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Can the Ponzi Fly Again?

Recently a new book on the Ponziani opening turned up in my mailbox. It was written by two of America's leading correspondence players, Dave Taylor and Keith Hayward. *Play the Ponziani* is published by Everyman Chess (ISBN 978-1-85744-620-3; US\$27-95, UK £16-99, 300 pages softcover). In the year 2000, Dave Taylor had self-published Ponziani Power and now Hayward has brought it up to date. The new work is very densely packed with information, providing comprehensive coverage of the opening in the way that the old Batsford monographs used to do, rather than the selective coverage through illustrative games as usually seen in Everyman Chess books.



Ponziani Opening

Although I never had much success with the opening, I did (twice) write short books on it for Chess Digest. The first of these was in 1974, the second and more substantial work was published ten years later. I note that Hayward and Taylor do not include the 1984 work in their bibliography, but I think that is just an oversight as they have clearly seen the book. Both of my old booklets were in English descriptive notation because that is what the Chess Digest publisher, Ken Smith, insisted upon.

An image of the Ponzi as a large flightless bird somehow got into my mind. Had the authors taught it to fly again? So I decided that this opening was worth another look. The English name of the opening is really a misnomer. 3 c3 is much older, but Domenico Lorenzo Ponziani (1719-96) analysed 3...f5 in his book *The Incomparable Game of Chess* and the name eventually stuck.

I first came across this opening (with black) as a young player when J. B. Howson, a strong English civil service club player, came to my school to give a simultaneous display in the early 1960s. I no longer have the game score, but it probably was not worth preserving.

After 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3 (the characteristic move of the Ponziani) White apparently intends to follow up with d2-d4 and then recapture on d4 with the pawn, achieving a big pawn centre. However there is another point to 3 c3.

I probably thought, like so many others meeting it for the first time, something along the following lines. "That's a silly move. Now I can play the freeing move 3...d5 because after 4 exd5 Qxd5 he cannot hit my queen by Nc3 as he has stupidly blocked the knight with his pawn."

There followed 3...d5 4 Qa4!

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[FEN "r1bqkbnr/ppp2ppp/2n5/3pp3/Q3P3/2P2N2/PP1P1PPP/RNB1KB1R b KQkq - 0 4"]

"Ouch. I didn't see that. He didn't take my pawn or defend his e-pawn. My knight is pinned. If I play 4...dxe5, he plays 5 Nxe5 and I am in trouble on c6, but if I play 4...Bd7, then my d-pawn is no longer defended."

I probably did not even consider 4...f6, or 4...Qd6, both of which protect the e-pawn, because the first is an ugly and apparently weakening move, while the latter offends against the principle of moving the queen early – although that is what White has just done.

I cannot remember what I played, but I know I lost quickly. Afterwards Howson showed me a few tricks of the trade.

3...d5 is actually playable, but Black needs to know what he is doing. If he is unprepared, White has excellent chances of achieving a significant opening advantage. The details follow later in the article.

Every other reply for Black and a final assessment of the book will follow in the September column.

Comments from a Loyal Reader

It seems that the Ponziani Opening does not attract a large following, but it does attract extraordinary loyalty from the few who find it suits their style. Last month I invited any readers who had played the Ponziani to send in comments or analysis, and one did. Many thanks to 2103-rated Robert Taylor from Preston in England (no relation of the co-author, I think), who will find himself quoted several times in this article.

Robert Taylor comments, "The book is impressive in terms of its scope – I have previous books on the opening and no-one has been this thorough previously, I think; however I do take issue with some of the 'preferred lines' given by Hayward and in a small number of places I think he leaves things out – maybe for space reasons, or other considerations. Also I do disagree with his assessments in a couple of places (he is stronger than me of course but I stick to my guns!)."

On the opening itself, Robert Taylor writes, "The most optimistic assessment I can make of 3 c3 is that it is fifth best in the position, but even so, I still employ it several times a year. Entertainment value (added to which, so many black players steer away from the critical positions, so my score with the move is no worse than you'd expect – quite the reverse)!"

The rest of this month's article is devoted to a detailed look at the 3...d5 variation and the September column will deal with 3...Nf6 and Black's other possibilities, and any further reader feedback.

A Detailed Look at the 3...d5 Line

It is now time to make a detailed examination of the critical positions arising from 3...d5. I look at these first because, frankly, if you do not like the type of game you obtain with white here, then you should not be playing the Ponziani. The play is sharp, but the opportunities of obtaining a clear, if not decisive, advantage (or disadvantage) straight out of the opening are greater in

the 3...d5 variation than in almost any other line arising from 3 c3.

An important position to note is the following, which commonly occurs after White's fifth move when Black defends his e-pawn by **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3 d5 4 Qa4 f6**, and now **5 Bb5**.



[FEN "r1bqkbnr/ppp3pp/2n2p2/1B1pp3/Q3P3/2P2N2/PP1P1PPP/RNB1K2R b KQkq - 0 5"]

The same position can come about if White adopts the move order 4 Bb5 f6 5 Qa4. So a major question facing White when learning and analysing this opening is whether 4 Qa4 or 4 Bb5 is preferable, on the basis of which lines does he wish to avoid, or encourage, in the event of Black playing something other than 4...f6.

If White plays the move recommended by Hayward and Taylor, namely 4 Qa4, then he chiefly needs to have lines ready against the counter-gambits 4...Bd7 (Caro) and 4...Nf6 (Leonhardt). He does not need to fear 4...dxe4. On the other hand, if he chooses the sharper 4 Bb5, then 4...dxe4 is the critical alternative to 4...f6.

When I wrote my first Ponziani booklet in 1974, I recommended 4 Qa4 on the basis that the queen was better able than the bishop to look after herself on an open board. Ten years later, in the 1984 booklet, I recommended 4 Bb5 in order to avoid the Caro and Leonhardt and steer the game into less analysed possibilities following 4 Bb5 dxe4. Subsequently, those possibilities have received attention, and of course computers have greatly changed the way one goes about preparing sharp opening variations. I have now been forced to change my mind. In practice, I never had to play the critical line as virtually all my opponents chose 3...Nf6 and on the rare occasion I had black, I chose 3...f5 as being the move White was probably least ready to meet.

Taylor also strongly recommended 4 Bb5 in his *Ponziani Power* but, like me, has now changed his mind. In the opinion of Hayward and Taylor, 4 Bb5 has been refuted and must be avoided. Here is a critical game that illustrates the problem.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3 d5 4 Bb5?! dxe4! 5 Nxe5 Qg5!

At first sight, 5...Qd5 might seem to be more problematic for White because the queen then forks two unprotected minor pieces. On the other hand, 5...Qg5 "only" forks knight and g-pawn, but it is the latter which represents the real danger to the first player because the black queen will come to g2, attacking the king's rook with tempo, and then his king comes under attack. Another option for Black is 5...Bd7, but White simply plays 6 Nxd7 Qxd7 7 d4 with a small advantage.

After **5...Qd5**, White has a strong tactical solution to the fork, although it yields only a minimal positional advantage. He plays **6 Qa4 Nge7** (not 6...Qxe5 7 Bxc6+ bxc6 8 Qxc6+ and Black loses the exchange for inadequate compensation.) and now Howard Staunton's move **7 f4**, when Black has to choose between capturing *en passant* or to maintain his cramping e4-pawn at the cost of letting White's knight become anchored on e5. Now

a) On page 212 of the book they discuss 7...Be6!? and the only reply considered is 8 Na3. Robert Taylor comments that he suggested an

improvement for White here to David Taylor which may not have been relayed by his co-author:

"I don't believe 8 Na3 offers white anything. I do support 8 b3 – and have played it twice over the board. Black is virtually obliged to continue 8...e3 but how is he going to untangle cleanly when White answers 9 0-0! I do feel this option for white ought to be in the book as after 9 0-0 exd2 White has a good position with either recapture."

b) Their main line continues **7...exf3 8 Nxf3** reaching the point where their coverage disagrees with my 1984 analysis.

b1) 8...Be6 was the main line in my old book, following analysis by Steinitz which had been updated by a Bulgarian called Filchev. However they have refuted his line. White continues 9 0-0 0-0-0 10 d4 Qh5 and now rather than 11 Na3 (Steinitz) or 11 c4?! (from Filchev) the authors of the new book suggest 11 Nbd2. It does seem that 8...Be6 is fairly playable.

b2) 8...a6 is the main line in Hayward and Taylor; it was a sub-line in my second book. Then

b21) I recommended 9 Be4, again following Bulgarian analysis, but they say that Black is fine after either 9...Qe4+ or 9...Qh4, giving examples.

b22) Their recommendation is 9 Be2 Bd7 10 0-0 Ng6 11 Qb3 exchanging into a somewhat superior queenless middlegame (Schakel-Cederquist, corr 2000).

c) Another possibility for Black is the solid 7...Bd7, discussed on pages 213-4. I have nothing to add here.

Now we return to Hayward and Taylor's critical line, 5...Qg5.



[FEN "r1b1kbnr/ppp2ppp/2n5/1B2N1q1/4p3/2P5/PP1P1PPP/RNBQK2R w KQkq - 0 6"]

In this position White has two possibilities: 6 Qa4 (which had been recommended in Russian books prior to my 1984 booklet) and 6 d4, which I tried to revive. Unfortunately both probably lose for White.

6 d4?!

Robert Taylor thinks that White must play **6 Qa4 Qxg2 7 Bxc6+** (7 Rf1 Bh3 transposes back to line a, after a few moves.) **7...bxc6 8 Qxc6+ Kd8** and now



a) The book gives only **9 Rf1** Bh3 10 Qxa8+ Ke7 11 Kd1 Qxf1+ 12 Kc2, when the key move for Black is 12...Bf5! as given in both my booklet and the new book. The key new discovery is that after 13 Na3 Black does not have to be satisfied with the draw following 13...e3+ but can play 13...f6!, as shown by GM John Emms in his book [Play the Open Games as Black](#). As I pointed out in my review at the time, 13...f6! was a recent discovery then and was not mentioned in Taylor's previous book, but that shortcoming has now been rectified.

b) Robert Taylor is a bit annoyed that the authors do not state that **9 Kd1!** is an improvement here. His game against GM Mark Hebden at Aintree 1998 continued 9...Qxh1+ 10 Kc2 Nh6! 11 Qxa8 Bd6 12 Nc6+ Kd7 and now White lost quickly following 13 Nxa7?!, whereas he should have played 13 Nd4, which Hebden had been expecting. Again, he says he sent his detailed analysis to David Taylor some years ago and it appeared in [Gary Lane's August 2004 column](#) after I wrote to him at [ChessCafe.com](#), but the improvement is not in the book.

Robert Taylor concludes that "9 Kd1 is not losing due to the improvement 13 Nd4... My conclusion is that the variation is good for black, but not winning for Black and that 9 Kd1 is essential here, because otherwise I am afraid 4 Bb5 needs not a ?! but a straight red-card."

Deep Rybka on my computer does prefer this line after 5...Qg5 but still thinks Black is clearly better, so I tend to think 4 Bb5 gets the red card anyway, for the purposes of serious correspondence games or play against strong opponents. However it may be fun to play sometimes. 9 Kd1 has worked for Robert Taylor in casual correspondence play on the Scheming Mind server and over-the-board games against weaker opposition. Since I wrongly believed in 1984 that 6 Qa4 led to a draw, I recommended the lesser-known 6 d4 instead, but here also improvements have been found for Black, and if anything it is a disimprovement on 6 Qa4.

Now we return to the alternative line at 6 d4.



[FEN "r1bkbnr/ppp2ppp/2n5/1B2N1q1/3Pp3/
2P5/PP3PPP/RNBQK2R b KQkq d3 0 6"]

6...Qxg2 7 Rf1 Bd6!

In my 1984 work I had identified this move as possibly "the critical test" because it prevents 8 d5, which is the answer to, for example, 7...Nge7.

8 Nxc6

It was this move, first suggested in the 1980 Chess Player booklet *The Ponziani Opening* by A. Smith and M. Ciamarra, which I recommended in 1984. Instead the tactics are all in Black's favour after 8 Qa4? Nge7! Also 8 Qh5, with which GM Velimirovic obtained a draw in a 1989 game, is not very convincing.

8...Bd7!

After this White cannot retain the extra piece. Other moves favour White, as Taylor and Hayward show on page 223.

9 Qa4!?

This may be the best practical try. David Taylor has personal experience of 9 Nxa7 c6 10 Nxc6 (10 Bc4 Rxa7 11 d5 c5) 10...bxc6 when Black has excellent compensation for the pawn at this stage.

9...a6!

Black keeps finding the "only" move. After 9...bxc6 10 Bxc6 Rd8 1 Be3, White starts to solve his development problem.

10 d5

Or 10 Na3 Rc8! as analysed in the book.

10...Rd8!!

This is even better than 10...Rc8 and much, much better than 10...bxc6?! 11 Bxc6 Rd8 12 Be3 when "White escapes the worst", they say.

11 Bxa6 bxc6 12 dxc6 Bh3 13 Be3 Qg6! 14 Nd2

This is all analysis from the book, probably by Taylor. If 14 Rh1 Bg2 15 Rg1 Bxh2.

14...Bxf1 15 Nxf1 Nf6 16 0-0-0 0-0

Now the authors say, "White has no compensation for the exchange".

The 4 Qa4 Lines

The conclusion that must be drawn from all the above is that 4 Bb5 is indeed unsound, and so White must answer (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3) **3...d5** by **4 Qa4**.



[FEN "r1bqkbnr/ppp2ppp/2n5/3pp3/Q3P3/2P2N2/PP1P1PPP/RNB1KB1R b KQkq - 0 4"]

4...f6

This introduces what used to be the main line of the 3...d5 variation. Black accepts a slight weakening of his kingside to secure the important e-pawn. The authors state that 4...f6 has become a rare move in practice, perhaps because modern players have forgotten Steinitz's idea or do not want to weaken their kingside.

He can also try

a) 4...Bd7 (Caro Counter-Gambit) 5 exd5 Nd4 6 Qd1 Nxf3+ 7 Qxf3 and now

a1) 7...Nf6 8 Bc4 Bd6?! 9 d3 Qe7?! 10 Bg5 led to a clinical White win in a game Surtees-Hebden, 1999, which was apparently analysed on the Chess Publishing website many years ago, although I have not seen it. The authors

omit the game from their coverage on page 148, probably because they consider the critical line to be 8...e4 9 Qe2 Bd6 10 d4! when they prefer White although there is still a lot of play.

a2) 7...Bd6 is the most flexible according to Hayward. For White he recommends 8 Bc4 f5 9 d4 e4 and that now either 10 Qe2 or 10 Qh5+ g6 11 Qg5!? might be tried.

b) 4...Nf6 (Leonhardt) is the alternative counter-gambit. The book gives 5 Nxe5 Bd6 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 d3 0-0 8 Be2 Re8 and now their recipe to defuse the complications is 9 Nd2. There have been a few successful recent games with this and perhaps at last the refutation of 4...Nf6 has been found.

c) 4...Qd6 looks artificial but it sensibly protects e5 without weakening the pawn structure. There is no clear main line for White. The authors point out that 5 d3 has done very well in practice although theoretically it should not lead to any opening advantage. It seems to me that if Black wishes to play 3...d5 then this is the line to investigate in more detail.

d) 4...dxe4? is quite often played, and was even the choice of Karpov back in 1975, but it is definitely weak. The main line goes 5 Nxe5 Qd5 6 Nxc6! bxc6 (not 6...Bd7?? 7 Nb4) 7 Bc4 and there is a big plus score for White in practice here. Now

d1) 7...Qd7 8 0-0 Nf6 (8...Bd6 9 Re1! Nf6 10 d3 0-0 11 dxe4 – Keres) 9 d3 exd3 10 Bg5! (S. Levitsky-A. Rabinovich, Russian ch, Vilnius 1912).

d2) 7...Qd6 8 0-0 Bf5 9 f3! (A. Dückstein-Mitkov, Schellenberg 1991); for details on these lines, see the book.

It seems to be accepted, however, that 4...f6 is the best move. The next few moves are virtually forced for both sides and then there are choices at move seven.

5 Bb5 Nge7 6 exd5 Qxd5



[FEN "r1b1kb1r/ppp1n1pp/2n2p2/1B1qp3/Q7/2P2N2/PP1P1PPP/RNB1K2R w KQkq - 0 7"]

7 d4

This is the more modern move, but the old 7 0-0 is the more promising option in Hayward and Taylor's opinion. They rather hide this comment away at the bottom of page 160 and the final comment to the chapter on page 189.

For 7 0-0 see the final section of this article: the illustrative games Alekhine-Isakov and Showalter-Pillsbury.

7...Bg4

This seems to be strongest although it deprives the black queen of the g4-square.

a) 7...e4 8 c4 and Black has three possible destinations for the queen. There are some unclear and relatively untested possibilities now:

a1) 8...Qd8 (or 8...Qd7) 9 Nfd2!? Qxd4 10 Nb3 is a pawn sacrifice by White, stemming from Von Popiel-Burn, Cologne 1898, which continued 10...Qd6 11 Be3 Bd7 12 c5 (12 Nc3 was preferred in contemporary notes but the authors like 12...Nf5! in reply.) 12...Qe6 13 Nc3 f5 14 0-0-0 a6 15 Rd2 Rc8 and now, as Hayward and Taylor say, 16 Bc4! would have been best. (See Richard Forster's book on Amos Burn for details.) Instead of 10...Qd6, Black can also try 10...Qd7 or 10...Qe5 but the authors prefer White.

a2) 8...Qd7!? 9 Nfd2 a6 was V. Zagorovsky's idea for Black to obtain counterplay by sacrificing the exchange with a subsequent ...axb5. The authors give some further analysis of my old suggestion 10 Nc3 but Zagorovsky's line lacks practical tests.

a3) 8...Qf5 9 Nh4 Qg4 is another almost untested possibility to which the authors devote two inconclusive pages.

If it turns out that 7...e4 is playable for Black, then White may have to re-examine the old 7 0-0, but for the time being the more aggressive 7 d4 still looks to me like the move to play.

b) 7...Bd7 8 Be3 exd4 9 cxd4 Ne5 10 Nc3 Nxf3+ 11 gxf3 Qf5 12 0-0-0 is a very sharp line. Now

b1) According to the authors, Black should play 12...Bxb5 13 Qxb5+ Kf7 but there is a muddle in their note on page 181; the lines they give following that are clearly based on having the knight not the queen on b5! Evidently 13 Qxb5 + would be met by 13...Qxb5 and so they mean 13 Nxb5; this does need some investigation.

b2) In a famous postal chess brilliancy from a championship of the British Correspondence Chess Association early in World War One, Rev. F. E. Hamond-Rev. W. E. Evill (which will be annotated in my forthcoming history of British correspondence chess), Black was crushed after 12...c6. (The authors wrongly give the loser the initial R.)

b3) Another game from the same tournament, Hamond-Baker, went 12...a6 13 d5! 0-0-0 14 Bxd7+ Rxd7 15 d6! cxd6 16 b4 Kb8 17 Kb2 Nc8 18 b5 axb5 19 Nxb5 b6 20 Nd4 Qh3 21 Rc1 Be7 22 Nc6+ Kb7 23 Bxb6! Kxb6 24 Qb4+ Ka6 25 Rc3 1-0. A curiosity is that Hayward and Taylor, despite having access to my booklets, have repeated the garbled citation "Gemon-Iville & Boicker" from the Bulgarian writer Khristov, although I pointed out that mix-up in 1984! Subsequent games cited in the book have only disimproved from the handling of this variation by Francis Hamond, a very strong player who took holy orders in mid-life and was still playing postal and OTB chess to national standard in the 1920s. He had made a special study of the 3...d5 Ponziani, improving on the way it was handled by the great masters of the late nineteenth century.

8 c4

Clearly best. It is well known, says Robert Taylor, that 8 Bc4? here loses a pawn and he complains that the authors do not make that clear by awarding the move a question mark.

8...Qe4+

The authors say 8...Qd8 is playable and indeed it may be best.

9 Be3 Bxf3 10 Nd2 Qg6

10...Bd1!? comes into consideration.

11 gxf3 exd4 12 Bxd4 a6 13 0-0-0 0-0-0 14 Be3

Once more we are following Hamond, this time in a game against G. Barron from board one of the Norwich-Hull postal match of 1915. They say recent theory has preferred 14 Be3 but give it an !? They prefer 14 Nb3. After White's next move, we return to their main line but Hamond played 14 Be3

first, according to *British Chess Magazine*, 1916, where he annotated it.

14...Nb8

This retreat is the crucial test says Hayward. 14...axb5 was not analysed in *BCM*, but a correspondence game Sample-Shannon from 1988 went 15 Qa8+ Nb8 16 Ne4 (following an old suggestion of my own) 16...Rxd1+ 17 Rxd1 Nec6 18 cxb5 f5 19 Nc3 b6 and now, instead of 20 bxc6, the authors give 20 Nd5! as "fine for White".

15 Nb3 Rxd1+ 16 Rxd1 axb5 17 Qa8 b6

Not 17...Nec6? 18 Na5! Nxa5 19 Qxb8+ Kxb8 20 Rd8 mate.

18 cxb5 Qf7 19 Kb1 Qc4 20 Bxb6



[FEN "Qnk2b1r/2p1n1pp/1B3p2/1P6/2q5/1N3P2/PP3P1P/1K1R4 b - - 0 20"]

20...cxb6?

Perhaps the losing move. 20...Qxb5 21 Rd8+! Kxd8 22 Qxb8+ Kd7 23 Nc5+ seems about equal.

21 Rc1 Qxc1+ 22 Kxc1 Ng6 23 a4 Bd6 24 Qa7 Nd7 25 a5 Bb8 26 Qa8 bxa5 27 b6!

Preventing ...Kc7.

27...Nge5?

27...Kd8 was the last chance.

28 f4 Nf7

If 28...Nd3+, 29 Kb1 wins.

29 Nxa5 Nd6 30 Qa6+ Kd8 31 Nc6+ Ke8 32 Qe2+ 1-0

Three Classic Games with 3...d5

Aleander Alekhine – K. Isakov
Moscow Spring tournament, 1907
Ponziani Opening [C44]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3 d5 4 Qa4 f6 5 Bb5 Nge7 6 exd5 Qxd5 7 0-0

The move that Hayward and Taylor prefer here.

7...Bd7

The authors say that 7...e4 "is regarded as the critical test of 7 0-0." See the next game.

8 d4 e4 9 Nfd2 f5



[FEN "r3kb1r/pppbn1pp/2n5/1B1q1p2/Q2Pp3/2P5/PP1N1PPP/RNB2RK1 w kq - 0 10"]

10 Nb3

The authors (see page 169) say White may do better with 10 Na3 Qd6 11 f3.

10...Ne5

This is weak.

a) Afterwards the players agreed to play a correspondence game beginning at move ten and this time Isakov tried 10...Ng6 11 c4 Qf7 12 Nc3 a6 13 c5 Na7 14 Bxd7+ Qxd7 15 Qc4 0–0–0 16 d5 Ne5 17 Qe2 Nb5 18 c6! Qd6 19 Nxb5 axb5 20 Qxb5 Qb4 and here the game was left unfinished.

b) 10...Nc8! is correct according to the authors, though Black must follow up better than he did in an 1893 postal game Traxler-Stastny.

11 Nc5 c6 12 Be2 Bc8 13 Be3 b5 14 Qa5 Nc4 15 Bxc4 Qxc4 16 Nd2 Qd5



[FEN "r1b1kb1r/p3n1pp/2p5/QpNq1p2/3Pp3/2P1B3/PP1N1PPP/R4RK1 w kq - 0 17"]

Black's weakened pawns and uncastled king are more serious disadvantages than White's apparent bad bishop and offside queen.

17 a4

Alekhine showed afterwards that 17 f3! would have opened up the game to White's decisive advantage. Hayward and Taylor do not mention that.

17...Ng6! 18 f3

18 axb5 f4 19 c4 Qd8 20 bxc6 is their suggested improvement.

18...Bxc5 19 dxc5 Qd3 20 Bg5 h6 21 Nxe4 hxg5 22 Nd6+ Kd7 23 Rad1 Qe3 + 24 Kh1 Qf4 25 g3 Qxa4 26 Nxb5+ 1–0

Jackson Whipps Showalter – Harry Nelson Pillsbury

USA Championship match (12), New York, 1897
Ponziani Opening [C44]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3 d5 4 Qa4 f6 5 Bb5 Nge7 6 exd5 Qxd5 7 0–0 e4 8 c4!?

Hayward and Taylor call this "a speculative move" that "needs further testing". In 1894 Showalter beat Pillsbury with 8 Bxc6+ but the authors consider all three recaptures to be playable. Although White won that game in Buffalo, it was not because of the opening and Pillsbury switched to the text move in a subsequent game against his great rival before trying 7...Bd7.

8 Nd4?! Bd7 is ineffective for White (see page 161), while after 8 Ne1 they only consider Bogoljubow's suggestion 8...Bf5 9 f3, which is reckoned to be about equal. The alternative 8...Bd7 has worked well for Black in some games.

8...Qd8

a) 8...Qd6 is best in the authors' opinion.

b) 8...Qc5 9 d4! exd3 10 Be3 Qh5 (10...Qd6?! 11 c5 Qd8 12 Rd1!) 11 Nc3 with a slight advantage to White say Hayward and Taylor.

c) 8...Qd7!? 9 Ne1 (9 Bxc6?! Nxc6! 10 Re1 f5 11 d3 Nb4!) 9...a6 10 Nc3 Rb8 is another possibility, forcing White to capture on c6, surrendering the bishop-pair.

9 Bxc6+ bxc6

9...Nxc6 10 Re1 f5 11 d3 is good for White.

10 Ne1 Bf5 11 Nc3 Qd7 12 c5 Nd5 13 Nxe4 Be7 14 Ng3 Bg6 15 d4



[FEN "r3k2r/p1pqb1pp/2p2pb1/2Pn4/Q2P4/6N1/PP3PPP/R1B1NRK1 b kq d3 0 15"]

In the long run, White's extra pawn decided the game.

15...h5 16 h4 0-0 17 Nf3 Rab8 18 Re1 Nb4 19 Re2 Rfe8 20 a3 Nd5 21 b4 Bd3 22 Re1 g6 23 Bd2 Kg7 24 Qb3 Bf5 25 Nxf5+ gxf5 26 Re2 Rg8 27 Rae1 Kh8 28 Re6 Qe8 29 g3 f4



[FEN "1r2q1rk/p1p1b3/2p1Rp2/2Pn3p/1P1P1p1P/PQ3NP1/3B1P2/4R1K1 w - - 0 30"]

30 Bxf4! Nxf4 31 Rxe7 Qg6 32 Qf7 Qxf7 33 Rxf7 Nd5 34 Rd7 a5 35 bxa5 Rb3 36 Nh2 Rxa3 37 Re6 Ra1+ 38 Nf1 Rg7 39 Rd8+ Rg8 40 Rxc8+ Kxc8 41 Rxc6 Kf7 42 Kg2 Ra2 43 Kf3 Ke7 44 Ne3 Kd7 45 Ra6 Nb4 46 Rxf6 Nc6 47 d5 Nd4+ 48 Ke4 Nb3 49 c6+ Ke7 50 Ke5 Nxa5



[FEN "8/2p1k3/2P2R2/n2PK2p/7P/4N1P1/r4P2/8 w - - 0 51"]

51 Nf5+ Ke8 52 Re6+ Kf8 53 f4 Nc4+ 54 Kf6 Rd2 55 Ng7 Kg8 56 Nf5 Kf8 57 d6 cxd6 58 Ng7 1-0

Rev F. E. Hamond – Major E. Montague Jones

BCCA Trophies First Class corr. 1915–16

Ponziani Opening [C44]

Notes by Hamond in the *BCCA Magazine* #21 (June 1916).

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3 d5 4 Qa4 dxe4 5 Nxe5 Qd5 6 Nxc6 bxc6 7 Bc4 Qd7 8 d4!?

8 0-0 is the move recommended in the Hayward book but I am unconvinced that this is inferior. Of course it is true that they have studied the opening far more deeply and passionately than me in recent years.

8...Nf6

"The Major did not wish to open the e-file by 8...exd3". According to the authors (see page 191), he should have done so. Then 9 0-0 Bd6 10 Nd2 Ne7 transposes to Ljubojevic-Karpov, Portoroz/Ljubljana 1975.

9 0-0

"For if 9 Bg5 Nd5 would be a good reply, and the Bishop would be left hors de combat."

9...Bd6 10 Nd2 0-0 11 f3 exf3

"For if 11...e3 12 Ne4 and the pawn falls" – but some annotators gave 11...exf3 a question mark.

12 Nxf3 Bb7

"This is not so good as it appears! Black seems to be a move behind until the end of the game."

13 Ng5

"Commencing a frontal attack on His Majesty."

13...h6

"As expected."

14 Qc2

"Threatening Qg6 at the right moment, and if 13...hxg5 14 Rxf6."

14...Qg4? 15 Rxf6 Bxh2+



[FEN "r4rk1/pbp2pp1/2p2R1p/6N1/2BP2q1/2P5/PPQ3Pb/R1B3K1 w - - 0 16"]

16 Kh1

"This is better than taking the Bishop, as 16 Kxh2 Qh4+ etc. would follow." Actually 17 Kg1 then wins easily.

16...hxc5

"Forced!"

17 Rh6!!

"White relied upon this move. Perhaps ...Rfe8 is the best reply, but Black's game is lost at this point."

17...gxf6 18 Qg6+ Kh8 19 Qxh6+ Kg8 20 Bxg5

"Black regretted his own generosity, and hoped I should treat the offer of the Queen as I had done that of the Bishop. But alas! it was too good to refuse in these hard times."

20...Qxg5

"White threatened 21 Qg6+ and 22 Bf6+, and if 20...Be5 simply 21 dxe5 and if 21...Qxc4 22 Bf6 and mate follows."

21 Qxg5+ Kh7 22 Kxh2

"Now we take off everything!"

22...Rg8 23 Qh5+ Kg7 24 Rf1 1-0

"Resigns, as 24...Rh8 will not do: 25 Rxf7+ Kg8 26 Rh7+."

At this stage it is hard to say whether the Ponzi is flying or not after 3...d5 4 Qa4. There are too many lines that need more testing, but that would make it interesting to play.

Postscript: Save Barden's Column!

Readers in England, especially in the London area, will be horrified to discover that Leonard Barden's long-running chess column in the *Evening Standard*, which has appeared every weekday for almost fifty years, has been axed from the printed edition of the paper. As of Monday 2 August, it has been relegated to the online edition only, probably as a prelude to dropping it altogether.

The English Chess Federation are calling on everyone affected to write a letter, in their own words, complaining and demanding reinstatement of the column. The address to write to is: Geodie Greig (Editor), Evening Standard, PO Box 2309, London W8 5EE, or email letters@standard.co.uk with a copy to managingeditor@standard.co.uk.

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