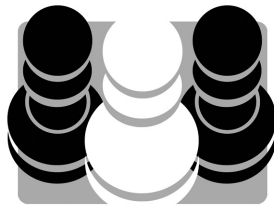


*Grandmaster Repertoire*

# The Dragon 1

By

Gawain Jones



Quality Chess  
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# Preface

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From Harry Golombek and B.H. Wood in the 1940s, through to the 1960s with players such as Peter Lee, Bill Hartston, Andrew Whiteley and David Levy, the Dragon has long been popular in the UK. During the Chess Revolution of the 1970s many of England's top players were frequent users, notably Jonathan Mestel, William Watson and our first Grandmaster Tony Miles. More recently Chris Ward, with his infectious *Winning with the Dragon* books, coupled with his coaching at elite youth events, inspired many of England's top talents to become Dragon exponents.

It is therefore no surprise that I have been playing the Dragon from a young age. I've enjoyed the complex battles and being able to attack White straight out of the opening. My quickest win with the Dragon was in 13 moves; how often does that happen in most defences?

Black's kingside fianchetto immediately sets the stage for a double-edged game. On the one hand, the pawn on g6 can become a hook for White's attack along the h-file. This caveman attack can be quite scary, hence Bobby Fischer's quote: "It's just a matter of throwing in a few sacrifices, then checkmate!"

However, it's not at all one-sided as the g7-bishop does a great job fighting for central control and targeting White's queenside. Often the game becomes sharp and White is forced to take risks. If White declines to get involved in the messy positions with opposite-sided castling then Black will generally be comfortable. His pieces coordinate well, his structure is sound and he has great long-term prospects. The only potential weakness in Black's camp is the d5-square, and that can usually be remedied. Having both the initiative and good long-term chances has always appealed to me. We can attack but we don't need to stake everything on it; if White survives the complications then we may still be able to count on a pleasant endgame.

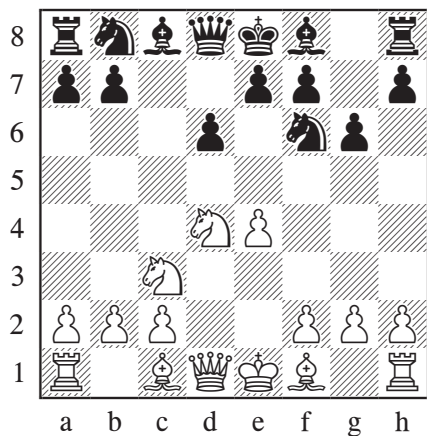
Amateur players often ask me whether the Dragon is still playable at high levels. It's true that a sizeable body of theory has developed, as with every opening in the computer era, but Black is still very much alive and kicking. I have used the Dragon as my main defence throughout my career and, when challenged, most of the elite have opted out of a theoretical duel. In producing this repertoire I have remained as objective and comprehensive as possible, not omitting any line I consider potentially dangerous, no matter how rare it might be. It is inevitable that improvements will be found at some point in the future, but I believe my recommendations will stand up to testing for a long time.

I would like to thank John Shaw for his patience and technical help; Richard Palliser, who has devoted so many hours trying to make my repertoire playable, not least in the Dragon; and my wife Sue, who has supported me and made it possible for me to complete this work. I hope you enjoy reading my book, and that you have fun and success counterattacking with the Dragon!

Gawain Jones  
London, July 2015

# Move Order Guide

The Dragon is reached after the opening moves: **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 g6**



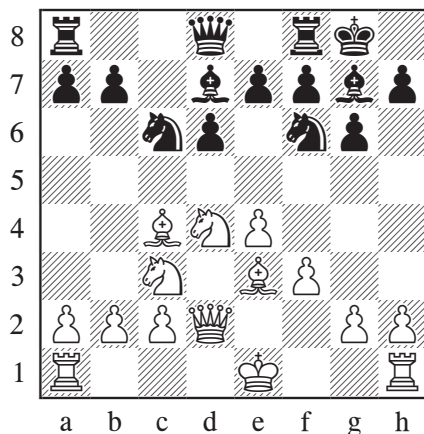
This will be the starting position of our repertoire. There are, of course, a number of ways for White to avoid the Open Sicilian, but to discuss them here would be to stray too far from our main topic, especially when books such as *Experts on the Anti-Sicilian* and Kotronias's forthcoming *Beating the Anti-Sicilians* offer dedicated coverage of these lines.

I will, however, draw your attention to another plausible route to the Dragon, which I have occasionally used in my own praxis: **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3** (5.e5? ♜a5† wins a pawn) **5...d6**

The above move order has the advantage of avoiding 3.♗b5†, which is one of White's most popular anti-Sicilian weapons. However, it also opens up some other possibilities for the first player: 4.♜xd4 is a significant option; 3.c4 angles for a Maroczy Bind; and even 3.h4!? can be considered.

Overall the 2...g6 move order gives White more interesting ways to deviate from the Open Sicilian, so the traditional 2...d6 should be preferred by most players. However, if your repertoire happens to include the Accelerated Dragon (meaning that 3.c4 isn't a worry), and you are facing an opponent who plays both the Open Sicilian and 3.♗b5†, then you may consider 2...g6 to eliminate one of his preferred systems.

Moving on, the primary topic of the first volume is the following main line: **6.♗c3 ♗g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♞d2 ♗c6 9.♗c4 ♗d7**

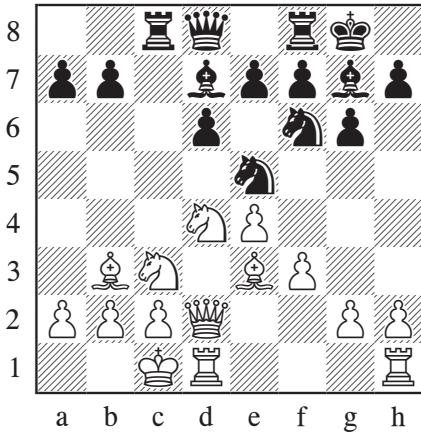


After the most common **10.0-0-0**, I have recommended the Topalov Variation as our main weapon. The tabiya after **10...♞c8 11.♗b3 ♗xd4 12.♗xd4 b5** is discussed in Chapters 7-9. This bypasses the myriad complications of the Soltis Variation, as well as the critical 12.♗b1 variation referred to below.

However, White can obstruct the above plan by altering his move order with **10.h4**. It would be dangerous to allow the pawn to

advance further, so I recommend **10...h5**. Then after **11.0-0-0 ♖c8 12.♗b3 ♜e5** we reach the Soltis Variation, with White having avoided the Topalov Variation.

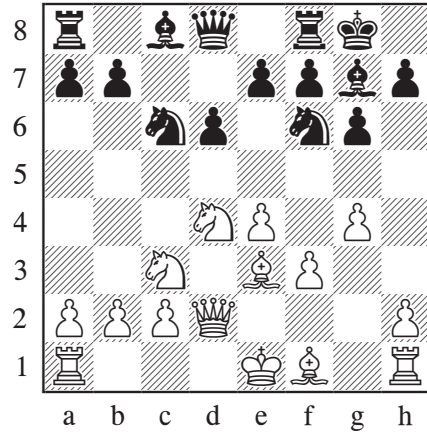
This isn't the end of the world for Black, as he too has avoided certain possibilities. Take the position after **10.0-0-0 ♖c8 11.♗b3 ♜e5**:



From this position, **12.h4 h5** reaches the Soltis Variation. However, the most critical test is reckoned to be **12.♖b1**. Therefore, if White cuts out the Topalov Variation with the 10.h4 move order, he also sacrifices this important option which might have been available had he preferred 10.0-0-0.

Should you wish to play the Soltis Variation as your main choice, rather than the Topalov, I have also included the Burnett Variation in Chapter 10 as an interesting way to challenge **12.♖b1**. This means that, whichever line you choose, you will have a complete repertoire. However, either move order will require you to be ready to play the Soltis Variation. That is why I have covered this first, in Chapters 1-6.

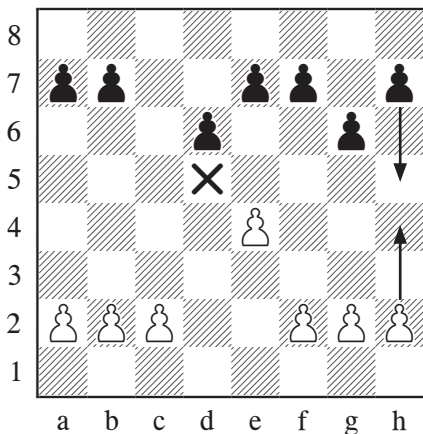
The final two chapters of this first volume are devoted to another important system: **9.g4**



I am recommending the established main line of **9...♗e6**. This generally leads to a healthy game for Black, but you must be ready for a variety of position types, from quiet endgames to double-edged middlegames with unusual pawn structures, as found in the final chapter with **10.♜xe6 fxe6**.

# Dragon Themes

Before getting down to the theory, we will examine a number of commonly occurring themes in the Sicilian Dragon. Let's start by considering the pawn structure, as this is what dictates the character of the position.

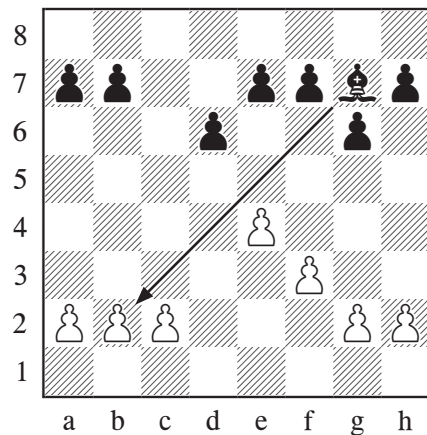


The Dragon is defined by the early deployment of Black's dark-squared bishop to g7. This speeds up Black's kingside development and gives him serious counterattacking chances, but it also has a couple of downsides. Black nearly always castles kingside, so White often tries to exploit the 'hook' on g6 by quickly advancing his h-pawn. Black's other potential problem is the d5-square. After developing his bishop to g7 Black does not really want to move his e-pawn, as the d6-pawn will then be weak. White can try to exploit this by moving the c3-knight to d5. This might be played as an attacking measure, to remove the defensive knight on f6, or it could be for positional gains: if Black elects to exchange knights then White will recapture with his e-pawn, intending to exert pressure along the e-file.

Despite these drawbacks, I believe the advantages of Black's set-up are enough to compensate for the risks. Black develops his dark-squared bishop more actively than in other variations of the Sicilian. The critical lines involve White castling queenside, after which the g7-bishop combines attack and defence, covering the dark squares while pointing at White's king, and the b2-pawn in particular. Black also has an extra central pawn and will generally be happy in the endgame.

I will now present what I consider the most important themes of this opening, with some lightly annotated games to illustrate the most important ideas.

## 1) The Dragon Bishop

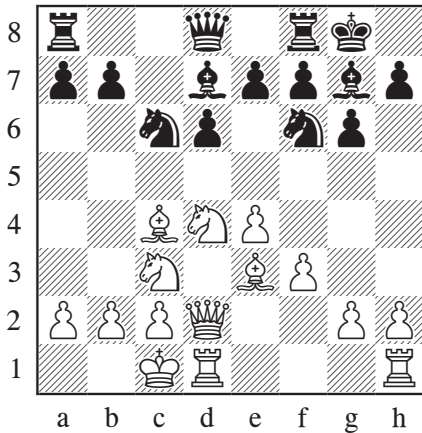


We will start with a couple of games in which White completely underestimates the power of the g7-bishop.

### Milenko Lojanica – Gawain Jones

Victoria 2009

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6  
5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 ♗c6 8.♚d2 0-0  
9.♙c4 ♙d7 10.0-0-0



10...♙b8!?

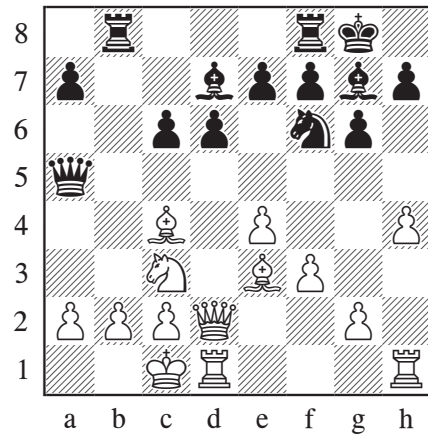
This move introduces the Chinese Dragon, an interesting and relatively new way of fighting against the Yugoslav Attack.

10...♙c8 is how I recommend playing in this book.

11.♗xc6? bxc6

As you will see in variation B3 of Chapter 12 (page 246), this change in the pawn structure gives Black a nice position even when he has spent a tempo putting the rook on c8. Here White is really asking for trouble with the rook already on the b-file.

12.h4 ♚a5



13.♗b1??

My opponent must have been worried about my attack and so decided a queen exchange would be his safest approach. However, the g7-bishop is now allowed into the game.

13...♗xe4!

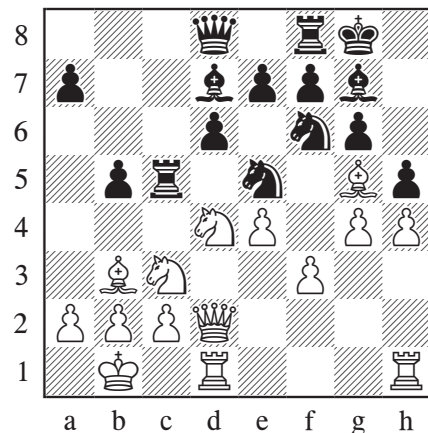
The mate threat on b2 will cost White his queen.

0-1

### Ismet Burovic – Peter Schreiner

Zadar 2014

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6  
5.♗c3 g6 6.♙c4 ♙g7 7.♙e3 0-0 8.f3 ♗c6  
9.♚d2 ♙d7 10.♙b3 ♙c8 11.h4 h5 12.0-0-0  
♗e5 13.♙g5 ♙c5 14.♗b1 b5 15.g4



**15...a5**

15...hxg4 is my recommendation, as detailed in Chapter 1.

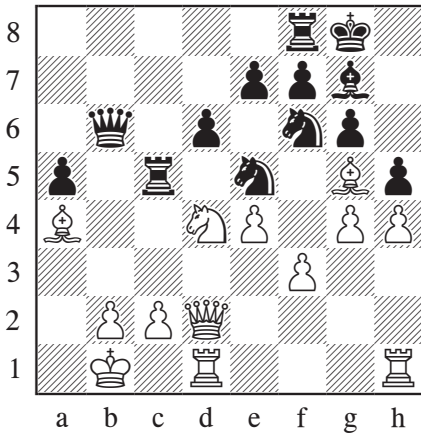
**16.a4?**

This simply accelerates Black's attack.

16.gxh5 and 16.♙xf6 are both much more critical.

**16...bxa4 17.♘xa4 ♙xa4 18.♙xa4 ♖b6!**

Black increases the pressure.

**19.gxh5 ♘xf3!**

We should always be looking out for this blow. Black sacrifices a piece to open up the sleeping g7-bishop.

**20.♖e3**

White declines the piece.

Instead after 20.♘xf3 ♘xe4 21.♖c1 ♘c3† 22.♙a1 ♘xa4 Black regains the piece and has an extra pawn together with his huge attack.

**20...♘xd4 21.♙xd4 ♘g4**

White threw in the towel. Indeed, as Chris Ward notes, 22.♖d2 ♙c4 would pick up a rook.

**0-1****2) The ...d5 break**

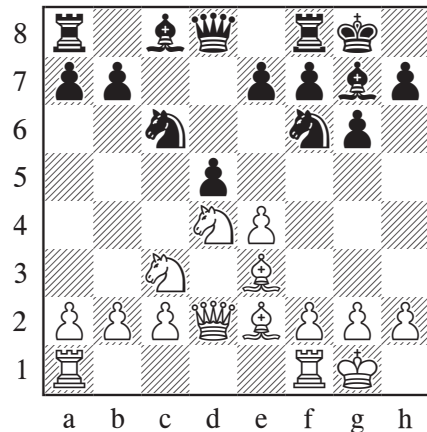
It is often said that if Black manages to counter in the centre with ...d5 in the Sicilian, then he has at least equalized. This is because White's main trump in the Sicilian is his extra space. In the Dragon, the ...d5 break also rids Black of any problems with the d5-square. This will be my recommended approach in many lines, particularly the 9.0-0-0 Yugoslav Attack and Classical Variation, both of which are covered in the second volume.

**Aimen Rizouk – Gawain Jones**

Hinckley 2012

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6  
5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e2 ♙g7 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♙e3 0-0  
9.♖d2 d5

Though it is not forced, I think this central break is the critical test of White's slower lines.

**10.exd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6**

This is a common structure after our central break. Black's queenside pawns are split and White has an outpost on c5, but Black has sufficient counterplay down the b-file and in the centre.

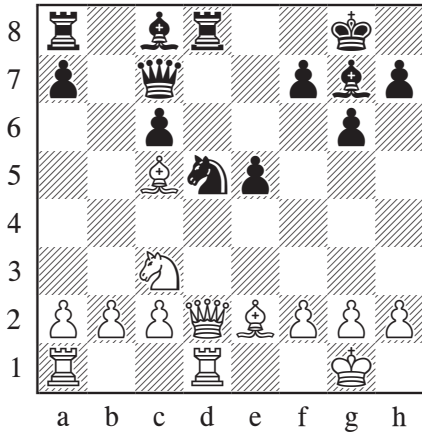
**12.♙fd1 ♖c7 13.♙d4**



White spends a tempo to try and block in the g7-bishop but it will only be temporary.

13...e5 14.♙c5 ♜d8

This type of position is more usual with the white king on the queenside. His king might look more vulnerable there, but at least then White can try attacking on the kingside.



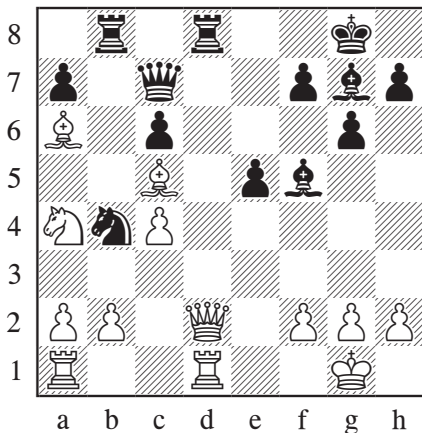
15.♘a4?

My grandmaster opponent has trouble finding a plan. Black's position was already comfortable but now White gets into a lot of trouble.

15...♙f5 16.♙a6 ♜ab8 17.c4?

Going from bad to worse.

17...♘b4

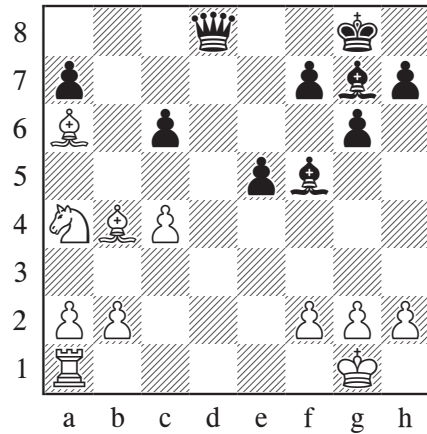


18.♞xd8†

18.♙d6 ♜xd6 19.♞xd6 ♞xd6 20.♞xd6 ♙f8 followed by taking on a6 leaves Black with two huge bishops for the rook.

18...♞xd8 19.♞xd8† ♞xd8 20.♙xb4

Black's material advantage is enough to win slowly, but White's poor coordination and vulnerable kingside make the win easy.



20...♙c2 21.b3 e4 22.♞e1 ♙d4

0-1

### 3) Exchange sacrifices

If you want to enjoy your time playing the Dragon, you need to get used to sacrificing your rook for a minor piece. This can happen in many forms.

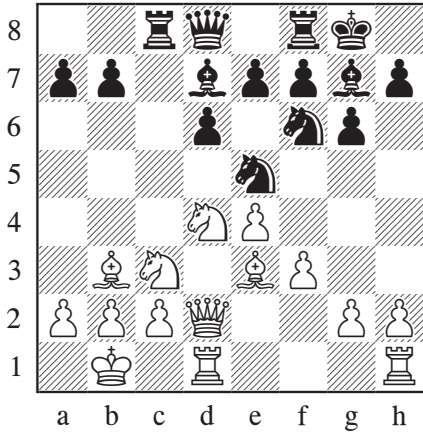
#### 3.1) Sacrifice on c3

This is a common motif throughout the Sicilian and the sacrifice one generally thinks of first. Black damages White's structure and weakens his king's defences. I should point out that in the Burnett Variation (covered in Chapter 10) Black actually sacrifices the rook on c4, but the themes are extremely similar.

Vassily Ivanchuk – Magnus Carlsen

Bilbao 2008

- 1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6  
 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 ♗c6 8.♚d2 0-0  
 9.♙c4 ♙d7 10.0-0-0 ♞c8 11.♙b3 ♘e5  
 12.♙b1



12...a6!?

This little pawn move became fashionable a few years ago. I feel it must be too slow to be objectively best, but it's certainly interesting.

Later in the book I will recommend the more established 12...♗c4.

13.♞he1

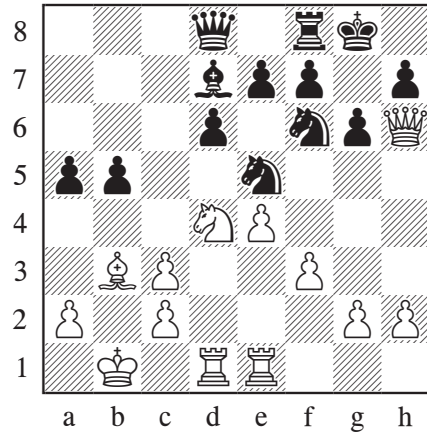
This is a solid move, but 13.h4 must be the critical test. In the Yugoslav Attack every tempo is vital.

13...b5 14.♙h6 ♙xh6 15.♚xh6 ♞xc3!?

The future World Champion cannot resist the thematic sacrifice.

16.bxc3 a5

Black does not even have a pawn for the sacrificed exchange, but White's king will be vulnerable for a long time. The b3-bishop is also short on squares.

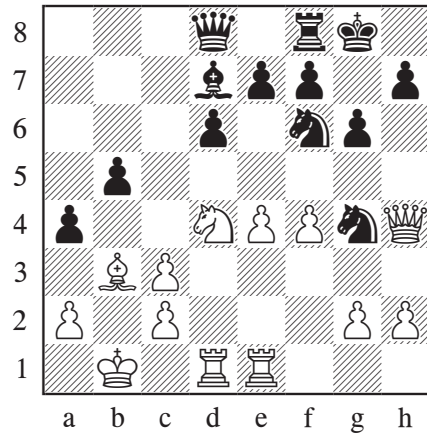


17.f4

Ivanchuk accepts the challenge of an extremely sharp game.

17.a3 ♞c7 18.♚e3 ♞c8 would give Black typical compensation.

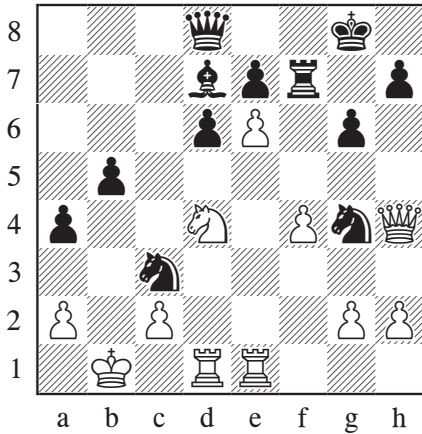
17...♗eg4 18.♚h4 a4



19.♙xf7!?

19.h3 is an alternative approach. 19...axb3 20.♗xb3 (20.cxb3 e5! gives Black good play, as mentioned by Ward.) 20...♗xe4 21.♞xe4 ♗f6 Black has still not managed to pick up any pawns for the exchange but he has much the better structure and long-term pressure on the queenside. Meanwhile White's kingside attack has been halted.

19...♖xf7 20.e5 ♘d5 21.e6 ♘xc3†



22.♔c1

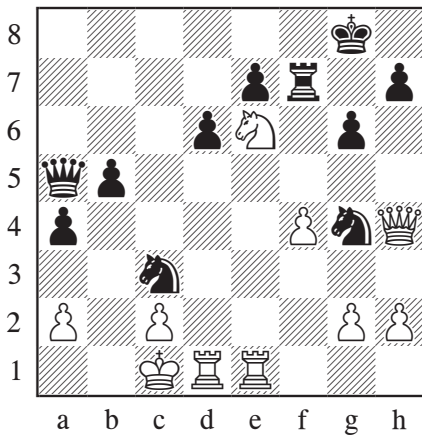
22.♔a1! was the critical test. After 22...♘f6! 23.exf7† ♔xf7 24.♖d3 White has two extra exchanges in return for a pawn, but matters are far from simple. Following 24...♗c8 25.♗g3 b4 White will have to give back one exchange on c3 to slow Black's attack.

22...♗e6

22...♘f6!? was still interesting.

23.♘xe6 ♗a5

Ivanchuk now decides Black's attack is too strong and so forces the draw.



24.♗xg4 ♘xa2† 25.♔b2 ♗c3† 26.♔xa2 ♗xc2† 27.♔a1 ♗c3† 28.♔b1 ♗b3† 29.♔a1 ♗c3†  
1/2-1/2

### 3.2) Sacrifice on g5

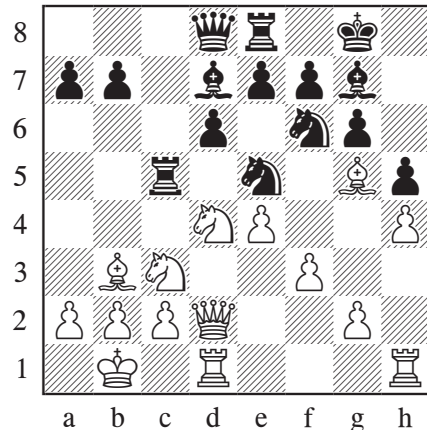
Whereas the sacrifice on c3 is aggressive, the present theme is a defensive idea. The Soltis structures are those with h2-h4 for White and ...h5 for Black. Once those moves have been played, White often puts his bishop on g5 in order to put pressure on the f6-knight and e7-pawn. Black puts his rook on c5 and gets ready to relieve the pressure by taking the bishop, often after White has already sacrificed a couple of pawns to open up lines. The sacrifice deflects White's f-pawn, preventing f4-f5 ideas, and gives Black a strong outpost on e5.

### Teimour Radjabov – Magnus Carlsen

Baku 2008

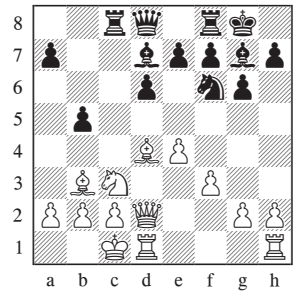
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗e3 ♗g7 7.f3 ♘c6 8.♗d2 0-0 9.♗c4 ♗d7 10.♗b3 ♖c8 11.h4 h5 12.0-0-0 ♘e5 13.♗g5 ♖c5 14.♔b1 ♖e8

I actually recommend 14...b5 but the theme illustrated in this game is relevant to our repertoire.



# Chapter 9

## Topalov Variation



### Other 13th Moves

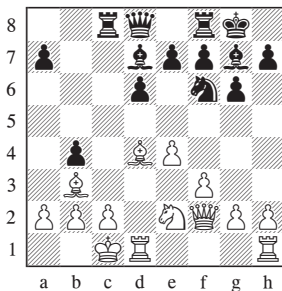
#### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♚d2  
 ♗c6 9.♙c4 ♙d7 10.0-0-0 ♗xd4 12.♙xd4

12...b5

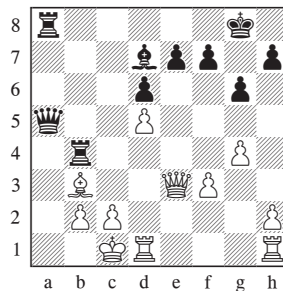
|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| A) 13.g4                    | 182 |
| B) 13.e5 dxe5 14.♙xe5 ♙c6   | 183 |
| B1) 15.♚e3                  | 184 |
| B2) 15.♚xd8                 | 185 |
| C) 13.a3                    | 186 |
| D) 13.♙xa7 b4               | 188 |
| D1) 14.♗e2                  | 189 |
| D2) 14.♗d5 ♗xd5 15.exd5 ♚a5 | 190 |
| D21) 16.♙d4?!               | 191 |
| D22) 16.♚e3                 | 193 |

note to move 13



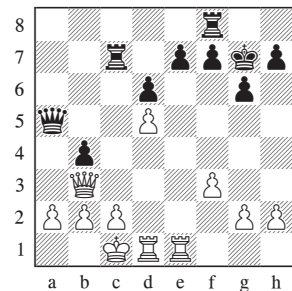
14...♚c7!N

C) after 23.♚e3



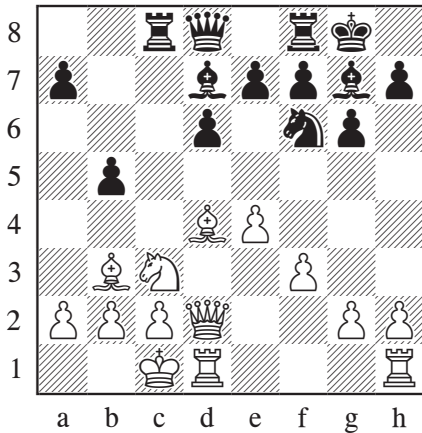
23...♙b5!N

D22) note 20.♙d4



20...♚c5!N

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6  
 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0-0 8.♚d2 ♗c6  
 9.0-0-0 ♙d7 10.♙c4 ♝c8 11.♙b3 ♗xd4  
 12.♙xd4 b5

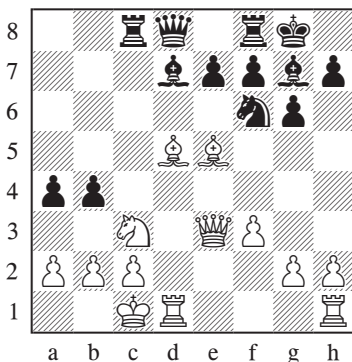


We have spent the last two chapters examining 13.♗d5 and 13.h4. In this chapter we will round up White's remaining options against the Topalov Variation, the four main ones being **A) 13.g4**, **B) 13.e5**, **C) 13.a3** and **D) 13.♙xa7**.

13.♖b1 a5 is likely to transpose to variation C after 14.a3.

Instead 14.a4? bxa4 15.♗xa4 ♙xa4 16.♙xa4 ♝c4♣ is a trap we've seen already, while 14.♗d5? would simply lose material after 14...a4!N.

13.♚e3 a5! It looks like White's last move prevented this but his queen turns out to be unfortunately placed. 14.e5 (14.♙b6N ♙h6!♣) 14...dxe5 15.♙xe5 a4 16.♙d5 b4



White found nothing better than 17.♙xf6 in Gaulupeau – Guerin, Paris 2010, but after the simple 17...♙xf6N 18.♗e4 ♙g7-+ Black's initiative is obviously too strong.

13.♚f2

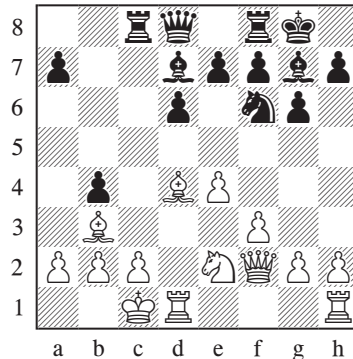
White is lining up pressure on the a7-pawn but it is hard to understand the logic when he could just take it immediately.

13...b4 14.♗e2!?

This is the usual follow-up but now the queen is misplaced.

14.♗d5 ♗xd5 15.♙xg7 ♖xg7 16.exd5 was seen in M. Lopez – A. Martinez, Santa Cruz 2010, and now the normal 16...a5N is pleasant for Black.

Perhaps White should try 14.♙xf6N although 14...bxc3 (both recaptures on f6 are also fine) 15.♙xg7 ♖xg7 16.♚xa7 cxb2♣ 17.♖xb2 ♝a8 18.♚d4♣ f6 offers Black good compensation.



14...♚c7!N

Black will follow up with ...a5, with excellent prospects on the queenside. Note that White cannot grab the a-pawn:

15.♙xa7? ♙e6 16.♝d2 ♙xb3 17.axb3 ♝a8-+

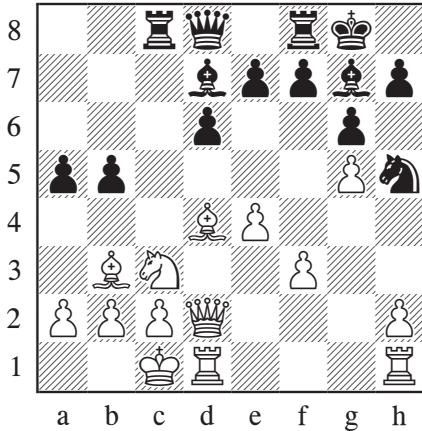
### A) 13.g4

This pawn advance never puts any pressure on Black in the Topalov Variation.

13...a5 14.g5

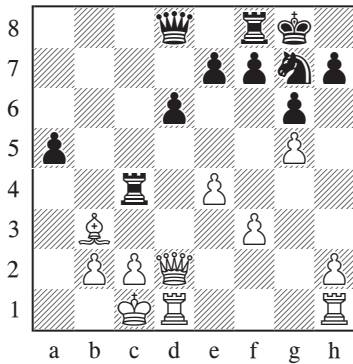
14.a3 b4 gives White an inferior version of variation C of Chapter 8, as g2-g4 is less useful than h2-h4.

14...♖h5



15.♕xg7

Another game continued: 15.a4?! bxa4 16.♖xa4 ♕xa4 17.♕xa4 ♖c4 18.♕xg7 ♖xg7 19.♕b3



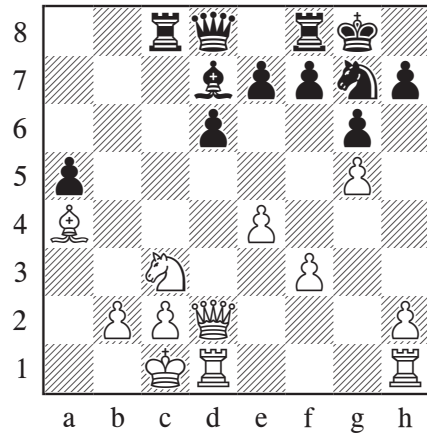
This was Gonzalez Roca – Gashimov, Ourense 2009, another game by the much-missed elite GM. Here I think the most accurate continuation is 19...♖c5N, intending to attack with ...♗b6, ...♖b8 and ...a4. Moreover, if White survives the onslaught then his weak kingside structure may give him problems in a future endgame.

15...♖xg7 16.a4?!

16.a3 should be preferred although Black is still doing well.

16...bxa4 17.♕xa4

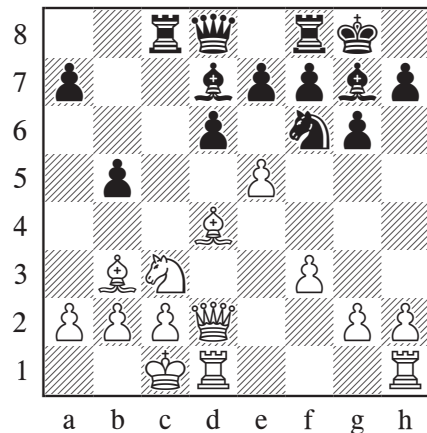
17.♖xa4 was seen in Ahmed Holi Ali – Ankit, Dubai 2013, and now 17...♕xa4N 18.♕xa4 ♗b6+ is similar to the Gashimov game above.



17...♖xc3! 18.♕xd7 ♖c5 19.♕a4 ♗b6

Black's queenside initiative was already decisive in Somborski – Roganovic, Sombor 2009.

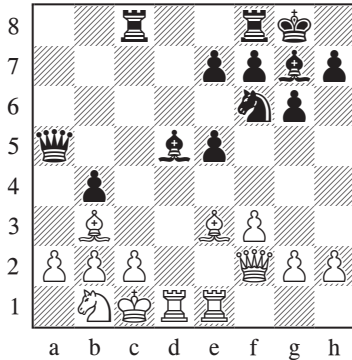
B) 13.e5



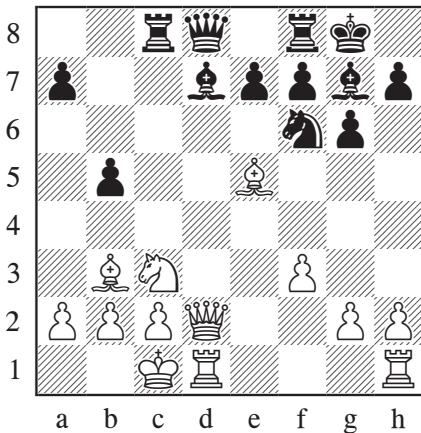
The immediate central break does not put much pressure on Black.

**13...dxe5 14.♙xe5**

14.♙xa7?! I can see some logic behind first giving the e-pawn and only then capturing on a7, but Black can reopen the long diagonal whenever he wishes. The following game featured logical play on both sides: 14...♖c7 15.♙e3 ♙c6 16.♖e2 ♖a5 17.♗he1 b4 18.♘b1 ♙d5 19.♖f2

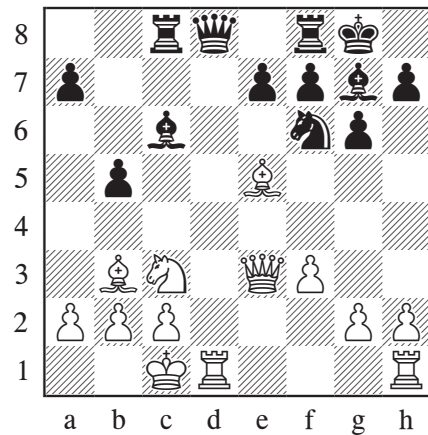


This was Epstein – J. Shahade, Denver 1998, and here 19...♙xb3!N 20.axb3 ♘d5→ would have been crushing, as White's position is terribly passive.

**14...♙c6**

From this position White may try **B1) 15.♖e3** or **B2) 15.♖xd8**. The latter is more prudent, as Black's attack is coming quickly.

15.♖g5 ♖b6 reaches a position where Black has scored 6/6 so far. The following game illustrates the play rather nicely: 16.♙d4 ♖b7 17.h4 a5 18.a3 b4 19.axb4 axb4 20.♘b1 ♖a6 21.h5 ♙a4 22.♙xa4 ♖xa4 23.♗d2 ♗fd8 Black was winning in Esenov – Smerdon, Dresden 2008.

**B1) 15.♖e3**

Compared with the note above, Black can no longer put the queen on b6, but he still has excellent chances.

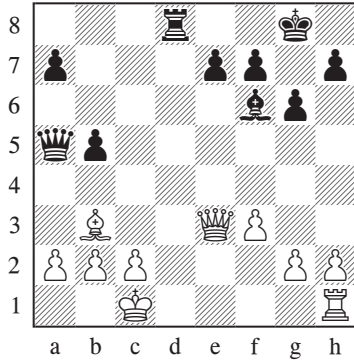
**15...♖a5 16.a3**

Black has a crushing score against most other moves.

16.♘b1 b4 17.♙xf6 ♙xf6 18.♘d5 ♙xd5 19.♗xd5 ♖c7 20.h4 ♗fd8 has been seen a few times. Black is dominating the opposite-coloured-bishop middlegame, as he can block in the b3-bishop with ...e6 whenever he chooses.

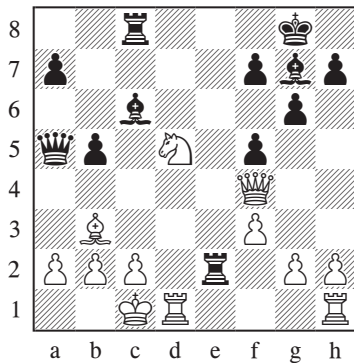
16.h4 b4 17.♙xf6 (17.♘e2 gives Black a pleasant choice between 17...♙a4 as played in Y. Zhao – Perelman, Aurora 2013, and 17...♘g4!N 18.fxg4 ♖xe5) 17...♙xf6 18.♘d5 ♙xd5 19.♗xd5 ♖c7 is similar to the note above.

16.♙xf6?! Even future GMs are not immune to ceding the dark squares! 16...♙xf6 17.♘d5 ♙xd5 18.♞xd5 ♞fd8 19.♞xd8† ♞xd8



20.f4 ♞c7 21.c3 b4 22.♞d1 ♞xd1† 23.♙xh1 bxc3 24.bxc3 ♙xc3† Neiksans – Vocaturo, Balaguer 2010.

16.♙d4 was played against a Dragon expert and White did not last long: 16...♞fe8 17.♙xf6?! exf6 18.♞f4 f5 19.♘d5 ♞e2† It is worth seeing the remaining moves:

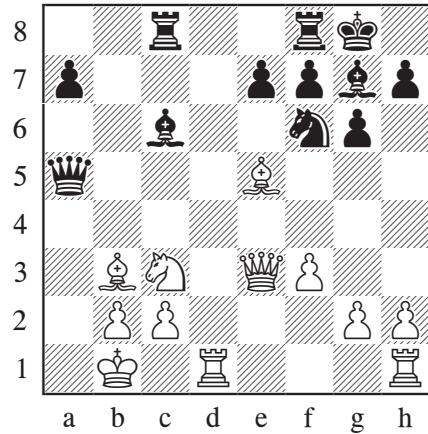


20.g4? ♙xd5 21.♞xd5 ♞exc2†! 22.♙xc2 ♞xa2 23.♞xb5 ♞a1† 24.♙d2 ♞xh1 25.♞g3 ♞d8† 26.♙e2 ♞c1 27.♙d3 ♞e8† 28.♙f2 f4 29.♞g2 ♞e1# Bertholee – Tiviakov, Netherlands 2000.

16...b4 17.axb4 ♞xb4

17...♞a1†N is an easy route to equality if Black wants it: 18.♙d2 ♞xb2 19.♘d5 ♘d5 (19...♘e4†!? 20.♞xe4 ♙xe5∞) 20.♙xb2 ♘xe3 21.♙xg7 ♙xg7 22.♙xe3 With a level ending.

18.♙b1 ♞a5



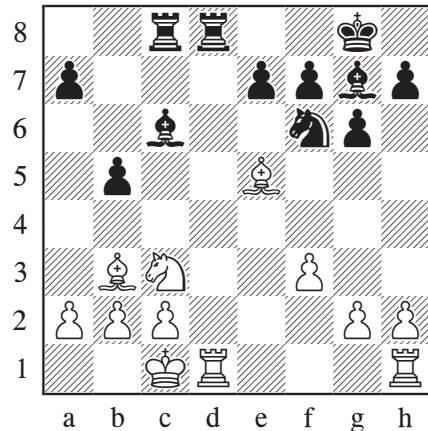
19.♙xf6?

I don't know why so many players are eager to give up the dark-squared bishop in this line. White should prefer something like 19.♞he1N with approximate equality.

19...♙xf6 20.♘d5 ♙xd5 21.♞xd5 ♞c7 22.♞hd1 ♞xh2†

Padilla – Cordova, Lima 2002.

B2) 15.♞xd8 ♞fxd8



16.♞xd8†

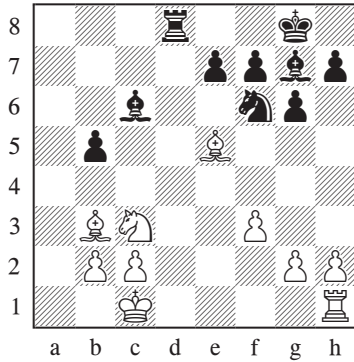
White has also tried chipping away at Black's queenside immediately: 16.a4 a6 (This is the simplest reply, although 16...bxa4!? 17.♙xa4



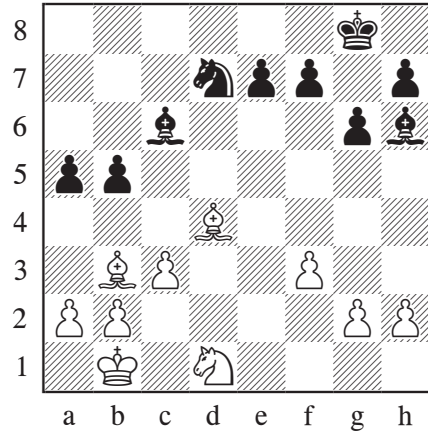
♙xa4 18.♘xa4 ♙h6† 19.♚b1 ♘d5 20.♙d4 ♘e3 is also possible if you would prefer some imbalance in the position; see Baramidze – Polzin, Austria 2006.) 17.♞xb5 axb5 18.♞xd8† ♞xd8

White's best seems to be 21.♘c3 e6 22.a4 b4 with balanced play.

In N. Mamedov – Kudrin, Moscow 2005, Black could have fought for the advantage with:



19.♞d1 ♙h6† 20.♚b1 ♞xd1† 21.♘xd1 The endgame is equal, although Aroshidze – Svetushkin, Kusadasi 2006, is a nice example in which Black managed to grind out a win.

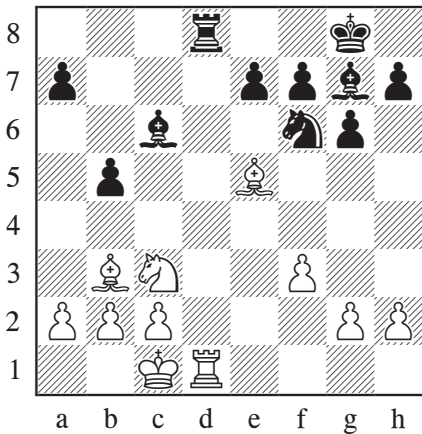


21...♙f4N 22.h3 a4 23.♙c2 f5!♞  
White's pieces are rather passive.

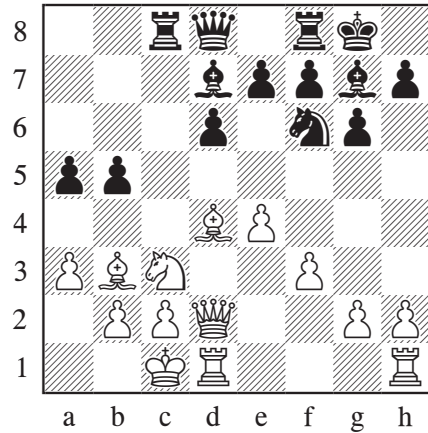
16...♞xd8 17.♞d1

White is simply chopping wood but he has to be careful in the endgame, as Black has the more mobile pawn majority and the b3-bishop might find itself shut out of play.

C) 13.a3 a5



17...♙h6†! 18.♚b1 ♞xd1† 19.♘xd1 ♘d7 20.♙d4 a5 21.c3  
21.c4 b4! favours Black.



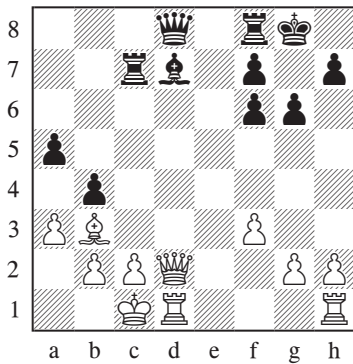
14.♚b1

White adopts a defensive approach, hoping to soak up the pressure and eventually exploit his extra pawn (after ...b4).

14.♘d5 ♘xd5 15.♙xg7 ♚xg7 16.exd5 transposes to variation B of Chapter 7.

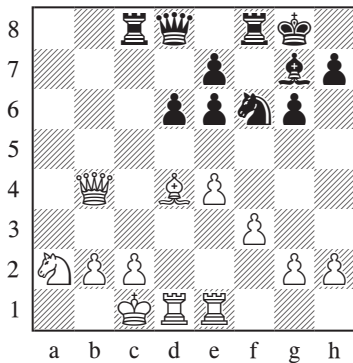
14.h4 leads back to variation C of Chapter 8, although it may well transpose again to variation B22 of Chapter 7 after 14...b4 15.axb4 axb4 16.♘d5 ♘xd5 17.♙xg7 ♖xg7 18.exd5 ♜g8.

14.e5 has a lot of similarities to 13.e5 and likewise should not trouble Black. 14...dxe5 15.♙xe5 Here we don't have to worry about the pressure on the d7-bishop and can just get on with it on the queenside. 15...b4 16.♙xf6 ♙xf6 17.♘e4 ♖c7 18.♘xf6† exf6



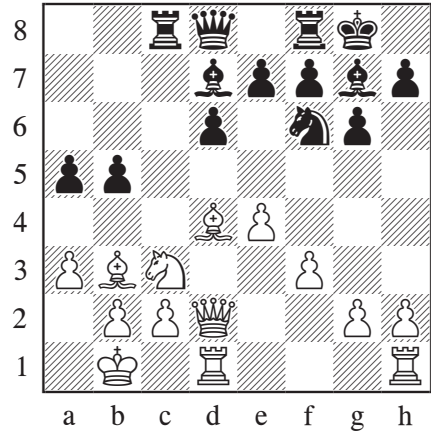
19.a4 ♖c8 20.♖he1 ♙e6 21.♙xe6 fxe6= rated rko – el-shaddai, engine game 2012.

14.♖he1 is a rare approach among humans, but the positions resemble those in the main line (after 14.♖b1). 14...b4 15.axb4 axb4 16.♘a2 ♙e6 17.♙xe6 fxe6 18.♗xb4 Here I like the human approach of:



18...♘d7!?!N 19.♙xg7 (after 19.♗b3 ♘c5

20.♙xc5 ♖xc5 21.♗xe6† ♖h8 White may be two pawns up but Black has a vicious initiative) 19...♖xg7 20.♖e3 ♖b8 21.♗c4 e5 Black has full compensation.

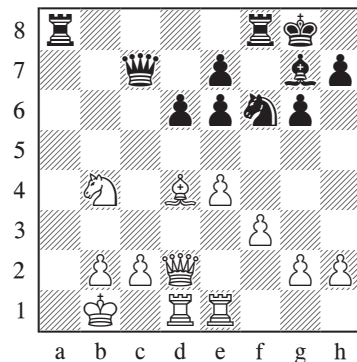


14...b4 15.axb4 axb4 16.♘a2

16.♘d5 does not make any sense here as the b4-pawn isn't dropping. 16...♘xd5 17.♙xg7 ♖xg7 18.exd5 This position could actually be reached via the 13.♘d5 move order, but with White having made the strange decision to play ♖b1 rather than capturing the b4-pawn. Black will get strong play down the a-file. (18.♗xd5?! ♜g8† is even worse for White.)

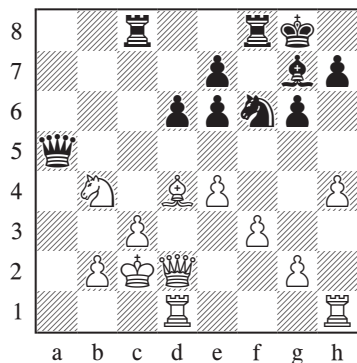
16...♗c7 17.♘xb4

17.♖he1 is one of those curious moves that engines pick up on and play in lots of games, yet it remains almost untouched in tournament play. 17...♙e6 18.♙xe6 fxe6 19.♘xb4 ♖a8 Black has good compensation. One example continued:

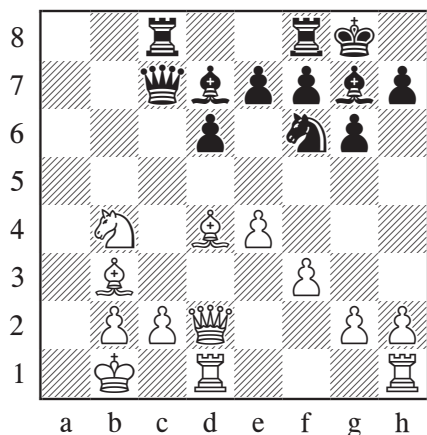


20.c3 ♘d7 21.♙xg7 ♔xg7 22.b3 ♖a5 23.♔b2 ♗fa8 24.♗a1 ♘c5 25.♖xa5 ♗xa5 26.h4 ♖a7 27.♗b1 h6 28.g4 e5= Trembecki – P. Nagy, email 2009.

17.h4 was tried in another correspondence game. Black can proceed with the same plan: 17...♙e6 18.♙xe6 fxe6 19.♘xb4 ♖a8 20.c3 ♗a5 21.♔c2 ♗ac8



22.♔b3 I can't imagine many players being happy having to put their king on such a square! 22...♘d7 23.♙xg7 ♔xg7 24.♗a1 ♗b5= Olofsson – Grigoryev, email 2009.



### 17...♗a8

Black's queenside play obviously gives him fantastic compensation for the pawn. Finding the right defensive moves in a practical game would be difficult, and even in engine games Black has the upper hand.

### 18.♘d5?!

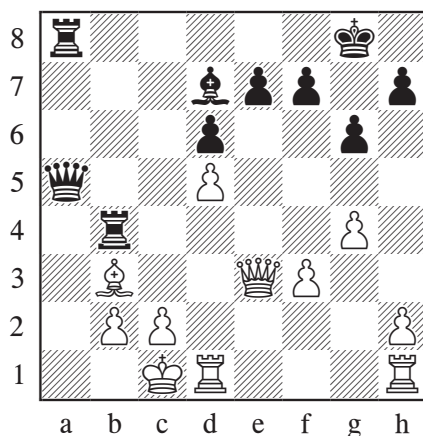
Not the best move, but it was played in both of the over-the-board examples on my database.

### 18...♘d5 19.exd5

19.♙xd5 ♙xd4 20.♗xd4 ♖a4 21.♖c3 ♗a7= Hong Xing – Sun Fanghui, China 2013.

### 19...♙xd4 20.♗xd4 ♖fb8 21.g4 ♗a5 22.♔c1 ♗b4 23.♖e3

In Sulc – K. Saric, Djakovo 2006, Black should not have been in a hurry to check on a1 and take on b2. A stronger move (though by no means the only winning continuation) would have been:



### 23...♙b5!N

Preventing White's king from fleeing to the kingside. A similar motif can be found earlier on page 154.

### D) 13.♙xa7

This can be compared with the lines in Chapter 7 where Black gives up a pawn on the queenside. The structure is slightly different but the general evaluation is the same: Black obtains full compensation.

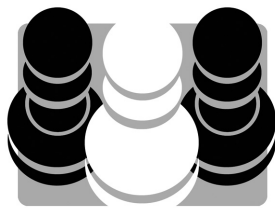
### 13...b4

*Grandmaster Repertoire*

# The Dragon 2

By

# Gawain Jones



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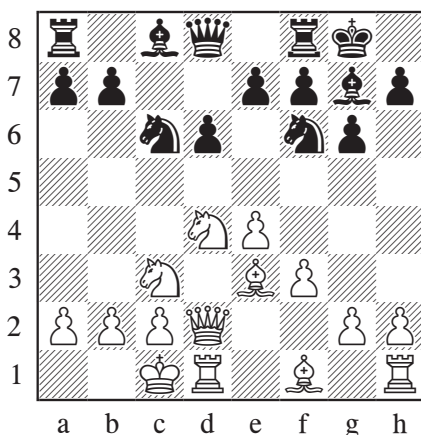
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# Introduction to 9.0–0–0

Welcome to Volume 2! This book continues where the first left off, by providing a complete repertoire against all of White's alternatives to the Yugoslav Attack with 9.♘c4 and 9.g4. Volume 1 contains both a preface and a detailed thematic introduction to the Dragon and, since the two books are complementary halves of a single work, I will not take up space duplicating them here.

I would, however, like to say a few things about the most important topic of the present volume, namely the position after the opening moves: 1.e4 c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♞f6 5.♞c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0–0 8.♚d2 ♞c6 9.0–0–0



Coverage of this critical variation spans the first seven chapters. In my own praxis I have faced 9.0–0–0 more often than any other system. I think this is due to practical considerations: the 9.♘c4 lines are razor-sharp and White needs to remember a lot of theory, whereas here the play tends to be more positional.

## 9...d5

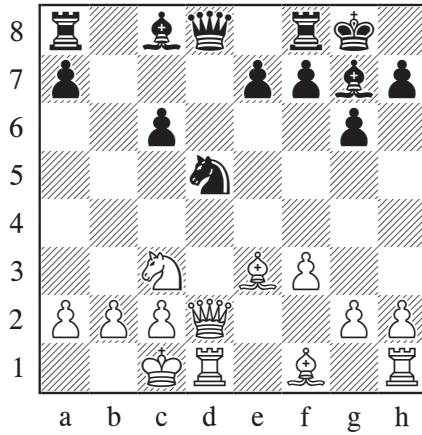
Typically in the Dragon, when we get the chance to execute the ...d5 break we should take it.

## 10.exd5

10.♞b1 received a flurry of interest some years ago, but in Chapter 5 I will show a good way to neutralize it.

10.♚e1 used to be popular but then fell out of fashion. However, it has recently attracted the attention of some strong players. The positions after 10...e5 11.♞xc6 bxc6 12.exd5 ♞xd5 have definite similarities to the old main line; see Chapter 6 for further details.

## 10...♞xd5 11.♞xc6 bxc6



### 12. ♖d4

12. ♖d5 cxd5 13. ♕xd5 ♖c7 is covered in Chapters 3 and 4. Taking the material, whether just the pawn or grabbing the black rooks for the white queen as well, is dangerous for White. The open lines on the queenside give Black easy counterplay against White's king.

The text move is White's main try and, in my view, the current main line of the entire Dragon.

### 12... ♖xd4

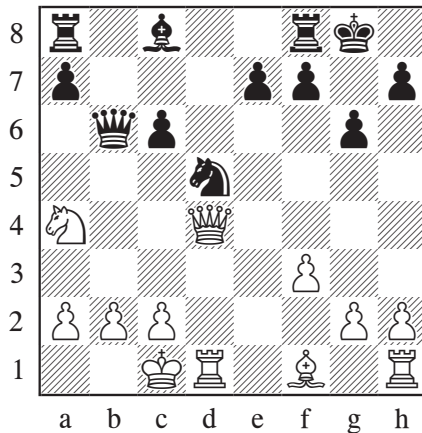
12... e5 13. ♖c5 ♖e6 used to be the main line but Black was suffering rather.

### 13. ♕xd4 ♖b6

White will try to exploit his better structure and the outpost on c5, but Black has his own trumps.

### 14. ♘a4

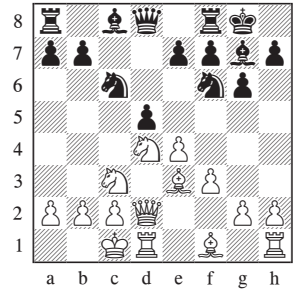
White's other tries are covered in Chapter 1.



From this important position I have covered two options in detail. The slightly offbeat 14... ♖a5 15. b3 ♖e6!? is presented in Chapter 1 and the more popular 14... ♖c7 can be found in Chapter 2.

# Chapter 7

## 9.0-0-0



## Offbeat Alternatives

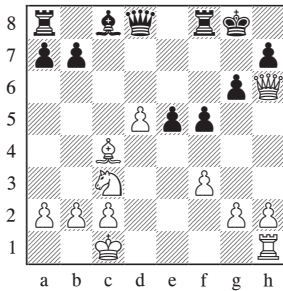
### Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7  
7.f3 0-0 8.♚d2 ♘c6 9.0-0-0

9...d5

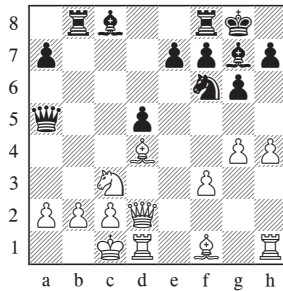
|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| A) 10.♙e2       | 129 |
| B) 10.♙h6       | 130 |
| C) 10.h4        | 130 |
| D) 10.♘xc6 bxc6 | 133 |
| D1) 11.h4       | 134 |
| D2) 11.♙h6      | 135 |

B) after 15.♙c4



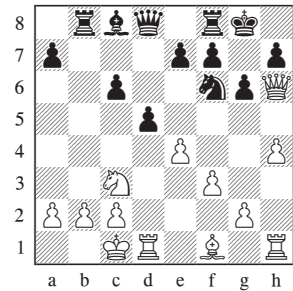
15...♚f6N

D1) after 14.g4



14...♘e4!N

D2) note to 13.e5



13...♚a5!N



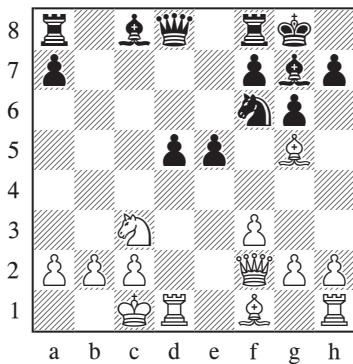
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6  
5.♘c3 g6 6.♙e3 ♙g7 7.f3 0–0 8.♚d2 ♘c6  
9.0–0–0 d5

In this final chapter on 9.0–0–0 d5, we will deal with the rare options: **A) 10.♙e2**, **B) 10.♙h6**, **C) 10.h4** and **D) 10.♘xc6**.

10.♘xd5 ♘xd5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 12.exd5 cxd5 would transpose to variation B of Chapter 3.

10.♘b3?! puts absolutely no pressure on Black. After 10...dxe4 11.♚xd8 ♖xd8 12.♖xd8† ♘xd8 13.♘xe4 (13.fxe4 b6) 13...♘xe4 14.fxe4 b6 the endgame favours Black, as he will be able to put pressure on the e4-pawn.

10.♚f2? e5 11.♘xc6 bxc6 gives White a much worse version of the 10.♚e1 line, as 12.exd5 can now be met by 12...cxd5† when 13.♙g5 no longer comes with a discovered attack on the e5-pawn. The following game is a good illustration of how bad White's position has already become:

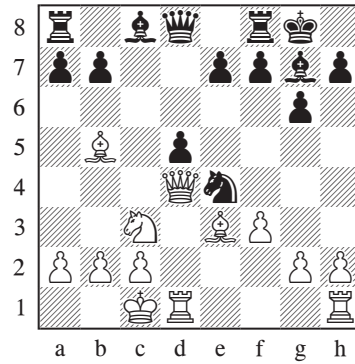


13...d4 14.♚h4 ♚b6 15.♘e4 ♘xe4 16.fxe4 ♙e6 17.♘b1 ♖f8 18.♙d3 ♖ab8 19.♙c1 ♖c3! 20.♖d2 ♙xa2†! 21.♘xa2 ♖a3† 22.♘b1 ♚a5 0–1 Sanchez Piquero – Gonzalez Valdes, Asturias 1987.

10.♙b5?!

This move encourages Black to trade knights but the ensuing structure favours Black.

10...♘xd4 11.♙xd4  
11.♚xd4 ♘xe4!N

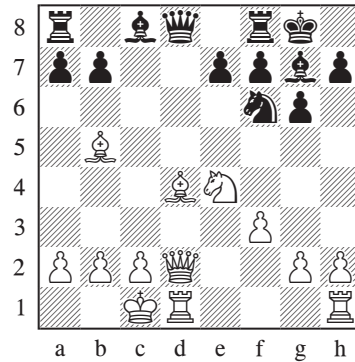


12.♚xd5 ♘d6† Black will gain time against White's queen and has good attacking prospects.

11...dxe4 12.♘xe4

12.♙xf6? ♚xd2† 13.♖xd2 exf6† White loses material due to the threat of ...♙h6.

12.fxe4 ♙e6† also favours Black due to White's loose e4-pawn and the potentially strong outpost on e5.



12...♘xe4 13.fxe4 ♙xd4 14.♚xd4 ♚a5 15.♚a4 ♚c7†

Paolini – Casafus, Buenos Aires 1994.

10.g4 dxe4! 11.♘xc6

This is White's only way to maintain the balance.

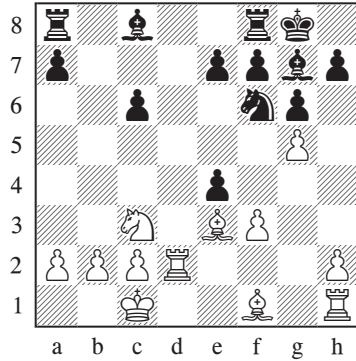
11.g5 seems consistent with White's last, but 11...♘d5† is just good for Black.

11. ♖f2 ♘xd4 12. ♙xd4 ♚a5≠ left White a pawn down in Soltes – Baranek, Slovakia 1998.

11... ♖xd2† 12. ♗xd2?!

12. ♙xd2N would have stopped the knight from going to d5 with tempo. 12... bxc6 13. g5 ♘d5 14. ♘xe4 a5=

12... bxc6 13. g5



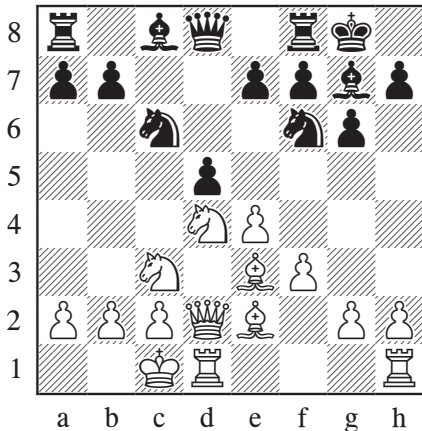
13... ♘d5! 14. ♘xd5 cxd5 15. ♗xd5

In Strater – Toel, Duisburg 2005, there was no reason not to take the pawn:

15... exf3N

With a clear advantage to Black.

A) 10. ♙e2



White connects his rooks but this inoffensive move does not challenge Black at all.

10... ♘xd4 11. ♙xd4 dxe4 12. fxe4

12. ♖g5 was played in Munksgaard – Carlstedt, Odense 2012. White's last didn't actually threaten anything, so I would simply develop with 12... ♙e6!N.

12. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 13. fxe4 ♙xd4 14. ♖xd4 ♚a5 was already more pleasant for Black in Bertusi – Havas, Novi Vinodolski 2009.

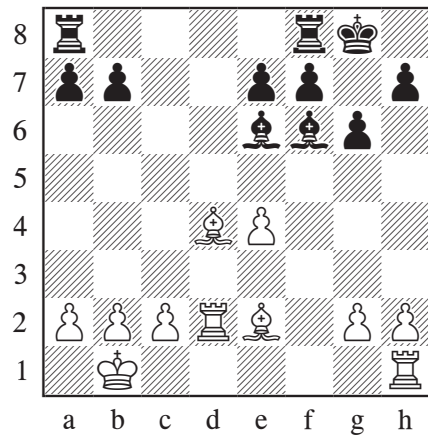
12... ♚a5 13. ♘b1 ♙e6 14. ♘d5

14. ♙xf6 is probably White's best, but it's clear that he is already angling for a draw. 14... ♙xf6 (14... exf6!? is also interesting) 15. ♘d5 ♚a4 (15... ♖xd2N 16. ♘xf6† exf6 17. ♗xd2 ♗fd8=) 16. ♖e3 ♗fd8= jin38 – cordo, Internet 2013.

14... ♖xd2 15. ♘xf6†

After 15. ♘xe7†?! ♘h8 16. ♗xd2 ♘xe4 17. ♙xg7† ♘xg7 18. ♗d4 ♘f6 White's knight is extremely offside.

15... ♙xf6 16. ♗xd2



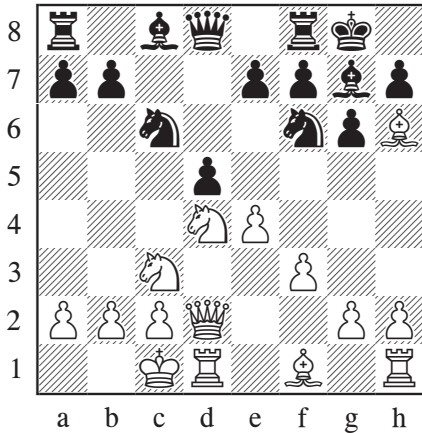
16... ♗ad8!

This accurate move gave Black the better chances in Prestage – Vaassen, email 2003. The reason for preferring the queen's rook is revealed after:

17. c3N ♙xd4 18. cxd4 f5!≠

Black has the more pleasant ending.

## B) 10.♔h6



White immediately decides to trade bishops but he loses control of the centre.

## 10...♙xh6

10...dxe4 is a straightforward alternative which comfortably equalizes: 11.♔xg7 ♖xg7 12.♘xc6 (12.fxe4 ♗xd4 13.♗xd4 ♘xd4 14.♙xd4 e5 15.♙c4 ♔d7= Holmsten – Gambäck, Stockholm 1999) 12...♗xd2† 13.♔xd2 (13.♙xd2 bxc6 14.fxe4 ♔e6=) 13...bxc6 14.♘xe4 ♘xe4† 15.fxe4 ♙d8† 16.♔d3 ♔g4= Sulskis – Gomez, Calvia 2006.

## 11.♗xh6 ♘xd4 12.♙xd4

12.e5?? is a typical intermezzo in these structures, but here it just loses to 12...♘f5! as in Simovic – Pletanek, Decin 1997.

## 12...e5

White's best chance is to sacrifice the exchange.

## 13.♙xd5!

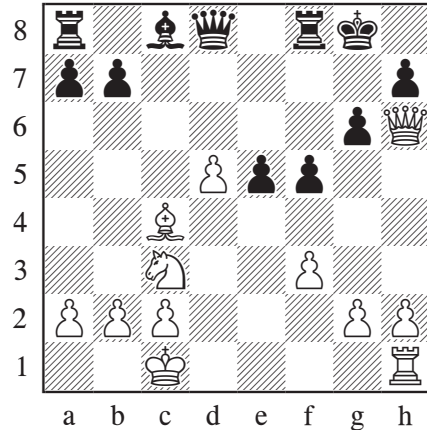
Instead 13.♙d1 is much more common but 13...d4♭ is comfortable for Black.

## 13...♘xd5 14.exd5

White has compensation for the exchange but no more.

## 14...f5 15.♔c4

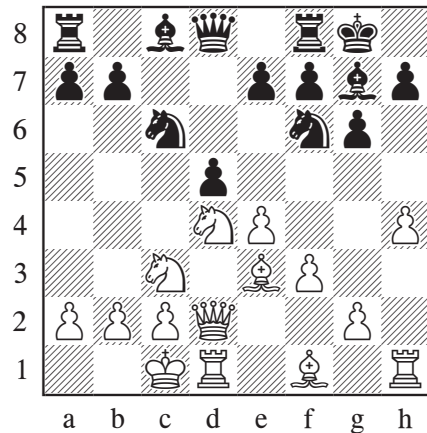
In Schulz Streeck – Soujon, Germany 1997, Black should have played:



## 15...♗f6N

Controlling several important squares. Black has a solid position with good chances to build on his material advantage.

## C) 10.h4



White immediately goes for the kingside attack, but it is not at all dangerous as Black's central play is already underway.

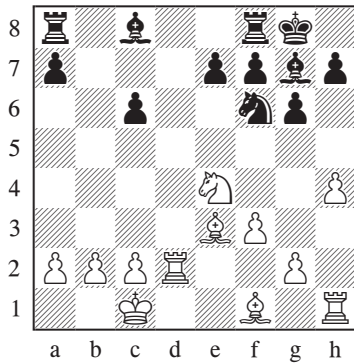
## 10...dxe4 11.h5

After 11.fxe4?! ♘g4 White's kingside has too many holes.

11. ♖xe4? has been played a few times but 11... ♖xe4 12. fxe4 ♙xd4!N 13. ♙xd4 ♙g4!→ wins material.

11. ♖xc6 ♜xd2† 12. ♜xd2  
12. ♙xd2?! bxc6 13. fxe4 ♖g4 14. ♜e1 ♙e6  
favoured Black in Roux – Goulenok,  
Montigny le Bretonneux 1999.

12...bxc6 13. ♖xe4



13... ♖xe4N

13... ♖d5!? is the move if you wish to keep more material on the board. White should reply: 14. ♙c5N (In Murray Ortiz – Ericsson, Guarapuava 1995, White immediately erred with 14. ♙d4? ♙h6†) 14... ♜b8 White has the slightly better structure but Black's piece activity is enough to maintain the balance. (14... ♙h6?! is less accurate in view of 15. c4 ♖f6 16. ♖xf6† exf6 17. ♙xf8 ♖xf8 18. ♙d3±.)

14. fxe4 ♙e6

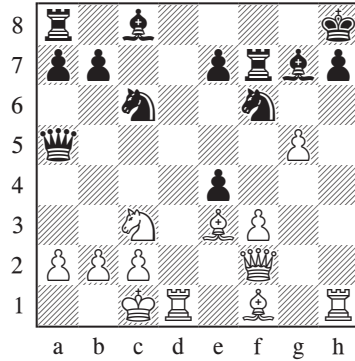
The endgame is balanced, for instance:

15. ♙a6 ♜ab8 16. b3 h5 17. ♖b1 ♙e5 18. ♙c5 ♜fe8=

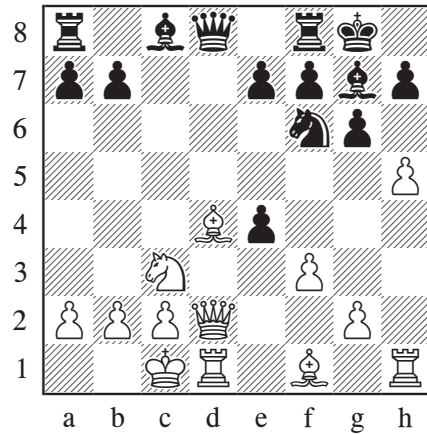
11... ♖xd4 12. ♙xd4

12. h6 ♙h8 (12... ♖e6!N could also be considered) 13. ♙xd4 exf3 14. gxf3 occurred in Escofet Fernandez – Izquierdo, Uruguay 1982. I think 14... ♜c7!N is best, taking control over the c4-square, with an edge to Black.

12. hxg6? is an enterprising piece sacrifice but White's attack is not strong enough. 12... ♖c6 13. gxf7† ♖h8 14. ♜f2 ♜a5 15. g4 ♜xf7 16. g5



16... ♖g4! 17. ♜h4 ♙xc3!→ Rasidovic – Riemersma, Caorle 1989.



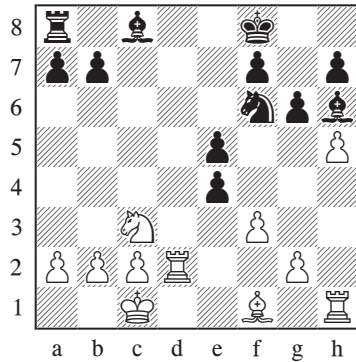
12...e5!

This is the simplest way to defuse White's initiative.

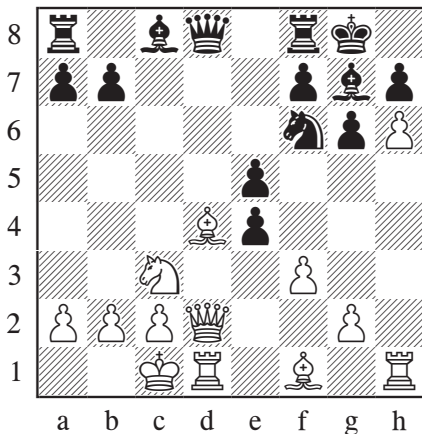
13. h6

13. ♙xe5 ♜xd2† 14. ♜xd2 favours Black after: 14... e3! 15. ♜d3 (15. ♜d6?! ♖xh5 16. ♙xg7 ♖xg7 17. g4 ♖g3† Britton – W. Watson, London 1982) 15... ♖xh5 16. ♙xg7 ♖xg7 17. ♜xe3 ♖g3 18. ♜g1 This was Donchev – Semkov, Varna 1982, and now Belov's suggestion of 18... ♙e6N gives Black slightly better chances in the ending.

13.♙c5 has only been tested in correspondence play but it seems to be White's best. The position liquidates into an equal ending:  
13...♜xd2† 14.♞xd2 ♙h6! 15.♙xf8 ♜xf8



16.hxg6 ♙xd2† 17.♜xd2 hxg6 (17...fxg6!? 18.♜xe4 ♜xe4† 19.fxe4 h5 was also level in Bujan Mosteiro – Diani, email 2009) 18.♜xe4 ♜e7 19.♜xf6 ♜xf6 20.♞h8 b6 21.♙c4 ♙b7= Jenull – Thannheiser, email 2007.

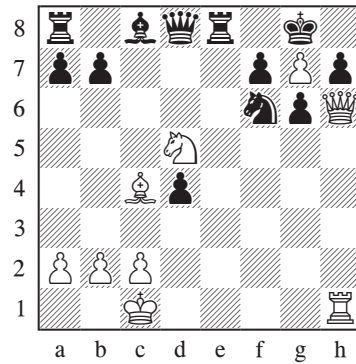


13...exd4! 14.hxg7 ♞e8!

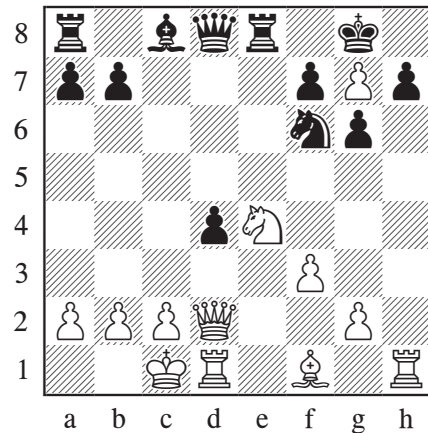
The position might look scary with a pawn on g7 but White cannot exploit it.

15.♜xe4

In another game White went all in for mate:  
15.♞h6 exf3 16.♙c4? (16.gxf3 ♙f5⌘) 16...fxg2 17.♜d5 gxh1=♞ 18.♞xh1



White has sacrificed everything for a speculative attack. However 18...♞e1†!–+ must have come as a cold shower in Llaneza Vega – Moranda, Herceg Novi 2005. (In fact 18...♜h5!N is also winning: 19.♞xh5 ♞e1† 20.♜d2 ♞d1†! 21.♜xd1 ♙g4† 22.♙e2 ♙xh5→)



15...♜xe4 16.fxe4 ♞f6!

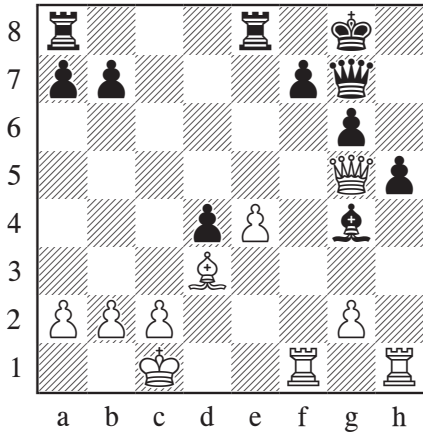
With the queen coming to the aid of the king, Black has nothing to fear.

17.♙d3

17.♞xd4 ♞f4† 18.♜b1 ♙g4 19.♞e1 ♞ad8 20.♞xa7 ♞xe4⌘ Hernaez Fernandez – Montella, corr. 2003.

17...♙g4 18.♞df1 ♞xg7 19.♞g5 h5

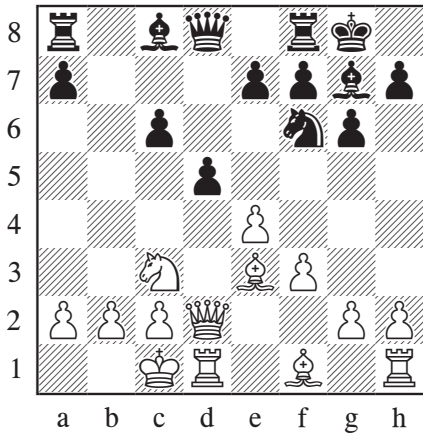
Black is safe on the kingside and is still a pawn up, but White has just enough activity to hold on to equality.



20. Bxf6 Re6 21. Bhf1 Bxf6 22. Bxf6 Re8  
23. e5 Re6=

Zupec – Ravnik, email 2006.

D) 10. Qxc6 bxc6



The knight exchange strengthens Black's centre and opens the b-file. In return, White hopes to gain time for his kingside attack. He may proceed with D1) 11. h4 and D2) 11. Qh6.

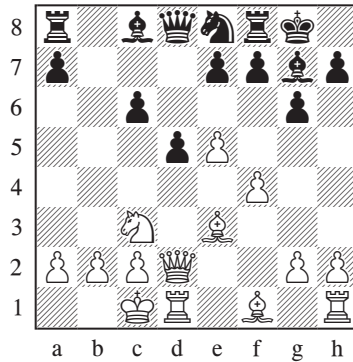
11. g4 ♖c7!N 12. g5 ♗h5 13. exd5 ♝d8+ is promising for Black.

11. exd5 may transpose to the main lines if Black recaptures with the knight, but 11... cxd5 seems like a logical way to limit White's

options; there is nothing better than 12. ♗xd5 ♗xd5 13. ♖xd5, transposing to variation B of Chapter 3.

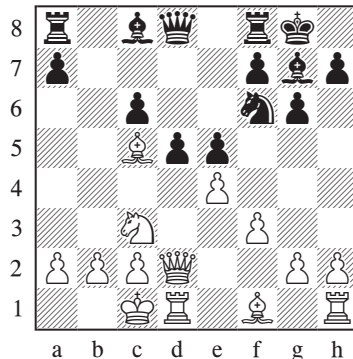
11. ♗c4 White exploits the pin to bring his bishop to b3. 11... e6 12. ♗b3 ♗b7= On the one hand the bishop blocks Black's play down the b-file, but it also finds itself shut out of play by Black's central pawns.

11. e5 ♗e8 would be good for White if he could keep the bishop hemmed in, but Black can fight back immediately. 12. f4 (12. ♗f4 was tried in Niewold – Decallonne, corr. 1989, but 12... ♗c7!N followed by ... ♗e6 looks strong)



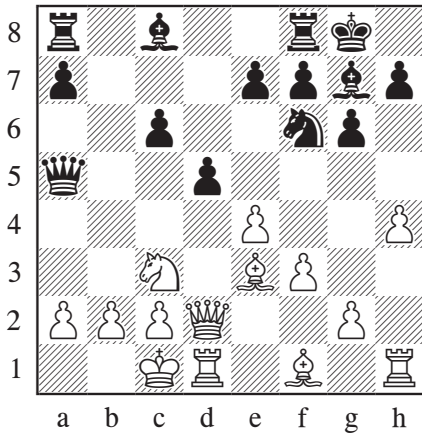
12... f6 13. exf6 In Shurunov – Sarana, Dagomys 2009, 13... ♗xf6N would have been the right recapture. Black intends ... ♖a5, ... ♗b8 and ... ♗d6, with a good position.

A final option is: 11. ♗d4 e5! 12. ♗c5



12...♙e6!?N (I find 12...d4 a bit too committal, even though it worked extremely well in its only practical encounter: 13.♙xf8?! ♖xf8 14.♘b1?? ♙h6 0–1 Pereira – Teixeira, Vila Real 2005) 13.♙xf8 ♖xf8 Black has great play for the exchange; just look at his central dominance and easy play down the b-file.

### D1) 11.h4 ♖a5!



Black's quick play along the b-file means his attack is faster.

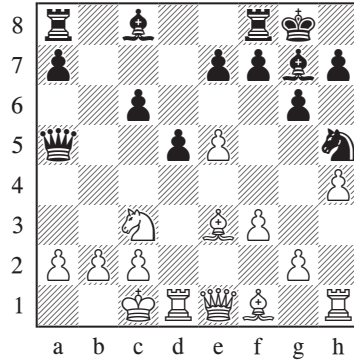
### 12.exd5

12.♙b1 has been tried, but after 12...♖b8 the pressure against b2 forced White to play 13.b3 in Stratil – Dobias, Bratislava 1992. Here I like 13...♖b4!?N, putting pressure on the e4-pawn. 14.e5 (14.exd5 ♖d8) 14...♘h5 White has to sacrifice the pawn as 15.f4? ♘g3 16.♖g1 f6! would be terrible for him.

12.h5 was played in M. Filippov – Ponomarev, St Petersburg 2009, when Black should have taken the offering: 12...♘h5!N 13.♙h6 (13.g4 ♘g3+) 13...♙xc3! 14.♖xc3 ♖xc3 15.bxc3 ♖d8

12.e5 ♘h5 13.♖e1!N (13.♙h6 d4! 14.♘b1 ♖xd2† 15.♙xd2 occurred in Al Haysamy – Chaudry, Singapore 1987. After the correct

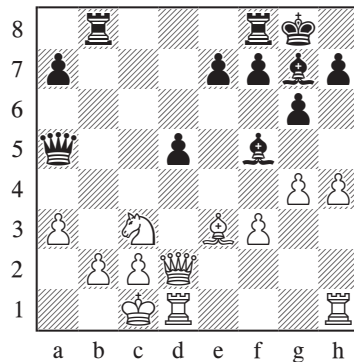
15...♘g3N 16.♖g1 ♙xe5 White is in trouble.) The text move is White's only way to defend, but Black can maintain the pressure with:



13...♖b8! 14.♘xd5 (14.g4 ♙xe5 15.gxh5 ♖xb2+) 14...♖xa2 15.♘xe7† ♙h8 16.♖c3 ♙e6 White is still struggling.

### 12...♖b8 13.♙d4

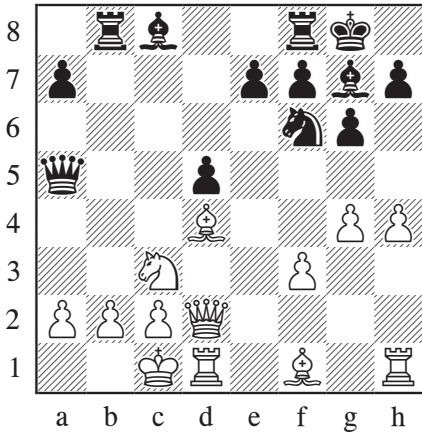
After 13.♙c4 ♘xd5! 14.♙xd5?! cxd5 White was in deep trouble and did not last much longer: 15.a3 ♙f5 16.g4



16...♖xb2! 17.♙xb2 ♖b8† 18.♙a2 ♙xc3 19.♖c1 d4 0–1 Zelic – Nikolin, Pula 1984.

### 13...cxd5 14.g4

Here I found a powerful improvement over Parfenov – Kornev, Kurgan 2001.



14...dxe4!N

A surprising but effective piece sacrifice.

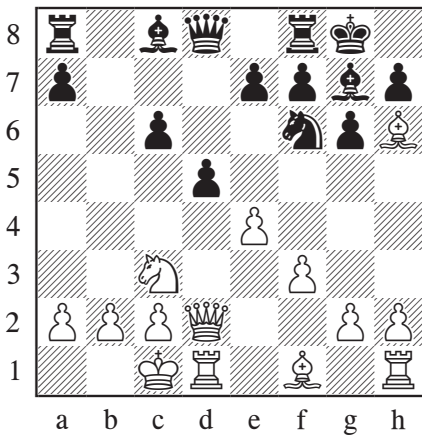
15.fxe4

15. dxe4 ♖xa2

15...e5! 16. f2 d4

White cannot afford to lose the a2-pawn, so Black will regain the piece with an excellent position.

D2) 11. h6



Compared to the earlier variation B, the bishop exchange makes more sense when Black cannot simply capture on e4. On the other hand, the open b-file gives Black attacking chances of his own.

11...hxh6 12. xh6 ♖b8

This position is double-edged, with both sides playing for mate.

13.e5

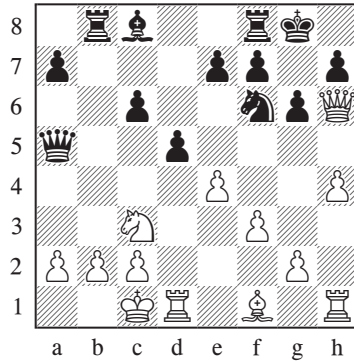
This is White's main try.

13.h4

This is obviously a critical plan, but Black has a strong novelty.

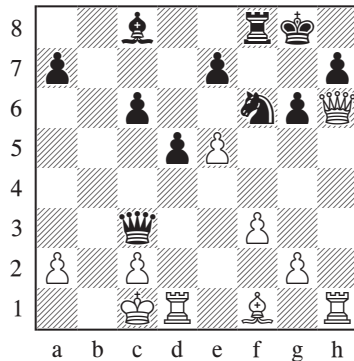
13...a5!N

Instead 13...e6 14.e5 h5 15.g4 g3 16.d3 hxh1 17.xh1 was dangerous for Black in Doci – Misovic, Slovakia 2002.



14.h5 xxb2! 15. xxb2 ♖b4† 16. c1 ♖xc3 17.hxg6 fxg6 18.e5!

18.exd5 f5 19.d3 (19. d3 ♖a3† 20. d2 d3 21.cxd3 ♖xa2† 22. e1 ♖xg2 23. ♖h3 ♖xh3 24. xh3 dxd5) 19...xd3 20. xd3 f7 21.dxc6 c8† Black's king is safe on f7 and his attack remains extremely strong.





My engine thinks White is holding a draw here but Black has many different tries. One possibility is:

18...♙f5 19.♙d3 ♙xd3 20.♞xd3 ♞xe5

Perhaps White can hold, but the position feels much easier for Black to play.

13...♘d7 14.h4

14.♙d4!?N is another interesting try. 14...♞e8 15.e6! (15.♞h4 ♘f8 doesn't get White anywhere) 15...♘f6 16.exf7† ♘xf7∞ The position is complicated but I like the potential of Black's central pawns.

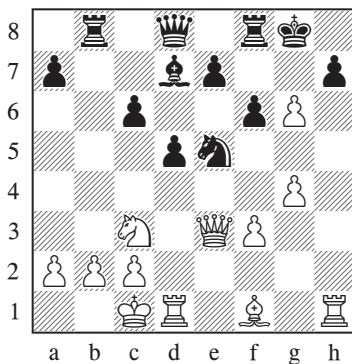
14...♘xe5 15.h5 ♙f5 16.g4 f6!

This is the crucial idea that holds Black's position together. The bishop is inedible.

17.♞f4?

After 17.gxf5? g5! White's queen is trapped and he will have to give at least a rook to extricate it.

17.♞e3!N looks like the best square for White's queen. 17...♙d7 18.hxg6

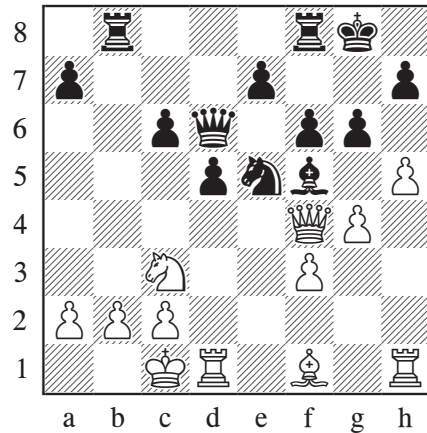


18...♞b6! Forcing the exchange of queens. (18...hxg6 19.f4! is dangerous) 19.gxh7† (19.♞h6? loses to 19...♞xb2† 20.♙d2 ♘xf3† 21.♙d3 ♘g5!-+) 19...♙h8 20.♞xb6 axb6 White is temporarily a pawn up but the h7-pawn is dropping. I like Black's compact structure, but White should be able to retain equality.

17.♞d2N is less accurate than the above line, as f3-f4 is no longer such a big threat. 17...♙e6 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.♙d3 ♙f7 Black's king can find sanctuary in the centre.

17...♞d6!

The threat of a discovered check forces White to lose time with his queen, giving Black vital extra time for his counterattack.



18.♞e3 ♞b4! 19.gxf5?! ♞xb2† 20.♙d2 d4! 21.♞e4 ♞xc3† 22.♙e2 gxf5

0-1 Gonell Aparici – Marin, Manresa 1995. Twenty years later, this energetic display from the Romanian GM remains a model demonstration of Black's chances.

## Conclusion

Most of White's alternatives on move ten are not dangerous as Black can simply take the pawn on e4. 10.♘xc6 bxc6 is more interesting as the pin on the d-file prevents ...dxe4, but Black obtains strong counterplay along the b-file, making this a risky way for White to play. Pay particular attention to 11.♙h6, as it is the sharpest line considered in this chapter.