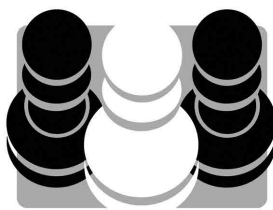


A Classical Repertoire

Playing 1.d4 d5

By

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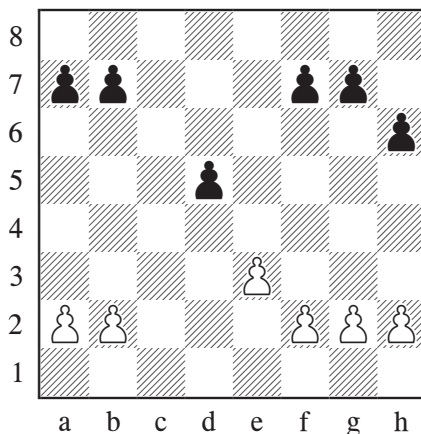
Introduction

This book presents a complete guide for Black after 1.d4 d5, the backbone of which is the Queen's Gambit Declined (henceforth abbreviated to QGD), which arises after 2.c4 e6.

It has been more than a year since *Playing 1.e4 e5 – A Classical Repertoire* hit the market, so the time has come to complete the picture with *Playing 1.d4 d5*. Although the previous work and the current one share a lot of similarities (the title and the author are two obvious ones!), in many ways they are completely different books. The Spanish, the Italian, the Scotch and other 1.e4 e5 lines are generally rather concrete in nature, making it hard to pick out common characteristics and play the resulting positions following a strategic masterplan. The openings stemming from 1.d4 d5 are of a completely different nature. No matter which major defence you choose, you tend to come across the same pawn structures and strategic patterns again and again. An opening book which has the ambition to be useful for both club players and more experienced ones up to GM level (something that *Playing 1.e4 e5* accomplished, of which I am proud) cannot be blind to that fact.

You know the pawn structure? You know how to play the opening!

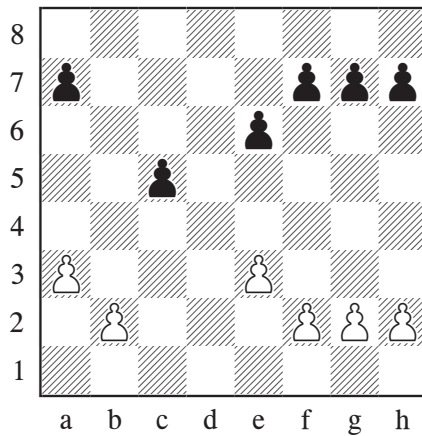
This book is structured in an entirely different way from my previous work. Every major set-up has a dedicated introduction, where I present vital information about thematic pawn structures and plans. The challenge here was to present useful, relevant concepts, without crossing too far into the territory of a specialist middlegame book. My goal was to keep things practical, by focusing on specific themes which crop up again and again in my chosen repertoire. As an example, take the Isolated Queen's Pawn, which often arises in our repertoire against the ♔g5 QGD, as found in Chapter 1b:



The IQP is perhaps the most written-about structure in chess, and it would be silly for me to try and discuss every facet of it in this book. Instead, in Chapter 1a, I will mention some of the most important themes and scenarios which are particularly relevant to the types of IQP positions we may reach in the proposed repertoire. I also offer some guidance on how to play against the IQP, including certain scenarios in which we should avoid that structure altogether.

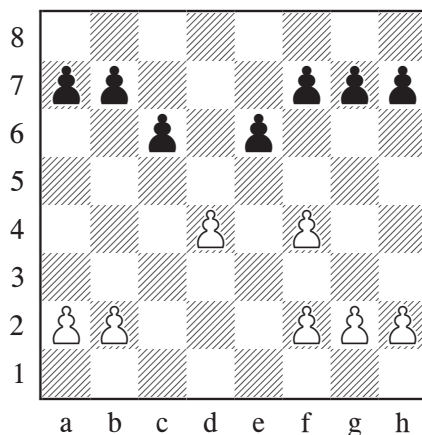
I believe the most valuable parts of my introductions are those places where I was able to identify a structure which commonly occurs in the specific variation under discussion, but which has not (to my knowledge at least) been discussed in any general-purpose middlegame books. In such cases, I had to formulate my own principles and guidelines. Here are a few examples of the kinds of structures under discussion:

The “2QPI” (2 Queenside Pawn Islands) Structure



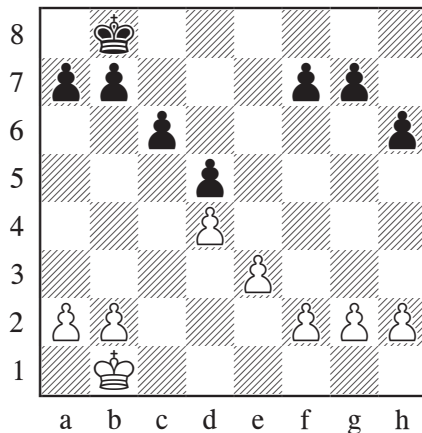
This structure often occurs in the ♕f4 QGD, when Black answers a dxc5 exchange with ...bxc5 , rather than recapturing with a piece. It may look ugly but it can work surprisingly well, as we will see.

The Rubinstein Structure



Rubinstein often allowed his bishop to be exchanged on f4 (or f5, if he was playing with Black) in order to transform the structure in this way. In Chapter 2a I will present several examples and show exactly how Black should deal with it and what he should avoid.

The Carlsbad Structure with Long Castling



Such positions make up a vital part of our repertoire against the Exchange Variation. Much ink has been used in discussing the minority attack and other typical plans in this structure when both sides castle on the kingside (and I will say something about that too...) but queenside castling leads to a completely different type of struggle.

How to use this Book

Before looking at any theory, I strongly advise you to read the relevant introduction to the topic in question. I consider the material in those introductory chapters to be the minimum that a practical player needs to know in order to navigate the theoretical part comfortably. Even if you are a strong player with experience playing the lines being recommended, you will still get more out of the theoretical section if you've read the strategic introduction first, as I often refer back to certain plans and structures which have been discussed there. On a more general note, I would advise the readers to deepen their knowledge by consulting other middlegame books. The bibliography on page 6 contains a few such sources which I have found useful.

My Personal Story with 1.d4 d5

The repertoire I proposed in *Playing 1.e4 e5* was my own, which I have tested and continue to do so without fear in high-level correspondence tournaments. The background to this project is a little different, as I started working on a repertoire for Black based on 1.d4 d5 for various students of mine during 2012. When I say "students", I include some real beginners rated 1500 or less, but also some Grandmasters, including a few rated over 2600 (they cannot really be called students, of course, but they find my opening ideas useful). In the text you'll find names such as Sabino Brunello of Italy and Sune Berg Hansen and Mads Andersen from Denmark, all of them strong

GMs who have made no secret of their collaboration with me, but there are also quite a few others who have preferred to keep our working relationship private. All of them have contributed greatly to the continual refinement of the material over the last five years.

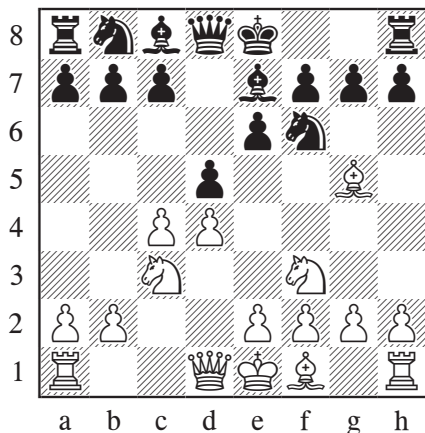
So, despite the fact that I have yet to test this repertoire in the harsh environment of correspondence chess, I am confident that it is theoretically bulletproof. One reason is that I have used the same methods and tools of analysing it which I use for all the other openings that I personally play, with the added benefit of extensive GM feedback over the years. Also, as I play as White in at least half of my correspondence games, I have tried hard to find ideas against the Queen's Gambit Declined, which has resulted in further refinement of my analysis.

Book Overview and Repertoire Suggestions

The book is divided into seven sections, each of which comprises an introduction (a) and either one or two chapters of theoretical content (b and c), depending on the volume of material. Sections 1-4 cover the QGD, and 5-7 deal with other lines. Here is a brief summary of the material:

1) The ♗g5 QGD

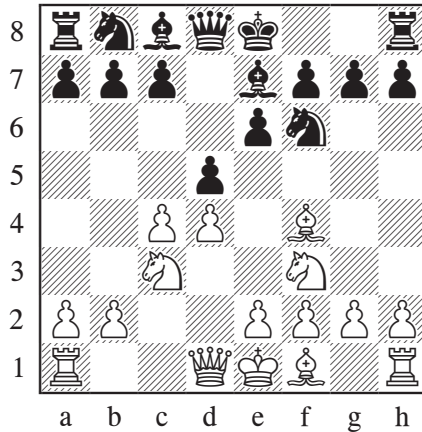
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.♗f3 ♗e7 5.♗g5



The biggest challenge when constructing any repertoire is choosing how to handle the absolute main lines. In the case of the diagram position, the crux of our repertoire is 5...♗bd7! 6.e3 h6 7.♗h4 0-0 intending the freeing ...c5!. Vladimir Kramnik is the hero of this variation, having resurrected it from obscurity a few years ago and achieving splendid results with it ever since. Many other top GMs have followed in his footsteps and the current outlook is one of optimism for Black. What I like most about Kramnik's handling of the QGD is that he blends well-tested old ideas with modern twists, move orders and nuances. Although there are some theoretical details which are worth knowing, a good understanding of positional themes and pawn structures will go a long way in this variation. When I was writing this section (as well as some other parts of the book), whenever I had a problem it seemed that there was always a Kramnik game that answered all my questions!

2) The ♖f4 QGD

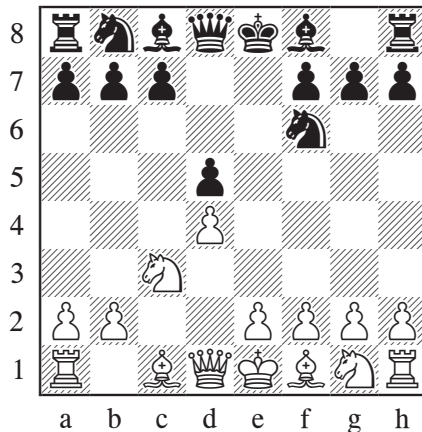
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗f6 4.♗f3 ♕e7 5.♖f4



This is White's other most serious option on the fifth move. After the normal 5...0-0 6.e3, it seems to me that Black is under some pressure at the top level in the most popular lines after 6...c5 and 6...♗bd7. Fortunately, there is an excellent solution in 6...b6!. Theoretically Black is in good shape, and I believe my chosen move also offers more prospects for Black to play for a win than the other main lines mentioned above.

3) The Exchange Variation

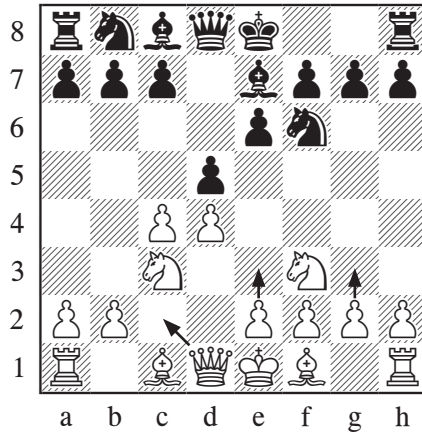
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗f6 4.cxd5 exd5



The Exchange Variation is a serious option and a popular recommendation in White repertoire books. In recent years, however, one particular plan has emerged as an excellent solution for Black. The main line continues 5.♖g5 c6 6.e3 ♕e7 7.♖d3 ♗bd7 when any of 8.♖c2, 8.♗f3 or 8.♗ge2 will be met by 8...h6, intending 9.♖h4 ♗h5!. Exchanging the dark-squared bishops eases Black's task, as we will see.

4) QGD Sidelines

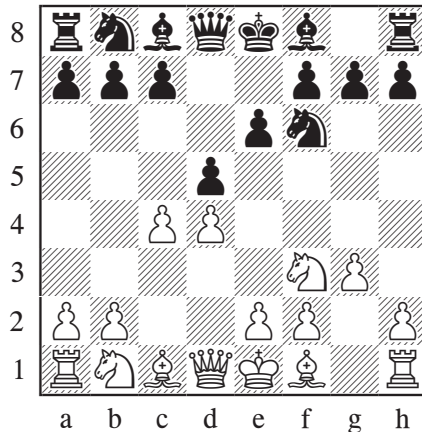
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♙e7



We conclude our coverage of the QGD by checking some sidelines such as 5.♙c2, 5.g3, and e2-e3 set-ups with the b1-knight going to either c3 or d2.

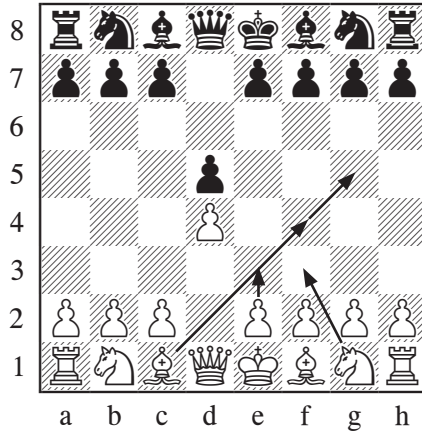
5) The Catalan

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3



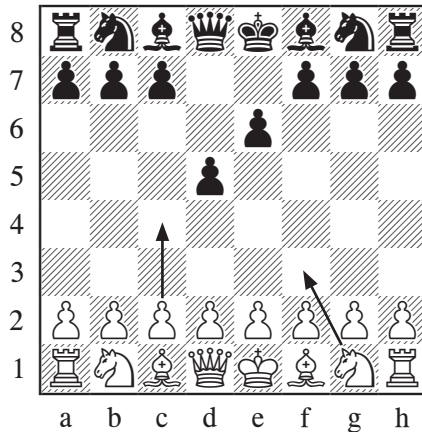
The Catalan is another major option for White. My choice against it is 4...dxc4 5.♙g2 a6 when, depending on circumstances, Black may or may not hang on to his extra pawn with ...b5. The Catalan is a big topic and my coverage spans an introduction plus two good-sized theoretical chapters, but I am satisfied that the proposed repertoire presents a stiff challenge to White.

6) d-Pawn Openings



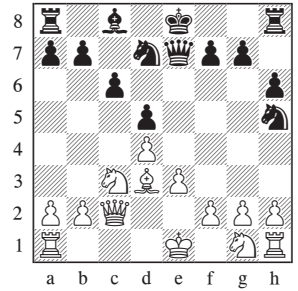
We end our 1.d4 d5 coverage by covering a variety of alternatives to 2.c4, from the wild Blackmar-Diemer Gambit to the currently trendy London System, and everything in between.

7) Bonus Chapters



Having dealt with 1.e4 in my previous book and 1.d4 in this one, I decided to go the extra mile and offer the reader some advice about other openings, specifically 1.c4 and 1.f3. Victor Mihhalevski covered this topic superbly in his 2016 book *Grandmaster Repertoire 19 – Beating Minor Openings*, but I (along with the Quality Chess team) decided it would be of value to offer some repertoire advice tailored for QGD players. We will therefore meet 1.c4 with 1...e6 followed by 2...d5, and 1.f3 with 1...d5 followed by ...e6 in the near future. For a complete repertoire you will have to do your own research, but I have laid out some suggestions and analysis of White's main options to give you a useful head start.

Chapter 3c



Exchange QGD Theory (0–0 Lines)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♙g5 c6 6.e3 ♙e7 7.♙d3 ♘bd7

♘f3 Lines page 150

8.♚c2 h6 9.♙h4 ♘h5 10.♙xe7 ♚xe7 11.♘f3?! ♘f4! page 150

The Right Move Order: 8.♘f3 h6 9.♙h4 ♘h5 10.♙xe7 ♚xe7 11.0–0 0–0 page 151

The Minority Attack: 12.♚c2 (12.♖b1) page 152

Central Play: 12.♚c2 (12.♖e1) 12...♘hf6 13.♖e1 page 152

♘ge2 Lines page 154

8.♚c2 h6 9.♙h4 ♘h5 10.♙xe7 ♚xe7 11.♘ge2 ♘b6 12.0–0 0–0 page 154

The Minority Attack page 155

13.♖ab1 a5! page 155

14.a3 (14.♘a4; 14.b3N; 14.h3N) page 155

14.♚b3 Game 39, page 157

The Central Attack page 158

13.♖ae1 page 159

The ♚d2 Set-Up: 8.♘ge2 h6 9.♙h4 ♘h5 10.♙xe7 ♚xe7 11.0–0 (11.♚d2!?) page 160

11...0–0 12.♚d2 ♘b6! page 160

A) 13.♖ae1 page 161

B) 13.f3 page 163

The previous chapter covered various sidelines in the Exchange Variation, followed by the important plan of long castling. This chapter will deal with those lines where White castles on the kingside. When he goes for this plan, his most important decision concerns the development of the g1-knight, which may go to either f3 or e2. We will discuss both options in turn.

♘f3 Lines

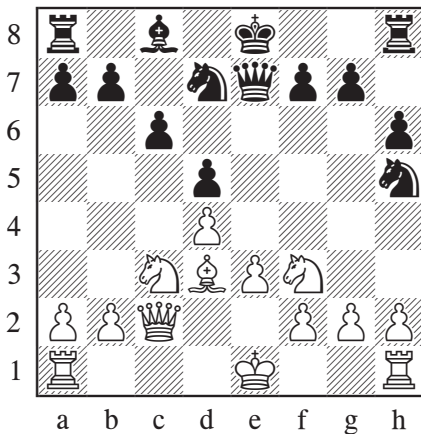
To start things off, let me show you how to deal with an inferior move order for White.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♙g5 c6 6.e3 ♙e7 7.♙d3 ♘bd7 8.♚c2 h6 9.♙h4 ♘h5 10.♙xe7 ♚xe7

If White gets as far as this position, he should either castle queenside or, if he really wants to castle short, he should go for a set-up with ♘ge2.

11. ♘f3?!

If White wishes to place the knight here and castle kingside, he should make proper time for it by delaying the development of his queen to c2. The present move order gives Black easy play with:

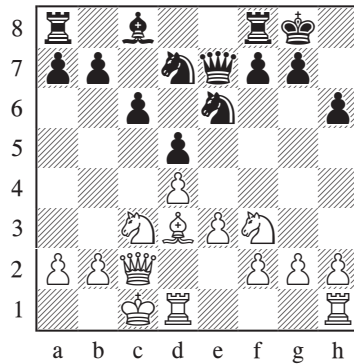


11... ♘f4! 12.0-0

It seems to me that there is no better option. White might also switch plans and castle on

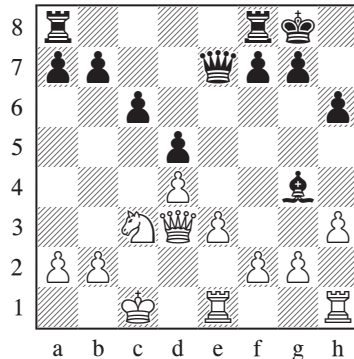
the queenside, but in that case Black has good chances to start an attack.

12.♙f1 0-0 13.0-0-0 should be met by: 13...♘e6! (in Karjakin – Kramnik, Stavanger 2014, the former World Champion preferred 13...♘g6, but the knight is less active and more of a target on that square) 14.♙d3 Now in Ploehn – R. Schneider, Germany 1997, Black should have played:

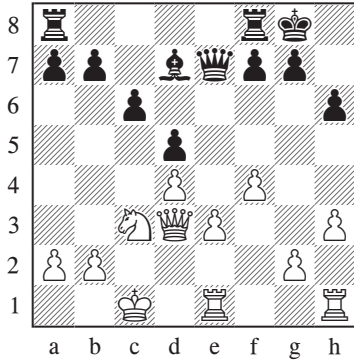


14...b5!N↑ Black has the faster attack.

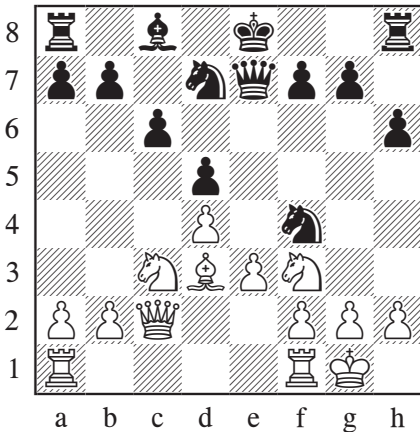
12.0-0-0 ♘xd3† 13.♚xd3 ♘f6!? also gives Black comfortable play, and he has the useful practical advantage of being able to castle on either side. One game went: 14.♘e5 (14.h3 ♘e4! is good for Black) 14...♘g4! 15.♘xg4 (15.f4? ♘f2) 15...♙xg4 16.♚de1 0-0!? Black decides to sharpen the game. 17.h3 In Lantos – Kiss, Hungary 2008, Black should have preferred:



17...♔d7!N Black has good chances in the likely pawn race, for instance: 18.f4 (18.g4 f5! is good for Black; and if 18.♖e2, hoping to meet Black's ...b5 advance with ♗b1 followed by ♕c1-b3-c5, Black has the annoying 18...♗f6!, hitting f2 and threatening ...♔f5)



18...b5! 19.g4 ♗fe8 20.♖hg1 a5 21.h4 a4 22.h5 b4 23.♔d1 c5±

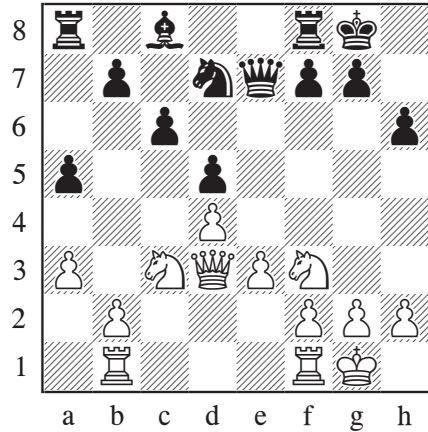


12...♔xd3 13.♗xd3 0-0

Black has a comfortable game; he has traded two minor pieces and his remaining bishop, while theoretically 'bad', actually has a lot of potential on the kingside. All that remains is to see how Black should counter White's obvious plan of a minority attack.

14.♖ab1 a5 15.a3

This position was reached in Jakob – Mayer, Gyongyos 1996, when Black should have continued:



15...♔b6!N

Now b2-b4 will give the knight an excellent outpost on c4.

16.♖e5

Covering the c4-square is a natural reply, but Black has a strong answer.

16...♗f6

Threatening ...♔f5.

Now that we have dealt with the inaccurate move order involving an early ♗c2 followed by 11.♖f3?!, let's see the superior version where White delays the queen move and makes time for castling before ...♖f4 becomes possible.

The Right Move Order

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♔c3 ♖f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♔g5 c6 6.e3 ♔e7 7.♔d3 ♖bd7 8.♖f3 h6 9.♔h4 ♖h5 10.♔xe7 ♗xc7 11.0-0 0-0

From here White has two plans: he can go for the typical minority attack of course, as well as the central break with e3-e4. We will deal with both options in turn.

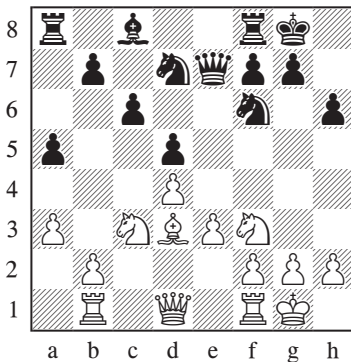
The Minority Attack

The minority attack may be White's most popular and best-known plan in this structure, but in this particular variation it is easy for Black to handle.

12. ♖c2

If White omits the queen move, Black handles the position in much the same way. For example:

12. ♖b1 a5 13.a3 ♘hf6



14. ♘a4!N

After 14.b4 axb4 15.axb4 b5! Black is more than okay.

14. ♖c2 ♜e8 transposes to the main line below. I decided to check the text move in light of the advice given by Botvinnik, who suggested that White should first establish a knight on c5 before advancing the b-pawn in this structure. However, Black obtains an easy game with:

14... ♘e8!

Our thematic manoeuvre, intending to put the knight on d6. With the other knight on d7 for the moment, White still cannot play ♘c5 yet. Play may continue:

15.b4 b5!

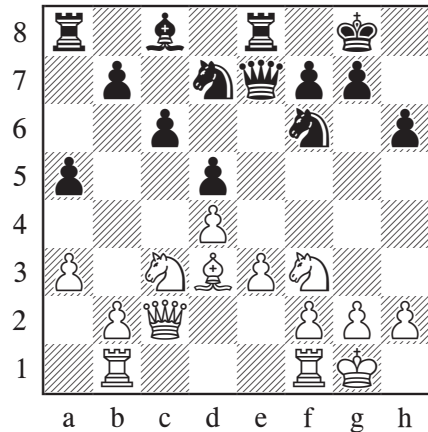
Followed by ... ♘b6-c4.

12... ♘hf6

The knight has done its job, so it returns to the centre.

13. ♖ab1 a5 14.a3 ♜e8

Black has a fine position and is ready to meet White's queenside activity in a familiar way:



15.b4 axb4 16.axb4 b5!

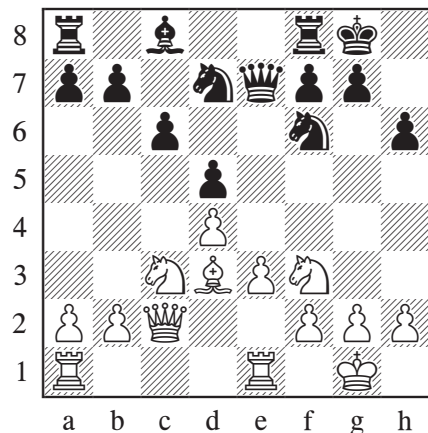
Followed by ... ♘b6-c4, with an excellent game. It is clear that White's minority attack is going nowhere, so let's see if White can do any better by focusing on the centre.

Central Play

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5. ♘g5 c6 6.e3 ♘e7 7. ♘d3 ♘bd7 8. ♘f3 h6 9. ♘h4 ♘h5 10. ♘xe7 ♜xe7 11.0-0 0-0 12. ♖c2

12. ♜e1 ♘hf6 13. ♖c2 is the same thing.

12... ♘hf6 13. ♜e1



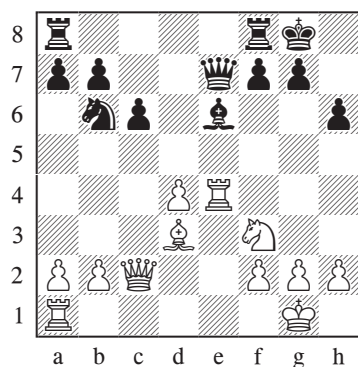
13...♖b6!

Black is ready to meet e3-e4, as the knight is poised to come to d5 and the bishop is also ready to be developed. If White refrains from advancing in the centre, Black may strengthen his position with ...♗e4 and ...♙f5 if allowed.

14.h3

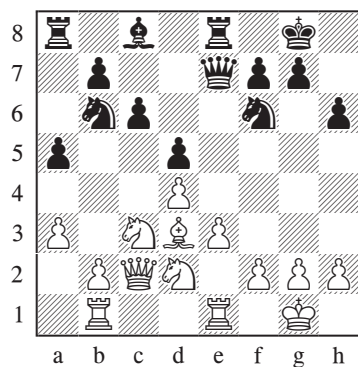
14.♗e5 was well met by 14...♖g4! in Ziems – Heilemann, corr. 1953.

14.e4 dxe4 15.♗xe4 ♖xe4 16.♙xe4 ♙e6 is fine for Black. One illustrative line goes:



17.♙ae1 ♗d5 18.a3 ♙d6 19.♖h4 This occurred in Juszczak – Maleska, Lublin 1999, when 19...♙fe8N= would have left Black with nothing to fear.

I also considered the untested 14.♙ab1!?N, with the idea to revert to a minority attack, now that Black is unable to counter b2-b4 with ...b5. My analysis continues: 14...a5 15.a3 ♙e8 16.♗d2! Otherwise ...♗e4 comes.



16...♙e6! Black is ready to regroup with ...♗c8-d6. A sample line is: 17.♗b3 (17.b4 looks premature due to 17...♗c4!) 17...♗fd7!? Before carrying out his own knight manoeuvre, Black prevents ♗c5. 18.♙ec1 Black can choose between 18...♗c8 and 18...♗c4, with a good game in either case.

14...♙e8

Intending ...♗e4.

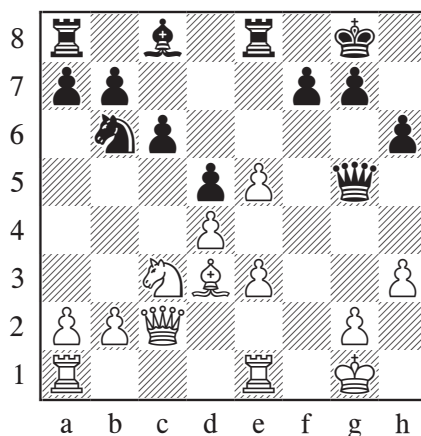
15.♗e5!?

This is an idea of my good friend Vasilios Kokkalis, who played it against me in a training game. White's plan is surprisingly strong and so Black has to know how to meet it.

15.♙ad1 allows Black to carry out his plan: 15...♗e4 16.♙xe4 (otherwise ...♙f5 followed by ...♗xc3 will give Black an excellent position) 16...dxe4 17.♗d2 f5 18.f3 exf3 19.♗xf3 ♙e6 Black has a good game.

15...♗fd7 16.f4 ♗xe5 17.fxe5 ♙g5!

This is the antidote. Black wins a tempo in order to complete development and carry out the ...f6 break under optimal circumstances.

**18.♗h1**

18.♗h2?! gives Black a useful extra option: 18...f6! (18...♙e6 is also playable of course)

19.exf6 ♖xf6 White would like to play 20.♖f1, hoping to develop threats with ♗e2, ♕h7† and ♗f4, but the position of his king allows 20...♗d6† 21.♔g1 ♞xe3, when Black wins a pawn for inadequate compensation. Note that 22.♕h7† ♖h8 23.♗e2? is refuted by 23...♞xe2.

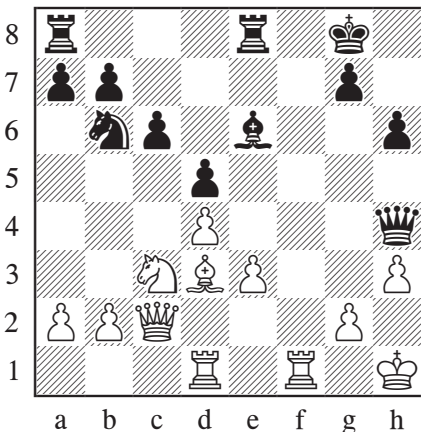
18...♕e6!

It should come as no surprise that, with the king on h1, 18...f6! allows White to seize the initiative with 19.exf6 ♖xf6 20.♖f1 ♗d6 21.♗e2!. The extra tempo makes all the difference after 21...♞xe3? 22.♕h7† ♖h8 23.♗f4 and White wins.

19.♞ad1

This seems as logical a move as any. Most other moves can be met by either 19...f6 as in the line below, or by the preliminary 19...♖f8!?

19...f6 20.exf6 ♖xf6 21.♖f1 ♗h4



22.♔g1 ♞f8 23.♗e2 ♞xf1† 24.♞xf1 ♗e7!?

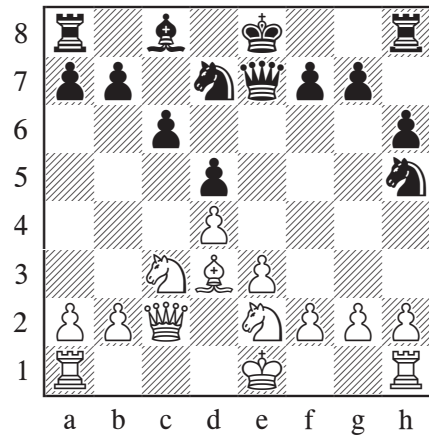
With ...♞f8 coming next, Black has nothing to fear.

♗ge2 Lines

This is similar to the previous section, but White will be developing his knight to e2 rather than f3 before castling kingside. We will

begin by considering this plan in the context of a familiar move order where the queen goes to c2 early. Later, we will see how White can try to improve his set-up by delaying the queen's development and possibly choosing a different square for it, such as d2.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♕g5 c6 6.e3 ♕e7 7.♕d3 ♗bd7 8.♞c2 h6 9.♕h4 ♗h5 10.♞xe7 ♞xe7 11.♗ge2



11...♗b6 12.0-0

12.0-0-0 leads back to variation B1 of the previous chapter on page 132.

12...0-0

Let me remind you that this move is only possible because Black inserted ...h6 before playing ...♗h5. If the pawn was still on h7, Black would have to bring the knight back to f6 before castling. In our version, Black can benefit from leaving the knight on h5 for a while, as this gives him the additional option of ...f5. This may prove especially useful in the later lines where White aims for f2-f3 and e3-e4.

Just as in the ♗f3 section, White has two main plans: he can play for a minority attack on the queenside, or for a central expansion.