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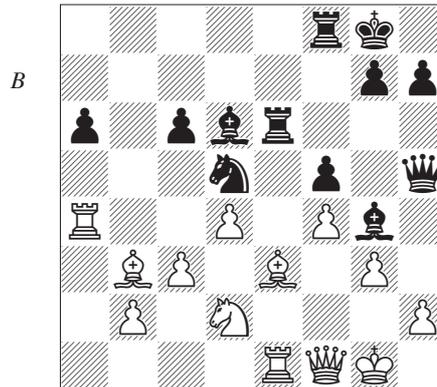
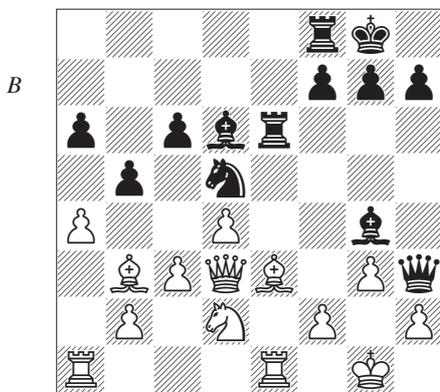
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2 Old Main Line: 18...f5/18...bxa4

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♟b5 a6 4 ♟a4 ♘f6 5 0-0
 ♟e7 6 ♚e1 b5 7 ♟b3 0-0 8 c3 d5 9 exd5 ♘xd5
 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11 ♚xe5 c6 12 d4 ♟d6 13 ♚e1
 ♚h4 14 g3 ♚h3 15 ♟e3 ♟g4 16 ♚d3 ♚ae8 17
 ♘d2 ♚e6 18 a4 (D)



Black is at an important crossroads. White threatens 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♟xd5 cxd5 21 ♚xb5. Black can play 18...♚h5 to protect d5, which was covered in Chapter 1. The alternative is to play for a direct attack on the kingside with ...f5. Black can begin this plan by playing either 18...f5 or 18...bxa4, which often lead to the same position. The move-order that Black chooses should depend on the deviations for White that are possible after each move. The two ways to reach the Main Line are 18...f5 19 ♚f1 ♚h5 20 f4 bxa4 21 ♚xa4 and 18...bxa4 19 ♚xa4 f5 20 ♚f1 ♚h5 21 f4 (D). In both cases we reach the position at the top of the next column.

It is from here that we form the basis for most of this chapter. The move-order that Black chooses will allow White certain deviations, however. Some of these sidelines are dangerous, and some are not. Even though 18...f5 is the traditional way of reaching the Main Line, I think that 18...bxa4 is the better way to head for the diagrammed position, so anyone wanting to play this variation would be well served learning this move-order. In any case, the two

methods to reach the Main Line should be studied together because there are many recurring ideas that are good to know.

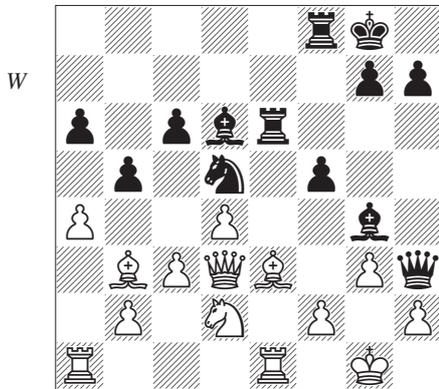
The variations in this chapter are very tactical in nature and the play is a real slugfest, with both sides trying to get in the bigger and faster punch. Theoretically, Black has been considered to be on rather shaky ground, but there is still unexplored territory despite the line's historical popularity in both over-the-board and correspondence play. In any case, this chapter shows a lot of thematic ideas in the Marshall Attack that will help Black find his way in other variations as well.

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Section 2.1: The Old Road 18...f5?!

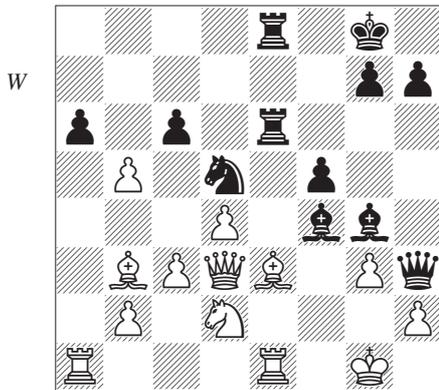
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♟b5 a6 4 ♟a4 ♘f6 5 0-0
 ♟e7 6 ♚e1 b5 7 ♟b3 0-0 8 c3 d5 9 exd5 ♘xd5
 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11 ♚xe5 c6 12 d4 ♟d6 13 ♚e1
 ♚h4 14 g3 ♚h3 15 ♟e3 ♟g4 16 ♚d3 ♚ae8 17
 ♘d2 ♚e6 18 a4 f5?! (D)

Black ignores White's demonstration on the queenside and threatens ...f4 and ...♚h6. If White meets a subsequent ...♚h6 with ♘f1,



then ... f3 comes and White no longer has f1 available to parry the mate threat on g2. Now, the Main Line is 19 f1 h5 20 f4 bxa4 21 xa4 , but there are a couple of other possibilities, of which one is very important. Note that 19 xd5 cxd5 20 f1 h5 21 f4 will also transpose into main lines.

After the poorly-timed 19 $\text{f4}?!$, the response 19... fe8 is always given as the refutation, but I am not sure about this move. After 20 axb5 (worse is 20 $\text{f2}?$ e2 21 $\text{c2}?$ $\text{xf4}!$ as given by Nunn, one possibility being 22 axb5 xd2 23 xd2 f3 24 e3 $\text{axb5}!$ -+) Black plays 20... xf4 (D).



This has been considered to be virtually winning for Black because, but after 21 $\text{gxf4}?$ both 21... g6 and 21... h6 give Black a strong attack while 21 $\text{bxc6}?$ $\text{fxg3}!$ (better than 21... $\text{xe3}?$ 22 $\text{xd5}+$ gh8 23 xe3 $\text{xe3}+$ 24 gh1 xd2 25 $\text{c7}!$) 22 hxg3 $\text{fxg3}+$ leads to mate after either 23 gh1 $\text{f3}+$ or 23 gf1 $\text{f4}!$. However, after 21 $\text{f2}!$ I cannot find a good continuation

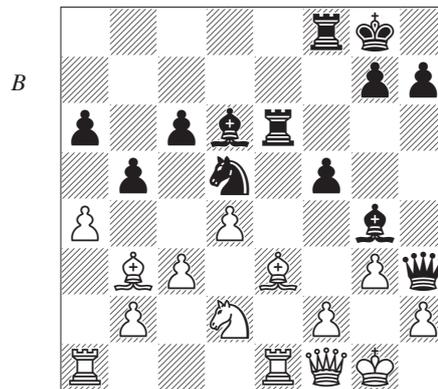
for Black. For example, 21... e2 22 xe2 xe2 23 bxc6 xd2 24 $\text{xd5}+$ gh8 25 ff1 looks better for White. All is not lost, however, and 19 $\text{f4}?!$ probably *is* a mistake in view of 19... $\text{bxa4}!$ with the idea 20 $\text{xa4}?$ $\text{xf4}!$, when 21 gxf4 is met by 21... g6 and Black indeed has a strong attack.

Thus we are left with two options for White. The first is the road White takes to head to the Main Line, while the second is the very dangerous 'Internet Refutation'. We have:

A: 19 f1 32
B: 19 $\text{axb5}!?$ 37

A)

19 f1 (D)

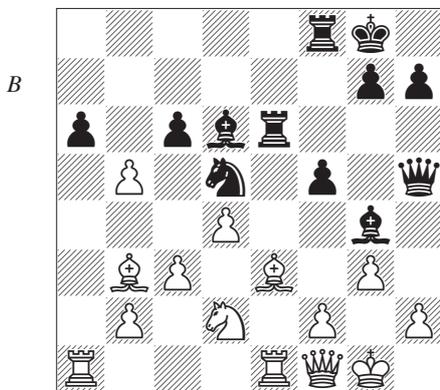


This is the traditional move. White evicts the black queen and in doing so escapes potential pins along the third rank and prepares to physically block the advance of Black's f-pawn by playing f4 himself.

19... h5 20 f4

The only real alternative is 20 axb5 (D). This was recommended by Shamkovich and although it is not bad, it never really caught on. Black has:

a) 20... $\text{axb5}?!$ should favour White because it will almost certainly help to have an open a-file for the rook. 21 xd5 (21 f4 is also possible, leading to the note to Black's 20th move below, where Black avoids 20... bxa4 , thus allowing 21 axb5) 21... cxd5 22 xb5 f4 23 xf4 xf4 24 xe6 xe6 25 gxf4 $\text{g6}+$ 26 gh1 c2 gives Black some counterplay, but it is hard to believe that it is enough for the missing pawns.

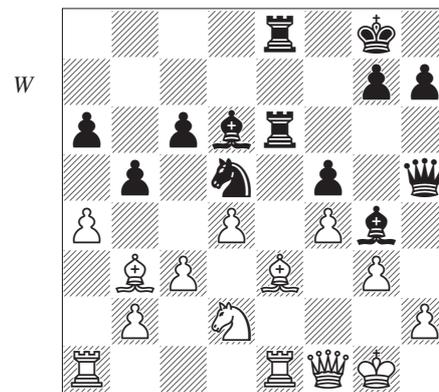


Black is pinned along the a2-g8 diagonal. It is an interesting situation where neither the d5-knight nor the e6-rook is pinned, but if one piece moves, the other one will be. For this reason Black sometimes spends a tempo playing ...♖h8 to free up these pieces.

20...bxa4

Black avoids the threatened 21 axb5 axb5 22 ♙xd5 cxd5 23 ♖xb5, opens the b-file, and lures White's rook off the first rank. The a6-pawn is left to its fate, but Black hopes that he will be able to generate enough kingside play. To see why this move is supposed to be necessary, let's look at Black's other sensible-looking moves:

a) 20...♗f8?! (D).

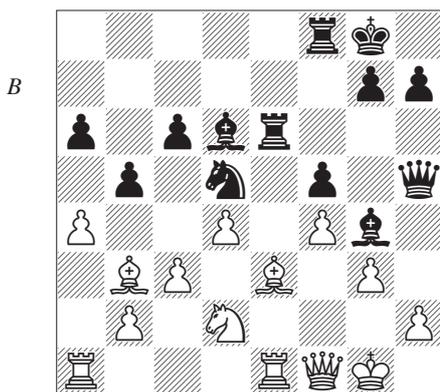


b) 20...f4 is a more sensible attempt to take advantage of White's move-order and it is probably stronger as well. 21 ♙xf4 ♙xf4 22 ♗xe6 ♙xe6 23 ♖e1!? (after 23 gxf4 axb5 Black has compensation according to Nunn, and this assessment has held up in correspondence games) and now:

b1) 23...♙h3 24 ♖e4 (24 bxc6!? ♙h8 25 ♙xd5 ♖xd5 26 ♖e4 may well be a better option) 24...♙h8 25 ♘f1 (25 bxc6 ♘xc3 26 bxc3 ♙xd2 27 ♖d3 ♗xf2! 28 ♙xf2 ♙f5 leads to perpetual check) 25...♗e8 26 ♖d3 axb5 27 gxf4 ♘xf4 28 ♘g3 ♖h4 gave Black compensation in McKenna-C.Chandler, corr. 1990-1.

b2) 23...♗e8 24 bxc6 ♘c7 looks rather unclear.

We now return to 20 f4 (D):

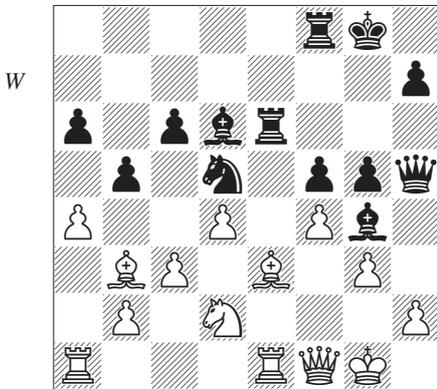


Black tries to counter White's attack on b5 and d5 by threatening the e3-bishop, but this natural move is probably just bad for tactical reasons. 21 axb5! axb5 (no better is 21...♗xe3 22 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 23 bxc6! ♗e2 24 ♙xd5+ and after either 24...♙f8 or 24...♙h8 White will play 25 h3! ♙xh3 26 ♙f3 leading to a winning ending for White) 22 ♙xd5 cxd5 23 ♖xb5 ♖f7 (23...♙xf4 24 ♖xd5 is simply winning for White, as pointed out by Nunn, while 23...♗xe3 24 ♗xe3 ♗xe3 25 ♖xd5+ also wins for White) 24 ♙f2! ± is given by Nunn. Black is just two pawns down.

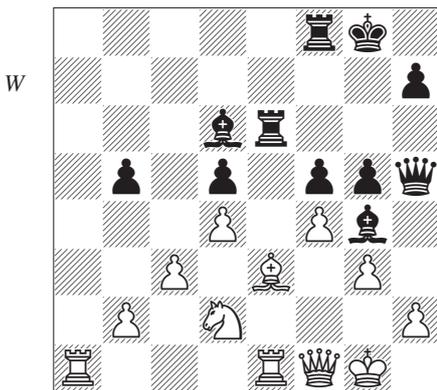
b) 20...g5?! (D) is a typical thrust that we shall see again and again.

Black wants to break down White's pawn-chain on the dark squares at all costs. However, I think this move does not show enough respect for White's resources and, although complicated, I do not think this line holds up. 21 axb5

This move is a bit ugly positionally, but something had to be done about the advance of Black's f-pawn. On the plus side it gives White some more space and controls the e5- and g5-squares. Although the e3-bishop is a bit loose,



axb5 22 ♗xd5! (22 fxg5?! allows Black to escape after 22...f4! 23 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 24 gxf4 ♖xf4 25 ♗d3 ♗e2!, when White is forced to take perpetual check by 26 ♖a8+ ♔g7 27 ♖a7+ ♔f8 28 ♖a8+ 1/2-1/2 Roelens-Elent, corr. 1996) 22...cxd5 (D) and now:



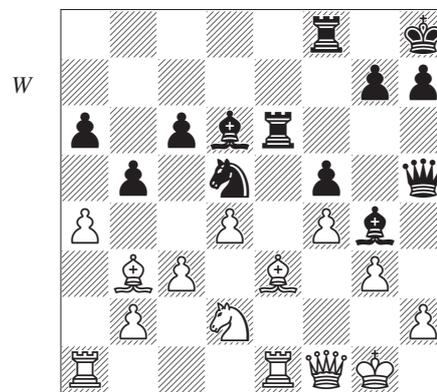
b1) 23 ♗xb5?! ♖h6 24 ♘f1 (after 24 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 25 ♗g2? gxf4 26 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 27 gxf4 ♗h3 ♢ Black's attack is very strong) 24...♗f3 25 fxg5 ♗xg3 26 ♖e2 f4 27 gxf6 ♗xe2 28 ♗c6 ♗h4 29 ♗e6+ ♔h8 30 ♗xf4 ♗f2+ 31 ♔xf2 ♖xf4+ 32 ♔g1 was drawn in Pietrocola-Elent, corr. 1999 because 32...♖xf1+! 33 ♖xf1 ♗g5+ leads to stalemate after either 34 ♔h1 ♗f3+ 35 ♖xf3 ♗g2+ or 34 ♔f2 ♗f4+ 35 ♔xe2 ♗xf1+ 36 ♔xf1.

b2) 23 ♗g2?! is murky after 23...♖fe8 24 ♗xd5 (24 ♗f2 ♗f7 25 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 is also unclear) 24...♗f7 25 ♖a8 gxf4 26 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 27 ♗xd6 fxe3.

b3) By playing 23 fxg5!, White basically calls Black's bluff. Now 23...♖xe3 is thematic

and forced – Black must play for destruction. 24 ♖xe3 f4 25 ♖f3! ♗xf3 26 ♗xf3 ♗xf3 27 ♘xf3 fxg3 was Fridel-Elent, corr. 1996. White can now play 28 ♔g2 gxh2 29 ♘h2 ♗xh2 30 ♔xh2 ♖f2+ 31 ♔g3 ♖xb2 32 ♔f4 ±. The fireworks are over and White has a big advantage in the endgame. We shall see a similar version of this forcing play in other positions. Here it just does not work, and this line looks like enough reason for Black to avoid 20...g5.

c) 20...♔h8 (D).



This line is also supposed to be dubious, but maybe it is not so bad. By breaking the pins on the a2-g8 diagonal, Black threatens the e3-bishop so White's reply is forced. Black still loses time and does nothing to address the queenside problems, but White has not found a convincing refutation yet. 21 ♗xd5 (21 ♗f2 ♖h6 22 ♗g2 ♗h3 23 ♗f3 ♗g4 is a draw) 21...cxd5 22 axb5 and now:

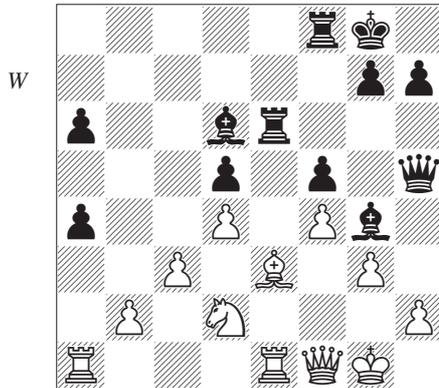
c1) 22...♗e8? 23 bxa6! (Black must always be wary of sacrifices of this nature) 23...♖xe3 24 a7 ♖xe1 25 ♗xe1 ♗xe1+ 26 ♖xe1 ♖a8 27 ♖e6 ♗c7 (St.Collins-P.Barrett, corr. 1999) and now 28 ♔f2! (to stop ...♗e2) followed by 29 ♖a6 gives White a big advantage.

c2) 22...axb5 23 ♗xb5 (23 ♗g2!? is also possible) 23...♖h6 24 h4! (24 ♘f1 ♗f3 25 b3 g5! gave Black good play in Arias Duval-Gimenez, corr. 2003) 24...g5 25 fxg5 ♗xg3 26 gxh6 ♗h2+ 27 ♔h1 and now instead of 27...♗xh4? 28 ♗g5! ♗xg5 29 ♖e8 +- Hage-Horak, corr. 1999, Black should play 27...♗b8 28 ♗g5 ♗f3+ 29 ♘xf3 ♗xf3+ 30 ♔g1 ♗g3+ 31 ♔f1 ♗f3+ with a draw. This is a line that could be explored further.

21 ♖xd5!?

21 ♖xa4 is the Main Line, and will be considered in Section 2.3.

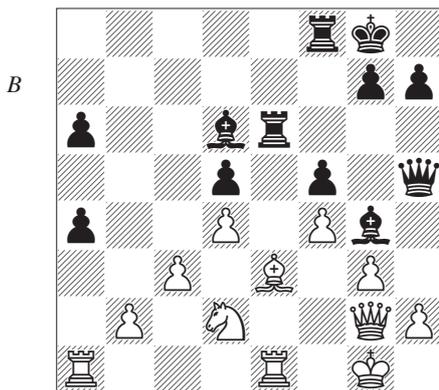
21...cxd5 (D)



22 ♖g2 (D)

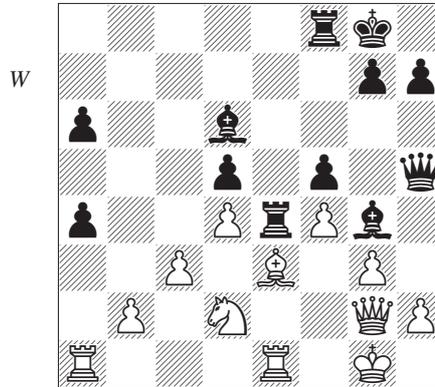
White attacks the d5-pawn, which is rather difficult to defend.

22 ♖xa4?? is a surprisingly common blunder because of 22...♗e8!. This is a typical tactical idea by which Black attacks the a4-rook and e3-bishop. White resigned immediately in Renet-Nunn, European Team Ch, Haifa 1989, while 23 ♕f2 ♖xe1 24 ♗xe1 ♗xa4 25 ♗e6+ ♖f7 26 ♗xd6 ♗d1+ 27 ♖f1 h6 28 ♗d8+ ♖h7 29 ♗xd5 ♕h3 0-1 was Kindermann-Lukacs, Budapest 1987.



22...♖fe8

This is the most sensible move, simply offering the d5-pawn, but Black has also tried to shield the pawn with the exchange sacrifice 22...♖e4 (D).



This interesting idea will probably not hold up to modern (i.e., computer-assisted) scrutiny:

a) 23 ♖xe4?! fxe4 24 ♖xa4 g5 25 ♖xa6 gxf4 (not 25...♕f3? 26 ♗f2 ♕xf4 27 ♖a5! +-) and here:

a1) 26 gxf4 and now 26...♖f6?! is line 'b3' below, but 26...♖h8! holds, since 27 ♖xd6 (27 ♖ea1 ♖g8 28 ♖a8 ♕f8) 27...♖g8 28 f5 ♕f3 29 ♗xg8+ ♖xg8 30 ♖d8+ leads to perpetual check.

a2) 26 ♖xd6 fxe3 27 ♖xe3 ♕h3 28 g4 wins a rook but not the game after 28...♗h4 29 ♗xh3 ♗f2+ 30 ♖h1 ♖a8 31 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 32 g5 ♖a8 33 ♗e6+ and White must give perpetual check, as has occurred in a few games.

b) Therefore White tends to ignore the rook, at least for the time being: 23 ♖xa4 g5 24 ♖xa6 gxf4 and now:

b1) 25 ♖xe4?! fxe4 transposes to line 'a' above.

b2) 25 ♖xd6?! fxe3 (25...♖xe3? 26 ♗xd5+ ♖h8 27 ♖xe3 fxe3 28 ♗e5+ is winning for White, as pointed out by Nunn) 26 ♖xe4 fxe4 transposes to line 'a2'.

b3) 25 gxf4 is probably best. 25...♖f6 26 ♖xe4 fxe4 and now:

b31) 27 ♕f2 ♖g6 28 ♖xd6 (28 ♕g3! looks good for White) 28...♖xd6 29 ♕g3 ♕f3 30 ♗f1 ♖g6 31 ♖f2 is not so clear, as pointed out by Nunn. Despite the two extra pawns, the opposite-coloured bishops and White's draughty king give Black reasonable chances.

b32) 27 h3! ♗xh3 (27...♖g6 28 ♖xd6! ♕e6 29 ♖xe6 ♖xg2+ 30 ♖xg2 ♗f3+ 31 ♖h2 leaves White with way too much for the queen) 28 ♗xh3 ♕xh3 29 ♖f2 ±. If Black cannot improve here (and he probably cannot), then 22...♖e4 has to be discarded.