

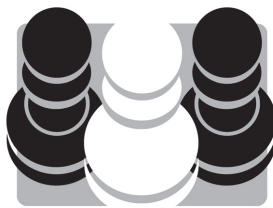
Playing 1.e4

Caro-Kann, 1...e5 & Minor Lines

– a grandmaster guide

By

John Shaw



Quality Chess
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Preface

The purpose of *Playing 1.e4* is simple – to supply a top-class repertoire for White. This first volume covers the Caro-Kann, 1...e5 and minor lines. The second volume will complete the repertoire by meeting the Sicilian and French.

In selecting lines for a 1.e4 repertoire, there are many possible approaches. One can choose the sharpest lines, cover them in full academic detail, and supply a complete repertoire spanning a multitude of volumes. Or one can create a slim, single-volume repertoire by ducking the theoretical challenge and giving “club players’ favourites” such as the Closed Sicilian. My two-volume series is at neither extreme. It delivers a repertoire which I am confident will be effective even at GM level, but it demands a workload from the reader that is manageable, albeit challenging in places.

If there are two equally strong alternatives, then I have chosen the line which requires less theoretical knowledge. But if there is one line that I believe is clearly best, then that is the line I have given, even if it requires intensive study before it can be played with confidence. The 6.♖xf7 sac against the Alekhine in Chapter 17 is just one example of the theoretical depths such a principled approach can lead to.

In terms of the style of play of the repertoire, I have been guided by White’s first move. If you prefer 1.e4 to 1.d4, then I suspect you are more likely to have dark intentions against the black king. Accordingly, I have selected lines that are active and space-gaining, as these are the lines that are most likely to lead to attacking chances. Naturally, Black has a say in the course the game takes, so there will be some lines where we have to postpone our mating dreams, and instead nurse a slightly better structure.

The two main defences met in this volume are the Caro-Kann and 1...e5. Against the Caro-Kann I have chosen the Advance Variation, meeting 3...♗f5 with 4.h4 – an aggressive and ambitious line. Following 1...e5 we reply 2.♖f3, when Black’s main option is of course 2...♗c6. We meet this with 3.d4 – the Scotch, which I did *not* select for nationalistic reasons. It was one of Kasparov’s old favourites, so it’s no surprise that it’s a forcing and challenging system. Thus it can lead to deep theory, but nothing like as much as the Spanish.

Other defences we will face in this volume are the Petroff, Scandinavian, Philidor, Alekhine’s, Pirc, Modern, as well as other variations too minor to be worthy of a name.

As with my book on the King’s Gambit, my name is on the cover, but creating the book was a team effort. I had the final say on words and analysis, but I was aided by GM Jacob Aagaard, IM Andrew Greet, Nikos Ntirlis, and also GM Parimarjan Negi offered invaluable help on the Scotch.

I hope you enjoy reading this book, and that *Playing 1.e4* leads you to success. It is, after all, best by test.

John Shaw
Glasgow, May 2016

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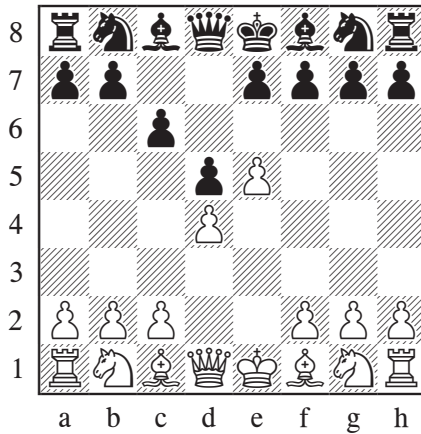
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Introduction to the Repertoire

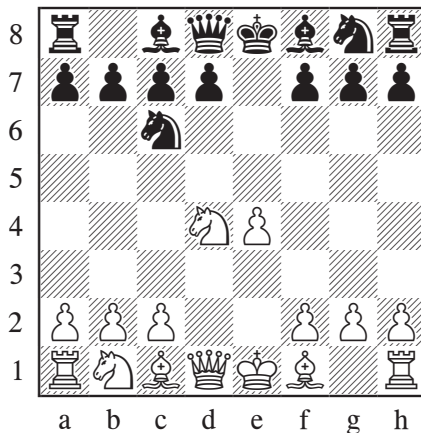
Chapters 1-4 Caro-Kann

1.e4 c6 The Caro-Kann is a sound and respected defence, and we will meet it with the principled and space-gaining 2.d4 d5 3.e5 – the Advance Variation. If Black replies with the usual 3...♗f5 then our move is 4.h4, seizing more space and intending to harass the light-squared bishop.



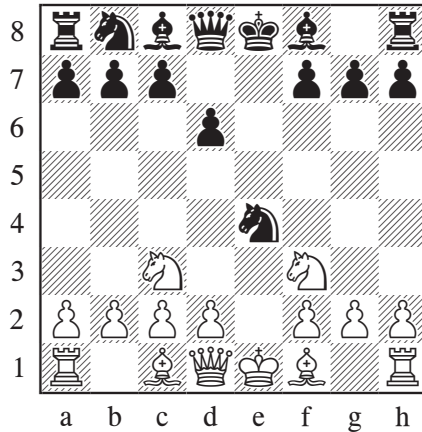
Chapters 5-9 Scotch

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♗xd4 For a 1.e4 player, meeting 1...e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 is one of the toughest challenges. Our choice is the Scotch, immediately destroying Black's foothold in the centre. It's too early to define exactly how White will use his space advantage, but we can already be certain that we have avoided the Berlin Wall and Marshall Attack.



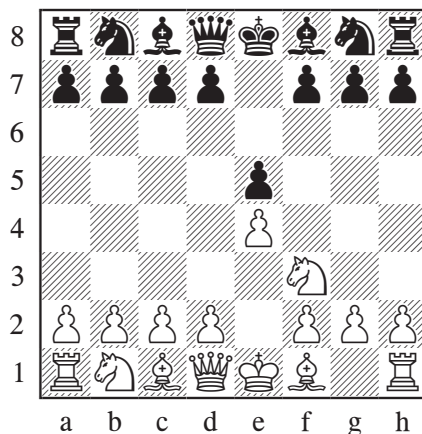
Chapters 10-11 Petroff

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 The Petroff is popular at the elite level, which proves it is sound, but unpopular at every other level, which suggests it does not offer Black enough excitement to appeal to the masses. Our antidote is the 'modern main line' with 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♗xe4 5.♗c3. If Black exchanges on c3, then we will recapture with the d-pawn and quickly castle long.



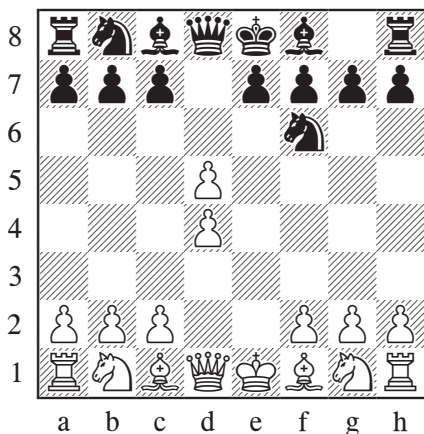
Chapter 12 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 Rare Lines

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 After dealing with three tough defences, White has a relaxing interlude. The Rare Lines in this chapter include the Latvian and Elephant Gambits, both of which we will be delighted to accept.



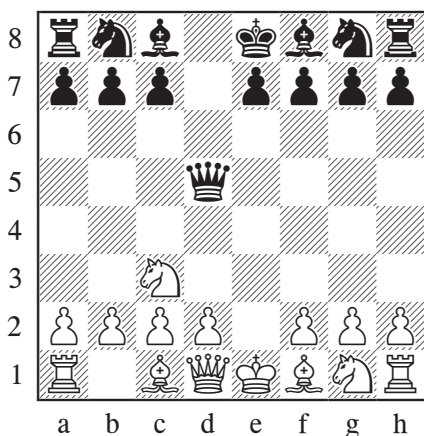
Chapter 13 Scandinavian 2...♘f6

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♘f6 The Scandinavian with 2...♘f6 is rarely seen in high-level chess, as White is all but guaranteed easy development and extra space. We will see later why 3.d4! is the precise reply to limit Black's options.



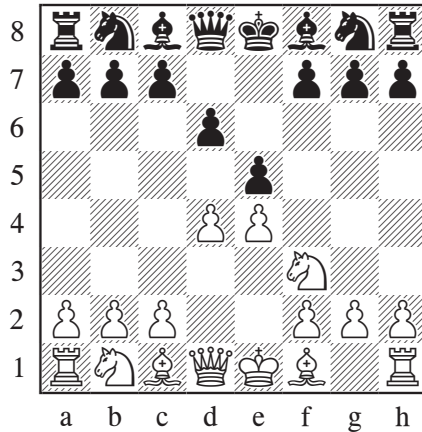
Chapters 14-15 Scandinavian 2...♙xd5

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♙xd5 Recapturing with the queen has a better reputation than its 2...♘f6 cousin, but even so, this is *not* one of Black's most reliable defences. Our reply is the simple 3.♘c3, accepting the offer of a free tempo. Black generally retreats to d8, d6 or a5, but we have good answers to all of them.



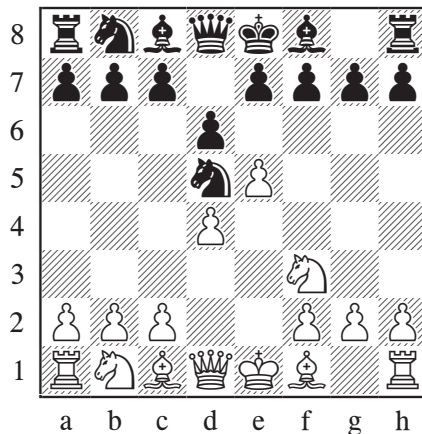
Chapter 16 The Philidor

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 is the traditional Philidor move order, but in this chapter we shall see that the most topical line for Black starts with a 1...d6 move order. There are many varieties of Philidor, ranging from the wildly over-aggressive to the sturdily solid, but their common feature is that White has more space.



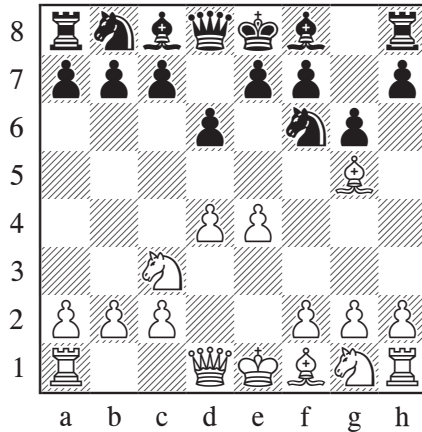
Chapter 17 Alekhine's Defence

1.e4 ♗f6 Alekhine's Defence is a provocative line, enticing our e-pawn forward. We will allow ourselves to be provoked, and reply with the main line: 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♘f3 Black has many possibilities, so this is a highly theoretical chapter, but White will have the lion's share of the chances.



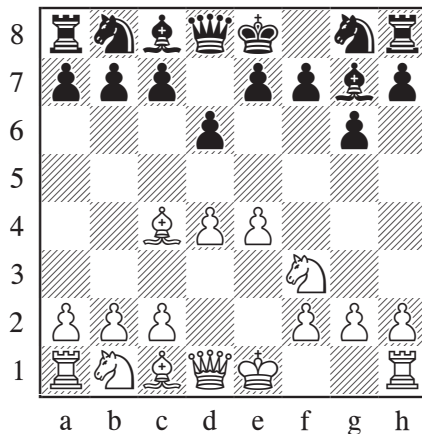
Chapter 18 Pirc Defence

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 The Pirc Defence offers White an automatic space advantage, but Black hopes to achieve solidity, then transform that into counterplay. Our reply 4.♕g5 is active and ambitious. One natural plan is ♖d2 and 0-0-0, but we may also have options of an early f2-f4 or even a quick e4-e5.



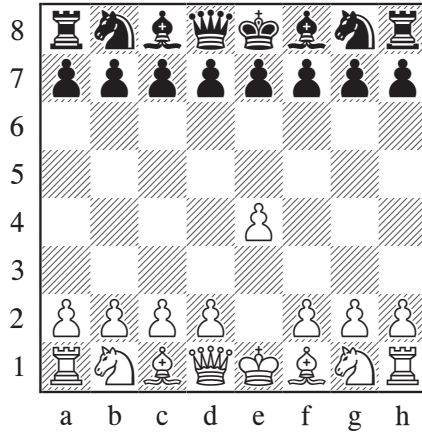
Chapter 19 Modern Defence

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♕g7 The Modern Defence is an ideological comrade of the Pirc, but I recommend a radically different response with: 3.♘f3 d6 4.♕c4 White has not been forced to defend the e4-pawn with ♘c3, and we can use that flexibility in various ways, including the option of a later c2-c3, blunting Black's bishop and shoring up our centre.

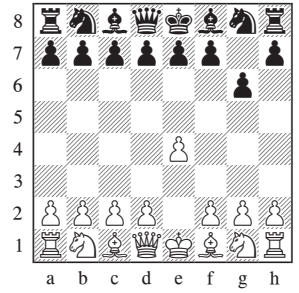


Chapter 20 Rare Lines

1.e4 Our final chapter rounds up the also-rans among Black's defences. To be fair, 1...♘c6 is not a bad move, and may transpose to the respectability of a Scotch, but the likes of 1...a6 and 1...b6 are poor relations to the defences we have seen earlier in the book.



Chapter 19



Modern Defence

1.e4 g6

2.d4

2...d6 Early Deviations *Game 101*

567

2...g7 3.f3

3...c6 The Chameleon *Game 100*

560

3...d6 4.g4

4...e6 The Hippo *Game 99*

557

4...f6 5.e2 0-0 6.e5!? The Main Line

6...dxe5 7.dxe5 d5 Alekhine-style *Game 98*

555

6...e8 *Game 97*

548

Often the Modern and Pirc are paired together, due to the obvious similarities of their kingside fianchettoes. But for our repertoire they are totally separate openings. Against the Pirc, as we saw in Chapter 18, we favour a set-up with a knight on c3 and bishop on g5. Against the Modern, our line usually involves a bishop on c4 and no knight on c3. There is good reason for the difference. In the Modern the absence of a knight on f6 would leave a g5-bishop lunging at shadows. Also, the g7-bishop has an unobstructed view of our d4-pawn, and the pressure may be enhanced by a ...c5 or ...e5 break, so leaving the c3-square free for a supporting pawn is wise.

The great benefit of the Modern is its flexibility. In this chapter, in addition to regular Moderns, we will see Hippos and Chameleons and even an Alekhine's Defence. You could spend your life studying the Modern and still be surprised by a new move order. So far it sounds scary for White, so let's mention the downside to the Modern – Black lacks space. As a general rule, White can effortlessly maintain a classical centre on d4 and e4, and complete development smoothly. As I mentioned, c2-c3 is often played, which would be a hook for a pawn storm, so White will usually castle kingside. With just a little care, and not so much memorization, we will start the middlegame with slightly better chances.

I will leave the explanations of the general themes for the illustrative games, because, as hinted above, the Modern can lead to many different structures.

I shall start by covering the Main Line, and later step back a few moves to explain the Early Deviations. Our approach to the deviations will be to steer the game towards territory that is familiar to us, so we need to know our destination first, before we can understand the best route to get there.

The Main Line

GAME 97

Petar Popovic – Lars Thiede

Germany 2010

1.e4 g6

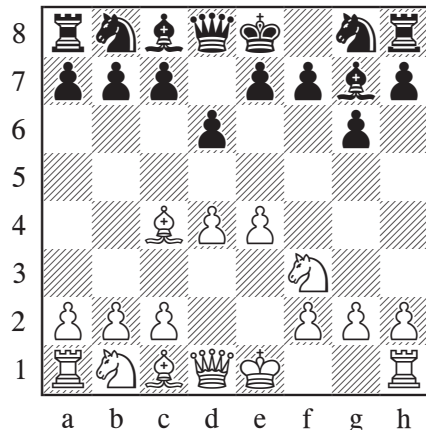
1...d6 2.d4 g6 is covered in Early Deviations, Game 101.

2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘f3 d6

3...c6 is Game 100. 3...c5 is a Sicilian, so we will cover it in the next volume.

4.♗c4

This is a key point of our Modern coverage, as Black can select various set-ups.

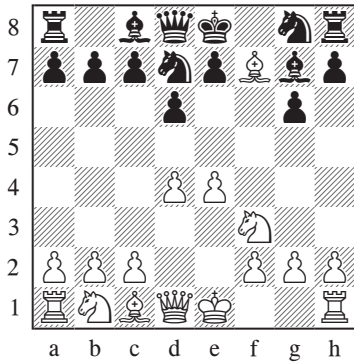


4...♗f6

By far the most common move.

4...e6 could head for a Hippo. This will be covered in Game 99.

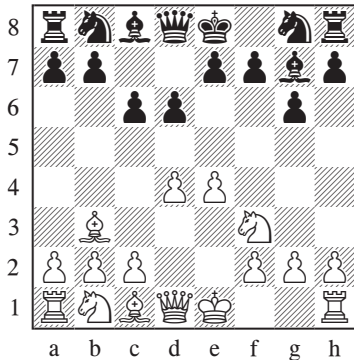
If you are lucky, someone will play 4...♗d7?? against you. There are over 80 games with this move in my database, with a teenaged Robert Byrne among the perpetrators. After 5.♗xf7†! Black can resign.



5...♔xf7 (after 5...♔f8 one of White's many options is 6.♘g5 ♘df6 7.♙b3 when Black is a pawn down with an unspeakable position) 6.♘g5† Black has a choice between retreating and thus losing the queen to ♖e6, or ending it all with 6...♔f6 7.♙f3#.

After 4...c6 White has many alternatives. If you want to limit your workload then choose 5.h3 which transposes to a position covered in Game 100.

Or if you want a different move, but in similar style to the rest of the chapter, then try 5.♙b3.



I will not offer comprehensive coverage, as we already have a repertoire move, and instead just give a couple of examples:

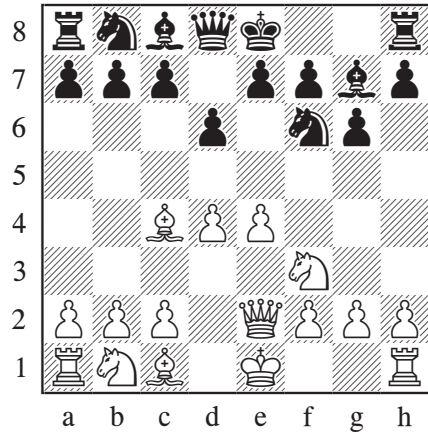
5...d5 6.♙e2!? dx4 7.♙xe4 (7.♘g5!? ♘h6 8.c3±) 7...♘f6 8.♙h4 h6 9.♘e5 e6 10.c3 ♘bd7 11.♘c4 ♘b6 12.♘ba3 ♘xc4 13.♘xc4

♙e7 14.0–0 ♘d5 15.♙g3 0–0 16.♙e1± In Carlsen – Nakamura, Stavanger (blitz) 2015, the World Champion had innovated his way to a pleasant position.

5...♘f6 6.♙e2 0–0 7.0–0 d5 8.e5 ♘e4 9.c4 ♘a6 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.♘e1 h6 12.f3 ♘g5 13.♘c3± Saric – Potapov, Sochi 2015.

4...a6 plays in Tiger's Modern-style, but Tiger recommended avoiding it due to 5.c3!? b5 6.♙b3 ♙b7 7.♙e2 planning a2-a4 "when Black has no good answer: ...b4 loses a pawn, ...bxa4 leaves Black with a silly pawn structure, and ...c6 is too passive."

5.♙e2



5...0–0

The usual move, but again Black has many options.

5...c6 6.♙b3 would be the Saric game mentioned above, while 6.e5 is the more Alekhine-style option, when ...c7-c6 is not one of Black's more active set-ups.

5...♙g4?!

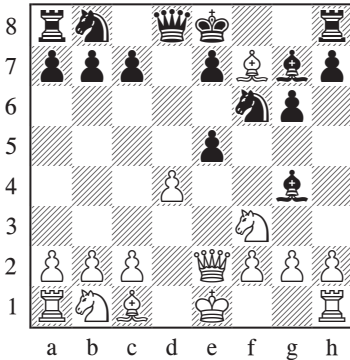
Another natural-looking slip. A few GMs have erred in this way, including Jan Timman.

6.e5! dxe5

Black players will likely see the problem now, but it's too late to bail out, as 6...♙xf3?

7.♞xf3 is resignable.

7.♙xf7†



7...♙xf7

Timman tried 7...♙f8?! 8.dxe5 ♞fd7 9.♙b3 ♞xe5 and after the ugly 10.h3? he doubled White's pawns with 10...♞xf3† and eventually won in Ljuga – Timman, Sombor 1974. White could have had an overwhelming advantage after 10.♞bd2!. I guess he was worried about 10...♞bc6 11.h3 ♞d4? overlooking 12.♞xd4! ♙xe2 13.♞e6†+.

8.♞xe5†

Black's position is not as bad as it deserves to be, given that he almost certainly missed everything when playing 5...♙g4. It will be level material with White having the healthier structure. For example:

8...♙e8 9.♞xg4 ♞xg4 10.♞xg4 ♞xd4 11.♞xd4 ♙xd4 12.c3±

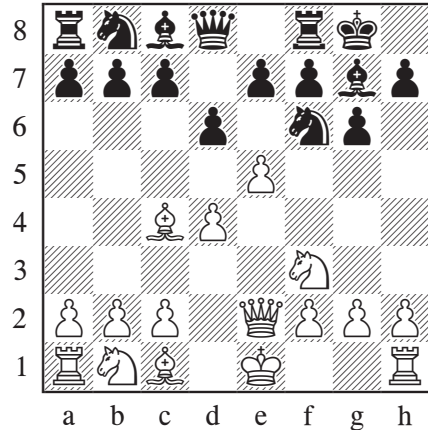
5...d5 It's odd to play ...d5 in two steps, but it's not such a bad move. Still, we have no reason to complain after 6.exd5 ♞xd5 7.0–0 0–0 8.h3± with G. Gopal – Mammadova, Al Ain 2015, a recent example.

5...♞c6 will be covered as an Early Deviation – Game 101.

6.e5!?

I like this move, which forces Black to make an awkward decision: play a passive move that keeps the game in Modern territory, or head for the Alekhine.

More common is 6.0–0 and naturally it's also a sensible move.



6...♞e8

This is the move that keeps Black playing a Modern.

6...dxe5 7.dxe5 ♞d5 is an Alekhine, though not a position which appears in Chapter 17. See the next game for our answer.

7.♞bd2!?

A rare move (there are four games in my database) but I believe it causes Black problems. As we will see, there are a few points to this move, including discouraging ...♙g4 and even preparing to keep hold of an extra white pawn on c5 with a later ♞b3.

Normal is 7.h3 but then 7...c5 looks okay for Black. Unlike the game, White is unable to maintain a solid grip on his space advantage. For example, 8.dxc5 is the move that works in the game, but here there is a simple tactical difference: 8...dxe5 9.♞xe5 ♞a5† Black easily

regains his pawn. Djuric – Sygulski, Warsaw (rapid) 2012, continued 10.♘d2 ♖xc5 11.♘df3 ♘d6 12.♙b3 ♘c6= and Black was doing fine.

Another good option is: 7.0-0!? ♙g4 8.♘bd2 which is a line Tiger likes for White, even giving ...♙g4 a dubious mark, but as he also mentioned, Black can try other moves, including 7...c5.

7...c5

Trying to break up White's centre.

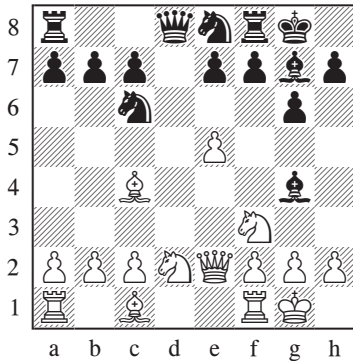
7...♙g4 is harmless and compliant, as 8.h3 ♙xf3 9.♘xf3 keeps White's play flowing, with his bishop pair a plus, especially compared to the dozy knight on e8.

7...dxe5 8.dxe5

This removes all the central tension, which suits us, as we are in control of most of it.

But there is one line worth noting:

8...♘c6 9.0-0 ♙g4



Black has two threats, ...♘xe5 and ...♘d4, and in Constantinou – Bitensky, Pardubice 2015, White's choice of 10.h3 only met one of them. After 10...♘d4 11.♖e4 ♘xf3† 12.♘xf3 ♙xf3 13.♖xf3 ♙xe5 14.♖xb7 ♘d6 15.♖d5 ♘xc4 16.♖xc4 ♖d4= the game was later drawn.

So correct instead was:

10.♖e3!

Transposing to a couple of games which reached this position from other move orders. A correspondence game continued instructively:

10...♖c8 11.c3 ♘a5 12.♙e2 c5 13.h3 ♙d7 14.b4!±

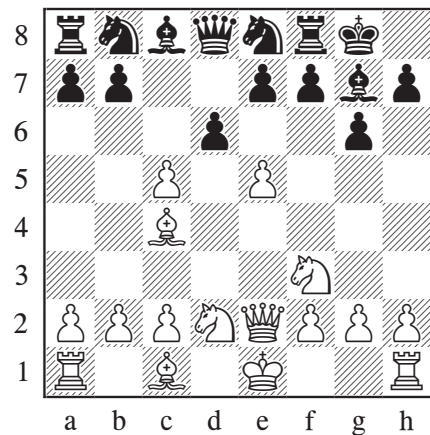
In T. Thomas – McNab, corr. 1990, my Quality Chess colleague gave up a pawn with 14...♘c6 15.bxc5 but White was clearly better, and won well.

Even worse was 14...cxb4 15.cxb4 ♘c6 because after 16.b5 ♘a5 17.♙a3+- the e7-pawn is weak and White's rooks are coming to c1 and d1.

8.dxc5!

This precise move has only been played in the present game.

8.c3?! gives Black a target to latch onto after 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 ♘c6↗.



8...d5

The closed centre should ensure Black does not face instant trouble, but now White's central control is assured.

8...♘c6!?N

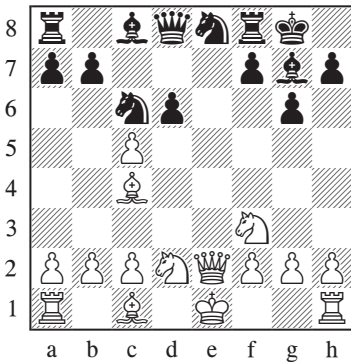
This is similar to an idea Tiger suggested in his first Modern book, then rejected in his

new one (in Tiger's line, White had castled instead of playing ♞bd2). In our case, this move is the most challenging line.

9...exd6

If you need more excitement, you could try 9.c3 when after 9...dxe5 10.0-0 ♙f5 11.b4∞ the unusual structure should lead to rich play.

9...exd6



10.0-0

The safest and best choice.

The greedy 10.cxd6?! offers Black plenty of play after 10... ♞xd6 ↑. For example: 11.0-0 ♞e8 12. ♞d1 ♞xc4 13. ♞xc4 ♙g4 Black's initiative continues, with or without queens.

10...dxc5 11. ♞e4

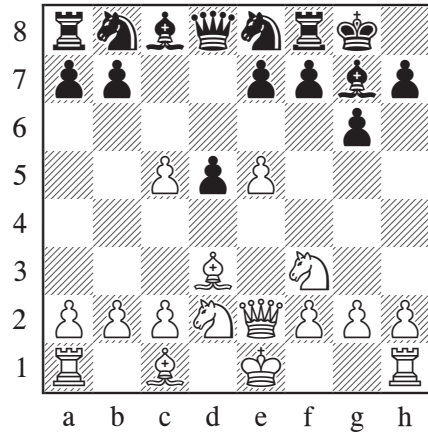
It's not thrilling, but White is microscopically better, as the c5-pawn has left some holes in its wake, while c2-c3 will shore up our position.

8...dxc5 is unchallenging as the e5-pawn is secure. White can ensure an edge with the simple 9.0-0 or if you feel frisky, there is 9.h4! with the point that 9... ♙g4 10.h5 $\text{♙xh5}!$ 11. $\text{♞e4}!$ is nasty.

8...dxe5 is the move Black would like to play, creating some imbalance; the problem is it loses a pawn. 9. ♞xe5 ♞c7 (9... $\text{♞a5}?$ is not a check, and fails at once to 10. ♞xf7 ♞xf7 11. ♞xe7+) 10. $\text{♞d3}±$ The d2-knight can come to b3, when Black does not have enough for his sac.

9. $\text{♞d3}±$

There are dozens of ways the game could proceed from here, but White starts playing with slightly better chances.



9... ♞c7

A little unkind to the e8-knight. 9... ♞c7 would have been my choice, but after 10. ♞b3 White's position is just a touch better.

10.0-0 ♞d7 11. ♞e1 ♞xc5 12.h3

Both sides have many options on most moves, with 12. $\text{♞b3}!$? ♙g4 13. $\text{♙f4}±$ just one example.

12... ♙d7 13. ♞b3 b6 14. ♙g5 ♙c6 15. ♞bd4 ♙b7 16. ♞e3 ♞e4 17. ♙f4

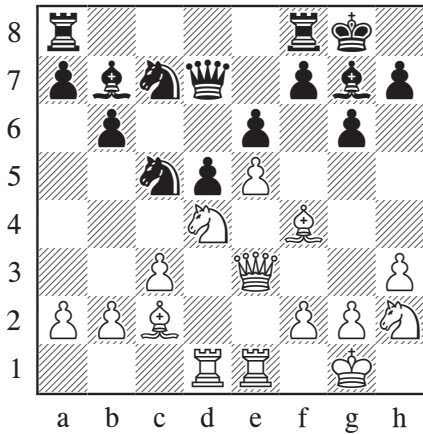
Or the direct 17. $\text{♙h6}!$ was also promising.

17...e6 18.c3 ♞c5 19. ♙c2 ♞d7 20. ♞ad1 $\text{♞c7}?$!

Trying to improve the knight is understandable, but the knight was performing a valuable defensive role on its ugly square.

21. $\text{♞h2}!$

A regrouping worth remembering, as ♞g4 is a standard way for White to probe the dark squares. This manoeuvre builds White's advantage to a decisive level.



21...f5

The engine is unimpressed by this move, but I think it gives Black the best chance of confusing his opponent, even though objectively White has a winning advantage.

The engine's top choice is 21...d8 which shows some 'character'. Black's position is grim after 22.dg4 f5 23.exf6 dxf6 24.d5. Nimzowitsch would have loved White's position.

Trying to stop dg4 with 21...h5 is just throwing petrol on the fire after 22.g4.

22.exf6 Rxf6 23.dg4 Rxf4

Black was committed to giving up an exchange as the alternatives are useless:

23...Rf7 24.d5! dxe5 25.dxe5+-

23...Rf8 24.b4! d5a6 A silly square, but if the knight goes to e4, then dxc7 and dxe6 wins the exchange. 25.h4!+-

At the end of both variations, White would be thinking about playing for mate.

24.Rxf4 Rf8 25.Rg5 Rf7 26.Rd2

Not a bad move, but even more controlling was: 26.d3! with the point that 26...de4 fails

to 27.dxe4 dxe4 28.dfe5 when Rd7 would soon end the game.

26...de4 27.dxe4 dxe4 28.dh6† dxe6 29.Rxh6 e5 30.dxc2 de6 31.de3 df4

Black is still losing, but the active knight gives him hopes of landing a shot.

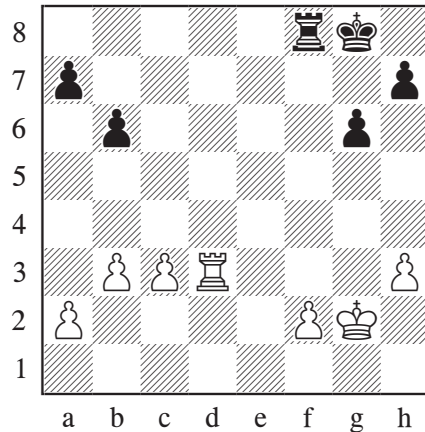
32.b3 d3 33.Red1 dxc8 34.Rh4

The computer is quite right that the undermining 34.f3 works and wins, but a human in time trouble would be suspicious.

34...Rf4 35.Rg3 dxb7 36.Rxf4 exf4 37.dxc4 f3 38.d6 dxc6 39.dxe4

Taking all the drama out of Black's play; White no longer needs to worry about losing a won position.

39...dxe4 40.Rxd3 dxd3 41.Rxd3 ffg2 42.dxg2±

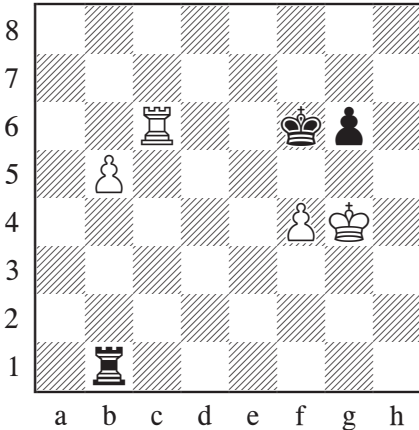


So are after a lot of shenanigans, White is a pawn up in a rook ending. Objectively his advantage is smaller than it was 20 moves ago, but I suspect he was relieved nothing worse had happened in the complications before the time control.

42...Rf7 43.c4 d7g7 44.Rd5 d6f6 45.a4 de6 46.dg3 df6 47.h4 Re7 48.h5 dg7

49.hxg6 hxg6 50.f3 ♔h6 51.b4 ♖e3 52.c5 ♖c3 53.cxb6 axb6 54.♖b5 ♖a3 55.♖xb6 ♖xa4 56.♔f4 ♖a3 57.♖e6 ♖b3 58.♖e4 ♔g7 59.♔g4 ♖b1 60.♖c4 ♔h6 61.f4 ♖f1 62.b5 ♖b1 63.♖c5 ♔g7 64.♖c7† ♔f6 65.♖c6†

I shouldn't be talking about rook endings, but this is a good puzzle. Where should the black king go?



65...♔g7?

An understandable choice, as Black wants to activate his king via h6. But when the action switches to the queenside, the black king will be one square too far away.

Also wrong was 65...♔e7? which would work fine after 66.♖xg6? ♖xb5= but after 66.b6 ♔f7 67.♔f3!+— Black has lost a tempo, compared to the line below.

Black can draw with 65...♔f7! 66.b6 ♖b5 with the point that if White plays as in the game with 67.♔f3 then 67...g5 68.fxg5 ♖xg5= draws, as the black king is just close enough, or 67.♖c7† ♔f6 68.b7 g5= draws directly.

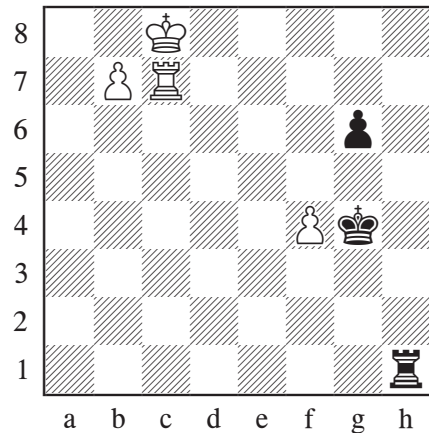
66.b6 ♖b5 67.♔f3! ♖b4

With the black king one step further from the b-pawn, 67...g5 now narrowly fails after 68.fxg5 ♖xg5 69.♔e4. For example: 69...♔f7 70.♔d4 ♔e7 71.♖c5 ♖g4† 72.♔d5 ♔d7 73.♖c7† ♔d8 74.♔c6+—

68.♔e3 ♔h7 69.♖c7† ♔h6 70.b7 ♔h5 71.♔d3 ♔g4 72.♔c3 ♖b1 73.♖f7

One of Black's ideas back on move 65 might have been to sacrifice his rook for the b-pawn, and then save the day with king and g-pawn versus rook. But we can see the white king is much too close for that to work.

73...♔f3 74.♔d4 ♔g4 75.♔d5 ♖d1† 76.♔c6 ♖c1† 77.♔d7 ♖b1 78.♔c8 ♖c1† 79.♖c7 ♖h1



80.♖c4!

The sensible approach.

Black was hoping for 80.b8=♖ ♖h8† 81.♔b7 ♖xb8† 82.♔xb8 ♔xf4 although even here White wins, but only with 83.♖f7†.

80...♖h8† 81.♔c7 ♖h7† 82.♔b6 ♖h8 83.♔a7

1-0