

Cyrus Lakdawala

The Sicilian Sveshnikov

move by move

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About the Author

Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 35 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the United States.

Also by the Author:

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Introduction

“Le vrai est trop simple; il faut y arriver toujours par le compliqué.”

“The truth is too simple; one must always get there by a complicated route. – George Sand in a letter to Armand Barbès, 12 May 1867

When we return to a line after years of abandonment, it's like gazing into the face of an old friend whose face, although altered, remains completely recognizable.

Your writer's relationship with the Sicilian Defence has been a stormy one, with a rocky beginning. It started in 1969, at the Lakeshore Chess Club, where my first round opponent happened to be my father. The governor opened with his customary 1 e4. I was in an optimistic mood that day, convinced that the sun would shine, the birds would sing, that luck would go my way, and that Santa would overlook my many transgressions with kindness and mercy with extra presents. I boldly responded 1...c5!. Now the traces of a disapproving frown began to crease mein papa's forehead, and his eyebrows began steadily to arc to the uppermost levels the laws of physics allow. The guv had lectured me previously that the *only* correct answer to the king's pawn opening was 1...e5!. I openly defied his royal edict since I was enamoured with Fischer's Najdorf games and desperate to imitate him. Of course I went on to get slaughtered in the Najdorf by my father, who at the time outrated me by a rating differential of 1900-1150 (and I was probably overrated to boot!).

Later, in my teens, I tried the Dragon, only to be punished with lists of short, humiliating losses, generally culminating with my getting mated before move 30. Disgusted, I gave up on the Sicilian for about a quarter century.

Then in my early thirties, my buddy, National Master David Hart, came over to my house and we logged on to the ICC. I got challenged to a blitz game by a GM (I forgot who) who opened with 1 e4. As a joke, David told me “You will kill him with a Sveshnikov Sicilian!” So as a counter-joke I accepted his dare and played 1...c5!. To our utter shock, I won rather handily, using an opening I never studied in my life. At long last, I found my Sicilian. For some reason, it is a Sicilian even an initiative-challenged player like me can comprehend, mainly because it *forces* Black into bold action, or risk strategic suicide. In other words, the system won't allow me to be overly cautious (which is my unfortunate natural chess state).

When we play an opening system in our youth, abandon it, and then return to it years later, it feels different. Not because the opening changed, but because we did.

When we play an ultra-theoretical opening such as the Sveshnikov, we do so with the assumption of superior knowledge and preparation over our opponent, who makes exactly the same assumption, but in reverse! So be prepared to book up heavily. The Sveshnikov is generally not conducive to winging it. Navigating the line – at least at the beginning – can feel like you are an overnight guest in an unfamiliar house, groping your way to the bathroom in the middle of the night. So interwoven are the variations that it becomes difficult to tell when one begins and the other leaves off. I wish I were similar to Sherlock Holmes, who could casually glance at a person and know that his subject is ambidextrous, suffers from clogged arteries, and is married to a blonde named Kristen, his third wife who is 23 years his junior.

For those of us who aren't like Holmes, the secrets of the Sveshnikov can only be only decoded by patiently gathering data of our key positions, which offers us a clearer picture of the facts. The positions we reach may be scarily complex, but if we study our lines (many of which are so long, they look closer to a ceremonial religious rite of passage than a chess opening) well, we end each game with a kind of joyful discomfort of leaving the gym after a tough work-out. We know that each game played in the line makes us stronger.

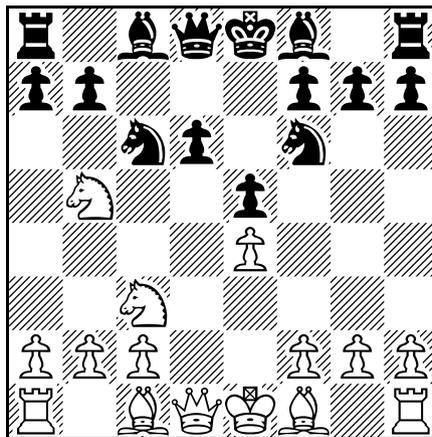
In such complex opening variations we, in a sense, lack independence, since we are obliged to follow in theory's footsteps, or risk terrible punishment. When the reader goes through one of my books, the last thing I want is for him to feel like he is in algebra class, cramming just before the exam. But to survive in this opening, we must do just that.

I have two types of student:

1. The kind who doesn't bother to study, but prefers to test a position out in actual play.
2. The kind who wants to look every line up.

Players who fit category number one need not apply to the Sveshnikov brother and sisterhood! This is an opening which just can't be winged successfully (even though I admittedly lucked out and did just that in my very first Svesh blitz game).

The d5 Issue



The d5-square – where White and Black’s interests intersect – in the Sveshnikov is the hand projecting from the lake, firmly grasping Excalibur. Here is our starting position. In the opening stage, we willingly hand White control over d5 and then, oddly, like a cast-out king, fight with all our power to regain our birthright. Now we may stare disgustedly at the giant hole we just created on d5, and our inability to do much about White’s coming occupation of it. Yet if we go through the games in the book, we find that it is often our side who ends up in control. Remember the story of the tortoise and the hare? (Should I put that children’s book in the bibliography?) White may derive comfort in control over d5, but turning ownership of the square into something concrete is another matter.

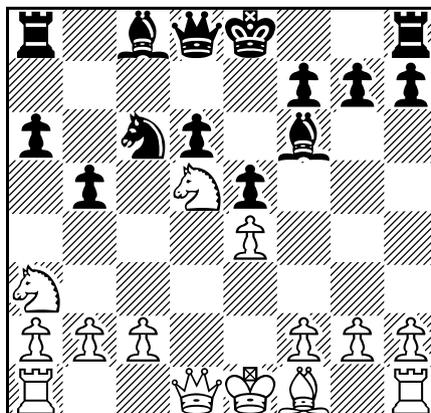
In exchange for handing d5 to White, we get the following benefits:

1. Black controls a larger percentage of the centre than in normal Sicilians, where Black’s pawns tend to be on d6 and e6, or d6 and g6.
2. White can only occupy d5 with a single piece, even if he controls it with three or four. And remember this: There is no need to challenge an impediment if we are capable of simply going around it. In some cases, White loses the game while retaining full control over d5.
3. Black may later lash out with an ...f7-f5 break (with or without ...g7-g6 first); or ...f6-f5 (if White has doubled the black f-pawns) and then sometimes a second ...f7-f5 as well.
4. Black generates queenside play with ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5.
5. Black is well positioned to challenge d5 later, with the potential for knights on f6, b6, a bishop on e6 or b7, and sometimes even a rook on c5.

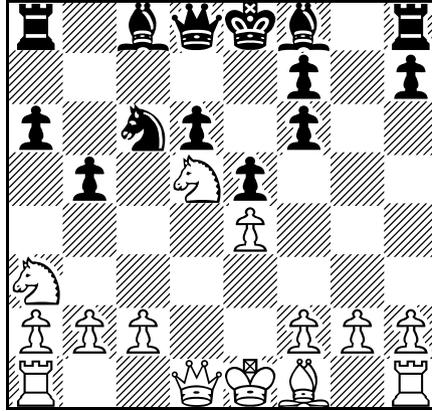
Structure versus Activity

Right from the start, the players have diametrically opposed expectations. The Sveshnikov is one of the few openings (similar to Queen’s Gambit Tarrasch) where our side deliberately allows White to compromise our structure to generate compensating piece activity. We can be assured that our opening is sound, simply from its pedigree. So many great players, including multiple world champions, wouldn’t be attracted to the line if it were otherwise.

Now let’s take a look at some of our key battlegrounds:

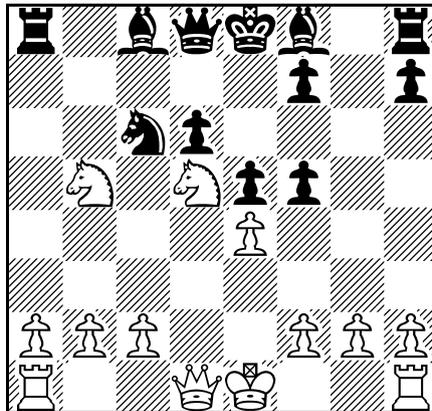


We begin with this strategically rich variation, where White gives up the bishop pair in order to dominate d5. Now our structure may appear terrible; but don't underestimate Black's counterplay. Piece activity has a way of masking a multitude of strategic sins. Our "bad" dark-squared bishop later turns into a hero for our side, more often than not.



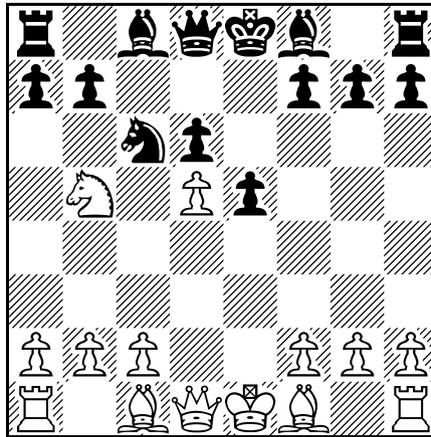
Here we arrive in the more tactical main line, which is filled with labyrinthine constructs capable even of confusing GMs. Of course to declare any analysed position as "unclear" is the annotator's biggest cop-out, since it degenerates into a superficial observation of the uncertainties of our lives – which we all already understand. Yet, dare I say to you that the positions we soon reach from this line tend to be... well... unclear.

White once again handed over the bishop pair. In this instance we recaptured on f6 with a pawn, and the game opens quickly when we achieve ...f6-f5. Now who will this favour? White, the slightly better developed side? Or Black, who owns the bishop pair? Easy access to attacks – for either side – is a salient feature of this line. Compromise is no longer an option. It's kill or be killed.



Most sensible players would consider this sacrifice a suspect creature, from which distance should be kept. However, as we all know, many of our more belligerent opponents lovingly enter such messes. Their philosophy: sometimes the best solution at hand in an argument is to clout the other guy (us!) in the head. If you are looking for logic from this position, then you may as well look for a logical story line in a *Three Stooges* movie. You may have noticed that, in the above diagram, manoeuvring is a skipped formality. From time to time, even quiet players must revisit an atavistic savagery, which is normally buried deep within our genes.

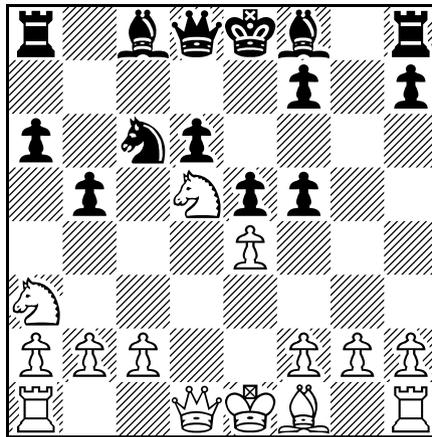
This line is an offshoot of the previous diagram. White's sacrifice resembles a throw-back to those blasphemously archaic pre-Morphy days, when everyone attacked without first developing fully or controlling the centre. When we study such irrational positions deeply, they no longer feel so irrational anymore. Wing it, mishandle it by even an iota, and we risk a swift and painful kick in the region of our gluteus maximus. Black has a path to equality at a minimum. To find out how, go to the end of Chapter Four.



To understand this position, we must shift our perspective from the Sveshnikov to a King's Indian, which the structure resembles. White has played an early Nc3-d5 . After a swap, we got White to plug d5 with a pawn. In exchange, he gets a tempo on our c6-knight. The opposite wing majorities play a huge role in our coming decision making.

Chapter Four

9 xf6 gxf6 10 d5 f5



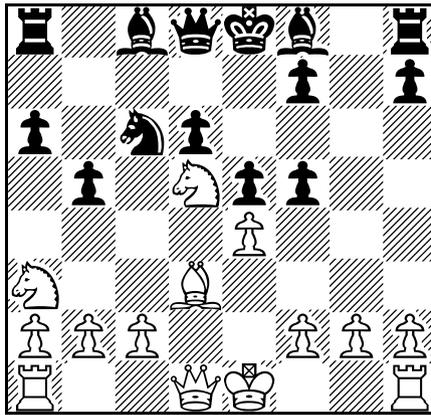
This is a major divergence from the positional 9 d5 we examined in Chapters Two and Three. Picasso could look at an ordinary scene and, in his mind, turn it into a series of mysteriously oblique boxes. This Picassoesque variation is really scary for Black, where alterations constantly sway on the winds of theoretical fashion, and is one of the main reasons I play the more controlled 6...h6 “Ulfie” (the final chapter of the book), which brings me happily to instant endings, more often than not. A psychologist needs to explain why I live calmly and fearlessly in an Armageddon-threatened world, menaced by overpopulation, global climate change due to ozone depletion, threats of nuclear and biological annihilation, and worst of all, heart stoppage and sudden death through past cholesterol indulgence (I now must pretend to love kale, when my wife is around), yet quake in fear at the thought of entering an unclear position, such as those featured in this chapter of the book!

Question: In what way do the positions differ from the previous two chapters?

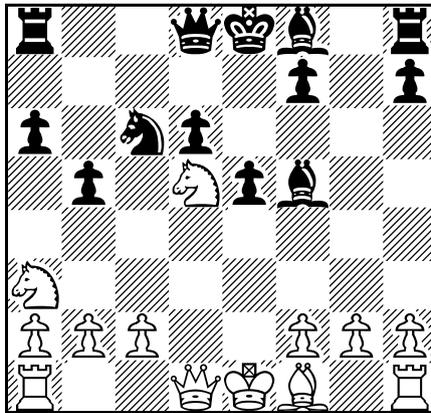
Answer: They tend to be more open and tactical than those after 9 ♟d5 , and our pawn structure radically alters, since we recapture on f6 with our g-pawn. This means:

1. We get an open g-file to attack if White castles short.
2. We can challenge White's centre with ...f6-f5; then if we manage to dissolve the e4-pawn, we are in a far better position to challenge for control over d5, as well as mobilize our second f-pawn with ...f7-f5.
3. Our king is less safe, since we voluntarily broke up our kingside pawn formation.

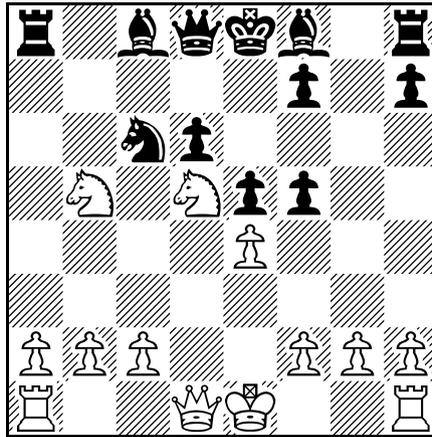
Here are some of the most critical positions we consider in this chapter:



White has just reinforced e4 with 11 ♟d3 . We respond with the further unbalancing plan of ... ♞e6 and ... ♞xd5 , after which we place all our hopes on our mobile e and f-pawns.



Here White exchanged pawns on f5. We can now begin to fight for d5 with a plan involving ...♗g7, ...0-0, ...♗e6 and ...♘e7.



The f1-bishop has just sacrificed itself on b5. People played like this in the pre-Morphy days, when there was only one direction: forwards. This line of the Sveshnikov is similar to working for an irrational boss, who must be humoured at all costs. The sacrifice may be somewhat shady, but it hasn't reached the level of defunct just yet. The previously out-of-play a3-knight is complicit in the attempted heist, as White gets two ominously placed horsemen – both of which give the c7-square the prosecutor's courtroom stare – and two pawns for the piece. We must know our theory deeply to survive White's dirty tricks.

Game 22

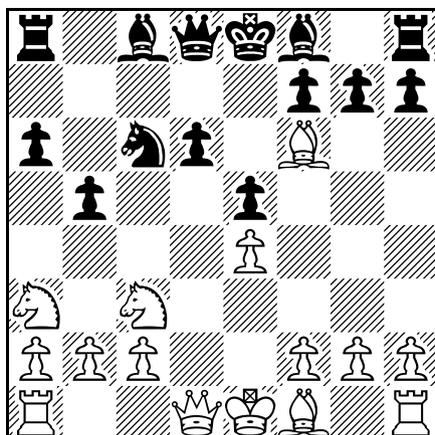
P.Leko-V.Kramnik

Linares 2004

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5

When we endear a line to ourselves, it almost turns into a chess version of our alter ego. Vladimir Kramnik (along with Peter Leko) is to my mind, the greatest exponent of the Sveshnikov Sicilian in chess history, and a study of his games in the variation is obligatory for any serious Sveshnikov player.

6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♗g5 a6 8 ♘a3 b5 9 ♗xf6



9...gxf6

Our most dynamic option, which we cover exclusively in this book. The tempo-losing 9...♙xf6 is perhaps playable, but we won't be looking at it. White scores 80% from the position after 10 ♘d5 ♚d8 11 c4, and I would never voluntarily enter this from Black's side.

10 ♘d5

White sidesteps our ...b5-b4 cheapo and occupies the d5 hole.

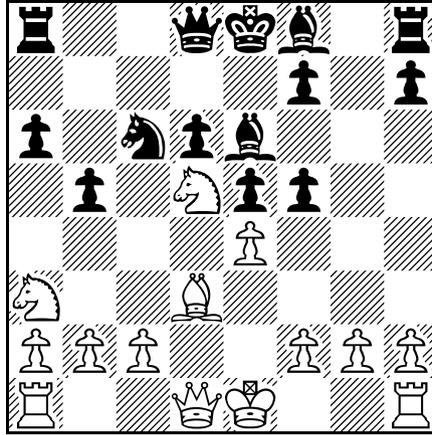
10...f5

Black's most popular and, in my opinion, best move. Kramnik has just as often played 10...♙g7 here (as he in fact did against Short in Game 27). This is known as the Novosibirsk Variation, and has the idea of answering 11 ♙d3 with 11...♘e7 12 ♘xe7 ♚xe7 and only then ...f7-f5; but we won't be covering that line either.

11 ♙d3

Leko backs up the e4-pawn, while continuing to develop. White has numerous alternatives here, which we will examine later in this chapter: 11 c3 ♙g7 12 ♙d3 (Games 25-26), 11 c3 ♙g7 12 exf5 (Games 27-29, including the important transposition via 11 exf5), 11 g3 (Game 30), 11 c4 (Game 31), 11 ♘xb5 (Game 32), and 11 ♙xb5 (Games 33 and 34).

11...♙e6



Our intention is to chop the d5-knight and plug the d5-square with a white pawn.

12 0-0

White continues to develop rapidly.

Question: Isn't White castling into an attack down the open g-file?

Answer: Yes, an attack for our side is a real future possibility. White willingly castles into the open g-file, banking on his development lead to keep him safe.

Other moves:

a) 12 ♖h5 is met by 12...♗g8!, as we will see in Game 24.

b) 12 c3 ♖g7 transposes to 11 c3 ♖g7 12 ♖d3 ♖e6, examined in Games 25 and 26. Note that Black can answer 13 ♖h5 with 13...0-0! here (unlike 12 ♖h5 ♖g7?! 13 0-0 0-0?? in the notes to Game 24), since c2-c3 isn't as useful for White as castling. Then 14 exf5 ♖xd5 15 f6 may look serious, but Black is just fine after 15...e4 (see Game 25).

c) 12 c4!? ♖a5+ 13 ♖f1 was played in our introductory game, B.Ivanovic-E.Sveshnikov, Yugoslavia-USSR match, Krk 1976 (see Game 1 in the Introduction).

12...♖xd5

We begin operation plug d5.

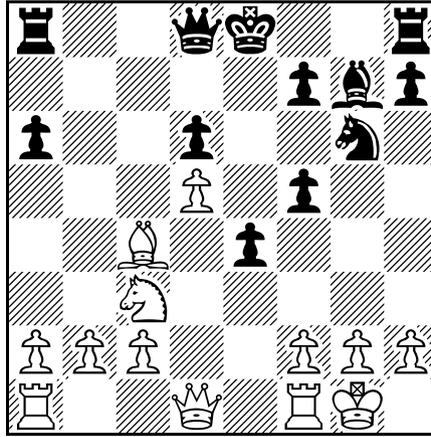
13 exd5 ♜e7 14 ♖h5

In the next game Shirov opts for 14 c3 ♖g7 15 ♖h5, when White can answer 15...e4 with 16 ♖c2, keeping the bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal.

Question: Doesn't White have the shot 14 ♜xb5 here?

Answer: There is nothing scary about the move, which loses time for White. Obviously we can't take the knight, so we simply ignore it with 14...♖g7! (now White's knight really is hanging) 15 ♜c3 e4 (another tempo gained) 16 ♖c4 ♜g6, when Black generates enough

compensation for the pawn, with the superior minor pieces and control of the dark squares.

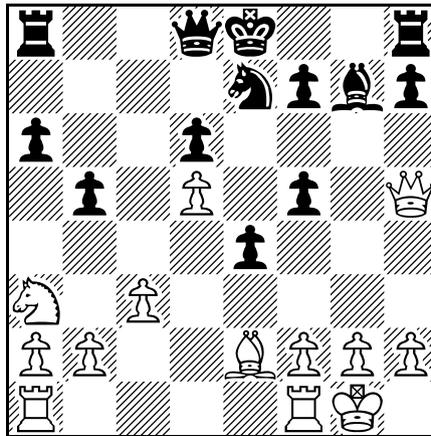


For example, 17 ♖h5 (or 17 ♖d2 0-0 18 ♔h1 ♜c7 19 ♟b3 ♟xc3 20 bxc3 f4 with excellent play) 17...♟xc3 18 bxc3 ♜f6 19 ♖h6 (if 19 f4 0-0 20 ♟b3 ♜fc8 21 g4, J.Nunn-Zsu.Polgar, Munich 1991, then 21...♜xc3 22 gxf5 ♘h4 is clearly better for Black) 19...♜xc3 20 ♟b3 ♟e7 21 ♜ae1 (or 21 f3 exf3 22 ♜ae1+ ♟f6 23 ♜e3 ♖d4 24 c3 ♖h4 25 ♖xh4+ ♘xh4 26 g3 ♜hg8 27 ♟d1 f4 28 ♜e4 ♘g6, E.Postny-J.Fluvia Poyatos, Andorra 2005) 21...♜hg8 22 ♟h1 ♜f6 23 f3 ♘h4 24 ♜xf6+ ♟xf6 25 fe4 ♜g2 26 ♜xf5+ ♘xf5 27 ♟xg2 ♘h4+ 28 ♟g3 ♘g6, D.Gutsche-V.Golod, correspondence 2003. With active pieces and access to the strong e5-square, Black has no problems at all in these endings, even a pawn down.

14...e4

Gaining a tempo, while clearing e5 for Black's pieces.

15 ♟e2 ♟g7 16 c3



16...♖c8!?

An interesting idea. Black normally castles with 16...0-0 17 ♜c2 and then:

a) 17...♖d7 18 ♖ad1 ♖ae8 19 ♜b4 ♖b7 20 g3 a5 21 ♜c6 ½-½ S.Khromov-F.Balabaev, correspondence 2003, in an even position. Play might have run 21...♜xc6 22 dxc6 ♖xc6 23 ♖xf5 ♖e5 24 ♖f4 d5, when Black doesn't stand even a shade worse.

b) 17...♖c8!? was Leko's choice a few months later, presumably influenced by our main game: 18 ♜e3 f4 19 ♜f5 ♖e8 20 a4 (20 ♖g4 ♖c4 21 ♜xe7+ ♖xe7 22 ♖ae1 ♖f6 23 ♖f5 h6 24 b3 ♖xc3 25 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 26 ♖xe4 ♖e5 27 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 was complete equal in S.Karjakin-P.Leko, Dortmund 2004) 20...♜g6! 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♖xb5 (or 22 ♖a6 ♖f8) 22...♖e5 23 ♖h3 ♖b8 24 c4 ♖f6 25 ♜xg7 ♜xg7 with excellent compensation for the pawn, S.Karjakin-O.Leko, Dortmund (blitz play-off) 2004.

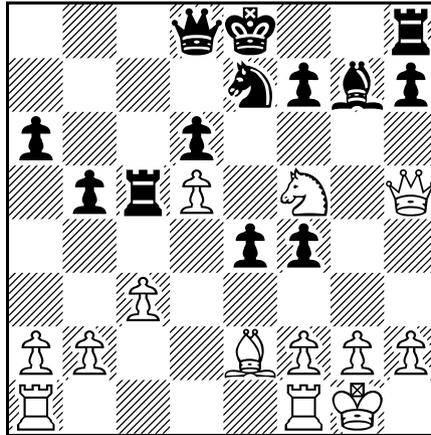
From the other side, Kramnik faced 16...♖d7 17 ♖ad1 ♜g6 18 g3 0-0 19 ♜c2 ♖ae8 20 ♜e3 ♖e5 21 ♖h3 ♖c8 (making ready to push the f4-pawn) 22 ♜c2 f4 23 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 and Black achieved dynamic equality, V.Kramnik-V.Anand, Munich (blitz) 1994.

17 ♜c2 ♖c5

Kramnik applies immediate pressure against d5. Here 17...0-0 18 ♜e3 f4 19 ♜f5 ♖c5 comes to the same thing, while 19...♖e8 transposes to Leko's games in the previous note.

18 ♜e3 f4

The most accurate continuation. 18...♖d7 19 f3! is unpleasant for Black, since 19...f4?? is unplayable in view of 20 fxe4! fxe3 21 ♖xf7+ ♜d8 22 ♖xg7 with a winning position for White.

19 ♜f5**19...0-0**

Not 19...♜xf5? 20 ♖xf5 ♖e7 21 ♖fe1 and Black's e4-pawn will fall, since 21...♖e5?? walks into the trick 22 ♖xb5+!, clearing the e-file for White's rook. Even 22...♜f8 doesn't work due to the back rank/queen sacrifice shot 23 ♖xe4! ♖xf5 24 ♖e8 mate.

20 a4

The Sicilian Sveshnikov: Move by Move

Here 20 ♖fe1 ♗xf5 21 ♜xf5 ♜e8 22 ♜xf4 ♜xd5 23 a4 ♜e7 24 axb5 axb5 is much the same, or Black might try 20...♜e8 21 ♗xe7+ ♜xe7 22 ♜g5 f3 23 ♙xf3 f6 24 ♜e3 f5 with compensation for the pawn in view of his aggressively posted pieces and attacking chances.

20...♗xf5

With each potential (future) attacker swapped away, Black finds it difficult to replenish the lack. He *must* attack, or else face an arduous defence due to his scattered structure.

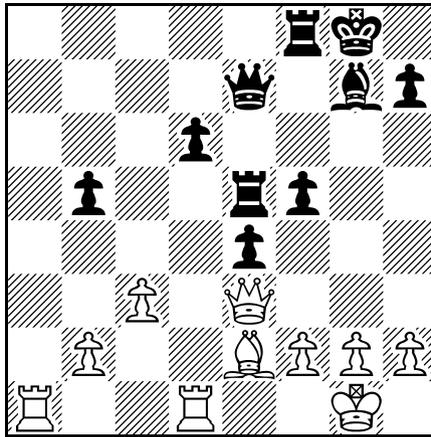
21 ♜xf5 ♜e7 22 axb5 axb5 23 ♜xf4 ♜xd5

Black retained material equality, yet White still has a pull, since Black's pawns are slightly weaker.

24 ♜fd1 ♜e5

An indicator that Kramnik may be playing for the full point. Black probably has enough to hold the draw if he goes for the simplifying line 24...♜xd1+ 25 ♜xd1 ♜e5 26 ♜xe5 ♙xe5 27 ♙xb5 ♜b8 28 ♜d5 (or 28 c4) 28...f5.

25 ♜e3 f5!?



An ambitious pawn offer. It's the type of move to which an annotator would attach a dubious mark, if Kramnik had lost the game – but he didn't, so I won't! After this decision, the evil genie can no longer be put back into the bottle. World class grandmasters have a way of leading you into an adventure, with the illusion that it was all your idea. In fact, chess players can be boiled down to two categories:

1. The kind who believe they should bend to the position's will.
2. The kind who believe the position should be bent to *their* will.

Kramnik's last move makes him a likely candidate for category number two.

It has been my observation that the ambitious types who want it all don't always get it, since nobody gets everything in life. Yet in this game, Kramnik proves me wrong, refusing to recant and head into an inferior but drawable ending with something like 25...b4 26 ♜a7 ♜f6 27 cxb4 d5 28 b5 ♜f5 29 b4 ♜e5 30 f3 ♜b2 31 fxe4 ♜e5 32 ♜d2! ♜xe4 33 ♜xb2 ♙xb2

34 ♖f1 ♜xb4, intending 35 ♜xd5 ♖d4, when Black will almost certainly hold the draw.

26 ♜b6

Double attack. The piratical queen steals a pawn, while avoiding pursuit. Obviously this is not the end of the story, since Black's build-up on the kingside now takes ominous shape.

26...f4

Once we begin such an attack, we gain nothing by holding back. Forward is the only available option.

27 ♜xd6!

Leko wisely avoids the greedy 27 ♖xb5?! (the unwise grabbing of material turns us into the ant who is unable to push its too-large crumb into the tiny aperture of its mound hole) 27...f3 28 ♖c4+ ♖h8 29 ♜xd6?!, when 29...♜g5 30 g3 e3 gives Black a very strong attack.

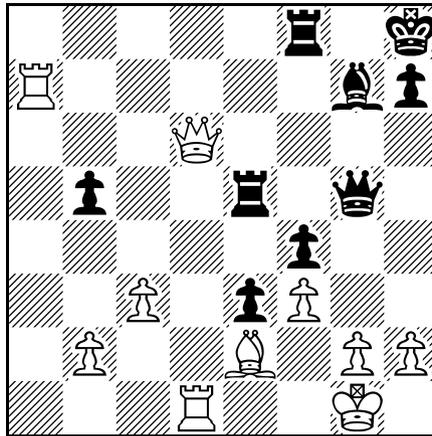
27...♜g5 28 f3

White puts a stop to the menacing ...f4-f3, at the cost of allowing Black a deeply entrenched passed pawn.

28...e3 29 ♜a7

Ganging up on the b5-pawn with 29 ♜a5 ♖h8 30 ♜c6?? grossly underestimates Black's chances: 30...♜h4! 31 ♜f1 ♜h5 32 h3 ♜g3 33 ♖h1 ♜g8 (threatening ...♜xh3+) 34 ♜e6 ♖xc3! (threatening the a5-rook, as well as mate on g2) 35 ♜xg8+ ♜xg8 36 bxc3 ♜g5 37 ♜g1 ♜b3 and White is unlikely to hold this position.

29...♖h8



Making way for the f8-rook, in anticipation of the kingside assault.

30 ♜d7

Rogozenko's idea of 30 ♜d7 ♜g8 31 ♖d3 e2 (not 31...♜h4?? 32 ♜xg7+) 32 ♜e1 can be met by 32...♜e6! 33 ♜b4 (not 33 ♜xe6?? ♖d4+ and mates, while 33 ♜d5 ♜e5 34 ♜d6 ♜e6 repeats) 33...♜a8 with full compensation, since White's forces are quite uncoordinated; for example, 34 ♜b7 ♜d8! 35 ♜xb5 ♜h4! 36 ♜b8+ ♖f8 37 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 38 ♜xe2 ♜xe2 39 ♖xe2 ♜e1+ 40 ♖f1 ♜e3+ 41 ♖h1 ♜a8 with a level endgame.

30...♖g8 31 ♔h3?!

Now the advantage swings to Black; whereas White still looks okay after 31 ♔h1.

31...♗g6!

Covering h7, while preparing ...♗h5.

32 ♗ad7??

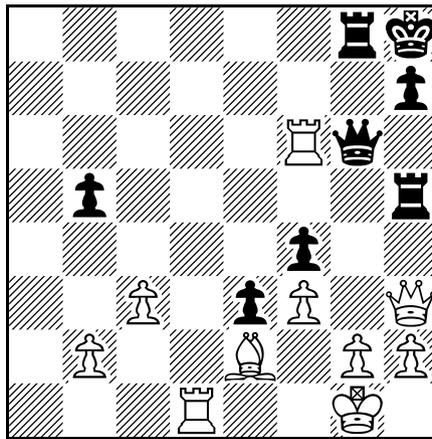
Accurate intelligence wins a war, long before even the first shot is fired. This move is based on a huge miscalculation.

White had to enter the forcing line 32 ♔h1! ♗h5 (or 32...♗c2 33 ♗xg7! and draws) 33 ♗a6! ♗xh3 (33...♕f6?! is met by 34 ♗xf6!) 34 ♗xg6 hxg6 35 gxh3, when his kingside pawns are all over the place, like thrown toys after a child's tantrum, but he should hold the game due to the presence of bishops of opposite colours; for example, 35...♗b8 36 ♗d6 b4 37 ♗xg6 ♕xc3! 38 b3 ♗d8 39 ♗e6 ♗d2 40 ♕c4 and it is difficult to see how Black can make progress.

32...♗h5 33 ♗7d6 ♕f6!

The guiding principle of an insurgency is to visit mayhem upon the enemy, and then scurry away before they are able to organize a reprisal.

34 ♗xf6



Exercise (combination alert): Leko miscalculated in entering this line. Black's pieces point murderously at the white king. Find one strong move and White's position collapses.

Answer: Zwischenzug/Double attack.

34...♗c2!

Defenders scatter like a flock of terrified chickens at the sight of the hungry, axe-wielding farmer.

35 ♗xh5

For White, this is a case of conspicuous consumption, without choice in the matter.

35...♖xe2

Black threatens mate in two ways. Notice the terrible irony of White's rook sitting on f6, which blocks all ideas of ♖e5+.

36 g4

"You can imprison my body, but cannot do so to an idea," declares White's king, who has no idea what he is talking about. Note that in the 32 ♖h1! ♖h5 33 ♖a6 ♖f6?! 34 ♖xf6! variation given above, 34...♖c2?? (34...♖g7! keeps Black in the game) 35 ♖xh5 ♖xe2 would have failed to 36 ♖g1 and wins, but here the white king is still in the way.

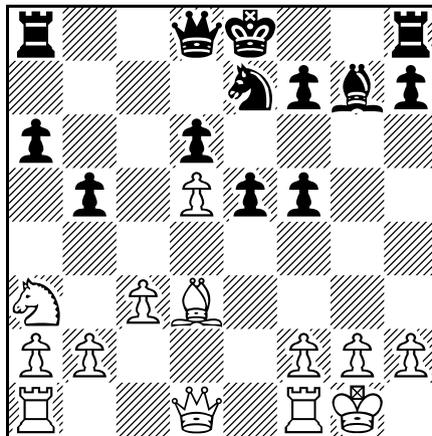
36...♖f2+ 0-1

After 37 ♖h1 ♖xf3+ 38 ♖g1 (the king hands his sister a lengthy list of objections to his death sentence, with each argument weaker than the one which preceded) 38...♖xd1+ 39 ♖g2 ♖xg4+, mate follows swiftly.

Summary: 11 ♖d3 is a theoretically dense variation, so you need to be well versed in the typical ideas for both sides. We will see more of these in the next two games.

Game 23
A.Shirov-P.Leko
 Candidates semi-final (1st matchgame), Dortmund 2002

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♖g5 a6 8 ♘a3 b5 9 ♖xf6 gxf6 10 ♘d5 f5 11 ♖d3 ♖e6 12 0-0 ♖xd5 13 exd5 ♘e7 14 c3 ♖g7



15 ♖h5

White's main idea, bringing the queen into the assault. The lone attacker is the ambitious Neanderthal, facing down a petulant Mastodon, who thinks to himself: "My clan will eat well tonight!". We look at an earlier ♖h5 deployment in the next game.