

Yearbook

NEW  IN CHESS 136

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CHESS OPENING NEWS

Edited by Jan Timman

From the editor



Classical

It is a strange experience: for months I have only seen rapid games, played on the Internet, with all their peculiar mistakes. I really miss the classical games. As a consequence, I have also included rapid games in my Survey, which normally I don't do.

So I was glad to see that Ivan Sokolov had decided to base his Survey on a classical game between two promising youngsters from the period just before the lockdown. It reminded me of the Karpov-Kasparov matches. This also goes for Krishnan Sasikiran's contribution to Erwin l'Ami's correspondence column. Just one small correction on his analysis: the move 9...e3 is generally attributed to Igor Zaitsev. However, as I have pointed out in my book *The Longest Game*, it was first mentioned by John Watson, back in 1979.

We welcome Yu Yangyi as a contributor. He has been a top player for years, but we hardly ever saw any of his commentaries. His views are obviously very interesting.

Another welcome to Zaur Tekeyev from Russia. He tackles an interesting option in the main line of the Caro-Kann.

Of course there were some rapid games from the last months that were worthwhile. The best example is Magnus Carlsen's victory over Anish Giri in the Semi-Tarrasch. Ivan Saric examines this line.

While Giri and Ian Nepomniachtchi frequently play the Semi-Tarrasch as Black, Hikaru Nakamura sticks to his own line in the Blackburne Variation of the Classical Queen's Gambit. Michael Adams writes the Survey; while working on it, he himself played the Black side of the system to beat Noël Studer in a game in Biel – the first big tournament in which classical chess was played again.

Jan Timman

Opening Highlights



Anish Giri

The Dutch super-GM boosted his speed chess in the past Covid-19 months. He won the strong Mr Dodgy Invitational and reached the final of the Chessable Masters event. Anish brilliantly defeated another specialist, Ian Nepomniachtchi, with a **fresh treatment of a distinguished Tarrasch line**, only to succumb to Magnus Carlsen in the final in an even more brilliant game with the same line! We have Peter Heine Nielsen's analysis in a Survey where Ivan Saric tells the whole story on page 131.

Aydin Suleymanli

The latest sensation before lockdown was this 14-year-old boy outstripping dozens of high-class GMs at the Aeroflot Open. In the crucial game, the young Azeri tempted Parham Maghsoodloo into **grabbing a pawn on b7 in the Exchange QGD** and then outplayed the former Junior World Champ. Aydin analyses this game in Ivan Sokolov's Survey on page 121. Also, newcomer Zaur Tekeyev (see facing page) looked at Suleymanli's exploits as Black in the Classical Caro-Kann.



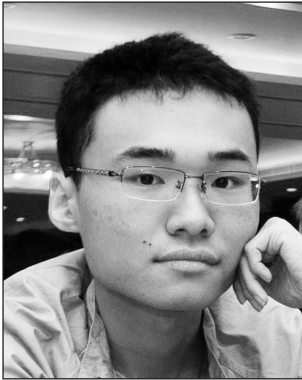
Sergey Karjakin

Leaving all the jokes about Ministers and Defence aside, we see that Sergey Karjakin has also rejuvenated himself online. He's been experimenting with **yet another 6th move against the Najdorf: bishop to d3**. It's just online chess, you may say, but if you try such things against the likes of Giri, Duda, Nepomniachtchi, and even Najdorf guru Vachier-Lagrave, you better know what you're doing. Kaido Külaots has collected and deeply analysed all the relevant games in his Survey on page 38.

Krishnan Sasikiran

The strong Indian GM already featured several times as a correspondence player – you know, that slower and deeper version of the current online hype – in Erwin l'Ami's column. In this issue, Sasikiran contributes analysis to our 'correspondence corner' of a **novelty on the 11th move which breathes new life into the famous 9...e3 idea in the Reversed Sicilian** which Karpov used in his 1987 match with Kasparov. See page 29 for Sasikiran's assemblage of new, fantastic variations!





Yu Yangyi

We are proud to present a Survey by absolute top player Yu Yangyi! At the Nations Cup, one of the first big online events after the lockdown, Yangyi was the big man of the Chinese team with a 7½ out of 10 score. Moreover, he bounced back from a loss against Wesley So in the preliminaries to beat the American with a **crushing 8th move novelty in the Nimzo-Indian Ragozin**, winning the Cup for his country! Yangyi's analysis of this gorgeous game and others in this line can be found on page 165.

Hikaru Nakamura

Starting in the Magnus Invitational, speed chess wizard Nakamura took on all comers in the same QGD line. Michael Adams aptly calls it 'Rest of the World v Nakamura' in his Survey on the subject (page 112). Nakamura kept showing that the set-up with **6...♟bd7 and 7...c6 is super-solid against the Blackburne Variation**, but can also lead to great complications and highly varied ramifications. Anish Giri got fascinated too and added a lot of comments on this line.



Zaur Tekeyev

We welcome our new contributor, Russian FM Zaur Tekeyev, current champion of the North-Caucasian Federal District and former student champion in Russia. Tekeyev is an active chess coach and opening expert who makes his debut with a Survey on **the Classical Caro-Kann where White squeezes in 7.♟d3 even before committing to h4-h5 and a move with his king's knight**. This gambit move may look a little brusque but it hides many subtleties, as Tekeyev nicely demonstrates on page 70.

Arne Moll

Some openings are considered just blatantly incorrect. But with computer analysis running to move 25 or further, what can we still call 'correct' in chess? Anyway, Arne Moll doesn't make any unrealistic claims for **the audacious 3...f5 in the Philidor Defence**. He just proves in his Survey on page 85 that it leads to wild tactics, fun games, and yes, the occasional loss against a White player who knows all the ins and outs of this obscure line. You think you're going to face many of those?



Your Variations

Trends & Opinions

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HOT! = a trendy line or an important discovery

SOS = an early deviation

GAMBIT = a pawn sacrifice in the opening

Cloud-busting

The FORUM is a platform for discussion of developments in chess opening theory in general and particularly in variations discussed in previous Yearbook issues.

Contributions to these pages should be sent to: editors@newinchess.com

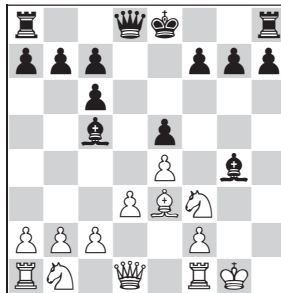
No toilet move

by Han Schut

RL 7.1 (C65)

YB 97

During the semifinals of the Lindores Abbey chess24.com Rapid Challenge, Magnus Carlsen played an interesting piece sacrifice and novelty against Hikaru Nakamura. As early as move 8, Black sacrifices a piece for two pawns and an attack on the white king.



position after 10. ♖e3

White's king is vulnerable, and it takes White time to unpin himself. Black has the bishop pair, and his attacking plan is simple: steamroll with the f-, g-, and h-pawns, castle queenside, bring on attackers and checkmate. And if White is able to organize a defence, then there is a plan B: create two passed pawns that keep White's major pieces occupied with defensive tasks. It is difficult for White to untangle himself and create counterplay. Nakamura's defensive play

in this rapid game was impressive.

Peter Leko was one of the commentators on Chess24. Coincidentally, he'd had the position after 10. ♖e3 against David Navara with white in Linares 2018. After the game, Navara had told him that his preparation was 10... ♗e7 but that he was in a rush to go to the bathroom and made a mistake. So, this time not the 'toilet' move 10... ♗d6 but the new 10... ♗e7!

It looks like White's best defence is to unpin himself immediately by protecting the pinned knight with his king (♔g2) and subsequently moving his queen out of the pin (♕e1).

Hikaru Nakamura Magnus Carlsen

Lindores Abbey Online 2020 (2)

**1.e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♗b5 ♘f6
4.d3 ♗c5 5. ♗xc6 dxc6 6.0-0
♗g4 7.h3 ♗h5 8.g4 ♘xg4
9.hxg4 ♗xg4 10. ♖e3 ♗e7N**

Up till now only the move 10... ♗d6 had been played. The essential difference between 10... ♗d6 and 10... ♗e7 is that in the variation 11. ♖h1 h5 12. ♖g1 f5, White can take on f5 if the bishop is on d6. This is impossible in the line with 10... ♗e7 as 13.exf5 e4 14.dxe4 ♕xd1 15. ♖xd1 ♗xf3 loses the knight on f3.

Moreover,

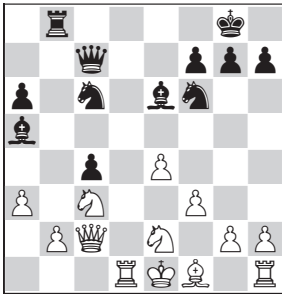
– 10... ♗d6 protects pawn e5 and allows the black queen to go to f6 or h4 but the bishop

the exchange also gets an engine endorsement which at this point indicates that Black has compensation, but nothing close to a significant advantage.

14... ♖xf8 15. ♖c2 ♖d8!

A key move. The logical 16... ♖b8?! would allow White to castle queenside and ultimately complete development in a reasonable manner.

16. ♖d1 ♖b8



Mission accomplished! White's king will now stay stuck in the center for the rest of the game and the rook on h1 will never see action. In subsequent play my computer offered a number of first and second choices that would lead to positions where Black had significant edges, but nonetheless did not look winning to me. Via a series of 'inferior' moves I was able to convert Black's advantage in development and piece coordination to a full point.

17. ♖c1 ♖b3 18. ♖f4 ♖b6 19. ♖e2 ♖xb2 20. ♖f1 ♖b3 21. ♖cd5 c3 22. ♖e3 c2 23. ♖xb3 ♖xb3 24. ♖c1 ♖xd5 25. exd5 ♖d4 26. ♖c4 ♖xa3 27. ♖f2 ♖b6 28. ♖e1 ♖c3 29. ♖xa6 ♖b3 30. ♖e2 ♖c5 31. ♖d3 ♖xc1 32. ♖xc1 ♖xd5 33. g3 ♖c7 34. ♖e2 ♖c3+ 0-1 White loses a piece after 35. ♖d2 ♖d1 36. ♖xc2 ♖f2 due to the threat of 37... ♖a5+. My colleague could not believe that a computer-



Michael Roiz

assisted email game could be so one-sided. My thoughts dwelled on 8.a3?! and that poor opening choices can indeed lead to a lost game before the fighting even starts; hence my ongoing subscription to the New In Chess Yearbook.

Wayne R. Gradl
U.S. National Master
Getzville NY, USA

Duda's novelty

by René Olthof

SI 8.8 (B97)

YB 53, 132

The nature of theoretical experiments in the rapid and blitz events during these pandemic times may be slightly different compared to over-the-board tournaments, but there is definitely no shortage of new opening developments, both on and off the well-trodden paths.

Sergey Karjakin
Jan-Krzysztof Duda

Lindores Abbey blitz 2020 (4)

1.e4 c5 2. ♖f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♖xd4 ♖f6 5. ♖c3 a6 6. ♖g5 e6 7. f4 ♖b6 8. ♖d2 ♖xb2 9. ♖b1 ♖a3 10. f5 ♖c6

Only one more game has been played in the new tabiya position after 10... ♖e7 11. fxe6

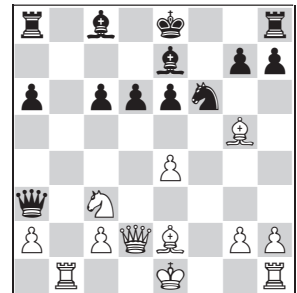
♖xe6!? 12. ♖xe6 fxe6 13. ♖c4 ♖bd7 14. ♖xe6 ♖c5 since my FORUM contribution in Yearbook 132: **15. ♖f5 g6 16. ♖h3 ♖cxe4 17. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 18. ♖d4 ♖c3+ 19. ♖xc3 ♖xc3 20. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 21. ♖xb7+ (diverging from 21. ♖b3 ♖e4 22. ♖xb7+ ♖f6 23. 0-0+ ♖g5 24. g3 ♖ab8 in Wei Yi-Nepomniachtchi, Moscow rapid 2019) 21... ♖f6 22. 0-0+ ♖g5 23. g3 ♖ab8 24. ♖c7! ♖d5 (½-½ (46) Wei Yi-Vachier-Lagrave, Internet blitz, September 2019) 25. ♖c6!? ♖b6 26. ♖xb6 ♖xb6 27. ♖f7 and White still has a slight pull.**

11. fxe6 fxe6 12. ♖xc6 bxc6 The former main line – long time no see!

13. ♖e2

Thousands of games with 13.e5. But the success rate is below 50 percent!

13... ♖e7



14.e5!?

Anish Giri has wiped the dust off this ancient continuation. There are literally hundreds of draws with either 14.0-0 0-0 15. ♖b3 ♖c5+ 16. ♖e3 ♖e5 17. ♖d4 ♖a5 18. ♖b6 ♖e5 19. ♖d4 or 17. ♖f4 ♖c5+ 18. ♖e3. 18. ♖h1 is the only way to play for more, as explained in Yearbook 53, over 20 years ago!

Likewise, the scoring percentage of 14. ♖b3, played twice by our editor-in-chief in the mid-1980s, is below 50 after 14... ♖a5!.

14... dxe5 15. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 16. ♖h5+

Sheer enthusiasm

by Erwin I'Ami



In this column, Dutch grandmaster and top chess coach Erwin I'Ami scours the thousands of new correspondence games that are played every month for important novelties that may start new waves in OTB chess also. Every three months it's your chance to check out the best discoveries from this rich chess source that tends to be underexposed.

Even though Corona-times have stopped more or less all OTB-events, for obvious reasons it has not affected Correspondence Chess. There was once again plenty of material!

The King's Gambit always speaks to the imagination of chess lovers. When I saw the following game passing by, I decided to grab my chance and do a full overview on this fantastic opening. I may have gotten a bit carried away, but it's sheer enthusiasm, dear reader!

A fantastic opening

KG 1.6 (C37)

John Claridge
Michael Höppenstein

GER-WLS ICCF 2019

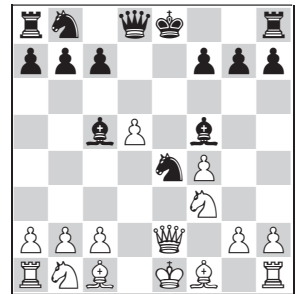
1.e4 e5 2.f4

This ancient opening wasn't featured before in this column. This game gives me the opportunity to right that wrong. We are in for a fun journey!

2...exf4

Hein Donner claimed that an attempt to refute the King's Gambit has to start with 2...d5, which is the Falkbeer Countergambit. Donner made this statement back in 1965, and a lot has happened since. The Falkbeer remains a viable option, but 3.exd5 e4, which was Falbeer's idea, has fallen from grace recently, due to 4.d3! ♖f6 5.dxe4 (5. ♖c3 ♖b4 6. ♖d2 e3! 7. ♖xe3

0-0 is known to give Black dangerous compensation) 5... ♖xe4 6. ♖f3 ♖c5 7. ♖e2 ♖f5 (if 7... ♖xd5 8. ♖fd2! just wins a pawn after 8...f5 9. ♖c3 followed by taking on e4)



8. ♖c3 ♖e7 9. ♖e3 ♖xe3 10. ♖xe3 ♖xc3 11. ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 12.bxc3 ♖xc2, an endgame that arises more or less by force. Now after 13. ♖d2 Black has three bishop moves, but none are overly satisfactory:

A) 13... ♖g6 14. ♖e1+ ♖d8 15. ♖d4 looks fantastic for White, despite Black actually winning this game in Wheatcroft-Keres, Margate 1939;

B) 13... ♖a4 14. ♖e1+ ♖f8 (on both king moves to the 6th rank, 15. ♖g5! is a strong reply) 15. ♖e4 followed by ♖c4 and ♖he1, is bad for Black;

C) 13... ♖f5 14. ♖e1+ ♖f6 15. ♖e5 (threatening 16.g4!) 15...h5 16.h3 is very dangerous. A sample line is 16...c6 17.d6! ♖d8 18.g4! ♖xd6+ 19. ♖c1 ♖e6 20.f5 ♖d7 21.fxe6 ♖xe5 22.exf7 and Black is in big trouble as ♖c4! is a huge threat. For instance, 22... ♖f8 23. ♖c4!

A fresh idea in the Classical Caro-Kann

by Zaur Tekeyev

- | | | |
|----|------|-------|
| 1. | e4 | c6 |
| 2. | d4 | d5 |
| 3. | ♘c3 | dx e4 |
| 4. | ♗xe4 | ♙f5 |
| 5. | ♖g3 | ♙g6 |
| 6. | h4 | h6 |
| 7. | ♙d3 | |



7. ♙d3 is a very rare option in this line; usually White trades the light-squared bishops only with 7. ♗f3 ♘d7 8. h5 ♙h7 included, winning some time to advance the h-pawn a bit further. It used to be debatable whether White should push the pawn till h5 or leave it to stay on h4, until in 1966 the former option took the upper hand when Boris Spassky used it to defeat Tigran Petrosian in the 13th game of their World Championship match. The idea was to tie up Black's kingside with the h5-pawn to restrict any activities there and possibly achieve a better endgame.

However, then Black found a possibility to castle kingside and get more dynamic play. Even though the h-pawn is advanced and there is a hook on h6, it is still difficult for White to create



Zaur Tekeyev

an attack on the kingside. The g2-g4 push is usually a pawn sacrifice, but the centre is not closed and Black often use the d5-square to activate his queen and either force some more exchanges or create active counterplay. Often the h5-pawn even becomes a weakness.

The white king's knight

Sometimes White develops the knight to f3 and transposes to the main lines with the pawn on h4. But one of the ideas of 7. ♙d3 is also to keep the possibility of developing the king's knight to e2. Then it can go to f4, controlling the d5-square, and sometimes to h5, trading the black king's defender and creating more pressure on the kingside. Now it is also easier for White to launch a pawn storm with f2-f3 and g2-g4-g5. In this Survey, we will focus on the approach with ♗g1-e2.

There are not many games played yet with this move, but I found the idea very fresh and interesting (even though the

first time it was played was back in 1948 in a correspondence game). And recently some grandmasters started using this rare weapon with good results.

So what can Black do? There are three main directions. After 7... ♗xd3 8. ♖xd3 Black can try to castle either kingside or queenside. The latter option is more popular in practice.

The third option is to take the d4-pawn on the 7th move. It looks risky, but it needs to be well analysed.

Black castles kingside

The winner of the Aeroflot Open 2020, Aydin Suleymanli, met this system twice in World Rapid and Blitz Championships. In a rapid game against Evgeny Najer, he went for queenside castling, got a solid but slightly worse position, and eventually lost in the endgame (see notes to Game 3). The next day he met the same variation in a blitz game against another strong Russian grandmaster, Sergey Grigoriants. Now Aydin decided to castle kingside and start an attack on the queenside (Game 1). This time he was objectively worse after the opening, but managed to outplay his opponent in time trouble. Nevertheless, this is a good game to start the analysis, because it shows that Black's attack is slower. In Game 2, Philipp Wenninger against Evgeny Vorobiev decided to stop White's attack by exchanging the queens, but the endgame turned out to be worse for Black.

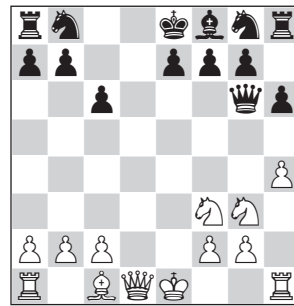
Black castles queenside

Castling queenside is by no means a safer option, but it usually leaves Black with a rather passive position. We will start covering it with a very exciting game played by Alexander Predke and

Ivan Rozum, where Black placed his queen on c7 (Game 3). It looks like White can obtain some advantage, but Black's position is solid. In Van Foreest-Dziuba (Game 4), the queen went to b6. In the notes to this game, you will find that Black has an interesting equalizing manoeuvre, but it seems like Jorden van Foreest knew about it, and he prevented it in time. In general in such positions White has a wider choice of plans.

Black accepts the gambit

But what if Black just takes the central pawn with 7... ♖xd4 ? After 8. ♘f3 ♖d6 9. ♗xg6 ♖xg6



White can choose between the sharp 10. ♖e2 (Game 5) and the calmer 10. ♗e3 (Game 6). The latter option forces Black to enter a somewhat worse endgame, but it seems like Black can hold with precise play. 10. ♖e2 leads to very sharp positions with full compensation for the sacrificed pawn. So taking the pawn on d4 doesn't seem to be a good option for a practical game.

Conclusion

There is not much theory in this line yet, but it leads to very interesting and fresh positions. The set-up with ♗g1-e2 looks quite promising for White, so I assume (and hope!) we will see more games with this in future practice.

**Black castles kingside
7...♗xd3 8...♗xd3**
**Sergey Grigoriants
Aydin Suleymanli**

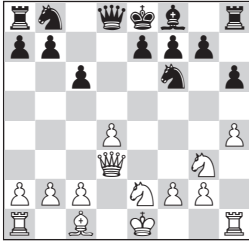
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Moscow Wch blitz 2019 (7)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 dxe4

4.♗xe4 ♗f5 5.♗g3 ♗g6 6.h4 h6

7.♗d3 ♗xd3 8.♗xd3 ♗f6 9.♗1e2

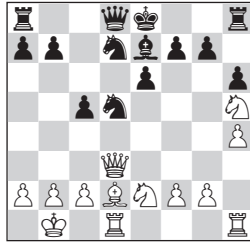


This variation was already used against Aydin Suleymanli just one day before this game. In that game, against Evgeny Najer, Black preferred castling queenside, but lost, so now Aydin decides to change the strategy and goes for a position with opposite-castled kings: **9...e6 10.♗d2 ♗e7** In case of 10...c5 White should play 11.♗e4 ♗c6 12.♗xc5 ♗xc5 13.dxc5 ♗xd3 14.cxd3. White is a pawn up, but Black has good compensation, so some precision is required from White, for example: 14...0-0-0 15.♖h3 ♗d5 16.b4 ♖hd8 17.b5 ♗d4 18.♗xd4 ♖xd4 19.♗e2±. **11.0-0-0 0-0** If Black tries to play ...c6-c5 before castling kingside, White has a very interesting pawn sacrifice: 11...♗bd7 12.♗b1 c5 (12...0-0 is covered in Vorobiev-Wenninger) 13.d5!. Not an obvious decision! Now:

A) 13...♗e5 14.♗b5+ ♗d7 15.♗xd7+ ♗exd7 16.dxe6 fxe6 17.♗f4 ♗f7 18.♖he1! with a better endgame for White;

B) 13...exd5 14.♗f5 g6 (14...0-0? falls immediately to 15.♗xh6+–) 15.♗xe7 ♗xe7 16.♗c3 0-0-0 (if 16...♗d6 White takes a pawn and retains the initiative after 17.♗xh6f) 17.♗f4! (17.♗xd5 is also possible, but not so great: 17...♗xd5 18.♗xd5 ♗e5 19.♗b3 ♗c6 20.a3 ♗d7 21.♗e3±) 17...♖he8 18.♗b5 ♗e5

19.♗xa7+ ♗b8 20.♗b5 g5 21.hxg5 hxg5 22.♗xe5+ ♗xe5 23.♗a3–; C) 13...♗xd5 14.♗h5 and now:



C1) 14...g6? 15.♗g7+ ♗f8 16.♗xe6+ fxe6 17.c4! ♗e5 (17...♗5f6 18.♗xg6+–; ♗xh6+ is coming and Black is lost) 18.♗c2 ♗xc4 19.♗xc4±;

C2) 14...♗f6 15.♗c3 (15.♗g3 is also possible, e.g. 15...♗b6 16.♗xf6+ gxf6 17.♗c3! 0-0-0 18.♗xd5 exd5 19.♖he1 and White's chances are a bit better) 15...0-0 16.♗g3 g6 17.♗xf6+ ♗7xf6 18.♗e5±. White will exchange one pair of knights to reduce Black's defensive potential;

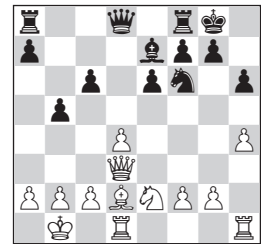
C3) 14...♗f8 15.♗g3 g6 (15...♖h7 16.c4 ♗5f6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.♗c3 ♗xc3 19.♗xc3 ♗e7 20.♖he1 and White is better) 16.c4 (16.♗hf4 ♗c7 17.♗c3!? ♗7f6 18.♗cxd5 ♗xd5 19.♗c1 (threatening 20.♖xd5 and then 21.♗e6+) 19...♗e8 20.♗f3 with some compensation for the sacrificed pawn) 16...gxf5 (16...♗5f6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 18.h5 g5 19.♗c3 ♗xc3 20.♗xc3 ♗e7 21.f4!) 17.cxd5 exd5 18.♗d3 d4 19.♗g3 with some advantage for White;

C4) 14...♖g8! is the best defence, e.g. 15.♗g3 ♗b6 16.♗xh6 0-0-0 (16...♗f6?! 17.♗xf6+ ♗7xf6 18.♗xg7 0-0-0 19.♗xf6 (19.h5 is also possible) 19...♖xg3 20.♗xd8 ♗xd8 21.fxg3±) 17.♗c1. White can create a passed pawn on the h-file at some point: 17...♗d6 18.♗hf4 ♗5f6 (18...♗7f6 19.♗xd5 exd5 20.♗f3 ♖ge8 21.♗f4 ♗xf4 22.♗xf4±) 19.f3, preparing ♗f2, g2-g4, h4-h5. For example, 19...♗e5 20.♗f2 ♗c7 21.h5 ♗b8 22.g4 ♗d5 23.♗d3 ♗xd3 24.♖xd3 f6 25.f4±.

The immediate 11...c5 can be met by 12.♗c3 0-0 13.dxc5, aiming for a

preferable endgame, e.g. 13...♗xd3 14.♖xd3 ♗xc5 (14...♗bd7 15.b4 a5 16.a3 axb4 17.axb4 ♗d5 18.♗f4! ♗xc3 19.♖xd7 ♗f6 20.♗d3±) 15.♗xf6 gxf6 16.♗e4 ♗e7 17.g4±. Or 12...♗e4 (preparing g2-g4!) 12...cxd4 13.♗xd4 ♗bd7 14.g4!? ♖c8 15.♗e3 ♗d5 16.g5 hxg5 17.hxg5 ♖xh1 18.♖xh1±. **12.♗b1 b5?!**

13.♗e4 This is White's main idea in this variation. Now the g-pawn is ready to march towards Black's king. **13...♗bd7** 13...♗xe4 was probably better, e.g. 14.♗xe4 ♗d5 15.♗e3 ♗d7 16.g4 ♗b6 17.♗f4 ♗d6 18.♗f3 ♖fd8 19.♗c1 g6 20.♗d3±. **14.♗xf6+** 14.g4! ♗xe4 (14...♗xg4 15.♗g3 f5 16.♗f4 ♗b8 17.f3 ♗gf6 18.♖d1 ♗e8 19.♗g5!+–) 15.♗xe4 ♗f6 16.♗xc6±. **14...♗xf6**

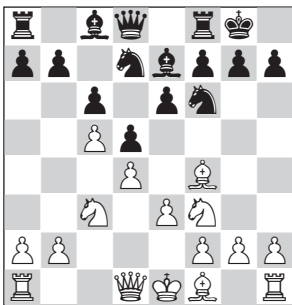


15.f3 This looks a bit slow. 15.g4 could be strong here, because Black shouldn't take the pawn anyway, for example: 15...♗xg4 16.♖d1 f5 17.♗g3 ♗d6 18.♗g2 ♗e7 19.f3 ♗f6 20.♗xh6± and White's attack is too strong. **15...c5** 15...♗d5! 16.g4 a5 17.♖d1 (17.g5 h5 18.g6 a4 19.gxf7+ ♖xf7 20.♗g6 b4 21.♗xh5 ♗b6 22.♗g6 b3?) 17...a4 18.♗g3 a3 19.b3 c5 20.g5 c4∞. **16.♗xb5** Now Black's compensation for the pawn doesn't seem to be enough. **16...cxd4** 16...♖b8 17.♗a5 cxd4 18.♗xd8 ♖bxd8 19.♗f4 ♗c5 20.♗e5 ♗d5 21.♗xf6 gxf6 22.♗d2±. **17.♗a5 ♗d5 18.♗xd5 ♗xd5 19.♗xd4** 19.♖xd4+– would have been more precise. **19...♗f6 20.g3 ♖ab8 21.♗b3** 21.♖d3 ♖fc8 22.b3 ♖c5 23.♗d2+–. **21...♖fc8 22.♖he1 g5 23.hxg5 hxg5** White was objectively much better, but it was a blitz game and Black managed to win. The rest is not important for us ... **0-1 (64)**

Rest of the World versus Nakamura

by Michael Adams (special contribution by Anish Giri)

- | | | |
|----|-----|------|
| 1. | d4 | d5 |
| 2. | c4 | e6 |
| 3. | ♘c3 | ♙e7 |
| 4. | ♘f3 | ♘f6 |
| 5. | ♙f4 | 0-0 |
| 6. | e3 | ♘bd7 |
| 7. | c5 | c6 |



This Survey aims to give some general guidance in an important QGD line, and bring things up to date on many new developments, which are occurring daily, or in some cases more frequently than that in the online chess extravaganza.

In the starting position after White opts for the inflexible, but space-gaining 7.c5, Black has three options. Two of them are to head for the complex 7...♘h5, going after the important bishop, or to try the less common 7...♘e4, both of which fall outside the scope of this Survey.

We will focus instead on relying on Black's solid structure to block the c-pawn with 7...c6 and get ready to contest the queenside with ...b7-b6 and ...a7-a5 next. Whilst it's nice to have extra space, and White's impressive pawn chain certainly gels well with the useful bishop on f4, Black's position remains durable, and after development is

completed, Black's position will also look harmonious.

This position has become a kind of unofficial 'Rest of the World v Hikaru Nakamura' match-up in various online events, as multiple contenders have attempted to pick holes in his preparation, or find a line he couldn't remember. With varying degrees of success they have attempted to squeeze Hikaru with the extra territory, but he has stuck to his guns, so many top games in such a short time have thrown up some interesting developments.

Black's planned next few moves

Black has a solid but slightly cramped position, which will be alleviated through exchanges. The plan is to challenge White's structure on the queenside, by playing ...b7-b6 and ...a7-a5, making room to swap the problem piece; Black's light-squared bishop on a6. Then Black's queen will move slightly awkwardly to b7 via c8. Longer term, after swapping light-squared bishops and perhaps doubling rooks down the a-file, sometimes ...♙e7-d8-c7, to reduce material further and even eventually planning ...e6-e5, will be desirable. Unfortunately White gets to play some moves as well! In several of the games below White takes disruptive action with tricky finesses to throw spanners into Black's plans at an early stage. There are few weaknesses on either side. In the very long term the pawn on c6 might become vulnerable, especially in an endgame where Black's

pawn advances to b5 and White's knight arrives on a5, but this is not an immediate concern. Black needs to be permanently alert to tactical tricks involving the b4-b5 pawn break for White on the queenside, and must consider when might be a good moment to shut down that side of the board with ...b6-b5. Generally speaking, Black should have good control of the a-file to make this a good option.

Historical lines

Let's start with some earlier encounters for this line. At one time White used to continue naturally with 8. ♖d3, then theory continues 8...b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3. This queenside pawn face off is almost certain to occur through a variety of move-orders to allow the black bishop to emerge. Hence Black now executes his main idea to swap the light-squared bishop with 10... ♗a6.



An important tactical line here is 11. ♗xa6 ♜xa6 12.b5 cxb5 13.c6, with a massively complex mess, where I included an email game with brief details, which supports the current theoretical assessment of equality. If White continues more calmly with 11.0-0, as in Mamedyarov-Aronian, this allows Black to carry out his strategic ideas of moving the queen to b7, and gradually swapping towards safety. It's notable that at one moment in

this game, Black has more useful moves than White, and Mamedyarov has to lose momentum by playing 13. ♖c2.

Free drinks and tempo thieves

Everyone likes free things, ideally drinks, but if they are not available, tempi could be worth having too. So White players started to begin scheming to acquire one with 8.h3, when after the traditional 8...b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 it turns out that after 10... ♗a6 11. ♗xa6 ♜xa6 12.b5 cxb5 13.c6, the extra move h2-h3 they have obtained might well turn out to be useful. So the stand-off continues, as Black also plays the waiting game, returning the favour with 10...h6.



Sometimes White now accepts it's time to develop the bishop with 11. ♗e2 or 11. ♗d3 ♗a6 as in some games from our Survey. Here it is worth highlighting another previously unplayed, but not unnoticed idea (see Anish Giri's comments). After 12.0-0 ♖c8, Firouzja tried the unlikely-looking 13. ♗a4. The logic behind this naïve-looking move is that losing a little time to fix the structure forever is a fine deal from White's point of view – pawns can't move backwards! It should have paid dividends in its first practical outing, as White gained a highly desirable strategic grip. Anish shows that Black's best response is to sidestep that with

13...♖b7, and outlines the details there in his comments to the stem game. After he wrote those notes, Hikaru gave Anish's recommendation a practical test where they stood up well.

Returning to move 11 alternatives, those who are not easily discouraged have continued to try to search for the elusive extra tempo. They have investigated some tricky queen nudges that insist on gaining a free move. One is 11. ♖c1.



Then Black must accept loss in the tempo duel gracefully, and continue developing in slow motion with 11...♗b7 (11...♗a6? 12. ♗xa6 ♖xa6 13.b5 is not a good idea here) 12. ♗d3 ♖c8 13.0-0 ♗a6, and ask if the extra move ♖c1 is especially useful. So far, it appears to be a fairly minimal gain. Aronian introduced a similar, but typically crafty new idea: 11. ♖b1.



He was probably hoping that Black would continue solidly with 11...♗b7 12. ♗d3 ♖c8, but then the stolen move ♖b1 looks more useful than ♖c1 in that

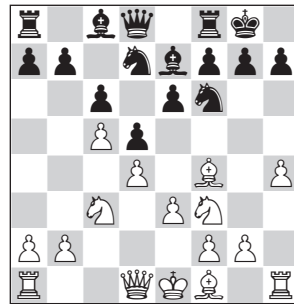


Hikaru Nakamura

line, as the king's rook can smoothly transfer to the useful c-file. Instead Hikaru went for the pointed 11...♗e4, which looks like a theoretically sound response, and might even be within his preparation, but the players soon both went badly wrong in the game.

Cutting-edge Caruana

The last word in this Survey has to go to Fabiano Caruana, who has essayed a more aggressive waiting move at an early stage: 8.h4.



I wonder what was the inspiration for this move: Simon Williams videos featuring Harry the h-pawn, Leela, who thinks this is quite reasonable, or was it just a mouse slip? Probably not the latter, if only on the grounds that he repeated it in his next White game, and the fact that it seems to be a good move. A new battleground for the line?

In both games so far Hikaru responded with 10...♘e4, but here I am less convinced by this move as Black faces a tricky task to negotiate a path to equality here, although it may be possible with computer help. The question as to how White would respond to 10...h6 against 8.h4 seems a very valid one to me.

Conclusion

If the frequency of online events and Hikaru's penchant for this variation continue, this Survey may outdate fast, but for now Black seems to be hanging

on alright, albeit under some pressure in a few different lines.

Postscript

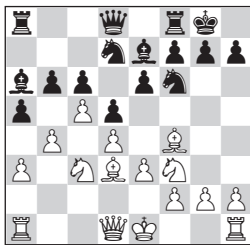
Actually since I wrote those words, about five weeks ago, the online action has tailed off, but I did have a relevant encounter of my own over the board, in the penultimate round in Biel. I have added some notes to this theoretically interesting game in the 'Clever 11. ♖c1' section. Earlier in the same tournament I reacted poorly to the third option 11.b5 after 8.♙d3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 ♙a6 in a rapid game against Vincent Keymer.

Natural development 8.♙d3

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov Levon Aronian

St Louis 2018 (4)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3
♙e7 5.♙f4 0-0 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.c5 c6
8.♙d3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 ♙a6

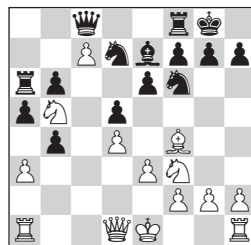


11.0-0 ♖c8 12.h3 ♗b7 Black has achieved his preferred set-up without problems, White doesn't have a very useful move now, and has to lose a little time.
13.♗c2 ♙xd3 14.♗xd3 axb4 I would prefer 14...♗a7 rather than releasing the tension immediately. 15.axb4 ♗xa1
16.♗xa1 ♗a8 17.♗b1 ♗xa1
18.♗xa1 bxc5 19.bxc5 h6
20.♗b1 White could try 20.g4 followed by ♔g2 but Shak decided to call it a day. 20...♗a8 21.♗a2 ♗b7 22.♗b1 ♗a8 23.♗a2 ♗b7
24.♗b1 ½-½

Jorge Eduardo Deforel Jan Nagel

cr 2018

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 d5 4.♘c3
♙e7 5.♙f4 0-0 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.c5
c6 8.♙d3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 ♙a6
11.♙xa6 ♗xa6 12.b5 White goes for it, giving up a pawn to create a dangerous passer. 12...cxb5 13.c6 ♖c8 A crucial line both sides need to know in detail, which is less of an issue in an email game, of course. 14.c7 b4 15.♘b5



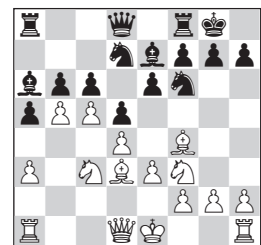
15...a4 Black shows he also has some trumps in this sharp scenario.
16.♗c1 ♘e4 Covering d6. 17.♘d2 ♘df6 18.♘xe4 dxe4! 18...♘xe4? is a mistake as after 19.f3 Black is in trouble after both Aronian-Adams, Bilbao 2013 and Anand-Carlsen, Sochi Wch m-3 2014. See Anish's 'Lesson in Theory' in Ikonnikov's Survey in Yearbook 114. 19.♘d6 19.♙d6 ♘d5! – it's important Black's knight has access to this

square. 19...♙xd6 20.♙xd6 b3
21.♙xf8 ♘xf8 White has won the exchange, but the protected passed pawn on b3 is strong, and the pawn on c7 is likely to be rounded up, so the position is roughly balanced.
22.♗d2 ♘d5 23.0-0 ♗a7 24.f3 The players finished the game as a draw here. 24...♗xc7 25.♗xc7 ♖xc7 26.♗c1 ♗d6 27.♗c8+ ♔e7 28.fxe4 ♖xa3 29.exd5 b2 30.d6+ ♘d7 31.♖c2 ♖xe3+ 32.♔f1 b1 ♖+ 33.♖xb1 ♘xc8 34.♖c2+ ♔b7 35.♖c7+ ♔a6 36.♖c4+ ♔b7 is one way the game could end. Now 37.♖c7+= but not 37.d7? ♖f4+ 38.♔e2 ♖c7. ½-½

Vincent Keymer Michael Adams

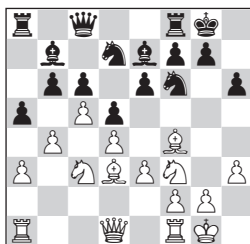
Biel rapid 2020 (2)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3
♙e7 5.♙f4 0-0 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.c5 c6
8.♙d3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 ♙a6 11.b5



11...♙b7 11...cxb5 12.c6 ♖c8 13.♗c1 ♖xc6 14.♘xb5 (14.♘e2? ♘c5 15.dxc5

bxc5 16.a4 b4 17.♟e4 ♖b7 18.♟xa6
 ♜xa6 19.♟b5 ♜c8 20.0-0 c4 ½-½
 I.Sokolov-Spassky, Malmö 1998.
 Young Spassky would not have
 agreed to a draw here!) 14...♟xb5
 15.bxc6 ♟xc6 16.♟e5 ♟xe5 17.♟xe5=
 Miedema-Brandenburg, Netherlands
 tt 2010/11. **12.cxb6 ♟xb6** 12...♟xb6
 13.0-0 a4 14.♟xa4 ♖a5 15.♟c5 ♟xc5
 16.bxc6 ♟xc6 17.dxc5 ♟a4 18.♟b1
 ♜fc8 19.♜c1 ♜xc5 20.♟b7 ♖a7
 21.♟xa7 ♜xa7 22.♜xc5 ♟xc5 with
 a minimal advantage for Black in
 Jobava-Lputian, Abu Dhabi 2003.
13.bxc6N ♟xc6 14.♟e5 ♟b7?!
 Black could have improved with
 14...♜c8 or 14...♟e8. **15.0-0 ♟fd7**
16.♟xd7 16.♟b1 ♟xe5 17.♟xh7+
 ♟h8 18.♟xe5 ♟c4 (18...♟a6
 19.♟d3 ♟xd3 20.♟xd3±) 19.♟xb7
 ♟xh7 20.a4 ♟xe5 21.dxe5 ♟b4
 22.♟b5±. **16...♟xd7 17.♟b1 ♟c4**
 17...♜fc8 18.♟xh7+ ♟f8 19.♟xb6
 ♜xc3 20.♜fc1 ♖c6 21.♟xc6 ♜xc6
 22.♜xc6 ♟xc6 23.♟d3. **18.♟xh7+**
 ♟h8 19.♟d3 ♟xa3 20.♟d1 ♟g8
21.♟h5 f5 22.g4 ♖e8 23.♟xe8
 ♜axe8 24.gxf5 exf5 25.♟a4
 ♟b4 26.♜fc1 ♟c4 27.♟c5 ♟c6
 ≥ 27...♟xc5 28.dxc5 ♜a8. **28.♟a6**
 ♜a8 29.♟xb4 axb4 30.♜ab1 ♜a3
31.♟xc4 dxc4 32.♟xb4 ♟d5 33.♜b5
 ♟e4 33...♟d8 34.h4±. **34.♟d6 ♜fa8**
 A better fighting chance should be
 34...♜b3 35.♜xb3 cxb3 36.♟xf8 b2
 37.♟a3 bxc1 ♖+ 38.♟xc1 due to the
 opposite-coloured bishops. **35.♟xa3**
 ♜xa3 36.♜c5+- ... **1-0 (52)** Just an
 awful game on my part.



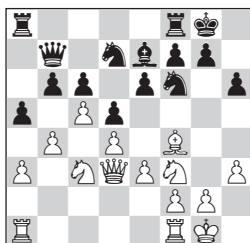
13.♜e1 White has many good
 moves, including 13.♟a4! which
 is a greatly superior version of
 games we will see later. Magnus
 goes for the most enduring edge
 by preventing the swap of light-
 squared bishops. **13...♟a6 14.♟c2**
♜e8 15.♜c1 15.♟d2 was stronger
 as now 15...♟d8 is met by 16.e4!
15...axb4 16.axb4 bxc5 17.bxc5
♟d8 18.♜a1 ♟c7 19.♟d2 Black
 has done well to get here after
 the early howler, but eventually
 succumbed ... **1-0 (67)**

Typical games

12...♟c8

**Magnus Carlsen
 Hikaru Nakamura**

Carlsen Invitational Prelim 2020 (1.3)
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 d5 4.♟c3
♟e7 5.♟f4 0-0 6.e3 ♟bd7 7.c5 c6
8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11.♟d3
♟a6 This time Hikaru plays the
 right bishop move. **12.0-0 ♟c8**
13.♟c2 ♟xd3 14.♟xd3 ♟b7



15.♟c2 Nakamura himself played
 15.♟d2 against Topalov in a St
 Louis Showdown rapid game in
 2017. **15...♜fc8** 15...♜a7!? looks
 good to me. **16.♜fb1 axb4 17.axb4**
♟d8 18.♟c1 ♟c7 19.♜xa8 ♜xa8
20.♟xc7 ♟xc7 21.♜a1 ♟b7
22.♜a3 ♟e8 Hikaru is happy to

wait passively. I feel Black should
 look to play ...e6-e5 as soon as
 possible, and would have been
 interested in 22...♟h7!? 23.♟a1
 ♜xa3 24.♟xa3 ♟g5 25.♟d2 bxc5
 26.bxc5 e5 27.dxe5 ♟e6. **23.♟e2**
♜xa3 24.♟xa3 ♟c7 25.♟f4
♟a6 26.♟xa6 ♟xa6 27.♟d3 An
 example where the pawn on c6
 remains sensitive, and the play is
 very one-sided. White's rock-
 solid pawn chain shouldn't be
 underestimated. **27...f6** If Black
 decides on 27...b5, arguing that
 at least White will be tied to the
 pawn on b4, he has to be wary that
 in the long term the white knight
 might transfer from f3 to a5 via d2
 and b3. **28.♟d2 28.g4 g5 29.♟g2**
♟f7 30.♟d2±. 28...♟f7 28...e5!?
29.f4 ♟c7 30.♟f2 ♟b5 31.♟f3
d3 32.g4 g5 33.f5 e5 Black is
 doing alright now but Magnus
 managed to win in the end:

34.♟c1 e4+ 35.♟f2 ♟e7 36.♟f1
♟a4 37.♟e2 ♟b2 38.♟d2 ♟c4+
39.♟c3 ♟b8 40.♟b3 ♟a6 41.cxb6
♟xb6 42.♟a5 ♟d7 43.♟g3 ♟c7
43...♟c7!. 44.♟h5 ♟d7 45.♟b3
♟d8 45...♟d6! 46.♟c5 ♟ab8 – Giri.
46.♟c5 ♟ab8 47.b5! cxb5 48.♟b4
♟c6+ 49.♟xb5 ♟a7+ 50.♟a6
♟xc5+ 51.♟xa7 ♟b3 52.♟b6
♟d7 53.♟xf6+ ♟d6 54.♟e8+ ♟d7
55.♟c7 ♟xd4 56.exd4 1-0

**Alireza Firouzja
 Hikaru Nakamura**

Carlsen Invitational Prelim 2020 (3.3)
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 d5 4.♟c3
♟e7 5.♟f4 0-0 6.e3 ♟bd7 7.c5 c6
8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11.♟d3
♟a6 12.0-0 ♟c8 13.♜e1 ♟xd3
14.♟xd3 ♟b7 15.♜eb1 This
 position usually arises by losing a
 move with the queen (♟d1-c2xd3)
 rather than the rook (♜f1-e1-b1).
 The same applies to 15.♜ec1
 ½-½ Van Wely-Kasimdzhanov,
 Vlissingen 2001. **15...axb4** I like
 the look of the less committal
 15...♜a7. 15...♜fc8, creating the
 option of playing ...♟e7-d8-c7, is
 thematic as usual. **16.axb4 ♜fc8**
17.♟d2 17.♟d1, keeping open the
 option of the other route for the

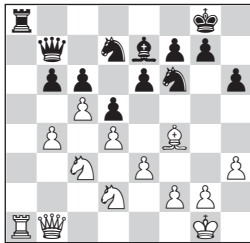
Not recommended
11...♟b7

**Magnus Carlsen
 Hikaru Nakamura**

Carlsen Invitational Prelim 2020 (1.1)
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 d5 4.♟c3
♟e7 5.♟f4 0-0 6.e3 ♟bd7 7.c5 c6
8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11.♟d3
♟b7? Hikaru totally loses the plot
 and gifts Magnus a move for no
 clear reason. He must have confused
 the lines, perhaps with 11.♟c1. Or
 did his mouse fall painfully short of
 11...♟a6 ? **12.0-0 ♟c8**

knight on the kingside: ♖e1-d3, was more precise. **17...♞xa1**

18.♞xa1 ♠a8 19.♞b1 Giri: 'White played it a bit clumsy and now Black has a liberating resource.'



19...♙d8 Giri: '?' **19...♞xa1!**
20.♞xa1 bxc5 21.bxc5 e5!, as Giri comments, 'would have equalized as after White captures on e5, his c5-pawn is doomed and if he retreats the bishop, Black will have counterplay on the d4-pawn with ...exd4 exd4 and ... ♖d7-f8-♖e6.' I can only endorse these words; Black must be on the lookout for tactical ideas to challenge White's pawn chain when they arise. **20.♞xa8 ♞xa8 21.♞a2 ♞b7 22.♞a4** Giri: 'Threatens 23.b5, so now Black has to take an unpleasant decision.' **22...b5 23.♞a3 ♖e8 24.e4** Giri: 'White could also slowly manoeuvre around, regrouping the knights to d3 and b3, but this is an interesting practical decision.' **24...dxe4 25.♖cxe4 ♖df6 26.♖d6 ♖xd6 27.cxd6** Giri: 'The d6-pawn is quite dangerous and at some point Hikaru was lost, but eventually his blitz skills pulled him through, as Alireza went astray in the time scramble.' ... **0-1 (93)**

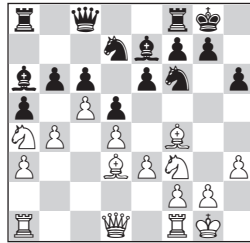
Sneaky

13.♖a4

Alireza Firouzja Hikaru Nakamura

Carlsen Invitational Prelim 2020 (3.1)
1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5 4.♖c3 ♙e7 5.♙f4 0-0 6.e3 ♖bd7 7.c5 c6 8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11.♙d3 ♙a6 12.0-0 ♞c8 13.♖a4 A new move by Alireza. Actually I wanted

to try it a long time ago already. It sort of provokes ...b6-b5, but Black should be strong and stay away from it.

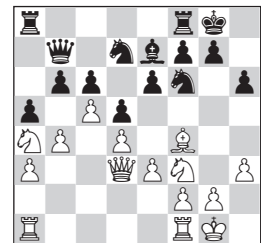


13...♙xd3?! 13...♞b7! seems to have no refutation, but Black has to know a long forced line here: **14.cxb6 axb4 15.axb4 ♖xb6 16.♖c5 ♙xc5 17.bxc5 ♙xd3 18.♞xd3 ♖c4! 19.♖e5 ♖xe5 20.♙xe5 ♖e4!** (the knights have to be active, as Black needs counterplay, when White will regroup and go after the c6-pawn with his major pieces) **21.♞xa8 ♞xa8 22.♞b1 ♞a6 23.♞xa6 ♞xa6 24.f3 ♖d2 25.♞b6 ♠a1+ 26.♗f2 ♖c4 27.♞xc6 ♠a2+.**
14.♞xd3 b5?! This is just not good. In general, it is rare that resolving the b6/c5 tension is good for Black and unless forced to he should try to avoid pushing or trading the b6-pawn. **15.♖c3 ♞b7 16.♖d2 ♙d8 17.♖b3 a4?** It's clear that Hikaru realized this move is no fun and he saw no other way to proceed with his plan of ...♙c7, but the arising position is way too one-sided and sad. **18.♖d2 ♙c7 19.♙xc7 ♞xc7 20.f4!** And Black's only hope is that he may push ...f7-f5 and establish some sort of a fortress, but White has got the e3-e4 push and play on the kingside with g2-g4 as well, so there should be enough resources to keep the game going. The game eventually took a very random course, but as for the opening battle, it didn't go well for Hikaru this time. **20...♗h8 21.♠ae1 ♠ad8 22.g4 ♖g8 23.♗f3 ♖e7 24.♠e2 f6 25.e4 ♖g6 26.exd5 ♖xf4 27.d6 ♞xd6 28.cxd6 ♖xd3 29.♖h4 ♠fe8 30.♠d2 g5 31.♖g2 ♖f4 ... ½-½ (45)**

Giri

Levon Aronian Hikaru Nakamura

Lindores Abbey Final 8 2020 (1.11)
1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5 4.♖c3 ♙e7 5.♙f4 0-0 6.e3 ♖bd7 7.c5 c6 8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11.♙d3 ♙a6 12.0-0 ♞c8 13.♖a4 ♞b7 A practical test for Anish's recommendation. The knight move looks very strange. **13...♙xd3 14.♞xd3 b5 15.♖c3** seems to gain time, however speed is not of the essence here; by defining the queenside structure White has improved his prospects considerably: **15...♞b7 16.♖d2 ♠a6 (16...♙d8 17.♖b3 a4 18.♖d2 didn't work out well in the last game) 17.♖b3 axb4 (17...a4 18.♖d2 leaves White sitting pretty with extra space and no black counterplay) 18.axb4 ♠fa8 19.♞c2 ♞xa1 20.♞xa1 ♞xa1+ 21.♖xa1 ♞a6? 22.♞a2** shows how Black can run into problems with natural moves, e.g. **22...♞xa2?** **23.♖xa2** followed by ♖a1-b3-a5 is already winning for White.
14.♞c2 ♙xd3 15.♞xd3



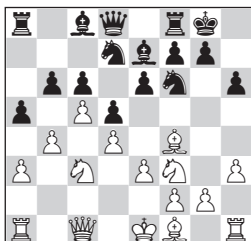
15...♖e4 15...b5 16.♖c3 ♠a7 17.♖d2 ♠fa8 18.♖b3 ♙d8 works better here. Importantly, Black will choose when to open the a-file. **16.♠fb1 axb4 17.axb4 b5 17...♠a7!?** is also possible. **18.cxb6 ♖xb6 19.♖c5 ♙xc5 20.bxc5 ♞xa1 21.♞xa1 ♖c4** leaves Black in great shape with the two well-placed knights. **18.♖c3 f5 18...♖df6!?** was better. As we have seen, it is dangerous for Black to fix the pawn structure in closed positions where White has a significant space advantage. The advance of the f-pawn creates weaknesses and leaves a permanent outpost on e5. **19.♖e2!±** Although the knight on e4 looks pretty,

White is ready to play ♖e5 followed by f2-f3 to remove it, and the knight on e2 might land on f4 one day ... **1-0 (118)**

Clever
11. ♖c1

Ian Nepomniachtchi
Hikaru Nakamura

Carlsen Invitational Prelim 2020 (4.2)
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 d5 4.♟c3 ♟e7 5.♟f4 0-0 6.e3 ♗bd7 7.c5 c6 8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11. ♖c1

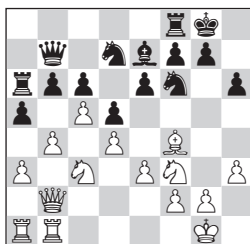


11... ♟b7 11... ♟a6? 12. ♟xa6 ♟xa6 13.b5 cxb5 14.c6±. 12. ♟d3 ♖c8 13.0-0 ♟a6 14. ♟xa6 ♟xa6 I once tried 14... ♖xa6 15. ♖b2 ♜fc8 but after 16. ♜fb1 White is pressing. 16. ♜fc1? ♟d8 17. ♜ab1 led to a white success in Anton Guijarro–Anand, Leon 2016. **15. ♖c2** White accepts that his earlier finesse didn't really pay any dividends as the queen moves again to connect the rooks. **15... ♖b7 16. ♜ab1 axb4 17.axb4 ♜fa8 18. ♜fc1** White argues that his rooks are well placed on the b- and c-files, and that there are no useful entry squares for the black rooks. However, in practice Black getting control of this file gives at the very least considerable annoyance value, and it can sometimes work out even better than that. **18...b5 19. ♖b2 19. ♗d2** is met by 19... ♟d8 but it is better than the game. **19... ♗e4!** Swapping knights creates some possibilities for the black rooks, and if the knight is taken on e4, recapturing gives Black's other knight an important square on d5. **20. ♜a1 20. ♗xe4 dxe4 21. ♗d2 ♜a2 22. ♖c3 ♗f6** and ... ♗d5 will chase the white

queen again. **20... ♖a7 21. ♜xa6 ♖xa6 22. ♗xe4 dxe4 23. ♗d2 f5 24. ♗b3 ♗f6 25. ♟d6 ♟d8 26. ♜a1 ♖b7 27. ♜a3 ♜a4 28. ♖a2 ♖a7 29. ♜xa4 ♖xa4 30. ♖xa4 bxa4** Black is in excellent shape here, but this time it was Hikaru's opponent that proved slippery ... **½-½ (68)**

Ian Nepomniachtchi
Hikaru Nakamura

Nations Cup Online Prelim 2020 (2.1)
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 d5 4.♟c3 ♟e7 5.♟f4 0-0 6.e3 ♗bd7 7.c5 c6 8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11. ♖c1 ♟b7 12. ♟d3 ♖c8 13.0-0 ♟a6 14. ♟xa6 ♟xa6 15. ♖b2 This is a more logical follow-up. White has gained something now, getting the queen to this useful post quickly. **15... ♖b7 16. ♜fb1**



16...axb4 16... ♜a7? is an interesting idea to keep options open. Black has to be alert, as 16... ♜fa8 17.b5 rebounds, leaving his rooks totally blocked out. **17.axb4 ♜xa1 18. ♖xa1 ♜a8 19. ♖b2 ♗h5** If 19... ♟d8, 20. ♜a1 prevents Black swapping bishops. I would prefer 19... ♗f8 or 19... ♗h7 as ways to activate Black's knights. They look better than the move played as the knight will have to retreat from h5 soon. **20. ♟h2 ♟d8 21. ♜a1 ♗hf6 22.g4 ♗e8 23. ♜xa8 ♖xa8 24. ♖a2 ♖b7 24... ♖xa2 25. ♗xa2** – White's extra space ensures plenty of suffering if queens are swapped too. **25. ♖a4 b5 25... ♟c7** seems more logical, following the general rule of avoiding to fix the structure when possible. Hikaru was probably worried by 26.b5 but Black is okay: 26... ♟xh2+ 27. ♗xh2 (27. ♟xh2 cxb5 28. ♖xb5

♖c8 29.cxb6 ♗xb6=) 27...cxb5 28. ♖xb5 but 28... ♖c8! 29.cxb6 (29.c6 ♗b8 30. ♖xb6 ♗xc6=) 29... ♗xb6=. **26. ♖a1 ♟c7 27. ♟xc7 ♗xc7 28. ♖a5** The drawback to ...b6-b5: White has an extra square available. This is none too pleasant for Black, but again in a long game Hikaru managed to turn things around ... **0-1 (138)**

Levon Aronian
Hikaru Nakamura

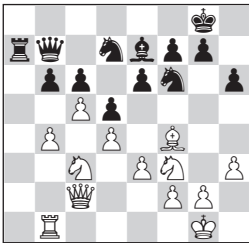
Lindores Abbey Final 8 2020 (1.22)
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 d5 4.♟c3 ♟e7 5.♟f4 0-0 6.e3 ♗bd7 7.c5 c6 8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11. ♖c1 ♟b7 12. ♟e2 ♖c8 13.0-0 ♟a6 14. ♜e1 ♖b7 15. ♜b1 axb4 16.axb4 ♟xe2 I once played 16... ♜fc8 intending ... ♟e7-d8-c7 here, but the simple capture is easier. **17. ♜xe2 ♜a7 18. ♜c2 b5** Black could have continued 18... ♜fa8. Hikaru may have been concerned about 19.cxb6, but then the clever idea 19... ♜a6!, waiting for the right moment to recapture to take with the rook, defuses any of White's hopes. **19. ♗d2 19. ♜a1**, fighting for the a-file, seems logical now. In the game White's rooks have no prospects. **19... ♜fa8 20.g4 20. ♗b3 ♟d8 21. ♜a1 ♜xa1 22. ♗xa1 ♗e4!** catches White's pieces disorganized. **20... ♟d8 21. ♟g3 ♟c7 22.f4** Very ambitious; practically this kind of position seems much easier for Black to handle ... **½-½ (33)**

Noël Studer
Michael Adams

Biel 2020 (6)
1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 d5 4.♟c3 ♟e7 5.♟f4 0-0 6.e3 ♗bd7 7.c5 c6 8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11. ♖c1 ♟b7 12. ♟e2 ♖c8 13.0-0 ♟a6 14. ♖c2 ♟xe2 I had previously played 14... ♖b7 15. ♜fc1 in a game with Ding Liren, Shenzhen 2017. **15. ♖xe2 ♖b7 16. ♜fb1** Noel chooses another square for the rook opposite my queen, facilitating b4-b5 ideas.

16...♞a7 It's too early to release the tension: 16...axb4? 17.axb4 ♞xa1? 18.♞xa1 ♞a8 19.♞xa8+ ♞xa8 20.♞a2 ♞b7 (20...♞xa2? 21.♞xa2 b5 22.♞d2!+-) 21.♞a4 leaves the c6-pawn very vulnerable. 16...♞fc8!? was worth considering.

17.♞c2 It seems more natural to transfer the knight to the queenside immediately, but this move is necessary as 17.♞d2? axb4 18.axb4 ♞xa1 19.♞xa1 bxc5 20.bxc5 ♞b2 is rather embarrassing. My opponent's moves were coming sufficiently quickly that I suspected he was still within preparation. **17...axb4** 17...♞c8!? was interesting; after 18.♞d2 ♞ca8! is good as 19.b5? now no longer works due to 19...bxc5; I didn't like 17...♞fa8 18.b5 a4 19.bxc6 (19.cxb6 ♞xb6 20.♞xa4 ♞xa4 21.bxc6 ♞a6 22.cxd7 ♞xd7=) 19...♞xc6 20.♞e5! ♞xe5 21.♞xb6 ♞e8 22.♞b5! (22.♞xe5 ♞d7) 22...♞c6 23.♞xa7 ♞xa7 24.♞d3 looks more pleasant for White. **18.axb4 ♞fa8 19.♞xa7 ♞xa7** 19...♞xa7 20.b5.



20.♞c1 We both underestimated the dangers after 20.b5!. Black must walk a tightrope to survive: 20...♞a5 (20...bxc5 is very dangerous: 21.dxc5 ♞xc5 22.♞d4 cxb5 23.♞cxb5 ♞a6 24.♞d6 ♞a7 25.♞4b5 ♞d7 26.♞xc5 ♞e4 27.♞c8+ ♞xc8 28.♞xc8) 21.bxc6! (if 21.cxb6 cxb5 22.♞xb5 ♞a6! holds) 21...♞xc6 22.cxb6 (22.♞e5 ♞xe5 23.♞xb6 ♞a8 24.♞xe5 ♞d7) 22...♞a3! 23.b7 g5! hardly an obvious way to play 24.b8 ♞+ ♞xb8 25.♞xb8+ ♞g7 26.♞b3 gxf4=. **20...♞a8 21.♞d2 ♞e8** I considered the thematic 21...b5 which makes sense with my good control of the a-file. I was worried by 22.f3, aiming

to push the e-pawn, although this strategy has its drawbacks: 22...♞f8 23.e4 dxe4 24.fxe4 ♞g6 25.♞h2 (25.♞d6 ♞xd6 26.cxd6 e5!) 25...e5! 26.dxe5 ♞d7 with good dark-square play. The best is 22.♞b3 ♞e4 23.♞e2! (23.♞xe4 dxe4 with the knight heading to d5 is fine for Black) 23...♞a2 24.♞f1 followed by f2-f3 and ♞c3. **22.♞b3 ♞c7** I thought 22...bxc5 23.bxc5 ♞f6 24.e4 dxe4 25.♞xe4 ♞a4 too risky with my knight on the back rank, but the computer sees it as playable. **23.♞g3** The trickier 23.♞a1!? requires Black to be alert: 23...bxc5! (23...♞xa1 24.♞xa1 ♞xa1+ 25.♞xa1 looks dangerous) 24.♞xa7 (24.♞xc7 c4!?) 24...♞xa7 25.bxc5 ♞f6, aiming for ...e6-e5. **23...bxc5 24.bxc5 ♞f6 25.e4** 25.♞d6 ♞e8 26.♞g3 was sensible, but hardly fits with White's last move. 25.♞a1 ♞xa1 26.♞xa1 ♞xa1+ 27.♞xa1 ♞a6! creates some problems, the awkward position of the knights mean that the c5-pawn cannot be saved. An unusual occurrence with this pawn structure: 28.♞b3 ♞axc5 29.♞a5. **25...dxe4 26.♞xe4?** 26.♞xc7! ♞xc7 27.♞xe4 ♞a7 was necessary, which the computer regards as equal. I would prefer to be Black. **26...♞b5** Probably my opponent only considered 26...♞d5 although this is also fine for me, but by attacking the pawn on d4, Black claims a clear edge. **27.♞d2 ♞a2 28.♞b2 ♞xb2 29.♞xb2 ♞a4 30.♞c3 ♞b4 31.♞xb5 ♞xc5!?** **32.♞a2 ♞xb3 33.♞a8+ ♞h7 34.♞xc6 ♞e1+ 35.♞h2 ♞d2 36.♞c2+ g6 37.h4 ♞e2 38.♞c6?** 38.♞h3?. **38...h5!+-** **39.♞c3 ♞f1+ 40.♞g1 ♞e1 41.♞e4 ♞e3+ 42.♞h2 ♞g4+ 0-1**

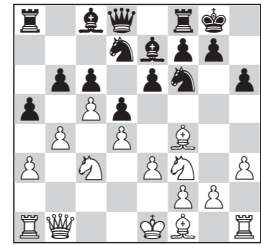
New Ideas

Levon Aronian
Hikaru Nakamura

Lindores Abbey Final 8 2020 (1.13)

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 d5 4.♞c3 ♞e7 5.♞f4 0-0 6.e3 ♞bd7 7.c5 c6

8.h3 b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 h6 11.♞b1
This looks interesting, but Hikaru finds an accurate reply.



11...♞e4! A good response, pointing out that even in this fairly closed position there are limits to how many liberties White can take with development. 11...♞a6? 12.♞xa6 ♞xa6 13.b5 cxb5 14.♞xb5±; 11...♞b7 12.♞d3 ♞c8 13.0-0 ♞a6 14.♞c1± allows White to mobilize very quickly. **12.♞xe4 dxe4 13.♞e5** 13.♞d2? axb4 14.axb4 ♞xa1 15.♞xa1 e5 opens the game before White is ready. After 13.♞xe4?! axb4 Black is doing fine, e.g. 14.♞d3 (14.♞xc6 ♞a7! 15.cxb6? ♞xb6) 14...♞f6! 15.♞xc6 ♞d5! 16.♞xd5 (16.♞xb6? ♞b3! 17.♞e2 17.0-0 ♞xd3 18.axb4 ♞d5) 17...♞d5) 16...♞xd5 and White will be happy to escape. **13...♞xe5 14.♞xe5 ♞d5 15.♞b2?** 15.♞e2!? ♞a6=; 15.♞c1!? is perhaps best, but this is not really an endorsement for 11.♞b1 instead of 11.♞c1. 15...♞a6 16.♞xa6 ♞xa6 17.0-0 axb4 18.axb4 ♞fa8 is roughly equal. 15.cxb6? axb4 16.a4 b3+-. **15...b5?** Hikaru is bluffed. 15...axb4 16.axb4 ♞xa1+ 17.♞xa1 ♞b3! would have been very embarrassing for Levon, e.g. 18.d5 exd5 19.♞xg7 ♞xb4+ 20.♞c3 ♞xc5 21.♞e2 ♞a3+-. **16.♞e2 a4 17.0-0 ♞d7** Black looks strategically busted, but with typical resilience Hikaru salvaged half a point ... ♞2-♞2 (**41**)

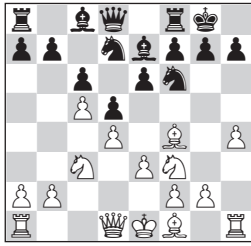
Fabiano Caruana
Hikaru Nakamura

Carlsen Invitational Prelim 2020 (5.3)

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 d5 4.♞c3 ♞e7 5.♞f4 0-0 6.e3 ♞bd7 7.c5 c6 8.h4 A fresh idea by Fabiano.

Queen's Gambit Declined – Blackburne Variation

Similar to 8.h3, but different. Food for thought!



8...b6 9.b4 a5 10.a3 ♘e4 An unusual way of dealing with the problems, but Hikaru probably thought that with the pawn on h4 potentially hanging, this makes sense here. MA: It's hard to understand the difference after 10...a6 11. ♟xa6 ♞xa6 12.b5 cxb5 13.c6 ♖c8 14.c7 b4 15. ♘b5 but I suspect White has reasons for optimism, just like in the related line with the white pawn on h3 instead. 10...h6!? looks pretty logical to me, intending 11. ♟d3 ♟a6 12.0-0 ♖c8. **11. ♘xe4 dxe4 12. ♘e5 ♘xe5 13. ♟xe5 ♖d5 14. ♟e2 ♟a6 15. ♟xa6** Hikaru probably looked up how to hold the position in the previous game, but now Fabi deviates. The first game in the match continued 15.0-0 ♟xe2 16. ♖xe2 axb4 17.axb4 bxc5 18.bxc5 ♟xc5 (not wanting to stay passive and worried for

the long-term weakness of the c6-pawn, Hikaru simplifies everything, but the position that ensues is still tricky; 18...♟xh4? 19. ♖g4+-) 19. ♟xg7! ♟xg7 20.dxc5 ♟e5 21. ♞ad1 (the position is more or less equal, due to very limited material, but in practical chess, the difference in the king's safety is striking and eventually Fabiano wins quite nicely; 21. ♞ab1!?) 21...♞a5 (MA: 21...♞fd8! – Black can pick off the c5-pawn later, but it is handy to reduce White's attacking potential by challenging the rook) 22. ♞d4 ♟h8 23.g3 ♞xc5 24. ♞b1 ♞d5 25. ♞c4 c5 26. ♖c2 f5? (chronically weakening the 7th rank. Black is now doomed to passive defence. 26...♞fd8 27. ♞xe4 ♖f5 would have been fine, as it is hard for White to harmonize his major pieces due to all the pins. If he trades the queens the endgame should be very holdable for Black) 27. ♞a4 ♞fd8 28. ♞b7 ♞5d7 29. ♞a8 ♞xb7 30. ♞xd8+ ♟g7 31. ♟g2 (the kind of move that underlines the essence of the position. Black can't touch the white king at all, nor can he bring his king to any sort of safety, and eventually White gets to the weak e6-pawn) 31...♞c7 32. ♖a4 ♖f6 33. ♖e8 ♟h6 34. ♞d6 ♟g7 35. ♖b8 ♞f7 36. ♞c6 ♞d7 37. ♞c8 ♟h6 38. ♞xc5 ♞g7 39. ♞c6

♞e7 40. ♞c8 ♞f7 41. ♞e8 ♞e7 42. ♖d8 ♞f7 43. ♖d6 ♟h5 44. ♞xe6 ♖g7 45. ♖f4 ♞f6 46.g4+ ♟xh4 47.g5+ 1-0 Caruana-Nakamura, chess24.com 2020. **15...♞xa6 16.0-0 ♞fa8** MA: What could be more natural than 16...axb4? 17.axb4 ♞fa8? Fabiano had prepared a dirty trap here: 18.cxb6 ♞xa1 19. ♖xa1 ♞xa1 20. ♞xa1 is completely winning, e.g. 20...c5 21.bxc5 f6 22. ♞a7 fxe5 (22...♟xc5 23.dxc5 ♖xc5 24. ♞a8+ ♟f7 25.b7) 23.b7 ♖b3 24. ♞a8+ ♟f7 25.b8 ♖. Black should consider 16...g6!? or 16...♖d7!? but White is pressing; 16...b5!? 17.a4 axb4 18.axb5 ♞xa1 19. ♖xa1 cxb5 20. ♖b2±. **17.cxb6 ♞xb6 18. ♟c7?** Fabiano probably forgot about his h4-pawn here. 18. ♖g4! would win a pawn, e.g. 18...f6 19. ♟c7 ♞ba6 (19...♞b7 20. ♟xa5 f5 21. ♖g3±) 20. ♟xa5 f5 21. ♖h3 and White is a pawn up and will eventually get the queen back in the game after ♞fc1, g2-g3 and ♖fl. **18...♞ba6 19. ♟xa5 ♟xh4** With an unclear position. Eventually the game was drawn after an interesting exchange sac by Fabi. **20. ♞c1 ♟e7 21. ♞c3 ♟d6 22. ♖c2 h5 23. ♞c1 ♞c8 24. ♖e2 ♞ca8 25. ♞c5 ♟xc5 26. ♞xc5 ♖b3 27. ♖xh5 f5 28.g3 ♖xa3 29. ♟g2 ♞f8 30. ♖e2 ♖d3 31. ♖xd3 exd3 ... ½-½ (42)**

Giri

Exercise 1

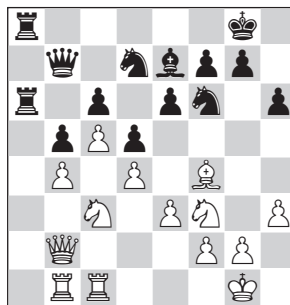


position after 21.b4xc5

How should Black proceed here?

(solutions on page 249)

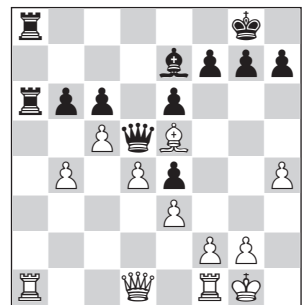
Exercise 2



position after 19. ♖c2-b2

Which thematic move helps Black to exploit his control of the a-file?

Exercise 3



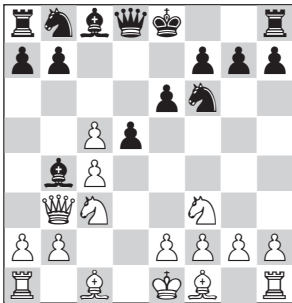
position after 17... ♞f8-a8

What idea did Fabiano Caruana have planned for White here, as part of some poisonous preparation?

Tough choices for Black

by Yu Yangyi

- | | | |
|----|------|-----|
| 1. | d4 | ♘f6 |
| 2. | c4 | e6 |
| 3. | ♘c3 | ♙b4 |
| 4. | ♘f3 | d5 |
| 5. | ♙b3 | c5 |
| 6. | dxc5 | |

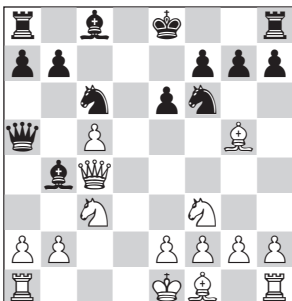


Yu Yangyi

This line has been played by some well-known grandmasters like Radjabov (against Leko in 2013), Andreikin, Fedoseev and Rapport, and also the Chinese grandmasters Wang Hao, Bu Xiangzhi and Xu Yinglun. Top players on the black side are Anand, Leko, Wojtaszek, Harikrishna and Vidit. Here Black has three options:

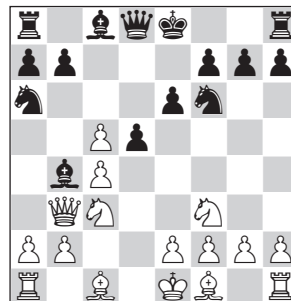
Complex play

A) 6...♘c6 is the most complicated. Play usually continues 7.♙g5 dxc4 8.♙xc4 ♙a5.



More solid

B) 6...♘a6



After White's attempt to expose Black's king with 9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.♖c1 ♙c5 11.♙h4 ♖e7, he continued with 12.g3 in Radjabov-Leko (2013) and Rapport-Gajewski (2014). If instead White plays 12.e3 then 12...♙xc3+ 13.♖xc3 ♙b4 or 13...♙b6 leads to an equal position with enough counterchances for Black. Instead of 8...♙a5, 8...h6! was a novelty Anand played against me at the Tata Steel tournament in 2020. I replied with 9.♙xf6 ♙xf6 10.e3 but couldn't get any advantage. If 9.♙h4 ♙e7 or 9...♙a5 Black should also be equal.

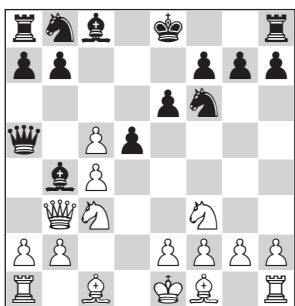
This move entered into the limelight in recent years. It was played first in 1994. Later, after Bartel-Gajewski (2011), several Polish players more often chose this line with black. After opening expert Peter Leko played it in 2016, 6...♘a6 became popular and was deeply analysed.

Usually White continues 7.a3 ♕xc3+ 8.♖xc3 ♘xc5 9.cxd5 ♖xd5, see the game Bu Xiangzhi-Leko, Danzhou 2016.

7.cxd5 is an interesting idea. I first tried this against Harikrishna in the Chinese League in 2019, and gained a memorable victory with it against Wesley So in the final of the 2020 Online Nations Cup, allowing me to level the score in the match with USA, earning China the title.

A rare line

C) 6...♖a5



This is a rare line. Usually White replies 7.♕d2 and now follows 7...dxc4 8.♖xc4 ♖xc5, see the game Wang Hao-Mamedyarov (2017).

7.cxd5 is an interesting alternative also here: 7...♘xd5 8.♕d2 ♘xc3 9.a3 ♘c6 10.♞c1 was seen in the game Demuth-Lazarev (2015).

Conclusion

Most players opt for 6...♘c6, which leads to more complex play compared with the other two variations. In some variations Black seems to be in danger when his king is on e7, but White's queenside pawns are also weak, and Black gets more active pieces in compensation.

6...♘a6 has become popular in recent years. It is a more solid option, usually leading to an exchange of queens and a transfer to an endgame, where basically Black can achieve equality.

6...♖a5 is the rarest option. There are not many games in the database here, so we need to analyse it by ourselves.

I hope my article will help the reader to find his way in this interesting line.

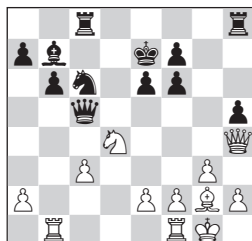
Complex play 6...♘c6

Teimour Radjabov
Peter Leko

Zug 2013 (4)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♘b4 5.♖b3 c5 6.dxc5 ♘c6 The first outing of this move in a top tournament was in Stahlberg-Wade, Saltsjöbaden izt 1952. 7.♕g5 ♖a5 8.♕xf6 dxc4 9.♖xc4 gxf6 10.♞c1 ♖xc5 11.♖h4 ♘e7 12.g3 ♕xc3+ 13.bxc3 b6 14.♕g2 ♘b7! I prefer this move because it is relatively safer, guarding the knight on c6. If

Black plays 14...♘a6, White can play ♘f3-d2-e4 to attack the black queen and the f6-pawn, when Black's position is uncomfortable. 15.0-0 h5 16.♘d4 ♞ac8 17.♞b1



17...♞c7?! Maybe Black should have played 17...♞hd8!? 18.♞fd1 (18.♞b5? is met by 18...♞xd4-+) 18...♘a5! 19.♘b3 (19.♕xb7 ♘xb7 20.♖f4 (20.♞d3 ♖g5!)=) 20...♖xc3 21.♞b3 ♖c7 22.♖h6 ♘c5 23.♞e3 ♞d5?) 19...♘xb3 20.♕xb7 ♘d2=.

18.♞fd1 ♘xd4 19.cxd4 ♖g5 20.d5± White is slightly better, but not enough to win. 20...♖xh4 21.d6+ ♘e8 22.dxc7 ♖c4 23.♞bc1 ♖xc1 24.♞xc1 ♕c8 25.♞d1 ♘e7 26.h4 e5 27.♕f3 27.f4!?)±.

27...♘e6 28.♞c1 ♕c8 29.♞d1 ♕e6 30.♘b7 ♕c8 31.♕xc8 ♞xc8 32.♞c1 b5 33.f3 b4 33...f5!? 34.♞c5

The joy of finding wisdom

by Glenn Flear



Englishman Glenn Flear lives in the south of France. For every Yearbook he reviews a selection of new chess opening books. A grandmaster and a prolific chess author himself, Flear's judgment is severe but sincere, and always constructive.

I recently saw a fascinating mini-documentary on the BBC. Amateur researchers had discovered some amazing truths about the curious disposition of some large rocks. It seems that ancient people from 5000 years ago(!) had moved and shaped these boulders in order to create a very precise calendar generated by the sun's apparition. A Japanese lady commented on her implication by explaining there was no pecuniary benefit from spending countless days measuring and observing, just 'the joy of finding wisdom from the bottom of my heart'. That's such a beautiful thing to say! In the chess world there is always something new to learn, like the latest trends expanded on by an opening book. Despite the extensive powers of modern technology, I like to imagine (just like the great masters of yesteryear) an author poring over his chess set, moving a few pieces around and ultimately having his Eureka moment. It's sort of a noble human way of uncovering (or rediscovering) something special that, once shared, can offer knowledge and pleasure to many chess adventurers.

Semko Semkov
The Modern Triangle
Chess Stars 2020

Bulgarian IM Semko Semkov sets out a repertoire for

Black based around playing ...d7-d5, ...e7-e6 and ...c7-c6, essentially in this order. For the uninitiated, it's a sort of hybrid with features of the Slav, Semi-Slav and Queen's Gambit. He explains his typical game plan which involves a timely capture on c4 and then a willingness to return the pawn to open up play and liberate his game. So, for example, he embraces the Noteboom and Meran, but avoids any sort of Stonewall.

A whole career's worth of experience has enabled him to point out the salient features of the early move order trickery and jostling. He explains what is at stake when meeting White's various attempts, and is willing to steer the game into certain forms of the Semi-Slav (such as the Moscow Variation), the Queen's Gambit Declined (Exchange Variation) or the Catalan (with ...dxc4), depending on circumstances.

