

Tibor Károlyi

PLAY THE SEMI-TARRASCH!

PART 1



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Evolution

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate

PREFACE

According to my database, after 1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5 it was the Swiss player Hans Fahrni who was the first to recapture with the knight. It happened in 1905 and, although he drew against Ossip Bernstein, Fahrni never repeated it. One year later, his play was followed by the first world-class player, Carl Schlechter. The opening became regularly played only in the thirties. Alekhine as White faced it in 1931, and he impressively beat Grünfeld. One year later he decided to give it a try with Black. So, the first time a world champion employed it. Alekhine would go on to use it five more times in regular tournament games. He played it in one of his most famous games, although sadly for him he lost against the rising star Botvinnik. Other world champions, such as Lasker and Euwe, also started to use it. In 1959, Fischer played it and drew with two strong opponents, Robert Byrne and Samuel Reshevsky. Tal started to play it one year later; he became a regular Semi-Tarrasch player. Botvinnik, Spassky and Petrosian joined the club in the sixties. Kramnik plays it a lot, while Carlsen rarely employs it. So it means that except for Smyslov, Karpov, Kasparov

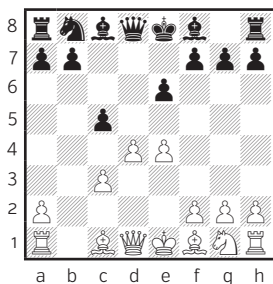
and Topalov, all the world champions at least gave it a try. And in the past many of the all-time great players played it, some of them quite often. Let me name a few top players (apart from the champions I already mentioned) who have employed it in recent years: Nakamura, Giri, Karjakin, Ding Liren, Harikrishna, Naiditsch, Bu, Wang Yue and the young Wei Yi. In the eighties and the nineties it was not popular, but perhaps because other openings lost some of their attractiveness, people turned their attention back to this old weapon.

Black in many lines gives up some space, but has no weakness. The pawn structure is not symmetrical and that means that some tension may remain. Yes, the opening is rarely dynamic and rarely results in great complications, but there is a good chance that the fight will last longer. It may make players not use their computers so efficiently during their preparation. Also, unlike in many openings, if one doesn't remember his or her preparation and makes the second or the third best move, the position is highly unlikely to collapse and the opponent still has to outplay you.

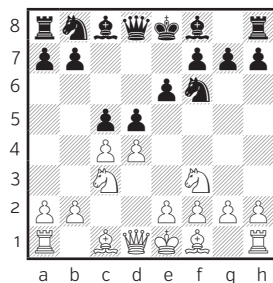
Originally the plan was to write one book, but the material was rich enough to have two books. In these two books I will provide you with a repertoire for Black in the Semi-Tarrasch, and I actually provide you with two different move orders. Quite often I will also provide you with more than one option in specific positions. The spirit I chose when ever it was possible, was to look for safety in one line and make sure Black gets a playable game. And when there was a reasonable line that is more adventurous, then I provided that possibility as well. In my opinion, many times there is no clearly best line in a variation and one can and should choose according to his or her specific taste.

Some openings or setups, like the Dutch, or ...c6 and ...d5, can be used against all White's openings apart from 1.e4. This is not the case with the Semi-Tarrasch, but it can still be used often enough to make it worth investing energy in it.

In the first book I start with the position after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 c5.



In the second book I will look at all other moves apart from 5.e4. I also provide a full repertoire after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5 4.♗c3 c5.



As stated, I will provide you with a full repertoire starting from these positions and offer several options against each line. Whenever possible in one of the lines I give, I look for security, whereas in the others I looked for complications. In some case I even discuss 4 possibilities; I tried to make them work. I carefully looked at Marin's video and Pinter's book on the Semi-Tarrasch. Their repertoire is mainly different from mine, but at some points we suggest the same line.

I do not recommend taking on d5 in English openings with g3 if the White knight remains on b1. In this book I do not cover the Catalan, just as I don't analyse the Nimzo Indian, or the Queen's Gambit with no capture on d5.

Please do not think that only having prepared the lines is fully satisfactory! That is important, but please play some friendly live games or on the internet to get a feeling for the

positions, to be aware of the dangers, and learn what opponents' reactions to your ideas are! I hope these books will give you an appetite for playing it, or if the Semi-Tarrasch is already included in your repertoire you get some useful new ideas. This opening will contribute to understanding isolated pawn positions. I can recall when Leko and Gyimesi were young and I trained them. Though they had special talent, and especially for positional chess, still playing against isolated pawns did not come that naturally. I can recall Leko's game against Vescovi in a junior tournament where I was not happy with his play or his moves in the analysis. Of course, soon afterwards he grew formidable at that as well. Also, playing this opening will improve your endgame play.

Your author has written over 100 opening reviews for the New in Chess Yearbook and quite a few also for Chessbase magazine. I have been making a living out of chess as a pro and as a coach for more than 40 years. I have worked all my life on openings and published more than 10 books on great players, but this is my very first time writing an opening book. I have found the task very challenging, and dear reader my desire is to please you.

Let me finish the preface with a masterpiece which was played in the Semi-Tarrasch, which proves that even without queens one can create an attacking gem. I rate this game as one of the all-time best games a Hun-

garian player has ever produced. Poetry in motion!

▷ **L. Portisch**

▷ **J. Pinter**

Hungarian Championship
Budapest, 1984

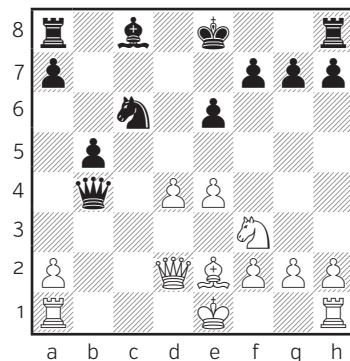
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 c5
5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3 cxd4
8.cxd4 ♘c6 9.♙c4 b5

This move was introduced by Fischer against Spassky in the historic World Championship final match in 1972. It has since lost its popularity, but it took roughly 1½ decades to find an advantage.

10.♙e2 ♙b4+ 11.♙d2 ♚a5 12.♙xb4

12.d5!? may well be even stronger.

12... ♚xb4+ 13.♚d2



13... ♙b7!?

This was Pinter's prepared novelty.

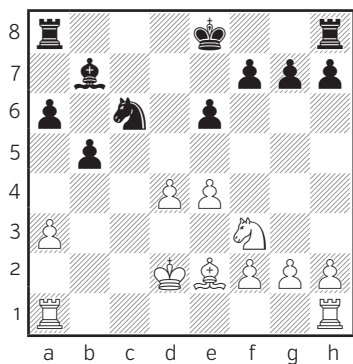
14.a3

14. ♖xb4 ♗xb4 15. ♕xb5+ ♖e7 This is the key point of the novelty: Black is at least not worse.

14... ♖xd2+ 15. ♖xd2

The king is strong and Black's queen-side is vulnerable.

15...a6



16.a4!

A strong move. When I asked Jozsef about the opening, he told me that he had looked at this strong move a bit, but had mainly focused on other continuations.

16...b4 17.a5?!

White gives up a tempo to fix the a6-pawn and separate it from the b4-pawn, however it gives Black time to organise his plan. 17. ♖hc1 ♖e7 18. ♖e3 White would be somewhat better after 18...f5 (18... ♖hc8 19. ♖c5) 19. ♕d3.

17... ♖d8! 18. ♖e3 f5!

Black undermines White's centre.

19.exf5

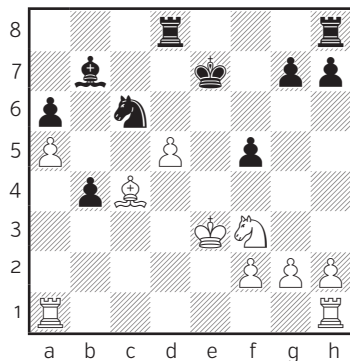
19. ♖hc1 fxe4 20. ♕xa6=

19...exf5 20. ♕c4! ♖e7!

Pinter finds a great square for the king.

21.d5

21. ♖hd1 ♖f6 22. ♗e5 Black can win a pawn, but the position would be equal.



21... ♖f6!!

A fantastic move! Pinter sacrifices a piece for a tempo. 21... ♗b8 22. ♖d4±

22.dxc6

On 22. ♖he1 ♗e7 wins.

22... ♖he8+ 23. ♖f4 ♖e4+?

This is very imaginative, but not the best. 23...g5+! 24. ♖g3! f4+ 25. ♖h3 ♙xc6! (25... ♙c8+ 26.g4 h5 27. ♖g2+=)

a) 26. ♖he1 h5 27. ♖xe8 ♙xe8! 28. ♗e1 ♙g6 (28... ♙d7+ 29.g4 hxg4+ 30. ♖g2 ♙f5=)

a1) 29.g3 f3 30.g4 ♖d4 31. ♖c1 ♖xg4 32. ♙d3 ♙e8 33. ♖c7 ♖g1 34. ♙xa6 ♖xe1 White is in trouble.

a2) 29.g4! hxg4+ 30. ♖xg4? (30. ♖g2=) 30...b3!! (30... ♖h8 31. ♖f3!) 31. ♙xb3 ♖h8 32. ♖f3 ♖h3+ Black is much better.

b) 26. ♖hd1 h5 27. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 28. ♗e1 ♖d2=

24. ♖g3 ♙c8

24... ♖g4+ 25. ♖h3 ♙xc6 26. ♙xa6±

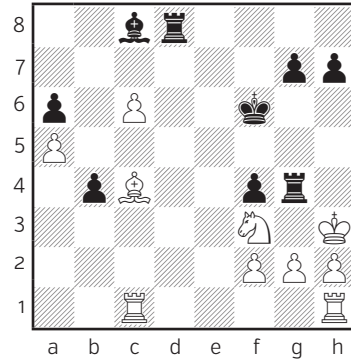
25. ♖ac1

a) 25. ♙xa6!? ♙xa6 26.c7 ♖d3 27. ♖hd1 ♖g4+ 28. ♖h3 ♖gd4 29. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 30. ♖h4 ♖c3 31. ♖d1 ♖e7 32. ♖d4 b3 33. ♖b4 White is somewhat better.

b) 25. ♖hc1 ♖g4+ 26. ♖h3 f4 27.c7 ♖d6 28. ♖d1 ♖g6+ 29.g4 ♖c6 30. ♙xa6 ♙xg4+ 31. ♖g2 ♙c8+ 32. ♖h1 ♙xa6 33. ♖d4 The position here is level.

25... ♖g4+ 26. ♖h3 f4!

A breathtaking idea! Black sets up a big battery; the discovered check is a heavy threat.



27. ♗e5?

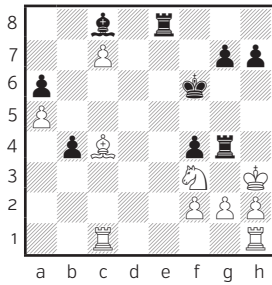
Perhaps Portisch calculated that the king would take the knight and after a rook check on e1 he was prepared to block the c8-h3 diagonal, but did not see Pinter's great answer. In fact he missed an amazing win...

a) 27. ♙xa6!? would allow no more than a perpetual. 27... ♖g3+ 28. ♖h4 ♖g4+ (28...g5+? 29. ♖h5+-) 29. ♖h3 (29. ♖h5? ♖d5+ 30. ♗e5 ♖xe5#) 29... ♖g3+=

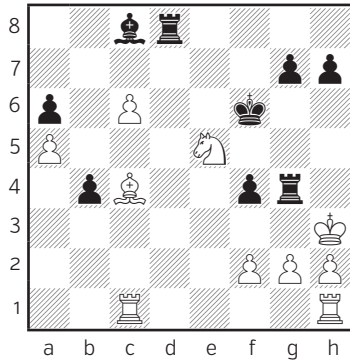
b) 27.c7!! ♖e8! (27... ♖g3+ 28. ♖h4 ♖g4+ 29. ♖h5 White wins.)

a) 28. ♖he1 g5--+

b) 28. ♙xa6 ♖g3+ 29. ♖h4 ♖g4+ 30. ♖h3 is equal, but not 30. ♖h5?? as Black can checkmate 30... ♖e5+ 31. ♗xe5 g6+ 32. ♗xg6 hxg6+ 33. ♖h6 ♖h4.



c) 28. ♙e6!! A fabulous move! 28... ♙xe6 29. ♖c6! White will destroy the bishop and promote to a queen. White wins after 29... ♗g3+ 30. ♙h4 ♗g4+ 31. ♙h5.



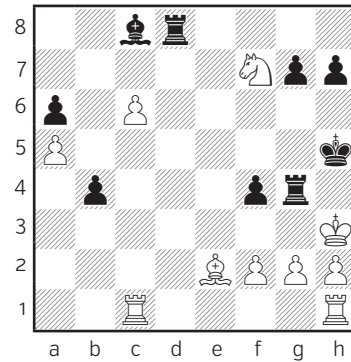
27... ♙g5!

Black catches White's king. If 27... ♙xe5 28. ♖he1+ ♙f6 29. ♙e6!+=

28. ♗f7+

28. ♗f3+ ♙h5! (28... ♙h6? 29. ♖he1 (29. ♖hd1? ♗g3+ 30. ♙h4 g5+ 31. ♗xg5 ♗g4+ 32. ♙h3 ♙xg5 Black checkmates in two.) 29... ♗g3+ 30. ♙h4 ♗g4+=) 29. ♙f7+ g6 30. ♖c5+ ♗g5+ +-

28... ♙h5 29. ♙e2



29... ♗d3+!!

Another brilliant move.

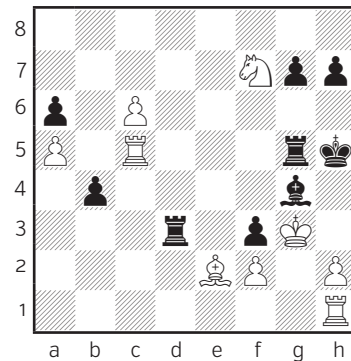
30. g3

30. ♙f3 ♗xf3+ 31. gxf3 ♗g3#

30... f3

Now White's king cannot be defended.

31. ♖c5+ ♗g5+ 32. g4+ ♙xg4+ 33. ♙g3

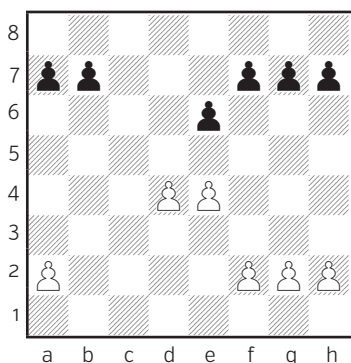


33... fxe2+ 0-1

It is symbolic that the game ends with a discovered check!

CHAPTER 1.

SIDELINES WITHOUT 7.♞f3

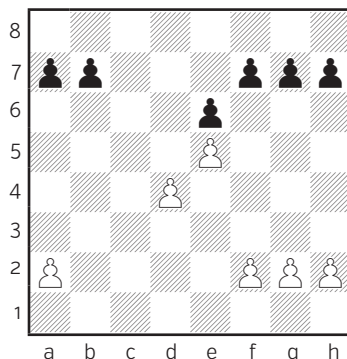


This is the most important pawn structure of the Semi-Tarrasch.

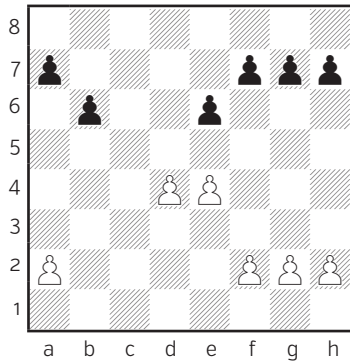
White's number one plan is to push the d-pawn as far as possible. Of course, the passed pawn might grow into a powerhouse, or instead become a target that might even fall. White can also sometimes play against the b7-pawn, he can sometimes attack the king with his pieces, or sometimes by pushing the h-pawn. It is rare that White invades on the c-file.

Black wants to reduce the number of pieces. He often brings his rook or rooks to the c-file. If Black manages to neutralise White's play, he may also push his queenside pawns. Sometimes Black plays against the e-pawn and, if

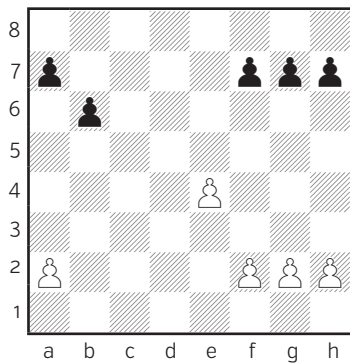
he finishes development, sometimes undermines the centre with ...f5. Black can also occasionally exploit White's back rank. The pawn chain can change in many ways, so it is important to discuss these possibilities.



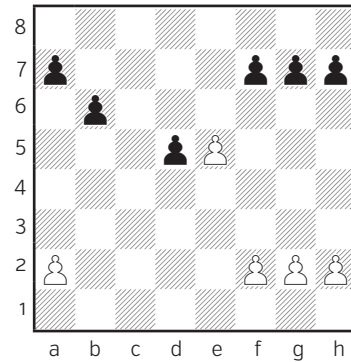
White hopes to attack the king, but may also want to transfer a knight to d6. Black wants to transfer a knight to d5, or place it on c6 to attack the d4-pawn. Black may play ...h6 to keep the knight away from his king and can also consider playing ...f5 to get rid of the e5-pawn or limit White's bishop.



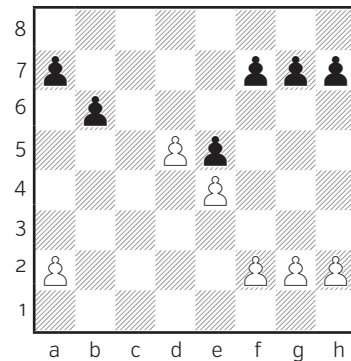
Apart from the above-mentioned play, White can consider playing a4 and a5 to create a target on the queen-side. Black sometimes plays ...a5 himself, and after that ...e5 as well to get the c5-square. Sometimes Black just plays ...a6 to push past if White plays a5. Of course Black can allow a5 and look instead for play on the c-file.



The disappearance of the d- and the e-pawns help Black. White must have something special in addition to be able to hurt Black.



This pawn structure usually happens after White's standard pawn sacrifice in the centre. This pawn structure often gives White a strong, sometimes even a winning attack. Black is usually safe when he manages to place a knight on e4. Otherwise, Black must be careful, and is often just trying to keep the balance regardless of the extra pawn.



White should prevent or get properly ready for the moment Black carries out ...f5. White may want to place the knight on c4. Of course, if White can push the d-pawn things may become unpleasant for Black.

5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5
7. ♗b5+ ♘d7

5... ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5

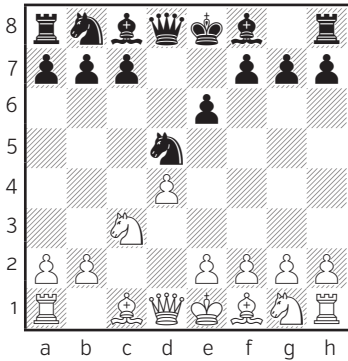
■ Game 1

▷ **B. Chatalbashev**

▷ **V. Bernadsky**

Albena, 2017

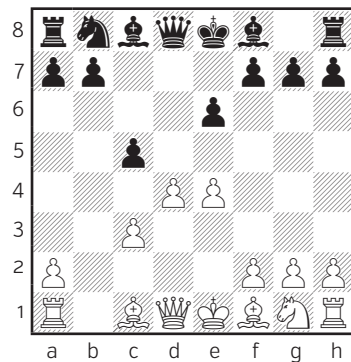
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♗f6 4.cxd5
♘xd5



5.e4

I think this is the most testing move. White gains space and a slight superiority in the centre. Later White may get play by changing the pawn structure via pushing the d- or the e-pawn. The pawn structure is similar to some lines in the Grünfeld. Here Black less-often gets strong play against the d4-pawn, but sometimes he can put pressure on e4. Black usually looks to reduce the number of pieces. His position is slightly passive, but he has no weaknesses.

The pawn structure almost guarantees that the tension will not disappear completely. I think this factor has a lot to do with the rise of popularity in the Semi-Tarrasch. Kasparov was always looking for huge complications in the opening, but thanks to the effect of computer engines, playing very sharp openings no longer offers so many chances—opponents know how to neutralise them. Carlsen handles the openings differently, looking for smaller, but longer-lasting tension. Therefore it may sound a bit surprising, but winning against a well-prepared opponent from this position with Black can more easily happen than in, let's say, the Poisoned Pawn Sicilian!



7. ♗b5+

This check should not hurt Black as it contributes to the second player's development.

7... ♘d7

This is somewhat risky. Objectively it is less correct than blocking the check with the bishop, but Black players think that with more pieces on the board opponents may go wrong more easily. Black's move often leads to positions which are close to equality, or perhaps really equal. Once we see more games we can better judge which evaluation is more correct.

8. ♖b1

8.a4 White can stop Black gaining space.

a) 8...a6 9. ♖d3 cxd4 (9...e5 10.d5 c4 and now 11. ♖xc4 or 11. ♖c2 are somewhat better.) 10.cxd4 ♖e7 11. ♗f3 White has some advantage.

b) 8...cxd4 9.cxd4 a6 10. ♖d3 ♖b4+ 11. ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 12. ♗xd2 e5 (12...b6 13. ♗f3 ♖b7 14.o-o o-o 15. ♗e2+=) 13.d5 ♗c5

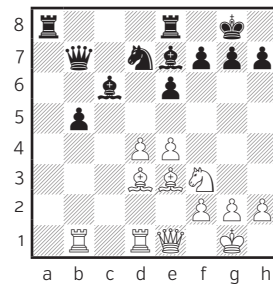
b1) 14. ♖c2 o-o (14...b6 15. ♗f3 o-o 16.o-o f6 17. ♗e3+=) 15. ♗f3 ♗d6 16. ♗e3 ♖d7 17.o-o ♖fc8 It is seen in practice that White has a small edge.

b2) 14. ♗f3 f6 (14...♗b3 15. ♗c3 ♗xa1 16. ♗xe5+ ♖f8 17. ♗xa1 ♖g4+=) 15. ♗c2 (15. ♖c2 ♖g4 16. ♗e3+=) 15... b6 16. ♖e2 o-o 17.a5 (17.o-o ♖d7) 17... ♖d7 18. ♗d2 White, as almost always in this variation, is somewhat better.

8...a6

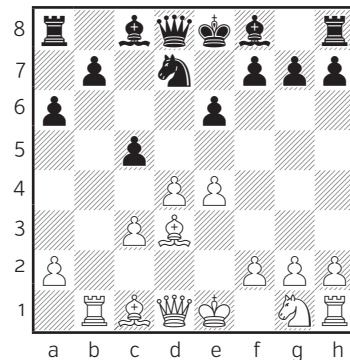
Black wants to keep the position closed, which is why he doesn't insert the capture on d4.

8...cxd4 9.cxd4 ♖e7 10. ♗f3 o-o 11.o-o (11.a4 a6 12. ♖d3 e5 is unclear) 11...a6 12. ♖d3 b5 13. ♖d2 ♖b7 White wants to pin the knight if it moves to b6. 14. ♗e2 ♗b6 (14...♗b6 15. ♖a5 ♗d6 16.e5 ♗b8=) 15. ♖fd1 ♖fe8?! 16. ♗e1 ♖c6?! 17.a4 ♖ab8 18.axb5?! axb5 19. ♖f4 ♖a8 20. ♖e3 ♗b7? (Instead of this blunder Black should play 20... ♗a6)



21.d5! exd5 22.exd5 ♖xd5 23. ♖xb5 1-o Gutman,L-Sibarevic,M, Lugano 1987.

9. ♖d3



9...e5

Black is ready to live with a protected passed d5-pawn. Van Wely twice undertook a similar pawn structure in the centre recently in a Grünfeld, drawing both games. We shall see in due course whether it gives a fully playable position or not.

9...b5 10. ♖f3 (10.a4 ♖a5=) 10... ♕e7 11.o-o o-o 12.a4 cxd4 13.cxd4 (13. ♖xd4 ♖e5=) 13...b4=

10.d5

10. ♖f3 ♕d6 11.o-o o-o If White has an edge it is small, after 12.d5 or after 12. ♕e3 ♖c7 13. ♖d2.

10...c4?!

This pawn sacrifice is simply not justified. After 10...b5 11.a4 c4 12. ♕c2 ♖b8 the position would be equal, so White should look for a small advantage with 11.c4 b4 12. ♖e2.

11. ♕xc4

11. ♕c2 ♖a5 12.a4 ♖xc3+ 13. ♕d2 ♖a3 14. ♖e2 ♕d6=

11... ♖c7 12. ♕e2

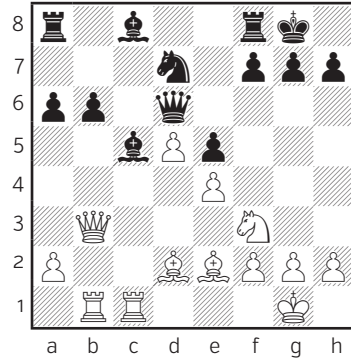
12. ♖e2 b5 13. ♕d3 ♖xc3+ 14. ♕d2

a) 14... ♖a3 15. ♖f3 ♕d6 16.o-o ♖c5 17. ♖e1±

b) 14... ♖c7 15. ♖f3 ♕d6 16.o-o ♖c5 17. ♕b4 White should be a little better here.

12... ♖xc3+ 13. ♕d2 ♖c7 14. ♖f3 ♕c5 15.o-o o-o 16. ♖b3 ♖d6 17. ♖fc1 b6

On 17...b5 White would answer 18.a4.



18. ♕e3!

This exchange softens Black's position.

18... ♖b8 19. ♖d2 b5 20. ♕xc5 ♖xc5 21. ♖b4

After 21. ♖e3 ♖a4 22. ♕d1 Black's position would be very difficult.

21... ♖b7 22. ♖c6

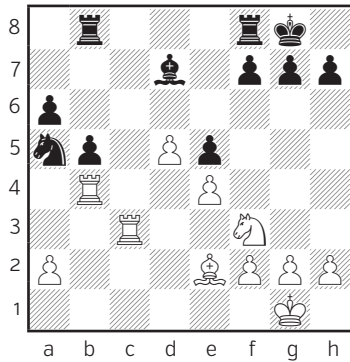
White's advantage should be enough to win.

22... ♖xb4 23. ♖xb4 ♖a5 24. ♖c3

24. ♖c7 is almost winning.

24... ♕d7 25. ♖f3?

The knight should remain on d2. White should win with 25. ♖a3 ♖b7 26. ♖xa6.



25...f6

The position remains even till the end, although it is not clear whether the game was not recorded all the way or White might have lost on time.

26. ♖a3 ♘b7 27. ♖xa6 ♘c5 28. ♖a3 ♖a8 29. ♖c3 ♖xa2 30. ♖xc5 ♖xe2 31. ♖c7 ♖c8 32. ♖xc8+ ♙xc8 33. ♙f1 ♖a2 34. ♘e1 ♙d7 35. ♘d3 ♙f7 0-1

5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5
7. ♙b5+ ♙d7

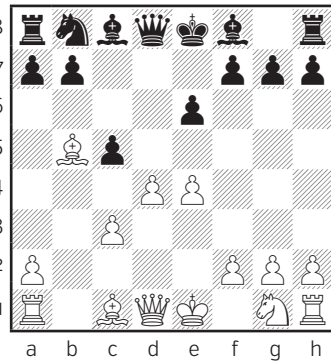
■ Game 2

▷ M. Cebalo

▶ A. Yusupov

Corsica Masters Rapid
Bastia, 2004

1.d4 e6 2.c4 d5 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5 7. ♙b5+



7...♙d7

The bishop move is Black's safer choice. White's bishop is somewhat more active in most lines, so Yusupov doesn't mind swapping the light-squared bishops.

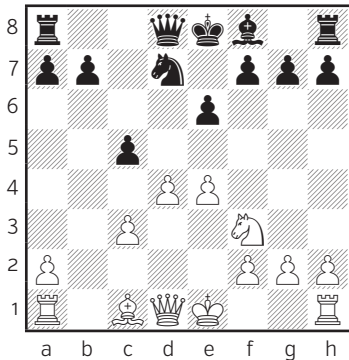
8. ♙xd7+

8. ♖a4 a6 9. ♙xd7+ ♘xd7 10. ♘f3 b5 11. ♖d1 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♙b4+ (12... ♘b6 The knight stands well on b6 as it stops both a4 and d5. 13.o-o ♙e7 14. ♙f4 o-o=) 13. ♙d2 ♖a5 (13... ♙xd2+!? 14. ♖xd2 ♘f6 Black can confuse White's pieces. 15. ♖e3 ♖a5+=+) 14.o-o ♙xd2 15. ♘xd2 ♘f6 16. ♘b3 ♖b6 17. ♖f3 o-o 18. ♖ac1 ♖ad8= Grapatin,L-Schade,W, Kiel 1992.

8...♘xd7 9. ♘f3

9. ♖a4 ♙e7 (9...cxd4 10.cxd4 ♖h4 11. ♖c2 ♙b4+ 12. ♙f1 o-o=+) 10. ♘f3 o-o 11.o-o a6 12. ♙e3 b5 13. ♖c2 (13. ♖b3=) 13... ♖c8 14. ♖e2 was played in the game Agabekian,R-Tukhvatullin,R, Kazan 2007 and after

14...♘b6 Black could have obtained a small advantage.



9...cxd4

Black gets ready to reduce the number of minor pieces on the board. 9...♙e7 Keeping the bishop helps White. 10.o-o cxd4 11.cxd4 o-o 12.♙b3 (12.♙f4 ♘f6 13.♙d3 ♖c8 14.♖fb1 b6 15.a4 White has a small edge thanks to his initiative on the queenside.) 12...♙b6 13.♙xb6 Exchanging queens slightly favours Black. 13...♘xb6 14.♙f4 ♖ac8 (14...♘a4=+) 15.♖ac1?! (15.♖fb1=) 15...♙a3 (15...♘a4) 16.♖c7 ♖xc7 17.♙xc7 ♘a4 18.♖b1 ♖c8? (18...b6!) 19.♙a5 (19.♖xb7! ♘c3 20.♙f1=) 19...b6 and Black obtained a better ending in the game Pavlovskij,R-Vovk,N, Dmitrov 2010.

10.cxd4 ♙b4+!

This is a useful check. Exchanging the bishop or otherwise keeping the king in the centre are both beneficial to Black.

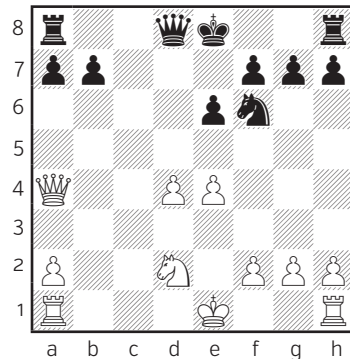
11.♙d2

Staying in the centre would be dangerous! 11.♙e2 ♙a5 12.♙d3 ♖c8 13.♙g5? (13.a4 ♖c3 [13...a6 14.♙d2=] 14.♙b5=) 13...♖c3 14.♖hc1 ♘c5 15.♖xc3 ♙xc3 16.dxc5 ♙xa1-+ Safin,S-Lauridsen,J, Abu Dhabi 2004.

11...♙xd2+ 12.♘xd2

The former World Senior champion is looking too much for a draw. 12.♙xd2 ♘f6 and they agreed to a draw in Kupruks,R-Katishonok,N Riga 1993 although the game might have continued 13.♙e3 ♙a5+ which would be nice for Black.

12...♘f6 13.♙a4+



13...♙d7

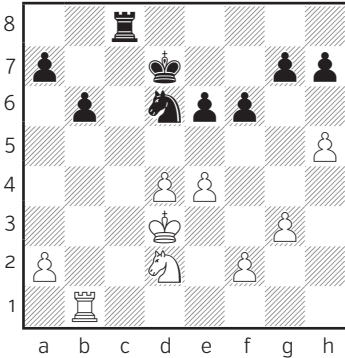
Yusupov is happy to play endgames.

14.♙xd7+ ♙xd7 15.♙e2 ♖hc8 16.♖hc1 ♘e8!?

The position remains equal; still, it is a good idea to improve the knight.

17. ♔d3 ♘d6 18.g3 f6 19.h4 b6 20.h5
 ♖xc1 21. ♖xc1 ♖c8 22. ♖b1

22. ♖xc8=



22...e5

The position is equal, but Black won because of a serious mistake.

23.dxe5 fxe5 24.f4 ♖c5 25. ♘b3 ♖b5
 26.f5? ♖b4 27.h6

27. ♖e1 ♖a4 28. ♖e2 ♔e7+-

27... ♖xe4 28.hxg7 ♖g4 29.f6 ♖xg3+
 30. ♔e2 ♖g2+ 31. ♔d3 ♔e6 32. ♖f1
 ♖g3+ 33. ♔e2 ♖g2+ 34. ♔d3 ♖g3+
 35. ♔e2 ♔f7 36. ♘d2 h5 37. ♖f3 ♖g2+
 38. ♔e3 ♖g4 39. ♔f2 h4 40. ♘f1 ♘e4+
 41. ♔e2 ♘xf6 42. ♘e3 ♖xg7 43. ♘f5
 ♖h7 44. ♖h3 ♔e6 45. ♘xh4 ♘d5
 46. ♖h2 ♘c3+ 47. ♔d3 ♘xa2 48. ♖xa2
 ♖xh4 49. ♖xa7 ♖d4+ 50. ♔e3 b5
 51. ♖b7 b4 52. ♖b5 ♔d6 53. ♔f3 ♖c4
 54. ♔e3 e4 55. ♔f4 ♔c6 56. ♖b8 ♔c5
 57. ♔e3 ♖c3+ 58. ♔xe4 b3 59. ♖b7 ♔c4
 60. ♖b8 ♖c2 61. ♔e3 b2 62. ♖b7 ♔c3
 63. ♖c7+ ♔b3 64. ♖b7+ ♔a2 65. ♖a7+
 ♔b1 66. ♔d3 ♖c7 67. ♖a1+ 0-1

5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5
 7.d5 exd5 8.cxd5

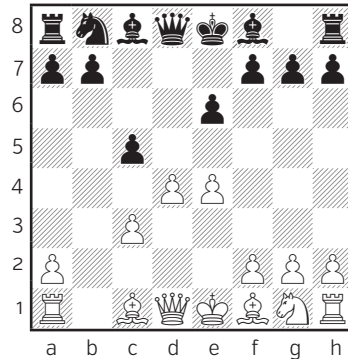
Game 3

▷ M. Nikolov

▷ L. Santolini

Padova, 2015

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♘c3 d5 4.cxd5
 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5



7.d5

The pawn doesn't become really strong here. Black can block it well and his pieces get easy development.

7...exd5 8.exd5 ♖e7

Black can develop the bishop to e7, in some cases get to f6, and will still have time to come to d6.

However, 8... ♔d6 was possible and I like this most as it firmly blocks the d-pawn.

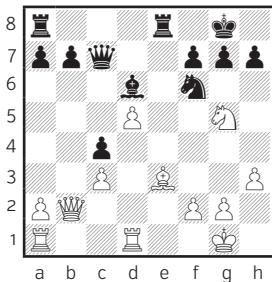
a) 9. ♖e2+ ♕e7 (9... ♖e7 Exchanging queens is simpler. 10. ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 11. ♖f3 ♕f5 Black should just bring the h8-rook into play.) 10. ♕g5 (10. ♖d3=) 10...f6 11. ♖b5+ Castellet Giralt,G-Urbe Arteaga,D, Barcelona 2016 11... ♕d7 12. ♖xb7 fxg5 13. ♖xa8 o-o Black has strong compensation as White is dangerously undeveloped.

b) 9. ♕b5+ ♖d7 10. ♖e2+ ♖e7 11. ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 12. ♕e3 The bishop is passive here and helps defend the black king. (12. ♖f3=) 12...a6 13. ♕e2 b5 14. o-o-o ♕b7 (14... ♖b6 15. h4 ♖e8 16. ♖h3 ♖a4=+) 15. ♖h3 ♖b6 16. ♖he1 ♗d7 17. ♕f3 ♖c4 (17...h6=+) 18. ♕f4 ♖ae8 19. ♕xd6 ♖xd6=+ Bekker Jensen,S-Olesen,M, Copenhagen 1995.

c) 9. ♖f3 o-o 10. ♕e2

c1) 10... ♕g4 11. o-o ♖d7

c11) 12. ♖g5 ♕xe2 13. ♖xe2 ♖c7 (13... ♖f6=) 14. h3 c4 15. ♕e3 (15. ♖e4=) 15... ♖f6 16. ♖fd1 ♖fe8 17. ♖b2



17... ♖e4 (17... ♖xe3 18. fxe3 ♕c5=+) 18. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 19. ♖ab1 b6= Barlov,D-Costa,J, Biel 1990.

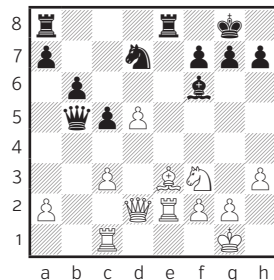
c12) 12. ♖c2 ♖f6 13. c4 ♖e8 14. ♖b1 b6 15. h3 ♖e7 16. ♕e3 ♕h5 17. ♖fe1 ♖ad8= Salvermoser,B-Gasthofer,V, Germany 2004.

c2) 10... ♖f6 Black tries to be active. 11. ♕d2 ♕g4 12. o-o ♖d7 13. ♖c1 ♖e5 14. ♖g5 ♕xe2 (14... ♕f5=) 15. ♖xe2 ♖g6 16. c4 ♖ae8 17. ♖fe1?! (17. ♖c3=) 18...f6 18. ♖e6 ♖d3 19. ♖xf8 ♖xe2 20. ♖xg6 ♖xe1=+ Agibileg,U-Enkhnar,E, Ulaanbaatar 2015.

9. ♖f3

a) 9. ♕d3 o-o 10. ♖f3 ♕g4 11. h3 ♕h5 12. o-o ♕d6 (12... ♖d7 13. ♕f4) 13. ♖b1 b6 14. c4 ♖d7.

b) 9. ♕f4 o-o 10. ♖f3 (10. d6 ♕g5) 10... ♕f6 (10... ♕d6=) 11. ♖d2 ♖e7+ (11... ♕f5 12. ♕e2 ♖d7 13. o-o ♖e8=) 12. ♕e2 ♖e8 13. ♕e3 b6 14. o-o ♕a6 15. ♖fe1 ♖d7 16. h3 ♕xe2 17. ♖xe2 ♖b5 18. ♖ae1 (18. a4 ♖c4 19. ♖a2 ♖xa2 20. ♖axa2 ♖a6=) 18... ♖d7 19. ♖c1

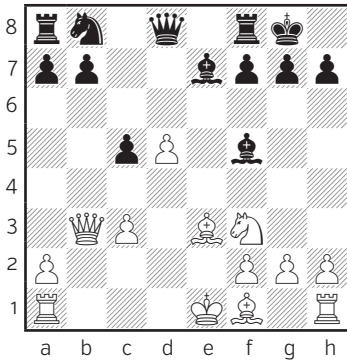


19... ♖c4=+ Clari Mascarell, J-Lloret Ramis, J, Valencia 1994.

9... 0-0 10. ♖e3?!

The bishop is passive on e3; both h6 and f4 are better squares. 10. ♖d3! This bishop stands well here. 10...c4 (10... ♖f6 11.0-0 ♘d7 12. ♖c2 g6+=or 10...g6 11. ♖b3 ♘c6 12.0-0 ♘a5 13. ♖a4 a6 14. ♖h6+=) 11. ♖xc4 ♖c7 12. ♖b3 ♖g4 13. ♖e2 (13. ♘d4 ♘d7 14.0-0 ♖ac8=) 13... ♖e8 14.0-0 ♘d7 15.h3 ♖h5 16. ♖e3 ♖c5=

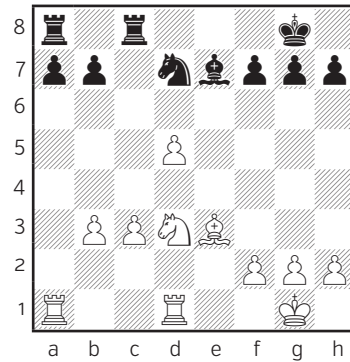
10... ♖f5 11. ♖b3



11... ♖b6

The position would be equal with the queens on as well, but swapping the ladies makes it easier to play.

12. ♖c4 ♘d7 13.0-0 ♖xb3 14. ♖xb3 ♖d3 15. ♖fd1 c4 16. ♘e1 cxb3 17. ♘xd3 ♖fc8 18.axb3



18... ♖xc3

Black has easy play and holds the game effortlessly, despite being rated almost 400 points less than White.

19.b4 b6 20.b5 ♖b3 21.d6 ♖f6
22. ♖ab1 ♖xb1 23. ♖xb1 a5 24.bxa6
♖xa6 25. ♖f1 ♖a1 26. ♖e1 1/2

5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5
7.d5 g6

■ Game 4

▷ R. Akesson

▶ B. Korpa

First Saturday
Budapest, 2016

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♘c3 d5 4.cxd5
♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.d5