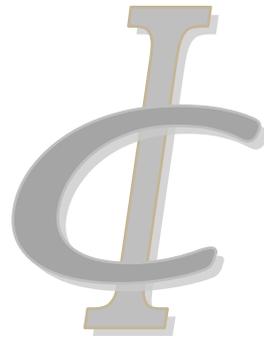


Institute of Chess

Revision Guide to

LEVEL 5



The contents were written and arranged by

GM Chris Ward
GM John Emms

This revision guide is dedicated to the memory of

IM Bob Wade (1921 ~ 2008),

who devoted his life to chess.

Last Updated October 2019

Institute of Chess
Level 5 Coaching Course
by GM Chris Ward and GM John Emms

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Opening and Middlegame Themes.

1: The Importance of Pawn Breaks

Studying and comparing the d2-d4 and f2-f4 pawn breaks in the following:

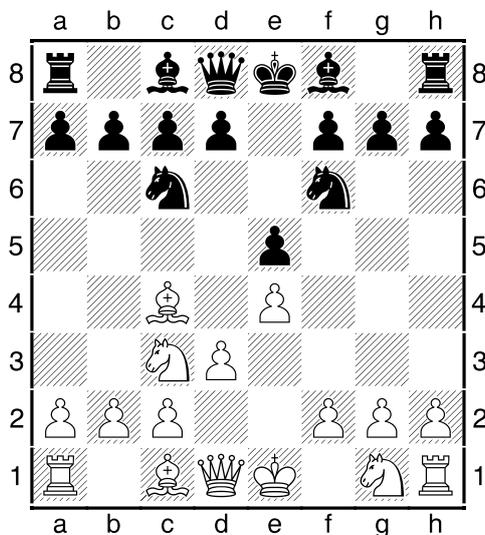
Bishop's Opening - seeking f2-f4

1.e4 e5 2.Bc4

2.Nc3 is the Vienna Game and 2...Nf6 3.Bc4 Nc6 4.d3 transposes.

Instead, 2.Nf3 generally sees White ultimately seeking to break with d4 but 2...Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.d3 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 would leave no near bright prospects for the rooks.

2...Nf6 3.d3 Nc6 4.Nc3



White prevents Black's pawn break ...d5 before employing his own f4. Instead, 4.f4 exf4 (or 4...d5 5.exd5 Nxd5) 5.Bxf4 d5 6.exd5 Nxd5 is most satisfactory for Black.

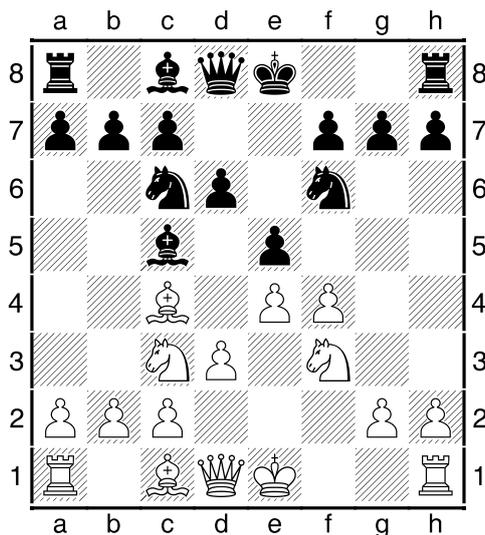
4...Bc5

Other candidates include 4...Na5, seeking to eliminate White's light-squared bishop and; 4...Bb4 pinning the c3-knight and thus once again bringing the concept of ...d5 into play.

5.f4!

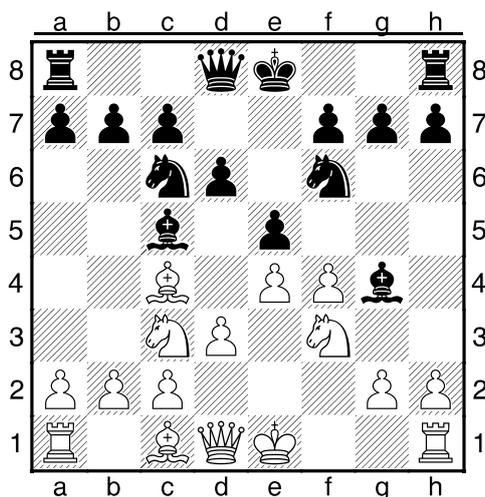
5 Nf3 would, of course, leave White without either of the d2-d4 or f2-f4 pawn breaks, whilst 5.Nge2? Ng4! 6.0-0 Qh4! would be disastrous.

5...d6 6.Nf3



White has managed to achieve his desired f2-f4 pawn break and, if he could castle now (including, say, tucking his king away on h1), then he would have a strong initiative on the kingside thanks to either direct action along the f-file or via an f4-f5 clamping plan. However, one obvious question is whether Black can exploit any frailties along the c5-g1 diagonal whilst the white king is still in the centre.

6...Bg4



Pinning the knight is Black's most logical move and also the most popular. However, let's look at 6...Ng4 and how White could deal with the threat to f2:

a) 7.Qe2 Bf2+ 8.Kf1 displaces the king but loses time: 8...Nd4 9.Nxd4 Bxd4 10.f5 Qh4 11.h3 Nf2 12.Rg1 c6 13.Be3 Nxh3 14.Rh1 Bxe3 15.Rxh3 and White won, So-Djuraev, Gaziantep 2008;

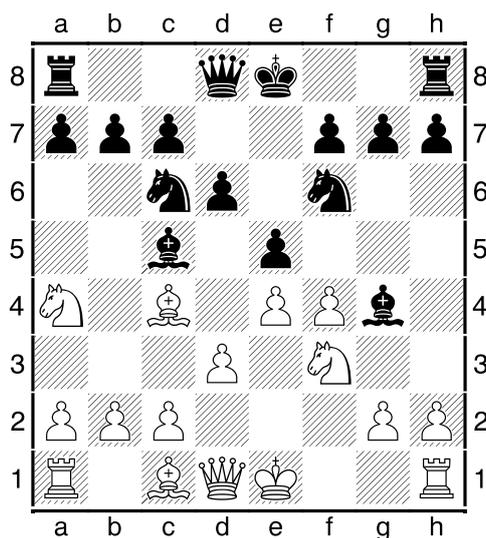
b) 7.Rf1 Nxb2! 8.Nxb2? Qh4+!;

Interesting is 7.Ng5!?;

Alternatively, 6...Be6 7.Bb5! Bd7 8.Na4 Nd4 9.Bxd7+ Nxd7 10.Nxc5 dxc5 11.0-0 Nxf3+ 12.Qxf3 0-0 13.Qg3 gave White good attacking chances on the kingside in Emms-Anand, Oakham 1986;

Upon 6...0-0, 7.Na4 would seek to remove that annoying black bishop but 7 f5 is also possible.

7.Na4!



White gets ready to exchange this knight for the bishop on c5, after which he will be able to castle kingside. An alternative complicated possibility is 7.h3 Bxf3 8.Qxf3 Nd4 9.Qg3!? (9.Qd1 would still leave a big question mark around the future of the white king) 9...Nxc2+ (each of 9...Nh5; 9...Qe7 and 9...0-0 warrant consideration too) 10.Kd1 Nxa1 11.Qxg7 Rf8 12.fxe5 dxe5 13.Bg5.

7...Bxf3

Instead:

a) 7...Nd4 8.Nxc5 dxc5 9.c3! Nxf3+ 10.gxf3 Bh5 (10...Nxe4? 11.0-0! wins material) 11.Qe2 (but now 11.fxe5?! is answered by 11...Nxe4!) 11...Qd6 12.Rg1 g6 13.fxe5 Qxe5 14.Be3 and White's two bishops and pawn centre give him a clear advantage.

b) 7...Bb6 8.Nxb6 axb6 9.c3 (or 9.0-0 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 Nd4 11.Qd1) 9...0-0 (observe 9...exf4 10.Bxf4 Ne5 11.Bxe5 dxe5 12.Bxf7+! Kxf7 13.Nxe5+) 10.0-0 and White has achieved his aim of castling combined with a successful f2-f4 pawn break;

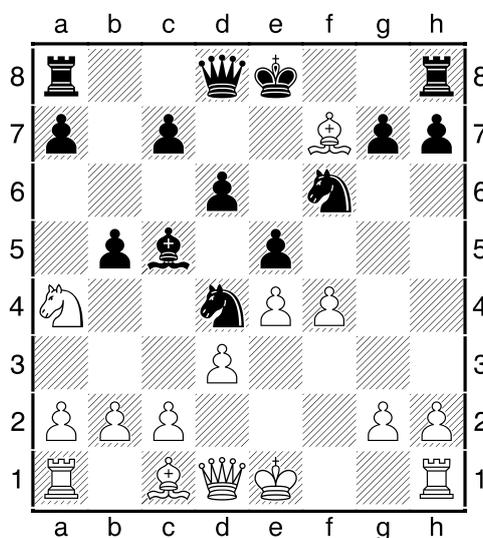
c) 7...0-0 8.Nxc5 dxc5 9.0-0 again with the f-file full of potential.

8.Qxf3 Nd4 9.Qd1!

Safest, although 9.Qg3!? is an aggressive alternative allowing, of course, the fork on c2.

9...b5

Otherwise, White was simply going to take on c5, when Black would have e5 to worry about as well.

10.Bxf7+!

This sacrifice is much stronger than 10.Nxc5 bxc4! 11.fxe5 dxc5 12.exf6 Qxf6, which looks at least equal for Black.

10...Kxf7 11.Nxc5 dxc5

11...exf4?! 12.Nb3 Ne6 (or 12...Nxb3 13.axb3 g5 14.0-0 , followed by g2-g3) 13.0-0 g5 14.g3! fxg3 15.Bxg5 gxh2+ 16.Kh1 Nxg5 17.Qh5+ Ke7 18.Qxg5 left Black in big trouble in the game Lane-S.Jackson, British Championship 1989.

12.fxe5 Nd7 13.c3!

Also appealing is 13.0-0+!? Kg8 14.c3 Nxe5!? 15.Bf4!

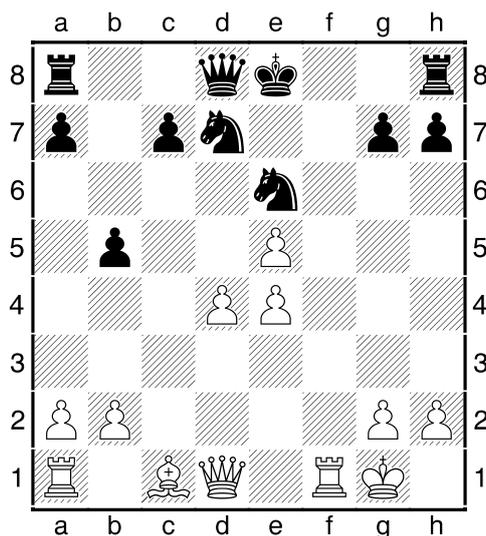
13...Ne6

If Black tries to return the piece immediately with 13...Nxe5, then both 14.Qh5+! and 14 0-0+ are very strong for White.

14.0-0+ Ke8

Also possible is 14...Kg8 15.d4 cxd4 16.cxd4 Nxe5!? (16...h6 17.Qb3 Qe8 18.Be3 leaves White with excellent compensation for the piece) 17.dxe5 Qxd1 18.Rxd1 Kf7 and White had an endgame advantage, Rahman-Lodhi, Dhaka 1995.

15.d4 cxd4 16.cxd4

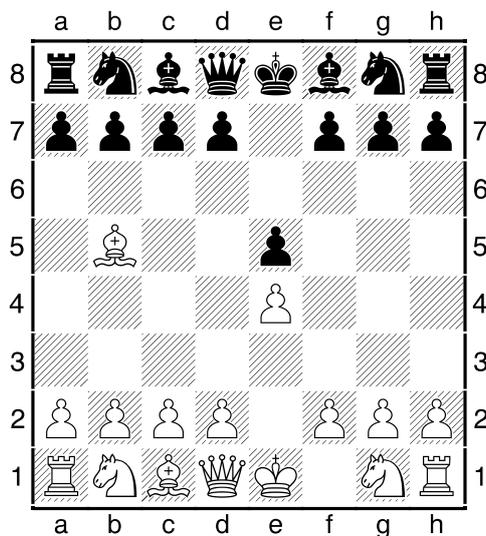


Now, the game Balashov-Matanovic, Skopje 1970 concluded **16...Qe7? 17.Be3 Rf8 18.d5 Rxf1+ 19.Qxf1 Nd8 20.e6 Nf6 21.Rc1! Nxe4 22.Qxb5+ c6 23.Rxc6! Kf8 24.Rc1 Kg8 25.Rc7! Qd6 26.Qe8+ Qf8 27.Rxg7+! 1-0.**

Instead, Black should try 16...Nxe5!, as 17.dxe5 Qxd1 18.Rxd1 Ke7 is probably only a small endgame advantage for White.

Portuguese Opening

1.e4 e5 2.Bb5



The Portuguese Opening, as it is known, has a clear similarity with the Bishop's Opening in that it is another line where White keeps the option open of f2-f4. The reason why this is seen much less often in practical play than the Bishop's Opening or Vienna Game is that 2 Bb5

breaks an opening principle and allows Black to gain time attacking the bishop with a useful move.

2...c6!

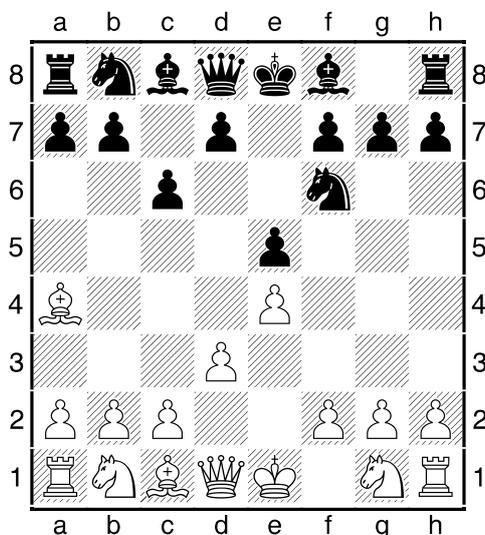
Note that this is not possible in the far more popular 'Ruy Lopez' in which the moves 2 Nf3 and 2...Nc6 would have been inserted.

Instead of the text, 2...a6 3.Ba4 b5 4.Bb3 Nf6 has not gained that much for Black because:

1. The white bishop is less exposed on b3.
2. ...a6 and ...b5 produces weaknesses as well as activity.

Incidentally, 2...Nc6 3.d3 Nf6 4.f4 is what White is after with, for example, 4...Bc5 5.Nf3 d6 6.Nc3 a6 7.Bxc6+ bxc6 8.fxe5 dxe5 9.Qe2 Qd6 10.Be3 being a clear advantage for White in Welling,G (2335)-Becker,F (2143) Germany 1998. Black has a shattered queenside pawn structure and White has a useful half-open f-file.

3.Ba4 Nf6 4.d3



Instead, 4.Qe2 attempts to dissuade Black from trying to play ...d5 but, in fact, 4...Bc5 5.Nf3 d5!? 6.exd5 0-0 now seeks to punish such an early white queen move, e.g. 7.Nxe5 (7.dxc6 e4 8.cxb7 Bxb7 offers up good compensation for the two sacrificed pawns) 7...Re8 8.c3 and now the nice tactic 8...Bxf2+ 9.Kf1 (or 9.Qxf2 Rxe5+ 10.Kf1 Qxd5 and 9.Kxf2 Rxe5 10.Qd1 Bg4, both with an initiative for Black) 9...Bg4 10.Qxf2 Rxe5 11.Kg1 Qe7 and White's development was dreadful in Vescovi,G -Sokolov,I Malmo 1995.

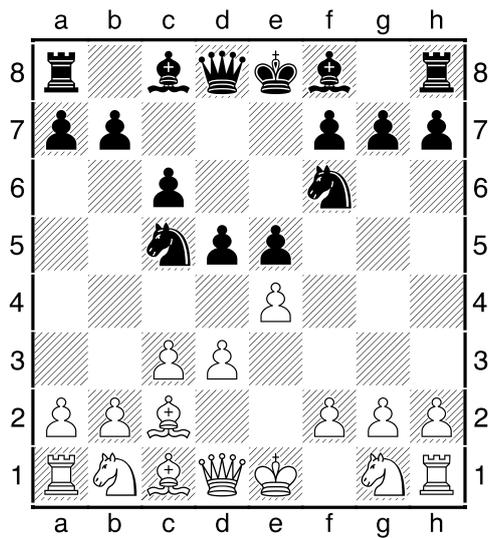
4...Na6!?

Also most satisfactory is 4...d5 5.Nd2 (or 5.exd5 Nxd5 6.Nf3 Bd6 7.0-0 0-0 8.Re1 Nd7) 5...Na6 6.c3 Nc5 7.Bc2.

5.c3

5.Nf3 Nc5 6.Bb3 d6

5...Nc5 6.Bc2 d5

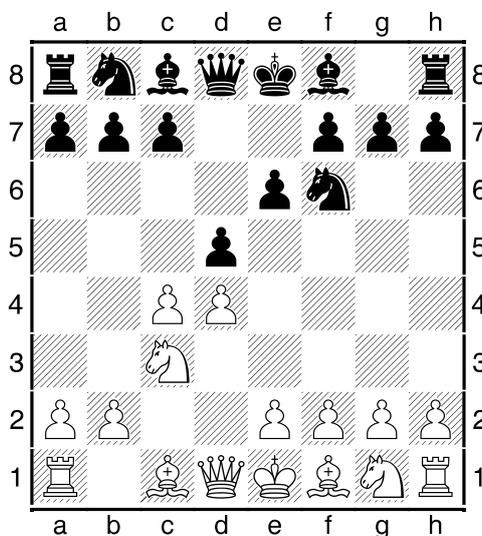


Black has the initiative in the centre and White is not going to successfully achieve his desired f2-f4 break.

2: Examples of Centre under Tension

The Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6



The Queen's Gambit Declined provides us with a simple example of tension in the centre, specifically involving c4 and d5. Just in general terms, Black may have the opportunity to resolve the tension by taking on c4, but that may gift White the chance to dominate in the centre by getting his pawn to e4, whilst the white light-squared bishop is likely to regain the pawn on c4. White will also have the opportunity (including the so called 'QGD Exchange Variation' 4 cxd5, here and now) to resolve the tension in the centre. However, he might not want to offer Black's light-squared bishop the freedom that ...exd5 would allow and will perhaps like being in charge of the situation of when the trade in the centre should occur.

4.c5?

Resolving the tension like this now is definitely considered to be an error with 4 Nf3, 4 Bg5 and the afore-mentioned 4 cxd5 far more preferred by theory.

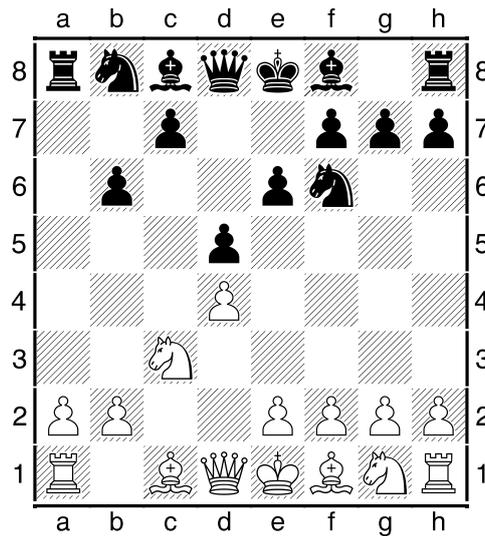
4...b6!

It is vital that, in meeting White's premature advance of his c-pawn, Black should seek to make a freeing, challenging pawn break of his own. Failure to try to respond with a swift ...b6 or a relatively quick ...e6-e5 could result in serious cramping.

5.cxb6

White would love to keep a pawn on c5, as it obviously inhibits Black's development. However, with the rook on a1 unprotected, 5.b4 is superbly met by 5...a5!, as, in the absence of an available a2-a3, his prematurely-advanced queenside pawn mass will crumble, e.g. 6.bxa5 bxc5 when, with a future ...cxd4 and ...c5 to come, it is Black, who will wind up totally bossing the middle.

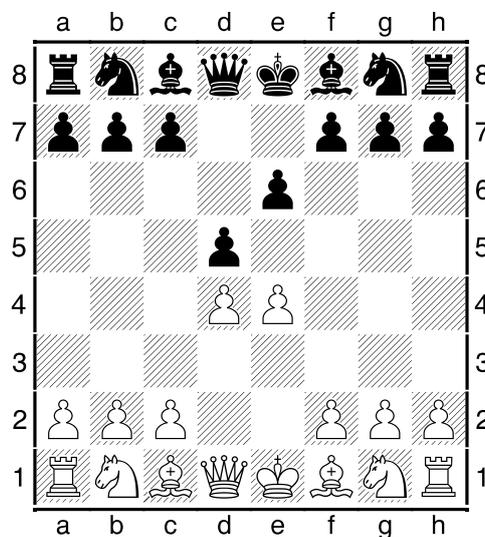
5...axb6



Also, Black has emerged from the opening few moves with the advantage. White may have a half-open c-file to show for all those moves with his c-pawn, but equally Black now has a half-open a-file. Moreover, Black has just one pawn island to White's two and specifically here the implication is that his (preferred) c- rather than a-pawn is going to have a future impact on the centre with ...c5. Yes, Black would then be very happy to meet dxc5 with ...bxc5, as his pawns would control vital central squares, whilst his early ...b6 is also useful in the fact that he can develop his bishop via ...Ba6.

The French Defence

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5



Here, White needs to make a decision about how he is going to deal with the threat to his e4-pawn. Essentially, he can choose to maintain the tension or relieve it.

3.Nc3

Similarly, in the 'Tarrasch Variation' with 3 Nd2, White simply protects the e4-pawn but the main two alternatives are strategically different:

The 'Exchange Variation' 3.exd5 releases the tension and, after 3...exd5, we have complete symmetry. The scope of Black's light-squared bishop has been improved but, as it is White to play, he must have a miniscule advantage;

The 'Exchange Variation' 3.e5 releases the tension and gains space. It is certainly useful to prevent Black from developing a piece on f6 although, after 3...c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Qb6 as investigated in detail in Level 4, Black now appears to have the choice regarding the c5 and d4 conflict.

3...Nf6

3...Bb4 also maintains the tension although, in pinning the c3-knight, the onus is again on White to deal with the threat of ...dxe4. Some choose to release the tension immediately with 3...dxe4. After 4.Nxe4, Black's position is solid but White has a space and indeed slight development advantage.

4.e5

Once more, White needed to do something about e4. It was still possible to trade on d5 but the main alternative is 4.Bg5, again maintaining the tension.

4...Nfd7 5.f4

Adding extra support to e5 in anticipation of Black's next move, although a future plan might easily include f4-f5.

5...c5

Black is really required to make this break in order to buy himself some space on the queenside and give White something to think about in the centre.

6.Nf3 Nc6!

Black develops and keeps the tension. Instead, premature would be 6...cxd4 7.Nxd4. Although it does not defend e5 in the way that a pawn would, actually d4 here is a very good square for the white knight.

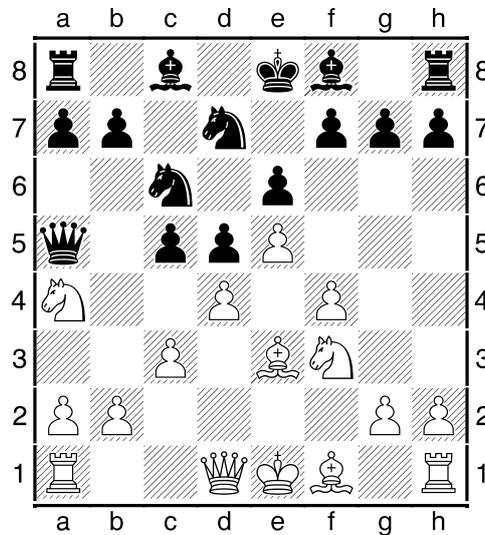
7.Be3!

Upon 7.dxc5 Bxc5, Black would have gained time with development time and have his bishop posted on a very handy diagonal.

7...Qb6 8.Na4

Although the b2-pawn was under threat, an alternative tactical solution would be 8.a3!?, i.e. 8...Qxb2?? 9.Na4, winning the black queen.

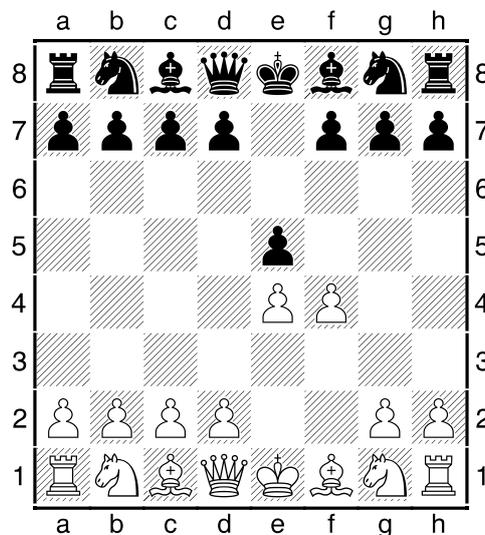
8...Qa5+ 9.c3



And we have a balanced middlegame, with tension revolving around c5 and d4.

The King's Gambit

1.e4 e5 2.f4



An immediate pawn break and a sharper opening than the Queen's Gambit.

2...d6

If Black is going to decline the offering, then 2...Bc5! is a better way of doing so, as White is not yet threatening fxe5 in view of ...Qh4+. Hence, 3.Nf3! d6 4.Nc3 (again, 4.fxe5 dxe5 5.Nxe5? Qh4+!) 4...Nf6! 5.Bc4 Nc6 is a more dynamic King's Gambit Declined. The King's Gambit Accepted might see 2...exf4 3.Nf3 g5 (making it a genuine gambit), whilst 2...d5 3 exd5 e4 sees Black making a counter-gambit.

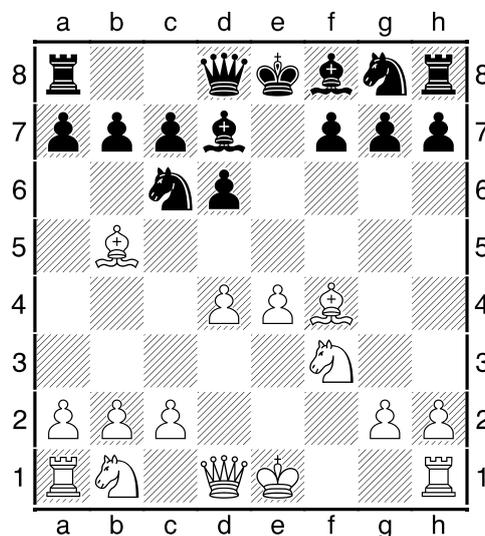
3.Nf3 Nc6

This way of playing is simply too passive.

4.Bb5!

Piling up the pressure on the centre, although 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bc4 Nf6 6.d3 0-0 7.0-0 would also be very nice for White. He has effectively achieved a successful pawn break f4 and has the future option of creating a half-open f-file by trading on e5 or cramping his opponent further with f4-f5 (and later, maybe, even g4-g5).

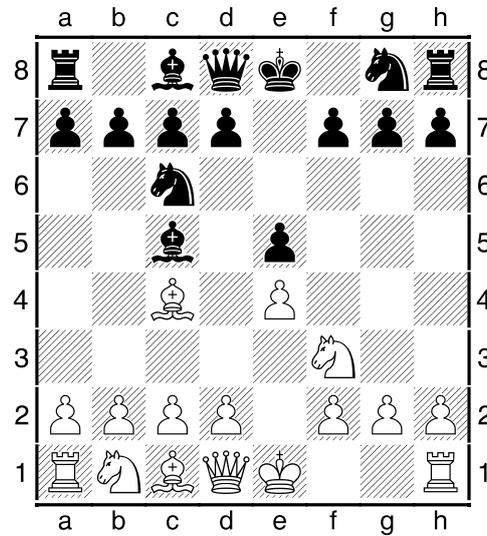
4...exf4 5.d4 Bd7 6.Bxf4



Black was forced to release the tension in the centre and now White is well on top with two attractive centre pawns and a handy half-open f-file.

The Italian Game

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5



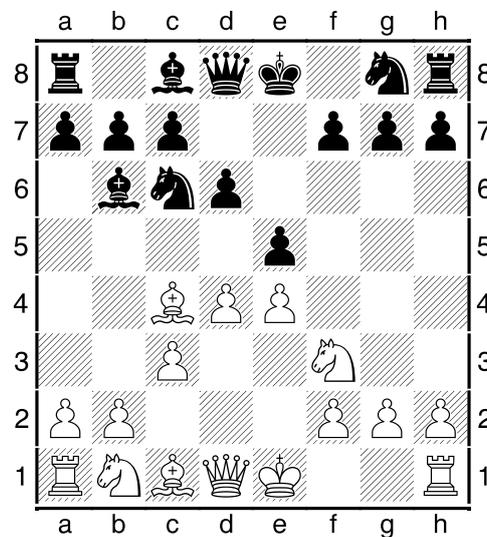
4.c3

This opening should be familiar to you from Levels 3 and 4 but, with White's obvious plan being d2-d4, let's see what might happen if Black tries to retain the upcoming tension in the centre.

4...d6

The main line is, of course, 4...Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 Bb4+!

5.d4 Bb6



6.dxe5!

Black is happy to see White release the tension with 6.d5 Nce7, as Black's own dark-squared bishop has been brought to life, whilst White has shut out his own on c4; 6.0–0 would allow Black time to avoid what follows.

6...dxe5

Note, following 6...Nxe5 7.Nxe5 dxe5, even better than trading queens first, is the immediate 8.Bxf7+!, as the black king is overloaded.

7.Qxd8+

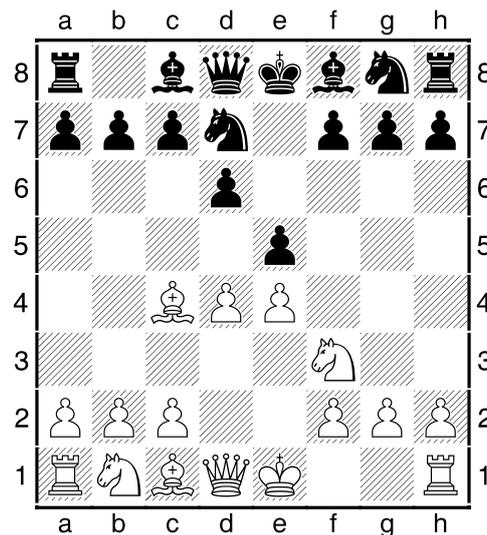
And now White is winning a pawn.

7...Nxd8

Or 7...Kxd8 8.Bxf7

8.Nxe5**Philidor's Defence**

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 Nd7 4.Bc4



Typically, in this defence, Black tries to bolster the e5-pawn but here he finds it hard to keep the tension (and specifically his pawn on e5) without allowing a tactic.

4...Ngf6?

4...Be7? might keep a white knight out of g5 but falls foul of 5.dxe5! Nxe5 (or 5...dxe5 6.Qd5! with an unstoppable threat to f7) 6.Nxe5 dxe5 7.Qh5! winning a pawn; 4...c6!

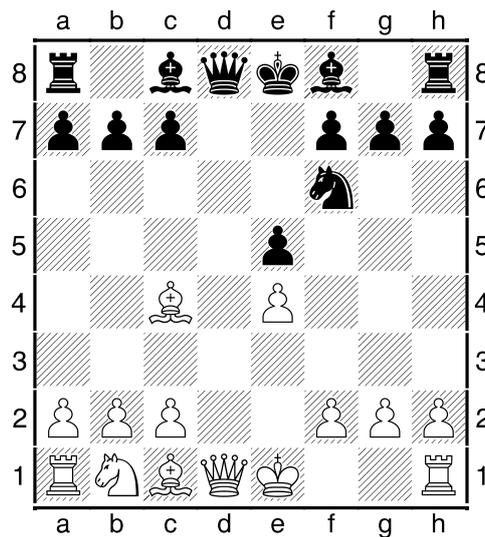
5.dxe5!

On a side note, the phrase 'always look one move deeper' is very applicable with the following ultimately-flawed tactic: 5.Nc3 Be7 6.Bxf7+ Kxf7 7.Ng5+ Kg8 8.Ne6 Qe8 9.Nxc7 Qg6 10.Nxa8 Qxg2. [Black's active piece play compensate him for his lost exchange.]

5...Nxe5

5...dxe5 6.Ng5! and f7 falls.

6.Nxe5 dxe5



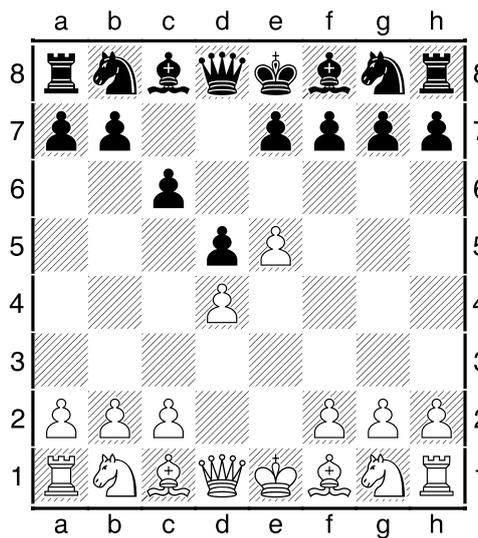
7.Bxf7+! Kxf7 8.Qxd8 Bb4+! 9.Qd2 Bxd2+ 10.Nxd2

White has emerged a clear pawn to the good.

3: Restriction and Disruption

Cramping and restricting an opponent's development:

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5



The 'Advanced Variation' of the 'Caro-Kann' sees the white e-pawn restricting Black's development. Compared to the French Defence Advanced Variation, though, Black can at least develop his light-squared bishop.

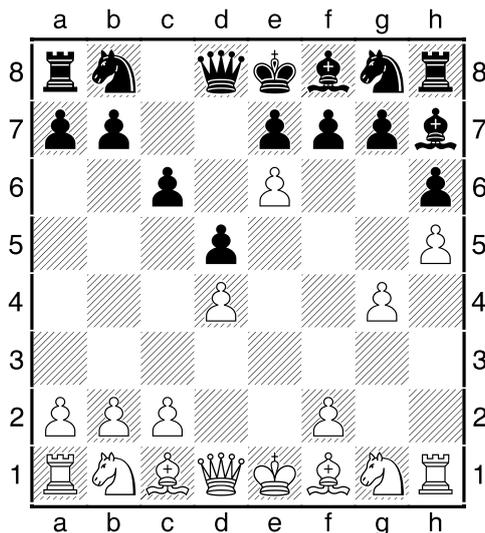
3...Bf5 4.g4 Bg6?!

Theory considers 4...Bd7! to be a better response, whilst 4...Be4 5.f3 Bg6 is a better version of the text, as White is a little vulnerable along the h4-e1 diagonal.

5.h4

Threatening to trap the bishop with h4-h5.

5...h6 6.h5 Bh7 7.e6!

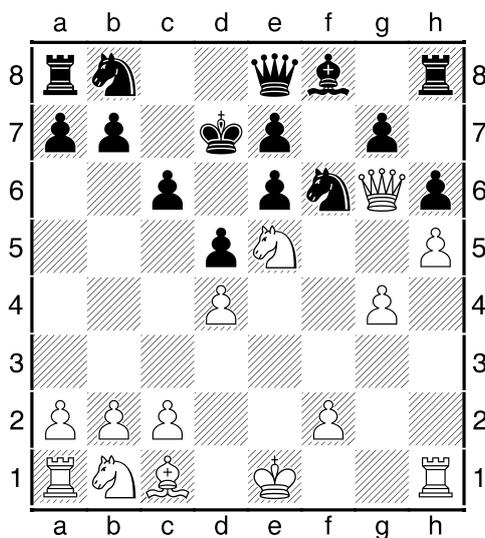


It is unusual to get away with playing so many pawn moves in the opening but White has got away with it here. Furthermore, this e-pawn advance is an excellent positional sacrifice aimed at disrupting Black's development.

7...fxe6 8.Bd3 Bxd3 9.Qxd3

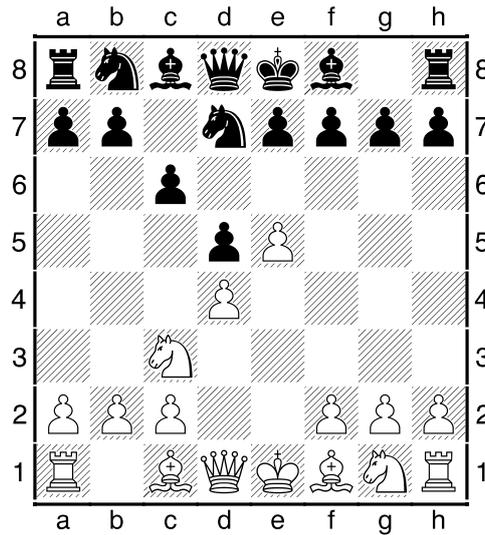
Black's e6-pawn is clearly in the way of the e7-pawn, making it extremely difficult to develop the dark-squared bishop. Furthermore, the g6-square is now particularly weak with 9...Nd7 10 Qg6 mate being especially undesirable!

9...Nf6 10.Qg6+ Kd7 11.Nf3 Qe8 12.Ne5+



In Jahr,U (2240)-Bauer Nuremberg 1982, Black's kingside was full of holes, whilst the white knight was on an excellent outpost. The black king looks silly and there was no way out for Black's king's bishop and rook.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7



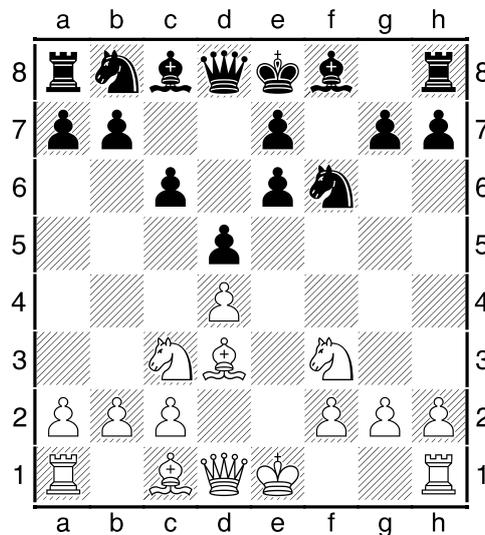
5.e6!

The disruptor!

5...fxe6 6.Bd3 Nf6

With the bishop on d3, a serious (mating!) threat was 7 Qh5+.

7.Nf3



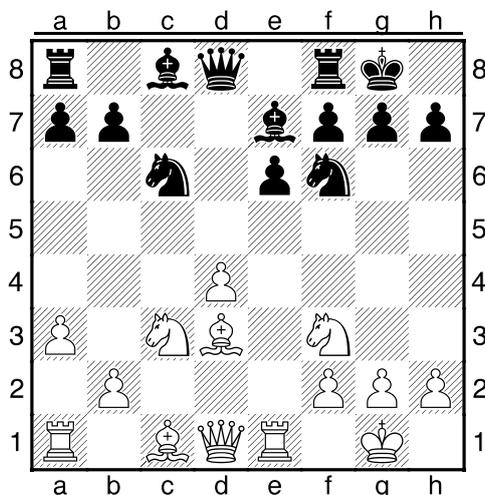
Black's e-pawns get in the way of his bishops and the white knight will be looking to occupy the tasty outpost on e5. Now, after 7...g6, White could develop naturally or dabble in 8.h4 with the ultimate aim of challenging Black's weakened kingside structure with h4-h5.

4: The Isolated Queen's Pawn

Stoica, Valentin - Flis, Jacek

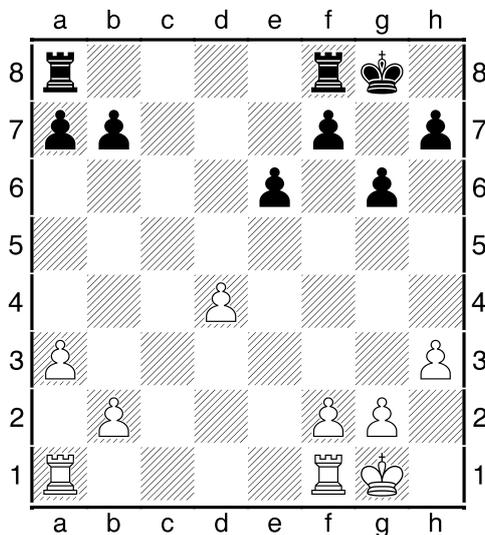
Rubinstein mem Polanica Zdroj 1983

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 e6 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.Nf3 Be7 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Bd3 0-0 9.0-0 Nc6 10.Re1 Nf6 11.a3



A typical 'IQP' starting position, which most theoretical works judge to be in White's favour. It all depends on how well the position is handled though. White's last move paves the way for Bc2 and Qd3, with a typical attack on the h7-pawn and indeed the IQP on d4 can provide a nice platform for an attack. It controls the e5-square, which, for one thing, prevents Black's e-pawn from advancing to free his light-squared bishop and may even get to advance to d5 to devastating effect at some critical moment.

However, if White does not play actively, then Black could easily end up on top. Blocking the IQP is a good idea (note though how 11 a3 prevented ...Nb4) and things could get very bad for White if lots of simple exchanges are made. Below is an extreme example:



Above, the IQP is clearly weak and, after 1...Rfd8 2.Rfd1 Rd5 (in fact, 2...Rac8 taking the open file would be better) 3.Rd3?! (White should seek activity with 3 Rac1) 3...Rad8 4.Rad1 e5, it would, of course, be lost!

White should not get tied down to just defending the IQP and, as he has a space advantage, he should avoid fair swaps. Back to the game:

11...b6 12.Bc2

A modern refinement is 12.Bg5 Bb7 and only then 13.Bc2.

12...Bb7

Theory now considers 12...Ba6! to be more accurate, as this cuts across White's basic plan.

13.Qd3

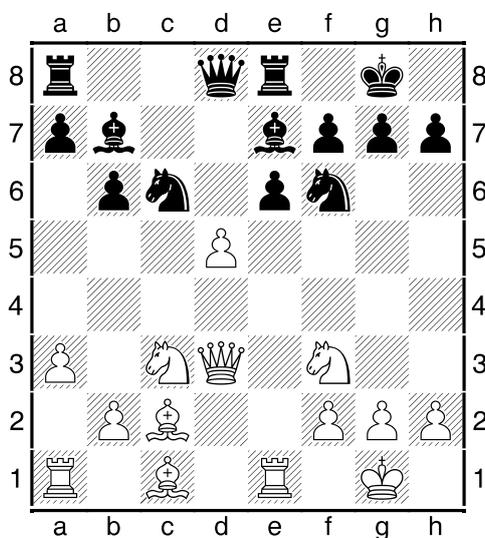
This is a very promising position for White. In practice, White has scored 70% from here. Although it must be admitted that part of the reason for such good results is that this move conceals a well-hidden idea.

13...Re8?

This innocent-looking move is virtually a decisive mistake. Similarly, though the natural move 13...Rc8? meets the same fate, i.e. 14.d5! exd5 (14...Nb8 is relatively best, after 15.dxe6 Qxd3 16.Bxd3 Bxf3 17.exf7+ Rxf7 18.gxf3, White "only" has a clear advantage) 15.Bg5 Ne4 (15...g6 16.Rxe7 Qxe7 17.Nxd5 is one of White's ideas) 16.Nxe4 dxe4 17.Qxe4 g6 18.Bh6 Re8 19.Rad1 Qc7 20.Bb3! with a big threat of Bxf7+ 20...Nd8 21.Qd4 W.Schmidt-Imanaliev, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

13...g6 is Black's best move, after which White has to make do with a moderate advantage. 14.Bh6 Re8 15.Rad1 Rc8 16.Bb3 Na5 17.Ba2 Nd5 18.Ne5 Bf8 (18...Nxc3 19.Nxf7!) 19.Bxf8 Rxf8 20.Ne4 Luther-Gheorghiu, Lenk 1999 - Black has succeeded in exchanging a pair of minor pieces but the dark-squared weaknesses around his king are a cause for concern.

14.d5!



A classic d4-d5 breakthrough, which shows the dynamic potential in White's position.

14...exd5

It is difficult to believe but Black is lost after this move.

14...Na5 15.b4 wins that offside knight;

14...Nxd5, of course, allows the mate on h7 and, so, 14...Nb8 is relatively best, although 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.Nd4 leaves White with a very strong position.

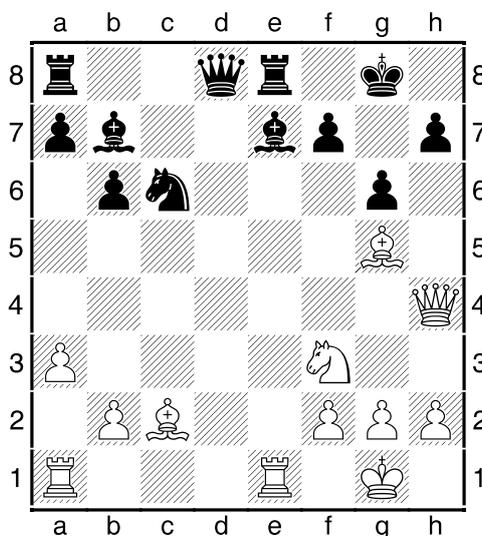
15.Bg5

Simply threatening Bxf6, followed by Qxh7+.

15...Ne4

Upon 15...g6, White has 16.Rxe7! Nxe7 (or 16...Qxe7 17.Nxd5) 17.Bxf6 Qd6 18.Be5 Qe6 19.Nb5 Ba6 20.Qd2 and Black resigned in the game Ong-Olsen, Espoo 2000 on account of 20...Bxb5 21.Qh6 f6 22.Ng5!

16.Nxe4 dxe4 17.Qxe4 g6 18.Qh4



The centre has been cleared and White is left with a winning initiative - both Rad1 and Bb3 are coming.

18...Qc7

18...Bxg5 19.Nxg5 h5 20.Bxg6! is very strong. After 20...fxg6 21.Qc4+ Kg7 22.Qf7+ Kh6 23.Qxb7 Qxg5 24.Qxc6, White is a clear pawn up and Black's king is still vulnerable, Demarre-Chaumont, Paris 1991.

Observe 18...f6 19.Bb3+ Kh8 20.Rxe7.

19.Bb3!

Threatening Bxf7+.

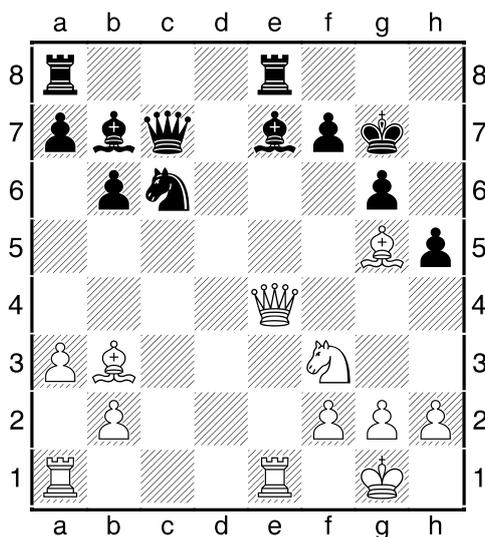
19...h5

19...Bd6 20.Bf6 idea Ng5 20...h5 21.Qg5 Kh7 22.Bc2 was the end of Dizdar-Dizdarevic, Sarajevo 1988 - Qxh5+ is coming.

20.Qe4

Threatening Qxg6+.

20...Kg7



21.Bxf7!

All the tactics work for White.

21...Kxf7 22.Bh6!

Threatening both Qe6# and Qc4+.

22...Qd7

Or 22...Nd8 23.Ne5+

23.Qc4+ Kf6 24.Qc3+ Nd4

Or 24...Kf7 25.Qg7#

25.Nxd4 Kf7 26.Nf3 Bf8 27.Bxf8

A graphic illustration of the attacking chances in certain IQP positions. Note, 27...Kxf8 28.Qh8+ Kf7 29.Ng5# 1-0

5: Closed Positions

Kramnik,V - Topalov,V
Dortmund 1999

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5 3.c4 c6 4.Nc3 a6

With this, Black is preparing to seek a resolution to the tension revolving around c4 and d5 with the break ...b5.

Making a comparison with the main game, you should note that 4...e6 5.c5? b6! is most satisfactory for Black, who could meet 6.b4 with 6...a5!

5.c5!?

It's more desirable for White to block now than before, because there is now a hole on b6.

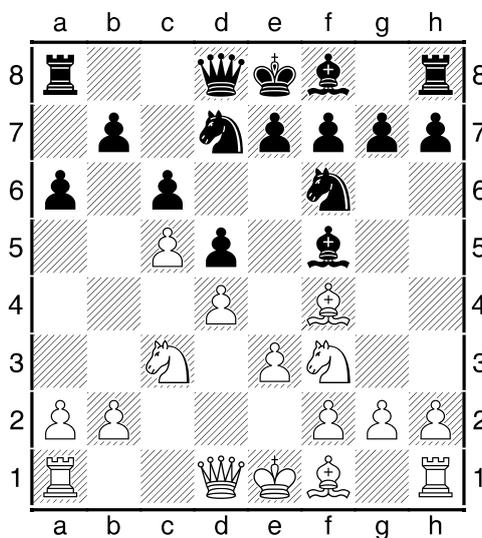
5...Bf5

5...b6 6.cxb6 Qxb6 is still possible but it is nowhere near as good as if Black could have recaptured on b6 with his a-pawn.

6.Bf4!

An excellent diagonal for the bishop.

6...Nbd7 7.e3



In closed positions, pawn breaks are vitally important. Here, Black should be aiming for ...b6 or ...e5, whilst White should plan to get in either b4-b5 or e3-e4.

7...e6

Here, 7...Nh5 to eliminate White's bishop, might come with a cost: 8.Be5!? f6 (8...Nxe5 9.Nxe5 Nf6 10.Bd3 Bxd3 11.Qxd3 e6 12.0-0 leaves White with a comfortable advantage) 9.Bg3 Nxg3 10.hxg3 e5 11.Nh4! Be6 12.Ng6!

8.Be2 Be7 9.Nd2!?

A nice multi-purpose move:

- 1). It rules out ...Nh5 altogether.
- 2). White prepares b4 and Nb3-a5.
- 3). White might attack on the kingside with g4.

PRINCIPLE: In closed positions, speedy development is not necessarily so important but the quality of development is.

Checking out white alternatives here, we have:

9.0-0 0-0 10.b4 but then Black could play 10...Nh5!?

9.h3 (to facilitate Bh2) 9...0-0 10.0-0 is sensible too but then it is important to remember that, if you have a cramped position, exchanges help. Hence, 10...Ne4! 11.Nxe4 Bxe4 12.Nd2 Bg6 13.b4 Re8 14.Nb3 Bf6 15.Rc1 e5! 16.dxe5 Nxe5 and Black was fine in C.Cruz-A.Mirzoev, Sabadell 2011.

9...Bg6

If 9...0-0, then White might begin an attack with 10.g4!? Bg6 11.h4 threatening h5.

PRINCIPLE: If the centre is closed, then you are often more able to attack on the wing. Here, White's king is perfectly safe on e1.

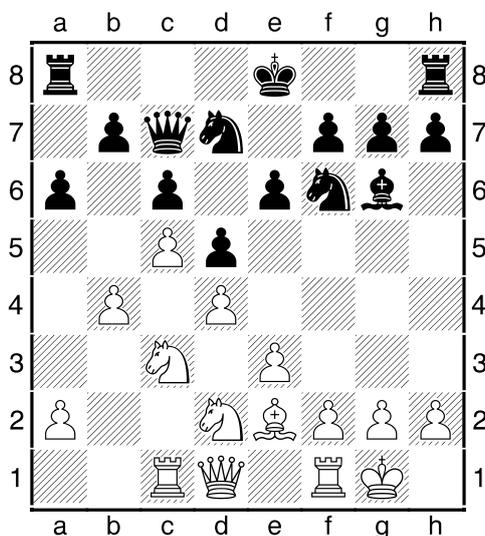
10.b4 Qc8 11.0-0 Bd8!

Black plansBc7 opposing White's strong bishop on f4 and preparing the key break ...e5.

12.Rc1

This is directed against ...b6.

12...Bc7 13.Bxc7 Qxc7



Now, Black is all set for ...e5 (maybe, after castling).

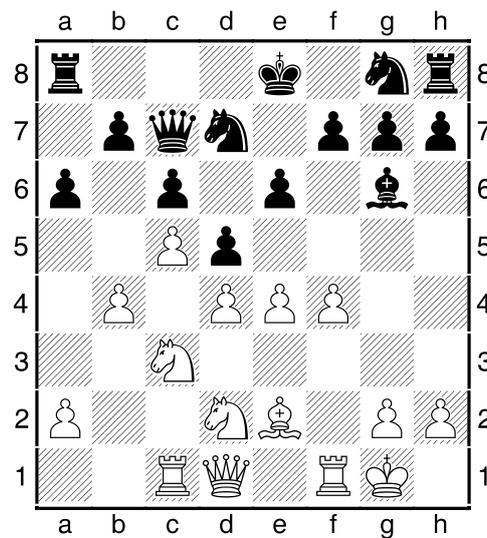
14.f4!

This allows White to keep an iron grip on the position. Black is lacking any decent pawn breaks and so has no counter-play at all.

14...Ng8!?

Continuing the manoeuvring policy from both sides. Black wants to improve his knight's position. Upon 14...0-0?, then 15.g4! h6 16.h4 looks attractive.

15.e4



Making a pawn break and frustrating Black's plan.

Instead, after 15.a4, Black's idea was 15... Ne7 16.b5 axb5 17.axb5 Nf5.

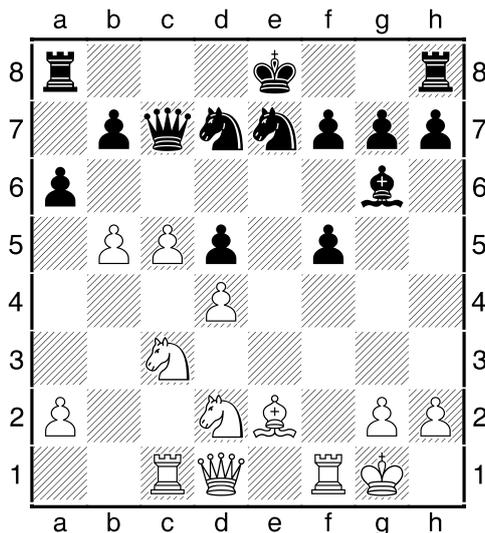
15...Ne7

15...dxe4? 16.Ncxe4 would allow a future Nd6+.

16.f5!?

A pawn sacrifice.

16...exf5 17.exd5 cxd5 18.b5



So, Kramnik's pawn sacrifice has:

1. Blocked in Black's bishop.
2. Created pawn weaknesses, such as d5.
3. Given White a mobile pawn majority on the queenside.

18...0-0 19.b6

Blocking an area of the board where you have the advantage is not usually recommended but here Kramnik has a concrete plan in mind.

19...Qd8 20.Nb3!

Planning Na5.

20...Nf6 21.Na5 Rb8 22.a4

Now, there are ideas of a possible sacrifice on b7, followed by Bxa6 and a4-a5 and with fantastic passed pawns.

22...Ne4 23.Na2!?

Planning Nb4.

23...f6?

Clinging on to the extra pawn proves to be Topalov's downfall. Black can activate his pieces with 23...f4! 24.Rxf4 Nf5,, followed by ...Qg5 and ...Re8 and suddenly Black creates some of his own threats.

24.Nb4 Be8 25.Qc2!

Now Black is passive. Kramnik has gained control and can take his time setting up a sac breakthrough on the queenside.

PRINCIPLE: When your opponent has no counterplay, do not rush!

25...g6?! 26.Rb1 Rf7 27.Nxb7!

Finally, the sacrifice comes.

27...Rxb7 28.a5!

Threatening c6 as well as Bxa6.

28...Nc6 29.Nxc6 Bxc6 30.Bxa6 Rb8 31.Bb5!

Kramnik's bishop move gets out of the way of the a-pawn and eliminates a key blockader.

31...Qc8

Black tries to keep a c6 blockade. 31...Bxb5 32.Rxb5 followed by c6 or a6.

32.Bxc6 Qxc6 33.a6 Kg7 34.Rb4!?

One winning plan is doubling rooks followed by a7 and b7.

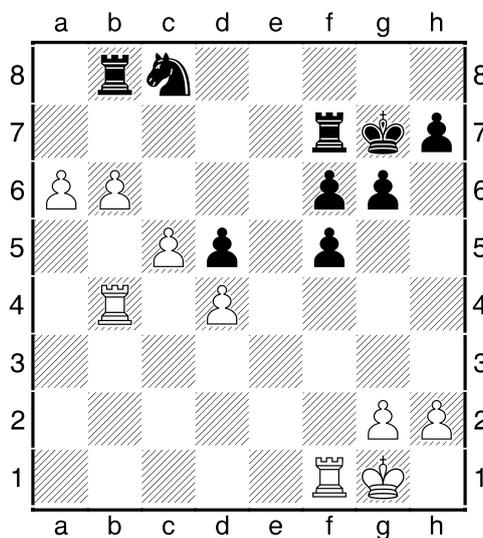
34...Nd6!?

Using the pin to get the knight back into play but Kramnik is ready.

35.Qa4!

Without queens on the board, nothing can stop White's pawns.

35...Qxa4 36.Rxa4 Nc8 37.Rb4!



37...Na7

White was threatening 38.Ra1 followed by a7. Note the immediate 38.a7? would allow 38...Nxa7 39.bxa7 Ra8.

38.bxa7 Ra8 39.c6! Raxa7 40.Rc1 1-0**SUMMARY:**

In closed positions:

- 1) Pawn breaks are vital.
- 2) Quality of development is more important than quantity.
- 3) With a blocked centre, you are more able to attack on the wings.
- 4) If you have less space, it's a good idea to exchange pieces.

6: 'Anti'-Openings

An anti-opening is aimed at forcing your opponent away from their main line. After 1 d4 Nf6, the 'Trompowski' opening of 2 Bg5 might be aimed at dissuading 2...g6 because of the debatable threat of 3 Bxf6 (doubling pawns but at the cost of conceding a bishop for a knight). In that respect, it is arguably an 'Anti-King's Indian' or 'Anti-Grunfeld'.

Very common are the group of openings known as 'Anti-Sicilians'. Rather than entering the highly theoretical Open Sicilian via 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4, White might, for example, employ:

2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 (The Grand Prix Attack)

2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 (The Closed Sicilian)

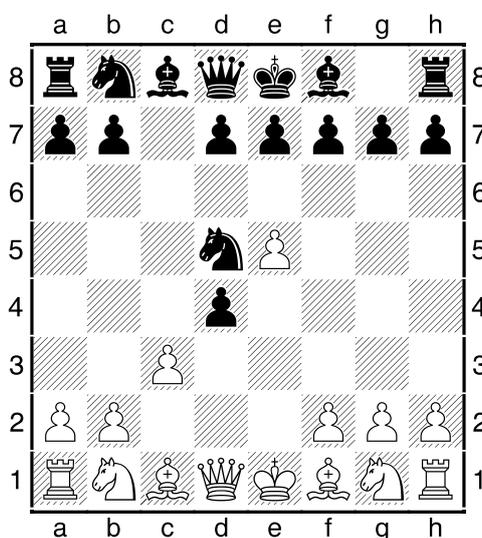
2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+ or 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 (Rossolimo Variation)

2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 (The Morra Gambit)

2 c3 (The c3 Sicilian)

All the above (and several more) are classed as Anti-Sicilians.

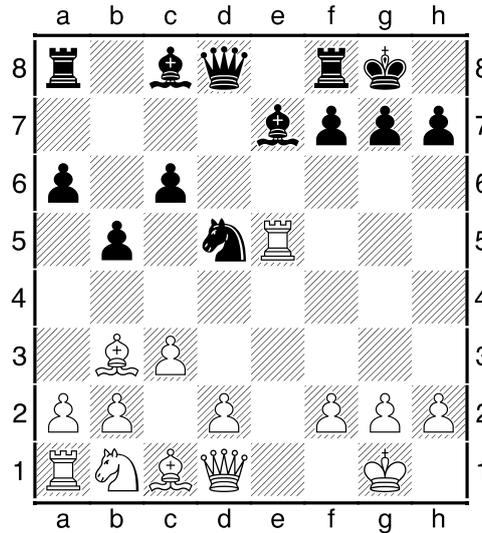
Note, after 1 e4 c5 2 c3, one option for Black is 2...Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 d4 cxd4.



If White instead selects the Morra Gambit of 1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3, then White should be aware that, instead of accepting the gambit with 3...dxc3 4 Nxc3, Black has the option of 3...Nf6. Then, after 4 e5 Nd5, we would have 'transposed' to a c3 Sicilian. Both Anti-Sicilians but worthy then of inclusion in a 'tricky transpositions' section!

Anti-Openings can be deployed within the first few moves or appear a little later. Take, for example, a tactical variation in the Ruy Lopez, a gambit typically referred to as the 'Marshall Attack':

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 Nxd5
10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Rxe5 c6



This sequence has received quite a bit of air time in Levels 3 and 4 as we reach a position in which Black has sacrificed a pawn but, by way of compensation, plans a swift transference of pieces in the direction of the enemy king. Yes, with the likes of ...Bd6 and ...Qh4 coming his way, White might feel a little daunted and, although there is much theory on this position, White might prefer to avoid it altogether.

The fact is that, although 8 c3 prepared the standard idea of advancing in the centre through d2-d4, its deployment there and then (i.e. move 8) may have encouraged Black to 'strike whilst the iron was hot', resulting in White's queenside pieces looking rather silly above and the pawn on c3 obstructing development and leaving a hole on d3.

Of course, one argument is 'a pawn is a pawn' but, if White is not happy with Black having so much action, then he may want to nip the whole idea in the bud and instead, the likes of 8 d3, 8 d4, 8 h3 or 8 a4 might be tried as alternatives. Perhaps not as to the point with regard to setting up that desired big centre but all useful moves in their own right. The fact is that in neither case is 8...d5 anywhere near as appealing as against the standard 8 c3 and hence these sensible options are collectively termed 'Anti-Marshalls'.

7: Tricky Transpositions

Essentially, a transposition occurs when an identical position is reached via a different move order. For example, everybody knows the French Defence that usually appears via 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5. Well, although it is far less common, it could equally be reached via 1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5. Unless you are prepared to play the French Defence as Black, then you should NOT meet 1 d4 with 1...e6.

Similarly, unless you play the Sicilian Defence, then it is unwise to meet the 'Reti' opening of 1 Nf3 with 1...c5, in case White plays 2 e4. Similarly, though you would not want to play 1...d5 if you normally play the King's Indian, as, after 2 d4, you are more likely to end up transposing into a Queen's Gambit variation when c2-c4 soon appears.

Indeed, I have seen many juniors automatically meet 1 Nf3 with 1...Nc6 just because they are used to having 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 as Black. However, in this instance, 2 d4 would completely throw them, particularly as obstructing the c-pawn is generally not a good idea in Queen's Pawn openings.

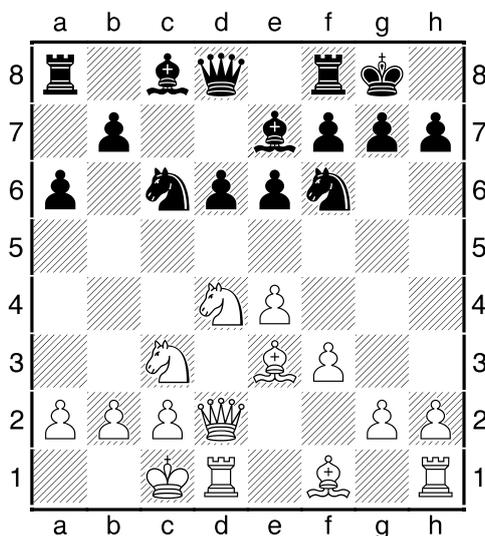
There are numerous transpositions but the key is that you do not allow yourself to be tricked into deviating from your standard opening repertoire into unfamiliar territory.

8: Attacking Kings on Opposite Wings

Fischer, Robert James - Spassky, Boris V

Belgrade 1992

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Nge2 d6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nxd4 e6 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Qd2 Be7 8.f3 a6 9.0-0-0 0-0



Open Sicilians are famous for their scenarios in which kings attack on opposite wings. Pawn storms are obvious plans, although with neither side having moved any defensive shield pawns, there is work ahead for both sides to create attacking action for their rooks.

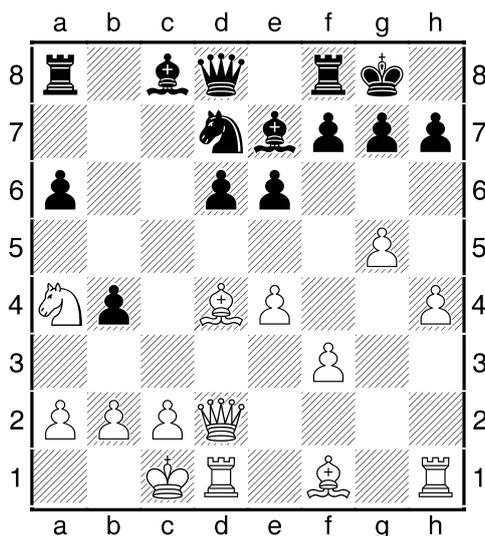
10.g4! Nxd4 11.Bxd4 b5 12.g5

White should not be side-tracked by 12.Bxf6?! Bxf6 13.Qxd6 Qa5, as Black's dark-squared bishop is a monster.

12...Nd7 13.h4

White appears slightly ahead in the offensive pawn-advancing stakes although a tempo on the white knight helps.

13...b4 14.Na4



This game superbly demonstrates how to break through with such pawn storms, although 14.Ne2 a5 15.Be3 Ne5 16.Nd4 Bb7 17.h5 b3! 18.axb3 a4 19.b4 a3, in Ilincic-Cvetkovic, Jugoslavia-ch 1990, equally shows how lines can be opened.

14...Bb7?!

In view of what follows, this is probably the key error in the game. Instead, 14...Qa5 15.b3 Nc5 in Inkirov-Vera, Varna 1986 immediately sought to exploit the awkward position of the white knight.

15.Nb6!

15.Qxb4?! Bc6 would see Black getting lots of play along the b- and c-files with the discovered attack ...d5 in the air too. Instead, White utilises a tactic to trade off his only real problem.

15...Rb8

15...Nxb6 16.Qxb4 was, of course, the point.

16.Nxd7 Qxd7 17.Kb1

White was not going to be tempted by 17.Qxb4? Bxe4! and instead takes a slight time-out to sort out his king.

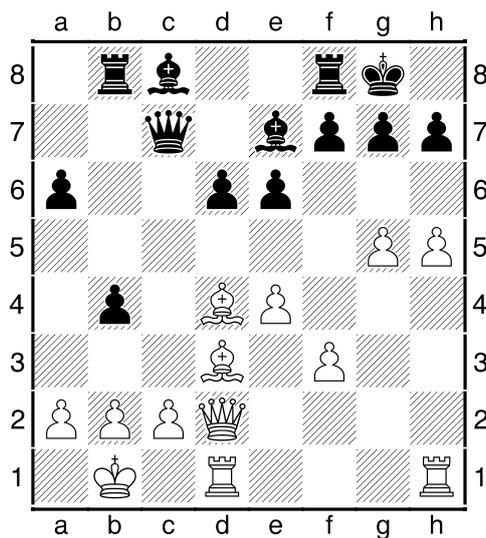
17...Qc7

Perhaps, 17...a5!? was better, although the pawn storms would be at a similar stage but with White to play.

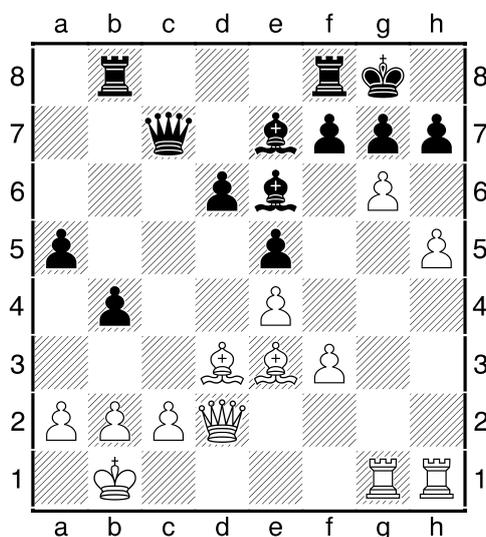
18.Bd3 Bc8?!

A bit slow.

19.h5



19...e5 20.Be3 Be6 21.Rdg1 a5 22.g6!



Basically, both players may have had very similar ideas but it is White who has the most advanced schedule.

22...Bf6

Highlighting the danger, we have: 22...fxg6 23.hxg6 hxg6 (or 23...h6 24.Bxh6 gxh6 25.Qxh6 Bf6 26.g7, e.g. 26...Bxg7 27.Qxe6+ Rf7 28.Rxg7+ Kxg7 29.Qh6+ Kg8 30.Qh8#) 24.Rxg6 Bf7 25.Rxg7+! Kxg7 26.Bh6+! Kg8 27.Qg2+ and an imminent mate.

23.gxh7+ Kh8

23...Kxh7 24.Bg5 Qe7 25.f4! is very strong for White and so Black adopts a standard policy of sheltering behind enemy pawns.

24.Bg5! Qe7 25.Rg3 Bxg5 26.Rxg5 Qf6 27.Rhg1 Qxf3

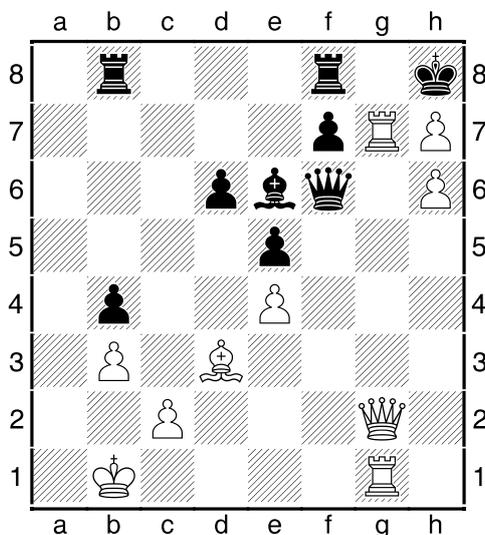
After 27...Kxh7, crushing is 28.Qg2 Rg8 29.Rg6!, i.e. 29...fxg6 30.hxg6+ Kh6 31.Qh2+. Upon 27...Qh6 28.Qg2, there is no way available to defend g7.

28.Rxg7 Qf6 29.h6

29 Qg2 was also possible and certainly remains on the agenda.

29...a4 30.b3 axb3 31.axb3 Rfd8 32.Qg2

The black king may have thought it was safe, tucked away behind the white h-pawns, but White is about to demonstrate otherwise.

32...Rf8**33.Rg8+! Kxh7**

Or, of course, 33...Rxg8 34.hxg8Q+ Rxg8 35.Qxg8 mate.

34.Rg7+! Kh8

34...Kxh6 35.Qh2+ would be a simple lawnmower.

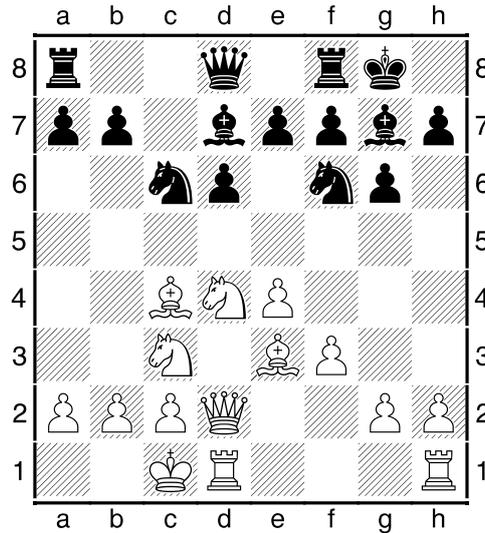
35.h7 1-0

And upon 35.h7, Black resigned, as we were about to see a repeat performance, i.e. 35...Rfd8 36.Rg8+! Kxh7 37.Rh1+.

Anon - Ward,C**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3**

Introducing the Yugoslav Attack variation against the Dragon. This move prevents a black minor piece from using the g4-square but also prepares the aggressive advance g2-g4.

7...Nc6 8.Qd2 0-0 9.Bc4 Bd7 10.0-0-0



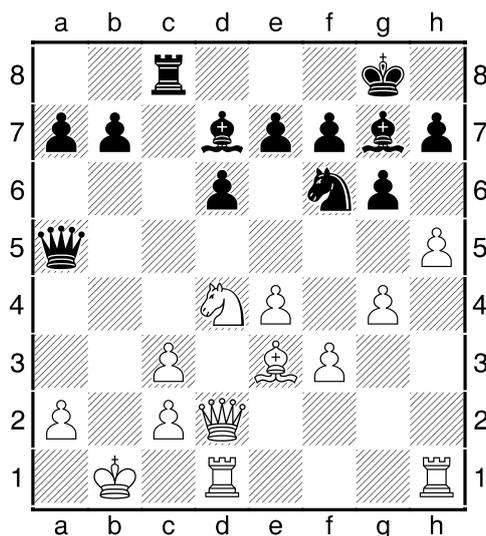
10...Qa5 11.h4

Getting the attack under way. Clearly, the h-pawn itself will not be doing any checkmating but the major pieces that benefit from the potential creation of an open or half-open h-file just might.

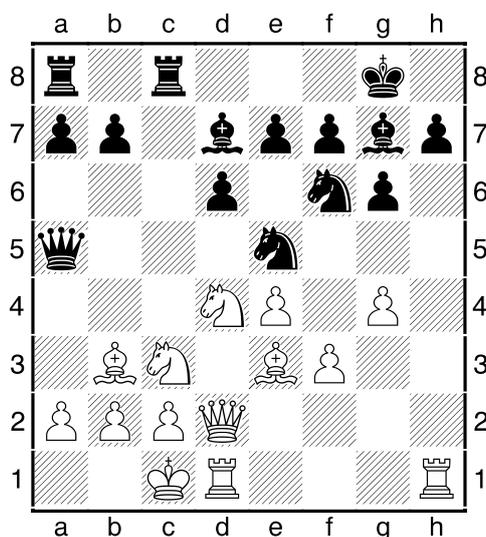
11...Rfc8 12.Bb3 Ne5 13.h5

As Black has already moved a pawn around his king (...g6), a pawn advance like this will quickly create some action. With White's queenside pawns at home, a similar pawn advance by Black would be slower and that is why he is attacking with pieces rather than pawns. 13 h5 is the most direct approach but, in truth, it is not the most threatening to this ...Qa5 variation of the Dragon.

The attacking with pieces concept is also well highlighted in the following: 13.g4 Nc4 (ultimately facilitating a doubling of the rooks) 14.Bxc4 Rxc4 15.Kb1 Rac8 16.h5?! Rxc3! 17.bxc3.



17...Bxg4! 18.fxg4 Nxe4 19.Qd3 Nxc3+ 20.Kc1 Nxa2+ 21.Kb1 Nc3+ 22.Kc1 Nxd1 23.Rxd1 Rc3 24.Qe4 Ra3 25.Rd3 Qe1+ 0-1 Brussen,M-Van der Knijff,K, Dieren 2005/EXT 2006.
13...Nxe4 14.g4 Nf6



15.Bh6

Seeking to remove a key black defender and preparing a swift route to the black king for the white queen. Note, 15.Qh2 also looks to get the queen down to h7 but then, 15...e6 would keep the black f6-knight safe from the challenging Nd5.

15...Bxh6 16.Qxh6

Now, the white queen is obviously in a dangerous position (from Black's point of view) and casual moves will easily lose.

16...Rxc3!

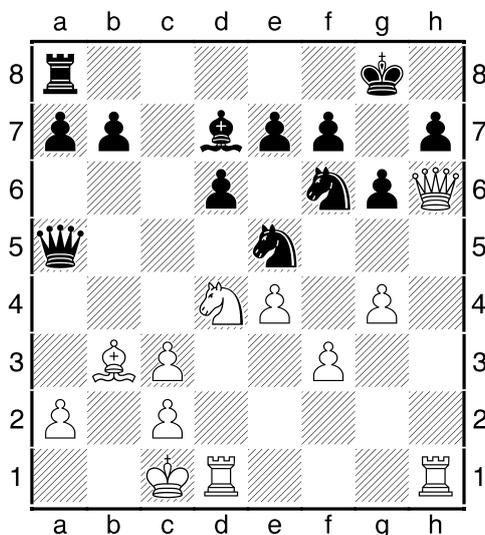
Absolutely vital, as without this move, Black's days are numbered.

Upon say 16...b5?, for example, the simple 17.Nd5! (rather than 17.g5 Nh5) is crushing, e.g. 17...Rab8 18.g5 (18.Nxf6+ exf6 19.Qxh7+ Kf8 is good but not mating) 18...Nh5 and now a

choice of 19.Nxe7+ Kh8 20.Rxh5 gxh5 21.Qf6 mate or 19.Rxh5 gxh5 20.Nxe7+ (plus 20.Nf6+ exf6 21.gxf6 and unstoppable mate on g7) 20...Kh8 21 Qf6 mate.

Don't forget, of course, 17...Nxd5 18.Qxh7+ Kf8 19.Qh8 mate, when White's whole plan would have worked to perfection.

17.bxc3



Let's just talk about what Black has got for his exchange sacrifice:

- 1) Materially speaking, he already had one pawn bagged from when he accepted White's h-pawn. He is about to take on c3 and so he won't even be any points down.
- 2) Even if he did not now take the c3-pawn, Black would have good compensation owing to the structural damage inflicted on those white queenside pawns.
- 3) He has removed the c3-knight that was not only a useful defender but also threatening that strong offensive move Nd5.

17...Qxc3 18.Kb1

Black was threatening ...Qa1+xd4+ and 18.Ne2 Qa1+ 19.Kd2 Nxf3+ 20.Ke3 Qxd1 21.Rxd1 Nxc4+ 22.Kxf3 Nxc6 would have left Black 4 pawns up!

18...Rc8 19.g5 Nh5 20.Rxh5

20.Nf5 is a nice move to play when it works but here it is easily met by 20...Bxf5 and, after 21.exf5 Nc4, the white king is seriously lacking in defenders. With nothing else going down then, White makes his own exchange sacrifice in order to open up the h-file.

20...gxh5 21.Qxh5

The simple threat now then is Rh1 (and Qxh7).

21...Nc4

There is not going to be time for that though, as Black is now threatening mate on b2.

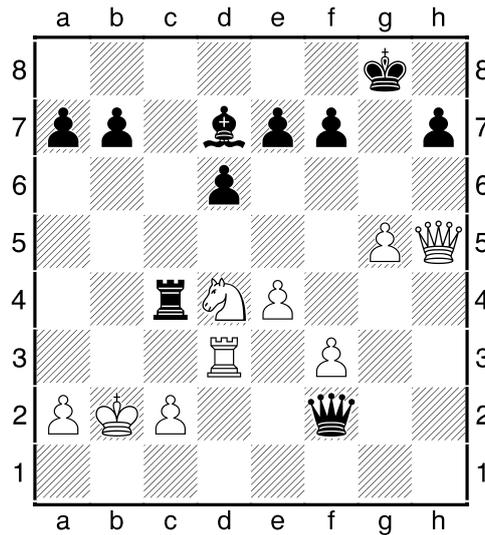
22.Bxc4 Rxc4

Ganging up on the d4-knight.

23.Rd3

This is a not a good sign from White's point of view, as this rook was hoping for more attacking duties. However, 23.Nf5 Qxc2+ was instantly losing whilst 23.Rh1 Qxd4 24.Qxh7+ Kf8 would leave the black queen defending more than adequately along the d4-h8 diagonal.

23...Qe1+ 24.Kb2 Qf2!



And now White's position is about to burst. The white knight is currently defending c2, but it now needs some extra protection itself, with none available.

25.g6 hxg6

Recapturing towards the centre is not always a good idea if you are worried about checkmate down an open h-file, but there is no white rook around whilst anyway 25...fxg6?? would allow 26.Qd5+.

26.Qd5 Be6

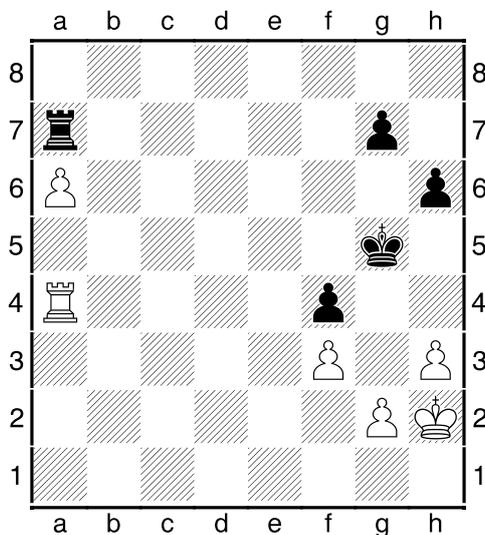
Attacking the queen and defending the rook, which is, of course, hitting the white knight.

27.Nxe6 Qxc2+ 28.Ka3 Ra4 mate.

Endgames and More.

9: Practical Rook and Pawn Endgames

R+4 vs R+3 – Extra Outside Pawn: Passive Defending Rook



1.Ra4!

Showing the scope that the white rook has. Here, it keeps an eye on the f4-pawn and thus prevents ...Kh4.

1...h5 2.Kg1 Kf5 3.Kf2 Ke5 4.Ke2 Kd5

If the black king remained on the kingside, then the white king would march up to b6 to budge the black rook and aid in the promotion of the a-pawn. Meanwhile, of course, should the black rook give ground, then the pawn will simply advance.

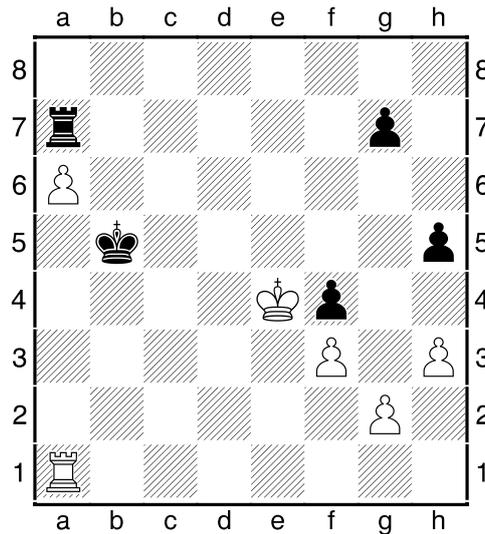
5.Kd3

Naturally, there is no need for 5.Rxf4 Rxa6 6.Rf5+, although this also wins. Depending on where the black king goes, White will either move his king towards the passed pawn or towards Black's kingside pawns, both with decisive effect.

5...Kc6

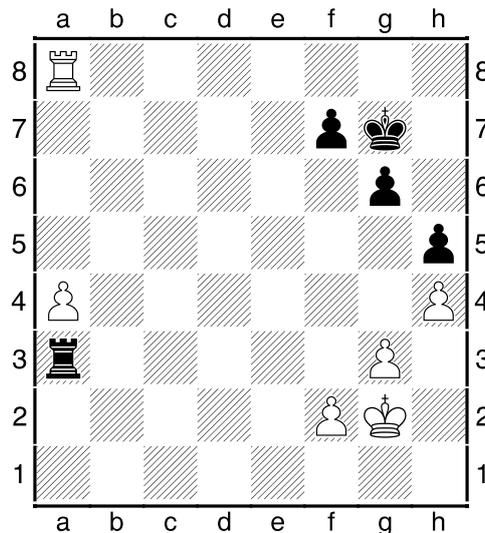
Black can attempt to resist the inevitable with 5...Ke5 but, after 6.Kc4 Kd6, White has many ways to win, for example 7.Kd4 g5 8.Ke4 Ke6 9.Ra5 h4 10.Ra1, when Black is in zugzwang and must give way.

6.Ke4 Kb5 7.Ra1



And upon 7.Ra1, Black resigned in Shabanov-Landa, Elista 1996 given 7...Rxa6 (or 7...Kb6 8.Kxf4 Rf7+ 9.Kg5 Ka7 10.Kxh5) 8.Rxa6 Kxa6 9.Kxf4 and a hopeless king and pawn endgame.

R+4 vs R+3 Extra Outside Pawn: Active Defending Rook



This is a typically drawn position. White can advance the a-pawn to a6, but, to make any progress after that, requires the white king to move all the way to the queenside. However, with the active black rook hovering around, this can only be done at a cost of losing at least one kingside pawn. Attempts by White in this manner give Black serious winning chances. Of course, White could push his pawn all the way to a7, thus preventing the black rook from

leaving the a-file, but then Black would draw by checking the king as it approaches the a-pawn.

1.a5 Kf6 2.Ra7 Ke6

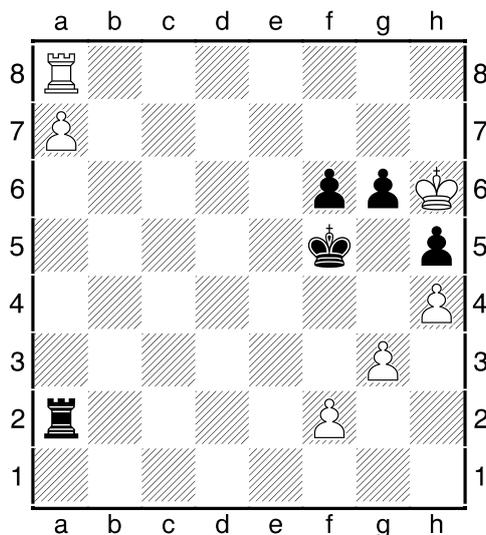
There's no harm in moving the king here, as long as it keeps protecting the kingside pawns.

3.Kf1 Ra2 4.Kg2 Ra3!

Accurate play by Black. This move prevents Kf3.

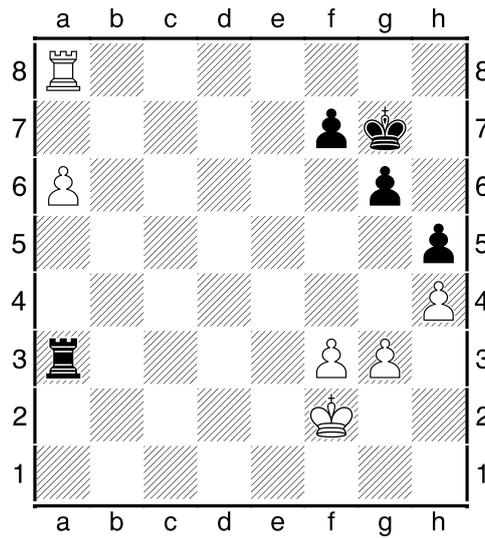
5.a6 Kf6

It is important to note that 5...f6? weakens the black pawn structure on the kingside, and the following variation would see it punished: 6.Ra8 Kf5 7.a7 Ra2 8.Kf3 Ra3+ 9.Ke2 Ra2+ 10.Kd3 Ra1 11.Kd4 Ra2 (11...Ke6 to prevent the ensuing white king march is, of course, now not possible, as the unsheltered black king is a victim of 12.Re8+ followed by a8Q) 12.Kd5 (with the pawn on the 7th rank, there is no future in moving the king towards the pawn, say, with 12.Kc5 Ra1 13.Kb6, as, although there is obviously the threat of moving the white rook out from in front of the pawn, the simple 13...Rb1+ 14.Kc6 Ra1 stops that plan) 12...Ra1 13.Kd6 Ra2 14.Ke7 Ra1 15.Kf7 Ra2 16.Kg7 Ra1 17.Kh6 Ra2 ...



when the purpose of this long white king journey is revealed in 18.Rg8! Rxa7 19.Rxg6. The h5-pawn will drop and White will have a decisive two pawn majority on the kingside.

6.Ra8 Ke7 7.f3 Kf6 8.Kf2 Kg7



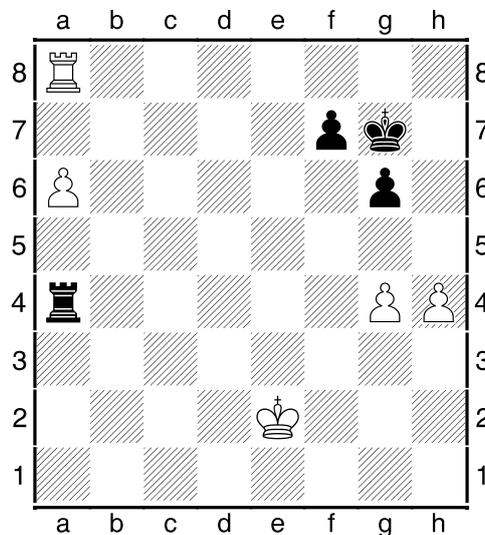
9.g4

After 9.Ke2 Kf6, too risky for White would be 10.Kd2 Rxf3 11.Kc2 Rxc3 12.Kb2 Rg4 13.Kb3 Rg1 14.Kb4 (14.Kb2 Rg4 is drawn) 14...Ra1 15.Kb5 Kf5 16.Kb6 Kg4 because, by the time White forces Black to concede his rook for that passed a-pawn, Black's own kingside pawns would be too dangerous.

9...hxc4 10.fxc4 Ra4 11.Kf3 Ra3+ 12.Ke2

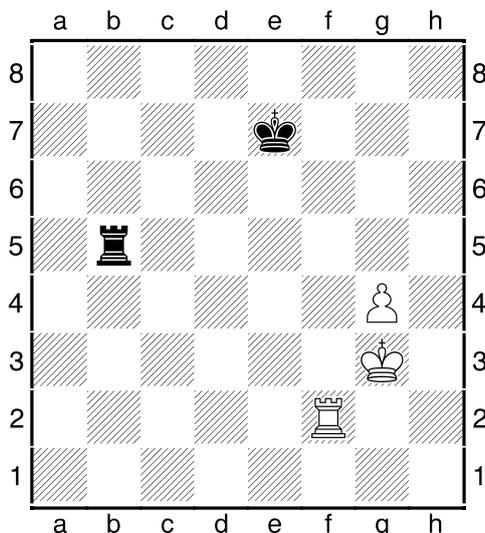
A more exciting draw might be seen via 12.Ke4 Ra4+ 13.Kd5 Rxc4 14.Kc6 Rxc4 15.Rc8 Ra4 16.Kb7 Rb4+ 17.Ka8 g5 18.a7 Kf6 19.Rb8 Ra4 20.Kb7 g4 21.a8Q Rxa8 22.Rxa8 Ke5 23.Kc6 g3 24.Rg8 Kf4 25.Kd5 Kf3.

12...Ra4 13.Kf3 Ra3+ 14.Ke2 Ra4



And the players merely repeated for a draw in Fedorowicz-Yermolinsky, USA 1996 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

Frontal Checking Defence in R+P vs. R



1...Rb8!

The Frontal Checking Defence is one of the defending side's greatest weapons in trying to prevent a Lucena position. The black rook is well placed on the back rank because:

- 1) It can harass the white king with checks; and
- 2) It gives Black the option of offering a rook trade.

Now, White must either push his pawn or advance his king.

2.Kh4

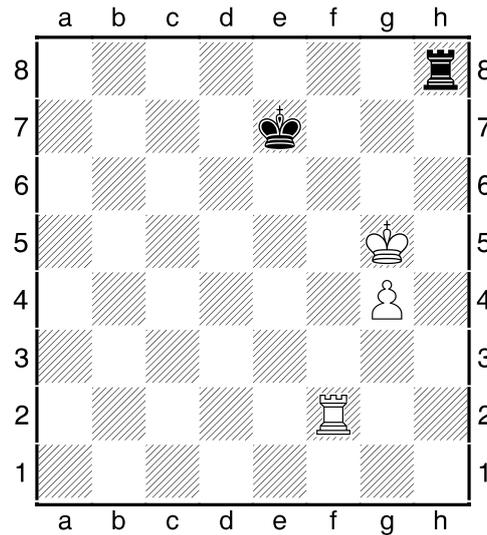
Upon 2.g5, Black has 2...Rf8! with the king endgame after 3.Rxf8 (3.Re2+ Kf7 and the king gets across) 3...Kxf8 4.Kg4 Kg7 being a draw.

Instead, 2.Rf4 sees White protecting the pawn in readiness for the king to march up the board but again 2...Rf8!, i.e. 3.Rxf8 Kxf8 4.Kh4 Kg8! (not 4...Kg7? 5.Kg5) 5.Kg5 (or 5.Kh5 Kh7) 5...Kg7 sees Black gain the opposition and draw.

2...Rh8+!

The only move, as this time 2...Rf8? 3.Rxf8! Kxf8 4.Kh5! Kg7 5.Kg5! is a losing king and pawn scenario, whilst 2...Ra8 3.Rf4! lays the foundation for a successful white king advance.

3.Kg5



3.Kg3 Rf8! 4.Rxf8 Kxf8 5.Kh4 Kg8! 6.Kh5 (or 6.Kg5 Kg7!) 6...Kh7! is again a good exercise in the opposition.

3...Rg8+!

Now, Black keeps checking.

4.Kh5 Rh8+! 5.Kg6 Rg8+!

The white king cannot advance because the pawn is unprotected.

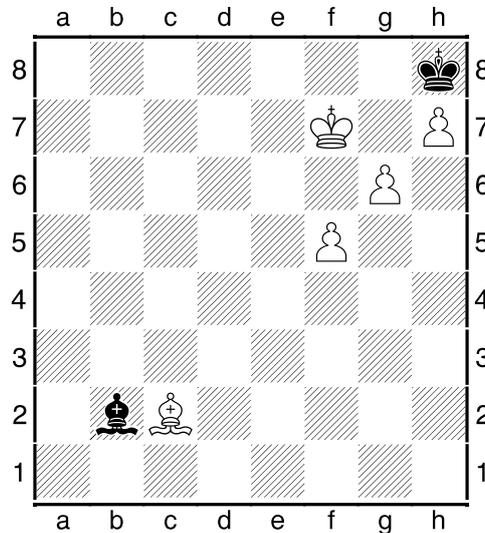
6.Kh5 Rh8+ and White can make no further progress. It's a draw.

3...Nf6. Then, after 4 e5 Nd5, we would have transposed to a c3 Sicilian.

10: Bishops of Opposite Colour

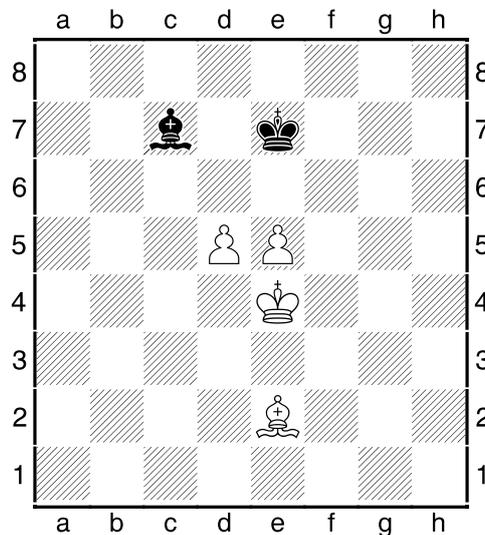
Most chess players know that bishops of opposite colour often produce endgames with drawish tendencies, especially pure bishop endings. On occasions, a player can be up to three pawns ahead and still only manage to draw.

Here is a rather contrived position to make the point.



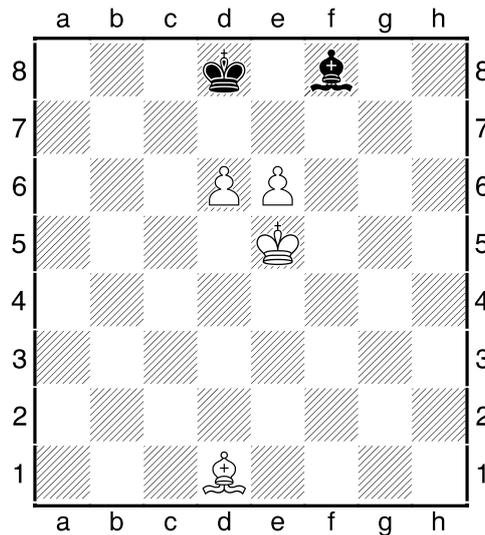
Despite being three pawns to the good, White can make no progress in this position. The only way forward is with **1 f6**, but then **1...Bxf6! 2 Kxf6** results in stalemate.

The key to utilising the pawn majority is ensuring that you do not get them stuck on the same colour as your bishop with your opponent having an easy blockade.

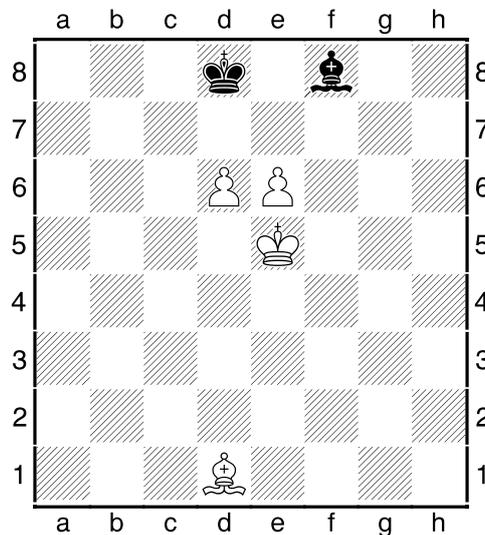


Above, for example, playing 1 e6 would seem ridiculous, as Black would then have total control of the d6-square and so White's pawn won't be advancing either pawn any further with Black simply oscillating up and down a diagonal (covering d6) without concern.

If there were any other pawns on the board elsewhere, then the move 1 d6+ would force Black to concede his bishop for White's e- and d-pawns. Of course, as it stands, that would be perfectly acceptable for Black, who can simply play ...Bb8-c7-b8-c7 to pass the time. The white king needs to make it to c5 or c6 to support the d-pawn advance but that is not possible, as then the e5-pawn would be en prise.



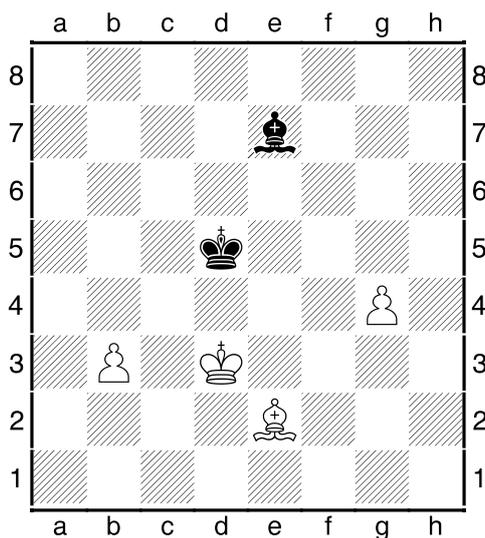
Note then how, in contrast to the 'rooks belong behind passed pawns' adage, such a placing would be totally inappropriate for the defender's bishop here. However, note that Black cannot afford to dilly dally as has occurred below.



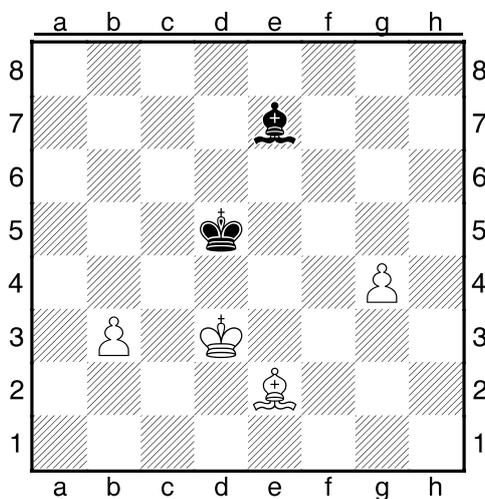
On f8, the black bishop fulfils the two main functions as before, i.e. scrutinising one white pawn whilst preventing the advance of the other. However, note how **1 Ba4** or **1 Bh5** would leave Black in zugzwang. He would rather not have to move but there is no choice. This time e6-e7 and an ensuing promotion is inevitable.

Connected passed pawns would generally comfortably win if we were talking about rooks, knights or same-coloured bishops but it is easy to see why the domination of one square colour group offers great drawing chances in endings, even when the odd pawn down.

Actually, whereas it is connected passed pawns that are so cherished in any endgames involving rooks, in practice, isolated passed pawns (as many files apart as possible) are handier in opposite-coloured bishop endings:



At first glance, one might think that Black has sufficient control of key dark squares to prevent the white pawns from advancing.



However, ...

1.Bf3+

The point is that the black king won't simply be able to shadow its opposite number, as this check forces it to commit one way or the other.

1...Ke5

And whichever way the black king goes, the white king will go the other in order to usher that particular pawn further down the board. Hence, 1...Kc5 2.Ke4 Kb4 3.Bd1 Kc3 4.Kf5 Kd2 5.Bf3 Kc3 6.Bd5 Kd4 7.Bc4 and next up is pushing the g-pawn.

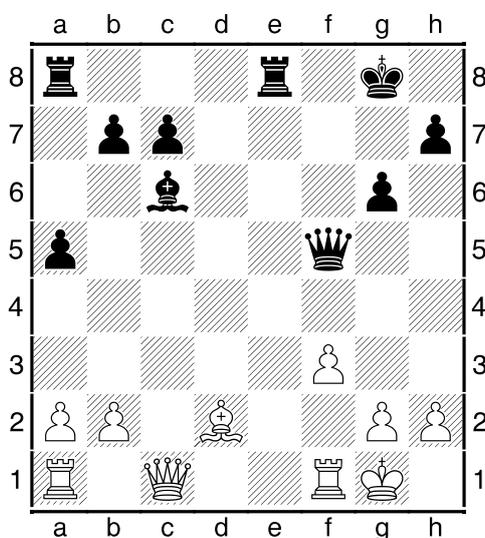
2.Kc4 Kd6 3.b4 Bg5 4.b5 Bd8 5.Bg2 Kc7

If the black bishop were to move, then one of the white pawns could safely advance. Therefore, the black king had to give way.

6.Kd5 Kb6 7.Bf1 Kc7 8.Ke6 Bh4 9.Kf5 Bf2 10.g5 Kd7 11.Kf6 Ke8 12.Kg7 Bd4+ 13.Kh7 Kf8 14.g6

Black does not want to move but, even if he didn't have to, next b5–b6 would deflect the black bishop, thus enabling the g-pawn to promote.

Less common is the knowledge that the presence of opposite-coloured bishops in a middlegame can have anything but a drawish effect. When one player is attacking, especially on the same colour of square as his bishop, it can often seem as if the attacker has an extra piece. Here is such an example.



Gligoric-Honfi

The Hague 1966

Despite Black's apparent activity in the diagram position, it is White who has a clear advantage. The problem for Black is that his king has less cover than White's. White's attack will not be immediate, but when it comes Black will have all sorts of long-term problems trying to defend on the dark squares. The presence of opposite-coloured bishops will virtually give White an extra piece when he attacks Black's vulnerable dark squares on the kingside.

20 Bc3

A good start, putting the bishop on the long diagonal.

20...Re2

This looks impressive but Black's activity is short-lived.

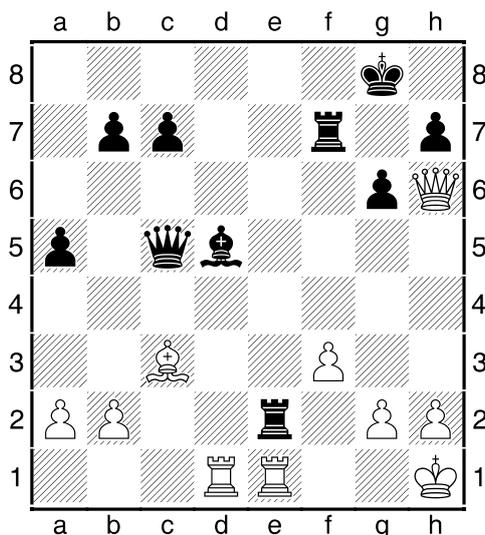
21 Qh6 Qf8 22 Qh4!

Naturally, White declines to exchange queens, as Black's weak king will suffer much more in the middlegame than in the ending.

22...Qc5+ 23 Kh1 Rf8

Preventing Qf6.

24 Rad1 Bd5 25 Qh6 Rf7 26 Rfe1!



White gradually assumes the initiative.

6...Rxe1+ 27 Rxe1

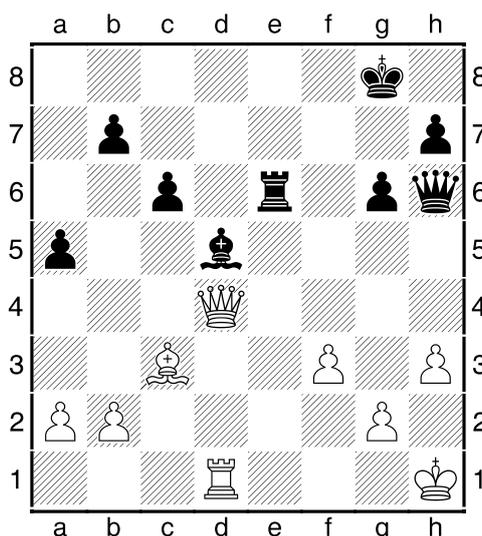
Now, Black must deal with the threat of Re8+.

27...Re7 28 Rd1

Again, White is loath to exchange pieces and thus ease Black's defensive burden. Now, the bishop on d5 dare not move, as this would allow Rd8+.

28...c6 29 Qf4 Re6

Once again, Black must prevent infiltration on the dark squares with Qf6.

30 h3 Qf8 31 Qd4 Qh6**32 a4**

White fixes the black pawn on a5 by advancing his own attack-pawn on a2. It is noticeable that White does not have to worry about the speed of his attack. Black's dark square weaknesses on the kingside will not go away and, as long as White avoids exchanges, he will keep a long-term attack against the black king.

32...g5

Strangely enough, Black's only chance of counter-play lies with exposing his king further by moving pawns on the kingside. To make any dent in the white camp, Black needs to play ...g6-g5, ...h7-h5 and then ...g5-g4. Creating further weaknesses, that plan is unlikely to succeed.

33 Bxa5 Qg7 34 Qf2

Again, despite now being a pawn up, it pays White to keep the queens on. Black would have far more drawing chances in an endgame.

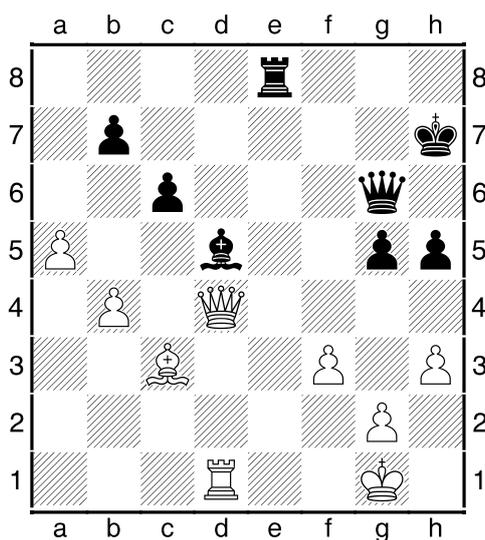
34...h5 35 Bc3 Qg6 36 Kg1 Qf5

The immediate 36...g4 loses after 37 fxg4 hxg4 38 Rf1 Re8 39 Qh4, when there is no good defence to mate with Qh8.

37 Qd4 Qg6 38 a5 Re8

Or 38...g4 39 fxg4 hxg4 40 Qh8+ Kf7 41 Rf1+ Ke7 42 Qf8+ Kd7 43 Rf7+ and White wins.

39 b4 Kh7



40 b5!

Attacking on a second front is immediately decisive. White aims to create a passed pawn on the queenside.

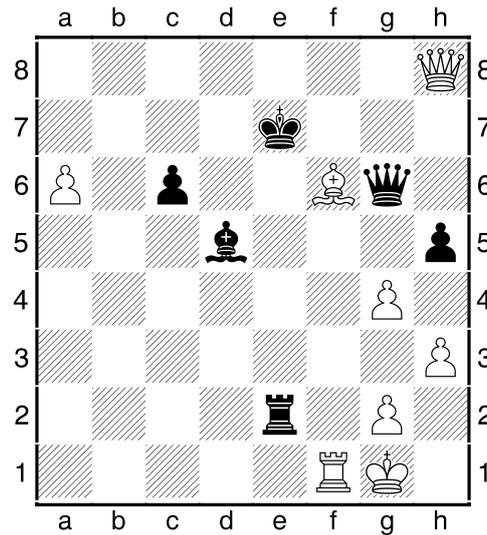
40...Kg8 41 a6! bxa6 42 bxa6 g4

Finally, this lunge arrives, but it is too late.

43 fxg4 Re2

43...hxg4 44 Rf1 Kh7 45 hxg4 prevents any counter-play – the a6-pawn will be decisive.

44 Qh8+ Kf7 45 Rf1+ Ke7 46 Bf6+ 1-0



White wins after either 46...Kd6 47 Qf8+ Kd7 48 Qd8+ Ke6 49 Qe7 mate, or 46...Ke6 47 Qc8+ Kf7 48 Bd4+ Ke7 49 Bc5+.

As a summary, yes anything close to a pure bishop endgame does offer a suffering defender good drawing chances but that is certainly not necessarily the case with more pieces on the board and remember that '**Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker**'.

11: The Power of the 2 Bishops

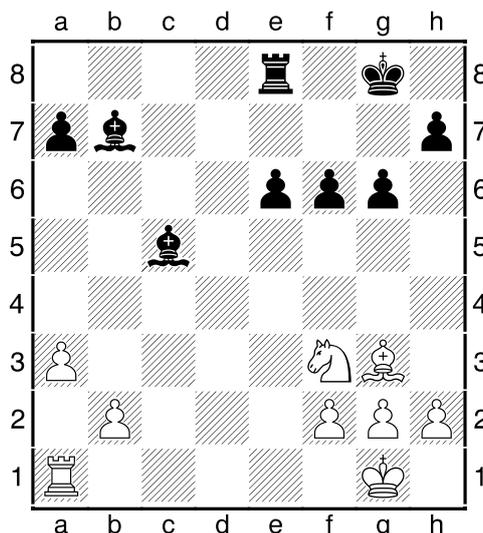
It's not uncommon to hear a player talk about the 'power of the two bishops' or refer to his/her advantage in a position in which they have the 'bishop pair'. Indeed, that can be a handy plus even where there are the odd obstructing fixed pawns, although there it simply means that one of the pair may be much better than the other. In that instance, there is, of course, a fine line though because, if the 'good' bishop is swapped off, then what was a bishop pair advantage could suddenly become an unfavourable 'bad bishop' vs. knight scenario.

Without knowing the specifics of a position, that is a little vague but unlikely to be in dispute is that, with all other things being equal, it is generally beneficial for the player with the bishop pair to open the position up, thus offering the chance to exploit their long-range power. Exceptions, of course can occur, for example, when the side with the bishop pair is lagging behind in development. Yes, the bishops are a key factor but other pieces have to be considered (e.g. queens and rooks!) and, on such occasions, the possessor of the bishop pair will only try to open the position after regrouping or catching up in development.

Below was reached an endgame with plenty of open space!

Giddins,S-Emms, J

Isle of Man, 1999



The situation has clarified and, after a tense middlegame, it is now much easier to see that Black is in command. The position has been opened and there are pawns on both sides of the board – just the sort of situation in which the long-range power of the bishop pair comes into its own.

24 Rc1 Rc8

Incidentally threatening 25...Bxf2+.

25 Bf4 Kf7 26 b4 Bf8 27 Rxc8 Bxc8

The exchange of rooks has not hindered Black's progress. Notice that the black king can try and penetrate on the light squares on which White has little control. On the other hand, the

progress of the white king will be severely hampered by Black's annoying bishops.

28 Nd2 e5 29 Be3 a6 30 Kf1 Ke6 31 f4?

White tries to exchange pawns, which is only natural (swap them all off and a draw is secured!). However, this particular trade only helps to open the position even further, thus giving the bishop pair even more scope.

White should really be trying to bring his king into the centre, for example, 31 Ke2 Kd5 32 f3, followed by Kd3, making the winning task more difficult.

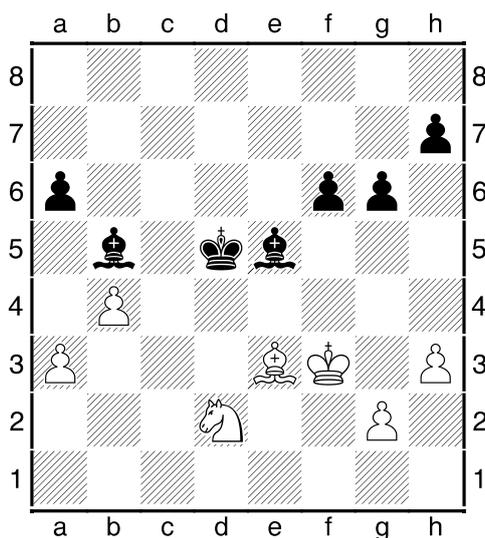
31...exf4 32 Bxf4 Kd5

Now the black king is ready to infiltrate with ...Kd4-c3.

33 Be3?

Preventing ...Kd4, but now Black has the extra idea of ...Bd6-e5-b2, a consequence of White's 31st move.

33...Bd7 34 Ke2 Bd6! 35 h3 Bb5+ 36 Kf3 Be5



Now the simple threat of ...Bb2 is too much for White.

37 Ne4

Or 37 Nb3 Bb2 38 Bc1 Bxc1 39 Nxc1 Kc4 40 Ke3 Kc3 and White can do nothing against the threat of ...Kb2, netting those queenside pawns.

37...Bb2 38 Bd2 f5 39 Nc3+

Or 39 Ng5 h5 and the b-pawn is a goner.

39...Kc4

There was still time for Black to mess things up: 39...Bxc3?? 40 Bxc3 Kc4 41 Be5 Kb3 42 Bd6 Kxa3 43 Kf2 leaving Black a pawn up but with no chance of making any further progress owing to the opposite-coloured bishops.

40 Nxb5 axb5

White has eliminated one of Black's bishops but it is too late. Black will clean up the queenside pawns.

41 g4 41...fxg4+ 42 Kxg4 Bxa3 43 Kg5 Bxb4 44 Bf4 Bf8 45 Kf6 b4 46 Kf7 b3 47 Be5

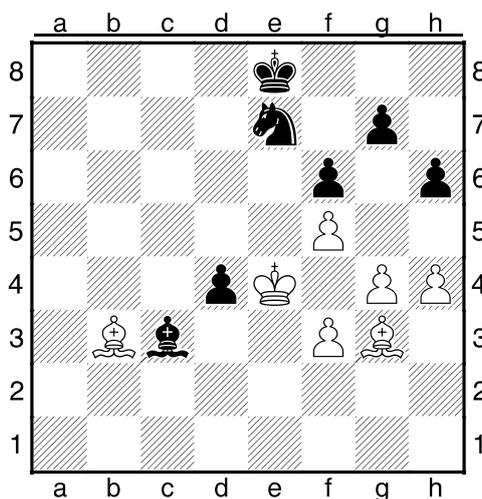
Or 47 Bc1 Bb4 48 Kg8 Kd3 49 Bb2 Kc2 50 Bf6 Bc3 and the b-pawn promotes.

47...Bb4 0-1

Black wins after 48 Bb2 Kd3 49 Kg8 Kc2 50 Be5 Bc3.

This time with a few fixed pawns, another example of how dominating the bishop pair can be:

Ward,C-Devereaux,M
4NCL 2003



Strictly speaking some might claim that Black is half a pawn up here but, of course, White would have little difficulty picking up that d-pawn through say Bf2xd4. However then, with all the pawns left on just the one side, Black would have good chances to hold a draw with a knight against a bishop. Here though is a good example of why 2B's vs B+N is usually a greater advantage than just a B vs N. White has no intention of conceding either of the bishops and so long as the knight is kept under control, Black's passed pawn will not be a problem.

52.Bd6 Be1 53.h5 Bc3 54.Bc5 Bb2 55.Bc4 Bc3 56.Bb5+ Kf7 57.Bc4+ Ke8 58.Bb3 Bb2 59.f4

After playing a few easy moves to help with reaching the time control, White gets on with his plan, not being interested in 59.Bxd4 Bxd4 60.Kxd4 Nc6+ 61.Kd5 Ne5 62.Bd1 Ke7 when the White king may not be able to penetrate.

59...Bc3 60.Bc4 Bb2 61.g5 d3

61...hxg5 62.fxg5 fxg5 63.h6 gxh6 64.f6 is just one variation highlighting the danger of those white pawns.

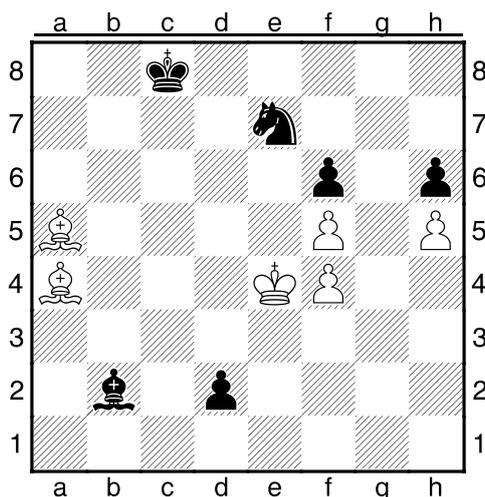
62.Bb5+ Kd8

The knight pin after 62...Kf7 63.g6+ Kf8 64.Kxd3 would be to say the least unappealing!

63.Bb6+ Kc8 64.gxh6 d2 65.Ba4

This bishop is completely dominating the light squares.

65...gxh6 66.Ba5



66...Bc1 67.Bc3 Ng8

An ugly square, but the only way to guard the attacked pawn.

68.Kd5

The white king is set to invade via e6 and now only conceding the d-pawn halts that plan.

68...d1Q+ 69.Bxd1 Kd7 70.Ke4 Ke8 71.Bb3 Kf8

The black king has made it back to the kingside but that is far from the end of his problems.

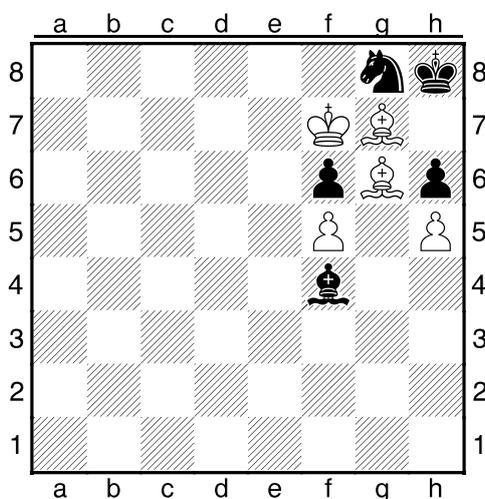
72.Bb4+

One would have to be sure it is winning before entering 72.Bxg8 Kxg8 73.Bxf6 Kf7 74.Be5 and, if not, it is totally unnecessary.

72...Kg7 73.Bd6

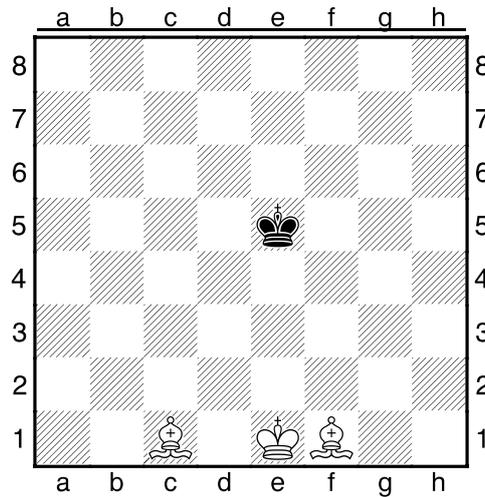
Guarding the f4-pawn and thus freeing up the king to return to active duty. The black king is trying to hole up in the corner and the black knight will not be going anywhere!

73...Bb2 74.Kd5 Bc3 75.Ke6 Bb2 76.Kd7 Bc3 77.Ke8 Bd2 78.Bf7 Be3 79.Bg6 Bd2 80.Bf8+ Kh8 81.Kf7 Bxf4 82.Bg7 mate



1-0 and a somewhat visual finish!

12: Checkmating with 2 Bishops

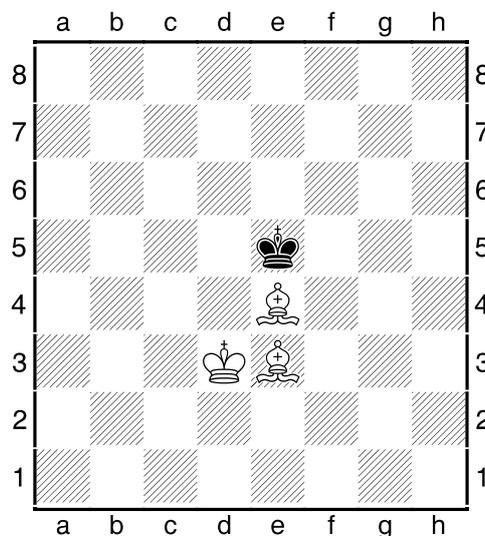


There are essentially three steps to delivering checkmate with two bishops:

- 1) Force the enemy king to an edge of the board.
- 2) Move the attacking king to the dominant 'guard' square.
- 3) Force the enemy king to the corner and mate it!

Let's see how that could be achieved from the above position where White has a bit of (albeit not that hard!) work to do...

1.Ke2 Kd4 2.Bd2 Kd5 3.Kd3 Ke5 4.Be3 Kd5 5.Bg2+ Ke5 6.Be4!



This is a good set-up. The black king has no choice but to retreat and is being slowly forced to an edge.

6...Ke6 7.Bf4!

Note how the bishops form a wall that the black king cannot penetrate.

7...Kf6 8.Kd4

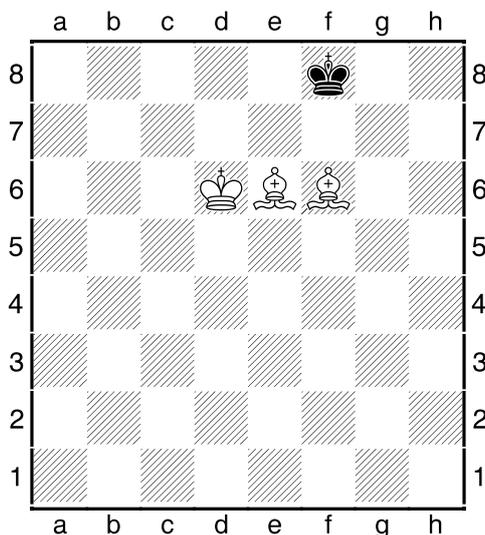
Of course, the white king is required to help force the retreat.

8...Ke6 9.Be5!

Just as before! Such processes often involve a repetition but that is not, of course, to say that the exact same position is being repeated. No ‘threefold’ claims in the air here although remember that, in accordance with the rules of the game, White does only have 50 moves to achieve his ultimate aim before Black can claim a draw. That should not be an issue either, as we are only 9 moves into that 50 so far and already plenty of progress has been made.

9...Kf7 10.Bf5

Yes, déjà vu, but more clear progress!

10...Ke7 11.Kd5 Kf7 12.Kd6 Ke8 13.Be6 Kf8 14.Bf6

And another impenetrable wall. The first step is complete and it is time to force the black king into a corner to put the icing on the cake. Here, the h8–corner has been selected as the designated corner and so the next plan is to move the attacking king around to the ‘guard’ square g6 from where his majesty will prevent its opposite number escaping whilst the bishops get ready to deliver the killing blow.

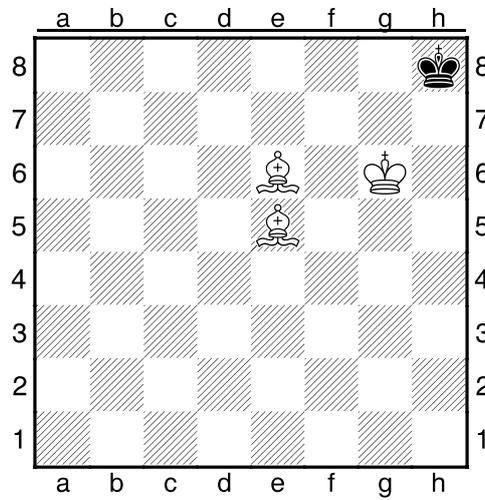
14...Ke8 15.Ke5 Kf8 16.Kf5 Ke8 17.Kg6 Kf8

Now to force the enemy king into the corner.

18.Bd7 Kg8 19.Be7 Kh8 20.Bd6

That aim has been achieved but not in avoiding stalemates along the way, note that 'waiting' moves are an important part of the checkmating plans.

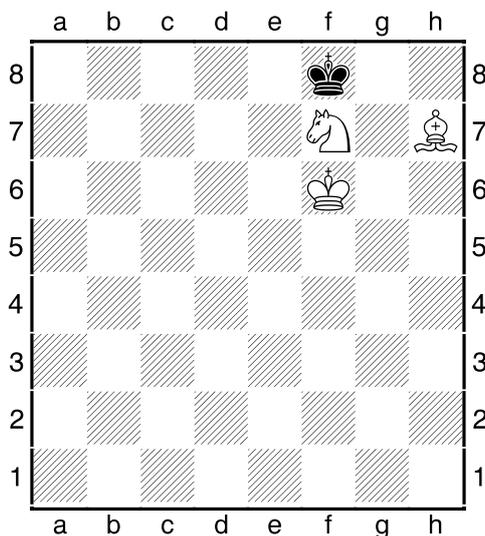
20...Kg8 21.Be6+ Kh8 22.Be5 mate



13: Checkmating with Bishop and Knight

It's fair to say that that delivering checkmate with a knight and a bishop is a bit trickier than with two bishops and whilst it is also true that it is unlikely to crop up too often in practice, many club standard players don't know how to perform this task.

The first important thing to note is that not only will the solitary king need to be nudged to one of the edges but also that it is only possible to force checkmate in a corner of the board that matches the colour of the remaining bishop.



Above is a key position from which I would like to begin. White has pushed his opponent's king to one of the edges but now needs to manoeuvre it into a corner with a light square so as to be able to force checkmate. The last played move Bh7 has meant that the black king has to move away from the dark-squared corner but he should do his best to avoid it getting trapped around a8. His next move is compulsory for now but, in a moment, we will be dealing with two defensive strategies, neither of which will be successful!

1...Ke8 2.Ne5 Kf8

In this first defensive strategy, we are going to see Black determined to make it back to the black corner and the safety of the area h8 where Black knows that White will not be able to force checkmate. Next up instead, we will see 2...Kd8 and the black king running towards open space and possibly the hope of making it down towards a1!

3.Nd7+

A very cute and easy to remember technique now involves White moving each of his pieces twice in succession.

3...Ke8 4.Ke6

With it being the white king's turn...

4...Kd8 5.Kd6 Ke8 6.Bg6+ Kd8 7.Bf7

and then the bishop's turn. Equally possible here though, was 7 Bh5 with the same aim of preventing the black king from coming back to e8 (i.e. in the direction of h8).

7...Kc8 8.Nc5

Yes, back to the white steed!

8...Kd8 9.Nb7+ Kc8

Followed by two with the white monarch...

10.Kc6 Kb8 11.Kb6 Kc8 12.Be6+

and back to the bishop with this simple pattern on the verge of achieving the ultimate aim.

12...Kb8 13.Bf5

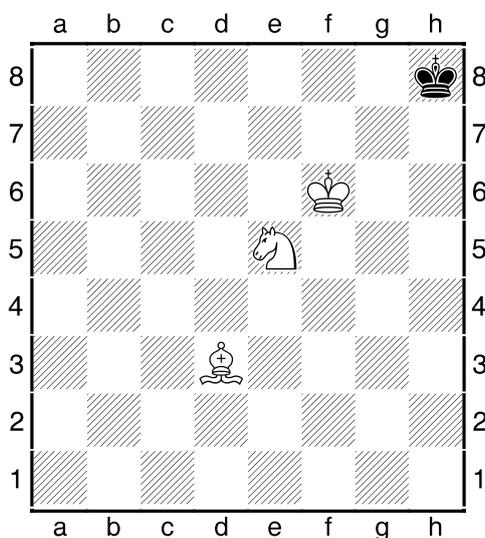
Here, of course, the squares d7, g4 or h3 would have had the same effect.

13...Ka8 14.Nc5

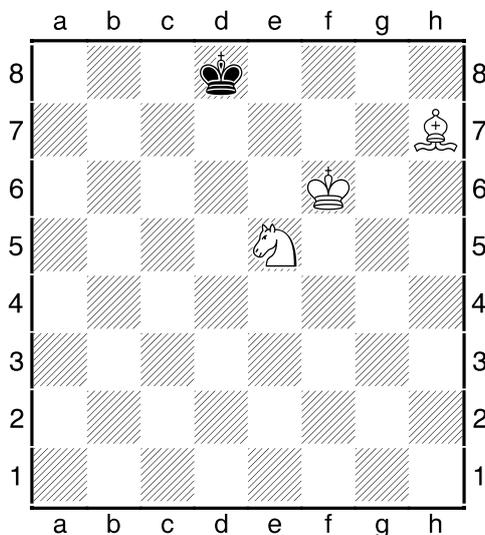
The black king has been manoeuvred to just where White wants it and now the net tightens.

14...Kb8 15.Na6+ Ka8 16.Be4 mate.

Below we start again with Black soon to deploy his other defensive strategy at a critical juncture.



1.Nf7+ Kg8 2.Be4 Kf8 3.Bh7 Ke8 4.Ne5 Kd8



In this second defensive strategy, rather than 4...Kf8, Black deviates from the stubborn approach of aiming to return to the dark-squared corner safety of h8 in favour of 'running for the hills'.

5.Ke6 Kc7

5...Ke8 6.Nd7 Kd8 7.Kd6 Ke8 8.Bg6+ Kd8 9.Bf7 transposes to the previous technique deployed against the 'stubborn' strategy.

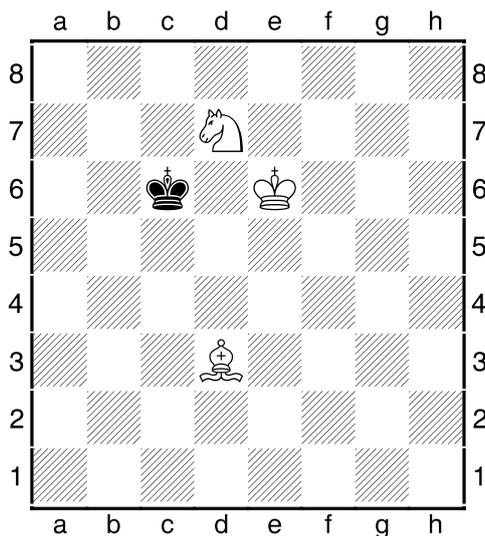
6.Nd7

And now follows another important concept as the knight and bishop soon combine to prevent the black king from travelling any further down the board.

6...Kc6

6...Kb7 7.Bd3! Kc6 8.Be2! would come to the same thing.

7.Bd3!



A key move. Between them the bishop and knight cover each of a6, b6, c6, b5 and c5, hence trapping the black king. Basically then, the bishop and knight create a 'diagonal wall', which prevents the king from escaping.

7...Kc7 8.Be4!

Another handy move sees the 'diagonal wall' get closer!

8...Kd8

Black's king has failed to escape to the queenside, so now it tries to head back to the h8–corner. However, we've already seen how to deal with that!

9.Kd6 Kc8

By now, you should be familiar with 9...Ke8 10.Bg6+ Kd8 11.Bf7 Kc8 12.Nc5 etc.

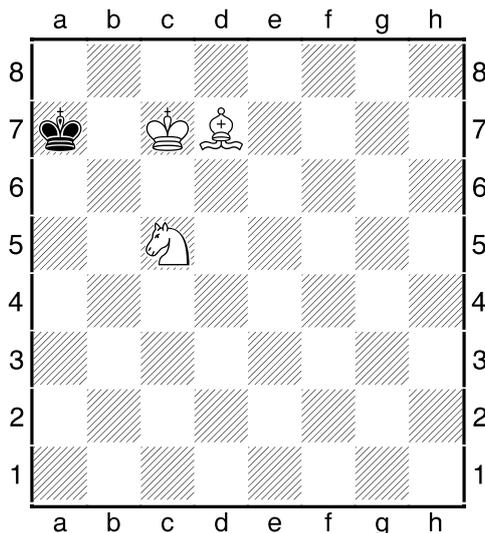
10.Nc5 Kd8

Or 10...Kb8 11.Bf5 Ka7 12.Kc7 Ka8 13.Kb6 Kb8 14.Na6+ Ka8 15.Be4 mate.

11.Bc6 Kc8 12.Bd7+ Kb8

12...Kd8 13.Ne6 shows that it is certainly possible to give mate away from a corner but only with the opponent's cooperation!

13.Kc6 Ka7 14.Kc7

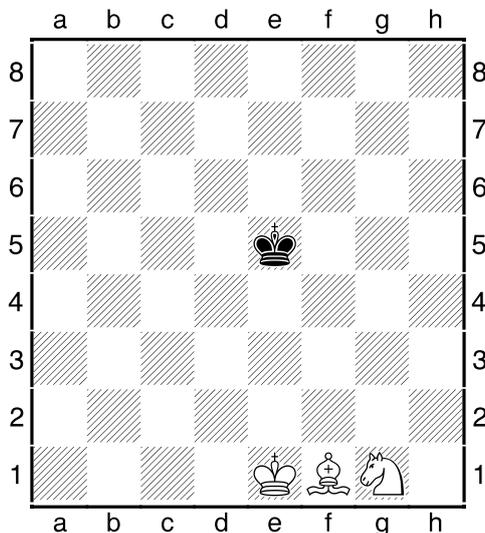


As we saw in the 10...Kb8 option, once the black king is trapped in the 'correct' corner, his days are numbered!

14...Ka8 15.Kb6 Kb8 16.Na6+ Ka8 17.Bc6 mate.

We have just seen how to force checkmate once we have reached a thematic starting position but the obvious question one might ask is “But how does one reach that position in the first place?”

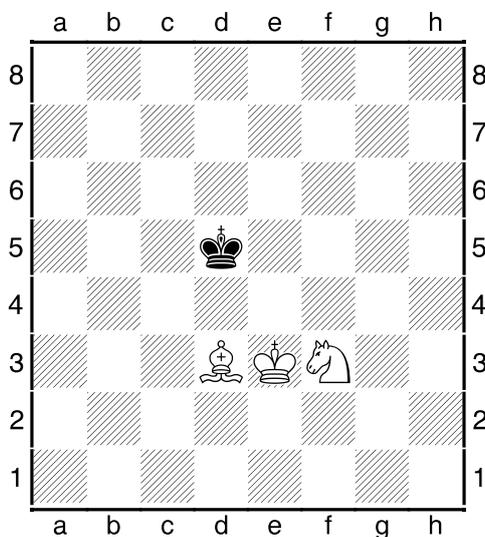
Well, of course, there is no way that every permutation of choices for the defender could be covered, but what now follows is a useful demonstration of how the king, bishop and knight can coordinate to drive the enemy king back and into that recognised key starting position. It's worth noting that there are a few different ways of doing this and, if the black king retreats straight back, then we may pick up the action half-way through one of our above-mentioned processes. Some methods may take slightly longer than others but as long as the aim is achieved inside 50 moves then all is well!



1.Kd2 Ke4 2.Bd3+ Kf4 3.Ke2 Ke5

Black knows which two corners he doesn't want his king to wind up in but naturally feels safer floating around the middle of the board; a situation that White will certainly prevent.

4.Ke3 Kd5 5.Nf3!



The bishop and knight work well together on the same colour squares because the knight then controls the squares that the bishop cannot.

5...Ke6 6.Kd4!

We are not unhappy that the king is retreating into the 'wrong corner' because from there we can use the method of forcing it to the right corner! The bishop and knight remain on d3 and f3, making a wall to prevent the king from escaping.

6...Kf6 7.Kd5!

White's king edges forward and given the in-place diagonal wall, therefore, forces the black king backwards.

7...Ke7 8.Bf5!

Again, we can almost actively encourage the king to go to the 'wrong' corner, as we know the method from there.

8...Kf6 9.Bg4 Kf7

9...Ke7 10.Be6 Kf6 11.Kd6 Kg7 12.Ke7 Kg6 13.Bg4 Kg7 14.Bf5 comes to the same thing, e.g. 14...Kh8 15.Kf6 Kg8 16.Ne5.

10.Ke5 Kg7

Or 10...Ke7 11.Be6! (a good set-up of king and bishop, forcing the enemy king back)
11...Ke8 12.Kd6 Kf8 13.Kd7 Kg7 14.Ke7 Kg6 15.Bg4 Kg7 16.Bf5 Kh8 17.Kf6 Kg8 18.Ne5
etc.

11.Ke6 Kg6 12.Ke7 Kg7 13.Bf5 Kh8 14.Kf6

White's king gets into the right position.

14...Kg8 15.Ne5

And so does the knight.

15...Kh8 16.Nf7+ Kg8 17.Bd3 Kf8 18.Bh7 Ke8 19.Ne5

And, of course, we know it from here!

14: Psychology - Preparation, Planning and Analysis

Preparation.

For anyone engaging regularly in any competitive pursuit, the adage “fail to prepare, prepare to fail” is one that should always be kept in mind.

As in other sports, preparation for chess is more or less a continuous process. The standard advice to eat healthily, drink plenty of water, take plenty of exercise and get plenty of sleep is applicable. The nearer your next competition draws, the more important that advice becomes. Games of chess can require you to maintain total concentration and a clear thought process for many hours. Physical fitness is a strong contributory factor towards maximising mental fitness. Specifically, you should try, during the 24 hours before your next match, to follow the above advice. It is important to remain well hydrated throughout the match. If water will not be available in the playing hall, it would be sensible to bring a large bottle of water with you. Bringing a flask of coffee or an energy drink and some energy bars or bars of dark chocolate (but not junk food!) is also a good idea for use in case you feel your concentration dipping during the game.

Time management is one of the core issues affecting the level of success of any chess player. We will discuss this in more detail later but time trouble is probably the most widespread factor leading to avoidable losses. Knowledge of how to respond in specific positions is the most important attribute in enabling you to decide quickly which move to make and thereby retain as much time as possible for the moments when complex or critical positions arise. Developing an in-depth knowledge of opening theory is an area in which you can save yourself a lot of time. It would help you to have access to a comprehensive book(s) or to similar online files on this subject.

Ideally, in the long-term you need to work towards a firm understanding of different types of positions but deciding what type of player you are is essential at an early stage of your career. By this, I mean “Do you enjoy an open board where all-out attack is feasible or do you prefer a closed position in which you can eke out an advantage gradually?” This is not just a matter of whether you enjoy open or closed positions. Do you fare better in an open position or in a closed position? So, there are 2 factors to consider. You need to enjoy your games of chess or it is more likely that you will give the game up. You also want to win as often as possible. You can make this decision yourself but, if you have a Chess Coach, making it as a joint decision would be advantageous. Having made the decision, say, that you enjoy and fare better in open positions, you then need to concentrate on an opening(s) that lead more readily to open positions and to learn how to open up closed positions that some of your opponents will favour. If you enjoy and fare better in closed positions, your future focus will be the opposite.

This leads on to a basic but important mindset if your aim is to become really good at chess. You will not become a very good player by playing purely defensively. To reach the top level, you will need to attack whenever the opportunity arises and to seek to create opportunities to attack continuously. The better your opponent, the less likely it becomes that you can sit back and wait for him/her to make a mistake enabling you to win or even draw. Of course, there will be moments when you are forced to defend but you should always be looking for the opportunity to launch a counter-attack. If you think about the best players or teams in other sports, you will realise that this is generally the same in all sports.

Therefore, at the start of any game, regardless of your opponent, your intention should be to win. There are few exceptions to this. They would include you only needing a draw to win the tournament or to earn a title norm. However, do not forget the axiom that 'attack is the best form of defence'. During the game, your aim should remain unchanged unless and until you reach a point from which you can see no opportunities to win. It is only then that your focus should switch to trying to obtain a draw. This intention is particularly important if you are playing in a team competition. If you offer or agree to a draw when you still have opportunities to win, this will place more pressure on your team mates to win their games and their opportunities to win may be weaker than your own. In these circumstances, they are likely to be less than pleased with you. The exception again would be if your draw would guarantee overall victory for your team.

Planning.

Having discussed above your general and long-term preparation for matches, we now switch to specific planning for your next match. Once you know the identity of your next opponent or which opponents you might have to face in your next tournament, you should look up some of their games in a chess database(s). Work out in your mind how they are prone to play, with the opening stage being an obvious first port of call, and which critical points may arise and then how you might combat these. Then decide how you would play and how you might take your opponent/each opponent into areas in which they might be uncomfortable.

Ideally, you should terminate this detailed planning at least an hour before the game starts. It is more important that your personal preparation is complete during the immediate build-up to the game. You should try to arrive at the board at least 5 minutes before the start and be organised, calm and clear-thinking when the game commences. At this point, you should banish from your mind any preconceptions about the strength or weakness of your opponent. Be neither overawed nor over-confident. You should always play the position on the board before you rather than the opponent whilst keeping in mind the plan that you made before the match.

Before the start you need to calculate how much time you can allocate for your moves so that you do not run into time trouble. In doing this, you have to make allowance for critical junctures in the game in which you will need longer to decide your next move(s). So, for example, if you have to make 40 moves in 2 hours, you will either lack the extra time you need at those moments or will run into time trouble as the 2-hour time control approaches, if you take the full 3 minutes available for each move. It is more sensible to allocate yourself around 2 minutes per 'straightforward' move whilst ensuring that you never go over the effective 30-minute maximum for each 10 moves. Most tournaments these days implement 'increments' (of so many seconds per move), which should be factored into the equation but the plan is the same; not to render yourself so low on time as to leave yourself under pressure or with insufficient time to deal with potentially tricky situations.

Sitting in the same position for several hours is not a good plan. Apart from being unhealthy, it is liable to lead to periodic loss of concentration with the attendant risk of making errors. A better discipline is to have a walk around for a few minutes at least once an hour. During this 'break', try to relax but keep the board position in your mind. This 'break' may provide you with a different perspective on the match. Obviously, this advice does not apply to rapidplay or shorter versions of the game. However, if you are playing in a rapidplay or blitz

tournament or team competition with multiple matches during each day, you should ensure that you get some fresh air and take some physical exercise – go for a walk or have a kick-around with friends, for example – between rounds.

Your opponent may run into time trouble. S/he is likely then to start to rush their moves. Unfortunately, many players fritter away this advantage by beginning to rush their own moves. You should never copy them. Rather make good use of your extra time. Your opponent may be hovering over the board, ready to make his/her next move to avoid losing any further scarce time. A delay in your response under these circumstances may well lead to a loss of concentration on their part. At best, your opponent may have worked out a plan some moves ahead to avoid further loss of time. This means, in practice, that, if you can find one good move, especially something not expected by your opponent, their time trouble is likely to be exacerbated and may even become terminal. So, use your extra time to find such a move. This hopefully also makes clear to you why you should organise your time management to avoid facing this sort of problem yourself.

Another major cause of time trouble is indecision. Once you have analysed the position before you on the board and decided on your best move, do not start to question your decision. Be decisive – make your move and ensure that you remain within the time allocation you gave yourself at the outset. If you do make an error – and even the best players do from time to time – stay calm, put the mistake out of your mind and focus entirely on analysis of the new board position before you. Then be just as decisive in respect of your next move.

Analysis.

In any sport, players learn most from their losses or more accurately from analysis of their losses. Victories are satisfying but will teach you much less for the future. So, if you find it difficult to confront your losses and simply banish them from your memory, you will find it much more difficult to improve. The best start to analysis is if your opponent is willing to go over the game with you, – and s/he often will – as this will give you their perspective and what they were thinking at critical points. For the same reason, you should be willing to go over a game if your opponent requests that of you. It is also beneficial to play the game through on a chess engine and/or go over it with your Coach. In doing all this, your aim is to identify where you went wrong and what you should have done instead. Then you should commit that to memory so that you do not make the same mistake again.

Win, draw or lose, you should always keep a full record of your games. These will be helpful if you come up against the same opponent in the future – as you assuredly will in many cases. However, you should not dwell on your losses. After the post-match analysis is complete, solely carry the memory with you of how you will avoid a similar loss in the future. Your focus must then switch to your next game. The maxim in sport that ‘the next match is always the most important one’ is wholly accurate. By these methods, you should always arrive at the board for your next game in a positive frame of mind concentrating exclusively on defeating the opponent then facing you.

Good luck!