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3...♘f6

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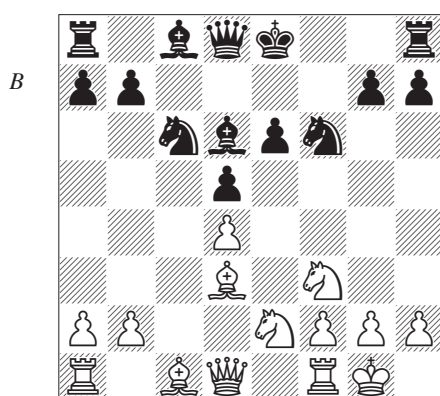
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7 3...♞f6 Main Line: 11 0-0

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♞d2 ♞f6 4 e5 ♞fd7 5 ♟d3 c5
6 c3 ♞c6 7 ♞e2 cxd4 8 cxd4 f6 9 exf6 ♞xf6 10
♞f3 ♟d6 11 0-0 (D)

A: 11...0-0 84
B: 11...♞b6 93
C: 11...♞c7 103



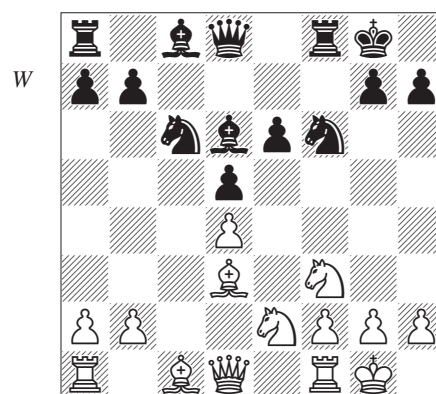
This massive chapter deals with this position, which is of fundamental importance to Tarrasch theory. Deviations up to here and other major lines of the 3...♞f6 complex are dealt with in Chapters 8-10. An essential strategic concept of this whole system involves White trying to force through an exchange of the dark-squared bishops with the aim of enhancing his control of the e5-square. If White obtains undisputed control of e5, Black will often have particularly awkward problems with his backward e-pawn and bad light-squared bishop.

We shall go through three main lines, the first of which (11...0-0) accepts White exchanging the dark-squared bishops with 12 ♟f4 but Black will try to compensate for his positional difficulties by counterplay on the f-file and an attack against the d4-pawn. Black's two other choices try to prevent the exchange of bishops in the first place. The exchange is something Black can hardly avoid altogether if White is very persistent but there are ways to make it less attractive. Both 11...♞b6 and 11...♞c7 usually lead to more positional play.

I should mention that there is nothing tactically wrong with Black's immediate attempt to free himself by 11...e5 but White can force favourable exchanges and has a large advantage after something like 12 dxe5 ♞xe5 13 ♞xe5 ♟xe5 14 ♟f4 ♟xf4 15 ♞a4+ ♟d7 16 ♞xf4 0-0 17 ♞d4.

A)

11...0-0 (D)



12 ♟f4

This is what White really wants. It can only be said again that an exchange of the dark-squared bishops often leads to long-term pressure on Black's position. We look only very briefly at other moves:

a) 12 ♞c3 and now:

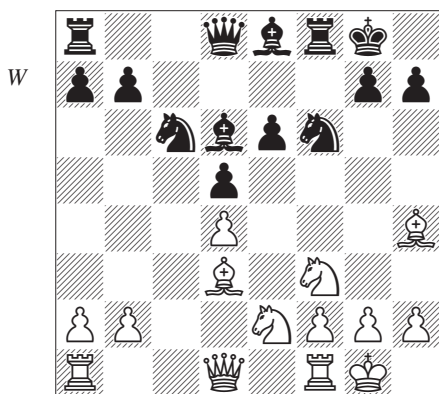
a1) 12...♞b6 – 11...♞b6 12 ♞c3 0-0.

a2) 12...a6 13 ♟g5 (13 ♞e1 ♞c7 – 11...♞c7 12 ♞c3 a6 13 ♞e1 0-0) 13...♞e8 (13...♞c7 – 11...♞c7 12 ♞c3 a6 13 ♟g5 0-0) 14 ♞d2 ♞h5 15 ♟h4 ♟d7 16 ♟g3 ♞xg3 17 hxg3 ♞h5 18

♙e2 ♖g6 19 ♜ad1 ♗f6 20 ♗e3 ♙b8 21 ♙d3 ♙a7 22 ♙b1 ♜ae8 = Barua-Temirbaev, Alma-Ata 1995.

a3) 12...e5! 13 dxe5 ♘xe5 14 ♘xe5 ♙xe5 is fine for Black. White should even take a little care and play 15 h3, for a move like 15 ♗c2? loses thematically to 15...♙xh2+! 16 ♙xh2 ♘g4+ 17 ♙g3 h5! 18 ♜h1 ♜xf2 19 ♗xf2 ♘xf2 20 ♙xf2 ♗f6+ 21 ♙g3 ♙f5.

b) 12 ♙g5 ♙d7 (12...♗e8 13 ♙f4! is a surprising switchback, but the queen may in fact be worse placed on e8: 13...♙xf4 14 ♘xf4 ♘e4 15 ♗c1 ♙d7 16 ♗e3 ♘b4, Rozentalis-Hergott, Montreal 1995, and now Rozentalis suggests 17 ♘e5 ♘d3 18 ♘fxd3 ♙b5 19 ♜fe1 with an edge for White) 13 ♙h4 ♙e8 (D) and then:



b1) 14 ♙xh7+?! ♙xh7 15 ♘g5+ ♙g8 16 ♘e6 ♙xh2+! 17 ♙h1 (17 ♙xh2 ♘g4+ 18 ♙g3 ♗d6+ 19 ♘2f4 ♘f6! ♣) 17...♗e7 18 ♘xf8 ♙d6 19 ♘g3 ♗xf8 20 ♘f5 ♙g6 21 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 ♣ Brady-Comas Fabrego, Escaldes Z 1998.

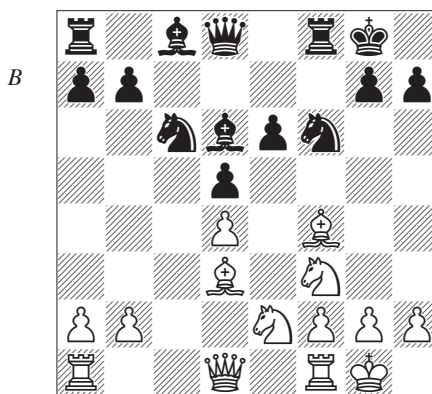
b2) 14 ♘g5 ♗d7 15 ♙g3 ♙h5 16 ♙xd6 ♗xd6 ♣ Brady-Illescas, Escaldes Z 1998.

b3) 14 ♗b1 h6 (14...♗b6!? is messy but worth a look; Black simply sacrifices his h-pawn but is very active) 15 ♙g6 ♙xg6 16 ♗xg6 ♗e8 17 ♗xe8 ♜axe8 18 ♙g3 ♘e4 19 ♙xd6 ♘xd6 20 ♜fd1 ♘e4 21 ♘g3 ♘xg3 22 hxg3 ♜c8 with an equal position, T.Horvath-Kindermann, Bundesliga 1995/6. White has done most things right strategically but Black has managed to exchange the light-squared bishops. It has also become clear that White's d-pawn is often as weak as Black's e-pawn, and

here there is certainly enough counterplay for Black.

c) 12 ♜e1 is clever according to Emms, who thinks that Black should transpose to a ...♗b6 or ...♗c7 system. His main point is that 12...♙d7 13 ♙f4 favours White, which may be right but the advantage isn't big; for example: 13...♙xf4 14 ♘xf4 ♘e4 15 ♘h3! (15 ♙xe4?! ♜xf4 16 ♙c2 ♗b6 17 ♗d3 g6 18 ♜ad1 ♜af8 with counterplay) 15...e5 16 ♙xe4 dxe4 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 dxe5 ♙xh3 19 ♗b3+ ♙h8 20 ♗xh3 ♗d4 21 ♜e2 ♗xe5 22 ♗e3 and White is definitely pushing but it still demands a certain amount of technique to win the position.

We now return to the position after 12 ♙f4 (D):



12...♙xf4

This is Black's most common move by far. Although it is a positional concession, Black hopes to exploit White's temporary instability on the f-file. Lesser alternatives:

a) 12...♘h5 13 ♙xd6 ♗xd6 14 ♗d2 ♙d7 15 ♗e3 ♜ae8 16 g3 ♘b4 17 a3 ♘xd3 18 ♗xd3 ± Knaak.

b) 12...♗c7 13 ♙xd6 ♗xd6 14 ♘g3 ♙d7 15 ♜e1 ♗f4 16 ♗c1 ♗xc1 17 ♜axc1 and White is better, Kholmov-Kislov, Warsaw 1989.

c) 12...♘xd4?! 13 ♙xh7+! ♙xh7 14 ♗xd4 ♙xf4 15 ♘xf4 ±.

13 ♘xf4 ♘e4

Or:

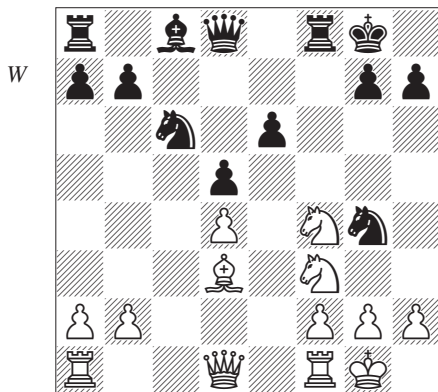
a) 13...♗b6 – 11...♗b6 12 ♙f4 ♙xf4 13 ♘xf4 0-0.

b) 13...♗d6 14 g3 and now:

b1) 14...e5 15 dxe5 ♖xe5 16 ♗xe5 ♜xe5 17 ♞b3 ♙d7 18 ♞fe1 ♞d6 19 ♞ad1 with a slight advantage for White, Timman-Kuijf, Dutch Ch (Hilversum) 1987.

b2) 14...♞b4 15 ♞b1 ♙d7 16 ♞e1 ♞ae8 17 ♙c2 ♞b6 18 b4 a6 19 h4 g6 20 a3 ♙g7 21 ♞d2 ♗xd4 (this idea has been in the air for several moves but White preserves a slight edge) 22 ♞xd4 ♞xd4 23 ♗xd4 e5 24 ♗fe6+ ♙xe6 25 ♞xe5 ♙h3 26 ♞xe8 ♞xe8 27 f3 ♞e3 28 ♞b3 ♞e1+ 29 ♙f2 ♞f1+ 30 ♙e3 ♞e1+ 31 ♙f2 ♞f1+ 32 ♙e3 ♞e1+ 33 ♙d2 ♞g1 34 g4 and White is slightly better in the endgame, Vokarev-Volkov, St Petersburg 2000.

c) 13...♗g4!? (D) opens the f-file like in the main line. An advantage over the main line is that it supports ...e5 but on the other hand it lacks ...♗g5 ideas. Now:



c1) 14 g3 g5 (14...♞f6 15 h4! ±) 15 ♗g2 ♞f6 16 ♙e2 ♗h6 17 ♞d2 ♗f5 18 ♞ad1 h6! (better than 18...g4 19 ♗e5 ♗cxd4 20 ♗xg4 ♞g7 21 f4 ± Renet-Hertneck, Altensteig 1987) 19 ♗e3 a6!? (avoiding 19...♙d7?! 20 ♗xf5 exf5 21 ♙b5! followed by ♙xc6 and ♗e5) 20 ♞c3 (I like Seferian's suggestion 20 h4!? gxh4 21 ♗xf5 exf5 22 ♞f4! hxg3 23 fxg3 intending ♙g2, ♞h1 and playing for an attack) 20...♞g7 21 ♗xf5 ♞xf5 22 ♞e3 ♙d7 = Godena-Illescas, Escaldes Z 1998.

c2) 14 ♞d2! ♞d6 15 g3 ♙d7 (15...e5 16 dxe5 ♗gx5 17 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 18 ♙e4 d4 is not clear either) and here:

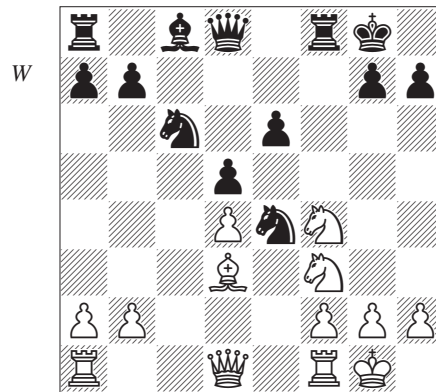
c21) 16 ♞fe1 ♞ae8 17 ♙f1 (17 ♞ad1!? might preserve a very slight edge) 17...♗f6 18 ♙d3

♗g4 19 ♙f1 ♗f6 20 ♙d3 ♗g4 1/2-1/2 Brynell-E.Berg, Swedish Ch (Linköping) 2001.

c22) 16 ♗g5! g6 17 ♙e2 ♗h6 18 ♙b5! ± Medveggy-Rudolf, Hungarian wom Ch 2003.

c3) 14 ♗e2 ♞d6! 15 h3 (15 ♗g3?! e5 16 dxe5 ♗gx5 17 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 and now instead of 18 ♞b3?! ♙e6 19 ♞ad1 ♞f7! 20 ♙e2 d4 21 ♞c2 ♞d8 ♞ Brynell-Gleizerov, Stockholm 1996, Gleizerov gives 18 ♞d2 = as White's best) 15...♗f6! (15...♞xf3 16 hxg4 ±) 16 ♙b5 (White aims for a positional plus but it is interesting that Black seems just in time to create enough counterplay) 16...♙d7 17 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 18 ♞b3 ♗e4 19 ♞ad1 a6 20 ♞fe1 ♞f6 21 ♞e3 ♞af8 22 ♗c3 ♞f4 23 ♞c1 h6 24 ♞e2 ♞xf3! 25 gxf3 ♗g5 ♞ Ponomariov-Vysochin, Swidnica rpd 1998.

We return to 13...♗e4 (D):



Now we have:

A1: 14 g3!?	86
A2: 14 ♞c1	88
A3: 14 ♗h5	90
A4: 14 ♗e2	92

A1)

14 g3!?

Obviously, White would like to keep his knight on f4. The text-move sensibly defends the knight but it also weakens the kingside.

14...♞f6

A more straightforward way to dislodge the knight from f4 is 14...g5 but this is also far riskier for Black: 15 ♗h5 e5! 16 ♗xe5 (16 ♙e4 dxe4 17 ♞b3+ ♙h8 18 ♗xe5 ♞e8 19 g4 ♗xe5