

# Yearbook

NEW  IN CHESS 139

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CHESS OPENING NEWS

Edited by Jan Timman

## From the editor



### **The best prepared**

Right at the start of the second half of the Candidates Tournament in Yekaterinburg, Fabiano Caruana beat Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in a game that Kasparov labelled as ‘the best prepared game in the history of chess’. Undoubtedly Caruana had spent countless hours on this specific line of the Najdorf Poisoned Pawn. There is not a Survey yet, since we will have to await further developments in the line, but a brief report on the game can be found in the FORUM Section of this Yearbook.

Congratulations to Ian Nepomniachtchi for winning the Candidates. His most significant theoretical contribution in this Yearbook is not from this tournament, though, but from the Magnus Invitational earlier in the year. He tackled the Berlin Defence in his own way. Ruslan Ponomariov wrote a Survey on the line.

We welcome Surya Sekhar Ganguly as our new contributor. As a long-time second of Anand he has an extensive knowledge of the openings. His two Surveys are about important new developments in the Sicilian – in the Rauzer and in the Najdorf.

Anish Giri is probably the best prepared top player at the moment. I became interested in his way of handling the Bogo-Indian against Radjabov in the Opera Euro Rapid and decided to write a Survey on this subject.

In his correspondence chess column, Erwin l’Ami focusses on a line in the French Winawer that I used to play myself, a quarter century ago. His conclusion: it is not playable for Black. I must admit that I’d had this feeling already for quite some time.

**Jan Timman**

# Opening Highlights



## Fabiano Caruana

The World number two started the second leg of the Candidates by dealing a **heavy blow to Maxime Vachier-Lagrave with a one-off piece sac novelty in the Najdorf Poisoned Pawn** (see FORUM Section, page 12), though perhaps of more lasting value was his flabbergasting concept in the Classical King's Indian against Wojtaszek in Wijk aan Zee, giving both his bishops for knights and outplaying the Polish top GM strategically. The line is analysed by Tibor Fogarasi on page 210.

## Wesley So

Wesley is the most experienced of all elite players in **the fashionable Giuoco Piano with 5.d4 and 6.e5**. Black may be OK here (So plays this from both sides!), but against Magnus Carlsen in the Opera Euro Rapid the American showed you can still achieve a lot if you know the nooks and crannies better than the other guy. See his analysis in Glenn Flear's Survey on page 131. There is so much material here that the second part of this article will be published in Yearbook 140.



## Ian Nepomniachtchi

Nepo is the new challenger of Magnus Carlsen. He won the Candidates Tournament by staying as cool as he did in many online events. In the Magnus Invitational early this year, the Russian impressed with a brilliant win versus Hikaru Nakamura. **He sacrificed two kingside pawns against the Berlin Wall**, totally paralyzing Black and finishing with a flourish. The game features in the Survey on page 107 by Ruslan Ponomariov, who is no longer convinced that the Berlin is always boring.

## Maksim Chigaev

One of the strongest grandmasters of the new Russian generation, Chigaev ended on 6/11 in the Russian Superfinal last December, half a point above eight-time champion Peter Svidler. Maksim ventured the principled and crucial **push of the e-pawn all the way to e3 against the popular double fianchetto** in several online blitz games with Victor Mikhalevski. Black sacrifices an exchange à la Kasparov and starts a dangerous offensive. The Survey on this important set-up is by Krisztian Szabo on page 216.



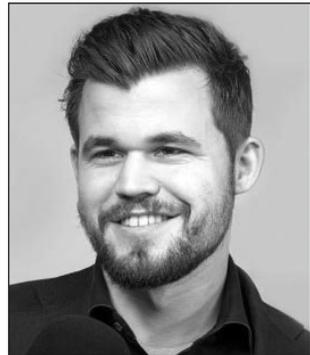


### Alireza Firouzja

Sharp solutions are what the Iranian phenomenon excels in. We have a nice example in Viacheslav Ikonnikov's Survey on page 190 of this issue. This article features a tricky line of the **4.♟f3 Nimzo in which White move-orders Black into an inferior type of Carlsbad structure**. Black players' modern solution to this, of moving the queen's bishop to f5, has been livened up with some aggressive ideas by Firouzja, and he even beat Magnus Carlsen with one of them in Banter Blitz.

### Magnus Carlsen

The experiments of the World Champ in online chess seem to know no end. In his own 'Invitational' he launched **the bizarre-looking 4.a4 in the Four Knights Game** to win a superb attacking game against one of his main rivals in online rapid, Wesley So. As you may have guessed, this move is all about transpositions, reversed openings and forcing your opponent to think for himself. Jeroen Bosch explains things in his Survey on page 148.



### Surya Sekhar Ganguly

The Indian grandmaster and long-time member of Team Anand debuts on these pages with two Surveys as well as a big FORUM story! Both Surveys are on the Sicilian. In the Najdorf, Ganguly has scored well with a delayed h2-h3 push, and **in the Rauzer he introduced the new 'all-purpose' move 8.♞d3** mainly on 'subtle positional grounds', as Surya put it. That's as may be, but the theoretical whiz has churned out some exciting lines! You'll find his Surveys on pages 40 and 55 respectively.

### Nils Grandelius

The Swedish GM was a last-minute replacement in Wijk aan Zee due to Covid problems, but he had a very good start, playing fearless and ever interesting chess. In round 2 he got into a flow when he won a great game versus Jan-Krzysztof Duda. **In the Symmetrical English, Grandelius showed that White's lengthy knight manoeuvres cannot really worry Black**. We present his analysis of this game in David Cummings' Survey on page 222.



# 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

## Bull's eye!

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](mailto:editors@newinchess.com)

### A wise investment!

by René Olthof

SI 4.8 + SI 8.14 (B97)

YB 82, 86, 89, 92, 102, 122, 128

With the world premier experts on the Najdorf for White (Caruana) and Black (Nepomniachtchi and Vachier-Lagrave) present at the second leg of the Candidates and pundits like Anish Giri and Alexander Grischuk not far away, the infamous Poisoned Pawn Variation was always on the mind of experts as the most likely opening choice in Yekaterinburg. And sure enough: bull's eye in the very first round.

#### Fabiano Caruana

#### Maxime Vachier-Lagrave

Yekaterinburg ct 2021 (8)

**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.e5

In the last tournament before the Candidates, 10.f5 ♗c6

11.fxe6 ♗xe6!? – Black's latest old toy (SI 8.8 – B97) – was put to the test by two big contenders in Yekaterinburg: 12.♞xb7 (12.♗xe6 fxe6 13.♞xb7 Chigaev-Vitiugov, Moscow 2020 – YB/138-24) 12...♗xd4 13.♖xd4 ♖e7! 14.♖c4 (the novelty 14.♗d3 h6 15.♗d2 ♖c5 didn't give White any chance of an advantage in Nepomniachtchi-Giri, Carlsen Invitational, March 2021) 14...♞c8 15.♗d5 (15.♖b3 Beliavsky-Buljovic, Novi Sad 1979 (!), is a dinosaur reference – YB/138-125) 15...♗xd5 16.♗xd5 ♗xd5 17.♖xd5 (17.♖xg7 ♞f8 18.exd5 ♗xg5 19.♖xg5 ♖c3+ 20.♗f2 ♖xc2+ 21.♗g3 ♖e4= Epiney-Koteski, cr 2003) 17...♖c3+ 18.♗e2 ♖xc2+ 19.♗d2 ♞c5 20.♞c1 ♖xc1 21.♗xc1 ♞xd5 22.exd5 h5 ½-½ (40) Nepomniachtchi-Giri, Carlsen Invitational, March 2021. 10.♖e2 was a clever choice by Caruana in Wijk aan Zee 2021, not giving away any major secrets and at the same time still posing difficult questions to MVL, who faltered immediately: 10...♗c6?! 11.♗xc6 bxc6 12.e5 ♗d5 13.♗xd5 exd5? 14.e6!+-; see Yearbook 138.

**10...h6**  
10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♗fd7  
12.♗e4 h6! 13.♖h4 is a mere transposition of moves.  
**11.♖h4 dxe5 12.fxe5 ♗fd7**  
**13.♗e4 ♖xa2 14.♞d1**  
The old 14.♞b3 has been completely ousted.

♖xc3+ 9.♘d2 ♖xa3 10.♙c1 (10.♘d4!?) 10...♘c6 11.♘c4 ♖b4+ 12.♘d2 ♖c5 13.♙c3 (rather than 13.♙e3 ♖b4+ ½-½ Benko-Bakonyi, Budapest 1950) 13...f6 14.♘e3 with overwhelming compensation for the two sacrificed pawns. Only suitable for the very brave! Secondly, from the first diagram above White indeed quickly lost in the stem game Rowson-Malakhov (1995) after 10.e5 a6 due to the unwarranted tactical strike 11.♙xf7+? ♙xf7 12.♘g5+ ♙e8 13.♖b3 ♘xe5 14.♘d4 ♙f6. But things are less clear after 11.♘a3, e.g. 11...♙xe5 12.♖b3 e6 13.♘xe5 ♘xe5 14.♙b6 (14.♙e2!? with compensation) 14...♖g5 15.0-0 ♘f3+ 16.♙h1 ♘d2 (16...♖f4 17.gxf3 ♖xf3+ 18.♙g1 ♖g4+ is an immediate perpetual check) 17.♖b4 ♘xf1 18.♙xf1 ♘e7 19.♖xd6 ♘f5 20.♖e5!? (or 20.♖b4 ♙d7 21.♘c4 with decent compensation) 20...f6 21.♖c7 0-0 22.♙d1 ♙f7 23.♖d8+ ♙f8 24.♖c7, repeating moves. Thirdly, Mr. Horton's recommended 11...♘c6 after 10.♖b3 ♘a5 11.♖a4 allows for the dangerous 12.e5 or 12.0-0-0 when 12...a6 13.♘b4 leaves Black in hot waters. In our opinion the best reply to the novelty 11.♖a4 is 11...♙f8!, stepping out of the battery.



This leads to immense tactical complications after

12.♘g5 a6! 13.♘xd6 b5! (13...exd6 14.♘xf7!), a sample line being 14.♖d1 ♖xd6 15.♙d5 ♙b7 16.♘xf7 ♖d7 17.♘xh8 ♙xh8 18.♖f3+ ♘f6 19.0-0-0 ♙xd5 20.♙xd5 ♖e6 21.♙hd1 ♙e8 with an ongoing struggle after 22.♙d4.

### Selling himself short

a letter by IJntze Hoekstra

KP 4.7 (C41)

I would like to bring to your attention a find of my computer that was not mentioned in *Side-Stepping Mainline Theory* by Welling and Giddins (New In Chess 2019). It is too beautiful (and decisive) not to bring it up here. It concerns the game Radulski-Mchedlishvili, Plovdiv 2012 on page 133.

- 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e5  
 4.♘f3 ♘bd7 5.♙c4 ♙e7 6.♘g5  
 0-0 7.♙xf7+ ♙xf7 8.♘e6 ♖e8  
 9.♘xc7 ♖d8 10.♘xa8 b6  
 10...b5!?.  
 11.d5  
 11.♙e3 ♙a6 12.♘xb6?! ♖xb6  
 13.b3? d5!; 11.dxe5 ♘xe5!?.  
 11...♙a6



Now 12.f3 was played but this deserves a question mark due to 12...♘g4!! 13.g3 ♙h4! 14.a4 ♘xh2!.

Stockfish indicated this refutation while analysing one of my own games. Welling and Giddins only give the game continuation



IJntze Hoekstra

12...♖xa8, concluding that 'Black is fine' but Black is selling himself short here. I believe White should play 12.♙e3.

Yours sincerely,  
 IJntze Hoekstra  
 Zeist, The Netherlands

### Reply by Steve Giddins:

This is all correct, of course. Quite a shocking find!

### Saddening the Benoni

by Mikheil Mchedlishvili

BI 5.6 (A65)

I would like to share an old and forgotten/new idea in the Benoni with you.

- 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3  
 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♘ge2  
 ♙g7 8.♘g3 0-0 9.♙e2 b6



This position is also regularly reached via two different

# Nothing to do...?

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.

We have a wide range of openings in this quarterly update on the world of Correspondence Chess. It is possible to fill all the pages of the Yearbook with these games, but as usual I have selected five games that give a nice overview and bring something new to the table.

## A soft spot for the Tarrasch

TD 5.11 (D30)

We start with the Tarrasch. I have a soft spot for this opening. It's perhaps the only opening where Black can volunteer to play with an isolated pawn and get away with it! It was largely due to Kasparov's losses against Anatoly Karpov that the Tarrasch faded for a couple of decades. At the present though, it is alive and kicking. That shouldn't surprise us much, as with the advent of ever stronger engines we have come to realize that more or less any opening line is playable.

### Alfonsas Kupsys

Klaus Kögler

MT-Uogele (LTU) ICCF 2020

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 c5**

**4.cxd5**

Siegbert Tarrasch himself once called this a premature exchange and instead considered 4.e3 the 'only correct move'. We have come a long way since then!

**4...exd5 5.g3**

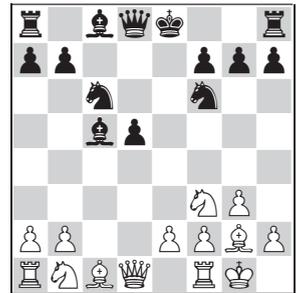
This is how Rubinstein played against the Tarrasch,

and it has remained the most critical test to this day.

**5...♞c6 6.♙g2 ♟f6 7.0-0 ♙e7**

**7...cxd4 8.♞xd4 ♙c5** is a very viable line with the knight on c3 and king still on e1. Dubov has successfully proven the viability of that line. In this move-order though, **9.♞xc6 bxc6 10.♚c2!** is (very) problematic.

**8.dxc5 ♙xc5**



### 9.a3

Of course, **9.♞c3 0-0** would now transpose back to the main line of the Tarrasch Defence, but White prefers a subtle pawn push. White's idea is that **9...0-0 10.b4** followed by **11.♙b2** is very pleasant.

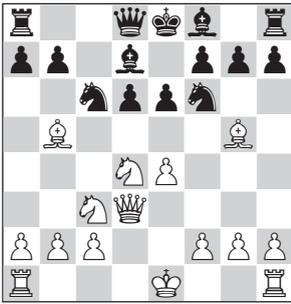


Alfonsas Kupsys

# Double pin in the Rauzer

by Surya Sekhar Ganguly

- |    |      |      |
|----|------|------|
| 1. | e4   | c5   |
| 2. | ♘f3  | d6   |
| 3. | d4   | cxd4 |
| 4. | ♗xd4 | ♗f6  |
| 5. | ♗c3  | ♘c6  |
| 6. | ♕g5  | e6   |
| 7. | ♕b5  | ♕d7  |
| 8. | ♚d3  |      |



The double pin move 7. ♕b5 is not a rare species in the Rauzer, and it has been played several times. In fact, it is the second most popular move after the standard 7. ♚d2. Traditionally after 7. ♕b5 ♕d7, 8. ♕xc6 used to be the main line with over 500 games already played as per Mega Database. In recent times the move 8. ♚d3 came into fashion and this is our Survey topic. At grandmaster level, this move was first tried in a game between Matlakov and Maghsoodloo in the World Blitz, 2018. I already see many Indian grandmasters employing it frequently. I had a look at this line and got a chance to play it myself recently in an online tournament. The line looks quiet but has its own venom. Unlike the traditional 8. ♕xc6 or Alekhine's continuation 8.0-0, here White does not wish to show his intentions so

quickly and keeps the option of taking on c6 open. The queen on d3 might look odd at first glance, particularly since Black can attack it with ...♗e5, but it turns out that after being chased away, the white queen can safely rest on h3 from where it keeps an eye on the black e6-pawn and, more importantly, makes sure Black cannot play ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5 as the h-pawn remains pinned.

Black has various plans at his disposal, but what makes this line a bit confusing is that on almost every single try, Black can do it with or without ...h7-h6. There are pros and cons to all of these options, depending on whether Black wants to include ...h7-h6 or not. The plans can be described as follows:

## The main line with ...♕e7 and ...0-0

This is by far the most popular and most logical choice. Black can either include ...h7-h6/ ♕h4 and then opt for ...♕e7 and ...0-0, or play this directly.



(without ...h7-h6/ ♕h4 - Game 1)

White's play remains more or less the same in either case: he takes on c6 with the bishop, and we reach a position with 10. ♕xc6 bxc6 11. ♗b3, which is



Surya Sekhar Ganguly

the main idea of this line from White's perspective. White is building pressure on the d6-pawn, and a threat of e4-e5 is deadly as the bishop on d7 hangs. At this stage, Black has a couple of moves to deal with White's threat: 11...d5, 11...e5, 11...♙c8 and 11...a5 are all analysed under Game 1. Black is not exactly worse, however I feel White keeps a microscopic but safe edge in such positions that are easier to play from the white side.

With the inclusion we see similar lines in Game 2. The evaluation remains more or less the same either way.



(with ...h7-h6/ ♗h4 - Game 2)

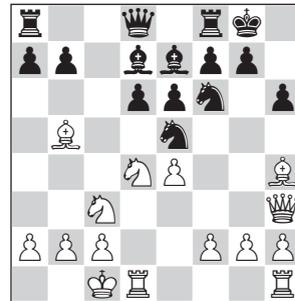
### ...♖b6 ideas

As typically happens in many other Rauzer lines, Black has the standard ...♖b6 option, which once again he can play with or without ...h7-h6. In this case, however, it is better not to include ...h7-h6/ ♗h4 since after the mass

exchange on d4 it is easier for White to build his pressure on the d6-pawn because he has a quick ♗g3. The same would not be possible with the bishop on g5 as ♗f4 runs into the ...e6-e5 fork. If Black wants to opt for the ...♖b6 idea, then I think it is better to go for it directly. All the ...♖b6 ideas are covered under Game 3 between Ragger vs Sanal.

### ...♘e5 ideas

Since White has committed himself with ♖d3, it feels tempting to attack the queen with ...♘e5. White usually retreats to h3 to keep the pin on the h-file and stop ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5. Black's critical try could be 11...0-0 instead of 11...a6 and the blunder 13...g5 that occurred in my game against Rahman (Game 4).



After 11...0-0, it is not obvious how White can gain an advantage, but clearly it is Black who must play accurately. Anton Guijarro lost a game against Dragnev in this direction which is also covered under Game 4. If Black wants to play ...♘e5, inserting 8...h6 is an absolute necessity as after 8...♘e5 9.♖h3, White won't be obliged to move the bishop from g5 when Black goes ...h7-h6 here.

### ...♘xd4 ideas

This capture also makes a lot of sense as White has committed with his queen move, thus taking back on d4 with the

queen will cost him an extra tempo. The main question for Black is, when to take on d4? Gelfand played it immediately on move 8 against Sethuraman, which is featured in Game 5. The position gets dynamic after both sides castle to opposite sides. In the game, after castling queenside, White even made a daring move by taking on a7 with the queen. It is also possible to include 8...♙e7 9.0-0-0 first before taking on d4. The main reasoning could be that Black would like to take on d7 with the knight instead of the queen. I think Black gets a more or less equal position, but I personally would prefer to have White in such a scenario. In the line 10.♙xd4 ♙xb5 11.♘b5 0-0 White cannot take on d6 thrice at the end of the variation as Black has a fork with ...♘xe4. It is important to understand that the same idea won't work with the inclusion of ...h7-h6/♙h4.

### Provoking White with ...a7-a6

This move has occurred rarely and is of a dubious nature. White is going to take on c6 anyway, so there is no need to provoke this. White gets an advantage due to this extra tempo, which is not

surprising by any means. The game Sethuraman vs Gupta (Game 6) deals with this variation.

### Conclusion

The line avoids insurmountable theory and is easy to prepare. We can understand the ideas within a short time span, and it is easy to play. The computer calls it equal in many positions, but I felt it is easier to play from the white side. Since the line is still developing, it also has a lot of surprise value.

Having said that, one should also understand that Black has multiple options to fight. However, in most cases, White gets a safe and solid position that is easy to handle.

When to include ...h7-h6 can be a tricky question. Depending on what set-up Black wants to take, he should decide whether to include ...h7-h6 or not. It makes a big difference in the ...♙b6, ...♘e5 and ...♘xd4 lines: particularly, it is better to include ...h7-h6/♙h4 in ...♘e5 lines, but in the other two lines it is wiser to refrain from it.

I hope that working through this Survey will bring a lot of clarity in this seemingly simple-looking opening.

### Game Section

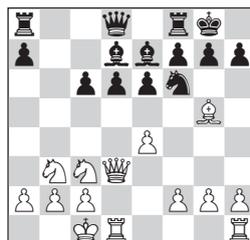
#### 8.♙d3

#### Maxim Matlakov Parham Maghsoodloo

St Petersburg Wch Blitz 2018 (17)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4  
4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♙g5 e6  
7.♙b5 ♙d7 8.♙d3 ♙e7 9.0-0-0  
0-0 10.♙xc6 The crux of the line. White gives up the bishop and intends to build more pressure on the d6-pawn. 10...bxc6 The most logical way to recapture. With the knight on d4, it makes little sense to take on c6 with the bishop:

10...♙xc6 11.f4 h6 12.h4!?! – White keeps a slight edge with ♙h4 also. The move 12.h4 is more dynamic, and Black is way behind with his counterattack on the queenside. 11.♘b3!



Essentially the main plan, on which this entire line stands. White creates the threat of e4-e5 as the d7-bishop hangs after ...dxe5 ♙xf6. Black has multiple ways to deal with the threat or he may simply ignore it with moves like 11...a5. 11...d5?! An understandable panic decision in a blitz game when facing this move for the first time. Now White gets complete control over the dark squares.

A) 11...e5?! 12.♙xf6 gxf6 13.♘d2± – the knight is coming to c4, and Black will likely lose the d6-pawn;

# Pockets full of novelties

by Ruslan Ponomariov

- |     |              |              |
|-----|--------------|--------------|
| 1.  | <b>e4</b>    | <b>e5</b>    |
| 2.  | ♘f3          | ♘c6          |
| 3.  | ♙b5          | ♘f6          |
| 4.  | <b>0-0</b>   | ♘xe4         |
| 5.  | <b>d4</b>    | ♘d6          |
| 6.  | ♙xc6         | <b>dx</b> c6 |
| 7.  | <b>dx</b> e5 | ♘f5          |
| 8.  | ♚xd8+        | ♚xd8         |
| 9.  | ♘c3          | ♚e8          |
| 10. | <b>h3</b>    | ♙e6          |



Ian Nepomniachtchi

When someone asks you about the Berlin Defence in 2000, probably you will have associations with Belarusian GM Alexey Aleksandrov, who exclusively plays this system with black, and with the historic World Championship match in London where Vladimir Kramnik replaced his favourite Petroff Defence with a totally new concept. Without queens on the board, some magic disappears. It's unbelievable, but Kasparov didn't manage to win even a single game during the whole match! This anti-record was repeated in 2013 by the reigning Champion Vishy Anand, and of course the Berlin was again involved in some games.

No wonder that the Berlin started to be associated with ultra-solid and drawish

play. Chess players have become much more pragmatic about results: even amateurs started to play the line and you can find many chess books on it, including some written by 2400+ chess players. Some radical minds proposed to simply forbid this line altogether in tournament play. Another popular trend is that White started avoiding the Ruy Lopez or even switched to 1.d4. There were hopes that with short time-controls players would start taking more risks and play more entertaining chess. However you can still see a 'pragmatic' game now and then going 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.dxe5 ♘xb5 7.a4 ♘bd4 8.♘xd4 d5 9.exd6 ♘xd4 10.♚xd4 ♚xd6 11.♚e4+ ♚e6 12.♚d4 etc.

I would say that Ian Nepomniachtchi's games are a breath of fresh air, and they are the focus of my investigation for this Survey. His quick aggressive style in the main game of this article was so convincing that his fans started to complain: 'Ian, what are you doing? Why

are you wasting your preparation before the Candidates?’ 😊

### Conclusion

Well, don't worry – you can still play the Berlin with black. But it seems that the trends are starting to change and now you need to memorize lots of theory

also in this variation. We already saw a few signs of this in 2018 during the Candidates Tournament, when Vladimir Kramnik showed some fresh ideas with white (!) and players picked them up for the next championship cycle in 2020. It's going to be interesting to see where this line will be heading in the near future.

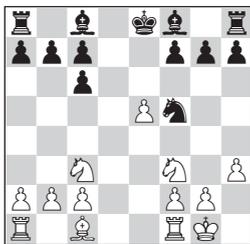
### Modern developments

Ian Nepomniachtchi

Hikaru Nakamura

Magnus Carlsen Inv KO rapid of 2021 (1.2)

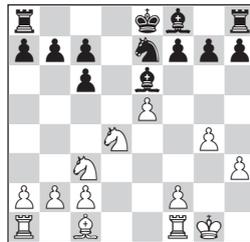
**1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 ♟f6**  
**4.0-0 ♟xe4 5.d4 ♘d6 6.♙xc6 dxc6**  
**7.dxe5 ♟f5 8.♙xd8+ ♟xd8 9.♘c3**  
**♙e8 10.h3**



**10...♙e6** Nakamura played this line twice in 2014 and 2015 and suddenly, after a long break, he decided to play it again. I guess one of the reasons was that recently Black started to have some problems in the most popular line: 10...h5 11.♙f4 ♙e7 12.♙ad1 ♙e6 (12...♟h4 was what Nakamura played two games later against Nepomniachtchi, see next game) 13.♟g5 ♙h6 14.♙fe1 ♙b4 15.a3!? ♙xc3 16.bxc3 etc. One of the topical games here is Vachier-Lagrave-Grischuk, Yekaterinburg 2020, and there were also many games by Nakamura. I will not go deeply into the details here. Probably this deserves an extra Survey, and you need to have a good memory just to remember the games that have been played already. **11.g4!?** A very tempting way to exploit White's pawn

majority on the kingside and the exposed position of Black's bishop.

**11...♟e7 12.♟d4**

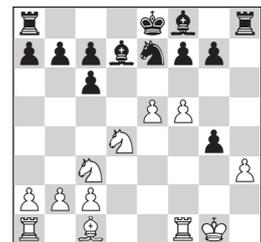


**12...♟d7** Hardly a good idea is 12...♙c4?! because Black doesn't challenge White's pawn chain: 13.♙d1 ♟g6 14.b3 ♙a6 15.♟g2! (a typical idea in such positions; in the endgame the king can be an active piece!) 15...h5 16.♟g3 hxg4 17.hxg4 ♙d8 18.f4 (18.♙b2!? ♟xe5 19.♟e4 ♙e4 ♟f5) 18...c5 19.♟f3 ♙xd1 20.♟xd1 ♙e2 21.♟f2 ♟e7 22.c4 ♙xf3 23.♟xf3 ♟c6 24.♙b2 and White is clearly better here. Nowadays you can only dream about such positions in the Berlin endgame! Nisipeanu-C.Horvath, Romania tt 1998. **13.f4**

A) During the qualification stage, Ian was not prepared for this line and he played the dull 13.♙e1 h5 14.e6 fxe6 15.♟xe6 ♙xe6 16.♙xe6. Now Black no longer has the bishop pair, but with some active play he manages to create enough counterplay to compensate his slightly worse pawn structure: 16...hxg4 17.hxg4 ♟d7 18.♙e4! (more tension is kept by 18.♙e2 ♟g6 19.♟g5 ♙d6 20.♟e4 ♙h7 but Black should still be okay here, e.g. 21.♟xd6 cxd6 22.f4 ♙ah8 23.♙ae1 c5 ♞ Caruana-Nakamura, London

2014) 18...♟d5 19.♟xd5 (19.♙d2 ♙d6 20.♙d4 ♙e5 21.♙d3 ♙h4) 19...cxd5 20.♙e5 ♙h4 21.♙g5 ♙e8 22.♙e3 ♙e4 23.♙xd5+ ♙e6 24.♙ad1 ♙exg4+ 25.♟f1 ♙h1+ 26.♟e2 ♙xd1 27.♙xd1 ♙d6= Nepomniachtchi-Nakamura, Magnus Carlsen Inv rapid prel 2021;

B) Earlier, Hikaru also faced 13.♟h2 c5!? (13...♟d5 14.♙d2 h5 15.♟g3 ♞) 14.♟db5 (14.♟de2 h5 15.♟g3 hxg4 16.hxg4 and now it's not really necessary but interesting to try 16...f5!? 17.exf6 gxf6 18.♙f4 f5 19.g5 ♙c6 20.♙xc7 ♙h5 when I believe Black should have enough active play for the sacrificed pawn) 14...♟d8 15.♙e3 a6 (more flexible was 15...b6! because the knight is not very stable on b5 and needs to look for a better square) 16.♟a3 b6 17.♟e4 h5 18.♟g3 hxg4 19.hxg4 ♙c6 20.♟g5 ♙e8 21.f4? (≥ 21.♙ad1 ♟d5 22.♙d2 b5 23.c4 ♟b6 ♞) 21...f5! ♞, reminding us that even without queens on the board you should not forget about the security of your own king, Grischuk-Nakamura, London 2015. **13...h5 14.f5 hxg4**



**15.e6!?** Surprisingly I didn't find even a single game with this move in the online database. Earlier White automatically played

# Fearless play

by Viacheslav Ikonnikov

- |    |      |      |
|----|------|------|
| 1. | d4   | ♘f6  |
| 2. | c4   | e6   |
| 3. | ♘f3  | ♙b4  |
| 4. | ♘c3  | d5   |
| 5. | cxd5 | exd5 |
| 6. | ♙g5  | h6   |
| 7. | ♙h4  | 0-0  |
| 8. | e3   | ♙f5  |



This is a very interesting and rather 'young' option. With 5.cxd5 White bypasses the well-studied variations of the Vienna (after 5...dxc4) and transfers the position into the Carlsbad Variation but with the black bishop in an unfavourable position on b4. Of course, it is not entirely profitable for Black to continue playing according



Alireza Firouzja

to the Carlsbad method (8...c6), so the alternative 8...♙f5 is becoming more and more popular. True, it should be noted that you need to be prepared for a rather risky weakening of your own king. How dangerous this can be, we will analyse with the help of recent games by top chess players.

In the diagram position, White has two ways of recapturing after 9.♙b3 (the move-order 9.♙e2 ♘bd7 10.♙b3 is a Grischuk specialty; see Game 4) 9...♙xc3+: 10.♙xc3 and 10.bxc3.

## The queen takes on c3

Without the dark-squared bishop, Black's play with ...c7-c5 is not so effective, so after 10.♙xc3 the best chance for Black is to attack on the kingside with ...g7-g5 and ...h6-h5. After 10...g5 11.♙g3 ♘e4 12.♙a3 Black has three options: 12...♙e8, 12...♘c6 and 12...♘bd7. The move 12...♙e8 increases the pressure on the e3-pawn and prepares a pawn storm on the kingside. In addition there is the possibility of exchanging the queens by ...♙e7 when necessary. Shankland's improvement 14.♘e5! against Dominguez (with the idea f2-f3) allows White to continue the game without any worries, whereas his move 14.♙c1?! against Vidit soon led White into trouble. It turned out that the inclusion of 14.♙c1 ♘c6 plays into Black's hands. The same is true for the immediate and rare push 12...h5!? (instead of 12...♙e8), applied by Bok against Urkedal, where White played 'regularly' with 13.♙c1 ♘c6 14.♘e5 and got into a difficult position. Realizing

that White's main method to save his ♔g3 is to move the ♖f3 away and play f2-f3, Black started to fight for the e5-square with 12...♘c6 (Firouzja) and 12...♗bd7 (Aronian) instead of 12...♖e8. In both cases, White used the manoeuvre ♖f3-d2, which is fraught with some threats. Indeed, the white king loses his castling rights, but he can also escape to the queenside, giving White the opportunity to attack on the kingside. In his game against Carlsen, Firouzja prevented the white king from escaping to the queenside with a few precise moves (14...c6 and 17...♖a5+) and got good counterplay.

Aronian's move 12...♗bd7 is less connected with the further attack with ...h5-h4 and more with the consolidation and strengthening of the position of Black's king and centre with ...♗d6.

### The pawn takes on c3

The plan 10.bxc3 is slightly less popular these days. After it was proved earlier that following 10...♗bd7 11.♙e2 c5, taking on b7 with the strong ♙f5 and closed centre after ...c5-c4 is good for Black, the struggle flares up after the exact move 12.dxc5 g5 13.♙g3 ♖c5 14.♖b4.



White has a plan here to open the centre for his two bishops with c3-c4 and try to get to the weakened black king. Black, in return, does not have an attack on the

kingside here (in contrast to the ♖xc3 variations) and his main counterplay is against the weak c3-pawn, with or without ...♗fe4. The combination of the moves ...♗fe4 and ...♖e7, the most common move, played in old games as well as in the most recent game Grischuk-So, has also proved good, apart from the gross mistake So made with 21...♙g6?. Fortunately, there is still always the good old move 21...a5! from Wojtaszek, which gave him equal chances. For Black, Firouzja's novelty against Grischuk, 16...a5!, deserves special attention in the system with 14...♗fe4 and 15...♖c8! (instead of 15...♖e7). Unfortunately, he did not crown his idea with the spectacular 17...♗a4!, but anyway 15...♖c8 looks more promising than 15...♖e7.

Finally, the third option is to leave the knight on f6 to protect the d5-pawn and start counterplay on the queenside with ...a7-a5 and ...♖b6. But Black needs to be careful, as without ...♗e4, the d6-square is weakened, which Giri could have exploited in his game against Maghsoodloo with 20.♗e5!. True, Black made a mistake one move earlier, so in general the evaluation of this option is also okay for Black.

### Conclusion

Summing up, it should be noted that Black has counterchances in both continuations. But White has a choice which position he wants to play. In the case of 10.♖xc3, as a rule both sides, after ♗d2 and ♙d3, exchange a couple more pieces, simplifying the position and reducing the risks. If White wants to play a more complicated position with several tactical possibilities, then the variation with 10.bxc3 and 12.dxc5 is for him.

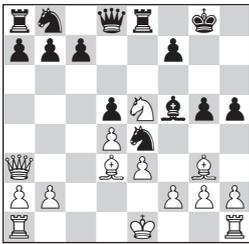
**The queen takes on c3**

**10. ♖xc3**

**Samuel Shankland 1**  
**Leinier Dominguez Perez**

Opera Euro Rapid Prelim 2021 (10)

**1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 d5 4.♟c3 ♟b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♟g5 h6 7.♟h4 0-0 8.e3 ♟f5 9.♖b3 ♟xc3+ 10.♗xc3 g5 11.♟g3 ♟e4 12.♖a3 ♟e8 13.♟d3 h5 14.♟e5!N** Worse is 14.♖c1?! ♟c6 15.0-0?! (15.♟e5! h4 16.f3 hxg3 17.♟xc6 bxc6 18.fxe4 ♟xe4 19.hxg3 ♖f6), leading to an incorrect piece sacrifice: 15...h4 16.♟xc7?! (perhaps sacrificing the other way was better: 16.♟e5! f6 17.♖b3 fxe5 18.♖xb7 g4+ and here the black king is more exposed) 16...♗xc7 17.♟xg5 ♖d7 18.♟xe4 ♟xe4 19.♟xe4 ♟xe4+ Shankland-Vidit, Biel blitz 2019.



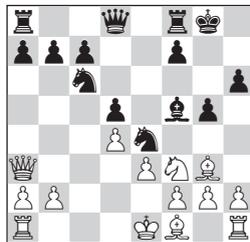
An important improvement, White will save his ♟g3 by f2-f3. **14...♖e7** This is the advantage of the move ...♟e8: now the weakness of the black king is not so dangerous. Also possible is 14...h4 15.f3! ♟d6! (but not 15...hxg3 16.fxe4 ♟xe4 17.♟xe4 dxe4 18.0-0± and here the ♟e5 is very strong) 16.♟xf5 ♟xf5 17.♟f2 ♟d7∞. **15.♗xe7 ♟xe7 16.0-0 f6** 16...h4 17.f3 ♟d6=. **17.f3 fxe5 18.fxe4 ♟xe4 19.♟xe4 dxe4 20.h4!** An important move, strengthening the ♟g3. 20...♟xe5?! ♟d7 21.♟g3 h4+. **20...exd4 21.♟xd4 ♟c6 22.♟d5 ♟b4 23.♟xg5+ ♟g7 24.♟d2?! 24.♟f4=. 24...♟d8+ 25.♟e2 ♟d3 26.♟f4 c6 27.g4 ♟xg5 28.hxg5 hxg4 29.♟g1 ♟g7 30.♟xg4 ♟g6** Black could have obtained a slightly better endgame by capturing the open file: 30...♟h8!+. **31.♟h4**

**♟f5 32.♟h7 ♟xf4+ 33.exf4 ♟xf4 34.g6 ♟f5 35.♟xb7 ♟xg6 36.♟xa7 ♟f5 37.♟c7 ♟a8 38.♟xc6 ♟xa2 39.♟e3 ♟xb2 40.♟c5+ ♟e6 41.♟xe4 ♟b4+ 42.♟d3 ♟d6 43.♟c4 ♟xc4 44.♟xc4 ½-½**

**Magnus Carlsen 2**  
**Alireza Firouzja**

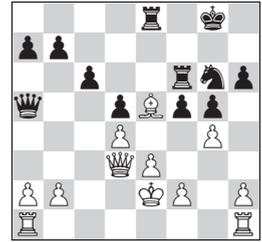
Chess24 Banter Blitz Cup 2020 (7)

**1.d4 ♟f6 2.♟f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.♟c3 ♟b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♟g5 0-0 7.e3 h6 8.♟h4 ♟f5 9.♖b3 ♟xc3+ 10.♗xc3 g5 11.♟g3 ♟e4 12.♖a3 ♟c6** Also interesting is the immediate 12...h5!N 13.♖c1 ♟c6 14.♟e5?! (with ...♟c6 this move does not work; already necessary was 14.h3!; ♟xg3 15.fxg3 f6∞ and both sides have several weaknesses) 14...♟xe5 15.♟xe5 f6! 16.♟g3 (16.♟xc7? ♟c8 17.♟xd8 ♟xc1+ 18.♟e2 ♟xd8+) 16...h4 17.f3□ (17.♟xc7 ♟c8+) 17...hxg3 18.fxe4 ♟xe4 19.hxg3 c6 20.♟d3 ♟e8 21.♟f2 ♖d7 22.♟g1 ♟g7+ Urkedal-Bok, Online Olympiad rapid 2020.



12...♟c6 is a quite aggressive continuation. This move also supports the pawn attack with ...h5-h4, and in case of ♟d3 and ♟d2, White has to reckon with ...♟e8 and ...♟xd4. **13.♟b5** In case of 13.♖c1 or 13.♟d3 Black will play 13...h5. **13...♟e7 14.♟d2 c6 15.♟d3 ♟xd2 16.♟xd2 ♟xd3 17.♖xd3 ♖a5+** A precise move. In case of 17...♟g6 18.♟c2∞, after his king hides on the queenside, White can start an attack against Black's king with full force. **18.♟e2 18.♟c2 c5! 19.h4 c4 20.♖e2 ♖a4+!** and White cannot hide from the checks except

by disrupting the connection between his rooks. **18...f5 19.♟d6 19.h4 f4 20.exf4 g4±. 19...♟ae8 20.g4?!** Perhaps Carlsen missed Black's 21st move. 20.h4! deserves attention, e.g. 20...g4 (20...♖d8 21.♟xe7 ♟xe7 22.hxg5 hxg5 23.g4f) 21.h5±. **20...♟f6 21.♟e5? ♟g6!**



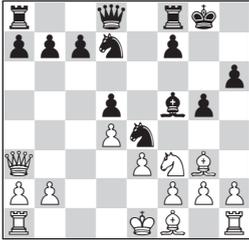
**22.h4 ♟xe5?** Firouzja misses his chance: 22...fxg4! 23.hxg5 ♟xe5! 24.dxe5 ♟xe5 25.♖c2 ♖a6+ 26.♟d1 hxg5!+. **23.dxe5 ♟xe5 24.hxg5 hxg5 25.♟h5 ♟b4 26.♟xg5+ ♟f7 27.b3?! 27.♖b3=. 27...♖f4 28.♖xf5?** The losing mistake. White still holds after 28.♖c3 ♖xg5 29.♖xe5 ♖xg4+ 30.f3 ♖g2+ 31.♟d3 with a highly probable perpetual check. **28...♖xg5 29.♖xg5 ♟xg5 30.♟g1 ♟g8 31.f4 ♟e6 32.♟d3 ♟ge8 33.♟g3 ♟e4 34.♟h3 ♟g7 35.g5 d4 36.exd4 ♟xf4 37.♟c3 ♟d8 38.♟e3 ♟d7 39.♟d3 ♟g4 40.♟c4 ♟xg5 41.♟c3 ♟gd5 42.♟g3+ ♟f7 43.♟g4 ♟e7 44.♟e4+ ♟d8 45.♟h4 ♟c7 46.a4 b6 47.♟c4 ♟b7 48.♟c3 a5 49.♟e4 b5 50.axb5 cxb5 51.♟d3 ♟d6 52.♟c3 ♟b6 53.♟d3 a4 54.bxa4 bxa4 55.♟c4 a3 56.♟b3 ♟xd4 57.♟e1 ♟d3+ 58.♟a2 ♟b5 59.♟b1+ ♟a4 60.♟c1 ♟d2+ 61.♟a1 ♟b3 62.♟b1+ ♟b2 63.♟c1 ♟a2+ 64.♟b1 ♟ad2 65.♟a1 ♟d1 66.♟b1+ ♟xb1+ 67.♟xb1 ♟d1# 0-1**

**Samuel Shankland 3**  
**Levon Aronian**

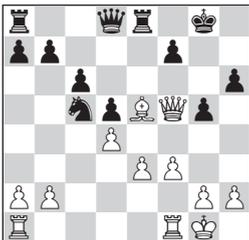
Opera Euro Rapid Prelim 2021 (7)

**1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3.♟f3 d5 4.♟c3 ♟b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♟g5 h6 7.♟h4 0-0 8.e3 ♟f5 9.♖b3 ♟xc3+ 10.♗xc3 g5! 11.♟g3 ♟e4 12.♖a3** If 12.♖xc7 ♟c6! (worse is 12...♖xc7 13.♟xc7 ♟c6 14.♟b5

f6 24. ♖xc6 bxc6 16. ♖a5 ♖ab8 17.b4± and White keeps an extra pawn, Grischuk-Sethuraman, Astana tt 2019) 13. ♖xd8 ♖fxd8 14. ♖e2 ♖ac8 15.0-0 h5! (the key to Black's defence) 16.h4 g4 17. ♖e5 ♖b4 18. ♖f4 f6 19. ♖d3 ♖c3= Ding Liren-Aronian, Palma de Mallorca 2017. **12... ♖d7!?N** A novelty from Aronian. Earlier, 12... ♖e8, 12...h5 (Bok), 12... ♖c6 (Firouzja) were seen.



**13. ♖d3** By transposition (... ♖e8 and ... ♖d7), a similar position arose after 13. ♖d2 (allowing the exchange of only one piece, but delaying his development) 13... ♖e8 (Black did not dare to play 13... ♖xd2!?) 14. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 15.f3 ♖g6 16. ♖e2 c6 17.h4 ♖f6 18. ♖f2 ♖e6 19.hxg5 hxg5 20. ♖ae1 ♖ae8= and the weakness of the black king is compensated by the weakness of the e3-pawn, Tabatabaei-Blübaum, Zürich 2019. **13... ♖e8 14. ♖d2 ♖df6 15. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 16.0-0 ♖xd3 17. ♖xd3 ♖e4 18. ♖e5 c6** It was possible to do without the move ...c7-c6 for now: 18... ♖d7!? 19.f3 ♖d6∞ **19.f3 ♖c5?** Spectacular, but useless. It was necessary to cover the f5-square: 19... ♖d6⇒. **20. ♖f5!**

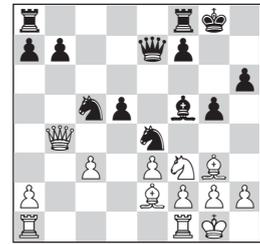


**20... ♖e7 21.f4!** ♖e4 **22.fxg5 hxg5 23. ♖f3?!** After 23. ♖g4! with the idea ♖f5 and ♖af1 Black's position could become critical, e.g. 23...

f6 24. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 25. ♖xg5+ ♖g7 26. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 27. ♖xf6 ♖xe3 28. ♖af1± with a pawn up and good winning chances. **23...f6 24. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 25. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 26. ♖xf6 ♖xe3 27. ♖g6+ ♖h7 28. ♖xg5 ♖g8 29. ♖xg8?!** Still better was 29. ♖e5 ♖d3 30. ♖e7+ ♖g7 31. ♖ae1±. **29... ♖xg8 30. ♖f2 ♖d3 31.g4?** White could have kept an equal position with 31. ♖e1 ♖xd4 32. ♖e7 ♖d2+ 33. ♖e2 ♖d3. **31... ♖xd4 32. ♖g3 ♖d3+ 33. ♖h4 ♖d2 34.h3 ♖xb2 35. ♖g5 d4 36. ♖d1 c5 37.h4 ♖xa2** Now the b-pawn will run. In addition, White's g- and h-pawns are not the best runners as a rook can fight them from the side. **38.h5 b5 39.h6 b4 40. ♖e1 b3 41. ♖e8+** 41. ♖g6 ♖a6+-+. **41... ♖f7 42.h7 ♖h2 43.h8 ♖ ♖xh8 44. ♖xh8 c4 45. ♖f5 c3 46.g5 b2?** Winning would have been 46... c2! 47.g6+ ♖g7! 48. ♖c8 b2 49. ♖c7+ ♖f8 50. ♖c8+ ♖e7 51.g7 b1♖. Now, in case of checks on the 8th rank, we could get the same position as in the game but the black king can reach c3, which decides the game. **47.g6+ ♖e7 48. ♖b8 c2 49.g7 b1♖ 50.g8 ♖ c1♖+ 51. ♖xb1 ♖xb1+ 52. ♖e5 d3 53. ♖e6+ ♖d8 54. ♖d6+ ♖c8 55. ♖c6+ ♖b8 56. ♖d4! d2 56... ♖b6+? 57. ♖xb6+ axb6 58. ♖xd3=.** **57. ♖d6+ ♖b7 58. ♖e7+ ♖b6 59. ♖d8+?** 59. ♖c5+ would still have kept the balance. **59... ♖a6 60. ♖c8+ ♖a5 61. ♖c5+ ♖b5 62. ♖xa7+ ♖b4 63. ♖e7+ ♖a4 64. ♖a7+ ♖b3 65. ♖f7+ ♖b2 0-1**

### The pawn takes on c3 10.bxc3

**Alexander Grischuk 4 Wesley So**  
PRO League Stage 2020 (5)  
**1.d4 ♖f6 2. ♖f3 d5 3.c4 e6 4. ♖c3 ♖b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6. ♖g5 h6 7. ♖h4 0-0 8.e3 ♖f5 9. ♖e2 ♖bd7 10. ♖b3 ♖xc3+ 11.bxc3 c5 12.dxc5 g5 13. ♖g3 ♖xc5 14. ♖b4 ♖fe4 15.0-0 ♖e7**



The black queen moves out of the pin on the d5-pawn in advance, preventing the ♖g3-e5-d4 manoeuvre at the same time. **16.c4** Either now or after ♖d1, c3-c4 is the planned move. The defensive method with the exchange of bishops is also possible: 16. ♖ad1 ♖fd8 17.c4 dxc4 18. ♖xc4 transposing to the game position after 18. ♖ad1 **16...dxc4 17. ♖xc4 ♖fd8 17... ♖e6!?** **18. ♖ad1 18. ♖d4 ♖g6 19. ♖ad1 ♖ac8 20. ♖b3 b6=.** **18... ♖xd1 18... ♖e6 19. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 20. ♖d4 ♖f6 (20... ♖xa2 21.f3 ♖xg3 22.hxg3 b6 23.g4∞ looks scary) 21.f3 ♖xg3 22.hxg3 b6 23.g4 ♖d7 24. ♖f5 ♖ad8 25. ♖xd7 ♖xd7** with equality, but Black's position is not easy to play, e.g. 26. ♖b1∞ Cheparinov-Salomon, Batumi Ech tt 2019. **19. ♖xd1 ♖d8 20. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 21. ♖d4**



**21... ♖g6?N** This position had already been seen, but the short time control plays tricks on Black; 21...a5! 22. ♖b2 (22. ♖b1 ♖xg3 23. ♖xf5 ♖xf5 24. ♖xf5 ♖d1+ 25. ♖f1 b6=) 22... ♖xg3 23.hxg3 ♖d7 24. ♖c2 ♖b6 25. ♖d5 ♖f8 26. ♖c4 ♖e6 27. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 28. ♖xe6+ fxe6= Aronian-Wojtaszek, Heraklion Ech tt 2017; 28... ♖xe6 29. ♖c5+ ♖g7 30. ♖xa5±. **22.f3 a5?!** Both players did not notice the threat, otherwise Black would

have agreed to the loss of ‘just’ a pawn with 22... ♖xg3 23. ♖xc5 ♖h5 24. ♗xa7±. **23... ♖a3?** 23. ♗b1!+-.

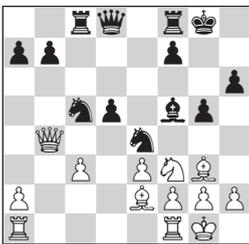
**23... ♖xg3 24. ♖xc5 ♖h5 25. e4 b6 26. ♖d5 ♖e7** 26... ♗xd5 27. ♖xd5 ♖f8=.

**27. ♖c6 ♖f6 28. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 29. ♖f2** Perhaps White could have exploited the offside position of the ♖g6 with 29. ♖c6!? ♖f8 30. ♖a7 ♖d7 31. ♖c8±.

**29... ♖f8 30. ♖e3 ♖e7 31. e5 ♖h5=** If 31... ♖d7 32. ♖c6+±, pushing the king back. **32. g3 ♖g7 33. ♖d3 ♖e6!** Eliminating into a drawn pawn endgame. **34. ♖xg6 fxg6 35. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 36. ♖d4 a4 37. a3 h5 38. ♖e4 h4 39. gxh4 gxh4 40. f4 h3 41. ♖d4 b5 42. ♖c5 g5 43. fxg5 ♖xe5 44. ♖xb5 ♖f5 45. ♖xa4 ♖xg5 46. ♖b4 ♖f4 47. a4 ♖f3 48. a5 ♖g2 49. a6 ♖xh2 50. a7 ♖g1 51. a8 ♗h2 52. ♖g8+ ♖h1 53. ♖d5+ ♖g1 54. ♖g5+ ♖h1 55. ♖f4 ♖g1 56. ♖g4+ ♖h1 57. ♖f3+ ♖g1 58. ♖f4 h1 ♗ 59. ♖c1+ ♖h2 60. ♖xh1+ ♖xh1 ½-½**

**Alexander Grischuk 5**

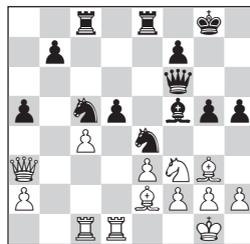
**Alireza Firouzja**  
 Chessbrahmin May 2020 (2.2)  
**1. d4 ♖f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♖f3 d5 4. ♖c3 ♖b4 5. cxd5 exd5 6. ♖g5 h6 7. ♖h4 0-0 8. e3 ♖f5 9. ♖e2 ♖bd7 10. ♗b3 ♖xc3+ 11. bxc3 c5 12. dxc5 g5 13. ♖g3 ♖xc5 14. ♗b4 ♖fe4 15. 0-0 ♖c8**



A more recent move than 15... ♖e7, as it were inviting White to play ♖d1, but it White’s next move that may be the reason for his difficulties: **16. ♖fd1!** A typical but imprecise move. Better was 16. ♖e5=. **16... a5!** A novelty from Firouzja. Also not bad was the earlier try 16... ♖e8 17. c4 (17. ♖a1 ♗b6 18. ♖xd5 ♖e6⇒) 17... ♗f6

18. ♖a1 dxc4 19. ♖xc4 h5 20. ♖d6 ♖xd6 (20... b6±) 21. ♖xc5 ♖e4 22. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 23. ♗d4 (23. ♗xb7 ♖c3=) 23... ♗xd4 24. ♖xd4 ♖g6= De Waele-Lammens, Belgium tt 2019/20. **17. ♖a3?!** Grischuk plays moves that are usually made in such positions, but this one does not work here; 17. ♗d4!?.

**17... ♖e8?!** Unfortunately, Firouzja misses a chance to gain an advantage, which is not uncommon for top-level tournaments over the past year, due to the short time controls; 17... ♖a4! 18. c4 (18. ♖d4 ♖axc3 19. ♖f3 ♖g6 20. ♖xe4 ♖xe4±) 18... ♖ac3±. **18. ♖a1 h5?!** The wrong move-order. 18... b6! 19. c4 ♗f6 20. ♖xd5 (20. cxd5 h5!)= 20... ♖e6=. **19. c4 ♗f6?!** 19... b6 20. ♗b2!±.

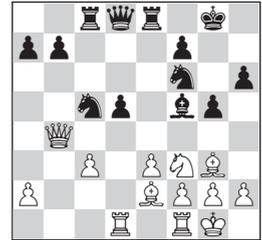


**20. ♖xd5?!** Now virtually winning would have been 20. ♖e5! ♖xe5 21. ♖xe5 ♗xe5 22. ♖xd5 ♗f6 23. f3. **20... ♖e6± 21. ♖dd1 ♖f5?** 21... b6!=. **22. ♖d5?!** Again missing 22. ♖e5!. **22... ♖e6± 23. ♖dd1 ♖f5?** 23... b6!=. **24. ♖d5?!** Threefold repetition, again missing 24. ♖e5! ♖xe5 25. ♖xe5 ♗xe5 26. ♖d5 ♗f6 27. f3. ½-½

**Anish Giri 6**

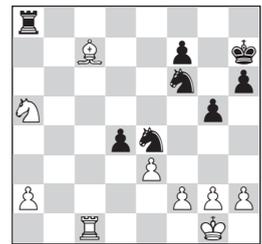
**Parham Maghsoodloo**  
 PRO League KO Stage 2020 (3)  
**1. ♖f3 d5 2. d4 ♖f6 3. c4 e6 4. ♖c3 ♖b4 5. cxd5 exd5 6. ♖g5 h6 7. ♖h4 0-0 8. e3 ♖f5 9. ♗b3 ♖xc3+ 10. bxc3 ♖bd7 11. ♖e2** It is dangerous to take on b7, which will be answered by 11... c5 with the threat of 12... ♗a5. **11... c5 12. dxc5!** Logical – White has two bishops and needs space. **12... g5 13. ♖g3 ♖xc5 14. ♗b4 ♖c8**

**15. 0-0 ♖e8 16. ♖ad1** A novelty by Giri. Previously, 16. ♖fd1 had been played, which is probably more logical since the ♖a1 may be needed on c1 or b1 and the ♖e2 can hide on f1 from the threat ... ♖e4-c3 which is hanging over White’s head.



**16... a5 17. ♖a3 ♗b6 18. c4 dxc4?!** White’s main problem is the c3-square: 18... ♖ce4! 19. cxd5 (19. ♖d4 ♖g6 20. ♖b1 ♗c5 21. ♗xc5 ♖xc5 22. ♖xb7 dxc4=) 19... ♖c3±.

**19. ♖d6 ♖c6 20. ♖xc6** Giri had a nice tactical solution here: 20. ♖e5! ♖ce4 (20... ♖xd6? 21. ♖xc4+-) 21. ♖xc6 bxc6 22. ♖xc4 ♗b4 23. ♗xa5 ♗xa5 24. ♖xa5±. **20... bxc6 21. ♖xc4 ♖ce4 22. ♖e5** Allowing the exchange of bishops, with a further simplification of the position. Maybe interesting was 22. ♖d4!? ♖d7 23. ♗d3∞. **22... ♖e6 23. ♖c1 ♖d5 24. ♖xd5 cxd5 25. ♖c6!** White needs to move the knight to d4 to control the weak f5-square. **25... ♖h7 26. ♗xa5?!** Probably Anish missed 28... d4!, otherwise he would have preferred 26. ♖d4!?. **26... ♗xa5 27. ♖xa5 ♖a8 28. ♖c7 d4!**



**29. exd4 ♖d5 30. ♖b3 ♖xa2 31. ♖g3 f5 32. ♖c5?!** Necessary was 32. f3 ♖ec3 33. ♖e1 ♖e2+ 34. ♖h1 ♖b2!, winning back the d4-pawn. Black has the initiative, but due

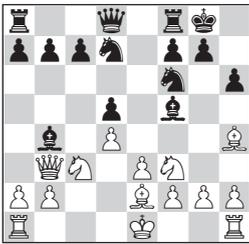
to the limited material White has good chances of holding the draw. **32...♗ec3 33.♞e1 f4 34.♗e6 fxg3 35.hxg3 ♕g6 36.♗f1 ♖b4 37.♗c5 ♗c2 38.♞e6+ ♗f7 39.f3 ♗xd4 40.♞xh6 ♗d5 41.♗e4 ♗e3+ 42.♕g1 g4 43.♞d6 ♞xg2+ 44.♗h1 ♗xf3 45.♗g5+ ♗e7 46.♞e6+ ♗d7 47.♞h6 ♞g1# 0-1**

**A Grischuk specialty**  
**9.♗e2 ♗bd7 10.♞b3**

**Rameshbabu Pragnanandhaa 7 Levon Aronian**

New In Chess Classic 2021 (11)

**1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5 4.♗c3 ♗b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗h4 0-0 8.e3 ♗f5 9.♗e2 ♗bd7 10.♞b3**  
 This move-order with 9.♗e2 first is a Grischuk specialty!



**10...c5** One of the ways to deviate from the standard 10...♗xc3+ 11.bxc3 – see the previous heading.

A) 10...♗a5 11.0-0 c6 12.♞xb7?! (12.♗e5 ♞b6= ½-½ (26) Giri-Navara, Shamkir 2019) 12...♞b8 13.♗xf6 (13.♞xc6 g5 14.♗xg5 hxg5 15.♗xg5 ♞b6 16.♞a4 ♗xc3 17.bxc3=) 13...♗xf6 (13...♞xb7?! 14.♗xd8 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♞xd8 16.♞fc1 ♞b2 17.♗f1±) 14.♞a6 ♞xb2 15.♗a4! followed by 16.♗c5±;

B) 10...♞e7 was played by Grischuk (as Black!) against Benjamin Bok in the 2019 FIDE World Cup to advance to the next round.

**11.dxc5 ♗a5** 11...a5 12.0-0 ♗xc5 13.♞d1 ♗xc3 14.bxc3 ♗ce4 15.♞c1 ♞c8 16.♗d4= ♗d7 (16...♗h7) 17.c4 dxc4 (17...g5 18.♗g3 ♞e7 19.cxd5 ♞xc1 20.♞xc1 ♗xd5±) 18.♗xc4 g5 19.♗g3± b5? 20.♗xb5! ♗c3? (Grischuk-Firouzja, Internet blitz 2020) 21.♗xd7 ♗xd1 (21...♞xd7 22.♞d3 ♗xa2 23.♞xc8 ♞xc8 24.♗f5+–) 22.♗xc8 ♗b2 23.♗c6 ♞d3 24.♗e7+ ♕g7 25.♗e5 ♗c4 26.♗d4 ♞d8 27.♞fd1+–. **12.a3** 12.♗xf6 ♗xf6 13.♗d4 ♗d7 14.0-0 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 (15.♞xc3 ♞xc3 16.bxc3 ♞fc8= Grischuk-Aronian, Internet blitz 2020) 15...♞xc5 16.c4 (16.♞xb7 ♞fb8 17.♞a6 ♗e4=) 16...dxc4 17.♗xc4 (17.♞xc4 ♞fc8 18.♞xc5 ♞xc5 19.♗f3 ♞b8=) 17...b5 18.♗e2 ♞fc8= Grischuk-Aronian, Internet blitz 2020.

**12...♗xc3+ 13.bxc3** 13.♞xc3 ♞xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♞fc8 15.♗d4 ♗g6 (15...♗h7 16.c4 ♞xc5 17.♗b3 ♞c7 18.cxd5 ♗xd5 19.♗f3 ♗f7f6 20.♗g3 ♞cc8 and Black should be fine) 16.c6 bxc6 17.♗a6 ♞cb8 18.♗xc6 ♞b6 19.♗e7+ ♕h7 20.♗e2 ♗e4 21.f3 ♞e8 22.fxe4 ♞xe7 23.exd5 g5 and the white pawns will fall like ripe fruit. **13...♗e4 14.♗d4 ♗h7 15.♞b4 ♞xc5 16.♞c1 ♞fc8 17.0-0 ♗e5 18.♗e7 ♞xb4 18...♗c7!?. 19.cxb4 ♗c3 20.♗f3 ♞c4 21.b5?! 21.♗d1 ♞ac8 22.♞a1. 21...♞ac8 22.♗b4 ♗xf3+ 23.gxf3 ♗d3 24.♞fe1 ♗xb5! 25.♞xc4 ♗xc4 26.♗f5 ♞e8 27.a4 ♗c7 28.♞c1 ♞e6?! 28...♗h7±. 29.h4?! 29.e4!. 29...♗e8 30.a5 ♗h7 31.♗h2 ♞c6 32.♗d4 ♞c7 33.♞b1 ♗a6 34.♕g3 ♗f6 35.♗f4 ♗d7 36.e4?! dxe4 36...♞c4 37.♗f5 dxe4± 38.fxe4 ♗f6+–. 37.fxe4 ♗c5 38.♗e3 ♗d3 39.♗d6 ♞c3 39...♞c4 40.f3 ♞a4 41.♗b8 ♞xa5 42.♗xa7. 40.♗d2? 40.♗b5! should have kept the balance. 40...♞c4! 41.♗xd3 41.♗e3 is met by 41...♗xf2, netting a second pawn. 41...♞b4+ 42.♗c2 ♞xd4 43.e5 ♞xh4+– 44.♗d2 ♞a4 45.♗e3 g5 46.♗b4 ♕g6 47.♗e4 ♞a2 48.♗c5 ♞xa5 49.♗xa7 ♗b5 50.♗d4 ♗c6+ 51.♗d3 ♗f5 52.♗c3 ♞xe5 53.♗xe5 ♗e4+ 0-1**

**Exercise 1**



position after 13...h6-h5

How can White save his ♗g3?  
 (solutions on page 251)

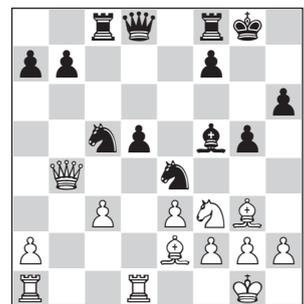
**Exercise 2**



position after 12...♗b8-c6

What is the best move for White here?

**Exercise 3**



position after 16.♞f1-d1

Find the best move for Black.

# Forward Thinking

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.**

In the old days, a monograph was something you read whilst moving pieces around a chessboard. Then along came computers, the ubiquitous ChessBase and our addiction to analysis engines. For many, the age of videos and DVDs led inexorably to the once cherished chess set being placed to one side to gather dust.

Now, into the third decade of the present century, playing, studying, or just watching are all readily done online with modern media offering greater and greater choice. I can now examine the works in my review section using Forward Chess on my telephone, or interact and get rapid stats feedback with Chessable. What next? Looking forward, I think that the chess world is going to evolve even further in directions that were unimaginable only a short time ago. Still, it's already an exciting time if you like to do your chess thing in any way possible, and even (occasionally!) with a board! A cautionary note is perhaps worth adding here, as whatever the future holds for chess fans, there is no easy shortcut to learning the openings properly. So please read on (or should I write 'click on?')...

*Dmitry Kryakvin*  
**The Modern French Defence 1**  
Chess Stars 2020

Dmitry Kryakvin's two-volume work lays out a pragmatic repertoire, and is ideal for those who are looking to steer away from the main lines. In fact I should really write repertoires, as he offers two recommendations for Black – one seeking equality, the other a complicated struggle – against each of White's major options. So forking out twice (as there are two volumes) doesn't seem that expensive if one gets a double portion!

The author himself describes his work as 'An alternative French Defence...' as many of his suggestions are essentially 'reasonable sidelines'. He has thus generally steered clear of what his confrères have already put into print, as well as avoided getting bogged down with too much theoretical baggage. The reader looking to spruce up, beef up, or even completely shake up, his way of playing the French should certainly find a bunch of new weapons here.

The author has found plenty of room to explain the plans and get involved in the fine detail. A consequence of being diligent, perhaps, but also a result of examining lines that don't require endless game segments to