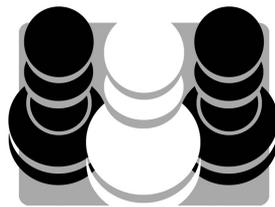


Grandmaster Repertoire 10

The Tarrasch Defence

By

**Jacob Aagaard
& Nikolaos Ntirlis**



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Preface

By Jacob Aagaard

In 2002 I helped some friends with the writing of two books for Everyman Chess, *Meeting 1.e4* and *Meeting 1.d4*. On the first book I worked as an editor only, while with the second book I wrote it together with Esben Lund (now a strong IM with a GM-norm in his pouch). We focused on the Tarrasch Defence for Black, with additional systems against the Reti, London and so on.

This was primarily Esben's project and he wrote most of the Tarrasch chapters, especially on his favourite line $9.\text{♗g5 c4}$. I had the thankless task of trying to make $9...\text{cxd4}$ work, something I probably did not do too badly, but on the other hand I cannot imagine that anything I did influenced practice significantly.

This is the main reason why I decided to offer my services to Nikolaos Ntirlis (referred to as Nikos in the rest of the book); I wanted to do better than first time around. This we have done. Nikos at some point said that we had moved the theory on the Tarrasch a few years forward, which is a very kind thing to say, as it is essentially he who has done this.

Our working relationship on this book has been one of the ideas man and his editor. Nikos started out with lots of ideas everywhere (based on a massive amount of research and sheer hard work), while I analysed everything carefully, checked if any games unknown to Nikos were available, and then wrote and rewrote every sentence of the book.

Esben and I wrote together in the same room and sought each other's advice, while Nikos and I are on two far corners of the European continent. We met up only briefly in Glasgow in February 2011 and are together in Greece in November 2011, at the time this book is being printed. However our work has been truly co-authored and not split as with my previous experience with the Tarrasch. It was definitely more social the first time around, but I think the reader will be happier with the result of the less social and more analytical approach taken this time around.

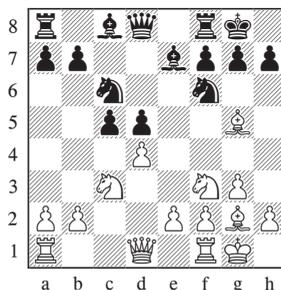
It has been seven years since I last wrote an opening book, and I have never had an opening book published by Quality Chess. Not only is this the start of the third part of my career as a chess writer, the first being working for Everyman and the second being essentially the *Attacking Manuals* and the spin-off prequel *Practical Chess Defence*, it is hopefully also the beginning of a close working relationship with Nikos. We have planned a number of things to work on together in the future and I look forward to it a lot.

I think this is a good book on a good opening and I hope you will enjoy it.

Jacob Aagaard
Halkidiki, Greece
November 2011

Chapter 1

9. ♖g5



Various 10th Moves

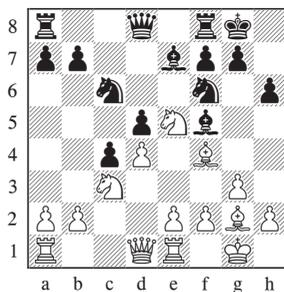
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1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.♗f3 ♘c6 6.g3 ♗f6 7.♕g2 ♕e7
8.0-0 0-0 9.♕g5

9...c4!

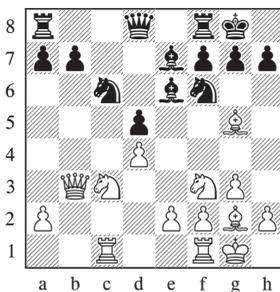
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D22) 11.♞c2	34
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A1) after 12.♗e5



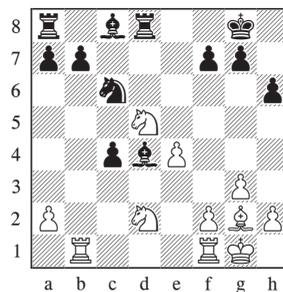
12...♞e8!N

B2) after 12.♞xb3



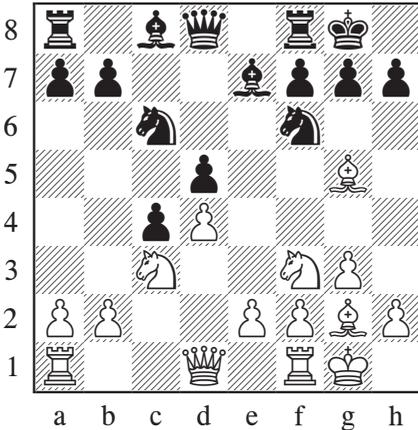
12...♞b6!N

D23) after 17.♞ab1



17...b5!N+

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5
5.♗f3 ♗c6 6.g3 ♗f6 7.♙g2 ♙e7 8.0-0 0-0
9.♙g5 c4!



The big move here is of course 10.♗e5, putting immediate pressure on the d5-pawn. Although the principal alternatives to the main line generally occur on move 11, various other 10th moves are played from time to time. In this chapter we shall look at: **A) 10.♗e1**, **B) 10.♗c1**, **C) 10.e3** and **D) 10.b3**. None of them should be considered critical, but on the other hand they are not entirely lacking in ideas, and they deserve some respect and a decent investigation. We have tried to provide both, but hopefully been more successful in the latter aspect.

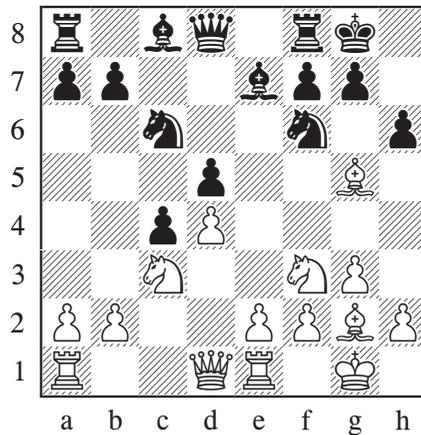
A) 10.♗e1

This type of slow move has no chance of challenging the black set-up. Contrary to popular belief, the Tarrasch is a positionally acceptable opening. It is true that in many lines Black accepts the isolated d-pawn and thus relies on a fair amount of activity, but other lines, such as this one, are more about structure than dynamics. If nothing happens for a few moves, Black will be able to start a pawn storm on the queenside and be positionally preferable. For this reason White

needs to challenge the black centre rapidly, and not waste time on moves such as 10.♗e1.

10...h6!

For Black there is no reason to hesitate; why not collect the two bishops immediately? Obviously there is nothing wrong with 10...♙e6, but given the chance, Black should ask White to either release the pressure a bit or concede the two bishops.

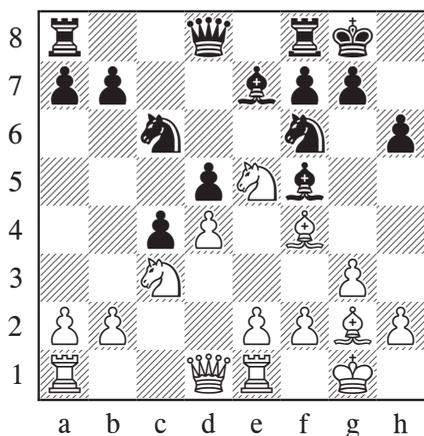


At this point White has the choice between **A1) 11.♙f4**, which seems a bit inconsistent, and accepting the challenge with **A2) 11.♙xf6**.

A1) 11.♙f4 ♙f5!

This reaches a favourable version of a line we shall examine in Chapter 14, dealing with 9th move alternatives (the variation with 9.♙f4). Here Black has gotten the useful move ...h6 thrown in for free, and also White has played the non-threatening ♗e1. In general the e6-square is a rather passive square for the bishop, but it usually has to go there to support the d5-pawn. However, when we are given the chance, we should choose the more active f5-square, where the bishop plays an active role in the centre.

12.♗e5

**12...Rc8!N**

A small refinement to existing practice. We want to target the important e4- and e5-squares before turning our eyes to the queenside.

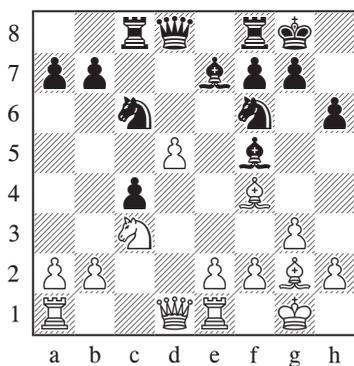
In the only game in this position in our database, Black played:

12...Rc8

The idea is to take on c6 with the rook. This is acceptable, but a bit unnecessary.

13.dxc6

There is a small trap in that White may be tempted by 13.dxc6? dxc4 14.d5, hoping to regain the piece by the further advance of the d-pawn.



14...g5! A tactical solution, which should be borne in mind as a resource in other similar positions. After 15.dxc6 gxf4 16.cxb7 Rb8 White does not have enough for his piece.

13...Rxc6 14.e4!?

This does not look great positionally, but White is trying to justify his play up to this point.

14...Nxe4 15.Nxe4 Rxe4 16.Qxe4 dxe4 17.d5?!

Better was the simple 17.Rxe4 Rf6, when White is only marginally worse.

17...Rc5 18.d6 Rf6

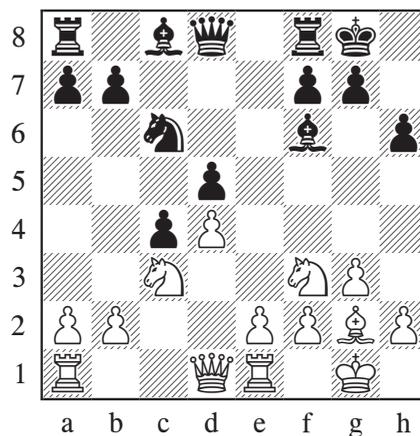
Tuerk – Bach, Dortmund 1995.

13.Nxc6

If 13.Rc1 then 13...Rb4!? looks an interesting idea, although we can now also afford the luxury of playing 13...Rc8.

13...bxc6

Black has a comfortable position. He can consider ...Rb4 to take control over the e4-square, and if White prevents this with 14.a3 then 14...Rd6 gives Black a slight edge.

A2) 11.Qxf6 Rxf6**12.e4N**

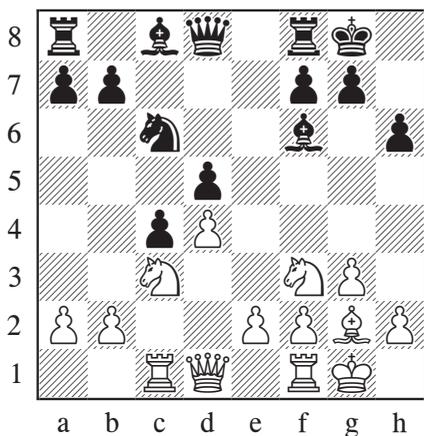
This is the move that makes sense of 10.Rc1, although when the opponent has two bishops, it is in principle not advisable to open the position, taking on a weak d-pawn in the process. However, White can probably maintain the balance fairly easily, with the help of a few computer moves.

This makes a bit more sense than 10.♖e1. Here we shall consider **B1) 10...h6!?** and **B2) 10...♙e6**. The first of these is attractive enough, and sufficient for equality, albeit rather a complicated way to deal with a subvariation. 10...♙e6 is livelier and simpler, and is thus our main recommendation for once.

B1) 10...h6!? 11.♙xf6

After 11.♙f4?! ♗f5 Black has a fine position. As we have said already, there is no need for ...♙e6 when the d5-pawn is not threatened. 12.♗e5 ♖e8= If White now plays 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.b3? ♙a3, he loses the exchange, which means that the white rook gains no benefit from being on c1.

11...♙xf6



12.e4!

This is not usually a very attractive move, but in this case we have an exception, because the rook on c1 is able to attack the c4-pawn quickly.

The alternatives are not really dangerous:

12.b3!? ♙f5↗

12.e3 is rather tame. Black can choose between

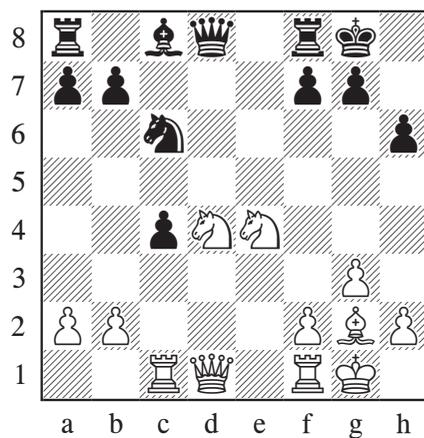
the simple 12...♙e6 and the more active 12...♙f5!?. In the latter case, moving the bishop again after 13.♗e1 ♙e6 does not feel like too great a concession, and 14.b3 ♗a5 15.b4 ♗c6 was fine for Black in Foierl – Modes, Germany 1993.

12.♗e5 ♙e6 13.f4 transposes to line D2 of Chapter 3.

12...dxe4

12...♗b4 is worse. White can reply with either 13.♗xd5 or 13.e5! ♙e7 14.♗e1 ♙e6 15.f4 with the idea 15...g6 16.a3 ♗c6 17.♗c2, and White will prepare f4-f5 with ♗e3 and possibly g3-g4.

13.♗xe4 ♙xd4 14.♗xd4



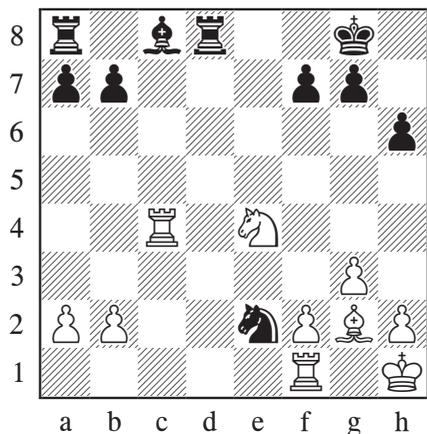
14..♙xd4!N

After 14...♗xd4 15.♖xc4± Black had not really solved his problems in Michenka – Netusil, Czech Republic 1996. The b7-pawn is a weakness and White has ideas such as ♗c5 or ♗d6.

15.♙xd4 ♗xd4 16.♖xc4 ♗e2!†

This might look risky, but the time gained is very useful.

17.♗h1 ♖d8

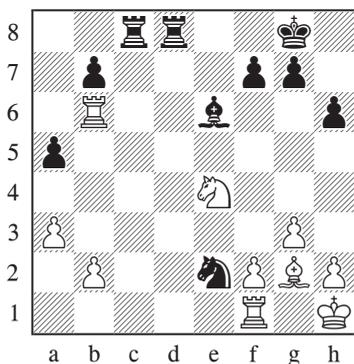


A quick look at the position might suggest that White has some chances to create a bit of pressure, but in reality Black does not have any problems equalizing. Here are some possible lines:

18. ♗c5 ♜b8 19. ♝e4 b6! The only move, but good enough. 20. ♘b3 ♙a6 21. ♞a4 ♚b5 22. ♞xa7 ♞bc8±

18. ♝c7 ♜b8 leaves White without a real follow up.

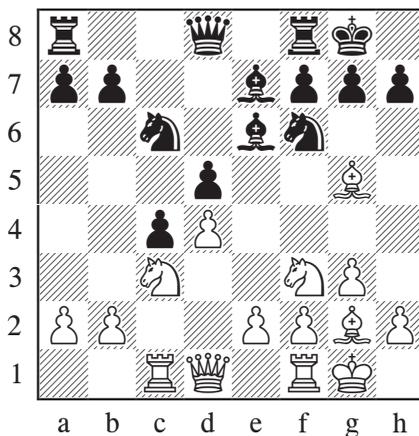
18. ♞b4 a5! 19. ♞b6 ♙e6 (probably 19... ♞a6!? is also sufficient, but we like this active approach) 20. a3 ♞ac8!



Aiming for the second rank. 21. ♞xb7 (21. b4 axb4 22. axb4 ♝c2 23. ♗c5 ♙c4 24. ♗xb7 ♝d4 is similar) 21... ♝c2 22. b4 axb4

23. axb4 ♙c4 24. ♝e1 f5 25. ♗c5 ♗c3 With enough counterplay, and maybe a draw after 26. ♖g1 ♗e2† 27. ♖h1.

B2) 10... ♙e6



The classical approach leads to the most interesting game here.

11. b3

11. ♗e5 transposes to 10. ♗e5 ♙e6 11. ♝c1, found in Chapter 3, where Black has good play in all lines.

11. ♝e1 ♝c8 12. e4 was played in Budihardjo – Oliver, Adelaide 2003. Here Black can improve with simple play: 12... dxe4!N 13. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 14. ♗xe4 ♙xd4±

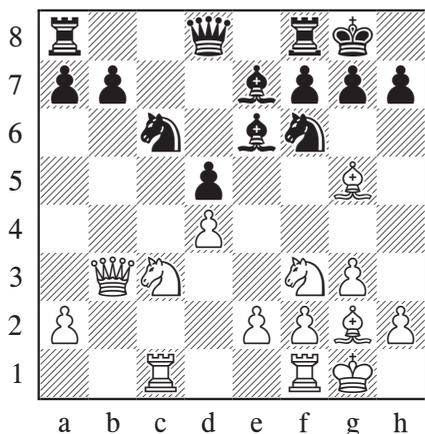
11. ♞c2 h6 12. ♙f4 does not make a lot of sense. Not surprisingly, after 12... ♞a5 13. ♝fd1 ♞ac8 14. ♗e5 ♝fd8= Black was already living a problem-free life in Prost – Midoux, Lyon 2003.

11. ♙f4 ♞b6 12. ♗a4 ♞a6= is also fine for Black, Van Heel – Wiersma, Utrecht 2004.

11... cxb3!?

Black tries to exploit the move order. 11... ♞a5 12. ♗e5 transposes to a line that we do not recommend for Black (see page 92)

12. ♖xb3



12... ♖b6!N

Black attacks the white centre, at the same time daring White to “give” him doubled pawns. As it happens, Black equalizes very easily here.

It was quite surprising to us that after 12... ♗a5 13. ♖b1 ♖c8 14. ♗e5±, Black does not have an easy way to solve his problems. At least, we could not find it. Mendez Ataria – Cranbourne, Buenos Aires 1991.

Another decent move is 12... ♗e4!N 13. ♗xe7 ♖xe7 14. ♖fd1 ♖fd8= and the position is roughly equal.

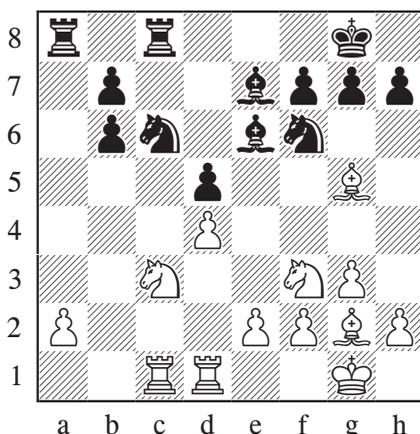
13. ♖xb6

There is not really a way to avoid it. 13. ♖a4 looks odd, and we cannot believe that this is the right move, no matter what our electronic horses neigh out. 13... ♖fc8 14. ♖b1?! (14. ♖fd1= is probably better) 14... ♖a5 15. ♖xa5 ♗xa5 16. ♗d2 b6 Black has come out of the opening with a good grip on the c4-square. After something along the lines of 17. ♗g5 ♗c4 18. ♗c1 ♗e3 19. ♗xe3 ♖xc3= it is definitely White who is fighting for equality, and maybe without success.

13... ♖xb6 14. ♖fd1

14. ♖b1 ♗b4! gives White immediate problems on the a-file.

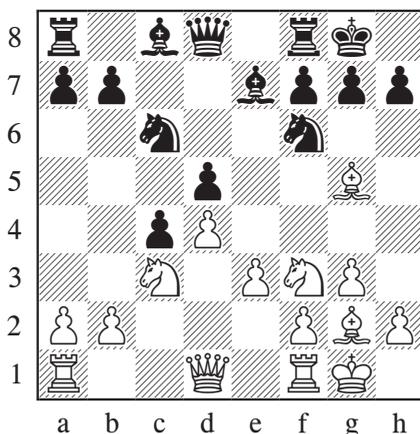
14... ♖fc8



With the threat of ... ♗a3 followed by ... ♗xd4, this gives Black a good game. White needs to force matters:

15. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16. e4 dxe4 17. ♗xe4 ♖d8 18. ♗xf6† gxf6 19. ♖b1 ♖xa2 20. ♖xb6 ♗xd4 21. ♗xd4 ♖xd4 22. ♖f1!=

C) 10.e3



10... ♗e6

10...h6!? is also playable, but it seems to be White’s intention to take on f6 anyway, so

why give up the tempo? After 11. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 12. ♗d2 ♕e6, the chances were roughly even in Borg – Takashima, Thessaloniki (ol) 1988.

11. ♗d2?!

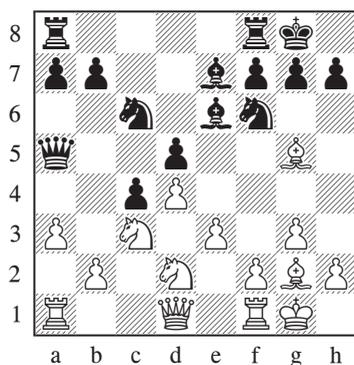
This move has an artificial feel to it. The best way forward must be 11. ♗e5, which transposes to Chapter 4. If you would rather not play this as Black, you can meet 10.e3 with 10...h6!? as mentioned above, but of course there is no way of avoiding it if White plays the superior move order of 10. ♗e5 ♕e6 11.e3.

There is always a question as to what point you should stop analysing a line. We could quite feasibly stop here and say that Black is obviously fine and should look forward to the middlegame with glee. But as this is a grandmaster repertoire book, we choose to provide a more extensive investigation. We hope that the reader understands that none of the authors of any of the *Grandmaster Repertoire* books expect the reader, or even themselves, to necessarily memorize all lines. Sometimes, such as here, seeing the illustrative examples is a benefit in itself.

At this point Black has two pleasant looking options, 11...♖c8 and 11...♗a5. We have chosen to cover the first, as it gives Black more options.

11...♖c8

11...♗a5 12.a3 should not be a problem for Black either, but he has to be careful:



a) After 12...♗fe8?! 13.b4! Black is in a slightly inferior situation.

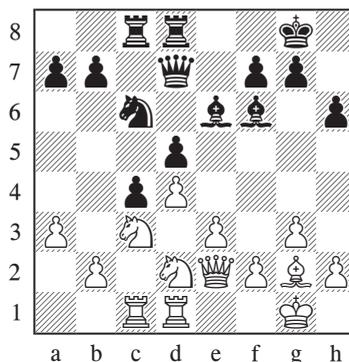
b) 12...h6?! 13. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 14. ♗h5 ♖ad8 15. ♗fc1 ♖d6 (15...♖d7 was better, but we fear that Black has to play accurately to avoid ending up in a worse position after 16.b3) 16.b3 b5? (again 16...♖d7 was best) 17.a4!± Graf – Meins, Osterburg 2006.

c) We have a lot of analysis on 12...♗ac8, which is fully playable, but we prefer to play the rook to c8 on the 11th move and keep our (queen's) options open.

12. ♖xf6

This is hardly the strongest idea here.

White also fared poorly after: 12.a3 ♗d7 13. ♗e2 ♖fd8 14. ♖fd1 h6 Black has played all his truly constructive moves, so this now makes sense. 15. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 16. ♗ac1



Mrva – Mozny, Slovakia 2002, continued with the natural 16...♗e7 with a slight edge for Black. There is nothing wrong with this, of course, but it was more accurate to play 16...b5!N right away. Black is just better. White is struggling to find a good move and the digital monster even wants to play 17. ♗xb5 ♖b8 18. ♗c3 ♖xb2, which we cannot be displeased with.

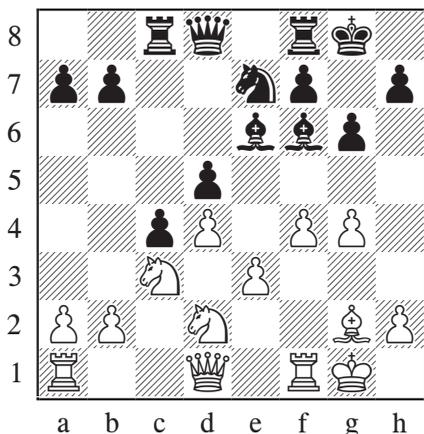
12...♖xf6 13.f4

White has played his hand. No face cards, only threes and fours...

13. ♖xc4 looks tempting, but Black has a strong riposte in 13... ♖xd4!.

13... ♖e7 14.g4 g6

The standard set-up. Black is doing well.



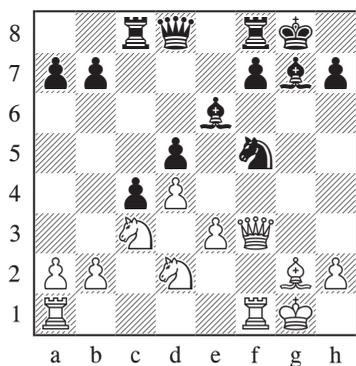
15. ♗h3

This looks simply wrong, but it is hard for White to find pleasant looking moves.

15. ♖f3 ♗g7! ♞

The idea of blocking off all White's play with ...f5 looks great. And if White tries to do anything immediately, he will find himself unprepared for the tactics.

16.f5?! gxf5 17.gxf5 ♖xf5 ♞



Black is simply a pawn up, based on:

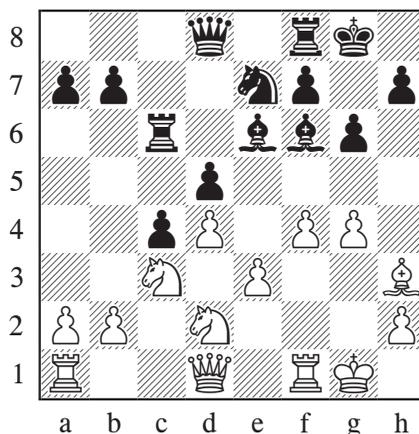
18. ♖xd5? ♖h4-+

Black wins after some complications.

19. ♖g3 ♖xg2 20. ♖f6+ ♖h8 21. ♖de4 ♗g8!
21... ♖xe3! also works.

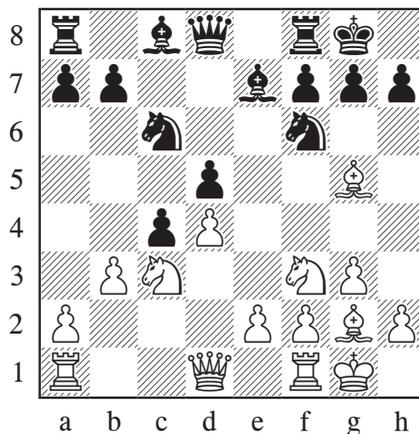
22. ♖xg8 ♖xe3! 23. ♖g6 ♖xf1 24. ♗xf1 ♗d5
The two bishops prevail.

15... ♗c6!



Keeping an eye on f6 and other important squares along the sixth rank; and also freeing c8 for the bishop – just in case. The opening is over and Black holds the better chances. His dark-squared bishop will one day become great, and White has no significant threats on the kingside to counter the long-term expansion Black is planning on the queenside, Volke – Bachmayr, Munich 1993.

D) 10.b3



This makes less sense without the inclusion of 10. ♘e5 ♙e6 first. It is our belief that Black can equalize in various ways, but we had to choose. So we have decided to go for just two of these: **D1) 10...cxb3!?** and **D2) 10...♙a5**.

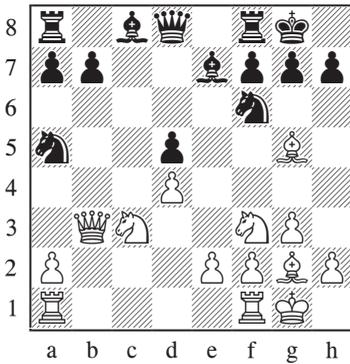
D1) 10...cxb3!?

This is the secondary option – but still worth a look.

11.axb3

The second option here is not surprisingly also a recapture:

11. ♙xb3 ♘a5



This line should not pose Black great problems. The c4-square will come in very handy.

12. ♙b5!

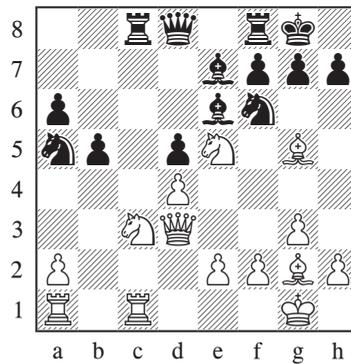
The most testing.

12. ♙c2 ♙e6 with the idea ...♞c8 should not be problematic for Black. For example: 13. ♘e5 ♞c8 14. ♙d3 h6 15. ♙d2 ♘c4 16. ♘xc4 ♞xc4 17. ♞ac1 b5 18. ♘xb5 ♙d7 19. ♘c3 ♞fc8 20. e4 ♙a3 21. ♞cd1 dxe4 22. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 23. ♙xe4 ♞xd4 24. ♙xa3 ♞xe4 Keskisarja – Martynov, Helsinki 1999. After 25. ♙xh6 ♙b5 ♞ Black has ample play for the pawn.

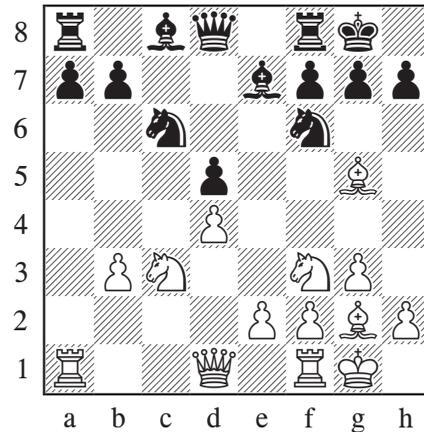
12... ♙e6!

By not harassing the queen yet, Black keeps the knight on c3 unprotected a bit longer, thereby gaining a tempo with ...♞c8.

Less precise is 12...a6 13. ♙d3 ♙e6 14. ♘e5 ♞c8, as played in Rapparlie – Tschann, Germany 1996. White should probably use his extra time to play 15.f4!N, when Black lacks a good reply. For example: 15...g6 16. ♙h6, based on 16...♞e8?! 17.f5! ♙xf5 18. ♞xf5 gxf5? 19. ♙xf5 ♘h5 20. ♙xf7 ♘h8 21. ♙xd5 with the threat of ♙g8 †, forcing Black into 21...♞g8 22. ♙f6 †! ♞g7 23. ♘f7 † and everything is coming to an end. 13. ♘e5 ♞c8 14. ♞fc1 a6 15. ♙d3 b5



Black has fully equalized.



11... ♙f5!

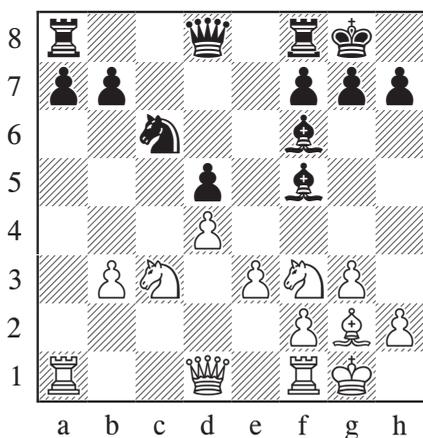
A very logical move, first played in Sasikiran – Kotronias, Bursa 2010. Previously the bishop had gone to the passive e6-square, where it has little to do. Kotronias correctly took advantage of the fact that d5 is no longer under attack.

12. ♖xf6

A typical plan in these structures. White's idea is that his central pawns on d4 and e3 will restrict Black's dark-squared bishop.

If White tries 12.e3 ♜c8 13. ♘e5, Black will reply with 13... ♘b4!= getting his pieces to good squares.

12... ♖xf6 13.e3



13... ♜c8!N

This is a slight refinement on Sasikiran – Kotronias, which is the model game for how to play this variation. Basically we think it is better to control e5 before initiating the plan with ...a5 and ...♘b4.

We have analysed some alternatives:

13... ♗d6!? 14. ♗d2 ♜fc8 15. ♜ac1 g6 looks like another reasonable set-up: 16. ♘e5!? ♘xe5 17.dxe5 ♖xe5 18. ♘xd5 ♜xc1 19. ♜xc1 ♜c8=

13... ♘b4 14. ♗d2

For some time we seriously feared that White could be a bit better after 14. ♘e5!? ♜c8 15. ♗d2 a5 16. ♜fc1 ♜e8 17.f4, though Black can reply with 17...g6! when the correct evaluation should be “unclear”. After this move Black plans to play ...♖g7 and ...f6. We don't think Black is getting a lot from

his two bishops, but exactly what White is doing is also not clear to us. 18. ♘b5 ♖e7 Once the knight has gone to b5, this is more logical; the bishop will go to f8.

14. ♘a2!? is also worth considering, with roughly equal chances.

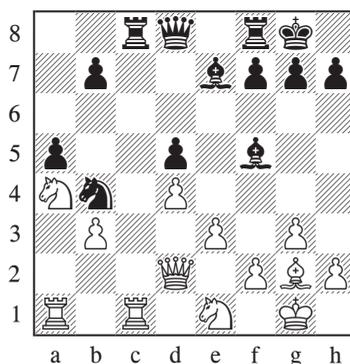
14...a5

We also spent a good deal of time analysing 14... ♖e7, but you cannot cover everything in a single volume.

15. ♜fc1 ♜c8 16. ♘e1

16. ♘e5!?

16... ♖e7 17. ♘a4



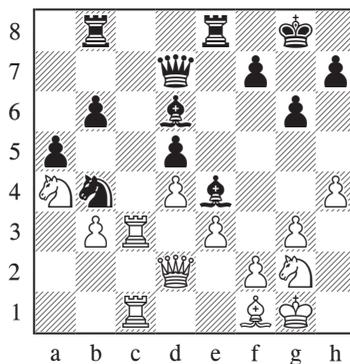
17... ♗d6

Black has emerged from the opening with a good position.

18.h4 b6 19. ♘c3 ♗d7 20. ♖f1 ♖d6

As there are no obvious actions for either party to undertake, the game enters a slow manoeuvring phase.

21. ♘a4 ♜b8 22. ♜c3 g6 23. ♜ac1 ♜fe8 24. ♘g2 ♖e4



Objectively the position is equal, but Black is starting to put some pressure on White's kingside, meaning he has to take care not to drift into a worse position.

25. ♖f4 ♜f5 26. ♙h3 ♜f6 27. ♙g2 ♙xf4 28. exf4 ♙xg2 29. ♖xg2 ♖g7 30. ♞e3 ♞e4

It was also possible to try 30... ♞xe3!? 31. ♜xe3 ♞b7, but White can defend with 32. ♜e5 b5 33. ♜xf6† ♖xf6 34. ♖c3 and Black will not be able to win the ending.

31. ♖c3 ♞xe3 32. ♜xe3 ♞c8 33. h5

Draw agreed, Sasikiran – Kotronias, Bursa 2010. Black is at least not worse.

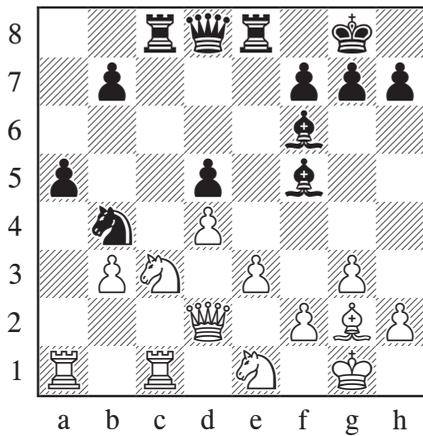
14. ♜d2 a5 15. ♞fc1

15. ♖e5 ♖xe5 16. dxe5 ♙xe5†

15... ♞e8

The e5-square is now under full control.

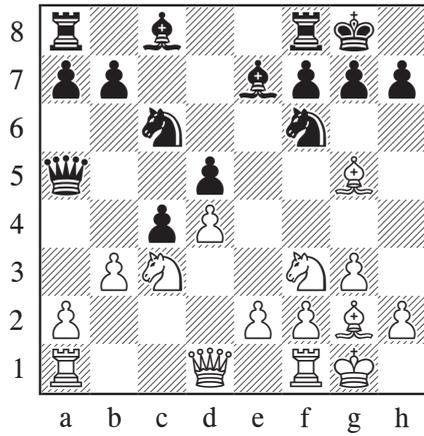
16. ♖e1 ♖b4



We have (almost!) transposed to Sasikiran – Kotronias. Black has a good game, but the position is a bit static, so maybe this is not the path to follow if you desperately need to win!?

D2) 10... ♜a5

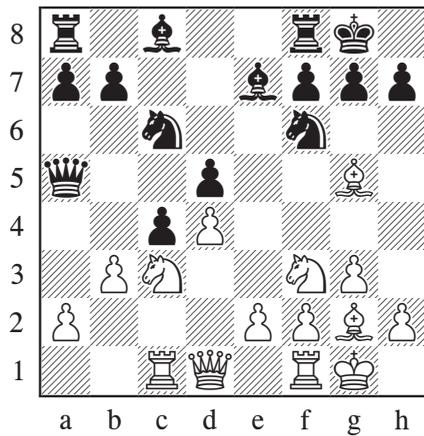
This is our main recommendation. Compared to 10. ♖e5 ♙e6 11. b3 ♜a5, Black is under less pressure in the centre and can thus act more forcefully.



White now has the following options at his disposal: **D21) 11. ♞c1**, **D22) 11. ♜c2**, **D23) 11. ♜d2** and **D24) 11. ♙d2**.

11. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 12. ♜d2 ♞d8 13. e3 ♙f5 is given as equal by Lund, but one might ask if Black is not already doing quite well.

D21) 11. ♞c1



11... ♙b4

The most direct way to play. 11... ♙e6 12. ♖e5 ♞ac8= transposes to a line we rejected for our repertoire (see page 92)

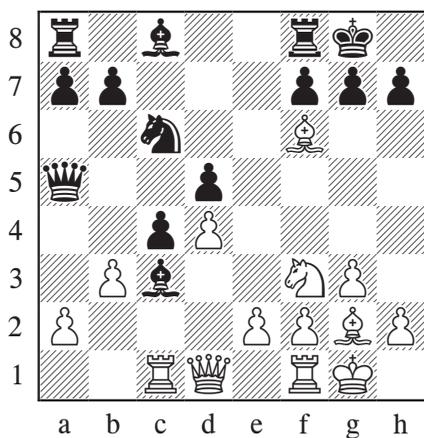
12. ♙xf6

After 12. ♜c2 ♙xc3 White should transpose to the main line by 13. ♙xf6; instead 13. ♜xc3?

Wxc3 14. Bxc3 Ne4 would give White problems with most of his pieces.

12... Qxc3 !

The accurate move order. The immediate recapture on f6 unnecessarily gives White extra options.



13. Wc2

This is more or less forced. 13. Qg5 Qb2 14. c2 c3 15. Qd2 looks very clever, but Black has: 15... Qf5 ! 16. Bxb2 cxb2 17. Qxa5 b1=Q 18. Wxb1 Qxb1 19. Bxb1 Nxa5 20. Ne5 Nc6 ! (20... Bfd8 is a bit passive, and with 21. Bc1 White might be able to hold the balance) 21. Qxd5 Nxd4 22. Qf1 B ad8 Black obtains winning chances in the endgame because of 23. Qxb7 Ne2 ! 24. Qxe2 Bfe8 .

13... gxf6 14. Wxc3 Wxc3 15. Bxc3 b5 16. bxc4 bxc4

This is quite a typical position for the old-fashioned 9...c4 Tarrasch, where Black accepts the doubled pawns with the argument that it does not matter at all, as they cannot be attacked, and that it is at least as important that he has a passed c-pawn. Additionally, the f6-pawn prevents any Nf3-e5 jumps.

17. e4?!

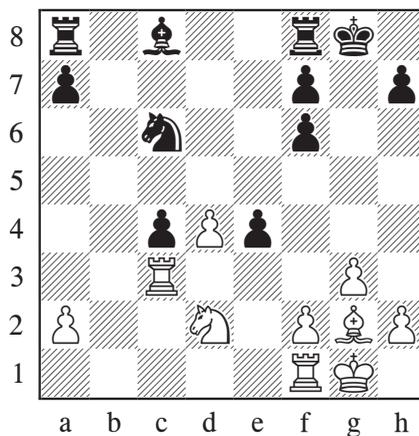
White is trying to force matters, but goes overboard in the process.

17. Re1 Qe6 18. e4 dxe4 19. Bxe4 B ac8 should not give Black any problems. He is already thinking about ... Nb4(e7)-d5 with active play.

17. e3 Bb8 18. Nd2 B d8 with even chances seems to be the most reasonable way to play, as long as it is not followed up with 19. Nxc4 ! Qa6 ! when Black is playing for an edge.

17... dxe4 18. Nd2 ?

Losing the plot. Necessary was 18. Bxc4 Qa6 19. Bxc6 Qxf1 20. Qxf1 exf3 21. Qxf3 Qg7 . White should hold, but will not enjoy the process of proving this assumption.



18... Nxd4 !N

One of these obvious improvements, found by the process of elimination. 18...f5 was the less fortunate choice in Kostiuik – Grabuzova, Vladimir 2008.

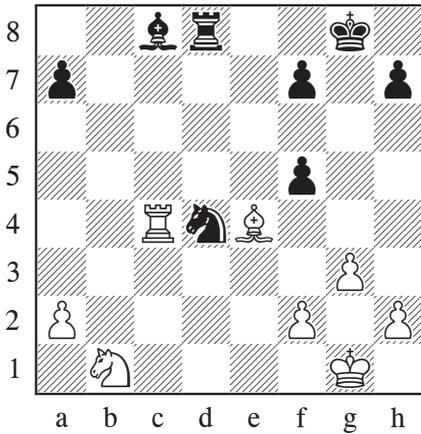
19. Bxc4 B d8 ! 20. Qxe4

20. Nxe4 Qa6 ! 21. Nxf6+ Qg7 22. Nh5+ Qh6 leads to Black being an exchange up.

20... Bb8 !

White is faced with threats such as ... Qa6 and ... Ne2+ , both picking up material. Forced is therefore:

21. Bb1 Bxb1+ 22. Nxb1 f5 !



23. ♖d5 □

White has to put the bishop somewhere, but the number of squares is limited.

As an example, 23. ♖h1 loses brutally by force to: 23... ♗e2† 24. ♖g2 ♖b7† 25. f3 ♖d1! 26. ♗c3 Other moves lose as well. 26... ♖g1† 27. ♖f2 ♖xh1 28. ♗xe2 ♖xh2† 29. ♖e3 ♖xe2†! 30. ♖xe2 ♖a6 31. ♖d3 f4! 32. gxf4 h5-+

23... ♗e2† 24. ♖g2 □

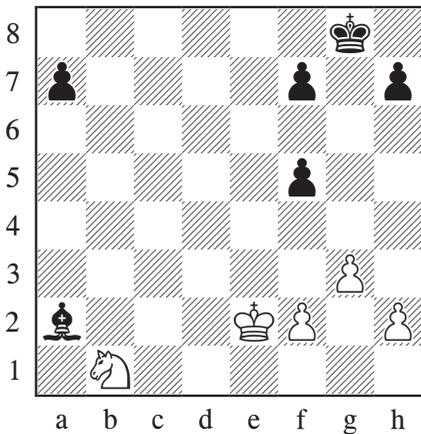
24. ♖f1 ♖a6 25. ♖c6 ♖d3! wins outright.

24... ♖a6 25. ♖c5 ♖xd5 26. ♖xd5 ♖b7 27. ♖f1 ♖xd5

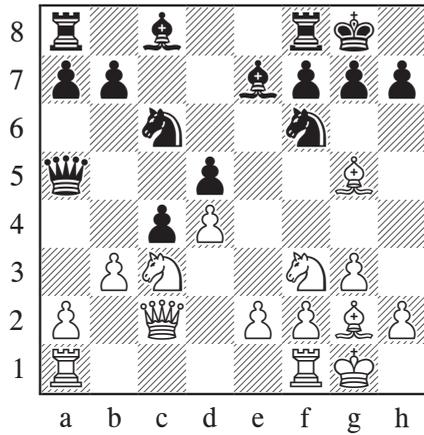
27... ♗xg3† 28. ffg3 ♖xd5 may also give Black some winning chances.

28. ♖xc2 ♖xa2

Black should win.



D22) 11. ♖c2



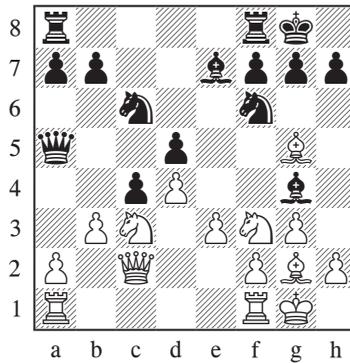
This looks like a flexible and normal move, but it has a downside; the d4-pawn can be attacked and Black thus equalizes comfortably.

11... ♖g4!

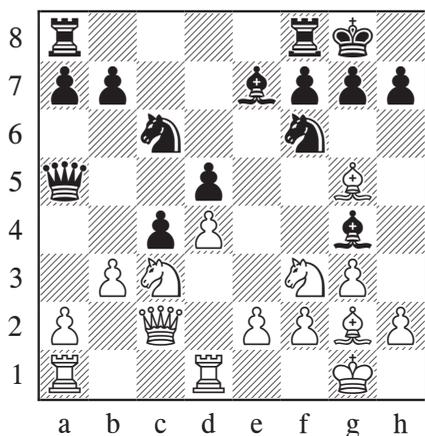
With an obvious threat to the d4-pawn.

12. ♖fd1

12.e3 looks quite solid.



Our suggestion is 12... ♖ac8!N with an active and interesting game. The only game to be played here continued instead 12... ♖b4 13. ♖xf6 ♖xf3 14. ♖xf3 ♖xc3 15. ♖ab1 gxf6 16. bxc4 ♖xd4 17. exd4 with a draw in Nenciulescu – Shishkin, e-mail 2005, based on the fact that 17... ♗xd4 18. ♖d1 ♗xf3† 19. ♖xf3 dxc4 is rather equal.



So far we have been following Vossen – Wacker, Germany 2001. Here we have a significant (though thematic) improvement.

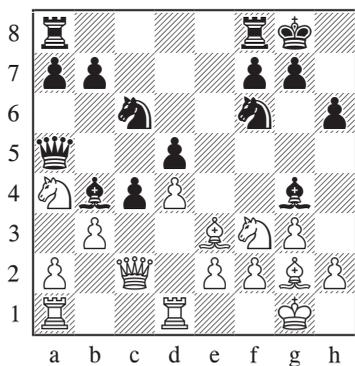
12...h6!N

Taking advantage of the fact that 13.♘d2 is not possible at this moment.

13.♙c1

13.♙e3 ♘b4 14.♘a4

14.♞ac1 ♙a3! followed by ...♘b4 and ...♙f5 looks unpleasant for White, even if he holds the balance. If nothing else, after 15.♞b1 Black has 15...♘e7!? or 15...♙b4! =.



14...♘e7!

With the ideas ...♙f5 and ...b5, Black is at least equal. For example:

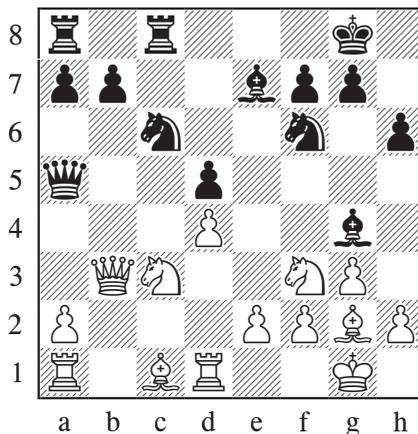
15.a3 ♙f5 16.♞a2

16.axb4?! ♞xa4! =

16...♙d6 17.♘c5 b5 =

13...cxb3 14.♞xb3 ♞fc8

Black has fully equalized. The following is just an illustrative line.



15.♙b2

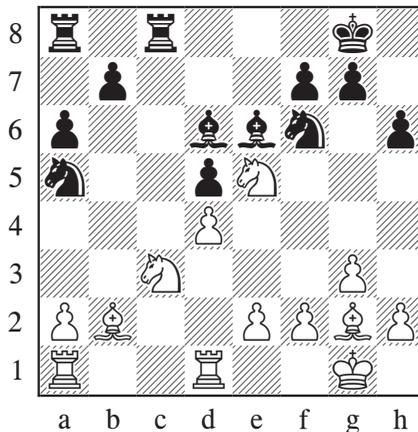
15.♞xb7?? ♞ab8 –+

15...♙e6

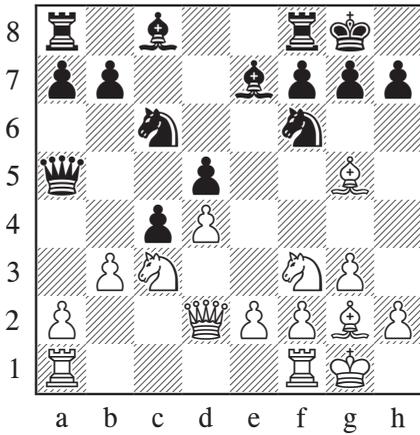
Black has other good ways to play this position. For example: 15...♞d8!? 16.♘e5 ♘a5 17.♞a4 ♘c4 18.♞b3 ♘xb2 19.♞xb2 ♙e6 and Black is at least equal.

16.♘e5 ♙d6 17.♞b5 a6 18.♞xa5 ♘xa5

What a pretty picture! White's bishops are both fianchettoed while Black's are placed "classically" in the centre. Black is by no means worse.



D23) 11. ♖d2



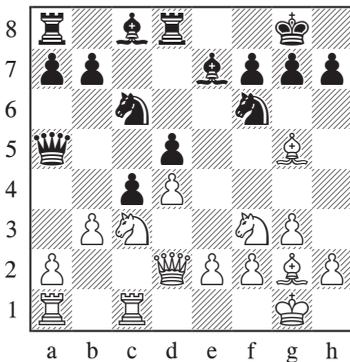
Not surprisingly there are no great benefits to entering into the pin.

11... ♜d8!

Protecting d5 and keeping an eye on d4 (and d2).

12. bxc4

White tried the more circumspect 12. ♖fc1 in Dolezal – Juarez, Villa Ballester 1992.

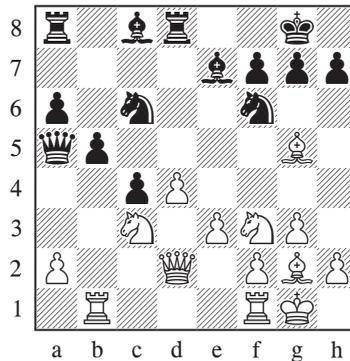


Black should be absolutely fine after either 12... ♖e6N= or 12...h6!?N. The latter could continue: 13. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 14. bxc4!? (14. e3 ♖f5=) 14...dxc4 15. e3 ♖f5 Black has a good game. He is planning ...♗b4-d3, and after 16. a3 b5 ♗ it looks to be more fun to be Black.

12...dxc4 13. e4?

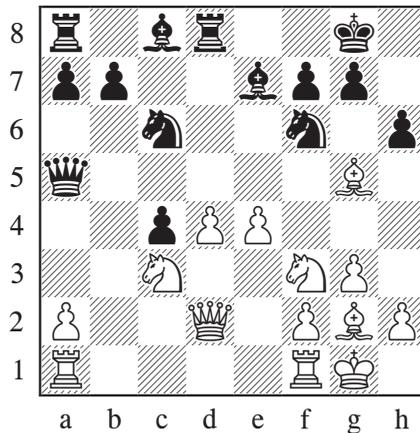
This is overambitious; White will not be able to keep control over the centre.

Better was 13. ♖ab1N, but after 13...a6 14. e3 b5! Black has an excellent and interesting game.



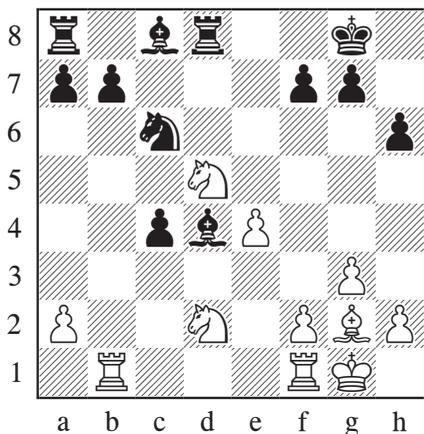
The main point is that after 15. ♗e5?! ♗xe5 16. ♖xa8 ♖f5 White has nothing better than 17. ♖xf6 gxf6 18. ♖g2 ♖xb1 19. ♗xb1 ♖xd2 20. ♗xd2 ♗d3, when he will be fighting for equality.

13...h6!



14. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 15. ♗d5 ♖xd2 16. ♗xd2 ♖xd4 17. ♖ab1

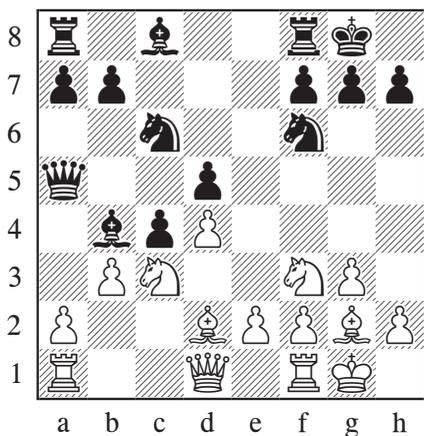
Saladino – Cranbourne, Buenos Aires 1986. Here Black missed his chance:



17...b5!Nf7

Based on 18.♞xb5? c3 followed by 19...♙a6-+.

D24) 11.♙d2 ♙b4



12.♞c2

We should also consider:

12.♞e1 ♞a6 13.e3 ♞e8

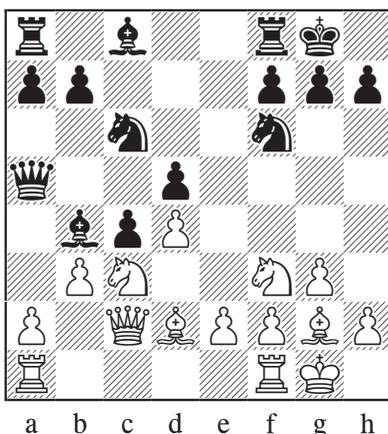
13...♙f5 or even 13...b5 14.♘e5 ♙xc3
15.♙xc3 ♘e4 16.♙b4 ♞e8 gives Black comfortable play.

14.♘e5 ♘xe5 15.dxe5

This was played in the game Haik – Miralles, Marseille 1987. Now instead of 15...♞xe5?!, Lund proposes:

15...♙xc3!?N 16.♙xc3 ♘e4

With equality.



12...♞e8!?

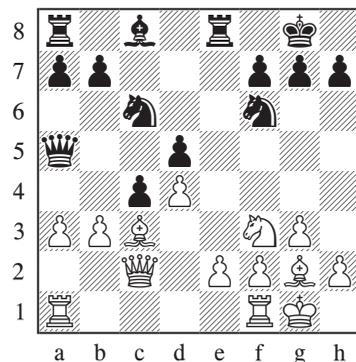
This logical move produces interesting play.

12...b5 13.a4 ♙xc3 14.axb5 ♞xb5 15.bxc4 ♞xc4 16.♞xc3± Tarjan – Zwaig, Hastings 1976, is not the way we want to go.

13.bxc4!?N

This is definitely the critical test, even if it is not clear whether it is the best move.

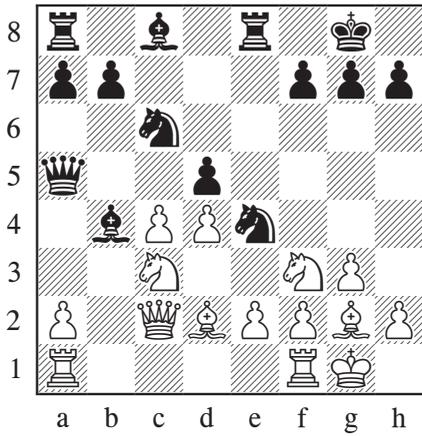
13.a3 ♙xc3 14.♙xc3 should not be a problem at all:



14...♙f5! Black needs to remember this zwischenzug. 15.♞d2N (15.♞xf5 ♞xc3 16.bxc4 ♞xe2 was level in Granberg – Vodep, corr. 1984) 15...♞a6 Black looks all right here. For example: 16.bxc4 ♞xc4 (or 16...♘e4 17.♞b2 ♘xc3 18.♞xc3 ♞xc4=) 17.♘e5 ♘xe5 18.dxe5 ♘e4 19.♙xe4 dxe4! =

13... ♖e4!

This leads to wild forcing lines.



14. ♖xd5!

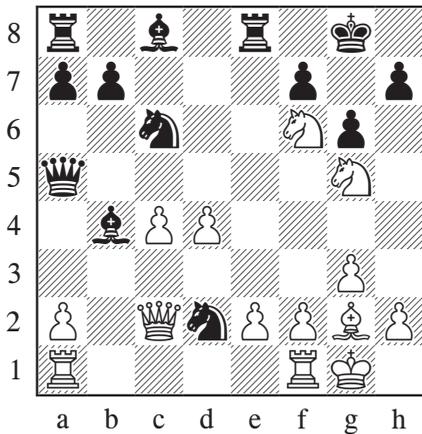
This piece sacrifice is the critical direction.

14. ♖b1 ♖f5! 15. ♖xb4 ♖xb4♯ makes no sense.

14... ♖xd2 15. ♖g5

The only idea. There are a lot of only moves around here...

15...g6! 16. ♖f6♯



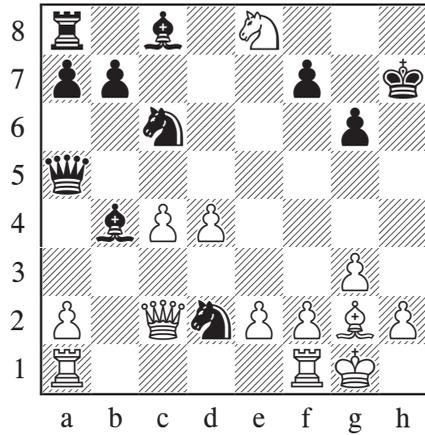
16... ♖h8!

16... ♖h8?! leads to problems for Black:
 17. ♖xf7♯ ♖g7 18. ♖xe8♯ ♖xf7 19. ♖fd1 ♖xe8
 20. a3 ♖c3 21. ♖xc6♯ bxc6 22. ♖ac1 ♖xd4
 23. c5♯

17. ♖gxh7♯

17. d5 ♖e5 18. ♖gxh7♯ transposes.

17... ♖g7 18. ♖xe8♯ ♖xh7



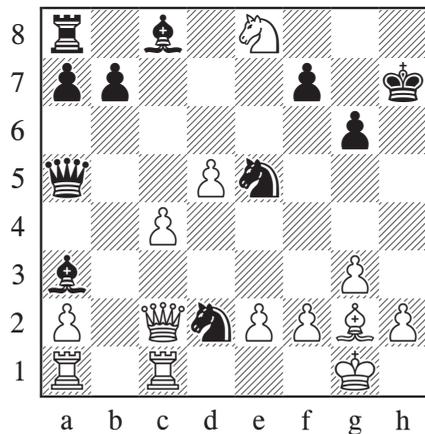
19. d5!?

19. ♖f6♯ ♖g7 20. ♖d5 ♖xf1 21. ♖xf1 ♖a3∞ offers White three pawns for the piece, but Black has some good things to say about his position too.

19... ♖e5

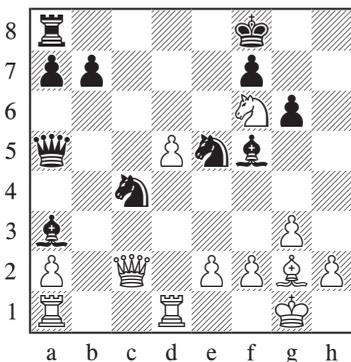
Black needs to avoid 19... ♖d4?! 20. ♖d3 ♖c3 21. ♖d6!♯.

20. ♖fc1 ♖a3



21. c5!

White has to play for structure and activity. If he plays slowly, he ends up in troubled waters: 21.♖d1 ♗dxc4 22.♘f6† ♔g7 23.♘e8† ♔f8 24.♘f6 ♙f5!



25.♙e4 (25.e4 ♙c8!!) 25...♗d8 26.♘h7† ♔g7 27.♙xf5 ♔xh7

21...♙f5 22.♘f6†

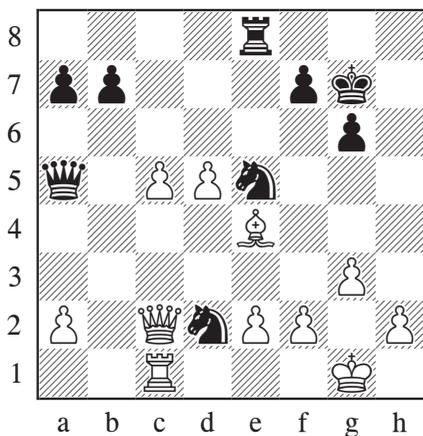
22.e4? would critically weaken the f3-square. Black plays: 22...♘ef3† 23.♙xf3 ♘xf3† 24.♔g2 ♖xe8 25.exf5 ♙xc1

22...♔g7 23.♘e4

23.e4 is still not working out the way White would like: 23...♙xc1 24.♖xc1 ♔xf6 25.exf5 ♘df3† 26.♔h1 gxf5

23...♙xc1 24.♖xc1 ♙xe4 25.♙xe4 ♖e8!

Black still needs to play accurately. After 25...♖c8? 26.♙d3± his pieces are not as well placed as he would like.

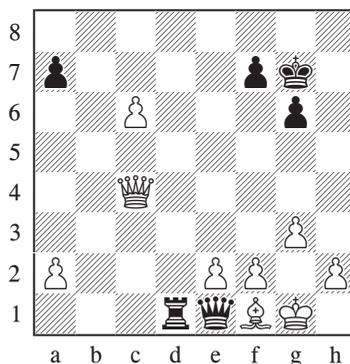


Now we should consider two options:

26.♔g2?! ♘xe4 27.♗xe4 ♖xa2 28.c6 bxc6 29.dxc6 f6!

Black is better, based on 30.f4? ♗d2 31.♖c2 ♘xc6!.

26.♙g2 ♘dc4 27.c6 bxc6 28.dxc6 ♖d8 29.♗b3 ♖d2 30.♖xc4 ♘xc4 31.♗xc4 ♖d1† 32.♙f1 ♖e1



33.e3 ♖d2 34.♗f4 ♖d1 35.♗c4 ♖d2=

Conclusion

The only challenging move against 9...c4 is 10.♘e5. In this chapter we have given good replies against the various alternatives, and demonstrated that there are several ways to deal with all of them.

One thing to pay attention to is the way the e2-e4 break is often a poor decision for White, leaving the d-pawn weak and unattended. This is often a strategic mistake; and quite a popular one.

Another thing to pay attention to is how the black bishop in most cases is far better placed on f5 than on e6, and how this alone can be the difference between a complex game (as in the coming chapters) and easy equality.