



## COLUMNISTS

### Over the Horizons

Stefan Bucker

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## The Antique Attack in the Modern Defense

After two losses with 1 e4 e5 in his little match with Attakinsky (see the [July](#) and [August](#) columns), an exhausted Defendarov declared that he needed a pause, apparently to prepare a more resilient first move. We take the opportunity to discuss 1 e4 g6, a reply not to be expected from this orthodox master. Many players find it difficult to prepare for flexible defenses such as 1...g6, 1...d6, 1...b6, where a great number of move orders are possible, in contrast to the more straightforward play in the Open Games; for example, in the Marshall Gambit. By postponing to move his center pawns, Black often keeps the option to transpose to other defenses. 1...g6 and a later c7-c5 could perhaps lead to a Modern Benoni, to an Open Sicilian or several other systems. For our offbeat repertoire after 1 e4, the Modern Defense 1...g6 is a difficult response – not because of its strength, but because of its flexibility. It isn't easy to develop something unusual, a personal approach against 1...g6, if Black has so many different options.

My own early attempts with 1...g6, based on the instructive work by Keene and Botterill, *The Modern Defence* (London 1972), typically included the pawn storm b7-b5, directed against the white knight on c3. This preference explains why I felt uncomfortable, when White chose the solid c2-c3. Many years later it seemed to be a useful weapon against the German fianchetto expert Jörg Hickl. I liked my position, at least up to a point:

**Stefan Bucker (2345) – Jörg Hickl (2480)**  
Bad Neuenahr 1991, German Championships  
Modern Defense [B00]

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d6 3 Bd3 e5 4 c3 Nf6 5 Ne2 g6



[FEN "rnbqkb1r/pp3p1p/2pp1np1/4p3PPP/2PB4/PP2NPPP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 6"]

As mentioned above, all kind of move orders are possible. Whether the opening should be called Modern Defense or Caro-Kann Defense or Pirc, I leave to the reader.

6 0-0 Bg7 7 Nd2 0-0 8 h3 Nbd7 9 f4

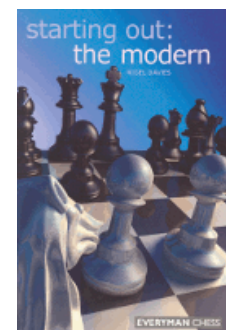
This solid white set-up, with the knight on e2 and an eventual later f2-f4, can still be recommended. It is relatively easy to handle. Of course it doesn't refute 1...g6, but in my opinion White keeps a lasting small advantage.

9...Qe7 10 Qc2 exf4 11 Nxf4 b6 12 b4 Bb7 13 Bb2 c5 14 Rae1 Rae8 +=

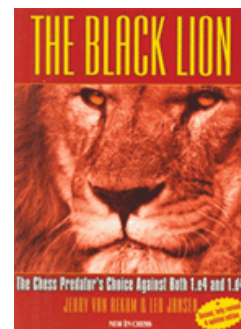
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[FEN"4rrk1/pb1nqbp/1p1p1np1/2p5/  
1P1PPN2/2PB3P/PBQN2P1/4RRK1 w - - 0 15"]

White has more space. Black's position is sound, but his options are limited.

**15 bxc5**

15 b5 was preferable.

**15...bxc5 16 Qa4 a6 17 Qa5 Bh6 18 Bc1 Bg7 19 Qc7? Rb8 20 Nf3? (20 dxc5) 20...Rfc8 21 Qa5 cxd4 22 cxd4 Nxe4 23 Bxe4 Bxe4 -/+ and Black won (0-1, 47), since 24 Nd5 Qe6 25 Nc7 fails to 25...Qc4.**

However, the set-up with c3 and Ne2 remained an exception in my games. For an adherent of the Closed Sicilian it is more tempting to lure the opponent into this familiar structure, by playing 2 Nc3 and leave the d-pawn on d2. Of course Black doesn't have to accept the invitation by playing c7-c5. The following game is an unusual mixture of a Pirc Defense and the Closed Sicilian. The ChessBase software classifies it as a "Vienna Game". I agree without much enthusiasm, since the situation is rather untypical for a Vienna Game.

**Stefan Bückner (2415) – Stephan Ingenerf (2265)**

Wittlich 1983

Vienna Game [C25]

**1 e4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 g3 e5 4 Bg2 d6 5 d3 Ne7 6 f4 0-0 7 Nf3 Nbc6 8 0-0 f5**



[FEN"r1bq1rk1/ppp1n1bp/2np2p1/4pp2/4PP2/  
2NP1NP1/PPP3BP/R1BQ1RK1 w - f6 0 9"]

The position is almost symmetrical, only the king's knights are occupying different squares. But it is White's turn, and some exchanges give him the slightly better pawn structure.

**9 fxe5 Nxe5?!**

Better: 9...dxe5 10 exf5 Bxf5, about =.

**10 Nxe5 dxe5 11 exf5 gxf5 12 Qh5 c6 13 Bh6!?**

White sacrifices a pawn.

**13...Qb6+ 14 Kh1 Qxb2**

Played without hesitation.



[FEN"r1b2rk1/pp2n1bp/2p4B/4pp1Q/8/2NP2P1/PqP3BP/R4R1K w - - 0 15"]

#### 15 Ne4! fxe4

The computer suggests the defense: 15...Qd4, intending 16 Ng5 Qg4!. But after 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 the quiet continuation 17 Rab1! threatens g3-g4, while the knight e4 is still taboo: 17...fxe4 18 Rxf8! Kxf8 19 Rf1+, winning.

**16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Rxf8 Qxa1+ 18 Rf1 Qxf1+ 19 Bxf1 Ng6 20 dxe4 Be6 21 Qg5 Rf8 22 Kg1 Bxa2 23 h4 h6 24 Qg4 Rf6 25 c4 Rxf1+ 26 Kxf1 Bxc4+ 27 Kf2 1-0**



Gambit inventor:  
Max Lange (1832-1899)

Searching for a more forcing sequence, or at least a trap, against the Modern Defense, I detected the following exotic gambit in Max Lange's *Der Meister im Schachspiel*, Weimar 1881, p. 204:

#### Steinitz – Blackburne

Vienna 1873

Modern Defense [B06]

**1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Bd3?!**



[FEN"rnbqk1nr/ppppppbp/6p1/8/3PP3/3B4/PPP2PPP/RNBQK1NR b KQkq - 0 3"]

A surprising pawn sacrifice. It is even more surprising that Black doesn't take

on d4:

**3...c5 4 dxc5 Qc7 5 Ne2 Qxc5 6 Nbc3 Nc6 7 a3 d6 8 Be3 Qa5**  
(1-0, 39)

However, the diagrammed position didn't really occur in this final and decisive game of the Vienna tournament. The tournament book gives this sequence: **1 a3 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 e4 c5 4 dxc5 Qc7 5 Bd3 Qxc5 6 Ne2 Nc6 7 Be3 Qa5+ 8 Nbc3 d6**, and via a completely different move order we have finally returned to Max Lange's creative version. Max Lange was a well known theoretician and had invented other gambit openings that were named after him, but his "improved game version"(?) 3 Bd3?! seems difficult to justify.

This example should be a warning. The King's Fianchetto or Modern Defense is flexible enough to resist any premature attack. It is probably wiser to play a solid set-up, such as my first two examples, or another reliable system – there are many. But for those who still urge me to show something offbeat, I propose the "Antique Attack":

**1 e4 g6 2 c3!? Bg7 3 Qb3**



[FEN"mbqk1nr/ppppppbp/6p1/8/4P3/1QP5/PP1P1PPP/RNB1KBNR b KQkq - 0 3"]

Intending 4 Bc4, to create a small weakness on the black squares (e7-e6 is almost forced) in Black's camp.

**3...c5!?**

Alternatives are playable, but in each case the resulting situations are attractive:

(a) 3...c6 4 d4 d5 5 Nd2 e6 (what else?) 6 h4!? Nd7 7 h5 +=.

(b) 3...d6!? 4 Bc4 e6 5 d4 (5 Nf3 Nf6 6 e5 deserves attention) 5...Nf6 6 e5!? (6 Bd3 0-0 7 Nf3 c5 8 0-0 d5!, about =, resp. 8 dxc5 Nbd7!) 6...dxe5 7 dxe5 Nd5 (7...Nfd7 8 f4) 8 Nf3 0-0 9 0-0 Nc6 10 Bg5, unclear.

**4 d4!?**



[FEN"rnbqk1nr/pp1ppbp/6p1/2p5/3PP3/1QP5/PP3PPP/RNB1KBNR b KQkq d3 0 4"]

A promising gambit, in the style of a Morra Gambit. In this concrete case, Black's fianchetto may be a small handicap. The consequences are not entirely clear, but White should get full compensation for the pawn, at least.

**4...cxd4 5 Nf3! Nc6 6 cxd4 Nxd4**

6...Bxd4?! is worse; e.g., 7 Bc4 e6 8 Nxd4 Nxd4 9 Qd3 +=.

**7 Nxd4 Bxd4 8 Bc4 e6**

8...Kf8?! 9 Bxf7 Kg7 is slightly better for White.



[FEN"r1bqk1nr/pp1p1p1p/4p1p1/8/2BbP3/1Q6/PP3PPP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 9"]

**9 0-0**

9 Nc3 also deserves attention: 9...Ne7 10 0-0 a6 11 Bf4 0-0 12 Rad1 Nc6 13 Qa3Bg7 14 Bd6.

**9...Ne7**

Looks more natural than 9...Nf6 10 Qd3 Qb6 11 Nc3; for example, 11...Ng4 12 Qe2, and White has the initiative.

**10 Nc3 a6 11 Bf4 Nc6**



[FEN"r1bqk2r/1p1p1p1p/p1n1p1p1/8/2BbPB2/1QN5/PP3PPP/R4RK1 w kq - 0 12"]

White has sufficient compensation for the invested pawn. He can simply plant his bishop on the vital square d6, which gives him a lasting grip on the position. 12 a4 is also possible, to prevent b7-b5. Another ambitious idea is 12 Rad1 0-0 13 Bd6 Re8 14 Rxd4!? Nxd4 15 Qd1. Maybe not entirely correct, but the long-term pressure may be worth the exchange.

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