Christof Sielecki

# Keep It Simple: 1.d4

A Solid and Straightforward Chess Opening Repertoire for White

# Contents

# Preface

**Welcome to *Keep it Simple: 1.d4* !**

*Keep it Simple: 1.e4* was released in 2018. Right after the release, people asked me if a similar book for 1.d4 was a future project, and here it is! This book outlines a complete repertoire for White based on 1.d4.

Before we discuss some points of the repertoire, I'd like to explain the 'Keep It Simple' approach. Most opening books nowadays have reached enormous complexity, often comprising of several volumes, totalling 1000+ pages. This depth of analysis is useful for very strong players, but not so much for amateur players. I felt that it must be possible to 'Keep It Simple' instead, being more practical than scientific in the choices. White does not get an advantage anyway against the main line defences– for example the drawing percentage in top level correspondence chess speaks for itself.

My main 'KIS' guidelines are:
- The chosen lines are simple to learn;
- It must be possible to find your way if you forget your lines;
- Choose lines that may not be most critical, but uncomfortable for the opponent.

Compiling the repertoire according to these guidelines has led to a very classical, sound and reliable repertoire. You will get good endgames frequently, or positions with long-term assets like the bishop pair. You won't get unsound gambits or tricky lines that can be refuted – all lines are playable up to a very high level. In fact, most of the repertoire has been played by top players, at least occasionally or in quicker time controls.

The lines chosen share many common themes and ideas and are therefore easy to learn as a whole. You will see many concepts multiple times, which makes it easier to learn them. The repertoire also includes many new dangerous ideas that will surprise your opponents early on.

I'd like to address one point about the term 'Simple'. There are some lines in the book that are not simple in the sense that there is no complexity in the play. Sometimes the only way to pose problems is to enter complex

play, and it is part of chess improvement to accept challenges at least in some lines. It is important to emphasize that our repertoire choices will often get opponents out of their mainstream theoretical knowledge and therefore we enter more complex situations with a head start, being on our home turf.

Compared to *Keep It Simple: 1.e4*, I made one change in the structure of the book. The 1.e4 version included 30 complete games to showcase typical middlegame ideas and plans. For the 1.d4-version, I decided instead to continue many lines deeper than it would be strictly necessary for opening study purposes only. This deeper look gives you the necessary insight on how to proceed after the initial opening moves. There are some variations easily going beyond move 20. This does not mean that you need to learn all these moves by heart, but having seen the key ideas unfold after the first moves is valuable and will add to your arsenal of middlegame plans. I also decided to cover some sidelines in more detail, when I felt that the play is particularly instructive in them.

The final important point I need to mention is that *Keep It Simple: 1.d4* was developed first as an online, interactive book on the platform www. chessable.com. On the website, you can learn the moves based on text and videos. This product was released in June 2019. The book you are now reading has the same content, only adjusted to fit the format better. Based on the feedback of Chessable users, I have added some lines that were played right after the release or that I simply forgot initially – having hundreds of readers before the book goes in print is excellent quality assurance!

So just one more thing. Always remember: 'Keep It Simple for you, make it difficult for your opponents!'

*Christof Sielecki*
*Dinslaken, Germany*
*October 2019*

# Building a 1.d4 repertoire

What's the main difference between building an opening repertoire based on 1.e4 and one based on 1.d4 ?

There are mostly two key points. The first one is the topic of 'move orders'. In a repertoire starting with 1.d4, move orders and transpositions are of paramount importance, while these concepts are less dominant in 1.e4-based repertoires. I guess it is best to explain this point with an example. If you start with 1.e4, right after Black's reply on move one, you most of the time know what opening you will play. If they choose 1...c5, it is a Sicilian and it won't transpose to a Caro-Kann any more. If they play 1...e5, you know that you won't play a French Defence. This also means that your options against Black's defences have very little dependence on one another. For example: you dislike your choice against the French and want to change your lines. This has no relevance for the rest of your repertoire, as there are no or very few connections between your lines.

Now, compare this to the 1.d4 universe. After 1.d4, Black might play the immensely popular flexible move 1...♘f6. Now, contrary to, for example, 1.e4 e6, you don't know yet what opening you are going to play. Black might intend to play ...g7-g6 next, or ...e7-e6, or even ...d7-d5, which he could have done already on move one. He might intend to play the moves ...e7-e6, ...d7-d5 and ...♘f6, but he has various move orders to do so. Starting with 1...d5, 1...e6 or 1...♘f6 is all possible and perfectly sound. Your move selection early on, even on move two, is relevant for many different openings that may arise. Every choice needs to fit, making sure that you get 'your' lines and that you are not being tricked into something you did not want to play in the first place. Of course, this works both ways: choosing your move orders correctly might lead your opponent into unknown territory, giving you an advantage.

Let's discuss the second difference between 1.e4-based and 1.d4-based repertoires. The character of the play is often slower at the very beginning, which gives added flexibility to both sides. There are exceptions, of course, but there are many openings that don't lead to an early confrontation within the 1.d4-universe, but rather have the character of a 'set-up' that features a slower development of the action. It is not uncommon that the first exchanges only happen after some moves, while early captures are

very usual in 1.e4 lines. Due to this less forced nature of the play, you need to look at more black options in the initial moves. This is the main reason why this book has more pages than the 1.e4 version.

Now let's talk about some specific lines. If we go back to move one after 1.d4, it is clear that we already have opened up the bishop on c1. But what about the bishop on f1? The bishop development on f1 is actually the most important decision that White has to take in the next moves. You may play the e-pawn soon and develop it on the starting diagonal, or you may play an early g2-g3 and fianchetto the bishop. My initial concept was to go for the first approach and play main lines in the Queen's Gambit and King's Indian, for example. However, I needed to stop these plans rather quickly. The move orders were very tricky and going for a more main line approach also invites many sharper openings, like the Benko Gambit or the Modern Benoni. Then I checked the idea of playing with a kingside fianchetto. This approach is used in one of the most popular and famous d4-repertoires created by GM Boris Avrukh. Avrukh's repertoire has four volumes, totalling more than 1500 pages. This already suggests that the fianchetto approach is rather complex as well.

A closer inspection, however, led to the concept for *Keep it Simple: 1.d4*. I noticed that many lines are complex for one reason: the early move c2-c4, which is usually played on move two. Black has many options based on the c4-pawn to steer the game into his territory, for example lines like the Queen's Gambit Accepted or the Catalan with 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 dxc4. What if we just don't play c2-c4 early on, but rather delay this move until we play it 'on our terms'? I wondered if it is possible to basically play the sequence of 1.d4, 2.♘f3, 3.g3, 4.♗g2, 5.0−0 and in most cases 6.c4, pretty much regardless of Black's moves? I had seen some impressive games by Kramnik with this approach, and he knows what he is doing! If this could be the standard set-up, it would be much easier to handle the early move orders. In this case, you would only need to learn the exceptions, instead of completely different approaches to each and every defence Black may play. This idea fascinated me and I wondered what drawbacks this approach might have?

My conclusion after a thorough analysis is: Black has some ideas to exploit our move order, but none of them put us in any danger. Black gets close to equality or equalizes with best play in some lines, but this should not discourage us too much. The important point to realize is: we are playing a slightly offbeat move order. **Black might have seen some idea against**

**our move order, but he won't be a specialist!** If we know exactly what to do and have some new ideas to pose problems, it does not matter at all that the more mainstream move order is 'supposed to be better'. **We want to fight on our ground. Not on the ground the opponent chooses.**

I'd like to emphasize that this repertoire does not consist solely of sidelines. I am covering main lines in the Catalan, Grünfeld and the Dutch, for example. We will also reach very well-tested main-line ground in the Tarrasch Defence of the Queen's Gambit (by transposition) or the Queen's Indian. This is very useful knowledge that will benefit you a lot in the long run, as you learn commonly-played structures and strategies that will improve your overall understanding of closed openings. This way it is much easier to later expand your repertoire or replace some parts of it. Contrary to a pure sideline repertoire (think of the Colle System for example), you learn concepts close to main-line openings that will be very valuable in the long term. The lines may easily fit into other move orders if you desire to do so later. You are not 'stuck' in some theoretical backwater that you need to completely abandon at some point because you want to broaden your chess knowledge and get more variety in your middlegames.

A final point that can be valuable in the long run: our standard set-up involves a quick kingside fianchetto after we have started with 1.d4. The lines analysed in the book are an excellent foundation to add 1.♘f3 to your repertoire at a later stage, as there are many possible transpositions to lines already covered here. In my own practice, I have frequently reached lines featured in the book via move orders like 1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.d4 ♗f5 5.c4 or 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.b3, which will very often transpose to our Anti-King's Indian approach. The main added option that you would need to check is 1.♘f3 c5, after which there is no overlap to KIS 1.d4.
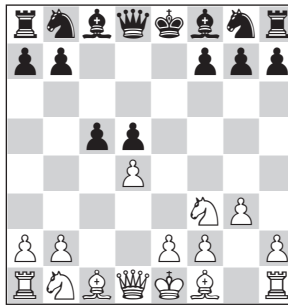
# CHAPTER 3

# The Tarrasch Defence: 2...c5 3.c4 e6

**1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.c4 e6**

This is the most popular move at this point, transposing to the Tarrasch Defence of the Queen's Gambit. We don't mind this transposition as the Tarrasch can be reached via multiple move orders of our repertoire, for example 1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♗g2 c5 5.0-0 ♘c6 6.c4 ♗e7 7.cxd5 exd5.

**4.cxd5 exd5 5.g3**



The fianchetto is the main line against the Tarrasch Defence. It is important to understand that the Tarrasch is more of a set-up rather than a concrete string of moves. Black's set-up consists of the moves ...d7-d5/...c7-c5/...e7-e6/...♘f6/...♘c6/...♗e7 and ...0-0. The particular move order is rather flexible – we will see transpositions to the Tarrasch from many chapters.

The usual pawn structure that we will reach is a black Isolated Queen Pawn (IQP). Black enjoys easy development, but the pawn is a long-term liability. The IQP will arise after White takes on c5 or Black trades on d4. These two scenarios share the same structure, but require a slightly different approach. Now, Black mostly plays 5...♘c6, but we also need to check a different move order starting with 5...♘f6, in which Black delays ...♘c6 for a while. This scenario mostly occurs when the Tarrasch is reached via transposition, for example after 1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♗g2 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 c5 7.cxd5 cxd5.

Line A covers the mostly-played version of the Tarrasch with an early ♘c6, while line B shows the alternative and less popular version without ♘c6.

## A) 5...♘c6 6.♗g2 ♘f6

6...c4 is an ambitious idea that is used in some Tarrasch lines, trying to gain space on the queenside. This is a premature version: 7.0-0 ♗b4 (Black may also play 7...♘f6: 8.♘e5 (a key idea to remember. Against an early ...c5-c4, it is promising to pressure the black pawns with ♘e5 and b2-b3) 8...♗e7 9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.b3 cxb3 (Black needs to accept an inferior pawn structure) 11.axb3, with a comfortable game for White. ♗a3 will trade the bishop, exposing the dark-square weaknesses, in particular c5, even more).
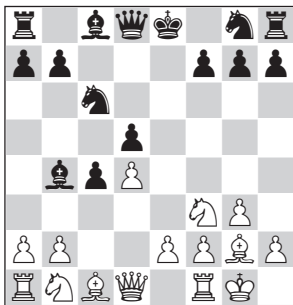


7...♗b4 looks a bit odd, but Black anticipates ♘c3 and intends to capture on c3 at the right moment. As we will see, this will never materialize with the right response. 8.b3 (White may also play 8.♘c3 here, which also leads to some advantage. The lines are somewhat tricky, though. Our choice is easier to learn and still good for White) 8...cxb3 (Black can't support the pawn on c4 and has to take. The resulting structure is at least slightly better for White, as Black has the potential weakness on d5

and White has useful pressure on the open files as well) 9.♕xb3 ♘ge7 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♗a3 (trying to trade this bishop makes sense, as the dark squares in Black's camp are rather weak) 11...a5 12.♖fc1. We have good pressure on the queenside in this position. An idea to take note of is playing e2-e3 to relocate the f3-knight. It would be nice on d3 or f4, for example.

**7.0-0**
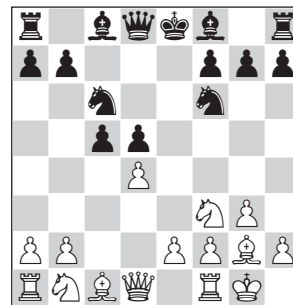


## A1) 7...♗e7

The main move by a mile, but Black has tried many inferior moves. It's not necessary to cover all of them, but it is useful to know some ideas. In my experience, it happens quite often that Black plays into the Tarrasch by accident, in particular against our choice of move order. People who play 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 go for the Tarrasch intentionally, but many players, in particular at club level, play ...c7-c5 in combination with ...d7-d5 without realizing what they will get on the board. They will often play a suspect line that can be punished severely, so it's worth checking out some of these deviations.

**8.dxc5 ♗xc5**

I am not sure what the motivation behind 8...0-0 is, to be honest. Black is in trouble after the obvious 9.♗e3, and we keep the pawn! 9...♘g4 10.♗d4 ♘xd4 11.♕xd4. I see no compensation for Black.

**9.a3**



This line has become very popular in recent years. White plans an expansion on the queenside with b2-b4, forcing a commitment by the c5-bishop. It is very important to understand that White is not aiming for ♘bd2-b3-d4, but rather wants to use the knight on c3 to attack the weakness on d5. An additional point is that ♗g5 is still possible, so you don't have to play ♗b2 in all cases. White has achieved excellent results with this approach, so it was a natural candidate for this repertoire. An added bonus is that Black's best reply is not obvious at all. Routine moves quickly lead to very comfortable positions for White.

**A11) 9...♘e4**

This enjoys the best theoretical reputation, but is not an obvious move at all.

**10.♘fd2**

I think this straightforward move is best. White challenges the intruder immediately and starts forcing play. After the alternative 10.b4 ♗e7 11.♗b2 ♗f6, we see one idea of ...♘e4: the relocation of the bishop. White might still be a bit better in this line, but I prefer the direct solution.
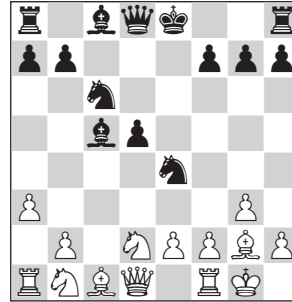


**10...f5**

This looks like Black's best bet.

1) 10...♘xd2 11.♘xd2 (11.♕xd2 isn't bad either, but 11.♘xd2 has an interesting point I'd like to show) 11...0-0 12.b4 (12.♘b3 ♗b6 13.♗xd5 ♗h3 gives Black good compensation and should be avoided) 12...♗b6 (12...♗d4 13.♖a2. We don't mind this move at all. It prepares ♗b2, and the rook might be lifted to d2 later) 13.♘b3 ♕f6 14.♖a2.
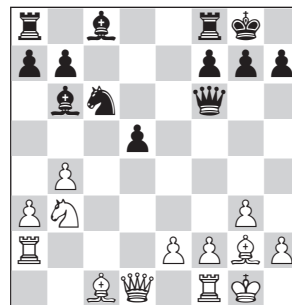


This is the point I mentioned. A set-up with ♖d2 and ♗b2 is highly

desirable and prepared with this elegant move. White has annoying pressure against the IQP;

2) 10...♗f5 11.♘xe4 ♗xe4 12.♗xe4 dxe4 13.♕c2. 10...♗f5 allowed this sequence, giving Black a weak pawn on e4. White is better now, for example in the following line: 13...♕e7 14.♘c3 e3 15.♗xe3 ♗xe3 16.♘d5, and White wins a pawn, because Black can't take on f2 now. 16...♗xf2+ 17.♖xf2.
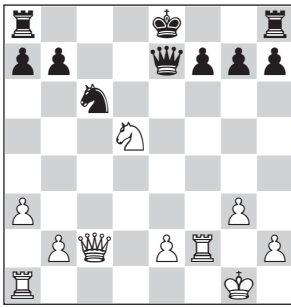


Now the queen has no good square. If the queen moves on the d-file, ♖d1 is going to be devastating, and 17...♕e5 18.♖f5 doesn't help either.

**11.♘xe4**

I didn't find anything too clear after the more complicated lines starting with 11.♘b3. The issue with 11.♘b3 is the line 11...♗b6 12.♘c3 ♗e6 13.♘a4 d4!, which seems satisfactory for Black. Fortunately, the capture on e4 leads to a small advantage in my opinion.
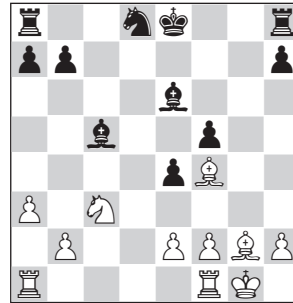
**11...dxe4**

The move 11...fxe4 is too ambitious: 12.b4 ♗b6 13.♘c3 ♗e6 14.♘a4. We will get the important bishop on b6, securing some advantage.

**12.♕xd8+ ♘xd8 13.♘c3 ♗e6 14.g4**

A key part of White's play. We should attack the pawn chain immediately.

**14...g6 15.gxf5 gxf5 16.♗f4**



I think White is slightly better here. We have more active possibilities, for example on the queenside based on moves like ♘b5, ♖c1 and b2-b4. Another idea worth noting is playing ♔h1 and continuing with f2-f3 next. That opens the long diagonal and gets us closer to attacking the f5-pawn, which is more exposed than the e2-pawn. Black has many possible moves now, so I'd like to stop at this point. It is an interesting position to explore further, together with a human or silicon partner.
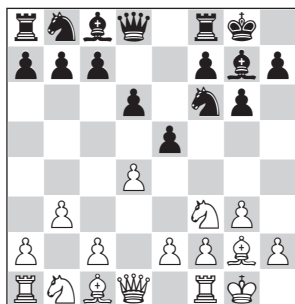
**A12) 9...0-0 10.b4**
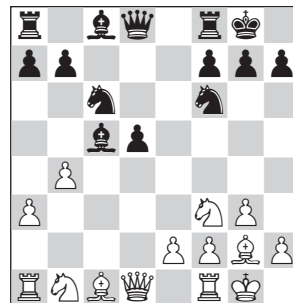
**CHAPTER 15**

# King's Indian:
# 3...♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 d6 6.b3 e5

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 d6 6.e5**

This chapter deals with black set-ups in the spirit of the King's Indian Defence. The King's Indian involves an early kingside fianchetto by Black, usually accompanied with the move ...d7-d6, preparing further action in the centre with ...e7-e5 or ...c7-c5. For this book, I have decided to devote a separate chapter to the ...c7-c5 approaches, so this chapter features other ways for Black to continue. In the vast majority of cases, ...e7-e5 will be the set-up that you will face. Speaking about a set-up... what are we going to play?

Well, the first moves will be easy – we are going to fianchetto on the kingside and then decide how to continue. The position you usually reach against King's Indian players will be the one after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 d6. Now, White's most popular move is 6.c4, which leads to a main-line Fianchetto King's Indian. This is of course perfectly acceptable for White, but I am still recommending a different move. I suggest playing the move 6.b3, which has enjoyed some popularity in recent years after Kramnik employed it with impressive results. The line 6.b3 is an excellent weapon for a number of reasons. The most important one is that it is still not particularly well known, and therefore Black quite often answers with schematic moves – an approach that will backfire badly most of the time. I have employed this line against the King's Indian on multiple occasions and my experience is overwhelmingly positive. I need to mention that it has also been employed by many former and current club- and teammates of mine. Some of the analytical efforts that I

was involved in over the years actually did not end up in my games, but in the games of my friends.

I need to mention one general point about the King's Indian. This opening derives a lot of its popularity from the spectacular games that often occur in the Classical King's Indian main line. This line arises after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7. In this variation, the closed centre often leads to uncompromising play, featuring a pawn storm on White's king after a later ...♘d7, ...f7-f5-f4, ...g6-g5 etc. Very often, aggressive players are attracted by the prospect of reaching this type of position. A very strong point about our choice of line against the King's Indian is that it is as far away from this scenario as possible. Our king will be very safe with the guardian bishop on g2, and the centre will usually be opened early, so there are no 'who gets there first' attacking games on the cards. We enjoy excellent control, and the solidity of our position will frustrate many King's Indian devotees.

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6**

Most King's Indian players opt for this move, but 2...d6 first and a later ...g7-g6 will transpose to our main line. Other set-ups with ...d7-d6 are discussed in Chapter 34.

**3.g3**

Now and on the next moves, Black of course may transpose out of this chapter by going ...d7-d5 or ...c7-c5, covered in later chapters. After 3.g3, there is also the rare move 3...b6 for the double fianchetto. I have covered the double fianchetto set-up in Chapter 22.

**3...♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 d6**

Black is finally committing to the King's Indian formation. I'd like to mention a little move order twist. Black may also play 5...c6, after which 6.b3 will either be answered with 6...d6 – staying in the King's Indian – or by 6...d5, transposing to a Grünfeld.

**6.b3**

In my mind, this system is one of the reasons for choosing the move order 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 over a main-line approach versus the King's Indian. It has more than a drop of poison and the best lines for Black are not very much in the spirit of most King's Indian fans. That being said, Black has many possible options now. In this chapter, we will cover 6...e5, while Chapter 16 contains all the alternatives for Black.

**6...e5 7.dxe5**

**A) 7...dxe5**
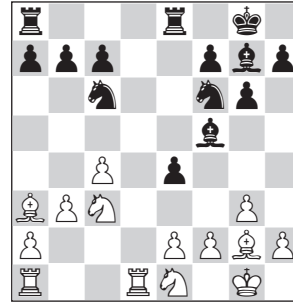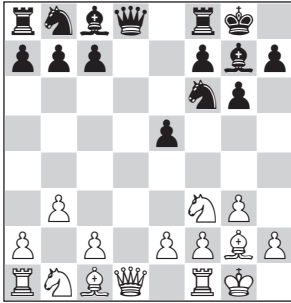
Black just recaptures on e5. This line has always enjoyed a good theoretical reputation, but Kramnik has shown some new ideas for White in recent years. These discoveries brought the whole 6.b3 line back on the map. On a very general note: the move 7...dxe5 is not very popular on the club/ amateur level, as most King's Indian players try to play aggressively and want to avoid a queen trade.
**8.♗a3**

**A1) 8...♕xd1 9.♖xd1 ♖e8 10.c4**
I am sticking with Kramnik's move, which is not a bad general approach while preparing any opening. But 10.♘c3 also scores well and is a reasonable way to vary your play.
**10...e4**
An alternative is 10...♘c6. I am sceptical about this move. In the main line, Black manages to play ...c7-c6, covering the d5-square. This is not going to be possible here, as we will see: 11.♘c3 e4 (Black more or less has to play this move. Against anything slow, we play ♘e1 anyway, with ♘e1-c2-e3-d5 or ♘d3 next) 12.♘e1 ♗f5

13.♘c2. White has the simple, but strong idea of playing ♖ac1 and ♘d5. Black also has to worry about ♘e3 and ♘b5, while the e4-pawn needs permanent piece protection. White is better here. 13...♘g4 is met by a powerful reply: 14.♘d5 ♗xa1 15.♖xa1 (now Black can't keep the material, as both ♘xc7 and h2-h3 are threats) 15...♖ac8 16.h3 ♘ge5 17.♘f6+ ♔g7 18.♘xe8+ ♖xe8 19.♘e3, with an overwhelming advantage for White. The bishop pair is devastating and e4 is very weak.
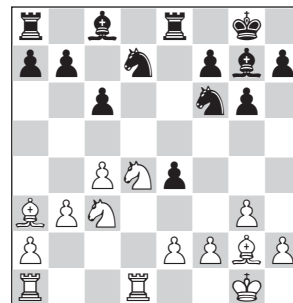**11.♘d4**

**A11) 11...c6**
That was the choice of Vocaturo in the stem game against Kramnik at the 2016 Baku Olympiad.
**12.♘c3 ♘a6**
An alternative for Black is 12...♘bd7.

Here, the 'creative' move 13.g4 is suggested by LeelaZero and I like the idea a lot! Of course, you may also play something slow like 13.♖ac1, with a typical small edge. The g-pawn move is just a lot more powerful!

1) 13...♘xg4 14.♘xe4 and ♘d6 is the idea, of course;

2) 13...h6 14.h3 ♘f8 15.e3, and we have the plan to corral the e4-pawn. The g4-pawn helps a lot, preventing ...♗f5;

3) 13...e3 14.f3 ♘f8 15.♖d3, and we have successfully isolated the e-pawn, with a nice advantage.

**13.e3**

Kramnik stops the e-pawn. As we have seen, the advance to e3 is not an issue in most cases. However, Kramnik intends to double on the d-file next and does not want to face ...e4-e3 with a rook on d2.

**13...h5**

This seems better than Vocaturo's move. 13...♗g4 was played in the Kramnik-Vocaturo game: 14.♖d2 ♖ad8 15.h3 ♗c8 16.♖ad1. White has two threats now: a strategic one in g3-g4 and a tactical one. It is impossible to stop both. 16...h5
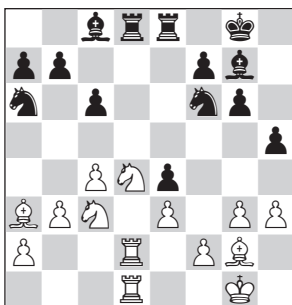


17.♗e7 (a nice shot by Kramnik) 17...♖xd4 (17...♖xe7 18.♘xc6 wins immediately) 18.♖xd4 ♖xe7 19.♖d8+ ♘e8 20.♘xe4, and White had a huge advantage. The whole game is worth studying, but you need to cut at some point.
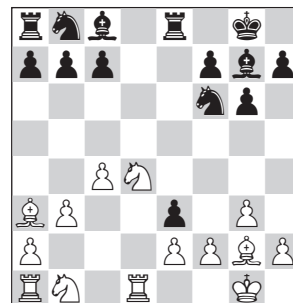
**14.h3 ♘c7**
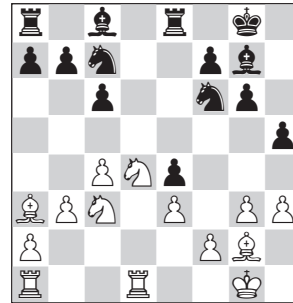


**15.♖d2**

White is slightly better. We have the more active pieces and have more options to improve. It is easier to play on the queenside, for example. Black has no active plan that I can see, but he is certainly quite solidly placed.

**A12) 11...e3**



**12.f3**

Please avoid 12.f4 ♘g4, which is irritating. After 12.f3, White is just

slightly better, but Black needs to play the right move now.

**12...a5**

This is the best move, but it was not played by any of the four GMs who had this on the board. 12...♘a6 13.♘c3 c6 14.♖ac1 h5 15.♖d3, and we are starting to corral the weak pawn on e3, enjoying some advantage.

**13.♘c3 ♘a6**

Black's set-up is directed against 14.♖d3, which is now defused by 14...♘b4.

**14.♖ac1 c6 15.♗d6**

With the idea of playing ♘c3-a4-b6 next. White has the easier game here, but Black is putting up a much better defence than without ...a7-a5 being played.

**A13) 11...♘g4**

Black tries to solve his opening problems tactically. I am actually surprised that this move is not tried more often, as it leads to complicated play. There is no way to dodge the mess, but Black's game will be hanging by a thread the whole time.

**12.♘c3 e3**
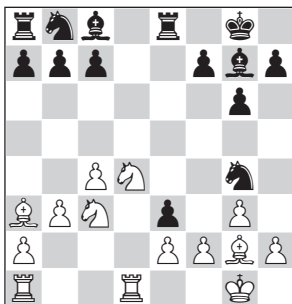


**13.♘d5**

Only this works! It gets very messy now, but even in a tactical mess, you should take into account that we have all pieces in play, and Black not so many. The engines find some miracle solutions for Black, but this is not very relevant for practical play. Still, let's have a look at some of the miracles.

**13...exf2+**

After the lame move 13...♘a6, we are better without any problems: 14.fxe3 ♘xe3 15.♘xe3 ♖xe3 16.♖ac1 ♖e8 17.b4 ♗f8 18.c5, with a useful initiative on the queenside.

**14.♔f1 ♘xh2+**

This is the human choice. Admittedly, the whole line with 11...♘g4 and 13.♘d5 is very computer-like anyway, but you need to establish that White is OK here. The move 14...c5 is what Stockfish wants to play: 15.♗xc5 ♘d7 (Black is giving up the c-pawn for a tempo) 16.♗d6 ♘df6 17.♘e7+ ♔h8 18.♖d3 ♘xh2+ 19.♔xf2.
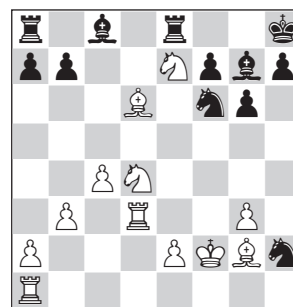


Now, the engine finds a way to save itself with a fantastic resource: 19...♗h3 (wow! What a move!) 20.♗xh3 ♘e4+ 21.♔g2 ♘xd6 22.♘d5 ♗xd4 23.♖e1 ♗c5 24.♔xh2,

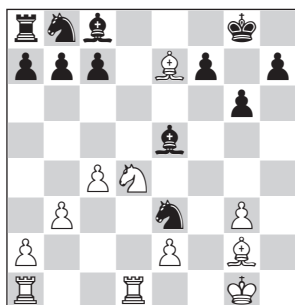and Black has equalized after some outlandish play!

**15.♔xf2 ♘g4+ 16.♔g1**

It is still messy, but here White seems to have good compensation for the pawn. I'll show two lines to illustrate my point:

**16...♘a6**

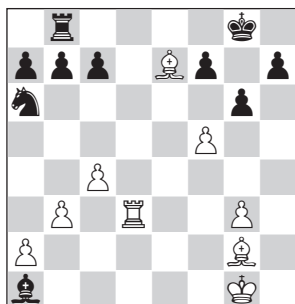Another possible line is 16...♗e5 17.♘e7+ ♖xe7 18.♗xe7 ♘e3



19.♘f3 (a great move pointed out by the engines) 19...♘xd1 20.♖xd1 ♘c6 21.♘xe5 ♘xe7 22.♖d8+ ♔g7 23.♔f2. Black has no way to untangle the queenside and is in trouble.

**17.♘e7+ ♖xe7 18.♗xe7 ♘e3 19.♖d3 ♘f5 20.♘xf5 ♗xf5 21.e4 ♗xa1 22.exf5 ♖b8**



**23.b4**

And White has a strong initiative for the pawn.

**A2) 8...♖e8**

White is better after this natural move with a rather forcing line, which surprised me quite a bit.

**9.♕xd8 ♖xd8 10.♘c3**

The development advantage reaches alarming proportions. Black needs to quickly support the e5-pawn.

**10...♘c6**

Black may also play 10...e4 11.♖ad1 (yet another tempo move) 11...♖e8 12.♘d2 (12.♘g5 is also better for White. After 12...♗f5 13.♘gxe4 ♘xe4 14.♘xe4 ♘c6, we have won a pawn, but Black gets some play with ...♘d4. 12.♘d2 leads to easier play for White) 12...♗f5 13.h3 (after 13.♘cxe4, we transpose to the line mentioned via 12.♘g5. White is fine there, but it is complicated) 13...h5
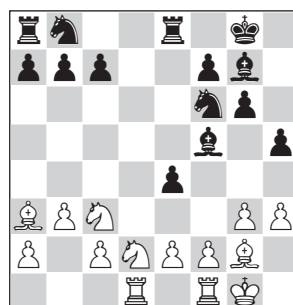


I suggest 14.♘c4 instead of grabbing the weak e4-pawn. We threaten ♘b5 and ♘e3, with a nice advantage.

**11.♖ad1 ♗f5**

Black's best defence, attacking c2.

**12.♘h4 ♗d7**

After 12...♗xc2 13.♖c1 ♗f5 14.♘xf5 gxf5 15.♗xc6 bxc6 16.♖c2, Black's pawn structure is permanently wrecked, giving White an advantage.