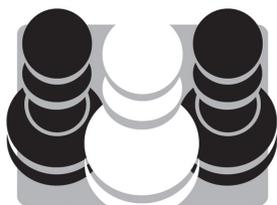


Understanding Chess Exchanges

By

Bagheri & Salehzadeh



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Preface

Exchanging pieces in chess is a subject lying deep within the foundations of our positional understanding. In reality, exchanging in chess bears many similarities to the sort of exchanges we can observe in economics, or the trades happening in our daily lives; the more profitable these exchanges are, the better it is for us.

Chess grandmasters are fully aware of the importance of exchanges and are always on the lookout for instances where a proper exchange might be profitable.

In this book, we have tried to strip complex games of their mysterious aura and break them down into simpler components, giving clear-cut explanations, and practical advice when necessary. We have tried our best to give the readers an easy interpretation of why grandmasters make certain decisions, and especially: how they decide which pieces need to be exchanged, and which need to stay on the board.

Of course, in this book, we will not only talk about exchanging pieces. It is impossible to conduct any discussion on strategy without firm knowledge of the basics, and we will very often dip our toes into many different aspects of positional chess, trying to shed light on as many basic principles as possible.

Most of the games in this book were played in the modern era, many even featuring young, up-and-coming talents that are still on their rise to the top. We did not want to rely on the already heavily discussed classics: chess is an insanely rich game, and instructive games are played every day by the strongest players of our time. Why not try to learn directly from them?

We hope that in this book you will be able to find many golden tips, the results of years of experience, that will help you improve your game.

Join us on this adventurous journey.

GM Amir Bagheri, FIDE Trainer Mohammad Reza Salehzadeh

August 2023

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Chapter 4

Exchanges and Lasting Advantages

Advantages in our game can be classified into two categories: short-term and long-term. For example, a lead in development is a short-term advantage, which we can imagine is made of ice. If it is not used immediately, it will melt and disappear. On the contrary, long-term advantages are made of stone, and will not disappear over time. Long-term advantages include material, pawn structure, space, controlling open files and many more. We have already discussed in detail the relationship between space and exchanging pieces in Chapter 2. In this one, we will focus on other long-term factors.

We have dedicated most of this chapter to the games of Magnus Carlsen. His ability to convert a long-term advantage to a full point is widely recognized as the best of any player to ever play the game, and his mastery of knowing which pieces to keep on the board has played an essential role in the building of this reputation.

When Style Matters & Keeping the Tension

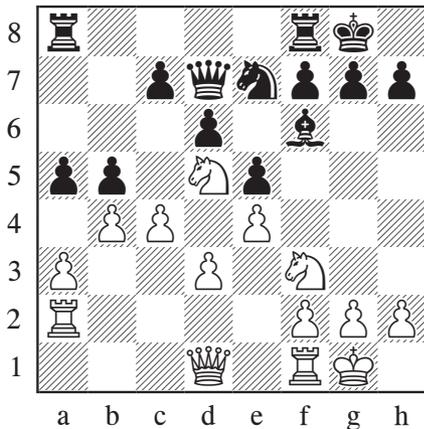
Making the right decision becomes harder when there is more than one good plan available. That is especially the case when we have a choice between a dynamic plan and a positional one. If the objective merits of both plans are roughly equivalent, that's when the style of the player might come into play.

In the following game, we will notice how playing style can affect these situations and start a small discussion about the importance of keeping the tension.

Magnus Carlsen – Ding Liren

St. Louis (rapid) 2017

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0–0 ♙e7 6.d3 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.a3 0–0 9.♘c3
♘a5 10.♙a2 ♙e6 11.b4 ♙xa2 12.♗xa2 ♘c6
13.♙g5 ♖d7 14.♙xf6 ♙xf6 15.♘d5 a5 16.c4
♘e7



17.♗c2!?

Keeping the tension! This instructive half-waiting move is deeply rooted in Carlsen's style.

In such a situation, the white player could be uncertain of whether he should damage the opponent's structure with ♘xf6 or stick to a plan of his own, and leave that bishop be. Since the bishop is passively placed, Carlsen does not want to exchange it. What he really wants is to tempt his opponent just enough to convince him to exchange the knights on d5 and reach a position where he has a good knight against the opponent's bad bishop. Again, the motto "what remains" is important here.

In the meantime, by putting his rook on the c-file White is calmly preparing for the file to open somewhere down the line.

After 17.♘xf6† gxf6 18.♗c2 White would also have a tiny advantage, but Carlsen's choice seems practically stronger from a human perspective. In this case, Black's king is not really in danger as White can't bring any pieces to the attack, and if White doesn't prove his advantage quickly, Black will eventually play ...f6-f5 and repair his structure. It seems like the advantage lost its permanent nature and it's a matter of time before Black completely equalizes.

17...♘xd5

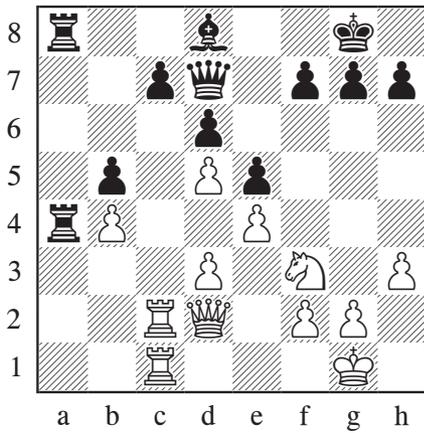
Ding reluctantly acquiesces to the exchange on d5.

The text move is objectively fine but going for 17...bxc4 18.♘xf6† gxf6 19.♗xc4 axb4 20.axb4 was probably a better practical choice. White retains an edge due to Black's kingside weaknesses and the pressure down the semi-open c-file. Nevertheless, it seems like Black's moves will be a lot easier compared to the game continuation. The crucial difference is that in this line Black doesn't have any passive pieces. In the game, he gets stuck with a terrible bishop.

18.cxd5

The c7-pawn has become backward and the square in front of it can be used by White as an excellent outpost. Black's bishop is clearly inferior compared to the white knight.

18...axb4 19.axb4 ♗a4 20.♖d2 ♗fa8 21.♗fc1
♙d8 22.h3



22...♖a1?!

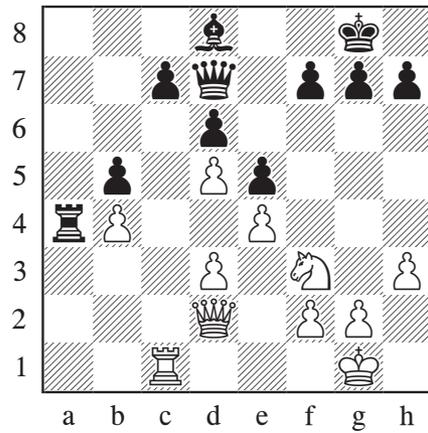
Black should have kept all rooks on the board and played a waiting move like 22...h6, preparing ...f7-f5 with some counterplay. Calm “quiet” moves like that are hard to play in fast time controls.

After trading a pair of rooks or all of them, White’s advantage gets stronger. The black bishop was “bad” according to classical guidelines due to the pawn structure. However, it kept both white rooks at bay by defending the c7-pawn. Not too shabby for a “bad” bishop. Black’s rooks on the a-file were perfectly placed to always threaten irritating counterplay.

With the rooks gone, Black’s potential counterplay disappears and he loses his main trump in the position: his more active rooks.

23.♞xa1 ♞xa1† 24.♞c1 ♞a4

After 24...♞xc1† 25.♞xc1 White can claim a small but lasting advantage.



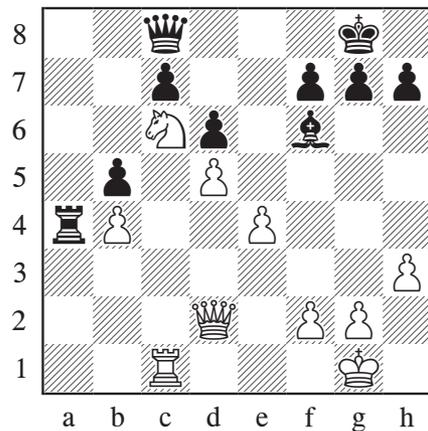
25.d4! exd4 26.♞xd4 ♕f6 27.♞c6

The white knight occupies a dream position. The weak b5-pawn and the c6-outpost ensure a pleasant advantage.

27...♞c8?

Allowing White to finish the game quickly.

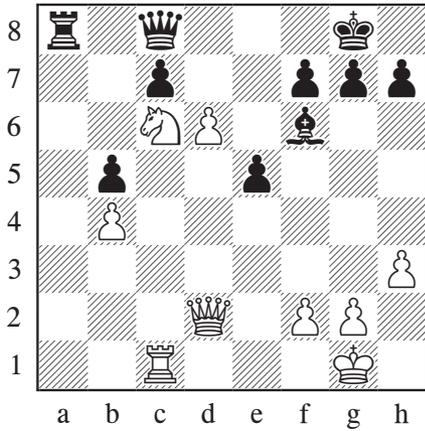
The lesser evil was 27...♞e8 28.♞e2 g6 29.♞xb5 but White remains a healthy pawn up anyway.



28.e5!

A powerful breakthrough.

28...dxe5 29.d6! ♞a8



30. ♖e7†!

White gets a powerful passed pawn on e7 that will decide the game shortly.

30... ♗xe7 31. dxe7 g6 32. ♕d5 h6

Ding resigned without waiting for Carlsen to make his move.

White had several ways to finish the game. The simplest was 33. ♖xc7 ♕e8 34. ♕xe5 and Black is completely helpless.

1–0

Objectively speaking, it's not clear whether 17. ♖c2!? was any better compared to 17. ♖xf6†. Nevertheless, Carlsen's choice to keep the tension presented his formidable opponent with much tougher problems to solve.

Keeping the tension like this is counterintuitive for most people. The majority of humans dislike “uncertainty” and that translates to chess by always aiming for clarity and resolving the tension. However, the game of chess is objective and does not care about our species' psychological defects. This in turn means we should always try to tone down our emotions and try to be as objective as possible.

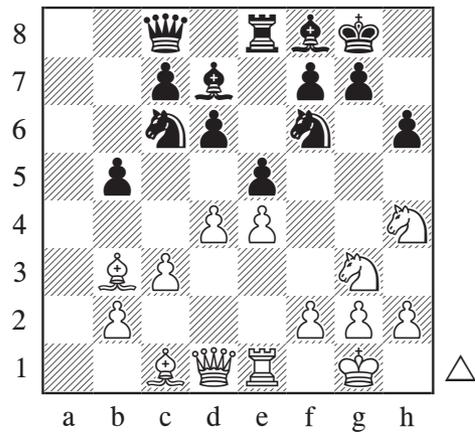
To play better moves, we should embrace uncertainty and tension. After all, chess is so complicated we can very seldomly play moves that are much more than an educated guess, and that's not a bad thing. On the contrary, it amounts to a large part of the reasons why this game is so fascinating. If you're still having trouble keeping the tension, remember: your opponents probably feel as uneasy as you do around uncertainty. They're not machines, and the only certain thing is they're going to make mistakes.

The Bishop Pair

Having the bishop pair is one of the most common long-term advantages and can single-handedly play a decisive role in the outcome of the game.

Magnus Carlsen – Veselin Topalov

Nanjing 2010



18. ♖g6!

At first glance, it seems unreasonable to exchange a knight that was able to jump to f5 for the bad black bishop on f8 that is surrounded by its own pawns. However, there are more important factors at play and, as we have mentioned plenty of times already, only what remains on the board is important.

In addition to obtaining the two-bishop advantage, Carlsen pays attention to the opponent's king position which is somewhat weakened by ...h7-h6 and could be attacked in the future. The bishop on f8 is the main defender of the black king and the difference in safety will be clearly felt when it is removed.

18...♖a5 19.♗xf8 ♜xf8 20.♙c2

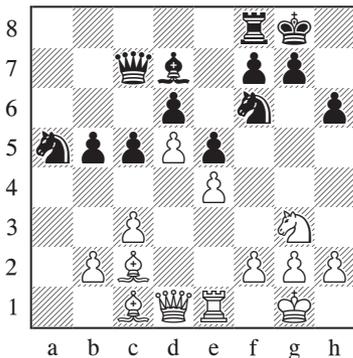
White has the bishop pair and his next step should be to open the position.

Strategy in chess is like a chain consisting of loops. These loops can be tactical or strategic in nature. The loops are independent but securely bonded together as one. After completing each loop, the next one begins and, ultimately, an overall strategy is created.

20...♞e8?!

Topalov should have reacted in the centre:

20...c5 21.d5 ♖c7



22.b3

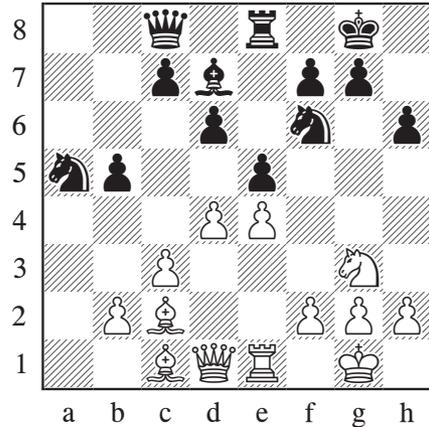
In the event of the immediate 22.f4 ♘c4 23.b3 Black can hold his own with a crucial in-between move: 23...exf4! 24.♙xf4 ♘e5 The strong e5-knight gives Black a good position.

22...♘b7 23.h3 ♜a8 24.♙e3

After 24.f4 ♜a1 Black finds some chances to create his own counterplay.

24...♘e8 25.f4 f6

White is certainly better, but Black can rely on his counterplay on the queenside to give him decent chances to hold.



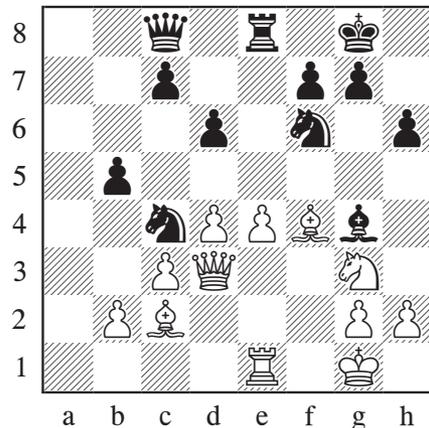
21.f4!

The second loop begins: White creates tension in the centre, looking to open the position.

21...♙g4 22.♞d3 exf4?

After this mistake, Black's position is probably lost. He should have tried to maintain the tension in the centre, although his position was unpleasant anyway.

23.♙xf4 ♘c4



24.♙c1!

There is no shame in the return of the bishop. On the contrary, it's perfectly placed on its initial square, both participating in the attack and protecting the b2-pawn.

24...c5 25.♞f1

The last loop begins: a search for the final blows.

25...cxd4 26.cxd4 ♚d8 27.h3 ♙e6 28.b3

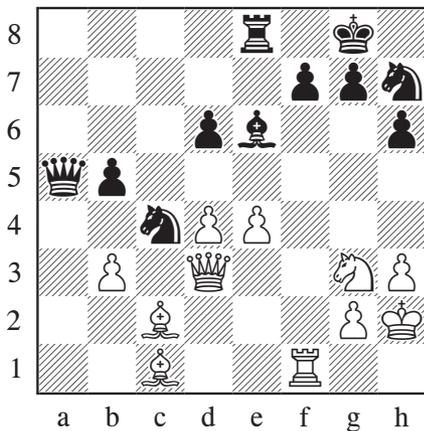
Carlsen slowly pushes the black pieces backwards while improving his own position.

28...♞a5

28...♞b6 29.♞xb5 is hopeless.

29.♔h2

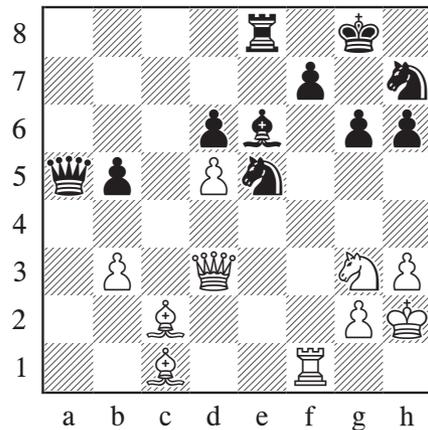
He even finds time to improve his king. He is in no rush! His attack will not go away as it is based on the pair of bishops and the pawn structure, and both these advantages are permanent.

29...♞h7**30.e5**

After all of White's pieces were put to their optimal attacking posts, it's time for the position to explode.

30...g6 31.d5!

The situation is ripe for such operations. The disparity in activity almost guarantees that the tactics will work out for White.

31...♞xe5**32.dxe6!**

A beautiful finishing touch. Topalov did not see any point in continuing the game and resigned on the spot.

After 32...♞xd3 33.exf7† ♔f8 34.♙xh6† ♔e7 35.fxe8=♞† ♔xe8 36.♙xd3 White has a tonne of material for the queen and Black is completely helpless against White's threats.

1-0

As we saw, giving up the h4-knight for the f8-bishop was a great call. At first, it might have looked like the f8-bishop was passive but, once again, what remained on the board was important. The pair of bishops almost single-handedly decided the game.

Giving up the Bishop Pair

Everyone knows that having the pair of bishops is, in most cases, an advantage. At the same time, one of the greatest strengths attributed to the bishop pair is the ability to exchange one or both bishops for enemy knights. That

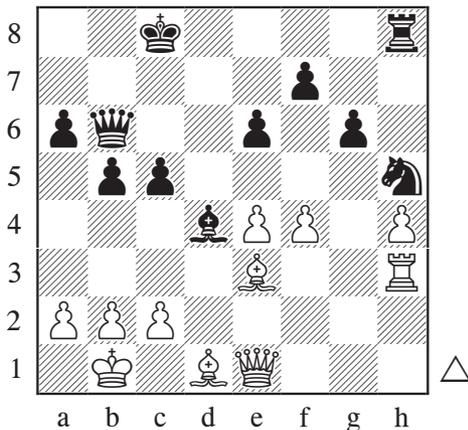
paradoxical statement will be at the core of this segment.

We briefly touched on this subject in Chapter 2, when analysing the game Giannoulakis – Donchenko. That game nicely showcased how tough it would be for a knight to hunt down and capture a bishop. The fact that bishops often find it much easier to hunt down and capture knights is a significant advantage. Imagine negotiating a deal, which your adversary is always obliged to accept. Even if you don't want the deal right now, who knows about next year? That's how having the bishop pair usually works. It's a great negotiating chip that should, in most cases, be cashed out eventually for the full point. Still, letting go of a permanent advantage as strong as the bishop pair isn't easy, and players often miss the right moment to transform the advantage.

Let us see a game from the youngest French player to ever become a grandmaster, that nicely illustrates the power of a well-timed exchange of a bishop for a knight.

Marc Andria Maurizzi – Vitaly Sivuk

Reykjavik 2021



22.♙c1!

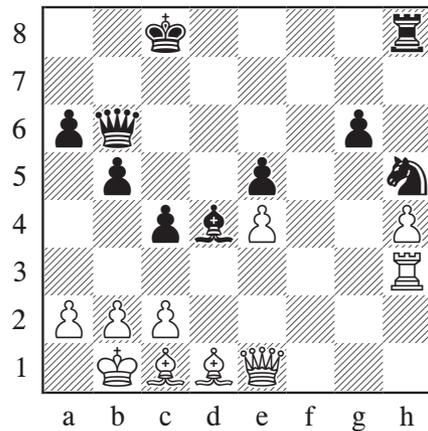
At first, Maurizzi avoids exchanging bishops and maintains his bishop pair.

The engine claims 22.♙xd4 is also interesting but it looks very committal. The proposed line continues: 22...cxd4 23.♞f3 ♖b8 24.f5 e5 25.♞b3 White keeps some advantage thanks to the idea of a2-a4. However, in the game his position was much easier to handle.

22...c4 23.f5!

A logical move. White is trying to open the position for his bishops and gain access to the opponent's king.

23...e5 24.fxg6 fxg6



25.♙xh5!

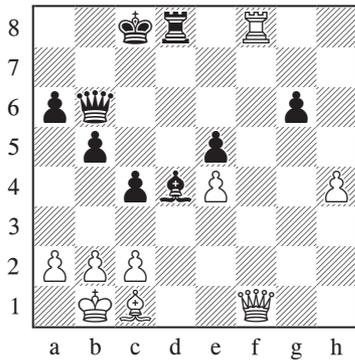
The right moment to surrender one of White's bishops. Maurizzi gives up his bishop-pair advantage to prevent the opponent's knight from coming to the excellent outpost on f4. If that happened, after the possible exchange on f4 the opposite-coloured-bishops position would have provided Black with good chances to keep the balance.

25...gxh5

25...♞xh5

This could be met with:

26.♞f1 ♞h7 27.♞f3 ♞d7 28.♞f6 ♞d6 29.♞f8+ ♞d8



Even though White has infiltrated the black camp with his rook, Black is holding his own for the moment, claiming that there is no easy progress to be made.

30. ♖g5!

Black's defensive construction was precarious and collapses completely.

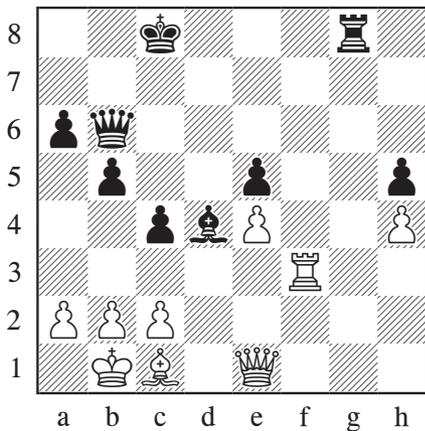
30... ♜xf8 31. ♚xf8 † ♔b7 32. ♚f7 † ♔a8 33. ♖f6

The g6-pawn falls and even though there are some tricks left up Black's sleeve, White is objectively and practically winning. The extremely vulnerable black king will always guarantee easy play for White.

26. ♜f3

The difference between the activity of the rooks and the safety of the kings is what will ultimately prove decisive.

26... ♜g8



27. ♖g5!

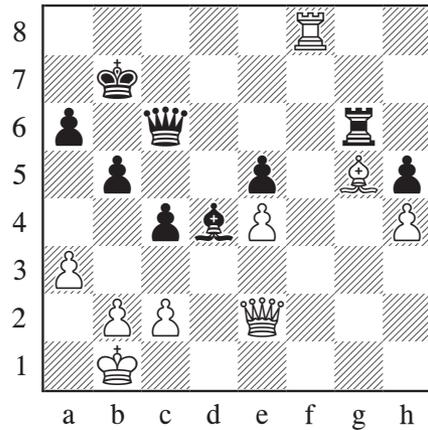
White blocks the g-file from the opponent's rook and prepares to initiate his attack against the opponent's exposed king through the open f-file. The game is completely one-sided.

27... ♚c6 28. a3 ♜g6

It's hard to suggest something constructive for Black.

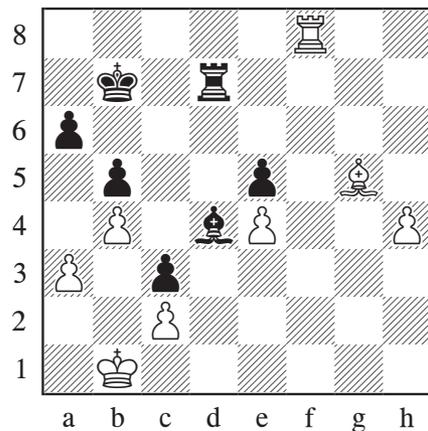
For example, after 28... ♔b8 29. c3 ♖c5 30. ♚e2 a5 31. ♜f6 ♚d7 32. ♜f5 ♜e8 33. ♖f6 White wins at least one pawn.

29. ♜f8 † ♔b7 30. ♚e2



The h5-pawn drops.

30... ♜d6 31. ♚xh5 c3 32. ♚f7 † ♚d7 33. ♚xd7 † ♜xd7 34. b4



White's position is totally winning. He has an extra pawn and his bishop is much better than its counterpart. The continuation of the game does not need much explanation. Black has no counterplay, so the game is effectively over already.

34...♖h7 35.♖f6 ♘b6 36.♗e6 ♖h8 37.♗xe5 ♙f2 38.♗e7† ♔c8 39.♗e6 ♔b7 40.♖h6 ♗e8 41.♖f6 ♙d4 42.♖f4 ♙e5 43.♖f7† ♔c6 44.♗e7 ♗xe7 45.♙xe7 ♔d7 46.♙g5 ♔e6 47.h5

Black resigned.

1–0

As we saw, White first refused an exchange of bishops, continuing to hold on to his bishop pair as a bargaining chip that prevented Black from opening the centre. After Black agreed to close the centre with 23...e5 the young Frenchman realized he could transform his advantage into a larger one. From having the two bishops, he went to having control over the “only” open file. Of course, it wasn't technically the only open file, as the d- and g-files were “open” as well, but they were both clogged by the d4- and g5-bishops respectively.

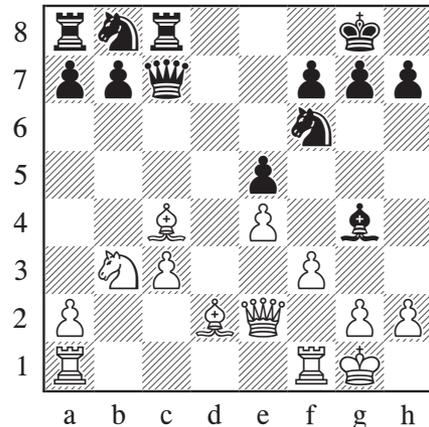
Controlling the only open file when infiltration squares are available is, in most cases, an advantage much larger than the pair of bishops – and one that is almost always enough to deliver the full point. When pondering whether to give up one of your bishops, the question you must ponder is: “Is what I'm getting in exchange better or worse compared to the advantage I had before?”

Another significant change that could justify the decision to part with our pair of bishops can be a dramatic change in pawn structure.

Magnus Carlsen – Levon Aronian

Karlsruhe 2019

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.e4 ♙b4 6.♙g5 c5 7.♙xc4 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♙xc3† 9.bxc3 ♗a5 10.♙d2 0–0 11.♗e2 e5 12.♘b3 ♗c7 13.0–0 ♙g4 14.f3 ♖c8



White must decide if and under what circumstances he should exchange his c4-bishop.

15.♙d5!

The only move to fight for an advantage. Carlsen decides to give up his bishop pair to create a powerful passed pawn on d5 which can be defended by c3-c4. This change in the pawn structure will also weaken the black pawn on e5, as White will be able to attack it down the e-file. There was no good way of keeping the bishop.

After 15.♙d3 ♙e6 Black is completely fine, as White kept a useless piece on d3 and, in exchange, Black got to keep the beautifully active e6-bishop.

In the event of 15.♙xf7† ♗xf7 16.fxg4 White achieves nothing because of 16...♗c4! and Black has a tonne of counterplay.

Black is stuck in a dilemma. If he takes on d5, then White obtains a strong, protected passed pawn. Otherwise, White will enjoy a great space advantage with the pair of bishops for free.

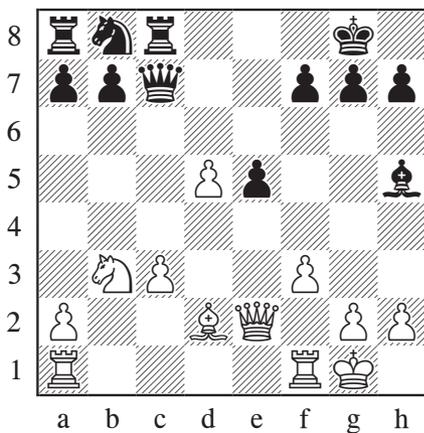
15...♞xd5

The lesser evil. Black needs to unbalance the game and seek his chances in a double-edged position.

If he tries to be solid with 15...♙e6, then White can play 16.c4! ♜c6 17.♙e3 and keep a significant advantage because of his space superiority. Black is relegated to complete passivity.

16.exd5 ♙h5

16...♙f5 does not change a great deal: 17.♞ac1 ♞d7 18.c4 The position is similar to the game, but White's f-pawn is not pinned so an eventual f3-f4 is very much on the cards.



17.c4!

White starts initiating play on the queenside where, on top of his spatial superiority, he has more pieces influencing the situation. Note how offside the h5-bishop starts to look already.

17...♞d7

The pawn wasn't hanging. After 17...♙xc4?? 18.♞fc1 White wins.

18.♞fc1!

Carlsen prepares to push his a- and c-pawns.

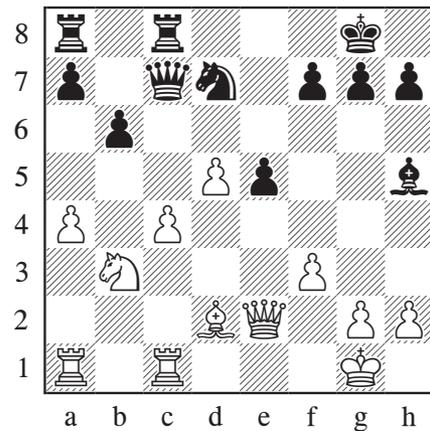
18.♞ac1!? with the idea of ♞fd1 is also interesting.

18...b6

Black prevents c4-c5. Nevertheless, this move creates some new weaknesses on the queenside.

19.a4

White focuses on a queenside attack. The reason he chose 18.♞fc1! over 18.♞ac1 becomes clear.



19...a5?!

Weakening the b6-pawn.

This is actually a typical and logical move in most similar situations. Black doesn't want to let White continue his minority attack with a4-a5 and axb6, as then White would exchange his isolated a4-pawn with Black's perfectly placed pawn on a7. By fixing the structure with ...a7-a5 Black accepts to weaken his b6-pawn but, in exchange, White is going to keep a weak pawn on a4 as well.

However, there's a catch: with the bishop so awkwardly placed on h5 the weakness of the a4-pawn is never going to be felt.

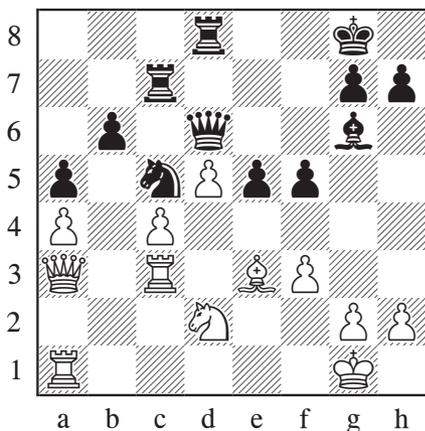
19...♖d6 would have been better, trying to be as solid as possible. After 20.♙e1 (20.a5? b5! gives Black good counterplay) 20...♙g6 White has only a slight advantage.

20.♖f2 ♖d6 21.♙e3 ♙g6 22.♖d2 f6 23.♖b2
♜c7 24.♘d2 ♘c5 25.♖a3 ♜d8 26.♜c3

White has a pleasant long-term advantage so there is no need to rush. Carlsen has been slowly but surely improving the placement of his pieces while at the same time poking and prodding Black wherever he can.

26...f5?

Aronian finally loses his patience and decides to play “actively”. Nevertheless, this move severely weakens the e5-pawn.



27.♜e1!

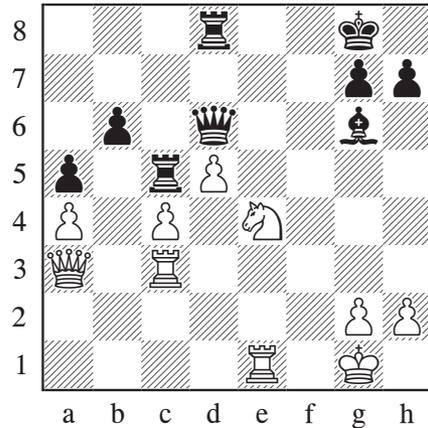
Carlsen targets the new-found weakness on e5 and the black position starts to crumble.

27...e4

Trying to repurpose the bishop also doesn't help: 27...♙e8 28.♙xc5 ♜xc5 29.♜ce3 ♙d7 30.♖a1! (Not 30.♜xe5? due to 30...♜xd5! and

Black is suddenly better.) 30...♜e8 31.♜xe5 ♜xe5 32.♜xe5 White wins a pawn.

28.fxe4 fxe4 29.♙xc5 ♜xc5 30.♘xe4



White is a pawn up for no compensation. Carlsen has no trouble putting the game away in his usual clinical manner.

30...♖e5 31.♜ce3 ♜cc8 32.h3 ♖c7 33.♘d2
♜e8 34.♜e7 ♜xe7 35.♜xe7 ♖d8 36.♖e3 ♜c7
37.♜e6 ♜c5 38.♖b3

After the b6-pawn falls Black has no chance to save the game. Aronian decided it was time to resign.

1-0

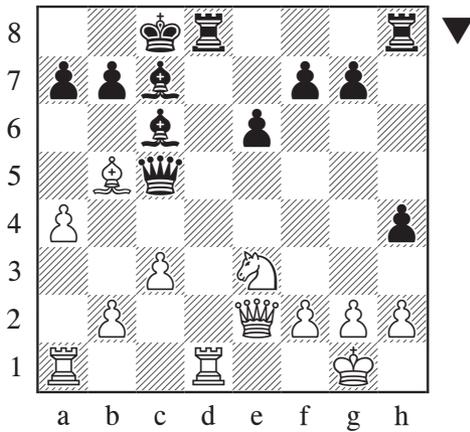
A magnificent positional game. This time, Carlsen used his “bargaining chip” of the bishop pair to force Black into taking the bishop on d5 and transform the structure in a way that gave him a permanent positional advantage. Especially when you compare the game move (15.♙d5!) with the alternative White had of keeping the bishop pair (15.♙d3), it becomes apparent that it would be silly to keep a bishop that would be so much worse compared to its counterpart.

Exercises

Baadur Jobava – Arjun Erigaisi

Internet (blitz) 2021

4-1

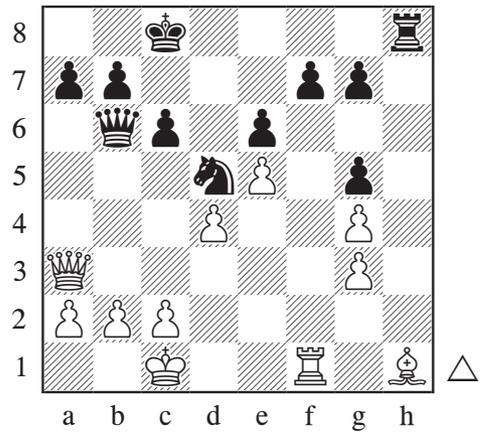


Black to play

Amir Bagheri – Timur Arestanov

Rasht 1998

4-3

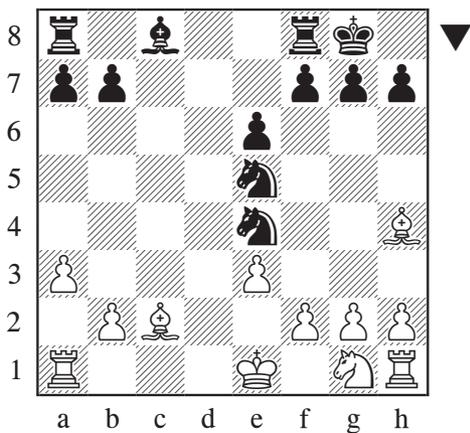


White to play

David Howell – Nils Grandelius

London 2022

4-2

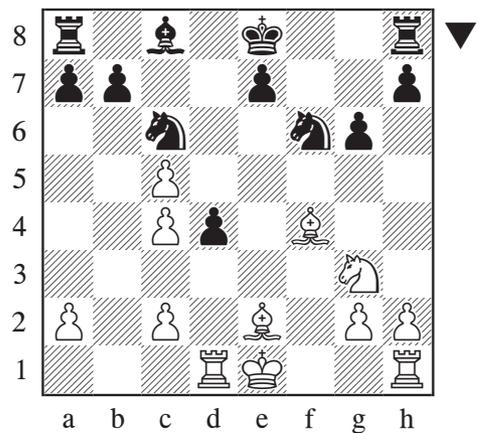


Black to play

Elshan Moradiabadi – Amir Bagheri

Cebu 2007

4-4

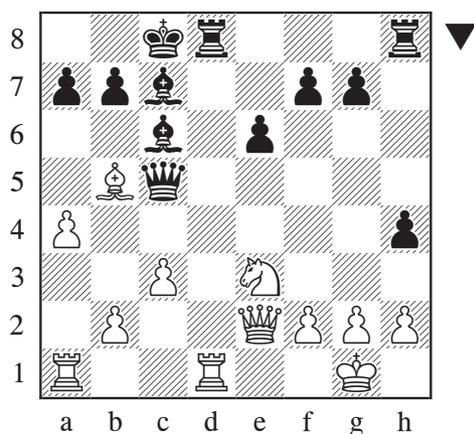


Black to play

Solutions

4-1. Baadur Jobava – Arjun Erigaisi

Internet (blitz) 2021



As we have seen in the games section, when you have the bishop pair, the exchange of queens usually works in your favour.

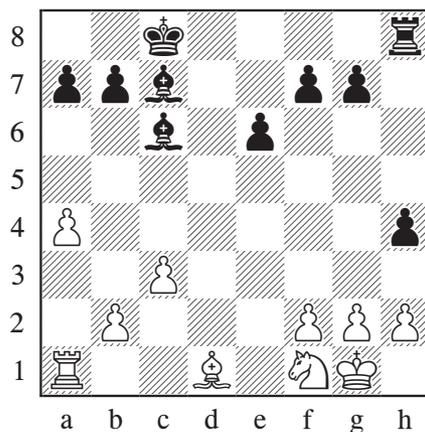
20...♙e5!

Black forces the exchange of queens by creating dangerous threats against the opponent's king,

21.♘f1

21.g3 is clearly suicidal: 21...hxg3 22.♖xd8† ♕xd8 23.fxg3 ♕b6 Black wins.

21...♙xe2 22.♕xe2 ♖xd1 23.♕xd1



White has no compensation for the opponent's bishop pair.

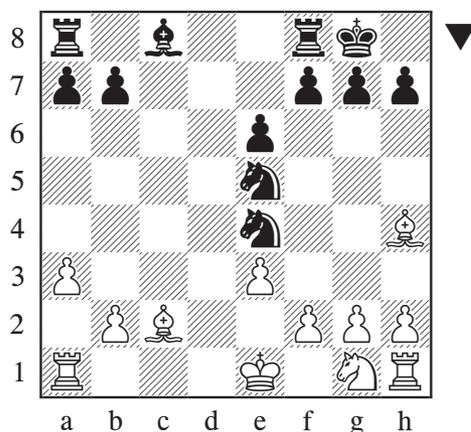
23...h3!?

One of many possible continuations. Black retains a good advantage but the game was eventually drawn.

...½–½

4-2. David Howell – Nils Grandelius

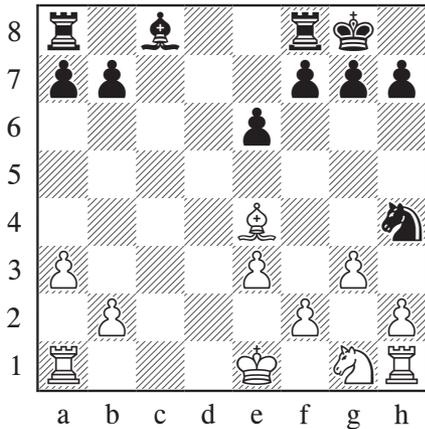
London 2022



15...♖g6!

This move is crucial for Black. He needs to eliminate White's bishop pair.

16.♙xe4 ♜xh4 17.g3



17...f5!?

Black plays energetically, trying to avoid any kind of unpleasant, Catalan-style positions.

18.♙c2

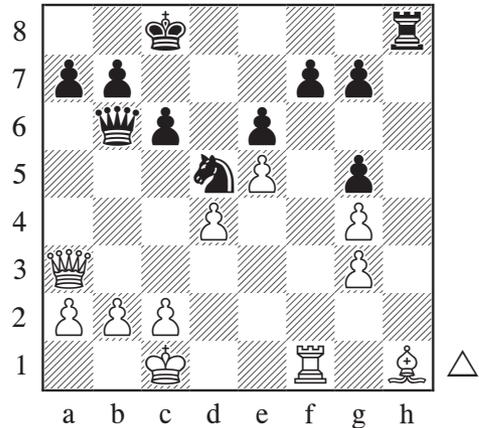
18.gxh4 fxe4 19.♗e2 ♙d7 leads to a double-edged position with chances for both sides. The seemingly weak black pawn on e6 is actually extremely useful, as it prevents White from permanently posting his knight on the d4- and f4-squares.

18...♗g6 19.f4 ♙d7 20.♗f3 ♙c6 21.♖e2 ♙d5 22.♜hc1 ♜ac8 23.♙d3 ♗e7

White has only a tiny edge, if anything at all. ...1/2-1/2

4-3. Amir Bagheri – Timur Arestanov

Rasht 1998



22.♙xd5!

After exchanging the minor pieces, the position gets quieter and that amplifies the importance of White's structural advantage.

22...exd5

After 22...cxd5? 23.♞c3† ♔b8 24.♞xf7 White is clearly winning.

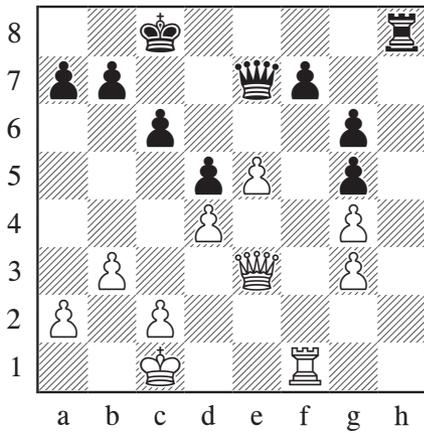
23.♞d3 g6

Also not helpful is 23...♞f8 when 24.♞f5† ♔b8 25.e6 ♞xd4 is forced, and 26.♞xf7! is a cute finish.

24.b3

White does not need to rush to take on f7; his advantage is permanent after all. Rushing will only create chances for the opponent to muddy the waters.

24...♞c7 25.♞e3 ♞e7



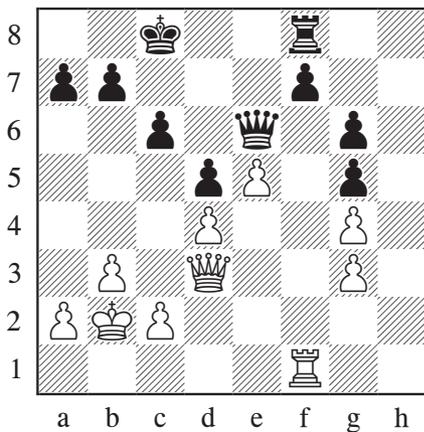
26. ♖b2!

Again, White does not need to rush. Let's first stop the annoying check on a3.

26... ♜e8 27. ♗f3 ♝f8 28. ♗d3

White wants to play ♜f6 next, establishing total control.

28... ♗e6



29. ♜f6!

White has made all the preparatory moves, and it is time for the final assault. The black queen gets dragged away from the defence of the king.

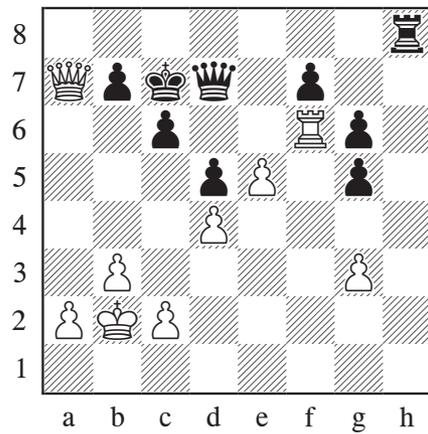
29... ♗xg4 30. ♗c3

Black can do nothing to stop the queen from invading via c5. (However, it is worth noting that White is not yet threatening ♜xc6†, which would only lead to a draw.)

30... ♗d7

The queen must guard the f7-pawn, as the rook is about to be chased away.

31. ♗c5 ♜h8 32. ♗xa7 ♔c7



33. a4!

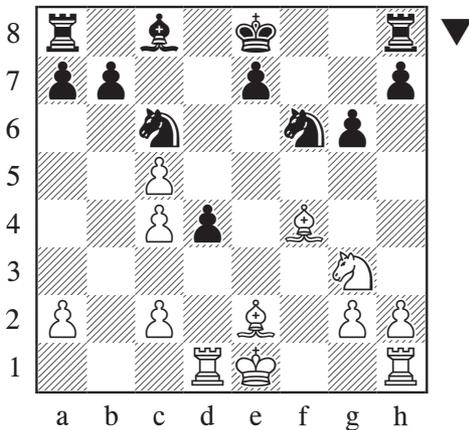
White's a-pawn also joins the attack.

33... ♜h7 34. a5 ♗c8 35. a6 ♗b8 36. ♜xc6†

A nice finishing touch. The black queen falls. 1-0

4-4. Elshan Moradiabadi – Amir Bagheri

Cebu 2007



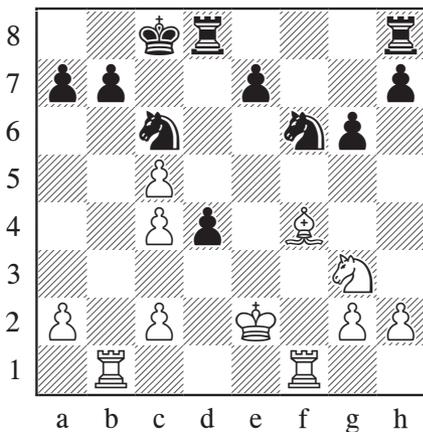
15...g4!

Before attacking the weaknesses of the opponent's position, Black wants to get rid of White's bishop pair. In fact, the bishop pair is the only thing White has in exchange for his terrible structure. With one of the bishops gone, he will be left with a miserable defensive task.

16.♖b1?

White should have played 16.♙xg4 ♘xg4 17.h3 ♘f6 18.0-0 trying to at least get a small lead in development.

16...♙xe2 17.♚xe2 0-0-0 18.♞hf1

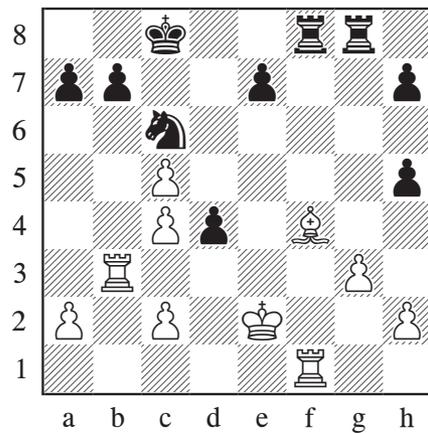


18...♘h5!?

An interesting idea. Black wanted to push his e-pawn with ...e7-e5-e4, but the loose f6-knight was a nuisance. However, it was not the most accurate way to play.

Black could have gained a big advantage with 18...h5! threatening ...h5-h4 and ...♘e4, and if White decides to stop that with 19.h4, then the g4-square is terribly weak. After 19...♘g4 Black is in complete control.

19.♘xh5 gxh5 20.♞b3 ♞hg8 21.g3 ♝df8

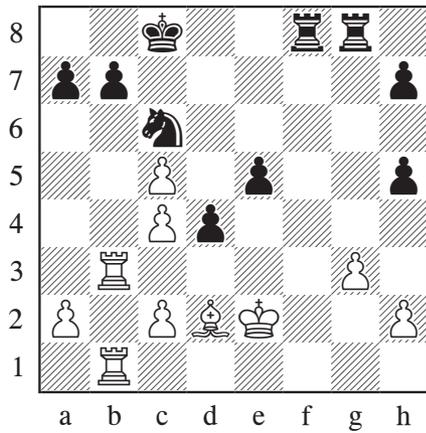


22.♞fb1!?

In a bad position, White makes a decisive mistake. The doubled rooks on the b-file serve no real purpose.

22.♙d2 was more circumspect, but still after 22...♞xf1 23.♚xf1 ♞f8† 24.♚e2 ♞f5 Black has a clear advantage.

22...e5 23.♙d2



23...Rf7

It is hard to choose a concrete approach when slow positional moves seem good enough for an advantage, but here 23...h4! was really strong: 24.Rf3 (24.Rxb7 could be met by 24...hxg3 25.hxg3 Rxc3 and Black gets a winning position. One of his main threats is ...d3† with the idea of clearing the d4-square for his knight.) 24...d3†! 25.Rxd3 Qd4† Black wins.

24.Rf3 Rxf3 25.Qxf3 Rf8† 26.Qe2 e4

Black still has a big advantage, but the game was eventually drawn.

...½-½