

Contents

Bibliography	4
Introduction	5
1 The Main Line: 8...♗a6 without 9 b3	7
2 The Main Line: 8...♗a6 9 b3	31
3 The Main Line: 8...♘b6 without 9 ♖c3	92
4 The Main Line: 8...♘b6 9 ♖c3	117
5 The Main Line: Early Deviations	141
6 The 4...♗c5 Variation: 5 ♘xc6 ♗f6 6 ♗d2	157
7 The 4...♗c5 Variation: 5 ♘xc6 ♗f6 6 ♗f3	195
8 The 4...♗c5 Variation: 5 ♗e3 without 5...♗f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4	230
9 The 4...♗c5 Variation: 5 ♗e3 ♗f6 6 c3 ♘ge7 7 ♗c4	273
10 The 4...♗c5 Variation: Early Alternatives	320
11 The Check on b4	335
12 Odds and Ends	357
Index of Variations	378

Introduction

The Scotch Game has been one of my favourite openings as White ever since I took it up a decade ago. It's far sounder than the majority of gambit lines available to White after 1 e4 e5, but like them leads to unbalanced positions in which the defender is likely to feel much less at home than in the generally more rational lines of the Ruy Lopez. In short, the Scotch leads to a complex, exciting early middle-game in which White can most certainly aspire to the advantage.

Throughout the 1990s Garry Kasparov was the main torch-bearer for the Scotch and under his patronage a large number of Grandmasters adopted the opening, no doubt attracted by the extremely original positions which arise after 4...♗f6 5 ♖xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♜e7 7 ♜e2 ♗d5 8 c4 and then 8...♙a6 or 8...♗b6. In the first few years of the new millennium Black's other main defence, 4...♙c5, caused a number of players, including Kasparov, to lose some of their faith in the Scotch, not least because new defences were worked out after 5 ♖xc6 ♜f6 6 ♜d2. However, the wheel didn't take long to turn full circle, thanks to new discoveries being found for White after 5 ♙e3 and especially 5 ♖xc6 ♜f6 6 ♜f3!?. Indeed, nowadays the Scotch occupies a prominent part in the repertoire of Kasparov's sometime protégé, Magnus Carlsen, and is regularly employed as well by the likes of Alexander Morozevich, Teimour Radjabov and especially Sergei Rublevsky, not forgetting too the talented, young grandmasters Emanuel Berg, Gawain Jones and Ian Nepomniachtchi.

Having spent many months studying recent grandmaster games in and existing theory on the Scotch, it quickly became clear that this project was going to be far bigger than I ever could have envisaged. As such I was very pleased when Richard Palliser agreed to come onboard. Richard not only added to the number of new ideas I'd found, but also updated much of the existing work, while helping to present the theory and key motifs of each variation as clearly as possible.

Both your authors have to admit to a certain bias for White's cause in the Scotch, but this is very much a complete work and those who defend 1 e4 e5 should also find much of interest, as well as plenty of new ideas within. Now I just

The Scotch Game

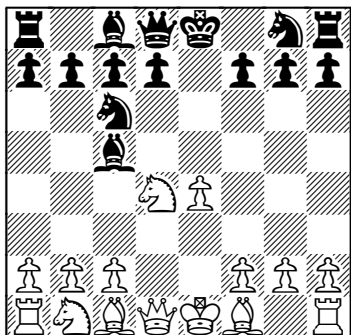
hope that you will enjoy your adventures with or against the Scotch as much as I've always done!

Yelena Dembo,
Athens,
December 2010

Chapter Ten

The 4...♘c5 Variation: Early Alternatives

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4
♙c5



Having examined White's two main continuations, we now turn our attention to the remaining less-popular and generally less-critical ways to deal with the early attack on his knight.

A: 5 ♘f5
B: 5 ♘b3

Line A has aggressive intent, but backfires in the face of forceful play from Black. However, Line B has recently received some attention thanks to an aggressive new plan championed by Magnus Carlsen.

Otherwise, 5 ♘f3 ♘f6 6 ♙d3 (and not 6 e5? ♘g4 with a double-attack) 6...0-0 7 0-0 already allows Black at least full equality with 7...d5, as does 5 c3?! ♘f6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 ♙d3 (O.Ottesen-R.Berg, Reykjavik 2009) 7...d5.

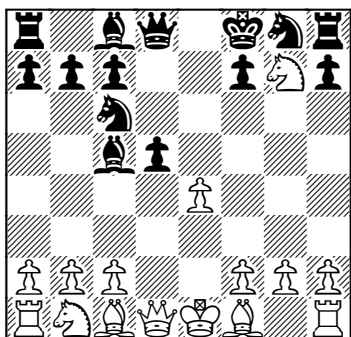
A) 5 ♘f5?! d5!

This powerful pawn sacrifice has pretty much consigned White's aggressive approach to the bin.

6 ♘xg7+

Neither does declining the pawn help White, as Black also obtains the initiative after both 6 exd5 ♙xf5 7 ♙e2+ ♘ge7 8 dxc6 bxc6 and 6 ♘c3 ♙xf5 7 exf5 ♙e7+ 8 ♙e2 0-0-0.

6...♙f8



7 ♘h5

The best try, especially as 7 exd5?? ♙xg7 8 dxc6 ♙xf2+! forced an embarrassing early resignation in R.Bana-G.Olarasu, Varna 1994, and 7 ♘f5? ♙xf5 8 exf5 ♙h4 is also best avoided: for example, 9 ♙f3 (or 9 ♙d2 ♙e8+ 10 ♙d1 ♙xf2 11 ♙e2 and now in P.Dukaczewski-M.Sakic, Ustron 1994, 11...♙e3 would have left Black firmly in the driving seat) 9...♙e8+ 10 ♙d1 ♘f6 11 g3 was O.Castro Rojas-G.Garcia, Bogota 1986, in which it's hard to believe that White would have survived after 11...♙d4+.

7...♙h4! 8 ♘g3 ♘f6!

While White has spent six tempi moving his knight around, Black has developed his queen and minor pieces to very active squares, thereby already giving him a highly-dangerous initiative.

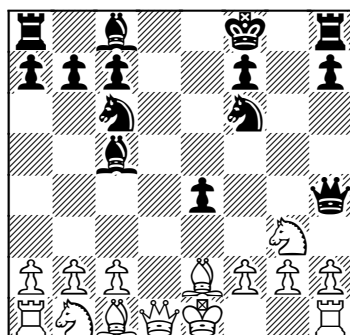
9 ♙e2

Wisely directed against the threat of 9...♘g4 and once again White has hardly prospered with the alternatives:

a) 9 exd5? ♙g4 10 f3 ♙e8+ 11 ♙e2 ♘d4 12 ♘c3 ♙xf3! saw White being crushed in the old game J.Minchin-W.Wayte, London 1900.

b) The desperate counter-gambit 9 b4? was tried in J.Bauma-P.Zvara, Czech League 2007, but after just 9...♘xb4 Black's initiative has scarcely been diminished.

9...dxe4!



The simplest reaction, regaining the pawn and preparing to occupy the d-file. Unsurprisingly Black has scored well from here in practice, with White facing problems housing his king and developing his queenside:

a) 10 ♙e3 ♙xe3 11 fxe3 was an attempt to reduce the attacking force in A.Grekh-A.Tukhaev, Simferopol 2000, but with 11...♙g4 Black retains a strong initiative.

b) 10 0-0 is best met by 10...♙g8, menacing an exchange sacrifice, as well as ideas of ...♘g4.

c) 10 b4?! ♙xb4+ 11 c3 ♙c5 12 ♙a3 ♙xa3 13 ♘xa3 ♙f4 14 ♘c4 ♙e6 saw Black go a pawn ahead for no real

The Scotch Game

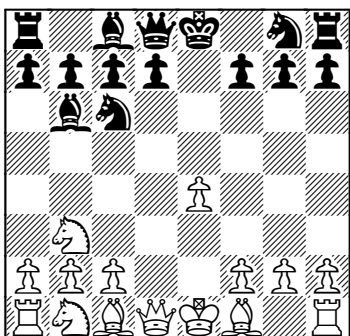
compensation in W.Puntier-C.D'Amore, Calvia Olympiad 2004.

d) 10 ♖c3 ♗e6 11 ♗e3 (otherwise, 11 ♜d2? e3! 12 fxe3 ♜d8 13 ♗d3 ♜g8 was a disaster for White in A.Damia-J.Tuma, Brno 2006, while the 11 ♗d2 of H.Strehlow-R.Rabiega, Berlin 2007, should just be met by 11...♜g8, retaining the initiative) 11...♗e3 12 fxe3 ♜d8 13 ♜c1 h5 14 b3 ♜g5 saw Black maintain the initiative and the upper hand in Y.Yakovich-A.Goldin, Moscow 1994.

B) 5 ♖b3

A much more sensible approach, removing the knight from attack with gain of tempo.

5...♗b6



Here White must decide whether or not to harass Black's bishop on b6:

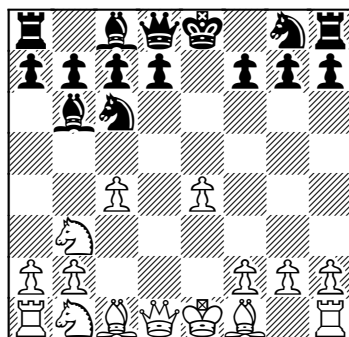
- B1: 6 a4**
- B2: 6 ♖c3**
- B3: 6 ♜e2**

White's remaining options are generally a little planless and unimpressive:

a) 6 ♗d3 ♜h4 7 0-0 ♖f6 8 h3 d6 gives Black good, active development and full equality. Moreover, it's White who must be careful here, as was shown by 9 ♖1d2? ♗xh3! 10 ♜f3 (10 gxh3? ♜g3+ 11 ♖h1 ♜xh3+ 12 ♖g1 ♖g4 13 ♖f3 ♜g3+ 14 ♖h1 ♗xf2 is crushing) 10...♗e6 and Black won in G.Seils-M.Heintze, Stralsund 1988.

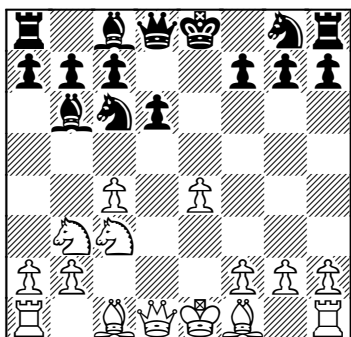
b) 6 ♗c4?! ♜h4 7 0-0 (or 7 ♜e2 ♖e5! when Black seizes the initiative) 7...♖f6 8 h3?! ♖xe4 9 ♜e2 0-0 simply left White a pawn down in J.Goncz-E.Szurovsky, Heves 1999.

c) 6 c4 is the most popular of these lesser options, clamping down on the d5-square.



However, after 6...d6 7 ♖c3 (otherwise, 7 ♗e2 ♜h4 8 0-0 ♖f6 9 ♖c3 ♖g4!? 10 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 11 ♜c2 a5 12 ♗f4 0-0 13 ♗g3 ♜h5 gave Black good activity in D.Genocchio-M.Lazic, Cortina d'Ampezzo 2004, and the 7 ♗d3 ♜h4! 8 0-0?! ♖f6 9 ♜e2 of H.Murtez-

D.Gurtner, Geneva 2004, should have been met by 9...♘e5, menacing 10...♘fg4 with dangerous attacking prospects) Black should not be too unhappy thanks to his strong presence on the dark squares:

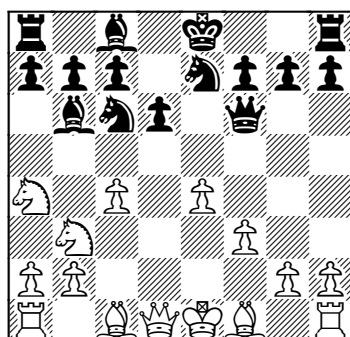


c1) 7...♘ge7 8 ♙e2 (8 ♚e2?! 0-0 9 ♙e3 was a rather ambitious idea in G.Kuzmin-O.Kulicov, Kramatorsk 2003, and might have been punished by 9...♚e8 10 0-0-0 ♙xe3+ 11 ♚xe3 a5 when Black is the first to attack) 8...0-0 was solid and fine for Black in S.Kalygin-V.Malaniuk, Alushta 2004.

c2) 7...♘f6 8 ♙e2 0-0 (but not 8...♘e5?! because of 9 c5! dxc5 10 ♚xd8+ ♙xd8 11 f4 ♘g6 12 e5 with more than enough for the pawn) 9 ♙g5 was seen in D.Szopka-T.Dziadykiewicz, Czestochowa 1994, and after 9...h6 10 ♙h4 ♚e8 the pressure against e4 gives Black the initiative.

c3) 7...♚h4 was once employed by Bronstein. It isn't quite as effective as elsewhere in this chapter, but even so after 8 g3 ♚f6 9 ♚e2 ♘ge7 Black cannot be worse.

c4) 7...♚f6! 8 f3 (otherwise, the 8 f4 ♘ge7 9 ♙e2 0-0 10 ♘a4 of F.Riemann-E.Flechsigg, Breslau 1886, should be met by 10...♚g6 11 ♙f3 f5 with the initiative, while 8 c5?! dxc5 9 ♘d5 ♚e5 10 f3 ♘ge7 11 ♙f4 ♚xb2 12 ♙c1 ♚e5 failed to give White enough for his pawns in J.Szabo-B.Tomisa, Hungarian League 1999) 8...♘ge7 9 ♘a4 sees White hunting down Black's powerful bishop, but at some cost in terms of time.

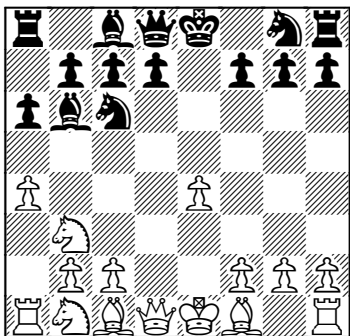


Indeed, after 9...0-0! (9...♙e6 10 ♘xb6 axb6 11 ♙e2, as in J.Martinez-M.Cardena, Merida 1997, and then 11...♘e5 also sees Black seizing the initiative) 10 ♘xb6 (or 10 ♚c2 ♚h4+ 11 g3 ♚h5 and suddenly White comes under pressure on the light squares) 10...axb6 11 ♙e2 ♚h4+ 12 g3 ♚h3 followed by ...f5 White's position remains under pressure.

B1) 6 a4

Until quite recently it was believed that this push represented White's only real attempt to make something out of his fifth move.

6...a6!



The most flexible and popular response. That said, 6...a5 is also playable and after 7 ♖c3 ♗ge7 (the ambitious 7...♗f6 8 ♜e2 ♖b4 could have backfired in J.Isaev-J.Piket, Elista 1998, had White seized the initiative with the logical 9 ♖b5) 8 ♙g5 f6 9 ♙h4 0-0 10 ♜d2 d6 11 ♙e2 ♖b4 the respective queenside holes roughly cancelled each other out in V.Samolins-J.Klovans, Riga 2009.

7 ♖c3

Invariably played, especially because pushing the a-pawn on doesn't achieve much: 7 a5 ♙a7 8 ♙d3 d6 9 0-0 ♖f6 10 ♙g5 h6 11 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 12 ♖c3 was seen in N.Bozilov-V.Stoimenov, Dimitrovgrad 2003, and now 12...♗e7 would have left Black fully equal.

7...d6

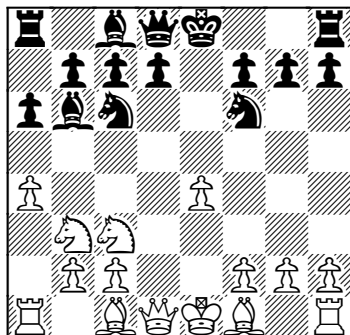
Again the most flexible and likely the best, but there are alternatives:

a) 7...♗f6 8 ♜e2 ♗ge7 9 ♖d5!? (trying to punish Black's slightly ambitious approach; earlier 9 h4 h6 10 g4 ♖d4 11 ♗xd4 ♙xd4 12 ♙d2 d6 13 f4 g6 14 ♙g2 ♙d7 had also led to a rather unclear

middlegame in S.Ansell-S.Ganguly, Edinburgh 2003) 9...♗d5 10 exd5+ ♗e7 11 a5 ♙a7 12 h4 d6?! (natural, but 12...h6!? is probably an improvement; then 13 ♗a4?! is much less effective on account of 13...0-0 14 ♗f4 ♜d6) 13 ♗a4! saw White seize the initiative in J.Van der Wiel-M.Merbis, Leiden 2010, with the creative idea of 13...0-0? 14 ♗f4.

b) 7...♗ge7 8 ♙e2 0-0 9 0-0 d6 10 ♙g5 ♙e6 11 ♖d5 ♙xd5 12 exd5 ♗e5 13 ♖h1 h6 was very solid for Black in H.Velchev-M.Vasilev, Sunny Beach 2009.

c) 7...♖f6



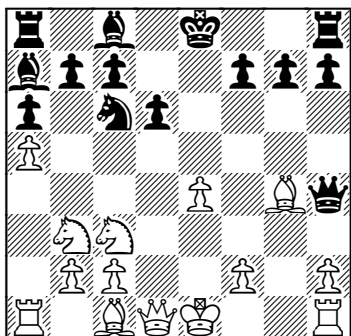
8 ♙e2 (White may do better with 8 ♙d3 d6 9 ♙g5!?, since 9...h6 10 ♙h4 g5 11 ♙g3 ♜e7 12 0-0 ♙e6 13 ♖d5 ♙xd5 14 exd5 ♗e5 15 ♗e1 gave him the initiative in C.Debray-L.Fressinet, Paris 2007, but the immediate 8 ♙g5 allowed Black to obtain decent counterplay with 8...h6 9 ♙h4 d6 10 ♙e2 ♙e6 11 0-0 g5!? – only now! – 12 ♙g3 h5 in J.Poenisch-V.Malaniuk, Dresden (rapid) 2010) 8...d6 9 0-0 h6 10 ♖h1 0-0 11 f4 ♗e8 12 ♙f3 ♙e6 13 a5 ♙a7 left both

sides with trumps and was about equal in J.Gallagher-S.Brunello, Dresden Olympiad 2008.

8 ♘d5

Continuing to harass the bishop, but White has also tested a number of alternatives:

a) 8 a5 again fails to impress: 8...♙a7 9 ♙e2 (Black was also better after 9 ♙d3 ♘f6 10 ♚e2 ♙e6 11 ♘d5 0-0 12 0-0 ♙xd5 13 exd5 ♚e8! 14 ♚f3 ♘e5 in E.Velazco-S.Ludena, Arequipa 2003, and after the 9 ♚e2 ♙e6 10 ♘d5 of V.Vigfusson-L.Blomstrom, Copenhagen 2007, one simple route to easy equality is 10...h6 11 ♙e3 ♙xe3 12 ♚xe3 ♘f6) 9...♘f6 10 g4?? (a shocking decision; correct was the simple 10 0-0 with equality) 10...♘xg4! 11 ♙xg4 ♚h4 unfurls a double-attack against the bishop and f2.



Unsurprisingly White was swiftly routed after 12 ♚d2 ♙xg4 13 ♚f4 ♘e5 14 h3 ♘f3+ in G.Trkulja-S.Atalik, Neum 2005.

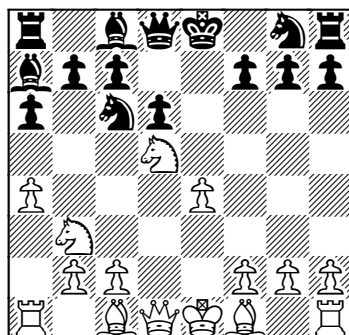
b) The 8 ♚e2 ♙e6 9 ♙e3 ♙xe3 10 ♚xe3 of G.Botterill-A.Perkins, Clacton

on Sea 1974, isn't a particularly inspiring approach and is a little illogical after the earlier 5 ♘b3 and 6 a4. Here 10...♘f6 11 ♙e2 0-0 12 0-0 ♚e8 should unsurprisingly be fine for Black.

c) 8 ♙c4 ♘f6 9 ♙g5 ♙e6 is also equal, but White must now avoid the trap 10 ♘d5? ♙xf2+!

d) 8 ♚f3?! ♘e5 9 ♚f4 (9 ♚g3 ♘g4 seizes the initiative) 9...♘f6 10 ♙e2 0-0 11 0-0 was seen in S.Naranjo Espinosa-F.Gomez, Havana 2007, and now 11...♚e8 would have left Black, if anyone, slightly for preference.

8...♙a7



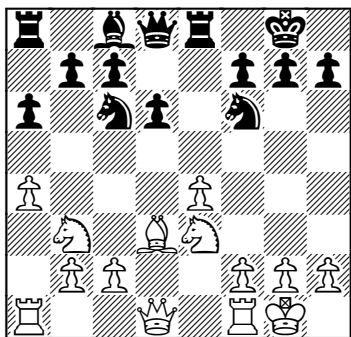
9 ♙e2

White settles for simple development. Such an approach is unlikely to trouble Black, but in any case the position appears fairly level:

a) 9 ♙e3 ♙xe3 (there's no real reason to allow White to exchange on a7) 10 ♘xe3 ♘f6 11 ♙d3 (but not the 11 f4? ♘xe4 12 ♚f3 ♘f6 13 0-0-0 0-0 14 g4 of W.Danneck-R.Kurz, Hockenheim 1994, because 14...♙e6 15 g5 ♘d7 would have shown up White's play as

The Scotch Game

being too ambitious) 11...0-0 12 0-0 ♖e8 leaves White quite strong on the light squares, but Black with sufficient counterplay down the e-file and potentially on the dark squares.

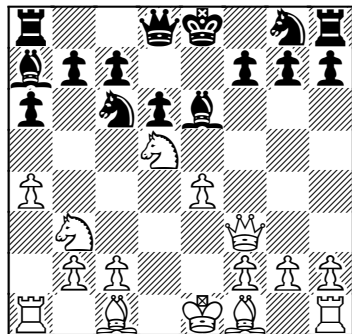


Indeed, with 13 f3 (13 ♘d2 was preferred in J.Rodriguez-Y.Kraidman, Siegen 1970, but 13...♗e5 would have attacked White's remaining bishop while preparing ...d5) 13...♙d7 14 c4 ♖b8! 15 ♗f2 ♗a7 Black had found his queen a dark-square role and enjoyed good counterplay in J.Hector-B.Sahl, Vejle 1994.

b) 9 ♗e2 ♙e6 10 ♙e3 ♙xe3 11 ♗xe3 ♗f6 12 ♙c4 (after the 12 0-0-0?! 0-0 13 f4 of T.Halasz-P.Lukacs, Budapest 1979, 13...♙xd5 14 exd5 ♗e7 gives Black strong play against the vulnerable pawns on a4 and d5) 12...0-0 13 0-0 ♗e8 14 ♗f3 ♙xd5 15 exd5 ♗e5 16 ♗f4 saw White trying to exchange his way to a draw in A.Vuckovic-A.Karpachev, German League 2005, but here 16...♗xc4 17 ♗xc4 ♗e4 was one way for Black to retain an edge.

c) 9 ♗f3!? is an ambitious try, dis-

suaing ...♗f6 and provoking complications. However, after 9...♙e6 Black seems to be able to obtain enough counterplay:



c1) 10 ♗c3 ♗f6! 11 ♗xf6+ (11 ♙e3 was preferred in A.Martorelli-F.Bellini, Arvier 2008, but 11...♙xd5 12 exd5 ♙xe3 13 ♗xe3+ ♗e7 strikes against d5 and leaves Black slightly better) 11...♗xf6 12 ♗xf6 gxf6 gives Black the initiative as ...f5 is next up.

c2) Zhang Pengxiang's 10 ♙d2 prepares ♙c3, but Black shouldn't have any problems after 10...♗ge7.

c3) 10 ♗g3 is critical, but 10...♙xd5! 11 exd5 ♗b4 12 ♗xg7?! (White should prefer 12 ♙c4 ♗e7! 13 0-0 0-0, retaining equality) 12...♗f6 13 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 14 ♙d3 (and not 14 ♙d1? ♗g4, as in R.Chalmeta Ugas-H.Mestre Bellido, Barbera del Valles 2008) 14...♗xd3+ 15 cxd3 ♗xd5 saw Black regaining his pawn with a pull in I.Salonen-I.Skrjabin, Espoo 2006.

d) 9 ♙g5?! might appeal to some ambitious or just weak players, but 9...♗xg5! 10 ♗xc7+ ♙e7 11 ♗xa8 ♗f6

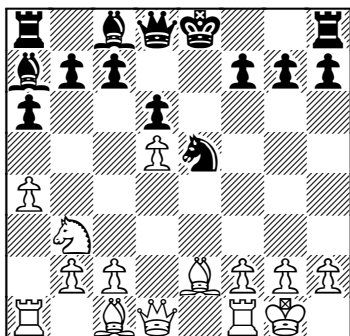
12 ♖d2 ♗e5 should turn out rather well for Black, since the knight is in some trouble on a8: for example, 13 f3 d5 with some initiative or 13 ♙d3 ♘xe4 14 ♙xe4 ♗xe4+ 15 ♙d1 ♗xg2 16 ♖e1+ ♙e6 17 ♘c7 ♙xf2 and Black has far too much for the exchange.

We now return to 9 ♙e2:

9...♘f6! 10 0-0

White must always beware tactics on f2 in this line and here 10 ♙g5? ♙xf2+ 11 ♙f1 (11 ♙xf2? ♘xe4+ 12 ♙e1 ♘xg5 regains the piece with a two-pawn surplus) 11...♙a7! 12 ♙xf6 gxf6 13 ♗d2 ♙e6 14 ♗h6 ♙d7! 15 ♘xf6+ ♙c8 leaves Black on top. So too does 10 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♙h1 ♖e8 13 f3 ♙e6 14 c4 (H.Velchev-M.Stoinev, Plovdiv 2003) 14...♗g6! followed by ...f5 with the initiative.

10...♘xd5 11 exd5 ♘e5



Thus Black has managed to leave White with a pawn not a piece on d5, while bringing his own knight to a promising square.

12 ♘d4

White hurries to recentralize his

knight, but in any case Black is already slightly the more comfortable.

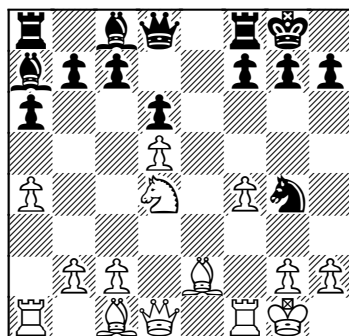
12 ♙f4 was preferred in R.Wade-E.Mulcahy, Munich 1954, but after 12...0-0 13 ♗d2 ♙f5 14 ♖a3 ♗d7 15 c4 ♖fe8 Black had the initiative and should have met 16 ♘d4? with 16...♘xc4! 17 ♙xc4 ♙xd4 18 ♗xd4 ♖e4.

Much more recently 12 ♙h1 was tried in D.Eggleston-P.Doggers, Budapest 2007, but after the continuation 12...0-0 13 f4 ♘d7 followed by ...♘f6 and ...♙f5 Black can have no complaints whatsoever.

12...0-0 13 f4?!

Too ambitious. White had to settle for 13 ♙e3, pretty pleasant though 13...♗h4 would have been for Black.

13...♘g4!

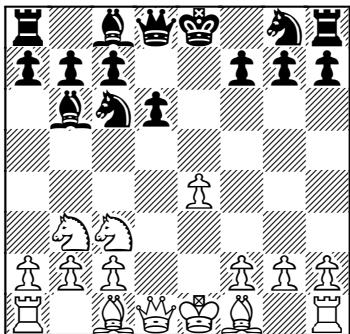


This strong blow left White in trouble in H.Pfleger-P.Keres, Tallinn 1973, and after 14 ♙xg4?! ♙xg4 15 ♗xg4 ♙xd4+ 16 ♙h1 f5! the legendary Estonian was well on his way to the full point, but even the more prudent 14 h3 ♘f6 15 ♙f3 ♖e8 16 ♙h2 ♙d7 would have given Black an edge.

B2) 6 ♖c3

White keeps his options open for a move: 7 a4 or 7 ♖e2 may yet follow.

6...d6



This looks like Black's best move order, although his choice does partly depend on how he likes to meet 6 ♖e2 (Line B3). Otherwise:

a) The misguided 6...a6?! 7 ♗d5 ♖a7 was brutally punished by 8 ♖g4! g6?! 9 ♖g3 d6 10 ♖g5 f6 11 ♖c3! ♗f7 12 0-0-0 in H.Odeev-H.Mikati, Guangzhou 2010.

b) 6...♗f6 7 ♖g5 (for 7 ♖e2 see Line B3) 7...h6 8 ♖h4 doesn't seem to be too scary a pin and after 8...d6 9 ♖d3 g5 10 ♖g3 ♖e7 11 h4 ♗g8 12 hxg5 hxg5 13 ♖d2 ♖e6 14 0-0-0 0-0-0 Black enjoyed full equality in K.Lahno-B.Bok, German League 2010.

c) 6...♖f6!? echoes Black's play after 5 ♗xc6 and is a slightly awkward attack on f2. White usually responds 7 ♖e2 and so we'll consider this position in Line B3.

7 ♗d5

White chases down the bishop, which this time has no escape. Others

here are:

a) 7 a4 a6 is another route into Line B1.

b) 7 ♖e2 transposes to Line B3.

c) 7 ♖d3 ♖h4! (we will see plenty more of this aggressive, logical and strong deployment below) 8 g3 ♖f6 9 f4 ♗ge7 10 ♖e2 0-0 11 ♖e3 ♖xe3 12 ♖xe3 a5 13 a4 ♖e6 14 ♗d2 was seen in L.Kernazhitsky-V.Romanov, Kiev 2004, and now 14...♗b4 would have been fine for Black.

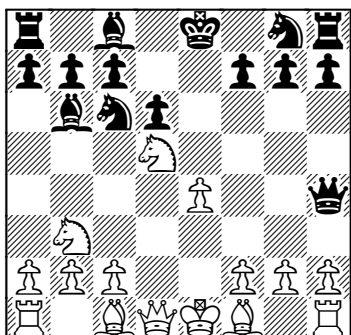
d) 7 g3 ♗f6 8 ♖g2 (A.Teuschler-W.Halser, Austria 1991) 8...0-0 9 0-0 ♖g4 is clearly very comfortable for Black.

e) 7 ♖f4 (F.Anton-K.Tsoumanis, Mecklenburg 2006) 7...♗f6 8 ♖d2 0-0 9 f3 a5! also sees Black beginning to assume the initiative.

f) And so does 7 ♖c4 ♗e5! 8 ♖e2 (and not 8 ♖e2?, as White played in M.Lugosi-T.Simon, Hungarian League 2007, because of 8...♖h4! with the nasty idea of 9...♖g4, not to mention the attacked bishop) 8...♗f6 9 0-0 h6 10 h3 0-0 11 ♗h1 (N.Greb-M.Muskardin, Bjelolasica 2008) 11...♖e8 12 f4 ♗c6 13 ♖f3 a5!. Indeed, an early a-pawn advance can be used by both sides in this variation to weaken the opponent's queenside, with the b4-square a particularly good outpost for a black knight.

7...♖h4!

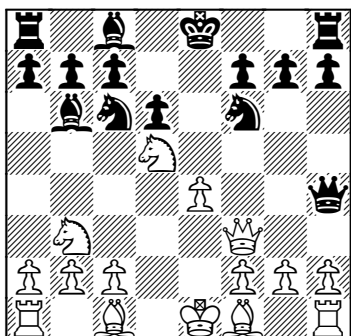
Just when White thought he was picking up the bishop-pair, Black counters in time against e4 and f2.



8 ♖f3

The alternative is 8 ♖e2?!, but after 8...♔g4 9 ♖d2 (and not the 9 g3? of T.Vasile-M.Burakovsky, Eger 2005, because of 9...♔xe2 10 gxh4 ♔f3) 9...♔e6 10 ♔d3?! (10 ♖f4 0-0-0 would restrict Black to just a pull) 10...♔xd5! 11 exd5 ♖e5 12 0-0 ♖f6 13 ♔b5+ ♖f8! 14 ♔e2 ♖e8 Black enjoyed a dangerous initiative in V.Kupreichik-Y.Razuvaev, USSR 1977.

8...♖f6!

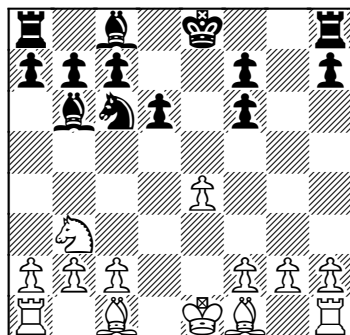


9 ♖xf6+

White changes tack. He can remain true to his initial idea, but after 9 ♖xb6 axb6 10 ♔d3 0-0 11 0-0 Black clearly

doesn't have any problems. Indeed, he might even try to seize the initiative by attacking e4 with the unsteretyped 11...♖a4!?

9...♖xf6 10 ♖xf6 gxf6



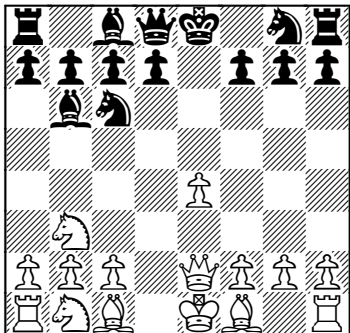
Taking stock we can see that White has fractured Black's kingside, but at a slight cost in terms of time. Moreover, ...f5 is imminent and after 11 c3 (11 ♔b5 f5 12 exf5 ♔xf5 13 c3 0-0-0 left Black with the safer king and beginning to attack in I.Radulov-S.Gligoric, Vrbas 1977) 11...♔e6 (11...f5!?) 12 ♔f4 0-0-0 13 ♔g3 f5 14 exf5 ♔xf5 15 0-0-0 ♖de8 Black clearly had no problems whatsoever in P.Simacek-D.Schwarz, Slovakian League 2005.

B3) 6 ♖e2!?

This aggressive sideline (White plans 7 ♔e3, 8 ♖c3 and 9 0-0-0) was used with some success by Magnus Carlsen in the 2009 World Blitz Championship. It had actually been introduced into top-flight praxis by Ivanchuk back in 2004, after which 6 ♖e2 began to gain a few adherents, but

The Scotch Game

only over the past year has it become quite topical.



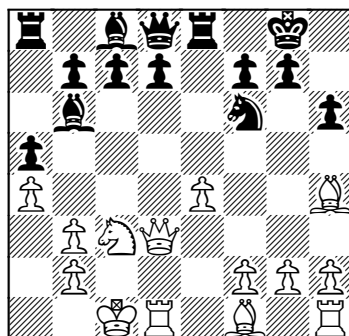
Before we discuss 6 ♖e2, we should examine a question of move order: should White start with 6 ♖e2 or prefer 6 ♗c3 followed by 7 ♖e2? It is still a little too early to be able to supply a definitive answer, but Carlsen himself did begin with 6 ♗c3 in a recent game. After 6 ♗c3 Black has:

a) 6...d6 7 ♖e2 ♗f6 transposes to our main line after 8 ♕e3 or to the notes to Black's 7th move, below, in the case of 7...♗ge7 8 ♕e3.

b) 6...♗f6 rather forces 7 ♖e2 and after 7...♗ge7 8 ♕e3 the aggressively placed black queen may well turn out to be exposed on f6. Following 8...♗d4 (hurrying to simplify; 8...0-0 9 0-0-0 d6 10 h4 ♕xe3+ 11 ♖xe3 ♕e6 12 ♕e2 a5 was an attempt to counterattack in D.Lima-J.Cori, Cali 2010, but after 13 ♗d4! ♗xd4 14 ♖xd4 ♖fe8 15 ♖d2 a4 16 a3 ♖a5 17 f4 ♕d7 18 g4 it had become clear that White's attack was somewhat the more potent, partly due to that by now misplaced queen on f6) 9

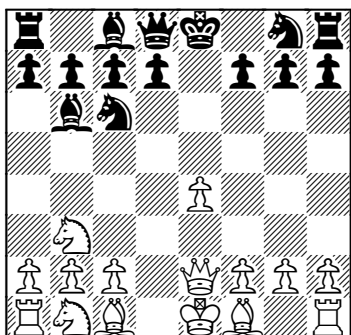
♗xd4 ♕xd4 10 ♕xd4 (10 ♖d2!? would be a more aggressive approach) 10...♖xd4 11 ♖d1 ♖b6 12 ♖b5 0-0 13 ♕e2 Black was quite solid, but White undoubtedly had a small pull in E.Ghaem Maghami-P.Harikrishna, Guangzhou 2010.

c) 6...♗f6 7 ♖e2 0-0 8 ♕g5 h6 9 ♕h4 (the far too ambitious 9 h4?! d6! 10 f3?! failed to 10...hxg5 11 hxg5 ♗g4! 12 fxg4 ♖xg5 in S.Rublevsky-V.Anand, Bastia (rapid) 2004) 9...a5 10 a4 ♗d4 (tempting but Carlsen doesn't fear the doubled b-pawns; perhaps 10...d6!? is more critical when one rather unclear line runs 11 ♗d5!? g5 12 ♗xb6 cxb6 13 ♕g3 ♗xe4 14 0-0-0 ♕f5 15 ♗d4 ♗xd4 16 ♖xd4 when White's kingside is still asleep, but Black's wrecked structure should grant him decent compensation) 11 ♖d3! ♗xb3 12 cxb3 ♖e8 13 0-0-0 reaches an original and fairly unclear position.



White's queenside may not make a pretty picture, but his king is safe and e-pawn mobile; factors which combined to leave him somewhat for

choice after 13...d6 14 ♖c2 ♙d7?! (slow; Black had to avoid 14...♙e6?! 15 e5, but 14...c6!? 15 ♙c4 ♖e7 would have kept matters fairly unclear: for example, 16 ♗he1 ♙e6 17 ♘d5!? cxd5 18 exd5 g5! 19 dxe6 d5 and Black seems to be holding his own in the resulting tactical flurry) 15 ♙c4 ♙e6 16 ♗he1 ♖e7 17 e5! dxe5 18 ♗xe5 ♖f8 19 ♙xf6 gxf6 20 ♗e2 in M.Carlsen-E.Bacrot, Nanjing 2010.



6...d6

Black's invariable choice, but this is by no means forced:

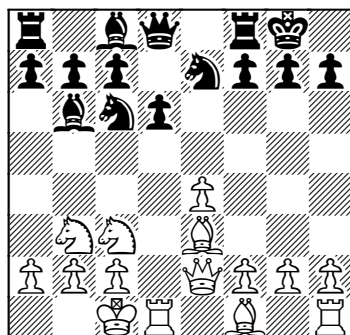
a) As elsewhere in the 5 ♘b3 variation, 6...a5!? deserves attention. Certainly 7 a4 (Black doesn't have any problems after 7 ♙e3 a4 8 ♘3d2 ♙xe3 9 ♖xe3 ♘f6) 7...♘ge7 8 ♘c3 ♘b4 9 ♙g5 (freeing the c-pawn with 9 ♘b5!? may be critical) 9...f6 10 ♙h4 0-0 11 0-0-0 d5 gave Black decent-enough counterplay in S.Novikov-A.Aleksandrov, Sochi 2005.

b) 6...♘d4 7 ♘xd4 ♙xd4 is a little too simplistic: 8 c3!? (the more straightforward 8 ♘c3 d6 9 ♖d3 should also suffice for an edge) 8...♙b6 9 ♘a3! a6?! (Black doesn't have time to pre-

serve her bishop so) 10 ♘c4 ♙a7 11 e5! b5 saw one of your authors gain a strong, early initiative in Y.Dembo-A.Stefanova, Rijeka 2010, and now 12 ♖e4!? ♗b8 13 ♙e3! ♙xe3 (or 13...♙b7 14 ♖g4, taking aim at that ever-sensitive g7-pawn) 14 ♘xe3 ♘e7 15 ♙d3 would have left White in charge of the position.

7 ♙e3 ♘f6

The main line, but it may be that Black does better with 7...♘ge7!? 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 0-0-0, thereby obtaining quite a solid set-up and one in which the f-pawn may be employed to begin counterplay.



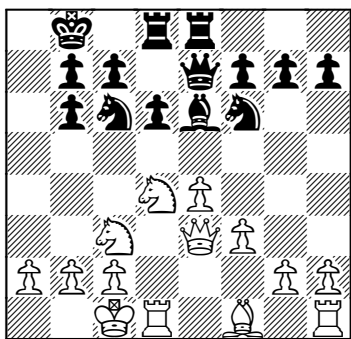
Yet another recent high-level encounter, T.Radjabov-E.Tomashevsky, Plovdiv 2010, continued 9...♙e6 (9...f5!? looks more consistent and after 10 ♖d2 ♙e6 11 ♙b1 ♙h8 12 ♙b5 fxe4 13 ♘xe4 ♘f5 14 ♙g5 White was at most a touch better in T.Thorhallsson-G.Sargissian, Copenhagen 2007) 10 f4 ♙h8 11 ♙b1 ♖e8 12 ♙xb6 (12 h4!? is also tempting, provoking 12...f5, as then White has 13 ♘b5! ♖d7 14 ♙xb6 axb6 15 e5 with a

The Scotch Game

central breakthrough) 12...axb6 13 g4 f6 14 h4 ♖f7 15 f5 ♙xb3 16 cxb3 ♘e5 17 g5 and White must be slightly better here, although in the game Black's solid defences held.

8 ♘c3 0-0

Black has also gone long with 8...♗e7 9 0-0-0 ♙e6 (or 8...♙e6 9 0-0-0 ♗e7 with a transposition) 10 f3 0-0-0 (10...h6 11 ♔b1 ♙xe3 12 ♗xe3 a6 13 ♘d4 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd4 0-0 15 ♙c4 ♖fe8 was fine for Black in N.Ferrec-V.Erdos, Rijeka 2010, but here White might have begun to advance his kingside pawns with 13 h4!?, which should retain a small pull) 11 ♙xb6 axb6 12 ♘d4 ♔b8 13 ♗e3 ♖he8, thereby reaching another quite solid set-up, but again one where White's space advantage persists and gives him a small edge.

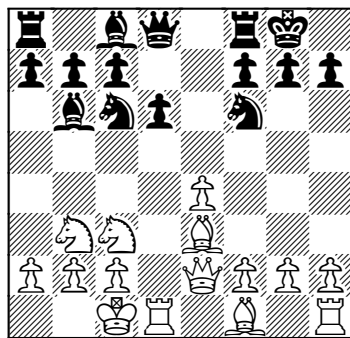


Indeed, with 14 ♘xe6 (it's logical to trade the bishop, but 14 ♙b5 ♙d7 15 ♘de2 ♗e5 16 ♗f4 ♗xf4+ 17 ♘xf4 was also enough for a small edge in M.Carlsen-V.Tkachiev, Moscow (blitz) 2009) 14...♗xe6 15 ♗d2 ♗e5 16 ♙c4 ♖e7 17 ♘d5! ♘xd5 18 exd5 ♘a7 19

♖he1 White had obtained the superior minor piece and begun to take control in E.Berg-M.Carlhammar, Gothenburg 2010.

9 0-0-0

We've now reached a position which is fast becoming a critical tabiya for this sub-variation.



9...♖e8

Thematic, but Black might again turn to his a-pawn in the bid for counterplay with 9...♙e3+ 10 ♗xe3 a5. This also appears quite logical, but with the precise 11 ♘d4 ♗e7 12 ♙b5! ♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 ♗e5 14 f3 ♙e6 15 ♗xe5 dxe5 16 ♘a4! White obtained an edge which he went on to convert in M.Carlsen-R.Ponomarev, Moscow (blitz) 2009.

That may help to explain why active players have recently begun investigating 9...♙e6 10 f3 ♘d7!?, relying on piece-play. Moreover, White must not underestimate the strength of the knight coming to e5, as he appeared to with 11 g4?! (11 ♘d4 ♘xd4 12 ♙xd4 is a more prudent approach and after 12...♗g5+ 13 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 14 ♖xd2 a6

15 f4 f6 16 ♙e2 ♜fe8 17 ♙f3 White even had an edge in E.Berg-M.Ivanov, Gothenburg 2010, but here Black might do better to secure some counterplay with 15...f5!?) 11...♘de5 12 ♜g1 in H.Nakamura-N.Kosintseva, Cap d'Agde (rapid) 2010, whereupon 12...♜f6! 13 ♜g3 ♘c4 would have left White on the back foot.

10 f3 ♙e6

This may be a little too routine and once again there are alternatives:

a) 10...♘e5!? 11 ♜d2 ♙e6 12 ♙e2 ♙c4 13 g4 ♙xe3 14 ♜xe3 c6 15 g5 was seen in the stem game V.Ivanchuk-V.Topalov, Monte Carlo (blindfold) 2004, and now Black would have been okay in the complications after 15...♘d5!, as pointed out by Mik-halevski. Thus the critical line is likely 15 ♘d4!? d5 16 g5 ♘fd7 17 b3, which may be slightly in White's favour.

b) 10...♙xe3+ 11 ♜xe3 a5 12 ♙b1?! a4! 13 ♘c1 a3 gave Black good counterplay in G.Arzumanian-Y.Balashov, Tula 2004, but White should have re-centralized with 12 ♘d4, as again Mik-halevski has pointed out in his excellent column for ChessPublishing.com.

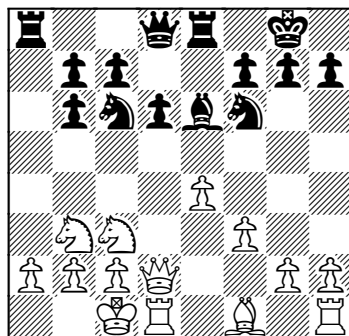
11 ♙xb6!?

White doesn't fear the resulting half-open a-file, but one can certainly also make a decent case for the immediate 11 ♜d2.

11...axb6 12 ♜d2

White has managed to prevent Black from breaking with ...d5, but Black's position remains pretty solid

and he can look to the a-file for counterplay. Perhaps White is a touch better, but it would be surprising if there weren't further developments here over the coming months. For now let's examine Carlsen's two experiences from this position in the 2009 World Blitz Championship:



a) 12...♙xb3 13 cxb3 ♜e7 (Mik-halevski's 13...♘d7!? intending ...♘c5 would at least give Black some counterplay against White's slightly vulnerable king position) 14 ♙b5 ♜e5 15 ♙b1 ♜ed8 16 a3! saw White keeping the queenside situation under control while preparing ♘d5 with a pull in M.Carlsen-A.Naiditsch, Moscow (blitz) 2009, but after 16...♘e7?! the breakthrough 17 f4 ♜e6 18 e5! gave him even more than that.

b) A few rounds later 12...♘d7 13 ♙b5 ♘c5 was preferred in M.Carlsen-D.Jakovenko, Moscow (blitz) 2009, but 14 ♘d4! ♙d7 15 ♙b1 ♘xd4 16 ♜xd4 ♙xb5 17 ♘xb5 ♜d7 18 c4 saw White retain a pull thanks to his bind and extra space.

Conclusion

When I (YD) started work on this book in 2008, 5 ♘b3 looked more respectable than 5 ♘f5, but that was about it. Indeed, practice has shown that the plan of 5...♗b6 6 a4 isn't too challenging, especially when compared with White's approaches in our last four chapters. However, thanks to the patronage of Ivanchuk and Carlsen, 6 ♖e2 and the closely-related 6 ♘c3 d6 7 ♖e2 has evolved into quite a dangerous

weapon. Despite the fact that the players generally castle on opposite sides, White must be happy with quite a small edge in a manoeuvring middle-game, but we are talking about decent prospects of an edge for White... at least at the time of this book going to press! Undoubtedly the ball is currently in Black's court here, but he may be able to hit back, especially by pursuing a more active approach than Carlsen's opponents have generally done.