

# **U Cannot Be Serious!**

## **Avant-Garde Strategy in Chess**

**Gerard Welling & Michael Basman**

*Dedicated to chessfriends Steve Giddins and Davide Rozzoni, who were  
instrumental in getting the book materialized in this format.*

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## Symbols used:

!	strong move	±	White has a clear advantage
?	weak move	∓	Black has a clear advantage
!!	brilliant move	+−	White has a decisive advantage
??	blunder	−+	Black has a decisive advantage
!?	interesting move	→	with an attack
?!	dubious move	↑	with the initiative
□	only move	↔	with counterplay
=	equal position	Δ	with the idea of...
∞	unclear position	⌒	better is...
∞	compensation for lost material	N	novelty
±	White is slightly better	#	checkmate
∓	Black is slightly better	+	check

Next to most diagrams you will find a small box. The colour of the box indicates which side is to move in that position.

## Figurine symbols

We will not be using letters to denote chess pieces (as these might not be familiar to non-native English speakers) but rather the 'figurine' symbols, as follows:

Chess piece	Letter	Figurine
King	K	K
Queen	Q	Q
Rook	R	R
Bishop	B	B
Knight	N	N
Pawn	—	-

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The New St.George	M.Basman	Cadogan Chess 1993
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Prisma Schaakboek 8	H.Bouwmeester	Het Spectrum 1967

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The Chess Player  
Myers' Openings Bulletin

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At the British	M.Basman	Audio Chess 1980
Play the Polish	M.Basman	Audio Chess 1981
The Macho Grob	M.Basman	Audio Chess 1982
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Global opening	M.Basman	Audio Chess 1993

## ***Manuscripts:***

De Klerk opening	M.Basman	Chessington 1991
Basmania for the 21st century	G.Welling	Eindhoven 2001
Biel 1979	G.Welling	Eindhoven 2010
Liege 1981	G.Welling	Eindhoven 2011

# Contents

<b>Symbols and bibliography</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Contents</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> Basmania in Biel	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 2</b> Basmania in Belgium	<b>47</b>
<b>Chapter 3</b> St. George's Opening with Black and White	<b>61</b>
<b>Chapter 4</b> Grob's Inheritance	<b>99</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b> Global Opening Play	<b>161</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b> Basmania for the 21st Century	<b>217</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b> Outro	<b>293</b>
<b>Index Games</b>	<b>299</b>

# Introduction

Modern chess is getting to be more and more a young man's game. Over the last decades, with the growth of internet and the development of chess engines, high quality chess material has become readily available. And the young generation knows how to put these opportunities into effect, the result being a much larger pool of strong players than the aged authors have ever witnessed in their respective primes. Openings are researched and tested with the strongest computer programs; this has led to a revival of concrete evaluation of positions and the good old intuition being pushed towards the background. Contemporary chess is lively and we see experimental approaches, but in general backed up with accurate calculation.

When a player has the impertinence to open a game with **1.h3** and follows up **1...e5 2.a3**, howls of protest descend from the internet forums. The least practised players especially – backed up with their Stockfish engines – are quick to abuse the player who had the impudence to sin against their feeling of what correct chess is supposed to be. It is easy enough to attack a skillful player of an experimental inclination, shielding oneself behind the back of the champions (and their -supposed- opinions on chess matters) or the negative balance in fractions of pawns (!) that an engine indicates. But is it fair to attack a player who plays a couple of unusual moves when the critic does not understand what is happening on the board? It is easy to demonize a move, but it is the underlying idea that should be understood, before it can be contradicted.



This book is about co-author and international master **Michael Basman**, who has been an avant-garde strategist on the chessboard from his early days as a tournament player and who has collected his share of ridicule and scorn throughout the years. But he has been fairly successful, so we can ask ourselves who has been right, the master or his critics. Former world champion Mikhail Botvinnik saw through the facade of experimental play and named Basman a creative and talented player. But even on the British player's home turf, there was often sharp rejection of his way of playing chess. Interesting wins were more than once described as lucky, and

losses as the natural consequence of sins against chess. Even in the late 1970s, when Mike Basman was a household name in British chess, *British Chess Magazine* was still writing he was 'handicapping' himself by his unfortunate opening choices. An interesting exception to this trend was grandmaster Raymond Keene, who back in 1982 wrote an extensive article on Basman's games from the Benedictine Masters in Manchester. He praised the strategical ideas but criticized the implementation. And he finished his article with an example of how these ideas could have found a place in one's own strategic arsenal.

Of course, as a kind of counterweight, avant-garde chess has a cult-following of players that catch the spark of inspiration, study the examples and often copy the ideas. Co-author Gerard Welling was an example of a player that borrowed some ideas from Michael Basman, and even went so far as to play 1. ♖f3 h6 in a decisive match in the semi-finals of the Dutch Championship 36 years ago (I won, and qualified). The study of experimental players can widen your horizons and give you new ideas. Even a celebrated chess trainer like Mark Dvoretsky has given this advice. So be critical, but keep an open mind!

Some fans go as far as to idolize certain players, or their experimental systems, which can lead to a group of chess players playing, and publishing material about a controversial opening move such as **1.g4**, and promoting it as the best way to open a chess game. This easily arouses irritation among self-proclaimed 'serious' chess players, but why? Most practitioners of our celebrated game are amateur players and chess is a pastime from which to derive some pleasure. Perhaps by competing and improving, but why not as an outlet for our fantasy?

This book is written with the intention to introduce the reader to the creative chess ideas of Michael Basman. He gave up more intense regular tournament chess around the turn of the millennium, to concentrate his energy on the development of school chess. And that is what he is mainly known for in recent times, as the motor who made the UK Chess Challenge blossom. Nowadays the yearly nationwide school competition still attracts around 40,000 children, and that is not even the record.

Michael was among the best British players of his age-group as a junior and kept this status well into the 1970s when he shared first place in the British championship at Eastbourne in 1973.

Unfortunately he lost the playoff with Bill Hartston and his creative restlessness seemed to have hampered him in fulfilling his full potential and realizing Botvinnik's prediction from 1968 – that he would soon be a grandmaster. Combined with his bad luck in the last rounds of norm-tournaments, it took him much longer than generally expected to clinch the well-deserved international master title, and this



seemed to have tempered Mike's ambitions. As he told me in one of the tournaments we played together, the improvement and successes of his contemporaries (eg. Keene's grandmaster title) and his own erratic results made him lose his drive, which in turn resulted in further stagnation.

Until at one point you arrive at a crossroads and ask yourself the question how to go on. Even giving up chess was an option, but Mike Basman found new inspiration in trying to prove that offbeat opening strategies have potential, if played in the right way. That turning point took place in the course of 1978 and in the next 40-plus years, he has never looked back.

♟ Morrison, C.

♟ Basman, M.

♟ Manchester 1981

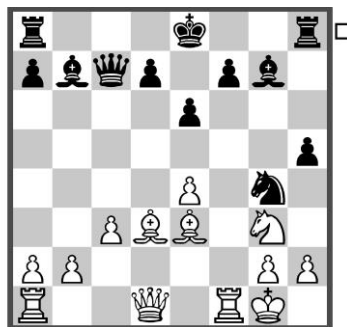
1. e4 g5 2. d4 h6



Position after: 2... h6

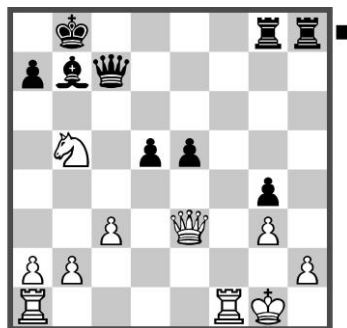
In this introductory game, we will not analyze critically but show you the fairy tale as it developed, to get an idea of the impression this brand of chess must have made in these days.

3. Bd3 Bg7 4. Ne2 c5 5. c3 Nc6 6. dxc5 b6 7. cxb6 Qxb6 8. 0-0 Nf6 9. Nd2 Ne5 10. Nc4 Nxc4 11. Bxc4 Bb7 12. Ng3 e6 13. Bd3 g4 14. Be3 Qc7 15. f3 h5 16. fxg4 Nxg4



Position after: 16... Nxg4

17. Qf3 0-0-0 18. Bd4 Be5 19. Bxe5 Nxe5 20. Qe3 Rdg8 21. Ne2 f5 22. Bc2 fxe4 23. Bxe4 d5 24. Bf3 Kb8 25. Nd4 Ng4 26. Bxg4 hxg4 27. g3 e5 28. Nb5



Position after: 28. Nb5

28... d4! 29. Nxc7 dxe3 30. Ne6

Even 30. Rf7 Rxh2 31. Na6+ does not  
save anymore: 31... Bxa6 32. Kxh2 Rh8+  
33. Kg1 Bc4 34. Rd7 Kc8 35. Rdd1 Be2  
36. Re1 Bf3—+

**30... Rxh2 31. Kxh2 Rh8+ 32. Kg1 Rh1#**

**0-1**

What will this book present you? First of all a more elaborate picture of Michael Basman's chess, based on my experiences with this creative master. We played together in two early tournaments around 1980, and (especially in the second one) we discussed the ideas which has given me a clearer idea of the man's way of chess thinking than before – because the multiple outright rejections in the past and on the net are clear proof that it is not so easy to understand new and creative ideas. These two tournaments, the Biel Masters in 1979 and the Liege Open in 1981 will be presented in separate reports of the events, focusing on the games of the hero of this book, from my point of view.

Mike Basman is the co-author of this book, and though I did most of the writing, there would not be a book without his ideas and his games. Quite a few years ago, I set myself the task of going critically through Mike's creative oeuvre, selecting or rejecting, and classifying it. That was material from his books, from his articles, from personal correspondence and databases. This process resulted in a large overview of the 'Basmanic' opening strategies that took shape from 1978 onwards, and basically the ideas for which he is best known. This work triggered our co-author as he suggested that we used this material as the basis of a joint book. It is his material, and I have received permission to edit it.

Finally we agreed that it might be worthwhile to add more recent material, even though Mike has cut down considerably on his chess playing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has limited his activity to the occasional rapid tournament. Less focus, less drive, less time to think, and this is bound to limit the quality of the games compared to the material from 'the old days'. But being a player from the old school, his intuition makes him still capable of producing a gem once in a while. The final chapter is therefore a collection of annotated games to give the reader some additional material for inspiring recreation by showing how 'Basmania' has entered into the new millennium.

Gerard Welling, March 2021.



## St. George's Opening with Black and White

The first link in the evolution of Basmanic flank strategy has been the so called St George's opening – the setup that has gained recognition after Tony Miles defeated reigning world champion Anatoly Karpov with it at the European team championship in Skara, back in 1980. His **1.e4 a6 2.d4 b5** must have been a nightmare for conventional chess strategists as Black is wasting time with his flank moves and seems to ignore the center of the board which is regarded as a cardinal sin. Still, Miles won that celebrated game which in itself is proof that Black's idea must at least make some sense...

Both Mike Basman and Tony Miles experimented extensively with **1...b6** in the 1970s which against closed formations is now known as the “English Defense” and against 1.e4. “Owens Defense” (named after a creative chess-playing reverend in the 19<sup>th</sup> century). At one point both of them became more or less unstuck against white's superior central control which was not easy to compensate; especially, the line **1.e4 b6 2.d4 ♟b7 3.♟d3 e6 4.♞f3 c5 5.c3 ♞f6 6.♔e2 ♟e7 7.0-0 ♞c6 8.a3.** threatening to swamp Black in the center with e5.. and maybe c4.. proved a tough nut to crack. The next step was the idea to gain some additional control of the central white squares by putting the b-pawn on b5. It discourages ♞c3, stakes a claim at the square c4 and prepares ♟b7 to claim d5 and e4 as well. That is the philosophy behind black's new idea in a nutshell, but unfortunately in chess nothing is as simple as it looks. The following illustrative games will give an idea of how it works in hard tournament practice and highlight the chances and dangers.

Mike Basman's baptized this opening strategy “St George's Opening” in honor of the British players that did a lot to popularize this opening. It was not only Mike

Basman – it's main practitioner – and Tony Miles – who introduced it at top-level with a bang – but the unknown historical chess amateur Baker also used it to beat Blackburne and Steinitz in simultaneous displays.

The games and notes in the theoretical chapters 3 to 5 are based on a critical examination and selection of Mike Basman's annotations in (out of print) books, audio-chess publications, magazines, newspaper columns and personal correspondence. The chapters can thus be considered as the current state of “Basmaniac theory”. In chapter 6 we look at possible developments for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

👤 Arkell, K.  
 👤 Basman, M.  
 🌐 London 1979

2. ♘f3 a6 3. g3 was countered with 3... d5 4. e5 c5 5. ♙g2 ♘c6 6. 0-0 g5! fighting for the initiative in the game Walker – Basman, Charlton Open 1980.

## 1. e4 e6

This was Mike Basman's favourite move order to play his St. George's Defense, Miles preferred 1... a6.

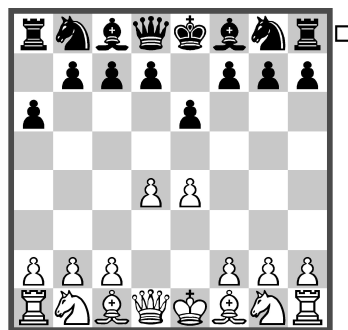
Less direct moves such as 2. a4 e6! and ...d5 with a good French Defense or 2. d3 d5 3. ♘d2 [3. exd5 ♙xd5 4. ♘c3 is nothing special] 3... e5 are not threatening.

After 2. d4 b5 3. ♘f3 ♙b7 4. ♙d3 and now 4... e6 Black creates a transposition that is maybe safer than his provocative 4... ♘f6 when 5. e5 ♘d5 6. ♘g5! is a dangerous sally.

## 2. d4

Now 2. d3 d5 [2... b6 can be considered as an alternative.] 3. ♘d2 c5 4. ♘gf3 ♘c6 5. g3 ♙d6 6. ♙g2 ♘ge7 7. 0-0 0-0 8. ♙e1 ♙c7 leads to a solid option against the King's Indian Attack;

## 2... a6



Position after: 2... a6

## 3. c4

Putting three pawns in the center is a direct threat to Black's idea of central counterplay.

Less effective is the other option 3. f4. This loosens control of the central white squares and therefore plays into Black's hands, for example: 3... b5 4. ♘f3 ♙b7 5. ♙d3 c5 6. c3 ♘f6 7. ♙e2 ♙e7 8.

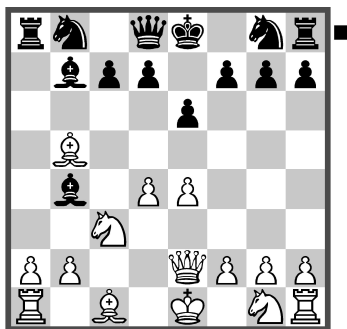
0-0 ♖c6 9. ♘bd2 cxd4 10. cxd4 ♘b4 11. ♙b1 ♚c8 12. ♘b3 ♚c7 with a good game.

Finally 3. a4 d5! 4. ♘c3 ♙b4 5. e5 ♘e7 6. ♘f3 c5 7. ♙d2 ♘bc6 led to an improved French Defense with good counterplay in Jackson – Basman, Edinburgh 1985.

### 3... b5!?

A pawn sacrifice that highlights Black's central strategy, but if one is afraid to give a pawn for purely positional trumps, Black can also play 3... d5 4. exd5 exd5 5. ♘c3 ♙b4 6. ♘f3 as has been practised repeatedly in the games of the French grandmaster Christian Bauer. Or even 3... ♙b4+ 4. ♘c3 ♘e7 with ideas such as a later ...f5 which was witnessed in Lazaro Garcia – Suba, Almeria 2006.

4. cxb5 axb5 5. ♙xb5 ♙b7 6. ♘c3 ♙b4 7. ♚e2



Position after: 7. ♚e2

7... ♘f6

A more thematic move would be 7... f5 when 8. ♘h3 was played in Basman – Chandler, Edinburgh 1985, with the possibility 8... ♘f6! [8... ♙xe4!?] 9. e5 [9. ♘f4 may come into consideration] 9... ♘e4 [And not 9... ♙xg2 10. exf6 ♙xh1 11. ♚xe6+ ♙f8 12. fxg7+ ♙xg7 13. ♙h6#].

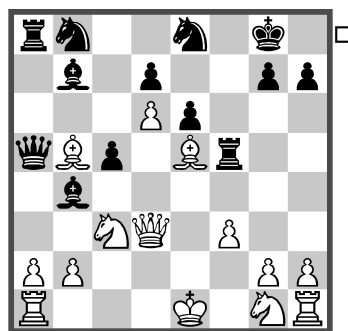
Instead 8. exf5 ♙xg2 9. ♚h5+ [Or 9. fxe6 ♘f6 10. exd7+ ♙f8] 9... ♙f8 is interesting.

### 8. f3

8. ♙d3 c5 9. ♘f3 is another option.

8... c5 9. d5 0-0 10. d6 ♘e8! 11. e5 f6 12. ♙f4 ♚a5 13. ♚d3 fxe5 14. ♙xe5 ♙f5

Now there is tremendous pressure against White's rather overextended formation.



Position after: 14... ♙f5

### 15. ♚e2

Instead 15. ♙g3 ♙d5 16. ♚c4 ♙d4 17. ♙b3 ♙xb5 wins for Black.

15... c4 16. a4

16. g4 ♖xe5 17. ♔xe5 ♘c6 wins.

16... ♘c6! 17. ♙xc6 ♖xe5 18. ♙xb7  
♙xc3+ 19. bxc3 ♔xc3+ 20. ♚f2 ♔d4+

0-1

♙ Pritchett, C.

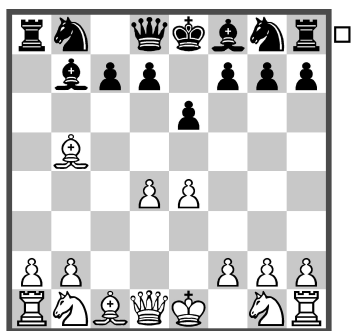
♚ Basman, M.

♜ Bristol 1980

1. e4 e6 2. d4 a6 3. c4 b5 4. cxb5

White can decline but after 4. ♘c3 bxc4 [4... ♙b7 5. d5] 5. ♙xc4 ♘f6 6. ♘f3 [6. e5 d5] 6... ♙b7 7. ♔e2 ♙b4 8. ♙d3 c5 Black seems to do OK.

4... axb5 5. ♙xb5 ♙b7



Position after: 5... ♙b7

6. ♘c3

A topical variation that looks similar to an English Defense main line can arise after 6. ♙d3 f5 7. exf5 [7. ♘c3 ♙b4 is a transposition to the game] 7... ♙xg2 8. ♔h5+ g6 9. fxg6 ♙g7 10. gxh7+ ♚f8 and the differences seem to give Black a defensible game, f.e. 11. ♘e2 [11. ♘f3?! ♘f6 12. ♔g6 ♙xf3 13. ♖g1 ♔e7 14. ♙h6 ♖xh7 and Black defends himself.] 11... ♘f6 12. ♔h4 ♙xh1 13. ♙g5 ♖a5! and Black comes out alright.

6... ♙b4 7. ♙d3

After the solid 7. f3 Black will soften up the kingside with 7... ♔h4+ 8. g3 [8. ♚f1 ♘e7 9. ♘ge2 f5 10. e5 Short – Basman, 1980, then probably 10... 0-0] 8... ♔h5 9. ♙f1 and to attack the center with 9... f5 for example 10. e5 ♘e7 11. ♚f2 f4! 12. ♙xf4 0-0 13. h4 c5 14. a3 ♙xc3 15. bxc3 ♘d5 16. ♙d2 cxd4 17. cxd4 ♘c6 18. ♙e1 ♔g4 19. ♖b1 Sax – Basman, Surrey 1980, and now 19... ♙a6! seems appropriate.

7... f5

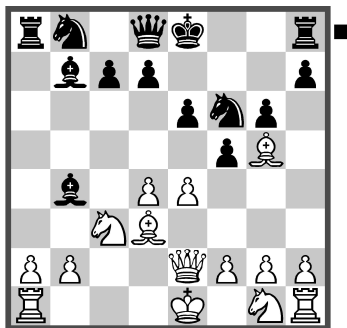
The thematic counterthrust.

8. ♔h5+

8. ♙e3 ♘f6 9. ♘ge2 ♘xe4! [9... fxe4 10. ♙c2 0-0 11. a3! Osterman – Basman, Ribnica 1979] 10. 0-0 ♙xc3 [10... 0-0 11. ♔b3] 11. bxc3 0-0= looks about equal.

8... g6 9. ♔e2 ♘f6 10. ♙g5

Alternatively 10. f3 c5 [10... ♖e7; 10... ♘c6 11. ♙e3 0-0 12. ♘h3 fxe4 13. fxe4 d5] 11. dxc5 ♖a5 [11... ♘a6 12. exf5 gxf5 13. ♙g5] 12. ♙d2 ♘a6 [Or 12... ♘c6] 13. exf5 gxf5 14. ♘h3 ♘xc5 with good compensation.



Position after: 10. ♙g5

**10... fxe4**

10... h6 is also possible, this initiates a wild continuation.

**11. ♙xe4**

Or 11. ♙xf6 exd3 12. ♙xd8 dxe2 13. ♙f6 0-0!

**11... ♘xe4 12. ♙xd8 ♘xc3**

With a strong attack, this was Black's – published – home analysis from 1979 of which Pritchett probably was not aware!

**13. bxc3 ♙xc3+ 14. ♔d1**

If 14. ♔f1 ♙a6.

**14... ♙xa1 15. ♖b5 ♙d5 16. ♙xc7 0-0 17. ♘e2 ♖xa2 18. ♙xb8 ♖b2 19. ♖xb2 ♙xb2 20. ♙g3 ♙xg2 21. ♖g1 ♙f3 22. ♔c2! ♙a3**

White hoped for bishops of opposite colors.

**23. ♘c3 ♙e7 24. ♖b1 ♔g7 25. ♖b8 ♖f7 26. ♙e5+ ♔h6 27. ♙g3 ♙c6 28. ♘d1! ♙a4+ 29. ♔d2 ♙xd1 30. ♔xd1 ♖f5 31. ♔e2 ♙f6 32. ♔e3 ♖d5 33. ♖b4 g5 34. ♔e4 ♔g6 35. ♙e5 ♙xe5 36. dxe5 ♖d1 37. ♖b7 ♖h1 38. ♖xd7 ♖xh2 39. ♔f3**




Instead 39. ♖e7 ♖h4+ following up with 40... ♔f5.

**39... h5 40. ♔g3 ♖h4 41. f3 ♖b4 42. ♖e7 ♔f5 43. ♖g7 ♖b3 44. ♖f7+ ♔xe5 45. ♖h7 h4+ 46. ♔g4 ♖b1! 47. f4+**

Or 47. ♔xg5 ♖g1+ 48. ♔h5 [48. ♔xh4 ♖h1+] 48... h3.
















**47... gxf4 48. ♖xh4 ♔e4 49. ♔g5 e5 50. ♔f6 ♖b6+ 51. ♔g5 ♖b8 52. ♔f6 ♔d4 53. ♔e6 ♖b5 54. ♔f5 ♔e3 55. ♖h1 e4+ 56. ♔g4 f3 57. ♖e1+ ♔d3 58. ♔f4 f2 59. ♖a1 e3**





**0-1**















 Grünfeld, Y.  
 Basman, M.  
 Biel 1979

We have considered this game in the first chapter, but we'll look at it from the theoretical angle now. As will be the case with other games from Biel 1979 and Liege 1981.

### 1. e4 e6 2. d4 a6 3. f3

White can also consider a setup with  d3; but with a knight on e2 which keeps the f-pawn free, it seems that does not really improve his chances, for example 3.  d3 b5 4.  e2 [Or 4.  h3 with roughly similar ideas, played in the Owen Defense 1.e4 b6 by no less than Paul Morphy, then 4...  b7 5. 0-0 c5 and J.H.Hodgson – Basman, Ilford 1980 continued 6. dxc5  xc5 7.  e2  c6 8. c3  c7 9.  h1  ge7 10. f4 0-0 11.  h5?! f5!] 4...  b7 5. 0-0 c5 6. c3  f6 7.  d2







**A)** 7...  c6 8. e5  d5 9.  e4  b6 . Black seems to be quite OK in these lines.

**B)** Or 7...  b6 8. a4 [8. e5  d5 9.  f3  e7 10.  f4! c4 11.  c2 d6 with approximately equal chances in Nicholson – Basman, London 1979] 8...  c6 9. axb5 axb5 10.  xa8+  xa8 11. dxc5  xc5 12.  b3  e7 13.  e3  b8.








*Julian Hodgson (photo Jos Suttmüller)*

### 3... b5

The basic idea of the St. George, but even transposition to a type of French with 3... d5!? is playable, for example 4. e5 [4. exd5 exd5= lacks bite for White;; 4.  bd2 c5 transposes to a valid line of the French Defense, Tarrasch variation] 4...  d7 With the intention ... b5 exchanging the so called 'bad bishop' that is the one which is hampered by our fixed pawns on the same color) 5. a4 [5.  c3 c5 then ... c6 to destabilize White's central pawn chain] 5... c5! 6. c3 cxd4 7. cxd4  c6 and Black has taken control of the square b4.

### 4. a4 b7

Alternatively Black can consider 4... b4:

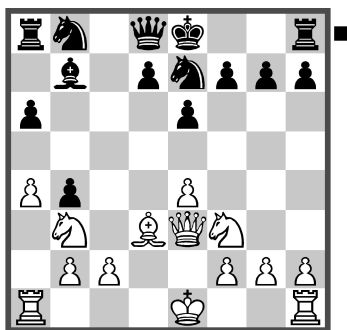
**A)** 5. c4 d6 [Or 5... bxc3 6. bxc3 c5 7.  d3  f6 8. 0-0 cxd4 9. cxd4  c6, and White has taken control of the center but Black has conquered the square b4.] 6.  d3  d7 7. 0-0 c5 8. d5 e5 and in this particular position



Black still has the choice to castle on both sides.

**B)** 5. ♖d3 ♘b7 6. 0-0 c5 7. ♙e2 cxd4 8. ♘xd4 ♘f6 9. c4 e5, Lederman – Basman, Ramat Hasharon 1979 and after the game, the player of the Black pieces decided that 9...e5 followed by ...d6, ...♘bd7 and ...♙c7 would have been appropriate.

5. ♘bd2 b4 6. ♘d3 c5 7. dxc5 ♘xc5 8. ♙e2 ♘e7 9. ♘b3 ♘a7 10. ♘e3 ♘xe3



Position after: 11. ♙xe3

11. ♙xe3 d6

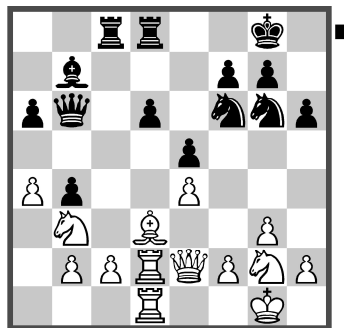
A slip instead of 11... 0-0 but Grünfeld, who played quickly and confidently, missed his chance.

12. 0-0

He could have played 12. ♙d4!

12... 0-0 13. ♖ad1 ♙c7 14. ♖d2 ♘d7 15. ♖fd1 ♖fd8 16. ♙g5 ♘c6 17. ♘e2 ♘f6 18. ♙f4 e5 19. ♙e3 ♘e7 20. ♘d3

♘g6 21. g3 h6 22. ♘e1 ♖ac8 23. ♙e7 ♙b6 24. ♘g2



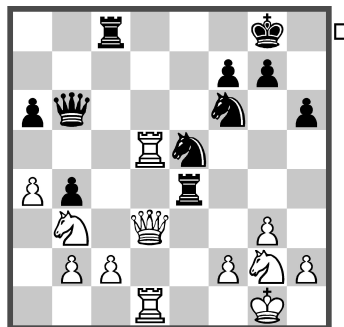
Position after: 24. ♘g2

Regrouping his forces with the idea ♘e3-c4; in order not to lose control, Black has to take direct measures.

24... d5! 25. exd5 e4 26. ♘xe4 ♖e8 27. ♖d4 ♘xd5 28. ♖xd5 ♖xe4 29. ♙d3

Maybe 29. a5.

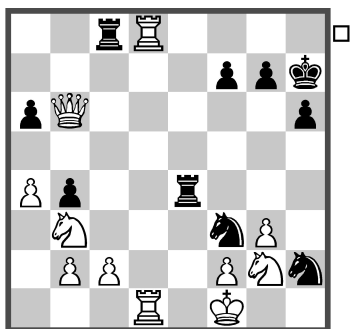
29... ♘e5



Position after: 29... ♘e5

30. ♖d6

In the post-mortem analysis one of the authors – playing with Black here – showed the line 30. ♖d8+ ♔h7 31. ♚d6 ♜fg4 32. ♚xb6 ♜f3+ 33. ♔f1 ♜gxh2#



Position after: 33... ♜gxh2#

which the spectating co-author still remembers very well!

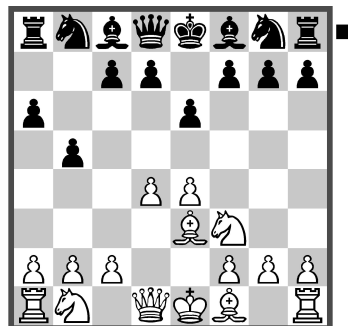
30... ♜xd3 31. ♖xb6 ♜xb2 32. ♖a1 ♖xc2 33. ♜e3 ♖c3 34. ♜d2 ♖e8 35. ♖xb4 ♜d3 36. ♖b3 ♖xb3 37. ♜xb3 ♜e4 38. ♜d1 ♖c8 39. ♔g2 ♖c2 40. ♜d4 ♖c4 41. ♜f3 a5 42. ♖a3?

Finally his nerves cracked.

42... ♜dxf2 43. ♜xf2 ♖c2 44. ♖e3 ♜xf2 45. ♜d4 ♖a2 46. ♖e2 ♖xa4 47. ♜f5 ♜e4 48. h4 h5 49. ♔f3 g6 50. ♜e7+ ♔f8 51. ♜c6 ♜d6 52. ♖e3 ♜f5 53. ♖d3 ♖g4 54. ♔f2 a4 55. ♜e5 ♖e4 56. ♜d7+ ♔g7 57. ♜b6 ♖b4 58. ♜d5 ♖b3 59. ♖xb3 axb3 60. ♔f3 b2 61. ♜c3 ♔f6 62. ♔f4 ♔e6 63. ♜b1 ♜d4 64. g4 hxg4 65. ♔xg4 f5+ 66. ♔g5 ♔f7 67. ♔f4 ♔f6 68. ♔e3 ♔e5 69. ♜a3 ♜c2+ 0-1

♟ Littlewood, N.  
♚ Basman, M.  
♜ Nottingham 1981

1. e4 e6 2. d4 a6 3. ♜f3 b5 4. ♖e3



Position after: 4. ♖e3

With the idea to contain Black's counterplay by making the natural lever ...c5 more difficult to achieve, or isn't it?

4... ♖b7

Maybe even a direct 4... c5 5. dxc5 ♚c7 6. b4 and gambiting with 6... d6 7. cxd6 ♖xd6 8. a3 ♜d7 when Black has some counterplay for the pawn. The solid 4... d6 is also worth a thought.

5. ♜bd2 ♜f6 6. ♖d3 c5

The move White had intended to rule out...

7. dxc5 ♚c7 8. b4 ♜c6 9. a3 ♜g4 10. ♚e2 a5!