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Over the Horizons

Stefan Bucker



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The French Attack: Pirc or Philidor? Part Two

By playing the Philidor Defense **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6**, you can avoid the Ruy Lopez and many other openings after **2...Nc6** that involve a mass of theory. For at least 150 years the Philidor Defense had the image of being slightly passive. The books presented short lines that usually ended with a \pm , saving space for more interesting topics. Nevertheless, creative players such as Nimzovitch, Larsen or Barendregt used the defense with success. Only in the last decades have authors begun to work out a detailed theory of the Philidor Defense, which makes it more difficult to claim an advantage for White. In 1998, Jerry van Rekom and Leo Jansen published an influential book that recommended **1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Nbd7**, calling it *The Lion* (De leeuw) [4].



This move order at least avoids the pedestrian lines **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 Nf6** (which allows **4 dxe5 Nxe4 5 Qd5**) and **1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 e5** (when White can exchange queens). Whether an old line already used by Alapin and Nimzovitch needs a new name is another question. The Pirc approach also involves new risks. [Part One](#) of my article discussed the main line **4 f4 e5 5 Nf3 exd4 6 Qxd4 c6!? 7 Be3 d5**, but during my analysis I had ignored two important sources (many thanks to Steve Giddins from England for pointing out my omission). The first was

Van Rekom/Jansen: *De leeuw, hét zwarte wapen* [4], and the second Christian Bauer's *The Philidor Files* (London 2006). So let's return to last month's **7 Be3 d5** to check my results:



After **8 0-0-0 Bc5** (**8...c5** [4] is wrong, as seen in [9]) **9 Qd3**, Bauer recommends **9...Qe7 10 e5 Ng4** saying that "the position remains balanced." My line went **11 Bxc5 Nxc5 12 Qd4 +/-** [9]. A possible continuation: **12...h5 13 Qg1 Be6** (**13...0-0?** **14 h3 Nh6 15 Rxd5 Ne6 16 Ra5 Nxf4 17 Rxa7**) **14 h3 Nh6 15 g4 g6 16 Be2 0-0-0 17 Nd4 Kb8 18 Kb1 Bd7 19 a3 Ne6 20 Qf2 Rdf8**, and Black isn't much worse. So Bauer's **9...Qe7** may in fact be a good alternative to my **9...Bxe3** [9].

After **8 e5 Ng4 9 Bg1**, Bauer's favorite is **9...Nh6**. I ignored the move because of **10 0-0-0 Qa5 11 Kb1 Nb6** (**11...Nf5** "unclear," Bauer **12 Qf2 Bb4 13 Ne2!** and Black is in trouble). So far W. Watson – Bauer, German League 1996. But **12 Nd2! Bg4** (**12...c5 13 Qd3!**) **13 Re1 c5** (else **14 Nb3**) **14 Qd3!** \pm gives White a clear advantage. So the stronger alternative should be **9...Qb6!** (not in [4]) **10 Qxb6 axb6 11 h3 Nh6 12 g4**, Wells – Oratovsky, European Club Cup 1999. End of analysis in [8]. According to Bauer, this "gives White a clear advantage," but my **12...b5!** [9], followed by **13...Nc5**, then **b4** or **f6**, gives Black reasonable counterplay. I don't think that White has a significant advantage.

In main line "C1" in [9], I unknowingly followed Bauer's analysis: **8 exd5 Bc5 9 Qd2 Qe7 10 Nd4 Ng4 11 0-0-0 Qxe3 12 Re1 Bxd4 13 Nd1 Qxe1+ Kd8** (Bauer also considers **14...Kf8**) **15 dxc6 bxc6 16 Qa5+ Bb6 17 Qg5+ Ngf6 18 Qxg7**.



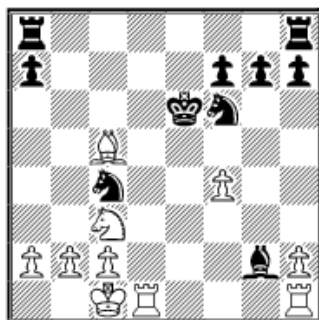
Bauer [8] stops here, saying "Black has rook, bishop and knight versus queen and two pawns, but he experiences difficulties coordinating his forces." My analysis continued **18...Rg8 19 Qxf7 Bb7 20 Qb3 Kc7 21 g3 Rae8** [9] and, after eleven further moves, White had no advantage at



all. Of course, this is a long and hardly forced line. Probably Bauer would agree with my assessment 14...Kd8 as “unclear” [9].

Line “C3” [9] **8 exd5 Be5 9 Qd3 Qe7**

(Van Rekom/Jansen [4] prefer the weaker move 9...0-0) **10 Nd4** was Bauer’s main line, too. I didn’t trust his favorite 10...Nb6 11 dxc6 bxc6 because of 12 0-0-0! Ba6 13 Qd2 Bxf1 14 Bf2!! Nc4 15 Qe1 Bxd4 16 Qxe7+ Kxe7 17 Rxd4 c5 18 Rd1 Bxg2 19 Bxc5+ Ke6



This tricky variation had already been detected by Christian Bauer [8] who concludes: “20 Rhg1 (or 20 Rhe1+) and Black is walking on a tightrope here, but I believe he should hold.” My analysis in [9] is a refutation: 20 Rhe1+ Kf5 21 Rd4 +- (21...Nxb2 22 Rg1 etc.). Therefore, **10...Nxd5 11 Nxd5 cxd5** should be preferred, an alternative also given by Bauer, with the verdict: “White stood a bit better, but not more” [8]. He doesn’t consider the dangerous 12 Nf5 +- (more details in [9]), but altogether I tend to agree with his assessment.



French Attack

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As announced last month [9], I’ll now check the relevant sidelines in moves four through seven. Mainly alternatives for White, but you’ll also get hints why Black is well-advised not to leave the main path. However, we’ll have to postpone the fashionable **4 g4!?** until next month, because I underestimated the amount of material. Moreover, 4 g4!? leads to positions of a different character, so it should get a separate article anyway.

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Nbd7 4 f4

After 4 Nf3, the response 4...e5 reaches a main position of Philidor’s Defence.

4...e5



5 Nf3

(a) 5 fxe5 dxe5 6 dxe5 Nxe5 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 is discussed by Van Rekom/Jansen [4] on six pages. With his firm grip on the e5-square, Black has no serious problems.

(b) 5 Be3 (Wim Hokken [4]) is interesting, to take back on d4 with the bishop. Bauer recommends two moves: 5...g6 [8], although 6 fxe5 dxe5 7 dxe5 Nxe5 8 Qxd8+ Kxd8 9 Nf3! gives White an advantage. His second idea 5...c6

(“intending b5 and Qa5,” [8]) was already

given by Van Rekom/Jansen [4] and seems quite reliable. There is a third line, not mentioned in [4] or [8]: 5...Be7!? 6 Nf3 (6 fxe5 dxe5 = Simon – Eberth, Fuzesabony 2002) 6...Ng4 7 Qd2 Nxe3 8 Qxe3 0-0 9 0-0-0 exf4!? 10 Qxf4; for example, 10...c6 11 Bd3 b5 12 e5 Qc7 13 Kb1 dxe5 14 dxe5 Nc5 15 Ne4 Nxd3 16 Rxd3 f6 =.

5...exd4

(a) 5...Qe7? 6 Be2! c6 (6...exf4 7 0-0 Nxe4 8 Nxe4 Qxe4 9 Bd3 Qd5 10 Bxf4 Be7 11 Re1 with a lasting attack) 7 0-0 b5 8 Bd3 Bb7 9 Be3 b4 10 Ne2 exd4 11 Nexd4 +/-.

(b) 5...Be7? 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 fxe5 Ng4 8 Bf4! Bc5 9 Qd2! (much stronger than 9 Bg5, as in Conquest – Hodgson, London 1991, quoted by Bauer [8]) 9...Nf2 10 Rg1 Ng4 11 0-0-0! +/- 0-0 12 Be2 Bxg1? 13 Nxg1+/-; for example, 13...Nh6 14 Nd5, etc.

(c) 5...c6?, analyzed in great detail by Van Rekom/Jansen [4], but there is a refutation: 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 fxe5 Ng4 8 e6 fxe6 9 Ng5 Nde5 10 Qxd8+ Kxd8 11 h3 Nh6 (or 11...Nf6 12 Bf4 Ng6 13 Bh2 +/-)



Here 12 Bf4 and 12 Be3 have been played, but I prefer the flexible and strong 12 Be2!. Two examples:

(c1) 12...Nh7 13 Nxf7+ Nxf7 14 Rf1 Ke8 15 Be3 Be7 16 0-0-0 b6 17 e5 Nxe5 18 Bd4 Bd6 (18...Bf6 19 Bh5+) 19 Ne4 Bc7 20 Ng5 Rf8 21 Nxf7 Rxf7 22 Rxf1 c5 23 Bh5+ Ke7 24 Bxe5 Bxe5 25 Rf7+ Kd6 26 Bf3 Rb8 27 Rxa7 +/-.

(c2) 12...Be7 13 Rf1 Bf6 14 Be3 b6 15 a4 Nh7 16 Nxf7+ Nxf7 17 a5 b5 18 0-0-0+

Kc7 19 e5! Nxe5 20 Ne4 Nd7 21 Ng5 e5 22 Ne6+ Kb8 23 Rd6 +/-.

(d) 5...exf4?! 6 Bxf4 Be7 7 Bd3 Nf8 8 Qd2 Ng6 9 Be3 += c6 10 0-0-0 b5 (Alexandria – Blagojevic, Belgrade 1969) 11 h4 +/-.

6 Qxd4!

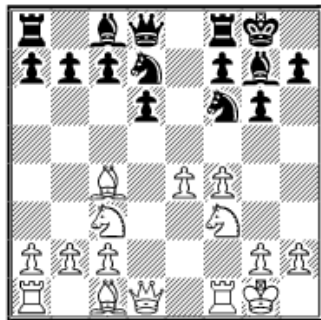
Against 6 Nxd4, Black has at least two reliable replies:

(a) 6...c6 7 Be2 [4] g6 8 0-0 Bg7 9 Nb3 +=.

(b) According to Christian Bauer, 6...Be7 is a bit passive “and gives White an edge” [8]. I agree: 7 Be2! (7 Bc4 0-0 8 0-0 K. Betins – Nimzowitsch, Riga 1910) 7...0-0 8 0-0 Re8 9 Bf3 c6 10 Re1 Qb6 11 Kh1 Bf8 12 Nb3 +=.

(c) After 6...Nc5!? (! Belavsky [5]) 7 Bd3, Van Rekom/Jansen [4] give 7...Bg4 (“!”) 8 Nf3 h5, which Bauer [8] criticizes because of 8 Qd2!, followed by h3, and Black loses valuable time. Instead, the solid continuation 7...Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 h3 c6 may be best, about =.

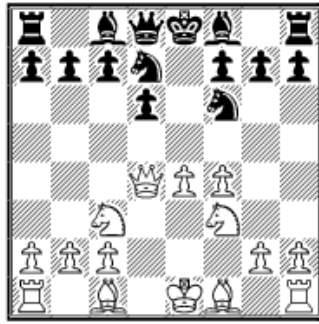
(d) 6...g6 7 Bc4 (Bauer only has 7 Bd3 [8]) 7...Bg7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Nf3 (9 Re1 Nc5! =) is a critical situation:



(d1) 9...Nb6?! 10 Bb3 c5 is risky because of 11 a4 c4 12 Ba2 d5 13 e5 Ne4 14 Nxe4 dxe4 15 Ng5 Bf5 16 a5 h6 17 Nxf7 Kxf7 18 Qe2 +/-.

(d2) 9...Nc5 10 e5 dxe5 11 Qxd8 Rxd8 12 fxe5 Nfd7! (12...Ng4 13 h3! Nxe5 14 Nxe5 Bxe5 15 Bg5 Bd4+ 16 Kh1 Rd7 17 Rae1 Ne6 18 Bxe6! +/-) 13 Bg5 Re8 14 Nb5 Na6 15 Rad1 Nb6 16 Bb3 Be6 17 Rfe1 +=.

(d3) 9...Qe7! 10 Re1 c6 11 Bb3 (11 Qe2 b5 =; 11 a4 d5 12 exd5 Qc5+ +=) 11...Nc5 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 Ng4 14 Qd6 Re8 and Black has sufficient counterplay; for example, 15 Bf4 Qxd6 16 exd6 Nf6 17 h3 Bd7 18 Be5 a5 19 Ng5 Nxb3 20 axb3 Bf5 21 Rac1 h5 =.



6...c6

The only move according to Van Rekom/Jansen [4]. They seem to be right:

(a) 6...c5? 7 Qg1! Be7 8 Be3 0-0 (8...Ng4 9 Bd2) 9 0-0-0 Qa5 (9...Re8 10 g4) 10 Kb1 b5 11 e5 +/-.

(b) 6...g6? 7 e5 dxe5 8 fxe5 Bc5 9 Qa4 Nh5 10 Bh6 “followed by 11 0-0-0 and Black’s position is vulnerable,” Bauer [8]. For example: 10...Bf8 11 Bg5 Be7 12

Bxe7 Qxe7 13 g4 Ng7 14 Nd5 Qc5 (Kulicov – Novitzkij, St. Petersburg 1999) 15 0-0-0! Kf8 16 b4 Qf2 (16...Nb6 17 Qa3) 17 Qb3 a6 18 Rd2 Qa7 19 Ng5 +/-.

(c) 6...Be7? 7 e5 dxe5 8 fxe5 Bc5 9 Qc4! Qe7 10 Qe2 Ng4 11 Nd5 Bf2+ 12 Qxf2 Nxf2 13 Nxe7 Nxe1 14 Nd5 +/- Martin Gonzalez – Ortega Ruiz, Linares 1998 [8].

(d) 6...Nc5? (!? by Beliavsky in [5]) 7 Be3! (7 Bc4 is also strong)

(d1) 7...g6 8 0-0-0! (8 e5 Ne6 Ponomarev – Beliavsky, Bled 1999, and now Beliavsky [5] gives 9 Qc4!?, which is +/-, in spite of Bauer’s belief that “the position remains balanced”) 8...Bg7 9 Bb5+! (even better than 9 e5 Ng4 10 Bg1 Yakovich – J. Johansson, Stockholm 1996, 10...0-0! [5] 11 h3 Nh6 12 g4 [8] and White attacks)



9...Ncd7 (9...c6 10 Qxd6; 9...Bd7 10 Qc4) 10 Bf2 (or 10 e5) 10...a6 11 Ba4 b5 12 Bb3 0-0 13 e5 dxe5 (13...Ng4 14 Bh4 Qe8 15 h3 +/-) 14 Nxe5 Qe8 15 Rhe1 Nxe5 16 fxe5 Ng4 17 Nd5 Bxe5 18 Qc5 Bd6 19 Qc3 (19 Ne7+) Be6 20 Bd4 Qd8 21 Bh8 +/- and White wins.

(d2) 7...Be7 8 0-0-0 0-0 is not sufficient either. The direct 9 e5 Ng4 10 Bg1 +/- may be best, which is also recommended by Bauer [8]. 9 h3 to prepare g2-g4 is equally strong, e.g. 9...Bd7 10 e5 (else Bc6 comes into question) 10...Nh5 11

Bc4 Ng3 12 Rhe1 Nf5 13 Qd2 +/- Finally 9 Bc4 Nfd7!? 10 Kb1! (avoids the trick 10 e5 Nb6 11 Be2 Bf5 12 h3 Nd3+! 13 Bxd3 c5 =>) 10...Nb6 11 Be2 +/-, and again White is clearly better.



7 Bd2

The main line 7 Be3! d5! was already analyzed above – and in the October column. Instead, 7...Qb6 8 0-0-0 would not be advisable, as 8...Qxd4 9 Bxd4 gives White a positional edge, and 8...Be7 9 e5 dxe5?! 10 fxe5 Ng4 11 e6 fxe6 12 Qxg7 Qxe3+ 13 Kb1 Rf8 14 Qxg4 Nf6 15 Qh4 +/- is even worse. But the text move isn’t White’s only option. These are his alternatives:

(a) 7 Qa4? Qb6! 8 Bd2 Nc5 9 Qc4 Nfxe4 +/-.

(b) 7 Bd3?! d5 8 e5 Bc5 9 Qa4 Qe7 =+.

(c) 7 b4 a5 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 Nd5 10 Nxd5 cxd5 11 b5 Qc7 =+.

(d) 7 a4 d5, and now:

(d1) 8 exd5? Bc5 9 Qc4 0-0 +/-



In Kronsfoth – Bucker, Münster 1989 [1], my opponent already resigned! In another game there followed: 10 Be2 Qe7 (threat: Nb6) 11 a5 Hummel – Ondersteijn, Leiden 2000; 11...cxd5 +/-.



(d2) 8 e5 Bc5 9 Qd3 Ng4 10 Nd1 0-0! =+ (0-1, 30) Reschun – E. Moser, Austria 2003.

(e) 7 **h3** d5 8 exd5?! (very risky; 8 e5! Bc5 9 Qd3 Nh5 10 Ng5? h6! +/- Palatnik/Ishee [6]; better is 10 g4 Ng3 11 Rh2 Qb6

12 Ng5 Nxf1 13 Kxf1 Be7 14 e6 fxe6 15 Nxex6 Nc5 =) 8...Bc5, followed by 9...0-0, and Black is better. For example: 9 Qc4 (9 Qd3 0-0 10 Bd2 Re8+ 11 Be2 cxd5 D. Mann – O. Rost van Tonningen, Rheda-Wiedenbrueck 2001) 9...0-0 10 Ne5 cxd5 11 Qd3 Re8 12 Be2 Qb6 13 Rf1 d4 14 Ne4 Nxe4 15 Qxe4 Bb4+ +/- (0-1, 27) Kessler – Bauer, Germany 2001.

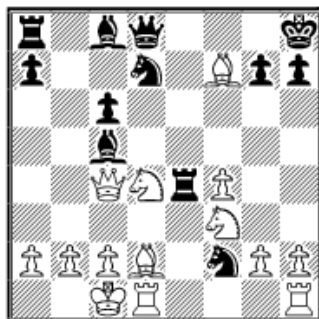
(f) 7 **Qd2**!? is a cunning idea of Hector's: 7...Be7? (Black should play 7...Nc5 8 e5 Nfe4 9 Qe3 d5 10 Be2 Be7 11 0-0 0-0 12 Nd4 f6 13 Bf3 fxe5 =) 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 Ng4 10 Qf4 Nf8 (10...Nc5 11 b4 Na6 12 Bxa6 +=) 11 Bc4 Nh6 12 0-0 Bf5 (12...Ng6 13 Qe4 Bf5 14 Qe2 Qb6+ 15 Kh1 0-0-0 16 Rb1 Qc7) 13 Qg3 Bg6 14 Bxh6 gxh6 15 Rad1 Qb6+ 16 Kh1 +/- Hector – Bergstrom, Roskilde 1998.

(g) 7 **f5** ("rather dubious," Bauer [8]) 7...Qb6! (here 7...d5 is less convincing because of 8 e5 Bc5 9 Qf4! (one of the points behind White's seventh move) 9...0-0 10 exf6 Re8+ 11 Kd1 Nxf6 12 Bd3 Ne4 13 Rf1 Nf2+ 14 Rxf2 Bxf2 15 Bd2 +=) 8 Be2 Be7 (= [8]) 9 a4!? (9 0-0 d5 10 Qxb6 Nxb6 11 Bd3 dxe4 12 Nxe4 0-0 13 Bg5 Bxf5 14 Bxf6 gxf6 15 Rae1 Bg6 16 Nh4 Smirin – Altounian, Los Angeles 2000; 16...Nd7 17 Nf5 Bc5+ 18 Kh1 Rfe8 =) 9...0-0 10 a5 Qxd4 11 Nxd4 Re8 =.

(h) 7 **Be2** d5 (7...Qb6?! [8] 8 a4! Be7 9 a5 Qxd4 10 Nxd4 Nc5 11 Bf3 +=; 7...Be7 8 e5! dxe5 9 fxe5 Bc5 10 Qf4 Nd5 11 Nxd5 cxd5 12 Qg3) 8 exd5 (8 e5 Bc5 9 Qd3 Ng4 10 Nd1 [10 Rf1 Nxb2] 10...Qe7 11 h3 Nh6 12 Be3 Bxe3 13 Nxe3 Qb4+ 14 Kf2 Qxf4 15 g3 Qb4 16 c4 Nc5 17 Qd4 Ne6 18 a3 Nxd4 19 axb4 Nxf3 20 Kxf3 dxc4 =+; 8 Bd2 Bc5 9 Qd3 dxe4 10 Nxe4 =) 8...Bc5 9 Qd3 Nxd5! (more precise than Bauer's favorite 9...cxd5 [8], because of 10 Be3 0-0 11 0-0-0 Re8 Spraggett – Calvo Sanchez, Seville 2002, 12 Bd4! Qe7 13 Be5 Nxe5 14 fxe5 Ng4 15 Nxd5 Qc6 16 Ng5 Qh6 17 h4 Be6 18 Qc3 Rac8 19 Bxg4 Bxg4 20 Rd2 +/-) 10 Nxd5 cxd5 11 Bd2 0-0 12 0-0-0 Nf6 13 Rhe1 g6 14 Ne5 Bf5 15 Qb3 Qc7 16 Bf3 a5 =.

(i) 7 **Bc4** d5! 8 exd5 Bc5 9 Qd3 is another critical moment for the whole variation:

(i1) 9...0-0 is the usual continuation. 10 dxc6 bxc6 11 Bd2 Re8+ (11...Qe7+!?) 12 Ne2 (the books don't mention 12 Kd1, but Black is fine: 12...Ng4 13 Kc1 Nf2 14 Bxf7+ Kh8 15 Qc4 Nxb1 16 Bxe8 Qxe8 17 Na4 Be3 18 Ng5 Nb6 = or 17 Ng5 h6 18 Nge4 Qe7 19 Qf1 Nb6 20 Qxh1 Nc4 with compensation) 12...Ne4! (12...Qb6 13 0-0-0 Rb8 resp. 13 Ng5 Bf2+ 14 Kf1 Re7 15 Rd1 Bh4, unclear) 13 0-0-0 Nf2 14 Bxf7+ Kh8 15 Qc4 Re4 16 Ned4



Here Palatnik/Ishee [6] prefer 16...Nxb1 17 Rxb1 Bxd4 18 Qxc6 Bxb2+ 19 Kb1 Bb7 20 Qxb7 Re7 21 Bb3 Nb6 22 Qa6 Bf6 "–+" [6], but after 23 g4 = White is still on his feet. So in the diagram position, the attack 16...Bxd4! seems more precise: 17 Nxd4 Nb6 (K. Zuse – Brix, Hockenheim 1994) 18 Nxc6 Nxc4 19 Nxd8 Bg4 20 Bxc4 Rxd8 +/-.

(i2) Instead, I recommend 9...Qe7+! 10 Kd1 (the point is 10 Qe2 Nb6!; or 10 Kf1 cxd5 11 Bxd5 Nb6 unclear) 10...Ng4 11 Rf1 0-0 12 h3 Nf2+ 13 Rxf2 Bxf2 14 d6

Qd8 15 b4 Nf6, and in this messy situation I'd slightly prefer Black.

(k) 7 **e5** dxe5 8 fxe5 Bc5. The immediate pawn push is hardly dangerous:

(k1) 9 Qc4!? Qe7 10 Qe2 Ng4 11 Bg5 Qe6 12 Ne4 Bb6 13 Nd6+ Kf8 14 Bf4 f6 unclear.

(k2) 9 Qf4 Qe7 10 Be2 Nd5 11 Nxd5 cxd5 12 Be3 Bxe3 13 Qxe3 Qb4+. The chances are equal; for example, 14 c3 Qxb2 (or 14...Qe4 15 Kf2 0-0 16 Bd3 Qxe3+ 17 Kxe3 Nc5 18 Be2 Seul – Bucker, Germany 1996 18...Bd7 19 h4 Rae8 =) 15 0-0 0-0 16 Rab1 Qa3 17 Rb4 (Maximov – Drozdovskij, Kiev 2001) 17... Nb6 18 Bd3 h6 =.

(k3) 9 Qh4 Qe7! 10 Bf4



10...Ng4 (10...Nd5 11 Nxd5 Qxh4+ 12



Nxh4 cxd5 13 Nf5 0-0 14 0-0-0! +=; 10... Bb4!? 11 0-0-0 Bxc3 12 exf6 Bxf6 13 Qg3 0-0 = Kuijf – Seret, Lyon 1990) 11 Qxe7+ (taking the “sacrificed” knight would lose: 11 Qxg4? Nxe5 [4] 12 Qg3 Nxf3++ 13 Kd1 g5) 11...Kxe7 with an equal position; for example, 12 Ne4 Be3 13 Bg3 f6 14 exf6+ Ndx6 15 Nxf6 [4] (V. Zaitsev – Yanvarjov, Moscow 1997) 15...Kxf6! 16 h3 Re8 17 hxg4 Bf4+ 18 Kf2 Be3+ and Black gives perpetual check.

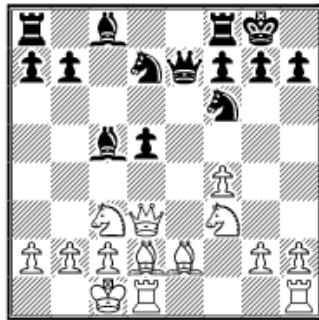
I considered giving these alternatives (a-k) in separate chapters, but this would have been misleading. It is well deserved that **7 Bd2** is the main line of this article. This little developing move looks harmless, but takes the sting out of Black’s key move d6-d5. In the stem game Korchnoi – Bastrikov, Minsk 1952, which is still of theoretical importance, Black chose a solid continuation:

7...Qb6!

7...d5 is more popular, but here the advance is dubious. Thanks to his preparatory Bc1-d2, White will simply castle long and bring his king into safety.

(a) 8 e5 Bc5 9 Qd3 Ng4 10 Nd1 Be7 += 11 Ne3? Nc5 12 Qe2 Qb6 -/+ Andolo – El Taher, Cairo 2000.

(b) 8 exd5 Bc5 9 Qd3. After 9...0-0 10 0-0-0, Bauer writes: “Black’s compensation for the pawn is rather meagre.” However, 9...Qe7+ comes into consideration: 10 Be2 (10 Qe2 Qxe2+ 11 Bxe2 cxd5 +=) 10...cxd5 11 0-0-0! (11 Nxd5 Nxd5 12 Qxd5 0-0 13 Ne5 Nb6 14 Qf3 Be6! 15 0-0-0 Bxa2 = Stiri – Milliet, Istanbul 2003) 11...0-0



(b1) 12 g4 Bb6! is chaotic, but ends peacefully: 13 g5 Nc5 14 Qb5 Bd7 15 gxf6 Qd6 16 Nxd5 Bxb5 17 Ne7+ Qxe7 18 fxe7 Bxe2 19 exf8Q+ Rxf8 =.

(b2) 12 Kb1 Re8 13 Nd4 Bb4 14 Ndb5 Bxc3 15 Nxc3 Nc5 16 Qd4 Nce4 (16... Ne6 17 Qe5 d4 18 Ne4 Nxe4 19 Qxe4 Bd7 20 Bd3 g6 21 f5 +=) and Black should be able to defend, e.g. 17 Bb5 (17 Rhe1 Bf5 18 Bb5 Rec8) 17...Rd8 18 h3 a6 19 Bd3 b5 20 Be1 Bb7 21 Bh4 Nxc3+ 22 Qxc3 (22 bxc3 +=) 22...d4 23 Qe1 Re8 +=.

(c) 8 0-0-0!, not mentioned in my sources, is both simpler and stronger than the last line: 8...Bc5 9 Qd3 dxe4 (9...Nb6 10 exd5 Nbx5 11 Re1+ Ne7 12 Qxd8+ Kxd8 13 Ng5 +/-; 9...0-0 10 exd5 cxd5 11 Nxd5 Nxd5 12 Qxd5 Qb6 13 Be4 Nf6 14 Qd3 and Black has no real compensation for the pawn) 10 Nxe4 0-0 11 Nxc5 Nxc5 12 Qa3 (12 Qc4 b6 13 Bb4 Qe7) 12...b6 13 Bb4 Qc7 14 Ne5 +/-.

8 0-0-0

8 Qxb6 axb6, followed by 9...b5 =.

8...Be7!

Ignored by Bauer, who prefers the premature 8...Qxd4? (“The dominant white queen is annoying for Black” [8]) 9 Nxd4. But then White is clearly better: 9...g6 (9...Nc5 10 Re1 Ne6 11 Nf3!; for example, 11...Be7 12 e5 dxe5 13 Nxe5 0-0 14 Bc4 Re8 15 f5, etc.) 10 Nb3! (better than 10 Nf3 [8]) 10...Be7 (or 10...Bh6 11 Be2 Nb6 12 Na5) 11 Be2 Nb6 12 Be3 0-0 13 Rhe1 Re8 14 Bd4 d5?! (14...Be6 15 Na5) 15 Bxb6 axb6 16 exd5 +/-.



9 h3

White may have a slight advantage in the diagrammed position, but after Korchnoi’s next move Black finds a good solution. Is there anything better?

(a) 9 Re1 0-0 10 e5 (10 Bc4 Qxd4 11



Bxd4 Nb6 12 Bd3 g6 13 h3 Nfd7) 10...
Qxd4 11 Nxd4 dxe5 12 fxe5 Ng4 13 e6
Nb6 14 Be2 (Steflitsch – Hautot,
Chalkidiki 2002) 14...Bf6! 15 Nxc6 Nf2
16 Rhf1 bxc6 =.

(b) 9 Be3 0-0 10 Kb1 Re8, about =.

9...Qxd4 10 Nxd4 Nc5 11 Re1

11 e5 doesn't achieve much: 11...dxe5 12 fxe5 Nce4 13 Nxe4 Nxe4 14 Bc4 b5 15
Bb3 Nxd2 16 Kxd2 Bd7 =.

11...Nh5

11...h5 was recommended by Van Rekom/Jansen [4], but after 12 b4 Ne6 13 Nf5
Bf8 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 Nd5 16 Nxd5 cxd5 17 Rd1, White has an edge.

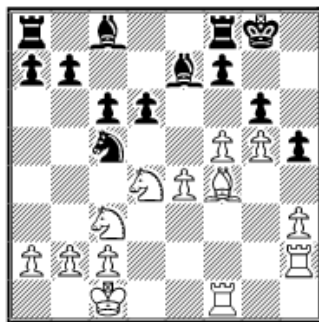
12 g4

Or 12 Nde2 Nf6 13 Ng3 a5.

12...Ng3 13 Rh2 Nxf1 14 Rxf1 h5 15 g5 g6

15...a5 comes into consideration.

16 f5 0-0 17 Bf4



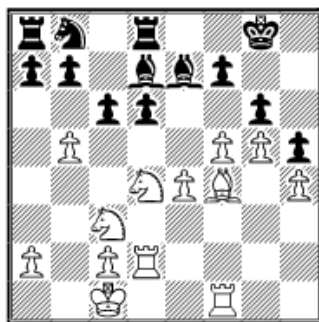
17...Rd8? +/-

A serious oversight. The rook should go to
the neighboring square: 17...Re8! 18 Re2
(18 b4 Nd7) 18...Nd7 =.

18 b4 Na6

Black's last move was wrong, now Black
cannot play 18...Nd7? because of 19 fxg6
fxg6 20 Ne6, which attacks the rook on
d8. If he only had the rook on e8, Black
would have nothing to fear.

19 b5 Nb8 20 Rd2 Bd7 21 h4



21...d5?!

Desperation, but Black was probably lost
anyway. He could have tried 21...Bc8 22
Bg3 a6; for example, 23 bxc6 bxc6 24
Rfd1 Re8 25 Na4 Ra7 26 Nb6 Rb7 27
Nxc8 Rxc8 28 fxg6 fxg6 29 Nb3 d5 30
exd5 Ba3+ 31 Kb1 a5!?, when he can still
continue the fight.

22 exd5 Ba3+ 23 Kd1 c5 24 Ne6 fxe6 25
dxe6 Bb4 26 Rf3 Nc6 27 exd7 Nd4 28
Rxd4 cxd4 29 Nd5 Ba5 30 fxg6 Rf8 31

Ne7+ and Black resigned, Korchnoi –
Bastrikov, Minsk 1952.

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