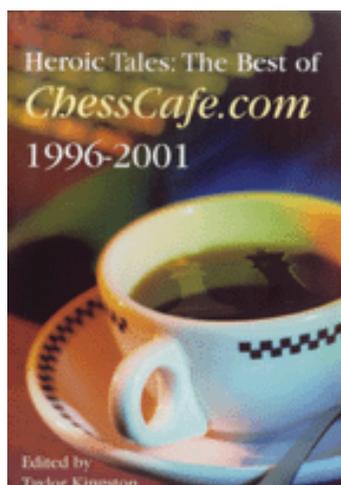


The Gambit Cartel

Tim McGrew



Kevitz's Legacy

Here at the **ChessCafe**, customers come first. So when Hanon forwarded me a request from reader Bob Ali for some coverage of 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nf3 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 5.Nb5 d5!? I jumped at the chance.

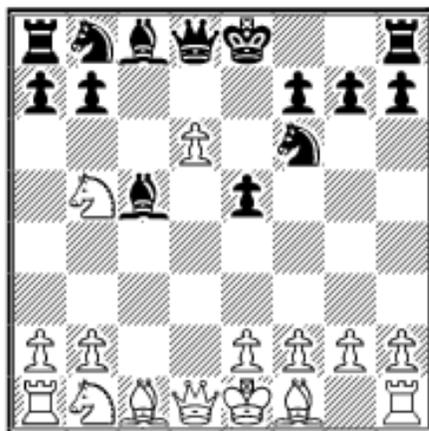
The gambit in question can arise, as above, when Black is aiming for a Benoni or a Benko and White declines, but it can also arise from the English Opening and it is classified as A31 in the *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings*. It does not appear, so far as I can tell, in Eric Schiller's massive *Gambit Chess Openings*, and I have been unable to determine when it was first played. The *Chess Author's Database* shows it taking off in popularity around 1977, but I have a dim recollection of an article in *Chess Life* around 1980 that attributed it to the inventive correspondence master Alexander Kevitz, who played a great deal of postal chess under the name of Palmer Phar (he worked for the Palmer Pharmacy) and experimented in that medium with a number of offbeat opening systems. Since I have not been able to find a definite name for the gambit, I will temporarily christen it the "Kevitz Gambit," secure in the knowledge that if this is a blunder my readers will quickly set me straight.

Without further eloquence:

Here is one of those mysteries to which the Internet age is prone: a miniature too plausible to be utterly fabricated, involving a powerful grandmaster when he was a rising junior, but with multiple names for his opponent. On a web site, I found this game with White as "Hugne." The version given here comes from the *Chess Author's Database*. And this isn't the only mystery ...

Huque,R (2260) - Hodgson,J (2510)
London, 1987

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nf3 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 5.Nb5 d5 6.cxd5 Bc5 7.d6?!



This move is seldom played, but why?

7...Ne4?

Hodgson, thrown off of his stride by an unfamiliar move, remembers the right idea but mistimes its execution. The right move is 7...0-0! 8.Nc7 and only now 8...Ne4 9.e3 (9.Be3 fails to 9...Bxe3 10.fxe3 Qf6 11.Qa4 Qf2+

12.Kd1 Qxe3 and Black has his own knight fork at f2.) 9...Bb4+ 10.Nd2 Qxd6 11.Nxa8 Rd8 and Black's pressure is decisive, Teske-Salmensuu, MK Cafe Open, Poland, 1999.

8.Nc7+??

But White is even more confused and falls on his sword. 8.Qd5! is the right way to take advantage of Black's misstep. After 8...Qa5+ 9.Nd2 Qxb5 10.Qxe5+ Be6 11.e3! Black's knight at e4 will fall and he has no compensation for the pawn he will still be missing.

8...Qxc7 9.Qa4+

Perhaps White believed he could regain the knight with this fork, but ...

9...Qc6! 0-1

Oops.

The next game shows Black handling this gambit in the broadsword fashion readers of this column know and love.

Bogdanovich, S - Kostiuk, T (2233)

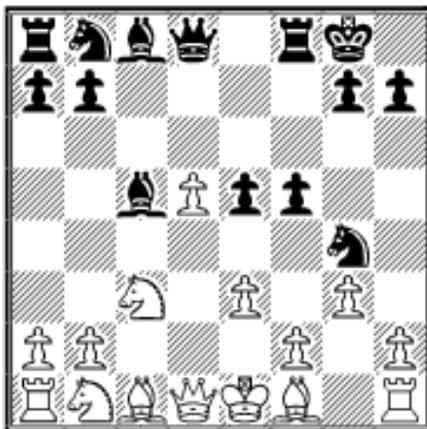
Kaissa Open Kharkov UKR (6), 27.01.2003

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nf3 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 5.Nb5 d5 6.cxd5 Bc5 7.g3?!

In many d-pawn openings, a kingside fianchetto is White's way of saying he'd rather live a quiet life. But in this gambit, the fianchetto looks like a luxury White cannot afford.

7...0-0 8.N5c3 Ng4

Black seizes the opportunity to force a weakening of White's pawn formation.

9.e3 f5

Experience has shown that the pawn formation g3/f2/e3 is vulnerable in two ways. First, if the light-square bishop doesn't get tucked in at g2 (and sometimes even if it does), Black can play ...e4 and try to drop a knight on f3. Second, the formation is somewhat brittle and under the right circumstances it can be vulnerable to a quick ...f5-f4, provided that Black has enough firepower in the form of active

pieces to back up the thrust. In this position, with his considerable lead in development, he does.

10.h3 Nf6 11.Bc4 Qe8

11...Nbd7 looks like a sensible alternative, perhaps intending ...e4 and ...Ne5.

12.Kf1

12.0-0 walks into the crossfire, e.g. 12...f4 (12...e4 is also plausible.) 13.exf4 Bxh3 14.Re1 Qg6 15.Qf3 e4 16.Nxe4 Nxe4 17.Rxe4 Bf5 and Black has excellent play.

12...f4 13.exf4 exf4 14.Bxf4 Nh5

Some rules were made to be broken – but only under the right circumstances. Black is leaving his queenside pieces at home, but the f-file is where things are happening and he needs the pressure against f2 now if it is to do him any good.

15.Na3?

White gravely underestimates the danger on f2. 15.Qe2 is a better defensive try, though White is still bedeviled by his poor king placement. 15...Qg6 16.Bd3 Nxg3+! 17.Bxg3 (17.fxg3 Qxg3--+ leaves White defenseless.) 17...Qxg3 18.Ne4 Bxh3+! 19.Ke1 Qg2 20.Qf1 Qxf1+ 21.Bxf1 Bb4+ 22.Nbc3 Bf5 Material has evened back out and Fritz thinks the game is about equal. But given White's king exposure and Black's bishop pair, I have to give Black an edge here.

15...Nxf4 16.gxf4 Rxf4 17.Be2?

White is lost in any event, but this permits an immediate finish.

17...Qe3! 0-1

The next game is a good cautionary tale for anyone who thinks White can just fling forward the g-pawn and win material.

Petrakis,I (2224) - Miezis,N (2524)

Acropolis IM Open Athens GRE (2), 17.11.2004

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nf3 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 5.Nb5 d5 6.cxd5 Bc5 7.e3 0-0 8.Be2 e4 9.N5c3 Qe7 10.Nd2 Rd8 11.Qc2 Bf5 12.d6?

It isn't clear to me, even on reflection, even after running Fritz on it – no, *especially* after running Fritz on it – why White played this move. If White had any hope of getting a bishop to g5, I could understand the desire to free the d5-square. But obviously he doesn't. Oh well! Real chess is stranger than fiction. 12.g4 Nxg4 13.Bxg4 Bxg4 14.Qxe4 would make some sense, as the passed d-pawn remains on the board.

12...Bxd6 13.g4?

The beginning of a bad plan.

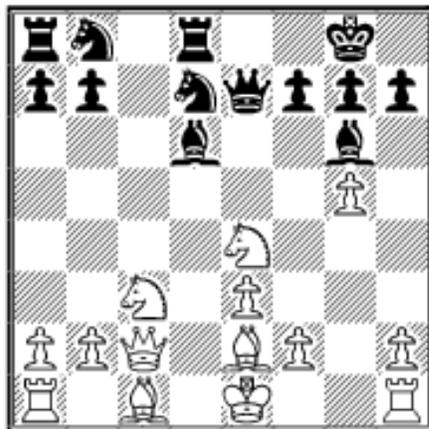
13...Bg6

Black suffers from an embarrassment of good ideas 13...Nxg4 14.Bxg4 Bxg4 15.Qxe4 Be6 looks very attractive, with the bishop pair, better development, and a better pawn structure on Black's side of the ledger.

14.g5?

Compounding his positional problems. If White is going to play this way, he has to try 14.h4

14...Nfd7 15.Ndxe4



“And White wins an important center pawn.” That’s how the script was supposed to go. Someone, however, forgot to tell Black about it.

15...Nc5

Now the truth is revealed: White’s knight is pinned and his position is very uncomfortable.

16.Bf3

White tries to hold the e4-point with pieces alone, but it doesn’t take massive calculating skills to see that this is not going to work. White has “maxed out” on defenders, and Black can toss in ...Re8 any time he’s ready. Probably the best try was 16.f3 But if so, White is likely lost already. After 16...Nc6 17.0-0 Be5 18.h4 Rac8 White looks like he is ready to be executed.

16...Nc6 17.Kf1 Nb4

17...Re8 also works just fine.

18.Qb1 Be5 19.a3 Bxc3 20.axb4 Bxb4 0-1

Postny, E (2260) - Smirin, I (2615)

Israeli League tt, Tel Aviv ISR (2), 1999

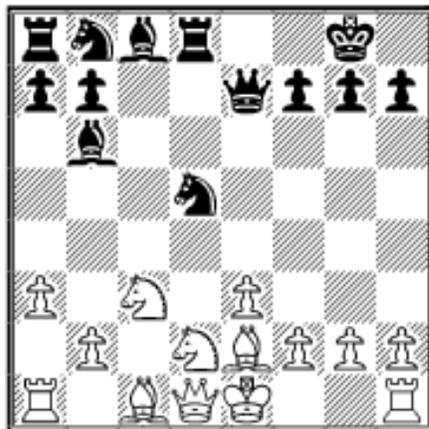
1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nf3 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 5.Nb5 d5 6.cxd5 Bc5 7.e3 0-0 8.N5c3 e4 9.Be2 Qe7 10.Nd2 Rd8 11.a3 Nxd5!?

A curious decision. Normally one would not trade the wedge pawn at e4 for the weakling on d5. But Smirin has something specific in mind.

12.Ncxe4 Bb6

By analogy with the Sicilian, one could consider 12...Bxe3 here. Black gets three pawns for the piece, which leaves him a pawn down on balance – in theory. Unfortunately, White has a lot more active pieces, and Black’s chances of a successful attack are remote. After 13.fxe3 Nxe3 14.Qb3 Nxc2+ 15.Kf2 Nf4 16.Bc4 the balance of piece activity is clearly in White’s favor.

13.Nc3



Taking the time for this retreat is one luxury too many. 13.0-0 Nc6 gives Black active pieces for the pawn, but there is no immediate knockout.

13...Nxe3!

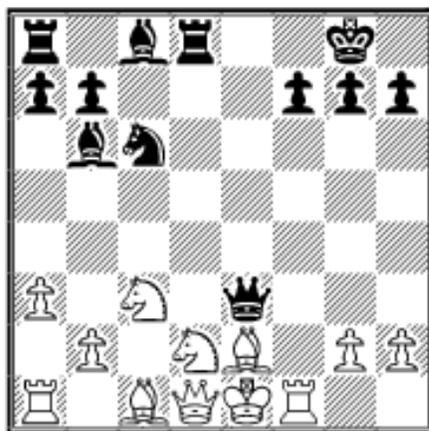
Another Sicilian-like sacrifice, but this time with quite a different idea. White's king will be pinned down in the middle where Black has heavy

material on the open files.

14.fxe3 Qxe3

A little threat of mate in one always brightens one's day!

15.Rf1 Nc6



This position is the one that Smirin had to evaluate accurately before embarking on the sacrifice. White has a piece for a mere pawn, but at the moment his pieces are huddled around his king and unable to develop any striking power. The question is whether Black will be able to drive home his attack before White can consolidate.

16.Qa4

It seems, in hindsight, like this may not have afforded the most tenacious defense. 16.Qb3 has the benefit of forcing Black to take a move to defend f7. The best response seems to be 16...Ne5 17.Nd1! Qd4 18.Qc3 Qh4+ 19.g3 Qe7 threatening ...Nd3+. White can meet this with 20.Ne4 (20.Nf2 Bf5 is not convincing for White), but Black can take advantage of the undefended knight to reposition his own minor pieces to better effect with 20...Nc6 and White will have to give back some material just to survive. It's a very difficult position.

16...Ne5

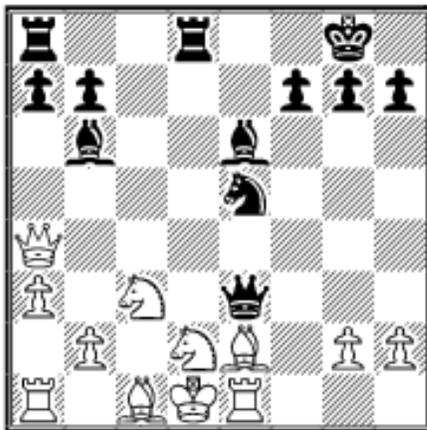
White's bishop on c1 is the only thing holding down d2. White cannot, therefore, allow 17...Nd3+ 18.Kd1 Nxd2+! when his queen is dropping off.

17.Kd1

17.Qc2 allows Black to force an immediate draw, if he's in the mood, with 17...Nd3+ 18.Kd1 Nf2+ etc. Somehow, I doubt that Smirin was in the mood.

17...Be6

Now Black has two rooks covering his back rank, so one of them can be freed up for central duty. The coordinated firepower of Black's pieces is really something to behold.

18.Re1

It is almost impossible to find the right moves (assuming they exist) when you're under this kind of sustained pressure.

18...Rd4

Blitz chess does strange things to your mind. In this position, my mind coughs up 18...Qf4!? intending 19.Qxf4 Bb3# We now return to our regular programming.

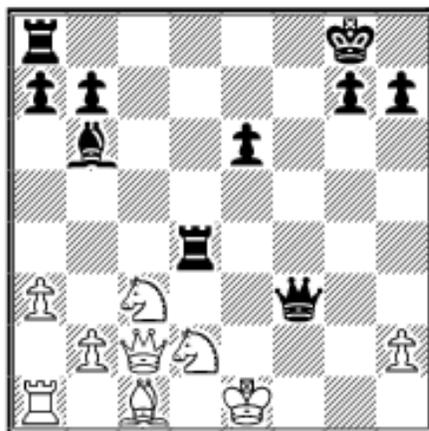
19.Bf3 Qf4 20.Qc2 Nxf3 21.Re4

21.gxf3 Qxf3+ 22.Ne2 (22.Re2 Qf1+ 23.Re1 Bg4+ 24.Ne2 Bxe2#)
22...Bb3 is a pretty picture – if you're looking at it from Black's side of the board.

21...Qf6

21...Qxh2 also wins, if you needed to know.

22.Rxe6 fxe6 23.gxf3 Qxf3+ 24.Ke1



24...Qf2+ 0-1

Simple chess.

After 25.Kxf2 Rxd2+ and 26...Rxc2, White is the exchange and two pawns down with nothing to live for.

Eagle-eyed readers will have noticed by now that in a lot of our illustrative games Black outrates White by a couple hundred points.

To redress that balance, and for other obvious and excellent reasons, we present an upset from Black's point of view.

Levin,D (2315) - Russell,H (2185)

New Haven Open, 23.02.1991

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 c5 3.c4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 5.Nb5 d5 6.cxd5 Bc5 7.e3 0-0 8.N5c3 e4 9.Be2 Bf5

If pressed, I'd probably vote for 9...Qe7 instead since it isn't yet clear where this bishop belongs. One reason to delay its development is that White can now fling forward his pawns with 10.g4 Bg6 11.h4 when roles are reversed – White is taking the risks and looking for glory. Why give him that opportunity?

10.a3

Since it isn't clear that White stands to gain anything much from queenside expansion, this move looks like a loss of time.

10...Re8 11.Qb3 Nbd7!?



This is a gutsy decision, daring White to waste more time grabbing the b-pawn while Black centralizes and activates everything.

12.Qxb7

White is up for what he thinks is a free lunch.

12...Ne5 13.Qb3 Nfg4 14.h3 Qh4!

Putting maximum pressure on White's kingside.

15.g3

15.0–0 would be a classic case of castling into it. One fantasy line runs 15...Nf6 16.Nd2 Bxh3! Ignore Fritz – he'll come around in a few moves. 17.gxh3 Qxh3 18.Ncxe4 Nfg4 19.Bxg4 Nxg4 20.Re1 Re5! Nothing quite like a rook lift when you need some extra muscle! 21.f3 Rg5! and White gets mated.

15...Qh6

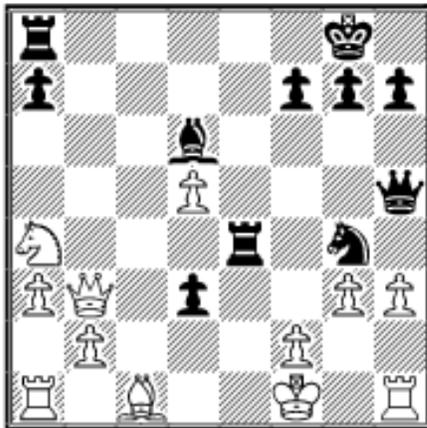
Now the threats of 16...Nf3+ and 16...Nd3+ keep White on his toes.

16.Na4 Bd6 17.Nbc3 Nd3+ 18.Bxd3 exd3

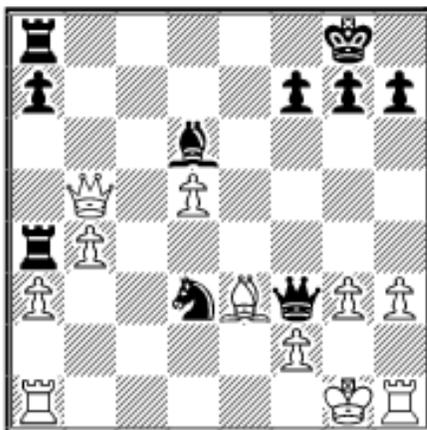
Now sacrificial threats loom on e3 and g3.

19.e4 Qh5

Black maintains the pin on the h-pawn while stepping out of the line of the laser on c1.

20.Kf1 Bxe4 21.Nxe4 Rxe4

26.Be3



26...Bxg3! 27.Rf1

White has no time for 27.Qxd3 Bxf2+ when the bishop on e3 is pinned.

27...Rxa3

Perfect! Black goes from having two pieces hanging to having none.

28.Qc6 Rf8 29.b5 Bxf2+ 30.Bxf2

Nxf2 0-1

Here 30...Nf4 would have forced mate. But does anyone really think White felt relieved?

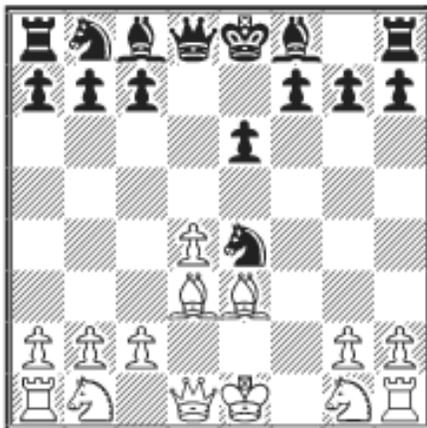
Peter's Answers to Last Month's Homework Problems



A. After 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Be3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4 c5 6.c3 cxd4 7.cxd4 Be7 8.Nf3 Nc6 9.Nc3 0-0 10.Bd3 a6 11.h4 f6, consider White's attacking options. Do not be afraid to sacrifice if that is what the position requires. Work out every line, explaining in words what the moves accomplish.

The immediate Greek Gift sacrifice with **12.Bxh7+** is sound. If Black declines the piece White can simply retreat with a pawn in hand. **12...Kxh7** (12...Kh8 13.Bg6+- White's bishop controls f7, so he threatens simply 14.Ng5 followed by 15.Qh5+ and 16.Qh7# There is little Black can do about this.; 12...Kf7 The king has only one flight square here – on e8 – so White needs to engineer a check along the diagonal connecting f7 and e8. This he can achieve with 13.Ng5+! clearing the line for his queen. 13...fxg5 (13...Ke8 14.Qh5+ mates.) 14.Qh5+ g6 15.Qxg6#) **13.Ng5+!** Only this second sacrifice, made possible by the pawn at h4 and the rook back on h1, enables White to justify the first sacrifice. **13...fxg5** (13...Kg8 14.Qh5! fxg5 15.hxg5 transposes into the main line) **14.hxg5+** White could also check with the queen here and then recapture with the h-pawn, cutting out the Kg6 “defense.” **14...Kg8** (14...Kg6 allows 15.Qh5+ Kf5 16.g4# A pretty mate!) **15.Qh5** Now the threat is 16.g6 locking the exit at f7, with mate

to follow. **15...Rf5** Black pins the g-pawn, but he cannot keep the rook here safely. **16.g4!+-** If the rook moves, White has the locking move **17.g6!** followed by mate on h8. If it does not move, White captures it, regaining his sacrificed material, and Black is still under great pressure.



B. After **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Be3 dxe4 4.f3 Nf6 5.fxe4 Nxe4 6.Bd3**, can Black safely play **6...Qh4+**? Working on this will give you a greater appreciation for the bishop on e3.

Black cannot afford the check **6...Qh4+** because after the forced sequence **7.g3 Nxe3** White has **8.Bf2!** pinning the knight. Black still

has the pin against the undefended rook on h1, so it becomes a question of whether Black can defend his knight more times than White can attack it. The answer, it turns out, is that he can't: **8...Bd6 9.Ne2** overwhelms the knight, leaving Black with nothing better than to try to pick up another pawn with **9...Bd7 10.Nxe3 Bxe3 11.Bxe3 Qxd4** On paper material is now equal, but after **12.Nc3** with the idea of **Qe2** and 0-0-0 White seems to have clearly the better prospects. (+/-)



C. After **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Be3 dxe4 4.f3 exf3 5.Nxf3 Nf6 6.Bd3 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Qe1 Bd7 9.Nbd2 Bc6 10.Qh4 Nbd7 11.Bg5 Re8 12.Ne5 h6**, work out the consequences of **13.Bxh6**. What happens if Black takes the bishop? What if he takes the knight on e5? Do not just come up with moves; explain your ideas in words, too.

First defense: **13...gxh6** Now the ordinary attacking idea with **14.Qxh6** falters since Black has **14...Bf8** as a response. Better is **14.Qg3+**, but the third option is best of all. **14.Nxf7!!** Black's queen is attacked, but he cannot take the time to move her because of **15.Nxh6+** when Black's kingside is completely shredded. So he must take the second piece. **14...Kxf7** Now the knight on f6 is pinned. White wants to work his queen to the g6-square, and the best way to do this is with a series of checks, never giving Black a chance to catch his breath. **15.Qh5+!** All with checks. (**15.Qxh6??** is much weaker since after **15...Rh8+** there is no mate and White is a huge amount of material down.) **15...Kg7** (**15...Kf8 16.Qxh6+** All with checks. **16...Kg8** (**16...Kf7 17.Qh7+**

Exploiting the pin on the knight again. 17...Kf8 Now Black's king is completely immobilized, so White just weaves the net around him with 18.Bg6! and mate on f7 or h8 cannot be stopped.) 17.Bh7+ and White mates as in the main line.) **16.Qg6+** All with checks. **16...Kh8 17.Qxh6+ Kg8 18.Bh7+ Kh8** (18...Kf7 19.Qg6+ Kf8 20.Qg8# That pin on the knight was useful!) **19.Bf5+ Kg8 20.Bxe6#**

Second defense: **13...Nxe5!** This is a much tougher line of defense. **14.dxe5 Bc5+** (14...Ne4 is also worth trying: 15.Qf4! f5! (or 15...Bc5+ 16.Kh1 Nf2+ 17.Rxf2 Bxf2 18.Qg4! g6 19.Bxg6! Kh8 20.Bg5!+-) 16.Bxe4 Qd4+ 17.Kh1 Bxe4 18.Qg3 Bf8 19.Be3 Qd5 20.c4 Qd3 21.Nxe4 and White's edge is pretty small) **15.Kh1 Qd4 16.Bf4** White pulls back the endangered bishop, defends e5, and blocks the exchange of queens. Now that Black is not ahead in material, it looks like White has some edge thanks to his attacking prospects, e.g. **16...Ne4 17.Nxe4 Bxe4 18.Rad1 Be7 19.Qg3 Bxd3 20.Bh6! Bf8 21.Rxd3 Qxb2 22.Rd7 Qxc2 23.Rdxf7**. Although White has not won the game yet, this looks tough for Black.



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