

# **The Modernized Scotch Game**

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# **The Modernized Scotch Game**

**Milos Pavlovic**

**Thinkers Publishing 2019**



# Key to Symbols

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

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# Preface

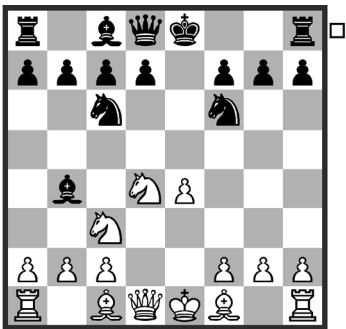
The Scotch was one of the first modern openings to appear in tournament practice. The nature of the Scotch fitted perfectly into the 19<sup>th</sup> century era of Romantic chess – the opening's emphasis on opening lines, fast development, rapid centralisation and, most importantly, fast attacking chances, meshed seamlessly with the style of the day. In a stylistic sense the Scotch very much resembles Open Sicilian positions.

In spite of its long history however, for most of its life the Scotch did not enjoy great popularity. It was a recognised answer to 1... e5, for sure, but it never seriously challenged the Ruy Lopez as the most “objective” way to fight for an opening advantage. The general opinion was that Black had enough resources to achieve equality. The turning point for the fortunes of the Scotch was the world title match between Kasparov and Karpov in 1990, the first time that the opening had been tested at such an elite level. Unsurprisingly, Kasparov's decision to employ this old opening meant that its appearances in tournaments soared. The popularity of the Scotch generated by this match remains today, and I would say it is perhaps more popular than ever before. That begs the obvious question – why? Well, due to the nature of the positions that tend to arise it is ideal for engine analysis, and so it lends itself perfectly to the tools of the current day. It is a nice paradox that the Romantic foundations of this opening merge so well with the computerised modern era. Credit can mostly be given to Kasparov for reviving this old opening, but there are many others who have contributed to exploring new ideas and forging new paths. A lot of discoveries have been made by some young grandmasters who don't shy away from analysing deep tactical solutions with the aid of the silicon beast.

The only other book written on the Scotch that I used whilst searching for material is the excellent work by the English GM Peter Wells, *The Scotch Game*. Wells' book comes from an older, classical style of opening literature which is helpful in developing the reader's understanding and certainly still has its merits today. Since its publication in 1998, however, many new lines have been introduced and our general approach to the Scotch has changed dramatically. Nevertheless, it served me well as guidance as I wrote this work. This book is going to be a big one, so my introduction will be a little different to my usual approach. I will try to present the most important features in the book so that readers can immediately see what kind of material they will find. Here I will briefly lay out the principal details of the book (N.B. this is not an official table of contents, just a quick guide for the reader).

# Introduction

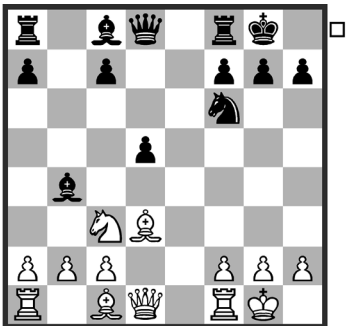
We start our journey by exploring the extremely old Four Knights line. This position can arise from various move orders. 1. e4 e5 2. ♞f3 ♞c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♞xd4 ♞f6 5. ♞c3 ♞b4



Position after: 5... ♞b4

It is an ancient system but we will see many new ideas for both sides.

After 6. ♞xc6 bxc6 7. ♞d3 d5 8. exd5 cxd5 9. 0-0 0-0 I have looked at a number of options, some well-known, others relatively new.



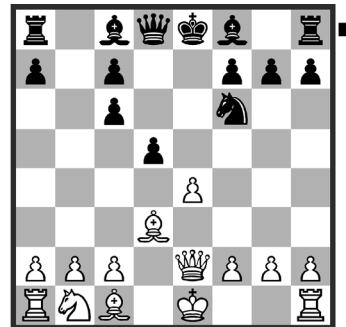
Position after: 9... 0-0

- A) 10. a3
- B) 10. h3 c6 11. ♞f3
- C) 10. ♞g5 c6 and now 11. ♞a4 and 11. ♞f3

All of them lead to a balanced positional game and are worthy of serious investigation.

The next two lines are both completely new ideas that have only recently been brought into the light. We can say that they are entirely the product of modern times.

- 1. e4 e5 2. ♞f3 ♞c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♞xd4 ♞f6 5. ♞xc6 bxc6 6. ♞d3 d5 7. ♞e2

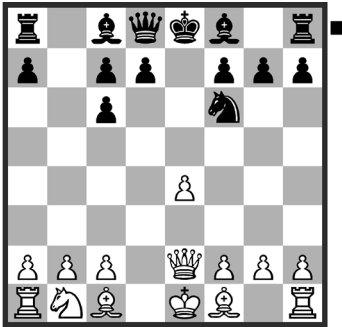


Position after: 7. ♞e2

An unusual try but not without some sense. Black must be vigilant in order to fight against White's idea, which mainly consists of depriving Black of the option of a quick ... ♞b4 in response to ♞c3.



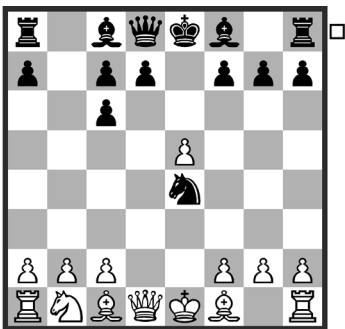
1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘xc6 bxc6 6. ♚e2



Position after: 6. ♚e2

This slightly odd-looking queen move has hidden depths and Black must be aware of how to deal with it.

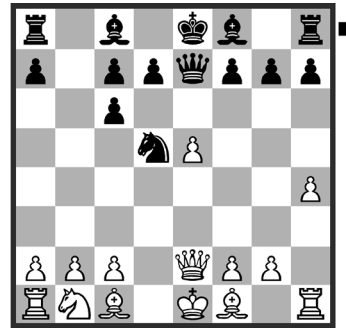
The following is a practical line that should not be taken lightly. 1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘xc6 bxc6 6. e5 ♘e4



Position after: 6... ♘e4

In response to this offbeat line White usually tries to force some positional gains.

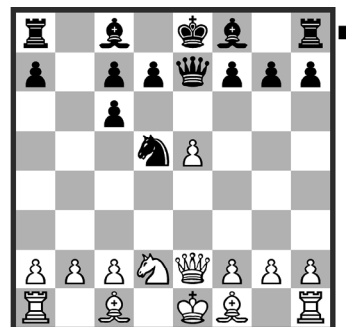
1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘xc6 bxc6 6. e5 ♚e7 7. ♚e2 ♘d5 8. h4



Position after: 8. h4

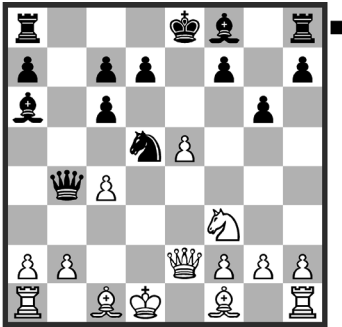
This is not a new idea but it has been completely reworked and given a fresh look in recent times. It is critically important to understand the nuances here. I have analysed three possibilities: 8... ♚e6, 8... f6 and 8... d6. All three are crucial for the evaluation of this line.

Another important set of themes arise from the following line: 1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘xc6 bxc6 6. e5 ♚e7 7. ♚e2 ♘d5 8. ♘d2.



Position after: 8. ♘d2

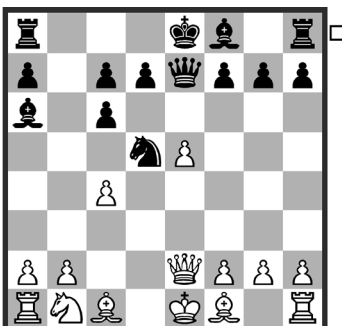
The game usually continues **8... g6 9. c4 ♖a6** when we reach an interesting and popular modern line. Next follows: **10. ♘f3 ♙b4+ 11. ♔d1.**



Position after: 11. ♔d1

A fascinating position which will often result in an endgame. The key question is who is better placed for the transition? Here I have analysed four different possibilities, **11... ♖g7**, **11... ♘b6**, **11... ♜b8** and **11... ♘e7**, which all lead to complex struggles.

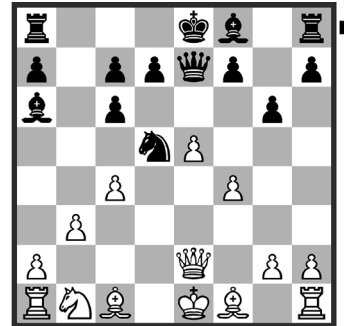
One of the two main lines in this book covers: **1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘xc6 bxc6 6. e5 ♙e7 7. ♙e2 ♘d5 8. c4 ♖a6.**



Position after: 8... ♖a6

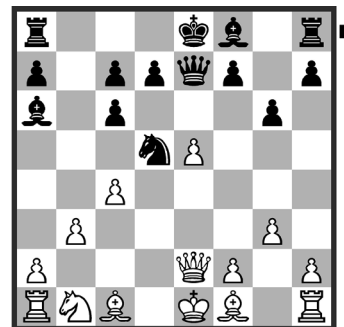
This is the starting point of the line, and now we can divide White's attempts into two branches.

#### A) 9. b3 g6 10. f4



Position after: 10. f4

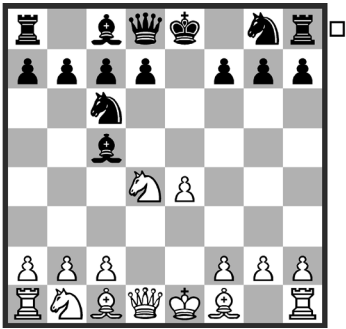
#### B) 9. b3 g6 10. g3



Position after: 10. g3

In both cases we are entering complex waters, both positionally and tactically. There are a lot of ideas here which must be correctly evaluated in order to steer safely through the complications. Black attempts (and should succeed) to carefully take note of the subtleties and with some clever exchanges often makes it to balanced – yet still sharp – endgames.

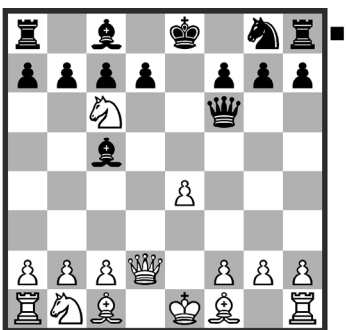
A major part of the book is devoted to the following main line: **1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♗c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♘xd4 ♙c5.**



Position after: 4... ♙c5

This is a key system and together with **4... ♗f6** represents best play for Black. Now White has various tries, one of which is the modern **5. ♘xc6 ♙f6**, after which there are two viable options for White:

**A) Kasparov's 6. ♙d2**



Position after: 6. ♙d2

**B) The modern 6. ♙f3.**

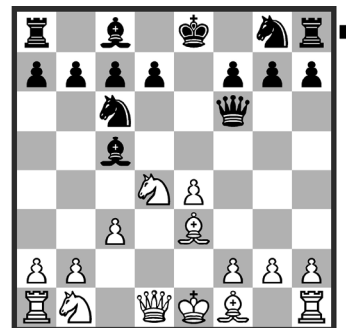
(see diagram next column)



Position after: 6. ♙f3

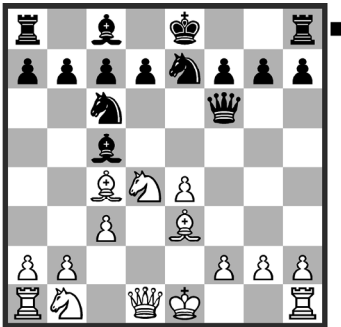
**5. ♘xc6** was played by Kasparov, leading to the complete rebirth of this line and many new ideas, especially relating to endgames. In both lines Black can react with either **6... bxc6** or **6... dxc6**, of which the latter is preferable.

Other attempts include **1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♗c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♘xd4 ♙c5 5. ♙e3 ♙f6 6. c3.**



Position after: 6. c3

This line is also a known entity that has been given a modern makeover. Now the most common, and probably best, response is **6... ♗ge7**, to which the most popular and complex reply is **7. ♙c4**. I have looked at two main tries:

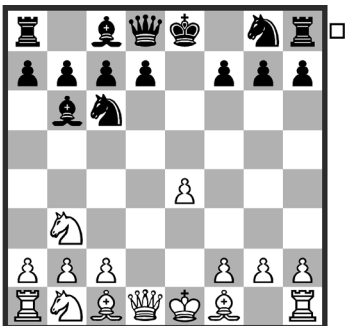


Position after: 7. ♖c4

- A) 7... ♗e5  
 B) 7... 0-0 8. 0-0 b6

both of which lead to interesting positions full of complicated play.

Then we have the traditional: 1. e4 e5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♗xd4 ♖c5 5. ♗b3 ♖b6.



Position after: 5... ♖b6

This part is almost completely reworked and I have given new ideas and lines for both sides. These three sections (5. ♗xc6, 5. ♖e3 and 5. ♗b3) are of the utmost importance for understanding the Scotch opening.

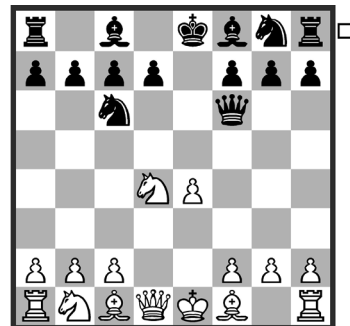
Here I have analysed a number of different options, with the last being Black's best in my opinion.

- A) 6. ♗c3 ♗ge7  
 B) 6. ♗c3 ♗f6  
 C) 6. ♗c3 d6  
 D) 6. ♗c3 ♗f6

Achieving a balanced game here with Black is no easy task, so he must really know what he is doing.

In the last part of the book I have tackled a few lesser-played lines after 1. e4 e5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♗xd4. They are not all that bad and some of them are very interesting indeed.

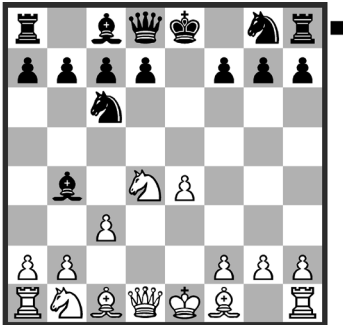
- A) 4... ♗f6!?



Position after: 4... ♗f6!?

A tricky move order from Black's side. White can transpose back to familiar lines with 5. ♖e3 ♖c5 6. c3 and 5. ♗xc6 ♖c5, but Black has avoided 4... ♖c5 5. ♗b3.

- B) 4... ♖b4+ 5. c3 leads to a further split into two lines.



Position after: 5. c3

- B1) 5... ♖c5  
 B2) 5... ♖e7

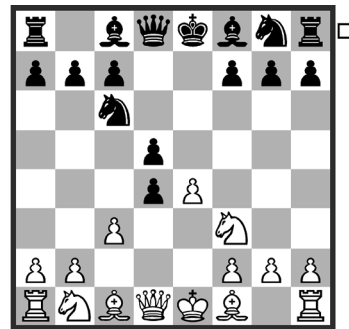
These are lines in which Black doesn't really look to immediately equalise but instead chooses to seek some more practical solutions.

After that I have examined some less common lines, some more solid than others!

Milos Pavlovic  
 Belgrade, 2019

- C) 4... d6  
 D) 4... ♘ge7  
 E) 4... g6  
 F) 4... ♘xd4  
 G) 4... ♖h4

At the very end we have the Romantic Göring Gambit where it has been known for decades that White should not achieve anything. 1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 exd4 4. c3 d5!



Position after: 4... d5!

The best response by far. Black doesn't have any problems reaching equality.



# Part I

4...  f6

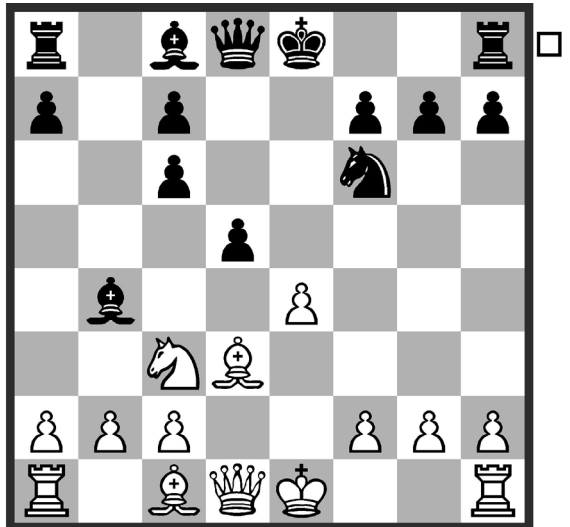






# Scotch Four Knights

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4  
exd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3  
Bb4 6. Nxc6 bxc6  
7. Bd3 d5



# Chapter Guide

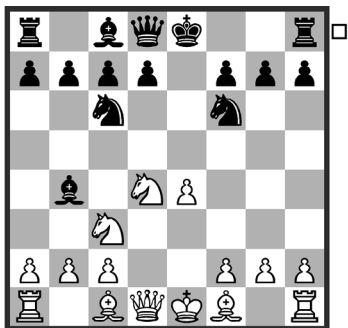
## Chapter 1 – Scotch Four Knights

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 ♙b4 6.♗xc6 bxc6 7.♙d3 d5  
8.exd5 cxd5 9.0-0 0-0

a) 8...♙e7+!? alternative .....	19
b) 10.--, 10.a3 .....	22
c) 10.h3 .....	25
d) 10.♙g5 c6 11.-- .....	28
e) 10.♙g5 c6 11.♙f3.....	32

## a) 8... ♔e7+!? alternative

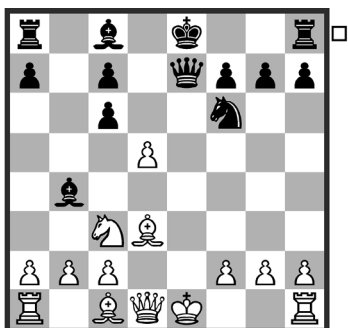
1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 exd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 ♙b4



Position after: 5... ♙b4

It is important to note that this line can also arise from a Four Knights move order after: 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4. d4 exd4 5.♘xd4 ♙b4.

6. ♘xc6 bxc6 7. ♙d3 d5 8. exd5 ♔e7+!?

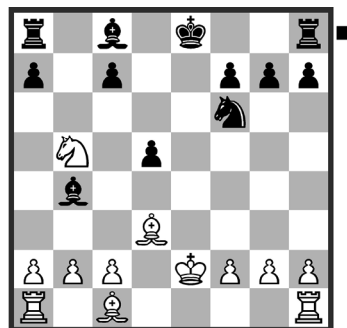


Position after: 8... ♔e7+!?

In my opinion this is an underrated line and a promising alternative choice, especially for those players who have a

fondness for endgames.

9. ♙e2 ♙xe2+ 10. ♔xe2 cxd5 11. ♘b5

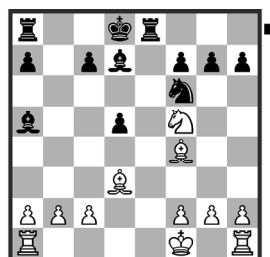


Position after: 11. ♘b5

11... ♔d7!?

11... ♔d8

A) 12. ♙f4 ♖e8+ Black should be able to neutralise any White pressure with accurate play, for example: 13. ♔f1 ♙a5 14. ♘d4 ♙d7 15. ♘f5

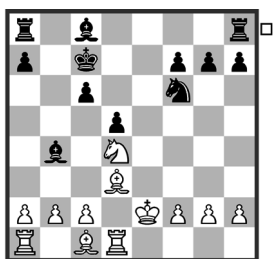


Position after: 15. ♘f5

15... g6! [15... ♙xf5 16. ♙xf5 ♖b8 17. b3 ♙c3 18. ♖d1 h6 19. g3 d4 20. ♙d2 ♙xd2 21. ♖xd2 c5 22. c3± 1-0

(45) Kryvoruchko, Y (2707) – Amin, B (2635) Dubai 2014] 16. ♖g5 [16. ♘e3 c6 17. ♖g5 ♗e7 18. c3 ♘d8 followed by ...♗f8] 16... ♙xf5 17. ♙xf6+ ♗d7 18. ♙xf5+ gxf5 19. ♖d1 c6 20. c4 ♗e6=.

**B)** 12. ♖d1 is a slightly more testing try. 12... c6 13. ♘d4 ♗c7



Position after: 13... ♗c7

14. ♙f4+ [14. c4 ♖e8+ 15. ♗f1 ♖g4 16. f3 ♙e6 17. ♙f4+ ♗b7 18. ♖ac1 ♖ac8 19. c5± 1-0 (60) Sutovsky, E (2480) – Jonkman, H (2280) Groningen 1994] 14... ♙d6 15. ♙xd6+ ♗xd6 16. c4 ♖b8 17. b3 ♖e8+ 18. ♗f1 ♙d7 19. cxd5 cxd5 20. f3±

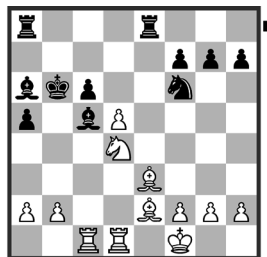
## 12. ♖d1

**A)** 12. ♙f4 c6= Δ 13. ♘c7? ♘h5!±

**B)** 12. ♙f5+ ♗e7 13. ♙xc8 ♖hxc8 14. ♖d1 c6 15. c3 ♙c5 16. ♘d4 ♗d7=

## 12... c6 13. c3

Another option is: 13. ♘d4 ♖e8+ 14. ♗f1 ♙c5 15. ♙e2 a5 16. c4 ♙a6 17. ♙e3 ♗c7 18. ♖ac1 ♗b6 19. cxd5

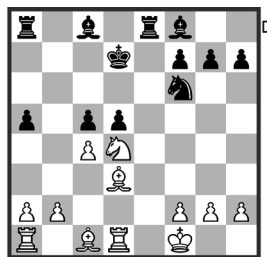


Position after: 19. cxd5

19... ♙xe2+!? 20. ♘xe2 ♙xe3 21. ♖xc6+ ♗b7 22. fxe3 ♘xd5 23. ♖dc1 ♘xe3+ 24. ♗g1 ♖ac8=.

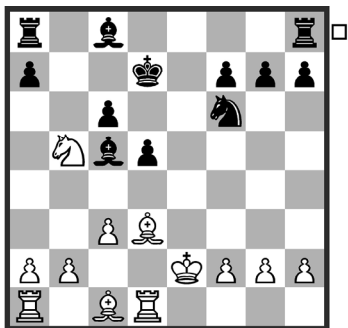
## 13... ♙c5

Black can also play in a slightly different way: 13... ♖e8+ 14. ♗f1 ♙f8 15. ♘d4 a5 16. c4 c5

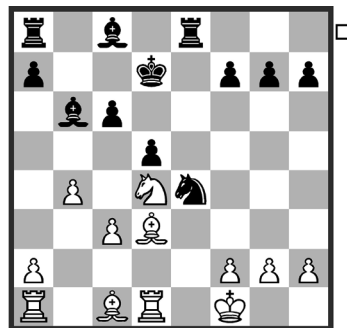


Position after: 16... c5

17. ♙f5+ [17. ♘b5 shouldn't bring anything for White after 17... d4 18. ♙g5 ♘e4 19. ♙f4 ♘d6 20. ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 21. ♖xe1 g6 22. ♘d4 cxd4 23. c5 ♙a6 24. ♖xa6 ♖xa6 25. cxd6 ♙xd6=] 17... ♗c7 18. ♘b5+ ♗b6 19. ♙xc8 ♖axc8 20. ♙g5 d4 21. ♙xf6 gxf6 22. ♖d3 ♖e6 23. ♖h3 h6 24. ♖b3 a4 25. ♖a3 ♖a8 26. b3 ♗c6! 27. ♖xa4 ♖xa4 28. bxa4 ♗d7=.



Position after: 13... ♖c5



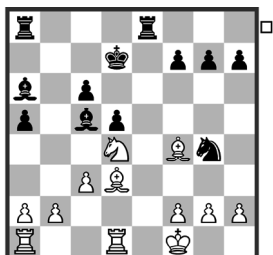
Position after: 16... ♘e4

**14. b4**

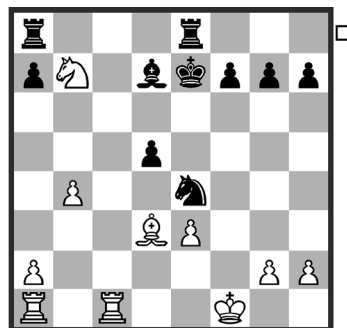
14. ♘d4 ♜e8+ 15. ♔f1 a5 Black prevents White's idea of expanding with b4. 16. ♙e3 ♞g4 17. ♙f4 ♙a6

The position is dynamically balanced.

17. ♙e3! ♞xc3 18. ♜dc1 ♞e4 19. ♞xc6 ♙xe3 20. ♟e3 ♔d6 21. ♞a5 ♙d7 22. ♞b7+ ♔e7



Position after: 17... ♙a6



Position after: 22... ♔e7

18. c4 [18. ♙xa6 ♜xa6= Δ 19. c4? ♜e4⌈] 18... ♙xd4 19. ♙f5+ ♔e7 20. ♜xd4 c5 21. ♜d2 ♙xc4+ 22. ♔g1 ♞f6 23. b3 ♙a6 24. ♜c1 c4 25. bxc4 ♙xc4 26. ♜xc4 dxc4 27. ♙d6+ ♔d8 28. ♙f4+ ♔e7=

**23. ♙xe4**

23. ♞c5 rapidly peters out after: 23... ♞xc5 24. ♜xc5 ♔d6 25. ♔f2 ♜eb8 26. a3 a5 27. ♜xa5 ♜xa5 28. bxa5 ♜b2+ 29. ♔f1 ♙b5 30. ♙xb5 ♜xb5=.

14... ♙b6 15. ♘d4 ♜e8+ 16. ♔f1 ♞e4

**23... dxe4 24. ♞c5**

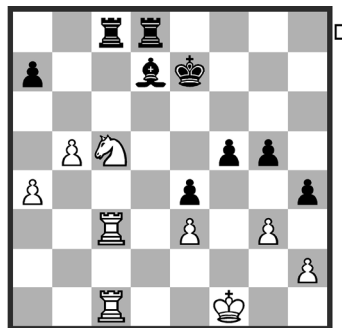
On the one hand the black king on d7 is somewhat vulnerable and the c8-bishop remains out of play, on the other hand the e4-knight is particularly strong.

24. ♜c7 ♜ac8 25. ♜xc8 ♜xc8 26. ♞c5 ♙c6=

24... f5 25. a4 ♖ac8 26. ♜c3 ♜ed8 27.  
♜ac1 g5 28. g3 h5 29. b5 h4↗

(see diagram on the right)

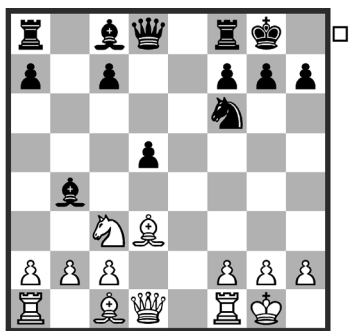
The position is roughly equal, with all three results remaining on the table.



Position after: 29... h4↗

## b) 10.--, 10.a3

1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. d4 exd4 4.  
♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 ♙b4 6. ♘xc6 bxc6  
7. ♙d3 d5 8. exd5 cxd5 9. 0-0 0-0



Position after: 9... 0-0

### 10. a3

This idea is a rarer guest in tournament play but it asks a logical question. What is Black going to do with the bishop? As well as this direct approach, White has a number of other infrequently played tries:

A) 10. ♙f4 ♙d6 11. ♚d2 c5 12. ♜fe1  
♙e6 13. b3 ♙c7 14. ♙xc7 ♚xc7 15.  
♘b5 ♚b8 16. ♘c3 ♜d8 17. h3 ♚c7=

B) 10. ♚f3 ♙g4!? 11. ♚g3 ♚d7



Position after: 11... ♚d7

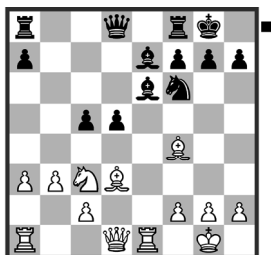
12. ♙g5 [12. ♙f4 ♜fe8 13. h3 ♙f5 14.  
♙xc7 ♙xd3 15. cxd3 d4 16. ♘e4 ♘xe4  
17. dxe4 ♜xe4 18. a3 ♙f8 19. ♜ae1 f5  
Black has no issues.] 12... ♘h5 13. ♚e5  
c6 14. ♚d4 ♙d6=

C) 10. ♘b5 ♙g4 11. f3 ♙d7 12. c3  
♙e7 13. ♘d4 ♜e8 14. ♙g5 c5 15. ♘f5

♙f8 16. ♖d2 c4 17. ♘c2 ♙xf5 18. ♙xf5 ♖e5 19. ♙xf6 ♗xf6 20. ♙g4 and Black can strike in the centre with 20... d4!↑.

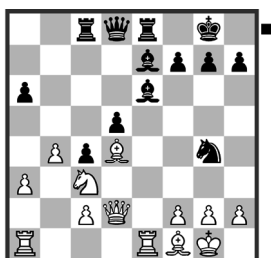
### 10... ♙d6

The alternative 10... ♙e7 is also a popular choice. 11. ♙f4 c5 12. ♖e1 ♙e6 13. b3!? [13. ♗d2 ♗d7 14. ♖ad1 ♖ad8 15. h3 d4 16. ♘e4 c4 17. ♙f1 ♗b7 18. ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 19. ♗b4 ♗xb4 20. axb4 ♙f5 ½-½ (55) Hovhannisyan, R (2640) – Vidit, S (2658) Martuni 2016]



Position after: 13. b3!?

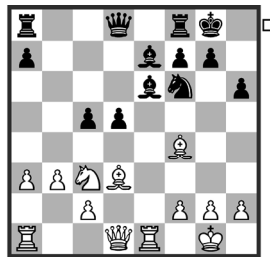
**A) 13... c4 14. ♙f1 ♖c8 15. ♗d2 [15. b4 ♗d7 16. ♘e2 ♘e4 17. ♘d4 ♘c3 18. ♗c1 ♖fe8 19. ♘xe6 fxe6 20. ♙e5 ♙f6 21. ♙xf6 gxf6∞] 15... a6 16. b4 ♖e8 17. ♙e5 ♘g4 18. ♙d4**



Position after: 18. ♙d4

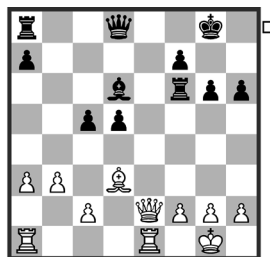
18... ♘h6! 19. ♖ad1 a5 20. ♘a4 axb4 21. axb4 ♘f5 22. ♙c5 ♙g5 23. ♗c3 ♙f6 24. ♗d2 ♙g5=

### B) 13... h6!?



Position after: 13... h6!?

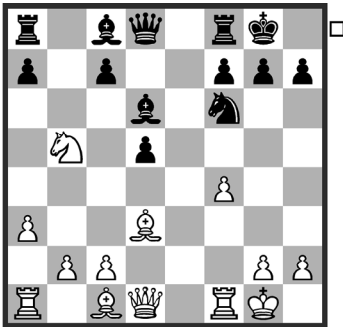
14. ♗d2 ♖e8 15. ♘b5 [15. ♖ad1 ♙d6 16. h3 ♗b8 17. ♙xd6 ♗xd6 18. ♘e2 ♙d7=] 15... ♘h5! 16. ♘c7 [16. ♙e5 ♙f6∞] 16... ♘xf4 17. ♗xf4 ♙d6 18. ♘xe6 ♖xe6 19. ♗f3 ♖f6 20. ♗e2 g6



Position after: 20... g6

The position is equal. One sample line might be: 21. g3 ♙g7 22. ♖ad1 ♗b6 23. ♙g2 c4 24. bxc4 ♖e8! 25. ♗d2 ♖xe1 26. ♖xe1 dxc4 27. ♙xc4 ♙xa3=.

**11. ♘b5 ♙e5 12. f4 ♙d6**

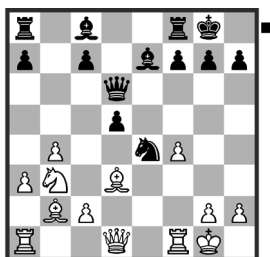


Position after: 12... Qd6

**13. Nxd6**

White is not obligated to capture the bishop straightaway – there is also the option of 13. b4.

A) 13... Qe7 14. Nd4 Qd6 15. Nb3 Qe4 16. Qb2



Position after: 16. Qb2

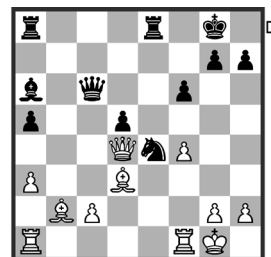
16... Qb6+!? This leads to a messy position after: 17. Qd4 Qg6 18. Bc1 [18. Qf3 Qf5+] 18... Qh3 19. Qe2 Bfe8 20. c4 Qf5 21. Qb2 a5 22. bxa5 Bxb8 23. cxd5 Bxa5 24. Bxc7 Qf8∞.

B) 13... a5 14. Nxd6 Qxd6



Position after: 14... Qxd6

15. b5 [15. Qb2 Bxe8 16. Qd2 axb4 17. axb4 Bxa1 18. Bxa1 Qb6+ 19. Qf2 Qxb4 20. Qxf6 gxf6 21. h3 f5+] 15... Bxe8 16. Qf3 c5 17. bxc6 Qa6 18. Qb2 Ne4 19. Qe3 Qxc6 20. Qd4 f6



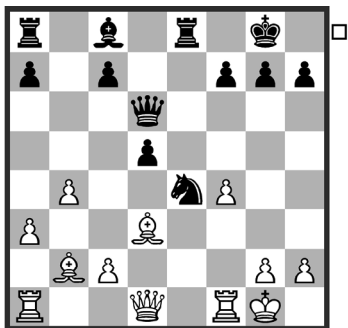
Position after: 20... f6

21. Qxa6 [21. Bfe1 Qxd3 22. cxd3 Nd6 Black is fine.] 21... Bxa6 22. Bxd1 Bb6 0-1 (58) Trjapishko, A (2510) – Bocharov, I (2547) Sochi 2018

**13... Qxd6 14. b4 Bxe8 15. Qb2 Ne4**

White can point to the bishop pair as evidence of a possible advantage but Black can be equally satisfied with the strong outpost in the centre.





Position after: 15... Nxe4

16. Qe2

16. Qd4 Kg6 17. Re1 Qg4 18. Qc1 Qf3 19. Qf1 Nd6 20. Qd2 Qe4 21. a4 a6 22. Qe5 c6∞

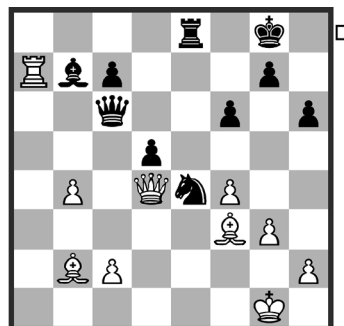
16... f6 17. Qd4 Qb7 18. Qf3 a5

Or 18... Re7 19. c4 dxc4 20. Qxc4+ Qh8.

19. g3

19. c4?! axb4

19... axb4 20. axb4 Qxa1 21. Qxa1 Qc6 22. Ra7 h6=



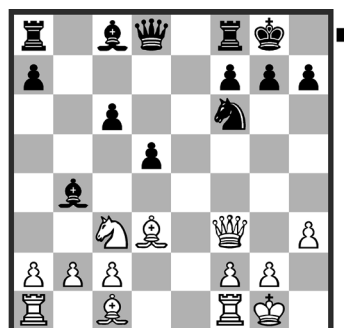
Position after: 22... h6=

Both sides have equal chances in this tense middlegame struggle.

## c) 10.h3

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 exd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Qb4 6. Nxc6 bxc6 7. Qd3 d5 8. exd5 cxd5 9. O-O O-O 10. h3 c6 11. Qf3

This plan, with the idea of bringing the bishop to f4 next, is a trendy choice at the moment. It is a solid, positional try but Black must be careful not to underestimate this approach. White has by no means abandoned his pursuit of an objective edge.



Position after: 11. Qf3

11... Rb8 12. Qf4