



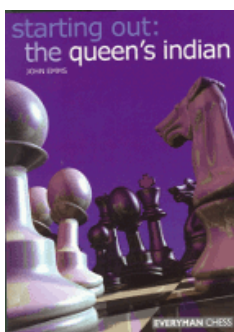
## COLUMNISTS

## Middlegame Motifs

Nigel Davies

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## Hanging Pawns

In many ways a hanging pawn duo is similar to the [King's Gambit Pawn Duo](#) that we looked at last month. In both cases the pawns, when united, control a valuable range of squares that restrict the opposing pieces. They can also be used as a battering ram, a thrust of either pawn having the potential to release the army that is gathered behind them.

The hanging pawn duo also has a disadvantage, however, in that it can be quite vulnerable to attack because one or both of the pawns will usually stand on a half-open file. And the fact that there are no friendly pawns on adjacent files means that they need to be protected by pieces. These factors lend hanging pawns some unique factors that tend to produce sharp and double-edged positions. And when one considers the huge variety of openings that lead to this structure the importance of understanding what to do becomes clear.

Just to mention some of the more common routes to hanging pawns, Paul Keres used to like to play 4.e3 against the Queen's Indian Defence: **1.d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6**, which leads to a typical hanging pawn position after **4...Bb7 5. Bd3 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.b3 d5 8.Bb2 c5 9.Nc3** (or 9.Nbd2) **9...dc 10.bc cd 11. ed**. Personally speaking, I prefer to avoid this with black and I play the 5...d5 6.0-0 Bd6 line. Similar to Keres's 4.e3 is the system 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.e3 and after 3...b6 or 3...d5. White fianchettoes his queen's bishop and may eventually play c2-c4. This used to be a firm favorite of Artur Yusupov and he played it with considerable success. It can transpose into the 4.e3 Queen's Indian.

During my five years of living in Israel, I learned a great deal from the former Soviet Champion Lev Psakhis, and he influenced me in my decision to play hanging pawn positions as black. If White plays **4.g3** against the Queen's Indian, it was Psakhis's opinion that the only way Black could play for a win was by accepting hanging pawns in the line **4...Ba6 5.b3 Bb7 6.Bg2 Bb4+ 7. Bd2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Nc3 Na6**, followed by 10...d5 and a later ...c7-c5. Psakhis had learned this system of defense from his former trainer, Anatoly Vaisner. Another strong Israeli player, Leonid Yudashin, also favored this kind of position as black, which further convinced me it was a good idea.

I have had excellent results with it including a win over the Peruvian grandmaster Granda-Zuniga. There are many lines in the Queen's Gambit that give rise to hanging pawns, but this discussion would hardly be complete without mentioning the Tartakover-Makogonov-Bondarevsky Variation: **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Be7 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 0-0 7.e3 b6**. The Fischer-Spassky encounter below is a good example of the hanging pawns becoming weak, but this does not always happen if Black plays precisely.

First, let's see the dynamic advantages of the hanging pawns with a Keres masterpiece against Mark Taimanov:

**Keres, Paul – Taimanov, Mark**  
USSR Championship Moscow, 1951  
Queen's Indian Defense [E14]

**1.c4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.e3 Be7 5.b3 0-0 6.Bb2 b6 7.d4 Bb7 8.Bd3 dxc4 9.bxc4 c5 10.0-0 cxd4 11.exd4**

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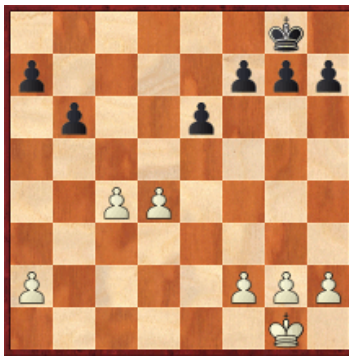
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[FEN "6k1/p4ppp/1p2p3/8/2PP4/8/P4PPP/6K1"]

Arriving at a typical hanging pawn position. White's pawn duo on d4 and c4 stake out a lot of central territory, but the pawns are rather vulnerable because of a lack of support on the b- and e-files.

### 11...Nc6 12.Qe2

Although this sets a nice trap, it isn't the best move. White should have played 12.Rc1 Nb4 13.Bb1, so as to avoid shutting in his rook on a1.

### 12...Re8

Black correctly avoids 12...Nxd4? as after 13.Nxd4 Qxd4 14.Nd5 Qc5 15. Bxf6 Bxf6 (15...gxf6 16.Qg4+ Kh8 17.Qh4 f5 18.Nxe7) 16.Qe4 g6 17.Nxf6+ White wins material.; On the other hand, there was a stronger move in 12... Nb4!, after which 13.Bb1 Bxf3 14.Qxf3 (Keres mentioned 14.gxf3 Qxd4 15. Ne4, with some attacking chances for the pawn) 14...Qxd4 15.a3 Na6 16.Qb7 Bd6! 17.Qxa6 Bxh2+! gives Black a winning attack.

### 13.Rfd1 Rc8 14.Rac1 Qd6?!

Black should still have played 14...Nb4 when Keres gave the line 15.Bb1 Bxf3 16.Qxf3 Rxc4 17.d5 exd5 18.a3 Nc6 19.Ba2. But this seems quite good for Black after 19...Nd4 20.Qh3 Rxc3 with a fork on e2.

### 15.Bb1 Qf4 16.d5!



[FEN "2r1r1k1/pb2bppp/1pn1pn2/3P4/2P2q2/2N2N2/PB2QPPP/1BRR2K1 b - - 0 16"]

This is often a key move for White in such positions, unleashing the power of his pieces and in particular his pair of bishops.

### 16...exd5 17.cxd5

Keres also considered the line 17.Nxd5 Nxd5 18.cxd5 Bf6 19.dxc6! Rxe2 20. cxb7, which objectively speaking would have been stronger. But he chose the simple recapture with the pawn because he was unable to calculate this out.

### 17...Nb8?!

After 17...Ba3?, White wins on the spot with 18.dxc6! Rxe2 19.cxb7; but Black might well have considered the more active 17...Nb4. Taimanov's

choice is rather passive and allows White to build up a strong attack.

**18.Rd4 Qd6 19.Rcd1 Bf8**

Underestimating the strength of White's reply. 19...Nbd7 would have been a better defense.

**20.Ne4! Nxe4 21.Rxe4 Rxe4 22.Qxe4 Qh6**

22...g6 was a better defense, though it still looks good for White after 23.Qd4 (23.Ng5 is also very dangerous) 23...f6 24.h4 followed by 25.h5.



[FEN"1nr2bk1/pb3ppp/1p5q/3P4/4Q3/5N2/PB3PPP/1B1R2K1 w - - 0 23"]

**23.Ng5! Bd6**

After 23...g6, there is 24.Nxf7!, etc.

**24.h4! Nd7 25.Qf5 Nf6 26.Bxf6**

With time trouble rearing its ugly head a few errors start to creep in. 26.Nxf7! was even stronger, for example 26...Kxf7 27.Qe6+ Kf8 28.Qxd6+ Kg8 29.Qe6+ Kh8 30.d6 wins easily.

**26...gxf6**

After 26...Qxf6, White has a strong line in 27.Qxh7+ Kf8 28.Bf5 Re8 29.Qh5 Kg8 (29...Qxf5 30.Nh7+ wins the queen) 30.Be6! g6 31.Qh7+, etc.



[FEN"2r3k1/pb3p1p/1p1b1p1q/3P1QN1/7P/8/P4PP1/1B1R2K1 w - - 0 27"]

**27.Nxf7! Qc1**

After 27...Kxf7, White would play 28.Qd7+ Kg8 (28...Be7? 29.d6 Rc1 30.Qxe7+ Kg8 31.Qxh7+ wins immediately) 29.Qxd6 Rc1 30.Qb8+ Bc8 31.Rxc1 Qxc1+ 32.Kh2 Qxb1 33.Qxc8+ Kf7 34.d6 with a winning queen and pawn endgame.

**28.Qxh7+ Kf8 29.Nxd6 Qxd1+ 30.Kh2 Qxd5 31.Nxb7 Qe5+ 32.g3 Rc7 33.Qh8+ Kf7 34.h5 Rxb7 35.Qh7+ Ke6 36.Qxb7 Qxh5+ 37.Kg2 1-0**

**Fischer, Robert – Spassky, Boris**

**1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bg5 0-0 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 b6**

This move characterizes the Tartakover Variation, which often leads to hanging pawns for Black.

**8.cxd5**

An alternative treatment is 8.Be2 Bb7 9.Bxf6 Bxf6 10.cxd5 exd5, which was heavily debated in games between Garry Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov. This became popular when ways to neutralize Fischer's play in the present game were discovered.

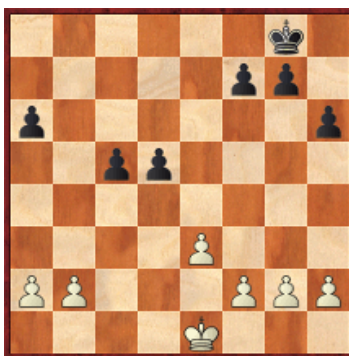
**8...Nxd5 9.Bxe7 Qxe7 10.Nxd5 exd5 11.Rc1 Be6 12.Qa4 c5 13.Qa3 Rc8 14. Bb5**

Cleverly hindering the development of Black's knight on b8 by preparing to exchange it should it come to d7. This causes Black to indulge in some convoluted maneuvers to eject the bishop.

**14...a6**

One of the antidotes Black later discovered was to play 14...Qb7 in this position. Should White take the pawn on c5 via 15.dxc5 bxc5 16.Rxc5 Rxc5 17.Qxc5 there follows 17...Na6 18.Bxa6 Qxa6 19.Qa3 (White cannot castle without ejecting Black's queen from the a6-f1 diagonal) 19...Qc4 20.Qc3 Qxa2 21.0-0 Rb8, recovering the pawn with pressure against White's b-pawn.

**15.dxc5 bxc5**



[FEN"6k1/5pp1/p6p/2pp4/8/4P3/PP3PPP/4K3"]

White could meet 15...Rxc5 with just 16.0-0 because both Black's a-pawn and c5 rook are pinned.

**16.0-0 Ra7?!**

After this White has long term pressure. Black later found the line 16...Qa7 17. Ba4 a5 18.Qd3 Nd7.

**17.Be2 Nd7 18.Nd4! Qf8?**



[FEN"2r2qk1/r2n1pp1/p3b2p/2pp4/3N4/  
Q3P3/PP2BPPP/2R2RK1 w - - 0 19"]

This leads to an unpleasant position when Fischer now 'unhangs' Black's pawns but fixes them on dark squares. Black should have played 18...Nf6 when 19.Nb3 c4 20.Qxe7 Rxe7 21.Nd4 is better for White but not easy to win.

**19.Nxe6! fxe6 20.e4! d4**

After 20...dxe4 21.Rfd1, Black's weak pawns will not all survive and those that are left would spread doom over his position. On the other hand, 20...Nf6 looks more tenacious, at least not giving White the c4-square without a fight.

**21.f4 Qe7 22.e5!**

Fixing the weakness on e6.

**22...Rb8 23.Bc4! Kh8**

On 23...Nb6, White can play 24.Qb3! because the knight on b6 is pinned.

**24.Qh3 Nf8 25.b3 a5**



[FEN"1r3n1k/r3q1p1/4p2p/p1p1P3/  
2Bp1P2/1P5Q/P5PP/2R2RK1 w - - 0 26"]

**26.f5! exf5 27.Rxf5 Nh7 28.Rcf1 Qd8 29.Qg3 Re7 30.h4 Rbb7 31.e6!**

Creating threats such as Rxc5, Rf7 and Qe5.

**31...Rbc7 32.Qe5 Qe8 33.a4 Qd8**

White has a winning attack after both 33...Nf6 34.Rxf6! gxf6 35.Rxf6; and 33...Kg8 34.Rf7.

**34.R1f2 Qe8 35.R2f3 Qd8 36.Bd3 Qe8**



[FEN"4q2k/2r1r1pn/4P2p/p1p1QR2/  
P2p3P/1P1B1R2/6P1/6K1 w - - 0 37"]

**37.Qe4!**

Threatening mate via 38.Rf8+.



37...Nf6 38.Rxf6 gxf6 39.Rxf6 Kg8 40.Bc4 Kh8 41.Qf4 1-0

41.Qf4 Kg8 42.Qxh6 will lead to mate.

### Exercises (solutions next month)



[FEN "1r3rk1/p4ppp/2q1p3/1pPn4/3Pb3/P3B3/3QBPPP/R4RK1 b - - 0 20"]

Black to play has successfully blockaded the hanging pawn duo but now managed to use the blockading pieces to great effect. How did he do it?



[FEN "3r1rk1/p3qp1p/2bb2p1/2pp4/8/1P2P3/PBQN1PPP/2R2RK1 b - - 0 18"]

Black to play used his hanging pawns to initiate a powerful attack. How did he do this?

### Solutions to last month's exercises

**Sokolov, Andrei (2605) – Kekov, Alexandr**  
URS Army-ch Simferopol, 1989



[FEN "mbq1r1k/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?

**15.Ng6+!** Black resigned when he saw this crushing blow. Let's see what would have happened had he continued: **15...Kg7** 15...hxg6 16.Qh6# is mate straightaway. **16.Qh6+ Kf6** 17.Qxh4+ **Kg7** 17...Kxg6 18.Qh6#. **18.Qh6+ Kf6** 19.Bg5# is mate.

## Morphy, Paul – Meek, Alexander

Beaufort Alabama, 1855



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

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

**17.Nd5!** A terrific move, offering the knight so as to get the rook on e1 into play. **17...cxd5** After 17...Qg7 18.Qxd6, Black would soon be mated. **18.exd5 1-0** Black has no defense to the terrific fire power along the e- and f-files. For example taking the rook on e1 is met by 19.Qf7 or 19.Qf8 mate.

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