

Preface

It is an appealing feature of the Dutch that 1...f5 can be played against virtually any opening move apart from 1 e4.

However, this is slightly misleading if it suggests that you only have to learn one basic sequence of moves after 1...f5 and then you are ready for anything. In reality the Dutch leads to a range of pawn structures, each of which requires its own special treatment. For example, this book is built around the Leningrad Dutch, but in many cases Black will do best to set up a Stonewall centre with ...d7-d5, rather than play the 'characteristic' ...d7-d6 Leningrad move.

Likewise after 2 ♘c3, 2 ♗g5 and other early divergences by White, the pawn structure has little, or sometimes nothing at all, in common with the traditional Leningrad Dutch. Thus at times the centre is characteristic of the Queen's Gambit; at other times the King's Indian; and after 2 ♗g5 it feels like a strange Sicilian Hedgehog!

So more preparation is required to play the opening than is apparent at first glance, when 1...f5 appears such a great labour-saving device. On the plus side you are going to have more fun playing the Dutch – its variety means you aren't going to grow bored of it any time soon.

In view of the range of possibilities after 1...f5, can we say that there is any one strategic theme that runs through the opening? I find the varied adventures of Black's f-pawn the most intriguing aspect of the opening. The pawn is cast forward irretrievably into the world on move one, and ends up performing varied

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roles, sometimes in the same game: a battering ram when it advances to f4; a pillar of the state in the Stonewall, perhaps supporting a knight on e4; and the destroyer of the white centre when it is exchanged for a pawn on e4. In a less aggressive role it sits patiently on f5, restraining the white centre. Destroyer, restrainer, pillar: the impact of the f-pawn is felt throughout the game, even if it vanishes from the board at an early stage.

The Dutch is a difficult opening for both players to handle, and sometimes it all goes wrong for Black. However, there are also great moments when the f-pawn shows its power. Even the strongest opponents can find their position ripped up by the dynamism of this little pawn.

Let me wish you good luck in your Dutch adventures. Have fun with the f-pawn!

Neil McDonald
Gravesend
September 2008

Introduction

Some Strategical and Tactical Themes in the Dutch

Before we become immersed in sophisticated modern theory, I thought I'd show you one of the very first Dutch games on record.

G.Walker-P.De Saint Amant
London 1836

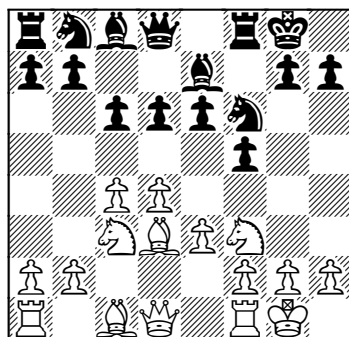
1 d4 f5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 d6 4 ♘f3 e6?!

Chess history, or at least its terminology, would have to be rewritten if Black had played 4...g6 here, since the Leningrad Dutch wasn't invented until a hundred or so years after this game. Not surprisingly, Black puts his bishop on e7 in Classical Dutch style.

5 e3 ♙e7 6 ♙d3

White is also unable to play in modern style by fianchettoing his king's bishop with 5 g3 and 6 ♙g2.

6...0-0 7 0-0 c6



8 ♙c2?!

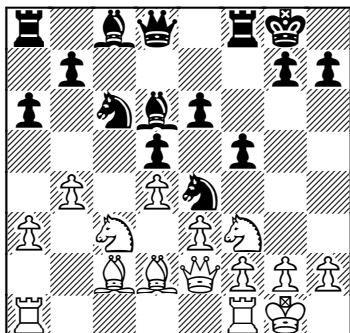
Nowadays we'd expect 8 e4, seizing space before Black can establish a Stonewall with his next move.

8...d5 9 cxd5 cxd5 10 ♙d2 ♘c6 11 ♙e2 a6 12 a3 ♙d6 13 b4 ♘e4!

A procedure that will be much repeated throughout this book. Black makes use of the 'de facto' outpost on

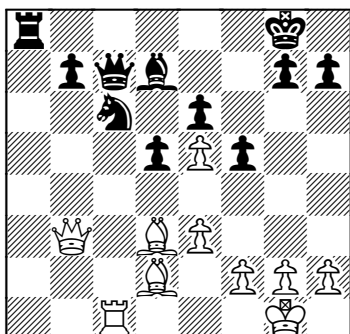
Play the Dutch

e4. Its effect in 1836 is such that White immediately blunders a pawn.



14 b5? ♖xc3 15 ♙xc3 axb5 16 ♖xb5
 ♖xa3 17 ♖xa3 ♙xa3 18 ♖a1 ♙d6 19
 ♙d3 ♖c7 20 ♙d2 ♙d7 21 ♖b3 ♖b8 22
 ♖c1 ♖a8 23 ♙e5 ♙xe5 24 dxe5

Now Black could keep his extra pawn with 24...♖xe5 25 ♖xb7 ♖a7 26 ♖b6 ♖a1 followed by simplifying. However, it seems that Saint Amant wanted to strengthen the f5-pawn against any possible ♙xf5 sacrifice.



24...g6??

The Leningrad Dutch kingside pawn structure is risky enough for Black even when there is a bishop available to

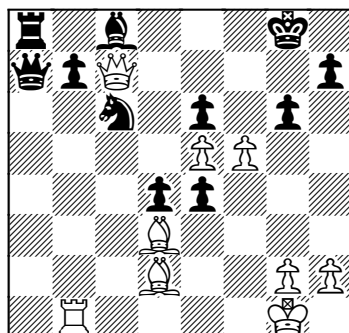
guard things on g7. Here the dark squares around the black king are entirely unprotected. Still, even after this positional blunder the wedge of pawns on the light squares acts as a barrier against the white attack.

25 f4 ♖b8 26 ♖b1 ♙c8 27 ♖b6

The manoeuvre 27 ♙e1 and 28 ♙h4 to infiltrate the dark squares on the kingside looks strong.

27...♖a7 28 ♖c7 d4 29 e4 fxe4 30 f5?

A clever attacking idea but with a fatal flaw. He should prefer 30 ♙xe4.

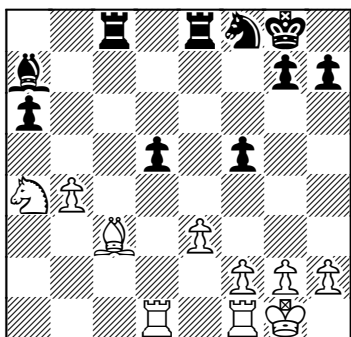


30...g8!

Walker was hoping for 30...exd3? 31 f6! b6 (to stop mate on g7) 32 f7+ ♙g7 33 ♙h6+! ♙xh6 34 f8♖+ completing a brilliant career for the f-pawn. Instead he is obliged to exchange queens and after some further adventures was defeated in the endgame by the pretty finishing stroke 40...♙f7.

31 ♖xb8 ♙xb8 32 ♙xe4 gxf5 33 ♙xb7
 ♙xb7 34 ♖xb7 ♖a1+ 35 ♙f2 ♙c6 36
 ♙h6 ♙xe5 37 ♖g7+ ♙h8 38 h3 ♖a2+ 39
 ♙g3 f4+ 40 ♙xf4 ♙f7! 41 ♖xf7 ♖f2+ 42
 ♙e4 ♖xf7 43 ♙xd4 ♖f6 0-1

The Dutch pawn-ram



The position was reached in **V.Sergeev-N.Firman**, Alushta 2009. It looks as though Black can't do anything but suffer with 23...♖ed8. However, there came:

23...f4!!

A move of splendid vitality.

24 exf4 ♖e6

What has Black achieved with his ...f5-f4 move that serves him so well in the Dutch?

Firstly, the scope of the bishop on a7 has been increased – it attacks f2 rather than (in Nimzowitsch's memorable phrase) 'biting on granite' against e3.

Secondly, the rook on e8 is granted an open file.

Thirdly, the pawn on d5 is converted into a passed pawn that can advance to d4 where it will be well defended.

Finally, the knight on e6 has been activated with a threat to f4 as 25 ♖xd5 ♖xf4 intending 26...♗e2+ is at least okay for Black.

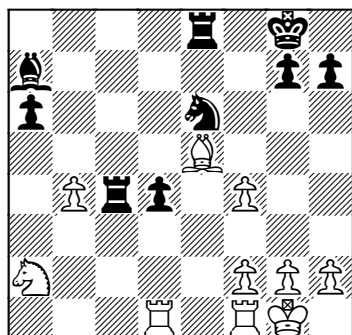
So a black rook, knight, bishop and

passed pawn have all become important dynamic factors in the position thanks to the sacrifice of the torrent pawn. The upshot is that thanks to the 'Dutch' pawn Black gains activity in what would otherwise have been a dour defensive position for him.

25 ♗e5

It is the black rook on the c-file that profits after 25 g3 d4 26 ♗d2 ♖c2.

25...♖c4 26 ♗c3 d4 27 ♗a2



Now Black should have continued generating dynamism with his pawns with 27...g5!, creating a passed pawn and active pieces after 28 fxg5 ♖xg5. Still, he managed to win the endgame anyhow after 22 moves.

Black establishes a pawn wedge in the centre

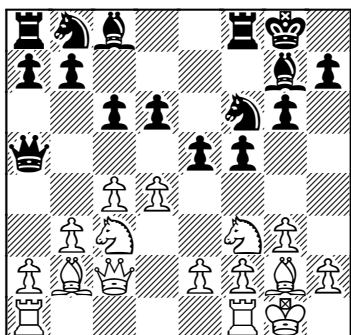
Sometimes the ...f5-f4 pawn-ram occurs in a closed or static pawn structure after systematic preparation. Often White can be accused of nothing worse than passive play in the Dutch, but ends up in great difficulties before move 20. Here is a typical positional

Play the Dutch

squeeze by Black against passive play, adorned with the pawn-ram.

W.Buehl-L.Reifurth
Chicago 1994

1 d4 f5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 g3 g6 4 ♙g2 ♙g7 5
c4 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 ♘c3 c6 8 b3 ♚a5 9
♙b2 e5 10 ♚c2?



An irresolute move that allows Black to get a grip on the centre. Instead 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 e4 is discussed in Chapter Six.

10...e4 11 ♘e1

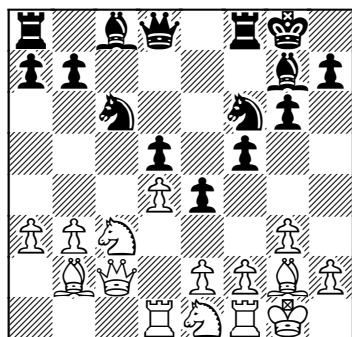
From bad to worse. He should play 11 ♘d2 followed by 12 e3 and then try to edge forwards on the queenside.

11...d5 12 cxd5?

The final mistake, giving the black knight the c6-square.

12...cxd5 13 a3 ♘c6 14 ♚d1 ♚d8!

The queen has served her purpose on the queenside and is now needed to support a kingside attack. Black's basic aim is to advance ...f5-f4 at the most favourable moment.



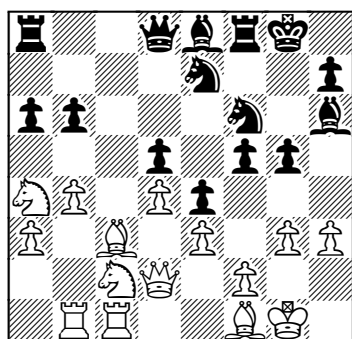
15 b4 ♙e6 16 ♘a4 ♙f7 17 ♚d2

White has no counterplay and so Black hasn't hurried his attack. However, now he decides it is time for violence:

17...♘g4 18 h3 ♙h6! 19 e3

Black provoked this move so that a future ...f5-f4 breakthrough will not only attack e3 but also contain the threat of ...f4-f3, smothering the bishop on g2.

19...♘f6 20 ♙c3 a6 21 ♚b1 b6 22 ♘c2
♙e8 23 ♚fc1 g5 24 ♙f1 ♘e7!



Nicely done. Black wins time to manoeuvre his knight to g6 to support the ...f5-f4 advance by a discovered attack

on the knight on a4.

25 ♖b2

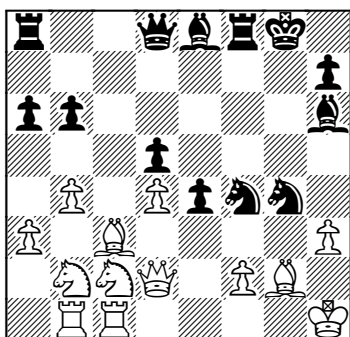
The white pieces are grouped on the queenside, but what can they do?

25...f4

The Dutch pawn has the decisive word.

26 exf4 gxf4 27 gxf4 ♘g6 28 ♔h1 ♘xf4 29 ♙g2 ♘g4!

It's not too late for Black to throw it all away with 29...♘g2? 30 ♚xh6 when 31 ♙g1 gives White a strong attack.



30 ♘e3

It all caves in for White after 30 hxg4 ♚h4+ 31 ♔g1 ♘h3+ 32 ♙xh3 ♙xd2 33 ♙xd2 ♚xf2+.

30...♘xh3 31 ♙xh3 ♚h4 0-1

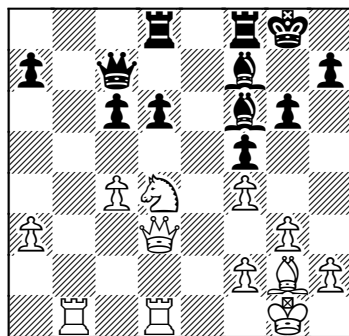
Either h3 or f2 drops next move with a quick massacre

Black wins through tactical sharpness after a tough defence

In the Dutch White often strives to gain space and/or open lines on the queenside. Black needs to be patient and keep an eye open for favourable tactics. Opportunities may appear suddenly

and have to be grasped!

The following position was reached in **A.Iljushin-E.Berg**, European Championship, Budva 2009.



The c6-pawn is attacked twice. If 21...♙e8 then 22 ♘e6 wins the exchange, while 21...♙xd4 22 ♚xd4 gives up Black's important dark-square bishop, and 21...c5 22 ♖b7 ♚c8 23 ♘c6 ♚xb7 24 ♘xd8 ♚c7 25 ♘f7 ♙xf7 26 ♚xd6 ♚xd6 27 ♙xd6 leaves him a pawn down in an endgame. Berg comes up with a far better solution to Black's travails:

21...d5! 22 cxd5 ♙xd5

Black remains under intense pressure after 22...cxd5 23 ♙dc1.

23 ♘xc6!

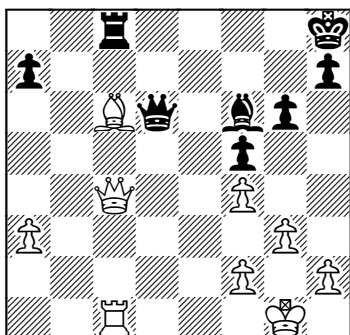
Winning a pawn.

23...♙xc6

If 23...♙xg2 24 ♘xd8 ♙xd8 25 ♚b3+ ♙g7 26 ♙xg2 and White wins.

24 ♚c4+ ♔h8 25 ♙xc6 ♙xd1+ 26 ♙xd1 ♙c8 27 ♙c1 ♙d6

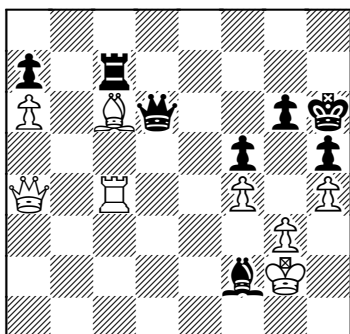
White has won a pawn, but the presence of opposite-coloured bishops means he has few winning chances.



28 a4 ♖g7 29 ♖g2 ♜c7 30 ♜c2 ♚d1 31 h3 h5 32 h4 ♚d6 33 a5 ♚d1 34 a6 ♚d6 35 ♚b5 ♖h6 36 ♜c4 ♙d4

Now the exchanges that result from 37 ♙f3 or 37 ♚d5 would leave White with negligible winning chances, but he has lost his sense of danger:

37 ♚a4? ♙xf2!!



The weakness of f2 strikes again.

38 ♙xf2?

White can hold on with 38 ♙f3, for instance if 38...♙c5 39 ♜c2.

38...♚d2+ 39 ♖g1?

White can still draw with 39 ♖f1 ♜e7 40 ♚a1! stopping the mate on e1 and aiming for a perpetual check via

the h8-square: for example, 40...♚d3+ 41 ♖g2 ♚e2+ 42 ♖h3 ♚xc4 43 ♚h8+ ♜h7 44 ♚f8+ ♜g7 45 ♚h8+.

39...♜e7 40 ♙g2 ♚e1+ 41 ♖h2 ♜e3! 42 ♜c1 ♚xc1 43 ♚d4 ♚c3 44 ♚xa7?

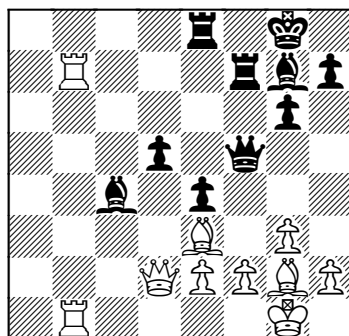
Black would still have to prove he is winning after 44 ♚d8! as 44...♜xg3? would only draw after 45 ♚f8+.

44...♚e1! 0-1

A typical advantage for Black in the endgame

Black does surprisingly well in the endgame in the Dutch as White's pawn structure gets worn down. In fact White often wears it down himself, or makes it disjointed, by playing overly sharply. Assuming that e7 remains guarded, the Dutch Leningrad pawn structure is rather solid for Black – the pawn on e7 is a linchpin that is difficult to attack and holds together the black centre.

The following position was reached in **A.Karpov-H.Nakamura**, Cap d'Agde (rapid) 2008.



Black has a couple of advantages:

The white bishop is shut in on g2 by a solid barrier on e4. If f2-f3 is ever played to free it then the white pawn structure and pieces will be exposed to tactical blows from the black pieces that are massed on the e-file and f-files. Here is the paradox of the Dutch e2, f2, g3 and h2 pawn structure: it is incredibly solid, but it can become a tomb for the bishop on g2 – and in some cases for the king on g1. Being behind heavy fortifications is okay so long as you don't want to get out.

In contrast, the black bishop on c4 is active. Unlike its opposite number on g2, it has escaped outside the pawn chain and has a target on e2. Furthermore, and this is an important factor on a board that is so open, it is defended by the pawn on d5 and so is secure from attack.

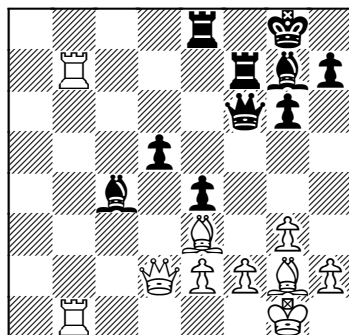
Whereas the pawn on d5 is soundly defended by the bishop on c4, White has two pawns that are potentially vulnerable. The first is the pawn on e2 – it cramps the white queen's mobility to have to defend it. The second vulnerable pawn is on f2. Its defensive alliance with the bishop on e3 is less secure than that between the black bishop and pawn on d5, because of the possible disruptive move ...d5-d4.

Whereas the white pawn structure is solid but inert, the black pawns control more space and are more dynamic. To have pawns on d5 and e4 versus pawns on e2 and f2 gives Black a lot more potential to expand. He can try to

arrange ...d5-d4, whereas White can only make moves with his pieces and wait.

But still, can we really say that the position is anything other than a draw? For the sake of fairness I should point out this was a rapidplay game. On the other hand, the fact that Karpov couldn't defend it shows that it isn't easy. Simple endgame positions are a forte of the great masters, even after their opening knowledge has withered and their tactical sight declined.

25...♖f6!



By threatening to mobilize the pawns with 26...d4 Nakamura persuades White to exchange off his active rook.

26 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 27 ♙f1

Intending to unwind with 28 ♙d4 and 29 e3. If all the bishops vanish from the board, Karpov could even try to prove that the d5-pawn is a weakness.

27...♖f6!

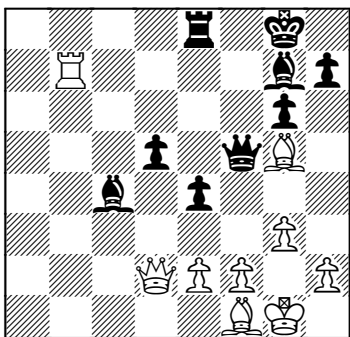
Denying Karpov his plan.

28 ♙g5 ♖f5

Play the Dutch

With the incidental tactical threat of 29...e3! winning instantly as b1, d2, f2 and g5 would suddenly all be hanging!

29 ♖b7



29...♗a8

In principle it would be wrong to hurry the ...d5-d4 push as it deprives the bishop on c4 of its defender. And there is also a tactical reason why: 29...d4 30 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 31 ♖h6+ (stronger than 31 ♖xd4+ ♗e5 when g5 as well as c4 is hanging) 31...♔g8 32 ♖xd4 ♖f7 33 ♖c1! intending 34 ♖b2. Then, notwithstanding being an exchange up, Black can never hope to win because of his dark-square holes.

30 h4

Black's persistence begins to pay off. Karpov secures his bishop but in doing so weakens his kingside pawns. It was simpler to retreat with 30 ♖e3! and ask Black 'how can you make progress?'

30...♖e5!

Nakamura straightaway homes in on the g3-pawn. As the bishop also controls b8 and prevents the white

rook checking there, poor Karpov has to worry too about a possible invasion on his second rank with 31...♗a2.

31 ♖e7?

The calm 31 ♖e3 would still have saved the day: if 31...♗f8 then 32 ♖d4 when 32...♖xg3?? allows the killer check 33 ♖g7+; and 31...♗a2 32 ♖b4 threatens 33 ♖e7 and so prevents Black from continuing his attack.

31...♗f8

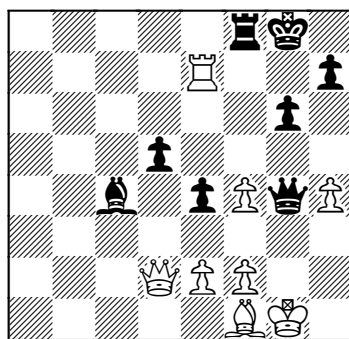
With a double threat to f2 and g3.

32 ♖f4!

After 32 ♖e3 ♖xg3?? 33 ♖d4!, threatening mate on g7 and defending f2 a third time, turns the tables. But the intermediate 32...♖f6! does the trick after 33 ♖b7 ♖xg3.

32...♖xf4 33 gxf4 ♖g4+!

The hurried 33...♖xf4? allows White counterplay after 34 ♖d4 ♖f6 (34...♖f6 is best) 35 ♖h3, etc.



34 ♖g2 ♖xh4

Winning a pawn and attacking the white rook...

35 ♖c7 ♖xf4

...and so winning a pawn while

again attacking the white rook. No chance is given to White to counterattack. The rest is fairly straightforward.

36 ♖xf4 ♗xf4 37 e3 ♗f7 38 ♗c8+ ♔g7
39 ♗c5 ♗e7 40 ♗c6 ♕e2 41 ♕h3 ♗a7 42
♗d6 ♕c4 43 ♔g2 h5 44 ♔g3 ♗a1 45
♔f4 ♗h1 46 ♕e6 ♗f1 47 ♔g5 ♗g1+ 48
♔f4 ♗g2 49 ♕xd5 ♗xf2+ 50 ♔xe4
♕xd5+ 51 ♗xd5 h4 52 ♗d7+ ♗f7 53

♔d4 0-1

White's isolated pawn is no match for Black's connected passed pawns.

Karpov didn't play as well in 2008 as he did twenty years earlier, but I'm pretty sure if he couldn't defend White's position then it won't be easy for your opponents either.