



C O L U M N I S T S

The Kibitzer
Tim HardingSwansong of the Giuoco Piano
Part 1

AFTER MY SERIES earlier this year on the 4 Ng5 lines in the Two Knights Defence, I have received several requests for similar coverage of the Giuoco Piano. While unwilling to divulge as many of my secrets in this case, I have decided to prepare a four-part overview of this ancient opening (but I may take a break to another topic between parts 3 and 4, to avoid alienating those readers who may think this an overdose of classical opening theory).

You may think this opening is dead in modern master play but you would be wrong. Alexander Morozevich and Emil Sutovsky are two top young GMs who enjoy playing these sharp positions and have come up with new ideas for White.

The key position arises after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 when Black plays 3...Bc5 (see diagram below) instead of the Two Knights Defence (3...Nf6) or lesser replies such as 3...Be7 (Hungarian Defence), 3...d6, 3...g6 or 3...f5?! which I won't address in this series.

Whereas my series on the Two Knights Defence was a geographical mapping exercise, I shall conduct this survey like a criminal trial. First we shall have the case for the prosecution (i.e. White), then the case for the defence (i.e. Black), part 3 will be the Counsel and Judge's Summing Up.

It's true that I shall be not only prosecuting and defence attorneys but also the judge, but we are talking chess here, not human rights! You can be the jury! So finally in the fourth part, where readers' feedback will be considered, we can have the Jury's Verdict (and maybe a sentence?).

In this first part, therefore, the issue is can White, make a convincing case for playing 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 in the year of Our Lord 2001? We shall only consider evidence relating to the reply 3...Bc5, because after our series on the Two Knights the defence counsel concedes that 3...Nf6 does not by any means refute 3 Bc4 and indeed even encourages White to hope for an exciting and beautiful victory. Other third moves for Black are even less likely to cause White to lose sleep.

So, 3...Bc5 it is. Nowadays this opening is normally called "The Italian Game" (Italienische Partie in German) in most languages, but when I was a boy it was normally known in England by its old Italian name of Giuoco Piano (meaning 'Quite Game') and even today I know many plausible ways to mis-spell Giuoco!

Maybe that is one reason the colourful name fell into disuse, but an even

better reason is that the old name is so misleading. Instead of being “quiet”, the play from an early stage is often quite aggressive on both sides, and frequently White even goes berserk.

The exception to this is the symmetrical variation known as the Giuoco Pianissimo (“very quiet game”) in which White and Black follow up with d3, Nc3, 0-0 and general boredom. This formation is often seen in young children’s games but I won’t waste much time on it. Normally one player or the other will seek to break symmetry early in the game.

The Giuoco Piano illustrates classical opening play to a high degree, and this makes it a very suitable starting point for beginners, who need to learn how to conduct cut-and-thrust piece play before progressing to positional openings. It also provides a good refresher course in tactics for anyone who is getting rusty in this department after playing too many Caro-Kanns and Retis. Like other sharp open games, this is also a good battleground for blitz games and Internet games, especially against casual players who may not know the best lines or have access to reliable books.

Move 1: e2-e4 e7-e5; both players stake their claim in the centre and prepare to develop their king’s bishops.

2 Nf3: White attacks Black’s pawn and 2...Nc6, it is defended.

3 Bc4: White is already geared up to castle and he also eyes f7, which is traditionally the weakest spot in Black’s position in classical openings. As we saw in Kibitzers numbers 58-60, if Black replies 3...Nf6 then White can directly attack f7 by 4 Ng5.

So 3...Bc5 is probably Black’s best reply. He observes White’s corresponding square, f2, takes a step towards castling and also he doesn’t have to worry about Ng5 because the black queen controls g5 for the time being.



Among the early treatises that cover 3...Bc5, Staunton (in his *Chess-Player's Handbook*) mentioned: Lolli (pp 46, 162, 264), Ponziani (1782, p.53), Stamma (1745, pp.7-19), Lewis, Bilguers *Handbuch* etc. In the mid-20th century, Paul Keres made a very deep study of the Italian Game. Then the late Yakov Estrin, the 7th Correspondence Chess World Champion, was one of the leading authorities on this opening, as he was on the Two Knights. In recent times, the Hungarian theoretician József Pálkövi has

written a book about it.

What is White to play now? In truth, he has a very wide choice, from the calm 4 d3 to the manic Jerome Gambit (4 Bxf7+), but the Prosecuting Counsel is only interested in a few of the possibilities, the ones that actually show promise for White.

Really White's problem is very different from what he faces when his opponent plays the Two Knights. Instead of accepting a gambit which is possibly unsound, he has to break down the very solid resistance of an opponent who is determined to develop soundly and soak up whatever pawns (or pieces) White sees fit to give away. Clearly, White must be aggressive or he will achieve nothing, but he cannot afford to overstep the mark.

The main ways that White can continue are as follows:

- a) 4 c3, the classical move, intending to meet 4...Nf6 by 5 d4 and then recapture with the c-pawn, establishing a broad two-pawn centre. There are several distinct follow-ups to this idea.
- b) 4 c3, in conjunction with d3 and perhaps b2-b4, to play positionally in Ruy Lopez style.
- c) 4 d3, in conjunction with Nc3 and Bg5 (Canal Variation).
- d) 4 0-0, intending to meet 4...Nf6 by the gambit 5 d4.
- e) 4 d4 immediately, with similar ideas to line d.
- f) 4 b4, the Evans Gambit, which was called in its day "the gift of the gods to a languishing chess world".

In the rest of this article, I am going to present one game won by White in each of those main lines. I can promise you delightful attacking chess presented without excessive comment.

Next month, the Defence Counsel will tell us how he thinks Black should have dealt with these lines!

Line A: Classical 4 c3 with an open centre, follow-up 7 Nc3

Wilhelm Steinitz-Curt von Bardeleben Hastings, 1895

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3

Essential preparation for establishing the classic pawn centre of d4+e4; White must be able to recapture with the c-pawn, but of course this means delaying the development of the queenside pieces. If you don't like doing this, and are happy to recapture on d4 with the knight, then play the Scotch!

4...Nf6

Attacking the white e-pawn is the only way to put pressure on the first player; the passive plan involving ...Qe7 and then ...Bb6 in reply to d4 has not done well.

5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4

A gambit line with 6 0-0 has occasionally been seen but is not recommended.

6...Bb4+

Black maintains the tempo struggle. White now has three ways to meet the

check, of which one (7 Kf1, the Krakow Variation) is not recommended. The other main move, 7 Bd2, is discussed later in this article.

7 Nc3!?



Obviously this is the move White really wants to play: free development without worrying about material. OK, Black can capture the e-pawn because of the pin on the queen's knight but then White castles and will use the e-file.

At least that is the idea; no doubt in the next article, my learned friend will seek to show that 7...Nxe4 is good for Black in the critical sequence 7...Nxe4 8 0-0 Bxc3 9 d5! Bf6! 10 Re1 Ne7 11 Rxe4

d6 12 Bg5 Bxg5 13 Nxc3 h6 (13...0-0 14 Nxh7) 14 Bb5+! Bd7 15 Qe2 Bxb5 16 Qxb5+ Qd7 17 Qxb7 0-0

but I am unconvinced. Moreover, I ask you this, members of the jury: how many average players (not masters or opening theoreticians) can remember or find all the "only" moves that Black must find in this sequence? The move 9...Bf6, in particular, is one that few will think of if they do not know it by heart. If they do find it, they may well be surprised by the attacks that White can still produce.

7...d5?

In this famous game Bardeleben already makes a serious mistake. Steinitz-Schlechter, in the same Hastings 1895 tournament, went instead 7...Nxe4 8 0-0 Bxc3 but here Steinitz played 9 bxc3 d5. Only in 1898 did J. Möller came up with 9 d5!, which is a major strengthening of White's initiative.

8 exd5 Nxd5 9 0-0 Be6

White now has an initiative without sacrificing any material. However, other moves are worse, for example:

a) 9...Nxc3 10 bxc3 Bxc3 11 Bxf7+ Kf8 12 Qb3 Bxa1 13 Ba3+ Ne7 14 Re1 with a winning attack;

b) 9...Bxc3 10 bxc3 0-0 (10...Nxc3 11 Qb3, ±) 11 Re1 h6 12 Ba3 (Keres-Koorm, Tartu 1935);

White won the exchange and eventually the game.

10 Bg5 Be7

If 10...Qd7 then 11 Bxd5 Bxd5 12 Re1+ Be7 13 Nxd5 wins a tempo.

11 Bxd5! Bxd5 12 Nxd5

Not 12 Bxe7 Nxe7 13 Re1 0–0 14 Rxe7 (as suggested by I. Zaitsev) because instead of 14...Qxe7? 15 Nxd5, Black can reply 14...Bxf3! when after 15 Qe1 White has only a slight edge.

12...Qxd5 13 Bxe7 Nxe7

Recapturing with the king is worse: 13...Kxe7 14 Rc1 (or 14 Re1+ Kf8 15 Qe2 f6 16 Rac1 Rc8 17 Rc5 Qd6 18 Qc4 Nd8 19 Rd5 Qc6 20 Qe2 1–0 Weiss-Seibold, IFSB corr 1933) 14...Rhe8 (14...Kd7 15 Qa4,) 15 Rc5 Qd6 and now 16 Qc1 or 16 Qc2!?

14 Re1 f6 15 Qe2

Here 15 Qa4+!?, as analysed in *The Mammoth Book of the World's Greatest Chess Games* (ed. Burgess, Nunn and Emms) is also strong. However, in view of the powerful alternative next move, White does not really need a diversion from the main line at this point.

15...Qd7

If 15...Qd6? 16 Qb5+ Qc6 17 Qb4 Qd6 18 Qxb7.



16 Rac1?!

This is not the only example in chess history where mistakes led to a brilliancy which would not have occurred if the most accurate path had been followed. In view of Black's improvement in the next note, White should have played 16 Rad1! (Zaitsev was right this time.) e.g. 16...Kf7 (16...c6? 17 d5!) 17 Qc4+ Nd5? (weak, but what else?) 18 Ne5+ fxe5 19 dxe5 soon winning.

16...c6?

Black could have saved the game by 16...Kf7! e.g. 17 Qxe7+? (17 Qc4+ Nd5) 17...Qxe7 18 Rxe7+ Kxe7 19 Rxc7+ Kd6 20 Rxc7 Rxc8! and White lacks compensation for the exchange (Reti).

After Black's fatal error, the stage is set for power play reminiscent of the ex-world champion's youth when he was known as the Austrian Morphy. Steinitz begins with a pawn sacrifice that clears the d4 square for his knight.

17 d5!! cxd5

If 17...Kf7 18 dxc6 Nxc6 19 Rcd1 with a strong attack.

18 Nd4 Kf7 19 Ne6

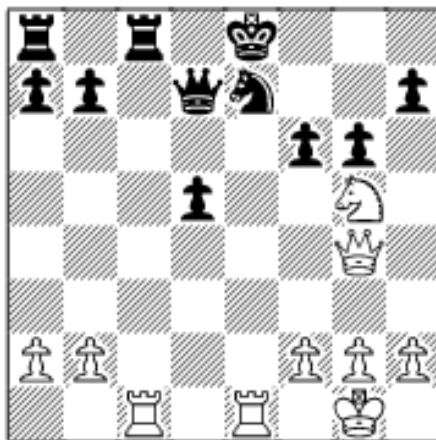
Threatening 20 Rc7 which pins the black knight again and puts it in great danger.

19...Rhc8

Also 19...Rac8 20 Qg4 and 19...Nc6 20 Nc5 Qc8 21 Qh5+! will soon be terminal.

20 Qg4! g6 21 Ng5+ Ke8

Forced in order to keep the queen protected, but now the knight is pinned again.

**22 Rxe7+! Kf8**

Bardeleben was counting on back rank mate to save him; at this stage, he may have thought Steinitz could only draw. Not 22...Qxe7 23 Rxc8+ Rxc8 24 Qxc8+ nor 22...Kxe7 23 Re1+ Kd6 24 Qb4+ Rc5 (if 24...Kc6 25 Rc1 mate, or 24...Kc7 25 Ne6+ Kb8 26 Qf4+ winning) 25 Ne4 and wins.

23 Rf7+!

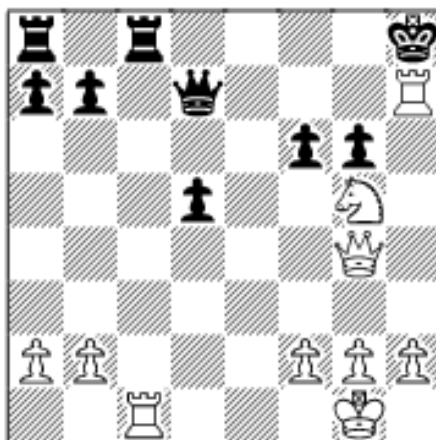
Of course White cannot capture the queen with either piece because ...Rxc1+ leads to mate.

23...Kg8!

This time if 23...Qxf7 24 Rxc8+ Rxc8 25 Qxc8+ Qe8 26 Nxh7+ wins.

24 Rg7+! Kh8!

If 24...Kf8 25 Nxh7+ Kxg7 26 Qxd7 is check and so wins.

25 Rxh7+! 1-0

Black churlishly disappeared from the tournament hall without resigning. When Bardeleben's time had run out, Steinitz demonstrated his intended finish: 25...Kg8 26 Rg7+ Kh8 27 Qh4+ Kxg7 28 Qh7+ Kf8 29 Qh8+ Ke7 30 Qg7+ Ke8 31 Qg8+ Ke7 32 Qf7+ Kd8 33 Qf8+ Qe8 34 Nf7+ Kd7 35 Qd6#.

A great deal of the charm of this famous attack lies in the five consecutive point-blank offers of the rook which nevertheless cannot be captured (moves 22-26).

Line B: Classical 4 c3 with an open centre, follow-up 7 Bd2

In this second main branch of the Italian Game, White plays in more positional style, avoiding the gambit approach. Nevertheless, complex variations can arise and even beautiful finishes like the following

miniature can occur.

Nicholas Rossolimo-Reissman Puerto Rico, 1967

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Bd2



7...Bxd2+

Here 7...Nxe4 is hazardous because of 8 Bxb4+ Nxb4 9 Bxf7+ even if it isn't quite a forced win.

8 Nbx d2 d5

In this position 8...Nxe4 is just about playable; Black is hoping for 9 Bxf7+ which leads to nothing and gets rid of White's strong bishop. White has chances of an advantage with 9 d5 or 9 Qe2 instead.

9 exd5 Nxd5

Isolated queen pawn positions usually arise in 1 d4 openings but this variation is a famous exception. As Black has a c-pawn instead of an e-pawn, the defence cannot really employ models from IQP positions closed openings. The initial play is also much sharper with Black striving above all to maintain control of d5.

10 Qb3 Nce7

Black sometimes tries to force a draw by repetition with 10...Na5 11 Qa4+ Nc6 but White need not repeat 12 Qb3. Instead he can play the relatively unexplored 12 Bb5!? where books do not give much guidance.

11 0-0 0-0 12 Rfe1 c6 13 a4

13 Ne4 is an interesting alternative to the better-known lines with 13 a4.

13...b6?

The queen or knight should belong on this square.

14 Ne5 Bb7 15 a5 Rc8 16 Ne4 Qc7 17 a6 Ba8 18 Qh3!

With the makings of a very strong attack while the black bishop is locked out of play.

18...Nf4

If 18...c5 (trying to liberate the bishop) 19 Ng5 h6 20 Ngxf7! Rxf7 21 Nxf7 Kxf7 22 Qe6+ Kf8 23 Ra3!+- followed by a rook switch to the kingside to finish Black off.

19 Qg4 Ned5 20 Ra3 Ne6

If 20...f5 21 Qxf4 or 20...c5 21 Rf3 (or Rg3) attacking.

21 Bxd5 cxd5 22 Nf6+ Kh8**23 Qg6!**

This flashy queen sacrifice has been much praised; it sets up an elegant finish next move. However, Black also has no defence to the relatively more prosaic 23 Qxe6!+- for example 23...fxe6 24 Ng6+ hxg6 25 Rh3#.

23...Qc2!

An ingenious way to defend against the threat of Qxh7 mate, but now comes:

24 Rh3!! 1-0

Black resigned in view of 24...Qxg6 25 Nxg6+ fxg6 26 Rxh7 mate..

Line C: 4 c3 with slow Lopez-style build-up

This variation is included for completeness only; its positional subtlety makes it more suitable for grandmasters and master strategists than for the type of player mostly attracted to the Italian Game.

Anatoly Karpov-Artur Yusupov Bugojno 1986**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3**

4 d3 is sometimes seen but is less accurate if White intends an early b2-b4: 4...Nf6 5 c3 a6 because 6 b4 (or a later knight move attacking the bishop) can be met by 6...Ba7 instead of ...Bb6.

4...Nf6 5 d3

5 b4 Bb6 is an alternative, with a sort of Evans Gambit Declined. However, the move b4 may turn out to be weakening later.

This line with 5 d3 became popular in the 1980s as a way of avoiding the Petroff Defence via the Bishop's Opening: 1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Nf6 3 d3 Nc6 4 Nf3 Bc5 5 c3 reaches the same position. Yusupov is a top expert in the Petroff but he may have smelled a rat on this occasion and decided to avoid whatever Karpov had prepared, so the anti-Petroff line arose after all!



5...d6 6 0-0 0-0 7 Re1 a6

Hoping to play ...Na5 and exchange the bishop, having ruled out Bb5 in reply, so White retreats.

8 Bb3 Ba7 9 h3 h6!?

9...Nh5 10 Bg5 is slightly favourable for White.

In this variation, White often plays for an eventual d3-d4 but Karpov is content to keep the centre restrained

and play on the wings.

10 Nbd2 Nh5 11 Nf1 Qf6 12 Be3 Nf4 13 Bxa7 Rxa7 14 Kh2 Ne7 15 Ne3 Ra8 16 a4!



A typical formation for this slow variation; the threat is a4-a5. Yusupov seeks counterplay on the f-file but his plan has positional drawbacks which Karpov gradually exposes.

16...Be6 17 Bxe6 fxe6?! 18 Ng1 Rad8 19 g3 Nfg6 20 Rf1 d5 21 Qe2 Nc6 22 Ng2 Rf7 23 h4 Rdf8

Playing on the d-file is no better:
23...Rfd7 24 Rad1!? dxe4 25 Qxe4 Qf5 26 Ne3±.

24 Rad1 Nge7 25 h5

25 f4! Was better, according to Karpov in Informator 41.

25...g6 26 Nh3 Qf3 27 Qxf3 Rxf3 28 hxg6 Nxg6 29 Ne3 d4 30 Nc2 R3f7 31 cxd4! Nxd4

White is clearly better at last. If instead 31...exd4 32 f4 Nge5 33 Nf2 h5 34 Kg2.

32 Nxd4 exd4 33 f4 c5

33...Ne5 again gets nowhere after 34 Nf2.

34 a5 b6 35 axb6 Rb7?

35...Rb8!? was more accurate.

36 Rc1 Rxb6 37 Rxc5 Rxb2+ 38 Rf2 Rxf2+ 39 Nxf2 Ra8 40 Ra5 Ne7 41 Ng4 Nc6 42 Rc5! Ne7 43 Rc7! Kf8

The knight sacrifice 43...a5 44 Rxe7 a4 apparently doesn't work because of 45 Nxh6+ Kf8 (45...Kh8 46 g4 a3 47 g5 a2 48 g6 a1Q 49 Rh7#) 46 Rxe6

combining threats to the king, the rook and chances to get the white knight back to stop the pawn. In those days there were adjournments after 40 moves and Karpov must have worked it all out before the resumption.

44 Ne5! a5

If 44...h5 45 f5.

45 g4 a4 46 f5 exf5 47 gxf5 Nxf5 48 exf5 Ra5 49 Rc5! Rxc5 50 Nd7+ Ke7 51 Nxc5 a3 52 Kg3

According to Karpov, the only winning move, keeping the king in touch with both f4 and g4.

52...Kd6

52...Kf6 53 Kf4.

53 Nb3 Ke5 54 Kg4 h5+ 55 Kg5 h4 56 f6 Ke6 57 Kg6 h3 58 f7 h2 59 f8Q h1Q 60 Nc5+ Ke5 61 Qb8+ 1-0.

Line D: Canal Variation

The Canal Variation appears innocuous but has some latent sting; it is the only “Giuoco Pianissimo” line to be feared. It is easy for Black to relax and not realise the danger until it is too late. I illustrate this variation with one of my own postal games.

Tim Harding-Istvan Kapic ICCF World Championship 15 semifinal, 1984

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 d3 d6 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bg5

Black now has to take a decision about how to counter the pin on his knight and the pressure on the c4-f7 diagonal.

He can no longer maintain the symmetry because of 6...Bg4 7 Nd5 Nd4 8 c3! Nxf3+ (8...Bxf3 9 Qa4+!) 9 gxf3 Be6 10 d4 (Keres).



6...Na5

This move is recommended in most books; apparently Korchnoi (many years ago) gave up playing the Italian Game because of it. The main alternative is 6...h6 (6...Be6 is little seen.) 7 Bxf6 Qxf6 8 Nd5 and now:

a) If 8...Qg6 not 9 Nxc7+ Kd8 10 Nxa8 Qxg2 11 Rf1 Bg4, but 9 Qe2! Bg4 10 c3 (prevents Black from reinforcing the pin by ...Nd4) 10...Bb6 11 a4 f5 (Foltys-Keres, Munich 1936) and now

12 b4! Is better for White (Keres).

b) 8...Qd8 9 c3 prepares d3-d4 to grab the centre and push Black back.

Many replies have been tried but none are entirely satisfactory. A recent example from GM practice went 9...Bb6 10 a4 0-0 11 b4 a6 12 Nxb6 cxb6 13 0-0 Ne7 14 Nd2 Ng6 15 g3 Qg5 16 Kh1 Bd7 17 Bd5 Bc6 18 Bxc6 bxc6 19 Nc4 Qd8 20 a5 b5 21 Nb6 Ra7 22 d4 exd4 23 Qxd4 f5 24 Rad1 f4 25 Qxd6 Qg5 26 Qxc6 Raf7 27 Qe6 Ne5 28 Nd7 Nxd7 29 Rxd7 Qh5 30 Kg1 Kh7 31 Rxf7 Rxf7 32 Qd5 Qg6 33 e5 f3 34 Re1 Qf5 35 Qe4 Kg6 36 e6 Re7 37 h3 Qxe4 38 Rxe4 Kf5 39 Re3 Rxe6 40 Rxf3+ Kg5 41 Rd3 Kf5 42 Kg2 Rc6 43 Kf3 h5 44 Ke3 Ke6 45 Kd2 Rc8 46 Rd4 g5 47 f4 gxf4 48 Rxf4 Rg8 49 g4 hxg4 50 Rxg4 Rh8 51 Rg6+ Kd5 52 Rxa6 Rxh3 53 Kc2 1-0 Morozevich-Aleksandrov, Chebanenco Memorial 1998.

7 Bb3!

Here 7 Nd5!? Nxc4 8 dxc4 c6 (8...Bxf2+!? may lead to perpetual check.) 9 Nxf6+ gxf6 was shown by Bronstein to be at least equal for Black (initially against Korchnoi in the 20th Soviet Championship, 1952).

7...c6

If instead 7...Nxb3?! 8 axb3 Be6 9 Na4 (9 0-0 Bb6 10 Ne2 h6 11 Be3 0-0 12 h3 Nd7 13 d4 f5 14 exf5 Bxf5= Carls-Keres, corr 1938) 9...h6 (The immediate 9...Bg4 may be better.) 10 Bh4 Bg4 11 Nxc5 dxc5 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Qxf3 Qd6 14 Bxf6 Qxf6 15 Qxf6 gxf6 16 Ra5 was good for White in Hug-Barle, Pula zt 1975.



Black's idea with 7...c6 is that now if 8 Na4 Bb4+ 9 c3 Nxb3 and 10...Ba5 when Black exchanges the white bishop but keeps his own (Botterill and Harding, *The Italian Game*). However, a few years after that book was published, the Swiss master Schaufelberger came up with a new plan for White.

8 d4!

This important move is still little known, e.g. it is not in Pálkövi's book!

8...Nxb3 9 axb3 exd4 10 Nxd4 0-0

The timing of 10...h6 11 Bh4 g5 is one of the issues in this variation. After 12 Bg3 Ng4 13 Qd2 Qf6 14 0-0-0 Bb4 15 h4 Rg8 16 Kb1 Bd7 17 f3 Ne5 18 Nd5 cxd5 19 Qxb4 0-0-0 20 hxg5 hxg5 21 exd5 Kb8 22 f4 gxf4 23 Bh4 Qg6 24 Bxd8 Rxd8 25 Rdf1 Rc8 26 Rxf4 White has a big material advantage and the initiative: 26...Rc5 27 Rh8+ Kc7 28 Qd2 Rxd5 29 Qf2 Qg5 30 Rh1 a6 31 Rd1 Qg6 32 Rd2 Kc8 33 Nf3 Rxd2 34 Nxd2 Bc6 35 g3 Qh5 36 Nc4 Qd1+ 37 Ka2 Nxc4 38 bxc4 Be8 39 Rd4 1-0 S.Nadyrhanov-S.Daniliuk, Novorossiysk 1995.

However, Black managed to get roughly equal chances with 11...0-0 12 0-0 (threat f4) 12...g5!? 13 Bg3 Re8 14 Re1 d5! in A.Morozevich-Kir. Georgiev, Tilburg 1994.

There hasn't really been enough experience with this variation yet.

11 0-0 Bb6 12 Qd3 h6 13 Bh4 Re8

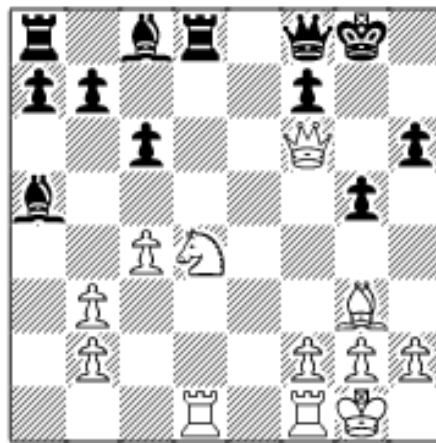
13...Qe7 14 Rad1 Rd8 15 Rfe1 Be6 16 Nf5 1-0 was
H.Schaufelberger-W.Wittmann, corr 1981.

14 Rad1 g5 15 Bg3 d5 16 exd5 Nxd5 17 Nxd5 Qxd5 18 c4 Qc5?

It wasn't clear until now whether White had a significant advantage, but after this move he has a forced win!

19 Qc3 Ba5 20 Qf3 Rd8 21 Qf6 Qf8

White was now able to calculate to the very end of the game, this being correspondence chess.



22 b4! Bxb4 23 Nxc6 Rxd1 24 Rxd1 Bg4! 25 Be5 Kh7 26 Nxb4 Bxd1 27 Qf5+ Kg8 28 Nd5 Qd8



29 Bc7 Qf8 30 Nf6+ Kg7 31 Be5 Qd8 32 Qh7+ Kf8 33 Qxh6+ Ke7 34 Nd5+ Ke8 35 Bc7 Qc8 36 Qd6 1-0.

Line E: Lange Attack with 4 0-0 Nf6 5 d4 or immediate 4 d4

In Internet games nowadays, I am more and more seeing these attempts by White to force an early resolution with piece play in the centre. Black can get very confused by the possible transpositions and opening books are not that helpful. Usually Black has the

option to transpose to the Max Lange Attack in the Two Knights Defence and that may be his wisest option. The following game was actually won by Max Lange himself against the leading European player of his day!

Max Lange v Adolf Anderssen 2nd informal match game, Breslau, 1859

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 0-0

The immediate 4 d4 gambit is occasionally seen. Theory books usually

give it?! or just do not mention the move at! I am told that Seirawan once recommended it in a book — presumably not for master play.

The positions arising are similar to the main line below with 4 0–0 Nf6 5 d4, with some transpositional possibilities but usually with small but significant differences. With the 4 d4 move order, possibly White denies himself the possibility 7 f4 in the main 4 0–0 gambit.

After 4 d4 Black's options are:

a) 4...exd4 is a Scotch Gambit, which can lead to the true Max Lange Attack after 5 0-0 Nf6 6 e5 d5 etc.

b) 4...Nxd4?! is reckoned unfavourable for Black: 5 Nxe5 Ne6 (5...Nh6 6 Nxf7!) 6 Bxe6 (not 6 Nxf7 Qh4) 6...fxe6 7 Qh5+ g6 8 Nxc6.

c) The main line after 4 d4 is 4...Bxd4 and now:

c1) 5 Nxd4 Nxd4 6 f4!? d5!? (Maybe 6...d6 is safer) 7 exd5 Qh4+ 8 g3 Qh3 9 Bf1 Qf5 10 Bd3 e4 was good for Black in Fahrni-Spielmann, Baden-Baden 1914. It is maybe better for White to get back to the traditional line by 6 0–0 Nf6 (see below).

b) 5 0–0 is White's best says the old German *Handbuch*. Then once more 5...Nf6 transposes to the line 4 0–0 Nf6 5 d4 below.

c) I recently saw 5 Bg5!? (Seirawan's idea?) played in two games on the web server www.itsyourturn.com. There followed:

c1) 5...Nge7 6 Nxd4 exd4 7 0–0 d6 8 f4 f6 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Qh5+ Ng6 (on 10...Kd7 White has at least a perpetual check, I guess.) 11 f5 Nce5 12 fxg6 Nxc6 13 Qd5 Ne5 14 Qxd4 and White went on to win.

c2) 5...Nf6 6 Nxd4 Nxd4 7 f4!? seems critical. (Instead 7 0-0 transposes to the line 4 0-0 Nf6 5 d4 Bxd4 6 Nxd4 Nxd4 7 Bg5. Also 7 Nc3 might be considered.)



There doesn't seem to be any obvious refutation of this but I think Black is OK.

Maybe safest for Black is 7...d6 8 fxe5 dxe5 but it gives up any hope Black might have of refuting White's idea. So instead 7...Qe7 8 Nc3 (8 f5?? was seen in an IECG email game where Black lost quickly after castling but he should have won with 8...Qb4+.) and now Black has another tricky choice.

8...Qb4?! now does not work because of 9 fxe5! (9 Bxf6 gxf6) 9...Qxb2 (9...Qxc4 10 exf6) 10 Kd2! (only move but very embarrassing for Black) while 8...c6 prevents Nd5 but may fall behind on development; at best Black gets equality here.

Therefore Black should try 8...Qc5! which guards the knight and e5 as well

as attacking the c5-B and keeping a lateral eye on the g5-B. Best now is 9 Bxf6 gxf6 when Black has an extra doubled Pawn and looks solid enough, though playing for a win may be arduous. In the game I saw, White actually lost a tempo by 9 Bd3?! Ne6 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 f5 Nf4 12 Qd2 b6 13 0-0-0 Bb7 14 Bb5 0-0-0. Black is obviously better but whether he can win without mistakes by his opponent is not yet clear; the extra f-pawn is useful for defensive purposes only. His advantages consist in superior bishop and queen, potential use of the g-file and a possible ...d5 break. White rejected 15 Bxd7+ because after 15...Kb8 he is in a pin e.g. 16 g3 Bc6 17 gxf4 Rxd7 but the actual continuation 15 g3?! d5! 16 gxf4 d4! also helped Black. The rest of the game is not of much interest.

Now we return to Lange v Anderssen.

4...Nf6 5 d4

This is a romantic gambit which GM Tony Miles used to play in his early career.

5...Bxd4

Once more 5...exd4 is perfectly playable: transposing to the Max Lange Attack in the Two Knights Defence (3...Nf6 4 d4 exd4 5 0-0 Bc5). Of course this variation is extremely complicated and favours the player who knows it best (and analyses most accurately).

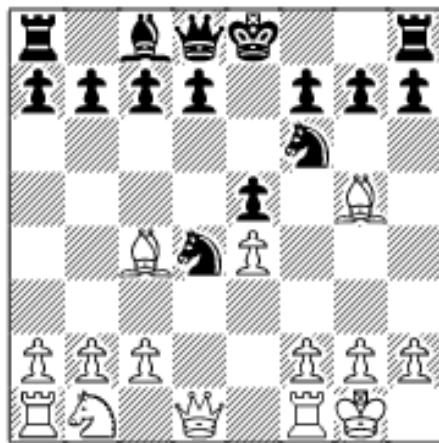
There are few takers for 5...Nxd4?! 6 Nxe5 when:

- a) 6...0-0? 7 Be3! and White easily won in several games by Estrin;
- b) 6...d5 7 exd5 Bb6 8 c3 Nf5 9 Bb5+ Kf8 (9...Bd7 10 Nxd7 Nxd7 11 Qg4 Estrin) 10 Re1! Was excellent for White in Karaklajic-Giustolisi, Beverwijk 1965.
- c) Estrin preferred 6...Ne6 when 7 Nd3 is probably better than the book move 7 Bxe6. After 7 Nd3 Black cannot play 7...Nxe4? because 8 Bd5! wins a piece (8...N4g5 9 h4!) so critical is 7...Bb6 and now 8 Nc3 and 8 Qe2 and 8 Qf3 are all a bit better for White (but not 8 e5 d5 Steinitz).

Now we return to Lange-Anderssen.

6 Nxd4 Nxd4 7 f4!

This is what Lange played but 7 Bg5!? is an entirely different way of playing the gambit.



Now Black can try:

a) 7...Ne6 8 Bxe6 (Usually given a ! but is it really best? White could also consider 8 Bh4 or 8 Be3.) 8...fxe6 9 f4 Qe7 10 Bxf6 (10 Kh1!? Estrin) 10...Qxf6 11 Qh5+ g6 12 Qxe5 Qxe5 13 fxe5 with an approximately equal endgame (Estrin-Golyak, Alma Ata 1966);

b) 7...Qe7 8 Nc3 c6 9 f4 d6 (Markland-Reshevsky, London 1973) 10 fxe5 dxe5 returning to the main line

below).

c) 7...h6 8 Bh4 (8 f4!?) 8...g5 (8...d6 9 f4 Be6 is the only hope.) 9 f4 when there are various examples of Black getting rapidly crushed:

c1) 9...d5 10 exd5 Bg4 11 Qe1 Nxc2 12 Qxe5+ Qe7 13 Qxe7+! Kxe7 14 fxg5 Ne8 15 g6+ Zavanelli-Cohen, Pittsburgh 1977;

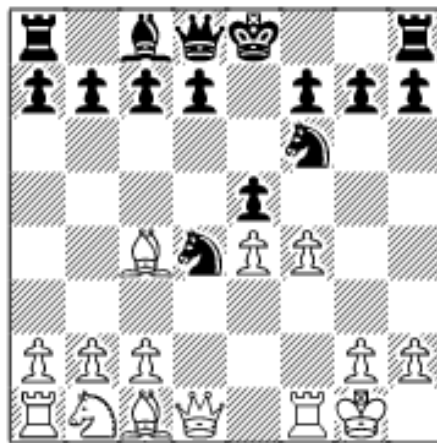
c2) 9...Ne6 10 fxe5 (or 10 Bxe6 dxe6 11 Qxd8+ Kxd8 12 fxg5 Nxe4 13 g6+ Mukhanov-Volovich, USSR 1974) 10...Nxe4 11 Qf3 Rf8 12 Qxe4 gxh4 13 Nc3 (Sergeyev-Ashirov, Minsk 1966).

c3) 9...gxh4? 10 fxe5+-;

c4) 9...gxf4 10 Rxf4 exf4 11 Qxd4 Rosentreter-Hoffer, Berlin 1899.

d) 7...0-0 may be best met by 8 c3, but usually 8 f4 is played; "premature!" says Max After 8 f4 d6 9 fxe5 dxe5 10 Nc3 (10 c3!? could be examined.) the problem is what to do about 10...c6. Other moves seem fine for White e.g. 10...Bg4?? 11 Bxf6+- Miles-Homer, Birmingham 1972, or 10...Be6? 11 Nd5 Bxd5 12 exd5 and c3 (Zavanelli).

d) 7...d6 is the reason why 7 Bg5 may not be best. After 8 f4 Black can try 8...Bg4 (Pálkövi), 8...Be6 (probably transposing to our main line below) or 8...Qe7 which Estrin thought was best. In the latter case, after 9 fxe5 dxe5 a position arises which Estrin considered critical because it can arise by so many routes.



There are lots of possibilities then including 10 Kh1 (Nezhmetdinov), 10 Bxf6, 10 Nc3 and 10 c3. We will probably examine these lines in the next article.

7...d6 8 fxe5 dxe5 9 Bg5 Be6

Instead of the bishop move, 9...Qe7 would give Estrin's standard position (above) once more.

Contemporary notes to the game indicate that Anderssen rejected

9...Bg4 because of 10 Bxf7+ Kxf7 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 Qxg4 Bxc2 13 Rd1 Nd4 14 Nc3 with White having promising compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



10 Bxf6! gxf6 11 Bxe6 Nxe6 12 Nc3!

I was surprised to find in my databases with over two million games, that this position had apparently only been reached twice, White usually playing inferior 12th moves.

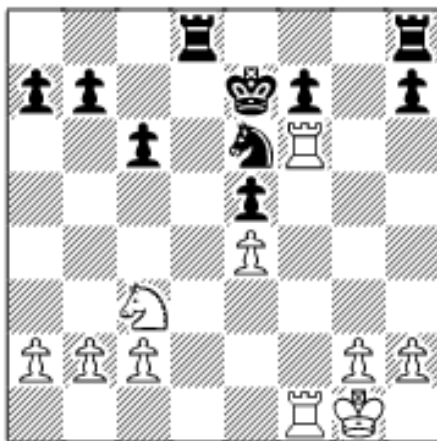
12...c6

The other game I found was 12...Qd4+ 13 Qxd4 Nxd4 14 Nd5 0-0-0 15 Rxf6 c6 16 Ne3 Ne2+ 17 Kf1 Rd2 18 Rf2 1-0 van Scheltinga-van der Tol, corr

1941; Black loses a piece.

13 Qxd8+ Rxd8 14 Rxf6 Ke7?! 15 Raf1

White's doubled rooks on the f-file give him nagging pressure and Anderssen did not manage to neutralise it. Therefore Black should have played 14...Rd2 to get a pair of rooks off after 15 Rf2.



15...Rdf8

15...Nf4 does not shake off his shackles because of 16 Rf5 followed by g2-g3, and now White rules out this line-blocking move completely.

16 g3 Rhg8 17 R6f5 f6 18 Nd1 Rg4 19 Nf2 Rg6?!

19...Rg5 is probably better; exchanging a pair of rooks would make a draw more likely.

In the latter part of this game, Lange has a slight advantage but doesn't

know what to do with it. Anderssen seeks a win and overpresses, helping his opponent.

20 Nd3 a5 21 Kg2 c5 22 b3 b5 23 Nb2 Rd8 24 Nd1 b4 25 R5f2 Rd4 26 Ne3 Rxe4?!

Very risky.

27 Nd5+ Kd6 28 Nxf6 Re3 29 Nxe7 Rg7 30 Nf6 1-0.

Black has lost a pawn but resignation seems premature.

Line F: Evans Gambit

The Evans Gambit is so complex that it is really an opening all to itself. I won't include it in the rest of this series, but here is one recent example for you to enjoy.

Emil Sutovsky-S. Smagin 3rd Julian Borowski Memorial, Essen 2001

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 b4

White gives up a pawn to side-track the black bishop and open lines. He can establish a big centre later, or open more lines there, depending on Black's responses.



4...Bxb4 5 c3 Ba5

5...Be7 is a different story, less threatening to White but more solid.

6 Qb3

Since a position soon arises that could also come about via 6 d4 exd4 7 Qb3 Qe7, I assume Sutovsky wanted to avoid the 6 d4 d6 variation.

6...Qe7

6...Qf6 is an important alternative that

has been little explored.

7 d4 exd4 8 0-0 Bb6 9 cxd4



Bernard Cafferty and I tried very hard to make this line work in the two editions of our book 'Play the Evans Gambit'. Maybe we were too pessimistic about White's chances in the end.

9...Na5!?

Of course the capture of the second pawn is critical. Not so much 9...Bxd4 10 Nxd4 Nxd4 (Moody) 11 Qd3! Ne6 12 Ba3 with an attack (Harding & Cafferty) but 9...Nxd4 10 Nxd4 Bxd4

11 Nc3 creates a critical situation. Now:

a) 11...c6? 12 Rd1 Be5 13 Ba3 d6 14 f4! Bxc3 15 Qxc3 Qf6 16 e5 dxe5 17 fxe5 Qg5 18 Rf1 Nh6 19 Bc1 Qg6 20 Bxh6 Qxh6 21 Bxf7+ Kd8 22 Rad1+ Kc7 23 e6 Qg5 24 h4 1-0 M.V.Fiorito-A.Gysi, EU/M/GT/369 corr 1992.

b) 11...d6 12 Bxf7+ Qxf7 13 Qa4+ Bd7 14 Qxd4 Ne7 15 Rb1 Bc6 16 Nb5 Bxb5 17 Rxb5 b6 18 Rg5 Ng6 19 Rf5 Qd7 20 Bb2 Rg8 21 Qd5 1-0 M.Ishee-J.Duffy, APCT Evans Gambit Thematic corr 1990.

c) 11...Nf6 12 Ba3 (12 Rd1 Bxc3 13 Qxc3 0-0 unclear — Fiorito) 12...d6 13 Rad1 Bxc3 14 Qxc3 Qe5 and it is somewhat doubtful whether White has enough. Nevertheless he went on to win in J.O.Fries Nielsen-S.E.Kramer, Danish corr ch 1993: 15 Qc1 0-0 16 Bb2!? Qe7 17 f4 Nxe4 18 Rfe1 Kh8 19 Bd5 f5 20 Rd4 c6 21 Bxe4 Re8 22 Rd3 fxe4 23 Rg3 Rg8 24 Rg5 h6 25 Rh5 Kh7 26 f5 Qf7 27 g4 d5 28 Re3 Re8 29 Reh3 e3 30 Qe1 Qf8 31 Bxg7 Qxg7 32 Rxh6+ Qxh6 33 Rxh6+ Kxh6 34 Qh4+ Kg7 35 f6+ Kf7 36 Qh5+ Kxf6 37 Qxe8 Kg5 38 Qxe3+ Kxg4 39 h3+ Kf5 40 Qe8 Kg5 41 h4+ Kxh4 42 Qg8 Kh5 43 Kf2 Kh6 44 Ke3 c5 45 Kf4 a5 46 Qg5+ Kh7 47 Qxd5 Kg7 48 Qxc5 Be6 49 Qe7+ Bf7 50 Qxb7 Rd8 51 Qb2+ Kg8 52 Kf5 Rd5+ 53 Kf6 Rd6+ 54 Ke7 Re6+ 55 Kd7 Rg6 56 Qb8+ Kh7 57 Ke7 Rg7 58 Kf6 Bc4 59 Qb1+ Kg8 60 a4 Rf7+ 61 Kg5 Rf8 62 Qb2 1-0.

10 Qa4 Nxc4 11 Qxc4 d6 12 a4 c6 13 Nc3 Qd8 14 a5 Bxa5 15 Bg5 f6

If 15...Ne7 16 Bxe7 Kxe7 (16...Qxe7) 17 Ng5 Rf8 18 Nxh7.

16 Bd2 Ne7 17 Rfe1 b5

Black has a few chances to vary in this critical phase, e.g. 17...Bg4!? is possible here.

18 Qb3 Bb6 19 e5 d5 20 exf6 gxf6

Now Sutovsky find a combination to break into Black's defences.



21 Nxb5!? 0-0

Not 21...cxb5? 22 Bb4 but 21...Kf7!? might be better.

22 Bb4 Nf5 23 Bxf8 Qxf8 24 Nc3 Kh8

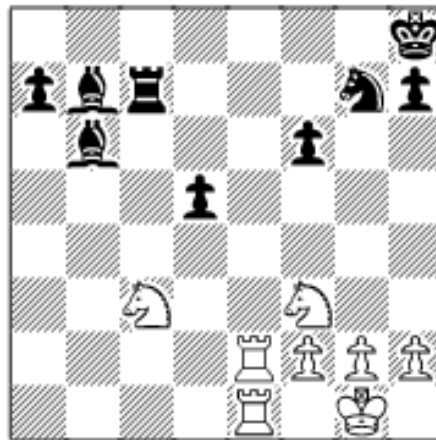
Black has to accept the material deficit of bishop and pawn versus rook because he cannot safely take a second pawn. Not 24...Bxd4? 25 Nxd5 while 24...Nxd4? is refuted by 25 Nxd4 Bxd4 26 Nxd5 e.g. 26...cxd5 (26...Bxa1 27 Re8 Qxe8 28 Nxf6+) 27 Qxd5+ Kh8

28 Qxa8 Bxa1 29 Rc1.

25 Qa4 Bb7 26 Re6 Ng7 27 Re2 c5 28 Rae1 Rc8 29 dxc5 Qxc5 30 Qd7

White starts to develop threats so Black exchanges queens. White then gives a good demonstration of how to exploit the advantage of the exchange in an endgame where the defender has a passed pawn.

30...Qc7 31 Qxc7 Rxc7



32 Nb5

White's aim is to undermine the d-pawn.

32...Rc5 33 Nd6 Ba6 34 Ra2 Bd3 35 Rd2 Bg6 36 Red1 Bh5 37 Rxd5 Rxd5

37...Rc7 38 Ne4.

38 Rxd5 Bxf3

38...Bg6 39 Nc8.

39 gxf3 Ne6 40 Nc4 Bc5 41 f4 f5 42

Re5 1-0

Nice work by Sutovsky.

You can download the games featured in this article from my website,
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