

NIKOLA SEDLAK

# WINNING

with the  
Modern London System

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PART 2



Chess  
Evolution

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## KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+∓	White has a decisive advantage
∓+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞̄	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate



## PREFACE

One year after my first book *Winning with the Modern London System* was published, I decided to round out our white repertoire to include Black's response 1...<sup>h2</sup>f6. I have tried my best to write this book in the same spirit as my first one, meaning that openings are explained through analysing complete games, putting the accent on typical plans and pawns structures arising in these kinds of positions. Only a small part of the book contains some forcing positions that need more in the way of 'memorising'. This repertoire which I am recommending is a good weapon against very sharp and well-prepared opponents.

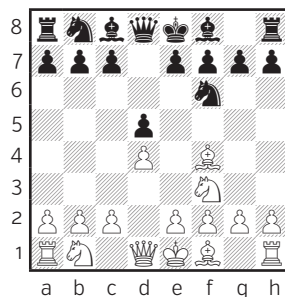
Nikola Sedlak



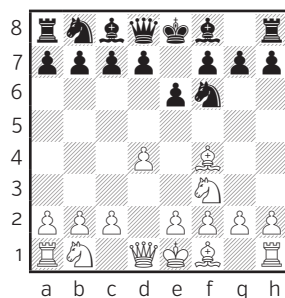


# INTRODUCTION

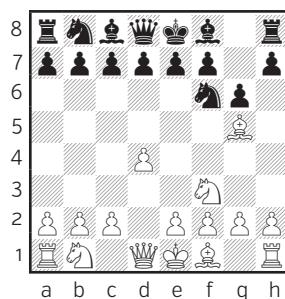
The book in front of you is organised into four main chapters. The first chapter deals with positions after 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d5 3.♙f4 which I refer to later in this book as the “Updated London System”. The main subject of this chapter are new positions which have become popular in the last year. The leaders of the black pieces came up with new, computer-assisted ideas and a big theoretical battle is still in progress.



In the second chapter we will see positions starting with 1. d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.♙f4 which is also a branch of the London system. Most of the games that I analyse here are without Black’s response ...d7-d5, a move which I already covered in my first book. Most often plans chosen by Black in this line are connected with ...c7-c5 and ...b7-b6, aiming for “hedgehog” setups. The most prominent exponent in these positions for the white side is the American grandmaster Gata Kamsky and this chapter features several beautiful victories by him.



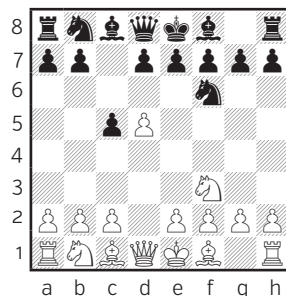
Next we turn to the Torre Attack, which starts after the moves 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.♙g5. The Torre Attack has become very popular at the top level and constitutes an unpleasant weapon against King’s Indian and Grünfeld players, because the arising positions are not so forced and sharp. It was often employed by great English grandmasters, such as Adams and Miles. It is also popular among Indian grandmasters, notably Harikrishna and Sasikiran.



Last but not least is the chapter with 1.d4  $\text{♞f6}$   
2.  $\text{♞f3}$  c5 3.d5 covering Anti-Benoni positions.

The main difference to normal Benoni/ Benko structures is that White does not play c2-c4, but rather Nc3 immediately - leaving the c4-square available for the knight. This setup is considered to be unpleasant for Black, because it throws them off their familiar ground. This repertoire that I suggest to you is simple to grasp, yet the

positions are not without venom. The best proof for this is that these positions were (and still are) in the repertoires of World Champions such as Kasparov, Carlsen, Smyslov and Kramnik. The positions covered in this book are often interesting and original and I hope that it will help you to achieve good results in your own games!

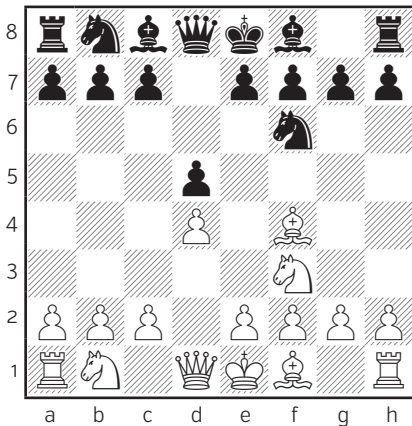


Nikola Sedlak

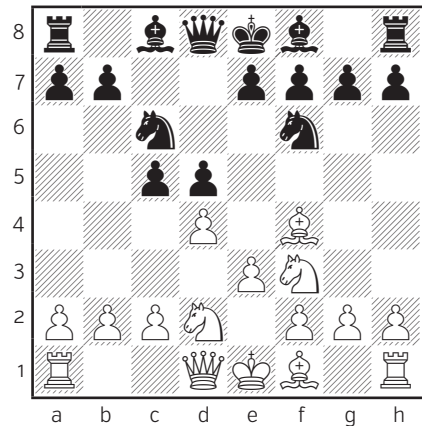
# CHAPTER ONE

## THE UPDATED LONDON SYSTEM

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♙f4



3...c5 4.e3 ♘c6 5.♘bd2!?



My suggestion here is to go for a ‘London System’. Compared with my 1st book, here we encounter a difference because in this position we have inserted the moves ♘f3 and ...♘f6. It doesn’t change so much, only in one position, so in this chapter we will see only that critical position — and some new plans for Black played in the last year. If you need more you can find it in ‘Winning with the Modern London System’, Chess Evolution 2016.

Only this move-order promises a fight for the initiative. In the past year this position has become very popular, even at the top level of chess.

Other possibilities, such as 5.c3?! give Black a comfortable position after 5...♙b6 6.♙b3 c4 7.♙c2 ♙f5! and Black is fine.

5...♙b6

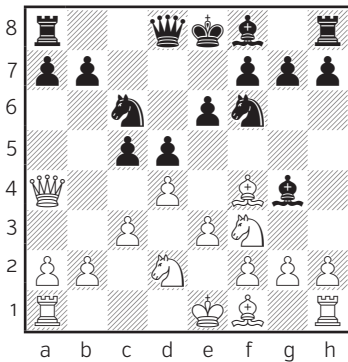
The most critical move, after which the position is going to be very sharp. Black also has other options;

5...cxd4 Here we have a transposition to the famous ‘Carlsbad structure’. 6.exd4 ♙b6 Only this

move is interesting for us here. The bad side of this move is that it renders difficult the implementation of a minority attack. Other continuations you can again find in my first book 'Winning with the Modern London System', Chess Evolution 2016 in CHAPTER 1. (6... ♖g4; 6...g6; 6... ♖f5) 7. ♖b3 ♖g4 8.h3 — see Ni Hua–Igonin Temur, Asia Continental Open 2016;

5... ♖f5?! at this moment doesn't work well because White has 6.dxc5! e6 7. ♖d4 ♖xc5 8. ♖xf5 exf5 9.c3± with a long-term and stable advantage thanks to his better pawn structure;

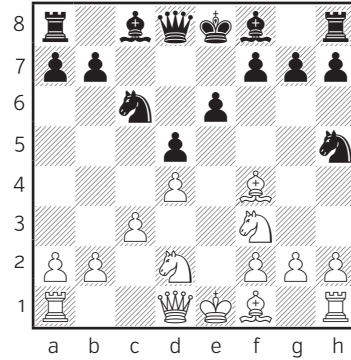
5... ♖g4 is one of the reasonable options: 6.c3 e6 7. ♖a4!?



See Shimanov A-Cox J, us Masters Open 2016;

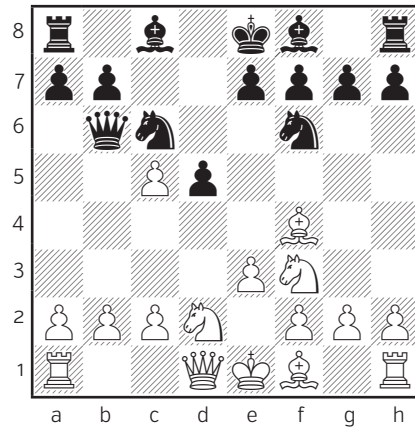
5...e6 is again displayed in 'Winning with the Modern London System', Chess Evolution 2016 in CHAPTER 4, but in this book I will explain a new Black concept, one which started to become very popular at

the end of 2016. 6.c3 cxd4!? 7.exd4 ♖h5



See Sedlak N-Shimanov A, Minsk 2017.

### 6.dxc5



What else? Otherwise White loses a pawn.

### 6... ♖xb2

The most principled reaction.

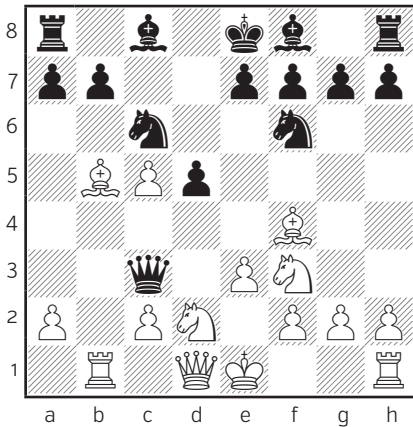
### 7. ♖b1 ♖c3□

The safest place for the queen and preventing c4!

7... ♖a3?! — this move is senseless because it allows a quick c4 compared with 7... ♖c3;

7... ♖xa2? 8. ♙b5 ♖a5 9.c4 e6 10.0–0↑

8. ♙b5



White has a lead in development and the main debate revolves around White's ability to use it and gain something more than compensation for the b-pawn. Tournament praxis shows at the moment that this position is very dangerous for Black. See the games: Sedlak N–Blagojevic D, Cetinje Open 2016 and Pert N-D Costa L, BCF 2016.

### Ni Hua — T. Igonin [Do2]

Asian Continental op 15th Tashkent  
(4), 2016

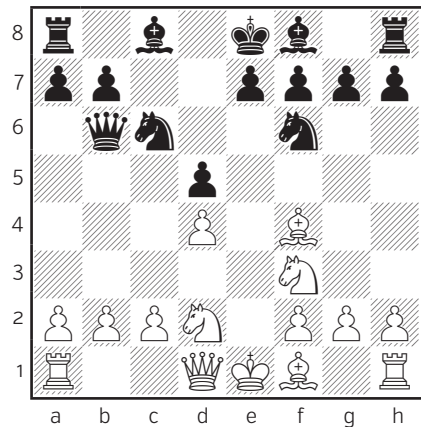
This game is very instructive, mainly because of the famous Carlsbad structure where Black went wrong

with the dubious plan of 6... ♖b6. With that move, Black was unable to implement the minority attack, which is the main idea in similar positions. It gave White time to organize a typical kingside attack undisturbed.

1.d4 d5 2. ♙f4 ♘f6 3.e3 c5 4. ♘f3 ♘c6 5. ♘bd2 cxd4 6.exd4

The Carlsbad structure occurs frequently in the 'London System', and that's why it is important to know the chess classics.

6... ♖b6?!



This move reduces Black's opportunities on the queenside, because the minority attack — as mentioned, one of the main ideas for Black in this structure — is far off.

Much better options for Black are 6... ♙f5, 6... ♙g4, 6...g6 and all of them are explained in my earlier book 'Winning with the Modern London System'.

## 7. ♖b3±

White is forced to put his knight in a 'strange' place in order not to lose a pawn, but in general the knight's position is not bad and can often be very useful, especially after pushing a4-a5.

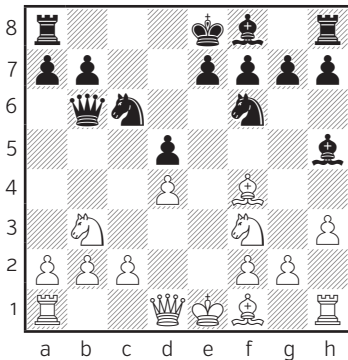
## 7... ♙g4

Black can also play the natural 7... ♙f5 8.c3 e6 (Preserving the light-squared bishop would be a big waste of time. 8...h6?! 9.a4! a6 10.a5 ♚d8 11. ♖c5±) 9. ♖h4! ♙e4 10.f3 ♙g6 11. ♖xg6 hxg6 12.g4 ♙e7 13. ♚c2±

## 8.h3 ♙xf3?!

But giving up the bishop pair in this way is not a great idea because it facilitates White's play on the kingside.

A better option was 8... ♙h5



but it's not without risk. Now White has two ways to continue; very aggressively or more positionally. Let's see both: The more positional option is 9.c3 which I suggest because

it's more in the spirit of these structures.

(Very sharp and complex positions arise after 9.a4!? a6. It seems as though Black needs to stop the a-pawn.

(9...e6 10.a5 ♚d8 11.a6± and now Black feels the absence of his light-squared bishop from the queenside after the following ♙b5.)

10.a5 ♚d8 11.g4!? This is not necessary, but it's an interesting try.

(It is always possible to play 11.c3 with standard plans.)

11... ♙g6 12. ♖e5 and now Black needs to play very accurately in view of his shaky bishop on g6. 12... e6 13.h4 ♖xe5 14.dxe5

(14. ♙xe5 ♚c8 15.c3 h5↔)

14... ♚c7! The only way to avoid material losses. 15. ♚d4

(15.c3 h5! 16.g5 ♖d7↔)

5... ♖xg4 16.f3 ♖h6 17.h5 ♙f5

(17... ♙xc2? 18. ♚c1 ♖f5 19. ♚d2 ♚c8 20. ♖a1!+-)

18. ♚a4+ ♚d7 19. ♖d4 ♙c5 20. ♙xh6 ♙xd4

(20... ♖xa4 21. ♜xa4 gxh6 22. ♘xf5  
exf5=)

21. ♘xg7 ♜g8 22. ♖xd4 ♜xg7= and  
after this all-out melee, the posi-  
tion is approximately equal.)

9...e6 10. ♔d3 ♖d8! If you are im-  
proving your pieces, it can't be  
a waste of time.

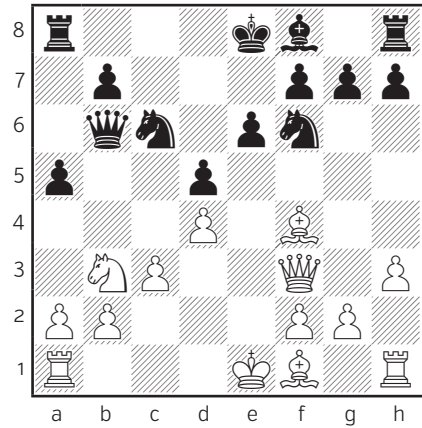
(At grandmaster level, in one  
game, Black chose a dubious plan  
with 10... ♔e7 11. ♖e2 a5 12. ♜b1  
o-o 13. ♘bd2 a4 14. o-o ♜fc8  
15. ♜fe1 ♖d8 16. a3 ♔g6 17. ♘xg6  
hxxg6 18. h4± and White had a free  
hand to build a typical attack with  
♙g2-♜h1-h5 Berkes F –Mihok O,  
Zalakaros 2016)

11. o-o ♔d6 12. ♔xd6 ♖xd6 13. ♜e1  
o-o 14. ♘bd2 ♜ab8 15. a4 a6 16. ♖b1!  
Removing himself from the pin with  
the idea of ♘e5. 16... ♔g6 17. ♘xg6  
hxxg6 18. ♘e5 ♖c7 19. ♘d3± It's eas-  
ier to play with White. The typi-  
cal plan with g3-h4-♙g2-♜h1 also  
works here, and Black's minority at-  
tack with ...b5 is not dangerous. For  
example: 19...b5 20. axb5 axb5 21. b4  
and White gains a pleasant position  
for his knight on c5.

### 9. ♖xf3 e6

Too risky would be 9... ♘xd4?  
10. ♘xd4 ♖xd4 11. ♔b5+- with  
a decisive initiative for White!

### 10. c3 a5?!



This move doesn't really have a deep  
idea behind it. It looks like a try to  
justify 6... ♖b6 and nothing more.

It is easy to say this in hindsight,  
but the best plan was to admit the  
mistake and continue with 10... ♖d8  
11. ♔d3 ♔d6± with an acceptable  
position.

In a relatively fresh game there  
was played 10... ♔e7 11. ♔d3 o-o  
12. o-o ♖d8 13. ♜fe1 ♔d6 14. ♔g5±  
with a slight and stable advan-  
tage for White: Nisipeanu, L  
-Khismatullin, D Gjakova 2016.

### 11. ♜b1 ♔e7

Forcing events is not going to be  
in Black's favour after 11... a4 12. ♘d2  
a3 13. bxa3! ♖a7 14. a4 ♔e7 15. ♔b5  
o-o 16. o-o±

### 12. ♔d3 o-o 13. o-o a4 14. ♘d2 ♜ad8?!

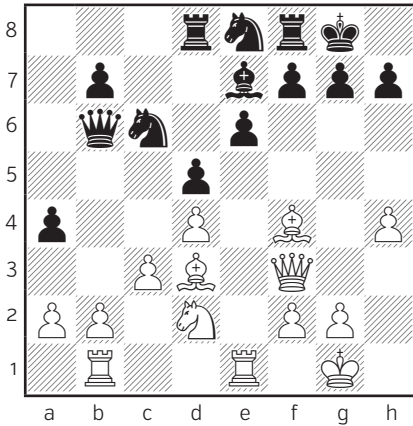
After this move, Black's queen  
will remain far from the action.

It was still not too late for 14... ♖d8 with the idea of ... ♕d6.

### 15. ♖fe1 ♘e8

With a lack of active play, these kinds of moves become a reality.

### 16. h4!±



By pushing the h-pawn, White is going to provoke weaknesses.

### 16... ♕d6

Immediately losing is 16... ♕xh4 after 17. ♖h5+-

### 17. ♕g5

White avoids a trade which would make Black's position easier.

### 17... ♕e7 18. ♕c2 ♖a5

Now White would be happy with swaps after 18... ♕xg5 19.hxg5 because White will use his open h-file for the attack by bringing his rook to h1 after g3-♕g2-♖h1

### 19. ♖d1?!

A somewhat unexpected move.

More natural was 19. ♖d3 g6 20. ♕h6 ♘g7 21. ♘f3→ and the attack plays itself.

### 19...b5?!

Black misses his chance.

After 19...a3 20.b4 ♖c7± Black could gain decent play (against the pawn on c3).

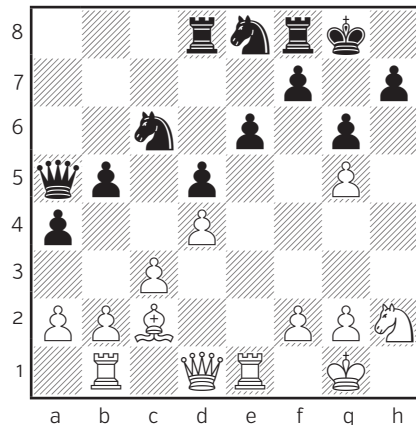
### 20. ♘f3 ♕xg5

Black finally cracks under the pressure.

### 21.hxg5 g6

Sooner or later, this weakening of the dark squares around the black king was inevitable! White's threat was ♖d3.

### 22. ♘h2!



Of course, White is going to use these weakened squares.



22...♔c7 23.♚e2 ♖b8 24.g3

This is a typical method of using the open h-file with the idea of ♖g2-♗h1.

24...♘d8

Black defends the e6-point, planning to defend with ...f6 if necessary.

25.♙d3?!

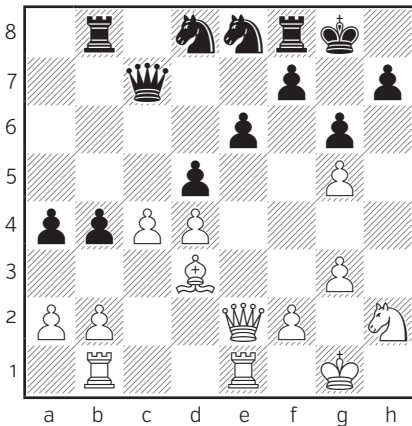
Probably in time trouble, White allows some counterplay.

After 25.a3± all Black's dreams on the queenside would disappear.

25...b4

Spoiling White's structure doesn't bring Black a satisfactory result, because all complications lead quickly to Black's demise. For example: 25...a3 26.bxa3 ♚xc3 27.♘g4! ♚xd4 28.♙xb5 ♘d6 29.♖b4! ♚g7 30.♘f6+ ♔h8 31.♗h4+-

26.c4?!



This is a typical reaction against the minority attack, but here — concretely — it was not the best idea. Black develops serious counterplay against the d4-pawn and things are no longer going to be so clear.

Less weakening was 26.♗bc1 bxc3 27.bxc3 with a continuing attack on the kingside.

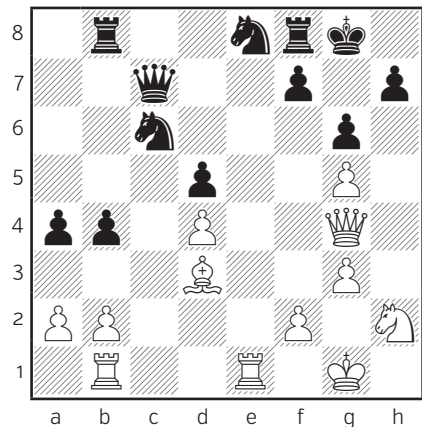
26...♘c6 27.cxd5 exd5?

Black again misses his chance! 27...♘xd4! would have brought him close to equality: 28.♚e3 ♘f5 29.♙xf5 exf5↔

28.♚g4?!

The g4-square looks more natural for the knight, but in a big fight, imprecisions are a natural occurrence!

The best move was 28.♗bc1! and after 28...♘xd4 29.♚e3 ♚b6 30.♘g4± Black remains with bad piece coordination.



28... ♖b6?

The queen heads far from her weak king.

Black could solve his problems with the active move 28...f5! 29.gxf6 ♕f7 30.♗f3 ♘xf6 31.♖e6 ♕xe6 32.♗xe6 ♘e4! ♗ and a draw is not far off.

29.♗f3 ♘g7 30.♗bc1 ♗bd8 31.♔g2 f5

Black must somehow oppose the ♗h1–♖h4 plan.

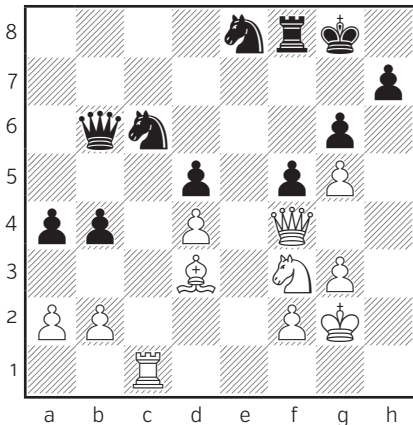
32.♖h4 ♗de8 33.♗xe8 ♘xe8

The only move!

33...♗xe8 34.♗h1 ♘h5 35.♔xf5+-

34.♖f4!+-

White is not interested in the h-file anymore and instead starts to play against the bad knight on e8.



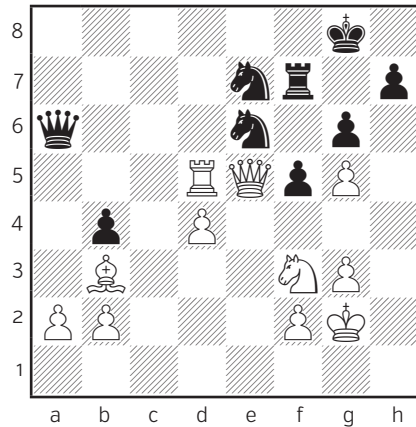
34... ♖b7 35.♗c5 ♘e7 36.♖e5

White's pieces are slowly entering into Black's camp.

36... ♗f7 37.♔b5

The positional advantage is now transformed to a material one as the bishop comes to the ideal b3-square.

37...♘g7 38.♔xa4 ♕a6 39.♔b3 ♘e6 40.♗xd5!



White finds the fastest and most effective way to finish the game.

40... ♘xd5 41.♖xd5 ♔f8

Black is forced to give up more material.

41...♗e7 doesn't help because White can utilise the pin with 42.♖d8+ ♔f7 43.♘e5+-

42.♖xe6 ♕xe6 43.♔xe6 ♗c7

44.♔b3 ♗c1 45.♘e5 1-0

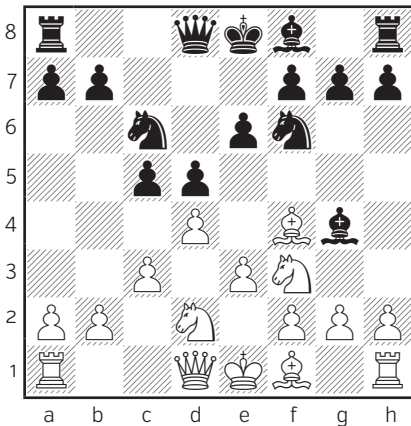
**A. Shimanov — J. J. Cox [Doz]**

US Masters Open Greensboro (1.1),  
25.08.2016

In this game Black used one of the most solid continuations with 6... ♘g4. The game is very instructive, mainly because of the many original decisions made by Shimanov, where he often changed the structure in this game with the idea of avoiding boring positions. This game also shows that the London is not just a static and schematic opening, but offers a player the chance to show his creativity.

1.d4 d5 2. ♘f4 ♘f6 3.e3 c5 4. ♘d2  
♘c6 5.c3 ♘g4 6. ♘gf3 e6

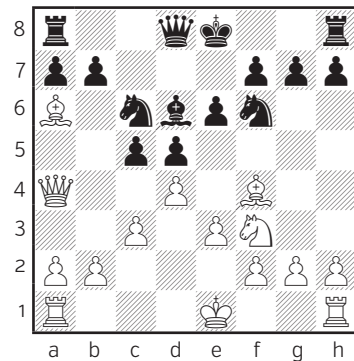
Black chooses a very natural method of development. If White want to fight for the advantage he must do something concrete.

**7. ♖b3**

A typical reply! White moves from the pin with tempo.

Also making sense was 7. ♖a4, in the spirit of the Cambridge Springs variation with reverse colours. The threat is unpleasant — ♘e5 — but Black has a pretty and simple solution 7... ♘xf3 8. ♘xf3 a6! A key move! Black prevents ♘b5 and avoids the trap.

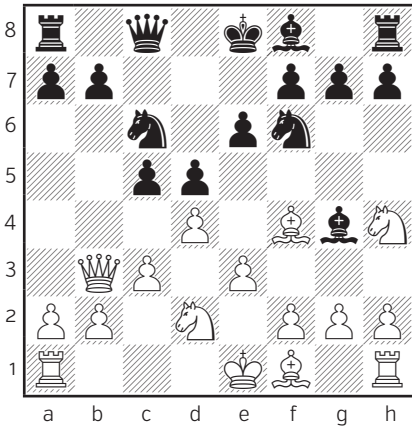
(The famous trap in the London System appears after 8... ♘d6? 9. ♘a6!±



Skoberne J-Sebenik M, Vidmar Memorial, 2016.)

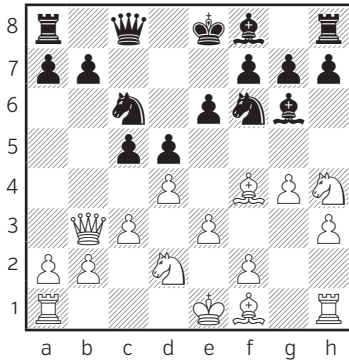
9. ♘e5 ♖c8 10. ♘xc6 ♖d7! 11. ♘e2 ♖xc6 12. ♖xc6+ ♖xc6 and the end-game is very close to equal. Black's idea is just to exchange dark-squared bishops and 'not play for a win' anymore.

7... ♖c8 8. ♘h4!



Only with this move-order can White take the bishop pair avoiding simplifications.

Imprecise is 8.h3 ♘h5 9.g4 ♘g6 10. ♘h4



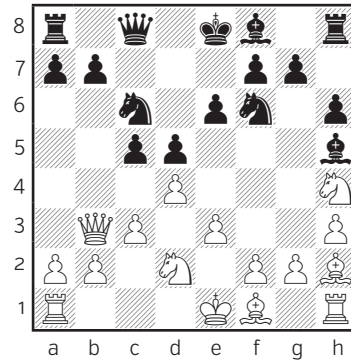
because Black has the relieving move 10... ♖e4! 11. ♘xg6 (11. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 12.f3 ♘e7! 13.g5 c4 14. ♖d1 ♘g6 15. ♘xg6 hxg6 16.h4 ♘d8! with ... ♘c7 next and Black is fine!) 11... ♘xd2 12. ♖d1 hxg6 13. ♖xd2 ♖d7 14. ♘g2 cxd4 15.exd4 ♘d6= 1/2 -1/2 Prohaszka P -Horvath J, Hungary 2016.

8... ♖d7

This is a critical moment and Black plays one of many logical moves in this position! He is improving his queen in order to play ...o-o-o or ... ♘d6 at an opportune moment.

Very logical is 8...h6!? threatening a fork with ...g5, which leads to very non-standard positions after 9.h3 g5

(9... ♘h5 10. ♘h2!



10...g5 What else against g4? 11. ♘hf3 — and it transposes to 9... g5) 10. ♘h2 ♘h5 (10... ♘xh3 11.gxh3 gxh4 12.dxc5 ♘xc5 13.o-o-o ♖d7 14. ♖a4±)

11. ♘hf3 and White has easier play as his pawn structure is healthier. For example: 11...c4 12. ♖d1 ♘e7 13. ♘e2± with the idea to trade bishops after ♘e5 and then e4 comes.

Lukewarm moves like 8... ♘e7 play into White's hands after 9.h3 ♘h5 10.g4 ♘g6 11. ♘xg6 hxg6 12. ♘g2± and White has achieved