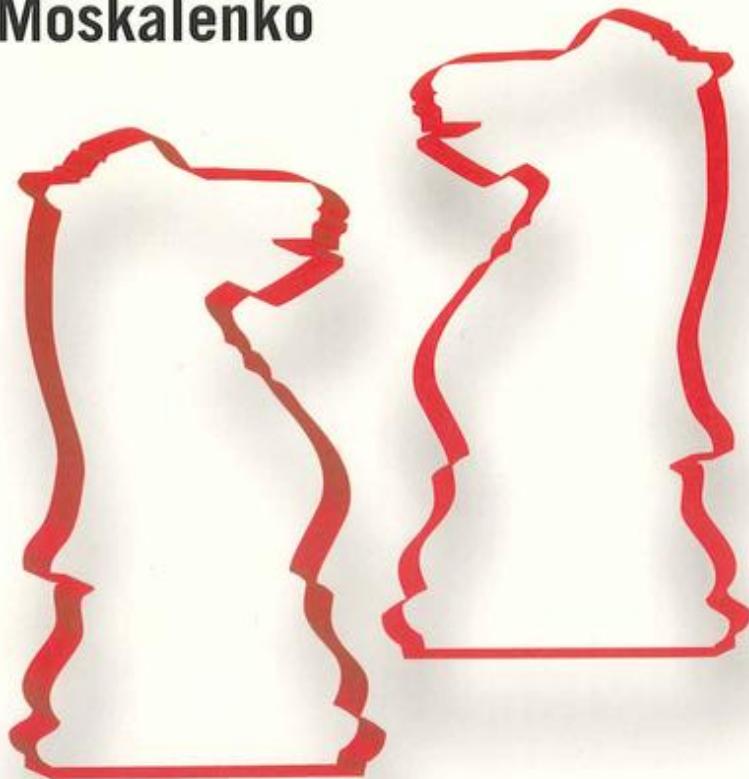


# *The Perfect Pirc-Modern*

**Viktor Moskalenko**

NEW IN CHESS



Strategic Ideas & Powerful Weapons

With a foreword by  
**Vassily Ivanchuk**

**The Perfect Pirc-Modern**

## **Acknowledgements**

This book is dedicated to my friend, Catalan master Rafael Martinez Molina (1962-2011). A respectable lawyer and an impeccable gentleman, Rafa was a great fan of the Pirc-Modern Defences.

My gratitude goes out to Lluís Delgado for his help with the translation.

And, of course, to the editing team of New In Chess, who are always a great help.

Viktor Moskalenko

# The Perfect Pirc-Modern

Strategic Ideas & Powerful Weapons

New In Chess 2013

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Published by New In Chess, Alkmaar, The Netherlands  
[www.newinchess.com](http://www.newinchess.com)

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Cover design: Steven Boland  
Supervisor: Peter Boel  
Proofreading: René Olthof  
Production: Anton Schermer

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ISBN: 978-90-5691-402-8

# Contents

<b>Foreword by Vassily Ivanchuk . . . . .</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction by the Author . . . . .</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 1 - The Austrian Attack: Introduction . . . . .</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Chapter 2 - The Austrian Attack: 5...c5 . . . . .</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Chapter 3 - The Austrian Attack: 5...0-0 . . . . .</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Chapter 4 - The Flexible Move 4.♗e3 . . . . .</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Chapter 5 - The Dynamic Bishop Attack 4.♗g5 . . . . .</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Chapter 6 - White's Fianchetto: 4.g3 . . . . .</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>Chapter 7 - The Classical 4.♘f3 . . . . .</b>	<b>216</b>
<b>Chapter 8 - Amadeus – Miscellaneous Ideas . . . . .</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>Index of Variations . . . . .</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Explanation of Symbols . . . . .</b>	<b>246</b>
<b>Index of Names . . . . .</b>	<b>247</b>
<b>Game Index . . . . .</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Bibliography . . . . .</b>	<b>255</b>

## Foreword by Vassily Ivanchuk

Dear Readers!

You are interested in chess, and accordingly, you cannot pass by such an important aspect of the game as the theory of the openings. Admittedly, Jose Raoul Capablanca advised players to begin by studying the endgame, but it is hard to imagine how we can survive into an ending, without at least some elementary idea of opening principles. This is especially true in our day, when practically every player can absorb different opening variations with the greatest speed, by an adroit use of textbooks and the computer.

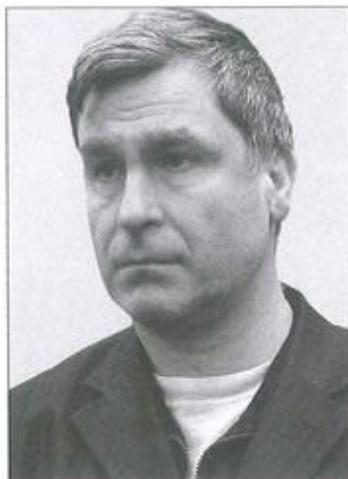
The present book is devoted to the Pirc and Modern Defences, although in many books (especially Soviet ones!), the Pirc is given the name of the master from Kustan, Anatoly Ufimtsev.

The author gives detailed coverage of various lines of this opening. Although in the main, the book is aimed at highly-qualified players, I think it will also be useful to the average amateur... As well as the main strategic plans, the author also draws attention to traps and non-standard tactical tricks.

And now to the opening itself. When playing the Pirc Defence, the black player does not aim to equalize the position. He tries to obtain complicated play, and even invites the danger of a direct attack on his king. But playing such positions, and making full use of one's (often far from obvious) resources, requires great skill, developing which is very valuable for players of all levels.

Viktor Moskalenko has already written a number of books, on various openings. One can think of the Nimzo-Indian with 4.f3 in his book *Revolutionize Your Chess*, the French Defence and the Budapest Gambit. By way of illustration, the author uses many of his own games, with very interesting annotations – not just regarding chess, but also from the psychological point of view. Consequently, this is not just an opening book, but it is also useful for further study of certain middlegame and even endgame positions. In addition, you can also become familiar with the particular methodology of analysing employed by Viktor Moskalenko, which will undoubtedly help you to master not just the Pirc and Modern Defences, but also to systematize and perfect your understanding of the key points of other openings.

I wish you success!



Vassily Ivanchuk

# Introduction



## Surprise your opponent with the Perfect Pirc-Modern!

In the beginning of the 20th century, hyper-modernism made its appearance in chess.

Since then, many chess players have finally discovered its 'dark side' (the dynamic style); the chess game proved to be richer than it had been thought to be before, and it began to change, from classical chess to a more active and unpredictable game.

As a consequence of this development, new openings were tested. In some of them, the influence on the centre was exerted from a distance.

This book is about two such systems: the **Pirc** and the **Modern Defence**.

**Pirc 1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\square$ f6**



**Modern 1.e4 g6**



## The Perfect Pirc-Modern

Both systems have long since established themselves as a universal opening weapon for the creative player.

The failure of many attempts to refute Black's defence outright with a quick occupation of the centre and a straight assault (such as the Austrian Attack with f2-f4) prove that it is still very much alive and kicking.

All main lines for White and Black are covered in this book, as well as some rare options.

### The main opening resources and pawn structures

#### **White:**

- \* maintain his centre and develop
- \* attack in the centre (e4-e5)
- \* attack on the kingside (h2-h4)
- \* a typical attacking set-up with pieces is f3/ ♕e3/ ♖d2/ ♜h6 etc.

#### **Black:**

- \* usually prepares ...e7-e5
- \* the universal set-up with ...c6-b5
- \* the modern set-up with ...a6-b5
- \* sometimes the Sicilian Dragon structure appears after ...c7-c5
- \* Benoni structure: ...c7-c5 and White replies d4-d5
- \* King's Indian: ...e7-e5, and White's d4-d5
- \* Ruy Lopez: ...e7-e5
- \* Philidor: ...e7-e5 and ...exd4

This list of options shows the great flexibility of the combative Pirc-Modern Defence. Many times we can see motifs from the Sicilian, the Benoni and certain other openings, and also transpositions, in a single game.

During my study for this book I have discovered a huge number of powerful ideas for both sides; surprising new plans, and even some unexplored but attractive systems.

### The Perfect Player

From the beginning, White can choose to go for forced and aggressive lines, and he can also choose among many positional plans, trying a different playing style every time. However, most of the time the character of the positions and the play in the Pirc-Modern is ultra-dynamic.

This factor enabled me to collect many great and memorable games for the book, for both White and Black.

As usual in my books, I have tried not to be too heavily influenced by computer lines and to offer material mainly based on healthy concepts instead. One of the strong points of the best players is that they allow us to learn how to play with a solid basis. After that we can learn how to use computers to our benefit.

"One of the secrets of success nowadays is to use computers in your favour and not let computers rule your thinking ability", said Grandmaster Boris Gelfand in his video interview *Nobody's invincible, nobody's immune to mistakes*, before playing his World Championship match against Vishy Anand.

Nowadays, the Pirc-Modern remains in the repertoire of many players as a nice dynamic option in must-win situations with black. On the other hand, it is also played by super grandmasters such as Ivanchuk, Grischuk, Kramnik and Nakamura: they also know perfectly well how to use the 'active side' of their chess talent. This perspective allows them as it were to take the chess game into a new dimension.

The perfect Pirc-Modern player doesn't need to have a phenomenal memory combined with some wishful thinking. He should first of all get the feel of this fascinating opening, and then use his fighting spirit!

Viktor Moskalenko,  
Barcelona, December 2012



Vasja Pirc (1907-1980).

## Chapter 1

# The Austrian Attack: Introduction

1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4.f4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



Austrian Attack



(Four Pawns Attack vs. KID)



### Little Puzzle

Why has the Austrian Attack for a long time been considered one of the most dangerous ways to fight against the Pirc Defence? First of all, let's compare the two quite similar opening positions above with a keen eye – just try to find the differences!

With the pawn on c4 in Diagram 2, White gains more space and has an advantage based on strategic rules. But his pieces are still undeveloped, so embarking on tactical adventures is hardly possible within the next moves.

## The Perfect Pirc-Modern

By keeping the pawn on c2 (Diagram 1), White gains a tempo to develop his knight ( $\mathbb{N}f3$ ), and this factor makes the position much more dynamic – the direct attack with e4-e5 is now a dangerous threat!

### Main Features

- \* The fight for the initiative (or for a strategic advantage) develops mainly in the centre and on the kingside.
- \* White will need to throw in some more developing moves – otherwise his attack will fail (see Game 1).
- \* The typical pawn structures are similar to those in the King's Indian, the Benoni and the Classical Variation of the Sicilian Dragon, determining the typical attacking and defensive methods (see 'directions').
- \* There are lots of sharp lines and premature attacks here – but thanks to computers and the progress of modern opening analysis, most of them can be thrown into the wastebin!

### Game 1 – The Bull and the Matador: 5.e5 $\mathbb{N}fd7$ 6.h4

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** The advance e4-e5 is always the most straightforward and concrete attempt to refute the Pirc Defence. As also happens in this line, White is usually not sufficiently developed for this pawn thrust. His impulse to play this dynamic move may be compared to the fighting instincts of a bull – or the matador, depending on the final result.

□ Nicolo Napoli  
■ Viktor Moskalenko

Barcelona open 2012 (6)  
1.d4  $\mathbb{N}f6$  2. $\mathbb{N}c3$  g6 3.e4 d6 4.f4  
 $\mathbb{B}g7$  5.e5!?

This enthusiastic advance introduces our sharp variation.



Matador vs. bull

5... $\mathbb{N}fd7$

Black is going to break the pawn wedge with the typical push ...c7-c5.

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** As we will see in the next chapters, the pawn exchange 5...dxe5?! is a less attractive defensive option, but it usually serves to reduce White's initiative. After 6.fxe5 in this concrete case, the best method for Black would be 6...Qfd7 7.Qf3 c5!??.

Instead, 5...dxe5 6.dxe5 Qxd1+ 7.Qxd1 Qg4 8.Qd5 Qd8 (we will see an important endgame with the same pawn structure in the notes to Game 8 – 6.e5 dxe5)



9.Qe1 Qe6 10.Qc3 Qc6 11.Qf3 f6! 12.h3 Qh6 13.Qb5 Qb4?? Hector-Smirin, Oslo 1994.

#### 6.h4

A typical 'bull-attack', however in this order (on move 6!) this is almost a novelty. Only two games have been played with it, in 1966 and 1972. When I see such a move on the board, I have to remind myself that I am a grandmaster, not a patzer.

6.Qf3 c5! transposes to Game 3 and 6...0-0 7.h4 to Game 8.

#### 6...c5? 7.h5 cxd4!

Resulting in a true jigsaw puzzle.



#### 8.h6N

During the game I expected this intermediate attack on my fianchettoed position. Remarkably, my young opponent had this tactical operation in mind as his main weapon against the Pirc Defence! (see the picture of the post more).

Anyway, the original move 8.Qxd4 dxe5 simply loses a pawn without much compensation: 9.Qf2 Qc6 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.Qxh8+ Qxh8 12.f5 gxf5 13.Qxf5 Qf6--+ Tredup-Oetzel, Krumpa 1972.

#### 8...Qxe5!

The best solution. Since the h-file is blocked now, kingside castling will be possible. White has active play after the modest retreat 8...Qf8 9.Qxd4 Qc6 10.Qf2 dxe5 11.Qf3?? and the option of like; 8...Qxh6 would continue the puzzle!

#### 9.fxe5 dxc3 10.exd6

The critical moment for Black.



**10... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ ?**

The computer recommends simple development as the best option: 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  cxb2 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb2$   $\mathbb{Q}de5$  (12...0-0) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  0-0 14.0-0-0 and now 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$  (or 14...exd6?) gives Black a clear advantage, but in a practical game the position remains complicated.

**11.b3  $\square$  0-0! 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ ?**

Another wake-up call for me:  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  mate is the threat. 12.dxe7 only helps Black: 12... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ .

**12... $e5!$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$** 

Now White has to come up with something spectacular, otherwise his 'bull strategy' will be refuted.

**14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$** 

If 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8!$ ? with the idea of jumping ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-g4$ . Against 14.a4!? I was planning to simplify with 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ ? as in the main game: 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  and now 16... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$  17.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ .

Here I would prefer Black, but things are still complicated.

**14... $\mathbb{Q}c5$** 

The offer to exchange the queens is a psychologically tricky concept. My op-

ponent wants to attack since he is less skilled in other fields. The computer thinks smarter is 14... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  (with the idea ... $b7-b5$ ) 15.a4 and only now 15... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ .

**15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$** 

15. $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  was my modest idea, in order to overplay my lower-rated opponent in a strategic end-game.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$** 

Threatening the thematic blow 16... $\mathbb{Q}xc2+$ .

**16. $\mathbb{Q}h3?$** 

There is some confusion about whether White is attacking or defending. Better was 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  a6?.



Barcelona, 2012. The post mortem analysis between Nicolo Napoli and the author. In the same year, bullfights were officially banned in Barcelona!

**16... ♕xd6**

Obviously, now Black is winning.

**17. ♜f3**

Better was 17. ♜d1 ♜f6!.

**17... ♜b6! 18. ♜xd4 exd4 19. ♜f4****♕f6! 20. ♜f3 ♜xc4 21. bxc4 ♜g4**

And White resigned.

**Summary bull vs. matador attacks**

I hope this recent miniature is a nice illustration of the causes and effects, as well as the morale, of these hurried attacks. The defence is difficult, and any player at B- and C-tournament level can deliver a mating combination!

**Directions in Chapter 2 and 3 – A Bit of Theory**

According to some writers about the Pirc Defence, the Austrian Attack is the most theory-intensive part of the repertoire and it requires a considerable amount of memory work. On the contrary, to me (as an experienced author of books on the French Defence and a well-known Four Pawns attacker as well), analysing and learning the most important sequences of this variation was like a walk in the park – an easy ride!

In fact, with the black king's knight already developed on f6, both sides have several traditional options on moves 5-6:

**Chapter 2: Austrian Attack – 5...c5**

Game 2 – The main line: 6. ♜b5+

Game 3 – Still a hasty advance: 6.e5

Game 4 – Playing A43 - Schmid Benoni: 6.d5

Game 5 – The positional way: 6.dxc5 ♕a5 7. ♜d3 (and some others)

Game 6 – A static concept: 7. ♜d4

**Chapter 3: Austrian Attack – 5...0-0**

Game 7 – Two anti ...c7-c5 lines: 6. ♜e3 and 5./6.a3

Game 8 – The Pawn Attack: 6.e5

Game 9 – Quiet development: 6. ♜e2

Games 10-14 – The main move: 6. ♜d3

Game 10 – The non-flexible 6.... ♜bd7?!; the premature pin 6... ♜g4?!, and the break 6...c5?!

Games 11 and 12 – A provocative set-up: 6... ♜c6, trying for a King's Indian with ...e7-e5

Games 13 and 14 – The Benoni hybrid: 6... ♜a6, preparing ...c7-c5

**Workshop**

Here I will highlight some important tips, novelties and main recommendations from the model games that are analysed further on. However, there are so many ideas to be found throughout these two chapters that it may be best to just study them inside those games and introductions.

## Chapter 2

### The Austrian Attack: 5...c5



Opinion (2001-2009): 'In the Austrian Attack, we can be confident in relying on the move 5...c5!. Black has sharp lines after 6.♗b5+ that lead to good positions. And we have plans and ideas of how to play the position after 6.dxc5. This preparation is sufficient for playing at any level' – according to grandmasters Lev Alburt and Alexander Chernin, in their enthusiastic (American) story *Pirc Alert!*



Statistics (2012): However, the total of games in the databases with 5...c5 is 5,082, compared to 5...0-0 = 11,382! The score is virtually the same.

Objectively, this ultra-dynamic Sicilian/Benoni thrust is not a typical early opening move in the Pirc, but it is mainly aimed against the possible attack e4-e5. Black prefers to put immediate pressure on the d4-pawn, after which White has at least four original arguments:

- A) Force the play: 6.♗b5+ or 6.e5.
- B) Just play normal positional moves: 6.d5 or 6.dxc5.

#### Game 2 – The Main Line: 6.♗b5+

Up to this day, White mostly uses this dynamic check. Now: 6...♗d7 7.e5 ♛g4 8.e6



When Yasser Seirawan introduced the fantastic move 8...fxe6 in the 1980s (even if 8... $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$ ? 9.exf7+  $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  is also interesting for Black), which earned him a quick draw with Gyula Sax and a prize for the best novelty of that year, the variation beginning with 5...c5 became fashionable. Throughout history (and I am writing in 2012), besides a few forced lines with a maximum level of complexity, White has also developed some intermediate plans on moves 7 and 8 to simplify the line: 7/8. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$ , 7.h3, or 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

In our main game, super grandmaster Alexander Grischuk improved the main line by exchanging the queens:



A Pirc hero: legendary American grandmaster Yasser Seirawan.



12... $\mathbb{Q}xd2!$ , and after that he just played the endgame as a positional masterpiece. See several amazing posts on the Internet by the winner.

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** In this variation, exchanging the queens is a basic necessity for Black!

- Sergey Karjakin
- Alexander Grischuk

Moscow ch-RUS 2011 (4)

1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4.f4  
5.g7 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5!?

Recently, in two games against Karjakin, Ivanchuk castled on both occasions (see Part 2, Austrian Attack 5...0-0), while the text is the second main move.

6. $\mathbb{Q}b5+$

This move reminds me of Taimanov's check in the Four Pawns Benoni! Also,

because the right defence is almost identical:



**6...♝d7!**

6...♝fd7?! is too passive: 7.dxc5! dxc5 8.e5± – Black gets a bad pawn structure.

**TRICK:** 6...♝bd7? allows White to exploit the big hole on e6: 7.e5 ♜g4 8.e6! fxe6 9.♝g5↑ 0-0□ 10.♝xe6 ♛a5 11.♝xg7 ♜df6 12.h3 ♜h6 13.dxc5±;

**WEAPON:** However, 6...♝c6?!, an idea introduced in 1980 by the young Englishman Peter Wells (now a grandmaster), is a provocative defence, especially suited to players who enjoy an extremely sharp struggle:



analysis diagram

A) 7.dxc5 is not strong enough: 7...♛a5 (7...0-0!? 8.0-0 ♜e6≈) 8.♝d2 0-0≈, as occurred in Motwani-McNab, London 1989, and, more recently, in Alsina Leal-Peralta, Catalunya tt 2012;

B) 7.d5?! a6 8.♝a4 (8.♝e2?! is the solid Benoni alternative) 8...b5 9.dxc6 and now 9...♛c7?! (9...♛b6?! is similar; 9...bx a4?! is also unclear: 10.e5 ♜g4 11.0-0 0-0 12.h3 ♜h6 13.♝d5 ♜e6 14.c7 ♛d7∞) 10.e5! (10.♝b3 c4∞) 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 ♜g4 12.♛d5 bx a4 13.♛xc5 ♜xe5 14.♝d5 ♜xf3+ 15.gxf3 ♛e5+ 16.♚f2 ♜b8! threatening 17...♜b5. The position remains quite dy-

namic, but forced play follows: 17.♞f4 ♛d4+ 18.♛xd4 ♜xd4+ 19.♝g3 e5 20.♜he1 ♜e6! 21.♜xe5 ♜xe5 22.♜xe5 ♜xd5 23.♜xb8 ♜xc6 24.♜d1 ♜e7=.

**7.e5!**

The planned attack begins.

7.♝xd7+ is a rather harmless option here, since Black gets excellent play after either of two equivalent answers:

A) 7...♝fxd7. This solid recapture is the most commonly played move, mostly in order to avoid complications with e4-e5. 8.d5 (if 8.♝e3 0-0 9.♛d2 ♜c6 10.0-0-0 ♛a5≈).



analysis diagram

As a general rule, after exchanging the bishops (f1xc8) and advancing his d-pawn, White will not get much out of this position.

8...b5?! is a typical Benoni gambit, but not the only option here.

**WEAPON:** I would recommend the natural plan: 8...0-0 9.0-0 ♜a6 10.♛e2 ♛b6! (better than 10...♝c7 11.a4!) 11.♝h1 ♜c7≈ with the idea to exchange the queens after ...♛a6, Zambrana-Morovic Fernandez, Asuncion 2010.

9.♝xb5?! (9.♛e2 b4 10.♝d1 ♛b6 11.0-0 ♛a6! 12.♛e1 ♜b6 13.♝f2 (13.♝e3 ♜8d7≈ Livshits-Grischuk, Rishon Le Ziyon blitz 2006) 13...♝8d7 14.a3, Shirov-



The game Karjakin-Grischuk: 'Only a win suited me, which is why I played such an opening as the Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence' (Grischuk).

Tkachiev, Bastia rapid 2003, and here:  
 14...0-0!N  $\Delta$  15. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{K}fc8$  16.b3 c4! $\rightleftharpoons$ ; 9.0-0 b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  (10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b6!$ ?N Rodriguez Lopez-Gual Pascual, Don Benito 2012 (0-1, 25)) 10...0-0 11.c4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  e6 13. $\mathbb{W}c2$  exd5 14.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}8d7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{K}e8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$  Bok-Tirnman, Antwerp 2011) 9... $\mathbb{W}a5+$  10. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$ !

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** The exchange  $\mathbb{Q}g7x\mathbb{Q}c3$  is a common resource in Pirc lines with ...c7-c5.

11.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}xc3+$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}c4$  13. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6!$  14.a4! a5 15. $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  f5! (another Benoni trick! 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ ! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$  $\pm$ ) 17.exf5  $\mathbb{Q}b6\rightleftharpoons$  and the arising endgame is equal:



analysis diagram

18.fxg6 hxg6 19. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}ab1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  21.c3 0-0 22. $\mathbb{Q}hf1$   $\mathbb{Q}ab8=$  Langrock-Reichmann, Germany Bundesliga B 2009/10.

B) However, the natural 7... $\mathbb{Q}bx d7$  also gives Black sufficient counterplay:

B1) The 'Benoni Pirc' is 8.d5 – we will see this scheme throughout these 'Austrian chapters': 8...0-0 9.a4!? (if 9.0-0 b5! $\rightleftharpoons$  10.e5 dx5 11.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4\rightleftharpoons$  Gubaydulin-Tseshkovsky, Tashkent 2008, and YudinTseshkovsky, Sochi 2008) 9...a6 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$  (10.a5  $\mathbb{W}c7$  11. $\mathbb{W}e2$  e6 12.dxe6 fxe6 13.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ae8=$  Bologan-Nunn, Germany Bundesliga 1992/93) 10...b5.

This gambit is always interesting, and at least unclear (10... $\mathbb{W}a5?$  11.0-0 c4! with the idea 12. $\mathbb{W}xc4$  b5! 13. $\mathbb{W}e2$  b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{K}fc8\rightleftharpoons$  and Black has nice counterplay along the c-file for the pawn):

**🔫 WEAPON:** I would advise 11.axb5 axb5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{W}xa8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{W}a5+$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}b4?$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}e8?$  was played in Shirov-Chernin, Moscow 1996, and here 15.e5!N)

15.0-0 ♦b6≈ Gu Xiaobing-Tan, Hefei 2011.

B2) 8.e5 is the principled advance.  
Now: 8...Qh5!.



#### analysis diagram

The arising position is tricky, but it is White who has to play accurately, otherwise he will lose all his centre pawns!

**TRICK:** 9.g4 ♖xf4 10.♖xf4 cxd4 11.♘e4 dxe5 ≡ – ♖ vs. ♗♗♘, where Black's centre pawns are too strong;

B21) 9.e6 requires accurate play from Black: 9...fxe6 10.Qg5 Qxd4! 11.Qxe6 Qxc3+ 12.bxc3 Qc8! 13.0-0 Qf8 14.Qg5 h6 15.Qe4 Qc6 16.Qe1 0-0-0! 17.c4 Bh7 18.g3 Qg7 19.Qb2 Qf5† Grandelius-Hillarp Persson, Kristiansund 2010;

B22) 9.♕e3?! 0-0 (9...♝xf4?N is probably a good option: 10.♕xf4 cxd4 ≡ etc.) 10.0-0 (10.g3?! cxd4 11.♕xd4+ dxe5 12.fxe5 f6 13.exf6 ♝hxf6 14.♗e2 e5!≈) 10...cxd4 11.♗xd4 dxe5 12.fxe5 ♞xe5! 13.♘xe5 ♜c7= Nazarov-Tseshkovsky, Tashkent 2008;

B23) 9.exd6 0-0! and Black can be happy with the opening: 10.0-0 exd6 11.♕e3 ♕e8 12.♗d2 ♔hf6 (12...♔df6!?) 13.♔h1 ♔b6 14.b3 ♔bd5 15.♔xd5 ♔xd5 16.♔g1 ♔f6 17.♕ael ♕d7 18.dxc5 dxc5 19.♗xd7

Qxd7 20.  $\mathbb{H}xe8+$   $\mathbb{H}xe8$  21.  $\mathbb{H}d1$   $\mathbb{H}e7$   
 22.  $\mathbb{H}f2$  b6 = ½-½, Carlsen-Mamedyarov,  
 Moscow Tal Memorial 2007.

7..9q4



The first key position of the main line  
6. ♕b5+.

8.e6!?

Maximum complexity!

White also has several ways to simplify:

A) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \mathbb{Q}xb5!$  (8...  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{W}xd7=$ ) 9.  $\mathbb{W}xg4$  (9.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{W}a5+$  10. c3  $\mathbb{W}xb5$  11.  $\mathbb{W}xg4$  0-0-) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10. e6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6 12. dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$  (as I already pointed out in the previous line, this is a typical Pirc exchange) 13. bxc3  $\mathbb{W}a5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (14.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  15. c4?? was played in Nosov-Rakhmangulov, Volgograd 1997, where Black could win immediately with a simple check: 15...  $\mathbb{W}b4+!$ ) 14...  $\mathbb{W}xc5$  15.  $\mathbb{W}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and Black has better perspective ( $\mathbb{Q}$  vs.  $\mathbb{Q}$ ), P.Lee-Suttles, Havana Olympiad 1966;

e) 8.b.3

Here Black can also follow two lines of action:

B1) The solid option is 8... $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ !?

9. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $dxe5$  10. $h\times g4$   $\mathbb{W}a5+$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  12. $d\times e5$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xa2$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ?) 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  which is fine for Black,  
Andersson-Marin, Internet 2004;

B2) 8...cxd4 9.♗xd4 ♕xb5 10.♘xb5



analysis diagram

**WEAPON:** in Felgaer-Movsziszian, La Pobla de Lillet 2006, an interesting idea was missed: 10...Qh6! 11.g4 Qc6 12.We4 Wa5+ 13.Qc3 0-0-0!? 14.Qd2 dxe5 15.fxe5 and here 15...Rxd2!N (instead of the weak 15...f5? 16.exf6±) 16.Qxd2 Qxe5 17.Qxe5 Qxe5 18.Rad1 f5!≈.

10...Qc6 11.We4 Wb6! 12.We2 a6! 13.Qa3 Qh6 14.Qc4 Wd8 15.exd6 Qf5≈ Black's position is strong, Plonczak-Panocki, Leba 2006;

C) 8.Qxd7+

**TRICK:** Beware! Now 8...Qxd7? allows 9.e6! fxe6 10.Qg5±.

8...Wxd7 and now:

C1) If 9.dxc5 dxe5! 10.h3 Wxd1+ 11.Qxd1 and now both 11...Qf6 12.Qxe5 Qe4 (12...Qbd7!?) 13.Qe3 Qa6≈ and even 11...e4!? 12.hxg4 exf3 13.gxf3 Qa6 lead to an equal endgame;

C2) After the poisonous move 9.h3! the true Pirc solution is 9...cx d4! 10.Wxd4 Qh6 (10...Qc6!?) 11.g4 (11.Wf2 Qc6 12.0-0 0-0 = ½-½ Mikhalchishin-Van Wely, Kecskemet 1991) 11...Qc6≈ 12.We3 dxe5 13.fxe5 0-0 14.Qd2 f5! 15.g5 f4! 16.We4 Qf5 17.0-0-0 Qg3 18.Wc4+

Qh8 19.Qxf4 Wf5 20.Qxg3 Wxf3= Loosnikov-Matveev, Satka 2012; C3) 9.d5 Again, the Benoni structure. 9...dxe5 10.h3.



analysis diagram

10...e4! (10...Qh6? 11.fxe5±) 11.Qxe4 (this move is more popular than 11.hxg4!? exf3 12.Wxf3 Qa6 13.Qd2 0-0-0 14.0-0-0 f5! (14...Qc7 15.Qe1 f5! 16.gxf5 Wxf5 17.g4 Wf7 18.Qg3 h5!≈ Westerinen-Nijboer, Skei 1994) 15.gxf5 Wxf5 16.g4 Wf7 17.We4 h5 18.gxh5 Rxh5 ½-½ Tukhaev-Hillarp Persson, Sweden tt 2010/11) 11...Qf6 12.Qxf6+ (if 12.Qe5 Wa4!? (12...Wd8 13.Qxf6+ exf6=) 13.Qc3 Wa6≈) 12...Qxf6 13.0-0 0-0.



analysis diagram

According to many sources this position is balanced. Here are some typical schemes:

C31) 14.c4 e6 15.Qe5 Wd6 16.Qe3 exd5= Acs-Chernin, Budapest 2000;

C32) 14.♕e5 ♕d6 15.c4 ♔d7 16.♕g4 ♔d4+ 17.♔e3 f5 18.♔xd4 ♕xg4!? 19.♔c3 gxh3 20.g3 e6= Eraschenkov-Tseshkovsky, Belorechensk 2007;

C33) 14.♔e3. This move was popular in the mid-1990s, but subsequent practice has shown that Black has several ways to equalize: 14...♔xb2!? (played first by expert Alexander Chernin; 14...♝d8 15.c4 e6 16.♕e5 ♕e7∞) 15.♝b1 ♔g7 (15...♔f6 16.♕e5 ♕c7 17.♕g4 ♔d7∞ l'Ami-Gurevich, Kusadasi Ech 2006) 16.♗xc5 ♜d8 17.♗d4 (17.c4 ♕c7 18.♗d4 ♕xc4= Palac-Lalic, Pula 2000; 17.♕e5 ♕c7 18.♔a3 ♔c6∞ Liss-Chernin, Rishon Le Ziyon 1994) 17...♕xd5 (17...♔xd4+ is the same) 18.♗xg7 ♕xg7 19.♕xd5 ♜xd5= and the draw was agreed after a few more moves, Nisipeanu-Badea, Sovata 2000.

#### 8...fxe6

A bit of history: this move was introduced in 1988 by Yasser Seirawan. This tactical idea has temporarily replaced the older main defence – however, the most important factor at that time was the revolutionary change in the mind of many players – and therefore, the re-evaluation of the entire Pirc Defence!



**WEAPON:** The above-mentioned option 8...♔xb5!? still deserves attention:



analysis diagram

9.exf7+ and now:

TRICK: 9...♔xf7?! 10.♕g5+ ♔e8 11.♔xb5 ♕a5+ 12.c3! ♕xb5 13.♕xg4†;

9...♔d7 has been around for more than fifty years, but in practice Black had problems with his more exposed king: 10.♔xb5 ♕a5+ 11.♔c3 cxd4 12.♔xd4 h5 (12...♔xd4 13.♕xd4 ♔c6 14.♕c4 ♕b6 15.♕e2†) 13.h3 ♔c6 (13...♔h6 14.♔e3 ♔c6∞ Smith-Hillarp Persson, Borup 2010) 14.♔e2!? (14.♔f3 ♕c5!?) 14...♔h6 15.♔e3 ♕f5! (15...♔f5 16.♔f2±; 15...♔af8 16.0-0 ♔f5 17.♔f2∞) 16.0-0 ♕xf7 17.♕d3 ♔f5 18.♔f2, (Provotorov-S. Chekhov, Voronezh 2008) and here 18...♜ac8! with a still unclear position.

9...♔f8! is the key move. 10.♔xb5 ♕a5+ 11.♔c3 cxd4 12.♔xd4 ♔xf7 (another solution may be 12...♔c6!?, 13.♔e6+ ♔xf7 14.♔xg7 ♔f6! and the game is quite balanced) and now:

A) Black is OK after 13.♕xg4 ♔xd4 14.♔d2 ♕f5! (remember the rule: exchange queens! Or 14...♔c6 15.0-0-0 ♕h5!N) 15.♕f3 (15.♕e2 ♕e6! 16.♔e4 h6=) 15...♕e6+! 16.♔e2 ♔c6 17.c3 ♔b6∞ Nazhmeddinov-Anarkulov, Tashkent 2011;

B) 13.0-0!? (castling is quite a new idea here, also played by Karjakin) 13...♕c5.



analysis diagram

The key moment. Here White has an important improvement: 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ N (instead of 14.  $\mathbb{W}xg4$  which was offered as the main line in *Dangerous Weapons* by Palliser, McNab and Vigus: 14...  $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$  (  $\mathbb{Q}x\mathbb{Q}$ ) 16. bxc3  $\mathbb{W}f5!$  17.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7=$  Karjakin-Mamedyarov, Nice rapid 2008) 14...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15. c3. The position is close to equal, but the black king is still vulnerable in the ensuing middlegame.

9.  $\mathbb{Q}g5!$



This is White's main idea in this variation, with a double attack on e6 and  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

9...  $\mathbb{Q}xb5 \square$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$

Other moves have brought White success in the past, but with the onslaught of computer analysis have gradually disappeared from practice:

A) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{W}a5+$  11. c3 (if 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}xb2!$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}xa2$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15. 0-0 and now 15...  $\mathbb{Q}f6?$  or 15...  $h5?$ ) 11...  $\mathbb{W}xb5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ .



analysis diagram

Now, the more complicated line begins with 12...  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+?$  (or 13.  $\mathbb{W}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14. d5 (14. dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  h5 16.  $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5=$  Panarin-Inarkiev, Vladimir 2002) 14...  $\mathbb{W}d3$  (14...  $\mathbb{W}c4!?$ ) 15.  $\mathbb{W}d1 \square$   $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  h5 17. g3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7=$  and Black even won this endgame, in Beliavsky-Timman, Belfort 1988) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xg4$  (14.  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7=$  Van der Wiel-Seirawan, Lucerne Wch-tt 1989) 14...  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$   $\mathbb{W}xb2!$  16. 0-0  $\mathbb{W}xc3$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{Q}hf8\infty$  and White has activity in exchange for his two pawns, but there is no easy progress, Anand-Gurevich, Linares 1991.

WEAPON: 12...  $\mathbb{W}c4!?$  is the simplest way to equality: 13.  $\mathbb{W}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4! \rightleftharpoons$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{W}e6+$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $dxe3$  17.  $\mathbb{W}xe6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  leads to a balanced ending.

B) 10.  $\mathbb{W}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4!.$  The best square for the bishop to defend e6 from. Now:

TRICK: 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xh7?$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!$   
12.  $\mathbb{W}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4\bar{\tau}$

TRICK: 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5?$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$   
12. bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}a5\uparrow$ .

11. b3  $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $exd5$  14. 0-0-0



analysis diagram

The critical position of this line. Not even correspondence games bring White any success – he has no serious attack!

14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (15... $\mathbb{W}e6$   $\mathbb{W}c8!$ )  
 16. $\mathbb{W}f7+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17. $\mathbb{W}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}g8!$   
 18. $\mathbb{W}xg8$   $\mathbb{B}hxg8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  b5 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   
 b4 21. $\mathbb{B}he1$  a5= Nunn-Seirawan,  
 Skelleftea 1989) 15... $\mathbb{W}c8$  (15... $\mathbb{W}d7$   
 leads to Nunn-Benjamin, Thessaloniki  
 of 1988, which was balanced after 16.f5  
 $\mathbb{Q}f6$  17. $\mathbb{B}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{B}xg5+$   
 19. $\mathbb{W}xg5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  20. $\mathbb{B}xe6$  0-0-0=) 16.f5  
 $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ ! 17.fxg6  $\mathbb{B}g8$  18.g7  $\mathbb{Q}f7!$  19. $\mathbb{B}h6$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  20. $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  21. $\mathbb{W}h3+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$   
 22. $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g6$  23. $\mathbb{B}hf1$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  24. $\mathbb{B}de1$   
 $\mathbb{B}xg7$  25. $\mathbb{B}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  26. $\mathbb{B}xf6$   $\mathbb{B}xe7$   
 27. $\mathbb{B}xg6+$   $\mathbb{B}hg6$  28. $\mathbb{W}xg6+$  and White  
 made a draw by perpetual check in  
 Sgherri-Viviani, corr 2009.

WEAPON: 14... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ !N with  
 the idea 15. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  16. $\mathbb{B}he1$   
 $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ ! and ... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ .

We return to the main line:

10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!!$



'Nowadays, an awful lot of people know  
 that you can make a draw in this position'  
 – Grischuk on chessintranslation.com.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xb5?$

The only way to continue fighting. The  
 stem game ended quickly after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e3+$  etc. = Sax-  
 Seirawan, Brussels 1988.

Black is fine after 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4?$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d7$   
 (11... $\mathbb{Q}c4?$ !) 12. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6=$  with an extra pawn, and White's bishop is limited.

11... $\mathbb{W}a5+$

Quite an annoying check, since White  
 has only two answers:

12. $\mathbb{W}d2$

12.c3 is less popular: 12... $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e3+$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{W}a4+$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}e4+$   
 (15... $\mathbb{W}xd1$  16. $\mathbb{B}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}ec7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$   
 18. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{B}xa8=$ ) 16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{W}xc2+$   
 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xc1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}ec7$   
 a6 20. $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  axb5 21.a4 bxa4 22. $\mathbb{B}xa4$   
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$  23. $\mathbb{B}a7$  c4!.



analysis diagram

Black has full compensation for the exchange, as the position of the  $\mathbb{Q}a8$  is far from perfect!

24. $\mathbb{B}e1$  (24. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  25. $\mathbb{B}e1$  e5= Olenin-Sudnizin, Yalta 1995) 24...e5 25. $\mathbb{B}e4$  (25. $\mathbb{Q}c2?$  exf4= Bauer-Chabanon, Nantes ch-FRA 1993) 25...d5= Acker-Kondziela, corr 2004.

12... $\mathbb{W}xd2+$ !

'This move is encountered less often, but it's got a better reputation' – Grischuk. Author's note: in fact, the exchange of the queens is our main concept here!

WEAPON: However, the main theoretical continuation leads more or less forced to the following position: 12... $\mathbb{Q}f2+$

13.♘d1 ♘e3+ 14.♔e2 ♗xb5+  
15.♗xf2 ♘g4+ 16.♗g3 ♘a6  
(16...♗d7 17.♗e1≈)

**TRICK:** Don't take the g4-knight! 17.♗xg4?! ♗d7 and Black wins the knight back after 18.♗e1 ♘c7 etc.

17.♗e1! ♘h6 18.b3 (18.♗f2 ♘f5  
19.g4 ♘d4 20.♗xd4 cxd4 21.♗xd4  
♗c5= Korneev-Peralta, Castellar 2004)  
18...♗f5+ 19.♗f2 h5 20.♗b2 ♘g8  
21.♗ad1 ♘d7 22.c4∞.



White has good long-term compensation, but the outcome of the game remains open. After the game, Grischuk stated that he considered this position rather dangerous for Black.

13.♗xd2 ♘d7



The key position. Karjakin probably wasn't prepared for this line and chooses an insipid continuation.

#### 14.♗bx4N

**TRICK:** 14.♗bc7? ♘c8!  
(14...♗a6!?) 15.♗xd4 ♘xc7  
16.♗f3 ♘c6†.

**WEAPON:** The principled decision is to take the exchange that is on offer: 14.♗ec7!. However, the position is always blocked, which hardly promises White any advantage:

A) Black can play strategically with 14...♗c6, when there are two interesting thrusts, played in correspondence games:  
15.♗xa8 ♘xa8 16.♗xd4 (or 16.c3 ♘g7  
17.0-0 e6 18.♗ae1 a6 19.♗a3 d5≈  
Besozzi-Lanzani, corr 2009) 16...♗xd4  
17.♗c1 ♘f8 18.c3 ♘f5 19.h3 ♘f6 20.g4  
♗g3 21.♗g1 ♘fe4 22.♗c2 h5 23.♗e3  
b6 24.♗d1 h4 25.♗e1 e6 26.♗c1 ♘f6  
27.c4 d5 28.♗c2 d4 29.♗cd1 e5!  
30.fxe5 ♘fe4 31.♗xd4 cxd4 32.♗xd4+



analysis diagram

and the draw was agreed in Vestergard-Pfiffner, corr 2009. Black's forces are so active that after 32...♗e6 33.♗dx4 ♘xe4 34.♗xe4 ♘f3 35.b4!≈ White must play accurately to hold the balance;

B) Or he can get a sharp ending after 14...a6! 15.♗xa8 axb5 16.a4 bxa4 17.♗b6+ ♘c6 18.♗xa4 ♘d7 (18...♗f8!?) △ 19.♗c3 ♘xc3! 20.bxc3

$\text{Qd7=}$  (vs.  $\text{Qg7}$ ) 19.  $\text{Qc3}$   $\text{Qb6}$  (19...  $e5!?$ ) 20.  $\text{Qd1}$   $\text{Qc4}$  21.  $c3$   $\text{Qg7} \mp$ , which was seen in the games Radjabov–Ivanchuk, Monaco blind 2007, and Muzychuk–Hamdouchi, Port Marly 2011.

14...  $\text{cx}d4$  15.  $\text{Qxd4}$   $\text{Rc8}$



'It's clear that this position has huge drawing resources, but if people want to play for a win then that's also an option' – Grischuk.

16.0-0  $\text{Rc5!}$

16...  $\text{Qc6}$  17.  $\text{Qf3}=$ .

17.c3

TRICK: 17.f5?!  $\text{Qc6}$  18.  $\text{Qxc6}$   $\text{Rxc2}!$ .

17...  $\text{Qc6}$  18.  $\text{Qf3}$

18.  $\text{Qxc6}$   $\text{bx}c6$  strengthens Black's centre.

18...  $b5$  19.  $h3$

'It's hard to say if Sergey wanted a real fight or not. But he started to play poorly here' – Grischuk. 19.  $a4$   $bx a4$  20.  $\text{Rxa4}$   $\text{Rb8}$  21.  $b4$   $\text{Rc4} \mp$ .

19...  $\text{Qf6}$  20.  $\text{Rxe3}$   $\text{Rd5}$  21.  $\text{Qd4}$

$\text{Qa5}!?$

Avoiding simplifications.

22.  $\text{Rad1}$

22.  $b3$   $\text{Qe4} \mp$  and the  $c3$ -pawn is weak. White still had a chance to play more actively with 22.  $a4$   $\text{Qc4}$  23.  $\text{Rf2}$   $b4!$  24.  $\text{cxb4}$   $\text{Qe4}$  25.  $\text{Rfc1}$   $\text{Qxb2} \mp$ .

22...  $\text{Qc4}$  23.  $\text{Rc1}$   $a5$



'I think Black is better here. Strangely enough, the rook is very strong on d5. Sergey decided to exchange it – at the cost of a couple of tempos' – Grischuk.

24.  $\text{Qc2}$   $\text{Rxd1}$  25.  $\text{Rxd1}$   $\text{Rc8}$

25...  $\text{Qe4}!?$ .

26.  $\text{Qf1}$

26.  $\text{Qd4}$   $b4 \mp$ ; 26...  $\text{Rc5}!?$ .

26...  $\text{Qb6}$

Black wants to play ...  $b5$ - $b4$ .

27.  $a3$

This allows Black to increase his positional advantage. 27.  $\text{Qd4}$   $b4$  28.  $\text{cxb4}$   $\text{axb4}$  29.  $\text{Qe2}$   $\text{Qfd5} \mp$ .

27...  $a4!$

'The two black pawns cancel out White's three pawns and therefore I end up with an extra pawn in the centre' – Grischuk.

28.  $\text{Rd4}$

If 28.  $\text{Qd4}$   $\text{Qc4}$  with the idea 29.  $\text{Qxb5}$   $\text{Rb8}$  30.  $\text{Qd4}$   $\text{Qxb2} \mp$ , eyeing the weak pawns on  $a3$  and  $c3$ .

28...  $\text{Qfd5}$



Here the time-trouble phase started. 'Without e7-e5 it's hard for me to make progress, and in order to play e5 I have to block the d-file' – Grischuk.

### 29.♘e2 e5!

A serious alternative was 29...e6!?. In such positions it is also promising to apply a light-square strategy!

### 30.fxe5 dxe5 31.♗d1

By now White is clearly on the defensive. 31.♗h4 h5??

### 31...♗e6 32.♗f1 ♘c4 33.♗f3 h6

33...g5!??

### 34.♗b4 ♘xb4 35.axb4 g5 36.g4

'When you've got such an overwhelming position you want to prevent any counterplay at all. Here I probably started to get a bit too clever' – Grischuk.

### 36...♗g8!?

Prevents h3-h4. 36...e4??

### 37.♗f1 ♘b6!?

'A promising plan – transferring the knight to f4. I think if you exchange rooks then Black will be winning, but there's no way of exchanging them: if 37...♗g7, then 38.♗f8, and the white rook becomes active' – Grischuk.

### 38.♗e3 ♘d5 39.♗h1 ♗c8!?

Setting a trap.

### 40.h4

40.♗c5 ♘f4+ is also winning for Black; or 40.♗a1 ♗c4?? and 41...♗f4.

### 40...a3!–+



The decisive break!

### 41.bxa3 ♗xc3 42.♗c5

After 42.♗d2 ♘f4+! Black is winning. Interesting is 42.hxg5 ♗xe3+ 43.♗d2 hxg5 (43...h5!?–+; 43...♗xa3!?–+) 44.♗h6+ ♘e7 45.♗h7+ ♘e8 46.♗h8+ ♘f7! 47.♗d8 (47.♗h7+ ♘g6 48.♗d7 ♘f6!) 47...♘e6 48.♗xd5 (48.♗e8+ ♘d7–+) 48...♗xd5 49.♗xe3 e4–+.

### 42...♗f4+ 43.♗d2 ♗xa3 44.hxg5 hxg5 45.♗h8 ♘d5

'I have to try and weave some sort of mating net in order to use the power of the knight' – Grischuk. 45...♗g3!?

### 46.♗d8+ ♘c4 47.♗e8 ♘d5T 48.♗b8

### ♘c4 49.♗e8 ♗a2+! 50.♗e3 ♘d5+

### 51.♗f3□

### 51.♗e4? ♘f6+.

### 51...♗a3+ 52.♗e2

### 52.♗f2 ♘f6!.

### 52...♗c3+ 53.♗e3 ♗a2!

Indirectly protecting the e5-pawn and preparing its advance.

### 54.♗c8

54.♗xe5?? ♗e2+; 54.♗e7 ♘d5+ 55.♗e4 ♘xe7 56.♗xe7 ♗f2!–+.

### 54...♗e2+ 55.♗f3 e4+ 56.♗g3 ♗c2!

### 57.♗h3

Once again: 57.♗e7+ ♘b3 58.♗xg5? ♘e2+ and Black wins the rook.

### 57...♗d5



Threatening mate in two, so White is forced to exchange rooks.

**58.♗e7+**

This loses by force. 58.♔g3?! was more resilient: 58...♝c3+ 59.♔h2 ♔b3 60.♗g8 e3 61.♗xg5 e2 62.♗f2 ♗f4 63.♗e5 ♘h3+ 64.♔g1 ♘f3—+ and fortunately, the black king has enough time to draw nearer to the battle: 65.g5 ♔c2 66.g6 ♔d2 67.g7 ♘xf2!! wins.

**58...♔b3 59.♗xc2 ♘xc2 60.♗xg5 ♘xb4 61.♔h4 ♗d5 62.g5 b4 63.♗g4 63.g6 ♗f4+; 63.♔h2 ♗e7—+. 63...b3 64.g6 b2 65.g7 b1♛ 0-1**

**Summary 6.♗b5+**

The check with the bishop on the sixth move is undoubtedly the main continuation, and to this day it remains a strong tactical threat against the 5...c5 variation.

The sharp and forced lines that follow are basically good for any player who likes to combine risky play with special home preparation.

The simplifications do not present any great danger to Black.

**Game 3 – Still a Hasty Advance: 6.e5**



**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** Pirc aficionados shouldn't worry excessively about this ambitious line. But they must always have a plausible reaction at hand, a thorough check and a good grasp of the complications arising after any e4-e5 advance against the Pirc Defence – find it here and elsewhere in this book!

Gyula Sax

Gudmundur Sigurjonsson

Vratsa zt 1975 (3)

**1.e4 g6!?**

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** Many times the Modern move order transposes to a normal Pirc, but it allows the black player to avoid some annoying lines.

**2.d4 ♘g7 3.♗c3 d6**

**WEAPON:** For instance, 3...c6!? is an interesting anti-Austrian and anti-Sämisch move, which is studied in the last chapter of this book. The idea is 4.f4 (4.f3 ♘b6!?) 4...d5!?.

**4.f4 ♗f6! 5.♗f3 c5 6.e5 ♗fd7!**

Still the best reaction, while 6...dxe5?! is a weak option here: 7.dxe5 (7.♔b5+!?) 7...♛xd1+ 8.♔xd1! ♗g4 9.♔b5+ ♔d7

(9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ ) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ N. His favourable pawn structure ensures a comfortable ending for White, Zubarev-Neu, Anzere 2011.



### 7.exd6

The first key moment.

Black stands well after 7.e6 fxe6 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9.dxc5 and now 9...0-0 (or first 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$  10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (10.cxd6 exd6=) 10...d5 11. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  d4!= Vasiukov-Tseshkovsky, Leningrad ch-URS 1974) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  dxc5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{Q}axc8=$  Isaev-Delchev, Bled Olympiad 2002.

TRICK: The Yugoslavian attack with 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  was originally used by Velimirovic and Ljubojevic: 7...cxd4! and now:

A) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  0-0!= 9. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10.e6 fxe6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  and Black is already better, Ljubojevic-Jansa, Skopje Olympiad 1972;

B) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  9.e6+  $\mathbb{Q}f8?$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}e8?$  10.exd7+  $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is also OK) 10.exd7 dxc3! 11.dxc8 $\mathbb{Q}$   $\mathbb{Q}xc8$  12.b3= and Black is a pawn up.

### 7...0-0

This is natural, and the main line.

TRICK: The recapture 7...exd6? loses to 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2+!$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}f8$



Hungarian Gyula Sax is a well-known classical grandmaster who was mainly active in the previous millennium. Everybody remembers his famous draw against Seirawan (Game 1, 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$ ). In this earlier game he appears as a rather optimistic 'Austrian attacker'.

9. $\mathbb{Q}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g5+-.$

WEAPON: 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$  is a highly playable move – but it has only been played in a single game so far!



analysis diagram

8.dxc5 (8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  exd6 is similar to the main line) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}b5?$  0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  exd6

11.  $\mathbb{W}xd6 \mathcal{Q}a4! \uparrow$  N.V.Pedersen-J.Gonzales, Calvia Olympiad 2004.

**WEAPON:** One of the most tense and interesting lines begins with 7... $cxd4$  8. $\mathcal{Q}b5!?$  (8. $\mathcal{Q}xd4$  0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathcal{Q}f6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}xd6!$  (if 10... $exd6$ , Sax-Sapi, Hungary 1974, then 11. $\mathbb{W}d2!?$  and 12.0-0-0 $\infty$ ) 11. $\mathcal{Q}db5$   $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathcal{Q}c6=)$  8...0-0 9. $\mathcal{Q}c7$



analysis diagram

9... $\mathcal{Q}c5!N$  (this move definitely changes the evaluation of the whole line, since 9... $exd6$  10. $\mathcal{Q}xa8$   $\mathcal{Q}c6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d3! \pm$  gives White a certain edge) 10. $\mathcal{Q}xa8$  (10. $\mathcal{Q}xd4!?$   $exd6$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!?$  11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathcal{Q}c6=\mp$ ) 11. $\mathcal{Q}xa8$   $\mathbb{E}e8+\mp$  with a dangerous initiative against the centralized white king) 10... $\mathbb{W}xd6! \mp$  (Black's centre will be too strong now) 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (11. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$   $\mathcal{Q}c6$  12.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4 \mp$ ) 11... $\mathcal{Q}c6$  12.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ ) 13. $\mathcal{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  14.f5!?. This move opens files and diagonals on the kingside, but it simply doesn't matter: 14... $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  15.fxg6 hxg6 16. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathcal{Q}xd3!$  17.cxd3 f6 18. $\mathcal{Q}f3$  (18. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f5! 19. $\mathcal{Q}xd6$  fxg4 20. $\mathcal{Q}xb7$   $\mathcal{Q}b4=\mp$ ) 18... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  and Black's position is at least not worse. This was played in the extremely sharp game Kramnik-Grischuk, Wijk aan Zee 2005.



**8.Qe3!?**

White's main idea is to prepare queen-side castling in order to attack with f4-f5. Otherwise he is simply worse!

A) After you have invested several tempi in the advance of your pawns, a quiet move like 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$  is also misplaced: 8... $exd6$  9.0-0  $\mathcal{Q}c6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and now:

**TRICK:** 10... $cxd4!?$  11. $\mathcal{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}b6! \Delta$  12. $\mathcal{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4! \mp$ , winning three pieces for the queen.

10... $\mathcal{Q}f6! \uparrow$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  (11.dxc5  $\mathcal{Q}g4!$  Voevodin-Grischuk, Moscow blitz 2007) 11... $b6$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ ) 12. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathcal{Q}e7$  13.a4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14.a5  $\mathbb{W}d7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  17. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathcal{Q}f5$  and Black dominates the game, Corrales Jimenez-Tjam, Sitges 2007.

B) Winning material is too optimistic: 8.dxe7!?  $\mathbb{W}xe7+$  9. $\mathbb{Q}e2 \square$  (9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ?  $cxd4 \mp$  10. $\mathcal{Q}xd4?$   $\mathcal{Q}b6$ : 0-5!) 9... $\mathbb{W}d8!$  (9... $\mathbb{W}xe2+!?$  10. $\mathcal{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8! \uparrow$ ) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $cxd4!N$  11. $\mathcal{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  12. $\mathcal{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8! \uparrow$  and White won't have an easy job unpinning all his pieces on the e-file.

**TRICK:** 8.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}a5$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}e8;$  8... $\mathcal{Q}xc5$ ) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$  10.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}xc3+$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  12.dxe7  $\mathbb{Q}e8! \uparrow$  Ivanovic-Gurevich, Lucerne Wch-tt 1989.

8...exd6 9.Qd2 Qc6 10.0-0-0



Now that both sides have completed their opening moves, we arrive at the critical position of the line.

10...Wa5

It is also interesting to start with 10...Qe8?! 11.Qf2 Wa5 12.Qb1 Qf6=.

11.f5

In accordance with the indicated set-up, grandmaster Gyula Sax wants to attack at any cost. The standard Sicilian prophylactic-move 11.Qb1?! is a bit safer, but it is not advantageous either:



analysis diagram

11...Qf6! and now:

**TRICK:** 12.Qc4 Qf5! 13.dxc5 dxc5↑ 14.Qd5?? Qxd5 15.Wxa5 Qxc2+!—+ and this nice intermediate check wins, Zelic-Ribli, Pula 1999;

12.h3 He8 (12...Hd8; 12...Qf5) and now:

**TRICK:** 13.Qb5? (13.a3 Qf5; 13.Qc4 Qf5) 13...Qb4! (not 13...Wxd2?! 14.Qxd2 Hd8= Toma-Sfarlog, Predeal ch-ROM 2006) 14.a3 Qe4 15.We1 a6= with attack, since 16.axb4? cxb4 17.Qa3 loses to 17...Qc3+!.

11...Qf6!

The knight goes back.

12.fxg6 hxg6 13.Qh6 Qg4!



After this typical pin, Black is attacking the d4-point.

14.Qxg7 Qxg7 15.d5?!

The Benoni system is losing here... Somewhat more successful was Russian GM Semen Dvoiry, who ultimately survived in a worse endgame after 15.dxc5 Qxf3?! 16.gxf3 dxc5 17.Wg5 Hd8 18.Qd3 (18.Qb5 Wb6!?) 18...c4?! (18...Hh8!?) 19.Wxa5 Qxa5 20.Qe2 Hxd1+ 21.Qxd1 Hh8!, Dvoiry-Kantsler, Moscow ch-URS 1991.

15...Qxf3

15...Qd4!? may be even stronger.

16.gxf3 Qd4

Black's strategic advantage is obvious now.

17.Qf4 Hfe8 18.Qb1 He5!

The dark-square punishment begins.

19.Qd3 b5

The safest route was 19...Hh8?! 20.Hhg1 Hd8=.

20.Wg3

His last chance was 20... $\mathbb{H}hg1!$  with the idea 20... $b4$  (better 20... $\mathbb{H}g8!?$ ) 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg6!$   $f\mathbf{x}g6$  22. $\mathbb{W}g3\#$ .

20... $b4$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  22. $\mathbb{W}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d8!$



White urgently needs to find compensation for his many pawn weaknesses, otherwise the game is close to over for him.

23. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

Winning the pawn was not necessary! 23... $\mathbb{W}e7!$ , improving the pieces, was much more effective.

24.h4

24.f4?  $\mathbb{H}e8$  25. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}fe3$  26. $\mathbb{H}de1$   $\mathbb{H}b8$  27. $\mathbb{H}hg1$   $\mathbb{Q}c3+!$  28. $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{W}a5\rightarrow$ .  
 24... $\mathbb{Q}de3$  25. $\mathbb{H}dg1?$   $c4!-\rightarrow$  26. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $c3$  27. $\mathbb{W}c1$   $d5$  28. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  29. $h5$   $\mathbb{H}h8$  30.f4  $\mathbb{H}e7$  31.b3  $\mathbb{Q}xc2!$



Intensifying the drama.

32. $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}a3+$  33. $\mathbb{Q}a1$   $\mathbb{W}xf7$   
 34. $\mathbb{H}xg6$   $\mathbb{W}d4$  35. $\mathbb{H}d1$   $\mathbb{H}xe2!$   
 36. $\mathbb{H}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  37. $\mathbb{H}g7+$

and White resigned.

#### Game 4 – Schmid Benoni style: 6.d5



#### Workshop

I have found two quite similar opinions about this variation in two different books on the Pirc:



'To understand why 6.d5 isn't effective, you need to notice the essential difference between it and the variations examined above (6. $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}fxd7$  8.d5 = our simplifying line in Game 1) – the presence of light-square bishops, which is in Black's

favor. He quickly gets to play ...e7-e6, and after White's dxe6 (otherwise, Black plays ...exd5 ...), Black follows with ... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ , and then ...d6-d5, solving his opening problems', write Albut and Chernin in *Pirc Alert!* (2001 and 2009).

'6.d5 is OK, but rarely used by strong players. Compare line 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}fxd7$  8.d5: here White's chances are better than after the immediate 6.d5, since he has swapped off the light-squared bishop that will otherwise get stuck behind the d5 and e4 pawn wedge', according to English FIDE master James Vigus, in *The Pirc for Black and White*, 2007.

Curiously, in both books the authors put so much trust in their own words that they refuse to present any game or, at least, a proper line to prove them. Therefore we will try to clarify this potential misunderstanding here!



**Statistics:** The Benoni advance (6.d5) is the third-most popular move against 5...c5. 653 games have been played from this position, with a balanced result of 51% in White's favour, including some attractive games by strong grandmasters!

After 6.d5 we enter into the variation A43 by transposition – the Schmid Benoni, where White usually keeps the pawn on f2. There is also a line where White plays f2-f4, but in that case he prefers to give the dynamic check  $\mathbb{Q}b5+!$  instead of developing slowly with  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . These are the main opening differences, and perhaps the reason why now the white  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  is worse than the black  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ . Let's see...

#### □ Konstantinos Nikolaidis

#### ■ Tamaz Gelashvili

Korinthos 2001 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4.f4  
 $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 6.d5 0-0!



Avoiding the annoying  $\mathbb{Q}b5+$ . In all honesty, it is easy to understand why the Benoni system is so popular – just look at the pawn structure. This Benoni line was named after the well-known German grandmaster Lothar Schmid, who played it soon after World War II against the likes of Smyslov, Keres and Botvinnik.

7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

In order to defend the pawn on e4.

A) After the inferior 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  we have the following options:

A1) 7...b5! is tactically interesting, since Black is ahead in development. Now the only reply is 8.e5 (not



Ukrainian/American grandmaster Lev Albut, co-author of *Pirc Alert!*, made many useful, though sometimes optimistic claims.

8.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5?$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}a5+$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  11.  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{W}xb5\mp$ ) 8...  $dxe5$  9.  $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$



analysis diagram

10.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (10.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $a6!\mp$ ) 10...  $b4$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7\uparrow$  and the pawn on e5 is lost – Black is already better;

A2) Of course 7...  $e6!?$  is a fine alternative: 8.  $dxe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$  9. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$  when 11.  $f5$  (11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6=$ ), going for the attack, is met by 11...  $gxf5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $h6!\mp$  and White has no serious attack, Le Roux-Popov, Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011.

B) There is also the direct attack with 7.  $e5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$  (thus Black avoids the complications after 7...  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  8.  $e6\infty$ ; or 7...  $dxe5$  8.  $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (9...  $b5!?$ ) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  11. 0-0-0!  $\mathbb{Q}gxe5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}b1\uparrow$ ) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9.  $e6\Box$   $fxe6$  10.  $dxe6$  and here I recommend 10...  $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$  N (10...  $\mathbb{Q}df6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5\infty$  Neverov-Solak, Trignac 2002) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12.  $a4\Box$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  13.  $a5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  14.  $axb6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3\mp$ ! 15.  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7\mp$  and after this quite forced line Black emerged a pawn up with somewhat better prospects;

C) The prophylactic move 7.  $a4$  is a bit slow: 7...  $e6!$  8.  $dxe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6!$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (9.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. 0-0  $c4!?$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b6+$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}c5\mp$ ) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$ .



analysis diagram

An interesting solution. 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $cxd4$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$  (12.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7\mp$ ) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13.  $e5$  (on 13.  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}b6+$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  wins the exchange) 13...  $dxe5$  (13...  $\mathbb{W}h4!?$ ) 14.  $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{W}axd8$  15.  $h3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16.  $fxe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  = Pakleza-Macieja, Ustron 2007.

### 7... $e6!$

A standard Benoni break.

A) Black can try including 7...  $a6!?$ , but then he must be prepared to face the unclear complications arising after 8. 0-0!? (8.  $a4$   $e6$ ) 8...  $b5$  9.  $e5!\infty$ ;

B) Or he can experiment with 7...  $\mathbb{W}b6$ .



analysis diagram

'With his move Black forces the opponent to put his f3-knight on c4. Things do not change much – White retains his opening advantage' – Viktor Kortchnoi on ChessBase.

8.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $e6$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}d8\infty$  as in Dancevski-Kortchnoi, Ohrid Ech 2001;

C) And you also need to know that the move 7... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  after 8.0-0 leads directly to Chapter 3: The Austrian Attack with 5.0-0.

 WEAPON: The gambit 7...b5!?  
is still interesting, though!  
8. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  c4! 9. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ .

 TRICK: Usual here is 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}a5+$ ! (the key check) 11.c3 and now a surprise: 11... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ !N and Black is fine; the idea is 12. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xb5$ !#;

Instead, 10.0-0!?

### 8.0-0

Castling cannot be bad. A critical alternative is 8.dxe6?  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  (8...fxe6 9.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6\infty$ ) 9.f5!? (a typical pawn attack; 9.0-0 c4!?) 9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.fxg6 (10.0-0!?

$\mathbb{Q}c6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5\rightleftharpoons$ ) 10...hxg6! 11.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12. $\mathbb{W}e1$  (or 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  13. $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$ !) 12... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  13. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$ ! (prophylaxis vs.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) and Black has a good game:



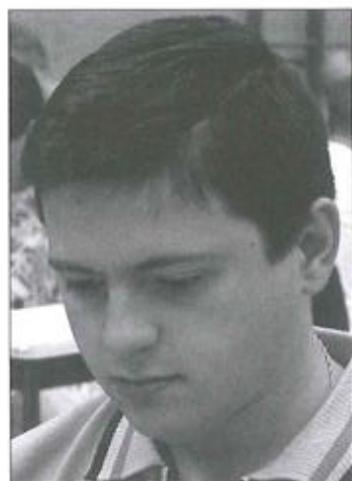
analysis diagram

14. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !?

$\mathbb{W}b6\rightleftharpoons$  15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ? (15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$ !) 15... $\mathbb{W}b4$ ! 16. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$ -- Malinin-Deribin, Zaporozhye 2004.

### 8...exd5!

Remarkably enough, we are still following in the footsteps of the *Pirc Alert* authors.



Georgian grandmaster Tamaz Gelashvili confirmed in practice the theoretical views on the advance 6.d5.

### 9.exd5?

Keeping the knight on c3 is risky and strategically wrong. After 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ !?

$\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ! ( $\leq$  9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{W}xf6$  11.c3± Arencibia Rodriguez-Mascarinas, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990) 10.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (10... $\mathbb{W}c7$ ?) 11.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xfs3$  12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  the position is balanced, but still playable, as in Djurhuus-Berelowitsch, Cairo 1999.

9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !



After all, the Benoni pawn on d5 is weak, and White's pieces will be too passive if he doesn't start an immediate attack. Therefore, he goes for:

### 10.f5

There are also two prophylactic options:  
 10.a3  $\mathbb{E}e8?$ ! with the idea 11.f5 c4!  
 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \mathbb{Q}xf5\#$ ; or 10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}b4?$ ! 11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  (Cioara-Chatalbashev, Plovdiv  
 Ech 2012) and now 12... $\mathbb{E}e8?!$ #.

10... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$   
 10... $\mathbb{W}b6?!$ .  
 11. $\mathbb{fxg}6$   $\mathbb{fxg}6!$

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** Consider carefully with which pawn you re-take on g6! Here, Black needs the f-file. If 11... $\mathbb{hxg}6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5\infty$ .

12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4?!$ #



Suddenly the counterattack begins!

13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

White should have considered earlier what to do with this knight.  
 If 13. $\mathbb{Q}ce4$  h6! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf8+$  (14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c4!  
 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5-+$ ) 14... $\mathbb{W}xf8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f5$  and the position is difficult for White.

13...c4!

Now the game is over, but the final shots are really beautiful – enjoy!

14. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2!$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xf8+$   $\mathbb{W}xf8$   
 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  17. $\mathbb{W}xa1$   $\mathbb{Q}d4+!$   
 18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  19. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  21. $\mathbb{dxe}6$  d5! 22. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}c5!$   
 0-1

### Summary – 6.d5

The 'Schmid Benoni' line is neither bad for White nor dangerous for Black. But in our case, it is a good help to learn some typical ideas that are useful to know when playing with such a pawn structure.

### Game 5 – The Positional Way: 6.dxc5 $\mathbb{W}a5$ 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ (and some other moves)



This solid variation used to be very popular in the 1970s and the 1980s. In this scheme the pawn structure is converted into some sort of Dragon Sicilian, with the white pawn already on f4. And the middlegame positions that arise from here are quite unclear. In order to find reasonable counterplay for Black, we must look at some set-ups applied by the real experts!

However, I discovered a controversy in the phase of the key black moves 12-14.

Igor Glek  
 Alexander Chernin

Neu Isenburg 1991

1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4.f4  
 $\mathbb{Q}q7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 6.dxc5!?

A standard resource for Black after  $dxc5$  in many openings. Of course, note  $6...dxc5\,7.\mathbb{W}xd8+\mathbb{Q}xd8\,8.\mathbb{Q}g5+-$ .



7.9 d3

The former main line and a very natural continuation. 7.  $\mathbb{W}d4!$ ? is the next game.

**TRICK:** White cannot win material with 7.cxd6?!  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  8.dxe7  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  9.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}xc3+$  10. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  11. $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{W}c5+$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}xe7\uparrow$ .

7.  $\mathbb{W}d3!?$ . This secondary line is somewhat poisonous. 7...  $\mathbb{W}xc5$  (7...  $dx5? 8.e5!\pm$ ; 7...  $\mathbb{Q}xe4?? 8.\mathbb{W}b5!+-$ ) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}e3 \mathbb{Q}a5$  and now:

A) 9.♗d2 ♜bd7 10.0-0-0 0-0 11.♗c4 ♜b6 12.♗b5 ♛xb5 13.♗xb5 ♜e6= Bartel-Van Wely, Guingamp 2010;  
 B) 9.♗b5+ ♛xb5 10.♗xb5+ ♜c6 11.♘d5 ♜xd5 12.exd5 a6 13.♗a4 b5 14.dxc6 bxa4= Stejskal-Melich, Czechia 1997.

C) 9.e5 dxe5 10.♗b5+ ♖xb5!  
 (10...♝c6 11.♗xa5 ♜xa5 12.♝b5 0-0-  
 13.♝c7 e4 14.♝e5∞ Robson-Molner,  
 Philadelphia 2010) 11.♝xb5+  
 (11.♝xb5 ♜g4! Δ 12.♝xa7 0-0! 13.h3  
 ♜c6!) 11...♝c6! (11...♝d7 12.♝xe5↑

Kaidanov-Boehmer, Chicago 1993)  
 12.fxe5 ♜g4  $\Leftrightarrow$  13.♗d4 ♜d7 14.0-0-0  
 0-0 and Black is fine.

**TRICK:** 7.  $\mathbb{Q}b5+!?$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xd7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  10.  $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  11.  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{W}xc3+$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}xa1$  13.  $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  14.  $\mathbb{W}c7$   $\mathbb{W}b1$  15.  $cxd6$   $\mathbb{W}b6+$  16.  $\mathbb{W}xb6$   $\mathbb{Q}xb6=\mp$  Bareev-Speelman, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

7...xc5 8...e2



The starting position. It is advisable for Black to exchange a few minor pieces, thus reducing the possibility of a white attack on the kingside.

8-9417

Therefore, the pin is a good option.

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** A game with all the pieces on the board will most probably favour White!

8...0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  10.0-0 (10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h5\rightleftharpoons$ ) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! still leads to our main set-up) 11.h3!. Preventing ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ . Now Black must hope for a bit of luck with the following active counter: 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  12. $\mathbb{W}f2$ ?! (also, 12.a3  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  13.cxd3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14. $\mathbb{W}f2$ ?! (or 14. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  15. $\mathbb{W}f2$ ! Kovchan-Budnikov, Alushta 2003) 14...b6 15.e5† Ljubojevic-Torre, Manila 1974) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  13.cxd3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15.a3  $\mathbb{W}a6$  16. $\mathbb{W}e3$  b5 17.g4 e6 18. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ .



analysis diagram

The desired position: White's attack can become very powerful, Velimirovic-Govedarica, Valjevo 2011.

**9.♕e3 ♕a5 10.h3**

A radical concept (**WEAPON**).

**WEAPON:** Another typical line is 10.0-0!? ♔c6 and now 11.♕e1!? (11.a3 0-0 12.b4 ♕xf3!? 13.♕xf3 ♕h5!?) 11...♕xf3! 12.♕xf3 0-0.



analysis diagram

**KEEP IN MIND:** A very similar position will arise further on: the line 5...0-0 6.♕e2, see the WEAPON on move 12, Game 9.

As the practical games show, Black has no real problems: 13.♕h1 (13.♕h4 ♕h5!?) 13...♖ac8 14.a3 ♔d7!? 15.♕d2 ♕d8 16.♕h3 e6= (the provocative 16...♔c5!? is possible: 17.♕h4 h5!?) 17.f5!? ♔c5 (17...♔de5!?) 18.♕g3

♕xd3! 19.cxd3 exf5 20.exf5 ♔d4# 21.fxg6 fxe6! 22.♕g5 ♔f5! 23.♕f4 ♕b6! 24.♔d5 ♕xb2+ Scekić-Palatnik, New Jersey 2008.

A more forced line is 14...d5 15.e5 (15.♔xd5 ♔xd5 16.♕xa5 ♔xa5 17.♕xd5 ♕xb2 18.♕b1 ♕xa3 19.♕xa7 ♕c5 20.♕b5 ½-½ Baklan-Chernin, Panormo 2001) 15...d4 16.♕xf6 ♕xf6 17.♔e4 dxe3 18.♔xf6+ exf6 19.♔xe3 as seen in De Firmian-Chernin, Moscow 1990. According to *Pirc Alert!* (and, surprisingly, also according to my computer!) this position is absolutely equal – both after 19...♕b6 and 19...♕xe1+.

**10...♕xf3 11.♕xf3 0-0 12.0-0**



As we will see in the following lines, the middlegame is balanced and Black has enough resources.

**12...♔c6**

This is an automatic move, but c6 is not the only square Black can develop the queen's knight to. Here it will remain useless until the very end.

**WEAPON** An interesting position arises after the typical Sicilian manoeuvre 12...♔bd7!?. This may even be a fundamental solution to the problems of the entire line: 13.a3 a6 14.♕f2 ♕ac8 15.b4 ♕c7 16.♕e2 e5! 17.♕ad1 d5! Korolev-Movsziszian, Tbilisi 1983.



**Ukrainian/Hungarian grandmaster Alexander Chernin, co-author of the popular American opening book *Pirc Alert!* and a clever generator of many Pirc ideas of his own on the black side.**

### 13.a3

WEAPON: The second-most popular move for White is also prophylactic and it can transpose to the main line:  
13.♗h1.

As you will see in my comment to move 14, Black should continue like in the main game: 13...♝d7!? (other continuations are not sufficiently clear: 13...♝ac8 14.♝d2 ♝d7 15.♝ab1 a6 16.♔e1 ♛d8 17.♔h4∞ Kovchan-Khalifman, St Petersburg 2011) 14.♝d2 ♝c5 15.♝ad1 ♝xd3?! 16.cxd3 e6 (preparing ...f7-f5) 17.f5!? (this is White's usual attacking resource, but here it only forces total simplification; 17.a3 f5!?) Tischbierek-Gurevich, Ostend 1991) 17...exf5 18.exf5 ♝d4! 19.♝d5! ♛xa2! 20.♝e7+ ♔h8 21.♛xb7 ♜ab8 22.♛e4 ♝xf5=. Of course, you may continue the game,

but there is not much material left on the board.

But why not play directly 16...f5!, a new move?



analysis diagram

If we compare this position to the one after 17...f5, this would even be a better move order for Black than in our main game!

### 13...♝d7!

A very useful manoeuvre, planning an eventual ...♝c5 and trading off the knight for the bishop on d3.

### 14.♝d2

At this point, Black has several major ideas (some of which may be wrong):

### 14...♛b6+!?

This check wins a tempo and helps to prepare a quick ...f7-f5.

A slower set-up is 14...♛d8 15.♔h1 as in the previous line by Khalifman, but now 15...e6.



analysis diagram

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** Even if it is the most played idea by Black (and the favourite defence of the *Pirc Alert!*), this may be a *strategic mistake*, since ...e7-e6 creates certain weaknesses: the pawn on d6 and the dark squares on the kingside. For this reason 15...♝c5!? or 15...♝c8!? are preferable.

- A) 16.♗ae1! White begins an interesting regrouping: ♜d1-♝c3 etc. 16...♝c8 17.♗g3 ♛e7 (17...♝c5!? 18.f5∞) 18.♗d1?.

Preparing to trade the bishops. 18...♝c5 (18...♝f6!?) 19.♝c3 a6 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♗e3!± and thanks to the above-mentioned points, White keeps the initiative. Felgaer-Peralta, Pinamar 2002.

The other attempts are not so effective:

- B) 16.♗ad1 ♛c8 17.f5. Importantly, this advance actually isn't dangerous, since it allows Black to block the crucial squares with his knights: 17...♞h4 18.♗e1 ♛e7 19.♗g3 ♜ce5 20.♗f2 a6∞ Marjanovic-Vucicevic, Belgrade 1988;

- C) 16.♗ab1 a6 17.♗e2 ♜c5 18.♗fd1 ♜xd3 19.♗xd3 d5 20.♗c3 dxe4 21.♗xe4 ♛c7= Campora-Chernin, Villarrobledo 1998;

- D) 16.♗g3 a6 17.f5 ♜e5! 18.♗f4 ♜f6 19.♗xe5 ♜xe5 20.♗h4 ♜g7∞ Van der Poel-Chernin, San Bernardino 1994;

- E) 16.♗c4 ♜d4 17.♗d1 d5!? 18.exd5 ♜b6 19.♗a2 exd5 20.♗e2 ♜f5± Campora-Chernin, Brocco 1991.

15.♗h1 ♜c5!

**TRICK:** Certainly not 15...♛xb2? 16.♗fb1 and the black queen is lost.

16.♗ab1 ♜xd3 17.cxd3



An important middlegame position.

17...f5!?

A dynamic block, put into practice by certain experts. If instead 17...e6, Black has to face a dangerous attack after 18.f5! exf5 (18...♝e5 19.♗g3 ♜fe8 20.f6 ♜f8∞ Van de Oudeweetering-Van Wely, Rotterdam 1990) 19.exf5 (19.♗d5 fxe4! 20.dxe4 ♜e5 21.♗g3 ♛d4∞) 19...♝d4 20.♗g3 and now:

**TRICK:** 20...♝xf5? 21.♗xf5 ♜xf5 22.♗d5 f4□ 23.♗f6+ ♜h8 24.♗h4 h6 25.♗xf4!→ Tolnai-Gurevich, Lucerne Wch-tt 1989.

20...♝e5 21.♗g4 ♛b3 22.♗f4 ♜h8 23.♗xe5+ dxe5 24.f6 and the position is rather unclear, Arnason-Pergericht, Bela Crkva 1983; or 24.fxg6!? fxg6□ 25.♗e4↑.

18.g4

A logical advance. White needs to open up this flank! Instead, 18.♗d5 ♛b3!? (18...♛d8 19.♗c3 e6 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♗e3 ½-½ Martin Gonzalez-Narciso Dublan, Terrassa 1994) 19.♗c3 e6 20.♗xg7 ♔xg7 21.♗c3 d5! 22.exd5 exd5 23.♗fe1 ♛ad8 24.♗d1 ♛xd1 25.♗bxg1= Balashov-Rustemov, Moscow 1995.

18...e6



This position is balanced and critical for this line. However, from here Black has scored two wins – and not one loss!

**19.gxf5 exf5! 20.Qd5 Qd8**

20...Qb3 is another possible alternative:  
21.Qc3 Rae8 (21...Rf7?) 22.Qg2∞  
Glek-Lobron, Germany Bundesliga  
1990/91.

**21.Qc3 Qe7!**

Eliminating the remaining minor pieces:

**22.e5?**

This seems to be the only way to continue the struggle. 22.Qxg7 Qxg7=.

**22...dxe5!**

The key: Black sacrifices the exchange and gets a wonderful game.

**23.Qxe7+ Qxe7 24.Qb4**

Or 24.fxe5 Rad8 25.d4 Rf7 26.Rbe1 Rfe8=. A complete blockade!

**24...Rf7**

WEAPON: Recently, Ukrainian GM Kryvoruchko even tried to improve with 24...Rd7?!, 25.Qxf8 Rxf8 26.fxe5 Qxe5 27.Rfe1 Qd4 28.Rbc1 and here, an interesting option was 28...Rf7?!! instead of 28...f4 29.Qc4∞, M.Pavlov-Kryvoruchko, Alushta tt 2005.

**25.Qxf8 Rxf8 26.fxe5 Qxe5**



Black has obtained clear compensation in exchange for being slightly behind in material, although the most likely result will be a draw.

**27.Rfe1 Qf6 28.Rbc1 Rd8! 29.Rc2**

**Qg7 30.Rec1 Rd7 31.b4 Qd8**

**31...Qd4?.**

**32.Rc4 Re6 33.a4 Qg5 34.R1c2**

**Rd6 35.Rg2 Qd8 36.Qxf5 Rf7**

**37.Qe4 Qb6 38.Rc1 Re7 39.Qh4**

**Re3 40.Rf1 Re6 41.Rg3 Qd5+**

**42.Qg2 Qd8? 43.Qg4?**

**43.Rf7+!.**

**43...Qxd3 44.Rgf2 Rxh3+ 45.Qg2**

**Rh4 46.Qf3 Qxf3+ 47.Rxf3**



Finally, the endgame is equal.

**47...Qg4+ 48.Qh3 Rxb4 49.Rf7+**

**Qh6 50.Rd7 Qb6 51.Rff7 Rxa4**

**52.Rxh7+ Qg5 53.Rd5+ ½-½**

**Summary 6.dxc5 and 7.Qd3**

White plays a very solid and classical variation, but if Black follows the advice given in Game 5, he should be OK.

Game 6 – A Solid Concept: 7.  $\mathbb{W}d4$



'At first sight the move 7.  $\mathbb{W}d4$  in itself doesn't seem very serious, but illusion and reality are different things...' – Endre Végh, Yearbook 97.

This variation has gained popularity in recent years (total 87 games = 67,4%). White activates the queen, covering the long diagonal. Black has three logical replies; however, practical evolution has changed the theoretical value of these lines:

- 1) Recapturing 7...dxc5
- 2) Developing 7...Qc6!?
- 3) Castling 7...0-0

Boris Savchenko

■ Tarik Selbes

Konya tt 2010 (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Qf6 3.Qc3 g6 4.f4  
Bg7 5.Qf3 c5 6.dxc5 Wa5 7.Wd4!?

A recent, paradoxical, but strategically interesting attempt to fight for an opening advantage. In this line White combines two basic ideas: to establish a favourable pawn structure and to exchange the queens.

**7...dxc5**

As we shall see later, this recapture allows White to put his strategies to good use.

**WEAPON:** The developing move 7...Qc6!?, attacking the white queen, is probably the best and most dynamic way to proceed. 8.Qb5!



**TRICK:** Now 8...Wxb5? almost loses because of 9. Wxf6! Qxf6 10.Qxb5± L.Milov-Henderikse, Haarlem 2004;

- A) 8...dxc5?! 9.Wa4! Wxa4 10.Qxa4 Qd7 (10...Qd7 11.e5! Qg4 12.h3 Qh6 13.Qe3± Papp-Medic, Pula 2009)  
11.Qe3! Bb8 12.e5! f6 13.0-0-0!  
(13.exf6!?) 13...fxe5 occurred in Led-

ger-Baker, England tt 2008/09, and here 14.♗d5!±;

B) After 8...♝d7 9.♛a4! Black should go for 9...♝xa4 (previously Black also tried 9...♝c7 10.♗d5± (or 10.♝a3!?), Hanley-Detienne, Charleroi 2006; or 9...♝d8?! 10.e5! (10.♝a3!?) 10...♝g4 11.exd6 (11.cxd6?; 11.h3!?) 11...0-0 12.h3 (12.f5!± is "...the best move in this position" – Endre Végh. The idea is ♜g5! on the next move) 12...a6!?, 13.♝xc6 ♜xc6≈ Kapnisis-Gurevich, Chalkida 2009) 10.♝xa4 ♜b4! 11.♝b3 ♜e6! ended in a draw by repetition in Leventic-Lazic, Borovo 2010.

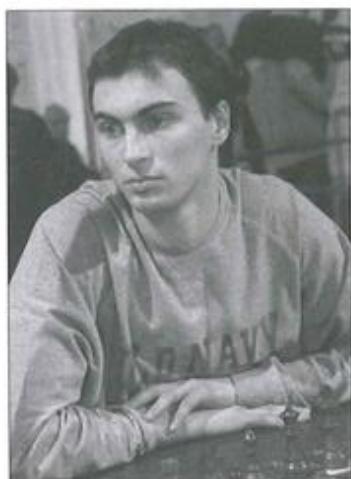


analysis diagram

However, White could have played for an advantage with 12.♔e2!± or 12.0-0!?.

C) 8...0-0! After some deep analysis of all the alternatives, I have reached the conclusion that this is the best continuation for Black, who won two games after 9.♝xc6?! bxc6 10.cxd6 exd6!.

Instead, White has 9.♛a4! ♜c7! (of course, not the exchange 9...♝xa4? 10.♝xa4±) 10.♝e3!? (if 10.cxd6 exd6 11.0-0 ♜d7≈; or 10.0-0 ♜d7! 11.♛a3 a6 12.♝c4 b5! 13.♗d5 ♜a7≈) 10...♝d7 (10...a6!? is also an idea) 11.0-0-0 a6 12.♝xc6 (12.♝e2!? dx5 13.♛a3 ♜b4 14.e5 ♜g4≈) 12...♝xc6 13.cxd6 (13.♛b4!? a5 14.♛c4 ♜g4≈) 13...exd6 14.♛b4 ♜fe8! 15.♝b6 (or



Russian grandmaster Boris Savchenko: an ultra-theoretical player. In his youth, he was very fond of the Fabulous Budapest Gambit, but in this game he played in solid style.

15.♛xd6 ♜xd6 16.♜xd6 ♜xe4≈) 15...a5! 16.♛b3.



analysis diagram

After a few forced moves, we reach an interesting position. Here Black should continue 16...a4!N (instead of 16...♝c8? 17.♗g5± Howell-Mitchell, Hastings 2009/10) 17.♛b4 (17.♝xc7? axb3↑) 17...♝c8≈ with more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn! The castling line 7...0-0 is less dynamic than the previous one (7...♝c6). Here White has two options:



analysis diagram

A) The conventional 8.♗d2.

A1) Here, Ukrainian GM Georgy Pilavov recommends 8...dxc5 9.♗c4 (9.♗g1!?) N – it seems as if White always has a nice choice here) 9...♗e6 (9...♘c6!?) 10.0-0-0 ♗e6 transposes to one of the previous lines) 10.♗b5 ♗c7! (10...♗xb5 11.♗xb5 a6 12.♗d3 ♘c6 13.e5 ♗d5 14.♗g5!±) 11.e5 (11.♗g5!?) 11...a6 (11...♗d5!?) 12.♗e2 ♘d5 13.♗g5!↑ ♘c6 14.♗xe6 fxe6 15.♗g4 ♘d4 16.0-0-0 b5 as played in Kalinina-Tan, Shenzhen 2011. Now 17.h4! b4 18.♗xd5 exd5 19.h5± gives White a clear plus;

A2) 8...♘c6! is also unclear: 9.♗c4! ♗e6 (9...dxc5!?) 10.0-0-0!? ♗e6 11.♗d5 ♘b4 12.a3 ♗fd8∞; 9...♗xc5! 10.♗xc5 dxc5 11.e5!↑ 10.♗b5 ♗xb5 (10...♗c7!) 11.♗xb5 dxc5 12.♗xc6! (12.♗e3!?) Korneev-Bermejo Martinez, La Roda 2012) 12...bxcc6 13.0-0-0± and White has an obvious advantage, thanks to his superior pawn structure. Bobras-Collins, Gothenburg Ech-tt 2005.

B) The ultra-sharp 8.cxd6!?: ‘At the moment I give my vote to this option. There are some illustrative examples proving that Black is ‘within an ace of death’ in this variation’ – Végh. Black’s first two options lead to a slight strategic advantage for White:

B1) 8...♘c6?! (the knight will be useless on c6) 9.♗d2! exd6 10.♗d3± Jovanovic-V.Bukal, Zadar 2010;

B2) 8...exd6 9.♗d2! ♘bd7 10.♗d3 (10.♗c4!?) 10...♘c5 11.0-0 ♗e8±, Beyerlein-Blodig, Bayern 2009. Now 12.♗h1!? with the tactical idea 12...♗b6 (12...♗d7!?) 13.♗g5! h6 14.♗c4!↑;

B3) 8...♗xe4 is a typical combination and a forced line: 9.♗xe4 ♘xc3+ 10.bxc3! (sacrificing the exchange; 10.♗f2? ♗f6!) 10...♗xc3+ 11.♗f2 ♗xa1 12.dxe7 ♗e8 13.♗c4!.

The first critical position: White’s threats are 14.♗g5 or even 14.♗xf7+.

TRICK: 13...♘c6? loses to 14.♗xf7+! ♗xf7 15.♗c4+ 1-0 Pitl-Bayer, Seefeld 2007.

So 13...♗f6! is the only move, and now 14.♗a3 ♗e6□ (again the only defence for Black – to simplify the position. If 14...♘c6? 15.♗g5± Pilavov-Zimmerman, Sochi tt-2 2006) 15.♗xe6 ♗xe6 16.♗xe6 fxe6.



analysis diagram

The evaluation of the whole line with 8.cxd6 might depend on this position. Although the game is close to equal, White can still push a little with any active move. For this reason I recommend White to study 8.♗d2 as well, as it is a less forcing alternative.

8.♗c4!



The key concept – a modern one, applied originally by Dutch player Arjen van Herwaarden, Dieren 2006 (see the sub-line after Black's 9th move), which changes the value of the line 7...dxc5 and of the whole variation with 7.♗d4.

**TRICK:** White has nothing after the old move 8.♕b5+?! ♜xb5! (8...♕d7!?) 9.♕xf6 (9.♘xb5? cxd4 10.♗c7+ ♔d8 11.♘xa8 ♘xe4!–+) 9...♕xf6 10.♘xb5 ♘a6 (10.♘d7=) 11.e5 ♕g7 12.♕e3 ♘d7! 13.0-0-0 ♘c6 14.♘c3= (Markgraf-H.G.Müller, Saarbrücken ch-GER 2009) 14...♕g4!N.

#### 8...0-0

**TRICK:** 8...a6? 9.e5! ♕e6 10.exf6! ♘xc4 11.fxg7 ♘g8 12.♘xc4± (♕♕♘ vs. ♘).

After 8...♘c6 White has the strategically strong 9.e5! (9.♕b5?! ♜xb5 10.♕xb5 ♘d7 11.e5±; 9.♘d2!? ♕e6 10.♕b5 ♜xb5 11.♕xb5±) 9...♕e6 (9...♘h5?! (Lindberg-Hillarp Persson, Stockholm 2007) 10.♕e3!N) 10.♕b5! (10.exf6?! ♘xc4 11.fxg7 ♘g8 12.♘xc4∞) 10...爵xb5 11.爵xb5 ♘d5 12.爵g5!± and after exchanges like ♘xe6 and ♘xc6, White will get an ending with an advantageous pawn structure, since the bishop on g7 is locked in.



Ko van Doorn

Young Dutch player Arjen van Herwaarden, who found the resource 8.♕c4! in Dieren 2006.

#### 9.e5

Strategically, White has a static advantage in this position. Therefore Black should find some counterplay, or he will be totally passive until the end of the game.

#### 9...♕e6!?

This looks like a logical intermediate move.

A) 9...♘fd7 10.♕e3 (10.h4!?) 10...♘a6 11.0-0-0-0!† Khairullin-Voinov, Novokuznetsk 2007;  
 B) 9...♘g4 10.h3 (10.♕b5?! ♜xb5 11.♕xb5±) 10...♘h6 11.♕e3! ♘a6 12.♕b5 (12.0-0-0-0!? ♘f5 13.♕f2 ♕e6 14.♕a4±) 12...爵xb5 13.爵xb5 b6 14.爵c6 (or even 14.g4!? ♕b7 15.♘f2± Hector-Jahnel, Nuremberg 2010) 14...爵b8 15.a3! (15.0-0-0) 15...爵b7 (15...♘c7 16.0-0-0 f6 17.exf6±) 16.爵xb7 爵xb7 17.0-0-0 f6 18.exf6 (18.g4!?) 18...exf6± and White got a clearly better game in Van Herwaarden-De Saegher, Dieren 2006.

#### 10.♕a4!

**WEAPON:** As in one of the previous lines, an interesting position arises after 10.exf6!? ♘xc4 11.fxg7 ♘d8 12.♘xc4∞.



analysis diagram

But here the position is less clear:  
 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13.0-0  $\mathbb{W}b4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c4  
 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  e6 17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$   
 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}e5$  f6  
 21.a3  $\mathbb{W}d6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xf4$  23.b3  $\mathbb{W}c7$   
 24. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  25. $\mathbb{Q}be1\uparrow$  Grablauks-Samraoui, corr 2004.

10... $\mathbb{W}xa4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xa4\pm$



The desired endgame for White. Of course, the position is far from dangerous or losing for Black, but this is not what every 'Perfect Pirc' player likes!

11... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$

A better try may be 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4\text{?}$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (on 12. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  looks OK, for instance: 13.b3 b6 14.0-0 f5!?) 12...b6 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5\text{=}$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  15.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}he1$  f6 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  f5 18. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  20.cxd3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  21.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  and

with precise play Black managed to save the game in J.Andersen-D.Conterno, corr 2008.

12. $\mathbb{Q}e3\text{!}$

Now Black needs to find a good counter.

12...f6

A) A bit passive is 12...b6 13.0-0-0 (13. $\mathbb{Q}b5\text{!?$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}fc8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}a6$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}c3\text{!}$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d5\pm$ ) 18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 22. $\mathbb{Q}d1\uparrow$  and White is better;

B) But after 12... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (13.0-0-0!?) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 15.0-0-0 h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  axb6 things are still not clear, Adair-Pein, England tt-2 2011/12;

C) The gambit 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6\text{!?$  is quite possible: 13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}b5\text{!?$ )  $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  14.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}h6\text{!?$  15. $\mathbb{Q}he1\pm$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  f6 16.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17.g3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  e5! and Black achieved an easy draw in Kotainy-Donchenko, Dresden 2011. The idea is 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}fxc6\uparrow$ .

13. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

13.exf6! exf6 14.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c8\pm$ , but the position is still playable.

13... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6\text{!}$

Thanks to his temporary lead in development, Black's compensation for the pawn is not dubious, as some commentators say, but very possibly enough for a draw; 14...fxe5? 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5\pm$ .

15. $\mathbb{Q}b5\text{!}$

An unclear line is 15.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6\Box$  (not 15... $\mathbb{Q}xf6\text{?}$  16.c3± Heberla-Selbes, Konya tt 2010) and Black has typical counterplay: 16.g3? (16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  b6!?) 16... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  b6 (17... $\mathbb{Q}c8\text{!?$ ) 18. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5 19. $\mathbb{Q}d1\uparrow$  exf6 20.gxf4  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (20... $\mathbb{Q}e7\text{!?$ ) 21. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$  and the position is finally OK for Black.

15...fxe5 16.Qxc6

If 16.Qg5 Qf5 17.Qc4+ Qh8 18.Qf7+ Rxf7 19.Qxf7 exf4??.

16...bxc6 17.fxe5



The key moment in this concrete end-game.

17...Qd5?

We should point out that this lapsus is the first significant mistake in the game, allowing White to hold on to his material advantage.

After the best defence 17...Rf5! 18.0-0-0 Qd5 19.Qxe7 Qxe5 Black has good chances to escape: 20.Qxe5 Rxe5 21.Rhe1 Rxe1 22.Rxe1 Re8! 23.g3 Qf7= and after the exchange of the rooks, the position will be drawn, thanks to the opposite-coloured bishops.

18.Qxe7 Rxf3?

And this exchange sacrifice is close to losing. 18...Rf5?! 19.0-0± or 19.Qd6±; or 18...Rf7 19.Qd6 Rxf3 20.gxf3 Qxe5 21.0-0-0± but there would still be some chances.

- 19.gxf3 Qxe5 20.Qf2! Qxb2  
21.Rad1 Qxa2 22.Rd8+! Rxd8  
23.Qxd8 Qc3?  
24.Rd1±



Now the following simplifications provide White with a technically winning position:

- 24...Qc4 25.Qe3 a5 26.Rd6 Qd5  
27.Qf6! Qb4 28.Rd7 Qc5+ 29.Qd4 Qxd4+ 30.Qxd4 Qxf3 31.Ra7 h6  
32.Qe5 h5 33.Qf6 Qe4 34.c4 a4  
35.c5 a3 36.Rxa3 Qh7 37.Qg5 Qg8  
38.Re3 Qf5 39.Qe7 Qf8 40.Qf6 Qg8  
41.h4 Qh8 42.Rg7 Qe4  
43.Rxg6! Qf3 44.Qg5 Qh7  
45.Rh6+ Qg7

1-0

#### Summary of 7.Qd4!?

This variation is very interesting for positional white players. Therefore I recommend black players to study the dynamic line 7...Qc6?! – which is only a normal continuation for a Pirc player!

#### General Conclusion Part 1 – Austrian Attack 5...c5

Even in the new millennium, theory considers that this is the most reliable defence against the attack of the white pawns. However, the variation contains at least two problems: White can force a draw by repetition (Game 1: 6.Qb5+ and 11.Qxd8) and, even worse, Black faces the constant danger of falling straight into his opponent home preparation, since these lines are forced and very sharp, and any false step can be fatal. This is the reason why many players prefer to avoid 5...c5 and go for 5...0-0.

## Chapter 3

# The Austrian Attack: 5...0-0

Romanian grandmaster Mihail Marin is one of the surviving veteran soldiers of the Pirc. Against the Austrian Attack he made a great stand for the main line 5...0-0!?, defending the black side with a massive amount of fine ideas, games and articles, some of which will be highlighted here.



If, for some reason, you don't have confidence in the move 5...c5 (which, according to *Pirc Alert*, is Black's only option!), this creative alternative is exactly what you are looking for.

After castling, Black is ahead in development and he is ready to embark on some major action, both defensive and offensive. However, the fundamental question in this line; i.e. how to destroy or, at least, undermine the white centre, may remain unsolved until the very end of the game!

### Directions

Although 6.♗d3 is quite a reliable move here, we should also consider some obvious alternatives:

Game 7 – 6.♗e3 and (in the notes) 5./6.a3

Game 8 – 6.e5

Game 9 – 6.♗e2

Game 10 – 6.♗d3 ♗bd7, 6...♗g4 and 6...c5

Game 11 – 6.♗d3 ♗c6 7.0-0

Game 12 – 6.♗d3 ♗c6 7.e5

Games 13 and 14 – 6.♗d3 ♗a6

### A Comparison between two anti ...c7-c5 lines: 6.♕e3 and 5./6.a3



#### **Puzzle and Workshop**

Basically, both moves share the same idea: to hinder Black's plan of breaking open the centre with his anti-Austrian weapon ...c7-c5, in order to restrict the second player's possibilities. This is why it is advisable to study both lines together.

#### **The Dynamic 6.♕e3**

White prepares an aggressive plan: quick queenside castling – but he allows Black enough time to play ...♝g4 at any point.

According to statistics the best counterargument starts with 6...b6!? (412 games=53% in Black's favour!). Now Black is ready to play ...c7-c5/...♝b7 (see the main game).

In my opinion, another interesting set-up is the flexible 6...♝bd7!? followed by the ultra-modern ...a7-a6/...b7-b5 (4 games only!, see WEAPON).

For various reasons I reject a number of typical alternatives: 6...c6?! (277=43,3%), 6...c5?! (147=38,7%), 6...♝c6 (104=40,4%), 6...♝a6 (97=47,4%), etc.

Also, I prefer to keep 6...♝c6/♝a6 for the main lines against 6.♕d3 !

#### **The Extravagant 5./6.a3**

According to grandmasters Marin and Stoica (Yearbook 90), 5.a3 does not refute the Pirc, but it cannot be refuted itself either. It fails to restrict Black's possibilities. However, it remains an interesting variation.

#### **Game 7 – 6.♕e3 and 5./6.a3**

**Ernesto Inarkiev**

**Fernando Peralta**

Khanty-Mansiysk World Cup 2007 (1.1)  
In this fascinating game, Fernando Peralta masterfully overplayed his higher rated opponent, but he had problems to deliver checkmate with bishop + knight!

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♕f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.f4**

**♗g7 5.♗f3**

5.a3?! is an extravagant way to try and restrict Black's options of playing ...c7-c5.

**WEAPON:** However, here 5...c5?! may be a tactical



Mihail Marin.

solution for Black. We will combine some analysis by Marin/Stoica (Yearbook 90) with the author's own analysis:



analysis diagram

PUZZLE: 6.  $\mathbb{B}b5+$  almost takes us back to Game 1, but nobody'll believe that a2-a3 is better than  $\mathbb{Q}f3!$  For example, 6...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (6...  $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$ ) 7. e5  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  (other moves are too complicated: 7...  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  8. g4 $\infty$ ; 7...  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  8. exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}a5+$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  cxd4 11. b4  $\mathbb{Q}f5\infty$ ) 8. dxc5 dxe5! $\infty$  leads to an interesting position.

6. dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  7. b4! is White's main argument: 7...  $\mathbb{Q}c7\Box$  and now:

TRICK: 8.  $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!\infty$  seems good for Black.

- A) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$  (here the bishop is also defending f4) 8... 0-0! 9.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  dxc5 10. e5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (10...  $\mathbb{Q}d8!?$  is tactically interesting) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8!\infty$ .  
B) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  0-0  $\Box$  9. cxd6 (9.  $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$   $\mathbb{Q}d8!?$  (9...  $\mathbb{Q}xc5!?$  10. e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  12. 0-0-0!) 10. cxd6 exd6 $\infty$ ) 9... exd6 $\infty$  and the position is not so clear:



analysis diagram

Black is already threatening 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ .

- B1) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  looks illogical:

TRICK: On 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xe4?!$   
11.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7+!$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d5+$  wins material.

But 10...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  a5! 12. b5  $\mathbb{Q}e7\infty$  with the nice idea of continuing 13... d5!;

- B2) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}d3!?$  a5 11. 0-0-0! axb4 12. axb4  $\mathbb{Q}d8!\infty$



analysis diagram

Black is OK, or even better after the inaccurate 13.♗b5?! (13.e5 ♜f5 14.♕c4 ♜xc4 15.♕xc4 ♗g4=) 13...♝e7!N (an improvement on Marin/Stoica's analysis) 14.e5 ♗e8= and if 15.exd6? ♜xb2+ 16.♔xb2 ♗xd6! 17.♗xd6 ♗c6= with a number of unpleasant threats, mainly on the queenside.

5...0-0 6.♗f3.



analysis diagram

Let's discuss some good and some bad alternatives, since they will be useful later, in the main lines of the Austrian Attack (with 6.♗d3):

WEAPON: 6...c5?! remains a possible remedy: 7.dxc5 ♜a5 8.b4 ♜c7! 9.e5 (for 9.♗d2 see 5...c5) 9...dxe5 10.♗b5 and now 10...♝d7∞; but not 10...♝c6?! 11.♗xe5 ♜e4+ 12.♗e2 ♜xe2+ 13.♗xe2 ♗c6 14.♗b2± Trent-Romanov, Chalkidiki 2003.

WEAPON: 6...d5?! is a new anti-Austrian method for classical lines: 7.e5 ♗e4 8.♗xe4 dxe4 9.♗g5 c5 10.d5 f6 11.exf6 exf6 12.♗e6 ♜xe6 13.dxe6 ♗c6∞.

WEAPON: 6...♗c6 7.♗e2?! has been analysed successfully for the white side in SOS 1. If 7.♗e3 e5!, but here Black can try 7...d5?! – an unusual advance in the Classical Pirc:



analysis diagram

8.e5 ♗e4! 9.♗d3 ♜f5∞ and the position looks playable, Kilpela-Liitiainen, Helsinki 2002.

A) 6...c6?! is always a very slow way to face the attack with f2-f4: 7.♗d3 (7.♗e3?! ♜bd7 8.e5 ♗e8 9.h4† Palac-Medic, Pula 2002) 7...♝g4 8.h3 ♜xf3 9.♗xf3 e5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.f5± Flear-Tseshkovsky, Hastings 2002/03;

B) The move 6...b6?! is premature here.



analysis diagram

It can be strongly met with the advance 7.e5! (7.♗d3 ♜b7=) 7...dxe5 7...♗fd7?! 8.♗c4! e6 9.f5†, sug-

gested by Stoica; 9.h4?! would be the author's choice) 8.fxe5 ♜d5 9.♗d3 (9.♘e4 c5!) 9...♝xc3 10.bxc3 ♜b7 11.0-0 c5 12.♗e3 ♜c6 13.♗e1? ♛d5 14.♗h4↑ and White has some annoying attacking ideas on the kingside;

C) 6...♝g4?! is also a premature pin, and in this move order it is even more favourable for White: 7.h3 ♜xf3 8.♗xf3 ♜c6? (8...♝fd7? 9.e5! c5 (9...♝c8)? and then ...c7-c5) 10.♗xb7 cxd4 11.♘b5 ♛b6 12.♗xb6 axb6 13.exd6 exd6 14.♗d2± Moreno Carnero-Narciso Dublan, Pamplona 2001/02) 9.♗e3 e5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.f5 ♜d4 12.♗f2 ♜h5? 13.0-0-0!±.



analysis diagram

This is the vantage point: if we compare this position to the main line 6.♗d3, we can see that here Black does not have the resource ...♝f4. 13...c6 14.♗b1 ♛e7 15.g4+– Illescas Cordoba-Gurevich, Madrid 1988;

D) 6...♝a6?! is a well-known idea, and it is also good here: 7.♗e3...

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** "...is probably the least adequate, because it deprives White of the possibility of a further e4-e5, in view of ...♝g4' – Marin/Stoica.

Black replies 7...c5 with good counterplay (or also the creative 7...b6!?, a move I like at this point):



analysis diagram

D1) 8.dxc5 ♜xc5 9.♗xc5 (White is trying to simplify the position. In case of 9.e5 ♜g4 (9...♝fe4? 10.♗xe4 ♜xe4 11.♗d5 ♜c5 12.♗xc5 ♜e6?) 10.♗g1? is too slow (10.♗xc5=), e.g. 10...b6 (10...♝e6!N) 11.h3 ♜h6 12.♗c4 ♜b7 and Black stands perfectly well, Forster-Neubauer, Montecatini Terme 1997) 9...dxc5 10.♗xd8 ♜xd8 11.♗c4 b5!? (11...♝h5?; 11...♝g4?) and here 12.♗xb5 was played in Illescas Cordoba-Sznapik, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988. An improvement is: 12...♝b7!N with active endgame play, for instance 13.e5 (13.♗d3 c4!) 13...♝h5?;

D2) 8.♗xa6 ♜g4! (this very strong intermediate move is a recent novelty. In case of 8...cxd4 9.♗xd4 bxa6 10.♗d3 ♜b7 11.0-0-0∞ (Palac-Sinanovic, Pula 2001) 11...♝h6? could be an interesting novelty) 9.♗g1 bxa6.



analysis diagram

This position looks excellent for any Pirc player:

D21) To 10.h3 the best reply is the novelty 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  (not 10...cx $d$ 4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4\infty$  Vega Gutierrez-Lopez Colon, Gran Canaria 2010) 11.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}b7!\rightleftharpoons$ ;

D22) 10.dxc5 and now the strategic exchange 10... $\mathbb{Q}xc3+!$  (or the solid 10... $\mathbb{B}b8!?$ ) 11.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}c7\uparrow$ .

 PUZZLE: The pawn advance 7.e5 is also popular here. However, compared to the main lines (see Game 13), the extra tempo used to play a2-a3 does not change the situation much:

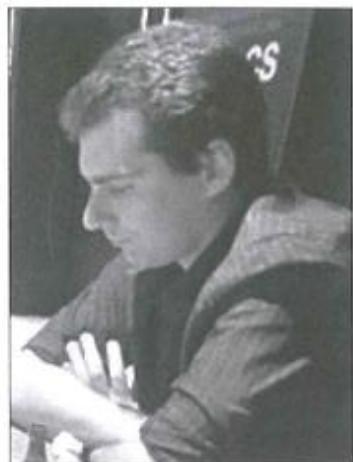
7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8. $\mathbb{B}e3$  c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  cx $d$ 4!? (this intermediate move is a more creative option than 9...bxa6 10.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5=$  Sedina-Zdebskaja, Chisinau 2005) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  dx $e$ 5 11.fxe5 bxa6 12. $\mathbb{W}e2$ , which leads to an important position from Sedina-I.Marin, Plovdiv Ech-W 2008.



analysis diagram

Here Black should continue as in the main variation (with the white pawn on a2, see the notes to Game 11): 12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$  and if 13.0-0-0 (13.0-0=) 13... $\mathbb{W}c7\rightleftharpoons$  and Black can attack on the queenside.

5...0-0 6. $\mathbb{B}e3!?$



We can learn a lot about the Pirc Defence from the modern games played by Argentinean grandmaster Fernando Peralta.



The most dynamic idea: this move aims at the same time to prevent ...c7-c5, and to quickly castle queenside. However, the bishop is now vulnerable to the sortie ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ . For 6.a3 see the above-mentioned lines.

6... $\mathbb{B}6!?$

 KEEP IN MIND: This solid plan (...c7-c5/ $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ) fails after 6.a3, because of 7.e5!. But here the aphorism pronounced by Marin/Stoica holds true: 'the move  $\mathbb{B}e3$  deprives White of the possibility of a further e4-e5, in view of ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ' – bravo!

WEAPON: However, the flexible set-up 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$ ? 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$  a6!? (instead of the traditional 7...c5 8.0-0-0!∞ – 25 games=55,2%) is similar to an improved Pirc played in modern fashion:

Play may continue 8.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9. $\mathbb{W}g1$  b5! 10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  11.g4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  with typical creative play:



analysis diagram

12...b4 (12... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$ ?) 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5 (13...a5) 14.0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}a5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ∞ Mikhalchishin-Todorcevic, Cetinje 1992.

### 7. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ ?

The normal move order to reach the game variation is 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  etc.

Some alternative lines show why 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is currently out of fashion:

A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  c5! 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$  (8.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ ; 8.dxc5 bxc5!) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !? (8... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  d5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c4= was played in Bologan-Ponomariov, Belfort 1998 and Enghien les Bains 1999, with a 0-2 result) 9.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ !N (an important improvement) 11. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

'This was my idea, now Black's pressure on the white centre is very strong and in a few moves my g7-bishop comes into play' – Avrukh, ChessBase Magazine 75.



analysis diagram

12.dxc5 (12.d5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! 14. $\mathbb{W}e4$  a6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$ ! 12...bxc5 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  14.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  dxе5!↑ Nisipeanu-Avrukh, Wijk aan Zee 2000;

B) On 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5! is a standard move:



analysis diagram

8. $\mathbb{W}e2$  (the Benoni move 8.d5 should be favourable for Black: 8... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! 9.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  10.a4 a6 11. $\mathbb{M}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  Shirov-Strikovic, Oviedo rapid 1992) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (9...cxd4!?) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  and here an improvement would be 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !N (10... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  11.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  12. $\mathbb{W}e1$ ± was seen in Bologan-Gipslis, Ostrava 1993) 11.d5 (11.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  12. $\mathbb{W}xe3$  cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14. $\mathbb{M}c8$  with a good position for Black) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  12.a3 f5! 13.exf6 exf6 14.axb4 f5!↑ and Black is more than OK!;

C) Finally, one of the crucial points of this line is that after 7.e5 Black can win a

tempo with 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , attacking the bishop:

C1) 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5 $\rightleftharpoons$  as in the previous lines;

C2) 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  9. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1$  10. $\mathbb{B}xf1$  c5! 11.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ?) 12.d5  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  13. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe3$  b5! $\rightleftharpoons$  A.Sokolov-Tseshkovsky, Igalo 1994;

C3) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  c5! (achieving the basic anti-Austrian break. 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! is a solid alternative: 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (9. $\mathbb{W}e2$  dxe5 10.fxe5 c5 $\rightleftharpoons$ ) 9...c5 10.dxc5 bxc5 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (11. $\mathbb{W}e2$  dxe5!) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12. $\mathbb{W}e2$  (12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}c8$ !) 12... $\mathbb{B}b8$  13.0-0-0  $\mathbb{B}b6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  16.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g3$ + Nisipeanu-Seul, Gelsenkirchen 1999) 9.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ .



analysis diagram

What do you think of this position? Yes, I would rather play with black, too!

10.d5 (White is forced to play Benoni-style once more. 10.g4 is fine for Black: 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ ! cxd4! $\uparrow$  Shmutter-Gofshtein, Tel Aviv 1996) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ?) 12. $\mathbb{W}d2$  (White lost quickly after the mistake 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! 13.0-0-0 dxe5 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (14.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! 15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ !) 14... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  15. $\mathbb{W}d2$  (15. $\mathbb{W}e4$  e6 $\uparrow$ ) 15... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! in Campora-Marin, Andorra la Vella 1999) 12...dxe5 13.fxe5 e6! $\uparrow$ . This position was played

three times, with a 0-3 result. 14.0-0-0  $\mathbb{exd5}$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  ( $\geq$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$ !) 15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (Black is ready to counterattack) 16.c3  $\mathbb{Q}cd4$ ! and now White is nicely punished: 17. $\mathbb{Q}f6$ +  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  18.cxd4 $\square$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  19.d5 c4? 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  23. $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  24.h4 c3 25.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  26.h5  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  27. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  28. $\mathbb{Q}xh7$   $\mathbb{Q}b3$ ! 0-1 Beliavsky-Anand, Munich 1991.

7... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ?

According to our knowledge of the line, it is better to force the white queen back to d2.

8. $\mathbb{W}d2$

Marin: 'White gets nothing by giving the play an independent character with 8. $\mathbb{W}f2$ !, because after 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! the queen is exposed on f2. For instance, 9.e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! leads to a loss of tempo for White compared to the normal lines.'

8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !

Attention, we have arrived at the critical position of the line.



White has only two answers:

9.e5!

For 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5!, you can look at our study of the line 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ . Or simply enjoy the following blitz miniature: 10.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  cxd4! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e5! $\rightleftharpoons$  13. $\mathbb{Q}de2$  exf4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}fd5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ! 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ?? (18.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$ !) 18... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$

19.exd5  $\mathbb{W}f6!$  0-1 Bareev-Tkachiev,  
Ajaccio Ech blitz 2007.  
9... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  10.0-0-0!



White's radical solution to the Marin/Stoica adage is to simply offer the bishop to be exchanged!

10...c5!?

Once this advance is played, the prelude is over – the true battle in this Pirc/Sicilian (and some other openings) hybrids begins.

A) Black is slightly passive after 10...dxe5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12.dxe5 (12.fxe5 c5!?) 12... $\mathbb{W}xd2+$  13. $\mathbb{R}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$  Carlsen-Lahno, Wijk aan Zee C 2004;

B) WEAPON: 10...e6!? might be tried, with the basic idea 11.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3!$  12.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  13. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{W}h4!\mp$  with an interesting game:



analysis diagram

14. $\mathbb{R}g1$  dxe5 15.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16. $\mathbb{R}g4$   $\mathbb{W}h6$  17. $\mathbb{R}e1$   $\mathbb{R}fd8$  18. $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f8!?$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{R}d4!^\uparrow$  Andrenko-V.Onischuk, Voronezh 2012.

11. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  bxc5!?

I have introduced this move into practice in 2002. Analysis had convinced me that "losing" a pawn is the least evil in this position. In any case, Black should refrain from prematurely exchanging his active minor pieces' – Marin (ChessBase Magazine 122).

A) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xe3?!$  12. $\mathbb{W}xe3$  bxc5 13.h4→;

B) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  13. $\mathbb{W}xe3$  bxc5 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$  (14.h4 (Marin); or 14. $\mathbb{W}e4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.h4) 14... $\mathbb{W}b6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}a4!^\uparrow$ ;

C) 11... $\mathbb{W}c8$ . This strange idea appeared in Chandler-McNab, Gibraltar 2004. 12.cxd6 exd6 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$  (13.h3!?  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe3\pm$ ) 13...dxe5 14. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  was played in the game (if 16... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}xb7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$ ), but White had 17.e6!N fxe6 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$  with a clear initiative.

12. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

The principled line, leading to an extremely complicated position with mutual chances. Marin: '12.h4 makes less sense now, because the g4-knight restricts White's kingside activity. Black could continue his development with 12... $\mathbb{Q}c6\mp$ ; 12... $\mathbb{W}c8!?$  13.h5 d5!± (the author).

12... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ N

A fantastic novelty by Peralta, unleashing even more complications and tactical tricks!

Reclaiming the pawn with 12... $\mathbb{W}c7N$  is less attractive, but still unclear: 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3!?$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  dxe5□ is quite balanced) 13...dxe5 14.h3!? $\infty$  with similar play to

line B, although the ♕ on c7 makes certain differences.

 WEAPON: After Marin's stem game, the line 12...♕a5!? 13.♔a3! dx5 started a certain trend for a while.



analysis diagram

Play may continue in two directions:

A) The original move was 14.h3 ♘h6 15.♗g5 exf4 16.♗xf7! (16.hxg4 ♘xg5?) 16...♗xf7 17.hxg4 ♘g5 and now:

A1) 18.♗e4?! ♖xd2+ 19.♗xd2 f3!= 20.gxf3 ♘xf3 21.♗c4 ♘xh1 22.♗xh1 ♘c6 23.♗xf7+ ♘xf7 24.♗xh7+ ♘f6≈ Illescas Cordoba-Marin, Mondariz 2002;

A2) Later on, 18.♗b1 f3 19.♗f2?!(19.♗d8+=) was tried in Charbonneau-Lahno, Montreal 2004: 19...fxg2 20.♗xg2 (the pin does not work: 20.♗c4 ♘d5!) 20...♗xf2 21.♗xb7 but things prove not to be that simple: 21...♗d2?! 22.♗xa8 ♘d7± favours Black.

B) 14.♗d5?! has become more popular recently: 14...♖xd2+ 15.♗xd2 ♘xd5 16.♗xd5=.

This position was tested first in San Luis 2005. Later, Gershon analysed it extensively in his book on the World Championship Tournament – but nobody can get anything from equality!



analysis diagram

16...♗e3 (Marin: '16...e4!? should give Black sufficient play in an unclear position') 17.♗d2 (17.♗d3! was pointed out by Gershon, but 17...exf4 18.♗xe7 ♘c8 is balanced) and now:

B1) 17...♗xf1? (Gershon recommends 17...♗h6!?) 18.♗xf1 ♘c6 19.♗xe5 ♘xe5 20.fxe5 ♘h6 21.♗xe7 ♘fb8 22.♗f2 ♘b5 23.♗f6 ♘d5 24.c4 ♘c8 25.b3=. However, Black must defend accurately in this endgame, activating both the ♗ and the ♘, otherwise White will simply advance his a-b-c-pawns and win, as happened in the game Shirov-McNab, Gibraltar 2006;

B2) 17...♘c6 18.♗b5 (18.♗a6 exf4 19.♗b7 ♘ac8 20.♗xc8 ♘xc8≈) 18...♗fc8 19.♗xc6 ♘xc6 20.♗xe5 ♘xe5 21.fxe5 ♘c4 22.♗xe7! ♘xd2 23.♗xd2 ♘b8 24.b3N.



analysis diagram

A novelty suggested by Gershon, but the position is balanced anyway: 24... $\mathbb{B}b5!$ ? 25. $\mathbb{Q}f6$   $\mathbb{A}a5!$  26.a4  $\mathbb{B}d5+$  27. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{B}d3!$  28. $\mathbb{B}d1\Box$   $\mathbb{B}xd1+$  29. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}f8=$  Kulaots-Pap, Zadar 2011.

### 13. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

The game move looks very solid, but it leaves the bishop out of play in view of the following tactical operation.

A) Marin: '13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  places the bishop on an exposed square. 13...dxe5! 14. $\mathbb{W}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  (the author: the computer's choices are 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?$  and 14... $\mathbb{W}xd7=$ ) 15. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  exf4 $\cong$  and Black has the safer king, which could prove decisive in the future';

B) Marin/the author: 13. $\mathbb{Q}g1?$  looks like the critical line:



analysis diagram

13... $\mathbb{Q}dxe5?$  does not seem to work well now. 14.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

15...dxe5 (15... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e3!+$ — and the bishop is helpful here; 15...f6? 16.exf6 exf6 17. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d4!+$ —) and here 16. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (16.h4! is probably the strongest move for White, but the tactical struggle is still very much alive; 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3?$   $\mathbb{W}xd2+?$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}f2\cong$ ) 16...e4 $\Box$  (16...f6? 17.h4!—) 17. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  18. $\mathbb{Q}cxе4$  (18. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5+)$  18... $\mathbb{W}xd2+$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd2!$  f5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  fxe4 21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\pm$ ; however 21... $\mathbb{B}f4!$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{B}c4$  23.c3

$\mathbb{B}b8\cong$  gives Black reasonable counterplay for the minus pawn.

WEAPON: Black should try to start a gradual queenside attack, trying to take advantage of the white dark-squared bishop's absence from this flank: 13... $\mathbb{B}c8?$  (or 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$ ), and his compensation is not entirely clear – but White has no clear continuation either: 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6!?\infty$  etc.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}dxe5!$



What a nasty blow!

### 14.fxe5

Marin: '14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  dxe5 15.h3  $\mathbb{W}xd2+$  16. $\mathbb{B}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}fe8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (18. $\mathbb{Q}c5$  exf4 $\bar{F}$ ) 18...e4 $\cong$  Black has active play and a dangerous passed pawn.'

### 14... $\mathbb{Q}h6$

As in the above lines, the pin is Black's tactical point.

### 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}xe5\cong$

Marin: 'White will not be able to save his knight, because the bishop cannot interfere the c1-h6 diagonal in any way.'

### 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1!?$

On 16.h4 f6 retrieves the piece: 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  (17. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  fxe5) 17...fxg5 18.hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  with equal chances, but the better Pirc bishop:  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  vs. a passive  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ .

16... $\mathbb{W}a5!$ 

Marin: 'Black completes his development by connecting rooks and creates the threat of winning the knight back with ...f6.' 16...f6? is bad now because of 17. $\mathbb{Q}e6!+-$ , but 16... $\mathbb{R}b8$  17.h4 f6 is interesting.

17. $\mathbb{W}e3$ 

Here Black has several attractive ideas.

17...f6!?

**WEAPON:** Instead, the positional improvement 17... $\mathbb{R}ab8!?$  is more tricky, preparing a dangerous attack by ... $\mathbb{R}fc8$  or some shot with the  $\mathbb{R}b7$ , opening the b-file.

**TRICK:** The direct 17... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  is unclear and probably not necessary: 18. $\mathbb{W}xe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  19. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{R}ab8$  20. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{W}xa3$  21. $\mathbb{Q}b5\Box$   $\mathbb{W}b4\infty$ .

**TRICK:** The most forcing line is 17... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  19. $\mathbb{W}h3\Box$   $\mathbb{Q}xa3+$  20. $\mathbb{Q}a1\Box$  and Black has at least a draw by perpetual check.

18.h4  $\mathbb{R}f7!$ 

In order to defend h7. If immediately 18...fxg5? 19.hxg5  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  20. $\mathbb{W}h3!$ . But 18... $\mathbb{R}ac8$  is tactically interesting.

19. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  f $\times$ g5 20.h $\times$ g5  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  21. $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8\infty$



Marin: 'Black has re-established material equality and has entirely adequate play. Soon, White will feel the passivity of his a3-bishop.'

22. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  23. $\mathbb{H}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  24. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  25. $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  26. $\mathbb{H}dd1$  a6

Things have gone wrong for White.

27. $\mathbb{Q}xd6\Box$ 

27. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{R}b8$  28. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{W}e3-$ + leaves White's pieces hanging.

27. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}xb4$  28.c3 (28. $\mathbb{Q}xe6?$   $\mathbb{Q}c4!-$ +) 28... $\mathbb{Q}xa2+$  29. $\mathbb{Q}xa2$   $\mathbb{W}a4+$  30. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{B}b8-$ .

27... $\mathbb{exd6}$  28. $\mathbb{H}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}e3$  29. $\mathbb{H}hd1?$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}f5!-$ .29... $\mathbb{W}xe2!-$ 

Faced with an unpleasant material balance ( $\mathbb{Q}Q$  vs.  $\mathbb{Q}Q$ ) White tries his last chance.

30. $\mathbb{H}d8+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8\Box$  31. $\mathbb{H}h1$ 

31. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{H}xd8$  and Black wins as White's back rank is not protected.

31... $\mathbb{W}h5!?$ 

Here, Black forgot about the typical defensive move 31...h5!, which would have won easily.

32. $\mathbb{W}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}xh5$  33. $\mathbb{H}xf8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  34. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  35. $\mathbb{H}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  36. $\mathbb{H}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  37. $\mathbb{H}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  38. $\mathbb{H}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  39. $\mathbb{H}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  40. $\mathbb{H}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2!+$  41. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$



The position is still technically winning for Black, but the clock factor did not allow Peralta to properly finish his great previous work.

42...Ra4 Rg6 43.b4 Rd6 44.Rd2 Re5 45.Re3 Rd4+ 46.Rd2 Re5 47.Re3 Rd4+ 48.Rd2 Rd5 49.b5 Rb5 50.Ra8 Rc4+ 51.Re2 Rb6 52.Ra7 Rc2 53.Rc7 Rc5 54.Rd2

Rg6 55.Rc3 Rd6 56.Ra7 Rc5 57.a4 Rd5+ 58.Rb3 Rc7 59.Rb7 Re4 60.Rb8 Rxg2 61.Rd8 Rd5+ 62.Rc2 Re6 63.Rd7 Re4+ 64.Rd1 Rc7 65.Re2 Rb6 66.Rf7 Rxg5 67.Rf6 Rd5 68.Re3 Rf7 69.Rf4 Rc7+ 70.Re3 Rd6 71.Rf8 h5 72.Rh8 Rf7 73.Rf4 Rxh5+ 74.Rg5 Rd6 75.Ra8 Rd5 76.Rf8 Rf7 77.Ra8 Rc6 78.Rh8 Ra5 79.Rh7 Rd2+ 80.Rf6 Rc3+ 81.Rg5 Rd2+ 82.Rf6 Rc3+ 83.Rg5 Re8 84.Re7 Rd2+ 85.Rf6 h4 86.Rh7 Re1 87.Rg5 Rd7 88.Rxh4 Rxh4+ 89.Rxh4 Rb6 90.a5+ Rxa5 91.Rg5 Rb5 92.Rf6 Rc5 93.Re5 Rc8 94.Rf6 Rd5 95.Rg5 Re5 96.Rg6 Rf5 97.Rh7 Rf6 98.Rg8 Rg7 99.Rf8 Ra6

½-½

#### Game 8 – Attacking with the e- and h-Pawns: 6.e5



As in Game 3 (5...c5 6.e5), Black immediately faces an important choice:

- Here, the natural, strategic simplifying resource 6...dxe5!? works almost perfectly.
- Braver and more ambitious players may opt for 6...Rfd7?!. However, I have to warn them in advance: this move leads to a manic game with crazy complications arising after 7.h4?!. White breaks all the rules and tries to blow up Black's bastion with one of the wildest lines in the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings*!

Grandmaster Igor Stohl in CBM 145: 'All this leaves quite a few open questions, which we will try to answer. The main one is – does 6.e5 really present a serious

danger for the Pirc in general, or is its main use only to force a draw against an ambitious opponent? The whole line and especially the branch which occurred in the stem-game is very sharp and double-edged, but still quite rare in contemporary practice. As many important games were played, or analysis published in pre-computer times, we'll have to rely heavily on engine support to weed out the inevitable errors and try to present an objective picture of the central thrust.'

Here is the stem game with the latest answers.

**Emil Sutovsky**  
 **Vassily Ivanchuk**

Khanty-Mansiysk World Cup 2011 (3.2)

This was a fascinating, romantic bull-matador encounter! Grandmaster Ivanchuk managed to avoid his elimination from the World Cup by scoring an obligatory win with black. However, Ivanchuk achieved his aim only when White went astray in an unclear position at the critical moment of the game.

**1.e4 g6!?**

The first game of this exciting match had been won by Sutovsky, so in this second game, in a nearly hopeless must-win situation with black, Ivanchuk opts for the Pirc, which he had played recently in a few games.

**2.d4 ♘g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.f4**

Sutovsky's pet line is the ambitious bishop sortie 4.♗g5, but this is less effective in the Modern order (the early fianchetto). However, maybe for the reason mentioned above, in the tiebreak he went for the more restrained manoeuvring option 4.♗e3 – see the following chapters.

**4...♘f6**

Getting back to a normal Pirc. Obviously, the typical plans ...a7-a6-...b7-b5/...c7-c6-b7-b5 were possible here as well (covered in Chapter 4).

**5.♘f3 0-0 6.e5!?**

An aggressive system, which suits Sutovsky's attacking style well enough. As always happens after e4-e5, the fight

between the bull and the matador begins!



Grandmaster Anish Giri wrote the following interesting comment on the Internet: 'To the naive me it seems like an exaggerated form of the psychological war, with White showing that he is more than ready for the sharp battle, but then again, it may have been the preparation of Emil Sutovsky, who knows.' All of the factors mentioned above lead us to the fighting reply:

**6...♗fd7!?**

The most effective retreat: Black is going to blast open the centre with a quick ...c7-c5.

Obviously, 6...♗e8?! is rather passive and it will also make any centre break more difficult. The logical response 7.♗e3! should give White an advantage. Even the direct 7.h4! is dangerous for the defender.

**WEAPON:** A less ambitious, but riskless alternative is

6...dxe5?!. Now both pawn recaptures come into consideration.

 TRICK: 7.♘xe5? c5! (7...♞c6!?)  
8.♗e3 ♘b4?? 8.dxc5 (8.d5!?)  
♞bd7±?? 8...♞fd7?!

A) A queenless middlegame arises after the symmetrical recapture 7.dxe5 ♛xd1+ 8.♗xd1? (if 8.♗xd1 the black knight jumps to the central square: 8...♞d5=). White's space advantage must be compensated for by an energetic counter: 8...♞h5! (the best square for the knight! This curious-looking manoeuvre actually gives Black comfortable equality, or even more, and is clearly stronger than 8...♞g4?! 9.♗e1, which renders the ♘g4 useless. The popular 'tempo-winning' check 8...♝d8+ is less effective: 9.♗e1 (9.♗d2 ♘h5??) and now 9...♞e8?! is the best retreat. It might be a bit passive, but it allows Black to keep a roughly equal ending) and now:

A1) 9.♗e1 ♘c6!.



analysis diagram

In my view, this key endgame position is not boring and still tricky.

 TRICK: If 10.♗d5 ♛f5!N  
11.♗b5 ♛e4!! OK!

10.♗b5 f6! (this important break greatly improves all the black pieces) 11.exf6

(11.♗d5 fxe5!) 11...♞xf6?? and Black is already the active side, Makarichev-Gedevanishvili, Moscow 1972.

After other moves, White will have to face the effective pin with ...♝g4, for instance:

A2) 9.♗c4 ♛g4! 10.♗f1 ♘c6??;

A3) Or 9.♗d3 ♛g4!? (9...♞c6!?) first is also playable) 10.♗e4 (10.♗e2 ♘c6??) 10...c6 11.♗e2 ♘d7 12.♗e3 f6!! Strobel-Lorenz, Bayern 2001;

A4) Finally, 9.♗g1 threatens g2-g4, but again 9...♝g4! 10.♗e2 ♘c6 11.h3 ♛ad8+ 12.♔e1 ♛xf3 13.♔xf3 ♘d4! (with the counter-threat 14...♞xc2+) 14.♗d1 ♘g3?! (dancing with the knights! Another option worth considering is 14...♝h6?!, as in Längl-Hamm, Württemberg 1999) 15.♗f2 ♘df5!, blocking the white kingside pawns: 16.♗f3 and now 16...f6?? 17.e6 c6! looks good.

B) More enterprising is 7.fxe5 ♘d5! (after this move Black is able to hold his position and ready to play ...c7-c5. If 7...♞fd7? 8.♗f4!! and White maintains a strong centre) and now:



analysis diagram

B1) The exchange 8.♗xd5 converts the Pirc into a Scandinavian: 8...♛xd5 9.c4 (otherwise ...c7-c5 is coming) 9...♝e4+ (9...♝d8?? and ...c7-c5) 10.♗f2 (10.♗e2 c5??; 10.♗e2 ♛f5??) 10...f6! 11.♗d3 ♛c6!;



Sutovsky vs. Ivanchuk, World Cup Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

B2) White can avoid simplifications by 8.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (8...  $f6$ !?) 9.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10. c4 (10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !?  $c5$ !) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  and the position is more similar to the Modern Alekhine Defence: 11. c5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b6!? $\Rightarrow$  Aaron-Torre, Bangalore 1981;

B3) 8. h4!? $\rightarrow$  – as in the main game, this is the sharpest line! 8... c5! (the mandatory break, which gives Black effective counterplay. A famous crazy blitz game continued 8...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9. h5!? c5 10. hxg6 hxg6 11.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ !?  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6 (13...  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ !?) 14.  $\mathbb{W}h3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xc2+$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (15...  $\mathbb{Q}xa1$ ?) 16.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !; 15... cxd4? 16.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ! 16.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ +  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  $\cong$  Nakamura-Kramnik, Moscow Wch blitz 2010) 9. h5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! (Black needs to develop.  $\leq$  9... cxd4 10.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  11.  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  $\infty$  Nakamura-Navrotescu, playchess.com 2005) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (a better option would be to include 10. hxg6 hxg6!) 10... cxd4 11. hxg6 hxg6 (11... dxc3!?) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ . You may not believe in the rules of attack and defence – but here Black should be OK!



analysis diagram

13...  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ ! 14.  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (14...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !?: 14...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !?) 15.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16. 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}dh1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xh8$   $\mathbb{Q}xh8$  20.  $\mathbb{W}h6$ +  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ + 22. cxd3  $\mathbb{W}e5$  23.  $\mathbb{W}h7$ +  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ + fxe6 25.  $\mathbb{W}xg6$   $\mathbb{W}f5$  $\mp$  and Black emerges a pawn up in the queen ending, Vovk-Kärner, Tallinn 2001;

B4) The developing move 8.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! is the most natural choice: 8...  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (the retreat 8...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ! also gives Black sufficient counterplay: 9.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (9.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ ) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  $\mp$ ; 9.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  is interesting, but it allows Black to exchange  $\mathbb{Q}x\mathbb{Q}$  by 9...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ !?) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. 0-0 f6 $\Rightarrow$  (or 10...  $\mathbb{Q}f5$ !?) was played in Krush-

Skipchenko, Moscow Wch blitz (w) 2010).

With the text move Black simply continues the development vs. development strategy. Now:

B41) 9.♕e2?! (after defending the bishop, White's pawn structure will be too compromised to give him an advantage) 9...♗xc3! 10.bxc3 ♗xc4 11.♕xc4 ♗d7 (another interesting try is 11...♗c6?! 12.0-0 ♗a5 13.♗b4 b6= Khuseinov-Zaichik, Sevastopol 1986) 12.0-0 (nothing is achieved by 12.e6 ♗b6 13.exf7+ ♛xf7 14.♕b3 ♕d5! Lanc-Clausen, Copenhagen 1987) 12...♗b6 13.♕d3



analysis diagram

The key position.

13...♕d5 (a very nice place for the black queen, controlling the important squares in the centre. I also like the faster 13...c5!?) 14.♗a3?! (it looks like there is nothing to do for this bishop on this diagonal. 14.♗g5 was tried in Tipsay-Lelchuk, Jakarta 1993: 14...f6 15.♗f4 and now: 15...c5!N. The computer gives 14.a4! as the strongest line: 14...♗c6! 15.a5 ♗c4 16.♗d2 ♗xd2 17.♗xd2 b5! with a balanced game) 14...♗fe8 15.h4 (White needs to create some serious play, but after 15...♗c4!N (instead of 15...f6 (Naumann-Bogdanovski, Chalkidiki 2002)

16.h5!∞) 16.♗c1 f6!∞ Black can breathe easily;

B42) Perhaps more promising is 9.♗xd5 ♗xd5 10.♗xd5 ♕xd5 11.♕e2. Now, a forced line begins with 11...c5? (or the strategic block 11...b5?!, played in Unzicker-Chandler, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978) 12.c4! ♘d7 13.d5 e6 14.d6 f6!∞ – sorry, but we have to use the 'unclear' evaluation here. Everything hangs on the white pawn on d6 – it can be strong or weak!



7.h4!?

Bronstein's move (Munich Olympiad 1958) is by far the most dangerous idea here. White's intentions are clear enough: to open the rook file and whip up a decisive attack – or, in the worst case, to force a draw (to win the match!).

A) We already know from Game 2 that 7.♗e3 c5!∞ cannot be very good for White;

B) However, White still has the restrained 7.♗c4.

 TRICK: Beware! White gets a dangerous initiative after the mistake 7...c5? 8.e6! ♗b6 9.exf7+ ♛h8 10.♗d3! cxd4 11.♗e4 ♛xf7 12.h4!→.

7...♗b6! (the safest reaction, which transposes into positions from the previous line 6...dxe5, for instance 7...dxe5?!

8.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  is quite balanced) 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (alternatively, after 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6=$  Black can exchange the  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  by playing ... $\mathbb{Q}a5$  next. This has been known for a long time already, since the game Beni-Pirc from 1953) 8...dxe5 9.dxe5 (for 9.fxe5 see the line 6...dxe5 7.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  8.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$ ) 9... $\mathbb{W}xd1+$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  f6 11.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6=$  Marks-Schmaltz, Schwäbisch Gmünd 1994.

Let's find out how to deal with a few more aggressive attempts:

C) 7. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b6!$  (7...c5? 8.e6±; 7...h6?! 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf7!?$ ) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (8.e6 fxe6 transposes to the next line, 7.e6) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (9.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  10.e6 fxe6 11.dxe6  $\mathbb{W}e8!?$  D.Bogdanov-Fries Nielsen, corr 1993) 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  and White's attack is a fata morgana: 10.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  11. $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12. $\mathbb{W}e2$  f6 13. $\mathbb{Q}ge4$   $\mathbb{W}d7!?$  Bichsel-Nunn, Groningen Ech-jr 1974/75.

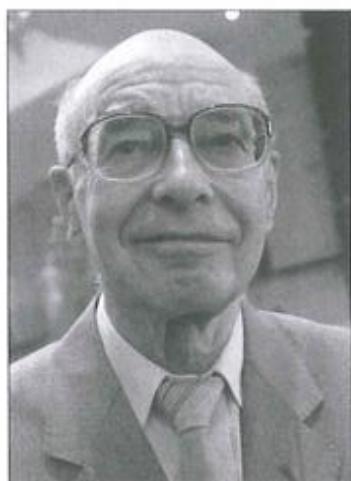
D) 7.e6 is another wild, but unconvincing attempt to break down the defences with bare hands, which occurred in my own practice.

7...fxe6 and now:



analysis diagram

D1) 8.h4?! is always an annoying wing advance, but it's not dangerous here: 8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{W}e8!?$ N (I found this very helpful defensive resource here, which can save us lots of energy.



Legendary grandmaster David Bronstein (1924-2006): inventor of the wild sacrificial variation 6.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  7.h4!?, demonstrating once more that he was not the world's most pragmatic chess player.

Of course 9...c5 is the most usual counter, but the position gets too complex and tricky after 10.h5!? (10.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$ N) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xh5!?$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}gh5!?$  11.dxc5!∞) and now 11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ∞ or 11. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$ . The idea of the queen switch is simple: if 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6! and White's attack is over;

D2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  (more pieces to the defence) 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (if 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$  10.h4  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  11.h5  $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$  12. $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{W}e8!?$ N is the same supporting idea) 9...d5 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5! Here we have a nice example of how to punish an opponent who does not respect you in the opening! 11.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12. $\mathbb{W}e2$  e5! (the bait strikes back) 13.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5?$  (≥ 14.e6  $\mathbb{Q}ge5!?$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}gxe5!$  15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6! 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}xg5!$  winning, Shmulevich-Moskalenko, St Martin 1991.

7...c5!

The standard reaction against any flank attack – advised by the wise and experi-

enced. This move undermines White's centre. Now the exciting part of the game starts.

7...dxe5?! comes a bit late: 8.dxe5 ♜b6 9.♗e2 ♜g4 10.h5!.

**TRICK:** 7...♜b6?! 8.h5 ♜g4 9.hxg6 fxg6 10.♗e2 dxe5 11.♗g5!↑ Gipslis-Botvinnik, Moscow 1965.



#### 8.h5

A quite logical continuation after playing h2-h4.

**WEAPON:** However, there is an important intermediate alternative: 8.e6?!, which has more sense at this moment, and at least leads to a complex fight: 8...fxe6□ 9.h5!

White's initiative can be dangerous – beware!

A) In the game Castella Garcia-Palencia, Mislata 2011, Black tried 9...cxd4 10.♗xd4 and now 10...♝c5 (10...♝f6 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♗d3 ♛e8 13.♗e2↑) 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♗e3 (12.♗g4?!) 12...♝c6 13.♗xc6! bxc6 14.♗g4 e5 (this move is also the computer choice. If 14...♛b6 15.♗xg6 ♜f6□ 16.♗h7+ ♜f8 17.♗d4! ♛xb2 18.♗b1 ♛a3 19.♗h3! e5 20.♗c4! d5 21.♗g3± etc.) 15.♗h4!→ e6 (15...♝xf4□) 16.♗h2

(16.♗h7+? ♜f7 17.♗h6→) 16...♛b6 17.♗h7+ ♜f7 18.♗h6!+–.



analysis diagram

Suddenly White's attack is decisive: 18...♛xb2 19.♗d2!! – unfortunately, not the only winning move, but after 19...♛xa1 20.♗xg6+ ♜g8□ 21.♗h7+ ♜f7 22.♗e2!+– Black is lost.

B) 9...gxh5□ is considered to be the only defence. 10.♗xh5 (from the position after 10.dxc5 ♜xc5 11.♗xh5 ♜bd7?!) Black won all three games played. 10.♗g5? has never been played; 10...♝f6□ 11.dxc5 is interesting and unclear! 10...♝f6 11.♗h4∞. Black is certainly not worse here and may even fight for an advantage. This is well illustrated by the following game and analysis: 11...cxd4 12.♗xd4 ♜c6? (a few other playable options are 12...♛b6?N; or the forcing 12...e5∞, Krovel Velle-Wagner, corr 1998) 13.♗e3 (13.♗xc6 was played in W. Watson-Conquest, London 1982: 13...bxcc6 14.g4 and now 14...♛b6?N 15.♗d3 ♜f7 looks very good for Black: 16.g5 ♜d5 17.♗xh7+ ♜f8 18.♗xd5 exd5?) 13...♛b6 14.♗d3 (the computer's 14.♗b5 is refuted by 14...a6! 15.♗f5 ♛a5 16.♗xg7 axb5! 17.♗h5 b4! 18.♗xf6+ ♜xf6 19.♗e4 ♜g6?) 14...♝b4? (14...♛xb2? is too suspicious!) 15.♗d2.



analysis diagram

The critical position of this line.

15... $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ ? (the computer insists on the variation 15... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{exd}5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3+$  18. $\mathbb{W}xd3$  h6 19.0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}a6$  and gives this position as equal) 16. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}g4+$  (better may be 17. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xf2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19.0-0-0  $\mathbb{W}e3$ , which is balanced) 17... $\mathbb{Q}f7$  and now:

 TRICK: The point is 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4!$ .

18. $\mathbb{Q}g7+?$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xd4!$  21. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2+$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4\#$  and Black's two extra pawns give him an advantage, Ciuffoletti-Sarno, St Vincent 2000.

Back to the main game:

8... $\mathbb{cxd}4$



The tension quickly grows after the aggressive reaction

9. $\mathbb{hxg}6!?$

White attacks, sacrificing a piece, with an almost forced continuation.

 WEAPON: Bronstein's original intention was 9. $\mathbb{W}xd4!?$ .

 TRICK: There is no time for 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$  10. $\mathbb{W}f2!\rightarrow$ .

9... $\mathbb{dxe}5$  is the only move.

 TRICK: If 10. $\mathbb{fxe}5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$  11. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5!\mp$ .

A) 10. $\mathbb{W}f2!$  is the key manoeuvre: the queen is heading for the h-file. Now:



analysis diagram

A1) 10... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$  11. $\mathbb{hxg}6$   $\mathbb{fxg}6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}c4+!$  e6 (12... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xe5\pm$ ) 13. $\mathbb{fxe}5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4\Box$  (13... $\mathbb{Q}d5?$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  Fauth-Urankar, Bayern tt 1995) 14. $\mathbb{W}g3\pm$  Hector-Polihorniade, Palma de Mallorca 1989;

A2) 10... $\mathbb{e}6?$  11. $\mathbb{hxg}6$ . Now the danger for the black king will be the same after either 11... $\mathbb{hxg}6$  12. $\mathbb{W}g3!\rightarrow$  (12. $\mathbb{g}4!?\mathbb{N}$ ; 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ ) 12... $\mathbb{W}a5$  13. $\mathbb{W}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}d8$  14.f5! e4 15. $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  17. $\mathbb{W}xh6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}h4!+\rightarrow$  winning; or ≥ 11... $\mathbb{fxg}6$  12. $\mathbb{W}g3!\uparrow$  exf4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ , which is better for White, as in Stein-Liberzon, Yerevan 1965.

A3) 10... $\mathbb{exf}4$  is also dangerous for Black: 11. $\mathbb{hxg}6$   $\mathbb{hxg}6$  (11... $\mathbb{fxg}6$  12. $\mathbb{W}h4$  (12. $\mathbb{Q}xh7!?$  Velema-Houben, Hengelo jr

1997) 12...h5 13.Qxf4? Qb6 14.Qd3 Qd7 15.0-0-0 Qg4 16.Qg5 Qxc3 17.bxc3 Qf5 18.Qxf5 Qxf5 19.Qh6 Ne8 20.Qg5 → Corbat-Pekin, corr 2005) 12.Qxf4 (or first 12.Qh4) 12...Qf6 13.Qh4 Qa5.



analysis diagram

The key position of this line.

14.Qb5! (grandmaster Anatoly Vaisser's improvement on the old 14.Qg5?! Qg4!, played for the first time in Bronstein-Palmiotto, Munich Olympiad 1958; or 14...Qh5!?) 14...Qb4? (the strategic point is 14...a6 15.Qh6! Qh5 16.Qxg7 Qxg7 17.Qd3!?). Maybe for this reason the best defence is the developing move 14...Qc6! N 15.0-0-0 Qh5! 16.g4 Qxc3!∞, which leads to a large forest of variations) 15.a3!



analysis diagram

An elegant tactical solution!

15...Qxb2? ( $\geq$  15...g5 16.Qxg5 Qxb2 17.Qd5!± etc.) 16.Qd5! (not 16.Qe5? because of 16...Qxa1+! (16...Qd8? 17.Qd5!?) Qxe5+ 18.Qxe5 Qxd5 19.Qxg6 Qxb5 20.0-0-0± Vaisser-Palac, Cannes 2000) 17.Qd1 Qc1! 18.Qxf6 Qh6!-+) 16...Qe8 (16...Qxa1+ 17.Qe2+-) and now 17.Qxf6+! is the winning move, suggested by Stohl: 17...exf6+ (17...Qxf6 18.Qh7+ Qf8 19.Qh6!-+) 18.Qxe8 Qxa1+ 19.Qf2+- and Black is helpless against the many threats;

A4) The move 10...e4! has the best reputation, but the follow-up is really crazy! 11.Qxe4 (after 11.Qg5 Qf6 12.hxg6 hxg6∞ and the logical 13.Qh4, the queen sortie 13...Qd4!± has always worked well for Black, since after 14.Qcxe4 there follows 14...Qd8! etc.) 11...Qf6 (this is the safest way for Black, a bit similar to the line with Qg1 below: 12.Qxf6+ exf6! 13.hxg6 Qe8+ 14.Qe3 hxg6.



analysis diagram

Now Black does not face any direct danger, and he is even better after the usual 15.Qd3 Qb6! 16.Qd2 Qa5+ 17.Qc1 Qc6! Varadi-Ianov, Nyiregyhaza 2002.

B) The idea 10.Qg1 is similar to that of Qf2, but is less effective: 10...e4 (10...Qc6!?) 11.Qxe4 Qf6 12.Qxf6+ exf6! 13.hxg6 Qe8+ 14.Qf2 fxg6 (the

safest option, played in Gasic-Milic, Vrnjacka Banja 1966. 14...hxg6? 15.♗h2 ♜d7 16.♗h7+ ♔f8 17.b3 ♜c5!?? Van den Berg-Kuijpers, Leeuwarden ch-NED 1972) 15.♗h2 ♛b6+ 16.♔g3 h5 17.♕c4+ ♔e6 18.♖e1 and here, 18...♜d7!N would be an improvement in a position that is balanced anyway...



**9...dxc3**

Ivanchuk, who is the defending side for the moment, correctly decides to count the pieces.

With the above-mentioned Bronstein line in mind, it is now clear that 9...hxg6? comes close to losing after 10.♗xd4 dxe5? (10...♜c6 11.♗f2!→; 10...♛b6 11.♕d5!+) 11.fxe5 ♜xe5 (11...e6 12.♗g5!) 12.♗h4→ ♜xf3+ 13.gxf3 f5 14.♗h7+ ♔f7 15.♗g1 ♛b6 16.♕c4+! and Black resigned a few moves later, Fossan-Thorstensen, Namses 1995.

**10.gxf7+**

Giri: 'This is the right pawn to be captured. Usually g6xf7 is a bad signal to a player with black pieces, but it doesn't have to be the case here, as he has a piece in reserve.'

**10...♝xf7**

**TRICK:** 10...♝h8?? 11.♗xh7+! allows White to mate quickly.

**11.♕c4!**

The main continuation. Now Black's task is difficult, but as we will see soon, both players are walking on a razor's edge!



**TRICK:** 11.e6? cxb2 12.exf7+ ♜f8! 13.♗xb2 ♜xb2+ as played in Pokojowczyk-Nowak, Poznan 1971. Don't forget the check after 14.♗xh7: 14...♛a5+!.



**TRICK:** 11.♗g5?? cxb2!



analysis diagram

And Black is winning: 12.♗xb2 (12.♕c4 ♜xe5!→ A.Bykhovsky-Bebchuk, Moscow 1966) 12...♛a5+ 13.c3 ♜xe5! (also 13...♝xf4! 14.♗b3+ d5 15.0-0-0 ♜b6+→ Keskinen-Heinimaki, Tampere 2000) 14.♗b3 ♛c5 15.♔e2 ♛e3 16.♔c1 ♛g3+ 17.♔d1 ♛g4 18.♔e1 ♛d3+ 19.♔d2 ♜c4! – another harsh punishment! 0-1, Bronstein-Conquest, Reykjavik 1996.

**11...e6!**

The best reaction. From this position on, most of the games played date from times when engines were non-existent.

The modest defence 11...♜f8?! allows White to continue the fight without much risk: 12.♗g5! (12.♗xf7+ ♜xf7 13.♗g5+ ♜g8 14.♗h5 h6 15.♗f7+ ♜h8 seems to draw) 12...e6? (White is

still on top after 12...d5 13.♕xd5!?

♕xd5 14.♗xd5 e6 15.♘xf7±) 13.♘xf7  
♘xf7 and now the immediate 14.f5!→.



analysis diagram

Here, contrary to what happened in the position which arose later in the game, White's queen has direct access to h5 and this proves to be decisive. The computer confirms this rather quickly and provides lines like 14...♛a5!→ (14...cxb2 15.♗xb2 ♛a5+ 16.♔f1±; 14...♝g8 15.f6+— Lemke-Grimm, corr 1988; 14...♝xe5? 15.♛h5+ ♚g8 16.fxe6+—) 15.fxe6+ ♜e8 (15...♝xe6 16.♝xe6+ ♜xe6 17.♛h5+ ♚g8 18.♛xh7+ ♜f8 19.♛f5!+ 1-0 Pirrot-Hardt, Vienna 1998) 16.♛h5+ ♜g6 17.0-0! ♛c5+ (17...♝xe5 18.♛xh7+—) 18.♜f2! ♛xe5 19.♛xh7 ♜f8 20.♜xf8!+—. Excellent!

### 12.♘g5!

Other moves are clearly weaker:

TRICK: 12.♗xe6? ♜xe5!+ is the main defensive point.

TRICK: 12.♕xd6? cxb2?! (12...♛b6+) 13.♗xb2 ♛a5+!.

TRICK: 12.f5 ♜xe5 13.fxe6 ♜e7! (13...♝xf3+? 14.♗xf3! Filipov-Efremov, USSR 1970) 14.♝xe5 ♛a5!—.



### 12...cxb2!

The evaluation here is also encouraging for Black. Giri: 'Ivanchuk manages to find a way to avoid the drawish lines. Unfortunately, I can't recall up to what point the players were prepared and from what moment on the improvisation started.'

The standard defence 12...♝f8? now loses almost by force: 13.♘xf7 cxb2 (13...♝xf7 14.f5+— transposes to the above line with 11...♝f8) 14.♗xb2 ♛a5+ 15.♔f1 ♜xf7 16.♛h5+ (16.f5!?) 16...♝g8 17.♔d3 ♛b4 18.♔b1 ♔d7 19.c4 ♛d2 20.♔xh7+ ♜xh7 21.♔xh7+ ♜f8 22.♔h4! (ingenious!) 1-0 Nakamura-Smirin, Mashantucket 2005.

WEAPON: However, objectively the safest idea is 12...♝xe5?!. This was for a long time the main line, which leads by force to a balanced endgame:

TRICK: 13.fxe5? cxb2 would destroy the ♜c1 and ♜g5 construction, and if 14.♛h5 ♛xg5!— wins.

So, 13.♛h5□ h6! 14.fxe5 hxg5! ('Keep it cool guys!' — Stohl) 15.♛h7+ ♜f8 16.♛h8+□ ♜xh8 17.♔xh8+ ♜g7□ 18.♔xd8 ♜c6 (18...♜c7? 19.♔d3↑ Perecz-Hever, Hungary 1974) 19.♔xd6

$\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (20.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ ? 21.  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8=$  Vaassen-Copie, corr 1992) 20...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}d1+$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ .



analysis diagram

From a theoretical point of view this line deserves some attention. Anyway, in the practical game the move played was 23.  $\mathbb{Q}xg5??$  (23.  $bxc3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8!$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}e1=$ ) 23...  $\mathbb{Q}h8!$  0-1 Perecz-Nunn, Dortmund 1979.

13.  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$



13...  $\mathbb{Q}a5+!$

A nasty check and the key to Black's defence.

**TRICK:** Now it's already too late for 13...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5?$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\mathbb{Q}a5+$  (14...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.0-0-0!+) 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d1!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6+!$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ , winning.

Again 13...  $\mathbb{Q}f8?$  would lead to trouble straight away: 14.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  16.0-0-0+-+. Here the use of the

mysterious queen check 13...  $\mathbb{Q}a5+!$  is revealed.

14.  $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$

**TRICK:** 14.  $c3$  can be answered with 14...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  (15.  $fxe5?$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5+)$  15...  $\mathbb{Q}bc6!$



analysis diagram

16.0-0-0! (16.  $fxe5?!$  occurred in Gwozdz-Nicholls, corr 2001: 16...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5+$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f2?!$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  and now 19...  $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  seems to be the most interesting (19...  $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$ ): 20.  $\mathbb{Q}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8\Box$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}e8+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8\mp$  and White must exchange the queens with 22.  $\mathbb{Q}xf8+\Box$  to avoiding a counterattack) 16...  $h6\Box$  17.  $fxe5$   $hxg5$  18.  $exd6$   $g4$  (18...  $\mathbb{Q}e5?!$ ) 19.  $\mathbb{Q}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}b1\cong$  – the computer's evaluation is =. This line was already suggested by grandmaster Igor Lysyj.

14...  $\mathbb{Q}f8N$

We have already seen this move as a passive defence, but here it keeps the game very much alive.

**TRICK:** 14...  $\mathbb{Q}c7?$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xh7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}d3\rightarrow$ .

**TRICK:** 14...  $\mathbb{Q}c5?$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!!\uparrow$ , vacating the d1-h5 diagonal, with the idea, for instance, after 15...  $dxe5$  (15...  $\mathbb{Q}b6?$

16.  $\mathbb{W}h5!$ ) 16.  $\mathbb{W}h5!$   $\mathbb{B}f5$   
17.  $\mathbb{B}af1!$  and White is winning.

14...d5!? is possibly the best concept, trying to close the position:



analysis diagram

15.  $\mathbb{B}d3$  and now:

TRICK: 15...  $\mathbb{B}e7$ ?!N is too optimistic: 16.  $\mathbb{B}xh7$ !? and  $\mathbb{W}d1-h1-h5 \rightarrow$  looks very dangerous.

15...h6 is suggested by Stohl as a playable option (previously Black played 15... $\mathbb{Q}f8$ !?, 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  17.  $\mathbb{B}f1\infty$  Winiwarter-Hager, Austria Staatsliga 1994/95): 16.  $\mathbb{B}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  18.  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}f8\infty$ ) 19.  $\mathbb{B}g8$   $\mathbb{W}a6$ ! with a quite forced liquidation: 20. f5+  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! 22.  $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}xa1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2=$ .

15.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$



The key moment of the game.

16.  $f5??$

Probably Sutovsky confused this position with some of the previous lines! White embarks upon a suicidal attack, probably not realizing the difference between the position of the king on e2 and f1.

16.  $\mathbb{W}xd6$ ! was obviously the move to play. Now the key squares remain intact and the bishop on g7 is dead: 16...  $\mathbb{W}a4$ !? (Black needs to take concrete action in order to avoid the strike with f4-f5 at all times; 16...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17.  $\mathbb{B}ad1$ !?) 17.  $\mathbb{W}d3$ ! and now it is Black who has to fight to keep afloat:



analysis diagram

A) 17...  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  was an 'ingenious defensive resource', writes Giri jokingly. However, after the counter 18.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !?, and the knight jumps 18...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (18...  $\mathbb{W}c6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !) 19.  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}xb4$  20.  $\mathbb{W}e4\uparrow$  and all Black's pieces are suffering from serious passivity.

B) 17...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !. Sutovsky writes that he simply underestimated this move. After 18...  $\mathbb{W}a5$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}a3$ ! a6 20.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! White has an obvious initiative ( $\mathbb{Q}$  vs.  $\mathbb{Q}$ , and Black is undeveloped), even though the position still remains complex and double-edged after 20...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  or 20...  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ .

16...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !—+

This fearless move essentially decides the game.

**17.♗h5**

An interesting resource. However, this square was needed for the queen!

**17...♕e8! 18.fxe6 ♕xe6**

Black gradually unravels his forces. However, the nice double attack 18...♗b4! would have won on the spot.

**19.♕xe6 ♘b5+ 20.♔d3**



**20...♗xb2!**

This is the best solution. Ivanchuk converts his advantage into an attack.

**21.♘f5**

Giri: 'White does have some ideas connected to the light squares, but Ivanchuk makes it a mere illusion.'

**21...♗b5+**

21...♘bd7?!

**22.c4 ♘b2+ 23.♔f3 ♘c6!?**

Of course, not the only move. 23...♘xe6 24.♘xe6+ ♘d8--+ was good enough.

**24.♘f7+**

24.♗d1 ♘f6 25.♗h6 ♘e7--+

**24...♘d8 25.♗xf8+ ♘c7**



By sacrificing some pieces, Black has finally safeguarded his king; now his counterattack will decide the game.

**26.♗xh7+**

If 26.♗xa8 ♘d4+ 27.♔e4 ♘e2+ 28.♔d5 ♘xg2#; or 26.♗f7+ ♘b6 27.♗d1 ♘c3+ 28.♔e4 ♘c2+ 29.♔d3 ♘e2+! 30.♔e3 ♘xg2+ 31.♔f3 ♘c2+ 32.♔d3 ♘b4--+ winning.

**26...♔b6 27.♗xa8**

This cannot help White, but the same goes for other moves: 27.♗f7 ♘d4+ 28.♔g4 ♘xg2+ (defending b7) 29.♔h5 ♘xe6! 30.♔b1+ ♘c5 31.♔b5+ ♘d4!--.

**27...♘d4+**

Black now wins by force with a brilliant sequence:

28.♔g4 ♘xg2+ 29.♔h5 ♘h2+  
30.♔g6 ♘c2+! 31.♔h6 ♘f4+  
32.♔g7 ♘xe6+ 33.♔f6 ♘xh7  
34.♔xe6 ♘g6+ 35.♔e7 ♘g5+  
36.♔f8 ♘f6+ 0-1

White loses at least the ♘a1.

It is easy to criticize Sutovsky once we know the result, but we can only admire Ivanchuk's performance – he managed to retain the tension and avoid a direct attack in a highly tactical and complex position, later on crushing his opponent with 0-2 in the tiebreak.

#### Summary 6.e5

- 6.e5 looks threatening, but after the cool reaction 6...dxe5?! Black has clear ways to achieve an equal game.

- The fighting alternative 6...♘fd7?! forces White to attack along the edge of the board, starting with the crazy pawn push 7.h4?!

However, after a deep study of the above-mentioned model game, you should be able to play this line successfully against either Ivanchuk or Sutovsky – it would make no difference!

### Game 9 – Quiet Development: 6.♕e2

A note about the line 6...c5?! 7.dxc5 (note that 7.e5?! and 7.d5?! transpose into Games 3 and 4) 7...♗a5 8.0-0 ♗xc5+ 9.♔h1:



While studying the following material, readers should be aware that very similar positions also arise after 5...c5 6.dxc5 ('the positional way' – Game 5), and in some cases there can be an exact transposition, in particular in the note to Black's 12th move.

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** We could claim that the popularity of 6.♕e2 is decreasing, since it is only a quiet developing move. Nowadays, it is hard to find a high-rated game played this way. But be careful, this does not mean that the black player (and our reader) can take a rest after the huge complications seen in the previous lines. What's more, this game survey may surprise and even change the mind of players on either side of the board.

□ Ilya Smirin

■ Sergey Rublevsky

Bastia rapid 1999 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4

Another useful move order for White is 4.♕e2?! ♜g7 5.f4 0-0 6.♘f3 etc.

4...♜g7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♕e2?!

Compared to 6.♕d3, this move allows the immediate counter-break. But still it remains a sound option. Some white players build their repertoire on 5...c5 6.dxc5, getting similar, sometimes even identical positions.

6...c5!?

The other defences are slower – White can play the advance e4-e5.

A) Here the 'flexible' 6...♝bd7?! may be wrong because of 7.e5! ♜e8 8.h4! (after all, this can be a dangerous advance for Black!) 8...c5 9.h5 cxd4?! 10.♗xd4±.

This reminds us of the Bronstein manoeuvre ♜d4-f2-h4 from the previous game.





analysis diagram

10...dxe5 11.fxe5+— Burn-Paulsen, Breslau 1889;

B) The typical 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  makes more sense against 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , when Black has the possibility of ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  to attack the bishop. The advance 7.e5! can now be successful, since the white queen defends d4 (7.0-0! c5 8.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  is a transposition): 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (7...dxe5 8.fxe5±) 8.0-0 c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  (9.dxc5?! dxe5) 9...cxd4 10. $\mathbb{W}xd4!$  (10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  dxe5 11.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}b4\rightleftharpoons$ ) 10...b6?! (too slow; better is 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$ , planning 11. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5\rightleftharpoons$ ; 10...dxe5? 11.fxe5 at least gives White's queen the h4-square after 11... $\mathbb{Q}ab8$  12. $\mathbb{W}h4\uparrow$  11. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{W}d2?$   $\mathbb{Q}dc5\Box$ . Here, Boris Gelfand chose the solid 13.exd6 ( $\geq$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ N dxe5 14. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ ± gives White a clear initiative) 13... $\mathbb{W}xd6$  (13...exd6?! 14.f5! $\uparrow$ ) 14. $\mathbb{W}xd6$  exd6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$  Gelfand-Speelman, Linares 1992.

#### 7.dxc5!

The best option – in all ‘positional’ lines.

We are already prepared against the Benoni System: for 7.d5?! see Game 3 (line 7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ), and now 7...b5?! or 7...e6?!

7.e5?! is obviously premature here: 7... $\mathbb{Q}fd7\rightleftharpoons$  8.exd6 (8. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$ ? cxd4 is fine for Black, Kuipers-Van Riemsdijk,

Vlissingen 2007) 8...exd6 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6\bar{F}$  and compared to Game 2, the arising position is even worse for White.

#### 7... $\mathbb{Q}a5!$ 8.0-0

8.cxd6?  $\mathbb{Q}xe4\bar{F}$  is also clear.

#### 8... $\mathbb{W}xc5+$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}h1$



This position ‘makes particular sense for players who also like the Classical Variation of the Sicilian Dragon as that features the same pawn structure’ – James Vigus in *The Pirc in Black and White*.

#### 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6$

A possible alternative is 9... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  but, as I already pointed out in Game 5, playing on a board full of light pieces can only benefit White’s kingside attack: 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  b6 11. $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (12.f5!?) 12... $\mathbb{W}c6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  14. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  15.f5!  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  16.cxd3±.



analysis diagram

A dream position for White.

16... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17. $\mathbb{M}ad1$  b5 18. $\mathbb{M}f3$   
(18. $\mathbb{Q}h6!+-$ ) 18...b4 19. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  M.  
Schlosser-Ludgate, Haifa Ech-tt 1989;

WEAPON: Azmaiparashvili's  
9...b5?! looks dubious, but it is  
a counterthrust that leads to  
complications: 10.e5 dxe5  
11.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .



analysis diagram

Here is some news. The obvious 12. $\mathbb{W}d5$  (12.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ ; 12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7!?$ ) has been used in three games, and the 12... $\mathbb{Q}f2$  check was the answer in all of them. After 13. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}h3+$  14. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  15. $\mathbb{M}xf2$   $\mathbb{W}xf2$  16. $\mathbb{W}xa8$  b4 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}xe2$  we reach the key position, where Black has tactically overplayed his opponent:



analysis diagram

18. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$   $\mathbb{W}b5$  20.c3 a5  
21. $\mathbb{Q}d4?$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}xb2$  Nijboer-  
Azmaiparashvili, Reykjavik 1990.

However, Black also has 12... $\mathbb{W}b6!?$  at his disposal. After this unexpected resource, the computer cannot find any attractive idea for White, and modestly offers a draw after 13. $\mathbb{W}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}a6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}b4$ = etc.

### 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$

This must be the right move.

A) 10. $\mathbb{W}e1$  allows 10...d5? (10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  transposes to the main game) 11.exd5? (after the better 11.e5 Black has 11... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  11... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ?) 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  13.c3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  Zhukova-Nisipeanu, Koszalin 1998;

B) Black has also encountered 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$ , a suspicious idea with a double purpose: to avoid the pinning ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  and to banish the black queen (with  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ -b3) from its active position, which in fact produces quite a poor effect: 10...a5! 11.a4 (11. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?) 11... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ .



analysis diagram

Black is OK, but after the famous move 13.g4? (13.f5 d5!?) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$  he is suddenly winning, Fischer-Kortchnoi, Curacao 1962.

### 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$

In order to exchange more light pieces (applying the same concept as in Game 5), thus reducing White's space advantage and his kingside initiative.

A) 10...b5 is an interesting idea which has only been played in a few games;

B) 10...e5 must be wrong: 11.♕e1 exf4 12.♗xf4± and the statistics show a clear 5-1 edge for White;

C) 10...d5?! 11.e5 ♗g4 12.♕e2± f6? 13.♗xd5! (13.h3!?) 13...fxe5 was played in Kiefer-Reinhardt, Lauda 1986. Here 14.h3! ♗f6 15.♗e3± leads to a big advantage for White.

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** From old theory it is known that the immediate manoeuvre 10...♗b4 fails to 11.♕e1 b6 12.♗g5!? (12.♗e3) 12...h6 13.♗e3 ♗xd3 14.cxd3 ♜c6 15.♗f3.



analysis diagram

A strong centre and the possibility of getting active play on both wings define White's advantage. Boleslavsky-Ufimtsev, Sverdlovsk 1951.

#### 11.♕e1

You can find a similar queen manoeuvre in my favourite variation, the Four Pawns Attack vs. the King's Indian (see *Revolutionize Your Chess*, last chapter).

#### 11...♗xf3

**WEAPON:** More than 20 years ago, Ivanchuk tried the waiting move 11...♝fc8?! with a reasonable position after 12.♗e3 ♜a5 13.♗d2 (after this move, White is threatening f4-f5, but



Belarus/Israeli grandmaster Ilya Smirin is a true Austrian Attack gladiator, playing on both sides. During the Bastia Cup, he refuted the main line, probably without knowing it.

as in the line 10.♗d2, the knight will be useless on the other side: 13.♕h4 ♜h5!?: 13.a3 ♜xf3?! still leads to usual lines) 13...♝d7!?



analysis diagram

Thus Black decided to keep the bishop, in order to provoke White to continue following a wrong strategy: 14.♗c4 (14.♗b3 ♜h5!?: 14.f5 ♗e5!) 14...♜d8 (14...♜h5!?) 15.♕h4?! (without the ♗f3 the attack is ridiculous; 15.a3

$\mathbb{H}ab8\rightleftharpoons$ ) 15... $\mathbb{Q}b4!\rightleftharpoons$  and Black has already achieved a strong initiative on the queenside, threatening ... $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  or ... $b7-b5$ , Chandler-Ivanchuk, Reykjavik 1991.

12. $\mathbb{H}xf3$



This position is important for the whole study of the Pirc/Sicilian Dragon structure.

12... $\mathbb{Q}b4?$

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** From the very beginning, and consequently in the major theoretical books, the knight manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-c6-b4$ , to exchange  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$ , has been by far the most popular defence – however, with time it has been shown to be a decisive strategic mistake!

**WEAPON:** From the point of view of the defence, it is important to wait with the c-knight (keeping open the possibility of ... $\mathbb{Q}c6-e5$  vs. f4-f5), preparing the most appropriate manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-d7-c5-\mathbb{Q}xd3$ . So, after 12... $\mathbb{H}ac8!?$  the most useful waiting move is 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  14.a3.



analysis diagram

Fortunately, you can study how to play the same exact position in Game 5 – see the WEAPON on move 10: 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ , which transposes to Scekic-Palatnik or, Chernin's direct 14...d5!?.

The other knight jump is also premature; 12... $\mathbb{Q}d4?!$ . White can face it with very simple answers: 13. $\mathbb{H}f1$  b5 (or 13... $\mathbb{W}h5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e3?!$  e5 15.h3± Almasi-Dao Thien Hai, Budapest 1993; 13...e6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g1\pm$  Vatter-Movsziszian, Untergrombach 1995) 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}c6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}xa4$  17.b3↑ with a clearly better game for White, as in Jaracz-Czerwinski, Gdansk ch-POL 1994.

And now...

13.f5!!

A significant alternative for White: only 5 games have been played with it (including this high-rated rapid game). As analysis shows, White has a dangerous, probably winning attack, sticking to the typical Four Pawns set-up ( $\mathbb{Q}g5-\mathbb{W}h4$ ).

#### A Bit of History

During my research, I found a surprising comment on White's 'natural' main move, both theoretically and practically, 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , by the Ukrainian candidate master from Donetsk, Igor Maximenko, on the Internet: 'the pseudo-active move, weakening the queenside and

giving Black (threat ... $\mathbb{Q}f6-g4$ ) various tactical possibilities.' According to this commentator, the most consistent continuation is 13. $\mathbb{W}h4$  followed by g2-g4, f4-f5, etc. Unfortunately, after the response 13... $\mathbb{W}h5=$  and the exchange of the queens, the position cannot be advantageous for White.

However, Maximenko's main idea is correct, so why not play f4-f5!? immediately, as in the main game? 13... $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  14.cxd3.



analysis diagram

This is a well-known theoretical position, which has been analysed extensively in many books since the 1990's. I think that White still has some advantage, but this will be of little importance after we learn the ideas from the main game: 14... $\mathbb{W}a5$ , and ...b5-b4 (or 14... $\mathbb{W}b4$  followed by ...a5-a4-a3 – this move was played by Speelman in the 4th game of his 1988 Candidates' Match against Short; Speelman even won the game) 15.f5 b5 ('this move secures Black adequate counterplay', comments the famous grandmaster and respectable author John Nunn in *The Ultimate Pirc* (1998), writing about his own game Nunn-Sznapik, Haifa Ech-tt 1989. A lot of water has flown under the bridge since then, but many new authors and players continue repeating Nunn's old concepts.



John Nunn.

John Henderson.

Let's take a look at the punishment:



### 13...e6

After this defence, Black's position collapses like a house of cards. But what to do? After the computer-suggested line 13... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14. $\mathbb{W}h4!$  (14. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ ) 14...h5 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  e6 16. $\mathbb{W}af1$ , take another look:



analysis diagram

Black has no adequate defence!

**14.♕g5!**

The extra-tempo point, compared to 13.♕e3.

WEAPON: 14.♕h4!?<sup>†</sup> is also sound: 14...♝xd3 15.cxd3 exf5 (15...♝b4 16.♗b1!? exf5 17.♗g5!<sup>±</sup>) 16.exf5 h5 17.♗g5!?<sup>†</sup> Robertson-Hopper, Largs ch-SCO 1998; even better is 17.♗e3!<sup>±</sup>.

**14...♝xd3 15.cxd3**

For ...♝g4, see the line given on move 13: ♜h4-♝g5-♞af1.

**15...exf5!?**

If 15...♝d4 16.♝d2!? ♜g4 17.♞af1<sup>±</sup>.

**16.exf5 ♜d4 17.♞f4! ♜e5 18.♝h4+–**



Black is helpless in this position.

**18...♞d5**

18...d5 19.d4 ♜d6 20.♞af1+–. **19.♞xd5**

19.d4! wins immediately.

**19...♜xd5 20.f6 ♜fe8**

20...♝h8 21.♝h6 and ♜h4-♜xh7#.

**21.fxg7 ♜e2 22.♞f3 ♜ae8 23.♞f6**

♝e6 24.♞af1 h5 25.♝f4 ♜h7

26.♝h6+ ♜xh6 27.g8♝ ♜xf6

28.♝h8+ ♜g5 29.♝xf6+ ♜h6

30.♝h8+ ♜g5 31.♞g3+ ♜h4 1-0

### Summary 6.♞e2

Black has to be prepared for this classical set-up. Although White's play seems a bit slow, threats like f4-f5 and ♜h4-♝g5 could become very dangerous.

In our main game, after ...♝c6 and ...♝g4, Black can either try Ivanchuk's 'waiting strategy' 11...♞fc8!? (without ♜x♝), or opt for the universal set-up from Game 5: 11...♞xf3 and 12...♞ac8, preparing the manoeuvre ...♞fd7-c5 and the block ...f7-f5.

Games 5 and 9 are very helpful to understand the resources in Pirc/Sicilian Dragon structures.

### Games 10-14 – 6.♞d3



We have finally reached the most popular position in the Classical Pirc.

The natural development of pieces and pawns allows White to threaten the ‘inevitable’ advance e4-e5 all the time. That is the main reason why this is the strongest and most dangerous set-up. In many cases the bishop also supports an attack with f4-f5.

As usual in the Pirc system, Black has several alternatives at his disposal: some of them are bad, some are good and some are interesting... Let’s see some of the bad ones first!

#### Game 10 – The Non-Flexible 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?!$ , the Premature Pin 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4?!$ , and the Premature Break 6...c5?!

##### A Bit of History – 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$



Recently, Karjakin managed to crush his ‘always annoying’ opponent in the super-tournament Medias/Bazna 2011, in around 20 moves (see the later main line 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6!?$ , Games 13 and 14). In the very next game, the same players met again and surprisingly enough, Ivanchuk repeated the opening. He managed to equalize (draw) and gained a psychological revenge in their duel, by employing the seldom seen 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?!$ , Karjakin-Ivanchuk, Ningbo Wch-tt 2011.

However, we don’t know how Ivanchuk had planned to fight the theoretical battle if White had played the strongest move: 7.e5! (see main game).

##### A Bit of History – 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$



More than 50 years ago, this suspicious bishop pin was already refuted in the game Fischer-Benko, played in the memorable US Championship held in New York in 1963, where Fischer gained the perfect score of 11 points out of 11. This is a fantastic attacking game which perfectly demonstrates why you should never want to defend passively in the Pirc!

□ Curt Hansen

■ Carsten Hoi

Taastrup ch-DEN 1998 (7)

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♗c3 d6 4.f4  
♘f6 5.♗f3 0-0 6.♗d3!**



And now we will investigate three options that are considered to be weak.

**6...♗bd7?!**

(380 games=36%) This unfashionable move, introduced more than a century ago, was recently used by Vassily Ivanchuk as a deviation from his previous 'disastrous' game (6...♗a6?!) against the same player (Sergey Karjakin).

We have already seen the successful 'flexible weapon' 6...♗bd7?! after 6.♗e3 (Game 7), but in the present case, after the immediate 7.e5, the knight must retreat as the jump to g4 doesn't come with gain of tempo. This is the main problem of Black's non-flexible text move.

**A) The Premature Break:** 6...c5?!

(851 games=36,8%) is a case of right plan, wrong timing:

White can easily build the pawn wedge f4-e5 by playing 7.dxc5 dxc5. Here we

have Black's main problem: the standard resource 7...♗a5? fails to 8.cxd6 since the e4 pawn is defended by the bishop. So: 8.e5! ♘d5 (8...♗g4 9.h3 ♘h6 10.♗e3±) 9.♗xd5 ♗xd5 10.♗e2! ♘c6 11.♗e4± after which natural developing moves keep the edge for White: 11...♗d7 12.♗e3 b6 (12...♗c7 13.♗b5± Menyhart-Deak, Sarospatak 1994) 13.♗d1 ♗c7 14.0-0 ♜b7 15.e6!↑ Günther-Stemmler, Germany Bundesliga W 2005/06;

**B) The Premature Pin:** 6...♗g4?!

(460 games=36,6%). If you still remember the line 6.a3 ♜g4?!! (Game 7), the same move here also leads to a passive defence for Black: 7.h3! (the refutation is to simply exchange ♜x♗). For instance, 7.♗e3 allows Black to realize his idea: 7...e5? 8.fxe5 (8.dxe5 dxe5 9.f5 gxf5⇒) 8...dxe5 9.d5 c6⇒ 10.♗g5?!! ♗b6 11.♗b1 ♘bd7 12.dxc6 bxc6 13.h3 ♜e6 14.♗e2 ♘h5 15.♗f2 (15.♗e3 ♘f4?!) 15...♗f4!↑ Guerrero Alvarez-Moskalenko, Badalona 2000) 7...♗xf3 8.♗xf3.



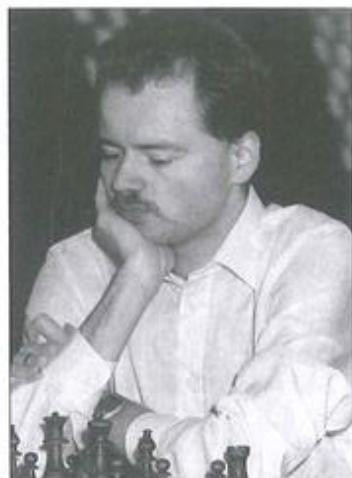
analysis diagram

Now, in a famous game, Fischer demolished Benko with a very sharp attack, destroying Black's set-up in just 21 moves, exploiting the potential of the Austrian Attack pawn formation: 8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  (8...e5 9.dxe5! dxe5 10.f5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  transposes) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5 (9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.e5!±; 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  10.0-0-0±) 10.dxe5! (10.fxe5?! dxe5 11.d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  12. $\mathbb{W}f2$  c6=) 10...dxe5 11.f5 gxf5?! (Black creates many holes in his own fortress. After the best move 11... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  the line requires some analysis: 12. $\mathbb{W}f2$  b5 (12...c5 13.g4±; 12...gxf5 13.exf5 b5 (13...c5 14.0-0±; 13...e4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ! exd3 15.0-0-0±) 14.0-0 c5 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !±) 13.g4? (13.0-0?) 13...b4? (13...c5 14.g5 b4 15.gxf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  16.0-0!±) 14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16.0-0-0± White enjoys a huge strategic advantage, especially on the light squares) 12. $\mathbb{W}xf5$ ! (12.exf5? e4! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$ =) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d4$  13. $\mathbb{W}f2$ !±  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  15. $\mathbb{W}g3$  (15. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$ !?) 15... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  16. $\mathbb{W}g4$  c6 17. $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{W}e8$ ?? (17... $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4



analysis diagram

19. $\mathbb{W}f6$ !!+-. Nowadays, the blocking sacrifice is a typical attacking motif in many books and games, but 50 years ago this was a truly amazing combination! (the primitive 19.e5? is refuted by 19...f5!) 19... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  20.e5 h6 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! 1-0 Fischer-Benko, US Championship, New York 1963.



Danish grandmaster Curt Hansen: in a game at the championship of his home country (1998), he found the most dangerous plan against Black's move 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ !.

Let's have a look at the punishment in our third bad line:

#### 7.e5!

White begins a dangerous attack on the kingside, and I am afraid that he is better prepared now than in the cases of a 'premature' e4-e5 (Games 1, 3 and 8). The modest answer 7.0-0 is not critical. According to grandmaster Marin (ChessBase Magazine 144): 'this neutral move should not face Black with too many problems': 7...e5? (7...c5) 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.f5  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ?N



analysis diagram

gave Black an equal game in Karjakin-Ivanchuk, Ningbo Wch-tt 2011.

But this is not all! Curiously, this position (but with  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ) transposes into the well-known line 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7.0-0 e5 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.f5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$ , which is considered to be good for Black, see Game 11.

**7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$**



Obviously, White already has many direct attacking ideas:

**8. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ?**

This jump is also typical in the Four Pawns Attack in the King's Indian. Here are some other lines that show the drawbacks of Black's system:

A) White can easily play for a positional plus after the natural 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ ? c5 9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  cxd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  dxe5 11.fxe5±, which is a solid, but not too threatening line;

B) White can also go 'on the attack' with 8.h4!?. Compared to Bronstein's line (Game 7), White has one extra attacking tempo ( $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ), so after 8...c5 he can play first 9.e6! fxe6 and now 10.h5! cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ → 2-0 for White, since Borner-Flückiger, Switzerland 1993;

C) Quite similar is Marin's favourite move, the sharp break 8.e6!?. 'A very dangerous move, but not the only one. So, I took it as the main line for sentimental reasons: it was used by my first ever trainer!' – Marin (ChessBase Magazine 144).

8...fxe6 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  (author's note: if 9... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11.h4!) 10.h4→.



Marin: 'The extra e6-pawn prevents Black from communicating between his opposite wings and the simple advance of the h-pawn is not easy to meet', as in that old game M.Pavlov-J.Westman, Krakow tt 1964.

Author's note: maybe it is better to insert 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ ? first.

**8...dxe5**

Black decides to open up some files, which does not make his life easier. The following examples illustrate well how difficult Black's defensive task is:

A) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (of course, White can play the solid 9.0-0!± and then  $\mathbb{Q}e1-h4$ ) 9...c6 10.h4!?.



analysis diagram

The position looks bad for Black: 10...f6?? (if 10...h6□ 11.h5!?)→, but this

is not the only option) 11.♕xh7! f5 12.h5 ♕xh7 13.hxg6+ ♔g8 14.♗h5 ♘f6 15.exf6 ♗xf6 16.♗h7+ ♔f8 17.♗h8+! 1-0, Ankerst-Ramseier, Silvaplana 1993;

B) Here is another typical matador attack: 8...e6 9.h4! c5 (9...h6?! 10.h5! hxg5 11.hxg6 fxg6 12.♘xg6+– Flogaus-Hahnewald, Germany tt 1987/88) 10.h5!.



analysis diagram

The h-soldier is unstoppable: 10...cxd4 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♗g4! (12.♘ce4!?) 12...dxc3 (12...♘df6 was played in Garcia Corada-Rodriguez Izquierdo, Valladolid 1990; 13.♗h4 dxc3 and here 14.♘e4! wins immediately) 13.♗xg6!N (this is an improvement to the 'old' correspondence game Casser-R. Fischer, 2001) 13...♘df6 14.exf6 ♘xf6 15.♗h7+ ♘xh7 16.♘xh7→ and White is better (analysis).

#### 9.fxe5! ♘b6

TRICK: 9...h6 10.♘xf7!? ♘xf7 11.e6+ ♘g8 12.♗g4+– 13.exd7 ♗xd7 13.♗e3 ♘d6 14.♗d2↑ and 0-0-0+.

9...♘b8 is a novelty, suggested by Vigus in 2012, that poses some questions. 10.♗e3 is the only reply he offers (10.♗c4!?): 10...c5 11.dxc5 ♘c6 12.0-0±.

#### 10.♗e3



The dream position for any 'Austrian' attacker.

#### 10...c6

Black plays passively, preparing the slow ...♘e8-c7-d5.

TRICK: 10...f6? 11.♘xh7!+–.

10...h6 11.♘f3± followed by ♗d2 and 0-0-0.

#### 11.0-0 ♘c7

The critical moment of the game. 11...f5?! was probably the last chance to escape somehow, although White is better after each logical move.

In case of 11...♘d5?! 12.♘xd5 cxd5 (12...♗xd5 13.♗e2!+–) 13.♗e1!→ h6 14.♘xf7! ♗xf7 15.♗xf7 ♘xf7 16.♗f2+ ♘g8 17.♗xg6 ♘e6 18.♗f1 ♗b6 19.♗h4+– with a winning attack.

#### 12.♘xh7!?

'I used 30-45 minutes calculating the variations after this sacrifice. I concluded it had to be strong' – grandmaster Curt Hansen (*ChessBase Magazine* 65). Of course, the text move leaves a strong aesthetic impression... However, the approach known from the 3/4 Pawns Attack, 12.♗e1!↑, would have been the best way to refute Black's opening strategy. And that was the reason why I selected this game for *The Perfect Pirc*.

#### 12...♘bd5!

An important intermediate resource, which was not fully acknowledged at the time – see the note to Black's 15th move. The key of the combination is 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh7?$  13. $\mathbb{B}xf7!$ , destroying Black's fortress before delivering the check on h5: 13... $\mathbb{B}xf7$  14. $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16. $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17. $\mathbb{B}d1!$ ± and White would break through with 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ .

**13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xh7$**

The gift of the 'Trojan horse' must be accepted.

**15. $\mathbb{B}xf7$**



This looks as if it's the same winning combination, but once again, we face the old conflict between illusion and reality.

**15... $\mathbb{B}xf7?$**

After seeing this move, along with the game Fischer-Benko and some other matting lines, a great classic aphorism came to my mind: Most of the beauty in chess is a consequence of mistakes, isn't it?

A) The modest 15... $\mathbb{Q}g8?!$  also loses to an attractive move: 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (or 16... $\mathbb{B}xf7$  17. $\mathbb{W}h5$  as in the game) 17. $\mathbb{W}h5$   $\mathbb{B}xf7$  18. $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h6!+-$ , threatening 20. $\mathbb{W}h8$  mate;

B) Unfortunately, Hansen missed the best defence for Black, both in the game and in his analysis: 15... $\mathbb{Q}f4\Box$ , a very



Young Bobby Fischer.

nice deviation trick. The forced line continues: 16. $\mathbb{B}xf4$   $\mathbb{B}xf4$  17. $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  18. $\mathbb{W}xg6$   $\mathbb{W}xd4+$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{B}f2\Box$  20. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  21. $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  and after 22... $\mathbb{B}xg2+$  23. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  24. $\mathbb{W}xh6+$   $\mathbb{W}g7+$  25. $\mathbb{W}xg7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  the arising endgame is equal.

**16. $\mathbb{W}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$**



Now it is too late for any counterplay.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

17... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  ('During the game I thought this was Black's best move' – Hansen). However, White seems to be winning: 18. $\mathbb{W}h7+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{B}xg6$  and now 20. $\mathbb{B}f1+!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (20... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  21. $\mathbb{W}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xg7+-$ ) 21. $\mathbb{W}xf6$  (21. $\mathbb{W}h8+$

$\text{xf}7$  22.  $\text{Wxd}8$   $\text{Xh}6$ ) 21...  $\text{Wxd}4+$  22.  $\text{Qh}1$   $\text{exf}6$  23.  $\text{Wxg}6$   $f5$  24.  $c3$   $We5$  25.  $\text{Qd}1!+-$ .

**18.  $\text{Qxf}7+$   $\text{Qf}8$  19.  $\text{Wh}7!$**

An elegant tactical solution. 19.  $\text{Qxf}4$   $\text{Wxd}4+$  20.  $\text{Qh}1$   $\text{Wxf}4$  21.  $e6$   $W h6$  22.  $\text{Qd}1!+-$ .

**19...  $\text{Wxd}4+$  20.  $\text{Qh}1$   $\text{Qxf}7$  21.  $\text{Qf}1!+-$**



And now the beautiful finish:

**Games 11 and 12 - A Provocative Set-Up: 6...  $\text{Qc}6$  (2079 games=45,3%)**



'Instead of attacking the enemy centre by means of ...c7-c5, Black blocks the c-pawn for the sake of rapid development and intends to hit the centre in what seems to be the best defended square, namely with ...e7-e5' - Marin (ChessBase Magazine 118). I found 6...  $\text{Qc}6$  to be a provocative and intriguing set-up, because there are many lines leading to non-standard and sharp positions, where both sides may provoke, joke, and invoke each other after every opening move... what else can we ask for?

Game 11 – 7.0-0 (we will also check some special white answers like 7.  $\text{Qe}3$ , 7.  $d5$  and 7.  $f5$ )

Game 12 – 7.  $e5$

**21...  $\text{Wxe}5$**

21...  $\text{Qe}6$  22.  $\text{Wxg}7$   $\text{Qd}5$  23.  $\text{Qxe}7!+-$  is another winning combination.

**22.  $\text{Qxf}4+$   $\text{Qe}8$  23.  $\text{Wg}6+$   $\text{Qd}8$**

**24.  $\text{Qe}4!$**

There are no more defensive resources – the game is over.

**24...  $\text{Wd}5$**

24...  $\text{Qf}5$  25.  $\text{Qxe}5$   $\text{Qxg}6$  26.  $\text{Qxe}7$   $\text{Qh}6$  27.  $\text{Qg}7+$   $\text{Qxg}5$  28.  $\text{Qxg}6!+-$  would be a technical victory.

**25.  $\text{Qxe}7!$**

**1-0**

Postscript: 'I was very disappointed when I found out after the game that 12.  $\text{Qxh}7$  had been played before. In an English postal-game in the 70s. In that game White continued 13.  $\text{Qd}2$  and won in a few moves – partly because Black defended very badly' – Curt Hansen.

Game 11 – Poker Lines: 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7.0-0 and others

'The positions arising from 7.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  are generally depressing for Black. On the other hand, the more tactical variations after 7.0-0 e5 offer good chances for equality' - John Nunn and Colin McNab, *The Ultimate Pirc* (1998).

**□ Ruben Felgaer**  
**■ Marc Narciso Dublan**  
 Andorra open 2004 (8)  
 1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4.f4  
 $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0

**PUZZLE:** 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! is an interesting deviation, also offered by Vigus in his 2007/2012 books:  
 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !? (6.e5!; 6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ?;  
 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?; 6.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  7. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0 9.0-0 b5= Stefanova-Vallejo Pons, Gibraltar 2010) 6...0-0 and now 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  leads to WEAPON 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  below.

**6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !?**

In this old main line Black refuses to play ...c7-c5 temporarily, or even for the rest of the opening, trying to attack the centre with ...e7-e5 or ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

**7.0-0**

By castling (for the main and most direct alternative 7.e5 see next game), White delays his advance e4-e5, and forces Black to make decisions, thus entering a kind of 'poker game'.

**7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ !?**

**TRICK:** The immediate advance 7...e5 leads to a very sharp struggle after 8.fxe5 dxе5 9.d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4\infty$ .



analysis diagram

The most interesting line for White seems to be 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! (instead, 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 11. $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! gxе5 12. $\mathbb{Q}c5$  fxe4! 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  f5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  is balanced) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ! 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ !? (if 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg2+$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  c5! 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}h4+$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xg2$   $\mathbb{Q}h3+$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}g5+$  18. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

$\blacksquare$  **ac8!N** 19.  $\blacksquare d4$   $\blacksquare g4!$  20.  $\blacksquare xg4 \square \blacksquare xg4$  21.  $\blacksquare xe5 \blacksquare g5\bar{f}$  and Black seizes the initiative;  $\blacksquare \blacksquare \blacksquare$  vs. active  $\blacksquare$ ) 12...  $\blacksquare e6$  13.  $\blacksquare xg6 \blacksquare xd4$  14.  $\blacksquare xf8 \blacksquare h4+$  15.  $g3\Box N$  (15.  $\blacksquare d2??$  was played in the famous game Baretic-Pirc, Cateske Toplice ch-YUG 1968, which ended 15...  $\blacksquare f4+$  16.  $\blacksquare d3 \blacksquare e3+$  17.  $\blacksquare c4 \blacksquare xc3$  18.  $bxcc3 b5+ 0-1$ ) 15...  $\blacksquare xc3+ 16. bxc3 \blacksquare xe4+$  17.  $\blacksquare e2 \blacksquare xh1$  18.  $\blacksquare xe6 \blacksquare xe6$  19. 0-0-0  $\blacksquare c6$  20.  $\blacksquare e5 h6$  21.  $\blacksquare d4!\uparrow$  and the black king still isn't safe.

WEAPON: 7...  $\blacksquare g4?$ ! (preparing ...e4-e5) 8.  $\blacksquare g1 e5 9. fxe5!$   $dxe5 10. d5 \blacksquare d4.$



analysis diagram

Black has sufficient counterplay in this position:

11.  $h3 \blacksquare h6$  12.  $\blacksquare d2 f5$  13. 0-0-0  $fxe4$  14.  $\blacksquare xe4 \blacksquare hf5$  15.  $\blacksquare e1 \blacksquare xf3$  (15...  $b5$  16.  $d6\infty$  Baramidze-Graf, Dresden 2003) 16.  $\blacksquare xf3$  (16.  $gxf3 \blacksquare d4\rightleftharpoons$ ) 16...  $\blacksquare d4$  17.  $\blacksquare e4 \blacksquare f5$  18.  $g4 \blacksquare xe4$  19.  $\blacksquare xe4 \blacksquare d7!$ ? 20.  $\blacksquare e3 b5\rightleftharpoons$  Van der Weide-Donner, Leeuwarden ch-NED 1971.

WEAPON: After 7.  $d5$  you don't need to play the Benoni! 7...  $\blacksquare b4$  8.  $\blacksquare e2$  (8.  $\blacksquare c4 c6!$ ) 8...  $c6!$  but not ...  $c7-c5$ . Now, 9.  $a3 \blacksquare a6\rightleftharpoons$ , keeping in mind a basic idea:



analysis diagram

10.  $\blacksquare xa6?!$   $bx a6$  11.  $dxc6 \blacksquare b6!$  12.  $\blacksquare d5?$   $\blacksquare xd5$  13.  $exd5$  (13.  $\blacksquare xd5 \blacksquare e6\bar{f}$ ) 13...  $e6\bar{f}.$

WEAPON: 7.  $f5 \blacksquare b4!$  8. 0-0  $c5\rightleftharpoons$  9.  $d5 gxf5$  10.  $exf5 \blacksquare xd3$  11.  $\blacksquare xd3$  leads to the game Maryasin-Dydyshko, Minsk ch-BLA 1972.



analysis diagram

Here an improvement is 11...  $\blacksquare b6!\bar{f}$  with threats such as ...  $c5-c4+$  or ...  $\blacksquare a6?!$ , intending to enter a pleasant endgame.

7...  $e5!$

Finally we see the King's Indian thrust, which produces tactically interesting positions.

As usual in the Austrian Attack, the early pin 7...  $\blacksquare g4?!$  is too passive an alternative. For this simple reason, the author refuses to recommend it in *The Perfect Pirc*: 8.  $e5 dxe5$  (8...  $\blacksquare xf3 9. \blacksquare xf3 dxe5$

10.dxe5 ♜g4 11.♕h1!±) 9.dxe5 ♜d5  
10.h3 ♜xc3 11.bxc3 ♜f5.



analysis diagram

According to theory and to the database, this is the key position of the line. However, to the grandmaster's eye White has an obvious advantage on the board: 12.♗e2 (12.♗xf5?!±)  
12...♝d7 (12...♝d5 13.♗e3±)  
13.♗e3 ♜ad8 14.♗ad1 and here I disagree with the main option 14...♝xd3?!, since after 15.cxd3 White gets a powerful centre and the black Pirc bishop on g7 remains poorly placed. So, I'd rather try to keep some tension with 14...♝c8!? as in Mäki-Yrjölä, Espoo ch-FIN 1985, although White stands better after any solid move, for instance 15.♗b5!? or even 15.g4?.

#### 8.fxe5?

Gaining space in the centre with d4-d5 is strategically the most ambitious continuation for White, as in the KI Four Pawns Attack.

The alternative is 8.dxe5 dxe5 and after this symmetrical exchange, White pins his hopes on the possibility of a kingside attack: 9.f5 ♜b4! (remember Ivanchuk's 9...♜c5! from the previous game, in the line with 7.0-0). Black immediately undermines White's central structure.



analysis diagram

A) At this point, the immediate 10.♗g5 should be regarded as the critical continuation, but it can lead to sharp play and White has to know very well what he is doing: 10...♜xd3 and now:

A1) The queen exchange with 11.♕xd3 allows Black to get rid of all his worries – a rare concept for young Karjakin! 11...♕xd3 12.cxd3 c6 13.♗ae1 (13.♗d2 b6 14.♗c4 ♜a6 15.a4 h6 16.♗h4 ♜xc4 17.dxc4 ♜ad8 18.♗ad1 ♜d4± Hellers-C. Hansen, Lemvig 1991) 13...♝d7 14.g4 b6 15.♗f2 ♜e8.



analysis diagram

Black has no special problems, although he has to continue with a clear plan (...♜a6/...♜c5), as in Karjakin-Ivanchuk, Ningbo 2011;

A2) 11.cxd3 and now:

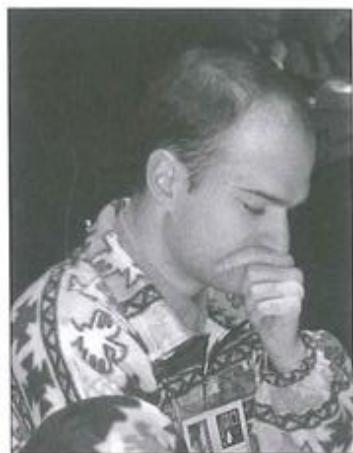
A21) 11...gxfs? is the logical reaction, since the f-pawn lacks sufficient

support after the exchange of the d3-bishop. However, several squares in Black's camp are weakened now, offering White some attacking ideas: 12.♕h1 (12.♕d5?! c6??; after 12.exf5 Black can follow Narciso's set-up) 12...♝d6! and it is not so clear where and how White can make progress: 13.♗e1 (13.d4? ♜xe4) 13...h6! 14.♗h4 ♜e8 (14...♜h5??; ≤ 14...f4 15.d4!) 15.exf5 ♜xf5! 16.♕d2! ♜e6 (16...♜xd3?? loses to 17.♗xf6 ♜xf1 18.♕de4+-) 17.♗f2 ♜xd3 18.♗xf6 ♜xf6 19.♗xf6 ♜xf1 20.♗xf1 (20.♗xf1?! ♜ad8) 20...♝xf6 21.♗xf6 ♜ad8 22.♕de4 ♜g7=. The arising curious endgame (♞b6 vs. ♜ad8) is basically equal, Eraschenkov-Zakharevich, Voronezh 2003.

A22) Before capturing on f5, Black can insert 11...h6!? 12.♗h4, which could eventually transpose: 12...gxfs 13.♕h1 ♜d6 14.exf5 ♜xf5 15.♕d2!? (15.♗xf6 ♜xf6 16.♗h4 ♜xh4?? ½-½ Van der Wiel-Hartoch, Leeuwarden ch-NED 1979) 15...♝e6 16.♗f3 (16.♗xf6 ♜xf6!? 17.♗f3 ♜g5!) 16...♝g4 17.♗xb7 was played in Graf-Narciso Dublan, Torrelavega 2007.



Here Black's possibilities would be preferable after the obvious 17...♜ab8! – the right rook to be played to b8!



The daring Spanish grandmaster Marc Narciso is a great expert of the somewhat old-fashioned but intriguing poker line 6...♝c6.

B) Meanwhile, after 10.fxg6 Black gets the chance to improve his pawn structure by capturing towards the centre. 10...hxg6 11.♗g5 and now 11...♝d6!? (11...♝xd3=):

B1) 12.♗e1 ♜h5!N (12...♝xd3=) 13.♗ad1 ♜f4= K.Szabo-Narciso Dublan, Dresden Ech 2007;

B2) 12.♗e1 ♜h7 is the safest set-up (12...♝xd3! 13.cxd3 ♜h5=): 13.♗d1 ♜e6 14.♕h1 ♜xd3 15.♗xd3 ♜c6 16.b3 was balanced, in Vaisser-Gofshtain, Biel 1995;

B3) 12.♗d2 ♜xd3 13.cxd3 ♜h7?.



analysis diagram

This is only one of the consequences of the exchange on g6: the h7-square became available for the knight.

14.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  b6 15.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  c5=. Black has arranged his pawns in an optimal way and has little to fear on the kingside. His chances are not worse, Van der Wiel-Donner, Amsterdam/Drachten ch-NED 1982.

**8...dxe5 9.d5**

**TRICK:** 9. dxe5 is met tactically by 9...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}d4+$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}c5$  13.  $\mathbb{W}f3$  c6 14. e5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  as in Nadig-Movsziszian, Sort 2008, and here the best queen move is 15...  $\mathbb{W}d5! \mp$ .

**9... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ ?**



Going for the provocative knight jump. Putting the knight on this central square is a dynamic option for Black, which can actually lead to some forced simplifications.

**WEAPON:** 9...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  is considered to be a worse alternative, but I found it to be an active option after 10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$  (10.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8! \mp$  and then ...  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  / ... f7-f5) 10... c6!? (other moves simply allow White to keep a strong centre: 10...  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5 \pm$ ; 10...  $\mathbb{W}d6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  13. a3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$

14.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  15.  $\mathbb{W}xe2 \pm$  Hammer-Narciso Dublan, Heraklio Ech-tt 2007) 11. a3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  12. dx6  $\mathbb{W}b6+ 13. \mathbb{Q}h1 \pm$ .



analysis diagram

This position occurred in Martin Alvarez-Mitt, San Sebastian 2008. Black can continue dynamically with 13...  $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$  N (instead of 13...  $\mathbb{Q}g4??$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d5+ -$ ) 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  g5! 17.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  h6= with compensation for the pawn.

**WEAPON:** The most complicated line arises after the retreat 9...  $\mathbb{Q}e7!?:$



analysis diagram

**TRICK:** 10.  $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$ , trying to get in c2-c4, fails to 10...  $\mathbb{Q}exd5!$  11. exd5 e4= Jonkman-Roobol, Amsterdam 2001;

A) 10.  $\mathbb{W}e1!?$  c6 (10...  $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$  11.  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}d6!$  is a good blockade plan) 11. dx6

$\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12.  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$  N 13.  $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{B}xd8$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f4!$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6!;$

B) Or 10.  $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  c6 (10...  $\mathbb{h}6!?$ ; 10...  $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$  11.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d6\infty$  leads once again to the blockade) 11.  $dxc6$  (11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  transposes to the main line) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  is interesting, but quite balanced, Vaisser-Degraeve, Chartres ch-FRA 2005;

C) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  is the main answer, opening the position. We will find some typical King's Indian set-ups here, but I have tried to come up with some fresh ideas rather than repeating any theory or actual games:

10...c6!  $\neq$  is Black's key resource. Now:



analysis diagram

TRICK: 11.  $dxc6??$   $\mathbb{W}d4+$ , winning the knight on e5.

C1) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  14.  $\mathbb{B}xf4$   $cxd5!N$  ( $\leq$  14...  $b5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}b3\infty$  Eames-McNab, England tt 2000/01) 15.  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  and Black is the active side;

C2) 11.  $d6$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}e6$  13.  $a4$  b6 14.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5\mp$  is also fine for Black, Chandler-Rayner, Innsbruck Wch-jr 1977;

C3) With 11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  White tries to make use of a dynamic pin. 11...  $cxd5!$

The critical position of the line with 9...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ . The following play is open and tactically balanced:



analysis diagram

C31) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}c7!?$  N is an improvement on 12...  $\mathbb{W}d6$ , although it is also equal: 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14.  $\mathbb{B}xf6$   $\mathbb{W}xe5=;$

C32) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (12.  $exd5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}exd5\mp$ ) 12...  $\mathbb{W}b6+$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  and now the black queen has two available squares:

C321) 15...  $\mathbb{W}c5!?$  16.  $exd5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  and Black is going to regain the d5-pawn and play with his two bishops: 17.  $\mathbb{W}f3$  and now:

C3211) In a rapid game Black played the provocative 17...  $b5!?$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  and here, 18...  $b4!?$  (instead of 18...  $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  19.  $\mathbb{B}ab1\infty$  as in Shkopenko-Markowski, Warsaw Ech rapid 2010) 19.  $d6$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6\neq$  looks interesting;

C3212) 17...  $b6=$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}b4!?$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  (19.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7!)$  19...  $\mathbb{W}xb2$  20.  $\mathbb{B}ae1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!$  (an improvement on 20...  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  in Kotronias-Timman, Malmö 2007, where 21.  $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$  was the slightly annoying answer) 21.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ . Now it is even easier to play with black: 21...  $\mathbb{W}b4$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f5!? 23.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{B}ae8$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  25.  $\mathbb{B}xe6$   $\mathbb{B}xe6$  26.  $dxe6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  and the game ended in a draw on move 52, Stets-Chatalbashev, Val Thorens 2007.

C322) 15...  $\mathbb{W}d8!?$  is also a solid option: 16.  $exd5$  b5 17.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (or 17.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}h4!?$  18.  $b4$   $\mathbb{W}xd5\infty$ ) 17...  $\mathbb{B}b8!?$  18.  $\mathbb{W}f3$  was played in Dolmatov-G. Kuzmin, Vilnius ch-URS 1980.



analysis diagram

And now, instead of taking on b2, Black had to play 18...Bb6!? or 18...Bg7, with a good position.

Back to the game.

**10.Qxe5**

The first key position of the line:



**10...Nxe4!?**

As we will see, Narciso's favourite move is the most creative option.



WEAPON:      10...Qxd5  
11.Qxd5 Qxe5 12.Qf4 Nc6  
13.Qd2 Qe6 and now:

A) 14.Qxe5?! Nxe5 15.Qf6+ Bg7  
16.Qc3 Qd6□ 17.Qad1↑ and White maintains tactical pressure on the diagonal c3-h8, as in Jonckman-Volokitin, Lvov 2001. Now 17...Qad8! is probably the best defence: 18.Qe2 Qb6+ 19.Qh1 Qxd1 20.Qh5+ gxh5 21.Qxe5+ f6 22.Qg3+ Qh8 23.Qxd1 Qxb2 24.Qxc7 Qxa2 and Black should be OK;

B) After 14.Qh6?!, 14...Qxb2 (14...Qd6?!) is a well-known exchange sacrifice: 15.Qab1 Qd4+ 16.Qh1 Qxd5 17.exd5 Qxd5 18.Qxf8 Qxf8=.



analysis diagram

With this line Black was successful in two practical games: H.Stefansson-P.Nikolic, Ohrid Ech 2001 and Karjakin-T.L.Petrosian, Tiayuan 2005. So White could try a new move here: 19.Qf4?!

**11.Qxe4**

11.Qxe4?! was claimed by Vigus to be an annoying option for Black. However, some nice tactical resources lie hidden in Black's defence:



analysis diagram

11...Qxe5 and now:

A) If 12.Qg5 f6 13.Qh6 Qe8!= (Narciso's improvement) 14.Qf4 Qf5!  
15.Qc3?! (≥ 15.c3 Qxe4 16.Qxe4 Qxf4 17.Qxf4 Qd6! 18.g3 Qb5 is OK

for Black) 15... $\mathbb{W}d6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5\#$  17.g4??  $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$  0-1 Lacasa Diaz-Narciso Dublan, Andorra 2003;

B) 12.c3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  13. $\mathbb{W}f3!$   $\mathbb{Q}g7!$  (long live the rock-solid Pirc fortress!) 14.g4 (14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  15. $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}e6\infty$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  16. $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}g5!=$  with a full game ahead) 15...f6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  17. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8!\rightleftharpoons$  – now White has to worry about his overstretched pawns on d5 and g4, Van der Weide-Schweizer, Augsburg 2008.

**11... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f4$**

This is another important moment.



**12... $\mathbb{Q}g7!$**

Black needs the Pirc bishop. Interestingly, Felgaer also played this position later in 2010. However, in that game Black switched to a weaker plan: 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf4?!$  13. $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  15. $\mathbb{W}d4?!$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  16. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .



analysis diagram

Here, 17.d6?! was played in the earlier game Felgaer-Narciso Dublan, Catalunya tt 2003. Now Black had to play 17... $\mathbb{W}xd6!N$  (not 17...c6? 18.g4↑) 18. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $f6\#$  and the rook endgame will be advantageous for Black.

In 2010 Felgaer improved the line with 17. $\mathbb{Q}e3?!$   $\mathbb{Q}d7\Box$  and this position looks dangerous for Black, Felgaer-Tristan, Buenos Aires 2010.

**13. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$**

The critical position of the opening:



**14... $\mathbb{Q}f5?!$**

Luckily, Black also has a solid alternative: 14...c6? 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7=$ ) 15... $\mathbb{W}b6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , which is balanced.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4?!$**

This unexpected sacrifice was Narciso's joker in this complex game. The more obvious line is 15... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$  17. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2\infty$ .



analysis diagram

We don't know what trick Ruben Felgaer had prepared here: there are no direct threats, but White's pieces are so active, while the black bishop on c2 is useless and almost transparent!

**16.♗xe4 ♕xd5∞**

The tactical operations can start.

**17.♗g3 ♜xc2 18.♗c1**

18.♔h1? ♔a4! 19.♗e2 c5 20.♗c3 ♜d7= seems to pose no problems for Black.

**18...♜e8? 19.♜xc2**

19.♜f4 ♜xe3! 20.♕xe3 ♜e6=; 19.♔h1 ♔a4 20.♜xc7 ♔e5 21.♜cxf7 ♔b5∞.

**19...♜xe3! 20.♕xe3 ♜xc2 21.♕e8+**

♔f8 22.♗e4 ♔g7 23.♗f6 ♜c4

23...♜c5+ 24.♔h1 ♜c4=.

**24.♗e4 ♜d5= 25.♗c3 ♜c4**

**26.♕e5+ ♔g8 27.♗e4**



Finally, the Argentinean matador has established the desired ♜+♗ battery.

**27.f5!**

But it will not shoot – the diamond-hard Dutch construction saves the day!

**28.♗f2?**

Confusion and panic. White had to play 28.♕d5+ ♜xd5 29.♗f6+ ♔f7 30.♗xd5 c6 with a theoretically equal ending (♗ vs. ♔♗♙♙).

**28...♗b4?**

As so often happens, the perfect Pirc bishop will now dominate the play.

**29.♗f6+ ♔f7 30.♗e4**

30.♕e8+ ♔g7! 31.♗d7 ♜d6†; 30.♗d7 ♜d3 31.♕f6+ ♔e8 32.♕xf8+ ♜xd7†.

**30...♗d3 31.♗g5+ ♔g8 32.♕e2 ♜c1+?**

A clear time-trouble mistake. 32...♔c5! wins on the spot, as does 32...♜d4 as well.

**33.♖f1 ♔c5+ 34.♔h1 ♜e3 35.♕xe3 ♜xe3 36.♗h3?**

After 36.♗e6 Black has at least a draw with 36...♗f2+.

**36...♗xb2 37.♖e1 ♗c4 38.♖d1 ♗d2 39.♗g1 c5 40.♗f3 ♜xf3 41.gxf3**

41.♖d8+!†.

**41...♔d4†**



Black should be winning with this material balance (♜ vs. ♔♗♙♙), with no other pieces on the board and no active counterplay either.

**42.♗g2 b5 43.♗f1 ♗f7 44.♗e2 ♗e6 45.♗d3 ♗d5 46.♖e1 ♗e5 47.♗c2 a5 48.♖d1+ ♗d4 49.♖e1 a4 50.♖e7 h5 51.♖e8 g5 52.h3 b4 53.♖g8 c4 54.♖a8 b3+ 55.♖xb3 axb3+ 56.♗d2 c3+ 57.♗d3 c2 58.♖d8+ ♗e5** 0-1

**Summary 6...♗c6 7.0-0 (and others):**  
White has nothing substantial in these provocative poker lines. After 7...e5!, Black's opening idea works perfectly well.

**Game 12 – The Direct Advance: 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7.e5**

The principled remedy against Black's threatened counter-break ...e7-e5 is to advance the e-pawn first – it's now or never!

□ Viktor Moskalenko

■ Vladimir Zhelnin

Odessa Kotov Memorial 1989

**1.d4**

Another typical transposition into the Austrian Attack.

**1...g6 2.e4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4.f4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$   
5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7.e5!?**



This space-winning central advance is logical here. Black's key e- and c-pawns are temporarily blocked, so he must look for a quick regrouping of his pieces in order to try a new break: ...f7-f6.

**7...dxe5**

Unfortunately, the immediate withdrawal of the knight makes less sense, for instance:

A) In case of 7... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ?! 8.0-0! (only after 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  dxe5 9.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  f6! the game transposes to the main line with 8... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ?) 8...dxe5 9.dxe5! $\pm$  the  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  is poorly placed;

B) Nowadays 7... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ?, Botvinnik's old weapon, looks suspicious: 8.0-0!? (if 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ! 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  c5 $\rightleftharpoons$  Kuijpers-Botvinnik, Amsterdam 1966) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (also 9. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ! with the same idea) 9... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ .



**TRICK:** After the two unexpected moves 10.a3!N  $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  11.g4! White is better.

**8.fxe5**

After this asymmetric response, the knight must choose among four squares.

**WEAPON** (for White): What about 8.dxe5!? Strategically, this is less ambitious, but on the other side Black's position remains passive, as we saw in a similar line of the previous game: 7.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?! 8.e5 dxe5 9.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  etc.

So, after 8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  there follows:

A) 9.0-0?  $\mathbb{Q}cb4$

**PUZZLE:** 9... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  10.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?; 10...f6!?) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! transposes to the above line, except here the white pawn is not on h3: 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  c6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6+$  12. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  13.bxc3!) 13.a3!N (or 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14.h3! $\pm$ ; 13. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  14.b3 b5 $\infty$  Shirov-Topalov, Monaco rapid 1999) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14.bxc3! $\pm$



analysis diagram

with an obvious central initiative for White, against a bad Pirc bishop.

B) 9.♘xd5 is also interesting: 9...♝xd5 10.♝e2! ♜g4 11.♝e4! (White prepares queenside castling, 11.c3 ♛ad8 12.♝e4 ♛d7 is about equal, Arizmendi Martinez-Vassallo Barroche, Spain tt 2009) 11...♛a5+ (11...♛e6!? with the idea 12.0-0 ♛ad8 13.c3 ♜f5 may be enough for equality) and now:

TRICK: 12.c3?! ♘d4!?

12.♘d2 ♛b6



analysis diagram

13.0-0-0!

TRICK: 13.♝e3?! ♛b4+!  
14.♘d2 ♛xb2= Berelowitsch Volokitin, Ordzhonikidze ch-UKR 2001.

13...♘d4 14.♛c4 c5 15.♝e3 Zaw-Sitanggang, Jakarta tt 1997. White has

some pressure on the centre. Therefore, Black must play 15...♜fd8, which is still unclear; or 15...♝h6?.

8...♝d5

Contrary to general chess strategy, in this provocative variation the central post is probably not the best for the knight (135 games=33,3% only).

WEAPON: The strange-looking retreat 8...♝h5?! is in fact the most popular option, and it is full of possibilities: Black is planning to attack the enemy pawn wedge using the pin ...♝g4 and/or the break ...f7-f6 (221 games=43,9%, which is a better result as well).

9.♝e3 (White is ready to play ♛d2 and 0-0-0. If 9.♝e4?! f6! 10.exf6 ♘xf6= Dembo-Skripchenko, Beijing rapid 2011; or 9.♝e2 f6 10.exf6 exf6= Pruijssers-Hofland, Dieren 2007)

A) 9...♝g4 and now:

A1) 10.♝e2 f6!?



analysis diagram

One of the key positions of the line 8...♝h5.

11.exf6 exf6 (11...♞xf6?! has been seen in only a few games) 12.0-0 (12.♛d2 ♜e7=?; 12.d5 ♛e7?! 13.♛d2 ♜e5 14.0-0-0 ♜fe8 15.♜he1 ♘xf3=? and now:

 TRICK: A not so difficult tactical blow occurs after 12... $\mathbb{W}d7?$  13.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e5!$ ± Shirov-Volokitin, Chalkidiki tt 2002.

12... $\mathbb{H}e8$ !? (a very solid plan for Black, although 12...f5!? should be a fine alternative: 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$  a6!N (improving on the main variation 13...f4 14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  15. $\mathbb{H}fe1$   $\mathbb{H}ae8$  16. $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  17.d5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ± Shirov-P.Nikolic, Monaco rapid 1999) 14. $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  15.h3 (15. $\mathbb{H}fe1$  b5!?) 15...f4!?) 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$  and now 13... $\mathbb{W}d6$ ! (13... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is also playable, Kuijpers-Timman, Leeuwarden ch-NED 1972) 14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (14. $\mathbb{H}fe1$  a6!?) 15. $\mathbb{H}ad1$  b5=; 14.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  15. $\mathbb{H}ad1$  f5=) 14... $\mathbb{W}d7$  15.d5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ ! 16. $\mathbb{H}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17. $\mathbb{H}h3$  a6! 18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ =.



analysis diagram

Black's position looks excellent, Mista-Markowski, Warsaw ch-POL 2011.

Other options on move 10 are not better for White:

A2) 10. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5! Ribili-Vadasz, Budapest ch-HUN 1972;

A3) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ! f6! 11.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ = 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ? e6± Michalczak-Narciso Dublan, Kusadasi Ech 2006;

A4) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f6! 11.exf6  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13.hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14.bxc3  $\mathbb{W}d5$

15. $\mathbb{W}d3$  e5! Sveshnikov-Moiseenko, Sochi tt 2008.

B) The immediate break 9...f6!? is an even more dynamic concept:



analysis diagram

10.exf6 (10. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  11.e6  $\mathbb{Q}a5$ ∞) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$  (11. $\mathbb{W}e2$ ?) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  13. $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}c4+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$ ∞ and by attacking d4, Black ensures attractive counterplay, Aguas Sanmartin-Beliavsky, Villarrobledo rapid 2001.

 WEAPON: 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !?



analysis diagram

This almost forgotten move (95 games=40,5%), actually puts the knight on the hottest square. From g4 its trajectory is very dynamic ( $\mathbb{Q}g4-h6-f5$ ). 9.h3 (White has to play this anyway) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  and now:

A) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ! defends d4, but also prepares  $\mathbb{W}d2$  and 0-0-0: 10... $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! (for-

ing the exchange  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ ) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xf5\infty$  with a complex middlegame: 12. g4!? (if now 12.  $\mathbb{W}e2?!$   $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ ) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  (13... b5!?) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}b8?!$  14. 0-0-0 b5 $\Rightarrow$  14. 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f5!? $N$  (an active improvement on the old 15...  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  16.  $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $\mathbb{W}d5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}b1\pm$  Spassky-Chebanenko, Soviet Union 1974) 16. exf6 exf6 $\Rightarrow$ . White has nothing special in this position and he may even be worse in the long run.

The other moves allow Black to achieve the perfect set-up, for instance:

B) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  f6!? (or 10...  $\mathbb{Q}b4?!$ ) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f5! $\Rightarrow$  Dobierzin-Schellig, Germany tt 2006/07) 11. exf6 exf6 12. c3  $\mathbb{E}e8$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f5!$  14.  $\mathbb{W}d2$  g5!.



analysis diagram

A nice black jet, Kuijpers-Spassky, Beverwijk 1967 – Black has good counterchances;

C) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f6! (10...  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 $\infty$  (P.Lee-N. Littlewood, Oxford ch-GBR 1967) 12. g4!) 11. exf6 exf6 12. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  (12...  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$ ) 13.  $\mathbb{E}e1$  (Ljubojevic-Van Wijgerden, Zurich jr 1970) and now the prophylactic 13...  $\mathbb{Q}h8!=$  gives Black an absolutely free game.

Unfortunately, I cannot recommend the retreat 8...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .



with this move (20 games=47,5%), Black tries to combine two ideas: ...f7-f6 and ...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  followed by ...c7-c5. It is also recommended in Vigus' updated book in 2012. However, in such a dynamic position this may be too slow, and it allows White to realize some interesting plans. I give two different lines:

WEAPON 9. h4!? – the standard h-pawn attack returns as a dangerous weapon!

A) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  10. h5! $N$  leads to an almost forced variation: 10... c5 11. hxg6 hxg6 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  cxd4 13.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$   $\mathbb{W}xd4$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}c5!$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 18.  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  19. 0-0-0! $\pm$ .



analysis diagram

The arising endgame is clearly in White's favour;

B) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ . The question is: how can Black defend against the 'matador line'?



analysis diagram

11...c5 (11...f5!?) is another resource. However, White keeps an advantage after 12.Qd3! c5 13.dxc5 Qa4 14.Qc4+ e6 15.c3 (15.Qed4!?) 15...Wxd1+ 16.Qxd1±) 12.c3 (12.h5!?) 12...Qc6 13.h5! cxd4 14.cxd4±. Suddenly White has a winning attack: 14...Qg4 (14...Qe6 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.Wd2!→ and Wg5-h4/Wf4-h2) 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.Qf2!→ Qh5 17.g4! Qxg4 18.Wg1+— Sorry, there's no defence!

9.Qe4!? is a natural and strong alternative: 9...Qb4 (the break 9...f6!N might be playable, but it needs some analytical effort: 10.0-0!? fxe5 11.Qc4+ Qh8 12.Qeg5∞ etc.) 10.Qc4 c5 11.c3 Qc6 12.e6!N (an improvement on 12.0-0 cxd4 13.cxd4 Qb6∞, which is fine for Black, see Martin Gonzalez-Adorjan, Lanzarote 1977) 12...Qb6 13.exf7+ Qh8 14.Qb3 cxd4 15.Qxd4 Qxd4 16.cxd4.



analysis diagram

And White is better after 16...Qf5 17.Qg3 e6 18.Qxf5 gxf5 (18...exf5 19.h4!?) 19.0-0 Wd7. Here, Vigus (2012) gives the assessment 'balanced' and stops his analysis, but if we continue with 20.We2!? Qd5 21.Qe1± Black still has to solve many problems.

9.Qxd5

WEAPON (for White): 9.0-0!? provokes a pin: 9...Qg4 10.Qxd5 Wxd5 11.c3 and now:



analysis diagram

- A) If 11...f6 12.exf6 exf6 13.Wb3!±.
- B) 11...Qxe5N leads to a material imbalance: 12.dxe5 Qad8 13.Wa4 Qxf3 14.Qxf3 Qxe5 15.Qe2 Qxf3+ 16.Qxf3 Wc5+ 17.Qh1 and this middlegame should be better for White;
- C) 11...Qad8 12.Qe1 (12.Qb3!?) 12...Wd7 13.Qg3 Qxf3 14.Qxf3 with a surprising advantage, Kotronias-Skembris, Glyfada ch-GRE 1995.

9...Wxd5 10.c3!



The diagram shows the main disadvantage of 8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ : after the exchange of the c3-knight, White improves his central pawn structure, while Black has no easy way to find acceptable counterplay – and the  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  remains passive.

#### 10... $\mathbb{Q}a5?$

This plan is too slow. White has enough tricks to meet the threat of ...c7-c5 adequately.

A) As a rule, the pin with 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4?$  is not a good solution here: 11.h3!? (for 11.0-0!? see Kotronias' line; or even 11. $\mathbb{W}e2?$   $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ , which has been known since Fischer-Perez Perez, Havana 1965) 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12. $\mathbb{W}xf3\pm$  Kravtsiv-Wang Yue, Shenzhen 2011;

B) Therefore, the break 10...f6 must be the best try in this line. However, White has some pleasant alternatives here: 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$  (11.exf6!? exf6 12.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}f4\pm$ ) and now, after the obvious prophylactic move 11... $\mathbb{Q}h8$  White gets a serious advantage. The engine suggests the provocative 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$ N as the only defence!



analysis diagram

B1) The main idea is 12.c4 (12.h4!?, 12.0-0!?) 12... $\mathbb{W}d7$  13.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  15.a3  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  16.b4 f5 17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  c6!± and Black is still alive;

B2) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$  (13.0-0±) 13...fxe5 14.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ± (or 15.0-0-0!) Karjakin-T.L.Petrosian, Mainz rapid 2007.

#### 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$

WEAPON: 11.b4!?, chasing away the provocative knight, may be even stronger.



analysis diagram

TRICK: 11... $\mathbb{W}c6?$  12.0-0!  
 $\mathbb{W}xc3$  13. $\mathbb{Q}b1+-$ , winning material.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  12. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13.c4± with a great space advantage.

#### 11...c5 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$

12.c4  $\mathbb{W}d8$  13.d5  $\mathbb{Q}g4\rightleftharpoons$ .

12... $\mathbb{W}d8$  13.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}c7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$



Obviously, it's easier to be White here.

#### 14... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

14... $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  16. $\mathbb{W}f2\pm$ .  
15. $\mathbb{Q}d4!?$

Trying to keep the extra pawn.

15... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc6!$   $\mathbb{W}xc6$  17.0-0  
 $\mathbb{Q}ad8$  18.b4  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  19.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   
20. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  e6 21.a4!  $\mathbb{W}c7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

22.♗e1!? a5 23.b5 also gives White a clear advantage.

22...a5 23.♗b1 axb4 24.♗xb4 ♗c8  
25.♗b2! ♗d7 26.♗b6 ♗f8 27.♗d6!



After more or less logical play by both sides, a picturesque position has arisen, which unfortunately is not good for Black.

27...♗xd6?

Accepting the offer of the fabulous rook leads to a quicker loss. Better was 27...♗d8 28.♗h2!?

28.exd6 ♗c6

If 28...♗d8 29.♗f2± with a probably decisive initiative via the dark squares.

29.♗f2!+

The Pirc fortress cannot be defended any more...

29.f5 30.♗xe6 ♗d5 31.♗e2 ♗f8  
32.♗e7 ♗xe7 33.♗xe7 ♗f7 34.♗e8+  
♗f8 35.d7! f4 36.♗e7 ♗f7 37.d8♗ 1-0

### Summary 7.e5!?

After 7...dxe5, Black has to start by finding an antidote to the symmetrical recapture 8.dxe5. If he is not afraid of this slightly annoying option, he can be happy with either of the two knight jumps 8...♘h5!? or 8...♘g4!?.

### Conclusion on the provocative 6...♘c6

The presence of such a venturesome alternative confirms once more the general concept of the opening – the whole Pirc Defence is a provocative but perfectly playable system!



### Statistics Games 13 and 14 – The Benoni-hybrid:

6.♗d3 ♘a6 (2128 games=51% is positive for Black!)



### A Bit of a Puzzle

We have finally reached this complex, highly popular set-up in the Austrian Attack:



By playing ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  and ...c7-c5 Black wants to provoke a Benoni structure after 7.0-0 c5 8.d5 (even though the early advance 7.e5?! is again a very plausible alternative, see the WEAPON in Game 13).



Those who have experience in the Benoni will engage immediately in the typical counterattack with ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ , ... $\mathbb{B}b8$  and ...b7-b5, an option both easy to carry out and effective. In some cases Black gets to break with ...e7-e6 and then White has nothing better than taking on e6.

However, the final result relies largely on the way in which both players combine their attacks with the appropriate defensive moves.

In this sense, it has been known for a long time that 8... $\mathbb{B}b8$  (Game 13) and 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (Game 14) are both stronger than 8... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ?! (see the comments to Game 13); this way Black retains the option to play ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  at a suitable moment.

The two following model games will complete the study of the Austrian Attack.

#### Game 13 – The Flexible 8... $\mathbb{B}b8$ (547 games=48,9%)



Black plays a move that is useful in many variations, leaving the knight on a6 in order to meet the typical attack 9. $\mathbb{W}e1$  (intending  $\mathbb{W}h4$ ) with 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$ .

□ Yasser Seirawan  
■ Fernando Peralta

Barcelona 2011 (3)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4  
♗g7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗d3 ♜a6



Due to its theoretical importance, this will be the longest game of the book, with about 55 diagrams included and a lot of variations. I wish you a nice walk around all the material, which will automatically make you an expert for both sides!

#### 7.0-0

WEAPON: The direct advance 7.e5!? is still a very interesting, sharp and controversial option. Especially in the light of the below analysis:

A) 7...♘d7!? – the most flexible square for the knight in this line.

A1) 8.e6!?



analysis diagram

Prior to checking this 'matador attack' I recommend you to take a look at the crazy game Sutovsky-Ivanchuk (Game 8). In the present line we have included the moves ...♘a6 and ♜d3, so Black has the resource ...♘b4...♘x♘, while White may be looking for straight checkmating combinations. 8...fxe6 and now:

A11) 9.h4 (bringing up the whole army!) 9...c5! (be careful: 9...♘f6 10.h5! ♜xh5 11.♘g5 is a very dangerous line!) 10.h5 cxd4.



analysis diagram

Black has two extra pawns already, and it is not so clear how White can develop the 'matador attack'. 11.♘e4?! (11.♘e2 gxh5!?) – since the white queen cannot join the attack, the kingside is irrelevant!) 11...♘b4! (the exchange ♜x♘d3 favours Black) 12.♘eg5 (the defensive point is 12.hxg6 hxg6 13.♘eg5 ♜xd3+ 14.♗xd3 ♜a5+ 15.♗d2 ♜f5!) 12...♜a5! 13.♗d2 ♜c5+ Hnydiuk-Jaracz, Polanica Zdroj 1995;

A12) White has alternatives here, but Black is OK after the more positional 9.♘g5 ♜f6 (not 9...♘b6? 10.♘xh7!) 10.♗e2 c5!? (10...♘b4 11.♗c4 d5 12.♗b3≈ Skold-Malmdin, Nassjo ch-SWE 1970) 11.♗xe6 ♜xe6 12.♗xe6+ ♜h8 13.♗xa6 bxa6 14.dxc5 ♜a5!?= (14...♝c8!?) 15.cxd6 exd6 16.0-0 ♜b6+ 17.♔h1 ♜fe8!?.



analysis diagram

With the typical tricky Pirc counterplay:  
 18.  $\mathbb{W}b3??$  (18.  $\mathbb{W}h3\Box$   $d5\Xi$ )  
 18...  $\mathbb{W}f2!+$ — and, suddenly, Black wins.  
 A2) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ ?  
 A21) 8...  $c5$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ .



analysis diagram

A similar position arose in one of the lines of Game 7. Remember the extravagant 5.a3. With the white pawn still on a2, Black can apply the same plan:  
 9...  $cxd4!?$  (9...  $bxa6$  10.  $dxc5$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   
 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $dxc5=\Xi$  Kotsur-Torre,  
 Kazakhstan 1997) 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $dxe5$   
 11.  $fxe5$   $bxa6$  12.  $e6$  (12.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$   
 13.  $0-0$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8\Xi$  Glek-  
 Cekro, Rethymnon tt 2003 ( $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ , 21))  
 12...  $fxe6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  14.  $\mathbb{W}d4+$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.  $0-0-0$   $\mathbb{W}c7!?$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8\Xi$   
 Timman-J.Nunn, Wijk aan Zee 1982;  
 A22) 8...  $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$  is a rather strategic  
 alternative: 9.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (9.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $c5\Xi$   
 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  11.  $e6$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12.  $exd7$   
 $\mathbb{W}xd7\Xi$  Timman-Van der Sterren,  
 Leeuwarden ch-NED 1981) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$   
 10.  $a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5\Xi$   
 Timman-Nunn, London 1982.

Here are some improved alternatives to 7...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ :

B) 7...  $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$  8.  $h4!?$  N (8.  $\mathbb{Q}e3\Xi$  is the usual move) 8...  $c5$  (8...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9.  $h5!?$ )  
 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $cxd4$  10.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $bxa6$  11.  $h5\uparrow$ ;  
 7...  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  8.  $0-0$   $c5$  9.  $d5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   
 (10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2!?$  with the idea 10...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$



Seirawan vs. Peralta, Barcelona Casino Masters 2011. This Austrian duel between two Pirc experts ended clearly in White's favour.

11.♕g5!↑) 10...♝b8 11.a4↑ Janda-C.Bayer, Germany 2007;  
C) 7...♞g4



analysis diagram

Some books offer this pseudo-active manoeuvre as the main defence, but in fact it is not enough for equality: 8.h3 ♜h6 9.g4! (this is the way: fix the knight on h6 and follow up with queenside castling. 9.♔e3?! is a similar idea; 9.♔xa6 bxa6 10.♔e3 ♜b8! (an active improvement on the solid 10...♜b7?! 11.♗e2∞ Timman-Marin, Neum tt 2000) 11.b3 ♜f5 12.♔f2 c5 13.d5 ♜b4!⇒) 9...c5 and now 10.♔e3! (not 10.d5 ♜c7⇒ 11.♔e2, N.V. Pedersen-Marin, Istanbul Ech 2003, in view of 11...b5!N) 10...cxsd4 11.♔xd4 dxe5 12.fxe5 f5 13.exf6 exf6 14.♗e2?N (14.♔e4?; ≤ 14.♗d2 ♜e8+∞ Menvielle-Lacourrelle-Todorcevic, Las Palmas 1995) 14...♜e8.



analysis diagram

Analysis shows that this position is better for White: 15.♔e4!? (centralization. Or 15.♔e3?! with the idea 15...♝e7 (15...♝b4 16.0-0-0!) 16.♘d5?! (16.♔b5?!) 16...♝f7 17.♔b5!↑) 15...f5 16.0-0-0! fxe4 17.♘xg7 exf3 18.♗b5?! (18.♗xd8±) 18...♝e7 19.♘xh6±;

D) The central pawn exchange 7...dxe5 gives White the typical Austrian pawn wedge after 8.dxe5 (8.fxe5? ♜h5 (≥ 8...♝d7?∞) 9.0-0 c5 10.d5± ♜g4 (Fier-Leitao, Internet ICC 2008) and now 11.♔e2!N) 8...♞d5 (8...♞h5?! 9.♔e3± ♜b4, Mamedov-Mamedyarov, Moscow Wch blitz 2010, 10.♔e4!N) 9.♘xd5 ♜xd5 10.♗e2 ♜e6?! (10...♝f5 11.♘xf5 gxf5 12.♔e3± Ree-Timman, Leeuwarden ch-NED 1971) 11.0-0 ♜c5 12.♔b5 a6 13.♖d1 ♜e4 14.♗xe4 ♜xe4 15.♔e2 ♜fd8 16.♘d4±, Stellwagen-Muse, Germany Bundesliga 2011/12.

### 7...c5



### 8.d5

Entering into the Benoni system is the best response. Once White has spent a tempo on castling, it is much easier to meet the advance 8.e5: 8...♞d7?! 9.♔e3 (9.exd6 exd6=) 9...cxsd4 10.♔xd4 dxe5 11.fxe5 ♜xe5! – a typical exchange combination, winning the central pawn: 12.♔xe5 ♜xe5 13.♘xe5 ♜d4+ 14.♔h1 ♜xe5± as in Vrhovnik-Vujakovic, Pula tt 1971.

**PUZZLE:** After 8.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ , once again a Sicilian Dragon structure appears on the board, but here with  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  instead of the usual  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , which gives Black excellent counterplay:

9.  $\mathbb{W}e1$  (9.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  b6!?) 9... b5! 10. a3 (if 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  Black has the tactical motif 10...  $\mathbb{Q}cxe4$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}b6+$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{W}xb5\#$ ) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}b7!$  (with pressure against the weaknesses on d3 and e4) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  (11.f5 a5!) 11... a5?! 12. e5 dxe5 (12...  $\mathbb{Q}xd3?$  13. cxd3  $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ ) 13. fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  14. cxd3# and Black is better after any logical retreat with the knight, Glik-Azmaiparashvili, Tallinn ch-RUS jr 1986.

### 8... $\mathbb{B}b8$

**KEEP IN MIND:** As we have seen, this is Black's most flexible continuation. He wants to play ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , but leaves the knight on a6 for one more move. However, spending tempi on the Benoni queenside attack (... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ /...c7-c5/ $\mathbb{B}b8$  etc.) might be too risky in the impending dynamic fight on the rest of the board.

8...  $\mathbb{Q}c7?$ ! (332 games=39,9%; for the immediate 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !? see next game).



analysis diagram

The main problem with this premature plan (...b7-b5) is that White is usually ahead with his typical kingside attack along the lines of  $\mathbb{W}e1-h4$  and  $f4-f5$  etc.: 9.a4 and now:

A) For instance, 9...b6?! is a move not connected with Black's concept, and it leads to a true opening disaster, as Karjakin explains in his notes in ChessBase Magazine 143: 10.  $\mathbb{W}e1$ ! e6? 11. dxe6 fxe6 (11...  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  12. f5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !?) 12. e5!± Karjakin-Ivanchuk, Medias 2011;

B) On 9...a6 White can try 10.  $\mathbb{W}e1$ ! and now:

B1) If 10...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ , White can avoid  $\mathbb{Q}x\mathbb{Q}$  by playing 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ! (11.  $\mathbb{W}h4$ !?) or 11. a5!  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  e6 13. dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ ± Z. Markovic-S. Nikolic, Niksic tt 1996) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12. a5  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ± Cabrilo-Todorcevic, Belgrade 1991;

B2) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11. a5  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  and now 12.  $\mathbb{W}h4$ ! (or even, 12. f5!  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  13.  $\mathbb{W}h4$ ! (13.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ !?) 13... e5?! 14.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f4 15. g3± Adorjan-Böhm, Amsterdam 1977) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  13. cxd3 e6 14. f5! (14. dxe6!±) 14...  $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !→ with a strong initiative, Fressinet-Marcelin, St Vincent Ech 2000.

### 9. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ !?

For many years, this was considered to be the most universal and also the most dangerous move. However, White has a wide range of possibilities at this point:

**WEAPON-1:** 9.  $\mathbb{W}e1$  – of course, before we try to find a way to prevent the ... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  sortie we should check if it is really a threat:

9...  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  10. a3?! (White cannot avoid this waste of tempo, as 10.  $\mathbb{W}h4$  allows 10... c4! 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ∞ Smeets-Kramnik, Monaco rapid 2010) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  11. cxd3.



analysis diagram

The critical position in this line.

A) 11...Bg4!?? 12.Qd2!? (if 12.Wh4 Bb6!N) 12...Qd7 13.a4 e6 14.dxe6 fxe6 15.Qc4∞ S.Polgar-Piket, Amsterdam 1990;

B) Or 11...b5 12.Wh4 Bg4 (two other moves deserve to be considered: (12...c4! and 12...a5 13.f5∞) 13.f5 b4 14.axb4 cxb4 15.Qd1↑ and Black's position is dangerous: 15...Bb6+ 16.Qh1 (16.Qe3!?) 16...Bb5 17.Qh6! Qxh6 18.Wxh6 Qxe4?? (18...Qxf3□ 19.Wxf3 Bb6 20.Qe3!?) Qd4 21.Qc4 Qg4 22.Wd2↑) 19.Qe3!+- Qxf3 20.dxe4 Qxe4 21.f6 exf6 22.Qg4 simply winning, Rudak-Kovtsev, Alushta 2005;

C) 11...Bb6! with the idea ...Ba6 is safer than the more common alternatives given above: 12.Wh4 Ba6! (the point: after this defensive move White will not be so successful on the kingside) 13.Qd1 e6 (13...Qd7!?, 14.h3 e6⇒) 14.f5 exf5 15.Qg5, Leveille-Dzindzichashvili, New York 1993, and here 15...h6!? 16.Qxh6 Qg4⇒ would have been the best continuation for Black.

#### WEAPON-2: 9.a3!?

With this modest-looking move, White not only prepares 10.We1 but he is also ready to stop Black's attack; if ...b5-b4, the a-file will be opened with axb4.



analysis diagram

A) 9...Qc7. BEWARE – this might still be a premature manoeuvre! 10.We1 (10.a4!?) 10...Bg4 11.Wh4 b5 12.f5! gxf5 13.exf5 c4 14.Qe4 Qxe4 15.Wxg4 Qf6 16.Wg3 Qh8 and now...



analysis diagram

#### A Bit of History

In an old game Rogers-Ftacnik, Sydney 1991, White unnecessarily defended the d-pawn with 17.Qd1!?, after which an obscure game unfolded. Later on, grandmaster Marin for some reason suggested this line in Spanish magazine *Teoría* 1999 as the best defensive system for Black. However, after a close look at the above position, any active player should be able to find the obvious road to an attack for White:

17.Wh4!N (starting with 17.Qg5 would amount to the same) 17...a5 (17...Qcxd5 18.Qxd5 Qxd5 19.Qg5 Qf6 20.Qf3!→) 18.Qg5 b4 19.axb4

$\text{axb4}$  20.  $\mathbb{B}f3!$   $\text{h6}$  (20...  $\text{bxc3?}$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}xh7$ )  
 21.  $\mathbb{Q}ce4\rightarrow$  and White should be winning with so many pieces surrounding the black king;

B) The pinning move 9...  $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$  is undoubtedly the safest: 10.  $\text{h3}$  (10.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$ ) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11.  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  and now 11...  $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$  (instead of the premature 11...  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12.  $a4$   $a6$  13.  $a5$   $e6$  14.  $f5!$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  15.  $\mathbb{W}g3\uparrow$  Boros-Z. Szabo, Hungary tt 2007/08) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (12.  $\mathbb{W}e2!?$ ) 12...  $b5!\rightleftharpoons$ , threatening ...  $c5-c4$ , Prada Rubin-Tkachiev, Las Palmas 1997.

WEAPON-3: 9.  $a4$  lacks sense because of 9...  $\mathbb{Q}b4!$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $a6$  (10...  $e6!?$  11.  $dxe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6$  13.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6=$ ) 11.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $e6$  12.  $dxe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $fxe6$  with an excellent game for Black:



analysis diagram

14.  $e5$   $dxe5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (16.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{B}be8=$  Zambrana-Peralta, Ayamonte 2006) 16...  $\mathbb{B}be8$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}fd5\rightleftharpoons$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  19.  $c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  20.  $\mathbb{W}xe3$   $g5!$  21.  $g3$   $gxf4$  22.  $gxf4$   $\mathbb{B}f5$  23.  $\mathbb{B}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}d7??$   $\mathbb{W}xd7!$  0-1 Tsepotan-Sturua, Swidnica rapid 1997.

WEAPON-4: 9.  $e5!?$ .

This advance is too ambitious in this move order, but it is based on some treacherous tactical tricks.



analysis diagram

The standard answers have been played and analysed on many occasions, but the arising positions are either risky or passive for Black.

For example:

A) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  10.  $e6$   $fxe6$  11.  $dxe6$   $\mathbb{Q}ac7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4+$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  14.  $f5!$   $gxf5$ , Almasi-Fridman, Duisburg jr 1992; and here a crushing improvement is 15.  $\mathbb{B}xf5!!N$ ;

B) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.  $e6!$   $fxe6$  11.  $dxe6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  12.  $f5\uparrow$ ;

C) Intuitively speaking, 9...  $dxe5!?$  should be the best reaction here: 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6!$  (this intermediate move is White's point) 10...  $bxa6$  (after 10...  $e4$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  we see a drawback of 8...  $\mathbb{B}b8$ : it turns out that after the recapture 11...  $bxa6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}c6\pm$  wins the exchange) 11.  $fxe5$  and now:

The well-known lines are:

C1) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12.  $\mathbb{W}e1!?\pm$ ; and

C2) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{B}xb2$  13.  $h3\uparrow$ ;

And now for some news:

C3) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$  N (preventing  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ) 12.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13.  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  14.  $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3!?$  (the resulting game is highly complex and unbalanced, but this exchange is not the only option!) 15.  $gxf3$   $\mathbb{B}b4!\rightleftharpoons$  (this is a more creative idea than 15...  $\mathbb{W}d7!?$  16.  $\mathbb{W}xa6$   $\mathbb{B}b4\cong$ , planning ...  $\mathbb{Q}g4+$  with a draw) 16.  $d6$   $\mathbb{W}b7!$ .



analysis diagram

After analysing this position back and forth, I came to the conclusion that White does not have any dynamic advantage, whereas Black's counterchances are 'Pircly' attractive!

**WEAPON-5:** 9.f5! is a very straightforward move popularized by the Hungarian grandmaster Peter Acs. This way, White avoids ...g4 and keeps his ♜f3 on the board for the attack.



analysis diagram

A) For instance, White can play a model attacking game after the, as so often, premature manoeuvre 9...♜c7 10.fxg6!? hxg6 ( $\geq$  10...fxg6 11.♕e1!) 11.♗e1 b5 12.♗h4 ♔e8 13.♗h6! → threatening ♜g5 or e4-e5, Zaichuk-Borzov, Alushta ch-UKR 2009;

B) The typical gambit move 9...b5, à la the Benoni, looks like it might be a

good tactical solution for Black, but it fails to a very fine line: 10.fxg6! (if 10.♗xb5 gx5! 11.exf5 ♜b4 12.c4 ♜d7! with threats like ...♜xd3 and ...♝xf5 or ...♝fxd5!) 10...hxg6 11.♗xb5! (provoking the thematic combination ...♝xe4; instead, 11.♗xb5 c4 12.♗xc4 ♜xb5 13.♗xb5 ♜b6+ 14.♗d4 ♜g4! looks OK for Black) 11...♝xe4 12.♗xe4 ♜xb5 13.♕e1!!.



analysis diagram

And again, White comes first with moves like ♜h4/♝g5 and c2-c4 etcetera;

C) 9...gx5 is always a critical option, but here it is terribly risky: 10.exf5 (10.♗h4 c4! 11.♗xc4∞ is even more complicated, as was seen in Gallego Martinez-Narciso Dublan, Andorra 1998) 10...♝b4 and here White can play 11.♗g5?N, looking for mating constructions, as we have seen in WEAPON-2 with 9.a3 (instead of the faint-hearted 11.♗e2 ♜xf5 12.a3 ♜xc2 13.♗d2∞ Nataf-Marin, Andorra 1998);

D) 9...♝b4? is the most logical continuation, which was recently supported with another fascinating idea by Ivanchuk. 10.fxg6 fxg6? (10...hxg6 11.♗e2!) 11.♗e2 ♜g4 12.a3 ♜a6 and now:



analysis diagram

**PUZZLE:** In two games White played 13... $\mathbb{W}e1!$ ? The best reply is 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7!N$ , waiting for  $\mathbb{W}h4$  (again, 13... $\mathbb{Q}c7?$  14. $\mathbb{W}h4 \rightarrow$  Solovjov-Lugovoi, St Petersburg 2005) 14. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}b6!?$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5\infty$ ) 15. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ . After 15... $c4!?$  (15... $\mathbb{B}e8=$ ) 16. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5\infty$  Black's position looks harmonious and wonderful!

13.h3!N  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{B}f6$  (15... $\mathbb{Q}g7?!$  16. $\mathbb{W}d2\uparrow$ ) 16. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . Here Black opted for the positional exchange sacrifice 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$  in true Benoni style (16... $\mathbb{B}xf1+!?$  17. $\mathbb{W}xf1$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  is very playable: 18. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (18... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ) 19. $\mathbb{B}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6\infty$ , blocking the kingside): 17. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{exf6}\infty$  with long-term compensation thanks to the Pirc bishop, picturesquely posted on e5: 18. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  19. $\mathbb{B}b1$   $c4$  20. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $b5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $b4$ .



analysis diagram

The rest of the game looks like a horror movie, with a few great action scenes. I will give it without further comment:  
 22. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}b6+ 23.\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  24. $\mathbb{Q}e6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  25. $\mathbb{W}g4$   $\mathbb{Bxa3}$  26. $\mathbb{Q}h5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  27. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $a2$  28. $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  29. $\mathbb{B}a1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  30. $\mathbb{B}xa2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  31. $\mathbb{B}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$  32. $\mathbb{B}xa7$   $\mathbb{W}xa7$  33. $\mathbb{Q}d7$   $\mathbb{W}xd7$  34. $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$  35. $\mathbb{W}e7$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  36. $\mathbb{B}f7$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  37. $g3$   $\mathbb{B}f8$  38. $\mathbb{B}xh7??$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  0-1 Mastrovasilis-Ivanchuk, Greece tt 2011.

**WEAPON-6:** 9. $h3!?$  has been working really well for White! This prophylactic idea (against ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ) was tried recently in two non-rated games between Karjakin-Kramnik, with a crushing 2-0 as a result.



analysis diagram

Let's see what happened:

9... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  looks like the only move here – must be a bad sign! 10. $a4$   $a6!?$  (this inaccurate move is the source of Black's future troubles) 11. $a5!$  A typical block, after which the counterthrust ... $b7-b5$  is strategically suspicious. Now:

- A) If 11... $\mathbb{Q}b5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{axb5}$  13. $e5\uparrow$ ;
- B) Or 11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12. $\mathbb{W}e1!?$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{axb5}$  14. $c3\pm$ ;
- C) But 11... $b5!?$  12. $\mathbb{axb6}$   $\mathbb{B}xb6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$  (13. $\mathbb{W}e1!?$ ) 13... $\mathbb{B}b8$  14. $c4$  transposes to favourable structures of the

Four Pawns Attack: after 14...e6 (Karjakin-Kramnik, Monaco rapid 2010) White is better after both 15.e5!↑ and 15.dxe6!?:

D) 11...e6 (trying the main Benoni break) 12.dxe6 fxe6 (12...dxe6 13.f5↑; 12...dxe6 13.f5↑) 13.e5!±.



analysis diagram

Karjakin's trusted killer break! 13...Qh5 (13...Qfd5 14.Qe4±) 14.Qg5! with a winning initiative (and an eye on h7), Karjakin-Kramnik, Moscow Wch blitz 2010.

But what can Black play instead of 10...a6? There are two other options: 10...e6 11.dxe6↑ is similar to the above line, and the 'best' choice 10...b6 is a bit slow against White usual set-ups: 11.Qe1 (or 11.Qc4!? Rb7 12.f5 a6 13.fxg6!↑) 11...a6 12.Qh4 b5 13.axb5 axb5.



analysis diagram

Here White can start an annoyingly sharp attack: 14.f5!N (14.e5 Qfxd5 15.f5∞ Svetos-Oral, Pardubice 1996) 14...gxf5 15.Qh6 c4 16.Qd4! Qd7 17.e5! dxe5 18.Qxf5 Qxf5 19.Qxf5↑ and White keeps the initiative.

WEAPON-7: 9.Qe2!? This idea, originally supported by grandmasters Dolmatov and Kaidanov, marks a radical change of plan. Instead of embarking on an attack, abandoning his queenside to its fate, White opts for a central strategy.



analysis diagram

9...Qc7 (9...Rg4!N; 9...Qb4?! 10.Qc4 a6 (10...e6 11.a3! exd5 12.axb4 dxc4 13.bxc5 dxc5± as in Castaldo-Sarno, St Vincent ch-ITA 2000) 11.a3 b5 12.axb4 cxb4 13.Qxb5 axb5 14.Qd3±, Daniliuk-Urban, Karvina 1993) 10.a4 a6 11.a5 b5 12.axb6 Rxb6 13.Qa4!?.

Most of the games have followed this path. Once more, as we saw in the previous WEAPON, White transposes into the Four Pawns set-up. However, there are many moves to check, and Black will have to meet them with 13...e6, 13...Rg4 or 13...Qb5:  
13...Rb8 14.c4 and now:

TRICK: After 14...Rg4, an interesting option is 15.e5?N

$\square d7$  16.  $\blacksquare e1$  with a typical Benoni/Four Pawns idea: 16...  $\blacksquare xf3$  17.  $\blacksquare xf3$   $dxe5$  18.  $f5! \rightarrow$  and the moves  $\blacksquare h3$  and  $\blacksquare h4$  are coming.

14...  $e6$  15.  $e5!$  (15.  $dxe6?!$   $\square xe6$  16.  $f5! \uparrow$ ). The typical attack with the central pawns begins: 15...  $\square fe8$  (obviously, this retreat is too passive). However, after 15...  $\square g4$  16.  $h3$   $\square h6$  White can play 17.  $exd6$  (also 17.  $\square e3! \pm$  or 17.  $g4! \uparrow$ ) 17...  $\blacksquare xd6$  18.  $\square e3$   $exd5$  19.  $\square xc5$   $\blacksquare xf4$  20.  $\square xf8$   $\blacksquare xf8$  21.  $\blacksquare e5 \pm$  ( $\blacksquare$  vs.  $\square + \Delta$ ), Beckmann-Weber, Germany tt 2004/05. Now:



analysis diagram

A) 16.  $\square c3?!$   $\blacksquare b7$  (16...  $exd5$  17.  $cxd5$   $\blacksquare g4$  was seen in Schwarz-Pel, Piestany 2004; now 18.  $h3!$   $\blacksquare xf3$  19.  $\blacksquare xf3 \uparrow$ ) 17.  $\blacksquare d1$  (17.  $f5!?$ ) 17...  $exd5$  18.  $cxd5$   $\square xd5$  19.  $\blacksquare xa6$   $\square xc3$  20.  $bxc3 \pm$  and Black is still in danger, Dolmatov-Marin, Kolkata 1999.

Although this line allows White to keep some initiative, there is also a quite occult option:

B) After 16.  $f5!?$  the position is brimming with wonderful tactics: 16...  $exd5$  (16...  $exf5$  17.  $\blacksquare g5$   $f6$  18.  $\blacksquare h4$   $\blacksquare e7$  19.  $e6 \pm$  or 16...  $gxf5$  17.  $exd6$   $\square xd6$  18.  $\square e5$   $\blacksquare b7$  19.  $\square xc5 \uparrow$ ) 17.  $\blacksquare g5$  (also 17.  $f6!?$   $\blacksquare h8$  18.  $\blacksquare h6 \uparrow$ ) 17...  $f6$  18.  $e6!$   $\blacksquare e7$  19.  $\blacksquare f4$   $dxc4$  20.  $\blacksquare xc4$   $\blacksquare b4$

21.  $\blacksquare d2$  (21.  $fxg6! \uparrow \uparrow$ ) 21...  $\blacksquare xc4$  22.  $\blacksquare xc4$   $gxf5$  23.  $b4! \uparrow \uparrow$  with unbalanced material ( $\blacksquare$  vs.  $\square + \Delta$ ) in an open position.

9...  $\blacksquare g4$ 

This position is also very important for the whole variation with 6...  $\square a6$ , since White can transpose here to the other main line 8...  $\blacksquare g4$  by playing 9.  $\square h1$   $\blacksquare b8$  etc. However, after you have checked the 7 WEAPONS given above, your study will be much easier. Meanwhile, Black's alternatives are worse:

PUZZLE: 9...  $b6$  can be met by 10.  $a3!?$ , similar to WEAPON-2 (White can also meet it with the central pawn attack: 10.  $\blacksquare c4!?$   $\square c7$  11.  $e5! \uparrow$ ): 10...  $\square c7$  11.  $\blacksquare e1!?$   $b5$  12.  $\blacksquare h4$   $c4$  13.  $\blacksquare e2$   $a5$  14.  $f5! \uparrow$ .



analysis diagram

**BEWARE:** This typical position in the variation with 8... $\mathbb{B}b8$  is always very dangerous for Black.

14... $\mathbb{gxf5}$  15. $\mathbb{Qd4\pm}$   $\mathbb{Qd7}$  16. $\mathbb{Qxf5}$   $\mathbb{Qxf5}$   
 17. $\mathbb{Bxf5}$   $\mathbb{Qh8}$  18. $\mathbb{Qg5}$  b4 19.axb4  $\mathbb{Bxb4}$   
 20. $\mathbb{Bf3\rightarrow}$  and White won in a few moves,  
 G.Kuzmin-Torre, Bangalore 1981.

**PUZZLE:** 9... $\mathbb{Qc7?!$ } is also inconsistent: 10.a4 a6 11.a5! b5  
 12.axb6  $\mathbb{Bxb6}$  13. $\mathbb{Qa4?}$  (again,  
 this transposes into the Four  
 Pawns Attack; 13. $\mathbb{We1?}$ )  
 13... $\mathbb{Bb8}$  14.c4 $\pm$  with a position  
 similar to the game Dolmatov-  
 Marin (WEAPON-7) after 14...e6  
 15.e5! $\uparrow$   $\mathbb{Qg4?}$  16.h3  $\mathbb{Qh6}$   
 17.exd6 (17.f5?) 17... $\mathbb{Wxd6}$   
 18. $\mathbb{Qe3}$  exd5 19. $\mathbb{Qxc5\pm}$   
 Marxen-Margraf, Kiel 2003.

A third option is 9...b5?!. Black will not have enough compensation for the pawn here: 10. $\mathbb{Qxb5}$   $\mathbb{Qb4}$  (10... $\mathbb{Qxe4}$  11. $\mathbb{Qxa7\pm}$ ; 10...c4 11. $\mathbb{Qxc4}$   $\mathbb{Qxe4}$  12. $\mathbb{Qxa7\pm}$  Moiseev-Weber, Germany tt 1991/92) 11.c4 (11. $\mathbb{Qc4?}$   $\mathbb{Qxe4}$  12.a3 $\pm$ ) 11... $\mathbb{Qa6}$  12. $\mathbb{Qe2\pm}$  Biriukov-V.Onischuk, Kharkov 2011.

#### 10.h3?!

A radical solution by Seirawan, based on the intention to force the  $\mathbb{QxQ}$  exchange, but the rook will have to take back on f3.

White can also try a similar idea we have seen in the above-mentioned 7 WEAPONS, where each move has its strengths and weaknesses:

**PUZZLE:** For instance, 10.a3?! is a prophylactic move we already know: 10... $\mathbb{Qc7}$  11. $\mathbb{We1}$  (11.h3?) 11...b5 (11... $\mathbb{Qxf3}$  12. $\mathbb{Bxf3\pm}$  e6 13.dxe6  $\mathbb{Qxe6}$  14.f5  $\mathbb{Qd4}$  15. $\mathbb{Bh3\uparrow}$  12. $\mathbb{Wh4}$ .



analysis diagram

We again remind you of the game Rogers-Ftacnik (WEAPON-2), where the white pawn was already on f5, and the  $\mathbb{Q}$  on g1. 12...c4 (12...a5 13.f5?  $\mathbb{Qxf3}$  (if 13... $\mathbb{gxf5}$  14. $\mathbb{exf5}$  c4 15. $\mathbb{Qe4?}$ ) 14. $\mathbb{Bxf3\uparrow}$  Korneev-Chatalbashev, Porto Carras 2005) 13. $\mathbb{Qe2}$  e6? (13...a5 14.f5?) 14.dxe6 fxe6 and now 15. $\mathbb{Bd1?N}$  with pressure in the centre (instead of 15. $\mathbb{Qe3}$  a5 $\Rightarrow$  Gaponenko-Aketaeva, Moscow 2009. There are also other possible transpositions, after 10.f5? or 10. $\mathbb{We2?}$ .



**WEAPON:** White can also insert 10. $\mathbb{Qc4?}$ , improving the bishop, which is similar to the popular set-up with 8... $\mathbb{Qg4}$  9. $\mathbb{Qc4}$  (see Game 14).



analysis diagram

Black does not seem to have an easy way to get counterplay: 10... $\mathbb{Qc7}$  11.a4 a6

12.a5  $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$  (12...b5 13.axb6  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  14. $\mathbb{W}d3!?$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$  Wedberg-Bodin, Stockholm 1991/92) 13.h3!? (an intermediate option, not known from official theory. The well-known line is 13. $\mathbb{W}d3!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14.bxc3 e6 15.dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  fxe6, and now 17. $\mathbb{Q}g5!N$  is an improvement on 17. $\mathbb{B}b1$  d5 $\rightleftharpoons$  (Belotti-Chatalbashev, Elista ol 1998); see 17... $\mathbb{W}e7$  18. $\mathbb{B}b1\uparrow$  13... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  14.bxc3.



analysis diagram

I found this position to be advantageous for White: 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (after 14... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15. $\mathbb{W}xf3\pm$  Black is too passive: he cannot play either ...e7-e6 or ...b7-b5) leads to a material imbalance: 15.hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}g3+$  (for 15... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  see the note to move 17) 16. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf1+$  17. $\mathbb{W}xf1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  (17... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  18. $\mathbb{Q}a2$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b2$  b5 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$ ) 18. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  19. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ . In a closed position ( $\mathbb{Q}+Q$  vs.  $\mathbb{Q}+Q$ ) White's attacking chances are clearly better, Mkrtchian-M.Socko, Elista ol 2004.

**10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$**

Not 11. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4\rightleftharpoons$ .

**11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12.a4**

This is the critical moment for Black, since he has to make a choice between two typical Benoni breaks: ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 or ...e7-e6.



### 12...e6

With this move order Peralta aims to divert from both his own game and the main line: 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}f1\pm$ ) 13...a6 14.a5!? $N$ ;  $\leq$  14. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  15.a5 b5 $\rightleftharpoons$  Felgaer-Peralta, La Plata ch-ARG 2009.

WEAPON: Usually Black inserts 12...a6!? 13.a5 and now:

A) We can imagine that White's preparation for this game was based on the following line: 13... $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xb5!$  (not 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8\rightleftharpoons$  Seirawan-Speelman, Reykjavik 1990) 14...axb5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ .



analysis diagram

### A Bit of History

According to Marin (in the magazine Teoría-99), this exchange (b5xe4) favours Black. However, modern practice shows that White dominates the game ( $\mathbb{Q}+Q$  vs.  $\mathbb{Q}+Q$ ) after 16. $\mathbb{W}e1!?$  f5 (16... $\mathbb{Q}f6$

17.c4± with a better pawn structure)  
 17.Qd3 (17.g4!?) 17...Qf6 (if 17...e5  
 18.Qxe4!?) 18.c4± Nithander-  
 Angskog, Stockholm 2009/10;  
 B) 13...e6 14.dxe6



analysis diagram

The key position, in which the ideas need to be updated.

14...Qxe6!? (after 14...fxe6, 15.f5! is the direct approach (15.Qe3!; 15.Qe1!); 15...Qd7 16.fxe6 Qxf3 17.gxf3! (this allows White to further improve the Austrian pawn structure: f3-f4!) 17...Qe5 18.Qf1 Wh4?! (18...g5?) 19.f4! Qc6 20.Qd5± Sochor-Martinec, Czechia 2004) 15.Qd5!? (two useful waiting moves are 15.Qf1!? and 15.Qg1!?) 15...Qd4 (15...Qxd5 16.exd5 Qd4 17.Qf1 Qe8 18.c3 Qf5 19.Wf3 followed by g2-g4) 16.Qf1 (16.Qxf6+? Qxf6 17.Qf1±) 16...Qh5 and now 17.Qg1!N (instead of 17.Qh2 Qc6± as in Ponomariov-Zviagintsev, Poikovsky 2006) 17...Qc6 18.c3± and White is better. If 18...Qxa5?! 19.f5→.

### 13.dxe6

**WEAPON:** 13.f5!N is another interesting line: 13...exf5 14.exf5 Qxd5 (14...Qd7 15.Qe4↑) 15.fxg6 hxg6 16.Qxd5 Qxd5 17.Qxg6 fxg6 18.Wxd5+ Qh7 19.Qf4↑.

### 13...fxe6

**WEAPON:** The second option of 13...Qxe6 is traditionally slightly favourable for White as we have seen in the previous reloaded weapon.



analysis diagram

14.Qf1!? Qd4 (14...d5?! was played in Hakki-Jasim, Teheran zt 2001. Now 15.e5! Qh5 16.We1±) 15.Qe3±; or Ponomariov's patented 15.Qd5! etc.

### 14.Qb5

White takes profit from the fact that the black pawn is not on a6. However, there are some questions to answer here: 14.f5!; 14.Qe1!; 14.Qd2!?

### 14...d5?

This might be a strategic mistake, or a psychological error. I guess Peralta did not want to wait, or suffer without any counterplay after 14...a6 15.Qxd6! Wxd6 16.e5 We7 17.exf6 Qxf6 18.c3±.

### 15.e5±



This structure tends to be good for White when it is reached from a King's Indian. White's pawn wedge is much stronger than Black's e6-d5 formation, and all Black's pieces are too passive. So strategically, Black is almost losing, but there are still some tactics ahead...

**15...♝e4**

**15...♝d7 16.c4!**

**16.♗e3 g5!?**

Black breaks the wedge, but the price he has to pay is the weakening of the central pawn chain and an opening of his kingside. We are approaching the inevitable climax of the drama.

**17.fxg5! ♜xb5 18.axb5 ♜xe5**

**19.♗xe4! dxe4 20.♗xf8+ ♚xf8**

**21.c3 ♘d8 22.♗e2 ♘b8 23.♗f1**

**♗d6 24.♗g1!+-**

A beautiful resource against the aggressive ♜+♝ battery, which allows White to comfortably finish the game.

**24..♜e5 25.♗h5! ♚g7 26.♗g4**

**♚e5 27.♗h5 ♚g7 28.♗xc5 ♜g6**

**29.♗g4 h5 30.♗e2 ♜xg5 31.♗xe4**

**♝e5 32.♗xb7 ♜h8 33.♗xa7**

Black resigned.

### Summary of the flexible 8...♝b8

As these high-level games show, both the moves 8...♝b8 and 8...♝c7 suffer from the same inconvenience – they are not connected to Black's defensive concepts. Therefore, in many major lines they are simply a waste of time.

However, there is still one other option to investigate.

### Game 14 – The Pin 8...♝g4 (582 games=49,2%)

□ Viktor Moskalenko

■ Lars Karlsson

Villa Salou 2010 (8)

**1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♜g7 3.f4 d6 4.♗f3 ♜f6**

**5.♗c3 0-0 6.♗d3 ♜a6 7.0-0 c5 8.d5**

**♝g4!?**



The previous game taught us that the pinning move ...♝g4 is an important factor in Black's defence, as it is in the

Benoni. Perhaps due to its solidity, this set-up is currently more popular than 8...♝b8: after the exchange ♜x♝f3, Black tries to reduce White's attacking potential both against his king (♝g5) and in the centre (e4-e5).

**9.f5!?**

A bit of a puzzle! This advance is known to be dangerous against 8...♝b8. However, here it is quite a new idea (only two games played). Of course, we will first check the main lines – fortunately for White, he can replicate certain ideas and weapons from Game 13:

WEAPON/PUZZLE-1: For instance, 9.♗h1!? ♘b8 transposes to the previous game. And 9...♝c7 allows at least the favourable exchange 10.h3!? ♜xf3 11.♗xf3!±.

**WEAPON/PUZZLE-2:** But not 9.  $\mathbb{W}e1?!$ . This well-known attacking move is premature here in view of Black's reply 9...  $\mathbb{Q}b4!$ , when the vulnerability of the queenside makes White's efforts useless:



analysis diagram

10.a3 (other options are good for Black: 10.  $\mathbb{W}h4$  c4!  $\mp$  and 10.  $\mathbb{Q}d2?!$   $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$   $\mp$  and now if 11.a4?!, e6!  $\mp$  Miliutin-Rakhmangulov, Yuzhny 2010) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  11.cxd3  $\mathbb{W}b6?!$  (11...  $\mathbb{B}b8$  transposes to WEAPON-1 (9.  $\mathbb{W}e1$ ) in the previous game) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{B}ac8$  13.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7\mp$  M. Pavlov-Ponomariov, Alushta tt 1998.

**WEAPON/PUZZLE-3:** 9.h3?! is in the style of Seirawan in Game 13, but without the moves  $\mathbb{Q}h1$  and ...  $\mathbb{B}b8$ .



analysis diagram



Pavel Grochowski

Veteran Swedish chess star grandmaster Lars Karlsson – facing the author's surprise weapon, at the critical juncture on move 21 he failed to find the best option.

9...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  ( $\leq$  10.  $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4=$ ) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (trying out a special idea on the queenside. The standard plan is 10...  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  11.a4 a6 (if 11... e6 12.  $\mathbb{dx}e6\pm$  is similar to the previous main game) 12.a5  $\mathbb{Q}b5?!$  and now, instead of taking on b5, White has 13.  $\mathbb{Q}e2!\pm$  Ehlvest-Azmaiparashvili, Tallinn ch-URS jr 1986) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d2?!$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  13.b3!  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  14.a4 b6 15.  $\mathbb{W}e2$  a6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}af1$   $\mathbb{W}b7$  17. h4!  $\pm$ . The massive concentration of black pieces on the queenside allows White to attack the enemy king: 17... b5 (if 17...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18. e5! or 18. f5?!) 18. axb5 axb5 19. h5 b4 20.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  21.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  22.  $\mathbb{W}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  23. hxg6 fxg6 24.  $\mathbb{W}h4 \rightarrow$  Rodriguez Cespedes-Conquest, Spain tt 2005.

**WEAPON/PUZZLE-4:** 9.a3?! is an invitation in prophylactic style; remember, among others, Rogers-Ftacnik in Game 13.

9...  $\mathbb{Q}c7$  and now:



analysis diagram

A) 10.Qe1!?: after ...Qc7 this attacking set-up ( $\mathbb{Q}h4$  and f4-f5) is traditionally dangerous;

B) 10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11.Qxf3 e6 and now:

B1) Sometimes, White can advance the f-pawn straightaway: 12.f5! exd5 13.exd5 Qd7 14.Qg3 (14.Qe4!?) 14...Qe5 15.Qf4↑ and after the exchange of the Pirc bishop, the black fortress will be weak, Zulfugarli-Kochetkov, Nikolaev zt 1995;

B2) Opening up the game with 12.dxe6± guarantees White the advantage with his bishop pair: 12...fxe6 (12...Qxe6?! is worse here: 13.f5↑; 13.Qf2?! or 13.Qe3±) 13.Qe3 b6 14.Qad1 Qe7 and now 15.f5!N (or 15.Qde1!?, Martin del Campo-Donguines, Manila ol 1992) 15...Qd7 16.Qg3↑. The black army is suffering heavy pressure along the four d-e-f-g-lines.

#### WEAPON/PUZZLE-5: 9.Qc4

With so many attractive alternatives, I do not see much sense in White moving the king's bishop twice. However, this is the most popular option against 8...Qg4, which is also recommended in Khalifman/Soloviov's repertoire book, so let's compare the ideas:



analysis diagram

A) Now 9...Qd7! might be a reasonable idea, since after 10.h3 Qxf3 11.Qxf3 Black wins a tempo in comparison with 9.h3 in WEAPON-3;

B) 9...Qc7 10.h3! Qxf3 (10...Qd7?? is playing with fire: 11.a4 a6 12.e5!↑ Mahjoob-Azmaiparashvili, Tripoli 2004) 11.Qxf3. White controls ...e7-e6 and is ready for queenside action.

B1) Opening the centre with 11...e6? is really dangerous: 12.dxe6 fxe6 13.Qe3 b6 with a similar structure to WEAPON-4.



analysis diagram

Everybody plays 14.Qad1! here: 14...Qe7 and now 15.Qf2?!, improving the queen's bishop: 15...Qh5?! (≥ 15...Qd7 16.Qe3!N) 16.f5 Qe5 17.g4± A.Kovacevic-Chatalbashev, Plovdiv tt 2010;

B2) Therefore, Black responds with the flexible 11...a6?!, known from the Benoni-hybrid: 12.a4 and now:

B21) 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13.a5 (13. $\mathbb{Q}h1$ ; 13. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ) 13...b5 14.axb6  $\mathbb{Q}xb6\rightleftharpoons$  is playable;

B22) 12... $\mathbb{B}b8$  13.a5 e6?! fails again ( $\geq$  13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ): 14.dxe6 (also 14.f5!?, as in WEAPON-4) 14... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  (14...fxe6 15. $\mathbb{Q}e3\pm$ ) 15.f5!? $\uparrow$  Spraggett-Movsziszian, Catalunya tt 2012 – though White is better after every natural move: 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ; 15. $\mathbb{W}d3$ ; 15. $\mathbb{W}f2$ ; 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ;

B23) 12...b6!? (the same waiting strategy) 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$  and only now 13...e6!? (the best moment for this sharp break;  $\leq$  13... $\mathbb{W}b8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (14. $\mathbb{Q}a3$ !) 14... $\mathbb{W}b7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}ab1\pm$  and b2-b4, Grischuk-Ponomariov, Lausanne 2000) 14.dxe6 fxe6 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  d5! (the key pawn sacrifice, after which Black can breathe easily) 16.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5 18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  19. $\mathbb{W}xd5+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  ( $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$  Gharamian-Peralta, Calvia 2007) 20... $\mathbb{Q}ad8=$ .

#### WEAPON/PUZZLE-6: 9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ .

Finally, White can try the same 'primitive' central strategy that was seen in WEAPON-7 in the previous game.



analysis diagram

9... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  10.a4 – just waiting for 10...e6, and now 11.h3!? $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12. $\mathbb{W}xf3$  exd5 13.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ ? 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ .



analysis diagram

In this typical Benoni structure, White usually has more space and some pressure, Vaisser-Degraeve, Val d'Isere ch-FRA 2004.

#### 9... $\mathbb{B}b8$

I guess my opponent was a bit surprised by the inspiring advance f4-f5. Therefore, he opted for a standard idea on the other side.

WEAPON: On 9...gxf5, 10.h3!? was my main point:



10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  12.exf5! $\uparrow$

WEAPON: 9... $\mathbb{W}c8$  10.fxg6!? was played in Logar-Chatalbashev, Rijeka 2009: 10...hxg6 (10...fxg6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !N.

WEAPON: 9... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  (10.fxg6!?) 10...gxf5 11.a3!

fxe4 (11... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}h4\uparrow$ )  
 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  13. $\mathbb{W}xe2\uparrow$   
 Borocz-Mester, Hungary tt  
 1999/00.

#### 10.fxg6 fxg6

If the h-file gets opened with 10...hxg6, White plays 11.a3!? followed by the attacking set-up  $\mathbb{W}e1-h4$  etc.

#### 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$

The arising structure is similar to the theoretical line 8... $\mathbb{H}b8$  9.f5 (see WEAPON-5 in the previous game), but the bishop is already on g4, so the Swedish grandmaster decided to exchange it immediately.

#### 11... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 12.gxf3!

White needs to set up a new pawn wedge. In case of 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ , the e5-square will be a strong outpost for the black pieces.

#### 12... $\mathbb{Q}c7$



This is what I expected from the opening: a complex middlegame with an unusual pawn construction. This will allow you to invent some unusual plans.

#### 13.f4

Aiming for an attack with  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and e4-e5. However, the blocking move 13.a4!? was natural.

#### 13...b5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ b4 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ $\mathbb{Q}h8$

A prophylactic move. He could play more aggressively with 15... $\mathbb{Q}b5\uparrow$ ?

16. $\mathbb{Q}h1\uparrow$ ?, when White prepares f4-f5 and threatens  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ .

#### 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

The typical break 16.a3!? was a nice alternative.

#### 16... $\mathbb{W}d7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ e6 18.dxe6 $\mathbb{W}xe6$

#### 19. $\mathbb{W}d2$

The following fragment combines several interesting features of piece play. The whole d6-c5-b4 formation is a strategic weakness, while the central white pawns on e4 and f4 are real attackers, posing the threat of the f4-f5 advance.

#### 19... $\mathbb{Q}g4\uparrow$ ?

With this knight jump, Black tries to solve the problems in his position in a dynamical way by sacrificing the d6-pawn. If 19... $\mathbb{Q}b5$  20.f5↑ or 19... $\mathbb{H}be8$  20. $\mathbb{H}ae1\uparrow\uparrow$  with central pressure.

#### 20. $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ $\mathbb{W}xg4$ 21. $\mathbb{W}xd6!$

White must accept the material and play the most aggressive option.



#### 21... $\mathbb{Q}e6?$

This is a tactical mistake, since it allows a very strong reply. Can you see it?

A better option was 21... $\mathbb{Q}b5$  22. $\mathbb{W}xc5$   $\mathbb{H}fc8\uparrow\uparrow$  with compensation, since the black pieces are active.

#### 22.f5!

The planned break.

#### 22...gxf5

Maybe Black did not calculate all the consequences of this operation properly, but this move leads to quick defeat. However, moving the knight on e6 or defending it does not solve the problems either: 22... $\mathbb{Q}g5$  23. $\mathbb{W}d1!$  $\pm$  or 22... $\mathbb{B}b6$  23. $\mathbb{W}d1!$  $\pm$ .

**23. $\mathbb{W}xe6!$**

The queen is devouring black pieces and defending the white position at the same time.

**23... $\mathbb{B}e8$  24. $\mathbb{W}d7!$**

Keeping the pin against the black queen on g4 intact. If 24. $\mathbb{W}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  25. $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{W}h4$ .

**24... $\mathbb{Q}e5$**

The decisive moment. Black unleashes the rest of his army for the final attack. 24... $\mathbb{B}d8$  25. $\mathbb{W}c7+$ .

**25. $\mathbb{B}xf5!$**

Another major piece joins the fight and the combination, based on intermediate moves, continues.

**25... $\mathbb{B}g8$**

If 25... $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  26. $\mathbb{B}xf8+$ , winning the black queen.

**26. $\mathbb{B}f7!$**

Threatening mate on h7. 26. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  was also good enough.

**26... $\mathbb{W}h4$**

26... $\mathbb{W}xe4$  27. $\mathbb{Q}f2+/-$ .

**27. $\mathbb{Q}g5!!$**



A tactical resource with a double motif: it diverts the black pieces both from the attack and the defence. Black resigned immediately, since the white bishop is untouchable.

#### Summary 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ and final opinion on 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

Against the pin, White does not need to use the main response 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  at all, since he has several more interesting options, like 9. $\mathbb{Q}h1!?$ , 9.a3!?, and 9.h3!?.

My final conclusion is that the Benoni-hybrid set-up with 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  is too risky and can only work against an unprepared opponent.

#### Conclusion Chapter 3: Austrian Attack with 5...0-0

Naturally, this continuation is richer in strategic and tactical chances than the 5...c5 line. Since both sides can enforce positions with different pawn structures and piece set-ups, there are more dynamic ideas.

This means that after 5...0-0 Black's preparation has to be much broader; otherwise he will be destroyed even more quickly than in the first line 5...c5 !

Still, in the dessert of this book – the final chapter – you will find some new weapons in Modern style.

## Chapter 4

# The Flexible Move 4. $\hat{Q}e3$

...c7-c6 and ...a7-a6 against the 150 Attack, the Sämisch and the Austrian Attack



'The setup f2-f3,  $\hat{Q}e3$  and  $\hat{W}d2$  is commonly used against the King's Indian Defence and Dragon Sicilian, and can also be used against the Pirc; indeed, this system is as old as the Pirc itself.' – Wikipedia, Pirc Defence.

Pirc: 1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\hat{Q}f6$  3. $\hat{Q}c3$  g6 4.  $\hat{Q}e3$       Modern: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.  $\hat{Q}c3$   $\hat{Q}g7$  4.  $\hat{Q}e3$



### Puzzle, Critical Points

In this chapter we will deal with the most flexible and most poisonous system against the Pirc and the Modern. Most fans in our day call it 'the 150 Attack'.

\* By playing 4.  $\hat{Q}e3$  White prevents an early ...c7-c5. After that, the opening can transpose into systems like the Sämisch (f2-f3) or the Hybrid (Classical with  $\hat{Q}f3$ ), or others.

\* White's typical pawn moves are prophylactic: f2-f3, h2-h3, a2-a4, combined with attacking moves: f2-(f3-)f4, g2-g4 and h2-(h3-)h4.

- \* In the Classical Pirc (with ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , see diagram above, left), White provokes the sortie ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ . However, both theory and practice have proved that this is particularly dangerous for Black (see Game 16), so White started to play  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  and  $\mathbb{W}d2$  in all sorts of move orders, omitting f2-f3.
- \* In the Modern Pirc (with  $\mathbb{Q}g7$ , diagram above, right), Black delays the development of the king's knight, but this allows White even more possible set-ups in the opening. For instance, against 4...c6 or 4...a6, the Austrian thrust 5.f4!? is a fashionable option, see Games 15 and 18.
- \* However, often both diagram positions lead to the same lines, which is the reason why we will study them together.
- \* Against the Sämisch Attack, known from the King's Indian Defence ( $\mathbb{W}d2$  and f2-f3), Black usually does not castle immediately and prefers to advance his queenside pawns with 4...c6 or 4...a6, followed by ...b7-b5.
- \* Meanwhile, the question of when White will implement his planned set-up remains open during moves 5-7.

### Directions

- Game 15 – Black's universal set-up with ...c7-c6.  
 Game 16 – The Classical Sämisch (f2-f3): 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , 4...c6 and 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ .  
 Game 17 – Black's ...a7-a6 vs the 150 Attack.  
 Game 18 – Black's 4...a6 vs the Austrian set-up (f2-f4).  
 Games 19 and 20 – Black's 4...a6 vs the Sämisch Attack (f2-f3).

### Game 15 – Experimenting with the Universal Move ...c7-c6



The first game of this chapter contains a great mix of traditional lines in the Sämisch and the 150 Attack, some of them employed in the author's own practice with black.

But first I want to show you a few magic positions created by other Masters, with the Pirc skeleton!



Position 1

After Ivanchuk's prophylactic 9... $\mathbb{H}e8!$ , just waiting for the  $\mathbb{Q}f1$  to move, White experienced a kind of zugzwang (see line B, the Classical 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ).



Position 3

8...h6!? stops the white g- and h-pawns. This method to block the kingside is Black's second weapon (it would also have been good in Game 16).



Position 2



Position 4

Find out how grandmaster Leonid Gofshtein used the h7-square for his king's knight against the Sämisch! See the 'WEAPON' line in Smirin-Gofshtein, after 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$ ? and 9... $\mathbb{Q}h7!$ .

Finally, this position leads to the main game (White to move): Black does not play the standard early manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-d7-b6$ . First he waits, in order to be able to exchange  $\mathbb{Q}c8 \times \mathbb{Q}h3$ .



**KEEP IN MIND:** Black can postpone castling for a while, but not forever!

□ Evgeni Janev

■ Viktor Moskalenko

Barbera del Valles 2005 (6)

1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6

→ WEAPON: 3...c6!? used to be my 'universal' move in many Pirc systems (see next chapters):

4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !? (instead, 4...d5!? is similar to the Modern Caro-Kann: 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (or 5.e5 f6=) 5...dxe4 6. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  etc., which is approximately balanced) 5.e5 (against the Sämisch move 5.f3 Black can at least transpose into the main line by playing 5...d6; and after 5. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (or the direct 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ), 5...d5 or

the tricky 5... 0-0!?, are possible deviations) 5...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  6.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 7.  $\mathbb{W}f3$  e6 (7... 0-0!? 8.  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  d6= is an interesting gambit) 8. h4!? d6 9. exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  10. 0-0-0.



analysis diagram

This position occurred in Delgado Crespo-Frometa Castillo, Havana 2001. Now 10...h5!∞ was a necessary block, which is also helpful after 11.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}xf4+!$ ? 12.  $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}h6=$ .

#### 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

One of the two key positions of Chapter 4.



#### 4...c6!?

Until today, I've always used this set-up against the Sämisch and the 150 Attack. Black temporarily delays his kingside development in order to discourage the plan with  $\mathbb{W}d2$  and  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , first preparing the traditional counterplay with ...b7-b5.

4...a6 is a popular alternative in the Modern – it will be covered in Games 17 and 18.

#### 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$ !

This is the main attacking set-up for White against Black's kingside castling. The objective is to exchange the dark-squared bishops and advance the kingside pawns against the black fortress. The '150' alternative leads to a great mix of possible quieter lines:

A) For instance, 5.a4!? (preventing ...b7-b5 at the price of his own 0-0-0) 5...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6.f3.



analysis diagram

This Sämisch set-up is less logical now, since it allows Black to achieve a comfortable game in the centre. The classical interpretation of the system would be 6.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  or 6.h3, which transposes into line B.

6...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  7.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0-0 8.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  e5 9. 0-0-0  $\mathbb{H}e8$ !? 10.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  11.  $\mathbb{H}ad1$  a6!? 12. dxе5 dxе5 (12...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?) 13. g4?! (13.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ !) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  (13...  $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ?) 14. b4 b5! 15. a5  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  Black controls the key squares c5-d4-f4, as in Mammadova-Moskalenko, Sant Marti 2012;

B) 5.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !?  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6. h3 0-0. This natural development leads to Classical/Hybrid lines, where the key moves are  $\mathbb{Q}e3/h3$  and ...c7-c6.



analysis diagram

Apparently, White is playing the opening without ambition – his solidly defended centre could offer him the better chances in the long run. However, he cannot avoid a complex middlegame struggle.

**WEAPON:** Against the tricky move 7... $\mathbb{W}d2!$ ? Black has two possibilities:

**PUZZLE:** 7...b5. In general, this early advance makes less sense against the Classical set-up. However, it may be used a few moves earlier to avoid White's annoying idea after 5.h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6.g4!? – instead of the knight move Black can play 5...b5!?, see line C.

B1) After 7... $\mathbb{W}d2!$ ? b5 we get 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3!$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  9.0-0, preparing the typical 'Ruy Lopez' manoeuvre  $\mathbb{Q}c3-e2-g3$ . But Black should not play ...e7-e5 too early: 9... $\mathbb{W}c7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5!? 11.c3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  a5!N with reasonable counterplay.

I prefer continuing with 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ ? and ...e7-e5: 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (if 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b5!) 8...e5! 9.0-0 (with the white bishop on d3, the exchange 9.dxe5 does not present any problems for Black after 9...dxe5 or 9... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?) and now:



analysis diagram

9...exd4! – a classical motif in the Philidor, aiming to attack the e4-pawn. With h2-h3 it is even more effective.

B11) If 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  b5! 11. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (11...b4!?) 12.a3 a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  c5! 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  c4!N (15... $\mathbb{W}c7$ ?, Magem Badals-Bernard, France tt-2 1996/97; and now 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ ??) 16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  looks excellent!

B12) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$  (it is not so easy to decide how to position the rooks. If 11. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ !N 13. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ ??) 11... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$ !? (again 12... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ !?) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ ?? looks interesting) 13. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  14.cxd3=, Eliet-Bacrot, France tt 2005.

B2) 7.a4!? is aimed against ...b7-b5. 7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ ? (there is no need to fear a4-a5. 7...b6! was played by Marin, though, and the results were not bad).

B21) After 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5 9.dxe5 dxe5 a well-known type of position arises:



analysis diagram

10.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (10.  $\mathbb{W}d6$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  is OK; 10. a5  $\mathbb{W}e7$  11.  $\mathbb{W}d3!$ ? (11.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ ) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  12.  $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  13.0-0  $\mathbb{E}e8=$  Birnboim-Beim, Rishon Le Ziyyon 1992) 10...  $\mathbb{W}e7$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  12.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c5=$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  (13.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6\neq$ , controlling d4 and f4, is comfortable for Black) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{E}d8$  15. a5  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16.  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  17.  $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$  Velikov-Bischoff, Plovdiv Ech-tt 1983;

B22) 8. a5!? (White delays the development of the f1-bishop in order to keep open the possibility of playing  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  without loss of time) 8...  $\mathbb{W}c7!$ .



analysis diagram

It appears that Black can play a semi-waiting game as well...

9.  $\mathbb{W}d2$  (9.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  can be safely answered with 9...e5).

B221) The premature 9...e5 10. dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  (10...dxe5 11.  $\mathbb{Q}c4\uparrow$ ) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}e2\pm$  'leaves Black in a passive form of the Philidor structure. The d6-pawn is vulnerable and the queenside is not easy to improve' – Marin in ChessBase Magazine 128;

B222) 9...  $\mathbb{E}e8!$ . The 'Breyer' move from the Ruy Lopez – four-dimensional vision by Ivanchuk! 10.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  is directed against ...e7-e5. Now:

**TRICK:** 10...  $\mathbb{E}b8??$  takes away an important square from the

queen, allowing 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}e6+-.$

10...  $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  (11.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$ ) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6=$ ) 11... d5.



analysis diagram

Here we have one demonstration of Black's flexibility in the Pirc Defence. Now, 12.  $\mathbb{Q}b3!?$  N (12.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  e5! was seen in the game Hartston-Koshy, Delhi 1982; 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  dxe4 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  e5 $\uparrow$ ; 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 13.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  e5 $\uparrow!$ ) 12...dxe4 13.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{E}f8!$  (another display of flexibility. 14.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6=$  was a continuation of the dramatic Pirc story between Sutovsky and Ivanchuk, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011 (see Chapter 3)).

WEAPON: 10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5!  
11. dxe5 dxe5 12.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  This is the beginning of a logical regrouping with ...  $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , eventually followed by ...  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (Marin). 13.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (the safest defence; 14...  $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$ ) 15.  $\mathbb{W}e2$  (15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4\bar{F}$ ; 15.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c8=$ ; 15.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{Q}xe6=$ ) 15...  $\mathbb{Q}xc4!$  (this exchange marks the surest way to equality. Less good is 15...h6, Friedel-Abbasov,

Sautron 2007) 16.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$  b5!  
17. axb6 axb6=.



analysis diagram

This line may continue with a defensive trick suggested by Marin: 18. b4?! b5!  
19.  $\mathbb{W}xf7+$   $\mathbb{W}xf7$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$   
21. bxc5  $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ .

WEAPON: After 5.h3?! and the natural reply 5...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ , White can transpose into line B by playing 6.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  or 6.a4 etc. However, there is also the separate idea of the extended fianchetto move 6.g4?!. Black has to be careful here:



analysis diagram

1) 6...  $\mathbb{W}a5$  7.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  e5 8.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ? (8. dx5 dxe5 9.  $\mathbb{W}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}e6=$  G.Jones-McNab, Coulsdon 2008) 8...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  9.0-0 with an edge for White, Laine-Nippula, Finland tt 2001/02;

2) 6... b5?! 7.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ? (7.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ?)  
7...  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  (Black can also try a gambit with 7...  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?! 8.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$ +  $\mathbb{Q}d7\#$ ) 8. f4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  b4 11.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c5 13.  $\mathbb{Q}fg5$ !  $\mathbb{W}b6\infty$  Svidler-Ivanchuk, Lugo 2006.

WEAPON: After 4.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c6, White can return to the Austrian Attack with 5.f4?!. Recently this became more popular than the immediate f2-f4.

5...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (even after the queen's dynamic sortie 5...  $\mathbb{W}b6$  6.  $\mathbb{Q}b1\pm$  White's traditional pawn wedge is still very solid)  
6.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 7.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  b5?! 8.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ .



analysis diagram

White is ready for the 'matador attack' with e4-e5 and h2-h4. For instance, 8...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  9.e5?! (9.a3  $\mathbb{Q}b6\#$ ; 9.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ; 9.f5 b4 10.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c5#) and now:

TRICK: 9... b4 is a typical counterthrust when the white queen is placed on d2. But here it is not so effective: 10.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5\#$  11. h4! → Baltag-Zickus, Urgup 2004.

9...  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ? is the safest defence: 10.  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  11. h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ . The arising position is quite balanced – at least, there are no prospects of a mating attack in the near future!

**5...b5!?**

By advancing his b-pawn, Black declares war on the queenside.

**⚠ KEEP IN MIND:** 5... $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$  is a more flexible strategy against any system used by White.

**6.h4**

Before pushing the h- and g-pawns, White usually first plays the Sämisch move 6.f3. But here it leads to the same position.

**→ WEAPON:** White could still opt for one of the Classical lines (see the lines given after the previous move), or also 6.f4. In the 1990's, both Anand and Morozevich tested this Austrian motif.

But in our days, after 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$  (threatening ...b5-b4 and then ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (if 7.e5 b4 (7... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ ) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5\rightleftharpoons$  Udeshi-T.L. Petrosian, Bhubaneswar 2011) 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$  (7...e5oo Anand-J. Polgar, Monaco rapid 1996) 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  9. $\mathbb{W}xe3=$  the score is 1-3: Black has nothing to fear after the  $\mathbb{Q}x\mathbb{Q}$  exchange.

**6...h5!**

**→ WEAPON:** 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$ . Usually, in the Classical or Modern Sämisch, either Black's  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  or his  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  does not move at an early stage. And as you will see

in Game 16, Black's main intention is ... $\mathbb{Q}d7-b6$ , in order to meet the advance 8.g4 with 8...h5! 9.g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ .

However, Black has two other promising ideas: 7.f3  $\mathbb{Q}bd7!?$  (this is the first idea. 7...h5 would transpose to the main game) 8.g4!? (8...h6 is not dangerous: 8... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  9. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  (9...b4!?) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5! $\rightleftharpoons$ ) and now: 8...h5 9.g5  $\mathbb{Q}h7!$  This may be another good square for the knight, reaching a practically unknown position against the Sämisch (only 20 games played!).



analysis diagram

10. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  (10.f4  $\mathbb{Q}b6\rightleftharpoons$ ) 10...b4  
11. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{B}b8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  c5! $\rightleftharpoons$  13.f4  $\mathbb{W}c7$   
14.0-0-0. After this 'logical' move, Black unleashes a strong attack on the queenside, which practically plays itself. White's counterplay in the centre comes too late... 14... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (14...c4!?) 15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  16.f5 c4! $\rightarrow$  17. $\mathbb{W}e1$  b3 18.axb3  $\mathbb{B}xb3!-$ . White cannot defend his b2-pawn and his position falls apart: 19.e5  $\mathbb{B}xb2$  20.f6 c3 21. $\mathbb{B}d3$   $\mathbb{B}b7$  22. $\mathbb{B}xc3$   $\mathbb{B}b1+$  23. $\mathbb{B}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  24.fxg7  $\mathbb{B}g$  0-1 Smirin-Gofshtein, Ischia 1996.

**PUZZLE:** Keep in mind the second weapon: 8...h6!? 9.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b6!N$ . In the next game you will find the same defensive

concept, arising after a different order of moves.

**7.f3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$**



This is one of the key positions in the Sämisch set-up, for both the Modern and the Classical Pirc (without the early manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}b8-d7-b6$ ).

**8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$**

The most popular manoeuvre: the knight is going to the desired g5-square.

**TRICK:** After 8.0-0-0!? (or, for example, 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ) 8... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ !?

9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ ! etc. I prefer waiting for  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  before moving the  $\mathbb{Q}b8$ , since 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  allows 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ !?

$\mathbb{Q}b6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , which is still not so clear, but that  $\mathbb{Q}$  on g5 is annoying!

**8... $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ !**

In my opinion, this  $\mathbb{Q}x\mathbb{Q}$  exchange is always an important option.

**9. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10.0-0-0**

Logical. If 10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  a6 11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  c5!?

**10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ !?**

Although play remains double-edged, it is hardly possible to indicate a clear plan for Black.

**WEAPON:** 10...a6!?. For all the above-mentioned reasons (given during moves 6-10), this universal opening plan is a

good alternative, preparing ... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  and ...c6-c5!. 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  c5! looks promising for Black.

**11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$**



White faces the unpleasant threat ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  and has to look for a favourable square for his c3-knight in order to defend the c4-square without weakening his king's position with b2-b3.

**11... $\mathbb{R}b8$**

The idea to improve the rook is correct, but it is not played in the best move order, since White has the dangerous threat of e4-e5-e6.

11... $\mathbb{Q}c4$  is also too risky: 12. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  bxc4 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  d5 14.e5 (14. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !) 14... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ∞ Pinski-Barwinski, Warsaw 1994.

**WEAPON:** Obviously, before castling kingside, it is advisable for Black to make a maximum number of useful moves – thus preparing a counterattack on the queenside. I've played two exciting games with the move 11... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ !, and in both cases the opening went excellently for me. However, this line still needs a few analytical improvements:

12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{R}b8$  (this might be premature. I would recommend 12...0-0-0!?, when it seems that Black is finally well prepared

for the sharp lines arising after 13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (or 13.g4 b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5??) 13...b4 (13... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ ??) 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5??) 13.e5! (this advance forces both players to make some tough decisions over the board. This is why it is sometimes better to analyse the situation at home! Less good is 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a6 (better was 13... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ ) 14.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  15.e6 fxe6 (15... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$ ) 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  bxc4?? Lakos-Moskalenko, Villa Salou 2002) 13... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  (the key moment; 13...dxe5? 14.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5\infty$ )



analysis diagram

A) After 14.e6, with the expected jump 14... $\mathbb{Q}c4!$  Black obtains the better chances: 15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  bxc4 16.exf7+  $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 18.c3  $\mathbb{Q}b5!$ ?→ M.Garcia-Moskalenko, Elegido 2008;

B) White should play 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  and now 15.e6! fxe6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  c5!? with great complications.

### 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

With this move White defends against ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , but loses his chances of getting a straightforward attack. Again, 12.e5!? is the critical option for White: 12... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  (12...b4? 13.exf6! bxc3 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8\#$ ; 12...dxe5 13.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  is unclear, for example 15.e6 (15.f4?) 15...f5!) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14.e6 fxe6 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g5\infty$  with a similar position

to the one in the previous line (without the moves  $\mathbb{Q}b1$ - $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ).

### 12...0-0



Finally, Black achieves the desired opening position, with promising counter-chances on the queenside.

### 13.g4? $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ b4! 15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ c5!!

At this moment my disappointed opponent went for complications by playing

### 16.e5

16.dxc5 dxc5 17. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  e5↑.

### 16...dxe5 17.dxc5 $\mathbb{Q}bd5$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}c4!$

Simply inevitable in this tactical struggle. However, Black still has some time to reinforce his centre.

### 18...e6!

18... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$ ? 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8\#$  is the best line according to the engine.

### 19. $\mathbb{Q}f2$

19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  exd5??.

### 19...e4?

19... $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}fc8\#$  was also good enough.



After the text Black gets to open the attacking diagonal ( $h8-a1$ ) for the 'Modern' bishop on  $g7$ ! Black's minor pieces are more active than White's and all the key squares are in his hands.

**20...♝xd5**

If  $20.fxe4 \square f4!$ .

**20...♝xd5 21.fxe4 ♜xb2+!**

Not so difficult, but a well-prepared material-winning combination. Unfortunately, I got confused in time-trouble...

**22.♗xb2 ♜e5+ 23.♔c1 ♜xe3**

**24.♕xe3**

Or  $24.♗xe3 ♜a1+ 25.♔d2 ♜xg1\#$ .

**24...♜a1+ 25.♔d2 ♜xg1# 26.gxh5**

**♝bd8+ 27.♔d3**

Here I played a crazy move that allowed White to survive:



**27...f5?!**

An inappropriate Stonewall! The simple  $27...♝g7\#$  or  $27...♜d7!?$  → should win.

**28.♖xf5 ♜xf5 29.♕xe6 gxh5  
30.♖e8+ ♜xe8 31.♕xe8+ ♜g7**

Now both kings are so exposed that the result must be a draw.

**32.♗e7+ ♜f7 33.♗e5+ ♜g8**

**34.♖xh5 ♜g2+ 35.♔c1 ♜g1+**

**36.♔d2 ♜g2+ 37.♗e2 ♜d5**

**37...♜xe2+? 38.♔xe2 ♜h7#** was the last winning chance.

**38.♗g4+ ♜h7 39.♗xb4 ♜xa2**

**40.♗e4+ ♜g7 41.♗e5+ ♜h7**

**42.♗e4+ ♜g7 43.h5 ♜a5+ 44.♗e2**

**♝c7 45.♗g6+ ♜h8 46.♗h6+ ♜g8**

**47.♗g5+ ♜h7 48.♗g6+ ♜h8**

**49.♗d6 ♜e7+ 50.♔e5 ♜g7 51.h6**

**♝g2+ 52.♔f3 ♜xd6 53.cxd6 ♜xc2**

**54.♗e4 ♜d2 55.♗d3 ♜e2+ 56.♗f5**

**♝d2 57.♗e4 ♜e2+ 58.♗d5 ♜e8**

**59.d7**  $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

### Summary ...c7-c6

After  $4.♗e3$   $c6!?$ , White can adopt the sharp Sämisch set-up ( $♗d2/f3$ ), allowing Black to play the counter-trust  $...b7-b5$ . Or he can opt for one of the more solid systems, where Black usually responds in the centre with  $...e7-e5$ . In all cases, Black's defence is flexible and the arising middlegame struggle is complex.

### Game 16 – The Classical Sämisch (f2-f3): $2...♝f6$ , $4...c6$ and $6...♝bd7$

As we have seen in the previous game, White's dynamic system with  $♗e3-♗d2-f3$  (similar to the well-known Sämisch Attack in the King's Indian) leads to double-edged play. Through the centuries, it has been used by attacking players – matadors – although now they are devoted to the 150 Attack. The statistics of the Sämisch lines, as well as the practical results and the existing theory, are also unstable and most likely misleading. Experience in every aspect creates a clearer view on the subject.

### Grandmaster Marin about the Classical Sämisch

$4...c6$   $5.♗d2$   $b5$   $6.f3$   $♝bd7$  (note: in the previous game Black did not use the early manoeuvre  $...♝bd7$ )



\* ...after having played numerous games against this line (most of them, quite successfully), I have understood that White is entitled to have a similarly pleasant feeling: after all, he can combine strategic elements with attacking ideas, without the necessity of embarking long forced (and super-analysed) variations. Practice has also taught me that for Black it is essential to correlate the order in which certain "typical" moves are played with White's concrete play. More than once, I have failed to find the correct answer over the board, somewhere in the move range 8-10, which is suggestive of the complexity of the position in general.'

\* ...Black seems to be absolutely fine in most of the lines, but should not forget that the final outcome of the game depends on the quality of the play in the complex middlegame. I would make a special mention of the variation 7.g4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  8.h4 h5 9.g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  10.d5!?



'where play becomes more concrete than usual and one has to analyse a lot before drawing reliable conclusions.' – Marin (ChessBase Magazine 128).

We will search for the right answers, following the steps of a highly combative game – trying to combine all those elements.

□ Andrey Volokitin  
 ■ Alexander Beliavsky

Portoroz Vidmar mem 2001 (6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♗c3

WEAPON and PUZZLE: The interesting 3.f3!? allows both sides maximum flexibility in their opening choices: 3...g6 4.♗e3 ♜bd7 5.♗d2! and here 5...c6 is an attempt to play a Classical Sämisch Pirc. However, White can transpose into a Sämisch King's Indian by simply playing 6.c4!, then ♜c3 etc.



analysis diagram

Therefore, Black has to find a different set-up, for instance with 3...c5!? – a new invitation to the Benoni! But here are some important alternatives:

A) After 4.dxc5!? ♜a5+ 5.♗c3 ♜xc5 6.♗d3 ♜c6 7.♗e3 ♜a5 8.♗e2 g6!? we have the skeleton of the Sicilian Dragon:



analysis diagram



Legendary Slovenian/Ukrainian grandmaster Alexander Beliavsky was a more balanced player than young matador Volokitin in their combative Sämisch battle.

9.♗d4 ♜g7 10.♗b5 ♜xb5 (10...♜c7?!) 11.♗d5 ♜d7 $\rightleftharpoons$ ) 11.♗xb5 ♜d7 12.0-0-0 a6 13.♗xc6 ♜xc6 14.♗e2 0-0 ½-½ Kuzubov-Chatalbashev, Reykjavík 2011;

B) 4.c3 would lead to an Alapin Sicilian, adopted from time to time by grandmaster Evgeny Sveshnikov. One interesting way for Black to fight for the initiative is 4...e6!? (the line 4...xd4 5.cxd4 g6 6.♗c3 ♜g7 7.♗d3 0-0 8.♗ge2 e5 9.d5 unexpectedly leads to a genuine Sämisch King's Indian!) 5.dxc5 (a principled answer, which, however, does not bring the desired result) 5...d5! (transposing to the Flexible French!) 6.e5 (6.exd5 ♜xc5? $\rightleftharpoons$  Merwin-Khachiyan, Reno 2006) 6...♗fd7 7.f4 ♜xc5 8.♗f3 f6! $\uparrow$  Shubit-Khachiyan, Minneapolis 2005;

C) 4.♗e2. Chances are that it will now become a Sicilian English Attack. However... 4...e6!? 5.♗e3 (renewing the invitation to a Sicilian. In case of

5.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}a5+$  6. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$  dxc5!?  
 (6... $\mathbb{W}xc5$  7. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  a6 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  leads to a Scheveningen where Black may wonder why he has developed his queen so soon) 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 8.g3  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 10.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d8$  11. $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with an equal game, Kurnosov-Zablotsky, Vladimir 2002) 5...d5!?



analysis diagram

A new possibility pops up: the French! 6.dxc5 (finally, the game takes an independent course. 6.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  7.f4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  looks nice for Black. White's minor pieces are far from optimally placed for the French structure) 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ ! (development is more important) 7. $\mathbb{Q}bc3$  (7.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$ ) 7...dxe4= Galkin-Kramnik, Moscow 2011;

D) Finally, 4.d5 e5!? (obviously, 4...e6!? and 4...g6!? may transpose into a Benoni) 5.dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$ .



analysis diagram

Now the opening qualifies under B07. In other words, it is still a Pirc Defence (Miscellaneous Systems)! 6.c4  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6 (8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ?) 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  b5 10.cxb5 d5 11.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  c4↑ Mundet Riera-Moskalenko, Banyoles 2005.

3...g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c6!? 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$ !

In the previous game we covered White's alternatives leading to Hybrid or Classical systems like 5.a4, 5.h3, 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and the Austrian motif of 5/6.f4.

5...b5!?

Whereas in the Modern Defence the  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  does not move, here, in the Classical line, by delaying the development of the  $\mathbb{Q}f8$ , Black intends to inhibit a direct kingside attack by White based on an early  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , which would simply lose a tempo after ... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$ .

PUZZLE: 5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 6. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  (6. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ?) 6...h6 7. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  8.h3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9.f4↑ transposes to the Pirc with 4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , where Black plays ...c7-c6. However, in this case White has invested a useful extra tempo in h2-h3.



analysis diagram

5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  is not advisable: 6. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !? (or 6.f3!?) 0-0, allowing the Grand Prix Attack with 7.h4!) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  7. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c5 was played not long ago in Caruana-Ivanchuk, Biel 2009. How-

ever, White has a 'strategic refutation' in this line: 9.d5!±, playing a slightly favourable Benoni – without Black's key piece ♜g7!

**6.f3 ♜bd7**



The key position of the Classical Sämisch. Of course, this tabiya can arise via different move orders.

**7.g4!?**

This advance is by far the most popular move for White (454 games = 54,4%).

A) As in the note to move 5, the strategic exchange 7.♕h6 should not pose Black serious problems: 7...♕xh6 (or first 7...b4!? 8.♘d1 ♕xh6 9.♗xh6 ♛b6= London-Molner, Parsippany 2006) 8.♗xh6 ♛a5 9.♗d2 b4 10.♘ce2 c5!= was played in Mogranzini-Giorgetti, Siena 1998.



analysis diagram

In this case the Benoni advance 11.d5! is not annoying, since Black is far ahead in development.

B) 7.0-0-0 should be regarded as a premature commitment (183 games = 46,4% only).

**WEAPON/PUZZLE:** 7...♕b6!?

is quite similar to the modern set-up from the previous main game: 8.♘d3 (8.g4?! b4!) 8...♗c7!? (or 8...♗c4!?) 9.h4 h5 10.♘h3 ♗xh3!? etc.

7...b4!? 8.♘ce2 a5 9.g4 (9.e5?! ♘d5=) 9...♗b6 10.♘g3!? (10.♘f4 h5 11.g5 ♘fd7∞ Wei Chenpeng-Hess, Chalkidiki 2003) 10...h5 11.g5 (11.e5? ♘fd5=) 11...♘fd7 12.h4.



analysis diagram

This line is more or less forced. In the long run, White's kingside attack can become unpleasant. His main threat is f4-f5 followed by ♘h3-f4, hitting e6 and g6. However, Black has a new strategic resource: 12...d5!=. For a 100% Pirc player, this may not be an easy move to find, but that is not the case for a French specialist! By switching the play from the dark squares to the light ones, Black aims to block the position on the kingside, in order to keep his chances on the other wing intact, Tolnai-Chernin, Austria tt 1993/94;

C) 7.♘h3. White is going to use the f2-square for the knight, over-defending the centre. However, his other pieces are still passive: 7...♗c7!? (7...♗g7 8.♘f2

0-0=) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  a6!? 9.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10. 0-0 0-0 11.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (11. f4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ?). Here Black should attack the enemy centre with the c-pawn by 11...c5!? $\mp$  as in Hartston-Rukavina, Vrnjacka Banja zt 1972;

D) To me, after White aims for the attacking set-up with f2-f3, the queenside break 7.a4 always looks a bit ridiculous: 7...b4 8.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (8...a5!? 9.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (9.c3 bxc3=) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 11. 0-0 e5 $\mp$ ) 9.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 11. 0-0 c5 (11...e5!? 12. c3  $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ! 13.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  d5! $\mp$ ) 12. c3  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  13. cxb4  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  $\mp$  German-Tkachiev, Villa Martelli 1997.

#### PUZZLE: 7.h4



analysis diagram

7...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (see the previous game for 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ !?, 8.g4 h5 (or 8...h6!?, see the WEAPON on move 7) 9.g5  $\mathbb{Q}h7$ !; Black should refrain from 7...h5! because of 8.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  and  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ) 8.e5!? (8.g4!?, h5 9.g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  etc.) is less dangerous than it looks. White should probably transpose to the main line after 8... $\mathbb{Q}fd5$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}h5$ ?) 9.h5  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  b4 11.  $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  dx5 13. hxg6 fxg6 $\mp$  Adell Corts-Marín, Valencia 2002.

E) Finally, let's check the sharp advance 7.d5!?



analysis diagram

7...cxd5! 8.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  (8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ !?, 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  10. exd5 0-0 $\mp$ ) 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !? (White's point) 10...e5 (10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ !N 11. 0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g8\infty$ ) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  b4 13.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$  (13.c3 a5) 13...h5 14. h4 a5 $\mp$  Black achieved a satisfactory (though still complex) position, Brookes-Sulskis, Guernsey 2011.

#### 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ?

Black clears the d7-square for the other knight.

PUZZLE: Remember 7... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ !?, 8.h4 h5 (for 8...h6!?, see the following weapon) 9.g5  $\mathbb{Q}h7$ ! transposes to Gofshtein's weapon in the previous game.

WEAPON: 7...h6!? is one more practical way to block White's g- and h-pawns:

8.h4

PUZZLE: In the line 8.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10. h4 h5 11. g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  $\mp$ , compared to the main game, here we have the  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  vs.  $\mathbb{Q}e2-g3$ , which probably favours Black.

8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ !?, 9. 0-0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ !N with an unexplored position – zero games!



### 8.h4!

A) The exchange  $8.\mathbb{Q}h6?!$  is still not good enough:  $8...b4\ 9.\mathbb{Q}d1\ \mathbb{Q}xh6\ 10.\mathbb{W}xh6\ e5?!\ 11.dxe5\ dxe5\ 12.h4\ \mathbb{Q}e6\mp$  Yudasin-Popchev, Albena 1985;

B) 8.b3 also delays the attack:  $8...\mathbb{W}c7\ 9.h4\ h5\ 10.g5\ \mathbb{Q}fd7\ 11.f4?!\ (11.\mathbb{Q}ge2\ a5?\mp)\ 11...b4\ 12.\mathbb{Q}ce2$  (White is going to play f4-f5 and  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ )  $12...a5?N$  with the idea  $13.f5\ gxf5!\ 14.exf5\ \mathbb{Q}d5\mp$ ;

WEAPON:  $8.g5?!$  is an important alternative for White:

1) By answering  $8...\mathbb{Q}fd7$  Black ignores h2-h4, accepting some 'claustrophobic' suffering:  $9.h4?!\ \mathbb{Q}g7\ 10.h5!.$



analysis diagram

'The fact that Black has to give up the right to castle will considerably restrict his active possibilities, in the event of adequate white play' – Marin.

$10...\mathbb{H}g8\pm$  Mateo-Marin, Andorra la Vella 1999.

TRICK:  $9.d5?!$  leads to complications:  $9...\mathbb{Q}e5\ (9...cxd5\ 10.\mathbb{Q}d4?!) 10.\mathbb{Q}d4!N\ \mathbb{Q}g7\ 11.dxc6!.$  White fights for the extra pawn in an unclear position.

2) For active players, the retreat  $8...\mathbb{Q}h5?!$  is natural – and it is entirely viable!  $9.b3?!$  (preparing  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ . The standard  $9.\mathbb{Q}d3$  allows Black to switch to a light-square strategy:  $9...\mathbb{Q}c4?!$  ( $9...e5?; 9...\mathbb{Q}g7?!$ )  $10.\mathbb{Q}xc4\ bxc4\ 11.\mathbb{Q}ge2\ \mathbb{B}b8\ 12.\mathbb{B}b1\ \mathbb{W}d7?\mp\mp\ 9...\mathbb{Q}g7\ 10.\mathbb{Q}ge2$ .



analysis diagram

Now  $10...b4$  ( $10...a5?!\ 11.\mathbb{Q}g3\ \mathbb{Q}xg3\ 12.hxg3\ a4$  with counterplay on the queenside)  $11.\mathbb{Q}d1\ e5?!\ (11...c5\ 12.\mathbb{Q}g3\pm;\ 11...a5\ 12.\mathbb{Q}g3\pm)\ 12.\mathbb{Q}f2\ exd4\ 13.\mathbb{Q}xd4\ 0-0\Box$  is still playable.

### 8...h5

WEAPON: It's still not too late for  $8...h6?!$

### 9.g5 $\mathbb{Q}fd7$



At this critical juncture White has two main alternatives:

### 10.d5!?

Breaking open the centre is the most dynamic way to fight for an advantage.

As we have seen in several lines, White can also follow the slower attacking plan with f4-f5, but sooner or later he has to decide which side his king is going to castle. And he also needs to defend the c4-square against a possible ...  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .

A) For instance, 10.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (10...  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !?) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  bxc4  $\Rightarrow$  and the b-file is opened for Black) 11.f4 0-0 12.f5 b4 13.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$



analysis diagram

with the typical sharp and complex attacks on opposite sides: 13...a5!? 14.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$  c5! 15. dxc5 (15.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  cxd4 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5\infty$ ) 15...  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  (15...dxc5!?) 16.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (16. f6!?) exf6 17.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}e5\infty$ ) 16...  $\mathbb{Q}axc5$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5\infty$  etc.

B) Or the direct 10.f4, playing without castling. However, White is not sufficiently developed for this ambitious advance: 10...  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  and now:

B1) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ! is always a useless move in this line: 11...0-0 12.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  (12.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$ !) 12...b4 13.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c5! 14. c3 was played in Apicella-A.Hamdouchi, Montpellier 2006. Here Black should be better after the dynamic 14...  $\mathbb{Q}b7!$   $\mathbb{f}$

B2) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  0-0 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (12...  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ?) 13.0-0 b4 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c5! 15. c3 bxc3 16. bxc3 cxd4 17. cxd4 d5! 18. e5 e6 19.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{f}$  with a comfortable position. The exchange on c4 is out of the question, because it would open the diagonal of the b7-bishop, Kosanovic-Leskur, Backa Palanka 2001;

B3) 11.f5 b4!? (11...  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ?) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c5!.



analysis diagram

Black has more than enough counterplay in this position: 13.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  (13. c3? bxc3 (13...  $\mathbb{Q}b7$   $\mathbb{f}$ ) 14. bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15. fxe6 fxe6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  0-0  $\mathbb{f}$  Blatny-Plachetka, Bratislava ch-CSR 1991) 13...0-0 14.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$ !? ('I still prefer 14...  $\mathbb{Q}c7$ ' – Marin) 15. fxe6 (if 15.  $\mathbb{Q}gh3$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}ac8$ !?) 15... fxe6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$ ! and Black is winning, for instance: 17.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a5 18.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$ ! – Forthofer-Le Floch, France tt-2 2002/03.

C) Finally, 10.b3! is a flexible prophylactic move, preventing ...  $\mathbb{Q}c4$ . 10...  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  and now:

C1) 11.0-0-0?! b4 12.  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  a5  $\rightarrow$ ;

C2) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  0-0 12. f4  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (12...  $\mathbb{Q}c7$ !? Marin) 13.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  b4 14.  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  c5  $\Rightarrow$  Végh-Molner, Budapest 2007;

C3) 11.f4 b4 12.  $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  c5 13. f5!? (13.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ !?) (Ochneva-Skomorokhov, Tambov 2011) 13...a5!?) 13...  $\mathbb{Q}b7$

14.fxg6 fxg6 15.Qg2 0-0 16.Qh3 cxd4  
 17.Qxd4 Qxd4 18.Qxd4 Qc5 19.0-0-0  
 ♜e8!?



analysis diagram

Black is going to play ...e7-e5, while the queen defends g6 and controls b5. 20.Qhe1 (20.Qxb4 Qd7!) 20...e5! with strong counterplay; now attacking e4.

#### 10...Qe5!?

Temporarily sacrificing a pawn, but getting good compensation in return.

- A) 10...b4? 11.dxc6±;
- B) 10...a6? 11.dxc6±.

I think Black has two interesting options in reserve:

**WEAPON:** 10...c5 is an 'Accelerated Benko Gambit':  
 11.Qxb5 a6! 12.Qe2 (12.Qc6  
 Qa7!?) 12...Qe5 (12...Qg7  
 13.f4 Qb8∞) 13.b3 Qg7  
 14.Qh3 a5∞.



analysis diagram

This position was seen in M. Markovic-Popchev, Sabac 1998. Even after the best move, the blockading 15.a4!?, 0-0∞, Black already has long-term practical compensation for the pawn, playing against the white king in the centre.

**WEAPON:** I like to go for an open game with 10...cxd5!?. This is also a provocative and very unclear line:



analysis diagram

1) 11.Qxb5 Qg7!? 12.exd5 a6!? with compensation;

2) 11.Qxd5 Qg7 12.Qd4 Qxd4  
 13.Qxd4 0-0∞;

3) 11.Qxb5 Qg7 12.Qd4 Qxd4  
 13.Qxd4 0-0∞;

4) 11.Qd4! and now:

4a) 11...Qg8!?

4b) 11...e5? 12.Qxb6±;

4c) 11...Qe5? 12.Qxd5±;

4d) 11...Qh7? 12.Qxb5! (this seems to be the best line for White: 12.Qxd5  
 Qxd5!?, 13.exd5 a6∞; 12.Qxb5 a6

(12...e5 13.Qxb6 Qxb6 14.exd5 f5!?)  
 13.Qc3 dxe4 14.fxe4 Qg7 15.Qf3  
 Qc5∞) 12...dxe4 13.fxe4 a6! 14.Qe2  
 Qb7 (14...Qb8!? deserves attention)

15.0-0-0 Qg7 16.Qf3 Qc7 17.Qhe1  
 Qf8!∞ and the position remains complex.

**11.dxc6**

This line is better known in practice – so Black can breathe more easily!

**WEAPON:** 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d4!!?$

The pin along the d4-h8 diagonal is another critical continuation which may create more problems for Black:

A) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}bc4?$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  13.  $\mathbb{W}e2! \pm$  Leuw-Noguchi, Groningen 2003;

B) Or 11...  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  12. dxc6. This complex line was considered to give chances for both sides, but: 12...  $\mathbb{Q}bc4$  (12... b4 13.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14. exd5  $\mathbb{W}a5$  15. c4!) looks better for White) 13.  $\mathbb{W}c1! N$  is an improvement (13. c7  $\mathbb{W}d7!$  14.  $\mathbb{W}c1!$  0-0  $\cong$  Nijboer-Timman, Rotterdam ch-NED 1997); the idea is to play a2-a4 next: 13...  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  14. a4! b4 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  e6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}f6! \uparrow$  can be annoying;

C) 11... b4! is the best defensive idea.

C1) It is well-known that after 12. f4? c5! Black has an excellent game:



analysis diagram

13. fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (14...  $\mathbb{Q}xc3!?$ ) 15.  $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5 \cong$  Molander-Nybäck, Helsinki 2002;

C2) After 12.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c5 (12...  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  13. dxc6  $\mathbb{W}c7 \infty$ ) 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 Black has enough play in this complex structure, as in Cobic-Jokic, Belgrade 2003;

C3) 12. dxc6N! (sacrificing the knight) 12...  $\mathbb{Q}bc3!$  (the principled answer. 12...  $\mathbb{Q}g7!?$  transposes to 11...  $\mathbb{Q}g7!?$ ) 13.  $\mathbb{W}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7.$



analysis diagram

#### A Bit of History

In the last Olympiad, Istanbul 2012, where I was coach of the Brazilian male team, we analysed this position with grandmaster Milos, and we came to the conclusion that Black has enough reason to be afraid of this new computer line.

**TRICK:** 14. f4 allows tactics:  
14...  $\mathbb{Q}a4$  15.  $\mathbb{W}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{W}a5+\square$  – and good luck with the rest!

14. a4! 0-0 15. f4! (15. a5  $\mathbb{Q}bd7!)$  15...  $\mathbb{W}c7$  (15...  $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$ ) 16. fxe5 dxe5 17.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  (17...  $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$  Milos) 18.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}fd8 \infty.$  As long as White retains his extra pawn on c6, the position continues to be dangerous for Black.

11.  $\mathbb{Q}bc4!$  12.  $\mathbb{W}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc4 \cong$

We've reached another climax in a typical dynamic Sämisch line:



### 13...Wd3

This move allows Black to castle kingside. The more traditional line runs 13.Wd4 Ag8! with equal chances: 14.Qge2 (14.Wd3 Qg7!; and the moves 14.Qxb5?! Wa5+ 15.Qc3 Qe6↑ were seen in the game Nijboer-Smirin, Pula Ech-tt 1997) 14...Qe6!? (14...Qg7 15.Wd3 Qa6∞ was suggested by Finkel in ChessBase Magazine) 15.Wd3∞ Firman-Nijboer, Warsaw Ech 2005.



analysis diagram

Here I like the positional solution 15...Qc8!∞ in order to eliminate the annoying c6-pawn as soon as possible.

### 13...Qg7!

13...Qxe3?! is a slightly premature exchange, though it was played by Marin's wife: 14.Wxe3 Wc7 (14...Qg7 15.Qge2± Sandu-I.Marin, Eforie Nord ch-ROM 2009) 15.Qxb5 Wxc6 and now White has a better endgame after 16.Wd4! (16.Wc3±) 16...Ag8 17.Wd5

Wxd5 18.Qc7+ Qd7 19.Qxd5± (Qd+Q vs. Qd in a closed position).

### 14.Qge2

TRICK: 14.0-0-0?? would be a big mistake: 14...Wa5! 15.Qd4 e5! 16.Qf2 Wb4 and Black is just winning.

### 14...Qe5!

14...a6?!, defending the b5-pawn, is less attractive, and too slow for the Sämis: 15.Qd5 Qxb2 16.Wb3 Qe6 17.Qd4 Qxd4 18.Qxd4± Pardo Simon-Rodriguez Gonzalez, Benidorm 2007.

### 15.Wxb5 Qxf3+ 16.Qf2



Here we can say that the opening phase is almost over – Black has achieved the desired complications.

### 16.Qe5

16...Qg4!?

### 17.Qd5?!

17.Qd4?; the variation 17.c7+ Wd7 18.Wb8 (18.Wd5?! Qc6!?) 18...Wc6↑ is tactically favourable to Black.

### 17...0-0-0?

The natural, and promising-looking move, but there was no hurry! Just keep in mind grandmaster Marin's postulate: Black 'can combine strategic elements with attacking ideas...'. So, 17...e6! was a good chance to grasp the initiative: 18.c7+ Wd7 19.Wxd7+ Qxd7 20.Qf6+ Qxf6 21.gxf6 Qb7?.

This endgame is clearly better for Black. Later in the game, a similar structure will arise, but with the black king too far away!

18.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$
18. c7!?; 18.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !?
- 18... e6 19. c7  $\mathbb{W}d7$  20.  $\mathbb{W}xd7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$
21.  $\mathbb{Q}f6+$
21.  $\mathbb{Q}e7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$ .
- 21...  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  22.  $\mathbb{G}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{H}fc8$
24. c4

White is still ambitious. 24.  $\mathbb{H}hd1$ !?  $\mathbb{H}xc7$  25.  $\mathbb{H}xd6$   $\mathbb{H}xc2$  26.  $\mathbb{H}xd7$  (26.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{H}c7$  27.  $\mathbb{H}d1$  e5=) 26...  $\mathbb{H}xe2$  27.  $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{H}xb2$ = would have resulted in a draw.

- 24...  $\mathbb{H}xc7$  25.  $\mathbb{H}ac1$   $\mathbb{H}b7$  26.  $\mathbb{H}c2$
- $\mathbb{H}ab8$  27. b3 a5 28.  $\mathbb{H}d1$  a4 29. b4
- $\mathbb{H}xb4$  30.  $\mathbb{H}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  31. c5  $\mathbb{H}c8$

Time trouble approaches, and with it the inevitable mistakes:

32.  $\mathbb{H}d4$ !?
- ≥ 32.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ .
- 32...  $\mathbb{H}xd4$  33.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e5!! 34.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$
34.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  35.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{H}c6$ ?
- 34...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  35.  $\mathbb{H}c4$ ?  $\mathbb{H}b8$  36.  $\mathbb{H}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$
- 36...  $\mathbb{H}b2$ ?

37.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{H}d8$  38.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{H}d4$  39.  $\mathbb{H}c2$
- $\mathbb{Q}e8$  40.  $\mathbb{H}c4$   $\mathbb{H}d3$ !?
- 40...  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ ?? 41.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{H}xc4$
42.  $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ++.

41.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{H}a3$  42.  $\mathbb{H}b4$   $\mathbb{H}xa2$  43.  $\mathbb{H}b8+$
- $\mathbb{Q}d7$  44.  $\mathbb{H}f8$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  45.  $\mathbb{H}d8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ -+

Among other troubles, the white king is in danger:

46.  $\mathbb{H}d6$ +  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  47.  $\mathbb{H}d7$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! 48.  $\mathbb{H}xf7$
- $\mathbb{Q}b5$ + 49.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e4+ 50.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{H}a3$ +
51.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  e3 52.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{H}a2$ + 53.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$
- $\mathbb{Q}f1$  54.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{H}h2$ ! 0-1



The five black pieces,  $\mathbb{Q} + \mathbb{R} + \mathbb{N} + \mathbb{B} + \mathbb{P}$  vs. white  $\mathbb{Q}$ , have created an amazing mating net.

### Summary of the Classical Sämisch



From the key position (after 7.g4!), the first real threat White poses is g4-g5. In order to respond adequately, Black has three viable options:

- 1) The semi-block 7...h6!? is a still unexplored deviation. By temporarily stopping the white g-pawn, Black can win decisive tempi in order to play several useful developing moves (see the line in Game 15, and the Weapon in Game 16).
- 2) The main move, 7...Qb6 primarily makes the retreat ...Qfd7 possible (Game 16). Until today, this popular set-up keeps a solid reputation both in theory and practice. However, it can lead to a huge number of concrete tactical lines after 8.g5!?, or 8.h4 and 10.d5!?. As seen by Marin and also in my game analysis, those variations can be dangerous for Black, and must be prepared very carefully – most preferably not at the tournament hall, but in the kitchen of your home!
- 3) Instead of spending a tempo on 7...Qb6, Black can opt for 7...Qg7!? 8.h4 h5 9.Qh7, developing, defending and attacking at the same time (see the WEAPON in Smirin-Gofshtein, Game 15). Black can successfully use this remarkably compact defensive concept, which leads to a safer opening, and in certain lines, even to a comfortably winning middlegame.

#### **Games 17-20: Black's ...a7-a6**



STATISTICS: Since the appearance of *Tiger's Modern* in 2005, Black's set-up with ...a7-a6 has become more and more popular up to a certain level (Grischuk and Ponomariov used it in the Modern order, and Kramnik in the normal Pirc). However, I have not found any recent game played by the author! The fact is that Swedish grandmaster Tiger Hillarp Persson has changed his Pirc-Modern repertoire and he has started playing more and more in Classical style, with ...c7-c6.



Tiger Hillarp Persson, the author of *Tiger's Modern*.

#### **Game 17 – Black's ...a7-a6 vs. the 150 Attack (without f2-f4 or f2-f3)**



#### **Puzzle, Opening Rules**



In recent years, when fighting against the set-up f2-f3/  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ , black players have more and more often used the sharpest plan with ...a7-a6/b7-b5.

There is no clear theory or general rule:

- \* Compared to the system with ...c7-c6, here the direct advance ...c7-c5 allows Black to save a tempo.
- \* Also an interesting plan is ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and ...e7-e5, when play resembles the Ruy Lopez – this intention is clearly seen in games by Kramnik.
- \* On the other hand, with the black knight on f6, White has the possibility to attack with e4-e5 at any time in the opening (keep in mind the trick 5.h3 b5? 6.e5!).
- \* The main difficulty in preparing and playing this line is that White can choose between all the '150' set-ups:  $\mathbb{W}d2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ -/ $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ,  $\mathbb{Q}e2$ / $\mathbb{Q}d3$ / $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , castling both sides, with the pawn moves a2-a4, g2-g4, h2-h3 and of course h2-h4 – and more:
  - the Austrian push f2-f4, Game 18
  - the Sämisch push f2-f3, Games 19/20

We can use the next game as a reference for the '150' opening options for both sides.

**□ Yge Visser  
■ Viktor Moskalenko**  
Groningen 1990 (3)  
**1.e4 d6**

WEAPON: 1...g6 is the Modern order: 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (in Games 19/20 we will check the main attacking continuation 4. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ! a6 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$ !, which is more appropriate for the Sämisch system, and continues with 5...b5 6.h4!? etc.)

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (4...a6 transposes) 5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  a6?.



analysis diagram

Here we will take a look at various different interpretations of the Classical/150 lines (without White's f2-f3):

A) After the normal developing moves 6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0-0! 7.0-0 b5?! Black has enough counterplay to keep the balance: 8.a4 (8.e5? dx5 9.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5\rightleftharpoons$ ) 8...b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5!.



analysis diagram

This way Black wins the mentioned tempo (compared to ...c7-c6). Black can hardly be worse here, Battaglini-Fressinet, Bastia rapid 2011;

B) Even with the knight on f3, 6. $\mathbb{W}d2$ ! is still the best set-up: 6...b5!? (6...0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}h6\pm$ ) 7. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! 0-0 and now 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ? (8. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  is similar, but less tricky)



Yge Visser, 1990.



analysis diagram

**TRICK:** 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ?! is a mistake:  
 ↗ 9.h4 (9... $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  10.e5?! is also dangerous) 9...b4? (better is 9... $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  10. $\mathbb{W}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  11. $\mathbb{W}g5$  h5□, but it is hard to recommend this position for Black) 10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  11.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ ?! 12.h5+– and Black was already lost in Fressinet-Smirin, Bastia rapid 2006.

8... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !? and now:

B1) The immediate 9. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  is a good idea, but in the wrong move order: 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  11.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ ?! 12.h5+– and Black was already lost in Munoz Santana-Grischuk, Istanbul ol 2012;

B2) The prophylactic 9.h3 would transpose into a well-known game, with chances for both sides: 9...e5! 10.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  12.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  13.a4 c6 $\rightleftharpoons$  and Black was doing fine, Anand-Chernin, Bastia rapid 2001;

B3) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  10.a4?! (in order to first provoke Black's ...b5-b4, and then jump  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !; 10.e5?! was seen in Emms-Pein, Southend 1999) 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (the key idea behind ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , attacking d4. If 10...b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  $\pm$  looks more testing now) 11.e5! (11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ ?! e5!) 11... $\mathbb{Q}g8$ ?! (the safest choice; 11...dxe5 12.dxe5↑ was Collutiis-Peralta, Turin ol 2006) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  13. $\mathbb{W}f4$ .



analysis diagram

Now 13...b4? (13...♗h6? 14.0-0 b4 15.♗d5± ♜ab8?? led to a swift defeat in Hebden-Collier, Guernsey 2011: 16.♗f6 and Black had to resign) 14.♗e2 f5!, which is dynamically balanced.

**2.d4 ♗f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♕e3 a6!?**



As we have seen, this is a modern and ambitious set-up – an alternative to the solid 4...c6. White is at a crossroads here. How to proceed?

**5.a4!?**

In many games, White automatically prevents ...b7-b5; this strategic measure clearly slows down the attack and leads to more positional play.

On 5.h3!? b5? is just dubious (better is 5...♝g7, transposing to the main game): 6.e5! and White enjoys a nice initiative: 6...♗fd7 (6...b4 7.♗f3!?) 7.♗f3 ♘b6 8.a4!± Markovic-Bogdanovski, Nis 1994.

Here are a few significant alternatives played by Vladimir Kramnik against the 150 Attack.

**Puzzle:** As in the Modern Defence, 5.♗d2! is the most aggressive move. However, it does not seem to work effectively without the Sämisch move f2-f3: 5...b5 6.♗d3 (6.f3!? is probably best here, see

Games 19/20) 6...♝b7 7.a3 ♘bd7 8.♗f3



analysis diagram

8...e5 (8...♗g4!?) 9.0-0 (9.dxe5? dx5 is balanced) 9...exd4! 10.♗xd4 ♘g7 11.a4 b4 12.♗d5 c5 13.♗xf6 ♘xf6 14.♗xf6+ ♘xf6 15.e5 dx5 16.♗xe5 0-0 17.f4 ♘d6 18.♗e3 ♜ae8± Dominguez Perez-Kramnik, Nice rapid 2010.

**Puzzle:** 5.♕e2 ♘g7 6.♗d2 (for 6.h4!? see Games 19/20) 6...b5 7.♗h6 (7.f3 – games 19/20) 7...0-0



analysis diagram

8.e5?! (8.h4?! b4! 9.♗d5 ♘xe4 10.♗e3 ♘xh6 11.♗xh6 e6!±; ≥8.♗xg7 ('It is already time for White to think about equalising' – Kramnik in ChessBase Magazine) 8...♗xg7 9.♗f3 e5 10.♗ge2 ♘bd7=) 8...dx5 9.♗xg7 ♘xg7 10.♗f3 (10.dxe5 ♘xd2+ 11.♔xd2 ♜d8+

12.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4+$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  14. h3  $\mathbb{Q}f5\#$ ) 10... c6 (10...  $\mathbb{Q}a7!?$ ) 11. dxe5  $\mathbb{W}xd2+$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}d8+$  ('Black has to be fast, otherwise White will consolidate and equalise' – Kramnik in ChessBase Magazine; 12...  $\mathbb{Q}g4!?\#$ ) 13.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4+$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4\#$  Smeets-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

### 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 6. h3

For 6.f3?! see the analysis in Game 19.

### 6... 0-0 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$



We are now in a hybrid of the Classical Variation with ...a7-a6; you can compare this position with the first game of this chapter (...c7-c6, line B).

I found some favourable comments by grandmaster Daniel King in the database: 'White's system is effective against ...e7-e5, but seems a little too rigid against other set-ups. Black plays a beautiful game.'

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$

The 'good old' flexible defence. Developing the bishop to b7 puts pressure on the e4-pawn, which can be important if White develops the knight to f3.

WEAPON: 7...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is the modern alternative, borrowed from the Classical system with ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , and used recently by grandmasters like Kramnik, Grischuk and Ponomariov.

8.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5!? (the key idea) 9. d5!? (9.dxe5 dxe5 is balanced; 9.0-0 exd4 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8\#$ ) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10. a5!? (10.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  11. g4 f5 12. f3  $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$  De Groote-Arutinian, Vienna 2009) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}e8!$ ? (in view of White's reaction, this is probably not the best retreat. 10...  $\mathbb{Q}h5!$ ? is more interesting, for example 11.0-0 f5# etc.) 11. h4!.



analysis diagram

What can Black do now? 11... f5 12. h5!  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  13. hxg6  $\mathbb{Q}xg6\#$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  gave White a huge advantage in Carlsen-Kramnik, Moscow Wch blitz 2010.

### 8. $\mathbb{Q}e2$

After this move we reach a popular position in the Classical Pirc.

A) 8.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  e6!? 9. 0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  10. e5 dxe5 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6=$  as demonstrated in some grandmaster games;

B) Or 8.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  (8...  $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$  9. 0-0 e5#) 9.  $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  e5 11. dxe5 dxe5 12.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{W}e7\#$  Dos Santos-Leitao, Campinas ch-BRA 2011.

### 8... $\mathbb{Q}e6$

In order to block the white e-pawn after the push e4-e5. Sometimes this prophylactic move is quite useful, but here it is not forced.

WEAPON: Black can also play the common 8...  $\mathbb{Q}b7!?$ , which can become similar to the main game:



analysis diagram

9.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (9.e5 dxe5 10.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5=$ ; 9.d5 c6! 10.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5\rightleftharpoons$  V. Dragiev-Moskalenko, Varna open 1998) 9... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ ? (9...c5!? 10.d5 e6 $\rightleftharpoons$ ) 10.0-0 e5 11.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7!$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}d4!$ ? S. Pedersen-Miles, Forli 1991) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}cb1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13.c4 f5! $\rightleftharpoons$  etc., Danzanvilliers-Stroppa, Montigny le Bretonneux 2009.

#### 9.0-0 $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}d2$

White solidly defends his e4-pawn.  
10.e5 dxe5 11.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7=$ .

#### 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$



Aiming for a kind of zugzwang! From this point on, Black's strategy consists in creating a slight disharmony in his opponent's camp and leaving the choice of concrete plans for later.

#### 11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$

If 11.f4  $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$ .

#### 11...e5! 12.d5

Black stands perfectly well after 12.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ ? 13.f3  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  d5! $\rightleftharpoons$ .

#### 12... $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$

The Pirc skeleton has transposed into a King's Indian one, so we have to keep in mind the preparation of ...c7-c6, or ...f7-f5. In fact, Black has already gained some important tempi, since the placement of the white knight on b3 is useless.

#### 13.a5 b5 14. $\mathbb{W}d3$ $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$

Continuing in the same vein – simply waiting for White's moves. But now ...f7-f5 is a new threat.

14...c5? was an alternative.

#### 15.g4

A rather provocative advance, aimed against ...f7-f5.



#### 15... $\mathbb{Q}h8!?$

There is no hurry, and here I found an interesting strategic ploy: ... $\mathbb{Q}g8$  followed by ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , which, by the way, is a typical set-up in the King's Indian. However, the direct 15...f5!? was also a strong argument, also on one of the few next moves.

#### 16. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8!?$

16...f5!.

#### 17. $\mathbb{Q}g1$ $\mathbb{W}e7$ 18. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{Q}ad8!?$

Improving the rook, in view of ...c7-c5.

#### 19. $\mathbb{Q}a2$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

Motivated by the same idea. Now 19...c5?.

#### 20. $\mathbb{W}d2$

White has defended well against ... $\mathbb{Q}g5$ , so it is a good moment to en-

gage in a second front by opening the centre:

20...c5! 21.dxc6 ♜xc6 22.♗f3 ♜b7  
 23.♘b4 ♜c5 24.♘d5 ♜xd5  
 25.♗xd5 ♜g5

25...♝e6?! was strong enough.

26.♗d2 ♜e6?

After exchanging the bishops, Black wins the strategic battle. In the second half of the game, White's position will remain very passive due to his weak dark squares, the bad bishop on f3 and finally his king.

27.♗e1 ♜f4+ 28.♕xf4 ♜xf4 29.♗g3  
 ♜f6 30.♘c1 ♜d7 31.♘d3 ♜xd3  
 32.cxd3 ♜c5 33.d4 ♜e6T  
 33...♝b3.  
 34.d5 ♜d4 35.♘d1 ♜c8 36.f4 f6  
 37.f5 g5 38.♗ee3 ♜c7 39.♗c3 ♜c5  
 40.♗d2 b4!—+



Finally, Black has achieved a dream position, impossible to spoil even in the worst of time-troubles.

41.h4 ♜c1 42.♗d3 gxh4 43.♗h3  
 ♜f7 44.♗f2 ♜b1 45.♗d2 ♜c1  
 46.♗f2 ♜g8 47.♗d2 ♜fc7 48.♗hd3  
 b3 49.♗xb3 ♜xb3 50.♗xb3 ♜b1  
 51.♗g2 ♜g7 52.♗c3 ♜xc3 53.bxc3  
 h5 54.♗b2 ♜e1 55.g5 ♜xg5  
 56.♗b8+ ♜h7 0-1

### Game 18 – The Austrian Set-up (f2-f4) vs. the Modern Defence

□ Alexander Morozhevich

■ Boris Chatalbashev

Plovdiv Ech-tt 2003 (1)

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3  
 a6!?



5.f4!?

The Pirc/Modern player should be more worried about this move order, which resembles the dangerous Austrian At-

tack. In comparison to many other theoretical set-ups, here Black's task to undermine the centre is not easy at all.

WEAPON: As I mentioned in the previous game, the strategic anti-b5 move 5.a4 is the second-most popular option (after 5.♗d2), but it significantly reduces White's attacking chances.

A) Keep in mind the logical move 5...♝c6!? (after a2-a4). It can transpose to many lines. Here White has 6.d5!? (6.f4 ♜f6 should be a good Anti-Austrian move order for Black) 6...♝e5!? (6...♝b8!? and in the event of ...c7-c6, dxc6, the knight can take back on c6; 6...♝b4!? since the knight can't be easily attacked here: 7.a5!? (White separates

the knight from its camp. After 7.  $\hat{Q}ce2$  a5 $\infty$  Black has no other way to save the knight) 7...e6 8.  $\hat{Q}a4$  c5 9. dxc6  $\hat{Q}xc6\infty$  looks playable) 7.f4!?



analysis diagram

White gains the tempo and takes space. However, Black has dynamic possibilities in this position: 7... $\hat{Q}d7$  (7... $\hat{Q}g4!$ ? 8.  $\hat{Q}d4\pm$ ) 8.  $\hat{Q}f3$   $\hat{Q}gf6\infty$  9.g3 c6 $\rightleftharpoons$ , S. Zhigalko-Smirin, Moscow 2009;

B) Putting the knight on d7 is a bit passive: 5... $\hat{Q}d7$  6.f4!? e6 (6...e5 7.  $\hat{Q}f3!$ ? $\pm$ ; 6... $\hat{Q}h6$  7.h3!? c5 8.  $\hat{Q}f3\pm$ ; 6...b6?! see below) 7.  $\hat{Q}f3$   $\hat{Q}e7$  8.  $\hat{Q}d3$  0-0 9.0-0 c5 10.  $\hat{Q}h1$  cxd4 11.  $\hat{Q}xd4$   $\hat{Q}xd4$  12.  $\hat{Q}xd4\pm$  Aagaard-Zozulia, Copenhagen 2006;

C) 5...b6 – since this idea is good after White develops the knight to f3, let's try it again: 6.f4 (for 6.f3!? see the analysis in the next game)



analysis diagram

White insists on playing the Austrian Attack. However, compared to the dy-

namic lines without a2-a4, here the position is more stable.

C1) With 6...c5!? Black can try to 'soften up' White's centre without wasting any time;

C2) Again, 6... $\hat{Q}d7$  is less good: 7.  $\hat{Q}f3$  (White can even try the kingside pawn storm with 7.g4!? as in Alexandrov-V. Fedorov, Moscow 1996) 7...e6 8.  $\hat{Q}d3$   $\hat{Q}b7$  9.0-0  $\hat{Q}gf6$  10.e5 (10.  $\hat{Q}g5!$ ?) 10... $\hat{Q}g4$  11.  $\hat{Q}d2$  c5? (11...0-0 12.  $\hat{Q}e4\uparrow$ ) 12.  $\hat{Q}g5!\pm$ . Surprisingly, the Indian World Champion not only wasn't able to convert his large advantage into a win. Eventually he even lost! Anand-Hillarp Persson, Benidorm rapid 2003;

C3) 6... $\hat{Q}b7$  7.  $\hat{Q}f3$   $\hat{Q}f6!$ ? (transposing into a 'normal' Pirc. 7...e6 is an alternative option: 8.  $\hat{Q}d3$   $\hat{Q}c6!$  followed by ... $\hat{Q}b4$  etc.) 8.  $\hat{Q}d3$  0-0 9.0-0  $\hat{Q}c6!$ ? (the game is balanced) 10.e5 (a bit late, since Black is well prepared for tactics; 10.d5  $\hat{Q}b4!$ ) 10... $\hat{Q}g4$  11.  $\hat{Q}d2$  (11.  $\hat{Q}e2$   $\hat{Q}b4$  12.  $\hat{Q}ad1$   $\hat{Q}d7=$ ) 11... $\hat{Q}b4!$ ? 12.  $\hat{Q}e2$  ( $\geq$  12.  $\hat{Q}e4$  d5 13.  $\hat{Q}d3$  c5 $\rightleftharpoons$ ) 12...c5! $\uparrow$  (a dangerous counter-thrust against the white centre) 13. dxc5 (13.  $\hat{Q}g5$   $\hat{Q}h6$  14. dxc5 bxc5 $\mp$ ) 13...bxc5 (13...dxe5! $\mp$ ) 14. h3  $\hat{Q}h6$  15.  $\hat{Q}e3$   $\hat{Q}c7\mp$  – White's position collapsed, and he lost within a few moves, Antoli Royo-Movsziszian, Lorca 2004.



**5...b5!?**

Now we enter a complex Modern Defence struggle.

The alternative 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  does not look like a losing move yet, but it allows White to dominate the centre: 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5 7.e5!  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  0-0 9. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ ? (9... $\mathbb{Q}d3$  Hracek-Manolache, Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011) 9...c5 (9... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !?) 10.0-0-0 (10.dxc5!?) 10...cxd4 11. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  dxe5 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{W}e8$  13.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  14.fxe5† Khalifman-Svidler, Moscow 1995.

**6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

WEAPON: 6. $\mathbb{W}e2$ ? is a popular alternative, in order to follow up with the strategic point  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .



analysis diagram

A) 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !? 7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ) 7...e5 (7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ !?) 8.dxe5 dxe5 $\rightleftharpoons$ . This position is considered to be fine for Black since Lanka-Petran, Groningen 1991. This was confirmed later in this century by Tiger's games and books.

B) 6...b4!? is the recommendation in *Tiger's Modern*, and now:

B1) After 7. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  I have not been able to find any advantage for White: 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  e6 (8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !?) 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  10.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  11. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  $\infty$  Houska-Skripchenko, Ekaterinburg 2006) 9.c3 a5 10.e5  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12.0-0 0-0 is quite balanced, T. Kosintseva-Koneru, Elista Wch 2004;



In this complex game Alexander Morozhevich defeats Pirc/Modern expert Bulgarian grandmaster Boris Chatalbashev using an aggressive set-up. However, the whole line remains double-edged.

B2) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !? a5 8. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ . As usual, along the road we've discovered some improvements: 9...e6 (9... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?) 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6+$  exf6 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 12. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  13.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  14.a3 c5 $\rightleftharpoons$ ) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !? (attacking e4) 11. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  12.e5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !?) 13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  0-0 14.0-0 $\infty$ .



analysis diagram

Here White must have some advantage according to general principles, but to exploit it is far from easy, Nyysti-Krasenkov, Copenhagen 2003.

**6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$**

The first key position of this line.



**7... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ ?**

Preparing the ambitious break ...c7-c5 against White's central pawn phalanx.

WEAPON: 7... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$ , trying to castle first, is an important alternative: 8.e5!  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9. $\mathbb{W}e2!?$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$  (9...c5 looks risky: 10.dxc5! dx5 11. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  13.0-0-0! Zhao Jun-Liu Qingnan, Xinghua ch-CHN 2012) 10. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  (10. $\mathbb{Q}d2!?$ ) 10...0-0 11.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  12.h4  $\mathbb{Q}b4\rightleftharpoons$  Rahman-Norwood, Dhaka 1993.

**8.e5!?**

The principled advance, limiting Black's kingside development. If 8.0-0 c5!?

**8...c5!?**

Otherwise White gets a clear advantage.

WEAPON: Black has also tried 8...e6!? 9.a4!? b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$  11.exd6  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12.dxc7  $\mathbb{W}xc7\rightleftharpoons$ .

A) 8... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  9.0-0 e6 10.a4 b4 11. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f2\pm$  Tiviakov-Azmaiparashvili, Groningen 1994;

B) If 8... $\mathbb{Q}h6$  9. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10.0-0-0!? (or 10. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  11.0-0 0-0 12. $\mathbb{Q}ae1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$  Grischuk-Svidler, Astana

Wch blitz 2012) 10.. $\mathbb{W}d7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}hg1$  0-0 12.g4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe3$  e6 15. $\mathbb{W}h3$  h6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf7! \rightarrow$ .



analysis diagram

This amazing combination occurred in the game Dominguez Perez-Ivanchuk, Barcelona 2006.

**9. $\mathbb{Q}e4!$**

White is ready to exchange Black's most active piece – the  $\mathbb{Q}b7$ .

TRICK: 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$  is a premature attack: 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4!$  10.e6 f5! $\mp$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf5?$   $\mathbb{Q}df6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xg6$  13. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  14. $\mathbb{W}xg6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{W}e8\rightarrow+$  San Segundo Carrillo-Hillarp Persson, Elista ol 1998.

**9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$**

9... $\mathbb{W}c8$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xb7!?$  (10. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?\infty$ ) 10... $\mathbb{W}xb7$  11.dxc5 dx5 12. $\mathbb{W}d5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xd5\pm$  leads to an endgame that is considered preferable for White, Grischuk-Bacrot, Dubai rapid 2002.



However, in super-grandmaster practice anything can happen!

**10.♘xe4**



**10...♞h6**

There is no time for anything else. The black knight intends to strike from f5.

**TRICK:** 10...c4?! 11.♗fg5↑ h6  
12.♗xf7! ♜xf7 13.♗g4→+.

**TRICK:** 10...cx d4? 11.♗xd4  
dxe5 12.fxe5 ♜h6 13.e6!±  
Adams-Bezold, England tt  
2000/01.

**11.♗e2?!**

Morozevich' idea, aiming to castle queenside as quickly as possible. If 11.exd6 ♜f5 12.♗f2 0-0∞ Hernandez Gallardo-Almeida Quintana, La Massana 2010.

**WEAPON:** The traditional 11.dxc5?! may be more annoying for Black:



analysis diagram

11...♝g4?! and now:

A) 12.♗g1? dx e5 13.h3 ♜h6 14.c6  
♜f6 (14...♛a5+!?) 15.♗xd8+ ♜xd8  
16.c7 ♜c8 17.♗xf6+ exf6 18.♗b6 ♜d7  
19.g4! (the pawn holds off the knight on h6. If 19.0-0-0 ♜c6 20.♗a5 ♜f5∞ Smeets-Vachier Lagrave, Wijk aan Zee 2011) 19...♝c6 20.♗a5± Cuijpers-Chernin, Germany Bundesliga B 2000/01;

B) 12.♗e2?!, following a concept quite similar to Morozevich': 12...dx e5 13.0-0-0! ♛c7 14.fxe5  
♜dxe5 (14...♝gxe5 15.♗f4 ♜d3+?  
16.♗xd3 ♛xf4+ 17.♔b1± Lalic-Polzin, Dresden 1998) 15.♗d4! 0-0  
16.h3↑ Escobar Forero-Almeida Quintana, Cali 2012.

**11...cx d4 12.♗xd4 ♜f5 13.0-0-0**



As the analysis shows, Black can defend this position with precise play:

**13...♝xd4!**

**TRICK:** 13...♛a5? 14.e6  
(14.exd6!? ♜xd4 15.♗xd4 e6  
16.♔b1±) 14...fxe6  
15.♗xd6+ exd6??  
(15...♝xd6□ 16.♗xg7 ♛xa2  
17.♗xh8 ♜c4∞) 16.♗xe6+  
♚d8 17.♗xg7++ Ibarra Chami-Almeida Quintana, Mexico City 2010.

**14.♗xd4 0-0! 15.♗hd1**



White has succeeded in consolidating all his pieces and has strong pressure in the centre. But the game is still full of life.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}c8?$**

15... $\mathbb{W}a5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  18. $f5\infty$  was seen in Couso-Tikkanen, Stockholm ch-SWE B 2007.

**WEAPON:** 15... $\mathbb{Q}b6?$  may be an improvement: 16. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  d3 (16. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}c7!$ ; 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ ) 17. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  18.d7  $\mathbb{W}c7\infty$ ) 16...d5! 17.e6  $\mathbb{W}c7!$  (17... $f5\infty$ ) 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}xf4+$  20. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}f6!\uparrow$  is an intriguing tactical line.

**16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8?$**

Another important loss of time, allowing White to obtain a more obvious advantage. 16... $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$  was still unclear.

**17.e6!±**



With this thematic blow Black's fortress is breached. In this game, Morozhevich preferred a technical way to win.

**17... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}eg5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$**

If 18...e5 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xh7!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21. $\mathbb{Q}hg5\rightarrow$ .

19. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{W}d7$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  22. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  e6 23. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$  24. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  25. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  e5 26. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

26.f5!±.

26... $\mathbb{Q}dx5$  27. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  28. $\mathbb{Q}f7+$

28. $\mathbb{W}h4$ ±.

28... $\mathbb{W}xf7$  29. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  30. $\mathbb{Q}a7$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  31. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  32.b3 h5 33. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  34. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  35. $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  36. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  37. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  38. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xh2$  39. $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}f1+$  40. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e4+ 41. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  42. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7+$  43. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d2$  44.a4!+-

Announcing the coronation of the pawn.



44... $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  45.a5 h4 46.a6  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  47. $\mathbb{Q}c7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  48. $\mathbb{Q}c8$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  49. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}g3+$  50. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7+$  51. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  1-0

### Summary Games 17 and 18

As the study of the key positions in both the Pirc and the Modern Defence has shown, the set-up with ...a7-a6 offers Black a good chance to take the decisive battle to the middlegame, with possibilities of outplaying a less experienced opponent. The opposite is valid too, of course: a stronger white player will find a way to convert his spatial advantage into something more concrete.

The black player has to be especially wary of the aggressive Modern/Austrian approach (Game 18), which can arise via move orders like 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 5.f4!?.

Usually these lead to sharp and double-edged lines (I advise you to check out recent games by Cuban grandmaster Omar Almeida Quintana on the black side).

It remains for us to check how this system holds up against the Sämisch set-up (Games 19 and 20).

#### Game 19 – Modern 4...a6 vs. the Sämisch move f2-f3

In an analysis of a recent Olympiad game (Istanbul 2012), I have incorporated the maximum possible set-ups and ideas for both sides.



In this critical position White can play 6.h4, 6.0-0-0, 6.f3 or even 6.a4.

Compared to the Sämisch with ...c7-c6, in certain lines (after the insertion of h2-h4 and ...h7-h5), it is easier for White to bring his knight to g5 (♘h3-g5). In general, Black has to watch out for this manoeuvre, and for this reason I recommend to follow the move order of the main game (6.h4 ♘f6!?), or the order in Game 20.

□ Arkadij Naiditsch

■ Hikaru Nakamura

Istanbul Olympiad 2012 (6)

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3  
a6!? 5.♗d2!?

White allows ...b7-b5, focussing on the kingside attack without losing any tempi.

WEAPON: There is still one question to be answered about the prophylactic 5.a4!?:



analysis diagram

A) In the previous games (17 and 18) the set-up with 5... $b6$  worked quite successfully, since the  $\mathbb{B}b7$  puts pressure on the diagonal  $b7-h1$ . But does it also work against the Sämisch system? 6. $f3!?$  (White defends the  $e4$ -pawn and prepares to launch a pawn storm in English Attack style) 6... $\mathbb{B}b7$ . Now the  $b7$ -bishop is temporarily passive. However, Black can compensate for this by preparing ... $e7-e5!?$  or ... $e7-e6$  and ... $c7-c5$ ? For instance, 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  and now:

A1) 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  9. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  0-0 10.0-0 e5!N looks balanced;

A2) 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2!?$   $e6$  9. $h4$   $h5$  10. $g3$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{M}d1$   $c5!?\rightleftharpoons$  Karakehajov-Miroshnichenko, Konya tt 2010;

A3) 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6!?$ N (after 8... $e6!?$  Black keeps both developing options for his  $g8$ -knight open – to  $e7$  and  $f6$ ; 8... $c6!?$  is a solid idea, but a bit passive, compared to the system with an early ... $c7-c6$ ; 8... $c5!?$  9. $d5!?$  – the bishop rarely stands well on  $b7$  in a Benoni, since it is biting on granite, Munoz Agullo-Mezcua Coronil, Mislata 1994) 9. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (if White plays any other move, Black simply plays ...0-0 and ... $e7-e5!?$ , like in the King's Indian)

ing its own pawn and does not allow White to attack!

B) The alternative of developing the knight with 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$  was also covered in the previous game. Now: 6. $f3!?$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  7. $\mathbb{W}d2$  0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $e5!?$  (as in many openings with a kingside fianchetto, Black plays this pawn push to put pressure on the  $d4$ -square)



analysis diagram

9. $d5$  (White closes the centre; now the position bears striking similarities with the King's Indian) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10. $a5!?$  (with this push White gains space on the queenside. 10. $g4$  would allow 10... $c6!?\rightleftharpoons$  Airapetian-Schebler, Differdange 2007; instead, if 10. $\mathbb{M}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8!?\rightleftharpoons$  wins time for ... $f7-f5$ , Lopez Martinez-Zviagintsev, Pamplona 2010) 10... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (this is a logical move, clearing the way for the  $f$ -pawn and defending the  $d6$ -pawn in advance. 10... $c6!?$  was an alternative) 11. $g4!?$  (a standard move in the King's Indian) 11... $f5\rightleftharpoons$  Cao Sang-Minasian, Warsaw Ech 2005.

### 5...b5 6.h4!?

This advance is logical against the Modern system, with the black knight on  $g8$ .



analysis diagram

9...0-0= The white army obstructs the  $h$ -file: the white knight on  $h3$  is block-



**PUZZLE:** 6.0-0-0!?. It is unclear which move order is better, this one or first 6. $f3$ , but both are likely to simply transpose after 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6!?$  7. $f3$  etc.



analysis diagram

A) Now 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$  is probably wrong:  
7.h4!. Now Black cannot stop the attack:

TRICK: If 7... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  8.e5!  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   
 $\mathbb{Q}h5!$  looks dangerous.

7...h5 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ . Now after 9.e5!  
(9.f3!?) 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  10.e6! fxe6 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   
(11. $\mathbb{Q}g5!?$ ) 11... $\mathbb{Q}f8$  12. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$  White is  
almost winning, Pinter-Berek, Slovakia  
tt-2 2009/10;

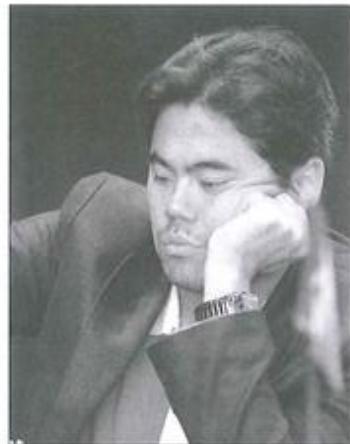
B) 6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  7.f3!  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  8.h4 and now:

WEAPON: 8... $\mathbb{Q}gf6!?$  9.g4! h6  
('Normally people play with  
...h5 but this is a critical alter-  
native. Black doesn't cede the  
g5 square and thus it's not such  
a simple position for White to  
play' – Gawain Jones & Tom  
Rendle, Chesspublishing 2012)



analysis diagram

10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  was seen in five  
games: 1-4 for Black, no losses!



Hikaru Nakamura.

8...h5! is a common blockading move:  
9. $\mathbb{Q}h3!?$  (9. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  10. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  c5  
11.dxc5 (11.d5!?) Ramakrishna-T.L.  
Petrosian, Visakhapatnam 2011)  
11... $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ )  
12... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6=$  Milliet-  
Stefanova, Baku 2007) and now:



analysis diagram

WEAPON: 9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6!?$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$

10...e5 (10... $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$  Dzhumaev-  
Chatalbashev, Creon 2006) 11.d5∞  
Saric-Drazic, Djakovo 2006.

TRICK: 9... $\mathbb{Q}c8!?$  is slow:  
10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  c5 11.e5! cxd4 12.e6  
fxe6 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (13...e5  
14. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f2\infty$ )

14... $\mathbb{W}xd4$  e5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  and White obtained a strong initiative for the pawn, Cooley-Gibbs, England tt-3 2008/09.

After 9...e6 we get a typical position with the white knight on g5: 10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  (10... $\mathbb{W}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6\infty$  Simacek-Vokac, Prague ch-CZE 2007) 11.g4 hxg4 12.fxg4  $\mathbb{Q}f6\rightleftharpoons$  and the game becomes very sharp, Sanchez Jerez-Movsziszian, La Roda 2012.

White can also start an attack on the other side with 6.a4, but this doesn't make much sense:



analysis diagram

6...b4 and now:

- A) 7. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  8.f3 a5 9.c3 (9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7!$ ? 11.0-0 c5=) 9...bxc3 10.bxc3 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6=$  Anand-Azmaiparashvili, Dubai rapid 2002;

B) 7. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is an interesting gambit: 8. $\mathbb{W}xb4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  9. $\mathbb{W}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6\infty$  Alonso Moyano-Gual Pascual, Spain tt 2012) 8.f3 a5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  h5!? 10. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}h3!$  0-0 12.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}xd3$  13. $\mathbb{W}xd3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  14. $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5! with a balanced position, as in Kosteniuk-Lahno, Beijing blitz 2011.

PUZZLE: The direct Sämisch move 6.f3!? usually transposes to h2-h4 or 0-0-0:



analysis diagram

6... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7.h4 (7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8.g4 c5!?) 9. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}c7\rightleftharpoons$ ; 7.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  8.h4 h5 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  c5 10. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  12.e5 cxd4 13. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  dxe5 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6\rightleftharpoons$  Mamedov-Azmaiparashvili, Internet blitz 2003) 7...h6 (7... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ !?) 8.g4 h6 $\infty$ ) 8.g4 h5 9.g5 e6 10. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  12.0-0-0-0 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14.b3 c5! $\rightleftharpoons$  Ohme-Fridman, Osterburg ch-GER 2012.

### 6... $\mathbb{Q}f6!$

'Not a popular move in this precise order, but we can't really see why', is Gawain Jones & Tom Rendle's comment on the Chesspublishing website (2012).

Moreover, 6... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ? allows 7.h5! $\pm$  b4 8. $\mathbb{Q}d5$  a5 9.f3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.0-0-0 e6 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}gh3$  e5 13.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and White won in Dominguez Perez-Mamedyarov, Beijing 2011.

WEAPON: 6...h5! is the usual defence; Black continues with the Modern system without ... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ .

7.f3!? (7. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ !) 7... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (7... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?) waiting for  $\mathbb{Q}h3$ - $\mathbb{Q}xh3$ ) 8. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ! (for the alternative 8... $\mathbb{Q}b7$  see the line with 6.0-0-0) 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ?



analysis diagram

10.0-0-0 (for 10.♗e2 0-0 see the analysis in Caruana-Kramnik, next game; 10.b3 c6 11.♗d1 0-0 12.♗e2 ♖c7= Perez Candelario-Granda Zuniga, Zafra 2009) 10...e6 11.d5 (11.♗d3 ♗b8!?) 11...exd5 (11...b4!?; 11...e5!?) 12.♗xb6 cxb6 13.♗xd5 was played in A. Hunt-Chatalbashev, Bratto 2009: here, Black's best move is 13...♗xd5! 14.♖xd5 ♗a7=.

**7.f3!?**

Houdini suggests the interesting 7.h5!?? (Gawain Jones & Tom Rendle).

The strategic exchange 7.♗h6?! allows nice counterplay for Black with 7...♗xh6 8.♗xh6 ♗bd7 9.f3 c5 (9...b4!?) 10.♗ge2 ♗a5 11.♗d2 ♗b7=.

12.♗d1 (12.g4 was another pseudo-aggressive concept in R. Martinez-Dzhumaev, Genova 2006. Here Black had 12...b4 13.♗d1 cxd4 14.♗xd4

d5!?) 12...♗xd2+ 13.♗xd2= Vavulin-Korotylev, Moscow 2012.

**7...♗bd7**

WEAPON: 7...h5! can transpose to the well-known exchange line (♗x♗):

If 8.♗h3 (8.0-0-0!? c6!?), then 8...♗xh3! 9.♗xh3 ♗bd7 when Black stands perfectly well, Zapata-Almeida Quintana, Cali 2012.

Again, 7...h6?! is a slightly suspicious option: 8.a4 (8.0-0-0!?) 8...b4 9.♗ce2 a5 10.g4 ♗bd7 11.♗g3 and White's extra space should give him something, Naiditsch-Dlugosz, Warsaw rapid 2005.

**8.♗h3**

Here, with the black pawn still on h7, the knight is going to f4 (on ♗g5, Black has ...h7-h6).

WEAPON: 8.g4!? h6! – a good move at last!



analysis diagram

9.0-0-0 ♗b6 10.b3 c6!= and we return to the classical set-up: 11.♗h3 a5! 12.g5 hxg5 13.hxg5 ♗fd7 (13...♗h5!?) 14.♗xd7+ ♗xd7 15.♗ge2 ♗g8 16.♗f4 a4= A. Ivanov-Seirawan, Long Beach ch-USA 1989.

**8...♗b7!?**

We arrive at the critical position of the line.

9.  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ 

9.0-0-0!? b4!? 10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  a5 11.  $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   
 12.  $\mathbb{W}xh6$  e5 (12...e6!?) 13. dx5 dxe5  
 14.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  is balanced, Black is ready  
 for ...0-0-0 or ... $\mathbb{W}f8$ , L. Schut-Siebrecht,  
 4th match game Amsterdam 2010.

9...h5 10.0-0-0 e5

10...b4 11.  $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ .

11. dx5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}fd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5!$ ?  
 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  14.  $\mathbb{W}xd5$  0-0



Summary: Black easily keeps the balance  
 after the opening.

15.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 15...  $\mathbb{H}e8$ !?16.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{H}b8$  17. f4?!

Now this advance only weakens the centre.

Better may have been 17. g4!?  $\mathbb{h}xg4$   
 18.  $\mathbb{f}xg4$   $\mathbb{W}f6$  (18...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ?∞) 19.  $\mathbb{Q}c1$   
 $\mathbb{W}e5$ =.

17...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ 

Aiming for ...  $\mathbb{Q}b6$ -c4.

17...  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !? 18.  $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   
 $\mathbb{H}fe8$ ??.

18.  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{H}xb6$  19.  $\mathbb{W}g5$   $\mathbb{W}e8$   
 20.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b4 21.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{H}b5$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   
 $axb5$  23. g4  $\mathbb{h}xg4$  24.  $\mathbb{W}xg4$   $\mathbb{W}e6$   
 25.  $\mathbb{W}xe6$   $fxe6$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{H}xf4$   
 27.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6+$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  28.  $\mathbb{Q}d7$   $\mathbb{H}xe4$   
 29.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  30.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{H}g4$  31.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   
 $\mathbb{Q}d4$  32. a4  $bxa3$  33.  $bxa3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   
 34. h5 g5?

In the ending that has arisen Black  
 even has some chances to gain the full  
 point.

35.  $\mathbb{H}g1$   $\mathbb{H}e4$  36.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$  c5 37.  $\mathbb{Q}a2$  c4  
 37...  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !?.  
 38. a4  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  39.  $\mathbb{H}g4$   $\mathbb{H}f4$  40.  $\mathbb{H}xf4$   
 $gxf4$   $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

### Game 20 – 4...a6 vs. the Sämisch (f2-f3) in the Pirc

In this game we can learn more about the Pirc system via Vladimir Kramnik's superior perspective on the position. Despite not getting adequate results in several games, his opening concept was of great theoretical value.

□ Arkadij Naiditsch  
 ■ Vladimir Kramnik

Dortmund 2010 (9)

1.e4 d6

(!) Kramnik.

2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ 

WEAPON: At the Moscow  
 2010 World blitz champion-  
 ship, Nepomniachtchi beat  
 Kramnik with the help of  
 $a2-a4$ : 4. f3 a6 5. a4!?.



analysis diagram



analysis diagram

However, the opening went favourably for Black: 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  0-0!? (the former World Champion decides to castle first. Black players rarely do this in the Sämisch Variation. Both 6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !?, and 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ !?, were covered in the previous game) 7.g4? c5!? (this break is especially good in blitz games, when the seconds are ticking away. 7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !?, 8.h4 e5 (8...h5!?) 9.d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ !  $\Rightarrow$  Slobodjan-Hickl, Montpellier 1993)

A) 8.d5 (the Sämisch-Benoni) 8... $\mathbb{W}a5$ !? (Kramnik becomes active at once) 9. $\mathbb{B}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10.h4 (this is very aggressive, but White cannot retrace his steps after playing g2-g4.

10... $\mathbb{Q}e5$  (closing the kingside with 10...h5!? is safer for Black, for example 11.g5  $\mathbb{Q}e8\bar{F}$ ) 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  (quite a thematic sacrifice:  $\mathbb{Q}x\mathbb{B}A$  and active play. Still, 11...h5 12.g5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7\bar{F}$  might have been better) 12.fxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  13. $\mathbb{B}h3$  (13. $\mathbb{Q}h3$ !?) 13...f5!?, 14.gxf5  $\mathbb{B}xf5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .

Here Black has several moves to keep the position balanced but unclear: 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  ( $\geq$  15... $\mathbb{B}af8$ !) 16. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ? (16... $\mathbb{W}b4$ !?) 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$  and Black still has some compensation for his material disadvantage, Nepomniachtchi-Kramnik, Moscow blitz 2010;



The game Naiditsch-Kramnik, Dortmund 2010.

B) With the bishop on e3, 8.dxc5! ought to be more critical: 8... $\mathbb{W}a5!?$  9.g5 (9.cxd6  $\mathbb{B}d8!?$ ) 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  10.cxd6  $\mathbb{Q}xc3+$  11.bxc3  $\mathbb{B}d8\#.$



analysis diagram

The position looks definitely playable!

#### 4...a6 5. $\mathbb{W}d2!?$

Once again, White chooses the main attacking continuation.

**WEAPON:** In another blitz game, Caruana tried the less common move 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  against Kramnik, but it transposed to a Sämisch anyway: 5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6.h4!? ('After 5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  this continuation seems more logical' – Kramnik in ChessBase Magazine). Now:

**TRICK:** 6...b5?! 7.e5!  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  8. $\mathbb{Q}f3\uparrow.$

6...h5! 7.f3?! b5 (7... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$  8. $\mathbb{W}d2$  e5 $\Rightarrow$ ) 8. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  allows 9. $\mathbb{Q}h3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  0-0.

Surprisingly, this position is new, but the game remains typically complex: 11.a4 (11.0-0-0 b4!?, 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  a5 $\Rightarrow$  etc.) 11...b4 12. $\mathbb{Q}d1$  a5 13. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  c5!?.

Kramnik's favourite break, used in many blitz games!

**TRICK:** 14.dxc5 dxc5 15. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{B}xd8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7\uparrow.$

14.0-0 cxd4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  e5!? (another active idea) 16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  d5! 17. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{B}e8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (19...dxe4!?, 20. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5!\mp$ ) 20. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb5$  21.axb5 and Black has achieved a promising position.



analysis diagram

Instead of 21...d4?!, he could now have played 21... $\mathbb{W}b8!.$ , Caruana-Kramnik, Moscow Wch blitz 2010.

#### 5...b5!

In view of a possible  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ , Black rightly delays the fianchetto and uses the tempo to start new activities on the queenside.

#### 6.f3!?, $\mathbb{Q}bd7!?$

So far, Black has not experienced big problems against any kind of Sämisch.



#### 7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

**WEAPON:** 7.g4 is also the main advance in the Classical Sämisch (with ...c7-c6/ ...b7-b5), as analysed in Game 16. Here, Black's queenside structure is

slightly different (a6/b5), and both players have to adjust some of their ideas: 7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$ ? 8. $\mathbb{g}5$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  e5! and Black got a comfortable opening position:



analysis diagram

11.dxe5 dxe5 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   
(12.0-0-0 0-0=) 12... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ =  
Vehi Bach-Peralta, Arinsal 2009.

7... $\mathbb{Q}b6$   
7... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ?  
8. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   
8.b3  $\mathbb{Q}g7$ ?; 8. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  h5? 9. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e5=  
8... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  9.a4!? b4 10. $\mathbb{Q}cd5$   $\mathbb{Q}bxd5$   
11. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  12.exd5=



With the exchange of the four knights, White has considerably simplified the position and now attacks the b4-pawn.

12...0-0!  
Once again, Kramnik decides to sacrifice material in order to fight for the initiative.

13. $\mathbb{Q}xb4$ !  
Accepting the gift.  
If 13. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  e6!=

13...e6



Due to the Sämisch pawn on f3, Black has enough counterplay in the centre.

14. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   
14.dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  c5=

14... $\mathbb{Q}h4+$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d1$

Avoiding castling seems a bit optimistic and provocative. The safer alternative was 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$  16.0-0 (16.dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xg2$  17.exf7+  $\mathbb{Q}h8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ =) 16...exd5 17.h4  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  18. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ =,

15... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ?

This is the first of a series of tactical mistakes by Kramnik in this game, eventually leading to his defeat. After 15... $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ! Black should have good compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

16. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ !



16...e5

**TRICK:** 16... $\mathbb{W}e7!?$  was relatively better: 17. $\mathbb{Q}h6$  (17. $\mathbb{W}xd4$  e5 18. $\mathbb{W}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ !) 17... $\mathbb{W}f6!$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  20. $\mathbb{Q}b7$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xb7!=$ .

### 17. $\mathbb{Q}xc8?!$

Naiditsch also goes astray, continuing to look for simplifications.

**TRICK:** 17. $\mathbb{Q}b5!?$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  19.a5!, keeping the extra passed a-pawn.

### 17... $\mathbb{Q}fxc8$ 18.c3 $\mathbb{Q}ab8$ 19. $\mathbb{W}c4$



### 19...c5?

Missing a strong reply. After 19... $\mathbb{Q}xb2!$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}cb8!$  Black seems to maintain the balance, though the position remains complicated.

### 20. $\mathbb{Q}c1!?$

Now White wins more material, while the bishop on c1 defends everything.

### 20...e4

Black is still trying to attack. 20... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e1!?$ ; or 20... $\mathbb{Q}f2$  21. $\mathbb{W}xh4$   $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$ .

### 21. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}e8!?$

22... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  23. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ ; and 22... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  fails to 23. $\mathbb{Q}a3!$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  24. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$  25. $\mathbb{Q}d2+-$ .

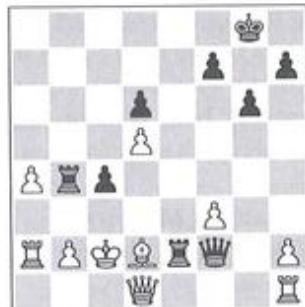
### 23. $\mathbb{Q}a3$

23. $\mathbb{Q}c2!$   $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  24. $\mathbb{Q}b1!$ .

23... $\mathbb{Q}b4$  24. $\mathbb{W}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4+$  25. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $c4$

### 25... $\mathbb{Q}eb8?!$

26. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  27. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$  28. $\mathbb{Q}a2$



White should be winning here. However...

### 28... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

28...c3 29.bxc3  $\square$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  30. $\mathbb{Q}c1+-$ .

### 29. $\mathbb{Q}e1?$

29. $\mathbb{Q}c1!$ .

### 29... $\mathbb{Q}b3+?$

**TRICK:** 29... $\mathbb{Q}f5+!$  30. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  c3! was the last chance for Black:



analysis diagram

31. $\mathbb{Q}xc3?$  (31. $\mathbb{Q}xe2!$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2+$  32. $\mathbb{Q}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4+$  33. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  34. $\mathbb{Q}b3!$ ; 31... $\mathbb{Q}f4+$  32. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}e4+$  33. $\mathbb{Q}a1??$  (33. $\mathbb{Q}c1=$ ) 33... $\mathbb{Q}d4!!+$ ).

### 30. $\mathbb{Q}b1+-$

Now the game ends quickly:

30... $\mathbb{Q}xe1$  31. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$  c3 32. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  33. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  34. $\mathbb{Q}a3$  1-0

**Game 21 – Summary 4...a6 vs the Sämisich:**

'White has the potential to emerge with an opening advantage if he adopts an aggressive approach to this line. However, Black gets rich piece play and serious counterchances in return. In an era of in-depth computer preparation, 4...a6 definitely looks far too risky to use at top level, but is definitely good enough for us simple mortals!' – grandmaster Alexander Finkel, Yearbook 98.

Comparing both systems, the one based on ...c7-c6 and the other, based on ...a7-a6, I think it's more a matter of taste and overall strategy before the battle starts.

**□ Sébastien Midoux**

**■ Viktor Moskalenko**

Cap d'Agde 2012 (5)

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.♘e3 a6!?**

After my study of the 'Perfect Pirc and Modern', I decided to use this set-up for the first time (instead of the traditional 4...c6) in a very recent tournament. I also felt that it was a riskier line, but I needed a win like fresh air!

**5.♗d2 b5 6.h4!?**

As we have seen in this book, most of my opponents like the 'matador style'. However, they will probably change their repertoire once this book has been published, and will favour the quieter lines.



**6...♗f6!?**

Following Naiditsch-Nakamura. 6...h5; 6...h6.

**7.f3 ♘bd7 8.a4**

Later, it will become clear that combining the two flank advances (h2-h4 and a2-a4) is a quite wrong decision, at least

from a strategic point of view. In Games 19 and 20 White used some other typical moves.

**8...b4 9.♘d1 c5!?**

A centre thrust against an attack on both flanks. In the only previous game with this line, Black answered with the slightly slow, but also successful 9...♝b8 10.g4 h5 (10...h6!?) 11.g5 ♘h7 12.f4 and now 12...c5!? 13.d5 ♘b6 14.a5 ♘a8 15.♗f3 ♘c7 16.♗c4 ♗g4 17.0-0 ♘d7! ↔ Pira-Bricard, Evry 2001.



**10.a5!?**

An unnecessary waste of a tempo, aimed against ...♗a5.

**WEAPON:** However, after the logical 10.dxc5 10...dxc5 (10...♘xc5!? 11.♗xb4 ♛c7?? would also be an interesting gambit) 11.g4 h5!? 12.g5 ♘h7 White's attack will utterly fail, and his own king will be the next target for the black pieces.

**10... $\mathbb{Q}c7!?$**

I still prefer to develop the queenside instead of playing 10...0-0.

**11.c3 bxc3 12.bxc3 0-0**



White cannot be very happy with such a position out of the opening.

**13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  e5!**

This second break allows Black to fight for the initiative.

**TRICK:** My first intention was to play the thematic combination 13...d5?! 14.e5 cxd4 15.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  with a double threat: to take the a1-rook, and to play ...d5-d4.



analysis diagram

However, I found a nice defensive resource for White: 17. $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ ±.

**14.d5**

After the closing of the centre, a King's Indian structure has arisen. White has

no time for developing moves, since if 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  d5!±.

**14...c4!**

It's useful for Black to include this advance before he plays ... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  and ...f7-f5.

**15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$**

After seeing this move on the board, I suddenly thought that my opponent just wanted to start a new game!

However, after the alternative 15. $\mathbb{Q}c2$  White cannot attack the c4-pawn: 15... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ?! 16. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ±.

**15... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f2$**

**16. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  f5±.**

**16...f5 17.exf5 gxf5**



Objectively, Black is already winning here.

**18. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ !?**  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$

An automatic exchange. An interesting variation with the purpose of keeping the knight was 18... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ ! 19. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  f4 20. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e4! 21.fxe4  $\mathbb{Q}e5$ ! 22. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ →.

**19.axb6  $\mathbb{Q}d8$**

Also, 19... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ ! 20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  f4 21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e4±.

**20. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}b1$**

Or 21. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  (21... $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !?) 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc8$   $\mathbb{Q}xa1$  23.b7  $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !±.

**21...f4!→**

Again, the 'Perfect Pirc punishment' begins.

22.♗e2 ♜f5! 23.♗b3 e4 24.♗d2?!

An elegant joke by the king before resigning, since 24.fxe4 ♜xe4 25.♗d4 ♜g3 26.♗h3 ♜xd4 27.♗xd4 ♜xg2++ is hopeless.

24...♛c8!?

The alternative 24...e3+ would be too obvious.

25.♗b4 a5 26.b7 e3+ 27.♗xe3 fxe3+ 28.♗xe3 ♛c7

It's clear that White will lose a lot more material.



29.♗b6 ♜f7 30.♗xc7 ♜xc7 31.♗b6 ♜h6+ 32.♔e1 ♜xc4 33.g4 ♜e3! 0-1

### Epilogue Chapters 1-4:

Attacking opening systems like the Austrian and the 150/Sämisch keep a decisive influence in the Pirc and Modern, and they often transpose into the most critical positions and set-ups. Therefore, these lines have been covered in the most extensive part of the book.

In the following short chapters we will examine the bishop sortie 4.♗g5; White's fianchetto 4.g3, the classical move 4.♗f3, and finally some unusual weapons against other white systems, mainly taken from the author's own practice.

## Chapter 5

### The Dynamic Bishop Attack 4. $\text{B}g5$

Pirc: 1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\text{B}f6$  3. $\text{B}c3$  g6 4.  $\text{B}g5$       Modern: 1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\text{B}g7$  3. $\text{B}c3$  d6 4.  $\text{B}g5$



The main characteristic of this set-up, which can be observed from the first moves, is that White initiates a sharp battle for the central initiative.

\* Thanks to the bishop on g5, the pawn advance e4-e5 will always be most effective.

\* One of the advantages of  $\text{B}g5$  is the possibility of quick queenside castling.

#### Directions

Game 22 provides an insight into the key positions of 4.  $\text{B}g5$ : 4...  $\text{B}g7$  (4...h6 5.  $\text{B}xf6$ !?) 5.  $\text{B}d2$  (also, 5.  $\text{B}e2$ ! and the tricky 5. e5) 5...h6 6.  $\text{B}h4$  0-0 (6...g5) 6. f4.

This game also includes the Modern order as a weapon against 4.  $\text{B}g5$ .

Games 23-26 continue the discussion on the sharpest variation: 5. f4!?



#### Game 22 – Key Positions and Puzzle: 4. $\text{B}g5$

Our main game was played by two experts on both sides. Black won this short theoretical duel easily. On move 18 he was already close to hauling in the deserved full point.

□ Mikhail Kobalia

■ Gennady Kuzmin

Moscow 2002 (4)

1.e4 d6

WEAPON: Keep in mind that the Modern Defence move order is far more flexible against attacks with  $\text{B}g5$ , for example:  
1...g6!? 2.d4  $\text{B}g7$  3. $\text{B}c3$  d6  
4.  $\text{B}g5$



analysis diagram

4...h6!? (4...a6!; or 4...c6!) 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$  b5 6.a3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  7.f4  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  8.b3  $\mathbb{W}c7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  a6 10. $\mathbb{H}c1$ !?

$c5!\rightleftharpoons$  Ortega Hermida-Perez Candelario, San Agustin 2012) 5. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  (5. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  makes little sense in the light of what we have seen in Chapter 4) 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !? (5...a6 6.f4 g5!N is an unexplored gambit idea) 6.d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (6... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ !?) 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$  c6! $\rightleftharpoons$  7. $\mathbb{W}d2$  c5 8. $\mathbb{Q}d1$ !?

$\mathbb{W}d7$ !N (White was very solid after 8... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9.c3  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  10.f4± in Vallejo Pons-Korobov, Aix-les-Bains Ech 2011) and now:

TRICK: 9.c3?  $\mathbb{W}g4$ !



9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  g5 10. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  f5! $\rightleftharpoons$ , and the position is already attractive for Black.

2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !?

This sharp bishop sortie is the first key idea of this chapter.

4... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

WEAPON: After 4...h6 White can play the strategic exchange 5. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !? (5. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  is the common continuation) 5...exf6.



analysis diagram

In this typical 'Trompowsky' position (with doubled black f-pawns) White maintains slight but quite annoying pressure: 6.f4 (6. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ !?) 6...f5 (6... $\mathbb{Q}g7$

7.f5! – this line is important in Game 23) 7.exf5 (7.e5!?) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  8. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ ±.

5. $\mathbb{W}d2$

The most popular move (1995 games = 62,4%). White prevents 5...c5 (after 6.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}a5$  doesn't pin the  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ ) and prepares queenside castling. However, in view of Black's simple answer, this set-up is less logical here than  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ / $\mathbb{W}d2$  in Chapter 4.



WEAPON: With 5. $\mathbb{W}e2$ ?

White can follow an as yet unexplored, strategically aggressive plan (65 games = 69,2%).



analysis diagram

5...h6 6. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !? (the same idea is also valid in Game 24) 6... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  7.e5!  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  8.0-0-0 0-0 9.f4 with attacking possibilities in the centre and on the kingside, Vega Gutierrez-Reizniece, Aviles Ech-jr 2000.



PUZZLE: 5.e5 is a known tricky line (1013 games = 61,6%).



analysis diagram

**WEAPON:** 5...Qfd7!? Nowadays certain experts prefer this option, since it is less forced than the exchange and not so boring: 6.f4 (6.exd6 cxd6=; 6.Qf3 Qc6!?) 6...0-0 7.Qf3 Qb6!? (7...f6) 8.Qe2 Qc6 9.0-0 f6 10.exf6 exf6 11.Qh4 d5= Gashimov-Ivanchuk, Wijk aan Zee 2012.

The exchange 5...dxe5 leads to a complex queenless middlegame: 6.dxe5 and now:

**TRICK:** 6...Qfd7 7.e6!  
 (7.Qd5?! Qc6= 8.Qb5? h6!  
 9.Qh4 g5 10.Qg3 Qcxe5=)  
 7...fxe6 8.Qe2= Bivol-Mann,  
 Oberhof 2011.

6...Qg4!? 7.Qxd8+ Qxd8 8.Qd1+ and: Until now, 8...Qd7 was considered almost forced, since...

**TRICK:** 8...Qe8?? loses to 9.h3!  
 Qxe5 10.Qd5+-.

**WEAPON:** However, Black can try the new idea 8...Qd7!? 9.Qd5 (9.e6∞) 9...c6!N and he seems OK in every line.

After 8...Qd7 we continue 9.e6 fxe6.



analysis diagram

After many years of practice and analysis, this position was considered not



A legendary veteran, Ukrainian grandmaster Gennady Kuzmin. For ages, he has used the Classical Pirc as his main weapon against 1.e4. In his games, we are bound to find some gems for our purposes!

dangerous for Black. However, there are still some interesting alternatives:

A) 10.Qe2 Qe5 11.Qf3 Qf7= Asensio Linan-Vidarte Morales, Barbera del Valles 1999;

B) 10.Qc4 Qe8! 11.Qf3 Qc6 12.0-0 Qge5 13.Qxe5 Qxe5 14.Qb5 Qxb5!?  
 (14...Rc8=) 15.Qxb5+ c6 16.Qe2 Qf7= Mellado Trivino-Peralta, Catalunya tt 2003;

C) 10.Qf3!? and now:

**WEAPON:** In view of the following novelty, 10...Qxc3+!? may be a good defensive idea for Black, for example 11.bxc3 Qc6∞ etc.

10...Qc6 11.Qe4!? Qe8 (11...b6  
 12.Qb5↑ Qb8 13.Qc1!↑; 11...Qxb2  
 12.Qc5 Qc3+ 13.Qd2 Qxd2+  
 14.Rxd2 Qf6∞) 12.Qc5 Qc8.

Now 13.Qb5 Qxb2! 14.0-0 Qa3  
 (14...Qe5=; 14...Qf7=) 15.Qxc6+  
 (15.Qa6 Qd6!) 15...bxc6 16.Qd3 h6

17.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$  Larino Nieto-Movsziszian, Mondariz 2008. Black could continue the game with 17...  $\mathbb{Q}d6!?$ .

**WEAPON:** But according to the engine, after 13.  $\mathbb{Q}c1! \uparrow$ , threatening  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and  $\mathbb{Q}b5$ , White has more than enough compensation.

**5...h6!?**

Disturbing the battery  $\mathbb{W}d2/\mathbb{Q}g5$ .

**6.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$**



However, White is going to play aggressively: 0-0-0 and e4-e5, or first f2-f4.

**6...0-0!?**

Another natural move for Black, but not the only one.

**WEAPON:** The well-known alternative is 6...g5!? in order to exchange  $\mathbb{Q}x\mathbb{Q}$ : 7.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  8. 0-0-0.



analysis diagram

The arising lines rather resemble the typical positional Torre systems with  $\mathbb{Q}g5$ . In a theoretically important game between two other experts, Almasi and Marin, we continue the dialogue:

A) After 8...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  9. e5!?, in a recent game Black tried to improve this line with 9...  $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$  (9...dxe5! 10. dxe5  $\uparrow$  has been given by grandmaster Almasi) 10.  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5 \infty$  preparing ...  $\mathbb{W}d7$  and ... 0-0-0, Idani-Gagunashvili, Baku 2011;

B) 8...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and now:

B1) The 'Ruy Lopez' move 9.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  has been played by Tiviakov and Almasi: 9...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  e6 11. f3 (11.  $\mathbb{Q}he1$  0-0!?) Almasi-Markowski, Odorheiu Secuiesc 1995) 11...  $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  12. hgx3 a6 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  with a solid position for Black, Tiviakov-Markowski, Polanica Zdroj 1995;

B2) 9.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2!?$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10. f3 (on 10.  $\mathbb{W}e3$  Chernin recommends 10...e5!?) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  11. hgx3 e6 12. f4 (this is a solid positional approach. The advance 12. d5 is more ambitious, but has the drawback of weakening the long diagonal: 12...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  exd5!N (better than 13...  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  as in l'Ami-Nybäck, Hengelo 2002; 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e2 \pm$ ) 14.  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15. exd5 0-0=) 12...  $\mathbb{W}f6!$ .



analysis diagram

This move was recommended by Chernin in the book *Pirc Alert!*. 13.e5 dxe5 14.fxe5N (14.dxe5  $\mathbb{W}e7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  0-0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}2c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8!$  is OK for Black if he continues with ... $\mathbb{Q}c8$  and ...b7-b6, T. Horvath-Leib, Saas Almagell 2005) 14... $\mathbb{W}e7$  (Chernin ends his analysis here. Marin in ChessBase Magazine 128 also considered 14... $\mathbb{W}g6?$  with the aim of preventing an early knight move to e4: 15.g4 0-0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  f6=) 15. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  0-0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}2c3$  f5!=, Almasi-Marin, Reggio Emilia 2008/09. Marin: 'Black has to open the centre before White completes his development, otherwise he would remain passive for the rest of the game.'

7.f4



**PUZZLE:** We have already reached an important position: after including the moves ...h6,  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ , now Black has a hidden combination! However, Black cannot get the same position so easily in the most precise order for White: 5.f4! h6 6. $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$ . See Game 24.7...c6

Generally, ...c7-c6 is the standard Pirc set-up (see Games 25 and 26). However, here it is not the best option for Black, since the white bishop is already on h4.

**WEAPON:** Instead, I recommend 7...e5!=, an important



Hungarian grandmaster Zoltan Almasi is a great expert of 4. $\mathbb{B}g5$  against the Pirc. However, he always uses the ultra-positional 5. $\mathbb{W}d2$ , which is, in the author's opinion, not adequate in this variation.

alternative based on the tactical resource ... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$ . Until now, only two games have been played with this move, so it has never been deeply analysed:



analysis diagram

- A) If 8.0-0-0 exf4!=;
- B) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  9.dxe5 dxe5 10. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  11.fxe5=, Dreev-Tkachiev, Neum blitz 2000;
- C) 8.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  (the double threat gives Black counterplay) 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd2$

10.♕xc7 ♔xf1 11.♔xf1 dxe5  
 12.♕xe5= and Black has obvious compensation for the pawn, Airapetian-Chuprikov, Voronezh 2008.

The typical break 7...c5 is a worse option here, but we must check everything:



analysis diagram

8.dxc5! dxc5 (after ♕d2, Black cannot play his usual 8...♕a5? in view of 9.cxd6±) 9.0-0-0! (White moves his king away from the centre. The exchange 9.♕xd8?! is premature: 9...♕xd8 10.e5 ♔h5 11.♕xe7 ♕e8= and Black has counterplay already, although he ended up losing after a blunder, Gofshtein-Horowitz, Tel Aviv 1990) 9...♕xd2+ 10.♕xd2 ♔c6 11.♕f3! (there is no hurry: 11.e5?! ♔h5 12.g3±) 11...♕e6 Dahlmann-Helmert, Germany tt 1996/97.  
 Here White could continue 12.♕f2?!± with a slightly favourable position.



## 8.0-0-0?!

Played in the aggressive style that is typical for Russian grandmaster Mikhail Kobalia. However, castling queenside is a risky option, and Black immediately advances his queenside soldiers.

PUZZLE: After the natural 8.♕d3?! Black has problems.

For instance, 8...♗bd7 (8...♗b6?! 9.♗f3† is similar to Game 25; and 8...b5 9.♗f3 is like Game 26, but the inclusion of the moves ...h6, ♘h4 here favours White) 9.e5! ♗d5 10.♗xd5 cxd5 11.♗f3 and White is already better.

PUZZLE: For the same reason, after 8.♗f3?!, if Black tries 8...d5?! as in Game 25, White can continue with 9.e5! (9.♗xf6 exf6= Aveskulov-V. Onischuk, Kharkov 2011) 9...♗e4 10.♗e3± and now there is no bishop on g5 to take!

## 8..b5! 9.e5?!

The action starts already on move 9, without a prologue!

### 9..b4!

A typical counter-attack for Black in such positions.

### 10.♗a4

10.exf6?! bxc3=.

### 10..♗d5



Now Black is ahead in the attack, since White still needs to develop his king-side. Maybe Black is even winning here.

**11.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$**

An important line is, for instance, 11.exd6  $\mathbb{W}xd6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ ? 13.  $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}5b6!$ , forcing White to open the a-file: 14.  $\mathbb{Q}xb6$  axb6→.

**11...  $\mathbb{W}a5!$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ ?**

Following the above-mentioned plan, intending ... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  etc.

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}a6!$ ?**

Suddenly, there is a new threat: 14... $\mathbb{Q}b5$ .

**14.c4  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{W}xa4$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}hf1$   $\mathbb{Q}7b6$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{W}b5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$**



Here Black made a move that is difficult to explain:

**18...  $\mathbb{Q}c4?!$**

After the obvious 18...a5 he should be winning.

**19.  $\mathbb{W}d3$**   $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

Black could still retreat the knight with 19... $\mathbb{Q}cb6?$  and continue the game.

### Summary game 22



After White's 5.  $\mathbb{W}d2$ , and even after 5.e5, the character of the game remains positional. Therefore, both sides have a little time for improvements.

But now, fasten your seatbelts please, before the next dynamic attack begins!

### Games 23-26 – The Sharpest Line: 4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 5. f4!?

The move order 4.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. f4!?, was established by grandmaster Efim Bogoljubow (1889-1952), a player with a super-active style.



This is for sure one of the sharpest lines of the Pirc. From here on, the advance e4-e5, reinforced by the ♕ on g5, is no longer a joke, but a serious threat!

Even today this system hasn't been fully investigated yet. However, it is quite popular among strong players. Bogoljubow's idea has been used (and probably well analysed) by grandmasters such as Unzicker (1925-2006), Liberzon (1937-1996), Westerinen, Dreev, Shirov, Yakovich, Yermolinsky, Ulibin, Sadvakasov, Ivanchuk and many other titled players.

Generally, White has many possibilities of obtaining the initiative in this line.

Black can play the following moves: 5...h6, 5...0-0, 5/6...c6 and an early 5/6/7...c5, but there comes a moment when the study of the variations becomes difficult. At the beginning, both Black and White have several alternatives with independent ideas, but after a few moves many lines transpose to the same position.

Game 23 – 5...h6 6.Qxf6!?

### Game 24 – The early break 5/6/7...c5.

Game 25 – The risky counterplan ...c7-c6/... $\mathbb{W}b6$ . Or alternatively, the strategic block with ...d6-d5.

Game 26 – finally, the universal set-up ...c7-c6/b7-b5.

### Game 23 – The Philippine Attack: 5...h6 6.♕xf6!?

White's opening idea  $\mathbb{Q}x\mathbb{Q}$  is an interesting possibility. The first player fights to win a few tempi, and perhaps also to avoid all the analysis required after 5...h6 6.  $\mathbb{Q}h4$ .

Rogelio Antonio Jr

■ Zaw Oo

Yangon et 1998 (5)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g5  
♗q75.f4!

After this aggressive advance, the central attack e4-e5 is always a threat.

5..h6

An intermediate move that looks useful. In practice, this is normally played before Black goes ...0-0 or ...c7-c5. However...



Efim Bogoljubow



6. ♘xf6!?

An unexpected resource. White prefers to take advantage of the one extra tempo in his fight for the initiative. 6.♗h4 is the common move, see Game 24.

#### 6...♗xf6

WEAPON: If 6...exf6, 7.f5! is strong (or 7.♗f3!? f5 8.0-0-0±); 7...gxf5 (7...0-0 8.♗f3!) 8.exf5 ♗xf5 9.♗d3!



analysis diagram

with an obvious attack along the light squares: 9...♗xd3 10.♗xd3 ♗c6 11.♗ge2 ♗d7 12.0-0 0-0-0 13.♗d5 ♗de8 14.c3 ♗e6 15.♗ef4+– as in my own game Moskalenko-Yastrebova, Villa Salou 2006.

#### 7.♗f3!?

WEAPON: Quite recently, the inventor of the idea ♗x♗, Rogelio Antonio, went for 7.e5!? ♗g7 8.♗f3! (ready for queenside castling. Still, 8.♗f3!? is a more solid alternative, similar to the main game) 8...0-0 9.0-0-0 c6 (Black must quickly find counterplay) 10.g4!? (the threat is f4-f5!?) Of course, 10.♗b1!?, 10.♗c4!?, or 10.♗d3!? are possible preparatory moves) 10...♗a5 11.♗c4 (11.♗ge2!?, 11.exd6 exd6) 11...c5.



analysis diagram

Now the game becomes very sharp and interesting! 12.exd6!? (even more ambitious was 12.f5!?, attacking directly: 12...cxsd4 13.♗d5 ♗c6!∞) 12...exd6 13.dxc5 (13.♗ge2!?) 13...dxc5 (13...♗xc5!?) 14.♗d6!↑ and White gets the initiative: 14...♗c6 15.♗xg6!? ♗d4 16.♗e4 ♗e6 as in Antonio-Maltese, Minneapolis 2005.



analysis diagram

Here White should continue 17.♗xg7+! ♗xg7 18.♗d3→ etc.

#### 7...c6

If 7...♗g4 8.e5! ♗g7 9.h3±.

#### 8.e5

WEAPON: 8.♗d2!? 0-0?! (8...♗g4 9.e5!; ≥ 8...♗g7 9.0-0-0 etc.) 9.f5!↑ and White is already better.

#### 8...♗g7 9.♗d3 ♗b6

Attacking b2 as a counter to White's plan with 0-0-0. If 9...0-0 10.♗e2! etc.

### 10.0-0!

White had other interesting moves, like 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$  or 10.exd6, but this one is also fine.



### 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

This looks like a reasonable idea, trying to attack d4. If 10...0-0 11. $\mathbb{W}e1!?$ , analogically to the game.



**TRICK:** 10... $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  11. $\mathbb{W}e1!?$

$\mathbb{W}a3$  12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  0-0 13.h4!→ and White's initiative becomes dangerous.

### 11. $\mathbb{Q}h1!0-0$ 12. $\mathbb{W}e1!$

Ignoring the attacks on his pawns!

#### 12... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$

12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}a4!?$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  14. $\mathbb{W}g3!$

#### 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ $\mathbb{W}xd4$ 14. $\mathbb{Q}d1!$



With some pretty annoying threats.

#### 14...dxe5

14... $\mathbb{W}b4$  15.exd6 (15.a3!?) 15...exd6 16.f5!.

#### 15. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$



The Philippine grandmaster Rogelio Antonio employed the most dynamic opening idea  $\mathbb{Q}xg6$ , attacking without wasting time.

This looks like a promising continuation, but there was a stronger idea.



**WEAPON:** Instead, White had 15.f5! with an easy attack against the lonely black king, for instance: 15...g5 16.f6 (16. $\mathbb{Q}e4!?$ ±) 16... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (16... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ →) 17. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  18. $\mathbb{W}e2!$ → etc.

15... $\mathbb{W}b4$  16.a3  $\mathbb{W}xb2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}a2$  19. $\mathbb{W}e4$

The climax of the game.



#### 19...f5??

I guess that Black got tired of defending, since he loses the queen and the game after this mistake. 19...♝f6 20.♛xe5∞.

20.♝c4+ ♜h8 21.♛e2!+-

The black queen is trapped.

21..e4 22.♝g3? ♛a1 23.♝xa1 ♜xa1

24.♝e6 ♞ad8 25.c3 b5 26.♛h5 ♜f6

27.♝xd7 ♜d6 28.♝c5      1-0

### Summarizing 6.♝xf6

Without a doubt, White's alternative ♜x♝ is surprising and dangerous. It may be good for players who want to avoid the long theoretical lines after 6.♝h4.

However, Black's position is still flexible! He can change the early move order by playing first 4..h6 (instead of 4..♝g7), or simply 5..0-0?, or finally 5/6..c6?.

### Game 24 – Seeking Early Counterplay: 5/6/7...c5

For a long time, the Pirc Defence has been an important part of the extensive repertoire of Ukrainian star grandmaster Ruslan Ponomariov. It is quite curious that after the present game (lost convincingly by Ruslan, in the year 1999), his opponents never repeated the 4.♝g5 variation against him!



Diagram 1: 6.e5!



Diagram 2: 7.e5!

After the premature break 5/6...c5?! Black hasn't yet found a sound antidote against 6/7.e5! (diagrams 1 and 2).

- Keep in mind: Black can play an early ...c7-c5 only after having castled kingside!
- In these cases the best alternative for White is dxc5? – never e4-e5 or d4-d5.

□ Darmen Sadvakasov

■ Ruslan Ponomariov

Lausanne 1999 (1)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♝c3 g6 4.♝g5!?

♝g7

PUZZLE: First 4..h6 is an important nuance, in order to get the desired opening position after 5.♝h4 ♜g7 6.f4 0-0! etc.



analysis diagram

But White still has 5... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !? (see the analyses in Games 22 and 23 further on).

**5.f4! h6**

We have already seen the ambitious early break 5...c5?! (without castling) against the Austrian Attack (Games 2-6), but in this variation, with  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  instead of  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ , it is too risky. 6.e5! is a powerful advance here. White already has superior attacking resources. Less strong is 6.dxc5  $\mathbb{W}a5$ ??.

Now:

- A) 6...cxd4? is another dubious move: 7.exf6 exf6 8. $\mathbb{W}xd4$ +– and White won a piece and the game in Yakovich-Chabanon, Oviedo rapid 1993;
- B) The line 6... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  7.dxc5! h6 8. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  transposes to the main game;
- C) 6...dxe5 7.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ .



analysis diagram

In this position the score is 5:1. White can play any natural sequence of moves and keep the central pressure: 8. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  (or 8. $\mathbb{W}e2$ !?; or 8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !?) 8...0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !± as seen in Munoz Pantoja-Coll Domenech, Barcelona 2003.

**WEAPON:** Why not play the natural and flexible 5...0-0!? first?



analysis diagram

**TRICK:** 6.e5?! would be a premature attack, since now it is White who lacks development: 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ?? 7.f5!? (7. $\mathbb{W}f3$ ? f6!; 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$  dxe5 8.fxe5 c5?? was played in a few games) 7...dxe5!N 8. $\mathbb{W}xg4$  exd4 9.0-0-0 h6 10. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  11. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ??,  $\mathbb{Q}$  vs.  $\mathbb{Q}AA$ .

**PUZZLE:** 6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ ! is a solid alternative, but among others, 6...c5?! may now be a good move for Black: again 7.e5? does not work due to 7...cxd4??N; or 7.d5?!  $\mathbb{W}b6$ ???. So, 7.dxc5!? $\mathbb{W}a5$  8. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  9.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !? 10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  (S. Alonso-Ibanez Aullana, Mislata 2003) and now 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ??.

6. $\mathbb{W}d2$ ! is the best set-up to fight for the initiative. It aims to prevent ...c7-c5 and prepares queenside castling.

**PUZZLE:** Keep in mind that here Black does not have the tactical solution 6...e5?, because the white bishop is still on g5. However, Black can now reach the standard Pirc set-up in a better move order with 6...c6!?, as in Games 25 and, especially, 26.

6...c5!? Anyway! Now, again, 7.dxc5! is the best try for White (if 7.d5 ♖b6!?) 7...dxc5 8.0-0-0!?



analysis diagram

Now Black is okay after 8...♝c6 (8...♜xd2+?! is also possible: 9.♝xd2 ♜c6 10.♗c4 h6 11.♗h4 and here I found 11...e5!?) 9.♜xd8 ♜xd8 10.♜xd8+ ♜xd8 11.♗f3 ♜e6 (11...♝f8!?) 12.♗xf6 exf6 13.g3 with an equal endgame, Svensson-Marin, Gothenburg 2000. Here, 13...♝c7!?? would have been the most precise move.

#### 6.♗h4

6.♗xf6?! was analysed in Game 23.



#### 6...c5?!

This is still premature. White will now be better even after the best defence.

**WEAPON:** My advice is to first complete development with 6...0-0!?, waiting for White's next move:



Grandmaster Darmen Sadvakasov from Kazakhstan, a successful champion of the sharpest variation 4.♗g5 and 5.f4.

A) Now 7.♗d2 transposes to Game 22, the WEAPON 7...e5!?

B) 7.♗f3?! c5?! (looking for direct counterplay)

**TRICK:** Once again, the advance 8.e5?! is wrong due to 8...♝g4!?? since White does not have ♜b5+;

B1) The Benoni position after 8.d5 is fine for Black: 8...♜b6?! 9.♝b1 ♜h5 10.g3 ♜d7 11.♗e2 ♜hf6!?? etc.;

B2) So, 8.dxc5 ♜a5!?? 9.♗d2 ♜xc5 10.0-0-0!?



analysis diagram

 TRICK: 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}d5\uparrow$  with the double threat of 13.b4 and 13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ , E.Can-Aristotelous, Porto Carras Ech-tt 2011.

10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?$ ! 11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  b5?!? and Black has dynamic play.

7.e5!

Again, a principled and well timed advance here.

A) In this variation White is not sufficiently developed to play a Benoni, Four Pawns Attack with 7.d5?!  $\mathbb{W}b6!$  (Black immediately starts a dangerous counter-attack. I also like 7... $\mathbb{Q}h5?!$ N with the tactical idea 8. $\mathbb{W}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4!$  9. $\mathbb{W}xf4$  g5 $\mp$ ) 8. $\mathbb{Q}b1$ ?! (another passive move, but it is not so easy to decide which is the safest option here. Probably Taimanov's check 8. $\mathbb{Q}b5+?$  is a better try: 8... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  9.a4  $\mathbb{W}a5!$ ? 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g5! $\uparrow$ ) 8...g5!.



analysis diagram

A fantastic jet push! White's position collapses like a house of cards. 9.fxg5  $\mathbb{Q}xe4!$  (another planned blow) 10. $\mathbb{Q}b5+\square$  (on 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$   $\mathbb{W}b4+$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{W}xh4+$  wins) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ N (Black is also better after 10... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$  Hoeksema-Muhren, Dieren 2004) 11.gxh6  $\mathbb{Q}xh6\mp$  12. $\mathbb{W}g4?$ ! (in order to survive, White is trying to complicate the position even more) 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

13.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe7+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8!$  15. $\mathbb{W}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c4! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$ .



analysis diagram

The culminating moment of the game Pancevski-Milos, Istanbul ol 2012. Black could have won easily with, for example, 17... $\mathbb{W}a5$  18. $\mathbb{W}d2$  a6, winning the bishop. You can read the full story of this Olympiad game in the Forum section of Yearbook 105;

B) The possibility of 7.dxc5?! has not been analysed because of the popularity of the advance 7.e5. However, it is an interesting alternative for White:



analysis diagram

7... $\mathbb{W}a5$  8. $\mathbb{W}d2!$  (8.cxd6?  $\mathbb{Q}xe4\mp$ ) 8... $\mathbb{W}xc5$  9.0-0-0?!. White is slightly more active, but this advantage is only temporary:

 TRICK: 9...0-0?!, 10. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$ . This surprising resource is the key to White's play: 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d5\uparrow$ .

 TRICK: With 9...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ?! Black shows that he does not sense the danger: 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !

But after 9...  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ ?! N 10.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$  0-0 11.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b5!  $\Rightarrow$  the game gets quite dynamic.

7...  $\mathbb{Q}h5$   $\square$

Immediately provoking a complex struggle.



8.  $dxc5$ !  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$

The most combative defence.

A) The machine is trying to find compensation after 8...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  9.  $cxd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  10.  $dxe7$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xd1$   $\pm$ . However, I believe that White will always be able to convert his two extra pawns into something tangible;

B) 8...  $dxe5$ ?! is obviously too passive: 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  10. 0-0-0+↑ with a clearly better ending for White, for example: 10...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11.  $fxe5$  g5 (11...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ! g5 13.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ !  $\pm$ ; 11...  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  g5 13.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\pm$  Hodgson-Lilley, Millfield ch-GBR 2000) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and now White can continue with either 13.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ !  $\pm$  or 13.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !  $\pm$  or 13. e6!?, Macieja-Nybäck, Antalya Ech 2004.

9.  $exd6$ ! g5

White has many advantageous options here:



10.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$ ?

A) The engine indicates as most ambitious the line 10.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  (if 10... 0-0 11.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\pm$ ) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ !  $N$   $exd6$  12.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\pm$  etc.;

B) The human move 10.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ ! is a solid retreat which looks good enough for an advantage: 10... 0-0 (10...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ ?? Hodgson-Vovsha, Philadelphia 2001) 11.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$  (11.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $exd6$  12. 0-0-0↑) 11...  $exd6$  12. 0-0-0↑ Yakovich-Kerkhof, Ostend 1993.

10...  $\mathbb{Q}a5$

10... 0-0 11.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ !  $\pm$  transposes to the computer variation A) given above.

11.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc5$

The key moment in this line.



12. 0-0-0?

This is too hasty.



WEAPON: Among others, White has the obvious move 12.  $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ !, attacking Black's best piece: 12...  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\pm$ .

12...0-0?

Interestingly, after the early impatient advance 6...c5?!, Black now has no time for such peaceful moves! 12... $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ ? was a good chance to escape: 13. $\mathbb{W}xc3\Box$   $\mathbb{W}xc3$  14.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  and Black is still alive.

13.dxe7

13.h4?!

13... $\mathbb{W}xe7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}ge2!$ ?14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$ .14... $\mathbb{Q}xe2+$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3!$ ?16. $\mathbb{W}xc3!$ ?

This looks like the solution to an exercise. However, 16.bxc3↑ was simpler.

16... $\mathbb{W}xe2$  17. $\mathbb{Q}he1$   $\mathbb{W}b5\Box$ 17... $\mathbb{W}xg2$  18. $\mathbb{Q}d6+-$ .18. $\mathbb{Q}d6!$ 

Black's queenside is undeveloped.

18... $\mathbb{Q}d8\Box$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xb8$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1+$  20. $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  $\mathbb{Q}d7\Box$  21. $\mathbb{W}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  22.b3  $\mathbb{Q}h7$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}d8$   $\mathbb{W}b6?$ 23... $\mathbb{W}f1+$  24. $\mathbb{Q}b2$   $\mathbb{W}f6+$  25. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   
 $b5\rightleftharpoons$ .24. $\mathbb{W}xb6$  axb6 25.a4  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  26.c4 $\mathbb{Q}f5$  27. $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  28. $\mathbb{Q}xb6$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 29. $\mathbb{Q}d2\pm$ 

The endgame ( $\mathbb{Q}+ \mathbb{Q}+ 5\Delta$  vs.  $\mathbb{Q}+ \mathbb{Q}+ 4\Delta$ ) is difficult for Black. White won on move 90 – enjoy!

29... $\mathbb{Q}f1+$  30. $\mathbb{Q}b2$  f5 31.g3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$   
32. $\mathbb{Q}c5$  f4 33.gxf4 gxf4 34. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xf2+$  35. $\mathbb{Q}xf2+-$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  36. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e5$  37.a5 h5 38.b4  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  39. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   
h4 40.b5 h3 41. $\mathbb{Q}a7$   $\mathbb{Q}f1$  42. $\mathbb{Q}b8+$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$  43. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  44. $\mathbb{Q}b4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$   
45. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}e2$  46.a6 bxa6 47.bxa6  
 $\mathbb{Q}d7$  48. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}f3$  49. $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{Q}g2$   
50. $\mathbb{Q}a7$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  51. $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  52. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f3$  53. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  54.c5  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  55.a7  
 $\mathbb{Q}g2$  56. $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  57. $\mathbb{Q}b6$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$   
58. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  59. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  60. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   
 $\mathbb{Q}g2$

White's move?



61.a8 $\mathbb{W}!$   $\mathbb{Q}xa8$  62. $\mathbb{Q}xh3$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$   
63. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  64. $\mathbb{Q}d8$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  65.h4  
 $\mathbb{Q}e8$  66. $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  67. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$   
68. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}a4$  69. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  70. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   
 $\mathbb{Q}c6$  71. $\mathbb{Q}c7$   $\mathbb{Q}b5$  72. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$   
73. $\mathbb{Q}d8$   $\mathbb{Q}f3$  74. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  75. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f3$  76. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  77. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$   
78. $\mathbb{Q}d8$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  79. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  80. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   
 $\mathbb{Q}e6$  81.c6  $\mathbb{Q}d6$  82.c7  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  83. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   
 $\mathbb{Q}g4$  84. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  85. $\mathbb{Q}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$   
86.h5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  87. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  88.h6  $\mathbb{Q}c8$   
89. $\mathbb{Q}d6$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  90. $\mathbb{Q}c6$  1-0

## Summary of the early break ...c7-c5

Remember: in this line Black has to be patient and seek counterplay with ...c7-c5 only after 5/6...0-0.

**Game 25 – A Risky Counterplan: ...c7-c6 /  $\mathbb{W}b6$ , or The Strategic Block ...d6-d5**

The next possibility is the standard move ...c7-c6 in the Pirc Defence.

In this game Black chooses between two completely different concepts: the sharp and risky ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ , attacking b2 and d4, or the positional blockading move ...d6-d5.

Apparently, the line ... $\mathbb{W}b6$ , which has produced a few nice miniatures, doesn't require deep analysis: Black plays 'devious' chess, typical of the Pirc-style. This method brings success against weaker opponents. However, when we are fighting against someone more skilled, such as grandmasters like Shirov or Dreev, we must be more careful.

**Alexei Shirov**

**Vlastimil Jansa**

Kerteminde 1991 (3)

1.d4 d6 2.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4. $\mathbb{B}g5$   
 $\mathbb{B}g7$  5.f4 c6

A traditional move in the Pirc, with the idea of continuing with ... $\mathbb{W}b6$  or ...d6-d5 (or playing the advance ...b7-b5, see Game 26).



6. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

6. $\mathbb{W}d2$  0-0 transposes to Game 26.

6...0-0!?

**WEAPON:** A new strategic alternative here is 6...d5!?. Black tries to block the centre before White starts the attack.

Now, 7.e5 (for 7. $\mathbb{B}d3$ !? see the line 8. $\mathbb{B}d3$ ) 7... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ ! 8. $\mathbb{B}d3$  f5!? (8... $\mathbb{Q}xc3$ !?, 9.bxc3 c5∞; 8... $\mathbb{Q}xg5$ !?, 9. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$   $\mathbb{W}b6$ ∞; after the weaker 8... $\mathbb{Q}f5$  9. $\mathbb{B}h4$  (9. $\mathbb{W}e2$ !?) 9...0-0 10.0-0± Black is too passive: 10...f6?

11. $\mathbb{W}e1$ ! fxe5 12.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  13. $\mathbb{B}xf5$   
14. $\mathbb{W}xc3$ ↑ Yakovich-Zozulia, Port Erin 2005) 9.exf6 exf6 10. $\mathbb{B}h4$  0-0  
11.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12. $\mathbb{B}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$ ∞.



analysis diagram

Black's position looks very solid, Quinn-Bach, Koszalin 2006.

A risky line is 6... $\mathbb{W}b6$ , in order to attack b2 before White plays  $\mathbb{W}d2$  and 0-0-0.



analysis diagram

7. $\mathbb{W}d2$ !  $\mathbb{W}xb2$  8. $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{W}a3$  9. $\mathbb{B}d3$   $\mathbb{W}a5$   
10.0-0  $\mathbb{W}c7$ . Black has played five moves

with his queen, delaying development. The punishment will be harsh: 11.e5!  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}e4$  f5 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7!!$  (a very strong blow that exposes Black's king in the centre. If instead 13.exd6!? exd6 14. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$  0-0 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4\pm$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}xe7$  (if 13...fxe4 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  e3 15. $\mathbb{W}e1$   $\mathbb{W}d8$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g5!+-$ ) 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g5\rightarrow.$



analysis diagram

All of Black's pieces make a miserable impression, Dreev-Minasian, Warsaw Ech 2005.

**7. $\mathbb{Q}d3$**

WEAPON: 7. $\mathbb{W}d2!?$ .



analysis diagram

After this move it is possible to play the blocking move 7...d5!? with options for both sides (7...b5 appears in Games 22 and 26):

A) 8.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$  9. $\mathbb{W}e3$  (9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$  dxе4 10. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  f6†) 9... $\mathbb{Q}xg5!!$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  c5! 11.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6\mp;$

B) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  exf6!? 9.exd5 (9.0-0-0 dxе4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8\mp$ ) 9...cxд5 (9... $\mathbb{Q}e8+!?$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  cxд5) 10.0-0-0 (the most aggressive plan) 10... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$  (worse is 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!?$  as Black needs this bishop: 11. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3?$  13. $\mathbb{Q}xf3\uparrow$  Ulibin-Wang Pin, Cappelle la Grande 1998) 11.h3 a6!?



analysis diagram

Black prepares a quick counterattack on the queenside. For instance, 12.g4 b5 13. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  14.f5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xc4$  bxс4 16. $\mathbb{W}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}a7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}de1$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  18. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7\rightarrow$  as in C.Rios-Del Rio de Angelis, Montcada 2012;

C) 8. $\mathbb{Q}d3!?$  is a solid developing move: 8...dxе4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}xe4!?$  is another solid alternative: 10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  11.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}f6\infty$  Fernandez Garcia-Schmidt, Dos Hermanas 2000) 10.c3.



analysis diagram



An excellent attacking game by Latvian grandmaster Alexei Shirov.

Since 1972, this position has been played in only three games! 10... $\mathbb{W}d5?$ N (an improvement on 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$ . White is better after this exchange: 11.gxf3!  $\mathbb{W}d5$  (11... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?!$  is even worse in view of 12.0-0-0! Ulibin-Van Rijn, Leeuwarden 1993) 12.f5!→ was seen in the stem game, Mestel-Tukmakov, Hastings 1972/73) 11. $\mathbb{W}e2$  h6! 12. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  (12. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  is playable) 12...exf6 13.0-0 f5! 14. $\mathbb{Q}c5$  b6 15. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4+!$ .



analysis diagram

A curious moment. Here White resigned in Van de Wynkele-Zozulia, Vlissingen 2005. However, the game would still have been balanced after 17.cxd4  $\mathbb{W}xd4+$  18. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}xc5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}d1\#$ .

7... $\mathbb{W}b6$

Again, Black seeks counterplay by attacking the b2- and d4-pawns with his queen.

 TRICK: Even after the preliminary pin 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  9. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  10.0-0-0! Black's position is very dangerous.



analysis diagram

10... $\mathbb{W}xd4N$  (10...h6 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  12.e5±) 11.e5!→ dx5 12. $\mathbb{Q}xg6$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  13.a3 (13. $\mathbb{Q}f5!→$ ) 13... $\mathbb{W}a5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d3↑$  as in my own game Moskalenko-H. Hamdouchi, Villa Salou 2006.

8. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9.e5!

This advance is always dangerous.

Quite unexpectedly, the variation 9. $\mathbb{Q}a4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  10.0-0 and now 10...b5 (10... $\mathbb{Q}h5?!$  10...d5? 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6!?$  exf6 12.f5! Mitkov-Gual Pascual, Barbera 1999) 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}b6$  transposes directly to the main position of Game 26!

9... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$



11.♗xd5

**WEAPON:** Also interesting is 11.0-0-0!?, played by the hero of this variation, Rogelio Antonio: 11...f6 12.exf6 exf6 13.♕h4 (13.♗xd5!) 13...♗xd4 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 (Antonio-Reilly, Bandar Seri Begawan 2001) and now 15.♗b4!↑ was the best move for White.

11...cxd5 12.c3±

White has an attacking pawn structure and the more active pieces; 12.0-0-0!?

12.f6 13.exf6 exf6 14.♕h4 ♗e8+ 15.♔f1 f5 16.♗g2 ♔d7 17.a4!? ♘f6 18.a5 ♗c6 19.a6 b6 20.♗xf6! ♗xf6 21.h4!±



White dominates the board. The kingside and the d5-pawn are Black's main weaknesses.

21...h5 22.♔h3 ♔h7 23.♗hg1 ♗d7 24.♗g2 ♗e6 25.♗ag1 ♗h8 26.♗c2

True to his vintage attacking style, Alexei Shirov prefers to set the kingside on fire! The positional solution was 26.♗d1!?, ♗f8 and now 27.♗b1!± and suddenly White can win the d5-pawn with ♗a2 and ♗b3, and Black won't have any compensation.

26...♗f8 27.♗b3 ♗e3 28.♗xd5!?

The expected sacrifice of the bishop.

28.♗xd3 29.♗xg6≈



It seems that the great 'Pirc bishop' is useless against White's heavy artillery in this case.

29...♗f7 30.♗g5! ♔h6 31.♗xd6+ ♔f6 32.♗g3 ♔h7?

A defensive mistake. 32...♗e3□ was necessary: 33.♗xf5 ♗e6 34.♗b4!? and things are still unclear.

33.♗xf5 ♗e3? 34.♗xf8!+- ♗xf8 35.♗xh5+ ♗h6 36.♗xh6+ ♗xh6 37.♔g4 ♗g6 38.h5+ ♔f7 39.♔f5

The endgame of ♗+7△ vs. ♗+bad ♗+2△ is winning for White.

39...♗e2 40.♗g6

1-0

An excellent attacking game by Shirov.

Summarizing ...♗b6/...d6-d5

In all lines with ...♗b6?!, we have seen that Black doesn't have time for a proper follow-up on this sharp idea. It seems that White is always one step ahead in the fight for the initiative, thanks to his domination with the central pawns. Generally, Black has difficulties in the unusual (for the Pirc) strategic alternative ...d6-d5. But after we have added some more ideas inside this model game, it looks more playable. There are many options for both sides.

## Game 26 – The Universal Set-Up: ...c7-c6 / ...b7-b5



The continuation 7...b5 virtually forces White to castle kingside, but the time Black has lost is important in the subsequent fight for the centre. White's advance e4-e5 is often a deadly threat.

□ Bartłomiej Macieja

■ Fernando Peralta

Warsaw m 2007 (2)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Bf6 3.Bc3 g6 4.Bg5

Bg7 5.f4 0-0 6.Bd2 c6

This decent move also appears in Games 22 and 25. In this game Black's idea is to play ...b7-b5.

7.Bf3 b5

During the past decades the universal plan with ...c7-c6/b7-b5 has gained popularity in nearly all variations of the Pirc Defence.

8.Bd3

The first key moment in this line.



8...Bg4!?

WEAPON: 8...Bbd7 is the main alternative. Now:

TRICK: If 9.0-0 c5!N (9...Bb6 is too slow in view of 10.f5! Tiviakov-Rukavina, Trieste 2008) 10.e5 cxd4=.

However, White has 9.e5!. Now this advance is well timed: 9...b4 10.Be2 Bd5 (10...dxe5?! 11.fxe5 Bd5 12.Bh6± Bb8? 13.h4!→ Ulibin-Jokšić, Padova 1999) 11.exd6 f6 12.dxe7 Bxe7 13.Bh4±.



analysis diagram

Black doesn't have full compensation:  
 13... $\mathbb{Q}e3?$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f2!$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}xg2+?$   
 15. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  loses the knight) 15.0-0±  
 Krayz-Beim, Rishon Le Ziyyon 1993.

**9.0-0**

This is the most popular answer.

WEAPON: Again we must check  
 the dangerous advance 9.e5!?:

9...b4 (a typical resource in the Pirc. Black  
 can also try 9... $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$  with the idea  
 ...f7-f6 and ... $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ) 10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  and now:  
 A) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf3?!$  11.gxf3  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ .



analysis diagram

12.f5! is an improvement on 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4\infty$ ,  
 Dreev-Azmaiparashvili, Moscow GMA  
 1989: 12...dxe5 13.h4!→ (by pushing the  
 kingside pawns, White creates serious  
 threats) 13... $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (or 13...exd4 14.h5!; if  
 13... $\mathbb{Q}d6$ , 14.h5! looks dangerous)  
 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 15.fxg6 fxg6 16. $\mathbb{Q}xb4\pm$   
 Kulish-Turova, Kolontaevo 1997;

B) 10... $\mathbb{Q}d5!?$  is the safest: 11.0-0.



analysis diagram

PUZZLE: Compare this position  
 to the main game, where Black  
 has his  $\mathbb{Q}$  already on b6 and the  
 $\mathbb{Q}$  is still on b5.

11...f6!? (or 11... $\mathbb{Q}b6?!$  12.c4 bxc3  
 13.bxc3  $\mathbb{Q}a5$  14.h3  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$   
 16.exd6 exd6 17.f5 (Delgado Ramirez-  
 Valdes, San Jose zt 2009) and now  
 17...c5!?) 12.exf6 exf6 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$   
 $\mathbb{Q}h6?!$  14.h3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15.c4 bxc3 16.bxc3  
 with an unclear position, Vitiugov-  
 Klenburg, Biel 2007.

**9... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !?**

Another critical moment in this line.



**10...c5!?**

It's now or never! Black's dynamic idea  
 is to develop the knight directly to c6,  
 where it will be more active. However,  
 White first starts action in the centre.

WEAPON: Therefore  
 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7?!$  might be a more  
 useful move, see:

TRICK: 11.e5?  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   
 (12.exf6 exf6?) 12...dxe5  
 13.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?

11. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  c5! 12.c3 d5!? (it's better to  
 play this move immediately. If 12...cxsd4  
 13.cxd4 d5 (13... $\mathbb{Q}b7?!$  14.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   
 15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  16.bxc3 f6∞) 14.e5  
 (14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b4$  is  
 unclear, Ulibin-Arun, New Delhi 2009,

and now 16... $\mathbb{W}b7!?\infty$ ) 14... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  15. $\mathbb{W}b4!?$  f6 16. $\mathbb{Q}h4\pm$  Palac-Sarno, Cannes 2005) 13.e5 (13. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  14.e5  $\mathbb{Q}d7!=$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14. $\mathbb{W}e3$  Antoniaci-Sarno, Arvier 2005. Here the best move is 14... $\mathbb{Q}xg5!$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  (15.fxg5 b4 $\rightleftarrows$ ) 15...f6! 16. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  b4 $\rightleftarrows$  and the game looks fine for Black.

### 11.e5!

This is the latest trend. It looks like White has serious threats, whereas Black's options are based on tactical resources. But this is how it always is in the Pirc Defence!

### 11... $\mathbb{Q}e8$

11...dxe5?! 12.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  13. $\mathbb{Q}e4\pm$ ) 13. $\mathbb{Q}xe7\pm$  Kovalevskaya-Lahno, Elista Wch 2004.

 WEAPON: The safest option is 11...d5??. In a few games, Peralta has tried to defend Black's position with this trick.

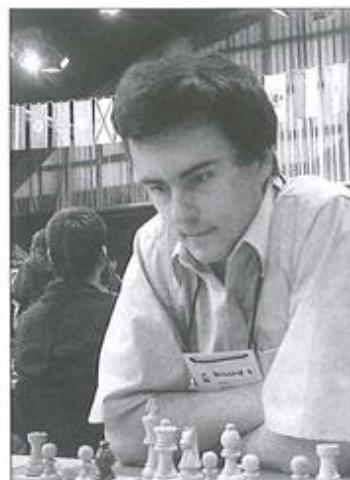


analysis diagram

A) The original game continued 12.exf6 exf6 13. $\mathbb{Q}h4$  c4 $\rightleftarrows$  Alexandrov-Gubanov, St Petersburg 1997;

B) The computer gives 12. $\mathbb{Q}g3!?$  c4 13. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe7!$  exf3 16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xf8$   $\mathbb{Q}e4\infty$  and the position is still unclear;

C) 12.c3N  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  13. $\mathbb{W}e3$  cxd4 14.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}xg5$  (14... $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$ ) 15.fxg5  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  with



Polish grandmaster Bartłomiej Macieja is also a big fan of 4. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  and 5.f4. Remarkably, in this game he played the endgame better than Peralta, but not the opening!

an equal game: 16. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$  (16.h3  $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$  De la Riva Aguado-Peralta, Andorra 2006) 16... $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  17. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xc1+$  20. $\mathbb{W}xc1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  21. $\mathbb{W}d2$  f6 $\rightleftarrows$  Espinosa Aranda-Peralta, Roquetas de Mar 2009.

### 12.c3

This natural move (defending the formation d4/e5) was used in the three 'human' games in this line.

My engine found an interesting 'controversy' here: 12.c4!?.



analysis diagram

This pawn push introduces a very sharp sequence: 12... $\text{bxc4}$  13. $\text{Bxc4}$   $\text{Qfd7}$  (13... $\text{Qe4}?$ ! 14. $\text{Wxe3}$   $\text{Qxg5}$  15. $\text{Qxg5 e6}$  16. $\text{dxc5}$   $\text{dxc5}$  17. $\text{Qc3} \pm$ ) 14. $\text{h3}$   $\text{Bxf3}$  15. $\text{Bxf3}$   $\text{cxd4}$  and now 16. $\text{Qd5}!$ . The arising position is still complex, but my engine prefers White in most of the lines.

### 12... $\text{Qfd7}!N$

Another improvement, produced by the same Peralta after the failure of the old line 12... $\text{Qd5}$ .



analysis diagram

A critical moment for White.

A) 13.a4!? An interesting idea, proposed by Catalan IM Joan Fluvia Poyatos. 13... $\text{Bxf3}$  14. $\text{Bxf3}$   $\text{cxd4}$  15. $\text{cxd4}$   $\text{bxa4}$  and now 16. $\text{Qe4}!$   $\text{e6}$  17. $\text{Qc3}$  (17. $\text{Bxa4}?$ !) 17... $\text{Qc6}$  18. $\text{Bxa4}$   $\text{dxe5}$  19. $\text{fxe5}$   $\text{Qxe5}$  20. $\text{Bf1}$   $\text{Bab8}$  21. $\text{Bxd5}?$  (correct was 21. $\text{Qxd5}!$   $\text{exd5}$  22. $\text{Bxd5} \uparrow$  and White has the initiative) 21... $\text{exd5} \mp$  Fluvia Poyatos-Peralta, Badalona 2006;

B) Also the direct 13. $\text{Qe4}?$   $\text{e6}$  14. $\text{Bh1}?$  (the king leaves the hot diagonal g1-b6. 14.a4 still worth considering) 14... $\text{Qd7}$  15. $\text{h3}$   $\text{Bxf3}$  (15... $\text{Bf5}?$ ) 16. $\text{Bxf3}$   $\text{Bac8}$  17. $\text{Baf1}$   $\text{cxd4}$  18. $\text{cxd4}$   $\text{b4}?$  (18... $\text{Bb7}$  19. $\text{Qc3}$   $\text{B7b6} \infty$ ) 19. $\text{f5}! \rightarrow$  – a strong attacking break that destroys Black's defence, Sadvakasov-Hendriks, Amsterdam 2002.

### 13. $\text{Bh1}$

13. $\text{Bxe4}$   $\text{Qc6}$  transposes.

### 13... $\text{Qc6}$ 14. $\text{Bxe4}$



This is already an attractive position – with all the pieces on the board!

### 14... $\text{dxe5}$

A slightly premature exchange, but not necessarily bad.

WEAPON: 14... $\text{Bd8}?$  was a more challenging idea (also recommended by Vigus, 2012): 15. $\text{exd6}$   $\text{Qf6}!$  16. $\text{dxe7}$   $\text{Qxe7} \mp$  is dynamically balanced.

### 15. $\text{fxe5 f5}!?$ 16. $\text{Bc2}$

16. $\text{exf6}?$  is unclear: 16... $\text{exf6}$  17. $\text{Bd5+}$   $\text{Bh8}$  18. $\text{Bc3}?$   $\text{Bd8}$  19. $\text{dxc5}$   $\text{Wa6} \mp$ .

### 16... $\text{Bd8}!$

With this move Black finally completes his development.

### 17. $\text{Wc3} \text{Qa5}$ 18. $\text{dxc5}$

White could try to maintain his pawn wedge with 18. $\text{h3}?$   $\text{Qc4}$  (18... $\text{Bxf3}$  19. $\text{Bxf3} \pm$ ) 19. $\text{Bc1}$   $\text{Bxf3}$  20. $\text{Bxf3} \pm$  etc.

### 18... $\text{Bxc5}$ 19. $\text{Bxc5}$ $\text{Qxc5}$

The endgame is still complex and unclear.

### 20. $\text{Bc3} \text{Qd3}$

Probably the first important inaccuracy by Black in this game. 20... $\text{Qa4}?$  was a preferable square for the knight, for

example: 21.b3 ♗b6= and it seems that Black does not have to worry about anything.

**21.b4**



**21...♗c6**

Actually, only after this mistake Black is in real difficulties. Still, his desire to defend the a7-pawn is understandable.

The computer suggests a more aggressive move: 21...♗c4!?, 22.♗xa7 ♗xf3!?, 23.gxf3 ♗xe5 24.♗b3 ♗b2!?

**22.♗ed4!**

22.a4!?.

22...♗xd4 23.♗xd4 ♗xe5 24.♗b3+ ♗f7?!

Black could try 24...♗h8 25.♗e6 ♗d3 26.♗xd8 ♗xd8=.

**25.♗ae1!!**

Now the threat of h2-h3/g2-g4 is annoying.

25...♗xd4 26.♗xd4 e5 27.♗xe5 ♗d1?!

After this tactical mix-up Black loses material and very soon the game. 27...♗f8 was the only move.



28.♗f6! ♗xb3 29.♗xd8 ♗xd8  
30.axb3+- ♗g5 31.♗e7 ♗e4 32.g4!  
♗d2 33.gxf5 ♗f2+ 34.♗g2! 1-0

Summarizing ...c7-c6 / ...b7-b5



Once Black places his queen on b6, he has to choose between the immediate but risky counter-attack 10...c5, and the safer developing move 10...♗bd7!?.

White maintains the option to push e4-e5 at any moment.

The most amazing aspect of many lines here is that the position during the opening remains like a good old Christmas puzzle with all the pieces on the board!

### Theoretical conclusion 4.♗g5

This is a very interesting and still relatively unexplored attacking system, where White seeks the initiative from the very first moves.

Many times White gained a dangerous initiative, even for almost the entire game, forcing his opponent to play defensively. However, play always remains complicated and mistakes are unavoidable in these situations.

From the fourth move onwards, Black can try the standard plans with, among others, ...0-0, ...c7-c5, ...c7-c6/...♝b6, ...c7-c6/b7-b5, also including an early ...h7-h6.

My main recommendation for Black is to use the move order 4.♗g5 ♗g7 5.f4 0-0!?, and then make a choice from the systems offered in this chapter.

Surprisingly enough, there is still not much activity in the practice of the variation with 4.♗g5!

## Chapter 6

### White's Fianchetto: 4.g3

Pirc: 1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4.g3

Modern: 1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d6  
4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}c6!?$  (see analysis in Game 27)



Statistics: Playing this variation on both sides, the author of this book always experienced more problems with white!

White: 5 games: 2 wins and 3 draws; Black: 3 games: 3 wins.

#### Directions

In order to consolidate his space advantage, White applies a slower set-up: 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  etc.



In Game 27 we start with the main move 6...e5 and White's 'precipitate' answer 7.0-0.

We also look at some less usual lines:

\* The Modern Set-up vs the Fianchetto.

\* Fans of the Sicilian Dragon (and of the Benoni as well) might prefer 6... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  or 6... $\mathbb{Q}bd7!?$ , followed by 7...c5.

Game 28 – main line 7.h3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ , combining four creative ideas.

Game 29 – main line 7.h3  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ , a flexible 'Philidor' set-up vs. White's fianchetto.

Game 30 – Black's universal system 7.h3 c6 (idea ...b7-b5) 8.a4, allowing ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ -b4.

## Game 27 – Unusual Lines: 4.g3

□ Jesus Penalosa Pinillas  
 ■ Viktor Moskalenko

Benesque 2007 (2)

**1.e4 d6**

The Modern Defence vs the Fianchetto goes 1...g6 2.Qc3 d6 3.d4 Qg7 4.g3.

In most cases, this move will soon lead to the same positions. Here we will look at a deviation for Black: 4...Qc6!? (strong grandmasters like Azmaiparashvili and Khalifman are fans of this system. 4...Qf6 would lead to a Pirc) and now:



analysis diagram

A) 5.Qe3 e5!? (or 5...Qf6!? 6.h3 e5 7.Qge2 d5∞ Daulyte-Khalifman, Tallinn 2012) 6.dxe5!? (6.d5 is not very logical) 6...Qxe5 (6...dxe5? 7.Qxd8+ Qxd8 8.Qd5 Qe6 9.Qh3!) 7.h3 Qf6 8.Qg2 0-0 9.Qge2 Re8 10.0-0



analysis diagram

10...b6!N 11.b3 Qb7∞;  
 B) 5.d5 Qe5!? 6.f4 Qg4 (6...Qd7!? 7.Qe3 Qgf6 8.Qe2 0-0 9.Qd2 c6!∞, Nepomniachtchi-Postny, Moscow 2004) 7.Qe2 Qxe2 8.Qgxe2 Qd7 9.Qe3 Qgf6 10.Qd4 c5!? 11.dxc6 bxc6∞ Esen-Gofshtein, Ankara 2010;

C) 5.Qge2 Qg4! 6.Qd3 e5 (6...Qf6!? 7.h3 Qd7 8.Qg2 e5 9.Qe3 0-0 10.0-0 is similar to the normal Pirc (Game 26), Potapov-Kurnosov, Moscow 2010) 7.d5 Qce7 (with a King's Indian structure) 8.h3 (8.Qb5+ c6 9.Qxb7 Rb8 10.Qxa7 Qf3 11.Qg1 cxd5∞) 8...Qd7 9.Qg5 f6!? 10.Qe3 f5 11.f3 Qf6 12.g4 with an unclear position, R.Vasquez-Azmaiparashvili, Seville 1994.

**2.d4 Qf6 3.Qc3 g6 4.g3 Qg7 5.Qg2 0-0 6.Qge2**



The tabiya of this opening. Black has the following possibilities:

**6...e5!?**

The main Pirc move.

With 6...Qa6 Black prepares an unusual and double-edged plan involving ...c7-c5, which has become quite popular thanks to two relatively recent blitz games: Svidler and Mamedov vs. Kramnik, Moscow 2010 (0-2). However, after taking a closer look I found a serious argument for White:



Georgian grandmaster Zurab Azmaiparashvili is a famous expert of all kinds of unusual lines. The Pirc/Modern is his greatest specialty.

7.0-0 c5 8.e5! (the first point. 8.h3 cxd4 9.Qxd4 Qd7= occurred in those games by Kramnik) 8...Qe8?! (in all three previous games Black used this move. Perhaps 8...dxe5 9.dxe5 Qg4 10.f4 Qb4 11.Qd5 Qxd5 12.Wxd5 Wxd5 13.Qxd5± is an advisable defense) 9.Qg5!N.



analysis diagram

This seems to be a very strong novelty. 9...Qec7 (9...cxd4?! 10.Qd5!±) 10.exd6 Wxd6 11.Qe4 We6 12.dxc5 and White is much better.

 WEAPON: Developing with 6...Qbd7?! is safer, since the Qd7 also defends against e4-e5.

7.0-0 and now 7...c5!? (it's never too late for 7...e5) 8.h3 (the Benoni: 8.d5 a6 9.a4 b6! 10.Qf4 Bb8 11.We2 Qe8 12.Qd2 Qc7 13.Qab1 b5= Hon Kah Seng-Seret, Lucerne ol 1982) 8...Bb8 (8...cxd4 9.Qxd4) 9.a4 (9.Qe3 b6!?) 9...b6 10.Qe3 a6 11.Wd2 Qb7 (11...We8 12.g4?!, Djurhuus-Van Wely, Tunja Wch-jr 1989) 12.Qad1 (12.d5 Qc8!?) 12...cxd4 13.Qxd4=.



analysis diagram

This looks like a typical Sicilian Dragon, with a 'triple fianchetto' in this case, Oms Fuentes-Narciso Dublan, Barcelona 2006.

#### 7.0-0

As a general rule in this line, White has to play 7.h3?! before castling (Games 28-30) in order to be ready for 7...Qc6, playing 8.Qe3!.

Once I tried 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.Wxd8 Bxd8 9.Qd5 Qxd5 10.exd5 c6 (10...Qf5!?) 11.c4 cxd5 12.cxd5 Qa6=.



analysis diagram

Black is at least not worse here. However, I won this game on technique: 13... $\mathbb{Q}g5$  f6 14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  (14...b6!?) 14... $\mathbb{Q}c5!$ ? (15. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  16.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  17.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (17...f5!) 18.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  b6 20. $\mathbb{Q}d4$  f5 21. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  23. $\mathbb{Q}ae1!$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  24. $\mathbb{Q}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  ( $\geq$  24... $\mathbb{Q}b4\infty$ ) 25. $\mathbb{Q}xa7$   $\mathbb{Q}c2$  26. $\mathbb{Q}c6$   $\mathbb{Q}d6$  27.h3  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  28. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  and suddenly White got a big advantage, Moskalenko-P.Petran, Lubniewice tt 1994.

7... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ ?



This move is an attempt to take advantage of White's opening inaccuracy. Of course, Black can play any other set-up, and he will most likely end up transposing to the main lines.

8.d5

**TRICK:** Without h2-h3 White has no time to defend d4 with 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}g4\mp$ .

**TRICK:** It is too late for 8... $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!$ ? 9.h3?: 9... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  exd4 11. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$ !

A thematic 'petit combinaison', using the motif of the discovered attack: 12. $\mathbb{W}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (the white rook on e1 is undefended) 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{Q}xe1+$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8\mp$  and the endgame is winning for Black, Asensio Linan-Moskalenko, Barbera 2002.

Perhaps the best option for White is 8.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ?? ( $\leq$  8...dxe5 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5!$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}g4\infty$ ) 9.h3 (preparing f2-f4) 9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  10.f4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  b5?..



analysis diagram

This way Black attacks e4; an important resource against the fianchetto system. 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$  b4 14. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  15.exd5 (Perez Pardo-Movsziszian, Seville 2004). Here Black should continue with 15... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$ ? $\mp$  with adequate counterplay.

8... $\mathbb{Q}e7$

Now we play a King's Indian without c2-c4.

9.h3

9.f4 seems to be the only active plan for White. However, 9...exf4!? (9... $\mathbb{Q}e8$  10. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  f5 $\infty$  Zaichik-Azmaiparashvili, Riga 1980) 10.gxf4 (10... $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  weakens e5; 10... $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ ) 10...c6! 11.dxc6 bxc6 $\mp$  shows a significant score: 1:8 for Black. After the upcoming ... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ , White's position will remain uncomfortable.

9...c6! $\mp$



A typical and effective break in this structure.

**10.♗e3**

10.dxc6 bxc6 is also good for Black.

**10...cx d5 11.exd5 ♜f5!?**

12.♗d2? Allowing a favourable ♜x♗ exchange.

**12...♜xe3 13.♗xe3 ♜d7**

13...h5?.

**14.a4 a5 15.♗b5 ♜c5 16.c3 f5 17.f4**

♝e8+ 18.♗f3 ♜xa4!?

A bit of tactics. 18...♝b6?.

**19.fxe5 ♜b6+ 20.♗bd4 dxe5**

**21.♗xa4 exd4 22.♗xd4 ♜d7**

22...♝xb2?!

**23.♖aa1 ♜xd4+ 24.cxd4 ♜xd4+**

**25.♗h2 ♜e3 26.♗f2 ♜d3 27.♗xd4**

♝xd4



The rest is a matter of technique (White: 4△ vs. Black: 5△), which, by the way, is a very important skill for a Pirc player.

**28.♖fc1 b6!?** 29.♖c7 ♜d8 30.♖e1

30.♖b7 ♜b4.

**30...♞f8 31.♖e2 a4 32.♗g1 b5**

**33.♗f2 f4!?**



**34.gxf4 ♜xf4+ 35.♗e3 ♜h4**

**36.♗d3 b4 37.♗e3 ♜f5+ 38.♗d2**

♝d7 39.♖c8+ ♜g7 40.♖a8 ♜d4+

41.♗e2 b3 42.♖a6 h5 43.♖b6 ♜c7

44.♖c6 ♜xc6 45.dxc6 ♜c4

46.♖e7+ ♜f6 47.♖a7 ♜c2+ 48.♗f1

♝xb2

0-1

### Game 28 – Black Combines Four Ideas: 7.h3 ♜c6

□ Viktor Moskalenko

■ Joan Prats Rodriguez

Barcelona Vulca 2003 (4)

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.g3**

♝g7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.♗ge2 e5

**7.h3!?**

The key prophylactic move, after which White can proceed with the set-up ♜e3, 0-0, ♜d2 and later perhaps f2-f4 and g2-g4.

**7...♜c6!?**



Black's most popular line against the fianchetto. I played this position three

times with white, but never got any serious advantage. Meanwhile, Black's ideas (based on the Philidor structure) are clearer and quite simply to realize.

**⚠ Keep in mind:**

1. simplify by trading on d4.
2. after ...exd4, prepare an attack on or exert pressure against the e4-pawn.
3. after completing the set-up exd4/xd7/c8, apply the famous rook lift ...e8-e5-h5.
4. a typical Philidor plan is ...exd4/...d7/...e5 and then ...c7-c5/...c6 etc.

**8.♗e3 exd4!?** 9.♕xd4 ♗d7 10.0-0  
♘c8

With this set-up (...d7-...c8) Black combines ideas 1-3 given above.

**WEAPON:** 10...♘xd4 is an application of ideas 1, 2 and 4:  
11.♗xd4 ♗e8 12.♗d3 a5  
13.a4 c5 14.♗e3 ♗c6 15.♗ad1  
♗b6!?



analysis diagram

16.b3 ♗b4 17.♗a2 ♗a3 18.♗c3 ♗b4  
19.♗a2 ½-½ Kolev-Azmaiparashvili,  
Albena 1986.

**PUZZLE:** Usually, Black first inserts 10...♗e8!?, keeping all options open.



analysis diagram

**TRICK:** 11.f4? allows 11...♘xe4!  
12.♗xe4 (12.♗xe4 d5 13.♗xc6  
♗xc6 14.♗xd5 ♗xe3+) 12...d5  
13.♗b3 dxe4 (13...♗f5?)  
14.♗c5 ♗e7+ Bucinskas-Sulskis,  
Lithuania tt 2012.

A) 11.♗de2 aims to improve the knight with ♘f4-d5, or g3-g4/♗g3:  
11...b5!?

Again, we see this resource for Black. He exploits the circumstance that the e4-pawn isn't well enough protected:  
12.a3 a5 13.g4 (13.♗f4 ♗b8?! 14.f3 b4  
15.axb4 axb4 16.♗ce2 ♗e5+ Gabriel-  
Hickl, Bad Homburg 1997) 13...h5!?  
(13...b4 14.axb4 axb4 15.♗xa8 ♗xa8  
16.♗d5 ♘xd5 17.exd5 ♘e5 18.b3 c5= A.Kovalev-Movsziszian, Moscow 1983)  
14.g5 ♗h7? Hoffmann-Movsziszian, El  
Sauzal 2008;

B) 11.♗e1 and now:

B1) 11...♗c8!? transposes to the main game;

B2) 11...♘xd4 equals with methods 1 and 2: 12.♗xd4 ♗c6 13.b4  
♗d7 14.a4 a6 15.♗d3 b6 16.♗ad1  
♗b7 17.a5 b5 (17...♗ac8!?) 18.g4  
♗ad8 19.♗d5 ♘xd5 20.exd5 ♗xd4  
21.♗xd4 ♗xe1+ 22.♗xe1 ♗e8= Moskalenko-Margolin, Moscow 1995;

B3) 11...a6!? prepares Philidor plan no. 4 with ...♗e5 and ...c7-c5!?:

B31) During the game I decided to prevent Black's active ideas (especially 3 and 4) with 12.♕xc6!? bxc6!? (12...♕xc6? 13.♗d4 ♔d7=) 13.♗d2.



analysis diagram

Here Black has enough counterplay, in a typical 'Philidor' structure. 13...♗c8!? (13...♗b8 14.b3 ♗c8 ½-½ Moskalenko-Delchev, Cullera 2001) 14.g4 (14.♔h2 ♗e5∞) 14...♗b8 15.b3 h5= L.Vajda-Nevednichy, Herculane ch-ROM 1996.

Here are a few typical alternatives, helpful to understand all possible plans, choosing between 3 and 4:

B32) 12.a4 ♗c8 (still, 12...♗b4!?, 13.♗de2 (13.g4 c5!?) 13...c5!?) N is Philidor plan-4) 13.♔h2 ♗e5!?.



analysis diagram

Accepting the challenge to carry out Plan 3.

14.f4 ♗h5 15.f5 gxf5 16.♗d5∞ and the character of the position changes drastically, Sermek-Volokitin, Portoroz 2001. In the main game we will see more analyses of this line, combining Plans 2-4;

B33) 12.♗d3 ♗c8 (12...♗e5!?, 13.♗e2 b5!) 13.♗xc6 bxc6 14.♔h2 ♗e5 15.g4∞.



analysis diagram

Even here Black can still choose between 15...♗e8!?, or going on the attack with 15...♗xg4∞ Schmittdiel-Movsziszian, Germany Bundesliga 1995/96;

B34) 12.♗d2!?, ♗e5! 13.b3 c5! 14.♗de2 ♗xh3! 15.♔g5 ♗xg2 16.♗xg2 ♗d7 (16...b5!) 17.♗ad1 ♗g4 18.♗f4∞ ½-½ Gufeld-Azmaiparashvili, Tbilisi 1980;

B35) Finally a mix of plans: 12.g4 ♗e5!? (or 12...♗xd4 13.♗xd4 c5 14.♔e3 ♗c6=) 13.b3 c5 14.♗de2.



analysis diagram

And now 14... $\mathbb{Q}fxg4!?\infty$  (oops... 14... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  is a normal alternative) 15.hxg4  $\mathbb{Q}xg4\infty$  with a dangerous initiative on the kingside: 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  17. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}h5$  18. $\mathbb{W}d5$  g5! 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  20. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  21. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  23. $\mathbb{Q}e7+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  24. $\mathbb{Q}ef5$   $\mathbb{W}h2+$  25. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  26. $\mathbb{Q}f3?!$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3$  0-1 Goganov-Shimanov, Taganrog 2011 – an amazing game!

**11. $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$**



A notoriously intriguing position in the Fianchetto Variation of the Pirc.

**12. $\mathbb{Q}e1$**

Remember another key resource: if 12. $\mathbb{Q}de2?!$  then 12...b5! 13.a3 a5 $\infty$ .

**12... $\mathbb{Q}e5?!$**

PUZZLE: If we include the moves 12...a6 13.a4  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  we have the same position as in the example mentioned above, Sermek-Volokitin (Plan 3).

**13. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$**

As in my above-mentioned game against Delchev, I embark on the same exchange in order to reduce Black's initiative according to Plan 3. Remember Volokitin's 'crazy rook' (... $\mathbb{Q}e8-e5-h5$ ).

Again, 13.g4  $\mathbb{Q}e8!?\infty$  is OK for Black.

WEAPON: Of course, White can continue with (or analyse



Strong Ukrainian grandmaster Andrei Volokitin here appears as a dangerous practitioner of plan 3: the 'crazy rook' manoeuvre ... $\mathbb{Q}e8-e5-h5$  vs the fianchetto.

at home) the forced line 13.f4?  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  14.f5 gxf5 15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ .

And now 15... $\mathbb{Q}g4+$  16. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  18. $\mathbb{W}xh5$  fxe4 19. $\mathbb{Q}h2?!$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  20. $\mathbb{Q}f1?!$   $\mathbb{Q}e6\Box$  21. $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  (21. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  is not dangerous) 21... $\mathbb{W}f8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}g7$  23. $\mathbb{Q}f5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  and the game looks balanced at last!

**13... $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14.g4?  $\mathbb{Q}e8?!$**



It seems that White has temporarily warded off the annoying threats on the kingside. However, it is unclear how he can get an advantage from this position.

**15.♗d2 ♜b8!?**

Preparing the alternative set-up ...c6-c5 / ...♜c6. Another creative idea is 15...h5!?, 16.g5 ♜h7 17.f4 ♜f8 18.♗d4!??.

**16.b3 c5 17.♗ad1 ♜c6!?**

Black's position is flexible. He simply switches from the aggressive Plan 3 to the strategic Plan 2, with pressure on e4. Meanwhile, I could not find any effective employment for my pieces.

**18.♗f4**

18.f3 ♜b7!?.

**18...♝b4 19.f3**

Another defensive move by White.

**19...a5!?**

Black's position is already more comfortable. 19...h5!?.

**20.♘e2 a4 21.a3 ♜b6 22.b4**

I remained ambitious till the end.

**22...cx b4 23.ax b4 ♜b7**

Logical and safe. However, 23...d5!? was a good way to start some action.

**24.c3 ♜b5 25.♘d4 ♜c4 26.♘h6!?**

Since half of the black army is concentrated on the queenside, White has to do something on the opposite flank.

**26...♞h8 27.♗a1!?**

In view of the following complications, this move is too slow.

**TRICK:** 27.f4!? ♜xe4?  
(27...♜c8??) 28.♘xe4 ♜xe4  
29.♘f5!?

**27...c5!?**

Finally, the battle begins! The character of the game will necessarily change from strategy to pure tactics.

**28.♘f5! cx b4 29.cxb4 d5**

This advance is not a mistake, but Black's eighth rank is quite weak, and that can lead to some nice ideas.

**30.exd5 ♜xd5 31.g5!**

Here I decided to take full risk over the board, since otherwise I might lose on time!

Objectively speaking, 31.b5!? (31.♗xd5?? ♜b8+!) 31...♝be6 32.♗xe6 ♜xe6 33.♗xa4 ♜xb5 34.♗a5=, with an obvious draw, was the best line for both sides.

**31...♜b8+! 32.♔g1 ♜e6**

Once again, Black chooses the safest (human) move. 32...gxf5!? was the best (computer) option here.

**33.gxf6 ♜xf5 34.♗f4 ♜xe1+  
35.♗xe1 ♜c8 36.♗d4**

This was one of the most dramatic moments in my chess career. With seconds on the clock, I was still trying to play some tactical tricks on my defensively inclined opponent.

**36... $\mathbb{H}xf6$ !?**

$\geq 36...\mathbb{H}c6\ 37.\mathbb{A}e5\ h5!?\infty.$

**37. $\mathbb{A}e5!$   $\mathbb{W}e8??$**

Trying to pin my rook, but after this mistake, my idea works perfectly.

$37...\mathbb{A}e6\ 38.\mathbb{A}xh8\ \mathbb{A}xe1+\ 39.\mathbb{A}f2\ f6!$

$40.\mathbb{W}xf6\ \mathbb{A}e7=$  would have saved the game, but this was not an easy line to find in time-trouble.

**38. $\mathbb{A}f2!$ !+–**

A multi-pin motif! According to the engine,  $38.\mathbb{A}h2?!\ \mathbb{W}e7\ 39.\mathbb{A}d1!+–$  was even better for White.



**38... $\mathbb{H}c6$**

Again, a tactical mistake, which is rare for a usually well-skilled Pirc player.

After  $38...\mathbb{W}e7\ 39.\mathbb{A}d1\ \mathbb{A}d6\ 40.\mathbb{W}xd6$  the endgame is winning for White ( $\mathbb{K}+2$  vs.  $\mathbb{K}+1$ ).

**39. $\mathbb{A}xh8$**

Anyway!

**39... $\mathbb{H}c2+$  40. $\mathbb{A}f1!$**



This modest retreat of the white king had escaped my opponent's attention. The fight is immediately over.

**40... $\mathbb{W}b5+$  41. $\mathbb{A}g1$**

1-0

#### Summary of 7.h3 $\mathbb{A}c6$

Against White's fianchetto (4.g3), Black must always combine the Four Ideas I have offered in this game.

#### Game 29 – Philidor vs. the Fianchetto: 7.h3 $\mathbb{A}bd7$

I would like to dedicate this game to the creative grandmaster Aleksander Wojtkiewicz (1963-2006), one of the people who once helped me to open up my mind.

This important game, in a sporting sense, against US International master and eventual martial arts champion Joshua Waitzkin, was played in the penultimate round of the strong 'Open Iraklion' (Crete, Greece 1997). Both players, each for his own reasons, needed a full point. However, the road to success could only be found with creativity.

**□ Joshua Waitzkin**

**■ Viktor Moskalenko**

Iraklion 1997 (8)

**1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{A}f6$  3. $\mathbb{A}c3$  g6 4.g3**

**$\mathbb{A}g7$  5. $\mathbb{A}g2$  0-0 6. $\mathbb{A}ge2$  e5 7.h3  
 $\mathbb{A}bd7!?$**

Initially, black players used to apply a flexible Philidor set-up: ...exd4/ $\mathbb{A}e8/$

$\mathbb{Q}c5$ , with pressure on e4. Or, more creatively: ...exd4/ $\mathbb{Q}e8/a7-a6/\mathbb{Q}b8/\mathbb{Q}e5$ , intending to advance his pawns to b5 and c5 (as in the main game).

Here are a few simple ways to equalize in the Fianchetto Pirc, using the same Philidor structure:

A) 7...b6!? 8.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  9. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  exd4 10. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ! 12.a4  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (12...a6!?) 13.a5  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  14.axb6 axb6 15. $\mathbb{Q}a7$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$  bxc5 17. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  18.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}xe1$ + 19. $\mathbb{Q}xe1$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa7$  ½-½ De la Villa Garcia-Azmaiparashvili, Leon 1994;

B) 7...exd4 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  9.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (aimed against ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b8$  11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  b6 (11... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !?) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (12... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !?) 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6=) 13.c3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c6 15. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  16. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}bd8$ = etc., Röder-Movsziszian, Bad Wörishofen 1997.



### 8.0-0 a6!?

Provoking a2-a4. Black's opening play is also flexible here: 8...exd4 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  (9... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !?) 10. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (aimed against ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ; 10. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ) 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6$  (10... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ !?) 11.a4 a5 12.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (12...c6!?) 13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$ !? 15. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17.b3 f5↑ Tseshkovsky-Gurevich, Severodonetsk 1982.



Aleksander Wojtkiewicz.

### 9.a4 exd4!?



This was my first and foremost intention: to avoid forced lines. Black can continue with ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ - $\mathbb{Q}d7$  etc.

### 11. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}b8$ !?

After this Benoni move, Black can advance his queenside pawns to c5 and b5 in some cases.

### 12.g4

It is obvious that White does not have a clear plan. However, such aggressive advances are welcomed by Black!

- A) 12.a5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  13.f4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ?
- B) 12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3+$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ ?, Iskandarov-R.Mamedov, Baku 2011.

**12...h6!?** **13.Qf4 Qe5**

Or 13...h5!? 14.g5 Qh7 15.h4 Qe5??.

**14.b3 h5!?**

This is a good moment to fix the pawn structure.

**15.f3!?**

Better was 15.g5 Qh7 (15...Qfd7)

16.Qd2 Qd7 17.Qad1 Qc8?!? with active counterplay.

**15...hxg4 16.fxg4**

If 16.hxg4 c5!? 17.Qde2 b5?? etc.

**16...c6**

16...Qfd7!??.

**17.Qd2 b5??**



Black's position is clearly preferable, since White only has pawn weaknesses and a quite exposed king.

**18.axb5 axb5 19.Qad1 Qb7**

19...b4!? 20.Qa4 Qfd7 21.Qe2 Qf8?? with the idea of ...Qa6 next.

**20.Qg5 Qb6 21.Qh1 Qh7**

21...Qfd7??; 21...b4!? 22.Qa4 Qa5??.

**22.Qh4 Qf8 23.Qde2**



I felt so comfortable in this position that I now played a paradoxical, Tigran Petrosian-style move.

**23...Qbd8!?**

Provoking some aggressive thoughts in my opponent's head: 'This guy is already dead!'.

**TRICK:** In fact, Black had a few other good options. The best was 23...Qe6! with some tactical motifs: 24.Qxd6 g5 25.Qg3 Qbd8 26.Qd5□



analysis diagram

26...Qa6 27.Qe7+ Qh7

28.Qxe5 Qxd6 29.Qxd6 c5 and Black is better (Q+Q+P vs. Q).

**24.Qxd8 Qxd8 25.Qd4 Qd7 26.Qf1 Qd8 27.Qf2 b4??**



The rest of the game was finished at blitz pace. Black won by maintaining the pawn structure in an endgame with Q+Q of opposite colours.

I remember the post-game remark by grandmaster Aleksander Wojtkiewicz, who went on to win the tournament:

'Bravo Viktor, you've played a great game, from the opening until the last move.'

### Game 30 – A Universal System: 7.h3 c6 8.a4

Some lines demand tactical resourcefulness, but can be rewarding for Black – see the improvements, Weapons and Tricks in this game.

□ **Viktor Moskalenko**

■ **Karen Movsziszian**

La Pobla de Lillet 2004 (7)

1.d4 d6 2.e4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.g3  
♗g7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.♗ge2 e5 7.h3  
c6!?



This universal Pirc system is also popular at grandmaster level, since Black can put pressure on the queenside with ...b7-b5.

**8.a4!?**

A second prophylactic move by White after h2-h3, preventing the advance of the b-pawn, but allowing ...♗a6-b4.  
8.0-0 b5=.

**8...a5**

This strategic move ensures the b4-square for the knight, but it is not forced. Black has more dynamic options:

WEAPON: For instance, after the direct 8...♗a6!? there are still some fresh ideas: 9.0-0 ♗b4!? 10.a5!? (10.♗e3 a5!) 11.♗d2 ♗e6!= transposes to

the main lines with ...a7-a5)

10...♗e7!? (Black maintains the centre. 10...exd4 11.♗xd4 transposes to the next WEAPON) 11.♗a4 c5!? 12.dxc5 dxc5 13.♗g5 h6 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6= 15.♗d5 ♗xd5 16.exd5 ♗d6 17.♗c3 f5=.

WEAPON: The immediate pawn exchange 8...exd4!? (before White can play ♗e3 and ♗xd4) is another popular line, a favourite of grandmaster Peralta among other experts: 9.♗xd4 ♗a6 10.0-0 ♗b4!?.



analysis diagram

The black knight on b4 is already enjoying its outpost, and is ready to support the freeing advance ...d6-d5.

11.a5!? (a logical advance, White can attack the b4-knight by playing ♗a4 next. Otherwise, Black will be comfortable, saving a tempo on ...a7-a5. For instance, 11.♗e3 ♗e8 12.♗d2 d5=; or 11.f4

$\mathbb{H}e8!$ ? 12.a5 a6!? 13. $\mathbb{H}a4?$  c5 14. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   
 $\mathbb{Q}d7\mp$ ) 11... $\mathbb{H}e8$ ! and now:



analysis diagram

- A) 12. $\mathbb{H}a4$  c5!? 13. $\mathbb{Q}db5$  d5 $\mp$ ;
- B) 12.f4 a6 13.f5 (Bologan-Chernin, Bastia 2000).

Here the best idea for Black was 13...d5!  
 14.fxg6 hxg6 15. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}d6$  $\mp$ ;  
 C) 12. $\mathbb{H}e1$  d5!? 13.e5 (13.exd5?  
 $\mathbb{H}xe1+$  14. $\mathbb{W}xe1$  c5 $\mp$ ) 13... $\mathbb{Q}d7$   
 (13... $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !? 14. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dx $e4$  $\mp$  G.  
 Hernandez-Nogueiras, Cienfuegos  
 1991) 14.e6  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  15. $\mathbb{W}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}xc2$



analysis diagram

**TRICK:** 16. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$ ?? (16.exf7+  
 $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xd5+$  cxd5  
 18. $\mathbb{W}xd5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  19. $\mathbb{Q}g5\infty$ )  
 16... $\mathbb{H}xe6$ ! 0-1 Vallejo Pons-  
 Perez Rodriguez, Villarrobledo  
 2006)

- D) 12. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ !?

**TRICK:** 12...d5 is a bit premature: 13.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$  ( $\geq$   
 13...cxd5!?) 14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   
 15.a6! $\pm$  Ivanchuk-Nikolic,  
 Moscow 1990.

D1) But 12... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  is similar and also playable: 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (13.f4? c5 $\mp$ ; and on 13. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (as after 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ ) Black has 13...d5! Bologan-Narciso Dublan, Pamplona 2001/02) 13... $\mathbb{H}e5$ ! – here we have the 'crazy rook' again. (Alternatively, after 13...d5!N and a general exchange on d5, Black has full compensation for the weakness of the isolated d5-pawn.) 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{H}h5$  15.f3  $\mathbb{W}c8$  16.h4 $\infty$  Bologan-Peralta, Barcelona Casino 2006;

D2) 12...a6! is probably the best move, since Black is now ready for both pushes: ...c6-c5 and ...d6-d5, for example: 13.f4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$ !? (it seems that Peralta cannot live without this move. 13...c5!N 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  $\mp$ ) and now:



analysis diagram

D21) 14. $\mathbb{Q}de2$ ?? was seen in Soto Paez-Peralta, Binissalem 2004. Here 14... $\mathbb{W}e7$ ! $\mp$  is an improvement, following up with ...c6-c5/... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ;

D22) 14. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !N (after 14... $\mathbb{W}c7$ !, Pena Dieguez-Peralta, Lorca 2006, White has 15.f5! $\uparrow$ ) 15.f5  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  16. $\mathbb{H}f2$  and now Black has many interesting options, 16... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  being the

sharpest (16...d5!??; 16... $\mathbb{W}e7!?$ ): 17. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}xg3!$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xg3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5+$  19. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{W}h4=$  etc.

**9.0-0**  
9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  transposes.  
9... $\mathbb{Q}a6!?$



Transferring the knight to b4.

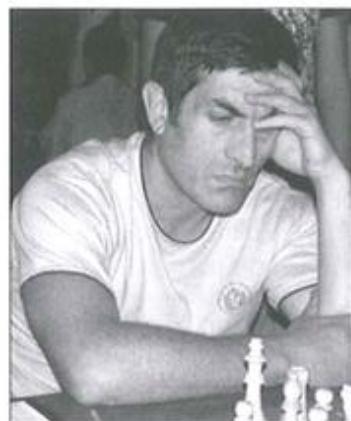
**10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$**   
Black keeps the option of the alternative idea: ...exd4 and ... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ . But objectively, he does not need this nuance at all.

**WEAPON:** 10... $\mathbb{Q}b4!?$  is deservedly the most popular move.

A) 11. $\mathbb{W}d2$  (in order to coordinate the rooks first) 11... $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$  (the bishop is headed for the diagonal a6-f1, which seems to be the best idea. Alternatively, the breakthrough 11...d5 is an attempt to equalize immediately, but there is no hurry!) and now:



analysis diagram



A frequent opponent in Spanish tournaments, Armenian grandmaster Karen Movsiszian is well-known as a lifetime repertoire player of both 1.g3 and 1...g6.

- A1) 12.b3 (preventing ... $\mathbb{Q}c4$ )  
12...d5!? 13.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$  with a 1:4 score since L.Vajda-Marin, Bucharest 1997;  
A2) Or 12. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  d5 (12... $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ )  
13.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}fxd5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5=$  Franzoni-Strikovic, Yerevan ol 1996;  
A3) 12.f4  $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ .



analysis diagram

Black's position looks wonderful.

**TRICK:** 13.b3  $\mathbb{Q}xe2!?$ N  
14. $\mathbb{Q}xe2$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  15.c3 exd4!  
16. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  and White doesn't have a natural way to defend his e4-pawn.

13.  $\mathbb{H}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  14.  $b3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  15.  $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{H}ad8$  16.  $g4$   $\mathbb{H}fe8\bar{f}$  and White even has some trouble keeping his pawn centre alive, L.Vajda-Marin, Bucharest 1997.

B) White has another logical continuation: 11.  $f4$   $exf4!?$  (the most creative reply, 11...  $\mathbb{H}e8$  transposes to the game, and 11...  $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$  transposes to the main line; 11...  $\mathbb{Q}h5!?$  was Alexeev-Motylev, Plovdiv tt 2010) 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  (12.  $gxf4$   $\mathbb{W}e7!?\rightleftharpoons$ ) 12...  $d5!?$  13.  $e5$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  14.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $f6!$  15.  $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  16.  $\mathbb{H}ae1$  (Black has destroyed White's centre and equalized) 16...  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  (16...  $b6!?$  looks even better: 17.  $g4$   $\mathbb{H}a7!\bar{f}$ , or 17.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6!)$  17.  $g4$   $\mathbb{W}b6=$  Alexeev-Ivanchuk, Skanderborg 2003.

11.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$  12.  $f4$

If 12.  $\mathbb{H}ad1$  then 12...  $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$ , as in the lines given above.

12...  $exd4$

With 12...  $\mathbb{Q}e6!?$  Black can play like Marin; 12...  $exf4!?$  is more like Ivanchuk.

13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$

Taking advantage of the insertion of the move  $\mathbb{Q}e3$ . 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  would lead to Peralta's lines given above.

13...  $b6!?$

I like this flexible idea, building a wall against White's centre.

 WEAPON: The always interesting 13...  $d5!?$  is a radical alternative here: 14.  $e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$



analysis diagram

15.  $\mathbb{H}ae1$  (15.  $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $f6$  16.  $exf6$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6=$  Palkövi-Slovineanu, Panormo tt 2001; 15.  $g4$   $b6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  17.  $\mathbb{H}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}c7\bar{f}$  Safarli-Simonenko, Abu Dhabi 2005) 15...  $b6$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  (16...  $\mathbb{Q}c5!?$ ) 17.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $c5$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  was seen in C. TothLeitao, Bogota 1992. Here Black could have tried the creative 18...  $d4!?\rightleftharpoons$ .

14.  $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$



We approach the culminating point of Movsziszian's line. The position is balanced, but complex. White still cannot attack anything, so I felt a little uncomfortable.

15.  $\mathbb{H}fe1$

15.  $\mathbb{H}f2$   $\mathbb{H}a7!?$ .

15...  $d5$

However, it was my opponent who lost his patience first. Better was 15...  $\mathbb{H}a7!?$ , improving the rook, or first 15...  $\mathbb{H}c8!?$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$  and now 16...  $d5!?$  17.  $e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7\rightleftharpoons$ .

16.  $exd5!?$

Black seems to be OK after 16.  $e5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7\infty$ .

16...  $cxd5!$  17.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6?$

Now it's my turn. 17.  $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  was the best try, for example: 17...  $\mathbb{Q}e4!?$  (better was 17...  $\mathbb{H}c8$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}d4\pm$ ) 18.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $dxe4$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{W}xd2$  20.  $\mathbb{H}xd2$   $\mathbb{H}ac8!$  21.  $c3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{H}xc6$  23.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{H}c4$  with equality.

17... $\mathbb{W}xf6$  18. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   
 $\mathbb{H}ad8$  20. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{W}d4+!!$



After this nice and unexpected check, White must defend accurately.

21. $\mathbb{Q}h1\Box$   $\mathbb{W}xd2$  22. $\mathbb{H}xe8+$   $\mathbb{H}xe8$   
23. $\mathbb{H}xd2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$  24. $bxc3$   $\mathbb{H}e3$   
25. $\mathbb{Q}h2!$   $\mathbb{Q}f8!\mp$

It still required some technique and hard work to escape with a draw.

26. $\mathbb{Q}b3!?$   
26.c4  $\mathbb{H}c3\mp$ .  
26... $\mathbb{Q}e7!$  27.g4  $\mathbb{H}xc3$  28. $\mathbb{H}d4$   $\mathbb{H}e3$   
29.f5  
29. $\mathbb{Q}c4!?$ .  
29...gxf5 30.gxf5  $\mathbb{Q}c8!$  31. $\mathbb{H}d5!$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$   
31... $\mathbb{H}c3!?$ .  
32. $\mathbb{H}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf5$  33. $\mathbb{H}xb6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$   
34. $\mathbb{H}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  35. $\mathbb{H}xf7$   $\mathbb{H}e2+$  36. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xh3$



The story reached a happy ending in a sharp time-trouble phase, as usual.

37. $\mathbb{H}xa5?!$

37. $\mathbb{H}c5\Box=$ .

37... $\mathbb{H}g2+?$

Fortunately for me, Black was the last one to go wrong!

37... $\mathbb{Q}g3!$  is a nice line for endgame fans: 38. $\mathbb{H}g5+$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  39. $\mathbb{Q}c4\Box$   $\mathbb{H}g2+!$  40. $\mathbb{Q}h1\Box$   $\mathbb{H}xc2$  41. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{H}c1$  42. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  h5 43. $\mathbb{H}g8$  h4 44.a5 h3 45. $\mathbb{H}h8\Box$  and it's still not clear how Black can win here...

38. $\mathbb{Q}h1=$

Now it's a draw.

38... $\mathbb{H}xc2$  39. $\mathbb{H}b5$   $\mathbb{Q}g2+$  40. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}f3$  41. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{H}b2$  42. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{H}d2$  43. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  h5 44. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{H}d1+$  45. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  h4 46. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{H}d2$  47. $\mathbb{H}b4+$   $\mathbb{Q}e4$  48. $\mathbb{Q}e1$   $\mathbb{H}d5$  49. $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}e3$

½-½

### Post Scriptum on White's fianchetto 4.g3

After this game, since the year 2004, I decided to definitely change my repertoire against the Pirc Defence into something more attractive, like for example the Austrian Attack (Chapters 2 and 3).

## Chapter 7

# The Classical 4.♘f3

'Piece pressure against White's centre has always been considered one of Black's most reliable methods of play in the classical Pirc.' – Marin.

Pirc: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.♘f3  
♗g7 5.♗e2 0-0 6.0-0

Modern: 1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♗c3 c6!?  
4.♘f3 (Game 33)



The developing move ♘f3 is so natural and frequent that its motifs require no explanation. And we have already seen it in many lines of the 150 Attack (Chapter 4, Games 15 and 17).

In order to enrich the book (and your repertoire), this chapter will offer different ideas for Black to face ♘f3, mainly from my own practical and analytical experience.

This has at least one good feature: the offered lines led to memorable successes and opening discoveries by the author. So, dear reader, they might offer something for you as well!

### Directions

Game 31 – Chigorin's provocative knight retreat 6...♘c6 7.d5 ♘b8.

Game 32 – The popular plan 6...♗g4, followed by ...♘c6 and ...e7-e5.

Game 33 – The 'universal Pirc set-up' with an early ...c7-c6; here with the Modern order.

Game 34 – The unusual line 6...c5 7.d5, which transposes to another popular opening, named the Schmid Benoni (A43).

Game 31 – Chigorin’s Knight Retreat 6...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7.d5  $\mathbb{Q}b8$ **A Bit of History**

We all know the famous Chigorin Defence: 1.d4 d5 2.c4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !. However, another provoking idea with 6...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! in the Pirc Defence was also first played by the same Russian grandmaster Mikhail Chigorin. In our days, nobody knows if this was a coincidence or causality.

Anyway, although I didn't know much about that story, an interesting set-up came to my mind in 1990, before a game against a super-solid grandmaster.

□ Valery Loginov

■ Viktor Moskalenko

Balassagyarmat 1990 (6)

1.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$

My opponent's main choice on the first move. But after

1...  $\mathbb{g}6$ !?

I was quite happy when the response

2. e4

appeared on the board.

2...  $\mathbb{g}7$  3.d4 d6 4.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5.  $\mathbb{Q}c3$

0-0 6.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !?

A provocative move, played originally by the famous Russian grandmaster Mikhail Chigorin! – though he got it on the board via the move order 5...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  6.0-0 0-0.

7.d5

Otherwise Black will push ...e7-e5: 7.h3 e5; 7.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5.

7...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$ !



The first key position. I was going to continue in King's Indian style with ...e7-e5.

8.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$

The stem game of this line shows Chigorin's plan: 8.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$ !? c6!? (the main alternative to ...e7-e5) 9.f4  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  cxd5 11.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}b6\bar{f}$ . This was played more than a hundred years ago, in Leonhardt-Chigorin, Karlsbad 1907.



Russian grandmaster Mikhail Chigorin (1850-1908). His ultra-provocative move ... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ ! returns in the Pirc Defence!

WEAPON: For instance, 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  e5!? (for 8... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  see Game 32; thanks to Chigorin, the main move here is 8...c6!?) 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !? 10. $\mathbb{H}fe1$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11. $\mathbb{H}ad1$  cxd5 12.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{H}c8$  etc., T. Hansen-Gelashvili, Khanty-Mansiysk ol 2010) 9.dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .



analysis diagram

This position is similar to the main game, where ...h7-h6 was included.

11.f3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6!? 13. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{H}e8$  14. $\mathbb{H}fe1$   $\mathbb{W}b8$  15.b3  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  16. $\mathbb{H}ad1$

$\mathbb{W}b4$  etc., Diogo-Vassallo Barroche, Matosinhos 2012.

8...h6

WEAPON: Again, 8...c6!? (instead of ...e7-e5) 9. $\mathbb{W}d2$  (9.h3  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ ! etc., playing like Chigorin) 9...cxd5 10.exd5  $\mathbb{Q}g4$  Petrushin-Khalifman, Podolsk 1992.

9. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

WEAPON: A recent example saw 9. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  e5!? 10.dxe6  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  (11...g5!) 12. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$ =) 12. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{H}e8$  14.f3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  bxc6 16. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  17. $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{H}xe6$ = Sipila-Ehlvest, Riga 2012.

9...e5!?

Alternatively, 9...c6 is still possible: 10. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  11.h3!?  $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  etc. Stevic-Smirin, Sibenik 2005.

10.dxe6

Otherwise we will have a King's Indian without c2-c4.

10... $\mathbb{Q}xe6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$



Finally I get my desired opening position: Black again has a Philidor structure, which we have already seen in the previous chapter against White's fianchetto (Games 28 and 29).

**12.f4**

This ambitious advance is quite risky against the solid Philidor: the e4-pawn will be attacked by many black pieces.

WEAPON: 12.  $\mathbb{W}d2!$ ?

12...  $\mathbb{Q}h7$ !? (12...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  14.f3 h5 is also interesting, L.Brunner-Gerer, Bad Wörishofen 1993) 13.f3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  etc., playing the way grandmaster Ehlvest previously did as Black.

**12...  $\mathbb{Q}c6$** 

The Chigorin knight becomes a Philidor knight.

**13.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{H}e8$  14.  $\mathbb{H}e1$** 

The position is approximately equal, but with possibilities of a good fight.

**14...h5!?**

One more provocative move.

WEAPON: 14...a6!? is more appropriate in the Philidor set-up. For instance, 15.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  16. b3 c5 17.  $\mathbb{Q}de2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  (18.  $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !?) 18...  $\mathbb{Q}xg4$  19.  $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$ !  $\mp$  with an active position for Black.

**15.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ !?**

The f4-pawn may become another weakness. Still, 15...a6!?.

**16.  $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  17.  $\mathbb{H}xd4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$** 

It is still unclear who is the cat and who is the mouse here.

**18.b4!? a6 19.a4!?**

More than half of the white pawns are advanced to the fourth rank.

**19... $b6$  20. $a5$** 

We approach the point of maximum tension. The situation remains highly complicated.

20.g4!?  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  21.g5 (21.  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{W}h4$ !  $\mp$ ) 21...  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$   $\infty$  is unclear, according to the engine Houdini 3.

**20... $\mathbb{Q}d7$** 

20...  $\mathbb{b}xa5$ !? 21.  $\mathbb{H}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}b7$  =.

**21.  $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{b}xa5$  22.  $\mathbb{b}xa5$   $\mathbb{W}h4$** 

It was difficult to reject this move, attacking f4. However, 22...  $\mathbb{H}b8$ !  $\mp$  may have been better; patience is also an important skill.

**23.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ !  $\mathbb{W}e7$** 

TRICK:  
24.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !?

**24.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ !?**

Objectively, this move (attacking e4) is too risky. Any normal alternative would have maintained the balance smoothly. Now the game turns wild. However, I felt comfortable even here, at least psychologically.

**25.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?IT**

As you see, nobody's perfect!

A) In mutual time-trouble, I only calculated the variation 25.e5  $\mathbb{W}xf3$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{W}h4$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  28.  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  +

$\text{g7}$  29.  $\text{Qxe8+}$   $\text{Kxe8}$  30.  $\text{Wf2}$   $\text{Wxh3} \pm$  with chances for both sides;

B) However, the silicon monster finds the best line for White: 25.  $\text{Wf2!}$   $\text{Qxe4}$  26.  $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Qxe4}$  27.  $\text{Qb6!}$   $\text{cxb6}$  28.  $\text{Qxe4} \pm$  with the initiative.

25.  $\text{Qxd5}$  26.  $\text{Wxd5}$   $\text{Wad8}$  27.  $\text{Qc4 Qe6}$

 TRICK: Or 27...  $\text{Wh4!?$ , returning with the queen, with the point 28.  $\text{e5 Qxe5!}$ .

28.  $\text{e5?!$

Better was 28.  $\text{f5 Qxe3+}$  29.  $\text{Qxe3 Wg5}$  30.  $\text{Qee1 Qf4} \mp$ .

28...  $\text{dxe5}$  29.  $\text{Qxd8 Qxd8}$  30.  $\text{Wxa6?}$  30.  $\text{f5 Qxe3+}$  31.  $\text{Qxe3 Wg5}$  32.  $\text{Qxe5 Qd4}$  33.  $\text{Qd5=}$ .

30...  $\text{Wb4!} \rightarrow$



A very annoying move for White. Black is winning at last, but we still had to reach the time control on move 40.

31.  $\text{Wc2?}$

31.  $\text{Qf2 Qxf4} \rightarrow$ .

31...  $\text{exf4}$

31...  $\text{e4!}$  just wins the  $\text{Qf3}$ .

32.  $\text{Qf2 Wxa5}$  33.  $\text{Qc4 Wf5}$  34.  $\text{Qe4 Wg5}$  35.  $\text{h4 Wf6}$  36.  $\text{Qd5 Qf8}$  37.  $\text{Qf3 Qe6}$  38.  $\text{Qd5 Qf8}$  39.  $\text{Qf3 Wd6}$  40.  $\text{Qd1 We7}$  41.  $\text{Qe1 Qe6}$



After some adrenaline rushes, now the situation is more clear. Black has enough time to convert his two extra pawns into a full point.

42.  $\text{Qd5 Qd6}$  43.  $\text{c3 Qd7}$  44.  $\text{Qf3 Qg7}$  45.  $\text{Qc1 Qf6}$  46.  $\text{We4 Qd2}$  47.  $\text{Qe2 Qg7}$  48.  $\text{Qe1 Qd5}$  49.  $\text{Wf3 Qe5}$  50.  $\text{Qc4 We7}$  51.  $\text{Qxe6 Qxe6}$  52.  $\text{Qd2 Qxh4}$  53.  $\text{Wxf4 Qf6}$  54.  $\text{Qb1 Wc5+}$  55.  $\text{Qh1 g5}$  56.  $\text{Wf3 h4}$  57.  $\text{Qb8 Wc4}$  58.  $\text{Qe3}$  0-1

This sharp victory in the sixth round was an important step towards my first grandmaster norm.

### Summary of the provocative 6... $\text{Qc6}$

Throughout my chess career I have often used the Pirc or the Modern in 'must-win' situations. The main advantage of this system with 6...  $\text{Qc6}!?$  is that White doesn't get the opportunity to play a dry game.

After 7.  $\text{d5 Qb8}$ , White's space advantage is an important strategic detail. However, a skilful player with black will always find ways to make good use of the squares, lines and diagonals made available by the early advance of the white d-pawn.

**Game 32 – A Popular Plan: 6...♝g4**

This line (and possibly the entire Pirc Defence) became popular thanks to many games played by the Slovenian grandmaster Vasja Pirc (1907-1980).



In accordance with the old chess rule 'first the knight, then the bishop' the move 6...♝g4 might be incorrect – even wrong. However, for the dynamic Pirc/Modern player this rule is nothing but a useless dogma. In practice White has many options, depending on his or her taste, from a complex to a technical approach – all without much risk, but none of them ensuring him any advantage.

□ **Rodrigo Vasquez**

■ **Viktor Moskalenko**

Andorra 1991

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♘f3  
♝g7 5.♗e2 0-0 6.0-0 ♘g4!?**

Black's first idea is to follow up with ...♘c6 and ...e7-e5.

**7.h3!?**

A radical option: White gains the pair of bishops first.

The knight jump 7.♘g5!?



analysis diagram

is more a tricky idea than a serious threat. Let's see: 7...♝xe2 8.♗xe2 ♘c6! 9.♗d1 and now:

9...♘d7!? (avoiding the forced line given in the TRICK below) 10.♘f3 (10.♗e3 e5!? 11.dxe5 ♘dxe5=) 10...e5 11.♗g5 ♘xd4! 12.♗xd4 f6 13.♗xf6 (13.♗xe5 fxg5 14.♗xd7 ♗xd7= Komliakov-Rakhmangulov, Kiev 1997) 13...♗xf6 14.♗dd1 ♗f7!? (intending ...♘f8-e6) 15.♗d5 ♘f8 16.♗c4 ♘g7 17.a4 ♗e8 18.♗a3 ½-½ Nisipeanu-Marin, Bucharest 1997.

**TRICK:** 9...e5 10.dxe5 ♘xe5 11.f4 ♘ed7 12.e5! dx5 13.fxe5 ♗e8 14.♗f4 (14.♗xf7!? ♗e7□ 15.♗h6+ ♗xh6 16.♗xh6±) 14...♘h5 15.♗g4 f5 (Akopian-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2004; 15...♘xf4! 16.♗xf4 ♗f8 17.e6∞) 16.exf6!

$\mathbb{Q}dx6$  17.  $\mathbb{W}e6+!$   $\mathbb{K}xe6$   
 18.  $\mathbb{K}xd8+$   $\mathbb{K}xd8$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xe6$   $\mathbb{K}d7$   
 20.  $\mathbb{Q}xc7\pm$ .

WEAPON: 7.  $\mathbb{Q}e3!?$   $\mathbb{Q}c6.$



analysis diagram

The main position in this line. White has tried many options:

A) King's Indian set-up 1: 8.  $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  9.  $\mathbb{W}xe2$  e5 10. d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7!?$  (10...  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  11.  $\mathbb{W}d3$  c6 12.  $\mathbb{D}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}b3\infty$  Delchev-Movsziszian, Albacete 2003) 11.  $\mathbb{K}ad1$  (11.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  12. g3 h6 13.  $\mathbb{Q}xe7$   $\mathbb{W}xe7$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6=$  Meier-Grischuk, Mainz rapid 2007) 11...  $\mathbb{W}d7!?$



analysis diagram

12. f3  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$  a6 14. g3  $\mathbb{K}ae8$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}a5$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  16. b4 f5 17.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}g2$  h5 $\infty$  and Black already has active play on the kingside, Drazic-Kozul, Bled 1997;

B) King's Indian set-up 2: 8.  $\mathbb{W}d2!?$  e5 9. d5 (9.  $\mathbb{d}xe5$   $\mathbb{d}xe5$  10.  $\mathbb{K}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  ½-½ Bricard-Moskalenko, Budapest 1990) 9...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  10.  $\mathbb{K}ad1$ .

Now Black can play an interesting and dynamic pawn sac:



analysis diagram

10... b5!? (10...  $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ ; 10...  $\mathbb{Q}d7!?$ ) 11. a3 (11. b4 a6 12. h3  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  c6 $\infty$  G.Kuzmin-Azmaiparashvili, Leningrad 1985) 11... a5 12.  $\mathbb{Q}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  13.  $\mathbb{g}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  f5 15.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 16.  $\mathbb{Q}xh6$   $\mathbb{Q}xh6$  17.  $\mathbb{W}xh6$  f4 18.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  20.  $\mathbb{W}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  21. a4  $\mathbb{Q}f6\infty$  22.  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$  exf4 23.  $\mathbb{W}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}h5$  24.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}h8$  25.  $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{W}xh5$  26.  $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  27. c4  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  28.  $\mathbb{W}g3$   $\mathbb{W}h6$  29. c5  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  30.  $\mathbb{W}h4$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  31. cxd6 cxd6 $\infty$ , A.Petrosian-Movsziszian, Yerevan 1983;

C) 8. d5!? (White continues as in our previous game) and now:

C1) Chigorin's (later Chernin's) knight retreat 8...  $\mathbb{Q}b8!?$  is less popular here than on move 7 (Game 31), but it's still quite safe: 9.  $\mathbb{W}d2!?$  (other moves look harmless: 9.  $\mathbb{Q}e1$  c6!; or 9.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  10.  $\mathbb{W}xe2$  c6 $\infty$ ; or, again, the unusual 9.  $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  10.  $\mathbb{W}xe2$  c6 $\infty$  Ziatdinov-Chernin, New York 1998) 9... c6!

Thus Black starts his standard counterplay.



analysis diagram

10.h3 (this move kind of justifies Black's strategy. On 10.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$   $\mathbb{W}a5!?$  gives chances for both sides, Blatny-Chernin, Pardubice 1993) 10...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  11.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}bd7\approx$  and Black's play is comfortable anyway, Bertok-Pirc, Zenica ch-YUG 1963;

C2) The capture 8...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3!?$  is more active: 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$  c6 11. f4  $\mathbb{Q}ed7$  12. dxc6!? (this option is better than 12.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  cxd5 13. exd5  $\mathbb{Q}b6$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{Q}c8$  15. a4 a6 16. b3  $\mathbb{W}c7\approx$  Perpinya Rofes-Gual Pascual, Catalunya 2012) 12... bxc6.



analysis diagram

At first glance, it seems that Black has a comfortable position: a compact mass of pawns and some pressure along the b-file. But of course, things are not entirely clear.

13.  $\mathbb{W}d2!?$  (13.  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  d5! Janosevic-Pirc, Maribor 1967; 13.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  14.  $\mathbb{W}d3$

$\mathbb{Q}ab8$  15. a3  $\mathbb{Q}fd8=$  Zakharov-Moiseev, Tula 2001) 13... a5!? (13...  $\mathbb{W}c7!?$ ) 14.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ .

Here, in one of the last games of his life, grandmaster Tseshkovsky found 15... e5!? (15...  $\mathbb{Q}ab8!?$  is a quieter option: 16. c4  $\mathbb{Q}fd8\infty$  C. Hansen-Taulbut, Silkeborg 1980) 16.  $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  exf4 17.  $\mathbb{Q}xf4$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$  18.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  19.  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{W}a7+$  20.  $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}e5\approx$ . Black has obvious compensation, playing on the dark squares, and he even won after a highly tactical tussle, Khamrakulov-Tseshkovsky, Tashkent 2009.

7...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  8.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$



Legendary Russian grandmaster Vitaly Tseshkovsky (1944-2011) was the perfect Pirc player, with many great and successful ideas, as for example in this Classical line.

Black is ready for ...e7-e5.

**9... $\mathbb{E}e1$**

- A) If 9.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  10. $\mathbb{E}e2$  c6 etc., as in the previous lines;
- B) King's Indian set-up 3: 9. $\mathbb{E}e3$   $\mathbb{E}e8$  (9...e5!?) 10.g3 (10.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  11. $\mathbb{E}e2$  c6) 10...e5 11.d5  $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ?



analysis diagram

12. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  c6! 13.dxc6 bxc6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  15.c3 d5=, Moskalenko-Gurevich, Kiev 1984;

C) King's Indian set-up 4: 9. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  e5!? (9... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ) 10.c3  $\mathbb{E}e8$  11.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$



analysis diagram

12.g4 (12.c4  $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  f5=) 12...h6 13. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  c6 14.c4 b5!? 15.cxb5 cxd5 16.exd5 a6=, Mukhutdinov-Botvinnik, Soviet Union 1967.

9...e5 10.dxe5

King's Indian set-up 5: 10.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  h6 12. $\mathbb{E}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  13. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}h7$  14. $\mathbb{M}ad1$  f5= Pham Minh

Tai-Nguyen Manh Truong, Vung Tau jr 2004.

**10...dxe5 11. $\mathbb{W}xd8$   $\mathbb{M}fxd8$**

A typical endgame with this symmetrical structure. Black is potentially slightly better, due to the passivity of the  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .

**12. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?**

In order to provoke further simplifications. Better was 12. $\mathbb{Q}e2$ !  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  c6 14. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15. $\mathbb{M}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$ , which is approximately equal.

**12... $\mathbb{Q}d4$ ! 13. $\mathbb{Q}d1$**

This looks too passive.

TRICK: 13. $\mathbb{Q}d5$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   
14. $\mathbb{Q}xd8$   $\mathbb{M}xd8$  15.exd5  
 $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ ?

13. $\mathbb{M}ac1$  h6? 14. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ ?  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  15. $\mathbb{Q}d5$   $\mathbb{Q}g5$ ?

**13...c6!**?



Now Black has a better pawn structure: the  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  is useless.

**14.f3  $\mathbb{M}d7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$ !**

Avoiding the exchange of the bad white knight.

**16. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ! 17. $\mathbb{Q}c1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4$ ?**

Provoking White to weaken some squares. 17... $\mathbb{Q}c5$ ?

**18.c3  $\mathbb{Q}c5$  19. $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Q}xe3+$  20. $\mathbb{M}xe3$   $\mathbb{M}ad8$  21. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  h5!?**

With a standard blockading idea: ...h5-h4. Black has achieved a few important strategic advantages, but his po-

sition is still not good enough for a win. He needs to create more weaknesses in White's camp.

22.  $\mathbb{h}4\Box$   $b6$  23.  $g3$   $a5$  24.  $a4$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$

A premature solution – maybe not the best, but perfect in a time-trouble situation! 24...  $\mathbb{Q}f8!$ ?; 24...  $\mathbb{Q}e8$ !?

25.  $\mathbb{Q}xc5$   $bxcc5$  26.  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{B}d2$

26...  $\mathbb{Q}g7$ !?

27.  $b4$   $cxb4$  28.  $cx b4$   $axb4$  29.  $\mathbb{B}xb4$   
30.  $\mathbb{B}d4$ !



The climax of this game: the white king might become unsafe.

30.  $\mathbb{B}b8+?$

30.  $\mathbb{B}b6$  was the best defence. Since the position is still dynamic, this tempo is decisive. 30...  $\mathbb{B}xa4$  31.  $\mathbb{B}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  32.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$ .

30...  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  31.  $a5$   $\mathbb{B}a4!$ ?

Now Black is better, but once again, we only had a few seconds left on the clock before the time control on move 40. So the rest of the game is good material for Mark Dvoretsky's book *Tragikomedy in the Endgame*.

32.  $a6$   $\mathbb{B}aa2$ ?

32...  $\mathbb{B}a1+$ ! 33.  $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{B}xa6$ ?

33.  $\mathbb{B}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$ ?

33...  $\mathbb{B}xe2$  34.  $\mathbb{B}xe2$   $\mathbb{B}xe2$  35.  $\mathbb{B}a1$   $\mathbb{Q}e8$ ?

34.  $\mathbb{Q}f1$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$  35.  $\mathbb{B}c3$   $\mathbb{B}a5$  36.  $\mathbb{B}bc1$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  37.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ ?

37.  $\mathbb{B}xc6=$ .

37...  $\mathbb{B}xa6$  38.  $\mathbb{B}xc6$ ??

38.  $\mathbb{B}3c2\Box$ .

38...  $\mathbb{B}aa2$



And finally Black is winning!

0-1

#### Summary of 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$

Many grandmasters (like Vasja Pirc, Savon, Tseshkovsky and later Chernin, Gurevich and Azmaiparashvili) used this line when facing the Classical Variation with 4.  $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .

In the main line, after 7.  $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  8.  $d5$ !?



Black has two main ideas: the old knight retreat 8...  $\mathbb{Q}b8$  or the more dynamic 8...  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ !?, 9.  $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$ , followed by the standard break ...c7-c6 in both lines.

Game 33 – A Universal Set-up in the Modern Defence: the early ...c7-c6



Quite surprisingly, there are not many games with this position. However, the play that follows is typical for both the Pirc and the Modern Defences.

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■ Viktor Moskalenko

Barcelona 2005 (4)

**1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 c6!?**



One of the positive points of this flexible system is that it offers White the chance to overreach himself. See also Chapter 8.

**4.♗f3**

Here Black meets this classical move with

**4...b5!?**

In this unusual way, Black avoids the aggressive move ♜c4, and already constructs the universal set-up with c6/b5!

**5.♘d3**

If here or further on White plays 5.♗e3, the game transposes into the 150 Attack (Chapter 4).

**5...d6**

Finally, the Pirc move.

**6.h3**

Of course, this is not the only move, but it is the main one in this position. It also strengthens e4-e5 against ...♗f6.

**6...♗d7!?** **7.0-0 ♜b7**

Black continues to develop his queen-side. **7...e5!?**; **7...♛c7!?**.

**TRICK:** The natural move **7...♗gf6?** must be prepared carefully. Now it is not possible, due to **8.e5!**.

**8.♗e1 e5!**

A well-timed Pirc advance.

**8...♛c7 9.e5!?** **dxe5 10.♗xe5↑**, Glek-Hanken, Philadelphia 1990.

**9.♗e2**

White prefers to keep the centre intact, allowing Black to complete his kingside development – the only thing the second player needs in this position.

**WEAPON:** The alternative 9.dxe5! is a more dynamic option. This exchange is common in the Classical lines, but here White's idea is to break immediately with a2-a4, without losing a tempo: 9...dxe5 10.a4!?



analysis diagram

10...b4!? (10...a6∞ Pesotsky--Skurygin, Peterhof 2009)  
11. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ .

However, the position is still balanced. No games have been played yet in this line.

9... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  10.c3 0-0 11. $\mathbb{Q}g3$   $\mathbb{W}c7$   
12.a4!?



This looks like a Closed Ruy Lopez, or a Breyer system. White makes the typical a2-a4 push at last, since he has nothing to do on the rest of the board.

### 12...a6 13. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{W}fe8$

Black still has some useful moves. I did not like the simplifications after 13...c5 14.axb5 etc.

### 14. $\mathbb{W}b3$ $\mathbb{Q}b6!?$

Again, the move that keeps the tension. 14...d5 15. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  16.dxe5  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}c7=$ .

### 15.dxe5

If 15.axb5 then 15...cx b5!.

### 15...dxe5



Although the position is quite balanced, it is perfect for a fight – even in the early morning.

### 16.a5 $\mathbb{Q}a4!$ 17. $\mathbb{W}c2!?$

In order to attack the annoying knight with b2-b3.

17... $\mathbb{Q}f8!$  18.c4  $\mathbb{Q}c5!$  19.cxb5  
 $\mathbb{Q}xd3$

19...cx b5! was also possible, but I preferred to exchange off the best white piece.

### 20. $\mathbb{W}xd3$ cx b5

Now White has three potential weaknesses: the pawns on a5, b2 and e4.

### 21. $\mathbb{Q}b6$ $\mathbb{W}d6$

For the above reason Black offers an exchange of the queens. The middlegame after 21... $\mathbb{W}e7!?$  was still interesting, though.

22. $\mathbb{W}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  23. $\mathbb{H}ad1$   $\mathbb{Q}b4!$   
24. $\mathbb{H}e2$   $\mathbb{H}ac8$  25. $\mathbb{Q}e1$  h5!? 26. $\mathbb{Q}d3$   
 $\mathbb{Q}f8$  27.f3  $\mathbb{Q}d7!$



The resulting endgame is slightly (but long-term) better for Black since all white pieces are suffering some discomfort, and the a5-pawn will also be a target.

**28.♔e3**

At this moment I had a dilemma.

**28...♗b8**

Improving the knight in Breyer style. A good alternative was 28...b4!?? with the idea to activate the bishop via ♘c6-b5.

**29.♗b6 b4!?**

Better late than never.

**30.♘f1 ♗d7!?** 31.♔e3

31.♔f2!? was more natural, allowing ♘e3.

**31...♗c6 32.♖ed2 ♗b5 33.♔f2  
♗xd3!?** 34.♖xd3 ♗c5??

After a few simplifications and regroupings, Black is going to attack the pawns on a5 and b2.

**35.♖d5 ♗b3 36.♘e3 ♗c5! 37.♖d7  
♗xe3!**

Of course, not 37...♘xa5 38.♘d5??.

**38.♘xe3 ♗xa5 39.♖a7 ♗a8**

39...♘c4?! 40.♖dd7!??.

**40.♖dd7 ♗xa7 41.♖xa7 ♗e6**

The safest move. I rejected the line 41...♘c4?! 42.♗c1 ♗d8 43.♗h2 ♗d1 44.♗g5 ♗d6! 45.♗e7 ♗b6 46.♗c5 ♗c6 47.♗xb4 ♗xb2??, which could have occurred later on.

**42.♗d2 ♗b6 43.♗f2?**

A gross inaccuracy, allowing Black to increase his advantage.

After the dynamic defence 43.♗g5!?

♗c6 44.♖a8+ ♔g7 45.♖b8 f6 46.♗d2

♘c4 47.♗xb4 ♗xb2 Black is only

slightly better – the extra a-pawn keeps his hopes of winning alive.

**43...♘c4! 44.♗c1 ♗c6??**



**45.♔e2?**

Again, this understandable move (improving the king) is a losing one.

**45...♗xb2! 46.♗xb2 ♗c2+ 47.♔f1  
♗xb2 48.♖xa6 b3 49.♖b6 h4!  
50.♖b5 f6 51.♖b6 ♔g7 52.♗g1  
♔h6!**



Thematic endgame play.

**53.♖xf6 ♗c2 54.♖b6 b2 55.♗h2  
♔g5 56.♗b5 ♗f4 57.♗b3 g5  
58.♖b8 ♗e3 59.♖b5 ♗d2 60.♖b8  
♔c1 0-1**

## Game 34 – The True Schmid Benoni: 6...c5 7.d5



Theoretically, this is the main position of the Schmid Benoni (A43), although it may appear from many different openings.

I have often faced the Schmid Benoni in my tournament practice (on both sides), and I believe White can get a strategic advantage using the set-up given below.

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■ Antonio Gual Pascual

Catalunya 2005 (4)

**1.d4**

The possible move orders from other openings are:

- 1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 6.0-0 c5 7.d5 (Pirc);
- 1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c5 4.d5 (Modern);
- 1.e4 c5 2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6 3.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  4.d5 (Sicilian) etc.

**1...c5**

Or 1... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  2. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5 3.d5 g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  etc.

**2.d5 d6 3.e4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$**

A natural development of the pieces.

PUZZLE: More ambitious is 5.f4!?.  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6. $\mathbb{Q}b5+!$ . This check is impossible in the Austrian Attack (Schmid Benoni line, Game 4), because there the moves  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  and ...0-0 are already included. Now Black must find the best answer:



analysis diagram

6... $\mathbb{Q}fd7$  □. Otherwise, White gets the advantage with the advance e4-e5.

**5... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  6. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 7.0-0**



Welcome to the true Schmid Benoni!

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}a6$

This well-known manoeuvre (... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ -c7) supports the typical Benoni advance with ...b7-b5. The main alternative is 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  8.a4 (8. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  9. $\mathbb{W}xe2$ ± Moskalenko-G.Kuzmin, Alushta 1994) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  9. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  a6 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  (10.a5!?) 10... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{W}a5$  12. $\mathbb{Q}fe1$ ±  $\mathbb{Q}e8$  13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !? $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}g4$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{W}b4$  16. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  exf6 (16... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  17.f4!) 17.a5!± with two threats:  $\mathbb{Q}a4$ , and simply f2-f4. Moskalenko-Munoz Pantoja, Sabadell 2008.

### 8.h3!?

A prophylactic move, preparing  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  and preventing Black's counterplay with ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  or ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .

 **WEAPON:** White can play first 8. $\mathbb{H}e1$ !?, which is similar: 8... $\mathbb{Q}c7$  9.a4 b6 (9...a6 10.h3  $\mathbb{H}b8$  11.a5!±) 10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !  $\mathbb{W}d7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ ±.



analysis diagram

Keep this set-up in mind; it is the best one for the white pieces.

12... $\mathbb{H}ad8$  (12...a6 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ !? $\mathbb{Q}h5$  14. $\mathbb{Q}h2$  f5 15.e5± f4 16. $\mathbb{H}ab1$ !? Moskalenko-Karatekin, Chalkida 1998) 13. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ ! a6 14. $\mathbb{Q}xc7$   $\mathbb{W}xc7$  15. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{W}c8$  16. $\mathbb{H}ad1$ ±. The rest of the game is quite instructive, but also entertaining: 16... $\mathbb{Q}d7$  17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ !? $\mathbb{W}fe8$  18. $\mathbb{Q}c3$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

19.bxc3 f6 20. $\mathbb{H}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  21. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}a8$  23.f4  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  24.e5!  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  25. $\mathbb{W}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  26. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{W}xe5$  27. $\mathbb{Q}g5$ !  $\mathbb{W}d6$  28. $\mathbb{Q}e4$   $\mathbb{W}c7$  31. $\mathbb{W}g4$ !  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  32. $\mathbb{W}e6$   $\mathbb{H}f8$  33. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  b5 34. $\mathbb{W}xe5$ !  $\mathbb{W}xe5$  35. $\mathbb{H}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}h6$  36. $\mathbb{Q}e6$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  37.axb5 axb5 38. $\mathbb{H}xb5$   $\mathbb{Q}a6$  39. $\mathbb{H}xc5$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  40. $\mathbb{H}e4$ ! g5 41. $\mathbb{Q}xa6$   $\mathbb{Q}xa6$  42. $\mathbb{H}c6$ !+– and Black resigned soon after, Moskalenko-Cifuentes Parada, Wijk aan Zee 1992.

### 8... $\mathbb{Q}c7$ 9. $\mathbb{H}e1$ $\mathbb{H}e8$

Preparing another Benoni break: ...e7-e6. If immediately 9...e6, 10.dxe6!  $\mathbb{W}xe6$  11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !±.

### 10. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ !



The most useful diagonal for this bishop is h2-b8: it avoids Black's counterplay in the centre and supports the e4-e5 push.

### 10...a6 11.a4

A typical blocking move in these lines: the b5-pawn cannot proceed for now.

### 11...b6 12. $\mathbb{Q}c4$

White's other bishop controls the diagonal a2-g8 and also supports the advance of the e-pawn.

### 12... $\mathbb{Q}b7$ 13. $\mathbb{W}d3$ !

The queen on d3 keeps the ...b6-b5 push under control, and prepares  $\mathbb{H}d1$ .

### 13... $\mathbb{H}a7$

The black pieces suffer from lack of breathing space and he doesn't have an effective plan.

14.  $\mathbb{H}ad1!$ ±



Meanwhile, White has successfully completed his opening plan: all his pieces are ready for the e4-e5 break.

14...  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}h2$   $\mathbb{Q}xc3$

In order to prevent e4-e5, Black exchanges his best piece.

16.  $\mathbb{W}xc3$  b5 17.  $\mathbb{Q}a2!$  f6 18.  $\mathbb{W}e3$   $\mathbb{H}a8$   
19. c4!?

White needs to strengthen the d5-point.

19...  $\mathbb{Q}c8$  20. e5!



A strong thematic break in the centre, which opens the path for the two white bishops and decides the game.

20...  $\mathbb{fxe}5$

20...  $\mathbb{bxa4}$  21. e6!±

21.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5!$ +-

This knight sacrifice is obvious. The bishop pair is a significant advantage in an open position, controlling the board.

21...  $\mathbb{dxe5}$  22.  $\mathbb{cxb5}$   $\mathbb{axb5}$  23. d6+! c4

If 23...  $\mathbb{Q}e6$  24. d7!.

24.  $\mathbb{dxc7}$   $\mathbb{Wxc7}$  25. b3!

The bishop on a2 returns to life.

25... e6

It is difficult to find a recipe for Black;

25...  $\mathbb{Q}f4$  26.  $\mathbb{Wxe5}$  +-

26.  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{W}a7$  27.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$   $\mathbb{W}f7$  28.  $\mathbb{bxc4}$

$\mathbb{Lxa4}$  29.  $\mathbb{Q}b3$   $\mathbb{Lxc4}$  30.  $\mathbb{Q}xc4$   $\mathbb{bxc4}$

31.  $\mathbb{W}e5$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  32.  $\mathbb{Q}c3!$



And Black finally resigned, since he cannot breathe anymore.

#### Summary of the Schmid Benoni

Once the white pieces are placed correctly ( $\mathbb{h}3/\mathbb{H}e1/\mathbb{Q}f4/\mathbb{Q}c4$  etc.), the rest of the game only confirms the rules mentioned above, and in some cases also the benefits of the bishop pair.

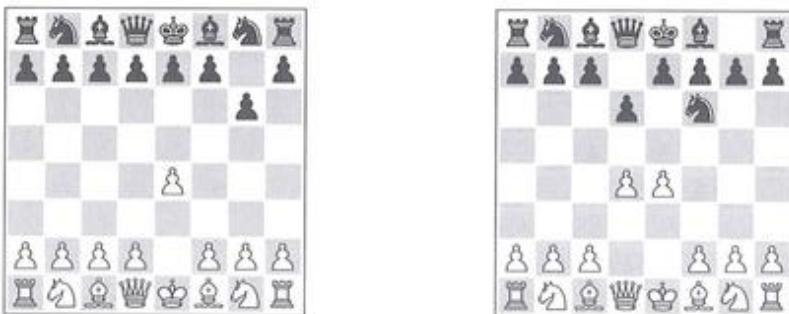
## Chapter 8

# Amadeus – Miscellaneous Ideas



Still from the movie Amadeus

Mozart forever...



Dedicated to the greatest composer, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - Piano Concerto No. 21 - Andante.

### Directions

With this chapter we complete this book on 'The Perfect Pirc-Modern' with a number of surprising but useful ideas in several popular lines of the Pirc and Modern Defences.

Game 35 – unusual systems against White's Three Pawns Attack (f2-f4): based on ...c7-c6/d6-d5 or ...c7-c6/b6b6.

Game 36 – the king's bishop attack – White's move  $\mathbb{B}c4$ .

Game 37 – White's anti-fianchetto set-up with c2-c3/d3, and a fantasy line in the Pirc, with  $\mathbb{E}e2$  followed by g2-g4.

**Game 35 – Stopping the Austrian Army: ...c7-c6/d6-d5 or ...c7-c6/... $\mathbb{W}b6$** 

Tiger Hillarp Persson's book *Tiger's Modern* was mainly based on the set-up with ...a7-a6/...b7-b5, missing Black's hidden dynamic plan with ...c7-c6/...d6-d5!

In this game Black renewed two unusual systems when he faced the ambitious Three Pawns Attack.

□ Daniel Alsina Leal  
■ Viktor Moskalenko

Badalona 2006 (7)

**1.e4 g6 2.d4  $\mathbb{W}g7$**

 **TRICK:** The advance 2...c6!? 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  d5 is premature (it's better to first play 3... $\mathbb{W}g7$ ), but I wanted to show an instructive line for White: 4. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ! with the tactical threat exd5 and  $\mathbb{Q}b5$  – this always worked in my games. After 4... $\mathbb{W}g7$ !...



analysis diagram

5.exd5 cxd5 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5$ !↑ White already had a nice advantage in Moskalenko-Sarto Ramos, Sitges 2008.

4.h3 is a more common continuation, preventing ... $\mathbb{W}g4$ : 4... $\mathbb{W}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$ !?

6.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$  7. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 8. $\mathbb{Q}g5$  c5= Moskalenko-Rahal, Catalunya 2003.

**3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$**

 **WEAPON-1:** 3.f4. Here we have to take a look at the unusual lines with ...d7-d5,

without White's early move  $\mathbb{Q}c3$ .

 **PUZZLE:** Instead of the immediate 3...d5, Black can first play 3...c6!? 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d5 5.e5  $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ! 6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  (for 6. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ , see WEAPON-2) 6... $\mathbb{W}b6$ !?

From this position, only two games have been played so far: 7. $\mathbb{W}c1$  (7.b3  $\mathbb{W}g4$  8.h3  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  10. $\mathbb{W}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}xd4$ ∞ Zlotnikov-Scekic, New Jersey 2008) 7...f6! 8.c3  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! 9. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$ ! 10.h3  $\mathbb{Q}e4$ !.



analysis diagram

The game ended in spectacular fashion:  
11. $\mathbb{Q}h2$ ?!  $\mathbb{Q}f5$  12.g4  $\mathbb{Q}xe3$  13. $\mathbb{W}xe3$  fxe5 14.fxe5 0-0-+ 15. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  16.b3 c5! 17. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  cxd4 18.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}ac8$  19. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 20.g5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! 21.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  22. $\mathbb{W}xb6$  axb6 0-1 Van Dongen-Moskalenko, Cannes 1990.

3...d5! 4.e5  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  (for the inclusion of the moves  $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6, see WEAPON-2).



analysis diagram

The key moment for Black.

- A) He can first play a few useful developing moves: 5...0-0?! 6.Qe3 f6!:

**TRICK:** 7.c4?! fxe5 8.dxe5 Qf5  
9.Qf2 d4=.

**PUZZLE:** Importantly, after 7.Qc3 Black can gain a tempo compared to WEAPON-2: 7...Qg4!? (7...e6!?) 8.Qg1 fxe5 9.fxe5 c5=, playing this break directly, without the preliminary ...c7-c6.

7.Qe2 c5 8.c3 cxd4 9.cxd4 Qc6 10.Qc3 Qg4 (even now this is not the only move: 10...fxe5?; 10...Qg4!?) 11.Wd2 e6 (11...Qf5!?) 12.0-0 Qf5 13.Qf2 fxe5 (13...Qxf3!?) 14.Qxe5 Qxe2 15.Qxe2 Qd6= looks good for Black, Martin Rodriguez-Epishin, Navalmore 2008;

B) 5...Qg4 6.h3 Qxf3 7.Wxf3 f6!=.



analysis diagram

The key break in this variation, well-timed here.

B1) In case of 8.Qc3 Black can win a tempo again: 8...e6 9.Qd3 0-0= 10.Wg3? c5! 11.dxc5 fxe5 12.fxe5 Qf5 13.Qxf5 Qxf5+ Brcar-Sulava, Pula 2000;

B2) 8.g4 fxe5 (not 8...0-0? 9.e6!) 9.fxe5 e6 10.Qe3. In this position Black can already exploit his advantage in development by playing 10...Qf7!N (10...c5!?) Lanneau-Safranska, Belgium 2008) 11.Qg2 0-0 12.We2 c5! 13.c3 Qc6 14.0-0 cxd4 15.cxd4 Wb6↑ etc., attacking d4.

**3...d6**

**WEAPON-2:** Another alternative with the ...c7-c6/d6-d5 plan is 3...c6!?, 4.f4 d5!?, 5.e5 Qh6!?,



analysis diagram

Another critical position. I recommend this set-up, since it is more interesting and dynamic than the main 'static block' with 5...h5?!. The following natural lines show some attractive counterplay against the 'Austrian' wedge: 6.Qd3 (6.Qf3 0-0 7.Qd3 amounts to the same) 6...0-0 7.Qf3 (7.h3?! Qf5! 8.Qxf5 Qxf5 9.Qf3 Qa6! (threatening 10...Qb4) 10.g4 Qe4 11.Qxe4 dxe4 12.Qg5 Wd5 13.We2 f5!+ Molinas Garcia-Moskalenko, Sitges 2007) 7...f6!



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Ambitious Catalan grandmaster  
Daniel Alsina Leal.

– again this break (first 7... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ ! is provocative: 8.h3 (for 8.0-0 f6! see the main line) 8... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  9. $\mathbb{W}xf3$  f6! $\rightleftharpoons$  10.exf6 (10. $\mathbb{W}g3$  c5!; 10.e6 f5!) 10... $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ !). Now:

**TRICK:** 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  9. $\mathbb{Q}g1$   
 fxe5 10.fxe5 c5 $\rightleftharpoons$ .

8.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}g4$ !?



analysis diagram

Black's position is more than satisfactory, and so are his results from it: 9.h3 (9.Qe2 is White's main alternative: 9...Qd7 10.c3 fxe5? 11.fxe5 Qxf3 12.Qxf3 Qxf3 13.gxf3 e6 $\rightleftharpoons$  Lawson-Hodgson, Dublin zt 1993) 9...Qxf3 10.Qxf3 e6 11.Qa4 Qd7 12.Qe3

$\mathbb{W}e7$  $\rightleftharpoons$  and Black stands perfectly well, Acs-Kantsler, Tel Aviv 2001.

#### 4.f4 c6

This set-up against the Austrian Attack is passive in itself. However, Black still has one sharp idea in mind.

4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$ ! would take us back to Chapter 2/3. And for the fans of 4...a6, see *Tiger's Modern* as well as Game 18 of Chapter 4 in this book.

5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6. $\mathbb{Q}e3$



In this position Black has no time to develop his knights, since after the simple h2-h3 White would get a considerable advantage.

#### 6... $\mathbb{W}b6$ ?

A very risky set-up against the Austrian Attack. I recommend to use it mainly in must-win situations, or in, for instance, rapid games.

#### 7. $\mathbb{W}d2$ ! $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 8.e5

Not a bad advance, but too ambitious. To be honest, in this game I used my knowledge of my opponent's style ☺. 8.Qe2! or 8.0-0-0!?

8... $\mathbb{Q}d5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$   $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  10.c4!?

#### 11.gxf3

This was the kind of the opening I needed: an unusual position with a mixture of strategic and tactical motifs.

#### 11...e6

Again, the sharpest option, provoking my opponent to go on the attack!

## The Perfect Pirc-Modern

11... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$ ? 12.cxd5  $\mathbb{Q}b4$  13. $\mathbb{Q}c4$  dxe5  
14.fxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d8\infty$ .

### 12.cxd5! exd5

Unbelievably, this modest black d5-pawn, originally from e7, will decide this game.

### 13.f5!

13.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  0-0-0 looks like a playable line.

### 13... $\mathbb{Q}c6$



Both armies still needed to make a few developing moves.

### 14.f4!?

However, White seems to forget about this rule, and seems fascinated by pawn advances. I was expecting 14.f6!?,  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  15.0-0-0 0-0-0 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  with a complex position.

### 14...dxe5

Played in order to reduce the number of white Austrian soldiers. 14...0-0-0!? may have been objectively better.

### 15.fxe5 f6!



The position remains very sharp, at least for a human player.

### 16. $\mathbb{Q}h3$

The white bishop on h3 prevents the possibility of castling queenside for Black, but this is not the biggest problem.

If 16.0-0-0  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ !?.

### 16...0-0! 17.0-0 gxf5!

Another pawn down...

### 18. $\mathbb{Q}xf5$

This natural recapture allows Black to achieve counterplay, and later on the initiative. Objectively, White had to balance the game with 18.e6  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ != or simply 18. $\mathbb{Q}ad1$  fxe5 19.dxe5 d4=.

### 18...fxe5! 19.dxe5 d4=



The situation changes dramatically.

### 20. $\mathbb{Q}h6$ ?!

Actually, this exchange is wrong, but this is not so obvious in a practical game. And of course, we were both already in time trouble!

It was better to keep the two bishops: 20. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  21. $\mathbb{W}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$  22. $\mathbb{Q}h1$  with compensation.

### 20... $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ !?

Destroying the Austrian wedge once and for all.

### 21. $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ $\mathbb{Q}xg7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}e4$

As we were playing in 'ping-pong' mode, I preferred the safest moves here.

### 22... $\mathbb{Q}g6$

22... $\mathbb{Q}h8!$ ? However, 22...d3+! was tactically strong: 23. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{W}d4\#$ , improving all Black's pieces.

23. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{B}xf1+$  24. $\mathbb{B}xf1$   $\mathbb{B}f8$  25. $\mathbb{B}xf8$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xf8$  26. $\mathbb{W}h6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  27. $\mathbb{Q}d5+$   $\mathbb{Q}h8$   
28. $\mathbb{W}g5?$   $\mathbb{Q}g7!$  29.h4  $\mathbb{W}f6!-$



Now the black hero, the passed d-(e-)pawn, is unstoppable.

30. $\mathbb{W}xf6+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6$  31. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  d3 32. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

Also after 32. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  d2 33. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}e5$  34. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  35. $\mathbb{Q}f2$   $\mathbb{Q}xb2$  36. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$  the pawn ending is a win for Black.

32... $\mathbb{Q}xh4$  33. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f5$  0-1

### Summary of Black's dynamic set-up with 3...c6 4.f4 d5 5.e5 $\mathbb{Q}h6!$ ?

This is an important alternative to the 'static' main line with 5...h5?! – and possibly even instead of the entire first three chapters.



After move 5 (!) we already have an interesting and still unexplored position. Black seems to have enough resources to achieve active counterplay, and to fight successfully against the Austrian pawn wedge.

### Game 36 – The King's Bishop Attack: $\mathbb{Q}c4$

Ironically enough, White plays in aggressive mode, but as a rule does not possess adequate knowledge of the system itself. However, this may not be the only factor that helps Black succeed in winning in this line.

□ Leonid Totsky  
 ■ Viktor Moskalenko

Simferopol tt 1990

1.e4 g6

The Pirc line goes as follows: 1...d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  (or 4... $\mathbb{Q}xe4?$ ! 5. $\mathbb{Q}xf7+$   $\mathbb{Q}xf7$  6. $\mathbb{Q}xe4\#$ ) 5. $\mathbb{W}e2$ .

This is the starting position from which White aims to set his trap.



analysis diagram

## The Perfect Pirc-Modern

Here 5... $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  is the main and most principled move.

 **TRICK:** 6.e5! is the idea. Now 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$  is the most frequently played move. Objectively, the combination leads to unclear positions with unbalanced material, where Black has more practical problems: 7.exf6!  $\mathbb{Q}xe2$  8.fxg7  $\mathbb{Q}g8$  9. $\mathbb{Q}gxe2$   $\mathbb{Q}xg7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}h6$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  11.0-0-0∞.



analysis diagram

From the material point of view, Black is doing not so badly:  $\mathbb{Q}+\mathbb{N} \mathbb{N}$  vs.  $\mathbb{W}+\mathbb{B} \mathbb{B}$ . However, the three minor pieces are usually better than a queen, even if White does not have his two central pawns. Instead, the two semi-open files can be used for the attack, whereas Black's major pieces remain useless until the very end of the game.

Instead of 6... $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$  Black has two solid moves: 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7?!$  7. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}b6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0-0 9.h3  $\mathbb{Q}a5=$ , and 6... $\mathbb{Q}g4?!$  7. $\mathbb{Q}b5$  (7.e6?  $\mathbb{Q}xd4?!$ ) 7...0-0 8. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{B}xc6$  9.h3  $\mathbb{Q}h6$  10. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  c5? 11.dxc5  $\mathbb{Q}b7\approx$ .

**2.d4**

 **TRICK:** If immediately 2. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ , 2... $\mathbb{Q}f6?!$  (2...c6?!) 3.e5 d5!≈.

**2... $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  c6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$**



This may be the critical position of the  $\mathbb{Q}c4$  line in the Modern order.

**4...d6?!**

Instead, Black has the famous alternative 4...d5.

The following trap was very popular at the end of the 60s amongst players from the GDR (Vogt, Espig, Liebert, Schöneberg). It was probably developed by Georgian players:

 **TRICK:** 5.exd5 b5 6. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  b4. If White now moves his knight away from c3, he will have done the correct thing. But at this point many players spot a tactical opportunity: 7.dxc6? (this is what Black was hoping for. After 7. $\mathbb{Q}ce2?!$  cxd5≈ White has a clear superiority on the queenside, but the position is playable for Black) 7... $\mathbb{B}xc3$  8. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ .



analysis diagram

The threats are mate on f7 and winning the rook with 9.c7. But after the surprising 8...e6! (8... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  9.c7  $\mathbb{W}xc7$  10. $\mathbb{W}xa8$  0-0-0) 9.c7  $\mathbb{W}xc7$  10. $\mathbb{W}xa8$   $\mathbb{Q}c6!$  11.bxc3 (11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$  cxb2 12. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  e5??) 11... $\mathbb{Q}ge7$  12. $\mathbb{Q}a3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7!!$  Black is winning.

### 5. $\mathbb{W}f3$

White's main set-up: the  $\mathbb{Q}+ \mathbb{W}$  attack f7. In case of 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  Black can win a useful tempo with 5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6.0-0 b5!? $\rightleftharpoons$  and the bishop must retreat to d3, to defend e4.

### 5...e6

5... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  6.e5 dxe5 7.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}d5$  8. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  cxd5 9. $\mathbb{Q}xd5$  0-0 10. $\mathbb{Q}xb7$   $\mathbb{W}a5+$  11.c3  $\mathbb{Q}xb7$  12. $\mathbb{W}xb7$   $\mathbb{Q}a6\infty$  is a risky gambit.

### 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$

WEAPON: Black is OK after 6. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ ?



analysis diagram

7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  (7. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$   $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ ) 7... $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  (7... $\mathbb{W}e7?!$ ) 8. $\mathbb{Q}xd6$   $\mathbb{Q}e5!$  9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  10. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{W}c7\rightleftharpoons$  Van der Werf-Moskalenko, Groningen 1990.

### 6... $\mathbb{Q}d7?$ ?

WEAPON: 6...b5?! is one more idea for Black. I am glad to say that my new student grandmaster Martha Fierro continues to use this line with great success.

### 7. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ a5?!



analysis diagram

'Despite my terrible loss against Judit Polgar in the Donner memorial (Amsterdam 1995) I still employ this setup. It's hard to believe that with such a bishop on b3 White should get the advantage.' – Alexei Shirov.

8.a4 (better may be 8.a3?!  $\mathbb{Q}a6$  9.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7\infty$ , Nunn-Shirov, Germany Bundesliga 1995/96) 8...b4 9. $\mathbb{Q}b1$  (9. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}a6\rightleftharpoons$ ) 9... $\mathbb{Q}a6$  10.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}d7\mp$ , Sulskis-Fierro Baquero, Ortisei 2012. Black is already more active in this position, he (she) only needs to complete kingside castling: 11. $\mathbb{Q}f4$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  (11... $\mathbb{W}f6?!$ ) 12.e5 dxe5 13.dxe5 and now 13... $\mathbb{Q}h6!\mp$  was already almost winning.

### 7. $\mathbb{Q}e3$

7.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}gf6$  8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  0-0 9. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}c7?!$  $\rightleftharpoons$  is similar.

### 7... $\mathbb{Q}gf6$ 8. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ 0-0=



This game was played about five years earlier, but probably Shirov's concept is right at all times: in the Pirc, with the bishop on b3 White has nothing to do!

**9.g4**

An optimistic advance, but pawns cannot move backwards.

**9...e5 10.h3**

10.g5?!  $\mathbb{Q}h5$  11.0-0-0 and now:

 **TRICK:** 11...exd4!? 12. $\mathbb{Q}xd4$  c5 13. $\mathbb{Q}de2$  c4!†.

11... $\mathbb{W}e7$  12.h4 b5 13.d5 b4 14.dxc6 bxc3 15.cxd7 cxb2+ 16. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd7$   $\mp$   
Kogan-Movsziszian, Tarragona 2007.

10... $\mathbb{W}e7$  11.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$ ! 12. $\mathbb{W}g2$  b5!†



13. $\mathbb{R}d1$   $\mathbb{R}e8$

13...b4!?

14.0-0  $\mathbb{Q}b7$  15. $\mathbb{Q}g3$  b4! 16. $\mathbb{Q}ce2$  a5  
17.c3 a4 18. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}c4$  19. $\mathbb{Q}c1$  a3!  
20.b3  $\mathbb{Q}b2$  21. $\mathbb{R}d2$  bxc3 22. $\mathbb{Q}xc3$   
 $\mathbb{Q}xg4$ !+–

Unfortunately, on this occasion I spoiled my huge advantage in time trouble and could not win the game.



John Fernandes

My new pupil, Latin America's strongest woman grandmaster Martha Fierro from Ecuador. The Pirc/Modern Defence is now part of our joint preparation.

23. $\mathbb{Q}d1$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  24. $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}xd1$

24... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !? 25. $\mathbb{R}e1$   $\mathbb{Q}d5$ +–.

25. $\mathbb{R}fxd1$  d5 26. $\mathbb{R}e2$   $\mathbb{W}f8$

26... $\mathbb{Q}a6$ !?

27.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4$

≥ 27... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ .

28. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 29. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xe5$

≥ 29... $\mathbb{R}xe5$ .

30. $\mathbb{Q}xc6$   $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  31. $\mathbb{W}xc6$   $\mathbb{R}e6$

32. $\mathbb{W}c4$   $\mathbb{R}ae8$  33. $\mathbb{Q}g2$   $\mathbb{Q}b2$

34. $\mathbb{R}xe6$   $\mathbb{R}xe6$  35. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{W}a8+$

36. $\mathbb{W}d5$   $\mathbb{W}xd5$ + 37. $\mathbb{R}xd5$   $\mathbb{R}e1$  38.b4

$\mathbb{R}b1$  39. $\mathbb{R}a5$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  40. $\mathbb{R}xa3$   $\mathbb{R}xb4$

41. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{R}c4$  42. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  f5 43. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}c5$

44. $\mathbb{R}a8+$   $\mathbb{Q}f7$  45. $\mathbb{R}c8$   $\mathbb{R}e4+$  46. $\mathbb{Q}f3$

$\mathbb{Q}e7$  47. $\mathbb{R}c7$  ½-½

**Game 37 – Torre and London Systems: c3 /  $\mathbb{Q}d3$ , and the fantasy line  $\mathbb{Q}e2/g2-g4$**   
In this final game you will find some more lines for your Pirc/Modern repertoire.

□ **Johan van Mil**

■ **Viktor Moskalenko**

Budapest Cansys 1991 (13)

1.e4 g6

The Pirc line goes 1...d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$ . Now:

 **WEAPON:** c3 /  $\mathbb{Q}d3$  vs. the fianchetto runs 3. $\mathbb{Q}d3$ !? e5!? 4.c3.



analysis diagram

In the 1990s this set-up bothered me. Black now probably should not play the fianchetto immediately: 4...d5!? (later I discovered that this is a direct route to equality. If 4... $\mathbb{Q}c6$  5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  g6 (5... $\mathbb{Q}g4$  6.d5∞) 6.0-0± A.Fedorov-Moskalenko, Nikolaev zt 1993) 5.dxe5 dxe4 6. $\mathbb{Q}b5+$  c6 7. $\mathbb{W}xd8+$   $\mathbb{Q}xd8$  8.exf6 cxb5 9. $\mathbb{Q}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  10. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$   $\mathbb{Q}xf6=$ .

3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5.g4?! is an attractive line, which emerged in a game of a teammate of mine, a great fan of the Pirc/Modern: 5...d5!? 6.e5  $\mathbb{Q}e4!$  7. $\mathbb{Q}xe4$  dxe4 8. $\mathbb{Q}e3$  c5!± 9.c3 cxd4 (9... $\mathbb{Q}c6?$ ) 10.cxd4  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  11. $\mathbb{W}d2$   $\mathbb{Q}e6$  12. $\mathbb{Q}h3$  h5 13. $\mathbb{Q}g5$   $\mathbb{Q}xg4!$ .



analysis diagram

This is a kind of dream position, and Black won the game in typical Pirc style: 14.e6 f5 (14... $\mathbb{Q}xe6?$ ; 14... $\mathbb{W}d5?$ ) 15.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e5$  16. $\mathbb{Q}b5+$   $\mathbb{Q}f8$  17.h3? a6

(17... $\mathbb{Q}f6?$ ) 18.hxg4 axb5 19.gxf5 gxf5 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$  h4?! 21. $\mathbb{Q}c5$   $\mathbb{Q}d3?$  22.d6! exd6 23. $\mathbb{Q}f7$   $\mathbb{Q}f6$  24. $\mathbb{Q}xd6+$   $\mathbb{Q}g8$  25. $\mathbb{Q}g5??$  (25. $\mathbb{Q}xh8\Box$ ) 25... $\mathbb{Q}h5$  26. $\mathbb{Q}g1$  h3 27.f4 h2 28. $\mathbb{Q}h1$   $\mathbb{Q}d4$  29. $\mathbb{Q}xh2$  e3 30. $\mathbb{W}c2$   $\mathbb{W}xd6$  31. $\mathbb{Q}xh5$   $\mathbb{Q}xf4+$  32. $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}f2+$  0-1 Simon Padros-Gual Pascual, Catalunya tt 2012.

**2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  3.c3**

3. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  d6.

Here are some more lines with  $\mathbb{Q}d3/c3$ : 4. $\mathbb{Q}d3$  (4.c3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$  0-0 6. $\mathbb{Q}c4$   $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7.0-0 e5 8.dxe5  $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  9. $\mathbb{Q}xe5$  dxe5 10. $\mathbb{W}e2$   $\mathbb{W}e7$  11. $\mathbb{Q}f3$  h6= Roca Calaf-Moskalenko, Sitges 2002) 4... $\mathbb{Q}f6$  5.0-0 0-0 6.c3  $\mathbb{Q}c6$  7. $\mathbb{Q}c2$   $\mathbb{Q}g4!$ ? 8. $\mathbb{W}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}xf3$  9. $\mathbb{W}xf3$  e5 10.d5  $\mathbb{Q}e7$ .



analysis diagram

Now Black can continue in King's Indian fashion: 11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$   $\mathbb{Q}d7$  12. $\mathbb{W}e2$  f5 13.f3  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  14. $\mathbb{Q}d2$  f4?! 15. $\mathbb{Q}f2$  g5→ with a typical advance of the kingside pawns: 16.h3  $\mathbb{Q}g6$  17.c4  $\mathbb{Q}f7$  18.c5  $\mathbb{Q}f8$  19.cxd6  $\mathbb{Q}xd6$  20. $\mathbb{Q}b3$  h5 21. $\mathbb{Q}ac1$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  22. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$   $\mathbb{W}d7$ .

Interestingly, Black is already winning, but the computer still gives White an advantage. 23. $\mathbb{Q}c5$  g4 24.fxg4 hxg4 25.hxg4 f3?! (25... $\mathbb{Q}h4-$ +) 26. $\mathbb{Q}xf3$   $\mathbb{Q}f4$  27. $\mathbb{W}f1$   $\mathbb{W}xg4$  0-1 J. Bertran-Moskalenko, Vulca 2002.

**3...d6**



Many years ago several strategic players, mainly Tigran Petrosian, used this pawn construction (c3-d4) against Black's fianchetto. However, the arising positions are quite balanced (see also above).

**4.♗g5 h6!?** 5.♗h4 ♗f6 6.♗d2 0-0  
7.♗gf3 ♗h5!?

The move order may differ, but the basic plan is to advance ...e7-e5.

**9.♗b3 ♗e8!?** 10.♗c4 e5=

After a quiet opening, Black has even obtained a microscopic advantage, as h4 is not the best place for the white bishop.

**11.dxe5 ♗xe5**

TRICK: 11...♗g4!?.



The late Dutch master Johan van Mil.

12.♗fxe5 dxe5 13.0-0 ♗e6 14.♗f3 ♗f4 15.♗g3 g5  
15...♗b5!?.  
16.♗e3 a5 17.♗xf4?!

exf4 18.♗f5 ♗xf5 19.♗xf5 ♗b5!?

Now White has to be careful.  
20.f6?! ♗xf6 21.♗ad1 ♗ae8!?  
22.♗d5 ♗e2! 23.♗h3?  
23.♗xa5.  
23...♗g7 24.♗xa5 ♗e7  
24...♗xb2!?.  
25.♗d5 ♗xb2 26.♗f5 ♗xc3



And suddenly Black has a technically winning position.

27.♗c2 ♗h8 28.g3 ♗e5!?

29.♗xe5 30.gxf4 ♗xf5 31.♗xf5 gxf4  
32.♗d1 ♗e5 33.♗e4 b6 34.♗d7 ♗f6  
35.♗d5 ♗h7 36.♗g2 ♗g7+ 37.♗f3  
♗d6 38.♗b3 b5 39.♗e4 b4 40.h3  
♗g6 41.♗f3 ♗f6 42.♗e4 ♗g2  
43.♗xf7+ ♗g6 44.♗f3 ♗h2 45.♗e6  
♗xh3+! 46.♗xh3 ♗f7—+

Black is winning in this ending (♗+2▲ vs. ♗+4▲).

47.♗e4 ♗c5 48.♗xf4 ♗xf2 49.♗f5  
♗e7 50.♗g4 ♗d6 51.♗e4 ♗c5  
52.♗e2 ♗e6 53.♗c4+ ♗f6 54.♗f4  
♗d6+ 55.♗e4 ♗g5 56.♗e6 h5  
57.♗d7 ♗e7 58.♗e6 c5 59.♗e5  
♗h4 60.♗f4 ♗d6+ 61.♗f3 ♗g5  
62.♗e4 ♗f8 63.♗e5 h4 64.♗e4  
♗f6 65.♗c8 c4!  
0-1

## Index of Variations

### 2 – The Austrian Attack: 4.f4 ♜g7 5.♘f3 c5

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4 ♜g7



5.e5 .....	14
5.♘f3 c5.....	18
6.♗b5+ .....	18
6.e5 .....	30
6.d5 .....	34
6.dxc5 ♛a5	
7.♗d3 .....	38
7.♕d4 .....	44

### 3 – The Austrian Attack: 5...0-0

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4 ♜g7 5.♘f3 0-0



6.♗e3 .....	51
5./a3.....	51
6.e5 .....	62
6.♗e2 .....	76
6.♗d3	
6...♘bd7; 6...♗g4; 6...c5 .....	83
6...♘c6 .....	89
7.0-0 .....	90
7.e5 .....	99
6...♘a6 7.0-0 c5 8.d5 .....	105
8...♗b8 .....	106
8...♗g4 .....	120

**4 – The Flexible Move 4.♗e3****1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗e3/1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.♘c3 ♜g7 4.♗e3**

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 c6.....	129
1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗e3 c6 5.♗d2 .....	136
1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗e3 a6 .....	148
5.a4 .....	151
1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♜g7 3.♘c3 d6 4.♗e3 a6 .....	154
5.f4 .....	154
5.♗d2 .....	160, 170
5.a4 .....	160
1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗e3 a6 5.♗d2 .....	167

**5 – The Dynamic Bishop Attack****1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♜f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗g5**

4...h6 .....	174
4...♜g7 .....	173
5.♗d2 .....	174
5.♗e2 .....	174
5.e5 .....	174
5.f4 .....	180
5...h6 .....	180
6.♗xf6 .....	180
6.♗h4 .....	185
5...c6 .....	189
5...0-0 6.♗d2 c6 .....	193

**6 – White's Fianchetto: 4.g3**

**1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4.g3  $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}g2$  0-0 6. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$  e5**



7.0-0 .....	201
7.h3 .....	203
7... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ .....	208
7... $\mathbb{Q}bd7$ .....	211
7...c6 .....	

**7 – The Classical 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$** 

**1.e4 d6 2.d4  $\mathbb{Q}f6$  3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$  g6 4. $\mathbb{Q}f3$   $\mathbb{Q}g7$  5. $\mathbb{Q}e2$  0-0 6.0-0**



6... $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 7.d5 $\mathbb{Q}b8$ .....	217
6... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ .....	221
1.e4 g6 2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ c6 .....	226
1.d4 c5 2.d5 d6 3.e4 $\mathbb{Q}f6$ 4. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ g6 5. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ ..	229

**8 – Amadeus – Miscellaneous Ideas**

**1.e4 g6**



2.d4 $\mathbb{Q}g7$	
3. $\mathbb{Q}c3$	
3...d6 .....	234
3...c6 4. $\mathbb{Q}c4$ .....	238
3.c3 .....	241

## Explanation of Symbols

The chess board  
with its coordinates:



- White to move
- Black to move
- ♔ King
- ♕ Queen
- ♖ Rook
- ♗ Bishop
- ♘ Knight

- ± White stands slightly better
- ⊖ Black stands slightly better
- ⊕ White stands better
- ⊖ Black stands better
- +− White has a decisive advantage
- −+ Black has a decisive advantage
- = balanced position
- ∞ unclear position
- ⊗ compensation for the material
- > strong (sufficient)
- < weak (insufficient)
- ≥ better is
- ≤ weaker is
- ! good move
- !! excellent move
- ? bad move
- ?? blunder
- ?! interesting move
- ?! dubious move
- only move
- △ with the idea
- attack
- ↑ initiative
- ↑↑ lead in development
- ⇄ counterplay
- # mate
- corr. correspondence

# Index of Names

Numbers refer to pages.

A		B		C	
Aagaard	155	Avrukha	56	Birnboim	131
Aaron	65	Azmaiparashvili	78, 110, 121-122, 157, 163, 194,	Bischoff	131
Abbasov	131	200-202, 204-205, 209,		Bivol	175
Acker	26	222, 225		Blatny	143, 223
Acs	23, 113, 235			Blodig	46
Adair	48			Bobras	46
Adams	158	Bach	189	Bodin	118
Adell Corts	141	Bacrot	130, 157	Boehmer	39
Adorjan	103, 110	Badea	24	Bogdanov	67
Aguas Sanmartin	101	Baker	45	Bogdanovski	66, 151
Airapetian	161, 178	Baklan	40	Bogoljubow	179-180
Aketaeva	117	Balashov	43	Böhm	110
Akopian	221	Baltag	132	Bok	21
Alburt	18, 35	Baramidze	91	Boleslavsky	79
Alexandrov	155, 195	Bareev	39, 58	Bologan	21, 56, 212
Alexeev	214	Baretic	91	Borner	86
Almasi	80, 112, 176-177	Bartel	39	Borocz	124
Almeida Quintana	158, 160, 164	Barwinski	134	Boros	112
Alonso Moyano	163	Battaglini	149	Borzov	113
Alonso,S.	184	Bauer	26	Botvinnik	68, 99, 224
Alsina Leal	20, 233, 235	Bayer	46, 109	Brcar	234
Anand	11, 25, 57, 133, 150, 155, 163	Bebchuk	71	Bricard	170, 222
Anarkulov	24	Beckmann	116	Bronstein	66-67, 70-71, 76, 86
Andersen	48	Beim	131, 194	Brookes	141
Andersson	22	Beliavsky	25, 57, 101,	Brunner	219
Andrenko	58		138	Bucinkas	204
Angskog	119	Belotti	118	Budnikov	40
Ankerst	87	Beni	67	Bukal	46
Antoniacci	195	Benjamin	26	Burn	77
Antonio	180-182, 192	Benko	84-85, 88	Bykhovsky	71
Apicella	143	Berek	162		
Arencibia Rodriguez	37	Berelowitsch	37, 100	C	
Aristotelous	186	Bermejo Martinez	46	Cabrilo	110
Arizmendi Martinez	100	Bernard	130	Campora	42, 57
Arnason	42	Bertok	223	Can	186
Arun	194	Bertran	241	Cao Sang	161
Arutinian	152	Besozzi	27	Capablanca	7
Asensio Linan	175, 202	Beyerlein	46	Carlsen	22, 58, 152
Aveskulov	178	Bezold	158	Caruana	139, 164, 167
		Bichsel	67	Casser	87
		Biriukov	117	Castaldo	115

Castella Garcia	68	Delchev	31, 205, 222	Fierro Baquero	239-240
Cekro	108	Delgado Crespo	129	Filipov	72
Chabanon	26, 184	Delgado Ramirez	194	Finkel	146, 170
Chandler	58, 66, 79, 95	Delgado,L.	2	Firman	146
Charbonneau	59	Dembo	100	Fischer	78, 84-85, 88,
Chatalbashev	38, 95, 117-118, 122-123, 138, 154, 156, 162, 164	Deriabin	37		104
Chebanenko	102	Detienne	45	Fischer,R.	87
Chekhov	24	Diogo	218	Flear	53
Chernin	18, 21, 23-24, 35, 39-42, 80, 140, 150, 158, 176-177, 212, 222-223, 225	Djurhuus	37, 201	Flogaus	87
Chigorin	216-218, 222	Dlugosz	164	Flückiger	86
Chuprikov	178	Dobierzin	102	Fluvia Poyatos	196
Cifuentes Parada	230	Dolmatov	95, 115-117	Forster	54
Cioara	38	Dominguez Perez	151, 157	Forthofer	143
Ciuffoletti	69	Donchenko	48	Fossan	71
Clausen	66	Donguines	122	Franzoni	213
Cobic	145	Donner	91, 94	Fressinet	110, 149-150
Coll Domenech	184	Dos Santos	152	Fridman	112, 163
Collier	151	Dragiev	153	Friedel	131
Collutii	150	Drazic	162, 222	Fries Nielsen	67
Conquest	68, 71, 121	Dreev	177, 180, 189-190, 194	Frometa Castillo	129
Conterno	48	Dvoiry	33	Ftacnik	111, 117
Cooley	163	Dvoretsky	225	<b>G</b>	
Copie	73	Dydyshko	91	Gabriel	204
Corbat	70	Dzhumaev	162, 164	Gagunashvili	176
Corrales Jimenez	32	Dzindzichashvili	111	Galkin	139
Couso	159	<b>E</b>		Gallego Martinez	113
Cuijpers	158	Eames	95	Gaponenko	117
Czerwonski	80	Efremov	72	Garcia Corada	87
<b>D</b>		Ehlvest	121, 218-219	Garcia,M.	135
Dahlmann	178	Eliet	130	Gashimov	175
Dancevski	36	Emms	150	Gasic	71
Daniliuk	115	Epishin	234	Gedevanishvili	64
Danzanwilliers	153	Eraschenkov	24, 93	Gelashvili	35, 37, 218
Dao Thien Hai	80	Escobar Forero	158	Gelfand	11, 77
Daulyte	200	Esen	200	Gerer	219
De Firmian	40	Espig	238	German	141
De Groote	152	Espineira Gonzalez	226	Gershon	59-60
De la Riva Aguado	195	Espinosa Aranda	195	Gharamian	123
De la Villa Garcia	209	<b>F</b>		Gibbs	163
De Saegher	48	Fedorov,A.	241	Giorgetti	140
Deak	84	Fedorov,V.	155	Gipslis	56, 68
Degraeve	95, 123	Felgaer	23, 42, 90, 97-98, 118	Giri	63, 71-72, 74-75
Del Rio de Angelis	190	Fernandez Garcia	190	Glek	39, 43, 108, 110, 226
		Fier	109	Gofstein	57, 93, 128, 133, 141, 148, 178, 200
				Gogonov	206
				Gonzales	32

Index of Names

Govedarica	40	Hever	72	Jonkman	94, 96
Grabliauskas	48	Hickl	166, 204	Jovanovic	46
Graf	91, 93	Hillarp Persson	22-24, 47, 148, 155, 157, 233	K	
Granda Zuniga	164	Hnydiuk	107	Kaidanov	39, 115
Grandelius	22	Hodgson	187, 235	Kalinina	46
Grimm	72	Hoeksema	186	Kantsler	33, 235
Grischuk	11, 19-21, 26-29, 32, 123, 148, 150, 152, 157, 222	Hoffman	204	Kapnisis	45
Gu Xiaobing	22	Hofland	100	Karakehajov	161
Gual Pascual	21, 163, 191, 223, 229, 241	Hoi	84	Karatekin	230
Gubanov	195	Hon Kah Seng	201	Karjakin	19, 21, 24-25, 27, 83-84, 86, 92, 96, 104, 110, 114-115
Gubaydulin	21	Hopper	82	Karlsson	120-121
Guerrero Alvarez	84	Horowitz	178	Kärner	65
Gufeld	205	Horvath,T.	177	Kerkhof	187
Günther	84	Houben	69	Keskinen	71
Gurevich,M.	24-25, 32, 41-42, 45, 54, 209, 224-225	Houska	156	Khachiyan	138
Gwozdz	73	Howell	46	Khairullin	47
<b>H</b>		Hracek	156	Khalifman	41, 122, 156, 200, 218
Hager	74	Hunt	164	I	
Hahnewald	87	Ianov	70	Ianov	70
Hakki	119	Ibanez Aullana	184	Ibanez Aullana	184
Hamdouchi,A.	28, 143	Ibarra Chami	158	Idani	176
Hamdouchi,H.	191	Illescas Cordoba	54, 59	Inarkiev	25, 51
Hamm	64	Isaev	31	Isaev	31
Hammer	94	Iskandarov	209	Ivanchuk	11, 19, 28, 63, 65, 72, 75, 79, 82-84,
Hanken	226	Ivanchuk	11, 19, 28, 63, 65, 72, 75, 79, 82-84,	Isaev	31
Hanley	45	Iskandarov	209	Iskandarov	209
Hansen,C.	84-85, 87-89, 92, 223	Ivanov,A.	214	Ivanov,A.	164
Hansen,T.	218	Ivanovic	164	Ivanovic	32
Hardt	72	J		Jahnel	47
Hartoch	93	Jahnel	47	Janda	109
Hartston	131, 141	Jahnel	47	Janev	128
Hebden	151	Janda	109	Janosevic	223
Heberla	49	Jana	31, 189	Jarsim	119
Hector	15, 47, 69	Jana	31, 189	Jaracz	80, 107
Heinimaki	71	Jana	31, 189	Jokic	145
Hellers	92	Jana	31, 189	Joksic	193
Helmert	178	Jana	31, 189	Jones	132, 162-164
Henderikse	45	Jana	31, 189	Jones	132, 162-164
Hendriks	196	Jasim	119	K	
Hernandez Gallardo	158	Jasim	119	Kaidanov	39, 115
Hernandez Guerrero	212	Jokic	145	Kalinina	46
Hess	140	Joksic	193	Kantsler	33, 235
		Kochehajov	161	Kapnisis	45
		Karatekin	230	Karakehajov	161
		Karjakin	19, 21, 24-25, 27, 83-84, 86, 92, 96, 104, 110, 114-115	Karatekin	230
		Karlsson	120-121	Karjakin	19, 21, 24-25, 27, 83-84, 86, 92, 96, 104, 110, 114-115
		Kärner	65	Karlsson	120-121
		Kerkhof	187	Kärner	65
		Keskinen	71	Kerkhof	187
		Khachiyan	138	Keskinen	71
		Khairullin	47	Khachiyan	138
		Khalifman	41, 122, 156, 200, 218	Khairullin	47
		Khamrakov	223	Khalifman	41, 122, 156, 200, 218
		Khuseinov	66	Khamrakov	223
		Kiefer	79	Khuseinov	66
		Kilpela	53	Kiefer	79
		King	152	Kilpela	53
		Klenburg	194	King	152
		Kobalia	173, 178	Klenburg	194
		Kochetkov	122	Kobalia	173, 178
		Kogan	240	Kochetkov	122
		Kolev	204	Kogan	240
		Komliakov	221	Kolev	204
		Kondziela	26	Komliakov	221
		Koneru	156	Kondziela	26
		Korneev	27, 46, 117	Koneru	156
		Korobov	174	Korneev	27, 46, 117
		Korolev	41	Korobov	174
		Korotylev	164	Korolev	41
		Kortchmai	36, 78	Korotylev	164
		Kosanovic	143	Kortchmai	36, 78
		Koshy	131	Kosanovic	143
		Kosintseva,T.	156	Koshy	131
		Kosteniuk	163	Kosintseva,T.	156
		Kotainy	48	Kosteniuk	163
		Kotronias	95, 103	Kotainy	48
		Kotsur	108	Kotronias	95, 103
		Kovacevic,A.	122	Kotsur	108
		Kovalev	204	Kovacevic,A.	122
		Kovalevskaya	195	Kovalev	204

Kovchan	40-41	Leveille	111	Marin,I.	55, 146
Kovtyev	111	Leventic	45	Marjanovic	42
Kozul	222	Liberzon	69, 180	Markgraf	47
Kramnik	11, 32, 65, 110, 114-115, 139, 148-149, 151-152, 164-168, 200-201	Liebert	238	Markovic	110, 144, 151
Krasenkov	157	Liitainen	53	Markowski	95, 101, 176
Kravtsiv	104	Lilley	187	Marks	67
Krayz	194	Lindberg	47	Martin Alvarez	94
Krovel Velle	68	Liss	24	Martin del Campo	122
Krush	65	Littlewood	102	Martin Gonzalez	43, 103
Kryvoruchko	43	Liu Qingnan	157	Martin Rodriguez	234
Kuijpers	71, 99, 101-102	Lobron	43	Martinec	119
Kuipers	77	Logar	123	Martinez	164
Külaots	60	Loginov	217	Martinez Molina	2
Kulish	194	London	140	Marxen	117
Kurnosov	139, 200	Looshnikov	23	Maryasin	91
Kuzmin,G.	95, 117, 173, 175, 222, 230	Lopez Colon	55	Mascarinas	37
Kuzubov	138	Lopez Martinez	161	Mastrovasilis	114
<b>L</b>		Lorenz	64	Mateo	142
l'Ami	24, 176	Ludgate	78	Matveev	23
Lacasa Diaz	97	Lugovoi	114	Maximenko,I.	80-81
Lahno	58-59, 163, 195	Lysyj	73	McNab	20, 25, 58-59, 90, 95, 132
<b>M</b>		Medic	53	Meier	222
Laine	132	Macieja	36, 187, 193, 195	Melich	39
Lakos	135	Magem Badals	130	Mellado Trivino	175
Lalic	24, 158	Mahjoob	122	Menvielle Lacourrelle	109
Lanc	66	Makarichev	64	Menyhart	84
Längl	64	Mäki	92	Merwin	138
Langrock	21	Malinin	37	Mestel	191
Lanka	156	Malmdin	107	Mester	124
Lanneau	234	Maltese	181	Mezcua Coronil	161
Lanzani	27	Mamedov	109, 163, 200, 209	Michalczak	101
Larino Nieto	176	Mamedyarov	22, 25, 109	Midoux	170
Lawson	235	Mammadova	129	Mikhailchishin	23, 56
Lazic	45	Mann	175	Miles	153
Le Floch	143	Manolache	156	Milic	71
Le Roux	36	Marcelin	110	Milutin	121
Ledger	45	Margolin	204	Milliet	162
Lee	22, 102	Margraf	117	Milos	145, 186
Leib	177	Marin	22, 50-54, 57-61, 85-86, 89, 109, 111, 113, 116-118, 130-132,	Milov	45
Leitao	109, 152, 214	Mitt	136-137, 141-142, 146,	Minasian	161, 190
Lelchuk	66	Miroshnichenko	117	Miroshnichenko	161
Lemke	72	Mitkov	216, 221	Mista	101
Leonhardt	217	Mitt	216, 221	Mitchell	46
Leskur	143	Mkrtyan	118	Mitkov	191
Leuw	145	Mogranzini	140	Mitt	94

Moiseenko	101		166, 200	Paulsen	77
Moiseev	117, 223	Neu	31	Pavlov,M.	43, 86, 121
Molander	145	Neubauer	54	Pedersen,N.V.	32, 109
Molinias Garcia	234	Nevednichy	205	Pedersen,S.	153
Molner	39, 140, 143	Neverov	36	Pein	48, 150
Moreno Carnero	54	Nguyen Manh Truong		Pekin	70
Morovic Fernandez	20		224	Pel	116
Morozevich	154, 156, 159	Nicholls	73	Pena Dieguez	212
Moskalenko	7, 14, 67, 84, 99, 120, 128-129, 135, 139, 149, 153, 170, 181, 191, 200, 202-205, 208, 211, 217, 221-222, 224, 226, 229-230, 233-234, 237, 239-241	Nijboer	23, 78, 145-146	Penalosa Pinillas	200
Motwani	20	Nikolaidis	35	Peralta	20, 27, 42, 51, 55, 58, 107-108, 112, 118,
Motylev	214	Nikolic,P.	96, 101, 212	123, 150, 168, 175, 193, 195-196, 211-212, 214	
Movsziszian	23, 41, 80, 94, 123, 155, 163, 176, 202, 204-205, 209, 211, 213, 222, 240	Nikolic,S.	110	Perez	72-73
Mozart	232	Nippula	132	Perez Candelario	164, 174
Muhren	186	Nisipeanu	24, 56-57, 78, 221	Perez Pardo	202
Mukhutdinov	224	Nithander	119	Perez Perez	104
Müller	47	Noguchi	145	Perez Rodriguez	212
Mundet Riera	139	Nogueiras	212	Pergericht	42
Munoz Agullo	161	Norwood	157	Perpinya Rofes	223
Munoz Pantoja	184, 230	Nosov	22	Pesotsky	227
Munoz Santana	150	Nowak	71	Petran	156, 202
Muse	109	Nunn	21, 26, 67, 73, 81, 90, 108, 239	Petrosian,A.	222
Muzychuk	28	Nybäck	145, 176, 187	Petrosian,T.	210, 242
<b>N</b>		Nysti	156	Petrosian,T.L.	96, 104, 133, 162
Nadig	94	<b>O</b>		Petrushin	218
Naiditsch	160, 164-166, 170	Ochneva	143	Pfiffner	27
Nakamura	11, 65, 72, 160, 162, 170	Oetzel	15	Pham Minh Tai	224
Napoli	14, 16	Ohme	163	Piket	111
Narciso Dublan	43, 54, 90, 93-94, 96-97, 101, 113, 201, 212	Olenin	26	Pilavov	46
Nataf	113	Oms Fuentes	201	Pinski	134
Naumann	66	Onischuk,V.	58, 117, 178	Pinter,P.	162
Navrotescu	65	Oral	115	Pira	170
Nazarov	22	Ortega Hermida	174	Pirc	11, 67, 91, 220, 223, 225
Nazhmeddinov	24	<b>P</b>		Pirrot	72
Nepomniachtchi	165,	Pakleza	36	Pitl	46
		Palac	24, 53-54, 70, 195	Plachetka	143
		Palatnik	40, 80	Plonczak	23
		Palencia	68	Pokojowczyk	71
		Palkövi	214	Polgar,J.	133, 239
		Palliser	25	Polgar,S.	111
		Palmiotto	70	Polihroniade	69
		Panarin	25	Polzin	158
		Pancevski	186	Ponomariov	56, 119, 121, 123, 148, 152, 183
		Panocki	23	Popchev	142, 144
		Pap	60	Popov	36
		Pardo Simon	146		

Postny	200	Samraoui	48	Skembiris	103
Potapov	200	San Segundo Carrillo	157	Skold	107
Prada Rubin	112	Sanchez Jerez	163	Skomorokhov	143
Prats Rodriguez	203	Sandu	146	Skripchenko	66, 100,
Provotorov	24	Sapi	32		156
Prujssers	100	Saric	162	Skurygin	227
		Sarno	69, 115, 195	Slobodjan	166
<b>Q</b>		Sarto Ramos	233	Slovineanu	214
Quinn	189	Savchenko	44-45	Smeets	110, 152, 158
		Savon	225	Smirin	15, 72, 76, 80,
<b>R</b>		Sax	19, 26, 30-33	128, 133, 146, 148, 150,	
Radjabov	28	Scekic	40, 80, 233	155, 218	
Rahal	233	Schebler	161	Smith	24
Rahman	157	Schellig	102	Sochor	119
Rakhmangulov	22, 121,	Schlosser, M.	78	Socko	118
	221	Schmaltz	67	Sokolov, A.	57
Ramakrishna	162	Schmidt	190	Solak	36
Ramseier	87	Schmittdiel	205	Soloviev	122
Rayner	95	Schöneberg	238	Solovjov	114
Ree	109	Schut	165	Soto Paez	212
Reichmann	21	Schwarz	116	Spassky	102
Reilly	192	Schweizer	97	Speelman	39, 77, 81, 118
Reinhardt	79	Sedina	55	Spraggett	123
Reizniece	174	Seirawan	19, 24-26, 31,	Stefanova	90, 162
Rendle	162-164		107-108, 117-118, 121,	Stefansson	96
Ribli	33, 101		164	Stein	69
Rios	190	Selbes	44, 49	Stejskal	39
Robertson	82	Seret	201	Stellwagen	109
Robson	39	Sermek	205-206	Stemmler	84
Roca Calaf	241	Seul	57	Stets	95
Röder	209	Sfarlog	33	Stevic	218
Rodriguez Cespedes	121	Sgherri	26	Stohl	62, 70, 72, 74
Rodriguez Gonzalez	146	Shibut	138	Stoica	51, 53-54, 58
Rodriguez Izquierdo	87	Shimanov	206	Strikovic	56, 213
Rodriguez Lopez	21	Shirov	21, 56, 59, 99,	Strobel	64
Rogers	111, 117		101, 180, 189, 192,	Stroppa	153
Romanov	53		239-240	Sturua	112
Roobol	94	Shkapanenko	95	Sudnizin	26
Royo	155	Shmulevich	67	Sulava	234
Rublevsky	76	Shmuter	57	Sulskis	141, 204, 239
Rudak	111	Short	81	Sutovsky	63, 65, 74-75,
Rukavina	141, 193	Siebrecht	165		107, 131
Rustemov	43	Sigurjonsson	30	Suttles	22
		Simacek	163	Svatos	115
<b>S</b>		Simon Padros	241	Svensson	185
Sadvakasov	180, 183,	Simonenko	214	Sveshnikov	101, 138
	185, 196	Sinanovic	54	Svidler	132, 156-157,
Safarli	214	Sipila	218		200
Safranska	234	Sitanggang	100	Szabo, K.	93

Szabo,Z.	112	Vallejo Pons	90, 174,	<b>W</b>
Sznapik	54, 81		212	Wagner 68
<b>T</b>		Van de Oudeweetering	42	Waitzkin 208
Taimanov	19, 186	Van de Wynkele	191	Wang Pin 190
Tan	22, 46	Van den Berg	71	Wang Yue 104
Taulbut	223	Van der Poel	42	Watson 68
Thipsay	66	Van der Sterren	108	Weber 116-117
Thorstensen	71	Van der Weide	91, 97	Wedberg 118
Tikkanen	159	Van der Werf	239	Wei Chenpeng 140
Timman	21, 25, 95, 101, 108-109, 145, 221	Van der Wiel	25, 93-94	Westerinen 23, 180
Tischbirek	41	Van Dongen	233	Westman 86
Tiviakov	157, 176, 193	Van Herwaarden	47-48	Winiwarter 74
Tjiam	32	Van Mil	240, 242	Wojtkiewicz 208-209, 211
Tkachiev	21, 58, 112, 141, 177	Van Riemsdijk	77	
Todorcevic	56, 109-110	Van Rijn	191	
Tolnai	42, 140	Van Wely	23, 39, 42, 201	
Toma	33	Van Wijgerden	102	<b>Y</b>
Topalov	99	Varadi	70	Yakovich 180, 184, 187, 189
Torre	40, 65, 108, 117	Vasiukov	31	Yastrebova 181
Toth	214	Vasquez	200, 221	Yermolinsky 180
Totsky	237	Vassallo Barroche	100,	Yrjölä 92
Tredup	15	Vatter	218	Yudasin 142
Trent	53	Vavulin	164	Yudin 21
Tristan	97	Vega Gutierrez	55, 174	
Tsepotan	112	Végh	44-46, 143	<b>Z</b>
Tseshkovsky	21-22, 24, 31, 53, 57, 209, 223, 225	Vehi Bach	168	Zablotsky 139
Tukhaev	23	Velema	69	Zaichik 66, 202
Tukmakov	191	Velikov	131	Zaichuk 113
Turova	194	Velimirovic	31, 40	Zakharevich 93
		Vestergard	27	Zakharov 223
<b>U</b>		Vidarte Morales	175	Zambrana 20, 112
Udeshi	133	Vigus	25, 35, 77, 87, 90, 96, 102-103, 196	Zapata 164
Ufimtsev	7, 79	Visser	149-150	Zaw 100
Ulibin	180, 190-191, 193-194	Vitiugov	194	Zaw Oo 180
Unzicker	66, 180	Viviani	26	Zdebskaja 55
Urban	115	Voevodin	32	Zelic 33
		Vogt	238	Zhao Jun 157
<b>V</b>		Voinov	47	Zhelnin 99
Vaassen	73	Vokac	163	Zhilgalko 155
Vachier Lagrave	158	Volokitin	96, 100-101, 138, 205-206	Zhukova 78
Vadasz	101	Vovk	65	Ziatdinov 222
Vaisser	70, 93, 95, 123	Vovsha	187	Zickus 132
Vajda	205, 213-214	Vrhovnik	110	Zimmerman 46
Valdes	194	Vucicevic	42	Zlotnikov 233
		Vujakovic	110	Zozulia 155, 189, 191
				Zubarev 31
				Zulfugarli 122
				Zviagintsev 119, 161

## Game Index

Nicolo Napoli	- Viktor Moskalenko	Barcelona open 2012 .....	14
Sergey Karjakin	- Alexander Grischuk	Moscow ch-RUS 2011 .....	19
Yuyla Sax	- Gudmundur Sigurjonsson	Vratsa zt 1975 .....	30
Konstantinos Nikolaidis	- Tamaz Gelashvili	Korinthos 2001 .....	35
Igor Glek	- Alexander Chernin	Neu Isenburg 1991 .....	39
Boris Savchenko	- Tarik Selbes	Konya tt 2010 .....	44
Ernesto Inarkiev	- Fernando Peralta	Khanty-Mansiysk World Cup 2007 .....	51
Emil Sutovsky	- Vassily Ivanchuk	Khanty-Mansiysk World Cup 2011 .....	63
Ilya Smirin	- Sergey Rublevsky	Bastia rapid 1999 .....	76
Curt Hansen	- Carsten Hoi	Taastrup ch-DEN 1998 .....	84
Ruben Felgaer	- Marc Narciso Dublan	Andorra open 2004 .....	90
Viktor Moskalenko	- Vladimir Zhelnin	Odessa Kotov Memorial 1989 .....	99
Yasser Seirawan	- Fernando Peralta	Barcelona 2011 .....	107
Viktor Moskalenko	- Lars Karlsson	Villa Salou 2010 .....	120
Evgeni Janev	- Viktor Moskalenko	Barbera del Valles 2005 .....	128
Andrey Volokitin	- Alexander Beliavsky	Portoroz Vidmar mem 2001 .....	138
Yge Visser	- Viktor Moskalenko	Groningen 1990 .....	149
Alexander Morozevich	- Boris Chatalbashev	Plovdiv Ech-tt 2003 .....	154
Arkadij Naiditsch	- Hikaru Nakamura	Istanbul Olympiad 2012 .....	160
Arkadij Naiditsch	- Vladimir Kramnik	Dortmund 2010 .....	165
Sebastien Midoux	- Viktor Moskalenko	Cap d'Agde 2012 .....	170
Mikhail Kobalia	- Gennady Kuzmin	Moscow 2002 .....	173
Rogelio Antonio Jr	- Zaw Oo	Yangon zt 1998 .....	180
Darmen Sadvakasov	- Ruslan Ponomariov	Lausanne 1999 .....	183
Alexei Shirov	- Vlastimil Jansa	Kerteminde 1991 .....	189
Bartlomiej Macieja	- Fernando Peralta	Warsaw m 2007 .....	193
Jesus Penalosa Pinillas	- Viktor Moskalenko	Benasque 2007 .....	200
Viktor Moskalenko	- Joan Prats Rodriguez	Barcelona Vulca 2003 .....	203
Joshua Waitzkin	- Viktor Moskalenko	Iraklion 1997 .....	208
Viktor Moskalenko	- Karen Movsziszian	La Pobla de Lillet 2004 .....	211
Valery Loginov	- Viktor Moskalenko	Balassagyarmat 1990 .....	217
Rodrigo Vasquez	- Viktor Moskalenko	Andorra 1991 .....	221
Diego Espineira Gonzalez	- Viktor Moskalenko	Barcelona 2005 .....	226
Viktor Moskalenko	- Antonio Gual Pascual	Catalunya 2005 .....	229
Daniel Alsina Leal	- Viktor Moskalenko	Badalona 2006 .....	233
Leonid Totsky	- Viktor Moskalenko	Simferopol tt 1990 .....	237
Johan van Mil	- Viktor Moskalenko	Budapest Cansys 1991 .....	240

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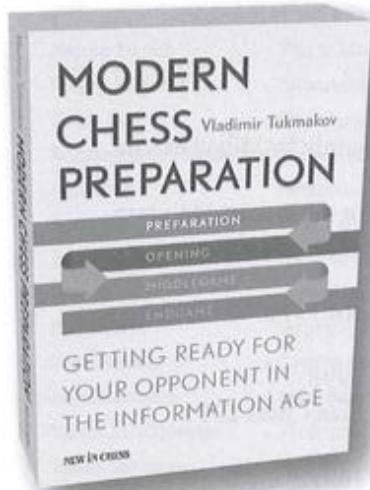
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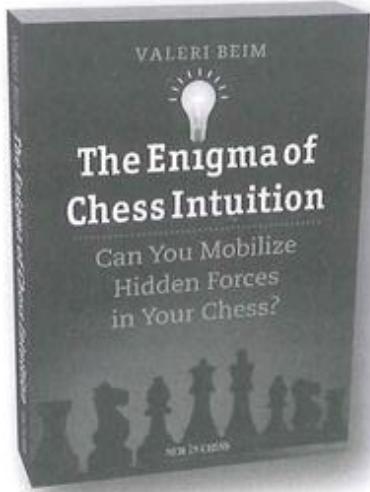
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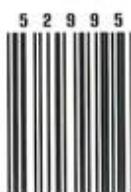
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