

The Modernized Trojan Horse 1.♘c3

A Complete Opening Repertoire for White

Bruno Dieu

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Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
☉	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⌋	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate
RR	author's recommendation

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Preface

Bruno and I met for the first time more than 30 years ago, but only rarely since then, Bruno being more a correspondence than an over-the-board player.

Being myself an adept of maverick openings I welcomed this book on 1.♘c3 from my friend, the FM Bruno Dieu, with open arms.

This book, thought as a repertoire for White, is sincere, it doesn't invent a white advantage in lines where this one doesn't exist. It suggests, on the other hand, some "trails", playable positions where the better-armed player is the more likely to be successful.

Bruno employed himself 1.♘c3 as White in high-level correspondence battles, and he notably relies on those to offer analysis on a large range of black replies to 1.♘c3, trying as much as possible to develop an offensive style of play.

I wish you a good reading and numerous victories on less explored tracks !

Christian Bauer, 2023

Introduction

Hello everyone and thank you for reading my book.

I faced 1. ♖c3 on the board for the first time in 1980 with a transposition into the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, and then a second time by correspondence against the future winner of the tournament against whom I lost. Like all players facing this opening, I was unfamiliar with this line and I greatly underestimated it.

Despite having a good level in chess, I finally undertook a career as a bank manager. Therefore, I did not get the chance to be a professional player and, as a humble amateur, I became a FIDE Master. Unable to combine the life of a chess player, who travels to tournaments in France and abroad, with my professional and family lives, I started correspondence chess, where my crowning glory was when I became French Champion in 2000. Correspondence chess allowed me to participate in thematic tournaments, where all players play the same opening with both white and black. I met Anker Aasum during a tournament on the Evans Gambit, and he invited me to a thematic tournament with 1. ♖c3 and that's how I met many Dutch players practising this line, as Dick Van Geet who popularised it in the Netherlands. Afterwards, Anker offered me his book and regularly communicated his analyses via his magazine. The idea was then to gather all the specialists in the world of this line in a thematic tournament over the board and to share our analyses. I thus took part in three tournaments in France: two in Mariac (one of which I had the pleasure to win) and the third one in Cannes. These tournaments were delightful moments of friendship, with memorable evenings of analysis in the summer house of our common friend, Henri Van Bellen. I had the chance to battle with great specialists and share the secrets of this opening with them: the IM Dick Van Geet, Dutch player whose beautiful tactical games, his book and ChessBase DVD popularized this original opening in Europe; my Norwegian friend, Anker Aasum, who wrote one of the first books on Odin's horse; the German Rainer Schlenker, known for his analysis of this marginal variation in the German magazine 'Rang Springer'; and, finally, the German Harald Keilhack, renown for his magnificent book on the Tarrasch defence (*Die Tarrasch Verteidigung*) and who wrote his book 'Knight on the left 1. ♖c3' right after the tournament, first in German and then in English. This book is still considered today as the bible of the opening. I remember with amusement the comment of chess specialists when the book came out: "If a player writes a 300-page book on 1. ♖c3, how many pages will it take for a book on the Sicilian?". I won't forget the

other Dutch and German players who took part in the tournament: Van Bellen, Jongsma, Leeners, Hanke...

Afterwards, I wanted to become an expert on this opening while refusing to be just a “one-line specialist”, so combined 1. c3 with my other openings: 1.e4, 1.d4, and 1. f3. It allowed me to consider all transpositions instead of just playing this line, as many specialists do. One of the greatest experts of this line is Ove Ekebjærg, who became World Champion in correspondence chess with this opening and I highly recommend studying his games, as much as the ones of Dick Van Geet and Dmitry Andreikin.

1. c3 became popular among professional players, and many grandmasters have added it to their repertoire or played it occasionally in official games: Nakamura, Morozevich, Rapport, Bauer, Vallejo Pons... However, it is especially in rapid games that it has reached the world elite, and the very best players in the world have tried it: Carlsen, Mamedyarov, Andreikin or Firouzja for example. I truly hope that seeing the very best players in the world playing it will convince the most sceptical critics.

It should be mentioned that it is common for an opening to alternate between darkness and spotlight. For example, the Scotch game was considered as a tasteless opening before Kasparov resurrected it against Karpov during the World Championship in Lyon. Ever since, it has grown in popularity getting more and more adepts. The same goes with the London system, considered as a passive system for lazy players, brought back to full glory by Carlsen, one of the greatest world champions. Let's hope that 1. c3 will one day seduce the world champion in official games!

When I started writing this book, I struggled with the name of this opening which has changed with each author. I wanted a coherent choice. I thought about the “Napoleon opening”, because, according to Chessbase, the first game occurred in 1804 between Napoleon Bonaparte and Madame de Remusat (1. c3 e5 2. f3 d6 3. e4 f5 4. h3 fxe4 5. xe4 c6 6. fg5 d5 7. h5+ f6 8. f3 h6 9. f6+ e7 10. d5+ d6 11. e4+ d5 12. c4+ xc4 13. b3+ d4 14. d3#). However, it is debated whether Napoleon actually played this game, so I changed my mind. Afterwards, I wanted to make a pun with my name as “God's bible” or “God's will” (NB: “*Dieu*” in French means “God”), but considering that I have health problems I didn't want to provoke the devil. Moreover, this joke would not have stand the translation. In the end, I settled on the “Trojan Horse” as it seems the most appropriate to me. Indeed, this move provokes all types of reactions,

especially among strong players: they don't want to waste their time studying such nonsense instead of the main lines, as 1.e4 or 1.d4.

Very often, the player with the Black pieces considers this opening ridiculous and plays without thinking too much his first move; afterwards, he often finds himself transposed in openings that he does not master or schemes that he does not know well. This is the similarity with Ulysses' wooden horse, the gift to the Trojans which turns out to be a poisoned gift. The Knight comes to c3, as an amateur move serving some specialists. So many variations are hidden in this horse's belly, and ready to kill like Ulysses' Greek warriors were. The Trojan horse refers to gifts (amateur moves) that turn out to be traps for those who receive them. Chess players, listen to Cassandra's warnings and do not pull the Trojan horse into your city walls by playing your move too quickly. Otherwise, White will break through your defences and then make a great feast!

Surprise is the main asset of this opening because even a well-prepared opponent may not know how to react and treat this line. You can choose to play original lines that your opponent has not studied much and he is facing the unknown, far from his preparations. Even better, while your opponent thinks that he will play marginal lines without any disadvantage for him, you can choose to transpose into great theoretical lines that he is not used to play. Indeed, by studying your opponent's games beforehand, this gives you information about the lines he plays and the type of position he likes, and you can prepare your transpositions into the main lines. Of course, a player can always transpose into his favourite defence but no defence refutes 1. e4 and the knight coming to c3 exists in all the main lines of all Black defences from 1. e4! Even 1. d4 without c4 and with c3 instead has become fashionable, so you can transpose into many different positions resulting from 1. e4 or 1. d4. You can also play Black defences in first with the knight already on c3 (e.g. Pirc, Grünfeld, King's Indian) or remain original.

I find it very amusing to read some comments on the internet judging that 1. c3 does not pretend to play for an advantage! Nowadays what to play with White to be sure to have the advantage? When I was a child, I have been told that the Italian game is for beginners, that we play the Scotch game to get a draw, and we can only become a strong player with the Ruy Lopez. Nowadays, we play the Italian game Giuoco Pianissimo (1. e4 e5 2. f3 c6 3. c4 c5 4. d3) to try to win! The Calabrian Gioachino Greco must be proud looking at us from heaven. Personally, I believe that everything is playable if you understand what you are playing and

where you want to go. In fact, what is the problem with this premature development of the knight?

The main disadvantage of the Trojan Horse is in the development of the knight itself; indeed, the White player must be prepared to transpose with the knight already on c3, depriving himself of other lines, which gives less flexibility to the White player. For instance, he does not have the Advance Variation (3. e5) nor the Tarrasch Variation (3. d2) in the French Defence; the Maroczy Bind (c4) in the Sicilian is also excluded. The White player must become a specialist in positions with the knight already committed to c3, in transpositions with a white pawn on e4 or d4. The main disadvantage of placing the knight in front of the c2-pawn is that the knight on c3 does not prevent the move 1... d5. After 1. c3 d5, White has two options. The first option is to play 2. d4, in order to move the bishop to f4 or g5. This option has been the choice of Carlsen and Firouzja in their rapid games. The second option is to play 2. e4 – the favourite of the 1. c3 specialists – where Black can either try to refute the opening by playing 2... d4 or try to equalise by taking on e4, but this is accepting to come into White's hunting field as a wolf or a rabbit.

Finally, Black can also try to transpose into their favourite opening. This is what Kasparov did against Morozevich, he judged the first move ridiculous and finally played 1... c5 to play a Sicilian, his favourite defence. For the record, Morozevich chose the miscellaneous 2. d4 rather than transposing into a Sicilian. We will propose here three alternatives for White. Either they transpose in a theoretical main line that they master, or they develop a specific line of 1. c3, or they opt for the original. For example, after 1. c3 c5: 2. e4 would be the “transposition”, 2. f3 followed by d4 would be the “specific”, 2. d4 or 2. g4 would be the “original”.

I hope you will enjoy playing this opening as much as I did. Work on your transpositions to become an expert in the main lines, enjoy playing new positions, be original from time to time, and think of my smile if your opponent gives you a contemptuous look.

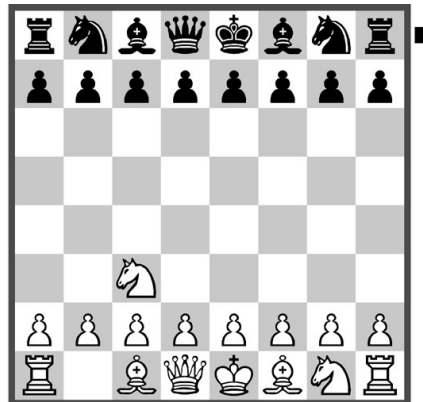
If you are playing at a high level, prepare yourself by studying your opponent's games beforehand to take him to your hunting field. If you want to progress without investing too much, you can play all the specific positions without working on anything else. Finally, if you just want to have fun, play the original variations because they are really out of the ordinary.

I thank all the specialists of 1. ♘c3 that I met during my tournaments over the board and by correspondence, all the authors of the books on 1. ♘c3 or on the Scandinavian (1. ♘c3 d5 2. e4) who inspired me, and the friend Camel Lorenzo who nicely helped me on the part about 1. ♘c3 e5. Enjoy!

Bruno Dieu

Origin of the names

1. c3



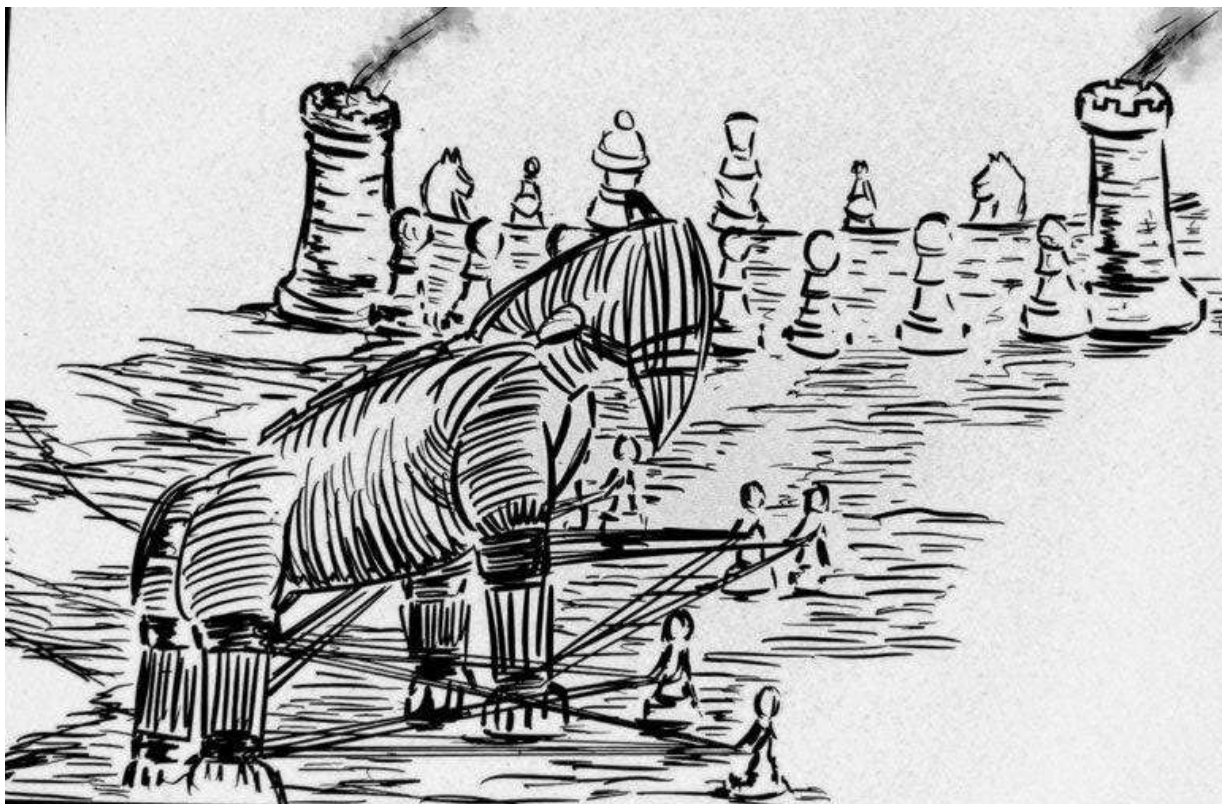
Position after: 1. c3

1. c3, the Trojan Horse! A bit of history on 1. c3. This opening has the particularity to have many different names according to the origin of the players who have either played it or analysed it. “Napoleon” (even though it is debated whether Napoleon actually played this line); “Heinrichsen” from the Lithuanian player Arved Heinrichsen who also gave his name to the Baltic openings; “Dunst” from the New York master Ted Dunst who popularized it in the United States; “Mestrovic” from the IM Zvonimir Mestrovic who systematically adopted this opening.

The name “Sleipnir” comes from the eight-legged horse ridden by Odin in Norse mythology. This is the name chosen in the book of our previously mentioned friend, the Norwegian Anker Aasum, descendant of the Vikings. This is a witty name as the knight on c3 can jump to eight different squares. “Millard” opening comes from the national master Hugh Myers in honour of Henry Miliard who played this opening during Joseph Henry Blackburne’s simultaneous. The English master Tim Harding, a very prolific author, called it the “Queen’s Knight Attack”. The German FIDE master Harald Keilhack chose the most neutral name “Der Linksspringer” (literally, knight on the left). Finally, the name of the Dutch IM Dick Daniel Van Geet is probably the most used one for this opening, especially in the Netherlands, as his magnificent games and his ideas illustrated this line to popularize it. He also wrote a book and a Chessbase CD on this opening. We can also see sometimes the name “Closed Scandinavian” for the line 1. e4 d5 2. c3 d4 which transposes into the main line of our opening. Personally, I consider that Van Geet opening is the most

deserved, as Dick brought plenty of new ideas. However, as every author proposes a new name, I will keep this tradition alive.

The idea of the move 1. ♘c3 is to confuse the Black player, as White play a supposedly unambitious move to mislead black. This is why I find the name "Trojan Horse" very appropriate for the move 1. ♘c3 just as the gift from Ulysses to the Trojans which appeared to be a tricky and poisoned gift.



Part I

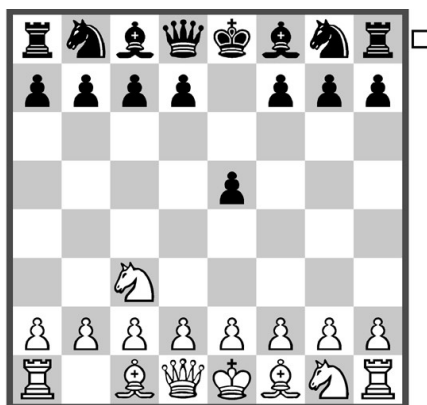
1...e5

Introduction to the variations

1. ♘c3

The "Trojan horse", a gift from Ulysses to the Trojans, an offering or a subtle ruse, a starting move offering equality or a beautiful manoeuvre misleading the opponent into lines that he does not practice.

1... e5



Position after: 1... e5

When Black plays the move 1... e5, he offers a transposition into an open game inviting White to play 2. e4. However, Black allows here theoretical main line of 1. ♘c3.

2. ♘f3

Developping a piece by attacking a pawn is always a good principle. White can obviously transpose into the theoretical main line with 2. e4, but it is not our idea. With 1. ♘c3, it happens that a player pushes his first move without thinking too much and finds himself transposed into a line that he does not master. Knowing a position and mastering it are two different things, that is why it is important to analyse your opponent's games to know his style and his openings, in order to transpose him wisely in a type of position that he does not like. It should be noted that transposing is a good option as long as the White player is better prepared than his opponent. It seems to me that the specialists of 1. ♘c3 have a tendency to privilege the originality over the transpositions to remain out of theory.

A) 2. e4 is a transposition into 1. e4 e5 2. ♘c3, and the game can go now in many different directions.

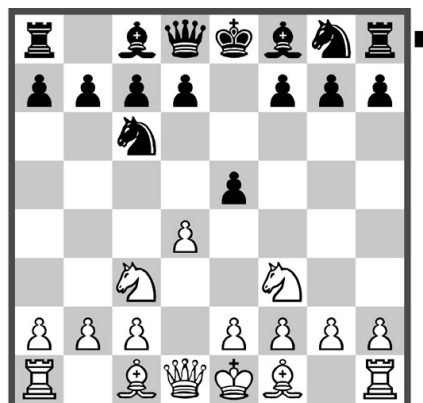
B) 2. d4 exd4 3. ♙xd4 ♘c6 4. ♙a4 is a reversed Nimzowitsch variation of the King's pawn. I do not analyse this line which seems to give only equality.

2... ♘c6

A) 2... ♞c5?! is a Traxler-like sacrifice.

B) 2.... d5 is a pawn sacrifice for the initiative.

3. d4



Position after: 3. d4

White seizes the centre as in the Scotch game but without the White pawn on e4.

3... exd4

The central capture is the most logical move when White plays d4.

4. ♘xd4

(see diagram next page)



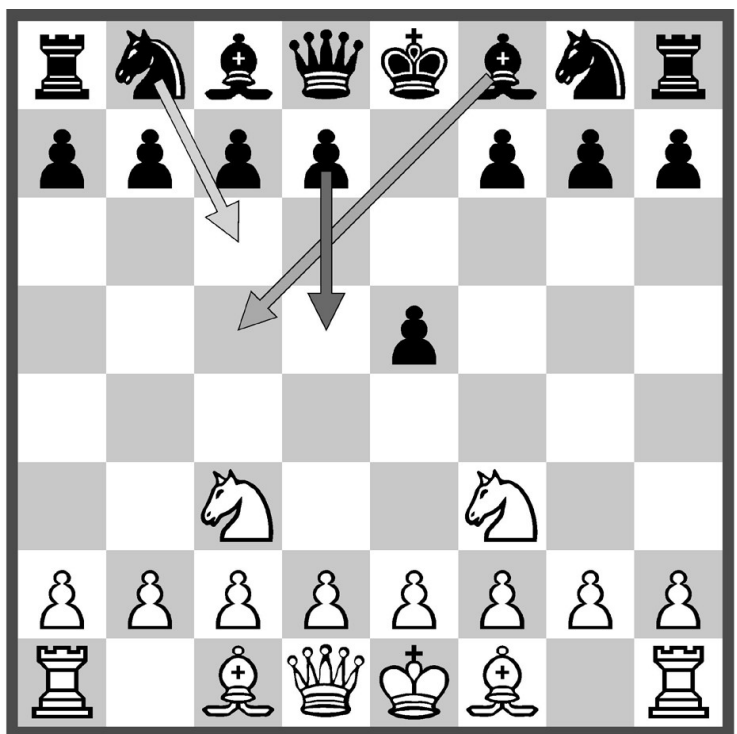
Position after: 4. ♘xd4

This will be the main position of our study in this first part, and there are obviously many similarities with the Scotch Game.



Early Sidelines

1. c3 e5 2. f3



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – Early Sidelines

1. c3 e5 2. f3

a) 2... c5..... 23

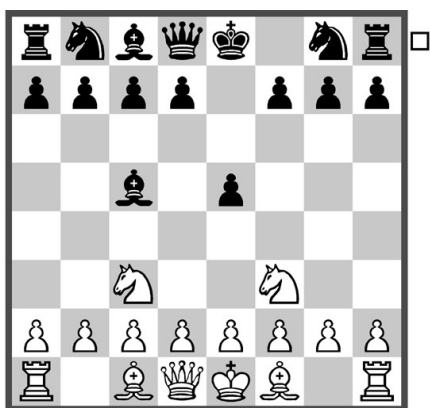
b) 2...d5..... 24

c) 2... c6 3.d4 f6..... 27

d) 2... c6 3.d4 d6 28

a) 2... ♖c5

1. ♘c3 e5 2. ♘f3 ♙c5?!



Position after: 2... ♙c5?!

A pawn sacrifice in the spirit of the Traxler Counterattack.

3. ♖xe5!

Accepting the challenge, as recommended by Anker Aasum.

A) 3. d4 exd4 4. ♖xd4 ♖e7 5. e4 ♖bc6 6. ♙e3 is a Scotch Game: Bauer – Kutzner, Hassloch 1999.

B) 3. e3!? does not take any risk: 3... ♘c6 [3... ♘f6 4. ♖xe5! ♙e7 5. ♖g4RR!±] 4. d4!? (Harald Keilhack) 4... exd4 5. exd4 ♙b4 6. d5 ♖ce7 7. ♙g5±

3... ♙xf2+

Black is going for the White king's hunt.

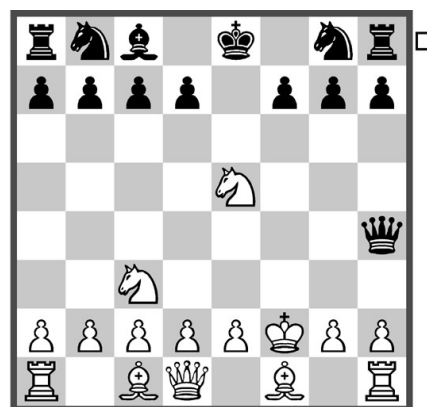
A) 3... ♘f6 4. d4! ♙b4 5. g3 d6 6. ♘d3 ♙a5 7. ♙g2 ♘c6 8. ♘f4±

B) 3... ♘c6 4. ♘d3!? ♙b6 5. ♘d5± Aasum – Roscher, corr. 1992.

4. ♙xf2

From a strategic point of view, this temporary sacrifice is bad, because it gives White the pair of bishops and the White pieces will gain some time by developing while attacking the Black queen.

4... ♙h4+



Position after: 4... ♙h4+

5. g3!

5. ♙g1!? ♙d4+ 6. e3 ♙xe5 7. d4! ♙a5 8. e4 d6? 9. b4!+- (Harald Keilhack) 9... ♙xb4 [9... ♙b6 10. ♘d5 ♙c6 11. ♙b5!!+-] 10. ♘d5+-

5... ♙d4+ 6. ♙g2!

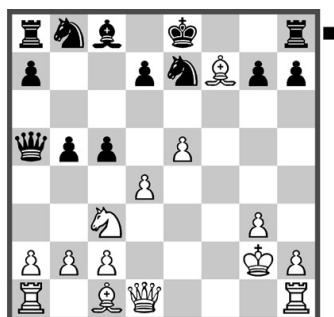
6. e3!? ♙xe5 7. ♙g2!? with the idea to limit Black's counterplay (Harald Keilhack).

7... ♘f6 8. ♖f3 d6 9. d4 ♘g4+ 10. ♖xg4 1-0 (10) Aasum, A – Roscher, J corr. 1980.

6... ♖xe5 7. d4±

7... ♖e6

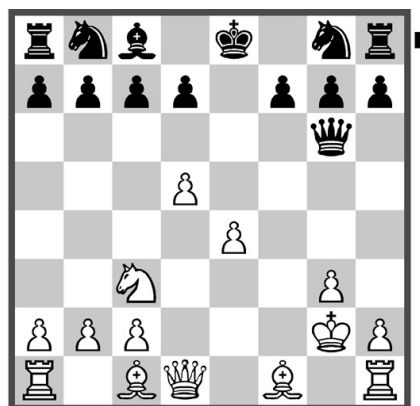
7... ♖a5 8. e4 ♘e7 9. ♙c4 c6 10. e5! b5 11. ♙b3 c5 12. ♙xf7+!!



Position after: 12. ♙xf7+!!

12... ♔xf7 13. ♖f3+ ♔e8 14. ♖xa8+– 1-0 (34) Morris, G – Turner, J Chepstow 1999.

8. d5! ♖g6 9. e4



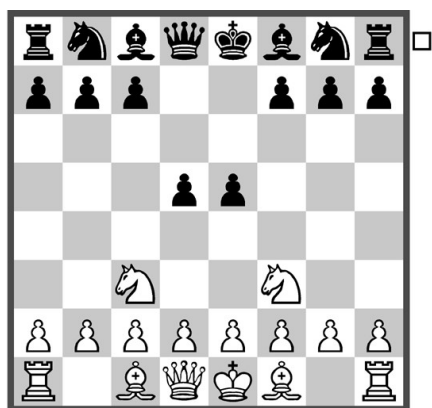
Position after: 9. e4

9... d6 10. ♙d3 ♙g4 11. ♖f1 ♘e7 12. h3 ♙c8 13. g4 0-0 14. e5±

1-0 Mestrovic – Jakubovic, Bihac 1999.

b) 2...d5

1. ♘c3 e5 2. ♘f3 d5!?



Position after: 2... d5!?

A very surprising pawn sacrifice, with the idea to take the initiative.

3. ♘xe5! d4

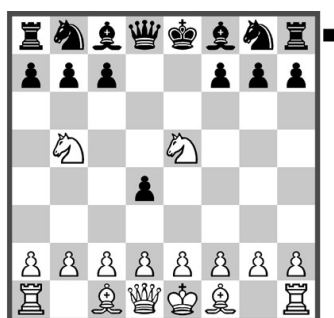
The point. Black is hoping to compensate for the lost pawn by attacking the White pieces and getting some space. However, as one of my former trainers used to say, a pawn sacrifice is often a pawn loss.

3... ♖d6?! 4. d4!? After this move, Black does not have enough compensation:
4... ♘f6 5. ♙g5 0-0 6. e3±

4. ♘b1!?

The most logical.

4. ♘b5!?



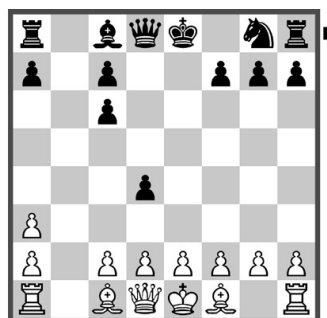
Position after: 4. ♘b5!?

This is a pretty provoking move to try, but it seems that White can keep the advantage.

A) 4... ♙d5?? loses the Queen after 5. ♘xc7+!+-

B) 4... ♘c6 5. ♘xc6 bxc6 6. ♘a3 the knight is on the edge, but the c-pawns are doubled. 6... ♙xa3 gives the pair of bishops to double the pawns on the a-file. [6... ♘f6 7. ♘c4 the knight is coming back into the game and Black does not have enough compensation after 7... ♙c5 8. e3 0-0 9. ♙e2±] 7. bxa3 This is a very unusual position where White has an extra pawn and the pair of bishops but struggles to develop its pieces. Black has control

over the centre and can easily develop its pieces.

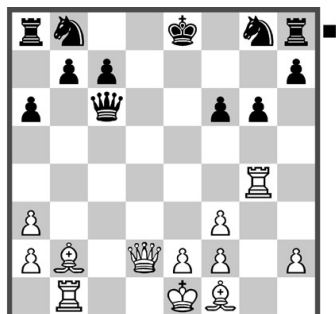


Position after: 7. bxa3

7... ♘f6∞ White must be very inventive to develop its pieces! 8. e3!? 0-0 9. ♙d3 ♖b8 fighting for the b-file 10. 0-0 ♙d6 11. ♙f3 ♖e8 12. ♙g3 ♖e5 13. a4!? threatening ♙a3. 13... ♘e4 14. ♙xe4 ♖xe4 15. ♙xd6 cxd6 16. d3±

C) 4... a6 forces the White knight to go on the edge: 5. ♘a3. In comparison with ♘b1, the knight is developed and can go to c4. It also lures Black into giving away the pair of bishops with ♙xa3. 5... ♙f6 [5... ♙xa3 6. bxa3 ♙d5 7. ♘f3 ♘f6 8. ♙b2 as soon as the pair of bishops becomes active, White will have the upper hand. 8... c5 9. c3 ♘c6 10. cxd4 cxd4 11. ♙b3±] 6. ♘f3

C1) 6... ♙g4 7. c3 ♙xf3 8. gxf3 ♙xa3 9. bxa3 dxc3 wins the pawn back. 10. ♖b1! Thanks to the pair of bishops in an open position, White keeps the advantage. 10... cxd2+ 11. ♙xd2± ♙c6 12. ♙b2 ♘f6 [12... f6 13. ♖g1 g6 14. ♖g4!!



Position after: 14. ♖g4!!

14... ♘e7 15. ♖c1+- ♙d7 16. ♖d4+-] 13. ♖g1 0-0 14. ♖xg7+ ♙xg7 15. ♙g5+ with a mating attack.

C2) 6... ♘c6 7. g3RR!? ♙c5 8. d3 ♘ge7 9. ♙g2 0-0 10. 0-0 ♙e6 11. ♘g5!±

4... ♙d6

A) 4... ♘f6 5. c3 with the idea to challenge this annoying pawn. 5... ♙e7 6. ♙a4+ ♘bd7 7. cxd4RR!? keeps the advantage without giving too much counterplay 7... 0-0 8. e3 c5 9. ♘f3±

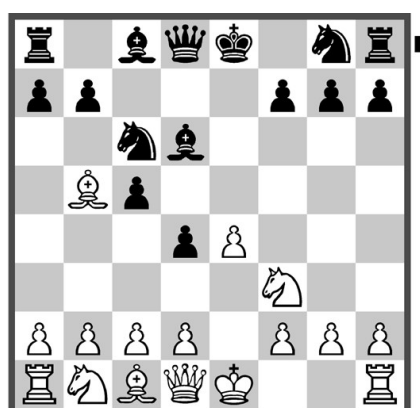
B) 4... ♙d5 5. ♘f3 Black gets some initiative in compensation for the sacked pawn. 5... g5?



Position after: 5... g5?

Black is going all-in. 6. c3!? [6. e3RR! c5 7. ♙b5+ ♙d7 8. c4 ♙f5 9. exd4±] 6... c5 7. cxd4 cxd4 8. e3 ♙g7 9. ♘xd4± ♙xd4 10. exd4 ♘c6 11. ♘c3± Mehlhorn – Sauermann, GER email 2002.

5. ♘f3!? c5 **6.** e4 ♘c6 **7.** ♙b5!?

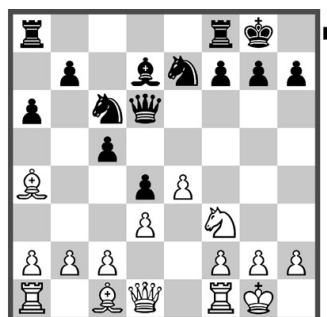


Position after: 7. ♙b5!?

7... ♙d7 **8.** 0-0 ♘ge7 **9.** d3 **0-0** **10.** ♘bd2 ♙c7 **11.** ♘c4±

a6 **12.** ♘xd6 ♙xd6 **13.** ♙xc6?!

13. ♙a4RR!?



Position after: 13. ♙a4RR!?

13... ♘g6 [13... ♙g4 14. h3 ♙h5 15. ♙d2±] 14. h3 ♖fe8 15. ♙d2 h6 16. a3 b5 17. ♙b3 ♖ac8 18. ♙e2 ♙e6 19.

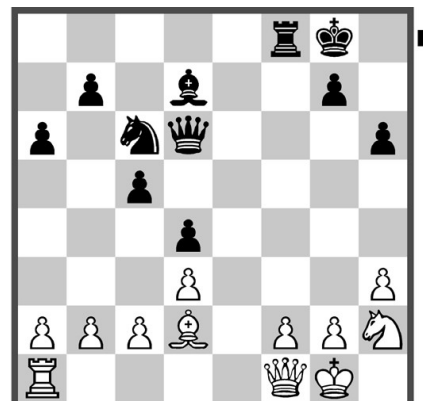
♙xe6 ♚xe6 20. b3± is a healthy extra pawn for White.

13... ♘xc6 14. h3 f5

14... ♖ae8!? 15. ♖e1 ♚g6 16. ♔h2 f5

15. ♖e1 fxe4 16. ♖xe4 h6 17. ♙d2 ♖ae8 18. ♖xe8 ♖xe8 19. ♚f1 ♖f8 20. ♘h2

(see diagram opposite column)



Position after: 20. ♘h2

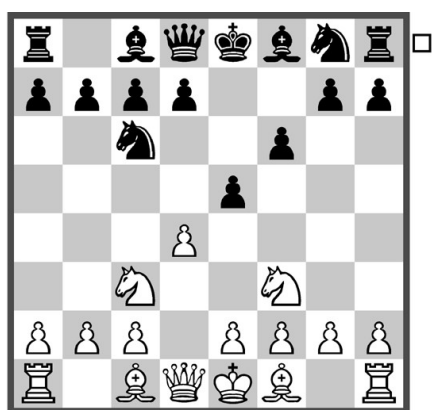
20... g5?!

20... ♚g6!?

21. ♖e1±

c) 2... ♘c6 3.d4 f6

1. ♘c3 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 f6?!



Position after: 3... f6?!

A surprising move whose idea is to strengthen the e5-square. However, this is dubious as it takes the natural square of the knight and weakens the a2-g8 diagonal.

4. d5!?

This is the move recommended by Anker Aasum.

A) 4. dxe5!? fxe5 5. e4 ♙e7 6. ♙c4 ♘f6 7. ♘g5± Pijloo – Drozdovskaia, Hengelo 2003.

B) 4. e4! is my personal preference. The idea is ♙c4 to prevent Black from castling. 4... ♙b4 [4... d6 5. h3!? I think it is necessary to prevent ♙g4. 5... ♘ge7 6. ♙c4±] 5. ♙c4±

4... ♘ce7

A) 4... ♘b4 5. e4 ♙c5 6. a3 ♘a6 7. b4 ♙b6 8. d6!±

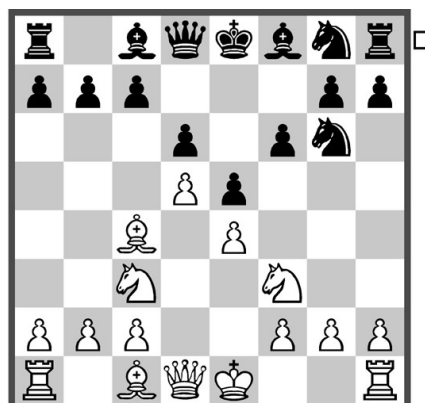
B) 4... ♘b8 5. e4 ♙b4 6. ♘h4 ♘e7 7. ♙h5+ g6 8. ♙h6↑

5. e4

5. d6!? Is an interesting obstruction sacrifice to close the diagonal for the f8-bishop and slow down Black's development. 5... cxd6 6. e4±

5... d6 6. ♙c4 ♘g6

(see diagram opposite column)



Position after: 6... ♘g6

7. ♙b5+

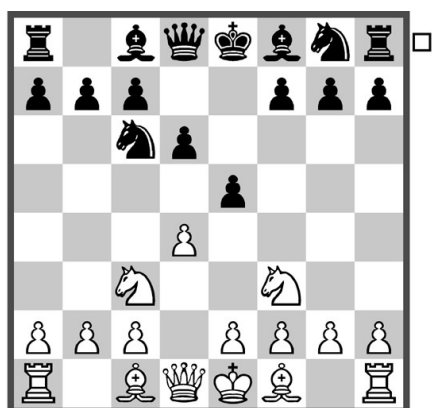
7. 0-0!? a6 8. b4 ♙d7 9. b5±

7... ♙d7 8. 0-0 ♙e7 9. ♙e3 c6 10. ♙a4±

1-0 Laurent – Ramunno, email 1996.

d) 2... ♘c6 3.d4 d6

1. ♘c3 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 d6



Position after: 3... d6

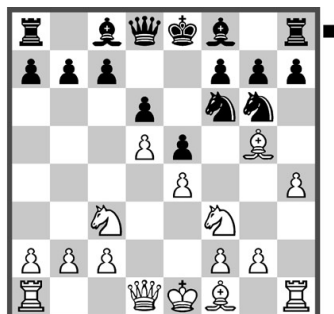
4. dxe5!?

This is the move recommended by Anker Aasum, in order to exchange queens and deprive Black from castling.

A) 4. e4 is my personal preference, as it transposes into the Steinitz Variation of the Ruy Lopez after 4... ♘f6 5. ♙b5. Playing with ... d6 is not the most useful move in open positions.

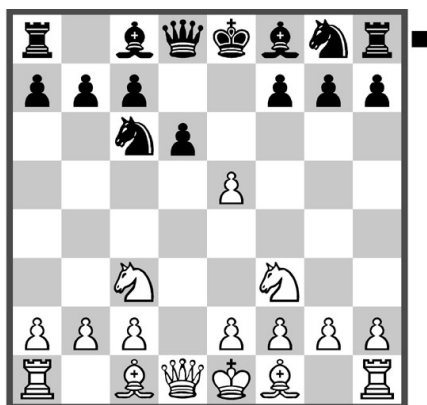
B) 4. d5!? ♘ce7 [4... ♘b8 5. e4 ♘f6 6. ♙d3 ♙e7 7. h3±] 5. e4 ♘f6 [5... ♘g6 6. h4!±] 6. ♙g5 ♘g6 7. h4!

(see analysis diagram next page)



Position after: 7. h4!

7... h5 8. ♖b5+ ♗d7 9. ♗xd7+ ♔xd7
10. g3± [10. ♘d2±]



Position after: 4. dxe5!?

4... ♘xe5

This is the best attempt to draw without the queens and with the king in the centre.

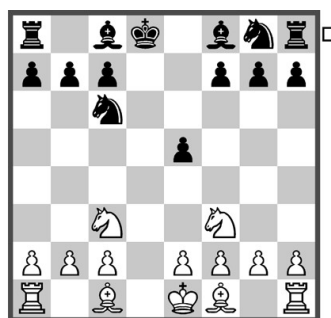
A) 4... ♗g4?! sacrifices a pawn to activate the pieces, but it does not seem enough. 5. ♗g5! aims at exchanging the bishop before accepting the pawn sacrifice.

A1) 5... f6?! persists with the pawn sacrifice. 6. exf6! accepts the gambit to refute it. 6... ♘xf6 7. ♗xf6!? [7. e3!? ♗e7 8. ♗e2 h6 9. ♗h4 g5

10. ♗g3± Neumann – Rasch, Germany 1994] 7... ♔xf6 8. ♘d5 ♗d8 [8... ♔xb2 9. ♖b1 ♗xa2 10. ♘xc7+-] 9. ♗d3 ♗e7 10. ♗c4 ♗h5 11. 0-0-0 ♗f7 12. h4→

A2) 5... ♗e7 6. ♗xe7 ♔xe7 7. exd6 cxd6 8. e3± Kles – Gilad, play-chess.com 2004.

B) 4... dxe5 looks like a Philidor Defence (1. e4 d6 2. d4 ♘f6 3. ♘c3 e5 4. dxe5 dxe5 5. ♗xd8+ ♔xd8) where White has a small advantage. 5. ♗xd8+ ♔xd8±



Position after: 5... ♔xd8±

[5... ♘xd8 6. ♘xe5±]

B1) 6. ♗g5+!? in order to castle with tempo. 6... f6 [6... ♔e8 7. 0-0-0±] 7. 0-0-0+± (Anker Aasum) 7... ♔e8 [7... ♗d6 8. ♗e3 b6 to prevent ♗c5. 9. ♘d2!? ♘ge7 10. ♘de4±] 8. ♘b5 ♗d6 9. ♗e3±

B2) 6. e4!? f6 [6... ♘b4? 7. ♗g5+! ♗e7 8. 0-0-0+ ♔e8 9. ♗xe7 ♘xe7 10. ♘xe5+- Bacsı – Szasz, Aggtelek 2005; 6... ♗c5 7. ♗e3RR!? ♗xe3 8. fxe3 and the pawns are weak but they

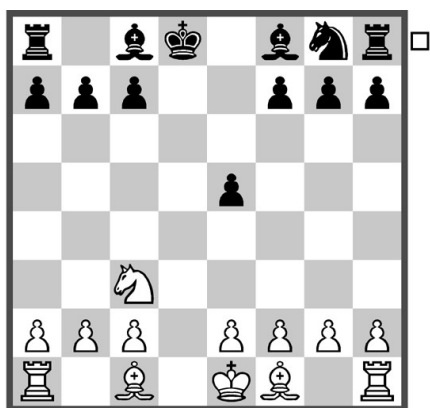
restrict the Black knights. 8... ♘g4 9. 0-0-0+±] 7. ♘e3 ♘e6 8. 0-0-0+ ♔c8 9. h3 ♘b4 10. ♘d5± Schenkeveld – Dekker, Hengelo 2001.

5. ♘xe5!

The most logical, as Black loses the right to castle.

5. ♘f4!?

5... dxe5 6. ♔xd8+ ♔xd8



Position after: 6... ♔xd8

White has a very small advantage, but Black is very close from equality.

7. e4!?

7. ♘g5+!?

A) 7... f6 8. 0-0-0+ ♘d6 9. ♘e3 ♘e6 [9... ♘e7 10. ♘c5 ♔d7 11. g4 b6 12. ♘g2 ♖b8 13. ♘xd6 cxd6±; 9... b6 10. g4!? - often a good move in these positions - 10... ♘b7 11. ♖g1±] 10. ♘c5 [10.

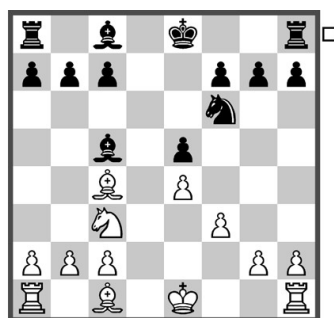
g4RR!±] 10... ♔e7= Schenkeveld – Van Akkeren, Hengelo 2001.

B) 7... ♘e7 8. 0-0-0+ ♘d7 9. ♘d2!? c6 10. g4 f6 11. ♖g1± Dieu – Hanke, Mariac thematic tournament, 2000.

7... c6

This is why Black exchanged the knights: giving the c7-square to the Black monarch.

7... ♘f6 8. ♘c4 ♔e8 9. f3 ♘c5



Position after: 9... ♘c5

10. ♘d2 [10. ♘a4RR! ♘b4+ 11. c3 ♘e7 12. ♘e3±] 10... ♔e7 11. a3 ♖d8 12. ♘g5 h6? [12... c6=] 13. ♘d5+± Pet-tigrew – Henderson, England 2002.

8. ♘e3 ♔c7 9. 0-0-0

9. ♘c4!? f6 10. 0-0-0 b6 11. a3 ♘d6 12. f3 ♘e7 13. h4±

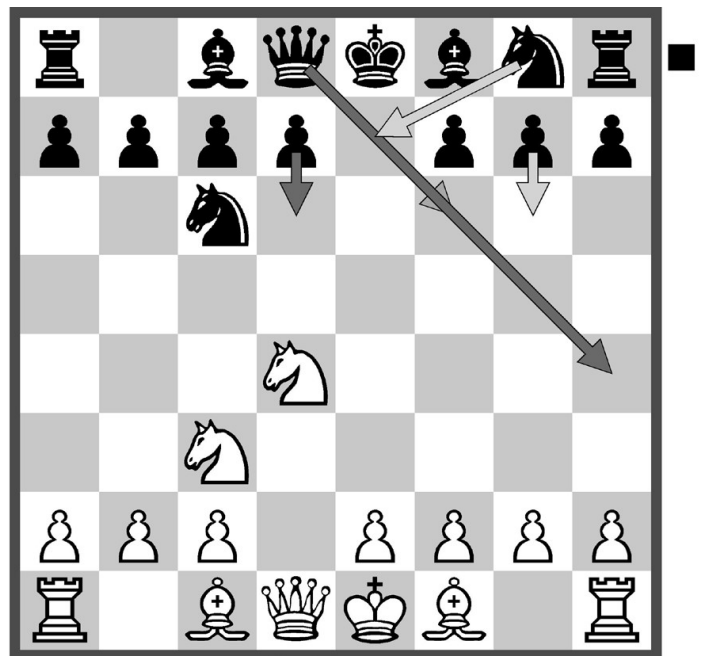
9... ♘e6= 10. f3

½–½ Ghinda – Vogt, Naleczow 1979.



Sidelines on Move 4

1. ♘c3 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4
exd4 4. ♘xd4



Chapter Guide

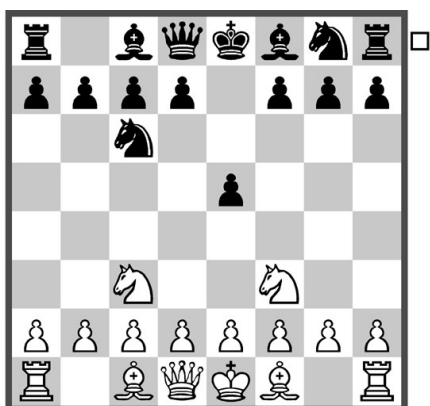
Chapter 2 – Sidelines on Move 4

1. c3 e5 2. f3 c6 3. d4 exd4 4. xd4

a) 4...  f6	33
b) 4...g6	36
c) 4...d6	40
d) 4...  h4	42
e) 4...  ge7	44

a) 4... ♔f6

1. ♘c3 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6



Position after: 2... ♘c6

3. d4

From a strategic point of view, White favours play with the pieces rather than with the pawns. Tactically, the time gained by not playing e4 may lead to some sneaky tactics with the knights as ♘cd5 and/or ♘db5 to attack c7 or ♘df5 to attack g7.

3... exd4

3... ♔f6? Before entering the sidelines on move 4, I will just mention this move. When the queen comes out of d8 too quickly, the c7-square is left undefended. 4. ♘b5! attacks the weakened c7-square. 4... ♙d6 encloses the c8-bishop. [4... ♔d8+— and White has the choice between 5.d5! or taking e5 with the pawn or the knight; 4... ♙b4+ 5. ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 6. ♔xd2 ♔d8 7. dxe5 ♘xe5 8. 0-0-0 ♘xf3 9. exf3±] 5. ♙g5

A) 5... ♔f5 6. dxe5



Position after: 6. dxe5

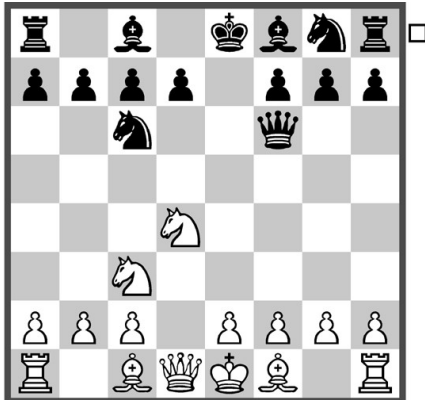
6... a6 [6... ♘xe5?? 7. ♔xd6!+— with a royal fork coming ; 6... ♙xe5 7. ♔d5!+— and the pin on the e5-bishop is decisive.] 7. ♘xd6+ cxd6 8. exd6± Black will struggle to complete the development.

B) 5... ♔g6 6. dxe5 ♘xe5 7. ♘xd6+ is the simplest solution. White gets the pair of bishops and doubles the pawns on the open d-file. 7... cxd6 8. ♔d2 h6 [8... ♘xf3+? 9. exf3!+— The opening of the file will only benefit White.] 9. ♙f4 ♔f6 10. 0-0-0+— White will continue its development before smoothly grabbing the d6-pawn.

4. ♘xd4 ♔f6?

Surprisingly, this move is sometimes played, according to Harald Keilhack.

(see diagram next page)



Position after: 4... ♔f6?

5. ♘db5!!

The Black queen comes out prematurely again, leaving the c7-square undefended; the move ♘db5 will threaten the capture of the weak c7-pawn and the ♘c3 threatens to pounce on d5, renewing the threat on c7. The game seems almost over.

5... ♕c5

Developing the bishop attacks the f2-pawn in order to gain time, and then come to b6 in order to defend the weak c7-pawn.

A) 5... ♔e5?? 6. f4! The queen has to let the c7-pawn unprotected and the fork on c7 will decide the game.

B) 5... ♔d8?? 6. ♕f4!! The most accurate, developing the bishop and attacking the weak c7 pawn to force d6, and locking up the f8-bishop. 6... d6 7. ♘d5!+- wins c7. 7... ♔d7 8. g3!!

(see analysis diagram next column)



Position after: 8. g3!!

threatening ♕h3+. 8... a6 [8... ♕e7 9. ♘dxc7 ♖b8 10. ♕h3+ f5 11. ♕xf5#] 9. ♕h3+ 1-0 Simon, P – Balcerak, M, Nickenich 1996.

C) 5... ♔d8? 6. ♘xc7! The king does not really defend c7, as there is a fork on d5. 6... ♖b8 7. ♘7d5+-

D) 5... ♕d6 is a very awful move. 6. ♘xd6+!

D1) 6... cxd6 7. ♘b5!



Position after: 7. ♘b5!

Looking at the c7-square and the d6-pawn. 7... ♔d8 8. e4! defends the b5-knight and threatens ♔xd6 and ♘c7+. 8... d5 9. ♔xd5+- ♔f8 [9... ♘ge7?? 10. ♘d6+ ♔f8 11. ♔xf7#] 10. ♔d6+ ♘ge7 11. ♕e3 b6 12. 0-0-0+- with a crushing position.

D2) 6... ♔xd6 7. ♔xd6 cxd6 8. ♘b5!



Position after: 8. ♘b5!

Again, this move is threatening both the fork on c7 and the pawn on d6. 8... ♕e7 9. ♖f4 renewing the threat. White will finish the development by castling long, condemning the weak pawn on d6. 9... ♘f6 10. ♕xd6+ ♔e6 11. 0-0-0+– Berger – Bergmann, GER email 2007.

6. ♘xc7+!!

The immediate capture of the c7-pawn is possible, and the threat on f2 can then be quietly parried as the black king cannot pick up the c7-knight because of the royal fork on d5.

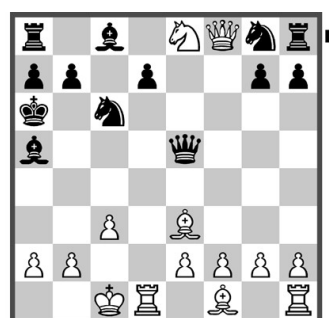
6. ♘e4! is another good option: White protects the f2-square and attacks the bishop and the queen, while retaining the threat on c7. 6... ♖b4+ moves one of the two pieces away from the fork on check. 7. c3 ♔e5 removes the queen by attacking the Ne4 to get the time to play ♖a5, defending c7. 8. ♔d5!

(see diagram next column)



Position after: 8. ♔d5!

Protecting the e4-knight and threatening to trade the queens to renew the threat on c7. 8... ♖a5 protects c7 just in time. [8... ♔xd5? 9. ♘xc7+ ♔d8 10. ♘xd5 ♖e7 11. ♖f4+–] 9. ♘bd6+! giving up a knight to aim at f7. 9... cxd6 10. ♘xd6+ ♔e7 [10... ♔f8?? 11. ♔xf7#; 10... ♔d8?? 11. ♘xf7+!! with another royal fork] 11. ♔xf7+ ♔d8 [11... ♔xd6 12. ♖f4+– pinning the queen] 12. ♔f8+ ♔c7 13. ♘e8+ ♔b6 14. ♖e3+ ♔a6 15. 0-0-0



Position after: 15. 0-0-0

[15. ♖d2! would have been even more accurate, with the idea to push the e-pawn: 15... ♔e7 16. e4+ b5 17. ♔xe7 ♘gxe7 18. ♘d6 ♖b8 19. a4+–] 15... ♖xc3? 16. bxc3 [16. ♖d5!! ♖xb2+ 17. ♔b1 ♔c3 18. ♘c7#] 16... ♘ge7 17. ♘c7+ ♔xc7 18. ♔xh8+– Arwanitakis – Woeber, Austria 2006.