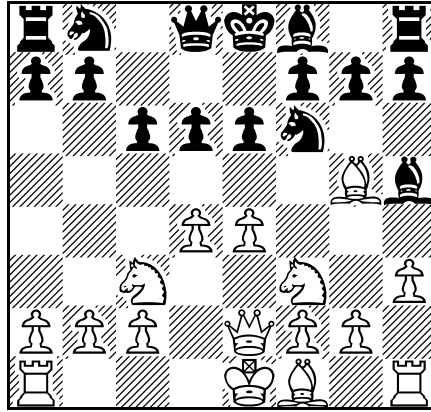


Game 8
G.Newerovski–R.Ovetchkin
 Tula 2003

1 ♖f3 d6 2 d4 ♙g4 3 e4 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 c6 5 h3 ♙h5 6 ♚e2 e6 7 ♙g5?!



Question: Is he trying for e5, in conjunction with the pin?

Answer: This isn't White's main idea behind 7 ♙g5. Remember, Black normally plays for ...d5 and White responds with e5, so White's idea behind the pin is a plan to unload his potentially bad dark-squared bishop in exchange for Black's knight.

Question: That doesn't seem like such a bad idea. Why don't you like it?

Answer: There are three problems:

1. It violates the principle: Avoid swaps when you have a space advantage.
2. White forks over the bishop pair in a fluid position which may later open.
3. If White avoids the swap on f6 he may later be vulnerable to tactics involving ...♗xe4.

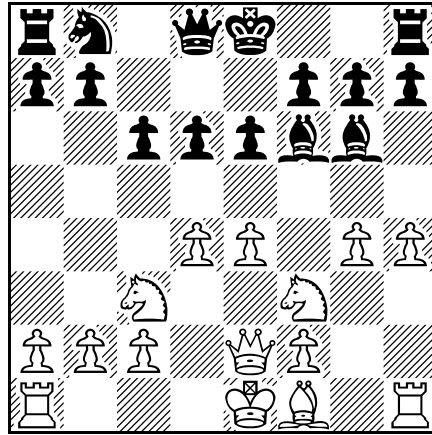
7... ♙e7 8 ♙xf6

Consistent but probably faulty. White gives up his bishop pair, and some dark squares in the process, but doesn't even make Black pay the price of a tempo with ...h6. The alternative is to delay the capture on f6 with 8 0-0-0:

a) 8... ♗bd7 9 ♖b1 d5 10 g4 ♙g6, but now he must submit to the unforced capture on f6 anyway: 11 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 was played in G.Todorovic-K.Mokry, Tuzla 1990. I would try the more adventurous 11... ♗xf6!? denying e5 to White's pieces and increasing the hold over the dark squares.

b) I would avoid the trick 8... ♗xe4?! which wins the exchange but also hands White many strategic plusses: 9 ♗xe4 ♙xf3 10 ♙xe7 (10 ♚xf3? ♙xg5+ drops a pawn) 10... ♙xe2

11 ♖xd8 ♗xd1 12 ♗h4 ♗h5 and a draw was agreed in P.Dezan-P.Toulzac, Toulouse 2000. White has excellent compensation for the exchange after 13 ♘xd6+ ♔d7 14 ♘xb7.
8...♗xf6 9 g4 ♗g6 10 h4



Once again White goes forward in his decision to napalm the kingside.

Question: And this doesn't make you nervous?

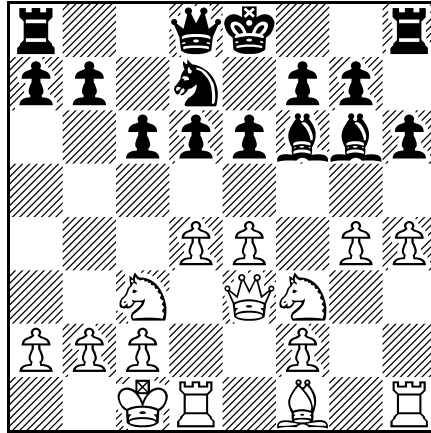
Answer: No. Somehow these rushing pawns don't make me nervous because Black hasn't committed his king to that side of the board. The position, for now all fun and games for White, may sour for him later since he risks serious danger of overextension.

10...h6

It makes more sense to keep the position fluid now that it is Black who has the bishop pair. Still, 10...h5 looks fully playable: 11 g5 ♗e7 12 0-0-0 ♘d7 13 ♗h3 d5 14 ♘e5 ♘xe5 15 dxe5 ♖a5 16 exd5 cxd5 17 f4 0-0 18 f5 exf5 19 ♗xd5 ♖b4 20 ♗g2 ♗fe8 21 ♔b1 ♗f8 22 ♖f2 a6 23 ♗hd1 ♗ac8 with mutual chances, V.Epishin-K.Mokry, Vienna 1991. Black's king looks slightly more secure to compensate for White's more centralized pieces.

11 0-0-0 ♘d7 12 ♖e3!

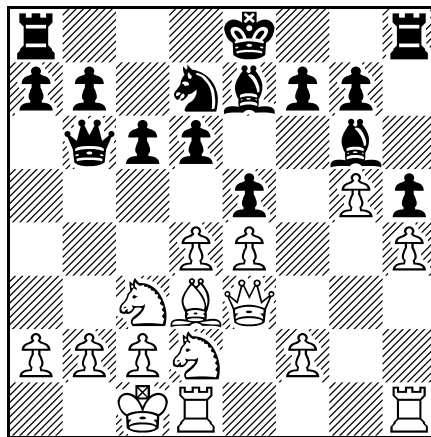
Multipurpose: he adds heat to the g5-square in order to push his g-pawn, his queen eyes a7, in case Black castles queenside, and he covers his c3-knight in order to play d5 at some point.



12...e7 13 d3 h5!?

I would have left the kingside fluid and played 13...b6 intending to castle queenside.

14 g5 b6 15 d2 e5!



Question: Why an exclamation when Black violates a principle by opening the position when behind in development? Also, shouldn't Black be playing for ...d5, and not ...e5, which we have seen in previous games?

Answer: Black isn't all that far behind in development. He violates the principle you mentioned, but follows one of opening the game when owning the bishop pair. At some point you must take your stand and fight back in the centre. Also, remember you don't always play for ...d5. Sometimes ...e5 may be superior. We must remain flexible. White threatens to overwhelm Black with f4 and f5, so Black logically plants his flag on e5.

16 e2 f6!

Bit by bit, Black chips away at White's imposing pawn centre. After 16...exd4 17 ♖xd4 ♗e5 18 f4 ♗g4 19 ♔g1 0-0-0 20 f5 ♕h7 White stands better due to his space and the buried black bishop on h7.

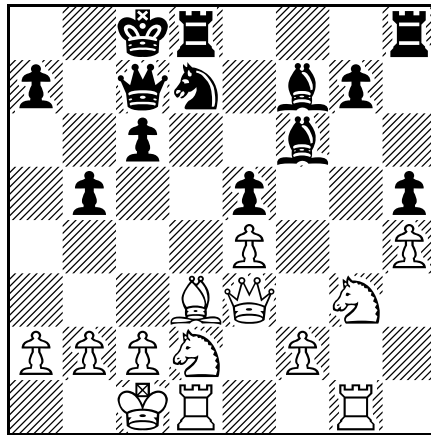
17 ♖c4 ♔c7 18 gxf6

The early release of tension probably helps Black. However I also like Black's position if White keeps the tension with 18 f4 ♕f7 19 ♔b1 0-0-0 20 dxe5 dxe5 21 ♔xa7 exf4.

18...♕xf6 19 dxe5?!

Ditto. Too early. Once again White releases central tension and falls victim to the law of diminishing returns. If you push all your pawns forward and then later lose momentum, a position tends to go south quickly. Remember the old saying: Early is late if you believe tomorrow is yesterday! Better was 19 f4 ♕f7.

19...dxe5 20 ♖hg1 ♕f7 21 ♗g3 b5! 22 ♗d2 0-0-0



An assessment:

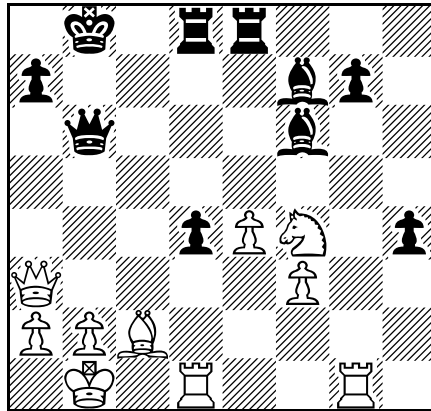
1. Black owns the bishop pair in a semi-open position.
2. Black controls the dark squares.
3. White is saddled with a potentially bad bishop.
4. h4 is weak.

Conclusion: The advantage swings to Black.

23 c4?!

Question: I noticed you gave White's aggressive move a dubious mark. Why force your pacifist philosophy on your readers? Some of us actually prefer to fight for the initiative, take risks and eat red meat!

Answer: There is a thin line between controlled aggression, which is good, and just flailing about, which is not! Fischer once said that to get squares one must sometimes give up squares. It's perfectly understandable that White doesn't want to sit around and wait while Black improves his position. However, his move compromises control over the key d4-



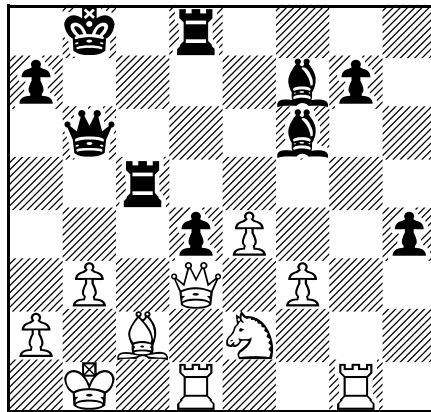
Exercise (planning): Should Black go for a touchdown with his h-pawn or directly after White's king?

Answer: Black should go after the king, with all his guns aimed in that direction.

35...♖e5! 36 ♔d3 ♜b5 37 b3

Fatally weakening the dark squares around his king.

37...♜c5 38 ♞e2



Exercise (combination alert): Find the move which bludgeons all hope.

Answer: 38...♙c4! 0-1

39 ♕d2 d3 wins.

Summary: No need to concern ourselves about the strategically suspect 7 ♙g5?! after which I believe White fights for equality.