

## Chapter Eleven

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# An Early Lunge

Colin McNab

1 e4 g6 2 h4!? (Diagram 1)

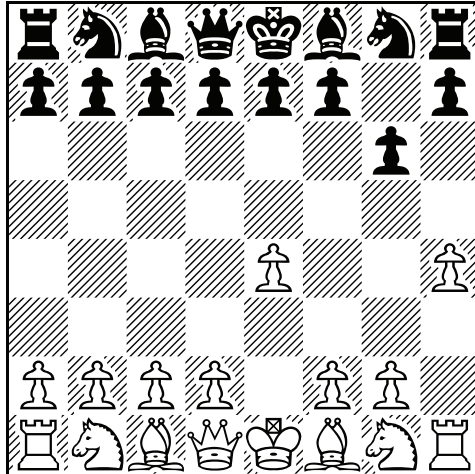


Diagram 1 (B)

Advancing on the kingside with h2-h4 (with a view to later playing h4-h5xg6) is a standard idea for White in many variations of the Pirc and Modern, although it is

not so common for it to be played quite this early. But for a player who uses the Modern move order 2 h4!? can be very irritating, since Black is immediately confronted with a dilemma.

Black can physically stop the pawn going any further by 2...h5, when White may hope to make use of the weakened g5-square as an outpost for a knight or bishop. On the other hand, Black may allow the h-pawn to advance, reacting in the approved manner to a flank attack with a counter in the centre. Indeed, the most frequently recommended response is 2...d5, but this option may not appeal to many players who having set out to play a Modern, do not want to find themselves in a type of Scandinavian Defence. Moreover, as we shall see in the following game, this line is not without its dangers for Black.

□ P.Ponkratov ■ V.Komliakov

Naberezhnye Chelny 2008

1 e4 g6 2 h4 d5 3 exd5 Qxd5

Black's alternatives here and on the next move will be covered later in the chapter.

4 Nc3 Qd8 5 h5 Bg7 6 Bc4 Nc6 7 Nf3 Nh6 (Diagram 2)

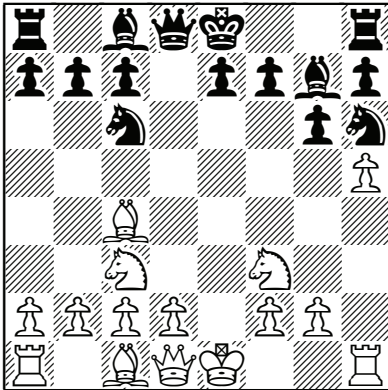


Diagram 2 (W)

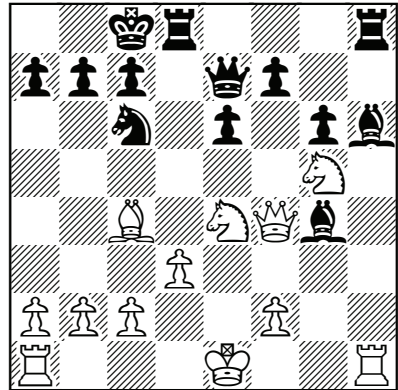


Diagram 3 (W)

8 d4!



**DANGEROUS WEAPON!** It may have looked as if Black had the d4-square under control, but his bishop is tied to the defence of the knight on h6, making this advance possible.

## Dangerous Weapons: The Pirc and Modern

White's move is an improvement on the game I.Nepomniachtchi-V.Komliakov, Moscow 2006, which continued 8 d3 Bg4 9 Bxh6 Bxh6 10 hxg6 hxg6 (Black is already comfortable) 11 Qc1? Bh5! 12 Ng5 e6 13 Nce4 Qe7 14 g4? (14 f4 would at least avoid losing material, but 14...0-0-0 is very good for Black) 14...Bxg4 15 Qf4 0-0-0! (**Diagram 3**) 16 Rxh6 (after 16 Qxg4 Bxg5 17 Rxh8 Rxh8 Black threatens ...Rh1+) 16...Rxh6 17 Nxf7 Rh1+ 18 Kd2 Rxa1 19 Qxg4 (19 Nxd8 Qb4+ 20 Nc3 Rd1+ 21 Ke3 Qb6+ is crushing) 19...Rf8 20 Qxe6+ Qxe6 21 Bxe6+ Kb8 and Black was winning.



**BEWARE! An open file is a two-way road. In this game it was Black who managed to benefit tactically from the h-file which White opened.**

### 8...Bg4 9 d5 Bxf3

If Black tries to utilize the pin by 9...Ne5, White responds 10 Bxh6 Bxh6 11 hxg6 and now both 11...Bxf3 12 gxf7+ Kxf7 13 gxf3 Nxc4 14 Rxh6 and 11...hxg6 12 Qd4 Bxf3 13 Qxe5 f6 14 Qg3 are good for White.

### 10 Qxf3 Ne5

No better is 10...Nd4 11 Qd3 Nhf5 12 Bf4 and White will castle queenside with a solid plus.

### 11 Bb5+! c6 12 Qe4! (Diagram 4)

Taking advantage of the insecure positions of the black knights.

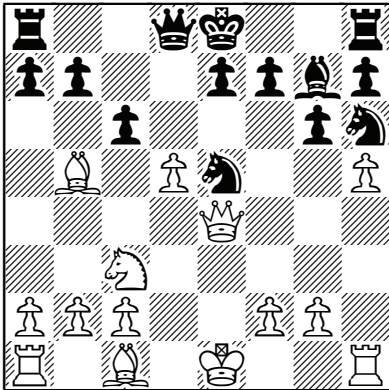


Diagram 4 (B)

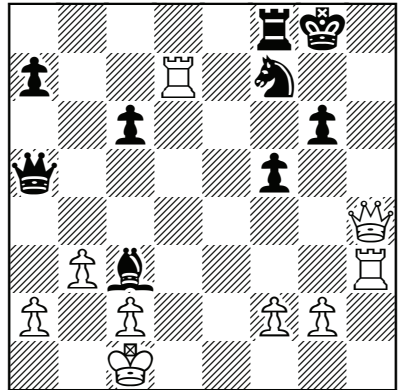


Diagram 5 (B)

### 12...f5

Perhaps Black should grasp the nettle with 12...cxb5!? 13 Bxh6 Bxh6 14 Qxe5 Rg8

when Golubev, writing in *Chess Today*, points out that 15 hxg6 Rxc6 16 Qh8+ Kd7 17 Qxh7 is not too clear. However White has a safer alternative in 15 Rd1, which should retain an edge.

**13 Qe2 Nhf7 14 dxc6 Nxc6**

After 14...bxc6 15 Ba4 White's bishop would find an ideal post on b3.

**15 Bd2 0-0 16 Bxc6?!**

Opening the b-file will allow Black to develop counterplay against b2. White should prefer 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 0-0-0 Nd4 18 Qd3 Nxb5 19 Qxb5 with long-term pressure because of Black's kingside weaknesses.

**16...bxc6 17 0-0-0 Rb8 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 b3 Qa5 20 Rh3 Rfd8!**

Black is willing to sacrifice a pawn for counterplay.

**21 Qxe7**

White could consider 21 g4!?

**21...Rxd2?**

This is just a blunder. Instead Golubev recommends 21...Re8! 22 Qh4 Rbd8! as very unclear.

**22 Rxd2 Bxc3 23 Rd7**

This forces Black to block in his king.

**23...Rf8 24 Qh4! (Diagram 5)**



**DANGEROUS WEAPON! What a triumph for White's strategy of opening the h-file with h4-h5! Black is defenceless.**

**24...Kg7 25 Qh6+ Kf6 26 Qxf8 1-0**

□ S.Sulskis ■ D.Dumitrache

Cappelle la Grande 2004

**1 e4 g6 2 h4 h5 3 d4 c6 4 c4**

Sulskis crosses Black's attempt to go into a Gurgendidze set-up, preferring to steer the opening along King's Indian lines.

**4...d6 5 d5!?**

Not a move that would have occurred to me, but Sulskis is known for his original opening play. The more conventional 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 (not 6 Bg5?! Qb6) 6...a6 7 Nh3 b5 8 Ng5 Nh6 9 f3 gives White some advantage. The game J.Eslon-M.Rivas Pastor, Coria 1994, continued 9...Nd7 10 Qc2 Rb8 11 0-0-0 bxc4 12 Bxc4 d5 13 Bb3 Nb6 14 Kb1 Bd7 15 Ka1 a5 16 Bc1 0-0 17 g4 Kh8 18 e5 with serious pressure (**Diagram 6**).

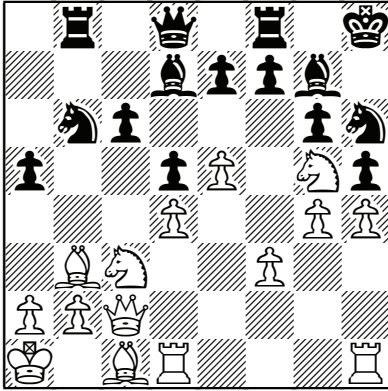


Diagram 6 (B)

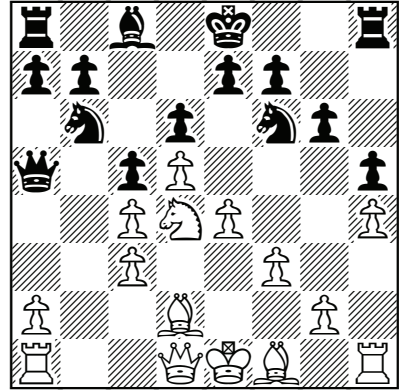


Diagram 7 (W)



**DANGEROUS WEAPON!** Note how White's excellent knight on g5 plays a key role in his promising kingside attack.

**5...Bg7 6 Nc3 Bxc3+?!**

This exchange is an ambitious way to play, but objectively not very good. The safer 6...Nf6 7 Bg5 Qb6 8 Qd2 is just a little better for White.

**7 bxc3 Nf6 8 f3 Qa5 9 Ne2 Nbd7 10 Bd2 Nb6**

Black is aiming to justify his 6th move by laying siege to the doubled c-pawns, but White has their defence in hand.

**11 Nd4 c5 (Diagram 7) 12 a4!!**

Black was hoping for 12 Nb3 Qa4 with good play against the pawns.

**12...Nbd7**

Of course 12...cxd4? loses to 13 cxd4 Qa6 14 c5 Nc4 15 Qc1.

**13 Nb3 Qc7 14 Be2 Ne5 15 0-0 Bd7 16 Bf4 0-0-0**

Black's lack of a dark-squared bishop means he can hardly contemplate castling kingside, but neither will his king be safe on the other wing.

**17 Qc1 Kb8 18 Qe3 Rc8 19 Bg3 a5 20 Rfc1!**

Moving the rook to the semi-open b-file was more obvious, but this 'mysterious' rook move is a clever preparation for the forthcoming attack.

**20...Ka8 21 Nd4! (Diagram 8)**



**DANGEROUS WEAPON!** Again the knight is sacrificed on this square – Black must have felt that he was in a recurring nightmare.

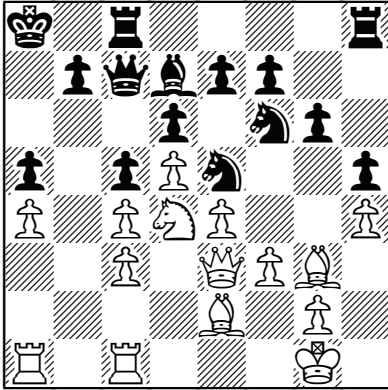
**21...b6**

After 21...cxd4 22 cxd4 Black's knight is trapped and the further 22...Neg4 23 fxg4 Nxg4 24 Qd2 sees White ready to crash through with c4-c5 and/or e4-e5.

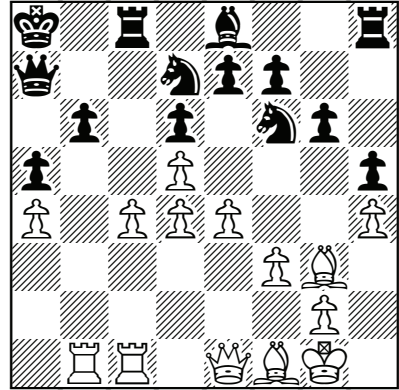
**22 Bf1 Be8 23 Qe1!**

By withdrawing the queen White threatens 24 f4 Neg4 25 e5, so Black now has no real alternative to accepting the sacrifice.

**23...cxd4 24 cxd4 Ned7 25 Rab1 Qa7 (Diagram 9) 26 c5!**



**Diagram 8 (B)**



**Diagram 9 (W)**

With this breakthrough White undermines the defence of the black a-pawn, so that a subsequent Rb5xa5 will embarrass the black king and queen.

**26...dxc5 27 Bb5 Nb8 28 dxc5 bxc5 29 Bxe8 Nxe8 30 Rb5 Nc7 31 Rxa5 Nca6 32 Rb1**

The black pieces are totally tied down and White can slowly increase the pressure.

**32...Rhe8 33 Qe2 c4+ 34 Bf2 Qc7 35 Rb6 Qe5 36 Qe1 Rc7**

36...c3 37 Qe2 also leads to a quick mate.

**37 Rxa6+ Nxa6 38 Rxa6+ Kb8 39 Qa5 1-0**