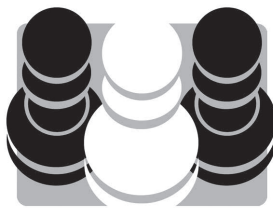


Key Concepts of Gambit Play

By

Yuri Razuvaev



Quality Chess
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Introduction

*If you want to learn how to win, don't be afraid to upset the balance!
More than that – train yourself to upset it.*

Mikhail Tal, 8th World Champion

Over a long stretch of years, agonizingly, step by step, players have studied the basic principles of chess. Together with knowledge, the technique of defence has steadily increased, and piercing your opponent's chess armour has become more and more difficult. It is not by chance that we have chosen the words of that great chess romantic, Mikhail Tal, to stand as a motto. Thanks to technique and knowledge, even strong grandmasters in our own day have difficulty winning. Risk and the fight for the initiative has become a crucial weapon of modern chess. But where there is risk and a fight for the initiative, there is also a rightful place for gambit ideas.

Yuri Razuvaev
Moscow, 2004



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Publisher's Foreword

The romantic era of chess was the 19th century, when the myth will tell you that the strongest players believed they could magically exert their personality on the board and did not possess the power of objectivity. For much of the 20th century, technically-oriented players such as Capablanca, Rubinstein and Botvinnik were in pole position. There were exceptions – Alekhine, Tal and others – but in general chess developed in a technical direction throughout the 20th century, culminating with Anatoly Karpov, probably the greatest technician ever. This ended in 1985 when Garry Kasparov brought dynamics to the forefront of chess strategy.

Chess has never really looked back. There are always pessimists who predict doom for chess, going back 100 years to Capablanca. They have always been wrong.

When I started working on this book I realized that gambit play is as alive as ever, maybe even more so than at any point since the beginning of tournament chess in 1851. It is just not the same gambits anymore!

More than a decade has passed since this book was published in Russia. It would have made perfect sense to have it translated into English at the time, but somehow it did not happen. Luckily the book remains highly relevant and virtually all of the gambits Razuvaev presented in the original book are still played today.

Still, after a lot of agonizing, we have decided to update the book. This could have been done in a lot of ways. Preferably an update is done by the author, but sadly Yuri Razuvaev is no longer with us, having passed away before his time in 2012, aged 66. So we decided to do it ourselves, with the intention of continuing the style of the original book.

All books are edited to some extent. The final text is rarely the sole unaltered word of the author. In the *Classics* series we have at times made minor corrections, which were in support of the author's argument, without advertising it. Our project is one of restoration and continued usage of great chess books from the past, not one of blind preservation.

However in this case we have chosen to go with appendixes. Every chapter has an additional section with recent examples, with the inspirational angle being the strongest, as in Razuvaev's original text.

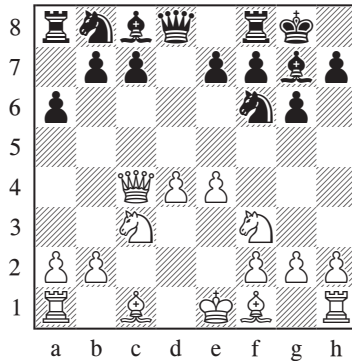
Jacob Aagaard
Glasgow, November 2016

Chapter 6

My Own Gambit

The history of the author's own gambit began a long time ago.

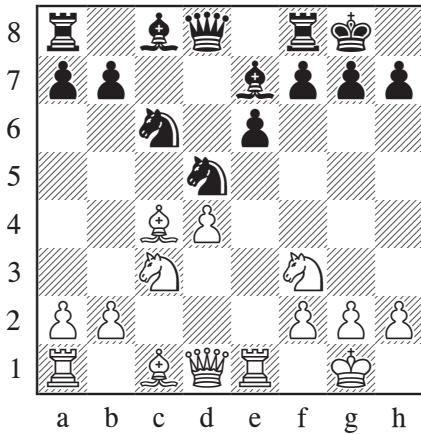
In 1963, Mikhail Botvinnik's famous chess school was opened. Alongside Anatoly Karpov, Yuri Balashov and Nukhim Rashkovsky, I too was one of its pupils. The first homework task that the "patriarch" set us was very serious – to analyse the openings of the Botvinnik – Petrosian match (1963). Quite frankly I didn't cope all that well with the task, but I did succeed in thinking up a whole range of new opening ideas. I well remember Botvinnik's astonishment when I demonstrated a variation which today is well known: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗f3 ♕g7 5.♚b3 dxc4 6.♚xc4 0–0 7.e4 a6



I thought at the time that this move was my patent, but later I managed to discover that Alekhine had played it against Euwe. The fourth World Champion had lost that game, and, in the way these things usually happen, the variation was consigned to oblivion until the end of the 1960s. After 8.a4 b5 9.♚b3 c5 10.dxc5 ♕e6 11.♚a3 b4! 12.♚xb4 ♘c6 13.♚b6 ♚c8, Black has good counterplay.

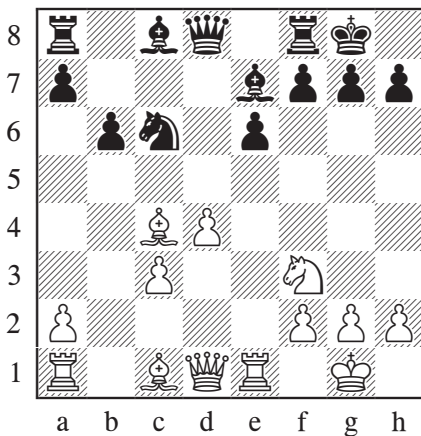
The "patriarch" severely criticized my lack of a systematic approach. The criticism produced its effect, and I applied myself to diligent opening study, coupling this work with the examination of typical middlegame positions. And seeing that the Queen's Gambit Accepted had occurred repeatedly in the Botvinnik – Petrosian match, I had to look closely into positions with an isolated pawn. The fruit of this labour was quite an interesting gambit.

1.d4 d5 2.♗f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e3 ♘c6 7.♕c4 cxd4 8.exd4 ♕e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.♖e1



The history of this position dates from the famous game Botvinnik – Alekhine, AVRO 1938. Alekhine played the incautious 10...b6, and after the energetic sequence 11.♘xd5 exd5 12.♙b5 ♙d7 13.♚a4 White took firm possession of the initiative. In later games Black began to play more circumspectly:

10...♘c3 11.bxc3 b6

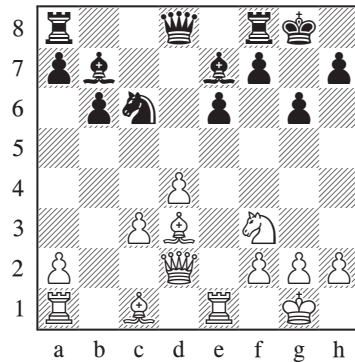


One of the standard positions of contemporary chess. It is, strictly speaking, a hanging pawn position, in other words its theme is closely related to the “IQP”. The verdict of theory is highly equivocal: the situation is one of dynamic equilibrium. But look at the black king. Without the knight on f6, Black’s monarch appears abandoned.

It’s natural that all White’s plans should be connected with an attack on the king. Several different ideas have been tried out here. For many years, the following has served as the main line and seemingly the best one:

12.♙d3 ♙b7 13.♚c2 g6 14.♙h6

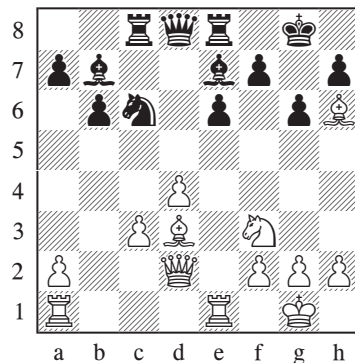
David Bronstein came up with the paradoxical 14.♚d2 in the game Bronstein – Pachman, Gothenburg 1955. The aim of White’s manoeuvre is to station his queen, not his bishop, on h6. The game continued:



14...♙a5 15.♘e5 ♙f6 16.♙a3 ♙e7 17.♙b2 f5 18.c4 ♙f6 19.♚ad1, with the initiative.

That, then, is a route for the unconventionally minded. Adherents of classical play prefer to continue calmly and have opted for the natural text move.

14...♚e8 15.♚d2 ♚c8



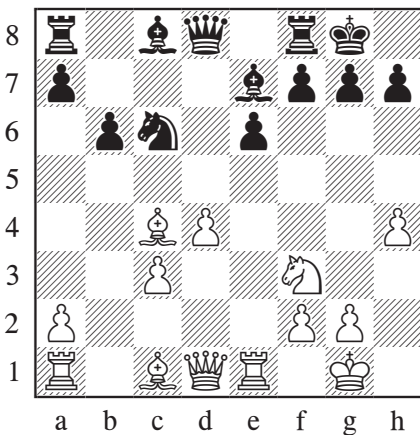
And again White must choose between paths. In 1970, facing Mikhail Tal in the

celebrated “Match of the Century” in Belgrade, Miguel Najdorf adopted the sharp 16.h4. The Argentine grandmaster failed to obtain an advantage, but after an interesting struggle he won the game – and that, as the practice of many years has shown, is more important for the future of a fruitful opening idea. Najdorf was to find quite a few followers. But they rarely had such good fortune as Caissa’s darling, “Miguel the Great”. Another move to have been played is 16.♞ac1 – we should mention Lajos Portisch in this connection; while the interesting 16.♞ab1 was employed by Botvinnik himself.

Names are recited to testify to the high quality of ideas. But at the age of eighteen, well-known truths have little appeal to you. Moreover, in those splendid years I was interested in the factor of tempo in attack. The study of classic gambit games led me to a natural and enticing conclusion: if you accelerate an attack by two or three tempos, this often has great repercussions. In the present case Black’s king is rather lonely, and if we just speed up the attack a little, the defenders may not arrive in time to help. In this way, the following idea arose. From the diagram after Black’s 11th move on the previous page, White plays:

12.h4!?

An attack needs impetus!



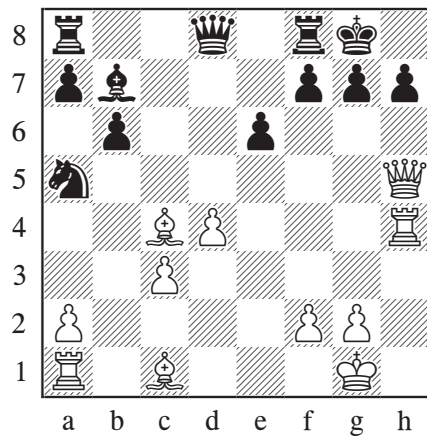
12...♙xh4 13.♘xh4 ♖xh4

The first part of the scheme is accomplished. A pawn has been sacrificed, and White now needs to carry out the second part – to gain 2-3 tempos for developing his attack.

14.♗f3 ♘b7 15.♞e4 ♜d8 16.♗h5

The activity of White’s pieces looks very impressive. Analysis was to show that Black’s only continuation, and an adequate one, involved giving up his queen:

16...♞a5 17.♞h4



17...♗xh4! 18.♗xh4 ♞xc4

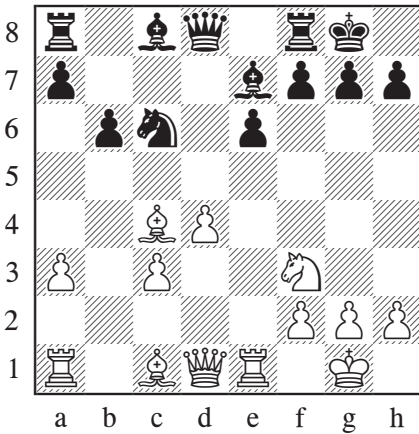
Subsequently it proved possible to refine White’s play a little: 17.♞g4 (instead of 17.♞h4) 17...♞xc4 18.♗h6 g6 19.♞h4 ♗xh4 20.♗xh4. Today Fritz evaluates this position as better for White. I cannot agree 100% with our “silicon friend”. The position, as they say, is one for the enthusiast.

The variations after 12.h4 proved very interesting in my analysis, and I was captivated by this work. It wasn’t until three years later, however, that I managed to test the novelty in practice.

Yuri Razuvaev – Vladimir Goldin

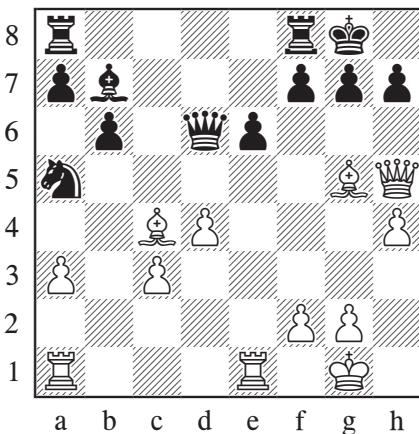
Moscow 1966

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c5 4.e3 cxd4 5.exd4
d5 6.♘c3 ♙e7 7.♙d3 0-0 8.0-0 ♘c6 9.a3
dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♘d5 11.♞e1 ♘xc3 12.bxc3 b6



Put the pawn back on a2, and we have the familiar position before us. This game, then, is the baptism of fire for my idea.

13.h4! ♙b7 14.♘g5 ♘a5 15.♞h5 ♙xg5
16.♙xg5 ♞d6



17.♙f6!

Shades of some games by Alekhine. Oddly enough, in *Chess Informant 2*, there is a question

mark after this move, and the contributor who put it there was Alexander Kotov – the fourth World Champion’s chronicler. What was his reason? In those far-off years I didn’t resolve to put this natural question to the revered maestro.

17...♞f4

On 17...gxf6, White would continue 18.♙d3 f5 19.♞g5† ♔h8 20.♞f6† ♔g8 21.♞e3 ♞e8 22.♞h6, with advantage.

The tempting 17...♞c6 would be met by 18.d5! exd5 (18...♞xc4 19.♞g5) 19.♙d3, with a strong attack.

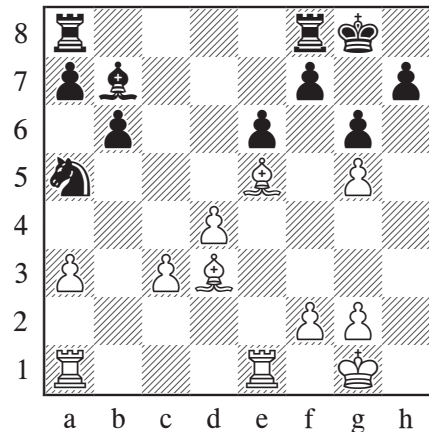
18.♙d3

The first bungle; 18.♙e5 is better.

18...g6 19.♙e5?

A second and more serious mistake; the natural 19.♞g5 is more precise.

19...♞d2 20.♞g5 ♞xg5 21.hxg5



White is a little better, but Black has a sturdy position. In the end I succeeded in winning this game, but the play on both sides was a long way from perfection. Even though the game made it into the holy book of that time – *Chess Informant* – it still went almost unnoticed.

The years passed, but players willing to repeat the variation didn't appear. I began to fret about it, and out of frustration and impatience I started playing the variation in lightning games.

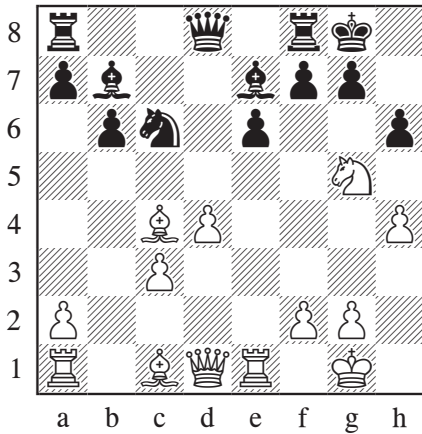
Thus it was that in 1977, in far-off Brazil, the following friendly blitz game took place.

GAME 28

Yuri Razuvaev – Anthony Miles

Brazil (blitz) 1977

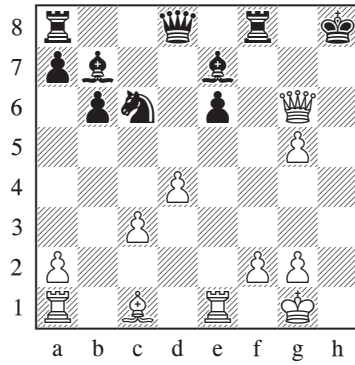
1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.e3 e6 5.d4 d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♙c4 cxd4 8.exd4 ♙e7 9.0–0 0–0 10.♞e1 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 b6 12.h4 ♙b7 13.♘g5 h6



14.♞h5

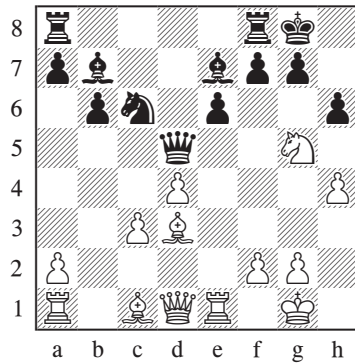
Not bad in a blitz game. Objectively, however, the strongest move here is 14.♙d3.

The position is then difficult to fathom, even in home analysis. Let's start with the capture of the knight: 14...hgx5 15.♞h5 g6 (if Black calmly plays 15...f5, the reply 16.hgx5 forces him to return the piece with 16...♙xg5; White then remains with a positional advantage after the simple 17.♙xg5, but 17.♙c4 is even stronger – Black's position then collapses) 16.♙xg6 fxg6 17.♞xg6 ♖h8 18.hgx5



18...♞xf2 (amazingly, even Fritz can't find any other defence against the white rook switching to the h-file) 19.♖xf2 ♞f8† 20.♖e2 ♞g7 21.♞h1† ♖g8 22.♞xe6† ♖f8 23.g6, and Black cannot save himself.

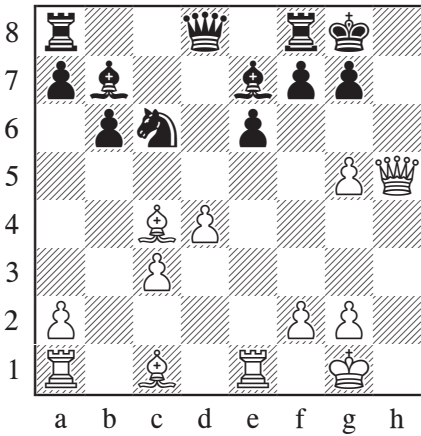
Now let us look at the counterattacking try 14...♞d5. In this case it's harder to discern a forced line of play, so let us improvise:



15.♙h7† ♖h8 16.♙e4 ♞c4 17.♘h7 ♞fc8 (in the event of 17...♞xc3, Black could suddenly find himself in an ending the exchange down: 18.♙xh6 gxh6 19.♘xf8 ♙xf8 20.♞c1) 18.♙xh6 f5 19.♞h5 fxe4 (19...♖xh7 20.♞f7 ♖xh6 21.♙xf5 is pretty) 20.♙xg7†! ♖xg7 21.♞xe4, and the black king has nowhere to hide from White's hurricane.

14...hgx5 15.hgx5

As is clear from what we have just examined, the right move is 15.♙d3.



15...g6

Blitz is blitz; Black could have emerged safe and sound by continuing 15...d4. Now after 16.d1 f3† 17.fxf3 gxf3 18.fxd8 fxd8 19.gxf3 Black is simply winning.

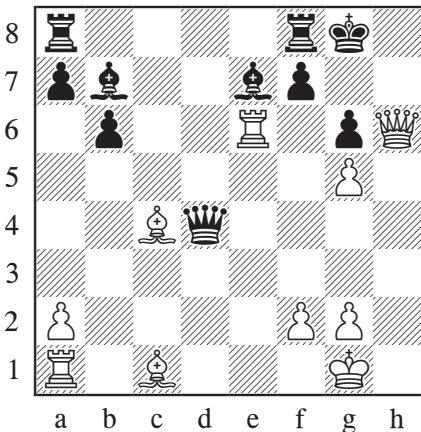
White's attack also peters out after 16.cxd4 fxd4 17.g6 fh4 (clearer than 17...fxf2† 18.fxf2 fxf3 19.g3 gxh5 20.fxe6).

16.fh6 d4

Too late. This sacrifice no longer saves him.

17.cxd4 fxd4 18.fxe6!

A picturesque position; Black is helpless. The concluding moves were:



18...fxf2† 19.fh2 fh5† 20.fhx5 gxh5

21.fg6† fh7 22.fh6† fh8 23.fb2
1-0

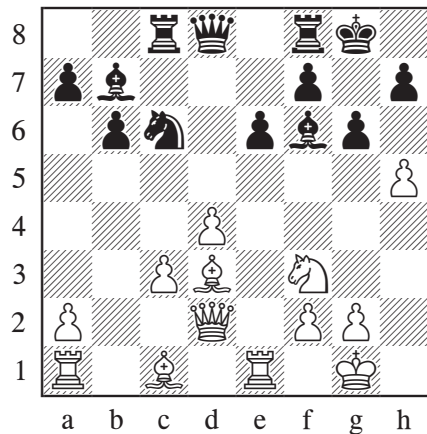
“Your secret?” Tony asked in astonishment, as he resigned the game. But the year 1979 arrived, and I was invited to the traditional international tournament at Dubna.

I set off on my way to the opening of the tournament like a man going to a casino with his last hundred dollars in his pocket. The point is that one of the participants was the Hungarian grandmaster Ivan Farago. In 1976 he had played a game that became one of the chief theoretical “hits” of that era.

Eivind Poulsen – Ivan Farago

Gausdal 1976

1.d4 e6 2.f3 f6 3.c4 d5 4.f3 c5 5.cxd5 fxd5 6.e3 f6 7.f4 cxd4 8.exd4 e7 9.0-0 10.f1 dxc3 11.bxc3 b6 12.f3 d3 f7 13.f2 c2 g6 14.f2 d2 f6 15.h4 fc8 16.h5



16...d4!

A brilliant innovation, overturning the verdict on the variation. White went to pieces and lost quickly.

17.fxd4 fc3! 18.fxc3 fxd4 19.f2 c2 fa1 20.f3 f5! 21.f4 fc8

White resisted until move 33, but could not change the outcome.

My intuition suggested to me that Farago would defend this variation for Black on principle. There was just one thing I needed – would the drawing of lots give me the white pieces against him? It did.

GAME 29

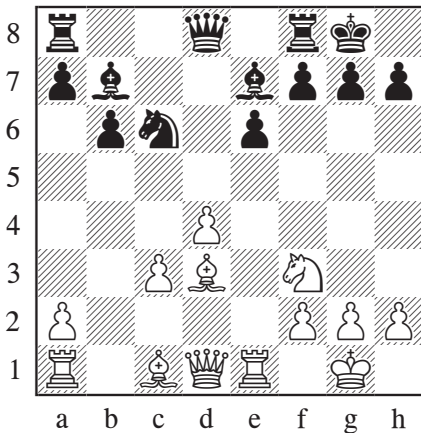
Yuri Razuvaev – Ivan Farago

Dubna 1979

1.d4 e6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 d5 4.♘c3 c5 5.cxd5
 ♘xd5 6.e3 ♘c6 7.♙c4 cxd4 8.exd4 ♙e7
 9.0–0 0–0 10.♞e1 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 b6 12..♙d3

A slight modernization of the line.

12...♙b7



13.h4!

There it is – the innovation of a whole chess lifetime. At present the database already contains over 60 games on this theme, and the merits and drawbacks of the new gambit can be the object of informed discussion. On that day, after lengthy cogitation, the Hungarian grandmaster decided not to accept the pawn sacrifice.

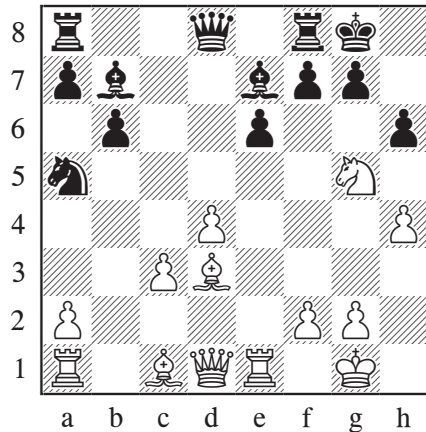
13...♘a5

Our analysis of the opening idea can be left until afterwards – there is no hurry. For now, let us see how the new idea made its appearance in practice.

14.♘g5 h6

In this kind of position Black usually plays 14...g6, although in the present case as in others, White's attack looks formidable after 15.♞g4.

Strictly speaking, the correct reaction to the knight sortie is 14...♙xg5, endeavouring to create counterplay on the light squares.



15.♞h5

White had a way to gain the advantage by quiet means: 15.♘h7 ♞e8 16.♞g4 ♞d5 (Black's affairs would turn out even worse after 16...♙h8 17.♘g5, leaving him at a loss how to continue) 17.♙e4 h5 18.♞g3 ♞xe4 19.♞xe4 ♙xe4 20.♘g5, and what lies ahead for Black is a fairly bleak struggle to draw. However, the fifteen-year wait had affected me – I very much wanted to win this game by a direct attack.

15...♙d5

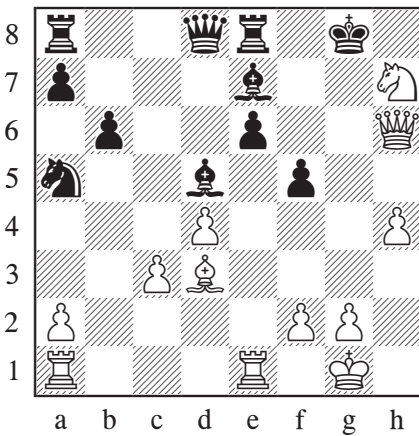
Curiously enough, Fritz considers this move strongest. It must be admitted that the position has escaped from human control and is scarcely amenable to intervention from the computer.

Thus for instance after the natural 15...♖c7, White would have the chance for a piratical foray: 16.♙h7† ♘h8 17.♘f7† ♗xh7 18.♞xe6, and the black king cannot break out of the tight ring of white pieces surrounding it.

The best defence was 15...♞c8, after which White has several interesting ways to develop the attack; one that looks very “tasty” is 16.♙f4.

A typical and amusing trap is also worth mentioning: 15...♞d5?? 16.♙h7† ♘h8 17.♙e4.

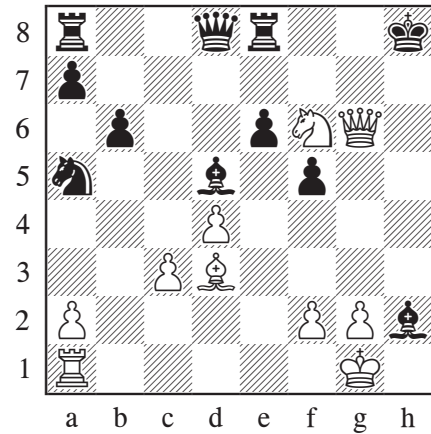
16.♘h7! ♞e8 17.♙xh6 gxh6 18.♞xh6 f5



19.♞e3

An interesting moment. Later, in some journals, the opinion was expressed that 19.♞xe6 would have achieved the aim more quickly. A computer test gives the following variation: 19...♙xe6 20.♞xe6† ♗g7 21.♞e5† ♗g8 22.♞xf5 ♞d6 23.♞e1 ♙xh4 24.♞g4† ♗h8 25.♞xe8† ♞xe8 26.♞xh4 ♞e1† 27.♙f1, with a big advantage. But then, the move in the game is not bad either. At any rate, my own computer – evidently out of a feeling of solidarity with its owner – also accords preference to my move.

19...♙xh4 20.♞g3†! ♙xg3 21.♞g6† ♗h8 22.♘f6 ♙h2†



23.♗h1

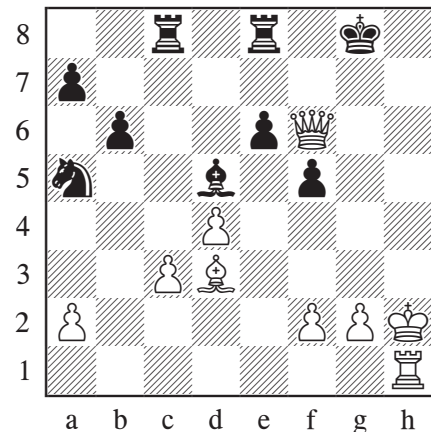
This had been Black’s last chance: if 23.♗xh2 then 23...♞c7† 24.♗g1 ♞e7.

23...♞xf6

Harsh necessity. There would be an entertaining mate in the variation 23...♙xg2† 24.♗xh2 ♞c7† 25.♗xg2 ♞g8 26.♞h1†.

24.♞xf6† ♗g8 25.♗xh2 ♞ac8 26.♞h1!

“Superior forces are obliged to attack” (Steinitz).



26...♞c7 27.♞g6† ♗f8 28.♗g1 ♞f7 29.♞g5 ♞g7 30.♞h8† ♗f7 31.♞h5†
1–0