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COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding

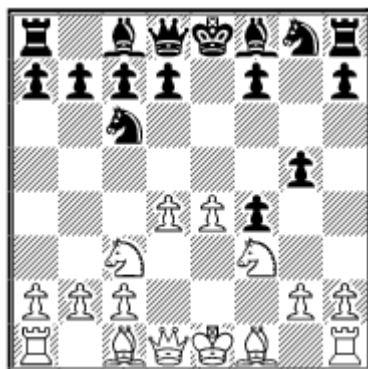


Some Theory of the Pierce Gambit

Last month I introduced the Pierce Gambit, **1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 5 d4** (see the first diagram below) without going into too much detail on the theory, in this article I want to look at some of the main lines in more depth and from a modern point of view. Later in the year I will return to this topic and try to come to some conclusions. So there is still time for readers to send in their own games or questions about this gambit; please submit them before the end of July.

By the way, if you are doing your own researches into the gambit, there is an important point to note. Although the Pierce Gambit is a branch of the Vienna, some King's Gambit books smuggle it in via the move order **1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Nf3 Nc6** ("the nameless 3...Nc6 defence" as Thomas Johansson calls it!) **4 Nc3 g5** and now **5 d4**. Yet Johansson suggests to avoid it all by **4 d4!?**. GM Joe Gallagher's book on the KG considers the Pierce Gambit on pages 113-117, while the more recent book by GM Neil McDonald (1998) considers the Pierce Gambit Accepted on pages 72-74.

An advantage of the Vienna route for White is that once Black plays **2...Nc6** rather than **2...Nf6**, he cannot really avoid the Pierce Gambit, whereas the chances of obtaining a Pierce Gambit via **2 f4** are very small. The disadvantage is that if you are determined to play a real gambit, **2...Nf6** thwarts you and have to take a different route; I would recommend **3 g3** rather than **3 f4** in that case.



After our preliminary investigation last month, we can see that there are three principal variations in the Pierce Gambit:

- a) Declined **5...d6** met by **6 d5**, almost invariably continuing **6...Ne5 7 Bb5+**;
- b) Declined **5...Bg7** met by **6 d5**, with options for White after **6...Ne5**;
- c) Accepted **5...g4 6 Bxc4 gxf3 7 0-0**, with several subdivisions according to Black's playable seventh moves.

Of these, by far the most important is c) since the Pierce Gambit can probably only be refuted by accepting it, and White may well stand better in all other variations. W. Timbrell Pierce's original line against the declined gambit, where White doesn't play **d4-d5**, has already been discarded after the previous article. Black holds the extra pawn without much risk.

Declined with 5...d6

There is one important line here, which I had promised to examine in this column.

Jon Arnason – Michael Adams
Manila ol 1992

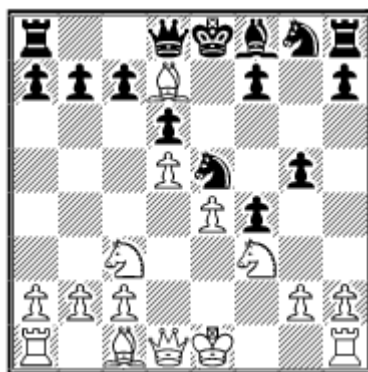
1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 5 d4 d6 6 d5

6 h4 leads into different territory: 6...g4 7 Ng5 h6 8 Nxf7 Kxf7 9 Bxf4 – the Hampe-Allgaier Gambit.

6...Ne5 7 Bb5+ Bd7

See my previous article for 7...c6.

8 Bxd7+



8...Nxd7

This is the testing reply. White can regain the gambit pawn, but whether there is much advantage afterwards is not so clear.

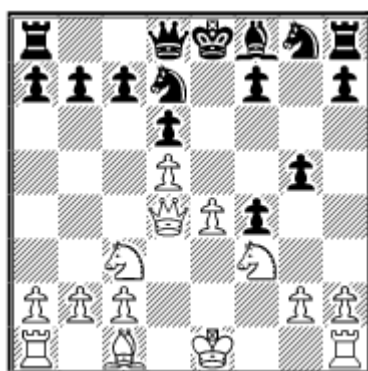
After 8...Kxd7, 9 g3 was the move analysed by the Pierces; see the previous Kibitzer in the [ChessCafe Archives](#). Also possible are 9 Nd4 (Arnason) and 9 h4 Nxf3+ (9...g4 10 Nxe5+ dxe5 11 Qxg4+ Ke8 12 g3!) 10 Qxf3 gxh4 11 Bxf4 Kc8 12 0–0–0 with clear advantage to White (Tseitlin-

Dukhovny, Kislovodsk 1984).

Or 8...Qxd7 9 Nxg5 (W.T.Pierce) Bg7 10 Bxf4 (*New In Chess Yearbook 29*).

9 Qd4!?

This is what I suggested in the previous article. Instead of 9 Qd4, White might investigate 9 h4 e.g. 9...g4 10 Nd4 or 9...Bg7 10 hxg5. I have not found any games yet with 9 h4.



9...f6

This move was not mentioned in the book by the Pierce brothers, which (on page 38) gives the line 8...Nxd7 9 Qd4 Qd6 (or 9...Ngf6 10 Nxg5 Bg7 11 Qf2) 10 Qxf6 Nxf6 11 Nxg5 etc.”

For a long time it was apparently taken for granted that this was good for White, but maybe the advantage is only slight after 11...Rg8 12 Bxf4 h6.

a) Several games have gone 13 Nf3 Rxc2 14 Bg3 Rxc2 which gives White nothing. Alternatively, there is 14 0–0–0 0–0–0 and here instead of 14 Rhg1 Rg6 16 Bg3 Re8 (draw in Mark Tseitlin-Y.Kosashvili, Tel Aviv 1992) *New In Chess Yearbook 29* claimed an edge for White with 15 Nd4.

b) 13 Nh3?! Rxd2 14 0-0-0 0-0-0 15 Rhg1 Rg6 16 Bg3 Re8 draw (Tseitlin-Kosashvili, Tel Aviv B 1992).

This is all very unconvincing; probably 9...Qf6 gives equality.

10 h4 g4

10...Ne5 is no improvement, although Black got a draw in M.Neubauer-E.Frosch, Austria Team Ch 2001. White stood clearly better after 11 hxg5 Nxf3+ 12 gxf3 Bg7 13 Bxf4 Qd7 14 Qe3 Ne7 15 0-0-0.

11 Ng5 Nc5 12 Ne6 Nxe6 13 dxe6 c6 14 Bxf4 Qb6

Or 14...Qe7 15 Qc4 Bh6 16 Bg3! Qc7 17 0-0 Be3+ 18 Kh2 0-0-0 19 Rad1 a6 20 Qd3 Ba7 21 Bxd6 Qg7 22 e5!+- Motwani-Gretarsson, Hafnarfirdi 1992.

15 Qd3 0-0-0 16 0-0-0 h5 17 Qg3 Qc7 18 Rd3 Qe7 19 Rhd1 Qxe6 20 Bxd6 Bxd6 21 Rxd6

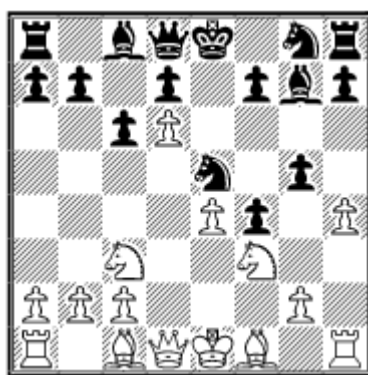
White had a clear advantage and went on to win.

21...Rxd6 22 Rxd6 Qe7 23 Qf4 Rh7 24 Ne2 Rf7 25 Qf5+ Kc7 26 Re6 Qd7 27 Qf4+ Kc8 28 Rd6 Qe7 29 Ng3 Qe5 30 Qxe5 fxe5 31 Re6 Kd7 32 Rxe5 Rf2 33 Nxe5 Rxe2 34 Rg5 Nh6 35 Rg7+ Ke8 36 Rg6 Nf7 37 Rxe4 Rh2 38 Ng7+ Ke7 39 Nf5+ Kf6 40 b3 a5 41 Rg8 Ke5 42 Rf8 Nd6 43 Nxd6 Kxd6 44 Rf4 b5 45 a3 Ke6 46 Rg4 Ke5 47 Rg6 Rxh4 48 Rxc6 Kd4 49 a4 bxa4 50 Rc4+ Ke3 51 Rxa4 Rh5 52 Kb2 Rg5 53 Rc4 Rh5 54 Ka3 Re5 55 Ka4 Kd2 56 Rc8 Kc1 57 c4 Kb2 58 Rb8 Kc3 59 Rb5 1-0.

Declined with 5...Bg7

Here the modern line that I promised to examine begins:

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 5 d4 Bg7 6 d5 Ne5 7 d6 c6 8 h4



8...Nxf3+

8...h6 was played in an early Pierce Gambit master game. L.Paulsen-J.Von Minckwitz, 6th German Congress, Breslau 1889, continued 9 Nd4 b6 10 Nf5 Kf8?! 11 hxg5 (White could also consider 11 g3 and 11 Nxe7.) 11...hxg5 12 Rxh8 Bxh8 13 Qh5 Bf6 14 Bd2 Bb7 15 Be2 Qe8 16 0-0-0 Qe6 17 g3 fxg3 18 Bxg5 Bxg5+ 19 Qxg5 Qg6 20 Qf4 Re8 21 Rg1 g2 22 Nd1 Qe6 23 Nc3 c5 24 Rxe2 Ng6 25 Qf1 Bxe4 26 Nxe4 Qxe4 27 Rxe6! Qxe2 28 Rxe8+! Kxe8 29

Qg1+ Kh8 30 Qg7# 1-0.

9 Qxf3

In fact this position was mentioned last month, by transposition from 7...Nxf3+ 8 Qxf3 c6 9 h4.

9...h6 10 g3

White can also consider 10 Bd2 followed by queenside castling (as in Y.Kucenko-A.Huzman, Ukraine Team Ch, Simferopol 1991) and 10 Bc4 Qf6 11 Bd2 Qxd6 12 0-0-0 (Danny Barash-Arkhipov, Gausdal 1991).

10...Qf6!?

This move was not in the last article, but I since found the game S.Soloviov-N.Padevsky, Val Thorens Open 1990. It is entertaining, but not very convincing and improvements for both sides should be available.

11 gxf4 Qxd6 12 e5 Qe7



13 Ne4?!

This should not work. White can consider 13 Be2 (to break the pin on the e-file so that 13...d5 can be met by 14 exd6 Qxd6 15 Ne4) or 13 hxg5 d5 14 Qd3.

13...gxf4 14 Nd6+ Kd8

14...Kf8 is possibly better. With his next move, White plans a bizarre and unnecessary queen sacrifice.

15 Bxf4?! 15...Bxe5 16 0-0-0 Qf6 17 Bxe5 Qxf3 18 Rh3 Qxd1+

The alternatives are 18...Qf2 and 18...Qxh3 19 Nxf7+ (19 Bxh3 f6) 19...Ke7 20 Bxh3 Kxf7 21 Bxh8.

19 Kxd1 f6 20 Bf4 Rh7 21 Bd3 Rg7 22 Re3 Ne7

He mustn't allow Re8+.

23 Bxh6 Rg1+ 24 Re1 Rg4

This tries to deal with the passed pawn, but it is a mistake. After 24...Rxe1+ 25 Kxe1 White's h-pawn is also a potentially winning force but it's harder to drive it forward without rooks.

25 Bf8 Nd5 26 h5 Rh4 27 h6 Kc7 28 Nf5+- Rh5 29 Bd6+ Kb6 30 c4 Nb4 31 Be4 c5 32 Rh1 1-0.

Pierce Gambit Accepted

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 Nf3 g5 5 d4 g4 6 Bc4 gxf3



Now there are three moves: 7 Bxf4?!, 7 Qxf3!? and the original main line, 7 0-0. That was examined in two games (Pierce-Cheshire, and Morales Pecino-Trani) in my previous article, so I will now look at the others but will give another example of 7 0-

0 at the end of this column, contributed by reader Michael Agermose Jensen from Denmark. He says he spent about 100 hours a few years ago trying to make the Pierce Gambit work.

A: 7 Bxf4?!

This was tried in some test games between the Pierce brothers and later suggested by Joe Gallagher, but Jensen says the bishop capture is a mistake.

a) 7...fxg2? 8 Bxf7+ and White wins according to Timbrell Pierce; half a century later this trap caught out the great Alexander Alekhine. An international tournament was held in Madrid in October 1943, but the world champion did not arrive in time to participate, possibly delayed by an attempt to obtain an exit visa for his wife from the zone of Nazi-controlled Europe. He did play in the blitz tournament at the end of the event. After 8...Kxf7 9 Qh5+ Kg7 10 Rg1 Nge7 11 Bh6+ Kg8 12 Rxg2+ Alekhine resigned. The lucky recipient of the bonus point was Francisco Jose Perez, for whom the Pierce Gambit proved to be a good choice on this occasion!

b) 7...Bg7? 8 0-0 Bxd4+ 9 Kh1 Bxc3?! 11 Bxf7+! is also winning for White according to McDonald, citing analysis by Estrin & Glazkov.

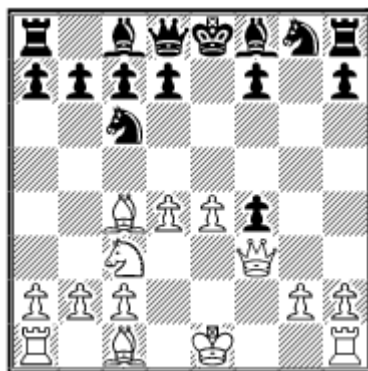
c) 7...d5 8 Nxd5 Bd6 9 e5 fxg2 10 Rg1 Qh4+ 11 Bg3 Qe4+ occurred in a game W.T.Pierce-J.Pierce; it ended in a draw but Black seems better.

d) James Pierce also tried 7...Qf6 when:

d1) Michael Jensen says that 8 Qxf3 Nxd4 9 Qf2 Nxc2+ is good for Black even though White won in Forster-Schmid, Berne op 1996.)

d2) 8 Nd5 Qxd4 ("This soon brings matters to a crisis" wrote W.T.P.) 9 Qxd4 ("Necessary as Black threatens ...fxg2.") 9...Nxd4 10 Nxc7+ Kd8 11 Nxa8 fxg2 12 Rg1 Nxc2+ 13 Kd2 Nxa1 14 Nc7 "and the game is about equal" claimed the Pierces in their 1888 book. However instead of James Pierce's 14...Bc5 (draw in 37 moves), Tseitlin & Glazkov's *The Complete Vienna* says that Black is better after 14...Bh6.

e) There is another possibility for Black. GM Neil McDonald suggested using the doomed pawn to disrupt White's king position by 7...f2+ 8 Kxf2 Bg7, but I have not seen any examples of this idea.



B: 7 Qxf3!?

This was dismissed as weak by the Pierces, but received a lot of attention when English master Ali Mortazavi tried it against the late Tony Miles.

It does lead to interesting complications. Jensen says it "is playable but with correct play Black should draw".

On the other hand, Timbrell Pierce wrote "7 Qxf3 would be bad, because of 7...Qh4+; then if 8 g3 Nxd4 etc." while an old Soviet source gives Black's best line as 7...d5 8 Bxd5 Qh4+ followed by ...Qg4. Besides those replies, Black also has

7...Nxd4 which in fact has received more attention although it cannot be a complete refutation: it should result in a very rapid perpetual check.

B1: 7...Qh4+ 8 g3 Nxd4



This is the reason why W.T.Pierce said Qxf3 would be bad.

9 Qf2 Qf6 10 Bxf4!

The defence is perhaps not so easy for Black in practice, but I am surprised it has not been examined more.

10...Bb4

10...Ne6!? could be considered too.

11 0-0 Bxc3 12 bxc3 Ne6 13 Qd2

White has some initiative, but is it enough?

13...Qe7

13...Nxf4 14 Rxf4 Qb6+ followed by ...Nh6 holds f7 for the time being but leaves Black's position woefully underdeveloped. So maybe this can be exploited.

14 Bxe6 dxe6

It doesn't seem essential to protect the c-pawn so 14...Qxe6!? could be better.

15 Rad1 Bd7?!

In such situations humans tend to like developing moves, but 15...h6 to stop White's principal threat looks critical. However, I have only seen low-level CC games with it:

a) 16 Qd3 a6 17 Rf2 f6 18 e5 f5 19 Rfd2 Rh7 20 Qf3 Kf7 21 Rd8 Kg7 22 g4 Kh8 23 gxf5 exf5 24 Kf2 Qc5+? 25 Be3 Qc4 26 e6 Qh4+ 27 Kf1 ½-½ Sisterofmerci-Sharks, web server CC game at www.playchess.de 2002.)

b) 16 Qd4 f6 17 Be5 Bd7 18 Bxf6 Nxf6 19 Rxf6 e5 20 Qf2 h5 0-1 M.Parsons-T.Avant, IECC Email 2004.

16 Bg5 f6 17 Rxf6 Qc5+??

There were several better moves, e.g. 17...Nxf6 18 Bxf6 Qc5+ 19 Bd4 Qf8 20 Bxh8 0-0-0 fights on.

18 Rf2 Qd6 19 Qe2! 1-0 F.Kreideweiss-M.Kahl, East Germany v West Germany corr 1973.

B2: 7...d5

Black applies the classic formula of giving back a pawn to gain time for development.



8 Nxd5

This was Mortazavi's choice.

a) 8 exd5 allows a queen exchange after 8...Nxd4 9 Qe4+ Qe7 (McDonald).

b) 8 Bb5 has the same objection.

c) 8 Bxd5 has been played in several games, with two lines developing:

c1) 8...Qh4+ (Glazkov) 9 g3 Qg4 (9...Nxd4 10 Qf2 Qf6 can also be considered.) 10 Qf2 (White doesn't want to exchange queens when he's a piece down.) 10...Be6 (Some computers like the odd 10...f3!?, of course 10.fxg3? loses to 12 Qxf7+.) 11 Bxf4 (11 Bxc6+ bxc6 12 Bxf4 led to a draw in Ekebjærg-Wibe, NPSF-40 corr 1983.) 11...Bd6 12 Bxc6+ bxc6 13 Bxd6 cxd6 14 d5 cxd5? (14...Bd7 was necessary.) 15 exd5 Bf5 16 0-0 Bg6 17 Rae1+ Kf8 18 Ne4 1-0 F.Kreideweiss-W.Wittmann, corr 1980.

c2) 8...Nxd4 9 Bxf7+!? (A typical Pierce Gambit shot; queen moves are unlikely to be sufficient.)

9...Kxf7 10 Qh5+ Kg7 11 0-0 Nf6 (Fritz8 suggests 11...f3 12 Be3 Nf6 13 Qg5+ Kf7 14 Rad1 Rg8.) and now:

c21) 12 Qg5+ Kf7 13 Bxf4 Rg8 14 Qh4 Rg4 15 Qf2 Ne6 16 Be3 Kg7 17 Rad1 Qe7 18 Rd5 Kg8 19 Rf5 Bg7 20 h3 Nxe4 21 Nd5 Qd6 22 Qe1 Rg6 23 Qh4 N6g5 24 Bf4 Nxe3+ 25 Kh1 Nxf4 26 Ne7+ Qxe7 0-1 A.Shabalov-A.Sherzer, World open, Philadelphia 1994.

c22) 12 Qh4 Nxc2 13 Bxf4 Ng4! 14 Bg5 (14 Qxd8 Bc5+ regains the queen.) 14...Qd4+ 15 Kh1 Black seems to stand well by 15...h6, but in N.Tripoteau-J.Bourges, Bretagne open-A 1999, Black (who had a rating over 2000) played 15...Nxa1?!, allowing mate in 2.

This is a warning to the type of player who is over-reliant on opening statistics generated by computer database reports and searches. The game will show up in the stats as a win for White when it should be vice versa.

8...Nxd4 9 Qxf4

9 Qc3 could be met by 9...Bg7 10 Bxf4 Ne6. Instead 9...Qxd5!? would be an extraordinary concept but it doesn't give Black any clear advantage after 10 exd5 Bb4 11 Bd2 (not 11 Qxb4? Nxc2+) 11...Bxc3 12 Bxc3 Nxc2+ 13 Kd2 as the h8-rook hangs and the black knight cannot escape from a1. A fairly unclear endgame is arising.

9...Bd6

9...Nxc2+ 10 Kf1 Bd6 (Not 10...Nxa1? 11 Nxc7+) 11 e5 Bf8 or 11...Bc5 is also pretty murky.

10 Qf2

10 e5 “is possibly a better try” wrote McDonald, but this isn’t too impressive after 10...Ne6 (T.Horvath) or 10...Bc5.

10...Ne6

Black intends to transfer this piece to e5, but 10...Ne6 also comes into consideration. The knight can often be well-placed here in the Pierce Gambit, to shield f7 from the bishop’s attentions.

11 Bf4 Ne5! 12 0–0

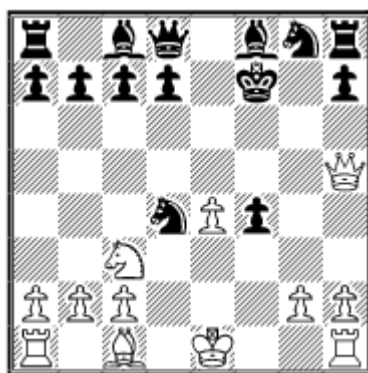
If 12 Bb3 Be6 or 12 Bxe5 Bxe5 13 Nb6 Qe7! 14 Nxa8 Qb4+ and Black wins (T.Horvath).

12...Nxc4 13 Qd4 f6 14 Qxc4 Bxf4

14...c6 “ends White’s compensation for the piece” says Mortazavi, but McDonald found 15 Nxf6+! when 15...Nxf6 16 e5 is roughly equal, while 15...Qxf6 loses to 16 Bxd6! Qxd6 17 Qf7+ Kd8 18 Rad1,

15 Nxf4 c6 16 e5!

This all happened in A.Mortazavi-A.J.Miles, London Lloyds Bank 1994. Although White eventually lost, he had a dangerous initiative at this juncture according to McDonald. The rest was: 16...f5 17 Rad1 Qe7 18 Qc3 Nh6 19 Qh3 Qg5 20 Rd6 Ng4 21 Rg6 Qe7 22 Qh5 hxg6 23 Qxh8+ Kd7 24 Nxc6 Qc5+ 25 Kh1 Kc7 26 h3 Ne3 27 Re1 Qxc2 28 Rg1 Qe4 29 Qf6 b5 30 Qd6+ Kb6 31 Qd8+ Ka6 32 Qc7 Bb7 33 Ne7 Rh8 34 Kh2 Qf4+ 35 Kh1 Qe4 36 Kh2 Ng4+ 37 Kh1 Rxh3# 0–1. One possible improvement is 20 e6, intending to switch the queen’s line of attack to c3.

B3: 7...Nxd4 8 Bxf7+ Kxf7 9 Qh5+**9...Kg7**

This is the main line after 7...Nxd4.

McDonald said that Black could try to win with 9...Ke7?! but rightly warned that “this seems highly dangerous” after 10 Nd5+ Kd6 11 Bf4+. He also mentioned that 10 Qe5+ Ne6 11 Qxh8 and 10 Qh4+ Nf6 11 e5 were “worthy of attention”. The former seems reasonable but Fritz8 thinks that 10 Qh4+ Nf6 11 e5 loses to 11...Kf7 12 0–0 Bc5 13 Kh1 f3 14 Bg5 Qg8.

9...Ke6 is not mentioned by theory. This needs more investigation; after 10 Qd5+ Ke7 11 Qxd4 Nf6 12 Nd5+ Kf7 13 Bxf4 White obviously has a strong attack. So 11...Kf6 11 Qxd4+ Kg6 12 Ne2 when White is still a piece down, but seems to have good potential, with a lead in development and open lines against the exposed black king. If 12...Qh4+ 13 g3 Bg7 (13...fxg3 14 Rg1 g2+ 15 Kd1) 14 Qxg7+ Kxg7 then White stands better despite the queen exchange. After 15 gxh4 he will collect the f-pawn and be a half-pawn up.

10 0-0?

This is an unjustifiable winning try for White; it should be a losing move.

The correct 10 Qg4+ draws, as several analysts have pointed out. McDonald for example says 10...Kf7 “seems a forced draw by repetition” (not 10...Kf6? 11 Qh4+ Kf7 12 Qxd8 Nxc2+ 13 Ke2) because “11 0-0?! Nf6 should be good for Black who after all has two extra pieces”.

Therefore White will play 11 Qh5+. McDonald is vague on how exactly the game should end but 11...Kg7! 12 Qg4+ Kf7 13 Qh5+ is presumably what he meant. Instead if 11...Ke7? 12 Nd5+ with a very strong attack, while 11...Ke6?! 12 Qd5+ transposes to the 9...Ke6 line above.

10...Nf6**11 Qh4**

Gallagher gave this as unclear in *Nunn's Chess Openings*, on page 288, but this assessment was lazy.

J.Stabenow-N.Zuravlevs, Baltic Sea tt4 corr 1984, went instead 11 Qg5+ Kf7 12 Bxf4 Rg8! 13 Qh4 Rg4 14 Qh3 (If 14 Qf2 Ne6 15 Be3 d6 16 Nd5 Be7 Black stands well: Estrin/Glazkov) 14...d6 15 Bg3 Kg8 16 Bh4 Be7 17 Bxf6 Bxf6 18 Nd5 Bg7 19 Qh5 Be6 20 c3 Rg5 21 Qd1 Nc6 22 Nf4 Bc4 23 Rf2

Ne5 24 b3 Bf7 0-1.

11...Ne6

“This seems best” says Michael Jensen, but Black probably has several good moves.

a) Not 11...Nxc2? 12 Bxf4 Bc5+ 13 Kh1 Nxa1 14 Bxc7 Qe7 15 Qg5+ Kf7 16 Nd5+- Michael Jensen.

b) The game cited in *Nunn's Chess Openings* was Stenqvist-R.Kotka, Sweden-Finland corr 1975. That went on 11...Qe8?! 12 Bxf4 Qh5?! (12...h6 13 Bxc7 Qe6 14 e5 Ng4 is one possible improvement.) 13 Qg3+ (Fritz8 prefers to swap queens into a slightly worse endgame after 13 Qxh5 Nxh5 14 Be5+ Kg6 15 Bxh8 Ne6 or 15 Bxd4 Bg7.) 13...Qg6 (13...Ng4 wins according to Fritz.) 14 Bg5 Be7 (Again Black missed the best line: 14...Ng4 15 Qxg4 Be7.) 15 Rxf6 Nf3+ 16 Rxf3 Qxg5 17 Rf1 Rg8 18 Rf7+ Kh8 19 Qh3 Rg7 20 R7f5 Qg6 21 Nd5 Bd6 22 Nxc7 (Now White has compensation.) 22...Rb8 23 Rf6 Bc5+ 24 Kh1 Qxe4 25 Rf8+ Rg8 26 Rxg8+ Kxg8 27 Qg3+ Kh8 28 Re1 Bd6 29 Qc3+ Be5 30 Qxe5+ Qxe5 31 Rxe5 b6 32 Re8+ Kg7 33 Kg1 Kf7 34 Kf2 b5 35 c3 b4 36 c4 b3 37 a3 a5 38 Ke3 a4 39 g4 Kg7 40 h4 Kf7 41 Kf4 h6 42 c5 Kg7 43 Ke5 Kf7 44 Kd6 Kg7 45 Nd5 Kf7 46 Rd8 Kg7 47 Nb6 1-0.

c) 11...Be7 12 Bxf4 Rf8? 13 Bh6+ Kh8 14 Bxf8 Qxf8 15 e5 Be5 16 Kh1 Qe7 17 Rxf6 d6 18 Nd5 1-0 was O.Ilen-O.P.Kuula, Finland corr 1976, but after 12...Rg8 White stands worse.

d) 11...d6 is best according to Fritz8, suggesting 12 Qxf4 Ne6 13 Qg3+ Kf7 14 Nd5 Rg8+.

12 Bxf4 h6

Black can do better with 12...Bc5+ 13 Kh1 Nxf4 14 Rxf4 Rf8 15 Qg5+ Kh8 16 Qxc5 d6 17 Qd4 c5+ (M.A.Jensen) or 12...Be7 (Fritz8).

13 Be5

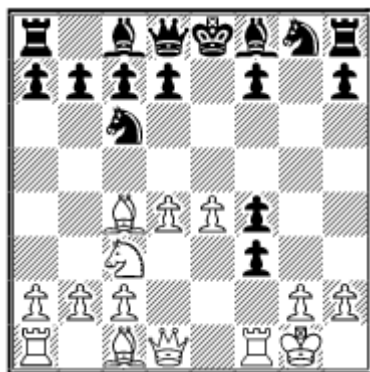
Now T.Nagley-C.Chadwick, IECC Email 2003, concluded 13...Kh7? 14 Bxf6 Qe8 15 Bxh8 Kxh8 16 Rf6 c6 17 e5 d5 18 exd6 Ng5 19 Re1 Qd8 20 Rxh6+ Bxh6 21 Qxh6+ 1-0.

Instead Black should play 13...Be7 14 Nd5 Rf8 with perhaps some advantage.

So 7 Qxf3 gives Black the chance to force a draw, and various unclear possibilities for both sides to play for a win otherwise, but in the final analysis White's piece sacrifice is unlikely to be correct.

C: 7 0-0

This was the original idea of the Pierce brothers to follow up the knight sacrifice.



The question now seems to be whether Black should play 7...Nxd4 or 7...d5. We saw 7...d6 in Pierce-Cheshire and 7...Qg5 in Pierce-Nash last time. I will look at 7...d5 in my final article of the series later this year, but current opinion seems to be that 7...Nxd4 is critical.

I conclude this article with the game submitted by Michael Jensen, which follows on from the last game in the previous column.

Erik H. Jensen – Michael Agermose Jensen

Danish 2nd League corr, 1997

(Notes from move 9 onwards are by M. Jensen, edited slightly.)

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

The Pierce Gambit book says “this is White’s best play but he may obtain a strong, though unsound attack by 8 Bxf7+”. James and Timbrell Pierce frequently experimented with this in the early years of the gambit but concluded it would not work against good defence.

8...Bc5!

8...Bg7 was the former main line. According to Tseitlin and Glazkov, White should play: 9 Bxf7+ (9 e5 d5! Tseitlin-Ciolac, Wattens 1992; 9 Be3 Qf6 Horvath.) 9...Kxf7 10 e5 (Horvath’s recommendation.) 10...d5 11 Qxd4. This position is completely unexplored.

9 Kh1

Recommended by Gallagher who just gives 9 Kh1! without analysis.

The original W.T.Pierce move-order 9 Bxf7+ Kxf7 10 Be3 is less good.

9 Be3! is White's only road to the draw. Back in 1999 I won a rapid game after 9...Ne2+ 10 Kh1 (10 Nxe2 is worse: 10...Bxe3+ 11 Kh1 d5! Schreiber-Thirion, Liege 1998.) 10...Bxe3 (10...fxg2+? 11 Kxg2 Nf6 should according to my original analysis be met by 12 Qxe2!+-). Now White is only a pawn down with a huge lead in development, the black king still in the centre and numerous threats: e4-e5, Bxc5 and Bxf7, e.g. 12...Bxe3 13 e5!? but 13 Qxe3 is also good of course.) 11 Bxf7+! (This "triple Pierce gambit" is the only chance. 11 Rxf3 of Seidel-Kruse is met by 11...Nf4!.) 11...Kxf7 12 Qxe2! (12 Rxf3+ Nf4-+) 12...Bg5! (Everything else loses.) 13 Qxf3+ (After 13 Rxf3+ as in Morales Pecino-Trani, from the previous Kibitzer article, I originally analyzed 13...Kg7 as better for Black. The king is placed better here than at g6. Then 14 e5 d6!, protecting the e5-square, 15 e6 Nf6 followed by ...Qe7 and Black repels the attack.) 13...Kg7 14 Qf7+ Kh6 15 g4.

Unfortunately I did not keep the game score. Anyway, best play from both sides yields a short draw: 15...Nf6 (15...Qe7 should also draw after 16 Qh5+ Kg7 17 Rae1! with the idea Nd5.) 16 Rf3 Nxg4 (I think Black played 16...Bh4? in the aforementioned game and was soon mated after 17 g5+!.) 17 Rh3+ (17 Raf1 d6 18 Rh3+ also draws.) 17...Bh4 18 Qf4+ Kh5=. I have spent maybe 50 hours on this line alone and still haven't found more than the draw after 19 Qf7+.

9...d6**10 b4!?**

An interesting move intending to improve on Mikhail Tseitlin's play. I did not know that it had been played two years earlier so this was new ground for me.

10 Be3 Be6! 11 Bxd4 fxg2+ 12 Kxg2 Bxc4 13 Bxh8 and now:

a) 13...Bxf1+ 14 Qxf1 Qd7 15 Qf4 0-0-0 Tseitlin-Marciano, Bucharest 1993. Tseitlin has not played the gambit since this game.

b) 13...Qg5+ 14 Kh1 Bxf1 15 Qxf1 0-0-0 16 Qxf7 Nh6 17 Qf6 Qg4+- McDonald, who somewhat mysteriously does not know (surprise!) of the Tseitlin-Marciano game. Nor did he care to figure out that 17 Qe6+ Kb8 18 Qf6 (attacking the rook on d8) is quite a bit (well a bishop really) more accurate.

10...Bb6 11 Nd5

The real idea is to swap off the black bishop.

11...fxg2+!

11...Ne2 12 Rxf3 Nxf4 13 Rxf4 is less clear.

12 Kxg2 Ne6

“With a knight on e6 Black cannot lose” - is an old saying that rings true this time.

13 Qf3

New; giving up the bishop in return for the knight but Black's position remains eminently defensible. The alternatives are equally bleak:

a) 13 Nxb6 Nxf4+ --+.

b) 13 Qh5 Nf6!.

c) 13 Bg3 when:

c1) 13...h5 14 e5 h4 15 Bf4 dxe5 16 Nxb6 Qxd1 17 Raxd1 axb6 18 Bxe5 Rh5 19 Rfe1 Bd7 20 Re3 0-0-0 21 Be2 Rg5+ 22 Kf2 Rf5+ 23 Ke1 Nh6 24 c4 Rg8 25 Rdd3 Ng4 26 Ra3 Kb8 27 Bxg4 Rxg4 28 Rad3 Bc6 29 b5 Be4 30 Rd7 Rxe5 31 Re7 Rg8 0-1 Z.Ramik-M.Narciso Dublan, Brno 1995.

c2) 13...Qg5 14 a4 Qg6 15 Qd3 c6 16 Nxb6 axb6 17 Qc3 Ng5 18 Rf4 f6 19 Qd4 b5 20 axb5 Rxa1 21 Qxa1 Nxe4 22 Bd3 d5 23 c4 Bf5 24 bxc6 bxc6 25 Qa8+ Kf7 26 Rxf5 Qxf5 27 b5 Qg4 28 bxc6 Ng5 29 h4 Ne4 30 Bxe4 Qxe4+ 31 Kh2 dxc4 0-1 S.Bocksberger-A.Wollmann, Germany Corr Ch-24 1995.

13...Nxf4+ 14 Qxf4

14 Nxf4 Qf6.

14...Qd7!

Giving back material, while threatening to exchange queens was the justification for Black's 13th move as otherwise Black would have to move the f-pawn now. The cosy-looking 14...Be6? loses a piece to 15 Nxb6.

15 Nxb6 axb6 16 Bxf7+ Kd8 17 Kh1 Qg4 18 Qe3 Qg7 19 Rae1 Bd7 20 Bd5? Ne7 21 Bc4

21 Bxb7 Rxa2.

21...Rf8 22 Rxf8+ Qxf8 23 Rf1 Qh8!

White can resign here, but apparently he had too many stamps.

24 Qg5 Qd4 25 Bd5 c6 26 Rf7 Qd1+ 27 Kg2 Qxc2+ 28 Kg1 Qb1+ 29 Kg2 Qb2+ 30 Kg1 Qe5 31 Qxe5 dxe5 32 Bb3 c5 33 Rxh7 Nc6 34 bxc5 bxc5 35 Be6 Be8 36 Rxb7 Nd4 37 Bd5 Bc6 38 Rb6 Bxd5 39 Rd6+ Kc7 0-1.

40 Rxd5 Kc6 41 Kf2 c4 wins easily.

Conclusion: Most of the Pierce Gambit games that I have looked at in databases contain some serious tactical errors, sometimes totally changing the assessment only one or more moves before the end of the game. Believe no statistics! Look

at the actual games for yourself and try to find mistakes and improvements. Send me your discoveries and I will round up my coverage of the gambit, with some additional historical material, later in the year.

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