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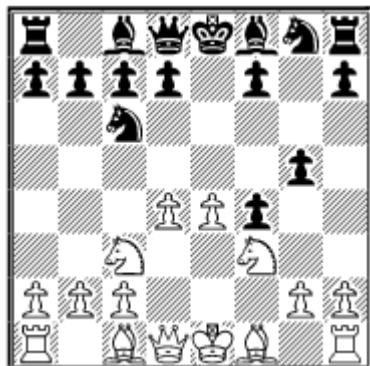
The Kibitzer

Tim Harding



Introduction to the Pierce Gambit

The Pierce Gambit is a branch of the Vienna, arising from 1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 and now the characteristic move: 5 d4.



In this article I will outline the origins and main lines of the gambit with a few games.

Next month I will look at the theory in more detail and a final article later in the year will cover additional historical or modern information that may come to light, and try to come to some conclusions. If any readers have played games with this gambit, with White or Black, please send them in for possible inclusion in my follow-up.

I shall not be surprised if, in the final analysis, this gambit turns out to be unsound but there's no reason why we cannot have a lot of fun with it along the way, and who knows, maybe something will turn up?

A little about the Pierces

The gambit is characterised by White's fifth move, played with the intention of sacrificing the knight if Black replies 5...g4. The gambit gets its name from English master William Timbrell Pierce (1839-1922) and his brother James Pierce (1833-1892). The first mention of it was apparently in the January 1886 issue of *British Chess Magazine*, to which they both regularly contributed, and several more articles followed in *BCM*.

They played a lot of test games with the line, both in friendly and correspondence tournaments, including many games between the two brothers. Chess players in Brighton, Sussex (where James lived, although he was born in London), also held a tournament in 1886 to investigate the gambit.

Numerous articles about it appeared during the later 1880s and 1890s, both before and after the publication of their slim volume towards the end of 1888. Page 363 of *BCM* for that year announces the publication of **Pierce Gambit, Chess Papers and Problems** by James and W.T.Pierce. They had co-written an earlier collection of chess problems in 1873.

Timbrell Pierce was the main author of the Pierce Gambit section, which begins the book and continues to page 47. He also contributed some chess problems to it. The more literary material was written by his elder brother James, who (according to *BCM*) also published a volume of poetry the following year under the title *In Cloud and Sunshine*.

James Pierce, a Cambridge MA, was also an organizer of correspondence and problem tournaments through the *English Mechanic* and *Brighton Guardian*. It

was in the *English Mechanic* CC tournament of 1885 that the following historic game was played; this game was published in that January 1886 *BCM* article. The loser was also an organiser of CC tournaments in the 1880s, in which at least one of the Pierces played.

W.T. Pierce – William Nash
English Mechanic tourney corr, 1885

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 5 Bc4

BCM says that White intended to play his new idea 5 d4 but made the usual move instead by a clerical error; however, the game transposes after White's 6th move. The Pierces appear to have "normalised" the move order in their book and later sources followed.

5...g4

With the old 5 Bc4 move order Black is under less pressure to play this move, whereas Pierce's improvement 5 d4 creates the threat of d4-d5 in some lines.

5...Bg7 (preventing d2-d4) is better and after 6 0-0:

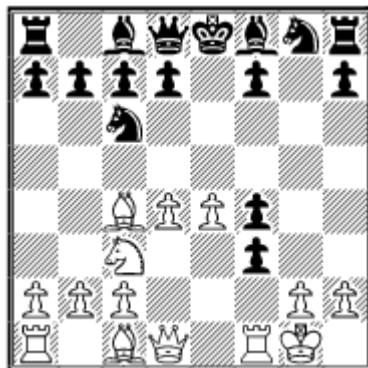
a) Bernhard von Guretzky-Cornitz v Max Lange, corr 1861, went 6...d6 7 d4 h6 with a Hanstein Gambit formation where White's Nc3 is less flexible than the usual c2-c3. In the Pierce Gambit proper, the same position can arise via 5 d4 Bg7 6 Bc4 d6 7 0-0 h6, which was soon abandoned for White because he can play 6 d5 instead (see below).

b) W.T.Pierce gives 6...g4 7 d3 gxf3 8 Qxf3 Bxc3 9 bxc3 Nf6 "with the advantage" but this is actually good for White after 10 Bxf4 or 10 Qxf4. There is no need for Black to surrender his good bishop at move eight!

6 d4

A game from the McCutcheon-Pollock correspondence match in the early 1890s went instead 6 0-0 gxf3 7 Qxf3 Qf6 8 Nd5 Qd4+!? 9 Kh1 Qxc4? 10 d3 (varying from 10 Qxf4 as played in Hampe-Horsky, Vienna 1856) 10...Qd4 11 Nxc7+ Kd8 12 Bxf4 d6 13 c3 Qg7 14 Nxa8 and White eventually won, but this was not a Pierce Gambit. Does anyone have more details of that match?

6...gxf3 7 0-0



We now have the main position of the Pierce Gambit Accepted. Black has a wide choice of moves. Confronted with a new position, Nash makes a poor choice.

7...Qg5 8 Rxf3 Nxd4 9 Bxf7+

Not 9 Qxd4? Bc5.

9...Kxf7?

This loses immediately but 9...Kd8 offers little more hope after 10 Rf2. P.Motwani-

R.Kula, Berlin 1991, ended 10...Qg7 11 Bxf4 Ne7 12 Qh5 d6 13 Bg5 Nxc2 14 Raf1 Qe5 15 Bg8 Qc5 16 Kh1 Kd7 17 Rxf8 Ng6 18 Rd8+ Kc6 19 Bd5+ 1-0.

10 Rxf4+ Nf6 11 Nd5 Qe5

Giving up the queen by 11...Ne6 12 Rxf6+ Qxf6 just prolongs the agony. Motwani-Antunes, Manila ol 1992, continued 13 Nxf6 Bc5+ 14 Kh1 Kxf6 15 Qh5 h6 16 b4! Bd4 17 c3 Bxc3 18 Qf3+ followed by Qxc3 and 1-0 in a few more moves.

12 Rxf6+ Kg8 1-0

The Pierce book says that White announced mate in 12 moves, but admits that it could be accomplished much quicker **13 Qg4+ Bg7** (if here 13...Qg5 14 Qxg5+ Bg7 15 Ne7 mate) and now instead of **14 Bh6?!** Timbrell Pierce subsequently found **14 Qxg7+ Kxg7 15 Bh6+ Kg8 16 Rf8#**.

After this game, 5 d4 became established as the correct way to play the Pierce Gambit and the line was extensively examined by the Pierce brothers in the next three years. It also appeared in a few OTB master games. I suppose it is possible that 5 d4 and even the Pierce's sacrifice was known in the 18th century or earlier but I don't have any supporting evidence of this.

The following game was one of the main ones included in the Pierce book.

W.T.Pierce – H.F. Cheshire

corr, 1886

(Notes based on those by W.Timbrell Pierce)

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4

In his introduction, Pierce also examines 3 d4 (the Fyfe Gambit), introduced in 1883 by a Mr. Fyfe of the Glasgow Chess Club. He said Black should reply 3...Nxd4.

3...exf4 4 Nf3

4 d4 is the Steinitz Gambit.

4...g5 5 d4

This is the true Pierce Gambit. "It is an attempt to graft the Muzio on to the Vienna stem," wrote Timbrell Pierce, "in a similar manner to the now fashionable Hampe-Allgaier, and, like the latter, it produces many difficult and new features."

The Hampe-Allgaier Gambit (5 h4 g4 6 Ng5) was examined in an earlier Kibitzer series. The prefix 'Hampe' (a bow to one of the inventors of the Vienna) implies a form of King's Gambit with the moves 2 Nc3 Nc6 included. Of course there cannot be a Hampe-Kieseritsky because 6 Ne5?? would be met by ...Nxe5.

5...g4

A different branch of the gambit, to be considered later, arises if Black prefers quiet play by 5...d6 or 5...Bg7 to accepting the knight sacrifice.

6 Bc4

At the 6th German Congress, Breslau 1889, Louis Paulsen rather missed the point and played here 6 Ne5? Nxe5 7 dxe5 Qh4+ 8 Ke2 against Isidor Gunsberg who, presumably taken by surprise, answered feebly with 8...b6; the game continued 9 Qd3 f3+ 10 gxf3 gxf3+ 11 Kd1 Bb7 12 Qxf3 0-0-0 13 Be3 and White won in 26 moves. The immediate 8...f3+ would have been much more awkward for Paulsen as his king would have been driven to d3.

In the *Handbuch*, Schlechter just gives 6 Bc4 an exclamation mark and analyses nothing else.

6...gxf3

“The reason for advancing the pawn would be lost if the knight were not at once taken.”

7 0-0

This is the main line but the Pierces said 7 Bxf4 was also possible. Now we have the position where Nash played 7...Qg5 in the stem game.

7...d6

“This is certainly one of Black's best (if not the very best) defences,” said Pierce, also indicating the possibilities 7...Nxd4 (see the end of this article), 7...d5, 7...Ne5 etc. which he analysed later, and which we shall look at in a future article.

8 Qxf3 Be6

First played in this game. "It is an excellent move, as it necessitates the exchange of bishops, and every exchange manifestly tends to weaken White's game."

9 Bxe6 fxe6 10 Bxf4

“Perhaps White might improve on his 10th move by playing 10 Qh5+; then after 10...Kd7 11 d5 Nd4 12 Rxf4 and the position is a difficult one for both sides.”

10...Qf6

This is Black's best move said Pierce in the book.

a) 10...Nxd4 11 Qh5+ Kd7 12 Be5 dxe5 13 Qxe5 (WTP);

b) 10...Nge7 11 Bg5 Kd7 12 d5 Ne5 13 dxe6+ Kc8! 14 Qf6 N5g6 15 e5 "and White's game for choice" (WTP);

c) 10...Qe7 11 Qh5+ Kd7 12 d5 Nd8 (12 ..Ne5? 13 Bxe5 dxe5 14 Rf7) 13 Bg5 Qg7 14 dxe6+ Kc8 15 Qe8 etc. (Curt von Bardeleben in the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, May 1888, cited in addendum on page 47 of Pierce book);

d) 10...Bg7 11 d5 Nd4 12 Qh5+ Kd7 13 Bg5 Nf6 (13 ..Qe8 14 Qf7+) 14 Qf7+ Qe7 15 dxe6+ Nxe6 16 Qxe7+ Kxe7 17 Nd5+ winning back the piece sacrificed (Von Bardeleben).

11 e5

Better than 11 d5 which would lead to 11...Nd4 12 Qd3 e5 etc.

11...Qg7

Pierce said "It is imperative to move the Q for if 11...dxe5 12 dxe5 Nxe5 13 Bxe5 wins at once", but this doesn't seem so obvious as Black could play 12...Qg6.

The point of 11...Qg7 was to defend the bishop, but according to analysis in the Pierce book, Black should prefer 11 ...Qg6! 12 exd6 cxd6 (If 12...0-0-0 13 dxc7 gaining three pawns for his piece sacrificed, with the better position, or 12...Bxd6 13 Bxd6 threatening Qf8+.) and now:

a) F.S.Pilleau-W.T.Pierce, corr (probably 1887) went 13 Be5 Bg7 14 Nb5 dxe5 15 Nc7+ Kd7 16 Nxa8 e4 17 Qb3 Kc8 ("Black still had to exercise considerable care to avoid complications.") 18 d5 exd5 19 Qxd5 Nge7 ("He is now pretty safe from all danger.") 20 Qc4 Bd4+ 21 Kh1 Nf5 (Threatening 22...Ng3+ 23 hxg3 Qh6 mate) 22 Rf4 Qxg2+!? (Flashy, but probably not best) 23 Kxg2 Ne3+ 24 Kh1 Nxc4 25 Rxe4 Bxb2 26 Rg1 (26 Rb1 Nd2) 26...Nd6 27 Reg4 Ne7 28 c4 Kd7? (Timbrell Pierce indicated 28...Kb8 ensuring the win of the knight.) 29 c5 Ndf5 30 Rb1 Rxa8 31 Rxb2 b6 32 cxb6 axb6 33 Rxb6 Rxa2 34 Rg2 ½-½.

b) Detailed analysis in the Pierce book (pages 9-10) concentrated on 13 d5. "White has a considerable amount of attack still left, though whether sufficient to win with is not so evident... Without attempting a complete analysis of the position, it will be well to show some pitfalls Black must endeavour to avoid."

Pierce's main line went 13...Nd4 (not 13...e5, for then 14 Bxe5 winning a piece) 14 Qf2 when:

b1) 14 ...Nxc2? 15 Rac1 (or perhaps 15 Nb5 at once) 15 ...Nb4 16 Nb5 Nxd5 17 Be5 Bg7 18 Bxg7 Qxg7 19 Nxd6+ followed by Nf7 and White should win.

b2) 14...Bg7 15 Bxd6 0-0-0 (15...Nxc2 16 Nb5) 16 Nb5 Rd7 (16..Nxb5 17 Qc5+ Kd7 18 dxe6+ Qxe6 19 Qxb5+ Kxd6 20 Rad1+ Kc7 21 Qc5+ Qc6 22 Rf7+ Kc8 23 Qf5+ and wins) 17 Nxa7+ Kd8 18 Qf8+ Bxf8 19 Rxf8+ Qe8 20 Rxe8+ Kxe8 21 Be5 and White wins.

"The above will perhaps suffice to show that Black's position [after 11 e5...13 d5] is a somewhat delicate one, although it can hardly be pronounced desperate. There are quite enough chances for each side to keep up the interest for some time."

12 d5 Nd4

If 12...Nxe5 White wins by 13 Bxe5 dxe5 14 Qh5+ etc., and if 12...dxe5 13 dxc6 exf4 14 cxb7 etc. (WTP).

13 Qe4 c5 14 exd6 Nf6 15 Qe5 Rg8

"A well-timed move," said Pierce, saying that "had he now played 15...Ng4 White would have continued 16 d7+! Kxd7 17 dxe6+ Ke8 18 Qh5+ Qg6 19 Qd5 Rd8 20 Qxb7 etc., or 15...Nd7 16 Qh5+ Qg6 17 Qxg6+ hxg6 18 dxe6 Nxe6 19 Rae1 Kf7 20 Be5+."

16 Bg3 Ng4 17 Qe4 Qg6

If 17...Nf6 White's only chance of avoiding draw is 18 Rxf6 Qxf6 19 dxe6 and White still has a very strong attack (WTP).

18 d7+ Kd8

"He could not safely have taken the pawn."

19 Qxg6

"White's best hope, for if 19 Qf4 e5 20 Qxf8+ Rxf8 21 Rxf8+ Kxd7 22 Rxa8 and Black should win" (WTP).

19...hxg6 20 Rf7 Be7

Black had to provide against Bh4+ etc.

21 d6 Bg5**22 Raf1?**

"An error, which loses the game. A little examination will show that 22 Re1 will win." Timbrell Pierce analysed:

a) 22...Bd2 23 Ne4 Bxe1 24 Nxc5 Rb8 25 Bxe1 g5 26 Bd2 Ne2+ 27 Kf1 Nf4 28 Bxf4 gxf4 29 Nxe6#.

b) 22...a5 23 Ne4 Bh6 24 Nxc5 Rb8 25 Rxe6 or h3 etc.

c) 22...b6 23 Ne4 Bh6 24 h3 Ne3 25 Be5 Nd5 26 c4 etc.

d) 22...Nf5 (or 22...Nf6 23 Re5 etc.) 23 Ne4 Nxc3 24 Nxc5 etc.

e) 22...Nh6 23 Rh7 Nh5 24 Ne4 Nxc3 25 Nxc5 Ngf5 26 Rxe6 Nb5 27 Ne4 anything, 28 g4, winning in every case.

f) 22 ..Be3+ 23 Rxe3 Nxe3 24 Bf4 Nef5 25 Bg5+ Ne7 26 Rxe7+.

22...Be3+ 23 Kh1 Nf5 24 Rf3 Nxc3+ 25 Rxc3 Ne5 26 Rxe3 Nxf7 27 Rxe6 Rf8
("and Black ultimately won") 0-1.

Pierce Gambit Declined

The Pierces also considered how to meet the line where Black plays more conservatively, not grabbing the knight. On page 32 of their book, I find the following statement: "In this defence, which may be called the Gambit declined, Black elects to develop [sic] his own game, before running after the Kt and so incurring the risks of having to contend against a strong, if not insuperable attack..."

The move order they mostly consider is [1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 5

d4] 5...d6 ("or 5...Bg7") 6 Bc4 Bg7 (or "...d6"), with the comment that "The order in which Black plays his 5th and 6th moves seems to be immaterial". This is the position after 5...d6 6 Bc4 Bg7:



However, that is only the case if White's sixth move is Bc4, as William Timbrell Pierce was playing in the early years of the gambit – by 1890 he was preferring 6 d5. The Pierce book has six pages on this obsolete line, which is the same Hanstein-type position which we already saw in the notes to Pierce-Nash, i.e. after 7 0-0 h6 it's a transposition to Von Guretzky-Cornitz against Lange. However, instead of 8 g3 in that game, which quite possibly the Pierces were unaware of, they favoured 8 e5 and also considered 8 Ne2.

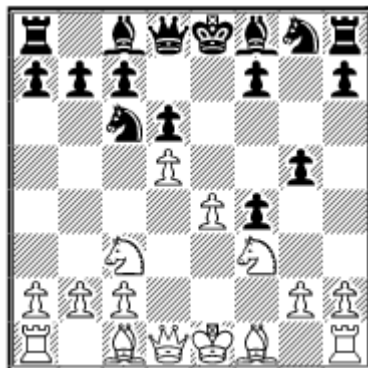
When White plays 6 d5 then it makes a tremendous difference whether Black's fifth move was 5...Bg7 or 5...d6. White does not capture the knight in either case, one variation would bring a pawn to e5, and the other a bishop. After 5...d6 6 d5 Ne5 White usually gives a bishop check on b5, whereas after 5...Bg7 6 d5 Ne5 he can choose between 7 d6, 7 Nd4 and 7 h4. These lines with an early d4-d5 attacking the black knight make the Pierce Gambit quite distinctive compared with other King's Gambit and Vienna Gambit variations.

Here is an early example for White of 5...d6 being met by 6 d5; indeed it is the only one in the Pierce book. In this case, the white pieces were played by James.

James Pierce – F.S. Pilleau

corr, circ. 1887-88

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 5 d4 d6 6 d5



6...Ne5

Black doesn't have much choice since 7...Ne7 loses the g-pawn and 7...Na5 loses the knight to 8 b4. The only alternative would be 7...Nb8. The Pierce Gambit book also gives the line 6...g4 7 dxc6 gxf3 8 Qxf3 Qh4+ (the *Handbuch* has 8...bxc6 9 Bc4) 9 g3 fxg3 10 hxg3 Qd8 11 cxb7 Bxb7 12 Bc4.

7 h4!?

The Pierce book says this is "not nearly so good" as the bishop check which is almost always played nowadays.

The main line is 7 Bb5+! Bd7 (7...c6 has not been tried, but the Pierce book gives 8 dxc6 bxc6 9 Nxe5 cxb5! 10 Qd5 Be6 11 Qxb5+ with advantage to White and 8...Nxc6 when 9 Qd4 seems better than their line 9 Qd5 h6 10 Bxc6+ bxc6 11 Qxc6+ Bd7 12 Qa6 "and the game seems pretty even, White for preference.") 8 Bxd7+ and now analysis on page 38 of the Pierce book gives:

a) 8...Qxd7? 9 Nxe5.

b) 8...Nxd7 9 Qd4 (9 h4!? might be considered.) 9...Qf6 10 Qxf6 and 11 Nxc5 – but this has been played a few times in recent years and is not so clear. I will discuss this line next month.

c) 8...Kxd7 9 g3 and now:

c1) 9...fxg3 (If 9...Nxf3+ 10 Qxf3 h6 11 Qg4+ Ke8 12 gxf4 or here 10...fxg3 11 Qxf7+.) 10 Nxe5+ dxe5 11 Qg4+ Ke8 12 Qxg3 f6 13 Bxg5! "White has regained his Gambit pawn and has by far the best position."

c2) "Has he anything better?" the Pierces asked. The *Handbuch* gives 9...h5! 10 gxf4 Nxf3+ 11 Qxf3 g4 12 Qd3 Qh4+ 13 Ke2 a6 (Woods-Kempson, corr 1892) 14 Be3 Bg7 15 e5! Nh6 16 e6+ fxe6 17 dxe6+ Kxe6 18 Ne4 "with a very strong attack."

7...Bh6 8 Bb5+

"It might be better to play 8 hxg5 or Nxc5 and so weaken the advanced f-pawn and obtain an open file for the KR."

8...Bd7 9 Bxd7+ Kxd7

Or 9...Nxd7 10 hxg5 Bxg5 11 g3! Qf6! 12 Nxc5 Qxg5 13 Bxf4.

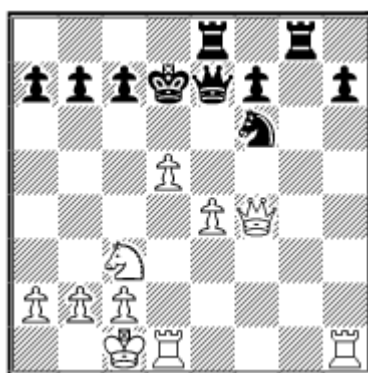
10 Nxe5+

Again 10 Nxc5 seems preferable.

10...dxe5 11 g3 Nf6 12 hxg5 Bxg5 13 Qf3 Qe7

"He had no means of saving the pawn."

14 gxf4 exf4 15 Bxf4 Bxf4 16 Qxf4 Rac8 17 0-0-0 Rhg8



18 Nb5?!

Premature; 18 Qf5+ is better.

18...Qe5 19 Rdf1 Rg6 20 Nc3 Re7 21 Rh4 Qd4

"Threatening ...Rg2 but it serves White's game too much and gives him the chance of a pretty combination."

22 Nb5 Qc4 23 Qf5+ Kd8 24 d6! cxd6 25 Nxd6 Qe6 26 e5 Qxf5 27 Rxf5 Rg1+ 28

Kd2 Ng4 29 Nxf7+ Kd7 30 Rxh7 Rg2+ 31 Kd3 Rxc2 32 Kxc2 Ne3+ 33 Kd3 Nxf5 34 Ke4 Nd6+ 35 Kd5 Nf5

If 35...Nxf7 36 Rxf7 Rxf7 37 e6+ Ke7 38 exf7 Kxf7 39 Kd6 White wins easily.

36 e6+ Kc7

If 36...Rxe6 37 Ne5+.

37 Rh3 Ng7 38 Rc3+ Kb8 39 Ng5 Ne8 40 Rf3 Kc8 41 Rf8 Kd8 42 Ne4 Rg7 43 Rf7 Nc7+ 44 Kd6 Ne8+ 45 Ke5 Rg4 46 Rd7+ Kc8 47 Nd6+ Nxd6 48 Kxd6 Rg2 49 Rc7+ Kb8 50 Rf7 1-0

The conclusions reached by Timbrell Pierce in his book can only be viewed as provisional, because the gambit was still very new at this stage. He continued to investigate the opening for many more years. Schlechter's 8th edition of *Bilguers Handbuch* quotes on page 637 some analysis that Pierce published as late as 1912, when he was in his seventies, and he was still playing postal chess right up to his death in 1922.

On page 4 of their book, the Pierces apologise for including many illustrative games played by themselves; "this was an unfortunate necessity, for the Opening being quite new, we were unable otherwise to procure examples." This seems to indicate that they did not always see games in foreign publications but foreigners had certainly spotted the debate in *BCM* because Paulsen and Schallopp both played 5 d4 at the 5th German Congress in Frankfurt, 1887, but these games do not appear in the Pierce book!

However, an addendum (page 47) does include some analysis published by Curt von Bardeleben in the *Deutsche Schachzeitung*, May 1888.

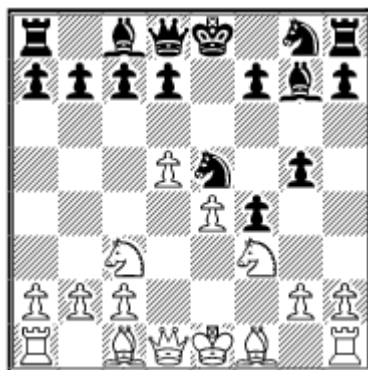
Louis Paulsen – Berthold Englisch

5th DSB–Congress, Frankfurt 1887

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 5 d4 Bg7 6 d5

First played by Mackenzie according to the *Handbuch*, but I have not yet found the game in which this happened. This variation is not in the Pierce book.

6...Ne5



7 d6

7 Nd4 was the Pierce's first try but it is weaker. It was played for example in W.T.Pierce-J.Pierce from the 1890 *English Mechanic* correspondence tournament (*BCM* November 1890) and again in J.Pierce-T.G.Hart, corr 1890 (*BCM* 1891 page 211).

Then the Pierces came up with 7 h4!? as an improvement, since it makes it harder for Black to transfer his knight to g6 to defend

h8. Opening the h-file gives play similar to the Philidor Gambit.

W.T.Pierce used this move to defeat Hart in the 1891 *English Mechanic* tournament (*BCM* 1891 page 558) but it seems they had not seen Paulsen-Englisch, or else were not impressed by it.

After 7 h4 h6 8 g3 fxg3 9 hxg5 hxg5 10 Rxh8 Bxh8 11 Nxc5, Hart played 11...Bf6 which may be good for Black, but the openings treatise by Freeborough & Ranken then gave 11...d6 as best, suggesting 12 Qh5 or 12 Be3 or 12 Bf4 or

12 Bg2. An article by W.T.Pierce then appeared in *BCM* 1893 (page 115) replying to Ranken. Apparently a Rev C.A.H.Woods had suggested to him that 12 Bb5+ may be better. Pierce gives lots of variations resulting from a long correspondence between them.

However, 7 d6 is almost certainly the critical move, to exploit Black's failure to play ...d6 himself.

7...Nxf3+

7...c6 is a major alternative nowadays and will be examined next month. If 7...cxd6 8 Nb5 or 8 h4 (*Handbuch*).

8 Qxf3 cxd6

If 8...c6, as played in Schalopp-Von Gottschall in a later round of the Frankfurt tournament, then 9 h4! becomes even stronger.

a) 9...h6 10 Bc4 b5 11 Bb3 occurred in a game Hotchkiss-McClure, corr 1931, won by White, but not that convincingly. It looks better to attack the black pawn chain immediately by 10 g3 as in A.Delanoy-G.Montavon, Geneva 2001, which continued 10...Be5 11 hxg5 hxg5 12 Rxh8 Bxh8 13 gxf4 gxf4 14 Bxf4. White has regained his pawn with the obviously superior game. Or if 10...fxg3 11 hxg5 hxg5 12 Rxh8 Bxh8 13 Qxg3 Black would either lose the g-pawn or become extremely weak on the light squares if he played 13...f6?!

b) 9...Be5 10 hxg5 Qxg5 11 Rh5 Qf6. In a game O.de la Riva-Aguado-F.Izeta Txabarri, Toledo 1991, White played here 12 Rf5 and eventually lost, but the *Handbuch* had already shown White's correct continuation 75 years earlier: 12 Rxe5+ Qxe5 13 Bxf4.

9 h4

GM Jonny Hector once won a rapid game playing 9 g3 here.

9...h6 10 Bc4



10...d5?!

This does not turn out well but modern experience suggests that White has a strong position anyway.

a) 10...Nf6 11 g3! d5! 12 Bxd5! d6 13 hxg5 hxg5 14 Rxh8+ Bxh8 15 gxf4 g4 16 Qh1 Bg7 17 f5! Qb6 18 Bb3 Bd7 19 Bf4 Bc6 20 0-0-0 0-0-0 21 Qg2 d5? (21...a5!?) 22 Nxd5 Nxd5 23 exd5 Bxd5 24 Qxg4 (better 24 Bxd5!+-) 24 ..Bf6 25 Kb1 Bxb3 26 axb3 Qb4? 27 Rxd8+ 1-0 Mikh.Tseitlin-

A.Volzhin, Hastings 1991.

b) 10...Ne7 11 g3 d5 12 Nxd5 Nxd5 13 Bxd5 d6 (J.Arnason-A.Ivanov, Saint Martin 1992) 14 gxf4 g4 15 Qb3 with a clear advantage to White according to Arnason in *Informator* 55.

11 Nxd5 Nf6 12 hxg5 hxg5 13 Rxh8+ Bxh8 14 Qc3 d6 15 g3

Now Black is clearly worse says the *Handbuch*.

15...Bg7 16 gxf4 Nh5 17 Qf3 g4 18 Qh1 Nf6 19 Bd2 Nxd5 20 Bxd5 Qb6 21 Bb3 Bxb2 22 Rb1 Qd4 23 e5 Bf5 24 Rxb2 g3 25 Qh8+ Ke7 26 Qf6+ 1-0

It would seem that Black gains nothing by declining the knight sacrifice but a more detailed look at the theory will follow next time.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Pierce Gambit made a comeback. We have already seen that it was being played by grandmasters Mikhail Tseitlin and Paul Motwani, to name but two. Now it has perhaps been returned to the scrap-heap of theory? Next month's article will look at the new main lines, but I will end this article with one modern win for White.

“Poetic ideals”

In 1893, Von Bardeleben's book *Die Wiener Partie* was published in Leipzig. It summed up roughly the first half century of experience with the Vienna Game, which had really sprung from the games of Hofrat Hampe (1814-76) and his contemporaries.

In his introduction, Von Bardeleben lamented that the theoretical investigation of gambit play nowadays has a rather academic character, because theory deals so much with traps that in practice rarely, if ever, happen any more, e.g. the Allgaier, Muzio and Kieseritsky Gambits. These gambits, he wrote, are the poetic ideals, but practical chess play is sober and unpoetic.

Yet even in recent times there have been players willing to try the Pierce Gambit, at least as a shock weapon. I will end this introductory article with the following game, since I hear you asking: “Yet isn't the gambit just unsound if Black takes the knight?” Yes, the players are low-rated but actually the loser was rated, by IECG, 500 points higher than the winner at the time!

Benito Morales Pecino (Spain, 1545) - Francesco Trani (Italy, 2075)

IECG Email 2001

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 5 d4 g4 6 Bc4 gxf3 7 0-0 Nxd4 8 Bxf4 Bc5



This looks like one of the critical positions of the Pierce Gambit Accepted right now.

9 Be3!? Ne2+ 10 Kh1 Bxe3

The stem-game of White's interesting ninth move concluded 10...fxg2+ 11 Kxg2 Nf6 12 Bxc5 Nxc3 13 Bxf7+ Kxf7 14 Qh5+ Ke6 15 Qh3+ Kf7 16 Rxf6+ Qxf6 17 Rf1 Rg8+ 18 Kh1 Nxe4 19 Qh5+ Kg7 20 Bd4 d5 21 Bxf6+ Nxf6 22 Qg5+ 1-0 H.Langborg-C.Rydberg, Nordic Congress, Stockholm 1897.

11 Bxf7+!?

This might be a bit far-fetched. The alternative is 11 Rxf3, e.g. 11...d5 12 exd5 Nxc3 13 Rxe3+ Ne7 14 Qd4 0-0 15 Qxc3 Nf5 16 Rh3 a6 17 Rf1 b5 18 Bd3 Qxd5 19 Bxf5 Bxf5 20 Rh5 Qc4 21 Qxc4 bxc4 22 Rhxf5 Rab8 23 b3 cxb3 24 cxb3 Rb5 25 Rf6 Ra5 26 a4 Rb8 27 R1f3 c5 28 R6f5 Rb7 29 g4 Kg7 30 Kg2 h6 31 g5 hxg5 32 Rxg5+ Kf8 33 h4 Rb6 34 h5 Rd6 35 Rgf5 Kg8 36 Kg3 Rd7 37 Rg5+ Kh7 38 Kg4 Rd4+ 39 Rf4 Rd7 40 Rgf5 Rd4 41 Rxd4 1-0 M.Seidel-E.B.Kruse, DESC email, Germany 2001.

11...Kxf7 12 Qxe2 Bg5 13 Rxf3+ Kg6 14 e5 d5 15 e6 Ne7 16 Raf1 h5 17 Qd3+ Nf5 18 Qxf5+ Kh6 19 Qf7 1-0

Any other ideas for White?

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