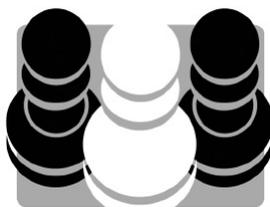


# The Secret Life of Bad Bishops

By

## Esben Lund



Quality Chess  
[www.qualitychess.co.uk](http://www.qualitychess.co.uk)

# Publisher's Foreword

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In this Foreword I will introduce the author, and allow Esben to explain what his book is about in the Preface. I have known Esben for about twenty years. Back in 2001 we wrote a book together, *Meeting 1.d4*, for Everyman Chess. Unlike a lot of other authors, we actually sat in the same room as we wrote, sharing ideas and opinions. The book was no runaway success, but it was decent and we learned a lot from the process.

When I co-founded Quality Chess in 2004, Esben told me he had an idea for a book. I did not think twice before offering him a contract, even if the subject, *Rook vs. Two Minor Pieces*, was a bit technical and unlikely to sell lots of copies. This was exactly how I wanted our new publishing house to be: willing to publish a less commercial book if we felt the content was interesting.

We expected the book to find a limited audience, but many friends have told us that they loved it, finding it thought-provoking. One admirer of the book is the Women's World Champion, Hou Yifan, who revealed that she read it as part of her preparation for the 2013 World Championship match against Anna Ushenina, which she won 5½–1½. Ushenina came well prepared, with top grandmasters to provide her with great openings. But Hou Yifan's focus on the middlegame and endgame proved a sounder strategy.

I think many people mistook *Rook vs. Two Minor Pieces* for an endgame book, when actually it had more material on the opening than the endgame, and overall it was mainly a middlegame book, should you have a deep desire to pin it down. This book might suffer from the same misunderstanding, but at least we have tried to make the title a bit more interesting this time!

Ten years have passed and Esben has not only improved as a player, he has also matured (this lovely word that makes growing older into a positive thing) as a writer, as this book shows.

Quality Chess is happy to continue our mission of publishing interesting and challenging books, no matter how uncommercial their focus. You might suspect that I am trying to put you off reading this book, but we both know that if you have read this far, you are likely to keep on reading; and you will be rewarded for that decision.

Jacob Aagaard  
Glasgow, July 2014

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# Preface

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You hold in your hands a book that has been long in coming to fruition. It took me years to collect material for the early chapters as well as for the exercise section, and it demanded further time testing it on several chess players of different strengths. When I finally concluded some chapters, I realized from the feedback I received that some of them needed restructuring. In the end I excluded several exercises and also one chapter.

My ambition with the book is to introduce the subject of good and bad bishops in a proper way, and that's why the introductory chapter has become slightly longer than usual compared to other chess books. I find existing views of good and bad bishops slightly simplified and misleading. Because the way I am dealing with them is quite a delicate subject, I simply decided not to let the size of the introduction be the main issue, but rather to focus on communicating my view in a proper and understandable way.

Both IM Andreas Hagen and FM Sebastian Nilsson told me that, while reading through the introduction, they thought at the beginning: "Now the bishop **MUST** be bad", while I kept calling it a double-edged bishop (DEB). And the more they read of the introduction, the more they became accustomed to my way of thinking. Danish IM Nikolaj Mikkelsen made a nice comment that in many ways grasps and confirms my idea with this project: he said that he is now less afraid that his potentially bad bishop will in fact become bad.

The structure of the book is similar to that of *Rook vs. Two Minor Pieces* – my first book for Quality Chess: I am dealing with a general subject – this time good and bad bishops – and each of the chapters represents a phase in the game.

The introductory Chapter 1 is followed by Chapter 2 on exchange sacrifices. This is a quite natural follow-up, since this sacrifice can be a way to exchange the right pieces and isolate the potentially bad bishop further. As we shall see throughout the book, the presence of additional pieces on the board is crucial in determining whether the double-edged bishop will in fact end up as a bad bishop.

Chapter 3 deals with the transformation from opening to early middlegame. For that purpose I have chosen to look deeper into a certain variation of the Advance French (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5), as this opening line leaves both White and Black with double-edged bishops. I realize that not everyone plays this line, but this should not be the main point: the material is specifically chosen beyond just the opening theory such that an understanding of the early middlegame is achieved. And by following the good advice from Andreas Hagen to pose questions to the reader throughout the chapter (Dvoretsky likes to do this as well), this chapter can be seen as a test as to whether the reader has captured the essence of the first part of the book. Please answer each question, and check the solution before you move on, as sometimes the next question follows on from the previous question's solution.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the endgame. Here I have analysed in depth the pure endgames rook vs. bishop and bishop vs. knight. It makes a lot of sense to consider what happens if the additional pieces go off the board and thereby ask the question: “What is the bishop able to do on its own?”

This led to some surprising and very useful conclusions. Rook vs. bishop endgames are the sharpest I have ever come across. By entering a pure rook vs. bishop ending, the side with the bishop cannot allow the position to come to a standstill, where only the rook side can improve his position (on the colour inaccessible to the bishop). If he allows the position to come to a standstill, he should be absolutely positive that it is a fortress. I present and discuss the possible fortresses for comparison. If the fortress-like position (FLP) is not a fortress, then the position is simply lost for the bishop side.

It was also beneficial to see in just how many positions it is better to place the pawns on the **same colour** as the bishop – contrary to the simplified rule of thumb that you should place the pawns on the opposite colour of the bishop. On the same colour the pawns can better be protected by the bishop and this comes in useful if, for instance, your activity is taking place on the kingside, whereas you only wish to defend the queenside from a distance.

The concluding Chapters 5 and 6 are devoted to exercises and their solutions, where the reader is able to test if he or she has grasped the essence of all aspects of the double-edged bishop. The exercises are given a level and a recommended time for solving, and the solutions are discussed thoroughly.

Thus the middlegame is given special attention in both the introductory Chapters 2 & 3 as well as in the exercise section.

The material presented in this book is on a high level, and I believe that players rated 1900 and above will benefit the most from it. Players eager to improve their play and understanding of the game will of course get a lot from the book as well. As an author and trainer it was important for me to test the material on players who are aspiring for titles (2 IMs and an FM). I can say with confidence that IMs will benefit a lot from the book on their way to the GM title, and I also believe that grandmasters can learn a thing or two.

I would like to thank all the people involved in this project, especially Andreas Hagen, Nikolaj Mikkelsen and Sebastian Nilsson for giving useful and critical feedback on the whole book from an early stage. This really shaped the book into what it has become. And a special thank-you goes to Jacob Aagaard for making this book possible. For me it was crucial to get an additional good and relevant critique from a grandmaster.

In any case, I hope you will find the book beneficial.

A note on my name: In 2009 I took a second first name (Silas) that I use in my everyday life, but for reasons of continuity I decided to keep Esben Lund on the front cover.

Silas Esben Lund  
Copenhagen, July 2014

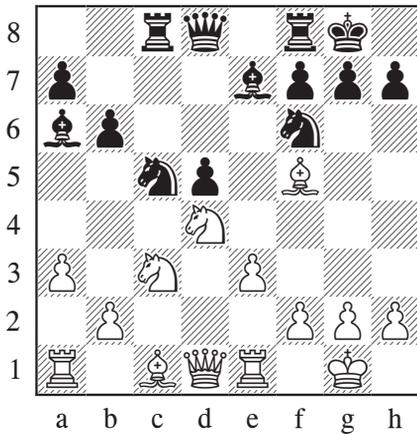
59.♔b2 ♖c4 60.♔c3 ♗d5 61.♞b7 ♞g3† 16...♞xc8 17.♞xc3  
 62.♔b2 ♗xd4  
 0-1

The next game is a favourite of mine as it contains an amazingly deep concept in the early middlegame.

**Suat Atalik – Pavel Eljanov**

Wijk aan Zee 2007

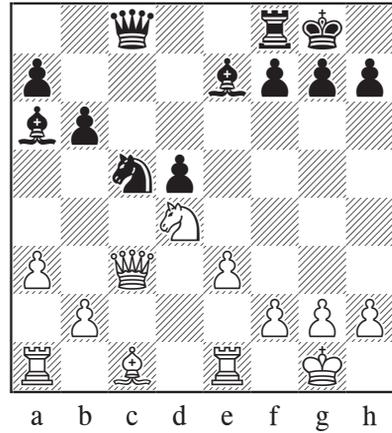
1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♖b4 4.e3 0-0  
 5.♖d3 d5 6.a3 ♖e7 7.♗f3 ♗bd7 8.0-0 c5  
 9.cxd5 exd5 10.♖c2 b6 11.dxc5 ♖a6 12.♞e1  
 ♗xc5 13.♗d4 ♞c8 14.♖f5



This is our starting point of the game. Both players have a DEB in this position, on c1 and a6, and both have the same ‘defect’ of not attacking any concrete targets in the opponent’s position.

14...♗fe4!? 15.♖xc8 ♗xc3 16.♞c2

16.bxc3!? ♞xc8 gives White an extra tempo compared to the game, and thus fights Black’s initiative, but at the expense of ruining the pawn structure. If White is less ambitious and does not wish to profit from his extra exchange, the continuation could be 17.a4 ♗d3 18.♞e2 ♗xc1 19.♞d2! ♗d3 20.♞xd3 ♖xd3 21.♞xd3 with a level, and interesting, position.



Now it is Black to move, and his initiative has a chance to develop; this is the trade-off White decided on in contrast to a healthy pawn structure. At the same time White has a material plus and potential for the future, should Black’s initiative evaporate.

17...♖h4

This might be the most critical point of the game, putting Black’s sacrifice to the test. I believe that this move was a part of Black’s whole concept when he sacrificed the exchange: He will force White to play g2-g3 which creates weaknesses on the light squares – the opposite colour of the DEB on c1. Now Black threatens to take immediately on f2 because of a nasty knight fork on e4.

18.g3

Was White forced to play this weakening pawn move?

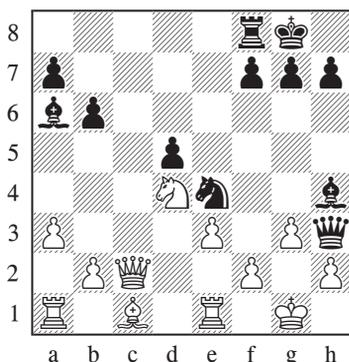
18.♞c2!?

This might be an improvement upon White’s play. Let’s analyse:

18...♗e4

Not 18...♗d3 19.♞e2 since 19...♗xc1? does not win back the exchange due to 20.♞xc1 eyeing c8.

19.g3 ♖h3



20.♔d2!?

The crucial difference. It looks dangerous to allow sacrificial ideas, but they do not seem to work in Black's favour. Without this little bishop move it would be very difficult for White to develop his queenside, and it might be the fear of some sacrifice that made Atalik reject this set-up.

20.f3? does not work because of 20...♙xg3!.

20...♞c8

20...♗xf2?! 21.gxh4 ♔d3 22.♞c7 ♗e4 has the double threat of ...♗xd2 and ...♞g4†, but White defends successfully with 23.♞f4! when 23...♗xd2 24.♞ad1 wins back the material. It is easy to overlook details in this line.

21.♙c3 ♙f6 22.f3 ♗xc3

22...♗g5 23.♞g2! If White can get this defensive move in, then c2 was definitely the right place for the queen. 23...♞h5 24.♗h1! ♙xd4 25.g4! ♞h4 26.exd4 and White has an advantage.

23.bxc3 h5

White holds a small advantage here, although Black is in the game.

18...♞h3 19.♞d1

White is under pressure, but perhaps defending with too much caution. Other options were:

19.gxh4 loses to: 19...♗e4 20.♞c2 ♞g4† 21.♗h1 ♙d3+–

Also possible was the natural-looking:

19.b4 ♗e4

19...♗d3? 20.b5 ♗xe1 21.♞xe1+– with two bishops hanging.

20.♞c7 ♙f6

Now threatening to take on f2.

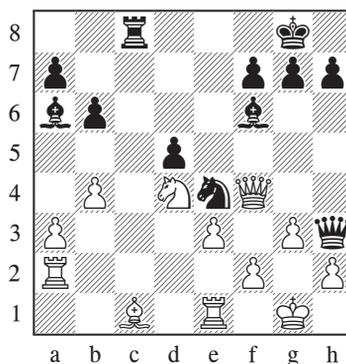
20...♗xf2 21.gxh4!

21.♞a2 ♞c8

21...♙c4!?

22.♞f4

The position is extremely dangerous for White after 22.♞xa7?! ♙d3, when it is difficult for him to untangle himself. For instance: 23.f3 ♗xg3! Meanwhile, Black can strengthen his attack by advancing the h-pawn or playing ...♗g5 at the right moment.



The following lines show that the game is balanced:

22...h5

22...♗g5!?

23.♞f5 ♞xf5 24.♗xf5 g6

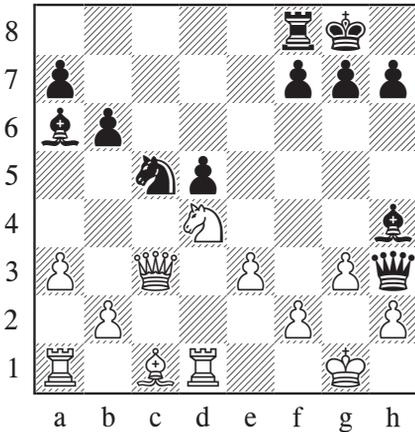
Even with queens off the board, White still needs to be careful. All Black's four pieces are active and cooperating well at the moment, which is not the case for White.

25.♗d4 ♗c3 26.♞c2 ♙xd4! 27.exd4 ♙d3

Black wins back the material.

28.♞d2 ♗e2† 29.♞dx2 ♙xe2=

19. ♖c2 was also possible, but Black can choose to play 19... ♟f6 (19... ♞e4 is met by 20. ♟d2!), when he keeps the option open for both knight jumps to d3 or e4, depending on the circumstances. 20. ♟d2 ♞d3 Now after 21. ♖f1 ♞e5, Black wins back the material, and after 21... ♞ed1? the sacrifice works: 21... ♞xf2! 22. ♜xf2 ♞xh2† 23. ♜f3 ♟xd4 24. exd4 ♟e2† with a mating attack.



**19... ♟f6!**

Very logical, for many reasons. We know that with every exchange White's DEB on c1 is being isolated. But with the exchange ♟f6x♞d4, opposite-coloured bishops will remain on the board and Black will rule on the light squares. For the record, the knight on d4 is defending the light squares (f3 and e2), so it's logical to exchange it to keep the attack going.

**20. ♖e1**

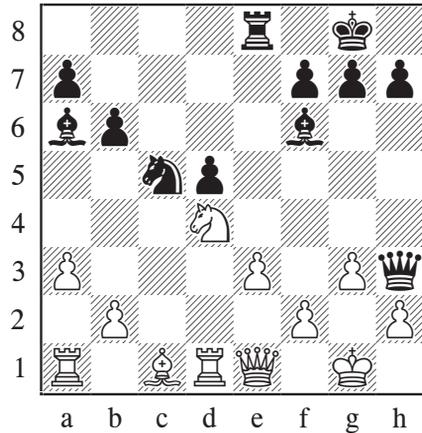
Another cautious defensive move, this time probably the best.

20. b4 fails to 20... ♞e4 21. ♖e1 ♞g5 with problems.

20. ♖c2 ♞e8 21. ♖f5?! Black's coordination is so good that again a queen exchange will not stop his initiative. (21. f3? ♟xd4! loses outright since

the rook is pinned to the defence of f1. 22. exd4 ♞e2-+) 21... ♖xf5 22. ♞xf5 ♞b3 23. ♖b1 ♞c8 With ... ♟e2 on its way. 24. ♟d2? ♟d3!

**20... ♞e8**



With White I would probably think along the lines: "What have I done to end up in this position – I made a simple bishop move with 14. ♟f5 a long time ago, attacking the black rook on c8!?"

It is amazing how fast Black's initiative developed after the exchange sacrifice. It is also easy to forget that Black's a6-bishop is a DEB, since as long as Black's initiative is ongoing, the bishop seems only useful and very strong. But again, no direct targets are to be found in White's position that it can attack; all White's pawns are on dark squares. In short, the DEB on a6 is dependent on the remaining forces.

**21. b4**

The DEB on c1 is sensing a breath of air.

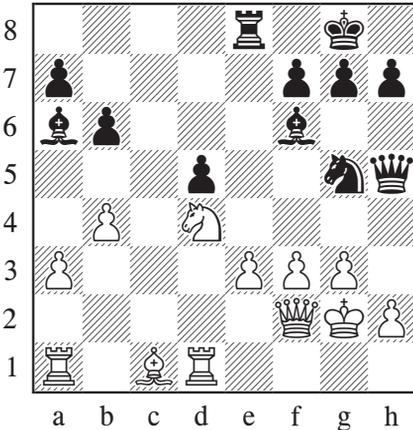
**21... ♞e4 22. f3**

22. ♟b2? is still too early: 22... ♞g5-+

My engine mentions 22. b5 as White's best defence, with the point 22... ♟xb5 23. ♞xb5 ♟xa1 24. ♖xd5, but Black can play the non-

materialistic: 22...♙xd4! 23.♖xd4 (Even worse is 23.exd4 ♙xb5 24.♙e3 f5! with a huge attack.) 23...♙xb5 This simply keeps the right pieces on the board, and White remains with the same problems, now with a pawn less. 24.f3 ♘g5 is similar to the game continuation.

22...♘g5 23.♖f2 ♗h5 24.♙g2



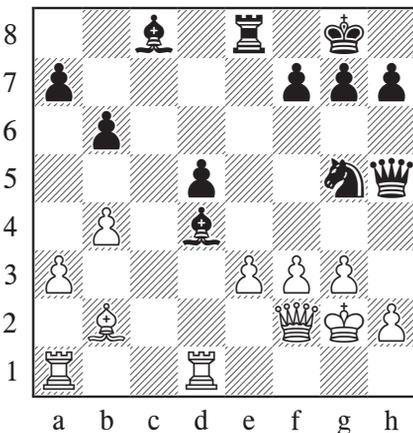
24...♙c8!

Black comes up with new attacking ideas.

25.♙b2

25.g4? ♙xc4 26.fxg4 ♗xc4† and the rook on d1 is hanging.

25...♙xd4



26.♖xd4

The rook is added to the defence via the 4th rank.

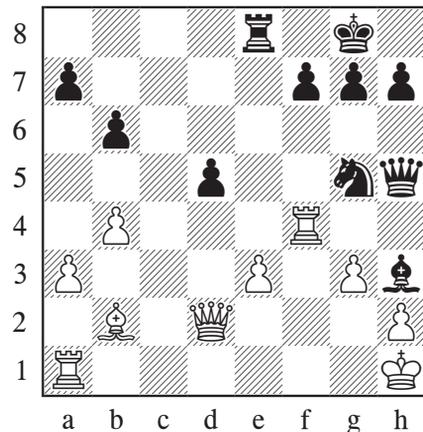
26.♙xd4 ♙h3† 27.♙h1 ♘xf3 with the deadly threat of ...♙f5-e4.

26...♙h3† 27.♙h1 ♘xf3 28.♖f4 ♘g5

For the first time in many moves, White has breathing space and has also caught up with his lack in development. Notice that even after the entrance on the long diagonal a1-h8, the white bishop is still a DEB.

29.♗d2

Black answers 29.♖h4 with 29...♗g6.



29...♘e6

My computer prefers the straightforward 29...♘e4! 30.♗d4 f6 (threatening 31...♗e2) 31.♖g1 ♙g4 32.♙g2 ♗h3† 33.♙h1 ♖e5 with ...♖h5 coming next.

30.♖f2 d4!?

Eljanov gives up another pawn to feed his initiative. My engine suggests the calm 30...f6 31.♖d1 ♖d8 with a stable advantage.

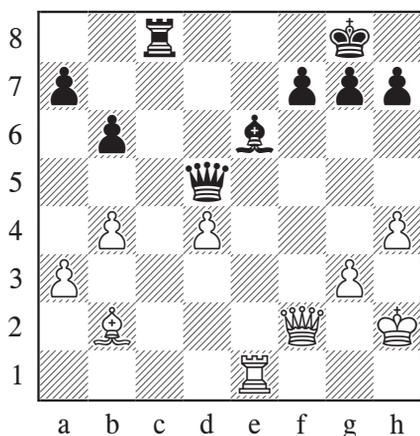
31.exd4?!

Now the black initiative continues with the same force as before.

31.♞xd4 ♜d5† 32.♔g1 ♝g5 gives Black the same kind of initiative as in the game.

31.♞e1!? was worth a try, or White could consider 31.e4!? to at least repair some of the light squares.

31...♜d5† 32.♔g1 ♝g5 33.♞e1 ♞e6 34.h4 ♜h3† 35.♔h2 ♜xf2 36.♞xf2 ♞c8♣



In this position both players still possess their DEB, but there is a huge difference in the strength of them, because of White's vulnerable king position. White's b2-bishop looks utterly helpless here.

37.♞c1 ♞d8 38.♞c7 a6 39.♞g2

39.♞a7? leaves the rook out of play after 39...♞e4→.

The next phase of the game we can name "The dance of the black queen". As long as Black does not exchange heavy pieces, his advantages will continue to exist.

39...♞b3 40.♞c3 ♜d1 41.♞e3 h6

41...♞d5?? 42.♞xd5+–

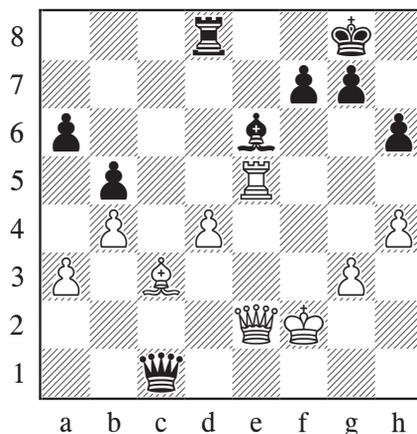
42.♞e2 ♞b1 43.♞c3 ♞f5

43...♞d5 looks strong, but White can play 44.♞e1! preparing the exchange of rooks.

(Not 44.♞e8† ♞xe8 45.♞xe8† ♔h7 46.♞e1 ♞d3 when White's coordination is far worse.) 44...♞c8 45.♞e8† ♞xe8 46.♞xe8† ♔h7 47.♞e3 It is not easy for Black to break the white defence in this position. Therefore Black should be careful before he allows the exchange of more of the remaining pieces.

44.♔g1 b5 45.♞e5 ♞b1† 46.♔f2 ♞c1

46...♞d5 47.♞e8† ♞xe8 48.♞xe8† ♔h7 49.♞e3 ♞h1 50.♞f4 is of course unpleasant for White, but nothing is clear. On the plus side Black's attacking material has been reduced.



47.♞b2

Here White had a chance to transform the position to what I believe gives him better chances of survival: 47.d5!? ♞xd5 (47...♞xc3 48.dxe6 ♞d2 49.e7 ♞xe5 50.♞xd2 ♞xe7 and a difficult technical task lies ahead for Black to convert the advantage in this ending.) 48.♞e8† ♞xe8 49.♞xe8† ♔h7 50.♞e5 This double attack is the real point, forcing Black into a queen ending. 50...♞c2† 51.♔e3 f6 52.♞xd5 ♞xc3† 53.♔f2 and once again White can fight for the draw in a queen ending.

47...♞c6 48.♞c5 ♞h1 49.♞f1 ♞e4 50.♞e2 ♞b1 51.♞c1 ♞a2 52.♞c3

52...♞c3 ♞d5

52...♙g4 53.♚d2 ♛d5 54.♖g1 ♙e6 55.♞c5 ♜f3 56.♞g2 ♛b3 57.♖h2 ♙d5 58.♚e2 ♙c4 59.♞f2 f6

Black has found the win: the rook on c5 is disconnected from the queen and bishop, and ...♞e8 cannot be prevented.

60.♖h3 ♞e8 61.d5 ♛d1

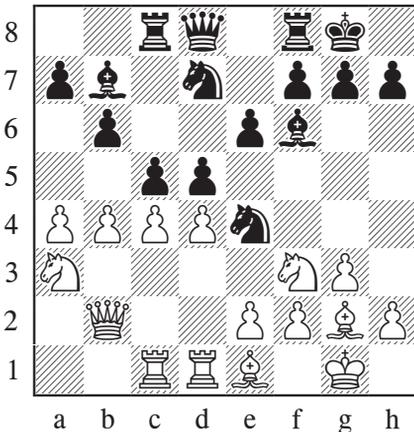
Black's initiative lasted more than forty moves!  
0-1

We end this introduction with a great game that somehow never really unfolded, but I hope to show in my analysis what went on in the game 'under the surface'. The reader should be familiar with all the concepts of the DEB by now.

### Vladimir Kramnik – Boris Gelfand

Wijk aan Zee 2008

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♙a6 5.b3 ♙b4† 6.♙d2 ♙e7 7.♙g2 c6 8.0-0 d5 9.♚c2 ♘bd7 10.♞d1 0-0 11.a4 c5 12.♘a3 ♙b7 13.♚b2 ♞c8 14.♞ac1 ♘e4 15.♙e1 ♙f6 16.b4



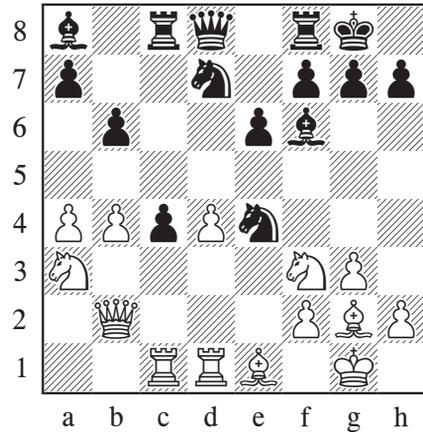
16...♙a8

Yusupov believes that Black has equalized at this point, whereas Marin thinks that White is able to obtain a small plus.

17.e3

Marin recommends 17.♚b1.

17...cxd4 18.exd4 dxc4



At this point in the game, it is not difficult to spot the possible DEBs in the position: Black's a8-bishop and White's e1-bishop. All four bishops – in fact all pieces – are still on the board, so none of the DEBs are unique, but further exchanges will soon reveal how the game is likely to develop. Deep strategic thinking is about foreseeing such developments.

19.♘e5

Marin awards this move – and Gelfand's reply to it – an exclamation mark. White's idea is to make use of the somewhat unstable knight on e4 and to force through d4-d5.

19...♙g5!

Forcing White to play f2-f4.

20.f4 ♙e7 21.♘axc4 f5

21...f6?! 22.d5! (Marin)

22.♘e3 ♞xc1 23.♚xc1 ♘df6

The d5-square is under control.

24.♘c6 ♚c7 25.b5