



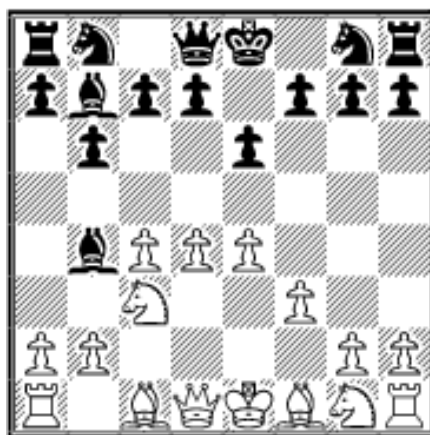
## COLUMNISTS

*From the Sidelines*

Hannes Langrock

*The Modern  
Morra Gambit*by  
Hannes LangrockThe Enterprising English Defense  
Part Two

As we discussed in [part one](#), after **1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.Nc3 Bb4**, the natural **5.Bd3** is well met by **5...f5!**, when White can't take on f5, as g2 would then be hanging. This month we will discuss lines where White plays **5.f3**:



White protects e4 with the f-pawn, thus strengthening the center and blocking the h1-a8 diagonal. Obviously, there are disadvantages as well. Most importantly, f2-f3 weakens some dark squares and the g1-a7 diagonal. Now Black has three continuations: the traditional main line **5...f5**, the flexible **5...Ne7** and the direct **5...Qh4+**, which provokes g2-g3, and weakens White's position further. I will discuss the first two options, as I have played both these moves in tournament praxis.

**5...f5** is the most aggressive continuation. Black is willing to sacrifice a couple of pawns to seize the initiative. This line can become extremely sharp; critical is **6.exf5! Nh6! 7.fxe6! Nf5! 8.Bf4!** – that's quite a few exclamation marks, but they are all justified – **8...dxe6 9.Qa4+**, with a position that was previously thought to favor White. However, there has recently been an important improvement for Black, and the correct assessment of the whole line seems to be unclear. This is discussed in the game [J.Plaskett – G.Buckley](#).

**5...Ne7** is less committal, but it can also become very sharp. The old main line is **6.Bd3**, but then Black has achieved good results by adopting a Nimzo-Indian set-up by **6...Nc6 7.Nge2 Bxc3+ 8.bxc3 d6**. Nowadays, White players prefer **6.Ne2!**, followed by a2-a3, getting the two bishops without having doubled pawns. Black must play energetically, and presently does OK in the line **6...f5! 7.a3 Bxc3+ 8.Nxc3 fxe4 9.fxe4 0-0**, see the game [K.Moberg-H.Langrock](#).

The game [J.Manion-A.Shabalov](#) takes a look at the immediate **4.f3**, which is played less frequently. Black has tried several moves, but **4...f5** is a good answer, as after **5.exf5 Nh6**, Black has fewer problems to solve than with **4.Nc3 Bb4**.

**Jim Plaskett (2490) – Graeme Buckley (2417)**  
London, 2005

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.f3 f5**

This sharp move is most in the spirit of the English Defense, so it is no surprise that it has traditionally been the main line. At the moment the theoretical verdict is unclear.

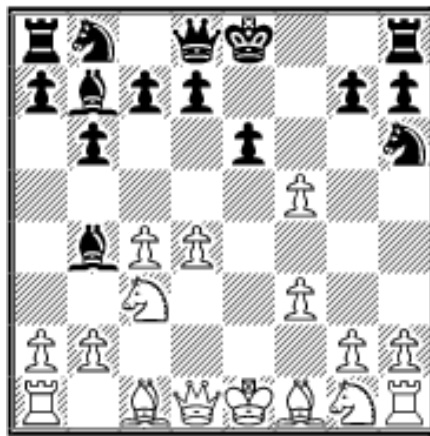
## 6.exf5!

Tournament praxis has proven that this is the only testing continuation.

After 6.Bd3, Black should not grab a pawn by 6...fxe4?! 7.fxe4 Bxc3+ (or 7...Nf6 8.Bg5 (8.Qe2 transposes to 5.Bd3 f5 6.Qe2 Nf6 7.f3 fxe4?! 8.fxe4, which was discussed in [part one](#), and is also good for White.) 8...h6 9.Bxf6 Qxf6 10.Nf3 with the initiative) 8.bxc3 Bxe4, because of 9.Qh5+! g6 10.Qe5. Instead, 6...Qh4+! 7.g3 Qh5 gives Black good chances.

In case of 6.e5, White's seemingly strong center will often be attacked by ...d7-d6. Black has a number of options; two of them are 6...Nc6 7.Be3 d6 and 6...Qh4+!? 7.g3 Qe7, usually followed by ...Nc6 and ...d7-d6.

## 6...Nh6!



This pawn sacrifice is a crucial part of Black's concept. As Daniel King points out, "6...exf5 is not the reason why most of us play 5...f5." Instead of searching for activity with 6...Nh6!, this recapture takes most of the dynamism out of the game. In praxis Black even scores quite reasonably; however, White should be somewhat better and the main line is much more in the aggressive spirit of the English Defense!

## 7.fxe6!

Accepting the challenge is the only real attempt to question Black's bold play.

In giving away his dark-squared bishop by 7.Bxh6?! Qh4+ 8.g3 Qxh6, White can easily find himself in a worse position: 9.Qd2 Qxd2+ 10.Kxd2 Nc6!? More dynamic and ambitious than 10...exf5. 11.fxe6 (For 11.Nge2, see 4.f3 f5 5.exf5 Nh6 6.Bxh6 Qh4+ 7.g3 Qxh6 8.Qd2 Nc6 9.Ne2 Bb4 10.Nbc3 Qxd2+ 11.Kxd2.) 11...dxe6 12.d5 exd5 13.Re1+ (13.cxd5 0-0-0 14.Bh3+ Kb8 with the initiative V.Volosin-A.Gara, Hungary 2005.) 13...Ne7 14.cxd5 0-0-0 15.Bd3 Nxd5 with the initiative, Black has won back the pawn, while retaining all his advantages. The game L.Jakobsen-E.Kengis, Gistrup 1997 ended after only five more moves: 16.Nge2 Bc5 17.Bf5+ Kb8 18.Kc1 Be3+ 19.Kc2 Bf2 20.Nxd5 Bxe1 0-1.

In case of the somewhat less critical 7.Be3?! Nxf5 8.Bf2, Black has a good position without being down material. Now there is nothing wrong with the normal 8...0-0. I once tried 8...c5!?, which also went well: 9.a3 Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 cxd4 11.cxd4 Nc6 12.Ne2 Qf6 13.Qd2 Ba6, when White has development problems and his pawns are under pressure. The initiative is clearly with Black. 14.Qc3 Rc8 15.Rd1 Na5 16.c5 0-0!? This intends to attack the opponent's king, instead of merely winning a pawn by 16...Bxe2 17.Bxe2 Rxc5. White's defensive task is difficult, and Black's attack proves victorious: 17.Qb4 e5 18.cxb6 axb6 19.d5 Nc4 20.Qb3 e4! 21.fxe4 Nh4 22.Qg3 (White was in serious time-trouble, so there was a slight hope for 22.Bd4 Qxf1+ 23.Rxf1 Nxg2#) 22...Nxa3+ 23.Nd4 (23.Qxh4 Nc2+ 24.Kd2 Qb2!-+) 23...Nc2+ 24.Nxc2 Rxc2 25.Bxa6 Qxf2+ 0-1, I.Neyman-H.Langrock, Greifswald 2002.

## 7...Nf5!

Black is ready to sacrifice another pawn for the initiative! Indeed, this is the main continuation, as well as the most direct and probably best way to play. By threatening ...Qh4+, Black tries to force his opponent to make some sort of concession. Instead, 7...0-0 is less forcing and gives White more options how to continue. Still, the position is very complicated and Black has been doing OK in praxis. However, I believe that White should be able to prove an advantage and that 7...Nf5! is objectively stronger.

### 8.Bf4!

Meeting the ...Qh4+ threat by developing the bishop to an active square.

Taking the second pawn with 8.exd7+ is dangerous for White and has only brought him quick defeats, 8...Nxd7 with compensation; 8.Nge2 is possible, 8...0-0 9.Qd3 (After 9. Qb3, a young Alexander Morozevich showed his attacking skills: 9...c5 10.exd7 Nxd7 11. d5 Ne5 12.Nf4? Qh4+ 13.Kd1 Nd4 14.Qa4 Rxf4 15.g3 Qh5 16.Bxf4 Qxf3+ 17.Kd2 Qxh1 18.Rd1 Qxh2+ 19.Kc1 Ng6 0-1, H.Ree-A.Morozevich, Tilburg rapid 1994; the position after 9.Bf4 dxe6 is discussed in [J.Manion-A.Shabalov](#).) 9...Qh4+ 10.Kd1 dxe6 11.Kc2 Nc6 “with obscure complications, though with the king wandering all over the board the odds are in Black’s favour” (King). In the following course of the game Black manages to score a nice attacking victory: 12.d5 Ncd4+ 13.Kb1 Rae8 14.g3 Nxb3 15.Nxb3 Rxf3 16. Qe4 Qxe4+ 17.Ngxe4 exd5 18.Nd2 (18.cxd5 Bxc3 19.Nxc3 doesn’t defend: 19...Re1 20. Bg2 Ba6! 21.a4 Bd3+ 22.Ka2 Bc4+ 23.Kb1 Rxh1 24.Bxh1 Rf1 25.Bg2 Rg1-+) 18...Rf2 19.a3 Bxc3 20.bxc3 Ne2 21.Bxe2 Rxe2-/+ 22.Ra2 d4 23.Rf1 Rxf1 24.Nxf1 Be4+ 25. Ka1 Re1 0-1, G.Gislason-A.Budnikov, Reykjavik op 1994.

### 8...dxe6

It is a good moment to regain one pawn, while also attacking d4.

8...0-0?! allows White to solve the problem of his king by 9.Qd2! dxe6 10.0-0-0, when praxis has shown that Black doesn’t have compensation for the pawn after 10...Nc6 11.d5 ±; 8...Qh4+?! is often a good idea in the f3-lines, forcing White to play g2-g3, which weakens his kingside further and softens the long diagonal. However, in this position White can get an advantage: 9.g3 Qe7 (On 9...Qf6, White can think about 10.Qd3!? preparing to castle queenside and keep one extra pawn. This is often a good defensive resource for White in such positions.) 10.Bh3 0-0 (10...Qxe6+ 11.Nge2!?, with the idea 11...Bxc3+ 12.bxc3 Bxf3 13.0-0) 11.Qd3 dxe6 12.Nge2 Nc6 13.0-0-0 Rad8 14.d5 g5 15. Qe4 Na5 16.Bd2± J.Kanewski-M.Menacher, Bavaria 2005.

### 9.Qa4+

For 9.Nge2 0-0, see the note to 8.Ne2 0-0 9.Bf4 dxe6.

### 9...Nc6



Now we have reached an important position in this line, which was once thought to be clearly better for White.

### 10.0-0-0

The other critical move is 10.d5!?, which scores an impressive 5/5 according to MegaBase 2007.



However, the fact that Edvins Kengis repeated this line as Black against Sadler (who then played 10.0–0–0) six years after losing a game against 10.d5, made me believe that he must have had prepared an improvement. Indeed, Black can do

better than his results thus far:

A) 10...exd5 11.0–0–0 Bxc3 (11...d4 12.Nd5 Bd6 13.Re1+ Kf7 14.c5 Re8 15.Rxe8 Bxf4+ 16.Nxf4 Qxe8 17.Bc4+ Kf6 18.Nd5+ Kg6 19.Nh3 with an attack, D.Komarov-M. Caposciutti, Clichy 2001.) 12.cxd5 Qf6 13.dxc6 (13.bxc3 interestingly transposes to 10... Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 exd5 12.0–0–0 Qf6 13.cxd5, which is OK for Black.) Now there have been two games in which Black played 13...Bxb2+?, but after 14.Kb1, Black can't take on c6 for tactical reasons: 14...Bxc6? (14...Bc8 is the only move 15.Bxc7± R.Lev-E.Kengis, London 1991.) 15.Bb5 Ne7 (15...Bxb5 16.Qxb5++-) 16.Bxc6+ Nxc6 N.Josephsen-L. Nielsen, DEN 1992. 17.Bg5!+-. Instead, 13...Bxc6 is critical, when I am not sure if White has anything real, though I sense that he does:

A1) 14.Qc2 Nd4 15.Qxc3 Qxf4+ 16.Kb1 0–0–0.

A2) 14.Bb5!? Bxb5 15.Qxb5+ c6 16.Qe2+ Kf8 (16...Ne7 17.Nh3 with the initiative) Now the computer says that Black is OK, despite having lost the right to castle. However, I wouldn't be surprised if deeper analysis shows that White has an advantage.

A3) 14.Qa3!? Bd4 15.Re1+! Ne7 16.Nh3 and Black still has some problems to solve; for example, 16...Bc5 17.Qb3 Bd7 18.Bg5 Qc6 19.Nf4!? 0–0–0 20.Bc4.

B) 10...Bxc3+!? looks critical: 11.bxc3 exd5 12.0–0–0 and now, instead of 12...0–0 13.cxd5 Na5 14.Nh3 Qf6 15.Kb2 Nd6 16.Qd4±, M.Medic-T.Grabuzova, Warsaw 2001, the move 12...Qf6!? deserves attention.



The queen moves out of the pin and attacks c3. 13.Ne2 (13.cxd5 Qxc3+ 14.Kb1 Qb4+ 15.Qxb4 Nxb4 and Black is OK; for example, 16.Bb5+ Kf7 17.Bc4 Nd6 18.Bb3 a5) 13...dxc4 14.Qxc4 Now if Black solves the problem of his king, he should be fine, because of White's weakened king position. He could think about 14...Na5; for instance, 15.Qa4+ (15.Qxc7 0–0 with compensation.) 15...Bc6 16.Qb4 Qf7 17.Kb1 Bd5, attacking a2 and preparing to castle long.

Now back to **10.0-0-0**:

**10...Nfxd4 11.Nb5**

On 11.Nh3, from the game S.Conquest-J.Plaskett, Hastings 1987, Fritz recommends 11...a6, with the threat of ...b6-b5; 11.Nge2 Nxe2+ 12.Bxe2 Qf6 13.Bd2 0–0–0= was pleasant for Black in D.Covic-B.Filipovic, Jahorina 2003. The e6-weakness is easily compensated, as Black's pieces stand well and White's position also has weak points.

**11...0–0 12.Bxc7**

It was thought that White would win decisive material now. 12.Nxd4 Nxd4 13.Qxb4 Rxf4 14.Ne2 c5 15.Qe1 Nxe2+ 16.Bxe2 Rd4= A.Szeberenyi-A.Gara, HUN 2001.

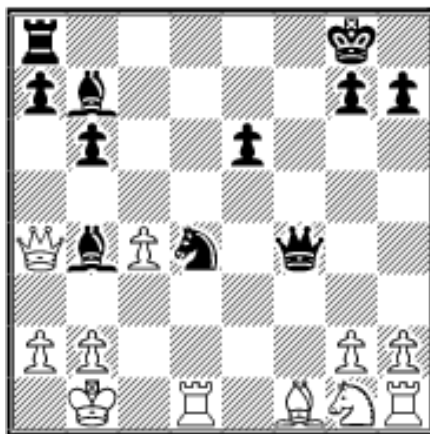
**12...Qg5+**

12...Qe7? 13.Nxd4 Nxd4 14.Rxd4 and White was winning, though it turned out to be difficult to prove in M.Sadler-E.Kengis, Koge 1997.

**13.f4 Qg6?**

After this, the complications will result in a material advantage for White and no compensation for Black.

Critical is 13...Qh6! 14.Nxd4 (White could play 14.Nh3 trying to keep an extra pawn, when 14...Bc5 looks complicated.) 14...Rxf4! This promising exchange sacrifice is the point of Black's previous move. Instead, the immediate 13...Rxf4? would have lost to 14.Nh3 (Bauer). 15.Bxf4 Qxf4+ 16.Kb1 Nxd4:



Black has nice compensation for the exchange. As Bauer points out, all of Black's pieces, apart from the rook, are well coordinated and ready to attack the white king. The French grandmaster gives the following lines: 17.Nf3 (17.Qxb4?? Be4 + 18.Ka1 Nc2+) 17...Nxf3 18.Qxb4 Be4+ 19.Ka1 (19.Bd3 Bxd3+ 20.Rxd3 Qe4 21.Qd6 Ne1 22.Rxe1 Qxe1+) 19...Nd4 20.Qd2 Nc2+ 21.Kb1 Ne3 + 22.Ka1 and now Black should take the perpetual check, according to Bauer. There are no games with 13...Qh6! as of yet, but it is only a matter of time!

**14.Nxd4 Nxd4 15.Rxd4 Bxg2 16.Bxg2**

16.Bd3 Qe8 17.Qxb4+- King.

**16...Qxg2 17.Qxb4 Qxh1 18.Qe1±**

With two pieces for the rook, White has a clear advantage and is close to winning.

**18...Rf6 19.Qe4 Qxe4 20.Rxe4 Rc8 21.Bd6 Rc6 22.Rd4 Rf7 23.Bb4 g5 24.Nf3 Rxf4 25.Rxf4 gxf4 26.Ne5 Rc7 27.Bd6 Rg7 28.b4 Rg1+ 29.Kc2 Rg2+ 30.Kb3 Kg7 31.c5 bxc5 32.bxc5 Kf6 33.c6 Rg8 34.c7 Rc8 35.Kc4 Kf5 36.Kd4 a6 37.h3 h6 38.Nc6 f3 39.Ke3 f2 40.Kxf2 Ke4 41.Na7 1-0**

*Karl Johan Moberg (2336) – Hannes Langrock (2413)*  
Gothenburg, 2006

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.f3 Ne7!?**



With this flexible move, Black keeps the options of ...f7-f5 and ...d7-d5, or he may even decide to play a Nimzo-Indian set-up after 6.Bd3.

**6.Nge2!**



This ambitious move has become the main line within the last few years. White wants to play a2-a3 and gain the bishop-pair without doubling his pawns. Black must play energetically and develop counterplay to compensate the bishop-pair.

6.Bd3 was once the main continuation, but Black did well by handling the position in Nimzo-Indian style: 6...Nbc6 7.Nge2 (7.Be3 Bxc3+ 8.bxc3 d6 9.Ne2 Qd7 10.0-0 transposes to 7.Ne2 Bxc3+ 8.bxc3 d6 9.0-0 Qd7 10.Be3.) 7...Bxc3+ 8.bxc3 d6 9.0-0 Qd7



White has the bishops and a good-looking center, while his c-pawn is weak and a nice target for the black pieces. Compared with positions from the Sämisch system of the Nimzo-Indian, Black's knight is on e7 instead of f6, which probably makes it harder for White to develop an attack. Looking at the practical examples from this position leads to the conclusion that Black has good prospects and at least practical chances to fight for an advantage:

A)10.Ba3 Ba6 11.c5 The c4-pawn was weak, but there was no reason to give it away without a fight. 11...Bxd3 12.Qxd3 dxc5 13.Rad1 Na5 14.Qc2 Qc6 15.d5 exd5 16.exd5 Qd7 17.c4 0-0/+ A.Gropp-D.Ruzele, Berlin 1997.

B)10.f4 Na5 11.f5 exf5 12.exf5 (White didn't find compensation for the pawn after 12.Ng3 fxe4 13.Nxe4 d5 14.Ng5 dxc4 15.Bxh7 Bd5 16.Bc2 f6 17.Ne4 0-0-0 18.Bf4 Bc6 19.Bg3 Kb7 20.Rb1 Ka8 21.Qd2 Nd5-/+ E.Vladimirov-Z.Rahman, Calcutta 2000.) 12...0-0-0 13.d5 (13.f6 gxf6 14.Rxf6 Nxc4 King) 13...Ba6 14.c5 Bxd3 15.c6 Qe8 16.Qxd3 Nxd5 17.Qxd5 Qxe2-/+ 18.Qxf7 Rhf8 19.Qd5 Rde8 20.Bf4 Qe4 21.Qxe4 Rxe4 22.g4 Nxc6 23.Kg2 Rc4 24.Rf3 h5 25.h3 hxg4 26.hxg4 g6 0-1, J.Hodgson-K.Bischoff, Linares 1996.

C)10.Be3 Na5! 11.Nc1!, with the idea Nb3 (11.d5 c5!? Fixing the c4-pawn, so that White can't play c4-c5. 12.Nc1 Ba6 and White lost his c-pawn in H.Wild-K.Bischoff, Bad Wiessee 1999.) 11...Ba6 12.Qe2 Qa4 13.c5 Bxd3 14.Nxd3 dxc5 15.dxc5 This position occurred in A.Niemela-P.Lehtivaara, FIN 2003. White no longer has the bishop-pair and his pawn-structure is somewhat inferior. Black is at least equal, or has a slight advantage.

## 6...f5!

Opening the kingside looks like the best approach.

I am a little skeptical about 6...0-0 7.a3 Bxc3+ 8.Nxc3 d5, with a position where White's bishop-pair may well enable him to achieve an advantage with precise play, though in the following game he failed to do so: 9.Be3 Nd7 10.Qc2 c5 11.cxd5 cxd4 12.Bxd4 exd5 13.0-0 dxe4 14.Bb5 Bc6 15.Bxc6 Nxc6 16.Qxe4 Nxd4 17.Rxd4 Qc8 18.Rhd1 Nc5 and Black was OK in E.Inarkiev-G.Schebler, Izmir 2004.

## 7.a3 Bxc3+ 8.Nxc3 fxe4 9.fxe4 0-0



9...Ng6?! is well met by 10.h4!, intending to gain further space and drive the knight back to e7. 10...0-0 (10...Nxh4 11.Qh5+ Ng6 12.Qxg6+) 11.





h5 Qf6 12.Be3 Ne7 13.Qg4 Nbc6 14.0–0–0± R. Wieser-A.Wohl, Schwarzach 2005.

### 10.Be3

10.Be2!? has been played only once. The creative idea is to meet 10...d5 by 11.exd5 exd5 12.Bf3!, with a nasty pin and good chances of an advantage for White in A.Abdulla-A.Hassan, Dubai 2003. Instead, 10...Nbc6!? looks

reasonable with the option to follow up by ...d7-d5 or ...e7-e5, depending on what White does.

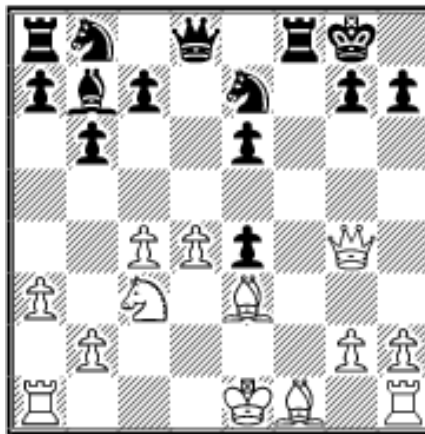
### 10...d5!

Black has to open the position, because otherwise he will just be worse with less space against White's two bishops. 10...Ng6?! is again well met by 11.h4! e5 12.d5 Qf6 13.h5 Nh8 14.Qg4, with a clear advantage for White in D.Rajkovic-B.Mihic, Herceg Novi 2001.

### 11.Qg4

Fritz strongly favors this move, as he doesn't see that Black can promisingly sacrifice the e6-pawn. 11.Bd3 dxe4 12.Bxe4 Bxe4 13.Nxe4 Nf5 with counterplay J.Borges Mateos-C.Matamoros Franco, Varadero 2000.

### 11...dxe4!



### 12.0–0–0

Realizing that after 12.Qxe6+ Kh8 13.Bg5 Qxd4!, White is in trouble despite winning a piece; for example, 14.Qxe7 (14.Bxe7 Qf2+ 15.Kd1 Re8, with the threats of ...Nc6 and ...Qxb2.) 14...Qf2+ 15.Kd1 Na6 with an attack; 12.Nxe4 Nf5

### 12...Nf5=+

Now the knight has found a good square, and Black is also a pawn up at the moment. In the post-mortem we came to the conclusion that Black is slightly better in a complicated position, which is probably correct.

### 13.Qh3

13.Bg5 Qe8 14.d5 (14.Nxe4? Qg6; 14.Be2 Nc6) 14...Qg6 15.Be2 Nd7 16.Bf4 Qxg4 17.Bxg4 Nc5 was complicated, but better for Black because of his extra pawn in A.Hauchard-C.Paci, Lausanne 2006.

13...Nd7 14.Be2 Qe7 15.Bg4 Rad8 (15...c5!) 16.Rhe1 Nf6 17.Bxf5 exf5 18.Qxf5 Ba6 ½–½

Both players were in time trouble and a draw was agreed, because of 19.Bg5 Bxc4 20.

Nxe4 Qd7=. Yet, precise play earlier in the game would have given Black an advantage.

**Josh Manion (2280) – Alexander Shabalov (2590)**

Chicago, 1994

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.f3 f5!**

4...Bb4+?! is not very effective here, as there is no knight on c3 to pin. After 5.Bd2! Bxd2 + 6.Qxd2, White's space advantage gives him good chances of a small, but solid advantage; 4...d5 is the most interesting alternative to the text move.

**5.exf5**

5.Bd3? just loses a pawn, as after 5...fxe4 6.fxe4 Bxe4, 7.Qh5+ is ineffective: 7...g6 8.Qe5 C.Le Carre-B.Gaulin, FRA 2004 and now Bauer gives 8...Bxd3 9.Qxh8 Qh4+ 10.Kd2 Bxc4, with a horrible position for White, especially for his king; 5.Nc3!? has never been played, but perhaps Black has nothing better than 5...Bb4, transposing to 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.f3 f5.

**5...Nh6**

We will see that this line is more comfortable for Black than with 4.Nc3 Bb4 included.

**6.fxe6**

6.Bxh6 Qh4+ 7.g3 Qxh6 8.Qd2 Nc6!? (8...Qxd2+) 9.Ne2 (9.Qxh6 gxh6 with compensation) 9...Bb4 10.Nbc3 Qxd2+ 11.Kxd2 Na5 12.Nf4 Bxf3 13.Rg1 exf5 14.Re1+, this position occurred in S.Semkov-E.Bricard, Sofia 1990, when Bauer recommends 14...Kf7, with an extra pawn for Black.

**6...Nf5 7.Bf4**

As in the 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.f3 f5 line, this is the critical continuation.

7.Bd3? It is rare for White to not prevent the check on h4, and for good reason: 7...Qh4+ 8.Kf1 Nxd4 9.Be4 Bxe4 10.Qxd4 Bc5 11.exd7+ Kf7 12.Qd2 Bd3+ 0–1, Pergericht-Boudre, FRA 1988.

In case of 7.Ne2, the move 7...Bd6!? can be a good option:

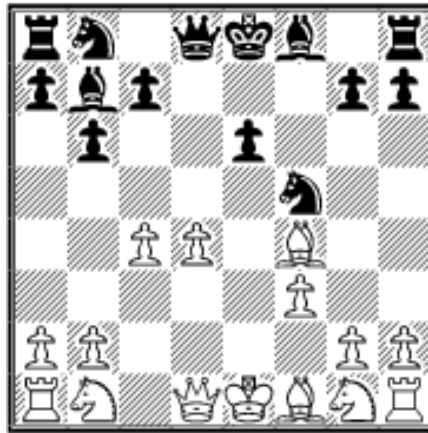


Now the check is threatened again, and, as 8.Bf4 is met by 8...Bxf4 9.Nxf4 Qh4+, White played 8.h4 in both practical examples. If this is White's best move, then 7...Bd6 can't be wrong! 8...0–0 9.Bg5 (9.Nbc3 dxe6 with compensation (9...Qf6?! 10.c5 Be7 11.exd7 Qf7 12.Qb3 and after the exchange of queens, White has to be better because of his material advantage. Still, the position remains highly complicated and the game H.Ree-A.Miles, Wijk aan Zee 1979 finally ended in a draw.)) 9...Qe8 10.Qd3 h6 11.Bd2 Qxe6 12.Nbc3 Nc6 13.Ne4 Nb4 14.Qb3 Now a draw was agreed in J.Meister-G.Meier,



Altenkirchen 2005, but Black has a crushing attack after 14...Bxe4!; for example, 15.fxe4 Qxe4 16.c5+ (16.Bxb4 Nxd4+; 16.0-0 Nd3+ 17.Kb1 Nf2+-) 16...Kh8 17.Qxb4 bxc5 18.dxc5 Bg3+ 19.Kd1 Ne3+ 20.Bxe3 Qxb4 21.Nxg3 Qxb2 22.Rc1 Qe5+.

**7...dxe6!**



7...Bb4+ 8.Nc3 transposes to [J.Plaskett-G. Buckley.](#)

**8.Ne2 Bb4+!**

This simply looks like a good opportunity to transpose into a comfortable variation of the 4. Nc3 Bb4 5.f3 f5 line.

8...c5?! finds a strong answer in 9.d5! White returns the pawn in order to achieve a pleasant endgame. 9...exd5 10.cxd5 Qxd5 11.Qxd5 Bxd5 12.Nbc3+= N.Babu-A.Miles, Sakthi 1996.

**9.Nbc3**

9.Bd2 is illogical and Black can choose between 9...Bd6, threatening 10...Qh4+, and 9...Be7!?, with the ideas of 10...Nxd4 and 10...Bh4+.

After 9.Nbc3, the game has transposed to 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.f3 f5 6.ef5 Nh6 7.fe6 Nf5 8.Bf4 de6 9.Nge2, when Black has managed to avoid the most dangerous continuation 9.Qa4+. I am discussing this position via the 4.f3 move-order, as it is more critical for the 4.f3 f5 line than for the 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.f3 line.

**9...0-0 10.Qd2**

A comparatively new move is 10.Qd3, with the idea that after 10...Qh4+? 11.g3 Qh5 12.Bg2, the f3-pawn is not hanging as in the 10.Qd2-line. However, Black plays 10...c5 11.0-0 cxd4 12.Nxd4 Nxd4 13.Bxb8 (13.Qxd4 Qxd4 14.Rxd4 Be5) 13...Qg5+! This strong resource gives Black the initiative. It is similar to Bauer's improvement in the critical line of the 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.f3 f5 variation. (13...Rxb8?! leads to an endgame that White can never lose: 14.Qxd4 Qxd4 (14...Qg5+ 15.Qd2 Qxd2+ 16.Kxd2 Rfd8+ 17.Bd3± H.Packroff-F. Montsma, Dresden 2004.) 15.Rxd4 Bxc3 16.bxc3 e5 Now if the rook moves to a square along the d-file, Black can play 17...e4, but 17.Rg4+= keeps the advantage.) 14.f4 (14.Kb1? Raxb8 15.Qxd4 Rbd8 and Black wins: 16.Qg4 (16.Qf2 Be4+!-) 16...Qxg4 17.fxg4 Bxc3 18.Rxd8 Rxd8 19.bxc3 Rd1+ 20.Kc2 Re1+) 14...Qh6 White must be careful. 15.Be5 (15.Bc7 Rac8; 15.Qxd4!? and now 15...Bxc3 16.Qxc3 Raxb8 winning back the pawn on f4 or 15...Raxb8.) 15...Nc6 with the initiative.

**10...Qh4+**



**11.g3!?**

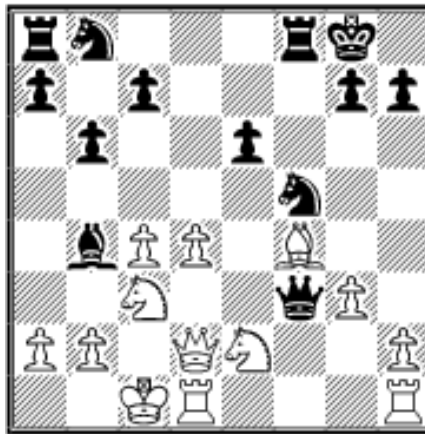
Giving back the pawn in order to finish development.



After 11.Ng3, the direct solution 11...Bd6! proves to be quite strong. 12.Bxd6 cxd6 13.Nce2 (13.Qf2 is possible, when Black has two options: 13...Nxd4 (After 13...Nxg3 14.Qxg3 Qxd4 15.Rd1 Qe3+ 16.Be2, the d6-pawn obviously is very weak, but Black can play 16...Nc6, when taking on d6 looks risky (17.Rxd6 Rad8 etc.), so maybe White should try the solid 17.Qf2!? hoping to put

pressure on Black's center pawns.) 14.Nce4 Now d4 and d6 are hanging, but the pawn sacrifice 14...d5!? looks interesting: 15.cxd5 (15.Qxd4 dxe4 16.Be2!? Na6! 17.0-0 Rad8, followed by 18...exf3.) 15...exd5 16.Qxd4 dxe4 and ...Nc6 coming.) 13...Nc6 14.0-0-0 Ncxd4 15.Nxd4 Nxg3 16.hxg3 Qxh1 17.Nxe6 Rf6 and White didn't have entirely sufficient compensation for the exchange in O.Panno-A.Miles, Buenos Aires 1979.

**11...Qh5 12.Bg2 Bxf3 13.Bxf3 Qxf3 14.0-0-0**



**14...Nd7** (with counterplay)

This move appears more subtle than 14...Nc6, from the game P.Vezzosi-B.Chatalbashev, Reggio Emilia 2002. The main reason is that White cannot play d4-d5 with tempo, also the queen may decide to go to c6 if it is attacked and the knight will find a good square on f6. I think the position is about equal; the e6-pawn is weak, but Black has good pieces and the d4-pawn can easily become a target as well.

**Ng4 19.h3**

**15.Rhe1 Nf6 16.a3 Bd6 17.Qd3 Qxd3 18.Rxd3**

19.h4 avoids losing a pawn, but Black has no problems after 19...e5 20.dxe5 Nxe5 21.Bxe5 Bxe5.

**19...Nf2 20.Rf3 Nxh3 21.Bxd6 cxd6 22.g4 Ng5 23.Rd3 Nh4-/+ 24.Nb5 Rac8 25.Nxa7 Rxc4+ 26.Rc3 Rxc3+ 27.Nxc3 Ng2 28.Rg1 Ne3 29.a4 Nf3 30.Rg3 Nf1 31.Rxf3 Rxf3 32.Nc8 Ne3 33.Nxb6 d5 34.a5 Nc4 35.Nxc4 dxc4 36.Nb5 Rb3 37.Nd6 c3 38.bxc3 Rxc3+ 39.Kd2 Rc6 40.Nb7 Ra6 41.Ke3 Kf7 42.Ke4 Ke7 43.d5 exd5+ 44.Kxd5 Rg6 45.Nc5 Rxc4 46.a6 Rg2 47.Kc6 Ra2 48.Kb6 g5 49.a7 Rxa7 50.Kxa7 g4 51.Ne4 Ke6 52.Kb6 h5 53.Kc5 Ke5 54.Nf2 g3 55.Nh3 g2 56.Kc4 Ke4 57.Ng1 h4 58.Nh3 Kf3 59.Kd3 Kg3 60.Ng1 h3 0-1**



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