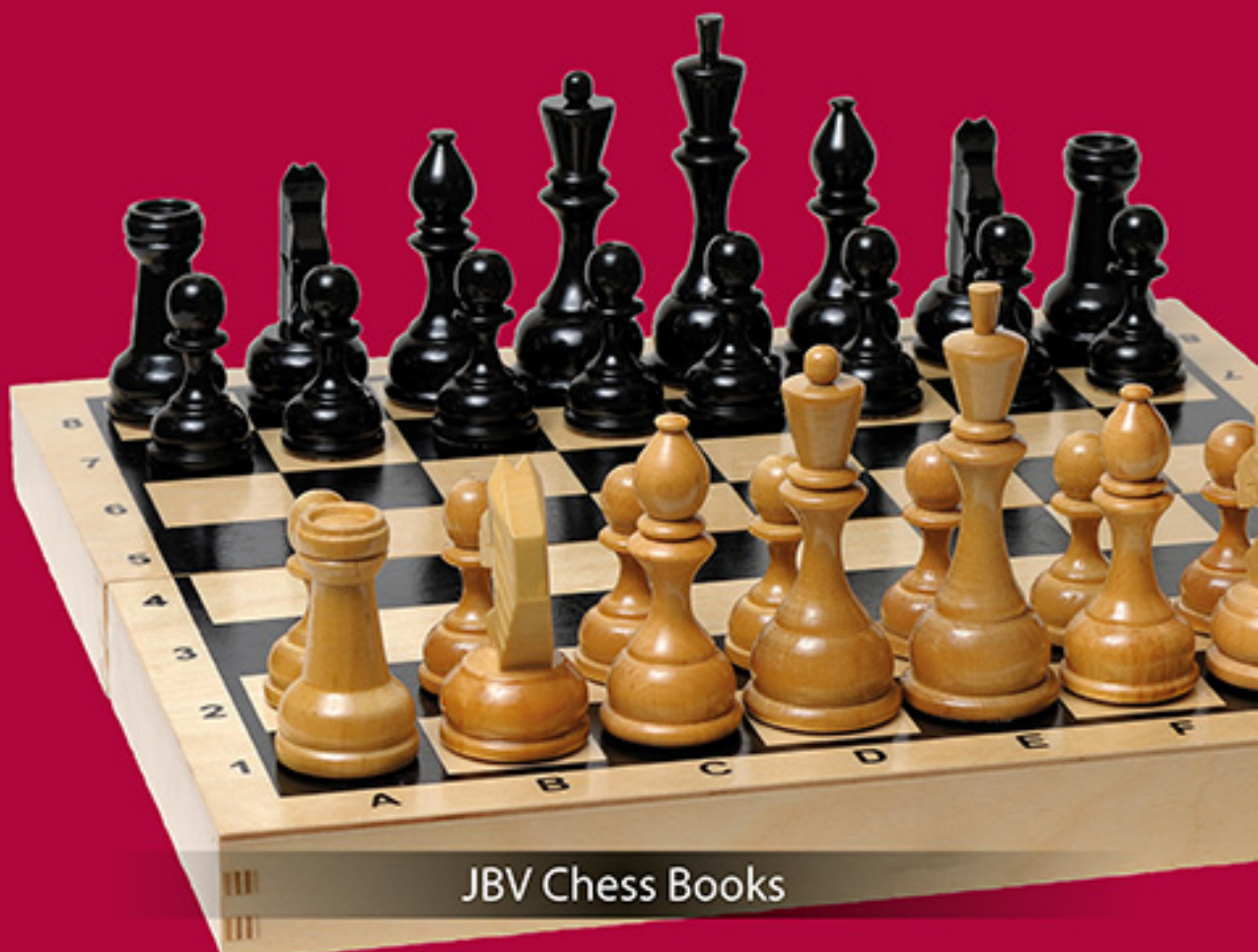


Karsten Müller

Typical Grünfeld Defence

Main line with 4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e4 ♜xc3 6.bxc3

Effective Middlegame Training



JBV Chess Books

Karsten Müller

Typical Grünfeld Defence

Main line with
4.cxd5 ♞xd5 5.e4 ♞xc3 6.bxc3

Effective Middlegame Training

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Preface

Someone who decides to learn French (the language, mind you – and not the opening!) will appropriately acquire textbooks that deal with French – not those that deal with *all* Roman languages or even all *European* languages.

Let's take this comparison a little further: If a dictionary is something like an opening book, then a grammar is something like a textbook for the middle game. True, one could fill entire libraries with opening books on the subject of *French* alone, but what about a corresponding 'grammar'?

Of course, in every middlegame textbook one or the other position is clearly recognisable as *French*, but their number is negligible in the context of Spanish, English, Russian, Italian, Dutch and so on and so forth. And thus of all these other European languages – no excuse me: of all these other *openings* whose middlegame treatment the reader doesn't want to learn at all.

For example, isn't dealing with the issues of isolani, hanging pawns and minority attack just as dispensable for an e4 player as it is essential for a d4 player? – Why should a die-hard enthusiast of Indian openings care about the strategic intricacies of positions resulting from all those complicated Queen's Gambit systems? And of course vice versa: what can a player who 'by nature' avoids fianchetto openings do with all these subtleties of Indian positions?

And it is precisely this conspicuous and astounding vacuum in the area of middlegame literature that inspired me to make an appropriate attempt at improvement: If you want to learn typical middlegame strategy for the *Grünfeld Defence*, you will get a textbook and exercise book that deals exclusively with *Grünfeld Indian* middlegames. However, this volume initially focuses only on positions that can arise after the main line 1.d4 ♖f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3.

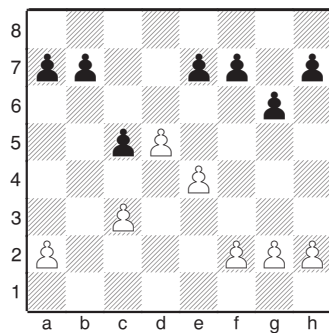
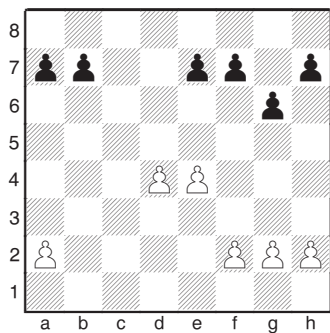
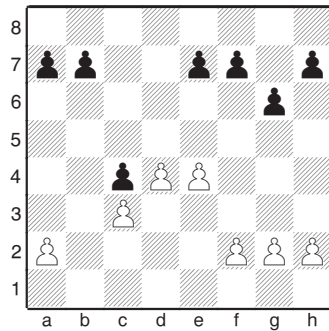
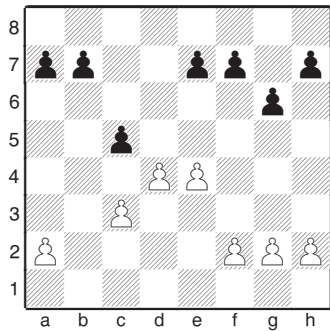
And I would like to make one more important point in advance. It is an enormous challenge for every chess author to do justice to a readership with the broadest possible skill level. So it would be absurd in the field of opening and endgame literature to offer, for example, 'Ruy Lopez' or 'Rook Endgames' for players between 1400 and 1600, between 1600 and 1800 and so on. Accordingly, you only write *one* book on the respective topic and try to explain all important things as precisely and comprehensibly as possible – and then it's up to each individual reader how intensively he is willing to work with the book in order to achieve the greatest possible benefit.

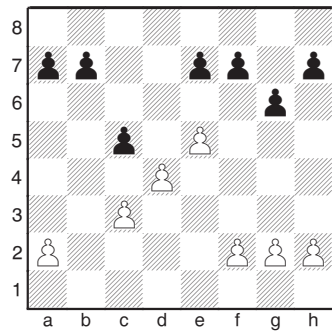
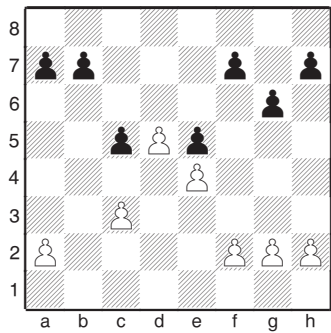
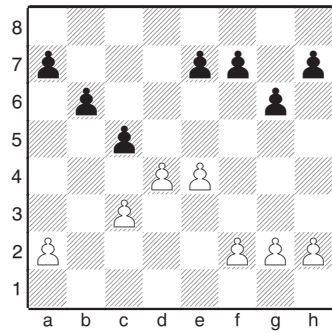
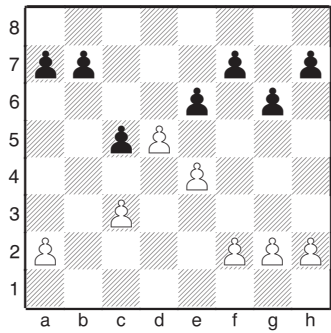
The task becomes much more difficult with a book like this, which consists exclusively of exercises. Because if the author chooses consistently very simple or consistently somewhat more difficult examples, then in the first case more advanced players shy away because they feel *underchallenged* – while in the second case less advanced players feel *overchallenged*.

And therefore here's a good advice – regardless of your skill level. Take each exercise seriously, but don't let it become torture! As soon as you encounter too many obstacles or too much resistance, just take the liberty to open the solution section and turn the test book into a textbook!

Karsten Müller
Hamburg, August 2026

The following pawn structures are treated



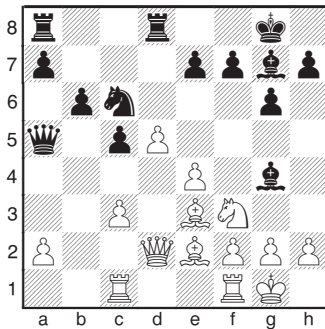


Exercises

Concrete question (solutions from page 41)



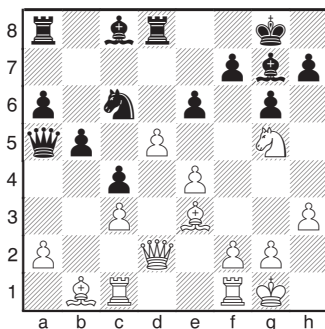
1



How can White get the most out of the advantageous position?



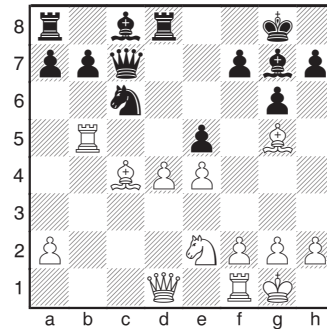
2



How can White obtain a winning position?



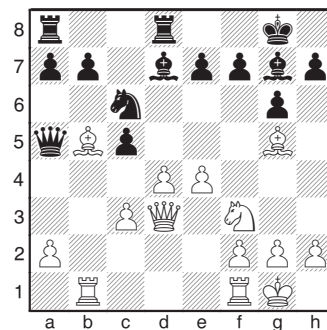
3



How can Black get the most out of the advantageous position?



4

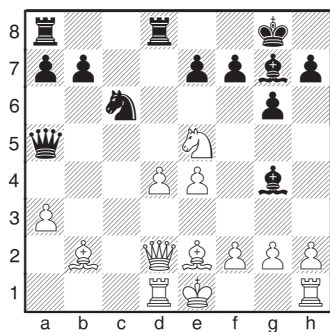


How can White get the most out of the advantageous position?

Relegation candidate (solutions from page 46)



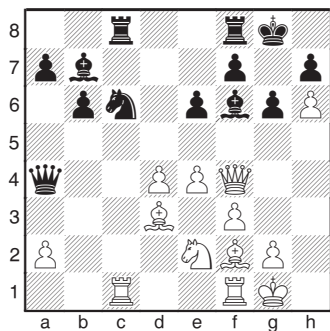
5



Which of the moves ♔xd2+, ♕xe5 or ♕xe2 offers no advantage whatsoever?



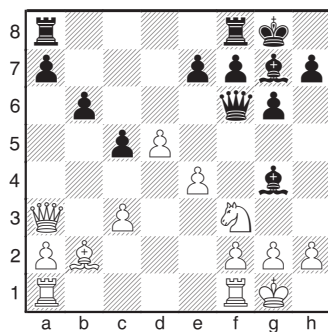
6



Which of the moves ♕e7 or ♕h8 leads to a losing position?



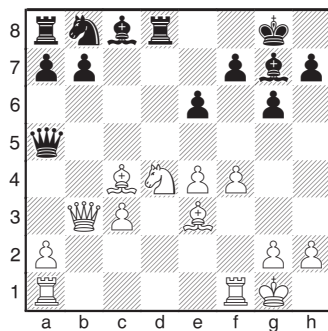
7



Why would ♖d2 lead to a losing position?



8

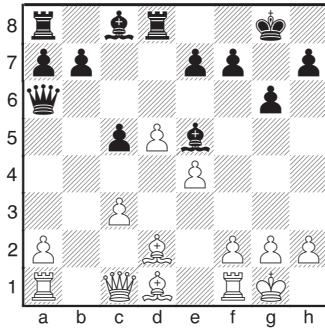


Which of the moves ♖a6, ♖c6, ♖d7 leads to defeat?

Concrete question (solutions from page 50)



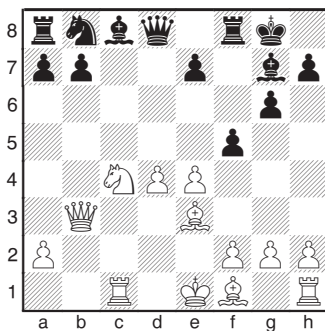
9



16. ♗g5 would be a blunder – wouldn't it?



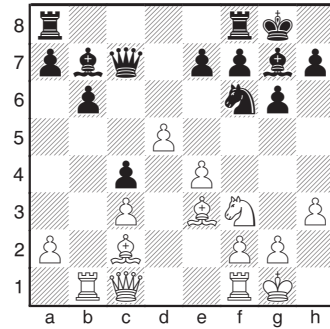
10



Do White's discovered attack threats require a defensive move?



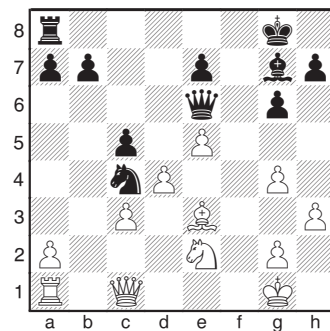
11



How can Black defend actively?



12



Can Black solve the positional problem by tactical means?

Solutions

1

Fehér – Csaszar

Hungary 2016

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5
5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♘g7 7.♘f3 0-0 8.♙e3
c5 9.♙e2 ♘c6 10.♖c1 ♚a5 11.♗d2 ♞d8
12.d5 ♙g4 13.0-0 b6

After Black failed on the previous move to keep the disadvantage to a minimum (♟13...♙xf3 14.♙xf3 e6), White can now obtain a clear advantage by exploiting the vulnerability of the knight on c6 in the most effective way. Of particular importance is the fact that Black's queen is tied to the queenside for the foreseeable future.

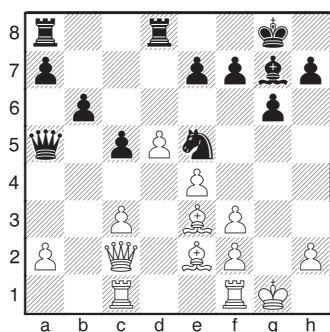
I) In the game, White chose the clearly strongest continuation **14.♗c2**.

A) With the intermediate exchange **14...♙xf3**, Black evidently intended to avoid the tactical calamities he had spotted after a knight move (see variation B).

15.gxf3!

15.♙xf3 ♘e5 16.♙e2~± ♠f4

And after **15...♘e5** (15...♘b8 16.f4±) ...



... in addition to **16.c4±**, the alternative **16.f4 ♘d7 17.c4 ♠d7...♙d4 18.♖fd1** would also have resulted in a clear advantage.

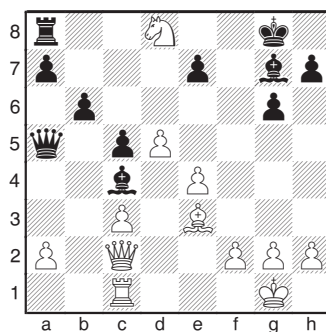
B) 14...♘e5

14...♘b8 15.♖fd1±; 15.♙g5; 15.h3

And after **15.♘xe5 ♙xe2**, White would be spoiled for choice:

1) 16.♘g6!? hxg6 17.♗xe2 ♙xc3 18.f4± ♠f5

2) 16.♘xf7!? ♙xf1 17.♘d8 ♙c4



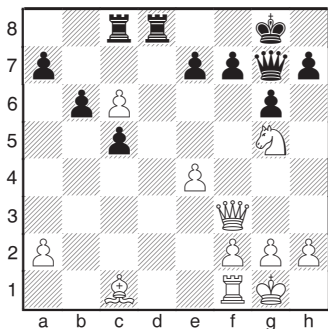
a) And now not the obvious temptation **18.♘c6?** ♗xa2 19.♗xa2 ♙xa2 ♠d20.♘xe7+ ♙f7 21.♘c6 a5± ...

b) ... but the precise liquidation into an endgame with **18.♘e6!** ♗xa2 19.♗xa2 ♙xa2 20.♖a1 ♙c4 21.♘c7 ♖b8 22.♖xa7, as after **22...♙xc3 23.f3± ♠d23...b5 24.♘a6** the connected passed pawns are not to be feared.

II) Another interesting, albeit entirely different, approach is **14.♘g5!?**, with the following main lines:

A) **14...♙xe2 15.♗xe2 ♠d15...♘e5?** (♟15...h6 16.♘h3±; 16.♘f3; 16.♘xf7!?) **16.f4 ♘d7 17.f5+–**

B) **14...♙xc3 15.♖xc3 ♙xe2 16.♗xe2 ♗xc3 17.dxc6 ♖ac8 18.♗f3**, and after **18...♗g7?! (♟18...♗f6) 19.♙c1!± ♠b2 ...**



... one of the many attacking possibilities that accompany the disappearance of the fianchettoed bishop would become apparent; e.g. **19...Rxc6 20.Bb2 Qf8** (20...f6? 21.e5+-) **21.e5** etc.

2

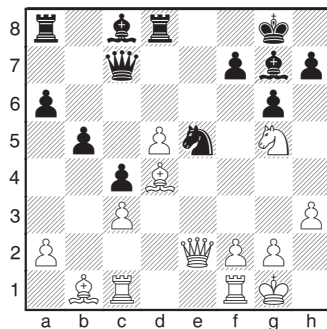
Hainke – Zuse

Germany 2016

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Bc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5
5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.f3 Ng7 8.Qe3
Qa5 9.Qd2 0-0 10.Rb1 a6 11.Rc1 Qg4
12.Ng5 b5 13.h3 Qc8 14.Qd3 Rd8 15.d5
c4 16.Qb1 e6 17.0-0 Nc6

After two inaccuracies by Black (15...e6±; 17...exd5 18.exd5±), White can now demonstrate a winning advantage. Besides the momentary front position of his knight and the offside position of the opponent's queen, the decisive factors are Black's lack of rook connection and the resulting weakness of the back rank.

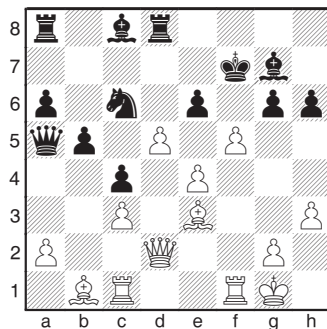
I) Before immediately breaking the pin with **18.Qe2??**, White had apparently only ensured that the d-pawn could not be endangered at once. There followed **18...exd5** (18...Ne5!?) **19.exd5 Ne5** (19...Rxd5?? 20.Qe4+-) **20.Qd4 Qc7** ...



... and now, at best, **21.Rfe1** or **21.Qce1** (not least in view of the latent weakness of Black's back rank) would have yielded a minimal advantage.

II) Since there was no urgency to unpin the d-pawn, it was much stronger to discourage the enemy knight from jumping to the central e5-square first by **18.f4!**. Incidentally, great importance also attaches to the tactical detail that the queen could occasionally switch to the f-file with **Qf2** ΔQb6, thereby gaining a tempo.

A) This would become immediately apparent after the reflex move **18...h6?**, as shown in the following lines: **19.Nxf7!** (19.Qf2!?) **19...Qxf7 20.f5!**



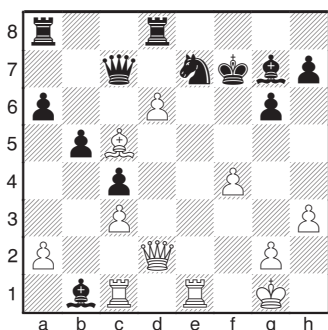
1) **20...exd5 21.fxg6+ (21.Qxh6) 21...Kg8 22.Rf7+++**

2) **20...exf5 21.Qf2!**

3) **20...gxf5 21.Qxh6; 21.Qe2**

4) **20...Ne5 21.Qxh6; 21.Qf2**

B) After **18... exd5 19.exd5 ♖e7 20.d6** (Δdxe7) **20... ♙f5** (20... ♙b7? 21.f5+-) **21. ♙c5 ♙xb1**, the assault **22. ♖xf7!! ♕xf7 23. ♖fe1!** ushers in a fireworks display of brilliant moves, although Black can seemingly still keep pace with **23... ♖c7!**.



After the further moves **24.dxc7 ♖xd2 25. ♖xe7+ ♕g8** and the next cracker **26. ♖ce1!**, however, he is ultimately ground down with patient persistence: **26... ♙f5 27. ♖e8+ ♖xe8 28. ♖xe8+ ♕f7 29. ♖e7+! ♕f6** (29... ♕g8 30.g4) **30.g4 ♙c8 31. ♖e8 ♖d5** (31... ♙d7 32. ♖d8) **32. ♙d4+ (32. ♙e7+) 32... ♖xd4 33.cxd4 ♙d7 34.d5**

With the premature promotion **34.c8 ♖?**! ♙xc8 **35. ♖xc8 ♕e6**, White would make life unnecessarily difficult for himself. It should better be postponed until the c-pawn has left its secure anchorage; namely **34... c3 35. ♕f2 c2 36.c8 ♖** etc.

3

Yeo – Taylor

Wales 2016

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3. ♖c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e4 ♖xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7. ♙c4 0-0 8. ♖e2 c5 9.0-0 ♖c6 10. ♙e3 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♖a5 12. ♖b1 ♖d8 13. ♖b5 ♖c7 14. ♙f4 e5 15. ♙g5

After White failed to remove the queen from the d-file in time (⊃14. ♖c2!±), Black

has brought maximum pressure to bear on the d-pawn by also deploying the e-pawn. In deciding how best to respond to the disruptive move that followed, Black should also take into account that there are loose or vulnerable enemy pieces on c4 and b5.

I) After the not particularly inspired evasive manoeuvre **15... ♖e8?!**, White had little difficulty overcoming his positional problems.

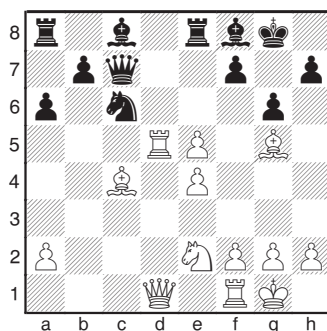
A) In fact, Black answered the exchange **16.dxe5 ...**

1) ... with the inaccuracy **16... ♖xe5?!**, whereupon White could even build up a promising attacking position with **17. ♙d5 ♖b8 18. ♖b3± Δ♖c1**.

2) After the correct intermediate move **16... a6**, the following possibilities would have arisen:

a) **17. ♖b1 ♖xe5 18. ♖b3∞; 18. ♖d5**

b) **17. ♖c5 ♙f8 (17... ♙xe5∞) 18. ♖d5!∞**



18... ♙e6?! (⊃18... ♖b4 19. ♖d4 ♖c6) 19. ♖f4!~±

B) Less solid would be **16.d5**, since after **16... ♖d4 17. ♖xd4 ♖xc4**, White would first have to find the only move **18. ♖c2**.

1) And if Black then avoids the serious blunder **18... ♖xd4?? 19. ♖d1+-; 19. ♙e3 ...**

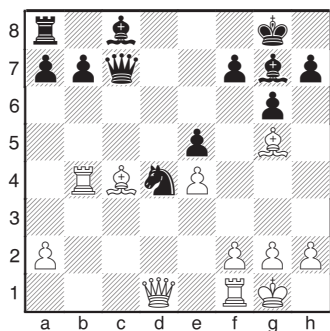
2) ... he would even emerge with the faintest edge after the alternative **18... ♖xc2**

19. ♖xc2 b6 (Δ♙a6) 20. ♖b4 ♙d7 21. ♖c6 ♙f8 22. ♖c1 ♙c5, thanks to his bishop pair.

II) After the exchange sacrifice in the version **15... ♖xd4?! 16. ♙xd8 ♖xc4 17. ♖xd4 exd4**, the continuation **18. ♖b3? ♙d7+** would indeed give Black a significant advantage, whereas **18. ♖b1 b6** would yield only adequate compensation.

III) The more promising version of the exchange sacrifice is **15... ♖xd4!**, as the following lines demonstrate:

A) 16. ♖xd4?! ♖xd4~+ Δ17. ♖b4 (17. ♖a4 ♙d7)



1) 17... ♙f8 18. ♖a4 ♙d7; 18... b5

2) 17... a5 18. ♖a4 b5; 18... ♙d7

B) 16. ♖a4 ♙d6 17. ♖c3 h6+; 17... ♖d4

4

Cilia Vincenti – Klyszcz

New Zealand 2016

1. d4 ♖f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♖c3 d5 4. cxd5 ♖xd5 5. e4 ♖xc3 6. bxc3 c5 7. ♙b5+ ♙d7 8. ♖b1 ♖a5 9. ♖d3 ♙g7 10. ♖f3 0-0 11. 0-0 ♖d8 12. ♙g5 ♖c6

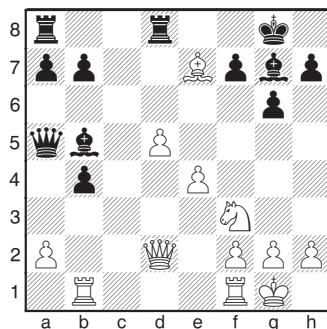
After inaccurate opening play by both sides (Δ10. ♙d2+; Δ10... cxd4 11. ♖xd4

a6!+; Δ11... cxd4 12. cxd4±), White is now faced with the task of finding the only move that secures a solid, minimal advantage. In doing so, he should focus on the latent vulnerability of the e7-pawn, but must not overlook Black's simple one-move counter-threat based on the latent vulnerability of the bishop on b5.

I) This is exactly what happened in the game with the inaccuracy **13. d5?!**

After the reinforcing attempt **13. ♖fc1?! and the continuation 13... h6 14. ♙d2 ♖a3!**, White doesn't have anything tangible to show either.

However, Black also overlooked the only move, **13... ♖b4!** (instead of **13... ♙g4?? 14. ♖e3!+-**), which would have led to unclear play after the continuation **14. cxb4 ♙xb5 15. ♖d2 cxb4 16. ♙xe7 ...**

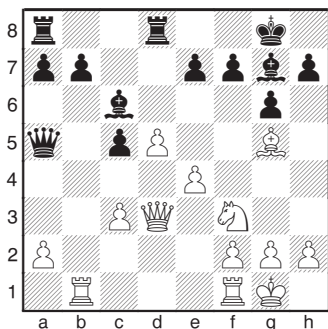


... 16... ♙xf1 17. ♙xd8 ♖xd8 18. ♖xf1 ♙c3 etc.

II) After the correct approach **13. ♙xc6! ♙xc6 ...**

A) ... White must not grab the pawn immediately with 14. ♙xe7?, because after 14... ♖e8, in view of the vulnerable e4-pawn, he would have to resort to the emergency solution 15. d5 ♖xe7 16. dxc6 bxc6+.

B) On the other hand, after the intermediate move 14. d5! ...



... *Black* would have to resort to an emergency solution to keep the damage to a minimum.

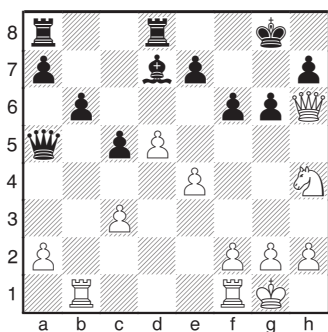
1) 14...♖d7?! 15.c4± Δ15...♙xa2? 16.e5+- Δ♖a1

2) 14...♙c7?! 15.♙e3! ♙e8 16.c4±

3) The aforementioned emergency solution is 14...f6 15.♙e3! (15.♙d2!? Δc4), with at least ~±. However, if *Black* defends carelessly, he may suddenly find himself in a losing position, as, for example, after the possible continuation 15...♙d7

(15...fxg5 16.dxc6 bxc6 17.♙xg5 ♖e8; 17...♙xc3)

16.♙h6 ♙xh6 17.♙xh6 and after the innocuous-looking mistake 17...b6? (Δ17...♙xa2!), the surprising attacking move 18.♙h4!! ...



... would lead to a highly charged and extremely interesting position that (to

round off this example, so to speak) deserves a separate investigation.

1) 18...♙e8 19.f4

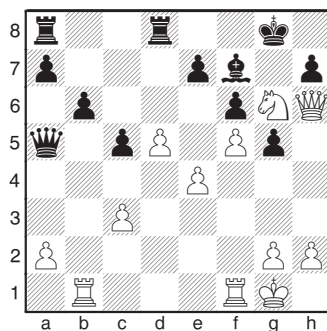
a) 19...f5

– 20.exf5?! ♙xc3

– 20.♙f3 ♙xc3 21.e5

– 20.♖bc1 Δ♙f3-g5; Δ20...fxe4 21.f5

b) 19...♙f7 20.f5 g5 21.♙g6!



– 21...hxxg6? 22.fxg6 ♙xg6 23.♙xg6+ ♙h8 24.♙f3; 23...♙f8 24.e5

– 21...♖d7/21...♖e8 22.♙f3

2) 18...♙a4 19.♙xg6 (19.♖be1!? Δ♙xg6) 19...♙xe4 20.♙f4

3) 18...♙f8 19.♙xg6

a) 19...hxxg6 20.♙xg6+ ♙h8 21.♖be1 Δ♖e3

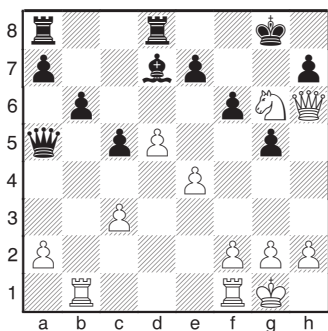
b) 19...♙f7 20.♙f4

– 20...♖af8 21.♖be1 +++

– 20...♖g7 21.d6!

– 20...♙xa2 21.d6 Δ21...exd6 22.♖bd1

4) 18...g5 19.♙g6!



a) 19...♖e8

– 20.♖be1 ♗xc3 21.♖e3

– 20.h4 ♗xc3 21.♖b3

b) 19...hxg6 20.♗xg6+

– 20...♔h8 21.♖be1 ♗xc3 22.e5

– 20...♔f8 21.♖be1 ♗xc3 22.e5;
21...♗xa2 22.f4

5

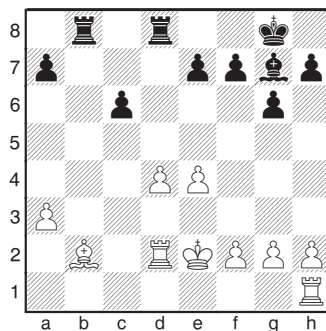
Papp, T. – Papp, P.

Hungary 2016

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5
5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 ♘g7 7.♗f3 c5 8.a3 0-0
9.♘b2 ♗a5 10.♗d2 ♖d8 11.♖d1 cxd4
12.cxd4 ♘c6 13.♙e2 ♘g4 14.♗e5

After an opening plan that was, to put it mildly, rather unconventional (8.a3?!; 9.♘b2?), Black has consolidated an advantage that is already out of the minimal range with more or less accurate play. And now that White has chosen probably the best defensive resource with his last, smart move, Black must decide which liquidation will ensure that the advantage is preserved into the endgame.

1) The weak move 14...♙xe2? led to the forced series of exchanges 15.♗xc6 ♗xd2+ 16.♖xd2 bxc6 17.♔xe2, and after 17...♖ab8 ...



... in addition to 18.f4 c5 19.e5∞, the approach 18.♖hd1 Δ18...c5 19.e5∞ could also have parried the advance of the c-pawn adequately.

By contrast, the two alternatives mentioned would have led to more or less clear ♠.

2) After 14...♗xd2+ 15.♖xd2 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♖xd2 (16...♔d7!? ♠ Δ♙h6; Δ♙c6) 17.♔xd2 ♖d8+, the king cannot escape the coming hostilities.

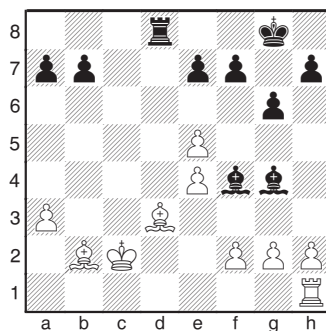
a) After 18.♔e1 ♙d7! Δ♖c8, the light-squared bishop can be deployed effectively on the queenside, with the result, among other things, that the threat of an invasion along the c-file cannot be parried easily; e.g. 19.f3 ♖c8

– 20.♙d3?? ♙xe5--+

– 20.♔d2?? ♙h6+ --+

– Δ20.♔f2 ♖c2~♠

b) And after 18.♙d3 ♙h6+ 19.♔c2, the study-like move 19...♙f4! ...



About the author

GM Dr. Karsten Müller was born on November 23rd, 1970 in Hamburg. He studied mathematics and received his doctorate in 2002. From 1988 to 2015 he played for the 'Hamburger SK' in the German 'Bundesliga' and in 1998 he was awarded the title of Grandmaster.

The busy and globally recognized endgame expert was named 'Trainer of the Year' by the German Chess Federation in 2007



He is the author (or co-author) of the following highly esteemed works:

- Secrets of Pawn Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, Everyman/GAMBIT 2000)
- Fundamental Chess Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, GAMBIT 2001)
- Danish Dynamite (with Martin Voigt, Russell 2003)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book: Test and Improve Your Tactical Vision (Russell 2004)
- How to Play Chess Endgames (with Wolfgang Pajeken, GAMBIT 2008)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book 2: Test and Improve Your Positional Intuition (Russell 2008)
- Bobby Fischer, The Career and Complete Games of the American World Chess Champion (Russell 2009)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book 3: Test and Improve Your Defensive Skill! (with Merijn van Delft, Russell 2010)
- Chess Cafe Puzzle Book 4: Mastering the positional principles (with Alexander Markgraf, Russell 2012)
- The Magic Tactics of Mikhail Tal: Learn from the Legend (with Raymund Stolze, Edition Olms 2012)
- Fighting chess with Hikaru Nakamura (with Raymund Stolze, Edition Olms 2013)
- The slow (but venomous) Italian (with Georgios Souleidis, New in Chess 2016)
- The Magic of Chess Tactics 2 (with C.D. Meyer, Russell 2017)

His excellent series of ChessBase–DVDs Chess endgames 1–14 also attracted attention.

Müller's popular column Endgame Corner was published at 'www.ChessCafe.com' from January 2001 until 2015, and his column Endgames is published in Chess-Base Magazine since 2006.

To date, numerous of his books have been published by JBV Chess Books (Joachim Beyer Verlag) – a total of 32 in German and the following titles also in English:

Magical Endgames (2020, together with Claus Dieter Meyer)

The Human Factor in Chess (2020, together with Luis Engel)

The Best Endgames of the World Champions Vol 1 – From Steinitz to Tal (2021)

The Best Endgames of the World Champions Vol 2 – From Petrosian to Carlsen (2021)

World Chess Championship 2021 (2022)

(together with Jerzy Konikowski and Uwe Bekemann)

The Best Combinations of the World Champions Vol 1 – From Steinitz to Tal (2022) (together with Jerzy Konikowski)

The Best Combinations of the World Champions Vol 2 – From Petrosian to Carlsen (2022) (together with Jerzy Konikowski)

Bobby Fischer 60 Best Games (2022)

Chess Training with Matthias Blübaum (2022)

(together with Matthias Blübaum and Matthias Krallmann)

Typical Sicilian, Effective Middlegame Training (2023)

The Human Factor in Chess – The Testbook (2023)

(together with Luis Engel and Makan Rafiee)

Karsten Müller – Attack (2023)

Magnus Carlsen – The Chess DNA of a Genius (2023)

Magic Endgames (2023) (together with Jerzy Konikowski)

Karsten Müller – Endgame Magic (2023)

Typical Queen's Gambit, Effective Middlegame Training (2023)

Typical King's Indian, Effective Middlegame Training (2024)

Typical French, Effective Middlegame Training (2024)

Tactical Endgames (together with Jerzy Konikowski) (2024)

Typical Ruy Lopez, Effective Middlegame Training (2025)

Typical Queen's Gambit, Orthodox Variation, (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6) Effective Middlegame Training (2025)

Typical Caro-Cann, Main line with 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4, Effective Middlegame Training (2026)

Typical Grünfeld Defence, Mainline with 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.e4 ♘xc3 6.bxc3 (2026)