

Patzer

**The magazine for the
club chess player**



The Scandinavian defence

**volume 3 number 1
January 2021**

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**volume 3 number 1
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Another year means another volume of **Patzer**, the only international magazine written by and for the tragic club-level chess player. This year, as a temporary experiment, we will bring you eight issues.

Why, I can hear the reader asking, is there a reproduction of "Destruction of Magdeburg", an etching by Jan and Kasparus (or Casper or Caspar) Luyken, on the front cover? Well, it's a tenuous link to our new openings series. Magdeburg was the site of the most notorious massacre of the Thirty Years' War (1618 to 1648). The poor locals apparently expected King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden to send his troops to support their besieged city. He didn't, but if he had, it might have been an example of a Scandinavian defence. OK, so it's not that clever, but it's a little bit of art in an otherwise culture-free magazine. In any case, if you want to know how to respond when black plays 1...e4 d5 2. exd5 ♔xd5 3. ♘c3 ♔a5, turn to page 5. This is a more detailed analysis than we are used to seeing in **Patzer**. The point is to give the reader a basic skeleton of moves to learn (see the abbreviated version on page 13), but also to showcase some interesting (but not-to-be-memorised) ideas.

We need some feedback – is this sort of article useful for the club player?

The opening theme continues with the final part of our mini-series on traps in the Queen's gambit (page 14).

Your editor has been hard at work, scouring cyberspace and paper-based chess magazines (they still exist), looking for entertaining club level games from all over the world. We've annotated another one of these for this issue, starting on page 17.

Loren Schmidt's second middlegame article for **Patzer**, *Converting an advantage in space into a "local" advantage in time*, is on pages 22 to 24.

Another year also means a new endgame theme. In this volume we will cover those positions where a rook takes on one or more pawns. These can be surprisingly tricky, as you will see in the article on pages 34 to 38.

Derek Roebuck

Symbols, abbreviations and conventions

1:0	white won	[Gough]	analysis by Gough
½:½	draw	C 36	<i>Encyclopaedia of chess openings</i> code
0:1	black won	♁ 0/a1	<i>Encyclopaedia of chess endings</i> code
+	check	FIDE	Fédération Internationale des Échecs
#	checkmate	ACF	Australian Chess Federation
!	a good move	ECF	English Chess Federation
!!	a really good move, and especially one that is hard to see	USCF	United States Chess Federation
?	a bad move	ICCF	International Correspondence Chess Federation
??	a blunder (a move even a complete patzer should be ashamed of)	GM	grandmaster
!?	an interesting move	IM	international master
?!	a dubious move	FM	FIDE master
∞	unclear position	OTB	over the board, as opposed to...
⊙	<i>zugzwang</i>	CC	correspondence chess, or maybe chess club, depending on context
▷	white to move	1(1): 32	volume 1 number 1, page 32
▶45	black to make his or her 45th move		
□	an "only move", i.e. any other move would change the result in favour of the opponent		
corr.	correspondence chess game (including email, server games etc.)		

Beating the 3...♔a5 Scandinavian defence

B 01

Part 1: Move 4 options

Derek Roebuck

The Scandinavian defence (1. e4 d5) is very popular at club level, and many white players find it difficult to deal with. After the natural moves 2. exd5 ♔xd5 3. ♘c3 ♔a5 black usually continues with 3...♔a5, although 3...♔d8 and 3...♔d6 are both perfectly playable alternatives.

I will examine this opening from white's perspective, after the usual move 4. d4. Instead of constructing a dense thicket of variations, I am going to choose one main line, and work towards it, looking at alternatives for black at each move. In keeping with our theme of opening traps, I am going to choose white moves with the idea of giving a club level opponent the most plausible chances of going wrong in the opening.

Some of the lines I am suggesting are similar to those given in a relatively recently published repertoire book, Christof Sielecki's *Keep it simple: 1. e4* (New in Chess, 2018). I have, however, adopted some important refinements for club-level play.

The main line we will be heading for over the next few issues will be:

1. e4 d5 2. exd5 ♔xd5 3. ♘c3 ♔a5
4. d4 ♘f6 5. ♘f3 ♙g4 6. h3 ♙h5 7.
g4 ♙g6 8. ♘e5 e6 9. ♙d2!? ♔b6
10. ♔f3 ♙b4 11. 0-0-0.

All patzers know that there is almost no chance that their opponent will follow the book to move 11, so the interesting stuff happens on the way.

We will start by looking at the alternatives to 4...♘f6.

4...♘c6?

Black can play ...♘c6, just not at move 4:

5. d5! ♘e5

(1) 5...♘b4 6. a3 ♘f6 7. ♙b5+ ♙d7 8. ♙xd7+ ♘xd7 9. ♙e3 ♘xd5 [9...♘a6 10. b4 ♘xb4 11. axb4 ♔xb4 12. ♘e2 b6? 13. ♖a4 ♔b2 14. ♙c1 V. Kupreichik – E. Atakichieva, Germany 1998] 10. ♔xd5 ♔xd5 11. ♘xd5 and white should have no trouble converting this massive material advantage.

(2) 5...♘b8 6. ♘f3 ♘f6 7. ♙d2 c6 8. dxc6 and here white has a clear advantage, plus the chance that black will go for 8...♘xc6? 9. ♘b5! ♔b6 [9...♔d8 10. ♙f4!] 10. ♙e3 ♔a5+ 11. ♔d2!

6. ♙f4 ♘d7

6...♘g6 7. ♙b5+ ♙d7 8. ♙xd7+ ♔xd7 9. ♙g3!?

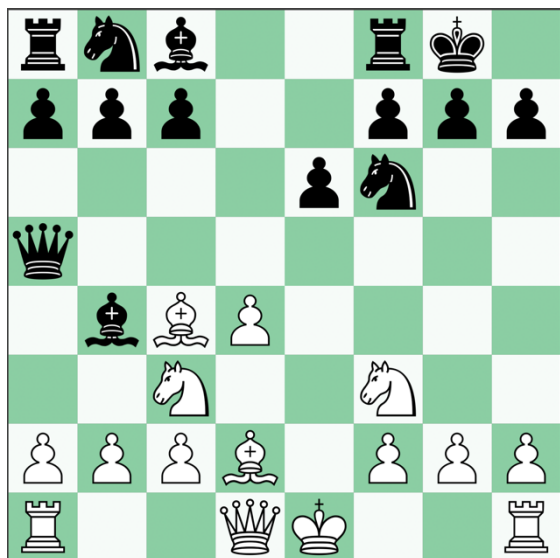
7. ♘f3 ♘gf6 8. ♙c4 g6 9. a3

White has a huge advantage.

4...e6?!

This is a poor move, because it locks in the bishop on c8. White needs only to bring his pieces out to their best squares in order to obtain a small but definite advantage.

5. ♖f3 ♜f6 6. ♔d2 ♘b4 7. ♙c4 0-0



▷ 8

8. 0-0 ♜c6 9. a3 ♙xc3 10. ♙xc3

White has completed development with two bishops and a nice position.

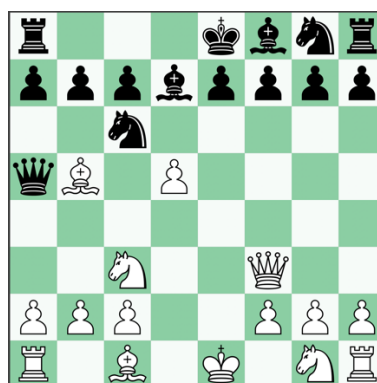
4... ♙f5

This is, in general, a reasonable square for the bishop, but black should wait until white has occupied f3 with a knight, because now the weakness on b7 can be exploited with:

5. ♙f3! c6

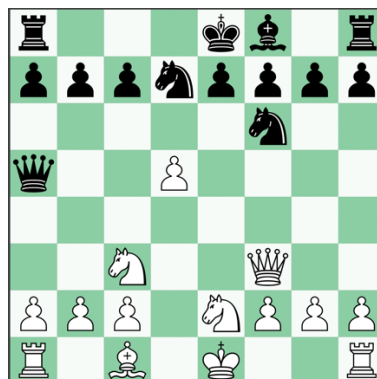
After the plausible 5... ♜c6 6. ♙b5! ♙d7 [6... 0-0-0?? 7. ♙xc6 bxc6 8. b4! ♙xb4 9. ♙xf5+ wins] Sielecki recommends 7. ♜e2, but I prefer 7.

d5!?, because this makes everything easy for white.



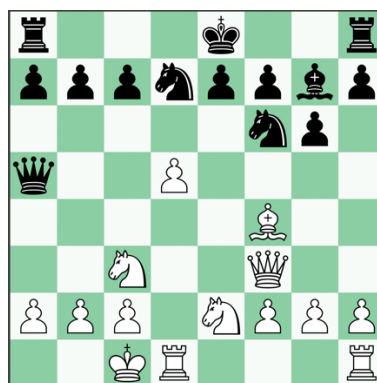
analysis

7... ♜e5 [if black plays 7... ♜b8 instead, white will just retreat the bishop to a better square: 8. ♙c4!] 8. ♙xd7+ ♜xd7 9. ♜e2 ♜gf6



analysis

It is obvious that black is going to fianchetto his bishop, so white sets up for a kingside attack. The exact move order is probably not critical. 10. ♙f4 g6 11. 0-0-0 ♙g7

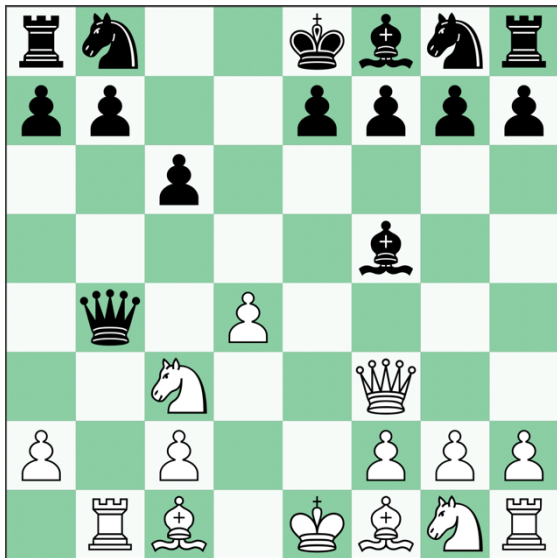


analysis

12. ♜he1 [it is important to persuade black not to castle queenside – 12.

♞d4!? would also work] 0-0 [if black insists on 12...0-0-0?? the weaknesses on c7 and e7 will tell: 13. ♞d4 ♜he8 14. ♞db5!] 13. ♞d4 ♜fe8 14. g4!?

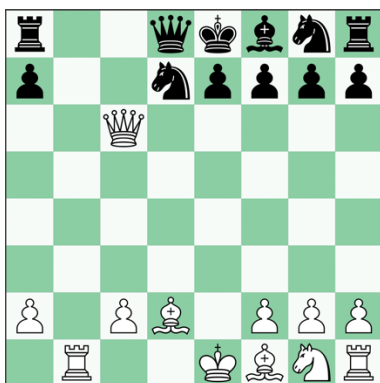
6. b4! ♙xb4 7. ♜b1



►7

7... ♙a5

7... ♙xd4 requires black to find a long series of forced moves, only to end up in a very difficult position anyway: 8. ♙xf5 ♙xc3+ 9. ♞d2 ♙d4 10. ♙c8+ ♙d8 11. ♙xb7! ♞d7 12. ♙xc6



analysis

After 12... ♞f6 [black would like to be able to counter with 12... ♜c8, but 13. ♙a4! raises threats along the a4-

e8 and a5-d8 diagonals that will be tricky to deal with] 13. ♞f3 e6 white can play 14. ♞a6!?, with the threat of ♞b7 and ♞f4.

8. ♜xb7 ♞f6

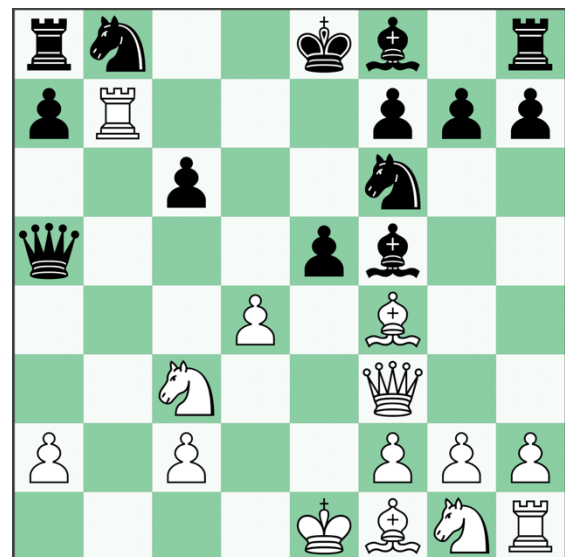
8... ♞e4? 9. ♙g3 ♞d7 10. ♞d2 ♞g6 [10... ♙f5 was better, but still losing] 11. d5! ♜c8 12. dxc6 ♙e5+ 13. ♞e2 1:0 was the abrupt end to E. Prié – D. Rodriguez, Réunion 1997.

9. ♞f4!?

The logical move, although it does invite more complications.

9...e5!

9...e6? obviously won't do, because of 10. ♞c7! ♙a3 11. ♞xb8 ♙c1+ 12. ♙d1, but black could try to mix things up with 9... ♞g4!? 10. ♞c7 ♞xf3 11. ♞xa5 ♞g4, although after 12. ♞f3 white is looking good.

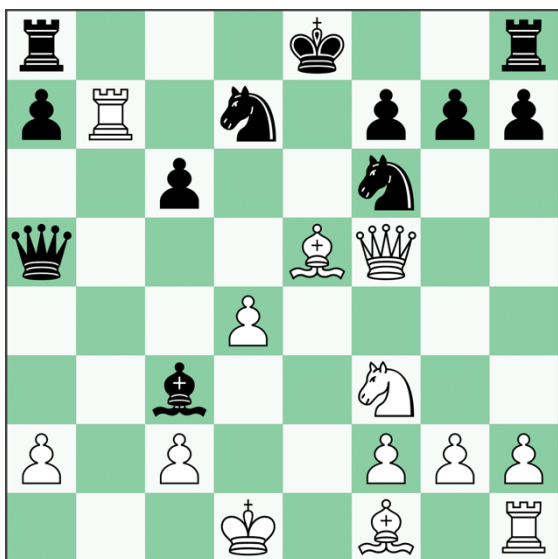


►10

10. ♞xe5! ♞b4

10... ♞c8 11. ♞c7 ♙a3 12. ♙e3+ makes things too easy for white.

11. ♔xf5 ♘xc3+ 12. ♚d1 ♞bd7 13. ♞f3

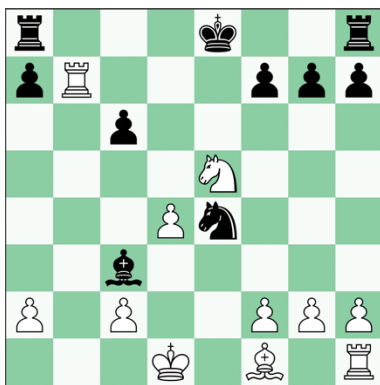


► 13

13... ♘xd4

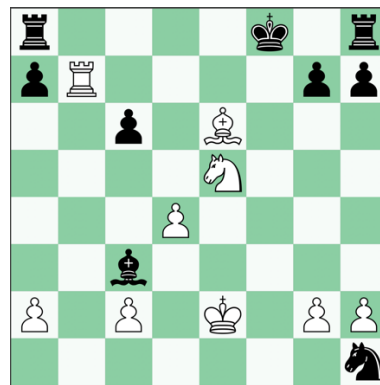
The other capture is no better:

13... ♞xe5 14. ♔xe5+ ♔xe5 15. ♞xe5 ♞e4!?



analysis

16. ♘c4!! [white can't play 16. ♚e2? anyway, because of 16... ♞xf2!] ♞xf2+ [16... ♞d6 17. ♜b3 gives white a favourable ending] 17. ♚e2 ♞xh1 18. ♘xf7+ ♚f8 19. ♘e6

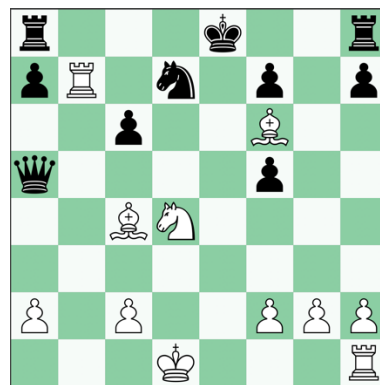


analysis

19... ♘xd4 20. ♜f7+ ♚e8 21. ♘d7+ ♚d8 22. ♞xc6+ ♚c7 23. ♞xd4 leaves white with a clear advantage.

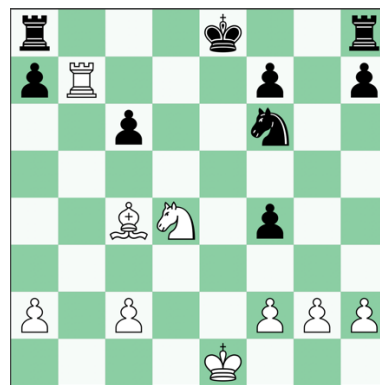
14. ♞xd4 ♔xe5

Can you see the amazing refutation of 14...g6? White has 15. ♘c4!! gxf5 16. ♘xf6.



analysis

16...f4 [black has no good way to stop white's next move] 17. ♜e1+ ♔xe1 18. ♚xe1 ♞xf6.



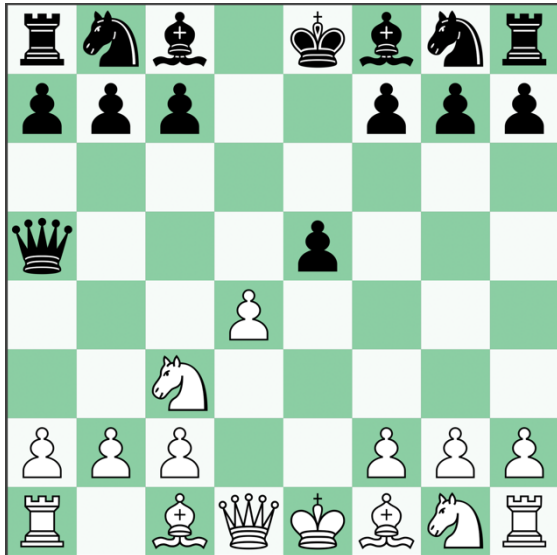
analysis

And now 19. ♘xf7+ ♚d8 20. ♞xc6+ ♚c8 21. ♜e7 ♞d7 22. ♘e6 ♚c7 23. ♘xd7 with a win.

15. ♔xe5+ ♖xe5 16. ♔c1!

White has a comfortable advantage.

4...e5



▷5

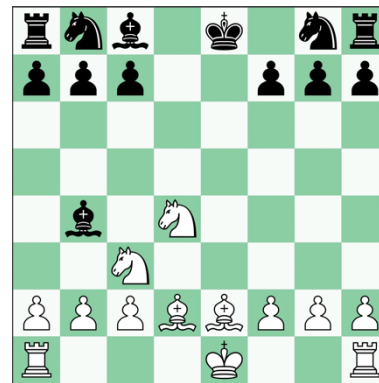
Although this is an interesting idea, ultimately it is not very good. We will look at 4...e5 in detail, however, not because you will want to memorise all of this analysis, but just to enjoy the challenge of attacking the black king, which is going to be hopelessly stuck in the centre.

First off, white needs to remember to play...

5. ♖f3! ♗g4

(1) If black tries 5...♗b4 white has 6. ♗d2, threatening dxe5. Now after 6...♗g4 7. a3 ♗xc3 [7...♗xf3 8. ♔xf3 is terrible for black] 8. ♗xc3 ♔d5 9. dxe5 white is, amongst other things, a pawn up, so black needs to try 6...exd4 7. ♖xd4! [much better

than 7. ♖b5] ♔e5+ 8. ♔e2 ♔xe2+ 9. ♗xe2.



analysis

This is a very nice position for white, who plans to continue with 0-0-0, ♖he1 and ♗f3. Black should probably play 9...c6 here, because 9...♖f6 can be met with 10. ♖db5!?, although 10. 0-0-0 might well be better.

(2) After 5...exd4?! white can play 6. ♔xd4!?, but 6. ♖xd4 is simpler.

Now 6...♗b4 7. ♗d2 transposes to 5...♗b4, and 6...♗f5 7. ♖xf5 ♔xf5 8. ♗d3 looks good for white, but even 6...♖f6 7. ♗d3!? ♔e5+ 8. ♖ce2! [with ♗f4 to come] is quite awkward for black.

(3) 5...♖c6? loses after 6. d5 e4?! [bad, but otherwise white plays ♖xe5] 7. dxc6 exf3 8. ♔xf3 b6 9. ♗f4.

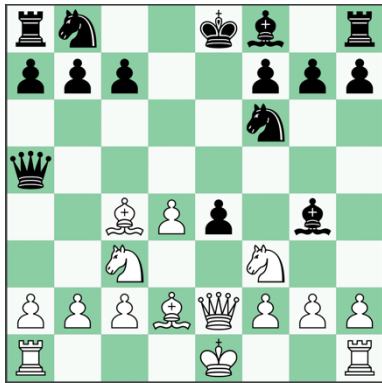
6. ♗c4! ♖f6

The "normal" defence to white's threat of ♗xf7+ and ♖g5+ would be ...e6, but that is no longer possible.

(1) 6...f6 is a computer idea, but not particularly a good one. White can continue with 7. 0-0 with ♖e1 to come.

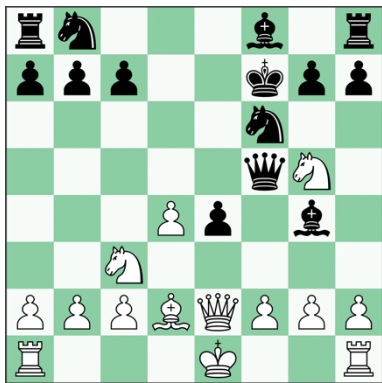
(2) $6... \text{Nc6}$ allows the flashy $7. \text{Qxf7+ Kxf7} 8. \text{Ng5+}$, which is favourable for white after $8... \text{Ke8} 9. \text{Qxg4 exd4} 10. 0-0!? \text{Nf6} 11. \text{Ke2+!? Ke7} 12. \text{Nce4 Nxe4} 13. \text{Nxe4}$.

(3) $6... \text{e4?!}$ also meets with a very concrete refutation: $7. \text{Ke2 Ng6} 8. \text{Nd2}$.



analysis

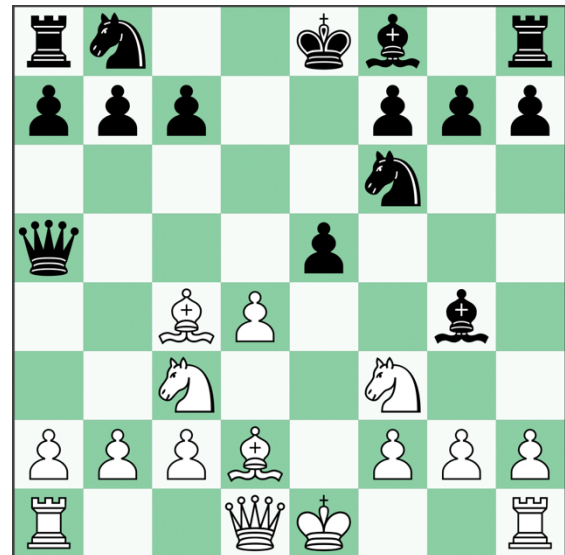
$8... \text{Qxf5} [8... \text{Ke8} 9. \text{Nxe4!}] 9. \text{Qxf7+ Kxf7} 10. \text{Ng5+}$



analysis

Now $10... \text{Ke8} 11. \text{f3}$ is very good for white, and $10... \text{Qxg5??}$ doesn't work at all, because of $11. \text{Qc4+ Ke6} 12. \text{Qxc7+}$, winning easily. So black is stuck with $10... \text{Kg6} 11. \text{Qc4}$, and now when he parries the mate threat white will have $12. \text{h3}$.

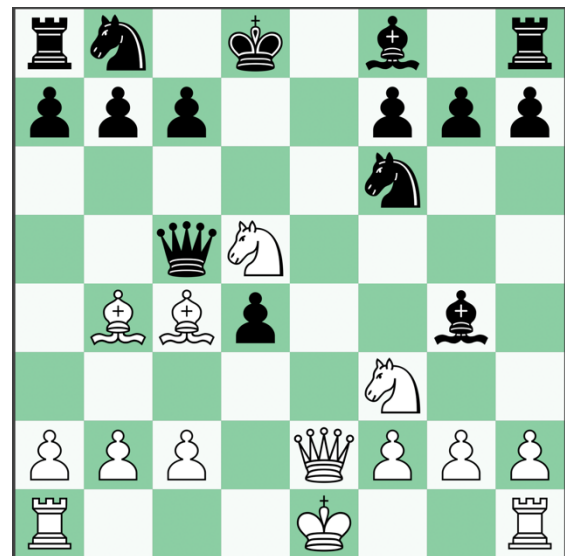
$7. \text{Nd2}$



►7

White's threat of Nd5 is essentially unstoppable.

$7... \text{exd4} 8. \text{Nd5 Qc5} 9. \text{Ke2+ Qd8} 10. \text{Nb4}$

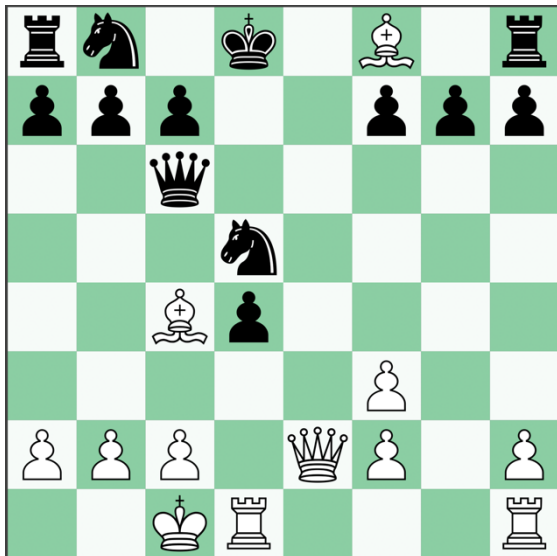


►10

$10... \text{Qxf3}$

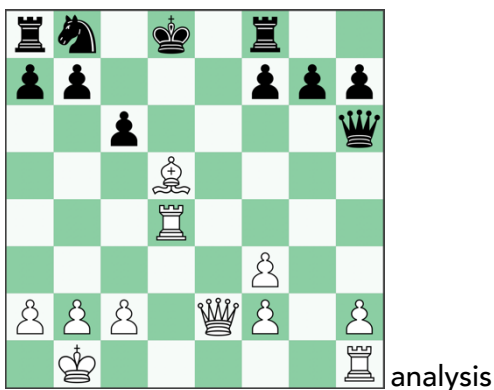
10... ♔c6 invites 11. ♙xf8!, after which neither 11... ♗xd5 12. 0-0-0! ♖xf8 13. ♖xd4 nor 11... ♙xf3 12. ♙e7+ ♔c8 ♗13. ♖xf3 ♖xc4 ♗14. ♙xf6 gxf6 ♗15. ♖xf6 ♖e8+ ♗16. ♗e7+ ♖xe7+ ♗17. ♖xe7 offer black much hope.

11. gxf3 ♖c6 ♗12. ♙xf8 ♗xd5 ♗13. 0-0-0!?



►13

White has a clear advantage. Black cannot hold onto an extra piece after 13... ♖xf8 14. ♖xd4 ♖h6+ 15. ♔b1 c6 16. ♙xd5!

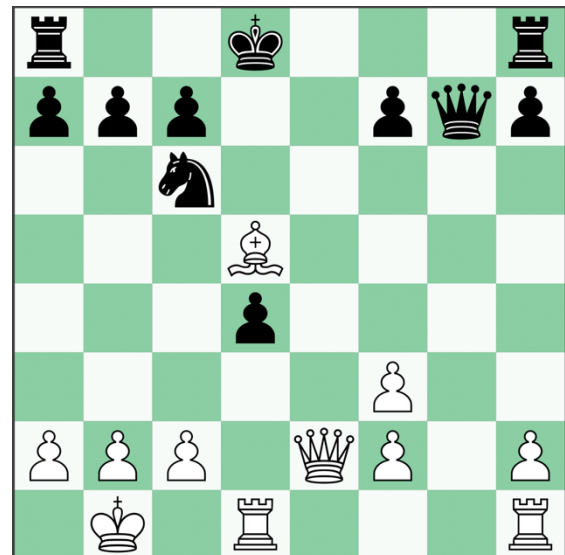


analysis

Now 16... cxd5 17. ♖xd5+ ♔c8 ♗18. ♖e7! ♖h8 ♗19. ♖d6 and 20. ♖hd1

looks really difficult for black, and 16... ♖f6!? 17. ♙xc6+ ♖xd4 18. ♙xb7 ♖e8 19. ♖b5!? will be a winning endgame for white.

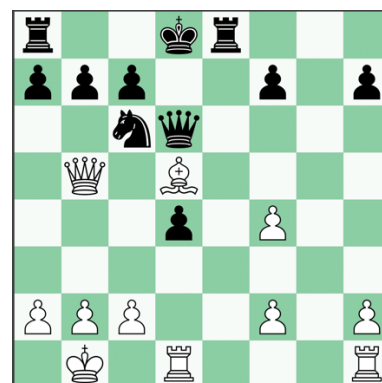
13... ♖h6+ 14. ♔b1 ♗c6 15. ♙xg7 ♖xg7 16. ♙xd5



►16

16... ♖f6

Note that 16... ♖e8?! loses to 17. ♖b5 ♖e5 18. f4 ♖d6

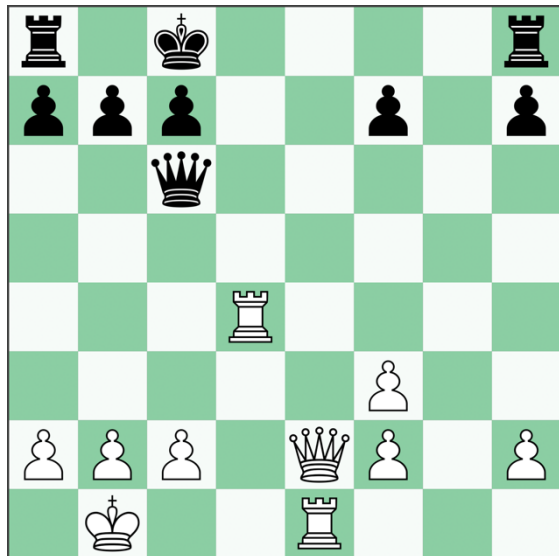


analysis

19. ♖he1! Black has no way to save the b-pawn, because 19... ♖b8? loses to 20. ♙xc6 ♖xc6 21. ♖xd4+ ♔c8 22. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 23. ♖xe8#. If instead 19... ♖xe1 20. ♖xe1 ♖d7 [to protect f7] then 21. ♖xb7!? [the

computer prefers 21. ♖e4!, but we are patzers, and the simplest win is always the best win] ♕xd5 and now 22. ♖xa8+ ♔d7 23. ♖e8+ should be an easy point.

17. ♖xc6 ♕xc6 18. ♖xd4+ ♔c8 19. ♖e1



► 19

White should be very pleased with the results of his opening play.

4...c6

This is the most respectable fourth move alternative to 4...♘f6. There is no “move order” trick for white to take advantage of here, so we will simply play...

5. ♘f3

...inviting a transposition to further down our mainline with 5...♘f6. This will be covered in the next instalment of this series.

5... ♖f5

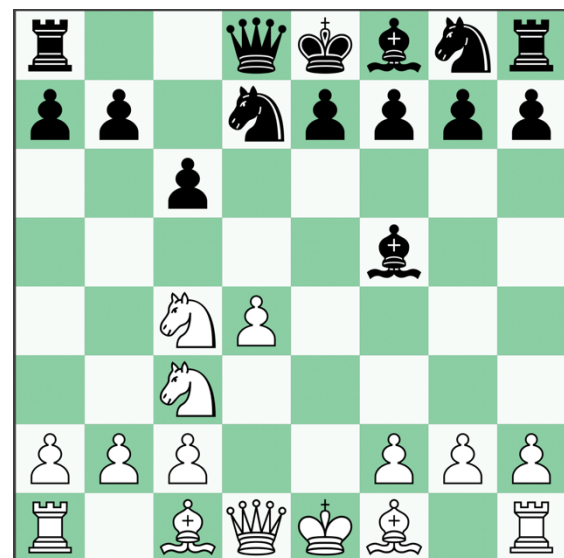
5... ♖g4 6. h3 is also very likely to transpose when black gets around to the almost unavoidable ...♘f6.

6. ♘e5!? ♘d7?!

6...♘f6! transposes, as noted above.

7. ♘c4 ♕d8

7...♕c7 allows white to gain a little time with 8. ♖f3 e6 9. ♖f4 ♕d8 10. 0-0-0.



▷ 8

8. d5!

This thrust is the best way to take advantage of black’s move order, so remember it! All of a sudden black’s queenside is looking very weak.

8...♘gf6

This is black’s only reasonable reply.

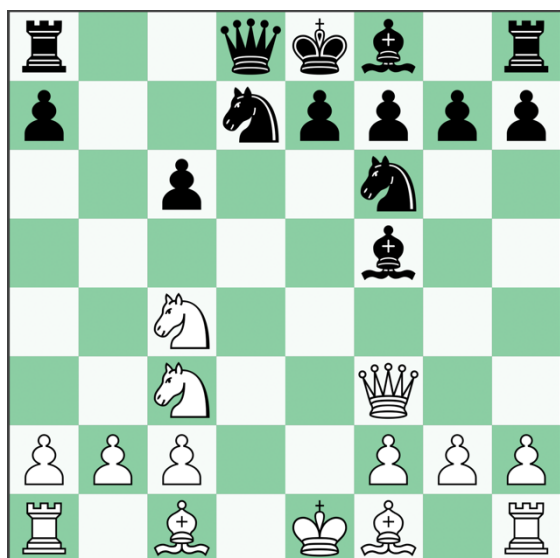
(1) 8...cxd5? is met by 9. ♕xd5 and 10. ♖xb7.

(2) 8... ♖c8 9. ♔e2!? [an evil move, threatening ♘d6#] ♘b6 10. dxc6 ♗xc6 11. ♘a5!? Now 11... ♗c7 is practically losing after 12. ♕f4 ♗d7 13. ♔f3!

(3) 8...g6 9. ♔e2! ♕g7 10. dxc6 bxc6 11. ♘d6+ ♔f8 12. ♘xf5 ♕xc3+!? 13. bxc3 gxf5 and now after 14. ♔f3! White will win a pawn and take a clear advantage into the inevitable endgame.

(4) 8...e6 loses a pawn after 9. dxc6 bxc6 10. g4! ♕g6 11. ♕g2, because 11... ♔c7 12. ♔f3, with the idea of ♕f4, is even worse.

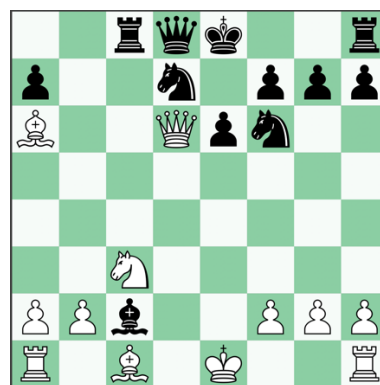
9. dxc6 bxc6 10. ♔f3!



► 10

10...g6

And not 10... ♕xc2?? 11. ♔e2! [I did warn you about the traps, didn't I?] ♕g6 12. ♘d6#. The main alternative is 10...e6, which allows white to simplify favourably with 11. ♗xc6 ♗c8 12. ♘d6+ ♕xd6 13. ♗xd6 ♕xc2 14. ♕a6!



analysis

14... ♗b8 [14... ♘b8 15. ♕b5+] 15. ♗a3, and after castling white will have a moderate advantage.

11. ♘e3!? ♕e6 12. ♗xc6 ♕g7 13. ♕e2!?

Black's lead in development is some compensation for the pawn, but white is better here.

Summary

None of black's fourth move alternatives are particularly good. White needs to punish 4... ♘c6? with 5. d5!, 4... ♕f5?! with 5. ♔f3!, and 4...e5 with 5. ♘f3!

After 4...c6, white can give black the opportunity to return to the main line by playing 5. ♘f3, but if black plays 5... ♕f5 6. ♘e5 ♘d7 then 7. ♘c4!

Next issue

After 1. e4 d5 2. exd5 ♗xd5 3. ♘c3 ♗a5 4. d4 ♘f6 5. ♘f3 black has a number of alternatives to our main line (5... ♕g4). In the next issue we will look at 5...c6, 5... ♕f5, and a couple of minor fifth move tries.

Traps in the Queen's gambit

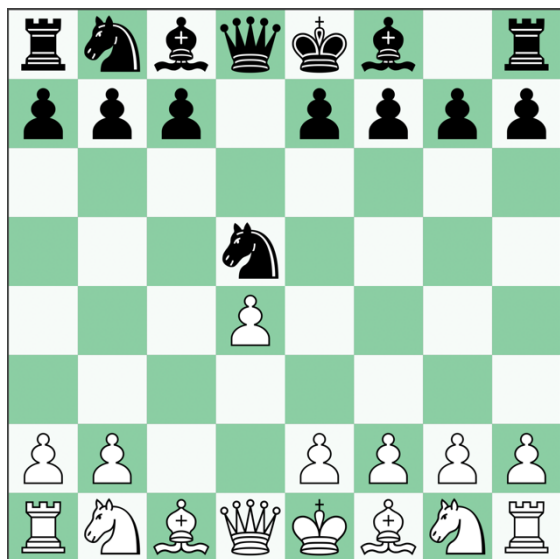
Part 4: Unusual defences

Derek Roebuck

After 1. d4 d5 2. c4, black has several alternatives to the "normal" 2...dxc4, 2...c6 and 2...e6. In the last part of this series we will look at a few of these, and the traps they may lead to.

Marshall variation (D 06):

1. d4 d5 2. c4 Nf6?! 3. cxd5 Nxd5



▷4

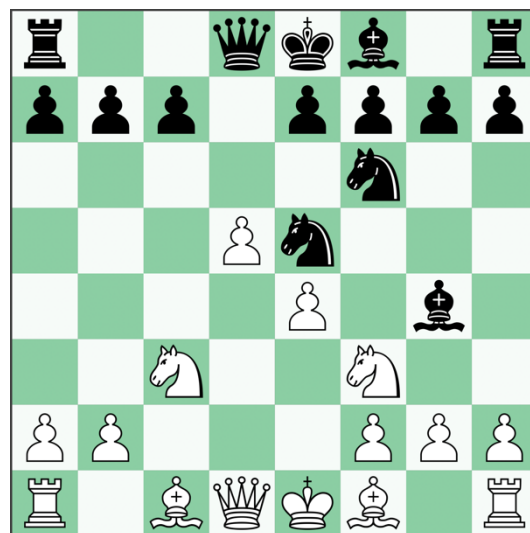
4. Nf3!

The Marshall variation (2... Nf6?!) is often seen at club level, so if you play

the Queen's gambit as white it is very important to know this move. All the authorities say that 4. e4 is not as good, on account of 4... Nf6 5. Nc3 e5!, although it seems that white still has a small edge after either of these continuations:

(1) 6. dxe5 Qxd1 7. Kxd1 Ng4 , and now the forcing continuation 8. Nd5! Nxf2+ 9. Ke2 Nhx1 10. Nxc7+ Kd8 11. Nxa8 Bg4+ 12. Nf3 .
 (2) 6. Nf3 exd4 7. $\text{Qxd4!?$ Qxd4 8. Nxd4 Bc5 9. Ndb5!

4... Nc6? 5. e4 Nf6 6. Nc3 Bg4?!
 7. d5 Ne5



▷8

8. Nxe5! Qxd1 9. Bb5+ c6 10. dxc6 a6

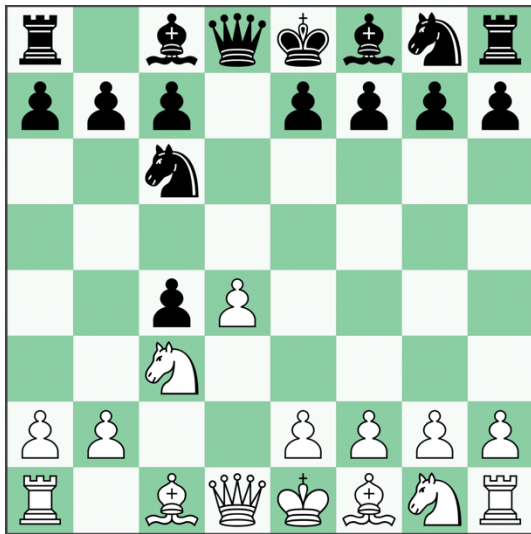
10... Qc7? 11. cxb7+ 1:0 D. Genz – D. Boehmer, USA 1985.

11. c7+ axb5 12. cxd8 Q+ Rxd8
 13. Nxd1 Nxe4 14. Nc3

White is a knight for a pawn up.

Chigorin defence (D 07):

1. d4 d5 2. c4 ♞c6 3. ♞c3 dxc4



▷4

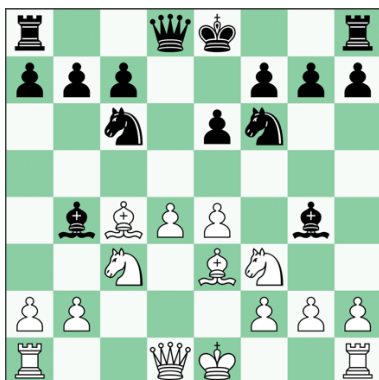
4. ♞f3 ♞f6

This position can also arise from the Queen's gambit accepted: 2...dxc4 3. ♞f3 ♞f6 4. ♞c3 ♞c6?!

5. ♟g5?!

(1) After 5. d5 ♞a5! black may end up sacrificing the "dim" knight, for example 6. ♞a4+ c6 7. b4 b5! [not 7...cxb3 8. axb3 b6 9. dxc6!] 8. ♞xa5 ♞xa5 9. bxa5 b4 10. ♞a4 cxd5.

(2) 5. e4 is the main line. Black will play 5...♟g4 6. ♟e3 e6 7. ♟xc4 ♟b4, with complications that must surely favour white.



variation

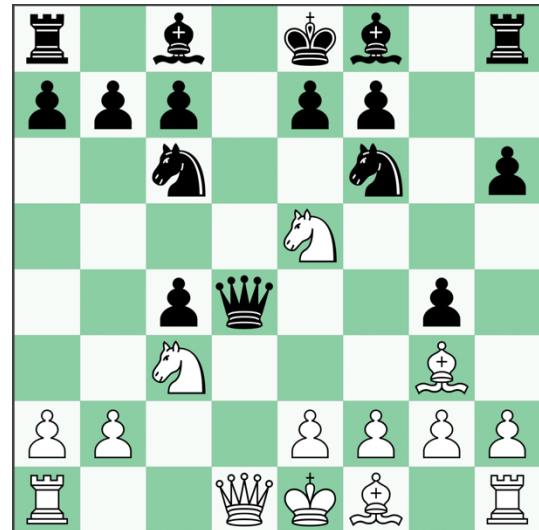
After 8. ♞d3 0-0!? white can try out 9. ♞d2!? or 9. a3!?, with a small but definite advantage.

5...h6 6. ♟h4 g5?!

Black should probably play 6...a6 here, and if 7. ♞a4?! then 7...b5!? 8. ♞xb5 ♟d7.

7. ♟g3 g4?! 8. ♞e5 ♞xd4??

Supremely greedy, and just about begging for punishment. 8...♞xe5 was obvious and much better.



▷9

9. ♞b5! ♞b6

9...♞xd1+ 10. ♞xd1 is at most very slightly better.

10. ♞xc6! ♞d5

10...♟d7 11 ♞xc7+ costs black his queen, and 10...e6 11. ♞d8 is mate.

11. ♞xc7+

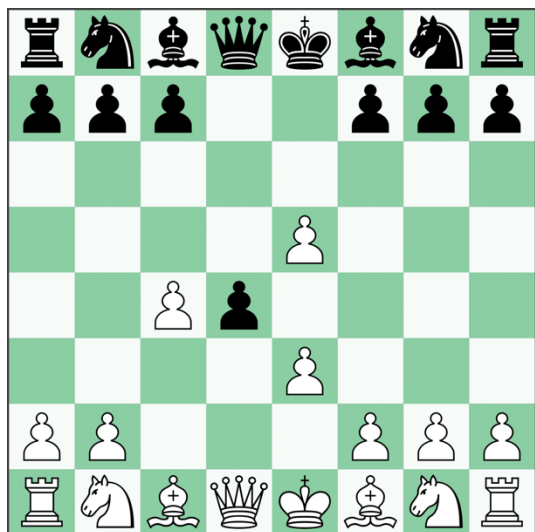
And white naturally won quite soon in L.M. Christiansen – S.A. Tarin, USA (New York Open) 1985.

Albin counter-gambit (D 08):

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e5 3. dxe5 d4

And finally, perhaps the most famous Queen's Gambit trap of all.

4. e3?!



►4

White often plays this move at club level, but it's not very good. Maybe this idea comes to mind because it is the mirror image of the old main line in the Falkbeer counter-gambit (1. e4 e5 2. f4 d5 3. exd5 e4 4. d3). But it's hard to see any good reason to avoid 4. ♞f3!

4... ♞b4+! 5. ♞d2

5. ♞d2 dxe3 6. fxe3 ♞h4+ is very comfortable for black.

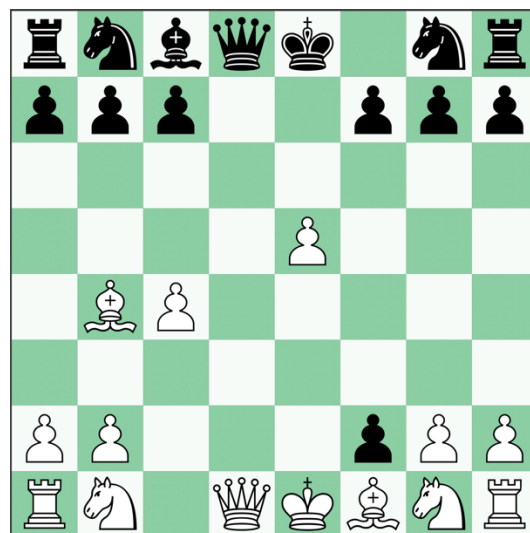
5... dxe3 6. ♞xb4?

(1) White needs to admit his mistake and play 6. fxe3 ♞h4+ 7. g3 ♞e4 8. ♞f3, after which he was only slightly worse in D. McLean – A. De Heer, Australia (Metro Open) 2019.

(2) 6. ♞a4+? doesn't help because the position after 6... ♞c6 7. ♞xb4

exf2+ 8. ♞xf2 ♞h4+ 9. g3 ♞d4+ 10. ♞e1 ♞e4+ 11. ♞f2 ♞h6! is going to be extremely difficult for white to defend.

6...exf2+



►7

This is a great trick in positions with no white knight on g1, because when the king moves to e2 [7. ♞xf2 ♞xd1] black has ... ♞g4+, and there is no way to interpose. But it works here too, because of an underpromotion:

7. ♞e2 fxg1 ♞+! 8. ♞e1 ♞h4+ 9. ♞d2

9. g3 drops the rook on h1.

9... ♞c6 10. ♞c3

10. ♞c5 [10. ♞xg1 ♞xb4] ♞g4 11. ♞b3 0-0-0+ 12. ♞c3 ♞e1+ was the end in M. Lintern – S. Crofts, Australia (Dick Lilly Swiss) 2020.

10... ♞g4

0:1 R. Biever – R. Cassidy, Münchenstein (World Junior Championship) 1959.

Games

Daniel Guel (USCF 1714 ≈ FIDE 1614)

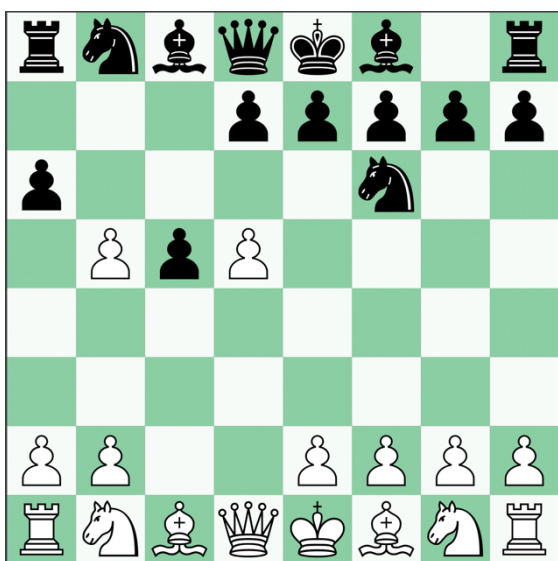
Zach Graber (USCF 1700 ≈ FIDE 1600)

USA (BRAZOS II, Hillsboro TX) 2017

Benko gambit, Zaitsev system (A 57)

[Roebuck]

1. d4 ♞f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 b5 4. cxb5 a6



▷5

The Benko gambit has maintained its popularity at club level for decades now.

5. ♞c3

White usually accepts with 5. bxa6 or declines with 5. b6, but this is also a good move.

5...axb5 6. ♞xb5!

6. e4 is often played here, although I suspect only because of a cheap trap. After 6...b4 7. ♞b5 black must avoid 7...♞xe4??, which loses a piece after 8. ♔e2 ♔b6 [8...♞f6?? 9. ♞d6#] 9.

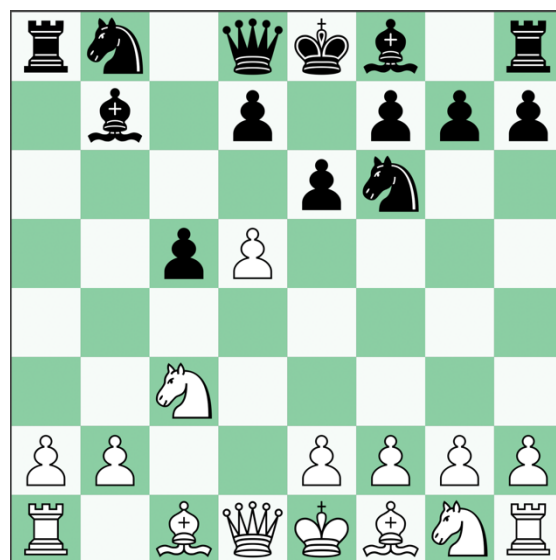
♔xe4 ♔a5 10. a4, and instead play 7...d6! with a roughly equal position, although white can still go gambit style with 8. ♞f3?! ♞xe4 9. ♕c4 if he or she insists.

6...e6 7. ♞c3?!

7. dxe6! is an interesting line: after 7...♔a5+ [an immediate 7...fxe6 just feels bad, because it allows 8. e3, but it's a similar game] 8. ♞c3 fxe6 9. ♞f3 white is going to have to decide whether to put his light-squared bishop on g2 or d3, but in either case is a pawn up.

7...♕b7?!

This makes things unnecessarily complicated. Black could have gone for 7...exd5 8. ♞xd5 9. ♞xd5 ♔xd5 ♞c6, with reasonable compensation for his pawn.



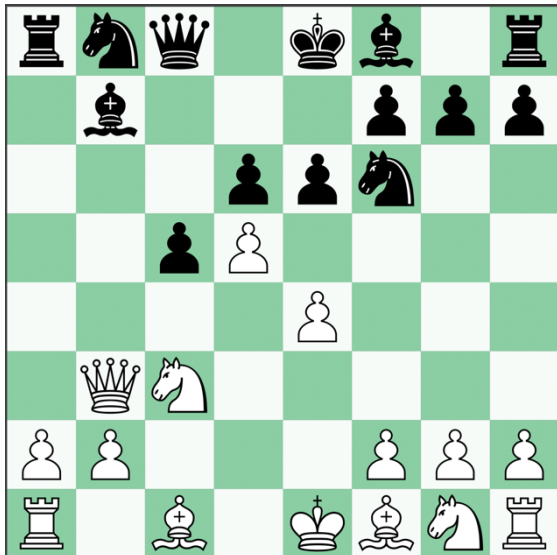
▷8

8. e4! d6?? 9. ♔b3!?

Not a terrible move, but 9. ♕b5+! with 10. dxe6 to follow was better.

9... ♔c8

Understandably trying to cover e6 while countering the threat to the bishop on b7, although 9... ♘c8 or 9... ♘a6 might have been more precise means to this end.



▷10

10. ♘a4?

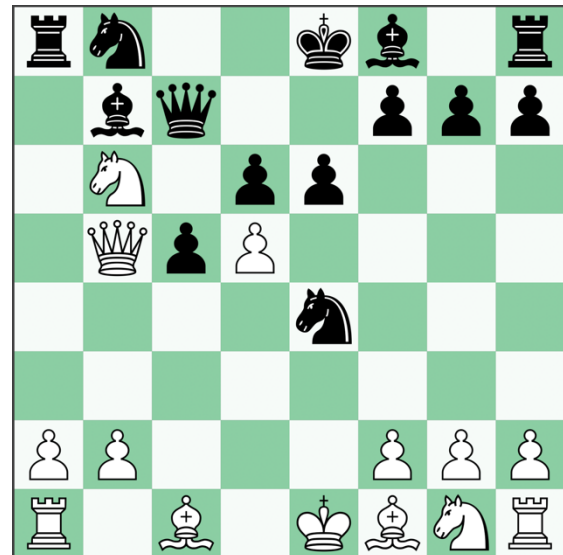
Missing a great chance: 10. ♘b5+! [10. dxe6 or even 10. ♘g5 were also better than the move actually played] ♘bd7 11. dxe6 fxe6 12. ♔xe6+ ♔d8 13. ♘g5 looks really good for white.

10... ♘xe4?!

Black may have missed that he can get away with 10...exd5 here, because 11. ♘b6 allows black to mix it up with 11...c4!?, although it's not looking great for him.

11. ♘b6 ♔c7 12. ♔b5+?

12. f3! makes things quite difficult for black.

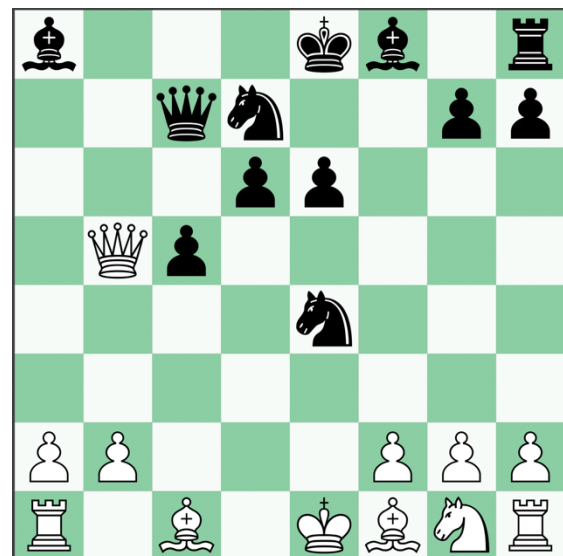


►12

12... ♘d7!

This is definitely black's best chance.

13. ♘xa8 ♘xa8 14. dxe6 fxe6



▷15

This is a really interesting position at club level. White is the exchange up, but his king is a long way from safety. The engine gives him a moderate advantage, but can he play like a computer?

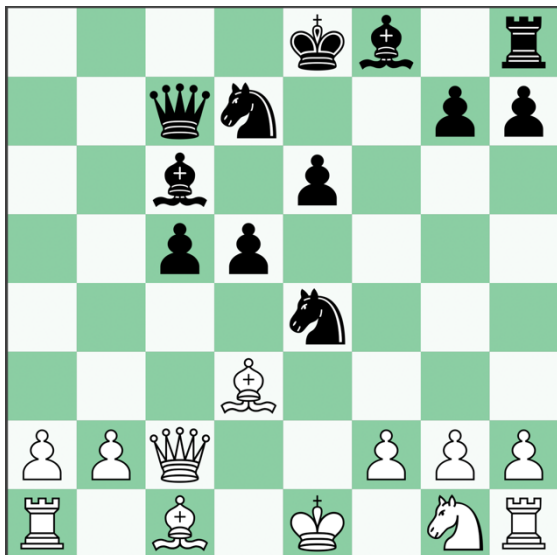
15. ♖d3?

The computer plays 15. ♔a4! ♙c6
16. ♙b5 ♙xb5 17. ♔xb5, and that
might have been all that white
needed to relieve the pressure.

15... ♙c6!

15... ♞c3!? 16. ♔b3 ♙d5 17. ♔xc3
♙xg2 must have been tempting, but
this is even better.

16. ♔c4 d5 17. ♔c2

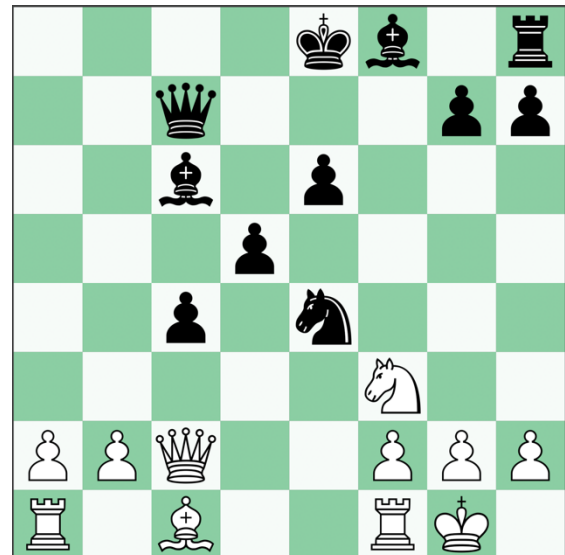


►17

17... ♞df6

17... ♔a5+ is a crucial alternative
here, although it looks as if white may
be able to escape to a very unclear
position after 18. ♔f1 ♞ef6.

18. ♞f3 c4 19. ♙xe4 ♞xe4 20. 0-0



►20

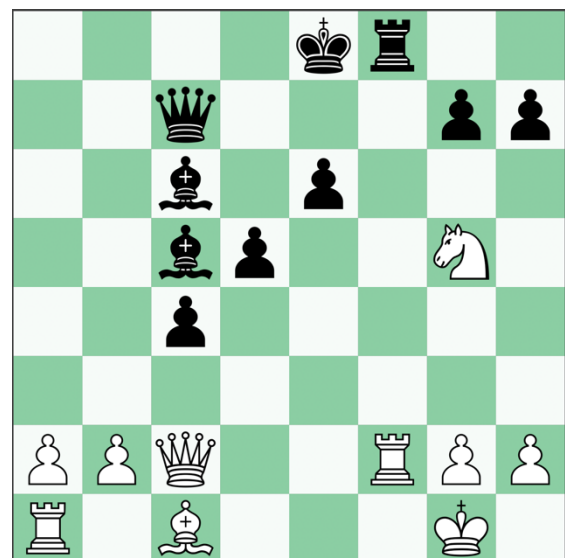
20... ♙c5?!

This allows white to play 21. ♙e3!? if
he wants. 20... ♙d6!, with the idea of
castling, playing ... ♙e8-h5, and
going for a kingside attack is better.

21. ♞g5 ♞xf2??

Maybe black was feeling desperate?
21... ♞xg5 would have kept him in
the game.

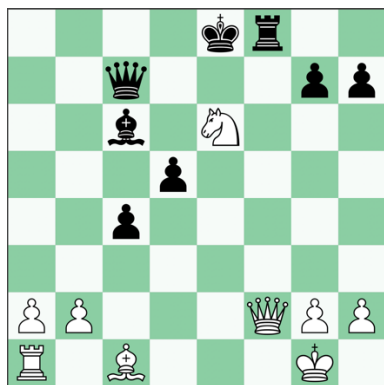
22. ♖xf2 ♖f8



►23

White has a difficult decision to make.

- (1) The problem with 23. ♞h3?! is 23... ♔e5!, although now white is a rook up he can afford to give back material with 24. ♘f4 ♙xf4 25. ♞xf4 ♙xf4 26. a4!? and still be winning.
- (2) The risky option is 23. ♞xe6 ♘xf2+ [23... ♔e5 24. ♘e3!! forces a winning endgame no matter which way black captures] 24. ♙xf2.

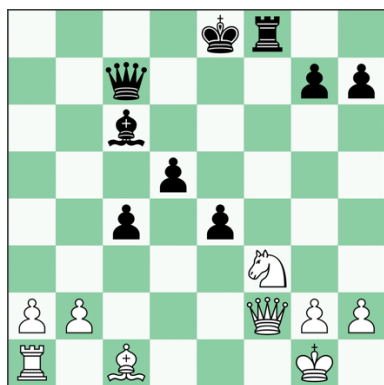


analysis

White wins after 24... ♙xh2+ 25. ♙xh2 ♙xf2 26. ♙g1!

23. ♞f3!? e5 24. ♙xh7??

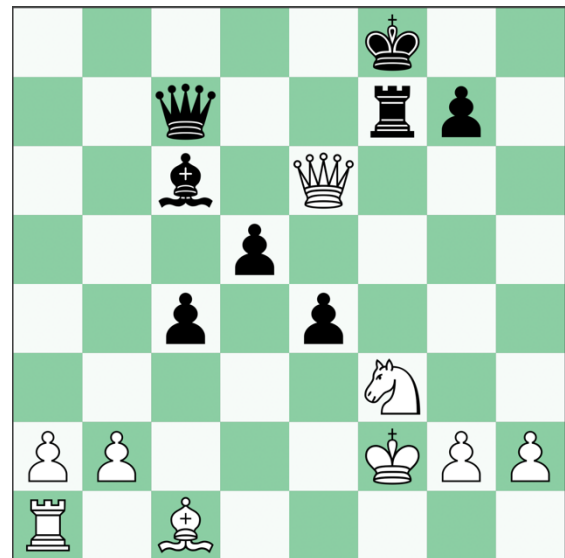
White has completely missed the point of 23...e5. He could have maintained his crushing advantage with 24. ♙e2 ♘xf2+ 25. ♙xf2 e4 .



analysis

White wins after 26. ♙e1!? or 26. ♙e3!?, but not 26. ♙e2?? ♙a7+!

24... ♘xf2+ 25. ♙xf2 e4 26. ♙g6+ ♙f7 27. ♙e6+? ♙f8



▷28

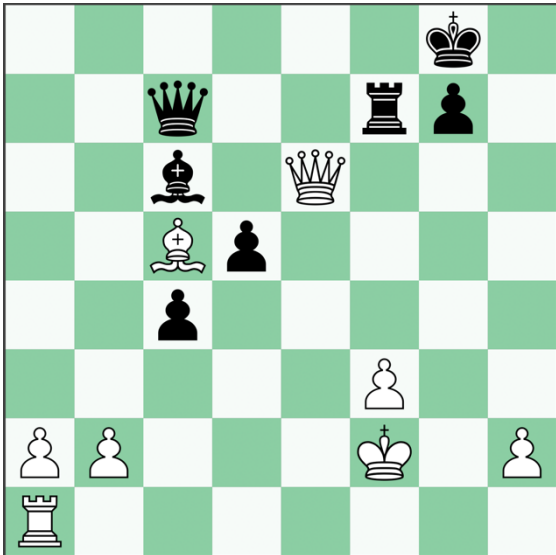
White's blunder has cost him all of his advantage, and now he must be very careful. He can't save the h-pawn with 28. ♙h3?!, because black will calmly play 28... ♙g8, and then the capture ...exf3. Then white won't be able to recapture because the new f-pawn cannot be defended.

28. ♘e3! exf3 29. ♘c5+?!

This doesn't help. White probably needed to play 29. g3.

29... ♙g8 30. gxf3??

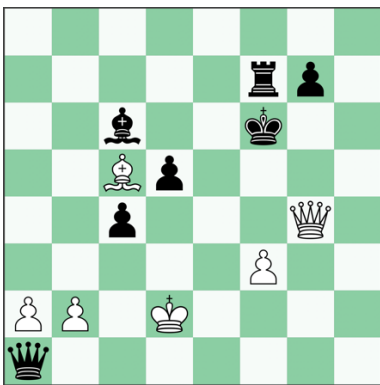
A truly awful blunder, of the kind we patzers seem to be unable to avoid.



► 30

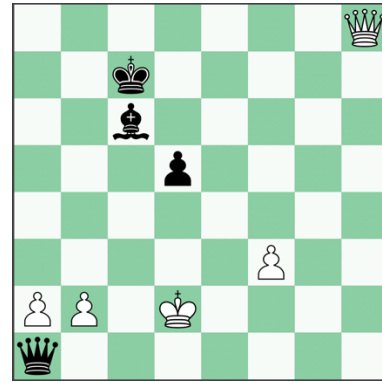
30... ♖xh2+ 31. ♔e3?

White should have tried 31. ♔e1 here, hoping for 31... ♖h1+ 32. ♔d2 ♖xa1, which allows him to force a draw with 33. ♖c8+ ♔h7 34. ♖h3+ ♔g6 35. ♖g3+ ♔f5 36. ♖g4+ ♔f6.



analysis

37. ♖d4+ ♔e7 38. ♖c5+ ♔d8 39. ♖b6+ is an immediate (and slightly unusual) perpetual check, unless black plays 39... ♖c7 40. ♖xg7 c3+! 41. ♖xc3 ♔c8 42. ♖h8+ ♔b7 43. ♖xc7 ♔xc7.



analysis

White has a draw here too, with 44.

♖g7+ ♔b6 45. ♖d4+ ♔b5 46.

♖d3+ ♔c5 47. ♖a3+ ♔b6 48.

♖e3+ ♔a6 49. ♖a3+. Of course all

of this would be irrelevant if black were to notice that 31... ♖d7!, wins easily.

31...d4+

31... ♖f4+ 32. ♔e2 ♖xf3+ is a faster win, but this is perfectly adequate.

32. ♖xd4 ♖f4+ 33. ♔e2 ♖xf3+ 34.

♔e1 ♖xd4 35. ♖c8+ ♖f8 36.

♖e6+ ♔h7 37. ♖h3+ ♔g6 38.

♖e6+ ♖f6 39. ♖e8+ ♔g5 40.

♖b5+ ♖f5

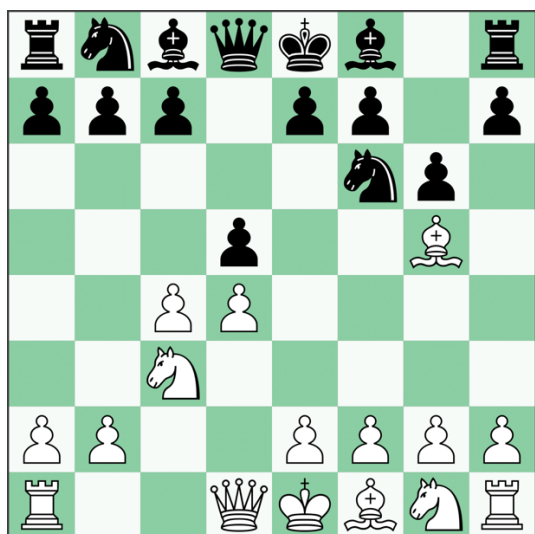
0:1

Converting an advantage in space into a "local" advantage in time

Loren Schmidt

L. Schmidt (FIDE 2340)
V. Onoprichuk (ICCF 2379)
corr. (50th ICCF World Cup) 2011
Grünfeld defence, Taimanov variation (D 80)

1. d4 ♞f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♞c3 d5 4. ♞g5



►4

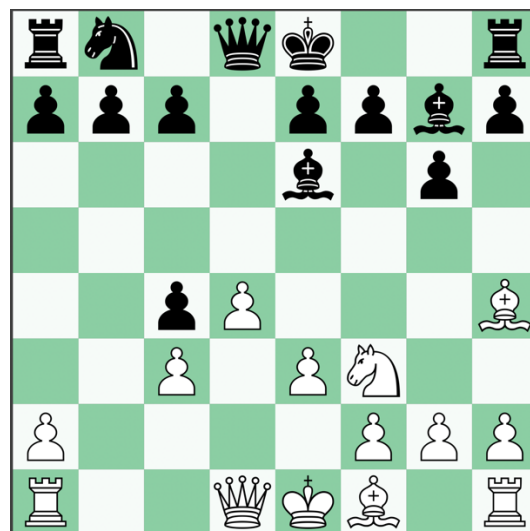
This is the Taimanov (or Stockholm) variation of the Grünfeld defence.

4...♞e4 5. ♞h4 ♞xc3 6. bxc3 dxc4

This move gives up space in the hope of slowing down white's development (time), and leads to unbalanced

positions. 6...c5 is the other idea, trying to reduce white's space advantage.

7. e3 ♞e6 8. ♞f3 ♞g7



▷9

9. ♞b1

A relatively recent idea. Previously, 9. ♞b1 was usual. The idea is to play ♞b4 at some point, with a double attack on c4 and e7.

9...♞d5!?

Protects everything, but this may be a dangerous place for the queen.

10. ♞e2 ♞a5?

Very risky. White will be able to gain time and space by threatening the queen.

11. 0-0!

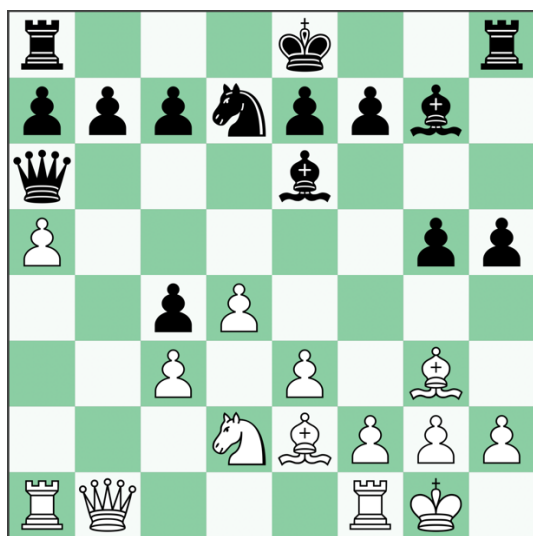
So simple – now it would be suicide to take on c3, so black must play the queen to a poor square to justify his last move.

11...♞a6?! 12. a4 h6?!

Sadly for black he cannot castle now because of the weak pawn at e7, and must lose time and weaken his position further in order to do so.

13. ♘d2 ♘d7 14. a5 g5 15. ♙g3 h5

Hoping to make a positive out of a negative by threatening to trap white's bishop.



▷16

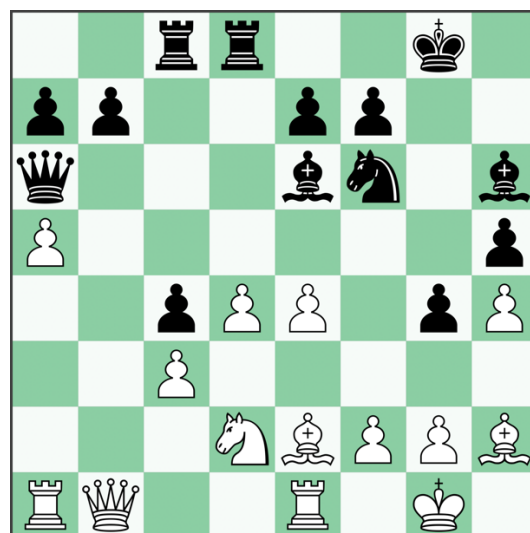
16. h3! g4 17. ♙xc7!

Again, a simple solution – white gets his pawn back since 17...gxh3 allows 18. ♙f3!., when the b7 square will be a disaster for black. From here on see how black's lack of space makes it impossible to get his queen and rook from the queenside to help defend the kingside, due to white's steady gain of space in the centre.

17... ♖c8 18. ♙h2 ♘f6 19. h4 0-0
20. ♖e1

White prepares to advance his centre and gain even more space.

20... ♖fd8 21. e4 ♙h6



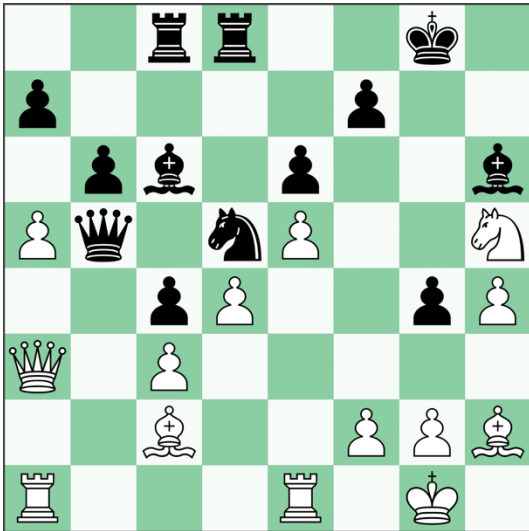
▷22

Now watch how White uses his space to transfer the bishop on e2 and the knight on d2 to attack the king. Black can only wait.

22. ♘f1 ♙d7 23. ♙d1 ♙e8 24.
♙c2 e6?! 25. ♖b4 ♙c6 26. ♘g3
♙f8 27. ♖b2 ♙h6

White is ready to attack now. When you have a pawn centre like this, wait until you can get a winning attack before advancing one of the pair. If you advance too soon, the opponent may gain some squares and be able to defend.

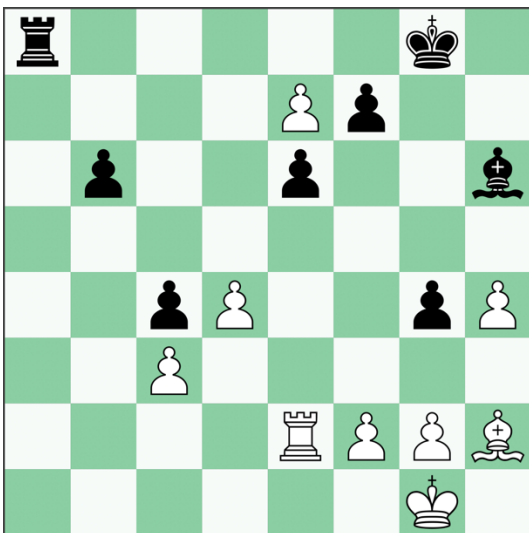
28. e5 ♘d5 29. ♘xh5 ♖b5 30. ♖a3
b6



▷ 31

White now simplifies to a winning endgame.

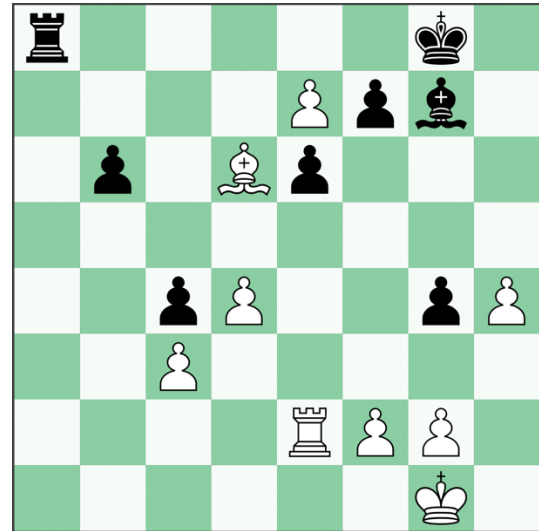
31. ♘f6+ ♘xf6 32. exf6 ♔xa5 33. ♔e7 ♔d5 34. ♕e4 ♔d7 35. ♖xa7 ♔xe7 36. fxe7 ♖e8 37. ♖e2 ♖a8 38. ♖xa8 ♕xa8 39. ♕xa8 ♖xa8



▷ 40

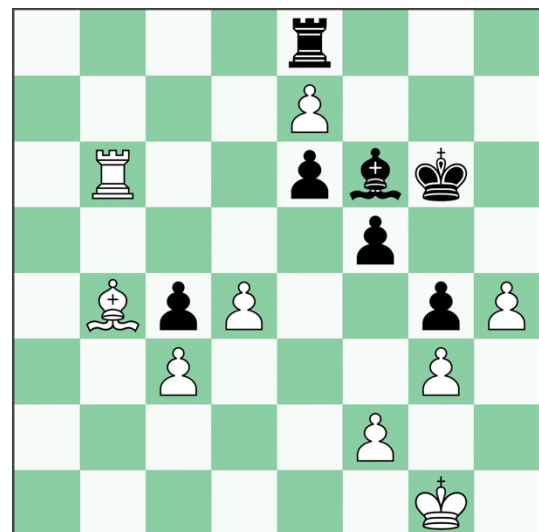
Watch out! Even when winning, you must look for your opponent's threats (in this case a back-rank mate).

40. ♕d6 ♕g7



▷ 31

41. ♖a2! ♖e8 42. g3 f5 43. ♖a7 ♔f7 44. ♖b7 ♕f6 45. ♖xb6 ♔g6 46. ♕b4



▶ 46

1:0

Soon white will be three pawns up. Try playing this out to see how to win it!

The definitive reference book, updated

Reviewed by Derek Roebuck

So long had passed since an updated edition of one of the five volumes of the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings* (ECO) had emerged, and so much had changed in that interval, especially the rise of engines and databases, that I had imagined that Chess Informant had given up on the ECO project. Certainly there has been nothing on their website recently to suggest that there has been any activity on this volume. So it came as a surprise to see this new edition advertised.

Firstly, a quick word about customer service. It is excellent. I ordered this volume on 13 December, and it arrived before Christmas. Given that I live in Perth, Western Australia, I think that is quite impressive. I have previously had to contact Chess Informant by email, and have always received a cheerful, friendly reply within a day.

The layout of this edition is similar to previous ECOs, so there is no text, only symbols that are supposed to replace descriptions. There are some improvements on earlier editions,



Encyclopaedia of chess openings, volume B (5th edition, part I)
Branko Tadić, editor-in-chief
Šahovski Informator (Chess Informant),
Belgrade, 2020
Hard cover, 483 pp.

for example there is now a diagram at the head of each section so you can keep track of the position while you browse.

The production quality is excellent, and there are relatively few editing errors. These are minor, for example when a player's name is in Cyrillic characters instead of Roman. Disappointingly, although there is a huge range of symbols available in the ECO system to describe the evaluation of a position, these are not used as often as they should be.

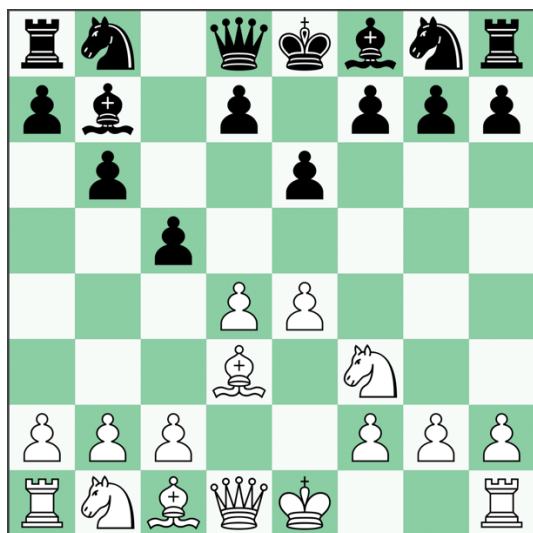
This volume covers all black replies to 1. e4 (excluding 1...e5 and 1...e6), including the Sicilian defence (except 1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6). The rest of the Sicilian (including the Classical, Dragon, Scheveningen and Najdorf variations) will appear in part II.

Updating ECO should have involved looking at a large database (including correspondence games), all recently published books on the subject and all of the major online resources.

How well the authors have done their job? I looked at various lines. Some of these were adequately covered and up to date, but some could have been better written.

Owen defence (B 00)

1. e4 b6 2. d4 ♗b7 3. ♗d3 e6 4. ♘f3 c5



▷5

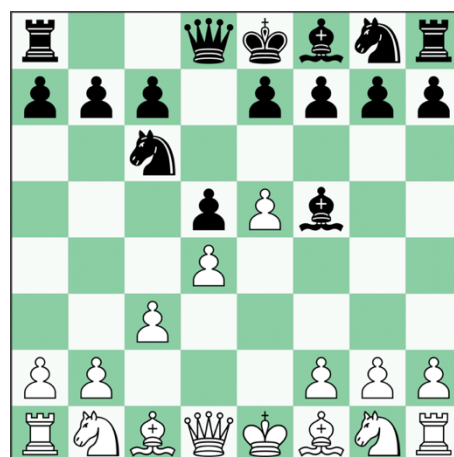
¹ Odessky I. *Winning quickly with 1. b3 and 1...b6*. New in Chess, 2020: 343-359.

² Olthof R. *Sparkling lines and deadly traps*. *New in Chess Yearbook 2020*; (137): 152-158.

There's an unfortunate error in the section on the Owen defence, where row 2 and row 4 are both 3. ♘c3, but row 3 is 3. ♗d3, which does call into question the diligence of the proof-reading. In this position ECO only considers 5. c3, which is historically the most popular, omitting 5. d5!, a pawn sacrifice which is currently quite trendy,^{1,2} and 5. ♘c3!?, which is also worth a look.³

Nimzowitsch defence (B 00)

1. e4 ♘c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 ♗f5 4. c3



▶4

4...e6

In this position, one of the main lines of the Nimzowitsch, ECO analyses only the odd-looking 4...♗d7!?, the third most frequent move in the database, and claims that white has the initiative (using the symbol "↑"). Given that 4...e6 is played four or five

³ Shaw J. *Playing 1. e4. Caro-Kann, 1...e5 & minor lines*. Quality Chess, 2016: 599-604.

times as often, it really should have been mentioned. Interestingly, the engines give white a significant advantage after either move, but this evaporates as you look more deeply, for example:

5. ♘d2 f6 6. f4 g5!? 7. ♔h5+!? ♙g6
8. ♚h3 ♚d7 9. ♙b5 gxf4 10. ♘gf3
0-0-0 11. ♘h4 ♙c2 12. ♘df3 a6

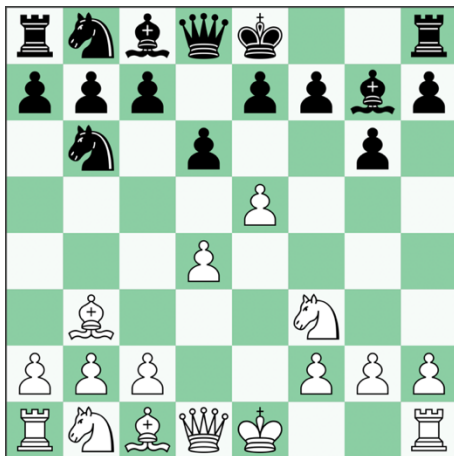
White doesn't seem to have made any mistakes, but black had equalised effortlessly in the game D.J. Roebuck – F. Schubert, corr. 2019/20.

Alekhine defence (B 04)

1. e4 ♘f6 2. e5 ♘d5 3. d4 d6 4. ♘f3 g6

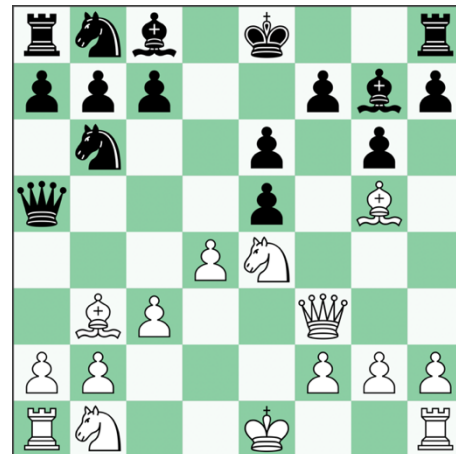
This is the second most common move here.

5. ♙c4 ♘b6 6. ♙b3 ♙g7



▷7

7. ♘g5!? e6 8. ♚f3 ♚e7 9. ♘e4
dxe5 10. ♙g5 ♚b4+ 11. c3 ♚a5

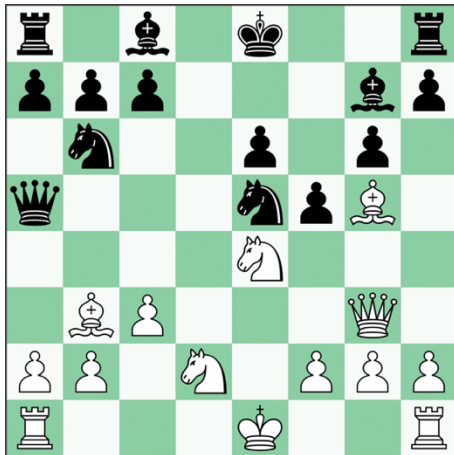


▷12

Here ECO gives only 12. ♙f6 ♙xf6 13. ♚xf6 0-0 14. ♚xe5 ♚xe5 15. dxe5, which is about equal, and 12. ♘f6+ ♔f8 [12... ♙xf6?? loses to 13. ♚xf6, threatening the rook on h8 and also mate on d8] 13. d5 e4!, which is good for black, because white has to find a tricky sequence to stay in the game: 14. ♘xe4 exd5 15. ♙f4!! The point is that 15...dxe4?? 16. ♙d6+ forces mate, but *Stockfish 12* gives black a trivial edge after 15...♘c6.

Instead, white has two better moves. 12. d5!? could work well at club level, because black might play 12...exd5?, allowing the forcing continuation 13. ♘f6+ ♔f8 14. ♘xd5 ♙e6 15. ♘xb6 ♚xb6 16. ♙xe6 ♚xe6 17. ♚xb7 ♚c6 18. ♚c8+ ♚e8 19. ♚xc7, when white is a pawn up with a very strong position. But black is likely to find 12...♘xd5 13. ♙xd5 exd5 14. ♘f6+ ♔f8, when white can get one pawn back after 15. b4!, and probably has sufficient compensation for the second, but no more. The best move, however, is probably...

12. dxe5! ♞8d7 13. ♞bd2 ♞xe5 14. ♚g3 f5



▷15

15. 0-0-0!! 0-0

Given that 15...fxe4 16. ♞c4! and 15...♞d5 16. f4 ♞f7 17. ♚xd5! both look dire for black, the only sensible alternative seems to be 15...h6 16. ♚f6 0-0 17. ♞f3!? ♚xf6 18. ♞xf6+ ♚xf6 19. ♚xe5 ♚xe5 20. ♞xe5, when black will probably have to give back the pawn and accept a slightly inferior endgame.

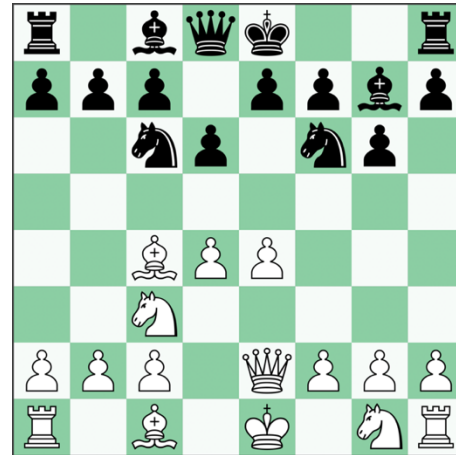
Most of the analysis after 12. dxe5! was published by Justin Tan at chesspublishing.com in June 2019.

16. f4 fxe4 17. fxe5 ♚xe5 18. ♚h4 a5 19. a4 ♚d7 20. ♚he1

Although the engine still shows a healthy edge for white, black had no trouble reaching a draw in the game D.J. Roebuck – L. Schmidt, corr. 2019/20.

Pirc defence (B 07)

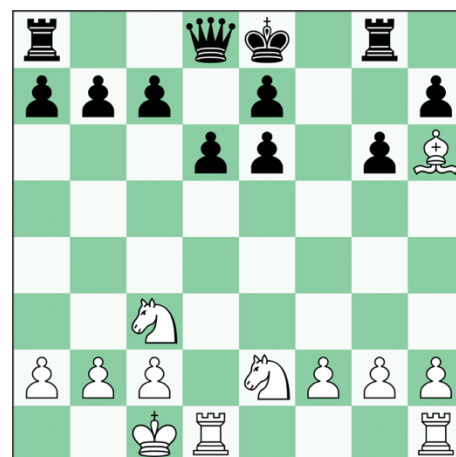
1. e4 d6 2. d4 ♞f6 3. ♞c3 g6 4. ♚c4 ♚g7 5. ♚e2 ♞c6



▷6

ECO likes 6. ♞f3 here, and gives the interesting idea 6. e5!? short shrift, as follows:

6. e5 ♞xd4 7. exf6 ♞xe2 8. fxg7 ♚g8 9. ♞gxe2 ♚xg7 10. ♚h6 ♚g8 11. 0-0-0 ♚e6 12. ♚xe6 fxe6



▷13

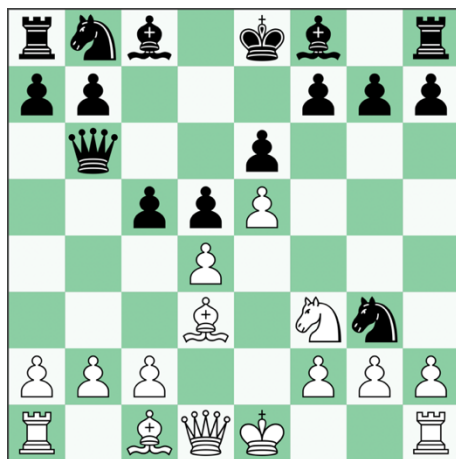
Now ♚, the ECO symbol for “black stands slightly better” is deployed, but *Stockfish 12* says that it is white who has a modest (about a third of a

pawn) edge after 13. h4 (the idea is to discourage ...g5, potentially trapping the bishop). Black will most likely play 13...♔d7 and 14...0-0-0, and white will continue with ♖he1 and f3, and rearrange his or her knights depending on what black does with the central pawns.

But another problem with the ECO analysis is that black appears to have a better alternative at move 11. After 11...c6!? white's three pieces may not be enough to cope with black's queen and two pawns after all.

Caro-Kann defence (B 11)

1. e4 c6 2. ♘c3 d5 3. ♘f3 ♘f6 4. e5
 ♘e4 5. ♘e2 ♔b6 6. d4 e6 7. ♘g3 c5
 8. ♙d3 ♘xg3



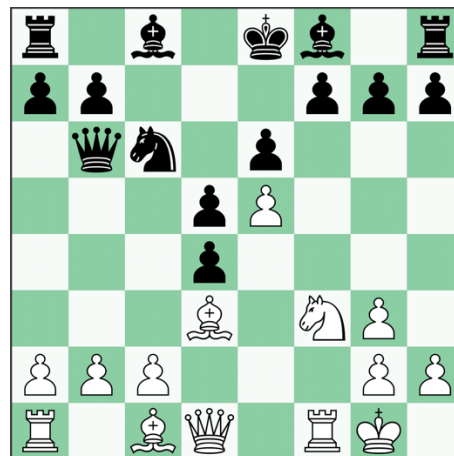
▷9

In this position from the Two knights' variation of the Caro-Kann, the only recapture considered by ECO is the "automatic" 9. hxg3, but the counter-

⁴ Well, the chess parts of the internet anyway. If you want to check this out, you could start at

intuitive idea 9. fxg3! is fashionable, and has been for some time now. In fact, you would practically have had to have been living under a rock to have missed this novelty, which has been widely published.

9. fxg3! cxd4 10. 0-0 ♘c6



▷11

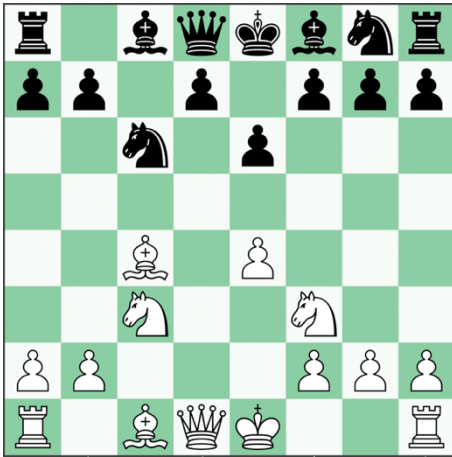
Here the engines say white can play 11. a3, with a handy advantage. Other moves are available, including 11. ♔e2, and 11. b4!?, which has been thoroughly analysed by Daniel Fernandez at chesspublishing.com.

Sicilian, Morra gambit (B 20)

The American player Elijah Logozar's claims of a refutation of the Morra gambit (1. e4 c5 2. d4!?) were all over the internet in 2019.⁴

1. e4 c5 2. d4 cxd4 3. c3 dxc3 4.
 ♘xc3 ♘c6 5. ♘f3 e6 6. ♙c4

<https://new.uschess.org/theory/bust-smith-morra-gambit>



►6

6...♞ge7!?

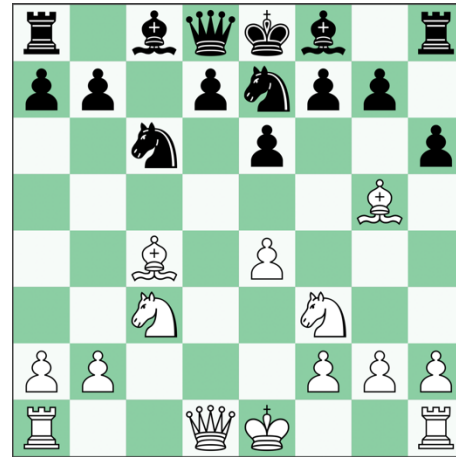
ECO considers only 6...a6 here, but Logozar doesn't like this move order, pointing out that 7. 0-0 ♞ge7 8. ♙g5 almost forces black to play one of two weakening pawn moves

(1) 8...f6, which is met by 9. ♙e3, followed by ♞d4 and f4-f5.

(2) 8...h6, when 9. ♙e3 carries the threat of ♞a4-b6, as in the line 9...♞g6 10. ♙b3 b5 (to prevent ♞a4), when black's lack of kingside development allows white to play 11. ♞d5!, with a strong initiative.

7. ♙g5 h6!

This is Logozar's "refutation". He has had some unseemly internet disputes about this with IM Marc Esserman, who wrote a famous book on the opening.⁵ Let's ignore their spat and take a look for ourselves.



►8

The Morra gambit is almost totally tactical, so it should come as no surprise to see that white's best move here is not to retreat the bishop or exchange it on e7, but instead:

8. ♞b5!

Threatening mate in one, obviously.

8...d5

An unbiased examination of this line⁶ suggests that there is a simple road to equality for white:

9. exd5 hxg5 10. dxc6 ♞xc6 11. ♙xd8+ ♚xd8

Now white can play 12. 0-0-0+ or 12. ♙d1, and take the pawn on g5 if he or she feels like it. In lines like these it shouldn't really matter that white appears to be struggling – with best play the position is equal, at least according to *Stockfish 12*, and in practice the better player will win.

⁵ *Mayhem in the Morra* (Quality Chess 2012)

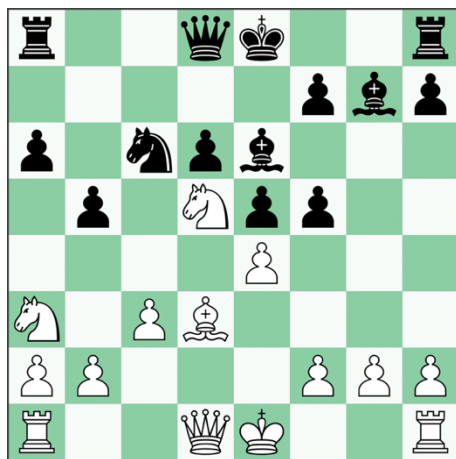
⁶ See, for example, analysis at talkchess.com: <http://www.talkchess.com/forum3/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=71408&start=20>

Sicilian, Sveshnikov variation (B 33)

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. ♖c3 e5

White is struggling to show any edge at all against the Sveshnikov variation.

6. ♗db5 d6 7. ♕g5 a6 8. ♗a3 b5 9. ♕xf6 gxf6 10. ♗d5 f5 11. ♕d3 ♕e6 12. c3 ♕g7

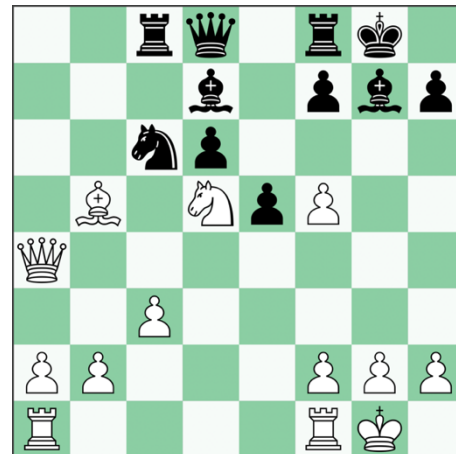


▷ 13

13. ♗xb5!? axb5 14. ♕xb5 ♖c8 15. ♖a4 ♕d7 16. exf5 0-0

This is not black's only safe route to equality. 16...h5!? 17. 0-0 ♖h6 18. ♖fd1 ♔f8 19. h3 ♕f6 20. ♖e4 ♗e7 21. ♗xe7 ♕xe7 22. ♕xd7 ♖xd7 23. a4 ♖c6 24. ♖xc6 ♖xc6 25. a5 ♖a6 26. b4 ♕d8 27. ♔f1 h4 28. ♖a4 ♔e7 29. ♖da1 ♔d7 30. b5 was a draw in D.J. Roebuck – I. MacTilstra, corr. 2016/17.

17. 0-0



▶ 17

In this long theoretical line, ECO gives only 17...♔h8?!, following the game I. Cheparinov – S. Halkias, Antalya 2004, and concluding that white stands slightly better (“±”). This assessment is changed by a move first played in 2003:

17...e4!

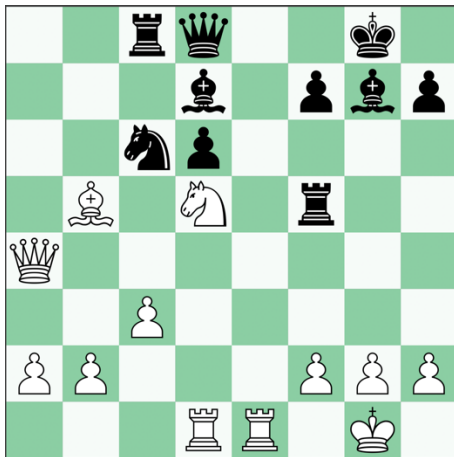
Parimarjan Negi's 2015 textbook⁷ has nearly 10 pages on this, and it is 13 times more common in the database, so to miss it out is a bit careless.

18. ♖xe4!?

Negi examines 18. ♖fe1 ♗e5! in great detail, before admitting that “the pesky correspondence players” have spoiled it for white by showing that black can get to a draw after 19. ♕xd7 ♗xd7 20. ♖xe4 ♗f6 21. ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 22. ♖ed1!? [22. ♖ad1 ♖b6] ♖b6 23. ♖d2 ♖fe8 24. ♖f3 ♖e5 25. g3 ♖ce8!

18... ♖e8 19. ♖a4 ♖e5 20. ♖ad1 ♖xf5 21. ♖fe1

⁷ Negi P. 1. e4 vs the Sicilian II, Quality Chess, 2015: 350-359



►21

21...♔h8

This is Negi's mainline, but there's an even simpler way for black to force a draw: 21...♖a8 22. ♔c4 ♖c8 [22...♞e5!?! is Solf's speculative suggestion, but you will notice that he didn't actually play it], and in D.J. Roebuck – F. Solf, corr. 2016/17 white took the draw with 23. ♔a4, instead of going for Negi's recommendation of 23. f4, which might have been tricky after 23...♞e6!?! or 23...♖h5!?! *Stockfish 12's* evaluations are drifting towards a black edge here, and if white is to show any advantage in the Sveshnikov, it probably needs to be in some other line.

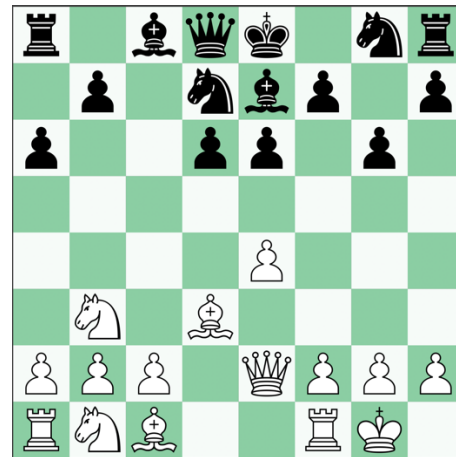
22. f4 ♖h5 23. h3 ♖h6 24. ♖e2 ♖e6

And D.J. Roebuck – A.M. Saidashev, corr. 2016/17 petered out into a draw after a few more moves.

Although I am far from expert in this field, other parts of the Sveshnikov variation seem to be covered quite well in this edition, so perhaps leaving out 17...e4, although unfortunate, is forgivable.

Sicilian, Kan variation (B 42)

1. e4 c5 2. ♞f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♞xd4 a6 5. ♞d3 ♞c5 6. ♞b3 ♞e7 7. 0-0 d6 8. ♔g4 g6 9. ♔e2 ♞d7

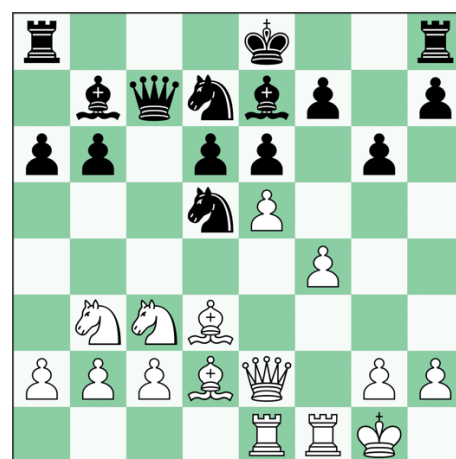


►10

10. ♞c3!?

Interestingly, this is not in *Stockfish 12's* top five choices at depth 38, but is still very frequently played.

10...♔c7 11. ♞d2 b6 12. ♖ae1 ♞b7 13. f4 ♞gf6 14. e5 ♞d5



►15

Here ECO gives 14...♞d5 a "!", indicating a good move, followed by

15. ♖xd5 ♗xd5, and the symbol "=", indicating equality. Negi⁸ points out a much stronger reply, that had been known about since at least 2008:⁹

15. ♖e4!

White spurns the offered exchange of pieces, and instead threatens to win the poor knight with 16. c4.

15...dxe5

There's not much choice, given that 15...b5 16. exd6 ♗xd6 17. ♖xd6+ ♗xd6 18. f5 gxf5 19. ♗xf5 looks so strong for white.

16. fxe5 0-0

Now the black king really needs to get to safety, before something seriously bad happens, for example 16... ♖b8? 17. c4 ♖b4 18. ♖d6+ ♗xd6 19. exd6 ♗xd6 [19... ♗c6 20. ♖xf7!] 20. ♗xb4 ♗xb4 21. ♖xf7!

17. ♖f2!

White needs to be a little careful with the ensuing kingside attack, but his or her advantage is undeniable. Clearly this line should have been included in this edition of ECO.

Conclusion

My examples are biased, of course, because they are mostly variations with which I am familiar, but I have no reason to doubt that there are similar problems in other parts of the book.

Another issue is the ECO tradition of neglecting slightly disreputable lines.

⁸ Negi P. *1. e4 vs the Sicilian III*, Quality Chess, 2016: 291

I can understand why 1. e4 h6!? and 1. e4 g5!? were left out, but it was a strange decision not to mention the North Sea defence (1. e4 g6 2. d4 ♖f6!? 3. e5 ♖h5), even though it has been played in competitive games by several very strong grandmasters, including the current world champion.

The authors are not the big names of the past (when the first edition of volume B came out in 1975, its contributors included former world champions Euwe, Botvinnik and Tal, and other greats of the game such as Keres, Korchnoi and Larsen) but does this really matter in the era of engines and databases? Of course, these same engines and databases are a real challenge to the relevance of ECO. What is the point of a printed book like this when opening theory is changing so rapidly?

Overall, this is a nice reference book, and I'm glad I bought it, but I suspect it is more useful to editors than to your average club player, who will not learn much from it, partly because of mistakes and omissions like the ones I have shown here, but mainly due to the absence of any explanations of the important concepts behind these openings.

Ratings (out of five stars)

Club player **
Correspondence player ***

⁹ Hellsten J. *Play the Sicilian Kan*, Everyman Chess, 2008: 236

Endings for the club player

Rook versus pawn, part 1

♠ 0/b

Derek Roebuck

These endings almost always arise from a game in which each side has rook and pawns, and where one player has been forced to give up a rook for the opponent's last pawn(s). It is *usually* won for the side with the rook (which for the purposes of these articles we will arbitrarily make white).

King and rook versus king and pawn

It should be obvious that if his or her king stands, or can be moved to, a square in the path of a solitary pawn (without losing the rook) then white wins easily. The borderline positions, however, can be quite complicated.

Playing white

When black's king can support the advance of the pawn, you need to break your plan down into the following obvious steps:

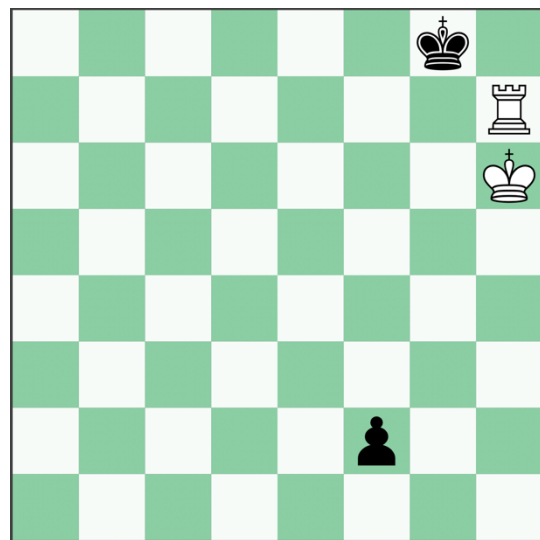
1. Do not allow black to promote his or her pawn.
2. Capture black's pawn (avoiding stalemate). The rook is almost

always best placed *behind* the advancing pawn.

3. Checkmate with king and rook versus king.

What if the pawn *does* promote?

Queen versus rook (without pawns) is theoretically winning, although it is very difficult and may, therefore, be covered in a future volume of **Patzer**. So if black can promote (and white cannot immediately capture the new queen) he or she should win. There are, however, some extremely unlikely exceptions (diagram 1).



1 An improbable position ▶

1. ♖g7+! ♔f8

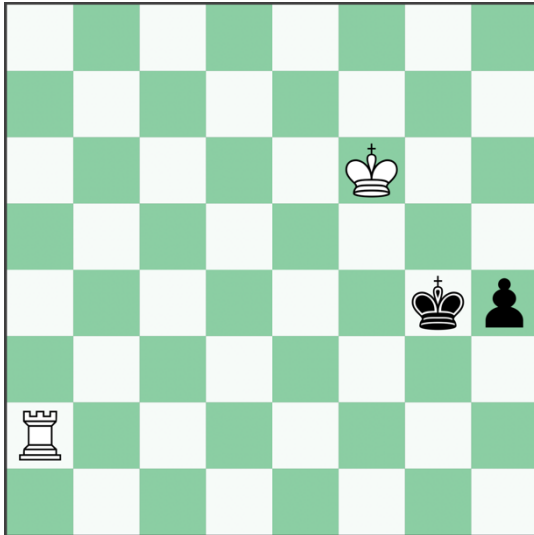
1...♔h8 2. ♖h7+ ♔g8 3. ♖g7+ is obviously getting black nowhere.

2. ♖g5! f1♔ 3. ♖f5+ ♔xf5

Stalemate!

Underpromotion to a knight

On some occasions black is forced to underpromote in order to avoid immediate mate, although he or she will still lose if the knight is in the corner (diagram 2).



2 A knight in the corner is lost ▶

In this position white can simply chase black down the board rank by rank. Although this idea is definitely worth remembering, it only works with an h- or a-pawn. (In part 2 we will see the surprising outcome when you try this with a b- or g-pawn.)

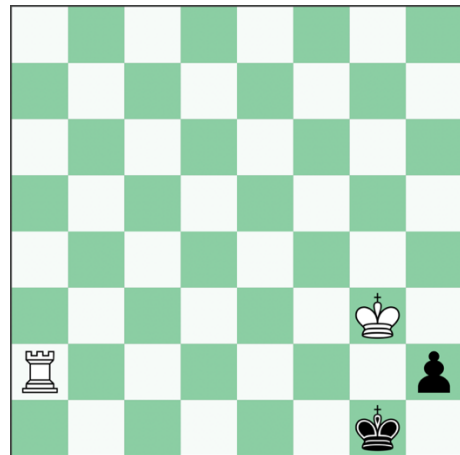
1. ♖a4+! ♔g3 2. ♔g5 h3

This advance is obviously forced, or black loses the pawn.

3. ♖a3+ ♔g2 4. ♔g4 h2

White just has to repeat his little manoeuvre.

5. ♖a2+ ♔g1 6. ♔g3!



2a Underpromotion ▶

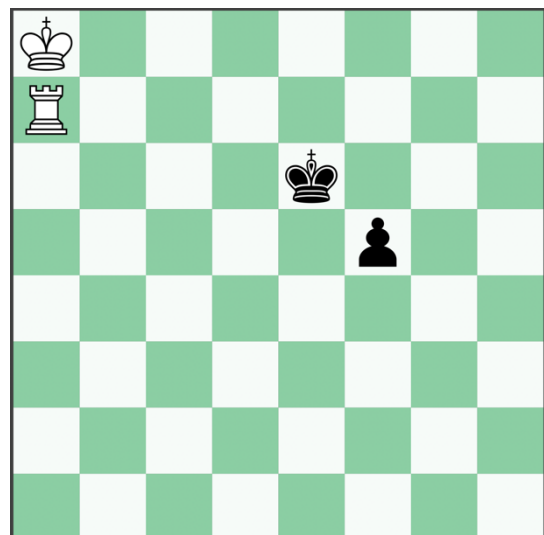
6...h1 ♞+

6...h1 ♚ 7. ♖a1 is mate, but a new knight in the corner is always lost:

7. ♔f3 ♞g3 8. ♔xg3

Capturing the pawn

If the black king cannot protect the pawn, or can be separated from it by a "cut-off" on white's fifth rank or better, then the win is easy.

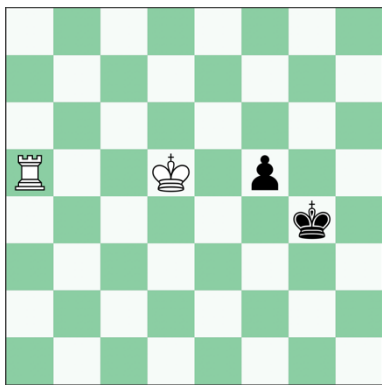


3 Cut-off on the fifth rank ▶

Actually, the win would be even more obvious if the pawn stood on f4 or h5, because then 1. ♖a5! cuts the king off completely. In diagram 3, white wins with:

1. ♖a5! f4

If black tries to use the pawn as a shield for the king, white has time to bring his own king over: 1...♔f6 2. ♔b7 ♔g5 3. ♔c6 ♔g4 4. ♔d5



analysis

White's threat is simply ♔e5. Black can't prevent this with 4...♔f4 because white has 5. ♖a4+ ♔f3 6. ♔e5, and must therefore push the pawn and lose it: 4...f4 5. ♔e4 f3 6. ♖f5 and white wins.

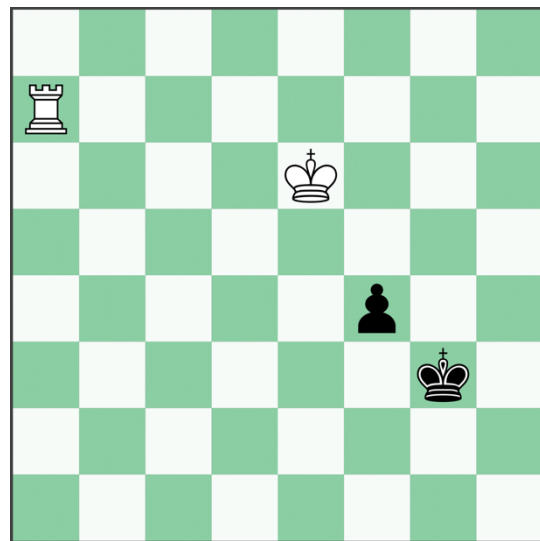
2. ♔b7 f3 3. ♖a3 f2 4. ♖f3

Clearly, if the cut-off is too low on the board (fourth rank or less) then this method will not work, because the pawn will promote.

Chasing down the pawn

It is obvious that the white king and rook must cooperate to capture the pawn when it is supported by the black king. If both white's pieces can attack the pawn, however, then (with the exception of immediate stalemate) black must move it or

lose it. Pushing the pawn will usually fail when the rook attacks it along the file, because it takes black two moves to advance the pawn one rank (the king must accompany it), and white's king only one move to chase it (diagram 4). White can sometimes save a tempo by giving a check before attacking the pawn, forcing black to defend it rather than advance it.



4 Chasing down the pawn ▶

1. ♖g7+! ♔f2!?

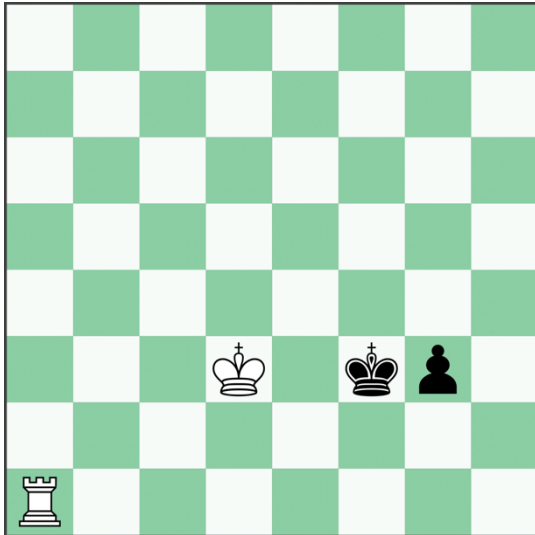
This offers more resistance than 1...♔h3 2. ♖f7 ♔g4 (note how white's check has effectively gained a tempo) 3. ♔e5 f3 4. ♔e4.

2. ♔f5!

2. ♔e5?? allows black to shelter his or her king from check: 2...♔e3! 3. ♖f7 f3 and white must give up the rook to stop the pawn.

2...f3 3. ♔f4 ♔e2 4. ♖e7+ ♔f2 5. ♖e3

White wins.



5 Using the opposition ▶

It is obviously more difficult when the white king cannot approach the pawn because black's king is "shouldering" it away. In diagram 5 the kings are in opposition, so it is the logical time for a rook check.

1. ♖f1+! ♔g4

Black also loses after 1...♔g2 2. ♔e2 ♔h2 (see diagram 6).

2. ♔e3 g2

2...♔h3 3. ♖f4! g2 [if black moves the king, white will play 4. ♖g4, then get his king to f3 and capture the pawn] 4. ♔f2 ♔h2 5. ♖h4 mate.

3. ♖g1!?

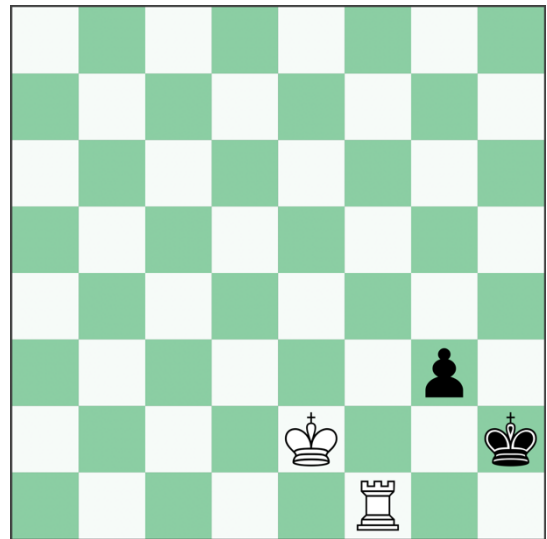
Computers play 3. ♖e1, but I suspect that most patzers will find this easier to remember.

3...♔g3 4. ♔e2 ♔h2 5. ♔f2

White wins.

The pawn on g2

If the pawn reaches g2 white needs to beware of stalemate tricks.

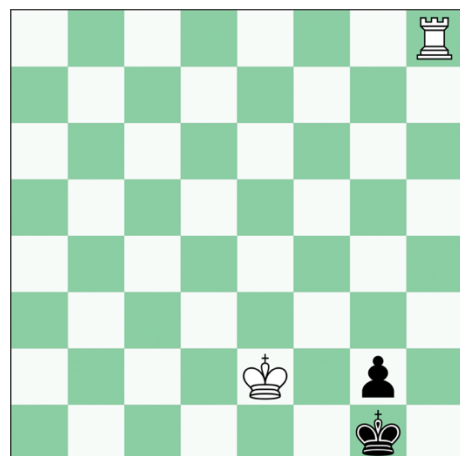


6 The pawn reaches g2 ▶

1. ♖f8!?

1. ♖d1 g2 2. ♔f2 ♔h3 3. ♖g1 is also winning, but 1. ♖f8! is quite instructive. Just don't play 1. ♔f3?? g2 2. ♖f2 ♔h1 3. ♖xg2 stalemate.

1...g2 2. ♖h8+ ♔g1



6a ▶

3. ♖g8!

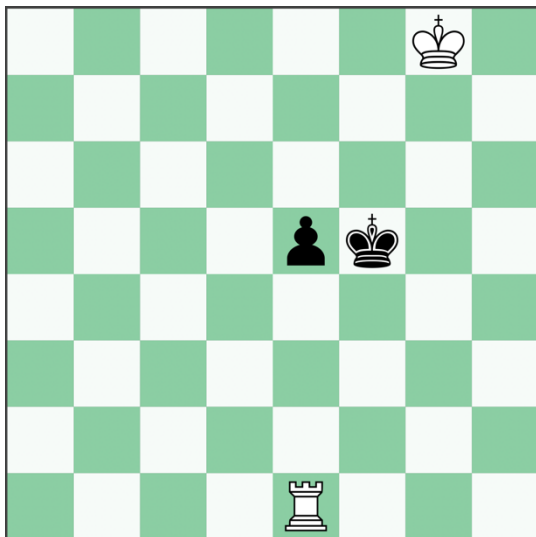
Not 3. ♔f3?? and black will draw by sheltering from check with 3...♔f1!

3...♔h2 4. ♔f2 ♔h1!? 5. ♖h8#

Zugzwang

Our regular readers will recall this concept from previous issues.¹⁰

Zugzwang (indicated in this article by the symbol ☹) applies when a player's obligation to make a move is a serious disadvantage.



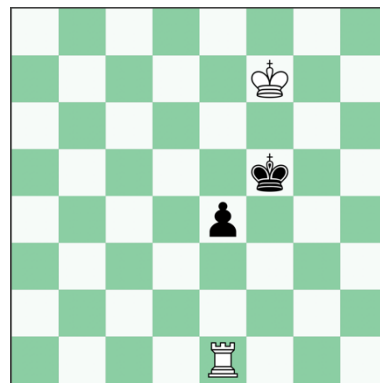
7 Zugzwang



It would be a mistake to think that because white has a rook it would be easy for him to "lose" a move, so he doesn't need to worry about taking the opposition with his king.

1. ♔f8!!

White must not play the obvious 1. ♔f7??, because after 1...e4 his king cannot approach, and black draws easily.



analysis

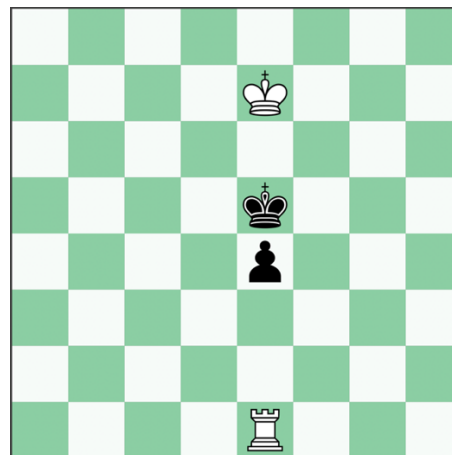
(1) If white tries 2. ♖f1+ black replies 2...♔g4! 3. ♔e6 [3. ♖e1 ♔f5 repeats] e3 4. ♖e1 ♔f3.

(2) If 2. ♖e2, black attacks the rook and gains a tempo: 2...♔e5 3. ♔e7 ♔f4 4. ♔e6 e3 5. ♔d5 ♔f3 6. ♖e1 e2, and draws.

1...e4 2. ♔f7!☹

Now black is in zugzwang.

2...♔e5 3. ♔e7☹



7a Zugzwang



Black must go one way or the other.

3...♔d4 4. ♔e6 e3 5. ♔f5 ♔d3 6. ♔f4 e2 7. ♔f3

White wins.

¹⁰ Patzer 2019; 1(1): 11



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