YOUR JUNGLE GUIDE TO 1.d4!

AGGRESSIVE ENTERPRISE

Volume 1B
Queen's Gambit Accepted

by

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and Mikhail Ivanov

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
=	equality
∞	unclear position
⩱	with compensation for the sacrificed material
⩲	White stands slightly better
⩱	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
⇆	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⌓	better is
≤	worse is
N	novelty
+	check
#	mate

FOREWORD

Dear Readers

What you are holding in your hands is the natural follow up of Volume 1 where some "lesser" openings after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 were examined, as well as a couple of less popular variations of the Queen's Gambit Accepted. This second Volume comprises all of the established main lines of the QGA after our recommended 3.e4 with the intention of giving you a full picture of this topical opening while helping you build a repertoire based on aggressive ideas.

Objectively speaking, it is very hard for White to find an advantage in the event of the absolute main lines 3...♘f6 and 3...e5, but we believe we have done our duty. We scrutinized multiple interesting variations with the help of engines while applying our human understanding to select those lines that would be the most unpleasant for Black.

Additionally, we tried to provide you with as many alternatives as possible so as not to become "victims" of a narrow repertoire. In the end a chess game may be a draw, but an author's duty is to provide you with several ideas with which you may confront your opponent to deprive him of that very draw. We believe our work has achieved this goal.

We are going to stress the view that you should not strive to remember all the material included as that is impractical. What we suggest you do is memorize the recurring patterns and try to understand why they appear so often. Additionally, try to spot the differences between similar patterns as that is the essence of good theoretical knowledge which will enhance your arsenal. This knowledge is a "must" if you want to master classical play after 1.d4.

We wish you a creative study in the QGA as White as it is the most natural reaction after 1.d4 d5 2.c4. If you work hard superior results will follow and the saying "tough training, easy game" will be vindicated.

But please remember that the strategy "you win some, you draw some" should definitely be part of your "modus operandi" in this opening as we are talking about one of the best systems against 1.d4 and one that has been throughly stud-

ied by multiple generations of chessplayers. This classical system will never be refuted no matter the number of books that are written. That is why we take the approach of winning while understanding that we will also have draws.

GM Vassilios Kotronias
GM Mikhail Ivanov

CHAPTER 1

QGA 3.e4 ♘f6 WITH 5...♘c6

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e4 ♘f6

1. 4.♘c3 10

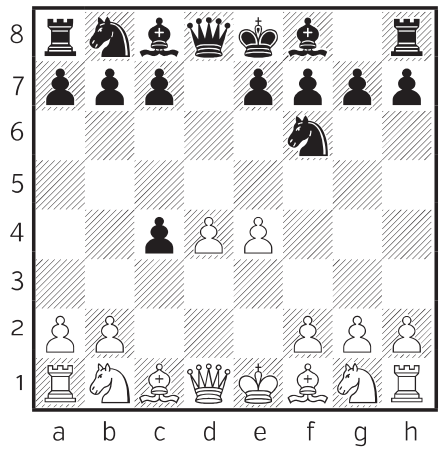
2. 4.e5 ♘d5 5.♗xc4 ♘c6 6.♘e2 21

3. 4.e5 ♘d5 5.♗xc4 ♘c6 6.♘c3 with 9.a3. 32

4. 4.e5 ♘d5 5.♗xc4 ♘c6 6.♘c3 with 9.0–0 46

{40} 1. 4.♘c3

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e4 ♘f6



According to a majority of theoreticians this is the main line of the 3.e4 QGA variation, and not without good reason.

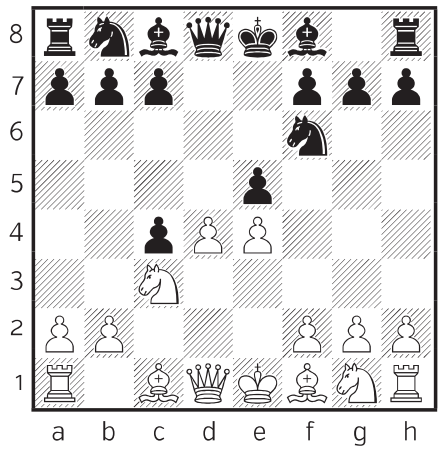
The knight develops to a natural square gaining a tempo by attacking the e4-pawn. In addition, the knight's entrance to the game tempts this pawn forward, hoping to establish control over the d5-square.

As we are about to witness the fight is very rich in both positional and attacking content which makes this choice more attractive in our opinion. Needless to say, several powerful theoreticians like Avrukh, Delchev, Semkov (to mention but a few) have made huge contributions to the cause of both sides here, but we think we managed to cope successfully with the arduous task of discovering new paths or enriching further the older ones. Hopefully, our findings will provide supporters of White's cause with fresh new choices in their quest for an advantage and at the same time reveal to both sides the key opening features in the best possible way.

4.♘c3

This alternative to 4.e5 (covered in the rest of the chapter) fails to prevent the latter break and it is for this reason that Black equalize s immediately.

4...e5!



We examined this position for some time but both theory and praxis imply that Black is ok and we did not find anything that casts doubt on this assessment.

5.♘f3!

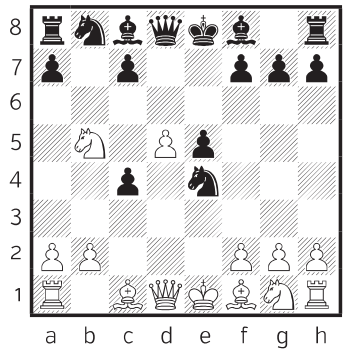
It is no exaggeration to say that only this move maintains level chances.

a) 5.d5? is answered strongly by 5...b5! and the computer says that Black is already better by 0.80, a surprising fact considering that only five moves

have been made. In our view White players should steer clear of this position as the computer evaluation can hardly be debated. 6.♘xb5

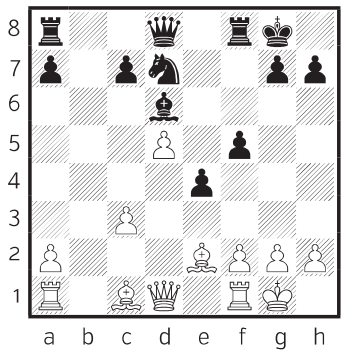
[White's prospects are also bleak in case of 6.♗g5 ♗c5 7.♘f3 0–0 8.♗e2 (*8.♘xb5? ♗xf2+–+*) 8...a6 9.0–0 ♘bd7 10.♕c2 h6 11.♗h4 ♗b7 12.♖fd1 ♕e7∓ and Black won in Lajthajm-Ratkovic, Mosko 2015.]

6...♘xe4

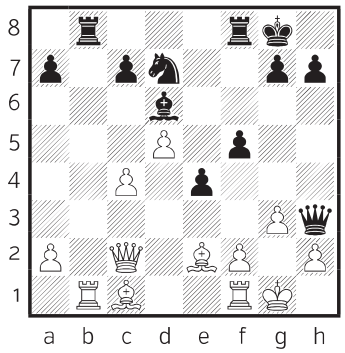


7.♗xc4 This has been the choice of Baadur Jobava, but the plain truth is that White is already significantly worse.

[7.♕a4?! looks like a natural possibility but after the accurate 7...c6! 8.dxc6 ♗c5 9.♗xc4 0–0 10.♘f3 (Vesterli-Jensen, Denmark 2018) 10...♗xf2+ 11.♔f1 ♘xc6–+ Black is well on his way to victory; A number of games have continued with 7.♘c3 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 then after the simple 8...♗d6! Black should have a large advantage. After 9.♗xc4 0–0 (*9...♘d7!?N 10.♘f3 0–0 11.0–0 e4 12.♘d4 ♘e5 13.♗e2 ♕h4↑* looks also depressing for White.) 10.♘f3 ♗g4 11.♗e2 ♗xf3!? 12.♗xf3 f5 13.0–0 ♘d7 14.♗e2 e4! and dark clouds are gathering over White's kingside.



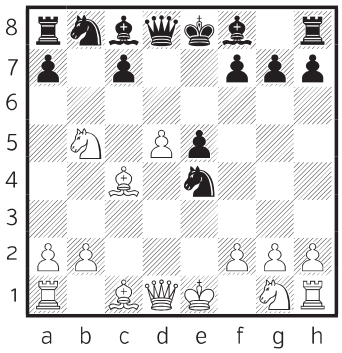
Up to this point we have actually followed the game Voloshin-Vrana, Czechia 2011. Here White could have somehow reduced the damage by playing 15.♖b1!∓/∓, activating his rook and keeping some sort of activity for his king's bishop. (Instead, the clumsy 15.c4? ♖b8 16.♕c2 ♕h4 17.g3 ♕h3 18.♖b1 left GM Leonid Voloshin in a hopeless position which he should have lost quickly.



18...♖be8? (Diverting the queen is simple and stronger *18...♖xb1! 19.♕xb1 ♘e5–+* followed by *20.♕b3 f4! 21.♗xf4 ♖xf4 22.gxf4 ♘f3+ 23.♗xf3 exf3–+* it is over.) 19.♖b3 ♗c5? Another slip. (*19...a5 20.♕d1*

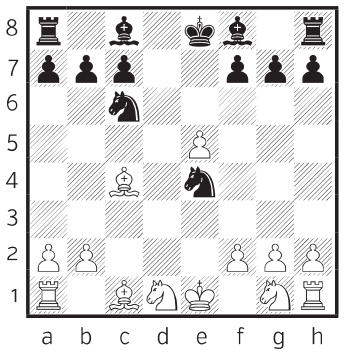
♘*c5*∓ was the right way to proceed with good chances of victory.) 20.♗e3∞ Suddenly White was making a fight of it and even won! That said, please refrain from copying this particular treatment of 3...♘f6 in your games, as miracles do not happen too often!)]

Let us now return to Jobava's choice 7.♗xc4

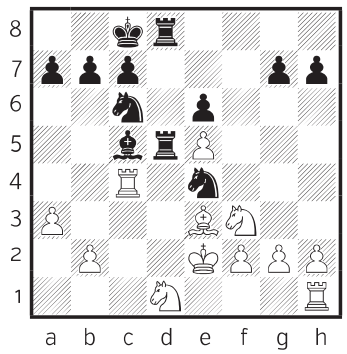


7...♗b4+! This simple move seems to refute White's opening idea. Black stops any tricks by developing his kingside and preparing to castle into safety. (Instead, *7...♗c5!?*, as played in Jobava-Terrieux, Europe Echecs 2020, is worse after the accurate *8.♕e2!* which looks sufficient to mix things up considerably. *8...♗xf2+ 9.♔f1 f5 10.d6 cxd6 11.♗d5 ♗b6 12.♗xa8 0–0 13.♘f3 ♗e6 14.♗e3*∓/∞) 8.♔f1 0–0! (In our view Black should not get carried away with *8...♘xf2?!* which is merely unclear. *9.♕a4! 0–0 10.♕xb4 ♘xh1 11.♕e1 c6 12.♘c3 ♗b7 13.d6 ♗a6! 14.♗e2! ♕xd6 15.♘h3 ♕d4 16.♗xa6 ♘xa6 17.♗e3 ♕d3+! 18.♔g1 ♘b4! 19.♖d1*∞/∓) 9.♕f3 ♘d6 10.♘xd6 cxd6∓ White's position lacks harmony as it is under-developed with an unsafe king and an inferior structure. Therefore, we must dismiss 5.d5? as a rather over optimistic way of playing which hardly even equalizes.

b) Another way of playing which we not approve of is 5.dxe5?! ♕xd1+ 6.♘xd1 (*6.♔xd1?! ♘g4 7.♔e1 ♗c5 8.♘h3 ♘xe5 9.♗f4 ♘bc6 10.♘d5 ♗d6*∓ looks like Black wins a pawn.) 6...♘xe4 7.♗xc4 ♘c6 with a position where not only does Black lead in development but also has pressure against White's exposed e5-pawn.

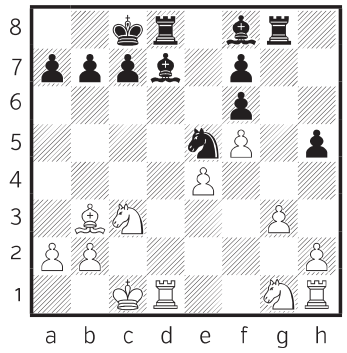


8.♘f3 Clearly the lesser evil. (*8.♗b5?* is answered by *8...♗b4+ 9.♔e2 ♗d7 10.♗e3 ♘xe5 11.♗xd7+ ♔xd7*∓/–+ and Black should convert his healthy extra pawn.) 8...♗b4+ 9.♔f1 ♗e6! We consider this move the strongest depriving White of his best minor piece. 10.♗xe6 fxe6 11.♔e2 0–0–0 12.♗e3 ♖d5 13.♖c1 ♖hd8 14.a3 ♗c5∓ The awkward position of the ♘d1 has prevented White from a harmonious mobilization of his forces. His position is worse, but he nevertheless retains chances of equalizing after the accurate 15.♖c4!



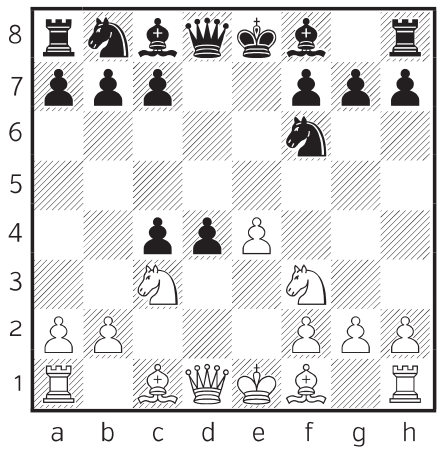
♗xe3 16.♘xe3 ♖d2+! 17.♘xd2 ♖xd2+ 18.♔e1 ♘d4 19.♖f1 b5! 20.♖xd4 ♖xd4 21.f4! ♖d2 22.f5! exf5 23.♖xf5 ♖xb2 24.♖f7⇆when the rook penetration to the 7th rank ensures counterplay.

c) A last line which is not to be recommended to supporters of White's cause is 5.♗e3?! exd4 6.♕xd4 ♕xd4 7.♗xd4 ♗e6 8.f4 ♘c6 9.♗xf6 gxf6 10.f5 ♗d7 11.♗xc4 ♘e5 12.♗b3! (*12.♗e2 0–0–0*∓) 12...♖g8 13.g3 0–0–0 14.0–0–0 h5!



15.♔b1 (*15.♘d5 ♘g4*∓) 15...h4 (*15...♘g4 16.♘h3!*=) 16.♘ge2 ♗d6 17.♘f4 hxg3 18.hxg3 ♖xg3 19.♘h5 ♖g2 20.♘xf6 ♗c6 21.♖hg1 ♖xg1 22.♖xg1 b5∓ and "eternal" control over the e5-square makes the position much easier for Black to play.

5...exd4



6.♕xd4

White's few chances of generating play lie in immediately going to the ending.

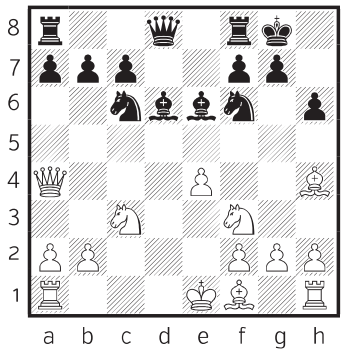
After 6.♘xd4?! ♗c5! 7.♗e3 ♘g4 8.♘e6!? ♗xe6! (*8...♕xd1+?!* 9.♖*xd1*=) 9.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10.♗xc5 ♘d7 11.♗a3 Black has the powerful retort 11... ♖b8! 12.♘b5 c5∓ with his queenside pawn mass becoming a major factor in his favor.

6...♕xd4

6...♗d6⇆ could well be an easier solution for Black, the point being to deny the ♘f3 from improving its position. A further benefit is that it accelerates development as now ...♘b8–c6 will gain a tempo on the queen. The following lines serve to show us that Black is not in any real danger here.
7.♗xc4

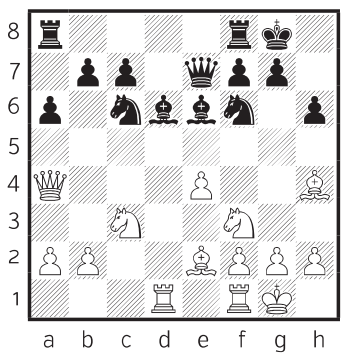
[We also looked at 7.♗g5 which may actually be a better choice. That said, after the more or less

forced sequence 7...♘c6 8.♕xc4 h6 9.♗h4 ♗e6 10.♕a4 0–0

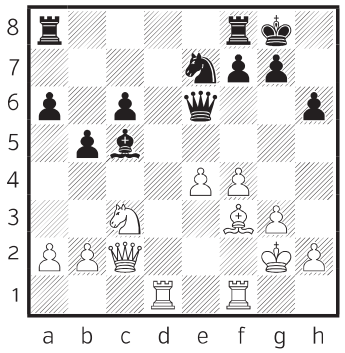


White has several tries but ultimately no advantage. We would like to further remark that the trodden path so far is not very much to our liking, so we made our main line the untried 11.♗c4!?.

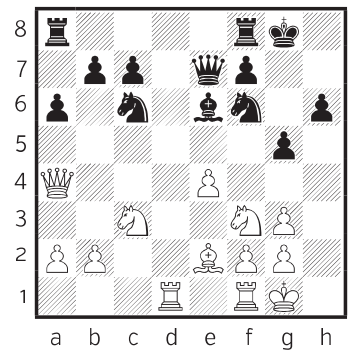
a) 11.♗e2 is rather too conservative a developing move. After 11...a6! (11...♘e5!? 12.♘d4 ♗d7 13.♕c2 ♘g6 14.♗g3 ♕e7 15.0–0 ♗xg3! (*15...c6 16.f4*±) 16.hxg3 ♖fe8= was equal in Goldin-Balashov, Irkutsk 1986.) 12.♖d1 ♕e7 13.0–0 we think we have found an improvement for Black over the only existing game to have reached this position.



13...g5! This strong move yields easy equality to Black. (Instead, 13...♘e5?! looks a bit better for White after 14.♘d4! (14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.f4 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♕c5+ 17.♔h1?! (*17.♗f2!*∞) 17...♕xc3 18.♖c1 ♕e3 19.♗xf6 ♕xe2∓, as in Arkell-Grinfeld, Hastings 1995, looks insufficient for White.) 14...♘g6 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.♘xe6 ♕xe6 17.g3 b5 18.♕c2 c6 19.f4 ♘e7 20.♗f3 ♗c5+ 21.♔g2±

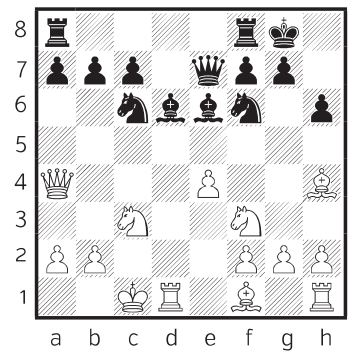


in view of the better pieces and space on the kingside, although also here things are far from easy.) 14.♗g3 White has to duly retreat. (We checked 14.♘xg5? just in case but after 14…hxg5 15.♗xg5 Black gets an easy advantage after 15...♗e5! 16.f4 (*16.♘d5? ♗xd5 17.exd5 ♕b4!*–+) 16...b5! 17.♕c2 ♘d4 18.♕b1 ♕c5! 19.♔h1 ♘h7! 20.♗h4 ♘xe2 21.♘xe2 ♗c4 22.♕c2 ♗f6∓.) 14...♗xg3 15.hxg3 This structure is not at all worrisome for Black as he controls all the critical squares in the center, and his kingside pawn weaknesses cannot be exploited.



After 15...♖fd8 16.a3 ♔g7 17.♕c2 ♖xd1 18.♖xd1 ♖d8 19.♖xd8 ♕xd8 the game is equal.

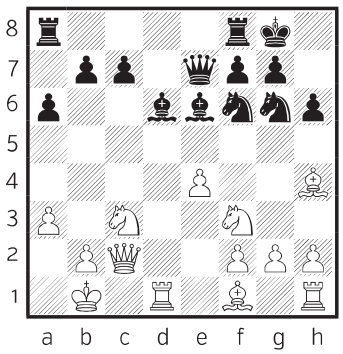
b) 11.0–0–0 has been played by GM Ventzislav Inkiov and is White's most aggressive try in the position. However, we believe that White's chances are far less impressive than they look at first sight. 11...♕e7



12.♔b1 This is our recommendation, but all the same the first player will not be able to achieve more than equality.

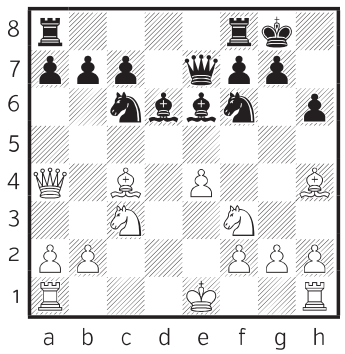
{We also looked at 12.♗c4 a6! 13.♗xe6 ♕xe6 14.♖he1 ♖fe8 15.a3 g5 16.♗g3 ♗xg3 17.fxg3 ♖ad8∞ which is nothing but an unclear position with promising play for the second player.; 12.♘d5?! has been Inkiov's choice, yet after 12...♗xd5 13.exd5 ♘b4 (*13...♘e5!?*) 14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.a3 ♕f4+ 16.♔b1 ♕f5+ 17.♔a1 ♘xd5 18.♗d3 ♘b6 19.♕b3 Inkiov-Le Roux, France 2007. Black has 19...♕f4! 20.♖he1 ♖ae8∓ and the idea of transferring the queen to a4 nullifies any White attacking plans thus making his compensation insufficient.}

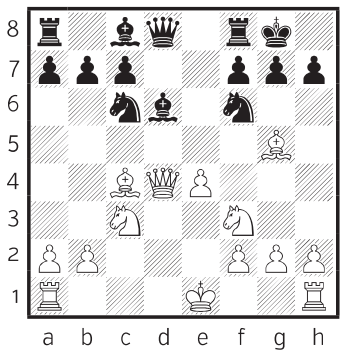
12...a6! A strong move, preventing ♗f1–b5 or ♗f1–c4 and preparing, according to circumstances, to expand on the queenside. 13.a3 ♘e5 14.♕c2 ♘g6!



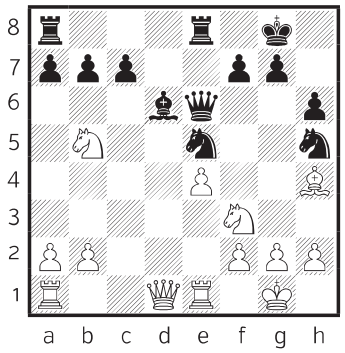
This move "kills" White's attacking aspirations. After 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.♘d5 ♗xd5 17.♖xd5 b5! 18.♗d3 ♖ae8 19.♖d1 ♘e5 20.♘xe5 ♖xe5 21.g3 ♖xd5 22.exd5 ♕f3 23.♕e2 ♕xe2 24.♗xe2 the ending is completely drawish.

Let us now return to our recommendation 11.♗c4!?: 11...♕e7





12.♗xe6! It is best to make this exchange now as later on Black might consider recapturing with the f-pawn. 12...♕xe6 (Actually *12...fxe6!?* is not out of the question here, however after *13.0–0 ♘e5 14.♘xe5 ♗xe5 15.♕b5! c5 16.♕e2 g5! 17.♗g3 ♗d4 18.e5* White does have some play and perhaps the tiniest of edges.) 13.0–0 ♘h5! 14.♖fe1 ♖fe8 15.♘b5 ♘e5 16.♕d1! This pawn sacrifice yields White interesting play.



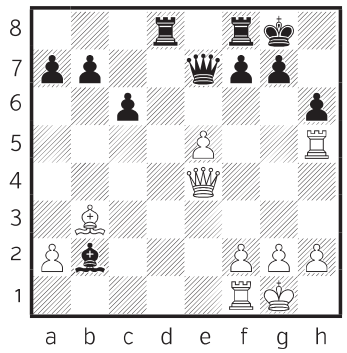
That said, after 16...♘xf3+ 17.♕xf3 ♗xh2+ 18.♔xh2 ♕e5+ 19.g3 ♕xb5 20.♖ad1⩲ it is out of place to say he has chances for an advantage. We can merely remark that it is rather Black who has to be a bit more precise in a state of approximate equality.]

We will now return to what has been the main line (7.♗c4): 0–0 8.♗g5 ♘c6 Practice has shown that White has no advantage in this position. Black's only problem is the pin of the f6-knight, but as we shall see below he should be able to deal with it comfortably. 9.♕e3

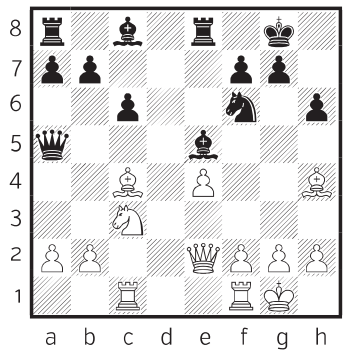
[Slightly inferior is 9.♕d2 as after 9...♘e5! 10.♘xe5 ♗xe5 11.♕xd8 ♖xd8 12.f3! (*12.f4?! ♗xc3+ 13.bxc3 ♖e8∓* is better for Black and he managed to convert this advantage in Gerard-Van den Doel, Groningen 1999.) 12...c6 13.a4 ♖d4 14.♖d1! ♘d7! 15.♖xd4 ♗xd4 16.♔e2 ♘e5 17.♖d1 ♘xc4 18.♖xd4 ♗e6= opposite colored bishops tend to guarantee a draw.]

9...h6 10.♗h4 ♘e5 11.♘xe5 ♗xe5 12.♕e2?! This looks slightly unnatural. There are two other possibilities at this point. (*12.♖d1 ♕e8 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.0–0* is the first of them. White seems to be better developed and with a mobile kingside pawn majority, yet after *14...♗e6* he will end up with only some mild pressure which will gradually be defused. *15.♘d5 ♗xd5 16.♖xd5! c6! 17.♖h5! ♗xb2 18.e5 ♖d8 19.♗b3 ♕e7 20.♕e4* To be honest, looking at this posi-

tion we felt that White should have something as Black's bishop seems to be missing from the defense, but the computers say that White has already reached his maximum and there is no more than a draw.



20...♖d4 21.♕c2 ♗a3 22.♕f5 ♗b4 23.♖xh6 gxh6 24.♕g6+ ♔h8 25.♕xh6+= The other choice is similarly insufficient for a white edge: *12.♗xf6 ♕xf6 13.♘d5 ♕d6 14.f4 ♗xb2 15.e5 ♕a3 16.♕xa3 ♗xa3 17.♘xc7 ♖b8 18.0–0 ♗f5 19.e6 ♖bc8 20.exf7+ ♔h8 21.♗e6 ♖xc7 22.♗xf5 ♖cxf7 23.♗e4 ♖xf4 24.♖xf4 ♖xf4 25.♗xb7=*) Returning to 12.♕e2?!, after 12...c6 13.0–0 ♕a5!? 14.♖ac1 ♖e8



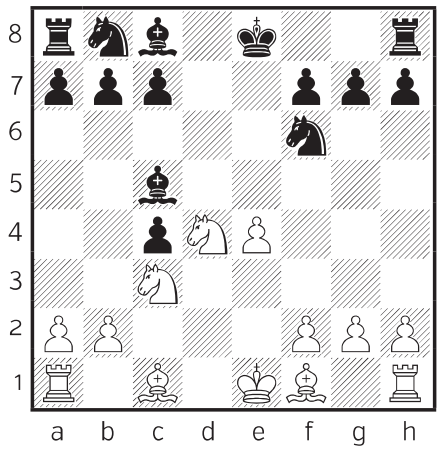
15.♗xf6□

[15.♗d3?! ♗f4! (*15...♗e6 16.f4 ♗d4+ 17.♔h1* was unclear in Timoshenko-Lekic, Tivat 1995.) 16.♖cd1 ♘g4∓ is already becoming very dangerous for White.]

15...♗xf6 16.f4 ♗e6 17.♗xe6 ♗d4+ 18.♔h1 ♖xe6∓ only Black has hopes to press, so we may conclude that the whole line starting with 6...♗d6⇆ is comfortable for Black.

Let us now go back to see what happens after the more popular alternative 6...♕xd4.

7.♘xd4 ♗c5!



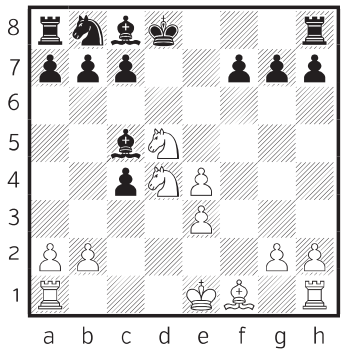
The secret is to displace the ♘d4 and try to hang on to the precious c4-pawn here. Our research indicated that White does not have real chances for an advantage.

8.♘db5!

The best possibility.

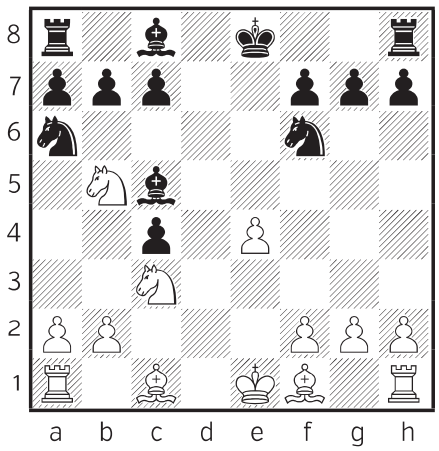
After 8.♗e3 ♘g4 9.♘d5 (Weak is *9.♗xc4?! c6 10.0–0 ♘d7 11.♘f5 ♗xe3 12.fxe3 ♘de5 13.♗b3 ♗xf5 14.exf5 0–0–0∓* Obolentseva-Afanasiev, Mos-

cow 2019.) 9...♘xe3 10.fxe3 ♔d8!⇆ Black has the easier play and quite possibly the slightly superior chances.



For example, 11.♗xc4 ♘c6! 12.0–0–0 ♘e5 13.♘f4 ♔e7! 14.♘d5+ ♔d7! 15.♗e2 c6 16.b4!? cxd5 17.bxc5 dxe4 18.♖hf1?! (*18.♘f3+N ♘d3+ 19.♗xd3 exd3 20.♖xd3+ ♔c7 21.♖hd1 ♖e8 22.♘d4 a6∓* is our recommendation, but White is still suffering.) 18...♔e7 19.♖f4 f6 20.♖xe4 ♗d7 21.♘f3 ♗c6∓ and although White subsequently drew in Ivanov V.-Kowalczyk, corr. 2017, his position at this point was certainly unenviable.

8...♘a6



Forcing this knight to the edge of the board is a small success for White, but as we shall see it only ensures equality.

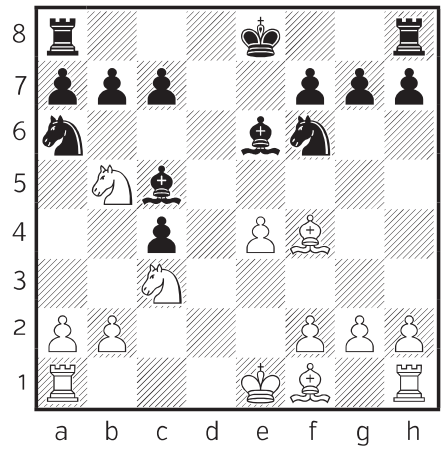
9.♗f4

This is imperative.

9.♗xc4?! c6 10.♘a3 b5! 11.♘axb5 cxb5 12.♗xb5+ ♔f8 13.♗f4 ♗b7∓ did not offer White enough for the piece in Yakubboev-Zubov, St. Petersburg 2018.

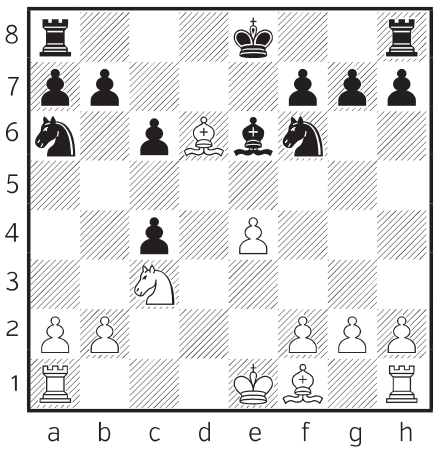
9...c6!?

An ambitious move.



It is also possible to return the pawn by 9...♗e6= 10.♗xc7 (*10.♘xc7+?! ♘xc7 11.♗xc7 0–0* was agreed drawn in Azmaiparashvili-Petrosian, Moscow 1983, but strictly speaking Black has a slight advantage at this point.) 10...♔e7! 11.♗g3 ♘b4 12.0–0–0 ♖hd8 13.♖xd8 ♖xd8 14.a3 ♘d3+ 15.♗xd3 ♖xd3 (*15...cxd3!? 16.♔d2 a6 17.b4∞/=* is also possible.) 16.♘a4! ♘xe4 17.♖e1 ♗xf2 18.♖xe4 ♗e3+ 19.♔c2 ♖d2+=

10.♘d6+ ♗xd6 11.♗xd6 ♗e6



This is the position that has attracted the most attention in practice after 4.♘c3 e5!. White has the bishop pair and some good dark square control in return for the pawn and a 4–3 majority on the kingside.

However, this is an ending and in endings material counts, so it is not surprising to us that Black has the easier game. We think that the following lines will convince you as well.

12.e5

The standard choice.

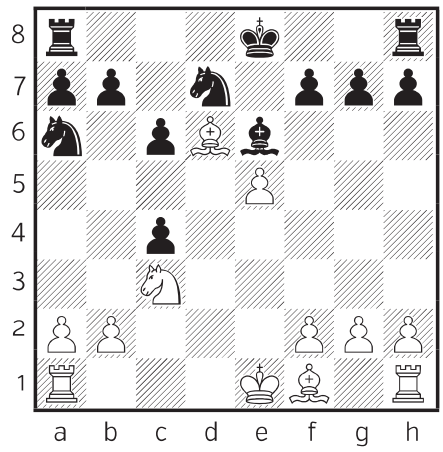
a) Basically, White would not like to surrender the d5-square to his opponent and play something like 12.f3?!, however after 12...0–0–0! 13.0–0–0 ♘d7! 14.♗e2 ♘ac5∓ Black is clearly better, and the position is similar to Aronian-Dominguez right below.

b) 12.0–0–0?! 0–0–0 13.♗e2 has been tried by Levon Aronian but is hardly convincing. After 13...♖he8!? (also nice for Black seems to be *13...♘d7!?N 14.f4 f6 15.e5 fxe5 16.fxe5 ♘ac5∓*.) 14.f3 ♘d7 15.♖d4 b5 16.♖hd1 ♘ac5∓ Black had a clear advantage in Aronian-Dominguez, Moscow 2009, and went on to win.

c) Finally, 12.f4?! 0–0–0 13.0–0–0 ♘e8! 14.♗e7?! (*14.♗e5!∓*) 14...♖xd1+ 15.♔xd1 f6∓ was a lot better for Black in Nikolaidis-Greenfeld, Moscow 1994 and Black prevailed.

12...♘d7

Surprisingly, 12...♘d5 remains untried. We do not see anything wrong with it with one plausible continuation being 13.♗xc4 ♘ab4 14.♘xd5 ♗xd5 15.♖c1 ♗xc4 16.♖xc4 ♘d5 17.♔e2 f6 18.f4 h5 19.♔f3 ♔f7=.



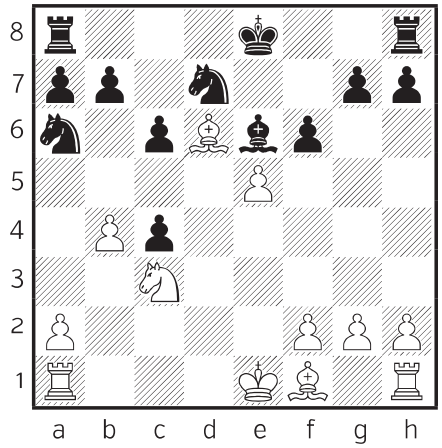
13.b4!

This strong move of Epishin's is the only way to create some play.

After 13.♗e2 f5! 14.0–0 ♘ac5∓ Black had a good blockade on the light squares and eventually made his extra pawn count in Beliavsky-Ponomariov, Enghien les Bains 1999.

13...f6!

13...cxb3? is a poor choice as after 14.♗xa6 bxa6 15.axb3 ♗xb3 16.♖b1 ♗c4 17.♖b7± the powerful rook on the 7th rank gives White more than enough for the pawns.



14.b5!N

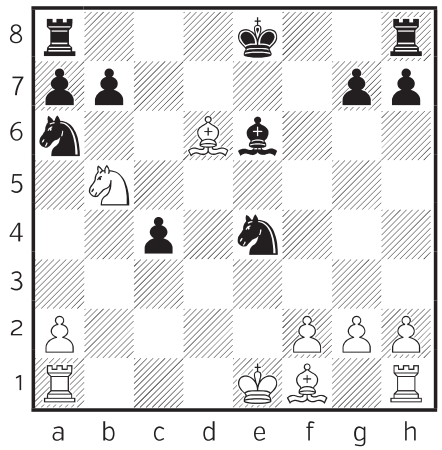
This novel idea opens up the position for the bishops and leads to approximately equal chances.

Weaker is 14.f4 fxe5 15.fxe5 0–0–0 16.b5 ♘ac5∓ and with his king safe and an extra pawn Black went on to win in Epishin-Dorfman, Belgrade GMA 1988.

14...cxb5

In the case of 14...♘ac5 15.bxc6 bxc6 16.exf6 gxf6 17.0–0–0⩲ White is at least equal as he is ready to follow up with ♖d1–d4 yet Black should not have any problems reaching the draw as he always has the resource ...♘c5–d3+ transposing to an opposite colored bishop ending.

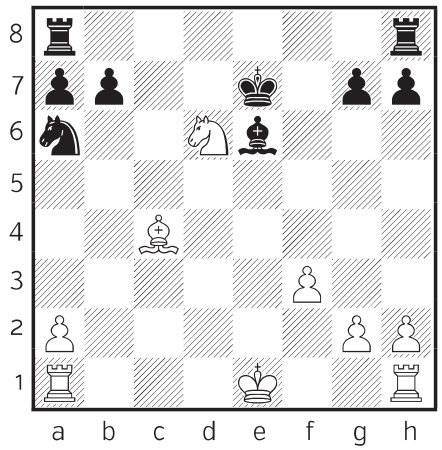
15.exf6 ♘xf6 16.♘xb5 ♘e4



17.f3

With the position wide open White can even rely on 17.♗e2!? ♖d8 (*17...♘xd6 18.♘xd6+ ♔e7 19.♘xc4=*) 18.♗a3⩲, which gives him just enough for the pawn.

17...♘xd6 18.♘xd6+ ♔e7 19.♗xc4!

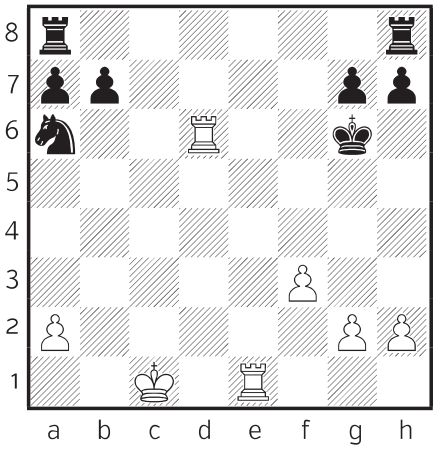


The prospects are equal as the following lines confirm.

19...♔xd6

19...♘b4 20.♗xe6 ♘c2+ 21.♔d2 ♘xa1 22.♘f7 ♔xe6 23.♘xh8 ♖d8+ 24.♔c3=

20.0–0–0+ ♔e7 21.♗xe6 ♔xe6 22.♖he1+ ♔f6 23.♖d6+ ♔f7 24.♖d7+ ♔g6 25.♖d6+=



Thus, we may conclude that 4.♘c3 e5! leads to an abundance of possibilities for the second player giving him easy play and a rather obvious equality. The above lines can be used by White when seeking only a draw. Despite our efforts we could not detect any reasonable tries for an advantage.

2. 4.e5 ♘d5 5.♗xc4 ♘c6 6.♘e2

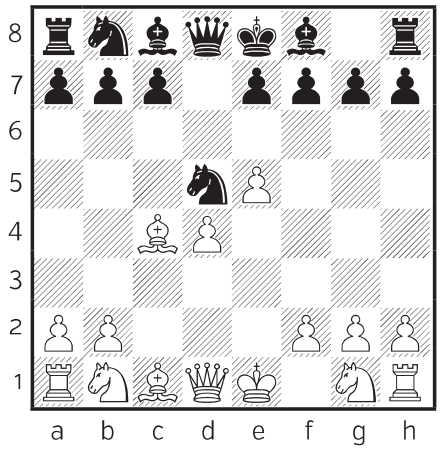
1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e4 ♘f6

We now switch to 4.e5! which produces eventful and dynamic positions.

4.e5!

We believe that White cannot do much without this move. It may look committal but on the other hand it gains space and ensures an immediate recovery of the pawn. Strategically speaking, its main virtue is preventing the ...c7–c5 and ...e7–e5 breaks in the near future.

4...♘d5 5.♗xc4



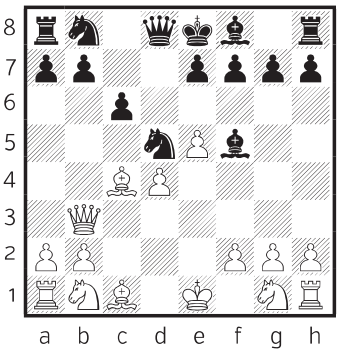
5...♘c6

Normally Black retreats his knight to b6, which is the main line. But we will first see what happens if he tries to maintain this knight on d5.

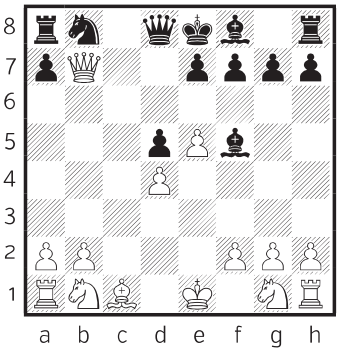
Another way to do that is with 5...♗f5. This move order has often been played by Spanish GM Anton Guijarro, and recently by other highly rated players. The idea is to lure the opposition to poorly studied positions such as 6.♕b3!? c6!, where Black seems to have good play. Black of course also wishes to avoid the theoretical branch

where the white bishop retreats to d3 by playing in this way. 6.♘e2! We recommend taking play into main line positions rather than trying to find a refutation which does not exist.

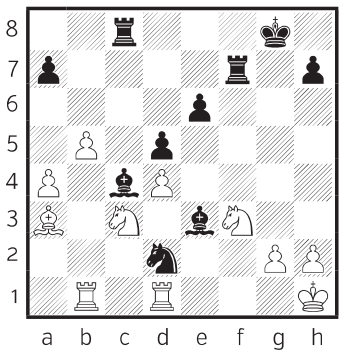
[After 6.♕b3!? c6! (Not 6...e6? 7.♕xb7! ♘d7 8.♗xd5 ♖b8 — 8...*exd5* 9.♕*xd5*± — 9.♕c6 ♖b6 10.♕a4 exd5 11.♘c3 c6 12.♘ge2±) Black seems to have a normal position.



7.♘c3 (Weak is *7.♕xb7? ♘b6! 8.e6 ♘xc4 9.♕xa8 ♕c7 10.♘a3 ♘b6 11.♘b5 cxb5 12.exf7+ ♔xf7 13.♕f3 ♕c2*∓. If White insists on playing 6.♕b3!?, we think that *7.♗xd5!? cxd5 8.♕xb7* represents his best chance.



However Black should hold the ensuing ending with precise play as shown by the following model game. *8...♕c8! 9.♕xc8+ ♗xc8 10.♘c3 e6 11.f4!? ♘c6 12.♘f3 ♗a6 13.♔f2 ♖b8 14.♖d1 ♗e7 15.b3 ♖c8 16.♗b2 ♘b4! 17.♘e1 0–0 18.a3 ♘c6 19.b4 ♗c4 20.♘f3 f6 21.exf6! ♗xf6 22.b5 ♘a5 23.a4 g5! 24.♗a3 ♖f7 25.fxg5 ♗xg5 26.♔g1 ♗e3+ 27.♔h1 ♘b3 28.♖ab1 ♘d2!=*

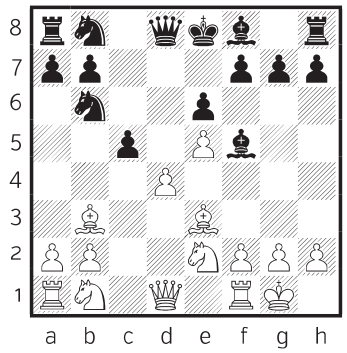


29.♘xd2 ♗d3 30.♘f3 ♖xc3 31.♗b4 ♗xb1 32.♗xc3 ♗e4 33.♖f1 ♔h8 34.h4 ♔g8 35.♖a1 h6 36.♖a3 ♗c1 37.♖a2 ♖c7 38.♗e1 ♗xf3 39.♗g3 ♖c4 40.gxf3 ♗e3 41.♖e2 ♗xd4 42.♖xe6 ♖xa4 43.♖d6 ♖a1+ 44.♔h2 ♖d1 45.♗f4 h5 46.♖d7 ♔f8 47.♔g2 and ½–½, Sanner-Kunz, corr. 2017.) 7...e6 8.♕xb7 ♘b6!∞ We think Black is fine here, so there is no need to continue the analysis.]

6...e6 7.0–0 ♘b6

[After 7...♗e7 8.♘bc3 Black should play 8...♘b6 transposing to the main lines. Instead, 8...c6? 9.♘g3 ♗g6 10.f4! ♕d7 (*10...0–0 11.f5 exf5 12.♘xf5 ♘b6 13.♗b3*±) 11.f5! exf5 12.♕f3!± led to a large advantage for White in Belous-Huschenbeth, Greensboro 2017.]

8.♗b3 c5 (*8...♗e7 9.♘bc3* will again transpose to our main lines.) 9.♗e3



Forcing play! 9...♘c6!

[9...c4?! 10.♗xc4 ♘xc4 11.♕a4+ ♘d7 (*11...♘c6 12.♕xc4 ♖c8 13.♕a4*± was also quite uninspiring for the defense in Malakhatko-Khodashenas, Tehran 2019.) 12.♕xc4 ♖c8 13.♕a4 ♗c2 14.♕xa7 ♗d3 15.♘bc3 ♗a6 16.d5! ♘xe5 17.♖fd1+– was hopeless for Black in Nakamura-Sutovsky, Douglas 2017.]

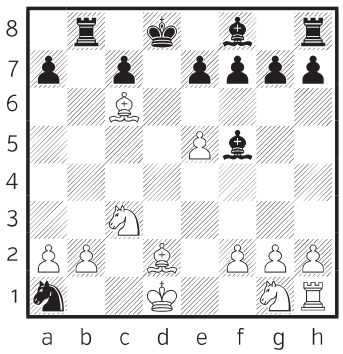
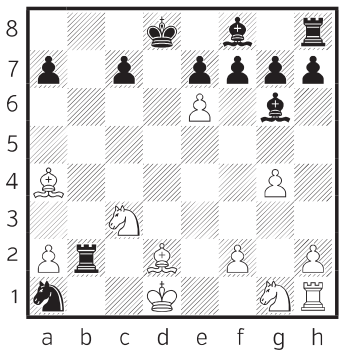
10.♘bc3 c4 So far we have followed Lei-Gara, Khanty-Mansiysk 2018. Here the obvious 11.♗c2 ♗xc2 12.♕xc2 leads to positions where White can put a lot of pressure on Black by a queen transfer to the kingside. 12...♕d7 (*12...♘b4 13.♕e4 ♕d7 14.a3 ♘4d5 15.♕f3 ♘xc3 16.♘xc3 ♘d5 17.♖fc1 ♖c8 18.♘e4 b5 19.♗d2*±) 13.a3 ♗e7 14.♖ad1 0–0 15.♘f4 ♘d5 16.♕e2±

We will now check the worthwhile alternative to 6.♘c3.

6.♘e2!?

This one looks the least committal and a better try than 6.♗e3 which we decided not to cover. It follows the dictum "knights before bishops", defends d4, and prepares castling.

6.♕f3? is the move that has to be discarded. After 6...♘xd4! 7.♕xd5 ♕xd5 8.♗xd5 ♘c2+ 9.♔d1 ♘xa1 10.♘c3 ♗f5 11.♗xb7 ♖d8+ 12.♗d2 White won in Baryshpolets-Wang J., chess.com 2020, but only because Black chose the inaccurate 12...f6?. Instead, correct was 12...♖b8!∓ and the black knight will either be extricated or prove costly to attack it as in the following example. 13.♗c6+ ♔d8



14.g4!? (*14.♘f3 ♖xb2 15.♔e2 ♘c2 16.♗c1 ♖b6 17.♖d1+ ♔c8 18.♗a4 ♘b4 19.a3 ♘a6 20.♘g5 ♗g6 21.♘d5 e6 22.♘xb6+ axb6 23.♗b5 ♘c5*∓) 14...♗g6 15.♗a4 e6! (*15...♖xb2 16.e6!*∞