3 e5

– the Advance Variation.

3 ... c5
4 ♘f3 ♘c6

If 4 ... cd 5 ♗d3!? is a gambit much beloved of Nimzowitsch – though out of book it would have been hard for *Par Excellence* to play this purely positional pawn sacrifice. Still, 5 ♕xd4 is a perfectly playable alternative.
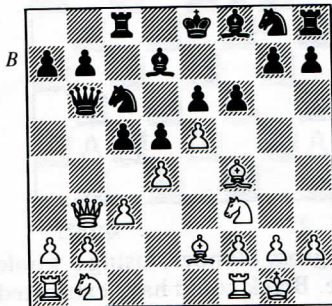
5 c3! ♗d7
6 ♗e2 ♖c8
7 0-0 f6

Black decides to attack the "head" of White's pawn chain as well as its base.

8 ♗f4

Par Excellence wants to support the e5 pawn. 8 ef was also good.

8 ... ♕b6
9 ♕b3

9 ... ♘ge7?

Up to here Black had played the opening well, but this is extremely careless. White is able, at the expense of central control and a temporary displacing of his queen, to win a pawn – and this is just the sort of thing that a computer tends to do. Moreover the tactical mess which arises is precisely what the programme is best at.

Instead 9 ... cd 10 ♕xb6 (10 cd ♘xd4 11 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 12 ♗e3 ♕b4 is extremely pleasant for Black)

10 ... ab 11 cd g5!? is quite good, and the immediate 9 ... g5 might be even stronger.

10 ef gf
11 dc ♕xc5

If 11 ... ♕xb3? 12 ab ♘g6 13 ♗e3 White retains the extra pawn.

12 ♕xb7 ♘f5

The immediate 12 ... e5 13 ♗e3 ♕a5 would avoid what follows, though the text move is also quite playable.

13 b4!?

Although this weakens White's queenside pawn formation it does gain time and almost wins material.

13 ... ♕b6
14 ♗a6! ♕d8!

The only move to avoid losing the exchange.

15 ♗d3 e5
16 ♖e1

And not 16 ♗g3 e4 17 ♖e1 ♗e7 (possibly preceded by 17 ... ♘xg3 18 hg and then 18 ... ♗e7), when White loses a piece for insufficient compensation.

16 ... ♘d6?!

16 ... ♗e7 at once looks better since then the bishop cannot retreat to g3 (17 ♗g3 e4 etc). Perhaps Black feared 17 b5, but then the intermediate moves 17 ... ♖c7! (not 17 ... ♘a5? 18 ♕xd5) 18 ♕a6 ♘b8! win a piece. Or maybe he wanted to avoid 16 ... ♗e7 17 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 18 ♗h6 – though this is rather good for Black. Finally, he may have disliked, after 16 ... ♗e7, an immediate sacrifice on e5. But neither 16 ... ♗e7 17 ♘xe5 fe 18 ♗xe5 0-0 nor 17 ♗xe5 fe 18 ♘xe5 ♖c7! is very convincing.
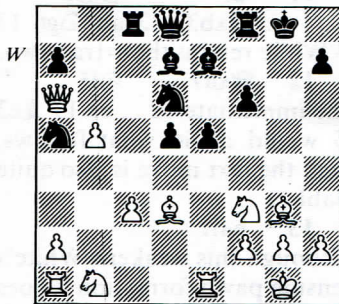
17 ♕a6 ♗e7
18 ♗g3 0-0

Now 18 ... e4 is harmless in view of (e.g.) 19 ♗f1, and if 19 ... ef? then 20 ♗xd6 utilising the pin.

19 b5!?

Preparing the sacrifice which follows.

19 ... ♘a5

20 ♘xe5!!

This brilliant sacrifice completely transforms the position. Prior to it Black had excellent compensation for a pawn in the shape of a strong pawn centre and well co-ordinated pieces; moreover it was hard to find a sensible way of completing White's queenside development. After 20 ♘xe5 White will obtain at least three pawns for the piece, with good pressure against Black's forces, which become seriously disco-ordinated. In addition, the black king becomes rather exposed.

Whatever the objective evaluation of the position after 20 ♘xe5, it is certainly a very good practical move; and the programmers have now created an evaluation function which can cater to the machine's needs, since the post-sacrifice position is much more congenial to *Par Excellence*, and correspondingly uncomfortable for the opponent, than that prior to the transaction.

20 ... fe
21 ♖xe5 ♘ab7

If 21 ... d4!? 22 ♖e1! defends the back rank and threatens 23 ♗xd6.

22 ♕xa7 ♘c5
23 ♖xd5 ♘xd3

24 ♖xd3 ♗xb5

At the cost of another pawn Black has eliminated one of White's best attacking pieces – the white-squared bishop – and so reduced any danger to his king. But the pin on the d-file remains annoying.
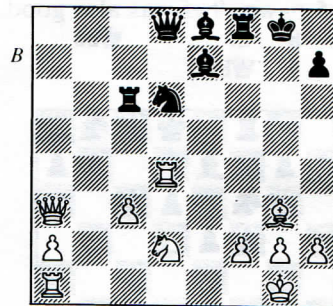
25 ♖d4 ♗e8
26 ♕a3

Rather a strange move since it is into a "battery", but the queen can leave the a3-e7 diagonal with check, as we shall see.

26 ... ♖c6

The knight was attacked by three pieces and defended by only two.

27 ♘d2

27 ... ♘f5??

A gross blunder, losing a whole piece. Black could have extricated himself with 27 ... ♕b6, and if 28 ♖b1 then 28 ... ♕a6, when he has a perfectly good game – though of course with four(!) pawns for the piece White is not worse.

But blunders don't usually grow out of thin air. The explanation for Black's lapse is that in this very messy position he has felt under pressure for a number of moves.

28 ♕b3+!

Black expected 28 ♖xd8? ♗xa3, when he has simplified successfully, but this check changes things totally.

28 ... ♗f7

29	♖xd8	♗xb3
30	♖xf8+	♔xf8
31	ab	♘xg3
32	hg	♖xc3

Up to here *Par Excellence* has played splendidly, and it now has a completely won game. However, we have reached an ending. In the early days of computer chess this was the area of the game which they were notoriously weak at. This is partly because an evaluation function for the middlegame does not apply well to the endgame; partly because of the specialist knowledge involved; and partly because of the need for plans rather than tactical ideas in many, though not all, endgame positions.

Nowadays, with special endgame modules, computers are much better at endings than they used to be. Nevertheless, it is still a weak department, and *Par Excellence*'s strong opponent finally managed to save himself . . .

33	♔f1	♗b4
34	♖a4	♗e7
35	♔e2	♔f7
36	♖f4+	♔e6
37	♖e4+	♔d7
38	b4?	

Here or on the previous two moves ♖c4 would have forced the exchange of Black's rook, leaving a trivially won ending. However, Black now gets renewed hope.

38	...	♖c2
39	♖f4	♖b2
40	♖d4+	

Possibly *Par Excellence* had intended 40 ♖f7, when the variation 40 ... ♔e6 41 ♖xh7 ♗xb4 42 ♖h6+ ♔e7 etc wins a piece for Black, unless White takes perpetual check.

40	...	♔e6
41	g4	♗xb4
42	f4	♗a5

43	f5+?	

White is slightly tied up since if 43 ♔e3? ♗b6. The right way to remedy this would have been 43 ♖d3 to be followed by 44 ♔e3 etc. The move played is a mistake since the black king gets an excellent square on g5 to blockade the white pawns.

43	...	♔f6
44	♖d5	♗b4
45	♔e3	♗xd2+
46	♖xd2	♖b3+
47	♖d3	♖b4
48	♖d4	♖b2
49	g3	♔g5

With White's pawns blockaded his winning chances have become totally problematical. Instead of 49 g3 he might have tried 49 ♔f4, and if 49 ... ♖xg2 then 50 ♖d6+! or 50 g5+!? give him reasonable chances, though the position is still objectively drawn.
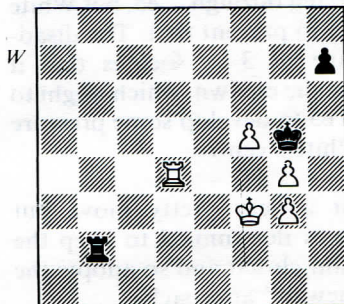
50	♖f4	♔f6!
51	♖e4	♔g5
52	♔f3	♖a2

Black must prevent the white king from reaching h3, since then he could safely move the rook from the 4th rank. Hence "passing" is absolutely the right policy.

53	♖d4	

If 53 ♖e7 ♖a3+ displaces the white king. This wouldn't be possible if it had a shelter on h3.

53	...	♖b2

W

54 ♖c4

The only winning chance would be to sacrifice back a pawn with either 54 ♖d7 or 54 ♖d8, but Black can defend in either case, e.g. 54 ♖d7 ♖b3+ 55 ♔e4 (55 ♔g2 ♔xg4 56 f6 ♖xg3+! 57 ♔h2 ♖f3) 55 ... ♖xg3 56 ♖xh7 (56 ♖g7+ ♔f6 57 ♔f4! ♖h3! is also drawn) 56 ... ♖xg4+ 57 ♔e5 ♖a4! with a theoretical draw since the black rook can annoy the enemy king from the side.

54	...	♖a2
55	♖e4	♖b2
56	♖d4	♖a2
57	♖c4	♖b2
58	♖a4	♖c2
59	♖b4	**Drawn**

GAME FOUR
P.Krause (175) *v*
Par Excellence
Irregular Opening or
"Stonewall System"

1 c3!?

An interesting choice. The player wants to get his opponent "out of book" as quickly as possible and is prepared to play slightly inferior moves to achieve this.

1	...	d5
2	d4	♘f6
3	e3	♘c6?!

This has the very laudable aim of forcing through ... e5, but White is able to prevent that. The disadvantage of 3 ... ♘c6 is that it blocks the c-pawn, which ought to go to c5 to develop some pressure on White's centre.

4 f4

Not a very pretty move but White is determined to keep the position closed and so adopts the "Stonewall" approach.

4 ... ♗f5!

Correctly getting the bishop outside the pawn chain.

5	♘f3	e6
6	♗e2	♗d6?!

This isn't a good square, given White's total control of e5. 6 ... ♗e7 was better, and in a couple of moves the *Par Excellence* corrects itself.

7 0-0 0-0

In the very long term White has a potential kingside attack due to his space advantage. However, this will take ages to organise, especially with the black bishop on the excellent square f5. And the queenside would not be comfortable for the black king, so this is a perfectly reasonable move.

8 ♕e1 ♗e7

See the note to 6 ... ♗d6 – but there was no need for this immediately.

9 h3 a5

With the knight on c6 it is hard for Black to get counterplay. Still, advancing the pawn is a good precursor to further queenside play.

10	♘bd2	♕d6
11	♘e5	a4
12	♗f3	h6

Slightly weakening but understandable since there will be some concern soon about the bishop's future if it gets "kicked" by g4.

13 ♔h2 ♗c2!

A very nice idea. Black tries to relieve the congestion on the kingside.

14	♖g1	♘e4
15	♘f1	

Hoping to exploit the loose bishop on c2, but *Par Excellence* played ...
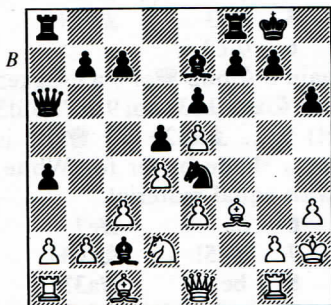
15	...	♘xe5!
16	fe	♕a6
17	♘d2	

Up to here, despite a slightly

shaky opening *Par Excellence* has done very well indeed. White's planned kingside attack is still in its infancy, if born at all, and Black in contrast has slowly been creating play on the queenside.

At this point simply 17 ... ♘xd2 would be very satisfactory for Black. And he can do even better with 17 ... a3!, breaking up White's queenside pawn structure. If then 18 ♗xe4 ab! (a strong intermezzo) 19 ♗xb2 de, or 18 ♘xe4 ab! 19 ♘f6+!? ♗xf6! 20 ♗xb2 ♗e7, and in both cases Black has an excellent game, whilst 18 b3? and 18 b4? both fail to 18 ... ♘xc3.

However, here the machine gets diverted by a desire to obtain the two bishops . . .

17 ...   ♘g5!?
18 e4

Freeing White's game and bringing the somnolent c1 bishop back to life.

18 ...   ♘xf3+
19 gf   h5?!

Here 19 ... ♕d3 would still give Black reasonable chances since White is discoordinated and his king position potentially very weak. The move played, on the other hand, is very dubious. It weakens Black's kingside pawn structure for no reason.

20 ♕g3!   g6

21 ed   ed
22 f4   h4?

And this is definitely wrong too. The pawn was still defensible on h5, but here it is in much more serious trouble.

23 ♕g2   ♕b5

Despite my castigation of the h-pawn's advance Black started from a sufficiently good position that he would still be doing fairly well after 23 ... ♕d3 or immediately 23 ... a3 breaking up White's queenside pawns.
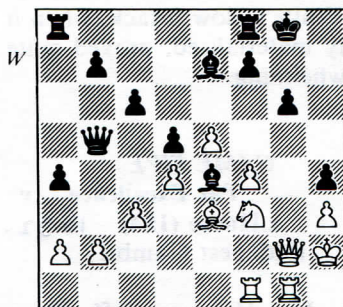
24 ♘f3   ♗f5
25 ♗e3   ♗e4?

Losing a tempo and facilitating the breakthrough on move 27.

26 ♖af1   c6?

Cutting the queen off from the kingside. Either 26 .. ♕d3 or 26 ... a3 were still indicated.

27 f5!

A very strong move after which White finally gains the advantage, in the form of a most dangerous kingside attack.

27 ...   ♗xf5
28 ♗h6   ♗d3?!
29 ♖f2   ♖fe8?

The black rook and bishop would have done better to stand their ground since it is vital to defend on the f-file. Now the white attack becomes overwhelming.

30 ♘g5!   ♗xg5

13

The best, though extremely distasteful, move was 30 ... ♖f8!.

31	♕xg5	♖c6
32	♕f4	♔h7
33	♕xh4	♔g8
34	♕f4	♔h7
35	♕xf7+	♔xh6
36	♕xe6	

And the rest is simply mopping up . . .

36	...	♕b6
37	♖fg2	♕xb2
38	♖xb2	♗f5
39	♖xg6+	♗xg6
40	♖g2	♖g8
	Black resigned	

To sum up this game: after a slightly shaky opening *Par Excellence* played very well to gain a clear advantage by the first diagram. However, it failed to exploit its opportunities on the queenside and White's slow attack, when it finally materialised, proved quite overwhelming.

GAME FIVE
Par Excellence   v
A.House (154)   18 32.
Budapest Gambit

| 1 | d4 | ♘f6 |
| 2 | c4 | e5!? |

The Budapest Gambit. Black sacrifices a pawn to free his game at once. Theoretically White has a choice between returning the pawn in exchange for a slight positional advantage and holding on to it for grim life. Both options are quite viable and, as one would expect, *Par Excellence* chooses the latter, since computers are extremely good at repulsing short-term tactical threats.

| 3 | de | ♘g4 |

| 4 | ♗f4 | |

If 4 ♘f3 ♗c5 5 e3 ♘c6 Black regains the pawn. However, the opening book compiler rightly preferred this line where White can keep his booty.

4	...	♘c6
5	♘f3	♗b4+
6	♘c3	

Again 6 ♘bd2 ♕e7 7 a3 ♘gxe5 8 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 9 e3 (not 9 ab?? ♘d3 mate!) 9 ... ♗xd2+ 10 ♕xd2 is maybe a shade better for White, but with equal material.

6	...	♕e7
7	♕d5!	♗xc3+
8	bc	♕a3?!

Nowadays 8 ... f6! 9 ef ♘xf6 is usually preferred, when Black has reasonable positional compensation for the pawn.

| 9 | ♖c1 | h5!? |

If 9 ... ♕xa2 10 h3 ♘h6 11 e4 (or simply 11 ♗xh6) White has a huge space advantage. 9 ... f6 is the other option but gives an inferior version of the last note.

After 9 ... h5 *Par Excellence* is definitely out of its book.

| 10 | h3 | ♘h6 |
| 11 | ♕d2 | ♘d8 |

Although he is a pawn down and White has the two bishops, Black can try to "play round" the white position. First he repositions his knights to prevent any immediate assault. The plan of ♘d4-b5 was enticing for White, and by the prophylactic ... ♘d8-e6 Black deals with this possible incursion in advance.

12	e4	♘e6
13	♗e3	b6
14	♖d1!	

An excellent move preventing the projected ... ♗b7 and ... 0-0-0 in view of the attack on d7 (14 ... ♗b7? 15 ♕xd7+). If now 14 ... ♕e7

then 15 ♘d4! is very strong since if 15 ... ♗b7 (15 ... ♘xd4? 16 cd straightens out White's pawns and leads to a totally hopeless position for Black) 16 ♗xh6! gh (or 16 ... ♖xh6 17 ♘f5 winning the exchange as well) 17 ♘f5 etc.

Therefore Black decided to reposition the other knight as well.
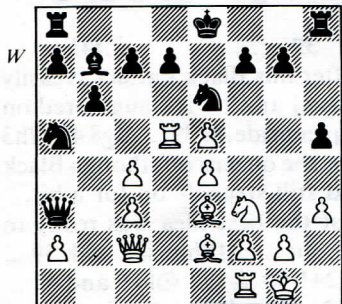
14	...	♘g8!?
15	♗e2	

White sensibly completes his development, but 15 ♘d4 ♘e7 16 f4 would be even stronger.

15	...	♘e7
16	0-0	♘c6
17	♕c2	

Now if 17 ♘d4 Black picks up a pawn by 17 ... ♘xe5. However, after 18 f4 ♘c6 19 ♘b5 and 20 f5 White has a winning attack. Therefore 17 ♘d4 was much stronger than the move chosen, though White is still a lot better.

17	...	♗b7
18	♖d5!?	♘a5

19   ♖b5?!

Of course Black was attacking the rook. However, the move ... ♗xd5, while it would win the exchange, was not necessarily a threat since it would straighten out White's centre pawns and give him massive compensation.

The correct move was 19 ♖b1!. If then 19 ... ♗xd5 20 ed ♘c5 21

♖b4! prevents ... ♕a4 and threatens 22 ♗c1 trapping the queen.

a) Black's best course is perhaps **21 ... ♘ab7 22 ♘d4 a6**, though White has a fantastic position for his minuscule material investment.

b) Perhaps, however, *Par Excellence* rejected this line in view of **21 ... ♘a6** releasing the queen. If then 22 ♗c1? ♘xb4!. But White has a long forcing continuation well beyond *Par Excellence*'s search, I presume, and also that of the average chessplayer! 22 ♖a4 ♕e7 (22 ... ♕f8(!) 23 d6 c5 is conceivable but then 24 ♕e4 ♖b8 25 ♘d2 intending ♘b3 is extremely strong) 23 d6 (23 c5 ♘xc5 24 d6! is also good) and if 23 ... cd then 24 ed ♕d8 (24 ... ♕xd6 25 ♕e4+ forks king and rook) 25 c5! ♘xc5 26 ♗xc5 bc 27 ♖xa5!, when 27 ... ♕xa5? 28 ♕e4+ wins the queen's rook and forces mate in two more moves.

19 ♖b1! would have been strong for other reasons too. If 19 ... ♕e7 20 ♖xa5! wins material, and Black is therefore in big trouble.

However, I repeat, the evaluation of this move depends on a combination of positional judgement and the calculation of very long tactical lines. And there is always a strong temptation to move a piece when it's attacked!

| 19	...	♕e7
20	♘d4	g6
21	♘f3	

Rather inconsequential. 21 f4 was more natural, but the tactics arising after 21 ... ♘c5! are very messy, e.g. 22 ♘f5 gf 23 ♗xc5 bc 24 ♖xa5 fe! is already unclear.

21	...	♗a6
22	♖b4	c5
23	♖a4	♗b7
24	♖d1	♗c6

25 ♖a3

Black has fought back very well and with the white rook badly misplaced on a3 and the centre safely closed he has reasonable compensation for the pawn. He now decided to take the initiative on the kingside.

25	...	g5
26	♕d3	g4
27	♘d2	
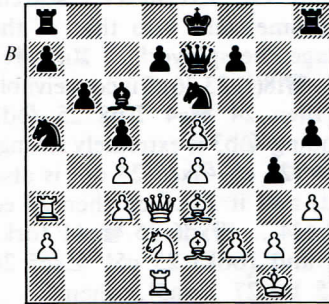
27 ... ♘b7?

Rather complacently assuming that White can't take the g-pawn since that will open up lines against White's king. However, that is not the case, and the position now explodes into a tactical mess in which *Par Excellence* is very much in its element.

He should have played either 27 ... gh, when 28 gh ♕h4 is okay for Black (though 28 f4!? is very messy), or 27 ... ♖g8, temporarily abandoning the h-file but defending an important pawn.

28	hg!	hg
29	♗xg4	0-0-0!?
30	♖xa7	♔b8
31	♖a6	♖dg8

Both sides now have dangerous attacks, but three(!) pawns up and with massive central control White is obviously in the driving seat.
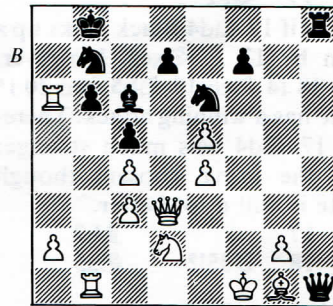
32	f3	♕h4
33	♖b1	

Defending the rook, which was threatened by 33 ... ♕h1+ and 34 ... ♕xd1, and at the same time strengthening his own attack.

33	...	♕h1+
34	♔f2	♕h4+
35	♔e2	♖xg4!

He must try to break up White's position. If instead 35 ... ♕g3 then simply 36 ♖axb6 is good since the white king has plenty of cover on c2.

36	fg	♕xg4+
37	♔f2	♕h4+
38	♔f1	♕h1+
39	♗g1	

39 ... ♘f4?

After this Black's attack is easily repulsed and he is slaughtered on the queenside. If 39 ... ♖g8 40 ♕h3 forces the queens off, though Black could still struggle on for a bit.

But the best idea was really to force queens off himself with 39 ... ♕xg2+! 40 ♔xg2 ♘f4+ and 41 ... ♘xd3, when White is winning, of course, but Black still has some swindling chances.

40	♕g3	♕h6
41	♖axb6	♘h5
42	♕f2!	♕g6
43	♕xc5	♘f4
44	♖xb7+!	

Par Excellence finishes off with an easy but pleasing combination to force mate.