Kotronias on the King's Indian 3

Mar del Plata II

By

Vassilios Kotronias

With contributions by Yannis Simeonidis

For my children, Adoria, Athanasia and Dimitrios

Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk

Introduction

The idea of defending Black's chances in the **Mar del Plata variation** was in my mind for quite some time and Quality Chess gave me the opportunity to materialize it through this series on the King's Indian. It proved to be an uphill task with many disappointments and joys waiting along the way, but in the end I think I managed to solve the problems and provide a comprehensive repertoire for Black.

During this great adventure I had the invaluable help of my good friend Yannis Simeonidis, several strong engines, and my intuition. Looking back, I am certain that it would have been impossible to accomplish such an enormous task were it not for a combination of strengths such as the ones described above. Even at the moment of writing these lines I still stand in awe, fascinated by the variation's complexity and beauty. I hope that the readers will feel the same fascination by going through these volumes, experiencing the full flavour of the King's Indian in such a unique way that only the Mar del Plata variation can offer.

The second volume comprises everything Black players need to know to face the Bayonet variation (9.b4), the old main line 9.♘d2, and other less popular but still poisonous 9th moves. With players such as Kramnik Anand, Karpov, Shirov, Beliavsky, M. Gurevich, Ivanchuk and Eljanov supporting the White cause it was anything but easy to provide equalizers, but after a lot of digging I think I have managed to prove that Black holds his own and can even aspire to play for a win in several cases.

Here the battlefield is less sharp than in the 9.♘e1 variation, but in my view Black players shouldn't be disappointed by that. Apart from a few drawish lines in the Bayonet there is still great scope for creativity, an additional advantage being that a memory failure will not lead to a death sentence as can often be the case with 9.♘e1.

The second volume on the Mar del Plata is more about understanding positions, understanding delicate differences, being more patient and generally being more technical. And while the tactical element is always there, it is often a deep positional manoeuvre that will equalize the chances or give us the upper hand.

It is clear to me by now that this manoeuvre always exists, but the battlefield remains tricky (as it does in every other opening) and White players will often come up with small improvements after move 15-20, trying to unsettle us. The secret here is to take our time and avoid a fast decision when faced with such a novelty. Rash decisions will almost never pay off in this type of profound game and one should keep in mind that the King's Indian offers more chances for a win exactly because the structures are more demanding.

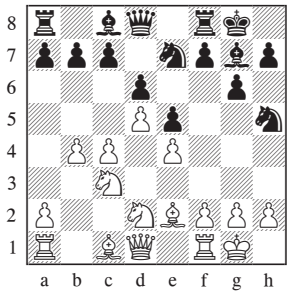
Ending here, I would like to add that I am looking forward to continuing with this series, and wish the readers many wins and interesting games when facing the Mar del Plata System.

Vassilios Kotronias
Athens, 17th December 2014

Contents

Chapter 6

Bayonet Rarities



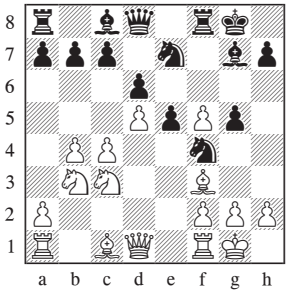
10.♘d2

Variation Index

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 ♘h5 10.♘d2

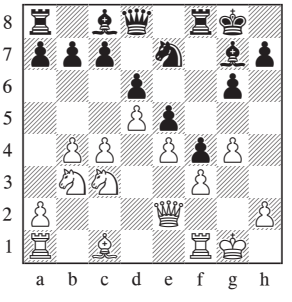
10...♘f4

A2) after 13.exf5



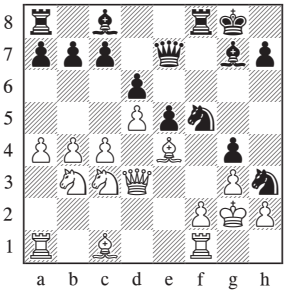
13...♘xf5!N

B) after 14.g4!?



14...g5!N

C2) after 18.♕d3



18...♗h6!N⇄

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4

An interesting move, which demands exact play on Black's part. Its clear-cut aim is to organize the thematic advance c4-c5, followed by ♘f3-d2-c4 to apply pressure on d6. In the 9.♘d2 variation Black can slow down White's queenside offensive by ...a5, but here more refined methods are required as the above-mentioned advance would be rather playing into White's hands.

9...♘h5

It is logical for Black to try to exploit the weakness of the f4-square and at the same time open the way for an advance of his f-pawn.

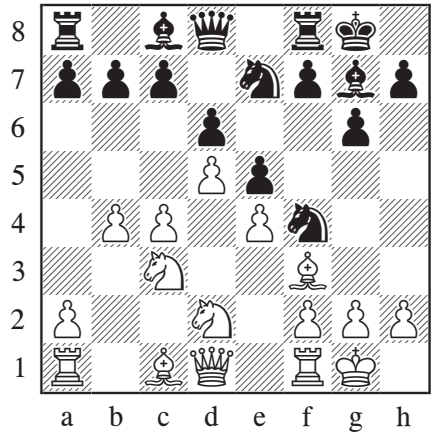
10.♘d2

The aim of this move is to generate play quickly on the queenside by c4-c5 and ♘c4. There is, however, an obvious disadvantage in that the black knight can now invade f4 with gain of time.

10...♘f4

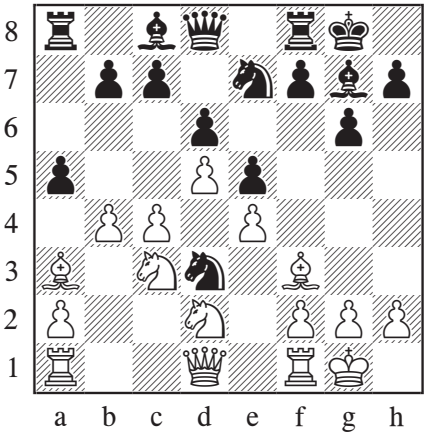
White can now play **A) 11.♗f3**, **B) 11.♘b3!?** or **C) 11.a4**.

A) 11.♗f3



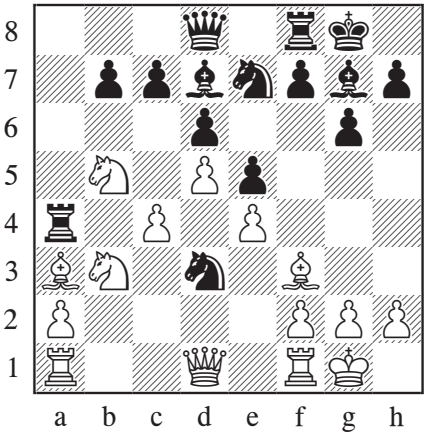
This may easily transpose to a popular line from a later chapter, but it can also lead to independent territory. Black now has a choice between **A1) 11...♘d3!?** and **A2) 11...f5**.

A1) 11...♘d3!? 12.♗a3 a5



This continuation occurred in the game Anand – Gelfand, Dortmund 1997.

13.bxa5 ♖xa5 14.♘b5 ♗d7!? 15.♘b3 ♖a4



16.♕xd3!?N

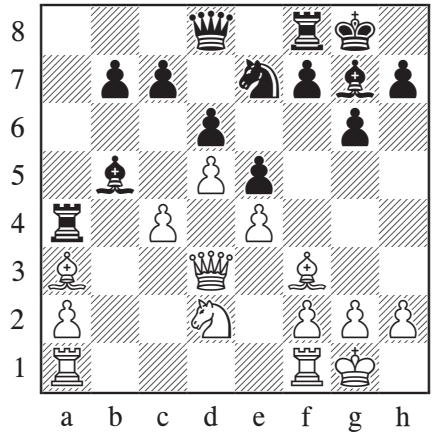
16.♗xd6?! cxd6 17.♕xd3 ♗xb5 18.cxb5 ♗h6 (18...♕b6!? 19.♘d2 ♖fa8⩲) 19.♗d1 ♔g7 (19...♕a8?! 20.♕h3!) 20.♕c2! (20.♖e1 ♕b6⩲) 20...♕c8! 21.♕xc8 ♘xc8⩲ was good for Black in the above-mentioned game.

16...♗xb5 17.♘d2!?

Or 17.cxb5 ♖xa3 and now:

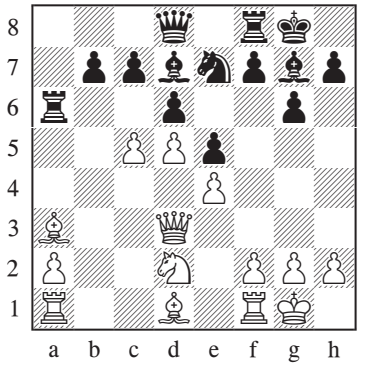
a)18.♕c4?! ♗h6! (I don't like 18...c5?! 19.dxc6! [19.bxc6 bxc6 20.dxc6 ♕b6= is equal according to Anand] 19...bxc6 20.♕b4! ♕a8 [20...♖a8 21.a4±] 21.♕xd6 ♖e8 22.♗e2!↑ when White maintains annoying pressure.) 19.♕b4 ♕a8∓ The resulting position may well be slightly better for Black.

b) Correct seems 18.♖fc1!? ♗h6 19.♖c2 ♕d7 20.♕c4 ♖c8= with equality, as each side has a backward pawn that hinders their progress.



17...♗d7 18.♗d1 ♖a8=

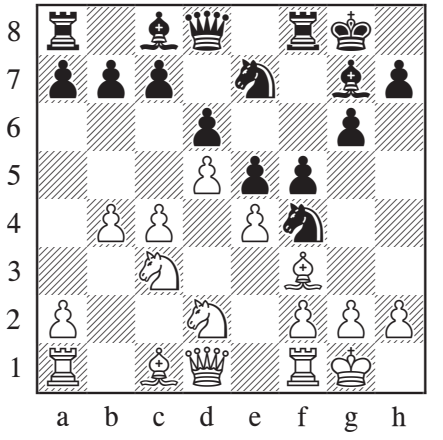
Gelfand's recommendation of 18...♖a6 should also be fine for Black, and in fact White does best to avoid his suggested line. 19.c5?



19...♘xd5! (Boris analysed only 19...♕a8 20.♗b4 ♘c8∞ with an unclear position.) 20.exd5 e4 21.♘xe4 ♗xa1 22.cxd6 cxd6 23.♘xd6 ♕b8!∓ I cannot see any serious compensation for the lost exchange.

A2) 11...f5

The standard attacking gesture.



12.♘b3!?

This is the only move to have some independent value.

Instead, 12.c5 g5⇄ is dealt with under 10.c5 and is a direct transposition to variation C of Chapter 9.

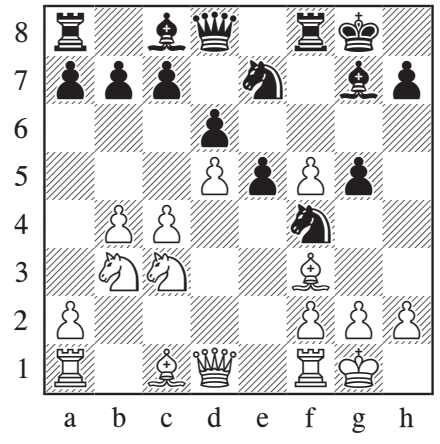
After 12.a4 g5 we reach a position examined in line C of this chapter.

Finally, 12.♕b3 g5∞ yields Black good attacking chances.

12...g5!?

Black continues with the standard attacking method, intending to gain space by playing ...g4.

13.exf5



13...♘xf5!N

This is the right recapture, intending ...♘h4.

After 13...♗xf5 14.♗e4 ♕d7 15.f3± White had a tiny edge that he eventually converted into a full point in Malmstroem – De Sa Nobrega, corr. 2000.

14.g3

After 14.♗e4 g4!∞ Black successfully contests the light squares on the kingside, obtaining good counterplay. For example, 15.♘e2 ♕h4 16.♖b1 ♘xe2† 17.♕xe2 ♗d7 and the second player does not seem to be any worse, as he is ready to double rooks on the f-file with good control of the position.

14...♘h3† 15.♔g2 ♘h6!

A key move, controlling the all-important g4-square.

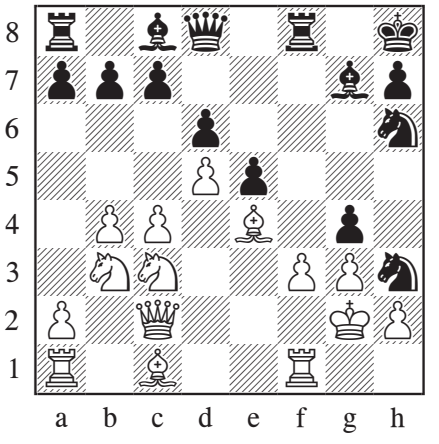
16.♗e4 g4 17.♕c2

17.♕d3 should similarly be answered by 17...♔h8!∞, for example: 18.♗d2 ♕e8!⇄ Black prepares a transfer of the queen to h5 with an attack.

17...♔h8! 18.f3!

White should play this freeing move to avoid falling under a dangerous kingside attack.

18.♗xh7?! allows 18...♘f5 19.♗xf5 ♗xf5 20.♘e4 ♕e8∓ and White is already much worse.

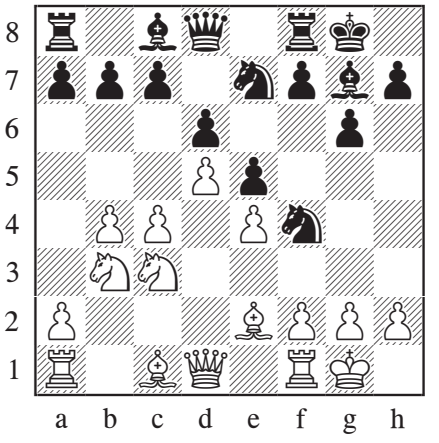


18...gxf3† 19.♖xf3 ♖xf3 20.♗xf3 ♘g5 21.♗xg5 ♕xg5 22.♘e4 ♕g6 23.♖e1 ♘f5=

White controls the e4-square while Black has the two bishops, so the position is approximately equal.

B) 11.♘b3!?

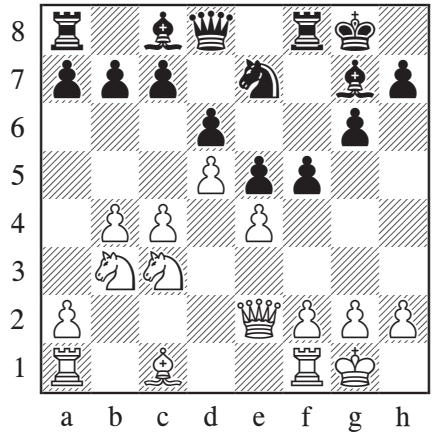
This move has only been tried in a few games. Best seems to be:



11...♘xe2† 12.♕xe2 f5

Black will obtain good attacking chances

with ...f4, no matter if White plays f2-f3 immediately or delays it.



13.f3

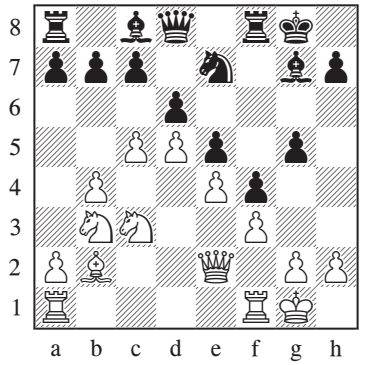
The idea of this move is to stop Black's kingside storm by answering ...f4 with g2-g4.

13.c5 f4 14.f3 g5

Black has launched his intended attack, reaching a position with interesting chances for both sides.

15.♗b2

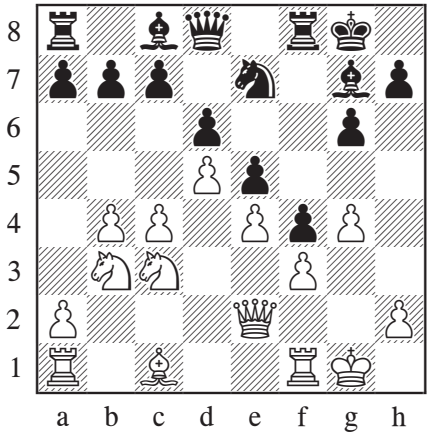
15.♗a3 ♘g6 16.♖ac1 h5 17.cxd6 (17.♘a5 g4 18.♔h1 ♘h4⇄) 17...cxd6 18.♖c2 (18.♘b5? ♖f7 19.♕c2?? ♕b6†–+) 18...g4!→ 19.♘b5? gxf3 20.gxf3 ♗h3 21.♖fc1 ♘h4–+ was already lost for White in Baumann – Repkova, Manila (ol) 1992.



15...♘g6 16.♖ac1 h5 17.♕f2 g4 18.♔h1

This was Malmstroem – Eilering, corr. 2007, and here Black has a choice between the traditionally good 18...♖f7N∞ and the subtle 18...b6!?N⇄, giving his light-squared bishop extra possibilities on the a6-f1 diagonal.

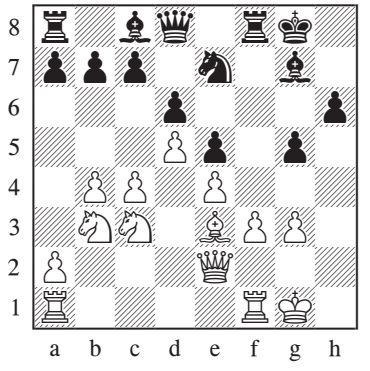
13...f4 14.g4!?



14...g5!N

I prefer to recommend the blocked position here. With the f4-pawn cramping the c1-bishop and good prospects on the light squares, I don't believe Black can be in any way worse.

Also possible is:
14...fxg3 15.hxg3 h6 16.♗e3 g5



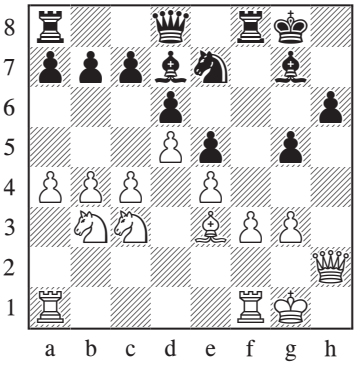
17.♕h2!

Black gets excellent compensation for his pawn after: 17.c5 ♗h3 18.♖f2 g4 19.fxg4

♖xf2 20.♗xf2 ♕d7 21.g5 ♖f8 22.♗e3 ♗g4 23.♕h2 hxg5 24.♖c1! (24.♗xg5?! ♖f3 25.♖c1 ♗h3! 26.♘d2 ♖d3 27.♘d1 (27.♗xe7 ♕g4∓) 27...♕g4 28.♗h4 ♗h6 29.♘f2 ♗e3↑) 24...♖f7 25.♗xg5 ♗f8!∞

17...♗d7 18.a4!

18.c5 ♕e8 19.♖ac1 ♕g6 looks quite okay for Black.



18...c6!?N⇄

This yields an unclear position. Instead, 18...♕e8?! 19.♘b5!N (improving on an immediate 19.c5 in Solmundarson – Jorgensen, corr. 1993) 19...♕g6 20.♘d2! (20.♘xc7 ♖ac8 21.♘e6 ♗xe6 22.dxe6 ♖xc4∞ is fine for Black) 20...c6! 21.♘xa7± is not something I would suggest to the readers, as White's extra pawn gives him a slight advantage with no risk involved.

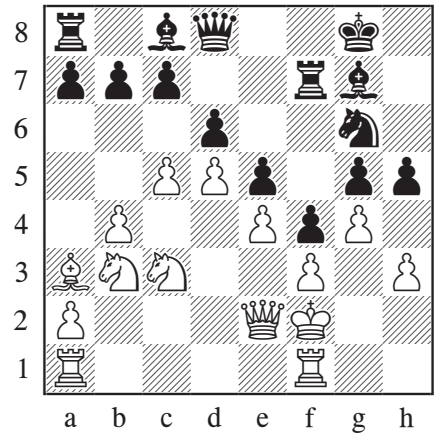
15.♗a3 ♘g6 16.c5 h5 17.h3 ♖f7

The standard method for Black, preparing to defend both d6 and c7 in an economical way.

18.♔f2!?

The king will be safer away from the kingside.

18.♘a5 dxc5!? 19.bxc5 hxg4 20.hxg4 ♗f8⇄, intending ...♖h7 and/or ...b6, leads to a tense position where Black is by no means worse.



18...♗f8

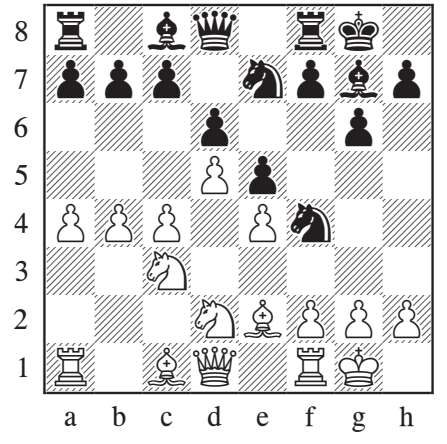
There is no question of an advantage for White here. A sample line is:

19.♔e1 hxg4 20.hxg4 ♖h7 21.♔d2 a5!⇄

A strong move, blasting open the queenside. Black has at least equal chances in the ensuing struggle.

C) 11.a4

Normally White employs this move order so as to deprive Black of the possibility to play 11.♗f3 ♘d3!? 12.♗a3 a5. Indeed, the c1-bishop now has an extra square to develop to, while in some cases the queen's rook may use a3 or a2 to offer protection to his kingside.



11...f5

There is no particular reason for avoiding an early ...♘xe2†, but the text is also satisfactory.

12.♗f3

White decides it's time to preserve this bishop.

12.c5 g5! 13.♘c4

13.exf5?! ♘xf5 14.♘de4 ♘d4↑ is clearly better for Black in view of his powerful knights.

13...♘eg6!

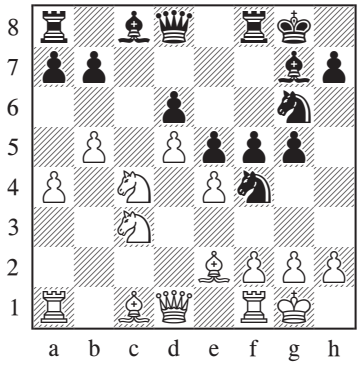
Black obtains a fine attacking position. For example:

14.cxd6

14.exf5 ♗xf5↑

14...cxd6 15.b5

15.♘b5 ♖f6 16.exf5 ♗xf5↑ looks tremendous for Black, who is massing a lot of troops in front of the white king.



15...♘xe2† 16.♕xe2 ♘f4

16...f4 17.f3 ♖f6 18.♗a3 ♘h4→ is another standard method of continuing.

17.♕a2 ♖f6 18.♘e3 fxe4 19.♘xe4 ♖h6 20.g3 ♗h3 21.♖e1 ♕d7

Black has annoying pressure.

12...g5

Weakening e4, but, on the other hand, acquiring an active role for the e7-knight.

Quite playable is 12...♗d7. For example: 13.♘b3 g5! 14.exf5 (14.h3 ♘eg6→) 14...e4 15.♘xe4 ♗xa1 16.♘xa1 ♘xf5 17.g3 ♘h3† 18.♔g2 (18.♔h1!?N with an unclear position looks better.) 18...♕e7! 19.♖e1 ♕g7 20.♘b3 ♘h4†!! 21.gxh4 g4 22.♗e2 ♖ae8 23.♗d3 ♗f5∓ Black went on to win an excellent game in Kuzenkov – Semenyuk, corr. 2002.

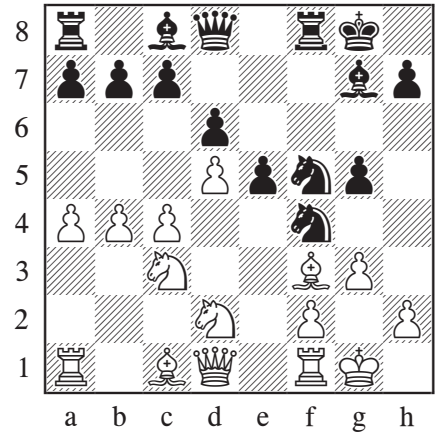
13.exf5 ♘xf5

A complicated position has arisen, with Black enjoying attacking chances in return for his positional disadvantage.

14.g3!

Evicting the black knight from its tremendously active outpost.

14.♘de4? is bad on account of 14...♘h4∓.



14...♘h3†!?

This appears to be the only way in which Black can count on level chances.

The piece sacrifice 14...♘d4?! 15.gxf4 exf4 is dubious in view of: 16.♘de4! ♘xf3† 17.♕xf3 g4 18.♕d1! (18.♕d3 ♗f5=) 18...♗f5 19.♖a3! The virtues of a2-a4 are apparent as the rook efficiently joins the defence of the kingside.

15.♔g2 ♕d7!

A strong move, keeping Black's chances at least equal without indulging in heavy complications.

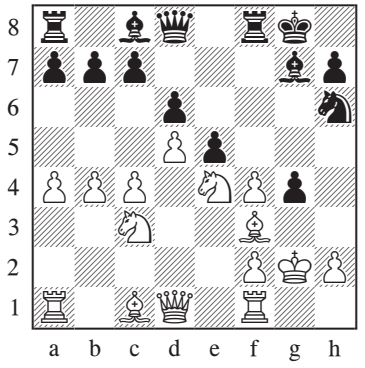
15...♘d4?! 16.♗g4! must be a solid positional advantage for White.

15...♘h6!?

An interesting idea that requires a lot of analysis.

16.♘de4 ♘f4† 17.gxf4 g4

White should now seek to refute Black's sacrifice:



18.♗e2!N

After 18.♔h1? gxf3 19.♖g1 ♕h4 20.♕xf3 exf4∞ 21.♖xg7†? ♔xg7 22.♗b2 ♘g4!–+ White resigned in Kourkounakis – Haliamanis, Greece 1992, as Black's threats cannot be stopped.

18...exf4 19.♗d3 ♕h4 20.♔h1

Black's compensation does look serious, and the position requires closer scrutiny. Some possible variations are as follows:

20...♗e5

Intending ...f3.

21.♖a3!?

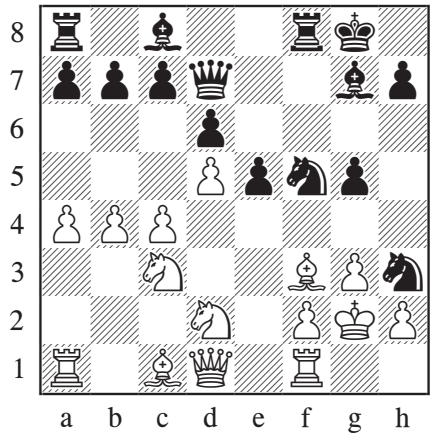
21.♕d2 ♘f5 22.♖g1 ♘d4⇄

21...♖f5 22.f3 g3 23.♖a2 ♖h5 24.♘b5 ♘f5 25.c5

25.♘xc7 ♕xh2†!=

25...♗d7→

With chances for both sides in a complex position.



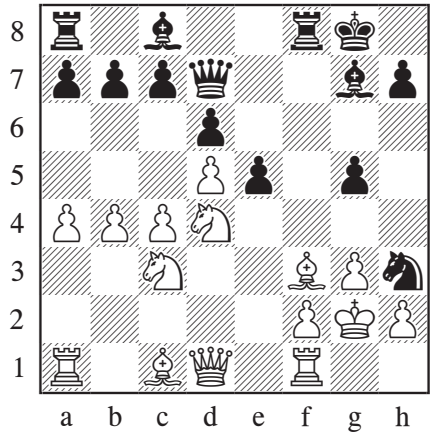
Now **C1) 16.♘b3?** does not turn out well, but **C2) 16.♗e4!?** is more challenging.

C1) 16.♘b3?

A perfectly natural move, defending the square d4. However, it soon runs into difficulties and it is doubtful whether White can survive.

16...♘d4 17.♘xd4

17.♗e4?? allowed the tactical shot 17...♘xf2! 18.♖xf2 ♕h3† 19.♔g1 ♖xf2–+ and White resigned in Petrosian – Rashkovsky, USSR 1974.



17...exd4 18.♘b5 c6!?

18...d3N 19.♖a3 a6 20.♘c3 ♕f5 21.♗e4 ♘xf2 22.♗xf5 ♘xd1 also looks better for

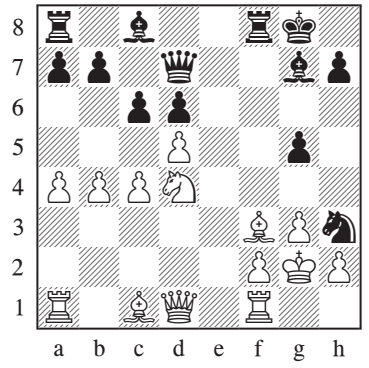
Black. After the text move White faces a difficult choice.

19.♘a3?!

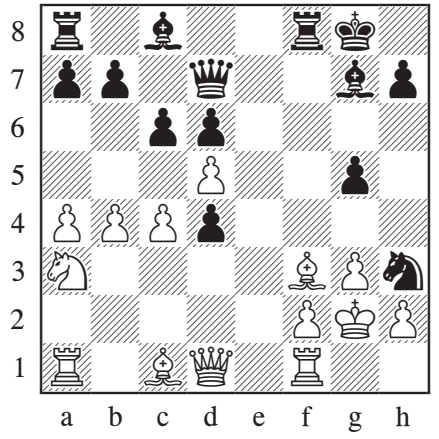
It seems to me that the first player falls into serious difficulties after this move. Alternatively:

19.dxc6? bxc6 20.♘xd4 ♖xf3! 21.♔xf3 c5–+ is clearly bad for White.

19.♘xd4!N is not mentioned anywhere but it seems that the position should peter out to at least a draw for Black:



19...♖xf3! 20.♔xf3! ♕g4† 21.♔e3 c5! (21...♘xf2!? 22.♔xf2 ♕xd4† 23.♗e3 ♕xa1 24.♕xa1 ♗xa1 25.♖xa1 cxd5 26.cxd5 h6=) 22.♗b2 (22.♕xg4 ♗xg4 23.bxc5 dxc5 24.♘b3 ♖e8†–+) 22...♕d7↑ Black keeps all the pressure in a complicated position.

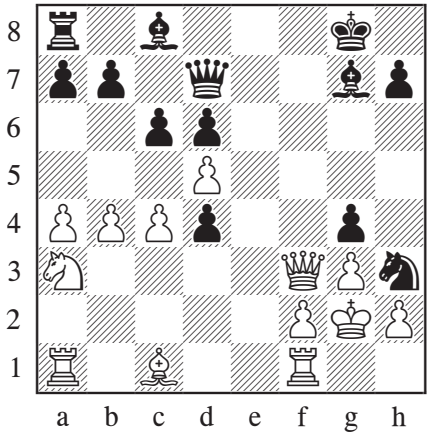


19...♖xf3!?

19...c5= is Nunn's logical recommendation, although even here I would prefer Black's chances.

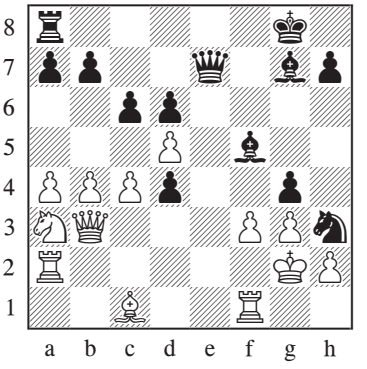
20.♕xf3 g4!

White is walking on the edge of a precipice.



21.♕d1N

21.♕b3? ♕e7 22.♖a2 ♗f5 23.f3 was played in Keene – Kavalek, Teesside 1975. Black should have now played:



23...♗e4!!N Leading to a winning position, for example: 24.♘b1 ♗xf3† 25.♖xf3 ♕e1! 26.♖f1 ♕e4† 27.♖f3 ♖f8 28.♗f4 gxf3† 29.♕xf3 ♘xf4† 30.gxf4 ♕xb1–+

Another losing continuation is: 21.♕e4? ♕f7! 22.dxc6 (22.f3 ♗f5 23.♕e1 ♖e8–+ gives Black

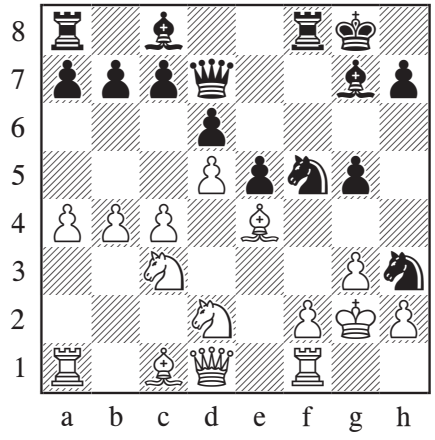
a strong attack according to Nunn, but I would rather say that White is totally lost.) 22...♗f5 23.♕d5 ♗e6 24.♕e4 d5!–+

21...♕f5 22.f3 ♕g6→

White is under serious pressure.

C2) 16.♗e4!?

Switching the bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal appears to be a wise decision, especially if we take into consideration that its position on f3 is vulnerable.



16...g4!

Defending the knight and partly recovering control of the light squares.

16...♘xf2?! 17.♔xf2 ♘xg3† 18.♔g1 ♘xf1 19.♘xf1± is at least slightly better for White.

17.♘b3 ♕e7 18.♕d3

18.♖a2!?N

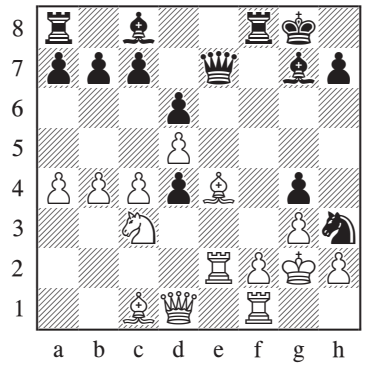
This may be a better move, avoiding Black's reply in our main line.

18...♘d4

18...♘g5!? could also be tried.

19.♘xd4 exd4 20.♖e2!

Black is left with more than one decent choice. I prefer:



20...♖xf2†!?

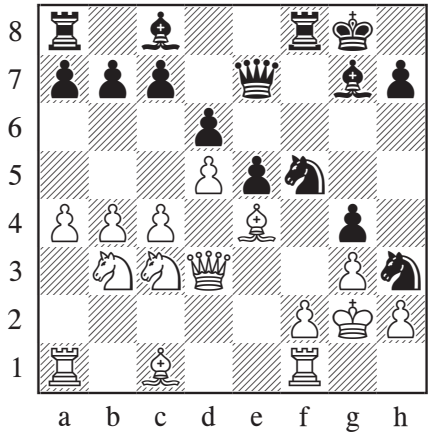
Black's also stands well after: 20...♗e5 21.♘b5 ♕g7 22.c5! (22.♕d3 a6 23.♘a3 ♗d7↑) 22...h5 23.♕d3 a6 24.♘a3 ♗d7 25.♘c4 ♖ae8! 26.♘xe5 ♖xe5!

21.♖fxf2 ♘xf2 22.♗xh7† ♔xh7 23.♕c2†

23.♖xe7 ♘xd1 24.♘xd1 ♔g6 25.♘f2 (25.♖xc7 ♗f6! intending ...♗d8) 25...♗f6 26.♖e1 ♗d7∓

23...d3 24.♖xe7 dxc2 25.♔xf2 ♔g8 26.♘b5 ♗f5 27.♘xc7 ♗f8⇄

Black is at least equal.

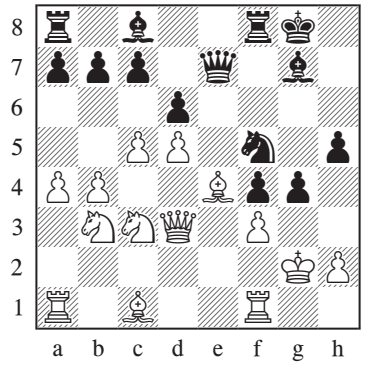


18...♗h6!N⇄

Black should rather exchange bishops in the diagrammed position, intending to transfer his displaced h3-knight to the wonderful g5-square.

Alternatively, 18...♘g5 19.♗xg5 ♕xg5 20.c5 was played in Zagorskis – Gross, Pardubice 1995. After 20...a6!?N Nunn considers the position to be unclear, but it seems to me that Black's pieces are less agile than after 18...♗h6!.

18...h5!? on the other hand, is a quite interesting possibility. After 19.c5 (19.♗d2 ♕f7 20.f3 ♕g6 is probably okay for Black, the idea being ...h4) 19...♘f4†!? 20.gxf4 exf4 21.f3? (better are 21.cxd6 ♘xd6!⇄ or 21.♘d2 ♕h4 22.♖g1 a5! 23.bxa5 dxc5⇄) as played in Manion – Smirin, Las Vegas 1997, best seems:



21...gxf3†!N 22.♗xf3 ♘h4† 23.♔h1 ♗f5 24.♕d2 ♕e3! 25.♗b2 ♖ae8!–+ With a winning position for Black.

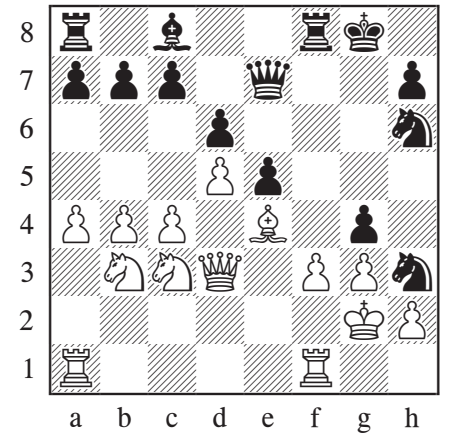
Let us now return to the more clear-cut 18...♗h6!.

19.♗xh6 ♘xh6

Black has the easier game. For example:

20.f3?

20.♖ac1= is correct, but even then 20...♕g7 21.c5 ♘f5 leaves White with the more complicated task.



20...gxf3†! 21.♖xf3 ♖xf3 22.♗xf3 ♕g7!∓

Conclusion

In Chapter 6 we started our examination of the Bayonet Attack 9.b4, which I decided to meet with the solid and thematic 9...♘h5. In this position White usually replies with 10.g3 or 10.♖e1, to minimize the consequences of a knight invasion on f4, but it is also possible to ignore it by 10.♘d2 which is the move we considered in this chapter.

My feeling is that 10...♘f4 gives Black a lot of play and even chances to fight for the advantage. The critical line runs 11.a4 f5 12.♗f3 g5 13.exf5 ♘xf5 14.g3! when the e4-square falls in White's hands; but that is only the beginning of the story. Actually Black gets interesting attacking chances by 14...♘h3†!? 15.♔g2 ♕d7! in view of his better coordination. Even 16.♗e4!? does not fully defuse the pressure in view of 16...g4! 17.♘b3 ♕e7 18.♕d3 ♗h6! when, by exchanging his inferior bishop, Black gets a very nice square on g5 for the stranded h3-knight. I am tempted to describe Black's position as the easier one to play over the board, and it is certain that objectively he does not stand any worse. He did not even have to invest any material to achieve this, which is often the case in other lines of the Mar del Plata Variation.