



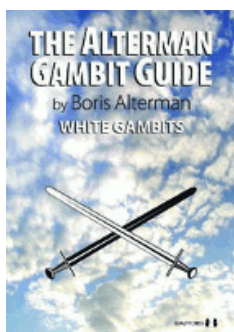
COLUMNISTS

Middlegame Motifs

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The King's Gambit Pawn Duo

A duo of united central pawns on e4 and d4 has long been known to be advantageous as long as the pawns can be maintained and they do an effective job of cramping the opposing forces. When Black allows White to set up such pawns, as in the Grünfeld Defense (1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 and now typically 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5. e4), the King's Indian (1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4) or the Pirc (1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6), he usually has plans to hit back at the center with ... e7-e5 or ...c7-c5. Because of this, these defenses do not neglect the center, it is rather a case of delayed occupation. So what if Black leaves himself unable to counterattack the center, for example if he pursues the gain of material rather than positioning his pieces appropriately? In this case the central pawns can have a huge influence on the course of the game, often making it impossible for the cramped side to get any play.

One of the main openings in which he might be tempted to do so is the King's Gambit Accepted (1.e4 e4 2.f4 exf4). Now there are lines in which Black can break up White's central pawn duo with a quick ...d7-d5, but given this gambit's shady reputation many black players are tempted to hang on to the material. They do so at their peril, as although it may be possible to defend Black's position in theory, in practice it is very difficult to play. This month's illustrative games feature two grandmasters who are willing to take the white side of such positions and serve as a warning of the dangers Black faces.

Jonkman, H (2520) – Pegorari, P (2386)

VIII Leonardo di Bona Open Cutro ITA (1), 24.04.2002

King's Gambit [C34]

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.Nf3 d6 4.Bc4

This ancient continuation has long been neglected. White's usual procedure against the Fischer defense (3...d6) has been 4.d4 g5 5.h4 g4 6.Ng1.

4...h6 5.d4 g5 6.g3 g4

Jumping at the opportunity.

7.Nh4 f3



[FEN "rnbqkbnr/ppp2p2/3p3p/8/2BPP1pN/5p1/PPP4P/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 8"]

Creating a fascinating position in which Black already has a protected passed pawn on f3. Can White's central pawn duo and the weakening of Black's kingside offer sufficient compensation?

8.Nc3

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A natural developing move, but this is not the only possibility. 8.h3 was played in Gabrielian,A (2462)-Ponkratov,P (2579), Voronezh 2009, the game continuing 8...h5 9.Nc3 Nc6 10.Be3 Be7 11.Nf5 Bxf5 12.exf5 Bf6 13.Nd5 with an interesting game in prospect.

8...c6 9.Qd3 Ne7 10.Bf4 Bg7 11.0-0 b5 12.Bb3 Na6?!

After this, White has a stunning piece sacrifice that sets a dangerous attack in motion. Upon 12...a5, the same sacrifice would be less convincing; for example, 13.Nxb5!? cxb5 14.Qxb5+ Nbc6 15.Qh5 0-0 (After 15...Rf8, White can make life very difficult for his opponent with 16.Ba4) 16.Bxh6 a4 17.Bd5 Nxd5 18.Bxg7 Kxg7 19.Qxd5 Ra6 20.Nf5+ Kg6 leaves White with nothing convincing, despite the scary position of Black's king. Certainly this would have been a sterner test of White's opening.

13.Nxb5! cxb5 14.Qxb5+ Kf8

Another possibility was 14...Qd7, which White would also have met with 15.Qh5.

15.Qh5 Be6



[FEN "r2q1k1r/p3npb1/n2pb2p/7Q/3PPBpN/1B3pP1/PPP4P/2KR3R w - - 0 16"]

16.d5!?

Interesting, but not necessarily the best. There also seems to be a good case for just 16.Bxe6 fxe6 17.Qxg4 when White will get a third pawn for the piece and have ongoing play against Black's exposed king.

16...Bc8 17.e5

The central pawns show their teeth!

17...Nc5 18.e6 Nxb3+ 19.axb3 Ng6?

After this, Black is always struggling because of the strength of White's unchallengeable e6-pawn. Instead of this he should try 19...fxe6 after which 20.dxe6 Bxe6 21.Rhe1 Bf7 22.Qxg4, is not great for Black, but he could still put up a fight.

20.Nxg6+ fxg6 21.Qxg4 g5 22.Bd2 Qf6

22...Ba6 would have been strongly met by 23.c4.

23.Bc3 h5 24.Qe4 Qe7 25.Qxf3+ Ke8?

25...Kg8 was relatively best, but far from pleasant. After the text White is winning.

26.Rhf1 Ba6



[FEN "r3k2r/p3q1b1/b2pP3/3P2pp/8/1PB2QP1/1PP4P/2KR1R2 w - - 0 27"]

27.Qf7+

Not bad, but 27.Qe4! would have been immediately decisive; for example, 27...Bxf1 (Or 27...Bxc3 28.Rf7 etc.) 28.Qa4+! Kd8 29.Qc6! with the deadly threats of 30.Qxa8+ and 30.Ba5+.

27...Qxf7 28.Rxf7 Bxc3 29.bxc3 h4 30.Kb2 hxcg3 31.hxcg3 g4 32.c4 Rb8 33. Rd4 Rg8 34.Rxa7 Bb7 35.Rf4 Rg7 36.Kc3 Ke7 37.Kd4 Ke8 38.b4

Preparing c4-c5 after which the pawns will take some stopping.



[FEN "1r2k3/Rb4r1/3pP3/3P4/1PPK1Rp1/6P1/2P5/8 b - - 0 38"]

38...Ke7 39.c3 Ke8 40.c5 dxc5+ 41.bxc5 Rg5 42.c4 Bxd5 43.cxd5 Rb4+ 44. Kc3 Rxf4 45.gxf4 Rxd5 46.Kc4 Rf5 47.c6 Rxf4+ 48.Kd5 1-0

After 48.Kd5 Rf1 49.c7 Rd1+ 50.Ke5 Re1+ 51.Kf6 Rf1+ 52.Kg5, White will queen his pawn.

In this next game, Black does not set up a protected passed pawn, but he does go a pawn up when White renounces any attempt to recover his gambit (6.g3). Yet once again we see the powerful influence the central pawn duo can have as Black struggles to find any kind of plan.

Hector, J (2513) – Wedberg, T (2540)

Swedish Championship Skara SWE (5), 04.07.2002

King's Gambit [C34]

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.Nf3 h6 4.d4 g5 5.Nc3 Bg7 6.g3!?



[FEN "rnbqk1nr/pppp1pb1/7p/6p1/3PPp2/2N2NP1/PPP4P/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 6"]

Immediately setting about breaking up Black's kingside pawn mass, albeit at the cost of a pawn. White will be left with a pawn center that will be difficult for Black to challenge.

6...fxg3

If Black tries to set up a passed f-pawn in this position, he gets into serious trouble; for example, 6...g4 7.Ne5 Bxe5 8.dxe5 f3 9.h3 Nc6 10.Bf4 and the f3-pawn has its support undermined.

7.hxg3 d6 8.Bc4 Bg4 9.Rf1 Qd7 10.Qd3 Bh5

10...Nc6 11.Be3 0-0-0 12.0-0-0 also leaves Black with the problem about what to do next. White's center keeps him bottled up very effectively.

11.Be3 Ne7 12.0-0-0 Nbc6 13.Rd2 a6 14.a3



[FEN "r3k2r/1ppqnpb1/p1np3p/6pb/2BPP3/P1NQBNP1/1PPR4/2K2R2 b kq - 0 14"]

Interestingly this move is a "theoretical novelty," though it's never easy to know if this is by accident or design. In the game Fedorov,A (2589)-Pilgaard, K (2400), Linares 2002 White played 14.Rh2 after which 14...Bg6 15.d5 Ne5 16.Nxe5 Bxe5 17.Bd4 Kf8 18.Rhf2 b5 19.Bb3 Bxd4 20.Qxd4 Rh7 21.e5! was another triumph of the central pawn duo.

14...Qg4 15.Rdf2 Rf8

Black might have rejected 15...Qxg3 because of the line 16.Ne2 Qg4 17.Nh2 Qh3 18.Ng1 Qd7 19.Bxf7+ Bxf7 20.Rxf7, though Black can then play 20...Rg8. Lines such as this show just how hard it is to play Black's position because even the playable lines can look horrific.

16.Qd2 Bg6

This time around 16...Qxg3 can be answered by 17.Nxg5 hxg5 18.Rg2 Qh3 19.Rh2 and White will get the bishop on h5.

17.Nh2 Qd7 18.g4

Keeping Black bottled up by preventing any ...f7-f5.

18...f6 19.Qe2 Rh8?



[FEN "r3k2r/1ppqn1b1/p1np1pbp/6p1/2BPP1P1/P1N1B3/1PP1QR1N/2K2R2 w q - 0 20"]

This runs into a powerful reply. Black should probably try 19...b5!? whilst keeping his f6 pawn well defended.

20.Rxf6! Bxf6 21.Rxf6 Nd8

Stopping 22.Be6.

22.Qf3 c6 23.Bf2 b5 24.Bb3 h5 25.Bg3 hxc4 26.Qe3 Rh3



[FEN "r2nk3/3qn3/p1pp1Rb1/1p4p1/3PP1p1/PBN1Q1Br/1PP4N/2K5 w q - 0 27"]

Temporarily stopping 27.Rxd6 (because of 27...Qxd6), but the reply is simple enough.

27.Qf2 Qa7 28.Bxd6 g3 29.Rf8+ Kd7 30.Qf6 1-0

After 30.Qf6 Rh7, White can simply remove the dangerous pawn with 31. Bxg3.

Exercises (solutions next month)



[FEN "rnbq1r1k/pp5p/2pp4/5p2/2BPPNpb/2N1Q1n1/PPP3P1/R1BK2R1 w - - 0 15"]

In this wild looking position it is White's central pawns that lend his pieces their power. How did he now set about finishing Black off?



[FEN "rnb3kr/pp2q2p/2pp4/6P1/3PPQp1/2N5/PPP3P1/4RRK1 w - - 0 17"]

White to play brought off a stunning finale. What was it?

Solutions to last month's exercises

Kuzmin, G.P – Kerius, N
Harrachov, 1967



[FEN "4r2k/pbr1q2p/1p2np2/2pp3N/3P3P/3BP1R1/PPQ2P2/1K4R1 w - - 0 27"]

White's pawn storm has already produced dividends in that he has broken up Black's king position. But how can he now convert this into victory?

27.Bxh7! A devastating combinative blow. **27...Rcc8** Taking the bishop also loses after 27...Qxh7 28.Qxh7+ Rxh7 29.Nxf6 which threatens both 30.Rg8 mate and 30.Nxe8. **28.Qg6! Rf8** This time round 28...Qxh7 loses to 29.Qxh7+ Kxh7 30.Nxf6+ Kh8 (Or 30...Kh6 31.Rg6#) 31.Rg6! with the deadly threat of 32.Rh6 mate. **29.Ng7 Ng5** Or 29...Qxg7 30.Qxg7+ Nxg7 31.Rxg7 threatening both 32.Rxb7 and 32.Bf5 followed by 33.Rh7 mate. **30.hxg5 Qxg7 31.gxf6 Qxg6+ 32.Bxg6 Rc7** Or 32...Rxf6 33.Bf5! threatening both 34.Bxc8 and 34.Rh3+ followed by mate. **33.Rh3+ 1-0**

Nisman, B – Burlaev
USSR, 1967



[FEN "r2qmk1/pp3p2/2p3p1/3pP2p/5Pb1/2NBP3/PPQ5/1K4RR w - - 0 19"]

How did White to play engineer a decisive attack?

19.Rxg4! Commencing the decisive breakthrough. **19...hxg4 20.Qh2 f5 21.e4!** A crucial follow up to White's 19th move; Black dare not open the a2-g8 diagonal for White's bishop (with ...dxe4) so the attack comes crashing through. **21...g3** On 21...fxe4, there follows 22.Nxe4 dxe4 (Or 22...Kf7 23.Nd6 + Ke6 24.f5+ Kd7 25.e6+ etc.) 23.Bc4+ Re6 (Or 23...Ne6 24.Qh8+ Kf7 25.Rh7#) 24.Bxe6+ Nxe6 25.Qh8+ Kf7 26.Rh7+ Ng7 27.Qxg7+ Ke6 28.Qf7#. **22.Qh8+ Kf7 23.exf5 gxf5 24.Bxf5 g2 25.Qh5+ Ke7 26.Qg5+ Kf7 27.Qxg2 1-0** There was a mate in four to be had via 27.Bg6+ Nxg6 28.Rh7+ Kf8 (28...Ke6 29.Qg4#) 29.Qh6+ Kg8 30.Qg7#, but humans are often better off taking the slow, certain route!

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