White had developed very smoothly and stood better.]

[However, 7...Bd7 looks quite playable, for example 8.e5 Qf5 9.Rd1 c5 10.Qc4 Bb5 and Black seems to have fairly smooth development.]

8.Nxd4 Bd7 9.Be3

[9.Bf4 0-0-0 10.Nc3 Ne7 11.Rad1 Ng6 12.Bg3 Bb4 13.Nf5 h5 14.Nh4 Nxh4 15.Bxh4 Rde8 and Black was at least equal in Biyiasis-Keres, Petropolis Interzonal 1973.]

9...0-0-0 10.Nd2 From here the knight can go to c4, which is useful if Black puts a bishop on d6.

[There is a major alternative in 10.Nc3 , for example Ne7 11.Rad1 (11.a4 doesn't help White, as a5 12.Rfe1 Re8 13.f3 Ng6 14.Bf2 Bb4 15.Re3?! Ne5 16.b3 h5 17.Nce2?? Bd2 saw White getting into trouble rather quickly in Kristensen-Hazai, Copenhagen 1987 ; 11.f4 f5 12.e5 leaves White with a bad bishop on e3, Black getting a good game after c5 13.Nf3 Nc6 14.Rad1 Be6 15.Rxd8+ Nxd8 16.Rd1 Nf7 in Peretz-Pachman, Netanya 1973) 11...Re8 12.Rfe1 f6 13.Nb3 b6 14.a4 a5 15.Nd4 Ng6 16.f4?! Bb4 was good for Black in Scuderi-Naumkin, Montecatini Terme 2004.]

10...c5

[Black can also play 10...Ne7 , for example 11.N2f3 (11.Rfe1 c5 12.N4f3 Nc6 13.c3 Be7 14.Bf4 Rhe8 15.Ng5 Bxg5 16.Bxg5 f6 17.Bf4 Be6 gave Black an advantage in Bruk-Kraidman, Israel 1984) 11...f6 12.h3 c5 13.Ne2 Nc6 14.Rad1 Re8 (avoiding further exchanges) 15.Nc3 Bd6 16.Rfe1 Be6 17.a3 b6 18.Nd5 Bxd5 19.exd5 Ne7 20.c3?! (20.c4 improves, putting the pawns on the same colour as the bishop) 20...Nf5 21.Bc1 Kd7 22.Kf1 Rxe1+ 23.Rxe1 b5 and Black had assumed the initiative in Kagan-Keres, Petropolis Interzonal 1973.]

11.Ne2

[After 11.N4f3 Black can mobilize effectively with g6 , for example 12.Rfd1 Re8 13.Ne1 b6 14.f3 Bg7 15.c3 f5 16.Bf2 Ba4 17.b3 Bc6 and Black was doing well in Bogda-Milos, Asuncion 1983.]

11...Ne7! Losing no time in bringing the knight to c6.

[Black can also get by if he's not that smart, for example 11...b6 12.Nc3 Ne7 was fine for Black after 13.f4 Re8 14.Nf3 Nc6 15.Rfe1 f5 16.e5 Be6 in Ang.Martin-Gomez Esteban, Barcelona 1984.]

12.Rad1

[The tactical point behind Romanishin's last move was that 12.Bxc5 loses material after Bb5! .]

12...Nc6 13.Nf3 Black's reply takes the initiative, so perhaps White should play differently here.

[13.a3 was played in Bernei-Halasz, Aarhus 1990, when Black equalized after Bd6 (13...Re8 is more ambitious) 14.Nc4 Be6 15.Nxd6+ cxd6 16.Bf4 d5 17.exd5 Rxd5 18.Rxd5 Bxd5 etc.]

13...Re8! 14.Nc3 h6 15.Rfe1 Bd6 16.h3 f5! A thematic move, opening the position for the two bishops.

17.exf5 Bxf5 18.Re2 Rhf8 Threatening 19...Bxh3.

19.Ne1 b6 20.Nd5

[20.Nd3 meets with c4 .]

20...Nd4 21.Red2 Be4 22.Nc3

[Not 22.Bxd4 cxd4 23.Rxd4 in view of Bc5 24.R4d2 Bxd5 25.Rxd5 Bxf2+ etc.]

22...Nf5 23.Re2

[Depriving Black of the bishop pair with 23.Nxe4 Rxe4 24.Rd3 takes him from the frying pan into the fire after c4 25.Rd5 Nxe3 26.fxe3 Rxe3 , winning a pawn.]

23...Bc6 24.Rdd2? This leaves White hopelessly hamstrung.

[24.Bc1 would have been tougher, but even then Black is very much on top after b5 , intending ... b5-b4.]

24...Rf7 25.Nd3 c4 26.Nf4 Nxe3 27.fxe3 Bc5 28.Nfd5 Bxd5 29.Nxd5 c6 30.Nc3 Bxe3+

31.Kh1 Rf1+ 32.Kh2 Re5! Threatening 33...Bxd2 34 Rxe5 Bf4+ etc.

33.g3 Bxd2 34.Rxe5 Bxc3 35.bxc3 Rf2+ 36.Kg1 Rxc2 37.Re7 Rxc3 38.Rxg7 Rd3 39.Kf2

c3 40.Rg8+ Kc7

0-1

C68

Holzwarth,J

Marco,G

Vienna

[*Nigel Davies*]

1890

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Qf6 6.d4 exd4 7.e5 As far as I know this hasn't been played for more than a century, but in any case it deserves a mention. The problem with advancing the e-pawn is that it weakens White's control of the light squares by placing an important pawn on the same colour as the remaining bishop.

Qg6 8.Nxd4 Bc5

[A good example of chess from the old days is Schallopp-Harmonist, Frankfurt 1887, which went 8...Bh3 9.Qf3 Bg4 10.Qg3 0-0-0 11.c3 Bc5 12.Be3 Ne7 13.h3 Bxd4 14.Bxd4 h5?! 15.hxg4 hxg4 16.f3 Qd3 17.Qxg4+ Nf5 18.Na3 Rxd4 19.cxd4 Rh4 20.Qg5 Qxd4+ 21.Rf2 Qxe5 22.f4 Qe4 23.Nc2 f6 24.Qg6 Rh6 25.Qf7 b6 26.Re1 Ng3 27.Qe8+ Kb7 28.Rfe2 (28.Rf3 is still winning for White) 28...Rh1+ when White resigned because 29.Kf2 Qxf4# is mate.]

9.c3 Ne7 10.Nd2 Bxd4 Returning the bishop pair is a very sensible idea because Black gains considerable control of the light squares. With d5 firmly in his grasp Black will never be worse.

11.cxd4 Qd3

[Marco certainly seemed to be a more solid player than Harmonist, though he might have taken a leaf out of the latter's book at this stage with 11...Bf5 followed by 12...0-0-0.]

12.Nb3 Qxd1 13.Rxd1 Bf5 14.Na5 Rb8 15.Bg5 Nd5 16.Rac1 h6 17.Bd2 Neither side is going to find it easy to make progress here.

$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

□ Khachiyan,M

■ Goldin,A

Minneapolis

[Nigel Davies]

2005

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Qf6 6.d3 A quiet move, intending further development before undertaking concrete action. But comparing this with the variation 5...Qd6 6 d3, Black's queen seems better placed here because it will not be under attack after White's Nbd2-c4 plan.

Ne7 I like this move, intending to develop the knight on the excellent g6-square while keeping other options open.

[Another reasonable move is 6...Bd6 , when 7.Bg5 Qg6 8.Nbd2 h6 9.Bh4 Nf6 10.Bxf6 Qxf6 11.Nc4 0-0 12.Nxd6 cxd6 gave Black at least equality in Carranza-Moruno, Sant Boi 2000, although White's play was rather anaemic in this example.]

7.h3 A cautious move, preventing ...Bc8-g4 in preparation for Nb1-c3.

[White doesn't get anywhere with the more aggressive 7.Bg5 as Qd6 8.Nbd2 Ng6 9.Nc4 Qe6 sees Black develop fairly comfortably, preventing d3-d4 for the moment because the knight on c4 would hang.]

[The immediate 7.Nc3 is met by the strong Bg4 .]

7...Ng6 8.Nc3 Bd6 9.Bg5 Qe6 10.Nh4 White attempts to take the initiative by freeing and subsequently pushing the f-pawn. But Black can continue to harass the opposition quite effectively.

Nxh4 11.Bxh4 Qg6 Threatening 12...Bxh3.

12.Kh2

[After 12.Bg3 Black could consider h5 .]

12...0-0 13.g4 a5 14.Bg3 h5 15.f3 a4 16.Qe2 Re8 17.Nd1 Bc5 18.Bf2 Bd4 Threatening 19...a3, and White doesn't want to play 19 c3 because of the weakening of his d-pawn.

19.a3 c5 20.Rb1 Ra6 21.Ne3

[Trying to trap the bishop on d4 does not work out well for White. After 21.Be1 Black has c4 22.dxc4 Rd6 , safeguarding the bishop and getting the rook to the d-file. White's extra pawn is not worth much because the queenside pawn majority is unable to yield a passed pawn. And before any endgame comes the gods insist on a middlegame being played.]

21...Bxe3 22.Bxe3 Rc6 23.Rg1 b6 24.Rbd1 Qh7 25.Rg3 Rg6

[Perhaps Black should have tried to open up with 25...hxg4 26.fxg4 c4 . After a few more solid moves by both sides the position becomes very drawish.]

26.Rdg1 Bd7 27.Bd2 Kf8 28.Bc3 hxg4 29.fxg4 Qh4 30.Qe1 Rge6 31.Rf3 Qxe1 32.Rxe1 R8e7

1/2-1/2

□ Pelikian,J

■ Schneider,D

Osasko

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.Nc3 Although this has been overshadowed by 5 0-0 it is by no means a poor move.

Qf6!? This looks just as good here as after 5 0-0.

[In order to prevent d2-d4 I have toyed with the idea of playing 5...c5 in this position, but it doesn't

look good for Black after 6.Nxe5 Qg5 7.Nf3 Qxg2 8.Rg1 Qh3 9.Nd5 Qd7 10.d4 etc.]
6.d4 exd4 7.Nxd4 Bd7 8.Be3 Qg6 This position can also be reached via transposition from 5 Nc3 Qd6. Most of the examples below did in fact take that course.

9.0-0 0-0-0 10.Qe2 Alternatives:

[10.Qf3 is well met by Nf6 , for example (10...Re8 is also fine, 11.Rfe1 Nf6 12.Bf4 Bb4 13.e5 Bxc3 14.Qxc3 Nd5 giving Black a very comfortable game in Rozentalis-Z.Almasi, Germany 1996) 11.Qg3 Bd6 12.Qxg6 hxg6 13.h3 Rde8 14.f3 Nh5 15.Rfe1 c5 (15...f5 16.Bf2 Nf6 17.exf5 gxf5 18.Rxe8+ Rxe8 19.Re1 Rxe1+ 20.Bxe1 Nd5 21.Nxd5 cxd5 also gave Black an edge in Seret-Mikhalchishin, Cappelle la Grande 1989) 16.Nb3 b6 17.Rad1 Be5 18.Bd2 f5 19.exf5 gxf5 20.Nc1 c4 and Black's bishop pair was coming into its own in Evelev-Malaniuk, Moscow 2001.]

[10.f4 proved to be as loose as it looks in Gorshkova-Van den Doel, Haarlem 1999. The game went Bc5 11.Qf3 Nf6 12.f5 Qg4 13.Rae1 Rhe8 14.Nb3 Qxf3 15.Rxf3 Bb4 16.Bg5 Re5 , with White under serious pressure.]

10...Nh6 This makes sense to me, angling for the ...f7-f5 pawn lever whilst incidentally menacing ... Nh6-g4.

[Some strong players have tried an alternative plan with 10...Nf6 , which is designed more for pure piece play. But Gipslis-Romanishin, Tbilisi 1974, continued 11.f3 Bd6 12.Rad1 (12.Nb3 Rhe8 13.Qf2 Qh5 gave Black fierce counterplay in S.Szabo-Acs, Paks 1994 ;as did 12.Kh1 Rhe8 13.Qf2 Qh5 14.g4 Qh3 15.Qg1 h5 16.g5 Nd5 in Smagin-I.Sokolov, Cap d'Agde 1996) 12...h5 (in this position 12...Rhe8 13.Nb3 Qh5 can be met by 14.Rxd6! cxd6 15.Bb6 , recovering the sacrificed exchange with a good game) 13.Qf2 h4 14.Nde2 Nh5 15.f4 f5 16.e5 Be7 17.Bc5 Bxc5 18.Qxc5 with the better game for White.]

11.f3 Bd6 12.Qf2 This doesn't look necessary.

[12.Rad1 might have been better, for example Rhe8 (the immediate 12...f5 can be met with 13.Bxh6 Qxh6 14.e5 Rhe8 15.f4 , which was slightly better for White in Stanojoski-Gicov, Ohrid 2001) 13.Qf2 (13.Nb3 f5 14.Bc5 fxe4 15.Nxe4 Bf5 16.Rfe1 was Moroz-Romanishin, Ordzhonikidze 2001, and now Rxe4! 17.fxe4 Bg4 18.Qf1 Bxd1 19.Rxd1 Bxh2+ 20.Kxh2 Qh5+ would have been very good for Black) 13...f5 14.Nb3 Kb8 15.Ba7+ Ka8 16.Bc5 , Zude-Lengyel, Baden-Baden 1988, and now fxe4 17.Bxd6 e3 18.Qg3 cxd6 19.Qxg6 hxg6 20.Rxd6 Nf5 21.Rxg6 Be6 looks best, with equality.]

[Another possibility is 12.Nb3 , but then Qh5 13.f4 Qxe2 14.Nxe2 Rhe8 15.Nc3 Bb4 16.Bd4 f6 17.Rfe1 Nf7 18.Rad1 Nd6 came round to target d6 in Masternak-Sorokin, Cheliabinsk 1991.]

12...f5 13.Nde2 Kb8 14.Bf4 Nf7 According to my database this is a new move, although its appearance might well have been accident more than design.

[In Buljovcic-Lein, Novi Sad 1973, Black played the equally reasonable 14...Rhe8 after which 15.Qg3 (15.Bxd6 might be better, but this is fine for Black after Qxd6 16.Rad1 Qe7) 15...Qxg3 16.Bxg3 b5 17.a3 c5 18.Bxd6 cxd6 19.Ng3 fxe4 20.Ngxe4 Kc7 21.Rfe1 Nf7 gave Black what chances were going in the form of the bishop.]

15.Bxd6 Nxd6 16.Nf4 Qh6 17.Nd3 f4!? A controversial decision, planning a pawn storm on the kingside but leaving White with an unchallengeable central bulwark on e4.

[17...fxe4 would be much simpler, but perhaps offer fewer winning chances.]

18.b4?! Failing to meet the challenge. White treats the position as if it were a race of attacks when he should be playing in the centre.

[Both 18.Ne5 and 18 Qd4 look preferable.]

18...g5 19.a4 Rhg8 20.h3 Qg7 Preparing to rip open White's kingside with a subsequent ...g5-g4. White's reply smacks of panic.

21.e5?!

[21.Qc5 looks like a better try.]

21...Nc4 22.b5 Ne3 23.Rfb1 h5?! Going ahead full throttle.

[Black could also hold up White's queenside play with 23...a5 .]

24.b6

[After 24.bxa6 Black would keep lines closed with b6 25.a5 b5 .]

24...g4!?

[Throwing another wild punch, though if Black wanted to box rather than brawl he could have tried 24...Bf5 .]

25.bxc7+ Kxc7 26.Nxf4?

[White should play the cold-blooded 26.Ne4! , when gxh3 27.Nxf4 Qxg2+ 28.Nxg2 Rxc2+ 29.Qxg2 Nxg2 30.a5 produces a favourable endgame.]

26...Qxe5 27.Nd3 Qd4 28.Ne2 Qa7 29.hxg4 hxg4 30.f4 g3?!

[And here the calm 30...Bf5 should be preferred.]

31.Nxg3 Kb8 32.a5 Rxc3? One senses that Black might have been pumped up on adrenaline.

[32...Qd4 looks better, when the issue is still in doubt.]

33.Qxg3 Nxc2+ 34.Rb6 Nxa1 35.Qg5 Re8 36.Ne5

[36.Nc5! looks winning for White after Nb3 37.Rxb3 Bc8 38.Rb6 etc.]

36...Nb3 37.Nxd7+ Kc7 38.Qg7?

[38.Nc5 is still correct, although by now the position is just a mess.]

38...Nxa5 39.Qd4? Losing immediately.

Rd8 40.Qe5+ Kxd7 I get the distinct impression that both players ran short of time in the latter part of this game.

0-1

C68

□ **Ljubojevic,L**

■ **Beliavsky,A**

Tilburg

[*Nigel Davies*]

1986

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.d4 This is how Lasker used to play the Exchange, immediately setting up his kingside pawn majority. Ljubojevic has tried this a few times but without much success.

exd4 6.Qxd4 Qxd4 7.Nxd4 Bd7 White is a tempo down compared with the position after 5 0-0 Qf6 6 d4 exd4 7 Qxd4 Qxd4 8 Nxd4 Bd7. It is therefore hardly surprising that this position is quite harmless for Black.

8.Be3 0-0-0 9.Nd2

[9.Nc3 Re8 10.0-0-0 Bb4 11.Nde2 f5 12.exf5 Bxf5 gave Black full equality in Smyslov-Keres, USSR Championship 1940.]

9...c5 10.Ne2 b6 11.0-0-0 Ne7

[Black can also continue development with the alternative 11...g6 . Ljubojevic-Yusupov, Bugojno 1986, continued 12.h4 h6 13.f3 Bg7 14.Nf1 Ne7 15.Bd2 Bb5 16.Nc3 Bc6 17.Ne3 b5 18.Ne2 h5 19.Rhe1 Rhe8 with at least equality for Black.]

12.Rhe1 Nc6 13.h3 Be7 14.Nf4 Rde8 Beliavsky is playing ambitiously. Shifting the rook from the d-file avoids further exchanges.

15.Nd5 Bd8 16.Nc4 b5 17.Nd2 c4 18.b3 cxb3 19.Nxb3 Be6 20.Nc5 Bxd5 21.exd5 Nb8 22.Bd4

[22.a4 looks like a good idea to me, trying to exchange at least one of the queenside pawns.]

22...Be7 23.Ne4 Rhg8 It looks as if White has been making the running but appearances are deceptive. The visually impressive positioning of his pieces is offset by the badly dislocated

queenside pawn structure. It is possible that Ljubojevic was too optimistic at this stage and did not perceive the potential danger. After a few moves he drifts into a simplified position in which structural considerations are the major factor.

24.Rd3 f5 25.Nc5 Bxc5 26.Rxe8+ Rxe8 27.Bxc5 Nd7 28.Bd4 g6 29.Kd1 Kb7 Now Black is better. His plan is to play ...Rd8 followed by ...Nb6, when White's d-pawn is in serious trouble.

30.g4 f4 31.h4 Re4 32.f3 Re8 33.Kd2 Rd8 34.Kc3 Re8 35.Rd1 Nb6 36.Bxb6 Kxb6 37.d6 Re3+!? I suspect this was partly bluff, trying to trick Ljubojevic into misplacing his king.

[After 37...cxd6 38.Rxd6+ Kc5 39.Rxa6 Re3+ 40.Kd2 Rxf3 41.Ra7 White's monarch is much better placed than in the game.]

38.Kb2

[Why Ljubojevic rejected 38.Rd3 , I don't know. Perhaps he was afraid of some tricks in the pawn endgame but it looks drawn to me after cxd6 (I wouldn't advise either 38...Rxd3+ 39.Kxd3 ;or 38...c5 39.d7 Rxd3+ 40.Kxd3 Kc7 41.Ke4 Kxd7 42.Kxf4) 39.Rxe3 fxe3 40.Kd3 Kc5 41.Kxe3 Kd5 .]

38...cxd6 39.Rxd6+ Kc5 40.Rd7

[The difference between this position and the one that could have arisen from the earlier capture 37...cxd6 is that after 40.Rxa6 Rxf3 41.Ra7 Rg3 42.g5 Kd4 Black's f-pawn is a much bigger menace because White's king is so far away (b2 rather than d2).]

40...Rxf3 41.Rxh7 Rg3 42.g5 Kd4 43.Rg7 f3 44.Rxg6 f2 45.Rf6 Ke3 46.g6 Ke2 47.Re6+ Kf3 48.Rxa6

[After 48.Rf6+ Kg2 Black's king finds shelter.]

48...f1Q 49.Rf6+ Ke2 50.Rxf1 Kxf1 51.c4 bxc4 52.h5 Ke2 53.Kc2 Kf3 54.Kc3 Kg4+ 55.Kxc4 Kxh5 56.g7 Kh6 57.g8Q Rxg8 58.a4 Kg6 59.a5 Kf6 60.Kc5 Ke7 61.Kc6 Kd8 62.Kb7 Rg7+ 63.Kb8 Kd7 64.Kb7 Kd6+ 65.Kb6 Rg3

[65...Rg3 66.a6 Rb3+ 67.Ka7 Kc7 68.Ka8 Rd3 69.Ka7 Rd6 70.Ka8 Rxa6# .]

0-1

CHAPTER 6: TWO KNIGHTS DEFENCE

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6

If White plays 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4, both 3...Nf6 4 Ng5 and 3...Bc5 4 b4!? - or 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 - allow White to sharpen the struggle and involve his opponent in having to know some theory. My choice of 3...Nf6, the Two Knights Defence, was made because of its relative pugnacity. White cannot easily create an equal position in which it is difficult for Black to play for a win.

After 3...Nf6 White's 4 Ng5 effectively wins a pawn, but the lost time gives Black good compensation after 4...d5 5 exd5 Na5.

In Alekseev-Yemelin we see what is essentially the main line (9 Nf3), but with my recommendation being the slightly unusual 10...Bc5 rather than 10...Bd6, and then Yemelin's 12...Nb7!?. Black seems to be doing quite well here, and the fact that this line is quite unusual should mean that many exponents of White's side will be caught unawares.

Instead of 9 Nf3 White can also try Steinitz's 9 Nh3, which is another move that Bobby Fischer rehabilitated. But against this I think that Malaniuk's 9...g5 followed by 10...Bg7 (Grischuk-Malaniuk) is a strong plan, shutting the knight out of the game and setting about advancing the kingside pawns. In my correspondence game with Azevedo Pessoa (Azevedo Pessoa-Davies) my opponent tried another unusual move that the Dutch GM John Van der Wiel has played in several games, namely 8 Qf3. I felt that Black had some initiative but White finally managed to force a draw by perpetual check. If Black wants more he could examine 11...Bb7!? instead of 11...Be6.

Finally there is 6 d3, which was recently given a run out in the correspondence game Spitz-Piccardo. Black obtained good counterplay, although there may be more to be said in this complex line.

Rather than force Black to play a promising gambit, White can try to seize the initiative with 4 d4. After 4...exd4 5 e5 I like the unusual but sound 5...Ne4!?, which has also been the choice of strong grandmasters such as Romanishin. In Kozakov-Jonkman White recovers the pawn with 6 Bd5 Nc5 7 Bxc6 but gives Black excellent light square play. V.Gurevich-Romanishin features the more testing 7 0-0, but even so Black gets counterplay with the clever 7...Be7 8 Qe2 0-0 9 Rd1 Qe8!. White can also try 5 0-0 instead of 5 e5, but this was essentially put out of commission in Karaklajic-Jovanovic with 11...Bxh2+.

Finally we come to 4 d3, which often leads to similar positions to the Closed Variation of the Ruy Lopez. Dolmatov-Romanishin features a good way to treat this line for Black, playing ...Rad8 before retreating the knight to c6 and just letting White capture on e6 if that's what he wants to do.

Summary

4 Ng5 leads to very complex positions in which Black gets ongoing compensation for the sacrificed pawn. 4 d4 doesn't cause Black much trouble after either 4...exd4 5 e5 or 5 0-0 Nxe4, while 4 d3 is similar to a Closed Spanish.

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8...h6 9 Nf3 - Alekseev-Yemelin
 9 Nh3 - Grischuk-Malaniuk

□ Alekseev,E

■ Yemelin,V

St Petersburg

[Nigel Davies]

2000

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 Na5 6.Bb5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.Be2

[8.Qf3 is covered in the game Azevedo Pessoa-Davies.]

8...h6 9.Nf3 Introducing what is really the main line of the 4 Ng5 Two Knights.

[9.Nh3 is dealt with in Grischuk-Malaniuk.]

9...e4 10.Ne5 Bc5!

[10...Bd6 has been more popular in the past but I like the text. Black gets White to play 11 c3 as after 11.d4 exd3 12.Nxd3 Qc7 there is an effective development for White with 13.b3!

, as played by Kasparov and Morozevich.]

11.c3

[In 'Play the Open Games as Black', Emms suggested that the simple 11.0-0 might be better, suggesting that Black still had to justify his play after Qd6 12.Ng4 Bxg4 13.Bxg4 h5 14.Be2 (14.Bh3 is powerfully met by g5!) 14...Ng4 15.g3 . I can see his point in that Nxf2 16.Rxf2 Bxf2+ 17.Kxf2 h4 18.Qg1 hxg3+ 19.hxg3 defends for White and he has two pieces for a rook.]

[Black's best may be to avoid an immediate attack on the knight with 11.0-0 0-0! , after which 12.c3 Qc7 13.d4 exd3 14.Nxd3 leads to similar positions to Sutovsky-Postny in the next note.]

11...Qc7 12.f4

[As I mentioned in the previous note, 12.d4 is not very good here because exd3 13.Nxd3 Bd6 makes a development with b2-b3 and Bb2 ineffective. Sutovsky-Postny, Tel Aviv 2001, continued 14.Nd2 Bf5 15.b4 Nb7 16.Nc4 Rd8 17.Be3 0-0 18.Bxa7 Nd5 19.Bd4 Rfe8 20.Nxd6 Nxd6 21.0-0 Nb5 and Black had dangerous threats.]

12...Nb7!? I really like this move, calmly improving Black's worst place piece before proceeding with direct action.

[12...Bd6 has been played more often, for example 13.d4 exd3 14.Qxd3 0-0 15.0-0 (15.Nd2 Bxe5 16.fxe5 Qxe5 17.0-0 was equal in Harding-Read, Correspondence 1992) 15...Rd8 16.Qc2 Nd5 17.b4 Nb7 18.Na3 (18.Bf3 Be6 19.Na3 Bxe5 20.fxe5 Qxe5 was also equal in Herbrechtsmeier-Read, Correspondence 1985) and now 18...a5! (as Emms pointed out, 18...Nxf4 19.Nxf7! is good for White) 19.Nac4 f6 20.Nxd6 (or 20.Nd3 Bf5) 20...Nxd6 21.Nd3 Bf5 looks quite good for Black.]

13.b4 White has tried two other moves here:

[13.d4 exd3 14.Qxd3 0-0 still leaves White with the problem of getting his king safe. Fine-Steiner, Washington 1944, went 15.Nd2 Nd6 16.Bf3 Bf5 17.Qe2 Nd5 18.Nb3 Bb6 19.c4 Nb4 20.c5 Nc2+ 21.Kf2 Bxc5+ 22.Nxc5 Nxa1 and White was fighting for survival.]

[13.Qa4 attacks the c6-pawn: Nd8 (13...Bd7! is also interesting but doesn't seem to have been tried) 14.b3 (14.Na3 0-0 15.Nc2 Re8 16.b4 Bd6 17.Nd4 Bxe5 18.fxe5 Qxe5 19.Nxc6 Qg5 20.0-0 Bh3 21.Rf2 was Mednis-Van Hoorn, Antwerp 1955, when Nxc6! 22.Qxc6 e3! 23.dxe3 Ne4 would have been good for Black) 14...Ne6! (14...a5 15.Ba3 Ba7 16.Rf1 Be6 17.d4 exd3 18.Nxd3 Nb7 was quite intricate and complex in Fink-Pinkus, New York 1946 ;but 14...0-0 15.Ba3 Bxa3 16.Nxa3 seems to take a lot of the steam out of Black's position) 15.Qxc6+ (15.d4 exd3 16.Nxd3 Bd6 17.Bf3 Bb7 gives Black excellent compensation) 15...Qxc6 16.Nxc6 Nxf4 17.d4 exd3 18.Bf3 Bd6 19.Nb4 Rb8 20.Bxf4 Bxf4 21.Nxd3 Bd6 and the bishop pair plus White's pawn weaknesses give Black adequate compensation for the pawn.]

13...Bd6

[13...Bb6 seems very reasonable here too, for example 14.Na3 (14.Qa4 Bd7 15.Na3 0-0 16.Nac4 Nd6 17.Nxb6 axb6 18.Qb3 Be6 19.Qb1 b5 gave Black good play for the pawn in

Mednis-F.Anderson, Montreal 1956) 14...Nd6 15.Nac4 Nxc4 16.Bxc4 0-0 17.d4?! exd3 18.Qxd3 Ng4! 19.Qe2 Re8 20.Bxf7+ Qxf7 21.Nxf7 Rxe2+ 22.Kxe2 Kxf7 and Black had two pieces for a rook in Szymanski-Sliwa, Krakow 1953.]

14.Na3 This looks too ambitious.

[White should probably play 14.d4 , when exd3 15.Qxd3 0-0 16.0-0 a5 17.Bf3 Bxe5 18.fxe5 Qxe5 19.Bxc6 axb4 20.Qb5 was equal and soon drawn in Mednis-Spassky, Antwerp 1955.]

14...Nd5 15.0-0 Nxf4 16.Rxf4 Bxe5 17.Rxe4 0-0 18.Nc4? After this Black is clearly better.

[White has to defend his h2 pawn with 18.Rh4 .]

18...Bxh2+ 19.Kh1 Nd6 20.Nxd6 Bxd6 21.d4 Bf5 22.Re3 Rae8 23.Bf3 Bg3 24.Bg4 Be4 25.Bd2

[The last chance to stay on the board was with 25.Kg1 . Now the storm clouds gather around White's king.]

25...f5 26.Bh5?! Qf4 27.Rxg3 Qxg3 With White being the exchange down and under attack, the rest requires little comment.

28.Qg1 g6 29.Bd1 Qh3+ 30.Qh2 Bxg2+ 31.Kg1 Qxh2+ 32.Kxh2 Be4 33.Bxh6 Rf7 34.Bd2 Rh7+ 35.Kg3 Rh1 36.Rc1 Rg1+ 37.Kf2 Rg2+ 38.Kf1 Rxd2 39.c4 Bg2+ 40.Kg1 Re1+ 0-1

C59

□ **Grischuk,A**

■ **Malaniuk,V**

Russian Team Championship

2001

[Nigel Davies]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 Na5 6.Bb5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.Be2 h6

9.Nh3 Steinitz's move, which was later used by Bobby Fischer, Nigel Short and Gata Kamsky.

White avoids the loss of time inherent in 9 Nf3 e4, but puts the knight on a very strange square.

g5!

[Black has tried several other moves here such as 9...Bd6 and 9...Bc5, but I think this is the best. Black advances his kingside pawns whilst menacing ...g5-g4; indeed White cannot castle here because 10...g4 wins the knight.]

10.d3 Bg7! Once again a move that I like.

[Black has also tried to bring the knight on a5 back into play with 10...c5 11.Nc3 Nc6 , but after 12.Bf3 Qd7 13.Ne4 Nxe4 14.Bxe4 g4 (Veinger-Bronstein, Rishon Le Ziyon 1991) Bronstein told me that White could have gained the advantage with 15.Qxg4! (rather than the 15.Ng1 f5 16.Bxc6 Qxc6 17.f3 c4! of the game) 15...Qxg4 16.Bxc6+ Bd7 17.Bxa8 . Shredder doesn't agree just here but I trust Bronstein's intuition more. In the variation c4 18.0-0 cxd3 19.cxd3 Rg8 20.Kh1 Qe2 21.Be3 Bxh3 22.gxh3 Qxb2 23.Rfb1 Qe2 24.Be4 Shredder's assessments have gradually changed from giving Black a clear advantage to equal. But Black's king is in serious trouble here.]

11.Nc3 This is probably best.

[In Mutu-Deseatnicov, Kishnev 2001, White played 11.Be3 , but there followed 0-0 12.Nc3 Nb7 13.Ng1 Nd5 14.h4 (14.Nxd5 might improve but after cxd5 15.h4 g4 16.Bxg4 f5 17.Bh5 f4 18.Bc1 Bf5 Black gets tremendous pressure for his pawns) 14...Nxe3 15.fxe3 Nd6 , and Black had more than enough compensation.]

11...0-0 12.Ng1 Nb7 13.Nf3

[Pilgaard-Dervishi, Bergamo 2004, went 13.Bf3 but after Qc7 14.h3 Nd6 15.Nge2 Nf5 16.0-0 Nh4 17.Ng3 Rb8 , White was under serious pressure.]

13...Nd5 14.0-0 Nd6 15.Ne4 f5! Now it is clear that the bishop on g7 is beautifully placed. It both

supports the centre and helps cover the king.

16.Nxd6 Qxd6 17.Nd2 g4 18.Re1 Ba6 19.Bf1 Qg6 20.g3

[20.Nb3 is well met by Rad8 , when 21.Nc5 Bc8 gets all Black's pieces working nicely.]

20...Rad8 21.c4 Nb4 22.d4 Rxd4 23.Qa4 c5 24.Nb3 Nc2 25.Nxd4 Nxd4?! Black is tempted by the idea of delivering mate, but maybe he shouldn't have been.

[25...Nxe1 is a more rational move, after which 26.Bd2 cxd4 27.Rxe1 Bb7 simply favours Black.]

26.Bg2 f4

[The immediate 26...Nf3+ can be answered by 27.Bxf3 gxf3 28.Be3 , for example Qg4 29.Qc6 e4 30.Qe6+ Kh7 31.Kh1 Qh3 32.Rg1 , when it is difficult to see how Black can continue the attack.]

27.Bd5+

[If White wants to put the bishop on e4 he should do so immediately. 27.Be4 Nf3+ 28.Kh1 Qh5 29.Bxf3 gxf3 30.gxf4 is much better than the game because Black's king is still sitting on the g-file.]

27...Kh8 28.Be4?!]

[28.Bd2 is a preferable follow-up.]

28...Nf3+ 29.Bxf3

[The point behind playing 27 Be4 rather than the check is that now White cannot play 29.Kh1 because it runs into Qh5 30.Bxf3 fxd3! (Black has time for this because White has no bishop check) 31.fxd3 gxf3 etc.]

29...gxf3 30.Bd2 Qg4 31.Kh1

[Or 31.Qc6 fxd3 followed by 32...Qh3.]

31...fxg3 32.Qxa6 Qh3 A terrific win by Malaniuk.

0-1

C58

□ **Azevedo Pessoa,F**

■ **Davies,N**

Correspondence

[*Nigel Davies*]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 Na5 6.Bb5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.Qf3!?

This is the kind of move that can be very awkward in practical chess because it is sharp and Black may not know it. Besides the standard 8 Be2 there are three other moves here: the dodgy, the ugly and the bad:

[8.Bd3 Nd5! 9.Ne4 f5 10.Ng3 Nf4 11.Bf1 Bc5 12.c3 Bb6 13.d4 Ng6 14.Bd3 0-0 15.b4 Nb7 16.Bc4+ Kh8 gave Black a strong initiative in Castaldi-Keres, Stockholm Olympiad 1937.]

[8.Bf1?! h6 9.Nh3 Bc5 10.d3 Qb6 11.Qe2 Bg4 12.f3 Bxh3 13.gxh3 0-0-0 and Black had a menacing attacking position in Steinitz-Chigorin, World Championship, Havana 1892.]

[8.Ba4? h6 9.Nf3 e4 10.Qe2 (after 10.Ne5 Qd4! Black wins a piece for inadequate compensation) 10...Bd6 11.Nd4 (11.d3 0-0 12.dxe4 Nxe4 13.0-0 Nc5 14.Bb3 Ba6 is good for Black according to Emms) 11...Qb6 12.c3 0-0 13.b4?! Bxb4 14.cxb4 Qxd4 favoured Black in Horwitz-Pindar, Manchester 1961.]

8...h6

[Black has also tried 8...Be7 and 8...Rb8, but the text seems like the most reliable continuation.]

9.Ne4 Nd5 10.Nbc3! White must develop at top speed here or risk being crushed by Black's advancing e- and f-pawns.

[10.Ba4 Be7 11.0-0 (or 11.Ng3 0-0 12.Nf5 Bc5 13.d3 Qf6 14.g4 Nf4 15.Bxf4 exf4 16.Nd2

, as in Capitaine-Legrand, Plancoet 2003, and now *Bxf5 17.gxf5 Qd4 18.Bb3 Rae8+* is simply very good for Black) 11...0-0 12.d3 (12.Re1 f5 13.Ng3 e4 14.Qd1 Ba6 offered Black excellent compensation for the pawn in Stenzel-Brooks, Chicago 1994) 12...f5 13.Nec3 Bb7 14.a3 c5 15.Qh5 Nb6 16.Bxh6? was played in Van Weersel-Solleveld, Vlissingen 2003, and now Qd6! would have been strong because 17.Bg5 (17.Bd2 Nxa4 18.Nxa4 Qc6 wins a piece) 17...Bxg5 18.Qxg5 Rf6 leaves White facing many threats.]

10...cxb5 11.Nxd5 Be6 At the time I played the game I liked keeping the bishop here because it covers the crucial f5-square. I was also influenced by the fact that Balashov has been Spassky's second for many years and played 11...Be6 after Spassky had tried 11...Bb7. [Van der Wiel-Spassky, Reggio Emilia 1986, went 11...Bb7 12.Ne3 Qd7 (in P.Watson-L.Cooper, England 2002, Black played 12...Be7 13.d3 g6, but then 14.0-0 would have prepared White to meet f5 with 15.Nxf5 gxf5 16.Qh5+ etc) 13.d3 Nc6 14.0-0 0-0-0 15.c3 g6 (Van der Wiel-Van Kooten, Hooegeveen 2004, continued instead 15...Qe6 16.Rd1 g6 17.Qf6 Qxf6 18.Nxf6 Bg7 19.Ne4, with Black having inadequate compensation for the pawn in the endgame; as this was a later game it also implies that Van der Wiel had an improvement ready had Black played like Spassky) 16.a4 b4 17.Nf6 Qe6 18.Nfd5 (18.a5!? might be the improvement Van der Wiel had in mind) 18...f5 19.c4 Nd4 20.Qh3 g5 21.Re1 Rg8 and Black had dangerous attacking chances.]

12.Ne3 Rc8 13.0-0 Nc6 This is a new move, re-centralizing the knight before committing myself to any concrete action. [Gikas-Balashov, Lugano 1988, had gone 13...Qd7 14.Ng3 h5 15.c3 (15.d3 might be an improvement) 15...Nc6 16.Rd1 h4 with a very messy position.]

14.d3 Qd7 15.Ng3
[I also looked at 15.Qh5 but thought that Black was doing well after Be7 16.f4 g6 17.Qe2 f5 18.Nc3 Nd4 etc.]

15...h5 16.c3 h4 17.Ngf5 h3 18.g3
[And here I examined 18.g4, concluding that Black stood well after g6 19.Ng3 Be7 in view of White's compromised kingside.]

18...Ne7! Eliminating White's advanced knight.
[18...g6 is not good due to 19.Ng4 Qd8 20.Nf6+! Qxf6 21.Nd6+ Ke7 22.Nxc8+ Bxc8 23.Bg5! Qxg5 24.Qxc6, with a position that I tried to make work for Black but without success. The poor king position prevents the efficient reorganization of forces.]

19.g4
[After 19.Nxe7 Bxe7 20.Qe4 Black can simply castle, 0-0, when 21.a4 b4 generates excellent play.]

19...g6 20.Nxe7 Bxe7 21.Qe4 0-0 I saw that this could lead to a forced draw but was unable to find a good alternative.

22.Qxe5 Qxd3 23.Nf5! Bxf5 24.Bh6 f6 25.Qxe7 Rf7 26.Qe3 Qxe3 27.Bxe3 Bxg4 28.f3 Bf5
1/2-1/2

C58

□ Spitz,P

■ Piccardo,V

Correspondence

[Nigel Davies]

2004

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 Na5 6.d3 Morphy's old move, which hasn't been seen much since the century before last. Still, you might have it played against you by an

enterprising GM like Ian Rogers.

h6 7.Nf3 e4

[Rogers-Jonkman, Wijk aan Zee 2003, featured 7...Bd6 , and after 8.Nc3 0-0 9.Qe2 Bg4 10.h3 Bxf3 11.gxf3 c6 12.dxc6 Nxc6 13.Be3 Nd4 14.Bxd4 exd4 15.Ne4 Bf4 16.Kf1 a draw was agreed.]

8.Qe2 This leads to positions in which Black has compensation for a pawn.

[David Bronstein introduced a piece sacrifice in this position with 8.dxe4 , although it is not now thought to give White enough compensation. After Nxc4 9.Qd4 (9.Qe2 Nb6 10.c4 Bb4+ 11.Kf1 0-0 12.a3 Re8 13.e5 Bf8 14.h3 c6 15.Be3 Nxc4 16.Qxc4 Nxd5 was good for Black in De Zeeuw-Timmerman, Dutch Team Championship 1992) 9...Nd6 10.Nc3 c6 11.0-0 cxd5 12.e5 Nf5 13.Qd3 Ne4 14.Nxd5 Nc5 , White had inadequate compensation for the piece in L. Bronstein-Ra.Garcia, Mar del Plata Zonal 1969. Note that Luis Bronstein is not a relation of the famous Russian GM with whom he shares the same surname.]

8...Nxc4 9.dxc4 Bc5 10.c3 Preparing to put the knight on d4, although this uses valuable time.

White has tried a few other moves here but in every case it looks as if Black has a strong initiative:

[10.Nfd2 0-0 11.Nb3 Bg4 12.Qf1 Bb4+ 13.c3 (13.Nc3 c6 14.h3 Bh5 15.g4 Bg6 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.Bd2 e3! 18.fxe3 Bxc3 19.bxc3 Bxc2 left White's position in tatters in Luckis-Keres, Buenos Aires 1939) 13...Be7 14.h3 Bh5 15.Be3 (15.g4 Bg6 16.Be3 Nd7 17.N1d2 Ne5 18.0-0-0 b5 19.cxb5 Nd3+ 20.Kb1 Qxd5 was good for Black in Salwe-Marshall, Vienna 1908) 15...c6 16.g4 Bg6 17.dxc6 bxc6 18.N1d2 Qc8 and White's king was short of a safe home in Popa-Godena, Verona 2005.]

[10.h3 prevents anything landing on g4 and creates 'luft' for the knight. Now 0-0 11.Nh2 b5 (11...Nh7 was played in one game by the legendary Paul Morphy, but Black has it all to prove after 12.Nc3) 12.Nc3 bxc4 13.Qxc4 Qd6 14.0-0 Ba6 15.Nb5 was Bird-Chigorin, London 1883, when simply Qxd5 16.Qxd5 Nxd5 would have left Black with a clear plus.]

[10.Bf4 0-0 11.Nfd2 Bg4 12.Qf1 c6 13.h3 Bh5 14.g4 Bg6 15.Nc3 Bb4 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.0-0-0 Bxc3 18.bxc3 Qa5 put White's king in desperate trouble in Van der Weide-Medina Garcia, Amsterdam 1967.]

10...b5!?

[10...b5 has been regarded as the theoretical continuation but the simple 10...0-0 might also be good. Waddingham-Hebden, British Championship, Southport 1983, continued 11.Nd4 Bg4 12.Qc2 Bxd4 13.cxd4 b5 14.cxb5 (or 14.b3 c6) 14...Qxd5 15.Qc5 Rfd8 16.Qxd5 Rxd5 17.Be3 Rxb5 18.b3 Nd5 and Black won the endgame.]

11.cxb5 This looks like a new move, but it isn't one that is particularly threatening for Black.

[11.b4 Be7 12.Nfd2 Bg4 13.f3 (13.Qe3 bxc4 14.0-0 Qxd5 15.Re1 Bf5 16.f3 Qd3 was also very good for Black in Torres-Uralde, Argentina 2001) 13...exf3 14.gxf3 Bh5 15.cxb5 0-0 16.0-0 Re8 gave Black a dangerous initiative in Grob-Keres, Dresden 1936.]

11...0-0 12.Nd4 Qxd5 13.Be3 Bg4 14.Qd2 a6!?

[There's a case to be made for 14...Bxd4 15.Bxd4 (or 15.Qxd4 Qxb5) 15...e3! 16.fxe3 Ne4 when Black's pieces become very active.]

15.bxa6 Bd6 16.h3 Bc8 The point of Black's play - with the bishop on a6 White will lose the capability to castle. Of course castling isn't everything and there are times in this game that Black might have wished he had more pawns.

17.a7 Ba6 18.a4 Bd3 19.Na3 Rxa7 20.Nab5 Ra6 21.Nxd6 Qxd6 22.Ne2 Rfa8 23.0-0

So White gets castled anyway and Black wins back the material. It is already looking rather equal.

Rxa4 24.Rxa4 Rxa4 25.Re1 Nd5 26.Nc1 Ra8 27.b4

[27.Nxd3 Nxe3! 28.Rxe3 Ra1+ 29.Re1 Rxe1+ 30.Qxe1 exd3 gives Black chances in the queen ending thanks to the passed d-pawn.]

27...Nxe3 28.Qxe3 Qd5 29.Qf4 c6 30.Nxd3 exd3 31.c4 Qd7 32.Rd1 Rd8 33.Qe5

Preparing the advance of the b-pawn.

Qd4 34.Qxd4 Rxd4 35.b5 Rxc4

1/2-1/2

C56

□ **Kozakov,M**

■ **Jonkman,H**

Lvov

[Nigel Davies]

2001

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Bc4 Nf6 5.e5 Ne4!? This has been the choice of many top players, and it does seem much simpler than the popular 5...d5.

6.Bd5 White has two other lines:

[6.Qe2 Nc5 7.0-0 (7.c3 d3 8.Qe3 Be7 9.b4 Ne6 10.Bxd3 d6 11.exd6 Bxd6 12.0-0 0-0 13.Bc2 Nf4 was equal in Abergel-Fressinet, Port Barcares 2005) 7...Ne6! (an improvement on the older 7...Be7 that makes it difficult for White to get the pawn back) 8.Rd1 (8.Bxe6 dxe6 9.Rd1 Be7 10.Nc3 0-0 11.Qe4 f5 12.Qe2 a6 13.Be3 Qe8 to complex play in Castany Pampalona-Narciso Dublan, Spain 1999 ;while 8.c3 d5 9.exd6 Bxd6 10.Bg5 Be7 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Re1 0-0 13.cxd4 Qf6 leaves Black very comfortably placed according to analysis by Emms) 8...d5! 9.Bb3 (Mikhailchishin suggested 9.Bb5 as an improvement, giving the variation Bc5 10.c3 Bd7 11.Bxc6 Bxc6 12.cxd4 Bb6 13.Nc3 0-0 as unclear; Black might contemplate 14...f5! on his next move and then transfer the queen to h5 via e8) 9...Bc5 10.c3 0-0 11.Bc2 f6! 12.cxd4?! Ncxd4 13.Nxd4 Nxd4 14.Rxd4 Bxd4 15.Qd3 Bxf2+! 16.Kxf2 fxe5+ 17.Kg1 Bf5 and Black went on to win in Voigt-Mikhailchishin, Dortmund 1992.]

[6.0-0 d5 (6...Be7 might leave White a bit better after 7.c3 d5 8.Bb3 Nc5 9.cxd4 Nxb3 10.Qxb3 , as in Kupreichik-Beliavsky, USSR Championship, Frunze 1981) 7.exd6 (after 7.Bb5 Black can transpose to the 5...d5 line by playing 7...Bc5, but I like Black's treatment in the game Pachman-Gligoric, Leipzig Olympiad 1960: Bg4 8.h3 Bxf3 9.Qxf3 a6 10.Bxc6+ bxc6 11.Nd2 Ng5 12.Qd3 Ne6 13.f4 g6 14.f5 gxf5 15.Qxf5 Qd7 16.Nf3 h6 17.Bd2 c5 18.Nh2 h5 19.Rf2 0-0-0 20.Qxf7 Be7 and a complex, double-edged situation arose in which Black's chances were certainly not worse) 7...Nxd6 8.Bd5 Nf5 9.Re1+ Be7 10.Bxc6+ bxc6 11.g4 Nh6! (11...Nd6 12.Nxd4 Qd7 13.Bg5 f6 14.Bf4 Kf7 15.Nc3 Re8 16.h3 Bf8 17.Qf3 Bb7 18.Na4 was good for White in Sveshnikov-Arkhipov, Elista 1994) 12.Qxd4 (12.Bxh6 gxh6 13.Nxd4 c5 14.Qf3 Bxg4 15.Qxg4 cxd4 16.Qg7 Rf8 17.Na3 Qd7 , intending ...0-0-0, was fine for Black in Filipovic-Blagojevic, Neum 2004 ;and 12.Bg5 Be6 13.Bxe7 Qxe7 14.Qxd4 Nxg4 gave Black counterplay in Sveshnikov-Smikovski, Togliatti 2003) 12...Bxg4 13.Bxh6 (13.Qe4 is well met by Bxf3 14.Qxf3 Qd5 15.Qe2 Nf5 , intending to castle) 13...Qxd4 (Black might also consider 13...Bxf3!? 14.Qxg7 Kd7 with a wild position) 14.Nxd4 gxh6 15.Nxc6 Be6 16.Nxe7 Kxe7 with an even-looking endgame, Black's active pieces compensating for the doubled h-pawns.]

[6.c3 d5 7.exd6 Nxd6 is good for Black thanks to the gain of time on the bishop on c4.]

6...Nc5 7.Bxc6?! This trade is quite harmless.

[Besides 7 0-0 and 7 Qe2 (see the next game) there is 7.c3 , but then dxc3 8.Nxc3 Be7 9.Be3 0-0 leaves White with rather nebulous compensation for the pawn, for example 10.Qe2 Nb4 11.0-0-0 c6 12.Bxc5 Bxc5 13.Bb3 d5 14.a3 Na6 as in Hector-Nunn, Vejle 1994.]

7...dxc6 8.Qxd4

[8.Nxd4 Ne6 9.Be3 Nxd4 10.Qxd4 Qxd4 11.Bxd4 Bf5 12.c3 0-0-0 was excellent for Black in A.Minasian-Mainka, Candas 1992.]

8...Bf5 Black stands very well here, with the bishop pair in an open position.

9.Qc3

[9.Bg5 Be7 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.Qc3 0-0 12.0-0 Rad8 13.Nbd2 Na4 14.Qc4 Nb6 15.Qb3 Rd5 was good for Black in Upton-Mikhalchishin, Mexico 1977.]

9...Ne6 10.Be3 Qd5! 11.Nbd2 Be7 12.a3 With the maniacal intention of castling long.
 [White should admit the fact that his opening has been a disaster and play the modest 12.0-0 .]

12...0-0 13.0-0-0 c5 14.Nb3 Qc6 15.Rd2 Rfd8 16.Rhd1 Rxd2 17.Rxd2 a5! Threatening to drive White's knight to the miserable a1-square with 18...a4 whilst angling for a queenside pawn storm. Of course White can take it, but that opens lines in front of his king.

18.Nxa5 Qa6 19.Nb3
 [19.Nc4 loses a knight after b5 .]

19...Qf1+ 20.Rd1 Qxg2 21.Ne1 Qc6 The movements of Black's queen remind me a little of snooker, her majesty bouncing off several cushions before finishing back where she started. Meanwhile Jonkman's advantage has increased as White's pawn structure is wrecked and Black has an open a-file.

22.Nd2 Rd8 23.Nf1 Rxd1+ 24.Kxd1 Bg4+ 25.Kc1 Qd5 26.b3 Nd4! Threatening both a fork on e2 and the simple capture of White's e-pawn. White opts for a radical solution but finds himself in even more trouble.

27.Bxd4?! cxd4 28.Qxc7 Bxa3+ 29.Kb1 Qh1! The pin is deadly. And Black's back rank isn't a problem because he can drop the bishop back to f8.

30.Qc4 Bh3 31.e6 fxe6 32.b4 Qxf1 33.Qc8+ Kf7 34.Qd7+ Kg6 White is running out of checks and he's about to lose the knight on e1.

0-1

C55

□ Gurevich,V
 ■ Romanishin,O
 Herson
 [Nigel Davies]

1989

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d4 exd4 5.e5 Ne4!? 6.Bd5 Nc5 7.0-0

[7.Qe2 Be7 8.0-0 transposes back into the game.]

[7.Bxc6?! was seen in Kozakov-Jonkman.]

7...Be7 8.Qe2

[White can also play 8.Nxd4 , for example Nxd4 (the risky 8...Nxe5!? was tried in Cohen-Flear, Isle of Man 1994, after which 9.f4 Nc6 10.Nf5 Bf6 11.Qg4 Kf8 12.Ne3 d6 13.Qd1 Ne7 eventually saw Black consolidate; this might be worth trying if you want to try and win as Black, although it does look very dangerous) 9.Qxd4 0-0 (9...c6 10.Bc4 0-0 11.Rd1 b5 12.Be2 Ne6 13.Qe4 f5 14.Qd3 Qc7 15.f4 left Black shy of equality in Erwich-Romanishin, Hoogeveen 2004) 10.Be3 d6 11.Qc3 Nd7 (Emms' suggestion of 11...Na4 is interesting as the knight can be dropped back to b6) 12.f4 Nb6 13.Bf3 c6 14.Rd1 d5 and Black had equalized in Fahrni-Schlechter, Baden-Baden 1914.]

8...0-0 9.Rd1 Qe8! A clever move, getting the queen away from the gaze of White's rook on d1.

[White stands somewhat better after 9...d6 10.Bxc6 bxc6 11.Nxd4 Bd7 12.Bf4]

[while 9...Ne6 10.c3! dxc3 11.Nxc3 d6 12.Ne4 gives him pressure for the sacrificed pawn.]

10.Bf4 Trying to prevent Black from effectively moving his d-pawn. Alternatives don't promise much:

[10.Bxc6 d3! (better than 10...dxc6 11.Nxd4 Bd7 , which is also not bad) 11.cxd3 dxc6 12.d4 Ne6 followed by ...b6, ...Bb7 and ...Rd8 is very good for Black]

[10.Na3 Nb4 11.Bc4 d3 12.cxd3 d5 13.exd6 Bxd6 14.Qxe8 Rxe8 15.Nb5 Bg4 and the position was about even in Khelminitsky-Malaniuk, Sibenik 1990.]

10...Ne6 This is a logical move, but a year later Romanishin had a change of heart.

[Khelminitsky-Romanishin, Sibenik 1990, varied with 10...b6 11.Bxc6 d3 12.cxd3 dxc6 13.d4 Ne6 14.Bg3 Bb7 15.Nc3 Rd8! , intending ...Rd7 followed by ...Qa8 and ...Rfd8, with strong pressure against d4 and the possibility of opening up for the light-squared bishop with ...c6-c5.]

11.Bg3 Kh8?! The ever-ambitious Romanishin wants to move his f-pawn and get his queen into play on the kingside, but this does leave the cramping pawn on e5 intact.

[Objectively stronger is 11...d6! , after which 12.exd6 Bxd6 13.Bxd6 cxd6 14.Bxe6 Bxe6 15.Nxd4 Nxd4 16.Rxd4 Bxa2! 17.Nc3 Qxe2 18.Nxe2 Rfe8 19.Nc3 Be6 20.Nb5 would lead to an equal position. However, I doubt that Black could win such a game.]

12.Nbd2

[If 12.Na3 Black could play Nb4 13.Bc4 a6! 14.Nxd4 b5 with double-edged play. I don't agree with the assessment of Gurevich and Schneider who claim that Black is slightly better - I would say it's equal after 15.Qe4 Rb8 16.Be2 .]

12...f5 13.exf6 Bxf6 14.Re1 Qg6

[14...Qh5 would have been strongly met by 15.Bxe6 dxe6 16.Bxc7]

[but 14...d3 15.cxd3 Bxb2 16.Rab1 Bc3 was worth considering.]

15.Qc4 Qh5 16.a4

[Not 16.Nb3? b5! 17.Qxb5 Rb8 18.Qc4 Rb4 and Black wins either the queen or the bishop on d5.]

16...a6?! Probably not the best.

[Here Gurevich and Schneider give 16...Na5 17.Qb5 a6 18.Qxa5 as good for White, but their analysis seems wrong. Black can play the amazingly calm d6!! (their 18...c6 should be met by 19.Re5 Bxe5 20.Bxe6 etc.), when 19.Ne5 (19.Ne4 b6 20.Nxf6 Rxf6 21.Qd2 Qxd5 is simply good for Black) 19...Bxe5 20.Bxe5 dxe5 21.Bxe6 Bxe6 22.Qxe5 is equal.]

17.a5 Ne7?!

[17...Ncd8 can be answered by 18.Bxe6 Nxe6 19.Bxc7 d5 20.Qb4 , preventing the capture of the bishop because the rook on f8 would hang.]

[But maybe 17...Qf5 was worth considering.]

18.Bxe6 dxe6 19.Qxc7 Nc6 20.Qb6 Qd5

[Or 20...Bd8 21.Bc7 .]

21.Qb3 Bd7?! 22.Nc4?!

[White should play the cold-blooded 22.Qxb7 , when Rad8 (or 22...e5 23.Nxe5!) 23.Qb3 leaves Black miserably placed.]

22...Rad8 23.Nfd2 Bc8 24.Nb6 Qxb3 25.Nxb3 Nb4 26.Re2 Nd5

[26...d3 doesn't help much after 27.cxd3 Nxd3 (or 27...Rxd3 28.Nc5) 28.Bc7 , forcing Black's rook to leave the d-file.]

27.Nc4 Bd7 28.Nd6

[28.Rd2 is also good.]

28...Bc6 29.Nc5

[Gurevich and Schneider give 29.Rxe6! Nb4 30.Re2 d3 31.cxd3 Nxd3 as unclear, but 32.Rd1 Nb4 (32...Nxb2? 33.Rxb2 Bxb2 34.Nf7+) 33.Nc5 still looks horrible for Black.]

29...e5 30.Ndxb7?! This allows Romanishin to finally get some counterplay.

[30.Nde4 maintains White's edge.]

30...Bxb7 31.Nxb7 Rb8 32.Nc5 Rxb2 33.Nd3? White is falling apart.

[33.Bxe5 is the best, when Nc3 34.Ree1 Bxe5 (not 34...Rxc2? 35.Bxf6 gxf6 36.Ne6 , hitting f8 and d4) 35.Rxe5 Rxc2 36.f3 h6 leaves the outcome in the balance.]

33...Nc3! 34.Rxe5 White has no good move.

[34.Rd2 is answered by Rb5]

[34.Ree1 by Rxc2 35.Bxe5 Bxe5 36.Rxe5 Rd2]

[and 34.Nxb2 by Nxe2+ 35.Kf1 Nxc3+ 36.hxc3 e4]

34...Bxe5 35.Nxb2 Ne2+ 36.Kh1?

[36.Kf1 is the best chance, when Nxc3+ 37.hxc3 d3 38.Ra2 dxc2 39.Nd3 Rc8 40.Nc1 Rc5 41.Ke2 Bc7 42.Kd3 Bxa5 43.Rxc2 Rxc2 44.Kxc2 Bb6 leaves White down but not completely out.]

36...Nxc3+ 37.hxc3 d3!

[This time 37...d3 38.Ra2 dxc2 39.Nd3 can be answered by Rxf2! , which is why White had to put the king on f1.]

0-1

C56

□ Karaklajic,N

■ Jovanovic,S

Palic

[Nigel Davies]

1996

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d4

[The more sober 4.d3 features in the game Dolmatov-Romanishin.]

4...exd4 5.0-0 White completes kingside development and offers a second pawn. But Black can take it and still reach a nice position.

Nxe4! 6.Re1

[White has also tried 6.Nc3?! but then simply Nxc3 7.bxc3 d5 8.Bb5 Be7 9.Ne5 (9.Nxd4 Bd7) 9...Bd7 10.Nxd7 Qxd7 11.cxd4 a6 12.Ba4 b5 13.Bb3 Na5 Black a good pawn up in S. Sokolov-Grodzenski, Correspondence 1976.]

[Equally unimpressive is 6.Bd5 , when Nf6 7.Ng5 (7.Bg5 Be7 8.Bxf6 Bxf6 9.Re1+ Ne7 10.Nxd4 0-0 and Black had a sound extra pawn in Venkataramanan-Gokhale, Calcutta 1994) 7...Nxd5 8.Re1+ Be7 9.Qh5 g6 10.Qf3 (or 10.Qh6 d6 11.Qg7 Rf8 12.Nxh7 Be6) 10...0-0 11.Qxd5 Nb4 12.Qb3 d5 does not give White what I'd describe as an attacking position.]

6...d5 7.Bxd5

[White also has the Canal Variation with the amazing 7.Nc3?! , but then dxc4 8.Rxe4+ Be6 9.Nxd4 Nxd4 10.Rxd4 Qf6 11.Nb5 (11.Ne4 Qxd4 12.Qxd4 Rd8) 11...Rc8 12.Bf4 (or 12.Nxa7 Bc5 13.Rf4 Rd8 as in Lembeck-Klasmeier, German Bundesliga 1987) 12...Bc5 13.Re4 Bb6 14.Qe2 0-0 15.Be5 Qg6 left Black a pawn up for nothing in Mindeguia Guruceaga-Estemera, Pamplona 1995.]

7...Qxd5 8.Nc3 Qh5 9.Nxe4

[After 9.Rxe4+ Be6 10.Nxd4 Qxd1+ 11.Nxd1 0-0-0 White gets into trouble on the d-file.]

9...Be6 10.Bg5 Bd6 11.Bf6 This meets with a neat refutation which essentially puts this opening out of business as a winning attempt. White has to try something else, but what? Here are the alternatives:

[11.Nxd6+ cxd6 12.Bf4 Qd5 13.c3 (13.Qd2 0-0 14.b3 Qc5 15.Rac1 Bg4 and White had to regret not trying to recapture the pawn more directly in Sorri-Ornstein, Helsinki 1990) 13...Kd7! (Black's king is perfectly safe here) 14.Nxd4 Nxd4 15.Qxd4 (15.cxd4 g5 16.Be3 h5 17.Qa4+ b5 18.Qa5 h4 19.Rac1 Rhc8 20.a4 b4 21.Rxc8 Qxa5 22.Rxa8 Bd5 was also good for Black in Nystrom-Hector, Stockholm 2001) 15...Qxd4 16.cxd4 Bd5 17.Bd2 a5 18.a3 b5 19.f3 Rhg8 20.Kf2 g5 also left White fighting for the draw in N.Thomas-Hector, Bled 2002.]

[11.c4 0-0 12.c5 Be5 13.Nxe5 Qxd1 14.Raxd1 Nxe5 15.Rxd4 Nc6 16.Ra4 Rfe8 17.Bf4 Bd5 was better for Black in COMP Deep Junior-Smirin, internet match (rapid) 2002.]

[11.h4 h6 12.Nxd6+ cxd6 13.Bf4 Qd5 14.Rc1 0-0 15.Qd2 Rfe8 16.c3 dxc3 17.Qxc3 Bg4 and White was a pawn down with kingside weaknesses in Aleksic-Pavlovic, Becici 1993.]

11...Bxh2+!! A stunning blow which secures Black an advantageous endgame.

[After 11...0-0 12.Nxd6 cxd6 13.Bxd4 White gets his pawn back without suffering any harm.]

12.Nxh2 White has no choice.

[Both 12.Kf1 Bc4+ 13.Re2 0-0]

[and 12.Kh1 Be5+ 13.Bh4 0-0 leave Black in a winning position.]

12...Qxd1 13.Raxd1 gxf6 14.Nxf6+ Kf8! 15.Nf3 Rd8 16.Ng5 Bf5 White's knights look dangerous but they don't have a permanent outpost. As a result they inevitably get driven back.

17.Rd2 Kg7 18.Nge4 h5! 19.f3 Rh6 20.g4

[Or 20.Nxh5+ Rxh5 21.g4 Ne5 etc.]

20...hxg4 21.fxg4 Bxe4 22.Nxe4 Ne5 23.Kg2 Rdh8 24.Rxd4? Losing the exchange.

[The only way to keep the game going was with 24.Nf2 , although Black could then keep his extra pawn with Nc6 .]

24...Rh2+ 25.Kg3 R8h3+ 26.Kf4 Nf3 27.Red1 Nxd4 28.Rxd4 Rxc2 29.Rd7 Rxb2 30.Rxc7 Rb4 31.Re7 Ra3 32.Kg5 Ra5+ 33.Kf4 Rxa2 34.Kf3 Ra3+

0-1

C55

□ **Dolmatov,S**

■ **Romanishin,O**

USSR Championship, Minsk

[Nigel Davies]

1979

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3 This quiet move has become the most popular way of playing the Italian Game for White. It can lead to positions much akin to the Closed Ruy Lopez.

Be7 5.Bb3

[5.0-0 0-0 6 Bb3 leads back to the game, but White has an independent alternative in 6.Re1 (6.Nc3 d6 7.a3 is well met by Be6) 6...d6 7.a4 (7.a3 is similar)and with the bishop ready to drop back to a2, the ...Na5 plan is no longer effective. Consequently Black should switch plans here and play 7...Kh8 8.c3 (8.a5 a6 9.c3 Ng8 10.Qb3 f5 11.exf5 Rxf5 12.Nbd2 Nf6 13.Be6 Bxe6 14.Qxe6 Qd7 15.Qxd7 Nxd7

was equal in Tkachiev-Fressinet, Cap d'Agde 2002) 8...Bg4 9.h3 Bh5 10.Nbd2 d5 11.exd5 Nxd5 12.Nf1 f5 13.Ng3 Bg6 14.Nxe5 Nxe5 15.Rxe5 Nb6 16.Qf3 f4 17.Nf1 Bd6 18.Re1 Be8! , intending 19...Bc6, which gave him a good game in Grosar-I.Sokolov, Bled 1991.]

5...0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.c3 Na5 8.Bc2 c5 9.Nbd2

[Instead, 9.b4 cxb4 10.cxb4 Nc6 11.b5 Na5 12.Bb2 Bg4 13.h3 Bxf3 14.Qxf3 Re8 15.Qe2 Qb6 is fine for Black.]

[9.a3 Nc6 10.b4 a6 11.Nbd2 Re8 12.Bb2 Bf8 13.Re1 Nh5 14.Nf1 g6 15.Ne3 was Bauer-Hebden, Andorra Zonal 1998, and now Hebden afterwards thought he should play Bg7 with the idea of a later ...f7-f5.]

9...Qc7 10.Re1 Be6 11.Nf1 Rad8 Mark Hebden advised me that this was the best way to play for Black, delaying the return of the knight to c6. He also said that when White plays Ng5 you just let him eliminate the bishop. I'm sure he's right, though I don't fully understand the reason for delaying the knight retreat.

[The immediate 11...Nc6 seems playable, for example 12.Ne3 (12.Ng5 Bg4 13.f3 Bd7 14.f4 Bg4 15.Nf3 exf4 16.Bxf4 was a tad better for White in J.Howell-Finegold, London 1988)

12...Rad8 13.Ng5 h6 14.Nxe6 fxe6 15.Bb3 Qd7 16.Nf5 Kh8 17.Nxe7 Qxe7 18.f4 b5 19.fxe5 Nxe5 20.d4 Ng6 21.Qe2 c4 22.Bc2 and a draw was agreed in Sandipan-Ganguly, Visakhapatnam 2004.]

12.Ng3 Nc6 13.Qe2 Exerting indirect pressure against e5.

[After 13.h3 Black can play d5! , for example 14.exd5 (14.Qe2 d4 15.c4 g6 16.Bh6 Rfe8 17.Qd2 Bf8 18.Bxf8 Rxf8 19.Qh6 Nb4 was fine for Black in the game Dolmatov-Timman,

Amsterdam 1980) 14...Nxd5 15.Qe2 (Yudasin assessed both 15.Ng5 Bxg5 16.Bxg5 f6 17.Bd2 Rfe8 ;and 15.Ba4 f6 16.d4 cxd4 17.cxd4 Nb6 as unclear) 15...f6 16.Bd2 Kh8 17.a3 Rfe8 18.d4 cxd4 19.cxd4 Bf8 20.Qe4 (20.dxe5 Nxe5 21.Nxe5 Qxc2 favours Black) 20...Bg8 21.dxe5 Nxe5 22.Ba4 Nxf3+ 23.Qxf3 ½-½, Yudasin-Beliavsky, USSR Championship, Moscow 1988.]

13...Rfe8

[In Turner-Hebden, British Championship, Hove 1997 Black played the unusual-looking 13...Kh8 , after which 14.h3 h6 15.Nh4 Nh7 16.Nhf5 Bg5 17.Bxg5 hxg5 18.Ne3 g6 19.Bb3 Bc8 20.Nd5 was good for White. Romanishin's move makes more sense to me, lending indirect support to e5 and 'shadowing' White's queen.]

14.Ng5 Bg4 15.f3 Bc8 16.Bb3 Rf8 17.f4 Having put the pawn on f3 this is the only logical way to continue.

Bg4 18.Nf3 exf4 19.Bxf4 Ne5 20.d4 Claiming space in the centre, but the d-pawn is also vulnerable.

Ng6 21.Bd2 cxd4 22.cxd4 Qb6 23.Qf2 Be6 24.d5 If White has to play this he's got nothing - with the use of the e5-square for his knight Black has little to fear in the endgame.

[The only try for something concrete was with 24.Nf5 , but then Bxb3 25.axb3 Rde8 lines up against e4.]

24...Qxf2+ 25.Kxf2 Ng4+ 26.Kg1 Bc8 27.Bc3 N4e5 28.Bd4 b6 29.a4

[Or 29.Nxe5 Nxe5 30.Rec1 Bg5 31.Rc7 Rd7 with equality.]

29...Bf6 30.Nxe5 Bxe5 31.Bxe5 Nxe5 32.a5 g6 33.axb6 axb6 34.Rec1 Bd7 35.Ra6 Rb8

36.Ba4 Rfc8 37.Rc3 b5 38.Bd1 b4 39.Rxc8+ Rxc8 40.Ne2?! After this I prefer Black.

[White should try 40.Be2 , when Rc2 41.b3 Rb2 42.Bc4 holds things together.]

[Less good is 40.Kf2 in view of Bg4 41.Ke1 Rc1 42.Ne2 Rb1 when White is in trouble.]

40...Rc4 41.Rxd6 Rxe4 42.h3 Bb5 43.Rd8+ Kg7 44.Kf2 f5

[Black could also play 44...Nd3+ first and after 45.Kf3 support the rook with f5 . I don't see much difference to the game.]

45.b3? Now White is losing.

[His last attempt to stay on the board was with 45.Rb8 Nd3+ 46.Kf1 Nxb2 47.Rxb5 Nxd1 48.d6 Kf6 49.d7 Ne3+ (49...Ke7 50.d8Q+ Kxd8 51.Rd5+) 50.Kg1 Ke7 51.Ng3 Re6 52.Rxb4 when the clearance of all the queenside pawns draws.]

45...Nd3+ 46.Kf3 Ne5+ Black repeats moves to gain time on the clock.

47.Kf2 Nd3+ 48.Kf3 Ne1+ 49.Kf2 Nxc2! 50.Ng3 Rd4 51.Bf3

[51.Be2 would have been more stubborn, although Black still seems to be winning after Rd2 52.Kf3 Bxe2+ 53.Nxe2 g5 etc.]

51...Rd2+ 52.Kg1 Nf4 53.Rb8 Nxc3+ 54.Kh1 Nf2+ 55.Kg1 Nh3+ 56.Kh1 Ng5

0-1

CHAPTER 7: THE SCOTCH GAME

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5

Rather than enter the complications of (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4) 4...Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5, Black's simplest and most economical answer to the Scotch is 4...Bc5. I'm not the only one to think so, as 1...e5 specialists like Short, Beliavsky and Romanishin also play this way.

Kasparov's preference of 5 Nxc6 should probably be regarded as the main line these days, when I suggest 5...Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Ne7 8 Qf4 Be6!? as in Magem-Kovalev and S.Haslinger-Lalic. Black gets excellent play for the doubled pawns thanks to the big development lead.

5 Be3 is still quite popular, although most of the terrors have now been shorn. Minyeyevtsev-Lacrosse and Pavasovic-Beliavsky illustrate a good method of play against 5...Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4, both against the sharp 10 Kh1 (sacrificing the e4-pawn) and the solid 10 f3. White has a solid alternative to 7 Bc4 in 7 g3, when Black's main problem is in finding chances to win the game without entering a major theoretical duel. I believe the answer is provided by 7...d5 8 Bg2 Bxd4 9 cxd4 dxe4 as in Kupreichik-Parma, where Black gets play on the light squares in return for the two bishops.

These days 5 Nb3 is something of a museum piece, but it is still seen occasionally. Yakovich demonstrates a good way of playing against this in Mathe-Yakovich and I cover a method of dealing with 5 Nf5 in the notes. Even more unusual is the Scotch Gambit (Bondarenko-Najer), against which I recommend the simple 4...d5 as a means of combating both this and the Danish. But note that Black can also transpose to my suggested line against the Ponziani by playing 4...Nf6 5 e5 Nd5 (see Sermek-Rogic in Chapter 8).

Last but not least there is the Scotch Four Knights, which I examine in Sutovsky-Davies. Black doesn't have particular problems here, though this ease owes much to the precise move order of 10 Bg5 c6 11 Qf3 h6.

Summary

The Scotch is a lively and interesting alternative for White to the Ruy Lopez. But Black seems to be holding his own against the critical 5 Nxc6 (8...Be6! is important here), and the other lines seem relatively comfortable.

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4 c3 - Bondarenko-Najer
4...Bc5 5 Nxc6
5 Nb3 - Mathe-Yakovich
5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7
7 Bc4 Ne5 8 Be2 Qg6 9 0-0 d6
10 Kh1 - Minyeyevtsev-Lacrosse
10 f3 - Pavasovic-Beliavsky
7 g3 - Kupreichik-Parma
5...Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Ne7 8 Qf4 Be6 9 Qxf6 gxf6 10 Na4 Bb4+
11 Bd2 - S.Haslinger-Lalic
11 c3 - Magem-Kovalev

□ Magem,J

■ Kovalev,A

European Team Championship, Batumi

[Nigel Davies]

1999

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Bc5

[I think this is much simpler than 4...Nf6 5.Nxc6 bxc6 6.e5 , which leads to great complications after Qe7 7.Qe2 Nd5 8.c4 Ba6 (or 8...Nb6 .)]

5.Nxc6

[5.Be3 is dealt with in Minyeyevtsev-Lacrosse, Pavasovic-Beliavsky, and Kupreichik-Parma]
[while 5.Nb3 features in Mathe-Yakovich.]

5...Qf6 6.Qd2 dxc6 A dynamic move - Black aims for rapid development at the cost of some structural weaknesses.

[Black can also avoid doubled pawns with 6...Qxc6 , for example 7.Bd3 Nf6 8.0-0 (or 8.Nc3 0-0 9.0-0 Re8 10.Qe2 b6 11.Nd5 Nxd5 ½-½ Rublevsky-Grischuk, Togliatti 2003) 8...0-0 9.b4 Bb6 10.c4 a5 11.Nc3 axb4 12.Nd5 Nxd5 13.exd5 Qf6 14.Bb2 Qh6 15.Qxh6 gxh6 16.d6 cxd6 17.Rfe1 d5 18.cxd5 d6 19.Re7 Bg4 20.h3 Bh5 21.Bc4 Rac8 22.Bb3 Rfe8 23.Rae1 Rxe7 24.Rxe7 Bc7 25.Bf6 when White's temporary initiative wasn't enough to win in Rublevsky-Grischuk, Evry 2004.]

7.Nc3 Ne7 8.Qf4 With Black taking a development lead White tries to emphasize the structural aspects of the position with the exchange of queens.

[The other move to have been tried is 8.Na4 , driving Black's bishop from the a7-g1 diagonal but putting the knight offside. After Bd6 9.Bd3 Ng6 10.Qg5 Nf4 11.Bxf4 Bxf4 12.Qxf6 gxf6 13.Nc3 Be6 14.Ne2 Bd6 15.f4 0-0-0 16.0-0-0 Bg4 17.Rdf1 Bxe2 18.Bxe2 h5 Black's active play on the dark squares compensated him for his pawn weaknesses in Makropoulou-Marrero, Calvia 2004.]

8...Be6!? Black continues the top speed development while ignoring any structural issues.

[Romanishin has been keeping the queens on and offering the c7-pawn as bait with 8...Qe6!?. It looks as if this deserves further investigation, for example 9.Qxc7 (9.Bd3 0-0 10.0-0 Ng6 11.Qg5 Qe5 12.Na4 Bd6 13.Qxe5 Nxe5 14.Be2 b5 15.Nc3 f5 was about equal in Medvegy-Markus, Budapest 2002 ; 9.Qg3 0-0 10.Bd3 Ng6 11.0-0 Qe5 12.Kh1 Qxg3 13.hxg3 was Van der Wiel-Jonkman, Leeuwarden 2002, and now Ne5 makes sense to me, aiming to eliminate White's light-squared bishop or put the knight on g4 in the event of f2-f4 ;and 9.Be3 Bd6 10.Qg5 0-0 11.Bd3 h6 12.Qh5 f5 gave Black good counterplay in Feletar-Lekic, Neum 2002) 9...Bb4!?. (9...0-0 10.Qg3 f5 11.e5 b5 12.f4 Nd5 13.Nxd5 Qxd5 14.Bd3 Be6 15.Be3 left Black with no compensation for his structural weaknesses in Pavasovic-Romanishin, Solin-Spilt 2002 ;while 9...Bd6 10.Qa5 b5 11.Bd3 0-0 12.0-0 Qe5 13.f4 Qd4+ 14.Kh1 Bb4 15.Qc7 Bd6 16.Qa5 Bb4 17.Qc7 Bd6 18.Qa5 Bb4 was only a draw by repetition in Nakamura-Romanishin, Linares 2002) 10.Bd2 Bxc3 11.Bxc3 Qxe4+ 12.Kd2 Qd5+ 13.Kc1 Bf5 14.Qxb7 Rd8 15.Bd3 (or 15.Be2 Qxg2 16.Rd1 Rxd1+ 17.Bxd1 Qxf2 18.Qb8+ Bc8 when, for the time being, Black is a pawn up) 15...Bxd3 16.cxd3 Qg5+ 17.Kc2 0-0 18.Qxa7 Nd5 19.Rhe1 Nxc3 20.bxc3 Qxg2 and White's exposed king left him with the worst of it in Manca-Romanishin, St Vincent 2004.]

9.Qxf6 gxf6 10.Na4 Driving the bishop away from its strong diagonal is White's best chance to get something.

[10.Bd2 0-0-0 11.f3 Bf2+ 12.Kd1 c5 13.b3 Rhg8 14.Kc1 Nc6 gave Black a strong initiative in Jeric-Korneev, Nova Gorica 2004.]

10...Bb4+

[I could only find one example of the move 10...Bb6!?. , but this was in a game played by the

former World Champion, Vassily Smyslov. After 11.Bd2 Rg8 12.f4 f5 13.e5 0-0-0 14.Nxb6+ cxb6 Black's position proved quite playable in Arakhamia Grant-Smyslov, Roquebrune 1998.]

11.c3

[For 11.Bd2 see the next game, Haslinger-Lalic.]

11...Bd6 Threatening to win White's knight with 12...b5.

12.Be3 b6 Taking the c5-square away from White's pieces.

[Black has also played the active 12...f5 , but after 13.Bd4 Rg8 14.e5 b5 15.exd6 cxd6 16.Nc5 dxc5 17.Bxc5 Black was struggling to offset his structural weaknesses in Moroz-Geo. Timoshenko, Enakievo 1997.]

13.f4

[13.Ba6 Rg8 14.g3 f5 15.exf5 Nxf5 16.c4 (16.Bb7 is answered by the zwischenzug Bd5) 16...Nxe3 17.fxe3 Rb8 18.0-0-0?! Rg5 left White facing the horrible threat of 19...Ra5 in Mrva-Hracek, Czech Republic 2005.]

13...0-0-0! Continuing the focus on rapid development. Black has tried a couple of other moves, but they don't seem as good:

[13...c5 weakens d5 a bit too early, after which 14.c4 (freeing the c3-square for the knight) 0-0-0 15.Nc3 put Black on the back foot in Kolev-Korneev, Malaga 1998, due to the threat of 16 Nd5. After c6 16.Rd1 Kb7 17.Kf2 f5 18.e5 Bc7 19.Be2 h5 20.b3 h4 he constructed a tough defensive fortress, but White was having more fun.]

[13...Bd7 14.c4 Bb4+ 15.Bd2 Bxd2+ 16.Kxd2 0-0-0 17.Nc3 Ng6 18.g3 h5 19.Ke3 h4 20.Be2 f5 21.e5 Rhe8 22.Kf2 c5 was also solid enough for Black but again nothing exciting in Lautier-Shirov, Monte Carlo 1998.]

14.Kf2 A few other moves have been tried here, without notable success:

[14.Be2 c5 15.c4 Nc6 16.0-0-0 Nd4 17.Bd3 Rhe8 18.Nc3 c6 19.Rhf1 a6 20.e5 Nf5 gave Black good counterplay in Eichab-Roselli Mailhe, Bled 2002.]

[14.b3 Rhg8 15.Kf2 f5 16.e5 Ba3 17.c4 c5 18.Be2 Nc6 19.Rad1 Nb4 20.Bf3 Rxd1 21.Rxd1 c6 made it difficult for White to do much in Lazar-Bratovic, Kranj 2001, thanks to Black's active knight and bishop on the queenside.]

[14.f5 Bd7 and Black threatens ...c6-c5 and gains the e5-square as a base for operations.]

14...c5 15.c4 Nc6 Black's forces are now working together very harmoniously.

16.Nc3 f5 17.exf5

[In COMP Deep Fritz-Kramnik, Manama 2002, White tried to improve with 17.e5 but after Bf8! (17...Be7 18.Nd5 Bxd5 19.cxd5 Nb4 20.Rd1 Nxd5 21.Bd3 is a bit better for White) 18.b3 Nb4 19.a3 Nc2 20.Rc1 Nxe3 21.Kxe3 Bg7 Black was threatening 22...f6 with an excellent, active game. The computer prevented this with 22.Nd5 but then c6 23.Nf6 Bxf6 24.exf6 Rhe8 left Black in front.]

[Attempting to maintain the tension with 17.Bd3? allows Bxf4! , hitting the bishop on d3.]

17...Bxf5 18.Rd1 Rhe8 19.Nd5 Nb4 20.a3?!

[White was probably discouraged from playing 20.Nxb4 cxb4 because Black would then threaten 21.-- Rxe3! 22.Kxe3 Bc5+ . But he shouldn't allow the knight to take up as strong a position as it shortly does.]

20...Nc2 21.Bc1 Nd4 22.Be3 c6 Black's knight on d4 is well established, whereas White's on d5 can be easily driven away.

23.Nc3

[After 23.Bxd4 cxd4 24.Nb4 Black could sharpen the struggle with d3! because 25.Bxd3 (25.Nxc6 Bc5+ 26.Kg3 Rd6 would also be very strong) is met by 25...Bc5+ 26.Kf1 Bg4 27.Nxc6 Rxd3 28.Rxd3 Be2+ , winning a piece.]

23...Bg4 24.Rd3

[Not 24.Re1?? Nc2]

[or 24.Be2?? Bxe2 25.Nxe2 Rxe3 26.Kxe3 Re8+ etc.]

24...Bf8 25.h3 Bf5 26.Rd1 Nc2 27.Rxd8+ Kxd8 28.Bd2 h5 29.Be2

[This allows Black to fix the pawns on the kingside, but 29.g3 would have been answered by Bg7, threatening an unpleasant check on d4.]

29...h4 30.Bf3 Kc7 31.g4

[After 31.Bg4 Bd3 White is tied up.]

31...hxg3+ 32.Kxg3 Bg7 33.Bh5

[If 33.Bg4 Bd3 34.b3 Nd4 etc.]

33...Rd8! 34.Bc1 Rd3+ 35.Kf2

[35.Kh4? Bf6# is mate]

[and 35.Kg2? Bxc3 36.bxc3 Be4+ loses the rook.]

35...Bd4+ 36.Ke2 Bxc3 37.bxc3 Rxc3 38.Bxf7 Nd4+ 39.Kd1 Bc2+! Commencing a neat sequence which wins by force.

40.Ke1

[Or 40.Kd2 Rd3+ 41.Ke1 Rd1+ etc.]

40...Be4 Hitting both c1 and h1.

41.Bd2 Nf3+ 42.Ke2 Nxd2 43.Kxd2 Rd3+! 44.Ke2 Rd7! The sting in the tail, hitting both f7 and h1.

0-1

C45

□ **Haslinger,S**

■ **Lalic,B**

British League

[*Nigel Davies*]

2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Qf6 5.Nxc6 Bc5 6.Qd2 dxc6 7.Nc3 Ne7 8.Qf4 Be6 9.Qxf6 gxf6 10.Na4 Bb4+ 11.Bd2 This is probably White's best, exchanging a piece and not removing the knight's retreat to c3.

[For 11.c3 see Magem-Kovalev.]

11...Bxd2+ 12.Kxd2 0-0-0+ This also looks best, depriving White of the time for Re1 and then Kc1.

13.Bd3 f5 The most active move, immediately setting about eliminating the doubled pawns.

[However, the quieter 13...b6 is also possible, a draw resulting after 14.Rae1 c5 15.Kc1 Nc6 16.a3 Nd4 17.Nc3 Rhg8 18.g3 Nb3+ 19.Kb1 Nd2+ 20.Kc1 Nb3+ in Rublevsky-Aleksandrov, Poikovsky 2004.]

14.Rae1 This looks like the appropriate choice as White might want to retreat the king to c1, but there is also a point behind putting the other rook on e1.

[Vuckovic-Pajkovic, Petrovac 2004, featured 14.Rhe1, but Black gained counterplay with fxe4 (after 14...Rhg8 15.g3 fxe4 White can play 16.Rxe4 because there's no rook on h1 to worry about) 15.Rxe4 Ng6 16.g3 (16.Nc5 Bd5 17.Rg4 b6) 16...Bf5 17.Re3 Bxd3 18.Rxd3 Ne5 19.Rxd8+ Rxd8+ 20.Ke2 Re8 21.Kf1 Nf3 etc.]

[After 14.Nc5 Black has fxe4 15.Nxe4 Ng6, intending to come to either f4 or e5.]

14...Rhg8 With the rook on h1 this is awkward for White, as after 15.g3?! there is 15...fxe4 16.Rxe4 Bd5 etc.

[The immediate 14...fxe4 is also pretty good, for example after 15.Rxe4 Ng6 16.Nc5 Bd5 17.Rg4 h5 18.Rg5 Nh4 Black obtained good counterplay in Sedlak-Kozakov, Valjevo 2000.]

15.exf5

[As noted above, 15.g3?! can be answered by fxe4 16.Rxe4 Bd5 although this is not necessarily winning for Black after 17.Rxe7 Bxh1 18.Rxf7.]

[White's alternative to the game is 15.Rhg1 , after which I suggest fxe4 16.Rxe4 Rg5! followed by 17...Ng6 (16...Ng6 17.Nc5 Bd5 18.Re3 Nh4 19.Rg3 saw Black's counterplay ebb away in Roschina-Krivec, Silvaplane 2003.)]

15...Nxf5 16.g3 Nd4

[Not 16...Bxa2? 17.b3 .]

17.Kc1 Bd5 18.Bxh7 Bxh1 19.Bxg8 Bd5 20.Bh7 Rh8 21.Be4 Rxh2 Black's active rook compensates for the slightly inferior pawn structure. The situation is equal.

22.Nc5? This looks like quite a serious oversight.

Ne6?

[Why not 22...Rxf2 , when 23.Bxd5 (or 23.Bf5+ Be6) 23...Rxc2+ 24.Kb1 Rxc5 leaves White fighting for a draw.]

23.Nd3 Kd8 24.b3 b6 25.c3 Ke7 26.Kd2 Kd6 27.c4 Bxe4 28.Rxe4 Rh1 29.Rh4 Rf1

30.Rh7 Ke7 31.Rh5 Nd4 32.c5

1/2-1/2

C45

□ **Minyeyevtsev,S**

■ **Lacrosse,M**

Borgerhout

[Nigel Davies]

2002

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Bc5 5.Be3

[This was considered to be White's most challenging move before Kasparov played 5.Nxc6 .]

5...Qf6 6.c3 Nge7 7.Bc4

[7.g3 is dealt with in Kupreichik-Parma.]

7...Ne5 Centralizing the knight whilst attacking the bishop.

[The immediate 7...Qg6?! is not good in view of 8.Nxc6! Qxc6 (or 8...Qxg2 9.Rf1 Bxe3 10.Nxe7 etc.) 9.Bxf7+! Kxf7 10.Qh5+ Ng6 11.Qf5+! Ke8 12.Qxc5 , which left Black's king very exposed in Ivanchuk-Gulko, Reykjavik 1991.]

8.Be2 Qg6 Attacking the g- and e-pawns simultaneously.

9.0-0 d6

[Not the immediate 9...Qxe4 due to 10.Nb5! Bxe3 11.Nxc7+ Kd8 12.Nxa8 , winning material. But now this is a genuine threat.]

10.Kh1

[White has also sacrificed the e4-pawn with 10.Bh5 Qxe4 11.Nd2 Qd3 (11...Qh4 12.Nb5 0-0 also looks okay) 12.Be2 Qg6 13.Bh5 Qd3 (13...Bg4!? 14.Bxg6 Bxd1 15.Bxf7+ Nxf7 16.Raxd1 Bxd4 17.Bxd4 Nf5 also looks fine ,but not 13...Qf6? 14.Nb5! 0-0 15.Nxc7 Rb8 16.Ne4 , forking f6 and c5) 14.Be2 Qg6 15.Bh5 Qd3 with a draw agreed in Kotsur-J.Benjamin, 4th World Team Championship, Lucerne 1997.]

[Another possibility is 10.f4 , but then Qxe4 11.Bf2 Bxd4 12.cxd4 N5g6 13.Nc3 Qxf4 14.Nb5 0-0 15.Nxc7 Rb8 16.Nb5 Bd7 17.Nxa7 Qg5 gave Black the initiative in Helbich-Acs, Montecatini Terme 1997.]

[Besides the gambits White has a sensible move in 10.f3 , which is covered in Pavsovic-Beliavsky.]

10...Qxe4! Taking an important pawn and putting the onus on White to demonstrate adequate compensation. He does get it back but this gives Black time.

[After 10...0-0 White can play 11.Nd2 , for example Ng4 12.Bf4 Nf6 13.f3!? (13.Bd3 Qg4! 14.Qxg4 Nxg4 was about equal in Svidler-Arkhipov, Russian Championship, Elista 1994) 13...Nh5 14.Be3 , when f5 seems well met by 15.f4 Nf6 16.e5 Nfd5 17.Qb3 Kh8 18.Nc4

with the initiative.]

11.Nd2 Qg6

[In Lyell-D.Howell, British Championship, Edinburgh 2003, Black played 11...Qh4 , but after 12.N2f3 Nxf3 13.Nxf3 Qf6 (13...Qg4 14.Ng5 Qf5 15.Bd3 Qe5 16.Bd2 d5 17.Qh5 gave White a strong attack in Fercec-Bubalovic, Bizovac 2000) 14.Bg5 Qg6 15.Bd3 Qh5 16.b4 Bb6 17.Re1 Be6 White could have obtained a clear advantage with 18.Re4 , after which (18.Bc4 Bxc4 19.Qa4+ Kf8 was played in the game) 18...Bxf2 (defending against White's threat of 19 Rh4) 19.Qe2 Bg3 20.Rxe6 fxe6 21.Qxe6 Qf7 22.Qxf7+ Kxf7 23.hxg3 leaves White with two strong bishops for a rook and pawn.]

12.Nb5

[Black can meet 12.Bh5 with Bg4 (12...Qd3 is not bad either, but after 13.Be2 Qg6 14.Bh5 Qd3 there would be a repetition of moves) 13.Bxg6 (13.Qa4+ Bd7 14.Qd1 Bg4 15.Qa4+ Bd7 is another way to repeat and was agreed drawn in Gomez Baillou-Onischuk, Buenos Aires 2003) 13...Bxd1 14.Bxf7+ Kxf7 15.Raxd1 Bxd4 16.Bxd4 N7c6 17.Ne4 (17.Be3 might be slightly better, with approximate equality) 17...Rhe8 , which was if anything slightly better for Black in Ganguly-Khalifman, Moscow 2001.]

12...0-0! Correctly getting the king out of trouble.

13.Nxc7 Rb8 14.Bh5 This is not the only move, but Black seems to be doing well in any event:

[14.Bf4 is okay for Black after Bf5 (14...Bd7 , intending 15...Bc6, also seems fine) 15.Nb3 Bb6 16.Nb5 Rbd8 17.Qd2 N7c6 18.Be3 Bxe3 19.Qxe3 Rfe8 when the active forces compensated for the isolated d-pawn in Lautier-Van der Sterren, Amsterdam 1994.]

[14.Nc4 should be answered by Bh3! (14...Nxc4 15.Bxc4 Bxe3 16.fxe3 Bf5 17.Nd5 Rbe8 18.Nf4 was a shade preferable for White in Rublevsky-Svidler, Maikop 1998), when 15.Rg1 (15.gxh3?! Nxc4 16.Bxc4 Qe4+ recovers the piece with a good game) 15...Nxc4 16.Bxc5 (16.Bxc4 Bxe3 17.fxe3 Bf5 is an improved version of Rublevsky-Svidler ,while 16.gxh3? Nxb2! 17.Qb1 Qxb1 18.Raxb1 Bxe3 19.fxe3 Na4 leaves White's structure in tatters) 16...dxc5 17.Bxc4 Qb6 18.Nd5 Nxd5 19.Bxd5 Be6 completely equalizes.]

[14.Bxc5 dxc5 15.Nf3 was played in Nolsoe-Pilgaard, Klaksvik 2002, and now Nxf3 16.Bxf3 Qb6 17.Nd5 Nxd5 18.Qxd5 (18.Bxd5 Qxb2) 18...Be6 would have been at least equal.]

[14.Nf3 Bxe3 15.fxe3 Ng4 16.Qd2 Nf5 17.Bd3 Qh6 18.Rfe1 Bd7 19.Bxf5 Bxf5 20.e4 Qxd2 21.Nxd2 Bd7 produced an even endgame in Rublevsky-Aleksandrov, Elista 1998.]

14...Qf5 Suddenly threatening to trap White's knight with 15...Qd7.

[14...Qd3 15.Re1 N7g6 16.Bxg6 Nxg6 was played in Dembo-Csonkics, Budapest 2001, and now 17.Ne4! would have given White the advantage after Qxe4 (17...Qxd1 18.Raxd1 Bxe3 19.Rxe3 drops the d6-pawn) 18.Bxc5 etc.]

15.Nb5?! Nd3

[Two years earlier Black had played 15...Bxe3 16.fxe3 Qd3 17.Qe2 in Baklan-Van der Sterren, Istanbul 2000, the game resulting in a draw after Bf5 18.e4 Bg6 19.Qxd3 Nxd3 20.Bxg6 hxg6 21.b3 a6 22.Nxd6 ½-½. The text is much stronger and suggests that White should have tried 15 Nb3 or 15 Qe2.]

16.Qe2? Making bad things even worse.

[16.Qf3 was a better try, when Nxb2 17.Bf4 seems to hang on.]

16...Bxe3 17.Qxe3 Qxb5 18.Be2 Bf5 19.Ne4

[19.Qxe7 Rbe8 is simply winning for Black.]

19...Bxe4 20.Qxe4 Nc5 21.Bxb5?

[21.Qxe7 was the last hope, although even then Black has the advantage after Qxb2 22.Qxd6?! (22.Bf3 is better, but a pawn is a pawn) 22...Ne4 23.Qf4 (or 23.Qd3 Qxa1! 24.Rxa1 Nxf2+ etc.) 23...Qxe2 24.Rae1 Nxf2+ 25.Qxf2 Qxf2 26.Rxf2 Rfe8 with an extra pawn and the superior pawn structure.]

21...Nxe4 22.Rfe1 d5 23.f3 Nd6 24.Rxe7 Nxb5
0-1

C45

□ Pavasovic,D

■ Beliavsky,A

European Championship, Istanbul

[Nigel Davies]

2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Bc5 5.Be3 Qf6 6.c3 Nge7 7.Bc4 Ne5 8.Be2 Qg6
9.0-0 d6 10.f3 The sober choice, protecting the e4-pawn.

[Note that White can't do this job with 10.Nd2 in view of Bh3 .]

10...0-0 11.Nd2

[White can also play the immediate 11.Kh1 , when Bb6 12.Nd2 f5! transposes to Rublevsky-Stefanova in the note to White's 12th move, below.]

11...Bb6! A subtle order of moves from Beliavsky.

[The main line is 11...d5 12.Kh1 Bb6 but 13.a4!? has been causing a few problems of late.]

12.Nc4

[In Rublevsky-Stefanova, Mainz 2004, White tried to transpose to the 11...d5 line with 12.Kh1 , but f5! gave Black a good game after 13.f4 N5c6 14.Nxc6 bxc6 15.Bh5 Qh6 16.Bxb6 axb6 thanks to her compact structure and active pieces.]

12...Nxc4 13.Bxc4 Be6 A nice move which exploits the pin on the d4-knight in order to prepare ... f7-f5 with another developing move.

[In Pavasovic-Ibragimov, Bled 1996, Black played 13...Kh8 and achieved a satisfactory position after 14.Qd2 f5 (14...Bd7 15.Rae1 h6 16.Bf2 Rae8 17.Kh1 Qh5 18.Ne2 Ng6 19.Bxb6 axb6 was also about equal in Praznik-Acs, Bled 1998) 15.Rae1 fxe4 16.fxe4 Bd7 17.Rf2 Ng8 18.Bd3 Rxf2 19.Qxf2 Re8 .]

14.Bd3 f5 15.Qc2?!

[White should have prevented Black's next move with 15.Qd2 , but Rae8 16.Kh1 Bd7 still doesn't look much.]

15...f4 16.e5

[And here White should have played 16.Bf2 , when Bh3 17.Bh4 seems quite playable.]

16...Nf5! 17.Bxf4 Nxd4 18.cxd4

[18.Bxg6?? Nxc2+ 19.Kh1 Nxa1 leaves White a rook and piece in arrears.]

18...Qh5 19.Be3 dxe5 20.Bc4 Qf7

[Another possibility was 20...Rae8 , although White seems to be okay after 21.Rad1 .]

21.Bxe6 Qxe6 22.Qc3 e4 23.d5 Qf6

[Perhaps 23...Qh6 is a better try, for example 24.Bxb6 (24.f4? Rxf4) 24...Qxb6+ 25.Kh1 exf3 26.Rxf3 Rxf3 27.gxf3 (27.Qxf3 Qxb2 28.Rf1 Qf6 is good because White dare not exchange queens) 27...Rf8 with the better endgame thanks to White's pawn weaknesses and slightly more vulnerable king.]

24.Rae1 Qxc3 25.bxc3 exf3 26.Rxf3 Rxf3 27.gxf3 Kf7 28.Kf2 Ba5?! Beliavsky might have hoped that his superior structure would count for something but White's pieces are quite active here. In fact Black's efforts to win soon land him in trouble.

[28...Re8 improves, when 29.c4 Rxe3 30.Rxe3 Kf6 31.Ke2 Bxe3 32.Kxe3 looks drawish.]

29.Rb1 b6 30.c4 c6 31.dxc6?!

[Having been on the defensive for a while White may have had no ambitions beyond a draw. But he is, in fact, slightly better after 31.Rd1 .]

31...Rc8 32.c5 Rxc6 33.cxb6 axb6 34.Rc1 Rxc1 35.Bxc1 Ke6 36.Ke3 Kd5 37.Bb2 g6

38.Kd3 b5 39.Bg7 Bc7 40.h3 h5 41.Bc3 Be5 42.Bd2 Bf6 43.Be3 Bb2 44.Bh6 Bd4
45.Bg5 Bf2 46.Bf4 Kc5 47.Bh6 Kb4 48.Bf8+ Ka4 49.Ke4

1/2-1/2

C45

□ Kupreichik,V

■ Parma,B

Dortmund

1975

[Nigel Davies]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Bc5 5.Be3 Qf6 6.c3

[White has also tried 6.Nb5!?, for example Bxe3 7.fxe3 Qh4+ 8.g3 Qd8 (8...Qxe4!? 9.Nxc7+ Kd8 10.Nxa8 Qxh1 11.Qd6 Nf6 12.Nd2 Ne4 13.Qc7+ Ke7 14.0-0-0 Nxd2 15.Bb5 Qd5 16.Bxc6 bxc6 was played in Mieses-Sergeant, Hastings 1945/46, and now 17.Qxa7 looks good for White) 9.Qg4 g6 (9...g5!? might be worth a further look as White can't put his queen on f4) 10.Qf4 d6 11.Bc4 , and now Ne5 (11...Be6 12.Bxe6 fxe6 13.0-0 Nge7 14.N1c3 Ne5 15.Qf6 Kd7 16.Nd4 Qg8 17.Ncb5 N7c6 18.Nxc6 bxc6 19.Rad1 Rf8? 20.Qxe5 gave White a won game in Spielmann-Rubinstein, Stockholm 1919) 12.Bb3 (or 12.Nd2 c6 13.Nd4 Qe7 14.0-0-0 Nf6) 12...c6 13.Nd4 Qe7 looks good enough for at least equality.]

6...Nge7 7.g3

[A quiet alternative to 7.Bc4 (covered in the previous two games), but one which gives White equality at best.]

[7.Nc2 Bxe3 8.Nxe3 d6 is also very comfortable for Black.]

7...d5 8.Bg2 Bxd4 I like this move, which has the right blend of economy and pugnacity.

[The main line is 8...dxe4 , but this is quite complex and theoretical after 9.Nb5 (or 9.Nd2 .)]

[And 8...Nxd4 9.cxd4 Bb4+ 10.Nc3 Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 dxe4 tends to leave too little tension in the position for Black to try and win.]

9.cxd4 dxe4 10.Nc3 0-0 The most natural continuation.

[Black has also played 10...Bf5 but then 11.d5 seems very dangerous, for example 0-0-0 (11...Ne5 12.0-0 0-0 13.Nxe4 is also better for White) 12.Qb3 Ne5 (12...Nd4?! 13.Qa4 Nf3+ 14.Bxf3 exf3 15.Qxa7 Qa6 16.Qxa6 bxa6 17.0-0-0 favoured White in Dworakowska-Onischuk, Skopje 2002) 13.Nxe4 (13.0-0 Nf3+ 14.Bxf3 exf3 15.Bxa7 Qh6 is less clear) 13...Qa6 14.0-0-0 Rhe8 15.Rhe1 and White's bishop pair is a factor.]

11.Nxe4

[After 11.0-0 Black should play Be6 (11...Qg6 12.Bxe4 Bf5 13.Bg2 Nb4 14.Qa4 Nc2 15.Rac1 c6 16.Ne2 Nxe3 17.Nf4 Qh6 18.fxe3 Ng6 19.Qb3 was slightly better for White in Sveshnikov-Tatai, Le Havre 1977) 12.Nxe4 Qg6 , transposing back into the game.]

[11.d5 can be answered by Rd8 12.0-0 Be6 , when 13.Bxe4 Nxd5 14.Nxd5 Bxd5 15.Bxd5 Qf5 16.Bxf7+ Qxf7 is enough for an edge in the shape of the weak light squares around White's king.]

11...Qg6 12.0-0 Be6! An excellent move, aiming to anchor the bishop on d5. White seems to be slightly better after the alternatives:

[12...Nd5 13.Nc3 Nxc3 (13...Nxe3 14.fxe3 is also a bit better for White) 14.bxc3 Bf5 15.Bf4 Rac8 16.Re1 and White's bishops were strong in Zhuravliov-Ostrovsky, Rostov 1975.]

[12...Nb4 13.Nc3 c6 14.a3 Nbd5 15.Qb3 Rd8 16.Rfe1 b6 17.Nxd5 Nxd5 18.Qc4 kept a nagging edge in Sedlak-Gross, Valjevo 2000.]

[12...Bf5 13.Nc3 Rad8 14.Qb3 (14.d5 Ne5 15.Qb3 Qh5 was Mukhametov-Ibragimov, St Petersburg 1996, and now the cold-blooded 16.Bc5 looks strong after Rfe8 17.Rfe1 N7g6 18.Qxb7 etc.) 14...b6 15.d5 Na5 16.Qb4 Rd7 17.Rfe1 Nb7 18.Qa3 a5 19.Rac1 and in this

advantageous position White mysteriously agreed a draw in Tompa-Opl, Budapest 1983.]

13.Nc5

[The only way White can prevent the blockade of d5 is with 13.Nc3 , but after Rad8 14.d5 (14.Qa4 Nd5 15.Nxd5 Bxd5 16.Bxd5 Rxd5 17.Qb3 Qd6 18.Qxb7 Rb8 19.Qa6 Nxd4 20.Qxd6 Rxd6 was equal in Timmerman-Pliester, Amsterdam 1982) 14...Nxd5 15.Nxd5 Bxd5 16.Bxd5 Qf5 17.Bxf7+ Qxf7 the light squares were proving awkward for White in Szurovszky-Lukacs, Budapest 1992.]

13...Bd5

[It is also worth considering 13...Bc4 14.Re1 b6 , when Basta-Lekic, Jahorina 2000, continued 15.Be4 f5 16.Bxc6 , after which Nxc6 would have been fairly equal. (In the game 16...Qxc6 17.Rc1 b5 18.Bg5 Ng6 19.b3 Bd5 20.Ne6 lost material.)]

14.Rc1?! After this Black is better.

[White should follow up his 13 Nc5 plan with 14.Nxb7 , when Rab8 15.Nc5 Rxb2 is balanced.]

14...Bxg2 15.Kxg2 Nf5!?

A very sharp move from Parma, trying to generate an immediate attack.

[I would have probably played for a blockade of d5 with 15...b6 16.Na6 Qd6]

16.Qc2 Rfe8 17.Kg1?

[17.Nxb7 is much better, when the position is just very messy. Now Black's pieces surge into the attack.]

17...Qf6 18.d5 Ncd4 19.Qd3

[After 19.Qd1 Black has Qe5 20.Nxb7 Qxd5 with a multitude of threats.]

19...Nf3+ 20.Kg2 Ne5 21.Qe4 Ng6 22.Qd3 b6! 23.Nd7

[In the event of 23.Na6 there follows Nfh4+ 24.gxh4 (24.Kh3 Qf3 25.Rg1 Nf4+ is decisive) 24...Nxb4+ 25.Kg3 Qf3+ 26.Kxh4 Re5 with a mating attack.]

23...Nxe3+ 24.fxe3 Qd6 25.Qf5 Re7

White's knight is trapped.

0-1

C45

□ Mathe,G
 ■ Yakovich,Y
 Kecskemet
 [Nigel Davies]

1991

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Bc5 5.Nb3 White moves the knight from the centre but gains time on Black's bishop.

[The sharp 5.Nf5 appears now and then and requires accurate play by Black. I think he should prefer d6 (I don't think Black should push the d-pawn two squares, as after 5...d5 6.Nxg7+ Kf8 7.Nh5 Qh4 8.Ng3 Nf6 the line 9.Bb5!? Ng4 10.Rf1 Nxb2 11.Qxd5 leaves me far from convinced this is as good for Black as theory has claimed) 6.Nxg7+ Kf8 7.Nh5 Qh4 8.Ng3 Nf6 9.Be2 Ne5 10.f3 (10.Nd2 Nfg4 11.Bxg4 was Eckerl-Urban, Bayern 2002, and now Bxg4 was the correct recapture, when 12.f3 Be6 gives Black good compensation ; 10.Nc3 Nfg4 11.Bxg4 Nxg4 12.Qf3 Bxf2+ 13.Ke2 Bd4 14.Nb5 Ne5 15.Nf5 Bxf5 16.Qxf5 Bb6 17.g3 Qg4+ 18.Qxg4 Nxg4 was roughly equal in Lau-Godena, Budapest 1992) 10...Rg8 (10...Neg4? 11.fxg4 Nxe4 12.Qd5 f5 13.Rf1 Nf6 14.Rxf5 Bxf5 15.Qxf5 led to a quick win for White in Handoko-Timman, Zagreb 1985) 11.Kd2 d5 12.c3 dxe4 13.Kc2 exf3 14.gxf3 Bh3 , when Black was well on top in Hobaica-Slipak, Mar del Plata 1999.]

5...Bb6 6.Nc3

[More usually White precedes this move with 6.a4 a6 and only then plays 7.Nc3 , when Nd5xb6 becomes a huge positional threat. Ansell-Ganguly, British Championship, Edinburgh 2003, continued Qf6 8.Qe2 Nge7 9.h4 (9.Nd5 Nxd5 10.exd5+ Ne7 11.h4 d6 12.Bg5 Qe5

was very comfortable for Black in Hanset-Van Weersel, Belgium 2005) 9...h6 10.g4 Nd4 11.Nxd4 Bxd4 12.Bd2 d6 13.f4 g6 14.Bg2 Bd7 15.g5 hxg5 16.hxg5 Rxh1+ 17.Bxh1 Qe6 18.Qd3 Bxc3 19.Qxc3 0-0-0 and White might have been regretting putting the pawn on a4 as he felt obliged to sacrifice it for insufficient compensation with 20.0-0-0 Bxa4 etc.]

[Another possibility is 6.Qe2 , but then a5 7.a4 Nge7 8.Nc3 Nb4! (the idea behind provoking 7 a4) 9.Bg5 f6 10.Bh4 0-0 11.0-0-0 d5 gave Black a good game in S.Novikov-Aleksandrov, Sochi 2005.]

6...d6

[Here, too, I like 6...Qf6 7.Qe2 Nge7 , for example 8.Nd5 (8.Be3 0-0 9.0-0-0 d6 10.f3 Be6 11.h4 h6 12.Kb1 Rfd8 13.g4 Ne5 14.Nd2 Bxe3 15.Qxe3 N7g6 16.h5 Qf4 17.Qg1 Nf8 saw Black blockade the kingside in Lima-Grischuk, New Delhi 2000) 8...Nxd5 9.exd5+ Ne7 10.h4 h6 11.g4 (11.Rh3 d6 12.Rf3 Qg6 13.Rf4 f5 14.Bd2 0-0 15.c4 Re8 left the rook on f4 out on a limb in Bellon Lopez-Tatai, Rome 1977) 11...d6 12.g5 Qf5 13.gxh6 gxh6 14.c4 Bd7 15.Bd2 0-0-0 16.Bh3 Qh7 17.Bxd7+ Rxd7 18.Bc3 Nf5 19.0-0-0 Re7 20.Qd3 Rhe8 and Black had good counterplay in Kupreichik-Klovans, Kirovabad 1973.]

7.Be2

[It's not too late for 7.a4 , and indeed after a6 8.Nd5 White wins time on the bishop. Nevertheless, this isn't a big deal after Ba7 9.Be3 (9.Qf3 Nge7 10.Bg5 h6 repels boarders) 9...Bxe3 (9...Nf6 10.Bxa7 Rxa7 11.Bd3 0-0 12.0-0 Re8 13.Re1 Be6 14.c4 a5 is also fine for Black, as in Rublevsky-Svidler, Dortmund 2004) 10.Nxe3 Nf6 11.Bd3 0-0 12.0-0 Re8 13.f3 Be6 14.c4 a5 15.Rf2 Nd7 16.f4 f6 , which left Black very comfortably placed in Rublevsky-Naiditsch, Dortmund 2004.]

[Note that Black can meet 7.Nd5 with the simple Nf6 , as 8.Bg5? loses to Bxf2+ 9.Kxf2 Nxe4+ etc.]

7...Nge7

[Black can also develop the knight on f6, although it is useful to first prevent any pin with Bg5. Timmerman-Timman, Hilversum 1983, went 7...h6 8.Bf4 Nf6 9.Qd2 Be6 10.0-0 0-0 11.Rad1 Re8 12.Bf3 Ne5 13.Bxe5 dxe5 when Black's bishop pair already gave him an edge.]

8.0-0

[8.Bg5 in this position can be simply answered by 0-0 9.0-0 f6 , and maybe Black can even take the initiative on the kingside with a second advance of the f-pawn.]

8...0-0 9.Na4 This decentralizing move looks poor, and meets with an energetic response from the Russian GM.

[A better move is 9.a4 , but this still fails to promise White anything after a6 10.Nd5 Nxd5 11.exd5 Ne5 12.a5 Ba7 13.Ra4 (13.Nd4 Bd7 14.Ra3 Qh4 15.Be3 Ng4 16.Bxg4 Bxg4 17.Qd2 Qh5 left Black with a useful bishop pair in Ofstad-Kholmov, Rowy 2000) 13...Qf6 14.Rf4 Qd8 15.Kh1 Re8 16.Bd2 Ng6 17.Rb4 Rb8 when Black's pieces were coming to nice squares in Boey-Westerinen, Lugano 1968.]

[9.Bg5 is quite unimpressive here, too, Black getting a good game after h6 10.Bh4 Be6 11.Na4 Qd7 12.Nxb6 axb6 13.Nd4 Nxd4 14.Qxd4 f5 in Siklosi-Karolyi, Hungary 1991.]

9...f5! 'Forward patrol!' as Tartakower used to annotate such moves. And White must really take this pawn before it pushes on to f4 and is followed by a knight on e5.

10.Nxb6 axb6 11.exf5 Nxf5 12.Bf3?! The bishop gets in the way here.

[White should play 12.Re1 , intending to drop it back to f1.]

12...Qf6 13.c3 Be6 14.Be4 Qf7! Using the open a-file to cause White some problems on the queenside. And once White's pieces shift to his left flank, Yakovich turns his attention to the right.

15.Bc2 Bc4 16.Re1 Nh4! 17.Be3? Losing.

[The only move was 17.f4 , but in any case White's king is becoming vulnerable.]

17...Bd5! 18.Qb1 Desperation already.

[But after 18.f3 there follows Nxg2! 19.Qd3 (or 19.Kxg2 Bxf3+) 19...g6 , when 20.Kxg2 Qxf3+

leads to mate next move.]

18...Nxc2 19.Bxh7+ Kh8 20.Bg6

[After 20.Be4 Nxe3 21.fxe3 Qf2+ 22.Kh1 Black can get fancy with Rxa2! 23.Bxd5 (23.Rxa2 Bxe4+ 24.Qxe4 Qxe1+) 23...Rxb2 , threatening mate on h2.]

20...Qf3 21.Nd2 Qg4 22.f3

[Or 22.h3 Qh4 etc.]

22...Nf4+! A nice finish.

[White is mated after 22...Nf4+ 23.fxc4 Nh3# .]

0-1

C44

□ **Bondarenko,V**

■ **Najer,E**

Moscow

[Nigel Davies]

1996

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3

[The line recommended for Black in this game is also a good answer to the Danish Gambit. After 2.d4 exd4 3.c3 d5 4.exd5 Qxd5 5.cxd4 Nc6 6.Nf3 we transpose into the position after White's 6th move.]

2...Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.c3 d5

[Another solid line is 4...Nf6 5.e5 Nd5 , which transposes to my suggested line against the Ponziani, examined in the game Sermek-Rogic (in Chapter 8). I am giving 4...d5 here because it's also playable against the Danish.]

5.exd5 Qxd5 6.cxd4 Bg4 7.Be2

[White has also played 7.Nc3 , although Black seems to be doing well in the complications that follow Bxf3 8.Nxd5 Bxd1 9.Nxc7+ Kd7 10.Nxa8 Bh5 11.d5 (11.Bb5 Bb4+ 12.Bd2 Bxd2+ 13.Kxd2 Nge7 won the knight on a8 with a clear advantage in Lover-Engedal, Gausdal 1993 ; as did 11.Bd3 Bb4+ 12.Bd2 Bxd2+ 13.Kxd2 Nge7 in Pawlowski-Rybak, Nachod 2000) 11...Nd4 12.Bd3 (or 12.Kd2 Nf6 13.Kc3 Bc5 etc.) 12...Bg6 (12...Bb4+ 13.Bd2 Bxd2+ 14.Kxd2 Ne7 15.Rhe1!? is awkward for Black, for instance Rxa8? is answered by 16.Re4 Ndf5 17.g4 etc.), for example 13.Bxg6 hxg6 14.Bf4 (Black seems to win the knight on a8 after other moves: 14.0-0 Bd6 15.h3 Ne2+ 16.Kh1 Nxc1 17.Raxc1 Nf6 , as in Sougakis-Hondrogiannis, Thessaloniki 2001 ;or 14.Kd1 Nh6 15.Be3 Nhf5 16.Kd2 Bd6 17.Kd3 Nxe3 18.fxe3 Nf5 19.e4 Nh6 , Coleman-Westerinen, Gausdal 1991) 14...g5!? (14...Nc2+ ;and 14...Nf6 also look good) 15.Be5 Nc2+ 16.Ke2 Nxa1 17.Rxa1 Bd6 18.Bxd6 Kxd6 19.Rc1 Ne7 and Black went on to win in Mieses-Janowski, Monte Carlo 1901.]

7...Bb4+ 8.Nc3 Bxf3! 9.Bxf3 Qc4

[Not 9...Qxd4?? 10.Bxc6+ bxc6 11.Qxd4 .]

10.Bxc6+

[White has a major alternative in 10.Qb3!? Qxb3 (I wouldn't recommend 10...Qxd4? 11.0-0 to my friends) 11.axb3 Nge7 (11...Nxd4 12.Bxb7 Rd8 13.0-0 a5 14.Nd5 Nxb3 15.Nxb4 Nxa1 16.Nc6 Rd3 17.b4 a4 18.Bb2 Nc2 19.Bxg7 f6 20.Bxh8 a3 was the entertaining continuation of Kenworthy-D.Howell, Blackpool 2003, which would have been good for White after 21.Na5 a2 22.Be4 Ra3 23.Nb3 Rxb3 24.Bxc2 etc.) 12.Be3 a6 13.0-0 0-0-0 (this looks more precise than 13...Rd8 when 14.Ra4! Bd6 15.b4! followed by 16 b5 gave White an edge in Mastrovasilis-Gabriel, Greece-Germany 1999) 14.Rfd1 Kb8 15.g3 Rhe8 16.d5 Ne5 17.Bg2 Nf5 and Black stood well in Mastrovasilis-Sturua, Istanbul 2003.]

[On the other hand, 10.Be3 proved to be poor after 0-0-0 11.Bxc6 Bxc3+ 12.bxc3 Qxc3+

13.Kf1 Qxc6 in Sadiku-Arduman, Izmir 2004.]

10...bxc6 11.Qe2+ Qxe2+ 12.Kxe2 Ne7 13.Be3 Kd7

[Black has also tried 13...0-0-0 , for example 14.Rac1 Rhe8 15.Rhd1 Nf5 16.Kf3 h5 17.Ne2 Rd6!? (17...Nh4+ 18.Kg3 Nf5+ 19.Kf3 Nh4+ would be a draw by repetition) 18.Nf4 Rf6 19.Nxh5 Nxd4+ 20.Kg4 Rg6+ 21.Bg5 (21.Kh3 is mandatory) 21...f5+ 22.Kh4 Re4+ 23.f4 Ne6 24.Kh3 Nxc5+ 25.fxc5 Rxc5 and Black won in Pirrot-Sturua, Biel 1996.]

14.Rac1

[Previously White had played 14.a3 here, when Bd6 (14...Bxc3 15.bxc3 Rab8 is similar to the game) 15.Na4 Rhe8 16.Nc5+ Bxc5 17.dxc5 Nd5 was at least equal in Kreutzkamp-Meszaros, Bargteheide 1989.]

[Another possibility is 14.Na4 , but then Nd5 is good.]

14...Rab8 15.Kd3 Bxc3!? An interesting winning attempt - Black gives up the bishop but manages to plant his rook on the 7th rank. White shouldn't really lose this position but he has to play well.

16.bxc3 Rb2 17.Rc2 Rhb8 18.c4 Nf5 19.Kc3

[After 19.g4 Black has Nxe3 20.fxe3 and then, perhaps, c5 .]

19...Rxc2+ 20.Kxc2 Nd6 Black sets about forcing the c4-pawn to advance, which would fix another pawn on the same colour as White's bishop and provide Black's knight (or king) a great square on d5.

21.Kc3 a5 22.Rc1 Rb4 23.c5? Strategic capitulation.

[White should try keeping the c-pawn where it is with 23.Kd3 .]

23...Nb5+ 24.Kd3 Ra4 25.Rc2 Ke6 With the entry of Black's king into the game, the pressure will be unbearable.

26.Bc1 Kd5 27.Re2 Rxd4+ 28.Kc2 Rg4 29.Re7 Rxc2 30.Rxf7 Kxc5 31.a4 Nd6 32.Be3+ Kd5 33.Rxc7 Nf5 34.Bb6 Rxh2 35.Ra7 Nd4+ 36.Kd3 Rh3+ 37.Kd2 Nb3+ 38.Kc2 g6 39.Be3?!

[The capture 39.Bxa5 would have been a better try, although by now White is losing.]

39...Kc4 40.Kb2 c5 41.Ra6 Rh2 42.Ka3 Nd4 43.Kb2 Nf5 44.Re6 Nxe3 45.Rxe3 Rxf2+ 46.Ka3 Rf7

0-1

C47

□ **Sutovsky,E**

■ **Davies,N**

Rishon Le Zion

[Nigel Davies]

1995

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.d4 exd4 5.Nxd4

[Black also needs to know what to do against the Belgrade Gambit with 5.Nd5!?, which certainly holds many pitfalls for the unwary. I recommend the simple Be7 , for example 6.Bc4 (6.Nxd4 Nxd5 7.exd5 Nxd4 8.Qxd4 0-0 9.Be2 Bf6 10.Qd1 d6 11.0-0 Bf5 12.Bd3 Qd7 13.c3 Rfe8 14.a4 Be4 15.Bxe4 Rxe4 16.Qb3 c5 17.dxc6 bxc6 , Sax-Karpov, Tilburg 1979 ;and 6.Bf4 d6 7.Nxd4 0-0 8.Nb5 Nxd5 9.exd5 Ne5 10.Qd2 Bg4 11.Nd4 Bf6 12.f3 Re8 13.0-0-0 Ng6 , Horak-Dolmatov, Cacak 1991, were both perfectly fine for Black) 6...0-0 7.Nxd4 (7.0-0 d6 8.Nxd4 Nxd4 9.Qxd4 Nxd5 10.Bxd5 Bf6 11.Qd3 a5 12.a4 c6 followed by 13...Be6 is equal) 7...Nxd5 8.Bxd5 Nxd4 9.Qxd4 Bf6 10.Qd3 c6 11.Bb3 d5 12.0-0 dxe4 13.Qxe4 Re8 with comfortable equality in Prie-Spassky, Angers 1990.]

5...Bb4 6.Nxc6 This is virtually forced.

[6.Bg5 h6 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Ndb5 Ba5 , followed by 9...a6, is good for Black.]

6...bxc6 7.Bd3 White's most natural and best continuation, although a few alternatives have been

tried:

[7.Qd4 was played a little by Paulsen and Tarrasch in the 1880s, but Qe7 8.f3 Bc5 9.Qd3 a5 10.Bg5 h6 11.Bxf6 Qxf6 12.Na4 Bd6 13.g3 0-0 14.0-0-0 Rb8 earned Black good counterplay in Tartakower-Prins, Venice 1949.]

[7.Bd2 0-0 8.Bd3 d5 9.exd5 Re8+ 10.Ne2 Bxd2+ 11.Qxd2 cxd5 gives White something similar to the main line, but with his pieces more passively placed.]

[7.e5?! is quite dubious after Qe7 8.Qe2 Nd5 etc.]

7...d5 8.exd5

[Black gets counterplay after 8.e5 Ng4, for example 9.0-0 (9.Bf4 f6! 10.h3 Nxe5 11.Bxe5 fxe5 12.Qh5+ Kf8 13.Qxe5 Bd6 14.Qh5 Qf6 15.0-0 g6 16.Qh6+ Kf7 favoured Black's bishops in Davie-Gligoric, Dundee 1967) 9...0-0 10.Bf4 (10.h3 Nxe5 11.Bxh7+ Kxh7 12.Qh5+ Kg8 13.Qxe5 Re8 14.Qg3 Bf5 was also good for Black in Pollock-Chigorin, New York 1889) 10...f6! 11.exf6 Qxf6! 12.Bg3 (12.Bxc7?! Bc5 is too dangerous for White) 12...Bd6 (12...Bc5 is also not bad, for example 13.Qd2 Rb8 14.Rab1 Kh8 15.b4 Bd6 as in V.Knox-Anand, British Championship, Blackpool 1988) 13.Be2 Ne5 14.Na4 Be6 15.Qd2 Ng6 16.Rae1 Nf4 17.Bd1 Rae8 and Black had a good game in Afek-Gyimesi, Kecskemet 1994.]

8...cxd5 9.0-0

[White has also tried 9.Qe2+, for example Be7 10.Bg5 (10.0-0 0-0 11.Re1 Be6 12.Bg5 h6 13.Bh4 c6 14.Na4 Re8 15.Bg3 Qa5 16.b3 Bf8 17.c3 c5 gave Black a good game in L. Hansen-Pinter, Copenhagen 1995) 10...0-0 11.0-0-0 Be6 12.Rhe1 (12.h4?! c5 13.f3 Qb6 14.g4 Rab8 and Black looked menacing in Ammad Almedaihki-Grachev, Minorca 1996) 12...Rb8! 13.Bf5 Rb6! 14.Na4 Rc6 15.Bd3 Nd7 16.Bd2 with a draw (Black is certainly okay here) in Kalevic-Korneev, Groningen 1995.]

9...0-0 10.Bg5 This reaches the key position in the Scotch Four Knights. White has tried a couple of alternatives, but neither troubles Black:

[10.Ne2 is well met by Bd6, when 11.Bf4 (11.Bg5? Bxh2+) 11...Rb8 12.b3 c5 13.Bxd6 Qxd6 14.Ng3 g6 15.c4 Bb7 gave Black a good game in Helin-Sepp, Finland 1997.]

[10.Nb5 Bg4 11.f3 Bd7 12.c3 (12.Bg5 Rb8 13.Nc3 c6 14.Kh1 Re8 was fine for Black in Rozentalis-Klovans, Groningen 1992) 12...Be7 13.Nd4 Re8 14.Re1 c5 15.Nf5 Bf8 16.Rxe8 Nxe8 17.Be3 h5!? 18.Qd2 g6 19.Ng3 Ng7 20.Re1 Be6 21.Ne2 Qd7 22.b3 a5 saw Black start effective action on the queenside in Hnydiuk-Kiselev, Zabrzanski Wrzesien 1994.]

10...c6 11.Qf3 For years this was considered to be almost mandatory, but more recently White has tried to play the position with more subtlety:

[11.Na4!? eyes the dark squares on the queenside and prepares a possible c2-c4, although Black is fine after h6 12.Bh4 Be6, for example 13.c3 Bd6 (13...Be7 14.b4 Nd7 15.Bxe7 Qxe7 16.Re1 a5 was also fine for Black in Tomescu-Romanishin, Reggio Emilia 2002) 14.Re1 (14.Bc2 c5 15.Qf3 Rc8 16.Bxf6 Qxf6 17.Qxf6 gxf6 produced the kind of endgame which is typical of this line, and offered Black better chances in Perelshteyn-Goldin, Minneapolis 2005) 14...Re8 15.Bc2 c5 16.Qf3 Rc8 17.h3 g5 18.Bg3 Bxg3 19.Qxg3 Qc7 20.Qf3 ½-½ Thorhallsson-Davies, Gausdal 1994.]

[11.Ne2 h6 12.Bh4 Bd6 13.Nd4 (13.Bg3 Bxg3 14.Nxg3 c5 15.Re1 was agreed drawn in Sveshnikov-Razuvaev, USSR Championship, Riga 1985) 13...c5 (not 13...Bxh2+? 14.Kxh2 Ng4+ 15.Qxg4) 14.Nf5 Bxf5 15.Bxf5 Rb8 (15...Be5 16.c3 g5 17.Bg3 Qd6 18.Bxe5 Qxe5 19.Bc2 Rfe8 20.Re1 Qd6 was also fine for Black in Motylev-Malaniuk, Ekaterinburg 1997) 16.Rb1 (16.b3 Be5 17.Rc1 Qd6 18.Bg3 Bxg3 19.hxg3 Rfe8 20.Qf3 Re5 21.Rfe1 Rbe8 also gave Black an edge in Zhelnin-Balashov, Moscow 1998) 16...Rb4 17.Bg3 Bxg3 18.hxg3 Qb8 19.b3 Qe5 20.Qf3 g6 21.c3 Rb6 22.Bc2 Re8 and Black was better in A.Ivanov-Liss, European Cup 1995.]

11...h6 12.Bf4

[The endgame that arises after 12.Bxf6 Qxf6 13.Qxf6 gxf6 offers White nothing, for example

14.Ne2 Rb8 15.Ng3 Ba5 16.Rab1 Re8 17.Nf5 Bxf5 18.Bxf5 Re2 19.g4 Rb4 20.Kg2 Rf4
with rather more than equality for Black in Spielmann-Rubinstein, Berlin 1926.]

[Trying to maintain the pin with 12.Bh4 is answered by g5 13.Bg3 (13.Qg3 Bd6 14.f4 Ng4)

13...Bg4 14.Bc7 (14.Qe3 d4) 14...Bxf3 15.Bxd8 Raxd8 16.gxf3 Bxc3 17.bxc3 Nh5

with the better endgame for Black because the knight is headed for f4.]

12...Bd6 13.Rfe1 Rb8 14.Na4 c5 The duo of pawns on c5 and d5 gives Black good central control.

15.b3 Be6 16.h3 Rb4 17.Bxd6 Qxd6 18.Rad1 Rc8

[Or 18...Qc7 19.c3 Rbb8 20.Bf5 Bxf5 21.Qxf5 Rfe8 with equality in Rogulj-Njirjak, Pula 2001.]

19.c3 Rbb8 20.Bf5 Re8 21.Bxe6 Rxe6 22.Rxe6 fxe6 23.Qe3 Nd7 24.Nb2 The position is well balanced.

1/2-1/2

CHAPTER 8: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6: THIRD MOVE ALTERNATIVES

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6

Unless Black wants to win, the venerable Four Knights Opening is not the most scary option open to White. But if Black is indeed looking for the full point, then it does become a serious problem, the aggressive Rubinstein Variation (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nc6 4 Bb5 Nd4) running into 5 Nxd4 exd4 6 e5 dxc3 7 exf6 Qxf6 (7...cxd2+ is too risky) 8 dxc3 with an exceptionally dull position. British GM Mark Hebden maintains that this is 'winnable' for Black, but I suspect this requires a rating difference of some 500 Elo points.

Accordingly I recommend that Black plays a simpler line, but one which retains more play in the position. Capablanca's 4...Bb4 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 d6 7 Bg5 Bxc3 8 bxc3 Qe7 9 Re1 Nd8 10 d4 Bg4 leads to an interesting fighting game in which Black gets a share of the chances. In Belavenets-Panov Black might have gone slightly over the top with 16...e4?!, but he had a good alternative in 16...b6. And in Shabtai-Davies Black obtained good play on the dark squares when White snatched my e5-pawn.

As well as 4 Bb5 White can also play 4 g3, which Grandmaster Glek has played in many games and features in Hector-G.Giorgadze. 4...d6 is quite a nice idea because it forces White to lose time with 5 h3 if he wants to avoid 5 d4 Bg4.

The suggested defence against the Ponziani (Sermek-Rogic) is also a good antidote to the Scotch Gambit. Although it isn't very well known, Black gets a solid game with chances to fight for the full point.

Summary

Capablanca's 10...Bg4 is a good way of fighting against the 'Spanish' Four Knights which avoids the drawishness of the Rubinstein line. After Glek's 4 g3 I like 4...d6.

The Ponziani is one of those openings in which you can be called upon to play against people who have a bundle of tricks up their sleeve. The simple defence given in Sermek-Rogic looks like a good treatment from both a practical and theoretical point of view.

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3...Nf6 4 Bb5
4 g3 - Hector-G.Giorgadze
4...Bb4 5 0-0 0-0 6 d3 d6 7 Bg5 Bxc3 8 bxc3 Qe7 9 Re1 Nd8 10 d4 Bg4
11 Bh4 - Shabtai-Davies
11 h3 - Belavenets-Panov

□ **Belavenets,S**

■ **Panov,V**

USSR Championship, Leningrad

[Nigel Davies]

1934

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bb5 The main line of the Four Knights, exerting indirect pressure on e5 just as White does in the Spanish.

Bb4

[Rubinstein's 4...Nd4 is the main reason the Four Knights went out of fashion, although one of the drawbacks of this move is that it can lead to a very drawish position after 5.Nxd4 exd4 6.e5 dxc3 7.exf6 Qxf6 8.dxc3 . As it also involves some sharp theory I prefer simple development.]

5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.Bg5 Bxc3 Preventing 8 Nd5.

8.bxc3 Qe7 9.Re1

[White can also try the immediate 9.d4 , after which Nd8 (9...h6 10.Bh4 g5 11.Nxg5 hxg5 12.Bxg5 is very dangerous) 10.d5 h6 11.Bh4 c6 gave Black counterplay in Apscheneek-Fine, Stockholm Olympiad 1937.]

[Other moves are harmless; for example 9.h3 Nd8 10.Nh2 Ne6 11.Bh4 Nf4 12.Ng4 Bxg4 13.hxg4 Ng6 left White with less than nothing in Rabinovich-Gothilf, USSR 1938]

[and 9.Nd2 h6 (9...Nd8 10.f4 exf4 11.Bxf4 Bg4 12.Qe1 was less comfortable for Black in Richter-Teschner, Germany 1948) 10.Bh4 Nd8 is directed against the 11.f4 plan, which can now be met by exf4 12.Rxf4? g5 .]

9...Nd8 Regrouping the knight to e6, where it helps reinforce Black's kingside defences.

10.d4 Bg4 Capablanca's move, which I have played myself in several games.

[10...Ne6 has been played more often but tends to give Black's forces less scope.]

11.h3 Bh5

[Maintaining the pin rather than giving away the remaining bishop with 11...Bxf3 .]

12.g4 Bg6 13.d5 White has tried several alternatives here:

[13.Nh4 might be the most testing of White's tries, for example h6 (13...Ne6 looks like a good alternative, after which 14.Nxg6 fxc6 15.Bc4 Kh8 16.Bh4 Nf4 17.Kh2 Qe8 gave Black a good game in Coleman-Pang, Guaymallen 2001) 14.Bc4! (14.Nxg6 fxc6 15.Bc4+ Kh7 16.Bh4 g5 17.Bg3 Nf7 18.Qf3 Rae8 19.Qe3 b6 20.Bb5 Rd8 21.a4 Nh8 22.a5 Ng6 was better for Black in Wolf-Rubinstein, Teplitz-Schoenau 1922 ;and 14.Bd2 Bxe4 15.g5 hxg5 16.Bxg5 Bh7 leaves Black with an extra pawn) 14...Ne6 (I can't find any games with 14...Bh7!? but it looks good after, for example, 15.Nf5 Bxf5 16.Bxf6 Qxf6 17.gxf5 Nc6) 15.Nxg6 fxc6 16.f4 Kh8 17.Bxf6 Qxf6 18.Bxe6 Qxe6 19.d5 was Drewitt-Rubinstein, Hastings 1922, and has been assessed by several sources as better for White, perhaps because of the result. But Rubinstein lost this game thanks only to a late blunder, and at this stage he stands very well in view of the exposed position of White's king. The game went Qf6 20.f5 Qh4 21.Qf3 c6 22.dxc6 bxc6 23.Rad1 Rf6 24.Qe3 gxf5 25.exf5 h5 26.Qf3 g6 27.Re2 gxf5 28.gxf5 Rg8+ 29.Rg2 e4?! (29...Rxc2+ improves and is good for Black) 30.Rxc2+ Kxc2 31.Qg2+ Kh7?! 32.Rf1 Kh6?! 33.Kh1 d5?? 34.Rg1 1-0.]

[13.Bh4 h5 (13...Ne6 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.Nxe5 Qc5 transposes to the next game, Shabtai-Davies) 14.Nh2 (14.Bd3 is worth considering) 14...c6 15.Bc4 Ne6 16.gxh5 Bh7 17.Ng4 Nf4 was far from clear in Ivkov-Portisch, Santa Monica 1966.]

[13.Bd3 h5 (13...Ne6 can be met by 14.Bh4 in this position) 14.d5 hxg4 15.hxg4 Qd7 16.Nh2 Nh7 17.Bd2 f6 18.c4 c5 (18...Ng5!?) 19.Kg2 was Geo.Timoshenko-Berzinsh, Naberezhnye Chelny 1993, and now Ng5 20.Qe2 Ndf7 was best, with approximate equality.]

13...c6 14.Bd3

[White has also played 14.Bf1 in this position, for example cxd5 15.exd5 Qc7! (it's good to

unpin immediately - 15...Rc8 16.c4 b6 17.a4 made things a bit awkward for Black in Wolf-Cohn, Nuremberg 1906) 16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.Re3 b6 18.Nh4 Nb7 19.Bd3 Nc5 was about equal in Altschuler-Weltmader, Correspondence 1960.]

14...cxd5 It is preferable to do this now before White plays c3-c4 and then recaptures with the c-pawn.

[After 14...Rc8 15.c4 h6 16.Bh4 b6 17.Nd2 Bh7 White keeps a grip on the position with 18.f3 (rather than 18.Qf3? g5 19.Bg3 Nb7, which was about equal in Yurtaev-Kharitonov, Riga 1980), when 18...g5 is met by 19.Bf2 with the idea of a2-a4-a5.]

15.exd5 Rc8

[In Spassky-Gligoric, Yugoslavia 1986, Black mistakenly tried 15...e4?! and found himself in trouble after 16.Bxe4! Bxe4 17.Qd4 Ne6 (if 17...Qd7 18.Bxf6 Bxf3 19.Bxg7 Re8 20.Bh6 Re5 21.Qf4 etc) 18.Qxe4! Nxe4 19.Qxe7 Nxf3+ 20.Kf1 Nxe1 21.Rxe1 Nxd5 22.Qxb7 and Black had insufficient compensation for the queen.]

16.c4 e4? The same mistake as Gligoric made in the note above, but as the Panov game was played first I should say that Gligoric emulated Panov's error! Black wants to take the initiative, but it's too early.

[Instead he should play the steady 16...b6, after which 17.Qd2 Nb7 18.Rab1 Na5 was fine for Black in Savova-Forgo, Brno 1989.]

17.Bf1?!

[White should play 17.Bxe4! Bxe4 18.Qd4, when Qd7 19.Bxf6 Bxf3 20.Bxg7 Re8 21.Bf6 leaves Black with no good defence against White's threat to bring the queen to g5 or h6.]

17...Ne6!? 18.dxe6 exf3 19.exf7+ Qxf7 20.Qxd6

[After 20.Qxf3 Bxc2 21.Bxf6 Qxf6 22.Qxf6 Rxf6 23.Re7 Black can hold together with Rf7 24.Rae1 Kf8 .]

20...Ne4 21.Qe7 Rfe8! 22.Qxf7+ Bxf7 23.Be3 Bxc4 24.Bxc4+ Rxc4 25.Bxa7 h5!? 26.gxh5 Re5 27.Be3 Nc3! 28.Kh2 Ne2 29.Bb6? White cracks under the pressure.

[He should play 29.h6, when Rh5 (29...gxh6 30.Red1 Rh5 is not bad either) 30.Rg1 Nxe4 31.Rxe4 Rc7 (31...g5 32.Bxg5 is very dangerous for Black) 32.c4 Kh7 33.hxg7 Rxe7 is drawish.]

29...Rxe7 30.Bd8 Rg4! 31.Rg1

[Or 31.h4 Rxe7+ 32.Bxe4 Rxe4# .]

31...Nxe4 32.Rxe4 Rxe4 33.Kxe4 Rxe4 34.c3 Kf7 35.a4 Ke6 36.a5 Kd5 37.Bb6 g5 38.Be3 g4 39.Bb6 Rh5 40.Bd4 Kc4 41.Bf6 Kd3 42.Bd4 Ke2 43.Bb6 Rh3

0-1

C49

Shabtai,R

Davies,N

Tel Aviv

[Nigel Davies]

1993

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bb5 Bb4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3

[The immediate 6.Bxc6 is not dangerous for Black, for example dxc6 7.d3 (7.Nxe5 Re8 8.Nd3 Bxc3 9.dxc3 Nxe4 is equal) 7...Nd7 8.Ne2 Re8 9.Be3 Nf8 10.a3 Bd6 11.Nd2 Ng6 12.Nc4 Bf8 13.f4 f5 (13...exf4 14.Nxf4 Nxf4 15.Bxf4 Be6 is also fine for Black) 14.exf5 Bxf5 15.Nxe5 Nxe5 16.fxe5 Rxe5 17.Bf4 Re8 with equality in Chekhov-V.Mikhalevski, Ashdod 2003.]

6...d6 7.Bg5 The only move to seriously trouble Black. Here are the alternatives:

[7.Ne2 Ne7 8.c3 Ba5 9.Ng3 c6 10.Ba4 Ng6 11.d4 Re8 12.Bc2 h6 13.h3 Qe7 14.Re1 Qf8

15.a4 c5 16.d5 Nf4 was about equal in Campora-Atalik, Calvia 2004.]

[7.Bxc6 bxc6 8.Ne2 Re8 9.Ng3 d5 10.Qe2 a5 11.h3 h6 12.Rd1 a4 13.c3 Bf8 14.Qc2 Bd6 15.Be3 Nh7 was also level in Hobuss-Hort, Davos 2002.]

7...Bxc3 8.bxc3 Qe7 9.Re1 Nd8 10.d4 Bg4 11.Bh4 Recently this has been considered White's most testing move, but I don't see the problem. Besides 11 h3 (as in Belavenets-Panov), two other moves have been tried:

[11.Bf1 was played in Bernstein-Capablanca, New York 1916. After Ne6 12.Bc1 Bxf3 13.gxf3 (13.Qxf3 exd4 14.Ba3 c5 left White with insufficient compensation for the pawn in Letzelter-Rubinetti, Skopje Olympiad 1972) 13...Nh5 14.Bh3 Nhf4 15.Bg4 h5 16.Bxe6 fxe6 17.Kh1 Nh3 Black had generated useful pressure on the kingside.]

[11.Bc4 Ne6 12.Bxe6 fxe6 13.dxe5 dxe5 14.Qd3 was Ziska-Christensen, Aarhus 1992, and now h6 (rather than 14...Qd6) 15.Bxf6 Qxf6 16.Re3 Rad8 would have given Black good play.]

11...Ne6 12.dxe5 The only critical line, playing to win Black's e-pawn. But Black has resources... **dxe5 13.h3 Bh5 14.g4 Bg6 15.Nxe5 Qc5 16.Bxf6**

[White can also avoid the exchange of this bishop with 16.Nxg6 hxg6 17.Bd3 (17.Qd3 g5 18.Bg3 Rad8 19.Qc4 c6 20.Qxc5 Nxc5 21.Bd3 Nxd3 22.cxd3 Rxd3 was slightly better for Black in Degraeve-Sharif, France 1993 ;and 17.Rb1 g5 18.Bg3 Qxc3 19.Qd3 Qc5 20.Qe3 Qxe3 21.Rxe3 Rfd8 22.Bc4 b6 was equal in Ivkov-Unzicker, Santa Monica 1966), and now Bernard-Vogt, Leipzig 1974, continued 17...Qxc3 18.Qf3 Nd7 19.Qe3 Nd4 (19...Ne5 20.Bg3 g5 21.Bf1 Qxe3 was equal and agreed drawn in Kobalija-Kharitonov, Moscow 1996) 20.Rab1? (20.Bg3 improves, with chances for both sides) 20...Ne5 21.Bg3 Ndf3+ and Black won the exchange and the game.]

16...gxf6 17.Nxg6 hxg6 18.Rb1 Qxc3 19.Re3 Qe5 20.Qd5 Qf4 The weak dark squares around White's king will cause him ongoing difficulties.

21.Be2 c6 22.Qc4 Rab8 23.Rd1 Rbd8 24.Rxd8 Rxd8 25.Qb4 Rd7 26.Qe1 Ng5 27.Kg2

[White should hang on to his pawns with 27.Qb4 , when he is worse but still on the board. The activity he might have hoped for never materializes.]

27...Nxe4 28.Bd3 Ng5 29.Qe2 Kg7 30.h4 Ne6 31.Re4 Rd4 32.Qe3 Rxe4 33.Qxe4 a5 34.Kg1 Qh6 35.g5

[35.Bc4 would have been more tenacious.]

35...fxg5 36.Qe5+ Kh7 37.h5

[37.Qf6 Qg7 38.hxg5 Qxf6 39.gxf6 Nf4 leads to the loss of the f6-pawn.]

37...Qxh5 38.Qf6 Kg8 39.f3 g4 40.f4 g3

0-1

C47

□ **Hector,J**

■ **Giorgadze,G**

Spanish Team Championship

[Nigel Davies]

2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.g3 Igor Glek's favourite move, which has caused Black some trouble.

[The Dutch GM John Van der Wiel has experimented with 4.Be2 , but Black equalized with d5 5.exd5 Nxd5 6.0-0 Nxc3 7.bxc3 Bd6 8.d4 0-0 9.Rb1 h6 10.dxe5 Nxe5 11.Nxe5 Bxe5 12.Ba3 Re8 in Van der Wiel-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 1985.]

[Another possibility is 4.Bc4 , which Black should meet with Nxe4! 5.Nxe4 (5.Bxf7+ Kxf7 6.Nxe4 d5 7.Neg5+ Kg8 brings Black's king to safety and leaves him better) 5...d5 6.Bd3

(6.Bb5 dxe4 7.Nxe5 Qg5! 8.d4 Qxg2 9.Rf1 a6 10.Qh5 Be6 11.Bxc6+ bxc6 is better for Black) 6...dxe4 7.Bxe4 Bd6 8.d4 exd4 9.Bxc6+ (White gets nowhere with 9.Nxd4 Nxd4 10.Qxd4 0-0 , and he might even lose his queen after 11.0-0?? Bxh2+) 9...bxc6 10.Qxd4 0-0 11.0-0 c5 12.Qc3 Bb7 13.b3 Qd7 14.Bb2 f6 15.Rad1 Qf5 16.Qc4+ Kh8 and Black's bishop pair fully compensated for the doubled pawns in Tartakower-Bogoljubow, Bad Pistyan 1922.]

4...d6!? I like this move, which prepares to develop the bishop to g4 in the event of 5 d4.

5.h3 Without this prophylactic move White can't really hope for an advantage.
[For example, 5.Bg2 g6 6.0-0 (6.d4 Bg4 7.d5 Nd4 8.Be3 Nxf3+ 9.Bxf3 h5!? 10.h3 Bd7 11.Qd2 Be7 12.Bg2 h4 13.g4 Nh7 14.f4 Bf6 15.0-0 0-0 was double-edged and agreed drawn in Ansell-Davies, British League 2005) 6...Bg7 7.d3 0-0 8.Ne1 Bg4 9.f3 Be6 10.f4 Qd7 11.Nf3 Bg4 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.Be3 Kh8 earned Black full equality in G.Giorgadze-Illescas Cordoba, Mondariz 2002.]

5...g6 6.d4 The consistent follow-up.
[After 6.Bg2 Bg7 7.0-0 0-0 8.d3 Be6 9.Ng5 Bd7 10.Be3 Nh5 11.Nf3 Nd4 Black was fully equal in Malaniuk-G.Kuzmin, Kharkov 2004.]

6...exd4 7.Nxd4 Nxd4 8.Qxd4 Bg7 9.Be3 The aggressive Swedish GM plans to castle long, which certainly enlivens the struggle, albeit not necessarily in White's favour.
[9.Bg2 0-0 10.0-0 Bd7 11.Qd3 Re8 12.Bg5 Qc8 13.Kh2 Bc6 14.Rfe1 Nd7 15.Rad1 Nc5 16.Qd2 a5 was level in Bosiocic-Loncar, Zadar 2003.]

9...0-0 10.Qd2 Bd7
[The Georgian is a solid player. I would be tempted by 10...b5!? 11.Bxb5 Rb8 with dynamic play for a pawn.]

11.Bg2 Bc6 12.0-0-0 Re8 This is a logical plan, building up on White's d-pawn and either breaking in the centre with ...d6-d5 or playing on the queenside with ...b7-b5.

13.Bg5 h6 Black decides to liquidate the position, although this was by no means mandatory.
[13...Re6 was quite interesting, intending to meet 14.Rhe1 with Qe8 15.f3 b5 .]

14.Bxh6 Nxe4 15.Nxe4 Bxh6 16.Qxh6 Bxe4 17.f3?!
[I think White should first exchange bishops with 17.Bxe4 , though after Rxe4 18.h4 Re5 19.Kb1 (19.h5 Qg5+ 20.Qxg5 Rxg5 is quite equal) 19...Qf6 20.h5 Qg7 he doesn't have any real advantage.]

17...Bc6 18.h4 Qe7 With the queens coming off on e3 Black is fully equal, and then he proceeds to grind away in the endgame. This is not everybody's cup of tea but it can be very effective.

19.h5
[Perhaps White should have stopped Black's next move with 19.Rd3 , but in any case he's okay for the time being.]

19...Qe3+ 20.Qxe3 Rxe3 21.hxg6 fxg6 22.Rh6? Hector does like the initiative but sometimes it proves to be his undoing.
[Simply 22.Rde1 maintains equality.]

22...Kg7 23.Rdh1 Rae8 24.Rh7+ Kf6 25.Rd1?
[And here he should be consistent with 25.Rxc7 , when Re1+ 26.Rxe1 Rxe1+ 27.Kd2 Rg1 28.Bh3 Bxf3 is slightly better for Black but still quite tenable. Now there are problems.]

25...Re2 26.Rd2 Re1+ 27.Rd1 R8e2 28.Rxe1 Rxe1+ 29.Kd2 Rg1 30.Rh2 g5 The squeeze.

31.Ke2 g4 32.Ke3 Re1+ 33.Kd2 Rg1 34.Ke3 gxf3 35.Bh3
[35.Bxf3 Rxg3 36.Rf2 Ke5 37.Ke2 Rxf3 leads to a decisive pawn endgame, so there's no choice but to give up the entire kingside.]

35...Re1+ 36.Kd2 Rg1 37.Ke3 Rxg3 The rest, as they say, is a matter of technique. White shows great tenacity in hanging on for another 35 moves.

38.Bf1 Rg7 39.Bd3 Re7+ 40.Kf2 Rg7 41.Rh8 b5 42.b4 a6 43.a3 Re7 44.Rf8+ Ke6 45.Rh8 Bd5 46.Rh5 c6 47.Rh8 Ke5 48.Ke3 Kf6+ 49.Kf2 a5 50.bxa5 Ra7 51.a4 Rxa5 52.axb5 cxb5 53.Rb8 Ke5 54.Ke3 Bc4 55.Re8+ Kd5 56.Be4+ Kc5 57.c3 Ra3 58.Rc8+

Kb6 59.Rc6+ Ka5 60.Rxd6 Rxc3+ 61.Kd4 Kb4 62.Rf6 Be2 63.Rf5 Kb3 64.Rf8 b4 65.Bd5+ Kc2 66.Be4+ Kd2 67.Bd5 b3 68.Rf6 b2 69.Rb6 Rd3+ 70.Ke4 Rxd5 71.Rxb2+ Ke1 72.Kxd5 f2 0-1

C44

□ Sermek,D

■ Rogic,D

Dresden

[Nigel Davies]

1998

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.c3 Nf6 4.d4

[4.d3 is quite playable here, with a kind of Philidor Defence with colours reversed. Against this I suggest a5! (preventing b2-b4) 5.Be2 g6! (from g7 Black's bishop will lend solid defence to Black's e-pawn and not get in the way) 6.0-0 Bg7 7.Qc2 0-0 8.Nbd2 d5 9.b3 h6 10.Bb2 b6 11.Rfe1 Bb7 12.a3 Re8 and Black had a comfortable game in Gavrikov-Bareev, USSR Championship, Kiev 1986.]

4...exd4 5.e5 Nd5 This is a safe way to meet the Ponziani and is also playable against the Scotch Gambit (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 c3 Nf6 5 e5 Nd5).

6.Bb5

[White can also try 6.cxd4 , for example Bb4+! 7.Bd2 (7.Nbd2 d6 8.a3 Bxd2+ 9.Bxd2 0-0 10.Be2 Bg4 develops comfortably and puts pressure on e5) 7...Bxd2+ 8.Qxd2 (8.Nbxd2 d6 9.Bc4 Be6 10.0-0 dxe5 11.dxe5 0-0 is equal) 8...d6 9.Bc4 (9.Nc3 Nxc3 10.Qxc3 0-0 11.Be2 Ne7!? 12.0-0 Nd5 13.Qb3 Nf4 14.Rfe1 Nxe2+ 15.Rxe2 dxe5 16.dxe5 Qe7 was equal in Sermek-I.Sokolov, Ljubljana 1993) 9...dxe5! 10.dxe5 Be6 11.Nc3 Nxc3 12.Qxc3 Bxc4 13.Qxc4 0-0 14.0-0 Qe7 left Black without any problems in Malaniuk-Mikhalchishin, Kecskemet 1991.]

[Sermek has also tried 6.Bc4 , but Black was fine in Sermek-Mikhalchishin, Ljubljana 1993, after Nb6 7.Bb3 d6 8.0-0 Be7 9.exd6 Qxd6 10.Nxd4 Nxd4 11.cxd4 Be6 12.Bxe6 Qxe6 13.Re1 Qd7 14.Qe2 Nd5 15.Nc3 Nxc3 16.bxc3 0-0! because 17.Qxe7 loses to Rfe8 .]

6...a6 7.Bxc6?! I don't like this move - White gives up the light-squared bishop with his e-pawn fixed on a dark square.

[7.Ba4 is preferable, when Velimirovic-Spassky, Reggio Emilia 1986, continued Nb6 8.Bb3 d5! 9.exd6 Bxd6 10.0-0 0-0 11.Bg5 Be7 with equality.]

7...dxc6 8.Qxd4?! And I don't like this one either!

[8.Bg5 is better, Be7 9.Bxe7 Qxe7 at least depriving Black of the bishop pair.]

8...Bf5 9.0-0 c5 10.Qd1 Qd7 11.Qb3 Qc6!

[The immediate 11...0-0-0 is less good due to 12.Rd1 Qc6 13.c4 with an edge for White.]

12.c4?! This is mistimed.

[12.Rd1? is poor after c4!]

[but White can play 12.Re1 .]

12...Nb4 13.Ne1 0-0-0 14.Nc3 Qe6 15.f4 f6! With White behind in development Black seeks to open up the game, and Sermek feels obliged to sacrifice a pawn to get his forces mobilized.

16.Be3

[16.exf6 gxf6 gives Black good attacking chances on the open g-file.]

16...fxe5 17.fxe5 Qxe5 18.Bf4 Qd4+ 19.Kh1 Be6 With the c4-pawn also falling the position starts to look desperate for White.

20.Ne2 Qxc4 21.Qf3 Bd6 22.a3 Nc6 23.Rc1 Nd4 24.Nxd4 Qxd4 25.Bxd6 Rxd6 26.Rc3 c4 27.Nc2 Qd2 28.Ne3 Kb8 29.Rc2 Qd4 30.Rfc1 Rhd8 31.h3

[Not 31.Nxc4? Bxc4 32.Rxc4 Qxc4 etc.]

31...Rc6 32.a4 c3 Thus far Black has put in an exemplary performance but here he starts to go wrong.

[32...Qh4 looks better.]

33.bxc3 Qxa4 34.c4 Qa3 35.Rc3 Qc5 36.Qe4 g6 37.Rb3 Ka7 38.Rcb1 Rb8

[38...b6 might be an improvement - White can try 39.Rb5!?, but after axb5 40.cxb5 Black is still winning with Rd4 .]

39.Rb4 Bf5 40.Nxf5 gxf5 41.Qh4 h6 42.Qf4 Re6 43.R4b2 b6 44.Ra1 Rbe8 45.Rbb1 Rd6

46.Rb5! Re1+? Time trouble might have started to intervene.

[46...Qd4 is still winning for Black.]

47.Rxe1 axb5 48.Qf3! Qc6 49.Ra1+ Kb8 50.Qxf5 Rd8 51.cxb5 Qd5 52.Qf2?! Giving Black another bite at the cherry.

[52.Qf1 leads to a draw.]

52...Qxb5 53.Qf6 Qd5 54.Qxh6 Rg8 55.Rg1 b5?! Interesting but very risky. If Black wants to win it means promoting a pawn, but this in turn will expose his king.

56.Qe3 b4 57.Qf2 c5 58.Ra1 Kb7 59.Qe2 Rg7??

[After 59...b3 60.Rd1 Qc6 61.Qf2 White has some threats but Black is still kicking.]

60.Qb5+ Kc8 61.Qe8+

[Black is losing material after 61.Qe8+ Kb7 (or 61...Kc7 62.Ra7+ Kb6 63.Rxg7) 62.Qa8+ Kc7 63.Qxd5 etc.]

1-0

CHAPTER 9: 1 e4 e5: SECOND MOVE ALTERNATIVES

1 e4 e5

Against the King's Gambit I am a firm believer in 2...Bc5 as a simple and strong defence. After 3 Nf3 d6 4 Nc3 Nf6 5 Bc4 Nc6 6 d3 the most natural move is 6...Bg4, when Black achieves good counterplay against both 7 Na4 (Munoz-Davies) and 7 h3 (Chigorin-Pillsbury). In the second of these games Black should avoid the greedy 9...Nxc2+ and instead play the cold-blooded 9...0-0.

Instead of 4 Nc3 White can play more ambitiously with 4 c3, aiming to build a broad pawn centre with 5 d4. The drawbacks to this plan are that it loses time and can leave White's extended central position quite exposed. Niedermaier-Sonntag features a good antidote with 4...Nf6, and 4...Bb6 (given in the notes) also looks solid enough.

The Vienna can be interpreted in King's Gambitesque fashion with 1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 f4, or more quietly with 3 g3 or 3 Bc4. The 3 f4 variation is examined in Hellers-Karpov, in which Black had an excellent position from the opening but won only after some strange happenings just before the time control. 3 g3 is well met by 3...c6 (Krivec-Mikhalchishin) and 3 Bc4 Nc6 4 d3 is answered by 4...Na5 (Cornette-Godena), the latter game also providing a means of combating the Bishop's Opening.

I complete this survey with the game Van de Mortel-Onischuk, a good antidote to the Centre Game (1 e4 e5 2 d4 exd4 3 Qxd4) in which Black adopts a kingside fianchetto. There was no need for Black to indulge in complications with 10...Ndb4 but it worked out nicely for him in the end.

Summary

The ancient openings examined in this chapter are amongst those that cause the most concern to players considering 1...e5 as their main line defence. It is true that they contain many tricky lines, but by making good selections I believe that Black can steer clear of the hidden reefs.

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4...Nf6 5 Bc4 Nc6 6 d3 Bg4 7 Na4 - Munoz-Davies
 7 h3 - Chigorin-Pillsbury

□ Munoz,L

■ Davies,N

Correspondence

[Nigel Davies]

2005

1.e4 e5 2.f4 Bc5 3.Nf3 d6 4.Nc3

[The alternative plan is to build a broad pawn centre with 4.c3 as in Niedermaier-Sonntag. The text aims for sound and sensible development for the time being and hopes for some pressure on the f-file later on.]

4...Nf6 5.Bc4 Nc6

[Hellers-I.Sokolov, Biel 1989, saw Black try the interesting 5...0-0 6.d3 c6!? (6...Ng4 gets nowhere after 7.Qe2) 7.fxe5 (7.f5 d5 8.Bb3 dxe4 9.dxe4 Qxd1+ 10.Kxd1 Nbd7 11.Bg5 Bd4 12.Re1 Nc5 gave Black good counterplay in Martin Gonzalez-Reinaldo Castineira, Cala Galdana 2001) 7...dxe5 8.Bg5 Be6 9.Bb3 Nbd7 10.Qd2 a5 11.Be3 Bxe3 12.Qxe3 Ng4 13.Qd2 Bxb3 14.axb3 Qb6 15.h3 Qe3+ 16.Qe2 Qxe2+ , and a draw was agreed in this equal position.]

6.d3 Bg4

The most principled and natural reply, which offers Black a level game.
[Of the alternatives I quite like 6...a6 , although White is slightly better after 7.fxe5 dxe5 8.Bg5 .]

7.Na4

The main line, aiming for the bishop pair at the cost of some time.
[For 7.h3 see the next game, Chigorin-Pillsbury.]

[One other possibility is 7.Bb5 , when the active exf4! (7...0-0 8.Bxc6 bxc6 9.fxe5 dxe5 10.h3! was better for White in Spangenberg-Farah, Buenos Aires 1992 ;as was 7...Nd7 8.Bxc6 bxc6 9.h3 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 exf4 11.Bxf4 Qh4+ 12.Bg3 Qf6 13.Qxf6 Nxf6 14.Rf1 in the game Capablanca-Fairhurst, Castleton 1922) 8.h3 (8.Bxf4 Nh5 9.Bd2 0-0 also gives Black a good game) 8...Bxf3 9.Qxf3 0-0 10.Bxc6 bxc6 11.Bxf4 Qb8 12.0-0-0 Bd4 gave Black good counterplay in Spice-Cobb, Swansea 2001.]

7...0-0

[Black has a solid alternative in 7...Bb6 , when 8.Nxb6 (8.Bb5 0-0 9.Bxc6 bxc6 10.h3 Bxf3 11.Qxf3 d5 12.fxe5 dxe4 13.dxe4 Nd7 14.Bf4 Qe7 15.Qc3 Rfe8 16.0-0-0 Nxe5 left White with very little in A.Minasian-Mamedyarov, Batumi 2002) 8...axb6 9.c3 (9.0-0 Nd4 10.fxe5 Bxf3 11.gxf3 dxe5 12.f4 exf4 13.Bxf4 b5 14.Bxf7+!? Kxf7 15.e5 Re8 16.Rf2 Kg8 17.exf6 Qxf6 was fine for Black in Vinokurov-Ponomariov, Voronezh 2003) 9...d5?! (9...Nh5 looks preferable, e.g. 10.f5 Na5 11.Bb5+ c6 12.Ba4 d5 13.0-0 b5 14.Bc2 dxe4 15.dxe4 Qxd1 16.Rxd1 0-0) 10.exd5 Nxd5 11.h3 Bxf3 12.Qxf3 Nxf4 13.0-0 0-0 14.Bxf4 exf4 15.Qxf4 left Black under pressure in Todorovic-Blagojevic, Herceg Novi 2001.]

[Less good is 7...exf4 8.Nxc5 dxc5 9.Bxf4 Nh5 (9...Qe7 10.h3 Bxf3 11.Qxf3 was better for White in Shabalov-Stamnov, Philadelphia 2000) 10.Be3 Qe7 (10...0-0 11.0-0 Ne5 12.Nxe5 Bxd1 13.Nxf7 Rxf7 14.Bxf7+ Kh8 15.Raxd1 Nf6 16.Bxc5 b6 17.Bf2 Ng4 18.Bd5 c6 19.Be6 Nxf2 20.Rxf2 left White with more than enough for the queen in Spielmann-Schlechter, Ostend 1906 ; 10...Nd4 11.Bxd4 cxd4 12.Bxf7+ Kxf7 13.Ne5+ Kg8 14.Qxg4 won quickly in Spielmann-Caro, Berlin 1907 ;and 10...Ne5 can end in tears for Black after 11.Nxe5 Bxd1 12.Bxf7+ Ke7 13.Bxc5+ Kf6 14.0-0+ Kxe5 15.Rf5#) 11.Bb5 f5 12.Bxc6+ and Black had inadequate compensation for his weak pawns in Alekhine-Tenner, Cologne 1911.]

8.Nxc5

[After 8.f5 Black can play Bxf3 9.Qxf3 Nd4 10.Qd1 b5 , for example 11.Nxc5 bxc4 12.Na4 cxd3 13.cxd3 Nxe4!? 14.dxe4 Qh4+ 15.Kf1 Qxe4 with three pawns and a vulnerable white king for the piece.]

8...dxc5 9.0-0

Alternatives leave Black with an excellent game:

[9.h3 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 b5 11.Bb3 Nd4 puts White in difficulties, for example 12.Qd1 (12.Qe3? exf4 13.Qxf4 Re8 14.Be3 c4! won quickly for Black in Barletta-Neiman, Evry 2003) 12...exf4 13.Bxf4 a5 14.c3 a4! 15.cxd4 axb3 16.Qxb3 Nh5 17.0-0 Qxd4+ 18.Kh1 Nxf4 19.Rxf4 c6 when Black is active and White has pawn weaknesses.]

[9.c3 should be met by Qd6! , intending ...Rad8 and ...Na5.]

9...Qd6

[Alternatively Black can try 9...Nh5 , although I rejected it during the game due to 10.h3 Bxf3 11.Qxf3 Nxf4 12.Bxf4 Nd4 (12...exf4 13.Qxf4 Qd4+ 14.Qf2 Qxf2+ 15.Kxf2 gave White slightly the better endgame in Pablo Marin-Marin, Roses 1992) 13.Qh5! (13.Bxe5 Nxf3+ 14.Rxf3 Kh8 15.Bc3 f6! and White had insufficient compensation for the queen in Forster-Mikhalchishin, Leipzig 2002) 13...exf4 14.Rxf4 g6 15.Rg4 Nxc2 16.Rxg6+ (maybe White can even play for a win via 16.Rf1!?) 16...hxg6 17.Qxg6+ with a draw by perpetual check.]

10.h3 This seems to be the first game in which this obvious move was played.

[Fedorov-Marin, Eforie Nord 2000, went 10.f5 Nd4 11.a4 (after 11.c3 Black can even consider b5!?, for example 12.cxd4 Bxf3 13.Qxf3 bxc4 14.dxe5 Qxe5 15.dxc4 Rfe8 will recover the pawn with active play for Black) 11...a6 12.c3 b5 13.cxd4 (13.Bxf7+ Rxf7 14.cxd4 Bxf3 15.Qxf3 Qxd4+ 16.Be3 Qxd3 favours Black because e4 is also weak) 13...Bxf3 (13...bxc4? 14.dxe5) 14.Qxf3 bxc4 15.dxe5 Qxe5 16.Bf4 (16.dxc4 Rfe8 with good play for Black) 16...Qd4+ 17.Be3 Qxb2 18.Bxc5 Rfe8 and although Black stood better here, he agreed a draw.]

[10.Qe1 isn't good thanks to Bxf3 11.Rxf3 Nd4 12.Rf2 Ng4 etc.]

10...Bxf3 11.Qxf3

[11.Rxf3 is answered by Nxe4! .]

11...b5! 12.Bb3 c4 Black needs to use his temporary lead in development before White's bishops start to come into their own.

[I didn't like 12...Nd4 13.Qf2 c4 that much because of 14.Be3! , when Ne6 15.dxc4 Nxe4 16.fxe5 Qxe5 17.Qf5 gives White a two bishop endgame.]

13.dxc4 bxc4 14.Ba4

[14.Bxc4? Qc5+ should be avoided.]

14...Nd4 15.Qd1 Rab8 16.c3

[In playing my last move I spent time considering 16.Be3 as a possible reply, intending to meet this with Rfd8 (16...Ne6 17.Qxd6 cxd6 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.b3 is better for White for the usual reason of the two bishops) 17.c3 Qa6!? 18.cxd4 exd4 19.Bc1 (19.Bf2 Nxe4 20.Bh4 Rd5 also gives Black good compensation) 19...Nxe4 20.Qf3 f5 with more than enough for the piece.]

16...Ne6 17.Qe2

[After 17.Qxd6 cxd6 18.fxe5 (18.f5 Nc5) 18...dxe5 19.Bc2 Nc5 20.Be3 Rxb2 the endgame favours Black.]

17...Nxf4 I liked this move because it got rid of White's bishops and staked out some dark squares.

[17...Qd3 was tempting, but I thought White could get away with 18.Qxd3 cxd3 19.Bc6 Nxf4 20.Bxf4 exf4 21.b4 , intending to meet Rb6 with 22.b5 .]

18.Bxf4 exf4 19.e5 Qc5+ 20.Kh2 Nd5 21.Rac1?! A very mysterious move by my opponent.

[The natural 21.Rae1 must surely be better, though I still like Black after Rb6 .]

21...Rb6 22.Bd7?! And this makes matters worse.

[After 22.Bc2 Black can play Ne3 23.Rxf4 Qxe5 24.g3 f5 , and after 25.Bxf5 Rxf5 26.Rxf5 Qxf5 27.Qxe3 Rxb2+ 28.Kg1 h6 Black has an extra pawn and much the better king.]

22...Qe7 23.Ba4

[A better try was 23.Bf5 though this still favours Black after g6 24.Bb1 Rfb8 25.Qe4 (25.Qxc4 Ne3) 25...c6 etc.]

23...Re6 24.Rce1? Although this loses it is not easy to find a good move for White.

[For example, 24.Qd2 Rd8 25.Rcd1 Rxe5 26.Rfe1 (26.Rxf4 Re2 etc.) 26...Rxe1 27.Rxe1

Ne3 28.Qf2 Qg5 29.Kg1 Qd5 and Black wins.]

[Another try was 24.Rf2 but then Rxe5 25.Qxc4 Ne3 26.Qc6 (26.Qxf4 Re4) 26...Qh4 27.Kg1 Rg5 is very strong.]

24...Ne3 25.Rxf4 Rxe5 26.Kh1

[Or 26.Qf3 Ng4+ 27.Rxg4 Rxe1 etc.]

26...Ng4 27.Re4 Rxe4

0-1

C30

□ **Chigorin,M**

■ **Pillsbury,H**

Hastings

[*Nigel Davies*]

1895

1.e4 e5 2.f4 Bc5 3.Nf3 d6 4.Bc4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.d3 Bg4 7.h3

[7.Na4 later superseded this move as White's most testing alternative.]

7...Bxf3 8.Qxf3 Nd4 9.Qg3!

[After 9.Qd1?! Black gets good counterplay with c6 followed by 10... b5.]

9...Nxc2+?! I now believe this is too risky,

[and that the correct move is the simple and cold-blooded 9...0-0 . Tartakover then gave 10.fxe5 (10.f5 Nxc2+ 11.Kd1 Nxa1 12.Bg5 c6 leaves White with very little compensation) 10...dxe5 11.Bg5 Nxc2+ 12.Kd1 , but this doesn't seem to be a problem for Black after Nxa1 13.Nd5 Be7 etc.]

[Alternatives don't look too promising for Black ; for example, after 9...exf4?! 10.Qxg7 Rf8 11.Kd1 Qe7 12.Rf1 Rg8 (12...0-0-0? 13.Rxf4 is bad for Black) 13.Qh6 Rxg2 14.Bxf4 (14.Qxf4 is also possible here) 14...Nxc2!? (14...Rg6 15.Qh4 Ne6 16.Bd2 leaves White with a positional advantage) 15.Bg5 Nxa1 (15...Rxg5 16.Qxg5 Ne3+ 17.Ke2 Nxf1 18.Rxf1 Bd4 19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.Qxd5) 16.Bxf6 Qf8 17.Qf4 White has a huge initiative for the sacrificed exchange.]

[9...Qe7 just looks rather passive for Black: 10.fxe5 dxe5 (10...Nxc2+? 11.Kd1 Nh5 12.Qg4 Nxa1 13.Qxh5 g6 14.Qh6 dxe5 15.Bg5 gives White a powerful attack and the knight on a1 is still trapped) 11.Kd1 (11.Bb3 c6 12.Rf1 0-0-0 13.Bg5 also looks quite good) 11...c6 12.a4 (preventing ...b7-b5, which is one of Black's usual means of counterplay) Rg8 13.Rf1 h6 (13...0-0-0 14.Ne2 Kb8 15.Nxd4 Bxd4 16.c3 Bb6 17.Kc2 showed that Hromadka had learned something from his game as Black against Rubinstein, giving him an edge in Hromadka-Prokes, Prague 1927) 14.Ne2 0-0-0 15.Nxd4 Bxd4 16.c3 Bb6 17.a5 Bc7 18.Be3 Kb8 19.Kc2 , and White was clearly better in Rubinstein-Hromadka, Maehrisch Ostrau 1923.]

10.Kd1 Nxa1 11.Qxg7 Kd7?

[After 11...Rf8 'theory' gives 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.Bg5 Be7 14.Rf1 as winning for White. When I first looked at this position I thought that Black could play Qd4 15.Bxf6 0-0-0 , but the variation 16.Qg4+ Kb8 17.Bxe7 Qxc4 18.Kc1 Rxd3 19.Bxf8 Rxc3+ 20.bxc3 Qxf1+ 21.Kb2 Qf2+ 22.Kxa1 Qc2 23.Bh6 Qxc3+ 24.Kb1 Qb4+ 25.Kc1 Qc3+ 26.Kd1 forces me to revise my opinion.]

12.fxe5 dxe5 13.Rf1 Be7 14.Qxf7? Now it is White's turn to go astray.

[It was subsequently discovered that 14.Bg5! is much better, and it looks very strong after Rg8 (14...Nh5? 15.Qxf7 Qe8 16.Qf5+! Kd8 17.Qxe5 wins for White ,while 14...Kc8 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Qxf6 sees White win material because the knight on a1 is trapped) 15.Qxf7 Rxg5 16.Qe6+ Ke8 17.Rxf6 Rg7 18.Qxe5 c6 19.Rf3 Rg5 20.Rf8+! followed by mate.]

14...Kc8 15.Bg5 Rf8 16.Qe6+ Kb8 17.Bh6

[In the event of 17.Qxe5 Black defends with Ng8! 18.Rxf8 Qxf8 etc.]

17...Re8 18.Qxe5 Nd7

[18...Ng8 is also good. Black loses this game only after making several mistakes, although from a theoretical point of view it is irrelevant given White's improvement on move 14.]

19.Qh5! Nb6 20.Bd5 a6 21.Kd2 Nxd5 22.Nxd5 Rg8 23.g4 Bb4+!?

[Black should play 23...Bg5+ when a draw is possible after 24.Bxg5 Rxg5 25.Qf7 c6 26.Qf4+ Ka7 27.Qe3+ Kb8 28.Qf4+ etc.]

24.Nxb4 Qd4! 25.Nc2?

[25.Bf8! was better because Qxb2+ 26.Ke3 leaves the king safe and White with powerful threats of his own.]

25...Nxc2 26.Kxc2 Rg6

[26...Rd8 improves, when 27.Rf3 is answered by Qa4+ 28.Kc1 Qxa2 , winning another pawn and exposing White's king.]

27.Bd2 Rd6 28.Rf3 Qa4+ 29.Kc1 Qxa2 30.Bc3 Rc6 31.Qxh7 b5 32.Qe7 Qb3?

[Black should at least activate the rook on a8 with 32...Kb7 - not that this would necessarily save him.]

**33.Kd2 a5 34.Rf5! Kb7 35.Rc5 Raa6 36.g5 Rxc5 37.Qxc5 Rc6 38.Qd5 Qa4 39.g6 b4
40.g7 bxc3+ 41.bxc3 Qa1 42.g8Q Qxc3+ 43.Ke2 Qc2+ 44.Kf3 Qd1+ 45.Kg3 Qg1+ 46.Kh4
Qf2+ 47.Kh5 Qf3+ 48.Qg4 Qf6 49.Qgf5 Qh6+ 50.Kg4 Qg7+ 51.Qg5
1-0**

C30

□ **Niedermaier,H**

■ **Sonntag,H**

German Bundesliga

[Nigel Davies]

1986

1.e4 e5 2.f4 Bc5 3.Nf3 d6 4.c3 This is White's main alternative to 4 Nc3, aiming to build a broad pawn centre with 5 d4.

[The only other move of interest is the Evans Gambitesque 4.b4!? . But Hector-Smyslov, Malmö 1997, saw the former world champion defuse it nicely after Bb6 (4...Bxb4 5.c3 Bc5 6.d4 gives White compensation) 5.Bb2 Nf6 6.fxe5 (6.Nc3 0-0 7.Bc4 Nc6 8.d3 exf4 9.a3 Bg4 10.Rf1 Be3 11.Ne2 d5 was better for Black in Loewy-Schlechter, Vienna 1904) 6...dxe5 7.Bxe5 (7.Nxe5?! is strongly met by Bd4) 7...0-0 8.Nc3 (8.d3?! Nc6 9.Bxf6 Qxf6 10.c3 Re8 11.Be2 Nxb4!/? 12.e5 Rxe5! 13.d4 Re3 14.cxb4 Bg4! would leave White in desperate trouble) 8...Re8 9.Bxf6 Qxf6 10.Bd3 c6 11.Na4 Bc7 12.0-0 Bg4 13.Nc3 Qd6 , and Black had excellent compensation for the pawn.]

4...Nf6

[There is another interesting possibility in 4...Bb6 , which gets the bishop out of harm's way of d2-d4. Murey-Marcelin, Saint Quentin 2000, continued 5.d4?! (5.Na3 Nf6 6.fxe5 dxe5 7.Nc4 Nxe4 8.Nxb6 axb6 9.Qe2 Bf5 10.d3 Nc5 11.Qxe5+ Qe7 12.Qxe7+ Kxe7 gave Black the more comfortable endgame in Hector-G.Giorgadze, La Coruna 1995) 5...exd4 6.cxd4 Bg4 7.Be3 (7.Bb5+ c6 8.Be2 Nf6 9.Nc3 0-0 10.h3 Bxf3 11.Bxf3 d5 12.e5 Ne4 13.0-0 f6 14.Be3 fxe5 15.fxe5 Ng3 16.Re1 Nd7 was fine for Black in Day-Curdo, North Bay 1998) 7...Nf6 (7...d5 looks interesting here, for example 8.e5 Ne7 9.Be2 Nf5 10.Bf2 Nd7 11.0-0 c6 12.Nc3 Nf8 , intending 13...Ne6, creates counterplay against White's d4-pawn) 8.Nc3 Nxe4 (8...d5 looks playable here, too, e.g. 9.e5 Ne4 10.Bd3 f5) 9.Nxe4 Qe7 10.Qc2 f5 11.h3 , and now fxe4 looks okay for Black (instead of 11...Qxe4?! 12.Qxe4+ fxe4 13.hxg4 exf3 14.gxf3 , when White stood better) after 12.hxg4 exf3 13.Kf2 Nc6 14.Bb5 0-0-0 15.Bxc6 bxc6

16.Kxf3 Rde8 .]

5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 Bb6 7.e5

[White's other natural move is 7.Nc3 , when I like Bg4! , putting immediate pressure on d4. After 8.Be2 (on other moves Black gets good counterplay, for example 8.Bc4 0-0 9.Be3 Re8 10.Qc2 Nxe4 11.Nxe4 Bxf3 12.gxf3 d5 ;or 8.Be3 0-0 9.h3 Bd7!/? 10.Bc4 Bc6 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5 Nd5 13.Bg5 Qd7 etc.) 8...0-0 9.0-0 Nc6 10.Be3 Re8 11.Qd3 Nxe4! 12.Nxe4 Bf5 13.Nfg5 d5 Black recovered the piece with the better game in Hoyos Millan-Bisguier, New York 1991]

7...dxe5 8.fxe5 Nd5 9.Bg5

White should play this before Black brings the bishop out to e6. [9.Bc4 Be6 10.Nc3 Nc6 (10...Nxc3?! 11.bxc3 Bxc4 12.Qa4+ would win the piece back with a good game) 11.Bb5 (11.Bg5 Qd7 is similar) 11...Qd7 12.0-0 0-0-0 13.Bg5 Rdf8 14.Qd2 was Prates-Roselli Mailhe, Santana do Livramento 2002 (14.Na4 might have been better, but Black still gets good counterplay with f6), and now 14...f6! would have given Black excellent counterplay after 15.exf6 gxf6 16.Bh6 Rfg8 etc.]

9...Qd7 10.Nc3 h6 11.Bh4?!

Allowing the knight into e3, after which White's d4-pawn falls to a tactic. [In Westerinen-Sepp, Finland 1996, White played 11.Bd2 , but after Nc6 12.Bb5 a6 13.Ba4 0-0 14.Rc1 Nde7 15.Be3 Nf5 16.Bxc6 bxc6 (16...Qxc6 is also worth considering) 17.Bf2 Rd8 18.Ne2 Black could have obtained excellent counterplay with c5 (18...Ba5+ 19.Nc3 Bb6 was less good in the game), intending 19.dxc5 Ba5+ 20.Nc3 Rb8 etc.]

11...Ne3 12.Qd3 Bxd4 13.Nxd4

[13.Qxd4?? Nc2+ is final.]

13...Qxd4 14.Qxd4 Nc2+ 15.Kf2 Nxd4 16.Nd5

At first sight White has good play for the pawn, but over the following moves this will evaporate. The key factor is that Black gets his knights to good squares, the first arriving on e6 and the second hopping into d5.

Ne6 17.Rc1 c6 18.Ne7 Nd7 19.Nxc8 Rxc8 20.Re1 Nb6 21.Be2 0-0 22.Rhf1 Nf4 23.Kg1 Nxe2+ 24.Rxe2 Rfe8 25.Bf2 Nd5 26.Bc5 Re6 27.Ba3 Rd8

[27...f6 is also strong, for example 28.exf6 Rxe2 29.f7+ Kh7 30.f8Q Rxf8 31.Rxf8 b5 when White is in trouble.]

28.b3 Rd7 29.g3 Ne7 30.Bb2 c5 31.Rff2 Nc6

Targeting both the e5 pawn and the d4-square. 32.Rd2 Ree7 33.Rd6 Rxd6 34.exd6 Re1+ 35.Kg2

[After 35.Rf1 Rxf1+ 36.Kxf1 b6 , followed by 37...f6 and ...Kf7, White is losing the endgame.]

35...Rd1 36.Ba3 b6 37.Re2 Kf8 38.b4

Desperately trying to generate some activity, but in fact just hastening the end. cxb4 39.Rc2 Rxd6 40.Bc1 Ke8 41.Bf4 Re6 42.h4 Kd7 43.h5 Re4 44.Kf3 f5 45.Rd2+ Nd4+ 46.Kf2 Kc6 47.Be3 Ne6 48.Rc2+ Nc5 49.Rd2 a5 50.Rd8 a4 51.Rg8 b3

0-1

C29

□ Hellers,F

■ Karpov,A

Haninge

1990

[Nigel Davies]

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.f4

The old main line of the Vienna. [For 3.g3 and 3 Bc4 see the games Krivec-Mikhalchishin and Cornette-Godena respectively.]

3...d5

This is far and away the best reply, setting about taming White's opening right from the outset. 4.fxe5 White has tried a couple of unconvincing alternatives:

[4.d3 can be answered by exf4 , when 5.e5 (5.Bxf4 is strongly met by Bb4 ;and 5.exd5 Nxd5

would give White equality at best) 5...d4 6.Nce2 Nd5 7.Nxf4 Bb4+ 8.Kf2 Nc6 9.Nf3 0-0 was clearly better for Black in Lombardy-Smyslov, Teesside 1975.]

[4.exd5 Nxd5 5.fxe5 (5.Nxd5 Qxd5 6.fxe5 Qxe5+ is at least equal for Black) 5...Nxc3 6.bxc3 Qh4+ 7.Ke2 Bg4+ 8.Nf3 Nc6 9.d4 0-0-0 10.Qe1 (10.Bf4 f6 sees Black open the centre to the horror of White's king) 10...Qh5 (10...Rxd4 11.cxd4 Nxd4+ 12.Kd1 Nxf3 13.Qxh4 Nxh4+ 14.Be2 is less convincing) 11.Kf2 Be7 , followed by ...f7-f6, gives Black more than enough for the pawn.]

4...Nxe4 5.Nf3 The most popular of several moves, developing the kingside and covering the h4-square. There are a number of alternatives which are dealt with as follows:

[5.d3 Nxc3 (5...Qh4+ is known to be poor in view of 6.g3 Nxg3 7.Nf3 Qh5 8.Nxd5!) 6.bxc3 c5 (I prefer this to the more common 6...Nc6 ,or 6...d4) 7.Nf3 Be7 8.Be2 Nc6 9.0-0 Be6 10.Qe1 h6 (the immediate 10...g5!? is also worth considering) 11.Qf2 (11.Qg3 g5 12.Rb1 is met by Qc7 followed by ...0-0-0) 11...Qa5 12.Bd2 Qa4 13.Qg3 0-0-0! 14.Ne1?! Bh4 and Black stood well in Milner Barry-Haygarth, Sunderland 1966.]

[5.Qe2 meets with Nc6 , for example 6.Nf3 (6.Nxe4 Nd4!) 6...Bf5 7.Qb5 (7.d3 Nxc3 8.bxc3 d4 9.g3 dxc3 10.Bg2 Bc5 11.Be3 Bxe3 12.Qxe3 0-0 was better for Black in Pel-Van den Doel, Dieren 1998) 7...a6 8.Qxd5 (8.Qxb7 is refuted by Nb4 9.Nxe4 Bxe4 10.Nd4 Bc5 11.Nc6 Qh4+ 12.g3 Nxc2+ 13.Kd1 Qg4+ 14.Be2 Qc8 15.Qxc8+ Rxc8 according to Emms) 8...Nb4 9.Qxd8+ Rxd8 10.Bd3 Nxd3+ 11.cxd3 Rxd3 12.Nh4 Nxc3 13.Nxf5 Nb5 was clearly better for Black in K.Berg-Spassky, German Bundesliga 1987.]

[5.Qf3 is also met by Nc6 . Then 6.Bb5 (6.Nxe4? Nd4! 7.Qf4 dxe4 8.Bc4 Bf5 9.c3 g5! 10.Bxf7+ Kxf7 11.Qf2 e3! was good for Black in Boros-Lilienthal, Budapest 1933) 6...Nxc3 7.bxc3 (or 7.dxc3 Qh4+ 8.g3 Qe4+) 7...Qh4+ 8.g3 Qe4+ 9.Qxe4 dxe4 10.Bxc6+ bxc6 11.Ne2 Bh3 (11...Ba6?! 12.Rf1 c5?! 13.Rf4 Bb7 14.c4 g6 15.Rb1 Bc6 16.Nc3 f5 17.exf6 Bd6 18.Rf2 Kf7 19.Ba3 Rhe8 20.Ke2 a6 was Vulfson-Lilienthal, Kuibyshev 1942, and now 21.g4 seems rather good for White ,but Tartakower's suggestion of 11...c5 looks quite promising) 12.Nf4 Bg4 13.d4 g5 (Tseitlin and Glazkov suggest 13...exd3 14.cxd3 0-0-0 15.d4 c5 16.h3 Bf5 17.Be3 cxd4 18.cxd4 Bb4+ 19.Kf2 g5 20.Ne2 h6 as being slightly better for Black, an assessment that looks reasonable because White's pieces are inhibited by his pawns) 14.Ng2 Be7 15.h3 Be6 16.Ne3 h5 17.Rb1 0-0-0 and Black stood quite well in Hromadka-Bogoljubow, Mahrisch-Ostrau 1923.]

5...Be7 Black has several other moves here but I like Karpov's simple and economical approach. He develops a piece, prepares to castle and provides a support square for his knight on g5.

6.Qe2

[6.d3 is well met by Nxc3 7.bxc3 c5 , transposing to Milner Barry-Haygarth in the note to White's 5th.]

6...Ng5!? 7.d4 c6! Preparing to bring his queen's knight to e6 via a6 and c7.

[Black has also tried 7...Ne6 , 7...0-0, 7...Nxf3+, 7...Bg4 and 7...Nc6, but none of them with great success.]

8.Qf2 White has tried a couple of alternatives:

[8.Be3 Bg4 9.h3 (9.0-0-0 Ne4 10.Qe1 Bxf3 11.gxf3 Bh4 12.Qe2 Nxc3 13.bxc3 Qa5 was good for Black in Driessen-Dutreeuw, Gent 2000) 9...Nxf3+ 10.gxf3 Bf5 11.0-0-0 Na6 12.Qg2 g6 13.h4 Nb4 14.Rd2 Qa5 15.a3 Na6 16.Nb1 was Martorelli-Lantini, Montecatini Terme 1999, and now Nc7 , followed by 17...Ne6, would have been at least equal for Black.]

[8.Nxg5 Bxg5 9.Qf2 (9.Be3 Be6 10.0-0-0 Nd7 11.Qd2 Bxe3 12.Qxe3 Qe7 13.Qg3 g6 14.Bd3 0-0-0 was equal and agreed drawn in C.Hansen-Tempone, Dortmund 1980 ; 9.Qh5 Bxc1 10.Rxc1 was tried in Janosevic-Osnos, Budapest 1965, and now Qb6!? 11.Qd1 0-0 would have given Black good play ,while 9.Bxg5 Qxg5 10.Qd2 h6 11.Bd3 Be6 12.0-0-0 Nd7 13.Kb1 Qxd2 produced a fairly even endgame in Kytoniemi-Koskela, Jyvaskyla 1994) 9...Bh4 10.g3 Be7 11.Bd3 was Hector-Schandorff, Bellinge 1991, and now Na6 (rather than the game's 11...Be6)

12.0-0 0-0 13.Bf5 (13.Ne2 Nb4 14.Bf5 Bxf5 15.Qxf5 Qc8 is an equalizer) 13...Nc7 14.Ne2 f6 should give Black at least equality]

8...Nxf3+ 9.Qxf3 Qb6! 10.Qf2

[After 10.Qg3 Black can play g6 and meet 11.Qf2 with f6 12.exf6 Rf8 . His simple and energetic play gives him excellent chances.]

10...f6 11.Qg3 Be6! Giving up a pawn to accelerate development.

[11...0-0 allows White to develop the queenside with 12.Bh6 Rf7 13.0-0-0]

[while 11...Qxd4? would be too risky after 12.Qxg7 Qxe5+ 13.Be2 Rf8 14.0-0 etc.]

12.Qxg7 Rg8 13.Qxh7 Qxd4 14.Bd2 With the position being blown wide open White must also develop as quickly as he can.

[He could also try 14.exf6 Qxf6 15.Bd2 Rh8! 16.Qd3 , but then Bf5 17.Qf3 Bxc2 18.Qxf6 Bxf6 is a slightly favourable endgame for Black.]

14...Qxe5+

[Another possibility is 14...fxe5 with a strong pawn centre. But the text is also not bad.]

15.Be2 Qf5 16.Qh6 Qxc2

[16...d4?! is less good due to 17.Bd3 Qg4 18.Ne2 , intending to castle long.]

17.0-0 Kd7 18.Qe3

[Both 18.Rae1 Qg6]

[and 18.Bh5 Na6 , followed by ...Nc7, also favour Black.]

18...Qg6 19.g3 b6 20.Kh1! Bc5 21.Qf3 Bd4 22.Bf4 Bg4 23.Qg2 Bxc3?! Not the best, as White now gets some serious counterplay.

[In his notes to the game Karpov suggested 23...Bxe2 24.Qxe2 (or 24.Nxe2 Be5 25.Bxe5 fxe5 26.Rf2 Kc7 27.Raf1 Nd7 etc) 24...Bxc3 25.bxc3 Re8 with a much improved version of the game.]

24.Bxg4+ Qxg4 25.bxc3 Re8 26.c4

[White could also get rid of the minor pieces with 26.Bxb8 Raxb8 27.Rxf6 . Black is still better after Re2 , but there's a lot of fight left.]

26...Re2 27.Rf2 Rxf2 28.Qxf2 Na6

[After 28...Qf5 White plays 29.Re1 , intending 30 Qe2.]

29.cxd5 Qh5?! Were this not Karpov playing Black here I'd say the text was a sign of panic.

[29...cxd5 must surely be better.]

30.dxc6+ Kxc6 31.Rc1+

[In his notes Karpov suggested that White exchange queens here with 31.Qg2+! Qd5 32.Rd1! Qxg2+ 33.Kxg2 . With a bishop plus an outside passed pawn against a knight White would have a clear advantage.]

31...Nc5 32.Be3 Rf8

[In the event of 32...Qd5+ 33.Kg1 f5 White has 34.Qf1! , threatening 35 Bxc5 and 36 Qa6+. The remaining moves look like a desperate time scramble with White's position deteriorating before he loses on time.]

33.a4 Qd5+ 34.Kg1 f5 35.a5 Re8 36.axb6 axb6 37.Bxc5?! bxc5 38.Rf1 Re5 39.Qc2 c4 White isn't better any more, although if his flag hadn't fallen he wouldn't lose.

0-1

□ Krivec,J

■ Mikhalchishin,A

Bled

[Nigel Davies]

2002

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 This deceptively quiet move has been favoured by such stars as Boris Spassky and Nigel Short. For the time being White develops the kingside and reinforces control of the centre, but later expansion with either d2-d4 or f2-f4 is possible.

c6! But this excellent reply might well put 3 g3 out of business, as Black simply prepares ...d7-d5. [The immediate 3...d5 gives White more hope for the initiative after 4.exd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bd6 7.Nf3 , intending 0-0 and d2-d4.]

4.d4 This is one of the standard replies Black uses against the Ponziani (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3), so with colours reversed and an extra g2-g3 for White it shouldn't be too bad. But neither this nor the alternatives seem to achieve much:

[4.Nge2 may be White's best, intending to meet d5 with 5.exd5 cxd5 6.d4 , for example Nc6 7.Bg2 exd4 (7...e4 8.0-0 Be7 9.f3 exf3 10.Bxf3 0-0 11.Nf4 is better for White thanks to weak d5-pawn) 8.Nxd4 Bc5 9.Qe2+ Qe7 10.Qxe7+ Kxe7 11.Nxc6+ bxc6 12.Na4 Bd6 13.Be3 was fairly equal in Hopper-Mannion, Aberdeen 1998.]

[4.Bg2 is less good after d5 5.exd5 cxd5 6.d4 exd4 7.Qxd4 Nc6 8.Qd1 d4 9.Nce2 Bc5 10.Nf3 0-0 11.0-0 Bf5 , when Black already had the better game in Krivec-Mikhalchishin, Maribor 2003.]

[By analogy with the Ponziani, 4.Nf3 might be worth a try, although Black seems to be doing well after d5 5.exd5 e4 6.Nd4 (6.Ne5 cxd5 leaves White's 3 g3 looking unnecessary and even weakening) 6...Qb6 7.Nb3 cxd5 , with good free play for his pieces.]

4...Bb4

[After 4...Qa5 White can play simply 5.Bg2 .]

5.dxe5

[In this position 5.Bg2 can be answered by d5 , for example 6.exd5 (6.dxe5 Nxe4 7.Bxe4 dxe4 8.Qxd8+ Kxd8 9.Bd2 Bf5 10.0-0-0 Nd7 was rather better for Black in Kobas-Benjamin, Parsippany 2004) 6...Nxd5 7.Bd2 (7.Nge2 might be an improvement, trying to get castled as quickly as possible) 7...Bxc3 8.bxc3 exd4 9.cxd4 0-0 10.Ne2 (10.Nf3 is strongly met by Re8+ , ruling out White castling) 10...Re8 11.0-0 Bg4 12.f3 Bf5 13.Re1 (if 13.c4?! Bd3! 14.Ba5 Bxe2 15.Bxd8 Bxd1 with the better endgame) 13...Na6 14.c3 c5 15.Qb3 Nb6 and Black stood well in Wahls-Ivanchuk, FIDE World Championship, Las Vegas 1999.]

5...Nxe4 6.Qd4

[The other possibility is 6.Qg4 but this seems to be well met by d5 (6...Qa5 does not seem as good after 7.Qxg7 Rf8 8.Bh6 , for example Bxc3+ 9.bxc3 Qxc3+ 10.Kd1 Qxa1+ 11.Ke2 Kd8 12.Qxf8+ Kc7 13.Bf4 with the better game for White in an admittedly chaotic position) 7.Qxg7 Rf8 8.Bd3 (8.Bh6 Qb6!) 8...Nxc3 9.Bd2 Qa5 10.bxc3 Bxc3 11.Rd1 Bxd2+ 12.Rxd2 Be6 , followed by 13...Nd7 and 14...0-0-0.]

6...Qa5 7.Nge2 f5 8.exf6 Nxf6 9.a3 Be7 10.b4

[Rather than creating this weakness on the queenside, White might be better off playing 10.Bd2 , when 0-0 11.0-0-0 d5 is equal.]

10...Qb6 11.Be3 Qxd4 12.Bxd4 d5 13.Nf4 0-0 14.Bg2 Bd6 15.Nce2 Bf5?! Giving White the glint of an opportunity.

[15...a5 16.b5 Nbd7 looks better, intending the bring the knight to e5 and then c4.]

16.Rc1?

[Missing 16.Bxf6 gxf6 (16...Rxf6 17.Nxd5 cxd5 18.Bxd5+ Rf7 19.0-0-0 leaves White with a rook and two pawns for the two bishops) 17.Nxd5 Bxc2 18.Ne3 when White reverses fortunes

and gets the slightly better game. Now it is a struggle for survival.]

16...a5 17.c3 axb4 18.axb4 Nbd7 19.h4 Ne4

[Black could also play 19...Ne5 , followed by 20...Nc4.]

20.0-0? This loses material.

[20.Rd1 was imperative, although Black is still much better after Ra2 21.0-0 Ne5 .]

20...Nd2 21.Rfe1 Nb3 22.Rcd1 Bc2 23.Ne6?

[23.Nxd5 is a better try, but White doesn't have enough for the exchange after Bxd1 .]

23...Rfe8 24.Nxg7 Rxe2! White is a piece down for nothing.

0-1

C28

□ **Cornette,M**

■ **Godena,M**

Lausanne

[Nigel Davies]

2001

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3

[The Bishop's Opening move order with 2.Bc4 leads back to the game after Nf6 3.d3 (3.d4 exd4 4.Nf3 Nc6 transposes to a Two Knights Defence, while 4 e5 would be strongly met by 4... d5) 3...Nc6 4.Nc3 Na5 , or to the Two Knights again after 4 Nf3.]

2...Nf6 3.Bc4 Nc6

[I prefer this to 3...Nxe4 which can lead to obscure and unnecessary complications after 4.Qh5 (4.Nxe4 d5) 4...Nd6 5.Bb3 Nc6 6.Nb5 g6 7.Qf3 f5 8.Qd5 Qe7 9.Nxc7+ Kd8 10.Nxa8 b6 , or gross simplification after 5 Qxe5+.]

4.d3

[Of course White could play 4.Nf3 , which brings about a Four Knights with the ineffective 4 Bc4 where we've already seen that Nxe4! equalizes.]

4...Na5 An excellent and challenging move, taking the bishop pair at the cost of some time and space.

5.Nge2

[White has a major alternative in 5.Qf3 , but Black still gets a good game by developing and then later capturing on c4. Tischbierek-Almasi, Jenbach 2003, continued d6 6.h3 Be7 7.Nge2 0-0 8.0-0 c6 9.a4 Nxc4! (only now!) 10.dxc4 Be6 11.b3 Qa5! (getting White to misplace the bishop on d2 from whence it takes time to bring it to a3) 12.Bd2 Rfd8 13.Rfd1 Qc7 14.Be3 Qa5 15.Bd2 Qc7 16.Be3 Rd7 17.Rd3 Qa5 18.Rad1 Rad8 19.Bd2 Qc7 20.Be3 Qa5 21.Bd2 Qc7 22.Be3 a6 and although Black was on the positive side of the position the game was eventually drawn.]

[Other moves are less good; for example 5.Bg5 c6 6.a3 h6 7.Be3 d5 8.exd5 cxd5 9.Bb5+ Bd7 10.Bxd7+ Qxd7 11.Bd2 Nc6 was good for Black in Storland-H.Olafsson, Halkidiki 2002.]

[And 5.f4 Nxc4 6.dxc4 Bb4 7.Qd3 (7.fxe5 Nxe4 8.Qd4 Qh4+ 9.g3 Qg4 is very awkward for White) 7...d6 (7...exf4 8.Bxf4 Qe7 9.0-0-0 d6 10.Nf3 gave White's pieces more scope in Van de Oudeweetering-S.Ernst, Leeuwarden 2004) 8.Nf3 Qe7 9.0-0 Bxc3 10.bxc3 Nd7 11.Ba3 0-0 12.Rae1 Re8 13.Kh1 f6 left White short of sufficient compensation for the weak pawns in Keogh-Sanz, Amsterdam 1978.]

5...c6 6.a3 White has tried several other moves:

[6.a4 is quite similar after Nxc4 7.dxc4 , for example Bc5 (7...Be7 8.0-0 d6 9.b3 0-0 10.Ba3 Be6 11.Qd3 Qc7 12.f4 Rad8 13.f5 Bc8 14.Kh1 b6 15.Rad1 Bb7 , aiming for ...d6-d5, was also playable for Black in Charbonneau-Onischuk, Kansas 2003) 8.0-0 d6 9.Qd3 Be6 10.b3 a5 11.h3 0-0 12.Kh1 (12.Be3 Bxe3 13.Qxe3 Qc7 14.Rad1 Rad8 15.f4 exf4 16.Qxf4 Qb6+

17.Kh1 Qc5 was fine for Black in Mitkov-Ibragimov, Connecticut 2005) 12...d5 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.Bg5 dxe4 15.Qg3 Be7 16.Qxe5 Rc8 17.Rad1 Qc7 18.Qb5 Qc5 led to an endgame in which both sides had chances in Miroshnichenko-Malaniuk, Barlinek 2002.]

[6.0-0 Be7 7.Ng3 d6 8.Bb3 (8.a4 Nxc4 9.dxc4 0-0 10.b3 Be6 11.Bb2 g6!? 12.Qe2 h5!? when Black was aggressive in Zavoronkov-Sepp, Tallinn 2005) 8...Nxb3 9.axb3 0-0 10.h3 d5 11.f4 exf4 12.Bxf4 dxe4 13.Ncxe4 Nxe4 14.Nxe4 Bf5 and Black's two bishops secured an edge in Richards-Hebden, Bradford 2002.]

[6.Bg5 Be7 7.Ng3 d6 8.0-0 0-0 9.a3 Nxc4 10.dxc4 Be6 11.Qd3 h6 12.Bxf6 Bxf6 13.Rfd1 was Cappon-Van de Velde, Belgium 2003, and now Bg4 (rather than 13...Be7 14.Nf5 Bxf5 15.exf5 as played in the game) 14.f3 (or 14.Re1 Qb6) 14...Qb6+ 15.Kh1 Be6 would have given Black active counterplay.]

6...Nxc4 Black must take the bishop before it retreats to a2.

7.dxc4 d6

[Black can also develop the bishop on the more active c5-square, for example 7...Bc5 8.0-0 d6 9.Qd3 a6 10.Be3 Bxe3 11.Qxe3 Qe7 12.a4 Be6 13.b3 a5 14.Rad1 0-0 15.Rd3 Rfd8 16.h3 Nd7 earned Black a solid game in Mitkov-Krasenkow, London 1993.]

8.b3

[In Tomescu-Godena, Saint Vincent 1999, White played more actively with 8.Qd3 , but Black was still doing fine after Be7 9.Bg5 (9.0-0 Be6 10.Bg5 h6 11.Bxf6 Bxf6 12.Rad1 Qe7 13.Qxd6 Bxc4 14.Qxe7+ Kxe7 gave Black a pleasant two bishop endgame in Hess-Ippolito, Connecticut 2005) 9...h6 10.Bxf6 Bxf6 11.Rd1 Be6 12.b3 Qa5 13.a4 Rd8 14.0-0 0-0 15.Qf3 Bg5 16.Ng3 g6 , preparing ...f7-f5.]

8...Be6 9.Bb2 d5! Opening up the position for the bishops before White clamps down on the d5-square.

10.cxd5 cxd5 11.exd5 Nxd5 12.Ne4

[After 12.Nxd5 Black should play Qxd5 (12...Bxd5 13.0-0 f6 14.Nc3 Bc6 15.Qe2 leaves him lagging behind in development), when 13.Qxd5 Bxd5 14.0-0 f6 favours Black slightly thanks to the bishop pair.]

12...Qa5+ 13.b4? A serious mistake.

[White should have played 13.Qd2 , when Qxd2+ 14.Nxd2 f6 is at least a lesser evil. After the text there's no way back.]

13...Bxb4+! 14.axb4 Qxb4+ 15.N4c3 Qxb2 16.Nxd5 Bxd5 17.Rb1

[After 17.0-0 Rd8 Black protects the bishop and threatens 18...Bxg2 etc.]

17...Qa2 18.Rb5

[Black doesn't have any problem consolidating after either 18.0-0 Qc4]
[or 18.Nc3 Qa5 etc.]

18...0-0-0 White is down two pawns and also faces a strong initiative.

0-1

□ Van de Mortel,J

■ Onischuk,A

Wijk aan Zee

[Nigel Davies]

C22

1996

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.Qxd4

[The Danish Gambit with 3.c3 transposes into my treatment of the Scotch Gambit after d5 4.exd5 Qxd5 5.cxd4 Nc6 6.Nf3 Bg4 etc. See the game Bondarenko-Najer for details.]

3...Nc6 4.Qe3

[In the spirit of the Scandinavian Defence (with colours reversed) White has also tried 4.Qa4 , but g6 is a good idea there, too. After 5.Nf3 Bg7 6.Bg5 Nge7 7.Nc3 h6 8.Be3 d6 9.0-0-0 Bd7 10.Qb3 Rb8 11.Nd5 0-0 12.h4 Bg4 13.Be2 b5 Black had good attacking chances in Nikoliuk-Yanvarjov, Moscow 1994.]

4...g6 5.Nc3

[5.Bd2 Bg7 6.Bc3 is too artificial to be good, Black getting excellent play after Nf6 7.Bb5 0-0 8.Bxc6 dxc6 9.Ne2 Re8 in D.Trifunovic-Koster, Vienna 2003.]

5...Bg7 6.Bd2

[In Chernyshov-Ziatdinov, Voronezh 2004, White played 6.Bc4 and after Nge7 (both 6...Nf6 ; and 6...d6 are very reasonable) 7.Nge2 0-0 8.Nf4 Nd4 9.Bd3 f5 10.0-0 d6 11.Ncd5 fxe4 12.Nxe7+ Qxe7 13.c3 , Black could have obtained a good game by Rxf4 (rather than the 13...Nf3+ 14.gxf3 Rxf4 15.Bc4+ Rf7 16.Qxe4 of the game ;although 13...Nf5 is a solid option) 14.Qxf4 exd3 15.cxd4 Bf5 with compensation for the exchange.]

6...Nge7

[Black can also play the natural 6...Nf6 , for example 7.0-0-0 0-0 8.Bc4 Re8 9.Nh3 (9.f3 improves, with approximate equality.) 9...Na5 10.Bd3 d5 11.Nxd5 Nxd5 12.Qc5?! Qf6 13.c3 Bxh3 0-1 Benares-V.Mikhalevski, Sao Paulo 2002.]

7.0-0-0 0-0 8.h4

White lunges while ignoring the centre.
[The similarly aggressive 8.Nd5 is well met by d6 , when 9.Bc3 Nxd5 10.exd5 Re8 11.Qg3 Bxc3 12.Qxc3 Ne5 gives Black an excellent game.]

[Perhaps White should probably go for simple development with 8.Bc4 , but there too Black can activate with Na5!? 9.Bd3 d5!?.]

8...d5!

As usual a flank attack is best met by a counterblow in the centre.

9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Qg3

[After 10.Qc5 Black can proceed in a similar vein with Ndb4 , for example 11.Bc4 Bd4 12.Qg5 Bf5 13.Bb3 Na5 14.Qxd8 Rfxd8 and Black won quickly in Le Masle-Crouan, Fouesnant 2002.]

[In Kurenkov-Stefansson, Riga 2004, White tried 10.Qf3 but then Ndb4 would have been good (10...Nxc3 11.Bxc3 Qe7 12.Bxg7 Kxg7 was rather equal in the game)after, for example, 11.Bg5 Qe8 12.a3 Nd4 13.Rxd4 Bxd4 14.axb4 Qe1+ 15.Qd1 Bxc3 16.bxc3 Qxc3 etc.]

10...Ndb4!?

This and Black' s following move prepare a positional piece sacrifice, albeit one which is far from clear.
[A more solid way to play was 10...Nd4 , with 11...c5 as a possible follow-up.]

11.a3 a5!? 12.Bg5

[The players were probably not aware of it but in Klein-Mendivil, Fortaleza 1963, White successfully tried 12.h5 Bf5 (12...Bxc3 is answered by 13.bxc3!) 13.hxg6 Bxg6 14.Bh6 Bxh6+ 15.Rxh6 . The fact that the knight on b4 doesn't threaten too much is what makes Onischuk's whole concept so controversial.]

[White should resist the temptation to play 12.axb4 axb4 13.Nb1 Ra1 14.Bd3 Qd5 etc.]

12...Qe8 13.axb4

A fateful decision which opens the floodgates on the queenside.
[White should still play 13.h5 , after which Bf5 14.hxg6 Bxg6 15.Bh6 Nxc2 16.Bxg7 Kxg7 17.Bd3 develops a strong attack, notwithstanding the loss of the c2-pawn.]

13...axb4 14.Nd5 Bf5 15.Bd3?!

In such a complex position it is very difficult to find the right path.
[Here White should hav chosen 15.Qe3 , when Ra1+ 16.Kd2 Qd7 17.Rxa1 Bxb2 would have led to massive complications.]

[15.Nf6+ looks good at first sight because it gets rid of Black's dark-squared bishop, but after Bxf6 16.Bxf6 Qe6 17.Bg5 Rfe8 White would not find it easy to meet the threat of 18...Ra1+.]

15...Qe6!? 16.Bxf5

[Black probably intended to meet 16.Nxc7 with Ra1+ (neither 16...Bxb2+ 17.Kxb2 Qa2+ 18.Kc1 ,nor 16...Bc3 17.bxc3 bxc3 18.Ba6! does the trick) 17.Kd2 Rxd1+ 18.Kxd1 Qd7 , threatening 19...b3.]

16...Ra1+ 17.Kd2 Qxd5+ 18.Bd3 Rxd1+ 19.Kxd1 b3

[19...Ra8 is ineffective after 20.Bc1]

20.Ne2 Re8 Onischuk pours gasoline onto the flames, no doubt wanting to maximize the pressure against his lower-rated opponent.

[Black 'should' play 20...bxc2+ 21.Kxc2 Nb4+ 22.Kd2 Nxd3 23.Qxd3 Qxg2 , but of course this is an easier position for White to play after, say, 24.Rc1 .]

21.Nc3?? White loses his way in the complications.

[White should play 21.c4 , when Qd7 22.Nc1 Nb4 23.Re1 would leave Black struggling to find compensation for the sacrificed piece.]

21...Bxc3 22.bxc3 b2 23.Kd2 Qa2 24.Qxc7 b1N+ It is always nice to deliver check in this fashion.

25.Rxb1 Qxb1 26.Be3 Ne5 27.Be2 b5 28.Qd6

[White should have prevented Black's next move with 28.Qb6 , although Black is nonetheless the exchange up.]

28...Nc4+ 29.Bxc4 bxc4 30.Qf6 Qh1 31.g4 Qe4 32.h5 Qe5 33.Qf3 Qe6 34.h6 f6

Black's king is finally looking quite safe. If one more white pawn falls it is all over, and there are targets on c2 and g4.

35.Qb7 Qe7 36.Qd5+ Qf7 37.Qb5 g5 38.Qc6 Qe6 39.Qb7 Re7 40.Qb8+ Kf7 41.Qg3 Qd5+ 42.Ke2 Rb7 43.Qg1 Rb2 44.Qc1 Qd3+!

0-1