Jose Sande

Sindarov's King's Indian

The Fight for the Dark Squares



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Forget the Engine

If you want to play the King's Indian, forget the engine! You are not going to play at 4,000 Elo like the latest Stockfish.

White enjoys a big space advantage, which is why the engine often assesses at between +1 and +2 positions that, for a human player, are complex and perfectly playable with Black. Sometimes White ends up prevailing with a long series of moves that no human would find; at other times the advantage gradually evaporates. In short: when it comes to assessing these positions at a human level, the engine is not a good guide.

What really makes the difference is knowing the right manoeuvres for Black in each structure and calculating three or four moves accurately. With that, you will approach master level.

Most of the games in this book were played at blitz or rapid time controls, so naturally they contain inaccuracies and even serious mistakes. That does not detract from their instructional value: they clearly show the plans and ideas you need to know to play these positions with Black in Sindarov's style.

Each game is preceded by a "Your Move!" page with four positions to solve before reading the notes, and has a QR code that lets you replay it on lichess.

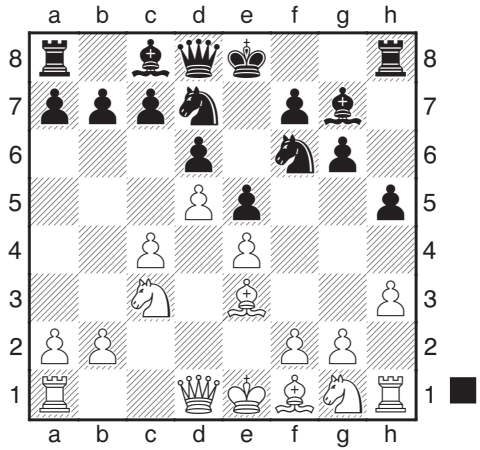
Chapter 1

h5 y ♗h6 vs. h3

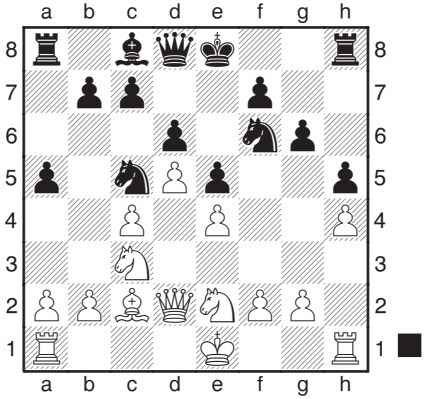
Set-ups with h3 are fashionable and very dangerous if you do not know them well with Black.

An interesting plan is to delay castling with 5... ♘bd7, so that after e5 and d5, Black advances h5.

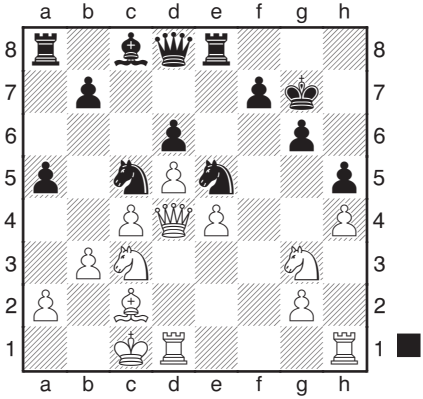
Black's aims are: to exchange the dark-squared bishop with ♗h6, to hinder the g4 advance and to gain space on the kingside, including the possibility of fixing White's structure with h4. After the exchange of bishops, the black king has good shelter with ♔f8- g7.



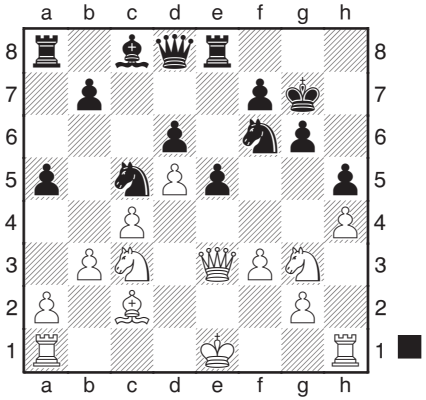
Your Move!



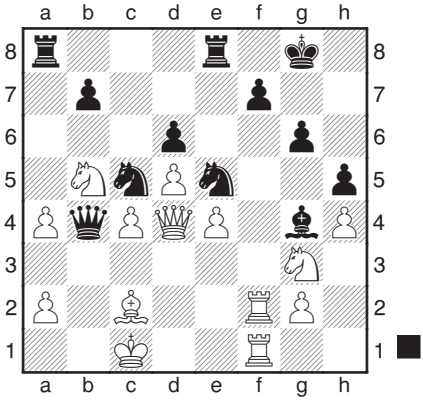
1. The black king cannot castle. Is this a problem?



3. How would you coordinate your pieces to attack on the queenside?



2. Explain two ways of playing this position.

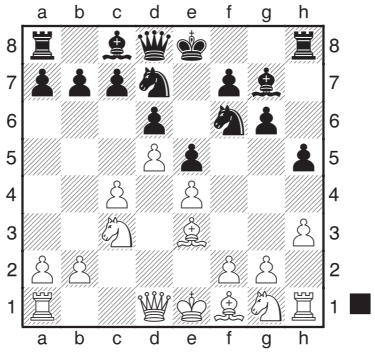


4. A forceful and decisive sequence.

Sarana (2679) - Sindarov (2682) [E71]

Blitz. Titled Tuesday 12.11.2024

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.h3 ♘bd7 6.♗e3 e5 7.d5 h5 8.♗d3

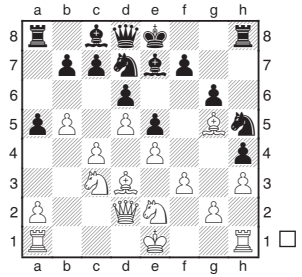


Main alternatives: ♕d2 or ♗d3

White has the option of preventing the exchange of bishops with 8.♕d2, but after 8...♘c5 he has to choose between further weakening the dark squares on the kingside with 9. f3, or accepting the loss of his light-squared bishop after 9.♗d3, which will make Black's later f5 break easier.

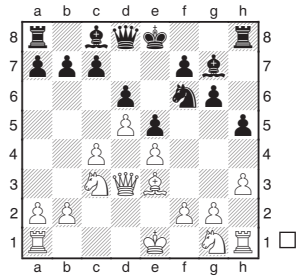
After 8.♕d2 ♘c5 9. f3 h4 (fixing White's weaknesses on the dark squares) and 10.♗g5, the manoeuvre ♗f8 and ♗e7 is very interesting, with very good results in practice. For example, one continuation could be 10...♗f8 11. b4 ♘cd7 12.♗d3 ♗e7 13.♘ge2 a5 14. b5 ♘h5, with good play for Black.

The idea is clear: the knight on h5 is heading for f4, a square that White can no longer control with pawns. If White exchanges bishops with 15.♗xe7 ♕xe7 16.♘a4 b6 17.0–0–0 ♗b7, Black has got rid of his bad bishop and can comfortably castle long. The most solid option is 15.♗e3, but after 15...b6 16.♗c2 g5 17.0–0–0 ♘f4 Black has comfortable and easy play.



♗f8-e7 is a manoeuvre to remember against ♗g5

If, instead of 9. f3, White opts for 9.♗d3, then after 9...♘xd3 Black can choose between exchanging bishops with ♗h6 or fighting for the f5 break with 0-0 and ♘h7, which is stronger than usual since the opponent no longer has his light-squared bishop.



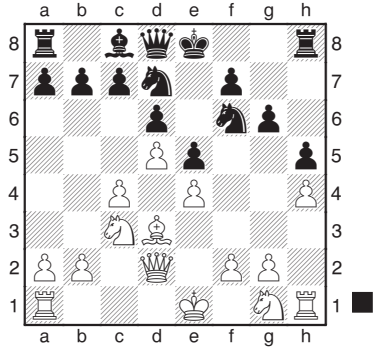
Main alternatives: ♗h6 or 0-0 with ♘h7 and f5

8...♗h6 9.♗xh6 ♖xh6 10.♕d2 ♖h8 11.h4

Preventing Black from fixing the kingside with h4!.

In return, the g4-square is available to Black's pieces as long as White does not play f3. Black is in no hurry at all: he will

complete his development with ♘c5, a5 and the artificial castling ♔f8-g7, a manoeuvre we will see often in this structure.



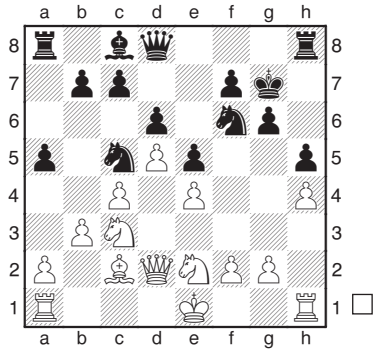
White prevents Black's h4

11... ♘c5 12. ♗c2 a5

Continuing the control of the dark squares.

13. ♘ge2 ♔f8 14.b3 ♔g7

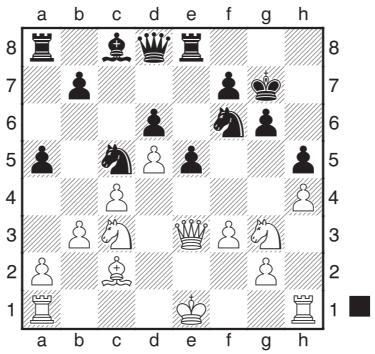
Black castles artificially.



With ♔f8-g7 Black completes his kingside development

15.f3 c6 16. ♕e3 cxd5 17.exd5 ♖e8 18. ♘g3

Sindarov wants to control the central e4 break. But Black's pieces are very well coordinated and active for this break.



Main alternatives: e4 or ♗d7-♕b6-a4

18...e4!?

Sindarov carries out a thematic sacrifice to occupy the e5-square with a knight. Another option, without giving up material, was ♗d7-♕b6-a4.

19.fxe4 ♘g4 20. ♕d4+ ♘e5 21.0–0–0 ♕b6

With the idea of ♗d7 and a4.

22. ♖hf1 ♗g4 23. ♖d2 a4

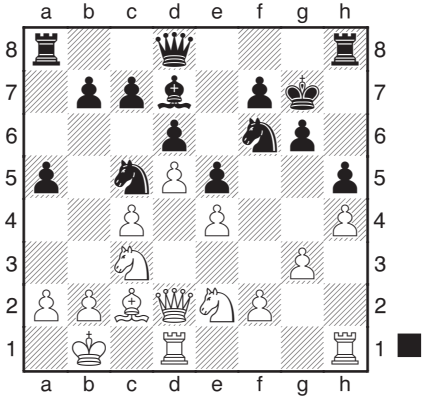
Opening up the white king's precarious position.

24.bxa4 ♕b4 25. ♖df2 ♔g8 26. ♘b5 ♘xa4

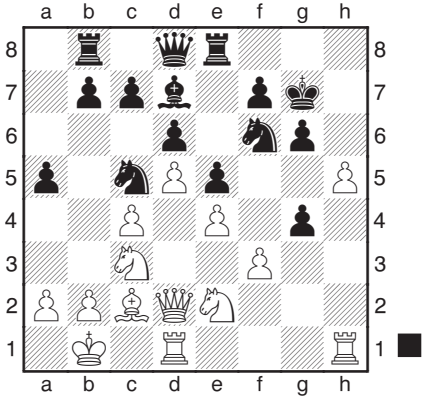
The exchange sacrifice 26...♖xa4 was more forceful. For example, 27. ♗xa4 ♘cd3+ 28. ♔c2 ♕xa4+ 29. ♔c3 ♕b4+ 30. ♔c2 ♖c8.

27.a3 ♕a5 28. ♘xd6 ♘c5 29. ♘b5 ♖ac8 30. ♔b1 ♘cd7 31. ♗b3 ♘c5 32. ♗a2 ♗d7 33. ♕c3 ♕b6 34. ♖b2 ♘a4 35. ♕b4 ♘xb2 36. ♕xb2 ♘xc4 37. ♗xc4 ♖xc4 38. ♘c3 ♕e3 39. ♘ge2 ♖ec8 40. ♖f3 ♕c5 41.d6 ♗e6 42. ♖d3 ♕e5 43.d7 ♖d8 44. ♕b6 ♖xd7 45. ♖xd7 ♗xd7 46. ♕d8+ ♕e8 47. ♕f6 ♖xe4 48. ♘d4 ♖e1+ 49. ♔b2 ♕e7 50. ♕f4 ♕e5 51. ♕f2 ♕e3 52. ♕f6 ♗e6 53. ♕d8+ ♔g7 54. ♘f3 ♕c1#

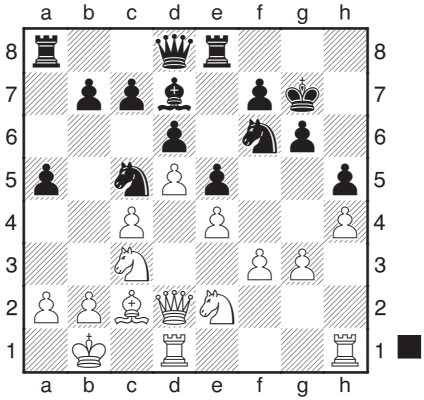
Your Move!



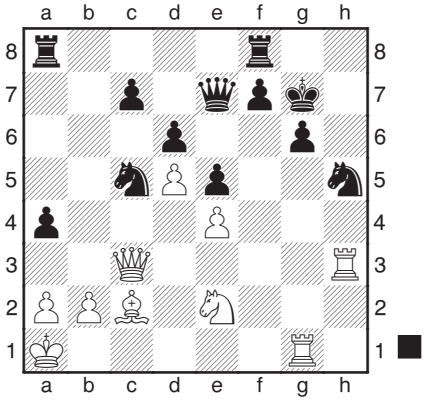
1. Sindarov played ♖e8, anticipating the f4 break. Was this the right decision?



3. What is Black's best defence?



2. What plan can Black carry out?

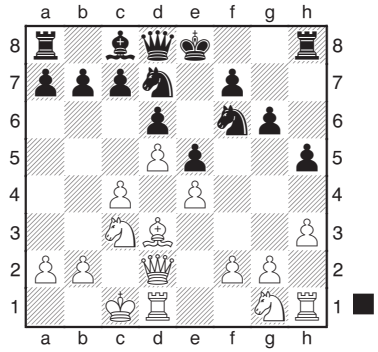


4. Is White's attack decisive?

Eljanov (2672) – Sindarov (2674) [E71]

Blitz.Titled Tuesday 02.07.2024

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.h3 ♘bd7 6.♗e3 e5 7.d5 h5 8.♗d3 ♗h6 9.♗xh6 ♖xh6 10.♕d2 ♖h8 11.0–0–0



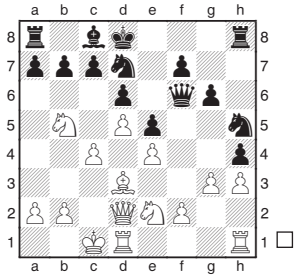
Main alternatives: ♔f8-g7 or h4

11...♔f8

11...h4, gaining space, was interesting. If White tries to exploit his lead in development, for example with 12. g3 ♘h5 13.♘ge2 ♕f6 14.♘b5, there is no need to be afraid of playing ♔d8, with very interesting play for Black (♘c5, a5-a4, ♗d7).

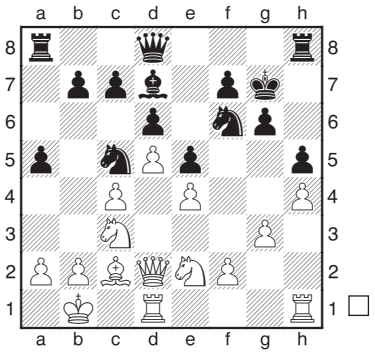
If 12. g4, the way to fight for the dark squares is 12...♘h7 13. f4 exf4 14.♕xf4 ♕g5. And again, there is no need to fear ♔d8 after the exchange of queens and ♘b5. 15.♕xg5 ♘g5 16.♘b5 ♔d8 17.♘e2 a6 18.♘bc3 ♘e5 with an advantage for Black.

The endgame is very favourable for Black: the knights on e5 and g5 are magnificent pieces, the c4-pawn is a permanent target and the bishop on d3 is hemmed in by its own pawns on e4 and d5. Moreover, the h4-pawn fixes the kingside and White has no breaks. It is a good example of how exchanging queens brings White no relief when the structure favours Black on the dark squares.



No fear of ♔d8!

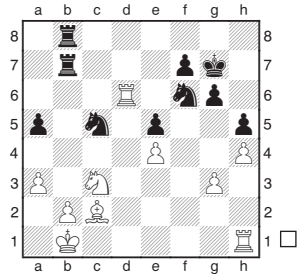
12.♔b1 ♔g7 13.h4 a5 14.♘ge2 ♘c5 15.♗c2 ♗d7 16.g3 ♖e8



f4 is usually a White threat, but not in this case

Sindarov played ♖e8, anticipating the f4 break. However, this break is not a problem for Black, so it was better to speed up the plan of ♖b8 and b5. Furthermore, the rook is better on h8, since White's best plan is to attack with f3 and g4, as happened in the game.

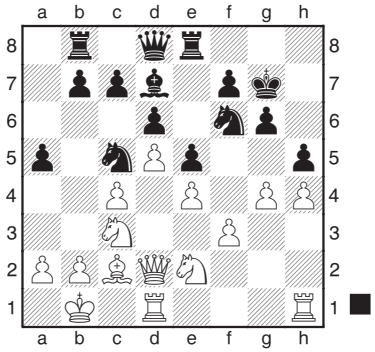
Thus, after 16...♖b8 17. f4, b5 18. cxb5 ♗xb5 19.♘xb5 ♖xb5 20.♘c3 ♖b4 21. a3 ♖b7 22. fxe5 dxe5 23. d6? ♕xd6 24.♕xd6 ♖xd6 25.♖xd6 ♖hb8, Black is left with a big advantage.



fxe5 dxe5 and d6 is not a problem for Black

17.f3 ♖b8 18.g4!?

Creating huge complications – and in a blitz game, no less! Now the absence of the black rook from h8 is felt.



A thematic sacrifice with opposite-side castling

18...hxg4 19.h5?

19. fxg4 ♗xg4 20.♖dg1 ♖h8 21.♘g3 was necessary, with complex play.

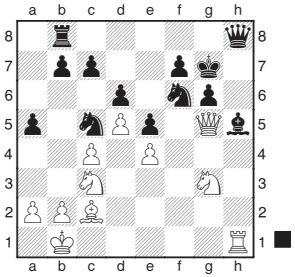
19...♘xh5?!

19. gxf3 20. hxg6 ♖h8 gave Black a big advantage.

20.♖dg1 ♖h8 21.fxg4 ♘f6 22.g5?!

22.♖xh8 ♕xh8 23.♘g3 ♗xg4 24.♖h1 ♗h5 25.♕g5 maintained the compensation.

Black is two pawns up, but it is hard for him to move. For example, 25...c6? 26.♖f1 ♘cd7 27.♗a4! with an advantage for White.



White has compensation for the two pawns sacrificed

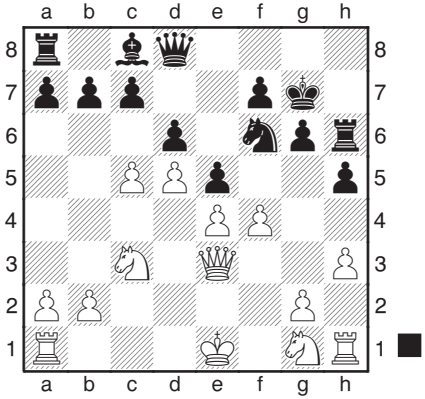
22...♘h5 23.♖f1 ♕e7 24.♖hg1 b5 25.cxb5 ♗xb5 26.♖f3 ♗xe2 27.♘xe2 a4 28.♖gf1 ♖hf8 29.♔a1 ♖a8

29...♕d7 was preferable, playing on both flanks and aiming for c6.

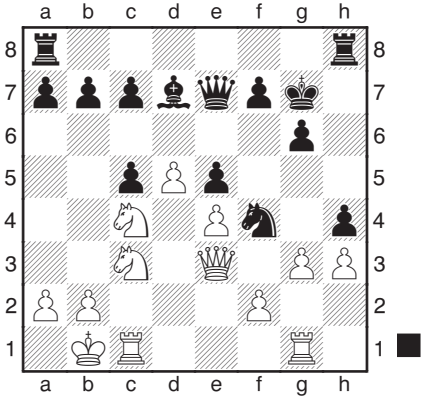
30.♕c3 ♕xg5 31.♖g1 ♕e7 32.♖h3 ♖h8 33.♕f3 ♘f4 34.♘xf4 exf4 35.♖xh8 ♖xh8 36.♕xf4 ♕f6 37.♕xf6+ ♔xf6 38.♖f1+ ♔e7 39.b4 axb3 40.axb3 ♖h4 41.♖e1 ♖h2 42.♔b1 ♘d7 43.♖e3 ♘e5 44.♖c3 ♔d8 45.♖g3 f6 46.b4 g5 47.♗d1 ♖d2

0–1

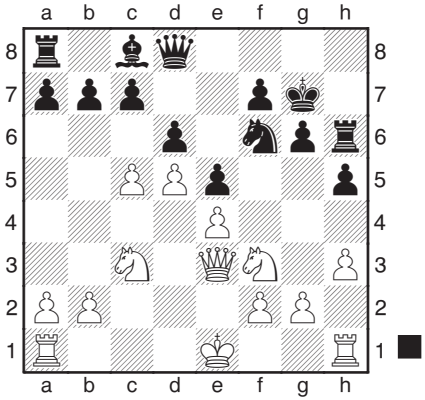
Your Move!



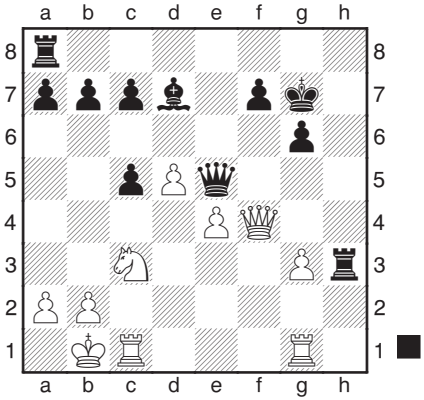
1. How should Black play after f4?



3. Is g3 a dangerous break?



2. What plan can Black carry out?

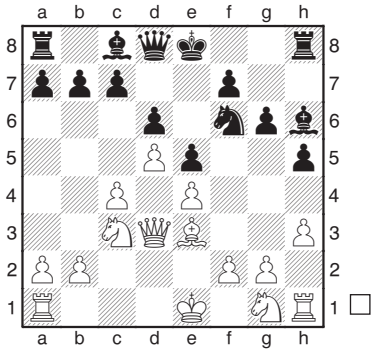


4. Should Black exchange queens?

Livaic (2550) – Sindarov (2722) [E71]

Blitz.Titled Tuesday 26.08.2025

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.h3 ♘bd7 6.♗e3 e5 7.d5 h5 8.♕d2 ♘c5 9.♗d3 ♘xd3+ 10.♕xd3 ♗h6



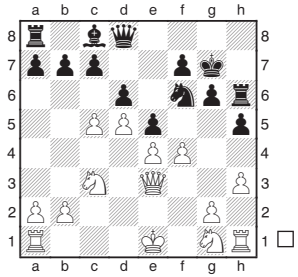
♗h6 is playable but risky

The exchange of bishops is playable, but 10...0-0, ♘h7 and f5 is considered more solid. Or, if we are worried about White's c5 break, 10... ♘d7.

11.♗xh6 ♖xh6 12.c5 ♔f8 13.♕e3 ♔g7 14.♘f3

The incisive 14. f4 was very interesting, after 14...exf4 15.♕xf4 h4 16.♘f3 ♘h5 17.♕e3 ♘g3 18.♖g1 ♕f6 19. 0-0-0 ♖h8 20.♖ge1 ♗d7 21.♔b1 ♖he8, with complex play.

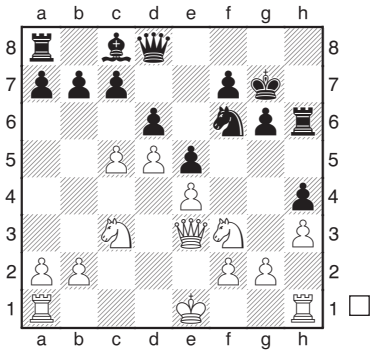
The idea of f4 is to attack the centre before Black stabilises his kingside. After the exchange of dark-squared bishops, the f4- and h4-squares are the most important ones for both sides, and Black has to watch over them very precisely.



f4 demanded precise play from Black

14...h4

Gaining space, fixing the kingside and preparing the manoeuvre ♘h5-f4.



h4 is very useful for stabilising Black's position

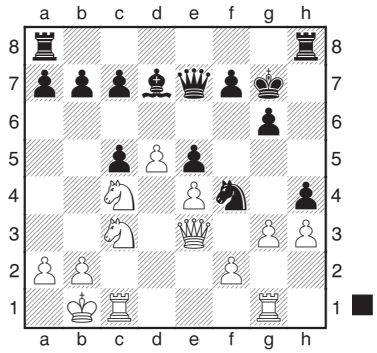
15.0–0–0 ♘h5 16.♔b1 ♖h8

♘f4 or ♕e7 were possible, but it seems natural to have the rook available to switch files.

17.♖c1 ♗d7 18.♘d2 ♘f4 19.♖hg1 dxc5 20.♘c4 ♕e7 21.g3

White's position was not easy, but ♘e2 looked more solid.

With 21. ♘e2 White exchanges the knight on f4, Black's best piece. For example, 21... ♘xe2 22. ♕xe2 ♖ad8 23. ♖gd1 and, although Black is still better thanks to his extra pawn and his control of the dark squares, White does not open up his kingside. With 21.g3, on the other hand, White opens lines precisely where Black has his rooks, and the h-file becomes a motorway towards the white king.

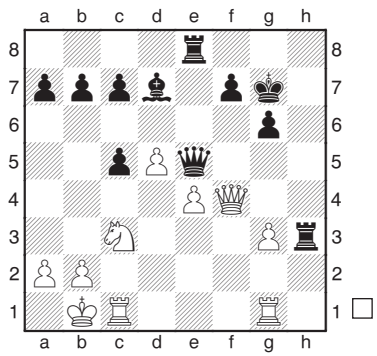


g3 opens the kingside in Black's favour

21...hxg3

21... ♘h3 22. ♖h1 hg3 23. fg3 and b6 was also possible, with a clear advantage for Black.

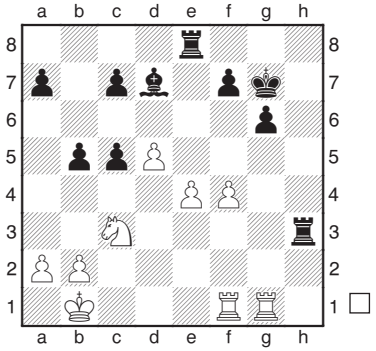
22.fxg3 ♖xh3 23. ♘xe5 ♕xe5 24. ♕xf4 ♖e8



♖e8 maintains the material advantage

This simple move keeps the extra pawn and the blockade on the dark squares.

25. ♖cf1 ♕xf4 26.gxf4 b5



b5 completely destabilises White's position

Sindarov judges the transformation of the position excellently. By exchanging queens White regains control of the e5-square and improves his pawn structure, but the mobilisation of Black's queenside majority together with the activity of his rooks decides the game.

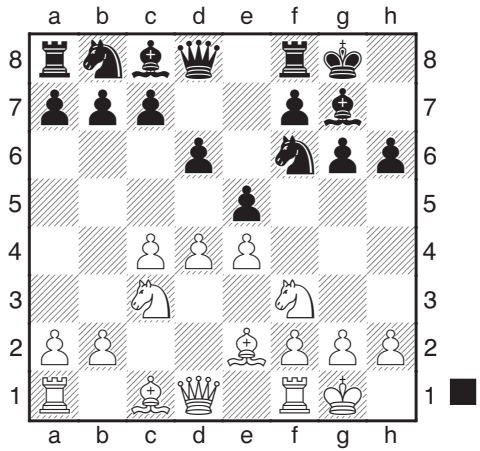
27.e5 b4 28. ♘e4 ♗f5 29. ♖e1 ♖d3 30. ♔c1 ♗xe4 31. ♖xe4 ♖xd5 32. ♔c2 ♖h8 33.e6 ♖e8 34. ♖ge1 ♖d4 35. ♖xd4 cxd4 36. ♖e5 ♖xe6 37. ♖c5 ♖e2+ 38. ♔b3 d3 39. ♖xc7 d2 40. ♔c2 d1 ♕+ 41. ♔xd1 ♖xb2 42. ♖xa7 ♖f2 43. ♖a4 ♖xf4 44.a3 ♖f1+ 45. ♔e2 ♖a1 46. ♖xb4 ♖xa3 47. ♖b7 g5 48. ♔f2 ♔g6 49. ♖b6+ f6 50. ♖b8 f5 51. ♖g8+ ♔h5 52. ♖a8 ♖xa8

0–1

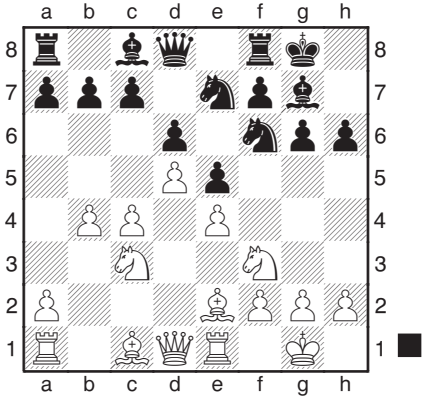
Chapter 2

e5 and h6 vs. the Classical

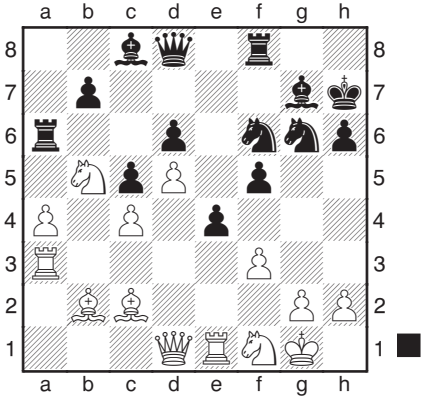
The traditional approach is to decide quickly on the development of the queen's knight to c6 or d7, whereas h6 leads to a very flexible and interesting fight. It ranges from keeping open the option of playing with an open centre via exd4, to using the h7-square for the knight if White decides to close the centre with d5. The idea is that White has to commit to a plan, and depending on that move Black will steer the game into a structure where h6 contributes most to his position.



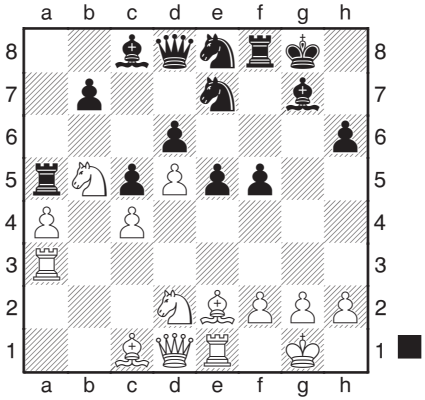
Your Move!



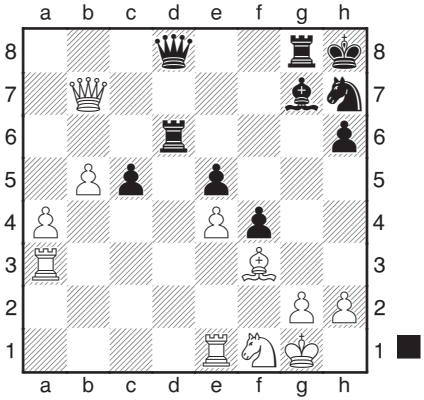
1. What is Black's typical reaction?



3. An interesting pawn sacrifice to activate the rook on a6



2. Where should the black rook on a5 go?

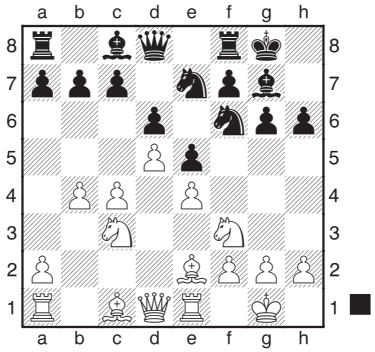


4. Which plan for Black unleashes a strong attack?

Vidit (2708) - Sindarov (2726) [E94]

Rapid. Mumbai TechM GCL Mumbai (4.3), 14.12.2025

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 h6 8.♖e1 ♘c6 9.d5 ♘e7 10.b4



b4 sets up a kind of Bayonet Attack

In the Bayonet Attack after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8. d5 ♘e7 9. b4 h6, the most promising continuations for White are 10 a4 or ♘d2. In the game position White is still somewhat better, so Black has gained more from ...h6 than White has from ♖e1.

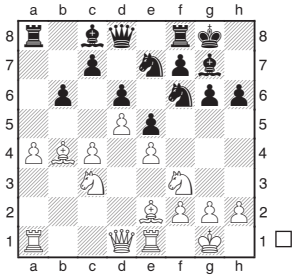
10...a5

A typical reaction from Black.

11.bxa5

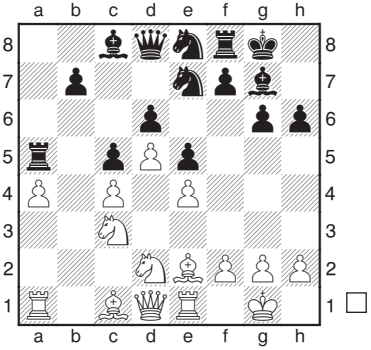
11. b5 would be a mistake, since after b6 Black blocks the queenside. But 11.♗a3 is thematic, with the idea that after 11... ab4 12.♗b4 b6, White can break with a5 and later with c5.

For example, 13.a4 ♘e8 14.♘b5 f5 15.♘d2 and White's queenside pressure arrives before Black's kingside attack.



♗a3 is thematic, preparing the a5 break and then c5

11...♖xa5 12.a4 ♘e8 13.♘d2 c5

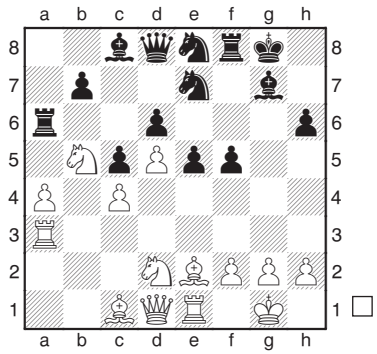


The c5-d6-e5 structure is one of Sindarov's favourites

Sindarov is very fond of c5-d6-e5 structures, but 13...♖a8 followed by f5 is safer for Black.

14.♖a3 f5 15.exf5 gxf5 16.♘b5 ♖a6

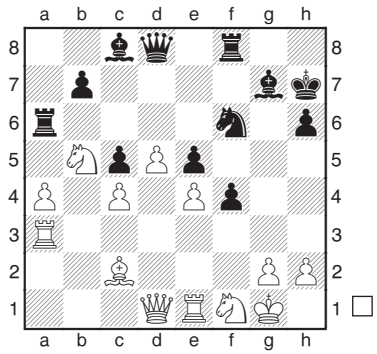
The knight on b5 is an excellent piece: it presses on d6 and c7 and cannot be driven away with c6 without weakening d6. With 17.♗d3 White could have kept a clear advantage, for example 17...♘f6 18.♗c2 f4 19.♘f3, controlling the e4-square.



White's rook on a3 is much more active than Black's on a6

White's rook on a3 can quickly swing over to the kingside, whereas Black's rook on a6 is blocked by its own pawn on d6. With a creative pawn sacrifice, Sindarov will bring this rook into the attack.

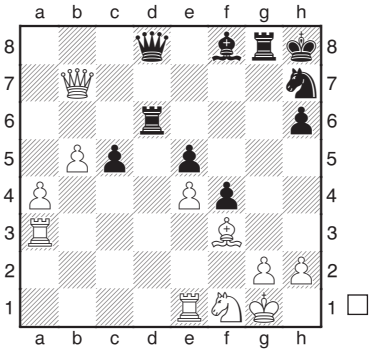
17.♗b2 ♘f6 18.♗d3 ♘g6 19.♗c2 ♔h7 20.♘f1 e4!? 21.f3 ♘e5 22.♗xe5 dxe5 23.fxe4 f4



An interesting pawn sacrifice

In return for a pawn Black has activated his rook and eliminated White's dark-squared bishop. But activating the bishop on g7 does not look easy.

24.♕d2 ♔h8 25.♗d1 ♖g8 26.♗f3 ♘h7 27.d6 ♗d7 28.♕d5 ♗xb5 29.cxb5 ♖xd6 30.♕xb7 ♗f8!

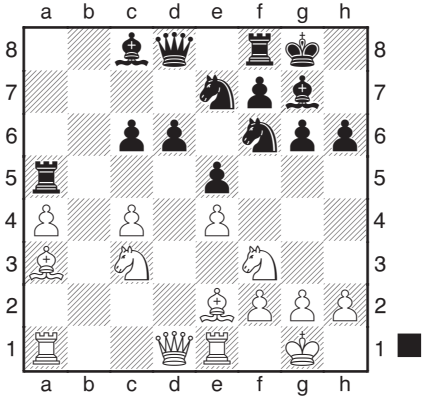


♗f8 and c4 give Black a decisive advantage

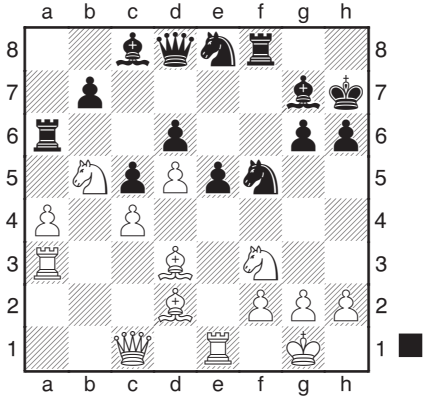
Surprisingly, Black has a decisive advantage. One of the keys is that after c4 the bishop or the queen will break through on the weakened g1-a7 diagonal. Being a rapid game, the rest of it is full of constant swings.

31.♕f7 ♘g5 32.♕h5 c4 33.♔h1 ♕b6 34.♖a2 c3 35.♗g4 ♕d4 36.♖d1 ♕c4 37.♖aa1 ♖xd1 38.♖xd1 ♘xe4 39.♕xe5+ ♗g7 40.♕xf4 ♖e8 41.♘e3 ♕c5 42.♗d7 c2 43.♖c1 f2+ 44.♕xf2 ♖xe3 45.♗f5 ♗d4 46.♕f4 ♔g7 47.h3 ♗e5 48.♕g4+ ♔f8 49.♗xc2 ♕xc2 50.♖f1+ ♔e7 51.♕h4+ ♔d7 52.♕xh6 ♕e4 53.♕h5 ♖e2 54.♕g4+ ♕xg4 55.hxg4 ♖e4 56.g3 ♖xa4 57.♔g2 ♖xg4 58.♖f3 ♖b4 59.♔h3 ♔e6 60.g4 ♗f4 61.♔h4 ♔e5 62.♔h5 ♖xb5 63.♖f1 ♔e4+ 64.♔g6 ♖b6+ 65.♔f7 ♖a6 66.g5 ♗xg5 67.♖e1+ ♔f5 68.♖f1+ ♗f4 69.♔e7 ♖a7+ 70.♔e8 ♔e6 71.♖e1+ ♗e5 72.♖d1 ♖b7 73.♖d2 ♖c7 74.♖d1 ♗c3 75.♔d8 ♖c5 76.♔e8 ♖c7 77.♔d8 ♖c4 78.♔e8 ♗a5 79.♔f8 ♖g4 80.♖c1 ♗b4+ 81.♔e8 ♖g8#

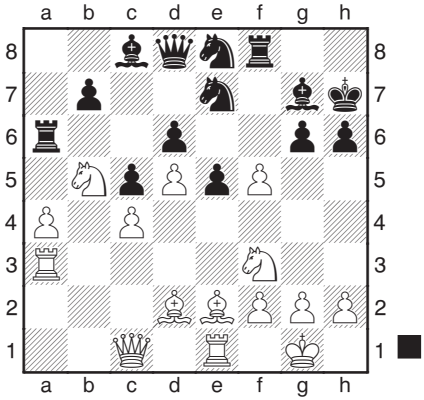
Your Move!



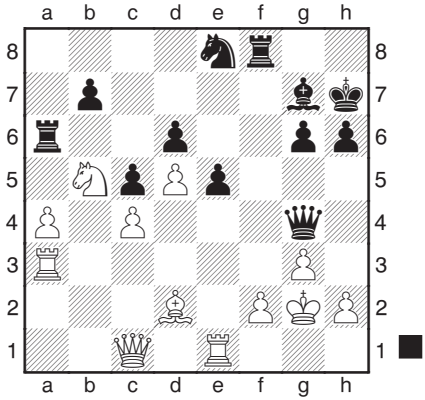
1. What is Black's typical reaction?



3. Which piece should Black exchange?



2. Assess the different captures on f5



4. What is Black's best move?

Dubov (2701) - Sindarov (2674) [E94]

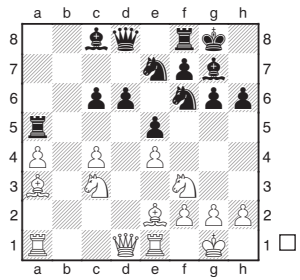
FIDE World Rapid Team Almaty (7.13), 03.08.2024

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♘c3 0–0 5.e4 d6 6.♗e2 e5 7.0–0 h6 8.♖e1 ♘c6 9.d5 ♘e7 10.b4 a5 11.bxa5 ♖xa5 12.a4 c5

Once again the c5-d6-e5 structure.

13.♗d2

If 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.♗a3 c5! followed by ♘c6-d4.



c5 and ♘c6-d4 with good play for Black

13...♘e8 14.♕c1 ♔h7 15.♘b5 ♖a6

Although the engines prefer returning to a8, we already know from the previous game that Sindarov likes this square better.

16.♖a3 f5 17.exf5

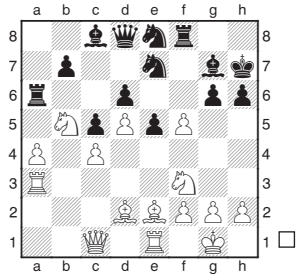
Black can capture on f5 in four different ways, and all of them have drawbacks:

- Capturing with the rook leaves it exposed and speeds up White's attack towards g6, for example with ♗d3 and ♘h4.

- Capturing with the pawn reinforces the e4-square, but again allows ♘h4 and ♖h3.

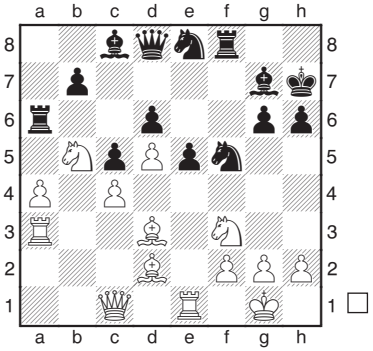
- Capturing with the bishop means giving it up after 18.♘h4, and the light squares become very weak in the medium term.

- Capturing with the knight is the least bad, since White cannot exploit the weakness on e4 and the ♘h4 jump is under control. For example, 18.♘c3 ♘d4 19.♗d1 ♘f6, controlling e4.



All the captures on f5 have drawbacks

17...♘xf5 18.♗d3 ♘h4

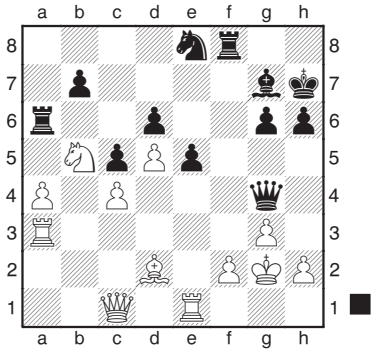


♘h4 is the right move for Black

19.♘xh4 ♕xh4 20.g3 ♕h5 21.♗e2 ♗g4 22.♗xg4 ♕xg4 23.♔g2

White threatens f3, which would trap the black queen and gain space. Black's

pieces are uncoordinated: the knight on e8 has no good squares and the bishop on g7 runs into its own pawns.



Black could have forced a draw with ♖a4!

Black is worse, so objectively the best move is 23...♖a4 24.♖a4 ♕f3+ with perpetual check. The perpetual is forced: 25.♔g1 ♕xf2+ 26.♔h1 ♕f3+ and the white king cannot escape. We will probably never know whether Sindarov missed it or trusted in the possibilities of his position. Javokhir, if you read this book, please write to me and clear it up for us. I am inclined to think you were playing for a win.

23...♖a8 24.a5 ♕d7 25.♕b1 ♘f6 26.♘c3 ♖f7 27.♘e4 ♘xe4 28.♕xe4 h5 29.♖b1 ♗h6

We already know how important it is to exchange this bishop.

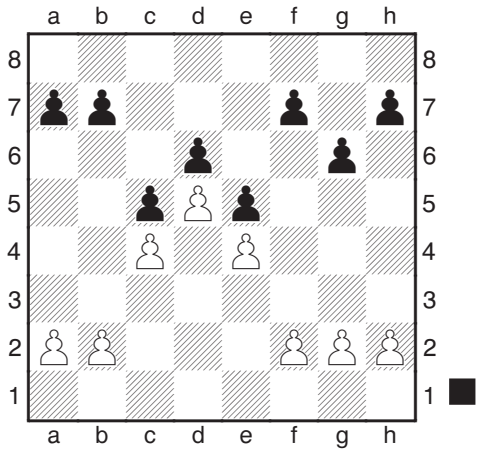
30.♗e1 ♗g5 31.♖ab3 ♖a7 32.h4 ♗d8 33.♖b5 ♕f5 34.f3 ♕xe4 35.fxe4 ♔g8 36.♗d2 ♔f8 37.♖1b2

½–½

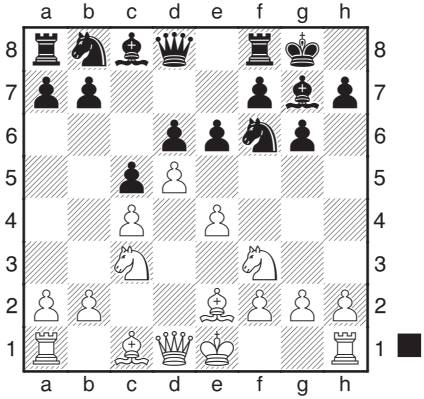
Chapter 3

The e5, d6 and c5 Structure

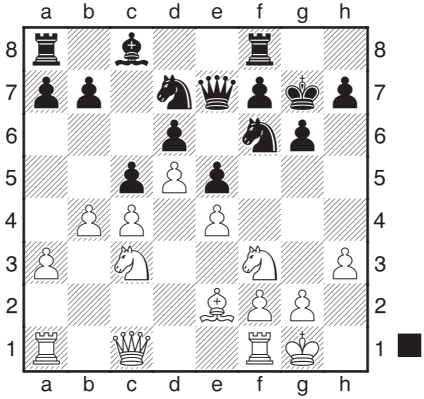
It can be reached by different routes; indeed, in the previous chapter we saw a version of it that favoured Black because the queenside was already very clearly defined. In the following games we will see how White tries to attack on the queenside with the b4 break, while Black counterattacks on the kingside with f5 or along the h-file.



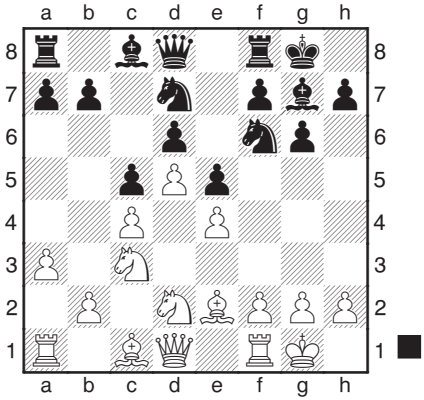
Your Move!



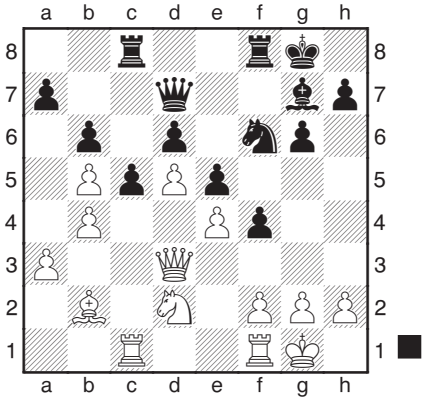
1. Why doesn't Black play e5 straight away?



3. How can Black play?



2. Name two plans for Black



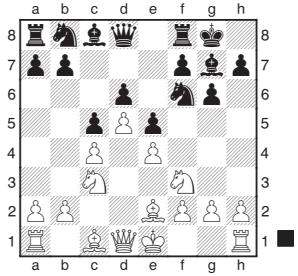
4. How can Black activate the kingside?

Firouzja (2759) - Sindarov (2558) [E91]

FIDE World Cup Krasnaya Polyana (2.5), 17.07.2021

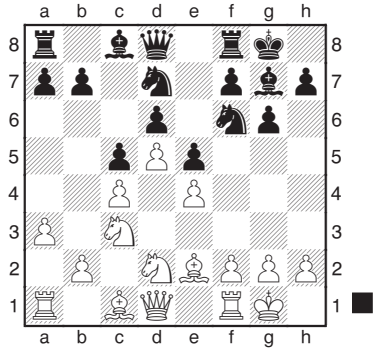
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 c5 7.d5 e6

It is not advisable to close the centre completely with e5 if White has not castled. For example 7...e5 8.♘d2 ♘e8 9. g4! f5 10. gxf5 gxf5 11. exf5 ♗xf5 12.♘de4 ♘d7 13.♗g4!, with a large advantage for White.

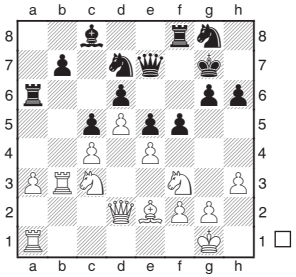


e5 is dangerous if White has not castled

8.♘d2 ♘bd7 9.0–0 e5 10.a3



White begins his b4 break. Black can play as in the game with ♘e8 for f5, or ♗h6, aiming to exchange the bad bishop, relieve the lack of space and adopt a waiting strategy. For example, 10...♗h6 11.♘f3 ♗c1 12.♕c1 ♔g7 13. h3 ♕e7 14. b4 a5! The queenside has opened, but it is not easy for White to break in. Black will prepare the f5 break carefully, above all watching out for the ♘g5-e6 manoeuvre. For example, 15. ba5 ♖a5 16.♕c2 ♘g8 17.♖fb1 ♖a6! (it is best not to leave that rook hanging) 18.♕d2 h6 (preventing ♘g5 after f5) 19.♖b3 f5 with counterplay.



♗h6 is an interesting plan to relieve the lack of space

10...♘e8 11.b4 f5 12.♖b1 ♘ef6?!

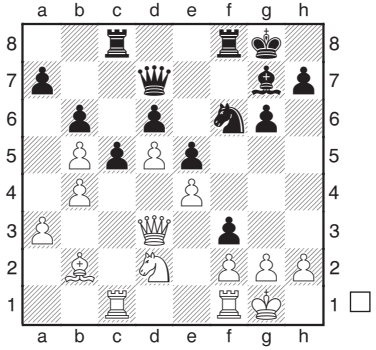
This allows the typical counterattacking manoeuvre of the white knight on the kingside: 13. exf5 gxf5 14.♘f3! h6 15.♘h4!

It was preferable to consolidate first with 12...b6

13.♘b5 ♘e8 14.♕c2 b6 15.♘c3 ♕e7 16.♗b2 f4 17.♗g4 ♘c7 18.♘b5 ♘xb5 19.cxb5 ♘f6 20.♗xc8 ♖axc8 21.♖bc1 ♕d7 22.♕d3 f3!

A very typical pawn sacrifice: it opens the f-file for Black's rooks and weakens White's castled position. The most accurate was 23.♕xf3, and after 23...♗h6 24.♕e2 ♗xd2 25.♕xd2 ♘xe4 Black

regains the pawn with equality. In the game White preferred to capture with the knight, which no longer defends the e4-square.



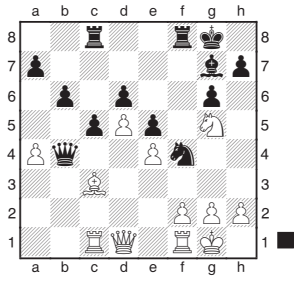
f3 brings Black's whole kingside to life

23. ♘xf3

(if 23.♕f3 both ♗h6 and ♕b5 give Black good play)

23... ♘h5 24. ♘g5 ♘f4 25. ♕d1 ♕xb5 26.a4 ♕xb4 27. ♗c3 ♕c4!

Paralysing White's pieces; 28. ♗e5 fails to ♕c1! and ♘e2

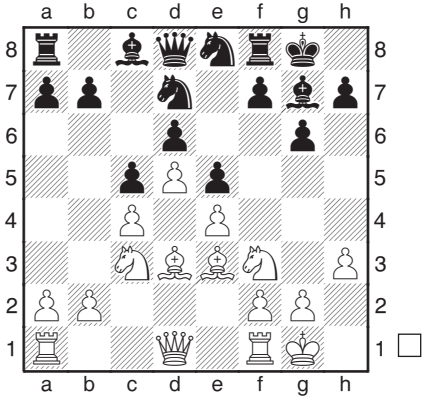


27... ♕c4! paralyses White's pieces

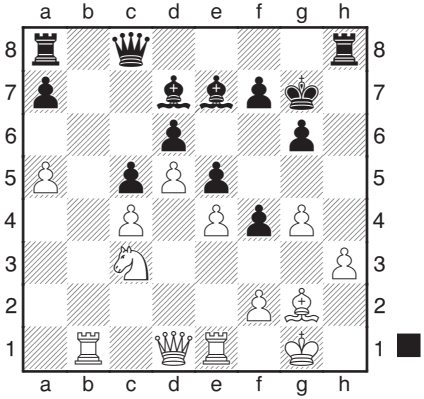
28. ♖c2 ♕xa4 29. ♗d2 h6 30. ♗xf4 hxg5 31. ♗xg5 ♕xe4 32. ♖e1 ♕f5 33.h4 ♗f6 34. ♗h6 ♖f7 35.g3 ♕h5 36. ♕c1 ♖h7 37. ♗e3 ♗xh4 38. ♕d1 ♕xd1 39. ♖xd1 ♗f6 40. ♖a1 ♖b7 41. ♖a6 ♔f7 42. ♔g2 ♔e7 43. ♖ca2 ♖cc7 44. ♗d2 b5 45. ♗a5 ♖d7 46.f4 b4 47. ♖e2 ♖b5 48.g4 ♔f7 49. ♖f2 e4

0–1

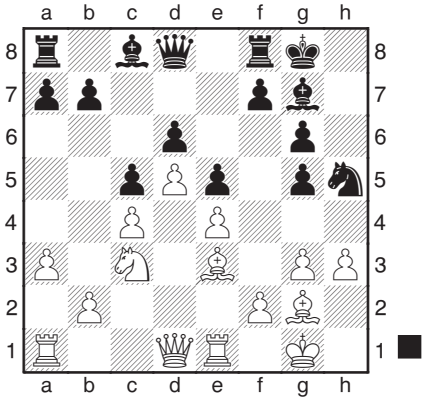
Your Move!



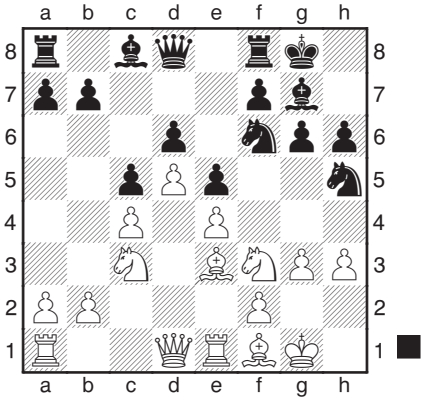
1. What is White's typical reaction?



3. What is Black's best move?



2. How should Black attack on the kingside?



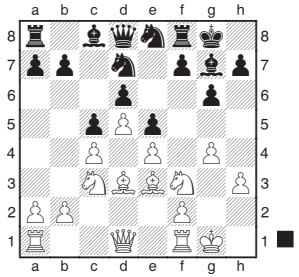
4. Which manoeuvre does Black have to try to exchange pieces and relieve the lack of space?

Lazavik (2605) - Sindarov (2721) [E90]

Blitz. Comet op Titled Losers Chess.com INT (7.1), 19.10.2025

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 c5 4.d5 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.h3 0–0 7.♗d3 e6 8.♘f3 ♘bd7 9.0–0 e5 10.♗e3

With the bishop on d3 it is harder for Black to play f5. If, for example, 10... ♘e8 11. g4! with a big space advantage on the kingside. It is very easy for White to reinforce his position with ♔g2, ♘e2-g3, ♖h1... and Black is cramped.



g4 means a big gain of space for White

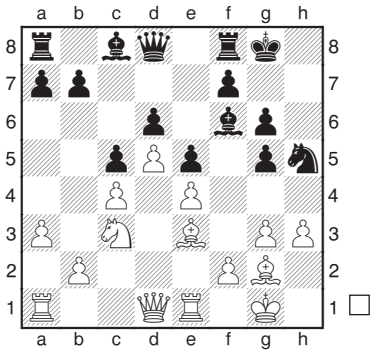
10... ♘h5 11.♖e1 h6 12.g3 ♘df6

This knight dance aims to induce weaknesses on White's kingside.

13.♗f1 ♘h7 14.♗g2 ♘g5 15.♘xg5 hxg5 16.a3 ♗f6!

Beginning the manoeuvre ♔g7, ♖h8, ♗d7 and ♕c8.

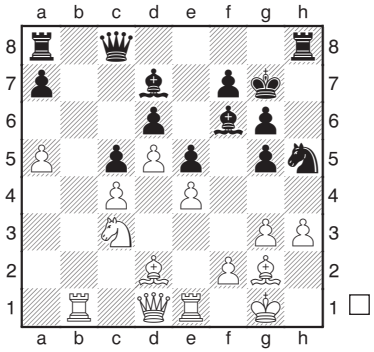
The plan is simple and very effective: after hxg5 the h-file becomes half-open and Black will occupy it with his heavy pieces, while the queen on c8, behind the bishop on d7, eyes h3. More accurate for White was 17.♗f3, attacking the knight on h5 and forcing it back to g7, away from the attack. After 17.b4 White seeks counterplay on the queenside, but Black's attack arrives first.



♗f6! Preparing the attack along the h-file

17.b4 b6 18.♖b1 ♔g7 19.a4 ♖h8 20.♗d2 ♗d7 21.bxc5 bxc5 22.a5 ♕c8

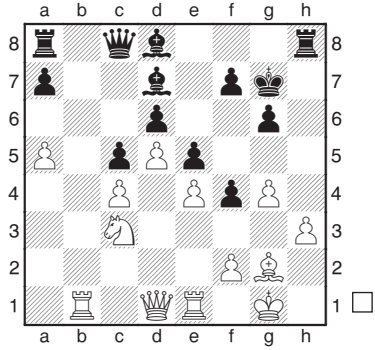
Black is already much better.



Black's pieces are very active against the white king

23.♘b5 ♗e7 24.g4 ♘f4 25.♗xf4 gxf4 26.♘c3 ♗d8!

With this manoeuvre Black takes control of the b-file. Black's advantage is already very large.



Black plays an excellent endgame, but allows a double attack in the final seconds.

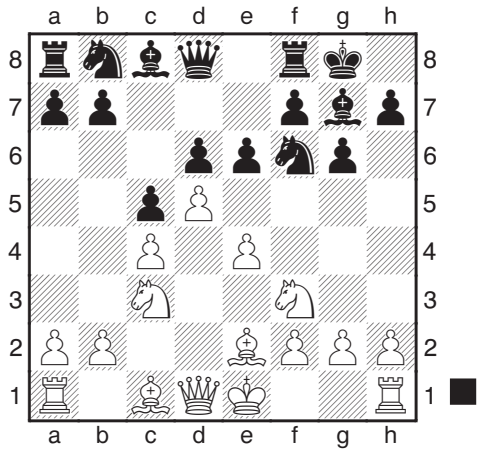
27.♖a1 ♖b8 28.♕d3 ♖b4 29.♖eb1 ♖xb1+ 30.♘xb1 a6 31.♘c3 ♕c7 32.♘e2 ♗h4 33.♕c3 ♗f6 34.♘c1 ♖b8 35.♘d3 ♕b7 36.♗f3 ♕b3 37.♕xb3 ♖xb3 38.♗e2 f3 39.♗f1 ♗d8 40.♘e1 f5 41.gxf5 gxf5 42.♗d3 ♔f6 43.h4 ♖c3 44.♔f1 fxe4 45.♗xe4 ♖xc4 46.♗xf3 ♖xh4 47.♗e2 ♗c8 48.♔g1 ♖b4 49.♘g2 c4 50.♘e3 c3 51.♔f1 e4 52.♔e1 ♔e5 53.♔d1 ♔d4? 54.♘c2+ ♔c5 55.♘xb4 ♔xb4 56.♖b1+ ♔a3 57.♖b8 ♗d7 58.♖xd8 ♔b2 59.♖b8+ ♗b5 60.♖c8 ♗a4+ 61.♔e1 c2 62.♔d2

1-0

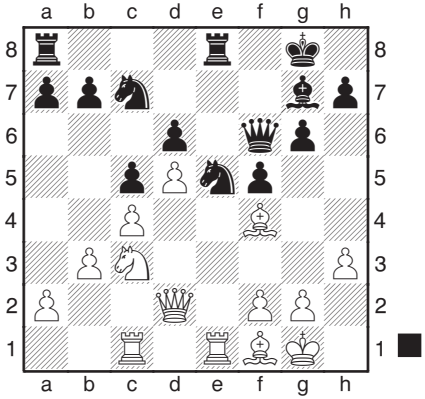
Chapter 4

Transposition to the Benoni

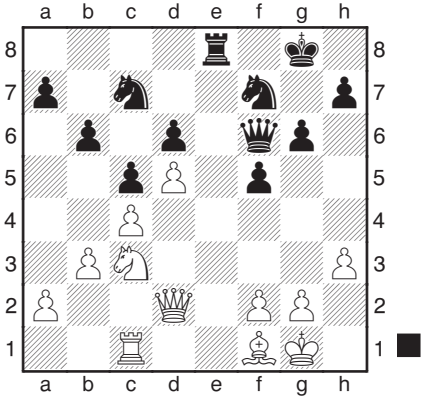
We have reached one of the main positions of the Benoni. Sindarov applies a very simple plan: take on d5 and try for ♗g4*f3. Theory (and the engines!) assess the resulting positions as favourable for White. Yet game after game Sindarov shows us how to win them with the black pieces.



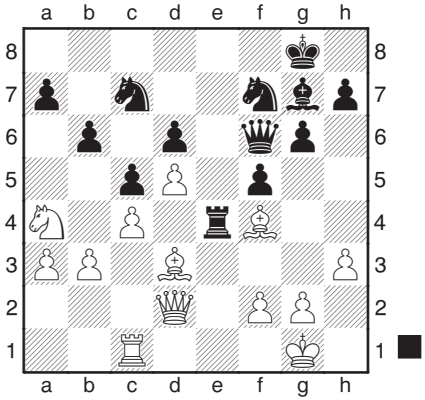
Your Move!



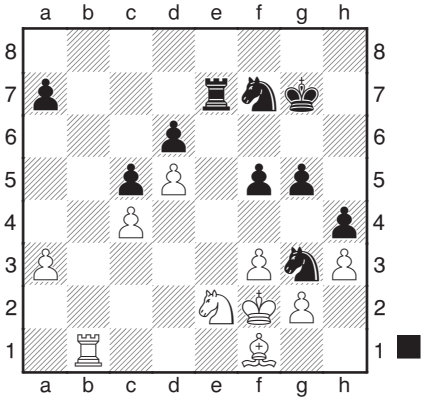
1. How should Black regroup?



3. How can Black improve his position?



2. Black to play and win



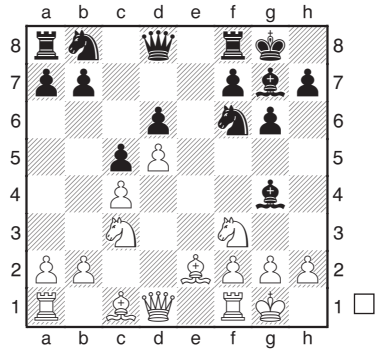
4. Should Black exchange on f1?

Firouzja (2762) - Sindarov (2721) [E91]

Blitz. Comet op Titled Losers Chess.com INT (6.1), 19.10.2025

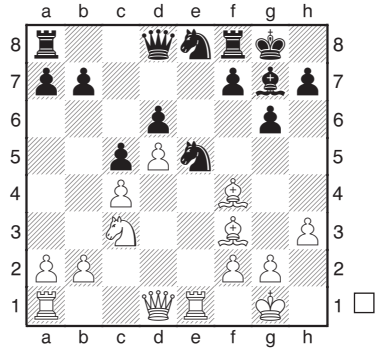
1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.d4 0–0 6.♗e2 c5 7.d5 e6 8.0–0 exd5 9.exd5 ♗g4

This is Sindarov's favourite manoeuvre: exchanging the bishop for the knight. The aim is to relieve the lack of space and control the dark squares.



♗g4xf3 is Sindarov's favourite manoeuvre

10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘bd7 12.♗f4 ♘e8 13.♖e1 ♘e5



A typical position of the variation

The basic position of the variation. Ideas for Black:

- f5, which controls e4 and tries to curb White's space-gaining g4, since if White plays it, the f-file will open for Black.

- ♘e8-c7 to support b5 and cover the weakness on e6.

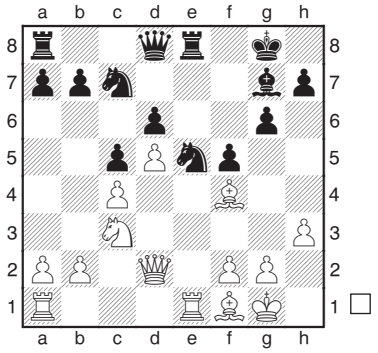
- ♘e5-f7 to defend d6 and control g5 and h6.

Although the engines insist on a slight advantage for White throughout this set-up, Sindarov's practical results are excellent. In fact, some strong opponents avoid the ♗g4xf3 manoeuvre.

14.♗e2 ♘c7

As we will see in the next game, it is usually advisable to play f5 earlier, to control ♘e4.

15.♗f1 ♖e8 16.♕d2 f5

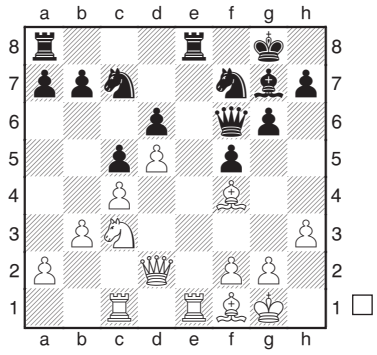


f5 controls the e4-square and makes White's g4 harder

17.b3 ♕f6 18.♖ac1 ♘f7!

A typical knight manoeuvre, combining defence of the weak points with threats of expansion with g5.

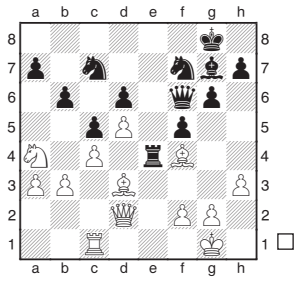
Now the g4 advance no longer works: after 19.g4? ♖xe1 20.♕xe1 fxg4 21.♕e3 ♖e8 the f-file opens and Black is clearly better.



♘f7! Improves the coordination of Black's pieces

19.♘a4 b6 20.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21.♕d1

Si 21.a3 ♖e4! 22.♗d3? ♖f4! 23.♕f4 ♗h6

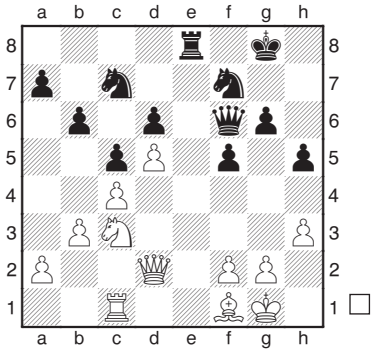


♗d3 is a serious mistake

21. ... ♗h6 22.♗xh6 ♘xh6 23.♕d2 ♘f7 24.♘c3 h5!

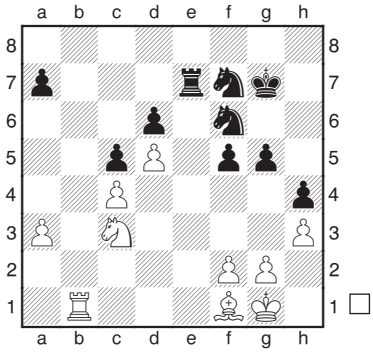
Gaining space on the kingside. The position is equal, but Black's game is easier to play. White will break with b4, but Black will coordinate his pieces very well to combine attack and defence.

The pawn will reach h4 and fix White's kingside: g3 will no longer be possible, and the g3-square will become an entry point for the black knight, as happens in the game. Meanwhile, the knights on f7 and c7 defend d6 and e6, the only weaknesses in Black's position.



h5 gaining space on the kingside

25.a3 h4 26.b4 ♔g7 27.♖d1 ♖e7 28.bxc5 bxc5 29.♖b1 ♘e8 30.♘e2 g5 31.♕c3 ♕xc3 32.♘xc3 ♘f6

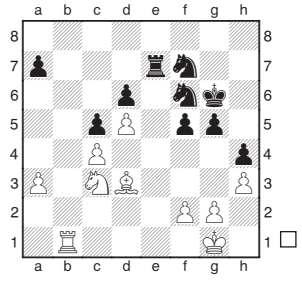


Black's pieces combine attack and defence very well

33.f3?

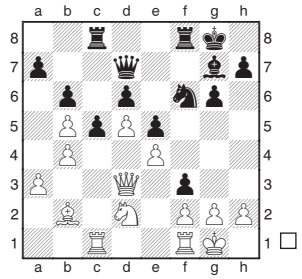
If 33.♗d3 ♔g6, it looks as though the king is exposed on the light diagonal, but the black pawn on h4 has fixed the kingside and prevents a direct h4, and after ♘e5 the bishop will have to leave the diagonal or lose the c4-pawn.

For example, 34.a4 ♘h5 35.a5 ♘f4 36.♗f1 and the knight on f4 dominates the board, with Black playing better.



After ♘e5 the bishop must leave the b1-h7 diagonal

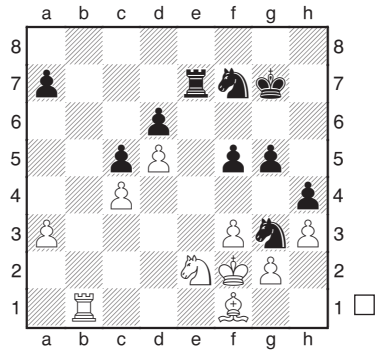
But 33.f3 has seriously weakened the dark squares, and with the manoeuvre ♘h5-g3 or f4, Black obtains a very comfortable advantage.



f3 brings Black's whole kingside to life

33...♘h5 34.♔f2 ♘g3 35.♘e2 ♘xf1

Converting one advantage into another. The passive bishop on f1 is eliminated, but this allows the decisive entry of the black rook via e3 or b7.



♘f1 is the correct exchange

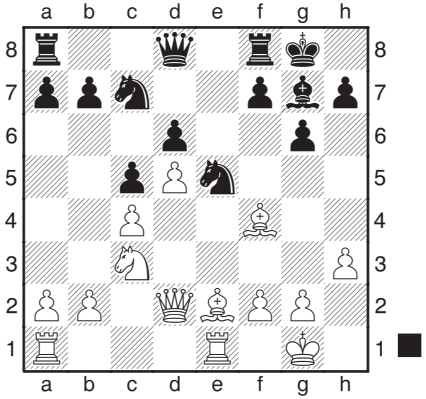
36.♔xf1 ♘e5

Good enough, but ♖e3 was very strong.

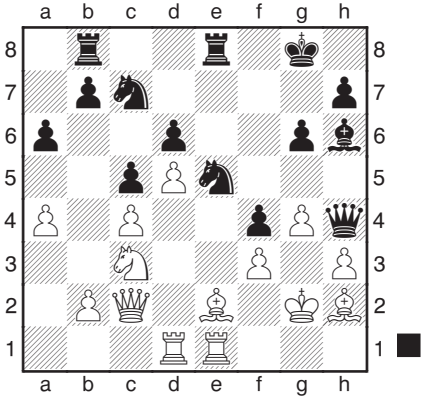
37.♖c1 ♖b7 38.f4 ♘d3 39.♖d1 ♘xf4 40.♘xf4 gxf4 41.♖e1 ♖b3 42.♖e6 ♖xa3 43.♖xd6 ♖c3 44.♖a6 ♖xc4 45.♖xa7+ ♔f6 46.d6 ♖d4 47.d7 ♔e7 48.♖c7 c4 49.♔f2 ♔d8 50.♖c5 ♔xd7 51.♖xf5 ♔d6 52.♖f8 ♔c5 53.♖h8 c3 54.♔e2 ♔c4 55.♖c8+ ♔b3 56.♖b8+ ♔a2 57.♖c8 ♔b2 58.♖b8+ ♔c1 59.♖a8 c2 60.♖b8 ♖d2+ 61.♔f3 ♔d1 62.♖c8 c1D 63.♖xc1+ ♔xc1 64.♔xf4 ♖xg2 65.♔f3 ♖g3+

0–1

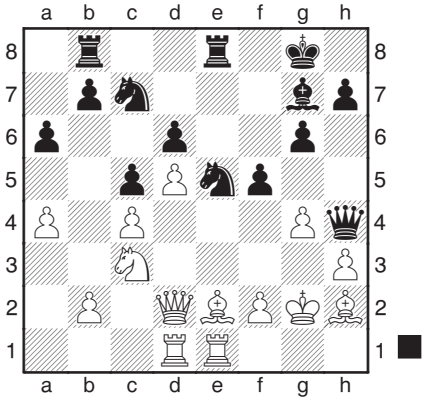
Your Move!



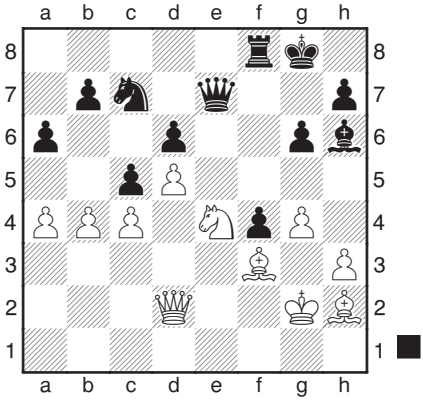
1. What is Black's typical move?



3. With which two moves does Black obtain a clear advantage?



2. What should Black play?
Assess the resulting position

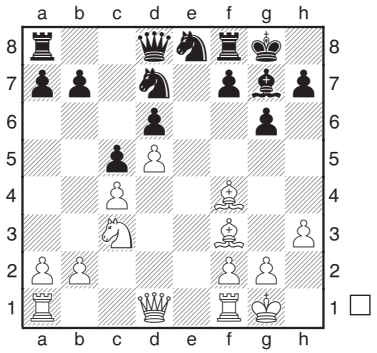


4. Simple but pretty

Shankland (2654) – Sindarov (2721) [E91]

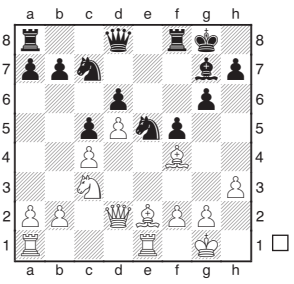
Blitz Titled Tuesday 07.10.2025

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 c5 7.d5 e6 8.0–0 exd5 9.exd5 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘bd7 12.♗f4 ♘e8



13.♕d2 ♘e5 14.♗e2 ♘c7 15.♖fe1 ♖e8?!

This allows 16.♘e4!; 15...f5! was better



Position after 15...f5!

In some lines the rook may be better placed on the f-file.

16.♖ad1 a6 17.a4 ♖b8 18.♗h2 f5 19.g4 ♕h4

19...b5! was much better: 20.axb5 axb5 21.cxb5 fxg4 22.hxg4 ♕d7

20.♔g2 ♗h6?

20...fxg4 was necessary: 21.hxg4 ♘xc4 22.♗xc4 ♕xg4+ 23.♗g3 ♕xc4 24.♗xd6 ♕g4+ 25.♗g3 ♖bd8, with a very complex position.

21.♕c2

21. f4! Followed by ♗g3, with a big advantage for White.

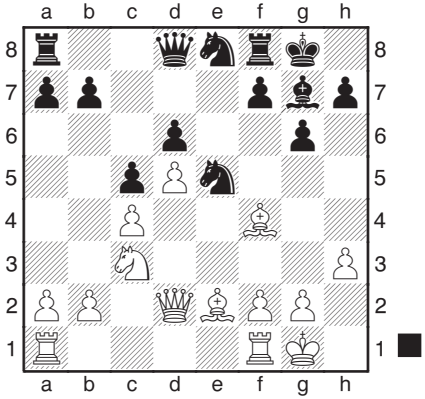
21...f4 22.f3? ♘xf3

22...♘c4 was also very good.

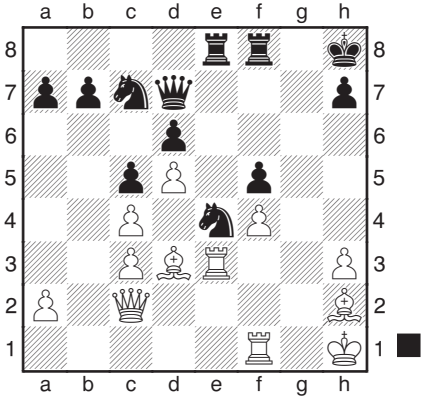
23.♗xf3 ♖xe1 24.♘e4 ♖xd1 25.♕xd1 ♕e7 26.♕d2 ♖f8 27.b4 ♕xe4 28.♗xe4 f3+ 29.♗xf3 ♗xd2 30.♗xd6 ♖f7 31.♗xc5 ♘e8 32.d6 ♖d7 33.♗d5+ ♔f8 34.♗e6 ♖xd6 35.b5 axb5 36.axb5 b6 37.♗xd6+ ♘xd6 38.♗d5 ♔e7 39.h4 h6 40.♔f3 ♔f6 41.♗g8 ♗e1 42.h5 g5 43.♔e3 ♔e5 44.♗d5 ♗b4 45.♔d3 ♗c5 46.♗g8 ♔f4 47.♗e6 ♘e4

0–1

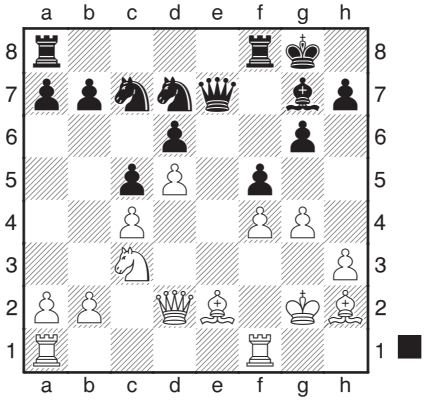
Your Move!



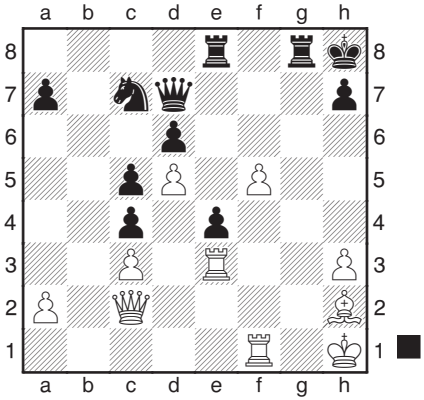
1. What is Black's typical plan?



3. How does Black open the game?



2. Would you exchange the bishop on g7?



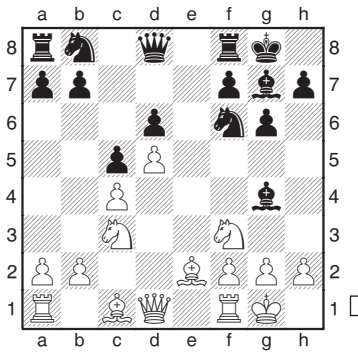
4. A forceful and decisive sequence.

Gunina (2439) – Sindarov (2658) [E91]

Blitz. Orsay Blitz op (8), 17.09.2023

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 c5 7.d5 e6 8.0–0 exd5 9.exd5 ♗g4

Once again Sindarov's favourite manoeuvre: exchanging the c8-bishop for the f3-knight to ease his position and fight for the dark squares.

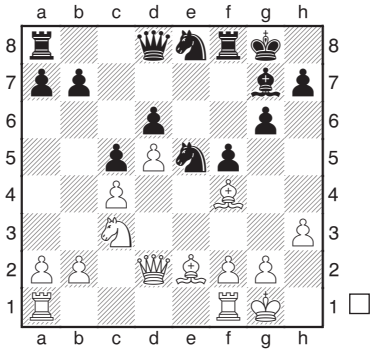


♗g4xf3, the usual manoeuvre

10.♗f4 ♘e8 11.♕d2 ♘d7 12.h3 ♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♘e5 14.♗e2 f5

We reach a structure very similar to that of the game Firouzja – Sindarov. With f5 Black controls the e4-square and hinders White's g4 advance.

Black has a clear plan: ♘c7 to support b5 and ♘f7 to watch over g5 and e5. For White the position is not simple either: if he plays f4 to drive the knight away from e5, he leaves the e3- and g3-squares weak. A logical continuation was 15.♗e3 ♘f6 16.f4 ♘f7 17.♗f2 ♖e8 18.♖ae1 a6 19.a4 ♕d7 20.♗f3 ♖xe1 21.♖xe1 ♖e8 22.♔f1 ♖xe1+ 23.♕xe1 ♔f8, with a slight advantage for White, although it would lead to the typical endgame that Sindarov is used to holding... and winning!



f5 controls e4 and restrains White's g4

15.♗h2 ♘c7 16.f4 ♘d7

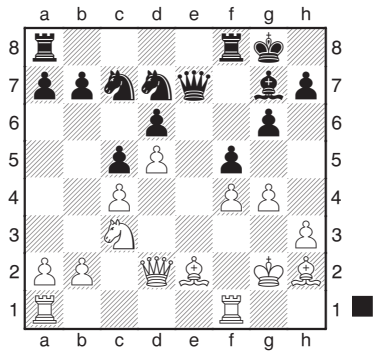
16...♘f7 was more natural, defending d6 and controlling g5 and h6, as we saw in the previous game.

17.g4 ♕e7?!

17...a6 was interesting, preparing ...b5. For example, 18.a4 ♗d4+ 19.♔g2 b5!? 20.axb5 axb5 21.cxb5 ♖xa1 22.♖xa1 ♘b6 23.♗g3 fxg4 24.hxg4 ♖e8, with a very complex game.

18.♔g2?!

18.♖ae1! was very strong, exploiting the poor position of the black queen on the e-file.

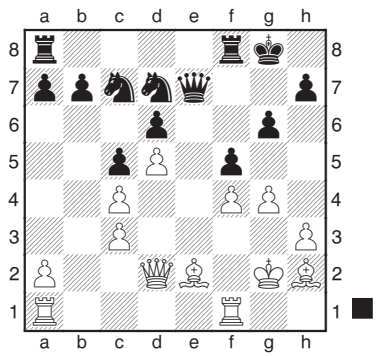


Black gives up his bishop on c3

18... ♗xc3!

A decision that may seem to go against the principles of the King's Indian: giving up the dark-squared bishop. Yet it is thematic in these positions. After bxc3 the doubled pawns on c3 and c4 will be a permanent weakness, and the black knights will find good squares, above all e4. It is important that the f4-f5 structure is fixed, so that White's dark-squared bishop cannot come into play.

19.bxc3



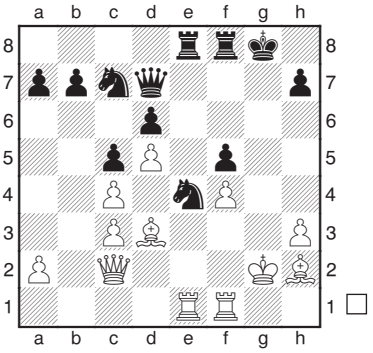
The doubled pawns compensate for giving up the bishop

19... ♘f6

19... ♘e8 was interesting, with the idea ♘g7, reinforcing the f5-pawn.

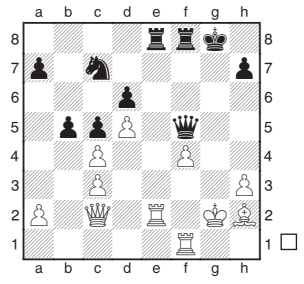
For example, 19... ♘e8 20.g5 ♘g7 21.a4 ♖ae8 22. ♖fe1 and the knight on g7 solidly defends f5 and e6. The c4-pawn is now a permanent target, because no pawn can defend it, and Black will attack it with the b5 break, as happens in the game. The price of ♗xc3 is the dark squares around the black king, but with the pawns fixed on f5 and f4, White has no practical way to exploit it.

20. ♖ae1 ♖ae8 21. ♗d3 ♕d7 22.gxf5 gxf5 23. ♕c2 ♘e4!?



23... ♘e4!?, a thematic offer

Although the engine finds a concrete refutation after 24. ♗xe4 fxe4 25.f5!, the idea is thematic and instructive: a pawn is given up to weaken the enemy king's position, specifically the light squares. If instead of 25.f5! White plays 25. ♖xe4, then 25... ♕f5 26. ♖e2 b5!, with good play for Black.



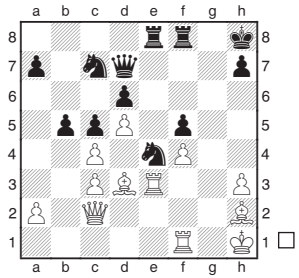
After 25. ♖xe4 ♕f5 26. ♖e2 b5!

24.♔h1 ♔h8

Eliminating the knight with 24.♗xe4 ♖xe4 25.♖xe4 fxe4 26.♕xe4 was the most sensible course.

25.♖e3? b5!

25.♖e3? is a mistake; 25.♗xe4 was necessary. Now the b5 break strikes at the c4-pawn, which holds up the entire white chain. If 26.cxb5 ♘xd5 and the c3-pawn falls too. And if 26.♗xe4 bxc4! (better than fxe4) Black regains the piece with advantage.



b5 strikes at the base of the white chain

26.♕g2 ♖g8 27.♕c2 bxc4 28.♗xe4?

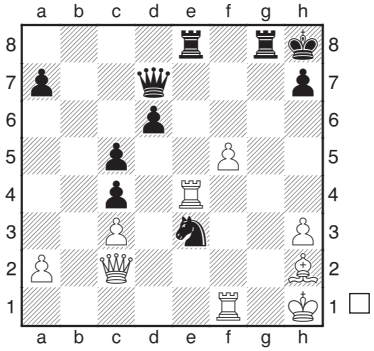
28.♗xc4 was better, although after 28...♕e7 Black's advantage is already clear.

28...fxe4 29.f5 ♘xd5!

The d5-pawn was blocking the long diagonal. Now the black queen aims straight at the white king from c6 or b7.

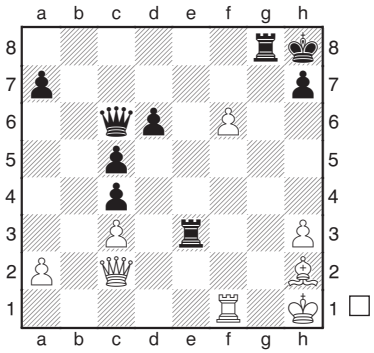
30.♖xe4 ♘e3!

A forceful move: the knight attacks both the queen on c2 and the rook on f1. White has no satisfactory defence. If 31.♕f2 ♘xf1 32.♖g4 ♘e3 33.♖xg8+ ♖xg8, Black wins easily, and if 31.♖g4 ♘xc2 32.♗f4 ♕xf5, the material advantage is decisive. That is why Gunina gives up the exchange, but after the capture on e3 the long diagonal is open towards her king. The black queen needs just one check along that diagonal, and it will arrive very soon with ...♕c6+.



♘e3! attacks the queen and the rook on f1

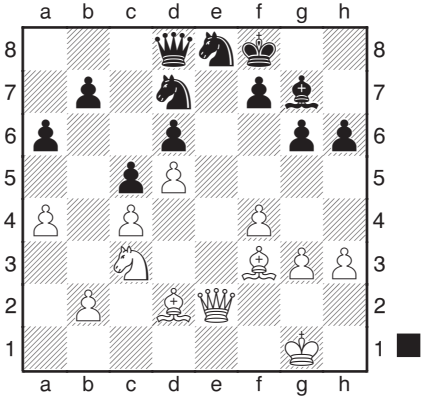
31.♖xe3 ♖xe3 32.f6 ♕c6+



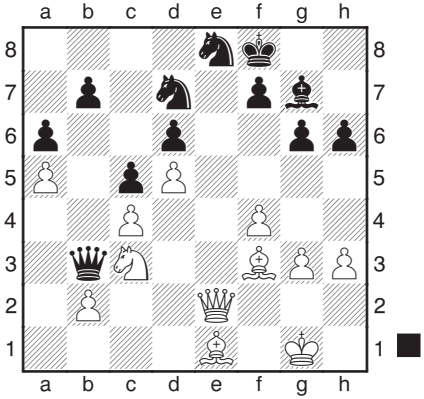
The long diagonal decides the game

0–1

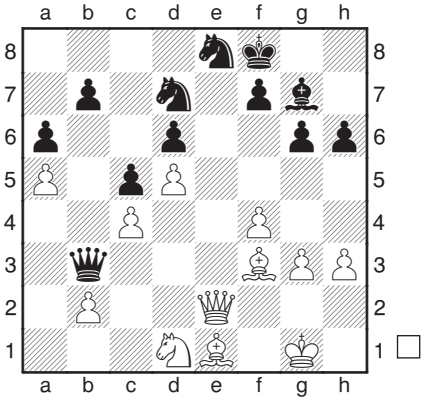
Your Move!



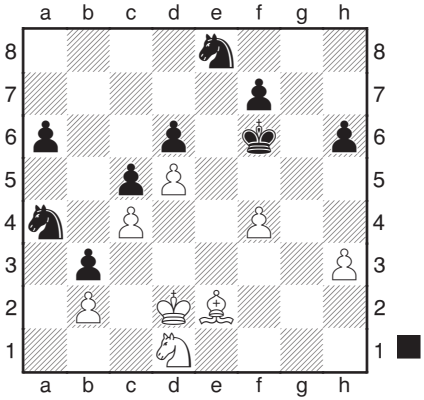
1. How does Black exploit the move g3?



3. How does Black continue on the queenside?



2. What should White play?

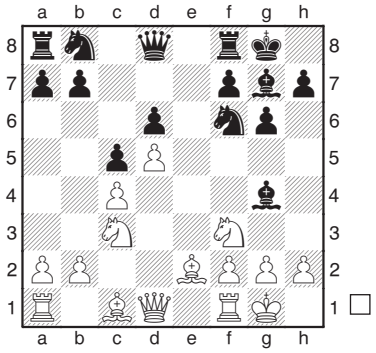


4. How does Black improve his knight on e8?

Gelfand (2592) – Sindarov (2680) [E91]

Blitz. Charlotte, Naroditsky Blitz final (8), 05.07.2026

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 0–0 5.d4 d6 6.♗e2 c5 7.d5 e6 8.0–0 exd5 9.exd5 ♗g4



Once again, ♗g4xf3

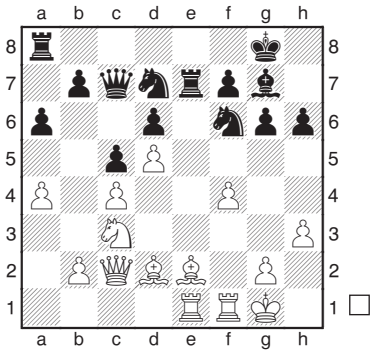
The same structure as in the previous games. Sindarov repeats his plan: exchange the bishop for the f3-knight and fight for the dark squares.

10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘bd7 12.♕c2 ♖e8

12...♘e8! was better, for example 13.♘e4 h6 14.♗f4 ♘e5 15.♗e2 f5, and Black has good play.

13.♗g5 h6 14.♗d2 a6 15.a4 ♕c7 16.♖ae1 ♘e5 17.♗e2 ♖e7 18.f4 ♘ed7

With 13.♗g5 White provokes h6 and will now try to attack on the kingside. Black will exchange a pair of rooks to reduce the force of that attack.



White has gained space

With f4 White drives the knight away from e5 and gains space. The engines give him an advantage. However, Sindarov is used to defending actively in such positions.

19.♗f3 ♖ae8 20.♖xe7 ♖xe7 21.♖e1 ♖xe1+ 22.♗xe1 ♕d8 23.♕e2 ♘e8 24.♗d2 ♔f8

We have now reached the typical endgame which the engine assesses as a slight advantage for White, but in which Sindarov plays with ease as Black.

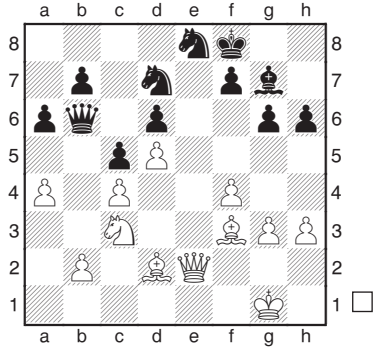
25.g3?!

This weakens the second rank and the f3-square. 25.b3 was better, holding the queenside.

25...♕b6!

25...♕a5 was also interesting, attacking the a4-pawn directly, but the idea is the same: the b3- and a4-squares become targets. For example, if 26.♘d1 ♕b3 27.a5, Black wins a pawn with 27...♗xb2 28.♘xb2 ♕xb2. In a blitz game it is very

hard to defend a passive position: White has to watch b2 and a4 at the same time, and any inaccuracy costs material, as will happen a few moves later.



The black queen heads for b3

The queen exploits the fact that the b2-pawn is defended only by the bishop and seeks out the b3-square, from where it attacks b2 and a4.

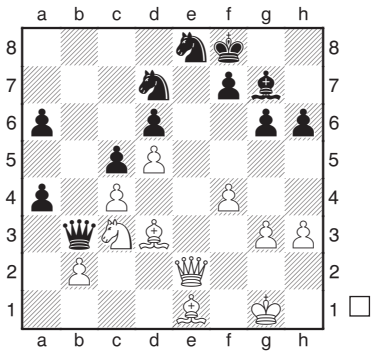
26.♗e1 ♕b3 27.a5 ♕b4 28.♘d1 ♕b3 29.♘c3

29.♗e4! was necessary: the bishop then supports the queenside and White equalises.

29...b6!

With this break Black opens the queenside, where his queen is very active.

30.♗e4 bxa5 31.♗d3?! a4



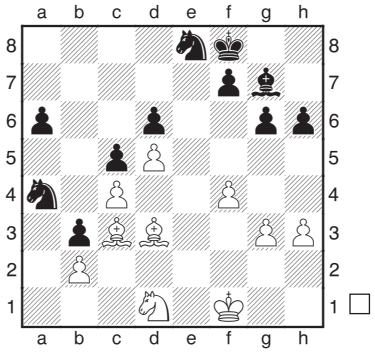
Black wins a pawn

31.♗b1 was more tenacious. Now Black is a pawn up.

32.♕c2 ♕b4 33.♔f1 ♘b6 34.♘d1 ♕b3! 35.♕xb3 axb3

The exchange of queens favours Black: the b3-pawn is a thorn in White's queenside.

36.♗c3 ♘a4



The knight on a4 attacks b2

37.♗xg7+ ♔xg7

The endgame is very favourable for Black: the b3-pawn fixes the queenside, the knight on a4 attacks b2, and the white bishop is hemmed in by its own pawns on c4 and d5, which stand on light squares.

38.♔e1 g5! 39.♔d2 gxf4 40.gxf4 ♔f6

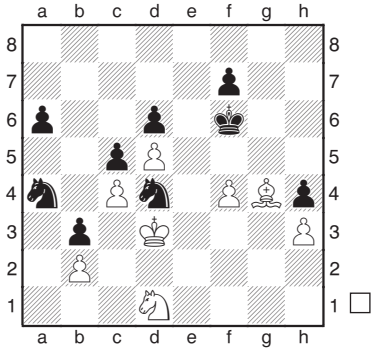
Sindarov creates a second front on the kingside. The black king becomes active and the f4-pawn becomes a new target.

41.♗e2 ♘g7! 42.♗g4 h5 43.♗e2 h4

The knight heads for the f5-square and, with h4, Black fixes the h3-pawn.

44.♗g4 ♘f5 45.♔d3 ♘d4

White is tied down to defence: the knight on d1 has to protect b2 and the king watches over c3 and e3. Meanwhile, Black gradually improves his position with his pawns, his king and his second knight. It is a perfect example of how a small structural advantage, the b3-pawn, becomes decisive in the endgame. Moreover, White cannot exchange his bishop for the dominant knight on d4, because the bishop is light-squared and the knight stands on a dark square.



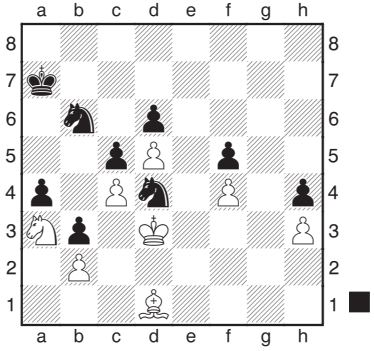
The knight on d4 dominates the board

An ideal square: no pawn can drive the knight away, and it controls b3, c2, e2 and f3.

46.♗d7 ♘b6 47.♗g4 a5 48.♘c3 ♔e7 49.♗d1 a4

The pawns on a4 and b3 paralyse White's queenside.

50.♘b1 ♘f5 51.♘a3 ♘g3 52.♘b5 ♘f5 53.♘c3 ♘d4 54.♗g4 ♔d8 55.♗d1 ♔c7 56.♗h5 f6 57.♗g4 ♔b8 58.♗d1 f5 59.♘b1 ♔a7 60.♘a3

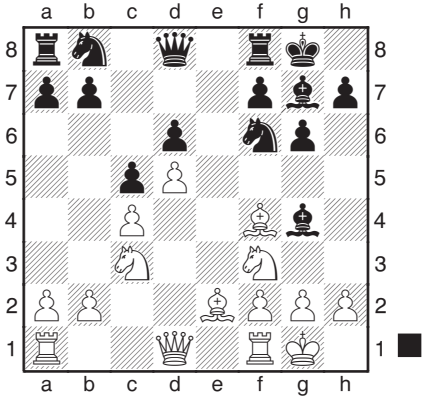


The black king heads for a5

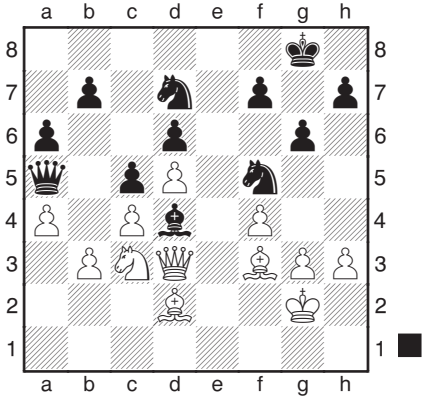
White can do nothing: the black king will go to a5 and b4, and then the knight on b6 will rejoin the fight via d7-f6.

0–1

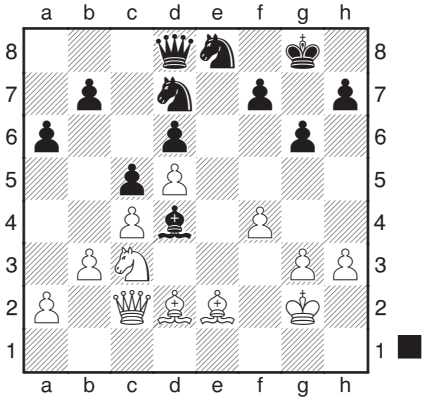
Your Move!



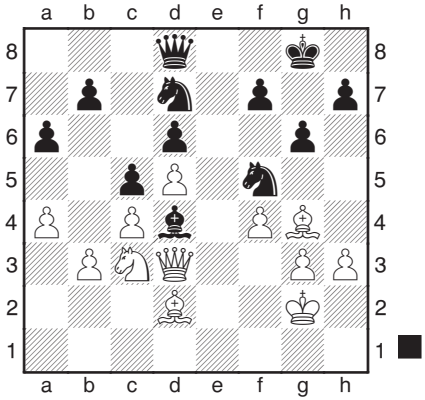
1. Assess ♘h5 or ♘e8.



3. What tactical resource does Black have?



2. What is the best route for the knight on e8?



4. Assess ♗xc3.

Lysyj (2589) – Sindarov (2658) [E91]

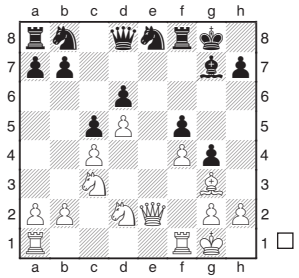
Blitz. Orsay Blitz op (6), 17.09.2023

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♘c3 0–0 5.e4 d6 6.♗e2 c5 7.d5 e6 8.0–0 exd5 9.exd5 ♗g4

Once again, the plan of this chapter: the light-squared bishop will be exchanged for the knight on f3, the defender of e5.

10.♗f4 ♘h5

Better was 10...♘e8 11.♘d2 ♗xe2 12.♕xe2 g5 13.♗g3 f5! 14.f4 g4, with a complex game.

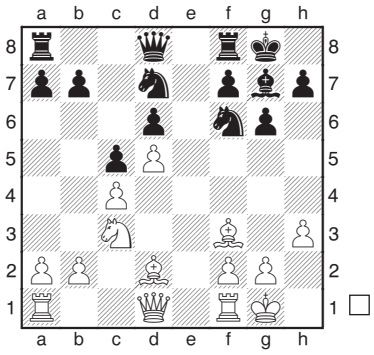


After 10...♘e8 and ...g5, ...f5

11.♗d2 ♘d7 12.h3 ♗xf3

Worse was 12...♗xc3 13.♗xc3 ♗xf3 14.♗xf3, because Black needlessly gives up his dark-squared bishop, the key piece of his structure.

13.♗xf3 ♘hf6



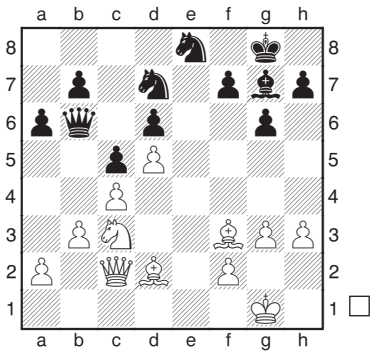
Once again, bishop against knight

White has the bishop pair: if he manages to open the position they will be very strong; if the position becomes blocked, the knights will prevail.

14.♕c2 ♖e8

The thematic 14...♘e8 was possible, with ...♘e5 and ...f5: 15.♖ae1 ♘e5 16.♗e2 f5 17.f4 ♘f7 18.♗f3 ♗d4+ 19.♔h2 ♗g7 20.b3 a6 21.a4 ♕d7 22.♗e2 b6, with equality.

15.♖ae1 ♕b6 16.b3 a6 17.g3 ♖xe1 18.♖xe1 ♖e8 19.♖xe8+ ♘xe8



Without rooks, the fight is for e5, d4 and e3

With the rooks off, the struggle revolves around the central dark squares: e5, d4 and e3 (once the pawn advances to f4).

20.♗e2 ♕d8 21.♔g2 ♗d4

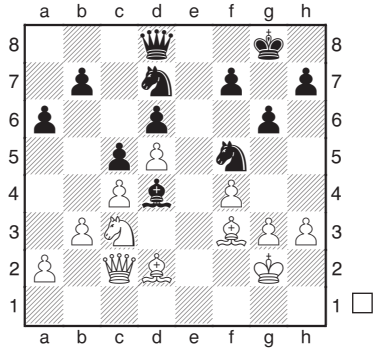
The bishop settles on d4, a square that no white knight from f3 can contest any longer.

22.f4 ♘g7!

The knight heads for f5, from where it watches over e3, d4, g3 and h4.

23.♗f3 ♘f5

From f5 the knight watches over e3, d4, g3 and h4. The bishop on d4, for its part, cannot be attacked by any white pawn: it is the strongest piece on the board. The knight on f5 also defends it, so White cannot exchange it without giving something in return. With no rooks on the board, everything depends on the minor pieces. The position is balanced, but it is Black who is playing more comfortably.



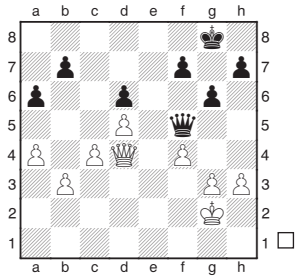
The knight dominates the dark squares

24.♕d3 ♕a5 25.a4 ♕d8

With 25...♘e3+ 26.♗xe3 ♗xc3 Black would have equalised easily.

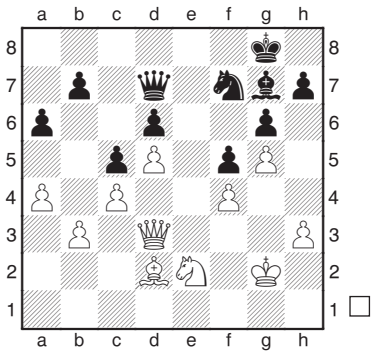
26.♗g4 ♘h6

Interesting was 26...♗xc3 27.♗xc3 ♘d4 28.♗xd7 ♕xd7 29.♗xd4 cxd4 30.♕xd4 ♕f5, with a level endgame.



After 26...♗xc3 the endgame is level

27.♘e2 ♗g7 28.♗xd7 ♕xd7 29.g4 f5 30.g5 ♘f7

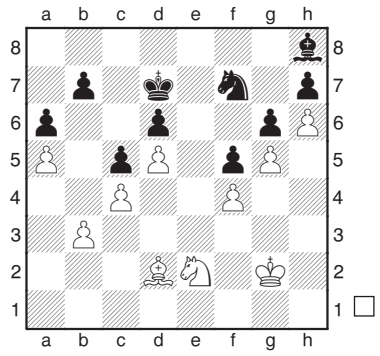


The position closes on the kingside

White has a clear advantage: the ♘f7 is very passive and White is better on both wings.

31.a5 ♕c7 32.♕e3 ♔f8 33.h4 ♕e7 34.♕xe7+ ♔xe7 35.h5 ♔d7 36.h6 ♗h8?

Black should have kept his bishop active with 36...♗b2.



After 37.♗c3 the endgame is an easy win

37.♔f3?!

With 37.♗c3 the bishops would have been exchanged, leaving a knight endgame that is an easy win for White.

37...♔c7 38.♔e3 b5 39.cxb5 axb5 40.b4 ♔b7 41.♔d3 ♔a6 42.♗c3 ♗xc3 43.♔xc3 ♘d8

In the knight endgame, the a5-pawn is weak and the king on a6 is watching it.

44.♘g3 ♔b7 45.♘f1 ♔a6 46.♘e3 ♘f7 47.♔b3 ♔b7 48.♔c3 ♔a6

49.♘xf5?

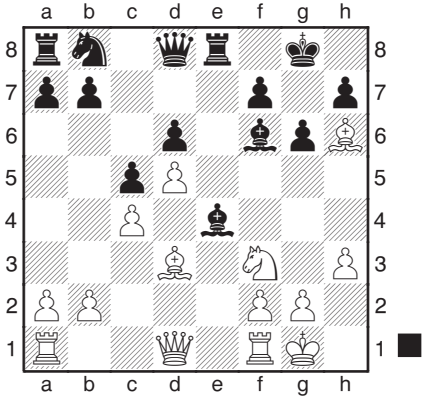
Lysyj launches into a combination that does not work. He had to maintain the tension, for example with 49.♔b3.

49...gxf5 50.bxc5 dxc5 51.g6 hxg6

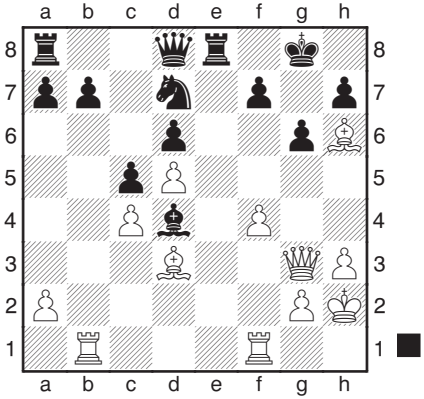
52.h7 ♔xa5

0–1

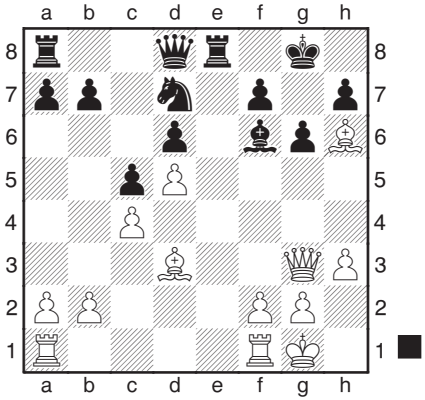
Your Move!



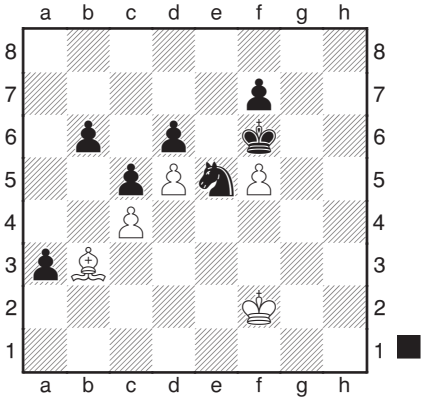
1. Which exchange suits Black?



3. Where should Black place his rook?



2. Can Black win material?



4. What is the quickest way to victory?

Lazavik (2605) – Sindarov (2721) [E90]

Blitz. Comet op Titled Winners, Chess.com INT (2.1), 18.10.2025

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♘f3 c5 7.d5 e6 8.h3 exd5 9.exd5 ♗f5

With h3 already played, the bishop goes to f5 instead of g4, but the idea is the same: to exchange it for the knight on f3.

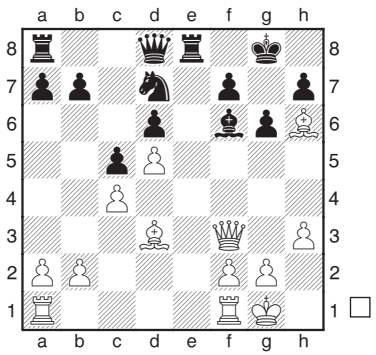
10.0–0 ♘e4! 11.♘xe4 ♗xe4 12.♗g5 ♗f6 13.♗h6 ♖e8

White avoids the exchange of dark-squared bishops, but his bishop on h6 is left far from the centre.

14.♗d3 ♗xf3!

Now comes the exchange on f3. With 14...♗xd3 15.♕xd3 Black would have achieved nothing.

15.♕xf3 ♘d7



The bishop on f6 eyes b2

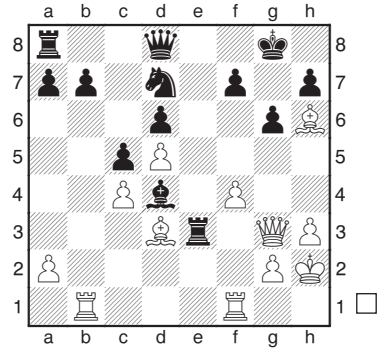
16.♕g3 ♗xb2

Sindarov is not afraid to leave his king-side without the bishop: he captures the b2-pawn and brings the bishop back to the centre, gaining time against the white queen.

17.♖ab1

If 17.♕d6?? ♗e5 wins the queen.

17...♗e5 18.f4 ♗d4+ 19.♔h2 ♖e3!

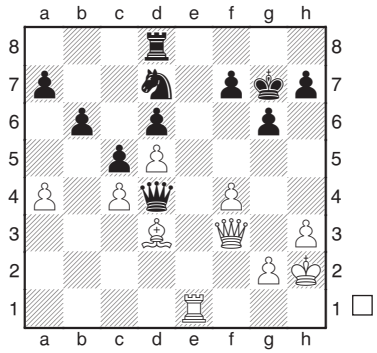


The rook settles on e3

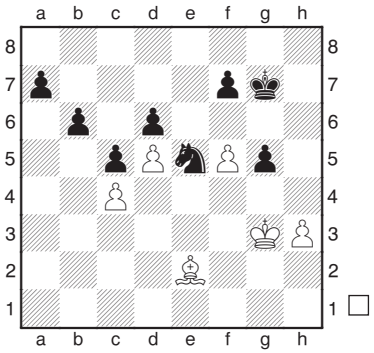
Black has won a pawn and manages to simplify the position.

20.♖f3 ♖xf3 21.♕xf3 b6 22.♕g3 ♗g7 23.♗xg7 ♔xg7 24.♖e1 ♕f6 25.♕f3 ♖d8 26.a4 ♔f8 27.♕e3 ♔g7 28.♕f3 ♕d4

The queen centralises on d4, a dark square that no white pawn can attack. From there she pressures c4 and watches over e3, e5 and a1. White will confine himself to moving his rook along the e-file and his queen between f3 and e3, while Black calmly prepares to bring his knight to the centre.



The black queen dominates from d4

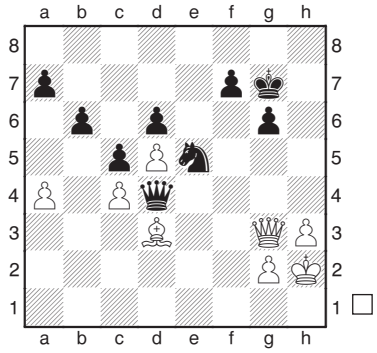


Winning endgame: two extra pawns

29.♖e4 ♕a1 30.♖e7 ♕d4 31.♖e4 ♕c3 32.♖e7 ♕a1 33.♕e3 ♕d4 34.♕f3 ♘f6 35.f5 ♖e8 36.♖xe8 ♘xe8 37.fxg6 hxg6

With the rooks off, Black's extra pawn begins to tell.

38.♕g3 ♘f6 39.♕f3 ♕e5+ 40.♔g1 ♕d4+ 41.♔h2 ♘d7 42.♕g3 ♘e5



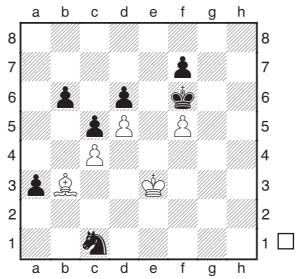
The knight dominates the dark squares

Another dark square: from e5 the knight attacks c4 and d3, and no white pawn can dislodge it.

43.♗e2 ♕d2 44.♗f1 ♕d1 45.♕f4 ♕xa4 46.♗e2 ♕c2 47.♕e3 ♕f5 48.g4 ♕f6 49.♔g3 g5 50.♕e4 ♘g6 51.♕f5 ♕xf5 52.gxf5 ♘e5

53.h4 gxh4+ 54.♔xh4 ♔f6 55.♔g3 a5 56.♔f2 a4 57.♗d1 a3 58.♗b3 ♔xf5

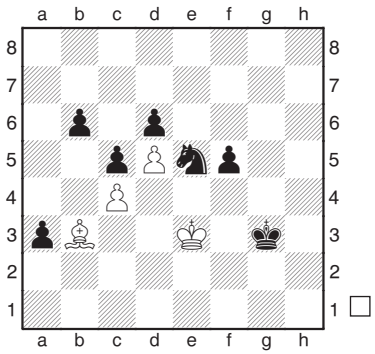
Quicker was 58...♘d3+ 59.♔e3 ♘c1, and the bishop can no longer stop the a-pawn.



After 58...♘d3+ 59.♔e3 ♘c1, the knight covers a2

59.♔e3 ♔g4 60.♗d1+ ♔g3 61.♗b3 f5

The two passed pawns, on the a- and f-files, are far apart: the bishop can watch one of them, but the white king cannot arrive in time to stop the other. Moreover, the knight on e5 controls d3 and hampers the white king's route to the queenside. Sindarov only has to push his pawns with the support of his king and knight: the white bishop cannot deal with both at once.

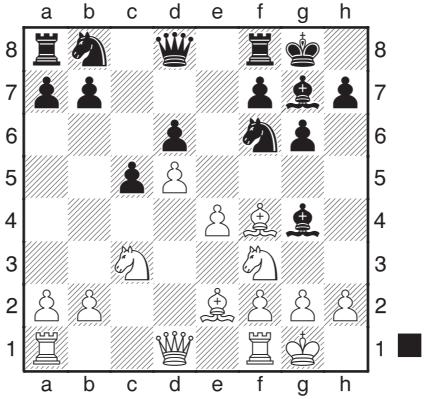


Two widely separated passed pawns

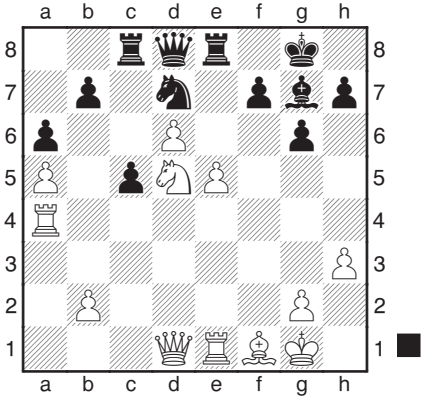
62.♔e2 f4 63.♗d1 f3+ 64.♔e3 a2 65.♗e2 a1=♕

0–1

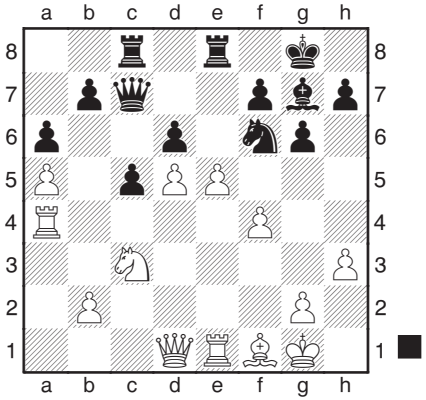
Your Move!



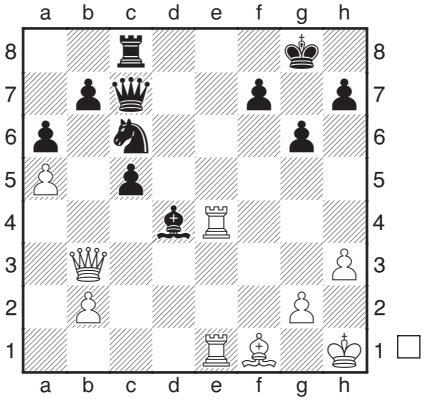
1. Which familiar plan does Black follow?



3. With which piece should Black capture on e5?



2. Assess the strength of the e5 break.



4. Should White exchange rooks?

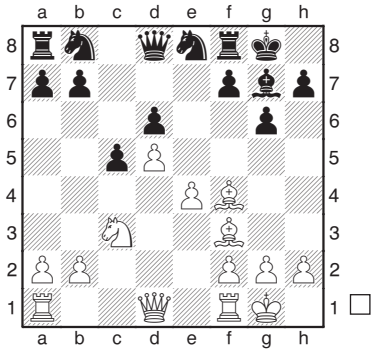
Ipatov (2544) – Sindarov (2672) [A73]

Blitz. W-chT Group-C Blitz, Hong Kong (6.7), 20.06.2026

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 c5 7.d5 e6 8.0–0 exd5 9.cxd5

This time White recaptures with the c-pawn, and we reach the Modern Benoni structure. Black's plan does not change.

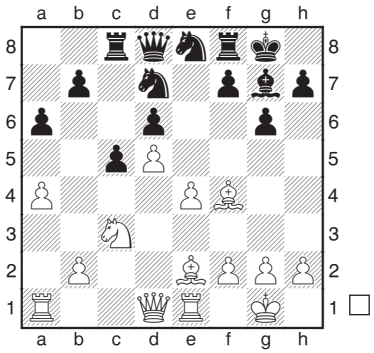
9...♗g4 10.♗f4 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘e8



Once again, ♗g4xf3

12.♖e1 ♘d7 13.♗e2 a6 14.a4 ♖c8

When White captures cxd5, the nature of the position changes. Now Black has a queenside majority, while White has a greater presence in the centre. Since the ...b5 advance looks difficult, Black will try ...c4 with the idea of ...♘c5.



The rook prepares ...c4

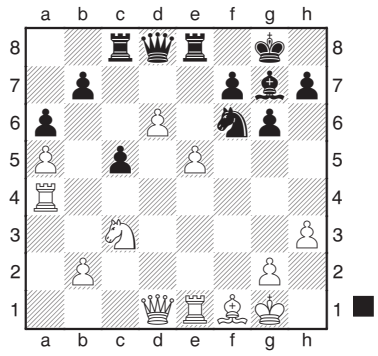
15.a5 ♕e7 16.♗f1 ♘ef6 17.h3 ♘h5 18.♗e3 ♖fe8 19.♖a4 ♘hf6 20.♗f4 ♘h5 21.♗e3 ♕d8 22.♗e2 ♘hf6 23.♗f4 ♘e5

This was the moment for 23...c4!?, seeking counterplay, for example 24.♖xc4 ♖xc4 25.♗xc4 ♘e5 26.♗xe5 ♖xe5 27.f4 ♖e7, with equality.

24.♗e3 ♘ed7 25.♗f4 ♕c7 26.♗f1 ♘e5 27.♗xe5 ♖xe5

After much manoeuvring, White gives up his dark-squared bishop. Now the ♗g7 has no rival.

28.f4 ♖ee8 29.e5 dxe5 30.d6 ♕d8 31.fxe5



The white pawns block the dark squares

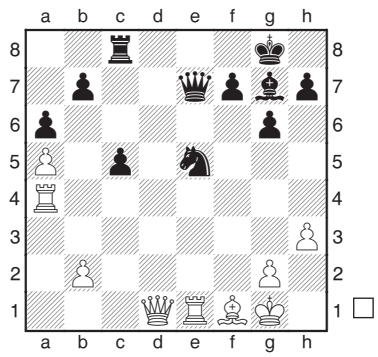
White has broken with e5 in order to block the diagonal of the g7-bishop with his pawns on e5 and d6.

31...♘d7 32.♘d5 ♘xe5!

It was also possible to capture with the bishop, but this position is easier for Black to play.

33.♘e7+ ♖xe7 34.dxe7 ♕xe7

With 33.♘e7+ White eliminates the rook, but the d6-pawn that was blocking the dark squares disappears. With no white pawns on the d- and f-files, nobody can dislodge the knight from e5.



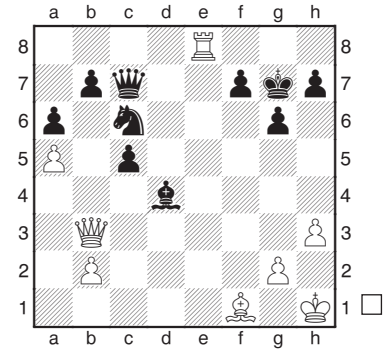
The knight on e5 dominates the centre

Material is level, but the knight on e5 and the bishop on g7 dominate the dark squares.

35.♔h1 ♕c7 36.♕b3 ♘c6 37.♖ae4 ♗d4 38.♖e8+?

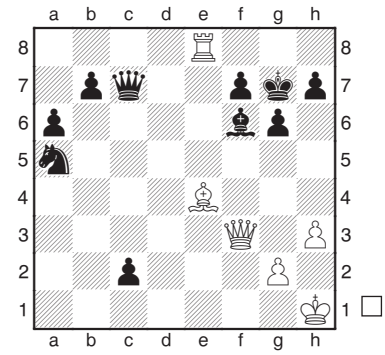
Better was 38.♗c4, without exchanging rooks. With minor pieces on the board, Black's queen and bishop are in charge.

38...♖xe8 39.♖xe8+ ♔g7



Two pawns for the exchange

40.♕f3 ♕d7 41.♖a8 ♘xa5 42.♗d3 ♗xb2 43.♗e4 ♗f6 44.♗d5 c4 45.♖b8 c3! 46.♗e4 ♕c7 47.♖e8 c2

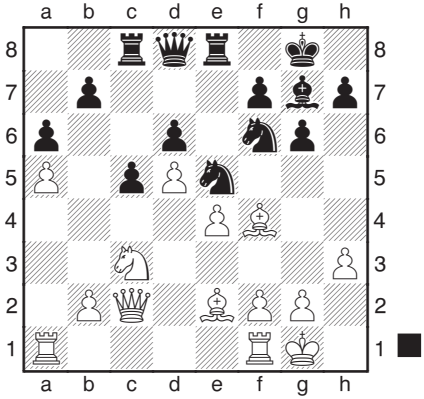


The c2-pawn decides

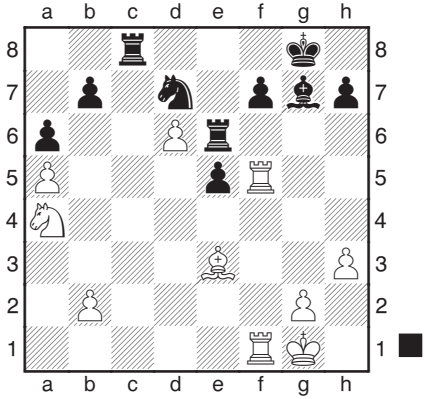
48.♗xc2 ♕xc2 49.g3 ♕c6

0–1

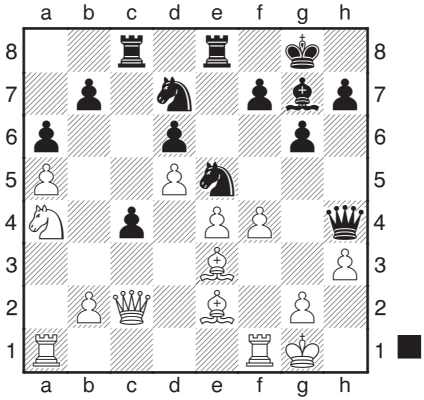
Your Move!



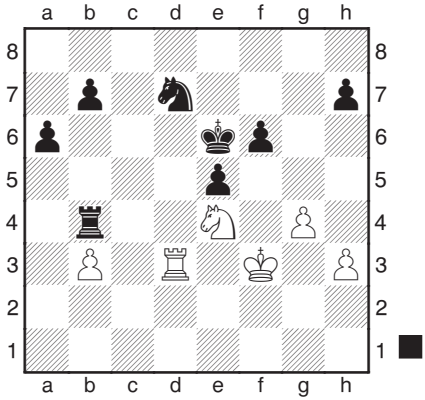
1. What is the plan after ♖c8?



3. The white rooks are pressing f7. How does Black reinforce his position?



2. Assess the consequences of ♘d3.

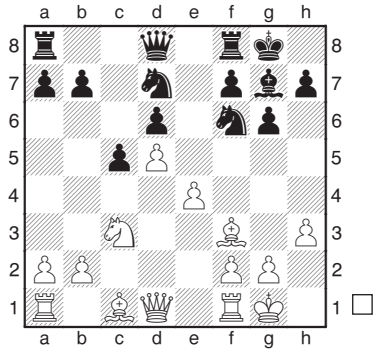


4. Decisive simplification.

Salem (2690) – Sindarov (2609) [A73]

Blitz. Wch Blitz, Warsaw (1), 29.12.2021

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♘f3 0–0 7.♗e2 e6 8.0–0 exd5 9.cxd5 ♗g4 10.h3 ♗xf3 11.♗xf3 ♘bd7

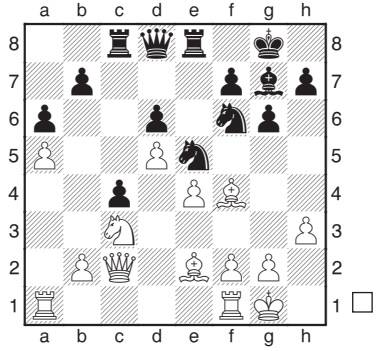


This time White has played h3 earlier

12.a4 ♖e8 13.♗f4 ♘e5 14.♗e2 ♖c8

The plan of this chapter: ...♖c8 and ...c4, gaining space on the queenside and freeing the c5-square.

15.♕c2 a6 16.a5 c4!

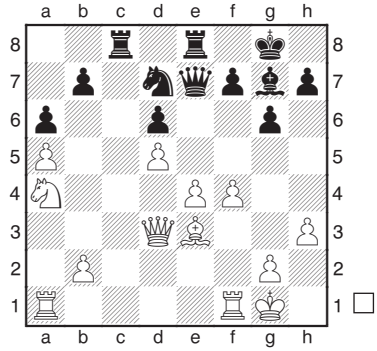


The ...♖c8 and ...c4 plan

17.♗e3 ♘fd7 18.♘a4 ♕h4 19.f4 ♘d3!

A positional pawn sacrifice. Black gives up the c4-pawn; in return the c-file opens and the knight obtains the c5-square.

20.♗xd3 cxd3 21.♕xd3 ♕e7



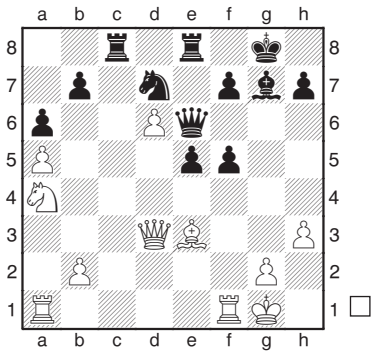
Black has compensation for the pawn

22.e5!

Now it is White who sacrifices a pawn: with e5 and f5 he wants to block the dark squares and shut the diagonal of the g7-bishop.

22...dxe5 23.d6 ♕e6 24.f5 gxf5

White is now a pawn down, but his d6-pawn is lodged in the heart of Black's position and the knight on a4 can return to play via c3 or c5. This is the typical struggle of this chapter: White gives up material to plug the dark squares, and Black has to return it at the right moment. Somewhat more precise than exchanging queens was 25.♖xf5. Note that it is now Black's own e5-pawn that blocks the diagonal of the g7-bishop.



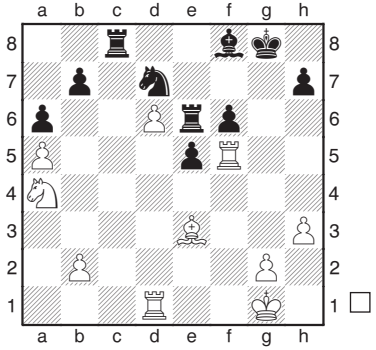
The d6- and e5-pawns in the fight for the dark squares

25.♕xf5 ♕xf5 26.♖xf5 ♖e6 27.♖af1 f6!

It closes the f-file and supports e5.

28.♖d1 ♗f8!

The bishop returns to attack the d6-pawn.

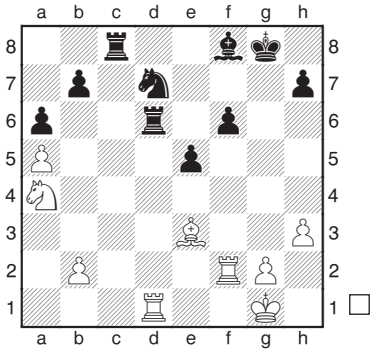


The knight on a4 must come back into play

29.♖f2?!

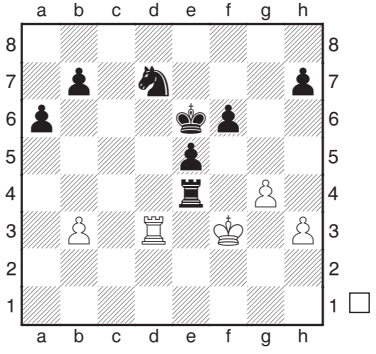
29.♘b6! was necessary, and after 29...♘xb6 30.d7! White maintains the balance.

29...♖xd6



Black regains the material

30.♖fd2 ♖cc6 31.♘c3 ♔f7 32.♘e4 ♖xd2 33.♖xd2 ♔e6 34.g4 ♗b4 35.♖d3 ♗xa5 36.♔g2 ♗b6 37.♗xb6 ♖xb6 38.b3 ♖b4 39.♔f3 ♖xe4!

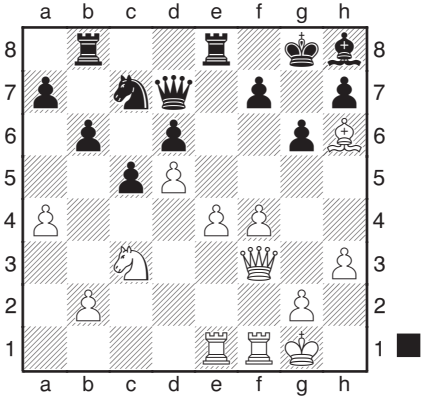


If 40.♔xe4, ♘c5+ and the rook falls

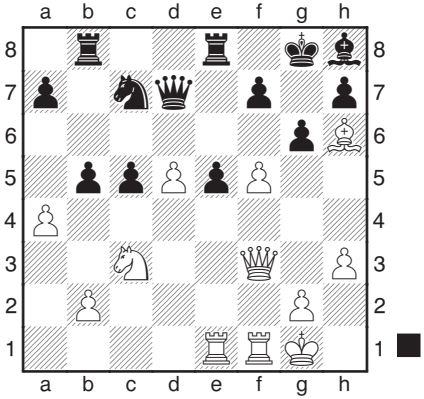
After 40.♔xe4 ♘c5+ the knight gives check and attacks the rook on d3.

0–1

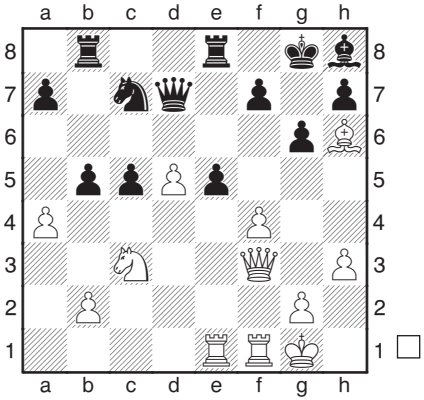
Your Move!



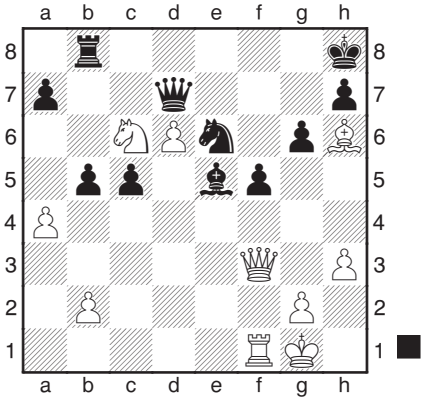
1. How does Black open up play on the queenside?



3. What should Black play?



2. What should White play?



4. The knight on c6 attacks e5 and b8. How does Black respond?

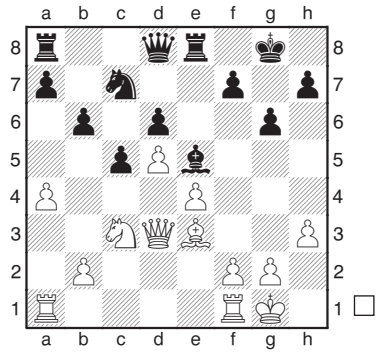
Sarana (2666) – Sindarov (2609) [A56]

Blitz. Wch Blitz, Warsaw (5), 29.12.2021

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.e4 d6 6.♗e2 0–0 7.♘f3 e6 8.♗e3 exd5 9.cxd5 ♗g4 10.♘d2 ♗xe2

When the knight retreats to d2, Black exchanges the bishop on e2. White is left without his light-squared bishop and Black without his least useful piece.

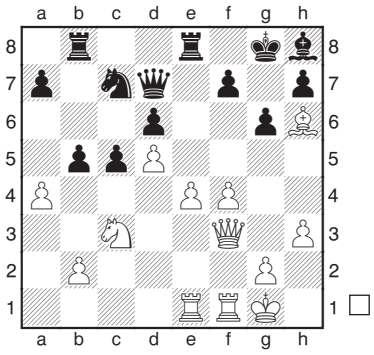
11.♕xe2 ♖e8 12.0–0 ♘a6 13.h3 ♘c7 14.a4 b6 15.♕d3 ♘d7 16.♘c4 ♘e5 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5



The bishop dominates from e5

18.♖ae1 ♕d7 19.♗h6 ♖ab8 20.f4 ♗h8 21.♕f3 b5!

Sindarov wastes no time. All of White's pieces are aiming at the e5 break, and Black opens a second front before the centre explodes. The knight on c7 supports the advance and is ready to jump to b5 or d5. Compare this with the Salem game: there Black prepared the break with ...a6; here he plays ...b5 directly because the knight on c7 already controls the b5-square.

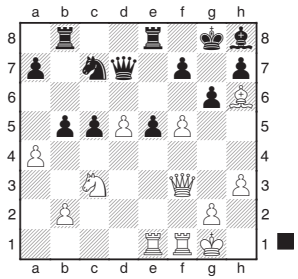


...b5 directly, without ...a6

Very interesting: Black plays ...b5 directly, without preparing it with ...a6. If 22.axb5 ♘xb5 23.♘xb5 ♖xb5, Black has active play along the b-file.

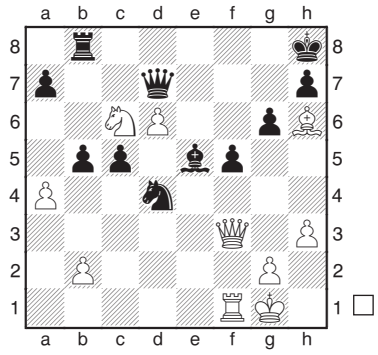
22.e5 dxe5 23.fxe5

Again the idea from the previous game: White breaks with e5 to block the dark squares with his pawns. The consistent move was 23.f5, as Salem played, to which Black must respond 23...e4!, freeing the e5-square, and the position remains balanced. With 23.fxe5 White opens the game and the black bishop regains its diagonal.



The idea 23.f5, blocking the dark squares

23...♖xe5 24.♖xe5 ♗xe5 25.d6 ♘e6 26.♘d5 f5 27.♘e7+ ♔h8 28.♘c6 ♘d4!



The knight jumps to d4

The knight jumps to d4, gaining time on the queen on f3.

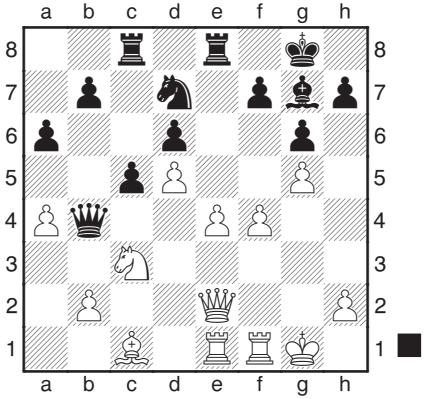
29.♘xd4 ♗xd4+

Stronger was 29...cxd4, keeping the bishop on e5 and the advantage.

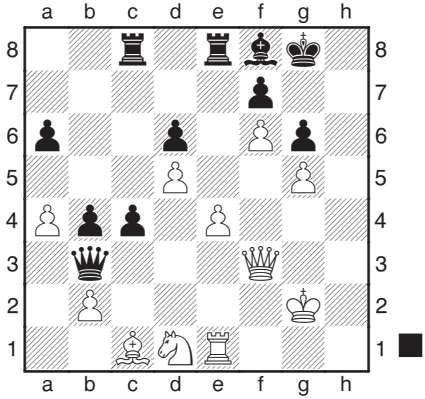
30.♔h1 ♕xd6 31.♗f4 ♗e5! 32.♕c3?? ♗xc3 33.♗xd6 ♖d8

0–1

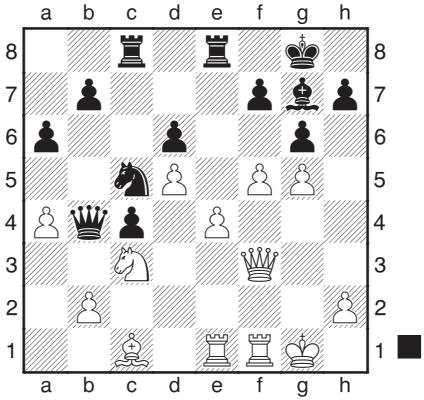
Your Move!



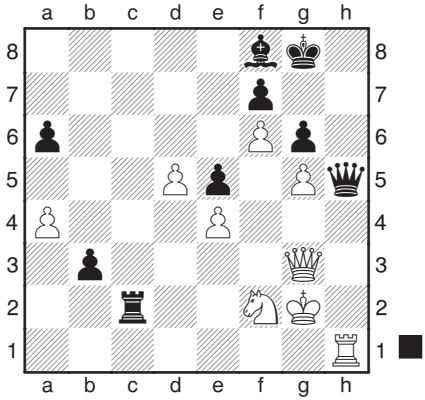
1. Which advance completes Black's plan?



3. How do the black pawns advance?



2. Where does the knight on c5 jump to?

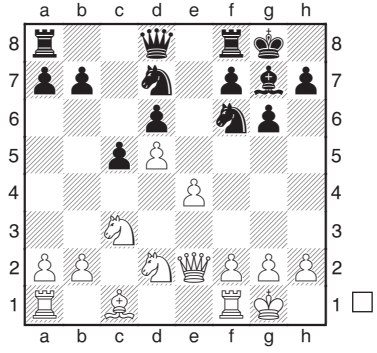


4. How does Black win?

Tin (2462) – Sindarov (2596) [A73]

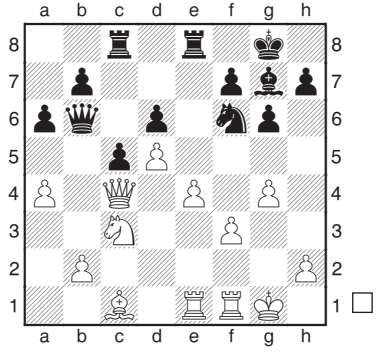
Rapid. Wch Rapid, Almaty (10), 28.12.2022

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0–0 6.♗e2 c5 7.d5 e6 8.0–0 exd5 9.cxd5 ♗g4 10.♘d2 ♗xe2 11.♕xe2 ♘bd7



White keeps the knight, aiming for the c4-square

12.a4 ♖e8 13.f3 ♘h5 14.♘c4 ♘e5 15.g4 ♘xc4 16.♕xc4 ♘f6 17.♗g5 a6 18.♖ae1 ♕b6 19.♗c1 ♖ac8



The ...♖c8 and ...c4 plan

20.g5 ♘d7 21.f4 ♕b4 22.♕e2 c4!

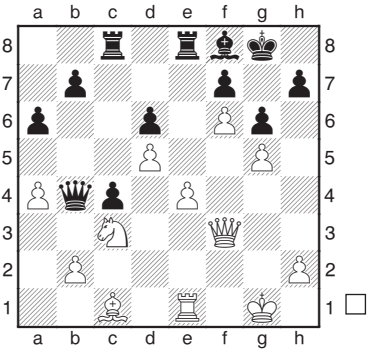
The pawn reaches c4 and frees the c5-square for the knight.

23.♕f3 ♘c5 24.f5 ♘d3

The knight bursts into d3, giving Black the advantage.

25.f6 ♘xe1 26.♖xe1 ♗f8

Black has won the exchange, but the position is very complicated.

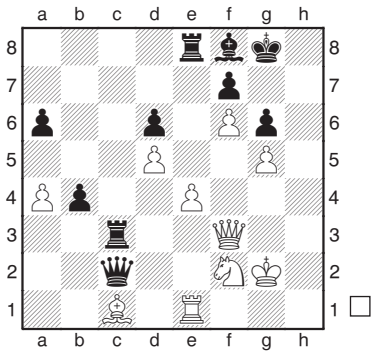


A very complex position

27.h4 b5 28.h5 ♕b3 29.hxg6 hxg6 30.♔g2 b4 31.♘d1 c3! 32.bxc3?

32.♘f2 cxb2 33.♕xb3 bxc1=♕ 34.♖xc1 ♖xc1 35.♕xb4 was necessary, with a complex game.

32...♕c2+ 33.♘f2 ♖xc3



The queenside pawns advance

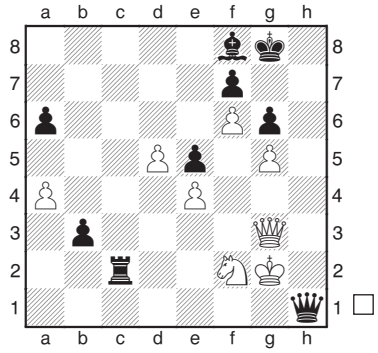
34.♗e3 b3 35.♖h1 ♖e5 36.♕f4 ♕e2 37.♗d4 ♖c2

With 37...♖xg5+! 38.♕xg5 ♕f3+ Black would have won on the spot.

38.♗xe5 dxe5 39.♕h4 ♕h5 40.♕g3?

White had to exchange queens with 40.♕xh5.

40...♕xh1+!



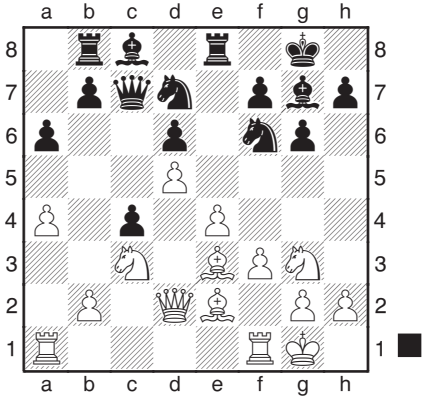
A decisive tactic

After 41.♔xh1, the b-pawn queens.

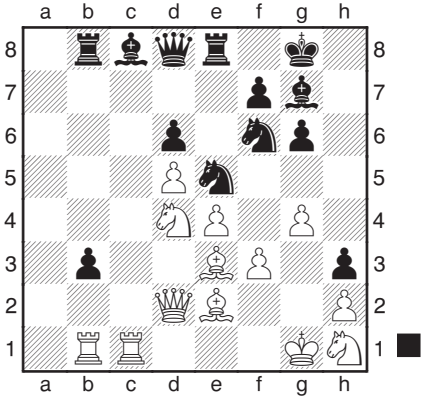
41.♔xh1 b2

0–1

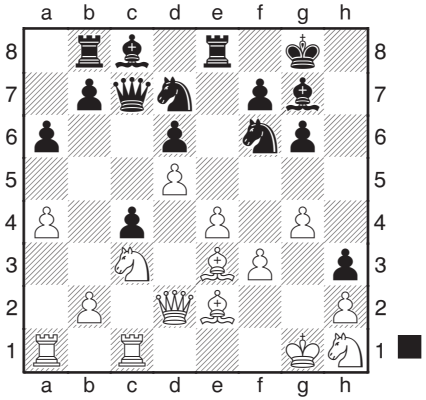
Your Move!



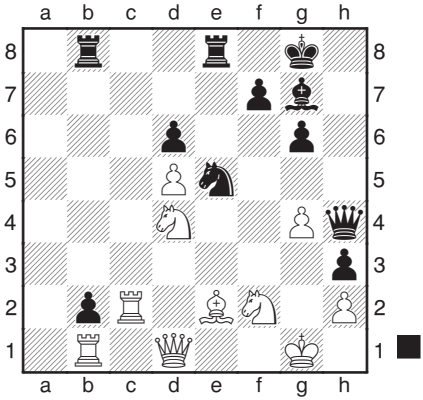
1. How does Black gain space?



3. How does Black destroy White's centre?



2. How should Black play on the queenside?



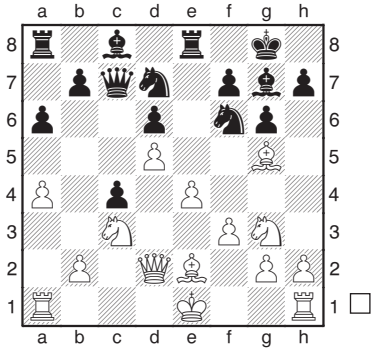
4. How does the b8-rook come into play?

Nakamura (2738) – Sindarov (2747) [A65]

Rapid (10+5). Clutch Chess: Champions Showdown (17), 29.10.2026

We end the chapter with a recent win over Nakamura. This time White opts for the Sämisch with 5.f3, but the Benoni structure and Black's ideas are the same.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0–0 6.♗g5 c5 7.d5 a6 8.a4 e6 9.♕d2 exd5 10.cxd5 ♖e8 11.♘ge2 ♘bd7 12.♘g3 ♕c7 13.♗e2 c4



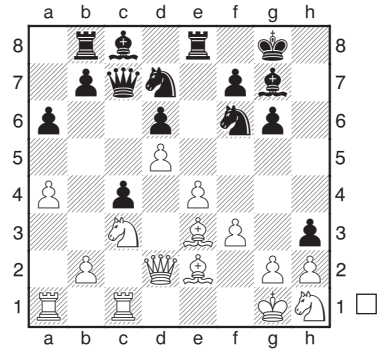
...c4: Black gains space and frees c5

14.0–0 ♖b8 15.♗e3 h5!

The h-pawn threatens ...h4, driving the knight away from g3.

16.♖fc1 h4 17.♘h1 h3!

The advance of the h-pawn has left the white knight on h1, temporarily out of play. It has also weakened White's castled position.



The h3-pawn, a thorn on the kingside

18.g4 b5!

The queenside break.

19.axb5 axb5 20.b4 cxb3 21.♘xb5 ♕d8 22.♖ab1 ♘e5 23.♘d4

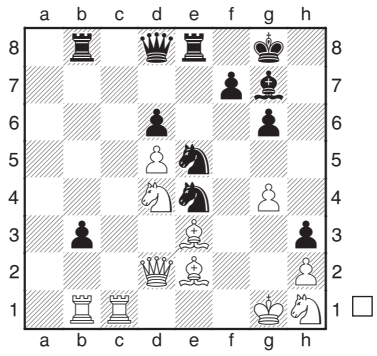
23.♖xb3 was safer.

23...♗xg4!

A piece sacrifice to destroy White's centre.

24.fxg4 ♘xe4

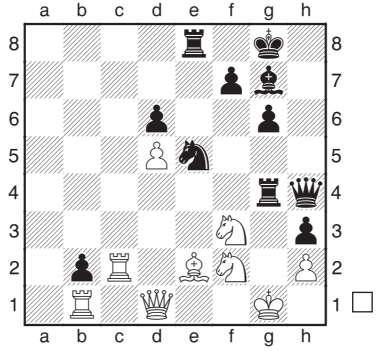
Black has given up the bishop, but he has two pawns, White's centre has vanished and the b3-pawn is two steps from queening. Moreover, the e4-knight attacks the queen on d2 and the f2-square. With the black pawn on h3 lodged in his castled position and the knight shut in on h1, the white king has been left without defenders. Nakamura no longer has any defence.



Two pawns for the piece and the centre destroyed

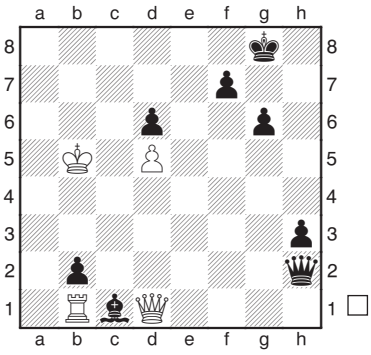
The g7-bishop now bears down on d4 and b2, and the black knights dominate the centre.

25.♕d1 b2 26.♖c2 ♕h4 27.♗f2 ♘xf2 28.♘xf2 ♖b4! 29.♘f3 ♖xg4+



Decisive attack on the white king

30.♔f1 ♘xf3 31.♘xg4 ♖xe2 32.♖xe2 ♕xg4 33.♖f2 ♕g1+ 34.♔e2 ♘d4+ 35.♔e3 ♗h6+ 36.♔xd4 ♕xf2+ 37.♔c4 ♕xh2 38.♔b5 ♗c1

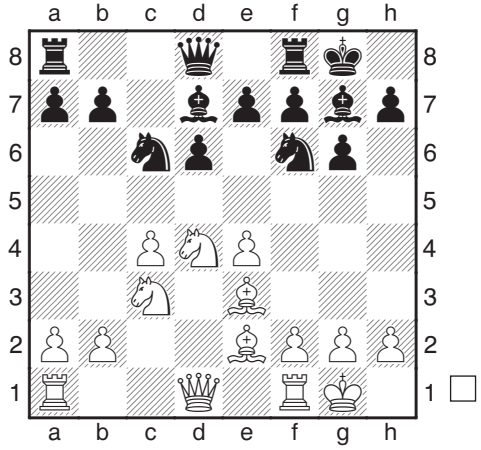


The b2-pawn decides

0–1

Chapter 5

Transposition to the Maróczy



The chapter's model position, after 9.♗e3 ♗d7

When White does not advance with d5 and Black exchanges on d4, the game transposes to a Maróczy structure: White has pawns on c4 and e4, and Black gives up the Benoni to play against the dark squares on the queenside.

Sindarov's plan is typical:

– exchange knights on d4 and bring the bishop to c6, from where it presses against e4 and controls d5;

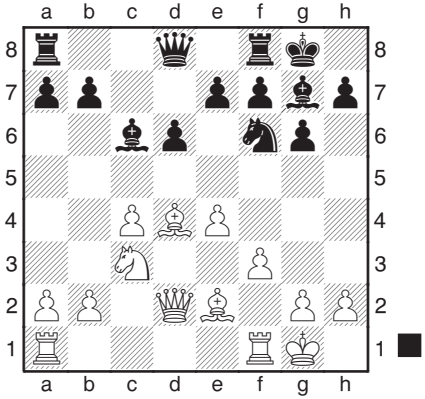
– advance ...a5-a4 to control b4 and give his queen an outlet and, if White plays b4, open the a-file;

– exchange the dark-squared bishops and occupy those squares with his pieces: the knight and the queen;

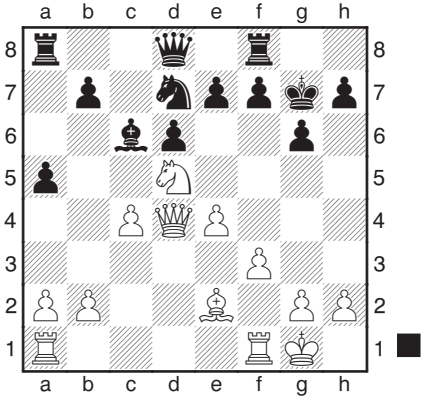
– exchange the c6-bishop for the d5-knight when the moment is right, leaving White with a light-squared bishop that has no play;

– and, at the right moment, the ...b5 or ...e6 breaks.

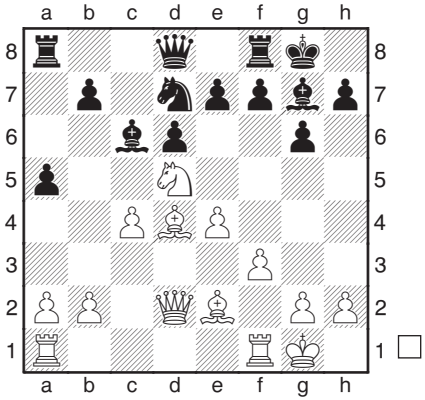
Your Move!



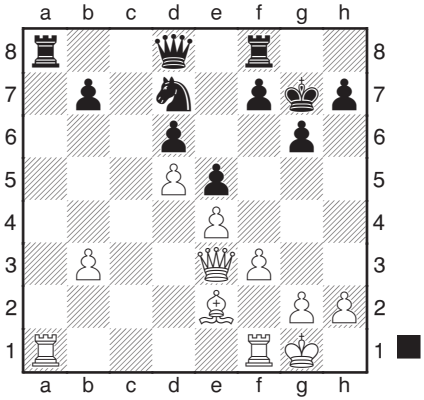
1. How does Black control the dark squares on the queenside?



3. What should Black play?



2. Should White exchange bishops?



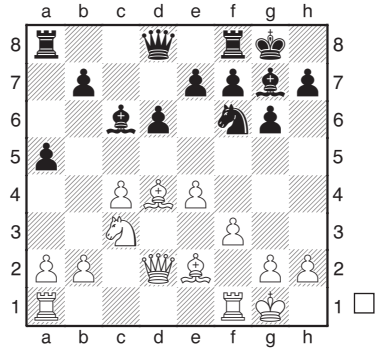
4. How should Black play on the kingside?

Nakamura (2792) – Sindarov (2777) [B38]

Blitz. Miami WR blitz (3.1), 27.07.2026

A model game: all the ideas of the chapter appear, one after another.

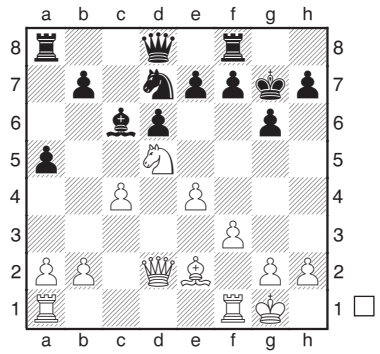
1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.d4 ♗g7 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♘f3 c5 7.0–0 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘c6 9.♗e3 ♗d7 10.♕d2 ♘xd4 11.♗xd4 ♗c6 12.f3 a5



...a5: control of the dark squares on the queenside

With ...a5 Black controls b4 and prepares ...a4. If White plays b3, the a-pawn stays on a5 and the b4-square belongs to Black.

13.♘d5 ♘d7 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7



Without his bishop, White suffers on the dark squares

Without his dark-squared bishop, White will find it hard to defend the dark squares: c5, b4, e5 and d4. White would have done better to keep the bishops with 14.♗e3 or 14.♗f2.

15.♕d4+ e5!

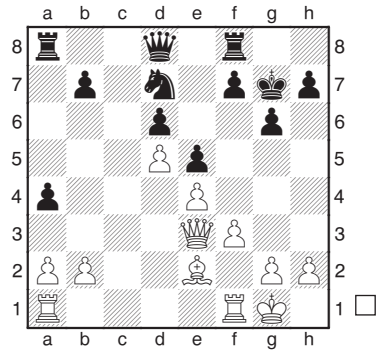
The pawn occupies e5, a central dark square, and the white queen has to retreat. 15.♔h1 was more prudent.

16.♕e3 ♗xd5!

The exchange of bishop for knight: White is left with a light-squared bishop against the black knight, and his pawns on d5 and e4 stand on light squares.

17.cxd5 a4!

Gaining space on the queenside.

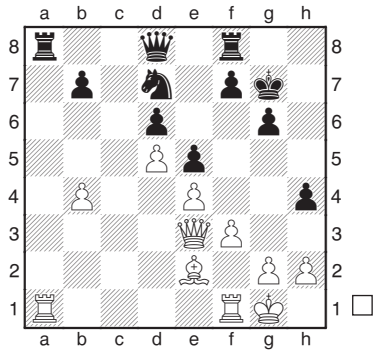


The black knight against the bad white bishop

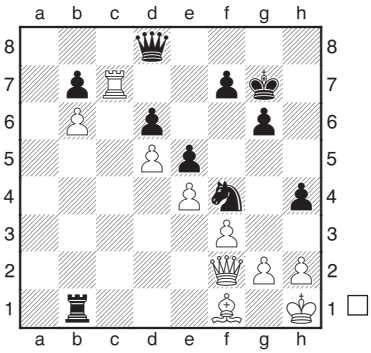
18.b4 axb3 19.axb3

The b3-pawn is left weak.

19...h5! 20.b4 h4



Gaining space on the kingside



The weakness of White's back rank

With ...h5 and ...h4 Black gains space on the other flank and prepares ... ♘h5-f4.

21.♖fc1 ♖xa1 22.♖xa1 ♘f6 23.♖c1 ♘h5 24.b5 ♘f4

The knight reaches f4, a dark square from which it attacks many white points.

25.♗f1 ♕g5 26.♔h1 ♖a8 27.♕d2 ♕d8 28.♕f2 ♖a3 29.b6 ♖b3! 30.♖c7 ♖b1

The rook enters along the back rank and pins the f1-bishop.

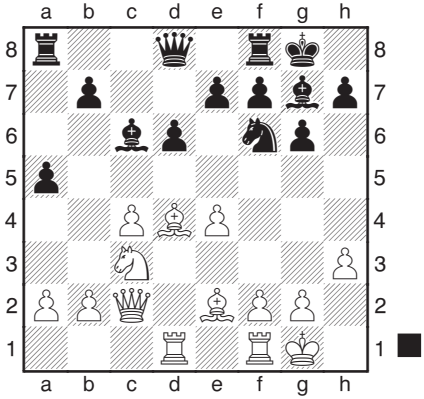
31.♖xb7 ♕g5 32.♖c7 ♘d3 33.♕g1 ♕d2 34.h3 ♘f2+ 35.♔h2 ♕f4+ 36.g3 ♕xf3 37.gxh4 ♘xe4

37...♕f4+ 38.♕g3 ♘g4+! 39.hxg4 ♕xf1 was quicker, with a decisive attack.

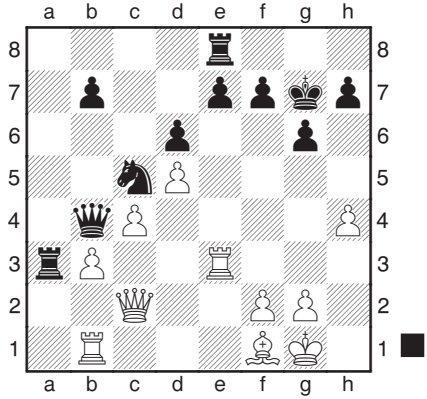
38.♕g4 ♕xf1

0–1

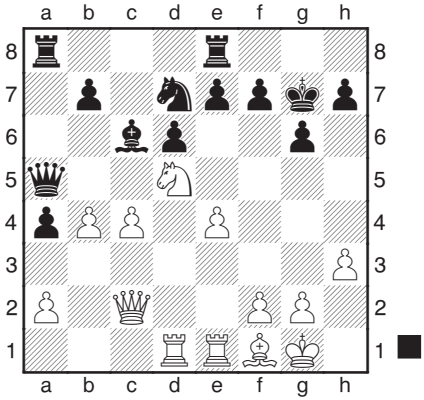
Your Move!



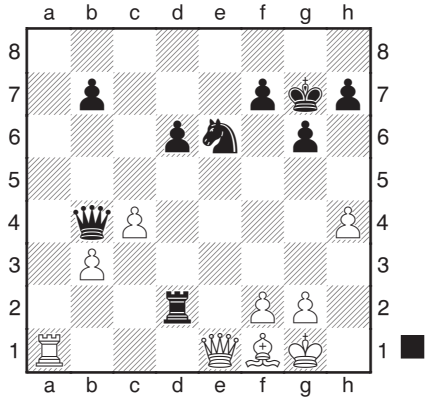
1. How does Black gain space on the queenside?



3. Which break frees Black's game?



2. White has played b4. How does Black respond?

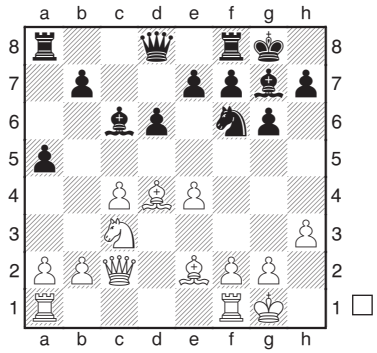


4. The white queen wants to pin the rook. What does Black play?

Suleymanli (2665) – Sindarov (2777) [B38]

Blitz. W-chT Blitz final, Hong Kong (1.2), 20.06.2026

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.h3 0–0 6.♗e3 c5 7.♘f3 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘c6 9.♗e2 ♗d7 10.0–0 ♘xd4 11.♗xd4 a5 12.♕c2 ♗c6



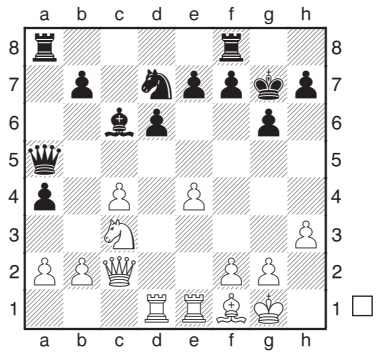
Once again ...a5 and ...♗c6

This time White has played h3 and ♕c2, but Black's set-up does not change.

13.♖ad1 a4 14.♖fe1

14.c5! is considered the main line.

14...♕a5 15.♗f1 ♘d7 16.♗xg7 ♔xg7

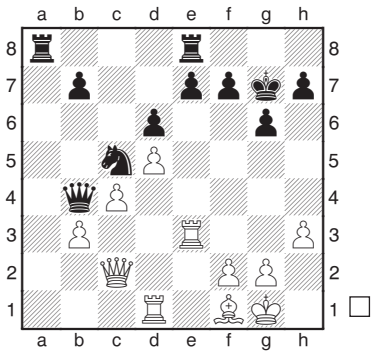


Without his bishop, White suffers on the dark squares

17.♘d5 ♖fe8 18.b4 axb3!

The b4-pawn attacks the queen; by capturing en passant, Black opens the a-file.

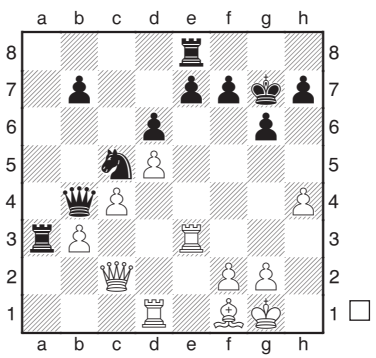
19.axb3 ♗xd5 20.exd5 ♕b4 21.♖e3 ♘c5



The strong knight on c5

The c5-knight is very well placed: it presses against b3, and the b-pawn cannot advance to drive it away because the black queen controls b4.

22.h4 ♖a3



Pressure on b3

The open a-file and the weak b3-pawn: all of Black's play revolves around that square.

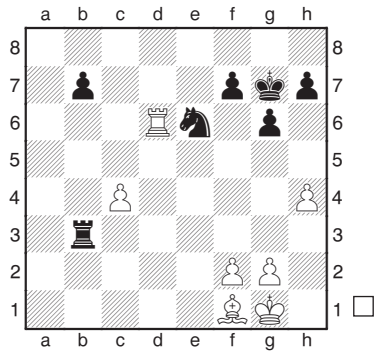
23.♖b1 e5!

The freeing break. If 24.dxe6 ♖xe6, Black exchanges his passive rook and activates all his pieces.

24.dxe6 ♖xe6 25.♖xe6 ♘xe6 26.♕d1 ♖a2 27.♖a1 ♖d2 28.♕e1 ♕c3!

The only move: Black prepares the exchange of queens.

29.♖d1 ♖c2 30.♕xc3+ ♖xc3 31.♖xd6 ♖xb3



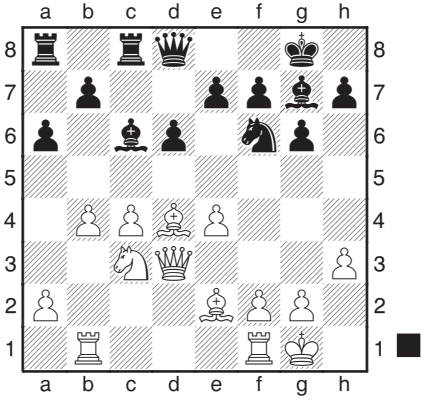
Black regains the material

32.g3 ♖b1 33.♔g2 ♘c5 34.♗e2 ♖c1 35.♖d4 b6 36.♗f3 h5 37.♗e2 ♖c2 38.♗f3 ♔f8 39.♖d6 ♖b2 40.♖d1 ♔e7 41.♖e1+ ♔f6 42.♖d1 ♔e7 43.♖e1+ ♔f8 44.♖d1 ♔e7 45.♖e1+ ♔f8

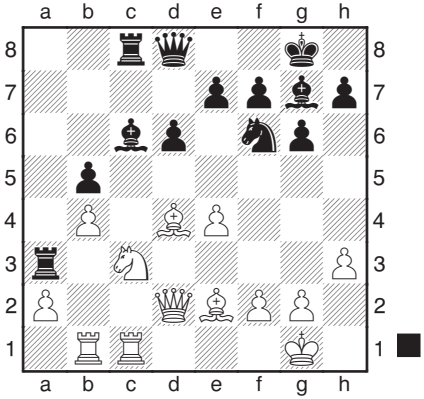
White lost on time in a level position.

0–1

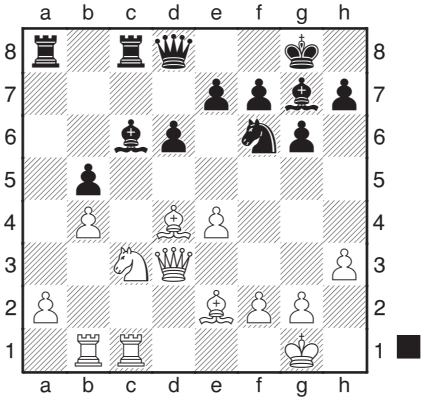
Your Move!



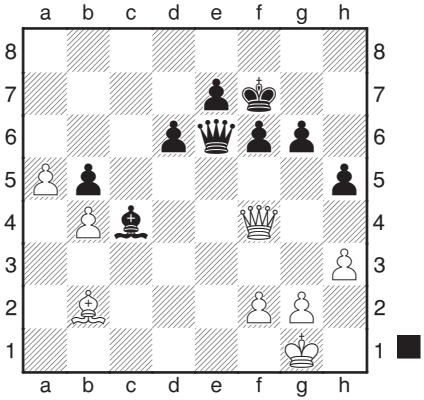
1. White has played b4. What is Black's counterblow?



3. What tactical blow does Black have?



2. How does Black activate the a8-rook?

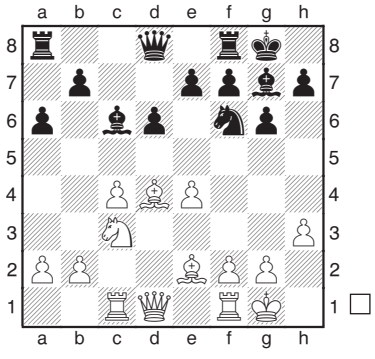


4. How does Black win material?

Bluebaum (2654) – Sindarov (2682) [B38]

Blitz. Titled Tuesday (9), 12.11.2024

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0–0 6.♘f3 c5 7.0–0 cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘c6 9.♗e3 ♗d7 10.h3 a6 11.♖c1 ♘xd4 12.♗xd4 ♗c6



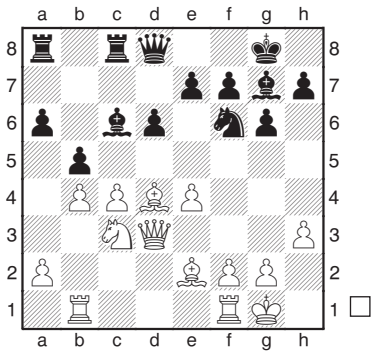
The c6-bishop presses against e4

This time Black plays ...a6 instead of ...a5: he is preparing ...b5.

13.♕c2 ♕a5 14.♖b1 ♖fc8 15.b4

Black has provoked b4: the white pawn gains space, but becomes a target for ...b5.

15...♕d8 16.♕d3 b5!



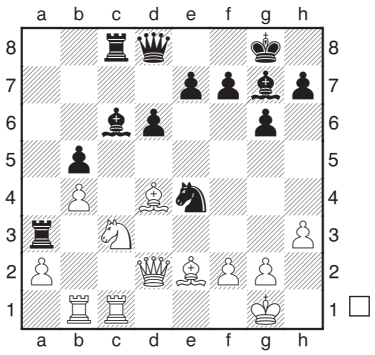
...b5: the counterblow

The typical counterblow against b4: Black opens the a-file and attacks c4.

17.cxb5 axb5 18.♖fc1 ♖a3!

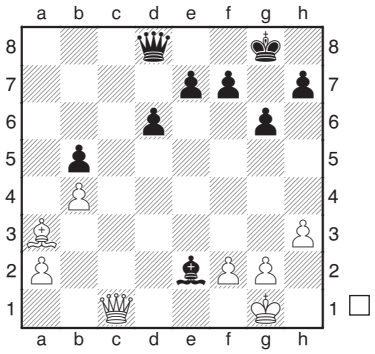
The rook enters via the a-file and puts pressure on the c3-knight.

19.♕d2 ♘xe4!



The tactical blow on e4

20.♘xe4 ♗xe4 21.♗xg7 ♗xb1 22.♗b2 ♖xc1+ 23.♕xc1 ♗d3 24.♗xa3 ♗xe2



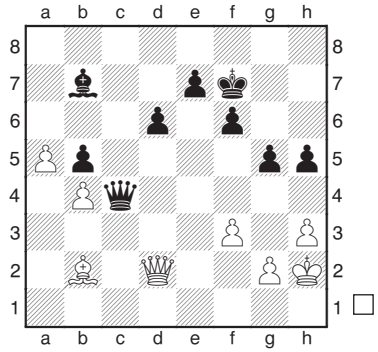
Black wins a pawn

Furthermore, the b4-pawn has been left weak.

25.♗b2 f6 26.♕c2 ♗c4 27.a4 ♕d7 28.a5 ♔f7 29.♕e4 ♕e6 30.♕h4 h5 31.♕f4 ♗d5

With 31...♕e1+ 32.♔h2 ♕xb4 Black would have won a second pawn.

32.♕d2 ♗b7 33.f3 ♕c4 34.♔h2 g5



Black advances on the kingside

35.♗d4 e5 36.♗e3 ♔e6 37.♕d1 g4 38.fxg4 ♕e4 39.♕e2 d5 40.♕xb5 d4 41.♕b6+?

With 41.♕e8+ White had a perpetual check.

41...♗c6 42.♔g3 hxg4 43.♗f2 ♕xg2+ 44.♔h4 ♕xh3#

0–1

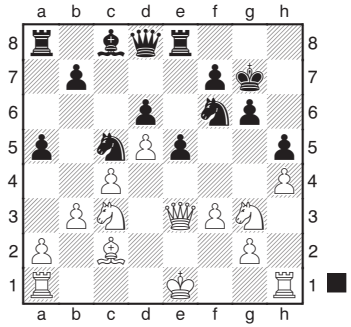
Appendix

Typical Ideas

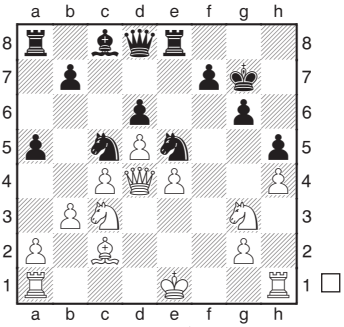
The ideas that recur most often in the games of this book, each shown with the position before and after the manoeuvre. Go over them often: they are what allow you to play the King's Indian in Sindarov's style.

IDEA 1 Pawn sacrifice to free a square

Sarana – Sindarov, Game 1



18...e4!

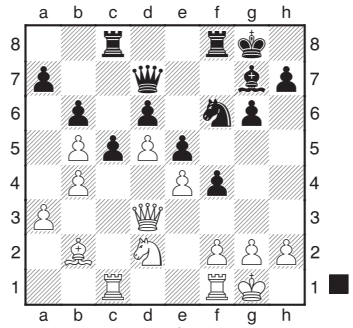


After 20...♘e5

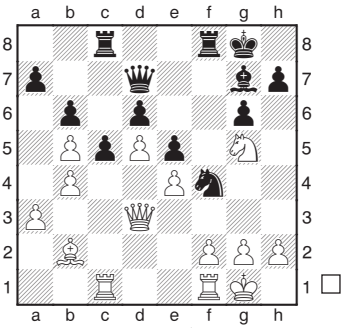
18...e4! 19.fxe4 ♘g4 20.♕d4+ ♘e5. Black gives up a pawn to free the e5-square, where the knight settles.

IDEA 2 ...f3 for ♘h5 and ♘f4

Firouzja – Sindarov, Game 6



22...f3!

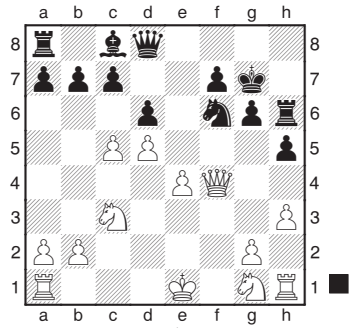


After 24...♘f4

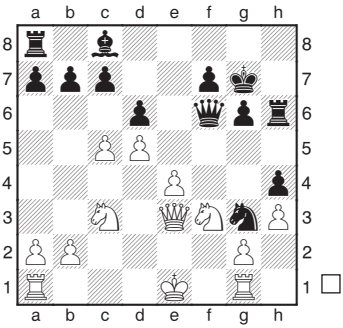
22...f3! 23.♘xf3 ♘h5 24.♘g5 ♘f4. The pawn is given up to clear the knight's path to f4, the great square on the kingside.

IDEA 3 The h4, ♘h5, ♘g3 and ♕f6 manoeuvre

Livaic – Sindarov, Game 3 (analysis)



15...h4

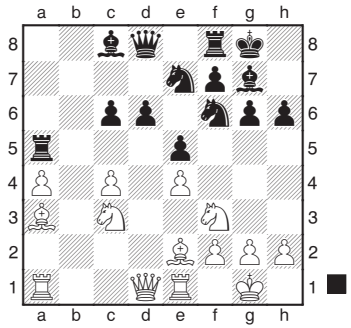


After 18...♕f6

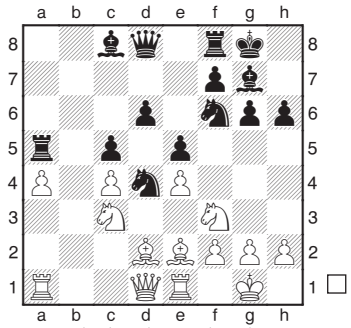
15...h4 16.♘f3 ♘h5 17.♕e3 ♘g3 18.♖g1 ♕f6. The h4-pawn supports the knight on g3 and the queen joins in from f6.

IDEA 4 ...c5! aiming for ♘c6-d4

Dubov – Sindarov, Game 5 (analysis)



14...c5!

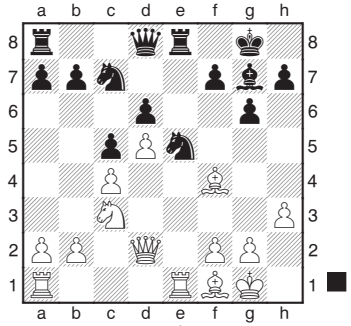


The knight reaches d4

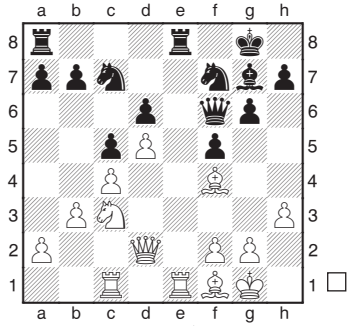
14...c5!, trying to bring the e7-knight to d4 via c6.

IDEA 5 ...f5, ♕f6 y ♘f7

Firouzja – Sindarov, Game 8



16...f5

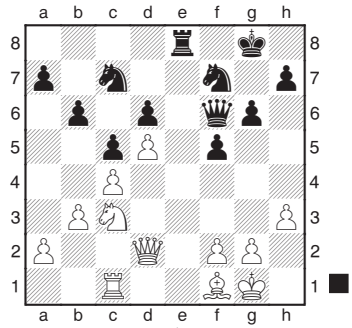


After 18...♘f7!

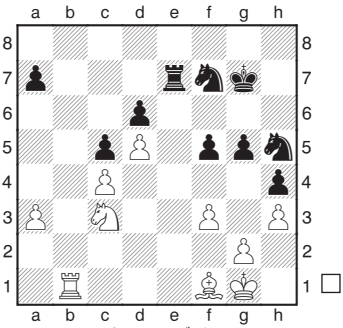
Black plays ...f5, puts his queen on f6 and retreats the knight to f7, from where it defends d6 and watches over e5 and g5.

IDEA 6 h5-h4, fixing the kingside

Firouzja – Sindarov, Game 8



24...h5

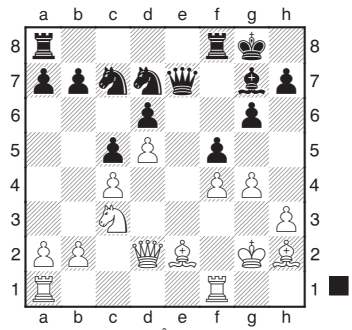


After 33...♘h5

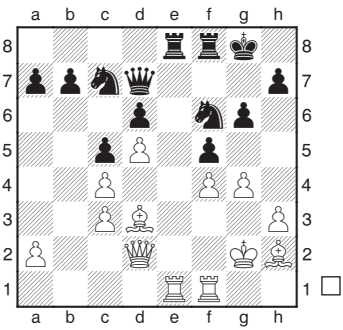
The typical h5-h4 manoeuvre, fixing White's kingside structure. It was later exploited for ...♘h5.

IDEA 7 ♗xc3, doubling pawns

Gunina – Sindarov, Game 10



18...♗xc3!

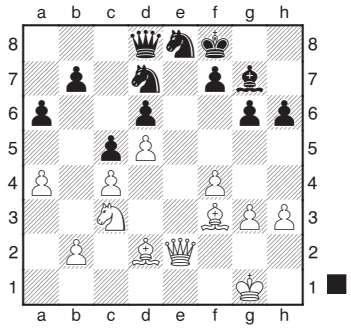


After 21...♕d7

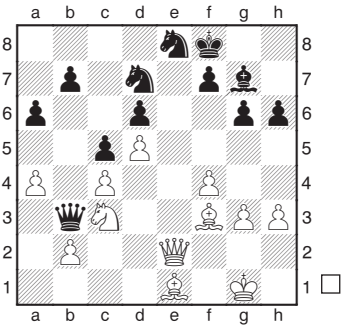
♗xc3, doubling pawns. It is important that f4 is fixed by ...f5, so that White's dark-squared bishop cannot easily come into play.

IDEA 8 The ♕b6-b4 or b3 manoeuvre

Gelfand – Sindarov, Game 11



25...♕b6!

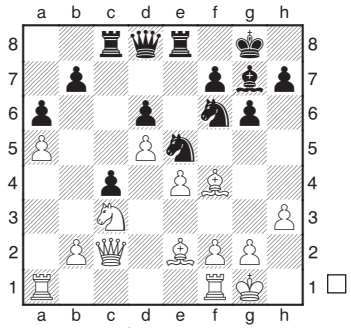


After 26...♕b3

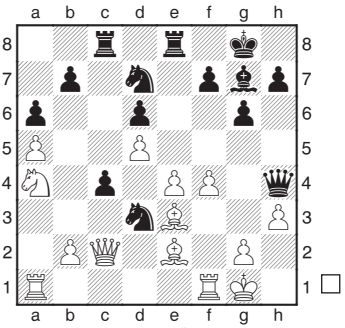
The typical manoeuvre ♕b6 followed by ♕b4 or ♕b3, attacking the weaknesses on White's queenside.

IDEA 9 ♖c8, ...c4 y ♘d3

Salem – Sindarov, Game 15



After 16...c4!

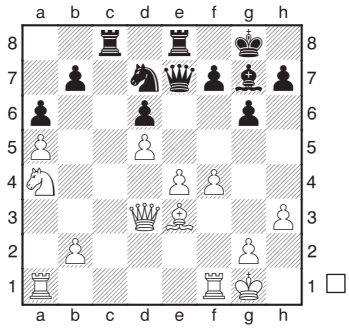


After 19...♘d3!

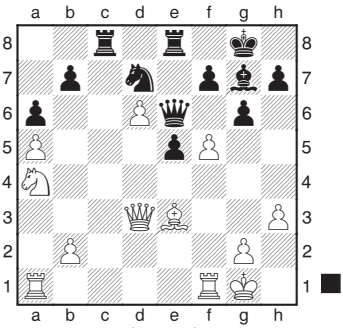
The typical manoeuvre ♖c8, ...c4 and ...♘d3. The c4-pawn gains space and supports the knight on d3.

IDEA 10 Sacrifice on e5 to play f5

Salem – Sindarov, Game 15



22.e5!

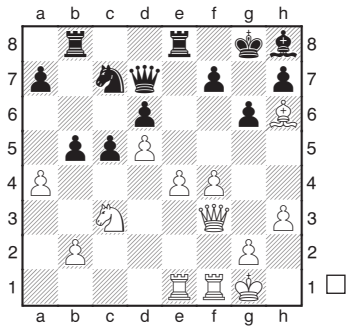


After 24.f5

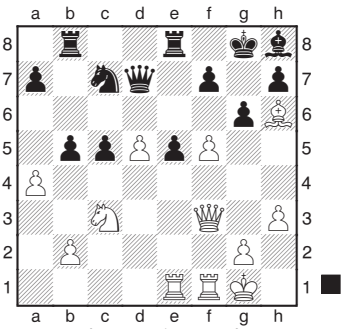
A typical idea for White: he sacrifices a pawn on e5 in order to play f5. In this way, the black pawn on e5 blocks that square for Black's pieces.

IDEA 11 e5 and f5 for White: another example

Sarana – Sindarov, Game 16



22.e5

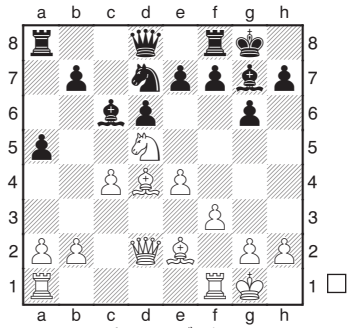


After 22...dxe5 23.f5

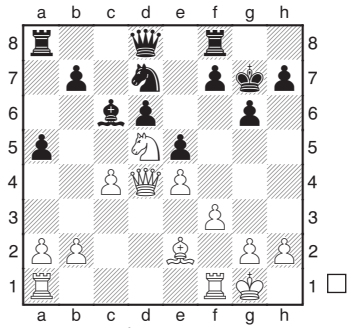
The same plan: 22.e5 dxe5 23.f5. Here Black's best reply would be 23...e4!, opening the bishop's diagonal and gaining the e5-square.

IDEA 12 Exchange of the dark-squared bishops

Nakamura – Sindarov, Game 19



After 13...♘d7!

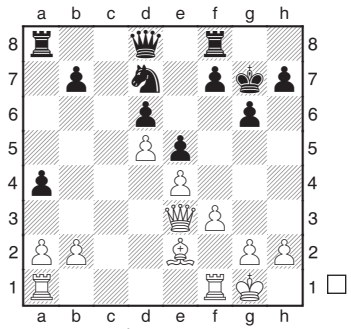


After 15...e5!

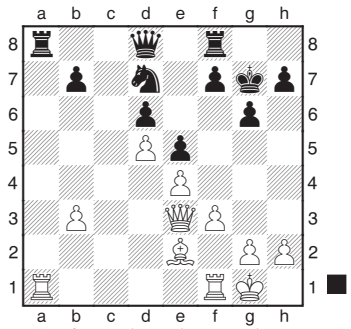
To gain space, this exchange usually suits Black: 13...♘d7! 14.♗xg7 ♔xg7 15.♕d4+ e5! The idea is to capture on d5 and have the c5-square for the knight and b6 for the queen.

IDEA 13 ...a4! on the queenside

Nakamura – Sindarov, Game 19



After 17...a4!

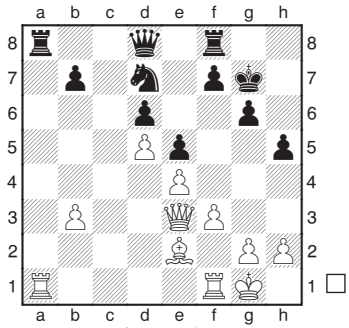


After 18.b4 axb3 19.axb3

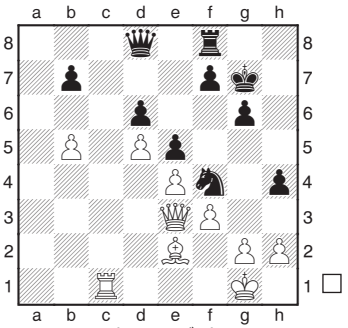
...a4! gains space on the queenside, fixes and pressurises the white pawns and frees the a5-square for the queen or rook. If White advances with b4, the a-file opens and a weakness is created on b3.

IDEA 14 ...h5 on the kingside

Nakamura – Sindarov, Game 19



After 19...h5!

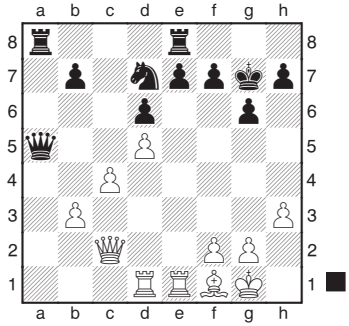


After 24...♘f4

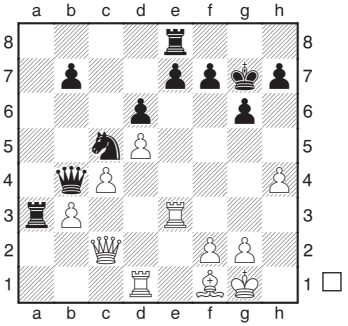
...h5 gains space on the kingside, with the idea ...h4, ...♘f6, ...♘h5 and ...♘f4.

IDEA 15 Pressure on b3: ♕b4, ♖a3 and ♘c5

Suleymanli – Sindarov, Game 20



20...♕b4

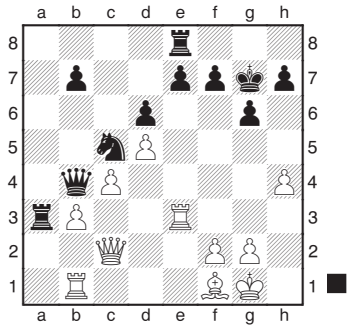


After 22...♖a3

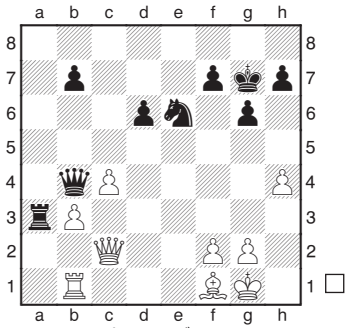
A typical idea: pressurising the b3-pawn with ...♕b4, ...♖a3 and ...♘c5. White's typical counter is to use his space advantage to defend the weakness on b3 while at the same time starting an attack on the king with h4-h5.

IDEA 16 The ...e5 break

Suleymanli – Sindarov, Game 20



23...e5!

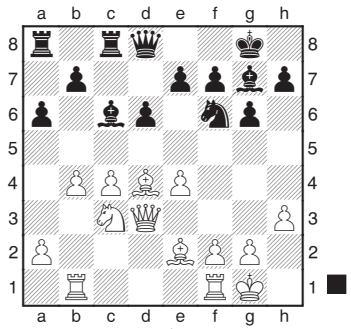


After 25... ♘xe6

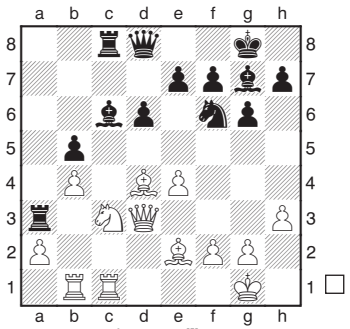
A typical break for Black: ...e5 eliminates the backward pawn on e7. Although it leaves d6 weak, this change of structure is usually preferable for Black.

IDEA 17 The ...b5 break

Bluebaum – Sindarov, Game 21



16...b5!



After 18... ♖a3

A typical idea: the ...b5 break is possible because the e4-pawn is hanging; in addition, the a-file opens for the black rook.

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Game Videos

Scan the code (or tap it in the digital edition) to watch the video on YouTube.



Game 4: Vidit – Sindarov
GCL Mumbai 2025 (GrandWonders)
youtu.be/Wsi5Jd4zvy4



Game 5: Dubov – Sindarov
World Rapid Team Ch., Almaty 2024 (Chess Buddies)
youtu.be/7By-pV7hAzE



Game 6: Firouzja – Sindarov
World Cup 2021 (Partidas Inmortales de Ajedrez, in Spanish)
youtu.be/j0hlyMbo_WM



Game 11: Gelfand – Sindarov
Naroditsky Memorial Blitz 2026 (Checkmate Central)
youtu.be/oFBYxZ-TiJE



Game 13: Lazavik – Sindarov
Comet Titled Winners 2025 (GrandWonders)
youtu.be/Uxobs6vFCfE



Game 14: Ipatov – Sindarov
World Blitz Team Ch. 2026 (ChessMoves VIP)
youtu.be/UVBAVWtRkrU



Game 18: Nakamura – Sindarov
Clutch Chess 2026 (ChessNetwork)
youtu.be/U6M1ts9Ig2g



Game 19: Nakamura – Sindarov
USA–Uzbekistan 2026 (agadmator's Chess Channel)
youtu.be/eJg5dPsxn1o

josesande.com/chess/