



COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding

The Giuoco Piano on Trial White Wins the Case!

This is the final article in the series where The Kibitzer has put this ancient opening, **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5**, on trial. Is it playable in 2002 or not?



Last year (Kibitzers 64-65), we presented the case for the prosecution (i.e., White), and for Black. Last month (Kibitzer 69) we had counsels' closing statements and the Judge's Summing Up.

Then the case was thrown open to you, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, with a voting form. You were invited to send your comments and to cast your democratic vote in favour of White or Black.

In all, 43 votes were received plus some comments without votes. We know this is only a tiny fraction of the readership for the column, but still quite a good response for this kind of exercise. Moreover, the result was very clear.

White received 31 votes, whereas Black received just 12 votes. This is a clear margin for victory in favour of the view that the Giuoco Piano is playable in 2002.

Actually I was quite surprised by this result, as I expected more of you to support Black and that maybe Black would even win the vote. However, perhaps I was more persuasive in my arguments on White's behalf than I thought at the time.

Anyway, I have had my say and now it's your turn. I shall quote from all the verbal comments that I received and answer some of the points raised.

I shall begin with those comments which did not include any actual analysis, and then move on to the few readers who raised specific points about certain

variations. I should point out that the voting form did not require readers to give their names, so many of the comments are anonymous, but some people did identify themselves.

After a final glance at the Moller Attack with 13...h6, I shall be looking at three specific variations, which should possibly have received more attention in the earlier articles. The whole exercise has been very beneficial, I think, in clarifying which lines are important for current theory.

The lines, raised by readers, to which I will give most attention in this article are:

- a) The 7 Nc3 Moller Attack with 13...h6;
- b) In the 7 Nc3 variation, the 9...Ne5 move (instead of 9...Bf6);
- c) In the 7 Bd2 variation, the reply 7...Nxe4!, which has been improved for Black and actually seems to equalise;
- d) The idea 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 b4!?, which is better than its reputation.

A few other variations will be mentioned briefly but I don't intend to go very deeply into them, but will just report what readers have said.

The Feedback

The viewpoints that readers expressed about the GP were widely divergent. One reader sent me the following comment which closely matches my own opinion:

"Black equalizes with greater certainty here vs. the alternative, the Two Knights."

On the other hand, Lellis (from São Paulo, Brazil) wrote: "Mr. Harding has written a beautiful article, but he forgot the reason why the Giuoco Piano is not so good. True, it doesn't belong to the the Giuoco Piano, it is the Two Knights Defense."

Another reader, who just called himself Mark, wrote: "The Italian game is aggressive and, more importantly at amateur level, fun to play. I've enjoyed reading your book *The Italian Game* (Batsford 1977) and was wondering if you could write a bit more about the Two Knights Defence. I don't think it's viable for Black, do you agree? Many thanks!"

My reply to these comments is that of course I did not forget the Two Knights Defense (3...Nf6), which is essentially a different way of meeting White's 3rd move. Not so long ago, I looked in detail at the reply 4 Ng5 for White and showed that White has much better chances than used to be thought the case. Indeed I have had a lot of practical success with this move that Dr Tarrasch

condemned. However, to say "I don't think it's viable for Black" is putting it too strongly. Maybe I shall look at other this and other variations of the Two Knights in future but not, I think, this year.

Now for some comments on the Giuoco itself from some people who play it at amateur level. I think these are very revealing about why White won the vote so decisively.

Without referring to any specific lines, Chris Chambers, from Atlanta USA, set out very clearly why he plays this opening successfully. Here is what he says:

This is absolutely an opening that can be employed by White in over-the-board games (club, league, regional tournaments, etc) at the sub-2400 level. Very few players of the black pieces at this level will bother to study all of the theory (or be able to remember it if they do study it). Thus, the well-prepared player of the white pieces can expect one of three outcomes:

- 1) An easy win after an under-prepared Black loses his way;
- 2) A strong attack (and probably some time advantage) against a player who is somewhat familiar with the lines; or
- 3) a dynamic position with chances for both sides against an extremely 'booked-up' opponent. This certainly satisfies all the requirements I demand when choosing an opening. Of course, if you're playing against the same pool of players, you will need to have something else to play as well, or you will be too easy to prepare for.

Thanks for such a lucid exposition, Chris.

A briefer summing-up came from an anonymous reader (voting for White): "Viable for White, if only as one of the most efficient (albeit temporary) tactical and attacking classrooms available to budding Tals".

Now I move on to those comments which mentioned specific variations.

"The Bd2 Line could be somewhat better" said M.Freeke (Holland); as he was voting for White, I guess he means that in the line 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Bd2 White can get an edge. Certainly, I used to think this was the most reliable of White's options following the sharp 5 d4 but my confidence in it has been knocked lately. We will come to this in more detail below.

US National Master Loal Davis wrote in as follows: "Just a few thoughts on the Bayonet variation. 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Nc3 Nxe4 8 O-O Bxc3 9 d5 Bf6 10 Re1 Ne7 11 Rxe4 d6 12 g4 O-O 13 g5 Be5 14 Nxe5 dxe5 15 Rxe5 Ng6 16 Re1 Qd6 17 Qd4 f6 18 Bd2 Ne5 19 Be2 c5 is a line that is rated as better for Black by Botterill (Open Gambits). He also mentions a fast '...c6' (in your 14 h5 line from Lazard-Gibaud, Paris 1909) as being difficult to handle - Black ends up with the Bishop pair and targets g4 and b2.

All that aside, I think the Giuoco Piano is great for students and the 7 Bd2 good for, and against, anyone. As much as I'd like 7 Nc3 to work (there are so many beautiful variations), I think the days of the Moller 'Attack' are numbered (if not over) - unless someone unearths an improvement in the 18...Rab8 line. I agree (as in your notes to Harding-Lindblom) that 'there are many sharp possibilities with unclear assessments' - but "scrambling for a draw" as White is not my idea of fun - better to play 7 Bd2."

A few readers mentioned the key position that arises after **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Nc3 Nxe4 8 O-O Bxc3 9 d5 Bf6 10 Re1 Ne7 11 Rxe4 d6 12 Bg5 Bxg5 13 Nxc5 h6**. I don't really want to spend much time on this but a few points are worth mentioning.



A reader identifying himself (or herself) as Kiwiinoz wrote: "I have played many games as Black and White in the above lines. I am happy to play both sides because it usually leads to a good fight. I have had the position after 13...h6 a dozen times as Black and White has never played 14 Bb5+ rather 14 Qe2 or 14 Qh5. My gut feel (without any hard analysis) is that over the board I would have an equal chance of finding the right moves as my opponent.

As White I am always amazed how poorly Black club players defend against the Italian Game. I regularly play 6 O-O and have never really been tested in that variation. I also mix it up with the Evans Gambit and also find club players defend poorly against this as well. Thus I believe that the Italian Game is a viable opening at least at club level. I have enjoyed your articles about this opening immensely."

Bruno de Baenst (Elo 1926, Belgium) had an idea for White in this 13...h6 line saying,

I (and Mr Fritz also) analysed it just because I didn't want to believe that such a beautiful opening is completely refuted. I

came up with one (probably new) variation. I am not saying that it's fantastic for White but in my opinion it's better than the main move in the 7 Nc3, 14 Qe2 line. My move is 14 Qe2 hxg5 15 Re3!?.

The idea is that after 15...Be6 16 dxe6 f6 White can play Qd3 with the idea of Rh3 when taking the rook is forbidden. And I think White's position is better than in the main line:

Qd3 is not possible after the main line 15 Re1 Be6 16 dxe6 f6 17 Re3 c6 because after 18 Qd3 Black plays ...Qc7 and then ...0-0-0.

He sent me more analysis but I think readers should look at it for themselves. In my database, there is only one game with Bruno de Baenst's suggestion 15 Re3. In a 1987 American amateur game Edelman-Lief, Black replied 15...Bd7 16 Re1 0-0 returning the piece and the game was eventually drawn.

Also from Belgium, Helmut Froeyman sent me some analysis confirming my suspicion that the line I played against Lindblom should not really be good enough. My opinion now is that at best, White is scraping a draw after 13...h6. Of course in blitz and sub-2200 play, it is quite a different matter.

Froeyman concludes "I must agree that the Italian opening remains a very strong weapon to play for a win. Although I think that better chances can be obtained by the real Giuoco Piano with c3, d3."

Next was another length anonymous contribution from a player who said he had an Elo rating of 1900: "Why can't I vote for both? My score in official encounters is 78% with White and 65% with Black. With white I play either the slow d3 and c3 system followed by a later a4 and b4 or followed by Nd2-f1-g(e)3. I also play the Moller-attack and then the bayonet attack, right into Keres's recommendation for Black. Even Fritz6 can't manage more than a draw.

As Black I play the Ne5 variation in the Moller, which isn't bad at all. Against the slow Canal set-up, 6...Na5 kills all the white fun. The d3 and c3 system I find the hardest to meet and usually I can't win.

In the Bd2 variation I like to play Be6: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Bd2 Bxd2+ 8 Nbx d2 d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Qb3 Be6?. All books claim a simple white victory starting with 11 Qxb7. However I play 11...Ndb4 and now White must play 12 Bb5 as all other moves lose. After this there are a couple of possibilities (some of them very interesting like Rb8, Nc2+ or Kf8), which unfortunately don't hold the balance. So I've switched to the old-fashioned 10...Nce7 line.

My main problem with White, however, is having to face the Two Knights Defence at which my score is 60%. Since I began answering it with 4 d3 my results have gone up, though."

That was an interesting summary from a player who has clearly had a lot of experience in the opening. It is interesting that against 7 Nc3 he recommends the same line with 9...Ne5 mentioned by Chim King Lye and played by Anand.

The second line raised by readers also concerns the Moller Attack, and Black's option to play (after **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Nc3 Nxe4 8 0-0 Bxc3 9 d5**) the move **9...Ne5** instead of 9...Bf6. White's bishop is attacked and will be exchanged.



Ching Kim Lye, an active email player from Malaysia, voted for Black and reckoned I had not made the case for Black strongly enough. I shall see later what he recommends against 7 Bd2. In the 7 Nc3 line, he recommended as Black's "shorter and much easier route to equality" the 9...Ne5 line following a game won by Anand against a computer.

10 bxc3 Nxc4 11 Qd4 0-0!

In my article, I mostly discussed 11...f5.

George Arndt, from Harvard, Massachusetts, also wanted to play 9...Ne5 with a different point. Here he disagreed with my comment 11...Ncd6? 12 Qxg7 saying "This is where I sat down with Fritz 6 on a 1200 mhz machine. Fritz gives 12...Qf6 with Black up almost 2 pawns. Also it seems to want to deviate well before this position. But it looks to me like 11...Ncd6 is good for Black and does not deserve the question mark."

I think that Mr Arndt should have looked a bit deeper, or maybe should upgrade to Fritz7. The computer I am using is a bit slower than his but once I continued with the forced moves 13 Qxf6 Nxf6 14 Rfe1+ Fritz7 only required a few seconds to see that Black stands worse. This position has actually been analysed very deeply way in the past by human masters and experts without making any apparent mistake.

Now if 14...Kf8 15 Bh6+ Kg8 16 Re5! e.g. 16...Nde4 (16...Nfe4 is slightly better but losing after 17 Re1 f5 18 Re7.) 17 Nd2! d6 18 Nxe4! with mate next move.

Black has only one way to hang on for a minimum disadvantage and that is 14...Nfe4! 15 Nd2 f5 16 f3. White regains his piece and reaches a favourable endgame, as Fritz7 recognises, after 16...0-0 17 fxe4 Nxe4 18 Nxe4 fxe4 19 Rxe4 d6 and now 20 Bh6 or 20 Re7. I think this whole variation shows the limitations of analysing with computers. It is no good expecting them to come up with the right answer too early in the sequence; when the next moves are obviously forced, narrow down their search to what matters and they are more likely to give an accurate result.

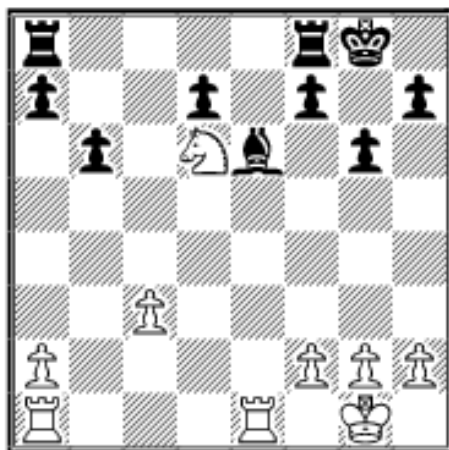
Returning now to the Anand game, the Indian grandmaster played 11...0-0 12 Qxe4 Nd6 13 Qd3 b6 which, although not often played, is not entirely new.

Instead of 13...Ne8 (unclear) Miseses-Suchting, Vienna 1908, which is given in some books.

14 Ba3? Qf6 15 Qd4 Qxd4 16 Nxd4 Bb7 17 Bxd6 cxd6 18 Nf5 g6 19 Nxd6 Bxd5.

Black has the better minor piece, although he must work a bit to get his rooks into play.

20 Rfe1 Be6



21 f4 a6 22 a4 Ra7 23 Reb1 Rb8 24 a5 b5 25 c4 b4 26 Ra4 b3 27 Ra3 Rc7 28 Raxb3 Rxb3 29 Rxb3 Rc5 30 Nb7 Rxc4 31 Rb6 Rc2 32 Nd6 32 Rxa6?? Bd5 threatening both b7 and g2. 32...Kf8 33 Rxa6 Bd5 34 g3 Rg2+ 35 Kf1 Rxh2 36 Ra7 Bc6 37 Nc8 Rg2 38 Nb6 Rxc3 39 Nxd7+ Bxd7 40 Rxd7 Ra3 41 Ra7 Rf3+ 42 Kg2 Rxf4 43 a6 Ra4 44 Ra8+ Kg7 45 Kh2 h5 0-1.

However, White can do better; this game has no real theoretical significance. In Klovans-Estrin, White played instead 14 Bg5 f6 15 Bf4 Nf7 16 d6 cxd6 18 Bxd6 Re8 19 Qd5 Ba6 20 Rfe1 with about equal chance. Estrin's comment was that the white activity and Black's extra pawn balance one another. Your computer will probably claim an edge to Black.

Estrin's book also mentions the possibility 13 Qf4 (instead of 13 Qd3) 13...Ne8 14 d6 (offers a second pawn to interfere with Black's development) 14...Nxd6 15 Ba3 b6 16 Rfe1 Bb7 17 Nd4 with compensation (N.Kopylov-Levenfish, 17 USSR Ch 1949).

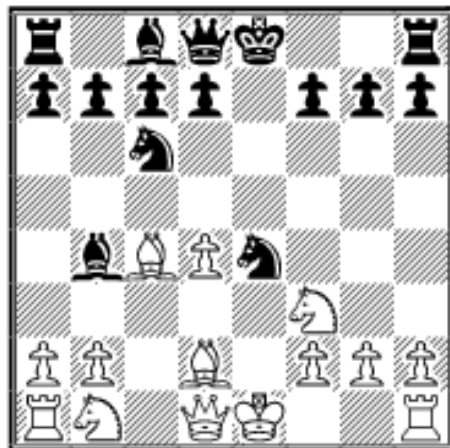
My conclusion is that while White may not be able to obtain a large advantage against 9...Ne5, it does not appear to be theoretically worrying. 9...Bf6 remains the critical line against 7 Nc3. Unfortunately it is indeed a strong move and I do not think that 7 Nc3 is viable any more at high levels

Next I want to look at the 7 Bd2 variation. A better response for Black has been recommended to me from three different sources in recent weeks.

Ching Kim Lye, and German correspondence player Klaus Kögler, and GM Paul Motwani at www.chesspublishing.com all make the same suggestion for Black and they have convinced me that it is correct.

After **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Bd2** Black should play **7...Nxe4!** when it seems that Black is OK! My comment in the first article that "7...Nxe4 is hazardous because of 8 Bxb4+ Nxb4 9 Bxf7+ even if it isn't quite a forced win" is vastly over-optimistic for White in the light of the following idea which seems to equalise.

Actually that sentence was written from a polemical point of view by the "prosecution counsel" and I intend to come back to this line again but forgot to do so, so all credit to Ching Kim Lye for reminding me of this. It is indeed very hard to see how White plays for advantage in the 7...Nxe4 line so let us look at it in more detail.



The point is that after **8 Bxb4** (8 Qe2 Qe7) **8...Nxb4 9 Bxf7+** (the move I and others usually recommend.) **9...Kxf7 10 Qb3+** Black can force off the queens with at least an equal endgame in the variation **10...Kf8! 11 Qxb4+ Qe7 12 Qxe7 Kxe7 13 O-O Re8=**. (After **14 Re1 Kf8 15 na3** Black plays either **15...Nf6** or maybe Kögler's suggestion **15...d5**). This variation led to a short draw in a few games (e.g. the stem game Wedberg-Korman, Sweden 1978 and in Berlinsky-

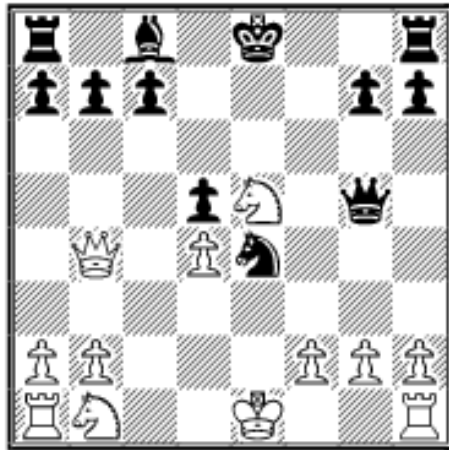
Motwani, Istanbul Olympiad 2000). Motwani did not seem to know about the Wedberg game but thought the idea stemmed from English master Jonathan Parker who even won a game as Black in this line. Motwani believes Black has the edge because of his strong bishop which is not impeded by its pawns.

Formerly, the main line of 7...Nxe4 was thought to be 10...d5 (instead of 10...Kf8) when after 11 Ne5+ Ke6 12 Qxb4 the move 12...Qf8 is given as equal in *Nunn's Chess Openings*, but that is questionable. Motwani points out that White has an edge in the resulting position because of the strong e5-knight; the postal game Golyak-Oshurkov, 1975-76, is usually cited. So 10...Kf8, keeping control of e5, is a much better way of getting queens off. I

think that it is actually harder for White to find an advantage after 12...c5.

Actually there are other fascinating possibilities after **10...d5**, of which the most exciting is **11 Ne5+ Ke8!?** (not 11...Kf6? because of 12 f3 as there is no queen check on h4). This definitely playable possibility, 11...Ke8, is not mentioned by Palkövi, Heyken & Fette or Gufeld & Stetsko in their books on the opening.

I went back to Schlechter's final edition of the *Handbuch des Schachspiels* to see what it said on this line. The position after 11...Ke8 **12 Qxb4 Qg5** was debated in German magazines in 1911.



First somebody claimed equality for Black after 13 Nd2 Qxd2+ 14 Qxd2 Nxd2 15 Kxd2 while other experts preferred White; if there is any advantage in this endgame, it can only be minute, e.g. 15...Rf8 led to an early draw in K.Glaser-Grazinys, email 1990.

In the search for a big advantage for White, the Germans came up with the line 13 0-0 Bh3 14 g3 Bxf1 15 Qxb7 Qc1 but this was beautifully refuted by 16 Qxa8+ Kd7 17 Nc3!! (W.Jahr, *Deutsche Wochenschach* 1911, p.341), for example 17...Qxa1 (17...Rxa8 18 Rxc1 or 17...Nxc3 18 Qxh8) 18 Nxd5+ forcing mate. This variation has been repeated in numerous later books.

However, there is a huge hole in the combination. Instead of 15...Qc1?? Black wins by 15...Qf5! as discovered by Lithuanian email player Vidmantas Grazinys (or his computer); Grazinys won two games with this move in recent years until White started going back to 13 Nd2.

So is there anything at all that White can do about **7...Nxe4**, I wondered. After **8 Bxb4** (forced) **8...Nxb4** the move 9 Qe2 is met by 9...0-0 (10 Qxe4? Re8) while if 9 a3 d5 so the only alternative seems to be **9 Qb3**



This was also tried in the mid-19th century and it was recommended for White by Tartakower in *Die Hypermoderne Schachpartie* (1924). Black continues 9...d5 10 Qxb4 dxc4 11 O-O and now old sources give 11...Qd5 12 Na3! and White gets a good game (Lord Lyttleton-W. Bigland, from *Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1855 page 255!). However, Black improved on this by 11...Qd6! 12 Qxc4 O-O (V. Nenasarov, in the openings manual *Kurs Debyutov*) e.g.,

a) 13 Nc3 Nxc3 14 bxc3 Be6 15 Qd3 h6= Tan-Lombard, Siegen ol 1970, or

b) 13 Re1 Be6 14 Qc2 Nf6 15 Nbd2 Bd5 16 Rac1 c6 (Honfi-M. Horvath, Hungary 1994). Palkövi says equal but Black seems to stand better because White has an isolated d-pawn but no light-squared bishop to complement it.

The bottom line seems to be that 7 Bd2 is dead as a winning try for White in master chess or high-level correspondence play although the right plan for Black will probably take a few more years to become general knowledge at club and Internet player level.

All this leads to the question, what then should White do instead?

My last contribution came from Dutch reader, Paul Ruber, who summed up the situation as follows: "In the line 7 Nc3 etc., 13...0-0 is a forced draw; so Black is theoretically OK! In the line 7 Bd2 Bxd2+ 8 Nbx d2 d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Qb3 the line 10...Na5 11 Qa4+ Nc6 12 Bb5 Bd7 followed by ...0-0 is also OK for Black."

In his opinion, White should investigate the lines with an early b2-b4, e.g., (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6) 5 d4 exd4 6 b4 Bb6 7 e5 d5 8 exf6 or 5 b4 Bb6 6 d3 d6 7 a4 a5 (7...a6!?) 8 b5 Ne7 9 h3 0-0 10 Nbd2 Ng6 11 0-0 and after 11...d5?! 12 exd5 Nxd5 13 Qb3 or 11...Be6!? 12 Bxe6 and 13 Nc4 Ruber claims a slight advantage for White.

I am going to take these in reverse order, beginning with the slow lines involving b4 and d3 (4 c3 Nf6 5 b4 Bb6 6 d3 d6 7 a4). Henry Bird, the 19th century English master, liked this system, e.g., Bird-Zukertort, London 1883. However, the positions arising can also be reached as a sideline of the Evans Gambit Declined (viz. 4 b4 Bb6 5 c3 Nf6) and are not reckoned to be that worrying for Black. Whatever the precise move order, the next diagram position is likely to arise, where Black has the choice between saving his bishop by ...a6 or ...a5.



I had a game in the ICCF 3rd North Atlantic Team Tournament about 10 years ago with White against Bragi Thorbergsson of Iceland who is now a CC-grandmaster. He chose the ...a6 option, which I think is more problematic for White.

**7...a6 8 0-0 0-0 9 Nbd2 Ne7 10 Bb3 Ng6
11 Nc4 Ba7 12 Be3!?**

I decided to vary from 12 Ra2 h6 13 Re1 Re8 14 h3 Be6= Ljubojevic-Furman, Ljubljana/Portorozh 1975. However, my opponent did not go along with idea of accepting a doubled e-pawn in order to get a half-open f-file.

**12...Be6 13 Bxa7 Rxa7 14 Re1 Ra8 15 Ra2 h6 16 Na5 Bxb3 17 Qxb3 Qc8
18 h3 Nf4** and Black started to get a kingside attack. In some lines he can sacrifice his knight on h3, or get his queen into the attack by sacrificing his b-pawn, or he can play ...N6h5 and ...g6, ...f5. White has little positive play as the best he can hope for is to win a rather irrelevant queenside pawn.

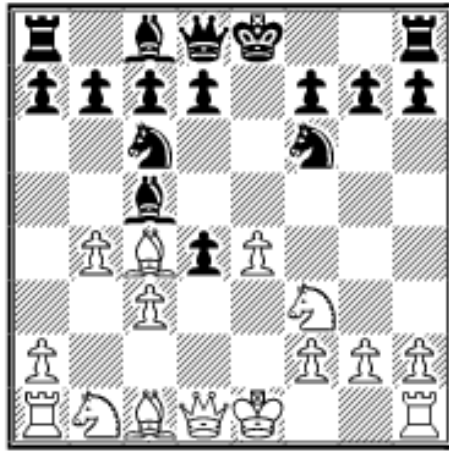
I eventually lost this game.

The first of Mr Ruber's suggestions is more surprising. I did not at first believe at all for White, but after more investigation I wonder if he has a good point. The more I investigate little-known sidelines of the G.P., the more I realise how unclear it all is: White still can find little-known and dangerous possibilities within the first few moves.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3

American correspondence master Max Zavanelli believes White has excellent chances with 4 0-0 Nf6 5 d4 which I looked at in the first article. I don't want to examine that any more today because Black can reply 5...exd4 and head for the Max Lange Attack in the Two Knights, which is a major theme in its own right.

4...Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 b4!?



Apparently 6 b4 was recommended by Dr Oskam in *De Schaakwereld* in 1938 (number 7).

One motive for it was that in the older line 6 e5 d5 7 b4 Black need not move his bishop. In that line Black has the options 7...dxc4!? or 7...Ne4!?, so the 6 b4 move order seems more dangerous, so long as the Bishop retreat to e7 is not problematic.

In fact 6...Be7 is recommended in several books, chiefly on the strength of an improvement recommended for Black in Informator 11 on a 1971 postal game David versus Allen Astrup Jensen. This line is however deeply unconvincing for Black.

White continued 7 e5 (Once more 7 b5 is *not* the right move.) 7...Ne4 (7...Ng4 8 cxd4 is unclear says Palkövi) and now a later game David-Offitserov, corr 1982, went 8 Qb3!? 0-0 9 cxd4 Bxb4+ 10 Kf1 Be7 11 Bd5 Ng5 12 Nxc3 Bxc3 13 Nc3 and Estrin said that White's initiative is dangerous.

Actually I see nothing wrong with David's original idea, 8 b5. The game with Jensen continued 8...Na5 9 Bd3 Nxc3 (Black follows an Euwe recommendation.) 10 Nxc3 dxc3 11 Qc2! d6 (11...b6 may be better, but if 11...h6? 12 Qxc3 b6 13 0-0 0-0 14 Bc2 d6 15 Qd3.) 12 Bf4! (Not 12 exd6? Qxd6 or 12 Bxh7? Nc4) 12...dxe5 13 Bxe5 Bf6 14 Qxc3 Bxe5 15 Nxe5 Be6? 16 0-0 Qd6 17 Rfe1 Qb6 18 Nxf7?! Kxf7 19 Re3 Rad8? 20 Rae1 Rde8? 21 Rf3+ Kg8 22 Rg3 Re7 and 1-0. Informator gives the possible finish 23 Qf6 Rf7 (23...Qd6 24 Rxe6 Qxe6 25 Rxc7+ Rxc7 26 Qxe6+ Rf7 27 Qg4+ Kf8 28 Qb4+) 24 Rxc7+! Rxc7 25 Rxe6.

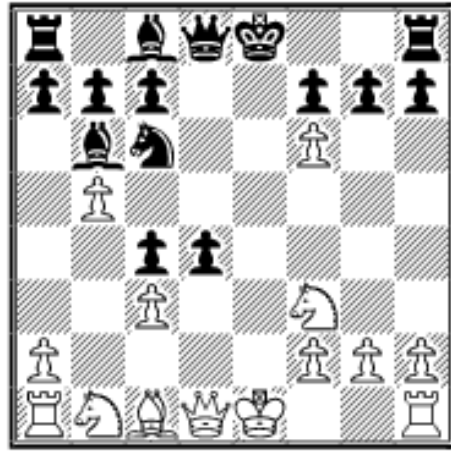
However, Jovcic recommended 15...0-0! for Black with the point 16 Qxa5 Qd4! 17 0-0 Qxe5 or 16 Qc2 Re8, and this is why White has not repeated the line. However, 16 Rd1! is much better and Black's position starts to look uncomfortable. Moreover, White has alternatives at move 14. Heyken & Fette's edition of Euwe's book proposes two ideas: the 'adventurous'

14 0-0-0!? or 14 0-0 0-0 15 Qxc3 Bxe5 16 Nxe5 c5 17 Rad1 Qc7 18 Rfe1.

I conclude that Black must reject the theoretical recommendation 6...Be7 and look again at the more natural retreat of the bishop to b6.

After **6 b4 Bb6 7 e5** (Not 7 b5?! Na5) **7...d5 8 exf6 dxc4 9 b5** White gets the position he was aiming for in the 6 e5 d5 7 b4 line. This is not really clear as Estrin and Honfi seemed to be the only masters to play it, and that was a long

time ago, until Spanish master Romero Holmes took it up fairly recently.



I have only started looking at this line recently, so I leave it to readers to explore, with just a little guidance to get you going.

Black has three possibilities:

a) 9...Nb8 10 fxc7 Rg8 and now White can either play 11 cxd4 Rxc7 (11...Ba5+ 12 Bd2) 12 0-0 as given by Heyken & Fette, or 11 0-0 Rxc7 12 Re1+ Be6 13 cxd4 when Honfi-Plescko, Zalaegerszeg 1954, continued 13...Qf6 14 d5! Qxa1 15

dxe6 f6 16 Qc2 Bd4 17 Ba3+-.

b) 9...Na5 when White can either play 10 fxc7 or, probably better, give the queen check on e2 first. I don't find the published examples convincing and I think it's better for you to examine this line with no more preconceptions. Black has an enduring problem in this line: his offside knight on a5 is very hard to get back into play.

c) Palkövi recommends the interesting piece sacrifice for Black 9...0-0!?. It is no good declining it (10 0-0 dxc3! 11 fxc7 Re8 12 bxc6 Qxd1 13 Rxd1 c2 Estrin-Grigoriev, Moscow 1940) so White should continue 10 bxc6 Re8+ 11 Kf1. Estrin reckoned in his 1985 book on the Italian that White's chances of defence were favourable. Palkövi now cites 11...d3 12 Be3 Qxf6 (Berend-Barle, Debrecen 1992) but clearly more tests and analysis are needed.

Finally, Black could try to find some other move than 7...d5 after 6 b4 Bb6 7 e5.

Now if 7...Ng4?! 8 cxd4 Nxb4 9 h3 d5 10 Qa4+ Nc6 11 Bb5 Nh6 12 Bxh6 gxh6 13 Bxc6+ bxc6 14 Qxc6+ favours White (Honfi) while 7...Qe7 has been rarely tried - and not with success. However, 7...Ne4!? is a line to investigate: 8 Bd5 (or 8 b5 d5! Marin Solano-Rhodes, David Lodge Memorial email 2001) 8...Nxc3 as in Greiff-Lars Bo Hansen, Politiken Cup, Copenhagen 2000.

These and other relevant games for this article can be found in my download files at <http://www.chessmail.com/freegames.html> . This concludes my coverage of the Giuoco Piano.

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