

**Thomas Willemze**

# **The Scandinavian for Club Players**

Start Playing an Unsidesteppable & Low Maintenance  
Response to 1.e4 (and Simultaneously Improve Your Chess  
Technique)

**New In Chess 2021**

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# Preface

Is it possible to **boost your strategic skills** and **be fully armed against 1.e4** in one compact manual of less than 300 pages? When I asked myself this question, I realized such a book had to be on the **Scandinavian Defence**. The Scandinavian is a ‘lean’ opening that had a major impact on my own chess development in the past and still serves me well.

## Take the next step

As a child, I loved the Sicilian Dragon. My older brother Jeroen taught it to me when I was seven and it was my sole response to 1.e4 until the age of 15 – with good results. The opening suited my opportunistic attacking style. Chris Ward’s *Winning with the Dragon* (1994) provided me with ‘fire breathing skills’ and I could rely on my brother for the latest tips and tricks. Unfortunately, my progress started to decline as my Elo rating approached the 2000 barrier and I started facing stronger opponents. Somehow, they seemed unimpressed by my Dragon bishop and knew how to defend themselves against the typical sacrifices of exchanges and pieces. I had to expand my toolbox if I wanted to take the next step.

## Develop your pieces with the Scandinavian

This all happened in 1998, which was also the year I started training with IM Cor van Wijgerden, the co-author of the famous Steps Method. He went through my games and came up with a very concrete conclusion. **I had to start using all my pieces**, not just a few, to mate the king. He recommended the ♔a5 **Scandinavian** (which from here on will be referred to as The Scandinavian) because that would force me to develop my pieces in a natural way. In this opening, Black relies on his **solid structure** and **harmonious piece coordination** to neutralize his opponent’s initiative. That was exactly the kind of chess I needed to learn! And there was more good news: the Scandinavian is a low-maintenance opening with only **little theory involved**.

## Learn new tools

I liked the Scandinavian right from the start. Along with this opening came a whole arsenal of **new tools** that I could put into practice in 95% of my black 1.e4 games. The opening is reached after only two plies and is

almost impossible for white 1.e4 players to sidestep. I learned invaluable techniques like **trading the right pieces, putting pressure on the centre and exploiting the weaknesses in your opponent's position**. I honestly believe the Scandinavian was one of the main reasons why I was able to raise my level from 2050 to 2250 within a year. I am convinced it can have a similar impact on any ambitious club player who has the will to improve and the patience that is required to learn new techniques. That is why I decided to write this book, *The Scandinavian for Club Players*.

### **The Scandinavian for club players**

This book teaches you the most important techniques and the concrete knowledge that is required to be fully prepared for 1.e4 with the Scandinavian – at any level. We will learn from the best by studying grandmaster moves but also learn from our peers by discussing instructive adventures by club players. The theoretical lines are enriched with verbal explanations, diagrams, flash cards and exercises to make this book highly accessible and put you into the right mindset for the game. Because we consider this opening from the Black side, we have reversed the diagrams so you can study the positions from a 'Black' point of view.

I sincerely hope you will enjoy reading this book and I wish you all the best in your chess career! If you have any comments regarding this book, or perhaps want to share stories about your adventures in the Scandinavian, please feel free to reach out to me at [chesstoolbox@outlook.com](mailto:chesstoolbox@outlook.com).

Thomas Willemze  
Haarlem, April 2021

# Introduction

This book consists of five different parts. We start with the main line and then discuss White's alternative set-ups in reversed order. In this introductory section, I will discuss the moves that constitute the main line and pinpoint these alternative set-ups along the way.

## 1.e4 d5



Every chess player knows that White has the right to make the first move, but did you also know that Black usually determines the opening? The choice is limited by White's first move, but it is nevertheless a serious advantage. It gets even better when you play the Scandinavian. White has a few minor options on move two (which will be discussed in Part V), but the moment he captures our pawn on d5, he will be on our territory. This means we do not have to worry about early sidelines and anti-systems and can devote our energy to the opening itself. The aim of the move 1...d5 is to open up the game as quickly as possible to ease the development of our pieces. It is a slightly provocative move since regaining the pawn might cost us a tempo and gives White a lead in development.

## 2.exd5 ♔xd5



Welcome to the Scandinavian!

### 3.♞c3

Developing this knight with tempo is the most principled reply. White forces our queen to move a second time and will be one move ahead in development. The downside is that the knight blocks the c2-pawn's push to c4. Part IV will discuss the third-move alternatives 3.♞f3 and 3.d4 that provide White with the flexibility to choose between a modest or a strong centre. 3.♞f3 is a very popular move because White can use it as a universal weapon and doesn't have to create different repertoires against the 3...♞a5-, 3...♞d6- and 3...♞d8-Scandinavians.

### 3...♞a5



The key move in this repertoire, and my personal favourite. I have some experience with 3...♞d6 as well, but consider it slightly more passive and easier to play for White. This especially goes for the other main alternative 3...♞d8, which is rock-solid but gives White a free ride.

### 4.d4

Again, the most principled move. White puts his pawn in the centre and grabs as much space as possible, but at the same time provides Black with a potential target. The d4-pawn can easily become vulnerable the moment Black is able to neutralize White's initiative. The more solid set-ups with d2-d3 and g2-g3 instead of d2-d4, as well as various aggressive lines involving the b2-b4 push, will be discussed in Part III.

### 4...♞f6

The most flexible move, and the strongest. The main alternative (4...c6) is out of fashion nowadays for reasons that I will explain in the first part.

### 5.♞f3

This move leads to our main line in which White develops his pieces to natural squares and claims a space advantage. On the other hand, it fails to interfere with Black's development, allowing him to coordinate his pieces and seek counterplay. This is one of the reasons why many top players started developing their knight to e2 recently to play against

Black's light-squared bishop. This set-up starts with either 5.♘c4 or 5.♘d2 and is recommended by John Shaw (2016) and Parimarjan Negi (2020) in their 1.e4 repertoire books for Quality Chess. Both books are aimed at the 2200+ level, so if you expect to face anyone in that category any time soon, I strongly recommend that you study Part II with extra care.

5...♘f5



This is the starting position of what I consider to be the main line of the 3...♙a5-Scandinavian. From here onwards, the line splits into different branches, each with its own tools for both players. All of these branches will be discussed in Part I of this book.

This set-up is based on the most logical developing moves and is therefore the most common reply among club players. It is also recommended by Christof Sielecki (2018) and Larry Kaufman (2020) in their 1.e4 repertoire books for New In Chess, which have the club player as the targeted audience.

**In summary, we will have the following table of contents:**

**Part I – The main line**

**Part II – Fifth-move alternatives: the ♘ge2 set-up**

**Part III – Fourth-move alternatives: b2-b4, g2-g3 and d2-d3 set-ups**

**Part IV – Third-move alternatives: the flexible ♘f3**

**Part V – Second-move alternatives: early deviations**

### **Outline of the chapters**

Each part consists of several chapters that discuss a specific continuation by White and have the following outline:

- **Introduction**
- **The most important tools for White**
- **The most important tools for Black**
- **Theoretical sections**
- **Flash cards**

## **Exercises**

We finish each part of this book with an exercise section that enables you to practice your new tools.

## **Aim of this book**

Studying this book will arm you to the teeth against White's most dangerous set-ups. You will get a thorough understanding of the Scandinavian Defence, boost your strategic skills and, last but not least, put yourself in the right mindset for the game.

## CHAPTER 3

# 6. ♖d2 – aggressive queenside castling

### 3.1 Introduction

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♜a5 4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗f3 ♙f5 6.♙d2



Very often, White develops his bishops to c4 and d2 in random order, which is why the vast majority of 6. ♙d2 games transpose back to Chapter 1 after the consistent 7. ♙c4. However, it is important to note that White is not obliged to follow up with his other bishop move. There is a rare but tricky alternative set-up you have to be familiar with:

**6...e6 7. ♗e5**

This is played in less than 20% of games in this position. White has a clear plan: to **castle queenside as quickly as possible and start an attack**. This can be a dangerous surprise weapon and we have to be well-prepared!

**7... ♜b6 8. ♜f3**



This is the main move; we will discuss 8. ♜e2 in the theoretical section as well. Both queen moves are aimed at castling queenside as quickly as

possible and leave three (!) different pawns unprotected. Can you identify them?

The fact that we can capture three different pawns is probably the reason why this set-up is hardly ever played. It also means that White probably knows what he is doing.

This short and instructive chapter will show you the right response and teach you a very important rule for this line specifically, and for the Scandinavian in general: **ignore the white pawn(s) until you have finished your development!**

In the ‘Tools for White’ section (3.2), I will show you what happens when we break this rule, whereas the ‘Tools for Black’ section (3.3) demonstrates the right response for Black. **Theoretical section 3.4** provides us with a concrete repertoire and we conclude with the most important lessons in five flash cards in **Section 3.5**.

This brings us to the following outline for this chapter:

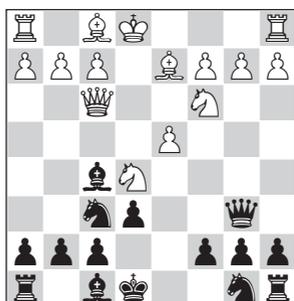
**Section 3.2 – Tools for White**

**Section 3.3 – Tools for Black**

**Section 3.4 – Theoretical section**

**Section 3.5 – Flash cards**

### 3.2 – Tools for White



With his last move, White offered us three (!) different pawns on a silver plate. The b2-, c2- and d4-pawns are unprotected and attacked by either our queen or our bishop. White is eagerly waiting for us to take the bait and use his superior piece development to grab the initiative. I will show you

a game in which Black was brave enough to take the c-pawn and got punished for it. We will discuss the other pawn captures as sidelines.

Game 8

**Panagiotis Koutoukidis** 2154

**Spyridon Ilandzis** 2118

Athens 2012 (6)

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♖a5  
4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♙f5 6.♙d2 e6 7.♘e5  
♜b6 8.♜f3 ♙xc2**

This is the only game in the whole Mega Database in which Black had the guts to take the c2-pawn. This move is dubious and extremely impractical since Black will have to be very precise to reach an ‘only’ worse position.

8...c6 is my recommendation. The two remaining pawn grabs lose by force:

A) 8...♖xb2.



analysis diagram

‘Never take on b2, even when it is good!’ is a famous rule in chess. This time, it is not good at all. This is the easiest line to refute for White: 9. ♖b1 ♖a3 10. ♖xb7. Black loses the rook and can resign;

B) 8...♖xd4.



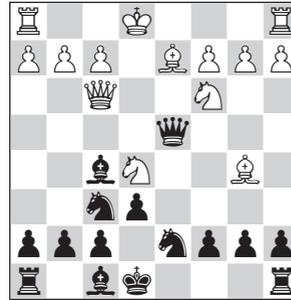
analysis diagram

A very tempting move at first sight. Black can snack a juicy centre pawn with an attack on the strong e5-knight. It was played a few times, but Black clearly underestimated his opponent’s counterplay: 9. ♖b5+!

B1) 9...c6 10. ♖xc6 ♖xc6 11. ♖xc6+ ♖d7 12. ♖b5 allows White to keep his attack without being a pawn down;

B2) 9...♖e7 10.0-0-0 ♖xe5 11. ♖xb7 is not an improvement for Black;

B3) 9...♖bd7



analysis diagram

10. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 11. ♖xb7 ♖d8 12.0-0-0 ♖b6 13. ♖xb6 cxb6 14. ♖f4 ♖c5 was the game Timman-Van Wely, Breda 1998. White collected the exchange with 15. ♖c7 and went on to win.

Back to the game after 8...♖xc2. This is Black’s most stubborn pawn grab.

**9. ♖c1**



**9... ♖f5**

This normal move is already a mistake with consequences. Black

should have put his bishop at a larger distance with 9...♗g6, even though White will still be better when he continues with his typical light-squared bishop hunt: 10.h4 c6 11.♖f4 (White has enough time to cover the d-pawn) 11...♘bd7 12.g4 and Black can sacrifice his bishop for a few pawns, but White's active pieces will always give him a clear edge.

After 9...♗f5, White should keep things as simple as possible and opt for the standard pawn push:

**10.g4!**

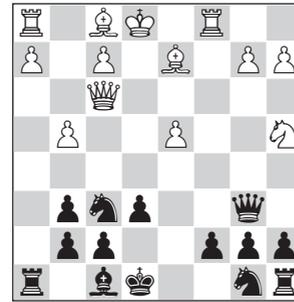
Instead, White went for the tempting 10.♘c4 ♖c6 11.♘d6+



analysis diagram

11...♗xd6 12.♗b5 0-0 13.♗xc6 ♘xc6, hoping that his queen versus two pieces and pawn would guarantee him an easy win. The engines agree to some extent, but White clearly underestimated the power of well-coordinated Scandinavian pieces in combination with a weakened white pawn structure. In a crazy game, Black got a completely winning position but then blundered a rook and lost.

**10...♗g6 11.♘xg6 hxg6 12.♘a4!**



Elimination of the defender. The queen has to abandon the b7-pawn.

**12...♖xd4 13.♖xb7 ♖e4+ 14.♖xe4 ♘xe4 15.♖xc7**

White can follow up with either ♗b5 or ♗g2 and is completely winning.

### Conclusion

In this entertaining line, White invites us to grab one of three (!) unprotected pawns and is ready to use his superior development to punish us for taking the bait.

### 3.3 – Tools for Black



There is one clear rule we can derive from the previous section: ignore White's pawns! Pawn hunts can be very dangerous when you are behind in development. Instead,

we should focus on the same steps that we learnt in the previous 6. ♖e5 chapter:

- 1) Create an exit for the queen with ...c7-c6;
- 2) Challenge the white knight as quickly as possible;
- 3) Finish your development and keep your position as compact as possible.

We start with step 1: the emergency exit.

8...c6 9.0-0-0



9...♗bd7!

Step 2: challenge the knight as quickly as possible!

10.♗c4 ♖d8 11.h3



11...♙e7

Step 3: finish your development and keep your position compact!

Black is very close to finishing his development and can already be satisfied with the outcome of the opening. I will elaborate on this position in **Theoretical section 3.4**.

### Conclusion

Grabbing pawns is a dangerous habit when you are behind in development. Only do this when it does not lose a tempo or if you are 100% sure for different reasons. If you are not, simply ignore the pawn and stick to your plan.

### 3.4 – Theoretical section

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♗xd5 3.♗c3 ♖a5  
4.d4 ♗f6 5.♗f3 ♙f5 6.♙d2 e6

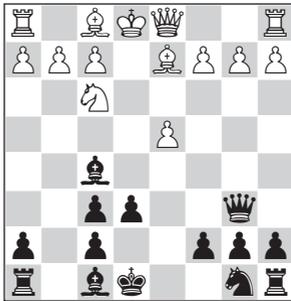


7.♗e5

White wants to castle queenside as quickly as possible and start an attack. We have to be precise now! White had two alternatives:

A) 7.♙c4 is by far the most popular move. We transpose back to Chapter 1 after 7...♙b4;

B) 7.♗e4 is a discovered attack, but not a very dangerous version of it because the queen has the b6-square available. Black is already better after 7...♖b6 8.♗xf6+ gxf6.



analysis diagram

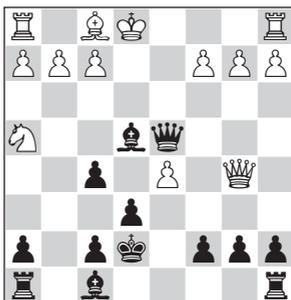
The black queen is extremely active and is by no means vulnerable at the moment. Black will follow up with ...♘c6 and ...0-0-0 and has a very comfortable game. This is one of those positions in the Scandinavian in which White plays normal moves but can easily end up in trouble very soon. This was nicely illustrated in the following online blitz game:

Game 9

**KillerCow** 2448  
**willemze** 2289

Team Battle lichess.org 2020

9.♙c3 ♘c6 10.♘h4 ♙e4 11.♚e2 f5  
 12.d5 ♘d4 13.♙xd4 ♚xd4 14.♚b5+  
 ♙e7



The king is on its way to the safe f6-square. The next step will be to connect the rooks by

developing the bishop. White is in serious trouble due to his poorly coordinated pieces and unsafe king.  
 15.♚xb7 ♚e5 16.0-0-0 ♙h6+ 17.♙b1  
 ♚ab8 18.f4 ♙xf4 19.d6+ ♚f6 0-1



position after 7.♘e5

7...♗b6

An important move to remember. The queen already leaves the a5-e1 diagonal and threatens to capture the d-pawn with an attack on the e5-knight. We already know we have to be extremely careful with greedy moves like this, but it can never hurt to have the option.

7...c6 was our response to the knight jump in the previous chapter but it is too slow in this exact position since it allows White his typical play against our light-squared bishop: 8.g4! ♙g6 9.h4.



analysis diagram

Our bishop is in serious trouble now since e4 is unavailable: 9...♖b6 (9...h6 10.♘xg6 fxxg6 11.♙c4 is horrible) 10.h5 ♙e4 (White is unable to win the bishop, but he can now develop a big initiative with tempo) 11.♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.♖f3 ♘d6 13.0-0-0.



analysis diagram

This position looks a lot like the game between Macieja and Tomczak that we discussed in **Section 2.2** and is terrible for Black. The game between Biolek and Schwabeneder (Vienna 2018) only lasted five more moves: 13...♙e7 14.h6 g6 15.c4 c5 16.b4 ♘c6 17.bxc5 ♘xd4 18.cxb6 and as he loses a piece, Black resigned.

Back to the main line after 7...♖b6:



8. ♖f3

This is the main move. White has two rare alternatives: 8.♖e2 and 8.g4.

A) 8.♖e2 is less challenging than our main move. The engines are screaming for 8...♖xd4, but I would rather stick to our rule and go for the safe and simple 8...♘c6.



analysis diagram

And now:

A1) 9.♘xc6 ♖xc6 10.♖b5 0-0-0 11.♖xc6 bxc6 gave Black a pleasant position in Santo Roman-Prié, Clichy 1993;

A2) 9.♘c4 ♖b4! 10.a3 ♖e7. Welcome home! Black will follow up with ...0-0-0 and have a normal Scandinavian game.

B) Besides venomous, 8.g4 can also be weakening. It is now time to grab the d-pawn with tempo with 8...♖xd4.



analysis diagram

9.f4 (forced, as both e5 and g4 were hanging) 9...♘e4 (easiest) 10.♙e2 ♚xd2+ 11.♙xd2 ♘xd2 12.♙xd2 f6!



analysis diagram

We have to challenge the knight!  
 13.♙g2 c6 14.gxf5 fxe5 15.fxe6 exf4  
 16.♘e4 ♙e7. White has insufficient compensation for the pawn.  
 Now we go back to the main line after 8.♙f3.

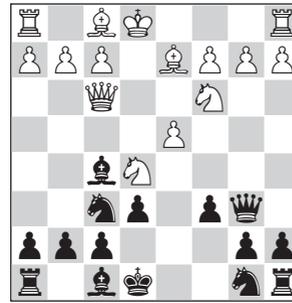


From now on, we will follow our three-step plan. We start with step 1: **the emergency exit.**

**8...c6**

We already discussed how capturing either the b-, the c- or the d-pawn was not such a good idea.

8...♘bd7 is met with 9.♘c4 ♙c6 10.♙xc6 bxc6 11.0-0-0. Black has no compensation for his damaged pawn structure.



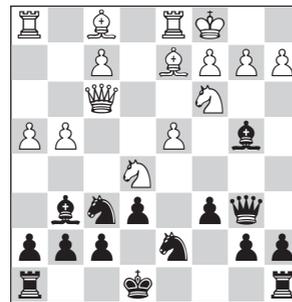
**9.0-0-0**

9.g4 again invites 9...♙xd4!.

**9...♘bd7**

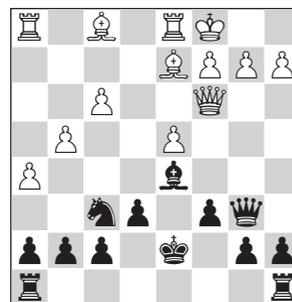
Step 2: we have to **challenge the knight** as quickly as possible!

9...♙b4 gives White exactly what he wants: 10.g4! ♙g6 11.h4 ♘bd7.



analysis diagram

Black challenges the knight too late. 12.♘xd7 ♙xd7 (12...♘xd7 13.h5 loses a piece) 13.h5 ♙xc3 14.♙xc3 ♙e4 15.f3 ♙d5.

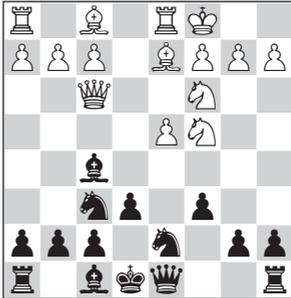


analysis diagram

The bishop has made it to d5, but after 16. ♖a3, White threatened 17.c4 and won convincingly in Philippe-Taddei, France tt 2013.

### 10. ♘c4 ♖d8

This is usually the best square for the queen. We do not want to allow our opponent to win a tempo with 10... ♖c7 11. ♕f4.



### 11.h3 ♕e7

Step 3: **finish your development and keep your position compact!**  
Black is very solid now.

### 12.g4 ♕g6 13.h4 h5!



This is exactly why we always have to challenge the e5-knight as quickly as possible. This move should be our standard reply to h2-h4, but it is never possible with a white knight on e5 because we would have to answer ♘xg6 with the horrible ...f7xg6.

### 14.g5 ♘d5

Black can be confident about his position. He will finish his development with 15...0-0 and then start pushing away the knights with ...b7-b5-b4.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we should ignore White's unprotected pawns and instead rely on the same three-step plan that we encountered in Chapter 2:

- 1) Create an exit for the queen with ...c7-c6;
- 2) Challenge the white knight as quickly as possible;
- 3) Finish your development and keep your position as compact as possible.

### 3.5 – FLASH CARDS



#### Ignore the unprotected pawns

Black has three different ways in which he can grab a pawn in this line, but we try to stick to our rule: **Ignore the pawn until you have finished your development!**



#### Step 1: create an exit for the queen

We follow the same three-step plan from Chapter 2. We start with **8...c6**, anticipating **9.♘c4**. The queen needs some fresh air.



#### Step 2: challenge the white knight

Once the queen is able to retreat, we go for **9...♗bd7!**. We have to put pressure on the white knight as quickly as possible to avoid the march of White's g- and f-pawns.



#### Step 3: finish your development

With the queen safe and the annoying knight gone, we can focus on finishing our development again. We want to keep our position as compact as possible. The modest **11...♙e7**, followed by **...0-0**, will do the job.



#### Stop the h-pawn

The most important reason for expelling the strong white knight on e5 is that we can safely pull back our bishop to g6 and block the white h-pawn with **...h7-h5!**

### 9.5 – Theoretical section 2: 7. ♘f3

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3. ♘c3 ♗a5  
4. ♙c4 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6. ♙d2 e6



#### 7. ♘f3

Two important alternatives have already been discussed in Section 9.3:

- A) 7. ♗e2 could be met with 7... ♗h5!;
  - B) 7. ♘d5 ♗c5 8. ♘xf6+ gxf6 9. ♗f3 ♘d7 and Black continues with 10... h5 and 11... ♗c6;
  - C) A third alternative does not really add any value for White. After 7. ♘e4 ♗f5 8. ♘xf6+ gxf6, White is unable to approach with his queen and Black can simply continue with ...b7-b5 and ... ♙b7.
- 7...c5



#### 8. ♘d5

The most principled move, even though not many opponents took up the gauntlet with this move in the online games that I used to experiment with this new set-up. I will briefly discuss two common alternatives:

- A) 8. ♘e5.



analysis diagram

This active move looks attractive but is quite harmless because White cannot maintain his knight on e5. Black is doing great after 8... ♗c7 9. ♗e2 b5 10. ♙b3 ♙d6;

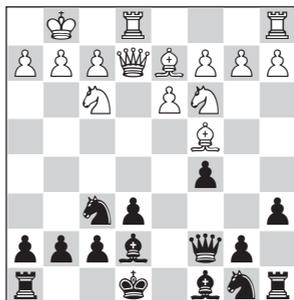
- B) 8. ♗e2.



analysis diagram

This was the most popular move, probably because White has entered unfamiliar territory and prefers to slowly finish his development first

before taking action. 8...♔c7 9.0-0  
♙e7 10.♖fe1



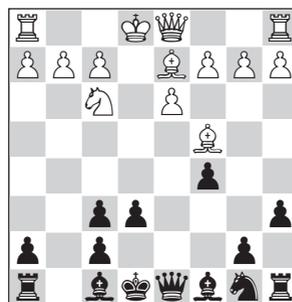
analysis diagram

10...b6. I prefer this modest move to 10...b5. Black is behind in development and should therefore **keep his position as compact as possible**. We already came across this rule of thumb in Chapter 2. The lack of clear targets in our camp is our most valuable asset, and 10...b5 would only add fuel to our opponent's a2-a4 plan. 11.a4 ♙b7 12.♘e4 ♘c6 13.♙c3



analysis diagram

13...♘xe4. Black is ready to answer 14.♔xe4 with 14...♘d4!, and after 14.dxe4, he can finish his development with 14...0-0 and have a balanced game.  
**8...♔d8 9.♘xf6+ gxf6**



We have arrived at the pawn structure we were aiming for. I really like the way our e6- and f6-pawns control important central squares and keep the white pieces at a distance. We also have a very straightforward plan available with ...b7-b5, ...♙b7 and ...♘c6.

**10.a4**

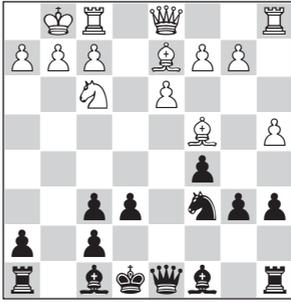
A critical position arises after 10.♘h4.



analysis diagram

Never forget the important conclusion we drew in **Section 9.2: keep the white queen away from h5!** The right move is, therefore, 10...h5!. This move will continue to be our standard reply to ♘h4 in this line for as long as our rook stays at h8.

**10...♘c6 11.0-0 b6**



This is an important moment for White. He has to figure out how to meet our standard plan that consists of the moves ...♖b7, ...♗g8, ...♔d7 and ...0-0-0.

**12. ♖e1**

This is the most natural move, dreaming of sacrifices on e6 in case our bishop loosens the defence of this pawn. An important alternative is 12. ♖f4, pointing at our queenside and preparing ♖g3 to block the g-file: 12... ♖b7 13. ♖g3.



analysis diagram

In earlier chapters, I already underlined the importance of Black's ability to castle in both directions. By blocking the g-file and controlling the b8-h2 diagonal, White has clearly discouraged us from castling queenside. However,

we can easily change our plan and are totally fine after 13... ♖g7 14.c3 0-0.

**12... ♖b7**



**13. ♖c3**

This is a clever move that ties our queen to the defence of the f6-pawn and makes it more difficult for us to castle queenside. I will show you two less subtle alternatives:

A) The sacrifice 13. ♖xe6 should always be checked. In this case, after 13...fxe6 14. ♗xe6+ ♔f7!,



analysis diagram

White clearly lacks a follow-up. 15. ♗e3 can, for instance, be met with the thematic 15...h5!. It is never too early to prevent the white queen from approaching. Soon Black will be the one with an attack after moves like ...♔d5, ...♖d6 and ...♗ag8;

B) 13. ♖g5. Even though this leads to another clear advantage for Black, it does open up the gate for the white queen and should therefore be taken more seriously: 13... ♕f5 14. ♖h5



analysis diagram

14... ♔d7! (an important move; the king heads for the safe queenside)  
 15. ♖xf7+ ♕e7 16. ♕xe6+ ♔c7 (pay attention to the importance of the g5-pawn; it is a pawn that can easily be overlooked when you start calculating this line on move 13)  
 17. ♖h5 ♖g7.

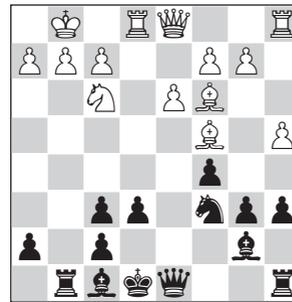


analysis diagram

This is not the only move that leads to a clear advantage for Black, but it is the strongest and the most instructive one. Black is ready to

coordinate his pieces with ... ♕d6 and ... ♖d4.

**13... ♖g8!**

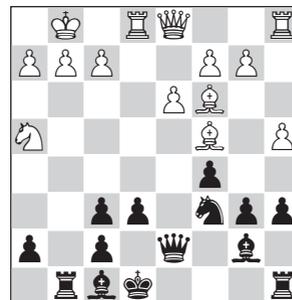


Black unpins the f-pawn and prevents 14. ♖g5.

**14. ♖h4**

We no longer have 14...h5 available, and White is on his way to put his queen on h5. For us this is a sign to evacuate the king as quickly as possible.

**14... ♖d7!**

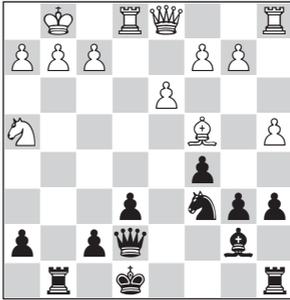


For the small price of a pawn, Black will be able to finish his development and trade the annoying dark-squared bishop.

**15. ♕xf6**

15. ♖h5 ♖g5 16. ♖xh7 ♖d4! followed by 17...0-0-0 looks very dangerous for White.

15... ♗e7 16. ♗xe7 ♖xe7



17. ♘f5

17. ♖h5 0-0-0 18. c3 ♖b8 gives Black pleasant compensation for the pawn.

17... ♖d7

17... ♖c7 18. ♗xe6 is a dangerous line that I would like to avoid.

18. ♘g3 0-0-0



Black has completed his development, and his pressure over the g-file and the a8-h1 diagonal provide him with enough compensation for the pawn.

Most likely, White will have to open up the queenside with c2-c3 and either b2-b4 or d3-d4. In response, we will direct our knight to f5, tuck away the king on a7 and attack the white king with, for instance, ...h7-h5-h4.

### Conclusion

In this line, we voluntarily accept the doubled f-pawn in return for very dynamic piece play. Our main plan consists of **fianchettoing our light-squared bishop, castling queenside and playing ...♖g8**, but we should always be ready to adapt our plan if necessary. We should, for instance, castle kingside in the event of White's ♗f4-g3 manoeuvre.