

The Double Muzio

by Peter Millican

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Unique amongst the major opening variations, the Double Muzio Gambit leaves White two pieces down after only eight moves! According to Lowenthal it was invented by Morphy, though he is recorded as having played it (in 1857) only when giving odds of the queen's knight. Despite its pedigree and glamour, however, the Double Muzio has been sadly neglected by 'theory', and indeed nearly every published variation of it is hopelessly wrong. This is not perhaps so surprising, since grandmasters cannot possibly afford to play such a risky and complicated line without thorough analysis, but neither can they afford to devote their time to analysing a line which can be so easily avoided by wary opponents. The Truth, therefore, remains to be uncovered by obscure axe-wielding fanatics who periodically crawl out of their dens to participate in gambit tournaments!

My own opinion of this magnificent gambit concurs with that of David Bronstein who, in his book *200 Open Games* (page 8), singled it out for special praise: the Double Muzio alone, he claimed, 'would be sufficient to earn for the [King's Gambit] the eternal gratitude of chess-players'. I hope that you will also agree when you have seen some of the beautiful variations arising from the following game!

Game No. 584

White: P. J. R. Millican

Black: N. A. Down

BCCA Gambit Tournament G 44, 1986-87

1	e4	e5
2	f4	exf4
3	Nf3	g5

The Classical Defence to the King's Knight's Gambit, one of the oldest replies and still perhaps the most challenging, since it threatens to hang on to Black's extra pawn on f4, fortifying the pawn chain with ...h6 and ...Bg7.

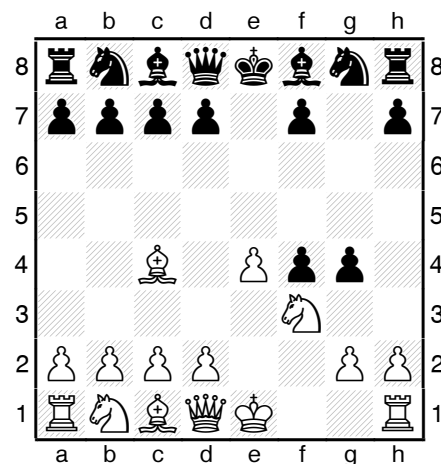
4 Bc4!?

Inviting Black to provoke a knight sacrifice.

For less swashbuckling souls, 4 h4 g4 5 Ne5 leads to the relatively mild Kieseritsky Gambit.

4 ... **g4!?**

There is a lot to be said for amending the Laws of Chess to make this move obligatory! 4...Bg7 is, of course, much safer, though hardly in the spirit of a gambit tournament.



5 0-0!

The Muzio Gambit: White's strongest continuation. There are several other ways of giving up the piece, notably the Lolli Gambit (5 Bxf7+), the Ghulam Kassim Gambit (5 d4) and the McDonnell Gambit (5 Nc3). All of these are dubious, though the last is probably the best alternative to the Muzio, since the attempt to save the knight by 5 Ne5? (the Salvio Gambit) is refuted by 5...Qh4+ 6 Kf1 Nc6! when Black sacrifices material himself in order to throw virtually everything that remains at the White king, for example 7 Nxf7 Bc5 8 Qe1 g3! 9 Nxf8 Bf2 10 Qd1 Nf6 11 d4 d5 12 exd5 Bg4 13 Be2 Nxd4 14 Nc3 f3! 15 Bxf3 Bxf3 16 gxf3 Qh3 mate.

5 ... **gxf3**

5...d5?! does little to hinder White's attack, while reducing its cost by a pawn. Aurbach – Spielmann, Abbazia 1912, continued 6 Bxd5 gxf3 (6...c6? 7 Bxf7+ Kxf7 8 Ne5+ Ke8 9 d4 is even worse) 7 Qxf3 Nf6 8 Qxf4 Be7 9 Nc3 0-0 10 d3 c6 11 Bb3 Be6 12 Bd2 Bxb3 13 axb3 Nbd7 14 Rf3 with a strong attack. The

little known 5...Qe7 is interesting, attempting to force a transposition into the 6...Qe7 line mentioned below whilst limiting White's options in reply. However, White can advantageously avoid the transposition by 6 d4 gxf3 7 Nc3!

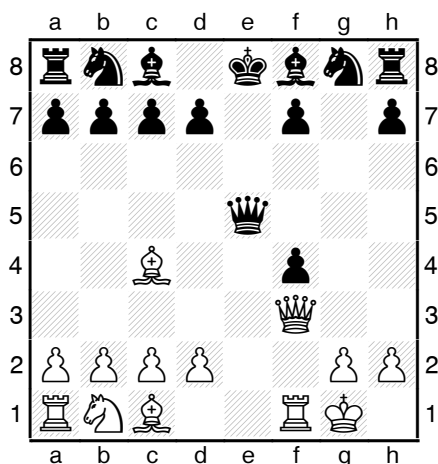
6 Qxf3 Qf6

This is the main line, although 6...Qe7 is also well worth considering. Steinitz – Anderssen (London 1862) continued 7 d4 Nc6 8 Nc3! (8 c3? Ne5! 9 dxe5 Qc5+) Nxd4 9 Qd3 Ne6 10 Nd5 Qc5+ 11 Kh1 b5 12 Bb3 Bh6 13 Bd2 Qf8 14 Qc3, a line which most authorities assess as being better for White, though the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings (ECO)* recommends that Black should play 12...Bb7 with the idea of queenside castling, leaving an unclear position. There are, however; many other ways for White to handle the attack, for example 7 b3, 7 d3 or even 7 Qxf4!? (since 7...Qc5+ 8 d4 Qxd4+ 9 Be3 Qxc4 can be met by 10 Qe5+).

7 e5

7 d3 and 7 c3 are both perfectly playable, but this pawn sacrifice is much more adventurous, as we shall soon see!

7 ... Qxe5



8 Bxf7+ !!?

Tally Ho! This startling bishop sacrifice introduces the Double Muzio Gambit.

8 ... Kxf7

8...Kd8 is playable, but can hardly be considered a serious attempt at refutation. White's best continuation is probably 9 d4 Qxd4+ 10 Kh1 followed by Bd2 and Bc3, as played by Marshall against Moreau at Monte Carlo 1903 (1–0, 29).

9 d4 Qxd4+

Also worthy of note is 9...Qf5, as recommended by Steinitz. The standard

reply to this is 10 g4 Qg6 11 Bxf4 Nf6 12 Be5 Be7 13 Bxf6 Bxf6 14 Nc3, but although all the books assess this position as promising for White, they are being wildly optimistic, since the simple unpinning move 14...Kg7! gives Black every prospect of hanging on to most of his extra material. In their article "Satisfaction to Mr Polerio and Mr Muzio", *British Chess Magazine* September 1988, IM's Sapi and Schneider recommend instead 13 Nc3 d6 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 Nd5 leading to an equal position. But in this line they have overlooked 14...Bxg4! which appears to win for Black, e.g. 15 Qd5+ Be6+ 16 Bg5+ Kg7 17 Qxb7 Nd7–+). Since 10 g4?! is so dubious, White does better to play 10 Bxf4! which is not so loosening and is also much more in the style of the main line Double Muzio (i.e. 9... Qxd4+ 10 Be3 Qf6 11 Bxf4). By comparison with the main line, Black's queen is probably better placed on f5 than it is on f6, but in compensation White's strong attack is assisted by his d-pawn, which can both support a piece on e5 and prevent a blockade on that square. After 10 Bxf4! the game Millican – D.J. Rawlings, BCCA G44 1986/7, continued: 10...Nf6 11 Qe3 (11 Qe2!? may be even stronger) 11...Bg7 12 Be5 Qe6 (12...Qg6 also leads to very complicated play, for example 13 Nc3 d6 14 Nd5 dxe5 15 dxe5 Re8 16 Nxc7 Re7 17 Qb3+ Kf8 18 exf6! Rxc7 19 Qa3+ Kg8 20 ffg7 Qxg7 21 Rae1 Bd7 22 Re3 Rc6 23 Re7!) 13 Nc3 d5 14 Rae1 Nbd7 15 Qf3 Nxe5 16 dxe5 Qb6+ 17 Kh1 Rf8 18 Nxd5 Qd4 19 exf6 Bxf6 20 Nxf6 1–0.

10 Be3 Qf6

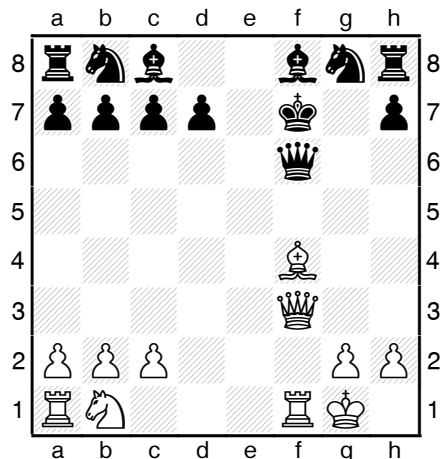
10...Qg7 gives White at least a draw with 11 Qxf4+! Nf6 12 Bd4 Be7 13 Nc3 d6 14 Bxf6! Bxf6 15 Nd5 Nd7 16 Rae1 Re8! 17 Qc4! Rxe1 (17...Ne5? 18 Nxf6+! Nxc4 19 Nxe8+ Kg6 20 Nxc7 Kxc7 21 Re8 intending 22 Rff8±) 18 Nxf6+ Kg6 19 Qg4+ Kf7 20 Qc4+. But White also has several opportunities to play for a win, for example 19 Qd3+ Kf7 20 Nh5+!?, or earlier 16 Nxc7?! or 16 Qc4!?

11 Bxf4!

Morphy's continuation 11 Qh5+ Qg6 12 Rxf4+ Nf6 13 Rxf6+ Kxf6 14 Bd4+ is inadequate when White has a queen's knight on the board, since 14...Kf7 15 Qd5+ Qe6 16 Qf3+ Ke8 leaves Black with a considerable material advantage (17 Bxh8?? Qe1+ mates in 4). Keres, however, suggested the interesting alternative 11 Nc3!?, the point of which is that 11...fxe3?! gives White a winning attack beginning with 12 Qh5+. One promising defence to 11 Nc3!? is 11...Ne7 12

Nd5 Qf5! 13 Nxc7 Ng6! 14 Nxa8 Na6 leaving a complicated situation in which White has nearly restored material equality, although the awkward situation of his knight on a8 may give Black the advantage.

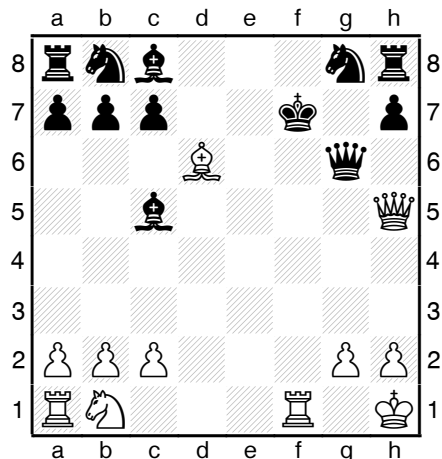
The move played, 11 Bxf4!, leads to the basic position of the Double Muzio Gambit, a position which I am convinced is objectively equal, having analysed it on and off for over thirteen years!



11 ... Ne7

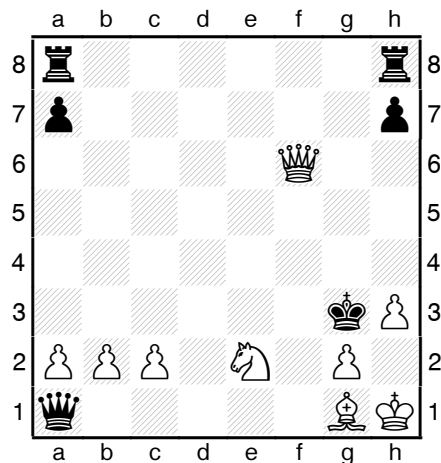
The 'book' move, but probably not the best. The main alternatives, in order of increasing importance, are:

(a) 11...Bc5+? leads to a beautiful forced loss after 12 Kh1 d6 13 Qh5+! Qg6 (13...Kg7 14 Bh6+!) 14 Bxd6+!

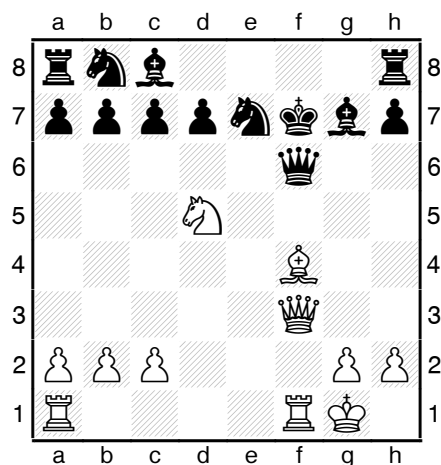


14...Bf5!? (14...Ke8 15 Qe2+!! Qe6 16 Qb5+ wins the bishop without conceding any material swaps, while 14...Nf6?? loses dramatically to 15 Rxf6+!! Kxf6 16 Qe5+ Kf7 17 Qe7+ Kg8 18 Qe8+ mate! as in Millican – B. Eley, offhand game, Ramsgate 1975) 15 Rxf5+ Ke6 16 Bxc5! Qxf5 17 Qe8+ Ne7! (17...Kf6 18 Bd4+ Kg5 19 Nd2+-; 17...Kd5 18 Nc3+ Kxc5 19 Qb5+) 18 Qxe7+ Kd5 19 Qxc7! Qf1+ 20 Bg1 Ke6 (else 21 Nc3+) 21

Qxb7 Nd7 22 Qc6+ Ke7 23 Nc3! Qxa1 24 Nd5+ Kf7 25 Qxd7+ Kg6 26 Qe6+ Kg5 27 Qf6+ Kh5 28 Nf4+ Kg4 29 h3+ Kg3 30 Ne2 mate. This line is Millican – J.C. Kirwan, Sittingbourne 1978, whose final position must be unique in a game which from as early as move eleven seems to follow the best play for both sides:



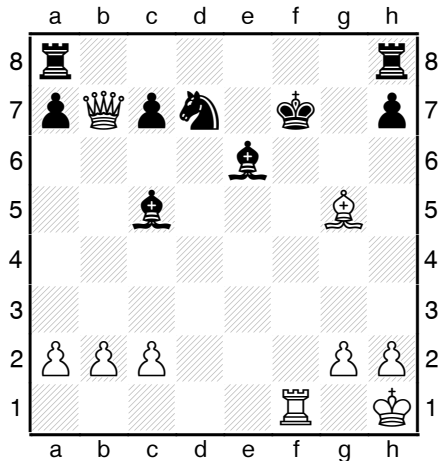
(b) 11...Bg7?! is an often quoted continuation, on the basis of the game Smirnov – Tikhonov, USSR 1954: 12 Nc3 Ne7 13 Nd5:



13...Nxd5 14 Qxd5+ Qe6 15 Bd2+ Kg8 16 Rae1! Qxd5 17 Re8+ Bf8 18 Bh6 1-0. This is all, however, rather unconvincing, since either 13...Qg6!? or the obvious 15...Bf6! would have put up considerably more resistance than Tikhonov's chosen line. The former fails to the surprising and spectacular 14 Bd6+! Nf5 15 Ne7!! Qxd6 16 Rae1! Bd4+ 17 Kh1 Qxe7 18 Qh5+ Kf8 19 Qxf5+! Qf6 20 Qg5 Qxf1+ 21 Rxf1+ Ke8 22 Re1+ Kf7 23 Re7+ Kf8 24 Re4! Nc6 25 Qf5+ Kg8 26 Rg4+ Bg7 27 Qf6 mates. The latter is best avoided by playing 15 Bh6+! (recommended by Rosenthal in 1885!) in preference to 15 Bd2+, since then the reply 15...Bf6 loses quickly to 16 Rxf6+! Kxf6 17 Qg5+ Kf7 18 Qg7+ Ke8 19

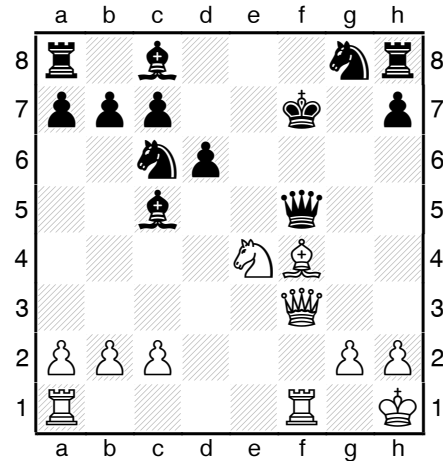
Qxh8+ Kf7 20 Qg7+ Ke8 21 Qf8 mate, which provides an interesting mirror-image of the Millican – Eley game in the previous note.

(c) 11...d5 is unknown to ‘theory’, as far as I am aware, but it is considerably more tenacious than most of the standard lines. White should continue 12 Nc3 Ne7 (12...c6? loses quickly to 13 Qh5+ Qg6 14 Bd6+ Nf6 15 Rxf6+ Kxf6 16 Qe5+ Kf7 17 Rf1+ or 14...Ke8 15 Rxf8+ Kd7 16 Qe5! Qe6 17 Bxb8!) 13 Nxd5 Nxd5 14 Qxd5+ Be6 15 Qxb7 Bc5+ 16 Kh1 Nd7 17 Bg5! Qxf1+ 18 Rxf1+



18...Kg7! (18...Kg6 19 Qe4+ Kxg5 20 h4+! Kh5 21 Qxe6 Raf8 22 Rxf8 Rxf8 23 Qxd7 Kxh4 24 Qh3+ Kg5 25 Qg3+ and 26 Qxc7 +-) 19 Bf6+!! Nxf6 20 Qxc7+ Kg6 (20...Nd7? 21 Qg3+ Kh6 22 Rf4 Be7 23 Qe3!+-; 20...Bf7!? 21 Qxc5 Rhf8 22 Qe7 Nd5! is unclear) 21 Qxc5 and White threatens 22 Qe2, 22 Qe7 or 22 h4 and 23 Qg5+, e.g. 21...Rhf8 22 h4! h6?! (22...Ne4! 23 Rxf8!±) 23 h5+! Kf7 (23...Kg7 24 Qe7+) 24 Qe5 Ke7 25 Re1+-

(d) My own preferred defence is the hitherto unmentioned 11...Nc6!? with the idea of playing ...Bc5+ and ...d6 while avoiding the disaster in note (a). D.J. Rawlings – Millican, corr. 1987, continued 12 Nc3 Bc5+ 13 Kh1 d6 14 Qh5+ Qg6 15 Be5+ Bf5!? 16 Rxf5+ Ke6 17 Bxh8 Qxf5 18 Re1+ Ne5 19 Qe2! Nf6 20 Bxf6 Qxf6 21 Ne4 Qf4 22 g3 Qf5 23 Rf1 Qg4 24 Rf6+ Ke7 0–1. In view of this, White should play not 14 Qh5+ but 14 Ne4, which virtually forces the reply 14...Qf5:

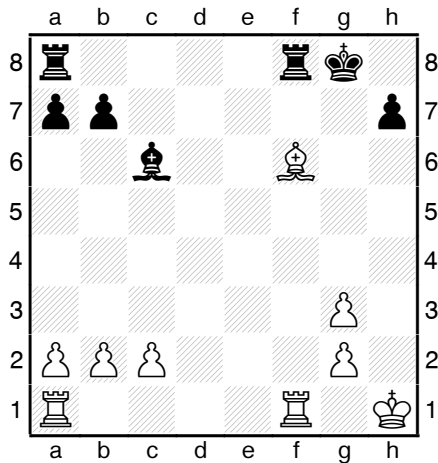


(d1) 15 Bxd6!? probably draws, for example 15...Qxf3 16 Rxf3+ Ke6 (we shall not go into 16...Kg6 which, after 17 Rg3+!? Kf5 allows a bizarre attempt to weave a mating net by 18 Rg5+?! Kxe4 19 Bxc5; or the more plausible king hunt 18 Nxc5 cxd6 19 Rf1+ Ke5 20 Rg5+ etc.) 17 Bxc5 Ne5! (Regan) 18 Ng5+ Kd5 19 Rd1+! Kxc5 20 Ne4+ Kc6 21 Rc3+ Nc4 (to avoid perpetual check) 22 Rxc4+ Kb6 (22...Kb5? loses to 23 Rxc7, for example 23...Bg4 24 Rd6 b6 25 Nc3+ Ka6 26 Rd4 b5 27 Rd6+! Ka5 28 Rcc6 a6 29 Rd4 and mates next move) 23 Rb4+ Ka5 24 Rb3 b5 (24...Be6?? allows mate by 25 Rxb7, Nc5 and b4!) 25 Rd8 Bb7 26 Nc5! Bc6 (26...Bxg2+! 27 Kxg2 Rxd8 28 Nb7+ is equal) 27 Ra3+ Kb6 (27...Kb4?? 28 Na6+ Kc4 29 Rc3 mate!) 28 b4!? (28 Nd7+ Kb7 29 Nc5+ draws) 28...a5! 29 Rxa8! Bxa8? (29...axb4! is the only move, though Black remains rather tied up) 30 Rxa5 Bb7 31 Nd7+ Kc6 32 Ne5+ and 33 Nf7 unexpectedly wins Black’s rook!

(d2) 15 Qb3+! is the best winning attempt, though Black has at least four plausible replies:

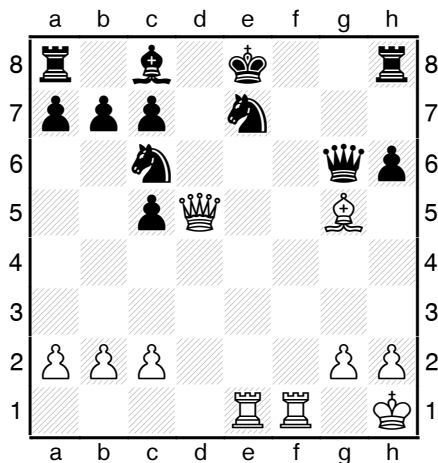
(d21) 15...Be6? allows White a very strong attack by 16 Ng5+ Ke7 17 Rae1 Ne5 18 Qxb7 Rf8 19 Qxc7+ Ke8 20 b4!

(d22) 15...Kg7 is better, and may be good enough to draw with the opposite bishops ending after 16 Nxc5! dxc5 17 Bd2! Qg6 18 Bc3+ Nd4 19 Qd5! Nf6 20 Qxc5 Rf8! (20...Nf5? 21 g4! Rf8 22 gxf5 Qf7 23 Rae1! b6 24 Rg1+! Kh8 25 Qxf8+!! Qxf8 26 Bxf6+ Qxf6 27 Re8+ mates) 21 Bxd4 Bd7! 22 Qxc7 Kg8 23 Bxf6 Bc6! 24 Qg3! Qxg3 25 hxg3:



(d23) 15...Kg6 allows a transposition into the previous line by 16 Nxc5 dxc5 17 Bd2 Qe6 18 Qd3+! Kg7 19 Qg3+ Qg6 20 Bc3+ Nd4 21 Qe5+ Nf6 22 Qxc5; but also gives White the option of more speculative lines such as 16 Ng3!? Qf7 17 Qd3+ Bf5 18 Nxf5 Qxf5 19 Qg3+ Kh5 20 Bd2! Qg4 21 Qd3! with designs on the Black king. Millican – J.J. Cox, Oxford 1983 continued 21...Nd4! 22 h3 Qe2 23 Rf5+! Kg6 24 Raf1! Qxd3 25 Rg5+ Kh6 26 cxd3 Bb4! 27 Be3 Re8! 28 Re5+ Kg7 29 Rxe8 Nc6 30 Ref8 Ba5 31 R8f5! h6 32 Rxa5! Nxa5 33 Bd4+ Kh7 34 Rf7+ Kg6 35 Rg7+ Kf5 36 Rxc7 Nf6 37 Rf7 1–0.

(d24) 15...Ke8! is, surprisingly, the most reliable move. Best play seems to be the following astonishing draw: 16 Rae1 Nge7 17 Bg5 Qg6 18 Nxc5 dxc5 (18...Qxg5?? 19 Qf7+ Kd8 20 Qf8+ mates) 19 Qd5!! h6 (19...Bd7? 20 Bxe7! Nxe7 21 Qe5+-)



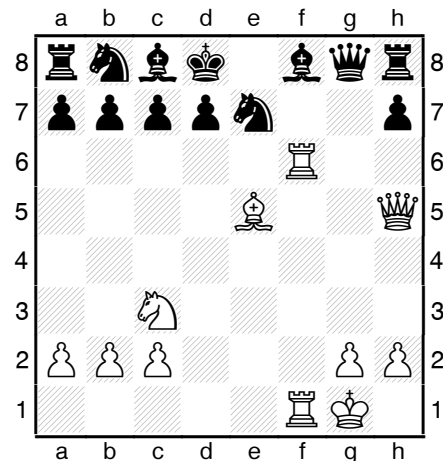
20 Qxc6+!! Qxc6 21 Rxe7+ Kd8 22 Bh4!! when, although Black is a whole queen ahead, he has no way of both preserving his material advantage and avoiding a perpetual check!

After that long digression into the theory of the Double Muzio Gambit, let us briefly return to Millican-Down!

12 Nc3 Nf5!?

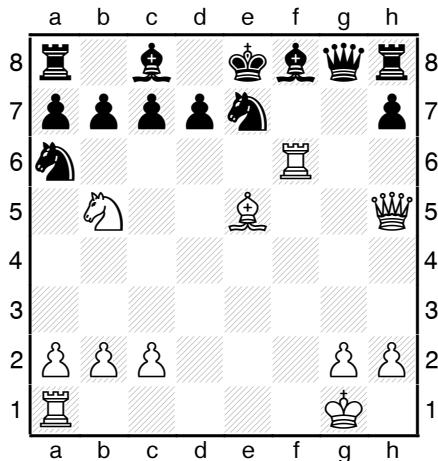
A very unnatural move, but one which has become the standard 'refutation' of the Double Muzio since it was played in the game Schussler – Akvist, Sweden 1976. It is given as the main line in *ECO*, and is the only move considered in *Batsford Chess Openings* which uncritically reproduces *ECO*'s line and its verdict of advantage for Black. Estrin and Glazkov's book *Play the King's Gambit* (E&G) disagrees but, as we shall see, it does so for all the wrong reasons!

Apart from 12...Nf5!?, Black also has the options of 12...Bg7?! or 12...d5 transposing to one of the lines considered above at move 11. But the best move is probably Keres' suggestion of 12...Qf5! where yet again 'theory' has it all wrong! The standard line follows the game Glazkov – Muratov, Moscow 1973, which continued 13 Qe2 Ke8 14 Be5 Qe6 15 Rf6 Qg8 16 Qh5+ Kd8 17 Raf1:



17...Bg7 18 Rf7 Bxe5 19 Qxe5 Nbc6 20 Qxh8! 1–0. But this finale, though pretty, is actually quite irrelevant since in the diagram position Black turns the tables by simply 17...d6! 18 Rxf8+ Qxf8 19 Rxf8+ Rxf8 20 Bg7 Rg8 21 Qxh7 Bf5, leaving him with two rooks and a knight in return for White's queen and pawn!

This is not, however, the last word on 12...Qf5 since White can improve after 13 Qe2 Ke8 14 Be5 Qe6 by interpolating 15 Nb5! Na6 16 Rf6 Qg8 17 Qh5+

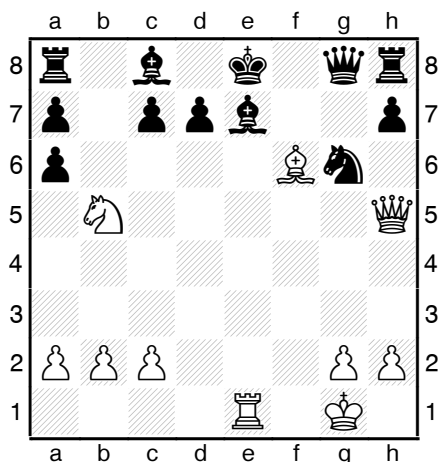


(a) After 17...Kd8? White carves his way through the Black defences by sheer brute force: 18 Rxa6! d6 (18...bxa6?? 19 Bxc7 mate!) 19 Bxd6!:

(a1) 19...cxd6 20 Rxd6+ Bd7 21 Rad1 Nd5 22 R6xd5 Qe6 23 Qh4+! Kc8 24 Qc4+ Qc6 (24...Bc6?? 25 Rd8 mate!; 24...Kd8 25 Rxd7+ Qxd7 26 Qc7+!) 25 Rxd7! Bc5+ 26 Kh1 Bb6 27 Qg4! Kb8 28 Qf4+ Kc8 29 Qf5 Kb8 30 Qe5+ mates.

(a2) 19...bxa6 20 Bxc7+ Kd7 21 Rd1+ 21...Nd5! (21...Kc6 22 Rd6+ Kb7 23 Qc5!! Bh3 24 Rb6+! Kc8 25 Bg3+ Kd8 26 Qc7+ Ke8 27 Nd6 mate or 24...axb6 25 Nd6+ Ka7 26 Qxb6 mate) 22 Rxd5+ Kc6 23 Qe8+!! Kxd5 (23...Kb7 24 Qe4 Qg4 25 Bf4!) 24 Nc3+ Kc5 25 Ne4+ Kd5 (the White pawns will anyway force Black to take this path eventually, or be mated) 26 Nf6+ Kc5 27 Nxc8 Rxc8 28 b4+! Kd5 29 c4+ Kxc4 30 Qe4+ Kb5 31 Qxa8 Bxb4 32 Qb8+ Ka4 33 Bd6! Bxd6 34 Qb3+ Ka5 35 Qxc8+-.

(b) 17...Ng6 is much more difficult to crack. Probably best for both sides is 18 Re1 Be7 19 Rxa6! bxa6 20 Bf6!



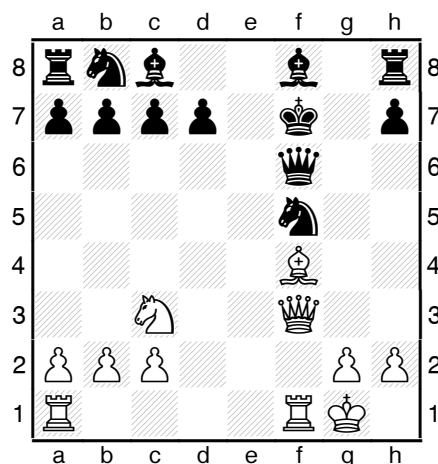
Now 20...axb5?? 21 Rxe7+ mates while 20...Kd8? loses to 21 Qc5!! This leaves:

(b1) 20...Kf8 21 Bxe7+ Nxe7 22 Rf1+ Kg7 23 Qe5+! Kh6 24 Qxe7 gives White a winning attack, even though he is a rook down, for example 24...Qg6 25 Rf4 Rg8 26 Rh4+ Qh5 27 Qf6+ Rg6 28 Qf8+-.

(b2) 20...Qf8?! 21 Bxe7 Qxe7 22 Nxc7+ Kd8 23 Rxe7 Kxc7 (23...Nxe7 24 Nxa8 Bb7? 25 Qe5!+-) 24 Rxh7 and White has a clear advantage.

(b3) 20...Qf7! 21 Bxe7 Nxe7 (21...axb5? 22 Bf6+ Kf8 23 Qh6+ Kg8 24 Re8+ Nf8 25 Qg5+ Qg6 26 Qd5+ Qf7 27 Re7!!+-) 22 Nxc7+ Kf8 23 Rf1 Qxf1+ 24 Kxf1 Bb7 (24...Rb8?? 25 Qe8+) 25 Qe5 Kf7 (25...Ng6 26 Qd6+±; 25...Rg8 26 Qf6 mate!) 26 Nxa8 Rxa8 27 Qf4+ Ke8 (27...Kg7? 28 Qb4 forks bishop and knight) 28 Qh4 and White has some winning chances, though he is at least a couple of tempi down on the previous note.

Now back once again to Millican – Down!



13 Ne4!

The obvious 13 Nd5 is also worthy of consideration, but it has curiously been overlooked by virtually all commentators with the notable exceptions of Sapi and Schneider. They assume that 13 Ne4 loses and therefore give preference to 13 Nd5, claiming a win for White with the following main line: 13...Qg6 14 Rae1 Bc5+ 15 Be3! Re8! 16 Bxc5! Rxe1 17 Rxe1 d6 18 Ne7! dxc5 19 Nxc6 Kxc6 20 Re8. However, 14...Nc6 looks more natural than 14...Bc5+ since it increases the guard on e7, prepares for ...Nd4, and leaves the f8 bishop on its good defensive square. Against 14...Nc6 Sapi and Schneider give only the line 15 Bd2 d6 16 Nxc7 Rb8 17 Bc3 Ne5 18 Qd5+! Kg7 19 Rxe5 dxe5 20 Qxe5+ Kh6 21 Bd2+ Kh5

22 Rf3 which wins for White. But here they have ignored several plausible alternative moves for Black including 16...Ne5, 15...Nd4, 15...Bc5+, and even 15...Ne7!? Each of these leads to immense complications, and it is therefore rather unlikely that White can force a clear win against all of them, particularly when Black can give up a whole rook and still come out on top, e.g. 15...Bc5+ 16 Kh1 Nd4 17 Qe4 c6!? 18 Ne7 d5 19 Nxc6 dxe4 20 Nxc8+ Kg7 21 Rxe4 Bd7 22 Nf7 Kxf7 23 g4 Re8 24 Rxe8 Kxe8 25 gxf5 Bxf5!

Instead of 14 Rae1, White can launch an unusual attack with 14 Be5?! Bc5+ 15 Kh1 Re8! 16 Nf4! Qh6! 17 Qd5+ Kf8 18 Nh5!?, hoping for 18...Qxh5? as in Millican – T. Wiley, Oxford 1983, which continued 19 Rxf5+! Qxf5 20 Bd6+ Bxd6 21 Qxf5+ Kg7 22 Qg5+ Kh8 23 Qf6+ Kg8 24 Rf1 Rf8 25 Qg5+ Kh8 26 Rxf8+ Bxf8 27 Qd8! Kg7 28 Qxc8 a5 29 Qxb7 1–0. Unfortunately, however, Black can put a stop to all this by giving up his queen with 18...d6! 19 Bg7+ Qxg7 20 Nxc7 Kxc7 21 g4?! Bd7!–+ or 21 Rxf5 Bxf5 22 Qxf5 Rf8!–+. White managed an equally surprising swindle in Millican – P.E. Terry, Brighton 1983: 18 Bg7+!? Kxc7 19 Nh5+!? Qxh5 20 Rxf5 Qg6 21 Raf1!? (21 Qxc5 d5!–+ Nunn) 21...d6 22 Rf7+ Kh6 23 Qf3 Bg4? (23...Be3!–+) 24 Qf4+ Kh5 25 h3! Bxh3 26 g4+! Kh4? (26...Bxg4 27 Qh2+ draws) 27 Rxh7+!! Qxh7 28 Qf6+ Kxc7 29 Rf4+ Kg3 30 Rf3+! Kg4 31 Qf4+ Kh5 32 Rxh3+ Kg6 33 Qg4+ Kf6 34 Rxh7 Nc6 35 Qf4+ Ke6 36 Qf7+ Ke5 37 Rh5+ Kd4 38 Qd5+ Ke3 39 Qd3+ Kf2 40 Rf5+ Ke1 41 Rf1 mate.

Since after 13 Nd5 Qg6 the direct assaults on Black's king seem dubious, White may do best to play the greedy and obvious 14 Nxc7!? Sapi and Schneider condemn this as too slow, quoting the continuation 14...Bc5+ 15 Kh1 d6! 16 Nxa8 Rf8 17 Nc7 Kg8 18 Nd5 Nc6. But this line is not entirely convincing, and White need not be in such a hurry either to take the rook or to retreat the knight which on c7 is fairly well placed and is not under threat. All in all, the verdict on 13 Nd5 has to remain 'unclear', so it is just as well that the decisive 13 Ne4! makes further study unnecessary!

13 ... Qg6
14 g4!?

This move leaves dangerous weaknesses in both the g-file and the long diagonal to White's king, thus committing him to concluding his attack before Black has time to exploit them. Alternatives, however, are unsuccessful:

(a) 14 Bxc7? d6 15 Ng3 Nc6 16 Nxf5 Bxf5 17 Qd5+ Kg7 18 Rxf5 Be7 19 Re1 Rhf8–+ (ECO).

(b) 14 Ng5+? Ke8 15 Rae1+ Be7 with advantage (Berglund).

(c) 14 Qb3+?! d5! (14...Ke8 15 Be5! Bg7 16 Bxc7 gives White good chances) 15 Qxd5+ Be6 16 Qxb7 Nd7–+ since 17 Qxa8? loses the queen to 17...Bc5+.

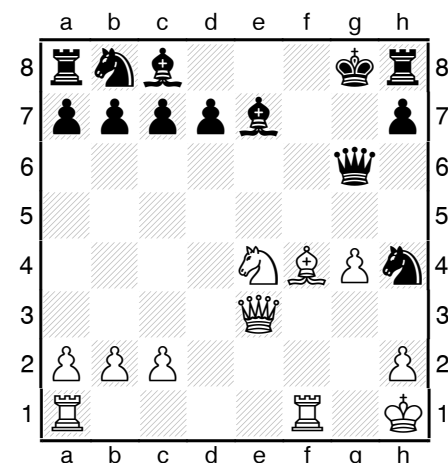
14 ... Be7

White threatened 15 Ng5+ and 16 gxf5, while the immediate 14...Nh4? loses to 15 Ng5+ Ke8 16 Rae1+ Be7 (16...Kd8? 17 Nf7+ Qxf7 18 Bg5+) 17 Rxe7+ Kxe7 18 Qe3+ Kf8 (18...Kd8? 19 Nf7+ mates) 19 Bd6+ Kg8 20 Rf8+ Kg7 21 Qe7+ Kh6 22 Nf7+.

15 Kh1 Nh4
16 Qe3!

Schussler – Akvist continued 16 Qb3+?! Ke8 17 Rae1 Rf8 18 Qe3, after which ECO gives the line 18...Nc6 19 Bxc7 Rxf1+ 20 Rxf1 d5 21 Nf6+ Kf7 22 Nxd5+ Kg8 23 Nxe7+ Nxe7 24 Qxe7 Qc6+ and White is mated.

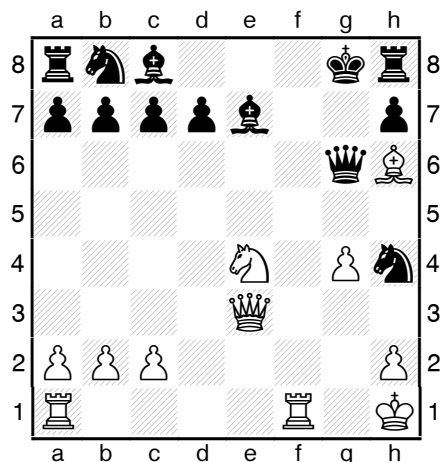
16 ... Kg8



16...Qc6 (Berglund) also loses: 17 Bg5+ (or 17 Be5+ Kg8 18 Bxh8 Kxh8 19 Rf7+–) 17...Ke8 18 Bxe7 Kxe7 19 Qg5+ Ke8 20 Qe5+ (E&G).

Here the books give only 17 Be5, when Estrin and Glaskov claim an advantage for White without giving any supporting analysis at all! ECO contradicts them, pointing out that after 17...b6! (intending ...Bb7) it appears to be Black who is the stronger.

17 Bh6!!

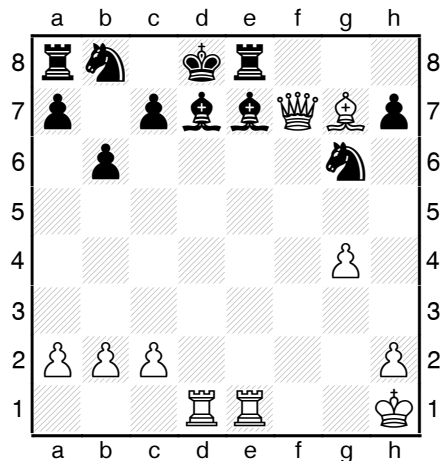


This beautiful move completely reverses the assessment of the whole variation. It threatens 18 Nf6+!, after which 18...Bxf6 allows mate by 19 Rxf6! Qxf6 20 Qe8+, while 18...Kf7 meets a similar fate after 19 Nd5+ followed by either 20 Ne7+ or 20 Qe7+.

17 ... Qe6

The knight sacrifice cannot be prevented by 17...Qc6 since this loses immediately to 18 Qg5+! Ng6 19 Qxe7! Nxe7 20 Rf8 mate. So Black's reply aims to defuse 18 Nf6+ Bxf6 19 Rxf6 with 19...Qd5+, launching a devastating counterattack down the long diagonal. There are two plausible alternatives: 17...b6! and 17...Nc6, the first of which has a similar point, while the second instead guards the square e7:

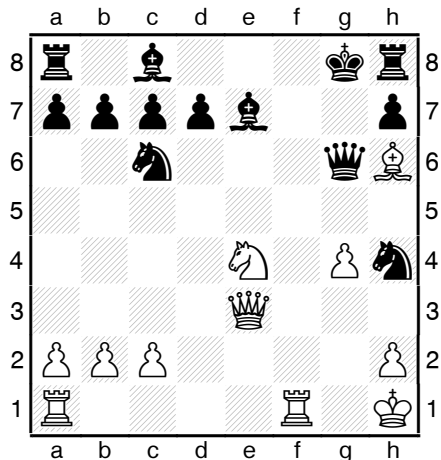
(a) 17...b6! lasts longest, though White still wins eventually with 18 Qb3+! Qe6 (18...d5? 19 Qxd5+ Qe6 20 Qd8+! Bxd8 21 Rf8 mate) 19 Nf6+ Kf7 (19...Bxf6 20 Rxf6 Ng6 21 Raf1 Bb7+ 22 Kg1 Nc6 23 Rxe6 dxe6 24 Qxe6 mate) 20 Nxd7+! Ke8 21 Qxe6 Bxd7 22 Qf7+ Kd8 23 Rad1 Ng6 24 Bg7 Re8 25 Rfe1:



Black is completely paralysed, e.g. 25...Nc6 (25...Kc8 26 Rxd7! Kxd7 27 Qd5+-) 26

Rxd7+! Kxd7 27 Qe6+ Kd8 28 Rd1+! Bd6 29 Rxd6+ cxd6 30 Qxd6+ Kc8 31 Qxc6+-.

(b) 17...Nc6 sets the stage for White's knight to commit a spectacular *hari-kiri*:



18 Nf6+! Kf7 (18...Bxf6 19 Rxf6 Qxf6 20 Qe8+ mates as usual) 19 Ng8+!! Kxg8 (19...Ke8 20 Rf8 mate!!; 19...Nf5 20 Rxf5+ Qxf5 21 gxf5+-, since either 21...Kxg8 or 21...Rxg8 loses to 22 Qb3+!) 20 Qxe7! Nxe7 21 Rf8 mate! (Millican – J. Roach, Glasgow 1983).

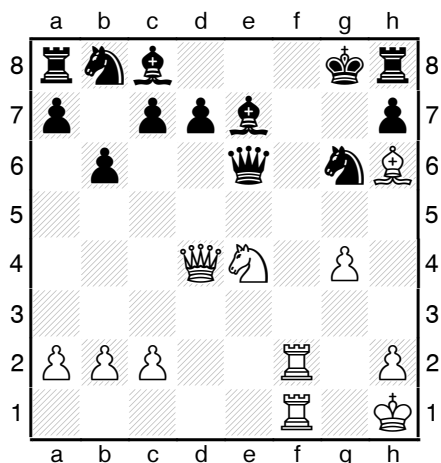
18 Rf2!!

White plans simply to double, and if necessary to treble, his heavy pieces on the f-file. Black can find no answer, for there is none!

18 ... b6

18...Nc6 defends the long diagonal to Black's king, and therefore avoids the game continuation, though it is equally futile after 19 Raf1 Ng6 20 Qf3!! and mates (Millican – E.O.M.C. Teichmann, Glasgow 1984).

19 Raf1 Ng6
20 Qd4



20 ... Bf6

Desperation, but there is nothing else.

21 Nxf6+	Kf7
22 Nd5+	Ke8
23 Qxh8+	Nxh8
24 Rf8 mate.	

Postscript

I have been fascinated by the Double Muzio Gambit ever since my game with Brian Eley in 1975, and this article presents only some of the main lines which I have discovered during many hundreds of hours of analysis and something like a hundred games. Many of these games have been against willing 'victims' who knew only too well that they were facing the pet line of a raving monomaniac, and I am profoundly grateful to John Cox, Nick Down, John Kirwan, Ken Regan, Erik Teichmann, James Toon and Tom Wiley for being prepared to take that risk. Despite their assistance and valuable suggestions, however, my analysis is bound

to contain many errors since nearly all of it is original and it has never been tested in master play – though even master play, as we have seen, gives no guarantee of soundness! I would be very grateful, therefore, for any corrections or new analysis, which will of course be properly acknowledged whenever I make use of them.

Peter Millican lectures in Philosophy and Computer Studies at the University of Leeds, and has been playing correspondence chess since joining the BCCA in 1986. He currently represents Yorkshire and also captains the Knights of the Square Table in the BCCL. The highest point of his chess career came when he led the Oxford University (OTB) chess team to victory in the National Club Championship in 1983, albeit as a non-playing captain.

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