



## C O L U M N I S T S

*The Kibitzer*

Tim Harding

## The Giuoco Piano on Trial

### Part 3

## The Summing-Up

As you will recall if you read last year's September and October articles (still available in the [ChessCafe.com Archives](#)) The Kibitzer has put this ancient opening, 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5, on trial.

In Kibitzer 64 (September 2001), we presented the case for the prosecution (i.e., White), and in Kibitzer 65 (October), the Defence Counsel put the case for Black.

After the winter recess, the Judge now calls on both sides to make a closing statement, after which we will have the Judge's Summing Up.

Then the case is thrown open to you, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, to send me your comments. The verdict and sentence (if any) will be next month's column if there is a good enough response. (Some comments already sent in have been filed and will be reviewed then.)

First, Counsel for the White pieces will tell us why he thinks the Giuoco Piano is a viable opening today:

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 positional openings like Caro-Kanns and Retis. Meaningful and effective positional play can only be conducted on a sound tactical basis; players who are weak tactically may be able to defer a crisis in their games by employing such openings but what they really need is training to get their tactics up to standard first. The Giuoco Piano offers this.

Moreover, if you want to put pressure on your opponent from an early stage, you need to employ a sharp opening. Like other sharp open games, the

Giuoco Piano 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.

I will now address a few details in the Defence case. I will only deal with the two main lines involving c3 and d4 and not concern myself with the sidelines, which I think have been adequately presented already in the earlier submissions.

First let us take the line **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Nc3 Nxe4 8 0-0**



Firstly, I want to point out several places where Black can go wrong, apart from 7...d5? which I discussed in the first article.

After 7...Nxe4 8 0-0 Black first must find 8...Bxc3 in preference to tempting alternatives, and if he does play that he must also meet 9 d5! by the correct 9...Bf6! because other moves favour White. Then at the next turn, after 10 Re1, he must choose between 10...Ne7 and

10...d6.

Here in brief are some of the traps Black must avoid (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).

A plausible move for Black is 8...Nxc3? but then 9 bxc3 Bxc3 (or 9...Be7 10 d5 Nb8 11 d6) 10 Ba3! is very strong for White. Relatively best after the knight capture is 9...d5 but 10 cxb4 dxc4 11 Re1+ Ne7 12 Bg5 f6 13 Qe2 favours White.

After 8...Bxc3 9 d5 the other plausible move for Black is 9...Ne5 when 10 bxc3 Nxc4 11 Qd4 f5 (11...Ncd6? 12 Qxg7) 12 Qxc4 d6 13 Nd4 0-0 14 f3 Nc5 may be just about playable for Black but White has excellent compensation for the pawn. He does not have a huge advantage but it is enough to work with.

Palkovi gives Karaklajic-Alexander, Belgrade 1952: 15 Ba3 b6 16 Bxc5! bxc5 17 Nc6 Qf6 18 Rfe1 Bd7 19 Re7 but I think White has a stronger line in 15 Re1 Kh8 (15...Re8? 16 Ba3 Rxe1+ 17 Rxe1 Na6 18 Qb5 favoured White in Schlechter-Meitner, Vienna 1899.) 16 Ba3 b6 and now either 17 Nc6 directly or after exchanging on c5.

At move 10, instead of 10...Ne7 it is possible for Black to castle and after 11 Rxe4 then retreat the knight somewhere else, but it has been shown that the move 12 d6! will then usually cause Black severe embarrassment because he cannot get his queen's bishop into play.

Now let us take the main line of the Moeller Attack: **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 Bf6 10 Re1 Ne7 11 Rxe4 d6 12 Bg5 Bxg5 13 Nxg5.**



Counsel for the Black pieces makes the following claims:

- a) That the line 13...0-0 14 Nxh7 Kxh7 draws;
- b) That 13...h6 14 Bb5+ Bd7 is good for Black (Barczay-Portisch);
- c) That the Bayonet Attack 12 g4 "is obviously loosening. Black gets a good game by returning the pawn with 12...0-0! 13 g5 Be5 14 Nxe5 dxe5 15 Rxe5 Ng6 as recommended long ago by Paul Keres".

I shall deal with these points in turn.

Firstly, I admit that the main lines after 13...0-0 14 Nxh7 lead to a draw; it soon becomes too risky for either side to play for a win if both sides know the theory. This means, of course, that the Moeller Attack is not a good choice if you are much higher rated than your opponent, or need a win at all costs, but in those situations you can choose a different variation of the Giuoco Piano.

The drawish nature of that line also means that if your opponent is higher rated, or needs the win, he is the one who must play something else. In practice the 13...0-0 line rarely occurs nowadays.

Most people now play 13...h6, which was not well known until the late 1970s but now is common knowledge.

When Black plays that move, he will be expecting 14 Qe2 but I think 14 Bb5+ is stronger..

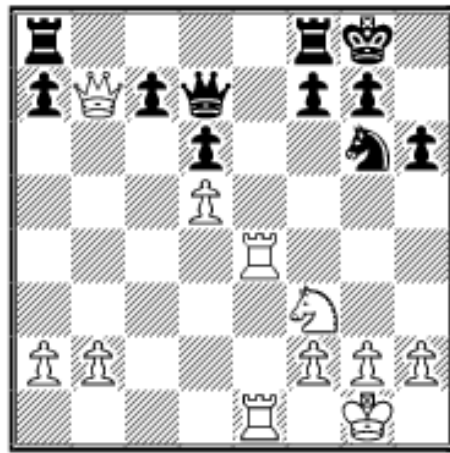
My learned colleague, in his submission (Kibitzer 65) cited the game Barczay-Portisch which went **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Nc3 Nxe4 8 0-0 Bxc3 9 d5 Bf6 10 Re1 Ne7 11 Rxe4 d6 12 Bg5 Bxg5 13 Nxg5 h6**



14 Bb5+ Bd7 15 Qe2 Bxb5! 16 Qxb5+ Qd7 17 Qe2 Kf8! 18 Nxf7 Kxf7 19 Re1 Ng8! 20 Re6 Kf8! 21 f4 Nf6 22 Re7 Re8! 23 Rxe8+ Qxe8 24 Qf2 Qh5 0-1.

In this game White went wrong at move 17; he should have captured the b7-pawn. After 17 Qxb7 0-0 18 Rae1 Ng6 (not 18...Rfe8?? 19 Rxe7 hxg5 20 Qxa8 Qxe7 21 Qxe8+ while if 18...hxg5 19 Rxe8+ Rxe8 20 Rc1 Black has a bad pawn structure.) 19 Nf3 is virtually forced for

both sides. White has regained his pawn for the time being, he leads in development, has more space and controls the e-file.



To compensate for this Black, Black must go for the white b-pawn although it is risky: 19...Rfb8 20 Qa6 Rxb2 when the Italian Game book by Palkövi (the most recent on this opening) stops saying that Black has a clear advantage, following a low-level postal game Pallagi-Mann played in the mid-1980s. Other books mostly don't go this deep at all.

That game is not of much theoretical value. Pallagi played 21 g3? allowing

Black to play 21...Qb5 which must not be allowed. White can keep his grip by 21 a4!? or probably even better by 21 Nd4! Ne5 22 h3, which was recommended by Estrin back in 1985! Now in some lines (e.g. 22...Rb4 23 Nc6) knights will be exchanged on c6, giving a potentially strong pawn for White at c6, while in other variations (22...Qc8 23 Qa3 Qb7 24 Nf5) the Knight can take up a strong attacking post on f5.

A few years ago, I had a high-level postal game in this line, which ended in a draw. I can assure you that superficial analysis with computers will not turn up the best moves in this line for White who has enduring pressure. There have hardly been any other games with 17 Qxb7 and you can be pretty sure Black will be on his own after this.

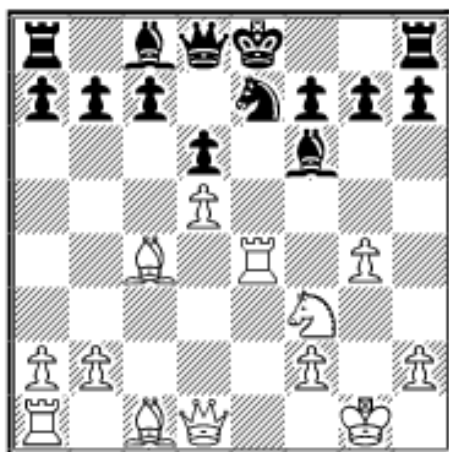
*Tim Harding – Per Lindblom 5<sup>th</sup> European Corr Ch preliminaries, board 1, 1994-96*

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 Bf6 10 Re1 Ne7 11 Rxe4 d6 12 Bg5 Bxg5 13 Nxc3 Nxe4 14 Bb5+ Bd7 15 Qe2 Bxb5 16 Qxb5+ Qd7 17 Qxb7 0-0 18 Rae1 Ng6 19 Nf3 Rfb8 20 Qa6 Rxb2 21 Nd4 Ne5 22 h3 Qc8 23 Qa3 Qb7 24 Nf5 Kh7 25 Qg3 Rg8 26 Ne7 Re8 27 Nf5 Rg8 ½-½. A lot of food for thought there; I spent at

least a hundred hours analysing this game at the time but it was before the days of the supercomputers we all have now. Don't expect your Fritz to come up in five or even twenty minutes with something that I didn't think of! There are many sharp possibilities with unclear assessments and computers often don't judge the positions correctly.

White also has the possibility to avoid both the 13...0-0 14 Nxh7 draw and the Portisch 13...h6 line by employing the Bayonet Attack, which my learned friend underestimates.

The Bayonet Attack involves White playing g2-g4 early on, to control the square f5 and later advance as a battering ram towards the black king. It can arise in various move orders but the most important line is 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 Bf6 10 Re1 Ne7 11 Rxe4 d6 12 g4!? as analysed by Schlechter, in *Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1899 page 219. This line was also surveyed in *New In Chess* Yearbook 26.



To start with an example that illustrates White's attack fully succeeding, I give the game:

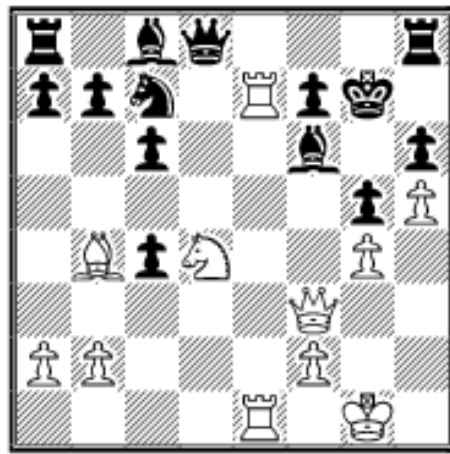
**Frederic Lazard - Amadee Gibaud Paris, 1909**  
**12...h6?**

Not 12...Be5? 13 Nxe5 dxe5 14 Rxe5 0-0 15 Bg5 (Schlechter) but Black should castle (see below).

**13 h4 Kf8**

If 13...0-0 14 g5 hxg5 15 hxg5 Be5 16 Nxe5 dxe5 17 Rh4!.

**14 h5!? g5 15 Nd4 c6 16 Qf3! Nxd5 17 Bd2 Nc7? 18 Rae1! d5 19 Bb4+! Kg7 20 Re7! dxc4**



**21 Nxc6!! Qd3**

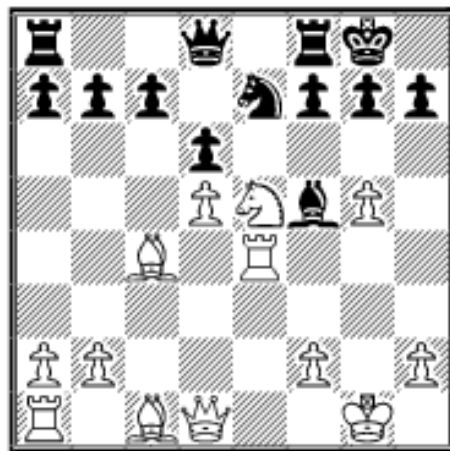
Black is lost; if 21...bxc6 22 Qxf6+! Kxf6 23 Bc3+.

**22 Rxf7+!! Kxf7 23 Re7+! Kg8 24 Qxf6 Rh7 25 Re8+ 1-0.**

Clearly Black could have defended better, especially at move 17, but White also had calmer alternatives at move 14 so this shows the potential of the bayonet attack.

Evidently 12...0-0 should be better for Black and this is what was recommended in the New In Chess Yearbook.

**12 g4 0-0! 13 g5 Be5 14 Nxe5 Bf5!?**



Smit and Bottlik commented that this move “is an obstacle to White's manoeuvre Re5-e4-d4 deals a serious blow to White's idea”.

Formerly, Black played 14...dxe5 15 Rxe5 Ng6 hoping to exploit White's kingside weaknesses. In a few recent games the pawn sacrifice 16 Re3?! Qxg5+ 17 Rg3 Qe5 18 Bd2! (Jakobson-Levenberg, 1913) did not work.) but White can just play 16 Re1. Now after 16...Qd7 Keres thought

Black was better because, despite his bishop pair, White suffers from kingside weaknesses. However this remains to be proved and some computer programs prefer White. The best move may be 17 Qf3 (instead of 17 Be3 b5 18 Bd3 Qh3 19 Qc2 Nh4 given by Sozin in ‘Sovremenny Debyut’); White has won at least two correspondence games from this position.

After 14...Bf5!? the postal game Rüfenacht-Smit, Heitmann Memorial 1994, continued **15 Re3 dxe5 16 Rxe5 Qd7 17 b4?**

If 17 Qf3 then 17...Rae8 (not 17...Bg4? 18 Rxe7) is a bit better for Black according to Smit, but I don't see it. Instead 17...Ng6 was played in the game cited by Palkovi Velasquez-Salas, Santiago de Chile open 1997) but White won in the end.

**17...Ng6 18 Re3 Rae8 19 Qd4 Rxe3 20 fxe3 Qe7 21 Bb2?** (White is worse anyway.) **21...Qxg5+ 22 Kh1 Nh4!** and White resigned (23 Rg1 Qxg1+ 24

Kxg1 Nf3+) 0-1.

This game virtually killed off the Bayonet Attack in recent years but actually it is not that convincing. White has two possible improvements. Apart from 15 Qf3, you can go back to the last diagram, and replace the rook retreat by 15 Nxf7! Rxf7 (if 15...Qd7 16 Nxd6 cxd6 17 Re3 White has won a pawn; also 15...Kxf7 16 Re3 Ng6 17 Qh5 Kg8 18 Bd2 is fine) 16 Re3 Ng6 17 Rg3 and White could be a bit better here. His position is loose but it has dynamic possibilities and the aggressive computer program Junior 7 likes White.

Moving on to the variation 7 Bd2 Bxd2+ 8 Nbx d2 d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Qb3 Counsel for Black makes two points:

- a) 10...Na5!? makes it hard for White to avoid a draw;
- b) 10...Nce7 is OK anyway.

Is he right?

Actually on the first point, my contention is that I have nothing to prove. Defense Counsel showed a game in which, after **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 Na5 11 Qa4+ Nc6**, White showed that it is possible to avoid the repetition draw by the interesting move **12 Bb5!**.



In the game Lyne-Harding (in The Kibitzer 94) White improved on the example of this variation given in Palkovi's book.

My game was in the end drawn anyway but only after quite a long struggle and there are certainly places between moves 13 and 20 where White could just as well have made some other moves and set his opponent different problems. Moreover in that game Black was playing by post with

dozens of hours to analyse and so he had the time to find a quite difficult line of counterplay that most players would not find.

There has been a recent master game in this line and although White did not win he certainly got some advantage and could have improved.

R. Zelic – S. Mamedyarov European Team Championship, Leon (Spain) 2001

From the last diagram (after 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 Na5 12 Bb5)

Black played **12...Qe7+!?**

This game was played last November a few weeks after The Kibitzer 64 appeared on the Internet, so perhaps one or both of the players had seen that article. Black tries a new move which is possibly no worse than 12...Bd7.

**13 Ne5 Bd7 14 0-0 Nb6**

If 14...Nxe5 15 Rae1.

**15 Nxc6 bxc6**

Again 15...Nxa4 16 Nxe7 Bxb5 17 Rfe1 could cause problems on the e-file for Black. So he tries to block the file.

**16 Qc2 cxb5 17 Rae1 Be6 18 d5 0-0**

18...0-0-0!? is possible but Black's queenside looks too full of holes to be a satisfactory home for his King. Not 18...Nxd5?? 19 Qc6+ and Qxa8+.

**19 dxe6 fxe6 20 Qb3 Rad8 21 Rxe6 Qf7 22 Nf3 Nc4 23 Re2**

This is possibly too cautious. 23 Rfe1!? seems playable because if 23...Nd2 24 Nxd2 Rxd2 (not 24...Qxf2+ 25 Kh1 Rxd2?? 26 R6e2+) 25 f3 c5 26 Qc3 White may have more advantage than in the actual game.

**23...a6 24 Qc2 Rfe8 25 Ng5 Qh5 26 Ne6 Rd6 27 Rfe1 Qg6 28 Qxg6 hxc6 29 b3 Nb6 30 h4 Nd5 31 Re5 Nb4 32 Ng5 Rxe5 33 Rxe5 Kf8**

Not 33...Nxa2?? 34 Re8 checkmate.

**34 a3 Nd3 35 Re3 c5 36 Rf3+ Kg8 37 Re3 Kf8** Black has more or less equalised and the endgame was eventually drawn.

Nevertheless, I think White's practical winning chances after 12 Bb5 are good, and I think it is quite possible that theory will find a line to give White some advantage. After all 10...Na5 does cost time and puts the knight offside.

So let us move on to the main line 10...Nce7. Defense Counsel says that Rossolimo-Reissman is irrelevant to theory so let us look at one game with the main line. Black is an IM with both FIDE and ICCF so this was a real test for the variation.



**Tim Harding - Ricardo Montecatine Rios (Spain) 5<sup>th</sup> European Corr Ch preliminaries, board 1, 1994-96**

**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 Nce7**

Black was rated much higher than me before the game so I was not surprised that he did not offer the repetition.

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



This is a well-known position that I have played with both colours over many years. White has an isolated d-pawn, which as is known from 1 d4 openings, usually gives a space advantage and some initiative, so long as White can employ his light-squared bishop actively. Black has a wide range of possibilities now but there is no general agreement about his best plan.

**13...Qb6**

This is the recommended move in Palkovi's book. Black hopes to reduce the dangers by a queen exchange.

Palkovi mentions the possibility 13...Nb6?! 14 Bd3 Be6? 15 Rxe6! with initiative to White. Actually this occurred in the game Jonathan Mestel-Tim Harding, Hammersmith open, London 1973. After 15...fxe6 16 Qxe6+ Kh8 17 Ng5?! Mestel offered a draw (which I accepted) because he suddenly saw problems after 17...Ng8!; instead 17 Qe4 would have been very good for White.

**14 a5**

Chigorin kept queens on with 14 Qa3 in several games (e.g., v Schlechter, Vienna 1898) but this is probably too slow against strong opposition.

**14...Qxb3 15 Nxb3 Bf5**

After 15...Ng6? 16 Bxd5! cxd5 White has no isolated d-pawn; he has knight outposts and open files. Instead of 17 Nc5 (Harding-Keogh, Galway 1977) maybe 17 Ne5 or 17 Rac1 gives the biggest advantage.

**16 Ne5 Rac8**

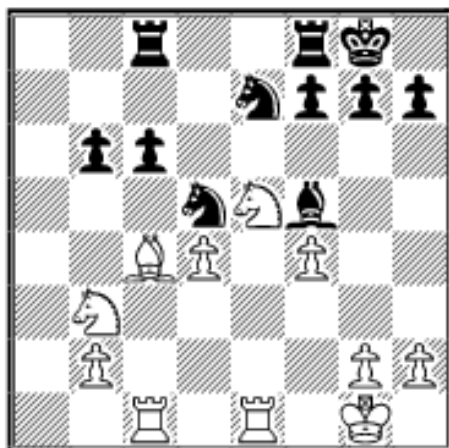
Not 16...f6? 17 Nxc6! winning a pawn because of the self-pin on the d5-knight. Black's move was a novelty; now ...f6 is a threat as the c4-bishop would be unprotected after Nxc6 Rxc6.

If instead 16...Nb4 17 Rac1 (or 17 Nxe5 Ned5 18 Nd6 Nc2 19 Nxb7 unclear – Estrin) 17...Ned5 18 a6! b5 19 Bxd5 cxd5 20 Nc6 White seemed to be better in O'Kelly-Euwe, Amsterdam 1950, although a draw was soon agreed. I guess Euwe, as ex-World Champion, got the half point on his reputation.

### 17 Rac1 b6

If 17...f6 I would probably have countered by 18 g4.

### 18 axb6 axb6 19 f4!?



I decided against the unclear 19 g4 and avoided his trap 19 Nxc6? Rxc6 20 Bxd5 Rxc1 21 Nxc1 Nxd5 22 Re5 Be6 when Black keeps the extra piece.

### 19...Nxf4?!

This doesn't quite work for him although other moves leave me standing slightly better anyway.

**20 Nxf7! Ned5 21 Nd6 Rcd8 22 Nxf5 Rxf5 23 g3 Nh3+ 24 Kg2 Ng5 25 h4 Nf3?**

Here 25...Nf7 was expected as I could find no win despite being able to get rooks to the 7<sup>th</sup> rank in the line 26 Bxd5 cxd5 27 Rc7, but instead 26 g4 Rf6 27 g5 Rfd6 may favour White.

### 26 Re4

This threatens to trap his Knight by Rf4.

### 26...Rdf8 27 Be2

Renews Rf4 threat; 27 Rf1 also comes into consideration but may transpose.

### 27...g5 28 Rf1! Nf4+

28...Nxb4+ 29 gxb4 Nxf4 30 Kh2 Nxe2 31 Rxf5 Rxf5 32 Rxe2 gxb4 33 Rc2 should win for White in the end so long as he retains one pawn. So Black has

to go for an ending with Rook versus Bishop and Knight and equal pawns.

**29 Rxf4 Nxb4+ 30 Rxh4 Rxf1 31 Bxf1 gxf4 32 gxf4 Ra8 33 Nd2 Kg7 34 Kf3 Ra2 35 Nc4 b5 36 Ne5 Rxb2 37 Nxc6 b4**

Now 38 Ke3 and 39 Bd3 and 39 Bc4 all came into consideration, but an unexpected thing happened at this point. In a correspondence tournament, all games start at the same time but some go faster than others. Now I was in the situation of needing a point and a half from my last two games for my International Master norm and expected to get the win from this ending. Then my opponent in the other game missed a drawing line and lost. So suddenly, why take any risk or make more effort?

**38 Bc4**  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

I offered a draw to secure the IM norm and two weeks later my second norm, in another event played simultaneously, was also secured.

Next, Counsel for the Black pieces will tell us why he thinks Black is OK.

I won't deny that the move 3 Bc4 can lead to exciting and even beautiful wins for White, especially in high-speed hacks on Internet sites, but it is no more suited to that medium than any other slightly eccentric or forgotten debut. To choose 3 Bc4 instead of, say, the Scotch (3 d4) or the Ruy Lopez (3 Bb5) in competitive chess, White needs more than the minimal advantage which he gets anyway by virtue of moving first.

As my learned friend said in his opening remarks last year, White 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. I would contend this is an impossible task for White.

Counsel for White has not made a convincing case. Let us look at a few details.

In the old main line with 7 Nc3 (Moeller Attack) he originally offered us the game Steinitz v Von Bardeleben: charming but hardly critical for theory! He did not discuss 7...Nxe4 at all.

In the line with 13...h6 with 17 Qxb7 where Tim Harding used Estrin's 21 Nd4 idea and drew with Lindblom, what can I say? A strong correspondence player who has been one of the world's leading experts in the opening for 20 years managed to get a draw with White — against an opponent who didn't play the most critical line as Black didn't want to run the risk of losing, (See

Tim's article in 'Chess Mail' 11/1999). I call that a 'reductio ad absurdum' of the whole idea.

In Counsel's latest submission, he has to fall back on Bayonet Attack where admittedly he has found an alternative for White in Rüfenacht-Smit. Probably the grandmasters looked at this but did not think it worth mentioning. The variation 15 Nxf7 Rxf7 16 Re3 Ng6 17 Rg3 which my learned friend says is favoured by Junior7 is assessed as better for Black by today's strongest commercially available computer program, Shredder 6. I do agree, however, that the Bayonet Attack is worth trying again — so that I can score some more points as Black!

Again in the 7 Bd2 line, Counsel for White showed us a pretty queen sacrifice but Rossolimo's miniature is not theoretically significant. I don't believe that the new examples he has shown today make any real difference to the theoretical standing of the variation either.

At the crucial point, Black's 15<sup>th</sup> move in the game Harding v Montecatine Rios, the Spanish player should have followed the game Rossolimo-Unzicker, Heidelberg 1949. With 15...Rd8! (instead of 15...Bf5) 16 Nc5 Rb8 17 Ne5 Kf8 Black met the threats calmly instead of indulging in pseudo-active moves like ...Bf5 until the time is right. After 18 h3 b6 19 axb6 axb6 20 Ncd3 f6 White was pushed back (21 Nf3 Bf5 ½-½).

His third line, the slow variation with d3, may have had a vogue in the 1980s but White has virtually stopped playing this – and anyway this strategy is not the lively tactical game which my learned friend wants to recommend to improving juniors and tactical players.

The Canal Variation and other minor lines, of which he showed example, may be suited to a quick hack on the Internet but are not serious 21<sup>st</sup> century chess.

The Judge now presents his summing up.

Both counsel for White and for Black have made interesting arguments and presented plausible examples in support of their cases. It is not for me to decide which of them has made the better case: that is your task! At the end of this column you will find a link to a voting form where you can answer whether, in your opinion, White or Black has made their case.

In my capacity as judge, I should like to make some general remarks, however.

The Giuoco Piano is a very old opening, although its main lines as we know them today did not take shape until the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Its reputation has probably suffered from the perception that it is a beginner's

opening from which mature players soon progress to something more interesting.

Many books that deal with it tend to give weak moves for one side or the other — for didactic purposes, better to illustrate some useful theme about the centre or development or king safety. The slow and symmetrical versions of the opening have the reputation of being drawish and boring, while the sharp variations are often considered over-sharp and unsound.

Looking at this opening from the standpoint of Mount Olympus, my view after hearing the arguments on both sides is that this is not an opening we can expect the Gods to play. Assuming that we are to have a 1 e4 e5 open game at all, many other openings seem to pose deeper and more intractable problems more suited for a duel between, say, Hercules and Mars. I am thinking of the Ruy Lopez, of course, but also of the Scotch or even the King's Gambit. In those openings, finding answers that are likely to stand for eternity — or even a few years of time on the human scale — is much less likely than in the Giuoco Piano which, I suspect, has in many of its principal variations been essentially solved.

However, most of us don't play chess on Mount Olympus, or — to put it another way — on the level where human grandmasters and the top chess computer programs are fighting it out for supremacy. Most of us play quick games on the Internet, or friendly social games, or in club tournaments and local leagues, or perhaps in regional tournaments, or we play correspondence chess by post, email or web server.

What you, members of the jury, are being asked to decide is NOT whether this opening would give winning chances for Hercules against Mars, or for Vladimir Kramnik against Deep Fritz.

You are being asked whether this is an opening that the average player in a normal amateur-chess context, could effectively play on a regular basis. That is the test.

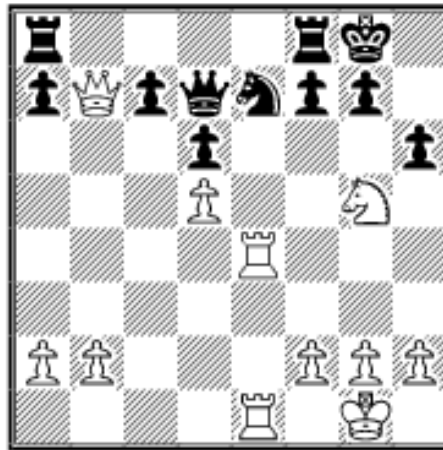
There seem to be about five critical positions. White must either make the 7 Nc3 line work or the 7 Bd2 line work. In the 7 Nc3 variation, he must either justify the line used in Harding-Lindblom (positions 1 and 2) or he must try the Bayonet Attack (see position 3).

If neither of those work, then White must play 7 Bd2 which is the move favoured by theory. At least White is not in danger of being worse in that line. If both Position 4 and Position 5 are good for White, then Black is in trouble in the 7 Bd2 line. If one or other is satisfactory for Black, then Black is OK.

To help you make your decision, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, you can

download the relevant games featured in this article from my website,  
<http://www.chessmail.com/freegames.html>.

Now here are the five positions for you to examine.

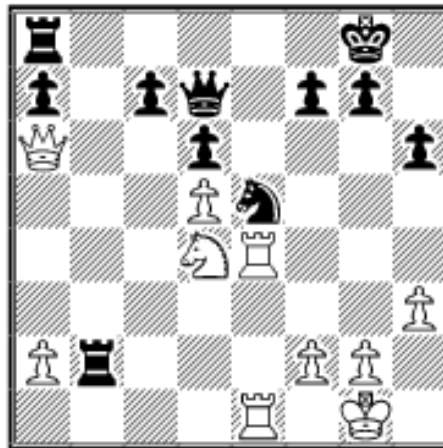


1. In the 7 Nc3 line with 13...h6.

Theory claims Black is much better in this line but the Counsel for White begs to differ.

There are two critical moments in the game Harding-Lindblom that we saw above.

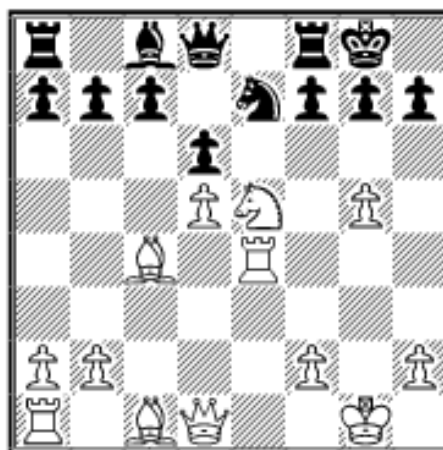
Can Black play 18...Rab8!? here?



2. In the 7 Nc3 line with 13...h6, later in the same game.

This is the position after White's 22<sup>nd</sup> second move in Harding-Lindblom. Black to play.

Did either player miss something strong in the remainder of this game?



3. In the 7 Nc3 Bayonet Attack line.

This is the position after White's 14<sup>th</sup> (Rüfenacht-Smit) discussed above.

Black (to play) has two possibilities here: the old 14...dxe5 recommended by Keres, and the 14...Bf5 played by Smit. White needs to get good play in both these lines for the Bayonet Attack to be viable; Black only needs to make one or other of the two defensive

strategies work for him.

4. In the 7 Bd2, 10...Na5 line.

Defense Counsel claims that 10...Na5 is just as good as the classical

10...Nce7 and it has two advantages:

- a) There is much less theory about it;
- b) White is immediately faced with the dilemma of avoiding a draw by repetition, if that is Black's intention.

However, maybe there is a way for White to avoid the draw without allowing Black comfortable equality in some other way. You have to decide and the following position is where you need to look.

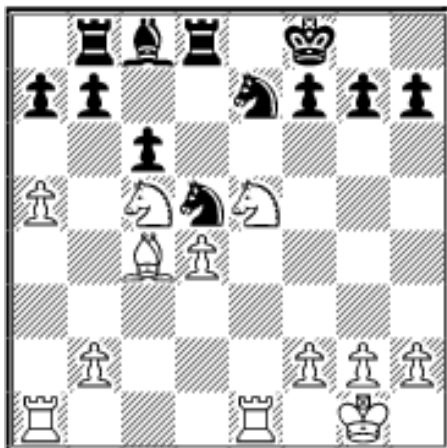


This is the position after 12 Bb5 in Lyne-Harding (see The Kibitzer 94) and Zelcic-Mamedyarov (above). Black to play.

5. In the 7 Bd2, 10...Nce7 line.

In the Prosecution case last September, we saw White win quickly in the game Rossolimo-Reissman in which Black played 10...Nce7 but followed up with some weak moves. In today's article, Counsel for White strengthened his case with some new examples, but the Counsel for Black says that Rossolimo-Unzicker is the game to follow.

Here is the crucial position from that game, after 17 Ne5 Kf8.



Peter Boll - J. Thorn Leeson  
Netherlands corr, 1978

White improved on the Rossolimo game with 18 Ra3! and won quickly.

The continuation was 18...b6 19 axb6 axb6 20 Ne4! f6 21 Rf3 Bb7 22 Nd3 Ra8 23 Ng5 Bc8 (if 23...Kg8 24 Rxe7) 24 Nxh7+ Kg8 25 Nxf6+ and Black resigned (25...gxf6 26 Rxe7).

If you cannot find a big improvement for Black, then this line is good for

White and Black would have to go back to 10...Na5.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury, you may now retire and consider your verdict!

You can vote immediately if you want but we prefer you come back in a few days after you have really thought about it. Then cast your vote in the form provided.

I vote for White

I vote for Black

***Comments:***

We also welcome new games and analysis to be considered in the final article of the series.

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