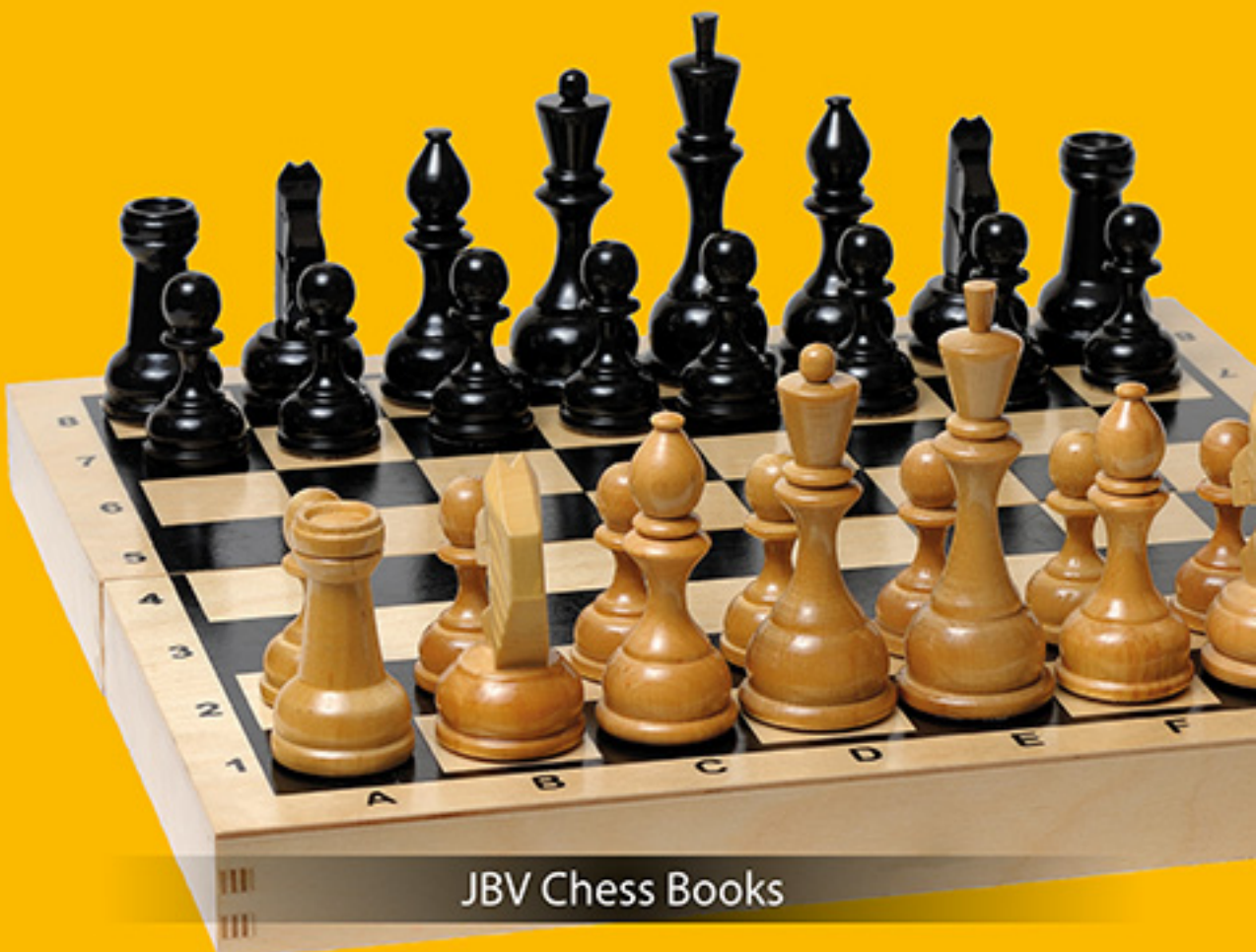


Karsten Müller

Typical Ruy Lopez

Effective Middlegame Training



JBV Chess Books

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Preface

If someone decides to learn French (the language, mind you – and not the opening!), he 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 middlegame. True, one could fill entire libraries with opening books on the subject of the French Defense alone, but what about a corresponding 'grammar'?

Of course, in every middlegame textbook there is one or the other position that is clearly recognizable as *French*, but their number is negligible in the context of Spanish, English, Russian, Italian, Dutch and so forth. And so too for 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 hanging pawns and minority attack – the author asks with good reason – 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 *French* (the *opening*, mind you, and not the language!), you will get a textbook and exercise book in which only *French* is 'spoken' or played.

However, this book only deals with the Ruy Lopez – more precisely: with positions in which the white pawns on c3, d4 and e4 are opposed by black pawns on d6 and e5 – or those positions that can arise from this basic structure, as shown in detail in the overview following the preface.

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, 'Sicilian Defense' or 'Rook Endgames' for players between 1400 and 1600, between 1600 and 1800, between 1800 and 2000 and so on. Accordingly, one only writes one book on the respective topic and tries to explain all important things as precisely and comprehensibly as possible – and then it is up to each individual reader how intensively he is willing to work with the books 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

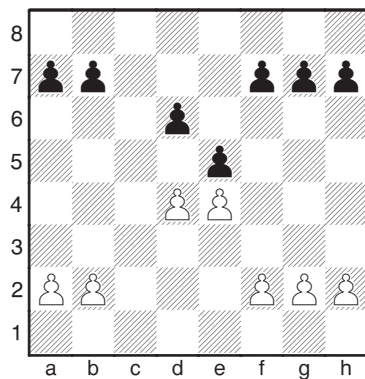
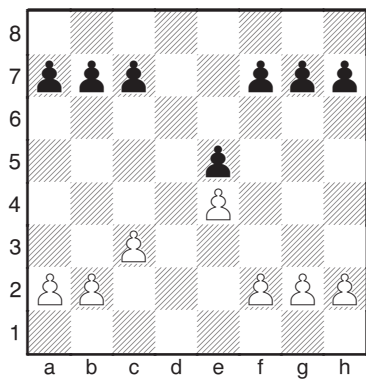
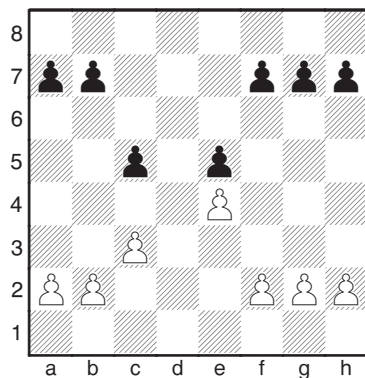
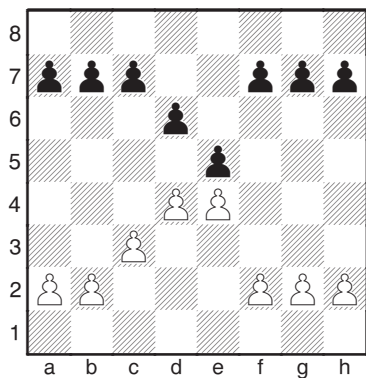
consistently somewhat more difficult examples, then in the first case more advanced players shy away because they are underchallenged – in the second case less advanced players because they feel overwhelmed.

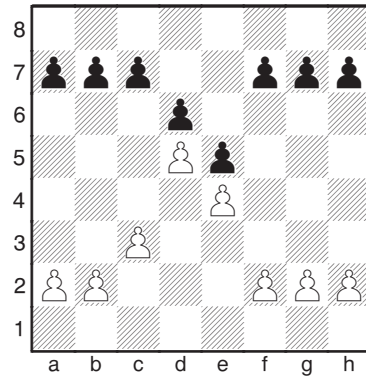
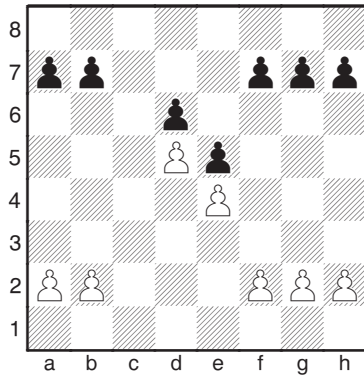
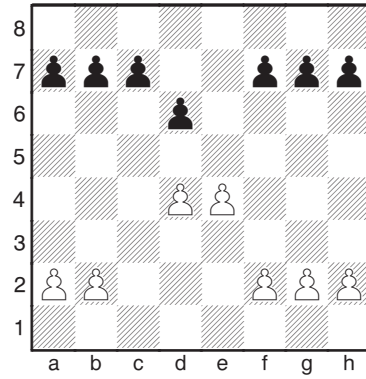
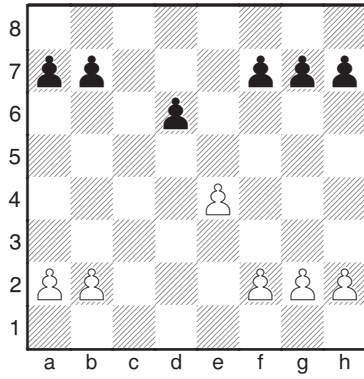
And therefore here's a good advice – regardless of your skill level. Take each task seriously, but don't let it become torture! As soon as you encounter too many obstacles or too much resistance, just take the liberty to open the solution section and turn the test book into a textbook!

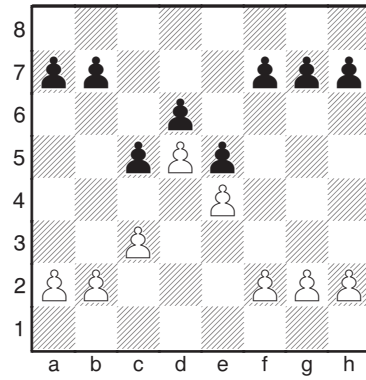
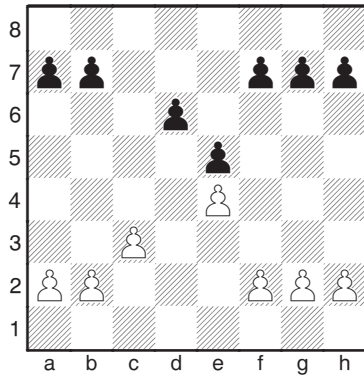
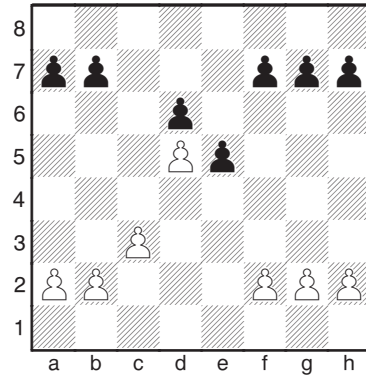
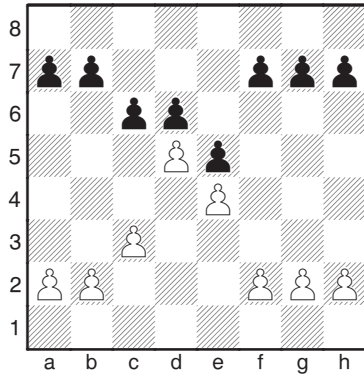
I would like to thank Rainer Woisin and Frederic Friedel from ChessBase for the great idea of working with QR Codes, Thomas Beyer for the very well done layout and – last but not least – the publisher Robert Ullrich for the overall excellent production.

Karsten Müller, Hamburg, November 2024

The following pawn structures are treated





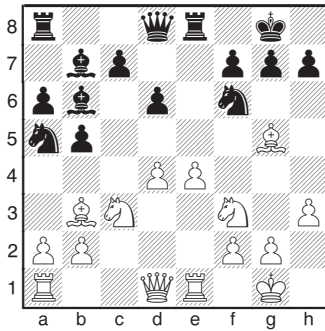


Exercises

Concrete question (solutions from page 40)



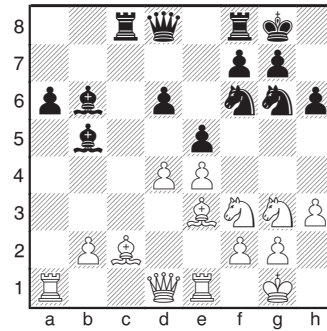
1



How can White prove that
♘a5 was a serious mistake?



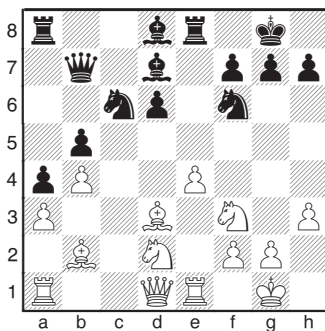
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How can White get the most
out of the advantageous position?



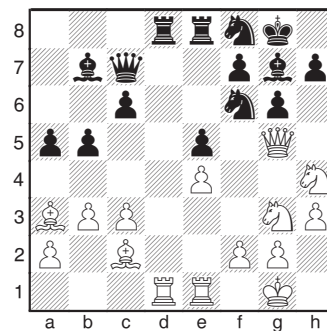
2



Why would the counterattack
♘h5 not be a good idea?



4

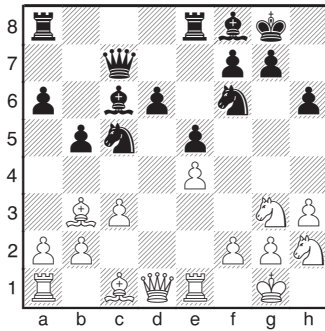


What is the best way to shake off
Black's positional pressure?

Only move (solutions from page 45)



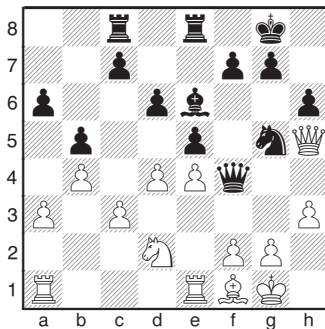
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With which ,only move' can
White keep the balance?



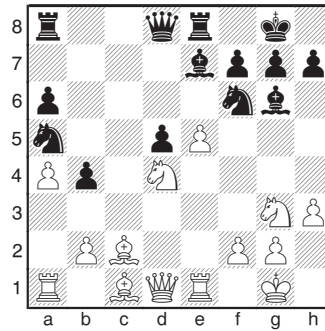
6



Only one of the moves ♔e2, ♖ad1, ♖e3
keeps the balance.



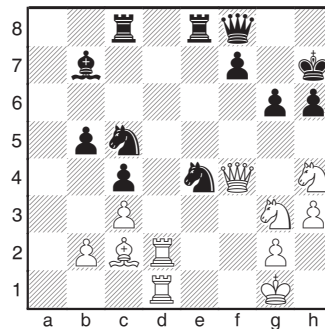
7



With which ,only move' can Black
keep the balance?



8



With which ,only move' can White
keep the balance?

SOLUTIONS

1

Perrin – Cassard

France 2020

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 b5 6.♙b3 ♙c5 7.♞e1 d6 8.c3 ♙b6
9.h3 0-0 10.d4 exd4 11.cxd4 ♞e8 12.♘c3
♙b7 13.♙g5 ♘a5

With his last move, Black evidently wanted to ward off the massive positional threat ♘d5. (In fact, he had no better choice than to accept a position that was ugly but far from lost with 13...h6 14.♙xf6 ♞xf6 15.♘d5 ♞d8 16.♘xb6 cxb6 17.♙d5±.) However, he was not the only protagonist who completely failed to notice that the opponent's *knight* was by no means the *only* piece that could use the d5 square with great positional effect.

I) After 14.♘d5? ♙xd5 15.♙xd5 c6, White continued with the (again) not very imaginative 16.♙b3?!, whereupon Black could easily equalize with 16...♘xb3 17.♞xb3 h6∞.

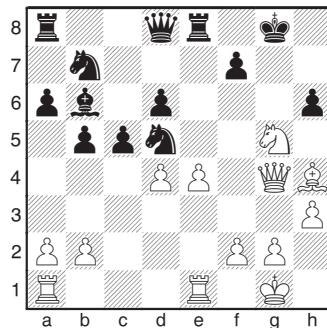
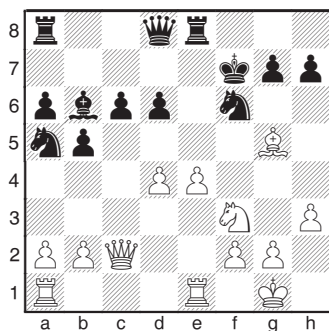
It's interesting that the hidden tactical key motif 16.♙xf7+! ♘xf7 17.♞c2! ...

... (given the threat e4-e5) would have resulted in splendid compensation even here – if not even in a winning position after an obvious mistake like 17...h6?? 18.e5! etc.

II) By the way, the immediate sacrifice approach 14.♙xf7+?? ♘xf7 15.♞c2 would have been completely wrong, because after 15...♔g8 16.e5, Black would first ruin the opponent's castling position with 16...♙xf3 17.gxf3 (17.exf6 gxf6) – and then carry out the counter-sacrifice 17...♙xd4! which would lead to a significant advantage after 18.exf6 ♞xe1+ 19.♞xe1 ♙xf6 20.♙xf6 ♞xf6 and the possible continuation 21.♞e4 c6 22.b4 h6!??; 22...♘c4.

III) With 14.♙d5! White could have confronted his opponent with a positional dilemma.

A) If Black tries to shake off the pin with 14...h6, he is again faced with the threat ♘d5 after the intermediate exchange 15.♙xb7 ♘xb7 and the retreat 16.♙h4 +-; e.g. 16...c5 (16...c6 17.♞c1! Δe5) 17.♘d5 g5 18.♘g5!! ♘xd5 19.♞g4! ...



... 19...hxg5 (19...♘f6 20.♙f5!) 20.♙xg5 ♜c8 21.♙g3 ♔h7/♔h8 22.♙h4+ ♔g8 with the final winning point 23.♞e3! Δ23...♜xe3? 24.♙f6 followed by #.

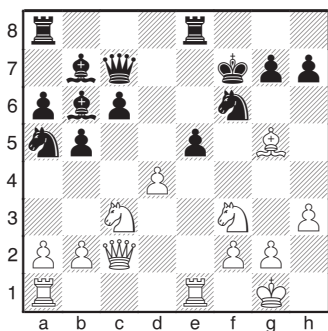
B) And if he tries to avoid the intermediate exchange on b7 with 14...c6, the resulting decommissioning of two minor pieces on the queenside now allows the sacrifice 15.♙xf7+! ♔xf7, after which the hidden tactical point 16.♙c2!+- proves fatal, as can be seen from the following instructive lines:

1) After 16...♔g8 17.e5, defeat can no longer be averted even with the conciliatory counter-sacrifice 17...♙xd4! followed by 18.exf6 and the lines:

a) 18...♞xe1+ 19.♞xe1 ♙xf6 20.♜e4!

b) 18...♙xf6 19.♞xe8+ ♙xe8 20.♙xf6 gxf6 21.♞e1; 21.♜e4 Δ♙c3

2) 16...♙c7 17.e5 dxe5



18.♙xf6! (18.dxe5!? ♜d7 19.e6+) 18...gxf6 19.♙xh7+ (19.dxe5) 19...♔f8 20.♙h8+ ♔f7

(20...♔e7 is also followed by 21.♙h6! Δdxe5 – even after 21...♔d8 22.dxe5! and not 22.♙xf6+?? ♙e7∞.)

21.♙h5+ ♔g8 (Δ♙h7)

(21...♔f8 22.♜e4; 22.dxe5)

22.♜e4 ♞f8 23.dxe5 fxe5 24.♜eg5 etc.

2

Vesselovsky – Kociscak

Czech Republic 2020

1.e4 e5 2.♜f3 ♜c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♜f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3 ♜a5 10.♙c2 c5 11.d4 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♙c7 13.♜bd2 ♜c6 14.♜b3 a5 15.♙e3 a4 16.♜bd2 ♙d7 17.a3 ♞fe8 18.♙d3 ♙b7 19.b4 exd4 20.♙xd4 ♙d8 21.♙b2

To 'praise' Black's position on at least one point, one could mention that the brutally backward isolani on d6 cannot come under serious pressure in the foreseeable future. However, there's the interrupted rook connection with a latent back rank weakness – and above all the ineffectively positioned 'fianchetto queen', which at least makes itself useful by safely protecting the second latent pawn weakness on b5.

In view of the bishop pair threateningly aiming at Black's king position, the step into an unprotected position on the rim with 21...♜h5?? must clearly be called suicidal.

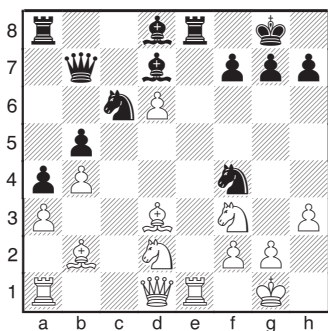
After the simple safety measure 21...♜e5 22.♜xe5 dxe5, the threatening bishop pair would be neutralized and after 23.♙e2, White would have at most a minimal advantage.

After the resolute response 22.e5! the entire dormant power potential was suddenly wide awake. Now the alternatives to the game continuation 22...d5 would have been even worse.

1) 22...♜f4

a) 23.♜e4 ♜xe5 (23...♜xd3? 24.♙xd3) 24.♙xe5 ♞xe5 25.♜xe5 dxe5 26.♙f1+-

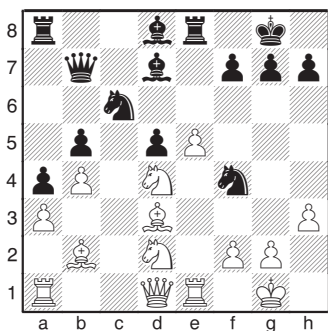
b) 23.exd6!?



- 23...dxd3 24. Rxe8+ Qxe8 25. We2+–
 – 23...Qf6 24. Rxe8+ Rxe8 25. Qxf6 Qxd3 26. Wc2+–
 – 26...Qf4 27. Qg5 Qg6 28. Qde4!
 – 26...Qde5 27. Qxe5 (27. Qg5 Qg6 28. Qde4!) 27...Qxe5 28. Qxe5 Rxe5 29. Rc1; 29. Wc7
 2) 22...dxe5 23. Qe4 Qe7 24. Qxe5 Qxe5 25. Qxe5 g6 26. g4 Qg7 27. Wf3 (Qf6+) 27...Wb6 28. Qb2+; 28. Rad1

In the game, White missed the strongest continuation of the attack with **23. Qg5!**, which would have resulted in a more or less clear winning position in all lines.

Instead, after 23. Qd4? Qf4 ...



... he had to be satisfied with 24. Qd2f3 and a minimal advantage, because he may have realized too late that 24. Qxb5? would even turn out in *Black's* favor after 24...Qxd4! (24...Qxe5∞) 25. Qxd7 Qfe2+ 26. Rxe2 Qxe2+ 27. Wxe2 Wxd7.

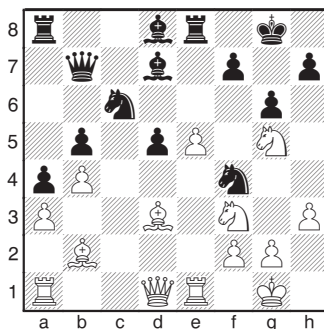
I) 23...Qxg5 24. Wxh5 Qxd2? (Q24...h6/Qh6 25. Qf3!) 25. Wxh7+ Qf8 26. e6+– e.g. 26...Qxe6 27. Rxe6+ (27. Re2) 27...Qxe6 28. Rd1

II) 23...g6 24. Qdf3 Qd2 (24. Qxh7?? Qf4)

A) 24...h6? 25. Qxg6 (25. e6; 25. Qxf7) 25...fxg6 26. Wxd5+

B) 24...Qg7 25. Wd2; 25. Rc1; 25. e6!?

C) 24...Qf4 25. e6!



1) 25...Qxg6 26. Qf1 Qd2

2) 25...fxe6 26. Qb1! Qg3; 26. g3!? Qxd3 27. Wxd3

3) 25...Qxg6 26. Qxe6 Rxe6 (26...Qxe6 27. Rc1; 27. Qd2)

27. Rxe6

a) 27...fxe6 28. Wc2; 28. We2

b) 27...Qxe6 28. We2 Q28...Rb8 29. Rc1

3

Gasa – Wagner

Austria 2020

1. e4 e5 2. Qf3 Qc6 3. Qb5 a6 4. Qa4 Qf6 5. d3 b5 6. Qb3 Qc5 7. c3 d6 8. h3 h6 9. 0-0 0-0 10. a4 Qd7 11. Re1 Qb6 12. Qbd2 Qa5 13. Qc2 c5 14. Qf1 Qc6 15. Qg3 Qe7 16. d4 cxd4 17. cxd4 Qg6 18. Qe3 Rc8 19. axb5 Qxb5

Given his space advantage and his overall more active piece position, White has achieved a considerable opening advantage, since Black must keep the latent weaknesses on a6 and especially d6 under control. However, White must not proceed too leisurely, as this could potentially lead to the transformation of the center with d6-d5 or exd4 followed by d6-d5.

The strongest continuation is the advance **20.♔f5!**, which not only targets the latent weakness on d6, but also the sacrifice complex on h6-g7 that is typical for this type of position.

– However, the systematic approach 20.♖d2!? Δ♙ad1 is also good for a solid minimal advantage.

– On the other hand, after the game move 20.♗d3, Black could have maintained the balance with 20...♞e8.

Now the disruptive move **20...♙a5** represents the greatest challenge for White's attacking play, because it forces an exchange of material and thus leads to a certain relief – or rather: it *seems* to force all these things.

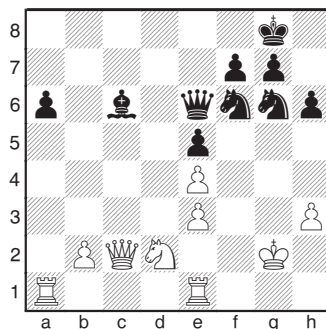
1) 20...♞c7?! 21.♗b1± Δ♞d2 would be less good, because after 21...♙a5 the game would continue with 22.♞xa5! analogous to the main line.

2) However, 20...♞e8!? 21.dxe5 dxe5 22.♗d6 ♗xe3 is of interest:

a) After 23.♗xe8? ♗xf2+! 24.♔xf2 ♞b6+ 25.♔g3 ♗h5+, Black has excellent compensation, because 26.♔g4?? fails to 26...♞f2 followed by a quick mate.

b) And after 23.fxe3 ♞xc2 24.♗xe8 ♞xg2+! 25.♔xg2 ♞xe8 26.♞c2 ♗c6 27.♗d2 ♞e6!

...



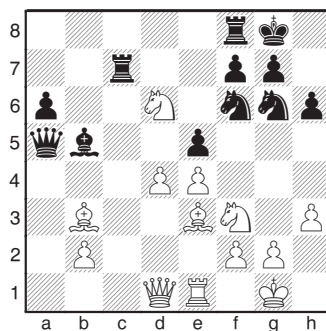
... White's advantage is hardly beyond the minimum range, especially since the two extra exchanges are opposed by the horrendous king position. For illustration, the main threat is 28...♗h4+ Δ29.♔g3 (29.♔h2 ♗d7!) 29...♗h5+! 30.♔xh4? g5+ 31.♔xh5 ♞xh3#.

21.♞xa5!

Of course, White has to continue like this, because after 21.♗d2? ♗xd2 22.♞xd2 ♞b6 he would be left almost empty-handed (as in the game).

21...♞xa5 22.♗xd6 ♞c6

After 22...♞c7 23.♗b3± ...



... White also dominates the game, as two cautionary examples may prove:

1) 23...♞d7? (Δ23...♗d7) 24.♗xe5! ♗xe5 (24...♞xd6 25.♗xg6) 25.♗d2! ♗f3+ 26.gxf3+–

2) 23...♞d8? 24.♗xf7! ♞xf7 25.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 26.♞b3+ ♔f8 27.♗d2! ♞a4 28.♗b4+ ♗e7

29. ♖c3!+-

23. ♜f5!±

But not 23.dxe5? ♜xe5! 24. ♜xe5 ♜xd6
oder 24... ♜xc2 with unclear complica-
tions.

I) 23... ♖b4 24. ♖b1 Δ24... ♜fc8 25. ♙d2
♖f8 26. ♙b3 (26. ♙c3? ♜xc3!) 26... ♜d7
27. ♙d5; 27.h4!?

II) 23... ♜d8 24. ♙d2 ♖c7 25. ♙b3

25. ♙c3? ♜xc3 26. bxc3 ♖xc3∞

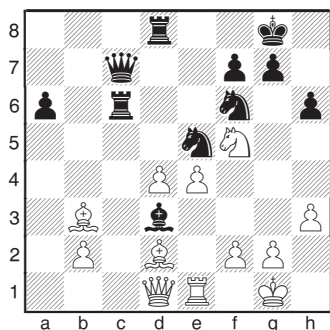
A) After 25... ♙c4 (25... exd4 26. e5)
26. ♙xc4 ♜xc4 27. b3 all rook moves are
more or less unsatisfactory.

1) 27... ♜c6 28. ♖a1!

2) 27... ♜c2 28. ♙a5

3) 27... ♜cx4 28. ♜3xd4; 28. ♜5xd4

B) 25... ♙d3 26. ♜xe5 ♜xe5



1) 27.dxe5? ♙c2! (27... ♖xe5? 28. ♙xh6!)
28. ♖c1 ♜xe4∞; 28... ♙xb3? 29. ♖xc6±

2) 27. ♙f4! ♙xe4 28. ♙xe5

III) 23... ♖c7 24. ♙b1! ♜d8

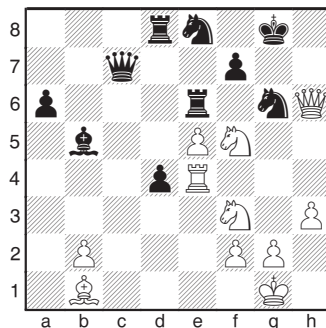
24... exd4 25. ♜3xd4 ♜d8/♜c5 26. ♖f3

25. ♖d2 (25. ♙d2; 25.d5) 25... exd4

25... ♜e8 26.d5 ♜f6 27.b4

And now the typical sacrifice attack on
the opponent's king (mentioned at the
beginning) can still be launched: **26. ♙xh6!**
(26. ♜3xd4) **26... gxf6 27. ♖xf6 ♜e8**
28.e5

A) 28... ♜e6 29. ♜e4!!+- ...



... Δ29... ♜f8 30. ♜g4+ ♜g6 31.e6! ♜xg4
32.hxg4; 32.exf7+

B) And 28... d3 29.e6! ♙c4 is not followed
by 30.exf7+? ♜xf7∞, but by the study-
like maneuver **30.e7! ♜xe7 31. ♖g5+**
♜g6 32. ♜e7+ ♜g7 33. ♜xc6 d5 34. ♜ce5
etc. with a rather healthy extra pawn and
a corresponding advantage.

4

Schöne – Rogozenco

Germany 2020

1.e4 e5 2. ♜f3 ♜c6 3. ♙b5 a6 4. ♙a4 ♜f6
5.0-0 b5 6. ♙b3 ♙e7 7. ♜e1 d6 8.c3?! 0-0
9.h3 ♙b7 10.d4 ♜b8 11. ♜bd2 ♜bd7
12. ♙c2 ♜e8 13. ♜f1 ♙f8 14. ♜g3 g6 15.b3
c6 16. ♙a3 ♖c7 17. ♖d2 a5 18. ♜ad1 ♜ad8
19. ♖g5 ♙g7 20. ♜h4 ♜f8 21.dxe5 dxe5

The aforementioned 'positional pressure'
is based on the clear strategic plan of
making the d4 square accessible with c5
and b4 and then occupying it with ♜e6-
d4. Since White's minor pieces are too
unfavorably positioned to prevent this in
the long term, the question remains wheth-
er they are in a favorable position for
anything in the sense of *counterplay*.

1) In the game, White relied on the
counter-strategy of immediately elimi-

nating the dangerous knight with **22.♙xf8?**, instead of having to capture it later on d4 and thus giving the opponent a protected central passed pawn.

22...♜xf8?

After the pointed intermediate move **22...h6!** followed by **23.♞e3/♞c1** and only then **23...♙xf8**, Black would have retained a solid minimal advantage because he could use the bishop pair to exploit the advancing pawns on the queenside without being disturbed by counterplay. After this omission, White still has the opportunity to carry out the relieving move that was actually already required earlier.

23.♘hf5! ♞xd1

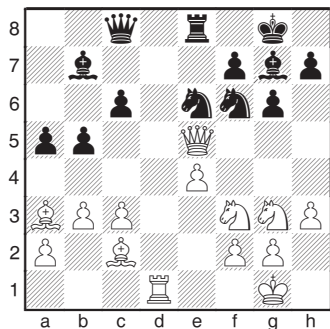
– **23...♙c8** **24.♘xg7 ♖xg7** **25.♘f3;**
25.♘f5+!?

24.♞xd1 gxf5 25.♘xf5 ♘e6 26.♞d8 f6 27.♞d2 ♖h8?

After this mistake (instead of **27...c5** Δ**28.♞d7 ♞b6**), White could have obtained a significant advantage with **28.♞d7 ♞b6** **29.♘g7 ♘g7** **30.♞d6 ♞g8** **31.♞xf6 ♙c8** **32.♞d6**.

2) As already indicated, the correct approach was **22.♘hf5!**

After **22.♘f3?! ♘e6!** Black still has a minimal advantage, as after the blunder **23.♞xe5??** (Δ**23.♞e3**) and the further moves **23...♞xd1** **24.♞xd1 ♞c8!–+ ...**

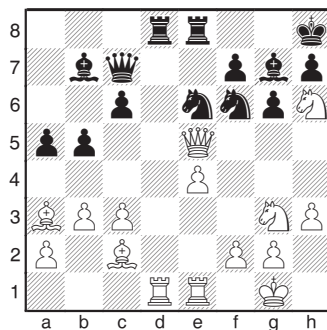


... the queen cannot escape the threatening discovered attack in a satisfactory way; e.g. **25.♞d6 ♙f8** **26.♞e5 ♙xa3** Δ**26.♞xf6?** (Δ**26.♘f5 gxf5** **27.♞xf6**) **26...♙e7** **27.♞e5 f6**.

22...♘e6

After **23...gxf5??** **24.♙xf8!** ♖**xf8/♞xf8** **25.♘xf5**, Black can resign.

23.♘h6+ ♖h8 (23...♙xh6 24.♞xh6) 24.♞xe5!



a) **24...♞xe5?! 25.♘xf7+ ♖g8** **26.♘e5** ♘**h5** **27.♞xd8 ♞xd8** **28.♘h5 ♙xe5** **29.♘g3** ♙**xc3** (29...♞d2 **30.♞e2**) **30.♞d1 ♞xd1+** **31.♙xd1±**

b) **24...♙xh6?! 25.♞xc7 ♘xc7** **26.♞xd8** ♞**xd8** **27.♙e7 ♞d2** **28.♙xf6+ ♖g8** **29.♞e2±;** **29.♙b1**

c) **24...♞xd1 25.♞xd1 ♙xh6** **26.♞xf6+** ♙**g7** **27.♞f3 c5**

5

Liebold – Wiesinger

Germany 2020

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0
9.h3 ♙b7 10.d4 ♞e8 11.♘g5 ♞f8 12.♘f3
♞e8 13.♘bd2 ♙f8 14.♙c2 ♘b8 15.d5 c6
16.dxc6 ♙xc6 17.♘f1 h6 18.♘g3 ♘bd7
19.♙b3 ♞c7 20.♘h2 ♘c5

The fact that the development lead has already reached a point where Black has

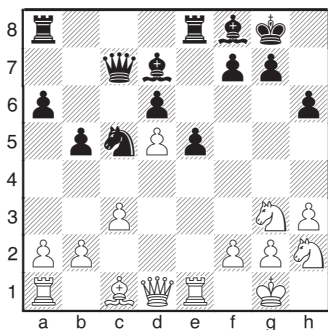
a first concrete threat indicates that something must have been more or less inaccurate on White's side. And on closer inspection, Black even has a *second*, albeit only *positional*, threat, since the breakthrough d6-d5 is of course not comparable to the impending win of a pawn. All in all, it should be clear that White can no longer afford any inaccuracy if he wants to avoid ending up with an irreversible disadvantage.

I) White could have avoided the not only inaccurate, but already clearly faulty continuation **21.♗d5?** (jokingly speaking) based on the following very general consideration: It's simply not compatible with chess logic that the proud 'Spanish bishop' takes up almost a third of the opening moves and then offers himself for exchange for a *knight*. – However...

21...♗xd5?

... Black also limited his calculations to the (incorrect) result that the text move still wins a pawn.

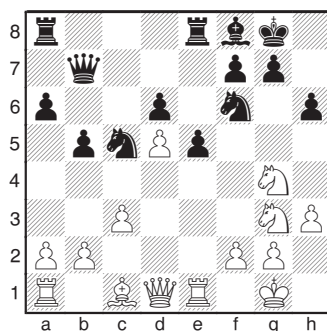
The correct (and again *positional*) approach 21...♗xd5 22.exd5 ♗d7+ ...



... would have led to a bizarre kind of opening metamorphosis (given the shift in the pawn position with the resulting majorities and minorities) since the given structure is not uncommon in the Sicilian Sveshnikov Variation. And since Black's

4-3 majority in the right half of the board can be used more effectively, White must always reckon with its advance; e.g. 23.♗c2 ♗c8 Δf5 (23...e4) 24.♗e3 f5 25.♗xc5 dxc5 with the threat e4 and a clear advantage.

After the game continuation **22.exd5 ♗b7** Black had probably missed the point **23.♗g4!** ...



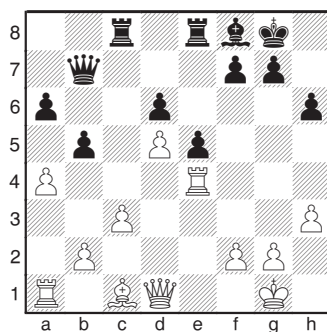
... which leads to the long-term discussion of a standard tactical motif – namely the possible overloading of the g7 pawn in view of the squares on h6 and f6.

23...♗cd7!

23...♗cd7?! 24.♗xh6! Δ24...gxh6? 25.♗xd5±; ○24...♗e6∞

24.♗xf6+ ♗xf6 25.♗e4! ♗xd5

The alternative 25...♗xe4 26.♗xe4 ♗ac8 does not lead to any significant advantage after 27.a4! ...



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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)
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- 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 25 in German and the following titles also in English:

- Magical Endgames (together with Claus Dieter Meyer)
- The Human Factor in Chess (together with Luis Engel)
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