Matthieu Cornette

The Complete Ragozin
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The complete Ragozin
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### KEY TO SYMBOLS

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<thead>
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<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Equality or equal chances</td>
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<tr>
<td>±</td>
<td>White has a slight advantage</td>
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<td>¶</td>
<td>Black has a slight advantage</td>
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<td>±</td>
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<td>+-</td>
<td>White has a decisive advantage</td>
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<td>-+</td>
<td>Black has a decisive advantage</td>
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<td>∞</td>
<td>unclear</td>
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<td>∞∞</td>
<td>with compensation</td>
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<td>⇔</td>
<td>with counterplay</td>
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<td>↑</td>
<td>with initiative</td>
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<td>→</td>
<td>with an attack</td>
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<td>Δ</td>
<td>with the idea</td>
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<td>only move</td>
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<thead>
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<th>Symbol</th>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>novelty</td>
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<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>a good move</td>
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<td>!!</td>
<td>an excellent move</td>
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<td>?</td>
<td>a weak move</td>
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<td>??</td>
<td>a blunder</td>
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<td>!?</td>
<td>an interesting move</td>
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<td>?!</td>
<td>a dubious move</td>
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<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>check</td>
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<td>#</td>
<td>mate</td>
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The Ragozin opening is named after one of its first contributors, Viacheslav Vasilyevich Ragozin (1908–1962). He was a Soviet grandmaster and became the World Correspondence Chess Champion in 1959.

I started to play this opening back in 2007 and I have used it ever since. It’s a perfect complement to my main opening against 1.d4, the Nimzo-Indian. Over the last decade this line has become highly fashionable at the top level, with Magnus Carlsen, Vishy Anand, Anish Giri, and Levon Aronian, to mention only a few of the elite grandmasters, playing it regularly.

The theory surrounding the Ragozin has developed very fast, but I have never stopped updating my files, and I am still amazed by how good this opening is.

I thought it was time for me to share with you all the secrets of my favourite and most-solid line; relatively easy to play, with a good positional background, but somehow almost always forgotten by the chess literature.

I apologize in advance if sometimes I push certain lines a bit too far, but I always have a desire to find the truth even if it’s not really possible. In any case, everybody can decide by themselves where to stop.

Do not worry, I am myself far from remembering everything from this book, and I doubt anyone can learn all the lines.

Have a good read and I hope you will enjoy this book.

Cornette Matthieu
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INTRODUCTION

When I started to write this book, one of the first problems I encountered was to find the right way to order it or to divide it. As you will notice, there is often more than one way to get to a certain position and I have tried to make it as clear as possible via which move-orders the line can be reached.

1.d4 \(f6\) 2.c4 e6 3.\(f3\) d5 4.\(c3\) \(b4\)

This is the basic position of the Ragozin opening. White now has a wide choice of moves. I decided to divide this book into seven parts.

The first part is about the \(a4+\) system. It can start with 5.\(a4+\) directly or with 5.\(g5\) first, then 5...h6 6.\(xf6\) \(xf6\) 7. \(a4+\). White’s idea behind this check is to drive the black knight from b8 to c6, blocking the c-pawn which otherwise often counterattacks White’s centre with a ...c7-c5 push. Instead, Black often reacts with ...dxc4 and ...e6-e5 at the right moment.

Part 2 introduces the \(b3\) system. As in the first case, it can start either with 5.\(b3\) directly or after 5.\(g5\) h6 6.\(xf6\) \(xf6\) 7. \(b3\). Black reacts with ...c7-c5 in both cases.

Part 3 is about the 5.cxd5 exd5 line, where I analyse not only 6.Bg5, the main line, but also other 6th moves.
In Part 4 I cover the $5. \texttt{g}5 \texttt{h}6$ line. If the bishop retreats to $\texttt{h}4$, Black can take on $\texttt{c}4$ and play a good version of the Vienna variation, and if $6. \texttt{xf}6$, it brings us to a fashionable line.

In Part 5 I analyze all the different White 5th moves which transpose to the Nimzo-Indian. $5.\texttt{e}3$ is of course the main move, but for example $5.\texttt{g}3$ is also a decent possibility. And finally, the last part of this book is about what I call the ‘Accelerated Ragozin’: $1.\texttt{d}4 \texttt{d}5 2.\texttt{c}4 \texttt{e}6 3.\texttt{c}3 \texttt{b}4$. It’s a move-order I have used quite often myself and most of the time it reaches the ‘normal’ Ragozin, even if White has different options. Black’s main idea behind this move-order can be to avoid the Nimzo-Indian with $4.\texttt{c}2$ or the line with $4.\texttt{e}3$ followed by $5.\texttt{ge}2$. If White tries to play these continuations in the accelerated Ragozin, Black has a strong ...$\texttt{dxc}4$ response.
Part 1.

System with ♘a4+

In this first section we will study every system where White plays ♘a4.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♖c3 ♘b4 5.♗g5
5.♘a4+

This move is the start of one of the main branches of Ragozin. The idea is to drive the ♘b8 to c6. It’s not the most natural square for the knight because it’s in front of the c7-pawn. On the other hand, the ♘a4 is also not ideally placed and Black will have an advantage in development. 5...♖c6 6.e3 (6.♗e5 will be studied in Chapter 4. 6.a3 will be studied in Chapter 4. 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗xf6 ♘xf6 is another move-order to reach Chapters 1 and 2, but also Chapter 3 if White delays taking on d5. 6.cxd5 exd5 is the starting position of Chapter 3.) 6...0–0 will be studied in Chapter 5.

5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗g5 h6 7.♗xf6 ♘xf6 8.♘a4+ ♘c6 is another path to reach Chapter 3.

5...h6 6.♗xf6 ♘xf6 7.♘a4+

This is a fashionable move-order.

7...♖c6 8.e3
8.♗e5 will be studied in Chapter 1. 8.a3 will be studied in Chapter 1.

8...0–0 9.♗e2
The most fashionable line nowadays, which will be carefully analyzed in Chapter 2. 9.♗c1 will be studied in Chapter 1.

9.a3 will be studied in Chapter 1.
Chapter 1.

5. \( \text{g5} \) h6 6. \( \text{xf6} \) – 7. \( \text{a4}+ \) 8. XXX 9. XXX

1. d4 \( \text{f6} \) 2. c4 \( \text{e6} \) 3. \( \text{f3} \) d5 4. \( \text{c3} \) b4 5. \( \text{g5} \) h6 6. \( \text{xf6} \) xf6 7. \( \text{a4}+ \) c6 8. e3

This move looks tempting, but it’s just a mistake giving Black a good advantage. 8... \( \text{d7}! \) 9. \( \text{xf7} \) (9. \( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc3}+ \) 10. bxc3 \( \text{xc6} \) 11. \( \text{b4} \) dxc4
Opening up lines for the bishop. 12. \( \text{xc4} \) (12. e3 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{xc4}! \) Threatening ... \( \text{xc3} \) winning the queen. 11. \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{xc7} \) + and Black simply had two pawns up for nothing in the game Teixeira,R (2353)-Mitkov,N (2547) Rio de Janeiro 2000) 10... \( \text{xc4}! \) as the white knight is trapped on d7 Black continues to collect the pawns 11.e3 \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{c2} \) + and Black won quite easily in the game: Abhishek,A (2123)-Vishnu,P (2467) Dharamshala 2014. White is not even able to grab a pawn with his knight!

8.a3 \( \text{xc3}+ \) 9. bxc3 \( \text{o–o} \) 10. e3 transposes to 8.e3 then 9.a3

8... \( \text{o–o} \)
9. \( \text{c1} \)?

Quite a fashionable move. Kramnik used it against Aronian in 2015, and in 2016 Wang Hao and Krasenkow played it. The idea behind this move is to be able to take on c3 with a rook and also delay the bishop development, which might be able to re-capture the pawn on c4 in one move without losing an important tempo.

9.a3 \( \text{xc3} + 10. \text{bxc3 g6} \)?

Black paralyzes White’s kingside as the f1-bishop cannot move (10... \( \text{d7} \) is also a decent alternative. Black wants to play ...\( \text{e8} \) next followed by ...\( \text{dxc4} \) and ...\( \text{e5} \)).

a) 11. \( \text{e2} \) I was surprised to see that this move had been already played several times. 11...\( \text{g2} \) 12.\( \text{g1 h3} \) 13.\( \text{g3 f5} \) 14.0-0!N \( \text{dxc4} \) 15.\( \text{xc4 a5=} \).

b) 11.h4 with the obvious idea of h4-h5, getting rid of the annoying black queen. 11...\( \text{d7} \) 12.h5 (12.\( \text{d1 dxc4} \) 13.\( \text{xc4 e5=} \) Black had good play in: Miladinovic, I (2603)-Mitkov, N (2528) Heraklio 2007) 12...\( \text{f6} \) 13.\( \text{xd5 exd5} \) 14.\( \text{d3} \) White has finally succeeded in developing his bishop, but his kingside is weakened now, and Black was totally fine after 14...\( \text{g4=} \) in the game Van Wely, L (2695)-Pokorna, R (2348) Vlissingen 2001;

c) 11.\( \text{g3 d7} \) 12.\( \text{d1 ad8=} \)N

With the idea of taking on c4 and playing ...\( \text{e5} \). (12...\( \text{dxc4=} \)N is a good alternative 13.\( \text{xc4 e5=} \) Exploiting the weakened light-squares on the kingside. 14.0-0 \( \text{ad8=} \) with a decent position) 13.\( \text{d3} \) (13.\( \text{xd5 exd5} \) 14.\( \text{g2 fe8} \) 15.0-0 \( \text{b6=} \) 13...\( \text{f6} \) 14.0-0 (14.\( \text{d2 a5=} \) 14...\( \text{dxc4} \) 15.\( \text{xc4 e5=} \) and I like Black’s position;

d) 11.\( \text{h4=} \)N can lead to a move repetition 11...\( \text{e4} \) 12.\( \text{f3 g6=} \);

11...\( \text{d8} \) 12.\( \text{c2} \) has been played twice with a score of 2/2 for White which is quite surprising, as Black has a good position here: 12...\( \text{xc2} \) 13.\( \text{xc2 dxc4} \) 14.\( \text{xc4 b6} \) 15.\( \text{e2} \) was played in the game Popov, V (2545)-Taimanov, M (2454) St Petersburg 2001, but here I suggest an improvement over the game: 15...\( \text{a5=} \)N
Black’s plan is simple: ...b7 and c7-c5 16.e5 (After 16.c4?! c5 is even stronger than with a pawn still on c3; 16.d2 b7 17.f3 xf3 18.exf3 ac8∞ followed by ...c7-c5) 16...b7 17.f3 (17.0-0 c5 and ...ac8 is coming next, with a pleasant position for Black) 17.ac8 18.c4 xc4 19.xc4 c5= with at least equality.

9.d3 will transpose to Chapter 2, but it’s actually less precise than 9.e2 because after 9.dxc4 the bishop is attacked and White has no choice but to take back the pawn directly;

9.e2 is the main move. It will be deeply analyzed in Chapter 2.

9.cxd5 exd5 See Chapter 3.

9...g6!? Putting pressure on the g2-pawn leaves White with a lack of coordination. 9...d8 I played this move back in 2011 against the Spanish grandmaster Rivas Pastor. It’s an interesting alternative but I prefer the text move.

10.c2

10.h4 has been played three times but it looks superficial to me. 10...a6?!N is a good move. Black is threatening to take on c4. 11.h5 (11.c2 xc2 12.xc2 dxc4 13.xc4 d6= followed by ...e6-e5) 11...f5 12.cxd5 (12.e2? is a mistake due to 12.dxc4!F simply winning the pawn, followed by ...b7-b5; 12.b3 dxc4 13.xc4 b5 14.e2 b7∞ with complex play) 12...exd5 13.d1 (13.e2 d6!? with the idea being to play ...e7 14.b5 leads to a forced draw: 14.axb5?! 15.xa8 d7 16.xb7 b8 17.a6 b6 18.a8= b8=) 13...e7 14.d3 e6 15.f1 d6= with a balanced position.

10...xc2 11.xc2 d8
This is the move chosen by the elite players. Aronian has already played this position three times and recently Hammer and Movsesian have both tried it. 11...\(\text{d6}?!\)N has never been played but I believe it is a good alternative to the main move.

12.a3

12...\(\text{c5}?!\) first 14.\(\text{xc3 \text{exd4}}\) 15.\(\text{xd4} \text{xd4} 16.\text{exd4 e8}+ 17.\text{e3 d7} =\) Shen,Y (2459)-Zhao,X (2527) China 2015) 14.\(\text{c1 xc3+} 15.\text{bxc3}\) (15.bxc3 \(\text{f6}\) =) 15...\(\text{exd4} 16.\text{xd4 dxc4 17.exd4} \text{e8}=\)

12...\(\text{f8} 13.\text{b5}\)

With the idea of forcing the \(\text{d8}\) to an awkward square. 13.\(\text{e2 a5}\) has been played in the most recent game by Hammer (13...\(\text{e7}?!\) was Aronian’s choice 14.0-0 c6 might look passive but is okay for Black 15.b4 (15.\(\text{e5 f6} 16.\text{f3 b6=}\) followed by ...\(\text{b7}\) 15...\(\text{xc4} 16.\text{xc4 d5=}\) and Black had a good position in the game Radjabov,T (2713)-Aronian,L (2803) Beijing 2013) 14.c5 (14.\(\text{cxd5 exd5=}\) 14...\(\text{c6}\) If such a theoretician as Hammer chose to play this way, I can be assured that my idea with 11...\(\text{d6}?!\)N 12.c5 \(\text{e7}\) is correct. 15.b4 g5 I am not entirely sure that it’s the best way to play for Black but nevertheless I want to keep this game in the book because

Black played a real masterpiece. (15...\(\text{a6=}\) looks quite logical) 16.g4 e5!

When holding the two bishops it’s always important to open the position 17.\(\text{xe5}\) (17.b5 \(\text{exd4} 18.\text{f4} \text{xd4} 18.\text{xc7 d3}! 19.\text{xd3 xg4} 20.\text{d4} \text{xd4} 21.\text{exd4 e8} 22.\text{b5 a6} 23.\text{g1 f5} 24.\text{c3 g7=} with a sharp and very unclear position. However, Black’s play looks easier.) 18...\(\text{xd4} 19.\text{xd4} c6=\) with equality.) 17...\(\text{xe5}\) 18.\(\text{dxe5}\) a5! Black has sacrificed a pawn for the initiative and now has to continue playing actively to keep up the pressure. 19.0-0 (19.b5 \(\text{e6=}\) followed by ...\(\text{d5-d4}\) gives Black an edge) 19...\(\text{axb4} 20.\text{axb4} \text{c6} 21.\text{d1 g7} 22.\text{f4 e8} 23.\text{f2 gxf4} 24.\text{exf4}\) f6! Once again Black tries to open as many lines as possible. 25.\(\text{exf6} 26.\text{h3 a3} 27.\text{d3 g7} 28.\text{f3 e6} 29.\text{d1 a4} 30.\text{b3 d4} 31.\text{c4 a2}\) A very nice tactical blow. 32.\(\text{xa2} (32.\text{c1 xc4} 33.\text{xc4 h2=}\) 32...\(\text{xc4} 33.\text{g5 xb3} 34.\text{xf6+ xfx6} 35.\text{d2 xdi+} 36.\text{xd1 e3=}++\) and Black easily won the rook endgame in Krasenkow,M (2610)-Hammer,J (2695) Stockholm 2016.
13... \( \text{d7} \)

I’m quite surprised to see that even this move is possible.

a) 14.\( \text{dxc7} \) this tempting move turns out to be not so good: 14... \( \text{ac8} \) 15.\( \text{b5} \) \( \text{dxc4!} \) 16.\( \text{e2} \) (16.\( \text{xc4?} \) \( \text{a5!} \)

b) 14.\( \text{e2} \) is harmless 14...\( \text{a6} \) 15.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{dxc4} \) 16.\( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 17.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{b4} \) 18.\( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{xc8} \) 19.\( \text{c1} \) \( \text{c5} \) \( \text{a5!} \)

c) 14.\( \text{cxd5}! \) is a bit smarter 14...\( \text{exd5} \) 15.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{a6} \) 16.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d8} \) (15...\( \text{d8} \) see 16.\( \text{xc8} \) 16...\( \text{ac8} \) 16.\( \text{b5} \) (16.\( \text{xd5?} \) \( \text{f5} \) ) 16...\( \text{a5!} \) 17.\( \text{xc8} \) (17.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{a6} \) 18.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a3} \) 19.\( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{f8} \) 20.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{b3} \) 21.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{b4} \) and Black will at least win back the pawn; 17.\( \text{d2} \) \( \text{f5} \) and here White’s best chance is to give up an exchange: 18.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{xc2} \) 19.\( \text{xc2} \) \( \text{a6} \) 17...\( \text{xc8} \) 18.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{a6} \) 19.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a3} \) 20.\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{b4} \) 21.\( \text{d3} \) with a balanced position) 15...\( \text{ac8} \) 16.0–0 \( \text{a6} \) 17.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{e7} \) and 17.\( \text{c5} \) (17.\( \text{cxd5} \) see 14.\( \text{exd5} \) 17...\( \text{c6} \) 18.\( \text{b4} \) (18.\( \text{d1} \) \( \text{g5} \) 19.\( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xd7} \) 20.\( \text{xb4} \) 21.\( \text{g4} \) \( \text{e7} \) = with an equal position) 18...\( \text{g5} \) 19.\( \text{h3} \) \( \text{g7} \) = followed by ...\( \text{e6} \)-\( \text{e5} \) with equality. 14...\( \text{exd5} \) 15.\( \text{d3} \) \( \text{a6} \) 16.\( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d8} \) 16...\( \text{a7} \) is also fine 17.\( \text{f5} \) (17.0–0 \( \text{d8} \) see 16...\( \text{d8} \) then 17...\( \text{a7} \) ) 17...\( \text{d8} \) 18.\( \text{xc8} \) \( \text{xc8} \) 19.\( \text{e5} \) \( \text{c6} \) 20.\( \text{a4} \) \( \text{e8} \) = with equality in Wang, H (2717)-Movsesian,S (2653) Huaian 2016.

17.0–0 \( \text{a5!} \)?
I like this move. Black can stop the advance of White’s queenside by playing ...b7-b5 or ...d3. The move ...c4 is also a good option. See 14.exd5
17...a7

is a safe option (see 16...d8 then 17...a7) 18.f1c1 c6 19.a4 (19.e5b5 20.a4 d6 21.b6 b8=) 19...d6 20.b6 b8 21.h3 (21.xc8 xc8 with an equal position) 21...e8 22.b4 g6 23.b2 g7 24.a4 e6= and I don’t see any plan for White;

17...b8 has been played twice in this position. It is of course possible, but I prefer another square for the knight.

18.b1?

Quite a smart move. White wants to play b3 to take away the squares from the knight on a5. The a3-pawn will not be hanging due to b4 threats trapping the bishop. 18.e5 b3 19.e2 (19.a4 b5 20.c6 d6 21.c5 xc6 22.xb3 xc2 23.xc2 a5=) 19...c5?

This gives Black good play for the isolated pawn. (19...c6 is also fine 20.d1 Taking control of the d2-square with the idea of playing c3 (20.c3 d2 21.d1 e4=) 20...e8! with the idea of ...c5 21.f3 (21.c3 c5=) 21...a5=) 20.dxc5 (20.c3 c4 21.e5 a5=) 20...xc5 21.d2 (21.c3 a4=) 21...d6 22.f3 xd3 (22...b3 23.c2 c5=) 23.xd3 f5=;

18.h3 b5 19.b1 c4 This is more logical, although 19.b3 is also possible 20.e2 c5 21.dxc5 xc5 22.e1 g6 23.d1 b7 24.d4 dc8= even if Black has an isolated pawn, I believe his good pieces compensate for it. 20.a4 c6=;

18.b4?! is not a good idea because after 18...c4! Black has the initiative. 19.xc4 (19.a2 b5=) 19...dxc4 20.e5 e6=;
18.e4?! is premature: 18...dxe4 19.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}\texttt{e}4\) (19.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}\texttt{e}4\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{c}6=\) followed by ...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{g}4\) and the d4-pawn will fall.) 19...\(\texttt{c}6=\) and only Black can be better here.

18...b5
18...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{b}3\) 19.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{d}1\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{e}6\) 20.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{e}2\) \(\texttt{c}6\) 21.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{c}3\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{a}5\) 22.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{f}4\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{g}4\) 23.\(\texttt{h}3\) (23.\(\texttt{b}4\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{c}4\) 24.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}c4\) \texttt{d}xc4 25.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}c4\) \(\texttt{a}5=\) and Black has a good initiative for the pawn) 23...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{f}3\) 24.\(\texttt{g}x\texttt{f}3\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{d}6\) 25.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{e}2\) \(\texttt{b}5=\) with an unclear position.

19.b3
19.a4 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{b}3=\)?

19...c6
19...\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}a3=\) 20.b4±

20.a4
20.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{e}2\) \(\texttt{d}6\) 21.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{f}4\) \(\texttt{d}7\)

This position looks totally fine to me. 22.g3 \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{b}7\) 23.a4

a) 23.b4 is always met by 23...\(\texttt{a}5=\);

b) 23.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{a}2\) \(\texttt{g}5\) 24.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{e}2\) (24.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{h}5\) \(\texttt{f}8\) 25.\(\texttt{g}2\) \(\texttt{c}5=\)) 24...\(\texttt{f}6=\);

c) 23.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{e}5=\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}e5\) 24.\(\texttt{d}xe5\) \(\texttt{e}8=\);

20...\(\texttt{e}6\)

This position is quite complicated. I tried to play logical human moves aiming to guess how the game might continue, and I found no problems for Black. I provide the following lines just to illustrate how play might develop, but there is no need to try to remember them!

21.g3
21.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{c}b2\) \(\texttt{d}6\) 22.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{a}1\) \(\texttt{b}7\) It's not easy to see how White can play for an advantage here. 23.\(\texttt{ax}b5\) (23.b4 leads to simplifications after: 23...\(\texttt{a}5=\)) 24.\(\texttt{ax}b5\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{b}4\) 25.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{a}2\) \(\texttt{cxb}5\) 26.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}b4\) \(\texttt{ax}b4\) 27.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}a8\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}a8\) 28.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{e}1\) \(\texttt{d}6=\) and Black has no problems; 23.\(\texttt{h}3\) \(\texttt{b}4\) 24.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{e}2\) \(\texttt{c}5=\) and I like Black) 23...\(\texttt{ax}b5\) 24.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{b}a2\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{a}2\) 25.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{x}a2\) \(\texttt{b}4\) 26.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{e}2\) (26.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{a}4\) \(\texttt{a}8=\) ) 26...\(\texttt{c}5=\) ? 27.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{a}7\) (27. \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{d}c5\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{c}5\) 28.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{c}2\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{c}8\) 29.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{f}d4\) \(\texttt{g}6\) with a balanced position) 27...\(\texttt{b}8\) 28.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{d}2\) \(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{d}8\) 29.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{xc}5\) (29.\(\texttt{\textit{\textbullet}}\texttt{a}6\) \(\texttt{f}8=\))
29...\(\text{dxc}5\)
30.\(\text{a}1\) \(\text{c}8\) transferring the bishop to b7 31.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{b}7\)
32.\(\text{ed}4\) \(\text{e}6=\) with equality.

21...\(\text{d}b8\) 22.axb5
22.\(\text{g}2\) bxa4 We can delay this move, but the simplification is also fine. 23.\(\text{xa}4\) (23.\(\text{bxa}4\) \(\text{xb}1\) 24.\(\text{xb}1\) \(\text{b}8=\)) 23...\(\text{xb}3\) 24.\(\text{e}5!\) \(\text{b}4!\) 25.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{c}5!\) 26.dxc5 (26.\(\text{xc}5\) \(\text{xc}5!\) It is important to have this move. 27.\(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{xd}3\) 28.\(\text{xd}3\) \(\text{xb}4\) 29.\(\text{xb}4\) a5 30.\(\text{c}6\) a4=) 26...a5
27.\(\text{b}6\) \(\text{e}8\) 28.\(\text{c}6\) \(\text{xc}5\) 29.\(\text{xb}4\) \(\text{xb}4\) 30.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{b}3\) with enough compensation.

22...axb5 23.\(\text{a}2\) \(\text{b}7\) 24.\(\text{ba}1\) \(\text{xa}2\) 25.\(\text{xa}2\)

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chessboard.png}
\end{center}

25...\(\text{d}8=\)? 26.\(\text{a}7\) \(\text{b}4\) 27.\(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}6\) 28.\(\text{f}4\) \(\text{c}8=\)
Black’s position is solid.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we studied the lines where White delays the development of the light-squared bishop. In general, Black benefits from it by playing ...\(\text{g}6\). In the 11.\(\text{c}1\) line, I like my novelty 11...\(\text{d}6!\)\(\text{N}\), but the regular 11...\(\text{d}8\) is also totally fine. I suggest two ways to improve on the most recent games, with 15...\(\text{a}5\) or 15...\(\text{a}7\).

Chapter 2.
5.\(\text{g}5\) h6 6.\(\text{xf}6\) – 7.\(\text{a}4+\) 9.\(\text{e}2!?)

1.d4 \(\text{f}6\) 2.c4 \(\text{e}6\) 3.\(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}5\) 4.\(\text{c}3\) \(\text{b}4\) 5.\(\text{g}5\) h6 6.\(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) 7.\(\text{a}4+\) \(\text{c}6\) 8.e3 0–0 9.\(\text{e}2!?)

This set-up became very fashionable in 2010 after Ding Liren played it with success against Hou Yifan, and has been widely used since. I started to work on this line back then and have constantly kept my file up-to-date. I played this position myself twice with Black, against Markus Ragger and Laurent Fressinet, with varying success. In this line White is aiming...
for a slight edge due to the passive black bishop on c8. After some considerations I decided to suggest two different ways of playing for Black. The first one is more solid and has been recently played by the elite players, whereas the second line I offer is the one I personally prefer.

9...dxc4

The fashionable reply and quite a logical continuation considering the fact that White has already spent time on developing the bishop, and now will have to lose one tempo more recapturing the c4-pawn. 9...\textit{d7}

This is my personal preference. Black is threatening to move the knight with a discovery so White has to do something about his queen. 10.\textit{b3} gives the opportunity to take back on c4 with the queen after ...dxc4 (10.\textit{c2} dxc4 11.0–0 is the best and transposes to 9...dxc4 10.0–0 \textit{d7} 11.\textit{c2}. (11.\textit{xc4} makes Black’s life easier, as after 11...e5! 12.a3 (recently played by Sargissian but not very impressive):

a) 12.d5?! is not that good due to: 12...\textit{d4}!

13.exd4 exd4 14.a3 \textit{fe8}+ 15.\textit{f1} dxc3 16.axb4 cxb2 17.\textit{b1} was played in Marchand,F (2259)-Inkiov,V (2440) Paris 2002, and here Black’s play can be improved with: 17...a5! Black is a piece down, but White’s weak king and undeveloped rook on h1 offer us more than enough compensation: 18.\textit{xb2} (18.\textit{xb2}\textit{?} fails due to a very nice trap: 18...\textit{xf3}!)

19.gxf3 \textit{h3+} 20.\textit{g1} \textit{e1+} 21.\textit{f1} \textit{xf1#} 18...\textit{xb2} 19.\textit{xb2} axb4 20.\textit{b1} a3 preventing g2-g3 and making it difficult for White to finish the development 21.\textit{d4} \textit{e4} 22.\textit{b5} \textit{xd4} 23.\textit{xd7} \textit{xd5#} Black now has three pawns for the bishop, and active rooks, while White still needs time to finish his development;