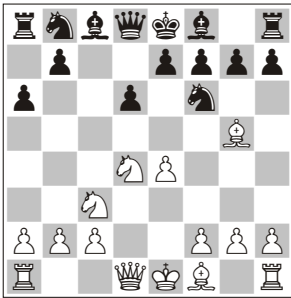


The Najdorf According to Berg

by Emanuel Berg

1. e4 c5
2. ♘f3 d6
3. d4 cd4
4. ♘d4 ♘f6
5. ♖c3 a6
6. ♗g5



I first started playing the 6.♗g5 line against the Najdorf in 2003. Earlier I had been playing 6.♗e3, which is the more popular move, at least in top level games. However, I found out that 6.♗g5 fits my style much better and this is confirmed by my results as well.

Playing it regularly ever since, out of 19 standard games until the moment of writing, I have lost only one and drew 7. This produces some very nice statistics of 14½ points, with 8 wins in a row. The 6.♗g5 Najdorf has become one of my favourite weapons with white.

Recently I have also won a few nice games, when in Corus 2007 I had the pleasure of playing the variation three times, with results in my favour.

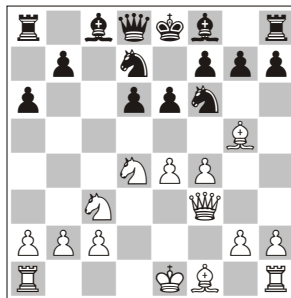
Not the Poisoned Pawn

The reason why the variation is not played that much on a higher level, I assume, is the 'Poisoned Pawn Variation', which has been discussed in several earlier Yearbooks, including Volume 82.

I do not have that much experience with this line myself, but I've never worried about it, as White always gets a powerful initiative for the pawn. When I first faced the variation against a well-prepared Sadvakasov in the Aeroflot Open 2006 I was doing fine in the opening and managed to get a clear advantage later on.

Anyway, it's not the line I am going to deal with in this Survey.

6...e6 7.f4 ♘bd7 8.♖f3



8...♖c7

After 8...h6 9.♗h4 there is the very unique try 9...♗g8, invented by the famous Dutch blitz player Manuel Bosboom. As far as I can see he is also the only player who has tried this. I have been unable to find any concrete refutation of this strange-looking move, so it might well work as an opening



Emanuel Berg

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surprise. However, playing it on a regular basis is not recommendable, as White can get a slight edge with correct play.

9.0-0-0

Here Black has two main choices. 9...b5 leads to very sharp variations which in most cases include a piece sacrifice by White. The solid line is 9...♗e7 with the idea 10.♗d3 h6 11.♗h4 g5 12.fg5 ♘e5 13.♖e2 ♘fg4, when Black has a very sound position. However, White has some advantage in development and will try to create counterplay quickly. In this line I will only mention an interesting pawn grab that occurs after 14.♘f3 hg5 15.♗g5!?, a line that for a long time has been considered dubious for White, but recently there have cropped up some new ideas giving Black some trouble.

9...b5 10.♔d3 ♖b7 11.♚he1



Now Black can choose between the direct 11...b4 12.♘d5 or first

11...♙e7 12.♗g3 and then 12...b4.

Anticipating the Sacrifice

Black has the additional possibility of 11...0-0-0, but this is supposed to be good for White after 12.f5 e5 13.♘b3 ♙e7 14.a4!, as in Kotronias-Jobava. Of course there is also the important move 11...♗b6, which is called the 'Gelfand Variation'. This was dealt with in a letter by Junior Tay in Yearbook 79 with some really nice ideas for White.

However, all important lines were not analysed. The most critical try for Black – 18...♙e8 with the idea 19.♗d6 ♗c6 – was only mentioned without any notes. In the game Luther-Sasikiran, Aeroflot Open 2007, Black was doing fine and managed to win. Later this year Negi played this line against me in Malmö. I tried 20.♗d4, after which White still seems to have compensation for the piece. But the conclusion for the time being must be that Black remains fine in the Gelfand Variation.

A Unique Idea 9...♗g8

Berg, Emanuel
Bosboom, Manuel

Wijk aan Zee III 2007 (12)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cd4 4.♘d4
♙f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 ♘bd7
8.♗f3 h6 9.♙h4 ♗g8



10.♙f2!

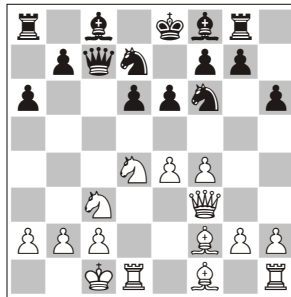
Preparing to meet ...g5 with g3 as in Negi-Bosboom, Wijk aan Zee III 2007. In the game Spoelman-Bosboom, Wijk aan Zee III 2005, there followed 10.0-0-0 g5 11.fg5 hg5 12.♙g3 g4 13.♗f2 and here instead of the game move 13...♗c7 I believe that 13...♘h5 is more accurate. Black seems to be doing fine, as in Zhang-Bosboom, Amsterdam 2006.

10...♗c7

The game Negi-Bosboom, Wijk aan Zee III 2007, went 10...g5 11.g3 ♗c7 12.0-0-0 ♙e7 13.♙g2 ♗b8 14.e5! de5 15.fe5 ♘e5 16.♗e2 and White got a very

powerful initiative for the sacrificed pawn. As Black has now lost his right to castle, on either side his king will be exposed for the rest of the game.

11.0-0-0



11...♙e7

A waiting move, preparing either ...g5 or ...b5.

After the immediate 11...b5 White has 12.e5 ♙b7 13.♗h3 de5 14.♘e6 fe6 15.♗e6 ♙e7 16.♙b5 with a crushing attack.

And in case of 11...g5 there is the interesting pawn sacrifice 12.e5!? (12.g3 ♙e7 (12...b5) 13.♙g2 ♗b8 14.e5 de5 15.fe5 ♘e5 16.♗e2 ♘eg4 17.♙g1 ♘d7 18.♗e1 h5 19.♘f5 ♙c5 20.h3 ♙f8 21.hg4 ef5 22.♙c5 ♗c5 23.gh5 ♙e6 24.♗d2 b5 25.h6 ♗g6 26.♘e2 ♙g8 27.♘d4 ♙a2 28.♘c6 ♗e8 29.♘e7 ♗e7 30.♗d8 ♙h7 31.♗e7 f4 32.♗f8 ♗c4 33.♗he1 ♗g8 34.♙f1 ♗f8 35.♙c4 ♙c4 36.gf4 gf4 37.♗e5 ♙e6 38.♗f1 ♘d5 39.♗g5 ♗g8 40.♗g8 ♙g8 41.♗h1 ♙h7 42.♗h4 a5

43.♘d2 ♙f5 44.c3 a4 45.♗h5 ♙e4 46.♗e5 f5 47.♗e6 f3 48.♙e1 ♘f4 49.♗b6 ♘d3 50.♙f1 ♘b2 0-1 Negi-Bosboom (by transposition), Wijk aan Zee III 2007) 12...de5 13.fe5 ♗e5 (trying to trap the queen with 13...♘e5 14.♗f6 ♙g7 doesn't work after 15.♙b5! ab5 (15...♙f8 16.♘e6 ♙e6 17.♙c5 ♗c5 18.♗d8 ♗d8 19.♗d8 mate) 16.♘db5 ♗a5 17.b4! ♙f6 (17...♗a3 18.♘a3 ♙f6 19.♘ab5 ♙f8 20.♘c7 ♗a3 21.♙d4 ♘d3 22.♗d3 ♙d4 23.♘7b5 ♙c3 24.♘a3 ♙b4 25.♘c4±) 18.ba5 ♙f8 19.♘c7 ♗a5 20.♙b6 ♗a3 21.♙c5 ♙e7 22.♗d8 ♙g7 23.♗g8 ♙g8 24.♙a3 ♙a3 25.♙d2±) 14.♙g3 with compensation. Black has development problems and his king is very exposed in the centre.

12.♙d3 g5

After 12...b5 once again White can go for 13.e5 (13.♗he1 ♙b7 14.a3 is another, more solid possibility) 13...♙b7 14.♗h3 de5 15.♘e6 fe6 16.♙g6 ♙d8 (16...♙f8 17.♗d7! (17.♗e6? ♗c4!?) 17...♗d7 (17...♘d7 18.♗e6 ♗c4 19.♗d7 ♗f4 20.♙e3!! (20.♙b1 ♙g2) 20...♗c3 21.♙b1 with an overwhelming attack!) 18.fe5 with an interesting position. At the moment White is a rook down, but Black will at least need to give back the knight on f6 and so White should have compensation for the sacrificed exchange) 17.♗e6±.

13.g3 b5 14.♗he1 ♙b7 15.♗e2

Getting out of the pin and preparing e4-e5. Now White is also ready for the piece sac ♘d5! if needed.

15...b4

Black is forcing some action, which gives him a pawn, but now the position opens up and his king will be in great danger. Probably better was 15...gf4 16.gf4 ♖g2!?

16.♔d5! ♕d5

Here Black could not take with the pawn, as the counterplay along the e-file would be too much and Black would even need to give his bishop on e7 in return.

17.ed5 ♕d5 18.♖h7!?

An interesting move, forcing the black rook to a worse square before taking action.

18...♖h8

18...♖g7 19.♕f5 ♖h7 20.♔e7 ♖b7 21.♕f5 d5 22.♗d3 ♕f8 23.♕d4±.

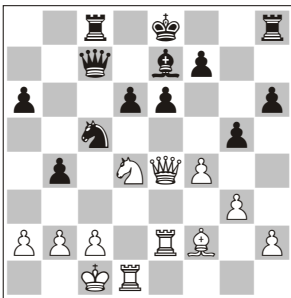
19.♖e4!

By exchanging the bishops White forces a weakening of the black king's protection. Soon a piece sac on e6 may come into consideration.

19...♖e4 20.♗e4 ♖c8 21.♖e2 ♕c5?

Missing a very important point. After this mistake Black will never really get back into the game again.

Much better was 21...d5! 22.♗f3 ♕f6, going for the e4-square and protecting everything for the moment. White still has some compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but there is nothing convincing anymore. After placing his knight on e4 Black will have a rather solid position.



22.♕e6!!

A nice blow!

22...♕e6

After 22...fe6 23.♕c5 ♗c5 (23...dc5 24.♗g6 ♕f8 25.♖e6 with a crushing attack!) 24.♗e6 ♖c7 25.f5 followed by f6, White wins back the material and has a winning position.

23.f5 ♕d8 24.♖b6

24.♕d4!?

24...♗d7

24...♗b7 might have been a better try, although White will always have a stable plus in the endgame after 25.♗b7 ♕b7 26.f6 ♕d7 27.♖e7 ♕c6 28.♕f2 ♖c7 29.♖c7 ♕c7 30.♖e1 ♕c6 (30...♖d8 31.♖e4 a5 32.g4±) 31.♖e4 a5 32.♖e7 ♖f8 (32...♖h7) 33.♕e3 ♕c5 34.h4 ♕d7 (34...gh4 35.g4±) 35.hg5 hg5 36.♕g5±.

25.♖de1

Now after 25.♕d4 I didn't like 25...f6 26.♖f6 ♖h7 27.♕d4 d5! and Black has good survival chances.

25...♕c6 26.f6 ♕e5 27.fe7 f6

Black has a seemingly solid block on e5, but it's not going to hold for long.

28.♕d4 ♕f7 29.♖f1 ♗e7 30.♖ef2

Now threatening to take on f6, which Black is not in time to stop.

30...♖ce8

Trying to soften the consequences, but it doesn't stop White's plan.

31.♗d5

Maybe even stronger was 31.♕e5 ♗e5 (31...de5 32.♗c6+-) 32.♖f6 ♗f6 33.♗d5 ♖e6 34.♖f6 ♕f6 35.♗d4 ♖e5 36.♗d6 ♖e6 37.♗d4 ♖e5 38.♗b4+- with a technical win, but still some work to do.

31...♕g7 32.♖f6 ♖hf8

32...♗f6 loses at once after 33.♖f6 ♕f6 34.♗d6 ♕f5 35.♕e5 ♖e5 36.g4 ♕e4 37.♗d3 ♕f4 38.♗d4+-.

33.♖f8 ♖f8 34.♖f8 ♕f8 35.♗a8 ♕f7

36.♗a6 ♕f3

36...♕c6 37.♗c4 ♗e6 38.♗e6 ♕e6 39.♕g7 h5 40.♕d2 should be rather easily winning for White. With a pawn down and the knight against the bishop Black doesn't have much of a chance.

37.♗c4 ♗e6 38.♗b4 ♕g6 39.b3

The immediate 39.a4! was stronger, but in time-trouble I decided on 'safety first'.

39...♕h2 40.a4 ♕f3 41.a5

Forcing a winning queen endgame which I considered rather easy, after having had two queen endgames earlier in the tournament. Of course there are several other ways to win.

41...♕d4

41...d5 42.♕f2+-.

42.♗d4 ♗e1 43.♕b2 ♗a5 44.♗d6 ♕f5 45.b4 ♗a4

45...♗b5! was a better try: 46.♕c3! (centralizing the king, which will be of great importance in any pawn endgame when the white king is running over to the kingside stopping the h-pawn. White is now threatening 47.♗d3+). 46.♕b3! h5 47.c4 ♗e5 48.♗d3 ♗e4 49.♗d7 (49.♗e4? ♕e4 50.b5 ♕e5!-) 49...♗c6 50.♗h7 ♕g4 51.b5) 46...♕g4 (46...h5 47.♗d3 ♗d3 48.♕d3+-) 47.♕d4! (47.♗c5!? ♗b8 (47...♗c5 48.bc5 ♕f5 49.c6! ♕e6 50.g4 ♕d6 51.♕d4 ♕c6 52.♕e5 ♕c5 53.♕f5+-) 48.b5 ♗g3 49.♕b2+-) 47...h5 48.c4 ♗f5 49.b5 h4 50.g4 gh4 51.b6 and White is first out in the pawn run.

46.♗c5 ♕g4 47.b5 ♗a5

47...♕g3 48.♗a3+-.

48.♗c8!

A nice check, forcing the black king back and at the same time improving the position of the white queen.

48...♕h5

If 48...♕g3 49.♗c3+-; or 48...♕f3 49.♗c3+-.

49.♗h3 ♕g6 50.♗e6 ♕h5 51.♗e2

♕g6 52.♗d3 ♕h5 53.♗f3 ♕g6

54.♗c6

Here the queen is perfectly placed and it can support the b-pawn.

54...♕h5 55.b6 ♗e5 56.♕a2 ♗g3

If 56...♗a5 57.♕b3!, moving out of the checks.

57.♗e8! ♕h4 58.b7 ♗c7 59.b8♗ ♗c2 60.♗b2

1-0

An Interesting Pawn Grab 10.♕d3 h6

Berg,Emanuel

Spoelman,Wouter

Wijk aan Zee III 2007 (5)

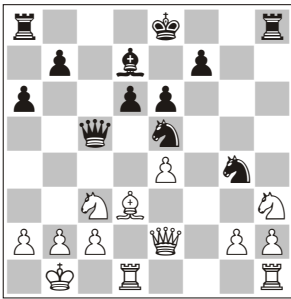
1.e4 c5 2.♕f3 d6 3.d4 cd4 4.♕d4 ♕f6 5.♕c3 a6 6.♕g5 e6 7.f4 ♕e7 8.♗f3 ♗c7 9.0-0-0 ♕bd7 10.♕d3 h6 11.♕h4 g5 12.fg5 ♕e5 13.♗e2 ♕fg4 14.♕f3 hg5 15.♕g5!?

A very ambitious move. White wins a pawn but his pieces will be very passively placed in the nearest future. Usually 15.♕g3 is played, but then White cannot count on much of an advantage.

15...♕g5 16.♕g5 ♗c5 17.♕h3

Forced, since both ... $\text{d}3$ and ... $\text{f}2$ were threatened.

17... $\text{d}7$ 18. $\text{b}1$



18... $\text{b}5$?

A natural-looking move, but it's more of a weakening, so instead Black should have gone for 18...0-0 at once and only after 19... $\text{d}e1$ $\text{f}d8$ 20. $\text{d}1$ he should think about how to continue.

19... $\text{d}e1$ 0-0!

Black realizes his mistake in time. In the game Vazquez-Ricardi, Santiago 2006, Black went for 19... $\text{c}8$? 20. $\text{d}1$ $\text{d}3$ 21. $\text{d}3$ $\text{e}5$ 22. $\text{c}3$ $\text{b}6$ 23. $\text{g}3$ $\text{c}5$ 24. $\text{e}3$ $\text{c}6$ 25. $\text{f}2$ after which White consolidated and went on to win.

20. $\text{d}1$ $\text{f}d8$ 21. $\text{d}2$

White slowly improves his position at every move and it's Black who must prove compensation.

21... $\text{c}6$ 22... $\text{e}2$ $\text{b}7$

Now Black is about to play ... $\text{b}5$ - $\text{b}4$ and rush forward with the a-pawn, creating some attacking chances.

23. $\text{a}3$!

Stopping Black's plans for the moment and throwing the ball over again.

23... $\text{b}6$

Black tries to support $\text{a}5$ with his queen, but now he loses some important control on the other side of the board, allowing White to create counterplay.

24. $\text{f}4$! $\text{a}5$ 25. $\text{g}5$

Activating the knight and at the same time threatening the $\text{f}7$ -pawn.

25... $\text{b}4$

Black decides to go for the attack at once, sacrificing the $\text{f}7$ -pawn. After 25... $\text{g}7$ or 25... $\text{f}8$ White would get some important extra time to consolidate and can for instance play $\text{h}3$ followed by $\text{f}1$, forcing either an exchange on $\text{d}3$ or a knight retreat to $\text{h}6$, both of which are favourable for White.

26. $\text{f}7$ $\text{f}8$ 27. $\text{d}6$ $\text{c}7$ 28. $\text{f}5$

White actually loses a piece, but with four pawns and strong counterplay for it he is obviously better.

28... $\text{e}5$

In case of 28... $\text{b}7$ White should play 29... $\text{h}e1$! $\text{e}5$ 30. $\text{e}5$ $\text{d}3$ 31. $\text{c}3$ $\text{f}6$ 32. $\text{e}3$ with four pawns and a strong initiative for the sacrificed piece.

29. $\text{e}5$ $\text{f}e8$ 30... $\text{h}e1$ $\text{c}5$

Here 30... $\text{b}7$ is met by 31... $\text{e}4$! (worse is 31... $\text{e}5$? $\text{e}5$ 32... $\text{c}5$ $\text{c}7$ and Black wins another exchange) 31... $\text{f}6$ 32... $\text{c}6$ $\text{c}6$ 33... $\text{e}8$ $\text{e}8$ 34... $\text{e}8$ $\text{e}8$ 35. $\text{f}6$! $\text{g}1$ 36. $\text{f}7$ $\text{d}1$ 37... $\text{c}1$!+- . A nice finish; Black is unable to stop the f -pawn from queening.

31. $\text{h}3$ $\text{b}6$ 32. $\text{a}4$ $\text{a}4$ 33. $\text{h}g4$ $\text{d}3$

34. $\text{c}d3$ $\text{e}2$ 35... $\text{e}2$ $\text{h}1$

Black has given back the piece and is now four pawns down. However, the pin on the first rank is quite annoying and White must play accurately to finish off.

36... $\text{c}1$!

36... $\text{d}2$ is also winning, but after 36... $\text{a}4$ White must find 37... $\text{b}8$ (as after 37... $\text{f}3$? $\text{d}1$ 38... $\text{d}1$ $\text{c}2$ 39... $\text{a}1$ $\text{d}1$ 40... $\text{d}1$ $\text{d}1$ he will have to settle for a draw: 41... $\text{f}6$ $\text{b}3$ 42... $\text{g}5$ $\text{f}7$ 43... $\text{b}1$ $\text{c}5$ 44... $\text{c}2$ $\text{d}4$ 45... $\text{d}2$ = $\text{g}6$) 37... $\text{a}5$ 38... $\text{a}8$ $\text{b}5$ 39... $\text{e}8$ $\text{a}5$ 40... $\text{e}2$. Now everything is protected and White is simply winning.

The last try is 40... $\text{g}1$, but then 41... $\text{e}5$ $\text{a}6$ 42... $\text{e}6$ $\text{a}5$ 43... $\text{b}3$ is winning for White.

36... $\text{a}4$

The best chance would have been 36... $\text{d}4$! 37... $\text{c}2$ (37... $\text{d}2$ $\text{b}5$) 37... $\text{g}4$ 38... $\text{c}1$ (38... $\text{f}6$ $\text{a}4$! 39... $\text{a}4$ $\text{e}2$ 40... $\text{b}4$ $\text{c}6$ 41... $\text{c}4$ $\text{b}6$ 42... $\text{b}3$ $\text{a}6$ 43... $\text{c}1$ $\text{e}3$ 44... $\text{c}2$ $\text{e}2$ 45... $\text{c}1$ =) 38... $\text{f}5$!, at least winning back some pawns, but still White has enough material and should be winning after 39... $\text{c}4$ $\text{g}5$ 40... $\text{c}2$ $\text{h}4$ 41... $\text{c}6$! $\text{c}5$ 42... $\text{d}2$ $\text{d}4$ 43... $\text{e}3$ when his pieces will soon start working again.

37... $\text{e}6$!

37... $\text{d}2$? is only a draw after 37... $\text{g}1$ 38... $\text{c}4$ $\text{d}1$ 39... $\text{b}4$ $\text{c}7$ 40... $\text{a}2$ $\text{a}7$ 41... $\text{a}3$ $\text{a}3$ 42... $\text{a}3$ $\text{g}4$ 43... $\text{f}2$ $\text{d}6$.

37... $\text{b}5$

37... $\text{c}6$ 38... $\text{b}3$ +-.

38... $\text{c}3$ $\text{b}3$ 39... $\text{h}1$ $\text{f}2$ 40... $\text{e}5$

40... $\text{c}1$ is also winning.

40... $\text{b}4$ 41... $\text{bc}3$

A terrible mistake would be 41... $\text{e}4$? $\text{b}3$! and after 42... $\text{c}1$ $\text{c}2$ 43... $\text{a}1$ $\text{a}7$ it is Black who is winning.

41... $\text{a}3$ 42... $\text{c}1$ $\text{b}3$ 43... $\text{d}1$ $\text{a}3$

44... $\text{e}2$!! $\text{b}6$ 45... $\text{a}1$

A nice finish with a temporary queen sacrifice.

45... $\text{c}2$

45... $\text{d}1$ 46... $\text{a}2$ $\text{b}3$ 47... $\text{b}2$ $\text{c}3$ 48... $\text{b}6$ +-.

46... $\text{c}1$

1-0

No more tricks. Of course not 46... $\text{c}2$? $\text{b}2$ 47... $\text{b}2$ when the black king is stalemated.

The Standard Sacrifice $\text{d}5$

Berg, Emanuel

Li Chao

Beijing tt 2006 (1)

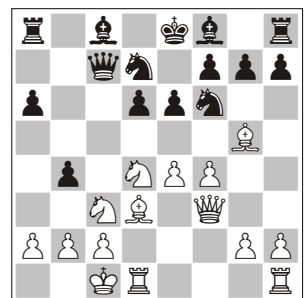
1. $\text{e}4$ $\text{c}5$ 2... $\text{f}3$ $\text{d}6$ 3... $\text{d}4$ $\text{c}d4$ 4... $\text{d}4$ $\text{f}6$ 5... $\text{c}3$ $\text{a}6$ 6... $\text{g}5$ $\text{e}6$ 7... $\text{f}4$ $\text{c}7$ 8... $\text{f}3$

White has the alternative 8... $\text{f}6$ $\text{g}6$ 9... $\text{d}2$, which may be objectively better. Anyway, this type of position got a bit boring and I wanted to keep as many pieces as possible on the board.

8... $\text{b}5$ 9... $\text{d}3$ $\text{bd}7$

Now Black chooses to transpose to another variation that usually arises after 7... $\text{bd}7$ 8... $\text{f}3$ $\text{c}7$ 9...0-0 $\text{b}5$ 10... $\text{d}3$. More consistent is 9... $\text{b}4$ and unlike in the game the knight is now forced to go back.

10.0-0 $\text{b}4$



11... $\text{d}5$

A standard sacrifice in this Najdorf Variation. White gets a pawn for the piece, but Black will get problems with his piece

coordination and his king will lose the right to castle.

11...ed5 12.♖he1!

Stronger than 12.ed5, as then Black has the option to play 12...♗c7 and White does no longer have the e5-thrust.

12...♗b7

Here 12...♗e7 is answered with 13.♘f5!, with the idea 13...♗f8 14.♘e7 ♗e7 15.e5 de5 16.fe5 ♘e5 17.♗d5 ♗e6 18.♖e5 with a winning position for White.

13.ed5 ♘d8 14.♘c6 ♗c6

14...♗c8 loses on the spot after 15.♗f6 ♘f6 16.♗f5 and Black loses his queen.

15.dc6 ♘b6

A novelty according to my database. Probably this is also an improvement on 15...♘c5 as was played in Gruenfeld-Gutman, Holon 1986/87. White quickly got a strong initiative after 16.♗f6 g6f6 17.♗c4 and later on also won the game.



16.♗h4!?

An interesting waiting move. The main idea is to meet the natural reply 16...♗e7 with 17.♗g3 and Black immediately gets into trouble. Another idea is that the bishop in some variations might go down to f2, starting action on the queenside.

16...♗c8?

Now Black hurries too much to get out of his cramped position. Better was 16...a5 17.♗b5 ♗e7 and slowly strengthening the position. Of course White still has good compensation but nevertheless, materially speaking, it's just a pawn for the piece. On 16...♗e7 there would follow 17.♗g3 with the idea 17...g6? (after 17...♖g8 White has the interesting option of 18.♗h7 ♖h8 19.♗g7 ♖h7 20.♗f6 ♖h4 21.♗f7 ♖h8 22.♗e6 with four pawns and a strong initiative for the two sacrificed pieces) 18.♗e7 ♗e7 19.♗e1, which is winning for White.

17.♗a6 ♖a8

17...♗c6 will be met by 18.♗e2! (protecting c2 and threatening 19.♗b5 followed by 20.♗e8; the endgame arising after 18.♗c8 ♗f3 19.gf3 ♗c8 is less clear) 18...d5 19.♗f6 g6f6 20.♗c8 ♗c8 21.♗a6 and White has a clear advantage.

18.♗b7 ♖a2 19.♗b1 ♖a5 20.♗e5!

A strong move, forcing the win without allowing any counterplay.

20...♘a4

20...♘c4 loses to 21.♗e4! ♘e5 22.fe5 and the extra rook doesn't help Black much in this position.

21.♗e4 ♖e5 22.fe5 ♗b6

A tricky move threatening 23...♘c3.

23.♖d4

Securing a safe future for White. In case of 23.e6f6 Black would get unnecessary counterplay with 23...♘c3 24.♗c1 g5 or 24...♘e4 25.fg7 ♗c7 26.♗d8 (26.g8♗?? loses to 26...♗h6 27.♗b1 ♘c3) 26...♗d8 27.g8♗ ♗e7, but of course White is still winning with 28.♗d4.

23...♘c5 24.♗d5

Once again a safety-move. There is no need to complicate matters with 24.e6f6 ♘e4 25.fg7 ♗c7 26.g8♗, even though it's still winning with correct play. Black gets nasty counterplay and chances of perpetual check after 26...♘c3 27.bc3 bc3 28.♗c1 ♗b2 29.♗d1 ♗b1 30.♗e2 ♗c2 31.♗f3 ♗f5, but with correct play White is winning here too.

24...b3

Desperation. Black is lost and has no sign of any counterplay.

25.ed6 bc2 26.♗c2 ♘b7 27.♗f6!

Black resigned in view of the variation 27...gf6 28.c7 ♗c8 29.♗f5 mate.

Berg,Emanuel Kristensen,Kaare

Denmark tt 2006/07 (1.3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cd4 4.♘d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♗e7 8.♗f3 ♗c7 9.0-0-0 ♘bd7 10.♗d3 b5

This move came as a nice surprise to me. I was expecting 10...h6, which I had prepared for the whole morning, but I also believe this is more solid for Black than the move played in the game. The main idea is to meet 11.♗h4 with 11...g5. By playing this move Black somehow weak-

ens his kingside, but in return he will get control over the important e5-square where he will put one of his knights later on. 12.fg5 ♘e5 13.♗e2 ♘fg4 and Black wins back the pawn on g5 with a nice structure and some positional advantage. White has some advantage in development though, and he will try to create tactical counterplay before Black gets time to stabilize his position. There is still a lot to play for and an interesting battle lies ahead.

11.♖he1

With this move White prepares a central break with e4-e5, but also the standard sacrifice ♘d5.

11...♗b7

Now 12...b4 is a threat. The immediate 11...b4 is, of course, met by 12.♘d5! ed5 13.♘f5! and Black is in big trouble.

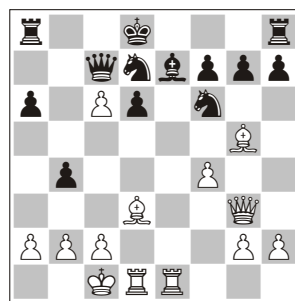
12.♗g3

The white queen walks out of the diagonal pin and at the same time once again prepares for e4-e5. Moreover, the queen has another important function: threatening g7, which will prove to be valuable in several lines.

12...b4 13.♘d5!

Of course! Why retract when a jump forward is possible? This thematic sacrifice turns up very often in different versions in the Najdorf with 6.♗g5. In principle, ...b5-b4 can always be met by this sacrifice if Black has not yet castled to any side.

13...ed5 14.ed5 ♘d8 15.♘c6 ♗c6 16.dc6



16...♘b6

16...♘c5 is met by 17.♗h4! and Black has no better than to return with his bishop: 17...♗f8 (17...♘d3? gives a clear advantage to White after 18.♗d3 ♗f8 19.♗f6 g6f6 20.♗h4 ♗e7 21.♗de3 ♖e8

22. ♖f6 and White is already winning, for instance 22... ♖c8 23. ♖c7 ♗e7 24. ♖e7 ♖e7 25. ♖d6 with a won endgame because of the lack of coordination of Black's pieces). Here White can continue 18. ♖c4 ♖a7 19. ♖d5 with a stable grip on the position.

16... ♖c6 loses to 17. ♖f6 ♖f6 (17... ♖f6 is no better after 18. ♗g7 ♖g8 19. ♖f7 ♖e8 20. ♖c4 with two pawns and a very strong initiative for the sacrificed piece. Black is practically lost) 18. ♖e4 ♖a4 (completely hopeless is 18... ♖c8 19. ♖a8 ♖a8 20. ♖d6 and after 20... ♖e8 White can even force the win with 21. ♖d7! ♖d7 22. ♖d3 ♖c7 23. ♖c4 ♖b6 24. ♖b4 ♖c7 25. ♖c5 ♖b7 26. ♖d5 ♖b6 27. ♖d6 and the black rook will fall) 19. ♖a8 ♖a2 20. ♖d6 ♖b2 21. ♖d1 ♖b1 22. ♖e2 ♖c2 23. ♖f1 ♖c4 24. ♖d3. The white king is in safety now. Materially speaking Black is OK, but with his king in the centre he is in big trouble.

17. ♖h4 ♖f8 18. ♖f3

By playing this move I linked back to my game against Li Chao, played in the match between Sweden and China, July 2006. The reason for this decision was that I could see no better alternative for Black than to play ... ♖e7 once again. However, now I give my opponent more chances to go wrong. Perhaps the best continuation is just 18. ♖e4, defending the c6-pawn with continuous pressure.

18... ♖d5

Now the centre opens up and the black king immediately gets under attack. On the other hand, Black is now able to activate his bishop. If White doesn't react quickly enough, he runs the risk that Black gets time to complete his development, resulting in a position where White's compensation might be dubious and Black has the better prospects.

18... ♖e7 19. ♖g3.

18... ♖c8 was the game Berg-Li Chao, China-Sweden 2006.

18... ♖a5 is met by 19. ♖b5 and Black is under pressure.

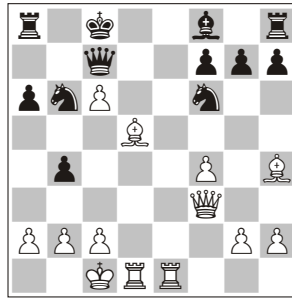
19. ♖e4!

A strong and elegant move. The bishop is en prise in two ways, but cannot be taken because both the knight on f6 and the d5-pawn are pinned. Now d5 is loose and this pawn will also be lost for Black.

19... ♖c8

Black escapes from the pins with his king and hopes to find shelter on a7 later on.

20. ♖d6



At first sight this looks like a sacrifice, but once again White has tactical compensation because of the vulnerable black king.

20... ♖d6

I was expecting 20... ♖b8, trying to run away with the king to a7 and at the same time threatening the bishop on d5. This I planned to meet with 21. ♖f2 ♖bd5 22. ♖d5 ♖d6. This position is rather hard to assess. White has two pawns for the sacrificed piece, which in combination with the vulnerable black king and Black's coordination problems should be at least full compensation.

A nice-looking move is 23. ♖de5, but Black doesn't need to capture and can play 23... ♖c8, attacking c6 instead.

Normal is 23. ♖d4 ♖c8 24. ♖c4 (but here there is the additional possibility of 24. ♖d6, as after 24... ♖d6 25. ♖f5 White threatens ♖g3, winning the black queen. Now Black's only real defensive move is 25... ♖c7 and after 26. ♖g3 White at least wins back an exchange, with chances of more) 24... ♖a5. An interesting position where there is still a lot to play for. Black is about to play ... ♖a6, winning the c6-pawn. A possible continuation is 25. ♖d3, with the idea 25... ♖a6 26. ♖b4 ♖b7 27. ♖a6 ♖e1 28. ♖b5 ♖a8 29. ♖a6 and perpetual check.

21. ♖f7!

Opening the game further is in White's favour because of Black's exposed king.

21... ♖f7

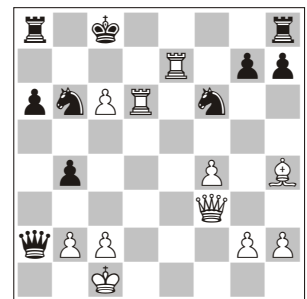
This was very surprising. Perhaps Black had overestimated his counterchances in the following. Better was 21... ♖b8, with the idea of putting the king into safety on

a7 and achieving coordination between his rooks, thereby completing his development. Of course White now has three whole pawns, but in case Black can regroup satisfactorily, the piece might even be worth more.

22. ♖d6 ♖a2

Consistent, but now White is winning rather simply and already on the next move Black decided to shake hands. Neither is the natural 22... ♖c7 enough to protect the position, as after 23. ♖de6 followed by f4 and then ♖g3 Black is still lost.

23. ♖e7!



In horrible time-trouble my opponent resigned, as he will be mated after 23... ♖a1 24. ♖d2 ♖c4 25. ♖e2 ♖d6 26. ♖h3 ♖b8 (26... ♖d8 also loses after 27. ♖d7 ♖c8 28. ♖b7 ♖d8 29. ♖d7 mate) 27. c7 ♖b7 28. c8 ♖b6 29. ♖c7 ♖b5 30. ♖e5 ♖d5 31. ♖hd7 mate. But the spectacular 23... ♖a7 was at least worth a last try. The idea is 24. ♖a7? (24. c7!! is the most simple win; after 24... ♖a1 25. ♖d2 ♖fd7 26. ♖b6 it's all over) 24... ♖a1 25. ♖d2 ♖c4 26. ♖e2?? (after 26. ♖d3 ♖b2 27. ♖d4 White is still winning, but this looks unnecessary) 26... ♖e8. Now White is lost, i.e. 27. ♖d3 (after 27. ♖f2 there will follow 27... ♖e1 mate) 27... ♖b2 28. ♖d4 ♖d3! 29. ♖d3 ♖c3 mate.

Berg, Emanuel

Negi, Parimarjan

Wijk aan Zee III 2007 (7)

1.e4 c5 2. ♖f3 d6 3. d4 cd4 4. ♖d4 ♖f6 5. ♖c3 a6 6. ♖g5 e6 7. f4 ♖bd7 8. ♖f3 ♖c7 9. 0-0 b5 10. ♖d3 ♖b7 11. ♖he1 ♖e7 12. ♖g3 b4 13. ♖d5 ed5 14. ed5 ♖d8 15. ♖c6 ♖c6 16. dc6

This forcing line is considered by theory to be good for White. However, many analyses are based on old games and so improvements can be found. I have played this variation two times before and my conclusion is that usually black players are not familiar with the ♔d5 sacrifice. However, that was not the case in this game, where my opponent had prepared a drawing variation no less than 30 moves long! Quite impressive, but was it really worth all the risks involved?

16...♗b6

16...♗c5!?

17.♗h4 ♖g8!?

An interesting move which I had analysed myself. However, it crossed my mind during the game that I hadn't come to any real conclusion.

18.♖e2!?

The straightforward move which I had prepared for other games would be far too risky to play now. My opponent was playing very quickly and for sure he had analysed the following variation until the end:

A) 18.♗h7 ♖h8 19.♗e4! (19.♖g7 looks interesting, but after 19...♖h7 20.♖f6 ♖h4 21.♖f7 (21.♖g7!? ♗c6 22.♖e7 ♗e7 23.♖g5 ♗d7 24.♖h4 does not look like enough compensation either 21...♖h8 it is doubtful if White will have enough compensation for the two sacrificed pieces).

B) 18.♖d2!?

C) 18.♖f3? doesn't look convincing at all after 18...d5 19.g4 ♗c6 20.g5 ♗fd7 21.♖e7? ♗e7 22.g6 ♗f8 23.gf7 ♗f7 24.♖h5 g6 25.♖h7 ♖g7 26.♖h6 ♗c5 Luther-Belov, playchess.com 2004.

18...♗c6

In case of 18...♖a7? White will play 19.♗h7 ♖h8 20.♖g7 ♖h7 21.♖f6 ♖h4 22.♖de1!!±, threatening both 23.♖e7 and 23.♖h4, which Black cannot prevent both.

19.♗h7 ♖e8

19...♖h8? 20.♖e7!±.

20.♖g7

20.♖e7!? ♖e7 21.♖g7 ♗h7 transposes to the game.

20...♗h7 21.♖e7 ♖e7 22.♖e1 ♖a7

23.♖f7 ♗c8

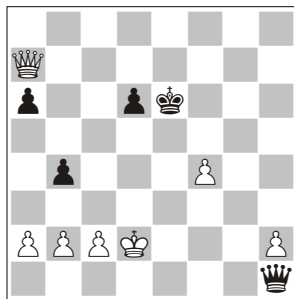
23...♗d5? is bad in view of 24.♖g8! ♗f8 25.♖f8 ♖e8 26.♖f5±.

24.♖h7?

This leads to a draw. After 24.♖g8! ♖e8 25.♖h7 ♖d7 26.f5 ♗c7 27.♗e7 ♗e7 (27...♖e7 28.♖e7 ♖e7 29.♖e7 ♗e7 30.g4 ♗c6 31.h4 ♗e5 32.g5 ♗d8 33.h5 ♗e7 34.h6 ♗f7 35.h7 ♗g7 36.g6+–) 28.f6 ♗d5 29.♖h4 White has a really nice position, for instance: 29...♖f7 30.♖c4 ♗b7? 31.♖e7! ♖e7 32.fe7+–.

24...♖g2 25.♖h8 ♗d7 26.♗e7 ♗e7 27.♖e7 ♗e7 28.♖h7 ♗e6 29.♖a7 ♖h1 30.♗d2

This was the preparation of my young opponent. However, he had missed some details.



30...♖g2

Easier is 30...♖h2 31.♗d3 ♖f4 and the pawn endgame after 32.♖e3 ♖e3 33.♗e3 ♗e5 34.♗d3 ♗d5 draws easily.

31.♗d1 ♖f1 32.♗d2 ♖g2 33.♗e1 ♖e4

33...♗c2 34.♖a6 ♗c1 is another draw.

34.♗f1 ♗c4

Again 34...♗c2=.

35.♗g2! ♖e4?

Last chance at 35...♗c2, and after 36.♖f2 ♖e4 37.♗g3 ♗f5! Black probably has enough activity to make a draw: 38.♖d2 d5 39.h4 d4 40.h5 d3 41.♗c1 ♖d4 (41...♖e7).

36.♗g3 ♖g6 37.♗f3 ♖h5 38.♗g3

♖g6 39.♗f3 ♖h5 40.♗e3 ♖h3

41.♗d4! ♖h2 42.f5!

42.♗d3 ♖f4=.

42...♗f6

42...♗f5 43.♖f7 ♗g5 44.♖e7 ♗f5 45.♖e4 ♗f6 46.♗c4±.

43.♗d3 ♖h3 44.♗c4 ♖f5 45.♖d4

♗e6 46.♗b3 a5 47.♖c4 ♗f6 48.♗a4

♖e5 49.b3 ♖f5 50.♖c7 ♖d5!

51.♖d8 ♗g6 52.♖e8 ♗f6 53.♖b5

♖e4 54.♖c4 ♖f5 55.♖c7 ♖d5

56.♖a5 ♖c6 57.♗b4 ♖c2 58.♖d8

♗e6 59.♖e8 ♗f6 60.♖h8 ♗e6?

This makes the job considerably easier for White.

60...♗g6! 61.♖g8 (61.♖d4 ♖a2 62.♖d6 ♗f5 63.♖d5 ♗f4 64.♗b5 ♗g3 65.♖e5 ♗g2 66.b4 ♗h1! is a theoretical drawn endgame even though the white pawn reaches b7) 61...♗f6 62.♖f8 ♗e6 63.♖h6 ♗d7 64.♖h3 ♗d8 65.♖h4 ♗e8 66.♖d4! ♖a2 67.♖d6+–, with mate in 83 moves!! according to the tablebases. Now that the black king will not reach h1, White is winning.

61.♖h3 ♗d5 62.♖f3 ♗e6

62...♖e4 63.♖e4 ♗e4 64.a4 d5 65.a5 and White wins.

63.♖e3! ♗d7 64.a4

Now that the c5-square is covered, the a-pawn can run. The rest is just a matter of technique and time.

64...d5

64...♖c6.

65.a5 ♖h2 66.♖a7 ♗e6 67.♖b6

♗f5 68.a6 ♖d2 69.♗a3! ♖c1

70.♗a4 ♖f4 71.♖b4 ♖c7 72.♖b7

♖f4 73.b4 ♖c4 74.a7 ♖c2 75.♗a5

♖a2 76.♗b6 ♖f2 77.♗c6! ♖c2

78.♗d7 ♖e4 79.a8 ♖ ♖e6 80.♗c7

♖e7 81.♗b8 ♖e5 82.♖c7 1-0

Anticipating the Sacrifice

11.♖he1 0-0-0/11...♖b6

Berg,Emanuel

Negi,Parimarjan

Malmö 2007 (6)

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cd4 4.♗d4

♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♗bd7

8.♖f3 ♖c7 9.0-0-0 b5 10.♗d3 ♗b7

11.♖he1 ♖b6

11...0-0-0?! 12.f5 e5 13.♗b3 ♗e7 14.a4!

b4?! (14...♗e4!? 15.♗e4 (15.♗e7? ♗c3

16.♗d8 ♖d8?) 15...♗g5 16.♗b1 ba4

17.♗a4 ♗f6 18.♗b7 ♖b7 19.♖c3 ♖c7

(19...♗b8 20.♗a5) 20.♖d3 ♗b7;

14...ba4?! 15.♗a4 d5 16.ed5 ♗d5

17.♗e7 ♗e7 18.♗e4±) 15.♗f6 ♗f6

16.♗d5 ♗d5 17.ed5 Kotronias-Jobava,

Batumi Ech 2002.

12.♗d5 ♖d4 13.♗f6 gf6 14.♗b5

♖c5 15.♗f6 ♗d8 16.♗d7 ♖b5

17.♗f8 ♖f8

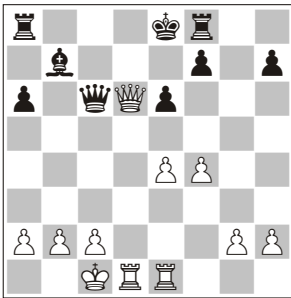
17...♗e7? was played in Dvirnyy-Negi, San Marino 2006. However after 18.♗e6

fe6 White should improve with 19.♖g4! (after the game continuation 19.♖c3?! ♜hg8 20.e5 d5 21.♖a3 ♘e8 22.♗h3 ♖d7 Black managed to get out of White's grip and later went on to win the game) 19...♞ag8 20.♗h4 ♘d7 21.♖f6. White has a very powerful attack. Black will need to give up at least another pawn to evacuate his king and so White's advantage is obvious.

18.♖a3 ♘e8!

The correct move order, giving Black an important extra option. After 18...♞c8 19.♖d6 ♘e8 20.♞e3! ♖c6 21.♖d2 White has a very powerful initiative as shown in Goh Weiming-Chan Peng Kong – YB/79-14.

19.♖d6 ♖c6



20.♖d4!?

The idea of this move is to keep the queen on the fourth rank so that after Black's ...♖c7 and ...♞d8 White is able to check on a4. In case of 20...♞c8 White can play 21.♞d2 with the idea to triple on the d-file with 22.♞ed1 and so protect against the exchanges with ...♞d8. After 20.♖d2 Black doesn't play 20...♞c8? but 20...♖c7! (Luther-Sasikiran, Moscow 2007) with the idea of 21...♞d8 intending to exchange some pieces. Now White doesn't have time for the ♞e3-manoeuvre. I believe that Black has at least a balanced game and most probably even more.

20...♖c7 21.f5!?!N

21.g3 was played in Alvir-Pachta, Austria tt 2006/07. After 21...♞d8 22.♖a4 ♘e7 (22...♖c6) 23.♖b4 ♘f6 24.♞d3 White went on to win that game, but White didn't get any immediate advantage. Therefore I believe that my interesting novelty 21.f5!?! is a much more critical test for the variation. After 21.g3 White remains very solid and the position is about equal.



Berg and Negi analysing 29...♞c7 in the post mortem

21...♞g8

Black takes control of the g-file and stops White from any invasion plans with ♖g7. I planned to meet 21...♞d8 with 22.♖a4 ♞d7 (22...♖c6 23.♖a5 and Black loses important dark-square control; 22...♘e7 is bad in view of 23.♖b4 ♘f6 24.e5 ♘g7 25.♞d8 ♞d8 26.fe6 fe6 27.♖g4 ♘h8 28.♖e6 with four pawns for the sacrificed piece and a wide open king for Black) 23.♞d7 ♖d7 24.♖a5 planning 25.♞d1 with some initiative for White.

22.g3 ♞c8

Once again 22...♞d8 was an option: 23.♖a4 ♞d7 24.♞d7 ♖d7 25.♖a5 with a similar position to the one mentioned above.

23.♞d2 e5!?

An interesting move. Black closes the center in favour of his light-squared bishop. Positionally this is a good decision, but now his king has to deal with the coming attack. Also interesting was 23...♞d8! 24.♖a4 ♖c6 and now after 25.♖a5 ♞d2 White can no longer recapture with his rook as in the earlier lines. After 26.♖d2 e5 27.♞d1 ♖c7 Black has managed to exchange an important pair of rooks and stands slightly better.

24.♖a4 ♘f8

In case of 24...♖c6 there might follow 25.♖b4 f6 26.c3 ♖b5 27.♖d6 ♖c6 28.♖b4 with repetition of moves and a draw as a result.

25.♞d7

25.f6 doesn't give White much after 25...♞g6 26.♖b4 ♘g8 and the king is in

safety, leaving White with a weak f-pawn.

25...♖c6 26.♖b4 ♘g7 27.♖d2 ♘h8 28.c3!

Freeing the queen from the defence of c2. Now 29.♞f7 is a threat. 28.♞f7 is too risky. Black takes over with 28...♞gd8 29.♖c2 ♖h6 30.♖e3 ♘e4! 31.c3 ♖h5 with a clear advantage.

28...f6 29.♞d1 ♖g7?

Better was 29...♞c7! (see the above picture!) 30.♞d8 ♞f7 31.♖h6 ♖c7! with advantage to Black.

30.♞d6 ♖a4??

The decisive mistake, based on a misconception. After 30...♖e4 White can either force a draw with 31.♞d8 ♞g8 32.♖h6 ♖f5 33.♞d7 ♞cd8 34.♖h7! ♖h7 35.♖f6 ♖g7 36.♖h4 ♖h7 37.♖f6 ♞g7 38.♖d8 with perpetual check or continue playing with 31.♞f6 when the position remains unclear.

31.♞d8+- ♖g8 32.♖h6! ♞c3

The point behind Black's 30... ♖a4. Unfortunately for him White doesn't need to accept this very nice sacrifice and after White's next move Black is lost with no hope of counterplay.

33.♘b1!

33.bc3?? loses to 33...♖a3 34.♘c2 ♘e4.

33...♘e4 34.♘a1 ♖d1

The only way to continue the game, but the fight will soon be over anyway.

35.♞d1 ♞c6 36.♖h5 ♞gc8 37.b3 ♞6c7 38.♖h6

38.♖h4!+-.

38...♞f7 39.♞d6 ♞cf8 40.g4 ♘b7 41.h4 e4 42.g5 ♞e8 43.♞f6 1-0