Lubomir Ftacnik
The Sicilian Defence

Tired of bad positions? Try the main lines!
The Sicilian Defence

By

Lubomir Ftacnik

Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk
Creating the Grandmaster Repertoire series seemed a natural idea. There is a glut of opening books at the *Starting Out* level. These books have certainly been refreshing, but they have almost completely replaced high-level opening books.

As chess fans, we felt we were missing out, and because we can, we decided to do something about it.

The books in the Grandmaster Repertoire series are written by grandmasters, edited by grandmasters, and will certainly be read by grandmasters. **This does not mean that players who are not grandmasters cannot read them.** We have worked hard to make our books clear in their presentation and to make it possible for the readers to decide the depth to which they want to study them.

When we were young and trying to be up-and-coming, we understood that you do not have to remember everything in an opening book in order to use it. It is our hope that those readers who find this repertoire too extensive and detailed, will ignore many of the details. Even now that we are grandmasters, we see the bolded moves as what we want to memorize, and the notes as explanations and illustrations.

It is our conviction that you will eventually be more successful by playing the main lines, simply because they are based on better moves. Instinctively most players know this, but they fear losing to a prepared line and thus turn to unambitious systems, or unhealthy surprises. The opponent will not be able to use his preparation but, sadly, will not need it. These sidelines generally end in uninspiring positions almost automatically.

Possibly the main reason why high-level opening books have disappeared is the rise of databases. It has been assumed that there is no point in having traditional opening books anymore, as you can look it all up in the database. Some rather lazy authors have a system: collect a few hundred games from the database, give Fritz a few moments, then hit Print. Such books add nothing to chess literature. We have seen enough of them and have never wanted to add to that pile.

In these days of multi-million game databases, we all have access to information, what is lacking is understanding. In the Grandmaster Repertoire series, very strong players will share their understanding and suggest strong new moves that are in no one else’s database.

We are excited about this series and hope that the reader will share some of that excitement.

John Shaw & Jacob Aagaard
Quality Chess
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Key to symbols used

±  White is slightly better
±  Black is slightly better
±  White is better
±  Black is better
++  White has a decisive advantage
+-  Black has a decisive advantage
=  equality
=  with compensation
±  with counterplay
=  unclear
(x)  xth match game

?  a weak move
??  a blunder
!  a good move
!!  an excellent move
?!  a move worth considering
?!  a move of doubtful value
#  mate

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Introduction

From Russia Sicily with Love

First I would like to express my gratitude to the reader for opening this book on the Sicilian Defence. Credit must go to the Quality Chess team and their excellent authors whose efforts resulted in the creation of a real buzz about the Grandmaster Repertoire series. To follow in the footsteps of the previous titles made for a daunting challenge and I hope that the present book, the sixth volume in the series, will live up to the readers' high expectations.

The unparalleled popularity of the Sicilian has led to the creation of an entire chess galaxy that is too vast for even the best and brightest minds to comprehend fully. Each player chooses his Kan, Sveshnikov, Dragon or other pet variation, around which he creates his own Sicilian world. My own modest expertise lies in the domains of the Najdorf and Scheveningen systems, which I have been playing and studying over the past two decades. The Scheveningen system represents a kind of foundational core, from which virtually all knowledge about thematic Sicilian structures and plans can be traced. Although the official subject of this book is the Najdorf variation, the two systems share many common themes and can often transpose to one another. In certain places, such as Chapters 12 and 13 (which deal with the variations 6.f4 and 6.&e2 respectively), the decision to recommend the response 6...e6, instead of equally valid alternatives such as 6...e5, was influenced by my fondness for the Scheveningen set-up. I make no apologies for this, as I believe that an author can make the most useful contribution when writing about his own areas of expertise.

At the end of the day this repertoire book is about cherry-picking the best and brightest ideas from the enormous jungle of variations available. In some sense the repertoire is notable not only for the recommendations that were included, but also for the attractive ones that (sometimes after agonizing deliberations) did not make the final cut. The whole Sicilian Defence creates something of a ‘win-win’ situation, in the sense that the unbalanced positions often result in bloodshed for one side or the other. In some variations Black may have to defend for a while, but it rarely kills his chances for a subsequent counterattack and ultimate success.

I have tried to address all the most important ideas in every chapter, but practice will inevitably bring some new challenges, so please be prepared for some surprises. Nobody can foresee the future – it is often difficult enough to ‘predict’ the past (just ask any decent historian).

I have often hankered for a bit of colour in our seemingly dry, black and white world of technical annotations, symbols and diagrams. As a young man I came across a game that is played in social situations, involving association with the names of films. Movies can often be symbolic, full of cultural references and associative bridges – evoking colours and emotions unlike any other form.
of media. I hope for some readers the chapter titles will evoke some positive feelings and help to place the struggle to master chess into a broader perspective.

This entire project has at times threatened to pull me down and drag me under the deep waters of endless lines and multiplying ideas. I am greatly indebted for the help and encouragement of John Shaw, Jacob Aagaard and Andrew Greet of Quality Chess. The love, care and understanding of my wife Katarina went so far that she is happy to be woven between the lines.

I appreciate the attention of any reader who glances beyond this preface. The main rule of the survival guide in Black’s Sicilian galaxy is to *Die Another Day* – be prepared to go under at any moment, but try to resist and strike back. The final (or should that be *Fatal*) attraction of the Sicilian is the fact that it is truly dangerous – for both sides!

Lubomir Ftacnik
Bratislava, June 2010
Minor Systems

Pandora's (Chess) Box - Miscellaneous 2nd moves

Variation Index

1.e4

1...c5

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A) note to 3.c3

C2) after 9.c4

F) note to 9.g4!?
1.\textbf{e4 c5}

They say that a happy ending makes earlier troubles fade away, but what should we do about a scary beginning? The present chapter, featuring chess horrors of all imaginable forms was impossible to avoid; it is a true Pandora's box of manifold troubles Caiusa is storing for her devoted followers. Fortunately, most of these sidelines are not so dangerous and in comparison with the sharpest and most complicated Sicilian variations they lack some sparkle. Nevertheless we should still take some time to find out how best to greet these exotic visitors.

In this Chapter we will consider the following moves: A) 2.\textbf{\textsc{d}a3}?, B) 2.b3, C) 2.b4, D) 2.d3, E) 2.\textbf{\textsc{d}e2} and F) 2.g3.

\textbf{A) 2.\textbf{\textsc{d}a3}}?

This kinky idea came into the limelight at the end of 2005 after Zvjaginsev used it three times in the Russian Championship, defeating Khalifman and drawing with Dreev and Motylev. Many games later, one has to admit that it is much more sensible than an initial glance might suggest.

2...\textbf{g6}

Black can play just about anything, but the text move is logical as it avoids creating any kind of weakness that the a3-knight may exploit.

\textbf{3.c3}

Once again White can play just about anything, so we will limit ourselves to a couple of instructive examples to show how the game might develop.

3.\textbf{g3} \textbf{\textsc{g}g7} 4.\textbf{\textsc{g}g2} \textbf{\textsc{c}c6} 5.d3 d6 6.f4 \textbf{\textsc{d}f6}

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\textbf{A) 2.\textbf{\textsc{d}a3}}?

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2...\textbf{g6}
Also promising is 7...d5 8.e5 Qg4 9.h3 Qh6 10.g4 f6 11.exf6 exf6 12.Qe2+ Qf7 13.0-0 Qe8. Black has the more harmonious position, and the slight compromising of his pawn structure is of little consequence.


Black’s position is already slightly more pleasant, Popelyshev – Arakelov, Kostroma 2008.

3...Qg7

4.Qf3

Alternatives are possible, but there is no particularly convincing way to make use of the position of the knight on a3.

4.f4 Qc6 5.d3 d5 6.Qf3 e6 7.Qe2 Qge7 8.0-0 0-0 with equal chances.

4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 d6 (Also interesting is 5...d5! 6.exd5 Qf6 7.Qb5† Qbd7 8.d6 0-0! 9.Qxe7 Qxe7† 10.Qe2 Qd8 11.0-0 Qc5 when Black can claim sufficient compensation for the missing pawn.) 6.h3 Qf6 7.Qd3 0-0 8.Qf3 Qc6 9.0-0 e5 10.d5 This position was reached in Papa – Wirthensohn, Switzerland 2007, and here I suggest 10...Qb4N 11.Qb1 Qa6 12.Qe3 b6 with roughly equal chances.

Black has a solid position with enough scope for counterplay.

4...Qc6

Black should wait for the most suitable moment before developing the other knight. After 4...Qf6 5.e5 Qd5 6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4! Qb6 8.Qh4 White had slightly easier play in Shabalov – Izoria, Philadelphia 2006.

5.d4

This seems like the most natural move.

5.Qb5 Qf6 6.e5?!N

This energetic move has not yet been tested.

6...Qd5 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qb3

Or 8.cxd4 0-0 with equality.

8...Qc7 9.cxd4 Qxb5 10.Qxb5 a6 11.Qc3 d6

The position is equal although White must play carefully, lest the light-squared bishop eventually achieve his “15 minutes of fame”.

5...cxd4 6.cxd4 Qf6 7.d5 Qb4

8.Qd3!

8.Qa4 a5 9.Qc2 Qxc2† 10.Qxc2 0-0 intending ...d6 was equal in Hole – Bekkesletten, e-mail 2006.

8...0-0 9.0-0 Qxd3N
Eliminating the opponent's bishops is usually a good policy for Sicilian players, and the present case is no exception. Nevertheless Black was also okay after 9...d6 10.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{g4}\) 11.h3 \(\text{xf3}\) 12.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{c8}\), Zvjaginsev – Bocharov, Tomsk 2006.

10.\(\text{Wxd3}\) d6 11.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{d7}\)
Black has already equalized comfortably.

B) 2.b3

Black may sleep soundly in the knowledge that the system with fianchetto of the bishop to b2 is not going to refute the Sicilian. At the same time the idea is certainly not completely stupid, and has been used with success by some strong players including Short.

2...\(\text{c6}\) 3.\(\text{b2}\) e5

4.f4?!
This pawn sacrifice has been White's most popular choice, but I do not believe it to be a really serious option. Black should simply accept the gift and develop naturally. I will not mention every possible White continuation, just offer a few illustrative lines.

4...\(\text{exf4}\) 5.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{f6}\) 6.e5 \(\text{h5}\)
6...\(\text{d5}\) is also okay, but I prefer not to obstruct the d-pawn. The knight is far from dim on h5.

7.\(\text{e2}\) d5 8.0-0 \(\text{g6}\) 9.e6
I tried to improve White's play with 9.\(\text{c3}\)N, but after 9...d4 10.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{e7}\) 11.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{f5}\)
12.\(\text{exf5}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 13.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 14.\(\text{xf3}\) g5+ White remains a pawn down, and the bishop on b2 is still a miserable piece.

9...\(\text{g7}\) 10.\(\text{xg7}\) \(\text{xg7}\) 11.\(\text{xf7}\) \(\text{xf7}\) 12.\(\text{e1}\)
13.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{g7}\)+
Black remained a pawn up in Romanov – Kurnosov, Minsk 2006. In the event of:

14.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{xf4}\) 15.\(\text{xlf4}\) \(\text{e6}\)
Black keeps a clear advantage, thanks to his better mobilization.

B1) 4.\(\text{c4}\)

This is a sensible plan. White plays to control the light squares that were weakened by Black's last move. The b2-bishop is still bad, but White hopes to prepare f2-f4 after completing development and castling. If Black reacts too passively then he might end up in a difficult position, but if he plays accurately then he should be fine.

4...\(\text{f6}\) 5.d3 d6 6.\(\text{e3}\)
6...\textit{\textbf{c}}e7

Another decent approach is 6...a6 7.a4 g6 8.\textit{\textbf{c}}ge2 \textit{\textbf{c}}g7 9.0-0 0-0 10.h3 \textit{\textbf{b}}b8 11.\textit{\textbf{f}}4 exf4 12.\textit{\textbf{c}}xf4 \textit{\textbf{d}}d7 13.\textit{\textbf{d}}c1 (13.\textit{\textbf{b}}b1!? \textit{\textbf{c}}de5 14.\textit{\textbf{c}}ce2 \textit{\textbf{c}}d7 looks about equal) 13...\textit{\textbf{c}}de5 14.\textit{\textbf{d}}d5 \textit{\textbf{d}}d7 15.\textit{\textbf{d}}d2 \textit{\textbf{g}}5\# Black's position was somewhat more pleasant in Kosten – V. Rajlich, Internet 2006.

7.\textit{\textbf{g}}ge2 0-0 8.0-0 \textit{\textbf{c}}e6!

Black wastes no time in fighting for the central squares. Instead the following encounter illustrates the potential dangers: 8...a6 9.a4 \textit{\textbf{c}}d4 10.h3 \textit{\textbf{c}}e6 11.\textit{\textbf{f}}4 \textit{\textbf{d}}d7 12.\textit{\textbf{f}}5 \textit{\textbf{c}}xc4 13.\textit{\textbf{d}}xc4 \textit{\textbf{g}}5 14.\textit{\textbf{d}}d5 \textit{\textbf{f}}6 15.\textit{\textbf{c}}ec3 with a stable advantage for White, Short – Prasad, Mumbai 2004.

9.\textit{\textbf{f}}4

9.\textit{\textbf{d}}d2 was played in Gelashvili – Gabrielian, Gyumri 2008, and now I suggest 9...d5!N. This central break solves all Black’s problems. 10.exd5 \textit{\textbf{c}}xd5 11.\textit{\textbf{d}}xd5 \textit{\textbf{f}}d5 12.\textit{\textbf{f}}4 \textit{\textbf{f}}6 Black is holding his own in the centre with full equality.

9...\textit{\textbf{g}}g4?!?

This must be better than the cooperative 9...exf4 10.\textit{\textbf{c}}xf4 \textit{\textbf{b}}d7 11.\textit{\textbf{c}}cd5 with some initiative for White, Shengelia – D. Eggleston, Banyoles 2007.

10.\textit{\textbf{d}}d2 \textit{\textbf{a}}x\textit{\textbf{f}}4

11.\textit{\textbf{c}}xf4

White does not gain much from 11.\textit{\textbf{d}}d5 g5!? (11...\textit{\textbf{g}}5 is also fine) 12.h4 (12.\textit{\textbf{g}}3! \textit{\textbf{a}}xd5! 13.exd5 \textit{\textbf{c}}d4 14.\textit{\textbf{c}}xd4 \textit{\textbf{f}}6 15.gxf4 cxd4 16.\textit{\textbf{f}}xg5 \textit{\textbf{c}}e5 is dangerous for White) 12...\textit{\textbf{a}}xd5 13.exd5 \textit{\textbf{c}}ce5 14.hxg5 \textit{\textbf{c}}xg5 15.\textit{\textbf{c}}xf4 \textit{\textbf{f}}6 with equal chances.

11...\textit{\textbf{c}}xc4 12.\textit{\textbf{b}}xc4 \textit{\textbf{a}}f6 13.\textit{\textbf{f}}e2 \textit{\textbf{d}}d4 14.\textit{\textbf{a}}b1 \textit{\textbf{g}}5 15.\textit{\textbf{d}}f4 \textit{\textbf{a}}5

Black’s active piece play was enough to balance his opponent’s central majority, Blazeka – Idani, Kemer 2009.

B2) 4.\textit{\textbf{b}}5

There is nothing much wrong with allowing doubled c-pawns, but perhaps out of general principle I prefer to prevent White’s idea and break a certain opening principle.

5.\textit{\textbf{c}}c4

At first glance the following alternative does not look like a serious option for White: 5.\textit{\textbf{d}}xd4!? cxd4

However, Black will need to play with a certain amount of care as he is behind in development. 6.\textit{\textbf{f}}3 \textit{\textbf{f}}6 7.0-0 a6 8.\textit{\textbf{d}}d3 \textit{\textbf{a}}5 9.c3 dxc3 10.\textit{\textbf{c}}xc3 \textit{\textbf{b}}4!
This looks better than 10...\textit{a}3 11.\textit{c}4 d6 12.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 13.\textit{xd}5 0–0 14.\textit{d}4± The bishop on d5 shines brightly.

11.\textit{c}2

Or 11.\textit{c}4 \textit{xc}3 12.\textit{dxc}3 \textit{c}5 13.\textit{xd}3 (13.a4 b6 14.\textit{d}3 \textit{b}7=) 13...b5 14.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 15.exd5 f6= Black will soon catch up on development and then enjoy a healthy position.

11...d6 12.a3 \textit{xc}3 13.\textit{dxc}3 0–0 14.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}6 15.\textit{f}c1 \textit{ac}8 16.c4 \textit{d}7

Black has obtained comfortable equality, Wohl – Palac, Metz 2001.

5...\textit{e}6

Should the reader feel more adventurous he might wish to consider the following daring queen foray, which is intended to derive some benefit from the pesky knight on d4. (Disclaimer: This would be done on the readers’ own risk!)

5...\textit{g}5?! 6.\textit{xd}4

This looks more critical than 6.\textit{f}1 \textit{f}6 7.\textit{f}3 \textit{h}5 8.\textit{c}3 \textit{d}6? 9.h4 a6∞.

6...\textit{gf}3 7.\textit{h}5

7.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xf}3 8.\textit{xf}3 exd4 9.0–0 \textit{e}7 leaves White with insufficient compensation.

So far we have been following the game Gelashvili – Thoma, Panormo 2001, which did not continue in a pleasant way for Black. So I found an interesting new idea:

7...\textit{f}6!?N

The game continued 7...\textit{h}6 8.\textit{xe}5\textit{f} d8 9.\textit{e}3 \textit{xf}1 10.\textit{f}3 \textit{g}2 11.\textit{c}3 d6 12.\textit{d}5\textit{f} with a dangerous initiative for White.

8.\textit{xf}7+

8.\textit{xe}5\textit{d}8 9.\textit{e}3 \textit{xf}1 turns out badly for White. Compared with the aforementioned game, the black knight is much better on f6 than h6.

8...\textit{d}8 9.\textit{xf}3 \textit{xf}3 10.\textit{xf}3 cxd4 11.\textit{xe}5 \textit{d}6 12.\textit{f}3 \textit{xe}4 13.\textit{g}1∞

We have reached a somewhat irregular queenless position, with approximately balanced chances.

6.\textit{c}3 \textit{e}7

The position is essentially the same as line B1, except for the inclusion of the ‘free’ move ...\textit{c}6-d4.

7.\textit{ge}2 0–0 8.d3 \textit{b}8

Playing for ...\textit{b}5 is the most natural way to utilize the knight’s presence on d4.

9.0–0

White can also try 9.a4 a6 10.a5, although in this case the a-pawn might become a target. Play continues 10...d6 11.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}6 12.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 13.\textit{xd}5 \textit{e}6 14.0–0 \textit{xd}5 15.exd5 \textit{d}4 16.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}6 with roughly even chances, although White may have to be slightly more careful due to his pawn weaknesses, Gelashvili – Najer, Panormo 2001.
10...d6 11.a4 a6

White pushes his a-pawn into a precarious position in order to prevent ...b5 for good.

Another possibility is 11.f4 g4 12.h3 d7 13.a5 c7 14.d2 h6 with mutual chances.

11...d5 12.d5 xd5 13.xd5 xa5 14.f4 f6 15.c3

5.fxe5 xe5 16.xe5 dxe5 17.d2 b6 18.b4 cxb4 19.xb4 e6 looks about equal. White has enough positional compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but not more.

15...b6 16.xa5 bxa5 17.f5 d7 18.e3 g6 19.f3 h8

We have been following the game Ivanisevic – Fercec, Ljubljana 2005. The position is complex and difficult for both sides. White seems to have good positional compensation, although it should be remembered that only one of his pieces can occupy the d5-square. Black, on the other hand, can hope to activate his bishop pair in the long run. In the game the second player eventually prevailed after a tough fight.

C) 2.b4 cxb4

The Sicilian is often associated with pawn sacrifices. This one is earlier than most, and is not considered theoretically promising although Black should play cautiously and treat it with respect. We will consider three options for White: C1) 3.d4, C2) 3.db2 and C3) 3.a3.

C1) 3.d4 xf6!

3...d5 is not a bad move and should probably give Black some advantage, but I believe the text to be slightly more accurate.

4.d3 d6 5.e2

White struggles to find a set-up that could justify his sacrificed pawn. For instance:

5.e5 dxe5 6.e4 e6 7.d3 d6 8.0-0 e7 9.a3 dxe5 10.dxe5 was Schneider – Schenk, Germany 2004, and now Black could have secured a clear advantage with the simple 10...0-0N.

5.d3 d5 6.e5 dxe4 7.0-0 xe4 8.db2 e6 9.e2 g5 10.bd2 e7 was also clearly better for Black in Philippe – Lerner, Metz 1996.

5...d6 6.0-0 g6!

The bishop will be well placed on g7, and the solid fianchetto formation will bolster the kingside against any attacking ideas.
7.\textit{d}d2 \textit{g}7 8.\textit{f}4 0-0 9.\textit{h}1 \textit{g}4 10.\textit{b}b2 \textit{d}7 11.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}5 12.\textit{b}1 \textit{xd}3 13.\textit{xd}3 \textit{d}5\textsuperscript{\texttt{f}}

White is not only a pawn down, but also overexposed in the centre and generally in deep trouble, Jurkovic – Dvoirys, Oberwart 1999.

C2) 3.\textit{b}2 \textit{d}f6

Just as in the previous line, I believe this to be slightly more accurate than the immediate central strike with 3...\textit{d}5.

4.\textit{e}5

After 4.\textit{c}4 Black should not hesitate to enter the complications with 4...\textit{xe}4 5.\textit{xf}7\texttt{f} 6.\textit{h}5\texttt{f} 7.\textit{d}5\texttt{f} 8.\textit{xe}4 \textit{c}6 9.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}5 10.\textit{e}2 \textit{e}7 when he was already much better in Rogers – Hoeksema, Groningen 1991.

4...\textit{d}5

The evaluation is not changed by:

5.\textit{c}4 \textit{b}6 6.\textit{b}3 \textit{c}6 7.a3

Compared with the previous note, GM Rogers had a more favourable experience on the black side of this opening in the same tournament after 7.d4 \textit{d}5 8.\textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 9.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}6 10.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}5 11.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 12.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 13.0-0 \textit{a}5 14.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}8\texttt{f} Houtman – Rogers, Groningen 1991.

7...\textit{e}6 8.axb4 \textit{xb}4 9.\textit{a}3 0-0 10.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}5 11.\textit{exd}6 \textit{xd}6\texttt{f}

White remained a pawn down with not much to show for it, Cierny – Lanc, Topolcianky 1994.

5.\textit{c}6 6.\textit{a}3 \textit{e}6

Also promising is 6...\textit{d}6\texttt{N} for instance: 7.\textit{c}4 \textit{b}6 8.\textit{b}3 a5 9.0-0 \textit{a}4 10.\textit{a}2 \textit{e}6 11.\textit{exd}6 \textit{xd}6 12.axb4 \textit{xb}4\texttt{f} White will struggle to get anything real for the missing pawn.

7.axb4 \textit{xb}4 8.\textit{c}3 \textit{e}7 9.\textit{e}4

This was Baumert – Kovalev, Berlin 1993, and now I suggest:
Chapter 1 - Miscellaneous 2nd moves

IO)t\]c3 0-0 II. lLibS a6 12.i.e2 gbg 13.lL!d6 f6:j:

Black's position remains solid, and as long as he stays alert he will have good chances to make his extra pawn count in the long run.

C3) 3.a3 d5!

The simple trap of 5.axb4?? \e5\t has embarrassed a few Wing Gambit practitioners over the years.

5...e5

The solid 5...e6 is a reasonable alternative, but the text is more ambitious.

6.axb4

6.c4?

This has not been the most common move, but it requires accurate handling from Black.

6...\e6

I think this is the best square for the queen.

7.d4?

This is the critical continuation, seeking to blast open as many lines as possible.

7...exd4\t 8.e2 d3!

It is important to play this here in order to disrupt the harmony of White's position before he can castle.

9.\e6 10.0-0 \e6 11.e1 \e7 12.axb4

This position was reached in Shirazi – Tregubov, Livry Gagran (rapid) 2009, and here I found an improvement for Black:

9...\e6 10.0-0 \e6 11.e1 \e7

The game continuation of 12...\e6?

13.\d2 0-0 14.f1 \d6 15.e7\! \xe7 16.a3 gave Black serious problems.

13.d2 0-0\t
White will have a hard time demonstrating compensation for the missing pawn.

6...\texttt{xb4} 7.e3

7.a3 \texttt{xa3} followed by ...\texttt{c6} does not give White much.

7...\texttt{d6}?

The point of this slightly unusual move is to defend the c7-square. The obvious 7...\texttt{e7} 8.a3 \texttt{c6} 9.b5 \texttt{d8} 10.d4 exd4 11.f4 \texttt{d8} 12.c7 \texttt{b8} 13.exd4 \texttt{d7} is playable for Black but not so pleasant in practice.

8.a3 \texttt{c6}

Also possible is 8...\texttt{f6} 9.b5 \texttt{c6} 10.c4?! (Better was 10.a4N although after 10...\texttt{e4}† 11.e2 \texttt{xe2}† 12.xe2 \texttt{b8} 13.g5 \texttt{g4}† 14.f3 \texttt{h5} 15.d3 a6 Black has no worries at all.) 10...\texttt{e6} 11.xd6† \texttt{xd6} 12.a3 \texttt{c7} 13.e2 e4 14.g5 h6 15.h3 \texttt{hxh3} 16.gxh3 0−0 0−0 And Black was already clearly better in Grcic – Malpas, Australia 1997.

9.ac4 \texttt{c7} 10.ac3 \texttt{d8} 11.\texttt{c4} e4 12.\texttt{g1} \texttt{e5} 13.\texttt{a3} \texttt{xc4} 14.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{f6} White was struggling for compensation in Balakanova – Chernenko, Pavlodar 2008.

9...\texttt{e4}† 10.\texttt{e2}

I also considered the untested:

10.\texttt{f1}?!N \texttt{g4}

Black can also try 10...\texttt{h6}?! 11.d4 \texttt{g4} 12.b5 with a very lively game.

11.\texttt{g5}?

9...\texttt{c4}

White needs something crisper than either of the following moves:

9.b5 \texttt{b8} 10.a4 \texttt{ge7} 11.ac4 \texttt{e4}† 12.\texttt{f1} \texttt{g6} 13.d4 0−0 14.d5 \texttt{d8}† Rombaldoni – Miladinovic, Assisi 2003.

10.\texttt{ge7}

This looks like the most natural move, although the following game showed another way to deal with White’s activity: 10...\texttt{g6} 11.ac4 \texttt{e7} 12.d4 exd4 13.cxd4 \texttt{c6} 14.\texttt{c3} \texttt{ge7} 15.0−0 \texttt{d8} 16.\texttt{a3} \texttt{b6} 17.\texttt{a4} 0−0 18.\texttt{e5} \texttt{f6} 19.\texttt{xc6} bxc6† Bronstein – Comp Chess Master 4000, The Hague 1995.
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11...c4

After 11.b5 b8 12.d4 exd4 13.bxd4
d4 14.cxd4 0–0 15.0–0 d5 16.e1 d6
7.e7 18.d3 e6 19.e4 Wh5 Black
was a pawn up for not much, WindPower –
Traka, Internet 2007. Even on the Internet this
 Gambit is ineffective!

11...c7 12.a3 0–0 13.0–0 e6 14.g5
g6 15.xe6 xe6 16.b3 aab8 17.f1
fd8

White kept some positional compensation,
which gave him reasonable chances to equalize

D) 2.d3

This is a modest move, although unlike some
others at least it does not lose a pawn! Jokes
aside, there is nothing much wrong with the
text move and White may have ideas such
as playing a Closed Sicilian set-up without
committing the knight to c3.

2...d5!!

I rather like this energetic response. In
fact, I decided to make it a theme for
the present chapter to play energetically with ...d5
whenver White played quietly enough to
allow it.

We will now consider two main options:
D1) 3.d2 and D2) 3.exd5. Of course, there
are other playable moves and it would be
pointless to analyse every one of them in detail.
In most cases Black can simply develop his pieces
in a normal fashion to obtain a comfortable
game. One point, worth mentioning briefly, is
that he should normally resist the temptation
to exchange on e4 and d1 in the early stages, as
the pawn structure with e4 versus c5 with an
open d-file favours White slightly.

D1) 3.d2 c6 4.g3

White elects to play a King’s Indian Defence
with an extra tempo.

4.f6

Another playable set-up is 4.e6 5.g2 g6
6.gf3 g7 7.0–0 ge7, but that is a different
story.

5.g2 g6

The fianchetto system is one of White’s best
choices against the standard King’s Indian, and
is one of those lines that can be played a tempo
down without any severe drawbacks, as long as
we avoid any really sharp variations.

I will mention one other line, which might
appeal to creative players:
5...e6 6.f4 e5!?N

This surprising move looks really interesting, as White is not ideally placed to deal with a quick opening of the centre.

7.e5\f3 exf4 8.gxf4 e7 9.0-0 0-0

The position of the first player is more dangerous than it may appear at first glance.

6.e5

It looks too risky for White to play 6.f4? dxe4 7.dxe4 e5 8.e5\f3 exf4 9.gxf4 e7 10.e5\b3 xd1+ 11.xd1 b5 12.e5 g4 with unpleasant pressure for Black, Movsesian – Kamsky, Moscow 2008.

6...\g7 7.0-0 0-0

We have reached a well-known King's Indian position, which you can find analysed in great detail in the second of Boris Avrukh's 1.d4 volumes in the same Grandmaster Repertoire series. Of course it is not as much fun to play a tempo down, but even with this liability Black's position is quite alright.

8.e1

Another option is:

8.c3 e5

I think Black should take some space in the centre.

In the event of 8...\c7 9.e1 e6 10.e2 b6 11.f1 dxe4 12.dxe4 \b7 13.e5 \d5 14.h4 a5 15.\h2 a4, Movsesian – Ivanchuk, Calatrava 2007, 16.\g4N White might have to endure some nervous moments on the kingside.

9.e3 dxe4?

It would be a bit too risky to try and maintain the big centre while playing a tempo down. This exchanging move may not be the most ambitious attempt for an advantage in the position with reversed colours, but it is enough for comfortable equality here.

10.dxe4 h6!

It is useful to prevent White's minor pieces from gaining access to g5.

11.f1 \c7 12.e1 a6 13.e2 \d8

14.e4!

The start of a dubious plan. Still, even after the more sensible 14.e3 \d6 15.d2 \d8 16.e1 b6 17.e5 Black has the more comfortable position.

14...\c4! 15.f4 \d3

White had a difficult position and went on to lose badly in Fedorov – Movsesian, Las Vegas (4.5) rapid 1999.

8...h6 9.c3 e5

Without the queen on b3 Black is less exposed to immediate tactical threats, so he can maintain the central tension for a little longer.

10.exd5
Opening the centre must be the critical test of Black’s play. Otherwise, depending on White’s next move, Black might exchange on e4, advance with ...d4 (when the rook on e1 would be misplaced), or continue developing with ...e6.

10...\(\text{dxd5}\)

Another possibility is 11.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{e8}\) 12.a4 \(\text{b6}\) 13.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{e6}\) 14.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{c7}\) 15.a5 \(\text{ed8}\) 16.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{ab8}\) 17.axb6 axb6 18.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{h7}\) 19.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{d7}\) 20.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{e6}\) with equal chances, Bologan – Ruck, Mainz 2007.

11.\(\text{w a4}\)!

If Black is allowed to complete development with ...\(\text{e6}\) and ...\(\text{ad8}\) then he will almost always stand better. The text move wins a pawn, but Black obtains decent compensation.

12...\(\text{e6}\) 13.\(\text{xc5}\) \(\text{xf8}\) 14.\(\text{a3}\) \(\text{b5}\)!

Taking the a4-square away from White’s queen.

15.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{f8}\) 16.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{f5}\) 17.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{exd4}\) 18.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{b6}\) 19.\(\text{b4}\)

19...\(\text{dxb4}\)!

Regaining the pawn.

20.\(\text{xb4}\)

White is certainly not helped by: 20.\(\text{xf5}\)!
\(\text{c2}\) 21.\(\text{xa6}\) \(\text{xa6}\) 22.\(\text{xa6}\) \(\text{e1}\) 23.\(\text{xc6}\) \(\text{ac8}\)!

20...\(\text{xd4}\) 21.\(\text{b2}\) \(\text{ac8}\)

After some exciting complications the position is now equal, Nisipeanu – Volokitin, Istanbul 2003.

The gambit approach with 3...\(\text{f6}\) 4.c4 \(\text{e6}\) is possible, but I do not see much point in it, as Black will mainly be playing to regain his pawn rather than truly fighting for the initiative.

The present position can be compared with the line 1.d4 \(\text{d6}\) 2.c4 \(\text{e5}\) 3.\(\text{c3}\) exd4 4.\(\text{xd4}\). Once again Black is playing a known opening with reversed colours and a tempo down, but it is not a situation in which a single tempo is likely to make a huge difference.

4.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{d8}\)

Another possibility is 4...\(\text{d7}\)!, intending to develop the bishop on b7, but I choose to focus on the text move instead.
5.g3

5...\( \text{d}f6 \)

The most common approach has been 5...\( \text{d}d7 \). Contesting the h1-a8 diagonal is an attractive idea, but it seems a little artificial and I think White has good chances to obtain an edge, for instance: 6.\( \text{g}2 \text{c}6 \) 7.\( \text{f}3 \text{f}6 \) 8.0-0 e6 9.\( \text{e}2 \text{c}7 \) 10.\( \text{d}1 \) 0-0 This position was reached in Kuang Yinghui -- Ju, Jinan 2005, and now after the natural 11.\( \text{d}4N \text{d}7 \) 12.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 13.\( \text{x}d4 \text{g}2 \) 14.\( \text{x}g2 \) a6± Black has no weaknesses, but White has more active pieces and controls the centre.

6.\( \text{g}2 \) e6 7.\( \text{f}3 \) 8.0-0 \( \text{c}7 \) 9.\( \text{f}4 \) 0-0 10.\( \text{e}5 \)

Another sensible continuation is 10.\( \text{e}1 \text{d}5 \) 11.\( \text{x}d5 \text{ex}d5 \) 12.\( \text{e}5 \) 13.\( \text{x}c6 \text{bxc6} \) with equality, Zaynard -- Schmid, Austria 2008.

10...\( \text{b}4 \)

10...\( \text{d}4?N \) also looks like a reasonable move.

11.\( \text{e}1 \)

11.\( \text{g}4 \text{f}5 \) 12.\( \text{g}3 \text{f}6 \) 13.\( \text{c}4 \text{d}7 \) 14.\( \text{x}d5 \text{x}d5 \) 15.\( \text{e}2 \text{e}8 \) 16.\( \text{a}4 \text{f}8 \) was equal in Zakic -- Barlov, Tivat 1995.

11...\( \text{d}5 \) 12.\( \text{d}2 \text{xc}3 \) 13.\( \text{bxc}3 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 14.\( \text{c}4 \) 15.\( \text{a}5 \text{b}8 \) 16.\( \text{a}1 \text{d}6 \) 17.\( \text{d}4 \)

This was Vesselovsky -- Ostrowski, Frydek-Mistek 1997, and now I suggest:

17...\( \text{c}7N \)

Black's position is fine.

E) 2.\( \text{e}2 \)

This is a flexible approach. White intends to wait before deciding whether to keep the position closed with d3 or revert back to an Open Sicilian with d4.

2...\( \text{f}6 \) 3.\( \text{bc}3 \text{d}5! \)

This cuts across White's plan. Once again we are playing the desired ...d5 break.

4.\( \text{exd}5 \)

It is not so logical for White to play 4.e5 \( \text{g}4 \) 5.f4, as the knight belongs on f3 in this structure. One high level game continued 5...h5 (Black can also consider 5...e6 6.h3 \( \text{g}6 \) 7.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 8.\( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) with at least equal chances.) 6.d4 e6 7.h3 \( \text{h}6 \) 8.\( \text{e}3 \text{f}5 \) 9.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 10.\( \text{xc}5 \text{a}5 \) 11.\( \text{d}3 \text{xc}5 \) 12.\( \text{xc}5 \text{xc}5 \) 13.0-0-0 \( \text{d}7 \) 14.a3 h4± Black keeps a very comfortable French-type position, Jobava -- Sutovsky, Moscow 2007.

4...\( \text{xd}5 \) 5.\( \text{xd}5 \)

After 5.g3 \( \text{c}6 \) 6.\( \text{g}2 \text{xc}3 \) 7.\( \text{xc}3 \) 8.d3 \( \text{g}7 \) 9.\( \text{e}4 \) c4 Black equalizes easily.
White also achieves nothing with 5.d4 \( \mathcal{O} \)xc3 6.bxc3 cxd4 7.cxd4 g6 8.g3 \( \mathcal{W} \)d5! It is not quite the same type of fianchetto for both sides. 9.\( \mathcal{E} \)g1 \( \mathcal{Q} \)g7 10.\( \mathcal{G} \)g2 This was Kurnosov – Simon, Cappelle la Grande 2006, and here perhaps the simplest continuation would have been 10...\( \mathcal{W} \)d7?N 11.\( \mathcal{E} \)e3 0–0 12.\( \mathcal{W} \)d2 \( \mathcal{C} \)c6+ when White will sorely miss his ability to castle on the kingside.

5...\( \mathcal{W} \)xd5

We will consider E1) 6.\( \mathcal{O} \)c3 and E2) 6.d4.

E1) 6.\( \mathcal{O} \)c3 \( \mathcal{W} \)e5† 7.\( \mathcal{E} \)e2

The queen exchange brings White nothing: 7.\( \mathcal{W} \)e2 \( \mathcal{W} \)xe2† 8.\( \mathcal{W} \)xe2 \( \mathcal{O} \)c6 9.\( \mathcal{O} \)d5 \( \mathcal{W} \)d7 10.b3 e6 11.\( \mathcal{O} \)c3 \( \mathcal{O} \)c7 12.\( \mathcal{W} \)b2 \( \mathcal{O} \)d7 Having solved the problem of his temporarily misplaced king, Black is absolutely fine.

7...\( \mathcal{G} \)g4 8.f3!?

This is the most ambitious move, hoping to keep more complexity in the position by avoiding exchanges.

Other continuations such as 8.0–0 \( \mathcal{G} \)xe2 9.\( \mathcal{O} \)xe2 \( \mathcal{O} \)c6, or 8.d3 \( \mathcal{O} \)c6 9.\( \mathcal{G} \)c3 \( \mathcal{O} \)xe2 10.\( \mathcal{W} \)xe2 e6, lead to equal play.

8...\( \mathcal{F} \)f5 9.0–0 \( \mathcal{O} \)c6 10.\( \mathcal{O} \)b5 \( \mathcal{E} \)c8 11.d3

11...e6N

This seems like the most natural choice to me, although there is also nothing wrong with 11...\( \mathcal{W} \)d4† 12.\( \mathcal{W} \)h1 a6 13.\( \mathcal{O} \)xc6† \( \mathcal{W} \)xc6 14.\( \mathcal{G} \)e2 \( \mathcal{W} \)d7 15.b3 e6 16.\( \mathcal{G} \)b2 f6 17.\( \mathcal{G} \)g3 \( \mathcal{G} \)g6 18.f4 \( \mathcal{G} \)e7 with balanced chances, Dzindzichashvili – Browne, Chicago 1982.

E2) 6.d4 e5!

This radical action may seem surprising, but the slower approach is not fully satisfactory. After 6...\( \mathcal{O} \)c6 7.\( \mathcal{G} \)e3! cxd4 8.\( \mathcal{O} \)xd4 \( \mathcal{W} \)d7 9.\( \mathcal{G} \)b5! I was unable to find a path to equality.
7...dxe5
We should also consider the gambit:
7...c3?!

This is an interesting idea, although it will be testing Black's nerves more than his actual position, as the latter is absolutely fine.

7...exd4 8...c3
There is also 8.b5 d7 9.e2 c6 10.0-0 0-0 11.d1 g4 12.xc6 xe2 13.b7 xe7 14.dxe2 c7 15.e3 f5+
The game Keres – Filip, Helsinki 1952, was agreed drawn here, but Black's bishop pair gives him a definite advantage.

8...xd1+ 9.exd1 c6 10.e4 d7 11.b5
g5 f5 12.b5 f6 13.e4 xe4 14.xd7 f5 15.f7 was a bit better for Black in Kupreichik – Vaulin, St Petersburg 2001.

After the text move, the game Grigoriants – Vorobiov, Moscow 2007, was agreed drawn.
The continuation might have been:
11...a6 12.xd7+ xd7 13.xc5 f5 14.xf8 xf8
The position is equal, although if Black is feeling ambitious he might try to make something of his superior minor piece.

7...xe5 8.c3
In also checked the following untested line:
8.f4?!N e7 9.e2 c6 10.c3 d7 11.d5 d6 12.c3 0-0 0-0 13.c4 g6 14.d3 g7 15.a3 (15.b6+ c7 16.xd6+ x6)
17.d1+ d4 18.xd7 xd7 is equal) 15...b6 16.d1 b8 17.e2 he8 with level chances, as Black manages to bring his pieces into play in time.

8...e7
8...c6 9.e4 f6 also looks fine, for instance: 10.a4 c7 11.0-0 0-0 12.e3 f5 13.g3 g6 14.e2 ad8 with easy equality.

9.f4 f6 10.e3 0-0 11.f4 d8 12.d5 e5 13.xe7+ xe7
After a logical sequence White has acquired a two-bishop advantage, but lost some time.

14.h5 b6!
Exchanging one half of the bishop tandem is the best way to prevent any future problems.

15.e2 a6 16.xa6
16.f3 b7 17.0-0 xf3 18.xf3 d7 does not change the evaluation.

16...xa6 17.0-0 c7 18.f1 e6=
These moves were played in Sepp – Fressinet, Gothenburg 2005. Black's knight has found an ideal home, and in the present situation it is no worse than the enemy bishop. Therefore the chances are equal.
F) 2.g3 d5!

Once again we are wasting no time in fighting for the centre. This is considered to be Black's most principled reaction to White's unusual second move.

3.exd5

3.d3 is not ridiculous, but is hardly threatening either. There is nothing much wrong with exchanging the queens off, although it is perhaps even more promising to play 3...\texttt{c6} intending to develop in similar fashion to line D1 above, while retaining the option of simplifying with ...\texttt{dxe4} depending on how White plays.

3...\texttt{xd5} 4.d3 \texttt{g4}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 & & & & & & & & \\
2 & & & & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & & & \\
4 & & & & & & & & \\
5 & & & & & & & & \\
6 & & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & & \\
8 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

5.\texttt{g2}

5.\texttt{e2}?

This is seldom seen, and with good reason. 5...\texttt{c6} 6.h3 \texttt{f5} 7.\texttt{c3} \texttt{d7} 8.g4 \texttt{g6} 9.d3 e6

9...e5 is also not bad, but I prefer the text. 10.\texttt{e3} \texttt{f6} 11.\texttt{d2} \texttt{d5} 12.0-0-0 0-0-0 13.\texttt{h1} \texttt{e7} 14.\texttt{xd5}

White is not helped by: 14.\texttt{e4} \texttt{c7} 15.h4 \texttt{b6} 16.\texttt{fg5} h6 17.h5 h\texttt{xg5} 18.h\texttt{xg6} f\texttt{5}+

This position was reached in the game Yudasin – Milman, New York 2003, and here Black should have played:

14...\texttt{xd5}N

In the game Black took with the pawn, which I do not understand. The text move keeps his queen and rook happy on the d-file.

15.\texttt{c3} e5+

Black dominates the centre and his chances are to be preferred.

5...\texttt{e6}!

This is an important move, taking the opportunity to disrupt White's development.

6.\texttt{f1}

6.\texttt{e2}! is toothless. 6...\texttt{xe2}+ 7.\texttt{xe2} \texttt{c6} 8.c3 e5 9.h3 \texttt{f5} 10.g4 \texttt{d7} 11.\texttt{a3} This was Petrov – Seeman, Tallinn 2001, and now it looks interesting for Black to try 11...h5!N (The game continuation of 11...f6 12.d3 0-0-0 was equal, but Black can try for more.) 12.g5 \texttt{e6} 13.d3 0-0-0 14.\texttt{e3} \texttt{ge7} 15.\texttt{h4} (15.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{d5} 16.\texttt{e3} \texttt{f5}+) 15...\texttt{d5} 16.\texttt{e4} g6 17.\texttt{f3} \texttt{g7} Black controls the centre, so it is White who must try to fight for equality.

6...\texttt{c6} 7.h3 \texttt{h5} 8.d3

We should also consider an alternative that might lead to an unusual tactical motif.

8.\texttt{c3}

The point is seen after:

8...\texttt{d7}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 & & & & & & & & \\
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\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

9.\texttt{e5}?
The quiet 9.d3 reaches the note to White’s ninth move below.

9...exd1 10.exd7 exe2 11.exc5 0-0-0

12.b4!

White needs to generate some activity, otherwise he will stand worse on account of his isolated d-pawn.

12...e6 13.exb7 exe7 15.a3 

After 18.exd6 exd6 19.exd6 +d3† the first player will struggle to hold the endgame.

18...exd4

This was Mozes - Loginov, Budapest 1990. Black maintains slightly better chances thanks to his superior structure. His king is slightly exposed, but on the other hand it could become extremely active in the event of a few more piece exchanges.

8...Wd7

The queen retreats to clear the path of the e-pawn.

9...g4!

This is White’s most ambitious approach. Eliminating an enemy bishop is an achievement, although the drawback is that it costs time and creates weaknesses. Of course we should also check a few other options as well.

9...e6 10.Wf4 d5 11.g4 Wh6 12...e5 

Covering e5 is the natural choice.

9...exe5 13...xe5 Whd6 14...e2 0-0-0?

9...a3

This is a sensible move, heading for c4 and possibly e5.

9...e6 10...c4 f6

Covering e5 is the natural choice.

In Karjakin - Grischuk, Moscow 2009, Black was successful with 10...exe6, but I do not see any reason for Black to relinquish the bishop pair just now.
Chapter 1 - Miscellaneous 2nd moves

11...\textit{e}3 \textit{d}8 12.a4

Another game continued 12.g4 \textit{f}7 13.a4 \textit{b}6 14.\textit{e}2 \textit{g}7 15.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}5 16.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}7

Black succeeded in organizing his pieces harmoniously and obtained the better prospects, Flower – Aseev, London 1994.

12...\textit{d}4 13.\textit{xd}4 \textit{cxd}4 14.\textit{e}1

This position was reached in Sepp – Yakovich, Leeuwarden 1993. Here I found a natural improvement for Black.

14...b6!N

In the game Black played 14...\textit{e}7?!, almost certainly overlooking the strong reply 15.\textit{a}5!, forcing 15...\textit{xf}3 16.\textit{xf}3 \textit{b}6 17.\textit{b}5 \textit{f}7 18.\textit{g}2 \textit{d}5 19.\textit{he}1=*

Without the light-squared bishop Black was facing a tough defensive task.

15.\textit{g}1 \textit{h}6 16.c3?!*

Opening the position carries certain risks when playing against two bishops, but if White does not do something active Black's position will just get stronger and stronger.

16...\textit{dxc}3 17.bxc3 \textit{e}5 18.d4 \textit{e}7

Black can look to the future with optimism. The e6-pawn may be slightly weak, but it can easily be defended and the bishop pair provides excellent long-term prospects.

11...\textit{hx}g6 12.\textit{c}3 \textit{f}6 13.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}7

White is not obliged to make this exchange immediately, but it is doubtful that he has anything to gain from postponing it.

Another game continued 11.\textit{a}3 \textit{c}7 12.\textit{hx}g6 \textit{hx}g6 13.\textit{c}4 \textit{f}6 14.a4 (14.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}5 15.\textit{g}3 \textit{f}5=) 14...\textit{d}5 15.d2 g5! Black follows a simple and efficient strategy: keep the centre closed and increase his control over the dark squares. 16.a5 \textit{d}8 17.c3 (17.\textit{c}4 0–0 18.\textit{g}2 \textit{f}5=) 17...g6 18.\textit{e}2 \textit{f}8 19.\textit{e}4 \textit{g}7 Both sides have certain advantages, but overall Black's kingside control gave him the better prospects in King – Sveshnikov, Neu Isenburg 1992.

11...\textit{hx}g6 12.\textit{c}3 \textit{f}6 13.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}7

White would like to generate some activity for his two bishops, but is hampered by the position of his king, which makes it hard to connect the rooks and coordinate his army.

14.\textit{e}4

This has been the most popular move, although we will consider a few other options as well. 14.\textit{g}1 does not seem to have been tried. Play might continue 14...\textit{d}4 15.a4 \textit{d}8 16.h4 \textit{e}5 17.g5 \textit{h}5 with equal chances.

14.h4?!*

White hopes to find a role for the rook on the h-file, either by pushing the h-pawn further or swinging the rook via h3.

14...\textit{d}4 15.a4 \textit{d}8 16.\textit{h}3 \textit{f}8

Black sensibly opts for a kind of artificial castling, leaving his rook on the vital h-file.

17.\textit{g}1 \textit{b}6 18.\textit{c}1 \textit{g}8 19.b3

These moves were played in Hort – Ribli, Baden-Baden 1992, and here I think Black could have played more energetically with:
19...e5!N
   It is hard for White to defend the g-pawn
   without creating further weaknesses, for
   instance:
   20.g5 d5 21.d5 e6 22.c4 d4
   Black has the better chances thanks to his
   two superb knights.

14...dxe4!
   14...b6 has been more popular, but the
   straightforward knight exchange ensures Black
   of a comfortable game with minimal fuss.

15.dxe4
   After 15.dxe4 Black stays on top with
   15...f5 16.f3 0–0–0 17.a4 g5.

The present position was reached in Korolev – Nimtz, Corr. 1990, as well as a few others. Black has a few decent continuations, but the following would be my first choice:

15...d6?!N
   Black takes control over a few more dark
   squares while avoiding the exchange of queens,
   which would probably be of more use to White
   in view of his compromised king position.

It should also be noted that 15...0–0–0,
   Antonov – Lew, corr. 1991, is also perfectly
   fine.
Minor Systems

Some Like It Hot - The Morra Gambit

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3

3...dxc3 4.\texttt{\textsc{xc}3} \texttt{\textsc{c}6} 5.\texttt{\textsc{f}3} d6 6.\texttt{\textsc{c}4} a6 7.0-0 \texttt{\textsc{f}6}

A) 8.b4!?  
B) 8.h3  
C) 8.\texttt{\textsc{g}5}  
D) 8.\texttt{\textsc{e}2}

A) after 16.\texttt{\textsc{e}2}  
B) after 11.\texttt{\textsc{f}4}  
D) after 8.\texttt{\textsc{e}2}

16...\texttt{\textsc{d}8N}  
11...\texttt{\textsc{e}5}!?  
The refutation of the Morra
One of the great mysteries of the Sicilian Defence is the evaluation and fate of the Morra Gambit. Upon first impressions, it looks — to put it bluntly — like a cheap opening. White sacrifices a pawn on the third move for the simple idea of enhancing the speed of his development. It sounds like something that might be fun for internet blitz games but not much else. Because the gambit comes so early in the game, Black has complete freedom to choose any set-up he wishes. It would seem as though Black merely has to develop sensibly and avoid any traps to reach a position from which he can consolidate and exploit his extra pawn, and yet somehow the gambit remains a tough, perhaps impossible one to refute.

Many players resort to meeting 3.c3 with 3...\textit{\&f6 4.e5 \textit{\&d5}, transferring the fight to the 2.c3 variation. In chapter 3 you can see I have recommended two different lines against 2.c3, so this option will not serve as a viable response to the Morra for the purposes of our repertoire. In any case, I would not wish to offer such a craven approach when White is, after all, offering to donate a pawn.

After considering several different defensive set-ups, I finally found an answer that satisfied me. The set-up I am recommending avoids most of White's early attacking ideas and leads to a solid position in which Black will have decent chances to retain his extra pawn. Despite all that I believe the Morra to be a "nearly correct" gambit that should not be underestimated.

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.\textit{\&xc3 \textit{\&c6} 5.\textit{\&f3 d6}

The defining feature of the recommended system is the intended development of Black's light-squared bishop on g4, followed by its subsequent exchange for the knight on f3. This will take away some of White's tactical chances, for instance by reducing the support for the e4-e5 break. Exchanging a minor piece will also help to relieve some of the congestion in Black's position.

Before going any further I would like to emphasize the following point. It is essential that Black executes his plan using the correct move order shown below, otherwise he can easily expose himself to tactical difficulties as we will soon see.

6.\textit{\&c4 a6}

Let us briefly note that 6...\textit{\&g4?? allows the simple trick of 7.\textit{\&xf7\#.}

A slightly more subtle mistake is 6...\textit{\&f6?. The problem with this move is seen after 7.e5! dxe5 (7...\textit{\&xe5?? loses the queen after 8.\textit{\&xe5 dxe5 9.\textit{\&xf7\#) 8.\textit{\&xd8\# \textit{\&xd8 (or 8...\textit{\&xd8 9.\textit{\&g5) 9.\&b5! With a strong initiative for White, despite the queen exchange. Thus Black must first cover the b5-square before developing the knight to f6, and only then place the bishop on g4.

7.0–0 \textit{\&f6}

Finally Black is ready for ...\textit{\&g4. In this position we will examine four main ideas: A) 8.\textit{\&b4?, B) 8.h3, C) 8.\textit{\&g5 and D) 8.\textit{\&e2."
Chapter 2 - The Morra Gambit

With the crucial b5-square now under Black’s control, 8.e5?! does not give White enough compensation after 8...dxe5 9.Qxd8+ Qxd8 10.Qxe5 e6 (10...Qe6 is also good) 11.Qd1 Qd7.

A) 8.b4?!

The move is less exotic than one’s first impression might suggest, and has been the choice of several Morra specialists. White is in a hurry to create havoc before the defender can put his house in order with speedy development.

8...e6?!

Now that White is in a position to open up the queenside, there is something to be said for keeping the c8-bishop at home. Black should certainly steer clear of options like 8...Qxb4? 9.e5! Qd7 10.exd6± and 8...b5 9.Qe2! Qd7 10.a4 bxa4 11.Qxa4±.

The only serious alternative to the text move is 8...Qg4, but in that case it will be harder for Black to develop his kingside pieces conveniently. Play continues: 9.b5 Qxf3 Black should take the opportunity to damage his opponent’s structure. 10.gxf3 axb5 11.Qxb5! (11.Qxb5 g6 should be better for Black) 11...Qe5 12.Øb3 e6 13.Qa3 (13.Qb2?!N also looks interesting) when White had reasonable compensation in A. Stuart – Hoynck van Papendrecht, corr. 1995.

9.Wb3

9.Qe2, Mezera – Necesany, corr. 2005, should be met by the straightforward 9...Qe7N.

9.a4 Qe7 10.Qa3 was seen in Doucet – De Jonghe, Teeside 1973. White is preparing to push his b-pawn, so it looks sensible to preempt that idea with 10...Qe5?!N when Black stands well.

9.b5 was White’s choice in Regan – A. Lutz, Germany 1999, and here Black should have played 9...axb5N 10.Qxb5 (10.Qxb5 fails to impress after 10...Qxe4 11.Qe1, and now the simplest route to an advantage would be 11...Qe7 [According to the computer, Black is also doing very well in the complications resulting from 11...d5 12.Qf4 Qc5 13.Qc7 Qe7.] 12.Qxe4 d5 regaining the piece with advantage.) 10...Qe7 preventing the troublesome e4-e5, with an edge for Black.

9...Qe7 10.Qd1 Qb6 11.a3 Qg4 12.Qa2 0–0 13.h3?!

White would have been better off with 13.Qc2 Qd7 14.Qf4, when his pieces coordinate quite well and he is only slightly worse.
13...\textit{d}ge5 14.\textit{d}xe5 \textit{d}xe5 15.\textit{f}e3 \textit{d}d4
16.\textit{e}e2
This position was reached in Fanha – Pinheiro, Lisbon 2000, and now Black should have played:

16...\textit{d}d8N
Keeping a clear advantage.

B) 8.h3
This prevents Black's intended bishop development, at the cost of an important tempo.

8...\textit{e}6
Now we reach a normal-looking position. The same set-up has been used by Black in a great many games, but the difference is that White would not normally have wasted time on h2-h3. It is hardly surprising that this loss of time reduces his attacking prospects.

9.\textit{e}e2 \textit{e}7 10.\textit{d}d1 \textit{c}7
It looks riskier to accelerate the development of the queenside with 10...\textit{d}d7 11.\textit{f}f4 b5 12.\textit{b}b3 \textit{b}b8 due to 13.\textit{e}5! \textit{d}xe5 14.\textit{x}xe5 \textit{x}e5 15.\textit{x}xe5 \textit{b}b7 16.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6, Manhardt – Pelletier, Medellin 1996, 17.\textit{e}e4N with some initiative. I actually analysed this line a bit deeper and concluded that Black should be able to hold the balance, but overall the text move is a much safer practical choice.

11.\textit{f}4

11...\textit{d}e5?! This is a pragmatic choice. Black prevents any e4-e5 trickery once and for all, while also forcing the exchange of a pair of minor pieces. True, he ends up with doubled pawns, but one of them is an extra pawn so his situation is still pretty healthy. Besides, the doubled e-pawns will help to control several important central squares.

There is a playable alternative in 11...0–0 12.\textit{a}a1 \textit{d}d7 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{b}b8. Black's position is a bit passive, but he has no real weaknesses and can gradually try to exploit his extra pawn. Still, the main line seems much more straightforward.

12.\textit{xe}5
A few players have exchanged with the knight, but in that case White would be forced to lose a tempo moving the bishop again. In the majority of games White has preferred to relinquish the bishop pair in order to avoid this loss of time.

12...\textit{d}xe5 13.\textit{a}a1 \textit{b}b8!
Vacating the c-file is a sensible precaution. For instance, after 13...0-0 14...xe6! ...xe6 15...d5 ...xd5 16.exd5 ...d6 17.dxe6 ...xe6 18...xe5 ...xe5 19...xe5 ...d8 20.b3 White regained his pawn to reach an equal endgame in Massie – Solomon, Elista 1998.

The text move may appear a bit passive, but it works well.

14.a4

White is not in much of a position to launch an attack, so it makes sense for him to restrict any queenside advance from his opponent.

8...e6!

Once again Black abandons the ...g4 plan in order to reach a favourable version of a different set-up. In this case the point is that the bishop would not normally go to g5 in such a position.

9...e2 h6

The solid 9...e7 is reasonable, but the immediate attack on the bishop is more forcing and has scored excellently in practice.

10.f4

10.h4 g5 11.g3 reaches the main line below.

10...g5!!

This is the most ambitious move. Black can also proceed in more solid fashion with 10...e5 11.e3 e7, although in that case White’s control over the d5-square would offer him some compensation.

11.g3

If White insists on preserving his bishop with 11.e3, there might follow 11...g4 12.d2 b5 13.b3 ...e5 14.xe5 ...d4! 15.d3 dxe5 16.fd1 ...b7 when Black kept an extra pawn and full control of the game in Kissick – W. Gray, corr. 2000.

14...0–0

Another game continued 14...d7 15.e3 0–0 16...g5 ...d8 17...xe5 ...xe5 18.xe5 ...e8 19.b3 b5 20.axb5 axb5 White regained his pawn but still suffered from the lack of a dark-squared bishop, Roeder – Gawehns, Germany 1981.

15.e3 h6 16.g4 ...e8 17.f1 b6


C) 8.g5

This ambitious move has yet to be tested extensively.
11...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}h5}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}d1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}g3}}} 13.hxg3

In the event of 13.fxg3, Dreke - Hertel, corr. 1994, 13...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}g7N}} White is unlikely to achieve much on the f-file.

13...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}f6}}}

Black is spoiled for choice, with a good alternative being 13...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}g7}} (the cheeky 13...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}h5!!\#+}} also looks dangerous for White) 14.e5 d5 15.g4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}c7}} 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xd5}}} exd5 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xd5}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}b8}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}fe1}}} 0-0 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}b6}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xg4}} when White did not have enough for the sacrificed piece in Zelic – Saric, Zagreb 2007.

14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}h2}}}

14.e5 dxe5 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}g7}} 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}d2}}} f5 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}c3}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}c5}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}fe1}}} e4 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xe4}}} fxe4 20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xe4}}} 0-0 was another failure for White in Costa – Gallagher, Lisbon 2000.

14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e3??}}} g4 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}d4}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xd4}} 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xd4}}} h5 seems sensible for White, but still not good enough for equality.

14...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}c7}} 15.f4 gxh4 16.gxh4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}g7}}}

The position is quite sharp, but there is no question that Black’s chances are higher. He has a pawn in the bank and an open g-file, while his bishop pair is also an important factor.

17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}h1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}d7}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e3}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}c8}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e2}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}g8}}} 20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}g4}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}d8}}}

Black’s king is safe enough in the centre and the second player eventually capitalized on his advantage in Lendwai – Lutz, Graz 1993.

D) 8.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e2}}}

Finally we arrive at the most common continuation. White continues with his usual scheme of development but also allows Black to carry out his plan.

8...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}g4}}}

9.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}d1}}} e6

It may seem tempting to exchange pieces and simplify the position, but after 9...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xf3?!}} 10.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xf3}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e5}}} 11.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e2}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xc4}}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xe4}}} Black suffers from retarded development.

It should also briefly be noted that 9...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e5?!}} 10.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xe5}}} would be embarrassing for Black.

10.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}f4}}}

Sometimes White plays 10.h3, when 10...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xf3}}} 11.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xf3}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e7}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}f4}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}b8}} reaches the main line. (Please note that Black would not really benefit from 11...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e5}}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}e2}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xc4}}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\#}xc4}} when once again his development is a little slow.)
10...\texttt{b}8!

White was threatening e5 so the queen should vacate the d-file, and this is the best location for her.

11.\texttt{h}3

11.\texttt{d}3 gives Black a pleasant choice. 11...\texttt{x}f3 (also promising is 11...e7??N 12.\texttt{x}d6 \texttt{xd}6 13.\texttt{x}d6 \texttt{e}6 14.\texttt{x}d6 (\texttt{e}7+) 12.gxf3?! (White should prefer 12.\texttt{xf}3 with the same position as the main line, except for the position of the pawn on h2 instead of h3.) 12...\texttt{h}5! 13.\texttt{xd}6 \texttt{xd}6 14.\texttt{xd}6 \texttt{xd}6 15.\texttt{xd}6 \texttt{e}7 16.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{hd}8 17.\texttt{xd}8 \texttt{xd}8 18.\texttt{xd}8 \texttt{xd}8 with a serious advantage in the ending, Al Badani – Sanjay, Beirut 2009.

11...\texttt{xf}3 12.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}7

Again Black should not waste time on unnecessary exchanges. For instance, 12...e5?! 13.\texttt{xe}5 dxe5 14.\texttt{g}3 made his task much more complicated in Tsereteli – Matnadze, Tbilisi 2001.

13.\texttt{e}2

Removing the bishop from potential attacks from ...b5 or ...\texttt{e}5. Some other moves have also been tried, but in all cases White has trouble justifying the missing pawn. Here are a few other examples:

If White spends an additional tempo on 13.\texttt{d}3, then 13...\texttt{e}5! becomes a good answer.

13.\texttt{f}1 0–0 14.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{d}8 15.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{c}7 16.g4? \texttt{e}5 17.\texttt{e}2 This was Regan – Paecht, Dresden 1998, and here I suggest: 17...\texttt{ac}8N 18.\texttt{ec}2 \texttt{g}6 19.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{wa}5 White's kingside activity does not succeed in producing enough counterplay.

13...0–0 14.\texttt{g}3

Another plausible continuation would be 14.\texttt{ac}1N \texttt{e}8 15.\texttt{e}3 b5 16.\texttt{g}3 h6?. In most respects White has a healthy position, except he is missing a pawn.

14...\texttt{e}5 15.\texttt{e}3

Also after 15.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{e}8 16.\texttt{ad}1 b5 17.a3 \texttt{a}7 White has no real compensation.

15...b5

16.\texttt{h}6?!

Unable to find a constructive plan, White embarks on a reckless attack.

16...\texttt{g}6 17.f4? b4 18.f5 bxc3 19.fxg6 hxg6 20.f4 \texttt{xb}2 21.\texttt{ab}1 \texttt{xe}4

White was soon forced to resign in Watzdorf – Buhr, Germany 1994.
Conclusion

All gambits are tainted with a chance of failure, since the violent way of breaking the balance can sometimes backfire on the active side. The Morra Gambit has all but disappeared from high-level chess, despite never having been completely refuted. Black must play with great precision in order to tame the opponent’s early initiative, which results from the rapid development of the pieces. The proposed antidote is one of the most promising and safest lines the defender can choose. It avoids the most dangerous attacking possibilities, while providing realistic chances for Black to capitalize on his extra pawn.
Chapter 3

Minor Systems

Forrest Gump - The c3-Variation

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.c3

A) 2...d6 3.d4 \( \text{ \text{f6}} \)
   A1) 4.f3
   A2) 4.dxc5 \( \text{ \text{c6}} \)
      A21) 5.cxd6
      A22) 5.\( \text{c4} \)
      A23) 5.\( \text{c2} \) dxc5
         A231) 6.\( \text{f4} \)
         A232) 6.\( \text{f3} \)
   A24) 5.f3
   A3) 4.\( \text{d3} \) g6!
      A31) 5.dxc5
      A32) 5.\( \text{f3} \)

B) 2...d5 3.exd5 \( \text{\text{xd5}} \) 4.d4 \( \text{g6} \)!
   B1) 5.\( \text{e3} \) cxd4
      B11) 6.cxd4 \( \text{g7} \)
      B12) 6.\( \text{xd4} \)
   B2) 5.dxc5
   B3) 5.\( \text{a3} \)
   B4) 5.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{g7} \)
      B41) 6.c4?
      B42) 6.\( \text{e2} \)
      B43) 6.dxc5
      B44) 6.\( \text{e3} \)
      B45) 6.\( \text{a3} \) cxd4
         B451) 7.\( \text{b5} \)
         B452) 7.\( \text{c4} \)!
The 2.c3 Sicilian is without a doubt the enfant terrible of the whole Sicilian complex. The system was not really taken seriously until the stubborn efforts of Sveshnikov transformed it into one of the most fashionable lines ever invented. Some 90,000 games later the theory of the system could fill several volumes.

Black’s two most popular choices are 2...d6 3.e5 d5, with a somewhat improved version of Alekhine’s Defence, and 2...d5 3.exd5 Qxd5, aping the main feature of the Scandinavian Defence. The biggest problem for Black is not so much finding a route to an acceptable position, but rather to find a fully sound line that offers him enough chances to play for a win. For this reason I decided to cover two options for Black, so that the reader can choose one that suits his own attitude to risk as well as the specific tournament or match situation that might arise on a given day.

The first option will be A) 2...d6, a somewhat underestimated line but in my opinion not a bad one at all. We will then turn our attention to B) 2...d5, in connection with a kingside fianchetto. This leads to sharper play and is often used by players who are looking to win with the black pieces.

A) 2...d6 3.d4 Qf6

Now White has three main ideas: A1) 4.f3, A2) 4.dxc5 and A3) 4.Qd3.

A1) 4.f3

This has been seen in quite a lot of games, but the problem for White is that now both his knights are deprived of their most natural squares. A witty solution for the second player is the immediate counterblow in the centre.

4...d5! 5.e5 Qfd7 6.f4 cxd4 7.cxd4 Qb6

Black has good chances to obtain a pleasant version of the French Defence, since the bishop on c8 is not blocked.

8.Qc3


8.Qe3

8.f3 Qc6 9.Qe2 should be met by 9...g6!N (9...Qb4?! 10.f5! was troublesome in Alavkin – Malaniuk, Kstovo 1997.) 9.Qc3 Qf5 10.Qxf5 gxf5 11.0-0 (11.e6 Qxe6 is nothing for White; the knight on e2 is useless, while Black can always hide his king on d7 if needed, and later he can easily manoeuvre a knight to e4.) 11...e6 with roughly equal chances. Black will develop his dark-squared bishop on e7 and might aim for active play on either side of the board.

8.Qc6 9.b3?

White wants to delay Qf3 in order to prevent the convenient development of the enemy bishop on g4.

9.Qf5 10.a3 Qd7 11.Qd2 Qa5 12.Qb5
12...\texttt{b6}?

There was a straightforward solution in 12...\texttt{xd2}+N 13.\texttt{xd2} \texttt{c8} 14.\texttt{d3} \texttt{xd3} 15.\texttt{xd3} \texttt{a6} 16.\texttt{c3} \texttt{e6} with equality, but Black is hoping for more.

13.\texttt{f3} \texttt{g4} 14.\texttt{d1} \texttt{a6} 15.\texttt{c3} \texttt{a5} 16.\texttt{b2} \texttt{e3} 17.gxf3 \texttt{g6} 18.e6?!

White decides to complicate the game before Black can stabilize the position with ...\texttt{e6}, when the doubled f-pawns could become a long-term liability.

18...\texttt{fxe6} 19.\texttt{h3} \texttt{g7} 20.\texttt{e3} \texttt{b4} 21.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{xd4} 22.\texttt{exd4} \texttt{xd4}

White must think about safety, otherwise he can lose the battle as in Rogers – Sadler, London 1992.

A2) 4.dxc5

This should not trouble Black too much, although he should certainly take care to avoid 4...\texttt{exe4}?? 5.\texttt{a4}†.

4...\texttt{c6}!

It would not be so terrible to play 4...\texttt{dxc5} 5.\texttt{xd8}+ \texttt{xd8} 6.f3 \texttt{e6} 7.\texttt{c3} \texttt{c6}, but Black would have to play carefully to equalize. The text move leads to more interesting play.

In this position White has a wide choice. We will consider the following options in detail:

A21) 5.cxd6, A22) 5.\texttt{c4}, A23) 5.\texttt{c2} and A24) 5.f3.

The modest 5.\texttt{d2} offers White very little, for instance: 5...\texttt{dxc5} 6.\texttt{gf3} \texttt{g6} 7.g3 \texttt{g7} 8.g2 \texttt{d3} 9.\texttt{f1} \texttt{d7} 10.g2 \texttt{b6} 11.0-0 0-0 12.e5 \texttt{d5} 13.e2 \texttt{c7} 14.e1 \texttt{b7} 15.e4 This was Sveshnikov – Dorfman, Volgodonsk 1981, and now 15...\texttt{exe6N} 16.e2 \texttt{ad8} would have given Black a slight plus.

5.\texttt{d3} also makes a timid impression. 5...\texttt{d5}?

Recapturing on \texttt{c5} is also okay, but the text seems even easier. 6.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e6} (If Black is feeling ambitious he might consider 6...\texttt{e5}?, which has scored well.) 7.\texttt{gf3} This was Goloshchaponov – Nevednichy, Miskolc 2004, and now 7...\texttt{xe5} 8.exd5 \texttt{xd5} would have been fine for Black.

A21) 5.cxd6

This amounts to an exchanging of what was, just two moves ago, White’s proud pair of central pawns. In other words, it is not a serious try for an advantage.

5...\texttt{exe4} 6.\texttt{d2}

White had better avoid 6.dxe7? \texttt{xd1}† 7.\texttt{xd1} \texttt{xf2}† 8.\texttt{e1} \texttt{h1} 9.exf8=\texttt{w}†
White is in trouble here, as he will have a hard time capturing the trapped knight on h1. Meanwhile Black intends to arrange long castling followed by ...\(\text{f8}+\) with powerful play in the centre.

If White does not take on e7 he has several different ways to develop his pieces, but in all cases Black will get a comfortable position after ...\(\text{xd6}\), when he will have two well-placed knights and a central pawn majority. I do not see much point in analysing every possible plan at White’s disposal, so we will just consider one example from Grandmaster praxis featuring accurate play from both sides.

6...\(\text{xd6}\)
6...\(\text{xd2}\) 7.e5 is equally playable and leads to similar positions.

7.e5 \(\text{f6}\) 9.e4 \(\text{e5}\) 10.e2 \(\text{c4}\) \(\text{f7}\) 14.d2 0–0 15.e1 \(\text{f7}\) 16.e2 \(\text{d6}\) 17.e3 \(\text{a6}\) was dangerous for White in Sveshnikov – Tseshkovsky, Frunze 1981.

5...\(\text{xe4}\)!
Black should not be afraid to accept the challenge.

6.\(\text{xf7}\)†
6.e6! 7.e4 d5 with better chances for Black.

6...\(\text{xf7}\) 7.e5†
The other possibility is 7.h5† \(\text{g8}\) 8.d5† e6 9.e4 d5 10.e3 b6 11.cxb6 axb6 12.e2 \(\text{c5}\) 13.g5 \(\text{f6}\) 14.\(\text{f4}\) (It is a similar story after 14.e6 \(\text{fxe6}\) 15.e2 \(\text{f7}\) 16.d5 \(\text{d6}\) 17.e3 \(\text{a6}\)) 14...\(\text{xe6}\) 15.e6 \(\text{fxe6}\) 16.e1 \(\text{xf7}\) Black has superb compensation for the missing pawn, Khmelnitsky – Goldin, Philadelphia 1992.

A22) 5.e4

This is one of the few moves that can put some excitement into White’s play. However, it will cost him one half of his bishop pair.

7.e6 8.e4 d5 9.f3† \(\text{f6}\)
This looks like the most natural move, although 9.g8?! is also playable. For instance, 10.e3 b6 11.cxb6 axb6 12.e1 \(\text{c5}\) 13.e2 \(\text{xe6}\) 14.e3 \(\text{f4}\) 15.e3 \(\text{a6}\) was dangerous for White in Sveshnikov – Tseshkovsky, Frunze 1981.

10.e5!
10...b6 11.cxb6 axb6 12.e4 \(\text{xd4}\) 13.cxd4 \(\text{f4}\) 14.e6† \(\text{gxf6}\) 15.e2 \(\text{b4}\)† 16.e3 \(\text{xc3}\) 17.e3 \(\text{a6}\) 18.e2 \(\text{xe2}\) 19.e2 \(\text{ha8}\) brought Black easy equality in
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Azmaiparashvili – Topalov, Elenite 1995, but I think it is quite realistic for Black to aim for more.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

11. \( \text{Wh5} \)† g6 12. \( \text{We2} \) \( \text{Wf5} \) 13. \( \text{Df3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \)† 14. \( \text{Dxf3} \) \( \text{Dxf3} \) 15.gxf3 e5 is similar to the main line, Christensen – Paunovic, Copenhagen 1989.

Black maintains excellent compensation for the reasons already stated, Brynell – Bator, Malmo 1986.

A23) 5. \( \text{Cc2} \) \( \text{Dxc5} \)

Black has a pleasant choice between this and: 5...d5?!?
Active play in the centre should also ensure a satisfactory game.

6. \( \text{Cxd2} \) e6 7. exd5 \( \text{Dxd5} \)
7...exd5?! is a bit too optimistic, and after 8. \( \text{Cb3} \) \( \text{Cxe7} \) 9. \( \text{Cf3} \) 0–0 10. \( \text{Cxe2} \) \( \text{Cxe4} \) 11. \( \text{Cxc3} \) \( \text{Cf5} \) 12. \( \text{Cxd3} \) a5 13. \( \text{Cxa4} \) \( \text{Cg6} \) 14.0–0 \( \text{Cc7} \)
15. \( \text{Cad1} \) Black was struggling to demonstrate
compensation for the pawn in Godena –
Aronian, Batumi 2002.
8.\texttt{b3} a5 9.a4 e5 10.\texttt{f3} \texttt{e6} 11.\texttt{a3} \texttt{xc5}
11...\texttt{g4}?! 12.\texttt{e2} e4 13.\texttt{fd4} \texttt{xe2}
14.\texttt{xe2} \texttt{xc5} is equal.
12.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 13.\texttt{e3} \texttt{e7}
Black should not have too many problems
here, as his central control should more or
less balance the strength of White’s bishop
pair.

14.\texttt{g5}
14.\texttt{b5} \texttt{d5} 15.0–0 0–0 16.\texttt{e2} \texttt{e8} is
also about level.
14...h6 15.\texttt{h4} 0–0 16.\texttt{e2} \texttt{d5} 17.0–0 e4
18.\texttt{d2} \texttt{e8}
Black has obtained a healthy and active
position, Mukhametov – Tregubov, Berlin
1997.

Now White’s two most popular choices are:
A231) 6.\texttt{f4} and A232) 6.\texttt{f3}.
Other moves
have been tested as well, but in most cases
Black will develop in a similar way as in the
two main lines.

A231) 6.\texttt{f4} g6

7.\texttt{f3}
It is also important to consider the queenside
development:
7.\texttt{a3} e5?!N
This daring advance looks to me like the best
option.
I initially looked at the following continuation,
but concluded that it was not so desirable:
7...\texttt{g7} 8.\texttt{d1} \texttt{a5} 9.\texttt{f3} 0–0 10.\texttt{d2} \texttt{d8}N
(10...\texttt{e6} 11.\texttt{e2} \texttt{xa2}?! 12.0–0 e5 13.\texttt{e3}
\texttt{d7} was seen in Sveshnikov – Shabalov, Neu
Isenburg 1992, and now White could have
won the battle for the light squares with:
14.\texttt{c4}N \texttt{xc4} 15.\texttt{xc4} \texttt{c7} 16.\texttt{b5}+)
11.\texttt{e2} \texttt{g4} 12.f3 \texttt{e6} 13.0–0 \texttt{f} Black’s
problems should be manageable, but this is
hardly an ideal outcome from the opening.
8.\texttt{e3}
8.\texttt{g5} \texttt{g7} 9.\texttt{d1} \texttt{e7} is equal.
8...\texttt{c7} 9.\texttt{d1} \texttt{c7}! 10.\texttt{f3} 0–0 11.\texttt{e2} a6
The pieces of first player are not well organized
and thus Black has comfortable play.
7...\textit{g}7 8.\textit{bd}2 0–0 9.\textit{d}1 \textit{e}6

Also worth considering is 9...\textit{h}5?! 10.\textit{c}4 Maksimenko – Ermenkov, Yugoslavia 1994, 10...\textit{d}4!N (Much better than the game continuation of 10...\textit{x}f4?! 11.\textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}8 12.\textit{c}e3 \textit{b}6 13.\textit{h}3±) 11.\textit{cx}d4 \textit{xf}4 12.\textit{xc}5 \textit{c}7 with equal chances.

10.\textit{b}3

Also harmless is 10.\textit{c}4 \textit{xc}4 11.\textit{xc}4 \textit{c}8 12.\textit{e}2 \textit{b}5 13.\textit{ce}5 \textit{h}5.

10...\textit{b}6 11.\textit{fd}2 \textit{fd}8 12.\textit{e}3

After 12.\textit{e}2 it looks interesting for Black to try 12...\textit{g}4?! 13.0–0 \textit{e}5 with active play.

12...\textit{d}7 13.\textit{e}2 \textit{ac}8

Black has succeeded in mobilizing his forces, and will enter the middlegame with equal chances.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \begin{scope}
    \node (a) at (0,0) {\textcolor{red}{A232) 6.\textit{f}3}};
    \node (b) at (1,0) {6...\textit{c}7};
    \node (c) at (2,0) {This is a nice flexible move. The queen will not want to remain on the d-file forever, so it makes some sense to solve that issue before deciding how best to deploy the other pieces.};
    \node (d) at (3,0) {7.\textit{e}3};
    \node (e) at (4,0) {Just as before, White has tried several different moves, but none of which are especially threatening. Here are a few examples:};
  \end{scope}
  \begin{scope}[xshift=2cm]
    \node (f) at (0,0) {7.\textit{g}5 \textit{g}4 8.\textit{bd}2 \textit{e}6 9.\textit{b}5 \textit{d}7 10.\textit{a}4 \textit{c}8 11.0–0 \textit{a}6 12.\textit{e}2 \textit{e}7 13.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xe}7 14.\textit{fe}1 0–0 with equal chances, Markovic – Damljanovic, Subotica 2000.};
    \node (g) at (1,0) {7.a4 \textit{g}6 8.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}6 9.\textit{b}5 \textit{d}7 10.h3 \textit{g}7 11.0–0 0–0 12.\textit{e}1 \textit{a}6 13.\textit{f}1 \textit{d}5 14.\textit{bd}2 \textit{e}5 15.b3 \textit{h}6 16.\textit{b}2 \textit{b}7 17.b4 \textit{e}6 18.b5 \textit{xb}5 19.\textit{xb}5?! (19.\textit{xb}5 \textit{d}6=) 19...\textit{c}4! Black began to take over the initiative in Kurajica – Movsesian, Sarajevo 2001.};
    \node (h) at (2,0) {7...\textit{e}6 8.h3 \textit{e}7};
  \end{scope}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textit{14.\textit{c}4}

White should take care to avoid: 14.0–0? \textit{d}4!±

\textit{14...\textit{c}7 15.0–0 \textit{b}5?!}

Black embarks on an ambitious plan based on advancing his queenside pawns.

\textit{16.\textit{cd}2 c4 17.\textit{d}4 \textit{xd}4 18.\textit{xd}4 \textit{b}6 19.\textit{d}5 \textit{d}7 20.\textit{f}3 \textit{b}4 21.\textit{c}1 \textit{b}7}

Black keeps a full share of the chances in this unbalanced position and eventually went on to win, Petrov – Kempinski, Ohrid 2001.

9.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash e2}}}

Another game continued 9.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash bd2}}} 0-0
10.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash e2}}} b6 11.0-0 \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash b7}}} 12.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash fe1}}} h6 13.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash f1}}}
\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash ad8}}} 14.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash g3}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash c8}}} 15.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash f4}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash h5}}} 16.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash e3}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash f6}}}
17.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash ad1}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash d6}}} 18.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash g2}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash c7}}} 19.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash f1}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash a8}}} Black
has positioned his pieces harmoniously and it is White who must work to maintain the

9...0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.a4 \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash b7}}} 12.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash bd2}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash hbd8}}}
13.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash fe1}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash ad7}}} 14.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash ad1}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash ad8}}} 15.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash g5}}}
15.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash c4}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash a5}}} 16.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xbd7}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xbd7}}} 17.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash cxd2}}} is also
equal.

15...\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash h5}}} 16.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash e3}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash f6}}}

White obtained no advantage from the
opening, and after a further repetition of moves
the players agreed to a draw in Sveshnikov –
Khalifman, Kujbyshev 1986.

A24) 5.f3

This seems like a natural move. White supports
his centre and hopes for a typical slight edge
in a position without queens. However, Black
does not necessarily have to fall in with that
plan.

5...d5!

It is of course possible to take on c5 and be
just a little worse, but the text move is much
more interesting, and probably just a better
move overall.

6.exd5 \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xxd5}}}

It is also quite acceptable for Black to play:
6...\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash wxd5}}}

It may seem paradoxical, but Black also
enjoys full compensation in the position
without queens.

7.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xbd7}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xbd7}}} 8.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash c4}}} e6

9.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xxd5}}}

After 9.b4 a5 10.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xbd7}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xbd7}}} 11.b5 \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash e5}}}
12.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash d3}}}, Panic – Lovric, Obrenovac 2008,
12...\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash d3t}}} 13.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash d3t}}} 14.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash d2}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xxd2}}}
White faces a tough fight for survival.

9...exd5 10.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash d3}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash e5}}} 11.b3

The safest approach is to return the pawn.
The greedy 11.b4?! looks too risky after
11...a5, for instance: 12.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash xd4}}} \texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash d3t}}} 13.\texttt{\textit{\textsf{\textbackslash d2}}}

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\[ \text{f5} 14.\text{a3} \text{h5} 15.\text{e2} \text{h6}! 16.\text{e3} \text{a6} \]

17.\text{f4}? (Better was 17.\text{d4} although Black is still doing well after 17...\text{h7} 18.\text{c2} [18.\text{b3} \text{axb4} 19.\text{cxb4} \text{e6} 20.\text{axb4} \text{xa1} 21.\text{xa1} \text{e6}]+) 18...\text{e7} 19.\text{d4} \text{d7}\]

17...\text{d4}! and White’s position soon fell apart, Klinger – Cebalo, Biel 1986.

11...\text{d3}+ 12.\text{d2} \text{xc5}

Material is equal. Black has an isolated pawn, but this is more than balanced by his bishop pair. The position is close to equal, but I would say it is White who has to be more careful.

13.\text{a3} \text{d7}

13...\text{e6} 14.\text{c2} \text{f6} 15.\text{e2} \text{f7} 16.\text{cd4} \text{xd4} 17.\text{x} 18.\text{h2} \text{h5} was also fine for Black in Turov – Sotnikov, Ekaterinburg 1996, although it looks more logical for Black to avoid a straightforward knight exchange for the time being, since he only has one knight left.

14.\text{e2} \text{d6} 15.\text{c2} \text{e6} 16.\text{cd4} \text{g6}

17.\text{ad1}

White should not improve his opponent’s structure with 17.\text{xe6}! \text{fxe6}, when 18.\text{f4} 0-0 19.\text{g3} \text{b5} 20.\text{b4} a5 21.\text{a3} \text{a6} 22.\text{d4} \text{fa8}+ meant just suffering for White in Prudnikova – Khurtsidze, Vrnjacka Banja 1996.

17...0-0 18.\text{he1} \text{f8} 19.\text{xe6} \text{fxe6} 20.\text{f4} e5 21.\text{fxe5} \text{xe5}

Black’s bishop pair gave him the edge in Manca – Gelfand, Arnhem 1988.

7.\text{c4}

Less common, but still playable, is 7.\text{c4} \text{a5} 8.\text{d2} \text{db4} 9.\text{c3} (White soon fell into trouble after the slow 9.a3? \text{f5}! 10.\text{c3} \text{a6} 11.\text{d2} \text{c2}+ 12.\text{f2} \text{xa1} 13.\text{xa1} \text{e5} 14.\text{b4} \text{a4} Kharlov – Smirin, Oviedo 1993.) 9...\text{f5} 10.\text{d5} 0-0-0 11.a3 \text{c2}+ 12.\text{x} 13.\text{xa5} \text{xa5} 14.\text{b4} This was Vulicevic – Olesen, New York 1993, and now I suggest 14...\text{c6} 15.\text{h3} e6 when Black has enough play for the pawn.

7...\text{e6} 8.\text{xd5} \text{exd5} 9.\text{c3}

9...\text{b6}!

With this excellent move Black clears the way for his pieces to develop on the most favourable squares. He relinquishes any hopes of regaining the sacrificed pawn in the
foreseeable future, but his tremendously active pieces should more than make up for that.

10. \textit{cxb6 d6?!}

10...\textit{axb6} 11.\textit{e2 d6} 12.0-0 0-0 is another route to the main line.

11. \textit{e2}

11.\textit{bxa7}?! looks too greedy, and after 11...0-0 12.\textit{f2 e8} 13.\textit{xe2 xe3} 14.\textit{xe3 g5+} 15.\textit{f2 c5+} 16.\textit{d4 xd4} 17.\textit{xd4 h4+} 18.g3 (18.\textit{e3 f5+}) 18...\textit{xd4} 19.\textit{e1 f6} 20.\textit{c3 a6} White was under serious pressure, Gusev – Rychagov, Tula 2006.

11...0-0 12.0-0 \textit{axb6}

Another possibility is 12...\textit{xe8} 13.\textit{f2}, Roeder – Halbritter, Bavaria 2006, 13...\textit{axb6}N 14.\textit{xe1 a6} 15.\textit{d2 e6} with full compensation.

13.\textit{e1 e5} 14.\textit{f2 a6}

Here we see another advantage of Black's ninth move. The bishop has excellent prospects here, and overall it is quite clear that Black's activity represents full value for a pawn.

15.\textit{c1?!}

Better was 15.\textit{f4}, although after 15...\textit{c4} 16.\textit{d3 e7} 17.\textit{f4 e8} Black still has good chances.

15...\textit{c7} 16.\textit{g3 e8} 17.\textit{d2 e6}?

Black succeeded in increasing his initiative while White's extra pawn fails to make its presence felt, Sermek – Loncar, Rabac 2003.

\textbf{A3) 4.\textit{d3}}

This is White's most popular move, and arguably his best chance to obtain an opening advantage.

4...\textit{g6!}

This is an important moment. Often Black has preferred to exchange on d4 before making this move, in order to avoid the response 5.dxc5. The problem with this approach is that it frees the c3-square for the white knight, thus enabling the first player to develop his pieces in the most harmonious way possible. After careful study I came to the conclusion that the exchange on c5 is not something that Black should worry about, meaning that the text move is the most accurate.

We will analyse two responses: \textbf{A31) 5.dxc5} and \textbf{A32) 5.f3}.

\textbf{A31) 5.dxc5 dxc5 6.e5}

Now Black must make a difficult choice. The following move may appear surprising, but I believe it to be the strongest.
6...\textit{\texttt{h5}}!

This has not been played in many games, but based on the available evidence, it looks like this move has taken the sting out of White's chosen set-up.

It is worth mentioning that the natural 6...\textit{\texttt{g4}}? is a bad idea, as after 7.j,b5! Black must accept a terrible weakening of his pawn structure with 7...\textit{\texttt{c6}}, because 7...\textit{\texttt{d7}}?? loses material immediately after 8.e6!.

There is an interesting, but ultimately inadequate alternative in 6...\textit{\texttt{c4}}! 7.Wa4\texttt{c6}d7 8.Wxc4 \textit{\texttt{g4}}. Black hopes to obtain some compensation for the pawn, but after 9.f4! practice and analysis have demonstrated that White's chances are higher.

The other knight retreats have also been tested, but each has its own drawbacks and I believe the text move to be clearly the most reliable choice. The knight is not so badly placed on h5, and will often retreat to g7 to help control the light squares on the kingside.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & 8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
\texttt{a} & \texttt{b} & \texttt{c} & \texttt{d} & \texttt{e} & \texttt{f} & \texttt{g} & \texttt{h} & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

7...\textit{\texttt{b5}}!?

This is perhaps White's most direct approach, although it is hard to say if it is any better than the alternatives as there have not been many games. Up to now, at least, the results seem encouraging for Black. Here are a few other examples of how the play might unfold:

It is worth briefly mentioning that 7.g4?! achieves nothing after 7...\textit{\texttt{xg4}}! (Even if this move were not viable for tactical reasons, Black could still obtain excellent chances by retreating to g7 and threatening to counter with ...h5.) 8.Wxg4 \textit{\texttt{xd3}} 9.Wc8\texttt{d8} 10.Wxb7 \textit{\texttt{xd7}} 11.Wf3 \textit{\texttt{g7}} Both sides have weaknesses, but White's are more serious as they affect the safety of his king.

7.h3 \textit{\texttt{c6}} 8.We2 \textit{\texttt{e6}} 9.Wf3 \textit{\texttt{c7}} 10.0-0 0-0 0-0 11.c4 \textit{\texttt{g7}} A series of natural moves has led to a comfortable position for Black, and after the further 12.Wc3 \textit{\texttt{d4}} 13.Wxd4 \textit{\texttt{cxd4}} 14.We4 \textit{\texttt{xe5}} it was White who was struggling to equalize in Lenic – Mamedov, Urgup 2004.

7.We2 The early queen exchange suits Black quite well. 7...\textit{\texttt{xd1}}+ 8.Wxd1 \textit{\texttt{c6}} Compared with certain other variations, the fact that White's e-pawn has advanced to e5 makes it slightly vulnerable, as well as creating some light-squared outposts for the black pieces. 9.f4 \textit{\texttt{h6}} 10.Wxh5 gxh5 11.Wf3 \textit{\texttt{g4}} 12.Wf2 0-0 0-0 13.We3 \textit{\texttt{d3}} 14.Wbd2 \textit{\texttt{hd8}} 15.h3 \textit{\texttt{e6}} Black kept a full share of the chances, Alexopoulos – Rohde, Mineola 1994.

7.Wc3 \textit{\texttt{c7}} 8.Wf4 \textit{\texttt{c6}} 9.Wf3 \textit{\texttt{g7}} Black begins the process of securing some light squares on the kingside. 10.Wd2 h5 11.We4 \textit{\texttt{g4}} 12.Wf2 0-0 0-0 13.Wc2 b6 14.h3 \textit{\texttt{e6}} With a balanced position, Guseinov – Mamedov, Moscow 2004.

7...\textit{\texttt{d7}}

This seems like the most reliable move. In Denny – Shabalov, Bridgetown 2009, Black preferred 7...\textit{\texttt{c6}}! 8.Wxd8+ \textit{\texttt{xd8}} 9.Wxc6 \textit{\texttt{bxc6}} and although he eventually triumphed,
I do not completely trust his position at this stage of the game.

8.\textit{\textbf{\textit{f2}}}

8.e6 fxe6 9.e2 f6 offers White some compensation for the pawn, but I doubt it can be considered a real try for an advantage.

8...d6 9.f4

This position was reached in the game Dempster – Noble, corr. 2005. Now after the simple:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 & a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 & & & & & & & & \\
2 & & & & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & & & \\
4 & & & & & & & & \\
5 & & & & & & & & \\
6 & & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & & \\
8 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

9...c6N

Black looks to be fine. (9...g7N also seems quite reasonable.)

A32) 5.f3

As it is by no means clear if White can benefit from exchanging on c5, a lot of players prefer this standard developing move. The drawback from White’s point of view is that his other knight will not have access to the desirable c3-square.

5...c7 6.0–0 0–0 7.h3

White usually makes this prophylactic move, either here or on the previous turn. It is not completely clear how the other pieces should best be developed; for instance, moving the queen’s knight could be met by ...cxd4 when the knight will dream of being on c3.

7...d7

This is the most flexible approach, preparing ...b7-b6 and ...\textit{\textbf{\textit{d8}}}. I will just mention one other interesting idea that deserves attention.

7...d5? 8.e5 f4 9.e1 f5 10.dxe5?! (Perhaps White should have tried 10.g4 \textit{\textbf{\textit{d8}}}, 11.c4, although after 11...f5! 12.cxd5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{wxd5}}, 13.wc2 \textit{\textbf{\textit{h8}}, 14.exf4 c4, 15.exf4 cxd3, 16.wx3 c6. Black’s strong play on the light squares gives him full compensation.) 10...\textit{\textbf{\textit{d7}}, 11.f4 \textit{\textbf{\textit{dxc5}}, 12.f1 w6b6, 13.e2 \textit{\textbf{\textit{d8}}. White was already uncomfortable in Adams – Tkachev, Cannes 2001.}

8.e1

White has a nice-looking centre, but putting it to use is another matter. Here are a few other examples:

8.wc2 \textit{\textbf{\textit{d6}}, 9.c3 b6, 10.b2d2 (10.d5 \textit{\textbf{\textit{d5}}, 11.exd5 dxe5, 12.c4 \textit{\textbf{\textit{h5}}, 13.c3 \textit{\textbf{\textit{f4 gives Black counterplay), 10...e5, 11.dxe5 dxe5, 12.a6 \textit{\textbf{\textit{d7}}, 13.a4 h6, 14.b1f1 d8, 15.a1 was fairly equal in Degraeeve – Movsesian, Pula 1997.}}}

8.e3 \textit{\textbf{\textit{e}d8}}, (8...b6 is also quite playable)

9.b2d2 e5?! 10.e1 h6 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.wc2
b6 13.a4  bölüm 14. bölüm 4.e6 Black has equalized comfortably, Sulypa - Tkachiev, France 1996.

8..d8
This is a flexible move, which could become especially useful in the event that the centre opens up.

9.e2

White continues to develop flexibly, delaying the development of his queenside pieces until their best locations become apparent.

Another game continued 9.g5 e5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.e2 h6 12. fx6 xf6 13. bd2 d7 14. c4 b6 15. b3 d7 This was Torre – Anand, Manila 1992. Black is slightly sensitive on the light squares, but as long as he plays carefully he should not have to suffer, and perhaps one day his bishops might their presence felt.

9...a6 10. f4 b5 11.e5
This is the natural follow-up to White's previous play, but it should not concern Black unduly.

11.. d5 12.exd6 exd6 13. g5 b8 14. e4 b7 15. dxc5 dxc5 16. d2 b6 17. x b7 x b7

B) 2..d5 3.exd5 xd5 4.d4 g6?

That concludes our coverage of 2...d6. Let us now turn to the second of our featured systems.

B) 2.d5 3.exd5 xd5 4.d4 g6?

This is one of Black's most active ways of meeting the c3-Sicilian. It is considered slightly risky but still perfectly playable, and has proven to be an especially good choice when needing to win with the black pieces. We will consider four responses in detail: B1) 5.e3, B2) 5.dxc5, B3) 5.a3 and B4) 5.f3.
Occasionally Black allows dxc5, hoping to obtain compensation after exchanging on d1. The idea might be playable, but overall I would regard the text move to be a sounder option. We will now consider B11) 6...cxd4 and B12) 6...Wxd4.

B11) 6...cxd4 g7

Unlike most of the lines occurring after 2...d5, here the bishop is perfectly placed to apply direct pressure to the isolated pawn.

7...c3
7...f3 reaches line B44 below.

7...d8

It is worth noting that this modest retreat of the queen fares better than the seemingly active line 7...a5. Black has to exercise patience in the quest of fighting against the isolated pawn.

8.f3 h6!? By moving to this square the knight avoids blocking the long diagonal while preparing to jump to f5 to attack the d4-pawn. 8...f6 is also playable, and actually transposes to line B44. (With the particular move order used to reach line B44, the development of the knight to h6 was impossible due to a tactical flaw.)

9...c4
This seems natural; besides, the alternatives are not particularly threatening.

9...a4† looks rather artificial. 9...d7 10.h3 f5 11.f4 0–0 12.0–0 a6 13.g4 b5 14.b4 b7 15.g2 d6 16...xd6 exd6 17...d6 b6 18...xd8 cxd8 Black soon regained the sacrificed pawn while keeping some initiative, Bergez – Shchekachev, Evry 2002.

9.b5† d7 10.0–0 0–0 11...e1 f5 12.f4 b6 13...f1 e6 14...e5 c8 15.g7 xg7 16.e2 g8 17.ad1 d5 18.g5 xc3 19.bxc3 d5 Black achieved a harmonious position and successfully exploited his opponent's pawn weaknesses, Plachetka – Ftacnik, Kaskady 2002.

9.d5!? looks slow, but White is trying to gain space and centralize his pieces. 9...f5 10.f4 0–0 11.c4 a6 12.0–0 b5 13.b3 d7 14...e1 b7 15.e2 This was Padeiro – Guerra Costa, Gaia 2004, and here I think Black should have played 15...c5?!N (The game continued 15...f6 16.ad1 b4 17.a4 xd5 [17...a5?!N is a probable improvement: 18.c5 ad8=] 18.c5 e6 19.c5 with pressure for the pawn.) Now in the event of 16.c2, it looks safe enough for Black to play 16...xc3 17.bxc3 d5 when White's compensation is questionable.

9...f5
9...0–0 is equally playable, as the following attempt to 'exploit' Black's move order is too optimistic: 10.hx6?! hx6 11.h4 g4 12.h5 g7 13.d5 wb6 14.h4 xf3 15.xf3 d7 It is already becoming clear that White's king is the one in danger. 16.b3 c5 17.a4 a5† 18.cf1 g5 19.g4 f6 20.xc5 xc5 Black kept a slight initiative and went on to win in Buchal – Degraeve, Cappelle la Grande 2008.
10.\text{d}e5!?

White can play more quietly, although a modest approach is hardly likely to cause Black many problems either.

10...\text{d}6 11.\text{b}3 \text{c}6 12.a4

12...0-0!

Black should have no qualms about sacrificing a pawn here, as his speedy development and harmoniously placed pieces will ensure a full share of the chances.

13.\text{x}c6 \text{bxc6} 14.\text{x}c6 \text{d}7 15.\text{e}5 \text{b}7 16.0-0 \text{xb}2 17.\text{d}5 \text{b}7 18.\text{c}6 \text{f}5 19.a4 \text{e}6

We have been following the game Pirrot – Nemeth, Germany 1992. Black has restored material equality, and under normal circumstances his bishop pair would guarantee his advantage. However, in this case White’s active knights enabled him to maintain the balance.

B12) 6.\text{x}d4 \text{f}6

This seems like the principled reaction, although there is nothing much wrong with 6...\text{x}d4 7.\text{x}d4 \text{f}6 8.\text{f}3 \text{c}6 9.\text{b}5 \text{d}7 with balanced chances.

7.\text{a}3

7.\text{xd}5 \text{cxd}5 8.\text{d}4 \text{f}6 gives White nothing. The following game is an instructive example of how Black may steadily improve his position. 9.\text{c}4 \text{e}6 10.\text{a}3 \text{c}6 11.\text{f}3 0-0-0 12.\text{d}1 \text{g}8 13.\text{c}5 \text{b}6 14.\text{e}3 \text{e}5 Finally Black’s extra central pawn makes its presence felt. 15.\text{c}2 \text{c}7 16.\text{b}3 \text{a}5 17.\text{c}1 \text{g}5\text{f} Rozentalis – D. Gurevich, Toronto 1998.

7...\text{c}6 8.\text{a}4

Once again 8.\text{xd}5?! \text{xd}5 only helps to activate the black pieces; perhaps even more so here, as the white bishop cannot gain time by moving to d4. 9.\text{d}2 \text{c}5 10.\text{b}5 \text{e}6 11.\text{c}4 (Perhaps 11.\text{f}3 would be the lesser evil, although Black is obviously happy after 11...\text{d}8 12.\text{c}4 \text{db}4\text{f}) 11...\text{db}4 12.\text{c}7\text{f} \text{d}7 13.\text{xe}6 \text{xe}6\text{f} White may have achieved a favourable minor piece exchange, but aside from that small accomplishment his position stinks.

8...\text{g}7 9.\text{b}5

If Black is given time to complete his development calmly, he will be absolutely fine. Therefore White tries to generate threats immediately.

Slow play brings White nothing, for instance: 9.\text{f}3 0-0 10.\text{c}4 \text{a}5\text{f} 11.\text{b}3 \text{g}4?\text{f}
Perhaps White's best would be 9...\(d1\), although even here after 9...\(d5\) (9...\(xa2\) 10.\(c4\) \(xb2\) 11.\(e2\) is a bit too risky for Black) 10.\(e2\) \(g4\) 11.\(b5\) \(xb5\) 12.\(xb5\) 0–0 it becomes obvious that Black is doing fine.

9...\(d8\) 10.\(f3\) 0–0 11.\(d1\) \(d7\) 12.\(e2\) \(a6\) 13.\(bd4\)

\[ 
\]

13...\(d5\)

Another decent option was 13...\(xd4\) 14.\(xd4\) \(a5\) 15.\(a3\) \(a4\) 16.\(d2\) \(ad8\) White is not doing too badly here, but he is still the one fighting for equality.

14.\(xc6\) \(xc6\) 15.\(b3\) \(a5\) 16.\(d2\) \(c7\) 17.0–0 \(e5\) 18.\(c4\) \(f4\)

The following suggestion from Rogozenko also looks promising: 18...\(e7\) N

19.\(c3\) b5! With some initiative for Black, who intends ...\(b7\).

19.\(xf4\) \(xf4\) 20.\(d4\)

This position was reached in the game Kharlov – Dautov, Tripoli 2004. Here Black should have played:

\[ 
\]

20...\(e8\) N

White will have to play well to neutralize his opponent's initiative. For example:

21.\(f3\) \(f3\) 22.\(xf3\) \(e2\) 23.\(d2\) \(ae8\)

Black keeps an edge, for instance: 24.\(fd1\) ? \(c5\)! (analysis by Rogozenko).

B2) 5.\(xc5\)

\[ 
\]
5...\textit{xc}5
5...\textit{xd}1+ 6.\textit{xd}1 \textit{f}6 has been played a few times, but I am not convinced that Black has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

\textbf{6.\textit{e}3}
Another possibility is
6.\textit{a}3 \textit{h}6?!
This is an important motif. Black's idea is to prevent \textit{e}3 once and for all.

7.\textit{f}3
We should also consider 7.\textit{b}5 \textit{xc}1 8.\textit{xc}1 \textit{f}6 9.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{xc}7 (10.\textit{xa}7 \textit{e}6! 11.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}7 only helps Black) 10...\textit{a}6
11.\textit{xc}6\textit{bxc}6 12.\textit{d}4 \textit{b}8 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{c}5 14.\textit{c}6
\textit{b}6 15.\textit{xa}7 \textit{b}7\textit{a} Black's compensation is quite real, and White will need to spend some time completing development.

This position was reached in Markovic - Ivanisevic, Herzog Novi 2005, and here I suggest:
7...\textit{xc}1N 8.\textit{xc}1 \textit{f}6 9.\textit{d}4 \textit{f}5 10.\textit{b}5
\textit{c}6 11.\textit{c}7\textit{f}8 12.\textit{a}4 \textit{b}8
Black will soon complete the artificial castling to reach a level middlegame.

\textbf{6...\textit{c}7}

\textbf{7.\textit{xa}7?!}
This slightly cheeky pawn grab is the critical continuation.

The following queenside demonstration does not achieve much: 7.\textit{a}3 \textit{a}6 8.\textit{c}4 \textit{d}7 9.\textit{a}4
\textit{g}6 10.\textit{a}5 \textit{g}7 11.\textit{b}6 \textit{xb}6 12.\textit{xb}6 \textit{d}7
White has spent a lot of time securing b6 as an outpost, but it is not clear what kind of benefits this is likely to yield. 13.\textit{e}2?! (White could still have maintained equality with 13.\textit{f}3
\textit{d}5 14.\textit{d}4 0–0 15.\textit{xg}7 \textit{xg}7 16.\textit{d}4\textit{f}6) 13...\textit{d}5 14.\textit{f}3 \textit{xb}6 15.\textit{xb}6 \textit{f}6
16.\textit{a}4\textit{d}7 17.\textit{b}4 0–0\textit{f} White was in serious trouble due to the weak b-pawn and lagging development in Antonio – Nataf, Montreal 2005.

\textbf{7...\textit{c}6}
It would be much too optimistic for Black to try: 7...\textit{xa}7? 8.\textit{d}4 \textit{f}6 9.\textit{xa}7 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{a}4

\textbf{8.\textit{e}3 \textit{f}6 9.\textit{f}3 \textit{g}7 10.\textit{e}2}

\textbf{10.\textit{g}4!}
Black takes the opportunity to force some kind of concession before White finishes developing.

\textbf{11.\textit{d}4}
This is not a move White ideally wants to make, but allowing the exchange on \textit{e}3 would create a pawn weakness, and alternative bishop retreats have their own drawbacks.
11...\textit{\texttt{N}}d4 12.\textit{\texttt{N}}d4 \textit{\texttt{N}}f4!
Combining attack and defence.

13.\textit{\texttt{B}}b5\texttt{f} 14.\textit{\texttt{B}}\textit{f}3 \textit{\texttt{B}}f6 15.0-0 \textit{\texttt{R}}g7
16.h3 \textit{\texttt{B}}e5 17.\textit{\texttt{N}}d4 \textit{\texttt{N}}d8
Black maintained full compensation for the missing pawn thanks to his powerful dark-squared bishop and other active pieces, Vajda – Nevednichy, Lasi 1999.

B3) 5.\textit{\texttt{B}}a3

5...\textit{\texttt{B}}g7!?
There is also nothing wrong with 5...cxd4, for instance: 6.\textit{\texttt{B}}b5 \textit{\texttt{B}}a6 7.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{B}}xd4 8.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{B}}f6 9.\textit{\texttt{B}}g3 \textit{\texttt{B}}g7 10.\textit{\texttt{B}}b5\texttt{f} 11.0-0 \textit{\texttt{B}}d7 12.\textit{\texttt{B}}c4 \textit{\texttt{B}}d5 13.\textit{\texttt{B}}e1 \textit{\texttt{B}}f6 14.a4 \textit{\texttt{B}}a6 with equal chances, Simacek – Karjakin, Kemer 2007.

6.\textit{\texttt{B}}c3
In the event of 6.\textit{\texttt{B}}b5 \textit{\texttt{B}}a6 7.dxc5, it looks quite promising for Black to sacrifice a pawn with 7...\textit{\texttt{B}}xd1\texttt{f} 8.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd1 \textit{\texttt{B}}f6:

9.\textit{\texttt{B}}e3 (After 9.\textit{\texttt{B}}f3 0-0 10.c6 bxc6 11.\textit{\texttt{B}}bd4 \textit{\texttt{B}}b8 12.\textit{\texttt{B}}d3 \textit{\texttt{B}}g4 13.\textit{\texttt{B}}e3 e5 Black has nothing to complain about.) 9...\textit{\texttt{B}}g4 10.b4 \textit{\texttt{B}}xe3\texttt{f} 11.\textit{\texttt{B}}xe3 0-0 12.a3 \textit{\texttt{B}}d8\texttt{f} 13.\textit{\texttt{B}}c2 \textit{\texttt{B}}d7 14.\textit{\texttt{B}}f3 b6! 15.\textit{\texttt{B}}xb6 axb6 16.\textit{\texttt{B}}d1 \textit{\texttt{B}}ac8 Black's compensation was obvious in Vajda – Lajthajm, Herzog Novi 2008.

6...cxd4 7.\textit{\texttt{B}}b5 \textit{\texttt{B}}a6 8.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{B}}xd4
Black can also consider the daring pawn sacrifice 8...\textit{\texttt{B}}f6? 9.\textit{\texttt{B}}xa7, Chole – Suresh, Chennai 2004, and now 9...\textit{\texttt{B}}e4\texttt{f} 10.\textit{\texttt{B}}e2 0-0 11.\textit{\texttt{B}}f3 \textit{\texttt{B}}d7 12.\textit{\texttt{B}}d4 \textit{\texttt{B}}f5\texttt{f} with interesting play for Black.

9.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd4 \textit{\texttt{B}}xd4 10.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd4
In general, this type of queenless position should not be too troublesome for Black. As long as he can finish developing comfortably, his extra central pawn should ensure a comfortable middlegame.

10...\textit{\texttt{B}}f6
There is no reason for Black to fear doubled a-pawns. It looks less promising to play 10...\textit{\texttt{B}}c7 (10...\textit{\texttt{B}}c5 11.\textit{\texttt{B}}b5 is awkward) due to 11.\textit{\texttt{B}}g3 \textit{\texttt{B}}h6 12.\textit{\texttt{B}}c4 \textit{\texttt{B}}f5 13.0-0-0 with a slight initiative for White, Baklan – Edouard, Andorra 2007.

11.\textit{\texttt{B}}gf3 \textit{\texttt{B}}c5
Compared with the previous note, the black knight is more active on c5.

12. \( \texttt{d}e5 \)

12. \( \texttt{d}b5+ \texttt{h}f8 13.0-0 \texttt{a}6 14.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{b}5 15.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{g}7 16.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{e}6 \) is equal.

12...0-0 13.\( \texttt{c}e2 \) \( \texttt{d}f7 \) 14.\( \texttt{d}xd7 \) \( \texttt{xd}7 \)

Black has already equalized comfortably, I. Naiditsch – Kunte, Dortmund 2001

B4) 5.\( \texttt{f}3 \)

This natural move has been White’s most common choice.

5...\( \texttt{g}7 \)

Now we will consider the following moves in detail: B41) 6.\( \texttt{c}4?! \), B42) 6.\( \texttt{e}2 \), B43) 6.\( \texttt{d}xc5 \), B44) 6.\( \texttt{e}3 \) and finally the main line of B45) 6.\( \texttt{a}3 \).

6.\( \texttt{bd}2 \) is rather modest, and Black is fine after 6...\( \texttt{xd}4 7.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{d}8 8.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{h}6 9.\texttt{f}3 0-0 10.0-0 \texttt{f}5 11.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{xd}4 12.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}7 13.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{a}6 14.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{e}6 15.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{d}7 16.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{c}6= Onischuk – Kudrin, Tulsa 2008.

B41) 6.\( \texttt{c}4?! \)

This surprising move poses some interesting problems for the defence.

6...\( \texttt{e}4?! \)

I consider this the most reliable antidote, although I will also mention the following reasonable alternative:

6...\( \texttt{d}8 \) 7.\( \texttt{d}5 \)

White hopes to exploit his space advantage in the centre. 7.\( \texttt{d}c5? \texttt{xd}1 \uparrow 8.\texttt{xd}1 \texttt{a}6 \) is already better for Black.

7...\( \texttt{e}5?! \)

This is interesting, but not necessarily best. Another option is 7...\( \texttt{h}6 8.\texttt{c}3 0-0 9.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{f}5 10.0-0 \texttt{e}5 11.\texttt{dx}e6 \texttt{xe}6 12.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{d}7 13.\texttt{ge}4 \texttt{d}4 14.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{xb}5 15.\texttt{cb}5 \texttt{d}7 when Black’s mobile pieces gave him decent play in Michalczak – Nevednichy, Senden 2003.

8.\( \texttt{c}3 \) \( \texttt{e}7 \) 9.\( \texttt{g}5 \)

There is also 9.\( \texttt{d}3 0-0 10.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{b}6 11.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{f}5 12.\texttt{x}f5 \texttt{x}f5 13.\texttt{de}4 \texttt{xe}4 14.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{h}4 15.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{f}5 16.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{x}g4 17.\texttt{x}g4 \texttt{fx}g4 18.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}3 19.\texttt{ag}1 with a slight edge for White, Lim Yee Weng – Zugic, Turin (ol) 2006

9...\( \texttt{f}6 10.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{a}6 11.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{N} \)

After 11.\( \texttt{e}2? \texttt{f}5 \) Black was more than happy in Shaw – Dreev, Gothenburg 2005, as the black knight was set to become a monster on d4.

11...\( \texttt{f}5 12.\texttt{xf}5 \texttt{xf}5 13.0-0 0-0 14.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}6 \)
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With an edge for White (Finkel).

Black is not losing too much time with the queen.

10.\textit{e}2 0–0

White gets nowhere with: 11.\textit{d}b5 \textit{c}6 12.\textit{c}1 \textit{g}4 13.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}6 14.\textit{f}4 \textit{h}5 15.\textit{c}7 \textit{d}ad8! An instructive moment – Black is willing to accept a pawn weakness in order to increase his dynamic potential. 16.\textit{x}e6 \textit{f}xe6 17.0–0 \textit{d}4 18.\textit{e}el \textit{f}5 19.\textit{d}d1 \textit{d}d7 20.\textit{c}e3 \textit{c}5 Black was on top in Arngrimsson – Carlsen, Reykjavik 2004.

Another game continued 13.\textit{f}f3 \textit{e}6 14.\textit{a}4 \textit{d}d7 15.\textit{f}e1 \textit{b}b8 16.b3 \textit{g}4 17.\textit{x}g4 \textit{g}4 18.\textit{a}c1 \textit{c}7 19.\textit{c}5 \textit{f}e8 when the Black pieces were working quite harmoniously, Courtial – Calotescu, France 2005.

This is an improvement over 14.\textit{d}d4?! Hanley – Dvorak, Millfield 2003, at which point the surprising 14...\textit{b}8!N would have put White in a difficult situation due to the dual threats of ...\textit{x}b2 and ...\textit{g}4.

14...\textit{c}7

The outcome of the fight is open.

This modest development is hardly likely to trouble Black.

White has plenty of alternatives, none of which are really likely to trouble the second player.

8.\textit{c}5

A normal-looking position. It is worth paying attention to the following sequence, in which a world-class player builds up a serious positional advantage. 11.\textit{h}3 \textit{f}5 12.\textit{d}d2 \textit{d}d8 13.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}e4 14.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}8 15.\textit{c}1 \textit{a}5 16.\textit{d}d3 \textit{xc}3 17.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xd}3 18.\textit{xd}3 \textit{d}5 Black obtained a textbook blockade of the opponent’s c3-d4 pawn duo and was soon in complete control, Sebag – Radjabov, Kemer 2007.

8.dxc5 \textit{xc}5 9.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}7 10.\textit{a}3 \textit{c}6 This type of position should be fine for Black, whose extra central pawn might prove to be
a valuable asset. 11...\texttt{a}a4 (11.h3 a6 12.\texttt{a}a4 h6 13.\texttt{a}ad1 \texttt{f}f5 was no problem for the second player in A. Ledger – Baburin, Isle of Man 1997.) 11...\texttt{d}d5! 12.\texttt{g}g5 (Perhaps White should have preferred 12.\texttt{b}b5N \texttt{b}b8 13.\texttt{h}h4 a6 14.\texttt{bd}d4 e5 with approximate equality.) 12...h6 13.\texttt{d}d2 e5 14.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{e}e6 15.\texttt{h}h4 \texttt{e}e7 16.\texttt{xc}e7 \texttt{xc}e7 17.\texttt{c}c4 e4 Black's central control and harmonious pieces gave him the better chances in Shorokhov – Zvjaginsev, Moscow 2004.

8.c4 \texttt{d}d6 9.\texttt{c}c3 cxd4 10.\texttt{b}b5 (10.\texttt{exe}d4 \texttt{exe}d4 11.\texttt{xd}x4 was seen in Felsberger – Benda, Finkenstein 1999, and now after 11...\texttt{c}6N 12.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{exe}d4 13.\texttt{exe}d4 \texttt{e}e6 Black should feel quite content, with no weaknesses and all his pieces in play.)

8.\texttt{c}e3 \texttt{g}4!

Black is immediately fighting against the optimal setup of enemy pieces.

9.\texttt{f}4

9.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{c}6 10.h3 \texttt{f}f6 11.c4 \texttt{d}d6 (The text is much easier than the nervous 11...\texttt{f}f5?! 12.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{d}d7 13.d5 \texttt{b}b4 14.\texttt{c}c3 e6 15.\texttt{e}e2 b6 16.a3 \texttt{a}a6 17.\texttt{c}e5 \texttt{w}e8 18.\texttt{f}3 exd5 19.\texttt{e}e1 when Black was facing catastrophe in Neelotpal – Ehlvest, Dhaka 1999.) 12.d5, Pickles – Gabela, Sydney 1992, 12...\texttt{d}d4N 13.\texttt{c}c3 e5 with strong central control.

9...\texttt{c}6

This position was reached in Fernandes – Rocha, Santo Antonio 2003, and now the most accurate retreat looks like 10...\texttt{w}d7N 11.\texttt{xd}x4 \texttt{c}c6 with no problems for Black, for instance 12.\texttt{w}h4 \texttt{g}4.

10.\texttt{h}3

After 10.\texttt{dxc}5 \texttt{xc}5 Black has good chances to seize control over the centre, for instance: 11.h3 e5! 12.\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{h}h6 13.\texttt{bd}d2 \texttt{w}e7 14.\texttt{xe}e1 f6 15.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{d}d8 16.\texttt{a}a4 \texttt{f}f7 17.\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{d}d7 18.\texttt{c}c2 \texttt{e}e6 19.\texttt{xd}x8+ \texttt{xd}x8 with some advantage for Black, Murariu – Nevednichy, Bucharest 2001.

10...\texttt{d}f6 11.\texttt{e}e3 cxd4 12.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{w}d6

Black has emerged from the opening unscathed and now just has to play sensible moves.

12...\texttt{xd}8 13.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{w}a5 14.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{b}b4 15.\texttt{w}e2 \texttt{a}a5 16.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{e}e6 17.a3 \texttt{d}d6 18.b4 \texttt{c}c6 was also fine in Pedzich – Maciejewski, Warsaw 1998.

13.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{f}f5 14.\texttt{b}b5!!

This nervous show of aggression soon backfires. Still, even after the superior 14.\texttt{e}c1N \texttt{f}f8 15.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{b}b4 White cannot claim even a trace of an advantage.

14...\texttt{d}d8 15.\texttt{f}f4 \texttt{d}d5 16.\texttt{g}g3 \texttt{e}e8 17.\texttt{c}c1 a6 18.\texttt{c}c3 \texttt{h}h6 19.\texttt{a}a1 \texttt{c}c4 20.\texttt{b}b3 \texttt{c}c2 21.\texttt{w}a3 \texttt{b}b6

Black's active pieces dominate the board, Al. Toth – Boros, Balatonlelle 2006.
8...cxd4 9.cxd4 c6 10.Qc3

Black also has nothing to fear after 10.f3 d6 11.Qxc6 (11.f4 Qxd4 12.Qxc6 Qxf4 13.Qxe7+ Qh8) Without the dark-squared bishop White can only dream about an advantage.) 11...bxc6 12.Qc3 Ask – Carlsson, Stockholm 2008. Here my preferred continuation would be 12...f5N 13.Qe1 Qd5 with equal chances.

10...Qd6
10...Qa5N 11.f4 Qd8 also looks fine.

11.b5 Qd8 12.Qf3

So far we have been following the game Mamedyarov – Kulaots, Moscow 2004. Here I think the strongest continuation would have been:

13.a4
13.Qxc6 bxc6 14.Qc3 Qd8 was evaluated as equal by Erenberg, but it seems to me that Black has the better chances thanks to the weakness of the d4-pawn.

13...a6 14.Qxc6 bxc6 15.Qe3 Qd8

Compared with the previous note, the extra moves a2-a4 and ...a7-a6 give White one additional possibility, but it is still not enough to solve his problems completely:

16.a5 Qxd4 17.Qxc6 Qxd1 18.Qxd1 Qxd1† 19.Qxd1 Qb8†

White still has some work to do before he can claim full equality.

B43) 6.Qxc5

We have already seen several instances in which this capture failed to cause Black problems, and the present case is a similar story.

6...Qxc5
6...Qxd1† 7.Qxd1 Qf6 may give Black a degree of compensation, but I am not altogether convinced.

7.Qa3?

This has been a relatively rare choice, but it looks to me like the most challenging. Before chasing the queen, White brings the knight into position in order to make for more effective harassment.

7.Qe3 has been more common, but after 7...Qc7 I see no problems for Black, for instance: 8.Qa4† (Perhaps White should just play something calm like 8.Qe2, although this
will hardly give Black nightmares.) 8...d7
9.b5 c6 10.0-0 a6 11.b2 h6 12.fe1 0-0 13.xc6 xc6 14.b4 a5 15.b6 d7 16.xh6 xh6 17.c4 xf3 18.e5 d8 1/2-1/2 Epishin – Zvjaginsev, St Petersburg 2004. After 19.xd8 xd8 20.xf3 e6 the endgame is equal, although an ultra-ambitious player might have tried to make use of Black’s slightly better minor piece.

7...f6 8.e3 a5 9.b5

Another interesting option is 9.c4 c7 10.a4!? d7 11.a3 Tong Yuanming – Kudrin, Beijing 1998. White’s idea is to obtain the advantage of the two bishops. And I say... let him!

11...c6N! 12.b6 d8 13.xd7 xd7 White has achieved his objective, but paid the price in terms of the time taken. 14.e2 Bangiev evaluates this position as slightly better for White, but after 14...0-0 15.0-0 d5 I rate Black’s chances as at least equal thanks to his harmonious development and superb central control.

9...d7!

This accurate move solves all Black’s problems.

10.e5!? 

White stakes his hopes on the two bishops. Other continuations are harmless, for instance: 10.d4 a6 11.b3 d8 12.a3 b5 13.c5 0-0 14.xd7 bx7 15.e2 c7 16.0-0 xd8 17.xd4 e5 18.h4 d5 19.d4 ab8 White has the two bishops but Black’s well-centralized pieces control plenty of squares, so overall the chances are balanced, Stevie – Morovic Fernandez, Pula 2000.

10...0-0

White’s idea was to meet 10...xb5 with 11.b3, regaining the material and keeping and edge after 11...0-0 12.xb5 thanks to the two bishops.

11.xd7 bx7 12.e2 a6 13.d4 d5 14.b3

We have been following the game Turov – Volokitin, Copenhagen 2002, which was agreed drawn here. The continuation would have been 14.xe3 15.xa5 xd1 16.xd1 c5, with an equal endgame.

B44) 6.e3

This time White wants to take on c5 without allowing the queen to recapture.

6...xd4

Black can also gambit the c-pawn, but I consider the text move to be the sounder response.
7. cxd4

The alternatives are toothless:

7. cxd4  e6 8. b3 Otherwise the bishop will soon be targeted by ... c6. 8... e4† 9. e3 0–0 10. b2 f5 11. d4 d7 12. b3 c6 13. 0–0–0 c7 14. h3 a5 15. b4 b6 16. b3 x b3† 17. x b3 f5 The position of White’s king gives the first player some cause for concern, Vajda – Areshchenko, Plovdiv 2008.

7. xxd4  e6 8. b5 White’s greedy strategy does not make a positive impression. 8... xd1† 9. xd1 d5 10. x a7 c6 11. d4 xd4 12. xxd4 0–0 With two great bishops and a lead in development, Black has more than enough for the pawn.

8. c3 d8

Just as in line B11 above, the queen is better off retreating to her original location rather than the seemingly more active a5-square.

9. c4 0–0 10. 0–0 e6

This position appears in quite a lot of games in the database, but usually with Black to move. Despite this slight disadvantage his position is still quite reliable. (With an extra tempo he would be comfortably equal with chances to play for more, whereas now the position is ‘only’ balanced.)

11. d5!

This energetic move seems to be White’s best attempt to place his opponent under pressure. The slower 11. h3 a5 12. d3 b6 looks fine for Black.

11... a5 12. e2 g4

13. d2 d8 (Another reasonable option is 13... e5!? N 14. c4 b3 d8 15. c4 b6 16. b5 a4 with ongoing compensation, although the game continuation is simpler.) 14. c4 b6 15. b3 x d4 16. x d4 x d4 17. e2 d7† Black regained his pawn while keeping the more active position, Zhang Pengxiang – Conquest, Cala Mayor 2008.

7... e6

Please be sure to avoid 7... h6?? 8. c1!, which has occurred in quite a number of games; even one of my own, although fortunately on that occasion my opponent did not notice my blackout.
13...\texttt{c}e1

I also considered 13...\texttt{a}4?! \texttt{N}e8 14...\texttt{fd}1 b6 15...\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{xf}3 16...\texttt{gx}f3? (16...\texttt{xf}3 \texttt{Cc}4=) White is trying to extract the absolute maximum from the position. Nevertheless after 16...\texttt{de}8! intending ...\texttt{d}d6, Black keeps a decent share of the chances in an unclear position.

13...\texttt{Cc}8 14...\texttt{d}d4 a6 15...\texttt{h}h3 \texttt{Cc}3 16...\texttt{xf}3 \texttt{Cc}4 17...\texttt{e}2 b5

We have been following the game Zifroni – Kengis, Eupen 1997. The position is dynamically balanced. White has more space and the two bishops, but Black has a harmonious set-up with a sounder structure and stable squares for his knights.

B45) 6...\texttt{a}3

Finally we come to White’s most popular and highest-scoring move.

6...\texttt{cxd}4

8...\texttt{f}6 9...\texttt{e}3 0–0 10...\texttt{c}4 \texttt{d}7 11...\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}8 12.0–0 e5 13...\texttt{b}b3 \texttt{e}7 14...\texttt{c}1 b6 White enjoys a pleasant initiative.

8...\texttt{e}3

White continues developing. Alternatives are not dangerous:

8...\texttt{fx}d4 \texttt{d}6 9...\texttt{e}3 0–0 10...\texttt{c}4 \texttt{d}7 11...\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}8 12.0–0 e5 13...\texttt{b}b3 \texttt{e}7 14...\texttt{c}1 b6 Black’s pieces are working in a more harmonious manner.

8...\texttt{xb}xd4

It is hard to believe that White can fight for the advantage having just made three consecutive moves with the same piece.

8...\texttt{f}6 9...\texttt{b}5†

9...\texttt{x}a6?! Strategically this is a very risky decision as the light-squared bishop might be badly missed. 9...\texttt{b}xa6 10.0–0 0–0 11...\texttt{e}1 \texttt{e}8 12...\texttt{b}3 (12...\texttt{f}4 \texttt{h}5?! 13...\texttt{e}5 \texttt{f}6† gave Black an edge in C. Werner – Riff, Switzerland 2007.) 12...e5! 13...\texttt{xd}5N White should be content to play for equality. (13...\texttt{c}2?! \texttt{b}7 14...\texttt{g}5 \texttt{ab}8 15...\texttt{xd}5 [15...\texttt{b}4 \texttt{w}a5 16...\texttt{d}2 \texttt{e}4†] 15...\texttt{xd}5 16...\texttt{ad}1 \texttt{h}6 17...\texttt{c}1 g5! Black maintained a strong initiative in Karpatchev – Galliamova, St Petersburg 1998.) 13...\texttt{xd}5 14...\texttt{c}6 \texttt{f}6 15.c4 \texttt{ab}6 16.b3 \texttt{f}8 9...\texttt{d}7 10...\texttt{xd}7† \texttt{xd}7 11.0–0 0–0 Black had no problems in Karalkin – Matlakov, St Petersburg 2007.

8...\texttt{f}6 9...\texttt{xd}4

Keeping the level play after 9...\texttt{xd}4 0–0 10...\texttt{e}2 \texttt{g}4 is not so difficult for Black.

9...\texttt{xd}4

The pawn a7 is hanging so the defender should not underestimate the seemingly peaceful position without queens. It is worth mentioning a second playable option:
9...0–0!

10.\textit{c}e2
10.\textit{d}c4 \textit{w}h5 11.\textit{w}h4 \textit{w}xh4 12.\textit{d}xh4 b6 13.\textit{h}3 \textit{b}b7 14.0–0–0 \textit{f}c8 15.\textit{e}e2 \textit{d}c5 16.\textit{f}f3 a6 17.\textit{x}xb7 \textit{xb}7 was comfortable enough for Black in Nezad–Ward, Gibraltar 2005.

White can also snatch the a-pawn with 10.\textit{x}xa7 \textit{e}e6 11.\textit{b}b5, Stummer–Manso Gil, e-mail 2006. Here I would suggest 11...\textit{f}c8?!N with the possible continuation 12.\textit{x}xd5 \textit{x}xd5 13.\textit{d}d4 \textit{c}c5 14.\textit{x}xg7 \textit{x}g7 15.\textit{f}f4 \textit{f}f4 16.\textit{xe}x6\dagger fx6 when Black’s compensation is very real.

10...b6 11.0–0 \textit{b}b7 12.\textit{f}fd1 \textit{w}h5 13.\textit{f}f4 \textit{d}d5 14.\textit{g}g5 \textit{x}xg5 15.\textit{h}xg5 h6 16.\textit{d}d2 \textit{c}c5

In principle such a middlegame without queens tends to be fine for Black, and the present game Rausis–Rasik, Czech Republic 2008, was no exception.

10.\textit{x}xd4 b6 11.\textit{a}a4

White is trying to exploit his might on the queenside. Quieter continuations achieve nothing, for instance 11.\textit{e}e2 0–0 12.0–0 \textit{b}b7 13.\textit{f}fd1 \textit{c}c5 14.\textit{c}c4 \textit{f}c8 15.\textit{h}3 \textit{h}5 16.\textit{x}xg7 \textit{x}xg7 with easy play for Black, Guido–Djuric, Genoa 2003.

11...0–0 12.\textit{a}a5

Here I found a promising new idea:

12.\textit{b}b7!N

Black is building an impressive lead in development and can thus afford to sacrifice a pawn. This seems more attractive than grovelling with 12...\textit{d}d7, although Black was more or less able to equalize after 13.\textit{x}xg7 \textit{x}xg7 14.b4 \textit{b}b7 15.\textit{d}d3 \textit{f}c8 16.\textit{d}d2 \textit{c}c7 in Degraeve–Relange, Belfort 1997.

13.axb6 axb6 14.\textit{xb}x6 \textit{d}d5 15.\textit{d}d4 e5

15...\textit{xd}4 16.\textit{fx}xd4 \textit{c}c5 also looks promising.

16.\textit{a}a7 \textit{f}fd8\dagger

Black has full compensation, and if anything it is White who is running the greater risk here.

B452) 7.\textit{c}c4!

This is the critical continuation, which is justified by certain tactical features of the position, as we will shortly see.

7...\textit{e}e4\dagger

7...\textit{d}d8 is certainly playable, but after 8.\textit{b}b5 \textit{f}f6 9.\textit{b}x\textit{d}4 (but not 9.\textit{f}f4 0–0 10.\textit{c}c7? \textit{h}5\dagger) 9...0–0 10.0–0 White has reasonable chances of obtaining a slight edge as his pieces are quite active.
Chapter 3 - The c3 Variation

8.\texttt{e3!}

This is the clever point behind White's play. 8.\texttt{f1} can hardly be viewed as a serious option, for instance: 8...\texttt{h6} 9.\texttt{b3} 0–0 10.\texttt{xh6} \texttt{xh6} 11.\texttt{e1} \texttt{h4} 12.\texttt{d4} \texttt{c6} 13.\texttt{e3} \texttt{d8} 14.\texttt{h4} \texttt{xd4} And White was already the grieving party in Sveshnikov – Sax, Bled 2000.

8...\texttt{h6}!

Hopefully the reader will have smelled a rat after White's last move, and sure enough 8...dxe3?? leads to disaster after 9.\texttt{xf7}† as Black will lose his queen.

Fortunately the text move solves Black's problems conveniently. Of course, the development of the knight to h6 is not only a defensive measure; this piece will often play a valuable role after shifting to f5 in the not too distant future.

9.\texttt{xd4}

There are two alternatives to consider:

9.\texttt{d3}

This is no longer considered a serious try for White, but it important to understand why this is the case.

9...\texttt{g4} 10.\texttt{h3}

This seems like the principled try. Instead 10.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xd4} 11.\texttt{b5†} \texttt{c6} 12.\texttt{xc6†} bxc6 13.\texttt{xd4} 0–0 is equal.

10...\texttt{xg2}!

Black allows his queen to be trapped, having correctly judged that he will receive full compensation.

11.\texttt{h2} \texttt{h2} 12.\texttt{h2} dxe3 13.\texttt{f3} 0–0

Svetushkin – Hamdouchi, Ubeda 1999. With rook, bishop and pawn for a queen, Black has full material equality. His pieces will develop harmoniously and his sounder structure should ensure excellent long-term chances.

9.\texttt{b5} 0–0!

Finally Black is really threatening to take on c3, so there is no time for \texttt{c7}.

10.\texttt{d3}

10.cxd4 \texttt{c6} reaches the note to White's 10th move below.

10...\texttt{g4}

10...\texttt{d5} is another good option.

11.\texttt{xh6} \texttt{xh6} 12.\texttt{c7} dxc5 13.bxc3 \texttt{xg2} 14.\texttt{g1} \texttt{h3} 15.\texttt{xa8} \texttt{f4}!
Preventing the knight from escaping. Once Black captures this piece he will be close to equal on material, with considerable positional advantages.

16...c2 c6 17..b3 e6 18.a4
18.xb7 d5++
18...h6 19.h4 a8=÷

The aggressive approach left White with a broken position in Hamdouchi – Kudrin, Tripoli 2004.

9...0–0

10.0–0

White can also postpone castling:

10.h5 c6 11.c3?!?
The alternatives are less dangerous:

11.0–0 g4 12.c2 f5 13.g5N
(13.c3? xe3 14.xe4 xd1 15.xd1

12.h5!N

Intending ...g4 and ...f5. The same author also mentions the possibility of 12..g4N intending either ...xe3 or even ...f6, centralizing the knight.

13.d5 c5 14.xe5 xe5

Black’s position is even a bit more pleasant.

10...g4

10...f5 has also been played, but I think it is better to develop the bishop first, in order to amplify the pressure against d4.
11.\textit{\textbf{\textit{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{\textbf{xh6}}}}}}}

For a while this move was believed to be enough for a white advantage, but it eventually transpired that Black can obtain a fine game by means of a pawn sacrifice.

Conclusion

Discovering new perspectives in the 2.c3 Sicilian is not easy, as just about every sensible continuation has already been tested and analysed extensively. Both of the systems covered in this chapter seem quite sound, with each having its own advantages.

The first, 2...d6 3.d4 ♜f6, leads to very interesting play after 4.dxc5 ♜c6!. Depending on White’s response, Black can sometimes follow up with the interesting 5...d5, sacrificing a pawn to fight for the initiative. The lines after the more solid 4.�d3 g6 are rich and eminently playable, and make for an interesting departure from the typical Sicilian positions.

The second idea, 2...d5 3.exd5 ♜xd5 4.d4 g6, is rather provocative. Black elects to fianchetto in a position in which a central strategy would seem more natural. Nevertheless the idea has held up well against White’s attempts to demonstrate an advantage, and players who are willing to venture a surprise weapon will be rewarded with rich pickings in reasonably fresh positions.
Closed Systems

Up Close(d) and Personal - Without g3

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\( \&c3 \)

2...d6

A) 3.\( \&ge2 \)

B) 3.d4

C) 3.f4 g6 4.\( \&f3 \) \( \&g7 \)
   C1) 5.d4 cxd4 6.\( \&xd4 \) \( \&c6 \) 7.\( \&e3 \) \( \&f6 \) 8.\( \&e2 \) 0–0
   
   C11) 9.0–0!
   
   C12) 9.\( \&b3 \)
   
   C2) 5.\( \&b5 \) 6.\( \&d7 \) 7.\( \&xd7 \) 7.0–0 \( \&c6 \) 8.d3 \( \&f6 \)
   
   C21) 9.h3
   
   C22) 9.\( \&d2 \)
   
   C3) 5.\( \&c4 \) \( \&c6 \) 6.0–0 \( \&f6 \)
   
   C31) 7.\( \&e1 \)
   
   C32) 7.d3 0–0 8.\( \&e1 \) \( \&d4 \)
   
   C321) 9.f5?!
   
   C322) 9.\( \&xd4 \)
   
   C323) 9.\( \&b3 \)

C21) after 17.\( \&d5 \)

C31) after 14.\( \&xf1 \)

C323) 17.\( \&xe7 \)

C21 after 17.\( \&d5 \)

C31 after 14.\( \&xf1 \)

C323 after 17.\( \&xe7 \)

17...\( \&xd5 \)!  

14...cxd4!N  

17...\( \&e8 \)N
1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6

Black has many different answers, but this one fits in well with our repertoire. Now if White switches plans with 3.d3, Black can calmly reply with 3...d6, knowing that 4.d4 will lead us back into our desired Najdorf variation. Had we instead chosen 2...c6, this would not have been the case.

3...e5?

This is a somewhat radical reaction, but it simplifies the defensive tasks to a narrow set of positional problems.

It is worth mentioning 3...d6 as a sensible alternative. In that case 4.d4 cxd4 would take us back into the Najdorf, so White would have to play 4.g3 to keep us guessing. After the natural 4...g6 5.g2 g7 White would have two main plans:

Keeping the position closed with d3 would not be dangerous as, compared with line B in Chapter 5, White's knight is less well-placed on e2 than f3.

Opening the centre with d4 leads to a rather innocuous variation of the Dragon. This is outside the proposed repertoire but theoretically fine for Black.

Overall, since one is unlikely to encounter the 3.dge2 variation very often, I decided 3...e5 would be the most suitable line to recommend, as it limits White's options and thus reduces the number of variations we need to learn.

4.d5

4.g3

Considering the central structure, it seems illogical to develop the bishop on g2 when the c4-square is available.

4...d6 5.g2

5.d5?! does not combine well with White's last move, and after 5...g4 6.g2 g4 White already has to waste time retreating with 7.d3.

5...g6 6.d3 g7 7.e3 ge7

The same set-up was recommended with reversed colours in the first of Mihail Marin's three volumes on the English Opening in the Grandmaster Repertoire series. Here Black is playing a tempo down but should still be absolutely fine.

8.d2?
This is perhaps White’s most ambitious plan. He postpones castling, hoping to build an attack on the kingside. 8.0-0 is also fine, and leads to normal positions with chances for both sides.

8...\(\text{Cd}4\) 9.h3 0-0 10.g4 \(\text{Ce}6\) 11.f4

This position was reached in Movsesian – Tischbierek, Germany 2007.

Here I recommend a simple improvement:

11...\(\text{Cxe}2\)!!

The game continuation of 11...f5 12.gxf5 gxf5 13.0-0-0 was dangerous for Black.

12.\(\text{Cxe}2\) exf4 13.\(\text{Cxf}4\) \(\text{Cxb}2\) 14.\(\text{Cc}1\) \(\text{Ce}5\)

15.\(\text{Cxb}7\) \(\text{Cb}8\) 16.\(\text{Cxb}8\) \(\text{Cxb}8\)

White is unable to aspire for anything more than equality.

4...\(\text{Ce}7\) 5.\(\text{Cec}3\) \(\text{Cc}6\) 6.\(\text{Cc}4\) \(\text{Cdx}5\) 7.\(\text{Cxd}5\)

Both sides have developed sensibly. Black has a slight hole on d5, but apart from that his position is perfectly healthy, with harmonious development and plenty of space in the centre. We will see that the opponent’s slight initiative can soon be extinguished with minimal hassle.

10.f4

Playing on the queenside is also not dangerous: 10.a3 \(\text{Cb}8\) 11.c3 \(\text{Cg}5\) 12.\(\text{Ch}5\) \(\text{Cxc}1\) 13.\(\text{Cxc}1\) b5 14.\(\text{Ca}2\) \(\text{Ce}7\) White has kissed goodbye to any aspirations for the advantage, and after 15.\(\text{Cxe}7\)† a draw was agreed in Mokry – Ftacnik, Sumperk 1984.

14.\(\text{Cd}5\)

14.\(\text{Cxe}6\) \(\text{Cxe}6\) 15.\(\text{Ce}3\) \(\text{Cc}6\) 16.\(\text{Cf}5\) \(\text{Cf}6\) does not change the overall assessment.

14.\(\text{Cec}6\) 15.\(\text{Cxc}6\) \(\text{bxc}6\) 16.e5

Also after 16.b4 \(\text{Cxb}4\) 17.\(\text{Cxb}4\) c5 18.\(\text{Ce}1\) \(\text{f}6\) the position is equal.

16...\(\text{dxe}5\) 17.\(\text{Cxe}5\) \(\text{f}6\) 18.\(\text{Cc}3\) \(\text{c}4\)
Black rids himself of his pawn weakness, leading to full equality, Mortensen – De Firmian, Copenhagen 1985.

B) 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{W}}}x\text{d}4\)

This centralization of the queen is much less common than the version examined in Chapter 8.

4...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}c6\) 5.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}b5\)

Rare is:

5.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{W}}}e3\)

The retreat of the queen costs time, and she might also become exposed on her new location.

5...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}f6\) 6.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{D}}}d2\) 7.0–0–0 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}c7\) 8.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{F}}}f3\) 0–0 9.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{G}}}g2\)

This seems to be White’s best.

In the event of 9.g4?! Schmalz – Soffer, Internet 1999, it looks strong for Black to play 9...d5!N The counterpunch in the centre is clearly the best reaction to White’s premature kingside demonstration. 10.exd5 exd5 11.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{W}}}e2\) (11.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{D}}}d3\) d4 12.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}e4\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}e5\) 11...d4 12.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}e4\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}e6\) 13.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{F}}}h3\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}x\text{e}4\) 14.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{G}}}x\text{e}4\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{G}}}x\text{a}2\) The first player has got into serious trouble.

9...d5 10.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}d4\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}x\text{d}4\) 11.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{W}}}x\text{d}4\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}x\text{e}4\) 12.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{D}}}d8\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{G}}}x\text{d}8\) 13.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}x\text{e}4\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}x\text{e}4\) 14.fxe4 b6 15.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}d3\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}}b7\)

Black seldom enjoys such an easy ride in the opening. He has equalized easily, and even has an (admittedly mostly symbolic) advantage of fewer pawn islands.

5...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}d7\) 6.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{H}}}xc6\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{H}}}x\text{c}6\) 7.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{G}}}g5\)

This is the independent try. Instead 7.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{F}}}f3\) transposes to Chapter 8.

7...h6

8.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}e3\)

Please pay attention to the following trick: 8.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{H}}}h4??\) e5! and Black wins a piece.

8...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{G}}}f6\) 9.0–0–0

Another game continued:

9.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{F}}}f3\) e5!

Thanks to the “gift” of the ...h7-h6 move Black does not have to worry about \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{G}}}g5\).

10.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{D}}}d3\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{Q}}}e7\) 11.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbf{B}}}h4\)
Black could even have considered 11...dxe4!?N 12.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xe4 d5 13.\textbf{\textit{Q}}f5 dxe4 14.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xg7+ \textbf{\textit{Q}}f8 15.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xd8+ \textbf{\textit{Q}}xd8 16.\textbf{\textit{Q}}f5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}d7 17.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xe7 \textbf{\textit{Q}}xe7 18.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xa7 \textbf{\textit{Q}}h8=, not that this is really necessary as the position reached in the game is more than fine.

12.exd5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}xd5 13.\textbf{\textit{Q}}f5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}b4! 14.0-0-0 14.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xg7+ \textbf{\textit{Q}}f8 15.0-0-0 \textbf{\textit{Q}}xc3 16.\textbf{\textit{Q}}f5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}b4 17.\textbf{\textit{Q}}e4 \textbf{\textit{Q}}a5 18.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xe5 f6 19.\textbf{\textit{Q}}g3 \textbf{\textit{Q}}g8 20.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xh6+ \textbf{\textit{Q}}f7 21.\textbf{\textit{Q}}b3 \textbf{\textit{Q}}g6+=

Black's ambitious play in the centre proved to be fully justified, Gashimov – Karjakin, Baku 2008.

9...e5 10.\textbf{\textit{Q}}d3 \textbf{\textit{Q}}c7 11.\textbf{\textit{Q}}ge2

11.\textbf{\textit{Q}}f3?! seems less logical as the knight has fewer prospects here. Play might continue 11...0-0 12.\textbf{\textit{Q}}b1 b5 13.\textbf{\textit{Q}}h4 b4 14.\textbf{\textit{Q}}d5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}xd5 15.exd5 e4 16.\textbf{\textit{Q}}d2 \textbf{\textit{Q}}d7 with fine prospects for Black.

11...0-0=\textbf{\textit{N}}

This seems like the most natural move, although there is also nothing wrong with 11...\textbf{\textit{Q}}a5 12.\textbf{\textit{Q}}b1 \textbf{\textit{Q}}c8 13.\textbf{\textit{Q}}g3. Now 13...g6 14.h4 b5 15.\textbf{\textit{Q}}d5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}xd5 16.exd5 h5 17.f4 \textbf{\textit{Q}}g4 18.\textbf{\textit{Q}}f5 gave White some initiative in Guseinov – Gabrielyan, Moscow 2008, but the improvement 13...\textbf{\textit{Q}}d7 N 14.\textbf{\textit{Q}}f3 \textbf{\textit{Q}}xf5 15.exf5 0-0 leads to equality, with similar play to the main line below.

12.\textbf{\textit{Q}}g3 \textbf{\textit{Q}}d7 13.\textbf{\textit{Q}}f5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}xf5 14.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xf5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}d7

Both sides have achieved certain things. Black has a healthy central majority, but for the time being it is being restrained by White's pieces. Overall the chances are balanced, for instance:

15.\textbf{\textit{Q}}he1 \textbf{\textit{Q}}fd8 16.\textbf{\textit{Q}}f3 \textbf{\textit{Q}}c6 17.\textbf{\textit{Q}}d5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}xd5

18.\textbf{\textit{Q}}xd5 \textbf{\textit{Q}}g5=

Black exchanges his bad bishop and intends ...\textbf{\textit{Q}}ac8 followed by centralizing his king.

C) 3.\textbf{\textit{f}}4

Some Sicilian players are reluctant to answer 2.\textbf{\textit{Q}}c3 with 2...d6 on account of this very move. The point is that, compared with the positions reached after 2...\textbf{\textit{Q}}c6 3.\textbf{\textit{f}}4, there can arise certain situations, specifically in line C3 below, in which Black might have been glad for the opportunity to play ...d7-d5 in one move rather than two. As I mentioned previously, the problem from the perspective of our repertoire occurs after 2...\textbf{\textit{Q}}c6 3.\textbf{\textit{f}}3, when Black must play something like 3...e5 in order to avoid entering a different variation of the Open Sicilian. This is not a bad line, but it
is highly theoretical and would require a great deal of attention. Overall I consider the 2...d6 move order to be the lesser evil, as Black still gets a fully satisfactory game, even after losing the ...d7-d5 option in certain positions.

Enough talk – let’s see some moves!

3...g6 4.f3 g7

Now we will consider three options:

C1) 5.d4, C2) 5.b5† and C3) 5.c4.

5.g3 and 5.d3 are both likely to transpose to the following chapter.

C1) 5.d4

This takes us into a variation of the Dragon. White’s approach has seldom been used in this position, as most exponents of the system with 2.c3 and 3.f4 employ it precisely in order to avoid the main Open Sicilian variations. Nevertheless we should still pay attention to it, as you never know when you might encounter one of those versatile players who decides to ‘move-order’ you into a different system.

5...cxd4 6.cxd4 c6

Please note that the immediate 6...d6 would be risky in view of 7.e5!.

7.e3 d6 8.c2

White has occasionally tested some alternatives on the previous few moves, but since you will only rarely (if ever) be encountering this position, it would be counterproductive to spend too much time examining sidelines.

8...0–0

Now we will consider the risky C11) 9.0–0! followed by the more reliable C12) 9.b3.

C11) 9.0–0! b6!

This clever move highlights the instability of White’s pieces in the centre. Now the first player must play with great accuracy to hold the balance.

10.d3

The parade of White moves (most of them quite frustrating) neatly evokes the Boulevard of Broken Dreams. Most of the alternatives lead to trouble for him, and in general he must tread a narrow path to equality.

10.f5? xb2! 11.a4 a3 12.c3 xe4 (but not 12...fx5? 13.c1) 13.c1 xc3 14.xa3 xd1 15.xe7† (15.xg7 xe3+) 15...xe7 16.axd1 d7 17.c5 c6 18.b3 (18.xd6 f5 is similar) 18...d5 19.xd6 e8 White is effectively bankrupt, Casas Saez – Ruiz Jarabo Pelayo, e-mail 2007.

10.h1?! xe4 (10...xb2 11.db5 b4+) 11.xc6 xc6 12.db5 e8! 13.d3 (Nothing much is changed by 13.f3 f5 or 13.a7 b4 14.b5 c8) This was Chemin – Resende, Sao Paulo 1995, and now after 13...f5 White does not have nearly enough for the sacrificed pawn.

10.e5!  
This is a bit more challenging, although Black is still doing well.
10...dxe5 11.fxe5 Qxe5 12.Qf5 Kb2
There is no reason for Black not to gobble another pawn.
13.Qxe7+ Kh8 14.d4

This poses tricky problems for the first player, although he can still maintain equality if he plays carefully.

14...Qb4! 15.Qxe5
15.Qxc8 should be met by 15...Qd8!N (Black should pay attention as the advantage could slip away after 15...Qaxc8, Slater - Donaldson, Seattle 1987, 16.Qb1!N Qe7 17.Qb5) 16.Qb5 Qaxc8 when White's position is in disarray.
15...Qxe7 16.Qd4 Qh5 17.Qxg7+ Qxg7
18.Qf3 Qe6 19.Qab1 Qf8d8 20.Qd5 Qd6 21.c4

Once again White has a hard time demonstrating compensation for the missing pawn, Mills - Braun, e-mail 2001.

10.Qa4? looks odd, although at least White avoids losing material. 10...Qb4 (Black can also repeat the position with 10...Qa5 11.Qc3 Qb6) 11.c3 Qa5 12.b4 Qc7 13.Qf3 Qd7 14.Qc1 Qb8 This position has been reached in several games, such as Westerinen - Miles, Metz 1985. The knight on a4 is less than ideally placed, and Black has made a high score from this position although objectively he is no more than equal.

10...Qg4!
11...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textit{\texttt{x}}}}}}4!
This provides the justification for Black's previous move.

12.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{x}}}xg4
After 12.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{x}}}xb6?! \textbf{\textit{\texttt{x}}}c3† 13.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{h}}}h1 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{x}}}xb6} Black's three pieces are more valuable than White's queen. White's only challenging continuation is 14.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{x}}}xg4 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{x}}}xg4 15.f5, but after 15...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{h}}}h5!} 16.a4 (16.h3 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{g}}}xf5 17.exf5 f6†) 16...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{e}}}e5 17.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{g}}}g3 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{e}}}e2 18.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{f}}}fe1 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{a}}}a6 19.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{a}}}a3 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{a}}}ac8 Black was better and went on to win in Olofsson – Isaev, e-mail 2007.}

12.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{x}}}xe3† 13.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{w}}}xe3}

13...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{w}}}xe3†}
If Black desperately wants to play for win he can consider the slightly risky capture of the b2-pawn. 13...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}xb2} 14.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{a}}}a4} 15.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}x}bxa4} 16.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{a}}}ac8} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}xc8} 16.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{a}}}xb7} This was Grosar – Kutzner, Bad Woerishofen 1991, and now, according to my analysis, best play continues 16...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{w}}}xc2N 17.f5! (17.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{a}}}c1 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{w}}}a4} 18.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{w}}}xe7} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{b}}}b4} 19.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{w}}}xc8† \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}xc8†}) 17...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{d}}}d5} (17...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{a}}}ab8?! 18.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{h}}}h6} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{w}}}xe4} 19.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textbf{w}}}e7} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{d}}}d4†} 20.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}e3} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{g}}}g7} 21.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}f4} looks too risky for Black) 18.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}xc5} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{d}xc5} 19.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{a}}}ac1 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{a}}}ab8} 20.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}xb8} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{w}}}xb8} 21.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{a}}}ac5 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{b}}}b4} 22.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}xe7† \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{h}}}h8= The excitement peters out into an equal ending.

14.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{d}}}xe3} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{g}}}xg4} 15.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{d}}}xg4} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{a}}}ac8} 16.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}c3} f6

We have been following the game Cramling – Keene, London 1982. The ending is equal, although I suspect most players would prefer Black's position ever so slightly, thanks to the open c-file and possibility of launching a minority attack on the queenside.

C12) 9.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{b}}}b3
Having witnessed the effectiveness of a well-timed queen sortie to b6, the rationale for this move becomes clear.

9...a5!?
Many other moves are possible, but I chose to focus on the text, which aims to question the position of the knight.

10.a4 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{c}}}c6 11.0–0

11...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}d7}?! This has seldom been seen, but has been tested by a few Dragon specialists and has scored highly for Black.

12.f5
White gains nothing from the slower approach: 12.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\textbf{h}}}h1} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}c8} 13.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}d2}? (Better was 13.f5N, although Black should still be fine after something like 13...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{b}}}xb3} 14.cxb3 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{c}}}c5 15.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{g}}}g4 \textbf{\textit{\texttt{b}}}b8=) 13...\textbf{\textit{\texttt{d}}}d4 14.\textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}xd4} \textbf{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}xd4} 15.f5
Chapter 4 - Without g3

The bishop exchange brings certain advantages for both sides. White will employ a set-up with central pawns on d3 and e4, so it makes a certain amount of sense to exchange his light-squared bishop. On the other hand, Black has slightly less space, so an exchange of minor pieces will relieve any congestion in his position.

7.0-0 \( \text{d}6 \) 8.\text{d}3 \( \text{f}6 \)

This is the most natural move, although Black can also consider:

8...\( \text{h}6 \)!

Intending to use the f-pawn in an active role.

9.\( \text{h}1 \) f5 10.\( \text{d}2 \)

White does not achieve much with 10.exf5 \( \text{x}f5 \) 11.\( \text{e}4 \) 0-0 12.\text{c}3 \text{e}6 (It was worth considering 12...b6?N 13.\( \text{d}2 \) d5 14.\( \text{g}3 \) e5 Black is doing well, with strong central control and perfectly coordinated pieces.)

13.\( \text{d}2 \) b6 14.\( \text{a}4 \) d5 15.\( \text{e}5 \) h6 16.\( \text{h}3 \) d4 (16...\( \text{ab}8 \)N deserved attention, for instance: 17.\( \text{f}2 \) b5 18.\( \text{c}2 \) b4+) 17.\( \text{ae}1 \) dxc3 18.\text{cx}3 \( \text{d}5 \) 19.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{fe}8 \) 20.\( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{e}7 \) \text{½}–\text{½} Adams – Gelfand, Dortmund 1996.

10...0-0 11.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{ae}8 \) 12.\( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{f}7 \)

Also fine was 12...\( \text{d}4 \)N 13.\( \text{ac}1 \) \( \text{f}7 \) 14.\( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{d}8 \) with equal chances.

13.exf5 \( \text{xf}5 \) 14.\( \text{ae}1 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 15.\( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{d}4 \)

White could claim no advantage against the well-coordinated enemy forces in Hebden–Novikov, Isle of Man 1996.

After 8...\( \text{f}6 \) White has tried a variety of responses. Instead of considering every possible move order, I think it makes sense to categorize the positions based on how White chooses to develop his remaining bishop. Thus we will consider C21) 9.\( \text{h}3 \) (intending \( \text{e}3 \)) and C22) 9.\( \text{d}2 \).

C21) 9.\( \text{h}3 \) 0-0 10.\text{e}3
10...b6

This has been the most popular move, although it is really a matter of taste as there are several satisfactory continuations. One alternative is 10...e8?, clearing the long diagonal and intending ...c7, while another is 10...b5 11.d2 b4 12.e2, Padievsky - Browne, Amsterdam 1972, and here I would suggest 12...e6N 13.c3 d8 with equal chances.

11.c1 a8 12.h4 d5 13.f2

The variation 13.e5 d4 14.exf6 xf6 15.g5 xg5 16.fxg5 dxe3+ shows that Black is well prepared for a tactical confrontation.

13...dxe4 14.dxe4

So far we have been following the game Radulski – Popov, Batumi 2002. Here I found an interesting new idea:

14...h5?

I must stress that there was also nothing wrong with the game continuation of 14...h6 15.e3 d4 16.b2 b7 17.c1 xf3+ 18.exf3 e6 19.d1 a8, when the chances were balanced.

15.ad1

It is not so easy for White to develop his attack, so the text looks logical. White certainly achieves nothing with 15.f5 d6 16.b7?

15...c8 16.e5 w5!

Black can afford to put his queen on this seemingly dubious square, as 17.g4? is refuted by the simple 17...xf4. Meanwhile White must find a way to deal with the threats against f4 and c2.

17.d5

Looks critical, but Black has a strong retort:

17...xd5!

17...xc2 is also playable, but the text is more ambitious.

18.d5 xf4 19.d2 xe5 20.xe5 xe5 21.c3 g5 22.f1 f3

With two pawns for the exchange Black is doing fine from a materialistic standpoint.
Furthermore, his well centralized pieces may give him some chances to fight for the advantage.

**C22) 9.d2 0–0 10.e1 ac8**

This move, which prepares a knight hop to d4, is a nice way to make use of the earlier bishop exchange.

11.h4

White should not be too lethargic in his approach. For instance: 11.h1 d4 12.c1 b5 13.d1 b7 (Also strong was 13...e8??!N intending 14.f5 d5+) 14.c3 Cu. Hansen – Van Wely, Cap d’Agde 1996.

14...h5??N Thanks to his well-placed pieces the second player can become quite active. 15.cxd4 (15.c3?! xf4! 16.cxd4 xd3?)

15.cxd4 16.g4 c6?? The vulnerable c2-pawn is more real than White’s dreams about a successful kingside attack.

11...d4 12.e1 g4

There is also nothing wrong with 12...b5N 13.d4 cxd4 14.e2 g4 15.g3 f5 with equality.

13.xg4 xg4 14.h3 f6 15.e3 xf3†
16.xf3 d7 17.e2 b5 18.c3 e6

Objectively the position is equal, although Black’s position is just a little more comfortable and in Kosten – Gavrikov, Budapest 1989, he was eventually able to grind out a win.

**C3) 5.e4**

This is the most aggressive line at White’s disposal. Instead of exchanging his bishop, he hopes to use it for attacking purposes.

5...c6 6.0–0 f6??

Many players prefer to develop this piece on e7 (after 6...e6), but after investigating the text move I believe it to be just as strong. Being the less popular choice, it might also provoke some opponents into playing over-ambitiously. We will consider two options: C31) 7.e1 and C32) 7.d3.
7.\textcolor{red}{b}3 0–0 8.\textcolor{red}{w}e1 \textcolor{red}{d}d4 9.\textcolor{red}{d}3 a5 reaches line C323.

C31) 7.\textcolor{red}{w}e1

With this move White intends a quick f4-f5, intending to catch up on queenside development a bit later.

7...0–0

7...\textcolor{red}{b}b4!? 8.\textcolor{red}{w}d1 0–0 9.\textcolor{red}{d}3 d5 10.exd5 \textcolor{red}{f}xd5= seems like an eminently playable solution too.

8.f5

8...\textcolor{red}{e}6!

Preparing to strike back in the centre. Theoretically it is okay for Black to grab the pawn with 8...gx\textcolor{red}{f}5, but after 9.\textcolor{red}{d}3 White always has a certain amount of practical compensation.

9.fx\textcolor{red}{g}6

9.fxe6 fxe6 is the same.

9...\textcolor{red}{f}x\textcolor{red}{g}6

It would be too dangerous for Black to play 9...hxg\textcolor{red}{6}! 10.d3, for instance: 10.\textcolor{red}{d}d4 11.\textcolor{red}{g}5! \textcolor{red}{x}c2 12.\textcolor{red}{w}h4 \textcolor{red}{d}xa1 13.e5!-- Greedy lines seem even more absurd when you notice Black making so many moves with one of his already developed pieces. His kingside was neglected and the punishment was severe.

10.e5?!

This tempting move is a mistake. White compromises his opponent’s pawn centre, but cannot tame his pieces. Better was 10.\textcolor{red}{d}3 \textcolor{red}{g}4 11.\textcolor{red}{g}5 \textcolor{red}{b}6 with equal chances, Leustean – Chiricuta, Sovata 1997.

10...dxe5 11.\textcolor{red}{d}3 \textcolor{red}{d}d4 12.\textcolor{red}{b}b3

No better is: 12.\textcolor{red}{x}d4 cxd4 13.\textcolor{red}{e}e4 \textcolor{red}{d}xe4 14.\textcolor{red}{x}f8+ \textcolor{red}{w}f8 15.\textcolor{red}{x}e4 \textcolor{red}{w}f5+

12...\textcolor{red}{d}5!

The doubled e-pawns play a valuable role in supporting the powerful knights.

13.\textcolor{red}{x}d4 \textcolor{red}{x}f1+ 14.\textcolor{red}{w}xf1

This position was reached in Dorfman – Polugaevsky, Moscow 1976. Here I found a natural improvement:

14...cxd4!N

Black should not be overly concerned about “correcting” his pawn structure. In fact it turns out that the e5-pawn plays an important role in taming White’s initiative.

15.\textcolor{red}{e}e4 \textcolor{red}{d}d7 16.\textcolor{red}{g}5 \textcolor{red}{c}7+$
Black has an extra pawn and healthy central control. True, the extra e-pawn may not be hurting White directly, but it certainly improves Black's control over the important central squares.

**C32) 7.d3**

8...\(e4\)

This is the standard developing move.

7...0-0 8.\(e1\)

White's entire system is geared towards a kingside attack, and this move plays a key role. White's typical plan involves some combination of \(f5, \text{h4, h6, g5}\) followed by mate on h7. It is all rather crude, but can certainly be dangerous if Black does not know how to respond.

Sometimes White switches things around with the immediate:

8.f5 e6

As mentioned previously, it would be risky to accept the pawn, although it may be theoretically okay.

9.fxg6

9.\(e1\) is well met by 9...d5!, which gives Black good chances to fight for the advantage, for instance: 10.\(b3\) c4! 11.dxc4 dxe4 12.\(xe4\) 13.\(xe4\) exf5, Vo Hong Phuong – Xu Yuhua, Istanbul (o) 2000.

9...fxg6 10.g5 h6 11.\(h4\)

It is a similar story after 11.\(d2\) d5 12.exd5 exd5 13.b3 \(h7\) 14.\(e1\) \(g4\). Black has all his pieces in play and the b3-bishop has trouble finding a useful role.

11.g5 12.e1 d5 13.b3 \(a5\)

White's position was already becoming uncomfortable, Meulner – Ploetz, Wildflecken 1988.

8...\(d4\)

9.\(d4\)

Here we will consider the ultra-aggressive but not quite sound C321) 9.\(f5\)!, followed by the calmer alternatives of C322) 9.\(xd4\) and C323) 9.\(b3\).

C321) 9.\(f5\)!

This was tried in Gofshtein – Pigusov, Bourbon Lancy 1997, and does not appear to have been repeated since.

9...\(xc2\)!N

Black must not be intimidated. He should be able to survive the attack and win with his extra material, although strong nerves may be required at certain key moments.

10.\(h4\) \(xa1\)

From this point on, the key to Black's defence will be to neutralize the c4-bishop.
The goal might be achieved by capturing the bishop outright, diverting it away from the a2-g8 diagonal, or blocking the said diagonal. Once this had been achieved, the remaining defensive moves should not be too difficult to find, as you can see in the following variations.

**11...b5!**

Once again, the c4-bishop is the target. 11...e6!? seems to be playable, but the text move is so obviously strong that there is no point in analysing anything else in detail.

It should briefly be noted that 11...d5? is much worse, for instance: 12.\(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) 13.\(\text{d}g5!\) \(\text{d}f6\) 14.\(\text{f}x\text{g}6\) \(\text{h}x\text{g}6\) 15.\(\text{x}x\text{g}7\) \(\text{x}x\text{g}7\) 16.\(\text{f}x\text{f}6+-\)

**12.\(\text{x}x\text{b}5\)**

12.\(\text{f}x\text{g}6?\) \(\text{bxc}4\) gives White nothing; alternatively after 12.\(\text{d}d5?\) \(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) 13.\(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) Black kills the attack with 13...\(\text{f}6!+-\).

The following line is more interesting: 12.\(\text{d}x\text{b}5\) \(\text{d}5!\) Having drawn the knight away from the centre, this becomes an excellent move. Once again we are targeting the bishop. 13.\(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}x\text{d}5\) 14.\(\text{d}g5?!\) The best try. 14...\(\text{d}f6\) 15.\(\text{f}x\text{g}6\) \(\text{f}x\text{g}6\) 16.\(\text{x}x\text{g}7\) \(\text{x}x\text{g}7\) 17.\(\text{f}x\text{f}6\) \(\text{x}x\text{f}6!\) 18.\(\text{e}5!\) \(\text{d}x\text{e}5\)

The king is surprisingly safe, for instance: 19.\(\text{e}4!\) \(\text{f}6\) 20.\(\text{d}x\text{h}7\) \(\text{x}g7\) 21.\(\text{d}x\text{f}8\) \(\text{x}f5\) and Black wins.

**12...\(\text{d}c2!\)**

The knight is not only safeguarding itself from a potential capture, but also playing an active role in the defence.

**13.\(\text{d}c4\)**
Other moves are no better, for instance:
13.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}3!\) Not only attacking the rook, but also threatening ...\(\text{xh}6\) followed by ...
\(\text{eg}4\).

13...\(\text{d}4\) 14.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}6!\)
Thanks to the lost tempo involved in White's \(\text{xb}5\)-c4 manoeuvre, Black had enough time to recentralize his knight, supporting the pawn on \(\text{e}6\) and thereby preventing the bishop on \(\text{c}4\) from playing an active role in the attack.

15.\(\text{xg}6\)
There is not much else that White can do.

15...\(\text{fxg}6\) 16.\(\text{h}g7<\text{h}xg7\) 17.\(\text{hf}6\) \(\text{h}6!\)–+
The attack runs out of steam.

As you can see, a certain amount of precision was required in order to defend correctly. At the same time, the ideas were quite easy to understand and follow: just take away the influence of the bishop on \(\text{c}4\), and everything else more or less falls into place.

C322) 9.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\)
The direct exchange in the centre may be White's best option, although it is not much of a try for an advantage.

10.\(\text{d}5\)
White should avoid 10.\(\text{e}2!\) \(\text{d}5!\) 11.\(\text{xd}5\) 12.\(\text{xd}5\) when the resulting pawn structure favours Black. Here is one example: 12.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{e}3\) (Also interesting is 12...\(\text{b}5!\)N 13.\(\text{xb}5\) 14.\(\text{xb}6\) with promising compensation.) 13.\(\text{xe}3\) dxe3 14.\(\text{xe}3\) \(\text{xb}2\) 15.\(\text{ab}1\) \(\text{g}7\) 16.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}8\) 17.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 18.\(\text{h}1\) b6 With the bishop pair and a sounder structure, Black was in full control in Kolosowski – Nedilko, Warsaw 2006.

10.\(\text{d}1\) is not so bad, although Black should be able to obtain a comfortable game after 10...\(\text{d}5\) 11.\(\text{b}3\) dxe4 12.\(\text{xe}4\), Armbrust – Fruebing, Willingen 2006. In this position it looks promising to pre-empt the possible e5-push with 12...\(\text{d}7?\)N 13.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}7\) 14.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{a}5\)! 15.a4 \(\text{c}5\) 16.\(\text{xc}5\) 17.\(\text{xc}5\) when Black has good chances on the queenside.

10...\(\text{xd}5\) 11.\(\text{xd}5\)
White can also consider 11.\(\text{xd}5\), J. Peters – D. Lee, Los Angeles 1999. White wants to attack along the e-file, but the downside is that his bishop has a restricted view of the board. Black should develop calmly with 11...\(\text{d}7\)N with the possible continuation 12.a4 \(\text{a}5\) 13.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}8\), with roughly even chances.

11...\(\text{e}6\) 12.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{a}5\) 13.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{h}8\)?
This is a sensible precaution.
Black’s defences were holding firm in Klimov - Trofimov, Satka 2005.

C323) 9...b3

This natural-looking move has been White’s most popular choice, but it runs into an unpleasant counter.

9...a5!

Suddenly the b3-bishop has become a serious target.

10.e5

White should try to create problems for his opponent. The passive 11.a4 gives Black a simple route to an advantage with 11...bxc3 12.cxb3 c6 13.f5 \(\text{W}b6\#.

11...a4!

Already White must search for the best way to avoid problems.

10...d3? is definitely not the answer in view of 10...g4!\(\text{†}.

10.d2 d7 (10...e6?N is also promising)

11.a4 bxc3 12.cxb3 c6 13.a3 \(\text{W}b6\) 14.b5 e8 15.f5 d7\(\text{b}6\). Black’s bishop pair and healthier structure gave him the better chances in Bauer - Pelletier, Aubervilliers 2002.

10.d4 cxd4 is just an inferior version of line C322, from White’s point of view. 11.d5 cxd5 12.exd5 e6 13.c4 [13.b3? a4 14.c4 d5 15.exd5 exd5 16.b5 a5\(\text{†}.

13...a4 14.a3 d5 15.a2 dxe4 16.dxe4 c7\(\text{f}\) The weak pawn c2 is hurting White’s position.)

11...a4 12.d4 d5 13.exd5 cxd5 14.a3 (14.f2 b5?! 15.xb5 \(\text{W}\)b6 16.c4 [or 16.c4 \(\text{c}3\) e6 looks excellent for Black, for instance: 17.xe3 dxe3 18.g3 a3\(\text{†}.) 14...b8 15.d6 with an obvious plus for Black thanks to his superior structure, Wei - Stojic, Tuggeranong 2007.

10.h4

This was played in Hernandez - Anand, Merida 2001.

10...d7!N

In the game Black sacrificed a pawn with 10...a4 and obtained good compensation, but the text move, which was subsequently given as an improvement by Anand, should ensure an advantage without much risk and should therefore be preferred.

11.e5

White should try to create problems for his opponent. The passive 11.a4 gives Black a simple route to an advantage with 11...bxc3 12.cxb3 c6 13.f5 \(\text{W}b6\#.

11...a4!

12.c4

The immediate capture on f6 does not solve White’s problems, and the same can be said for the following alternatives:

12.d4 cxd4 13.d5 (or 13.xa4 b5 14.b6 \(\text{W}\)xb6 15.exf6 \(\text{c}6\)xf6\(\text{†}.) 13...axb3 14.exf6 exf6 15.cxb3 a5\(\text{†}.

12.c4 g4!
12.\texttt{g5} \texttt{f5!} 13.\texttt{xf7+ xf7} 14.\texttt{h3} \texttt{d4}
15.\texttt{h4} \texttt{xe2} 16.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{xf7} 17.\texttt{exf6} exf6
18.\texttt{b1} \texttt{xf6}

12...\texttt{b5}!
Continuing to fight against the dangerous light-squared bishop.
12...\texttt{xf3+} would let White off the hook:
13.\texttt{gxf3} (13.gxf3? \texttt{h5+}) 13...\texttt{dxe5} 14.\texttt{fxe5} \texttt{g4} 15.\texttt{g5} \texttt{xe5} 16.\texttt{ff1} \texttt{e8} (16...\texttt{xc4} 17.\texttt{xe7} would be unclear) 17.\texttt{d5} \texttt{xc4} 18.\texttt{xe7+ xe7} 19.\texttt{xe7 c7} 20.\texttt{xc4 xb2} 21.\texttt{e1 d4+} 22.\texttt{h1} with roughly equal chances.
13.\texttt{xd4}
13.\texttt{xf7+ xf7} 14.\texttt{g5 xc2} 15.\texttt{xf7 xf7} 16.\texttt{exf6 exf6} 17.\texttt{b1 f5+} is similar to the 12.\texttt{g5} variation noted above.
13...\texttt{xd4} 14.\texttt{xb5 d5!} 15.\texttt{exf6 g6} 16.\texttt{f2} \texttt{dxc4} 17.\texttt{xd4 cxd3} 18.\texttt{cxd3 g4} 19.\texttt{xe3 d5}
Black has emerged from the complications with a definite advantage.

10...\texttt{d7}
10.\texttt{g4} is not a bad alternative, but I prefer to focus on the text move.
11.\texttt{xd7 xd7} 12.\texttt{f2 a4} 13.\texttt{xd4 cxd4} 14.\texttt{c2 b6}
14...\texttt{e5} is fine as well, but I would prefer not to obstruct the view of the g7-bishop.

15.\texttt{f5}
15...\texttt{d5!?}
This is a really interesting and creative idea. Black is looking to take the sting out of the possible \texttt{f4-d5} manoeuvre.

16.\texttt{g5}
Obviously we should also consider the consequences of accepting the bait.
16.\texttt{exd5 e6!?}
This can lead to interesting complications, although the straightforward 16...\texttt{ac8?!} might actually be a stronger move. Black has fine compensation thanks to his pressure on the c-file.
17.\texttt{c4}
17.c3 gives Black the extra option of 17...\texttt{exf5!}, for instance: 18.\texttt{xd4 d4} (18...\texttt{f6} 19.\texttt{c2 xf2+} 20.\texttt{xf2 xd5}) 19.\texttt{xd4 xd4+} 20.\texttt{xd4 f6} with better chances for Black.
17...\texttt{dxc3}
17...\texttt{exf5?!} is possible, albeit slightly less attractive with the pawn on c4 instead of c3.
18.\texttt{xb6 xb6} 19.\texttt{f6} \texttt{cxb2} 20.\texttt{xb2 h6} 21.\texttt{xe6 e3+} 22.\texttt{h1 fxe6}
Black is not worse in the ending.

16...\texttt{dxe4} 17.\texttt{xc7}
17.dxe4 \texttt{ac8} 18.\texttt{ac1 c5} is clearly better for Black.
We have been following the game Mitkov – Vera Gonzalez, Merida 2005. At this point Black exchanged on d3, but there was no need to release the tension so soon. Instead he could have kept the upper hand with:

17...\texttt{\texttildelow}fe8N 18.\texttt{\texttildelow}a3

In the event of 18.f6, the reply 18...exd3 suddenly becomes very strong, as 18.cxd3 runs into 18...\texttt{\texttildelow}xf6! when the knight on e2 will be hanging.

18...\texttt{\texttildelow}e5!

With some initiative, as 19.dxe4?? is refuted by 19...\texttt{\texttildelow}g4 followed by d3†.

**Conclusion**

The contents of the present chapter seem quite disparate, with numerous types of positions being analysed. Line C1 even took us as far afield as a line of the Dragon variation involving the early f2-f4. In those positions it seems like the first player is aiming for too much from the very beginning and puts (at least some part of) the carriage ahead of the horse. Line C2 featured a closed set-up combined with an exchange of light-squared bishops. White's set-up is sound enough, although the early bishop exchange creates additional breathing space for the black pieces, and the defender should have little trouble equalizing the game. Variation C3 with the bishop on c4 is rather more threatening, although there is also a potential downside for White as the same piece might become a target, as was vividly demonstrated in the final variation C323) 9...\texttt{\texttildelow}b3 a5!. Overall, if Black comes to the board well-prepared, there will be little reason for him to fear any of the lines examined in this chapter.
Closed Systems

A Bridge Too Far - 3.g3

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.g3

3...c6 4.g2 g6 5.d3 g7

A) 6.d3 e6 7.0-0 0-0 8.h3 b8
   A1) 9.e3
   A2) 9.a4

B) 6.f4 e6 7.d3 d7 8.0-0 0-0
   B1) 9.d2
   B2) 9.e3 b6!? 10.d4 a6
       B21) 11.e2
       B22) 11.e1

C) 6.e3 b8 7.d2 b5
   C1) 8.f4
   C2) 8.d3
   C3) 8.e2

A1) after 20.c3

A2) note to 10...b5

C3) after 18...c8

The Closed Sicilian defused
When choosing the Closed Sicilian with 2.\textit{\texttt{c3}} and 3.g3 White avoids any early opening of the position or even direct contact of the pieces, and instead seeks to accumulate energy to be unleashed later in the game. His dream scenario would involve a devastating kingside attack, while the opponent keeps himself occupied by winning an odd pawn or two on the opposite side of the board.

The reader may laugh or cry about this idea, but it is actually more realistic than it sounds. Black has to rush his queenside counterplay without delay and at the same time be mindful of the consequences of any possible opening of the centre.

\texttt{1.e4 c5 2.\textit{\texttt{c3}} d6 3.g3 tlJc6 4.\textit{\texttt{g2}} g6} 

The kingside fianchetto is Black's most respected system.

\texttt{5.d3 \textit{\texttt{g7}}} 

Here we will consider three moves in detail: 
A) 6.tlJf3, B) 6.f4 and C) 6.\textit{\texttt{c3}}.

A) 6.tlJf3 

Most Sicilian repertoire books do not even mention this move, but it is worth considering as White is playing with an extra tempo over a set-up that is commonly used by Black against the English Opening.

\texttt{6...\textit{\texttt{f6}}} 

In variations without the f2-f4 advance Black does not have to worry about a kingside pawn storm, so there is no real need to develop the knight on e7. Instead the text move saves time and positions the knight on a more active square.

\texttt{7.0 0 0 8.\textit{\texttt{h3}}} 

A database search reveals that just about every legal move has been tried here, but since the whole line is not hugely popular, I will just focus on the main line, the point of which is to prepare \textit{\texttt{c3}} without allowing harassment with ...\textit{\texttt{g4}}.

\texttt{8...\textit{\texttt{b8}}} 

The defender loses no time and aims for immediate counterplay on the queenside. Now White can decide between the immediate A1) 9.\textit{\texttt{c3}} and the same idea, with the addition of an open a file, with A2) 9.a4.

I will mention just one other interesting line: 
9.\textit{\texttt{e1}}
White tries to play in the centre using his pieces.

\texttt{9...\textit{\texttt{d7}} 10.\textit{\texttt{c3}} b5 11.d4} 

White's strategy is not without logic, as his f-pawn will be better on f2 than f4 in a position with an open centre.
Black does not want to cooperate, and avoids ...cxd4 for the time being.

13.\textit{d}d2 e6 14.\textit{d}d1 c7 15.\textit{d}d5

Unsure how else to make progress, White drives forward.

15...\textit{f}6

It was worth considering 15...\textit{e}5!?N
16.\textit{f}xe5 \textit{xe}5 17.b3 a4 18.f4 \textit{d}d7 19.e5 \textit{b}b7+.

16.\textit{h}6?! This allows a strong sacrifice.
16.\textit{c}c1 \textit{xe}2 17.\textit{xe}2 \textit{b}5+ was also not great for White.

However, the first player could have maintained the balance with 16.\textit{b}b1 \textit{f}f6 17.\textit{h}4 \textit{b}5 18.\textit{g}5, when he has no serious weaknesses.
16.\textit{x}xb2! 17.\textit{x}f8 \textit{xf}8 18.\textit{h}6 \textit{g}7 19.\textit{h}4 \textit{xe}2 20.\textit{xe}2 \textit{b}5+

Black had a fantastic position for a small material investment in Golovin – Khismatullin, Voronezh 2008.

A1) 9.\textit{e}3 b5 10.\textit{d}2

10.\textit{e}5?! White's pieces are not fully prepared for the opening of the centre. 10...\textit{xe}5 11.\textit{xc}5 b4 12.\textit{e}4 (12.\textit{a}4?!N \textit{c}7 13.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}6?)
12...\textit{xe}4 13.\textit{dxe}4 \textit{a}5 14.\textit{e}3 \textit{a}6 15.\textit{b}1 \textit{d}8 15.\textit{c}1 \textit{d}4+ Reinhard – Fischer, Bay City 1963.

10.\textit{b}4 11.\textit{d}1

In the event of 11.\textit{d}5, Galego – Damaso, Portugal 1994, it looks interesting to try 11...\textit{e}6?!N 12.\textit{f}4 (After 12.\textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6 13.\textit{d}4 cxd4 14.\textit{x}d4 \textit{xd}4 15.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 16.\textit{xd}x4 \textit{b}6+ The endgame will be rather painful for White.) 12...\textit{d}7 13.\textit{d}5 \textit{c}8 14.\textit{h}2 e6 15.\textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6+ Black has the more pleasant position without any hint of troubles.

11...\textit{e}5? This ambitious advance not only gains space, but also robs White's centre of much of its dynamism by preventing any e4-e5 ideas.

Anyone who feels that the last move is too committal might also consider 11...\textit{d}7, when play may continue 12.\textit{h}6 \textit{d}4 13.\textit{x}g7 \textit{x}g7 with no problems for Black.

12.\textit{h}6

White does not achieve much with 12.c3 \textit{e}6 13.\textit{g}5 \textit{d}7 14.cxb4 (14.f4? \textit{h}5?) 14...\textit{xb}4+.

Also unimpressive is 12.b3 \textit{d}4 13.\textit{x}d4 cxd4 14.\textit{b}2 \textit{c}7 15.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}6+ White has managed to mask his weakness on the c-file, but Black's extra space and bishop pair are important trumps.
12... \( \text{Nh5} \)

Black already enjoys a space advantage on the queenside and in the centre, and now he prepares to fight for the kingside as well.

13. \( \text{hxg7 } \text{hxg7} \)

14. \( \text{a3} \)

14. \( \text{Nh4?!} \) is an instructive mistake. 14... \( \text{f4} \) 15. \( \text{f5} \) gxf5 16. \( \text{gxf4} \) Ristoja – Maeder, Haifa 1970. Now Black could have seized the initiative with the natural 16... \( \text{g8!N} \) The opening of the g-file will favour the player who can occupy it first. 17. \( \text{fxe5 } \text{h8} \) 18. \( \text{h1} \) (18. \( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{xd6} \) 19. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{f4} \) 20. \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{xg4} \) 21. \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{g4+} \) 18... \( \text{dxe5} \) 19. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{fxe4} \) White has only succeeded in opening the position against his own king.

14... \( \text{b3!} \)

Black should keep the a-file closed, preventing any counterplay, as he is already in a position to seize the initiative on the opposite flank.

15. \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{f5} \)

16. \( \text{exf5} \) \( \text{gxf5} \) 17. \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{f4} \) 18. \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{f6} \)

Making room for the knight to return to c3, although d4 now becomes an inviting target for its counterpart on c6.

19. \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{e4} \) 20. \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{f3} \) 21. \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 22. \( \text{cxd4} \) \( \text{d5} \)

looks unpleasant for White due to his severe lack of space and unsafe king.

19... \( \text{b8} \) 20. \( \text{c3} \)

20... \( \text{xg4}! \)

This brilliant sacrifice works because White's position is too cramped to allow the smooth transfer of defenders to the kingside.

21. \( \text{hxg4} \) \( \text{xg4} \) 22. \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{g8} \) 23. \( \text{h1} \) \( \text{d4} \)

It is not even clear if ... \( \text{c2} \) should be called a "threat", as the monstrous knight can claim to be stronger than either of the enemy rooks.

24. \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{h5} \) 25. \( \text{f2} \)

Preventing ... \( \text{h4} \).

25... \( \text{b7} \)

This was the end of the game Engelhard – Schnabel, e-mail 2006. It seems bit early to resign, so it is possible that the game ended in some other way, such as White defaulting on his next move. In any case, it is obvious that Black's initiative more than compensates for the sacrificed piece. A plausible continuation is:

26. \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{bg7} \) 27. \( \text{h3} \)

27. \( \text{g1} \) is refuted by 27... \( \text{f5}! \).

27... \( \text{g3} \) 28. \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{xg4} \) 29. \( \text{fxg4} \) \( \text{a8}! \)
Threatening ...$\text{g}6$-$h6$. Black can also restore approximate material parity with ...$\text{Exd3}$ at any moment. His position is clearly better, and quite possibly winning.

**A2) 9.a4**

The opening of the a-file should be beneficial for White as he kept his rook on the a-file.

We have already encountered this idea in line A1 above. It may not be quite as strong with the white knight on c3 instead of d1, but it should still suffice for equality.

11.$\text{h2}$?

This is a logical idea. The knight wants to exchange itself for its counterpart on f6, thus enabling the other knight to occupy the d5-outpost at a suitable moment.

11.$\text{d2}$ is not dangerous, for instance:

11...$\text{d}4$ 12.$\text{e}1$ b5 13.axb5 axb5 14.$\text{g5}$ $\text{e}6$ 15.$\text{h}4$ h6 16.$\text{xf6}$ $\text{xf6}$ 17.$\text{d}5$ $\text{g}7$ 18.$\text{a}5$ $\text{b}7$ 19.$\text{xd}8$ $\text{fxd}8$ 20.c3 $\text{a}8$= Wahls – De Firmian, Novi Sad 1990.

11...$\text{d}4$ 12.$\text{g}4$

9...$\text{a}6$

This is the most natural move, although Black can also consider 9...b6!? making use of the fact that the rook is no longer tactically vulnerable on the h1-a8 diagonal. 10.$\text{e}3$ $\text{b}7$ 11.$\text{d}2$ d5 This should be enough for a satisfactory game, for instance: 12.$\text{f}4$ (Perhaps White should have settled for the equal position resulting from 12.exd5 $\text{Exd5}$ 13.$\text{h}6$) 12...$\text{dxe}4$ 13.$\text{dxe}4$ $\text{xd}2$ 14.$\text{Exd2}$ $\text{bd}8$ 15.$\text{fd}1$ $\text{h}5$ 16.$\text{e}3$ Markowski – J. Polgar, Oviedo 1993, 16...$\text{b}4$!N 17.$\text{g}4$ $\text{f}6$ 18.$\text{dc}1$ h5‡.

10.$\text{e}3$ b5

I will keep this as the main line in order to maintain some consistency between this and the previous variation A1.

However, I will also mention a fully viable alternative:

10...e5!?
on the board, here it is more reasonable for White to play:

12...e5!

The conflict in the centre makes more sense when White is already dominating the open a-file with his rook. Nevertheless Black still has nothing to fear.

12...dxe5 13...xe5 b4 14...e4

In the event of 14...a4, Sandner – Rogulj, Austria 2003, it looks quite promising for Black to play 14...c7 intending ...d8.

The present position was reached in Muench – Derlich, Bad Neustadt 1990, and here there are a couple of promising ideas for Black:

14...b5??

The straightforward 14...xe4N 15...xe4 c7 also looks quite satisfactory.

13...e5

13...d5! (Black could also consider 13...e6!? but the text move enables him to highlight one of the drawbacks of White’s decision to open the a-file.) 14.exd5 cxd5 15...xd4 cxd4 16...h6 xh6 17...xh6 b3! Had White chosen to leave the a-pawns at home, this would not have been possible. 18.c4 dxc3 19.bxc3 f5 The strong passed b-pawn was the most salient feature of the position in Hertzog – Weis, Germany 1992.

13...d1 temporarily disrupts communication between the rooks, but White hopes that the knight will emerge to play an active role on e3. Still, in the time it takes to accomplish that goal, Black can simplify the position to reach easy equality as follows: 13...b7! 14.h6 a8 15.xg7 xg7 (But not 15...xa1? 16.h6! e8 17...g5 c7 18.f4++) 16...e3 a1 17.a1 c7 18.c3 a8= Black was not suffering at all in Zvjaginsev – Dreev, Krasnoyarsk 2007.

13...b7 14...h4

14.h6 a8 15.aab1 e6 16...e1 c7 17...e3 was played in Inarkiev – Van Wely,
Dagomys 2008, and here it looks good to play 17...\texttt{e}a5\texttt{=}N 18.\texttt{g}xg7 \texttt{g}xg7 19.\texttt{a}a1 \texttt{fa}8 20.\texttt{x}a5 \texttt{xa}5\texttt{=}N Thanks to his control over the only open file, Black can feel optimistic about the future.

14...\texttt{c}c7 15.\texttt{h}h6
15.\texttt{a}a2 \texttt{b}b6 16.\texttt{fa}1 \texttt{b}3 17.\texttt{xb}3 \texttt{xb}3 18.\texttt{a}a3 \texttt{b}4\texttt{=}N

15...\texttt{g}xh6!?N
This is a promising new idea. Instead 15...\texttt{a}a8 16.\texttt{g}xg7 \texttt{g}xg7 17.\texttt{g}g5 \texttt{x}a1 18.\texttt{x}a1 \texttt{e}6 was equal in Kritz - Alekseev, Biel 2005.

16.\texttt{w}xh6

16...\texttt{b}3!
Black times his counterplay at a moment when White’s pieces are ill-prepared for the conflict on the queenside.

17.\texttt{c}3
17.\texttt{xb}3 leaves White with a shattered structure and Black should be better after something like 17...\texttt{b}b6 18.\texttt{a}a3 \texttt{a}8 19.\texttt{fa}1 \texttt{xa}3 20.\texttt{xa}a3 \texttt{a}8 21.\texttt{xa}8\texttt{=}N \texttt{xa}8 22.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{b}4\texttt{=}N.

17...\texttt{a}a8 18.\texttt{w}d2 \texttt{f}c8\texttt{=}N
White will struggle to equalize.

B) 6.f4 \texttt{e}6

As White is hinting at a possible pawn storm, I have chosen to recommend a solid set-up with the knight on \texttt{c}5, thus enabling Black to fight for some kingside territory with ...\texttt{f}5 if needed.

7.\texttt{d}f3 \texttt{g}g7 8.0-0 0-0

This is the basic starting position for the present variation. In general terms, we can say that Black can quickly finish his mobilization and is well prepared for most scenarios. White’s main choice concerns the development of his dark-squared bishop, so we will divide the material between B1) 9.\texttt{d}d2 and B2) 9.\texttt{e}e3.

It is too early for an immediate pawn advance: 9.g4 \texttt{f}5! A useful rule of thumb for this whole variation is: if it looks like White may be threatening \texttt{f}5, then play ...\texttt{f}5 yourself! 10.\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{ex}f5 11.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{d}d4 (11...\texttt{h}h8 12.\texttt{h}h1 \texttt{e}6 13.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{d}d7 14.\texttt{a}a1 b6 15.\texttt{g}g5 \texttt{a}g8 16.\texttt{d}d5 \texttt{h}6 17.\texttt{xe}7 \texttt{xe}7 was comfortably equal for Black in Manor - Gelfand, Israel 1999, but he can even play more ambitiously.) 12.\texttt{d}d2 Medina Garcia - Gadia, Malaga 1965. Here it looks good to play 12...\texttt{b}b6\texttt{=}N 13.\texttt{ab}1 \texttt{d}d7 14.\texttt{f}f1 \texttt{ae}8\texttt{=}N Black has completed the mobilization of his pieces, with pleasing results.
B1) 9.\(\text{d2} \ b6\)?

The standard 9...\(\text{b}8\), intending ...\(\text{b}5\), has been much more common, but the more modest text move is also quite attractive.

10.\(\text{b}1\)

This is a typical idea in the 9.\(\text{d2}\) variation. The usual intention will be to prepare a3 and b4, although a secondary purpose might be to defend the b-pawn in order to facilitate the transfer of the c3-knight to the kingside.

10...\(\text{b}7\) 11.a3

Another popular continuation has been:

11.\(\text{c}2 \ \text{d}7\) 12.g4\(\text{f}5\) 13.gxf5\(\text{exf}5\) 14.c4

14...\(\text{d}8\)

Black is spoiled for choice as he can meet White's challenge with different manoeuvres of his queen knight. There is also 14...\(\text{d}4\)?

15.\(\text{xb}4 \ \text{xb}4\) 16.\(\text{fd}4\) (16.\(\text{d}2 \ \text{ae}8\) 17.\(\text{g}3 \ a5\) 16...\(\text{c}6\) 17.\(\text{a}4 \ \text{xe}4\) 18.\(\text{xe}4\) Menetrier – Mittag, corr. 1990, and now 18...\(\text{d}8\)N 19.\(\text{xc}6 \ \text{xc}6\) 20.\(\text{c}2 \ \text{d}8\) would have left Black with the more comfortable position.

15.\(\text{c}3 \ \text{c}6\) 16.\(\text{g}5\)

16...\(\text{h}3 \ \text{ae}8\) 17.\(\text{e}1 \ \text{d}8\)N

16...\(\text{dg}5\) 17.\(\text{fg}5 \ \text{xe}4\)N

17...\(\text{f}7\) 18.\(\text{f}3 \ \text{af}8\) was more pleasant for Black in Spassky – Portisch, Mexico 1980, but the text is even better.

18.\(\text{e}4 \ \text{d}4\)N 19.\(\text{h}1 \ \text{xf1}\) 20.\(\text{xf1} \ \text{ff}8\)

Black has a dream position, with all his forces active and working in perfect harmony.

11.\(\text{d}7\)

12.b4

This is the most consistent move. In some games White has tried pre-empting the following knight jump with 12.\(\text{c}2\), but Black can still play 12...\(\text{d}4!\) 13.\(\text{exd}4\) (13.b4 transposes to the main line below) 13...\(\text{cx}d4\) 14.\(\text{e}2 \ \text{ae}8\) with the better prospects, as seen in Balashov – Adorjan, Munich 1979. In the resulting structure the moves a2-a3 and \(\text{a}1-b1\) are almost completely redundant.

12...\(\text{d}4\) 13.\(\text{e}2\)

13.bxc5 bxc5 does not really alter the evaluation.

13...\(\text{ac}8\)


B2) 9.\(\text{e}3 \ b6\)?

For many years 9...\(\text{d}4\) was almost an automatic choice, as d3-d4 was considered a significant positional threat. But eventually
players began to realize that this was not necessarily the case, and nowadays many experts believe the text move to be the most accurate at Black’s disposal.

10.d4
This is the most principled continuation, although it turns out that Black is well-placed to meet it.

White can also aim for a more patient build-up on the kingside:
10.♗g1  ♗a6 11.♗d2 ♘d7 12.♗e1
This looks more natural than 12.♗e1 ♗c8 13.g4, Starostits – Kulaots, Tallinn 2006, 13...♗d4N 14.♗b1 ♗ec6 15.♗e2 ♘xf3† 16.♘xf3 ♗d4 17.♗g2 ♗fe8†
12...♗ae8 13.g4 f5!
This is an important motif, which stems logically from Black’s preparation for conflict in the centre and kingside.

14.gxf5
14.exf5 exf5 15.g5 d5 16.♗e5 ♗xe5 17.fxe5 d4 18.e6 (18.♗e2 ♗c6+) 18...♗d6† Starostits – Almeida Quintana, Oviedo 2008.
14...exf5 15.♗h3
No better is 15.e5 dxe5 16.fxe5 ♗d8† Black’s pieces have great fluidity and can easily manoeuvre to the best squares, in this case e6.

15...d5! 16.e5 ♗d8 17.♗e2 d4 18.♗g2 ♗e6 19.h4 ♗b7† Black kept the more harmonious position in Spassky – Atalik, Tallinn 1998.

It is also worth mentioning:
10.♗h1 d5!
This is a try for an advantage. There is also nothing wrong with 10...♗b7 11.d4 d5 12.exd5 ♗xd5 13.♗xd5 cxd4 14.♗xd4 ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 ♗xd5 16.♗xg7 ♗xg7 17.♗g2 ♗xg7 18.♗d8 ♗fxd8 with complete equality, J. Polgar – Kramnik, Paris 1994.
11.♗g1
11.exd5 exd5 12.d4? ♗g4†
11...dxe4 12.dxe4 ♗a6 13.♗f2 ♗xd1 14.♗xd1 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 ♗ad8 16.♗e2 ♗e2 17.♗xd8 ♗xd8 18.♗xd8† ♗xd8
Black went on to exploit his opponent’s shattered queenside in Augustin – Boensch, Leipzig 1979.

10...♗a6
Tournament practice has also revealed 10...d5?! to be a reliable solution, but I have chosen to concentrate on the preliminary bishop development. In certain positions Black may be able to benefit from a delayed but more effective advance of the d-pawn, backed up by a fully developed army of pieces.
We will consider both rook moves: B21) 11.\texttt{f}2 and B22) 11.\texttt{e}1.

\textbf{B21) 11.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{c}7}

11...\texttt{c}xd4 12.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}8 is also quite playable, but I think it is more interesting to maintain the tension.

12.a4

This has been White's usual choice, with the obvious intention of \texttt{b}5. At this point I found a strong novelty for Black – quite a surprise, considering that this position has been tested in a few dozen games.

12...d5

This is the perfect timing for the thematic central advance, as White's pieces are in the wrong positions to deal with the early conflict.

In all the games on my database Black played 12...\texttt{ad}8, when best play looks to be 13.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{b}8 14.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{b}7 with approximate equality, Dovramadjiyev – Liangov, Sofia 1996.

\textbf{B22) 11.\texttt{e}1}

13.\texttt{f}5!

Black does not have to recapture immediately, but can instead take the opportunity to activate his knight while driving the enemy bishop to a passive square.

14.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{xd}4 15.\texttt{xe}6

15.\texttt{e}5 \texttt{ad}8 also maintains some initiative for Black.

15...\texttt{xe}6 16.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{d}6 17.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{ed}4\texttt{f}

Black's pieces are much more harmonious, and White faces a difficult battle for equality.

11.\texttt{c}8

The position is exceptionally rich, and Black can try several different ideas leading to a variety of possible structures. One option is 11...\texttt{xd}4 12.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}8, leading to a lively position in which the result is wide open. However, just as in line B21 above, I prefer to maintain the tension for a move or two longer.

12.a4

This has been the most common choice so I will take it as the main line, although many other moves have been tried. Here are a few alternatives:
12.d5 exd5 13.exd5 c5! (In the event of 13...b4, playing to win the d5-pawn, White can respond with the tricky 14.f5!?) 14.d2
This position was reached in Melendez Fierro – Martin Catalan, Spain 2006, and now Black could have secured a slight advantage with 14...e8N 15.f2 d7f thanks to his more harmoniously placed pieces.

12.f2 is another popular move, which makes a certain amount of sense as this piece can often become a target on e3. Play continues 12...cxd4 13.d4 and now 13...c5! sets up the awkward prospect of ...c4. Compared with the 11...cxd4 line noted above, you can see how useful it is that the black rook already sits on c8. The following recent game shows how quickly White may fall into trouble:

14.f3 c4 15.d1?! e5 16.fxe5 dxe5 16.e2 Inoue – Matlakov, Antalya 2009, and now after 17...d2N White’s position is close to collapsing.

12...d5!
Black has no reason to delay the pawn advance.

13.exd5 exd5
Black enjoys active prospects in the centre and has achieved good practical results from this position.

14.f2
After the inexplicable blunder 14.dxc5?? d4 White was losing a piece and resigned immediately in Britton – Ward, Swansea 2006.

14.xf3 only seems to have been played once. 14...e8 15.c5 a6 16xc8 e8 17.dxc5 d5 18.xb6?? (White had to play 18.f2N when the position remains unclear after 18...a6??) 18...e3 19.e3 xb6 and White resigned in Torres – Niebergall, e-mail 2005.

14.b5 15.dxc5 d4 16.e4
16.b5 bxc5 17.d2 b4 was pleasant for Black in Loekvist – Sogin, e-mail 2007.

16.b4! 17.d2
17.e5 bxc5 18.c3 was played in Rogulj – Jovanic, Zagreb 2008. Now after 18...d5N Black is doing well, as White can hardly contemplate 19.cxd4 cxd4 20.d4? fxd4!–+

17.bxc5 18.xc5?
Better was 18.e5N, although after 18...d5 19.h3 e8 Black’s strongly centralized pieces give him slightly better chances.

18.xc2 19.xb4 xc2 20.e5 d3 21.e4 xe5 22.fxe5 e8
Black’s advantage was close to decisive in Tischbierek – Avrukh, Biel 2004.
One of the great modern concepts for White in the Closed Sicilian involves the clever idea of exchanging the mighty bishop on g7, not only reducing Black's dynamic potential but also eliminating a key defender of the kingside. Fortunately for Black, the whole line has lost a lot of its sparkle as practical testing revealed the effectiveness of an early b-pawn advance.

6...a6 7.b4

White seldom chooses to insert the moves 7.a4 a6 here, as the open a-file would almost certainly fall into Black's hands in the not too distant future.

7...b5

For the time being Black deliberately postpones the development of the g8-knight in order to frustrate White's intended bishop jump to h6. We will now consider three options, starting with C1) 8.f4, followed by the two knight moves: C2) 8.\texttt{d}f3 and C3) 8.\texttt{g}e2.

C1) 8.f4

White abandons the h6 dream in order to press ahead on the kingside.

8...b4 9.\texttt{d}d1 \texttt{b}b6

There are several good lines for Black, but this would be my choice.

10.\texttt{d}f3 \texttt{h}h6?

It is not only White who can aspire to kingside activity. The text move prepares ...f5, while incidentally preventing castling which would now cost White his valuable dark-squared bishop after ...\texttt{g}g4.

11.a3?

Opening the a-file is a double-edged strategy, but in this position Nigel Short considered it to be worthwhile.

The main alternative is 11.h3 f5 12.0-0 0-0, leading to the same position but with the a-pawns still on the board. Play may continue 13.exf5 (or 13.\texttt{d}f2 e6 14.\texttt{g}e3 \texttt{f}f7 15.exf5 gxf5 16.g4 \texttt{d}d4 17.\texttt{x}xd4 \texttt{x}xd4 18.\texttt{c}c4 \texttt{c}c5 19.\texttt{e}e1 \texttt{d}7 with approximate equality, Krapivin - Krylov, Vladimir 2008.) 13...\texttt{x}xf5 14.\texttt{d}f2 \texttt{d}d4 15.\texttt{x}xd4 \texttt{d}xd4 16.\texttt{c}c3 bxc3 17.bxc3 \texttt{a}a5 18.\texttt{h}h2 \texttt{b}b5 Black was in control as his pieces became very active in Krapivin - Frolyanov, Zvenigorod 2008.

11...a5 12.axb4 axb4 13.h3 f5 14.0-0 0-0 15.\texttt{f}f2

15.e5 does not achieve anything after 15...\texttt{f}f7 16.d4 \texttt{b}b5!
Both sides have manoeuvred logically, with White never coming close to any sort of advantage, Short - Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2005.

C2) 8.f3

If you feel this move is clumsy you are definitely not far off the mark. The knight will have to jump away in order to make way for the advance of the f-pawn.

8...b4 9.d1 d4 10.h4

The most ambitious move, although objectively it may already be time for White to admit he achieved no opening advantage and settle for a safe continuation like 10.0-0 g4 11.e1.

10...wa5

Black's biggest problem is that he is spoiled for choice, with virtually any reasonable move leading to a comfortable game. Here are two such examples:

10...e5 11.f4 exf4 12.xf4 e7 13.0-0 h6 14.e3 g5 15.xf3 xf3 16.xf3 c6 17.g2 xe6 18.a3 a5 19.axb4 axb4 20.c3 bxc3 21.bxc3 e5= Black's defence was a pleasant task in Smyslov - Portisch, Portoroz 1971.

10...e6 11.0-0 e7 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3 d6 14.e6 bxc3 15.dxc3 c6 16.g7 f8 17.xh7 xg7 and Black was on top in Krapivin - Grachev, Moscow 2006.

11.0-0 wa4 12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3 c2 14.xc1 xxc3 15.xxc3 f6 16.f4 0-0 17.h3 a6

Black has clearly better chances thanks to his bishop pair and queenside pressure, Krapivin - Ulko, Moscow 2009.

C3) 8.ge2

Of the three main options, this one fits in best with White's previous moves and has been by far the most popular choice.

8...b4 9.d1 d4

10...e5 11.f4 exf4 12.xf4 e7 13.0-0 h6 14.e3 g5 15.xf3 xf3 16.xf3 c6 17.g2 xe6 18.a3 a5 19.axb4 axb4 20.c3 bxc3 21.bxc3 e5= Black's defence was a pleasant task in Smyslov - Portisch, Portoroz 1971.
10.0–0 e6
Black can also consider the more creative 10...\varepsilon_4!? 11.f3 \varepsilon_7 12.\varepsilon_c1 \varepsilon_a4!? 13.\varepsilon_b3 when the two sides are experiencing a kind of stalemate on the queenside. One interesting game continued 13...\varepsilon_c7 14.f4 \varepsilon_h6 15.h3 f5 16.\varepsilon_f2 0–0 17.\varepsilon_e3 e6 18.\varepsilon_h2 \varepsilon_c6 with a full-blooded fight in store, A. Ledger – Neverov, Port Erin 2002.

11.\varepsilon_c1
If White wishes to expel the enemy knight from d4, then he should almost always retreat the e2-knight first. Instead after 11.c3?! bxc3 12.bxc3 Black avoids any loss of time with 12...\varepsilon_xe2\textup{\textdagger}, and after 13.\varepsilon_xe2 \varepsilon_c6 White has made a dismal score from this position.

11...\varepsilon_e7
Having forced his opponent to make a couple of quiet moves, Black no longer needs to fear the bishop exchange. The b-file will soon be opening, and so Black should hurry to finish mobilizing his forces in order to fight for the initiative on the queenside.

12.c3 bxc3 13.bxc3 \varepsilon_dc6 14.\varepsilon_h6 0–0 15.\varepsilon_xg7 \varepsilon_xg7
White has fulfilled his dream, but it did not bring him any hint of an advantage.

16.\varepsilon_e3
16.f4 f5 17.\varepsilon_e3 \varepsilon_a6 18.\varepsilon_e2 \varepsilon_b6 was fine for Black in Lorenzo de la Riva – Gelashvili, Balaguer 2007.

16...\varepsilon_b6
Once again Black must choose between a few tempting continuations:

16...\varepsilon_a6 17.\varepsilon_d1 \varepsilon_a5 18.\varepsilon_b3 \varepsilon_a3 gave him nice play on the queenside in Brooks – Benjamin, Las Vegas 1992.

16...\varepsilon_5!? 17.\varepsilon_e2 \varepsilon_a6 18.f4 f6 19.\varepsilon_ac1 \varepsilon_a5 20.\varepsilon_c2 \varepsilon_b7 21.\varepsilon_h3 \varepsilon_fb8 Black combined control of the b-file with an ambitious central set up in Short – Hossain, Dhaka 1999.

17.\varepsilon_b3 \varepsilon_a6 18.\varepsilon_fd1 \varepsilon_fc8

Black had every reason to feel satisfied with the outcome of the opening in Ljubojevic – Sosonko, Tilburg 1981.
Conclusion

The closed system examined in this chapter contains potential that should not be taken lightly. Anybody who thinks that nothing bad can happen to the second player should take a look at the games from the Candidates match Spassky – Geller from Sukhumi 1968. Geller (one of the few players with a plus score against Fischer!) lost the second, fourth and sixth games in the 6.f4 d6 line, before switching to 6.f4 e6 7.Qf3 Qge7 in the eight game, which he managed to draw. In more recent times the danger for the defender has diminished, with deeper understanding and more clever play by Black.

I have presented three distinct defensive set-ups, each of which has been carefully chosen to counteract White’s chosen method of development. Variation A, involving the somewhat clumsy knight move 6.Qf3, was met with 6...d6, enabling Black to develop rapidly and fight for the centre. Against the more popular variation B with 6.f4, I recommended the somewhat more robust and flexible 6...e6 7.Qf3 Qge7, enabling Black to fight for space on the kingside with ...f5 when necessary. The third and final variation C involved the sophisticated plan of 6.Qe3 and 7.Qd2. In that case we saw the g8-knight remaining at home for a while, while Black accelerated his queenside counterplay with a quick ...b8 and ...b5.

In all three cases, we have seen that sensible play combined with a few useful tricks should enable Black to look forward to a pleasant middlegame.
Anti-Open Systems
Fight Club - Various

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\(\Delta f3\)

2...d6

A) 3.\(\Delta c4\)

B) 3.c3 \(\Delta f6\)
   B1) 4.\(\Delta d3\)
   B2) 4.\(\Delta e2\)
   B3) 4.h3

C) 3.\(\Delta c3\) \(\Delta f6\) 4.e5 dxe5 5.\(\Delta xe5\) \(\Delta bd7\)
   C1) 6.\(\Delta b5\)
   C2) 6.d4
   C3) 6.\(\Delta c4\) e6
      C31) 7.\(\Delta e2\)
      C32) 7.g3

A) note to 9.\(\Delta bd2\)

C2) note to 11.\(\Delta e3\)

C32) after 13.\(\Delta b5\)

12...\(\Delta c4!N\)

13...\(\Delta xe5!N\)

13...\(\Delta c8\) or the cheeky 13...\(\Delta d7?\)
After the opening moves 1.e4 e5 2.d3 d6, I imagine most readers would be shocked to see the following punctuation: 3.d4?! 

Despite being unjust, it may serve as a reminder of the strategic dangers associated with the white side of the Open Sicilian. White forgoes the slow attempts to win the centre and in a flash of inspiration opens the game – only to find himself bound to the concept of attacking Black's ramparts or risking a loss of his initiative followed by suffering in the endgame!

The present chapter should give comfort to all those who grew up on the games of Capablanca and Rubinstein and prefer a slower strategic fight to short-term gunfights that might win or lose the game before move 20. All three of the systems presented are primarily positional and solid, but fortunately for the Sicilian player, also a bit timid and not dangerous against a well-versed opponent.

A) 3.c4 

The development of the bishop to c4 used to be sneered at, as players tended to perceive the line as too simplistic. However, in modern praxis even the strongest players have occasionally been known to turn to this positional treatment.

3...d6 4.d3 c6 5.c3 g6

5...e6 is also possible, but the set-up with a kingside fianchetto has brought Black better practical results.

6.b3 
White can vary his move order, for instance by castling first, but in most cases the same position will be reached.

6...g7 7.0–0 0–0

8.e1 
The alternative 8.bd2 b6 9.e1 only leads to a transposition.

8.h3 
White prevents the pin along d1–h5 diagonal, but we should feel quite happy to see this move as I am recommending a set-up with the bishop on b7 or a6 anyway.

8...b6 9.e1 
The immediate central advance does not bring much for White: 9.d4 a6 10.e1 e6 (The careless 10...d7?! allows White to obtain some initiative with 11.e5! dxe5 12.dxe5 xd1 13.xd1 h5 14.e1) 11.bd2 (11.g5 cxd4 12.cxd4 h6=) 11...cxd4 12.cxd4 b4 13.c4?! (13.e3 looks like White's best chance for equality) Lowitz – Sommer, Bavaria 2008, and now 13...xe4!N would have won a pawn for Black.
9...\(\text{\texttt{f}}_5\)!

9...e6 10.\(\text{\texttt{bd}}_2\) \(\text{\texttt{a}}_6\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{f}}_1\) \(\text{\texttt{c}}_8\) also brings Black a decent position, but exchanging a pair of knights should make his position more comfortable by reducing any congestion in his ranks.

10.d4

Exchanging on e5 would only saddle White with a backward d-pawn.

10...\(\text{\texttt{xf}}_3\)† 11.\(\text{\texttt{xf}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}_7\)

12.\(\text{\texttt{g}}_5\)

12.\(\text{\texttt{f}}_4\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}_5\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{d}}_2\) \(\text{\texttt{d}}_7\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{xc}}_5\) \(\text{\texttt{xc}}_5\)

15.\(\text{\texttt{d}}_5\) \(\text{\texttt{c}}_7\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{e}}_4\) (Perhaps White should have preferred 16.\(\text{\texttt{b}}_3\)N \(\text{\texttt{a}}_4\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{ab}}_1\) \(\text{\texttt{ac}}_8\)=) 16...\(\text{\texttt{e}}_5\)! 17.\(\text{\texttt{xb}}_7\) \(\text{\texttt{xb}}_7\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{g}}_5\) f5†

White was already struggling in Mainka - Edouard, Bad Wiessee 2008.

12...\(\text{\texttt{h}}_6\)

Black can also do without this move: 12...b5 13.\(\text{\texttt{d}}_2\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}_6\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{e}}_3\) e6 15.\(\text{\texttt{e}}_4\) \(\text{\texttt{ad}}_1\) \(\text{\texttt{xd}}_4\)

16.\(\text{\texttt{xd}}_4\) \(\text{\texttt{xd}}_4\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{xc}}_4\) \(\text{\texttt{c}}_8\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{f}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{d}}_7\)

19.\(\text{\texttt{e}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}_6\) 20.\(\text{\texttt{ac}}_1\) d5 21.e5 a5 and White had excellent prospects on the queenside, Totsky - Zvjaginsev, Samara 2000.

13.\(\text{\texttt{h}}_4\) \(\text{\texttt{b}}_5\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{d}}_2\) \(\text{\texttt{cx}}_d4\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{cx}}_d4\) \(\text{\texttt{wb}}_6\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{e}}_3\) g5!

Black seizes the opportunity to force a favourable trade of minor pieces.

17.\(\text{\texttt{g}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{h}}_5\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{f}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{gx}}_3\) 19.\(\text{\texttt{fx}}_g3\) \(\text{\texttt{ac}}_8\)†

Without the dark-squared bishop it is White who is struggling for equality, Cicak - Popov, Sweden 2006.

8...\(\text{\texttt{b}}_6\)

8...\(\text{\texttt{g}}_4\) has also been tried in several games, but in general I prefer not to play this move except in response to d3-d4, when White’s centre could become vulnerable.

9.\(\text{\texttt{bd}}_2\)

9.d4

This should also be considered as it forces Black to make an important decision.

9...\(\text{\texttt{cx}}_d4\) 10.\(\text{\texttt{cx}}_d4\) \(\text{\texttt{g}}_4\)!

This might seem inconsistent with ...\(\text{\texttt{b}}_6\), but it is still the best way to exert pressure against White’s centre.

11.\(\text{\texttt{e}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{a}}_5\)

A couple of alternatives are also worth considering.

11...\(\text{\texttt{e}}_5\)†N 12.\(\text{\texttt{d}}_5\) (12.\(\text{\texttt{dx}}_e5\) \(\text{\texttt{xe}}_5\)=) 12...\(\text{\texttt{d}}_4\)†? This is risky, but very interesting.

(It looks as if Black has a simple route to equality with 12...\(\text{\texttt{xf}}_3\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{xf}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{d}}_4\)

14.\(\text{\texttt{xd}}_4\) \(\text{\texttt{ex}}_d4\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{d}}_2\) \(\text{\texttt{d}}_7\), but the position is also a bit sterile.) 13.\(\text{\texttt{xd}}_4\) \(\text{\texttt{ex}}_d4\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{bd}}_2\)

(14.\(\text{\texttt{xd}}_4\)? \(\text{\texttt{xf}}_3\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{xf}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{h}}_5\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{wb}}_2\) \(\text{\texttt{ac}}_8\)=) 14...\(\text{\texttt{d}}_7\)! (14...\(\text{\texttt{h}}_5\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{h}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{c}}_8\)

16.\(\text{\texttt{c}}_4\) \(\text{\texttt{f}}_4\) 17.e5†) 15.\(\text{\texttt{h}}_3\) \(\text{\texttt{xf}}_3\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{xf}}_3\)

\(\text{\texttt{d}}_5\) (16...\(\text{\texttt{xf}}_6\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{a}}_4\)±) 17.\(\text{\texttt{xd}}_4\) \(\text{\texttt{xf}}_6\)

18.\(\text{\texttt{c}}_6\) \(\text{\texttt{xb}}_2\) with unclear play and mutual chances.

11...\(\text{\texttt{d}}_7\)†N with the idea of ...\(\text{\texttt{xf}}_3\) also deserves attention.
12...\textit{c}4!N

Black played artificially with 12...e5 13.\textit{b}d2 \textit{h}5?! (13...\textit{c}8?!N 14.\textit{c}e1 exd4 15.\textit{x}d4 \textit{f}e7=) 14.h3± in Balinov – Salmensuu, Budapest 1999.

13.\textit{c}c1

After 13.\textit{b}3 \textit{x}e3 14.\textit{x}e3 b5 Black is at least equal.

13...\textit{c}c8 14.h3!

14.\textit{b}3?! \textit{a}5! 15.\textit{d}d3 \textit{c}6?

In the event of 14.\textit{c}c3 \textit{h}5! 15.\textit{b}3 \textit{xf}3 16.gxf3 \textit{e}6 Black has promising play on the dark squares.

14...\textit{xf}3

The cheeky 14...\textit{h}5? is amusing but probably not entirely correct.

15.\textit{xf}3 \textit{h}5

15...\textit{xb}2? 16.\textit{xb}2 \textit{xc}2 17.\textit{c}3 is promising for White.

15...b5?! looks reasonable though.

16.\textit{d}d1

Or 16.\textit{d}d3 e5 17.d5 \textit{f}4 18.\textit{f}1 b5, with decent counterplay for Black.

16...e5 17.d5

Black is well ahead in development, although he will need to play energetically in order to avoid suffering on the weakened light squares on the kingside. Here is a sample continuation:

17...\textit{f}4?! 18.b3 \textit{a}5 19.\textit{a}3 \textit{b}7?

19...a6 leads to roughly equal chances.

20.\textit{b}5 a6 21.\textit{a}7 \textit{xc}3!

This leads to fascinating complications, with one key motif being the potential sacrifice on h3.

9...\textit{a}6

It also looks quite reasonable for Black to play 9...\textit{b}7 10.\textit{f}1 \textit{c}8 11.\textit{c}2 b5 The queenside counterplay is coming before White was able to take any action in the centre. 12.h3 \textit{d}7 13.\textit{d}2 b4 14.\textit{c}1 This was Delgado Ramirez – Dziuba, Internet 2009, and now Black could have fought for the advantage with 14...\textit{a}6!

15.\textit{e}3 \textit{de}5 16.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 17.\textit{b}1 bxc3 18.\textit{xc}3 \textit{b}b8± White is under unpleasant pressure on the queenside.

10.\textit{f}1

10...\textit{e}5!
Again we see this thematic move. It is all the more effective in conjunction with the bishop on a6.

11.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{c2}}}}

White is practically forced into this defensive move thanks to the weakness of the d3-square.

11...\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{c7}}}}

It is also quite good for Black to play 11...\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{c8}}}}, anticipating the subsequent opening of the c-file. The following example illustrates his chances quite well: 12.\textit{\textit{\textit{g5}}} h6 13.\textit{\textit{\textit{f4}}} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{h}}}}5 14.\textit{\textit{\textit{e3}}} e6 15.\textit{\textit{\textit{c1}}} \textit{\textit{\textit{f6}}} 16.h3 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{xf3}}}}+ 17.\textit{\textit{\textit{xf3}}} \textit{\textit{\textit{xf3}}} 18.gxf3 d5 White was fighting to maintain the balance, Benjamin – Baklan, Moscow (2) 2001.

12.h3 e6 13.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{h2}}}} \textit{\textit{\textit{c6}}} 14.f4 e5 15.\textit{\textit{\textit{g4}}} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{dxf4}}}} 16.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{wxf4}}}}

Here I found an interesting new idea:

16...\textit{c4}!!N

This looks promising, although it is not the only decent move:

16...\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{xf4}}}} leads to a relatively dry position after: 17.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{xf4}}}} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{e5}}}} 18.\textit{\textit{\textit{xe5}} dxe5} 19.\textit{\textit{\textit{e3}}}=

16...f5?! is a daring move that sharpens the conflict. 17.exf5 gxf5 18.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{f3}}}} (18.\textit{\textit{\textit{g3}} \textit{\textit{\textit{ae8}}}} 19.\textit{\textit{\textit{d2}} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{e7}}}=} 18...\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{e7}}}} 19.\textit{\textit{\textit{g3}} \textit{\textit{\textit{b7}}}} 20.\textit{\textit{f2}} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{h8}}}}} This was Benjamin – Baklan, Moscow (4) 2001. The position is tense with approximately equal chances, and everything still to play for.

17.dxc4 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{exf4}}}} 18.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{d5}}}}} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{e5}}} 19.\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{e2}}}} \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{xc4}}}}} 20.\textit{\textit{\textit{f2}} \textit{\textit{\textit{e6}}}}

Black has reached a pleasant Sicilian position with very little stress.

B) 3.c3 \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{f6}}}}}

The attack on e4 holds up White’s intended d2-d4, although please do remember that Black is not threatening to capture the e-pawn immediately due to the check on a4. In this position White normally chooses one of the following three moves: B1) 4.\textit{\textit{\textit{d3}}, B2) 4.\textit{\textit{\textit{e2}}} and B3) 4.h3.

B1) 4.\textit{\textit{\textit{d3}}}

White intends to drop the bishop back to c2, followed by d2-d4, somewhat in the style of the Ruy Lopez. Perhaps he can even dream of a superior version of that opening, since the bishop will reach its intended square in just two moves, instead of the more arduous route it often undergoes via \textit{\textit{\textit{\textit{b5-a4-c2}.}}}
4...\textit{g}4

This highlights the drawback of White's set-up. The pin will make it harder for White to carry out his intended d2-d4 advance.

5.h3

White can also delay this move, in order to recapture on f3 with the other knight:

5.\textit{c}2 \textit{c}6 6.d3 \textit{g}6

Another reliable option is 6...e6, intending ...d5 leading to a comfortable French-type position with the bishop outside the pawn chain. However, I decided to focus on the set-up with a kingside fianchetto in order to maintain some thematic consistency.

7.\textit{bd}2 \textit{g}7 8.h3 \textit{d}7!

Taking on f3 would fall in with White's plans.

9.0–0 0–0 10.\textit{e}1

10...\textit{h}5

Another decent option is 10...b5 11.d4 cxd4 12.cxd4 \textit{h}5 (12...\textit{e}8?N was worth considering) 13.d5 \textit{b}4 14.\textit{b}1 \textit{a}5 15.a3 \textit{a}6 16.\textit{b}3 \textit{a}4 17.\textit{bd}4 This was Akopian – Sutovsky, Moscow Rapid (2) 2002, and now after 17...\textit{c}8 18.\textit{g}5 \textit{c}5 Black's pieces are working fine and the chances are even.

11.\textit{fl} e5

Now the position strongly resembles a Ruy Lopez. In principle the present version should not be unfavourable to Black, as he has benefitted from developing his bishop directly to g7, as well as the c-pawn to c5, both of which would usually cost additional time in the main line of the Spanish.

12.\textit{g}5 \textit{b}6

There is also nothing wrong with 12...\textit{f}6N, for instance 13.\textit{h}6 \textit{g}7 14.\textit{x}g7 \textit{x}g7 15.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}8 with equal chances.

13.\textit{b}3 \textit{a}5 14.\textit{d}5 \textit{h}6 15.b4 cxb4 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{d}8 17.cxb4 \textit{c}6 18.\textit{d}2 \textit{f}4!

Black succeeds in justifying his 10th move.

19.\textit{xf}4 \textit{xf}4 20.d4 \textit{b}6 21.\textit{ad}1

This position occurred in Akopian – Sutovsky, Moscow Blitz (4) 2002. Now Black should have played:

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

21...g5N

Black has a full share of the chances, and in the long term he might hope for some advantage based on the bishop pair.

5...\textit{xf}3 6.\textit{xf}3 \textit{c}6

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board1.png}
\end{center}
Chapter 6 - Various

7.\( \text{\texttt{c2}} \)

White does not achieve much with 7.0-0 \( \text{\texttt{d7}} ? \) (7...\( g6 \) is also fine) 8.\( \text{\texttt{b5}} \) This looks a bit artificial, although Black should be fine regardless. 8...\( g6 \) 9.\( \text{\texttt{d1}} \) \( g7 \) 10.\( \text{\texttt{a3}} \) 0-0 11.\( \text{\texttt{xc6}} \) (11.\( \text{\texttt{e3}} \) a6 12.\( \text{\texttt{e2}} \) e6= The second player has obtained a harmonious set-up and his pieces are working together. Can the same be said for White?) 11...\( \text{\texttt{c5}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{e3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc6}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{d4}} \) cxd4 14.\( \text{\texttt{cxd4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b6}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a6}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{b3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{ad8}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{a3}} \) d5= Black had the more harmonious set-up in Svidler - Vallejo Pons, Monte Carlo 2005.

7...\( g6 \) 8.0-0 \( g7 \)

As usual, the kingside fianchetto works well. Black's control over the central dark squares, combined with the removal of the f3-knight, will make it hard for White to achieve the desired d4 advance.

9.\( \text{\texttt{e2}} \)

It is a similar story after 9.\( \text{\texttt{d3}} \) 0-0 10.\( \text{\texttt{d1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b8}} \) 11.\( \text{\texttt{d2}} \) b5 12.a3 \( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{f3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{de5}} \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{xe5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xe5}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{c3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b6}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{h1}} \) \( g7 \) 17.\( f4 \) a5 18.\( \text{\texttt{c1}} \) b4 19.\( \text{\texttt{a4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{fc8}} \) Black's queenside counterplay gave him decent chances, Kasparov - Bosboom, Wijk aan Zee (blitz) 1999.

9...0-0 10.\( \text{\texttt{d3}} \) b5 11.\( \text{\texttt{d2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) 12.\( \text{\texttt{f3}} \)

12...\( \text{\texttt{b4}} \)

This immediate queenside strike seems natural, although there is also nothing much wrong with the slower 12...\( \text{\texttt{b6}} \) 13.\( \text{\texttt{d2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{ab8}} \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{fd1}} \) b4 15.\( \text{\texttt{b3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{wb5}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{ac1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a5}} \) 17.\( \text{\texttt{c2}} \) (17.\( \text{\texttt{xb4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xb2}} \) 19.\( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) \( g7= \)) 17...\( \text{\texttt{fc8}} \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{g5}} \) e6 19.\( \text{\texttt{f4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{a6}} \) with a pleasant position for Black, Svidler - Popov, Tomsk 2001.

13.\( \text{\texttt{d2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{ab8}} \) 14.\( \text{\texttt{a4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{c7}} \) 15.\( \text{\texttt{fc1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{fc8}} \) 16.\( \text{\texttt{d4}} \) bxc3 17.\( \text{\texttt{xc3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{b2}} \) 18.\( \text{\texttt{wa6}} \) \( \text{\texttt{cb8}} \) 19.\( \text{\texttt{wd3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{eb6}} \)

We have been following the game Svidler - Van Wely, Polanica Zdroj 2000. The outcome of the opening can be evaluated as fully satisfactory for Black, who has succeeded in taking the fight to the queenside, preventing his opponent from utilizing his bishop pair and pawn centre in a truly effective way.

B2) 4.\( \text{\texttt{e2}} \)

Modesty is said to be a great virtue, so this fine move must have some merit...

4...\( \text{\texttt{bd7}} \)

By blocking the potential check from a4, Black makes the attack on the e4-pawn into a real threat.

5.\( \text{\texttt{d3}} \)
White does not benefit much from:
5.\textit{\textbf{c2}} \textit{\textbf{c7}}!
This ensures that White's dream pawn centre (e4-d4) remains a fantasy.
6.0-0 \textit{\textbf{b6}} 7.\textit{\textbf{c4}}?
This might appear strange, but the reason for it can be seen after 7.\textit{\textbf{e1}} \textit{\textbf{b7}} 8.\textit{\textbf{d3}}
c4! 9.\textit{\textbf{b2}} cxd4 10.\textit{\textbf{x}}d4 \textit{\textbf{e7}} when White’s hopes for an advantage were
nothing more than a pipe dream in Vujacic – Predojevic, Tivat 2001.
7...\textit{\textbf{b7}} 8.\textit{\textbf{c3}} e6 9.\textit{\textbf{d4}} cxd4 10.\textit{\textbf{x}}d4 a6
Black sets up the well-known Hedgehog formation.
11.\textit{\textbf{e3}} \textit{\textbf{e7}} 12.\textit{\textbf{ac1}} 0-0 13.\textit{\textbf{f3}} \textit{\textbf{ac8}} 14.\textit{\textbf{fd1}}
\textit{\textbf{fe8}}=
The queen on c2 is less than ideally placed, and Black generally has a harmonious position

5...\textit{\textbf{g6}} 6.0-0 \textit{\textbf{g7}} 7.\textit{\textbf{bd2}} 0-0

8.\textit{\textbf{d4}}
8.\textit{\textbf{e1}} b6 9.\textit{\textbf{d4}} \textit{\textbf{c7}} leads to the same position. In general, it is hard to believe that
White has anything better than establishing his strong pawn centre.

The slower approach does not bring White much joy: 8.a4 b6 9.\textit{\textbf{c4}} \textit{\textbf{b7}} 10.\textit{\textbf{e3}} \textit{\textbf{c7}}
The game Kengis – Gulko, Vienna 1991, was agreed drawn here. This does not tell us much about the position, but it seems to me that Black should be fine. A plausible continuation might be:

13...cxd4 N 14.\text{c}xd4
Taking with the c-pawn does not look too attractive as Black is in full control of the open c-file.

14...\text{f}d8 15.axb6 axb6 16.\text{b}5 \text{b}8=
White made some modest achievements on the queenside, but the b6-pawn is not really weak and the knight on b5 is not hurting Black. Meanwhile the second player has a harmonious position and can look for a suitable moment to break in the centre.

B3) 4.h3
White is aiming for an improved version of line B1. He intends to put his bishop on d3 after first preventing ...g4.

4...\text{b}d7
There are other good moves, but I would like to recommend a related set-up to that seen in the previous variation, but with something of a twist.

5.\text{d}3 b6

Here is the first small refinement: Black is developing his queenside before the kingside.

6.0-0 \text{b}7 7.\text{e}1 \text{c}7! 8.\text{c}2

8...\text{e}8!
With this, Black’s strategy becomes clear. The second player is exploiting the position of the bishop on c2 to hinder White’s intended d2-d4.

I also investigated 8...c4, as played in Arapovic – Stohl, Medulin 1997, but eventually decided it was slightly risky after 9.b3!N (The game continuation of 9.d4 was completely harmless, and after 9...cxd3 10.\text{x}d3 \text{c}8 Black obtained a comfortable Sicilian position.) White is trying to undermine his opponent’s advanced c-pawn. Black’s position is playable, but not quite as comfortable as he would like. A possible continuation is 9...a6 10.\text{e}2 \text{c}8 11.\text{a}3 \text{cxb}3 12.axb3 \text{g}6 13.\text{b}2 \text{g}7 14.d4+ The asymmetry of the pawn chain is in White’s favour.

9.\text{a}3
This must be the critical path, intending to play d2-d4 in one move.

In the event of the slower 9.d3, Black should play 9...g6 with comparable play to line B2 above.
9...e6
On this occasion the kingside fianchetto would be less appropriate. The point is that after d2-d4, Black may wish to react with a timely ...d6-d5.

10.b3?! 
White continues with his queenside development before occupying the centre. Of course, we should also pay attention to the immediate:

10.d4
This principled move might lead to a small storm.

10...cxd4 11.cxd4
11.Qb5 should be met by 11...Qc5!N (This is clearly better than 11...Qb8?! 12.cxd4 "e7, Andriasian – Garza Marco, Benasque 2009, at which point 13.d5!N± would have been unpleasant.) 12.Qbxd4 a6, when Black has a pleasant version of a normal Open Sicilian.

11...d5 12.exd5!
This looks like White’s only chance to put his opponent under any pressure.

12.e5 achieves nothing after 12...Qxa3 13.exf6 Qxc2 14.fxg7 Qg8 15.bxa3 Qxd1 16.Qxd1 Qxg7= Black has nothing to worry about in the middlegame without queens.

12...Qxd5 13.Qa4 Qxa3

White should have preferred 14.Qc5!N Qf6 15.bxa3 0-0 16.Qf4 Qxe5 17.Qxe5 Qe7 with mutual chances. White’s bishop pair is balanced by Black’s superior structure and firm control over the d5-square.

14...Qc3 15.Qxd7+ Qxd7 16.Qd3 Qxf3 17.Qxf3 Qd5 18.Qf4 0-0=
White faces a difficult defence, Ovetchkin – Golubev, Internet 2006.

10...Qc7

11.Qb2
It is also important to consider the consequences of the immediate:

11.d4?N
Compared with the previous note, the inclusion of the move b2-b3 leads to some significant differences as we will see.

11...cxd4 12.cxd4 d5 13.e5 Qe4
It is important to recognize that 13...Qxa3? is no longer a good move due to: 14.exf6 Qxf6 15.Qxa3 Qxc2 16.Qxc2 Qxc2 17.Qec1±

14.Qxe4
This is the most forcing continuation, although perhaps White would be better off settling for the quieter 14.Qd3 Qc3 15.Qc2 (15.Qb1 Qa5! is awkward) 15...0-0 when Black has sufficient counterplay thanks to the nuisance value of the queen.

14...Qxe4 15.Qb5 Qb8 16.Qg5
The first player must show some patience, as the immediate strike against the knight on e4 backfires: 16...\textit{\texttt{x}}xe4? dxe4 17.\textit{\texttt{d}}2 f5 18.\textit{\texttt{xf}}6 \textit{\texttt{xf}}6= Black’s two bishops are a powerful force.

16.\textit{\texttt{b}}1 was played in Golod – Gershon, Ramat Aviv Modiin 2000. At this point I think Black should have played 16...\textit{\texttt{b}}4! 17.\textit{\texttt{bd}}2 f5! 18.\textit{\texttt{xf}}6 \textit{\texttt{xf}}6= Black’s active pieces give him the better chances.

16...h6? This is a somewhat useful waiting move. From here I analysed a few possible lines, eventually concluding that the chances are about equal with accurate play from both sides.

17.\textit{\texttt{b}}1

The cheap solution 17.\textit{\texttt{c}}4?! does not work well for White after 17...\textit{\texttt{xc}}4 18.\textit{\texttt{xe}}4 \textit{\texttt{xe}}4 19.\textit{\texttt{xe}}4 b5=.

17...\textit{\texttt{c}}7 18.\textit{\texttt{fd}}2

White is not helped by 18.\textit{\texttt{d}}3?! \textit{\texttt{c}}8 19.\textit{\texttt{d}}1 f5=.

18...\textit{\texttt{xd}}2 19.\textit{\texttt{xd}}2 \textit{\texttt{fc}}8 20.\textit{\texttt{d}}3 \textit{\texttt{f}}8=

Black has successfully limited the dangers, and the position remains approximately equal.
C) 3.\(\text{d}c3\) \(\text{d}f6\)

From here, the play frequently transposes to the main lines after 4.d4 cxd4, but White can also keep the position in independent territory with:

4.e5 dxe5 5.\(\text{d}xe5\)

White is aiming for active piece play, helped by his minimal development advantage.

5...\(\text{d}bd7\)

Black immediately challenges the active knight. Now we will consider the following three moves: C1) 6.\(\text{b}b5\), C2) 6.d4 and C3) 6.\(\text{c}c4\).

C1) 6.\(\text{b}b5\)

Trading the bishop means express development, but White’s chances for an opening advantage become negligible.

6...a6 7.\(\text{d}xd7\)

It is hardly any better for White to play 7.\(\text{d}xd7\)\(\text{d}d7\) 8.\(\text{e}e2\) (8.\(\text{d}xd7\) \(\text{d}d7\) looks like nothing to worry about) 8...e6 9.d3 \(\text{d}xe5\) 10.\(\text{x}e5\) \(\text{d}d4\) 11.\(\text{f}f4\) \(\text{e}e5\) 12.\(\text{x}e5\) f6 when Black has no problems at all, Hammer – Nordahl, Oslo 2005.

7...\(\text{d}xd7\) 8.\(\text{d}xd7\)\(\text{d}d7\)
6...e6
After 6...dxe5 7.dxe5 wxd1+ 8.wxd1 g4 9.b5+ d7 10.e6 fxe6 11.xd7+ xxd7 Black should be able to hold the balance but can hardly hope for anything more, Balogh – Mamedov, Budva 2003.

7.b5 a6
I also spent some time looking at 7...cxd4 8.wxd4 a6 9.e5 d7 10.f4, but eventually concluded that it was too risky for Black. There is no reason to assist with the opponent’s development.

8.xd7+
8.xd7 xxd7 9.e5xd7 hd7 10.e5 c8 11.dxc5 wxc1+ 12.xc1 xc5 13.xc5 xc5 14.e3 d5 led to an absolutely level endgame in Tseshkovsky – Polugaevsky, Tbilisi 1978.

8...xd7 9.h5
The threat of mate may appear alarming, but calm defence should enable Black to defuse his opponent’s initiative.

9...g6
9...dxe5 10.dxe5 d7 11.g5 is solid enough for Black as long as he does not play...e7 before...c6, preparing to eliminate the white knight which might appear on e4. The positions are rather dull though, so I decided to focus on a slightly riskier, but still sound continuation, which leads to more combative play.

10.xf3 f5!
This looks better than 10...f6 11.xf6 xf6 12.g5 d5 13.xd5 exd5 14.f6 g8 15.dxc5 xc5 when Black faced a tenable but slightly unpleasant endgame in Kotsur – Zhang Zhong, Jodhpur 2003.

11.e3
It is often White’s prerogative to take the life out of the position. Here this can be accomplished with 11.xd7 xd7 12.dxc5 xc6 13.g3

13...xc5!N (13...f7?? was the risky try in Sorensen – Aagaard, Denmark 2009. Now White should have played 14.c3N g7 15.0–0±, when Black has some problems proving compensation.) 14.e5 Black has to rely on the bishops in the following roughly equal ending. 14...d4! 15.xe6 txe7 16.xe7 fxe7 with sufficient compensation.

11...g7

12.g3!
This is stronger than the more natural-looking 12.0–0–0?! cxd4 13.xd4 g5 14.c3 xe5 15.xf3 xf3 16.gxf3 h6 17.d8t (or 17.f4 g5 18.d6 d7 19.he1 xe7) 17...f7 18.xh8 xh8 19.xh6 d7
when White faced a difficult endgame in N. Davies – Navara, Birmingham 2005.

12...0–0

12...cxd4?! leads to difficulties for Black after
13...xd4 0-0 14...d3 xg3 15.hxg3 ...d4 16...xd4 f6 17.0–0–0 ...d7 18...e1 ½f7±
Black should be able to hold the ending, but it will not be much fun.

However, there was a viable alternative in
12...xe5?!N 13.dxe5 0-0

14.0–0–0 ...a5 14...d7 15...d5 0–0 16.0–0–0 ...e7 17...h6 0–0 18...h3 b5!? (18...e7 19.g4 fxg4 20.xg4 0–0–0 should be equal too.) 19...b1 b4 20...c2 ...e7 21.g4 0–0–0 with chances for both sides.

13.0–0–0 ...a5 14...d7 15...d5

Another critical line might also end with a perpetual: 15...d6 ...f7 (15...c6!? 16.xe6+ ½f7∞) 16.xc5 b5!

17.d5 ...c8 (17...exd5?) 18.dxe6 ...xe6 19...b6 ...xc3 20...xe6 ...xb2+ 21...xb2 ...c3+ 22...b1 ...xc2+ with a draw.

15...xc3 16.bxc3

16...f4!
Preventing White's intended attacking plan with 0-0 and ...d4.

17...xf4 ...c6 18...b2 ...xg2 19...xg2 ...c4
19...b5+? was the last chance to prolong the game.

20...xb7 ...b8 21...d7 ...b8 22...g7+ ...f8 23...f7+ ½–½
Ruefenacht – Moser, e-mail 2006.

C3) 6...c4 e6

This natural move is the main line, although 6...b6 also seems fully viable.
Now White's main decision concerns the development of his kingside, thus we will analyse: C31) 7.e2 and C32) 7.g3.

7.d4
This move is nowhere near as threatening here as it was on the previous turn.
7...cxd4 8.exd4 \&c5 9.\&d6†?
The check looks tempting, but only succeeds in helping the opponent to bring his pieces into play.
A safer approach for White would be to play for equality with 9.\&d3N 0-0 10.e2 \&b6 11.\&e3 \&xe3 12.\&xe3 \&xd3 13.\&d7 Black can complain about the weather, but certainly not about the position.
9...\&e7 10.\&xc8+ \&xc8
Strangely enough, the database shows that White has made a perfect score of 3/3 from this position. It just shows that statistics are not always to be trusted, as in reality Black has the upper hand.
11.\&h4 \&c5 12.e2 \&d4 13.\&g3 \&eg4

14.\&xg4
14.0-0 runs into 14...\&d6 15.\&h4 \&xh2† 16.\&h1 \&f4 when White will have a hard time demonstrating compensation, especially given that his own king is now exposed.
17.\&b5 \&e4 18.\&xg4 \&xc1 19.\&g3 \&xg4 20.\&a3† \&d8 21.\&d3† \&d5 22.\&xc1 \&e7† The shooting exercise is partly over, the black king has survived and White will have to suffer.

14.\&d1 \&hd8 15.\&f3 was played in Andreikin – Mladenov, Plovdiv 2008, and now Black could have maintained the pressure with 15...\&d5N, hoping for a favourable endgame, or 15...\&d7, intending to double rooks while keeping queens on the board.
14...\&xg4 15.\&xg4 \&xg4 16.\&e4 \&b6 17.f3 \&f6 18.\&xf6 \&xf6 19.c3 \&hd8†
White must play with great care to hold the balance. He may have gone on to win eventually, but this had nothing to do with the objective merits of the opening, Browne – Mecking, Mar del Plata 1971.

C31) 7.e2
The bishop will usually head for the h1-a8 diagonal; the real question is whether it will be on g2 or f3.

14...\&e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.\&f3
Alternatives are no better, for instance: 9.b3 \&d5 10.\&b2 \&xc3 11.\&xc3 \&f6=
9...\&b6 10.b3 \&bd5
The following game was an instructive example of the potential dangers lying in wait for Black. 10...\&f5 11.\&b2 \&xc3 12.\&xc3 \&xc4 13.bxc4 \&f6 14.\&xf6 \&xf6 15.\&c1 \&f4 16.d3 \&xc1 17.\&xc1 \&b8 18.\&ab1 b6 19.\&b3 \&b7 20.\&xb7 \&xb7 21.a4
This was McShane – Gordon, British League 2009. Black should be able to hold this endgame, but at the same time it is a somewhat unpleasant task due to his slightly weak queenside, and in the game Gordon (a talented young Grandmaster) was unable to withstand the pressure.

11.\texttt{b2} \texttt{xc3}

This is the no-nonsense route to equality. It looks riskier for Black to play 11...\texttt{d7} 12.\texttt{e5} \texttt{e8} 13.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{exd5} 14.\texttt{d4} \texttt{c8} 15.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5}, Balashov – Loginov, St Petersburg 1998, 16.\texttt{d3!N} \texttt{b6} 17.a4 \texttt{c6}±.

12.\texttt{xc3} \texttt{d5} 13.\texttt{b2} \texttt{f6} 14.\texttt{e5}!

14...\texttt{xe5?!N}

This has never been played, but it looks to me like the simplest route to equality. Nevertheless, if the reader feels uncomfortable relinquishing the two bishops, then he can also consider:

14...\texttt{c7}

This is also quite acceptable, although it was necessary to improve over previous games.

15.\texttt{e1} \texttt{b8N}

This idea of Psakhis looks like the most reliable method for Black, who intends to finish developing his queenside.

The following may serve as an instructive example of what to avoid: 15...\texttt{d8} 16.\texttt{e4} \texttt{f4} 17.\texttt{f3} \texttt{g6} 18.\texttt{xe6!} \texttt{hxg6} 19.d3 \texttt{d7} 20.\texttt{e3}± White had a nasty pull in Zvjaginsev – Wojtkiewicz, Tripoli 2004, and eventually won after massing his heavy pieces on the kingside.

16.a4 \texttt{b6} 17.a5 \texttt{b7}

I also looked at the riskier 17...\texttt{bxa5} 18.d3 \texttt{b7}, which may be playable but is hardly necessary.

18.\texttt{xb6} \texttt{axb6} 19.\texttt{a7} \texttt{f8∞}

Black keeps a fair share of the chances (analysis by Psakhis).

15.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{f6} 16.\texttt{b2} \texttt{e5} 17.\texttt{a3?!}

This is an attempt to put the black position under immediate pressure before the second player finishes developing. The idea is interesting, but the black position holds up just fine.

Psakhis mentions the possibility of 17.\texttt{e1} \texttt{b8?! With unclear play.}

17...\texttt{b4}!
18.c3

This certainly looks like the consistent follow-up.

18...a5 19.e1 d3 20.d5# h8 21.f3 f4

Black is doing fine here, for instance 22.xb7 xxb7 23.xb7 d3, with more than enough compensation for the pawn.

C32) 7.g3

White has similar ideas to those seen in the previous section. The positioning of the bishop on g2 instead of f3 introduces some minor differences, without altering the fundamental character of the position.

8.Ne2

This move in some way justifies the decision not to place the bishop on e2, although it is not at all dangerous for Black – just like the alternatives:

8.xb6 a5 9.g2 d7 10.a4 c6 11.a5 c7 12.0-0 xg2 13.xg2 h5? Black tries a speculative idea. He should be able to get away with it, although most players would probably have chosen a quieter continuation. 14.f3 a6 15.d3 This was Sutovsky – Popovic, Internet 2004, and here Black should have played 15...h4N 16.g5 h3# 17.g1 e7 with equal chances.

8.e3

This has been the most common choice. White avoids simplifications and intends a4-a5, perhaps followed by returning with the knight to c4.

8...d7!

Black takes the opportunity to neutralize his opponent’s powerful bishop.

9.g2 c7 10.a4 c6 11.a5

11.0-0 c7 12.d3 0-0 13.a5 d7 14.c4 b5 15.axb6 axb6 16.xd2 was played in Shaposhnikov – Shomoev, Dagomys 2008, and here I suggest 16...b7N 17.xc6 xc6 with a harmonious set-up for Black.

11...c4 12.xc6+ xc6 13.0-0 d6 14.d3 c7 15.d2 0-0 16.e2

16.b5!

There were quieter alternatives, but there is no reason for Black to be modest.

17.f3 e8 18.g4

This does not work out well, but it was not easy to find a constructive plan for White.

18.xg4 19.fxg4 c4!
Black succeeded in taking over the initiative in Bartel – Sandipan, Germany 2007.

8...\(\text{dxc4}\) 9.\(\text{xc4}\) \(\text{d7!}\)

Once again Black wastes no time in contesting the h1-a8 diagonal.

10.\(\text{g2}\) \(\text{c8}\) 11.\(\text{a4}\)

White secures some light squares and dreams of a favourable endgame. Other moves are possible, but in any case Black will just continue with normal development and equal chances.

11...\(\text{c6}\) 12.\(\text{xc6}\) 9\(\text{xc6}\) 13.\(\text{b5}\)

White is not getting anywhere in this structure.

Conclusion

All three of the lines presented in this chapter have attracted their own loyal band of followers. The underestimated 3.\(\text{c4}\) gives the impression of an Italian Game reappearing on the scene in different clothes. We have seen that the kingside fianchetto serves Black well here, and often leads to slower fighting in the style of the Ruy Lopez. The tricky line 3.c3 leads to an interesting struggle, but over time skilled defenders managed to prepare for the coming advance of White’s forces and avoid any problems. The last idea of 3.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{f6}\) 4.e5 is suffering from its own ailment, since after the partial elimination of the pawn centre Black just needs to combine sensible moves with a bit of precise knowledge to obtain a pleasantly playable position.
Anti-Open Systems

Blade Runner - 3...b5†

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.b5†

3...d7 4.xd7† xxd7

A) 5.0–0 c6 6.c3 f6
A1) 7.e1
A2) 7.e2
A3) 7.d4?! 120

B) 5.c4 c6 6.d4 cxd4 7.xd4 g6 8.c3 g7
B1) 9.e3 121
B2) 9.de2 123

B) note to 5...c6 125

A1) after 20.bxa3 127

B) note to 5...c6 128

B1) after 13.e1 129

20...ab8N

11...d5!

13...e8??N
Chess can be a brutal game – not only players, but also moves and ideas have to fight for recognition in a crowded and increasingly competitive field. Take the line forming the subject of the present chapter:

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.b5†

White’s seemingly modest idea of an early bishop check has never really excited the crowds in the same way as the more aggressive alternatives. Nevertheless, despite the lack of obvious spark the system grew into a comprehensive concept with strong strategic features and independent challenges for the defender. I have chosen to recommend a tried and tested defence:

3...d7 4.exd7†

White players are occasionally testing two other moves as well.

Somewhat unimpressive is 4.c4 dxe5 5.cxb5 6.c3 g6 7.0-0 g7 8.d4 cxd4 9.exd4 d5 10.e5 dxe5 (Black is also enjoying easy equality after 11...b6 12.b3 f5 13.g5 h6 14.h4 e6 15.e6 d5 16.exd5 exd5 17.g3 c4, Moutousis – Macieja, Aghia Pelagia 2004.) 12.e3 e5 13.a3 f5 14.h3 a5 15.h5 b6 16.b4 h5 17.g3 e6 18.g2 c4 Black has no problems thanks to his opponent’s inferior pawn structure, Romanishin – Kupreichik, Yerevan 1982.

More popular, though still not dangerous, is 4.a4 d6 (4...f6 is also playable, but has given worse results in practice.) 5.0-0 (Another game continued 5.d3 g6 6.0-0 g7 7.b2 d6 8.c4 0-0 0 9.e1 a6 10.xc6 xc6 11.a5 d5 12.exd5 xd5 13.c3 d7 14.e5 b5 Black’s bishop pair enabled him to fight for more than equality in Wall – Shirov, West Bromwich 2005.) 5...d6 6.e1 e6 7.d3 e7 8.b2 0-0 0 9.b3 b6 10.b2 a6 11.xc6 xc6 12.d4 d5 13.exd5 xd5 14.e2 cxd4 15.e4 b7 16.a3 d6 17.c4 b4 White already had to work for equality in Becerra Rivero – Arun Prasad, Philadelphia 2008.

4...xd7

This is known to be one of the most reliable systems at Black’s disposal. It has only one small Achilles’ heel: the light-squared bishop is gone and the major part of Black’s central control pawn chain is, for the time being at least, based on the dark squares. Fortunately Black can adapt the defence accordingly, with good chances to obtain an interesting position with bright prospects. White has to choose between two different worlds, involving either c3 or c4. The build-up on the light squares tends to be more popular, but in both cases Black keeps a very sound position. Prejudices aside, White’s third move might be a bit bland after all!

Now White must chose between A) 5.0-0 and B) c4.

A) 5.0-0 d6 6.c3

Attempting to take over the centre is White’s most natural and logical plan. Nevertheless he occasionally tries: 6.b3 d6 7.e1 g6
Black prepares to counter his opponent’s impending fianchetto.

8.c3?!  
White switches plan, hoping that in the ensuing structure Black’s bishop will be less than ideally placed in g7.

8...g7 9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 d5  
Despite the slightly unusual position of the bishop, this standard reaction works fine.

11.e5 dxe4 12.b2 0–0 13.bd2 xdx2  
It is important to use this rook, for reasons that will soon be revealed.

15.h3  
15.aac1 d8! This is why it was better to move the f-rook to c8; Black executes the thematic knight manoeuvre without breaking the coordination of his rooks. 16.a3 e6  
17.e3 (17.b4? d4!) 17...h6 18.h3 a5=  

15...d8  
Once again the knight is headed for the ideal e6-square. This thematic manoeuvre solves all Black’s problems and ensures a comfortable game.

16.aac1 e6 17.a3 f8 18.h2 ecx1  
19.exc1 a5  
Also perfectly fine was 19...ec8 20.exc8 ecx8 21.g4 ecx6 22.e3 b6= Adams – Ftacnik, Germany 1999.

20.f1 a4 21.b4 axb3 22.axb3 h5=  
Black had no problems in Adams – Anand, Dortmund 2001.

6...f6  
Now White can defend his e-pawn with either A1) 7.e1 or A2) 7.e2, or sacrifice it with A3) 7.d4?.

A1) 7.e1 e6  
This is the typical response to White’s planned expansion in the centre. Black intends to position his pawns on the light squares in the style of the French Defence, having already exchanged his bad bishop for the opponent’s good one.

8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 d5 10.e5  
Other moves would see White fall into a dubious IQP position.

10.e4  
Players wishing to keep more complexity in the position may choose to investigate 10...g8??, but I have chosen to focus on the main line.

11.bd2  
White has tried a few other ideas, but most can be met with simple, common sense replies.
13.\texttt{g5} 0–0 14.\texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} is close to equal but marginally favourable to Black, as the d4-pawn is slightly weak.

13...0–0
Black has the makings of a significantly improved French-type position. The exchange of light-squared bishops is a serious achievement, and the removal of a pair of knights helps to reduce any feelings of congestion within his position. If White does not come up with an active plan then he will simply be a bit worse, so the following move is critical.

14.\texttt{e3}!
The rook prepares to swing to the kingside to assist in an attack. This is the only way to challenge the black position, although the drawback of this plan is that if the attack fails, the white pieces might end up misplaced on the kingside.

14...\texttt{fxc8}
I think this is the right rook. It might appear dangerous to move a defender away from the kingside, but it is actually quite useful to free the f8-square for the bishop or even the queen.

15.\texttt{a3}
This has been the usual choice, taking a moment to restrict Black's minor pieces. Another option is 15.\texttt{h4} \texttt{f8} 16.\texttt{a3} \texttt{b5}! The advance of the b-pawn is one of Black's key resources in this line, which makes for an effective distraction before White's kingside attack gathers steam. 17.\texttt{d3} \texttt{b4} 18.\texttt{g5} \texttt{h6} 19.\texttt{h3} (or 19.\texttt{f3} \texttt{ab8} 20.\texttt{xb4} \texttt{xb4+N} 19...\texttt{bxa3} 20.\texttt{bxa3} \texttt{e7+} Colovic - Arizmendi Martinez, Malaga 2005.

15...\texttt{b5}
Again this typical move works well, although I will mention in passing that the alternative 15...\texttt{d8}?! has also scored highly for Black.

16.\texttt{d3} \texttt{d8}
From this square the queen can influence events on either side of the board.

17.\texttt{h4} \texttt{h6}
The greedy 17...\texttt{xh4}?! was seen in Laurent – Van der Stricht, Namur 2006, and a few subsequent games. The move is certainly playable, although such an approach carries obvious risks. Here I find it strange that no one seems to have tried 18.\texttt{xh4N} \texttt{hxh4} 19.\texttt{c3}, intending to bring the heavy pieces into the attack, for instance: 19...\texttt{ab8} 20.\texttt{h3} \texttt{g5} 21.\texttt{g3} \texttt{d8} 22.\texttt{g4} \texttt{g6} 23.\texttt{h3=} The number of defenders around the black king is quite modest.
Chapter 7 - 3...b5+

18.h5 b4 19.h2 bxa3 20.bxa3

We have been following the game Mamedov – Sjugirov, Kirishi 2005. At this point I found a simple improvement for Black:

7...e6

Black sticks to the same plan as in the previous line. However, we will see that White’s seventh move will facilitate an entirely different way for him to approach the position.

8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 d5 10.e5 e4

Once again this is the main line, although 10...g8 is also possible and was once tested by Topalov.

20...ab8N 21.g4 h8

Black’s queenside pieces are ideally placed to control that side of the board, while his kingside is not in serious danger. It is worth noting the useful manoeuvre ...g8-h7, for active and defensive purposes.

A2) 7.e2

This time White hopes that his queen will be well placed in the centre, while keeping some other options open for the rook.

8.e3!

11.bd2 xd2 12.xd2 e7 is harmless and can be compared with the previous section. The text move is more challenging – instead of merely exchanging the centralized enemy knight, White is hoping to expose that piece as misplaced by preparing f3. This certainly keeps the game interesting although Black should be okay with correct defence.

11...e7 12.e1 f6!

Securing a safe retreat for the knight on g5 and, if necessary, f7.

13.f3 g5 14.d3 fxe5

Black can also block the centre with 14...f7 15.f4 f5 16.d2 0-0 17.f3 ac8, Iulachkev – Hracek, Calvia (ol) 2004. Now a logical continuation would be 18.ac1N (the game continuation of 18..c5? lost a pawn after
18...\texttt{xd4}! 19.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{xe2}+ 20.\texttt{xf2} \texttt{f8}
18...b6 19.\texttt{d2} \texttt{b7} 20.\texttt{d1} \texttt{c7} 21.\texttt{b4} \texttt{c8}±
With such a central structure Black obviously benefits from the exchange of light-squared bishops. Nevertheless White has a solid space advantage which promises him slightly better chances.

It should be mentioned that Black often castles before exchanging on e5; this is perfectly fine and will usually transpose to the main line below.

15.\texttt{dxe5}
Occasionally White has taken with the knight, but this seems illogical as the d3-knight is certainly not weaker than the one on c6.

It is also worth considering:
15.\texttt{fxg5}
This should not worry Black at all, but we will check a few lines all the same.
15...\texttt{xd4}

16.\texttt{f4}?
This looks like a principled move, but in reality it is just a mistake. Nevertheless it has been White's most popular choice in the diagram position, so I will consider it as the main line in order to focus the spotlight on refuting it.
16.\texttt{dxe5} is toothless, and after 16...0–0 17.\texttt{f4} \texttt{d8}± Black's bishop had the potential to become the dominant piece on the board in Ribeiro – Ulrich, e-mail 2001.
White's best continuation is 16.\texttt{xe5}, although after 16...\texttt{xe5} 17.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{f6} 18.\texttt{e3} 0–0 Black had equalized easily in Dalmau – Tokmachev, Budapest 1999.
16...\texttt{xf4}!
This natural move leaves White struggling to demonstrate compensation.
17.\texttt{dxe5}
After 17.\texttt{xf4} \texttt{xf4} 18.\texttt{xf4} \texttt{f8} 19.\texttt{xf8}\texttt{x} \texttt{f8} 20.\texttt{d2} \texttt{g8}± White has no compensation for the missing pawn.
Another game continued 17...\texttt{g3} \texttt{xd4} 18.\texttt{xf2}, Wong – Rosin, corr. 2000, and now the clearest refutation of White's play would have been 18...\texttt{b5}N 19.\texttt{fxd4} 0–0 20.\texttt{c3} \texttt{b6} 21.\texttt{ad1} \texttt{g5} when Black is close to winning.

17...\texttt{d4}! 18.\texttt{f2}
18.\texttt{d1} \texttt{c3}+ 19.\texttt{h1} \texttt{f5} 20.\texttt{c3} 0–0 was no better, Fusthy – Shirov, Budapest 1989.
18...0–0!
This final accurate move leaves the result in no doubt.
19.\texttt{xf4}
19.\texttt{xd4} would have lasted slightly longer, although after 19...\texttt{xh2}+ 20.\texttt{xh2} \texttt{xh1} 21.b3 \texttt{f7} Black should win easily enough.
19...\texttt{xf4}++
Apart from his extra pawn Black also has a decisive initiative and won quickly in Micic – Jovanovic, Yugoslavia 1994.
15...0–0

Chapter 7 - 3.\(\text{b5}\)†

16.\(\text{d2}\)

Some players were unhappy with the position of the knight on d2 and started experimenting with 16.\(\text{d2}\) intending \(\text{c3}\). Despite a few successes, this idea should not be too dangerous after 16...\(\text{f8}\) (There is also 16...\(\text{ac8}\) 17.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{b4}\) 18.\(\text{d1}\), Godena – Negi, Moscow 2006. Here instead of 18...\(\text{f8}\) 19.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{a5}\) 20.\(\text{d6}\) when White stood better, Black should have preferred 18...\(\text{b6}\)N with a fine position.) 17.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{g6}\) 18.\(\text{h1}\) h5 19.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{f5}\) 20.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{f7}\) 21.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{xc5}\) 22.\(\text{xc5}\) b6 23.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{ad8}\) Black had no cause for complaint in Chebotarev – Sakaev, Kazan 2005.

16...\(\text{f7}\) 17.\(\text{f2}\)!

The more popular 17.f4 lends more stable support to the e5-pawn, but restricts White's bishop. Later Black may try to exploit the light-square weaknesses. One illustrative game continued 17...\(\text{h6}\) (There is also 17...\(\text{b6}\) 18.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{h6}\) 19.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{f5}\) 20.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{a5}\) 21.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{xd4}\) 22.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{wa4}\) 23.\(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{xa2}\) 24.\(\text{wa1}\) \(\text{b3}\) 25.\(\text{g4}\) \(\text{f5}\) Black's enterprising play was enough for equality but not more in Bulmaga – Mar, Chisinau 2005.) 18.g4?! This is too weakening; instead White should be playing for equality with something more modest. 18...\(\text{d4}\) 19.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{b4}\) 20.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{f5}\) 21.\(\text{xb4}\) \(\text{xb4}\) 22.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{ac8}\) 23.\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{c5}\) 24.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{b6}\)† Black was convincingly outplaying his opponent in Andreikin – Zhou Jianchao, Moscow 2004.

17...\(\text{ac8}\)N

This seems like a logical move, although I must stress there is nothing wrong with 17...\(\text{b4}\) 18.\(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c8}\) 19.\(\text{f1}\) b6 20.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{a6}\) 21.\(\text{xa6}\) \(\text{xa6}\) with equality, Sedlak – Velimirovic, Herceg Novi 2007.

18.\(\text{ac1}\) b6 19.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{c7}\)

Black is holding his own on both flanks, and overall the position is in a state of dynamic equilibrium.

A3) 7.\(\text{d4}\)!

With this move White sacrifices a pawn for the initiative as Black needs a few more moves to bring his king to safety.

7...\(\text{xe4}\)

Black should certainly accept the offer. Occasionally he exchanges on d4 first, but it seems more logical to keep the position closed since Black is temporarily behind in development.

8.\(\text{d5}\) \(\text{e5}\) 9.\(\text{e1}\)
9. \( \texttt{cxe5} \texttt{dxe5} \texttt{10.e1 cxf6} \) leads to the same position.

9... \( \texttt{cxf6} \)

I also analysed 9... \( \texttt{xf3} \)† 10.\( \texttt{xf3} \texttt{cxf6} \), whereby Black hangs on to the extra pawn for the time being. However, in most cases he will eventually be forced to return the pawn in order to neutralize White's initiative, resulting in equal play. Therefore I decided to focus on the present line, which simplifies Black's task by conveniently providing a solution against both 9.\( \texttt{e1} \) and 9.\( \texttt{xe}5 \).

10. \( \texttt{xe5} \texttt{dxe5} \texttt{11.c5} \)

White is not obliged to recapture immediately, and sometimes tries to cause problems by accelerating his development:

11.\( \texttt{c4} \texttt{e6} \texttt{12.c3} 0-0-0 \texttt{13.g5} \texttt{h6}! \texttt{14.h4} \)

Harmless is 14.\( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{gx6} \) 15.\( \texttt{f3} \texttt{c7} \) 16.\( \texttt{d1} \) (After 16.\( \texttt{h5} \) \( \texttt{e8} \) 17.\( \texttt{ad1} \) \( \texttt{b8} \) White has enough activity for a pawn, but not more.) 16.\( \texttt{b8} \texttt{d6} \texttt{xd6} \texttt{18.h5} \texttt{c7} \texttt{19.xd6} \texttt{e6} \texttt{20.xd6} \texttt{xf6} \texttt{21.xf6} \texttt{e8} \texttt{d8} \) Black had no problems in Ulibin – N. Kosintseva, Moscow 2005.

14... \( \texttt{c7} \)

15.\( \texttt{xe5} \)

Another reasonable continuation is 15.\( \texttt{f3} \texttt{exd5} \texttt{16.cxd5} \), although after 16... \( \texttt{e4}! \) 17.\( \texttt{xe4} \texttt{xe4} \) 18.\( \texttt{xe7} \texttt{xe7} \) 19.\( \texttt{xe4} \texttt{g5} \) 20.\( \texttt{xf7} \texttt{xd5} \) 21.\( \texttt{g6} \texttt{d7} \) Black held the balance without any problems in Klosterfrau – Flyingfatman, Internet 2007.

15... \( \texttt{xd5} \)!

This accurate tactical shot removes all dangers from Black's world.

16.\( \texttt{xd5} \texttt{h4} \) 17.\( \texttt{g4} \texttt{f6} \) 18.\( \texttt{dxe6} \texttt{fxe6} \) 19.\( \texttt{xc5} \)† \( \texttt{b8} = \)

Black's slightly compromised pawn structure was balanced by his superior minor piece in Sahl – Schneider, Isle of Man 1999.

11... \( \texttt{e6} \) 12.\( \texttt{c4} \) 0-0 0-0

We have reached a fairly typical scenario for a gambit line: Black has returned the extra pawn in order to catch up on development, and overall the chances are about equal.

13. \( \texttt{c3} \)

Black is fine after 13.\( \texttt{g5} \texttt{c6} \) 14.\( \texttt{xf6} \) \( \texttt{gx6} \) 15.\( \texttt{h5} \texttt{c5} \) 16.\( \texttt{c3} \) 5, Gurgenidze – Mchedlishvili, Tbilisi 2001.

13... \( \texttt{d6} \) 14.\( \texttt{xe1} \)

It is worth pointing out that 14.\( \texttt{dxe6} \) leads to trouble for White after 14... \( \texttt{c7} \) 15.\( \texttt{e7} \texttt{xe5} \texttt{16.exd8= \texttt{wb} \texttt{xd8} = \texttt{wb} = \) Sosna – Voller, Czech Republic 1994.

14... \( \texttt{exd5} \) 15. \( \texttt{xd5} \)

15.\( \texttt{xd5} \) is playable but riskier, as the d-pawn might become weak. Black has scored highly
after 15...\textit{f}5 when play may continue
16.h3 \textit{h}5 17.\textit{c}e3 \textit{g}he8 18.\textit{a}4 \textit{a}6 19.b4?
This overambitious move leads to problems.
(White could and should have maintained the
balance with: 19.\textit{a}3N \textit{xd}5 20.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}3
21.\textit{xd}6 \textit{b}5 22.\textit{c}5+ \textit{xc}5 23.\textit{xc}5=)
19...\textit{xb}4 20.\textit{b}5 \textit{xd}5 21.\textit{xd}6+ \textit{b}6
22.\textit{ed}1 \textit{d}5= Black can live with a somewhat
exposed king having received the gift of several
pawns, Bergez – Abergel, Evry 2002.

15...\textit{f}5
15...\textit{xd}5 16.cxd5 \textit{g}he8 is very safe, but
promises less scope for Black's ambitions.

16.\textit{c}e3 \textit{g}he8
This position should be equal with correct
play, although in practice White's position has
proven to be more dangerous.

17.h3
The dangers facing the first player are
everywhere. Look at the following abrupt
finish: 17.b4? \textit{g}4 18.g3? \textit{xe}3! 0–1 Zarnicki

Perhaps White's safest continuation would be
17.\textit{b}3N, evacuating the queen from the
watchful gaze of the d8-rook, although after
17...\textit{xd}5 18.cxd5 \textit{e}4= Black certainly has
nothing to fear.

17...\textit{xd}5 18.cxd5 \textit{b}8
18...b6?N looks interesting, threatening...
\textit{c}7 to round up the d5-pawn.

19.b4 \textit{c}7 20.\textit{a}4 \textit{xd}5 21.\textit{ac}1!
Evidently not satisfied with the equal position
resulting from 21.\textit{xc}5N \textit{xe}1N 22.\textit{xe}1 \textit{b}6,
White tries to maintain some tension in the
position. He should not be risking much, as
Black can hardly hope to save the c5-pawn.

21.\textit{d}7 22.\textit{a}3 \textit{d}3!
Setting a cunning trap, into which White
unwittingly falls.

23.\textit{c}3?
It was time to accept the equal endgame that
would have resulted from 23.\textit{xd}3N \textit{xd}3.

23...\textit{xe}3! 24.\textit{xe}3 \textit{d}6++

B) 5.c4

With this move White aims for a Maroczy
Bind set-up, having already made a positionally
favourable bishop exchange.

5...\textit{c}6
The currently fashionable treatment of this
line involves delaying the development of
this piece in order to facilitate a clever tactical sequence. The key line runs as follows: 5...\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{Qf6}}}\) 6.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{c3}}}\) \(g6\) 7.\(d4\) \(\text{\textbf{x\texttt{dx4}}}\) 8.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{xd4}}}\) \(g7\) 9.0–0 0–0 10.f3 (10.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{c3}}}\) \(c6\) reaches line B1 below.) 10...\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{c8}}}\) 11.b3

11...\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{d5}}}\)! This kills all White’s chances for an opening advantage. Best play now leads to an equal endgame as follows: 12.exd5 \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{cxd5}}}\) 13.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{b5}}}\) \(e6\) 14.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{h6}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{exd5}}}\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{xg7}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{g7}}}\) 16.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{b5}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{dxc4}}}\) 17.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{c6}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{c8}}}\) 18.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{xb7}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{xd1}}}\) 19.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{fxd1}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{xd1}}}\) 20.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{b3}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{c6}}}\) as seen in Lupulescu – Colovic, Subotica 2003, and several subsequent games, all of which ended in draws.

Theoretically this is all completely fine, and if the reader wishes to play this way then I have nothing bad to say about Black’s opening strategy. However, since the above line has been analysed extensively by other commentators, I thought it would be more interesting to cover the old-fashioned way of handling the position. A secondary reason is that although an easy drawing line might count a theoretical success for Black, it may not suit the ambitious player who wishes to strive for a win with the black pieces.

6.\(d4\)

6.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{c3}}}\) \(g6\) will almost certainly transpose, as White can hardly benefit from omitting \(d2\)-\(d4\).

6...\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{xd4}}}\) 7.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{xd4}}}\) \(g6\) 8.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{c3}}}\) \(g7\)

Here White must choose between B1) 9.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{e3}}}\) and B2) 9.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{de2}}}\). The former looks natural and is not bad, but the latter is considered more ambitious and is the usual choice of 3.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{b5}}}\) specialists.

B1) 9.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{e3}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{f6}}}\)

10.\(f3\)

White should safeguard his bishop from harassment by ...\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{g4}}}\). He can also achieve this with:

10.h3

Compared with the main line the e4-pawn lacks any secure protection; on the other hand, perhaps White can aim for active play with a timely f2–f4.

10...0–0 11.0–0 \(a6\) 12.\(a4\)

This is a typical reaction, clamping down on the possible freeing break ...\(b5\).

12.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{ac8}}}\) 13.\(b3\) e6

This is almost always a useful move for Black in this system. It prevents the enemy knight from utilizing the d5-square while also preparing a possible ...\(d5\) break in the future.

14.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{bc1}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{d8}}}\) 15.\(\text{\textbf{\texttt{de2}}}\) \(\text{\textbf{\texttt{c7}}}\) 16.\(f4??\)

White embarks on a kingside adventure. In the event of quieter play, the position would resemble the main lines of variations B1 and
16...\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}d8?! \\
Black prepares the ...d5 break. It might look risky to move a piece away from the kingside, but the black position is resilient enough.

17.f5 \text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}a5 \\
It was also possible to fight back with 17...gx\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}f5?! 18.exf5 d5! 19.fx\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}e6 dxc4 20.\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}e1 fx\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}e6 21.bxc4 \text{\textquotesingle}d8 22.\text{\textquotesingle}e1 with approximately equal chances.

18.\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}f4 gx\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}f5 19.\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}f3?! \\
The objectively correct continuation would have been 19.ex\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}f5N \text{\textquotesingle}d8, which surprisingly leads to a forced repetition after 20.\text{\textquotesingle}\text{\textquotesingle}d5 \text{\textquotesingle}g6 21.\text{\textquotesingle}f4 \text{\textquotesingle}f5.

19...\text{\textquotesingle}x\text{\textquotesingle}e4 20.\text{\textquotesingle}x\text{\textquotesingle}e4 fxe4 21.\text{\textquotesingle}x\text{\textquotesingle}e4 \\
We have been following the game Ni Hua – Balogh, Beijing (rapid) 2008. Up to this point Black has played well, and he could have exposed his opponent’s dubious pawn sacrifice with:

21...\text{\textquotesingle}e5N 22.\text{\textquotesingle}f3 \text{\textquotesingle}d4! \\
White does not have adequate compensation.

10...0–0 11.0–0 a6 12.a4 e6!! \\
Once again we see this important pawn move, preparing a timely ...d5.

13.\text{\textquotesingle}c1 \\
13.\text{\textquotesingle}d2 \text{\textquotesingle}c7 is comfortable for Black. The position can be compared with line B2 below.

In the present variation White’s bishop is less actively placed on e3 than g5, so the second player has little to fear.

13...\text{\textquotesingle}d8?! \\
Surprisingly this natural move does not appear to have been tested here.

I spent some time checking the more combative 13...\text{\textquotesingle}e5, when the critical line continues 14.\text{\textquotesingle}e2 \text{\textquotesingle}e8 15.b3 d5 16.cxd5 ex\text{\textquotesingle}d5 17.\text{\textquotesingle}f4 \text{\textquotesingle}xc3?! (17...\text{\textquotesingle}e4 18.e5 \text{\textquotesingle}e4 19.\text{\textquotesingle}xe4 dxe4\textdagger) 18.\text{\textquotesingle}xc3 \text{\textquotesingle}xe4 19.\text{\textquotesingle}c2 \text{\textquotesingle}g4 20.\text{\textquotesingle}f1\textdagger Sadvakasov – Kasparov, Astana 2001. The position is interesting but I am not convinced that Black has full compensation for the material deficit.

14.b3 \text{\textquotesingle}e7 15.\text{\textquotesingle}f2 \text{\textquotesingle}d7 \\
The black position remains solid and flexible, and the chances are approximately equal.

B2) 9.\text{\textquotesingle}c1 \\
Though is may look cowardly to retreat the knight from the centre, the set-up examined here is generally considered to be the most ambitious at White’s disposal. The main advantage from White’s perspective is that his bishop will be free to go to the more active g5-square. The constant possibility of \text{\textquotesingle}xf6
will make it virtually impossible for Black to carry out the ...d5 break. He has occasionally facilitated this with the help of ...h6 and ...g5 to chase the bishop away, but weakening the kingside brings its own problems.

Despite all this, we will see that the black position still contains sufficient resources to maintain the balance.

9...\textit{d}f6 10.f3

This is White's most accurate move order. In the event of 10.0–0 Black has the intriguing possibility of 10...\textit{w}e6?!, which rose to fame after featuring in the heavily publicized \textit{Kasparov versus the World} match from 1999. If this line is of interest to the reader then I would encourage him to investigate this independently; there was not much point in analysing it here as White can avoid it so easily.

10...0–0 11.0–0 a6 12.a4

This will be the automatic reaction of most proponents of White's system.

Other moves allow Black to free his position with minimal fuss, for instance: 12.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}5 13.b3 b5 14.\textit{d}d5 (14.cxb5 axb5 is hardly likely to trouble Black.) 14...\textit{b}7 15.\textit{b}6 (or 15.\textit{b}1, Favarel – Bartha, France 2003, 15...\textit{f}d8N 16.\textit{e}f4 e6 17.\textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6=) 15...\textit{ab}8 16.cxb5 axb5 17.\textit{c}3 b4 18.\textit{ca}4 \textit{d}8 19.\textit{e}2 d5 20.\textit{ex}d5 \textit{xd}5 21.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 22.\textit{ad}1 \textit{b}d8 Black kept an active position with at least equal chances in Tseitlin – Lerner, St Petersburg 1992.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chessboard}
\caption{Position after 10.f3}
\end{figure}

12...e6!

As usual, this move forms an integral part of Black's set-up.

13.\textit{g}5 \textit{c}7 14.\textit{h}1

The king sidesteps any potential checks. 14.b3 is another sensible move, which might very well transpose to the following note after 14...\textit{d}d7 15.\textit{h}1.

14...\textit{d}7 15.\textit{b}1

Another possibility is:

15.b3 \textit{a}5

15...\textit{c}5 is also playable, when 16.\textit{b}1 \textit{ac}8 transposes to the main line below. Black might even contemplate 15...f5!?N This outlandish move illustrates the versatility of Black's flexible set-up. 16.\textit{b}1 (After 16.\textit{xf}5 \textit{xf}5 17.\textit{e}3 \textit{ed}8 Black's position is full of dynamism.) 16...\textit{ae}8 17.\textit{fd}2 \textit{f}7 18.\textit{fd}1 \textit{a}5 with roughly even chances.

16.\textit{d}2

White had better avoid 16.\textit{xd}6? \textit{xd}5 17.\textit{xd}7 \textit{e}5! 18.\textit{d}2 \textit{fd}8 19.\textit{b}2 \textit{b}4= Black's bishop has become a superpower,
but the other pieces are also playing to their maximum.

16...\textit{c}5 17.\textit{aab}1 \textit{wb}4

Once again Black might consider 17...f5!? 18.exf5 \textit{xf}5 19.\textit{ae}3 \textit{ed}8 with an unclear position.

18.\textit{wc}2 \textit{wa}5 19.\textit{ah}4

19.\textit{wd}2 \textit{ac}8 20.\textit{ed}1 \textit{ec}7 looks about equal.

19...\textit{cb}4 20.\textit{wd}1

20...\textit{ac}8N

It is worth mentioning that after the pseudo-active 20...\textit{cd}3?! as seen in Shirow – J. Polgar, Vienna 1996, White could have obtained an edge with 21.\textit{oa}2!. I would advise the reader to make a mental note of this resource, as once White exchanges one of the troublesome knights, he will be able to develop the rest of his pieces comfortably, after which he will enjoy a slight but lasting advantage.

After the text move, Black completes his development and keeps enough active possibilities to maintain the balance.

15...\textit{ac}8 16.\textit{b}3 \textit{ae}5 17.\textit{ah}4

This is a thematic idea for White in this variation. The bishop withdraws to a slightly less vulnerable location, pre-empting possible attacks from a queen on a5, for instance.

The natural 17.\textit{wd}2?! leaves the b3-pawn with insufficient defenders, allowing the following tactical solution: 17...\textit{a}5 18.\textit{cc}1

18...\textit{axb}3! 19.\textit{xb}3 \textit{xb}3 20.\textit{xb}3 \textit{xc}4 21.\textit{fb}1 \textit{xc}3 22.\textit{xd}6 This position was reached in Ponomariov – Shipov, Lubniewice 1998, and now after 22...a5!N 23.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xa}4 White would still have to fight for equality.

17.\textit{fe}4?! \textit{de}5 18.\textit{ed}8 \textit{dd}4 This position was reached in Miroshnichenko – Sakaev, Panormo (blitz) 2002. Here I think Black should have played:

19...\textit{bc}7N (After the game continuation of 19...\textit{cc}6 20.\textit{xc}7 \textit{xc}7 21.\textit{f}4 \textit{gg}8 22.\textit{f}5 \textit{de}5 23.\textit{wd}2 the Black king became somewhat vulnerable.) 20.\textit{gg}4 21.\textit{xc}7 \textit{xc}7 22.\textit{h}3 \textit{ff}6= Black keeps a safe position with mutual chances.

17...\textit{fe}8

In this position 17...\textit{a}5? is unjustified:

18.\textit{b}4 \textit{xc}4 19.\textit{bc}5 \textit{ce}3 20.\textit{dd}3 \textit{xf}1

21.\textit{cxd}6 \textit{wc}4 22.\textit{xc}4 \textit{xc}4 23.\textit{xf}1 \textit{xc}3
24.\texttt{\textbf{B}c1=} Black’s combination had a nasty hole at the end and he had to part with some material in Ponomariov – Sutovsky, Ohrid 2001.

With the text move Black continues to wait patiently, improving his position slightly and challenging White to do the same. The first player would ideally like to put his queen on d2, but we have already seen that this is a risky policy when...\texttt{\textbf{Da}5} is possible.

Another interesting game continued 18.h3 \texttt{\textbf{Wa}5} 19.\texttt{\textbf{Cc}2} \texttt{\textbf{B}xc3}! 20.\texttt{\textbf{W}xc3} (20.\texttt{\textbf{Cc}3} \texttt{\textbf{D}d4}) 20...\texttt{\textbf{W}xc3} 21.\texttt{\textbf{Cc}3} \texttt{\textbf{D}d4} 22.\texttt{\textbf{B}b4} \texttt{\textbf{Ac}b3} 23.\texttt{\textbf{E}e5}! Otherwise White loses material. 23...\texttt{\textbf{D}d5}? 24.\texttt{\textbf{C}xd5} \texttt{\textbf{B}xc3} 25.\texttt{\textbf{D}d6} \texttt{\textbf{D}f5} 26.\texttt{\textbf{D}d7} \texttt{\textbf{B}f8} 27.\texttt{\textbf{D}d8=} \texttt{\textbf{W}e} 28.\texttt{\textbf{B}xd8} \texttt{\textbf{D}g3}\dagger The complications eventually led to a comfortable ending for Black in Greet – Edouard, Hastings 2009.

18...\texttt{\textbf{D}e5}
Black must avoid 18...\texttt{\textbf{D}ed8}? 19.b4.

19.\texttt{\textbf{W}d2} \texttt{\textbf{b}6} 20.\texttt{\textbf{D}fd1} \texttt{\textbf{F}ed8}

\textbf{Conclusion}

White may still try to dig in line A with 5.0–0 \texttt{\textbf{D}c6} 6.c3, using the strategy of occupying the centre with pawns. Despite the slightly simplified nature of the fight, the supporters of White’s cause have managed to infuse each of the different lines with interesting ideas. We have seen that precise defence should enable Black to deal with each problem, but the lines are all quite interesting and should be studied carefully.

The more popular variation B, with 5.c4, is not so scary for Black, whose position remains sound and without serious weaknesses. Once again, as long as Black pays close attention to the recommended lines he should be able to obtain a comfortable position with a full share of the chances.
Anti-Open Systems
The Last Samurai - 4.\*xd4

Variation Index
1.e4 c5 2.\*f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\*xd4

4...\*c6 5.\*b5 \*d7 6.\*xc6 \*xc6

A) 7.c4  
B) 7.\*c3 \*f6 8.g5 e6 9.0–0–0 \*c7  
  B1) 10.\*d3  
  B2) 10.\*he1 0–0  
    B21) 11.e5  
    B22) 11.\*d2  
    B23) 11.\*b1  

B1) after 10.\*d3  
B2) after 18.\*xd5  
B3) after 19.\*f4!!

A) after 17.\*e3  
B22) after 18.\*xd5  
B23) after 19.\*f4!!
Chess novices trying to improve their game will be taught to avoid playing with the queen too early, but experienced players wanting to win the game will occasionally do just that! The variation examined here is one of the exceptions to the general rule, with the White queen appearing boldly in the centre as early as the fourth move. Although the general pawn structure remains the same as in the traditional Open Sicilian, the unusual queen position gives the present variation a unique character so I would advise the reader to study it carefully.

4...\textit{\texttt{Qc6}}

Sometimes Black prevents the following pin with 4...\texttt{a6} or 4...\texttt{d7}, but the text move is the main line and the one I have chosen to recommend.

5.\texttt{b5}

White is ready to part company with his light-squared bishop very early, since it maintains the position of the queen on \texttt{d4} and facilitates the rapid development of all the remaining pieces.

5...\texttt{d7} 6.\texttt{xc6}

(I found one game on the database in which a player with a rating over 2100 forgot to exchange on \texttt{c6} and allowed Black to take the queen!)

6...\texttt{xc6}

Now we will consider the unusual A) 7.\texttt{c4}, followed by the main line of B) 7.\texttt{d3}.

A) 7.\texttt{c4}

White can try for a Maroczy Bind set-up, hoping that the centralized queen will support his actions across the board.

7...\texttt{f6} 8.\texttt{c3} \texttt{g6}

I think this is the most convenient solution for Black's development. It will also force the centralized queen to spend time moving, as she will hardly be able to remain on the \texttt{a1-h8} diagonal for much longer.

9.\texttt{d3} 9.\texttt{d3} 

Strictly speaking White is not obliged to retreat the queen immediately, but it will clearly have to happen once Black has castled. In practice most players have chosen to retreat at this turn in order to improve the f3-knight at the earliest opportunity.

10...\texttt{0-0}

11...\texttt{c5} 12.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 13.\texttt{xc5} \texttt{xc5} 14.\texttt{dxc5} 

Now we will consider the unusual A) 7.\texttt{c4}, followed by the main line of B) 7.\texttt{d3}.

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Strictly speaking White is not obliged to retreat the queen immediately, but it will clearly have to happen once Black has castled. In practice most players have chosen to retreat at this turn in order to improve the f3-knight at the earliest opportunity.

10...\texttt{0-0}
11.\(\text{Qd}4\)

A glance at the database reveals that White has tried just about every legal move here. It would be pointless to analyse all of them, as in most cases Black will proceed in a similar fashion as seen in the examples given below. The quoted games should be enough to illustrate all of the essential ideas needed to handle the black position.

11...\(\text{Ec}8\)

The text move prepares an interesting tactical motif, which is why I decided to offer it as the main line. However, I also advise the reader to pay close attention to the following plan:

11...\(\text{Qd}7\) 12.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{Ec}8\) 13.\(\text{Qb}2\) \(\text{Ec}5\) 14.\(\text{Qe}3\) \(\text{Wb}6\) 15.\(\text{Qf}d1\) \(\text{a}5\)

This is a model set-up for Black, which we have 'borrowed' from the Accelerated Dragon. Black's pieces are all ideally placed, and the ...\(\text{a}5-\text{a}4\) plan is an effective source of counterplay.

16.\(\text{Qab}1\) \(\text{a}4\) 17.\(\text{Qd}5\) \(\text{Qxd}5\) 18.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{axb}3\) 19.\(\text{axb}3\)

This position occurred in Z. Almasi – Anka, Zalakaros 1992, and now I think Black should have opened the centre with:

19...\(\text{e}6?!\)

Such a move should not be taken lightly, as Black's pawn structure might suffer. In this position, however, it is justified by the improvement in the activity of his pieces.

20.\(\text{dxe}6\) \(\text{Qxe}6\)

21.\(\text{Qb}5\)

21.\(\text{Qf}5?!\) also leads to equality after

21...\(\text{Qxe}3\) 22.\(\text{Qxe}3\) \(\text{Qc}5\) (another possibility is 22...\(\text{Qed}8\) 23.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{h}5\)) 23.\(\text{Qxg}7\) \(\text{Qg}7\) 24.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{Qe}4\) 25.\(\text{Qb}3\) \(\text{f}5\) 26.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{Qf}6\) 27.\(\text{Qxd}6\) \(\text{Qa}1\) 28.\(\text{Qf}2\) \(\text{Qa}2\) 29.\(\text{Qf}1\) \(\text{f}4\) 30.\(\text{Qd}1\) \(\text{Qec}2\)

31.\(\text{Qa}3\) \(\text{Qac}2\) 32.\(\text{Qc}3\) \(\text{Qa}2\) and the game ends in a repetition.

21...\(\text{Qc}5\)! 22.\(\text{Qf}3\)

The evaluation is not changed by 22.\(\text{Qd}2\) \(\text{Qe}4\) 23.\(\text{Qf}4\) \(\text{g}5\) 24.\(\text{Qf}5\) (24.\(\text{Qe}3\) \(\text{Qxe}3\) 25.\(\text{fxe}3\) \(\text{Qa}2=\)) 24...\(\text{Qa}2\) 25.\(\text{Qxg}7\) \(\text{Qxg}7\) 26.\(\text{Qxd}6\) \(\text{Qxd}6\) 27.\(\text{Qg}5\) 28.\(\text{f}8\) 28.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{Qg}8\) 29.\(\text{Qg}5\) with a perpetual.

22...\(\text{Qe}4\) 23.\(\text{Qxg}7\) \(\text{Qxg}7\) 24.\(\text{Qc}3\) \(\text{Qxc}3\) 25.\(\text{Qxc}3\) \(\text{Qg}8\)

Black's problems are only optical – in reality his chances are not harmed by his slightly inferior structure.
12. b3

This is the most natural reaction to the appearance of the rook on the c-file, and has been by far White's most common choice. Alternatives should not worry Black, as illustrated by the following example from grandmaster praxis: 12. d1 a5 13. b3 a6 14. b2 e8 15. ab1 h5? (15... d7 16. h3 c7=) 16. h3 d7 17. e1 c5 18. xc6 xc6= White achieved nothing in Predojevic - Timofeev, Sarajevo 2007.

12... d4!

This well-camouflaged combination might come as an unpleasant surprise to some opponents. It has only been played once to my knowledge.

13. e4 d5 14. xc6 xc6 15. b1 dxe4 16. e4 d7 17. e3

This position was reached in Ni Hua – Li, Xinghua Jiangsu 2009. At this point I found a modest but definite improvement for Black.

17... d8N

After taking control of the open file Black immediately achieves comfortable equality. There is no reason to defend a7, as 18. xa7 loses to 18... e6! when the bishop will be trapped after a subsequent ... b6, for example 19. g4 h5! – .

B) 7. c3

This is the main line. Indeed, the plan of developing quickly certainly appears more consistent with White's previous few moves.

7... e6 8. g5 e6 9.0–0–0

Black has no reason to fear the doubled pawns arising after 9. xf6 xf6 10. xf6 gxf6 11.0–0–0 g8. On the other hand Black's bishop pair could become a tremendous asset later in the endgame.

9... e7

At this point White has two main options: B1) 10. d3 and B2) 10. he1.

Sometimes he shuffles the move order around with:

10. b1 0–0

From here the most common continuation has been 11. he1, transposing to line B23. However, some players have experimented successfully with:

11. d3?

White is angling for an improved version of variation B1, avoiding the plan involving delayed castling which I have chosen to recommend against the earlier 10. d3. However, White's chosen move order brings its own disadvantages, which can be highlighted by the following accurate move:
11...h6! 12.h4?
The trouble for White is that the normal 12.\textit{h}4 runs into 12...\textit{xe}4! as a subsequent capture on c3 would come with check. Instead White has to settle for 13.\textit{xe}4 \textit{xe}4 14.xd6, Madurga Lopez – Noval Toldos, Madrid 2009, and now after 14...xf2N there is no reason why Black should not go on to convert his material advantage.

Another game continued 12.c1, Mostertman – Timmerman, corr. 1991, and now after 12...d5!N 13.e5 \textit{e}4 Black is already for choice.

Finally, there is nothing to fear from: 12.xf6 xf6 13.xd4 wb6 14.f4 fd8 15.hf1 ac8= 12...wa5 13.ad4 13.xf6 xf6 14.ad4 d5=

13...hxg5!? If Black prefers to avoid the resulting complications he can also consider 13...fd8?N with even chances.

14.hxg5 xg5 15.h3 h6 16.g3 g6 16...h5??N 17.xf3 g6 is also possible.

17.h4?
It was necessary to play 17.xh3! h7? (If Black is content with a draw he can of course repeat the position) 18.f5 f5 19.xe6! xe6 20.xh7 f5 21.xe5 f6 22.h5+ g8 23.ad1 xf5! 24.xe7 xh5 25.xh5 xf4 26.b3 af8 with equality.

17...h7+ 18.g3 dxe4 19.dxe4 xe4 20.xh3
Malec – Ivanov, Warsaw 2009. Here Black should have played:

20...f5!N
Black survives the attack and should win with his extra material.

B1) 10.ad3

With this move White intends to reposition the \textit{f}3-knight on \textit{d}4, followed by advancing the kingside pawns.
10...\texttt{a5}!
I believe this to be the most accurate response. By eyeing the bishop on g5, Black inhibits his opponent's plan for the time being, while creating the incidental threat of ...\texttt{a}xe4.

11.h4
The main alternative is:
11.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{h}6 12.\texttt{f}4
After 12.\texttt{d}2, Pulyaev – Chulivska, Lvov 2007, I suggest 12...\texttt{a}6N=.
The untested 12.\texttt{h}4??N looks quite sensible, although Black should obtain satisfactory play after 12...0-0 13.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{h}5 14.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{f}d8=.
12...d5

This thematic break equalizes comfortably, although there does not seem to be anything wrong with 12...\texttt{e}5??N either.

13.\texttt{d}4
13.exd5 \texttt{d}x5 14.\texttt{d}x5 \texttt{d}x5 15.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{c}6 16.\texttt{d}d4 0-0 17.\texttt{c}xc6 bxc6 18.\texttt{d}d2 (18.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{f}f6=) 18...\texttt{h}5! After this precise move White has no claim to an advantage.

13...\texttt{d}xe4 14.\texttt{x}xc6 bxc6 15.\texttt{d}xe4 0-0
Black's split queenside pawns are balanced by his active pieces and slightly safer king, so the chances were balanced in Macieja – Leitao, Turin 2006.

11...\texttt{h}6
Castling is also possible, but I prefer to take the opportunity to pose an immediate question to the bishop.

12.\texttt{d}2
Sometimes White relinquishes his second bishop in order to gain additional time:
12.\texttt{x}xf6 \texttt{x}xf6 13.\texttt{d}4
This plan has made a higher score than the main line, but it should not threaten Black if he responds accurately.

13...0-0-0!
I prefer this over the more common 13...0-0 14.\texttt{f}4. Black should be alright in this position, but White has a clear plan of attacking the kingside and has scored quite well in practice.
The other main option is 13...\texttt{b}6, intending to meet 14.\texttt{c}xc6 bxc6 15.\texttt{d}d6 with 15...\texttt{b}8, when White must give up the b2-pawn. One game continued 16.\texttt{d}d7\texttt{f}8 17.\texttt{a}4 \texttt{xb}2+ 18.\texttt{xb}2 \texttt{xb}2+ 19.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{b}4+ 20.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{c}5+ 21.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{d}d4+ 22.\texttt{x}d4 \texttt{e}7, Zelcic – Brkic, Split 2008. Black should be able to hold this endgame, but he certainly has the worse side of the equal position and has absolutely no winning chances. It might be possible to improve his play around move 19-20, but overall still I find the text move more appealing.
14.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{c}5 15.\texttt{x}xc6 \texttt{x}xc6 16.\texttt{h}3 a6 17.\texttt{g}4
These moves occurred in Belkhodja – Movsesian, Cappelle la Grande 2002, and here I rather like the straightforward:
I see no real problems for Black here, and perhaps one day his unopposed bishop could become a force.

This virtually forces a queen exchange, thus guaranteeing Black a safe position with some prospects to make his bishop pair count in the long term.

12...\(\text{a}6\)

This is the main line, developing the last drop back to e8 if needed, and the other rook piece. An interesting alternative would have been 16...e5!N followed by ...f5, hoping to erode White’s centre and activate the light-squared bishop.

16...\(\text{d}7\) 17.e3 \(\text{e}5\) 18.h5

18.e1 \(\text{fc}8\) 19.b3 has been recommended as an improvement, but it seems to me that Black’s chances are still higher after 19...\(\text{e}5\)N.

12...\(\text{g}4\) is a reliable alternative, but I find the text move more straightforward.

13.\(\text{xa}6\) bxa6 14.e1 \(\text{g}4\)

In some games Black has opted for a set-up with ...e5 either here or in the next few moves. There is nothing wrong with that, but at the same time I think I prefer the treatment seen in the present game, by which Black keeps a flexible centre and gradually strengthens his position on the queenside.

15.e2 0–0 16.d4

In the event of 16...f4, Sanduleac – Golubev, Romania 2003, it looks logical for Black to play 16...\(\text{fd}8\)N. The light-squared bishop can drop back to e8 if needed, and the other rook can find an active role on the queenside.

We have been following the game Kaminski – Gelfand, Polanica Zdroj 1997. Black’s doubled pawns are not causing him any discomfort, and White was ultimately unable to withstand the pressure on the queenside.

B2) 10.e1

This is the main line, developing the last piece.
In this position White can choose between immediate action with B21) 11.e5, the queen retreat B22) 11.d2 intending d4, and the prophylactic king move B23) 11.b1.

Let us briefly note that the feeble 11.xf6? brings White nothing but problems after 11...xg6 12.xd6 xc3 (12...a5 is also strong) 13.xd8 (13.xc3 a5) 13.xb2 14.xb2 xad8 White will have to suffer in the ending, Trajkovic – Romani, Caorle 1982.

B21) 11.e5

The opening of the centre looks logical since all White’s pieces are mobilized and ready for action. Black, on the other hand, benefits from the bishop pair and is only slightly behind in development. Ultimately it seems that these two factors should cancel each other out, resulting in eventual equality.

11...dxe5 12.h4

White is unlikely to achieve much with 12.xe5, when Black can choose between the solid 12...c7 and the ambitious 12...xg2??, which looks risky but is by no means easy to refute.

12.c7 13.e5 f6 14.g4

Less accurate is 14.xd8?? xd8 15.g4 xg4

14...xg4 15.xe7

16.xxe7? (White should settle for 16.xg4 xg5† 17.xg5, Sochacki – Alonso Roselli, Belfort 2005, although only Black can be better here.) 16...b4† 17.b1 d2 18.f3 (18.d1? e4! 19.f1 xc2†! 20.a1, Janaszak – Smolak, Wisla 2000, 20...h6N-) 18...e5 19.a1 e3 20.xg5 (20.e4 xg2†) 20...xc2 21.xc3 xc3† 22.xa1 xc1† 23.xc1 d3 and Black soon won, Jooste – Goze, e-mail 2004.
This tricky move is the only way to try for anything, but Black still has no problem staying out of trouble.

17...\texttt{d}6 is even more harmless due to 17...\texttt{f}5 18...\texttt{xc}7 (Only Black can benefit from 18...\texttt{xh}7! \texttt{xh}7 19...\texttt{xc}7 \texttt{xg}2 due to the split kingside pawns.) 18...\texttt{hxh}4 19...\texttt{f}3 20.h4 \texttt{f}6

At first glance the game looks to be heading for a draw, but Black does have certain minor advantages (extra central pawn, more active minor pieces) and in Dueckstein - Sosonko, Amsterdam 1978, the second player eventually prevailed.

17...\texttt{f}5 18...\texttt{b}6!?

After 18.g3 \texttt{f}5 19...\texttt{g}4 \texttt{c}8 Black was slightly for choice in Reinders – Parrilla, e-mail 2003.

18...\texttt{f}6!

This prevents any tricks, as well as generally improving Black's position by increasing his influence over the dark squares.

19...\texttt{f}5 20...\texttt{d}4 \texttt{b}5

Black has no problems whatsoever, Podkrajsek – Merilo, corr. 1999.

B22) 11...\texttt{d}2

This move is played with the intention of clearing the \texttt{d}4-square for the knight. This is an absolutely standard idea for the present variation, but in this particular position it exposes White to certain tactical problems.

11...\texttt{h}6!

This perfectly timed move poses awkward problems for White.

12...\texttt{f}4

I only found one game in which White was brave enough to venture 12...\texttt{xh}6? \texttt{gxh}6 13...\texttt{xh}6, when 13...\texttt{h}7! should enable Black to repel the attack. In the game Tomin – Draskovic, Herceg Novi 2006, White's eventual win was certainly not a reflection of the objective merits of his position at this stage.

The main tactical point behind Black's last move is revealed after:

12...\texttt{h}4? \texttt{xe}4! 13...\texttt{xe}4 After 13...\texttt{xe}4? \texttt{h}4 14...\texttt{g}4 (14...\texttt{xh}4 \texttt{xf}3++) 14...\texttt{h}5! 15...\texttt{d}4 \texttt{xf}3 16.gxf3 d5 Black's advantage should already be enough to decide the game, Jedryczka – Grabarczyk, Griesheim 2002.

13...\texttt{h}4
14...Wxd6
Keeping the queens on with 14.Qxd6 e7 did little to change the overall evaluation in Vetemaa – Veingold, Jyväskylä 1999.
14...Wxd6 15.Qxd6 e7 16.Qd1 f6 17.Wxf2 Wf6 18.Qe5 Qd8
This position was reached in Schoeneberg – Gaponenko, Germany 2006. It is clear that the black bishops have good chances to become a dominant force over the enemy knights.

12...e5 13.Qg3
Once again 13.Qxh6?! gxh6 14.Qxh6 Qh7 can hardly offer White enough for the piece.

13...Qc8!
This is more accurate than the often played 13...b5.

14.Qb6
After the slow 14.Qb1?, the reply 14...b5!

becomes extremely powerful. 15.Qe2 b4 16.Qd5 Qxd5 17.exd5 Qd7 18.Qd2 Qc7 19.Qc1 Qf5 Black was miles ahead in fulfilling his attacking dreams in Karjakin – Topalov, Dubai 2002.

14.Qh4 is not such a bad move, but Black can still eliminate any hint of an enemy advantage with 14...Qxe4! 15.Qxe4 Qxh4 16.Qxd6 Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Qxd6 18.Qxd6 Qxf2 19.Qxe5 Qf6 20.Qe4 The position is absolutely equal, although ambitious endgame players might try to make use of Black's potentially superior minor piece.

14...Qd7! 15.Qb1
The following game was highly instructive:
15.Qd5 Qxd5 16.Qxd5 Qc6! 17.Qb1 Qc7 18.c3 Qc8

Black has a theoretically bad bishop and White controls the d5-square, so it would be easy to think that White stands better. In reality, the opposite is true. White's main problem is that his minor pieces are not working properly due to the restraining action of the enemy pawns. In the time it takes him to coordinate his position, Black will be able to create unpleasant threats on the queenside.
19.Qh4 Qb6 20.Qd3 g5!
Black continues to restrict the opponent's pieces. It is becoming clearer which side truly has the bad bishop.
21...g3 c4 22.fxe2 b5
It is already hard to suggest a satisfactory
defence, and in the game Black was able to
smash through quickly.
23.e2 b4 24....b5 cxb2! 0–1

15...a6 16....e2 b5 17....d5
By delaying this knight move, White has
managed to obtain a slightly improved version
of the position reached in the game from the
previous note. Nevertheless Black still has no
problems.

17...xd5 18.xd5
At this point I found an improvement for
Black:

A previous game continued 18...c5 19.ed1
xd5 20.xd5 a8 21.h4 f6 22.d2 b6
23.d3 d5 with equality, David – Tiviakov,

Another reasonable continuation would be
18...b6N 19.d3 c7 20.h4 a4 with a
comfortable game for Black. The text move is
more ambitious.

19.xe5!
This looks like the critical continuation.
Quieter moves would be met by ...c7 and
...c8, with similar play to the Hasangatin –
Yakovich game we witnessed earlier.

19...dxe5
The next few moves are forced:

20.ed1 c7 21.xe5 xe5 22.xd8 xd8
23.xd8+ xd8
The computer assesses this endgame as equal,
but it is surely Black who will be pushing for
the win.

B23) 11.b1
This is the main line. Now that we have
witnessed the tactical resources available to
Black in the previous variation, the need for
this prophylactic move becomes clear.

11....c7
This is the main line, and my primary
recommendation. However, I would also like
to draw your attention to an interesting and
fully viable alternative:
11...h6?!
Readers who are in any way unconvinced
by the main line should examine this move
closely.
12.h4
12.\text{\text丞}c1 makes a strange impression. 12...\text{\text丞}c7
(Also interesting is: 12...\text{\text丞}g4? 13.\text{\text丞}e2 \text{\text丞}f6
14.\text{\text丞}xd6 \text{\text丞}b6 15.\text{\text丞}a3 \text{\text丞}fd8\text{\text丞}) 13.\text{\text丞}d3
This position was reached in Titova Boric – Gocheva, Cetinje 1991, and now Black
could have obtained the better chances with
13...d5\text{\text丞}N 14.exd5 \text{\text丞}xd5 15.\text{\text丞}e5 \text{\text丞}f6\text{\text丞}.
12.\text{\text丞}xf6 \text{\text丞}xf6 13.\text{\text丞}xd6 The loss of the d6-pawn in this line is far from tragic, as Black
usually gets ample compensation. Here I
found a new and promising idea:

12...\text{\text丞}e8?N
The position is brimming with possibilities,
with 12...\text{\text丞}c7 and 12...a6 being valid
alternatives. The text is the main line
though.

13.\text{\text丞}g3
13.h3 a6 14.\text{\text丞}e3 \text{\text丞}c8 15.\text{\text丞}g3 \text{\text丞}c7 16.\text{\text丞}d4
b5 17.f3 b4 18.\text{\text丞}ce2 \text{\text丞}d7 19.\text{\text丞}d2 \text{\text丞}b7
20.\text{\text丞}f2 \text{\text丞}c7 was more promising for
Black in Rozentalis – Huzman, Montreal
2007.

13...d5
There is also the unusual 13...e5?! 14.\text{\text丞}d3,
S. Martinovic – Pernutz, Seefeld 1999, and
here Black should have played 14...\text{\text丞}d7\text{\text丞}.
In the event of 15.\text{\text丞}h4, hoping to exchange
on f6 in order to control d5, Black can
seize the initiative with 15...g5?! 16.\text{\text丞}g3
b5!.

14.e5
So far nobody seems to have tried
14.exd5\text{\text丞}N \text{\text丞}xd5 15.\text{\text丞}xd5 \text{\text丞}d5 16.c4 with
equality.

14...\text{\text丞}e4 15.\text{\text丞}xe4 dxe4 16.\text{\text丞}d8 \text{\text丞}exd8
17.\text{\text丞}d4 \text{\text丞}e8
There is also 17...\text{\text丞}d5 18.b3 (18.\text{\text丞}b5 h5
19.\text{\text丞}f4\text{\text丞}) Ciubara – Huda, Predeal 2007,
and now after 18...\text{\text丞}c5\text{\text丞} Black is absolutely
fine.

18.c3
18.\text{\text丞}xe4 \text{\text丞}c6 19.\text{\text丞}e2 \text{\text丞}xg2\text{\text丞}
18...\text{\text丞}ac8 19.\text{\text丞}c2 b5 20.\text{\text丞}xe4 b4\text{\text丞}
Black kept enough counterplay for the
sacrificed pawn in Svidler – Kasparov, Linares
1999.

12.\text{\text丞}d2
White continues with his standard
regrouping method, which typically involves
\text{\text丞}d4 next. It seems strange that White should
develop his queen to d4 early and relinquish
the bishop pair, only to reorganize his position
making it resemble something from the
standard 4.\text{\text丞}xd4 positions. Still, practice has
shown that Black should be on guard in the
resulting positions.
12...\textit{a}fd8

Paradoxically, even in the positions without the early ...h7-h6, Black must remain fully alert to the possibility of allowing a favourable exchange on f6. For instance, after 12...\textit{a}ab8 13.\textit{d}d4 b5 14.\textit{x}xf6! \textit{x}xf6 15.\textit{e}xc6 \textit{\textw}{xc6} 16.\textw}{xd6± Black does not have full compensation for the pawn.

13.\textit{d}d4 \textit{a}ab8 14.\textit{f}3

This looks better than 14.f4? b5 15.e5 (15.f5 b4 16.fxe6 is not quite sound: 16...\textit{b}xc3 17.\textit{e}xf7! \textit{x}xf7 18.\textw}{xc3 \textw}{dc8 19.\textw}{xf6 [19.\textw}{c4† \textw}{g}6! 20.\textw}{d}3 \textw}{b}7--+ 19...\textw}{xf6 20.\textw}{c}4† d5 21.exd5 This was Chebotarev – Shomoev, Internet 2004, and now 21...\textw}{a}8N should win easily.) 15...\textit{d}xe5 16.fxe5 \textit{\textw}{d}5 (16...\textit{c}5??) 17.\textit{\textw}{xc6 \textw}{g}5 18.\textw}{g}xg5 \textx}{c}6 19.\textx}{d}x5 (19.\textw}{e}4 b4?) 19...\textx}{d}x5 White's active play in the centre amounted to nothing and he was left facing a difficult defence in Vijayakumar – Stojic, Mount Buller 2005.

14...b5 15.g4 \textw}{e}8

Another promising continuation is 15...b4 16.\textw}{ce2 \textw}{a}8??, which has scored quite highly for Black.

16.\textw}{ce2

White's typical attacking plan involves transferring this knight to h5, where it can exert unpleasant pressure against the black kingside. Black can of course exchange it, but that would open the g-file.

16...h6?!

The pawn move in front of the king is risky, but the reward might be sweet. The older line goes:

16...b4 17.\textw}{g}3 \textw}{h}8!

The defender is playing cleverly in anticipation of White's attack.

18.\textw}{g}1N?!

This new idea may bring White some advantage.

The point behind Black's last move is revealed after 18.\textw}{h}5N \textw}{x}xh5! (18...\textw}{g}8 is playable but a little worse for Black) 19.gxh5 \textw}{x}g5 20.\textw}{g}xg5 h6 21.\textw}{g}3 \textw}{a}4! 22.\textw}{e}2 \textw}{b}c8 23.\textw}{g}2 \textw}{g}8 With g7 firmly under control Black can try to look to advance his own attack on the opposite side.

The only game I found on the database continued with 18.h4 \textw}{b}6 19.h5 \textw}{a}6 20.\textw}{b}3 \textw}{c}8 21.h6 g6 22.\textw}{c}1 \textw}{c}6 with chances for both sides Sieiro Gonzalez – Mena Crespo, Cuba 2005.

18...\textw}{d}c8 19.\textw}{h}5 \textw}{g}8!

Since the white rook has already moved to the g-file, it is logical for Black to refrain from exchanging on h5.

20.\textw}{x}c7 \textw}{x}c7 21.f4 \textw}{a}4? 22.b3

Also quite promising is 22.f5 \textw}{c}6 23.\textw}{x}c6 \textw}{x}c6 24.\textw}{e}1.
22...c6 23.dxe1±
White has somewhat better chances.

17...e3
It is also important to consider
17...xh6!?N gxh6
Both sides will have to display clever ideas in this highly charged position.
18.xh6
18.g5!? is interesting, but ultimately not quite sufficient. 18...h5 (18...xg4?
19.gxe4 hxg5 20.xg1±) 19.gxf6 h8 20.g1 c5 21.f4 d7! Black must connect the rooks as soon as possible. (Much worse is 21...e6 22.c3 h5 [or 22...d7 23.e5
d5 24.h3±] 23.e5 dxe5 24.fxe5 d5 25.b3 g6 26.h3± The pressure along the g-file can not be countered by Black.)

17...d5 18.e5
By now it is too late for the sacrifice:
18.xh6 dxe4! 19.xg7 xg7 20.g5+ h8 21.fxg7 xh7+
18...d7 19.f4!!
This is White’s most dynamic approach to the position, leaving the e5-pawn to its fate and hinting at possible sacrifices on e6.
In the event of 19.f4, Titova - Boric – Kutuzovic, Pula 1997, I would suggest 19...\f6, with similar ideas as given in the main line below.

19...\f6

This is an improvement over 19...\b6 20.\h5 (20.\fxe6 \xe6 21.\xe6 \c6 22.\xd8 \xd8 23.\xb6 \xb6 24.f4\fffffff) 20...\c4 21.\c1 \h7 22.f4 \b4 23.f5 With a powerful kingside initiative for White, Stellwagen – Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2004.

One of the main ideas behind the text move is to retain the option of meeting a subsequent f4-f5 with ...\xe5, although as we will see, this must always be judged carefully.

20.\h5 \f8

20...\xe5? loses to 21.\xf6! \xf3 22.\xf3 \xh6 23.e2+. Black needs to play very carefully in order to avoid disaster.

21.f4 \b6 22.f5

After 22.g1 \a6 23.\xb5 (23.g5 \xg5 24.\xg5 \g6+) 23.\c4 24.\c3 \b4 White’s pawn-grabbing has only opened lines for his opponent’s attack.

22...\xe5!

This time the complications do not work out badly for Black.

23.\f4 \c4 24.\xc7 \xd2 25.\xd2 \xc7 26.\f4 \c4 27.\xe6 \c5

The main complications have subsided to leave a balanced but still lively endgame.

Conclusion

Different chess players are like apples and oranges – each with their own personality, ego and temperament. There will always be those who cherish the unusual challenges connected with moves like 4.\xd4, which continues to prove itself as a potentially venomous challenge to the Sicilian. The brave queen cannot easily be repelled without incurring some kind of positional cost, so Black had better find a coping strategy that really works. The main line analysed in this chapter is not without risks, but Black keeps his own chances to take over the initiative and play for a win.
Open Systems
The Misfits - 6th Move Sidelines

Variation Index
1.e4 c5 2.\f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\xd4 \f6 5.\c3

5...a6

A) 6.\f3
B) 6.\f3!!?
C) 6.\g1!!?
D) 6.\d3
E) 6.a4

A) after 16.\d3!!
B) after 13.\xd4
D) after 13.cxd3

16...e4!N
13...e5!
13...b4!N
Before we move on to the major lines of the Najdorf, there are a few quirky alternatives to consider. None should be too terrifying for a well-prepared player, although all have claimed their fair share of scalps over the years.

1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.e5 cxd4 4.cxd4 f6

We will consider five options: A) 6.f3, B) 6.e6, C) 6.b3!, D) 6.d3 and E) 6.a4.

A) 6.f3

This move would in 99% of all games be followed by a subsequent e3 during the next few moves against both 6...e6 and 6...e5, thus transposing to the English Attack. In this section I will examine a few cases where White is “being creative”, trying to derive some independent value from this move order.

6...e5

Fans of the Scheveningen-style system have little to worry about: 6...e6 7.g4 b5 8.g5!? (8.e3 b4 leads us to Chapter 17.) 8...d5 d6 9.e3 I would not worry about other moves here; nor do I worry about this one. Black can take advantage of having the knight pushed towards the queenside with: 9...b6 10.d2

b4!N (10...b7 11.0-0-0 d7 would bring us into a different main line in which Black should be fine; the text looks even easier though.) 11.d5 It is White who will need to play accurately to maintain the balance.

7.b3 e6 8.g5 d7 9.d2

9.d5 might look natural, but it is a classic example of mixing up the ideas of different setups, without keeping the advantages of any of them. 9...d5 10.exd5 e7

Already White needs to be careful, as he is behind in development with a slightly unfavourable pawn structure. 11.d2?N (11.e3 has been played in a few games, but I see little reason to spend time on this. White will struggle to keep even chances.) 11...a5!

Black is doing very nicely, as 12.a4 is well met with 12...e4! 13.xe7 xxd2 14.xd8 xxb3 15.cxb3 xxd8 when Black has a slightly better ending.
9...\textit{e}7 10.0–0–0 b5

White's 'creative' play has only resulted in an inferior version of the usual positions he would reach in the English Attack. The main problem is that he will find it hard to launch an attack on the kingside, as his bishop will obstruct the g-pawn. Black, on the other hand, is not feeling any such restrictions on the queenside. It is amusing to consider that those relying on database statistics to make their choices would think that the position after 11.\textit{e}3 would give them a good game, with a 68\% score. However, those with a bit more chess knowledge will recognize the position in question as one where it is typically White, not Black to move.

Instead of that rather humiliating retreat, White has also tried:

11.\textit{b}1 0–0

11...b4 12.\textit{a}4!N is not necessarily progress for Black.

12.h4 \textit{c}7 13.d5 \textit{x}d5 14.exd5 \textit{b}6 15.\textit{x}f6 \textit{xf}6=

Black has equalized effortlessly, and if anything his position is slightly easier to handle. His knight is about to land on c4 and Black can activate his bishop with ...e5–e4 as well. One practical example continued:

16.d3?!  
This was played in Salvador – Mendoza, Quito 2003. Here Black did well after 16...\textit{c}4, but even stronger would have been:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

16...e4!N 17.fxe4 \textit{a}4 18.c3 b4+  
White is very unlikely to survive this position. A tactical line is:

19.cxb4 \textit{x}xb2 20.a5 \textit{f}6 21.c1 \textit{c}3 22.c3 \textit{xc}3 23.c2 \textit{b}8 24.b6 \textit{xb}4+? 25.\textit{xb}4 \textit{g}8 26.a3 a5

White simply cannot survive in the long run.

B) 6.\textit{f}3?  

This looks bizarre, but it has been tested by a few strong players, most notably GM Kogan who has used it on numerous occasions. Queen transfers to f3, g3 or h3 are commonplace in certain variations of the Najdorf, so it is certainly not ridiculous that White should consider the same idea in an accelerated form. In the meantime White plans long castling at the earliest convenience.

6...g6

Several other moves are possible, but this one looks especially logical – there are not too many Dragon lines in which White places his queen on f3.
7. h3 g7 8. e3 d7 9. g4

Quieter set-ups achieve nothing, for instance:
9. d3 c6 10.0-0 0-0 11.a4 c8 when Black had a comfortable Dragon position in Alavi Moghaddam – Magerramov, Abu Dhabi 2006.

The most logical alternative is:
9.0-0-0 c6

10. xc6
10. e2 c8 11.f4 was seen in Sowray – Simacek, Dresden 2007. Here Black could have created some tricky problems with
11... b4 N 12.a3 (12.b1 xc3 13.bxc3 xe4 14.d2 g3 15.e3 xh1 16.cxb4 g3++; 12.e5 fd5 13.d5 xd5 14.d2 b6 is also problematic for White.)
12... xc3! 13.axb4 c8 with somewhat better chances to Black, due to White's compromised king shelter.
10... bxc6!
This move should secure a decent game for Black.
Instead 10... xc6 11.d5 gave White some initiative in Kogan – Ortega, Lido Estensi 2003.
11.e5!? dxe5 12.c4 0-0 13.c5 b8 14.b3
This position was reached in the recent game Howell – Womacka, Rijeka 2010. At this point Black could have obtained an excellent game as follows:

9... c6

10. xc6
10. e2 c8 11.f4 was seen in Sowray – Simacek, Dresden 2007. Here Black could have created some tricky problems with
11... b4 N 12.a3 (12.b1 xc3 13.bxc3 xe4 14.d2 g3 15.e3 xh1 16.cxb4 g3++; 12.e5 fd5 13.d5 xd5 14.d2 b6 is also problematic for White.)
12... xc3! 13.axb4 c8 with somewhat better chances to Black, due to White's compromised king shelter.
10... bxc6!
This move should secure a decent game for Black.
Instead 10... xc6 11.d5 gave White some initiative in Kogan – Ortega, Lido Estensi 2003.
11.e5!? dxe5 12.c4 0-0 13.c5 b8 14.b3
This position was reached in the recent game Howell – Womacka, Rijeka 2010. At this point Black could have obtained an excellent game as follows:
10.0–0–0

Worse is 10.g5 \( \heartsuit \)h5 11.\( \clubsuit \)b3?! Saathoff – Rous, Bavaria 2004, 11...\( \heartsuit \)xc3\#!N 12.bxc3 \( \clubsuit \)e5 13.\( \spadesuit \)d1 (13.\( \spadesuit \)e2 \( \heartsuit \)b5) 13...\( \spadesuit \)c7 14.\( \heartsuit \)d2 0–0 when Black is significantly better.

10...0–0 11.\( \spadesuit \)g2

White has tried several other moves here, without coming close to achieving anything against correct defence:

In the event of 11.\( \spadesuit \)f5?, Holzer – Danner, Vienna 2003, 11...gxf5\#!N 12.gxf5 <\( \heartsuit \)>h8+ I do not believe in White’s compensation.

Retreating the knight from the centre is also unimpressive: 11.\( \clubsuit \)b3 Peptan – Dzagnidze, Mallorca 2004. Now Black could have obtained an excellent game with 11...b5N intending the simple plan of ...\( \spadesuit \)e5–c4.

11.\( \heartsuit \)e2 \( \spadesuit \)c8!N (11...\( \spadesuit \)e5?! 12.\( \spadesuit \)g3 \( \spadesuit \)c8 13.g5 \( \spadesuit \)h5 14.\( \heartsuit \)xh5 \( \spadesuit \)xc3 15.bxc3 g.xh5 led to unclear play in Nabuurs – Clemens, Maastricht 2007.) 12.\( \heartsuit \)b1 \( \spadesuit \)e5 13.\( \spadesuit \)g2

13...\( \spadesuit \)xc3\#? (The less ambitious 13...\( \spadesuit \)c4 14.\( \spadesuit \)xc4 \( \spadesuit \)xc4= is also fine.) 14.bxc3 \( \spadesuit \)b6\# 15.\( \heartsuit \)a1 \( \spadesuit \)c7\# Black’s compensation is quite real.

11.\( \heartsuit \)b1 \( \spadesuit \)c8 12.\( \spadesuit \)g3 was seen in Ramsurrup – Jayaram, Gaziantep 2008, and now Black could have fought for the initiative with 12...b5N 13.f3 (13.f4? b4\#) 13...\( \spadesuit \)xd4 14.\( \spadesuit \)xd4 e5 15.\( \spadesuit \)e3 b4 16.\( \spadesuit \)d5 \( \spadesuit \)xd5 17.\( \spadesuit \)xd5 \( \spadesuit \)e6 18.\( \spadesuit \)d2 \( \spadesuit \)a5 19.b3 \( \spadesuit \)d8 with at least equal chances.

Finally, there is:

11.g5 \( \spadesuit \)h5 12.h4

The more patient 12.\( \heartsuit \)b1 gave Black no problems after 12...\( \spadesuit \)c8 13.\( \heartsuit \)e2 \( \spadesuit \)e5 14.\( \spadesuit \)g2 \( \spadesuit \)c4 15.\( \spadesuit \)xc4 \( \spadesuit \)xc4 with equal play in M. White – A. Hunt, Hastings 2008.

12.\( \heartsuit \)e2 \( \spadesuit \)xd4?! (12...\( \spadesuit \)c8N is a good alternative) 13.\( \spadesuit \)xd4 \( \spadesuit \)xd4 14.\( \spadesuit \)xd4 e5 15.\( \spadesuit \)xd6 \( \spadesuit \)xg5\# should have led to equality, but after 16.\( \spadesuit \)e3?! \( \spadesuit \)xe3\# 17.\( \spadesuit \)xe3 \( \spadesuit \)g3! Black’s chances were somewhat higher in Goumas – Gazis, Heraklio 2007.

12...\( \spadesuit \)e5 13.\( \spadesuit \)g2 \( \spadesuit \)c8

Black has every reason to feel satisfied with the outcome of the opening, and in the following game White immediately faltered:

14.f4?! \( \spadesuit \)g4\# Polivanov – Tihonov, Lvov 2007.

11...\( \spadesuit \)c8

Also not bad is 11...b5?! 12.\( \spadesuit \)xc6?! (12.f4N would have kept the game unclear) 12...\( \spadesuit \)xc6 13.h4 \( \spadesuit \)a5\# Van Delft – Burg, Leiden 2008.

12.\( \heartsuit \)e2?
This move is too slow to meet the demands of the sharp position that stands on the board. Instead White should have preferred one of the following alternatives:

12.f4 \do xd4 13.\do x d4 \wa5 with typical counterplay for the Dragon.

12.\d xc6 \d x c6 13.\d d 4 e5 14.\d e 3 (14.\d x e 5 runs into 14...\d x e 4!) 14...\wa 5 15.\d b 1 \d f d 8 with roughly equal chances.

12...\d x d 4 !
This leads to Black's advantage after the following precise sequence:

13.\d x d 4
13.\d x d 4 gives Black a pleasant choice between 13...b5 and 13...\d e 8 !

6...e 5
This is the simplest strategy. Black does not want to worry about possibilities such as 6...b5 7.g4 \d b 7 8.g5! \d x e 4 9.\d x e 4 \d x e 4 10.\d g 4 \d b 7 11.\d g 2. White's compensation is more dangerous than it may initially appear, as confirmed by several practical encounters.

7.\d b 3 \d e 6 8.g4 d 5 !
This highlights the drawback of White's decision to prepare g4 with \d g 1 instead of \f 3; the e4-pawn is lacking support.

9.g5
Despite the aforementioned problem, this remains an interesting move and certainly the only ambitious attempt at White's disposal. The alternative is:

9.exd5 \d x d 5 10.\d x d 5
Now Black has a choice between a safe equalizing continuation, and a double-edged one. We will focus on the latter:

10...\textit{exd5}?

This has only been played a couple of times, but I think it deserves serious consideration. 10...\textit{wxd5} is safe, but also a bit dull: 10...\textit{wxd5} (11.\textit{we2}! \textit{dxc6} 12.\textit{ge2} \textit{d6} 13.\textit{ge3} \textit{d8\#} Simmelink – Wilczek, e-mail 2004) 11...\textit{exd5} 12.\textit{ge3} \textit{d6} 13.0-0-0 0-0-0 with an equal and drawish position as in Yemelin – Huzman, St Petersburg 1999, as well as several other games.

11.\textit{ge3}?

This is the critical move, without which Black would not have the slightest cause for concern.

White played worse in the following game: 11.\textit{ge3} \textit{dxc6} 12.\textit{we2} \textit{d8} 13.0-0-0 \textit{d4} 14.c4 Farnault – Wang Yue, Calvi 2007. Here Black could have obtained a big advantage with: 14...b5!N 15.\textit{ge2} (15.\textit{ge5} \textit{dxe5} 16.\textit{we5} \textit{dxe5} 17.\textit{we4} \textit{d7\#}) 15...bxc4 16.\textit{exd5} \textit{d3\#} 17.\textit{g1} \textit{wxd5}+

11...\textit{d6}!

11...\textit{we6} 12.\textit{wxd8\#} \textit{d8} was seen in San Juan Rodriguez – Vazquez Igarza, Collado Villalba 2007, and now 13.\textit{f4!}N might offer White some initiative.

12.\textit{b3} \textit{b4} 13.\textit{h2}

This position was reached in Petrosian – Ghaem Maghami, Stepanakert 2004, and here I found an improvement for Black:

13...\textit{c8}!

I think Black should be okay in this highly irregular position, thanks to White's poor coordination.

14.\textit{exd5}

14.\textit{c3} \textit{d6}! 15.\textit{xb4} \textit{xb4} 16.\textit{f3} 0-0 gives Black promising compensation.

14...\textit{xh2} 15.\textit{ge2} \textit{xa1} 16.\textit{exc5}\# 16.\textit{xa1} \textit{wxb4} 17.\textit{f3} \textit{wb4} can be dangerous only to White.

16...\textit{c7} 17.\textit{xa1} \textit{xb4} 18.\textit{e1} \textit{b4}\# 19.\textit{d2} 0-0

Any result is possible, but I do not think Black's chances are any worse.

9...\textit{exd4} 10.\textit{exd4} \textit{dxe4} 11.\textit{wxd8\#} \textit{xd8}

White's slight lead in development should enable him to regain his pawn, but not to claim any advantage.
12.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c3}

After 12.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar g2} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c6} 13.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xe4} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c7} 14.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar e3} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d8} Black was fine in Landa – Nevostrujev, St Petersburg 1999.

12...\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c7} 13.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar g2} h6!

Forcing a weakening of the white kingside.

14.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar gxh6}

14.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xe4} hxg5 15.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xg5} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d7}+ Branzuela – Sadorra, Manila 2007.

White is also not entirely happy after 14.h4 hxg5 15.hxg5 \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c6} 16.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xe4} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d8} 17.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d1} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xd1}+ 18.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xd1} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar h4}+.

14...g6

Obviously Black prefers to recapture on h6 with a piece rather than a pawn. Now the rook on g1 will be largely ineffective, and the h2-pawn might become a serious weakness later in the game.

15.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xe4} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d7} 16.0-0-0 \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xh6}

17.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xh6}

This looks better than 17.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar g3} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar f6} 18.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xh6} (18.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar h1} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar h5}+) 18...\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xe4} 19.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar g7} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar h5} 20.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar e3} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xf2} 21.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c3}+ \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar b6} 22.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d6}+ \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar a7} when White was a pawn down for no real compensation in Prasad – Sasikiran, Nagpur 2002.

17...\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xh6} 18.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar g3} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c8}

It was also worth considering 18...\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar f6}!?, although after 19.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c3}+ \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar b8} 20.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar h1} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xh2} 21.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c5} White should have just about enough activity to maintain the balance.

19.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d5} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar f5}+

Black offers a temporary pawn sacrifice, hoping to make the most of his active pieces.

20.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar w7} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar b8} 21.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar c3} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar f6}

Here I found an improvement for White:

22.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d2}!

In the following game White soon found himself in trouble: 22.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d2} 23.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar e3} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar f4} 24.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar e1} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xh2}\textsuperscript{=} Fontaine – Relange, Clichy 1998.

22...\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar f8} 23.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar b3} \texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar xh2}

The position should be equal, although Black's pieces are slightly more active.

D) 6.\texttt{\textord DoubleStruckChar d3}

This is not usually played so early, although d3 is clearly not such a bad square for the bishop, and there are several mainstream variations in which it might occupy this square a few moves later.
Just about any sensible move is playable, but the fianchetto development seems like one of the most logical set-ups, fortifying the b1-h7 diagonal and thus immediately questioning the usefulness of White’s bishop development.

An example of a line that would justify White’s play is: 6...b5 7.0–0 ²b7 8.²e2! e6 9.a4±

7.f4
This is perhaps the most active plan at White’s disposal. The alternatives give Black nothing to fear:

7.h3 ²g7 8.²c3 b5 9.a3 This may not be the best move, but it is up to White to prove there is a better one. 9...²b7 10.f4 (10.0–0 0–0 11.²b7 12.²d2 ²c8 13.²ac1 ²e5² Maharjan – Timoshenko, Mumbai 2009) 10.²bd7 11.²f3 ²c8 Black already has the more harmonious position, Perdomo – Rodriguez, Las Palmas 1993.

7.0–0 ²g7 8.²c1
There is no reason to retreat the knight from the centre voluntarily: 8.²b3? 0–0 9.²e1 (9.h3 b5 10.²e2 ²b7 11.²d1 ²bd7² Levy – Ljubojevic, New York 1985) 9...²bd7 10.²g5 h6 11.²h4 b5 12.f4 ²c7 13.a3 ²b7 14.²f3 e6 15.²h3 ²fe8 16.²ad1 h5?? Desbonnes – Savchenko, Paris 2001.
Also harmless is 8.²h1 ²c6 9.²xc6 bxc6 10.f4 ²d7 11.²e1 a5 12.²c3 a4= Campora – Ehlvest, San Roque 1996.

8...0–0 9.²f1
White has reverted to a defensive set-up commonly used by Black in the ‘reversed Dragon’ variation of the English Opening. The extra tempo should be enough to ensure equal chances for him, but not to obtain any advantage.

9...²c6 10.²b3

10...b5
This is the most natural move, although some players have also experimented with the disruptive 10...²g4?!.

11.a4
The immediate 11.²d5 can also be met by 11...²d7, leading to similar positions.

11...b4 12.²d5 ²d7
Black intends to complete development with ...²b7, and can choose the right moment to expel the enemy knight from the centre with ...e6, followed by ...²c7 or ...²e7. For an in-depth discussion of such positions (with colours reversed), the reader may refer to the first of Mihail Marin’s volumes on the English Opening (number 3 in the Grandmaster Repertoire series).

7...²g7 8.²f3
We have been following the game Delchev – Kolev, Sofia 1996, which – like several of the quoted game references – transposed to our variation through a different move order, in this case beginning with 6.f4. In the present position Black missed a good opportunity:

8...0–0

The disruptive 8...\textit{b}b6 could be considered, but the main line is fine.

9.0–0 \textit{\textit{c}}bd7 10.\textit{\textit{e}}1

There is no need for the slow 10.\textit{h}h1, and after 10...\textit{c}c5 11.\textit{e}e1 \textit{b}5 12.a3 \textit{e}6 13.\textit{h}h4 \textit{\textit{d}}d7 14.\textit{h}h3 \textit{\textit{c}}xd3 15.\textit{c}xd3 \textit{\textit{c}}c5 Black had the more comfortable position in Carlsen – Sutovsky, Rishon Le Zion (blitz) 2006.

10...\textit{c}c5 11.\textit{h}h4

After 11.\textit{e}e3 the exchange on \textit{c}5 would lead to a worsening of Black's pawn structure, thus Black should play 11...\textit{\textit{d}}xd3! 12.\textit{c}xd3 \textit{b}5 with a pleasant position as in J. Polgar – Gelfand, Dos Hermanas 1997.

11...\textit{b}5

This natural move should be preferred over 11...\textit{d}5?! 12.e5 \textit{\textit{d}}fe4 13.\textit{\textit{e}}e3 \textit{\textit{c}}xd3 14.\textit{c}xd3 \textit{\textit{c}}xc3 15.bxc3= Kindermann – Browne, Thessaloniki 1984. The bishop on \textit{g}7 will have a hard time finding a meaningful role.

12.e5

12.a3 is rather slow, and after 12...\textit{\textit{b}}b7 13.e5, Paglilla – Klbanski, Buenos Aires 1973, Black can obtain an excellent position with 13...\textit{\textit{d}}fd7=.

12...\textit{\textit{d}}xd3 13.\textit{c}xd3

White has nothing better, as the reader can easily verify.

14.\textit{\textit{d}}d5

Thanks to Black's small finesse on the previous move, his knight can hop to a purposeful square in the centre.

15.\textit{\textit{e}}e3 \textit{\textit{b}}6 16.\textit{d}4 \textit{\textit{b}}7

Black's \textit{g}7-bishop might not be fantastic, but the one on \textit{c}1 is no better. Meanwhile the rest of Black's pieces are superbly placed, and the arrival of a rook on the c-file will complete the picture of perfect harmony.

\textbf{E}) 6.a4 \textit{e}6

I find this the most convenient choice for our repertoire. With the pawn on \textit{a}4 White will hardly be able to contemplate the most aggressive set-ups involving long castling. Instead, in the great majority of games he has
placed his bishop on e2 and castled short, thus transposing to the 6.e2 system, specifically variation B in Chapter 13.

In this section we will consider a few of the ways in which he can deviate from this plan.

7.e3

Harmless is 7.g3 b6 8.g2 b7, for instance: 9.0–0 b7 10.g4 h6 11.f4 c6 12.b3 e7 13.h3 d7 and Black's chances were already slightly higher in Felgaer – Fedorchuk, Barcelona 2005.

7.e7

7...b6!? 8.g4!? is another very sharp and interesting line.

8.d3

8.e2 obviously takes us back to Chapter 13.

8.0–0 9.0–0 c6

Take a look at Chapter 13, and you will see that in several variations White eventually moves his bishop from e2 to d3, so Black must be careful to avoid slipping into such a position a tempo down. Fortunately there are more promising ways to handle the positions with the bishop already on d3.

10.h1

Another option is:

10.f4 cxd4 11.exd4 e5!

Here we see one very clear drawback of the bishop's development on d3: the troublesome possibility of ...g4.

12.e3!!

12.fxe5N dxe5 13.xe5 g4 14.f4 (14.g3 e3) 14...c5† 15.h1 f2† 16.xf2 xf2 White will struggle to demonstrate compensation.

Possibly best is 12.f2 g4!N (12...exf4 was also not bad in Shah – De Mie, Menorca 1996) 13.d5 xf2 14.xf2 exf4 with equality.

12...g4 13.d2 xe3

The loss of this valuable bishop is a serious hardship for White.


10...e5! 11.xc6

11.b3 e6 looks comfortable for Black.

11...bxc6 12.a5 d5 13.b6 c6 14.e2

14.d4N

This is a natural improvement over: 14.b7?! What is the bishop supposed to do here? 15.f4± Diamant – Milos, Rio de Janeiro 2007.
15...a4  d7  16.b3 c5

Black has a nice position. He controls the centre, and the bishop on b6 might turn out to be misplaced.

Conclusion

None of the five deviations examined here should be of great concern to us, but they all undoubtedly have the right to exist. Out of the many possible responses, I sought to recommend responses that were both practical and, where possible, problematic for the opponent. Thus, lines A and E will, in the great majority of cases, merely transpose to a different variation in the nearest future. The quirky variation C with 6.g1!? is more respectable than it may first appear, but we saw that Black can easily obtain a fine game with the aid of direct action in the centre. Finally, against lines B and D I chose to recommend a transition to a Dragon set-up, in order to question the usefulness of White’s sixth move (6.f3!? and 6.d3 respectively).
Open Systems

Sideways - 6.g3

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.d3xf4 d6 5.d3 c3 a6

6.g3 e5

A) 7.d3 b3 e7 8.g2 b5
   A1) 9.a4
   A2) 9.0–0 \bd7
       A21) 10.d2!?
       A22) 10.a4

B) 7.d3 c2 b5
   B1) 8.g5
   B2) 8.g2

A22) after 17.f1!?

B2) after 13.0–0

B2) note to 14.gxh5

17... d5!

13... h5!

21... a7!!
Despite its modest appearance the variation with 6.g3 is not without danger for Black, since the bishop has the potential to exert considerable pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal. How should the defender react?

One option is to revert to a standard Scheveningen set up with 6...e6, intending to develop solidly and hoping to make use of the unguarded c4-square in the middlegame. Black has excellent chances to equalize the position, but playing for a win has proven a bit of a challenge.

For this reason I eventually decided to recommend the more spirited 6...e5, gaining additional space in the centre and driving the enemy knight to a more modest location. Naturally there is a price to pay, in the form of the weakened d5-square, which will have to be guarded carefully against the enemy knights.

Studying the intricacies of this complex system helps with understanding other Sicilian lines featured in our book. The reader should pay special attention to the timely ...b7-b5 advance, securing enough counterplay on the queenside.

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 d6 5.c3 a6 6.g3 e5

A) 7.b3

The retreat of the knight to b3 can occur in many different Sicilian variations. The advantages are that the knight has found a stable location from which is does not obstruct the rest of the white pieces. However, the drawback – which applies in almost all scenarios involving d4-b3 in the Sicilian – is that the knight suffers from a lack of active prospects.

7...e7

Black can also play 7...bd7, although White may be tempted to respond with 8.a4!?

B) 7.de2

8.g2

The plan of restricting the enemy queenside does not work so well before Black has committed his queen's knight to d7.

8.a4 c6! 9.g2 b4

The knight wastes no time occupying the newly created outpost.

10.g5

After 10.0-0 g4 11.d2 c8 12.a5 it looks promising for Black to play 12...d7?!N (This is an ambitious try for an advantage, although there is nothing wrong with 12...c6 when Black had nothing to fear in Felgaer – Ricardi, Mendoza 2008.) 13.a4 b5 14.c3 c6? with some queenside pressure.
White’s problems are even greater after:
14.\(\text{h}6\) d5! 15.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{fxd}5\) 16.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\)
17.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\)!
14.\(\text{xf}6\) 15.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{d}7\)

The second player already had the more comfortable game in Lopez Martinez – Dominguez Perez, Barcelona 2006.

8...b5

9.\(\text{g}5\) is not too dangerous. Pieces alone are unlikely to conquer Black’s position despite the obvious hole on d5. One high-level game continued 9...\(\text{bd}7\) 10.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 11.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{b}6\) 12.\(\text{xc}7\) \(\text{xc}7\) The position of the king is of no great concern. 13.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}6\) 14.0–0 \(\text{e}6\) 15.\(\text{c}3\) (15.\(\text{a}5\) \(\text{c}7\) 16.\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}8\) 17.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{f}7=\)
15...\(\text{c}8\) 16.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{c}4\) 17.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}6\) Black had no problems in Alekseev – Nepomniachtchi, Moscow 2006.

A1) 9.a4 b4

This leads to a more or less forced sequence:
10.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 11.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{a}7\) 12.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{e}6\)

White must decide where to place his queen.

13.\(\text{d}2\)

It seems logical to tie the enemy rook to the defence of the b4-pawn. The other main choice is:
13.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{d}7\)

Also playable is 13...\(\text{b}7\) 14.\(\text{a}5\) 0–0 15.0–0 \(\text{c}7\) 16.\(\text{d}2\), Lirindzakis – Ornithopoulos, Nikea 1985, and here I suggest 16...\(\text{c}6\)N with the possible continuation: 17.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 18.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{f}7\) 19.\(\text{fd}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 20.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{d}8=\)
14.0–0

This position was reached in Timofeev – Smeets, Amsterdam 2005. At this point I recommend a natural yet untested move:

14...0–0N

The game continuation of 14...d5?! was rather risky, as Black is opening the position before finishing development. Objectively his position should still be alright, but in the game he was unable to withstand the pressure. Play continued 15.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 16.\(\text{xc}7\) \(\text{xc}7\) 17.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}7\) 18.\(\text{fd}1\) 0–0 19.\(\text{c}5\)! \(\text{xc}5\) 20.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{xd}1\) 21.\(\text{xd}1\) \(\text{c}7\) 22.\(\text{d}5\) And White’s pieces were dominating the board.

15.\(\text{fd}1\) \(\text{c}8\) 16.\(\text{ac}1\) \(\text{b}7=\)

Black has a solid position and can choose the right moment to break with ...d5.

13.\(\text{b}7\) 14.0–0 0–0
15.a5

In one high-level game White tried:
15.\texttt{d}d3

This loss of tempo does not create much
of an impression, and it is no surprise that
Black soon gets
a comfortable game.
15 ... \texttt{c}7 16.\texttt{d}d2 a5
16 ... \texttt{c}8!?N 17.\texttt{f}d1 a5 18.c3 b3 was also
fine.
17.\texttt{a}c1 \texttt{d}d7

16 ... \texttt{a}c7 16.\texttt{d}d1

White is not helped by 16.\texttt{e}c2 \texttt{b}5 (or
16 ... \texttt{c}7N 17.\texttt{f}d1 \texttt{c}6 18.\texttt{a}c1 \texttt{f}6=)
17.\texttt{f}d1 \texttt{c}7 18.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{c}6 19.f3 \texttt{e}8 20.\texttt{a}c1
h6 when Black had no problems in Lintchevski –
Brodsky, Peterhof 2006.

16 ... \texttt{c}7 17.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{a}8

Black has obtained a solid position, and it
is hard to see White achieving much on the
queenside. In the one game I found, White
now went astray.

18.b3

After 18.c3 \texttt{c}5 19.\texttt{xc}5 dxc5 20.\texttt{c}4 bxc3
21.bxc3 \texttt{d}8 22.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}3 The second player
can benefit from two bishops and active
pieces.
18 ... \texttt{c}8

Black obtained excellent control over the
queenside and centre in Kasimdzhanov –
Karjakin, Tomsk 2006.

18 ... \texttt{d}7 16.\texttt{d}d1

White is not helped by 16.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}5 (or
16 ... \texttt{c}7N 17.\texttt{f}d1 \texttt{c}6 18.\texttt{a}c1 \texttt{f}6=)
17.\texttt{f}d1 \texttt{c}7 18.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{c}6 19.f3 \texttt{e}8 20.\texttt{a}c1
h6 when Black had no problems in Lintchevski –
Brodsky, Peterhof 2006.

16 ... \texttt{c}7 17.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{a}8

Black has obtained a solid position, and it
is hard to see White achieving much on the
queenside. In the one game I found, White
now went astray.

18.\texttt{a}4?

White should play something less exotic,
although he could hardly hope for an advantage
in any case.

18 ... \texttt{c}6! 19.\texttt{d}a1

19.\texttt{xb}4? \texttt{xb}4 20.\texttt{xb}4 \texttt{xc}2 leaves White
in serious trouble.

19 ... \texttt{d}5! 20.exd5 \texttt{xd}5

With the centre open, White’s oddly-placed
rooks were a real problem in Zagrebelny –
Biriukov, St Petersburg 2006.

A2) 9.0–0

This time White performs the essential task of
casting and will choose what he hopes will be
a more favourable moment for a2-a4.
It is also worth mentioning:
10.\textit{d}d2\textit{l}lxdS 11.\textit{exd}S a5!
Black needs to put the pawns on the correct squares before he chooses a place for his bishop. After 11...\textit{b}7?! 12.a4 b4 13.\textit{d}d2 a5 14.c3 bxc3 15.\textit{xc}3 White has managed to put pressure on the a5-pawn. The big problem for Black is that after 15...\textit{b}6 16.\textit{a}3 \textit{d}8 he has defended the pawn, but his pieces are not ready for 17.\textit{d}d4!! which he has to take, otherwise it comes to c6: 17...\textit{exd}4 18.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}5 19.\textit{e}e1+ \textit{d}7 20.\textit{gx}g7 \textit{g}g8 21.\textit{d}d4+ with a strong attack, Civric - Djuhanovic, Tivat 1995.

12.a4 b4 13.\textit{d}d2

9...\textit{bd}7
Now we will pay attention to A21) 10.\textit{d}d2? and A22) 10.a4.

\textbf{A21) 10.\textit{d}d2?}

For a while this spirited idea was robbing Black players of their dreams. White is preparing to undermine the pawn structure on the queenside, so the bishop moves to control the vital a5- and b4-squares.

13...\textit{g}5!
Once the bishops are exchanged Black will not have the same problems with the a5-pawn.

14.f4?!
Preventing Black’s idea, but making a different kind of concession. The bishop now returns to f6 and is still involved in the fight for the queenside from an active position, rather than sitting passively on d8.

14...\textit{f}6 15.c3 bxc3 16.\textit{xc}3 0–0
The position is about equal with everything to fight for, Movsesian – Kasparov, Prague 2001.

12.a4 b4 13.\textit{d}d2

10...0–0 11.\textit{e}e1
This secondary preparatory move has been White’s highest-scoring choice. The immediate queenside strike does not offer much:

11.a4 b4 12.\textit{d}d5
The knight can also return to its original square, but this hardly seems like the most principled way to conduct the game.

12.\textit{b}1 a5 13.c3 \textit{c}5 14.cxb4 (14.\textit{xa}5 bxc3
15...\texttt{xc3} \texttt{c7} 16..\texttt{e1} \texttt{d7} 17..\texttt{a3} \texttt{xa4=}

14...\texttt{xb4} 15..\texttt{xb4} \texttt{a6} 16..\texttt{xc5}! (16..\texttt{e1} \texttt{d3} 17..\texttt{a5} \texttt{b8} 18..\texttt{e3} \texttt{xb2} 19..\texttt{c2} \texttt{c4} 20..\texttt{c3} \texttt{c8=} 16...\texttt{xf1} 17..\texttt{xf1} \texttt{dxc5} 18..\texttt{c3} \texttt{c4} 19..\texttt{xc4} \texttt{d1=} 20..\texttt{f1} \texttt{c2=}

With the help of the witty exchange sacrifice White was able to maintain the balance in Felgaer – Dominguez Perez, Havana 2004.

12...\texttt{xd5} 13.exd5 a5

14.c3

14..\texttt{e1} \texttt{f6} 15.c3 \texttt{bxc3} 16..\texttt{xc3} \texttt{b6=} The weakness on a5 is well defended and the black pieces have a lot of room for manoeuvres and improvement.

12.a4

In view of Black’s strong reply, perhaps White should try something different here. On the other hand his whole set-up is geared towards preparing this move, so if he has to abandon the whole idea then Black already has good reason to feel happy with the outcome of the opening.

12...\texttt{g4}!

We have been following the game Socko – Karjakin, Mallorca 2004. Black has excellent prospects with his mobile e- and f-pawns, while White will struggle to achieve much with his oddly-placed queenside pieces.

11...\texttt{b6=}

This is the perfect antidote to White’s concept. There is nothing much wrong with 11...\texttt{b7} 12.a4 \texttt{b4} 13..\texttt{d5} \texttt{xd5} 14..\texttt{d5} \texttt{a5} 15.c3 \texttt{bxc3} 16..\texttt{xc3} \texttt{b6, Rodriguez Guerrero – Quezada Perez, Santa Clara 2004, except for the fact that White can practically force a repetition with 17..\texttt{d4} \texttt{b4} 18..\texttt{c3} if he desires it.

13..\texttt{c1}

13.f3 \texttt{d7=} was mentioned by Gelfand in his annotations.

Perhaps White’s best continuation would have been 13..\texttt{f3} with good chances to equalize, for instance: 13...\texttt{xf3} 14..\texttt{xf3} \texttt{b4} 15..\texttt{d1} \texttt{d5} 16..\texttt{exd5} \texttt{e4} 17..\texttt{e2} \texttt{xd5} 18..\texttt{e3} when White should be okay.

13...\texttt{b4=}N

I believe this active move to be an improvement over 13...\texttt{d7}, Movsesian – Gelfand, Budapest 2003. Black was absolutely fine in that game, but I think he could have played more ambitiously.

14..\texttt{d5}

Another possible continuation would be 14..\texttt{d1} \texttt{a5} 15..\texttt{e3} \texttt{e6} 16..\texttt{f5} \texttt{c7} 17..\texttt{xe7=}
Wxe7 18.\texttt{\textordmasculine}e3 \texttt{\textordmasculine}c4 19.\texttt{\textordmasculine}g5 h6+ Only Black can be better in this position thanks to his harmonious pieces.

14...\texttt{\textordmasculine}fxd5 15.exd5 a5 16.c3
16.c4 \texttt{\textordmasculine}d7! 17.c5 dxc5 18.\texttt{\textordmasculine}xe5 \texttt{\textordmasculine}xa4 19.\texttt{\textordmasculine}e3 c4+ would be quite tragic for the first player.

16...\texttt{\textordmasculine}d7! 17.cxb4
17.f3 \texttt{\textordmasculine}f5 does not help either.

17...\texttt{\textordmasculine}fc8 18.\texttt{\textordmasculine}b1 axb4
Black’s active pieces and sounder pawn structure mean that his chances are higher. A further continuation might be:

19.a5 \texttt{\textordmasculine}c4 20.\texttt{\textordmasculine}c1 \texttt{\textordmasculine}d8 21.a6 \texttt{\textordmasculine}e2+
Black maintains some pressure. Overall the sophisticated plan with 10.\texttt{\textordmasculine}d2 does not seem dangerous if Black responds correctly.

A22) 10.a4 b4

11.\texttt{\textordmasculine}a2!?
This looks a bit timid, but in a way it is quite an ambitious move, as White is avoiding the exchange of knights.

He does not achieve much after: 11.\texttt{\textordmasculine}d5 \texttt{\textordmasculine}xd5 12.\texttt{\textordmasculine}xd5 \texttt{\textordmasculine}b8! (Less precise seems to be 12...\texttt{\textordmasculine}b6 13.\texttt{\textordmasculine}a5! 0–0 14.\texttt{\textordmasculine}xb4 when it is not clear if Black has enough for the pawn, Vul – Kokanovic, Kladovo 1990.)

13.\texttt{\textordmasculine}c4?!N (White should not underestimate the dangers: 13.a5 0–0 14.\texttt{\textordmasculine}e1 \texttt{\textordmasculine}c7 15.\texttt{\textordmasculine}e3 Dvoiry – Zakhartsov, Pardubice 2007, 15...\texttt{\textordmasculine}d8?!N 16.\texttt{\textordmasculine}c1 \texttt{\textordmasculine}c5 17.\texttt{\textordmasculine}c4 \texttt{\textordmasculine}g4+) 13...0–0 14.\texttt{\textordmasculine}d2 \texttt{\textordmasculine}b6! Black should always be on the lookout for such an opportunity to sacrifice a pawn favourably. 15.\texttt{\textordmasculine}xb4 \texttt{\textordmasculine}e6 16.\texttt{\textordmasculine}fd1 \texttt{\textordmasculine}c4 17.\texttt{\textordmasculine}c3 \texttt{\textordmasculine}e8 Black has fine compensation.

11...a5 12.c3
This is necessary in order to enable the a2-knight to return to an active role in the game.

12...\texttt{\textordmasculine}a6!?
This is an important moment. The more common continuation has been 12...bxc3 13.\texttt{\textordmasculine}xc3, and although Black should be okay here, White has at least obtained the type of position towards which he was aiming. The text move gives some additional opportunities thanks to the active bishop.

13.\texttt{\textordmasculine}e1 bxc3 14.\texttt{\textordmasculine}xc3 0–0 15.\texttt{\textordmasculine}d2
15.\texttt{\textordmasculine}e3 \texttt{\textordmasculine}c4 16.\texttt{\textordmasculine}d2 \texttt{\textordmasculine}e6 maintains the balance.

15...\texttt{\textordmasculine}c4!
Now we begin to see the value of Black’s 12th move. The bishop menaces the unstable knight on b3 while also helping to control the crucial d5-square.
16.\( \text{b}5 \)

Another possibility is 16.\( \text{c}1 \)N \( \text{b}8 \) 17.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{xb}3 \) 18.\( \text{xc}e7 \)† \( \text{h}8 \) 19.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{xa}4 \) 20.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{b}5 \) White has a degree of compensation, but no claim to an advantage.

16...\( \text{b}6 \) 17.\( \text{f}1 \)??

White should have settled for 17.\( \text{e}3 \)N, although 17...\( \text{b}7 \) leaves White nothing better than retreating with 18.\( \text{d}2 \). At this point Black can choose between repeating the position with 18...\( \text{b}6 \), and playing for a win with 18...\( \text{xb}5 \) 19.\( \text{axb}5 \) \( \text{a}4 \) 20.\( \text{a}5 \) \( \text{xb}5 \), although I must admit White should probably not be worse after 21.\( \text{f}1 \).

18...\( \text{xb}3 \)??

There was also nothing wrong with 18...\( \text{b}7 \) 19.\( \text{exd}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) transposing to the previous note.

19.\( \text{xb}3 \) \( \text{c}5 \)

Less than 20 moves into the game Black had already developed a powerful initiative in Dutreeuw – P. H. Nielsen, Gothenburg 2005.

B) 7.\( \text{d}e2 \)

This time the knight elects to remain closer to the kingside, where White hopes to become active.

7...\( \text{b}5 \)

Black wastes no time in commencing his queenside play. Now we will consider the immediate attempt to fight for the d5-square with B1) 8.\( \text{g}5 \), followed by the main line of B2) 8.\( \text{g}2 \).

The immediate occupation of the d5-square is also possible, although it should not be too dangerous.

8.\( \text{d}5 \)
fighting idea, even though White remains a bit better.

9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}e3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}7 10.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}2 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}d5 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}d5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}6
11...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f}}6 12.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}7 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6
14.0-0± is very similar to the main line.

12.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}g5 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}b6 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}8 14.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}8
15.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}d3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}7 16.0-0 0-0 17.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash f}}d1

This type of position should not hold any dangers for Black, as has been established in hundreds of games in the quiet lines of the Sveshnikov variation.

12...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}5

12...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}d5?! would be a mistake, as after 13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}d5 the opposite-coloured bishops in no way guarantee a draw in the position with White's clear positional advantage.

18.c3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}8 19.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}2 a5 20.a4 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}7 21.axb5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}x5 22.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}2


**B1) 8.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}5**

The bishop move is tied with a strong strategic idea of fighting for d5.

8...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}d7 9.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}7 10.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6
10.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}2N \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}7 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}c7 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}c7 12.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}3 h6= leads nowhere for White.

Also harmless is: 10.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}c7 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}c7 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}3
\text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}7 12.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash h}}3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}6 13.a4 b4 14.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}xd5
15.exd5 h6 16.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6= Ivanov – Kelleher, Natick 2000.

10...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6 11.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}7

Black should have no real problems here, although he should remain vigilant in order to avoid falling into a slightly worse position with no counterplay.

12.a4

This seems like the most challenging idea. Quieter alternatives can be compared with the Alekseev - Karjakin game given in the note to White's eighth move above.

12...b4

12...0-0 is also playable, but it looks safest to keep the queenside closed.

13.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6+ \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}f6 14.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}8 15.b3
15.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}d5 16.exd5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash w}}a5 17.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}4 was seen in Janev – Meera, Saint Affrique 2007, and now 17...\text{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}c7N 18.0-0 g6 would have been at least equal for Black.

15...0-0 16.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}4 a5 17.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash h}}4 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}5 18.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash w}}e2 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}d5
19.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}d5 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash e}}3 20.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash c}}4 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}8 21.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}1 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}8
22.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}}3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash x}}d3 23.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash w}}xd3 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}6

The position remained equal and the players soon agreed a draw in Matulovic – Colovic, Subotica 2003.

**B2) 8.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash g}}2 \text{\texttt{\textbackslash b}}d7**
9.h3
This is White’s most active and aggressive continuation; he intends to prepare g4 and is willing to postpone, or sometimes forgo altogether his kingside castling. Obviously we should also pay attention to:

9.0–0  0e7  10.h3

There is also 10.a4 b4 11.d5  xd5 12.xd5?! (12.exd5 a5 is equal, as shown in a number of games.) 12...b8 (12...c7 N=) 13.c4?! (13.e3 c7=) 13...c5 14.d1  b6  15.f3 0–0 A. Vuckovic – Maksimenko, Schmiden 1995.

10...b6!
Taking control over d5.

11.g4

Also very interesting is 11...h5?! 12.g5  fd7 13.f4 (13.h4 b4! [13...c7?! 14.a4 b4 15.a5! bxc3 16.xc3  c4 17.d5  c6 18.b3±] 14.d5  xd5 15.xd5  b8=) 13...h4∞ Geirnaert – Naiditsch, Belgium 2003.

12.a4  b5?!  13.exd5  d5
Also not bad is 13...0–0  14.g3 a5 with equality.

It should be noted, however, that Black should play these moves in the right order, as the slightly premature 13...a5?! 14.a3! might offer White a slight initiative.

14.gxf5  xf5  15.g3  g6

16.d2?!
Better was 16.a3, although Black still has no cause for complaint after 16...c8.

16...a5  17.g4  0–0  18.a3 c8= Varavin – Dvoirys, St Petersburg 2000.

9...c7  10.g4

Some players, evidently worried by the prospect of ...b5-b4, have experimented with the modest:

10.a3

Here I suggest an unusual and refined move order:

10...b6?!

10...b7 has, not surprisingly, been much more popular, but after the natural continuation of 11.g4  b6 (11...c5 may be better) 12.g3 g6, I find Black’s position slightly unpleasant after 13.h6??N.

11.g4

11.g5  b7  12.0–0  0–0 was equal in Olsson – Lautier, St Vincent 2005.
11...h6 12.\( \text{g}3 \) 0–0 13.0–0
13.\( \text{g}5 \)  \( \text{hxg5} \) 14.\( \text{gxf5} \) (14.\( \text{exf5} \) \( \text{d5} \pm \)) 14...\( \text{c8} \)
15.0–0 \( \text{c4} \) 16.\( \text{e1} \) \( \text{c7} \) gives Black promising counterplay on the c-file.
13...\( \text{c7} \) 14.\( \text{f3} \) \( \text{d8} \)

15.\( \text{g5} \)!
White should probably have preferred the less drastic 15.\( \text{f5} \), when 15...\( \text{xf5} \) 16.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{ac8} \) is about equal.
15...\( \text{hxg5} \) 16.\( \text{xg5} \) \( \text{d5} \) 17.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 18.\( \text{d2} \)
This position occurred in Kristol – Nowak, e-mail 2006. At this point Black has a couple of tempting continuations.
18...\( \text{xc2} \)\( \text{N} \)
This is the most enterprising, although 18...\( \text{f6} \)\( \text{N} \) is also at least equal for Black.
19.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{f4} \) 20.\( \text{xd8} \) \( \text{xd8} \)\( \text{N} \)
With excellent compensation for the exchange.

10...\( \text{b4} \)!
Black can also castle before executing this advance, but we will see that in certain cases he can try to make use of the rook on h8.

11.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 12.\( \text{exd5} \)
After 12.\( \text{xd5} \), Himanshu – Ramesh, New Delhi 2007, Black's most convenient reply is 12...\( \text{xc7} \)\( \text{N} \) since capturing the rook would cost White his queen: 13.\( \text{xa8} \) \( \text{b6} \)\( \text{N} \)

12...\( \text{a5} \)!

This demonstrates the advantage of postponing the move \( ...\text{b7} \). Now there is a real chance that the bishop will find a brighter future on the more active a6-square.

13.0–0
The control of the a6-f1 diagonal plays a significant role in limiting White's options.

The straightforward attack on the b4-pawn leads to a balanced position: 13.\( \text{xa3} \) \( \text{a6} \) 14.0–0 (White does not gain anything by delaying casting. After 14.\( \text{d2} \) Black can even afford to leave the b-pawn en prise temporarily with 14...0–0, since 15.axb4 axb4 16.\( \text{xb4} \)\( \text{b6} \) gives Black a strong initiative with \( ...\text{f5} \) on the way.) 14...0–0 15.axb4 axb4 16.\( \text{d2} \)

This position occurred in Al Modiahki – Sedlak, Biel 2003, and now it looks good
for Black to play 16...\textit{c}7?!\textit{N} with an active position (16...\textit{b}6 is also okay) as the threat to the b-pawn is not real: 17.\textit{x}b4? \textit{c}4 wins material.

The other main option is:

13.\textit{g}3 \textit{a}6 14.h4?!  
14.\textit{f}5 0–0 gives Black no problems; the potential loss of the bishop pair is no big deal, while White must worry about the future of his king.

14...0–0 15.\textit{e}3  
15.\textit{f}5 \textit{e}8 does not achieve much for White.

15...\textit{c}7 16.\textit{c}1 \textit{c}5 17.b3?!  
Better was 17.\textit{c}4\textit{N}, although after 17...\textit{b}xc3 18.\textit{xc}3 \textit{ab}8 Black has every reason to feel optimistic.

17...\textit{a}4??

White was playing with a great risk as his king was left in the centre in Ye Jiangchuan – Gelfand, Shenyang 2000.

Still, it should be mentioned that the less enterprising 13...\textit{a}6 is not a bad move, and after 14.\textit{e}1 0–0 15.\textit{g}3, Lujan – Colovic, Balaguer 2006, Black can equalize with 15...\textit{c}5\textit{N} 16.\textit{e}4 \textit{xe}4 17.\textit{xe}4 g6. Without the knights on the board White should be careful about his exposed kingside.

14.\textit{gxh}5

White's attempt to keep his pawn structure intact with 14.\textit{g}3?! only leads to trouble: 14...\textit{hxg}4 15.\textit{hxg}4 \textit{f}6 (15...\textit{g}6\textit{=} is also fine, but Black finds a more dynamic way to seize the initiative.) 16.g5 \textit{g}4 17.\textit{e}4 f5! 18.gxf6 gxf6 19.\textit{e}1 f5 20.\textit{g}3 \textit{h}4 21.\textit{f}3 This position was reached in Inkiov – Ninov, Donostia 2009. Black has several promising continuations here, but I think the strongest would have been:

21...\textit{a}7\textit{N} Intending to swing the rook to g7, with a tremendous attack.

14...\textit{exh}5 15.\textit{d}4

It looks tempting to send the knight towards what looks like a dream outpost on c6, although it is hard to say if this move was really best. We should also pay attention to the alternative: 15.\textit{f}4\textit{=}\textit{N}

The jump to e6 has the potential to prove disruptive, although it turns out that with accurate play Black keeps good chances here as well.

13...\textit{h}5!

This modern idea lends an unexpected twist to the position. The c8-bishop had previously been intending to move to a6, but now that White has castled Black decides to keep this piece on c8 where it will assist with a kingside attack.
15...\texttt{h}4!
Also interesting is 15...\texttt{h}8!? 16.\texttt{e}6 \texttt{f}xe6
17.dxe6 \texttt{f}f6 18.\texttt{x}xa8 \texttt{xe}6 19.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{x}h3
when Black has decent attacking chances in return for the exchange. Nevertheless it seems
to me that the main line is even better.
16.\texttt{e}6 \texttt{f}xe6 17.dxe6 \texttt{b}8 18.\texttt{d}3!?  
I checked this move in order to find out
if White could improve on the following
analysis by Stohl: 18.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{f}6 (18...\texttt{f}6?
19.\texttt{g}3\texttt{t}) 19.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{h}8 20.\texttt{x}d7\texttt{t} \texttt{d}7
either is Black's compensation is in question.
18...\texttt{f}8  
18...\texttt{e}4!! also looks promising.
19.\texttt{x}d7 \texttt{d}7 20.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{e}4!
This pawn sacrifice brings Black excellent
chances.
21.\texttt{x}e4 \texttt{f}6  
Despite the pawn minus, Black has the upper
hand as his pieces are extremely active.
17.\texttt{f}5  
It also looks tempting to try 17...\texttt{e}4??N
18.\texttt{x}g3 \texttt{x}d5 19.\texttt{x}e7 \texttt{x}e7 20.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{c}5!
when White's compensation is in question.
18.\texttt{e}1  
18.\texttt{xe}5? does not work due to 18...\texttt{c}4.
It was worth considering the immediate
attempt to obtain counterplay with 18.a3?!
This does not equalize, although it does force
Black to make a difficult decision.
15...\texttt{f}6 16.\texttt{e}6 \texttt{c}7  
Both sides have their own pros and cons
here, but overall it seems to me that White's
weak kingside is the dominant feature of the
position.
17.a3  
It would be too risky for White to venture:
17.a3? \texttt{x}h3 18.\texttt{x}h3 \texttt{x}h3 19.axb4 \texttt{c}8\texttt{t}
18.\texttt{g}3  
We have been following the game Alekseev
– Dominguez Perez, Biel 2008. The position
remains complex, but White's position is more
dangerous due to his unsafe king.
Conclusion

Black is not obliged to meet 6.g3 with 6...e5, but this system seems much more spirited than the solid but timid 6...e6. White has invested lot of energy into experimenting with 7.\(\text{b}3\), but at present Black seems to be doing fine there, even against the tricky 10.\(\text{d}2\) plan. The strategically heavy retreat 7.\(\text{de}2\) is connected with the plan of h3, g4 and \(\text{g}3\). In this case Black does well to hurry with ...b5-b4, gaining enough counterplay on the queenside. And in a final twist, we saw how Black could follow the early queenside advance with... an attack on the far side of the board with ...h7-h5! Such ideas are becoming more and more typical in modern chess, and here it leads to rich positions in which Black is more than holding his own.
Open Systems

The Karate Kid - 6.h3

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\xd4 f6 5.\c3 a6

6.h3 e6 7.g4 d5

A) 8.\g2
B) 8.exd5

A) note to 9.0-0

A) after 17.\b3

B) 13.\c3

13...\e7!N

17...\a7!

13...\d6!N
1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 a6 5.d3 a6 6.h3

The funny-looking move has become extremely fashionable in recent years. White intends to combine the development of the bishop on g2 with a potential kingside advance; you might think of it as a turbo-charged version of the 6.g3 line from the previous chapter. We already saw that after 6.g3 and g2, White often follows up by playing h3 and g4, so in a way it is quite logical for him to try and save a tempo by playing g2-g4 in one move.

Just about every sensible response has been tested, but I have chosen to recommend:

6...e6

6...e5 is possible, but after 7.dxe5 White would not be far away from reaching his ideal outcome with an extra tempo over the previous chapter. Therefore on this occasion I prefer to revert to a Scheveningen formation.

7.g4

7...d5

The sophisticated 7...e7 8.g2 d7?! also leads to interesting play, but it feels more principled to take immediate action in the centre. In this position White’s two main choices are A) 8.g2 and B) 8.exd5, although a few other moves have been tested as well:

8.e5?! looks dubious: 8...d7 9.f4 (9.f4 is well met by 9...c7! 10.f3 [10.e2 runs into 10...a3! 11.d1 xb2 12.xb2 c3† 13.d2 xb2] This was Koukoufakis – Vlahakis, Athens 2006, and now the most logical continuation seems to be 10..c6N 11.e2 b4 when White already faces difficult problems.) 9...h4† 10.e2 c6 11.e3 c5 12.xf3 e7 13.xc5 xc5 14.a3 0–0 15.d2 f6 Black seized the initiative in Matla – Majcher, Leba 2006.

8.de2 is playable, but does not give White much hope for an advantage: 8..xe4 9.xe4 dxe4 10.xd8† xd8 11.e3 d7 (The computer says 11...f5?! is okay, but Black’s position looks rather risky after 12.gxf5 exf5 13.d5†)

12.xe4 (In the event of 12.e3??, Romero Holmes – Uibilava, Subijana de Alava 2001, Black can safely hang onto his extra pawn with 12..c6N 13.0–0 f5 14.g2 f5.) 12..c6 13.f3 d7 14.d2 c5 15.g2 xe4 16.fxe4 c5 The endgame was absolutely level in De Waard – Mrazik, e-mail 2008.

A) 8.g2 b4

This seems like the most logical and principled move. A brief glance at the alternatives should be enough to convince us of the need to take White’s set-up seriously.
Chapter 11 - 6.h3

8...dxe4 9.dxe4 dxe4 10.0-0 Qd7 11.Qxe4 Qe7 12.c3 (or 12.Qf3? 0-0 13.Qd1 Qb6 14.Qb3 Qc7=) 12...0-0 13.Qf3 Qc7 14.Qf4 Qd6 15.Qxd6 Qxd6 16.Qad1 Qc7 17.Qf6! The queen exchange will force Black to defend his queenside without support of the strongest piece. 17...Qxg3† 18.fxg3 Qb8 19.Qb3 b5 20.Qd6 Qe5 21.Qa5= Carlsen – Gelfand, Moscow 2008.

8...dxe4 9.0-0 Qc7 10.Qxe4 Qxe4 11.Qxe4 Qd7 12.Qe1 Qe7 13.c3 0-0 14.Qf3 Qe5 15.Qg2 Qg6 16.Qxe 3 Qb8 17.Qad1 Qd7 18.Qg3= Kamsky – Karjakin, Sochi 2008. Again White will be somewhat better – the queen exchange is an important motif.

9.0-0

Alternatives should not be too threatening for Black:

9.e5?! Qfd7 10.f4 (10.0-0 Qxe5 11.f4 Qec6 12.Qf3 Qc5† 13.Qh1 h5= Miersch – Gruzzmann, Willingen 2001) 10...Qc6 (10...Qh4†?) 11.Qe3 Qa5! 12.Qde2 Qc4 was better for Black in Miedema – Verkerk, corr. 1989.


13...Qe7= 14.Qxe4 Qxd2† 15.Qxd2 h5 16.g5 e5=


13.c3 (13.0-0 Qc6 14.f4 Qe6 15.c4 Qxc3 16.Qxc3 Qxf4 17.Qxf4 Qd7=) 13...Qxc3 14.Qxc3 Qc6 15.Qxf6† Qxf6 16.Qd5 Qd8= Black has a comfortable position and White will have to play carefully to avoid a nightmare ‘bad bishop’ situation.

Finally, there is:

9.exd5 Qxd5 10.Qd2

The best move is probably 10.Qde2, transposing to line B.

10.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}3}}}} \textcolor{blue}{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}7}}} 11.\texttt{\textcolor{red}{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}2}}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}c}3}} 12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}xc}3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}6}}}=
10...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}c}3}} 11.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}xc}3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}6}}}

Black is already at least equal, for instance:

12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}1}}}}

Or 12.0–0 0–0 13.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}3}}}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}7}}} 14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}2}}
Kravtsiv – Vovk, Lvov 2007, 14...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}8}!N}
15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}d}1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}6}^2}}
12...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}7}}} 13.0–0 0–0 14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}7}}} 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}5}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}5}^2}}

9...0–0

Black does best to refrain from any pawn-grabbing and instead focus on development.

14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{xf}4}}}
14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}3}?!}} e5 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{xf}4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{xf}4}} 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}3}} was mentioned by Mamedyarov. The idea is certainly playable, although I see no real problems for Black after 16...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}7}} 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}b}1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}8}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}d}1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}8}}.

16...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}5}?!}} enables White to obtain some initiative with 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}7}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}8}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}6}}.

17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}3}}}}
17.a4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}8}!} (17...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}5}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}7}} was
recommended by Golubev, but White has a strong answer in 19.\texttt{b}3! \texttt{xb}3 20.\texttt{xb}3 \texttt{ad}8 21.\texttt{e}7±) 18.\texttt{c}3 Now it is safer for Black to play 18...\texttt{d}5, for instance 19.a5 e5 20.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{e}6 with equal play.

\textbf{B) 8.exd5 \texttt{xd}5}

17...\texttt{a}7! 18.\texttt{e}3

Mamedyarov mentioned the line 18.a4 b6 19.a5 bxa5 20.\texttt{e}3 a4! 21.\texttt{a}5 \texttt{c}5, with better chances for Black.

18...\texttt{b}6

Having solved his development problems on the queenside, Black could feel satisfied with the outcome of the opening in Mamedyarov – Karjakin, Foros 2006.

\textbf{9.\texttt{d}e}2

This is considered critical, and has been by far the most popular choice, although several other moves have also been tried.

9.\texttt{g}2?! is not impressive, as after 9...\texttt{xc}3 (Black can also play 9...\texttt{b}4 transposing to line A above, but White’s inaccurate move order constitutes a gift that Black should not decline.) 10.\texttt{xc}3 White will struggle to justify his pawn weaknesses. A logical continuation is 10.\texttt{d}6 11.0–0 \texttt{c}7 12.\texttt{b}1 0–0 13.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}7 14.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{e}5 15.\texttt{b}3 Manik – Oral, Olomouc 1998, and now after 15...\texttt{a}4!N White will have a hard time protecting his weaknesses.

It is also hard to believe that White can achieve much with 9.\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{xd}5 10.\texttt{g}1 e5 11.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{xd}1+ 12.\texttt{xd}1 \texttt{c}6 13.\texttt{e}3 This was Ninov – Maruejols, San Sebastian 2008, and now after 13...\texttt{e}6N Black is at least equal.

The only serious alternative is:

9.\texttt{d}2 b5!

After 9...\texttt{c}5 10.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{a}7 11.\texttt{g}2 0–0 12.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{xc}3 13.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{c}6 14.\texttt{d}1 \texttt{c}7 15.0–0 \texttt{d}7 16.\texttt{d}2 \texttt{a}8 17.\texttt{fd}1 White kept some initiative in Smirin – Zhigalko, Panormo 2001.

10.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{b}7

The bishop arrives on the long diagonal in time to neutralize its opposite number.

11.0–0 \texttt{xc}3 12.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{g}2 13.\texttt{g}2 b4
14.\texttt{\texttt{e}1} \\
14.\texttt{\texttt{f}7} \texttt{\texttt{a}7} 15.\texttt{\texttt{c}6} \texttt{\texttt{c}6} 16.\texttt{\texttt{w}xc6} \texttt{\texttt{d}7} 17.\texttt{\texttt{w}xd7} \texttt{\texttt{xd}7}= Black has no problems, even though his rook from h8 needs some time to get into play. \\
14.\texttt{\texttt{f}7} \texttt{\texttt{a}7} 15.\texttt{\texttt{c}3} \texttt{\texttt{h}5} 16.\texttt{\texttt{f}4} \texttt{\texttt{hxg}4} 17.\texttt{\texttt{hxg}4} \\
This position was reached in Smirin – Mista, Plovdiv 2008. Now instead of the reckless 17...\texttt{\texttt{g}5}? Black should have played: \\
17...\texttt{\texttt{e}d7}!N 18.\texttt{\texttt{f}3} \texttt{\texttt{bxc}3} 19.\texttt{\texttt{bxc}3} \texttt{\texttt{c}8} \\
The position is double-edged, with neither king feeling completely safe. At least Black benefits from having the more compact pawn structure, which should serve him well in the event of a queen exchange.

9.\texttt{\texttt{b}4} \\
9.\texttt{\texttt{h}5}? \\
This creative solution has only been tried once at the time of writing, but it offers exceptionally interesting food for thought.

10.\texttt{\texttt{d}5} \\
10.\texttt{\texttt{g}2} \texttt{\texttt{hxg}4} 11.\texttt{\texttt{hxg}4} \texttt{\texttt{xe}1} 12.\texttt{\texttt{xe}1} \texttt{\texttt{c}6} looks fine for Black. \\
10...\texttt{\texttt{e}5} 11.\texttt{\texttt{f}4} \texttt{\texttt{hxg}4} 12.\texttt{\texttt{w}xd}5 \\
This position was reached in Sutovsky – Najer, Netanya 2009. At this point Black’s safest continuation would have been: \\
12...\texttt{\texttt{c}6}N \\
The game continuation of 12...\texttt{\texttt{d}7} 13.\texttt{\texttt{c}4} \texttt{\texttt{e}7} 14.\texttt{\texttt{e}3} \texttt{\texttt{c}6} 15.\texttt{\texttt{w}f}5 left Black some way short of equality, and he was unable to cope with his problems. \\
However, if Black wishes to keep the game more complicated then he may wish to investigate 12...\texttt{\texttt{e}7}?!N. \\
13.\texttt{\texttt{w}xd}8+ \texttt{\texttt{xd}8} 14.\texttt{\texttt{e}3} \texttt{\texttt{f}5} 15.\texttt{\texttt{e}0}–\texttt{\texttt{e}0} \texttt{\texttt{c}8} 16.\texttt{\texttt{d}3} \\
Harmless is 16.c3 \texttt{\texttt{e}6}. \\
16.\texttt{\texttt{e}xd}3 17.\texttt{\texttt{e}xd}3 \texttt{\texttt{c}7} \\
Black has no problems; the position is equal.

10.\texttt{\texttt{g}2} \\
Very timid is 10.\texttt{\texttt{d}2} \texttt{\texttt{xc}3} 11.\texttt{\texttt{xc}3} \texttt{\texttt{xc}3}+ (If Black is looking for a no-nonsense route to equality he can always opt for 11...\texttt{\texttt{w}xd}1+ 12.\texttt{\texttt{x}d}1 \texttt{\texttt{xc}3}+ 13.\texttt{\texttt{xc}3} \texttt{\texttt{d}7} 14.\texttt{\texttt{g}2} \texttt{\texttt{c}6} as in Becerra Rivero – Dominguez, Santa Clara 1999.) 12.\texttt{\texttt{xc}3} \texttt{\texttt{b}6} 13.\texttt{\texttt{d}2} \texttt{\texttt{xb}2} 14.\texttt{\texttt{b}1} \texttt{\texttt{a}3} 15.\texttt{\texttt{g}2} 0–0 16.0–0 \texttt{\texttt{c}7} \\
This was Tseshkovsky – Sakaev, Moscow 2009. White had enough compensation to fight for equality, but certainly nothing more. \\
10...\texttt{\texttt{c}6}! \\
I spent some time analysing the more common 10...0–0, but eventually decided not to recommend it on account of the rare, but quite promising 11.a3?! \texttt{\texttt{xc}3} 12.\texttt{\texttt{w}xd}8 \texttt{\texttt{ex}d}8 13.\texttt{\texttt{xc}3} \texttt{\texttt{xc}3}+ 14.\texttt{\texttt{b}xc}3 as played in Mikhaletz
Chapter 11 - 6.h3

Hoffmann, Budapest 1998. I am not fully confident that Black is equalizing here – and even if he is, the most he can realistically hope for is a draw.

11.0-0

The alternative is to play 11.d2 xc3, giving White an interesting option:

12.xc6t!? (12.xc3 0-0 13.a3 e7 is comfortable for Black, and the second player has scored heavily from this position; 12.xc3 is also harmless, and after 12...b6 13.d2 the players agreed a draw in Pietrusiak – Pytel, Wroclaw 1972. Obviously the game is far from dead, but it is clear that neither side can claim an advantage.) 12.bxc6 13.xc3 b6 14.d2 c5 15.a3 xc3 16.xc3 0-0 17.0-0-0 b7 The position remained dynamically balanced in Fontaine – Kosten, Saint-Affrique 2000.

11...xc3 12.xc3

12.xd8t xd8 13.xc3 was played in J. Miladinovic – Eric, Zlatibor 2007, and here it looks sensible for Black to play 13...xc3?N 14.bxc3 d7 15.b1 c8 with a full share of the chances.

12...c7 13.f3

The position occurred in Vallejo Pons – Dominguez Perez, Oropesa del Mar 2000. Here I suggest a small refinement for Black.

13...d6!N

After the game continuation of 13...0-0, White could have obtained a slight initiative with 14.f4!N. Instead White missed his chance by playing 14.d1, and after 14...d6! Black prevented the bishop from developing with gain of tempo. I simply want to do the same thing a move earlier.

14.e4

Obviously 14.d1 0-0 transposes to the aforementioned game, in which Black was doing fine.

14...e7 15.c3

By luring the knight to e4 Black succeeded in taking the sting out of 15.f4, as after 15...e5 there is no d5.
15...0-0

The position is level.

Conclusion

The quirky 6.h3 might appear to be an ugly duckling, but it has truly come into vogue in recent years, with many of the world’s top players incorporating it into their repertoires. The plan involving 6...e6 followed by 7...d5 will be music to the ears of classical players – Black responds to his opponent’s early flank activity with a strong counter in the centre, just as prescribed in the manual. Unfortunately the story does not end there, and we have seen that the game will often develop into a tense battle in which both sides must solve tricky problems. According to my analysis Black should be holding his own, although you can bet that the cheeky h-pawn will remain a topical subject in the ongoing theoretical debate.
Chapter 12

Open Systems

Pulp Fiction - 6.f4

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 f6 5.c3 a6 6.f4 e6

A) 7.e3
B) 7.e3 b5
   B1) 8.e5
   B2) 8.e3
   B3) 8.e3
C) 7.e3 b6
   C1) 8.a3 c6
   C11) 9.e3 c7
   C111) 10.e3
c112) 10.g4
   C12) 9.e3
   C2) 8.e3 c7 9.g4 b5
   C21) 10.g5
   C22) 10.e3

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B1) after 26.e3
B3) note to 13.0-0
C22) note to 12.e3

26...c8!N
16...h6?N
16...0-0!N
One of the older attacking systems for White features the immediate 6.f4. This became especially popular in the 1990s after being advocated in John Nunn’s landmark *Beating the Sicilian* books. The glory days of the system may have passed, but Black still has to be well informed about the most accurate methods of defence; the underlying principles of White’s play are as sound as ever.

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.dxe4 d6 5.c3 a6 6.f4

### 6...e6

Several other moves are playable. To mention just a few of them, the most popular response has been 6...e5 although I also spent some time analysing the intriguing and somewhat provocative alternative 6...g6?. In the end, however, I decided that the Scheveningen-style treatment provided the right balance between solidity and counterattacking potential.

Here White’s main choices are A) 7.d3, B) 7.e3 and C) 7.f3, although several other ideas have been tried. Here are the most significant of them:

7.e2 will lead to Chapter 13 (6.e2).

7.a4 e7 is likely to lead to Chapter 13 after a subsequent e2 and e3, or perhaps line E of Chapter 9 (6.a4 e6) in the event that the white bishop comes to d3.

7.e5

This might seem premature and is rarely seen, but is far from ridiculous.

7...dxe5 8.fxe5 d5

I also checked 8...fd7 9.f4, as occurred in Shook – Sadiq Chanthana, e-mail 2003. Here 9...a5?N looks interesting, but White’s play now begins to make sense after: 10.f3! exd5 11.g3 followed by 12.0-0-0 with compensation and good attacking chances.

9.d5

9.d2?? h4† was embarrassing for White in Ivert – Osterberg, Sweden 1992.


9.g4 xc3 10.bxc3, Rantanen – Paasikangas Tella, Tampere 1998, 10.d7!N 11.f4 a5 12.g3 g5† 13.xg5 (13.d2 h6†) 13...g8 14.b3 exf5† 15.exf5 e5† The capture on d5 was played in Jennings – Aldridge, e-mail 1996. Here Black should have responded with:

9...xd5 10.f3 xd1† 11.xd1 d7!

The ending should be equal, but it seems that White has to take more care than Black.

7.g4

Another aggressive though slightly premature move that requires careful handling.
This is the only real attempt to refute White's concept.

8...f5!N

This is the most challenging reaction. In the event of 8.fxe5, D. Jensen – R. Moore, Grand Rapids 1989, Black could have seized the initiative with 8...\( \text{fxg4} \)N 9.\( \text{f3} \) d6 10.\( \text{g5} \) (10.\( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{xd6} \))\( + \) 10...\( \text{wb6} \) 11.\( \text{d2} \) h6 12.\( \text{f4} \) dx \( \text{e5} \) 13.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{xb2} \)! 14.\( \text{c7} \)\( \text{c7} \)\( + \) 15.\( \text{d1} \) (15.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{d8} \)+) 15...\( \text{xe6} \)! 16.\( \text{fxa8} \) \( \text{exf4} \) 17.\( \text{c7} \) g5 with somewhat better chances, in an admittedly rather complex and irrational position.

8...h5!

9.fxe5

9.g5?! This idea, borrowed from the Perenyi Attack (see line C of Chapter 16) does not work so well here. 9...\( \text{fxe4} \) 10.\( \text{g7} \) d5 12.\( \text{c3} \) (12.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{exf4} \) 13.\( \text{xf4} \) d6 14.\( \text{xe2} \) [14.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{c7} \)! 15.\( \text{e2} \) 0–0] 14...\( \text{f8} \) 15.\( \text{c3} \) [15.0–0–0 \( \text{g4} \)+] 15...\( \text{g4} \) 16.\( \text{d2} \) d4\( \infty \) 12...\( \text{c6} \) 13.\( \text{xe5} \) d6 14.\( \text{g2} \) \( \text{wa5} \) 15.\( \text{x d 5} \) (15.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c5} \)+) 15...0–0–0 16.\( \text{xe6} \) fxe6 17.\( \text{e2} \) d4 18.\( \text{c4} \) d8 19.0–0–0 \( \text{xe5} \)+

9...\( \text{fxg4} \) 10.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{xf5} \)

10...\( \text{d5} \)?! 11.\( \text{d5} \) (11.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{bc6} \) 12.0–0–0 \( \text{g6} \) 13.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{g7} \)+) 11...\( \text{bc6} \) 12.0–0–0 \( \text{xe6} \) 13.\( \text{x d6} \)\( \text{xd6} \) 14.\( \text{xd6} \) \( \text{x d6} \) 15.\( \text{xd6} \) 0–0=

11.\( \text{exf5} \) dxe5

13...\( \text{xe5} \)

13.\( \text{e4} \)\( \text{xe4} \) 14.\( \text{xe4} \) d5 15.\( \text{d5} \)\( \text{g8} \) 16.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{a7} \) 17.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{d6} \) 18.\( \text{g1} \)\( \text{e6} \) 17.\( \text{b6} \) \( \text{g6} \)–0–0 19.\( \text{d7} \) \( \text{d8} \) 20.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 21.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{g8} \) 22.\( \text{d6} \) [22.\( \text{e8} \)\( \text{xd8} \) 23.\( \text{x d8} \) \( \text{g7} \) 24.\( \text{e7} \) \( \text{b5} \) 25.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{axb5} \) 26.\( \text{e7} \) \( \text{d8} \) 27.\( \text{b7} \) \( \text{d5} \)+] 22...\( \text{e5} \) 23.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 24.\( \text{e6} \) \( \text{g7} \) 25.\( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xf5} \) 26.\( \text{e7} \) \( \text{d6} \)+] 17...\( \text{e7} \) 18.\( \text{c8} \) \( \text{a8} \) 19.\( \text{b6} \) with equality.

14.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{f5} \) 15.0–0–0\( \text{d7} \) 16.\( \text{xd4} \) d4\( \infty \)

A draw is the most likely result, but I like this passed pawn.

7.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{bd7} \) 8.\( \text{d3} \)

This introduces a crude but potentially dangerous attacking plan: White wants to castle and later launch an attack based on e4–e5, unleashing the bishop on d3 and driving the f6-knight away from defensive duties.

8...\( \text{c7} \)

Black can also provoke the e-pawn into advancing with 8...\( \text{b5} \) 9.\( \text{e5} \)\( \text{b4} \)! 10.\( \text{exf6} \) (10.\( \text{e4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 11.\( \text{xe4} \) d5 12.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{b6} \) 13.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 14.\( \text{d2} \) a5 turned out well for Black in L. Schneider – Agrest, Sweden}
2006.) 10...bxc3 11.fxg7 hxg7 12.b3 c5 13...c3 Wc7 14.0-0 &b7∞
9.0-0 b5 10.We1 &b7 11...h1 b4 12...d1
12...a4 was seen in Dvoirys – Agrest, Budapest 1991, and here the easiest solution for Black was 12...Wc6!?N 13...xb4 &xe4
14...e3 &e7 with equal chances.

12...&c7
There is also 12...&c5!? 13...f2 (13...xb4 &xe4 14...xe4 &cxe4 15...a4 &d7= A. Saunders – Lindsalu, e-mail 2003) 13...d5
14.e5 &fe4 15...e3 &e7 16...d4 0-0= Amason – Pliester, New York 1989.

13...f2
In the event of 13...d2 a5 14.a3, Vasiliev – Dion, Dos Hermanas 2003, it looks good for Black to try: 14...d5!?N 15.e5 &e4 16.axb4
&xd2 17...xd2 axb4=

13...a5!?N
This seems like the safest solution, although Black also obtained an acceptable position with 13...&c5!? 14...d2 a5 15.a3 b3 16...b5+
&fd7 17...c1 bxc2 18...xc2 a4 in J. Polgar – Polugaevsky, Roquebrune 1992.
14.a3 bxa3 15...xa3 0-0
Black has no cause for complaints.

A) 7...d3

White sometimes plays this with the intention of following with &f3 and so on, as above. However, by developing the bishop first, White avoids revealing his intentions and might also opt for a different plan with the knight.

7...&bd7
Black can also consider the disruptive 7...&b6?! 8.a3!? (8...b3 &c7 9...f3 transposes to the note to move 9 in variation C2; 8...f3 is possible, but the queen on b6 has considerable nuisance value and White will have a hard time arranging castling.) 8...c6 (8...bd7 would be incorrect due to 9...e3!, with the point 9...xb2?? 10...a4++ = 9...e3 &d7 10...e2 (Or 10...f5 &c7 11...g3, Todorovic – Bistric, Banja Vrucica 1991, 11...d5!?N 12.e5
d4 13...f6 &xe3 14...h5 g6 15...g7&d8?) 10...&c7 11.0-0 &e7 12...h1 0-0 We have reached something resembling the positions from Chapter 13, without transposing directly.

8.0-0
8...f3 transposes to 7...f3 above.

8...b5
I do not trust the risky pawn grab: 8...&b6?! 9...e3 &xb2 10...cb5! axb5 11...xb5 Trapping the queen. In return Black obtains enough material, but he still has a hard time coordinating his position. 11...a5 12...b1 &xb5 13...xb5 &xb2 14...al &b6 15...xb6
cxb6 16...c3 Black was unable to solve his problems in Anand – Kasparov, Tilburg 1991.
9.a3 \textbf{\&}b7 10.\textbf{\&}h1 \textbf{\&}e7

We have reached a typical Sicilian position, the likes of which can be found in other parts of this chapter as well as the book in general. I do not want to spend too much time on it in this part of the book, so will just mention a few possible continuations.

11.\textbf{\&}e1

11.\textbf{\&}e2 \textbf{\&}c5 12.\textbf{\&}d2 0–0= Jakubowski – Cyborowski, Dzwirzyno 2004.

11...\textbf{\&}c5

White's most typical attacking plan would be to prepare e5 at some point, so it is always useful to have the option of eliminating the d3-bishop.

12.b4 \textbf{\&}xd3 13.cxd3 0–0 14.\textbf{\&}e3 \textbf{\&}c8

With chances for both sides, Schmaltz – Shipov, Internet 2002.

B) 7.\textbf{\&}e3

By developing his queen's bishop at an early stage, White hints at the possibility of long castling.

7...b5

\textbf{B1) 8.e5}

Quite often when White feels his opponent is investing too much time into pawn moves he itches to start an attack.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

8...\textbf{\{xe5} 9.\textbf{\{xe5} \textbf{\&}d5 10.\textbf{\{xd5}

In a few games White has tried 10.\textbf{\&}b3 \textbf{\&}xc3!? (10...\textbf{\&}b7 is also fine) 11.\textbf{\&}xa8 Borkowski – Kiedrowicz, Piotrkow Trybunalski 1983.

\textbf{B2) 8.\&d3}

At this point the safest continuation would have been 11...\textbf{\&}xd4N 12.\textbf{\&}xb8 \textbf{\&}xc2† 13.\textbf{\&}e2 \textbf{\&}xa1 14.\textbf{\&}xc8† \textbf{\&}e7 when White is more or less forced to take a perpetual.

Instead the game continuation of 11...\textbf{\&}c5!? 12.\textbf{\&}b3 (12.\textbf{\&}xb8 \textbf{\&}xd4) 12...\textbf{\&}xc2† 13.\textbf{\&}e2 \textbf{\&}xa1 14.\textbf{\&}xc5 \textbf{\&}c7 led to rather murky complications, with White eventually coming out on top. The computer likes Black although
it probably does not fully appreciate the misplacement of the knight on a1, so overall I would regard “unclear” as a fair assessment.

10...\[\text{\texttt{Wxd5}}\] 11.\[\text{\texttt{Le2}}\]
This pawn sacrifice is the only really principled continuation.

The passive 11.\[\text{\texttt{Qf3?! b7}}\] can hardly trouble Black.

In the event of the aggressive lunge 11.\[\text{\texttt{Wh5}}\], as played in Zontakh – Najer, Internet 2004, it looks good for Black to respond calmly with 11...\[\text{\texttt{Qb7?!N}}\] (Instead the game continued with the tempting but probably inaccurate 11...\[\text{\texttt{We4}}\] 12.\[\text{\texttt{Qf2}}\], leading to complications in which White’s chances should be slightly higher according to my analysis.) 12.\[\text{\texttt{Qe2}}\] g6 13.\[\text{\texttt{Qf3}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qg7}}\] 14.0–0 0–0 15.\[\text{\texttt{Wxd5}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qxd5}}\] 16.a4 \[\text{\texttt{Qb4}}\] 17.\[\text{\texttt{Qf3}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qd7+}}\] White is left with weaknesses and very little to show for them.

11...\[\text{\texttt{Wxe5}}\] 12.\[\text{\texttt{Wd2}}\] \[\text{\texttt{b7}}\]

13.\[\text{\texttt{Qf4}}\]

In the event of 13.0–0–0 \[\text{\texttt{Qe7}}\] 14.\[\text{\texttt{Qf3}}\]N (14.\[\text{\texttt{Qf4}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qc5}}\] reaches the main line) Black keeps the upper hand with 14...\[\text{\texttt{Qc7}}\] 15.\[\text{\texttt{Qf4}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qc8}}\] 16.\[\text{\texttt{Qd6}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qc6+}}\].

It looks less logical to for White to castle short. One game continued 13.\[\text{\texttt{Qd1}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qe7}}\] 14.0–0 0–0 15.\[\text{\texttt{Qf3}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qc7}}\] 16.\[\text{\texttt{Qd3}}\] (This combined with White’s next move seems rather slow, but he would also struggle to achieve anything through more energetic means, for instance: 16.\[\text{\texttt{Qf4}}\]N \[\text{\texttt{Qe8}}\] 17.\[\text{\texttt{Qc4}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Bxc4}}\] 18.\[\text{\texttt{Qxe5}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qd8}}\] 19.\[\text{\texttt{Qc3}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qd7+}}\] 16...\[\text{\texttt{Qc6}}\] 17.\[\text{\texttt{Qc3}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qe5}}\] (17...\[\text{\texttt{Qad8}}\]N also looks good) 18.\[\text{\texttt{Qxe5}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qxe5}}\] 19.\[\text{\texttt{Qf4}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qc5+}}\] 20.\[\text{\texttt{Qe3}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qc6+}}\] Perelshteyn – Ehrlvest, Connecticut 2007.

13...\[\text{\texttt{Qc5}}\] 14.0–0–0 \[\text{\texttt{Qc7}}\] 15.\[\text{\texttt{Qb3}}\]
White must try to impede his opponent’s castling if he is to have any real chance of demonstrating compensation.

The following game quickly led to disaster for White after an unsound combination: 15.\[\text{\texttt{Qxb8}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qxb8}}\] 16.\[\text{\texttt{Qxe6}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qxe6}}\] 17.\[\text{\texttt{Qd7+}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qh8}}\] 18.\[\text{\texttt{Qc6}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qxg2}}\] 19.\[\text{\texttt{Qhe1}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qb6}}\] 20.\[\text{\texttt{Qd7}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qe4}}\] 21.\[\text{\texttt{Qf1+}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qf6}}\] 22.\[\text{\texttt{Qxf6}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qxf6}}\] 23.\[\text{\texttt{Qd2}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qg8}}\] 0–1 Oll – Smirin, Klaipeda 1988.

15.\[\text{\texttt{Qhe1}}\] is a more reasonable move but fails to display the necessary urgency, and after 15...0–0 16.\[\text{\texttt{Qd3}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qc6}}\] 17.\[\text{\texttt{Qxc6}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qxc6}}\] 18.\[\text{\texttt{Qe5}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qb4}}\] 19.\[\text{\texttt{Qa4}}\] Black was clearly better in Schwilk – Zeller, Schwabish Gmuen 2000.

15...\[\text{\texttt{Qc8}}\] 16.\[\text{\texttt{Qd6}}\]
16.\[\text{\texttt{Qa5}}\] \[\text{\texttt{Qd5}}\] does not help White.
Chapter 12 - 6.f4

16...\textit{\textdollar}d8!

The queen has had a busy time so far! Now she returns to her original square, solving all Black's problems in the process.

17.\textit{\textdollar}b4 \textit{\textdollar}xd6 18.\textit{\textdollar}xd6 \textit{\textdollar}g5+ 19.\textit{\textdollar}d2 \textit{\textdollar}e7

Ensuring that the king will escape to safety.

20.\textit{\textdollar}c5 0–0 21.\textit{\textdollar}hd1 \textit{\textdollar}xg2 22.\textit{\textdollar}xa6

White needs to allow a queen exchange, otherwise he would be having nothing to show for the two-pawn deficit.

22...\textit{\textdollar}xb4 23.\textit{\textdollar}xb4 \textit{\textdollar}c6 24.\textit{\textdollar}xb5 \textit{\textdollar}xb4 25.\textit{\textdollar}xg2 \textit{\textdollar}xa2 26.\textit{\textdollar}d7

We have been following the game Gipslis – Sigurjonsson, Amsterdam 1976. Here I think Black should have played:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}[scale=0.8]
\draw (-1.5,0) grid (8.5,8.5);
\node at (0,0) {a}; \node at (1,0) {b}; \node at (2,0) {c}; \node at (3,0) {d}; \node at (4,0) {e}; \node at (5,0) {f}; \node at (6,0) {g}; \node at (7,0) {h};
\node at (0,1) {1}; \node at (1,1) {2}; \node at (2,1) {3}; \node at (3,1) {4}; \node at (4,1) {5}; \node at (5,1) {6}; \node at (6,1) {7}; \node at (7,1) {8};
\draw (1,1) -- (1,7) (3,1) -- (3,7) (5,1) -- (5,7) (7,1) -- (7,7);
\draw (0,1) -- (8,1) (0,2) -- (8,2) (0,3) -- (8,3) (0,4) -- (8,4) (0,5) -- (8,5) (0,6) -- (8,6) (0,7) -- (8,7);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Partially inspired by the treatment of the English Attack discussed in Chapter 17, I decided to investigate this rare but enthusiastic lunge with the b-pawn.

I should add that there is nothing at all wrong with 8...\textit{\textdollar}b7, after which White's most common reaction has been 9.\textit{\textdollar}f3 transposing to line B3 below.

9.\textit{\textdollar}b1

9.\textit{\textdollar}a4 allows Black to call the knight's position into question immediately with 9...\textit{\textdollar}d7 10.c4 \textit{\textdollar}a5 11.b3 \textit{\textdollar}xa4 12.bxa4 e5, with a good position.

In the event of 9.\textit{\textdollar}ce2, Fabregas Fontanet – Perpinya Rofes, Barbera 1997, it looks logical to continue 9...\textit{\textdollar}bd7N 10.0–0 \textit{\textdollar}c5 with a healthy position for Black. It is useful to have the option of eliminating the d3-bishop at a moment's notice.

9...\textit{\textdollar}b7 10.\textit{\textdollar}d2 \textit{\textdollar}bd7

10...\textit{\textdollar}c6 should be perfectly playable too, for instance 11.0–0 \textit{\textdollar}e7 12.\textit{\textdollar}e2 0–0 with a normal Sicilian position.

11.\textit{\textdollar}f3 e5 12.\textit{\textdollar}f5

The other main option is 12.fxe5 \textit{\textdollar}xe5 13.\textit{\textdollar}g3, reaching a typically double-edged
position for the Najdorf. Several moves are possible here, but I found the following line particularly intriguing: 13...h5!? 14.g5 h4! 15.xh4 d3+ 16.cxd3

16...xe4! 17.xe4 xh4 18.xh4 xh4 19.d5 xe4 20.xh4 xd3 With a pawn for the exchange plus two wonderful bishops, Black has a fully acceptable position. Obviously this whole line was far from forced, but it shows the kind of resources that lie under the surface of such positions. I will leave it to the reader to investigate the above line more deeply if he wishes.

12...g6 13.g3
There are no clever sacrifices here, so the knight is forced to retreat.

13...xf4 14.xf4 e5 15.c4 df4!
This move effectively puts an end to Black’s opening problems by reinforcing the perfectly-placed knight on e5.

16.xe5 xe5 17.0–0 g7 18.a3
White’s only active plan; he can hardly hope to break though Black’s rock-solid kingside.

18...bxa3 19.xa3 0–0
We have been following the game Heinemann – Stohl, Germany 2006. White can only dream of an advantage, and this particular encounter ended in a draw just two moves later.

B3) 8.\textit{f3}

This has been the most popular choice by far.

8...\textit{b7} 9.d3 \textit{bd7}

10.g4
This is the most principled continuation, and the most frequently played.

In the event of 10.a3 Black should play 10...c8, when the usual answer of 11.0–0 transposes to 10.0–0 below.

White’s most important alternative is:

10.0–0 c8 11.a3
11.ee1 c7 12.h3?! (better was 12.a3 0–0, transposing to the main line) 12...b4 13.c2c5 14.g3 This was Romanishin – Schmidt, Yerevan 1976, and now after 14...fxe4N I do not believe in White’s compensation.

11.d1 is playable, although it is hardly the type of move that will strike fear in the hearts of Sicilian players. The game Hort – Ribli, Wijk aan Zee 1983, continued

11.g6 12.d2 g7 13.b3 0–0 14.a4 b4 15.a5 c7 16.e2 e5 17.fxe5 dxex5 when the powerful centralized knight ensured a full share of the chances for Black.

11...c7
The exchange sacrifice on c3 is a typical motif in many Sicilian positions; not just the Dragon. Unfortunately in this position the tempting 11...\(\texttt{Exe3!}\) 12.bxc3 \(\texttt{Qc5}\) comes at a moment when Black is not fully developed. White can effectively refute his opponent's concept with 13.c4! bxc4 14.\(\texttt{Bxc4}\) \(\texttt{Bxc4}\), Radulov – Soos, Sofia 1967, and now 15.f5!N \(\texttt{Qd2}\) 16.\(\texttt{Wh5}\) \(g6\) 17.\(\texttt{fxg6}\) \(\texttt{fxg6}\) 18.\(\texttt{Qe2}\) \(\texttt{Bxf1}\) 19.\(\texttt{Qxe6}\) \(\texttt{Qxe6}\) 20.\(\texttt{Qd4}\) \(\texttt{Qe7}\) 21.\(\texttt{Qxe6}\). After 11...\(\texttt{Qc7}\) we will consider two continuations for White:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
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\hline
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 & 8
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\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textbf{a})] 12.\(\texttt{Qg3}\) 0–0?!

The more common 12...g6 is perfectly okay, but I rather like the provocative text move, as Black's position is resilient enough to withstand any acts of aggression.

13.e5

13.f5 meets with the powerful retort 13...\(\texttt{Exe3!}\) 14.bxc3 \(\texttt{Qxe4}\) 15.\(\texttt{Bxc4}\) \(\texttt{Bxe4}\) For a tiny material investment Black has obtained excellent piece play and destroyed White's pawn structure.

13...\(\texttt{dxe5}\) 14.\(\texttt{fxe5}\) \(\texttt{Qxe5}\)!

This clever tactical nuance provides the justification for Black's 12th move.

15.\(\texttt{Bxe5}\) N

15...\(\texttt{Bxe5}\)!

This is clearly the critical continuation, and in any case it looks more challenging than 15.\(\texttt{Bxe6}\) \(\texttt{fxe6}\) 16.\(\texttt{Qd6}\) 17.\(\texttt{Bxd6}\) \(\texttt{Bxd6}\) 18.\(\texttt{h3}\) \(\texttt{Qc5}\) 19.\(\texttt{Ba1}\) \(\texttt{Qxc3}\) 20.\(\texttt{Bxc3}\) e5 A draw was agreed here in Glinz – Starotzhsy, e-mail 2008, although it seems to me that Black is just better.

15...\(\texttt{Bd6}\) 16.\(\texttt{Qg5}\) \(\texttt{Bc5}\)!

Surprisingly the queen is embarrassed.

17.\(\texttt{f5}\)

17.\(\texttt{Wh4}\) loses by force after: 17...\(\texttt{Bh5}\) 18.\(\texttt{Be1}\) \(\texttt{Qxh2}\) 19.\(\texttt{Bf2}\) \(\texttt{Qg4}\) 20.\(\texttt{Qe2}\) \(\texttt{Qe5}\)–+

17.\(\texttt{f5}\) is trickier, but Black remains on top with: 17...\(\texttt{Bc8}\)

17...\(\texttt{fxe5}\) 18.\(\texttt{Bxe5}\) \(\texttt{Qxe5}\)† 19.\(\texttt{Wh1}\) \(\texttt{Qg4}\)!

20.\(\texttt{Bxd8}\)

Or 20.\(\texttt{Bf4}\) \(g6\) with a strong initiative.

20...\(\texttt{Bxd8}\) 21.\(\texttt{Qd1}\)

\item[\textbf{b})] 12.Bae1

White brings his last piece into play before initiating a conflict.

12...0–0 13.\(\texttt{Qh3}\) \(\texttt{Qc5}\) 14.\(\texttt{f2}\)

14.\(\texttt{e5}\) does not work, and led to an early disaster for White in the following game:

14...\(\texttt{dxe5}\) 15.\(\texttt{fxe5}\) \(\texttt{Qxd3}\) 16.\(\texttt{Bxf6}\) \(\texttt{Bxf6}\) 17.\(\texttt{Bxe6}\) \(\texttt{Bxf2}\) 18.\(\texttt{Bg4}\) \(\texttt{fxe6}\) 0–1 Diaz – Zapata, Havana 1986.

21...\(\texttt{Bd6}\)

21...\(\texttt{Bd6}\)

This forces a draw. If Black is feeling more ambitious then he may consider 21...g6? with ongoing compensation.

22.\(\texttt{Bxf5}\)

22.\(\texttt{Bxf5}\) would be painful.

22...\(\texttt{Bh6}\) 23.\(\texttt{Bxc5}\) \(\texttt{Bh2}\) 24.\(\texttt{Qg1}\) \(\texttt{Bxg2}\)†

25.\(\texttt{Qf1}\) \(\texttt{Qh2}\)† 26.\(\texttt{Qe1}\) \(\texttt{Bf3}\)†

The game ends in perpetual check.

21...\(\texttt{Bd6}\)
14...\texttt{Qd}7!
White was not threatening \texttt{e}5 just yet, but it was still a smart idea to sidestep the possibility while also preparing a kingside regrouping.

This is generally regarded as the main line, although the following alternative also looks quite tempting:

10...\texttt{h6}? 11.a3
White's position is not strong enough to justify an immediate assault: 11.g5? hxg5 12.fxg5 \texttt{Qxe}5 13.\texttt{Wg}3 \texttt{Qf}4 14.g6 \texttt{Qxe}3 15.gxf7\texttt{Qxf}7 16.\texttt{Wxe}3 \texttt{Wh}4 is likely to end in tears for White.

More sensible is 11.h4 \texttt{b4} 12.\texttt{Qce}2 \texttt{Qc}5 (12...\texttt{e}5?!N looks quite promising) 13.\texttt{Qg}3
This was seen in Alekhina – Grinfeld, Sochi 1981, and here I suggest 13...\texttt{Qxd}3?!N
14.\texttt{Qxd}3 \texttt{e}5 15.\texttt{Qdf}5 \texttt{g}6 16.\texttt{fxe}5 \texttt{dx}e5 17.\texttt{Qxe}6 \texttt{Qxe}6 18.\texttt{Qxe}6 \texttt{Qxe}6 19.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{Qh}8

(15...\texttt{Wh}7 16.\texttt{Wf}6 17.\texttt{Qe}5t 18.\texttt{Qf}4 \texttt{Qx}e5 19.\texttt{g}6 \texttt{Qh}8 20.\texttt{Qxe}3 \texttt{Wh}4 is likely to end in tears for White.)

11...\texttt{Qf}6 12.\texttt{Qc}8 12.a3
12.g5\texttt{h}xg5 13.\texttt{f}xg5 \texttt{Qe}5 14.\texttt{Qg}2 \texttt{Qf}4 15.\texttt{Qf}4 \texttt{b}4 16.\texttt{Qce}2, Lanc – Mokry, Trnava 1984, 16...\texttt{Qxd}3?! 17.\texttt{Qxd}3 \texttt{Qe}5t; 12.\texttt{Qb}3 \texttt{Qc}7! 13.\texttt{Qg}2 \texttt{b}4 14.\texttt{Qb}1 \texttt{d}5 The tactics can easily turn against White.)

11...\texttt{Qc}8 12.0–0 \texttt{Qe}7 13.\texttt{Qae}1

Once again 13.g5?! is premature: 13...hxg5 14.\texttt{fxg}5 \texttt{Qe}5 15.\texttt{Qg}3 \texttt{Qf}4 16.g6 \texttt{Qh}4 17.gxf7+ \texttt{Qd}7 18.\texttt{f}8=\texttt{Q}+ \texttt{Qxf}8! 19.\texttt{Qxf}8 \texttt{Qxg}3 20.\texttt{Qxh}8 \texttt{Qxh}8 21.\texttt{h}xg5 \texttt{Qe}3t The tactics backfire against White, as the rook on h8 becomes active in the process.

13...\texttt{g}5?!

This thematic positional tool should be known by all Sicilian players – and Najdorf fans especially.
14.fxg5?! hxg5 15.h3 (15.\textit{\textblackslug}xg5 \textit{\textblackslug}b6 16.\textit{\textblackslug}e3 \textit{\textblackslug}e5 17.\textit{\textblackslug}f4 \textit{\textblackslug}exg4\textsuperscript{\texttimes}) 15...\textit{\textblackslug}e5 16.\textit{\textblackslug}g3 \textit{\textblackslug}fd7\textsuperscript{\texttimes} The exchange on g5 is strategically dubious for White.

The attempted 'improvement' 14.\textit{\textblackslug}h3 brought White nothing but misery: 14...gxf4 15.\textit{\textblackslug}xf4 \textit{\textblackslug}g8 16.g5 hxg5 17.\textit{\textblackslug}e3 \textit{\textblackslug}e5 White had nothing to show for his missing pawn, and the desperate sacrifice 18.\textit{\textblackslug}xe6? sealed his fate after 18...g4\textsuperscript{\texttimes} in J. Dominguez – Zapata, Decameron 2003.

14...\textit{\textblackslug}e5

15.\textit{\textblackslug}h3?! Better was 15.\textit{\textblackslug}g2N \textit{\textblackslug}xd3 16.cxd3 e5 17.\textit{\textblackslug}f3 \textit{\textblackslug}d7 with dynamic equality.

15...\textit{\textblackslug}d7 16.\textit{\textblackslug}e2 h5! 17.fxe6\textsuperscript{\texttimes} fx6 18.gxh5 g4 19.\textit{\textblackslug}g2 \textit{\textblackslug}xc3! The celebrated exchange sacrifice on c3 is often very effective.

20.bxc3 \textit{\textblackslug}xe4 21.\textit{\textblackslug}f2 \textit{\textblackslug}h5\textsuperscript{\texttimes}

We have been following the game Milos – J. Polgar, Sao Paulo 1996. White has little chance of defending against the intended...g3.

11.\textit{\textblackslug}ce2 \textit{\textblackslug}c5 12.\textit{\textblackslug}g3 \textit{\textblackslug}c7! The key move in this complex position. Black needs to fight against the threat of White's long castling.

13.0–0

13.0–0–0 \textit{\textblackslug}xd3\textsuperscript{\texttimes} 14.\textit{\textblackslug}xd3 \textit{\textblackslug}c8 was pleasant for Black in Korzubov – A. Sokolov, Vilnius 1984. White would much prefer to recapture with the c-pawn.

13.g5 \textit{\textblackslug}fd7 14.h4

14.0–0 g6 transposes to the main line below, while 14...\textit{\textblackslug}e7 is also quite reasonable.

14...\textit{\textblackslug}g6!

This may appear provocative, but the black defences prove to be resilient enough.

14...\textit{\textblackslug}xd3\textsuperscript{\texttimes} 15.cxd3 \textit{\textblackslug}c5 16.\textit{\textblackslug}e2\textsuperscript{\texttimes} is by no means bad for White.

15.0–0 15.0–0–0 \textit{\textblackslug}xd3\textsuperscript{\texttimes} 16.\textit{\textblackslug}xd3 \textit{\textblackslug}c5 17.\textit{\textblackslug}d2 0–0–0 was fine for Black in Feher – Timoshenko, Cappelle la Grande 1992.

15.h5 is not too dangerous after 15...\textit{\textblackslug}g7 16.\textit{\textblackslug}h6 (16.\textit{\textblackslug}hxg6\textit{\textblackslug}hxg6 17.\textit{\textblackslug}hxh8\textsuperscript{\texttimes} \textit{\textblackslug}hxh8 18.\textit{\textblackslug}xe2 e5 was already more pleasant for Black in Kernazhitsky – Feldman, Kiev 1986.) 16...\textit{\textblackslug}f8 White has gained some space and the h6-pawn might become an important asset in an endgame. On the other hand the blocking of the kingside limits his attacking chances. 17.0–0 \textit{\textblackslug}e7 18.a3 a5 19.axb4 axb4 20.\textit{\textblackslug}xa8\textsuperscript{\texttimes} \textit{\textblackslug}xa8 White achieved no advantage and a draw was agreed in Cramling – Ilic, Lugano 1983.

15...\textit{\textblackslug}g7 16.h5

16.a3 e5 17.\textit{\textblackslug}b3 exf4 18.\textit{\textblackslug}xf4 0–0 19.\textit{\textblackslug}xc5 \textit{\textblackslug}xc5 20.axb4 \textit{\textblackslug}xd3 (20...\textit{\textblackslug}e6 21.\textit{\textblackslug}f3 \textit{\textblackslug}xb2 22.\textit{\textblackslug}a1 \textit{\textblackslug}e5 23.\textit{\textblackslug}c2 \textit{\textblackslug}ae8\textsuperscript{\texttimes} Black has used his chances in the centre for gaining
somewhat better play in Hübner – Portisch, Lucerne 1982.) 21.cxd3 \( \triangleleft \)xb2 22.\( \triangleleft \)ad1 \( \triangleleft \)e5

Up to this point we have been following the game Pyka – Jedrzejowski, corr. 2000. Here I found an interesting new idea:

16...h6!N

It turns out that Black can turn the tables and fight for the initiative on the kingside!

17.hxg6 fxg6 18.\( \triangleleft \)g4 0–0 19.a3!

This is White’s best chance. Now the war rages along all fronts.

Less challenging is 19.\( \triangleleft \)xe6 \( \triangleleft \)xe6 20.\( \triangleleft \)xe6 hgx5 21.fxg5 \( \triangleleft \)e5 22.\( \triangleleft \)e2 d5

19...hxg5 20.axb4 gxf4 21.bxc5

21.\( \triangleleft \)xf4 \( \triangleleft \)e5 22.\( \triangleleft \)e2 \( \triangleleft \)xd3 23.cxd3 e5

24.bxc5 exd4

21...\( \triangleleft \)xe5 22.\( \triangleleft \)a4 fxe3 23.\( \triangleleft \)c4 \( \triangleleft \)xd4 24.\( \triangleleft \)e2 \( \triangleleft \)xb2

Black has succeeded in navigating the complications and keeping an advantage.

13...g6

Black is thinking about striking in the centre with ...e5, but first needs to take control over the f5-square.

13...\( \triangleleft \)fd7 is also quite playable, for instance:

14.a3 bxa3 15.b4 \( \triangleleft \)xd3 16.cxd3 \( \triangleleft \)e7 17.\( \triangleleft \)fc1 \( \triangleleft \)b8 18.\( \triangleleft \)xa3 0–0 with equality, Chandler – Olafsson, Reykjavik 1984.

14.g5

Technically this seems to be a novelty, although after Black’s response we immediately transpose to several previous games.

14.a3 bxa3 15.b4 \( \triangleleft \)xd3 16.cxd3 gives Black a chance to fight on the kingside with 16...h5! 17.\( \triangleleft \)ac1? (Better was 17.g5, although after 17...\( \triangleleft \)g4 18.\( \triangleleft \)xa3 \( \triangleleft \)xe3 19.\( \triangleleft \)xe3 \( \triangleleft \)b6 20.\( \triangleleft \)ge2 \( \triangleleft \)e7 White will sorely miss his bishops in the middlegame.) 17...\( \triangleleft \)d7 18.g5 \( \triangleleft \)g4 19.\( \triangleleft \)d2 This was Kupreichik – Balashov USSR 1976, and here I suggest 19...\( \triangleleft \)g7N when Black should be clearly better, although the position is still quite tense with the knight on g4 being in some jeopardy.

White would love to break the enemy spine with a violent attack:

14.f5 exf5 15.\( \triangleleft \)dx5!

This looks dangerous, but with accurate defence Black should be able to neutralize his opponent’s initiative and keep some advantage.

15...gx5 16.\( \triangleleft \)d4 fxe4! 17.\( \triangleleft \)xf6 \( \triangleleft \)g8
Chapter 12 - 6.f4

18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}c5

Feeble is 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}4 d5 19.\texttt{\texttt{c}}2 \texttt{\texttt{g}}6\texttt{\texttt{f}}.

18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}}5? would have been a bit more challenging, but Black stays on top after:

18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}c6! 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}e4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}d4 20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}}}e1 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}8
19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}6\texttt{\texttt{t}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}7 22.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}d4 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}g4\texttt{\texttt{t}} 23.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}}}1 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}5\texttt{\texttt{f}}

18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}}}\texttt{5}\texttt{t}

It was even possible to play 18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}7}? or 18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}6}?, but the straightforward text move is fine.

19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}2 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}7! 20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}f7\texttt{\texttt{t}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}7 21.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{f}}}5

This position was reached in Short – Lukov, Yerevan 1984. At this point Black could have kept a clear advantage with the simple:

21...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}g4\texttt{\texttt{t}}\texttt{\texttt{N}} 22.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}}}e1 \texttt{\texttt{e}}8\texttt{\texttt{t}}

14...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}f7

15.a3

This looks logical, as it is hard for White to make any inroads on the kingside. For instance, the rash 15.f5? \texttt{\texttt{g}}xf5 16.\texttt{\texttt{f}}2 allows Black to seize the initiative with 16...0–0–0! (but not 16...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}d3? 17.cxd3 \texttt{\texttt{c}}5 18.exf5 e5 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}2\texttt{\texttt{t}}) 17.exf5 e5 18.\texttt{\texttt{b}}3 d5\texttt{\texttt{f}}. The mighty pawn centre looms like a dark cloud over the white position.

15...bxa3

Another game continued 15...\texttt{\texttt{b}}6 16.axb4

(16.\texttt{\texttt{b}}3?!\texttt{\texttt{N}} looks more solid.) 16...\texttt{\texttt{b}}4
17.c3?! \texttt{\texttt{b}}2 18.\texttt{\texttt{f}}1 \texttt{\texttt{c}}3 19.\texttt{\texttt{f}}1 \texttt{\texttt{g}}7
20.\texttt{\texttt{c}}1 \texttt{\texttt{x}}d4! (20...\texttt{\texttt{b}}2 21.\texttt{\texttt{a}}b1 \texttt{\texttt{a}}2
22.\texttt{\texttt{a}}1 \texttt{\texttt{b}}2 would be a repetition, but Black can be more ambitious) 21.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}d4 \texttt{\texttt{d}}d4\texttt{\texttt{t}}
22.\texttt{\texttt{g}}2 \texttt{\texttt{a}}1 23.\texttt{\texttt{a}}1 h6 This was Gdanski – Ki. Georgiev, Stara Zagora 1990. Only Black can be better in this position, with more than enough material for the queen and stable squares for all his pieces.

16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}}}a3

This position was reached in Crisan – Baciu, Sovata 1997, and here I suggest:

16...\texttt{\texttt{g}}7\texttt{\texttt{N}} 17.b4 \texttt{\texttt{d}}d3 18.cxd3 \texttt{\texttt{c}}8

Black has a solid position and his bishop pair might become a force one day.

C) 7.\texttt{\texttt{f}}3

This is generally regarded as the main line. The advantage of the early queen development is that ...b7-b5 is inhibited.

7...\texttt{\texttt{b}}6

The main alternative is 7...\texttt{\texttt{c}}7, preparing ...b5 after which e5 could be met by ...\texttt{\texttt{b}}7. The text move is played with similar intentions, but Black would first like to drive the enemy knight away from the centre. The first player
can respond with either C1) 8.a3 or C2) 8.\(\texttt{b3}\).

C1) 8.a3

This witty move defends indirectly against 8...\(\texttt{x}d4??\), which would now cost Black his queen after 9.\(\texttt{e3+}\).

8...\(\texttt{c6}\)

Now White really must move the knight, and can choose between C11) 9.\(\texttt{b3}\) and C12) 9.\(\texttt{xc6}\).

C11) 9.\(\texttt{b3}\) \(\texttt{c7}\)

Now we face one further split; White can continue developing and aim for active piece play with C111) 10.\(\texttt{d3}\), or commence an immediate pawn storm with C112) 10.\(\texttt{g4}\).

C111) 10.\(\texttt{d3}\)

This is not a bad move, although a glance at the database reveals that it has made a dismal score in the region of 20% for White.

10...\(\texttt{g6!}\)

Black is not facing any immediate threats, so he has enough time to organize a kingside fianchetto. Not only does this secure an active future for his bishop, but it also provides an automatic barrier against the attacking power of the bishop on d3.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

11.0–0

White continues his policy of straightforward development. He does not achieve much with more aggressive actions, for instance:

11.\(\texttt{e3}\) \(\texttt{g7}\) 12.\(\texttt{g4}\) 0–0 13.0–0–0 was Lyly – Budlevskis, corr. 1993. Now Black should have played the logical 13...\(\texttt{b5}\) with good attacking chances, as the pawn on a3 will help to facilitate the opening of the b-file.

11.\(\texttt{d2}\) \(\texttt{g7}\) 12.\(\texttt{g4}\) \(\texttt{b5}\) 13.\(\texttt{g5}\) \(\texttt{d7}\) 14.\(\texttt{f2}\) (14.\(\texttt{f4}\) \(\texttt{d4}\)?? 15.\(\texttt{xd4}\) \(\texttt{xd4}\) gives Black good play on the central dark squares, as pointed out by Van Wely.) 14...\(\texttt{b6}\) 15.\(\texttt{e2}\)? Probably concerned about ...\(\texttt{c4}\), White commits an error, although Black's position was already the more appealing. 15...\(\texttt{a4}\)! White already faced serious problems in Lutz – Van Wely, Debrecen 1992.

11...\(\texttt{g7}\) 12.\(\texttt{d2}\)

White has also tried:

12.\(\texttt{e3}\) 0–0 13.\(\texttt{e1}\)

13.\(\texttt{ad1}\) can safely be met by 13...\(\texttt{b5}\), without fearing 14.\(\texttt{xb5}\)?? \(\texttt{xb5}\) 15.\(\texttt{xb5}\) \(\texttt{b8}\) 16.\(\texttt{xd6}\) e5! 17.\(\texttt{f5}\) \(\texttt{d8}\) 18.\(\texttt{xc8}\) \(\texttt{xc8}\) 19.\(\texttt{g5}\) \(\texttt{hg8}\) Black's extra piece should prove stronger than White's three pawns.

13...\(\texttt{b5}\)

14.\(\texttt{h1}\)

White should not rush into a premature
confrontation. 14.e5?! only led to problems for him after 14...dxe5 15...b5 16...xf8
xf8 with full compensation for the exchange as in De Firmian – Polugaevsky, Biel 1990. Perhaps shaken by this turn of events, White immediately erred with 17...e3!, allowing his opponent to secure a big advantage with 17...h6!.

14...b7 15...h3
This position was reached in Leskur – Sulava, Sibenik 2005. At this point it looks logical for Black to advance his queenside counterplay:

15...b4N 16.axb4 lLlxb4
With a comfortable position.

12...0–0 13...d1!
White embarks on a somewhat unusual regrouping. Other moves would be met by the usual plan of ...b5 and ...b7, with a comfortable and harmonious set-up for Black.

13...e5!?
This is a principled attempt to question White’s last move, although it should be mentioned that there was nothing wrong with 13...b5.

14...e3
In the event of 14.f5 it looks quite promising for Black to try 14...a5?! (Kasparov’s annotations focus on the combative 14...d5?! which also looks reasonable for Black and may appeal to players who thrive on complications.) 15.a4
b4 16...xb4 axb4 17...e3 d7 18.a5...c6=
White is unlikely to achieve much without his dark-squared bishop.

14...xf4 15...xf4...e6 16...h4...d8!
This more or less kills White’s dreams of carrying out a successful attack.

The cheeky 16...e5?! is a bit too clever for its own good, and after 17...xf6...d8 18...a1
...xd3 19.cxd3...xb3 20...c3 White is out of trouble.

17...a1...d7!
We have been following the game Short – Kasparov, Debrecen 1992. Black’s last move more or less forces a queen exchange, leading to a position in which Black’s chances are clearly better thanks to the great activity of his minor pieces.

C112) 10...g4

10...b5
In view of White’s decision to combine the retreat of his knight from the centre with an early pawn advance on the flank, I wondered if it might be possible to try the central break
10...d5?!N, which seems logical but has, as far as I am aware, never been tested. Eventually I was forced to conclude that White keeps an edge, with my main lines continuing as follows: 11.exd5 (11.e5 Qd7 12.Qe3 g5? looks like fun) 11...Qxd5 12.Qxd5 exd5 13.Qe3 Qd6 (13...Qe7? 14.0-0 0-0 Qxg4 15.Qxg4 Qxe3+ 16.Qb1 Qe6 17.Qg3 Qe7 18.Qh3 Qg6 19.Qxd5 Qxg3 20.hxg3 Qd8=) 14.0-0 0-0 15.Qb1 Qe8 16.h3 Qd7 17.Qg2 Qe7 18.Qf2= Still, this could be interesting food for thought for players who like to forge their own paths.

11.g5
This would seem like an automatic choice, although I found one noteworthy game in which White chose to postpone it: 11.Qd3 Qe7 12.Qe3 Qd7 13.0-0 Qc5 14.Qxc5 dxc5 15.e5 Qb7 16.Qe4 This was Onischuk - Cvitan, Yerevan 1996. At this point Black should have played:

11...Qd7 12.Qe3

12.Qb7 13.Qd3 Qc5??
This looks to me like the most straightforward equalizer. 13.g6 has been more common and is certainly playable, although it does give White an automatic point of attack and in practice the first player has scored well after 14.h4.

14.0-0 Qe7 15.Qf2
Black has no problems after 15.Qxc5 dxc5 16.Qf2 Qd4 17.f5 0-0-0!. The option to castle long often plays a significant role in this line.

The present position was reached in the game Mestel - Polugaevsky, Reykjavik 1990. At this point the following idea looks quite promising for Black:

15...Qxd3N
In the game Black exchanged on b3, but it seems to me that exchanging the d3-bishop is more important than compromising White's pawn structure. Besides, the knight on b3 is contributing very little to White’s position at present.

16.cxd3 0-0 17.f5?
Quieter methods also do not achieve much for White, for instance 17...\textsubscript{a}ac1 \textsubscript{w}d7 when Black can look to open the game for his bishops with ...f5 in the nearest future.

17...exf5 18...\textsubscript{w}xf5
18...\textsubscript{d}d5 \textsubscript{w}d7 19...\textsubscript{b}b6 \textsubscript{w}e6 works out well for Black.

18...\textsubscript{e}e5

I prefer Black’s position here. The bishop pair is an important asset, and White’s king is not entirely safe on the kingside.

Black should take the opportunity to strengthen his centre and open the b-file.

10.g4?!

White can also play in a more reserved fashion with:
10.b3 \textsubscript{a}b7 11...\textsubscript{b}b2 d5 12...\textsubscript{d}d3
12.0-0-0 \textsubscript{a}a5 13.e5 (13.b4 \textsubscript{w}c7+) 13...\textsubscript{d}d7
14...\textsubscript{a}a4 \textsubscript{c}c7 was about equal in Z. Almasi – Kasparov, Lyon 1994.

12...\textsubscript{e}e7?!N

There is something to be said for keeping the game less forced than current theory suggests. Having said that, the reason why this whole line is so rarely encountered in tournament play is that it was once played against Kasparov...

12...c5 13.exd5 exd5 14.0-0-0 (14...\textsubscript{e}e2\textsubscript{f}+ \textsubscript{w}e6=) 14...0-0-0 15...\textsubscript{a}a4 \textsubscript{c}c7 16...\textsubscript{f}f5+ (16...\textsubscript{e}e5 \textsubscript{d}d6 17...\textsubscript{h}h1 \textsubscript{h}he8=) 16...\textsubscript{b}b8
17...\textsubscript{e}e5 \textsubscript{d}d6= 18...\textsubscript{c}c3?! d4\textsubscript{f}+ J. Polgar – Kasparov, Dos Hermanas 1996.

13.0-0-0 0-0

13...\textsubscript{a}a5 14...\textsubscript{a}a4 0-0 15.e5 \textsubscript{d}d7 16.f5\textsubscript{f}± is a bit unpleasant for Black once you go deeper into the variations.

14.g4 \textsubscript{d}d7 15...\textsubscript{a}a4 \textsubscript{c}c7

The white bishops look impressive, but Black is solid and can consider several potential central breaks.

10...\textsubscript{g}g6 11...\textsubscript{g}g5 \textsubscript{d}d7 12.b3
12...h6!

The timid 12...g7 13.b2 0-0 14.0-0-0 d5 15.h4 was excellent for White in Short – Smirin, Debrecen 1992.

13.b2

13.e4 a5† 14.d2 c7 15.c3 h7∞

13.hxg5!N

This clever move is an important improvement over 13..h7, Oll – Stohl, Manila (ol) 1992, at which point 14.h4N would have brought White some advantage.

14.a4

14.d5? cxd5 15.xh8 dxe4† is certainly not what White wants.

14.fxg5 is possible, although this would constitute something of a moral victory for Black. Play may continue 14.e5 (or 14.c7 15.h4 e5 16.g2 b7=) 15.g3 g7 16.e2 c5 with a promising position and impressive central control for Black.

14.a5† 15.c3

The alternative is 15.b4 xa4 16.xh8 a5† (If Black is happy with a draw he can settle for 16...gx4 17.xd4 xc2 18.cc1 wb3 19.g2 b7 20.cc3 b1† 21.cc1 d3 White has nothing better than 22.cc3 b1† repeating the position.) 17.xg5 axb4 18.e2 e5 19.xe5 dxe5 20.0-0 a7† 21.h1 bxa3 The position is messy and double-edged, and any result is possible.

After the move played it looks as though Black is losing a rook, but it turns out that the cheeky pawn, which made the audacious capture on move 13, is set to play a starring role:

15.g4! 16.e3

Alternatively 16.xg4 h5 17.g3 h7 leads to a position with material equality and chances for both sides.

16.h5 17.xh8 xh8∞

With a pawn for the exchange, two powerful bishops and a healthy mass of central pawns, Black has every reason to feel satisfied.

C2) 8.b3 c7
Black is happy to "waste" a tempo with the queen, now that the enemy knight has retreated from its active position in the centre.

9.g4

This is the most important move, although White can also try to develop an initiative based on piece play.

The most direct way of doing so would be:
9.d3 b5 10.0–0 b7 11.d2 bd7 12.e1 e7
12...g6 is a perfectly satisfactory alternative. The fianchetto set-up will bolster the kingside, reducing the likelihood of a successful attack from White.

13.Wh3

Another game continued 13.g3 g6 14.a3 0–0 15.f5 c5 16.fx6 fx6 17.d4 c8 18.f3 (Perhaps White should have preferred 18.h6N, after which 18...f7 is about equal.) 18.h5! 19.h3 f4 20.xf4 xf4† Goloshchapov – Kobalia, Ekaterinburg 1999. Having exchanged the important bishop for a knight, White is destined to suffer on the dark squares.

13...h5?!

Here we see an interesting plan by which Black decides to forgo short castling altogether.

14.h1 c5 15.c5
15.f5N could be met by 15...b4 16.d1 e5, with equal chances.

15...dxc5 16.e5 g4 17.e4 0–0–0

Black had a nice position in Romanov – Kurnosov, Chelyabinsk 2007.

White can also opt for a similar set-up after first restraining his opponent's queenside expansion:
9.a4 b6

Black settles for a more modest queenside fianchetto. Apart from that, his set-up will be more or less the same as in the previous note.

10.d3 b7 11.0–0 bd7 12.g3
d4?! does not make much of an impression, and after 12...g6 13.h3 c5 14.d2 g7 15.e1 0–0 Black's position was already more comfortable in Cladouras – Shabalov, Gausdal 1991.

Another possibility is 12.d2 g6 13.h3 g7 14.e1 0–0 15.f5 e8 16.g5, Nunn – Stohl, Novi Sad 1990.

At this point Black should have played 16...fxe5N 17.fxe5 and now either 17...e5?! or 17...e1 18.e1 d5 would have kept a fair share of the chances for Black.

12...g6 13.e3?!

White tried 13.d2 g7 14.e1 0–0 15.h4, in Adams – Cu. Hansen, Groningen 1995. Now my preference would be 15...e8N, anticipating the f5-advance with a solid, healthy position.

13.e7
This is the only move I found on the database, although I do not see anything wrong with 13...\textit{\textbf{g7}} either.

14.\texttt{Ad1}

Black should consider his options carefully here.

14...\texttt{c5}!

In view of White's decision to develop his bishop and rook on e3 and d1 respectively, it looks logical for Black to threaten the now slightly vulnerable e-pawn.

I checked a few alternatives, but was not completely happy with any of them:

- 14...0-0N is well met by 15.f5! \texttt{e5} 16.\texttt{h6 \textit{\textbf{fe8}}} 17.fxe6 \textit{f6} 18.\texttt{h3 \textit{d7}} Black is somewhat uncomfortable due to the weakness of e6.
- 14...h5?!N is interesting and somewhat thematic for the Najdorf. Play might continue 15.\texttt{d4} e5 16.\texttt{e3 h4} 17.f3 exf4 Black intends to follow with ...\texttt{e5}, when the well-placed knight will be an important asset. Nevertheless I do not fully trust the black position due to the continuing uncertainty regarding the safety of his king.

15.\texttt{d4}

This position was reached in Vehi Bach - Korneev, Ortiguera 2003. Black opted for long castling, which I do not find fully convincing. Instead I suggest the straightforward:

15...0-0N

Continuing development, while renewing the threat to the e-pawn. The position is balanced, with chances for both sides.

9...\textbf{b5}

Here White can choose between C21) 10.g5 and C22) 10.\texttt{d3}, the latter being the main line. The former can lead to the same positions, but provides independent possibilities for both sides along the way.

C21) 10.g5 \textbf{b4}?

This daring counterattack is what gives the present variation a truly distinct character compared with the main line.

It should be mentioned that there is nothing much wrong with the calmer alternative:

10...\texttt{fd7} 11.\texttt{e3}

11.\texttt{d3} \texttt{b7} transposes to line C22 below, but White sometimes tries to do without the bishop on d3.

The main alternative is 11.a3, when 11...\texttt{c6} reached line C112 above, via the move order 8.a3 \texttt{c6} 9.\texttt{b3 \textit{c7}} 10.g4 \textit{b5} 11.g5 \texttt{d7}.

11...\texttt{b4} 12.\texttt{e2 \textit{b7}} 13.0-0-0 \texttt{c6} 14.\texttt{ed4 \textit{xd4}}

Another possibility is 14...\texttt{e7}?N 15.\texttt{xc6 \textit{xc6}} 16.\texttt{d3 0-0}, followed by a standard race of attacks on opposite flanks.
Thanks to his bishop pair only Black could dream about an advantage in Almasi – Sax, Budapest 1995.

White must certainly avoid 11. \texttt{tLe2}? (11. \texttt{tLe2}? would meet with a similar fate) 11. \texttt{tLlxe4}! which occurred in Grubbs – Woods, Dallas 2000.

The main alternative is 11. \texttt{gxf6} \texttt{bxc3} 12. \texttt{bxc3} (12. \texttt{Wxc3} is also playable: 12. \texttt{Wxc3} 13. \texttt{bxc3} \texttt{gxf6} 14. \texttt{Gg1} was seen in Bogie – Millar corr. 2000, and here I suggest 14... \texttt{Gc6N} 15. \texttt{Gc3} \texttt{Gb8} with chances for both sides.) 12... \texttt{gxf6} 13. \texttt{Gg1} \texttt{Gb7} 14. \texttt{c4} \texttt{Gd7} 15. \texttt{Gb2} This position was reached in J. Polgar – Ljubojevic, Monte Carlo (blind) 1995. At this point it looks logical for Black to continue 15... \texttt{Gb8}N 16.0–0–0 \texttt{a5} with chances for both sides.

11... \texttt{axb5} 12. \texttt{gxf6} \texttt{gxf6}

Black has a risky, but perhaps playable alternative at his disposal:

12... \texttt{Gd7}?

This has only been tried once to my knowledge. Black lost the game in question but the opening left numerous questions unanswered.

13. \texttt{fxg7}?! It looks wrong to facilitate Black’s development for the sake of a mere pawn. 13. \texttt{Gg1}N is a sensible alternative, although I doubt that Black has much to fear after 13... \texttt{gxfs}, for instance 14. \texttt{d3} \texttt{Cc6} 15. \texttt{Ge3} \texttt{Gb7} 16. \texttt{Wh5} \texttt{Gxa5} with approximate equality.

More dangerous is 13. \texttt{f5}!N which was recommended by Sutovsky after the game. His analysis continued 13... \texttt{gxfs} 14. \texttt{fxe6} \texttt{fxe6} 15. \texttt{Gg1} \texttt{Gc7} 16. \texttt{Gg7} with dangerous compensation for White.

13... \texttt{hxg7} 14. \texttt{Gg1} \texttt{Gf6} 15. \texttt{e5} \texttt{Cc6} 16. \texttt{Wh5} 16. \texttt{Gxb5} is also less than ideal after 16... \texttt{dxes} 17. \texttt{c4} \texttt{bxc3} 18. \texttt{Wxc3} \texttt{Gfd6} 19. \texttt{Gxc6}h 16. \texttt{Gxc6} 20. \texttt{Gxe7} \texttt{Gb4} White will have to defend.

16... \texttt{dxes} 17. \texttt{fxfs} 18. \texttt{Gg5} 18. \texttt{Wxf5} \texttt{Gb4}h 19. \texttt{Gd1} \texttt{Gd7} 20. \texttt{Gxe3} \texttt{Gf6}h 18. \texttt{Gd1} 19.0–0–0

This was Sutovsky – Ilincic, Neum 2004, and now Black should have played: 19... \texttt{Gd7}!N

Sutovsky mentioned this in his annotations. The position is highly complex, but overall it seems to me that Black is doing well thanks to his well coordinated cluster of pieces in the centre. Overall 12... \texttt{Gd7}?! looks to be worth
considering although I hasten to remind the reader that the most critical challenge may well lie in the notes to move 13 above.

13.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}}}

This natural move has been the most popular, although in Timman – Tal, Hilversum 1988, White deviated with 13.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}}}4, after which I think Black’s best answer would have been 13...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}}}8N, taking the open file immediately. A logical continuation would be 14.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}3 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{d}}7 15.\textit{\texttt{g}}1 \textit{\texttt{xg}}1 16.\textit{\texttt{xg}}1 \textit{\texttt{b}}7 with equal play.

13...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}7 14.\textit{\texttt{f}}5

\begin{center}
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\end{center}

14...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}}}}6

In a later game the same player tried to “improve” with 14...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}}7, but after 15.\textit{\texttt{f}}xd7 \textit{\texttt{f}}xd7 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.f\texttt{f}1 Black’s position was already beyond saving in J. Polgar – Van Wely, Amsterdam 1995.

15.\textit{\texttt{e}}2

15.fxe6 is not dangerous after 15...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}}b5 16.exd7\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}}d7 17.\textit{\texttt{g}}1 \textit{\texttt{e}}5, when Black’s control over the dark squares makes up for his dubious pawn structure.

15...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}}}}}8 16.\textit{\texttt{c}}4?  

Looks like a surprising choice, but does not change the overall evaluation of the position.

After the more natural 16.\textit{\texttt{d}}d3 Black keeps a fair share of the chances with 16...\textit{\texttt{e}}5 17.\textit{\texttt{e}}3 \textit{\texttt{x}}d3\textit{\texttt{f}} 18.cxd3 \textit{\texttt{a}}6\textit{\texttt{w}}.

16...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{b}}xc}3 17.\textit{\texttt{a}}4

This was White’s idea – he stabilizes the bishop on b5 and hopes to open lines for his attack.

17...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{a}}6!}  

Black should not be overly concerned with material, and sensibly decides to exchange a pair of pieces while activating his queen. Obviously giving up a bishop for a knight carries certain risks, but overall this should not harm Black’s position too much.

18.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}}}}xa6 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{x}}tb}3 19.\textit{\texttt{\texttt{b}}b}5 \textit{\texttt{c}}7 20.fxe6 fxe6\textit{\texttt{w}}

We have been following the game Gipslis – Van Wely, Gausdal 1992. The position remains roughly equal but also complex and difficult for both sides, with neither king feeling completely safe.

Overall Black seems to be holding his own in the complications arising after 10.g5 b4?.. Depending on the reader’s personal tastes, he can of course settle for the straightforward 10...\textit{\texttt{d}}fd7, with a solid position and a possible transposition to one of the other lines considered elsewhere in this chapter.

C22) 10.\textit{\texttt{d}}d3

This also leads to double-edged positions, although they will usually be of a more stable nature than those encountered in the previous section.

10...\textit{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}}}}7 11.g5 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}fd7

Here there is nothing much to be gained from 11...b4, as White can just play 12.\textit{\texttt{e}}e2 if he wishes.
12. \( \text{b3} \)

This natural move has been the most common, although White has some other ways to develop his attack.

The bishop can also take a shorter step with:

12. \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{c5} \) 13. \( \text{b2} \)

13.0-0-0 \( \text{xd3} \) 14. \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 15. \( \text{d6} \) 0-0-0 was fine for Black in Yudasin – J. Polgar, Groningen 1993.

The more direct 13. \( \text{f5} \) is well met by 13... \( \text{b4} \) 14. \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{exf5} \) 15. \( \text{f5} \) \( \text{d7} \) 16. \( \text{xb4} \) White may as well take the pawn, otherwise the arrival of the knight on \( e5 \) will ensure Black of a nice position with no material investment.

16... \( \text{g6} \) Here I tried to improve White’s play with 17. \( \text{f2} \)N (After 17. \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 18. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{h6} \) Black began to take over the initiative in Wahls – Hracek, Germany 1997.) 17... \( \text{xe4} \) 18. \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 19. \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{e5} \) 20. \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{f3} \) 21. \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{d5} \) 22. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 23. \( \text{xe4} \) 0-0-0 24. \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{exh2} \) The situation is somewhat unclear, although the position of the white king on \( d1 \) should prevent the first player from achieving much.

13... \( \text{c6} \) 14. \( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{dxc5} \) 15. \( \text{c3} \)

This looks better than 15... \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{b6} \) 16. \( \text{a4} \) ! \( \text{bxc4} \) 17. \( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 18. \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{b6} \) when White had no real compensation in Popovych – Maksimenko, Lvov 1999.

15...0-0-0

15... \( \text{a5} \)N would prevent long castling.

16.0-0-0 \( \text{h6} \) 17. \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{hgx5} \) 18. \( \text{fxg5} \) \( \text{c5} \) 19. \( \text{g2} \)

This position was reached in Styblo – Urbanek, corr. 1998. Now I think Black should have played:

19... \( \text{d6} \)N 20. \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{f6} \)

Reinforcing the powerful knight on \( e5 \), with at least equal chances.

Another option is to prepare \( f5 \) without completing development, although this might prove risky for the first player as well:

12. \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{g6} \) 13. \( \text{f1} \)

13. \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 14. \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{g7} \) 15.0-0-0 was Bernhard – Woischke, e-mail 2000, and now I like 15... \( \text{h6} \)N 16. \( \text{g6} \) \( \text{h6} \) 17. \( \text{b2} \) \( \text{f6} \) Without the \( g5 \) pawn, White’s position is losing its bite.

The text move leads to immense complications, but should not be more dangerous than many other lines.

13... \( \text{g7} \)

13... \( \text{b4} \) 14. \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{c6} \) 15. \( \text{f5} \) \( \text{gxf5} \) 16. \( \text{exf5} \) \( \text{e5} \) 17. \( \text{f6} \) was a bit uncomfortable for Black in Ulibin – Khurtsidze, Oakham 1992.

14. \( \text{f5} \) \( \text{exf5} \) 15. \( \text{exf5} \) \( \text{xc3} \)!

It is a bit counter-intuitive to give up the ‘Dragon’ bishop, but it is better than for it to be shut out. 15...0-0 Happened in two games of a very young Wesley So as White in 2006. Here 16. \( \text{f6} \)N\( \text{f4} \) would have been a natural improvement. The idea of \( \text{f4} \)-\( h4 \) is quite annoying.

16. \( \text{bxc3} \)
16...0–0!N
16...\blackquare e5 17.fxg6 fxg6 occurred in Heinemann – P.H. Nielsen, Germany 2007. Here White could have improved with 18.\blackquare e2!N \blackquare bc6 19.\blackquare a3± and it is not so easy for Black to solve his problems. For example: 19...\blackquare d8 20.0–0–0 \blackquare c8 21.\blackquare g3 \blackquare f5 22.\blackquare xf5! \blackquare xf5 23.\blackquare h5+ \blackquare f8 24.\blackquare d4±
17.f6
17.\blackquare h6 \blackquare xc3t 18.\blackquare d2 \blackquare e8t 19.\blackquare d1 \blackquare g7± does not look dangerous for Black at all.
17...h5!
This might look risky, but it is not so easy for White to break through; shortly Black’s pieces will become very active.
18.gxh6!
18.\blackquare e3 \blackquare xc3t 19.\blackquare d2 \blackquare e5t 20.\blackquare f2 \blackquare c5±
18...\blackquare xf6 19.\blackquare b2
19.\blackquare e3 \blackquare xc3 20.\blackquare f2 \blackquare c8 21.\blackquare f3 \blackquare g4t
22.\blackquare g1 \blackquare xxe3 23.\blackquare xe3 \blackquare d7±
19...\blackquare e8t 20.\blackquare d1 \blackquare bd7∞
Black is looking for counterplay in the centre, with ...\blackquare e5–h5 being one important resource.

12...\blackquare c6 13.0–0–0

13...b4!
Several other moves have been played, but now that White has committed himself to long castling, I see no reason for Black to delay his assault.

14.\blackquare e2 \blackquare e7 15.\blackquare b1 a5
Black continues his aggressive policy.

16.\blackquare bd4
I also checked 16.\blackquare ed4 a4 17.\blackquare b5, and found: 17...\blackquare b8 18.\blackquare d2 0–0 19.\blackquare h3 (or 19.\blackquare c4 b3?!?) 19...\blackquare c5 20.\blackquare xc5 dxc5±
The present position was reached in Dashko – Weetik, Belorechensk 2007. At this point I suggest a slight improvement for Black:

16...\blackquare c5!N
By reinforcing the e6-pawn, Black takes the sting out of any f5 ideas. Naturally the text move is also played with some active intentions as well as defensive ones. A possible continuation might be:

17.\blackquare b5 \blackquare b8 18.\blackquare xc5? dxc5 19.h4 a4 20.h5 0–0
With unclear roughly balanced play.

Conclusion

In the current chapter White plays with a grand plan, which demands an equally well-considered response from the defender. The first major variation of 7.\blackquare d3 \blackquare bd7 should not hold too many dangers for the second player, although he should keep an eye on possible transpositions to other lines. We also saw that Black is holding his own in variation B with 7.\blackquare e3 b5, despite the fact that he is making a lot of pawn moves in the early part of the game. Over time, the resilience of Black’s set up contributed to the relative loss of White’s interest in that system. Matters are somewhat more complicated in variation C with 7.\blackquare f3 \blackquare b6, when the second player often has to demonstrate some ingenuity to maintain the balance. The scope for creative players is considerable, and both sides can use their imagination and attacking skill to showcase the Sicilian Defence at its dynamic best.
Open Systems

Chapter 13

The Rock - 6.\textit{d}e2

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d5 e5 3.dxe5 cxd4 4.e4 d6 5.d2 c6 6.e2 e6

6.e2 e6 7.0-0 \textit{d}e7 8.f4 0-0

A) 9.\textit{d}h1 \textit{e}7
   A1) 10.\textit{d}e3 b6
       A11) 11.a3
       A12) 11.\textit{f}d3
       A13) 11.e6 dxe5 12.fxe5 \textit{f}d7
           A131) 13.\textit{d}d3
           A132) 13.\textit{f}d4
           A133) 13.\textit{d}f3
   A2) 10.e1 b5 11.\textit{f}d3 \textit{b}7 12.e5 \textit{e}8
       A21) 13.\textit{d}b7
       A22) 13.\textit{g}3
       A23) 13.\textit{d}5

B) 9.a4 \textit{c}6 10.\textit{d}e3 \textit{c}7 11.\textit{h}1 \textit{e}8!
   B1) 12.a5!? \textit{d}xa5 13.e5! dxe5 14.fxe5 \textit{f}xe5 15.\textit{f}d4 \textit{f}c5 16.\textit{a}4 \textit{a}7
       B11) 17.\textit{c}7
       B12) 17.\textit{e}3
   B2) 12.\textit{g}1 \textit{d}7
       B21) 13.\textit{h}3
       B22) 13.\textit{d}3
   B3) 12.\textit{d}3
   B4) 12.e1 \textit{d}d4 13.\textit{d}xd4 e5
       B41) 14.fxe5
       B42) 14.\textit{e}3
   B5) 12.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}7
       B51) 13.\textit{a}d1
       B52) 13.\textit{b}3
   B6) 12.\textit{b}3
   B7) 12.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}a5?
   B71) 13.e1
   B72) 13.\textit{g}1
   B73) 13.\textit{g}4 \textit{f}8
       B731) 14.\textit{g}2
       B732) 14.\textit{g}5

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The Najdorf and Scheveningen set-ups have always been closely linked. Two of White's most popular and dangerous attacking systems against the Najdorf, 6..c4 and 6..g5, are almost universally met by the response 6...e6, while the alternatives 6..e2 and 6..e3 can be met equally well by either move of the e-pawn. Is one of these moves really "better" than the other? Both options have their merits, and we could spend a long time debating the question without reaching any kind of ultimate truth. In this chapter I have chosen to focus on the seemingly more modest 6...e6, for two reasons. First, I am aware that 6...e5 is widely seen as the more traditional response for the Najdorf system, so I find it more interesting to focus on the option that has hitherto received less attention in the literature. And more importantly, it is the option with which I have the most personal experience and deeper understanding.

Our basic starting position arises after the following moves:

1.e4 c5 2..f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4..xd4 ..f6
5..c3 a6 6..e2 e6 7.0-0 ..e7 8.f4

A glance at the database reveals that White has, at one time or another, tried practically every legal option on moves 7 and 8, but I see no value in analysing variation after variation, transposition after transposition and so on. A careful study of the main lines presented here should arm the reader with all the knowhow and understanding he needs to deal with most of White's more exotic possibilities.

At this point we will divide the material into two major branches, based on whether or not White chooses to allow ...b5. Thus we will consider A) 9..h1 and B) 9.a4.

A) 9..h1

White normally includes this prophylactic measure in his plans over the next few moves. I should add that there are numerous possible move orders and transpositions, and it would be counterproductive to try and analyse every last one of them. Instead, by studying the most important lines in detail, the reader should learn enough about the position to be able to deal with most deviations. I will briefly mention a few possible lines in which White tries to save time by postponing or omitting the move ..h1.

9..e3 ..c7 10..f3 ..c6 11..e1 (An altogether different direction is 11..xc6 bxc6 12..a4 ..b7 13.c4 c5 14..c2 ..d7 15.b3 ..ac8 16..ad1 ..b8 17..f2 ..d8 18.g3 ..c6 19..c3 ..f6 20..e2 ..b7 21.g4 g6 22.g5 ..g7 23..d2 ..c6 24.h4 a5 25.h5 a4 Black had enough counterplay in Adams – Van Wely, London 2009.) 11..xd4 12..xd4 e5
13.\textit{c3} (13.\textit{fxe5 dxe5 14.\textit{g3} \textit{c5}! exploits the position of White's king.) 13...\textit{exf4} (13...\textit{b5} is also quite alright) 14.\textit{xf4} \textit{e6} 15.\textit{h1} \textit{d7} with a solid position, as seen in several games. The situation bears a close resemblance to line B42 below.

9...\textit{c7}

Here the principal choices are A1) 10.\textit{c3} and A2) 10.\textit{e1}, remembering of course that 10.\textit{a4} will be considered under line B later in the chapter.

A1) 10.\textit{c3} \textit{b5}

Black can be grateful for the chance to play this useful move. The light-squared bishop will soon appear on the long diagonal facing the white king, and the b-pawn is already threatening to drive the enemy knight away from c3.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

White can now choose between preventing \textit{...b4} directly with A11) 11.\textit{a3}, anticipating it with A12) 11.\textit{f3}, or commencing his own attack with the aggressive A13) 11.\textit{e5}.

A11) 11.\textit{a3} \textit{b7} 12.\textit{d3}

12.\textit{f3} reaches line A12 below.

12...\textit{bd7}
In the game he tried a spirited, but unsound sacrifice: 18...\textit{x}h7\textit{?} \textit{x}h7 19...\textit{h}5\textit{?} \textit{g}8 20.f5 \textit{dxe}5 (20...\textit{f}8\textit{?}N would have been even stronger) 21..\textit{f}xe6 \textit{f}6 22..\textit{xf}e6 \textit{fxe}6 and White did not have enough compensation.

18...\textit{d}xd3 19.cxd3 \textit{e}c8 20..\textit{ac}1 \textit{d}d8\textit{?N}

The diagonal a8-h1 will become a source of headache for White.

A12) 11..\textit{f}3 \textit{b}7

12.a3

12.e5 \textit{dxe}5 13..\textit{fxe}5 \textit{d}d7 reaches line A133 below.

12...\textit{bd}7 13..\textit{e}1 \textit{ac}8 14..\textit{g}3 \textit{c}5 15.f5

e5 16..\textit{h}6 \textit{e}8 17..\textit{b}3

17..\textit{de}2 \textit{h}8 18..\textit{g}5 \textit{hxg}5 19..\textit{xg}5 \textit{f}6 20..\textit{g}3 \textit{b}6 21..\textit{ad}1 \textit{fd}8 was comfortable for Black in Ayyar – Tarjan, Saratoga Springs 1980.

I also checked the principled, but insufficient attacking attempt: 17.f6?!N \textit{xf6} 18..\textit{f}5 \textit{h}8 19..\textit{d}2 \textit{d}d8\textit{?} Black will defend carefully and tame White's attack.

17...\textit{d}a4!

It is quite common in this variation for Black to accept doubled a-pawns in order to advance his queenside initiative, and in the present position the idea works perfectly.

18..\textit{xa}4\textit{N}

This is an attempt to improve over the following game, which soon ended in disaster for White: 18..f6?! \textit{xf6} 19..\textit{g}4\textit{?} \textit{xc}3 20..\textit{xc}3 \textit{b}8 21..\textit{d}7 \textit{xd}7 22..\textit{xf}e6 \textit{xe}4 23..\textit{d}d1 \textit{g}6 0–1 Perez Garcia – Spraggett, Lorca 2005.

18...\textit{b}xa4 19..\textit{d}2 \textit{h}8 20..\textit{g}5 \textit{hxg}5 21..\textit{xf}e5 \textit{b}6\textit{?}

White is under heavy pressure on the queenside.

Finally we come to White's most aggressive option on move 11.
Chapter 13 - 6...e2

A13) 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5 \( \text{\#d7} \)

In the event of 12...\( \text{\#xe5?} \) 13.\( \text{\#f4} \) \( \text{\#c5} \) 14.\( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#d5} \) 15.\( \text{\#xe6} \) \( \text{\#xe6} \) 16.\( \text{\#xd5} \) \( \text{\#xd5} \) 17.\( \text{\#xd5} \)± White would be overjoyed after his small witty combination.

Now we face a further division between A131) 13.\( \text{\#d3} \), A132) 13.\( \text{\#f4} \) and A133) 13.\( \text{\#f3} \).

13.\( \text{\#f5} \)!

The knight sacrifice is very tempting, but Black can parry it with a clever concept of his own.

13...\( \text{\#xf5} \) 14.\( \text{\#d5} \)

14.\( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#c6} \) 15.\( \text{\#d5} \) \( \text{\#b8} \) 16.\( \text{\#xe7} \)± \( \text{\#xe7} \)±

14...\( \text{\#xe5} \) 15.\( \text{\#f4} \) \( \text{\#e6} \)

16.\( \text{\#f3} \)

16.\( \text{\#xe7} \)± \( \text{\#xe7} \) 17.\( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#a7} \) 18.\( \text{\#d4} \) \( \text{\#c5} \) 19.\( \text{\#xb8} \) \( \text{\#d7} \)±

16...\( \text{\#d8} \) 17.\( \text{\#e1} \) \( \text{\#g6} \) 18.\( \text{\#h5} \)

In the event of 18.\( \text{\#c7} \), Klundt - Budde, Germany 1982, Black should play 18...\( \text{\#c6N} \) with a winning position.

18...\( \text{\#c6} \) 19.\( \text{\#f3} \) \( \text{\#a7} \) 20.\( \text{\#e3} \)

20.\( \text{\#e7} \)± \( \text{\#xe7} \) 21.\( \text{\#xc6} \) \( \text{\#xc6} \)± Black’s three pieces clearly outclass the white queen.

20...g5?!

20...a5?!N also looks good, but Black decides to force the issue immediately.

21.\( \text{\#e7} \)± \( \text{\#xe7} \) 22.\( \text{\#xc6} \) \( \text{\#xc6} \) 23.\( \text{\#g3} \) \( \text{\#f6} \) 24.\( \text{\#d5} \)± \( \text{\#h8} \) 25.\( \text{\#g5} \)±

White had to play 25.\( \text{\#xc6} \), although 25...\( \text{\#xf4} \) should win for Black eventually as his minor pieces will coordinate beautifully.

25...\( \text{\#g5} \) 26.\( \text{\#xc6} \) \( \text{\#xf4} \)

0–1 Bentancurt - Lozano Kafure, Argentina 2000.

A131) 13.\( \text{\#d3} \)

This aggressive move forces Black to proceed with caution, as there are numerous sacrifices in the air.

13...\( \text{\#c5} \)

13...\( \text{\#b7} \) 14.\( \text{\#xc6!} \) \( \text{\#xe6} \) 15.\( \text{\#h5} \) \( \text{\#f5} \) 16.\( \text{\#xf5} \) \( \text{\#xf5} \) 17.\( \text{\#e8} \)± \( \text{\#f8} \) 18.\( \text{\#xf5} \)±

13...\textit{\v{c}}xe5\textit{N} does not appear to have been tried, probably with good reason as White develops a dangerous initiative after 14.\textit{\v{c}}f4 \textit{\v{c}}bd7 15.\textit{\v{w}}h5 g6 16.\textit{\v{w}}h3 \textit{\v{a}}f6 17.\textit{\v{d}}e4 \textit{\v{g}}7 18.\textit{\v{d}}g5, intending to meet both 18...h6 and 18...h5 with 19.\textit{\v{d}}xg6.

14.\textit{\v{d}}xh7+?

In the following game White did not achieve much with a more patient build-up. 14.\textit{\v{w}}f3 \textit{\v{a}}b7 15.\textit{\v{w}}g3 \textit{\v{c}}bd7 16.\textit{\v{d}}f4 b4 17.\textit{\v{c}}ce2 \textit{\v{h}}8 18.\textit{\v{d}}f3 \textit{\v{c}}xd3 19.cxd3 Aveskulov – Levin, Sochi 2008. Now it looks promising to play 19...\textit{\v{c}}xf3\textit{N} (If Black prefers to hang on to the bishop pair, then 19...\textit{\v{d}}d5\textit{N} also looks good for him.) 20.\textit{\v{w}}xf3 (20.\textit{\v{w}}xf3 \textit{\v{w}}c2!) 20...\textit{\v{c}}xe5 21.\textit{\v{w}}g3 f6+ Black keeps an extra pawn for the time being, as 22.d4? runs into 22...\textit{\v{c}}c4.

14...\textit{\v{c}}xh7 15.\textit{\v{w}}h5\textit{N} \textit{\v{g}}8 16.\textit{\v{d}}f3

This position was reached in Petraitis – Chacon, e-mail 2003. Now it is important for Black to defend in the right way:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\begin{scope}
\node at (0,0) {a} edge (1,0) edge (0,1) edge (0,2) edge (1,1) edge (2,1) edge (2,0) edge (3,0) edge (3,1) edge (4,1) edge (4,0) edge (5,0) edge (5,1) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,0) edge (7,1) edge (8,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (1,0) {b} edge (0,0) edge (1,1) edge (2,1) edge (2,0) edge (3,1) edge (3,0) edge (4,1) edge (4,0) edge (5,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (2,0) {c} edge (1,0) edge (2,1) edge (3,1) edge (3,0) edge (4,1) edge (4,0) edge (5,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (3,0) {d} edge (2,0) edge (3,1) edge (4,1) edge (4,0) edge (5,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (4,0) {e} edge (3,0) edge (4,1) edge (5,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (5,0) {f} edge (4,0) edge (5,1) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (6,0) {g} edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (7,0) {h} edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (8,1);
\node at (0,1) {a} edge (0,0) edge (1,1) edge (1,0) edge (2,1) edge (2,0) edge (3,1) edge (3,0) edge (4,1) edge (4,0) edge (5,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (1,1) {b} edge (0,1) edge (1,0) edge (2,1) edge (2,0) edge (3,1) edge (3,0) edge (4,1) edge (4,0) edge (5,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (2,1) {c} edge (1,1) edge (2,0) edge (3,1) edge (3,0) edge (4,1) edge (4,0) edge (5,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (3,1) {d} edge (2,1) edge (3,0) edge (4,1) edge (4,0) edge (5,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (4,1) {e} edge (3,1) edge (4,0) edge (5,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (5,1) {f} edge (4,1) edge (5,0) edge (6,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (6,1) {g} edge (5,1) edge (6,0) edge (7,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\node at (7,1) {h} edge (6,1) edge (7,0) edge (8,1);
\end{scope}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

16...\textit{\v{f}}6\textit{N}

Seizing some space. Now the critical continuation looks to be:

17.exf6 \textit{\v{g}}xf6 18.\textit{\v{d}}xb5! axb5 19.\textit{\v{c}}c5 \textit{\v{f}}7! 20.\textit{\v{w}}xf6! \textit{\v{w}}xf6!

Less convincing is 20...\textit{\v{w}}xh7?! 21.\textit{\v{w}}xf8+ \textit{\v{h}}7 22.\textit{\v{c}}xc8.

21.\textit{\v{w}}xf8 \textit{\v{w}}xf8 22.\textit{\v{w}}b5 \textit{\v{d}}d7\textit{N}

Black's bishop is worth more than three pawns.

A132) 13.\textit{\v{d}}f4

White takes a moment to defend the e-pawn, and hopes to make tactical use of the opposition of bishop and queen.

13...\textit{\v{b}}7 14.\textit{\v{d}}d3

14.\textit{\v{f}}3 reaches line A133 below.

14...\textit{\v{c}}5 15.\textit{\v{g}}4

White is making no secrets about his ambitions to attack the enemy king, which does not appear to be so well defended.

15...\textit{\v{c}}6

Several other moves have been tried here. For instance I consider 15...\textit{\v{b}}d7 to be quite playable, but my overall preference is for the text move.

16.\textit{\v{f}}3

After 16.\textit{\v{d}}d5? exd5 the game Koch – Hoffmann, e-mail 2007, was agreed drawn. However, it seems to me that White will have a hard time justifying his material investment after 17.e6 \textit{\v{d}}d8 18.\textit{\v{f}}5 \textit{\v{d}}xe6.

Another game continued 16.\textit{\v{e}}4 \textit{\v{d}}xd3
Chapter 13 - 6.\textit{e}2

17.\textit{c}xc6 \textit{c}xf4 18.\textit{c}xe7+ \textit{x}xe7 19.\textit{c}xf4 \textit{c}xe4 20.\textit{c}xe4 Rodriguez Guerrero - Castellanos Rodriguez, Mislata 2007. Black has equalized easily, and now after 20...\textit{ad}8N it is White who would have to be slightly careful.

Finally, I also analysed the following untested continuation:

16.\textit{c}xc6 \textit{c}x6 17.\textit{c}ae1 \textit{c}h8 18.\textit{c}e3 \textit{c}xd3

The bishop was too dangerous as can be seen in the line: 18... \textit{b}4? 19.\textit{c}xe7+! \textit{c}xh7 20.\textit{c}h5+! \textit{g}8 21.\textit{c}h6! \textit{f}5 (21... \textit{g}6 22.\textit{c}g3+-) 22.\textit{c}xg7 \textit{g}5 23.\textit{c}h8+ \textit{f}7 24.\textit{c}xf8 and White wins.

19.\textit{g}3?! 19.\textit{c}xd3 \textit{f}5 20.\textit{c}xf6 \textit{c}xf6 21.\textit{c}xe6 \textit{c}c8

22.\textit{c}xf6 \textit{c}xg4 23.\textit{c}xc6 \textit{c}d7 24.\textit{c}c7 \textit{c}xd3+- Black's advantage is defined by his powerful queen.

Also 19.\textit{c}xd3 \textit{b}4 20.\textit{g}3 \textit{g}6 is pleasant for Black.

19...\textit{c}f2+?!

Also not bad is 19... \textit{g}6 20.\textit{c}xd3 \textit{f}5, for instance 21.\textit{c}xf6 \textit{c}xf6 22.\textit{c}g5 \textit{c}xf4 23.\textit{c}xf4 \textit{c}xf4 24.\textit{c}f4 \textit{d}6 with a modest edge for Black in the ending.

20.\textit{c}xf2 \textit{g}6

Black is doing well here, for instance:

21.\textit{h}6 \textit{c}xe5! 22.\textit{c}e3 \textit{c}c5 23.\textit{c}e2 \textit{c}g5!

24.\textit{c}e5 \textit{c}xf2 25.\textit{c}xf2 \textit{c}xh6

Black has full material equality against White's queen, and with two powerful bishops and a compact pawn structure, his chances should be evaluated as somewhat higher.

16...\textit{c}xd3 17.\textit{c}xd3 \textit{c}h8 18.\textit{g}5

No better is: 18.\textit{c}e4 \textit{c}b4 19.\textit{c}e1 \textit{c}d7 20.\textit{c}d6 \textit{c}xa2 21.\textit{c}e2 \textit{c}b4 22.\textit{c}h6 \textit{c}xh6 23.\textit{c}xb4 \textit{c}f6 Black's pieces are springing to life.

18...\textit{c}xe5 19.\textit{c}xe5 \textit{c}xg5 20.\textit{c}xg5 \textit{f}6 21.\textit{c}g6+\textit{h}xg6 22.\textit{c}xg6 \textit{c}f7

We have been following the game Zelcic - Stohl, Bled 1997. Black has no problems at all, and it was White who had to be careful to avoid becoming worse on account of his inferior minor piece.

A133) 13.\textit{c}f3 \textit{c}b7

Alternatives are no better:

14.\textit{d}xb5? \textit{axb5} 15.\textit{c}xb5 was seen in Serafin - Sanchez Almeyra, Rosario 1996, and now Black could have refuted his opponent's idea with either 15...\textit{c}xe5!N 16.\textit{c}xb7 \textit{c}a5+!, or 15...\textit{c}xf3!N 16.\textit{c}xc7 (16.\textit{c}xf3 \textit{c}f6) 16...\textit{c}xd1 17.\textit{c}xa8 \textit{c}xc2+ with excellent winning chances in both cases.

14.\textit{c}xb7 \textit{c}xb7 15.\textit{c}h5 (15.\textit{c}f4 is well met by 15... \textit{b}4, chasing the knight to a less than
ideal location.) 15...c6!? (The more common
15...b4 16.Qxc2 d6 is also fine, but the text
move may be even more promising.) 16.Qf3
g6 17.Qh6 Qxe5 18.Qxe5 Qxe5 19.Qxd4
f6 20.Qh3 Qc6 21.Qae1 Qad8 Black had
consolidated his extra pawn and was well and
truly in the driving seat in Sowray – Lazarev,

14...c6
In principle Black would welcome the
exchange of some minor pieces, as this will
bring him closer to a favourable endgame in
which he can exert pressure against the weak
e5-pawn and along the c-file.

15.Qxc6
The other main option is:
15.Qxc6 Qxc6 16.Qg4 Qh8 17.Qae1 b4
Black’s counterplay arrives before White can
generate any serious attacking chances.
18.Qe4
In the event of 18.Qxc6 Wxc6 19.Qe4,
Martin del Campo – Vera Gonzalez, Linares
1993, I see no reason for Black not to grab
an important pawn with 19...Qxc2N.
18...Qxe4 19.Qxe4 Qe4 20.Qd1N
After the dreadful 20.Qe1?? Qc5 White
resigned immediately in Lau – Stean,
Munich 1979.
20...Qxa2!
Black has enough tactical resources to justify
this seemingly risky move.

21.Qc6
21...f5! 22.Qxf6 Qxf6 23.Qxe6 Qxe4!
23...Qxe6 24.Qxe6 Qc5 is equal, but Black
can try for more.
24.Qxa2 Qf2† 25.Qg1 Qxd1 26.Qg6
Black’s two rooks are at least as strong as
the white queen, and his minor pieces also
coordinate well.

15...Qxc6 16.Qxc6
This looks like the most logical idea, making
way for the queen to join in the attack. Others
can hardly threaten Black:
16.We1 Qxf3 17.Qxf3 b4 18.Qe4 Qxc2 19.Qc1
This was Barcenilla – Ribli, Manila 1992, and
here Black should have played 19...Wxa4!N
(The game continuation of 19...Wxb2? might
have led to problems after 20.Qd1N, not only
attacking the knight on d7 but also threatening
to trap the queen with Qd2.) 20.b3 Wxa5
21.Qd6 Qxd6 22.Qxd6 Qac8 White can hardly
justify the loss of the pawn.

16.We2
After this sensible but timid move White has
little chance of getting his attack rolling.
16.Qac8
After 16...b4 17.Qxc6 Wxc6 18.Qe4 Qb6
19.c3 the position was level and the players
agreed to a draw in Azarov – Brkic, Moscow
2008. This is all well and good, but I think
Black can try for more.
17.Qad1
17...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{xf3}}}!\texttt{N}

This is an important improvement over 17...\texttt{\texttt{b6}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{e4}}! when White developed some initiative in Jor. Kristensen – Cu. Hansen, Aars 1995.

18.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{\texttt{b6+}}

Black's queenside initiative is the dominant feature of the position. The immediate threat is ...\texttt{b4}, while other ideas include ...\texttt{fd8} and perhaps a timely ...\texttt{c4}. The earlier exchanges have reduced White's chances for a successful attack.

16...\texttt{xc6} 17.\texttt{g4}

After 17.\texttt{xf3}? \texttt{xf3} 18.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{ac8+} Black obtained a typically advantageous endgame without any effort whatsoever in Slingerland – Janssen, Amsterdam 2005.

17...\texttt{h8}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ch13-6e2-01.png}
\end{center}

18.\texttt{ad1N}

This seems to be untested, but the move is so natural I decided to promote it to main line status.

18.a3 was seen in A. Zude – Rotstein, Bad Wiessee 2003. There is something to be said for stabilizing the knight on c3, nevertheless the move is a little slow and thus it looks promising for Black to react with the forceful

18...\texttt{f5}!N (I also considered 18...\texttt{b6}N, but then 19.\texttt{xf3}! looks tricky) 19.\texttt{xf6} \texttt{xf6} Black has obtained some breathing room on the kingside and is well placed to attack on the opposite flank, while the isolated e-pawn is not really an issue.

18...\texttt{b6} 19.\texttt{ed3}?

Sacrificing a pawn seems like the only chance to justify White's earlier play.

Black would be happy to see 19.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{xf3} 20.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{ac8+} Endgames of this type are quite dangerous for White, due to the weaknesses on e5 and c2.

19...\texttt{b4} 20.\texttt{g3} \texttt{g6} 21.\texttt{d1} \texttt{xc2}

Black's position seems resilient enough, for instance:

22.\texttt{h6} f5! 23.\texttt{exf6} \texttt{xf6+}

White will have to work hard to justify his pawn sacrifice.

A2) 10.\texttt{e1}

We saw that in some of the above lines White chose to move his dark-squared bishop from e3 to f4 after a pawn exchange on e5. With this in mind, it is hardly surprising that many players have preferred to delay the development of this bishop, hoping to save a tempo by moving to f4 directly.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ch13-6e2-02.png}
\end{center}
10...b5
Black can also play in real Scheveningen style with 10...c6, but the text move is fully reliable and has also been a very heavy scorer for Black, yielding well over 60%. This does not mean that Black stands better of course, but I think it is fair to say we can feel cautiously optimistic about playing it.

11...f3 b7 12.e5
White's whole set-up is geared towards preparing this move, so I will not waste time delving into any obscure alternatives.

12...e8
The retreat of the knight seems rather conservative, but it has a great deal of merit. By avoiding the exchange on e5 Black limits the mobility of the c1-bishop. He intends to follow up with ...d7, attacking e5. We will now consider the relatively timid options of A21) 13...xb7 and A22) 13...g3, followed by the more dangerous A23) 13.f5.

The slow 13.a3 is occasionally seen, but this can hardly threaten Black. 13...d7 14...g3 xf3 (14...b6 is also reasonable) 15...xf3 This was Ermenkov – Ghinda, Albena 1977, and now 15...b6N looks promising.

A21) 13...xb7 xb7

14.f5?
This looks like the most principled attempt to create problems for the defence.

14...e4 a7! 15...e3 b4 16...xb7 xb7 17...e4 dxe5 18.fxe5 c7 gave Black at least equal chances in Gild. Garcia – G. Timoshenko, Havana 1981.

14...e4 d7 15.exd6 (In the event of 15...g3, as in Xie Jun – Blazkova, Istanbul 2000, it looks good for Black to play 15...c8N or even 15...c7?!N, trying to provoke exd6.) 15...xd6 16...xd6 xd6 17...e3 f6 18.d1 f6 Black already had the easier game in Bresciani – Maksimenko, Bratto 2004.

14...dxe5 15...xe5 f6 16...e3 c6 17...xc6
17...b3?! looks too passive. 17...e5 18...xf5 d8 19...f1 d4 (19...b4?!N 20...f2 c6 also looks promising, but the text is simple and strong.) 20...xd4 xd4 21...g3?! (White should probably have settled for 21...e4N, although the ending is comfortable for Black after 21...xe4 22...xe4 c7N 21...c6 22...e2 xc2 23...xd4 xd4 Black eventually converted his extra pawn in Efimenko – Golod, Lvov 2001.

17...xc6 18.fxe6 fxe6
Black can also consider 18...xe6?N 19...xe6 fxe6 20...e4 c8 The ending is equal, but there is plenty of play left in the position.

19...e4 xc2 20...d2 d8
This virtually forces a draw. If Black is determined to play for a win he might consider 20...f7?N, with the possible continuation 21...c3 xc3 22...xf7 xf7 23...f3+ f6 24...xf6 xf6 25...xa8 xb2, when it seems to me that Black’s chances are slightly higher, although all three results are possible.


21.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{xf6}} \texttt{xf6}} 22.\texttt{xf6} \texttt{xf6} 23.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{h8} 24.\texttt{c3} \texttt{b4}

In view of the weakness of the first rank, White will never get a chance to exploit his superior minor piece.

25.\texttt{e7} \texttt{d1} 26.\texttt{xd1} \texttt{xd1} 27.\texttt{el} \texttt{d5} 28.\texttt{xb4} \texttt{xa2} 29.\texttt{c3} \texttt{d5} 30.\texttt{xf6}

In this equal position the players agreed to a draw in Nevednichy – Mikhalchishin, Moscow 1979.

A22) 13.\texttt{g3}

This deployment of the queen looks natural, but White will find it hard to make much progress on the kingside.

13...\texttt{d6}!?  

The more common 13...\texttt{d7} is also fine, but as I mentioned previously, it often helps Black to exchange some minor pieces.

14.\texttt{e3}

White's position is not strong enough to justify 14.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{xc6} 15.\texttt{f5} \texttt{dxe5} 16.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{exd4} 17.\texttt{f4} \texttt{d6} 18.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{xf7} and White soon had to resign in H. Hunt – Aslanian, Moscow 1994.

14...\texttt{d8}

15.\texttt{f5}

This does not lead to the desired outcome, although White has not really fared better with any other moves.

15.\texttt{e4} was seen in Har. Schmid – Hellwege, Dresden 2007, and here Black could have won a pawn with 15...\texttt{d5}!N intending ...\texttt{xd4} followed by taking on \texttt{c2}.

15.\texttt{ae1} just leads to the loss of pawn after 15...\texttt{dxe5} 16.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{xc6} 17.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xf3} 18.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{b4} 19.\texttt{e4} \texttt{xc2} and Black soon won in Formanek – Yudasin, Philadelphia 1991.

15...\texttt{xd4}

Black has a promising alternative available in 15...\texttt{dxe5}!N 16.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{xc6} 17.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{xf3} 18.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{xf7} 19.\texttt{xf3} \texttt{f6} N Black's pieces coordinate well and he controls the centre.

16.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{exf5} 17.\texttt{ae1} \texttt{dxe5} 18.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{d6} 19.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xe5} 20.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xb7} 21.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{b4} N White has managed to regain his pawn but only at the expense of the initiative, Aveskulov – Shomoev, Ottawa 2007.

A23) 13.\texttt{f5}

13...\texttt{dxe5}

This is the safest and most popular option, although Black can also consider:
13...\textit{xf}3 14.\textit{xf}3 b4 15.f6!
Opening the kingside, but Black should have enough defensive resources.

15...\textit{gx}f6 16.\textit{ex}d6
After 16.\textit{ex}f6?! \textit{xf}6 17.\textit{e}e4 \textit{g}7 I am not convinced by White's compensation, for instance: 18.\textit{h}4, Vogt – Suba, Berlin 1979, 18...d5N Black controls a lot of key central squares and should be able to transfer enough pieces to defend the kingside. He might consider a timely \textit{xc}2, depositing another pawn in the bank while also facilitating the transfer of the queen to the opposite flank.

16...\textit{xd}6 17.\textit{e}e4 \textit{h}8 18.\textit{d}2
18.\textit{ex}d6 \textit{xd}6 has also been seen in a few games. White should have sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but not enough to claim an advantage.

18...\textit{c}e6 19.\textit{h}4 \textit{e}7 20.\textit{g}5?
This position was reached in Karpov – Ermenkov, Skara 1980, and now Black should have played:

17.\textit{g}5
Although it is Black's bishop which is theoretically 'bad', it is actually the white one which will have a hard time finding a useful role, hence the offer to exchange. We should also check a few other possibilities.

The following is a good illustration of how Black should arrange his pieces in the event of quiet play from his opponent: 17.\textit{d}2 \textit{c}6 18.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}6 19.\textit{ae}1 (19.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5}
The only move I found which creates any concrete problems for Black is the rare 17.a4?. It seems that the great majority of players were always focused on the centre and the kingside, and I only found one correspondence game in which the text was played. 17...b4 (17...bxa4N is playable, although White may have some chances for a small plus after 18...\textit{e}4.) 18...\textit{d}5 \textit{xc}2 19...\textit{xe}7+ \textit{xe}7 20...\textit{xb}4 \textit{b}7 21...\textit{e}1 This was Spoel – De Jong, corr. 1991, and here it looks logical for Black to play 21...\textit{de}f6N, for instance 22...\textit{a}3 and now the regrouping 22...\textit{c}6 (22...a5!? is also playable, but in principle I would prefer to avoid fixing a pawn on a dark square.) 23...\textit{c}3 \textit{d}5 Black keeps a harmonious position with equal chances.

17...\textit{f}8!!

17...\textit{xf}5 should also equalize, but I believe the text to be a better move as it is not easy for White to find a useful role for his bishop.

18...a3

Another game continued 18...\textit{h}4 \textit{d}6 19...\textit{d}1 \textit{e}8 20...\textit{g}3 (Perhaps White should have preferred 20...\textit{e}4, although after 20...\textit{xe}4 21...\textit{xe}4 \textit{c}5 22...\textit{d}5 \textit{b}7 Black can look forward to a pleasant ending after a queen exchange.) Haba – Cvitan, Toulouse 1990. Now after 20...\textit{c}6N Black is doing very nicely due to his great control over the centre.

B) 9.a4

Here the play takes on a different character. White takes a moment to check his opponent’s queenside counterplay.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

9...\textit{c}6

On this occasionally I have chosen to recommend a traditional Scheveningen set-up. The knight is quite well placed on c6, inhibiting a4-a5 and also eyeing the potential outpost on b4.

10...\textit{e}3 \textit{c}7 11...\textit{h}1

This is not absolutely forced, but it is almost always a useful move for White and has been by far the most popular choice here.

11...\textit{e}8!!

At this point a draw was agreed in Karpov – Kasparov, Moscow (43) 1985. Black has coordinated his forced in an optimal way, and is not experiencing any difficulties whatsoever.
Tournament practice has indicated this flexible move to be the most promising option available to Black. The present position is extremely important for understanding the defensive intricacies of the Scheveningen system. Over the years, White players have thrown everything including the kitchen sink in an effort to break the enemy spine, only to encounter increasingly cleverer forms of resistance and counterplay.


B1) 12.a5!!

Funnily enough, it took thousands of games and several decades of practical testing before anyone even realized that the text move was playable at all! I would advise the reader to consider this move with the utmost care and attention. If Black can navigate the complications successfully then he should be at least equal, but precision will be required.

12...txa5

If Black wants to avoid then he could consider 12...d7 or 12...d7, but taking the pawn is obviously the critical test.

13.e5!

Having given up one pawn, White must proceed energetically.

13...dxe5 14.fxe5 $wxe5

14...d7?! is also playable, but taking the second pawn is the most principled reaction.

15...f4 $wxc5 16...d4 $a7

After some forced moves we reach an important branching point, with two options for White: B11) 17...e7 and B12) 17...e3.

B11) 17...e7 $c4!

Chess is full of small paradoxes, but usually we politely decline to point them out!

18...xc4 b5

Black’s witty mini-combination has turned the tables, and it is now the first player who will have to solve some problems.

19...b6

There is nothing better:

19...xb5? axb5 20.dxb5 $b7 21.d6 occurred in Masliak – Aliavdin, Rodatychi 2006, and now after the simple 21...$xc7N 22...xe8 $xe8++; Black’s bishops will easily outclass the white rook.
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19...bxc4 20.b6 bxc4 21.b6 b8
22.dxc4 d5 23.b6 e4 24.e1 g6
25.c6 b7 26.dxe7+ dxe7 The extra pawn and pressure on the long diagonal are mighty arguments for the superiority of the second player.

19...d7! (19...bxc4 20.b6 b7
21.dxe7+ dxe7 22.b6 a7 23.xf6 gxf6
24.xc4 c7= Black is certainly fine, but the vulnerable kingside robs him of any real aspirations for the advantage.) 20.b3
(20.d3 bxa4 21.xf6 axf6 22.xf6 gxf6
23.g4+ f8 24.xh4 e5! 25.f1 b6+ 20...bxa4 21.a4 dxa4 22.a4 d7 23.c4 c8 24.xc8 c8= White can only dream of any compensation for the missing pawn.

B12) 17.e3 b6

This modest pawn advance puts the onus on White to justify his material investment. 17...d8 is a promising alternative, but overall I think that the text puts White under the most pressure.

18.b4??

White tries to lure the bishop from the defence of Black's kingside. Other moves are possible, although it seems that White is fighting for equality in all cases.

18.e1+ d5 19.g1 c7 20.c4 exd4 21.cxd4 a7 25.c7 xd4 26.xb5 e5 27.c3 d6 28.g3 c5.

Black's compensation for the exchange is sufficient for equality, but not more.

21.b6 c5 22.c8 c8 23.c3 b6
24.e2 c5

With two pawns for the exchange and a solid structure, Black was in the driver's seat in Paragua – Vovsha, New York 2008.
Perhaps a better practical chance was 19...b4?!N although Black remains on top after: 19...\texttt{b7}! (but not 19...\texttt{xa4}:
20.\texttt{xf6} gxf6 21.\texttt{g4}\# 22.\texttt{b5} axb5
23.\texttt{xb4}\#) 20.\texttt{b3} b5 21.\texttt{b6} \texttt{b8}
22.\texttt{xa6} \texttt{d6} 23.\texttt{xc8} wc8 24.\texttt{a7} \texttt{b7}\#
19...\texttt{b8}

20.\texttt{c3}N
This looks like a better try than 20.\texttt{xb6},
when for some reason a draw was agreed in Picard – Sandalakis, Caen 2009, even though Black is much better after 20...\texttt{xa6}
21.\texttt{xa6} \texttt{xb2}.
20...\texttt{b7} 21.\texttt{h3} h5 22.\texttt{e2} b5 23.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{d8}
24.\texttt{e2} b4\#
White is not getting anywhere with his attack.

The other option is:
18.\texttt{xe6}? \texttt{xe6} 19.\texttt{xb6}
This position was reached in Lejarre – Fomichenko, Villeneuve Tolosane 2007,
and a few subsequent encounters. I find it surprising that no-one seems to have tried:
19...\texttt{b7}!N
All three of the games on my database continued 19...\texttt{b8}, but I think the text move is better.
20.\texttt{xa5}
White has regained both sacrificed pawns,
but his pieces lack coordination.
20...\texttt{ac8}
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19.\*g1

19.bxa5? \*xe3 20.\*c6 \*c7 21.\*d3 \*xf1
22.\*xf1 \*xc6 was an early disaster for White in Moingt – Drenchev, France 2005.

More interesting is 19.\*d3, Gajewski – Dydyshko, Lubniewice 2002. Here Black can call his opponent’s bluff with: 19...\*xe3!N
20.\textit{ix}h7t \textit{xf8!} 21.\*xf7t \textit{xf7} 22.\*xf7t \*e7 23.\*e6 \*f6 24.\*h8t \*e7 25.\*xe8t \*d6—+
The refutation of White’s attack is daring, but at the same time rather convincing.

19...\textit{hb}4

Also very strong is 19...\*xb4N 20.\*f3 \*b8 21.\textit{lb}b6 \*xb6 22.\*xa5 \*c7 23.\textit{xb}6 \*xb6+ White will be struggling to fight back against Black’s magnificent pieces.

20.\*d3 \*c7

Another sensible option is 20...g6N, fortifying the kingside against the dangerous bishop on d3. Play may continue 21.\*f3 \*e7 22.\*c4 \*c3 (or 22...\*c7 23.\*c2 \*b7 24.\*h3 \*c6 25.\*xb6 \*d6+ and Black keeps two extra pawns) 23.\*xc3 \*xc3 24.\*g6 \*xg6 25.\*xc3 \*e5 26.\*b3 \*xb3 27.\*xb3 \*e6+ Black is seriously better with a safe king despite the opposite-coloured bishops.

21.c4

21...\*f4!N

This is a serious improvement over 21...\*c3?
22.\*xc3 \*xc3 23.\*a3 e5 24.\*xc3 exd4 25.\*xd4 \*e6 26.\*xe7+ \*xf7 27.\*g3 \*g3 28.\*xg3± White’s attack can serve as model example for this line, Mastrovasilis – Iotov, Kusadasi 2006.

22.\*xf4 \*xf4 23.\*xb6 \*b7 24.\*xa8 \*xa8 25.\*a4 \*d2 26.\*xd2 \*xd2 27.\*a2 \*c3 28.\*b3 \*b2 29.\*xa5 \*d8 30.\*xe6 \*xe6 31.\*e2 \*c3±

Black has good chances to convert his extra pawn in the endgame.

B2) 12.\*g1

White tucks the bishop out of harm’s way and clears the third rank for the transfer of the queen to g3.

12...\*d7

Black continues to mobilize his forces. Here the two main responses are B21) 13.\*b3 and B22) 13.\*d3.

Another possibility is:

13.\*f3 \*ad8 14.\*d3 \*c8 15.\*e2
15.\*d2 d5! 16.e5 \*d7 17.\*h5 g6 18.\*h6 \*f8 19.\*h4 b6 20.\*f3 \*c5 The advance in the centre was played at the right moment, and Black was fine in A. Sokolov – Ftacnik, Evora 2006.

15...\*d7 16.\*d1 \*b4 17.\*d4
A. Sokolov – Van Wely, Bundesliga 2005.
17...e5!
Much more energetic than the game continuation of 17...b6.

18.fxe5
18...c3 dxe5 19.cxd3 exf4+
18...dxe5 19.c3 dxe5 20.cxd3 f6+
The two bishops are a great asset.

B21) 13.b3 b6

White was intending a5.

14.c3
This natural move has been by far the most popular, although in one high-level game White tried an altogether more aggressive approach:
14.g4?!

14...c8!

Black demonstrates the ability to think creatively, undeveloping his bishop in order to meet the new demands of the position.

15.g5 d7 16.f3 b7 17.g2 f8 18.h5 g6 19.h3 c7
Black opts for solid defence. Also possible was the more active 19...eb4?N.

20.a3d1
I also checked the line 20.a4?N ec6 (20...g7 21.xg7 xg7 22.d4+ 21.f5 d4 22.xd4 exf5 23.exf5 e5 24.f4 f6 25.f1 g7 when Black gets enough counterplay along the e-file.

20.g7 21.d4 e5 22.e3 exf4 23.xf4 e5=

Black has succeeded in maintaining the balance thanks to a clever regrouping of his pieces, A. Sokolov – Ivanchuk, Moscow 1988.

14...c8?!
Once again we see this adjustment in Black’s development. It may seem provocative, but the black position proves to be resilient enough. 14...b8 is also a decent move, but that is another story.

15.e5
This energetic move looks like the most principled attempt to challenge Black’s play.

15.e2 b7 16.a3d1 a8 17.d7 led to a normal-looking Scheveningen position with chances for both sides in Moroz – Pavlov, Alushta 2003.

15...dxe5 16.fxe5 d7 17.xc6 xc6 18.d4 b7 19.xx?
Far from being the start of a devastating kingside attack, this is in fact the correct way for White to equalize before his weak e5-pawn becomes a serious liability.

19.h5? looks too optimistic: 19...g6 20.e2 c7 21.f3 f8 22.a1 b7+
The mighty bishop on b7 was tilting the scales in Black’s favour in Glek – Sax, Senden 1998.
19...\texttt{Exe5}
Capturing the rook is refuted trivially, as the reader can verify for himself.

20.\texttt{f1} \texttt{g6} 21.\texttt{e2} \texttt{e5} 22.\texttt{f3}
After 22.\texttt{f5} \texttt{f4} the players agreed to a draw in Yagupov – Aroshidze, Batumi 2002. The continuation might have been 23.\texttt{xf4} exf4 24.\texttt{d6} \texttt{c6} 25.\texttt{xe8} \texttt{b7} 26.\texttt{c7} \texttt{xc7}= White should be happy to maintain equality against the strong enemy bishops.

22...\texttt{f8} 23.\texttt{g5} \texttt{c6} 24.\texttt{e4} \texttt{xe4} 25.\texttt{gxex4} \texttt{b8}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}

\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Black’s strong bishop pair gave him at least equal chances in Zinchenko – Airapetian, Moscow 2007.

\texttt{B22)} 13.\texttt{d3}
This time White focuses on the kingside by means of a queen transfer to g3.

13...\texttt{ac8} 14.\texttt{g3}
In one game White switched plans as follows: 14.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{xc6} 15.\texttt{a5} d5! 16.\texttt{e5} \texttt{d7} Velickovic – Musil, Yugoslavia 1985. Black has good chances in this French-type position, with one attractive idea being ...\texttt{b4} rounding up the pawn on a5.

14...\texttt{d5}!
According to my database this only appeared in two of the eleven games from the diagram position, but it seems to solve all Black’s problems with ease.

15.\texttt{exd5}
Perhaps White should already think about maintaining equality with 15.\texttt{e5} \texttt{e4} 16.\texttt{xe4} dxe4 17.\texttt{c3} \texttt{d4} 18.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{c5} 19.\texttt{f1} \texttt{xd4} 20.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{c6}= The pawn on e4 will enable Black to organize sufficient counterplay.

15...\texttt{exd5}
15...\texttt{xd5}! also worked out well in the following game: 16.\texttt{xex5} (Perhaps White should forget about this exchange and settle for 16.\texttt{xc6}N \texttt{xc6} 17.\texttt{d4} with approximate equality.) 16...\texttt{exd5} 17.\texttt{xc6} \texttt{xc6} 18.\texttt{xd3} \texttt{xf6} 19.\texttt{c3} \texttt{d6}+ Black’s isolated pawn is less significant than the activity and harmony of his pieces, Tischbierek – Schlosser, Germany 2003.

16.\texttt{d3}
This position occurred in Marjanovic – Sax, Zagreb 1985. At this point I think Black should have taken a moment to fortify his kingside:

16...\texttt{g6}N
16...\texttt{f8}N also looks promising, clearing the e-file.
17.\( \text{dx}c6 \)
This may not be best, but I wanted to consider the possibility for White to prepare \( f5 \).

17...\( \text{dx}c6 \) 18.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 19.\( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{e}5? \)
Black is not in any real danger on the kingside, and his pieces are more active.

B3) 12.\( \text{d}3 \)
In some ways this is an ideal location for the bishop. From \( d3 \) it supports the sensitive pawns on \( c2 \) and \( e4 \), while also hinting at veiled threats against \( h7 \) after a future \( e5 \) push. The only drawback is that the bishop might soon be exchanged after a timely ...\( \text{bd}4 \).

12...\( \text{d}7 \) 13.\( \text{f}3 \)
This is the most popular move, although some strong players have also tried:

13.\( \text{f}3 \)
White eases the central tension and hopes to use his knight for attacking purposes later.

13...b6
There is also not much wrong with 13...\( \text{bd}4 \), for instance 14.a5 \( \text{xd}3 \) 15.\( \text{xd}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 16.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 17.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 18.\( \text{g}3 \) \( e5 \) with equality, Ki. Georgiev – Ehlvest, Brussels 1992.

14.\( \text{e}2 \)
Another game continued 14.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 15.\( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 16.e5, A. Muller – Choisy, Besancon 2006, and now Black should have played 16...\( \text{d}7? \) 17.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{xd}3 \) 18.cxd3 \( \text{ec}8 \) with a good game.

14...\( \text{b}4 \)

15.\( \text{ae}1 \)
15.\( \text{d}4 \) should also be met by 15...\( \text{c}6 \), without fearing 16.e5?! \( \text{fd}5? \) when the black pieces are working together seamlessly.

15...\( \text{c}6 \) 16.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 17.\( \text{g}5 \)
No better is 17.\( \text{f}2? \) 16.\( \text{xd}3 \) 18.cxd3 \( \text{c}5? \).

17.\( \text{xd} \) 18.\( \text{xd}3 \) \( e5 \)

18...h6 19.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}5 \) was also pleasant for Black in Psakhis – Cvitan, Debrecen 1992.

19.\( \text{e}3 \)
This position occurred in Ki. Georgiev – Stohl, Elenite 1992. Now I suggest the following improvement:

19...h6?N
In the game Black exchanged on f4. I prefer to maintain a strong foothold in the centre.
20.\( \text{d} \text{f}3 \)

20.\( \text{d} \text{x}f7? \ \text{d} \text{xf}7 21.fxe5+ \text{g}8 \) does not give White enough.

20...\( b5! \)

Commencing counterplay. Maybe the position is only equal, but I would certainly take the black position if given the choice. The potential of the bishop pair should not be underestimated.

13...\( \text{d} \text{b}4 \)

This looks more promising than 13...\( \text{d} \text{x}d4 \)

14.\( \text{d} \text{x}d4 \text{c}6 15.\text{g}3 \text{g}6 16.f5 \text{e}5 17.\text{e}3 \text{b}5, \)

Westerinen -Tisdall, Helsinki 1986, 18.axb5\( \text{N} \)

axb5 19.\( \text{f} \)g6 \( \text{h} \)xg6 20.\( \text{f} \)f3 \( \text{h} \)xa1 21.\( \text{h} \)xa1 \( \text{a}8 22.\text{f}f1\) and White keeps a grip on the position.

14.\( a5 \)

A logical reaction to Black's last move.

14...\( \text{c}6 \)

Clearing the d7-square in preparation for ...\( \text{d} \text{d}7-\text{c}5 \). Black is not worried about \( \text{d} \text{x}c6 \) as the recapture ...\( \text{b} \)xc6 would strengthen his centre and open the b-file.

15.\( \text{f} \)g3 \( \text{d} \text{x}d3 \)

The immediate exchange of the bishop may seem to be a simplistic solution, but there is no doubt that it is positionally well-founded.

16.\( \text{c} \text{x}d3 \text{d} \text{d}7 \)

16...\( \text{e} \)ac8 17.\( \text{f} \)f5 \text{e}5 is also playable, but I prefer the text slightly.

17.\( \text{f}3 \)

White can also try the more aggressive 17.\( \text{f} \)f5, although any ensuing pawn exchanges might help to open the game for the black bishops in the long run. One interesting game continued 17...\( \text{f}6 18.\text{c} \text{e}2 \text{e}5 19.\text{f} \text{f}3 \text{d}5 20.\text{c} \text{c}3 \text{d} \text{xe}4 21.\text{d} \text{xe}4 \text{b}5 22.\text{f} \text{f} \text{d}1 \text{Timofeev} - \text{Vitiugov}, \text{Serpukhov 2008}. \) At this point the best continuation looks to be 22...\( \text{b} \text{d}8\text{N} \) 23.\( \text{a} \text{c}1 \text{w} \text{a}5 \) 24.\( \text{f} \text{d}6 \text{b}4 \) with roughly equal play. After the opening of the centre it is important for Black to win some squares for his pieces.

17...\( \text{f}6 \)

Another solid option is 17...\( \text{f}8 \), for example:

18.\( \text{g}5 \text{f}5 19.\text{d} \text{d}4 \text{h}6 20.\text{c} \text{c}3 \text{c}5 21.\text{e} \text{x}c5 (21.\text{d} \text{d}2 \text{w} \text{f}7 22.\text{a} \text{c}1 \text{w} \text{c}8=) 21...\text{x} \text{c}5 22.\text{e} \text{e}5 \text{d} \text{d}6 23.\text{c} \text{c}4 \text{w} \text{ad}8= \) The neatly organized bundle of black pieces secured equal chances in Filippov - Van Wely, Moscow 2009.

18.\( \text{f} \)f2 \text{g}6 19.\( \text{d} \text{d}2 \text{g}7 20.\text{c} \text{c}4 \text{b}5 \)

20...\( \text{d}5\text{N} \) 21.\( \text{b}6 \text{b}x \text{b}6 22.\text{a} \text{xb}6 \text{w} \text{d}7 23.e5 \text{w} \text{a} \text{c}8 \text{b} \) looks interesting. Closing the centre may not seem like the ideal strategy with two bishops, but Black still has some chances to activate them later.
In this equal position the players agreed a draw in Arnason – Polugaevsky, Haninge 1989.

The queen is heading to the desirable g3-square. From there she hopes to menace the enemy king, while the opposition of queens on the h2-b8 diagonal might lead to some tactical opportunities.

Here we will consider both B41) 14.fxe5 and B42) 14.e3.

B41) 14.fxe5 dxe5 15.g3

It is logical for White to insert this active move.

15.e3 is harmless: 15.e6 16.g3 h8 17.a5 c5 18.g5 c7 19.e3 (19.h4 fad8 20.fx6 gx6 21.fx6+ f6 22.xf6+ g8 23.g5+ h8=) 19.b4 20.h4 e7= In the position with a simplified pawn structure White has little chance to fight for the advantage, Chandler – Psakhis, Sochi 1982.

15...d8 16.e3 h8

Black does not mind compromising his pawn structure in order to cover the crucial d5-square. His chances are not worse, as his pieces are active and he can look to exert pressure against the enemy queenside.

17.e2

17.ad1 e6 18.g5 g8 left White with nothing better than repeating moves with 19.e3 f6 in Tal – Andersson, Stockholm 1976.

Another instructive continuation was 17.g5 e6 18.xf6 (18.h4 is well met by 18.g8!) 18.xf6 19.g4 fad8 20.xe6 fxe6! Baumegger – Zoler, Graz 2002.
the more natural 18...\textit{ac}8 is also absolutely fine.

19.\textit{xd}3

Perhaps the critical continuation is 19.\textit{wxe}5N \textit{c}7 20.\textit{we}5 \textit{xc}5 21.\textit{xc}5 \textit{e}5 22.\textit{xd}3 \textit{ac}8 23.\textit{eb}4 \textit{ed}8=\textit{w} Black can claim sufficient compensation for the missing pawn due to his excellent piece coordination.

19...\textit{dg}4 20.\textit{xf}7 \textit{xf}7 21.\textit{xf}7 \textit{g}6 22.\textit{xb}7 \textit{h}4 23.\textit{wh}4 \textit{xe}3

This position was reached in Stanojoski - Cheparinov, Pancevo 2003. White should have tried:

14...\textit{exf}4 15.\textit{xf}4

In some games White has tried 15.\textit{xf}4, but after 15...\textit{e}6 intending ...\textit{d}7 Black is no worse off than in the main line.

15...\textit{e}6

From here Black will generally look to follow up with ...\textit{d}7 and ...\textit{e}5. The light-squared bishop will not mind trading its life for a white knight on \textit{d}5, as Black will maintain excellent control over the dark squares.

16.a5!

This has only been played in one game on my database, but since the game in question was contested by two top-class grandmasters I decided to elevate it to main line status. Of course we will consider a few other options as well:

16.\textit{e}2!

We see the charm of the white queen’s flexibility, as she turns back towards the centre. Of course, everyone knows it is a lady’s prerogative to change her mind...

16...\textit{ed}8

There is not much to choose between this and 16...\textit{ac}8 17.\textit{f}3 \textit{ed}8 18.a5 \textit{d}7 19.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 20.\textit{wd}5 \textit{e}5 21.\textit{xe}5 (White should probably have preferred 21.\textit{e}2N \textit{w}6 22.c3 \textit{wd}5 23.exd5 \textit{e}8=)
21...dxe5 22.\texttt{b}b3 \texttt{d}d2= Black's pieces were becoming rather active in Barle – Portisch, Ljubljana 1985.
17.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{d}d7 18.\texttt{d}d5 \texttt{x}d5

19.\texttt{xe}5 dxe5 20.\texttt{ex}d5 g6 21.\texttt{ae}1 \texttt{d}6 gives Black no problems, as 22.\texttt{f}6? e4 23.\texttt{ex}d6 exd3 only leads to problems for White.
19...\texttt{xd}3 20.\texttt{wx}d3 \texttt{f}6

Black is doing fine here, for instance:
21.c3 \texttt{x}e5 22.\texttt{ae}1
22.h3 g6 23.\texttt{f}f3 \texttt{f}5= 22...\texttt{xf}4 23.\texttt{ex}e8\texttt{f} 24.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{e}1\texttt{f} 25.\texttt{f}1 \texttt{e}5\texttt{f}

Only Black can realistically play for a win here due to his control over the only open file, Iskov – Fracnik, Berlin 1984.

16...\texttt{d}7

Again we see this typical manoeuvre.

The most popular continuation in the position has been:
16.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{d}d7

Once again this standard manoeuvre ensures a solid position for Black.
17.\texttt{d}3

17.\texttt{e}3 \texttt{f}8 18.\texttt{f}2 g6 19.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{e}5 20.a5 \texttt{g}7 21.b6 \texttt{e}7 22.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{c}8= Black's only weakness on d6 was fully compensated by Black's perfectly coordinated pieces in Klovans – Magerramov, Moscow 1979.
The position resulting from 17.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{d}5! 18.\texttt{x}e6 \texttt{xe}6 19.\texttt{xe}5 dxe5 can be compared with the game Baumegger – Zoler in the note to White's 17th move in line B41 above.
17...\texttt{e}5 18.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{x}d5 19.exd5
impossible to break down, Sicilian players have been much more confident. The game now enters a manoeuvring phase, in which both players will subtly try to improve their positions.

18.\( \text{Ke3} \) \( \text{Kf8} \) 19.\( \text{Kb6} \) \( \text{Kc6} \) 20.\( \text{Kd3} \) \( \text{g6} \) 21.\( \text{Ke2}! \)

White finds the right time for a positionally desirable manoeuvre, when it is justified by concrete variations.

21...\( \text{Kg7}! \)

Black correctly avoids 21...\( \text{Kxd3} \) 22.\( \text{Kxd3} \) \( \text{Kc2} \) 23.\( \text{Kd4} \) \( \text{Kxb2} \) 24.\( \text{Kab1} \) \( \text{Ka2} \) 25.\( \text{Kf4} \) \( \text{Kg7} \) 26.\( \text{Kd1} \) \( \text{Ke2} \) 27.\( \text{Kxe2} \) fxe6 28.\( \text{Kd6}^\pm \) White regains the sacrificed pawn, and the pawn on b7 is also likely to fall.

22.\( \text{Kd4} \) \( \text{Kd7} \) 23.\( \text{Kad1} \) \( \text{Kac8} \)

Also possible was 23...\( \text{Kc4}N \) 24.\( \text{Kxc4} \) \( \text{Kxc4} \) 25.\( \text{Kfe1} \) \( \text{Ke5} \) 26.\( \text{Kf3} \) \( \text{Ke6} \) 27.\( \text{Kf3} \) \( \text{Kac8} \) 28.\( \text{Kb3} \) \( \text{Kf7} \) 29.\( \text{Kc4} \) \( \text{Kd7} \) when Black should be able to cover all his weak spots without serious difficulty.

24.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{Kg4} \) 25.\( \text{Kd2} \) \( \text{Kxd3} \) 26.\( \text{Kxd3} \)

It was also quite acceptable to play 26...\( \text{Kfe7} \), for instance 27.\( \text{Kf3} \) \( \text{Kd7} \) 28.\( \text{Kc2} \) \( \text{Kxe5} \) 29.\( \text{Kc4} \) \( \text{Kh5} \) with roughly equal chances. Black has a bit less space, but with two sets of minor pieces exchanged this should not bother him too much.

27.\( \text{Kf3} \)

Here I suggest the following improvement:

27...\( \text{Kf6}^\pm \)

Angling for a position with rook versus two minor pieces.

The game continuation of 27...\( \text{dxe4} \) 28.\( \text{Kxe3} \) \( \text{Kf6} \) 29.\( \text{Kc4!} \) enabled White to keep a slight plus in Kamsky – Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2006.

28.\( \text{Kxg4} \)

White is not helped by 28.\( \text{Kxf2?} \) \( \text{dxe4} \) 29.\( \text{Kg3} \) \( \text{Kf6} \) 30.\( \text{Kxc6} \) \( \text{Kxe6}^\mp \).

28...\( \text{dxe4} \) 29.\( \text{Kxe4} \) \( \text{Kxd2} \) 30.\( \text{Kxd2} \) \( \text{Kg4} \) 31.\( \text{Kf6} \) \( \text{Kf6} \) 32.\( \text{Kc4} \)

After 32.\( \text{Kxf6?!} \) \( \text{Kf8} \) 33.\( \text{Kd6}^\dagger \) \( \text{Kxe6} \) 34.\( \text{Kxf8}^\dagger \) \( \text{Kxf8} \) 35.\( \text{Kxd6} \) \( \text{Kf1}^\dagger \) 36.\( \text{Kf2} \) \( \text{e3} \) 37.\( \text{Kd4} \) \( \text{Kf2} \) only Black can be better.

32...\( \text{Kc6} \) 33.\( \text{Kxe2} \) \( \text{Kxe2} \) 34.\( \text{Kxe2} \) \( \text{Kf7} \)

The chances in this type of endgame should be about even, with all three results possible.
B5) 12.\text{\textit{d}2}

The queen move is partly born out of frustration with more fancy ideas. White connects the rooks, and after one of them lands on d1 the pressure can be multiplied.

As is usually the case for such positions, several other moves have been tried. I will mention a few of the more relevant ones, remembering that it would be counterproductive to attempt to analyse everything exhaustively.

13.\text{\textit{f}3} 'Llxd4 14.\text{\textit{d}4} e5 15.\text{\textit{e}3} b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.fxe5N (Alternatively after 17.'Lld5 White achieved nothing from the opening and a draw was agreed in Guliyev – Ftacnik, Hamburg 2005.) 17...dxe5 18.'LWe3 'Lld8 with equality.

13.'Llf3 d5!?N

Surprisingly enough nobody seems to have tried the central counterblow at this moment.

As is usually the case for such positions, several other moves have been tried. I will mention a few of the more relevant ones, remembering that it would be counterproductive to attempt to analyse everything exhaustively.

13.'Llf3 'Lxd4 14.'Lxd4 e5 15.'Lle3 b5 16.axb5 axb5 17.fxe5N (Alternatively after 17.'Lld5 White achieved nothing from the opening and a draw was agreed in Guliyev – Ftacnik, Hamburg 2005.) 17...dxe5 18.'LWd3 'Lxc4 19.'Lxc4 'Llxc4 20.'Llxc4 with equality.

13.'Llf3 d5?!N

Surprisingly enough nobody seems to have tried the central counterblow at this moment.

After 13...Ead8 14.'Lle3 'Llf6 15.'Llc3 'Lld8 White obtained some initiative in Volokitin – Lutz, Germany 2006.

14.\text{\textit{e}5}

White gains nothing from 14.exd5 exd5 15.'Lld5 Otherwise we would have a normal-looking IQP position in which the pawn on f4 would be completely out of place. 15...dx5 16.'Lld5 'Llf6 White can hardly hope to keep his extra pawn.

14...'Lle4 15.'Lld4 dxe4 16.'Lle4

16.'Llg5 is well met by 16...\text{\textit{g}5} 17.'Llg5 'Lld8 18.'Lw6 'Lld6 The pesky black pieces will cause plenty of problems.

16...'Lld8

17.c3

17.'Llf4 'Llf4 18.'Llc4 \text{\textit{a}5}+

17...dx4 18.'Lld4 'Llf5

Even though the bishop on d4 is theoretically “bad”, it is rather well-placed and should definitely be destroyed. In the resulting position the strong passed e-pawn should give Black enough counter-chances.

The other most natural move is:

13.'Llc3

Here Black can react in an unusual but effective manner with:

13...\text{\textit{g}4}?! 14.'Llc1 'Lxd4 15.'Lld4 'Llf6

16.'Llf6 'Lxf6 17.'Lla1

Here I suggest a natural improvement:
Chapter 13 - 6.\(\text{Ke2}\)

17...\(\text{c6N}\)

In Yudasin – Van Wely, Philadelphia 1994, Black preferred the risky 17...e5?!; and after the natural 18.fx e5 followed by \(\text{xf6}\) White obtained a dangerous attack. Black may be able to hold the balance with the aid of precise defense, but from a practical point of view it is much easier to avoid such dangers altogether.

18.e5 dx e5!

Yudasin only gave 18...\(\text{d5}\) 19.\(\text{e4}\) \(\text{dxe5}\) 20.\(\text{fxe5}\)± in his annotations.

19.\(\text{fxe5}\) \(\text{d7!}\)

This is a much better square than d5. The knight menaces the e5-pawn, and can later move either to c5 to exchange the opponent’s dangerous bishop, or to f8 to help defend the kingside.

20.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{d8}\)

The chances are about even. White has some attacking chances, but the defender has a sound structure with no weaknesses, and is certainly helped by the absence of dark-squared bishops.

\[\text{B51) 13.\text{e21 ead8}\]

Black has mobilized all his pieces without paying any special price.

14.\(\text{b3}\)

Alternatives also do not promise White much.

14.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{e5}\) 15.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{c4}\) 16.\(\text{c1}\) e5! The advance in the centre comes at the perfect moment. 17.\(\text{d2}\) (17.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{xf5}\) 18.\(\text{e4}\) exf4 19.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{f8}\)!) 17...b5 18.b3 \(\text{b6}\) with a decent position for Black in Wolff – De Boer, Wijk aan Zee 1993. Note that there is nothing to fear from 19.a5N \(\text{c8}\) 20.\(\text{a2}\) \(\text{e6}\) as the misplacement of the knight is only temporary.

14.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{d4}\) (Slightly risky, but nonetheless playable, is 14...\(\text{d5?!}\)N 15.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{e4}\) 16.\(\text{xe4}\) dx e4 17.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{e8}\)N Despite the danger for the unsupported e4-pawn Black has enough counterplay.) 15.\(\text{xd4}\) \(\text{c6}\) 16.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{d7}\) 17.\(\text{d3}\) \(\text{d8}\) 18.b4 e5 19.\(\text{xe5}\) dx e5 20.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{h5}\) 21.\(\text{f3}\) At this point a draw was agreed in Dolmatov – Zhigalko, Moscow 2004. The continuation might have been 21...\(\text{cxb4}\) 22.\(\text{c4}\) \(\text{xe5}\) 23.\(\text{xf7}\) \(\text{h8}\) 24.\(\text{xd7}\) \(\text{xd7}\) 25.\(\text{exh5}\) \(\text{d8}\). Despite all the tension Black ends up with a fully viable position and good counterplay against White’s numerous weaknesses.

14...\(\text{c8}\)

Again we see this typical regrouping.

15.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{b6}\) 16.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{d7}\)

Here I decided to examine a novel and direct approach by White.
17.e5?

In the following game, which was played at the very highest level, White failed to get anywhere with the patient approach: 17.\(\text{d4}\) \text{\&b7} 18.\(\text{\&h5!}\) \text{\&f8!} Anticipating any future opening of the f-file. 19.\(\text{\&g3}\) \text{\&xd4} 20.\text{\&xd4} \text{\&f6} 21.\text{\&e2} e5! 22.fxe5 \text{\&xe5} Black's position is safe and without any real weaknesses, Anand – Kasparov, New York (1) 1995.

17...dxe5

The two armies are more or less equally well mobilized, and the opening of the centre does not change the evaluation of approximate equality.

18.\text{\&xd7}!

White should certainly avoid 18.f5? \text{exf5} 19.\text{\&d5} \text{\&b8} 20.\text{\&xb6} e4+ Black's pawn centre can start playing a key role.

Also unimpressive is 18.\text{\&xc6?!} \text{\&xc6} 19.fxe5 f5! (But not 19...\text{\&xe5?} 20.\text{\&d4} f6 21.\text{\&xe5} fxe5 22.\text{\&f7}\# \text{\&h8} 23.\text{\&xd8} \text{\&xd8} 24.\text{\&f8}\# \text{\&xf8} 25.\text{\&xf8}\# Clumsy play can easily end up in tears for the defender!) 20.\text{\&d4} \text{\&c4} 21.\text{\&b3} (21.\text{\&g3} \text{\&xe5!}) 21...\text{\&xe5} 22.\text{\&xb6}\# Black has two bishops and a smile on his active pieces.

18...\text{\&xd7}

Also interesting is 18...\text{\&xd7} 19.\text{\&xb6} \text{\&b7} 20.\text{\&xc6} \text{\&xc6} 21.\text{\&xd8} \text{\&xd8} 22.fxe5 \text{\&f8} Black has enough counterplay against White's weaknesses.

19.\text{\&xb6} \text{\&b8} 20.\text{\&xd8} \text{\&xd8} 21.\text{\&xc6} \text{\&xc6} 22.fxe5 \text{\&c8}

Black's two powerful bishops will provide long-term compensation for the missing pawn.

B52) 13.\text{\&b3}
Chapter 13 - 6.e2

18...e5N 19.f5 c7 20.a5 \(\text{\textsc{c}6=}\)

The second player will focus on obtaining counterplay with ...d5.

14.\(\text{\textsc{b}}3\)

It looks premature for White to play:

14.g4 d5!

We already know the idea of meeting White’s flank activity with the counterblow in the centre.

15.e5

Perhaps White could have considered 15.exd5N \(\text{\textsc{d}x}5\) 16.\(\text{\textsc{d}x}5\) exd5 17.c3 \(\text{\textsc{d}6}\) 18.\(\text{\textsc{f}3}\) \(\text{\textsc{ad}8}\) when Black certainly has no problems, although White is not really worse.

15...\(\text{\textsc{e}4}\) 16.\(\text{\textsc{dxe}4}\) dxe4 17.c3 \(\text{\textsc{ed}8}\) 18.\(\text{\textsc{e}1}\) \(\text{\textsc{a}5}\) 19.\(\text{\textsc{d}4}\) \(\text{\textsc{c}4}\)

Black managed to support the e4-pawn with some highly energetic play in Corrales Jimenez – Arencibia Rodriguez, Santa Clara 2008.

The other main option is:

14.\(\text{\textsc{ad}1}\) \(\text{\textsc{c}8}\) 15.\(\text{\textsc{f}3}\) \(\text{\textsc{b}7}\) 16.\(\text{\textsc{f}2}\) \(\text{\textsc{d}7}\)

We have transposed to a known position where the chances are generally about equal.

17.\(\text{\textsc{d}2}\)

17.\(\text{\textsc{fe}1}\) \(\text{\textsc{ab}8}\) 18.\(\text{\textsc{c}1}\) \(\text{\textsc{c}5}\) 19.\(\text{\textsc{d}2}\) \(\text{\textsc{a}8=}\)


17...\(\text{\textsc{c}5}\)

Another reasonable continuation is 17...\(\text{\textsc{ab}8}\)

18.\(\text{\textsc{fd}1}\) \(\text{\textsc{a}5}\) 19.\(\text{\textsc{xa}5}\) bxa5 20.\(\text{\textsc{a}7}\) \(\text{\textsc{bc}8}\)

21.\(\text{\textsc{d}4}\) \(\text{\textsc{f}8}\) Jimenez Fraga – Ortiz Suarez, Ciego de Avila 2010.

18.\(\text{\textsc{xc}5}\) bxc5 19.\(\text{\textsc{g}3}\) \(\text{\textsc{f}8}\) 20.e5 dxe5 21.fxe5 \(\text{\textsc{e}7}\)


14...\(\text{\textsc{ab}8}\)

The rook vacates the long diagonal while hinting at a possible ...b5 or ...\(\text{\textsc{a}5}\).

15.g4

Once again a great variety of slightly different set-ups and move orders have been tried. Here are a few of the more interesting examples:

15.\(\text{\textsc{fd}1}\) \(\text{\textsc{c}8}\) 16.\(\text{\textsc{d}4}\) \(\text{\textsc{b}7}\) 17.\(\text{\textsc{xc}6}\) \(\text{\textsc{xc}6}\) 18.\(\text{\textsc{d}3}\) \(\text{\textsc{a}8}\)!. Returning the rook to its original square does not harm Black’s chances. 19.\(\text{\textsc{d}4}\) \(\text{\textsc{d}7}\) Black kept a solid and flexible position in El Taher – Lesiege, Istanbul 2000.

15.\(\text{\textsc{ad}1}\) \(\text{\textsc{ec}8}\) 16.\(\text{\textsc{e}2}\) \(\text{\textsc{a}5}\) 17.\(\text{\textsc{xa}5}\) bxa5

This typical ploy gives Black excellent play on the b- and c-files. 18.\(\text{\textsc{c}1}\) \(\text{\textsc{b}6}\) 19.e5 \(\text{\textsc{e}8}\) Black has promising counterplay on the queenside and intends ...\(\text{\textsc{c}6}\) next, Kharlov – Shipov, Aalborg 1993.

15.\(\text{\textsc{f}2}\) \(\text{\textsc{c}8}\) 16.\(\text{\textsc{g}3}\) \(\text{\textsc{b}7}\) 17.\(\text{\textsc{f}8}\) \(\text{\textsc{f}8}\) 18.\(\text{\textsc{ae}1}\) \(\text{\textsc{d}7}\) 19.e5 dxe5 20.fxe5 \(\text{\textsc{c}5}\) 21.\(\text{\textsc{f}4}\) \(\text{\textsc{xb}3}\)
22.cxb3 This was Kuzmin – Morozevich, Alushta 1993, and now after the straightforward 22...c5 N 23.g3 d4+ Black's knight will cause trouble from the f5-square.

15...c8 16.g5 d7

17.g2

This does not alter the position drastically, although it will obviously lead to some small differences in certain variations.

17.f2

The thematic 17...a5? is also playable, although given that the white queen will no longer be exposed to attack after ...c4, White has less of an incentive to capture on a5 and open the b-file.

After the bishop retreat we will examine two continuations in detail.

a) 18.h4 g6!

This move was recommended by Seirawan.

18...b5?! 19.axb5 axb5 Zhukov – Sarkisian, St Petersburg 2007, looks natural, but 20.e2!N b4 21.b5+ is undesirable.

18...b7 19.h5 was dangerous for Black in Beliavsky – Kasparov, Barcelona 1989, and many subsequent games.

19.h5

19.fd1 b7 20.ed2 c5 21.ad1 ed8 was solid enough for Black in Postl – Karasek, e-mail 2001. In general, it is only the kingside attack that is really likely to worry the second player.

19...g7

20.hxg6

20.ad1N was mentioned by Seirawan, but after 20...c5 Black does not appear to be worse. Another possible response is 20...a5?! 21.d4 c4 22.cl b7, although it is not easy to evaluate whether or not the knight on c4 is truly well-placed.

20...hxg6 21.ad1

21.g2 does not appear fully realistic.

21...a5 22.e1 c4 23.cl xb2? is just one of the possible lines.

21...a5

Another good option was 21...c5N, just as in the note to White's 20th move above.

After the text move the chances are level, but in the following encounter Black soon took over the initiative:

22.d3! c4 23.cl b5 24.axb5 axb5

Plaumann – Freeman, corr. 1990.

b) 18.g2 b7 19.ad1 g6 20.cl

Correspondence players clearly love chess history, as this position has been reached in a great many correspondence and e-mail games. Overall the chances should be roughly even, but in practice the position has proven quite tricky for White to handle.
20...\texttt{c}c5
20...\texttt{b}bc8 21.\texttt{e}d3 \texttt{b}b4 22.\texttt{h}h3 \texttt{g}7 was played in the famous and decisive 24th game in the 1985 Karpov – Kasparov World Championship match. In the event of 23.f5! Karpov might have set himself on the path to retain his title, but history took another turn.

21.\texttt{x}xc5 \texttt{bxc5} 22.\texttt{d}d3
22.f5 might be more challenging, but Black is still holding his own after 22...\texttt{d}d4 (22...\texttt{e}e5N also looks absolutely fine) 23.f6 \texttt{a}a5 24.\texttt{d}d3 e5\textsuperscript{∞} Rehder – Dietrich, e-mail 2003.

22...\texttt{d}d4 23.\texttt{h}h3
23.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{g}7 24.\texttt{d}d2 d5\textsuperscript{†} Gislon – Chmelik, corr. 1990.

23...\texttt{e}e7 24.\texttt{d}d1
24.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{g}7 25.\texttt{d}d1 f5\textsuperscript{†} Stern-Glaser, corr. 1987.

24...f5 25.\texttt{x}xf6 \texttt{xf6} 26.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{g}7 27.\texttt{g}g4 \texttt{e}e7

20...\texttt{h}6\textsuperscript{†}
28.\texttt{g}1 \texttt{f}8 29.\texttt{h}6\textsuperscript{†} \texttt{h}8\textsuperscript{†} Bj. Larsen – Stigur, Norway 1989.

28...\texttt{h}8 29.c3 \texttt{b}3 30.\texttt{e}e3 \texttt{f}8 31.\texttt{f}3 d5\textsuperscript{†} Kaplan – Koguvel, Andorra 2006.

17...\texttt{a}a5!
This is a key motif in these positions.

18.\texttt{x}xa5
The spectre of a knight on c4 could be troubling for the first player, although he can also prepare for it with: 18.\texttt{f}2!? \texttt{c}c4 19.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{f}8 Now there might follow an amusing dance between the opposing knights: 20.\texttt{d}d4 \texttt{a}a5 21.f5 \texttt{e}e5 22.\texttt{c}c2 \texttt{ac}6 and Black kept a solid position in Janus – Fatcik, Prague 1989.

18...\texttt{b}xa5
The doubled a-pawns are not really weak in anything other than a theoretical sense, but the open b-file is of real concern to White.

19.b3 \texttt{b}7
Black switches his focus to the c-pawn. Because both files are open, White will always have at least one weakness on the queenside.

20.\texttt{c}2 \texttt{bc}8 21.c4 \texttt{c}c5 22.\texttt{x}xc5
If White gives up his dark-squared bishop then Black must have done something right.
22.\(\text{c}2\) g6 23.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{b}8\) also looks comfortable for the second player. It is doubtful that White can tolerate the knight on c5 indefinitely.

22...\(\text{w}xc5\)

Another game continued 23.\(\text{ad}1\) \(\text{b}8\) 24.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 25.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}6\) 26.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{eb}8\) (26...g6?N 27.\(\text{f}6\) \(\text{f}8\) intending ...\(\text{eb}8\)) 27.\(\text{f}6\) \(\text{f}8\) 28.\(\text{fg}7\) \(\text{xg}7\) 29.\(\text{w}f4\) \(\text{e}8\) 30.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{w}5\) Black maintains equal chances, having survived the kingside assault and kept enough counterplay on the opposite flank, Timofeev – Shomoev, Warsaw 2005.

23.\(\text{g}3\)

We have been following the game Radjabov – Svidler, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2007. At this point I suggest a modest improvement:

26...\(\text{b}7\)N

With the simple idea to double on the b-file. White has no immediate threats on the kingside, so a possible continuation might be:

27.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{eb}8\) 28.\(\text{w}a2\) \(\text{e}7\)N

Black should be able to weather any storm on the kingside, especially with the white queen in such an awkward position. Overall I rate Black’s chances as slightly higher due to his queenside pressure and the latent potential of his bishop pair.

**B6) 12.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{b}6\)**

As usual, Black prevents the cramping a4-a5. White can choose between a wide variety of ideas, but none is particularly scary for the second player.

13.\(\text{f}3\)

Once again, we will look at some of the more interesting of the many alternatives.

13.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{b}8\) 14.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 15.\(\text{ac}1\) \(\text{b}7\) 16.\(\text{h}3\) e5 17.\(\text{fxe}5\) \(\text{dxe}5\) 18.\(\text{w}g3\) Lopez Martinez – Korneev, Elgoibar 2005. 18...\(\text{bd}8\)!N 19.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{h}5\) 20.\(\text{w}e5\) \(\text{xe}5\) 21.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{xd}3\) 22.\(\text{cxd}3\) \(\text{xd}3\)\(\text{f}7\) Black’s two bishops give him better chances.

13.\(\text{f}3\)! is a slightly unorthodox move which nevertheless deserves attention. 13...\(\text{b}7\) 14.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 15.\(\text{f}3\) g6 16.\(\text{c}1\) \(\text{d}7\) 17.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{ac}8\) Both players are manoeuvring in sensible fashion, without disturbing the equilibrium. 18.\(\text{d}4\) \(\text{c}6\) 19.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{a}5\) 20.\(\text{w}f2\) \(\text{c}4\) 21.\(\text{c}1\) e5 22.\(\text{d}e2\) \(\text{exf}4\) 23.\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{c}e5\) Meijers – Rytshagov, Istanbul 2003. This whole sequence was not forced, but it both sides played logically and consistently. In the
final position the chances are equal, as the vulnerability of the c2-pawn is preventing White from occupying the desired d5-square with the knight.

Finally there is 13.\textit{\texttt{We}}1 \textit{\texttt{ab}}7 (also quite acceptable is 13...\textit{\texttt{Db}}4 14.\textit{\texttt{Dd}}4 \textit{\texttt{Ab}}7 15.\textit{\texttt{Ff}}3 \textit{\texttt{Eac}}8 16.\textit{\texttt{Gg}}3 \textit{\texttt{Af}}8 17.\textit{\texttt{Ff}}2 Klovans – Zoler, Schwarzach 2000, 17...\textit{\texttt{Bed}}8N 18.\textit{\texttt{Be}}1 \textit{\texttt{Ah}}8 with approximate equality.) 14.\textit{\texttt{Ff}}2 \textit{\texttt{Dd}}7 15.\textit{\texttt{Ad}}1 \textit{\texttt{Db}}4 16.\textit{\texttt{Gg}}4 \textit{\texttt{Ec}}5 17.f5

This position was reached in Klovans – Lesiege, Cappelle la Grande 2002, and now after 17...\textit{\texttt{Ee}}5N 18.\textit{\texttt{Ff}}3 \textit{\texttt{Ed}}8, the position remains balanced and playable for both sides.

13...\textit{\texttt{Ab}}7

Black can also try the now familiar:

13...\textit{\texttt{Bb}}8?! 14.\textit{\texttt{We}}2 \textit{\texttt{Ca}}5! 15.\textit{\texttt{Ad}}1

15.\textit{\texttt{Dd}}2 is well met by 15...\textit{\texttt{Df}}5! 16.\textit{\texttt{Exd}}5 (After 16.\textit{\texttt{Ee}}5 \textit{\texttt{Dd}}7 the bishop on f3 and knight on d2 are less than ideally placed in this French-type structure.) 16...\textit{\texttt{Exd}}5 17.\textit{\texttt{Ff}}2 \textit{\texttt{Cc}}5 18.\textit{\texttt{Exc}}5 \textit{\texttt{Exc}}5 Already it was White who had to worry about equalizing in Smyslov – Kaledin, Elista 1995.

15...\textit{\texttt{Af}}8

The immediate 15...\textit{\texttt{Cc}}4 16.\textit{\texttt{Cc}}1 \textit{\texttt{Bb}}5 should also be fine.

14.\textit{\texttt{We}}2

White should not try to be too sophisticated in his manoeuvring, for instance: 14.\textit{\texttt{Ff}}2 \textit{\texttt{Ad}}8 15.\textit{\texttt{Ed}}2 \textit{\texttt{Dd}}7 16.\textit{\texttt{Ee}}2?! (Better was 16.\textit{\texttt{We}}2N, although Black still has no problems after 16...\textit{\texttt{Ca}}5! 17.\textit{\texttt{Xa}}5 \textit{\texttt{Bxa}}5 18.\textit{\texttt{Ff}}2 \textit{\texttt{Cc}}6=) 16...\textit{\texttt{Cc}}5 17.\textit{\texttt{Bb}}1 This was Nanu – Damljanovic, Sozina 2004, and now Black could have punished his opponent’s strange handling of his pieces with: 17...\textit{\texttt{Ca}}5!N 18.\textit{\texttt{Bxc}}5 \textit{\texttt{Bxc}}5+

14...\textit{\texttt{Dd}}7

Black pre-empts any e4-e5 ideas and prepares to deploy the knight actively on the queenside.

15.\textit{\texttt{Ad}}1

15.\textit{\texttt{Gg}}4 \textit{\texttt{Cc}}5 16.\textit{\texttt{Gg}}5 \textit{\texttt{Ff}}8 17.\textit{\texttt{Gg}}2 \textit{\texttt{Gg}}6 18.\textit{\texttt{Ff}}2 \textit{\texttt{Ed}}8 19.\textit{\texttt{Ad}}1 was seen in Thorhallsson – Stefansson, Selfoss 2003, and now after 19...\textit{\texttt{Gg}}7N Black pieces are ready to deal with any of his opponent’s ideas.

15...\textit{\texttt{Cc}}5

Black could also consider 15...\textit{\texttt{Ca}}5?! – it is rarely a bad move in these positions.
16.\textit{\underline{f}2} \textit{\underline{f}8}

The position remained roughly full of tension in Smyslov – Radulov, Leningrad 1977, but Black certainly kept his fair share of the chances.

\textbf{B7) 12.\textit{\underline{f}3}}

The bishop’s relocation to the a8-h1 diagonal has grown to be recognized as the main line in this critical Scheveningen position. The combination of support for the e4-pawn, pressure along the h1-a8 diagonal and preparation for the kingside attacking plan with g4 goes some way towards explaining its popularity.

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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{figure}
\end{center}

12...\textit{\underline{a}5}?!?

Once again we see this same knight hop to the edge of the board, albeit under slightly different circumstances. (Remember, it does not always have to include an invitation to inflict doubled pawns upon the second player!)

The choice of the present line is consciously provocative, but it sports an excellent statistical score in tournament practice. Black is basing his counterplay around the vulnerable c4-square. White has tried just about every plausible move here, but the most important lines are B71) 13.\textit{\underline{e}1}, B72) 13.\textit{\underline{g}1} and B73) 13.g4.

Here is a quick round-up of the alternatives:

13.\textit{\underline{f}2}

This is played with similar intentions to line B72 below, except that this time White hopes to find a role for the bishop on the e1-h4 diagonal.

13...\textit{\underline{d}7} 14.\textit{\underline{e}1} b6 15.e5 \textit{\underline{b}7} 16.\textit{\underline{x}b}7

This position occurred in Adams – Kempinski, Kemer 2007, and here I would suggest:

16...\textit{\underline{x}b}7N

I prefer this slightly over the knight recapture, although the latter is also quite playable and soon led to a draw being agreed in the aforementioned game.

17.\textit{\underline{e}2} dxe5 18.fxe5 \textit{\underline{e}c}8

It is also possible to play 18...\textit{\underline{b}4}?! 19.\textit{\underline{a}2} \textit{\underline{e}7}, challenging White to find something better than 20.\textit{\underline{c}3} repeating the position. Still, it looks more principled to bring another piece into play, and after the text move Black must be at least equal with ...\textit{\underline{c}4} on the way.

13.\textit{\underline{d}e}2

The knight retreat seems to be very modest and does not aspire to much.

13...\textit{\underline{d}7}

Another logical continuation is 13...\textit{\underline{c}4}

14.\textit{\underline{c}1} \textit{\underline{b}8} 15.b3 \textit{\underline{a}5} 16.\textit{\underline{d}2} \textit{\underline{d}8} 17.\textit{\underline{e}1} \textit{\underline{c}6} 18.\textit{\underline{g}3} b5 19.\textit{\underline{a}d}1, King – Gavrikov, Brocco 1991, and now Black should have
played 19...b4!N 20.e5?! (White should probably settle for a simple retreat, but in that case his knight would have a depressing choice between two poor squares.) 20...bxc3
21.exf6 axf6 22.Bxc3 Bxc3 23.Bxc3 Bb4+

The general exchange of pawns and pieces has been kind to the second player.

14...Bb7 15.e5 Bd7 16.exd6 Bxd6 17.Bxb7 Bxb7 18.Bc1

18...Bf6N

The game continuation was also not bad: 18...c5 19.Bxc5 Bxc5 20.Bg3, Narciso Dublan – Bruzon Bautista, Ayamonte 2006, and now after 20...Bf6N Black can claim a slight plus, as the f4 pawn is weak.


Black has no weaknesses and better pieces.

13.Bc2

This queen move prepares for an interesting conflict in the centre.

13...Bc4

There is nothing wrong with straightforward development with 13...Bd7 14.Bae1 Bad8, but the text seems like the most principled way to fight.

14.e5

This was White’s idea. Instead 14.Bc1?! would lead him into difficulties after 14...e5 15.Bf5 Bxf4 16.Bxf4 Bxb2+.

14...Bxe3


The defender is in some trouble, as his pieces are playing to a rather limited degree.

15.exf6 Bxf6 16.fxe7 Bb6

Here I found an improvement for White:

17.Bd1!N

This is better than 17.Bd3 e5 18.Bd5 (White is also not helped by 18.Bb3 Be3 19.a5 Bb7 20.fxe5 dxe5 21.Be1 Bg4 22.Bxg4 Bxg4+) 18...Bxd4 19.Bxf1 Bb8 Black was able to neutralize his opponent’s fleeting initiative and went on to win in Geller – Stangl, Dortmund 1991.

17...Bxb2 18.Bd3 Bh2!

Black must be precise – the alternatives are unsatisfactory:

18...e5 19.Bb1 Bb7 20.Bb3


This looks safest. 19...d5 seems tempting, but White can make a powerful sacrifice with 20.Bxd5! exd5 21.Bxd5 when his knights are simply fantastic. My analysis continues 21...Bg4 22.Bd2 Bxc8 23.Bf5 Ec5 24.Bc4 Bc1 25.Bf3?? (White can also take a draw with 25.Bb3 Bf1 26.Bxc5 Bh4++ 27.Bgl Bh1++)
25...\textit{We}1 26.\textit{O}xg4 \textit{Wh}4 \textup{f} 27.\textit{Wh}3 (27.\textit{C}g1? \textit{W}xg4) 27...\textit{W}e7 reaching a double-edged position in which any result is possible.

20.\textit{O}e4 \textit{W}xe7 21.\textit{O}g5 g6

Black should be able to withstand any kingside assault, and with a rook and three pawns for a knight, his chances are somewhat higher.

13.\textit{W}d3

This has been tried by a few strong players, but the queen on d3 looks a bit clumsy, and she can easily fall under some piece attack.

13...e5

Another reasonable continuation is 13...\textit{O}c4 14.\textit{O}c1 e5 15.\textit{O}xe2 exf4 16.\textit{O}xf4 \textit{O}e5 17.\textit{W}d4 \textit{O}e6 18.\textit{O}e2 \textit{O}ac8 when Black was holding his own in Karpov – Martinovic, Amsterdam 1985.

14.\textit{O}xe2

14.\textit{O}f5 \textit{O}xf5 15.exf5 \textit{O}c4 16.\textit{O}c1 exf4 17.\textit{O}d5 (17.\textit{W}d4 \textit{O}ac8 18.\textit{O}xf4 \textit{O}d7 19.\textit{O}d1 \textit{O}d8\textup{f} The bishop will improve its location, and Black has a splendid position.) 17...\textit{O}e3 18.\textit{O}xe3 fxe3 19.\textit{W}xe3 \textit{O}ab8 20.\textit{W}d3 \textit{O}f8 21.\textit{O}ae1 \textit{O}e5 22.\textit{O}xe5 dxe5= Due to the opposite-coloured bishops the chances were perfectly equal in Panchenko – Wojtkiewicz, Katowice 1993.

14...\textit{O}e6 15.b3

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\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

13...\textit{O}c4 14.\textit{O}c1 e5!

Once you look closely enough, the black rook on e8 serves as a counterweight for the white queen on the e-file.

15.\textit{O}xe2

15.fxe5 \textit{O}xe5 (15...dxe5 16.\textit{W}g3 \textit{W}h8 is also quite playable, but it is always nice to have a piece outpost on e5, as well as keeping the rook on e8 happy. 16.\textit{W}g3 \textit{O}xf3 17.\textit{W}xf3 This was Kovacevic – Kempinski, Bled 2002, and now the most accurate sequence looks to be

\begin{center}
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\end{center}

15...\textit{O}ac8?\textup{f}N

This is not necessarily an improvement, but
17...\textit{g}4\textit{N} 18.\textit{g}3 \textit{c}5! 19.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}5 with a comfortable position for Black.

15...\textit{c}5!

The queen turns out to be surprisingly well-placed here. It should be mentioned that 15...d5?! is a decent alternative, but I believe the text move to be strongest.

16.\textit{g}3

The alternatives are no better:

16.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}4 17.\textit{xf}4 \textit{xb}2 18.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}5
19.\textit{e}2 \textit{e}6 (or 19...d5?! \textit{N} 20.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}4\textit{N})
20.\textit{f}5 \textit{xf}5 21.\textit{xf}5 \textit{e}6 22.\textit{e}4 \textit{ac}8
23.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}4 24.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}5\textit{N} Black keeps an extra pawn as well as the better structure, Fedorowicz – Arnason, St Martin 1992.

16.\textit{f}5, Malinovsky – Grandelius, Olomouc 2009, is best met by 16...d5\textit{N} 17.exd5 (17.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}4 18.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 19.exd5 \textit{h}4 20.\textit{e}4 \textit{d}6\textit{N}) 17...\textit{xf}5 18.\textit{d}1 \textit{ad}8\textit{N} It becomes obvious that White faces an uphill struggle for survival.

16.\textit{e}5 \textit{e}5 (16...dxe5 is playable, but the text is more ambitious.) 17.\textit{f}4 \textit{d}7 18.b3 \textit{ac}8\textit{N} Black's pressure along the c-file gave him the edge in Babaev – Kempinski, Batumi 2002.

16.\textit{f}2 \textit{xf}2 17.\textit{xf}2 d5!

After this powerful move White is already in trouble.

18.\textit{g}fd1

18.exd5?! is not really playable due to 18...\textit{e}4 19.\textit{xe}4 \textit{d}5 20.\textit{e}3 \textit{xf}2 21.\textit{xc}4 \textit{g}4\textit{N}.
18.fxe5 was tried in one game: 18...\textit{xe}5 19.\textit{g}3 \textit{xf}3 20.\textit{xf}3 \textit{g}4 21.\textit{f}1 (21.e5 \textit{d}4\textit{N}) 21...d4 22.\textit{d}1 This was Markin – Grandelius, Pardubice 2009. Black has several strong continuations here, but perhaps the simplest would have been 22...\textit{xd}1\textit{N} 23.\textit{xd}1 \textit{c}5 24.\textit{e}1 \textit{d}6 when Black wins a pawn and, in all likelihood, the game.

The main move was played in L.B. Hansen – Cu. Hansen, Gladsaxe 1994. Black's most convincing reply would have been:

18...\textit{exd}4\textit{N} 19.\textit{xe}4 \textit{g}4!

This energetic move maintains Black's initiative.

20.\textit{xe}5 \textit{g}xe5\textit{N}

It is obvious that the opening of the centre came for at a bad moment for White.

16...\textit{d}7

17.\textit{f}xe5

This looks like the only way for White to maintain the balance.

17.\textit{b}1 is unimpressive, and after 17...\textit{ac}8 18.\textit{ed}1 \textit{b}5 19.axb5 axb5 20.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5\textit{N} White position was just a shadow of its usual self in Prasad – Kempinski, Biel 2001.
17...\texttt{\textbackslash e}xe5 18.\texttt{\textbackslash f}4 \texttt{\textbackslash d}x\texttt{\textbackslash f}3

It was also possible to maintain the tension with 18...\texttt{a}c8N, but eliminating an enemy bishop is always a useful insurance policy in case the position opens up later.

19.\texttt{\textbackslash w}xf3

White could also have considered 19.gxf3!?N, for instance 19...\texttt{\textbackslash e}6 20.\texttt{\textbackslash g}1 g6 with chances for both sides.

19...\texttt{\textbackslash c}6

Also interesting was 19...\texttt{\textbackslash g}4!?N 20.\texttt{\textbackslash d}3 \texttt{\textbackslash a}c8 21.\texttt{\textbackslash c}e3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}4.

20.\texttt{\textbackslash f}d5 \texttt{\textbackslash d}x\texttt{\textbackslash f}3 21.exd5

21...\texttt{\textbackslash b}5

21...\texttt{\textbackslash d}8??N also deserved attention.

22.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 \texttt{\textbackslash b}4 23.axb5 axb5 24.\texttt{\textbackslash x}a8 \texttt{\textbackslash x}a8

Black had enough queenside play to maintain the balance and prevent his opponent from mounting a genuinely dangerous attack in Glek – Sutovsky, Haifa 1996.

B72) 13.\texttt{\textbackslash a}g1

With this move White pre-empts the possible knight jump to c4. The bishop is not so badly placed on g1, where it keeps its monarch company and avoids obstructing any other pieces.

13...\texttt{\textbackslash f}8

Black can also play 13...e5 immediately, but I like the flexibility of the text move.

14.\texttt{\textbackslash w}e1

White can also pre-empt the central advance with 14.\texttt{\textbackslash d}e2 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 (The following game showed another decent approach for Black: 14...\texttt{\textbackslash b}8 15.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 16.\texttt{\textbackslash d}4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d4 17.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d4 e5 18.\texttt{\textbackslash f}xe5 dxe5 19.\texttt{\textbackslash g}3 \texttt{\textbackslash h}8 20.\texttt{\textbackslash e}2 \texttt{\textbackslash d}6 21.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3 \texttt{\textbackslash e}6 22.\texttt{\textbackslash g}5 \texttt{\textbackslash e}7 23.\texttt{\textbackslash d}1 \texttt{\textbackslash c}5 24.\texttt{\textbackslash f}6 \texttt{\textbackslash x}f6 25.\texttt{\textbackslash g}4?? Short – Arnason, Vestmannaeyjum 1985.) 15.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1 b6 16.\texttt{\textbackslash d}1 \texttt{\textbackslash b}7 17.\texttt{\textbackslash f}2 \texttt{\textbackslash a}c8 18.\texttt{\textbackslash b}3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6 19.\texttt{\textbackslash e}2 \texttt{\textbackslash b}4 20.\texttt{\textbackslash d}1 d5! 21.exd5 At this point the players agreed to a draw in Tiviakov – Sax, Chalkidiki 2002. The likely continuation would have been 21...exd5 22.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 23.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5
14...e5!?

It feels like a good time to play this move, as the white queen might start to feel uncomfortable opposite the enemy rook, even if there is no immediate way to exploit it.

Black can also play more patiently with 14...b8, although in the following top-level game he did not quite manage to equalize: 15.h3 d7 16.h2 c6 17.e1 d4 18.xd4 b5 19.axb5 axb5 20.e5± The bishop on h2 was helping to feed White's initiative in the centre in Kasparov - Topalov, Dos Hermanas 1996.

15.d2

White should certainly avoid 15.fxe5? dxe5 16.f5 xf5 17.exf5 b4 Black is already better, as the bishop on g1 is now misplaced. 18.e2 ac8 19.b5!? A witty move, but it is not enough to solve White's problems. 19...c7 20.c3 b3 21.xd1 axb5 22.cxb4 bxa4 23.b5 ed8 24.xd8† xd8 25.axa4 d4† The knights proved more valuable than the bishops in Oll – Smirin, Kissimmee 1997.

15...b6 16.d1 b7 17.h4 c7 18.g3

18...c4!?

Black embarks on a risky-looking, but nevertheless justified plan involving a daring foray from the knight.

Instead the more sedate 18...ac8 would have been equal.

19.b3 a3! 20.c1

20.d2 would also have been met by 20.b5. Presumably the idea behind the text move was that any subsequent ...xc2 would place the knight in an immediate pin.

20...b5!

White does not quite have the time to punish the cheeky knight.

21.e3 bxa4 22.fxe5 dxe5 23.h6 g6

24.bxa4 ad8

We have been following the game Soereghy – Goze, e-mail 2006. Black’s enterprising play has paid off. He has succeed in compromising his opponent’s queenside structure and eventually converted his advantage to a full point.

B73) 13.g4

13...f8

Probably White’s most promising idea.
Now we will consider the subtle \text{B731)} $14.\text{g2}$ followed by the main line of \text{B732)} $14.g5$.

\text{B731)} 14.\text{g2}

By refusing to drive the knight away from f6, White prevents the usually desirable $...b7-b6$, which would now lose to $e4-e5$.

\text{14...d7}

Black can also consider $14.\text{b8??}$, when it is doubtful that White has anything better than $15.g5 \text{d7}$ transposing to the note to Black's 15th move in line B732 below.

\text{15.eel}

Obviously $15.g5$ would lead back into B732, so we will only focus on White's attempts to do without this move.

\text{15...b6}

It seems logical to keep the knight jump in reserve. Nevertheless it is also not bad to play $15.\text{c4}$ 16.\text{cl} b6N (16.g6 17.b3 \text{a5} 18.\text{b2} \text{g7} 19.\text{f1} \text{c6} 20.\text{de2} = Polzin – Kempinski, Germany 2005) 17.b3 \text{a5} 18.\text{b2} \text{b7}$. In this typical Scheveningen position Black should have enough time to create counterplay.

\text{16.d1 b7} 17.\text{h4 c6}

17...\text{c4} 18.\text{c1} g6 19.\text{d3} \text{g7} was not a bad alternative, but I prefer the text.

\text{18.de2!}

This looks like White's most challenging approach, aiming to limit the opponent's counterplay. Instead 18.\text{f3} \text{xd4} 19.\text{xd4} e5 20.\text{h3} h6 leads to a complex position in which Black's chances are not worse.

\text{18...b4} 19.\text{d2}

\text{19.d5!}

This is a significant improvement over a high-level game. I found the idea myself, although I later discovered that it had been played in an obscure e-mail game so I could not claim it as a novelty.

19...\text{d8??} is unsatisfactory after 20.g5 f6 (or 20.g6 21.\text{f3} \text{c8} 22.\text{h3} h5 23.\text{gxf6} \text{hxg4} 24.\text{h4} \text{h7} 25.e5±) 21.\text{d4} ± Black had plenty of weaknesses and little compensation for them in Anand – Topalov, Dortmund 1996.

\text{20.e5}

This leads to a position resembling the French Defence, in which neither side's pieces are deployed exactly as they would normally be in that opening. Overall I would say that the
differences favour Black slightly, as he can still pursue a queenside attack, helped in part by the pawn on a4 which provides a ready-made target.

Before moving on, let us note that White is not helped by 20.\(\text{d4} \text{c5} 21.\text{exd5} \text{xd5}^*\).

\textit{20...c5}

In his annotations to the aforementioned game, Anand only mentioned 20...\textit{f6?!} which creates too many weaknesses.

However, 20...\textit{e7?N} might be a worthy alternative, for instance 21.\textit{Wf2 c6} when I prefer Black’s position slightly.

\textit{21.d4 c6!}

The knight has been Black’s hardest working piece. Now, finally, it prepares to exchange itself for the important blockader on d4.


We have been following the game Lagerborg – Romanov, e-mail 2000. Black’s queenside offensive is well underway, whereas White is a long way from achieving anything special on the opposite flank.

\textbf{B732) 14.g5 d7 15.g2}

This is the normal move in such positions. The bishop makes way for the heavy pieces to get to the kingside.

\textit{15...b6}

This is the standard move, although it might also be interesting for Black to consider 15...\textit{b8?!}, hoping to play ...\textit{b7-b5} in one move. Here are a couple of nice examples: 16.\textit{We1} (There is also 16.\textit{Wh5 c4} 17.\textit{Wc1 g6} 18.\textit{Wb3 g7} 19.\textit{de2 b5} 20.axb5 axb5 21.b4 \textit{b6} 22.\textit{Ba2} \textit{b7+} The strong knight from c4 was limiting White’s attacking prospects in Hermansson – Kempinski, Stockholm 1999.) 16...\textit{c4} 17.\textit{cl} \textit{g6} 18.b3 \textit{g7} 19.\textit{de2 d5} 20.\textit{d2} \textit{c6} 21.\textit{h4} b5 Black could not complain, as his queenside counterplay was becoming quite real in Nataf – Relange, France 2003.

\textit{16.Wf3}

White’s plan will generally involve shifting his queen and rook to the h-file in one way or another. Black will generally place his bishop on g7, after which the knight can always drop back to f8 to defend h7. One of Black’s key resources will be the counterattacking thrust ...f5. If the second player can time this move correctly, it should enable him to secure some
valuable breathing space on the kingside and in some cases even fight for the initiative in the centre.

Here are some illustrative examples:

16...\(\text{b7}\) 17...\(\text{a6}\) \(\text{e}4\) 18...\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{g7}\) 19...\(\text{a6}\) \(\text{g7}\) 20...\(\text{d6}\)

20...\(\text{g}5\)? (This plunges the game into unclear complications. A safer alternative would have been 20...\(\text{f}5\)N 21...\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{a}8\) with a good position for Black.)

20...\(\text{d6}\)?

This was Matejovic - Szegi, Slovakia 2006, and here Black could have created unpleasant queenside threats with 23...\(\text{a}5\)!N.

16...\(\text{c4}\) 17...\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}7\) 18...\(\text{de}2\) \(\text{g7}\) 19...\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{c4}\) 20...\(\text{c1}\)

20...\(\text{f}5\)?

This looks like a good time for Black to execute his space-gaining break, although he can also postpone it as in the following game:

20...\(\text{c5}\) 21...\(\text{d9}\) \(\text{b}5\) 22...\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{f}8\) 23...\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{b}6\) 24...\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{a}8\) 25...\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 26...\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\)

Having outmanoeuvred his opponent for the past five moves, Black has taken over the initiative and went on to win in Polzin - Kempinski, Germany 2005.

21...\(\text{a}5\) 22...\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{a}8\) 23...\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{f}8\)

Black's pieces coordinate well, his king is safe and he has every reason to feel confident about the future.

16...\(\text{b}7\)

I think Black should continue to refrain from the knight hop to \(\text{c4}\) for the time being. After 16...\(\text{c4}\) 17...\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{b}7\), the following game provides an excellent demonstration of why it is not always desirable to drive the white bishop back to \(\text{c1}\): 18...\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{g}6\) 19...\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}5\) 20...\(\text{a}3\)! White finds an excellent way to combine his kingside attack with pressure against the \(\text{d}6\)-pawn. 20...\(\text{e}8\) (Deserving attention was 20...\(\text{e}5\)?N 21...\(\text{de}2\) \(\text{e}4\) 22...\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{d}8\) 23...\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{g}5\) 24...\(\text{c}7\) \(\text{e}5\) 25...\(\text{xa}8\) \(\text{xa}8\) 26...\(\text{b}1\)± The exchange sacrifice promises rich play, but Black's position is still worse.) 21...\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}7\) 22...\(\text{e}1\) \(\text{g}8\) 23...\(\text{de}2\) \(\text{c}8\) 24...\(\text{hd}3\) \(\text{b}7\) 25...\(\text{d}2\) Black was unable to hold the \(\text{d}6\)-pawn and had to fight for survival in Kuczynski - Ftacnik, Germany 2002.
17.\textit{\textbf{h}}3 g6 18.\textit{\textbf{g}}4 \textit{\textbf{g}}7

Now that White has committed his heavy pieces to the kingside, it starts to become more tempting for Black to consider 18...\textit{\textbf{c}}4!? 19.\textit{\textbf{c}}1 \textit{\textbf{g}}7 20.\textit{\textbf{d}}e2 This position was reached in Hanley – Michielsen, Groningen 2006, and here Black could have obtained at least equal chances with the thematic 20...f5!N 21.\textit{\textbf{h}}4 \textit{\textbf{f}}8.

19.\textit{\textbf{g}}1 f5! 20.e5

After 20.gxf6 \textit{\textbf{x}}xf6 21.\textit{\textbf{h}}4 \textit{\textbf{h}}5 the knight on h5 is strong.

20...\textit{\textbf{x}}xf5 21.\textit{\textbf{e}}2

The evaluation would be similar after 21.\textit{\textbf{h}}5 \textit{\textbf{f}}8 22.\textit{\textbf{d}}1 \textit{\textbf{a}}c8.

21...\textit{\textbf{f}}8 22.\textit{\textbf{f}}1 \textit{\textbf{a}}c8 23.\textit{\textbf{d}}3 \textit{\textbf{x}}g2# 24.\textit{\textbf{x}}g2 \textit{\textbf{g}}6

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\end{center}

Black kept a nice position with well-placed pieces in Fedorchuk – Kempinski, Germany 2008.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The Scheveningen set-up is a valuable tool in the repertoire of players who are willing to exercise patience with a view to countering at a suitable moment. White has tested umpteen different ways to try and penetrate the opponent's armour, but aggressive operations very often resemble a training exercise with live ammunition – one mistake can see the attacking efforts backfire, with harsh consequences.

To play the black side of the Scheveningen system successfully requires many things: a certain level of concrete opening knowledge (as with all openings), knowledge of typical plans and piece manoeuvres, as well as a more subtle feeling for when to manoeuvre, when to defend, when to counterattack and so on. The last of these can take some time and practice to develop, but once you have it, you will truly be the master of an unbreakable defensive system that can last a lifetime.
Open Systems

Midnight Express - 6.\texttt{c4}

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.\texttt{f3} d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{f6} 5.\texttt{c3} a6

6.\texttt{c4} e6

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Open Systems

6...c4 is one of the most direct attacking systems at White’s disposal. The light-squared bishop focuses its aim against the pawn on e6, the cornerstone of Black’s entire set-up. The first player will typically look to develop his remaining pieces as quickly as possible before attempting to draw on the power of the light-squared bishop to unleash a deadly attack, often with the help of a sacrifice on the sensitive e6-square. Fortunately Black is not without chances of his own. If White’s intended attack fails to materialize, then his active bishop might become a target for Black’s advancing queenside pawns. In other cases, the second player may goad his opponent into an unsound sacrificial attack, drawing on the legendary defensive resources of the Najdorf system. It all adds up to a recipe for breathtaking complications, combinations and sacrifices, so without further ado, let’s see some action!

1.e4 c5 2.d3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 e6

White has tried several different moves here, but only three deserve serious attention: A) 7.a4, B) 7.a3 and C) 7.b3.

7.0–0 has no independent value against our repertoire, as after 7...b5 8.b3 we reach variation C1 below.

A) 7.a4

With this move White aims to restrict his opponent’s counterplay. It looks slightly odd to combine this restraining approach with the active and aggressive development on c4, and yet the idea has been used successfully by a number of strong players, most notably Emms and Kuzmin.

7...e7 8.0–0 d6

It makes sense to develop the knight here rather than on d7, as the b4-square has been weakened.

9.e3

The more aggressive 9.h1 0–0 10.f4 allowed Black to retaliate with 10...d5! 11.xc6 bxc6 12.d3 c5 13.e5 d7 with a pleasant position in Gasparian – Anastasiyan, Yerevan 2006.

9...0–0

A set-up involving ...e5 would be positionally dubious, as White’s light-squared bishop would be ideally placed to assist in the fight for the weakened d5-square. Instead Black plays to fortify the a2-g8 diagonal and follow up by harassing the dangerous bishop with ...b5.
10.\textbf{h1}

White intends to play \textit{f4} at a suitable moment. Other ideas are not dangerous, for instance:

10.\textit{e2} \textit{d5} 11.\textit{fd1} \textit{d6} 12.\textit{exd5} \textit{exd5} 13.\textit{exd5} \textit{cxd5} 14.\textit{xc4} \textit{e4} was equal in Ivanovic–Kasparov, Bugojno 1982.

10.\textit{a2} \textit{d5} 11.\textit{c3} \textit{d5} 12.\textit{exd5} (12.\textit{e5}?! \textit{d7} 13.\textit{f4} \textit{c5} \textit{Savon–Jakobsen, Esbjerg 1980) 12...\textit{bxd5} White had no trace of an advantage in Nepeina Leconte–Bojkovic, Belfort 2002.}

10...\textit{c7} 11.\textit{e2} \textit{d7} 12.\textit{f4}

This is the only really threatening plan at White's disposal, but Black is well placed to meet it.

12...\textit{ac8} 13.\textit{a2} \textit{d4} 14.\textit{xd4} \textit{e5} 15.\textit{xe3} \textit{e6}!

Also harmless is 16.\textit{f3} \textit{dxe5} 17.\textit{g5} \textit{xa2} 18.\textit{xa2} \textit{c4} 19.\textit{f3} \textit{xc6} 20.\textit{a5}, J. Geller–Zagrebely, Krasnodar 2003, 20...\textit{b4}!!N 21.\textit{a4} \textit{c5} with advantage to Black.

16...\textit{xa2} 17.\textit{xa2} \textit{c4} 18.\textit{f3} \textit{exf4} 19.\textit{a4} \textit{e6} 20.\textit{xf6} \textit{f6} 21.\textit{xc4} \textit{xc4}

Black should have no problems from this position. I found two examples on the database.

16.\textit{e5}

A previous game had finished with a quick draw: 22.\textit{g4} \textit{e6} 23.\textit{h3} \textit{c8} 24.\textit{g5} \textit{h6} 25.\textit{d2} \textit{½–½} Kuzmin–Sneider, Enakievo 1997.

22...\textit{dxe5} 23.\textit{xe5} \textit{b4}

The position remained absolutely equal in Emms–Grischuk, Esbjerg 2000.

\textbf{B) 7.a3}

With this move White plans to meet 7...\textit{b5} with 8.\textit{a2}, tucking the bishop out of harm's way. The drawback is that, having spent an extra tempo on the queenside, White's attacking prospects are reduced. Of course, it also goes without saying that the most aggressive plans involving long castling will be out of the question due to the ease with which Black can open a file with ...\textit{b5}–\textit{b4}.

16.\textit{xe6} \textit{f6} 17.\textit{f3} \textit{dxe5} 17...\textit{dxe5} is of no concern to Black (compare the note to White's 17th move in line B41 of Chapter 13, page 228). The doubled pawns control several important squares, and Black's pieces are all working together harmoniously.
7...\(\text{\texttt{\textsf{c7}}}\) 8.0–0 0–0 9.\(\text{\texttt{a2}}\)

9.f4 d5! 10.exd5 exd5 11.e2 c6 12.e3 \(\text{\texttt{\textsf{e}}}}\)

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chess_board}
\caption{Standard chess board}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
\item \(\text{\texttt{a8}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{b8}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{c8}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{d8}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{e8}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{f8}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{g8}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{h8}}\)
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
\item \(\text{\texttt{a7}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{b7}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{c7}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{d7}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{e7}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{f7}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{g7}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{h7}}\)
\end{itemize}

9...\(\text{\texttt{b5}}\) 10.f4 \(\text{\texttt{b7}}\) 11.\(\text{\texttt{e2}}\)

It looks premature for White to try 11.f5!

\begin{itemize}
\item \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\)
\item \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\)
\end{itemize}

11.\(\text{\texttt{c7}}\)!

I like this standard (but rare in this specific position) move for its sheer flexibility, and because I cannot see what White is going to play next.

A playable, though somewhat uninspiring alternative is: 11.\(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 12.e5 dxe5 13.fxe5 \(\text{\texttt{c5}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{e6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e3+t}}\) 16.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e6}}\) 17.\(\text{\texttt{e5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{b6+t}}\) 18.\(\text{\texttt{h1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{a8}}\) Black's position seems okay, even if Arizmendi and Moreno feel that Black has no prospects.

Those authors recommend 11...\(\text{\texttt{c6}}\), which looks like another good move, and may well have been my recommendation had it not been for the even more promising main line.

12.\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\)

As I mentioned before, the surprising reality is that it is not at all easy for White to find a convenient move. Here are a few examples:

12.f5 e5 13.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\) was played in Gerasimovitch - Stiri, Mureck 1998, and now after 13...h6!N Black is at least equal.

White is not ready to play 12.e5? dxe5 13.fxe5 \(\text{\texttt{d7+t}}\) as 14.\(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e5}}\) wins material.

12.\(\text{\texttt{h1}}\) \(\text{\texttt{bd7}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{xc6}}\) does not work either. After 13...\(\text{\texttt{f6}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{xe6}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c6}}\) 15.\(\text{\texttt{xf8}}\) \(\text{\texttt{xf8}}\) the minor pieces are stronger than the rook, and White is vulnerable on the light squares.

12.\(\text{\texttt{d7}}\) 13.\(\text{\texttt{a5}}\) \(\text{\texttt{c5}}\) 14.\(\text{\texttt{f3}}\)

14.e5 \(\text{\texttt{f4}}\) was better for Black in Van der Weide - Tatai, Amsterdam 1967.

The present position was reached in Sanchez - Lloyd, St Rosa 1983. At this point I found an important improvement for Black:

14...\(\text{\texttt{a5!N}}\)

This is a particularly forceful way to exploit the weakness of the e4-pawn and the a7-g1
diagonal. It is also worth mentioning the possibility of 14...\(\text{\textit{b6}}\)N. This highly ambitious move brings danger for both players. 15.\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxe4}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) \(\text{\textit{xe4}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{g3}}\) b4! The complications seem to favour Black. Nevertheless the text move seems like the better practical choice as it also leads to an advantage, but in a less volatile position.

15.f5!
This looks like the best practical chance. After 15.\(\text{\textit{cxb5}}\) \(\text{\textit{b6}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxe4}}\) the exchange of a wing pawn for a central pawn has clearly been to Black’s advantage.

15...b4!
15...\(\text{\textit{h8}}\)!? 16.\(\text{\textit{fxe6}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxe6}}\) gives Black decent prospects in an unclear position, but the text is a try for an advantage.

16.\(\text{\textit{cxb5}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{fxe6}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxe6}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{h3}}\) \(\text{\textit{fxe4}}\)

Black’s chances are higher, as demonstrated by the following sample variation featuring principled play from both sides:

19.\(\text{\textit{xf8}}\) \(\text{\textit{axb}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{xe6}}\) d5! 21.\(\text{\textit{xf8}}\) \(\text{\textit{wh3}}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{gxh3}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd2}}\) 23.\(\text{\textit{e6}}\) b3! 24.\(\text{\textit{xc5}}\) \(\text{\textit{bxa}}\) 25.\(\text{\textit{a1}}\) \(\text{\textit{f8}}\) 26.\(\text{\textit{g2}}\) \(\text{\textit{c8}}\) 27.\(\text{\textit{xa2}}\) \(\text{\textit{f3}}\)

C) 7.\(\text{\textit{b3}}\)

This is by far the most important option at White’s disposal. The bishop will have to retreat at some point anyway, so it drops back to a safe spot on b3 without spending time on unnecessary pawn moves on the queenside.

7...b5
The other main line is 7...\(\text{\textit{bd7}}\) intending ...\(\text{\textit{c5}}\), both reinforcing the sensitive e6-pawn and preparing to eliminate the dangerous bishop at a moment’s notice. The choice between the two is largely a matter of taste, although I believe that the text move is a more convenient one around which to build a repertoire. The point is that after the move order with 7.0-0, it would not make much sense for Black to play 7...\(\text{\textit{bd7}}\) as the bishop is not yet committed to b3. Therefore Black would have not only have to study 7.\(\text{\textit{b3}}\) \(\text{\textit{bd7}}\), but also 7.0-0 b5 8.\(\text{\textit{b3}}\). Instead I find it more consistent to play an early ...b5 against both of White’s move orders.

At this point White must make a fundamental choice, his main options being C1) 8.0-0 and C2) 8.\(\text{\textit{g5}}\). However, we should also pay attention to some less common, but still potentially tricky alternatives.

8.f3 \(\text{\textit{bd7}}\) 9.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) \(\text{\textit{b7}}\) transposes to 8.\(\text{\textit{e3}}\) below.
8...\textit{e}3 \textit{b}7 9.f3 White is combining two of the most dangerous attacking systems, but unfortunately he fails to obtain the best of both worlds. 9...\textit{bd}7 10.\textit{wd}2 \textit{b}4 11.\textit{ce}2 \textit{d}5 12.exd5 \textit{exd}5 13.0–0–0

This was Ardura Fernandez – Dominguez Perez, San Miguel 1999, and here Black should have taken the opportunity to eliminate one of the enemy’s strong bishops with 13...\textit{xe}3!N
14.\textit{xe}3 \textit{b}6! Preventing any sacrifices on \textit{e}6. (14...\textit{c}5 15.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}7 16.\textit{e}1 is not so clear) 15.\textit{f}4 0–0–0 16.\textit{d}3 \textit{g}6 with better chances for Black, whose dark-squared bishop has the potential to become a monster.

8.f4
When faced with this early show of aggression, Black should remain calm and continue with his normal development.

8...\textit{b}7 9.f5 \textit{e}5 10.\textit{de}2
Another game continued 10.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}7 11.\textit{d}3 \textit{bd}7 12.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}8 13.\textit{d}2, Milagrosa – Bitoon, Manila 2007, and now after 13...\textit{c}5?!N 14.\textit{xc}5 \textit{dx}c5 15.\textit{d}5 \textit{c}4 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{ex}d5 17.\textit{xd}5 0–0 Black’s chances are higher.

10...\textit{bd}7 11.\textit{g}5 \textit{e}7 12.\textit{g}3 \textit{c}8 13.\textit{xf}6 13.0–0 \textit{h}5!\texttt{+} This attractive idea is a common theme in positions with this pawn structure. See for instance the note to White’s 10th move in variation C13 (page 261). 14.h4 \textit{b}4 15.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 16.\textit{d}5 \textit{hx}h4 17.\textit{hx}h5 \textit{g}5\texttt{+} R. Byrne – Fischer, Sousse 1967.

13...\textit{xf}6 14.\textit{h}5 \textit{xc}3! The exchange sacrifice on \textit{c}3 is a well-known motif of the Sicilian, and in this position Black is well-placed to deal with the resulting complications.

15.\textit{xf}6\texttt{+}
Feeble is 15.bxc3? \textit{xc}4 16.\textit{xc}g7\texttt{+} \textit{f}8 17.\textit{h}5, Hildebrandt – Stewen, corr. 1994, 17...\textit{b}6!N (This is better than 17...\textit{h}4\texttt{+}, although even brought Black a quick victory in the game.) 18.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}5 19.\textit{d}1 \textit{h}4\texttt{+} 20.g3 \textit{xc}3 with a winning position.

16.\textit{xe}4!
More accurate than 16.\textit{h}4\texttt{+} 17.g3 \textit{xe}4 18.f1 \textit{f}6 19.\textit{d}5 when White escapes to reach a roughly level position.

17.0–0 \textit{d}5 18.a4 0–0
Black’s position was clearly better in Ledic – Szabo, Vinkovci 1970.

8.\textit{e}2
The queen does not really belong here in this system – it has better prospects on \textit{f}3.

8...\textit{b}7 9.\textit{g}5
9.f3 looks slightly odd, although the position after 9...\textit{bd}7 10.\textit{e}3 \textit{c}5 11.0–0–0 \textit{c}7 12.g4 \textit{e}7 13.g5 \textit{fd}7 was interesting and gave chances for both sides in Lind – Wojtkiewicz, New York 1992.

9...\textit{b}4 10.\textit{a}4 \textit{c}7 11.0–0–0 11.f3 looks rather slow by comparison, and
Chapter 14 - 6.\textit{xc}4

after 11...0-0 12.c3 bxc3 13.\textit{xc}xc3 \textit{xe}4!  
14.\textit{xe}6! fxe6 15.\textit{xc}xe7 \textit{exe}7 16.\textit{xe}4 d5  
17.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xc}6 Black had the better chances in  
Feygin – Shirov, Germany 2009.  
11...\textit{xa}5 12.f4 \textit{bd}7  

8.\textit{g}3  
This is probably the most significant of  
White's unusual eighth moves.  
8...\textit{b}7  
Now we will consider two possibilities for  
White.  

a) 9.\textit{g}5 \textit{bd}7 10.0-0-0 \textit{c}5 11.\textit{he}1 \textit{e}7  
12.\textit{g}3 b4 13.\textit{xf}6  
13.e5??N is interesting, but not fully  
satisfactory for White after 13...\textit{h}5!  
14.\textit{xe}7 \textit{exe}7 15.exd6 \textit{dg}3 16.dxe7 bxc3  
17.hxg3 cxb2+ 18.\textit{xe}2 \textit{xe}7++.  
13...\textit{xf}6 14.\textit{a}4N  
This is a clear improvement over 14.e5? \textit{h}4!  
15.\textit{g}e3 (15.\textit{g}xg7 \textit{g}5++) 15...bxc3++  
14...\textit{xb}3+ 15.\textit{xb}3 e5 16.\textit{ac}5 \textit{c}8 17.\textit{d}3  
a5 18.\textit{xe}5! \textit{xe}5 19.f4 a4 20.\textit{d}2 \textit{xb}2??  
20...a3 21.fxe5 axb2+ 22.\textit{xb}2 \textit{a}5 23.\textit{a}1  
0-0∞  
21.\textit{xb}2 0-0∞  
Both sides have their chances, but White's  
vulnerable king is the most salient feature of  
the position.  

b) 9.0-0 \textit{bd}7 10.\textit{he}1 \textit{e}7  

11.\textit{xe}6?!  
This is a principled choice. In the event  
of other moves, Black can benefit from not yet  
having had to move his queen.  
11.\textit{g}3 is of course possible, but there is no  
reason to fear it. Black has several playable  

Black has an excellent position, and the  
following idea does not fully solve White's  
problems:  
18.\textit{xe}6 fxe6 19.\textit{xe}6\textit{h}8 20.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5  
21.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 22.\textit{xd}5 \textit{ad}8 23.\textit{f}3 \textit{h}4!  
24.\textit{f}1 \textit{f}5∞  

This is probably the most significant of  
White's unusual eighth moves.
responses, with one of the more interesting examples being: 11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{d}c5}?!} (but not 11...b4?
12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{d}d5}!} exd5 13.exd5+) 12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}g}7 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{g}8}}
13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{h}6} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{g}6}} 14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{e}3} b4} 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{c}e2} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{f}xe4}}}
11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{f}xe6} 12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}e6} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{e}5}} 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{g}3}}}
Another interesting line is: 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{h}3} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{d}7}}
14.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}g7}+ \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{f}7}} 15.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{f}5} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{a}g}8}}
19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{h}5}+ \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{g}6}} 20.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{g}3} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{g}4}} 0–1} Sharma –
Adly, Dubai 2008.
16...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{g}6} 17.f3
Worse is: 17.a3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{h}g}8 18.g3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{g}4}} 19.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{h}6}+}
\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{f}e}8 20.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}g}4 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}g}4}} 21.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{e}3} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{e}4}} 22.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{d}xe4}}
\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{xe}4}}++)
17...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{h}g}8 18.g3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{e}8}}}
Black's extra piece should count for more than White's three pawns.

\textbf{C1) 8.0–0 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{e}7}}}

Now White's main choices are \textbf{C11) 9.a4,}
\textbf{C12) 9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{e}3}, C13) 9.f4} and \textbf{C14) 9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{f}3}}}.

9.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{e}1}} is not the most accurate, as the e-pawn does not require defending at this time. Play may continue 9...0–0 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}f}3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{b}7}} 11.a3
(11.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}e}6 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{f}xe}6}} 12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}e}6 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{c}8}} 13.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{xf}8} \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{xf}8}}})
11...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{c}6} 12.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}c}6 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{xc}6}} when Black has no problems.

\textbf{C11) 9.a4}

Attempting to undermine Black's pawn structure is a reasonable idea, but it slows White's development.

9...b4 10.\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textsc{a}2} 0–0
Black does not need to spend time defending the b-pawn, as White's e-pawn is also under
fire. It is possible to capture it immediately, but my own preference is for castling first.

11.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}\texttt{b4}}}

11.c3 bxc3 12.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}}\texttt{xc3}} 14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}\texttt{d7}} 13.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e3}} 1\texttt{\texttt{c6}} is nothing for White.

11...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}}}}\texttt{\texttt{7}}}!}

Black continues to delay the capture on e4. The idea works well, as White can hardly save this pawn anyway. The text move develops another piece while preventing any c6 ideas.

12.c3

Black’s last move set a little trap – if White tries to hang on to his extra pawn with 12.f3?, he loses a piece after 12...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}}}}\texttt{\texttt{6}}} 13.c3 a5! (but not 13...c5?? 14.a5!!+ 14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}\texttt{bc2}} e5\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}}}!}.)

12...a5

There is also nothing wrong with 12...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\texttt{e4}}, for example: 13.a5 d5 14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}}\texttt{c2}} (14.f3 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}}\texttt{c5} 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}\texttt{c2}} d6=) 14...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}\texttt{6} 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}}\texttt{h}5} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}\texttt{d7} 16.f3 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}}\texttt{c6} 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}}\texttt{h4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c8}} Black could not complain in the least in Velimirovic – Pavlovic, Belgrade 1999.

13.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}\texttt{d3}}} 1\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}}}\texttt{e4}}} 14.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e1}}

14.f3 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}}\texttt{7}}} 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c6}}} is also equal.

14...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{a}}\texttt{6}}} 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}\texttt{5}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}\texttt{3}}} 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}\texttt{d3}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}}\texttt{5}}

17.\texttt{\texttt{d1}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\texttt{b3}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}\texttt{b3}} h6 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h}}\texttt{4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{b}}}}\texttt{8}}

Black has equalized comfortably, Kavalek – Andersson, Tilburg 1980.

C12) 9.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e3}}

Development of the last minor piece prepares White for action, but Black also gets a chance to finish his own mobilization.

9...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}}}}\texttt{d7}?}

This has not been a popular choice, but it is quite logical and has been shown to work well in this position. Black is preparing to develop the b8-knight but does not want to allow a sacrifice on e6.
10...b4!

In the game De Firmian – Ftcnáik, Polanica Zdroj 1995, I preferred 10...c6, but I now consider the text move to be more accurate. I would like to stress that the point of the move is not so much to win the e4-pawn immediately, as this would cost too much time, but rather to drive the white knight to an inferior square away from the centre.

11.\(\textit{\text{d}}\)ce2

11...\(\textit{\text{d}}\)a4 has not yet been tested, and is unlikely to trouble Black. After the natural 11...0–0, a plausible continuation might be: 12.f5 c5 13...d3 b5 14...b6 (14...e1 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)bd7+) 14...xf1 15...xf1 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)bd7 16...xa8 \(\textit{\text{w}}\)xa8 17...d2 \(\textit{\text{w}}\)xe4 18...xe4 \(\textit{\text{w}}\)xe4 19...f3 \(\textit{\text{w}}\)xf3 20...xf3 \(\textit{\text{e}}\)a8+ White will have to struggle for a draw.

Black is also well-prepared for action in the centre, as seen after 11.e5?! bxc3 12...xf6 \(\textit{\text{w}}\)xf6 13.bxc3 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)c6 14.f5 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)xd4 15...xd4 e5 16...e3 \(\textit{\text{w}}\)c7 17...h5 (or 17...d3 \(\textit{\text{e}}\)8 18...c4 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)c6 19...ad1 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)d8 20.c5 d5+) 17...\(\textit{\text{b}}\)5 18...d1 0–0+ Kengis – Kupreichik, Germany 1995.

11...0–0 N 12...d3 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)c6

With a comfortable position.

C13) 9.f4

The advance of pawns in the centre puts the defence on high alert. Fortunately for Black he can meet the challenges with confidence.

9...\(\textit{\text{b}}\)7?!

This move is rather provocative, but so far it has continued to hold up to the most intense scrutiny.

10.e5

This is the main line, although we should certainly consider some alternatives.

10...\(\textit{\text{e}}\)3 is a bit slow, and Black should be able to obtain at least equal chances as follows: 10...b4 11.e5? (11...d4 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)xe4 does not give White enough for the pawn, so he tries to complicate the game.) 11...bxc3 12...xf6 \(\textit{\text{w}}\)xf6 13.bxc3 (13.f5 e5 14...e2 cxb2 15...b1 0–0 16...xb2 De Firmian – Pinter, Copenhagen 1985. 16...d5+) 13...0–0 14...d2 \(\textit{\text{c}}\)7 15...ad1 d5 16.f5 e5 17...e2 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)d8 18...g3 \(\textit{\text{d}}\)d7+ Biedermann – Bokar, corr. 1996. White is too slow to disturb Black's control over the centre.
10.f5
This is more energetic, but is still not enough to trouble the second player.
10...e5 11.\textit{\textit{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}}\texttt{c}2 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{c}}}bd7 12.\textit{\texttt{g}}5
12.\textit{\texttt{g}}3?! runs into the thematic retort:
12...h5! 13.\textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{f}3 h4 14.\textit{\texttt{c}}\texttt{ge}2 \texttt{c}5 15.\textit{\texttt{d}}\texttt{d}5 \textit{\texttt{d}}x\texttt{d}5 16.ex\texttt{d}5 (16.\textit{\texttt{d}}x\texttt{d}5 \textit{\texttt{c}}\texttt{xe}4 17.a4 b4\texttt{f})
16...b4 17.\texttt{d}1 e4\texttt{f} Slobodjan – Lutz, Nussloch 1996.
12.\textit{\texttt{e}}3N is harmless, for instance: 12...0–0
13.\textit{\texttt{g}}3 \textit{\texttt{c}}c8 14.\textit{\texttt{d}}d5 \textit{\texttt{d}}x\texttt{d}5 15.ex\texttt{d}5 \texttt{g}5
16.\textit{\texttt{x}}x\texttt{g}5 \textit{\texttt{x}}g5 17.\textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{f}3 \texttt{f}6 Black averted all the possible problems and his chances are already slightly higher.
12...\textit{\texttt{c}}c8 13.\textit{\texttt{x}}f6
13.\textit{\texttt{g}}3 once again runs into 13...h5!, for instance: 14.h4 b4\texttt{f}
13...\textit{\texttt{x}}f6 14.\textit{\texttt{x}}d3 0–0 15.\textit{\texttt{g}}3 \textit{\texttt{b}}6\texttt{f} 16.\textit{\texttt{h}}1 \textit{\texttt{d}}4!
This is a convenient way to disrupt the white position before the first player can consolidate his hold over the d5-square.
17.\textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{f}3 b4 18.\textit{\texttt{x}}d1 \textit{\texttt{c}}5 19.\textit{\texttt{d}}d5 \textit{\texttt{d}}x\texttt{d}5
20.ex\texttt{d}5 a5 21.\textit{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e}4 \textit{\texttt{c}}\texttt{xe}4 22.\textit{\texttt{x}}e4
This position was reached in Kuczynski – Gruenberg, Polanica Zdroj 1989. The position is close to equal, but plenty of play remains. The following idea looks quite tempting:

22...\textit{\texttt{b}}5??\texttt{N} 23.a4 \textit{\texttt{c}}5
By inducing the advance of the pawn to a4, Black has effectively trapped the b3-bishop in a cage on the queenside. It is still not such a bad piece as it performs the useful task of defending three important pawns. Nevertheless Black can in some sense claim a strategic superiority.
24.\textit{\texttt{d}}d3
White should of course look towards the kingside for some attacking chances.
24...\textit{\texttt{x}}e8!
By introducing the possibility of ...e4, Black restricts the mobility of the enemy queen. White should not lose this position, but Black is certainly a bit more comfortable in my opinion.
10.\textit{\texttt{x}}xe6?!
This may not be completely sound, but it is still rather dangerous and must be met with some precision.
10...\textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{f}6 11.\textit{\texttt{c}}\texttt{xe}6 \textit{\texttt{b}}6\texttt{f} 12.\textit{\texttt{h}}1 \textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{e}4
12...\textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{f}7 13.\textit{\texttt{g}}\texttt{g}5\texttt{f} \textit{\texttt{g}}8 is not so promising:
14.e5 \textit{\texttt{c}}6 15.\textit{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e}2 dxe5 16.fxe5 \textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{d}7
17.e6 \textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{f}6 18.a3\texttt{f} The black position is uncomfortable and he cannot really hope for an advantage.

13.\textit{\texttt{d}}d5!
13.\textit{\texttt{x}}x\texttt{g}7\texttt{f} \textit{\texttt{d}}8 14.\textit{\texttt{e}}\texttt{e}6\texttt{f} \textit{\texttt{c}}8 does not give White enough for the piece.
13.\textit{\texttt{c}}\texttt{xe}4 \textit{\texttt{c}}\texttt{xe}4 14.\textit{\texttt{x}}x\texttt{g}7\texttt{f} \textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{f}7 15.f5 \textit{\texttt{f}}\texttt{f}6
16.\textit{\texttt{h}}5\texttt{f} \textit{\texttt{c}}7 was also unimpressive for the first player in Matushinskij – Kunzelmann, corr. 1986.
13...\textit{xd}5 14.\textit{xd}5 \textit{c}c6 \\
Here I found a way to improve White's play.
15.\textit{g}xg7\text{TN} \\
This looks more challenging than 15.\textit{e}e1?! \textit{xd}5 16.\textit{c}c7\text{T} \textit{d}d8 17.\textit{xd}5 \textit{sf}6 18.\textit{xe}7 \textit{xd}5 19.\textit{g}xg7 \textit{d}d7\text{T Black was close to complete consolidation in Petrosian – Papaioannou, Plovdiv 2008.
15...\textit{d}d8 16.\textit{f}f5 \textit{d}d7 17.\textit{e}e6\text{T} \textit{c}c8 18.\textit{xd}4 \textit{b}b7

19.\textit{e}e3 \\
19.e1 d5 20.a4 \textit{c}c5\text{T} \\
19...f6 20.a4 b4\text{T} \\
White does not have sufficient compensation, but Black still has to do some work before his king can feel completely safe.

10...\textit{xe}5 11.\textit{f}xe5

11...\textit{c}c5! \\
This type of counterattacking motif is often seen in the Najdorf. It works well here, despite the fact that Black is moving the same piece twice in the early stages.

12.\textit{e}e3 \textit{c}c6! 13.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xd}4 \\
White has tried several moves here, but only one can really threaten Black.

14.\textit{fxg}7! \\
White must sacrifice material if he is to justify his earlier play.

14.\textit{e}e1?! (14.\textit{e}e2 is the same) gives Black an easy game after 14...\textit{xe}3\text{T} 15.\textit{xe}3 \textit{d}d4 16.\textit{ae}1 gx6 17.\textit{e}e4 \textit{f}f7 18.\textit{xf}6 \textit{ad}8 Simeonov – Ermenkov, Primorsko 1987. The queens will leave the board at any moment and Black will have better chances in the ending, thanks mainly to his excellent central control and superior king.

14.\textit{xd}4?! is also rather compliant. 14...\textit{xb}d4\text{T} 15.\textit{xd}4 \textit{d}d4 16.\textit{fxg}7 (16.\textit{d}d1 \textit{xb}3 17.\textit{axb}3 \textit{g}f6 18.\textit{xf}6 \textit{g}g8 19.g3 \textit{c}c7 was similar in Ljubicic – Vaulin, Zadar 2000.) 16...\textit{g}g8 17.\textit{f}f4 \textit{xb}3 18.\textit{xb}3 \textit{g}g7 19.\textit{g}3 \textit{c}c7 20.\textit{d}d1 \textit{d}d8 21.\textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}8 Black obtained a slightly favourable endgame position in Linuma – Sakaev, Dos Hermanas 2003.
Black could even decline the offer, at least for the moment, with 14...\texttt{g8}?, hoping for a slight but safe endgame edge as in the above variations, although White can also opt for 15.\texttt{x6} \texttt{x3}† 16.\texttt{h1}, transposing to the main line below.

16.\texttt{x6}!!

This sharp move looks like the best practical chance to create problems, although objectively Black is still doing well.

16.\texttt{f3} is not so challenging: 16...\texttt{g7} 17.\texttt{x3} (17.\texttt{x6} \texttt{e7} reaches the note to White's 17th move below) 17...\texttt{d4} 18.\texttt{ae1} (18.\texttt{d5} 0-0-0† Echavarria – Guthrie, Medellin 1996) 18...\texttt{x3} 19.\texttt{x3} This was Dueball – Cording, Germany 1980, and now after 19...\texttt{d8N} Black stands better in the ending, much as in the two lines given in the note to White's 14th move above.

17.\texttt{f3} more or less loses by force as follows: 17...\texttt{e7} 18.\texttt{d5} (No better is 18.\texttt{d5} \texttt{d4} 19.\texttt{x7}, De Ridder – Van der Drift, corr. 1983, 19...\texttt{xf7N} 20.\texttt{c7} \texttt{e7} 21.\texttt{x3}† \texttt{g8} 22.\texttt{x4} \texttt{g8}+ The second player will bring the second rook into play with devastating effect.) 18...\texttt{d4} 19.\texttt{h4} \texttt{d2} 20.\texttt{xb7} \texttt{xb7} 21.\texttt{e2} This was Zaichik – Lukov, Tbilisi 1988, and now the most accurate continuation seems to be 21...\texttt{g5N} 22.\texttt{e1}† \texttt{e6} when Black has consolidated into a winning position.

17...\texttt{f7} 18.\texttt{h5} \texttt{e5} 19.\texttt{x5}† \texttt{e7} 20.\texttt{h5}

20.\texttt{h8}?? loses by force: 20...\texttt{d7} 21.\texttt{xf7} (Even more feeble was 21.\texttt{ad1}† \texttt{e6} 0-1 Cervenka – Schneider, USSR 1974.) 21...\texttt{xf7} 22.\texttt{e5} \texttt{xg2†} 23.\texttt{xg2} \texttt{g8}+ 24.\texttt{h3} \texttt{f3†} 0-1 Kalep – Sostra, corr. 1982.

20...\texttt{f8}!

20...\texttt{d8} is also playable, but the text move is the only one that keeps real winning chances alive for Black.

21.\texttt{h7}

21.\texttt{e1}† \texttt{xf1†} 22.\texttt{xf1†} \texttt{g7} left White with no compensation whatsoever in Bieganowski – Muller, corr. 1988.

21...\texttt{d4} 22.\texttt{e4}!
Only this witty move can present an obstacle to Black’s intended consolidation.

22.\(\text{E}\text{ae}1\) was played in Perez Perez – Brito Zamora, Cuba 1992, and now Black should have played 22...\(\text{E}\text{e}8!\), followed by a careful untangling of his heavy pieces.

22.\(\text{E}\text{a}d1\) was not much better in Li Chao – Sadorra, Manila 2007. The simplest solution here looks to be 22...\(\text{E}\text{e}8\) 23.\(\text{h}\text{h}4\) \(\text{f}\text{f}6\) when White is unlikely to survive.

22...\(\text{E}\text{d}5!\)

This is probably the most accurate move.

Black can also simplify immediately with 22...\(\text{x}\text{e}4!\) 23.\(\text{E}\text{e}7\) 24.\(\text{x}\text{xe}4\) \(\text{E}\text{d}8\) although converting his advantage would not be easy.

The queen is planning to come to b7 – not a common plan for the Sicilian, but it is established as one of the main lines in this particular variation. Now White can choose between the slightly cheeky C141) 10.\(\text{g}\text{g}5!\) and C142) 10.\(\text{e}\text{e}3\).

C141) 10.\(\text{g}\text{g}5!\)

This is justified by the fact that 10...\(\text{E}\text{x}d4?\) runs into 11.\(\text{e}\text{e}5\), for instance: 11...d5 12.\(\text{E}\text{xf}6\) \(\text{g}\text{xf}6\). Hunt – Stam, Oslo 2004, and now 13.\(\text{x}\text{e}3!\) \(\text{E}\text{x}e5\) 14.\(\text{E}\text{x}d5!\) kills Black immediately.

10...\(\text{b}\text{b}7\)

Black continues with his normal plan. 10...\(\text{E}\text{bd}7\) and 10...0–0 are look fine and are decent alternatives.

C14) 9.\(\text{f}\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}\text{b}6\)

11.\(\text{f}\text{f}1\) \(\text{b}\text{d}7\) 12.\(\text{a}\text{d}1\) b4

I decided to recommend this as the main line, although the following continuation from one of my own games is also quite playable: 12...0–0 13.\(\text{g}\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}\text{h}8\) 14.\(\text{e}\text{e}3\) b4 15.\(\text{E}\text{ce}2\) \(\text{d}\text{xe}4\) 16.\(\text{E}\text{xe}4\) \(\text{x}\text{g}5\) 17.\(\text{E}\text{xe}6\) This was Nunn – Ftacnik, Birmingham 2000. Now the most accurate move would have been 17...\(\text{f}\text{f}6!\) 18.\(\text{E}\text{x}d6\) \(\text{E}\text{e}4\) 19.\(\text{f}\text{f}3\) (19.\(\text{E}\text{e}5\) f6 20.\(\text{d}\text{d}5\) \(\text{E}\text{x}d6\) 21.\(\text{E}\text{x}d6\) \(\text{x}\text{g}4\)) 19...\(\text{E}\text{x}d6\) 20.\(\text{d}\text{d}5\) \(\text{x}\text{g}4\) 21.\(\text{x}\text{b}7\) \(\text{xf}3\) 22.\(\text{xf}3\) \(\text{E}\text{ae}8\). The tactics worked like magic for Black!
13.\underline{\text{a}4} 0-0

14.\underline{\text{g}3}

This aggressive deployment of the queen looks natural, although White can also retreat:
14.\underline{\text{e}2} \text{h6} 15.\underline{\text{h}4} \text{\underline{\text{e}}5} 16.\underline{\text{f}4} \text{\underline{\text{g}}6} 17.\underline{\text{g}3} \text{e5} 18.\text{fxe5} \text{\underline{\text{g}}4} 19.\text{\underline{d}5?!N (19.\text{exf6} \text{\underline{\text{x}}e2} 20.\text{fxe7} \text{\underline{\text{x}}d1} 21.\text{exf8=}\text{\underline{\text{W}}t} \text{\underline{\text{xf8}} 22.\text{\underline{\text{xd}}1} \text{\underline{\text{xe4}}=} The queen was on a par with three white pieces in Warakomski – Naiditsch, Warsaw 2005.)} 19...\text{\underline{\text{d}7}} 20.\text{\underline{\text{b}}6} \text{\underline{\text{a}7}} 21.\text{\underline{\text{f}2}} \text{\underline{\text{xd}}5} 22.\text{\underline{\text{xd}}5} (22.\text{\underline{\text{x}}a8} \text{\underline{\text{dxe}}5} 23.\text{\underline{\text{c}}c6} \text{\underline{\text{xf}}2\text{\uparrow} 24.\text{\underline{\text{xf}}2} \text{\underline{\text{f}6=}}) 22...\text{\underline{\text{dxe}}5} 23.\text{\underline{\text{c}}c6} \text{\underline{\text{xf}}2\text{\uparrow} 24.\text{\underline{\text{xf}}2} \text{\underline{\text{g}5=} Black’s creative play has equalized the chances.}

Another game continued 14.\text{c3} \text{a5} 15.\text{\underline{\text{c}}2} \text{\underline{\text{e}5}} 16.\text{\underline{\text{h}3}} \text{h6} 17.\text{\underline{\text{x}}h6? (17.\underline{\text{c}1} was better, with approximate equality) 17...\text{\underline{\text{g}}xh6} 18.\text{\underline{\text{x}}h6} \text{\underline{\text{fg}4}} 19.\text{\underline{\text{h}5}? (19.\text{\underline{\text{f}4=}) 19...\text{\underline{\text{g}7}}! 20.\text{\underline{\text{h}3}} \text{\underline{\text{h}8} 21.\text{\underline{\text{g}3}} \text{\underline{\text{h}4=} Pace – Golichenko, Pardubice 2009.}

14...\underline{\text{e}8}

Clearing the f8-square might prove useful in enabling the transfer of one of Black’s minor pieces to the kingside.

15.\text{\underline{\text{f}3}} \text{\underline{\text{h}8}}

And now he prepares to drive the enemy bishop away.

16.\underline{\text{h}1} \text{h6} 17.\text{\underline{\text{c}}1}

We have been following the game Reinderman – Danailov, Wijk aan Zee 2000. So far Black has played quite sensibly, and at this point he could have obtained a perfectly reasonable position with:

17...\underline{\text{b}8=!N

Anticipating the following thematic pawn break.

18.\text{c3} \text{bxc}3 19.\text{\underline{\text{xc}}3} \text{\underline{\text{c}}5

I see no reason to evaluate Black’s chances as inferior.

C142) 10.\underline{\text{e}3}
White has tried 11.\textit{\texttt{f}}e1 0–0 12.\textit{\texttt{g}}5 in a few games, but this should be of no concern as he is just a tempo down on the previous section.

In the event of a slow move like 11.a3, Black should develop normally with something like 11...0–0 12.\textit{\texttt{f}}e1 \textit{\texttt{bd}}7, with typical play that can be compared to the main line.

\textbf{11...0–0}

Another popular and perfectly playable continuation is 11...b4 12.\textit{\texttt{a}}4 \textit{\texttt{bd}}7 13.\textit{\texttt{f}}3 0–0. There is nothing wrong with this, but in certain positions I want to preserve the option of continuing the queenside attack with ...a5 before ...b4.

\textbf{12.\textit{\texttt{h}}6 \textit{\texttt{e}}8}

Black position may seem endangered, but he has everything under control and with each move the situation will only improve.

\textbf{13.\textit{\texttt{f}}e1}

The quiet 13.\textit{\texttt{f}}3 should be met by 13...\textit{\texttt{d}}7 intending to complete development. One game continued 14.\textit{\texttt{h}}1 \textit{\texttt{c}}6 15.\textit{\texttt{x}}c6 \textit{\texttt{x}}c6 16.a4 b4 17.\textit{\texttt{d}}1 \textit{\texttt{h}}8 18.\textit{\texttt{f}}4, Wittmann – Sisniega, Manila 1992, and now 18...\textit{\texttt{f}}6\textit{N} seems pleasant for the second player.

White can also play a different rook move with similar intentions to the main line:

\begin{enumerate}
\item 13.\textit{\texttt{ad}}1 \textit{\texttt{h}}8 14.\textit{\texttt{g}}5
\item 14.\textit{\texttt{e}}3 \textit{\texttt{f}}6 15.\textit{\texttt{f}}3 \textit{\texttt{d}}7 16.\textit{\texttt{f}}2 \textit{\texttt{c}}6 17.\textit{\texttt{g}}4 \textit{\texttt{xd}}4 18.\textit{\texttt{x}}d4 \textit{\texttt{c}}6 was fine for Black in Stisis – Mashian, Tel Aviv 1994.
\item 14.\textit{\texttt{c}}1 \textit{\texttt{f}}6 15.\textit{\texttt{f}}3 \textit{\texttt{c}}6 16.\textit{\texttt{x}}c6 \textit{\texttt{xc}}6 17.\textit{\texttt{e}}2 Van der Wiel – Van den Doel, Wijk aan Zee 1999. Now the most promising continuation would have been 17...\textit{\texttt{c}}5\textit{N}
\item 18.\textit{\texttt{h}}1 a5 with promising counterplay, as pointed out by Van der Wiel.
\item 14...\textit{\texttt{f}}6 15.\textit{\texttt{f}}3
\item 15.\textit{\texttt{f}}e1 \textit{\texttt{bd}}7 actually transposes to the Nunn – Ftacnik game mentioned in the note to Black's 12th move in line C141. (In the present position the move count is two higher, due to the time taken on White's \textit{\texttt{e}}3–\textit{\texttt{h}}6–\textit{\texttt{g}}5 and Black's ...\textit{\texttt{f}}6–\textit{\texttt{e}}8–\textit{\texttt{f}}6.)
\item 15...\textit{\texttt{bd}}7 16.a3
\item This was Oral – Colovic, Katowice 1993, and now it looks interesting for Black to try:
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item 16...\textit{\texttt{c}}7\textit{N} 17.\textit{\texttt{h}}1 \textit{\texttt{c}}5 18.\textit{\texttt{a}}2 \textit{\texttt{b}}7=
\end{enumerate}

After completing development Black will have comfortable equality.

Before moving on, we should also check a couple of aggressive knight jumps:

\begin{enumerate}
\item 13.\textit{\texttt{d}}5? is much too optimistic, and the sacrifice was easily refuted in the following game: 13...\textit{\texttt{ex}}f5 14.\textit{\texttt{d}}5 \textit{\texttt{c}}6 15.\textit{\texttt{ex}}f5 \textit{\texttt{xf}}5
\end{enumerate}
16.\textit{\textbf{f}}3 \textit{d}7 17.\textit{\textbf{f}}e1 \textit{f}6 18.\textit{\textbf{e}}4 \textit{\textbf{e}}5$\rightarrow$


More interesting is:

13.\textit{\textbf{d}}5?! \textit{\textbf{d}}8 14.\textit{\textbf{f}}4?!  

After 14.\textit{\textbf{f}}e1 \textit{h}8 15.\textit{\textbf{e}}3 \textit{d}7 16.\textit{\textbf{c}}3 \textit{b}4 17.\textit{\textbf{a}}4 \textit{c}6 Black completes his development with a solid position, M. Chapman – Booth, Melbourne 1998. I also checked the critical 17...\textit{\textbf{e}}4N, but concluded that after 18.\textit{\textbf{d}}xe6! (18.\textit{\textbf{g}}5 \textit{\textbf{x}}d4 19.\textit{\textbf{a}}d1 \textit{\textbf{a}}7 20.\textit{\textbf{d}}x\textit{d}8 \textit{\textbf{c}}6 21.\textit{\textbf{b}}6 \textit{\textbf{b}}7 is okay for Black) 18...\textit{\textbf{x}}e6 19.\textit{\textbf{g}}5 \textit{g}6 20.\textit{\textbf{d}}x\textit{d}8 \textit{\textbf{x}}g3 21.\textit{h}x\textit{g}3 \textit{\textbf{c}}6 22.\textit{\textbf{b}}6 \textit{\textbf{x}}b3 23.axb3 the ending is a little better for White.

14...\textit{\textbf{f}}6?!N  

This has seldom been seen, but it looks quite promising. The most popular move has been 13...\textit{\textbf{h}}8, leading to similar positions to those reached in the 13.\textit{\textbf{a}}d1 line mentioned in the previous note.

14.\textit{\textbf{f}}3  

This looks like the most straightforward route to a good position, although it is also possible to play 14...\textit{\textbf{x}}e4 15.\textit{\textbf{d}}xe6 \textit{f}xe6 16.\textit{\textbf{f}}e1, Tsymbalov – Skripko, corr. 1990, and now 16...\textit{\textbf{x}}f4!N 17.\textit{\textbf{f}}xf4 \textit{\textbf{f}}5 18.\textit{\textbf{d}}x\textit{d}6 \textit{\textbf{c}}6 19.\textit{\textbf{a}}d1 \textit{\textbf{b}}6 Black’s chances are not worse in this position with two minor pieces versus a rook.

15.\textit{\textbf{c}}3  

15.\textit{\textbf{f}}xe6?! gets nowhere after: 15...\textit{\textbf{e}}6 16.\textit{\textbf{\textbf{d}}e}6 \textit{f}xe6 17.\textit{\textbf{d}}xe6$\textbf{f}$8$\textbf{f}$ 15...\textit{\textbf{h}}8 16.\textit{\textbf{g}}5 \textit{\textbf{g}}5 17.\textit{\textbf{x}}g5 \textit{\textbf{a}}7! 18.e5  

It is hard to suggest anything else against the dual threats of ...\textit{\textbf{e}}5 and ...\textit{\textbf{f}}xe4.

18...\textit{\textbf{d}}xe5 19.\textit{\textbf{x}}e5 \textit{\textbf{d}}7

Black will follow up with ...\textit{\textbf{e}}5, when White will be forced to sacrifice a piece for limited compensation.

13...\textit{\textbf{f}}6?!  

This looks like the most straightforward route to a good position, although it is also possible to play 14...\textit{\textbf{x}}e4 15.\textit{\textbf{d}}xe6 \textit{f}xe6 16.\textit{\textbf{f}}e1, Tsymbalov – Skripko, corr. 1990, and now 16...\textit{\textbf{x}}f4!N 17.\textit{\textbf{f}}xf4 \textit{\textbf{f}}5 18.\textit{\textbf{d}}x\textit{d}6 \textit{\textbf{c}}6 19.\textit{\textbf{a}}d1 \textit{\textbf{b}}6 Black’s chances are not worse in this position with two minor pieces versus a rook.

14.\textit{\textbf{c}}3  

This is a standard motif in the 6.\textit{\textbf{c}}4 variation; White hopes to carry out an attack based on fluid piece play.

14...\textit{\textbf{d}}7 15.\textit{\textbf{d}}ad1 \textit{a}5!  

Here we see the idea referred to in the note to Black’s 11th move. By eschewing the early ...\textit{\textbf{b}}4, Black has created the much more serious threat of ...\textit{\textbf{a}}4, trapping the bishop.

16.\textit{a}3  

16.a4N was the lesser evil, although White may have been put off by 16...\textit{\textbf{c}}3 17.\textit{\textbf{b}}xc3 \textit{\textbf{c}}5! with strong counterplay.
16...a4 17...a2 b4 18.axb4 a3?
This poses awkward problems for White, although there was nothing wrong with the simple recapture on b4 when Black also maintains some initiative.

19.e5?
Already in difficulties, White tries to complicate the game.

19...dxe5 20.dxe4?
The best chance was 20.dxe5N dxe5 21.f4 (21...dxe5?! dx5 22.bxa3 xa3 23.c1 a8 is difficult for White) 21...xf4 22.xf4 axb2 23.b1 White will regain the lost pawn, with some chances to equalize.

20...g6?!
20...xf3† also looks strong.

21.g5 axb2 22.xf6 xf6 23.xf6† xf6 24.b1 xb4?
We have been following the game Gdanski – Kempinski, Warsaw 1997. White failed to generate any real attacking chances and soon lost.

C2) 8.g5

Here we see White playing more aggressively, retaining the option of long castling.

8...e7 9.f3
White is applying the well known strategy from the famous 6.g5 variation: mobilize in an instant, with the aim of delivering a knockout blow before the opponent completes his development.

9...c7
Although I fully believe in Black’s chances in the main line, the play can become incredibly sharp, and for this reason I would like to mention an offbeat but fully playable alternative, just in case some hot new novelty throws Black’s play into question. (I would be surprised if it happened, but you never know...)

Thus I present:

9...a7?!
This has seldom been seen, but it seems quite reasonable.

10.0–0–0
This is obviously the critical continuation.

10.0–0 0–0 might be compared with section C1 above. Play might continue 11.f1 c7 12.g3 c6 13.xc6 xc6 14.h6 e8 Black has a solid position and can only be slightly worse, if at all.

10...b4
Amazingly this natural move only appears in two games on my database.

11.c2 d7 12.e3 c7
13...g4

The other principled continuation is 13...g3N g6 14.e5 0-0 (14...dxe5 15.We5 0-0 16.h4 cc8=) 15.Wg4 dxe5 16.f3 cc6 17.Wh3 cc6 18.b6 b8 19.xc7 xc7+ The compensation for the exchange is healthier than White would have hoped.

13...cc6 14.g5

This is consistent, but it turns out badly for White. Still, it is not clear if he could do any better with 14.Wg2 ccxd4 15.ccxd4 a5 16.g5 a4! 17.gxf6 ccxf6 18.Wg3 axb3 19.ccxb3 cc8= Black's strong bishops give him excellent chances.

14...cc5 15.Wg2

15.gxf6 does not work due to 15...ccf3 16.fxe7 cc8= 17.ccxf3 a5= with difficult problems for White.

15...ccg4 16.cc4 a5?!

Also quite playable was 16...ccxg5N 17.h3 ccxf4= 18.ccxf4 cc6 19.ccxg7 cc8 20.cc6 cc7 with equality.

17.h3 a4 18.hxg4 axb3 19.ccxb3

19...cc8= 19...cc8N also looks good.

20.cc1 cc6

Black had promising compensation for the sacrificed pawn in Adla – Rotstein, Port Barcare 2005.

After the main move White can choose between C21) 10.0–0–0 and C22) 10.e5.

C21) 10.0–0–0 cc8d7

Black needs to bring the pieces out very quickly, but he must also be careful about his potentially vulnerable e6-pawn.

We will now consider C211) 11.ccxf6, C212) 11.ccg3 and C213) 11.e5.

The immediate 11.ccxe6 does not work:

11...cc5 12.cc3 cc6 13.ccxe6 ccxe6 14.ccxe6 cc7 15.cc3 cc4 and White had no compensation in Munteanu – Calotescu, Sovata 2001.

The only other move worth mentioning is:

11.cc1 0–0 12.cc3

There is also 12.cc3 cc5 13.f4 b4 (or 13...cc7 14.e5 dxe5 15.ccxe5 cc5 16.ccxe7 ccxe7 17.ccxe6 b4! 18.cc2 cc6 19.ccxe6 cc8= 20.ccxf8 ccxf8 21.cc1 cc7 22.cc1 cc7...
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\( \text{c7} \) Finnie – Berclaz, corr. 2002) 14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 bxc3 16.exf6 \( \text{cxb3} \)† 17.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 18.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{f4} \)† 19.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 20.\( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{b7} \)† The complications have subsided to leave a simplified position with a definite plus for Black, Timmerman – Soltau, corr. 1986.

12...\( \text{c5} \) 13.\( \text{d5} \)!

White finds an interesting way to complicate the game.

He is not really helped by 13.\( \text{h6} \) \( \text{e8} \) 14.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{h8} \)† 15.\( \text{g5} \) \( \text{f6} \)† G. Hernandez – Gelfand, Merida 2003.

12...\( \text{xc5} \)

Also possible is 12...\( \text{dxc5} \) 14.\( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 15.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{d8} \) 16.\( \text{c6} \) \( \text{h4} \)! 17.\( \text{de7} \)†!N (17.\( \text{c3} \) Devangi – Saranya, Chakradharpur 2009, 17...\( \text{g5} \)†N+) 17...\( \text{e7} \) 18.\( \text{d8} \) \( \text{d8} \) when Black's three pieces are roughly an even match for White's queen and pawn, although either player might try for the win.

14.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{g5} \)† 15.\( \text{xg5} \) e5 16.\( \text{c6} \) \( \text{f6} \) 17.\( \text{h4} \) \( \text{b7} \) 18.\( \text{e3} \)

This position was reached in Tuturin – G. Pinter, Budapest 1999, and here I would suggest:

18...\( \text{xc6} \)N 19.\( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) 20.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{a7} \)∞

White obviously has some compensation – but is it enough?

C211) 11.\( \text{xf6} \)

The idea of exchanging the attacking bishop was born out of frustration with the main line. White hopes to advance the g-pawn and create havoc before Black can get fully organized.

11...\( \text{xf6} \)

I spent some time analysing the cheeky bishop recapture 11...\( \text{xf6} \)?!, but unfortunately it looks dubious after 12.\( \text{xe6} \)! (The tempting 12.\( \text{dxb5} \)? does not work so well after 12...\( \text{axb5} \) 13.\( \text{xb5} \) \( \text{c6} \)! 14.\( \text{xd6} \)† [14.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 15.\( \text{gxf3} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 16.\( \text{c7} \)† \( \text{d8} \) 17.\( \text{xa8} \) \( \text{b7} \)+] 14...\( \text{f8} \) 15.\( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e5} \) 16.\( \text{xc5} \) \( \text{xc5} \) 17.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{c7} \)† Black should have slightly better chances.) 12...\( \text{xe6} \) 13.\( \text{xe6} \) \( \text{c6} \) 14.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{f7} \) 15.\( \text{g5} \)† with a dangerous attack, Kovacevic – Palac, Pula 1990.

12.g4 b4 13.\( \text{ce2} \)

So far nobody seems to have tested the tempting bishop check:

13.\( \text{a4} \)†N \( \text{d7} \) 14.e5

Feeble is 14.\( \text{ce2} \) 0–0 15.\( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xd7} \)†.

14.\( \text{b7} \)!

The position is rather volatile, and both players must proceed with great care.

14...\( \text{dxe5} \)? runs into the powerful retort 15.\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 16.\( \text{dxe5} \) \( \text{xc7} \) 17.\( \text{xa8} \)† \( \text{f7} \) 18.\( \text{xa8} \) \( \text{b7} \) 19.\( \text{xc1} \) \( \text{bxc3} \) 20.\( \text{b3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 21.\( \text{b1} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 22.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{b5} \) 23.\( \text{h3} \)±

Black does not have enough compensation for the missing material.
15.\textit{c}e4!

Now it is White’s turn to calculate carefully. He had better avoid: 15.exd6? \textit{xf3} 16.dxc7 \textit{g}5+ 17.\textit{b}1 \textit{xh}1 18.\textit{de}2 \textit{bxc}3 19.c8=\textit{w}+ 20.\textit{xd}7+ \textit{e}7 21.\textit{xc}8 \textit{xc}8 22.\textit{ex}h1 cxb2+ 15... \textit{d}5 16.\textit{c}g3!

16.\textit{xd}7+ \textit{wd}7 17.\textit{d}6+ \textit{xd}6 18.\textit{ex}d6 \textit{xd}6 19.\textit{he}1 0–0?

16...0–0 16...\textit{xe}5 might just be playable, although Black will have to endure some tricky moments after 17.\textit{gf}5!.

17.\textit{xd}7+ \textit{xd}7 18.\textit{h}5 \textit{fc}8+ Black’s chances are higher in this position involving mutual attacks. The plan of ...a5–a4 and ...b3 is tough to meet, and Black’s bishops have tremendous potential.

13...\textit{d}d7 14.\textit{c}e3 \textit{c}5 15.\textit{f}4

We have been following the game Nisipeanu – Blomqvist, Kallithea 2008. Here I suggest a slight refinement for Black:

11...\textit{d}c5

Black can also obtain a fine game with 11...b4! 12.\textit{xf}6, Zambrana–Alvarez Marquez, Yucay 2001, and now 12...\textit{xf}6!N (The game continuation of 12...\textit{xf}6 might have led to serious complications after 13.e5!N, resulting in eventual equality.) 13.\textit{a}4 0–0 14.\textit{he}1 \textit{e}5 15.\textit{f}4 \textit{g}6+ Black’s advantage is rather limited, but the two bishops are still worth something.

12.\textit{d}5? This looks like the only way to create any serious practical difficulties.
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It is worth paying attention to the following trick: 12.f3? b4 13.\( \squaree2 \) \( \text{fxe}4! \)

The thematic 12.\( \text{fxe}5?! \) is a spirited approach, but ultimately an unsound one. The sacrifice is refuted as follows: 12...\( \text{exf}5 \) 13.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 14.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 15.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 16.\( \text{xd}6 \) \( \text{xb}3 \) 17.axb3 \( \text{h}4 \) 18.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{e}6 \)

Finally, 12.\( \text{e}1 \) looks too slow. 12...\( \text{b}7 \) 13.e5 \( \text{dx}e5 \) b4 15.\( \text{f}5?! \) Other knight moves would allow ...\( \text{fe}4 \). 15...\( \text{ex}f5 \) 16.\( \text{de}1 \) 0–0 Black converted his extra piece in Maslak – Magoo, Dos Hermanas 2003.

12...\( \text{b}8! \)

Black should resist the bait: 12...\( \text{ex}d5?! \) 13.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 14.\( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 15.\( \text{c}6 \) \( \text{h}4 \) 16.\( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{g}5 \) 17.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 18.g3 \( \text{b}7 \) 19.\( \text{c}7 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 20.\( \text{xa}8 \) \( \text{xc}6 \) 21.\( \text{he}1 \)

13.\( \text{c}6 \) 14.\( \text{f}4 \)

White is not helped by: 13.\( \text{c}6 \) b4! 14.\( \text{xb}8 \) (14.\( \text{xe}7 \) \( \text{bxc}3 \) 15.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{gx}f6 \) 16.\( \text{xc}8 \) \( \text{cxb}2 \) 17.\( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{xc}8 \) 14...\( \text{bxc}3 \) 15.\( \text{c}6 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 16.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{gxf}6 \) 17.\( \text{xc}3 \) \( \text{xb}8 \) Not only is White's rook no match for Black's two minor pieces, but he also has to worry about the insecure position of his bishop on c6.

13...\( \text{f}8 \) 14.\( \text{h}6! \)

leaves White without a good answer.

14...\( \text{h}6 \) 15.\( \text{h}4 \)

White can try to complicate the game with 15.e5?! , but ultimately it will not solve his problems: 15...\( \text{hx}g5 \) 16.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 17.\( \text{fxg}5 \) \( \text{xd}4 \) 17...\( \text{fe}5?! \) 18.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 18.\( \text{xd}4 \) \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 20.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 21.\( \text{he}8 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 22.\( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{g}4 \) 23.\( \text{h}8 \) \( \text{d}1 \) \( \text{f}6 \) The endgame will be tough for White to hold.

15...\( \text{b}4 \) 16.\( \text{ce}2?N \)

I wanted to see if White could improve over 16.\( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) as seen in Illescas Cordoba – Gelfand, Linares 1990. White had no compensation and Gelfand duly converted his advantage.

16.\( \text{xe}4 \)

Black should not try to be too clever with 16...\( \text{e}5?! \) 17.\( \text{exe}5 \) \( \text{dxe}5 \) 18.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{ex}f6 \) 19.\( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 20.\( \text{xb}7 \) \( \text{xb}7 \) 21.\( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 22.\( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{g}6 \) Black is only slightly better as his king is less than ideally placed.

17.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 18.\( \text{xe}7 \) \( \text{xe}7 \) 19.\( \text{e}1 \) \( \text{c}7 \)

White has no real compensation for the missing pawn.

C213) 11.e5

This is White's most aggressive try, and probably the only way to mount a serious challenge to the black position.

11...\( \text{b}7 \) 12.\( \text{g}3 \)

12...\( \text{e}6 \) 13.\( \text{dx}c7 \) \( \text{ad}1 \) 14.\( \text{xd}1 \) \( \text{c}8 \) 15.\( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \) \( \text{e}5 \) White will not be able to hold onto his proud \text{c}7-pawn.

12.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{dxe}5 \) 13.\( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 14.\( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{fxe}6 \) 15.\( \text{xe}6 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 16.\( \text{he}1 \) \( \text{e}8 \) (16...\( \text{d}8 \) also looks good enough) 17.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \) 18.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{a}7 \) Black soon converted his material advantage in Vovk – Borovikov, Poltava 2008.
In this sharp position I have chosen to cover two alternatives for Black: C2131) 12...dxe5 and C2132) 12...dxes5. The former is "safe", in the sense that the main line seems to lead to a forced draw after accurate play from both sides. The latter is an attempt to play for an advantage, and tends to lead to unclear positions with chances for both sides.

C2131) 12...dxe5 13.\textit{xe}6

Without this White's previous play would make no sense, for instance 13.f4? dxc4 14.\textit{he}1 0-0\textvisiblespace and White is a pawn down for nothing.

13...f\textvisiblespace e6

\begin{center}
\textbf{Diagram 14.1}
\end{center}

14.f4

In Lahno – Novikov, Montreal 2004, White played the weaker:
14.\textit{xe}6?!

This enables Black to consolidate his extra material, but it is important to be precise.
14...\textit{d}d7!N

I will not analyse the game continuation of 14...\textit{c}8 in any great detail. Black should eventually keep some advantage here as well, but it is more useful to keep the queen on the second rank where she helps to defend the e7-bishop as well as keeping the eighth rank clear for the a8-rook to switch to the kingside.

15.\textit{xc}7+ \textit{f}7 16.\textit{he}1

16.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 17.\textit{h}5 \textit{f}5 18.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 19.\textit{h}5 \textit{h}4

15...\textit{d}d3 \textit{g}4 20.\textit{xd}6 \textit{he}8

16...\textit{ag}8! 17.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}3! 18.gxf3 \textit{ex}g7 19.\textit{f}2 \textit{e}8

With the help of some accurate moves, Black has reached a position with excellent chances to convert the material advantage.

14...\textit{f}7

This has more or less been analysed out to a forced draw. From a theoretical perspective this can be considered a success for Black; nevertheless if the reader is not satisfied with this he may wish to investigate:

14...\textit{c}8!? 15.\textit{xe}5 dxe5 16.\textit{xf}6

If 16.\textit{he}1, Doghri – Bluvshtein, Turin 2006, 16...b4!N 17.\textit{xf}6 gxf6 18.\textit{e}4 \textit{f}8 19.\textit{f}3 \textit{b}7 White has to fight for draw.
16...\textit{xf6} 
16...\textit{gxf6} is also playable, for instance:
17.\textit{g7} \textit{f8} 18.\textit{f3} \textit{d8} 19.\textit{h6} \textit{b7} 
20.\textit{hf1} \textit{f7} 21.\textit{g5} \textit{xf5} 22.\textit{xe6}+ \textit{e7} 
23.\textit{xf7}+ \textit{xf7} 24.\textit{xf7} \textit{d7}+ 25.\textit{d7}+ \textit{g6} 
26.\textit{xb7} g4= The endgame is about equal, 
but the rook on a8 deserves a better fate.
17.\textit{e4} 0-0 18.\textit{hf1} \textit{h8} 19.\textit{f3}N 
This improves over 19.\textit{g5} Freydl- 
Karkuth, e-mail 2004, 19...\textit{c4}N when 
Black is doing well.
19...\textit{a7}!
Defending along the second rank is often an 
important motif in the Najdorf. Now my 
main line continues:
20.\textit{c3} \textit{b6} 21.\textit{f3} \textit{d7} 22.\textit{xd7} \textit{xd7} 
23.\textit{xf6} \textit{gxf6} 24.\textit{xe5} \textit{e8} 
The chances are approximately equal, but 
everything is still to play for.

15.\textit{fxe5} \textit{dxe5}

16.\textit{xe6}! 
This is the justification for White's play, 
without which he would be suffering, for 
instance: 16.\textit{f3} b4 17.\textit{xe5}+ \textit{e8}! (17...\textit{g8} 
is unnecessarily complicated after 18.\textit{hf1}) 
18.\textit{g6} \textit{g6} 19.\textit{hxg5} \textit{bxc3} 20.\textit{xb8} \textit{cxb2}+ 
21.\textit{xb2} \textit{f8} Black will soon round up the 
trapped knight, with a near-decisive advantage 
in the endgame.

16...\textit{xe6} 17.\textit{h3} \textit{f7} 18.\textit{xf6} \textit{gxf6} 
19.\textit{d7} \textit{c6} 
Another game finished 19...\textit{c8} 20.\textit{hd1} 
\textit{e6} 21.\textit{h5} \textit{f8} 22.\textit{h6} \textit{f7} 23.\textit{h5} \textit{f8} 24.\textit{h6} \textit{f5} \textit{f5} Ris - Ibrahimov, 
Hoogeveen 2006.

20.\textit{hd1}

20...\textit{ad8} 
Black does not have time for 20...\textit{h5}?? 
21.\textit{d5}+-.

20...\textit{yg2} 21.\textit{xe7}+ \textit{xe7} 22.\textit{d7}+ \textit{f8} 
23.\textit{c6} \textit{g1}+ 24.\textit{d1} \textit{g5} 25.\textit{b1} \textit{g6} 
26.\textit{c7}+ \textit{g8} 27.\textit{e6}+ \textit{f8} is another forced 
draw.

21.\textit{h5}+ \textit{e6} 22.\textit{h3}+ \textit{f7} 
A slightly more interesting route to the 
same result would be 22...\textit{f5}?? 23.\textit{h6}+ 
\textit{f7}, Konguvel - Ramesh, Badalona 2006. 
At this point White could have secured the 
half point with 24.\textit{d6}+\textit{N} \textit{xd7} 25.\textit{h5}+ 
\textit{f8} (25...\textit{g8}?? 26.\textit{xd7} \textit{xd7} 27.\textit{e8}+)+) 
26.\textit{h6}+ with a perpetual.

23.\textit{h5}+ \textit{e6} 
\textit{f5}+ \textit{e6} 
Nisipeanu - Karjakin, Foros 2006.
This is a slightly riskier continuation, but probably the best bet if Black is determined to play for a win.

If Black is looking for a simple, low-theory solution then 13...c5!? looks fine. Play continues 14...xf6 c5 15.d5 0-0 with everything to play for, Gallego Alcaraz – Valdes Escobar, Cali 2008.

14...c6 is also playable, but I prefer to focus on the text move.

15.xg7+ f7 16.xf6

Another game continued 16.f5 f8 17.hel (?) (Better was 17.xf6N xf6 18.xxe5, transposing to the main line below.) 17...e8 18.h3 e6 19.f4 e4 20.g4 h5! 21.xxf6 xf6 22.g5 c8 23.xf6 xf6— Saric – Cheparinov, Dresden 2007.

Defending against the threat of d6f by ensuring that the recapture xd6 will not hit the queen. Instead the game continuation of 19...h5? soon led to disaster after 20.d6+ g6 21.f5+ h7 22.g5+ h6 23.xf6 White had regained his piece while keeping three extra pawns, and went on to win easily.
20.e3
20...d6+ e5 21.exd6 e6 22.hxd1 h8

20...g8
Black’s chances should be slightly higher as long as he continues to play carefully.

C22) 10.e5

White has done everything to prepare for the immediate start of the serious conflict.

10...b7 11.exd6
White must swap on d6, otherwise his pieces will not coordinate: 11.g3 dxe5 12.0-0-0 b4 13.axb6 axb6 14.dxe2 0-0+

11...xd6 12.e3
The queen controls lots of important squares from e3. 12.e2?! c6 13.f5 0-0-0 14.xd6+ xd6 15.c3 ed4 16.xd4 xd4

At this point I would like to draw your attention to two very different options for Black. The first, C221) 12...c5, is the main line. It leads to razor-sharp complications, which should not be unfavourable to Black. The second, C222) 12...c6, is a rare but in my opinion fully playable alternative. I can imagine each move appealing to different types of players, so please take a look at both and play whichever one you prefer.

C221) 12...c5 13.0-0-0

This aggressive move is the only one that is likely to trouble the defender.

13...c6
There is an intriguing alternative available in 13...bd7 intending to meet 14.xe6 with 14...0-0!, sacrificing a pawn to fight for the initiative. If for some reason the reader is dissatisfied with either of my two main recommendations, he may find this an interesting direction for independent investigation.

Now we will consider the remarkable C2211) 14.xe6†?, followed by the main line of C2212) 14.xf6.

C2211) 14.xe6†?
At first glance this looks like the kind of move that might be fun for a blitz game but not much else. However, it has been in the limelight ever since 2008 when Ivanchuk used it to defeat Karjakin.
14...fxe6 15.\(\texttt{\text{	extcopyright{}} e6}\) \(\texttt{\text{	extcopyright{}} c7}\)

The alternative is:

15...e6

This is somewhat risky, as Black relinquishes the defence of the g7-pawn and thus helps the opponent to develop his attack. Nevertheless the move may still be playable.

16.\(\texttt{\text{	extcopyright{}} xg7}\) \(\texttt{\text{	extcopyright{}} f8}\) 17.\(\texttt{\text{	extcopyright{}} e6}\) \(\texttt{\text{	extcopyright{}} f7}\) 18.\(\texttt{\text{	extcopyright{}} hel}\)

18...\(\texttt{xf2}\) N

Sadly for Black this modest move seems to be the best choice, as it is essential to tame White’s attacking enthusiasm.

18...\(\texttt{xe1}\)? 19.\(\texttt{xc5}\) \(\texttt{xe6}\) 20.\(\texttt{xc6}\) \(\texttt{xe6}\) 21.\(\texttt{xb7}\) \(\texttt{d4}\) 22.\(\texttt{d6}\) was painful for Black in Ivanchuk – Karjakin, Nice 2008.

18...\(\texttt{xe6}\) 19.\(\texttt{xc5}\) \(\texttt{xe6}\) 20.\(\texttt{xc6}\) \(\texttt{e4}\) 21.\(\texttt{xb7}\) \(\texttt{d4}\) 22.\(\texttt{xd5}\) \(\texttt{e4}\) 23.\(\texttt{b7}\) \(\texttt{d8}\) 24.\(\texttt{d5}\) \(\texttt{d8}\) Such a position full of attacking pieces cannot be pleasant for the defence.

19.\(\texttt{xe5}\) \(\texttt{xe5}\) 20.\(\texttt{d8}\) \(\texttt{d6}\) 21.\(\texttt{xf6}\) \(\texttt{xf6}\) 22.\(\texttt{xb7}\) \(\texttt{h8}\) 23.\(\texttt{e4}\) \(\texttt{g7}\)

The endgame should be about equal.

16.\(\texttt{hel}\)

The alternative is:

16.\(\texttt{d5}\) N \(\texttt{d4}\)

16...\(\texttt{d5}\) should lead to equality as follows:

17.\(\texttt{xh7}\) e7 18.\(\texttt{xf5}\) d7? 19.\(\texttt{xe7}\)

(19.\(\texttt{hel}\) \(\texttt{f6}\) 20.\(\texttt{xe7}\) \(\texttt{xe7}\) 21.\(\texttt{e6}\) \(\texttt{f7}\) 22.\(\texttt{d7}\) \(\texttt{b6}\) 23.\(\texttt{xe7}\) \(\texttt{ae8}\) 24.\(\texttt{e3}\) \(\texttt{hf8}\))

19.\(\texttt{c7}\)

19.\(\texttt{xf6}\) \(\texttt{xf6}\) 20.\(\texttt{hel}\) \(\texttt{b8}\) 21.\(\texttt{c5}\) \(\texttt{f8}\) 22.\(\texttt{d7}\) \(\texttt{f7}\) 23.\(\texttt{xb8}\) \(\texttt{xb8}\) 24.\(\texttt{f3}\) \(\texttt{c8}\)

19...\(\texttt{f7}\) 20.\(\texttt{xa8}\) \(\texttt{xa8}\) 21.\(\texttt{f3}\) h6 22.\(\texttt{f4}\)

22...\(\texttt{xf6}\) 23.\(\texttt{hel}\) \(\texttt{e6}\)

22...\(\texttt{d5}\) 23.\(\texttt{e5}\) \(\texttt{e8}\) 24.\(\texttt{hel}\) \(\texttt{c5}\)

Out of several equalizing variations, this seems to be one that offers the most winning chances for Black, although even here I am not sure if the second player can really claim any objective advantage.
16...\texttt{\textbackslash w}xe6!

The amazing ideas are overflowing in this fascinating position. Black kills the most dangerous attacker and remains with an extra piece for two pawns.

17.\texttt{\textbackslash b}xe6†

No better is 17.\texttt{\textbackslash b}xe6 \texttt{\textbackslash d}e7, for instance:
18.\texttt{\textbackslash e}5 \texttt{\textbackslash x}f2 19.\texttt{\textbackslash g}4 \texttt{\textbackslash f}7 20.\texttt{\textbackslash x}e7† \texttt{\textbackslash x}e7
21.\texttt{\textbackslash d}7† \texttt{\textbackslash f}8 22.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f6 \texttt{\textbackslash g}6 23.\texttt{\textbackslash x}b7 \texttt{\textbackslash g}8
24.\texttt{\textbackslash f}3 \texttt{\textbackslash a}7† Black has good chances to convert his extra exchange.

17...\texttt{\textbackslash d}e7 18.\texttt{\textbackslash d}e1

This looks like White’s best chance. Less accurate is:
18.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f6 \texttt{\textbackslash g}6 19.\texttt{\textbackslash d}5\texttt{\textbackslash N}

This was my attempt to improve over 19.\texttt{\textbackslash d}e1 \texttt{\textbackslash d}7 20.\texttt{\textbackslash c}e4 \texttt{\textbackslash x}e4 21.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1\texttt{\textbackslash x}e4 \texttt{\textbackslash f}5
22.\texttt{\textbackslash e}4\texttt{\textbackslash e}5 \texttt{\textbackslash d}6 23.\texttt{\textbackslash e}1 \texttt{\textbackslash a}d8 24.\texttt{\textbackslash d}1 \texttt{\textbackslash c}8
25.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f6 \texttt{\textbackslash d}8 26.\texttt{\textbackslash x}h6 \texttt{\textbackslash c}7† Black will have to work hard, but he was the only one aspiring for the point in Andrews – Gopal, Philadelphia 2008.

White is also struggling after 19.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f6\texttt{\textbackslash N} \texttt{\textbackslash f}8 20.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f8† \texttt{\textbackslash x}f8 21.\texttt{\textbackslash f}3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}6†.

19...\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 20.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5 \texttt{\textbackslash d}8

21.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f6†

Or 21.\texttt{\textbackslash c}e7 \texttt{\textbackslash f}7! 22.\texttt{\textbackslash d}e1 \texttt{\textbackslash e}8 23.\texttt{\textbackslash x}a6
\texttt{\textbackslash x}e7 24.\texttt{\textbackslash x}e7† \texttt{\textbackslash x}e7†
21...\texttt{\textbackslash f}7 22.\texttt{\textbackslash x}d8
22.\texttt{\textbackslash x}a6? \texttt{\textbackslash d}4 23.\texttt{\textbackslash x}h7 \texttt{\textbackslash x}b2† (23...\texttt{\textbackslash x}h7?
24.c3=) 24.\texttt{\textbackslash x}b2 \texttt{\textbackslash x}d1 Black should win easily with an extra rook.
22...\texttt{\textbackslash x}d8 23.\texttt{\textbackslash x}a6 \texttt{\textbackslash d}6
23...\texttt{\textbackslash x}f2 24.\texttt{\textbackslash g}4 \texttt{\textbackslash g}1 25.a4 \texttt{\textbackslash b}x a4
26.\texttt{\textbackslash x}a4†
24.\texttt{\textbackslash h}5
24.c4 \texttt{\textbackslash f}4† 25.\texttt{\textbackslash c}2 \texttt{\textbackslash d}2† 26.\texttt{\textbackslash c}3 \texttt{\textbackslash x}f2†
24...\texttt{\textbackslash d}5 25.c3 \texttt{\textbackslash c}5 26.a4†

White keeps excellent chances to defend to a draw, but never “risks” playing for win.

The present position was reached in the game Novkovic – P. Papp, Rogaska Slatina 2009. Black has a few playable continuations, but my overall preference is for:

18...\texttt{\textbackslash d}8\texttt{\textbackslash N}

The aforementioned game continued 18...\texttt{\textbackslash x}g2 19.\texttt{\textbackslash e}5! \texttt{\textbackslash c}8, and although Black eventually triumphed, at this point White could have obtained a slight edge with 20.\texttt{\textbackslash e}3\texttt{\textbackslash N} \texttt{\textbackslash x}e3† 21.\texttt{\textbackslash x}e3†.

18...0–0–0\texttt{\textbackslash N} is a playable alternative, but having analysed the different options in some detail I think the king should be happy to remain in the centre.

19.a4?!

White can obtain a similar ending to that reached in the main line with: 19.\texttt{\textbackslash x}f6 \texttt{\textbackslash g}6
Chapter 14 - 6.c4

20.\texttt{dxe4 dxe4} 21.\texttt{d1xe4 d6} (21...f5 22.\texttt{e4e5 d6} 23.\texttt{xf5 d8} 24.\texttt{xf8\# xf8} 25.g3) 22.\texttt{xf6 d8} 23.\texttt{xf8\# xf8\#} The absence of the moves a2-a4 and ...b5-b4 does not alter the evaluation in any significant way.

19...b4

This seems simplest, although Black can also consider 19...\texttt{b4?!}, for instance: 20.f3 d7 21.axb5 axb5 22.d1 c8 23.xd8\# xd8 24.xb5 c6d5=

20.\texttt{d6 gxf6} 21.\texttt{e4 dxe4} 22.\texttt{d1xe4}

There is no point in trying to save the f-pawn, as after 22...f5 White has 23.e4d6 24.xf5, as pointed out by Morgado and Alvarez in New In Chess Yearbook 87. The same authors mention the possibility of the text move, without further analysis. Having investigated the position, I see no problems at all for Black.

22...\texttt{d6}

The endgame with three pawns versus a piece is balanced, but with some potential for either side to fight for a win.

C2212) 14.xf6 gxf6

In this sharp position White has tried two moves: C22121) 15.e4 and C22122) 15.d5.

C22121) 15.e4

This active move forces Black to accept the sacrifice of the exchange in return for the f6-pawn.

15...\texttt{d4}

15...e7? might quickly end in tears for Black after 16.f5! exf5? 17.xf6\# f8 18.h6#!

15...\texttt{d4N} sets a nice trap, but is not a great move due to 16.xc5 (Black was hoping for 16.xf6\#? e7 17.g5 f4\#\#-) 16.xc5 (16.xb3\# 17.axb3 xg2 18.hg1\#) 17.xd4 e5 18.c3 c8 19.hd1 0-0 20.b4 h8 21.f3 Black's position is more or less playable, but it remains quite dangerous due to his sensitive king.

16.xd4 xd4 17.xf6\# f8

Very enterprising is an attempt to keep the king on e7 in order to connect the black rooks: 17...\texttt{e7?} 18.xd4 ad8 19.h4 xd6\#! (19...\texttt{f8?} Taddei - Roeder, Le Touquet 2006, 20.d1\# c7 21.e1\#) 20.d1\# c5 Amazingly the king manages to pull off
a chessboard version of a circus trick, dodging bullets while balancing on a tightrope: 21.\texttt{g5} f6 22.\texttt{e3} c6 23.\texttt{c3} b6 24.\texttt{d7}f? \texttt{xh7} 25.\texttt{xd7} \texttt{xd7} 26.\texttt{xf8} a5! 27.g3 d3=. Black barely keeps equality.

18.\texttt{xd4} \texttt{d8} 19.\texttt{h4}

White must play energetically, otherwise Black will have little trouble organizing his position and winning with his extra exchange.

19.\texttt{d7}f? soon led to a hopeless situation for White after 19...\texttt{d7} 20.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{xe6} 21.\texttt{xd1} \texttt{d5} in Grimberg - Bromberger, Bavaria 2007.

Not much better was 19.\texttt{e3} h6 20.\texttt{e1} \texttt{xg2} 21.f4 (21.\texttt{g4} \texttt{d5}f?) 21...\texttt{h3} and Black soon won in Hardy - Oestergaard, e-mail 2001.

19...\texttt{h6}

19...\texttt{e5} could transpose after 20.c3 h6, but White can also try 20.f4!? \texttt{e3} 21.\texttt{b1} \texttt{d2} 22.\texttt{d5} which I analysed to a draw after 22...\texttt{xd5} 23.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{exd5} 24.\texttt{e1} \texttt{b6} 25.\texttt{e7}f \texttt{g7} 26.\texttt{c3} \texttt{g8} 27.a3 \texttt{h8} 28.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{xe3} 29.\texttt{f6}f \texttt{g7} 30.\texttt{d8}f with perpetual check.

The text move reduces White’s options while offering a few extra ones for Black on the next move.

20.\texttt{c3}

The computer wants to try the cheeky 20...\texttt{xg2}?!N 21.\texttt{g1} \texttt{h3}!, which looks risky, but might appeal to players with strong nerves who trust in their defensive skills.

Another valid possibility is 20...\texttt{d6}f?N 21.\texttt{c2} \texttt{c4} 22.\texttt{h7}f \texttt{xh7} 23.\texttt{xc4} bxc4 24.\texttt{h7}f5 25.\texttt{g6} \texttt{g2} with a roughly equal endgame.

21.\texttt{h7}f+

21.f4 \texttt{e3} 22.\texttt{b1} \texttt{d2} 23.\texttt{d1} \texttt{e4} 24.\texttt{xe4} \texttt{xe4}f 25.\texttt{c1} \texttt{xd1} 26.\texttt{xd1} \texttt{e3}f 27.\texttt{c2} \texttt{g7}f was not what White was hoping for in Lobron – Novikov, Bad Wiessee 1999.

21...\texttt{g7}f?

Black has a safe route to a draw in 21...\texttt{e8} when White has nothing better than repeating with 22.\texttt{f6}f \texttt{f8}, after which a draw was shortly agreed in Kogan – Sutovsky, Ashdod 2006. The text is an attempt to prolong the game.

22.\texttt{c2} \texttt{e8}

The sobering news for Black is that he should not get carried away with overoptimistic attempts to play for the win, as can be illustrated by the line: 22...\texttt{f5}? 23.\texttt{e7}f \texttt{g6} 24.h4 h5 25.g4=−

23.\texttt{b1}
Chapter 14 - 6.c4

23...\(\text{f5}\)

Black does best to avoid the witty 23...\(\text{e4?!}\) 24.\(\text{xe4}\) (24.\(\text{exe4}\) \(\text{exe4}\) 25.\(\text{exe4}\) \(f5\)) 24...\(\text{f5}\) 25.\(\text{c6}\) \(\text{d6}\) 26.a3 (26.\(\text{exe8}\) \(\text{d3}\) 27.\(\text{c1}\) \(\text{d2}\)) 26...\(\text{xc6}\) 27.\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{xe2}\) 28.\(\text{exe8}+\) \(\text{xe8}\) 29.\(\text{d4}+\) \(\text{f7}\) 30.\(\text{e1}\): The black king will remain a target for some time.

24.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{c7}\) 25.\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{f8}\) 26.\(\text{h5}\)+ \(\text{h8}\) 27.\(\text{e1}\) \(\text{d6}\)

The chances are about even, but the battle rages on.

C22122) 15.\(\text{d5}\)

This largely unexplored jump of the knight is very interesting.

15...\(\text{d8}\)

The exchange of queens may not solve all the problems despite the compact position of Black’s pieces. 15...\(\text{e5}\) 16.\(\text{exe5}\) \(\text{exe5}\) 17.\(\text{c7}\)+ \(\text{e7}\) 18.\(\text{xa8}\) \(\text{xa8}\) 19.\(\text{he1}\) \(\text{g2}\) 20.\(\text{e3}\): White can continue to create problems in the endgame.

16.\(\text{f4}\)

This is better than 16.c3?! \(\text{xd4}\) 17.\(\text{cxd4}\) \(\text{a7}\) 18.\(\text{f4}\) (or 18.\(\text{c3}\) \(\text{e7}\)) 18...\(\text{d6}\) when the mighty bishop pair tilted the scales in Black’s favour in Papa – Karjakin, Lausanne 2003.

16...\(\text{xd4}\)

Black can also consider the rarely-seen 16...\(\text{xd4}?!\), which appears risky but should be just about playable. 17.\(\text{xf6}+\) \(\text{e7}\) (better than 17...\(\text{f8}\) 18.\(\text{he1}\) \(\text{e8}\) 19.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{h6}\) 20.\(\text{c3}\)) From this position I only found one game, which continued 18.\(\text{g5}\) (18.\(\text{h4}\) \(\text{N}\) might lead to a draw after 18...\(\text{xe2}\) [adventurous players may gamble for a win with 18...\(\text{h5}?!\)] 19.\(\text{he1}\) \(\text{f3}\) 20.\(\text{hxf7}+\) \(\text{e8}\) 21.\(\text{f6}\)+ \(\text{e7}\) =; Another possibility is 18.\(\text{he1}\) \(\text{c8}\) [18...\(\text{h6}?!\)] when the computer finds several possible drawing lines, but nothing more than that for White.)

18...\(\text{b6}\) (There is also 18...\(\text{e8}\) 19.\(\text{e4}\)+ \(\text{e8}\) 20.\(\text{xd8}+\) \(\text{xd8}\) 21.\(\text{xc5}\) \(\text{g2}\) 22.\(\text{he1}\) \(\text{f7}\) 23.\(\text{xa6}\) \(\text{f3}\) Black should be better in this endgame, as his soon-to-be-passed h-pawn will be a powerful force.) 19.\(\text{d5}\)+ \(\text{f8}\) 20.\(\text{h6}\)+ \(\text{e8}\) 21.\(\text{g7}\) This position was reached in Hegarty – Neuhauser, Dieppe 2009, and here Black could have obtained the upper hand with: 21...\(\text{xb3}\) 22.\(\text{axb3}\) \(\text{xd5}!\) 23.\(\text{wh8}+\) \(\text{e7}\) 24.\(\text{wh7}\) \(\text{h8}\)

17.\(\text{c7}\)+

Insufficient is 17.\(\text{he1}\) \(\text{e5}\) 18.\(\text{exe5}\) \(\text{fxe5}\) 19.\(\text{f6}\)+ \(\text{c7}\) 20.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{d4}\) 21.\(\text{c3}\) (21.\(\text{g4}\)+ \(\text{f8}\) 22.\(\text{exe5}\) \(\text{exe2}\) 23.\(\text{xe2}\) \(\text{g5}\)) 21...\(\text{h6}\) 22.\(\text{wh4}\) (22.\(\text{exe5}\) \(\text{d6}\)) 22...\(\text{f8}\) Black was defending successfully and went on to convert his extra material in J. Houska – Palliser, Swansea 2006.
17...\textit{\textbf{e7}}

After 17...\textit{\textbf{f8}?! 18.\textit{\textbf{he1}} \textit{\textbf{g8} 19.\textit{\textbf{xa8}} \textit{\textbf{axa8}} 20.c3± Black's life will not be sweet after dropping the exchange.}

18.\textit{\textbf{he1}} \textit{\textbf{e5}}

Black can sacrifice an exchange in order to eliminate the queens, but the idea does not quite equalize: 18...\textit{\textbf{d6} 19.\textit{\textbf{xd6}+ \textit{\textbf{xd6}} 20.\textit{\textbf{xa8}} \textit{\textbf{xa8}} 21.c3 \textit{\textbf{c5} 22.cxd4 \textit{\textbf{xd4} 23.e3 b4 24.g3 a5 25.a2 f5 26.b3± Pavasovic – Karjakin, Kallithea 2008.}}}

19.\textit{\textbf{d5}†!}

The obvious eating of the rook is worse: 19.\textit{\textbf{xa8}} \textit{\textbf{xb2}† 20.\textit{\textbf{xb2}} \textit{\textbf{xd1} 21.e3 exf4 22.c7 \textit{\textbf{e5}†}}

19...\textit{\textbf{d6}!}

19...\textit{\textbf{d7}? 20.f5+ \textit{\textbf{d6} 21.c3 \textit{\textbf{c8} 22.f3 \textit{\textbf{e6} 23.b1±}}

20.\textit{\textbf{f5}}

Another possibility is 20.\textit{\textbf{h4N} a5? (Or 20...\textit{\textbf{g8} 21.c3 f5 22.xh7 a5 23.e3 xb3† 24.axb3 \textit{\textbf{f6} 25.xf5 \textit{\textbf{xf5} 26.xf5† \textit{\textbf{c7} 27.cxd4 \textit{\textbf{exg2}} and the ending should be a draw.) 21.xf6 \textit{\textbf{c7} 22.c3 \textit{\textbf{a6} 23.f4 e4 24.d5† (24.cxd4 \textit{\textbf{b4=}) 24...\textit{\textbf{b8} 25.h5 \textit{\textbf{b6} 26.a4∞ This somewhat irrational position is about equal. White's active pieces should provide enough compensation for the missing material.}})

20...\textit{\textbf{c8} 21.\textit{\textbf{f3} h5 22.xf6 \textit{\textbf{g4} 23.d5† \textit{\textbf{c7} 24.xf7† \textit{\textbf{b6} 25.f3 \textit{\textbf{f8} 26.d5† \textit{\textbf{c5} 27.g7!}

After the less accurate 27.g6?! \textit{\textbf{f5 28.xh5 \textit{\textbf{a7} 29.f4 \textit{\textbf{d7 Black consolidated and eventually won with his extra piece in Marton Bardocz – A. Stephenson, Internet 2004.}}}

27...\textit{\textbf{a7} 28.h6 \textit{\textbf{h8}}

In this position a draw was agreed in Marton Bardocz – Kuhne, e-mail 2006.

C222) 12...\textit{\textbf{c6}?!}

The main line is hugely fascinating, but there is no denying that it requires a tremendous amount of home preparation, not to mention strong nerves! The present variation is an interesting way for Black to surprise his opponent with a natural yet unusual development of the last minor piece.
No better is 13.\(\text{exf6}\) exf6 14.\(\text{dxc6}\) xc6 15.\(\text{d5}\) 0–0 0–0 16.\(\text{dxc6}\) xc6 17.0–0 f5\(\text{f5}\) Black has an active position and the superior minor piece.

13...0–0–0 14.\(\text{exd6}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\)

Obviously we should also pay attention to:

14.\(\text{exg7}\)

After this move White wins material, but pays the price by handing the initiative to his opponent.

14...\(\text{e5}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\)

In Darvall – Jovanovic, Canberra 2001, Black preferred 14...\(\text{e7}\). The two moves can lead to the same positions in certain variations, but the main line reduces White's options slightly.

15.\(\text{exf6}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\)

Quieter continuations are not very attractive as the knight on g7 is virtually trapped. One plausible continuation is 15.0–0 \(\text{g4}\) (The calm 15...\(\text{b8}\)? also deserves attention) 16.\(\text{h3}\) (16.\(\text{xd8}\) \(\text{xd8}\) 17.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{g8}\) 18.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{xf7}\)?) 16...h5! 17.\(\text{xe6}\) fxe6 18.\(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{b6}\) 19.\(\text{xd8}\) \(\text{xd8}\) 20.\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{e6}\) 21.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{c6}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) Despite his material disadvantage, Black's tremendously active pieces are the dominant feature of the position.

15...fxe6 16.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{xf6}\) 17.\(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{d7}\)?

Golubev mentioned the more natural-looking 17...\(\text{b8}\) in Chess Today, but the text move helps to set up certain attacking motifs on the light squares; see the note to White's 20th move below for a nice example.

18.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{e8}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) 19.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{xd4}\)

White has three extra pawns, but the question is whether he will survive for long enough to use them. It would be reasonable to finish analysing here, but I decided it would be interesting to explore the position a bit more deeply:

20.\(\text{h4}\)!

White badly needs to get more pieces into play, and I believe this to be the best chance of doing so.

20.\(\text{d1}\)? is a nice way to set up a mating pattern exercise: 20...\(\text{xe2}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) 21.\(\text{xf2}\) \(\text{g4}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) 22.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{h3}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) 23.\(\text{g1}\) \(\text{e2}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) 24.\(\text{xe2}\) \(\text{xb1}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) 20.\(\text{g5}\) is somewhat more resilient, although Black should still prevail as follows: 20...\(\text{xb3}\) 21.\(\text{xb3}\) b4! 22.\(\text{c5}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) \(\text{c6}\) 23.\(\text{c4}\) (23.\(\text{xb4}\) is refuted by 23...\(\text{xe2}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\)) 24.\(\text{xe2}\) \(\text{c6}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) 25.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{d2}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\); 23.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{bxc3}\) 24.\(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{e6}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) The first player has all the pawns but Black is dominating the board.) 23...\(\text{xb3}\) 24.\(\text{xa6}\) \(\text{b7}\) 25.\(\text{xb7}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) \(\text{xb7}\) 26.\(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{c2}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) White may temporarily have five pawns for a bishop, but his pieces are just pathetic.

20...\(\text{b4}\)!

This poses a tricky question to the opponent.

21.\(\text{h3}\)!

This looks like a better try than 21.\(\text{a4}\) \(\text{g4}\) 22.\(\text{f3}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 23.\(\text{gxf3}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 24.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{g5}\) 25.\(\text{hxg5}\) \(\text{h1}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) 21...\(\text{f8}\) 22.\(\text{e5}\) \(\text{f5}\) 23.\(\text{h2}\) \(\text{bxc3}\) 24.\(\text{xc3}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\) \(\text{c6}\)\(\text{\textdagger}\)

White has a slight material advantage, but he will have a hard time dealing with his opponent's continuing initiative.

14...\(\text{xd6}\)
White is trying to block the b7-bishop from taking an active role in the game. The first player gets nowhere with other moves:


Future games will doubtlessly shed more light on 12...l"lf12!, but based on the combination of presently available games and my own analysis, it looks to be fully viable and has the bonus of requiring nowhere near as rigorous preparation as the main line with 12...l"lf7.

Conclusion

The 6.l"le4 system has always been known as a sharp and aggressive choice, and even the relatively calm variation C1 with short castling is anything but boring. Black does not have to panic, and his careful and patient development, possibly in conjunction with the manoeuvre l"lf6-b7, will tame White's initiative.

A different cup of coffee is the wildly popular and ultra-aggressive 8.l"lxe5 l"lf7 9.l"lxe3 l"lf7 (C2), in which each move can make or break the result for either player. Certain lines have been analysed out to a final result, but others have barely been tested. Anybody who enjoys adrenalin-fuelled chess should find rich rewards, although I also made an effort to include less wild options such as the final variation C222) 12...l"lf6, which shows that these rich positions contain something for everyone.
Chapter 15

English Attack

The English Patient - 6.e3 e5

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.d3 f6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 \( \text{\underline{e}f6} \) 5.c3 a6

6.e3 e5

A) 7.dxe2 \( \text{\underline{e}6} \)
   A1) 8.g3
   A2) 8.f4 \( \text{\underline{\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}} \text{bd7} \) 9.f5 \( \text{\underline{e}c4} \)
      A21) 10.g3
      A22) 10.\( \text{\underline{c}} \) c1 d5!
          A221) 11.xc4
          A222) 11.exd5

B) 7.d3 \( \text{\underline{c}} \text{7} \)
   B1) 8.g5
   B2) 8.a4 \( \text{\underline{\text{\textit{\textbf{e}}}}} \) e7
      B21) 9.e2
      B22) 9.a5

C) 7.b3 \( \text{\underline{e}6} \)
   C1) 8.f4 exf4 9.xf4 \( \text{\underline{c}} \) c6
   C11) 10.d2 d5!?
      C111) 11.0-0-0
      C112) 11.exd5
   C12) 10.e2
   C2) 8.d2
   C3) 8.f3 h5!?
      C31) 9.d5
      C32) 9.e2
      C33) 9.d2 \( \text{\underline{\text{\textit{\textbf{d}}}}} \) bd7 10.0-0-0 \( \text{\underline{c}} \) c8 11.b1 \( \text{\underline{e}} \) e7
         C331) 12.d5
         C332) 12.d3
England became a chess force to be reckoned with in the 1980s thanks to an explosion of good players and many novel opening ideas, including what became known as the English Attack – an aggressive system based on the moves e3, f3 and g4, which became a feared weapon against the Scheveningen and Najdorf as well as some other Sicilian variations. In simple terms, White intends to castle long and hurl his g- and h-pawns up the board to threaten the enemy king. It seems a bit crude, but over the years the supporters of White's cause have come up with increasingly sophisticated ways of combining the kingside attacking plan with active operations in the centre and sometimes even on the queenside, depending on his opponent's reaction.

As early as the sixth move, Black faces a fundamental decision regarding whether to advance his e-pawn one or two squares, the choice being largely a matter of personal taste. Given the status of 6.e3 as one of the pre-eminent anti-Najdorf lines at White's disposal, I have decided to offer coverage of both 6...e5 and 6...e6, so that the reader can choose the option that best suits his own style. We will begin by investigating the former in the present chapter.

1.e4 c5 2.d4 d6 3.dxd4 cxd4 4.dxd4 d5 5.e3 a6 6.e3 e5

The pawn formation with ...d6 and ...e5 is arguably the more thematic choice for fans of the Najdorf. Compared with the more reserved 6...e6, Black loses some flexibility in the centre but gains space, while winning a tempo and driving the enemy knight away from its ideal location on d4.

At this point White must make a decision with far-reaching consequences. We will start by considering the slightly quirky A) 7.de2, followed by the more orthodox B) 7.d3 and finally the main line of C) 7.b3.

A) 7.de2

This looks like an odd choice, but White hopes to reposition the knight, usually on g3. The idea has been used with success by several strong players, most notably Nisipeanu, and should certainly be respected.

7...e6

This standard developing move has been Black's normal choice, although several other moves are playable. Here is an exotic one:

7...d4??

It seems a bit cheeky to move the only developed piece for a second time, but the precious bishop cannot move away from e3 due to the nasty possibility of ...b6.

8.d2
8.\textit{d}d5 \textit{d}xe3 9.fxe3 \textit{d}c6 10.\textit{e}c3 \textit{e}e6 11.\textit{e}c4 \textit{e}c7=
8...\textit{d}xe3 9.\textit{w}xe3 \textit{d}e6 10.f4
Or 10.0-0-0 \textit{d}c7 11.\textit{b}b1 \textit{d}d7 12.f4, Ringel – Hummeling, e-mail 1998; 12...g6N with similar ideas to the main line below.

10...g6?!N
This looks like a slight improvement over 10...\textit{d}c7 11.f5 \textit{c}c4 12.\textit{g}g3 \textit{xf}1 13.\textit{xf}1 \textit{d}d7 14.\textit{e}e3 \textit{d}xe3 16.\textit{w}xe3 \textit{xb}6 17.\textit{xb}6 \textit{xb}6 18.0-0-0± Timman – Vazquez Igarza, Amsterdam 2006.
11.0-0-0 \textit{c}c6 12.fxe5 \textit{xe}5 13.\textit{d}d4 \textit{e}c7=
White will find it difficult to achieve much without the dark-squared bishop.

14.h4N
This looks like an improvement over 14.\textit{d}e4 \textit{f}5 15.\textit{f}6\textit{xf}6 16.\textit{xf}6 \textit{h}6 17.\textit{b}4 0–0 when Black already had the upper hand in Haslinger – Esimenko, Port Erin 2007.

8.\textit{g}g3 \textit{d}c6
It is worth mentioning the instructive mistake 8...b5?! as played in Asrian – Thorfinnsson, Kemer 2007. Here White could have punished his opponent’s overly eager opening play with 9.a4!N b4 10.\textit{d}d5 \textit{xd}5 11.\textit{ex}d5 \textit{c}7 12.\textit{c}e2± The combination of White’s bishop pair and Black’s weakened queenside adds up to an unhappy future for the second player.

9.\textit{e}e2 g6?!
9...\textit{d}5 10.\textit{ex}d5 \textit{xd}5 11.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 12.\textit{xd}5 \textit{xd}5 was about equal in Roy Chowdhury – Ramesh, Chennai 2008. Instead the text move aims to keep some complexity in the position, while playing to restrict the knight on g3.

10.\textit{wd}2 h5 11.\textit{d}d5 \textit{xd}5 12.\textit{ex}d5 \textit{d}e7
13.\textit{g}5 \textit{h}7
Black should definitely avoid the greedy 13...\textit{fx}d5? 14.\textit{f}4 \textit{f}5 15.\textit{c}4 when he has real problems.

At this point White can choose between improving his knight with \textbf{A1)} 8.\textit{g}g3 and commencing active operations with \textbf{A2)} 8.f4.
Black has every reason to feel happy with the outcome of the opening.

A2) 8.f4

8...\text{\texttt{bd7}}

This has been the most popular move, although in practice Black has scored most heavily with:

8...g6?

By preventing f5, Black maintains more tension in the position.

9.h3

Here are a few other possibilities:

9.\text{\texttt{d2}} \text{\texttt{c6}} 10.\text{\texttt{g3}} \text{\texttt{xf4}} 11.\text{\texttt{xf4}} \text{\texttt{d5}} Very often the advance of the black d-pawn equalizes, as the knight on g3 will not be terribly useful. 12.\text{\texttt{xd5}} (12.\text{\texttt{g5}} \text{\texttt{d4}} 13.\text{\texttt{d5}} \text{\texttt{g7}} 14.\text{\texttt{c4}} \text{\texttt{h6=}}) 12...\text{\texttt{xd5}} 13.\text{\texttt{xd5}} \text{\texttt{xd5}} 14.\text{\texttt{xd5}} \text{\texttt{xd5}} 15.0-0-0 0-0-0= White had no trace of an advantage and a draw was agreed in Jenni – Vitiugov, Biel 2007.

9.g3 \text{\texttt{bd7}} 10.\text{\texttt{g2}} \text{\texttt{c7}} 11.\text{\texttt{h3}} \text{\texttt{xc8}} 12.0-0 (12.\text{\texttt{g4}} \text{\texttt{xf4}} 13.\text{\texttt{xf4}} 0-0 14.\text{\texttt{xe6}} \text{\texttt{fxe6}}=) 12...b5 (Black should avoid 12...\text{\texttt{xf4}} 13.\text{\texttt{xf4}} 0-0 14.\text{\texttt{xe6}} \text{\texttt{fxe6}} 15.\text{\texttt{h4}}! \text{\texttt{de5}} 16.\text{\texttt{eh3}} \text{\texttt{wd7}} 17.\text{\texttt{d5}} \text{\texttt{f5}}) 13.a3 Parligras – Kovacevic, Dresden 2008, 13...\text{\texttt{c4}} 14.f5 \text{\texttt{eb6}} Black benefits from healthy control over the centre.

9...h5

10.\text{\texttt{fxe5}}

The untested 10.\text{\texttt{d3}} \text{\texttt{c6}} 11.0-0-0 \text{\texttt{xc8}} leads to an interesting position with mutual chances.

The other move to have been tried is 10.g3 \text{\texttt{bd7}} 11.g2 b5 12.b3 This position was reached in Nisipeanu – Dominguez Perez, Foros 2007, and here Black should have played 12...b4N (The game continuation of 12...\text{\texttt{c5}}! was insufficient to equalize.) 13.\text{\texttt{d5}} \text{\texttt{xd5}} 14.\text{\texttt{xf4}} \text{\texttt{f5}} 15.0-0 \text{\texttt{xc8}} 16.\text{\texttt{c1}} \text{\texttt{h6}} 17.\text{\texttt{d2}} 0-0 18.\text{\texttt{xb4}} \text{\texttt{e8}}\text{\texttt{e8}}

With sufficient compensation for Black.

10...\text{\texttt{dxe5}} 11.\text{\texttt{xd8}}\text{\texttt{t}} \text{\texttt{xd8}} 12.0-0-0\text{\texttt{t}} \text{\texttt{bd7}}

In theory White has a slight development advantage, but his ambitions are hampered by the badly-placed knight on e2.

13.\text{\texttt{g1}}?

White decides it is worth investing two tempi to improve the knight.

13.\text{\texttt{g3}}N \text{\texttt{c7}} 14.\text{\texttt{g2}} \text{\texttt{h6}} should be fine for Black.

13...\text{\texttt{c8}}
14.\texttt{\textbackslash .d3}

In the event of 14.\texttt{\textbackslash .f3}, I doubt that Topalov would have hesitated to execute the thematic Sicilian exchange sacrifice: 14...\texttt{\textbackslash .xc3}! 15.\texttt{\textbackslash .xc3} \texttt{\textbackslash .a3}+ 16.\texttt{\textbackslash .b1} \texttt{\textbackslash .xe4} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash .d3} \texttt{\textbackslash .c7}+ Another possibility is 14.\texttt{\textbackslash .g}5 \texttt{\textbackslash .h}6 15.\texttt{\textbackslash .xh}6 \texttt{\textbackslash .h}6 16.\texttt{\textbackslash .f3} \texttt{\textbackslash .e7} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash .g}5 \texttt{\textbackslash .h}4, with no problems for Black.

14...\texttt{\textbackslash .h}6 15.\texttt{\textbackslash .h}6 \texttt{\textbackslash .xh}6 16.\texttt{\textbackslash .f3} \texttt{\textbackslash .e7} 17.\texttt{\textbackslash .g}5 \texttt{\textbackslash .h}4 18.\texttt{\textbackslash .e2} \texttt{\textbackslash .c5} 19.\texttt{\textbackslash .h}f1 \texttt{\textbackslash .e8} 20.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}3 \texttt{\textbackslash .hc}8

Black was at least equal in Nisipeanu – Topalov, Sofia 2007. His pieces are operating in near-perfect harmony, and he went on to win after seizing the initiative with a thematic advance of the queenside pawns.

9.f5

It is doubtful that White can gain much from delaying this advance. One of the rare games in which he attempted to do so continued 9.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}2 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}8 10.\texttt{\textbackslash .f}5 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}4 11.\texttt{\textbackslash .g}3 and now 11...\texttt{\textbackslash .h}5?! led to an double-edged strategic fight in Borisek – Hulak, Murska Sobota 2006. (More orthodox alternatives such as 11...\texttt{\textbackslash .e}7 and 11...\texttt{\textbackslash .b}5 were also quite satisfactory, and can be compared with the main line below.)

9...\texttt{\textbackslash .c}4

10.b3?! is rather risky due to the destabilizing of the knight on c3: 10...\texttt{\textbackslash .xe}2 11.\texttt{\textbackslash .xe}2 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}8 (11...\texttt{\textbackslash .a}5?!N also looks promising, for instance 12.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}2 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}8 13.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}5 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}5 with promising play for Black.) 12.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}2? This suffers from a tactical refutation. (The only chance was 12.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}3!, although Black is still at least equal.) 12...d5! 13.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}x\texttt{\textbackslash .d}5 \texttt{\textbackslash .xe}4 14.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}1 \texttt{\textbackslash .h}4! 15.\texttt{\textbackslash .f}1 \texttt{\textbackslash .g}3† 16.\texttt{\textbackslash .g}1 \texttt{\textbackslash .xh}1 17.\texttt{\textbackslash .xh}1 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}5 and Black soon won the game Todorovic – Aveskulov, Internet 2006.

A21) 10.\texttt{\textbackslash .g}3

From White's point of view, the static structure in the centre is crying out for an exchange of the light-squared bishops. For the time being the knight will be rather passive on g3, but White is dreaming of eventually exchanging it for the f6-knight, or perhaps even re-routing it via f1-e3-d5. It all takes time though...

10...\texttt{\textbackslash .c}8 11.\texttt{\textbackslash .c}4 \texttt{\textbackslash .xc}4 12.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}3 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}7 13.0-0

There is also the more ambitious 13.0-0-0? \texttt{\textbackslash .e}7 14.\texttt{\textbackslash .g}5 (14.\texttt{\textbackslash .f}1 \texttt{\textbackslash .b}5 15.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}2 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}5 16.\texttt{\textbackslash .x}c5 \texttt{\textbackslash .x}c5 17.\texttt{\textbackslash .b}3 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}4, 14...\texttt{\textbackslash .b}5 15.\texttt{\textbackslash .b}1 0-0 16.\texttt{\textbackslash .x}f6?! (White should have preferred 16.\texttt{\textbackslash .h}5, although even here after 16...\texttt{\textbackslash .c}5 17.\texttt{\textbackslash .e}2 \texttt{\textbackslash .c}xe4 18.\texttt{\textbackslash .f}6† \texttt{\textbackslash .x}f6 19.\texttt{\textbackslash .x}f6 \texttt{\textbackslash .x}f6 20.\texttt{\textbackslash .d}5 \texttt{\textbackslash .d}5 White should fight for equality in the position with a missing pawn.) 16...\texttt{\textbackslash .x}f6 17.\texttt{\textbackslash .f}1 White is so close to achieving his dream central clamp with \texttt{\textbackslash .e}3 and \texttt{\textbackslash .d}c5, but he is just one tempo too slow.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

White can choose between two logical knight moves: A21) 10.\texttt{\textbackslash .g}3 and A22) 10.\texttt{\textbackslash .c}1.
17...b4! Of course! 18.\textit{f}d5 \textit{xd}5 19.\textit{f}xd5 \textit{g}5! 20.h4 \textit{h}6 21.\textit{d}3 \textit{c}8\texttt{f} White’s plan has failed, and he is left wondering how to solve the problem of his poorly coordinated pieces, Saric – Palac, Zagreb 2009.

13...\textit{e}7 14.\textit{ac}1 0–0
White has the makings of a huge positional advantage, if only the knight on \textit{g}3 could easily teleport itself to within easy reach of the \textit{d}5-square. But in the absence of such trickery, the reality is that Black’s queenside pressure gives him the upper hand.

15.\textit{d}5
15.\textit{h}5 b5 16.\textit{xf}6\texttt{f} 17.a3 \textit{c}8\texttt{f} Black has strong pressure on the \textit{c}-file, and a sacrifice on \textit{c}3 is a real possibility.

15...\textit{xd}5 16.\textit{exd}5
White has relinquished the piece outpost on \textit{d}5, in the hope of utilizing the \textit{e}4-square to activate or exchange what had previously been his misplaced knight. But even this plan turns out not to be perfect.

16...\textit{f}6 17.c3 \textit{ac}8 18.\textit{fd}1
This position was reached in Van der Weide – Naiditsch, Belgium 2003, and here Black could have cemented his advantage with:

18...\textit{w}a5!N 19.a3 \textit{d}8!
The exchange of Black’s worst-placed piece will be a significant achievement.

20.\textit{df}1 b5 21.h3 \textit{xe}3 22.\textit{xe}3 \textit{b}6\texttt{f}
White will have a hard time defending his weaknesses while preventing Black’s active pieces from infiltrating his position.

A22) 10.\textit{dc}1
This looks like a better try for White.

10...d5!
This well-timed strike should solve all of Black’s opening problems. I also checked the same idea after the preliminary bishop exchange:
10...\textbf{xf1} 11.\textbf{xf1}

And now:

11...d5?!

Here is one other example to illustrate the potential dangers for Black: 11...\textit{c8}
12.\textit{b3} b5 13.a3 \textit{e7} 14.\textit{d3} \textit{c7}
15.0-0-0 \textit{c4} 16.\textit{g5} h6 17.\textit{h4} 0-0
18.\textit{xc4} \textit{xc4} 19.\textit{a5} \textit{c7} 20.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf6}
21.\textit{d5} \textit{xd5} 22.\textit{xd5} \textit{xc8} 23.c3 h5
24.\textit{c2} With a big advantage for White who went on to win the game Nisipeanu – Areshchenko, Foros 2006.

The text move was tried in one high-level game, but White was able to reach a favourable endgame with minimal fuss:

12.\textit{xd5}

12.exd5 transposes to line A222.

12...\textit{xe4} 13.\textit{b3} \textit{d6} 14.\textit{xf6}+ \textit{xf6}
15.\textit{xd8}+ \textit{xd8} 16.\textit{g5} \textit{c7} 17.\textit{xf6} \textit{xf6}
18.c3

We have been following the game Nisipeanu – Gelfand, Turin 2006, which eventually resulted in a win for White. Perhaps Black could have held the position with perfect defence, but I doubt that this would appeal to many of the readers...

After the recommended move, White has tested two natural responses: \textbf{A221) 11.\textit{xc4} dxc4 12.\textit{b3} b5?}

Black can equalize effortlessly with 12...\textit{c5}
13.\textit{e2} \textit{xe3} 14.\textit{xe3} b5 (or 14...\textit{b6} N=) as in H. Pedersen – A. Del Vecchio, e-mail 2006. The text move keeps the position more complicated and challenging for both sides.

13.\textit{e2} b4 14.\textit{d5} \textit{xd5} 15.\textit{exd5} \textit{d6}
16.0-0-0 \textit{d6}

Another possibility was 16...\textit{e4} N 17.\textit{h3} \textit{a5} 18.\textit{b1} 0-0-0 19.\textit{g5} \textit{xd5} 20.\textit{g3} with a messy position.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\begin{scope}[scale=0.5]
\draw (0,0) grid (8,8);
\draw (0,0) rectangle (8,8);
\draw (0,0) -- (8,8);
\draw (0,8) -- (8,0);
\draw (0,8) -- (8,8);
\draw (8,8) -- (8,0);
\draw (8,0) -- (0,0);
\draw (1,1) circle (0.5);
\draw (2,2) circle (0.5);
\draw (3,3) circle (0.5);
\draw (4,4) circle (0.5);
\draw (5,5) circle (0.5);
\draw (6,6) circle (0.5);
\draw (7,7) circle (0.5);
\draw (8,8) circle (0.5);
\draw (1,7) -- (2,6);
\draw (2,6) -- (3,5);
\draw (3,5) -- (4,4);
\draw (4,4) -- (5,3);
\draw (5,3) -- (6,2);
\draw (6,2) -- (7,1);
\draw (7,1) -- (8,0);
\draw (1,1) -- (2,2);
\draw (2,2) -- (3,3);
\draw (3,3) -- (4,4);
\draw (4,4) -- (5,5);
\draw (5,5) -- (6,6);
\draw (6,6) -- (7,7);
\draw (7,7) -- (8,8);
\end{scope}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

17.\textit{g5}

17.\textit{g5} might also lead to tricky complications after 17...\textit{e4}! 18.\textit{e3} 0-0
19.\textit{d4} c3?! (or 19...\textit{e8}?! 20.\textit{xc4} \textit{e5}, with fair compensation for the pawn) 20.\textit{xf6}
\textit{cxb2}+ 21.\textit{xb2} \textit{gxf6} Both kings have been left exposed and the position remains unclear but roughly balanced.

17...\textit{b3}!

This is much more interesting than 17...\textit{h6}
18.\textit{h4} \textit{a5} 19.g5 b3 20.\textit{xb3} \textit{xb3} 21.\textit{xb3}
\textit{hxg5} 22.\textit{hxg5} \textit{xlh1} 23.\textit{lxh1} \textit{g4} 24.\textit{f3}
\textit{xe3} 25.\textit{xe3} \textit{c5}± when Black will have to fight for a draw in the endgame.

18.\textit{xb3}
After 18.axb3 cxb3 19.g5 (19.cxb3 would transpose to the main line below) 19...bxc2 20.dxc2 d7 21.g3 b8 the white king does not feel especially safe.

18...cxb3 19.axb3IN
This is the most challenging approach. Instead after the timid 19.d1 bxa2t 20.a1 e4 21.g2 e5 Black was at least equal in Nisipeanu – Topalov, Vitoria Gasteiz 2007.

19...h6
It is worth taking a moment to slow White’s kingside play. From this position a possible continuation might be:

20.d1 b8 21.g5 hxg5 22.xg5 b6
Compared with the aforementioned game, White’s extra pawn is not especially useful from a materialistic standpoint, but it is extremely helpful in providing additional shielding to his vulnerable king. Nevertheless Black’s counterplay should still be sufficient to keep the game in a state of dynamic equilibrium.

A222) 11.exd5xf1 12.xf1

12...b6
The untested 12...b4?!N also looks reasonable, for instance: 13.e2 b6 14.d3 (14.xb6 xb6 15.d3 0–0 16.0–0–0 g4=)

14...xd5 15.0–0–0 xc3 16.xc3 xd3 17.xd3 d8= The position is peaceful and quite safe for Black.

13...f4
13.g5 did not make much of an impression after 13...b4 14.e2 and draw was agreed in Sakelsek – Czakon, Aschach 2006. In the final position 14...xd5N and 14...xd5N both look comfortable for Black.

13...xd5 14.e2 xe3
Once again the path to a playable position is not narrow, and Black may consider preventing long castling with 14...b4!N 15.e1 c6 16.e5 17.d1 a5 18.g4 (18.e1 0–0 19.d3 c7 20.e2=) 18...h6 19.h4 e4 20.g2 d8 21.g5 hxg5 22.hxg5 d5 23.xe4 xe3 24.xe3 e5= With reasonable compensation, thanks to White’s exposed king.

15.xe3
We have been following the game Nisipeanu – Kempinski, Dresden 2007.

15...d6IN
After the game continuation of 15...c7 16.0–0–0 Black was not doing too badly, but he failed to neutralize his opponent’s initiative
and eventually went down. The point of the text move is to prevent White's intended long castling.

16.\text{\texttt{\textbackslash d}1} e5
16...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}5} 17.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}8} also looks about equal. The main point is that it was worthwhile for Black to lose a tempo with the queen in order to prevent the white king from escaping to c1.

17.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}5} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5} 18.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}d5} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}6} 19.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}3}
White could also consider a more complicated route with 19.f6!? 0-0-0 20.fg7 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}g8} 21.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}3} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash x}g7}, although it is hard to say which side is taking the greater risk here.

19...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}7} 20.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash d}1} 0-0=
White's artificial castling takes time, and it is doubtful that he will be able to arrange his ideal formation with a knight on e4, rooks doubled on the d-file, and so on.

B) 7.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash f}3}

The older idea of retreat to f3 is more dangerous than meets the eye. The knight is inhibiting the potential counterplay with \ldots d6-d5 and can sometimes wreak havoc with jumps to g5 or h4-f5. White generally intends to play a slow positional game with the hope to exploit the minuses of Black's rigid central pawn formation. The antidote I offer has escaped the attention of many players, but it surely equalizes for Black and steals the limelight from White's modest idea.

7...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash c}7}
Black begins by preventing the active development of the enemy bishop on c4. At this point White's two main ideas are B1) 8.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}5} and B2) 8.a4.

B1) 8.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash g}5}
This line used to be tested in the past and the pressure against the f6 knight was seen as a problem. Times and evaluations change, and the current verdict is that Black is doing fine here.

8...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}d7}
A basic rule of thumb for positions involving this pawn structure is that Black should always be ready to meet an exchange of the knight on f6 by recapturing with the other knight, in order to maintain control over d5.

9.a4 \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}6}
9...\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash e}7} is also playable, but leaves White with more options.

10.\textit{\texttt{\textbackslash h}4} \textit{\texttt{\textbackslash b}6}
Players who yearn for a full-blooded battle may wish to investigate:
10...g5?! 11.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{c}5\) 12.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{e}6\) 13.\(\text{e}2\)
\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{g}7\) 14.\(\text{c}4\) Makarichev – Szekely, Frunze 1979, 14...h5N
15...0–0–0 14.0–0 d5
Also interesting is 14...h5 15.h4 \(\text{h}6\)
\(\text{a}3\) g4 with double-edged play, Topalov – Karjakin, Benidorm (rapid) 2003.
15.exd5 \(\text{xd}5\) 16.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 17.b4 \(\text{e}6\)

18.c4?!
Better was 18.b5N h5 19.bxa6 \(\text{c}5\) 20.\(\text{xb}5\) \(\text{f}5\) 21.h3 \(\text{xb}6\)$ In an unbalanced position the black king feels naked and the white one trampled on; the outcome is wide open.
18...\(\text{x}g2\) 19.\(\text{x}g2\) \(\text{xb}4\) 20.\(\text{a}2\) h5 21.h3
This position was reached in Kobalia – Onischuk, Moscow 2009, and here Black could have obtained the upper hand with:
21...\(\text{f}f4\)†!N 22.\(\text{x}f4\) \(\text{g}xf4\) 23.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{h}g8\)†
24.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{xd}2\) 25.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{zd}2\) 26.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{e}4\)†

11.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{b}7\) 12.\(\text{c}4\)
Unimpressive is 12.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}7\) 13.\(\text{c}4\) 0–0
14.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{d}5\) 15.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 16.exd5 \(\text{b}4\)†
17.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{e}4\) 18.\(\text{h}3\) David – Preuss, Cappelle 2009. Here it looks logical for Black to continue 18...\(\text{c}5\)N 19.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}5\)† With somewhat better chances thanks to White’s misplaced king.

12...\(\text{e}7\) 13.0–0
Sometimes White switches the move order around with 13.\(\text{e}2\) 0–0 14.0–0., but it makes no real difference either way.

13...0–0 14.\(\text{e}2\) g5! 15.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{c}5\)
It was necessary to prevent the exchange on \(f6\) before playing this move. White’s pieces are in no position to exploit the weakened kingside, and as long as Black plays energetically he should have no problems at all.

16.f3 \(\text{e}6\)

17.\(\text{x}e6\)†?
White is parting with the bishop in the hope of exerting pressure against the \(d6\)-pawn.

17...\(\text{f}6\) 18.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{x}c4\) 19.\(\text{xc}4\) \(\text{xb}8\)
Thanks to this elementary tactical defence, Black has just enough time to cover his weak spots.
Black is ready to defend the d6-pawn with ...\textit{d}e8 and thus kept a fully viable position in Hübner – Hjartarson, Tilburg 1988.

11.a5?! The opening the queenside helps to facilitate Black's counterplay. 11...\textit{bxa5} 12.\textit{e}g5 \textit{bd}7 13.\textit{d}d2 \textit{h}6 14.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 15.\textit{e}c4 \textit{d}8 16.\textit{xa}5 (16.b3 \textit{b}4 17.\textit{d}3 \textit{e}6\texttt{#}) 16...\textit{b}4 17.\textit{a}4 \textit{xa}4 18.\textit{xa}4 \textit{xe}4 19.\textit{cb}6 \textit{b}7 20.\textit{d}d5 \textit{d}7 (or 20...\textit{xd}5\texttt{#}) 21.\textit{xd}5 \textit{f}6 22.\textit{c}4 \textit{c}8\texttt{#} 21.\textit{ab}6 \textit{c}6\texttt{#} White's active pieces were not enough to compensate for the missing pawn in Bologan – Naiditsch, Sibenik 2009.

11.\textit{e}e1 \textit{b}7 12.\textit{d}d5 \textit{xd}5 13.\textit{exd}5 \textit{d}7 14.\textit{c}4 \textit{a}5! After fixing the structure on the queenside Black will be free to direct his attention to the kingside. 15.\textit{c}c2 \textit{c}5 16.\textit{a}3 \textit{d}8 17.\textit{f}4 \textit{xf}4 (or 17...f5\texttt{#}) 18.\textit{b}5 \textit{f}6 19.\textit{d}2 \textit{d}7 20.\textit{d}d3 \textit{g}6 21.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5\texttt{#} 18.\textit{xf}4 \textit{a}6 19.\textit{c}2 \textit{f}6\texttt{#} Atlas – Gallagher, Switzerland 1996.

11.\textit{e}e1 \textit{b}7 12.\textit{d}d2 (12.\textit{h}4 \textit{g}6 13.g3 \textit{b}7 14.\textit{g}2 \textit{f}e8 15.\textit{f}3 \textit{ac}8 16.\textit{e}3 \textit{b}8 17.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 18.\textit{e}e1 \textit{c}5 19.\textit{d}3 \textit{ec}8 20.\textit{ad}1 \textit{f}8 After a period of logical manoeuvring by both sides the position remained equal in Adams – Svidler, Dortmund 1998.) 12...\textit{h}6 13.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 14.\textit{c}4 \textit{e}6 15.\textit{f}3 \textit{c}5 16.\textit{d}3 \textit{ec}8 17.\textit{e}2 \textit{a}5 18.\textit{d}d1 \textit{g}6 19.\textit{a}6 \textit{c}7 20.\textit{b}5 \textit{d}7\texttt{#} Black was suffering on the light squares but dominating on the dark ones in Gharamian – Morozevich, Zürich 2009.

11...\textit{bd}7

It is worth mentioning that 11...\textit{b}7 is less exact due to 12.\textit{h}4! when the f5-square is a source of concern.

12.\textit{c}4 \textit{b}8\texttt{#}N

By avoiding the queen exchange Black maintains more tension in the position. Furthermore, the retreat may simply be the
most accurate move. I was unable to find a clear path to equality with the alternative:

12...\textit{\=W}xc4 13.\textit{\=W}xc4 \textit{\=b}7 14.\textit{\=d}2 \textit{\=a}c8 15.\textit{\=d}f1

In the event of 15.\textit{\=f}3, Moussard – Khachykian, Moscow 2008, Black can consider 15...d5?!N (The game continuation of 15...\textit{\=f}d8 should also be okay.) 16.\textit{\=x}d5 (16.exd5 \textit{\=b}4=) 16...\textit{\=e}xd5 17.exd5 \textit{\=f}6 18.\textit{\=x}b6 \textit{\=x}d5 19.\textit{\=x}d5 \textit{\=x}d5 20.c3 \textit{\=f}5

Black’s bishop pair and active pieces give him interesting compensation for the pawn (analysis by Short).

15...\textit{\=g}4?!N

This was my attempt to improve over the following passive approach, which soon led to a depressing position for Black: 15...\textit{\=c}7 16.\textit{\=f}3 \textit{\=c}e8 17.\textit{\=b}3 \textit{\=h}5 18.\textit{\=f}2 \textit{\=f}8 19.\textit{\=f}1 \textit{\=g}6 (19...\textit{\=x}c4 20.bxc4 \textit{\=x}c4 21.\textit{\=d}3\texttt{=f}0 20.\textit{\=e}3\texttt{=f}0

Short – Gelfand, Novgorod 1996.

16.\textit{\=d}5 \textit{\=x}e3 17.\textit{\=f}xe3 \textit{\=x}d5 18.\textit{\=x}d5 \textit{\=d}8 19.c3 \textit{\=e}6

Black should hold this ending, but White has some chances to press. The doubled e-pawns are not ideal, but nor are they a serious handicap for White.

13.\textit{\=h}4?!

This seems like the most challenging response.

In the event of 13.\textit{\=b}3 \textit{\=b}7 14.\textit{\=d}2 \textit{\=c}5 15.\textit{\=x}b6 \textit{\=c}xe4, the exchange of a wing pawn for a central one is a pleasant bargain for Black.

Another harmless continuation is 13.\textit{\=f}d1 \textit{\=c}5 14.\texttt{a}5 \texttt{b}5 15.\textit{\=b}4 \textit{\=c}7 with equality.

13...\textit{\=c}5 14.\textit{\=f}5 \textit{\=d}8!

This retreat may seem a little passive, but we should not forget that the knight on f5 is somewhat unstable and vulnerable to ...\textit{\=c}xe4 tricks.
19.\( \text{d}e3 \)

19.\( \text{d}g3 \) \( \text{w}xd6 \) 20.\( \text{w}xd6 \) \( \text{c}7 \) gives Black decent compensation for a pawn. His dark-squared bishop is strong and the imminent pressure on the b-file will be annoying for White.

19...\( \text{w}xb2 \) 20.\( \text{w}xe5 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 21.\( \text{w}xd7 \) \( \text{x}a1\uparrow \)

22.\( \text{w}d1 \) \( \text{c}7\uparrow \)

After a logical series of moves from both sides, the game could well be destined to end in a repetition after 23.\( \text{w}d4 \) \( \text{b}6 \), or 23.\( \text{w}f6 \) \( \text{d}8 \).

B22) 9.a5

This has been by far the most popular choice. White wants to fix the queenside structure and rob the opponent of some flexibility.

12...d5!

This thematic break more or less frees Black’s game. White still keeps something of a bind on the queenside, but it should not be too serious.

13.exd5

13.0–0 \( \text{b}4 \) gave Black no reason to complain in Agustsson – Browne, Reykjavik 1988.

13...\( \text{d}x\text{d}5 \) 14.\( \text{d}x\text{d}5 \) \( \text{w}x\text{d}5 \) 15.0–0

15...\( \text{e}6 \)

I also spent some time analysing 15...\( \text{f}5 \), but eventually settled on the text move after discovering an interesting new possibility for Black on move 17.
16.c3!
This is the most challenging option, although the second of the following alternatives also demands some attention:

16...b5 17.b3 f5 18.axe2 d5 19.c4 d7 a6 17.8c8 was equal in Mestel – Chandler, Southampton 1986.

16...c4 b5!
This move is an important resource for Black, and constitutes the main argument in favour of developing his bishop on e6 instead of f5. All other moves lead to a bad position.

17.b3 e4 18.d1 g5 19.d3
19...e7? (The straightforward 19...e7 is equal) 20.xd8 xd8 21.e1 d4 22.d1 (22.d1 f5) 22...g6! 23.f3 c3 24.f4 (24.d3 xc4 25.xc4 e5 26.c3 c2 27.d4 exf1=wd+ 28.xf1 xd8) 24...f6 25.e1 bxc3 26.d8 c5 27.xc3 c5 28.wf2 a5

19...e5
Black's pieces are beginning to acquire some harmony, and he now threatens to obtain serious counterplay by rolling his f-pawn down the board.

20.fd1!N
This is much better than the slow 20.c4? f5 21.ad1 f4 22.g4 f5 23.f3 e3± Blank – Kover, e-mail 1999.

20...f5?! is more complicated but roughly as good: 21.wf1 f4 22.wc4 xd5 23.wxe6 wd6 24.b3 f5 25.xb7 e7 (25...e5 26.c5±) 26.c5 d5 27.c4 f8 28.wx2 xa5!

21.wd6 xd6 22.axd6 bxc6 23.axb6 ad8 24.ad1
24.c6?! does not quite work: 24...xc6 25.b7 a7 26.axa6 b8
24...xd6 25.xd6 xh8

With an equal endgame.

16...d8
I find this to be the only fully playable move. 16...ad8?! is unsatisfactory due to: 17.xd8 xd8 18.c4! e4 19.f3!

17.c4

17...b5?!N
This is a slightly risky-looking novelty, but quite a promising one in my view. Black aims to solve all his problems by taking a concrete approach to the position.

17...xb6 18.axb6 xd1 is playable, but the ending after 19.xd1 is just a little more comfortable for White, with almost zero winning chances for Black.

18.d6
The slower approach leads nowhere for White: 18.b3 e4 19...c2 bxb8 (19...f5?!) 20...xe4 xb3 21...d3 g6 22...c5 e7 23...xe7 cxe7=

**18...xb2 19...d3**

Black looks to be in great danger, but fortunately there is a way out:

19...e4!
19...a2 20...e4 xb6 21.axb6 ab8 leads to a position where Black has no sensible moves, so after 22.h4!! he is probably close to losing. For instance, 22...h8 23...xb7 xb7 24...d3! and 22...a5 23...b5 are dangerous; 22...f8 23...xa2! just wins, and 22...g6 23.h5 looks very uncomfortable.

20...xe4
20...xe4 xb6 21.axb6 xb6 22...f1 c7=

20...f5

8...e6

Now we will consider the somewhat non-traditional but still potent C1) **8...f4**, followed by the standard moves for the English Attack: C2) **8...d2** and C3) **8...f3**. The latter two can transpose to one another, although independent possibilities do exist.

8...d5 is less effective than in some other positions, as Black does not have to worry about dx7 ideas, so he can reinforce the knight with 8...bd7 and threaten the e4-pawn. Here is an example: 9.f3 xd5 10.exd5 f5 11...e2 xe7 12...d2 a5 13.0–0 a4 14...c1 0–0= Lukin – Gelfand, Klaipeda 1988.

8...e2

Technically speaking, this transposes to the 6...e2 e5 line. Given that in Chapter 13 I recommend meeting 6...e2 with 6...e6, you may wonder if the text move presents a repertoire problem for readers who prefer to meet 6...e3 with 6...e5. I do not see it as an important issue. For one thing, the majority of players who wish to play the white side of this position are more likely to use the 6...e2
move order instead of 6.e3. Moreover, having committed his bishop to e3 so early, White has robbed himself of one of the more dangerous plans involving a quick 0–0 followed by 0-0 and f4, as a subsequent ...exf4, exf4 would cost White a tempo.

If you do encounter this position, I recommend that you play:

8...e6

The idea is to delay ...e7 and play for a quick ...e8, and possibly ...b6-c4. This steers the game away from a transposition to the normal 6.e2 e5 lines, and aims to cast a shadow over the early development of the white bishop on e3. Here are some examples:

9.0–0 e8?

10.a4

10.f3 b6 11.h1 c4 saw Black execute his plan with a nice position in Kaderabek – Vokac, Budejovice 1999.

10.h1 xc3!? 11.bxc3 xe4 gives Black promising compensation, and in the following encounter White quickly collapsed under the strain of the drastic change in the position: 12.f3 d5 13.e1 c7 14.d4? exd4 15.xd4 d5--+ Abramov – Nevostruev, Kemerovo 2009.

10.f4 c7 11.f5 c4 12.xc4 xc4 13.d2 e8 14.h1 b5 15.a3 c7 was equal in Smuk – Fercec, Pula 2001.

10...b6!

Black has just enough time to execute the desired knight manoeuvre before White seals up the queenside with a5.

11.a5 c4 12.xc4 xc4 13.e1 e7 14.b6 d7 15.c1 e6 16.a2 d8

Black has equalized comfortably, Smeets – Karjakin, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

C1) 8.f4

With this move White kisses goodbye to the standard positions of the English Attack. On the other hand the idea of an early conflict could be attractive for many players.

8...exf4 9.e4 c6

At this point White almost always prepares for long castling with either C11) 10.d2 or C12) 10.e2. Quieter moves such as 10.e2 do not need to be taken too seriously, as White will reach a tempo-down version of a standard position, usually reached via a 6.e2 e5 move order, in which White's dark-squared bishop would has taken two instead of the usual one move to recapture on f4.

C11) 10.d2

White hopes to castle, attack the d6-pawn and start a kingside attack as quickly as possible.
Can Black really be entitled to play so actively at this stage of the game? I think he can, and the practical results have tended to support this view. White can choose between C111) 11.0–0–0 and C112) 11.exd5.

C111) 11.0–0–0

Castling is certainly adding oil to the flames, but fortunately Black is not without resources.

11...dxe4

11...b4!? is a worthy alternative: 12.d3 bxc3 13.bxc3 0–0 14.exd5 (Or 14.e5 b4 15.e3 b8 16.d3 c7 17.b1 Kaminski – Baburin, Vienna 1995, and now after

17...b4?N 18.c1 a5 the white king begins to feel the heat.) 14...xd5 15.g3 c8 16.d6

16...e8 (16...cb4?!, Iordachescu – Van Blitterswijk, Wijk aan Zee 2002, is interesting but perhaps not quite correct: 17.xb4!N exc2† 18.b1 xxb4 19.xd8 exd8 20.d3 exf4 21.exf4 22.xb2 23.xc3 f4 24.g3± Black will struggle to survive, despite having two pawns for the exchange.) 17.c5 f6 18.d3N (18.d2 h6! was awkward for White in Perez Garcia–Cornejo, e-mail 2003.) 18...cb4 19.a3 a2† 20.b1 a3 21.bxc3 xc3† 22.c1 a2† with perpetual check.

12.xe4 dxe4 13.e3 f6 14.xe4 e7 15.d3

White has a slight edge in activity, but Black should be able to neutralize his opponent’s modest initiative without too many problems.
15...\(\text{Qb}4\)
15...\(\text{Qd}5\) has also been played, but eliminating the d3-bishop looks safest to me.

16.\(\text{Qe}5\)
16.\(\text{Qd}4\) \(\text{Qd}5\) 17.\(\text{Qf}5\) \(\text{Qxd}3\)† 18.\(\text{Qxd}3\) 0–0 gave Black no problems in Iordachescu – S. Hansen, Malmo/Copenhagen 2005.

16...\(\text{Qg}5\)† 17.\(\text{Qb}1\)
17.\(\text{Qf}4\) \(\text{Qf}6\) repeats.

17...\(\text{Qd}5\)
After 17...\(\text{Qd}8?!\) 18.\(\text{Qh}4\) \(\text{Qg}4\) 19.\(\text{Qxb}7\) Black failed to equalize in Recuero Guerra – Perez Garcia, Seville 2009.

18.\(\text{We}1\)
This position occurred in Baramidze – Ringoir, Liverpool 2008. At this point Black should have played:

19.\(\text{Qc}3\) \(\text{Qxd}3\) 20.\(\text{Qxd}3\) \(\text{Qxb}3\) 21.\(\text{Qxb}3\)
21.\(\text{Qg}3\) \(\text{Qxc}2\)† 22.\(\text{Qa}1\) \(\text{Qfe}8\) 23.\(\text{Qxg}5\) \(\text{Qxg}5\) should be fine for Black.

21...\(\text{Qf}6=\)

White's pieces are marginally more active, but it is unlikely to lead to anything.

\[\text{C112) 11.\text{exd}5 \text{Qxd}5}\]

12.\(\text{Qxd}5\)
12.0–0–0?! allows 12...\(\text{Qb}4\)! , forcing a damaging of White's pawns. 13.\(\text{We}1\) \(\text{Qxc}3\) 14.\(\text{Qxc}3\) \(\text{We}7\) 15.\(\text{Qd}2\) 0–0\!N (In the following game Black soon made an easy perpetual:
15...0–0–0 16.\(\text{Qb}1\) \(\text{Qa}3\) 17.\(\text{Qd}3\) \(\text{Qdb}4\) 18.\(\text{Qxb}4\) \(\text{Qxd}3\) 19.\(\text{Qxd}3\) \(\text{Qxb}3\) 20.\(\text{Qxb}3\) \(\text{Qxb}3\)† 21.\(\text{Qa}1\) and a draw in Hellers – Malishauskas, Oslo 1992. The second player can play more ambitiously though.) 16.\(\text{Qd}3\) \(\text{Qad}8\) 17.\(\text{Qb}1\) \(\text{Qfe}8\)† Black's chances are higher as White's king is unhappy.

12...\(\text{Qxd}5\) 13.\(\text{Qxd}5\)
After 13.0–0–0 \(\text{Qxd}2\)† 14.\(\text{Qxd}2\) \(\text{Qd}8\) 15.\(\text{Qxd}8\)† \(\text{Qxd}8\) 16.\(\text{Qe}2\) \(\text{Qe}7\) 17.\(\text{Qf}3\) \(\text{Qc}8\) 18.\(\text{Qd}1\) \(h5\) White failed to get even a symbolic advantage in Leko – Sadler, Budapest 1993.

13...\(\text{Qxd}5\) 14.0–0–0 0–0–0
All White's attempts to squeeze some advantage have ended up buried in the sand, and Black can look to the future with optimism.

15.\(\text{Qe}2\)
White gets nowhere with 15.g3 d6! 16.exd6 (Another game continued 16.h3 f5 17.exf5 gxf5 18.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)c7 19.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)f4 d6 20.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)xd8 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)xd8 21.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)xd8 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)xd8 22.d4 e5 23.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)d2 g5 25.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)e4 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)d4 26.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)c3 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)e7 \(1/2-1/2\) Gallagher - Gelfand, Biel 2000.) 16...exd6 17.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)c4 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)xf4t 18.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)xf4 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)e5 19.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)e2 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)e8 20.\(\text{\underline{d}}\)d1 Malisauskas - Dvoirys, Biel 1993. Here the most accurate continuation looks to be: 20...e4 \(1/2=\) Black does not feel any pain due to his perfect coordination.

15...g6

Another decent line is: 15...d6 16.exd6 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)xd6 17.\(\text{\underline{h}}\)f1 (17.\(\text{\underline{c}}\)4 \(\text{\underline{g}}\)xg2 18.\(\text{\underline{g}}\)xg1 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)xd1t 19.\(\text{\underline{e}}\)xd1 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)e4 20.\(\text{\underline{g}}\)xg7 \(\text{\underline{g}}\)g6 21.h4 \(\text{\underline{d}}\)d7 22.h5 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)e7+t) 17...\(\text{\underline{e}}\)hd8= The rooks doubled on the d-file promise easy equality.

16.\(\text{\underline{g}}\)h1 \(\text{\underline{e}}\)c7 17.g3 \(\text{\underline{h}}\)e8=

Black was absolutely fine and a draw was soon agreed in Yudasin - Gelfand, Biel 1993.

C12) 10.\(\text{\underline{w}}\)e2

The queen on e2 is preventing the advance of the d6-pawn. At the same time it will enable e4-e5 threats after long castling. The downside is tied with the need to prevent ...\(\text{\underline{g}}\)g4 before sending the king to the queenside.

15.exd5N \(\text{\underline{w}}\)xb2 16.\(\text{\underline{w}}\)xe6t \(\text{\underline{e}}\)d8 17.\(\text{\underline{b}}\)b1 \(\text{\underline{w}}\)xc3t 18.\(\text{\underline{d}}\)d2 \(\text{\underline{w}}\)g3t 19.\(\text{\underline{d}}\)d1 \(\text{\underline{w}}\)xa3 20.\(\text{\underline{b}}\)xb7 The black king is unlikely to survive the pressure.

11.\(\text{\underline{h}}\)3

Preparing to castle.
11...\textit{d}d7
This is the main line. Black will transfer one of the knights to e5, seizing the important central outpost while conveniently shielding the d6-pawn. It is also useful to open the d8-h4 diagonal for the dark-squared bishop.

12.0–0–0 \textit{c}ce5
Sometimes Black uses the other knight, but I think it is more logical to clear the c-file for the rook.

13.\textit{d}d5
White has tried a few different approaches here, and it is hard to say exactly which is best. Here are some other examples:

\hspace{1em}13.g4 \textit{c}c8 14.\textit{w}e1 \textit{c}c7 15.\textit{b}b1 \textit{b}b6 16.\textit{d}d4 was seen in the game Amonatov – Slizhevsky, Voronezh 2007, and now after 16...0–0N 17.\textit{w}f2 \textit{bc}4 Black has promising counterplay.

\hspace{1em}13.\textit{b}b1 \textit{c}c8 14.\textit{d}d5 \textit{xd}5 15.exd5 0–0 (or 15...\textit{g}g5N 16.g3 0–0 17.\textit{d}d2 \textit{xf}4 18.gxf4 \textit{g}g6=) 16.g4 \textit{g}g5 The active dark-squared bishop helps the defender to slow down White’s progress on the kingside. 17.\textit{xe}5 \textit{e}e8 18.h4 \textit{xe}5 19.\textit{g}g2 \textit{e}e3 20.g5 \textit{c}c5= Movsesian – Palac, Neum 2004.

13.\textit{xd}5 14.\textit{xd}5
14.exd5 \textit{g}g5 15.g3 0–0= seems comfortable enough for Black.

14...0–0
The position is dynamically balanced. White has the two bishops, but Black’s pieces have good prospects on the dark squares. The development of mutual attacks could easily see the game sharpen in the near future.

15.h4
The kingside attack is not only a logical plan in itself, but it also provides a convenient way for the theoretically ‘undeveloped’ kingside pieces to find a useful purpose.

15...\textit{c}c8 16.g4
The more modest 16.g3 does not bring White much after 16...\textit{b}b6 17.\textit{d}d1 \textit{f}f6=.

16.\textit{c}c7
Black can even get away with the prankish move: 16...\textit{h}x\textit{h}4? 17.\textit{h}h2 g5 18.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 19.\textit{e}e2 \textit{e}e8 with unclear play. Still, I would imagine most players would be more comfortable with the text move.

17.g5 \textit{b}b6 18.\textit{d}d4
Another game continued 18.\textit{d}d1 \textit{a}a4 19.\textit{b}b1 (or 19.\textit{h}h3N f6 20.\textit{xe}5 fxe5 21.\textit{b}b1 \textit{f}f4= Black is completely safe, with active pieces and opposite-coloured bishops.) 19...b5 20.\textit{xe}5 Exchanging this bishop shows a lack of ambition, but White was obviously fed up with the powerful knight. 20...\textit{d}xe5 21.\textit{h}h3 \textit{d}d8 with an easy game for Black, Ye – Masse, Quebec 2007.

18...a5!
White is suddenly struggling to meet the advance of the daring pawn.
19.\(\text{h}3\)

19.\(\text{h}xa5\) is well met by 19...\(\text{a}8\) 20.\(\text{b}5\) (20.\(\text{b}3\) \(\text{e}xa2+\)) 20...\(\text{c}8!\) 21.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{bd}7\) 22.\(\text{a}4\) \(\text{c}5\+\).

19.a3?! a4 20.\(\text{a}1\) \(\text{e}c4\+) is also unappealing for White.

19...a4 20.\(\text{a}1\)

20.\(\text{c}3?\) is refuted by 20...\(\text{a}xb3!\) 21...\(\text{b}xa2--\) Reincarnation of the black queen is the last thing White needs.

Perhaps 20.\(\text{a}5?\) would have been a better attempt, although Black still remains on top with 20...\(\text{g}6!\):

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
1 & & & & & \text{c3} & & & \\
2 & & & \text{h}2 & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & \text{xh}4 & & \\
4 & & & & & & \text{xg}5 & & \\
5 & & & & & & \text{xf}4 & & d5 \\
6 & & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & & \\
8 & & & & & & & & \\
\end{array}
\]

21.\(\text{e}3\) (I also analysed the following variation
21.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{xh}4!\) 22.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{xg}5+\) 23.\(\text{f}4\) d5 
24.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xe}4\) 25.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xf}8\) 26.\(\text{d}3\) f5 
27.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{d}5\) 28.\(\text{bc}4\) \(\text{xf}4\) 29.\(\text{xc}7\) \(\text{xd}3+\) 
30.\(\text{cxd}3\) \(\text{xd}2+\) 31.\(\text{xd}2\) \(\text{xc}7\) 32.\(\text{xc}7\) \(\text{xd}7+\)
21...a3 22.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{xb}2+\) 23.\(\text{xb}2\) \(\text{e}5+\) White’s defensive wall has been compromised, and Black’s chances are higher.

20...\(\text{f}6!\)

Black finds a perfect way to introduce another piece to the game.

21.\(\text{e}3\)

21.\(\text{g}6?!\) \(\text{g}6\) 22.\(\text{h}2\) \(\text{e}5+\) 

21...\(\text{b}8\)N

This looks like a slight improvement over 21...\(\text{c}6\), although after 22.\(\text{d}1\) \(\text{f}g5\) 23.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{ce}8\) Black still had good reason to feel satisfied in Shirov – Gelfand, Chalkidiki 1993.

22.\(\text{xc}8\) \(\text{xc}8\+)

The white knight on \(a1\) is a model “anti-piece”, and the first player must battle to equalize.

C2) 8.\(\text{d}2\)

The potential knight jump to \(g4\) is not really a threat at this stage, so White sometimes delays \(f3\) for another move. In the great majority of cases he will follow up with \(f3\), leading to line C3 below. Here we will focus on some independent possibilities.
8...\(\text{bd7}\) 9.f4!?
This shares some obvious similarities with line C1 above, but does not transpose directly to our proposed repertoire.

9.0-0-0 should be met by 9...\(\text{c8}\), when White almost always reacts with 10.f3 or 10.f4, transposing to either line C33 below, or the main line of the present variation respectively.

9...\(\text{c8}\)!

The other main option is 9...exf4 10.xf4 \(\text{c5}\) 11.0-0-0 \(\text{e7}\) 12.d4 0-0, when Black should be doing okay. However, I consider the text move to be even more promising and tricky for White to handle.

10.0-0-0

Harmless is 10.d3 \(\text{e7}\) 11.f5 \(\text{c4}\) 12.e2 (12.xc4 \(\text{xc4}\) 13.d3 \(\text{c7}\) 14.0-0 0-0) 12.b5 13.d2 xd3 14.xd3 0-0 15.0-0 b4 16.a4 d5 17.fc1 a5+ Jenni – Baramidze, Olbia 2008.

White is not sufficiently prepared to fight for the central light squares by advancing his f-pawn:
10.f5 \(\text{xb3}\) 11.axb3 d5!

Please note the importance of this thematic advance, which frees Black's position generally, and especially his dark-squared bishop. We will see the same idea on move 13 in the main line below.

White has tested both captures, without achieving anything special at all.

a) 12.exd5 \(\text{b4}\) 13.d3 \(\text{c5}\) 14.e4 14.xc5?! \(\text{xc5}\) 15.0-0-0 \(\text{a5}\)N (Even better than 15...\(\text{xc3}\) 16.bxc5 \(\text{xd5}\) 17.f3 \(\text{xd1}\) 18.xd1 \(\text{d1}\) 19.xd1 \(\text{e4}\) Rodriguez Vila – Bittencourt, Vitoria 2006.) 16.g3 0-0+ White will be punished for his reckless play, offering all the trumps to the enemy.

14...\(\text{xc3}\)†

There is a second equalizing line available in 14...\(\text{d6}\) 15.xc5 (15.0-0-0 0-0 16.b1 \(\text{xc3}\) 17.c3 \(\text{d8}\) 18.e1 \(\text{c7}\)– Mortensen – Matthiesen, Denmark 2009) 15...\(\text{xc5}\) 16.xc5 \(\text{xc5}\) 17.0-0-0 \(\text{xc3}\) 18.bxc3 \(\text{xd5}\) 19.e2 \(\text{xd1}\) 20.xd1 \(\text{e7}\) The endgame in Kristjansson – Browne, Reykjavik 1986, was perfectly fine for the second player.

15.bxc3N

This is much safer than 15.xc3 0-0! 16.0-0-0 (16.xc5 \(\text{xd5}\) 17.d2 \(\text{xc5}\) 18.0-0-0 \(\text{b6}\) 19.e4 \(\text{f6}\)† 16...\(\text{xd5}\) 17.e1 \(\text{xb3}\)† 18.b1 \(\text{c7}\) 19.xd5 \(\text{xc2}\)† 20.a2 Gonzales – Hmadi, Thessaloniki 1984, 20...\(\text{e4}\)N 21.xb3 \(\text{xd5}\)† 22.a3 \(\text{c2}\)† 15...\(\text{xd5}\) 16.bxd5 \(\text{xd5}\) 17.d2 \(\text{e7}\) Black's two active knights manage to compensate for the opponent's bishop pair.
b) 12.\texttt{\textdagger}xd5 \texttt{\textdagger}xe4 13.e2
13.a5 \texttt{\textdagger}xa5 14.bxa5 \texttt{\textdagger}d6 15.a2
(15.c3 \texttt{\textdagger}xf5 16.b4 \texttt{\textdagger}xe3 17.c3 \texttt{\textdagger}d6\texttt{\textdagger}
This was Paneque – Herrera, Bayamo 1990, and now the simplest route to a big advantage
would have been: 15...\texttt{\textdagger}xc2!N 16.e1 \texttt{\textdagger}xb2
17.e1 \texttt{\textdagger}xd2 18.e1 \texttt{\textdagger}xf5
The present position was reached in the
game Nikolenko – Odeev, Naberezhnye
Chelny 1988, as well as a few subsequent
games.

13...\texttt{\textdagger}b6!N
This great novelty should eliminate all the risk
connected with the tempting line 13...\texttt{\textdagger}h4\texttt{\textdagger}
14.g3 \texttt{\textdagger}xg3 15.hxg3 \texttt{\textdagger}xh1 16.0–0–0, when
practice has shown that Black has some
difficulties.
14.d3
The modest retreat may well be the only way
for White to maintain equality.
14.c3 \texttt{\textdagger}c3 15.d3 \texttt{\textdagger}d2 16.e1 \texttt{\textdagger}e3 17.e1 \texttt{\textdagger}xb4 \texttt{\textdagger}xb6--.
Somewhat better, but still uninspiring for
White, is 14.e1 \texttt{\textdagger}xe6 15.bxc3 \texttt{\textdagger}d4 16.c3 \texttt{\textdagger}d6\texttt{\textdagger}
14...\texttt{\textdagger}xc3 15.bxc3 \texttt{\textdagger}c7 16.e4
16.0–0–0–0 allows Black to force a draw with
16...\texttt{\textdagger}a4? Obviosly this is not forced,
and ambitious players could continue the
fight in the double-edged position. 17.bxa4
\texttt{\textdagger}a3\texttt{\textdagger} 18.b1 \texttt{\textdagger}xc3 19.d4 \texttt{\textdagger}b4\texttt{\textdagger} 20.a2
\texttt{\textdagger}xa4 21.a2 \texttt{\textdagger}xb2\texttt{\textdagger} 22.b2 \texttt{\textdagger}b4\texttt{\textdagger} with
a perpetual.

16...\texttt{\textdagger}c5 17.g3 0–0 18.e2 \texttt{\textdagger}xe3 19.e3
\texttt{\textdagger}d7=

The chances should be about even in this
interesting middlegame.

10...\texttt{\textdagger}c7
Another possible move order is 10...b5
11.b1 ...\texttt{\textdagger}c7 12.f5 \texttt{\textdagger}c4 13.h3, transposing to
the main line below.

11...\texttt{\textdagger}b1 b5 12.f5 \texttt{\textdagger}c4 13.h3
Black should also be ready for the more
energetic:
13.g4??
This move first appeared in a rapid game in
2004, when Morozevich used it to inflict
a spectacular and devastating defeat on
Topalov. Since then it has yielded a 100% score for White in grandmaster games –
that is, when Black captures the g-pawn. I suggest that you avoid that treacherous path, regardless of what the computer might say.

13...h6!

The purpose of this move is twofold. The first and most obvious idea is to safeguard the position of the knight on f6. The second, more subtle point is to prepare to capture the pawn on g4 without suffering positional problems.

It is worth taking a brief moment to witness the aforementioned game, which ended as follows: 13...txg4 14.xg1 dxe3 15.dxe3 g6 16.dxc4 bxc4 17.d2 d6 18.xh3 d7 19.d1 gxf5 20.e3 xh4 21.d5 d2 13...txd1 White's pieces are simply tremendous, and in the game Black was unable to offer much resistance, despite his considerable material advantage.

14.d5

Black also has no problems after 14.xb4 (14...d6??N is also interesting) 15.d5 d6 16.exd5 xh1??N (16...g5?? Stets – Saulin, Senden 2008.) 17.d1 d5 with promising counterplay for Black, for instance: 18.h4 a4 19.d2 c7 20.e4 e4

13.d5!

The central counterblow is the most unpleasant reaction to White's plan, although quieter alternatives would also have brought the second player a decent game.

14.exd5

This looks safer than:

14.xd5?? dxe4
The first player has to tread carefully since the situation has become dangerous for him.

15...a5
15.c1 c3 16.b6 c7 17.xc4 bxc4
18.xd7 xd7 19.xd7 xd7 20.d1

Best may have been 15.c1, although even here after 15...xd5 16.xd5 c7 17.c3 0-0 Black should be somewhat better.

16...xa5
15...xb3 16.xd8+ xd8 17.axb3 g3
18.g1 xf5 19.f2 was equal in Todorovic - Marjanovic, Subotica 2000.
16.xa5 xd5 17.xd5 g3 18.g1 xf5 19.f2 c5

14.b4 15.g5 xc3 16.xf6
16.bxc3 xd5

This is the main line of course.

16...xf6!

This is a try for an advantage. 16...xf6 is playable but only good enough for equality after: 17.xc3 xf5N (17...0-0 18.xc4 xc4 19.d4 e4 20.e3 xf5 21.f1 g6 22.d4 Ni Hua - Li Shilong, Beijing 2008)
18.g4 xf2 19.xc4 xc4 20.d3 0-0=

17.bxc3

With the c8-rook defended, White obviously cannot recapture with the queen. Thus both sides suffer from pawn weaknesses, but White's is more severe.

17...b6 18.xc4
18.d6 xd5 19.e2 c6

18...xc4 19.d6 xd7 20.c1 c5

White must be prepared for careful defence as the position is becoming quite dangerous for him.

C3) 8.f3

With this combative move Black prevents the pawn advance g2-g4, one of the key concepts of the English Attack. It compromises Black's kingside to be sure, but I believe that the
potential benefits justify the risks. The idea has been tested repeatedly at high levels, most notably by Topalov who has used it in several important games.

At this point we will pay attention to three main moves: C31) 9.\(\text{\textit{d5}},\) C32) 9.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) and C33) 9.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\).

\begin{itemize}
  \item **C31) 9.\(\text{\textit{d5}}\)**
  
  Since Black has “wasted” a tempo on such an outrageous pawn move, White hopes to benefit from immediate action in the centre.

  \begin{itemize}
    \item **9...\(\text{\textit{xd5}}\)**
      
      On this occasion it is preferable to wave goodbye to the bishop, rather than lose a tempo moving it after 9...\(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) 10.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\).
    
    \item **10.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\)**
      
      The fixed central structure gives the game a clearly defined strategic character. Black will base his play around the kingside and the dark squares generally, so in an ideal world the loss of the light-squared bishop will fit in quite well with his plan.
  \end{itemize}

10...\(\text{\textit{bd7}}\) 11.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\)

The other main option is 11.c4, when play may continue 11...g6 12.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) (12.\(\text{\textit{d3}}\) \(\text{\textit{h6}}\) [Black can also play 12...\(\text{\textit{g7}},\) but it looks sensible to exchange these bishops when given the chance.] 13.\(\text{\textit{xh6}}\) \(\text{\textit{xh6}}\) 14.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{h8}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{a5}}\) \(\text{\textit{b6}}\) 16.b4 h4? [possibly safer was 16...\(\text{\textit{f8N}}\) intending ...\(\text{\textit{g7}}\)] 17.\(\text{\textit{eb1}}\) \(\text{\textit{h5}}\) with double-edged play, Vertes – Covolo, e-mail 2006.) 12...b6 Preventing \(\text{\textit{a5}},\) which is often a key resource for White in this line. (12...\(\text{\textit{a5N}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{e2}}\) \(\text{\textit{g7}}\) 14.0–0–0–0 15.\(\text{\textit{ac1}}\) a5 16.\(\text{\textit{a1}}\) \(\text{\textit{c5}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{c2}}\) \(\text{\textit{fd7}}\) 18.\(\text{\textit{a3}}\) f5 The players reached a complex, dynamically balanced middlegame in Syska – Benitah, France 2008.

11...\(\text{\textit{c7?!}}\)

This is a clever refinement, directed against White’s next move.

12.\(\text{\textit{a5}}\)

White is hoping that the knight will help to restrict his opponent’s queenside pieces by tying at least one of them to the defence of b7. As I mentioned, Black has a special reply in store, but even so, the text move remains playable. Before we see the details, we will first check a couple of alternatives:

12.0–0–0

This position has occurred in a few games, sometimes via a different move order. The next few moves are quite natural from both sides:

12...\(\text{\textit{b6}}\) 13.\(\text{\textit{a5}}\) \(\text{\textit{c8}}\) 14.c3 \(\text{\textit{c4}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{xc4}}\) 15.\(\text{\textit{xc7}}\) \(\text{\textit{xc7}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{xc4}}\) \(\text{\textit{xc4}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{a5}}\) \(\text{\textit{c7}}\)

18.\(\text{\textit{he1}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) is equal, for instance: 19.f4 \(\text{\textit{e7}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{xe5}}\) \(\text{\textit{xe5}}\) 21.\(\text{\textit{b6}}\) \(\text{\textit{d7}}\) 22.\(\text{\textit{d4}}\) f6= 15.\(\text{\textit{xc4}}\) 16.\(\text{\textit{he1}}\) \(\text{\textit{c7}}\) 17.\(\text{\textit{g5}}\)

This position was reached in Shirov – Ljubojevic, Belgrade 1997, and here I found a new idea which solves all Black’s problems:

17...\(\text{\textit{b6!N}}\)

The game continuation of 17...0–0 is also quite playable. After 18.\(\text{\textit{xf6}}\) \(\text{\textit{f4}}\) 19.\(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf6}}\) 20.\(\text{\textit{b6}}\) \(\text{\textit{b8}}\) Black was only
Chapter 15 - $6.\text{\textlowercase{e}}3 \text{e}5$

minimally worse and drew without too many difficulties.

18.\text{\textlowercase{a}}3 \text{\textlowercase{c}}xd5
18...0–0 19.\text{\textlowercase{b}}xf6 \text{\textlowercase{f}}4+ 20.\text{\textlowercase{b}}b1 \text{\textlowercase{xf}}6
21.\text{\textlowercase{w}}xa6 \text{\textlowercase{g}}6+ 22.\text{\textlowercase{w}}d3 \text{\textlowercase{x}}g2 23.\text{\textlowercase{c}}d2±
19.\text{\textlowercase{w}}xe7 \text{\textlowercase{c}}xc3 20.\text{\textlowercase{b}}xc3 \text{\textlowercase{c}}xc3+ 21.\text{\textlowercase{b}}b1 \text{\textlowercase{c}}+2
22.\text{\textlowercase{w}}a1 \text{\textlowercase{c}}+3 23.\text{\textlowercase{w}}b2 \text{\textlowercase{c}}xe7

All three results are still possible, but I certainly would not rate Black’s chances as inferior.

12.\text{\textlowercase{c}}4 \text{a}5
Black prevents the knight jump and prepares to build a wall using the dark squares. Still, in view of the knight manoeuvre executed by White between moves 16-19, Black might also consider 12... b6 with similar ideas, as seen in a number of games.

13.\text{\textlowercase{c}}c1
13.a4?! has actually been the most popular reply, but it looks wrong for White to immobilize his own queenside like this.
13...b6 14.\text{\textlowercase{w}}f2 g6 15.\text{\textlowercase{c}}e2 \text{\textlowercase{g}}7 16.0–0 0–0 17.h3 \text{\textlowercase{c}}c5 18.\text{\textlowercase{c}}d7 19.\text{\textlowercase{g}}4 \text{\textlowercase{x}}g4
20.\text{\textlowercase{h}}xg4 was seen in Apicella – Areshchenko, Cappelle la Grande 2003, and here after
20...\text{\textlowercase{c}}xb3 N 21.\text{\textlowercase{w}}xb3 \text{\textlowercase{c}}c5 Black’s position is as solid as a rock without any problems.
13...b6 14.\text{\textlowercase{c}}e2 g6 15.0–0 \text{\textlowercase{g}}7

16.\text{\textlowercase{d}}a1!
It is time for the knight to search for greener pastures, and it just so happens that the corner square provides the right path.

16...0–0 17.\text{\textlowercase{c}}c2 \text{\textlowercase{c}}c5 18.\text{\textlowercase{c}}a3 \text{h}4 19.\text{\textlowercase{c}}b5 \text{\textlowercase{c}}+7!\text{N}
19...\text{\textlowercase{w}}e7 20.\text{\textlowercase{b}}3 \text{\textlowercase{h}}5 21.\text{\textlowercase{d}}d1 \text{f}5 22.a3 \text{h}3
23.\text{\textlowercase{x}}h3 was a little better for White in Goloshchapov – Anisimov, Sochi 2006. Instead I find it interesting to use the queen on the light squares.
20.\text{\textlowercase{w}}e1?!
This is the most ambitious idea. White simply aims to win the h-pawn outright.
Another option is: 20.\text{\textlowercase{g}}5 \text{h}3 21.\text{\textlowercase{x}}h3 (21.\text{\textlowercase{g}}3 \text{e}4\text{∞}) 21...\text{\textlowercase{f}}e8\text{∞}
20...\text{h}3 21.\text{\textlowercase{g}}4?!
Now Black had better do something quickly before the h-pawn drops off the board.
21...\text{e}4!

22.\text{\textlowercase{w}}h4
After 22.\text{\textlowercase{g}}3 \text{e}x\text{f}3 23.\text{\textlowercase{w}}xf3 \text{\textlowercase{c}}ae8 24.\text{\textlowercase{w}}xh3 \text{\textlowercase{c}}e7! Black has reasonable compensation.
One possible continuation is 25.\text{\textlowercase{g}}5 \text{\textlowercase{c}}xe2
26.\text{\textlowercase{c}}xf6 \text{\textlowercase{c}}xf6 27.\text{\textlowercase{c}}xf6 \text{\textlowercase{c}}e4, with good attacking chances.
22...\text{\textlowercase{f}}e8 23.g5
23.\text{\textlowercase{c}}xc5 \text{bxc5}\text{∞}
23...\text{e}x\text{f}3 24.\text{\textlowercase{c}}xf3 \text{\textlowercase{c}}xe3 25.\text{\textlowercase{g}}xf6 \text{\textlowercase{c}}d8
Black seems to be holding his own in this complicated position. Here is one example of how the game might end after reasonably accurate play from both sides:
26.\text{\textlowercase{h}}1 \text{\textlowercase{c}}d7 27.\text{\textlowercase{c}}f4 \text{\textlowercase{c}}e5 28.\text{\textlowercase{f}}x\text{g}7 \text{\textlowercase{c}}g5\text{†}
29.\text{\textlowercase{g}}2 \text{\textlowerline{c}}x\text{g}2\text{†} 30.\text{\textlowercase{h}}1 \text{\textlowercase{c}}e5 31.\text{\textlowercase{w}}h6 \text{\textlowercase{c}}xh2\text{†}
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32. \( \text{g}1 \text{g}2^+ \)

With perpetual check.

12... \( \text{b}6! \) 13. \( \text{c}6 \)

In a few games White has opted for the somewhat humiliating retreat 13. \( \text{b}3 \), but obviously we need not spend much time on this. One example continued 13... \( \text{g}6 \) 14. \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 15.0–0 0–0 16. \( \text{ad}1 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 17. \( \text{a}5 \) \( \text{b}7 \) with comfortable play for Black, Londyn – Borovikov, Pardubice 2004.

13... \( \text{xd}5! \)

This witty capture reveals the point behind Black's move order.

14. \( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 15. \( \text{b}3 \)

After 15. \( \text{c}4?! \) \( \text{b}5 \) 16. \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{xc}6 \) 17. \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 18.0–0–0 \( \text{d}5 \) 19. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 20. \( \text{xf}6 \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 21. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{b}6 \) 22. \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{c}5 \) 23. \( \text{he}1 \) \( \text{f}8^+ \) White had little to show for his missing pawn in Leko – Topalov, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2006.

15... \( \text{xc}6 \) 16. \( \text{xb}6 \)

White has also tried 16.0–0–0 \( \text{b}5 \) 17. \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 18. \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 19. \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 20. \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 21. \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 22. \( \text{he}1 \) 0–0 23. \( \text{c}2 \) The pressure against the central pawns gave White good chances to hold the balance in Cvek – Areshchenko, Germany 2007.

16... \( \text{xb}6 \) 17. \( \text{xb}6 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 18. \( \text{a}5 \)

18. \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{xb}2 \) 19. \( \text{xa}6 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 20.0–0 \( \text{d}6 \) 21. \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{d}4 \) 22. \( \text{b}5^+ \) \( \text{d}8 \) 23. \( \text{a}4 \) \( \text{c}7^+ \) Black's strong centre gave him the upper hand in Erdogdu – Zakharstov, Olomouc 2009.

18... \( \text{xb}2 \) 19. \( \text{xa}6 \) \( \text{d}5 \)

The ending should be approximately equal, as White's bishop pair and passed a-pawn are balanced out by Black's powerful centre, fewer pawn islands and active rook.

20. \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 21. \( \text{hb}1 \) \( \text{a}3 \) 22. \( \text{xb}2 \) \( \text{xb}2 \) 23. \( \text{b}5^+ \) \( \text{e}6 \) 24. \( \text{b}1 \) \( \text{a}8! \) 25. \( \text{xb}2 \) \( \text{xa}5 \)

The position remains in balance and the game Bologan – Atalik, Wijk aan Zee 2007, was eventually drawn. This whole line appears to put 12. \( \text{a}5 \) out of commission as a try for an advantage, so future attempts will probably focus on White's alternatives on move 12.

C32) 9. \( \text{c}2 \)

Given that g2–g4 is no longer an option, it makes a certain amount of sense for White to abandon all thoughts of aggression and settle for simple development.

9... \( \text{bd}7 \) 10.0–0

There is also:

10. \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 11. \( \text{exd}5 \) \( \text{f}5 \)
It is more reasonable for Black to preserve the bishop on this occasion, as the reply $d3$ would entail the loss of a tempo for White.

12. $\text{d2} \text{e7}$

12...$g6$ is also quite reasonable: 13. $\text{a5} \text{c7}$ 14.0-0 $\text{g7}$ 15. $\text{c6} \text{b6} 16. \text{c6} \text{b8}$ 17. $\text{xb8}$ (17. $\text{ad1} \text{xc6} 18. \text{dxc6} \text{c7} 19. \text{b4} \text{xc6}$ 20. $\text{d3} a5 =$ Black's extra pawn compensates for the undesirable position of his king.) 17...$\text{xb8}$ 18. $\text{b4}$ 0-0 19. $\text{ac1} \text{fd8}$ 20. $\text{a4}$ 21. $\text{al} \text{xb8}$ 21. $\text{a5}$ Despite White's progress on the queenside the position remained approximately even in Nijboer – Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

13.0-0 $\text{c7}$ 14. $\text{c4}$ 0-0!

Black should continue mobilizing his pieces without being too worried about the weakness of the $h5$-pawn.

14...$\text{b5}?$ is a bit too slow. One game continued 15. $\text{f4} \text{g6} 16. \text{fxe5} \text{dxe5}$, Ponomariov – Cvitan, Neum 2000, and here White could have obtained some initiative with 17. $\text{ac1}! \text{N} a5$ 18. $\text{c5}! \text{bxc5} 19. $\text{b5}.$

15. $\text{f4}$

15. $\text{ac1} a5! 16. a4 $g6 17. $\text{h1} b6$ was comfortable for Black in De Vreugt – Karjakin, Wijk aan Zee 2003.

15...$\text{xf4} 16. \text{xf4} \text{g6} 17. \text{ac1}$

17...$\text{ec8}$!\text{N}$

Black can equalize comfortably with 17...$\text{b6}+$ 18. $\text{e3} \text{g5} 19. $\text{xb6} \text{xd2}$ 20. $\text{xd2} \text{xb6}$ as in Ponomariov – Karjakin, Benidorm 2002, but the text move keeps more life in the game.

18. $\text{f2} \text{h4}$!

Provoking a slight weakening.

19. $g3 \text{f6}$ 20. $c5 \text{e5}$

Black has promising counterplay.

10...$\text{e7}$

Black obviously cannot contemplate a kingside fianchetto when the d-file is still open. However, he could have considered 10...$b5?$ 11. $\text{d2} \text{e7} 12. \text{fd1} \text{b6} 13. \text{f1}$ $\text{c7} 14. \text{f2} \text{a4}!$. This is an important motif in the battle for counterplay. 15. $\text{xa4} \text{xa4} 16. \text{b6} \text{b8} 17. \text{a5} \text{d7} 18. \text{e3} \text{xb2}$ 19. $\text{c4} \text{xc4} 20. \text{xc4} \text{a5} 21. \text{e2} 0-0$ 22. $\text{d2} \text{d4} 23. \text{e3} \text{c3}$ White failed to get any advantage as his queenside was shattered in Ivanchuk – Dominguez Perez, Havana 2006.

It should be mentioned that White can always shuffle his move order around with 10.a4 $\text{e7} 11.0-0$, so Black should not count on being able to play this way.

11. a4 $\text{c7}$

It is hard to choose between this and the equally playable alternative:

11...$\text{c8} 12. a5 \text{h4} 13. \text{d2} \text{g6}$

Black intends to castle artificially by walking his king to $g7$.

14. $\text{fd1}$

1... $\text{b5?}$
There is also 14...c1 w c7 15.d d1 h6 16.e4 (or 16.e1 g7 17.e2 h5 18.e1 B e8 19.d d2 Grischuk – Popov, Elista 2000, 19...B c6 N 20.d d3 d5 21.exd5 B x d5 22.B x d5 B x d5=) 16...c6 17.a1 (17.d a2 d5 18.exd5 B x d5 19.d x d5 B x a4 20.a3 B x a5 21.B x c7 B x c7 22.d d5+ B x d5 23.B b4+ B f6 24.B x d5 B x d5 25.B d3= With two rooks and a pawn for the queen, Black is not worse.) 17...B c7 18.d4 B c6 White had a hard time making any progress in Zhigalko – Podolchenko, Minsk 2009.

14...f8 15.d d5 B x d5 16.exd5 g7 17.c4 h5

18.B a1


18.d6

18...d4 19.e1 B g5 also deserves attention.

19.d a1 f4 20.e1 B g5 21.b4 f6

Another game continued 21...f6 22.b3 e8 23.d d3 h3 24.g3 B x d3 25.B x g5 B x f3 26.B c3 e4= Wang Pin – Zhang Zhong, Shanghai 2000.

22.B b3

Now in Gadjily – Magerramov, Dubai 2000, Black should have played:

22...d7 N 23;a1

Otherwise ...a4 might prove annoying.

23...B f5

In this complex position Black should be at least equal.

12.B d2

This is the most natural move, although the general character of the play is likely to remain the same in most cases. Here are a few other practical examples:

12.B f2 0–0 13.B f1 B f8 14.a5 B f8 15.B d2 B a c8 N (This looks better than: 15...B c6 16.h3 g6 17.d d5 B x d5 18.exd5 B c7 Black has lost some time and after 19.c4 White was
a little better in Fedorov – Kovchan, Saratov 2006.) 16.\texttt{Be}1 \texttt{Be}7 17.\texttt{Bg}3 \texttt{Bd}8 Black has arranged his pieces in a sensible way to reach approximate equality.

12.\texttt{Sh}h1 0–0 13.a5 \texttt{Fbd}8 14.\texttt{Dd}5 \texttt{Xxd}5 15.\texttt{Exd}5 \texttt{b}5?! This is something of a double-edged idea. Black leaves himself with a potentially weak a-pawn, but hopes to obtain counterplay using the open b- and c-files. 16.\texttt{xb}6 \texttt{Xxb}6 17.\texttt{Xxb}6 \texttt{Fxb}6 18.\texttt{Ba}5 \texttt{Bc}8 19.\texttt{Ld}3 \texttt{Ld}8 20.\texttt{We}2 \texttt{Bb}8 Black's counterplay on the dark squares is enough to make up for the weakness on a6, Flores Rios – Quesada Perez, Sao Paulo 2009.

12...0–0 13.a5
13.\texttt{Ffd}1 \texttt{Fbd}8 14.a5 \texttt{Lac}8 transposes to the main line, although Black can also consider 14...\texttt{b}5?! as above.

13...\texttt{Lac}8 14.\texttt{Ffd}1 \texttt{Fbd}8

With this move Black centralizes his last piece to reach a generally harmonious position, in which the oddly-placed pawn on h5 does not seem to harm his chances.

15.\texttt{Cc}1

15.\texttt{Sh}f1 meets with a similar reaction: 15...\texttt{d}5! 16.\texttt{Exd}5 \texttt{Lxd}5 17.\texttt{Sh}d5 \texttt{Lxd}5 18.\texttt{Bx}d5 \texttt{f}6 19.\texttt{wc}4 \texttt{xc}4 20.\texttt{Exd}8+ \texttt{Xxd}8 21.\texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 22.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{Lc}7 With a level endgame, Lupulescu – Shneider, Korinthos 2004.

15.\texttt{Sh}e1 only delays the inevitable after 15...\texttt{wc}6 (15...\texttt{Lc}5 16.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{Lxc}5 has been played, but White is almost always a little better in this pawn structure, Rytsagov – Gadjily, Elista 1998.) 16.\texttt{Sh}1 (16.\texttt{Sh}d2 \texttt{Lc}7=) 16...\texttt{d}5! 17.\texttt{Exd}5 \texttt{Lxd}5 18.\texttt{Lxd}5 \texttt{Lxd}5 19.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{d}6 20.\texttt{Sh}d2 \texttt{Lc}5= Having solved the problem of his backward pawn Black's pieces spring to life and his position is already slightly favourable, Jakubowski – Stoczek, Pardubice 2006.

15...\texttt{d}5!

Black's pieces all stand on ideal squares, and there will never be a better moment to launch his counterplay.

16.\texttt{Lxd}5

16.\texttt{Exd}5 \texttt{f}8! leaves White struggling to equalize, for instance: 17.\texttt{Ld}3 \texttt{Lxd}5 18.\texttt{Lxd}5 \texttt{Lxd}5 (or 18... \texttt{Exd}5!?) 19.\texttt{Ld}1 \texttt{d}7 20.\texttt{Lb}3 \texttt{Lc}4=) 19.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{e}6 20.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{Lc}5 21.\texttt{Sh}5 \texttt{d}6 22.\texttt{Exd}8+ \texttt{Exd}8 23.\texttt{exe}6 \texttt{exe}6+ Shomoev – Zhang Zhong, Ulaanbaatar 2002.

16...\texttt{Lxd}5 17.\texttt{Lxd}5 \texttt{Bc}2 18.\texttt{d}6

After 18.\texttt{xc}2 \texttt{xc}2 19.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{c}5 20.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 21.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{f}8 Black was more than comfortable in Grabner – Vossenkuhl, e-mail 2000.

18...\texttt{f}8 19.\texttt{a}2

We have been following the game Hracek – Ftacnik, Germany 1999. It is not hard to determine that the d6-pawn will soon be departing to the next life, but the question is how best to capture it while restricting the opponent's counterplay. In the game I exchanged queens and later won, but White missed an opportunity to make better use of his bishop pair in the endgame. Thus I believe that the best move would have been:
19...b3!N
19...d5?N is also interesting, but the text move is strongest.

20.c1
20.c3 c5 is also unpleasant for White.

20.e6
Black will soon collect the d-pawn, after which White’s bishop pair will provide only negligible compensation.

C33) 9.d2 b6d7 10.0–0–0

The plan with the long castling is normal for the English Attack, and probably the most serious test of the whole 8...h5 line. White could also switch plans with 9.d5 or 9.e2, transposing to variations C31 or C32 respectively.

10.c8
This is the main move, although Black has also successfully tested:

10.e7
Maintaining some flexibility with the rook. The c-file might seem like an automatic target for it, but that is not necessarily the case.

11.h3
This was played in a relevant high-level game, which showcased Black’s idea perfectly. I do not intend to try to analyse the whole line exhaustively, but will merely mention in passing that 11.b1 has been White’s most popular choice.

11.c7 12.d3 h4 13.f4 b5 14.hel
Fixing the centre is not so clever for White:

14.e8+ The e4–f5 structure fails to deliver much for White in this line.

14.b8?!
The great master of the 8...h5 system finds yet another creative idea. This time Topalov anticipates an exchange of one of his minor pieces on c4, and thus places his rook accordingly.

15.b1
15.f5 c4 16.c2 b4 17.b1 x3 18.xd3 0–0 The e4–f5 structure fails to deliver much for White in this line.

15.b6
Continuing the plan.

16.f2
16.fxe5 dxe5 17.e2 b4 18.d5 bxd5 19.exd5 cxd5 20.c5 f4 transposes.
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16...b4!?
16...\texttt{c}c4 also looks reasonable, and was subsequently tested in a couple of high-level encounters.

17.\texttt{d}d5!N
This is more challenging than 17.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{c}c4
18.\texttt{d}d2 (18.\texttt{c}c1 \texttt{a}5 19.\texttt{f}f5 \texttt{d}d7 20.\texttt{d}d2 \texttt{c}xd2\texttt{=} 21.\texttt{b}xb2 \texttt{a}4\texttt{=} 18...\texttt{e}xe3 19.\texttt{w}xe3 \texttt{a}5 20.b3 a4\texttt{=} With two bishops a very safe king Black had the upper hand in Svidler – Topalov, Morelia/Linares 2007.
17...\texttt{b}xd5 18.exd5 \texttt{c}xd5 19.fxe5 dxe5 20.\texttt{c}c5 \texttt{f}f4? 20...\texttt{c}c3\texttt{=} does not work: 21.bxc3 \texttt{x}b3 22.\texttt{b}xb3 \texttt{c}c5 23.\texttt{w}f5\texttt{=} The opposite-coloured bishops might turn out to be a great blessing for the attacking side.
21.\texttt{x}e7 \texttt{xe}7 22.\texttt{c}c5 \texttt{bd}8= Black is doing fine despite the location of his king.

11.\texttt{b}1
White usually includes this prophylactic king move at some point. Sometimes he begins with:
11.h3
White intends to play f4, but does not want to worry about a knight appearing on g4.
11...\texttt{c}e7 12.\texttt{e}2
12.f4 b5 13.\texttt{d}d3 \texttt{c}c4 14.\texttt{b}1 (14.g4 hxg4 15.hxg4 \texttt{x}h1 16.\texttt{x}h1 \texttt{c}xg4= The opening of the h file is not so dangerous for Black.) 14...\texttt{w}c7 15.\texttt{w}f1 h4 16.\texttt{g}2 0–0 17.\texttt{f}g1 b4 18.\texttt{d}d5 (After 18.\texttt{e}e2 d5 19.exd5 \texttt{c}xd5\texttt{=} the White pieces are ill-prepared for the coming storm.) 18...\texttt{x}d5 19.exd5 Thorhallsson – M. Ashley, Bermuda 1999. 19...\texttt{f}6N 20.\texttt{x}d1 \texttt{x}d5 21.\texttt{x}c4 \texttt{x}e3 22.\texttt{w}xe3 \texttt{w}xc4\texttt{=} Black is in the driving seat with his good pieces and bishop stronger than the knight.
12...h4 13.f4
13.\texttt{b}1 b5 14.\texttt{e}h1 \texttt{b}6 15.\texttt{b}b6 \texttt{w}xb6 16.f4 0–0 17.\texttt{f}3 (After 17.\texttt{d}d5 \texttt{x}d5 18.exd5 e4 19.\texttt{g}4 \texttt{c}c4 Black has a stable centre and the d5-pawn might become weak.) 17...\texttt{c}4 18.\texttt{f}d3 \texttt{f}c8 19.\texttt{x}e5 dxe5 20.\texttt{d}d5 \texttt{x}d5 21.exd5 \texttt{d}6\texttt{=} Onischuk – Dydyshko, Minsk 2006.

13...b5
Black should almost always just ignore the pawn on f4 in the 8...h5-line.
14.\texttt{f}3 b4 15.\texttt{e}2
15.\textit{a}a4 \textit{e}c7 16.\textit{f}5 \textit{e}c4 17.\textit{xb}b4 \textit{d}5+ \\
15...\textit{a}5 16.\textit{b}1 \textit{e}c7 17.\textit{h}el a4 18.\textit{bc}1 \textit{b}7+ \\
White is already in big trouble, and his 
position soon collapsed in Muttschnik – A. 
Shneider, Alushta 2000.

11...\textit{c}7

At this point several moves have been tried, 
but I will focus on the two most important 
ideas, namely \textbf{C331}) 12.\textit{d}5, immediately 
changing the situation in the centre, and 
\textbf{C332}) 12.\textit{d}3, continuing development and 
intending to follow up with \textit{f}4.

12.\textit{h}3 has also been popular, but in most cases 
it will simply transpose to line C232 after 
12...\textit{b}5 13.\textit{d}3.

One other idea is:
12.\textit{g}3 \textit{b}5 13.\textit{d}5 \textit{xd}5 14.\textit{ex}d5 \textit{db}6 15.\textit{h}3 
This was the idea behind White's 12th move, 
but it should not be too dangerous. 15...\textit{c}4 
16.\textit{e}2 \textit{ec}7 17.\textit{f}4 0-0 18.\textit{f}2\textit{N} (After the 
strange-looking 18.\textit{hg}1\textit{N}, Lutz – Gommers, 
Belgium 2004, Black could have obtained 
good play with both 18...\textit{e}8\textit{N} and 18...\textit{a}8\textit{N}.) 
18...\textit{e}8 19.\textit{d}2 \textit{exf}4 20.\textit{gf}4 \textit{xd}2+ 21.\textit{xd}2 
\textit{f}8= Black intends ...\textit{e}4 with a healthy 
position.

12.\textit{d}5

The knight jump to d5 introduces a somewhat 
dangerous concept.

12...\textit{xd}5

12...\textit{xd}5 has been about equally popular, 
but the text is my own preference. Obviously 
there are some similarities with variation C31, 
except for the fact that in that line the white 
king invariably opted for short castling.

13.\textit{exd}5 \textit{db}6

This is more challenging than 14.\textit{a}a5 \textit{dc}4 
15.\textit{xc}c4 (15.\textit{xd}8+ \textit{xd}8= The middlegame 
without queens poses no great problems.) 
15...\textit{xc}c4 16.\textit{dd}2 \textit{dd}7 17.\textit{dd}3 \textit{cc}8 18.\textit{g}3 
0-0 19.\textit{h}3 \textit{aa}4 20.\textit{dd}2 \textit{bb}5 21.\textit{c}4 \textit{bb}4 
22.a3 \textit{aa}4 23.c5 \textit{fd}8= Black is doing fine 
despite the smart advance of the white c-pawn, 
Hracek – Ftacnik, Czech Republic 2000.

14.\textit{xb}6! 

This is more challenging than 14.\textit{a}a5 \textit{dc}4 
15.\textit{xc}c4 (15.\textit{xd}8+ \textit{xd}8= The middlegame 
without queens poses no great problems.) 
15...\textit{xc}c4 16.\textit{dd}2 \textit{dd}7 17.\textit{dd}3 \textit{cc}8 18.\textit{g}3 
0-0 19.\textit{h}3 \textit{aa}4 20.\textit{dd}2 \textit{bb}5 21.\textit{c}4 \textit{bb}4 
22.a3 \textit{aa}4 23.c5 \textit{fd}8= Black is doing fine 
despite the smart advance of the white c-pawn, 
Hracek – Ftacnik, Czech Republic 2000.

14...\textit{xb}6 15.\textit{dd}3 

The alternative bishop development should 
not cause too many problems for Black, as 
long as he makes a correct decision: 15.\textit{g}3 0-0 
16.\textit{h}3 \textit{cc}7! (16...\textit{a}8 has been more popular, 
but it has scored badly and I think the text 
move is better.) 17.\textit{he}1 \textit{ee}8 18.\textit{ff}4 \textit{ee}4 19.\textit{gg}2
15...0-0
Though it may feel strange to castle with the pawn on h5, practice has shown that Black's defences are still resilient enough.

16.\( \text{c} \text{h}1 \)
16...\( \text{f}5 \) leads nowhere for White after 16...\( \text{c} \text{c}4 \) 17.g3 \( \text{c} \text{e}8 \) 18.\( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 19.c3 a5 20.d3 \( \text{c}7 \) 21.d2 g6 22.\( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{g}7= \), Balcerak – Ftacnik, Germany 2001.

16...\( \text{c}8 \)!
16...\( \text{d}8 \) has been more popular, but it looks logical to develop another piece and prepare to contest the e-file.

17.f4 \( \text{f}8 \)!
Black could have secured an equal game with 17...\( \text{x} \text{xd5} \) 18.fxe5 dxe5 19.\( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \), but instead chooses to keep things more complex.

18.\( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{e}4 \) 19.d3 \( \text{xe}4 \) 20.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 21.\( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{f}2 \) 22.f5 \( \text{c}7 \)
Black was at least equal in Hynes – Djoudi, e-mail 2003. His bishop is not great, but his queen has considerable nuisance value.

C332) 12.\( \text{d}3 \)
With this move White continues his development and prepares f4.
19...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}4!}\) (The game continuation of 19...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}4}\) 20.exd5 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}4}\) could have been punished by 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}3!}\) when the opposite-coloured bishops greatly enhance White's attack.) 20.exd5 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}4}\) 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}1}\) f7 22.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}4}\) a7 23.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}4}\) b8 Black should be at least equal here.

15...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}4!}\)

Tournament practice has demonstrated that this is Black's most promising method of handling the position. The idea is simple, but effective: Black intends to play ...b4 and meet \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d}}5}\) with ...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}d5}\), without having his bishop exposed to attack after the reply exd5.

15...0-0?!N 16.a3 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b}}8!}\) 17.f5 (17.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}2}\) h5 18.fxe5 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}e5}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}e2}\) g5 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xg3}}\) hxg3\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{3}}}\)\) 17...a5 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}2}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d}}4}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d3}\) b4 20.axb4 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}b4}\) 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}a2}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b}}8}\) 22.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xh4}}\) (22.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}c3}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b}}5}\)) 22...a4 23.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}d2}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}7}\)

16.a3!?

Given Black's intentions, this seems like a principled reply. We should not underestimate the influence that the knight exerts from the c3-square.

An example of what White should avoid is: 16.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}2}\) b4 17.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d}}5}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d5}\) 18.exd5 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d3}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d5}\) 0–0 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}c1}\) a5? Black's activity on the queenside was developing unhindered in Mastrovasilis – Efimenko, Istanbul 2003.

16.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}2!}\) might encourage Black to change his plans slightly with 16...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d3?!}\)N (16...b4 17.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d}}5}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d5}\) 18.exd5 \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d3}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d3}\) 0–0 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d4}\) This reveals the point behind White's clever 16th move. [20.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e}}2}\) a5 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b}}5}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}6}\) 20...f6 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}c6}\) exf4 22.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{e}}7}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}e7}\) 23.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}e7}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d}}8}\) 24.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xh4}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}5}\) 25.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xe5}}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xh4}}\) White could claim no more than a negligible advantage in Tiviakov – Quinn, Bratto 1999.) 17.cxd3 (17.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d3}\) exf4) 17...b4 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}c2}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b}}7}\) 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}c1}\) 0–0 20.fxe5 dxe5 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}c8}\) exc8 22.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}c1}\) exc1= 23.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}xc1}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}h5}\) Black is completely safe, despite having a few pawns on the dark squares.

16...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b}}8!}\)

I believe this to be the most promising reaction to White's last move. I was not quite satisfied with the following alternatives:

16...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b}}6?!}\) 17.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}2}\)N (17.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}b6}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}b6}\) 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{d}}5}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d5}\) 19.exd5 was seen in Lutz – Ki. Georgiev, Plovdiv 2003, and here after 19...0–0N 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}5}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}d8}\)= Black has nothing to fear as his counterplay against the d5-pawn balances the chances.) 17...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{a}}4}\) 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{a}}4}\) bxa4 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b}}6}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{b}}8}\) 20.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}c4}\) exc4 21.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}a5}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{c}}8}\) 22.fxe5 dxe5 23.c4= Black's activity has badly backfired.

I spent some time analysing 16...0–0?!N 17.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{f}}2}\) \(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}d3}\) (17...\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{x}}b3}\) 18.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{cxb3}}\) exf4 19.\(\texttt{\textbf{\textit{xh4}}\)
\( \text{17. } \text{Nxf2!N} \)

This looks critical, and is certainly more challenging than the plan seen in the following game: 17. \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 18. \( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{Nxd5!} \) 19. \( \text{fxe5} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 20. \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{Nxe5} \) 21. \( \text{Wxg5} \) \( \text{f8!} \)

\[ \text{22. f5 (22. e4 dxe4 23. Wxe4 e8 24. Wxe2 e8} \]
\[ 25. \text{Nxe4 Nf6 26. Wxe4 Wxd5} \]
\[ 27. Wxh4 g8=\text{c} \]
\[ 22... \text{Nf6} \]
\[ 23. Wxe3 \text{xb3} \]
\[ 24. cxb3 g6 25. d3 \text{d8} \]
\[ 26. Wxe5 \text{Wxe5} \]
\[ 27. Wxe5 dxe5 28. Wxh5 \text{Nxa5} \]

With a clearly better endgame for Black, Claridge – Krueger, e-mail 2004.

17...0-0!

This interesting pawn sacrifice should result in promising compensation for Black.

17...b4 is interesting, but I do not quite trust it. Play may continue: 18.axb4 \( \text{xb4} \) (Perhaps 18...\( \text{Nxb}3 \)?? could be considered, although exchanging this bishop for a knight brings its own problems) 19.\( \text{fxe5} \) (19.\( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 20.\( \text{xd2} \) a5 gives Black enough counterplay) 19...\( \text{dxe5} \) 20.\( \text{xc4} \) (20.\( \text{f1} \) 0-0 21.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) is fine for Black, as 22.W\( \text{xh4} \)?? is refuted by 22...\( \text{xc3} \) 23.\( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{Nxe5} \) 24.\( \text{cxd3} \) \( \text{d8} \) 25.\( \text{f1} \)) 20...\( \text{xc4} \) 21.\( \text{d3} \) 0-0?! 22.W\( \text{xh4} \) \( \text{wb8} \) 23.\( \text{f1} \)

18.W\( \text{hxh4} \) a5!

18...\( \text{b4} \) is not quite sufficient to equalize: 19.axb4 \( \text{xb3} \) 20.\( \text{xb3} \) \( \text{xb4} \) 21.\( \text{c2} \) (21.\( \text{c4} \)
Variation A with 7.\textit{\&}d2\textit{\&} fails to produce many sparks under closer scrutiny, which is perhaps not surprising given its artificial appearance. Nevertheless the move is by no means bad, and should be studied carefully.

The positional 7.\textit{\&}f3 is also not to be underestimated. The various branches of variation B revealed that Black succeeds in maintaining the balance, but needs to combine a sound positional understanding with resolute action in certain critical positions.

Finally, the most aggressive and popular retreat is variation C with 7.\textit{\&}b3, which will undoubtedly continue to be tested in competitive situations ranging from club chess all the way up to super-GM level, for years to come. My overall conclusion is that the recommended solution of 7...\textit{\&}e6 8.f3 \textit{h5!} leads to rich and dynamic positions in which Black should be able to maintain a fair share of the chances, although once again it was necessary to find some creative new ideas in certain key variations. The whole line is characterized by deep strategic play combined with a simmering cauldron of potential tactical fireworks lying under the surface – a perfect battleground for fans of the uncompromising Najdorf variation.
English Attack

Predator - 6.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) e6 7.g4

Variation Index

\begin{align*}
1.e4 & c5 2.\(\text{\texttt{d3}}\) d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\texttt{dxd4}}\) \(\text{\texttt{e6}}\) 5.\(\text{\texttt{c3}}\) a6 6.\(\text{\texttt{e3}}\) e6 \\
7.g4 & e5 8.\(\text{\texttt{f5}}\) h5
\end{align*}

A) 9.\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\) \\
B) 9.\(\text{\texttt{gxh5}}\) \\
C) 9.g5 \(\text{\texttt{dxe4}}\) 10.\(\text{\texttt{dxe4}}\) b6 11.\(\text{\texttt{g5}}\) a6 12.\(\text{\texttt{g3}}\) d4 13.\(\text{\texttt{d2}}\) \(\text{\texttt{d5}}\)

\begin{align*}
\text{C1)} & 14.\(\text{\texttt{d1}}\) \text{\texttt{d5}} \\
\text{C2)} & 14.\(\text{\texttt{c4?}}\)
\end{align*}

A) note to 10.\(\text{\texttt{d5}}\) \\
A) note to 11.h4!? \\
C1) after 20.0–0–0
This extremely sharp line, known as the Perenyi Attack, is related to the Keres Attack (5...e6 6.g4), but White hopes that his c1-e3 will prove more useful than Black's ...a7-a6 in the ensuing battle. Matters are not so simple though, as Black can begin an immediate counterattack against the g4-pawn, while it is quite helpful to have prevented a possible check on b5.

7...e5

7...h6 has been more popular, but I believe the text move to be the most challenging response.

8...f5 h5!?

I believe this to be a better practical choice then the more popular 8...g6, when play continues 9.g5 gx5 10.exf5 d5 11...f3 d4 12.0-0-0 with a hugely complicated and irrational position. It is not clear if Black will get a chance to enjoy his (often huge) material advantage, as hardly any of his pieces are playing. Instead our recommended solution is much safer and is gradually winning followers.

White has three main responses: A) 9...g5, B) 9.gxh5 and C) 9.g5.

A) 9...g5 hxg4 10.d5

It is too early for White to give up his dark-squared bishop:

10...xf6 xf6 11.d5

11.xg4xe6 gives Black an easy game, for instance: 12...f3?! (12.0-0-0 looks better, although Black is still doing nicely after 12...d7 13...f3, Mijovic - Krivokapic, Bar 2005, 13...0-0-0N) 12...d7 13.e2 g6 14...e3 xf3 15...xf3 d6 16...c5 e8 17.c3 xe3 18...xe3 h4 19.0-0 e7 White was already positionally lost in Bellin - Hillarp Persson, Guernsey 2007.

11...d8 12...f3 e6 13.e2 d7 14.xg4 e6 15...xf6+ xf6 16.e5

This position was reached in Alcazar Jimenez – Martin Rueda, Mondariz 2003, and here Black could have created problems with:

16...f4!N 17.xe6

17...xe4 looks like a safe pawn, while after 17.f3 White would have to reckon with 17...e7, when the bishop could become rather active.

17...xe4 18...g4 xg4

18...h6? could also be considered.

19.xg4 e8 20.c3 e7

White's kingside weaknesses will give him some problems in the ending.

B) 9...xh5

There is a second satisfactory continuation in 10...xf5 11.xf6 gxf6 12.exf5 g7 13.g2
h4 14...d3 b6. From here, best play seems to be 15.0-0-0N (This is stronger than the meek 15.c3?! c7 16.0-0-0 0-0 17.d5 h6t 18.b1 Swinkels – Palac, Dresden 2007, since now 18...h3!N 19.e4 f4 would be very pleasant for Black.) 15...xd5 16.xd5 d7 17.b1 c8 With roughly even chances.

11...g6
Black should exchange or repel his opponent's active pieces. First there is the knight...

12.fe3 h6
And now the bishop.

13.xh6 xh6 14.e4?
The routine 14.xg4 xg4 15.xg4 b6 16.d1 c6 gives Black a pleasant and easy game.

14...xe4!
Black could have equalized with the solid 14...c5, but instead he opts for the most principled and ambitious move.

15.g2 d6 16.xf6† xf6 17.d2 h5 18.xd6† f8 19.0-0-0 e7
Black has weathered the storm and emerged with an excellent position in Naiditsch – Cvitan, Kusadasi 2006.

B) 9.gxh5

15...a4!N (This is a simple improvement over 15...c7 16.xg4 c6? [Black could still have maintained the balance with 16...xf5N 17.exf5 c7] 17.f4 and Black was suffering in Barrientos Chavarriaga – Brkic, Turin 2006.)

16.c4 b5 17.d5 c6 18.xd8† x8 19.xg4 c7 Black's sounder structure gives him the better chances.

11...g6
Black should exchange or repel his opponent's active pieces. First there is the knight...

12.fe3 h6
And now the bishop.

13.xh6 xh6 14.e4?
The routine 14.xg4 xg4 15.xg4 b6 16.d1 c6 gives Black a pleasant and easy game.

14...xe4!
Black could have equalized with the solid 14...c5, but instead he opts for the most principled and ambitious move.

15.g2 d6 16.xf6† xf6 17.d2 h5 18.xd6† f8 19.0-0-0 e7
Black has weathered the storm and emerged with an excellent position in Naiditsch – Cvitan, Kusadasi 2006.
I cannot imagine many scenarios in the Sicilian Defence in which this meek reaction to ...h7-h5 could aspire to be the best line.

9...d5!
Now that g4-g5 is no longer an option for White, this becomes quite awkward to meet.

10...g5
A couple of other moves have also been tried:

10...d4 11.0-0-0 xf5 12.xf5 (12.exf5 bd7 also looks pleasant for Black) was seen in Pikula – Jakovljevic, Niska Banja 1996. Here it looks promising to play 12...bd7N 13.g5 hxg5, with an excellent game.

If4!?
White tries to provoke huge complications.

10...b4!?
Black might also have done well to consider 10...d4N, when my main line runs as follows:

11.fxe5 xe4 12.xe4 xf5 13.g3 a5† 14.d2 xe5† 15.e2 xe2† 16.xe2 xc2 17.c1 d3 18.d1 c6 19.xc2 dxc2 20.xc2 d8 Black has a safe position with slightly better chances.

11.g2!?
White should have preferred 11.xg7†??N 8 12.exd5, leading to a wildly unclear position with umpteen possibilities.

11...xf5 12.exf5 e4 13.0-0 c6 14.a3 xc3 15.bxc3
This position was reached in Ionov – Vachier Lagrange, Moscow 2008, and here Black should have played:

15...hxg5N
With a clear advantage.

10...d4 11.e2
It is doubtful that White gains anything with the preliminary minor piece exchange: 11.xf6 gxf6 12.e2 (or 12.b1, Frolochkin – Fedoseev, Peterhof 2008, 12...c6N 13.d2 b6 with a good game for Black) 12...xf5

This position was reached in De Jong – Goudriaan, Hoogeveen 2008, and here it looks logical for Black to play 13...c6N 14.g2, and now either 14...hxg5 or perhaps even the disruptive 14...a5†?.

11...a5 12.exf5 d5 13.e1
This looks better than 13.g3?! hxg5 14.g1 xg3 15.hxg3 e4† (15...h2?N may have been even stronger) 16.e2 xf5 17.d2 d7 18.0-0-0 c8 when White did not have much to show for the missing pawn in Giri – Kozlov, St Petersburg 2007.

13...bd7N
This simple move is an improvement over 13...e4?! 14.g2 a5† 15.d2 xd2
16.\texttt{\textit{W}}xd2 when White was fine in Cheng – Ftacnik, Las Vegas 2006.

14.\texttt{\textit{R}}g2 \texttt{\textit{W}}b5!

The attack on the b-pawn is a bit annoying for White. True, Black may not be threatening to capture the pawn immediately as the white rook would penetrate to \texttt{\textit{b}}7, but the real point is that the natural plan of \texttt{\textit{W}}d2 and 0–0–0 is prevented. Overall I would rate Black’s chances as at least equal.

\textbf{C) 9.g5}

This has been by far the most popular choice, and leads to a rich position after the following brief tactical exchange.

9...\texttt{\textit{Q}}xe4 10.\texttt{\textit{R}}xg7+ \texttt{\textit{Q}}xg7 11.\texttt{\textit{Q}}xe4 d5

We have quite an unusual situation for the early stages of the Sicilian Defence. Black has seized the centre and his pieces have plenty of space; his only concerns are connected with the slight looseness of his pawns.

12.\texttt{\textit{Q}}g3

Harmless is 12.\texttt{\textit{R}}f6+ \texttt{\textit{Q}}xf6 13.\texttt{\textit{G}}xf6 \texttt{\textit{Q}}e6 14.\texttt{\textit{R}}g1 \texttt{\textit{Q}}c6 15.\texttt{\textit{Q}}g2 d4 when a draw was agreed in Todorovic – Aleksic, Budva 2004. A likely continuation would have been 16.\texttt{\textit{Q}}g5 \texttt{\textit{W}}b6 when Black is more than happy.

12...d4

The expansion in the centre seems a bit daring, but the alternatives fare worse. For instance: 12...\texttt{\textit{Q}}g4 13.\texttt{\textit{Q}}c2 d4 14.\texttt{\textit{Q}}d2 \texttt{\textit{Q}}xe2 15.\texttt{\textit{R}}xe2 \texttt{\textit{W}}d5 16.0–0 h4 17.\texttt{\textit{Q}}h5 \texttt{\textit{F}}f8 18.\texttt{\textit{Q}}f4 \texttt{\textit{Q}}c6 Pelletier – Jaracz, Warsaw 2005, and now after 19.\texttt{\textit{F}}5!\texttt{\textit{N}} h3 20.\texttt{\textit{F}}f2 Black is in trouble.

13.\texttt{\textit{Q}}d2 \texttt{\textit{W}}d5

Here we will pay close attention to \textbf{C1)} 14.\texttt{\textit{Q}}g1 and \textbf{C2)} 14.c4?, after first checking a couple of bishop moves:

14.\texttt{\textit{Q}}e2

This does not look too threatening and has never been played at GM level, but that does not mean it is a bad move.

14...e4 15.c4

A few other moves have been tried:

15.\texttt{\textit{Q}}f4 h4 16.\texttt{\textit{R}}h5 \texttt{\textit{Q}}h7 17.\texttt{\textit{Q}}g1 \texttt{\textit{Q}}c6 18.\texttt{\textit{Q}}f6+ \texttt{\textit{Q}}xf6 19.\texttt{\textit{Q}}xf6 \texttt{\textit{Q}}h8 20.\texttt{\textit{Q}}g5 \texttt{\textit{W}}d8 21.\texttt{\textit{Q}}d2 \texttt{\textit{W}}xf6 22.0–0–0 \texttt{\textit{Q}}e6 Black was a pawn up with good prospects in Oortwijn – Kund, e-mail 2007.

15.\texttt{\textit{Q}}f3 has been played a few times, but the tense position soon petered out to equality after 15...d3 16.\texttt{\textit{Q}}xd3 exd3 17.\texttt{\textit{Q}}c3 \texttt{\textit{Q}}xc3+ 18.\texttt{\textit{Q}}xc3 \texttt{\textit{Q}}xg5 19.\texttt{\textit{Q}}xd3 \texttt{\textit{Q}}c6 20.\texttt{\textit{Q}}b1 \texttt{\textit{Q}}h6 21.\texttt{\textit{Q}}f2 \texttt{\textit{Q}}h3 when a draw was agreed in Perez – Blanco Gramajo, e-mail 2006.
15...c6 16.0–0 h4 17.\textit{\textbf{h}5}
This position was reached in Yordanov – Grigorov, Plovdiv 2008, and here I suggest:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\filldraw[lightgray] (0,0) rectangle (4,4);
\draw[very thick] (0,0) grid (4,4);
\draw[step=0.5cm,very thin] (0,0) grid (4,4);
\draw[fill=white] (0.5,0.5) circle (0.1cm);
\draw[fill=black] (1.5,1.5) circle (0.1cm);
\draw[fill=white] (2.5,2.5) circle (0.1cm);
\draw[fill=black] (3.5,3.5) circle (0.1cm);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

17...\textit{\textbf{e}5N}
In the game Black opted for the questionable exchange sacrifice 17...\textit{\textbf{x}h}5?!., and although he went on to win, I do not think the idea was fully justified.

18.f4?! \textit{\textbf{d}6 19.\textit{\textbf{f}6}} 18.\textit{\textbf{f}8}
Black is not worse in this double-edged position.

14.d3 \textit{\textbf{g}4 15.\textit{\textbf{e}4} \textit{\textbf{d}7} 16.f3}
This was White’s improvement over a previous game which continued 16.\textit{\textbf{f}3} \textit{\textbf{c}6 17.\textit{\textbf{e}2} 0–0–0 18.\textit{\textbf{x}g}4 \textit{\textbf{hxg}4} 19.0–0–0 \textit{\textbf{w}e}6 20.\textit{\textbf{b}1} \textit{\textbf{f}8} 21.\textit{\textbf{f}4} \textit{\textbf{xf}4} 22.\textit{\textbf{xf}4} \textit{\textbf{xe}2} 23.\textit{\textbf{xe}2} \textit{\textbf{d}6} when Black was defending successfully in Korneev – Wojtaszek, Evora 2007.

16.\textit{\textbf{c}6}!

Another game continued 16.\textit{\textbf{h}3} 17.\textit{\textbf{g}1}, and here Black should have played 17...\textit{\textbf{c}6N} (Instead in Korneev – Mogranzini, Porto Mannu 2008, Black erred with 17...h4?!., inviting the strong manoeuvre 18.\textit{\textbf{h}1}! followed by \textit{\textbf{f}2} hitting the bishop, and later \textit{\textbf{d}3} when the knight was ideally placed.) The knight on g3 is not so well-placed, so there is no reason to drive it to a better square. Nevertheless, after 18.\textit{\textbf{e}2} (Black should certainly not be afraid of 18.f4? \textit{\textbf{g}4} 19.\textit{\textbf{f}3} 0–0–0 when White is in trouble.) 18...\textit{\textbf{c}7} 19.0–0–0 it seems to me that White’s chances are slightly higher.

17.h4
This looks better than 17.\textit{\textbf{g}1} \textit{\textbf{c}6} (Also interesting is 17...h4N 18.\textit{\textbf{h}1} \textit{\textbf{c}7}! intending ...\textit{\textbf{d}7–c5}.) 18.\textit{\textbf{c}2} 0–0–0 when Black had a comfortable position in Lagarde – Stephan, Pau 2008.

17...\textit{\textbf{c}6} 18.\textit{\textbf{c}2} 0–0–0

C1) 14.\textit{\textbf{g}1}
This older move appears logical, but Black soon obtains a promising position.

14.\textit{\textbf{g}4} 15.\textit{\textbf{e}2}
15...\textit{\texttt{d}d7} 
Black intends to position the knight on c5, where it will control some of the vital central squares. In the following high-level encounter Black succeeded with a different approach, although I would caution the reader not to read too much into this as it was only a blitz game:

15...\texttt{c6} 16.h4 \texttt{e4} 17.\texttt{hxg4} hxg4 18.\texttt{Wxg4} e3 19.fxe3 dxe3 20.\texttt{Wxe3} e5 21.\texttt{Wxe4} \texttt{Wxe4} 22.\texttt{Qxe4} \texttt{f3} 23.\texttt{Wxe2} \texttt{Wxe4} 24.\texttt{Qxe4} \texttt{Qxh4} and Black went on to win the ending in Ponomariov – Gelfand, Moscow (blitz) 2008.

\section*{16.\textit{\texttt{x}g4}} 
This is not much of a try for an advantage, but the alternative is risky:

16.f3 
After this move Black is unable to claim the best pawn structure, but his pieces can become very active.

16...\texttt{e6} 17.\texttt{e4} \texttt{c5} 18.\texttt{xc5} 18.\texttt{c4} \texttt{c6} 19.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{xe4} (19...\texttt{xe4} 20.g6=) 20.\texttt{f5} (20.\texttt{xf7}+ \texttt{xf7} 21.g6+ \texttt{xe6} 22.\texttt{fxe4} \texttt{xe4} 23.\texttt{Wxe2} \texttt{xe2}+ 24.\texttt{xe2} \texttt{e4} centralized set up promises advantage to the second player) 20...\texttt{d6} 21.\texttt{d3} \texttt{c4} 22.\texttt{c1} the outcome of the bishops dance is an equal position.

18.\texttt{xc5} 19.\texttt{d3} f5 
Black is doing fine also after 19...0–0–0N 20.\texttt{e2} \texttt{b8}.

16...\texttt{hxg4} 17.\texttt{Wxg4} \texttt{Qxh2} 
The outcome of the opening can be evaluated as positive for Black, who benefits from active pieces and healthy control over the centre. In fact it is already White who must work for equality.

18.\texttt{Wxe4} 
Alternatives are no better:

18.\texttt{b4}? \texttt{c8} (Black could also consider 18...\texttt{b5}?N 19.a3 \texttt{f8} with the better position.) 19.\texttt{xf5} was seen in Koch – Andruet, Marseille 1989, and now Black could have obtained clearly better chances with 19...\texttt{f8}N.
White's position is not yet strong enough to justify a direct attack, and after 18.\(\text{d}5\) \(\text{d}8\) 19.\(\text{g}6\) \(\text{x}g6\) 20.\(\text{x}g6\)\(\text{d}8\) Black once again had the better chances. The game continued with the slow 21.\(\text{g}3\)?!, and after 21...\(\text{c}8\) White had real problems in Zherebukh – Brodsky, Cappelle la Grande 2008.

18...\(\text{x}e4\)\(\text{a}4\)

18...\(\text{b}6\)?! also deserves consideration.

19.\(\text{d}xe4\) \(\text{e}7\) 20.0-0-0

We have been following the game Hracek – Solak, Mallorca 2004. At this point I think Black's most accurate continuation would have been:

20...\(\text{h}8\)\(\text{N}\)

Followed by activating the king. A possible continuation is:

21.\(\text{c}3\)

It looks logical for White to exchange one of the dominant central pawns.

21...\(\text{e}6\) 22.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{exd}4\) 23.\(\text{g}e1\) \(\text{d}5\)

With an edge for Black.

C2) 14.\(\text{c}4\)?

This is a modern idea, with most of the available games having been played over the past three or so years. It is a tricky move, which forces the defender to play with some precision.

14...\(\text{c}6\)

Opening the centre is not good enough for full equality: 14...\(\text{dxc}3\) 15.\(\text{xc}3\) \(\text{e}6\) (Black should not help the enemy with his development: 15...\(\text{xd}1\)\(\text{t}\) 16.\(\text{xd}1\) \(\text{h}4\) 17.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{c}6\), Balogh – Doric, Vogosca 2007, and now after 18.\(\text{c}4\)\(\text{N}\) \(\text{g}4\) 19.\(\text{d}6\)\(\text{t}\) \(\text{e}7\) 20.\(\text{f}3\) Black has serious problems.) 16.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{c}6\) 17.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 18.0-0 \(\text{h}4\) 19.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{g}8\) 20.\(\text{xf}7\)\(\text{g}7\) 21.\(\text{f}4\) White's bishop pair gave him a pleasant edge in Amonatov – Grachev, Moscow 2007.

15.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{g}4\)

16.\(\text{c}2\)

Another game continued 16.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{xd}1\) 17.\(\text{xc}6\)\(\text{t}\) \(\text{xc}6\) 18.\(\text{xd}1\) Gaponenko – Chulivska, Nikolaev 2008. Here I suggest the immediate 18...\(\text{f}6\)!\(\text{N}\) (In the game Black played 18...0-0-0 followed by ...\(\text{f}6\) on the following move, but it looks much more logical to use the king actively in the centre.) Possible continuations include 19.\(\text{e}4\) \(\text{e}7\), 19.\(\text{g}1\) \(\text{f}7\), and 19.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{xf}4\) 20.\(\text{gxf}6\) \(\text{x}f6\) 21.\(\text{xf}4\) \(\text{d}7\), none of which look at all bad for Black.

16...\(\text{f}3\) 17.\(\text{g}1\)!?
This critical move was introduced just a few months before publication. The alternatives also warrant close attention:

17.\(\text{e}4\)

This should not be too dangerous.

17...\(\text{ex}e4\) 18.\(\text{xe}4\)

The knight capture is no better: 18.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 19.\(\text{0-0-0}\) 0-0 20.\(\text{he}1\) (Or 20.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{b}8\) 21.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{f}8\) 22.\(\text{xf}8\) \(\text{hx}f8\) 23.\(\text{he}1\) \(\text{f}5\) 24.\(\text{gx}f6\) \(\text{x}f6\) 25.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) with an edge for Black in Ehlvest – Ludwig, Internet 2009.) 20...\(\text{b}8\) 21.\(\text{b}1\) This was Balogh – Sasikiran, Beijing (blitz) 2008, and now after 21...\(\text{c}5\)! N 22.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{xe}5\) Black has nothing to fear.

18...\(\text{h}4\) 19.\(\text{xc}6\) 20.\(\text{xe}4\)

We have been following the game Pruijssers – Moranda, Enschede 2009, in which Black now decided to castle on the queen’s wing. Instead it looks promising to look for an active role for the king in the centre with:

20...\(\text{c}7\)!! N

With decent prospects for Black.

17.\(\text{0-0}\)

This only seems to have been tried in a few obscure e-mail games, but it leads to extremely rich and complex play so I would not be surprised if it starts to appear in high-level over-the-board chess in the near future.

17...\(\text{d}7\) 18.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{f}6\)!

The undeveloping move 18...\(\text{f}8\), Brunsek – Avotins, e-mail 2006, does not look quite as attractive.

19.\(\text{h}4\)

19.\(\text{gx}f6\) is actually possible, although Black gets plenty of activity after 19...\(\text{g}8\) 20.\(\text{g}3\) (or 20.\(\text{g}7\)!! \(\text{d}8\) 21.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{xf}6\) 22.\(\text{fe}1\) \(\text{xf}5\) 23.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{c}7\)) 20...\(\text{h}4\).

19...0-0 0-0 20.\(\text{c}5\)

 Harmless is 20.\(\text{gx}f6\) \(\text{g}8\) 21.\(\text{g}5\) (21.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}4\) is too dangerous for White) 21...\(\text{f}6\) 22.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{xf}5\) 23.\(\text{hx}f5\) \(\text{gg}5\) 24.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 25.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{h}4\) 26.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{g}8\) 27.\(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{gg}5\) Black should be fine in the ending.

20...\(\text{g}8\) 21.\(\text{b}4\) \(\text{b}8\) 22.\(\text{fe}1\) \(\text{f}8\)!

Preparing a nice regrouping and counterattacking plan.

23.\(\text{a}4\)

23.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 24.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{xe}4\) 25.\(\text{xe}4\) \(\text{d}8\) looks okay for Black, who intends ...\(\text{f}6\).

23...\(\text{d}8\) 24.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{f}6\)!

Black succeeds in executing his plan, just in the nick of time before White sets up a breakthrough on the queenside.

25.\(\text{b}5\) \(\text{e}6\) 26.\(\text{c}4\) \(\text{d}5\) 27.\(\text{xd}5\) \(\text{xd}5\) 28.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{gg}7\) 29.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{gg}8\)

Neither player found any reason to avoid the move repetition, so a draw was agreed in Spiridonov – Djoudi, e-mail 2005.
17...h4!?N

The subtle idea is to prevent the enemy knight from making use of the h4-square! In the following game Black ran into problems:

17...Nd7 18.Nf5 Ne8

I considered 18...Ng8N but this also fails to equalize after 19.Nh4! This is an important resource for White. 19...e5 (also unsatisfactory is 19...Ng4 20.Nh7? Nh8 21.e4 Nc7 22.Nf5) 20.Nxf3 Nhxf3 21.Nxe2 Nh3 (21...d3 22.Nxa4† Nxa4 23.Nxf3 e4 24.Nxe4 0–0–0 25.Nf1 gives White a clear advantage in the ending) 22.Nh7 0–0–0 23.b4! Black does not have a satisfactory continuation, for instance: 23...e4? (23...Ne6 24.Nxh5; 23...Na4 24.Nxh5; 23...Nxf2 24.Nf5† Ne6 25.0–0–0 e4 26.g6!) 24.bxc5 e3 25.Ng3 Black does not have enough compensation: 25...Nh2 (after 25...Ne2† 26.Nxf2 White should consolidate easily) 26.Nf5† Nh8 (26...Nd7 27.c6!) 27.Nb1 and White keeps a big advantage in all variations.

19.g6! fxg6 20.Nh4!

Again we see the knight making effective use of the h4-square.

20...e4

Black could have kept his disadvantage to a minimum with 20...0–0–0N 21.Nxg6 Nh6, although his situation still does not represent an ideal outcome from the opening.


White went on to convert his extra pawn in Sutovsky – Cvitan, Rijeka 2010.

18.Ne4

18.Nf5 Nh8 looks okay for Black, now that the resource of g6 followed by Nh4 is unavailable.

18.Ne4 Nx e4 19.Nxe4 Nh7 is also fine for the second player.

18...Nd7
English Attack

Four Weddings and a Funeral - 6...e3 e6 7.f3

Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 @f6 5.c3 a6 6.e3 e6

7.f3 b5

A) 8.d2 b4
   A1) 9.a4 @bd7
       A11) 10.c4
       A12) 10.c4
       A13) 10.0-0-0
   A2) 9.@@e2 e5 10.@b3 @c6
       A21) 11.c4
       A22) 11.@g3
       A23) 11.g4 h6
           A231) 12.0-0-0
           A232) 12.@@g3 @c6
               A2321) 13.0-0-0 @c7
               A2322) 13.h4 d5
B) 8.g4 b4
   B1) 9.a4
   B2) 9.@@e2 h6
       B21) 10.@g3
       B22) 10.c4
       B23) 10.@@d2
           B231) 10...@bd7 11.0-0-0 @c7 12.h4 d5!
               B2311) 13.@@g2
               B2312) 13.exd5
               B2313) 13.@@f4?!
               B2314) 13.@@h3
               B2315) 13.@@f4?!
           B232) 10...e5 11.@@f5 d5
               B2321) 12.exd5
               B2322) 12.0-0-0 @e6
                   B23221) 13.exd5
                   B23222) 13.@@b1

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Although the Perenyi Attack remains a genuine challenge to Black’s Najdorf/Scheveningen set-up, the traditional English Attack with 7.f3 remains White’s most popular choice at all levels. White’s strategy is both direct and effective. By advancing his g-pawn up the board, he aims to drive the knight away from the f6-square and, if all goes to plan, proceed to smash up the opponent’s entire structure with h4-h5 and g5-g6, opening some kingside files and undermining the e6-pawn. (The demise of this pawn usually precedes the funeral march for Black’s game.)

In order to fight against White’s plan, I have chosen an aggressive counter involving the immediate advance of the black b-pawn. This approach has achieved encouraging practical results, and has most notably been favoured by Topalov, who has enriched the theory with several innovative ideas. The expulsion of the c3-knight is genuinely troubling for White as he loses part of the natural coordination of his pieces. This often means that, instead of furthering his attack, he has to worry about solving other problems. It goes without saying that the whole line is far from a walk in the park for Black as well though...

1.e4 c5 2.\textit{f}3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\textit{x}d4 \textit{f}6 5.\textit{c}3 a6 6.e3 e6 7.f3 b5

From this standard position White has two principal ideas, with A) 8.\textit{d}2 and B) 8.g4 both deserving serious attention. Sometimes the two moves can transpose, but there are also some independent possibilities that lead certain players to prefer one move over the other.

Against both moves, I am recommending the energetic response of 8...b4. However, Black’s subsequent follow-up will depend firstly on which of the two main candidates White has chosen on move 8, and secondly on whether he moves his knight to a4 or e2. Naturally we will address all these options over the course of the chapter.

\textbf{A) 8.\textit{d}2 b4}

This daring move seemingly defies any strategic logic. Black is continuing his queenside advances well before finishing the development of his own pieces. We will analyse both sensible knight moves in detail, starting with A1) 9.a4 followed by A2) 9.\textit{ce}2.

\textbf{A1) 9.a4}

Here the knight moves away from the centre, but on the other hand White hopes it may play an active role on the queenside.

9...\textit{bd}7
In this position we have to be prepared for three main options: A11) 10.\textit{\textbf{c}}4, A12) 10.c4 and A13) 10.0--0--0.

We should briefly note the almost untested line: 10.\textit{\textbf{w}}xb4 d5 11.\textit{\textbf{d}}2 dxe4 12.0--0--0 \textit{\textbf{b}}7∞ The position is murky, but not especially appealing for White.

\textbf{A11) 10.\textit{\textbf{c}}4}

The bishop develops actively, perhaps hoping to strike a blow against e6. However, tournament practice has demonstrated that Black has no problems if he plays carefully.

10..\textit{\textbf{w}}c7

Black has also achieved decent results with 10.\textit{\textbf{e}}5 11.\textit{\textbf{b}}3 \textit{\textbf{b}}8, but my personal preference is for the text move.

11.\textit{\textbf{b}}3 \textit{\textbf{b}}7 12.c3

Black was ready for ...d5, so White had better play either this or 12.c4, which leads to the same position.

12...\textit{\textbf{b}}xc3

12...d5 would now be too risky due to 13.\textit{\textbf{c}}xb4 dxe4 14.\textit{\textbf{c}}c1 with some initiative for White.

13.\textit{\textbf{d}}xc3 \textit{\textbf{c}}8 14.0--0 \textit{\textbf{b}}b8

Not only removing the queen from the c-file, but also ensuring that \textit{\textbf{xe}}6 tricks will not work after the bishop comes to e7.

15.\textit{\textbf{a}}4!?

This was White's choice in both of the games I found on the database from this position, although there are plenty of other reasonable options. In the event of quieter play, the position can be compared to those examined in line A12 below.
accompanied by two extra pawns, and the g2-f3-e4 pawn chain does a nice job of restricting the b7-bishop. Nevertheless Black's chances are higher due to the immense potential of the bishop pair, and in the game he eventually ground out a win.

16...h6!
If White is going to play g5, he will have to open the h-file for the enemy rook.

17.h4?! 
This is the consistent move, but it leads to a difficult position. After a quiet move like 17.Ea1N the pawn on g4 looks strange, but overall White's position is acceptable enough.

17...d5! 
This central counter-strike works perfectly.

18.g5
It is worth pointing out the following tactical point: 18.e5 Wxe5! 19.f4 The queen is trapped, but Black has a simple exchanging resource: 19...Wxd4t! 20.Wxd4 c5, leading to an ending with an extra pawn.

18...hxg5 19.hxg5 xc3!
19...cxe4?N 20.cxe4 dxe4 was also playable, despite the apparent vulnerability of the knight on d7. But the text move is simpler.

20.bxc3 xc4! 21.g2
After 21.fxe4 Kg3† 22.g2 xe3† Black has more than enough for the exchange, and White's position is practically in ruins.

Up to this point we have been following the game Soumya – Konguvel, Gurgon 2009. Here I found a simple improvement:

21...xc3N 22.xd7† xd7†
Black's king is safe, despite appearances, and overall White is suffering.

A12) 10.c4
This leads to the same structure as seen in the previous variation, but in this case White reasons that his bishop will be better off developing modestly and aiming at the queenside, where the first player will likely direct most of his attention.

10...bxc3
Black takes the opportunity to exchange a flank pawn for a more central one.

11.xc3
11.xc3 does not appear to have been tested – hardly a surprise, as exposing the queen so early in the game is unlikely to promise White much. Play may continue 11.b7 12.c1 (12.c6?! xe4! 13.xd8 [13.fxe4 Kd4†}
14.\textit{\texttt{d}1 \texttt{c}8$^+$} 13...\textit{\texttt{x}c}3 14.\textit{\texttt{x}b}7 \textit{\texttt{x}a}4 15.b3 \textit{\texttt{c}3} 16.\textit{\texttt{x}d}2 \textit{\texttt{b}5} 17.\textit{\texttt{c}1} d5 Black is a pawn up, and the two bishops do not offer much compensation.) 12...\textit{\texttt{c}8} 13.\textit{\texttt{b}3} \textit{\texttt{x}c}1$^+$ 14.\textit{\texttt{x}c}1 \textit{\texttt{b}8} 15.\textit{\texttt{c}4} d5 16.exd5 \textit{\texttt{x}d}5 With a comfortable position for Black.

11...\textit{\texttt{b}7} 12.\textit{\texttt{c}2}

12.\textit{\texttt{c}4} was played in Al Modiahki – Sasikiran, Doha 2006, and now Black's simplest solution would have been 12...d5$^+$!N 13.exd5 \textit{\texttt{b}6} 14.\textit{\texttt{x}b}3 \textit{\texttt{x}d}5 15.\textit{\texttt{x}d}5 \textit{\texttt{x}d}5 with no problems whatsoever.

12...\textit{\texttt{e}7} 13.0–0 0–0

Both sides have completed their standard developing moves, and the next job will be to decide on a plan. We can see that Black enjoys healthy control over the centre and will usually look for a timely ...d5 break. White, on the other hand, will look to make inroads on the queenside, either through active piece play or by creating a passed pawn.

![](chessboard.png)

14.\textit{\texttt{a}c}1

This has been the usual choice. Evidently most players believe that the other rook will be best placed on the d-file.

14.b4 does not appear to have been tested. The natural answer seems to be 14...d5 15.exd5, and now 15...\textit{\texttt{x}b}4?! (15...\textit{\texttt{x}d}5 should also be fine) leads to interesting complications: 16.dxe6 \textit{\texttt{d}5}! 17.e7! (17.\textit{\texttt{a}c}1 \textit{\texttt{e}8} gives Black no problems at all) 17...\textit{\texttt{x}e}7 18.\textit{\texttt{f}b}1 (18.\textit{\texttt{a}b}1 \textit{\texttt{x}c}3 19.\textit{\texttt{w}x}c3 \textit{\texttt{d}5} 20.\textit{\texttt{a}3} \textit{\texttt{x}e}3 21.\textit{\texttt{x}e}3 \textit{\texttt{e}8} is equal) 18...\textit{\texttt{x}c}3 19.\textit{\texttt{w}x}c3 \textit{\texttt{d}5} 20.\textit{\texttt{a}3} \textit{\texttt{x}e}3 21.\textit{\texttt{x}b}7 \textit{\texttt{e}8} Black has enough activity to compensate for White's theoretical advantage of bishop versus knight.

14.\textit{\texttt{f}c}1 has been much less popular than the text move, but deserves to be taken seriously. I believe the most accurate response to be 14...\textit{\texttt{e}8} (if Black continues analogously to the main line with 14...\textit{\texttt{b}8} then his queen might become uncomfortable after 15.\textit{\texttt{a}b}1! \textit{\texttt{e}8} 16.b4 intending b5 to open the b-file, Erenburg – Vovsha, Pawtucket 2008.) 15.\textit{\texttt{b}3} \textit{\texttt{e}8} 16.\textit{\texttt{h}1} This position was reached in Lupulescu – Papp, Hungary 2007, and here I suggest 16...d5N with the likely continuation 17.exd5 exd5 18.\textit{\texttt{a}4} \textit{\texttt{x}c}1$^+$ 19.\textit{\texttt{x}c}1 \textit{\texttt{d}6} when Black has enough activity and central control to make up for the isolated d-pawn.

14...\textit{\texttt{b}8} 15.\textit{\texttt{f}d}1

Alternatives do little to alter the overall character of the play.

15.\textit{\texttt{e}2} \textit{\texttt{d}8} 16.\textit{\texttt{w}c}1 \textit{\texttt{c}5} 17.b3 was seen in Fedorov – Gabrielian, Voronezh 2008. Now a sensible continuation seems to be 17...d6N (In the game Black opted for the strange 17...h5?! and soon found himself in trouble.) 18.\textit{\texttt{a}4} \textit{\texttt{b}4} 19.\textit{\texttt{b}2} \textit{\texttt{d}7} 20.a3 \textit{\texttt{e}8} 21.\textit{\texttt{d}2} \textit{\texttt{c}6} Black keeps a solid position with balanced chances.

15.b4 \textit{\texttt{d}8} 16.a3 (16.a4 d5 17.exd5 \textit{\texttt{x}d}5 18.\textit{\texttt{x}d}5 \textit{\texttt{x}d}5 19.b5 \textit{\texttt{x}b}5 20.\textit{\texttt{x}b}5 \textit{\texttt{c}5} gave Black healthy piece play in Korneev – Vera Gonzalez, La Roda 2009.) 16...d5 17.exd5 \textit{\texttt{x}d}5 18.\textit{\texttt{x}d}5 \textit{\texttt{x}d}5 19.\textit{\texttt{c}4} (19.\textit{\texttt{c}3} \textit{\texttt{d}6} 20.h3 \textit{\texttt{c}5} 21.\textit{\texttt{f}c}1 \textit{\texttt{g}6}∞) 19...\textit{\texttt{e}5} 20.\textit{\texttt{x}d}5
338 English Attack

\[ \text{exd5 21.} \text{e2 f6 Black keeps a full share of the chances thanks to his strong central control, Najer – Belov, Krasnoyarsk 2007.} \]

15...d8 16.h1

In the event of 16.f2, Brkic – Rezan, Split 2008, Black obtains a fine game with 16...d5!N 17.g3 d6.

16...d5

This thematic move destroys White's remaining central pawn while increasing the scope of both Black's bishops.

17.exd5 \text{exd5 18.xd5 xd5}

White no longer has the two bishops, and if anything it is Black who has a slight initiative thanks to his active queen, although ultimately the position should be level.

19...f6 20.e2 b7 21.b3 h6

We have been following the game Leko – Topalov, Morelia/Linares 2008. The position is equal, but at the same time unbalanced enough for either side to outplay the opponent, and in the end Topalov went on to earn a hard-fought victory.

A13) 10.0–0

This time we see White playing more aggressively.

\[ \text{10...a5} \]

This move has established itself as the most reliable, although it is also worth checking the alternative briefly in order to learn about the potential dangers lurking in the position:

10...d5!

Readers who are not yet versed in this variation may be wondering what could be wrong with this natural move. Black tries to seize the initiative in the centre in thematic fashion, but his lagging development turns out to be his undoing.

11.exd5 \text{exd5 12.c4 f6} \]

Black has better control over the centre, but on the other hand his queenside is slightly weak. Overall the position is balanced.

19.c4

19.a3 is harmless in view of 19.c5 20.c3 (20.b4 b3 21.xb3 x3b3+) 20...a5=.

A critical alternative is 19.c6?N c6 20.xc6. The point is that after 20.e5 White can play 21.b6, hoping to simplify into an advantageous ending in which his bishop pair would be a huge asset. Fortunately Black can counter that idea with 21...c8! 22.c1 e1 23.exd1 c4 24.xc4 xc4...
Another game continued 12...\textit{b}b7 13.\textit{h}e1 \textit{a}a5 (13...\textit{c}e7 leads to a difficult position for Black after a forced sequence: 14.\textit{x}d5 \textit{x}d5 15.\textit{c}f5! 0–0 16.\textit{b}b6! \textit{a}xb6 17.\textit{c}xe7! \textit{h}h8 18.\textit{b}b6 \textit{x}b6 19.\textit{d}xd5 \textit{ex}d5 20.\textit{x}d5 [20.\textit{e}5?!] 20...\textit{h}h6† 21.\textit{d}d2 \textit{h}h2 22.\textit{h}h1 \textit{e}5 23.\textit{h}h4± White’s pieces are extremely active.) Unfortunately for Black, a nasty surprise lay in store:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[help lines] (0,0) grid (8,8);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

14.\textit{c}xe6! fxe6 15.\textit{b}b6 \textit{a}a4 (15...\textit{d}7xb6 16.\textit{e}xe6† \textit{c}e7 17.\textit{c}xb6+-) 16.\textit{d}xd5 \textit{c}c7 17.\textit{xb}7 \textit{xb}6 18.\textit{e}xe6 0–0 19.\textit{e}xe7 \textit{a}a2 20.\textit{d}d4 \textit{f}f6 21.\textit{a}xa8+ 1–0 Wang Hao – Nava, Istanbul 2005.

13.\textit{g}5

13.\textit{f}5!? is also strong, but there is no need to spend time examining multiple refutations.

13...\textit{c}c7

13.\textit{b}7 14.\textit{h}e1 \textit{e}7 15.\textit{f}5! 0–0 16.\textit{d}xd5 \textit{c}c7 17.\textit{e}xe7+ \textit{e}c7 18.\textit{b}b6 \textit{a}d8 19.\textit{d}xd5 \textit{xb}xd5 20.\textit{w}xd5+- The centralized pieces have triumphed with the help of pins.

14.\textit{d}xd5!

White should maintain the momentum of his attack rather than worry about trivialities such as the bishop pair.

14...\textit{c}xd5 15.\textit{h}e1 \textit{b}7 16.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}6

Leko – Topalov, San Luis 2005. At this point White could have obtained a huge attack as pointed out by numerous commentators shortly after the game:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\draw[help lines] (0,0) grid (8,8);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

17.f4! \textit{g}6

17...\textit{xf}4 18.\textit{g}4 \textit{d}d5 19.\textit{e}xe6+--

18.\textit{f}5

It is hard to suggest a decent defence, for instance:

18...\textit{g}7 19.\textit{e}xe6! fxe6 20.\textit{c}c5

Black is busted.

11.\textit{b}3 \textit{b}7

12.a3

This is the most straightforward attempt to question the placement of the black queen. It wins a pawn (at least temporarily) but the black position still turns out to be quite reliable.

A few other moves have been tested. Curiously, in both of the following examples we will follow the example of the Indian Grandmaster and Najdorff expert Sasikiran.
12...d5 17...a5 \(a\) 8 18...a8 19...c5

19...\(\text{x}\)xc5!
This attractive sacrifice creates serious problems for White.

20...bxc5
20...\(\text{x}\)xc5 \(\text{x}\)xc5 21...bxc5 \(\text{b}\)b6! Also poses difficult problems for the defence.

20...\(\text{x}\)xc5 21...\(\text{x}\)xc5 \(\text{b}\)b6!
Perhaps White had overlooked this clever tactical motif. Now it becomes clear that capturing on c5 with the rook will really hurt.

22...c4 \(\text{xc}\)c5 23...d4 \(\text{e}\)e7 24...xc5\(†\) \(\text{xc}\)c5 25...e2 dx\(c\)c4\(†\)
Black went on to win the ending in E. Andreev – Sasikiran, Cappelle la Grande 2006.

12...b1 \(\text{c}\)e7 13...g4 \(\text{c}\)e5 14...xc5
Once again after 14...a3 ...xa4 15...b4 \(\text{c}\)c7

16...xa4 0–0 17...d7 18...h4 \(\text{b}\)b6 Black has excellent compensation due to his attacking chances.

14...dxc5 15...e2 \(\text{d}\)d8 16...e1 \(\text{xd}\)1\(†\) 17...xd1
This position was reached in Erdogdu – Sasikiran, Beijing (blitz) 2008. Here I suggest a modest improvement for Black:

17...0–0\(N\)
In the game Black was successful with 17...c4 18...f4 \(\text{c}\)3 19...g5 \(\text{d}\)d7 20...h4 \(\text{e}\)e5 21...e2 0–0\(∞\) but at this stage of the game White has fair chances to maintain the balance.

18...d4 \(\text{e}\)d8\(\text{†}\)
Black is slightly ahead in development and possesses some attacking chances.

12...\(\text{w}\)c7 13...xb4
It is hardly surprising that no-one has yet ventured 13...xb4? d5 when White is struggling, for instance: 14...c3 \(\text{xc}\)c3 15...xc3 \(\text{c}\)e5 16...dc2 d4 17...xd4 exd4 18...xd4 \(\text{xa}\)3\(†\) 19...b1 \(\text{c}\)e5\(†\) With only two pawns for the piece, White is in trouble.

13...d5
We have reached a critical position. The situation is certainly complicated, but based on the evidence so far, Black's position seems to be fully viable.
14.\textit{c4} \hfill

Several other moves are possible:

14.exd5 \textit{cxd5} 15.\textit{c3} \textit{xb4} 16.\textit{c4} \textit{d6} gives Black no problems at all.

14.\textit{f4} has not been tried, but Black is doing well after 14...\textit{e5} 15.\textit{g3} \textit{h5}!\textsuperscript{?} (15...\textit{dxe4} also looks fine) 16.h4 \textit{g6} 17.\textit{d1} \textit{h6} 18.\textit{g1} \textit{dxe4} 19.fxe4 \textit{cxe4} Black has at least equal chances thanks to his excellent central control.

14.b5 \textit{e5} 15.b6 (15.\textit{c5} \textit{d4} 16.\textit{g5} \textit{axb5} 17.\textit{xb5} \textit{c6} 18.\textit{xc6} \textit{xc6} 15...\textit{xb6} 16.\textit{e6} \textit{fxe6} 17.\textit{xb6} \textit{a3}!\textsuperscript{?} 18.\textit{b1} \textit{e7} 19.\textit{a5} \textit{Bb8} 20.\textit{c3} \textit{d6}! Black had a powerful centre and the makings of a promising attack, Brodsky – Cheparinov, Hoogeveen 2006.

14.\textit{b1}!\textsuperscript{?} \textit{dxe4} 15.b5

This results in rather murky complications.

15...\textit{c7} 16.\textit{f4}

16...\textit{c8}

Black could also have considered 16...\textit{e5}\textsuperscript{?} N 17.\textit{g3} \textit{g6}! (This is safer than 17...exf3 18.\textit{f5} \textit{c4} 19.\textit{xe7} \textit{xe7} 20.b6 \textit{c6} 21.\textit{b4}! \textit{e8} 22.\textit{c4}! \textit{fxg2} 23.\textit{h1} when Black’s position may be technically playable, but is also risky and difficult to handle in practice.) 18.\textit{h6} (18.bxa6 \textit{xa6} 19.\textit{xa6} \textit{xa6} 18...\textit{f8} 19.\textit{g5} \textit{c7} and it is doubtful that either side has anything better than accepting the repetition.

17.\textit{c4}

In the event of 17.bxa6 \textit{xa6} 18.\textit{b5} \textit{xb5} 19.\textit{xb5} \textit{b7} 20.\textit{e2} 0–0 21.\textit{f4} \textit{b6} Black’s attacking chances will make up for the pawn deficit.

17...\textit{xb5} 18.\textit{b5} 0–0 19.\textit{xe6} \textit{xe6} 20.\textit{xd7} \textit{xd7} 21.\textit{xd7}

So far we have been following the interesting game Szabo – Kulaots, Budapest 2008. At this point I suggest a modest improvement for Black:

21...\textit{f7}\textsuperscript{?} N

I prefer this slightly over the game continuation of 21...\textit{f6}, which still led to a comfortable ending for Black but had the drawback of obstructing the f-file.

22.\textit{xc8}!\textsuperscript{?} \textit{xc8} 23.\textit{d7} \textit{c6} 24.\textit{a7} \textit{a8}

24...exf3 leads to equality after: 25.gxf3 \textit{xf4} 26.\textit{xc7} \textit{xa4} 27.bxa4 \textit{b4}!\textsuperscript{?} 28.\textit{b1} \textit{a4} 29.\textit{d2} \textit{c4} 30.\textit{c1} \textit{h4}=

25.\textit{xa8}!\textsuperscript{?} \textit{xa8} 26.\textit{e5} exf3 27.gxf3 \textit{xf3}
In the resulting endgame White benefits from having connected passed pawns on the queenside, but Black's chances are still slightly higher thanks to his mighty pair of bishops.

14...dxe4

Destroying White's centre is more important than chipping away at his queenside. Thus 14...dxc4?! makes little sense, and after 15.bxc4 e7 16.c5 0–0 17.wc2 White is clearly better.

15.wb2

The need for this move was highlighted in the following game: 15.f4 d5! 16.c2 dxe3 17.wxe3 e7 18.wxd7 wxd7 19.wb6 w6 20.wxa8 waa8 21.wc2 0–0 Black was clearly better in Ponomariov – Grischuk, Sochi 2006, and only lost after a subsequent blunder.

15...e7

Black can also consider the untested 15...e5!!N 16.d5 exf3 It may look too greedy, but I am not convinced by White's compensation although the position is of course very complicated. 17.c5 is one idea, when Black should continue 17...wb8P.

16.wc2 0–0 17.wf4

The peaceful approach does not help White: 17.f4 wfd8 18.wc3 (18.wc1 waxb8P) 18...wac8P

17...e5 18.wg3

18.d5 is well met by 18...wxb4! 19.wxb4 exf4 20.wd6 wxd6 21.wxd6 wfe8P White must struggle to equalize.

18.g6

We don't want a knight hopping onto f5.

19.f3 ed8

19...a5 20.b5 would simplify White's task by stabilizing his position on the queenside.

20.wc3

We have been following the game Motylev – Cheparinov, Wijk aan Zee 2006. I had already annotated this game for Chessbase, but when I re-examined it in the course of writing this book I found an important improvement:

20...wxb8N

The game continuation of 20...wc6 led to roughly equal chances after 21.wc3, and after the further inaccuracy 21...wab8? White even took over the initiative with 22.f4!.

21.wc3 ed8 22.gxf3 dh5

20...wc6!? also looks sensible. In general it seems to me that Black's chances are somewhat higher, as White's queenside pawns and his king might both become vulnerable. After the text move, a possible continuation is:
23.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{xd}5 24.\texttt{ex}d5 \texttt{a}5 25.\texttt{b}5 \texttt{e}8f

Black keeps some initiative.

That concludes our coverage of 9.\texttt{a}4, so it is time for us to consider the other knight retreat.

A2) 9.\texttt{ce}2

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|l|l|l|l|l|l|}
\hline
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 & & & & & & & & \\
2 & & & & & & & & \\
3 & & & & & & & & \\
4 & & & & & & & & \\
5 & & & & & & & & \\
6 & & & & & & & & \\
7 & & & & & & & & \\
8 & & & & & & & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

9...e5

This is the main line. Somehow it feels appropriately thematic to make yet another pawn move!

10.\texttt{b}3

10.\texttt{f}5 is almost never seen. The move is not completely ridiculous, although Black will certainly have no complaints after 10...d5.

10...\texttt{c}6

We will take a brief look at a couple of other options. The first is dubious, and is merely being included as an example of what to avoid. The second looks like a genuinely viable alternative though.

10...d5?! was seen in Bhawoodien – Mauba, Cape Town 1995, as well as a few other games. Just as in variation A13, it is too risky for Black to open the centre while lagging in development. Here Black's concept can be called into question as follows: 11.0–0–0!N \texttt{e}6 (11...d4?! 12.\texttt{ex}d4! \texttt{ex}d4 13.e5 \texttt{fd}7 14.\texttt{xd}4 \texttt{c}7 15.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{c}6 16.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{b}7 17.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{b}6 18.\texttt{d}6\texttt{a}5) 12.\texttt{ex}d5 \texttt{xd}5 13.\texttt{f}4! \texttt{c}6 14.\texttt{f}5 \texttt{xe}3 15.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{d}7 16.\texttt{g}3± Black's position is uncomfortable.

10...\texttt{a}5?!

This cheeky pawn move is a different story entirely. Black can get away with yet another non-developing move as the knight on b3 has no good squares left.

11.\texttt{g}3

An alternative is 11.a4 bxa3 12.\texttt{xa}3 d5 13.\texttt{xa}5 \texttt{xa}5 14.\texttt{xa}5 (14.\texttt{xa}5 \texttt{xa}5± 15.\texttt{xa}5 dxe4 16.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{c}6 17.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{xe}4 18.g3 \texttt{b}4 19.\texttt{d}1 f6 20.\texttt{g}2 \texttt{f}5 Black has brought the pieces out and his activity offers good chances against White's passed pawns, Balogh – Cheparinov, Warsaw 2005.) 14...dxe4 15.\texttt{xd}8\texttt{a} 16.\texttt{b}6\texttt{g} 17.\texttt{c}4 exf3 18.gxf3 \texttt{bd}7 19.\texttt{c}7 \texttt{b}7 20.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{d}5 21.\texttt{xd}7 \texttt{xc}7 22.\texttt{e}5 f6 23.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{xf}3 Black has every reason to feel satisfied, Daubenfeld – Shtyrenkov, Pardubice 2004.

11...\texttt{a}4 12.\texttt{c}1 d5!

Now the central break works well as White's pieces are passive.

13.\texttt{ex}d5

13.\texttt{b}5\texttt{d}7 14.\texttt{xd}7\texttt{b}xd7 15.\texttt{ex}d5 \texttt{a}5! 16.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{xd}5 17.0–0 a3 18.bxa3 \texttt{xe}3 19.\texttt{xe}3 \texttt{xa}3 Black will soon catch up on development while keeping a fine position.

13.\texttt{a}5 14.\texttt{d}3 \texttt{xd}5 15.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{c}6 16.\texttt{f}2 \texttt{f}5 17.\texttt{xf}6\texttt{f}

17.\texttt{b}6 \texttt{c}8 18.\texttt{xf}6\texttt{g} 19.g4 \texttt{c}6± White is also exposed and his pieces do not harmonize at all.

17...\texttt{xf}6 18.g4

This position was reached in Anand – Gelfand, Turin (ol) 2006, and here I suggest an improvement:
18...<e6?!  
The game continuation of 18...<xd3 soon led to a draw after 19.<xd3 <a3 20.<e4 axb2 21.<xb1 <d7 22.<xb2 <e7 23.0-0 ½–½, but Black can try for more.
19.<g5 <g6 20.h4 <f5 21.h5 <e6+  
White has lost the battle for the centre.

At the moment 10...<a5?! looks like a fully playable move. Nevertheless it somehow seemed appropriate to focus on the established main line as a primary recommendation. In this position White has tested three different moves in the quest to challenge Black’s set up: A21) 11.}<c4, A22) 11.<g3 and A23) 11.<g4.

It should briefly be noted that after 11.0–0–0?! <a5! White already faces some difficulties on the queenside.

A21) 11.<c4  
This space-gaining move leaves the white position looking quite rigid, as Black is not forced to exchange on c3.

11...<e7 12.<g3 <g6 13.<d3 <d7!  
The knight begins to take aim at its ideal home on c5, while also hinting at a possible activation of the dark-squared bishop.

14.<d1  
14.0–0 <a5 15.<e2 <c7 also does not give White much, as his knights have very little to do.

The present position was reached in the game Kramnik – Topalov, Sofia 2005. Here I suggest a small refinement for Black:

14...<a5?!  
After the game continuation of 14...0–0 15.<f2 <a5, White had the interesting possibility of 16.<c5?!N, when play might continue 16...<xc5 17.<xc5 <xc5 18.<xc5 <d4 (18...<xc5 19.<xc5 <f6 20.0–0 <d8 21.<c4±) 19.<xd4 exd4 20.<c4 <f6 21.<e2 <a6 22.<xa6 <xa6 23.<f4 when the knight will find an ideal home on d3 or d5. Black has a passed pawn and will take control over the <c-file, so his position is not altogether bad,
although White must be at least a little better. By changing the move order slightly, Black eliminates the c4-c5 possibility altogether.

15.0-0 0-0
Black will follow up with ...a4 and later ...c5, with a healthy position.

A22) 11.Qg3

With this move White avoids blocking the centre and strives to activate his pieces as quickly as possible.

11...Qe6 12.0-0-0 Qc7
Another game continued 12...Qe7 13.f5 Qxf5 14.exf5 d5 15.g5 Qb6 16.h4 d4 17.Qxf6 Qxf6 18.g4 This was Morozevich – Grischuk, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2006, and now Black should have played 18...a5N 19.Qd3 0-0 20.g5 a4 21.Qd2 Qd8 leading to an unclear position, in which neither king can feel completely safe.

13.f4
This move was played in Borisek – Gallagher, Gothenburg 2005, and here I found a logical improvement for Black:

13...Qe7!N
In the game Black preferred 13...a5, and although he obtained a reasonable position, I do not see any reason to allow the f1-bishop to come to b5 just yet.

14.Qf5
14.f4 should be met by 14...h6! in order to prevent the positional threat of f5 followed by Qg5. Play may continue 15.f5 Qd7 16.Qe2 a5 with some initiative for Black.

14...Qxf5 15.exf5 a5
Having exchanged the knight that had previously been standing on g3, White is now ready to start advancing his kingside pawns, so Black should not delay his counterplay.

16.Qb5 a4 17.Qc1 0-0 18.Qd3 b3 19.cxb3 axb3 20.axb3
20.a4 is well met by 20...Qfb8, when sacrifices on b5 are in the air.

20...Qfb8 21.Qa4 Qa5 →
Black has promising attacking chances.
13...h5!
Black takes the opportunity to target the knight on g3 and consequently the pawn on e4.

14.h4
This leaves a hole on g4, but from White’s perspective that seems to be the least of the evils.

14...a5
One move of a rook’s pawn is followed by the other!

15.fxe5N
This untested move looks better than 15.f5?! 
\[d7\] 16.\[\text{c}1\] \[b8\] 17.\[\text{c}2\] \[a7\]? (17...a4
\[c1\] \[c7\] 19.\[f3\] a3∞) 18.\[xa7\]? \[xa7\]
19.\[d3\] \[b5\]

20.\[f3\] (20.\[xb5\] \[xb5\] 21.\[xb5\] \[e7\])
20...\[c6\] 21.\[d2\] \[c5\] Svidler – Topalov, Sofia 2006. Black has the bishop pair and attacking chances on the queenside, while White is a long way from making any use of the outpost squares of d5 and g5.

15...dxe5 16.\[b5\] \[e7\]
Another option is 16...a4 17.\[a5\] \[d7\] 18.\[xc6\] \[xc6\] 19.\[d3\] \[b8\] 20.\[xc6\] \[c6\] with equality.

17.\[c5\] \[g4\] 18.\[f5\] \[f5\] 19.\[xf5\] \[0-0\]
Finally the king vacates the centre. Black has active prospects for his pieces, and can look to the middlegame with confidence.

A23) 11.g4
With this move White commences immediate hostilities.

11...h6
It is useful to preserve the position of the knight on f6 for the time being. Now we should consider A231) 12.0–0–0 followed by what I consider to be the main line of A232) 12.\[g3\].

A231) 12.0–0–0
The early castling is somewhat provocative, as Black can start an immediate attack.

12...a5 13.\(\text{c}b1\)

This has been the usual choice, although I found one game in which White allowed the knight to be driven to the corner:

13.\(\text{e}g3\) a4 14.\(\text{e}a1\) \(\text{e}a5\) 15.\(\text{c}4\) g6 16.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{e}6\) 17.\(\text{c}2\) \(\text{b}8\) with a nice position for Black, Perez Candelario – Sasikiran, Zafra 2007.

13...a4 14.\(\text{b}c1\) \(\text{e}6\) 15.\(\text{g}3\)

15...\(\text{b}8\)!

15...\(\text{a}5\) has been the most popular move and is certainly not bad, but the subtle rook move might be even more promising. One advantage is that a subsequent ...\(\text{b}3\) will not permit a queen exchange.

16.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{d}5\)!

Good timing – White is not in an ideal position to counter with 17.\(\text{g}5\), as the subsequent rook exchange would force his knight to retreat to the dismal h1-square.

17.\(\text{d}3\)

After 17.\(\text{g}2\) \(\text{d}4\) 18.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 19.\(\text{d}2\) \(\text{b}6\)† White's timid play lands him in grave difficulties.

17...\(\text{d}4\) 18.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{b}3\) 19.\(\text{c}xb3\) \(\text{axb3}\) 20.\(\text{a}3\) \(\text{d}7\) 21.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{c}5\)†

Black was clearly on top in Hermansson – Agrest, Gothenburg 2004.

A232) 12.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{e}6\)

It looks risky and premature for Black to open the centre with 12...\(\text{d}5\) 13.\(\text{exd}5\) \(\text{cxd}5\) 14.0–0–0, Michielsen – Grigorov, Belfort 2005. I tried to improve Black's play with 14...\(\text{e}6\)N, but concluded that White stays on top after 15.\(\text{h}5\) \(\text{c}7\) (or 15...\(\text{g}6\) 16.\(\text{c}4\)±) 16.\(\text{c}5\) \(\text{g}5\) 17.\(\text{h}3\)±.

After the text move we reach a final branching point for this line, with A2321) 13.0–0–0 and A2322) 13.\(\text{h}4\) being the main options.

In a few games White has tried:

13.\(\text{d}1\)

This does not seem especially threatening.

13...\(\text{g}6\) 14.\(\text{e}2\)

14.\(\text{f}2\) \(\text{c}7\) 15.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{h}5\) 16.\(\text{g}5\) \(\text{d}7\) 17.\(\text{d}3\) \(\text{c}7\)† Black has stabilized the kingside and could focus on the centre and the queenside in Papp – Valeanu, Belfort 2005.

14...\(\text{c}7\) 15.0–0 \(\text{h}5\)† 16.\(\text{g}xh5\)

White does not achieve much with 16.\(\text{g}5\)N \(\text{h}7\) 17.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{h}4\) 18.\(\text{h}1\) \(\text{xh}6\) 19.\(\text{h}6\) \(\text{a}5\)†.
It seems to me that White's most logical continuation would have been 16.g5N, although Black should have no problems after 16...\texttt{\texttt{D}}d7, for instance: 17.f4 h4 18.\texttt{\texttt{D}}h1 exf4 19.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xf4 \texttt{\texttt{D}}de5 20.\texttt{\texttt{D}}f2 \texttt{\texttt{D}}e7= 16...\texttt{\texttt{D}}xh5 17.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xh5 \texttt{\texttt{D}}xh5 18.f4 \texttt{\texttt{D}}h4

The queen vacates the d-file in preparation for opening the centre.

14.\texttt{\texttt{D}}b1 d5!

Timing this move correctly is a delicate matter of the utmost importance. Strangely enough, the text move only seems to have been tried in e-mail and correspondence encounters, and never over the board.

Before going any further I will show why I was not satisfied with the more frequently-played alternative.

14...a5 15.b5! a4 16.\texttt{\texttt{D}}c1 \texttt{\texttt{D}}b7 17.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xc6+ \texttt{\texttt{D}}xc6 18.\texttt{\texttt{D}}d3 d5

18...\texttt{\texttt{D}}b8 19.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xb4 \texttt{\texttt{D}}b5 20.a3 d5 was seen in Quezada Perez – Dominguez Perez, Santa Clara 2006, and now White should have played 21.exd5N \texttt{\texttt{D}}xb4 (21...\texttt{\texttt{D}}xd5 22.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xd5! \texttt{\texttt{D}}xd5 23.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xd5+) 22.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xb4 \texttt{\texttt{D}}xb4 23.axb4 \texttt{\texttt{D}}xd5 24.\texttt{\texttt{D}}c5 \texttt{\texttt{D}}xb4 25.\texttt{\texttt{D}}e4+ Black has not managed to equalize from the opening.

This position was reached in Najer – Grigoriants, Moscow 2006. Black went on to obtain a nice position and later won the game, but at this stage White could have obtained the advantage with a natural improvement:

19.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xe5N

This is much more promising than the game continuation of 19.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xb4?.

19...\texttt{\texttt{D}}c7 20.exd5 \texttt{\texttt{D}}xd5 21.\texttt{\texttt{D}}d4 \texttt{\texttt{D}}d6 22.\texttt{\texttt{D}}f5 0-0 23.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xd6 \texttt{\texttt{D}}xd6±

Black has some chances for counterplay with a timely ...a4-a3, nevertheless White's chances must be evaluated as somewhat higher.

15.g5

15.exd5 \texttt{\texttt{D}}xd5 16.\texttt{\texttt{D}}d3 \texttt{\texttt{D}}d8 17.\texttt{\texttt{D}}e2 \texttt{\texttt{D}}xe3 (17...\texttt{\texttt{D}}c7, F. Silva – Knoll, e-mail 2007, is also quite reasonable.) 18.\texttt{\texttt{D}}xe3 \texttt{\texttt{D}}c7 19.\texttt{\texttt{D}}f5 \texttt{\texttt{D}}xf5 20.gxf5 a5∞ Black could look confidently to the future in Janusonis – Johansson, e-mail 2006.
We have reached a critical position, rich in resources for both sides. Having analysed it in some detail, I have concluded that Black has a number of moves that more or less equalize, although in all cases the position remains rather unclear and tricky for both sides - not an uncommon scenario in the Najdorf.

16...d4!?N

This is one of the more promising options, although as I mentioned previously, it is hard to offer a cast-iron recommendation in such a double-edged position.

I spent some time looking at 16...d8N, but eventually concluded that Black's position was not so appealing after 17...xf6! (17...e2 e7 18...xa6 0–0 19...b5 d4 gives Black promising counterplay) 17...xf6 18...xa6.

16...dxe4!?N is playable, and one 'freestyle' (computer-assisted) encounter continued: 17...xf6 gxf6 18...xe4 d8 19...e2 b6 20...xd8+ xd8 21...xa6 xa6 22...xa6 h4 Arturchix – Pandini, Internet 2006. Black has good compensation for the pawn because his bishops are strong and his rook is well-placed on h4. Still, the whole line feels a bit shaky for me, and I suspect White can improve.

Finally, another option is 16...e7?!N with the possible continuation 17...f5 (Harmless is: 17...xf6 xf6 18...xd5 xd5! The bishop is poisoned, and after 19...e3 e6 Black is fine.) 17...xf5 18...f5 b7 Once again the position remains complicated, with chances for both sides.

17.f4

Clearly this is the critical response.

17...h7!

17...d6 18...f5 is a bit unpleasant.

18.h4

White can grab a pawn with 18...xe5, but pays the price in allowing his valuable bishop to be exchanged: 18...xg5 19...xg5 g6 20...f6 xe5 21...xe5 xe5 22...xd4 g4 23...e2 xe2 24...dxe2 g4 Black has no worries.

18...e4 19...f5 g5! 20...f2 f6 21...bxd4 d5

Once again the position is approximately equal, but at the same time double-edged and challenging for both sides.
14.exd5
White should not play too timidly: 14.0-0-0? d4 15.e2 c7 16.g5 hxg5 17.hxg5 exf1 18.xf1 d7 19.g3 d6= The mighty centre favours the second player as White will struggle to find a decent plan.

Another harmless continuation is 14.g5! hxg5 15.hxg5 exf1 16.xf1, Warakomska – Przybylski, Mielno 2007, and here Black could have obtained the upper hand with the typical response: 16...d4!

14...cxd5 15.0-0-0 c7 16.d3 d8
Black had better avoid: 16...a5 17.c5 xe5 18.xc5 0-0-0 19.f5 g6 20.g7= The white knight achieved a great feat in Naiditsch – Palac, Warsaw 2005.

However, the following alternative is more reasonable: 16...a5?! 17.b1 (17.xa5 xa5 18.c4 d8 19.f2 c7 20.e2 0-0 21.f5 f6=) 17...c4 18.xc4 xc4 19.e4 xe3 20.wxe3 c8= 21.ed2 c7 22.a7 d5 23.hd1 xe4 24.d7= f8 25.fxe4 xh4 26.d6= g8 27.wxe5 h7=

17.f2
17.e2 xe3 reaches the same position.

17...xe3
I also considered 17...e7, but eventually concluded that it made more sense to eliminate the bishop on e3 when given the opportunity.

18.xe3
18...d4?! has been played in a couple of games, but this looks much too risky. Play continues: 19.h5! g6 (or 19...xb3 20.axb3 xb3= 21.db1 d4 22.f4 with some initiative) 20.f5= e7 21.e4 xb3 22.xb3= 23.db1 d4 24.bf1 e6 25.h5 Black had won a pawn but was nonetheless under pressure in Pieri – Bergmann, e-mail 2006.

19.f5
White gets nowhere with 19.h5 f8! This move looks odd, but once Black follows up by ...g6 and ...g7, it becomes clear that the king is neither in danger nor as stupidly placed as it may first appear. 20.g3 (20.b1 a5 21.b5 xd1= 22.ed1 a7 23.a4 c8 also looks promising for Black) 20...a5 21.db1 a4 22.d2 d4= With promising attacking chances for Black.

19...xf5 20.xf5 0-0
The impending kingside attack may look scary, but Black's counterplay arrives just in the nick of time.

21.g5 \texttt{\textit{xf}1} 22.\texttt{\textit{xf}1} \texttt{\textit{hxg5}} 23.\texttt{hxg5} \texttt{\textit{tLld4}}!

24.\texttt{\textit{tLlxd4}}

24.\texttt{\textit{d3}} \texttt{\textit{lt:Je6}} is not dangerous for Black.

25.\texttt{\textit{exd4}} 25.\texttt{\textit{h}l}!

25.\texttt{\textit{d3}} \texttt{\textit{g}6} is nothing for White, so he may as well settle for a draw.

25.\texttt{\textit{dxe3}} 26.\texttt{\textit{h}l}† \texttt{\textit{h8}} 27.\texttt{\textit{g}6†}

After a series of logical moves on both sides, the game ends in a perpetual check.

\textbf{B) 8.g4}

8...\texttt{\textit{b4}}

Once again Black wastes no time in driving the knight away. Compared with the previous section, obviously the inclusion of the move g2-g4 in place of \texttt{\textit{d1-d2}} will lead to some changes in the character of play, especially in the event that the knight decides that its future lies at the edge of the board. Just as before, we will consider \textbf{B1) 9.\texttt{\textit{a4}}} and \textbf{B2) 9.\texttt{\textit{ce2}}}. It is worth mentioning that in the present variation the latter move has been far more popular, compared to the analogous 8.\texttt{\textit{d2}} variation in which the knight has preferred the a4-square in roughly five out of eight games.

\textbf{B1) 9.\texttt{\textit{a4}} \texttt{\textit{d7}!}}

Here we see the first major difference, which probably accounts for the lack of popularity of the present variation from White's point of view. The point is that with the queen on d2, this move would have left the b-pawn hanging, whereas now the attack on the knight is rather awkward.

10.c4

There is also a second option, which I believe to be underrated:

10.b3?!

This has scored unimpressively for White, but it seems to me that the few existing games have not accurately reflected the reality of the position. Therefore I am immediately recommending a new idea:

10...\texttt{\textit{c6}}

Unsurprisingly, in most games Black has been unable to resist the temptation of wrecking the enemy queenside with 10...\texttt{\textit{xa4}}. However, swapping the bishop for the knight is a kind of sacrifice in itself. 11.bxa4 \texttt{\textit{c7}} This position was reached in G. Garcia – Bruzon Bautista, Cali 2000, and several subsequent games. At this point White could have obtained chances for an advantage with
12.\text{c1!?N} \text{bd7} 13.\text{g5} \text{h5} 14.\text{d2 e7} 15.\text{c3=} White succeeds in exchanging one of his weak pawns while opening the queenside for his pieces. In the resulting position his bishop pair should count for more than the doubled a-pawns.

With the text move Black continues developing while reserving the possibility of exchanging on a4 at a later stage of the game. There are many possible continuations, but I will just give a few lines that appeared critical to me.

11.\text{g5} \text{h5} 12.\text{e2} 12.\text{g1 e7} 13.\text{f4} \text{f4} 14.\text{xd4 a4} 15.\text{bxa4 f4} 16.\text{h7 g6} 17.0-0-0 \text{a5=} Black has enough counterplay on the dark squares.

12...h6 13.gxh6 \text{e6} 14.\text{d2}

Taking the exchange is risky: 14.\text{xh6 gxh6} 15.\text{xc6 xc6} 16.\text{g1 h4+} 17.\text{d2 xh2=t Without the dark-squared bishop White will have a hard time defending his weaknesses.}

14...\text{xd4} 15.\text{xd4 g3} 16.\text{xh6 xh1} 17.0-0-0 gxh6 18.\text{b6 b8} 19.\text{xd7 xd7} 20.\text{xh1 b6=}

Black has no problems at all.

10...\text{a5} 11.\text{b3 xaxa4}

This time Black does best to make the exchange. Compared with the previous note, White will no longer have the attractive possibility of c2-c3.

I also considered 11...\text{c6!?N} 12.\text{g5 g8}. 12...h6!
This move seems to be the one that put White's set-up out of business, at least with regards to popularity.

13.\(\text{g}2\)

A more challenging continuation is:

13.\(\text{xe2}!\)N \(\text{c}7\) 14.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{bd7}\) 15.0-0 \(\text{xe7}\)

But I think Black is okay here too. For example:

16.\(\text{xfd1}\)

16.a5 should be met by 16...\(g5!\) intending...h5 with decent counterplay.

Another possibility is 16.\(\text{ab1}\) a5 17.\(\text{b5}\) \(\text{c6}\) 18.\(\text{fd1}\) 0-0 19.\(\text{xd6}\) \(\text{d8}\) 20.\(\text{d4}\) e5 21.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{f8}\) 22.\(\text{xa4}\) with equality.

16...\(\text{e5}\) 17.a5

Or 17.\(\text{ac1}\) \(\text{b8}\) with even chances.

17...\(\text{b8}\) 18.\(\text{db1}\) \(\text{f7}\)

Black is holding his own here, and the attempt to grab a pawn backfires on White:

19.\(\text{xb4}!\) \(\text{xb4}\) 20.\(\text{xb4}\) d5 21.\(\text{b3}\) dxe4 22.f4 \(\text{c6}\)²

13...\(\text{bd7}\) 14.0-0 \(\text{xc8}\) 15.\(\text{f4}\)

15...\(\text{h5}!\)N

This is an attempt to fight for the advantage. The continuation seen in the following game is also quite acceptable for Black:

15...\(\text{e7}\) 16.\(\text{g5}\)

16.\(\text{h4}?!\) \(\text{h5}\)²

16...\(\text{hxg5}\) 17.\(\text{fxg5}\) \(\text{h5}\)

There is also 17...\(\text{e5}?!\)N 18.\(\text{f3}\) (18.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{c5}\) 19.\(\text{gxf6}\)? [White had better settle for a draw with 19.\(\text{ec3}=-\) ] 19...\(\text{xf6}\) 20.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{e5}\) 21.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 22.\(\text{xb3}\) \(\text{xb2}\) 23.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{xa1}\) 24.\(\text{xf1}\) \(\text{e5}--\) ) 18.\(\text{xe4}\) 19.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{g4}\) 20.\(\text{e5}\) (20.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{e3}\) 21.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{g5}\) 22.\(\text{ad1}\) \(\text{xf4}\) 23.\(\text{fe1}\) \(\text{e5}\) 24.\(\text{xe3}\) \(\text{exe3}\) 25.\(\text{xe3}\) \(\text{e3}\) 26.\(\text{xe3}\) \(\text{xe3}\) 27.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{h5}=\) ) 20...\(\text{xe5}\) 21.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{dxe5}\)²

18.\(\text{g6}\) \(\text{h6}\) 19.\(\text{gf7}+\)

19.\(\text{g4}?!\) \(\text{f8}!\)

19...\(\text{xf7}\)

Despite the suspicious-looking king, Black is doing fine.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

20.\(\text{g4}\)

20.\(\text{xe6}\) \(\text{xe6}\) 21.\(\text{d5}+\) wins for Black – Lutz.

20...\(\text{xf8}\) 21.\(\text{g3}\) \(\text{e5}\)

21...\(\text{xc4}\) 22.\(\text{ac1}+\) is dangerous for Black.

22.\(\text{xe5}\)

Perhaps White should have preferred:

22.\(\text{ac1}?!\)N=

The game Bacrot – Lutz, Biel 2003, was agreed drawn here, although Black could have considered playing on with:

22...\(\text{dxe5}\)²

16.\(\text{g5}\)

The following is not an improvement for White: 16.\(\text{h3}\) \(\text{hxg4}\) 17.\(\text{hxg4}\) e5 18.\(\text{f5}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 19.\(\text{xd6}+\) (19.\(\text{e2}\) \(\text{c3}+\) ) 19...\(\text{xd6}\) 20.\(\text{xd6}\)
In this murky position Black's chances are at least equal, and probably somewhat higher.

B2) 9.\(\text{d}e2\) h6

10.g5 is not bad, but looks a bit strange and has only been tried once. Play continued 10...hxg5 11.\(\text{d}xg5\) e5 12.\(\text{d}b3\) \(\text{d}c6\) 13.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{d}e6\) 14.\(\text{h}3\) \(\text{d}e7\) 15.\(\text{f}x\text{e}6\) \(\text{f}x\text{e}6\) 16.\(\text{d}d3\) \(\text{d}b6\) 17.0-0-0 \(\text{d}b5\) 18.\(\text{f}x\text{b}5\) \(\text{b}x\text{b}5\) 19.\(\text{d}b1\) \(\text{d}8\) with decent chances for Black, whose pawn structure is more effective than a quick glance may suggest, Talla - Wojtaszek, Chotowa 2007.

10.\(\text{g}2\)

This has been tested by a few strong players, but Black can obtain fine chances by playing in the centre.
10...e5 11.\(\text{f}5\) \(\text{d}e6\) 12.\(\text{f}2\) d5 13.\(\text{e}x\text{d}5\) \(\text{x}d5\) 14.0-0 \(\text{d}b7\) 15.c3 \(\text{d}x\text{d}1\)

Another perfectly playable line is 15.\(\text{d}c8\)N 16.\(\text{c}xb4\) g6 17.\(\text{e}3\) \(\text{d}x\text{d}1\) 18.\(\text{f}x\text{d}1\) \(\text{x}b4\) with equality.
16.\(\text{f}x\text{d}1\)
This position occurred in Motylev – Shipov, Elista 2001, and here I suggest a straightforward improvement:

16...bx c3

In the game Black took the strategically risky decision of exchanging on f5 and went on to lose.

17...c5 3 b 8 18.b3 h5!

This resolute move leads to interesting complications.

19...d6+ x d6 20.xd6 hx g4 21...a6 0-0-

Both sides have certain advantages and a tough battle lies ahead. Overall I would rate the position as approximately equal.

10...h4

This is the most significant of the minor alternatives. White obviously wants to prepare g5, so Black should strike at the centre before f6-knight is driven away from its present location.

10...f5! 11...b3

So far nobody seems to have tried 11...f5N, although the move does not seem so bad. Play might continue 11...c6 12...g2 g6 13.xh6? xh6 14.g5 xg7 15.xf6 xf6 16.wxd5 b7 17.0-0 xh4 18.xh4 xh4 19.wxd6 when White has maintained the material balance, but can hardly hope for any advantage.

11...d5!

Now White has two main moves.

a) 12.exd5?

It turns out that White is playing with fire here.

12...cxd5 13.wd2 c e3 14...e3 e7!

15...e5 0-0 16.g5

16...e8!

16...d6 17.wd4 c6 gave Black sufficient compensation, but no real advantage in Frolov – Novikov, Simferopol 1991.

17.d1 w b6 18.wf4

18.wd4 wg6 19.wd3 xf5+

18...c6 19.xh6 e5!!

Much stronger than 19...f6, which only leads to messy complications after 20.hxg7 xb2=

20.wg2

20.hxg7 d6! 21.wc4 b8+=

20...f6! 21.hxg7

21.h5 is strongly met by 21...a7! 22.hxg7
356 English Attack

\[ 356 \text{ English Attack} \]

\[ \text{\textae7 with a strong initiative, for example:} \]
\[ \begin{align*}
23.\text{h}1 & \text{ } \text{xf3} \uparrow 24.\text{xf3} \text{h}7 25.\text{xf2} \text{xf2} \uparrow \\
26.\text{xf2} & \text{hxh1} \uparrow \\
21. & \text{...g6} 22.\text{c4} \text{hxh4} \uparrow 23.\text{xh4} \text{g1} \uparrow \\
24.\text{f1} & \text{g3} \uparrow 25.\text{d2} \text{hxh4} \uparrow \\
\end{align*} \]

White has survived the attack, but paid the price in material.

b) 12.\text{g3}

This is a more reliable move, maintaining the e4-pawn as a foothold in the centre. Nevertheless Black is still doing just fine.

\[ 12\text{...e6} 13.\text{d3} \text{bd7} 14.\text{e2} \text{a5} \]

\[ \begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
& a & b & c & d & e & f & g & h \\
\hline
1 & 15.\text{g1} \\
2 & 15.\text{xd5} \text{seems a little inconsistent, and Black easily obtains a comfortable game as follows:} \\
3 & 15...\text{xd5} 16.\text{b5} \text{c7} 17.\text{d4} \text{c8} 18.\text{d1} \\
4 & \text{We have been following the game Horvath \text{-} Kulaots, Budapest 2004. Here Black should have played:} 18...\text{c3N} 19.\text{e3} \text{e7} \\
5 & 20.0-0 0-0 21.\text{xax5} \text{xa5} 22.\text{xd7} \text{d8}! \\
6 & 23.\text{h1} \text{xd7} 24.\text{xd7} \text{xa2} \uparrow \text{Black will have every reason to play for a win from this excellent position.} \\
7 & 15...\text{a4} 16.\text{d2} \text{a3} \\
8 & \text{In the following high-level game Black also did well using a more flexible approach:} \\
9 & 16...\text{c7} \uparrow 17.\text{g5} \text{hxg5 18.hxg5 dxe4 19.gxf6} \\
10 & \text{exd3 20.fxg7} \text{gx7} 21.\text{xd3} \text{This was Anand \text{-} Gelfand, Linares 1994, and here Black could have obtained some advantage with} \\
11 & 21...\text{c8} \uparrow 22.0-0 \text{f8!} 23.\text{d4e4} \text{h2, for instance:} 24.\text{d2} \text{xd2} 25.\text{xd2} \text{c5} \\
\hline
\end{array} \]

19...\text{c3}!N

This is an improvement over 19...dxe4, Wedberg \text{-} Agrest, Osterskan 1994, at which point 20.\text{c4!N would have kept the position unclear.}

\[ 20.\text{b1} \text{dxe4} 21.\text{dxe4} \text{dxe4} 22.\text{xe4} \text{c5} \]

A fascinating, though somewhat extravagant alternative is: 22...\text{c8} 23.\text{f2} \text{xe3} \uparrow! (23...\text{c5} \uparrow) 24.\text{xe3} (24.\text{xe3} \text{c5} \uparrow) \\
24...\text{c5} \uparrow 25.\text{d3} \text{cxd3} \text{g1} 26.\text{c1} \text{e7} \\
27.\text{d2} \text{c5} 28.\text{d1} \text{d4} \uparrow \\
23.\text{xc5} \text{xc5} 24.\text{d2} \text{c8} \uparrow \\
\text{Black keeps an obvious positional superiority.}

B21) 10.\text{g3}
Chapter 17 - 6.d3 e6 7.f3

10...e5 11...b3

There is an important alternative available:
11...d5? 12.f4! is dangerous.
12...h5!

Clearly the most challenging.
12...d2 d5 gives Black a comfortable game.
More challenging, but ultimately unimpressive, is 12.g5?! hgx5 13.xg5 c6
14.f4 b6! (14...exf4?×)

15.fxe5?!N (15.d2 was seen in Gonzalez Vidal – Vera Gonzalez Quevedo, Las Tunas 2001, and here Black should have played 15.h7!N; 15.xf6N gxf6 16.h5 is good for White according to Vera, but it turns out that the opposite is true after 16...0-0-0!!
17.xf6 d5+ 15...dxe5 16.xf6 gxf6 17.h5 White seems to have played quite logically, but his concept can be refuted in spectacular style: 17...hxh5!! 18.xh5 b3!
19.axb3 b4+ 20.d2 xe4 21.d3 e5+ 22.g3 f4+ 23.g2 d7 24.hf1 g8+ 25.g3 d5+ 26.h3 f2!--+
12...dxe5 13.gxh5

13...g6N

It is important for Black to improve over the following game: 13...d5 14.xg1
15.exf5 d4 (15...a5 16.d2 c6 17.0-0-0 d4 18.xc4+ 16.d7 17.e2 c5 18.xg7+ Craciunescu – Mendez, e-mail 2006.
14.xg6 fxg6 15.g3 c6

Both kings are somewhat unsafe, but Black is certainly not lagging behind in terms of activity. In the near future he will develop his bishop on e7 and then make a decision regarding his king according to circumstances.
16.d2 e7
16...h5?! 17.g1 (17.0-0-0? a5+) 17...e7 18.h1 f7 19.d2 d5=
17.g1
17.xh6? g5++
17...c7

The position remains approximately balanced, for instance:
18.e2 g5! 19.xg5 hxg5

Black is doing fine, as 20.xg5? is refuted by 20...d4!:

11...e6 12.d3 bd7 13.e2 a5 14.h4

14.c4 is harmless, and after 14...c7 15.d2 d5 16.exd5 a draw was agreed in Korneev – Vera Gonzalez, Coria del Rio 2001. The continuation might have been 16...d5
17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}5}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}5}} 18.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}e}4}} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}6}}} 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}d}1} \texttt{\texttt{d}8} with at least equal prospects for Black.

I also spent some time analysing 10...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}7}}, but concluded that there is no need to play this committal move so early.

14...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}7}}} 15.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}d}2} \texttt{\texttt{a}4} 16.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}4}}

16...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}8}!N}

This is an improvement over 16...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{c}5}} 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}d}2} \texttt{\texttt{b}8} 18.\texttt{\texttt{b}3} \texttt{\texttt{d}5} 19.\texttt{\texttt{e}xd}5 \texttt{\texttt{x}d}5, Lutz – Anand, Germany 2003. Black eventually won this game, but at this stage White's position is perfectly playable (though not necessarily preferable). The critical continuation looks to be 20.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{e}x}e}5}N} \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}e}5}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}d}5} \texttt{\texttt{d}6} 22.\texttt{\texttt{f}4} 0–0 23.\texttt{\texttt{c}c}4 \texttt{\texttt{b}d}8 when Black certainly has full compensation for the missing pawn, but I doubt that he is objectively better.

17.\texttt{\texttt{b}3} \texttt{\texttt{d}5}! 18.\texttt{\texttt{e}xd}5 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}d}5} 19.\texttt{\texttt{d}d}2 \texttt{\texttt{a}8}+

Black is well and truly in the driver's seat.

B22) 10.\texttt{\texttt{c}4}

With this move White tries for more of a positional strategy. We have already seen a similar idea in variations A11, A12 and A21.

10...\texttt{\texttt{e}5}!

This is an excellent decision. Black seizes some space centre and takes control over the f4-square. Note that both of the white knights are several moves away from the key d5-square.

11.\texttt{\texttt{d}c}2

Another game continued 11.\texttt{\texttt{f}5} \texttt{g}6 12.\texttt{\texttt{f}g}3 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{d}6} 13.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{\texttt{e}e}6 14.\texttt{b}3 \texttt{h}5 15.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{\texttt{d}d}7 16.\texttt{\texttt{g}2} \texttt{\texttt{e}7} 17.0–0 Gomez Garrido – Ortiz Suarez, Albacete 2009. Here I suggest 17...0–0N 18.\texttt{\texttt{f}4} \texttt{\texttt{ex}f}4 19.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}f}4} \texttt{\texttt{d}e}5 20.\texttt{\texttt{d}d}5 \texttt{\texttt{d}g}4 With the kingside closed, there is no reason why Black should be worse.

11...\texttt{\texttt{d}c}6 12.\texttt{\texttt{d}g}3 \texttt{\texttt{e}e}6 13.\texttt{h}4 \texttt{a}5 14.\texttt{\texttt{f}2}

Another game continued 14.\texttt{\texttt{d}d}2 \texttt{\texttt{b}8} 15.\texttt{\texttt{e}2} (15.0–0 a4 16.\texttt{a}3 \texttt{\texttt{d}5} 17.\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}b}4} \texttt{\texttt{d}c}4=) 15...\texttt{h}5 16.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{\texttt{d}d}7 17.\texttt{\texttt{f}4} \texttt{\texttt{ex}f}4 18.\texttt{\texttt{xf}4} \texttt{\texttt{d}c}5 19.\texttt{\texttt{e}3} \texttt{\texttt{g}6} 20.\texttt{\texttt{d}d}5 \texttt{\texttt{f}4} 21.\texttt{\texttt{xf}4} \texttt{\texttt{g}6} And Black’s dark-squared bishop became a real force, Sjol – Pasko, e-mail 2007.

14...\texttt{\texttt{g}6} 15.\texttt{\texttt{e}3} \texttt{\texttt{g}7} 16.\texttt{\texttt{c}1} 0–0 17.\texttt{\texttt{d}3} \texttt{\texttt{d}d}4 18.\texttt{\texttt{d}c}2

We have been following the game Vallejo Pons – Anand, Monte Carlo (rapid) 2006. In this position Anand chose to retreat his knight to c6 and although he later won, I think the most straightforward continuation would have been:

18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}c}2}!N 19.\texttt{\texttt{xc}2} \texttt{a}4
Black has a decent position, with fair prospects for counterplay on the queenside.

**B23) 10.\(\text{Wd2}\)**

The same position can also be reached via the move order 8...h6 9.\(\text{Wd2}\) b4 10.\(\text{Cc}2\), but our chosen sequence avoids the potentially troublesome option of 10.\(\text{Ca4}\).

The present position is critical for the evaluation of the entire 6...e6 7.f3 variation. In view of its importance, I decided to cover two separate continuations: **B231) 10...\(\text{Bd7}\)** and **B232) 10...e5.** Both moves are playable, but lead to markedly different position types, thus the reader will be able to choose the one that best suits his own style. The former is riskier and can lead to almost unfathomable complications. The latter is more reliable and leads to less chaotic play, although it is still far from dull.

**B231) 10...\(\text{Bd7}\)**

Passengers are instructed to fasten their seatbelts.

11.0–0–0

It is hardly surprising that no-one has been attracted by 11.\(\text{Wxb4}\), when play might continue 11...d5 12.\(\text{Wxa4}\) dxe4 13.0–0–0 \(\text{Cc5}\) 14.\(\text{fxe4}\) 0–0 when Black has enough counterplay.

11...\(\text{Cc7}\)

11...d5 has been the most frequently played move, but White has scored highly after 12.exd5 \(\text{Cxd5}\) 13.\(\text{Cc4}\) intending \(\text{Cc4}\), when sacrifices on e6 are in the air.

There is an interesting and modern alternative available in 11...\(\text{a5}\)?, when the critical continuation is 12.\(\text{Cb1}\) \(\text{Cb7}\) 13.\(\text{Cb3}\) \(\text{Cc7}\) 14.\(\text{Wxb4}\) d5 as was seen in Svidler – Gelfand, Monte Carlo 2005. I have chosen to focus on the established main line, but if the reader wishes to explore something different, this could be one viable idea.

**12.h4**

This has been by far the most popular move; White hurries to prepare g5.

I only found one game in which White was brave enough to grab the b-pawn, although the idea is certainly not completely stupid: 12.\(\text{Wxb4}\) d5 13.\(\text{Wa4}\) This was Kovchan – Solodovnichenko, Kharkov 2007, and here I am not sure why Black refrained from the obvious 13...dxe4N (The game continuation of 13...\(\text{Cc5}\) 14.e5! \(\text{C Bh7}\) 15.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{Bb8}\) 16.c3 0–0
17.\textsuperscript{c}g3 \textsuperscript{c}b6 18.\textsuperscript{c}c2 \textsuperscript{d}d7 19.\textsuperscript{d}d3± left Black well and truly on the road to extinction.)
14.\textsuperscript{c}c3 exf3 (And not 14 ... \textsuperscript{c}b7?! 15.\textsuperscript{d}xe4! \textsuperscript{d}xe4 16.\textsuperscript{f}xe4 \textsuperscript{d}d6 17.\textsuperscript{c}c4 \textsuperscript{c}c8 18.\textsuperscript{b}b3 \textsuperscript{c}c7 19.\textsuperscript{h}hf1 \textsuperscript{c}c5 20.\textsuperscript{c}c4 \textsuperscript{d}xe4 21.\textsuperscript{b}b1± Despite Black's heroic efforts, his position remains distinctly dubious.) 15.\textsuperscript{f}xf3 \textsuperscript{b}b7 16.\textsuperscript{g}g2 \textsuperscript{d}d6 with equal chances.

12.\textsuperscript{b}b1 is a rare move, but was played in the fairly recent high-level encounter Szabo – Vachier Lagrave, Gibraltar 2009. It seems to me that Black should have taken the opportunity to strike at the centre with 12...d5!N 13.exd5 \textsuperscript{d}xd5 14.\textsuperscript{f}f4 \textsuperscript{f}f6 By contrast with the analogous position occurring in the 11...d5 variation mentioned in the note to Black's 11th move above, the c4-square is unavailable to White's bishop, limiting his attacking chances considerably. Play might continue 15.\textsuperscript{c}xd5 \textsuperscript{d}xd5 16.\textsuperscript{d}f2 \textsuperscript{b}b7= when White is not getting anywhere.

12...d5!  

With this principled move Black implements his central counterplay before his knight is driven away from the centre. White has a plethora of interesting responses at his disposal, and we will consider five principal continuations: B2311) 13.\textsuperscript{g}g2, B2312) 13.exd5, B2313) 13.\textsuperscript{f}f4??, B2314) 13.\textsuperscript{h}h3 and B2315) 13.\textsuperscript{f}f4?.

It is also worth mentioning the surprising sacrifice:
13.e5!!
This is an enterprising idea, but ultimately a flawed one.

White hopes to stifle his opponent's central activity and press ahead with his kingside play, but he can hardly hope for full compensation against accurate play from Black.

14.\textsuperscript{d}d7 15.\textsuperscript{g}g1 \textsuperscript{c}c8 16.\textsuperscript{b}b1 \textsuperscript{c}c5 17.\textsuperscript{g}g2 \textsuperscript{h}h5
Another good option was 17...\textsuperscript{g}g6N 18.\textsuperscript{g}xg5 \textsuperscript{h}hg5 19.\textsuperscript{h}xg5 \textsuperscript{h}h5 20.\textsuperscript{f}f4 \textsuperscript{d}xd4 21.\textsuperscript{b}b5±.

18.\textsuperscript{g}g5 \textsuperscript{g}g8 19.\textsuperscript{g}ge1 \textsuperscript{g}g6 20.\textsuperscript{f}f4 \textsuperscript{e}e8+ 21.\textsuperscript{e}exg6 \textsuperscript{e}xg6 22.\textsuperscript{f}f4

This position was reached in Najer – Shomoev, Tomsk 2006, and now Black should have played:

B2311) 13.\textsuperscript{g}g2

White prepares g5 and hopes to find a useful role for the bishop on the long diagonal.
It looks more threatening to keep the rook on the d-file. After 16...\texttt{xd}5 I analysed the following line: 16...\texttt{xd}5 17.fxe4 \texttt{xe}c3 18.\texttt{xe}c3 e5 19.f5 \texttt{b}7 20.\texttt{h}7 \texttt{c}5 21.\texttt{xc}5 \texttt{xc}5 22.\texttt{xg}7+ \texttt{xg}7 23.\texttt{g}7 \texttt{e}6 24.\texttt{g}8+ \texttt{d}7 25.\texttt{xa}8 \texttt{xa}8= Black has no reason to fear this endgame.

16...\texttt{d}5 17.\texttt{f}4

17.fxe4 \texttt{xe}c3 18.\texttt{xe}c3 \texttt{e}5 Black can fall back on bishop pair and if he is able to complete development his chances might turn out to be better. 19.\texttt{g}3 (19.\texttt{f}4 g6 20.\texttt{b}1 \texttt{b}7 [20...\texttt{g}7 21.\texttt{h}3 \texttt{d}7 22.\texttt{h}7 \texttt{b}8 23.\texttt{g}2\texttt{e}5] 21.\texttt{d}xe6 \texttt{xc}6 22.\texttt{xe}6 \texttt{e}7 23.\texttt{b}3 a5+) 19...\texttt{g}6 20.\texttt{c}6 \texttt{xc}6 21.\texttt{xe}5 \texttt{e}5 22.\texttt{f}6 \texttt{b}7+ Two bishops are an important asset in this defendable position.

The undermining move 17.g6 looks natural, except that the rest of White's army is not ideally placed to follow up the attacking efforts of the enthusiastic foot soldier. The following game demonstrated accurate play on both sides: 17...\texttt{xe}5 18.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{d}c4 19.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{xf}4 20.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{xf}4+ 21.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{c}5 22.\texttt{xf}7+ \texttt{xf}7 23.e5 \texttt{a}7 And White faced a difficult defensive task in the endgame in Elburg – Hadet, e-mail 2007.

17...\texttt{c}3?!

This is a combative move, although ultimately it seems that the position will remain in a state of dynamic equilibrium.

Black can also maintain the balance in more mundane fashion: 17...\texttt{xf}4N 18.\texttt{xf}4 \texttt{e}5 19.\texttt{g}3 \texttt{c}4 20.\texttt{b}3 a5 21.\texttt{b}1 a4 22.\texttt{c}1 b3 23.axb3 axb3 24.cxb3 \texttt{b}4 25.\texttt{xb}4 \texttt{xb}4 26.\texttt{xe}4 \texttt{e}7 With an equal ending.

18.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{xc}3 19.\texttt{e}1 \texttt{e}5 20.\texttt{d}5 \texttt{a}5 21.\texttt{xc}3 \texttt{xd}5 22.\texttt{c}6 \texttt{e}6 23.\texttt{e}4 \texttt{b}7

The position is messy, with chances for both sides, Pawnstriker1978 – Intagrand, Internet 2007.

**B2312 13.\texttt{d}5**

This is another typical method of attacking; White hopes to develop threats using the open e-file.

13...\texttt{d}5 14.\texttt{f}4
It was also possible to play 14...\texttt{Qxe3} 15.\texttt{Qxe3} \texttt{Qc5} 16.\texttt{Qd3} (Another possible line is 16.\texttt{Qe4\texttt{N}} \texttt{Qb6} 17.\texttt{Qb1} 0-0 18.\texttt{Qd3} f5 19.\texttt{Qxf5} \texttt{Qxf5} 20.\texttt{Qe3} \texttt{Qd6} 21.\texttt{Qc2} \texttt{Qh7} 22.\texttt{Qh1} \texttt{Qd5} 23.\texttt{Qxd5} \texttt{Qxd5=} Fighting back with active pieces can yield a pleasant dividend for Black.) 16...\texttt{Qe7} 17.\texttt{Qf4} \texttt{Qb7} 18.\texttt{Qh2} \texttt{Qf6} 19.\texttt{Qe5\texttt{N}} (After 19.\texttt{Qe2} \texttt{Qd5} 20.\texttt{Qf2} \texttt{Qd6=} Black's advantage is not huge, but his position was certainly more pleasant in Tissir – Brodsky, Cappelle la Grande 2008.) 19...\texttt{Qd5} 20.\texttt{Qg3} \texttt{Qd8} with equal chances.

15.\texttt{Qxd5} \texttt{Qxd5} 16.\texttt{Qd3}

This position occurred in Talla – Stoczek, Havlickuv Brod 2008, and here the most sensible move would have been:

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\tint{8}{7}{6}{5}{4}{3}{2}{1}
\draw (a1) -- (h1) -- (h8) -- (a8) -- (a1);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

16...\texttt{Qc5\texttt{N}}

With the possible continuation:

17.\texttt{Qe4} \texttt{Qb7} 18.\texttt{g5}

18.\texttt{Qf2} \texttt{Qd8} is equal.

18...\texttt{Qxe3} 19.\texttt{Qxe3} \texttt{Qd8} 20.\texttt{Qxh6} \texttt{Qxh6} 21.\texttt{Qxb7} \texttt{Qxb7} 22.\texttt{Qe5} \texttt{Qxd4} 23.\texttt{Qxd4} \texttt{Qxd4} 24.\texttt{Qxd4} \texttt{Qh5} 25.\texttt{Qd1} \texttt{Qd5} 26.\texttt{Qe4} \texttt{Qxd1=}

The endgame is certainly not dangerous for Black.

13...\texttt{e5!}

This direct approach appears to be best, although I will mention a second playable continuation just in case any unexpected improvements appear for White in the main line.

13...\texttt{dxe4}?!

This appears risky but according to my analysis it should be playable.

14.\texttt{Qxe6}!

This is certainly the most principled and dangerous-looking continuation. White can also try a quieter alternative like 14.\texttt{Qe2}, although it is hard to believe that Black should have much to fear from such a move.

14...\texttt{fxe6} 15.\texttt{Qxe6} \texttt{Qc6} 16.\texttt{Qf8} \texttt{Qxf8} 17.\texttt{Qxb4} \texttt{exf3} 18.\texttt{Qd3}?

We have been following the analysis of Golubev. Black's position certainly looks precarious, but the Najdorf is a resilient beast and I am not absolutely convinced that
White has enough compensation. The best continuation looks to be:

18...\textit{c}e6! 19.\textit{d}d4 \textit{e}d8 20.\textit{h}f1!

There are immense complications in store, and I will leave it to the readers to investigate this position in more detail if they so desire.

\textbf{14.\textit{d}fe6}

White can also sacrifice the piece with 14.\textit{c}xd5?! \textit{c}xd5 15.\textit{e}xd5 \textit{exd}4 16.\textit{d}xd4, but in this case it seems Black can repulse the attack with 16...\textit{d}d6!, when White is lacking a decent follow-up. The only try is probably 17.\textit{g}xg7 to complicate matters. Still, even here after 17...\textit{f}4 18.\textit{e}e1+ \textit{d}d8 19.\textit{e}e3 \textit{g}g8 20.\textit{d}d4 \textit{b}b7 White does not have enough for the sacrificed material.

An altogether more dangerous proposition is:

14.\textit{f}f5?! \textit{exf}4!

Black should certainly accept the challenge.

The position looks dangerous, but in reality it should be pretty safe.

15.\textit{xf}4 \textit{a}a5!

Again this resource is important.

\textbf{16.\textit{exd}5}

16.\textit{e}5 is insufficient after 16...\textit{xa}2 17.\textit{e}e1 \textit{g}g8 18.\textit{d}d6+ \textit{xd}6 19.\textit{exd}6+ \textit{f}f8 20.\textit{xb}4 \textit{b}8 and White will be a piece down in an ending before too long.

16...\textit{xa}2 17.\textit{e}e2+ \textit{d}d8 18.\textit{d}d4!

This looks like White's best chance, but I am still not convinced.

18...\textit{xd}5!

This is a winning attempt, and in my view a justified one.

18...\textit{b}7 is possible and leads to a forced draw after: 19.\textit{c}c6+ \textit{e}8 20.g5! hxg5 21.hxg5 \textit{a}1+ 22.\textit{d}d2 \textit{xb}2 23.\textit{h}h8 \textit{c}c3+ with perpetual check.

19.\textit{b}1 \textit{b}7

The position remains complex, but objectively I doubt that White has enough for the sacrificed piece.

\textbf{14.\textit{fxe}6 \textit{a}5!}

This is the only good square for the queen.

\textbf{16.\textit{exd}5 \textit{xa}2 17.\textit{d}3!}

White has no other threatening moves. This position was reached in Morozevich – Vachier Lagrange, Biel 2009, and here Black should have played:
The game continued with what looked like an impending catastrophe for Black:

17...e4!N

The game continued with what looked like an impending catastrophe for Black:

17...e4!N 18.g5 Qxd5?

18...a1† 19.d2 bx b2 was necessary, but Black no longer equalizes. I do not want to spend time analysing this and other alternatives in detail, since I am recommending a different path for Black. However, I do think it is worth a brief diversion to witness the beautiful winning line that was missed by White in the game.

19.h3 xe3 20.d8† e7 21.c6† f7

It was here that Morozevich missed a delicious winning combination, which was first pointed out by Korotylev.

22.e6††!N xe6

22...xe6 23.d8† e7 24.xe6 Qxd1 25.Qxd1 is a winning position. Black is slightly ahead on material, but White can combine threats to the king with plucking pawns or harassing the pieces.

23.g6† f6 24.gxf6 gxf6 25.e8† f5

Most computers would have trouble finding 22.e6† without considerable time on their hands, as this position from afar can appear unattractive to them. But when seen up close, it turns out that White can win by force:

26.d4† f4 27.e2† f5 28.d4!!

Black is helpless against the mating threats, for example: 28...g8 29.f4† exf4 30.e4#
Chapter 17 - 6.e3 e6 7.f3

18.d4
What else should White play? Certainly not 18.fxe4?? when 18...e5 wins for Black.

18.c7† f7 19.c4
This is not entirely bad, but still leads to a sharp endgame with slightly better chances for Black:

19...xc4
Black should not get too greedy with 19...a1†? 20.d2 xb2 21.d6† as the white attack is too dangerous.

20.xc4 e5 21.b3 b8 22.g5 hxg5
22...d6 is playable, but after 23.gxf6 xf6 24.f4 g4 25.d4† f5 26.e6 xe6
27.dxe6 the evaluation is not so clear.

23.hxg5 xh1 24.xh1

18...d6!
Clearly the most ambitious move. 18...b3 is a playable alternative which should lead to a draw as follows: 19.c7† f7 20.d6 (20.xa8? d6 hands Black the initiative) Now Black has to take the perpetual after 20...a1† 21.d2 a5† 22.c1 a1† etc.

Instead if he tries for more with 22...e5? he might easily end up in trouble after 23.xb3! b8 24.g5. One spectacular line runs 24...b4 25.xc3 hxg5 26.c5! c6 27.h5!! and White has a winning attack after 27...g8 28.h6!.

19.c4
19.f4 b3! is also dangerous for White. A possible line runs: 20.xb3 (20.c4 transposes to the main line below) 20..b7 21.c4 c8! 22.xg7† f7 23.d5 b4 24.d2 xd5 25.a1 xc4† 26.bxc4 xc4† 27.xxx4 c4 and White will have a tough job fighting for a draw in the ending.
19...b3!
This powerful move was first suggested by Korotylev. Black is taking over the initiative.

20.f4
20.axb3 is simply poor. Black has some nice tactics: 20...a1+ 21.d2 a5+ 22.e2 exf3+ 23.xf3 e5+ 24.g2 xe6 25.dxe6 dxe4 and White is close to being busted. Not even winning things with check works: 26.a4+ f8 27.xd6+ g8 Black keeps an extra piece and should win without too many problems.

20...b8!
This is not the only promising option, but I think it is the strongest. Vachier-Lagrave only considered the weaker 20...a1+ but it seems to me that the text move is much more consistent with the spirit of the Najdorf.

21.cxb3
21.axb3 is poor. Black is a piece up, and in a dynamic position it is not too important what sort of piece this is. Thus the second player can decide the game with 21...xb3! 22.cxb3 b7 23.xg7+ f7 24.f5 c8+ 25.d2 c5 26.wc3 f8 27.a1 xc3 28.axa2 d3+ 29.e2 dxe4 and Black wins.

Although the position remains sharp, I see no reason why Black’s extra piece should not decide the game as long as he plays with reasonable accuracy. Here is a possible line:

22.xg7+
This is not objectively the best way to play for White, but it is the only way he can really try to hurt us, which is why we should consider it carefully.

22.g5 g4! leads nowhere for White, as 23.xg7? is refuted by 23...a1+ 24.d2 xc4.

22.g7 23.g5 g4 24.g6 g8! 25.e8
Black appears to be on the verge of defeat, but in fact the opposite is true thanks to the following beautiful combination:

25.a1+ 26.c2 xe3+ 27.xe3 xb2+!!
And Black wins.

To summarize, Morozevich’s 13.f4 does not appear to be fully sound, but it certainly demands accurate handling so I would advise the reader to study this section carefully before entering this labyrinth of complications over the board.
B2314) 13.\textit{h3}

This bishop development is another critical line for us to consider. White prepares g5 and takes aim at the sensitive e6-square.

13...\textit{b6}

Tempting, but ultimately inferior, is:

13...\textit{e5}?!\n
Unfortunately I was unable to find a satisfactory solution to the following idea:

14.\textit{f4}!N

14.\textit{b3}?! would not be as effective here due to 14...\textit{dxe4} 15.g5 \textit{hxg5} 16.\textit{hxg5} \textit{exf3} with a better game for Black. If you want to try out this interesting move order, you need to be prepared for White’s strongest response.

14...\textit{c}4 15.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}7!

15...\textit{dxe4} 16.\textit{exe4} \textit{e}5 17.\textit{b3} \textit{hxg5} 18.\textit{hxg5} \textit{f}xe4 19.\textit{f}4 looks like a classical murder scenario.

19.\textit{d}3! 19.\textit{h5}?! \textit{xe5} 20.\textit{f}1 with the idea 20...\textit{d}6 21.\textit{f}3! looks tricky, but Black has a brilliant solution in 20...\textit{xb2}! 21.\textit{xb2} \textit{b}7 22.\textit{b}1 0-0-0 with powerful compensation for the piece.

After the text move I prefer White’s chances. I am not sure how to prevent White’s ideas of g5-g6 or e4-e5. He should definitely avoid:

19...\textit{g}6? 20.\textit{h}5!

When White crashes through on the kingside. However, I would encourage the reader to investigate this variation independently and form his own conclusions. Authors can be mistaken, so if you think you have found an improvement for Black then go for it!

14.\textit{b}3!

14.\textit{g}5?! I believe this to be ultimately weaker, although proving it with analysis is not easy.

14...\textit{c}4 15.\textit{d}3 \textit{d}7!

15...\textit{dxe4}? 16.\textit{exe4} \textit{e}5 17.\textit{b3} \textit{hxg5} 18.\textit{hxg5} \textit{f}xe4 19.\textit{f}4 looks like a classical murder scenario.

16.\textit{c}xe6!N

White has to try this to stay in the game. 16.\textit{f}4? \textit{c}de5 17.\textit{e}2 \textit{c}xe3 18.\textit{xe3} \textit{c}c4 was already winning for Black in Ashwin – Banikas, Rethymno 2009. White had to try a futile knight sacrifice and was without a real chance.
16...fxe6
16...xa5?! does not work in this position, as 17.d4! fxe6 (17...xa2 18.b3 defends against Black's threats) 18.exd5 gives White a huge attack.
17.exd5 Ode5!
17...exd5? 18.g6+ d8 19.f4 gives White a strong attacking position.
18.e4 exd5
19.xd5 e7
19...xh3?! is another possibility, which leads to dynamic equality. My analysis continues as follows: 20.xh3 (20.f4 is sharper, but not more dangerous. Black plays 20...d6! 21.xd6 [21.xh3 0–0–0 22.b3 hxg5 23.xg5 c8 24.bxc4 xxc4 25.d3 is roughly equal as well, but if anyone has the chances, it is Black.] 21...0–0! 22.e5 c6 23.xb4 c4 24.xd6 xxe2 25.xf8 xxf8 26.g6+ f7 27.b3+ as the ending is a draw.) 20...d8 21.f4 This looks very dangerous for Black, but there is a brilliant solution: 21...b3!! 22.axb3 Oxd5 23.cxd5 Oa5! and neither player can reasonably avoid 24.Ob1 Oe1+ 25.Oa2 Oa5+ with a draw.
20.b3!
Only with this move can White maintain significant attacking chances.
20...xd5 21.xd5 Oe8 22.e6+ e7!
Rybka's first choice is not always the best. After 22...e7 23.bxc4 xxe6 24.xe6 hgx5 25.xg5 e7 26.f4 the sharp fight finally results in a peaceful and roughly equal position.
23.bxc4 Oe8 24.xf5 Oe8 25.e4 Oxc4!
26.g6+h6!
White has to seek an inferior ending at all cost.
The computer wants to play 26.f4, but Black has a wonderful combination:

26...xf4!! 27.xf4 b3!! 28.axb3 Oa5 Black has a winning attack. My main line runs as follows: 29.Oa8+ f7 30.g6+ f6 31.b1 c3+ 32.b2 e5+! 33.Oa2 Ob5! With decisive threats.
26...e4 27.hxg7!
27.xe3?! xh6 is poor.
Here Black is at a crossroads.
27...\text{\texttt{Eg8?!}}

This is the most ambitious move, and probably objectively strongest. He can also play safer with 27...\text{\texttt{Dxc2}}
28.\text{\texttt{gx8=\texttt{Wt}}} \text{\texttt{xf8}}, but accept that White can more or less equalize with 29.\text{\texttt{Wf5+t \texttt{xf6}}}
30.\text{\texttt{Wc8+t \texttt{xc8}}} 31.\text{\texttt{Dxc3 \texttt{Dh3 \texttt{Dxh4}}}} 33.\text{\texttt{Dc6 \texttt{xf6}}} 34.\text{\texttt{Dc3}}, when it is unlikely that Black will have genuine winning chances.

28.\text{\texttt{Dxe3 \texttt{Exg7}}}

I would rate Black's chances as slightly higher, although all three results are possible.

Returning to the main line, we have arrived at a position that the Russian GM Alexei Fedorov has employed twice with the white pieces.

14...\text{\texttt{Dxe4!}}

In a previous game Black preferred 14...\text{\texttt{e5}}
15.\text{\texttt{Df5 \texttt{Dxf5}}} 16.\text{\texttt{xf5}} \text{\texttt{c5}} 17.\text{\texttt{Dxc5 \texttt{Dxc5}}} 18.\text{\texttt{g5}}
\text{\texttt{Dfd7}} Here I would improve on White's play with 19.\text{\texttt{Dd1!N}} (19.\text{\texttt{Df4 e4}} 20.\text{\texttt{Dd4 a5}} 21.\text{\texttt{Dd1}}
was unclear in Fedorov – Annaberdiev, Abu Dhabi 2005. White eventually won this game, but at this stage Black's position is quite healthy.) After this new move it is not easy for Black to continue constructively. If he plays a normal move, such as 19...\text{\texttt{a5}}, White can strike with 20.\text{\texttt{f6!}}, with a possible line being: 20...\text{\texttt{gx6}}
21.\text{\texttt{gxh6 a4}} 22.\text{\texttt{Dg3 D4}} 23.\text{\texttt{Df4 \texttt{Dg7}}} 24.\text{\texttt{Dxg1+t}}
and Black is attacked all over the board.

15.\text{\texttt{Dd5 \texttt{Dxe4}}}

16.\text{\texttt{g6? \texttt{c5}} 17.\text{\texttt{Dxf7+t \texttt{xf7}}} 18.\text{\texttt{Df5 \texttt{exf3}}} was already winning for Black in Bittencourt – Molina, Brazil 2009.

16...\text{\texttt{Dxe3}} 17.\text{\texttt{Dxe3 \texttt{hxg5}}} 18.\text{\texttt{hxg5 \texttt{g6!}}}

Black needs to keep his structure intact. Now I found an improvement for White:

19.\text{\texttt{Db1!N}}

White needs to maintain the pressure against e6. Instead after 19.\text{\texttt{Dg2?! \texttt{Dh1}}} 20.\text{\texttt{Dxh1 \texttt{Df7}}}
21.\text{\texttt{Dh7 \texttt{Df5+t}} White was in danger of losing the strategic fight in Fedorov – Ashwin, Dubai 2009.

19...\text{\texttt{Dg7}}

This natural developing move is strong.

Black should not be lured by 19...\text{\texttt{e5?!}}, even if the consequences of the following tactical sequence are not altogether clear: 20.\text{\texttt{Dd7+t}}
\text{\texttt{Dxd7}} 21.\text{\texttt{Dxh8 \texttt{Dxd4}}} 22.\text{\texttt{Dxd4 \texttt{d0-0}} 23.\text{\texttt{Df2}}}
\text{\texttt{Dx7}} 24.\text{\texttt{Dxd8+t \texttt{Dxd8}}} 25.\text{\texttt{Dxf7 \texttt{Dg4}}} 26.\text{\texttt{Df2}}
and Black is just marginally worse.

20.\text{\texttt{Dd2?!}}

White continues to try to kill us.

Another possibility was 20.\text{\texttt{c3 \texttt{bxc3}}}
21.\text{\texttt{Dxc3 \texttt{Db7}} with unclear play. Black might not get
to castle, but the g7-bishop is a tremendous asset.

20...b7!
When playing such a move, Black must of course anticipate the following strike:

21.axb4! axb4 22.axb4 d8!
Thanks to the strong bishop on g7 it is unlikely that Black is in trouble. According to my analysis the critical continuation runs as follows:


This modern move was first played in 2009, and it may well be the most critical line of all.

13...a5?!N
This interesting idea is given in the latest version of Aquarium. So far White’s 13th move has only been played in a few games, and the text move has yet to receive a practical test. After analysing it in some detail I believe it is the most promising option, although in view of the freshness of the position and the scope for new ideas, I will also provide some coverage of the alternatives.

13...e5?!N is playable, although I prefer White’s position slightly after 14. g2.

The other critical idea is:
13.e5 14.Wh2 dxe4
I also spent some time analysing 14...b6N but was not entirely happy with Black’s position after 15.g5.

15.g5 exf3
It seems amazing that Black can continue eating pawns while behind in development with his king in the centre, but for a Najdorf player it is just another day at the office.
16...gx6
The alternative is 16...xf3 g4 17.g6 fx6 18.ed4, when Black must be precise: 18...hxh2!N (And not 18...b6? 19.c4!!+ Szabo – Kislik, Budapest 2009.) 19.xh2 b7 20.h3 (20.e6 b6 21.h3 xf3 22.c7+ xc7 23.xd7+ d8 24.c6+ xdl 25.xd1+ d6 26.xa8 c7+ 20...c5 21.e6 d6 22.e6 cxe6 23.xe6 d8 White keeps some compensation for the pawn, but no advantage.

16...fxe2 17.xe2
Perhaps the critical continuation is 17.xe2!N gx6 18.h3 when White has compensation for the two pawns, but how much is not clear.

17...gx6 18.h5
In this sharp position I found an improvement for Black:

18...c4!N
This looks better than 18...b8 19.e6 c4, Aroshidze – Banikas, Kavala 2009, 20.d5!N xd5 21.c7+ when White’s compensation remains quite potent even in the position without queens.

19.g2
19.b3 a5 20.hf1 c7 is complicated, but not unfavourable to Black.

19...a7 20.b3 c3 21.c6 a1+ 22.d2 c3=

The game should end in a perpetual, as the attempt to run with the king only leads to trouble for White:

23.e2? c5!+ 24.xa7 e3+ 25.f1 b7+

14.b1 dxe4
14...e5?! is a bit risky: 15.exd5 b7 (15...xf4 16.xf4 c5 17.h3 0–0 18.g5) 16.c6 c7 17.ed4→
15.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{b}}}}\textsubscript{2} \textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{d}}}}\textsubscript{7} \textit{16.g5 cxf3 17.exf3 \textbf{\textgreek{xf3}}} \\
\textbf{18.gxf6} \\
18.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{xf3}}} h\textit{g5 19.h\textit{g5} \textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{h}}}}\textsubscript{xh1} 20.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{h}}}}\textsubscript{h1} \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{d}}}}\textsubscript{5}} \textit{is about equal.} \\
18...\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{d}}}}\textsubscript{5} 19.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{b}}}}\textsubscript{3} \\

\textbf{19...\textbf{\textgreek{b}}}}\textsubscript{6} \\
\textbf{Another intriguing possibility is: 19...\textbf{\textgreek{a}}}}\textsubscript{4}?! 20.fx\textit{g7 \textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{g}}}}\textsubscript{7} 21.h\textit{g1} \textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{f}}}}\textsubscript{6} 22.d\textit{d6} \textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{e}}}}\textsubscript{8} 23.xb4 \textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{c}}}}\textsubscript{2} 24.xc2 \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{b}}}}\textsubscript{4} \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{b}}}}\textsubscript{5} \textit{Black has reasonable compensation for the exchange, and his king should be able to survive in the centre.} \\
20.fx\textit{g7 \textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{g}}}}\textsubscript{7} 21.h\textit{g1} \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{f}}}}\textsubscript{6}! \\
\textbf{This is an improvement over 21...e5 22.c4!, with an edge to White according to Aquarium. Black does best to preserve his dark-squared bishop, which can be useful for both attacking and defensive purposes.} \\
22.c4 \\
\textit{22.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{h}}}}\textsubscript{6} 0–0–0 23.h5 \textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{c}}}}\textsubscript{5} 24.f4 \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{e}}}}\textsubscript{4} \textit{reaches a double-edged position in which Black's prospects are not worse.} \\
\textbf{Another possibility is 22.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{e}}}}\textsubscript{3} \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{b}}}}\textsubscript{7} 23.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{c}}}}\textsubscript{5} \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{c}}}}\textsubscript{5} 24.xc5 0–0–0 25.f4 \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{e}}}}\textsubscript{7} with approximate equality.} \\
22...\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{e}}}}\textsubscript{6} \\
\textbf{From this position White should have enough activity to compensate for the missing pawn, but not enough for an advantage.} \\
23.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{d}}}}\textsubscript{6} \\
23.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{d}}}}\textsubscript{d4} \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{a}}}}\textsubscript{4}?? \\
23...a5 24.c5 \textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{b}}}}\textsubscript{7} 25.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{b}}}}\textsubscript{d4} \textit{\textbf{\textgreek{e}}}}\textsubscript{4}+ 26.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{a}}}}\textsubscript{4} \\
\textbf{The position remains balanced. Obviously the whole line requires much more practical testing, but at this stage I see no reason to evaluate Black's chances as inferior. Summing up, the 10...\textbf{\textgreek{bd}}\textsubscript{7} line can lead to mind-boggling complications posing no end of complex problems for both sides. According to my analysis Black should hold his own, although both sides will have to walk a tightrope. If you are the type of player who thrives in a tactical minefield then look no further.} \\
\textbf{We now move on to the less volatile approach.} \\
\textbf{B232) 10...e5} \\

\textbf{11.\textit{\textcolor{black}{\textbf{\textgreek{f}}}}} \\
\textbf{In some Sicilian lines the jump of the knight to f5 smacks of extreme measures, but here it is more justified thanks to the inclusion of the move ...h7-h6.}
11.\(\text{b3} \text{c6}\) transposes to line A23 (8.\(\text{d2} \text{b4}\) 9.\(\text{c2} \text{e5}\) 10.\(\text{b3} \text{c6}\) 11.\(\text{g4} \text{h6}\)), although with the present move order Black has also scored highly with 11...\(\text{a5}\)!

11...\(\text{d5}\)

This is the consistent follow-up to Black’s previous move. Now White’s two principal responses are B2321) 12.\(\text{exd5}\) and B2322) 12.0–0–0.

Inferior is:
12.\(\text{g5}\)!! \(\text{hxg5}\) 13.\(\text{xg5}\)

White is exerting pressure against the centre, but has seriously compromised his pawn structure.

13...\(\text{xf5}\)

This looks like the most straightforward path to a good position, although 13...\(\text{e6}\) is also perfectly decent.

14.\(\text{exf5}\) \(\text{a5}\) 15.\(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{gx6}\) 16.0–0–0 \(\text{h6}\) 17.\(\text{f4}\) \(\text{c6}\)

Also deserving consideration is 17...\(\text{xa2}\)!! \(\text{N}\)
18.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 19.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 20.\(\text{b1}\) \(\text{xf4}\)
21.\(\text{g2}\) 0–0–0\(\text{f}\) The first player needs to worry about equalizing.

18.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\) 19.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xf4}\) 20.\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{f3}\)
21.\(\text{d4}\) \(\text{e5}\)\(\text{f}\)

White’s pieces were poorly coordinated in Goloshchapov – Sakaev, Dubai 2003.

With this move White releases the tension and exposes his kingside slightly, which should enable Black to count on a comfortable game.

12...\(\text{xd5}\) 13.\(\text{g2}\)

13.0–0–0 \(\text{e6}\) transposes to line B23221 below (Black can also consider 13...\(\text{b7}\)!!).

Sometimes White exchanges queens immediately with 13.\(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{xd5}\), but this almost always leads back to the main line within a few moves, as both light-squared bishops are likely to settle on the h1–a8 diagonal.

13.\(\text{b7}\)

\[\text{Diagram 14.}\]

B2321) 12.\(\text{exd5}\)

White can also delay this exchange with 14.0–0 \(\text{bd7}\) 15.\(\text{fd1}\) \(\text{g6}\) 16.\(\text{fg3}\) (After 16.\(\text{xh6}\)!! \(\text{xd2}\) 17.\(\text{xd2}\) \(\text{h6}\) 18.\(\text{xf3}\) \(\text{h6}\) 19.\(\text{g5}\) \(\text{h4}\) 20.\(\text{xf4}\) \(\text{xf6}\)\(\text{f}\) White would be struggling to equalize due to his inferior pawn structure.) 16...\(\text{c5}\) 17.\(\text{f1}\) \(\text{xd2}\) 18.\(\text{xd2}\)
19.\(\text{f4}\) 20.\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 21.\(\text{f4}\) 0–0–0–

The queenless middlegame is fine for Black as the e4-pawn remains vulnerable, Kovacevic – Ilincic, Herceg Novi 2000.

14.\(\text{xd5}\) 15.\(\text{f2}\) \(\text{g6}\) 16.\(\text{e3}\) \(\text{xe3}\) 17.\(\text{xe3}\)
18.\(\text{d7}\) 19.\(\text{f2}\)
Another game continued 18.\textit{g}1 \textit{c}5 19.\textit{x}c5 \textit{x}c5 20.\textit{f}4 \textit{e}4 21.0–0–0 \textit{h}5 22.g5 \textit{d}8 23.\textit{x}d8+ \textit{x}d8. The endgame was fine for Black in Papadopoulos – Wojtaszek, Thessaloniki 2007.

18...\textit{e}8 19.c3 \textit{d}5 20.\textit{h}d1 \textit{e}6 21.\textit{a}c1 \textit{b}xc3 22.\textit{x}c3 \textit{e}xc3 23.\textit{b}xc3 \textit{e}7

The endgame is balanced, Azarov – Ehlvest, Moscow 2005.

\textbf{B2322) 12.0–0–0 \textit{e}6}

In this position we arrive at a final division between \textbf{B23221) 13.exd5} and \textbf{B23222) 13.\textit{b}1}.

\textbf{B23221) 13.exd5}

The inclusion of the previous move of each side does little to change the verdict that the early exchange on d5 promises White very little.

13...\textit{xd}5 14.\textit{g}2

Other moves are no better:

14.\textit{xd}5?! is feeble: 14...\textit{xd}5 15.\textit{b}2 This was Hotting – Teichmeister, e-mail 2004, and now Black could have obtained the upper hand with 15...\textit{g}6 16.\textit{f}3 \textit{d}7.

14.f4?! is no better: 14...\textit{xd}2+ 15.\textit{x}d2 \textit{x}g4 16.\textit{g}2 \textit{a}7 17.\textit{h}3 \textit{xf}5 18.\textit{x}g4 \textit{g}4 Life is easy for Black in a pleasant endgame.

14...\textit{bd}7 15.\textit{xd}5

With the bishop ready and waiting on g2, this exchange has become rather more purposeful than on the previous turn. Nevertheless Black still has little to fear.

15...\textit{xd}5

Also quite playable is:

15...\textit{xd}5 16.\textit{xd}5?! More challenging than 16.\textit{f}g1 \textit{g}6 17.\textit{f}3 \textit{e}8 18.\textit{b}1 \textit{c}5 19.\textit{x}c5 \textit{xc}5 20.h4 \textit{d}6 when Black controls most of the board, Chadaev – Belov, Moscow 2006.

16.\textit{x}d5 17.f4 \textit{xe}3

17...\textit{f}6?! 18.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}3 19.\textit{xe}3+-

18.\textit{xa}8
18...\textsf{\underline{\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}}f5}

Another possibility was 18...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{x}}}g4 19.\texttt{\texttt{c6}}!

\quad (19.h3 \texttt{\texttt{\texttt{g}}f6} 20.fxe5 \texttt{\texttt{x}}e5 21.\texttt{\texttt{f4}})

19...\texttt{\texttt{xf4}} 20.\texttt{\texttt{xf4}} \texttt{\texttt{ge5}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{e1}} White’s active pieces give him full compensation, but no real advantage.

19.\texttt{gf5} \texttt{\texttt{d6}}

Or 19...\texttt{\texttt{xf4}} 20.\texttt{\texttt{xf4}} \texttt{\texttt{d6}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{e1}} \texttt{\texttt{d8}}

22.\texttt{\texttt{d5}} \texttt{\texttt{xh2}} 23.\texttt{\texttt{xb4}} with approximately equal chances.

20.\texttt{\texttt{c6}} \texttt{\texttt{e7}}

Black has nothing to fear, Sandipan – Lutz, Germany 2005.

16.\texttt{f4}

Harmless is 16.\texttt{f2} 0–0 0–0 17.\texttt{e3} (17.\texttt{d2} g6 18.\texttt{hd1} h5 The tension would be too challenging for White.) 17...\texttt{f7} 18.\texttt{h4} g6 19.\texttt{e3} \texttt{f4} 20.\texttt{f1} \texttt{c5} with comfortable play for Black, Rainer Zufall – Team Aldersbach, Internet 2006.

16...\textsf{\underline{\texttt{\texttt{e3}}}} 17.\textsf{\underline{\texttt{e3}}} 0–0 0–0 18.\texttt{f5} \texttt{\texttt{c5}}

19.\texttt{d5} \texttt{\texttt{xd5}}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

20.\texttt{\texttt{xd5}}

White is not helped by 20.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{\texttt{d6}}!

21.\texttt{xf7} \texttt{\texttt{g4}} Black’s active pieces make a strong impression, especially the powerful bishop on c5.

20...\texttt{\texttt{c3}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{b1}} \texttt{\texttt{h8}} 22.\texttt{\texttt{hd1}} \texttt{\texttt{f6}}

23.\texttt{\texttt{xd8}} 24.\texttt{\texttt{xd8}}

The evaluation is similar after 24.\texttt{\texttt{b7}}, Boucqueau – Weber, e-mail 2002, 24...\texttt{\texttt{c7}}

25.\texttt{\texttt{xd8}} \texttt{\texttt{xd8}} 26.\texttt{h3} a5.

24...\texttt{\texttt{xd8}}

Black has marginally the better of this drawish ending, Erkens – Vonhoff, Internet 2004.

\textbf{B23222} 13.\texttt{\texttt{b1}}

13...\texttt{\texttt{bd7}}

13...\texttt{\texttt{c6}} has also proven to be quite reliable, but I have chosen to concentrate on the text move.

14.\texttt{exd5}

White can also maintain the central tension with 14.\texttt{\texttt{c1}} \texttt{\texttt{c7}} 15.\texttt{\texttt{d3}} d4 16.\texttt{\texttt{f2}} g6 17.\texttt{\texttt{g3}} \texttt{\texttt{c5}} 18.\texttt{h4} This was Moreno Carnero – Vera Gonzalez, Seville 2001, and here it looks logical for Black to play 18...h5?N 19.g5 \texttt{\texttt{f7}}

20.f4 \texttt{\texttt{g4}} 21.\texttt{\texttt{df1}} \texttt{\texttt{e7}}= Black’s king remains safe and his overall position quite healthy.

14...\texttt{\texttt{xd5}} 15.\texttt{\texttt{f4}}!

This looks critical, but is still untested. I found the move suggested in a book of John Emms, although he in turn refers to previous analysis by Ilincic.
The alternatives present few problems for Black:

15.\texttt{c1} \texttt{c7} 16.\texttt{d3} \texttt{xb8} 17.\texttt{a1} was seen in Uribe – Arencibia, Cali 2001, and now Black could have obtained an excellent position with 17...\texttt{g6}!N 18.\texttt{xh6} (18.\texttt{g3} a5 gives Black good attacking chances, for instance: 19.h4 a4 20.h5 \texttt{xh5} 21.\texttt{xh5} a3 22.\texttt{de1} axb2\texttt{t} 23.\texttt{xxb2} \texttt{c3}--) 18...\texttt{xf5} 19.\texttt{xf8} \texttt{fxg4} 20.\texttt{g7} \texttt{g8}+ Black should be the favourite in this complex position.

15.\texttt{f2}

It is perfectly natural that White should wish to preserve this important bishop, but the loss of time enables Black to solve his problems.

15...\texttt{g6}!

This improves over 15...\texttt{a5} 16.\texttt{c1} \texttt{d8} 17.\texttt{b3} \texttt{a4} (17...\texttt{c7} 18.\texttt{xa6}+) 18.\texttt{c4}! The black queen on a4 is rarely a good piece when the pawn is already on b4. Black was under some pressure in Baramidze – Wojtaszek, Chalkidiki 2001.

16.\texttt{e3}

16.\texttt{c1} \texttt{c7} 17.\texttt{e3} \texttt{b6} 18.\texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 19.\texttt{d3} \texttt{d8} 20.\texttt{he1} h5 21.g5 \texttt{d6}-- White has a centralized army, but little chance of getting anywhere.

16...\texttt{xe3} 17.\texttt{xe3} \texttt{f6} 18.\texttt{e1} \texttt{c7} 19.\texttt{c1} This position was reached in Von Saleski – Nenciulescu, Internet 2005. Now the simplest continuation would have been:

19...\texttt{e7}N

Black has no problems.

15...\texttt{xe3}

I also considered 15...\texttt{a5}, but unfortunately this looks dubious in view of 16.\texttt{c1} \texttt{d8} 17.\texttt{b3}! This was a suggestion of Jacob Aagaard who shared his analysis with me. Play continues as follows: 17...\texttt{a4} (or 17...\texttt{c7} 18.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xe5} 19.\texttt{d4} g6 20.\texttt{g2}! with a powerful initiative) 18.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{xe5} 19.\texttt{d4} \texttt{c6} 20.\texttt{e2} With his king stuck in the centre Black is unlikely to survive, for instance: 20...\texttt{xd4} 21.\texttt{fxd4} \texttt{c7} 22.\texttt{xe6} \texttt{fxe6} 23.\texttt{g2} \texttt{f4} 24.\texttt{xd8}+ \texttt{xd8} 25.\texttt{c4} \texttt{xe2} 26.\texttt{xe6}+ \texttt{c7} 27.\texttt{c8}+ \texttt{d8} 28.\texttt{d1}--

16.\texttt{xe3}

Black must certainly take care here, but overall his position is resilient enough.

16...\texttt{g6}!

Black cannot tolerate such a knight indefinitely.

The black position is not yet strong enough to justify such an extravagant move as 16...\texttt{h5}!, which loses almost by force. The main line runs as follows: 17.\texttt{g2} \texttt{h4} (or 17...\texttt{c8} 18.\texttt{xe5} \texttt{a5} 19.\texttt{c1} \texttt{xe5} 20.\texttt{d2} \texttt{hxg4} 21.\texttt{he1} \texttt{c7} 22.\texttt{d4} \texttt{h6} 23.\texttt{c6} \texttt{d8} 24.\texttt{g5} \texttt{e6}
25.\texttt{Wxg4+-} 18.\texttt{Exd7 Wxd7} 19.\texttt{Axa8 c8} 20.\texttt{Ag2 xf5} 21.\texttt{Qxe5+ e6} 22.\texttt{Ab8+ e8} 23.\texttt{Cc6+ e7} 24.\texttt{Qxb4+ f6} 25.\texttt{Bb6 d6} 26.\texttt{Qg3+-}

17.\texttt{Qg2!}

This must be the critical test. Emms only mentioned the rather cooperative 17.\texttt{Qd6?? xxd6} 18.\texttt{Exd6 e7} when Black already stands better, for instance 19.\texttt{fxe5 Qxe5!} 20.\texttt{Qxe5?? xa2+}.

17...\texttt{gx}f5

Black should accept the challenge, otherwise he will come under a strong attack without the benefit of any extra material. A sample continuation is: 17...\texttt{Ec8} 18.\texttt{Qd6+ xxd6} 19.\texttt{Exd6 a5} 20.\texttt{Qc1 exf4} (20...\texttt{0-0} 21.\texttt{f5 gx}f5 22.\texttt{Qxf5 Qxf5} 23.\texttt{Qe4+-}) 21.\texttt{Qxe6+ fx}e6 22.\texttt{Qxe6+ d8} 23.\texttt{Qd1 b5} 24.\texttt{Qf6+ c7} 25.\texttt{Qxf4+ d8} 26.\texttt{Qf6+ c7} 27.\texttt{Qd6+ d8} 28.\texttt{Qb3 Qh7} 29.\texttt{Qd4+-}

18.\texttt{Exd7}!

This is the most challenging move, although it is not clear which side is running the bigger risk. The alternative leads practically by force to a drawn ending:

18.gxf5 \texttt{xf5} 19.\texttt{Exd7}

18...\texttt{b}d7!

And not 18...\texttt{fxd7}?! 19.\texttt{Qxa8 c8} 20.gxf5 \texttt{xa8} 21.\texttt{Exd7} 22.\texttt{Qxe5+ e6} 23.\texttt{Qh8 xe2} 24.g6+\texttt{e7} 25.\texttt{Qxe5+ e7} 26.\texttt{Qe1+} 27.\texttt{Qxe5+ xe5} 28.\texttt{Qxe5+ g7} 29.\texttt{Qb7 Qc7} 30.\texttt{Qxa6 Qxe5} 31.\texttt{Qe4}.

19.\texttt{Qxe5+ e7}

20.\texttt{Qxh8}

20.\texttt{Qxa8?} leads to a difficult endgame for White: 20...\texttt{Qxe5} 21.fxe5 fxg4 22.\texttt{Qf4+ g7} 23.\texttt{Qd5 c7} 24.\texttt{Qe1 e8} 25.\texttt{Qxe6 fxe6} 26.\texttt{Qxe6+ d8} 27.\texttt{Qe6+ d7} 28.\texttt{Qxe8+ e8}

20...\texttt{0-0-0}

Black has a safe position. True, his king's shelter is a little draughty, but the white pieces are not well-placed to exploit this. On the other hand the two bishops could become a major force in the future.

21.\texttt{Qc1}
The tempting 21.\textit{\texttt{W}}d4?! does not work: 21...\textit{\texttt{W}}xe2 22.\textit{\texttt{W}}d5 \textit{\texttt{B}}e8 23.\textit{\texttt{W}}d1 \textit{\texttt{B}}b5 24.\textit{\texttt{W}}a8\texttt{\texttt{B}}c7 25.\textit{\texttt{W}}a7\texttt{\texttt{B}}d8 26.\textit{\texttt{W}}f1 \textit{\texttt{B}}c6 27.\textit{\texttt{W}}b8\texttt{\texttt{B}}c8 28.\textit{\texttt{W}}b6\texttt{\texttt{B}}c7 29.\textit{\texttt{W}}f6\texttt{\texttt{B}}e7! (This looks stronger than 29...\textit{\texttt{B}}e7 30.\textit{\texttt{W}}xf5.) White remains a piece down with limited compensation.

21...\textit{\texttt{F}}xg4 22.\textit{\texttt{F}}d1

Another continuation of roughly equal value is 22.\textit{\texttt{F}}f1 \textit{\texttt{B}}d6 23.\textit{\texttt{B}}e5 \textit{\texttt{B}}b7 24.\textit{\texttt{B}}a5 \textit{\texttt{B}}c8 25.\textit{\texttt{B}}d3 \textit{\texttt{B}}b6 26.\textit{\texttt{B}}h5 \textit{\texttt{W}}f6 27.\textit{\texttt{B}}e4\texttt{\texttt{B}}c6 28.\textit{\texttt{B}}e1 \textit{\texttt{B}}xf4 29.\textit{\texttt{B}}d3 \textit{\texttt{B}}c7 30.\textit{\texttt{W}}xg4 with approximate equality.

22...\textit{\texttt{B}}e6 23.\textit{\texttt{B}}xd8\texttt{\texttt{B}}xd8

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}[scale=0.5]
\draw (0,0) grid (8,8);
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (a1) at (0,0) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (a2) at (1,0) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (a3) at (2,0) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (a4) at (3,0) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (a5) at (4,0) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (a6) at (5,0) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (a7) at (6,0) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (a8) at (7,0) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (b1) at (0,1) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (b2) at (1,1) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (b3) at (2,1) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (b4) at (3,1) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (b5) at (4,1) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (b6) at (5,1) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (b7) at (6,1) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (b8) at (7,1) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (c1) at (0,2) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (c2) at (1,2) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (c3) at (2,2) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (c4) at (3,2) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (c5) at (4,2) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (c6) at (5,2) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (c7) at (6,2) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (c8) at (7,2) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (d1) at (0,3) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (d2) at (1,3) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (d3) at (2,3) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (d4) at (3,3) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (d5) at (4,3) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (d6) at (5,3) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (d7) at (6,3) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (d8) at (7,3) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (e1) at (0,4) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (e2) at (1,4) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (e3) at (2,4) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (e4) at (3,4) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (e5) at (4,4) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (e6) at (5,4) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (e7) at (6,4) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (e8) at (7,4) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (f1) at (0,5) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (f2) at (1,5) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (f3) at (2,5) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (f4) at (3,5) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (f5) at (4,5) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (f6) at (5,5) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (f7) at (6,5) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (f8) at (7,5) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (g1) at (0,6) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (g2) at (1,6) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (g3) at (2,6) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (g4) at (3,6) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (g5) at (4,6) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (g6) at (5,6) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (g7) at (6,6) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (g8) at (7,6) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (h1) at (0,7) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (h2) at (1,7) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (h3) at (2,7) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (h4) at (3,7) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (h5) at (4,7) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (h6) at (5,7) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (h7) at (6,7) {};
\node[draw,shape=circle,fill=black,inner sep=2pt] (h8) at (7,7) {};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

If the queens were removed then Black's bishop pair combined with the weakness of White's kingside pawns would give the second player a near-decisive advantage. As it stands, however, Black's airy king will provide a source of counterplay for the first player. Overall the chances are about equal, but everything is still to play for.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The English Attack continues to be regarded as one of the most dangerous attacking systems at White's disposal, although the devotees of Black's side have learned plenty of tricks themselves. In this chapter we have seen how Black can base his counterplay around a fascinating, and in some ways logic-defying concept from Veselin Topalov involving an unusually rapid pawn advance to b4. White's pieces can often find themselves forced into uncomfortable positions, although on the other hand, Black is temporarily behind in development and must take great care when planning to open the centre. Overall, I would conclude that as long as Black plays accurately his chances for dynamic equality and active counterattacking play are quite high.
Variation Index

1.e4 c5 2.f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.exd4 Nf6 5.c3 a6 6.Ng5

6...e6

A) 7.Nbd3 380
B) 7.Nf3 381
C) 7.Nd2 382
D) 7.f4 h6!? 8.Nh4 Ne7 9.Nf3 Nbd7 10.0–0–0 Nc7 383
   D1) 11.Ng3!? 386
   D2) 11.Nd3 389
   D3) 11.Ne2 b5 394
      D31) 12.e5 395
      D32) 12.Nxf6 400

D1) note to 22...Nd5!
A) note to 11.Nh4?
D31) after 22.exd7

31...Nd3†!!

21...dxe5\n
22...Nxg6\n
The attacking system introduced by the moves 6.\textit{\texttt{g5}} e6 7.f4 is far from easy for Black to handle. The first player wastes no time in moulding his small band of wooden soldiers into a vicious army of bloodthirsty assassins, with a licence to kill and the collective firepower to do just that. The task of playing against such a system is rather like picking up a venomous snake from the floor – the handler must keep razor-sharp wits and use a sound strategy to avoid the opponent’s fatal bite.

Many defensive set-ups have been tried, the most famous being the Poisoned Pawn variation with 7...\textit{\texttt{b6}} 8.\textit{\texttt{d2}} \textit{\texttt{xb2}}, and the traditional main line of 7...\textit{\texttt{e7}} 8.\textit{\texttt{f3}} \textit{\texttt{bd7}} 9.0–0–0 \textit{\texttt{c7}}, when both 10.\textit{\texttt{d3}} and 10.g4 lead to a tough battle to put it mildly.

My own proposed solution will hopefully come as a refreshing change from these well-known and exhaustively analysed battlegrounds. The recommended plan involves striking at the enemy bishop with an early ...h6, which opens the door to some colourful counterattacking possibilities based on a subsequent ...g5 in certain positions. Black’s system fell out of fashion for a while, but it has recently started attracting more followers, and at the moment I see no reason why it should not continue its resurgence into mainstream acceptance.

From this position we will consider the sidelines of A) 7.\textit{\texttt{d3}}, B) 7.\textit{\texttt{f3}} and C) 7.\textit{\texttt{d2}}, followed by the big main line of D) 7.f4.

A) 7.\textit{\texttt{d3}}

Just as with the other two sidelines, White intends to castle without delay and then start some kind of attack.

7...b5 8.0–0–0

Nothing else is likely to trouble Black.

8.f4 b4 9.\textit{\texttt{ce2}} \textit{\texttt{b7}} 10.\textit{\texttt{g3}} h6 11.\textit{\texttt{xf6}} \textit{\texttt{xf6}}+Palekha – Loskutov, Serpukhov 2003.

8.\textit{\texttt{ce2}} \textit{\texttt{bd7}} 9.f4 \textit{\texttt{c5}} highlights a drawback of White’s seventh move: the queen is forced to waste time. 10.\textit{\texttt{e3}} b4 11.\textit{\texttt{xf6}} (White is not helped by: 11.\textit{\texttt{d5}} N exd5 12.e5 \textit{\texttt{e7}} 13.\textit{\texttt{c6}} \textit{\texttt{e6}} 14.f5 [14.\textit{\texttt{d4}} \textit{\texttt{g4}}+] 14...\textit{\texttt{xf5}} 15.exf6+ \textit{\texttt{e6}} 16.h4 \textit{\texttt{xc2}} 17.\textit{\texttt{c1}} \textit{\texttt{e4}}+ 11...\textit{\texttt{xf6}} Black is at least equal, for instance: 12.\textit{\texttt{f3}} bxc3 13.e5 cxb2 14.\textit{\texttt{b1}} dxe5 15.\textit{\texttt{xe5}} \textit{\texttt{d8}} 16.\textit{\texttt{xa8}} \textit{\texttt{d7}} 17.\textit{\texttt{f3}} \textit{\texttt{a4}}+ L. Anderson – Karasalo, e-mail 2007.

8...b4!

This energetic approach is not easy for White to counter.
9.\textit{\texttt{f6?}}

This interesting move is directed against the transfer of the b8-knight to c5. For instance, 9.\textit{\texttt{b1 \texttt{bd7}} gave Black easy play in Soylu – Hauchard, Istanbul 2000. (White does not want to exchange on f6 at a time when Black can conveniently recapture with the other knight.)

Another game continued 9.\textit{\texttt{ce2 \texttt{bd7}}} 10.\textit{\texttt{f4?!}} (White should have settled for the modest 10.\textit{\texttt{f3}}, although such an approach can hardly threaten Black.) 10...\textit{\texttt{c5}} 11.\textit{\texttt{e3}} Vukovic – Pavlovic, Vrnjacka Banja 1999, and now I see no reason not to gobble the loose pawn with 11...\textit{\texttt{cx e4}}.

9...\textit{\texttt{xf6}}

I prefer this over 9...\textit{\texttt{gxf6}} 10.\textit{\texttt{ce2}}, with unclear play.

10.\textit{\texttt{c4 \texttt{g5}}}

Another option is 10...\textit{\texttt{d7}} 11.\textit{\texttt{xb4 \texttt{xf2}}}, with a murky position.

11.\textit{\texttt{f4?!}}

11.\textit{\texttt{b1 \texttt{c5}}} is comfortable enough for Black.

11...\textit{\texttt{xf4?}} 12.\textit{\texttt{b1 \texttt{d7}}} 13.\textit{\texttt{xb4}}

With two powerful bishops and a better pawn structure, Black’s long-term chances are excellent. For the time being, however, he lags in development and will need to play carefully to reach an acceptable middlegame.

13.\textit{\texttt{e5?!}}

The queen would soon have been chased from the f-file in any case, and it turns out that her presence may be required on the queenside.

14.\textit{\texttt{a4 \texttt{c5?!}}}

This accurate move takes the sting out of any troublesome \texttt{c6} invasions. From here Black should have good chances to complete development, and the onus is on White to prove something before his positional defects make themselves felt.

B) 7.\textit{\texttt{f3}}

7...\textit{\texttt{h6?!}}

Out of numerous playable options, I like the idea of forcing the bishop to define its intentions immediately.

8.\textit{\texttt{c3}}

There is no reason to fear 8.\textit{\texttt{xf6 \texttt{xf6}}} 9.\textit{\texttt{xf6 \texttt{gxf6}}. Generally speaking, this structure with doubled f-pawns is more dangerous for Black in the middlegame, when his centralized king would be a liability. With the queens exchanged his king will be ideally placed, and he can aim to exploit the power of the bishop pair. One high-level game continued 10.\textit{\texttt{f4 \texttt{h5}}} 11.\textit{\texttt{f5 \texttt{c6}}} 12.\textit{\texttt{d1 \texttt{d7}}} and Black was quite happy in Short – Kasparov, Sarajevo 2000.

The only other reasonable option is 8.\textit{\texttt{h4}}, when Black can obtain a decent position with 8...\textit{\texttt{d7?}} 9.0–0–0 \textit{\texttt{c6}} 10.\textit{\texttt{xc6 \texttt{xc6}}} 11.\textit{\texttt{d3 \texttt{c7}}= Wibe – Olafsson, Gluecksburg 1977.

8...\textit{\texttt{d7?!}}
This is an effective way of preparing ...\(\text{c}6\), although there are other decent ways to handle the position, for instance: 8...e5 9.\(\text{b}3\) (9.\(\text{f}5\) g6 10.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{g}7=\)) 9...\(\text{e}7\) 10.\(\text{c}2\) 0–0 11.\(\text{g}3\) \(\text{h}8\) 12.0–0 b5= Saenko – Van der Hoeven, e-mail 2005.

9.0–0–0 \(\text{c}6\) 10.\(\text{g}3\)

10.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{xc}6\) 11.\(\text{d}3\) b5∞

10...\(\text{xd}4\)?N

I prefer this over 10...\(\text{c}8\) 11.\(\text{xc}6\)! (Better than 11.f4?! when 11...\(\text{b}4\)! enabled Black to seize the initiative in Morozevich – Shirov, Frankfurt 2000.) 11...\(\text{xc}6\) (or 11...\(\text{xc}6\)N 12.\(\text{d}3\)± 12.\(\text{d}3\)± Oliveira – Valinova, e-mail 2006.

11.\(\text{xd}4\)

11.\(\text{xd}4\) e5 12.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{c}8\) 13.f3 b5 14.a3 \(\text{c}6\)

is fine for Black.

11...\(\text{c}8\)

Black has decent prospects for counterplay, as demonstrated by the following illustrative line:

12.\(\text{b}1\) \(\text{xc}3\)! 13.\(\text{xc}3\) e5 14.\(\text{b}4\) a5 15.\(\text{xb}7\) \(\text{xe}4\) 16.\(\text{fb}3\) d5∞

And not 16...\(\text{c}6\)?! 17.\(\text{xf}7\)#!

The resulting position is one that every Najdorf player should be happy to reach.

C) 7.\(\text{d}2\)

7...h6!

Once again this well-timed move causes problems for White.

8.\(\text{xf}6\)

The first point to appreciate is that 8.\(\text{h}4\)? loses a pawn to the thematic riposte:

8...\(\text{xe}4\)+

8.\(\text{c}3\) is also less than ideal due to 8...\(\text{g}4\)!, for instance: 9.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{xe}3\) 10.\(\text{exe}3\) \(\text{c}6\) 11.0–0–0 \(\text{b}6\) 12.\(\text{g}4\) \(\text{c}7\) 13.\(\text{h}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 14.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{xd}4\) 15.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{d}7\) Naimanye – KI. Georgiev, Manila 1992.
8...\textit{xf6} 9.0-0-0

White needs to play actively and aggressively, otherwise it will be hard to justify the loss of the bishop pair.

9.a4 \textit{c6} 10.\textit{b3} \textit{d8} 11.\textit{c2} \textit{e7} 12.0-0 0-0 13.f4 b6 14.f3 \textit{b7} 15.\textit{ad1} b5 16.\textit{h1} \textit{b6} was just a normal-looking Sicilian position in which Black was obviously benefiting from the bishop pair in Panakus - Loginov, Budapest 1994.

9.f4 is harmless, and transposes to the note to White's eighth move in line D.

9...\textit{c6}

This is a good way to make use of the queen's presence on f6. Now White will have to worry about a possible queen exchange, which would kill his early initiative and leave Black with a very pleasant ending thanks to the bishop pair.

10.\textit{b1} \textit{d4} 11.\textit{xd4} \textit{xd4} 12.\textit{xd4} \textit{d7} gave Black a slight but stable advantage in Piorun - Kempinski, Warsaw 2007.

10.\textit{xc6} is possible, although the pawn structure after 10...\textit{bxc6} is obviously more favourable for Black due to his increased central control and open b-file. One practical encounter continued: 11.f4 \textit{d8} 12.\textit{a4} \textit{c7} 13.\textit{e3} \textit{b8\#} Bryzgalin - Makarov, Samara 2002.

10...\textit{d8} 11.f4 \textit{c7} 12.\textit{f2}

This position was reached in Vesterinen - Smyslov, Amsterdam 1954, and now I like the following idea:

12...b5

This typical counterattacking move gives Black an excellent game, for instance:

13.g4 b4 14.\textit{a4} \textit{b8} 15.h4 \textit{c7} 16.\textit{b1} \textit{d7\#}

White's attack is a long way from achieving anything, and in the meantime the knight on a4 is beginning to feel distinctly uncomfortable.

D) 7.f4

Finally we reach the main line, which has been played in thousands of games and continues to produce no end of spectacular fighting games, not to mention headaches for players on both sides of the board.
introductory paragraphs, I believe this move is underrated and possibly due for a resurgence in the near future.

8...\texttt{\texttt{\texttt{h4}}

White gains nothing by exchanging on f6:

8...xf6 \texttt{xf6} 9...d2 g5??

9...\texttt{c6} is perfectly okay, but the text is more ambitious. Black is determined to make his opponent suffer on the dark squares.

10.f5

The only good thing about White's position is his lead in development. For this reason Black would love to exchange queens, which would enable him to exploit his positional advantage in the endgame without fear of a sacrificial attack. Here are two examples to show what White should be striving to avoid at all costs:

\begin{itemize}
\item 10...gxf4 11.xf4 Wh4t 12.xf2 Novkovic – Korbut, Dresden 2008 12...xf2tN 13...xf2 \texttt{c6} and White has nothing to compensate for the missing dark-squared bishop.
\item 10..xf5 hxf5 11.0--0--0 c6 12.\texttt{d2} xd4 13...xd4 Whxd4 14..xd4 \texttt{d7} The bishop pair combined with the central pawn majority gave Black clearly better chances in Kummerow – Pavlovic, Biel 1997.
\end{itemize}

10...\texttt{c6} 11...xc6 bxc6 12.0--0--0 f5 13.g3 Preventing ...Wh4. This position was reached in Vouldis – Milu, Mangalia 1992, and here the most logical continuation would have been:

13...\texttt{b8N}

Black's chances are higher, thanks to his dark-squared domination.

8...\texttt{e7} 9...f3 \texttt{bd7} 10.0--0--0 Wh7

From this position White has tried various ideas, three of which warrant close attention. First we will consider the comparatively rare but still quite challenging D1) 11.xg3?, followed by the two most popular options of D2) 11.xd3 and D3) 11.xe2.

Before we analyse the three main lines, we will first check some of the less common alternatives.

A bit artificial seems to be 11.xg1?! b5 12.xd3 b4 13.xc2 (or 13.xf6 xf6 14.e5 b7 15.xe4 dxe5 16.xe5 d5t) 13...b7 14.xb1 c5 15.xf6 xf6 16.g4 0--0--0 17.xe3 \texttt{b8}

Black enjoyed two bishops and some advantage in Fontaine – Ni Hua, Cannes 2004.

White was advancing too slowly with 11.xf2 b5 12.a3 b7 13.xd3 c5 14.xb1 c8 15.xe1 0--0 16.xh3 (16.xe3 xd8 17.xh3 xd7 is also very pleasant for the second player.) 16.d5 17.e5 \texttt{f4} and ended with worse chances in Shabalov – Dominguez Perez, Cali 2001.
11...g4? b5!
11...g5 12.e5! dxe5 13.fxg5 hxg5 14.g3 has proven to be quite dangerous for Black in practice, so I consider it prudent to avoid this. However, if you like to take chances and wish to investigate this in more detail, I will simply mention the critical line as a basis for further investigation:
14...b8 15.h4 gxh4 16.g5 d5 17.g6 e5+ 18.h1 xc3+ 19.bxc3 f8 20.xh4 xh4 21.xh4 f6 22.g3 b6+ 23.e3 g2 24.xg6+ f7 25.xd3 xf3 26.xd6 c6 27.xd2 xg5 28.d3 e4 29.xxe4 e5 30.e3 b6 31.e2 1-0 Claridge – Ingersol, e-mail 2000.
12.xf6
Nothing else makes much sense.
12...xf6
12...xf6 should be avoided on account of 13.xb5+.
On the other hand 12...gx6!? is not entirely stupid, and leads to unclear play.
13.g5
White should not delay his attack.
13...hxg5 14.fxg5 d7 15.g6 e5 16.e1
17...xf7 18.g2
This position was reached in Perruchoud – Schweizer, Biel 2000, and now the most accurate move would have been:
18.f6= Black has a solid position and can look to exploit his bishop pair later in the game.
Perhaps the most important of the minor alternatives is:
11.g3
White prepares e5 and hopes to make use of the X-ray attack on the black queen.
11...b5 12.e5 b7 13.e2 dxe5
13...d5 is also playable, but I prefer the text move slightly.
14.fxe5 d5
15.e4
15.xe6?! is not quite sufficient, although Black must take care. 15...fxe6 16.xd5 xg5 17.xd5 exd5 18.e6 w6 19.h5+ (19.exd7 w7 20.wd1 eae8 21.wd3 g5+ 22.b1 wh8 saw Black consolidating in Van den Berg – Bobotsov, Beverwijk 1964.) 19...d8 20.exd7 This position was reached in Karup – Rasic, Neum 2003, and now after 20...g6!N 21.d1 xbd7 22.d3 c8 Black will shelter his king on b7 and should eventually consolidate his material advantage.
Another aggressive try is 15.xd5 xxd5 16.xd5, when Black should react bravely with 16...wh8!N 17.xe7:
White does not have sufficient attacking resources, for instance: 18.\textit{\textbf{W}}f3 (Or 18.\textit{\textbf{W}}g4 \textit{\textbf{W}}h8 19.\textit{\textbf{W}}f2 \textit{\textbf{W}}f8 20.\textit{\textbf{W}}b4++, L. Bronstein – Rubinetti, Zarate 1973, 20...\textit{\textbf{B}}c5\textit{\textbf{B}} 21.\textit{\textbf{W}}f2 [21.b3? \textit{\textbf{B}}xb3 22.\textit{\textbf{W}}xb3 a5] 21...\textit{\textbf{B}}d5 Black is a pawn up with a safer king; although on the last move he must be sure to avoid 21...\textit{\textbf{B}}g8? 22.\textit{\textbf{W}}xh3 \textit{\textbf{W}}xh3 23.\textit{\textbf{W}}xg8\textit{\textbf{B}}+-.) 18...\textit{\textbf{W}}h8 19.\textit{\textbf{W}}a3++ (19.\textit{\textbf{W}}d2 \textit{\textbf{B}}d5 20.\textit{\textbf{W}}g4 \textit{\textbf{W}}f8 21.\textit{\textbf{W}}b4++ \textit{\textbf{B}}c5 Ostos – Duran, San Felipe 2008; 19.\textit{\textbf{W}}xh7++ \textit{\textbf{W}}xh7 20.\textit{\textbf{W}}a3++ \textit{\textbf{B}}e8 21.\textit{\textbf{W}}xa2 \textit{\textbf{W}}xc2+! 22.\textit{\textbf{W}}xh2 \textit{\textbf{B}}c5+-) 19...\textit{\textbf{B}}c5 20.\textit{\textbf{W}}xh3 \textit{\textbf{W}}xh3 21.\textit{\textbf{W}}d2 \textit{\textbf{B}}d4 22.\textit{\textbf{B}}xf2 \textit{\textbf{B}}a5 23.\textit{\textbf{B}}e2 \textit{\textbf{B}}a1++ 24.\textit{\textbf{B}}d2 \textit{\textbf{W}}xb2 Black soon won in Grishchenko – Morev, Lipetsk 2007.) 20...\textit{\textbf{W}}h8 21.\textit{\textbf{B}}xh3 \textit{\textbf{B}}c6 22.\textit{\textbf{B}}b4++ \textit{\textbf{B}}e8 23.\textit{\textbf{B}}d6 \textit{\textbf{B}}d5 Black gradually converted his extra pawn in Bolado Saez – Alvarez Fernandez, Barcelona 2006.

15...\textit{\textbf{B}}a5??

15...0–0 is okay if Black does not mind his opponent forcing a draw. One such example, featuring accurate play on both sides, continued as follows: 16.\textit{\textbf{B}}f6++ \textit{\textbf{B}}h8 17.\textit{\textbf{B}}d3 cxd3 18.\textit{\textbf{B}}xh7\textit{\textbf{B}} 19.\textit{\textbf{B}}xf6 \textit{\textbf{B}}xf6 20.\textit{\textbf{B}}d5\textit{\textbf{B}} f5 (18...\textit{\textbf{B}}h7 19.\textit{\textbf{B}}xf6 \textit{\textbf{B}}d6 20.\textit{\textbf{B}}d5\textit{\textbf{B}} g8 21.\textit{\textbf{B}}df1 was rather dangerous for Black in Weinzelts – Karner, Austria 2004) 19.\textit{\textbf{B}}xf6++ \textit{\textbf{B}}g8 20.\textit{\textbf{B}}d3 (20.\textit{\textbf{B}}xe6 fxe6 21.\textit{\textbf{B}}g6++) 20...\textit{\textbf{B}}f6 21.\textit{\textbf{B}}f2 \textit{\textbf{B}}d8 22.\textit{\textbf{B}}h4 \textit{\textbf{B}}xe5 23.\textit{\textbf{B}}xf5 \textit{\textbf{B}}xf5 24.\textit{\textbf{B}}xf5 \textit{\textbf{B}}g6 25.\textit{\textbf{B}}d4 \textit{\textbf{B}}f6 26.\textit{\textbf{B}}xe6 \textit{\textbf{B}}xe6 27.\textit{\textbf{B}}h4++ \textit{\textbf{B}}g8 28.\textit{\textbf{B}}h6++ \textit{\textbf{B}}g8 ½–½ Velimirovic – Minic, Umag 1972.

16.\textit{\textbf{B}}b1

White has the bishop pair and a potentially strong passed pawn, but neither is hurting Black in the present position.

18...\textit{\textbf{B}}b4??

Provoking a weakness.

19.a3 \textit{\textbf{B}}d5 20.\textit{\textbf{B}}b3 \textit{\textbf{B}}b6 21.\textit{\textbf{B}}d2 \textit{\textbf{B}}d5 21...\textit{\textbf{B}}c8N also looks reasonable.

22.\textit{\textbf{B}}d3 \textit{\textbf{B}}e4 23.\textit{\textbf{B}}xe4 \textit{\textbf{B}}xe4 24.\textit{\textbf{B}}d4 \textit{\textbf{B}}xd4 25.\textit{\textbf{B}}xd4 \textit{\textbf{B}}f5+


\textbf{D1}) 11.\textit{\textbf{W}}g3??

This has not been as popular as the other two main lines, but it is no less dangerous. I will mention in passing that the present position has usually occurred via the move order 7...\textit{\textbf{B}}e7 8.\textit{\textbf{B}}f3 \textit{\textbf{B}}c7 9.0–0–0 \textit{\textbf{B}}bd7 10.\textit{\textbf{W}}g3 \textit{\textbf{B}}h6 11.\textit{\textbf{B}}h4.
11...g5
This is the thematic and principled reaction.

12.fxg5 Nh5 13.Qe3 Qc5!
This important resource enables Black to regain his pawn, but the real battle is just beginning. Once Black has recaptured on g5 he will enjoy good long-term prospects thanks to his superior pawn structure and control over the e5-square. On the other hand, his king might turn out to be vulnerable in the middlegame and the open f-file will be a useful attacking resource for White.

14.Qb1!
Due to the factors explained above, a position without queens would be fine for Black:
Were it not for the vulnerability of the d6-pawn, Black might even claim some advantage, but as it stands the position is balanced.
19.Qhd1 Qe8 20.a4
20.Qd4 b6 21.Bd2 Qe5 22.Qc4 Qxc4 23.Qxc4 Qb7 was also comfortable for Black in Poulin – Lehnberger, e-mail 2000.
20...b6

Another harmless continuation was 21.Qf1 Qb7 22.e5 d5 23.b3 Qg8= Kapstas – Stepanov, corr. 1986.
21...Qa7 22.Qb2 Qc7 23.Qd4 Qb7=
The position remains equal and a draw was soon agreed in Short – Ki. Georgiev, Elenite 1995.

14...hxg5
Black does best to avoid 14...Qxg5?! on account of 15.Qxg5 hxg5 (or 15...Nh5 16.Qf2 with some initiative) 16.Qh3! as in Taiana – Rshaid de Retes, corr. 1985.

15.Qf2 Qe5 16.Qd2 Qc7 17.Qf3 Qxf3 18.gxf3 Qd7
The computer likes White, and indeed the first player has scored quite highly from this position in practice. Nevertheless, my analysis indicates that if Black plays carefully he should be quite alright.

19.h4
This is clearly the most logical move, opening the h-file while exchanging off a long-term weakness. Instead after 19.Qg1?! 0–0 0–0 20.Qe3 f6 21.Qf2 Qf4 22.Qxf4 gxf4 23.Qg4 Qc5 Black stood better in Kupreichik – Beliavsky, Leningrad 1974.
19...gxh4 20.Qxh4!
20...\textcolor{red}{\textit{\textbf{g}3!}}

This leads to complications in which both sides must tread carefully.

21...h6!

Less critical is: 21...d4 f6 22.g1 xh4
23.xg3 0-0-0 24.g7 e8=

21...xh1

This is much safer than the following continuation, which may nonetheless be just about playable: 22...xf1 23.g5 d2\textdagger!
24.c1 xd1\textdagger 25.xd1 b5 26.g8\textdagger
t (26.xd2? d2\textdagger) 26...d7 27.xa8 c3 28.a4 c6\textdagger 29.e8 e5 30.b4! b6\textdagger!
31.c1!!

22.f6!

This calm move is White's strongest. He certainly gets nowhere with: 22.h5? e5\textdagger+

Slightly more tempting, but still ultimately insufficient, is: 22.xd6! xf1 23.g2 (23.g5? xd6) 23...d2\textdagger 24.xd2 xd1\textdagger 25.xd1 b6\textdagger

22...c5!

This is much safer than the following continuation, which may nonetheless be just about playable: 22...xf1 23.g5 d2\textdagger!
24.c1 xd1\textdagger 25.xd1 b5 26.g8\textdagger
t (26.xd2? d2\textdagger) 26...d7 27.xa8 c3 28.a4 c6\textdagger 29.e8 e5 30.b4! b6\textdagger!
31.c1!!

23.h3!

23...xd1\textdagger would be riskier after 24.xd1 h5 25.h4 (or 25.g5) when Black's king remains unsafe and his knight unstable.

24.d3 h5 25.h6 xf6 26.xh3 e7
Black has returned his extra material in order to neutralize his opponent's initiative – not an uncommon scenario in the Sicilian. The resulting position should be safe enough for him, as the centralized king is unlikely to cause a problem with so little material remaining on the board.

27.\( \text{Nh2} \) \( \text{Nh5} \) 28.\( \text{f4} \) \( \text{Ec8} \)

White's advantage is minimal, if it exists at all.

D2) 11.\( \text{d3} \)

This move is natural, but it allows Black to demonstrate one of the key ideas behind his unusual seventh move.

11...\( g5! \)

Black's position is resilient enough to justify this active strike.

12.\( \text{fxg5} \)

The central break should not be too dangerous for the defender:

12.e5 \( \text{gxh4} \)

Those who love to take risks in order to play for a win might consider 12...\( \text{dxe5?!} \), when the critical line runs 13.\( \text{exh6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 14.\( \text{g6f6} \) \( \text{d8} \) 15.\( \text{fxg5} \) with heavy complications.

16.\( \text{e4} \)

Less accurate is 16.\( \text{e4? d5!} \) (This is stronger than 16...\( \text{c6} \); Black is happy to return the pawn in order to activate his pieces.)

17.\( \text{xf6f6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 18.\( \text{wxd5} \) \( \text{c6} \) 19.\( \text{b3} \) 0–0–0 with some advantage for Black in Parma – Bukic, Belgrade 1978.

16...\( \text{c6} \) 17.\( \text{d5} \) \( \text{xd5} \)

17...\( \text{xd5} \) 18.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{c8} \) 19.\( \text{c3} \) b5 20.\( \text{b7} \) \( \text{b8} \) 21.\( \text{xa6} \) was a little better for White in Smirin – Gelfand, Belarus 1984.

18.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{g5} \) 19.\( \text{b1} \) 0–0–0

The chances can be evaluated as approximately equal; White has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but not more.

20.\( \text{c3} \)

Not much is changed by 20.\( \text{d3} \), Semenova – Druzhinina, Serpukhov 2002, 20...\( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{d5} \) 21.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{d8} \).

20...\( \text{b8} \) 21.\( \text{e1} \)

We have been following the game Stean – Szmetan, Haifa 1976. At this point Black should probably have played 21...\( \text{c8} \) or perhaps 21...\( \text{g8} \), hoping for kingside counterplay with a timely ...\( \text{f4} \).

12.\( \text{e5} \) 13.\( \text{w2} \)

White has tried the cheeky sacrifice 13.\( \text{gxf6?!} \), but this is hardly something that should keep Najdorf players awake at night.

The main alternative to the main line is:

13.\( \text{g3} \) \( \text{g8} \)
After this move White can hardly hope to keep the extra pawn on g5.

14...\textit{e}1

14.\textit{f}2 \textit{fg}4 15.\textit{e}2 hxg5 16.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}7 is fine for Black.

White also gains nothing from 14.g6 \textit{x}g6 15.\textit{h}3 \textit{b}5 16.\textit{h}1 \textit{b}7 Black has developed harmoniously, and can look to the future with confidence thanks to the wonderful knight on e5.

14...hxg5 15.\textit{f}2 \textit{b}5 16.\textit{e}b1 \textit{b}7 17.\textit{f}3

Here I found an interesting new idea:

17...\textit{xd}3?N

Black is trading one positional plus (the powerful centralized knight on e5) for another (the bishop pair).

Also not bad is 17...\textit{ed}7 18.a3 \textit{c}8 19.\textit{d}4 \textit{e}5 20.\textit{f}2, Yemelin – Rublevsky, St Petersburg 1998, and here 20...\textit{xd}3N 21.\textit{cx}d3 \textit{d}7 would have been pleasant for Black.

18.\textit{cx}d3 \textit{c}8 19.\textit{c}1 \textit{a}5

With all pieces developed and few weaknesses, the black king is quite happy to remain in the centre. Black is doing fine in the middlegame, and it almost goes without saying that most endings will favour him thanks to his bishop pair and better pawn structure.

13.\textit{fg}4

Black must take care, since the conflict on the board has begun at a moment when White is better developed. For example, 13...\textit{d}7? quickly becomes painful after 14.\textit{h}5! \textit{c}5 (Even worse is 14...\textit{g}6? 15.\textit{xe}6 \textit{a}5 16.\textit{xh}6 \textit{xh}6 17.\textit{g}7\textit{f}8 18.\textit{xe}7\textit{xe}7 19.\textit{xe}5 \textit{ex}e6 20.\textit{xe}2+-) 15.\textit{gx}h6 \textit{cx}d3\textit{f} 16.\textit{cx}d3 \textit{c}5 17.\textit{f}5\textit{f} exf5 18.\textit{d}4 \textit{b}6 This was Kamsky – Polgar, Paris 1992, and now White could have killed the game almost immediately with 19.\textit{d}5!N \textit{c}6\textit{f} 20.\textit{b}1 \textit{c}4 21.\textit{xe}7 \textit{e}6 22.\textit{h}4+-.

14.\textit{f}3

This is White’s most principled attempt to challenge his opponent’s bold strategy. The main alternative is:

14.h3

This is more modest, though not altogether bad.

14...hxg5 15.\textit{g}3

White does best to avoid 15.hxg4 \textit{h}4 16.\textit{\textit{f}3 \textit{h}1 17.\textit{\textit{h}1 \textit{f}6 18.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 19.\textit{h}7 This was Stripunsky – Wojtkiewicz, Oak Bridge 2000, and now it looks good for Black to play 19...\textit{b}5N (The game continuation of 19...\textit{d}7 was also fine) 20.\textit{b}1 \textit{e}7 21.\textit{h}6 \textit{b}7 The excellent bishops are sailing Black’s ship into favourable waters.

15...\textit{f}6
Alternatives do not alter the evaluation much:

16.\( \f3 \) gives Black a pleasant choice between the solid 16...\( \d7 \) and the more combative 16...\( \b5 \)!!.

16.\( \f3 \) \( \h5 \)! 17.\( \h2 \) \( \b5 \) gives Black active prospects on both sides of the board, and the following sacrifice failed to improve White’s situation: 18.\( \f5 \) \( \dxe5 \!) \( \dxe5 \) 19.\( \f5 \) \( \xf3 \) 20.\( \f5 \) \( \d7 \) 21.\( \f5 \) \( \f6 \) 22.\( \f5 \) \( \f6 \) Black went on to win the ending in Sadathajafi – Sadvakasov, Dubai 2002.

16...\( \d7 \)

Once again the rare 16...\( \b5 \)!! looks promising.

17.\( \f2 \) 0–0–0 18.\( \f3 \)

This position was reached in Szabo – Browne, Amsterdam 1972, and here it looks interesting for Black to try:

18...\( \h5 \)!!

The game continuation of 18...\( \h5 \) 19.\( \f4 \) \( \d4 \) \( \f8 \) 20.\( \f2 \) \( \f6 \) 21.\( \f6 \) led to an interesting and double-edged position, although White eventually obtained the upper hand.

19.\( \f3 \) \( \b8 \)

The evaluation is similar after 19...\( \h6 \) 20.\( \f1 \) \( \f6 \) 21.\( \f1 \) \( \f8 \) 22.\( \f6 \) \( \c8 \).

16.h3

16.\( \f1 \) \( \b5 \) 17.\( \f5 \) (17.\( \f3 \) \( \f6 \) 18.\( \f3 \) \( \f3 \) \( \f6 \) is not dangerous for Black at all.) 17...\( \f6 \) 18.\( \f1 \) \( \f8 \) 19.\( \f5 \) \( \d5 \) Black was already slightly better in Azarov – Amonatov, Voronezh 2007. The doubled e-pawns are in no way weak; on the contrary, they help Black by controlling several important squares, and the move ...\( \dxe5 \) has also increased the scope of his dark-squared bishop.

16.\( \f1 \) \( \f5 \) 17.\( \f5 \) \( \f5 \) 18.\( \f1 \) \( \f8 \)

(18...\( \b5 \)!! looks interesting) 19.\( \f2 \) \( \f5 \) gave Black a pleasant and solid position in

16...\f6 17.\xex5 dxe5 18.\f2 \c6 19.\h1 \h5 20.g3 0–0–0

Black eventually lost against his much higher-rated opponent in Ivanchuk – Quan Zhe, Edmonton 2005, but the outcome of the opening was quite satisfactory for him. (You can see from the above note that Ivanchuk was obviously impressed enough with Black’s opening to use it himself against a top-class adversary.)

15...\xg5† 16.\xg5 \c5!

17.\h3

In the majority of games White has chosen to prevent the fork on f2. Nevertheless the following alternative is also rather interesting:

17.\f3?!

This exchange sacrifice is not fully sound, but it creates plenty of pitfalls for Black and should be studied closely.

17...\f2

White has two choices here.

a) 18.\a4 \exd3†!

18...\a7? 19.\xe5 dxe5 20.\b5† transposes to the unfavourable line mentioned in the note to Black’s 18th move in note b) below.

19.\xd3 \xd3† 20.\xd3 \b4

20...\c7??N could also be considered, when it remains to be seen if White’s compensation will be enough.

21.\c3 \d7 22.d1

22...0–0–0??N

22...\c6 23.a3 \c5 24.b4 gave White an ongoing initiative in Lapshun – Mirabile, Philadelphia 2004.

23.\xd6 \xd6 24.\xd6 \c6 25.\xd8 \xd8!

25...\xd8 26.\d2 enables White to activate his king.

In the final position Black’s chances are at least equal as his two long-range pieces will work well in the position with pawns on both flanks.

b) 18.\xe5
with a strong attack, for instance: 23...\textit{xa2} 24.\textit{d6} \textit{xd1} 25.\textit{xd1} \textit{a1}+ 26.\textit{d2} \textit{a5}+ 27.b4 and wins – analysis by Rajkovic)
23.b6! \textit{xb1} 24.\textit{f1}+ \textit{g6} 25.\textit{e7}, as played in Ristic – Pablo Marin, Tjentiste 1975. I analysed this position in some detail looking for a defence, but was eventually forced to conclude that the second player was fighting an uphill battle to survive.

19.\textit{xf7} \textit{xc3}

There is a second promising line available in the form of: 19...\textit{xb2}N 20.\textit{xf1}N 20...\textit{xb2}N (20.\textit{xb2} \textit{xf7} 21.\textit{c4} \textit{d7} 22.\textit{b3} \textit{e7}+) 20...\textit{xc3} 21.\textit{b5}+ \textit{xb5} 22.\textit{xb5}+ \textit{d7} 23.\textit{xb2} \textit{c4} 24.\textit{b1} \textit{a4} (24...\textit{a5} 25.\textit{a1} \textit{b5} 26.\textit{g7} \textit{e5} 27.\textit{g6}+ \textit{d8} 28.\textit{f7}+ \textit{e7} 29.\textit{g5}+\textit{=} 25.\textit{a1} \textit{c6} 26.\textit{g6} \textit{xc4} 27.\textit{f4} \textit{e5} 28.\textit{d3} \textit{xc2} 29.\textit{c1} \textit{d5} 30.a3 \textit{xd6}+ 20.\textit{xf3}

20...\textit{xb2}N! 20...\textit{xb2}N looks less accurate due to 21.\textit{xf1}! \textit{xa2} 22.\textit{b1} \textit{c3}+ (22...\textit{b4} 23.\textit{g3}+) 23.bxc3 \textit{d7} when Black is only slightly for choice.
20...\textit{h5} is definitely not a smart idea: 21.\textit{xf6} \textit{f8} 22.\textit{xd6}+ \textit{d7} 23.\textit{g7}+ 1–0 was the abrupt end of the game Rapoports – Kalnins, corr. 1978.
21.\textit{xf1}N

This is a logical attempt to improve White’s play.

In the event of 21.e5, Supanic – Tarjan, Maribor 1978, Black wins with 21...\textit{dxe5N} (The game continuation of 21...\textit{xa2}+? 22.\textit{b1} \textit{b4} might have led to a reversal of fortunes had White played: 23.\textit{xd6}+\textit{N} \textit{e7} 24.\textit{g4} \textit{d8} 25.\textit{g7} \textit{f2} 26.\textit{xd1}→) 22.\textit{xf1} \textit{c4}+ 22...\textit{xa2}+ 22...\textit{b1} \textit{b4} 23.e5

23...\textit{d7}!

23...\textit{xd3} 24.\textit{xd3} (24.\textit{xd6}+ \textit{xd6}+) 24...\textit{xf7} 25.\textit{g6} \textit{d7} 26.\textit{xf7}+ \textit{c6} 27.\textit{f3} \textit{b6} 28.\textit{c3} gives White decent chances of making a draw.
24.\textit{exd6}

24.g4 \textit{d5} 25.g5 \textit{a5} 26.c3 \textit{a2}+ 27.\textit{c1} \textit{xd3}+ 28.\textit{xd3} \textit{c7}+ 24...\textit{xd3}

24...\textit{xd6} should also be good enough, as long as Black follows up carefully: 25.\textit{c4} \textit{c7} 26.c3 (26.\textit{xd6} \textit{xf3} 27.\textit{c8} \textit{d7} 28.\textit{xf3} \textit{xe8} 29.h4 \textit{e7} 30.\textit{g3} \textit{d7}+) 26...\textit{d5} 27.\textit{xd6} \textit{xf3} 28.\textit{e8}+ \textit{d8} 29.\textit{xf3} \textit{xe8} 30.c4 \textit{b6} 31.b3 \textit{e5}+ The text move seems like a much easier practical choice though.
25.cxd3 \textit{f5} 26.\textit{e2} \textit{xf7} 27.\textit{xf7}+ \textit{xf7} 28.g4 \textit{d6} 29.d4 \textit{d7}+

Black will be the strong favourite to win the ending.

To summarize, 17.\textit{f3} is objectively dubious, but could easily create problems for an
unprepared opponent, so I would urge the reader to treat it with respect.

17...b5!

This has only been played a few times, but it appears quite promising. The main move has been: 17...d7 This also offers Black good compensation thanks to his superior piece coordination. 18.d2 (Another game continued 18.d2 c8 19.de1 b5 20.d1, Ivkov – Tatai, Imperia 1967, and here it looks good for Black to play 20...xd3\N 21.xd3 b4 with pleasant compensation for the pawn.) 18.b5 19.b1 b4 20.d1 e7 21.h2 xh2 22.e3 a8 The black pieces were working in remarkable harmony in Brandenburg – Zhigalko, Hengelo 2005.

18.b1

Suggesting a sensible regrouping of the white forces is not an easy task. One encounter continued 18.d1 d7 19.d1, Rohde – Boss, Werfen Essen 2002, and here I suggest 19...e7\N 20.d2 a8 with some advantage thanks to the glamorous black pieces.

18...b7?!?

The bishop would also have been happy on d7, but Black obviously wanted to make full use of his previous move.

19.de1 0–0–0 20.a4?

White does not want his opponent to have all the fun, and immediately tries to create a weakness. A quiet move like 20.a3 should be met by 20...b8 with a pleasant position.

20...bxa4

Black could also have considered 20...b4\N 21.d1 xd3 22.cxd3 e5 with ongoing compensation.

21.xa4?

Avoiding the roughly equal position that would have resulted from 21.xa6 a3 22.b5 xb5 23.xb5 axb2.

21...a5 22.b3

The evaluation would have been similar after 22.c3 b8 23.c4 c8.

22...b8 23.b2

We have been following the game Mamedov – Areshchenko, Moscow 2007. At this point my favoured continuation would be:

23.dg8N

The knight on h3 remains a serious burden for White.

D3) 11.e2
The modest bishop move is generally regarded as the most challenging line for Black to face. White is hoping that the bishop will prove useful in controlling the vital g4- and h5-squares.

11...b5

Several other moves have been tried, including the precautionary 11...b8, but I believe the text to be the most promising. At this point White's only dangerous plan involves the advance of the e-pawn. Thus he can choose between the immediate D31) 12.e5 and the preliminary D32) 12...xf6.

D31) 12.e5

The common consensus used to be that Black had overstretched himself and could be punished with this immediate act of aggression.

12...b7 13.exf6

This is White's most promising idea, giving up his queen for some combination of black pieces. The immediate attempts to blast through with blunt force are unjustified:

13.g5

No better is 13.h3? dxe5 14.gxe6 fxe6 15.xe6 c5 16.xe5 c8 17.xf6 gxf6 18.g5 f8 19.b1 c4 when White had little to show for the piece in Tatai – Costantini, Bratto 2005.

13...dxe5 14.gxe6

After 14.xg7, Skovgaard – Andersson, Grenaa 1973, 14.h7N White has to transpose to the main line with 15.gxe6. White also gets nowhere with 14.f5 0–0–0 15.fxe6 exd4 16.exd7† xxd7 17.xf6 xf6 18.g4 g5† 19.xb1 f5 20.xd4 xxd4 21.xf5† d7 22.d1 d2 and Black easily converted his extra material in Perez Perez – Matanovic, Utrecht 1961.

14...fxe6

15.xg7

15.g6†! f8 16.g4 exf4 17.xf6 xf6 18.xe6 c5 White had nothing to show for the piece in Olthof – Deak, Eger 1987.

15.h7 16.h5† 16.g6† f7 17.xd7 cxd7 18.f2 (no better is 18.h5 0–0–0 19.xf7 xh4) 18.f8+ Aghabekian – Huang Qian, Ekaterinburg 2007.

16.d8 17.g6 c8 18.xd7 White's initiative is petering out so he needs to add some oil to the flames. 18.xf6 xf6 19.he1 e4† is unappealing for him.

18.xd7 19.xh7 xh4 20.g8† 20.d1 is convincingly met by 20...b4 21.g4 c6 (The defender must be sure to avoid 21...bxc3? 22.g8† b8 23.xd7† cxb2† 24.b1 with barely equal chances.) 22.e4 b8†.
20...\textit{d}d8 21.\textit{x}xe6

\textcolor{red}{21...\textit{e}7!N}

The exact move is more logical than the eccentric idea 21...\textit{f}f6?! Sedlak – Ilincic, Budva 2002, when White can keep some chances alive with 22.\textit{h}3!N \textit{c}7 23.\textit{d}1 \textit{c}7#.

22.\textit{g}8+?
22.\textit{x}h6 \textit{f}6 23.\textit{x}f6 \textit{xf}6 is a similar story.

22...\textit{f}8 23.\textit{xf}8+ \textit{xf}8 24.\textit{x}e5 \textit{c}7

Black should win the ending without too many problems.

\textcolor{red}{13...\textit{x}f3 14.\textit{x}f3}

I actually reached this position in one of my own games a short while before the book was due to be published, but forgot my analysis!

\textcolor{red}{14...\textit{d}5}

This has not been the highest scoring move, but it may well be best.

The alternative is:

14...\textit{xf}6 15.\textit{xf}6 \textit{c}8?!

This leads to fascinating complications, although in view of the improvement at move 17 I would not recommend this move for Black.

The safe alternative is 15...\textit{xf}6. This was my choice in the aforementioned game, as I was struggling to remember all the nuances of the more complicated lines. The game continued:

16.\textit{x}a8 \textit{d}5 (If I had this position again I would prefer 16...0–0! 17.\textit{f}3 b4 18.\textit{e}4 [or 18.\textit{a}4, Hartston – Williams, Bristol 1968, 18...\textit{e}5!N 19.\textit{xe}5 \textit{d}xe5 20.\textit{b}3 \textit{c}8 21.\textit{ac}5 \textit{e}4 22.\textit{e}2 \textit{a}5 23.\textit{a}6 \textit{a}4 24.\textit{xc}8 \textit{axb}3 25.\textit{xb}3 \textit{xc}8#] 18...\textit{xe}4 19.\textit{xe}4 \textit{d}5 20.\textit{d}3 \textit{xf}4+ 21.\textit{b}1 \textit{a}5 The position remained dynamically balanced in Ozerov – Liebeskind, e-mail 2005.) 17.\textit{c}6+ \textit{e}7 18.\textit{g}3 \textit{d}8 (Slightly more accurate would have been 18...b4 19.\textit{ce}2, Perunovic – Antic, Dimitrovgrad 2003, 19...\textit{xc}8N.) 19.\textit{he}1

20.\textit{h}g7

White kept an edge in Van Kampen – Ftacnik, Amsterdam 2010, although it is not so easy for him to make real progress, and I eventually managed to win after my opponent misplayed his position.

16.\textit{x}g7
16.\(\text{h4}\) is less threatening: 16.\(\text{b4}\) 17.\(\text{\&}e2\) \(\text{\&}c4\) (17...\(\text{d5}\)?? looks riskier, as after 18.\(\text{\&}h1\) \(\text{\&}c5\) 19.\(\text{f5}\)! White’s pieces are becoming dangerously active.) 18.\(\text{b3}\) \(\text{\&}c5\) 19.\(\text{\&}d2\) 0–0–0
16.\(\text{\&}h7\)

Here I found a strong new idea for White, which casts a dark shadow over Black’s 15th move.

16...\(\text{\&}h7\)

Previous games had seen 17.\(\text{\&}h5\) \(\text{\&}c5\)! Black must be careful, as the white pieces are very mobile and dangerous. (17...\(\text{\&}xg7\)? 18.\(\text{\&}xe6\) \(\text{\&}c4\) 19.\(\text{\&}h1\) \(\text{\&}xg2\) 20.\(\text{\&}d4\)!N [White has got too excited with 20.\(\text{\&}xd6\) \(\text{\&}e7\) 21.\(\text{\&}d4\) \(\text{\&}xh6\) and was duly punished in Klavins – Tal, Riga 1959.] 20...\(\text{\&}xh2\) 21.\(\text{\&}c5\) \(\text{\&}d8\) 22.\(\text{\&}xc4\) \(\text{\&}xc5\) 23.\(\text{\&}xc5\) \(\text{\&}xc5\) 24.\(\text{\&}xf7\)\text{±} 18.\(\text{f5}\)! \(\text{\&}xg7\) 19.\(\text{\&}xe6\) \(\text{\&}e3\)\text{±} 20.\(\text{\&}b1\) This position was reached in Euwe – Tal, corr. 1961, and here Black should have played 20...\(\text{\&}g8\)N 21.\(\text{\&}h1\) \(\text{\&}xc3\) 22.\(\text{\&}xc3\) 22.\(\text{\&}f4\)! \(\text{\&}f8\) 23.\(\text{\&}xe3\) \(\text{\&}xe3\) 24.\(\text{\&}xd6\) \(\text{\&}e1\)\text{±} 25.\(\text{\&}d1\) \(\text{\&}e7\) 26.\(\text{\&}d4\) \(\text{\&}f6\)\text{±} The black rooks will become very active.) 22...\(\text{\&}xc3\) 23.\(\text{\&}c7\)\text{±} \(\text{\&}d8\) 24.\(\text{\&}d5\) \(\text{\&}c5\) 25.\(\text{\&}xf7\) \(\text{\&}f8\) 26.\(\text{\&}e6\) White narrowly manages to maintain the balance thanks to his well-coordinated pieces in the centre.
17...\(\text{\&}xg7\)

Black is not helped by 17...\(\text{e}5\) 18.\(\text{f6}\) \(\text{exd4}\) 19.\(\text{\&}xd4\) \(\text{\&}f8\) 20.\(\text{\&}e1\)\text{±} \(\text{\&}e6\) 21.\(\text{\&}d2\)\text{±}

18.\(\text{fxe6}\) \(\text{\&}e5\)

The defender must exercise extreme caution. For instance, 18...\(\text{\&}b6\)? is swiftly punished after: 19.\(\text{\&}h1\) \(\text{\&}c5\) 20.\(\text{\&}xf7\)\text{±} \(\text{\&}xf7\) 21.\(\text{\&}e4\) \(\text{\&}e5\) 22.\(\text{\&}xd6\)\text{±} \(\text{\&}xd6\) 23.\(\text{\&}h5\)\text{+–} 19.\(\text{\&}e4\) \(\text{\&}c5\) 20.\(\text{\&}d5\)?

This is stronger than 20.\(\text{\&}f5\) \(\text{fxe6}\) 21.\(\text{\&}xg7\)\text{±} \(\text{\&}f7\) 22.\(\text{\&}xe6\) \(\text{\&}xe6\) 23.\(\text{\&}h1\) \(\text{\&}e3\)\text{±} 24.\(\text{\&}b1\) \(\text{\&}xc3\) 25.\(\text{\&}d5\)\text{±} \(\text{\&}d7\) 26.\(\text{\&}xc3\) \(\text{\&}xc3\) when Black escapes to equality.
20...\(\text{fxe6}\) 21.\(\text{\&}xe6\) \(\text{\&}a7\) 22.\(\text{\&}xg7\)\text{±} \(\text{\&}xg7\) 23.\(\text{\&}h1\)

Black is surviving for the moment, but he is certainly under pressure.

15.\(\text{\&}xe6\)\text{±}?

White is keeping the flames of his initiative alive with this spectacular move.

Weak is 15.\(\text{\&}xd5\) \(\text{\&}xf4\)\text{±} (15...\(\text{\&}c8\)??N and 15...\(\text{\&}b4\)?N also look good) 16.\(\text{\&}b1\) \(\text{\&}xh4\)
17.\(\text{\&}xg7\) 0–0–0 18.\(\text{\&}xh8=\text{\&}f8\) 19.\(\text{\&}xe6\), Hartla – Koczlo, Budapest 2009, and now after 19...\(\text{fxe6}\)N 20.\(\text{\&}xe6\) \(\text{\&}d8\)± Black should win with careful play.

White does have a more serious alternative:
15.\(\text{\&}xg7\) \(\text{\&}g8\) 16.\(\text{\&}xe7\)
16.\(\text{\&}xd5\) \(\text{b4}\) will transpose to the note to White’s 17th move below after a subsequent exchange on e7.
16...\textbar{x}e7!N
This is more accurate than the immediate 16...\textbar{x}f4\textdagger, as played in Semer – Kover, corr. 1979.

17.\text{h}6e1!
White must try to exploit the excellent coordination between his pieces.
17.\text{x}d5? is refuted by 17...\text{b}4! (this is much stronger than 17...\textbar{x}f4\textdagger 18.\text{b}1 \textbar{a}c8\textdagger)
18.\text{c}6\textdagger \text{f}6 19.\text{x}b4 \textbar{x}f4\textdagger 20.\text{b}1 \textbar{x}b4 21.\text{a}xa8 \text{b}8 22.b3 \text{e}5++; White ends up overstretched and losing.
17...\textbar{x}f4\textdagger
It looks a bit too risky to try 17...\text{f}6 18.f5! \text{b}4 19.\text{x}e6 \text{b}xc3 20.\text{x}d5 \textbar{f}4\textdagger 21.\text{b}1 \text{b}8 22.b3 \text{e}5 23.\text{x}f7 \text{x}f7 24.\text{f}1\textdagger \text{x}g7 25.\text{x}f7\textdagger \text{h}8 26.\text{a}xa8 \text{a}8 27.\text{f}6++; The black king is more exposed than his counterpart.
18.\text{b}1 \text{f}6
18...\text{d}6 puts the king in a more exposed position, and White obtains an edge after 19.\text{x}d5! \text{ex}d5 20.\text{c}6 \text{x}h2 21.\text{f}5\textdagger \text{e}6 22.\text{d}e7\textdagger \text{c}7 23.\text{x}g8 \text{x}g8 24.\text{e}7 \text{d}8 25.a3±.
19.\text{d}x\text{d}5
Despite the seemingly chaotic situation, position remains dynamically balanced.
19...\text{x}h2
Also reasonable is 19...\text{x}g7, for instance 20.g3 \text{f}6 21.\text{e}6\textdagger \text{f}xe6 22.\text{e}6 \text{f}8 23.\text{a}xa8 \text{c}5 24.\text{e}5 \text{a}8 25.\text{e}c5 \text{d}8 with approximate equality.
20.\text{x}e6
20.\text{a}xa8 \text{a}8 21.\text{x}e6 \text{f}xe6 22.\text{e}d7 \text{g}8 23.\text{e}d6 \text{x}g7 24.\text{e}e6 \text{f}8 is also balanced.
20...\text{f}xe6 21.\text{x}e6\textdagger \text{x}g7 22.\text{a}xa8 \text{c}5 23.\text{e}7\textdagger \text{f}6 24.\text{d}5\textdagger \text{g}5
Chances are about equal, although any result is possible.

15...\text{f}xe6 16.\text{h}5\textdagger

16...\text{g}6!
Black would be playing with fire if he ventured 16...\text{d}8? 17.\text{x}e7\textdagger \text{c}8, Kostov – Minev, Sofia 1960, at which point 18.\text{d}4!N \text{b}7 19.\text{e}1 \text{c}5 20.\text{f}2 looks highly unpleasant. The white pieces are concentrated and prepared to strike.

17.\text{x}g6\textdagger \text{f}8 18.\text{x}e7\textdagger \text{g}7 19.\text{g}3
Senseless is 19.e8=\text{\textbf{\text{f}}}t? \text{a}xe8 20.\text{e}8 \text{f}4\textdagger 21.\text{b}1 \text{xe}8++ Silva – Kover, corr. 1994.

19...\text{b}4!
In such a wild-looking position, it somehow only seems right to provoke further complications. The following two moves have also been tried:
19...\text{f}6?! 20.f5 \text{d}7\textdagger (This looks like the best try. Instead after 20...\text{x}e7 21.\text{h}6e1 \text{h}d8
Chapter 18 - 6...g5 e6

22...hxg6 23.fxe6 hxg6 24...h4 White was clearly on top in Rothuis – Hachijan, Bussum 2008.) 21.fxe6 (21.e8=\texttt{=} hxe8 22...xe8 hxe8 23...e5\texttt{=} 21...xe7 22.f7 b4 23...xd5 exd5 24...xd5 hhd8 25...f5\texttt{=} The black king will not be able to relax for a while.

19...c5 should be met by 20.f5!N (Instead after 20.e8=\texttt{=} hxe8 21...xe8 hxe8 Black had somewhat better prospects in Tukmakov – Klimenok, Riga 1962.) 20...b4 21.c2 (21.fxe6? f6\texttt{=} 21...e5 22...he1 hxe8 23...d4...xe7 (23...xd4? 24...e2 d6 25...xd4\texttt{=} g8 26...e6\texttt{=} 24...e6\texttt{=}...xe6 25.fxe6...xg6 26...d7 e4 27...h4...c7 28...d2...xd7 29...xe4 Black’s chances for win are minimal.

20.f5
The feeble 20.c2? runs into 20...c4.

20...c4!
20...c5 transposes to 19...c5 above. The text is more challenging, and should give Black chances to fight for the advantage.

21.fxe6 bxc3 22.exd7

22...\texttt{=}xg6!N
This is an important improvement over the following game: 22...xa2 23.c5\texttt{=} (23.bxc3\texttt{=} a3\texttt{=} 23...xg6 24...xc3 With such an exposed king Black will have little chance to play for a win, so he decided to take a perpetual

23...e5
After 23...he1 h5 24.e8=\texttt{=} hxe8 25.dxe8=\texttt{=} h8 26.bxc3 h4=\texttt{=} White will have to work hard to stay afloat.

23...b2\texttt{=}
Compared with the Bryson – Pereira game, the main difference is that Black manages to destroy the pawn on b2 rather than the one on a2, thus ensuring that the white king will remain exposed.

24...b2
24...b1 does not solve White’s problems after 24...hd8! 25...xd8=\texttt{=} h8\texttt{=}.

24...f4\texttt{=} 25...d2
25...b1 d6 26...h8...e7 leads to a similar situation.

25...hd8! 26...xd8=\texttt{=} h8
Black will collect the second of the terrible twins on the seventh rank, while keeping some winning chances in the ending.
D32) 12.\( \texttt{\textit{xf6}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xf6}} \)

The bishop has to keep protecting the d6-square. 12...\( \texttt{\textit{xf6}} \) can be more or less refuted by 13.e5! intending \( \texttt{\textit{dx}b5} \).

13.e5

The central break tries to punish Black before he gets the chance to complete his development. Slower methods such as 13.a3 \( \texttt{\textit{b7}} \) 14.\( \texttt{\textit{g3}} \) 0-0 15.\( \texttt{\textit{d3}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{d7}} \) would be anything but dangerous for Black.

13...\( \texttt{\textit{b7}} \) 14.\( \texttt{\textit{g3}} \)

Compared with the previous section, the idea of giving up the queen for three pieces is not really viable here: 14.\( \texttt{\textit{xf6?}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xf6}} \) 15.\( \texttt{\textit{xf3}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{d5}} \) 16.\( \texttt{\textit{xe7}} \) was seen in Del Castillo – Ortiz Suarez, Dalkeith 2005, and now after 16...\( \texttt{\textit{f4}} \) 17.\( \texttt{\textit{b1}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{c8}} \) 18.\( \texttt{\textit{he1}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xc3}}! \) 19.\( \texttt{\textit{xc3}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{d7}} \) White will have a tough time fighting for equality.

14...\( \texttt{\textit{dxe5}} \) 15.\( \texttt{\textit{f xe5}} \)

After 15.\( \texttt{\textit{g7?}} \), Vargic – Rasic, Pula 2000, 15...\( \texttt{\textit{g8N}} \) 16.\( \texttt{\textit{xe6}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{b6}} \) 17.\( \texttt{\textit{hx6}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xe6}} \) Black is a piece up for very little.

15...\( \texttt{\textit{d5}} \)

The alternatives fail to impress:

Somewhat better, though still not fully satisfactory, is 15...\( \texttt{\textit{e4}} \) 16.\( \texttt{\textit{xe6}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xc3}}! \) (16...\( \texttt{\textit{fxe6}} \) 17.\( \texttt{\textit{g6}} \) 18.\( \texttt{\textit{h fl}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{g8}} \) 19.\( \texttt{\textit{xe6}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{f8}} \) 18.\( \texttt{\textit{e6}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{e8}} \) 19.\( \texttt{\textit{xc3}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xc3}} \) 20.\( \texttt{\textit{c7}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{b8}} \) 21.\( \texttt{\textit{xc3}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{e8}} \) 22.\( \texttt{\textit{c5}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{d5}} \) 23.\( \texttt{\textit{xd5}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{g8}} \) 24.\( \texttt{\textit{g3}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xc3}} \), Gonzalez Melo – Kral, e-mail 2006, 25.\( \texttt{\textit{f1N}} \) Black has reasonable chances to fight for a draw, but his task will not be a pleasant one.

16.\( \texttt{\textit{xe6!}} \)

White gets nowhere with the simple-minded 16.\( \texttt{\textit{g7?}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{g5}} \) 17.\( \texttt{\textit{b1}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xc3}} \) 18.\( \texttt{\textit{h fl}} \) 0-0 0-0 when Black’s chances seem higher, for instance 19.\( \texttt{\textit{h fl}} \) (or 19.\( \texttt{\textit{h4}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{dg8}} \) 20.\( \texttt{\textit{xe6}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{e7}} \) 21.\( \texttt{\textit{d8}} \) 22.\( \texttt{\textit{xf7}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{d7}} \) 23.\( \texttt{\textit{xd7}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xd7}} \) 24.\( \texttt{\textit{c5}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{c6}} \) 25.\( \texttt{\textit{xb7}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xb7}} \) 26.\( \texttt{\textit{hxg5}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xg5}} \) 19...\( \texttt{\textit{xc3}} \) 20.\( \texttt{\textit{d3}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{b4}} \) 21.\( \texttt{\textit{a1}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{h fl}} \) White faces an unpleasant fight for equality.

Slightly better, though still not very impressive, is 16.\( \texttt{\textit{xd5}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{xd5}} \) 17.\( \texttt{\textit{g7}} \), Schwertel – Mrkvicka, e-mail 2000, although even here after 17...0-0-0N 18.\( \texttt{\textit{b1}} \) \( \texttt{\textit{h g8}} \) 19.\( \texttt{\textit{f1}} \)
Blacks bishop pair gives him promising compensation for the pawn.

16...f6 17.\textcolor{red}{g6}\textsuperscript{†}

17.\textcolor{red}{h5}\textsuperscript{†} \textcolor{blue}{d8} 18.\textcolor{red}{xg7}\textsuperscript{†} \textcolor{blue}{xg5}\textsuperscript{†} was embarrassing for White in T. Thomson – M. Bergmann, e-mail 2001.

17...\textcolor{blue}{d7} 18.\textcolor{red}{g4}

Worse is 18.\textcolor{red}{xd5}?!, Velasquez Ojeda – Valdes Escobar, Santiago 2007, 18...\textcolor{blue}{xd5}\textsuperscript{!N} (The game continuation of 18...\textcolor{blue}{xd5} is less good due to 19.\textcolor{red}{g4}\textsuperscript{!N} \textcolor{blue}{xe5} 20.\textcolor{red}{xd5}\textsuperscript{†} \textcolor{blue}{xd5} 21.\textcolor{red}{d1} \textcolor{blue}{g5}\textsuperscript{†} 22.\textcolor{blue}{b1} \textcolor{blue}{xd1}\textsuperscript{†} 23.\textcolor{red}{xd1} \textcolor{blue}{f6} 24.\textcolor{red}{f3} when Black has some problems to solve.) 19.\textcolor{red}{g4}\textsuperscript{†} \textcolor{blue}{d8} White does not have enough for the missing piece.

18...\textcolor{red}{xe5} 19.\textcolor{red}{xd5} \textcolor{red}{g5}\textsuperscript{†}!

This should enable Black to hold the balance, although in certain lines he will have to find a couple of accurate moves to defend a mildly unpleasant endgame.

19...\textcolor{blue}{xd5}? 20.\textcolor{red}{xd5}\textsuperscript{†} \textcolor{blue}{xd5} 21.\textcolor{red}{d1} is known to be unpleasant for Black.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

The other option is:

20.\textcolor{red}{f4}\textsuperscript{†} \textcolor{blue}{c7} 21.\textcolor{red}{xe6} \textcolor{red}{xf4}\textsuperscript{†}

After 21...\textcolor{blue}{ad8}? 22.\textcolor{blue}{b1} \textcolor{red}{c8} 23.\textcolor{red}{xe8}\textsuperscript{†} Black was forced to resign in Vuckovic – Marinkovic, Zlatibor 2006. 22.\textcolor{blue}{b1} \textcolor{red}{b8}

White’s initiative provides enough compensation for the missing piece, but Black should be able to hold the balance with careful play.

23.\textcolor{red}{d7}

White is unable to get anywhere with 23.\textcolor{blue}{hf1} \textcolor{blue}{c7} 24.\textcolor{blue}{d7} \textcolor{blue}{c8} 25.\textcolor{red}{xe7} \textcolor{blue}{xd7} 26.\textcolor{red}{xd7} \textcolor{blue}{c8}\textsuperscript{†}.

23.\textcolor{red}{xe7} is also not dangerous after 24.\textcolor{red}{d6}\textsuperscript{†} \textcolor{red}{a7} (but not 24...\textcolor{red}{c8}\textsuperscript{?} 25.\textcolor{red}{d3}\textsuperscript{+-}) 25.\textcolor{red}{c5}\textsuperscript{†} \textcolor{red}{b8} with an immediate draw.
23...\textit{xd}8 24.\textit{xb}7+ \textit{xb}7 25.\textit{f}3+ \textit{a}7 
26.\textit{xa}8 \textit{xa}8 27.\textit{xa}6+ \textit{b}8 28.\textit{xb}5+ \textit{a}8 
White can take a perpetual if he wishes it, although we should also check to see if he can try for more.

29.\textit{d}1 \textit{xb}h2 30.\textit{a}3 \textit{b}8 31.\textit{a}6+ \textit{a}7 
32.\textit{e}6 \textit{c}7 33.\textit{d}7 
We have been following the game Pletanek – Kropik, corr. 1999. Here Black should have played:
33...\textit{b}6N 
Maintaining the balance.

20...\textit{c}7 21.\textit{xe}6 \textit{c}5 22.\textit{d}7+ \textit{b}8 
23.\textit{xb}7+\textit{N} 
After 23.\textit{e}1?! \textit{c}8 White was unable to justify his material investment in Malevinsky – Anikaev, USSR 1979.

23...\textit{xb}7 24.\textit{e}1 
Vasiukov mentioned 24.\textit{f}3+ \textit{b}8 25.\textit{e}1, but after 25...\textit{a}7! Black’s defences hold firm.

24...\textit{b}8 25.\textit{b}4! 
Otherwise Black would continue to consolidate with ...\textit{a}7, or force simplifications with ...\textit{e}7.

25.\textit{xe}3+ 26.\textit{xe}3 \textit{f}6 27.\textit{xf}6 gxf6 
28.\textit{f}3 \textit{a}7 29.\textit{e}6 
Black is slightly ahead on material, yet he must exercise great caution as his pieces are passive and several of his pawns are weak. According to my analysis he can more or less force a draw with the following accurate sequence:

29...\textit{a}5! 
29...\textit{f}8 30.\textit{b}2 would be rather unpleasant, as White would quickly prepare a queenside attack with a4.

30.\textit{a}3 \textit{xb}4 31.\textit{xb}4 \textit{a}4! 
This active move forces a concession.

32.\textit{b}6+ 
32.c3 \textit{a}2 White can hardly hope for an advantage with his king stranded on the first rank.
32...\textit{a7} 33.\textit{xb5} \textit{xb8}!

This is the point behind Black's previous few moves. It is tremendously useful for Black to force the exchange of rooks.

34.\textit{xb8} \textit{xb8} 35.\textit{b5}

35...\textit{c3} \textit{a2} would be an easy draw.

35...\textit{c7}

The king will easily blockade the queenside pawns, while the black rook is active enough to prevent the enemy king from penetrating on the opposite flank. The game is almost certain to end in a draw.

Conclusion

In variations A, B and C we considered three early queen moves after 6.\textit{g5} e6, none of which were at all troublesome for Black. On the other hand, variation D with 7.f4 can potentially open the gateway to some of the wildest and most dangerous complications in all of chess theory. In the present chapter I recommended a slightly offbeat system based on 7...h6?, which used to be sneered at, but is presently enjoying a resurgence. The majority of games continue with the natural moves 8.\textit{h4} \textit{e7} 9.\textit{f3} \textit{bd7} 10.0-0-0 \textit{c7}, after which White must make an important choice.

Line D1 with 11.\textit{g3} poses tricky problems for the second player, especially in the main line where White sacrifices the exchange. Fortunately Black can return the material to neutralize his opponent's initiative and equalize the game.

In variation D2 we saw how the natural developing move 11.\textit{d3} could be met convincingly by a well-timed ...g5, perhaps in conjunction with a pawn sacrifice which looks eminently playable.

The biggest dangers for the second player have traditionally been thought to lie in variation D3 with 11.\textit{c2}. Fortunately, the relevant games along with my analysis support the conclusion that Black's defences are strong enough to withstand even the sharpest attacking attempts. In the critical variation White can choose between a few different endgames, but in all cases his winning chances are pretty low.
Classic Main Line

Blood Diamond - 6.\(g5\) \(\text{bd}7\)

Variation Index

1.\(e4\) \(c5\) 2.\(\text{d}f3\) \(d6\) 3.\(d4\) \(\text{cxd}4\) 4.\(\text{xd}4\) \(\text{f}6\) 5.\(c3\) \(a6\) 6.\(g5\)

6...\(\text{bd}7\)

A) 7.\(\text{c}4\)

B) 7.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{c}7\)!

B1) 8.\(\text{e}2\)

B2) 8.\(\text{f}3\) \(h6\)!

B21) 9.\(\text{xf}6\)

B22) 9.\(\text{h}4\) \(g5\) 10.\(\text{fxg}5\) \(hxg5\) 11.\(\text{xf}5\) \(\text{c}5\)!

B221) 12.\(\text{f}5\)!

B222) 12.\(\text{e}3\)

B223) 12.\(\text{e}3\)!

B21) after 15.\(\text{xd}1\)

B221) after 15.\(\text{g}4\)

B223) note to 13.\(\text{e}2\)

15...\(\text{g}7\)!\(N\)

15...\(b5\)!\(N\)

18...\(\text{e}3\)!\(N\)
The system featuring an early ...\(\text{\=b}d7\) is truly at the forefront of Najdorf theory. Long considered a dubious sideline, it has been reinvigorated by some new discoveries including an exciting pawn sacrifice which gives Black excellent chances to fight for the initiative. This revolutionary idea was developed by a German amateur named Christoph Tiemann, who shared his analysis with his compatriot, the talented young GM Sebastian Bogner. Both have tested Black’s system with success.

Tiemann has kindly shared his analysis with Quality Chess for this book, and his suggestions and improvements have been referenced accordingly.

406 Classic Main Line

1.e4 c5 2.\(\text{\=f}3\) d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.\(\text{\=f}4\) \(\text{\=c}6\) 5.\(\text{\=c}3\) a6 6.\(\text{\=g}5\) \(\text{\=b}d7\)

From this position the most popular move has been A) 7.\(\text{\=c}4\), but in my view the most interesting and critical continuation is B) 7.f4.

Here are a few examples to show how Black may respond to some alternatives:

7.\(\text{\=d}2\) b5 8.\(\text{\=d}3\) (8.f3 \(\text{\=b}7\) 9.0–0–0 e6 gave Black a comfortable position in Sychev – Voitsekhovsky, Kaluga 2007.) 8...\(\text{\=b}7\) 9.0–0–0 e6 10.\(\text{\=h}1\) \(\text{\=b}6\)? (10...\(\text{\=e}7\)=) 11.\(\text{\=e}3\) \(\text{\=c}7\)

12.\(\text{\=f}4\) \(\text{\=c}7\) 13.\(\text{\=e}1\) \(\text{\=d}8\) 14.a3 0–0 15.\(\text{\=f}3\) \(\text{\=e}5\) 16.\(\text{\=d}2\) Diaz Rodriguez – Vallejo Pons, Palma de Mallorca 2009.

7.\(\text{\=e}2\) b5 8.0–0–0

8.f4 e5 9.\(\text{\=d}5\) \(\text{\=b}7\) was already more comfortable for Black in Brasket – Browne, Lone Pine 1974. (Another promising option is: 9...\(\text{\=a}5\)¿N 10.b4! \(\text{\=a}3\) 11.\(\text{\=x}f6\) \(\text{\=x}f6\) 12.\(\text{\=f}3\) \(\text{\=b}2\) 13.\(\text{\=b}3\) \(\text{\=x}d5\) 14.\(\text{\=e}5\) \(\text{\=x}c2\)¿)

8...\(\text{\=b}7\) 9.f4

This was Kuzmin – Vitiugov, Sochi 2007, and here I found an attractive new idea:

9...\(\text{\=c}8\)N

Making use of the quick development of the queenside.

10.e5

Another option is 10.\(\text{\=x}f6\) \(\text{\=x}f6\) 11.e5 \(\text{\=x}c3\) 12.\(\text{\=e}6\) (12.\(\text{\=x}c3\) \(\text{\=e}4\)¿) 12...\(\text{\=e}5\) 13.\(\text{\=x}e7\) \(\text{\=x}e7\)¿ intending to meet 14.\(\text{\=e}1\) \(\text{\=e}7\) 15.\(\text{\=e}5\) with 15...\(\text{\=g}6\)¿.

10...\(\text{\=x}c3\) 11.\(\text{\=x}f6\) \(\text{\=g}6\) 12.\(\text{\=e}5\) \(\text{\=c}6\)¿

12...\(\text{\=x}g5\) 13.\(\text{\=e}5\) e6 14.\(\text{\=x}d6\)† \(\text{\=x}d6\) 15.\(\text{\=x}d6\)

Black is holding his own in this complex position.

A) 7.\(\text{\=c}4\) \(\text{\=b}6\)¿?

This might be viewed as a cousin of the infamous Poisoned Pawn variation, although
Fortunately it does not demand anywhere near as much theoretical preparation.

This is an attempt to fight for an advantage, as opposed to the following game which quickly resulted in a draw: 10...\textit{a}5 11.\textit{d}5! \textit{xd}2 12.\textit{c}7+ \textit{d}8 13.\textit{de}6\textit{f} fxe6 14.\textit{xe}6\textit{f} \textit{e}8 15.\textit{c}7+ \textit{d}8 16.\textit{e}6\textit{f} \textit{e}8 ½–½ Luther – Bischoff, Austria 2002.

11.\textit{b}3

White should certainly avoid 11.f4? \textit{c}5! 12.\textit{b}3 e5 13.\textit{xe}5 \textit{d}xe5 14.\textit{e}3 exd4 15.\textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4! 16.\textit{xd}4 \textit{c}5 17.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5 18.e5 \textit{xb}3 (18...\textit{fe}4 19.\textit{x}f7† might be good for Black too, but is certainly risky.) 19.exf6 \textit{d}2 20.fgx7 \textit{g}8 21.\textit{d}5 \textit{g}7 22.\textit{be}1† \textit{e}6 23.\textit{c}7† \textit{e}7 24.\textit{xa}8 \textit{xf}1 25.\textit{xf}1 \textit{d}7†

I do not believe that White has enough for the sacrificed pawn.

11...\textit{a}5†

Black could even consider 8...\textit{g}6?, although after 9.0–0 \textit{g}7 10.\textit{e}1 0–0 11.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}8 12.\textit{f}3 White was a little better in Zielinski – Nenciulescu, e-mail 2004.

9.\textit{d}2

The plan of long castling must surely be the most challenging approach, as well as the one most in keeping with the overall character of the 6.\textit{g}5 variation.
The alternative is 9.0–0 ąe7 White has tried a lot of moves here, but I do not consider it productive to examine this position in detail as it is obvious White's set-up should not be too dangerous. 10.ęe3 (A recent game continued 10.a4 ąc5 11.a5 ąc7 12.ąa2 h6= Huschenbeth – Berg, Sarajevo 2010.) 10...ąc5 11.f4 ąc7 12.ęf3 0–0 13.f5 b5 with roughly equal play, Kuklin – Rodriguez Lopez, Budapest 1996.

9...ąe7 10.0–0–0 ąc5 11.ęf3

With this move White offers solid support to his e4-pawn and hopes to develop a kingside offensive by advancing his pawns there. He can also consider:

11.ęhe1

With this move White hopes to blast through the centre.

11...ąc7

Very interesting is 11...h6?!N 12.ęe3 (12.ąxf6 ąxf6 13.ęf3 ąc7) 12...ąc7 (12...ęg4 13.ęf5!) 13.ęf3 b5 (13...0–0 14.g4 b5 15.h4 ąfd7 16.g5 ąxb3† 17.axb3 h5 18.g6) 14.g4 ąd7?! 15.h4 b4 16.ęce2 a5 17.g5 hxg5 18.hxg5 ąh5

12.ęf4 h6

12...b5?! 13.e5! was dangerous in Dimitrov – Rodriguez Lopez, Orense 1994.

13.e5!N


13.ąxf6 ąxf6 14.ęf3 ąc7= 13...dxex 14.fxe5 hgx5 15.ęxf6 ąxf6 16.ęd5 ąd8 17.ęb4 ąe7 18.ęxe7 ąxe7 19.ęb1 ąxb3

Also playable is: 19.a5 20.ęb5† ąd7 21.ęb6 g6∞

20.ęxb3 0–0

With equal chances.

13...ąc7 12.ęb1 0–0 13.g4

Another high-level game continued 13.h4 b5 14.a3?! White was obviously not happy about the need to calculate the consequences of ...b4 on each turn, but the text move allows Black to pry open the queenside. (Better was 14.g4 b4 15.ąa4 ąb8 16.ęh2 ąxb3 17.axb3 ąd7, when Black enough counterplay.) 14...ęb8! 15.h5 (15.g4?) 15...h6 16.ęe3 e5! 17.ęf5 (17.ęde2 ąxb3 18.cxb3 b4! 19.axb4 ąe6 20.ęc1 ąb7 21.g4 d5→+) 17...ęxf5 18.ęxf5 ąxb3 19.cxb3 b4 with better chances for Black, Naiditsch – Anand, Dortmund 2003.

13...b5 14.a3 ąb8 15.h4 ąd7 16.ęxf6 ąxf6 17.g5 ąd8?!

The more normal-looking 17...ąe7N was also not bad, for instance 18.h5 a5 19.g6 h6! 20.ęxf7† ąxf7 with reasonable prospects.

18.h5 a5 19.g6
Chapter 19 - 6.\textit{g}5 6.\textit{bd}7

7...\textit{c7}!

Black continues to play in a somewhat unorthodox fashion by delaying ...\textit{e6}. We will soon see some of the subtle points behind his intriguing move order.

At this point we will analyse two moves. 

\textbf{B1) 8.\textit{e}2} is somewhat unusual, but is at the time of writing the only move to have been tested at 2700 level. However, the big main line is the natural \textbf{B2) 8.\textit{f}3}.

\textbf{B1) 8.\textit{e}2 e5!}

Here we see an immediate benefit of delaying ...\textit{e6} – the pawn can aspire to greater ambitions.

\textbf{9.\textit{f}5 \textit{h}6 10.\textit{x}f6}

10.\textit{h}4 is well met by 10...\textit{exf}4! 11.\textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 12.0–0–0 \textit{g}6 13.\textit{d}5 \textit{x}d5 14.\textit{xd}5\textit{f}+ 15.\textit{d}4 \textit{g}7 16.\textit{f}2 \textit{g}5 17.\textit{h}4 \textit{c}5 18.\textit{c}3 \textit{c}7 White already stands worse, and his position quickly deteriorates. 19.hxg5 hxg5 20.\textit{x}h8 \textit{x}h8 21.\textit{c}2 \textit{d}7 22.b4 \textit{b}6 23.\textit{h}7 This was Damjanovic – Saidy, Zagreb 1969, and here Black could have ensured a comfortable victory with 23...\textit{c}8!N 24.\textit{xf}7 \textit{b}8\textit{+}.

\textbf{10.\textit{xf}6}
11.\textit{\$e}3

In the event of 11.\textit{\$e}c4?! , Poetsch - Bogner, Kemer 2009, it looks good for Black to play: 11...\textit{\$e}a5!N 12.0-0-0 \textit{\$e}6 13.\textit{\$d}3 0-0-0\textit{\$} (or even 13...exf4?! 14.\textit{\$d}6+ \textit{\$f}d8 15.\textit{\$xf}4 \textit{\$xd}1N 17.\textit{\$xd}1 0-0)

A better alternative is:
11.0-0-0 b5? N

This new idea looks quite promising, although Black can also consider 11...\textit{\$f}5 12.exf5 0-0-0 13.\textit{\$c}4 exf4 14.\textit{\$xc}7+ \textit{\$xc}7 15.\textit{\$c}4 Bok – Kleijn, Venlo 2009, and now 15...\textit{\$d}7?!N 16.\textit{\$h}f1 d5 17.\textit{\$xd}5+ \textit{\$xd}5 18.\textit{\$xd}5 \textit{\$d}6 with equality.

12.\textit{\$d}3

Or 12.\textit{\$e}3 exf4 13.\textit{\$ed}5 \textit{\$xd}5 14.\textit{\$xd}5 \textit{\$d}8 15.\textit{\$f}3 \textit{\$e}7 16.h4 \textit{\$e}6 17.\textit{\$xf}4 \textit{\$xd}5 18.exd5 0-0-0 19.\textit{\$b}1 \textit{\$d}6 when Black has slightly the easier side of a near-equal position.

12...b4 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.\textit{\$d}5 \textit{\$xd}5 15.exd5 15.\textit{\$xd}5 \textit{\$e}6

15...\textit{\$xf}5 16.\textit{\$xf}5 \textit{\$d}6

\textit{\$d}2

White also fails to get anywhere with: 14.c3 \textit{\$e}6 15.\textit{\$xf}4 (15.0-0-0 0-0-0 16.\textit{\$b}1 g5=) 15...\textit{\$e}7 16.\textit{\$xe}6 \textit{\$xe}6 17.\textit{\$g}4 \textit{\$e}5 18.\textit{\$c}4 \textit{\$d}7=

14..\textit{\$xd}2\textit{\$} 15.\textit{\$xd}2 \textit{\$b}8 16.\textit{\$xf}4

16.h4?! g6 17.\textit{\$xf}4 \textit{\$g}7 18.c3 is also equal.

16...\textit{\$e}7

Black has achieved full equality, and the following game never looked like finishing in anything other than a draw.

17.\textit{\$c}4 \textit{\$g}5 18.\textit{\$af}1 \textit{\$e}6 19.\textit{\$xe}6 \textit{\$xe}6 20.\textit{\$d}3 \textit{\$xf}4 21.\textit{\$xf}4 \textit{\$f}8 22.\textit{\$xf}8\textit{\$} 23.\textit{\$f}1\textit{\$} \textit{\$e}7 24.\textit{\$f}3 \textit{\$e}8 25.\textit{\$g}3 \textit{\$f}7

B2) 8.\textit{\$f}3

This is the usual square for the queen in most lines of the 6.\textit{\$g}5 variation, so it is hardly surprising that it has been the most popular move by far.
8...h6!
Now it is important to consider both B21) 9.\textit{\textit{xf6}} and B22) 9.\textit{\textit{h4}}.

B21) 9.\textit{xxf6} \textit{xf6} 10.f5!

This is a genuinely threatening option, for which Black should be well-prepared. The following alternative is slower and less dangerous: 10.h3 e5 11.\textit{b3}

No better is: 11.\textit{de2} b5 12.a3 \textit{b7} (Black can also consider 12...\textit{e7}?!N, when he has slightly the more comfortable side of a near-equal position.) 13.\textit{g3} This position occurred in Avila – Ramsay, Medellin 2009, and here Black could have secured an excellent game with 13...d5!N (Tiemann) 14.exd5 exf4 15.\textit{ge4} \textit{xe4} 16.\textit{xe4} \textit{xd5} 17.0–0–0 0–0–0.

11...\textit{e7} 12.0–0–0 0–0–0

13.g4
White is not helped by 13.f5\textit{N} b5 14.g4 b4 15.\textit{d5} \textit{xd5} 16.\textit{xd5} a5\textit{N}.

He might have done better to consider 13.\textit{d3}N, although after 13...b5 14.\textit{b1} \textit{b7} Black can look to the future with confidence.

13...\textit{xf4}! 14.\textit{b1} \textit{e6} 15.\textit{d4} \textit{ac8} 16.\textit{f5} \textit{xf5} 17.\textit{xf5} d5\textit{?}+

Black had won the opening battle in Licina – Danner, Aschach 2001.
2010. The last few moves have been more or less forced on both sides, but now Black must make an important decision.

16.\texttt{\texttt{b3}}
This forcing move must be critical. If White prefers the quieter 16.\texttt{e2}, then 15...\texttt{e6!} becomes more attractive than on the previous move, as the white bishop has lost some options.

16...\texttt{d5!}
This principled move leads to complications that are not unfavourable to Black.

17.\texttt{f5} \texttt{xе4}
An equally valid alternative is: 17...\texttt{he8} 18.\texttt{c3} \texttt{e6} 19.\texttt{xb7} 19.\texttt{c7} 20.\texttt{xc7} 20.\texttt{xc7} \texttt{xc7} 21.\texttt{xd7} \texttt{yg7} 22.\texttt{exd5} \texttt{xd5}=  

18.\texttt{d3} \texttt{f6} 19.\texttt{e1} \texttt{he8} 20.\texttt{h4} \texttt{c7} 21.\texttt{g6} 22.\texttt{xe8} \texttt{xe8}
The resulting position holds chances for both sides (analysis by Tiemann).

\textbf{B22) 9.\texttt{h4}}

9...g5!
This pawn sacrifice provides the justification for Black's entire set-up. The whole concept is extremely fresh, with practically all the games having been played from 2009 onwards.

10.\texttt{fxg5} hxg5 11.\texttt{xg5}
It is unlikely that White can get anywhere by declining the offer.

11.\texttt{g3} \texttt{e5} 12.\texttt{f2}

12...\texttt{g4!N}
Black wants to exchange light-squared bishops, as the subsequent knight jump to c4 will gain in strength. 12...\texttt{c5} 13.0–0–0 \texttt{d7} led to a tense position with mutual chances in Frick – Bogner, Triesen 2010.

13.\texttt{e2}
This is the logical way to prepare castling. Instead 13.\(\texttt{f3} \texttt{x}\texttt{xf3}+14.\texttt{gxf3} \texttt{e}6 15.0-0-0 \texttt{g}7 16.\texttt{b1} \texttt{a}5 is great for Black.

13...\texttt{x}e2 14.\texttt{xe}2 \texttt{e}6 15.0-0-0 \texttt{c}8

15...\texttt{c}4 16.\texttt{h}f1 \texttt{h}5 does not work here, because of 17.\texttt{xf}7!! with a huge attack.

13.\texttt{xf}6

Inadequate is 13.\texttt{e}3? \texttt{b}4 14.0-0-0 \texttt{ex}f5 15.\texttt{xf}5 \texttt{h}5 16.\texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}7 when White does not have enough for the piece, and after the further 17.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{e}5 18.\texttt{f}4 \texttt{g}4 19.\texttt{xg}4 \texttt{c}4! Black was already winning in Kanovsky - Navara, Ostrava 2010.

13.\texttt{xd}6+ \texttt{xd}6 14.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{xf}6 15.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{g}3+ transposes to the following note.

13...\texttt{xf}6 14.\texttt{e}3

Risky is 14.\texttt{xd}6+ \texttt{xd}6 15.\texttt{xf}6 \texttt{g}3+ 16.\texttt{e}2N (An attempt to improve over 16.\texttt{hx}g3? \texttt{e}3+ 17.\texttt{e}2 \texttt{xh}1+ Namyslo - Bogner, Bad Liebenzell 2010.) 16...\texttt{e}5 17.\texttt{g}5 \texttt{b}5 with excellent compensation for Black.

14.\texttt{d}7 15.\texttt{g}4

15...\texttt{b}5!N
This suggestion of Tiemann looks like the most promising course of action, although in a way Black is spoiled for choice as the following alternative is also perfectly adequate:

15...\textit{g}7

There is even a third playable option in 15...\textit{e}5 16.\textit{x}e5 \textit{xe}5 17.\textit{g}3 \textit{g}7 18.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}7 19.0-0-0 Garnelis – Kleijn, Fermo 2009, 19...0-0-0N with even chances.

16.0-0-0 \textit{e}5 17.\textit{x}e5 \textit{xe}5

17...\textit{xe}5?N was also not at all bad.

18.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}7

Black has promising compensation, although it would be too much to claim an objective advantage. However, in the one game that reached this position, White went astray.

19.\textit{g}3?

Best play looks to be: 19.\textit{h}f1N 0-0-0!? 20.\textit{h}3 (20.\textit{xf}? \textit{g}5† 21.\textit{b}1 \textit{d}8 22.\textit{h}4 \textit{xf}8 23.\textit{xf}8† \textit{xf}8 24.\textit{xf}8† \textit{c}7†) 20...\textit{hf}8

19...\textit{xf}3 20.\textit{xf}3 \textit{e}7 21.\textit{f}3

This position was reached in Narmontas – Bogner, Kemer 2009, and here Black should have played:

21...\textit{xe}5N

When White faces a difficult defence in the endgame.

16.\textit{e}5

This principled move fails to solve White's problems, although it is doubtful that the quieter alternatives can improve his fate.

16.0-0-0 \textit{b}7 17.\textit{f}6† (17.\textit{a}3 \textit{g}7) 17...\textit{xf}6

18.\textit{xf}6 \textit{g}8 19.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}8 20.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5

16.\textit{d}3 \textit{b}7 17.\textit{xf}4 (or 17.\textit{f}6† \textit{xf}6

18.\textit{xf}6 \textit{h}6 19.\textit{f}3 \textit{g}7 with some initiative for Black) 17...\textit{g}7 18.0-0-0 \textit{xc}3 19.\textit{xc}3

16.\textit{xf}6† \textit{e}7! 17.\textit{xd}7 (17.\textit{g}4 \textit{b}4 18.\textit{a}4 \textit{xc}2) 17...\textit{xd}7 18.0-0-0 \textit{g}7 19.\textit{b}1 \textit{b}4

White must worry not only about ...\textit{e}5
with decisive threats, but also simply ...a5-a4 with a strong attack.

16...\textit{b}8 17.0-0-0

17.exd6 is strongly met by 17...\textit{f}5! 18.\textit{f}2 \textit{b}7 19.\textit{e}2 \textit{x}d6 20.\textit{d}1 \textit{e}7 21.\textit{d}3 \textit{b}4 22.\textit{b}1 \textit{e}5, when Black's two bishops and mobile central pawns give him fantastic compensation for a mere pawn.

17...\textit{d}xe5 18.\textit{f}6t

After 18.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5\+$ The bishops will become monsters.

18...\textit{e}7 19.\textit{h}4 \textit{b}7 20.\textit{h}6 21.\textit{x}h6 \textit{h}6 22.\textit{xc}5 \textit{xc}5\+$

White faces a miserable defensive task in this ending. Thanks once again to Christoph Tiemann for sharing his analysis of the new idea of 15...b5.

B222) 12.\textit{e}3

12...\textit{d}g4

This appears natural, although Black could also consider 12...\textit{h}7\+$! 13.\textit{h}4 \textit{h}f6!, when I have not been able to find anything better than 14.\textit{g}5 repeating the position.

13.\textit{d}2 \textit{g}7

Black should not allow himself to be distracted by trifles such as the h2-pawn: 13...\textit{h}2?! 14.\textit{d}5 looks risky for him.

14.\textit{b}3\textit{N}

This is the natural way to improve over 14.\textit{f}5? \textit{xc}3 15.\textit{xc}3? (15.bxc3 \textit{d}f6\+$) 15...\textit{f}2\+$! 16.\textit{d}1 \textit{h}2 17.\textit{h}4

White faces a miserable defensive task in this ending. Thanks once again to Christoph Tiemann for sharing his analysis of the new idea of 15...b5.

17...\textit{x}h4 18.\textit{x}h4 (18.\textit{x}h4 \textit{x}f1\+$ 19.\textit{e}1 \textit{f}2\+$ 20.\textit{d}2 \textit{x}g2 21.\textit{e}3 \textit{e}4\+$ 22.\textit{c}1 \textit{g}6-+) 18...\textit{e}3\+$ 19.\textit{c}1 \textit{f}1 20.\textit{f}5

This position was reached in the game R. Griffiths – D. Eggleston, Torquay 2009, and here 20...\textit{f}8\+$ would have virtually assured Black’s victory.

14...\textit{xc}3

It looks sensible to take the opportunity to shatter White’s pawns, although Black can also consider a more creative approach with:
14...\textbf{a7?!} 15.\textbf{d5} \\
This looks critical, although we could also have fun analysing 15.\textbf{d3} b5\infty and 15.h3 b5\infty.
15...\textbf{xb2} 16.\textbf{b1} \textbf{e5} \\

17.\textbf{c7\dagger} \\
17.\textbf{xe7} is well met by 17...f6!, for instance: 
18.\textbf{a5} \textbf{c5} 19.\textbf{e2} \textbf{h7\dagger} \\
17...\textbf{f8} 18.\textbf{xa8} \textbf{df6!} \\
Incredibly, Black does not even have to recapture on a8, and can instead use his pieces to launch an attack without suffering from the absence of the rook.
19.\textbf{d3} \textbf{hx2?!} \\
19...\textbf{hx2} 20.\textbf{hx2} \textbf{g3\dagger} would lead to a perpetual, but where's the fun in that?
20.\textbf{d1} \\
After 20.\textbf{f1} \textbf{h5} 21.\textbf{e1} \textbf{g3\dagger} 22.\textbf{e2} \textbf{e5} the white king feels distinctly uncomfortable.

20...\textbf{h5} \\
Another possibility is 20...\textbf{f2\dagger} 21.\textbf{c1} \textbf{b1h} 22.\textbf{c7} \textbf{e8} 23.\textbf{c7} \textbf{d7} 24.\textbf{e3} b6 25.\textbf{d5} \textbf{xd5} 26.exd5 \textbf{e5} with unclear play.
21.\textbf{xf6} \textbf{xf6?!} \\
21...\textbf{f4} 22.\textbf{xf5} \textbf{g1\dagger} leads to a draw after 23.\textbf{e2} when neither side can avoid the perpetual.
22.\textbf{c7} \textbf{f4} 23.\textbf{xf4} \textbf{exh1\dagger} 24.\textbf{d2} \textbf{xb1} \\
25.\textbf{h6\dagger} \textbf{g8} 26.\textbf{g5\dagger} \textbf{h8} \\

27.\textbf{h4\dagger}! \\
The queen must check here in order to cover the f2-square, thus ensuring that 27...\textbf{h7?} would now lose to 28.e5. And after all of that excitement, the game finally ends in a draw!

15.bxc3
Chapter 19 - 6.\he5 \gbd7

15...\weg5??

Palliser mentions 15...\wc7, which also looks playable and should give Black enough compensation.

16.0-0-0 \wbd6

In this complex position I am not sure if White has anything better than:

17.if4 \we7 18.ig5 \we5

Repeating the position.

B223) 12.\xe3!

Finally we come to White's most natural and challenging response.

12...\wge5

Black executes the first of two tempo-gaining knight moves.

13.\wge2

The alternative is riskier.

13.\wd1?!

This enables Black to develop promising counterplay as follows:

13...\wge4 14.\we1 \weh6! 15.\wif5 \wbb4!

16.\wexh6

16.\wxd4 runs into 16...\wxf5! 17.exf5 \wge3! when White is under pressure.

16...\wexh6

17.\wge2

White needs to improve over 17.a3? \wxb2 18.\wdd4 Ahner - Tiemann, Badenweiler 2009, when Black overlooked a stunning idea:

18...\wge3!!N 19.\wxe3 \wxc3† It was trivial to see that Black could regain the piece, but there is still the small matter of the rook hanging on h6. 20.\wd2 \wge5! 21.\wexh6 \wxe4 Despite the extra rook, it turns out that White is under serious pressure: 22.\wge2 (22.\wcc1 \wcc3†-; 22.\wbb5† axb5 23.0-0 \wcc5†=) 22...\wge3 23.\wdd3 \wxe2 24.\wdd2 \wge5 25.\wge3 \wdd5† (25...\wcc8+) 26.\wxe2 \wexg2† 27.\wdf2 \wgg4† 28.\wge3 \whe5† 29.\wdd2 \wexh6†

17...\wge6

17...\wge4 18.a3 \wxc3 19.axb4 \wxd1 20.\wxd1 \wge5 reaches a roughly equal semi-endgame, with chances for both sides.

18.\wdd2 \wxe4 19.\wdd4 \wxd4 20.\wxd4 \wge3
This interesting ending sees Black's central pawns pitted against White's bishop pair and passed h-pawn. Obviously both sides have certain advantages, but I am confident that Black's chances are at least not worse.

13...\textit{h}4 14.\textit{g}1

14...\textit{h}6!

Black does not need to worry about discovered attacks at this moment.

15.\textit{g}3

15.\textit{h}5?! \textit{b}4 is awkward, and so far nobody seems to have tried 15.\textit{d}b5 \textit{c}6 16.\textit{a}7 \textit{c}7 17.\textit{x}c8 \textit{xc}8 when "unclear" seems like a fair assessment. Two other moves have been tried in practice:

15.\textit{b}3 should not be dangerous, and after 15...\textit{c}7 16.\textit{g}3 \textit{e}5 17.\textit{h}3 \textit{e}6 Black was already more comfortable in Pon – Ziaziulkina, Kemer 2009.

The following game was a brutal demonstration of Black's attacking potential:

15.\textit{a}3 \textit{g}5

15...\textit{a}5?N and 15...\textit{b}6?N also deserve attention.

16.\textit{f}3 \textit{a}5 17.\textit{d}2 \textit{e}6 18.\textit{d}4 \textit{c}8 19.0-0-0 \textit{e}4!

Forcing the exchange of White's valuable dark-squared bishop.

20.\textit{x}f6?

White had to play 20 \textit{d}3N \textit{e}5 21.\textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 22.\textit{b}1, although he remains clearly worse after 22...\textit{xd}4 23.\textit{e}2 \textit{d}8, as pointed out by Richard Palliser.

20...\textit{xf}6 21.\textit{b}1

21.\textit{d}3 \textit{xc}3 22.\textit{xc}3 \textit{xc}3 23.\textit{bxc}3 \textit{xe}4 is also hopeless for White.

21...\textit{xc}3 22.\textit{bxc}3 \textit{xa}3

Black has a crushing attack, and he finished the game in style:

23.\textit{c}4 \textit{xc}3 24.\textit{d}3 \textit{xe}4! 25.\textit{xe}4 \textit{b}4† 26.\textit{a}2 \textit{g}7 27.\textit{x}d4 \textit{xd}4 28.\textit{xd}4 \textit{h}5!

0–1 Harutjunyan – Kokarev, Bhubaneswar 2010.
15...\( \text{d}e5 \)

This looks better than 15...\( \text{w}b6?! \) 16.\( \text{w}b1 \text{c}5, \) Rasulov – Kleijn, Fermo 2009, at which point 17.\( \text{g}2\text{N} \) would have given White good chances for an advantage as follows: 17...\( \text{g}8 \) 18.\( \text{d}1 \) (18.\( \text{f}5 \) only leads to a draw after 18...\( \text{c}xe4! \) 19.\( \text{f}5 \text{c}3 \) 20.\( \text{bxc}3 \text{w}xc3+t \) 21.\( \text{d}2 \text{w}e5+t \) 22.\( \text{d}1 \text{w}h6 \) 23.\( \text{f}h6 \text{g}4+t \) 24.\( \text{c}1 \text{e}1+t \) 25.\( \text{b}2 \text{b}4=t) \) 18...\( \text{d}7 \) 19.\( \text{f}5= \\

16.\( \text{h}3 \text{d}7 17.\( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 18.\( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{c}8\text{=} \\

Black has more or less completed his development, and his pieces are a picture of harmony. Further practical testing is needed, but I am pretty sure Black is at least not worse. From this position I found one practical encounter, which we will follow for a few more moves.

\[ \begin{array}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c|} 
\hline
8 & 7 & 6 & 5 & 4 & 3 & 2 & 1 \\
\hline
b & c & d & e & f & g & h & \\
\hline
\end{array} \]

19.\( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{e}6 \)

19...\( \text{b}5??\text{=} \)N also deserves attention.

20.\( \text{g}4 \)

20.\( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{b}5 \) 21.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{f}d7\text{=} \)

20...\( \text{g}5 \) 21.\( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{a}5\text{=} \text{N} \)

After 21...\( \text{b}5 \) 22.\( \text{a}3 \) \( \text{fd}7 \) 23.0–0–0 \( \text{b}6 \) 24.\( \text{b}1 \) White was consolidating and stood slightly better in Radulski – Raykhman, Cappelle la Grande 2010.

22.\( \text{b}3 \)

I see nothing better for White than repeating the position. For instance, 22...\( \text{x}d2\text{=} \\

22...\( \text{w}c7 \)

With ideas of ...\( \text{c}4 \) and ...\( \text{h}4+t \) in the air, White had better settle for half a point.

Conclusion

The modern chess world is characterized by the ever-increasing depth of computer-assisted opening preparation, with some commentators even speculating about the death of our beloved game within the next however many years. In such times, it is all the more refreshing to witness the emergence of a brand new counterattacking concept in what is possibly the most heavily analysed opening system of all: the Najdorf. The paucity of practical examples in certain critical lines prevents us from drawing any firm conclusions about the 6...\( \text{bd}7 \) system, but the results of the available games, combined with some of the original analysis contained within these pages, lead me to evaluate Black's system quite optimistically. If the readers feel the same way, perhaps they will make their own contribution in moulding the development of this new and exciting system.
Chapter 1

1.e4 c5
A) 2.\&b3!? 10
B) 2.b3 \&c6 3.\&b2 e5 12
B1) 4.\&c4 12
B2) 4.\&b5 13
C) 2.b4 cxb4 15
C1) 3.d4 15
C2) 3.\&b2 16
C3) 3.a3 17
D) 2.d3 d5!? 19
D1) 3.\&d2 19
D2) 3.exd5 21
E) 2.\&c2 \&f6 3.\&bc3 d5 4.exd5 \&xd5 5.\&xd5 \&xd5 22
E1) 6.\&c3 23
E2) 6.d4 23
F) 2.g3 25

Chapter 2

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.\&xc3 \&c6 5.\&f3 d6 6.\&c4 a6 7.0-0 \&f6
A) 8.b4!! 31
B) 8.h3 32
C) 8.\&g5 33
D) 8.\&e2 34

Chapter 3

1.e4 c5 2.c3
A) 2...d6 3.d4 \&f6 38
A1) 4.f3 38
A2) 4.dxc5 \&xc6! 39
A21) 5.cxd6 39
A22) 5.\&c4 40
A23) 5.\&c2 dxc5 41
A231) 6.\&f4 42
A232) 6.\&f3 43
A24) 5.f3 44
A3) 4.\&d3 g6! 46
A31) 5.dxc5 46
A32) 5.\&f3 48
B) 2...d5 3.exd5 \&xd5 4.d4 g6! 49
B1) 5.\&e3 cxd4 50
B11) 6.cxd4 \&g7 50
B12) 6.\&xd4 51
B2) 5.dxc5 52
B3) 5.\(\text{\textipa{\textgreek{f}}}\)a3 54
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