

CHESS DEVELOPMENTS

The Sicilian Najdorf 6 Bg5

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About the Author

Kevin Goh Wei Ming is an International Master and a six-time National Champion of Singapore in classical chess. He has represented Singapore in five Olympiads and other major team tournaments such as the Asian Nations Cup, Asian Indoor Games and South-East Asian Games. Kevin has gained two grandmaster norms. Outside of playing, he was a columnist on the chess theory website chesspublishing.com. *Chess Developments: Sicilian Najdorf 6 ♘g5* is his first book project.

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Foreword

by GM Thomas Luther, 3-time German Champion

The Najdorf is known as the opening of the world champions. White has numerous replies, but the most challenging move is 6 ♖g5. Some of the most remarkable games in all of chess history have featured this variation. Indeed, the 6 ♖g5 line could just be studied out of pure joy for the historical games and all the entertaining tactical ideas which can easily occur.

One might argue that 6 ♖g5 is nowadays more popular than ever. I recommend to all my students to play this line. It combines sharp variations (good for improving one's calculating skills), with many general ideas. Just to tell one Najdorf story: Black always comes fast with ...b7-b5-b4, attacking White's knight on c3. This is a key moment of the game, as if the knight goes back to b1 or e2, Black is fine, maybe even better, with the dynamics of the position on his side. So White should go ♗d5!, sacrificing the knight for an attack. Go forward! In the 6 ♖g5 line it is victory or glory, nothing else. If you cannot make ♗d5 happen, at least play e4-e5 or anything aggressive, but do not settle for a compromise.

Almost every chess player has a pet line, an opening variation he or she analyses deeply for ages because the search for the ultimate truth requires no less. The assessment of each variation, even it is the most far flung sideline, means everything. This dedication can lead to the most remarkable results and can be a lifetime's achievement. My pet line has long been 6 ♖g5 against the Najdorf.

At the end of the 1980s I was a young player collecting my IM norms. Struggling against the Sicilian with the closed systems and 2 c3, GM-norm results seemed far away. In 1987, right after the closing ceremony of a tournament in Czechoslovakia, a GM from Yugoslavia approached me. He congratulated me on my result, but criticised my openings. If I really wanted to become a GM, I had to improve my openings. And he offered the perfect solution: I should buy the *Encyclopaedias of Chess Openings* he had brought to the tournament. I bought the Enzies, as they were called, started to work on the Open Sicilian and have never regretted it since. No wonder I scored my first GM norm as soon as 1991.

The 6 ♖g5 Najdorf soon became a special line for me. Working for ChessBase, early on I encountered the strength of chess programs and their use in sharp lines. After playing the 6 ♖g5 variation for more than a decade, Jacob Aagaard contacted me in 2004 to write the Najdorf chapter in his book *Experts vs the Sicilian*. I was uneasy about publishing my ideas, but Jacob insisted. His main argument was that playing competitive chess does not last forever; one needs to focus on a second career. Becoming an author and a coach would be

the right choice for me. To ensure I understood, he booked a flight and came to visit me. We finished writing the Najdorf chapter in less than a week. Since then I have regularly published training materials and coached students.

I was pleased when Kevin asked me to write the foreword to this book, being happy that someone remembered my games and articles. Kevin told me he was inspired by my chapter in *Experts vs the Sicilian*, which was the reason why he first picked up the 6 ♗g5 variation.

In this book Kevin deeply analyses 40 recent games. Theory develops quickly, especially in sharp lines. Besides knowing the history of an opening line, I advise you, dear reader, to be on top of the latest news. Study the new games and look for novelties!

In my view, Kevin has written a great book and will surely be Singapore's next grandmaster. His deep understanding and devotion to the game make it only a question of time. To become a strong chess player many say that talent is required. However, the most important talent needed for chess is the ability to work hard. Kevin has more than demonstrated that skill in this book. It is a difficult task to analyse games so deeply and publish one's findings. All his analysis should be checked by you, but will inspire, give you knowledge and guide you successfully in your games.

Thomas Luther,
Germany
October 2014

Introduction

It is quite a miracle that I'm writing an introduction to a Najdorf book. The fact is – I once hated the Najdorf. It is a pesky opening where White never seems to have any real route to obtaining clear and understandable positions, and my score against it has always been horrendous. When I was a kid, John Nunn's incredible work *Beating the Sicilian 3* was my bible, but although a reasonable choice, I could never quite get advantageous positions from the opening with 6 f4. For a good number of years, I retreated into the shell of the 2 c3 Sicilian world, eager to escape from the complications that can arise from any Najdorf.

I eventually decided to explore new grounds again, this time with 6 ♗e3 which was all the rage back in the early 2000s. However, the positions in the English Attack are often extremely wild and contain seemingly illogical nuances that were impossible (to me) to understand. I soon gave that up as well. Of course, I am happy to admit that there is probably very little wrong with the opening and the bad results were more to do with the player than anything else.

I never really considered studying 6 ♗g5 at all as I was put off by the tremendous amount of theory that is in place and, in any case, all the various options at Black's disposal seemed perfectly respectable and hard to crack. Daniel King's quote in his 1993 classic on the Najdorf sums it up pretty well:

“White players are scared of the complexity and variety of defences (counterattacks) at Black's disposal, and simply do not have the time or inclination to go through books learning masses of variations by rote. Moreover, many of these sharp lines are theoretically good for Black anyway. I'm amazed that anyone plays 6 ♗g5 at all. (The reason they do is for the chance to sacrifice all their pieces in some glorious fashion to force mate.)”

My first real contact with 6 ♗g5 came about purely by chance and almost felt like it was predestined. Flipping a random *New In Chess Yearbook* in my university dormitory, I came across the game Nakamura-Gelfand, Biel 2005, in the Forum section where the Israeli super-GM was demonstrating the black side of the Gelfand variation. A brief comment at move 20 where Gelfand seemed to evaluate as fine for Black intrigued me. Surely, the vulnerable position of the black king should count for something? I proceeded to do something I'd never really done before – investigate an opening position really deeply and thoroughly, complete with chess engines and all. Back then, *Fritz* was not exactly *Houdini*, but was still pretty good and everything appeared to point in White's favour. Yes, Black was completely busted.

Despite the fact that I was in the middle of the Singapore National Championship, I forced my good friend Junior Tay to hold an online joint analysis where we spent a couple of hours going through my notes. Finally at 2am, we concluded that White was close to winning and Gelfand should have counted himself extremely lucky to be annotating a win instead of a loss.

As luck, or destiny, would have it, I was paired with IM Chan Peng Kong on the very next day. I had, of course, prepared against his favourite Classical Sicilian, but was thoroughly surprised when Peng Kong essayed 5...a6 instead. Without any doubt in my head, I immediately replied with 6 ♗g5!, despite the fact that I had virtually no knowledge of any of the variations apart from the Gelfand game that I had analysed the night before. I didn't know what I was thinking, but despite the incredibly bad odds, we followed my analysis and I won.

K.Goh Wei Ming-Chan Peng Kong Singapore Championship 2006

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♘bd7 8 ♖f3 ♗c7 9 0-0-0 b5
10 ♗d3 ♗b7 11 ♖he1 ♗b6 12 ♘d5 ♗xd4 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♗xb5 ♗c5 15 ♘xf6+ ♗d8 16
♘xd7 ♗xb5 17 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 18 ♗a3 ♖c8

Stronger is 18...♗e8!, as analysed in Game 23.

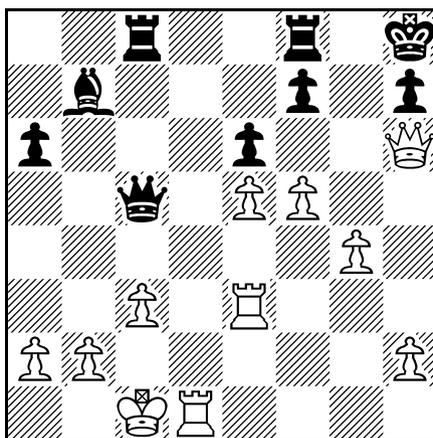
19 ♗xd6+ ♗e8 20 ♖e3!

20 c3? was played in the aforementioned game H.Nakamura-B.Gelfand, Biel 2005.

20...♗c6

This was given an exclamation mark by Gelfand.

21 ♗d2! ♗e7 22 ♗b4+ ♗f6 23 c3! ♗c5 24 e5+ ♗f5 25 g4+ ♗g6 26 f5+ ♗g7 27 ♗f4 ♗h8 28
♗h6!



Here my preparation ended, but my opponent already had less than twenty minutes left.

28...♙g2 29 ♖d7! ♚c4 30 b3! ♜f1+

Black no longer has a valid defence. After 30...♜b4 31 ♙b2 ♜xg4 32 ♜g3 ♜e2+ 33 ♖d2 White wins back the piece with interest.

31 ♖d1 ♜b5 32 ♖d2 ♙f1 33 ♙b2 ♜g8 34 ♜f6+ ♜g7 35 fxe6 fxe6 36 ♜f3! ♚c5 37 ♖d8+ ♜xd8 38 ♜xd8+ ♜g8 39 ♜f6+ ♜g7 40 ♜xf1 ♖d5 41 ♜f2 a5 42 ♜f4 h5 43 ♖d2 ♜c6 44 ♜h6+ ♙g8 45 ♖d8+ ♙f7 46 ♜f6# 1-0

After the game, I vowed to study 6 ♙g5 for life and immediately fell in love with the opening. Despite the massive complications and the mandatory memory work required, the attacking ideas and motifs make a lot of sense, appealed to me and I had no doubt that this would be my companion for life.

This Work

When I proposed to write this particular book to John Emms, I surely underestimated the task that was ahead of me. This book has taken a long time to write because of the massive amount of material available in today's market. Tons of books on the Sicilian have been written, but these have mainly been from Black's perspective which means the coverage is often restricted to one or two critical variations. Obviously, chess theory has moved on tremendously since John Nunn's mammoth *The Complete Najdorf*: 6 ♙g5 was written and it is hardly a big surprise that no one has attempted a similar project ever since. Thomas Luther's article in *Experts vs the Sicilian* is thoroughly inspirational, but is mainly a repertoire for White which naturally means the scope is much narrower than a complete overview.

There are simply many, many possibilities within the 6 ♙g5 world and existing theory often does not show the whole story as many players, even grandmasters, can find themselves going wrong at a very early stage of the game. This means that contrary to popular belief, there are still new grounds to explore in the opening as I have done.

Make no mistake about it, this book is first and foremost a theoretical manual and most readers will find the coverage excessive or even intimidating. However, I have tried to the best of my ability to explain the typical themes and motifs while rationalizing the irrational. Indeed, I genuinely hope and believe that players of all levels will be able to grasp some, if not all the positions that are discussed in this book. Despite my obvious emotional attachment to the white pieces, my personal goal was to be completely objective about each theoretical evaluation that I have given.

Approach

I have ambitiously hoped to make this the go-to book for all 6 ♙g5 Najdorf related matters. In my research, I have obviously referenced all the major Najdorf books that were published recently and have also delved deeply into the correspondence chess world. I find it quite amazing that whenever some top player plays a big theoretical novelty in a major event, the move has more likely than not been played five to six years before in some ran-

dom correspondence game. This simply means that a good correspondence database is often a treasure trove for researchers and anyone who wants to write an opening book.

As for the use of chess software, I have primarily used *Houdini 4* and the latest *Stockfish*, plus ChessBase's very helpful 'Let's Check' function which saved me a lot of time by pointing me in the right direction in a matter of seconds. While I am a great believer in the prowess of the human brain, there are certain positions in chess that simply require an engine to solve them by brute force and unfortunately these exist very often in the Najdorf. Using this approach, I have managed to find a large number of new ideas and 'novelties' to existing theory which I hope can be useful even at grandmaster level.

Scope

This work is part of the *Chess Developments* series which means the focus is primarily on cutting-edge theory. However, I have deemed it fit to include lines where I have proved that well-established conclusions are either inaccurate or erroneous. I have also added certain rarely played variations that I feel deserve a lot more attention than the respect that theoreticians have given them. I believe that given the surprise value, a careful study of these lines will be useful in a practical game. However, there are also some necessary if unfortunate omissions – some of which I hope to cover in the future.

In a strange way, I have enjoyed the rather painful process of writing this book and I have learnt a lot, not just in terms of the theoretical aspect, but also in terms of learning to be better organised and more detailed in my research. I hope you will enjoy this book as much I have enjoyed writing it, and that you will score many more points from either side of this fascinating opening.

Acknowledgements

I must thank the following without whom this work would not have been possible:

- i. My good friend, ICCF International Master Junior Tay, for reigniting my interest in chess after a temporary hiatus, for being my grammar police over the years, for giving me countless advice at and away from the chess board, and basically being supportive every step of the way.
- ii. National Master Olimpiu Urcan, for his infectious optimism, no holds-barred and direct criticism, and for always reminding me that there are many other facets to life apart from chess.
- iii. International Master Erik Kislik for sharing his extremely detailed notes and spending long nights proof-reading the final product.
- iv. Grandmaster Zhao Zong Yuan for spending an entire evening with me analysing a line in the Delayed Poisoned Pawn – a variation that he doesn't even play.
- v. Grandmaster John Emms, for entrusting me with my first book project and for being incredibly understanding when I failed to meet deadlines along the way.
- vi. Grandmaster Tony Kosten, for giving me the opportunity to write for the popular ChessPublishing.com website.

vii. My employer KPMG Singapore, for providing me with endless support in chess-related matters.

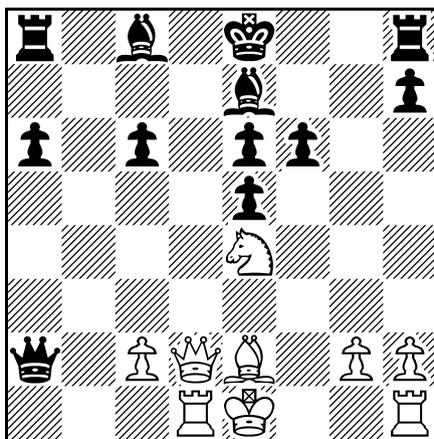
viii. My wife Yoke Ching, for being extremely tolerant with my bizarre and quirky behaviour throughout the course of writing this book.

Kevin Goh Wei Ming
Singapore
October 2014

49 ♖g4+ ♔h8 50 ♜h5+ ♔g7 51 ♖g5+ ♔h7 52 g3 ♜xc3 53 ♜f5+ ♔g7 54 ♖g4+ ♔f6 55 ♜f4+ ♔g7 56 ♜xe4 ♜c5+ 57 ♔g2 ♜d5 58 ♜xd5 cxd5 59 ♖xa6= ♖b4 60 ♖b7 d4 61 ♖a6 ♔h6 62 ♔f3 d3 63 ♖xd3 ♖c5 64 ♖b5 ♖b6 65 h4 ♖c7 66 g4 ♖d8 67 ♔g3 ♖e7 68 g5+ ♖xg5 69 hxg5+ ♔xg5 1/2-1/2

Game 31
A.Grischuk-V.Anand
 Linares 2009

1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♖f6 5 ♖c3 a6 6 ♖g5 e6 7 f4 ♜b6 8 ♜d2 ♜xb2 9 ♜b1 ♜a3 10 f5 ♖c6 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 ♖xc6 bxc6 13 e5 dxe5 14 ♖xf6 gxf6 15 ♖e4 ♜xa2 16 ♜d1 ♖e7 17 ♖e2



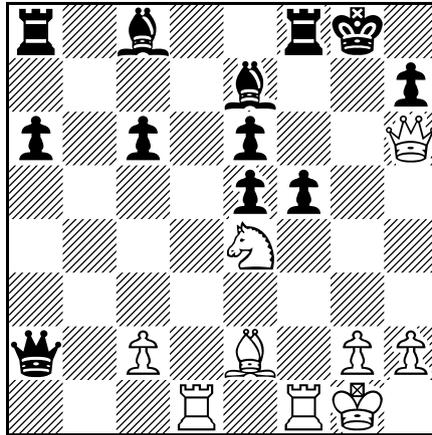
The main move by far. This entire variation has been established as a forced draw ever since the famous game Vallejo Pons-Kasparov back in 2004 where Kasparov revealed some top-notch home preparation. Since then there have been some new attempts from both sides, but nothing has appeared to change the overall conclusion.

17...0-0 18 0-0 ♜a7

18...f5!? is also played and equalizes cleanly too:

a) 19 ♜f3 f4! is an untried novelty which looks fairly decent and might confuse White (in his book, Andriasyan demonstrated the refutation of 19...fxe4?: 20 ♜g3+ ♔h8 21 ♜h6 ♜g8 22 ♜f1!! ♜a7 23 ♔h1 ♜b7 24 ♜f7 ♜b1+ 25 ♖f1 ♜xf1+ 26 ♜xf1 ♜a5 27 h3 and “no comments!”). For example, 20 ♜c3 ♜b8! (preparing ...♜b7; the typical 20...♜a7 allows 21 ♖c4 ♜a4 22 ♜b1 with a difficult position for Black) 21 ♜g3+! fxg3 22 ♜xg3+ ♔h8 23 ♜xe5+ ♔g8 24 ♜g3+ looks like the cleanest way to force a draw after 19 ♜f3.

b) 19 ♜h6 forces Black to tread carefully:

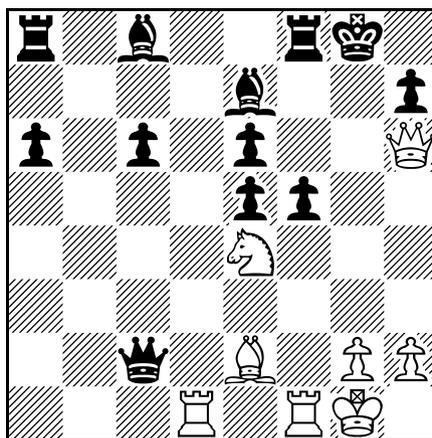


b1) After the natural 19...♖f7?, the untried 20 ♗d3! ♗g7 (20...♔h8 21 ♗g3 with the threat of ♕h5 is winning for White) 21 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 22 ♗xf6 ♕d7 23 ♗fd1 is pretty dangerous for Black.

b2) 19...♗a7? loses to 20 ♗f3! f4 (20...♕b4 21 ♗g3+ ♔h8 may appear to hold everything, but White has the brilliant finish 22 ♗f6+!! ♗xf6 23 ♘xf6 when Black cannot defend against the back-rank threats; likewise, 20...♗f7 21 ♗g3+ ♔h8 22 ♘f6 ♕c5+ 23 ♔h1 forced resignation in A.Danin-A.Zhigalko, Minsk 2006) 21 ♗h3 ♕b4 22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 23 ♗xf6.

b3) The obvious 19...fxe4? loses to 20 ♗xf8+ ♕xf8 21 ♗g5+ ♔h8 22 ♗f6+ ♔g8 23 ♕h5! when there is no defence to the threat of ♗f1.

b4) After 19...♗xc2! we arrive at a complicated position that is critical for the assessment of 18...f5.



Black has four(!) extra pawns, but he is severely lacking in development. White's attacking ideas hinge on the rook lifts ♗d3 and/or ♗f3, and Black has to react accordingly, again

with exact moves:

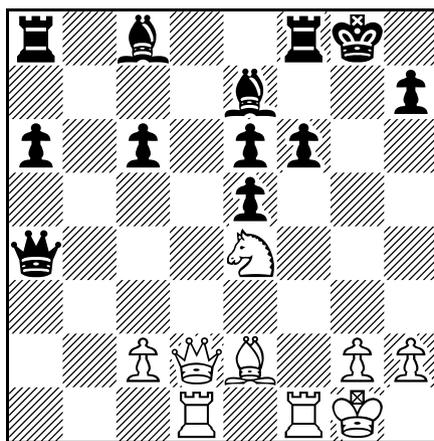
b41) Black defends easily after 20 ♘g5? ♙c5+ 21 ♖h1 ♗a7, as in V.Liberzon-Y.Gruenfeld, Biel 1980. This is normally Black's follow-up after White moves his e4-knight.

b42) 20 ♙d3?! was played in K.Maslak-D.Kokarev, Ulan Ude 2009, and here Black can improve with 20...♗a4! when 21 ♘g5 ♗d4+ 22 ♖h1 ♙xg5 23 ♗xg5+ ♖h8 is fine for him.

b43) 20 ♗d3 ♗xe2 21 ♗g3+ ♖f7 22 ♗xf5+! is a spectacular sacrifice, but unfortunately it only forces a draw after 22...exf5 23 ♗g7+ ♖e8 24 ♗xc6+ ♖d8 25 ♗b6+ as in D.Velimirovic-L.Ftacnik, Vrsac 1981, and many other games.

b44) Black also just survives after 20 ♗f3 f4 21 ♗h3 ♗f7! (in my old notes, I initially analysed 21...♗xe4 22 ♙d3 as winning for White, but after 22...♗f6! things are hardly clear, although White can certainly press in the endgame arising after 23 ♙xe4! ♗xh6 24 ♗xh6) 22 ♗hd3 ♗xe2 (the cleanest way to force a draw) 23 ♗d8+ ♗f8 24 ♘f6+ (24 ♗xf8+ ♙xf8 25 ♗g5+ ♖f7 26 ♗f6+ ♖g8 27 ♗g5+ is yet another forced draw) 24...♖f7 25 ♘h5 ♙xd8 26 ♗xh7+ ♖e8 27 ♗g6+ ♖e7 28 ♗g5+ ♖f7 29 ♗g7+ ♖e8 30 ♗g6+ ½-½, W.Watson-D.King, London 1990. An impressively well-played game in the days when there was no computer analysis to rely on.

Before we return to 18...♗a7, I'll also briefly mention the rare 18...♗a4!?



This is yet another viable option. Those who are turned off by the large amount of theory that is examined in this game may prefer to uncover new ground here. Superficially, I looked at 19 c4 ♗a7 20 ♗h6 (20 ♘xf6+!?) 20...♗d7 21 ♗d3 (21 ♗xd7 ♙xd7 22 ♙h5 ♗xc4 23 ♙g6 is equal) 21...♗xd3 22 ♙xd3 f5 23 ♘g5 ♙xg5 24 ♗xg5+ ♖h8 25 ♗e7 ♗g8 26 ♗f6+ with yet another draw.

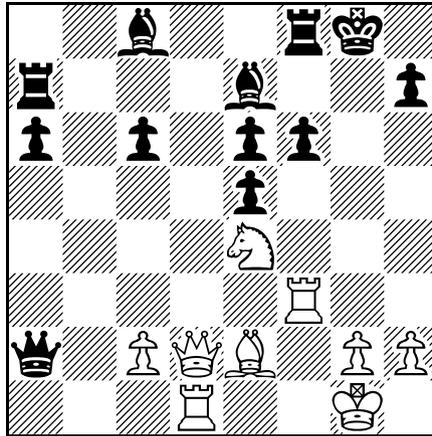
19 ♗f3

19 ♗h6 has been played in a handful of games. So long as Black knows his stuff, he should have nothing to worry about as the number of tricks at White's disposal is considerably less than in the variations after 19 ♗f3:

a) 19...♗d7 20 ♗d3 (20 ♗xd7 ♙xd7 21 ♙d3 f5? 22 ♘g5 ♙xg5 23 ♗xg5+ ♖h8 24 ♗e7

wins a piece, but here 21...♖f7 22 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 23 ♕xh7+! ♜xh7 24 ♜xf6 ♖g7 25 ♜d8+ ♘h7 26 ♜h4+ is another forced draw) 20...♞xd3 21 ♕xd3 f5 22 ♘g5 ♕xg5 23 ♜xg5+ ♘h8 24 ♜e7 ♖g8 25 ♜f6+ led to a perpetual in the high-profile game V.Topalov-B.Gelfand, Wijk aan Zee 1998.

b) 19...♜xc2 is also playable and here White has to play 20 ♘xf6+! not to slip into a worse position (the natural 20 ♕d3 can be met by 20...♜a4! when White has no attack: 21 ♘c3 ♕c5+ 22 ♘h1 ♜d4 23 ♘e4 f5 24 ♘g5 e4 25 ♕xa6 ♜g7 and Black has good chances, while the caveman style rook lifts don't work: 20 ♞d3 ♕c5+! 21 ♘xc5 ♜xc5+ 22 ♘h1 ♜e7 or 20 ♞f3 ♕c5+ 21 ♘xc5 ♜xc5+ 22 ♘h1 ♜e7). However, after 20...♕xf6 21 ♞xf6 ♜c5+ 22 ♘h1 ♖g7 23 ♜h4 ♕d7! 24 ♕xa6 ♜e7 Black is still quite safe having forced further exchanges.



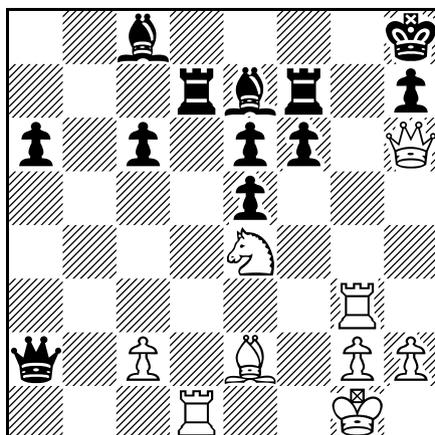
19...♞d7

This was initially thought to lead to the same thing as 19...♘h8, but Grischuk's novelty on the next move shows otherwise. Unfortunately, we still do not know what Grischuk had planned here. White has:

a) 20 ♞g3 leads to a famous draw after 20...♞d7 21 ♜h6, although even here Black must be accurate:

a1) The right move order is 21...♞xd1+! 22 ♕xd1 ♞f7, transposing to 'a21' below. Interestingly, Andriasyan gave this as the move order in his book, but all my other references indicated that Kasparov went 21...♞f7?? instead.

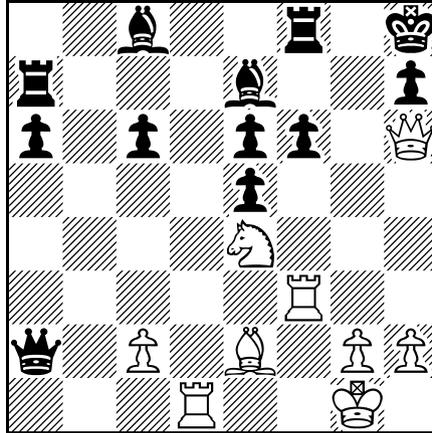
a2) If he did play 21...♞f7??, Kasparov can count himself extremely lucky that he pulled off a draw:



a21) 22 ♖h5? (missing a great opportunity) 22...♗xd1+ 23 ♕xd1 ♖a5! (threatening mate in one and bringing his queen back with tempo) 24 ♔f1! (the white king has to stay off the a7-g1 diagonal as after a move like 24 h3? Black can bring his queen back to his king's aid with 24...♖c7, indirectly defending the f7-rook) 24...♗d8! 25 ♖xf7 ♖xd1+ 26 ♔f2 ♖xc2+ 27 ♔f3 ♗d1+ 28 ♔f2 ♖c2+ 29 ♔e3 ♕c5+ 30 ♖xc5 ♖xc5+ 31 ♔d2 ♖f2+ 32 ♔c3 ♗d4+ 33 ♔c2 ♖f2+ 34 ♔c3 and White couldn't avoid the checks in F.Vallejo Pons-G.Kasparov, Moscow 2004. Since then, plenty of other games have followed the same path.

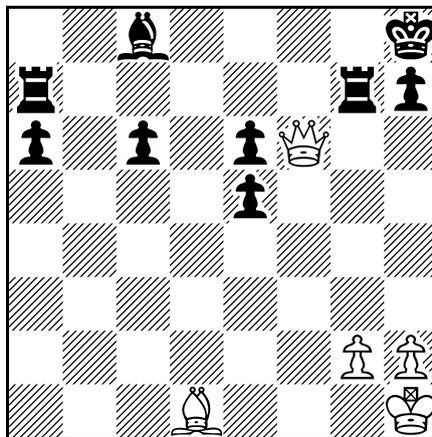
a22) What a lot of commentators have failed to point out is that White could have obtained a winning position here with 22 ♗xd7! ♕xd7 23 h3!, with the idea of playing ♔h2 followed by ♕h5. There is no real excuse for Kasparov missing this in his commentary as it had been played in a correspondence game from 2003, which continued 23...♖a5 24 ♔h2 ♗d8 (24...♖e1 25 ♖xf6! ♖xg3+ 26 ♔xg3 ♕xf6 27 ♔h2 is very good for White, and here 25...♕xf6 26 ♗b3! is a brilliant and aesthetic response; Black cannot hold the back rank despite being a piece up) 25 ♕h5 ♖f8 26 ♕xf7! ♖xf7 27 ♗b3 and Black soon resigned in N.Ferreira-B.Jaderholm, correspondence 2003. I would love to hear from the great man himself as to whether he had missed this little nuance.

b) 20 ♖h6!?! is another rare move that may confuse even someone who is booked up to the hilt.



b1) 20...♖f7? 21 ♗g5! ♜g7 22 ♘h7! ♜xh7 23 ♞d8+ can be easy to miss. Indeed, I have won a couple of games like this in blitz.

b2) 20...♙xc2 21 ♜xf6! ♟c5+ (there's good compensation after 21...♜g8 22 ♗g5 ♜g7 23 ♞df1 ♟xf6 24 ♙xf6 ♙c5+ 25 ♟h1 ♙e7 26 ♙xe5 ♞d7; Stohl claims equality which may well be the case, but it will be hard for Black to unravel in practical play despite his extra material) 22 ♗xc5 ♙xc5+ 23 ♟h1 ♜g8 (23...♜g7 24 ♞df1 ♜fg8 should also be okay for Black, although White's attack looks scary enough) 24 ♟h5! (with the idea of ♜f7; Black has to over-protect h7) 24...♙c2 25 ♜g6! (this forces Black to part with his queen for White's two rooks, but the attack isn't over yet) 25...♙xd1+ 26 ♟xd1 ♜xg6 27 ♙f8+ ♜g8 28 ♙f6+ ♜gg7.



Black has three pawns and two rooks for White's queen, but his position is stuck and White can always choose to take a perpetual any time he likes. Here Danin played the strong 29 ♟h5!, stopping ...♜af7 and preparing to launch his h-pawn up the board. In practical terms, this is extremely difficult for Black to handle. Indeed, after 29...c5 30 h4 c4 31

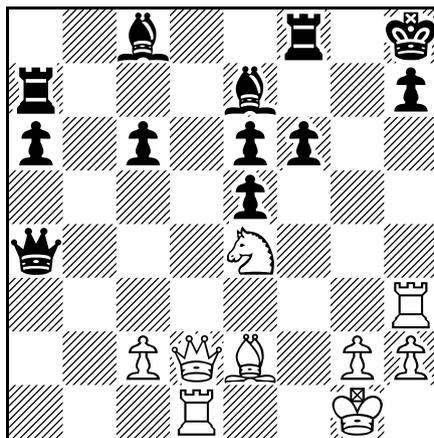
♜f8+ ♜g8 32 ♜f6+ ♜ag7 (32...♜gg7 33 ♜xe5 would have continued to ask questions) 33 ♖d1 h5? (this loses in a pretty way; Black should have finally activated his light-squared bishop with 33...♖b7! when after 34 h5 ♖xg2+ 35 ♖h2 h6 36 ♜xh6+ ♜h7 37 ♜f6+ ♜gg7 White amazingly has no breakthrough and has to acquiesce to a draw with 38 ♜f8+ ♜g8 39 ♜f6+ ♜gg7) 34 ♖c2! ♜e8 35 ♖g6 ♜eg8 36 g4!, in view of the onrushing h-pawn, Black had to resign in A.Danin-S.Dvoiryys, Vladimir 2009. An extremely well-played game by the young Russian.

c) 20 ♜h3!? has been played just once, but is extremely trappy:

c1) 20...♜d7? is so common in similar lines, but here loses immediately in brutal fashion: 21 ♜h6 ♜xd1+ (21...♜f7 22 ♜g6 ♜g7 23 ♜xh7+! ♜xh7 24 ♜e8+ ♖g7 25 ♜d7 ♖xd7 26 ♜xe7+ is a complete whitewash) 22 ♖xd1 ♜f7 23 ♜g6! and Black was smashed on the kingside. The game finished 23...♖c5+ 24 ♖xc5 ♜d5 (24...♜a5 was Black's only hope, but White can simply play 25 ♖f1 with an extra piece after 25...♜c7 26 ♖e4) 25 ♜xf7 ♜xd1+ 26 ♖f2 ♜xc2+ 27 ♖g3 ♜c3+ 28 ♖h4 ♜d4+ 29 ♖h5 ♜d1+ 30 ♜f3 1-0, L.Figueroa Losada-A.Fernandez Hernandez, Havana 2010.

c2) Attempting to swap a pair of rooks with 20...♜b7 is met by the concrete 21 ♜h6 ♜f7 22 ♜hd3 ♜b1 23 ♜h5! ♜xd1+ 24 ♖xd1 when Black is simply too exposed on the kingside and on the back rank. He can't move his rook without losing something, but 24...♖g8 (24...♖g7 25 h3 amounts to the same thing) 25 h3! followed by ♜g3 and ♜g4 is devastating.

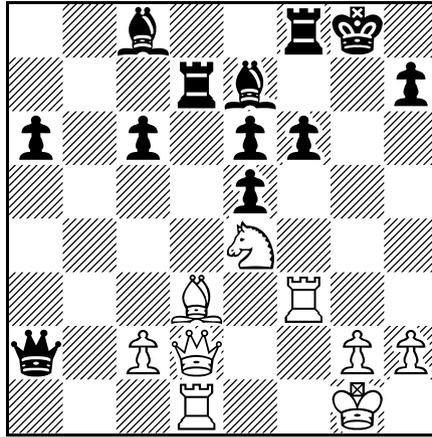
c3) The improbable 20...♜a4!, deterring ♜h6 for the time being, appears to be the only saving move.



After 21 ♜e3 ♜d7 White has nothing better than to force a draw with 22 ♜xh7+ ♖xh7 23 ♜h3+ ♖g7 24 ♜g3+ ♖h7 25 ♜h3+. Note that the queen on a4 not only attacks the knight on e4, but it also threatens to swap queens with ...♜d4 and prevents White from doing anything concrete.

After that rather lengthy but very important digression, we return to Anand's 19...♜d7:

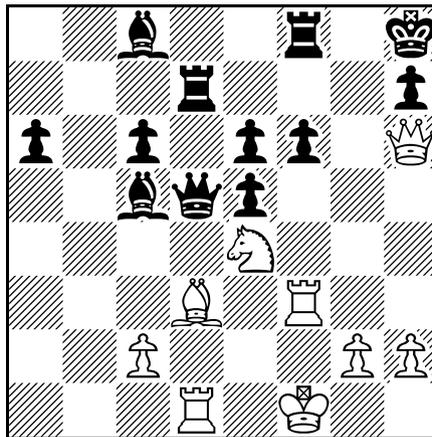
20 ♕d3!?



The novelty that Grischuk must have prepared. Previously, only 20 ♖h6 ♗xd1+ 21 ♕xd1 ♗f7 22 ♗g3+ ♕h8 23 ♖h5 had been seen, transposing back to Vallejo Pons-Kasparov.

20...f5

20...♗f7 21 ♖h6 f5 will likely transpose, while the computer indicates 20...♗d5!?, which may be a more straightforward way to hold the balance. The following computer-generated lines look totally irrational at first glance, but the logic will become clearer once you spend sufficient time on the position. My impression is that both sides should be trying to find moves that do not lose immediately. After 21 ♖h6 (21 ♗g3+ is already inaccurate as Black can escape with 21...♕f7) 21...♕c5+ 22 ♕f1 (of course not 22 ♕h1?? ♖xe4, while after 22 ♗xc5 ♖xc5+ 23 ♕h1 e4! 24 ♗g3+ ♕h8 25 ♕f1 ♖e7 Black defends easily and is a few pawns to the good) 22...♕h8! White has:



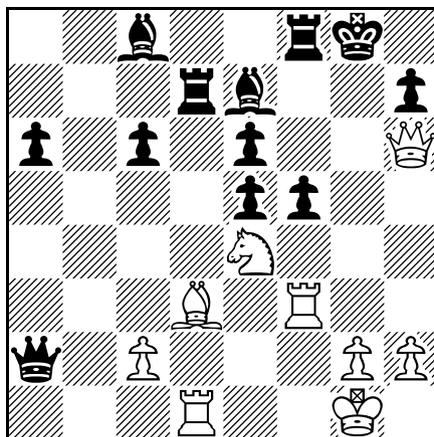
a) 23 ♗xf6? is not possible due to 23...♗d4 when the point of ...♕h8 is revealed. There is

no check on h7 and Black is poised to strike on the kingside.

b) 23 ♘xc5 ♜xc5 24 ♝xf6 ♞df7 (24...♞g7!?) 25 ♖e2 ♜e7 is also a successful defence.

c) 23 ♖e2! ♜xe4 24 ♝xd7 ♖xd7 25 ♖d3 ♜xf3+ 26 gxf3 ♝f7 and I prefer Black, although the position is probably equal.

21 ♜h6



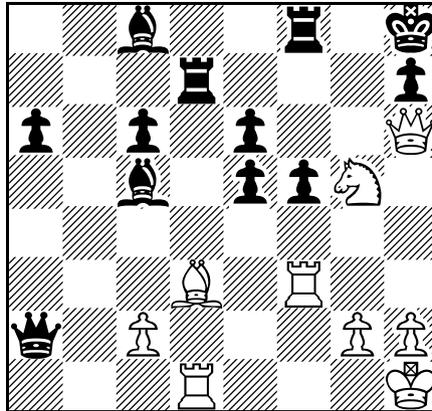
21...♖h8?

Even the former world champion was not able to meet the demands of the Poisoned Pawn. Both Palliser and Giri have pointed out 21...♝f7 as a possible improvement. This was tested subsequently in a couple of games, but both games ending with White victorious which is an indication of how difficult these Poisoned Pawn positions can be. After 22 ♞g3+ ♖h8 23 ♘g5 we have:

a) 23...♖xg5? 24 ♜xg5 ♝f8 (24...♞g7 25 ♜f6 wasn't much help either) 25 ♖f1! ♝df7 26 ♝d8 was a nice miniature in M.Kravtsiv-J.Jens, Pardubice 2009.

b) 23...♞g7! 24 ♘xe6 ♝f7 and here Giri noted that Black appears to be have everything covered, but the position remains complicated even for engines: 25 ♞g7 (Palliser analysed 25 ♘g5? ♖xg5 26 ♜xg5 ♝f8 27 ♜h6 ♜a3 with the onus on White to find equality, while 25 ♖f1 ♖h4! is good for Black as demonstrated by Giri) 25...♖c5+! 26 ♘xc5 ♝xg7 27 ♘xd7 ♜d5 28 ♝d2 ♜xd7?! (28...♖xd7 is safer: 29 ♖xf5 ♜c5+ 30 ♖h1 ♜b5! 31 ♝d1 ♜e2 32 ♝g1 ♖xf5 33 ♜f6 ♜g4 34 ♝d8+ ♝g8 35 ♜f6+ ♜g7 36 ♜xf5 with a probable draw) 29 ♖c4! ♜e7 30 ♜xc6 (White has the initiative, but he certainly shouldn't have won so easily) 30...♖d7?? 31 ♝xd7 1-0 L.Lekic-M.Huber, Kemer 2009. I can't help but notice that this game was played in the World Under-12 Championship and that it is astonishing just how much theory some kids know at such a young age.

22 ♘g5 ♖c5+ 23 ♖h1



The threats are Qxe6 and Th3 followed by Qxh7 , both of which are tricky to meet.

23...Qa5

This is best under the circumstances. 23...Qd5 permits 24 Th3 Tg7 25 Qe2 Qe7! (Black has to keep the pressure on g2 to prevent Qxh7) 26 Th5! Qc5 27 Qxh7 Qg8 28 Qxf8 Qxf8 29 Th3 with a big advantage for White, while 23...e4? 24 Qf1! Tg7 25 Th3 wins in similar fashion.

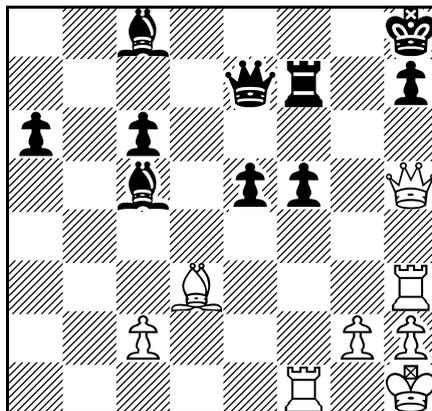
24 Th3?

This gives White an edge, but he could have ended the game immediately. Surprisingly, 24 Qxe6 was not mentioned by either annotator, but it seems to win on the spot. For example, 24...Tff7 25 Wh5! Qb4 26 Tdf1 and Black has no defence.

24...Qc7 25 Qxe6 Qd6 26 Qxf8 Qxf8 27 Tf1

27 Qxc6! e4 28 Qe2 Txd1+ 29 Qxd1 also seems nice for White, although there would still be technical difficulties in converting the material advantage.

27...Tf7 28 Wh5 Qe7



29 ♖hf3?

Grischuk falters at the critical stage, but to be fair, the win was not the simplest to find. 29 ♖xf5! e4 30 ♖b3! is a brilliant idea, planning to both attack the back rank and bring the rook back to guard his own first rank with tempo. I suspect that Grischuk simply missed this idea. After 30...♗d6 31 ♖bb1 White would have been in the driver's seat.

29...f4

White is still better, of course, but things are no longer that clear.

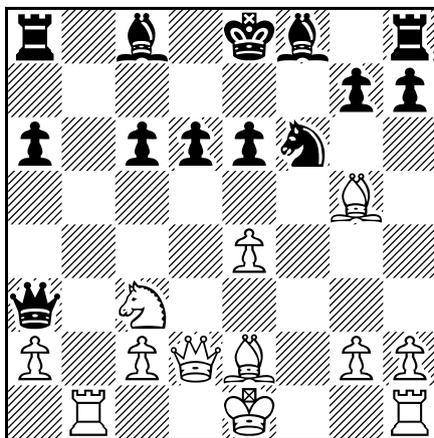
30 ♖e4 ♖g7 31 ♖b3 ♖a7 32 ♖d3?

The final blunder, after which the game is drawn immediately. 32 ♖fb1! would have retained the initiative.

32...♗g4 33 ♖h6 ♖e2 ½-½

Game 32
V.Ivanchuk-A.Grischuk
 Russian Team Championship, Dagomys 2010

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♖g5 e6 7 f4 ♖b6 8 ♗d2 ♖xb2 9 ♖b1 ♖a3 10 f5 ♗c6 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 ♗xc6 bxc6 13 ♖e2!?



This old move was first played by Lembit Oll in 1983 and was reasonably popular in the eighties and nineties. Since then, its popularity had dipped before Ivanchuk reignited the line with three nice wins in 2010.

13...♖e7 14 0-0

14 ♖b3! may catch out the unwary if they attempt to transpose to familiar territory. Here Black has to play 14...♖a5 (the trap is 14...♖c5? 15 ♖e3 ♖e5 16 ♖d4! ♖a5 17 e5!, with promising play for White) when 15 ♖h5+! g6 (15...♗xh5? 16 ♖xe7 d5 17 0-0! is quite hopeless for Black) 16 0-0! is an interesting piece sacrifice. For example, 16...♖c5+