



## C O L U M N I S T S

*Over the  
Horizons*

Stefan Bucker

## Only a Storm in a Teacup?

In recent works on the Marshall Attack, the main line  $9...Nxd5$  fills about ten times as many pages as the alternative  $9...e4$ , which fairly reflects the popularity of the two moves. Apparently, sacrificing one pawn is enough for modern players. In comparison, old sources reserved more space for  $9...e4$ . For example, Leonard Barden's book [2] from 1963 covers  $9...Nxd5$  in five columns, while  $9...e4$  gets  $2\frac{1}{2}$  columns. And yes, Barden claims that the latter were "clearly refuted." We will soon return to the critical position.

**Peter Langer** from **Germany** likes Black's chances after  $9...e4$ . He sent me five correspondence games, all won by him. The most impressive example is our main game and his other experiences are given in the notes. Experts of the Marshall Attack won't be surprised to see Tim Harding referred to more than once, for no one has written more books on the Marshall Attack. In writing this article, clearly the most useful source was the *Total Marshall* CD (by Tim Harding, Janis Vitomskis and Martin Bennedik), published in 2002. The author of the  $9...e4$  section was the Latvian theoretician Vitomskis.





The Gambit Pawn © by Zygmunt Nasiolkowski, Lüdenscheid

***U. Vetter – P. Langer***

Correspondence, April 1999

Ruy Lopez [C89]

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 b5 6 Bb3 Be7 7 Re1 0-0  
8 c3 d5**

The Marshall Attack was first played in 1893 in Havana by four Cubans in consultation against Walbrodt. Another game, Sittenfeld – Soldatenkow, appeared in 1901 in *La Stratégie*. It was seven-teen years later when Frank Marshall introduced the move to grandmaster play.

**9 exd5 e4**



Black sacrifices a second pawn. The text move characterizes the Herman Steiner Variation, yet Frank Marshall had the idea years before his American colleague. When Stoltz – H. Steiner, Hamburg 1930, was played, the move was considered a theoretical novelty (cf. [\[1\]](#), also *Wiener Schachzeitung* 1930, p. 276: “neu!”). More popular is 9...Nxd5, where Black seems to have enough compensation for the

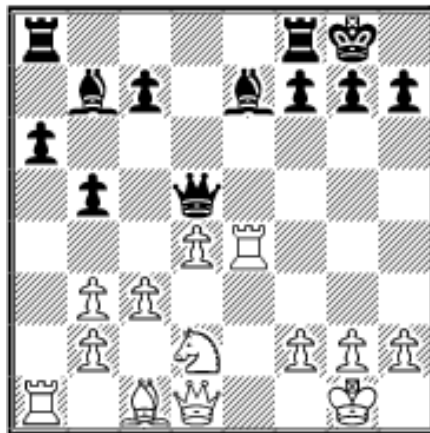
pawn.

9...e4 has a somewhat dubious image:

- “A good line for those who like to sacrifice their material while setting nasty traps. Of course, the problem is that if White sidesteps the tactics the reward is a better game.” G. Lane [9].
- “This extravagant variation is not nowadays in fashion. Indeed, the ‘waves’ of interest in it over the years have not generally amounted to more than a storm in a teacup, although in practice it does contain some venom.” A. Suetin [8].
- Tim Harding [5] wasn’t so negative: “Unsound or not, there has been a lot of experience with it in correspondence chess and internal Soviet events, with Black scoring his share of wins.”

## 10 dxc6

According to **Jeroen van den Bersselaar** from **The Netherlands**, 10 Ng5 is best answered by 10...Na5, with approximate equality; for example, 11 Nxe4 Nxe4 12 Rxe4 Bb7 13 d4 Nxb3 14 axb3 Qxd5 15 Nd2.



Krogius & Matsukevich [7] continue: “Now White is ready to counter 15...f5 with 16 c4. How strong Black’s initiative remains in this case, wasn’t yet determined in practice.” This is translated in [13] to “15...f5 16 c4 +/- Krogius, Matsukevic.” In fact, the position seems balanced after 16...Qf7. And 15...Bf6! 16 Qg4 Rfe8 may be even better.

Note that instead of 10...Na5, the old variation 10...Bg4? 11 f3! exf3 12 gxf3 Nxd5 13 Nxe4 Bb7 14 f4 Bxh2 15 Kxh2 ... → (Keres) is unplayable, because of 15 Kf1! Kxh7 16 Qf3 + (Van den Bersselaar).

In M. Fetzer – P. Langer, White chose the weaker 11 Qc2 Ne5 12 Nxe4 Nxe4 13 Qxe4 Bd6 14 f4 (or 14 d4 f5 15 Qxe5!?, but surely Black isn’t worse) 14...Ng6! (a strong novelty) 15 d4 (15 g3 Qd7 16 Qc2 Rfe8 17 Re3 Nxf4! etc.) 15...Qd7 16 Rf1 (16 Qc2 Rfe8!; i.e., 17 Re5 Nxe5 18 fxe5 Bxe5 -/+ ) 16...Rae8 17 Qc2 Re2 18 Qd3 Nh4 19 g3 Rg2+ 20 Kh1 Be2 0-1.

## 10...exf3 11 Qxf3



Herman Steiner (USA)

The main line in [Total Marshall \[13\]](#). Tim Harding: “Theory has swung back to the view that this move, rather than 11 d4, is the most accurate attempt to refute the Herman Steiner Variation.” In the history of this opening, more books have recommended 11 d4. We’ll look at this important alternative at the end of the article.

### 11...Bg4 12 Qg3

In two of Peter Langer’s games White fell into an old trap: 12 Qe3?! Re8 13 d4? (13 Qg5) Bd6 14 Qd2 Bf4! → Tislenko – Pakulis, Liepaja 1981.

### 12...Re8

12...Bd6 13 Qh4 Re8 14 f3 Rxe1+ 15 Qxe1 Qe8 16 Qxe8+ Rxe8 17 Kf2 Bf5 18 d4 Bd3 19 Bd1 Bxh2 20 Nd2?? (20 Na3 = was necessary) 20...Re1 21 Bc2 Re2+ 22 Kf1 Bg3 23 Kg1 Re1+ and White resigned, H. Bussjaeger – P. Langer, 1998.

### 13 f3

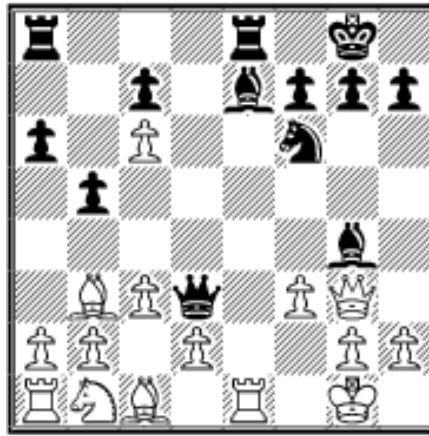
Other continuations are less critical:

(a) 13 d4 Bd6 14 Rxe8+ Qxe8 15 Qe3 Qxc6 16 f3 Re8 17 Qf2 Bf5 (17...Re7!? Radchenko 1963, is also interesting) 18 Bg5, and instead of the unclear complications after 18...Bd3, Black can choose the simpler

18...Nd5 =.

(b) 13 f4 Bd6 14 Rxe8+ Qxe8 15 d4 Qxc6 is another situation where Black has full compensation for his sacrificed pawn.

**13...Qd3!**



Black's position is menacing.

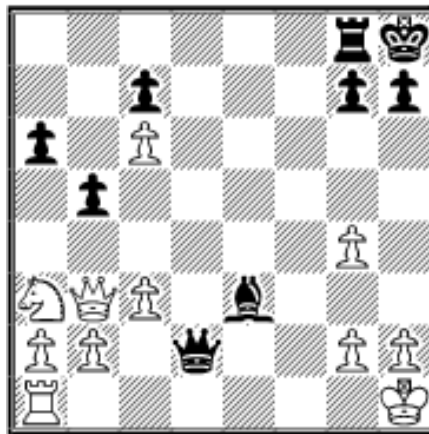
**14 fxe4 Bc5+ 15 Re3**

Forced because of 15 Kh1 Rxe1+ 16 Qxe1 Re8 17 Qd1 Nxe4, etc.

**15...Rad8 16 g5?**

[Total Marshall \[13\]](#) recommended 16 Na3! Ne4 17 Qf3 Nxd2 18 Bxd2 Qxd2 19 Bxf7+ Kh8 20 Bxe8 Rxe8

etc., (+/-). But this analysis also contains a side line, where Black seems to survive: 20...Bxe3+ 21 Kh1 Rxe8 22 Qf7 Rg8 23 Qb3 (so far [Total Marshall \[13\]](#))



Instead of Vitomskis' 23...Bf4?, Black plays 23...Bc5! and equalizes.

**16...Nd5 17 Qf3 Nxe3 +- 18 dxe3 Re5 19 g4! Bxe3+ 20 Bxe3 Rxe3 21 Qxf7+ Kh8 22 Na3 Rf3! 23 Qe6 Rdf8 24 Qe1 R3f4 0-1**

**The Second Main Line 11 d4**

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 b5 6 Bb3 Be7 7 Re1 0-0 8 c3 d5 9 exd5 e4 10 dxc6 exf3 11 d4**



This is preferred by most sources. In *ECO*, the line 9...e4 has dwindled from six lines in the first edition to just two lines in the third. The latter edition considers 11 Qf3 as the weaker option (where Black has compensation), but claims a clear advantage (+/–) after 11 d4.

### 11...fxg2 12 Qf3

(a) 12 Bg5 (Barden [1]: “This development is the most advantageous move for White [...] White’s plan is simple and direct: Qf3xg2, Nd2 and doubling his rooks on the e-file. Black doesn’t have an adequate answer.”) 12...Bg4 is *ECO*’s main line [11]. Here 12...a5 comes into consideration, when 13 Qf3 a4 would transpose to our main line.

(b) 12 Bf4 Bg4! 13 Qd3 Nh5 14 Be5 Bd6; for example, 15 Nd2 Kh8 16 Bc2 f5 17 Nf3 Nf4 18 Qe3 Nh3+ 19 Kg2 (so far Gufeld – Chikovani, Tbilisi 1976) 19...Bxe5! 20 Qxe5 Rf6 21 d5 Rg6 22 Re3 Qxd5! =.

(c) 12 Nd2 a5!? 13 a4 bxa4 14 Rxa4 Bg4 15 Nf3 Bd6 16 d5 Re8 17 Kxg2 Rxe1 18 Qxe1 Qc8 (or 18...Bxf3+ 19 Kxf3 Nxd5 20 Bxd5? Qf6+) 19 Nh4 Rb8 with fine compensation.

The text move is given an “!” by Ludek Pachman (1980). It is also the (+/–) main line for John Nunn in [12], while 12 Bg5 only gets a +=.

### 12...a5!



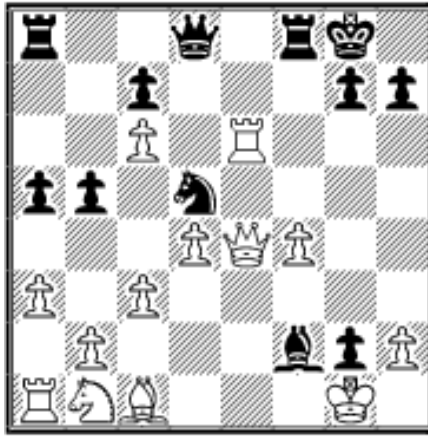
From Harding’s *MegaCor3* CD: “Probably Black’s best try. This idea to revive the Herman Steiner Variation was analysed by Tim Harding and George Botterill back in 1971. Instead of trying to play only on the kingside, Black creates complications on a wider front by threatening to drive back the bishop b3.” Without this clever idea, Black really would be in difficulties. It is astonishing to see that most sources

(for example Nunn [12]) completely ignore Harding’s improvement.

### 13 Bg5

A critical reaction. 13 a3 Be6! 14 Bxe6 fxe6 15 Rxe6 Nd5 16 Qe4 (16 Qxg2 Bh4 17 f3 Rf6 18 Re4 Rxc6 19 Nd2 Ne3! Lukyanchenko)

16...Bh4 (16...Bd6 followed by Nf4 = seems better) 17 f4? Bf2+?



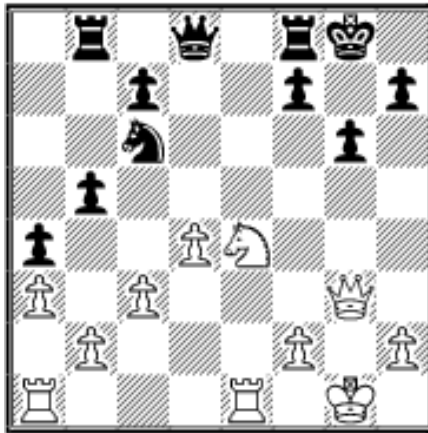
18 Kxf2? (18 Kxg2) Qh4+ 19 Kg1 Nxf4 20 Bxf4 Rxf4 21 Re8+ Rxe8 22 Qxe8+ Rf8 23 Qe2 Rf1+ 24 Kxg2 Re1 25 Qf3 Qg5+ 26 Qg3 Qd5+ 27 Kf2 Qe4 28 Qf3 Rf1+ 0-1 Melnikov – A. Lukyanchenko, corr. 1975 (source: *MegaCorr3 CD*).

**13...a4 14 Bc2 b4!**

After 14...Be6 15 Nd2 Bd5 16 Qd3 g6, there are two continuations:

(a) 17 Rxe7 Qxe7 18 Qxb5 (so far analysis by Gutman and Vitomskis) 18...Rfb8! 19 Qxd5 Nxd5 20 Bxe7 Rxb2 –/+ Vitomskis ([Total Marshall \[13\]](#)).

(b) But 17 Qxb5! is stronger, as the Dutch correspondence player **Kees van Oirschot** has kindly informed me. I tried to improve upon this analysis by means of 15...Nd5! (instead of 15...Bd5), to win back the pawn c6; for example, 16 Qe4 g6 17 Bxe7 Nxe7 18 a3! Rb8 19 Qxg2 Nxc6 20 Qg3 Bd5 21 Be4 Bxe4 22 Nxe4.



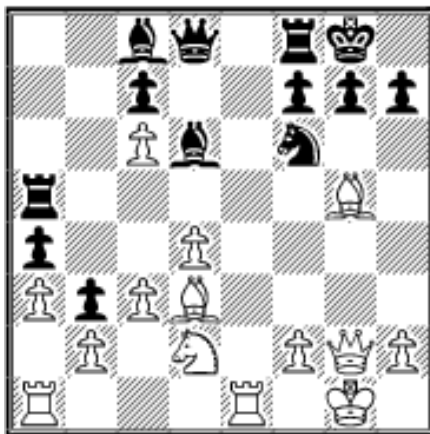
White has a small, but lasting advantage.

The text move is new and apparently a significant improvement for Black.

**15 Qxg2**

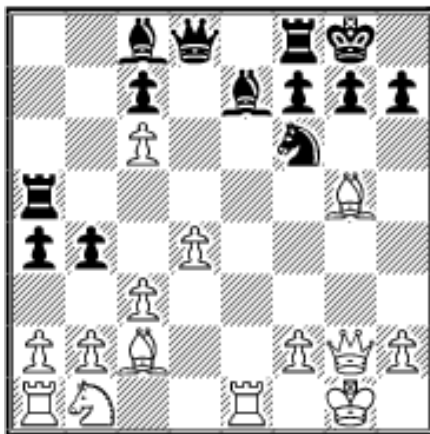
(a) 15 cxb4 Bxb4 16 Re5 Bd6 17 Qxg2 Rb8 18 b3 Kh8 19 Nc3 Bxe5 20 dxe5 Qd4 21 exf6 Qxc3 22 Rc1 Re8 =+.

(b) 15 a3!? b3 16 Bd3 Ra5 (or 16...Be6 17 Qxg2 Bd5 18 f3 Bxc6 19 Nd2 Re8) 17 Qxg2 Bd6 18 Nd2 leads to an unusual line-up on the h-file:



18...Bxh2+ 19 Kh1 Bh3 (19...Bd6!? 20 d5 h6! 21 Bh4 Bf4!) 20 Bxh7+ Kh8 21 Qxh3 Rxc5! 22 Re4 Rh5 23 Rh4 Rxc7 24 Qxh2 Qd5+ 25 f3 Qxc6 is about equal.

**15...Ra5!**



Creating obvious threats like Bh3 or Bxh2+. It also prepares to attack the irritating bishop on g5 by means of h7-h6 (Bxh6 Ng4!).

**16 a3 b3 17 Bd3 Bd6**

Other options: 17...Rxc5 18 Qxc5 Nd5 19 Rxc7 h6 20 Qh4 Nxc7 +/- or 17...Bh3!? 18 Bxh7+ Nxh7 19 Bxc7 Re8 (or 19...Qc8 =) 20 Qxh3 Rxc7 21 Rxc7 Qxc7 22 Qe3 Qh4 23 Nd2

Rf5 24 Kg2 Nf6 25 f3 Nd5 26 Qe8+ Kh7 27 Qe4 Nf4+ 28 Kh1 g6 is about equal.

**18 Nd2**

It is difficult to find a better solution: 18 d5 h6 19 Bxh6? Ng4! -/+, and 18 h4 Rxc5! 19 Qxc5 h6 20 Qg2 Bf4! (preventing the natural development Nd2) is anything else than a comfortable situation for White.

**18...Bxh2+ 19 Kh1**

19 Kxh2? Rxc5 20 Qxc5 Ng4+, etc.

**19...Bd6**

Black has regained his sacrificed pawn and can be satisfied with his position. None of the following variations seems to offer an advantage for White: 20 Nc4? Bh3! 21 Bxh7+ Kh8, or 20 d5 h6 21 Bh4 Bf4, or 20 Ne4 Be7 21 Qf3 Ng4, or 20 f4 Be6.

**Statistical Nonsense**

**Magnús Teitsson** from **Iceland** writes: "Thank you for your entertaining and informative articles on **ChessCafe**. However, I

think I have spotted an error in the most recent one. You wrote that 'White has scored an impressive 64 percent' out of nine games. I don't quite understand how a score of 64% can be achieved from nine games, at least not until quarter point scores are introduced. Can this be corrected?"

Thank you very much for spotting my statistical nonsense. In these nine games, White scored six points, so I should have been able to find the correct result of approximately 67 percent. Perhaps when I had completed my studies of mathematics...

#### Sources:

- [1] F. Chalupetzky, L. Tóth (Ed.): *Die Schacholympiade von Hamburg*, 1931.
- [2] L. Barden: *Die Spanische Partie*, Berlin 1963.
- [3] R.G. Wade, T. D. Harding: *The Marshall Attack*, London 1974.
- [4] A. Matanovic, etc., *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Belgrade 1974.
- [5] T.D. Harding: *Spanish (Ruy Lopez): Marshall*, London 1977.
- [6] A. Matanovic, etc., *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings*, 2nd ed., Belgrade 1981.
- [7] N. Krogius, A. Mazukewitsch: *Marshall-Angriff*, Berlin 1989.
- [8] A. Suetin: *The Complete Spanish*, London 1991.
- [9] G. Lane: *The Ruy Lopez for the Tournament Player*, London 1991.
- [10] V. Anand: *C89*, Belgrade 1993.
- [11] A. Matanovic, etc., *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings*, 3rd ed., Belgrade 1997.
- [12] J. Nunn, etc.: *Nunn's Chess Openings*, London 1999.
- [13] T.D. Harding, J. Vitomskis, M. Bennedik: [Total Marshall](#) (CD), Dublin 2002.

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