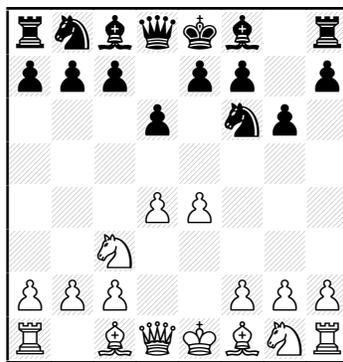


Pirc & Modern Defence [B06–09]

Written by GM Nigel Davies & IM Andrew Martin

Last updated Thursday, September 23, 2004



The Pirc Defence remains a solid and reliable option for Black. Black encourages White to set up a broad pawn centre which he or she will later attempt to undermine. Watch out for the latent power of Black's King's Bishop!

White's most frequently played option is the Austrian or Three Pawns Attack. This is a highly dangerous and direct attempt to score the point, and requires up-to-date knowledge of theory.

4 ♗g5, the Byrne Variation is currently in vogue and scoring well against unwary players. Watch out for this line! White can of course also steer the game into quieter more positional channels by adopting the Classical or Fianchetto Variation.

All the games given in [blue](#) can be accessed via ChessPub.exe, simply head for their respective ECO code.

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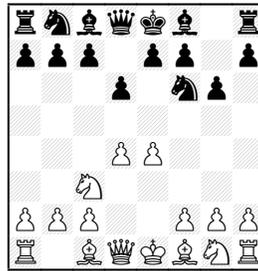
1 e4 d6

1...g6 2 d4 ♘g7 Modern Defence [B06]

2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3

3 ♘d3 g6 4 c3 ♘g7 Pirc–The system with c3 & Bd3 [B07]

3...g6



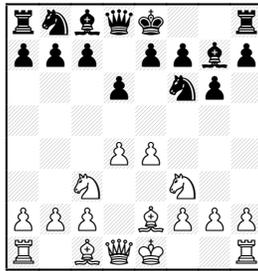
3...c6 4 f4 ♖a5 Pirc–Czech System [B07]

4 ♘f3

4 ♘g5 Pirc–Not 4 f4 or 4 Nf3 [B07]

4 f4 ♘g7 5 ♘f3 0-0 (5...c5 Pirc–Austrian Attack– 5...c5 [B09]) 6 ♘d3 Pirc–Austrian Attack– 5 0-0 [B09]

4...♘g7 5 ♘e2



5 ♔e3 Pirc–The 150 Attack [B08]

5...0-0 6 0-0 ♘c6

Pirc–Classical [B08]

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Modern Defence [B06]

Last updated: 11/06/04 by Andy Martin

1 e4

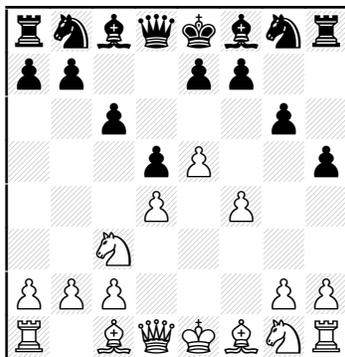
1 d4 d6 (1...g6 2 c4 ♘g7 3 ♖c3 c5 4 e3 cxd4 5 exd4 ♗f6 6 ♗f3 d5 transposes to a Grünfeld-style set-up, Korchnoi,V–Morozevich,A/Biel 2003) 2 ♗f3 g6 3 c4 ♘g7 4 ♖c3 ♘g4 5 e3 c5!? Mikhalevski,V–Davies,N/Rishon le Zion 1995.

1...g6 2 d4

2 f4 d5 3 e5 c5 Danielsen,H–Salmensuu,O/Munkebo 1998.

2...♘g7

2...d6 is a subtle order of moves, after which 3 ♖c3 c6 4 f4 d5 (4...♗b6!? 5 ♘c4 ♘g7 6 ♗f3 ♗h6 7 ♘b3 ♘g4 8 ♘e3 d5 Bologan,V–Azmaiparashvili,Z/European Club Cup, Crete 2001) 5 e5 (5 ♗f3 dxe4 6 ♗xe4 ♘g7 7 ♘c4 ♗h6 8 h3 ♗f5 gave Black excellent counterplay in McDonald,N–McNab,C/Hastings 1993) leaves Black's bishop better placed on f8 than g7, despite the apparent loss of tempo by playing first ...d7–d6 and then ...d6–d5. 5...h5



6 ♗f3 (6 ♘e3 ♗h6 7 ♗d2 ♗g4 8 ♗d1 ♘f5 9 ♗f3 ♗xe3 10 ♗xe3 e6 11 ♘e2 ♗b6 12 0-0 c5 led to sharp play in Hector,J–Gurevich,M/Mariehamn 1997

and 6 ♘e2 ♗h6 7 ♗f3 ♘g4 8 ♘e3 e6 9 ♗d2 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 b5 11 h3 ♘xf3 12 ♘xf3 h4 13 ♗e2 ♗f5 14 ♘f2 c5 gave Black excellent counterplay in Meszaros,A–Chernin,A/Hungary 1992)

a) 6...♗h6 7 ♘e3 ♗b6 8 ♗a4 ♗a5+ 9 c3 ♘g4 10 ♗c5 ♗f5 (10...♗c7 is not much of an improvement. 11 h3 ♗f5 12 ♘f2 ♘xf3 13 ♗xf3 b6 14 ♗d3 h4 15 e6!!± Karjakin,S–

Kotsur,P/Kallithea 2002, cutting the black position in half!) 11 ♕f2 e6 was also OK for Black in Luther,T–Gurevich,M/Cappelle la Grande 1998

b) 6...♙g4 7 ♕e3 was Almasi,Z–Norwood,D/Germany 1994 and now 7...♗h6 would have been the simplest approach (in the game Norwood played 7...♞b6)

An offbeat idea that has attracted the attention of a few idiosyncratic GMs is 2...♗f6

a) After 3 ♗c3 Black can lend the game independent significance with 3...d5!? (3...d6 is a Pirc) 4 e5 ♗h5 5 ♕c2 (5 f4 ♗g7 6 ♗f3 c6 7 ♕e2 ♙g4 Vajda,L–Budnikov,O/Yerevan ARM 1999) 5...♗g7 6 ♕h6 c5 7 ♗f3 ♗c6 8 dxc5 d4 9 ♗b5 ♗e6 was OK for Black in Daamen–Welling,G/Eindhoven 1988

b) 3 e5 3...♗h5 4 ♕e2 (4 ♗f3 d6 5 ♕c4 d5 6 ♕e2 ♗g7 Ferguson,M–Hodgson,J/Kilkenny IRL 1999

4 c4 d6 5 f4 ♕h6 6 ♞f3 dxe5 7 dxe5 ♗c6 was good for Black in Vlad,D–Barkhagen,J/Mamaia 1991) 4...♗g7 5 ♗f3 d5 6 h3 (6 c3 c6 7 h3 ♕f5 8 ♗bd2 h5 Pacey,K–Day,L/North Bay Int Open 1996) 6...h5 7 0-0 c6 8 b3 a5?! 9 c4! and White had a strong initiative in Lautier,J–Miles,A/Biel 1996.

2...c6!? gives Black the option of Caro–style play with ...d5, 3 c3 ♕g7 4 ♕d3 d6 5 ♗e2 ♗f6 6 f3 ♗bd7 7 ♕e3 is a strange way to start the game. White can't seem to make his mind up what to do. Naturally Black can achieve a very good position effortlessly against such an insipid strategy: 7...e5 8 ♞d2 0-0 9 g4 d5! see Dauth,B–Paulsen,D/Berlin GER 2004, where Black went on to win.

3 ♗c3

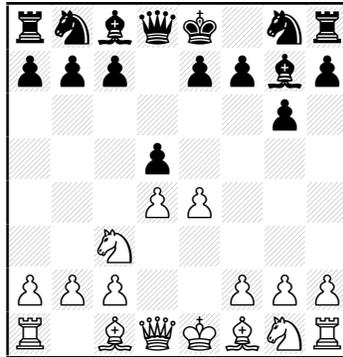
3 ♗f3 In the Modern Defence White can choose a Holmov–like set–up, just as well as in the Pirc. In fact, the delay in the development of Black's Knight on g8 allows White to keep his Queen's Knight on b1 for a while and to put it on the d2–square. 3...d6 4 ♕c4 (4 c3 ♗f6 5 ♗bd2 c6 6 ♕e2 Taimanov,M–Mikeli,L/European Seniors, Saint Vincent ITA 2002) 4...♗f6 (4...a6 5 0-0 e6 6 ♕g5?! The bishop puts itself too far too soon into the enemy camp, where it quickly becomes a target for Black's pawns to attack. 6...♗e7 7 ♞d2 Bouroutzakis,G–Agdestein,S/Kiel Open, Germany 2000. 4...e6!? 5 ♕b3 b6 6 ♗c3 ♕b7 7 ♕g5 ♗e7 8 ♞e2 h6 9 ♕e3 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 0-0 The Hippopotamus method seems well playable against an early Bc4. The Bishop is a little exposed and Black hopes to gain time on that piece in due course. See our featured game, where Enders makes a move forward on the Kingside but gets nowhere. 11 h4 d5 A blow on the flank deserves a counterblow in the centre! 12 exd5 ♗xd5 13 ♗xd5 exd5 14 ♗e5 ♗xe5 15 dxe5 ♕xe5 16 ♕xh6 ♞e8 17 ♞f3 c6 18 ♕g5 f6 19 ♕f4 ♞d6 20 g3 ♗g7 21 c3 ♕a6! = Enders,P–Gallagher,J/Bundesliga 2003) 5 ♞e2 c6 Here this plan is the best. 6 ♕b3 0-0 Matulovic,M–Botvinnik,M/Beograd 1970, this classic game shows how Black should react in this case.

3 c4 d6 4 ♗c3 ♗c6 (4...a6!? Levitt,J–Davies,N/Southend ENG 1999) 5 ♕e3 e5 6 d5 ♗ce7 7 g4 c5!? Polajzer,D–Davies,N/Graz 1981.

3 c3 d6 is covered in Waddingham,G–Davies,N/Southport ch70-BCF 1983

3...d6

In general, the Modern Defence is not too popular amongst the world's very best players, probably because it allows White to establish a large spatial advantage.
3...d5!?



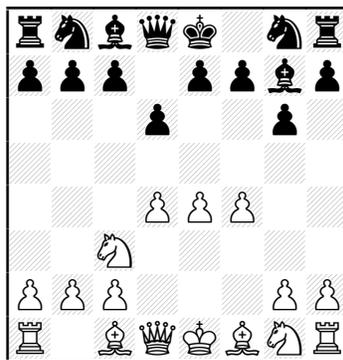
This line was pioneered by the Finnish correspondence player Ahlback and has since attracted the attention of some strong over-the-board players. Britain's Matthew Turner and the Israeli (formerly Russian) Alek Vyderslaver have both given it a whirl, though neither of them with notable success. The real champion of this line seems to be the Portuguese player, Sergio Rocha. White should of course capture on d5, not with the knight because of 4...c6, but with the pawn. 4 exd5 ♖f6 (4...a6 This amazing move was Ahlback's preference for years before he had a brief flirtation with the 'normal' 4... Nf6. 5 ♗e2 b5 6 ♗f3 [Torhola,S–Ahlback,B/corr. 1979.](#)) 5 ♗c4 The critical line, trying to hang on to the pawn at least for a while. 5...♗bd7 The critical move, denying White the time he needs to reinforce the pawn on d5. (5...0-0?! After this Black struggles to regain his pawn. 6 ♗ge2 ♗bd7 7 ♗b3 ♗b6 8 ♗f4 [Yudasin,L–Vydeslaver,A/Beer–Sheva \(Israel\) 1992.](#)) 6 ♗b3 On practical grounds this would be my personal preference. (6 ♗g5 Aiming to keep the extra pawn at the cost of the bishop pair – but Black gets compensation. 6...♗b6 7 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 8 ♗b3 [Campora,D–Rocha,S/Santo Antonio \(Portugal\) 1999.](#)) 6...♗b6 7 ♗f3 ♗g4 8 ♗g3, as in [Klovans,J–Gurevich/Dnepropetrovsk \(Ukraine\) 1970](#), seems to give White a worry free edge. The verdict is that 3...d5!? has plenty of shock value, but I wouldn't recommend that you play it all the time!

3...c6 This move order is very popular nowadays. 4 ♗c4 (Preventing 4...d7–d5 – thought after 4 f4 d5 5 e5 h5 6 ♗f3 ♗g4 7 ♗e3 ♗h6 8 h3 ♗f5 9 ♗f2 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3 h4 11 ♗d3 e6 12 ♗e2 ♗d7 13 0-0 ♗f8 14 b3 White had a useful space advantage in [Yudasin – McCarthy, New York 1991](#) 4 ♗f3 d6 5 h3 ♗f6 6 a4 a5 7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0 ♗a6 9 ♗e1 White is holding off with the Bishop on c1, seeing if he make a gain elsewhere or lure Black into an inferior set-up. 9...d5 10 exd5 cxd5 11 ♗b5 ♗c7 12 ♗f4 ♗e6 13 ♗e5 ♗d7 14 ♗d3 ♗h6 15 c3± [Schmaltz,R–Krasenkow,M/Reykjavik ISL 2004](#), a position in the best murky traditions of the Modern Defence. Of course White is better but it is a difficult advantage to pin down, and Black went on to win!) 4...d6 (Black can try 4...d5?! nevertheless, but this move is quite dubious: 5 exd5 b5 6 ♗b3 b4 7 ♗ce2 cxd5 8 ♗d2! Immediately exploiting the weakness of Black's queenside pawns.) 5 ♗f3 e6 (5...♗f6?! is a dubious move. 6 e5! Only by playing this active continuation can White

hope for an advantage. 6...dxe5 7 dxe5 ♖d5 8 ♗xd5 cxd5 9 ♙xd5 Thipsay,P–Koshy,V/India 1994.) 6 ♗ge2 The key position of this line. Now Black has a choice, 6...b5 The main line. (6...♗f6 7 ♙g5 ♗bd7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♙b3 Milov,V–Segal,A/Israel 1993.) 7 ♙b3 a5 8 a3 ♙a6 Shirov believes in this set-up and still employs it despite terrible losses against Judit Polgar and Anand. 9 d5! The correct approach: White counters flank activity by action in the centre. (9 0-0?! Nunn deviates, probably being afraid of Shirov's preparation. However, his choice unlikely will have many supporters as Black now has easy play. 9...♗d7 10 ♙f4 ♖e7 11 ♗ad1 e5 Nunn,J–Shirov,A/Germany 1996.) 9...cxd5 10 exd5 e5 Black has a nice pawn structure in the center and if he manages to complete his development he'll be better. So White should play very aggressively. 11 ♗e4! h6!? An interesting attempt to improve. Black prepares ...f7–f5 (of course, Black couldn't play it immediately in view 12 Ng5). (11...♖c7?! After this seemingly natural move Black's position is barely defensible. 12 c4! bxc4 13 ♙a4+ ♗d7 14 ♗2c3 Polgar,J–Shirov,A/Amsterdam 1995.) 12 g4! The only move, otherwise White's pieces will be thrown back after ...f7–f5. 12...♗f6 13 ♗2g3 ♗xe4 14 ♗xe4 0-0 15 ♖h3 The critical position for the evaluation of the whole line, Anand,V–Shirov,A/Dos Hermanas 1996.

3...a6!? 4 h4!? d5 5 ♗xd5 c6 6 ♗e3 ♖xd4 7 ♖xd4 ♙xd4 8 h5 ♗d7 9 f4 ♙g7 10 e5 ♗b6 11 g4 ♗h6 12 g5∞ Motylev,A–Chernyshov,K/56th ch–RUS, Krasnoyarsk RUS 2003. The game has taken a very bizarre turn. Perhaps White is to be preferred as Black has problems liberating the g7–bishop.

4 f4



Inviting transposition into the Austrian Attack.

If Black plays the Modern defence without an early ...Ng8–f6, he has an additional possibility in the Fianchetto system: 4 g3 ♗c6!? This provocative move seems risky, but modern practice proves it to be viable. 5 d5 (5 ♙e3 ♗f6 6 h3 e5 Frois,A–Davies,N/Cala d'Or 1986) 5...♗d4 6 ♗b1 White has tried several different continuations here, but none of them promise anything special. 6...c6 7 c3 Raetsky,A–Sakaev,K/St. Petersburg 1999.

Against several other moves he can start a queenside expansion with ...a7–a6 and ...b7–b5 before completing his kingside development, for example 4 ♙g5 a6 5 ♗f3 (5 ♖d2 b5 6

f4 ♖d7 7 ♗f3 c5 8 dxc5 ♗xc5 9 e5 ♙b7 10 0-0-0 f6! ⇒ A fighting move which more less forces an unclear sacrifice, [Shabalov,A–Burnett,R/CCA Vermont Open, Stratton Mountain USA 2003](#)) 5...♗d7 6 a4 b6 7 ♙c4 [Rublevsky,S–D'Amore,C/Istanbul Olympiad, Turkey 2000](#).

or 4 ♙e3 with

a) 4...c6 5 ♗d2 b5 is the older approach. 6 ♙d3 (6 0-0-0!? is very committal. After 6...♗d7 7 h4 ♗a5 8 ♗b1 ♗b6 9 ♙d3 h5 10 ♗h3 ♗f6 11 f3 ♙xh3 12 ♗xh3 ♗fd7 13 f4 b4 14 ♗e2 c5 15 dxc5 ♗xc5 16 ♙d4 e5 [Janev,E–Todorov,T/BC Masters, Bois Colombes FRA 2003](#), Black achieved a more or less ideal set-up) 6...♗d7 7 ♗f3 ♗c7 I don't think this is the right square for Black's Queen. For maximum flexibility, Black should try to play ...e7–e5 before committing the Queen, 8 0-0 ♗gf6 9 h3 0-0 10 a4 b4 11 ♗e2 a5 12 c3 bxc3 13 ♗xc3 ♙a6 14 ♗fc1 ♗b8 (14...♙xd3 15 ♗xd3 ♗fb8 [Ferrec,N–Kljako,D/4th ZNG111 IM, Opatija CRO 2002](#)) 15 ♗c2 [Ferrec,N–Rukavina,J/Hotel Opatija GM Nov, Rijeka CRO 2002](#).

b) 4...a6!? 5 a4 (5 ♗d2 ♗d7 6 ♗f3 b5 7 a4 b4 8 ♗e2 ♗b8 [Szalanczy,E–Davies,N/Liechtenstein 1993](#).) 5...b6 6 ♗d2 ♙b7 7 ♙c4 (7f3 [Kozlov,V–Inarkiev,E/Autumn III, Alushta UKR 2002 7 h4!?](#) [Manca,F–Davies,N/Saint Vincent ITA 1999](#)) 7...♗d7 8 ♗f3 e6 9 0-0 h6 10 ♗fe1 ♗e7 11 ♗ad1 ♗f8 12 ♙d3 ♗g8 13 ♗e2 ♗f6 14 ♗g3 ♗e8! White is being outmanoeuvred, [Spoelman,W–Hort,V/Essent Open, Hoogeveen NED 2002](#)

4 ♗ge2 ♗c6 5 ♙e3 ♗f6 6 h3 e5 [Godena,M–Davies,N/Budapest 1993](#).

4 ♙c4 ♗c6!? 5 ♙e3 ♗f6 [Gausel,E–Davies,N/Oslo 1988](#).

4 ♗f3 a6 5 ♙e3 b5 (5...♗f6 6 ♗d2 b5 7 ♙d3 ♙b7 8 ♙h6 0-0-0 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 10 e5 White has played all the traditional attacking moves and now stands better. 10...dxe5 11 dxe5 ♗fd7 12 ♗e3 e6 13 ♙e4 ♗c6 14 0-0-0 ♗e7 15 h4± [Kizov,A–Ardelean,G/Sozina SCG 2004](#) although White later messed it up and lost!) 6 a3? A weedy move. (6 ♙d3) 6...♙b7 [Thimm,T–Berelovich,A/19th Muensterland Open, Senden GER 2002](#).

4...a6

4...♗f6 is considered under B09.

4...♗d7 5 ♗f3 c6 6 ♙d3 e5 7 dxe5 dxe5 8 ♗e2 ♗e7 9 f5 was [Lalic,B–Turner,M/Kilkenny 1998](#).

4...e6!? 5 ♗f3 ♗e7 The Hippopotamus or 'Frog' set-up popularised when Spassky used it against Petrosian. I really think it isn't very good against the Austrian Attack.

a) 6 ♙d3 b6 7 0-0 (7 ♗e2! is also good, intending e4–e5!) 7...♗d7 8 f5! Direct and excellent. 8...exf5 9 exf5 ♗f6 10 ♙g5 0-0 11 ♗c4 ♗xc4 12 ♙xc4 d5 13 ♙xe7 ♗xe7 14 ♙xd5 ♗b8 15 fxg6 hxg6 16 c3± [Zarnicki,P–McShane,L/Dos Hermanas 2003](#) Remarkably, White failed to win this position!

b) 6 ♙e3 6...♗d7 7 ♗d2 a6 [Baum,B–Davies,N/Gausdal 1993](#).

5 ♗f3 b5

5...♗d7 6 ♙c4 e6 7 a4 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a5 c5! This might well be a very significant new idea. Delchev finds an optimal move order to defuse the Austrian attack. 10 ♙e3 ♗c6, see [Armbrust,F–Delchev,A/3rd Autumn Open, Bad Wildbad GER 2002](#).

6 ♔d3 ♕b7

6... ♖d7 7 e5 ♕b7 8 ♜e2 ♗h6 9 a4 b4 10 ♗e4 0-0 11 c3 bxc3 12 bxc3 c5 13 0-0 ♜c7 14 e6±
As a contrast to Delchev's idea, Lobron trots out the old stuff and gets crushed,
[Svidler,P–Lobron,E/Ordix Open, Mainz GER 2002](#).

7 e5

I like this central thrust, which leaves Black's king's knight and bishop with little scope,
[Beliavsky,A–Hickl,J/European Zonal, Pula 2000](#).

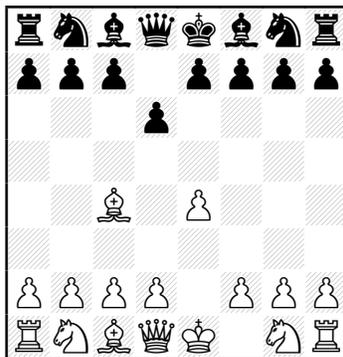
Pirc – Not 4 f4 or 4 Nf3 [B07]

Last updated: 23/09/04 by Andy Martin

1 e4 d6 2 d4

White often plays this automatically, but it is not the only move. Several players have tried an attacking set-up akin to the f4 Sicilian:

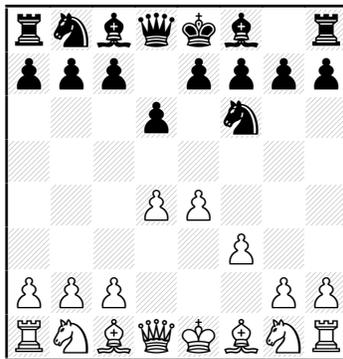
2 ♖c4



2... ♗f6 3 ♗c3 c6 4 ♖b3 e5 5 f4 ♖g4 6 ♗f3 exf4 7 d4 Short,N–Campora,D/Moscow 2001 or 2 ♗c3 ♗f6 3 f4 g6 4 ♗f3 ♖g7 5 ♖c4 ♗xe4 (5...c6 6 ♖b3 ♗a6 Romero Holmes,A–Wortelv,M/Wijk aan Zee NED 1998 5...0-0 6 ♖b3 ♗c6 7 d3 ♖g4 Romero Holmes,A–Insua Mellado,J/Alicante 1997) 6 ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 7 ♗xe4 with an interesting position in which White's pawn structure gives him more space, but Black has the two bishops – Grigorian,M–Ornstein,P/Warsaw 2001.

2... ♗f6 3 ♗c3

3 f3

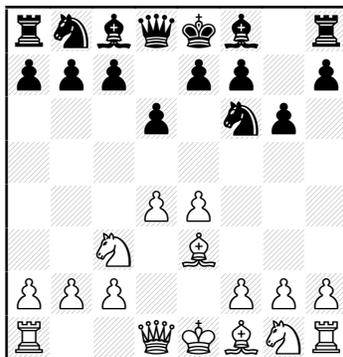


This humble move in fact contains more than a drop of poison. It's especially unpleasant for players who don't play the King's Indian, since such a transformation is quite common here. 3...e5 (3...g6 4 c4 leads to the Saemisch Variation in the King's Indian. For this, check out Victor Mikhalevski's excellent site! 3...d5 4 e5 ♞fd7 and now the game may transpose into one of key positions in the French! 5 f4 c5 6 ♞f3 ♞c6 7 ♞c3 e6 A more common move order to get here is 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. Nf3 Nc6.) 4 d5 (4 dxe5 aiming for a small advantage in the endgame is the main alternative. 4...dxe5 5 ♞xd8+ ♔xd8 6 ♕c4 with slightly the better chances for White. 4 ♞e2 ♕e7 5 ♕e3 0-0 6 c4 [Agrest,E-Jansa,V/Fuerth 1999](#).) 4...♕e7 5 ♕e3 ♞h5 6 ♞e2 (6 c4 ♕g5 7 ♕f2 g6 8 ♞c3 a5 9 g3 is a more severe test.) 6...♕g5 7 ♕f2 g6 8 h4 ♕h6 9 c4 f5 10 ♞bc3 0-0 11 exf5 gxf5 12 ♖g1 ♜h8 13 g4? fxg4 14 fxg4 ♞xf2! [Hillarp Persson,T-Azmaiparashvili,Z/Hotel Bali Stars, Benidorm ESP 2003](#), White was annihilated after this shot!

3...g6 4 ♕g5

The system involving 4 Bg5 used to be considered quite harmless, but modern games seem to indicate a different trend. Similar to the Austrian, except that the White Queen's Bishop is on the dynamic g5 square, not c1. Needs careful examination.

4 ♕c3



- 4...c6 (4...♔g7 5 ♖d2 c6 6 f3 b5 7 g4 h5! a good move, halting White's attack, 8 g5 ♗fd7 9 f4 ♗b6 10 ♗f3 0-0 11 ♔d3 ♖c7 12 a3 a5 13 ♗e2 d5 14 e5 [Goloshchapov,A–Lahno,K/Kharkiv UKR 2004](#), when 14...♔g4! would have given Black interesting counterplay.)
- a) 5 h3 This line is rather dangerous for Black and he has to play carefully to avoid problems. 5...♗bd7! In my opinion, the best. In other lines Black has serious problems: 6 f4 b5 7 ♖f3 (7 e5?! is premature in view of the typical 7...b4! 8 exf6 bxc3 9 bxc3 ♗xf6 but the natural 7 ♔d3 is worthy of consideration.) 7...b4 8 ♗b1 ♔b7 9 ♗d2 ♖c7 10 ♔d3 ♔g7 11 ♗e2 c5 Black can be satisfied with the result of the opening – all his pieces are well placed and ready to attack the White pawn centre, [Berezjuk,S–Stohl,I/Presov 1999](#).
- b) 5 ♖d2 ♗bd7 (5...b5 6 ♔d3 ♗bd7 7 a4 b4 8 ♗ce2 ♖a5 9 ♗f3 c5!?) Carrying the idea of delaying castling to extremes! 10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 ♔b5+ ♔d7 12 ♔xc5 dxc5 13 0-0 ♔xb5 14 axb5 ♖xb5 15 e5 White has a dangerous initiative, [Ganguly,S–Azmaiparashvili,Z/Pune IND 2004](#).)
- b1) 6 f3 b5 7 g4 ♗b6 8 g5 ♗h5! 9 ♔d3 e6 Black's position is a coiled spring, waiting to unfold. 10 ♗ce2 e5 11 0-0-0 ♖e7 12 f4?! (12 dxe5 dxe5 13 ♗g3 ♗xg3 14 hxg3 ♔g7 15 ♗e2± was a better chance for White. The choice of the game is poor, enabling the Bishop to come into play on g7.) 12...exf4 13 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 14 ♔xf4 ♔g7 15 ♗f3 ♔g4!⇒ [Molander,R–Lugovoi,A/Troll Masters, Gausdal NOR 2003](#).
- b2) 6 ♗f3 looks like a '150 Attack',
- b2a) 6...e5 7 h3 ♔g7 (7...♖e7!?) 8 ♔h6 0-0 9 ♔xg7 ♗xg7 10 0-0-0 ♖c8 11 g4 b5 12 g5 ♗h5 13 ♗e2 ♖b6 14 ♗g3 ♗xg3 15 fxg3 exd4 16 ♗xd4 ♗c5 (Keeping cool with 16...♗e5 is recommended! 17 ♖f4 ♖a5 18 ♗b1 ♔e6) 17 ♔g2 ♗xe4 18 ♖f4 d5 19 ♖hf1 ♖b7 20 ♗xc6!± [Landa,K–Rudolf,H/ECC, Rethymnon GRE 2003](#)
- b2b) 6...♖c7 7 ♔d3 e5 8 0-0 ♗g4 9 ♔c4 ♔g7 10 dxe5 ♗dxe5 11 ♗xe5 ♔xe5 12 ♔f4 d5 13 ♔xe5 ♖xe5 14 f4 ♖h5 15 h3 dxc4 16 hxg4 ♖c5+ 17 ♖f2 ♔xg4 18 f5∞ [Kasparov,G–Azmaiparashvili,Z/Blitz Match, Crete GRE 2003](#). Perhaps Black can defend, for instance after 18...Bh5 or 18...Rg8, but it will be no easy task .
- c) 5 ♗f3 ♖b6! A very sharp novelty which works wonders after 6 ♖b1, 6 ♖b1 6 ♖d2 or 6 a3 are critical. 6...♔g7 7 h3 0-0 8 ♖d2 ♖c7 9 ♔h6 ♗bd7 10 ♔d3 b5 11 0-0 ♔b7 12 ♔xg7 ♗xg7 13 ♖fe1 b4 14 ♗e2 c5± [Hunt,A–Rahman,Z/British Championship 2003](#)
- d) 5 f3
- d1) 5...♗bd7 6 ♖d2 b5 7 ♗ge2 ♔b7 8 ♔h6! not waiting for ...Bf8–g7. 8...♔xh6 9 ♖xh6 e5 10 dxe5 dxe5 11 ♗c1 ♗c5 12 ♗d3 ♗xd3+ 13 ♔xd3 ♗g8? A very strange move indeed. [Dvoirys,S–Tkachiev,V/Moscow RUS 2004](#) (Either 13...♖e7 or 13...♗h5 would have been better, with equality.)
- d2) 5...b5 6 g4 h6 7 ♖d2 ♔g7 8 h4 h5 9 g5 ♗fd7 10 ♗ge2 ♔b7 11 ♗g3 0-0 12 f4 b4 13 ♗d1 c5 14 d5 The moves of both sides are very natural and suggest themselves quite readily. [Anand,V–Chernin,A/European Club Cup 1999](#).
- 4 g3 ♔g7 (4...c5 is premature: 5 dxc5 ♖a5 6 cxd6 ♗xe4 7 ♖d5! and Black is in trouble.) 5 ♔g2 0-0 6 ♗ge2
- a) 6...♗bd7 7 0-0 (7 h3 c5 8 ♔e3 cxd4 9 ♔xd4 ♗e5! 10 0-0 ♗c6 11 ♔e3 This position may occur in the Sicilian Dragon as well.) 7...c5 8 h3 (White has also tried 8 d5 which leads to a Benoni-like position, but here it doesn't look good for White as his Knight is misplaced on e2. White's main plan is to break through in the centre of the board by playing e4–e5 and the Knight is much better placed on f3 for this purpose.) 8...♖b8!

Black should postpone the pawn exchange and play ...Rb8 and ...b6 first. Only then will Black take on d4 and complete his development by playing Bc8–b7. 9 a4 a6 So which move (9...a6 or 9...b6) to prefer is entirely up to you – both are perfectly playable. 10 dxc5 (10 a5!? is worthy of consideration.) 10...♖xc5 11 ♕e3 b6 12 g4 More or less forced if White wants to avoid playing the ugly f3, [Rodriguez Talavera,J–Gulko,B/San Roque 1996](#). (12 ♖d4 ♕b7 13.f3 allows 13...e5! 14 ♖b3 ♖xb3 15 cxb3 d5 with advantage to Black.)

b) 6...e5 7 0-0 The critical position of the Fianchetto system. (7 h3 This is the most precise move order. 7...♖c6!? 8 ♕e3 ♕d7 9 0-0 [Khenkin,I–McNab,C/Koszalin 1997](#)– an excellent game!) 7...♖a6 8 ♖e1 c6 9 h3 ♖e8 10 ♕g5! [Karpov,A–Timman,J/Montreal 1979](#).

4 ♕c4 ♕g7 5 ♖e2 By developing his pieces in this way White intends an early e4–e5. Here Black can choose between two different lines: 5... c6 and 5... Nc6. Both are perfectly playable. I personally prefer the latter. But this position may also arise from the Modern defence with an early ...c7–c6, for example: 1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 c6 4 Bc4 d6 5 Nf3 Nf6 see [B06]. 5...♖c6!? White's last move left his d4–pawn unattended so Black immediately attacks it. 6 e5 ♖g4!? The sharpest continuation. (6... ♖d7 is a good alternative to the text.

So both 6...Nd7 and 6...Ng4 are suitable for Black. But Black should avoid the following trick: the tempting 6...♖xd4? is bad in view of the queen sacrifice 7 exf6! ♖xe2 8 fxg7 ♖g8 9 ♖gxe2 The critical position. Although Black has a material advantage his position is hardly defensible. My database contains about 40 games and the statistics are horrible for Black: White has won almost all the games!!) 7 ♕b5 The only way to hold the central pawns. 7...0-0 8 ♕xc6 bxc6 9 h3 ♖h6 10 ♖f3 c5! 11 dxc5 ♕b7! This pawn sacrifice gives Black excellent compensation. His light–squared bishop is very strong now and pressure on the b–file and long diagonals give him a lasting initiative, [Sigurjonsson,G–Timman,J/Wijk 1980](#).

4 ♕f4!? ♕g7 5 ♖d2 a6 6 ♕h6 ♕xh6 7 ♖xh6 e5! 8 0-0-0 ♖g4 9 ♖g7 ♖f6 equalised in [Salmensuu,O–Chernin,A/European Club Cup, Crete 2001](#)

4...c6

4...♕g7

a) 5 e5!? dxc5 (5... ♖fd7 is the main alternative to the text. Theory considers it dubious, but it's premature to draw definite conclusions as only a few games have been played.) 6 dxe5 ♖g4! Absolutely the only move. 7 ♖xd8+ (The "active" 7 ♖d5 leads White nowhere in view of 7...c6! 8 ♖xe7 ♖a5+! and Black is better, for example: 9 ♖d2 ♖xd2+ 10 ♖xd2 ♕e6, threatening 11...h6 12.Bh4 g5, winning the brave knight.) 7...♖xd8 8 ♖d1+ ♕d7 9 e6 Besides the text White has other possibilities, but none of them are sufficient for achieving opening advantage, and maybe even equality. [Magem Badals,J–Chernin,A/New York 1998](#).

b) 5 f4

b1) 5...h6 6 ♕h4 ♖bd7 7 ♖d2 c5 8 d5 a6 9 ♖f3 b5 10 e5 b4 11 ♖a4 dxe5 12 fxe5 ♖g4 13 e6 fxe6?! Once again, (13...g5 is a move that has to be considered for Black. After the text move, the end comes swiftly, [Dreev,A–Beim,V/Frankfurt GER 2000](#).)

b2) 5...c6 6 ♖d2 0-0 7 ♕d3 and now 7...♗b6 is one of Black's best possibilities. The game Yakovich – Wang Pin, Beijing 1997 continued with 8 ♖ge2 (after 8 e5 ♖d5 9 ♖xd5 cxd5 10 c3 ♖d7 11 ♖e2 ♗e8 12 a4 f6 13 exf6 exf6 14 ♕h4 f5 Black had obtained a good position in the game [Romanishin,O–Kuzmin,G/Tallinn 1979](#) since his Knight has the possibility of going to e4.) 8...e5 9 0-0-0 exd4 10 ♖a4 ♗c7 11 ♖xd4 ♖bd7 12 ♖c3 b5 13 ♗he1 b4 14 ♖b1 a5 15 ♖f3 ♖c5 with good prospects for Black on the queenside.

4...♖bd7 5 f4! The threat of 6.e5 is obvious, but it's not clear how to react against it. 5...c5 (5...h6 6 ♕h4 ♖h5 doesn't work, as after 7.f5! the weak g6-square is a target.) 6 e5 dxe5 But the text move is hardly an improvement. 7 dxe5 ♖h5 8 ♕c4 h6 9 e6! fxe6 10 ♗d3 ♖f7 11 ♖f3 ♖g7 12 0-0 White has developed his pieces in the most powerful way. It looks like Black is already in dead trouble: [Yakovich,Y–Gual,A/Terrasa 1999](#).

5 ♗d2 b5

5...♖bd7 6 f4 ♗a5 7 ♖f3 b5 This is the natural way for Black to meet this set-up from White. However, the combination of the early ...Nbd7 and ...Qa5 doesn't seem to work so well. 8 ♕d3 b4 9 ♖e2 (9 ♖d1 has also been tried successfully, e.g. 9...d5 10 ♖f2 dxe4 11 ♖xe4) 9...♕a6 10 0-0 d5 11 e5 ♖e4 12 ♗e3 [Afek,Y–Van der Wiel,J/Dieren NED 2000](#).

6 ♕d3 ♕g7

6...♖bd7 7 f4 ♕g7 8 ♖f3 (8 e5 b4 9 exf6 bxc3 10 ♗xc3 exf6 11 ♕h4 ♗b6 is fairly balanced.) 8...♗b6!? A new move, several other moves have been tried out, but apparently Azmaiparashvili didn't find these sufficient. 9 e5 b4 10 ♖a4 ♗a5 11 b3 [Maciejka,B–Azmaiparashvili,Z/Saint Vincent ITA 2000](#).

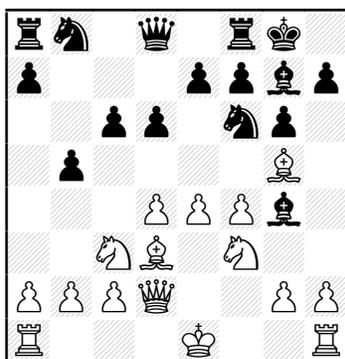
7 f4

White obtains a strong pawn centre, and his dark-squared Bishop is situated much more actively than in the Austrian Attack.

7...0-0

7...♗b6?! Black's position can tolerate either ...b5 or ...Qb6, but combining both of them asks for trouble. It's important that after ...b5 the b2-pawn is not hanging. 8 e5! (8 ♖f3 ♕g4 is unclear.) 8...♖d5 9 ♖xd5 cxd5 10 c3 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♖c6 12 ♖e2 b4 13 ♕e3! Preparing to castle, [Kobalija,M–Burmakin,V/Novgorod 1999](#).

8 ♖f3 ♕g4



The most popular line.

The old move 8...♗bd7 is out of fashion, but it is far from bad, 9 e5! (9 0-0 was played in [Byrne,R–Gipslis,A/Sousse 1967](#). Although White won this game, my comments prove Black had some possibilities to equalize.) 9...b4 10 ♗e2 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♗d5 12 ♕h6! ♖b8 13 h4! White takes advantage of the fact he hasn't castled yet and begins a very dangerous kingside attack.

9 e5!

9 0-0 ♖b6 10 ♗e2 ♗bd7 11 ♖h1 e6 12 h3 ♕xf3 13 ♖xf3 c5 14 c3 ♖ab8 15 ♖af1 b4? So far very well played by Nijboer but this is almost a losing mistake. Instead, (15...c4!± gives Black a decent share of the game. His solid hedgehog-like centre and Kingside keeps him in good shape to deal with e4–e5.) 16 e5 bxc3 17 bxc3 ♗d5 18 c4 ♗b4 19 ♕e7± [Werle,J–Nijboer,F/Harmonic, Groningen NED 2002](#).

9...b4 10 ♗e2 ♕xf3 11 gxf3 ♗d5 12 ♕c4!

It's premature to castle queenside immediately as Black obtains good counterplay. 12 exd6!? is a typical Conquest idea to muddy the water: 12...♖xd6 13 f5 ♗d7 14 h4 ♗7f6 15 h5 ♗xh5 16 0-0-0 e5 17 ♖dg1 ♖h8 18 ♕h6 ♖g8∞ [Conquest,S–Lahno,K/Premier, Hastings ENG 2004](#), Black's position may well be fully playable, but courage is required!

12...a5 13 0-0-0

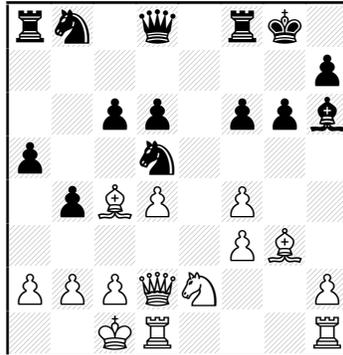
Now White is ready for the breakthrough f5.

13...f6!

This is a strong novelty.

13...♖d7 Prevents White's main idea. However... 14 f5! [Dreev,A–Azmayparashvili,Z/Moskva \(GMA\) 1989](#)– a brilliant attack!

14 exf6 exf6 15 ♖h4 ♖h6 16 ♖g3!?



Up to this move it's been well known theory. White's last move is a novelty, prepared especially for this game.

Black is a well-known expert in this line and he had already played this position when White preferred: 16 ♖f2, but after 16...♘d7 17 h4 ♘7b6 18 ♖d3 ♘a4! Black had seized the initiative, [Dreev,A-Zakharevich,I/Russia 1996](#). But what a game! Sacrifices, hair-raising ideas, both Kings feeling the heat and finally a draw by perpetual check.

16...♘d7 17 h4 ♘7b6 18 ♖d3

Black can successfully fight for the initiative, [Kobalija,M-Zakharevich,I/ Yekaterinburg 1999](#).

Pirc – Czech System & others [B07]

Last updated: 23/09/04 by Andy Martin

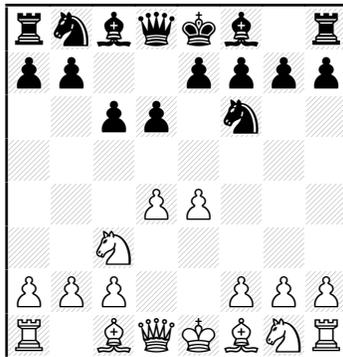
1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6

Normal, but sometimes Black plays more originally:

2...e5?! 3 dxe5 dxe5 4 ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 5 ♕c4 f6 (5...♗e6 6 ♗xe6 fxe6 7 ♘f3 ♗d6 8 ♘bd2!± with the idea b3, ♗b2 xe5) 6 f4 [Narciso Dublan,M–Garcia Castro,P/Cerrado CEMAR A, Mondariz ESP 2002](#).

2...c6!? 3 ♘c3 ♖c7 4 f4 a6 Black can play in this obscure fashion if he wishes but I feel he should go back into a Philidor at the earliest opportunity. 5 ♘f3 ♗g4 6 h3 ♗xf3 7 ♖xf3 ♘d7 8 e5 e6 9 ♗d3 d5 10 f5 exf5 11 ♗xf5↑ [Baklan,V–Lachmayer,M/20th Open, Boeblinger GER 2003](#) White has obtained a very good attacking position effortlessly.

3 ♘c3 c6



This line achieved the peak of its popularity in the early Nineties, first of all due to the efforts of players from former Czechoslovakia: J.Pribyl, M.Pribyl, K.Mokry and others. Black had very good results and at that time it was a significant part of Vladimir Kramnik's opening repertoire. Later it's popularity went down since White found a line which proved rather unpleasant for Black, but the last word has certainly not yet been said.

Black has another interesting possibility in 3...♘bd7 which aims to get a Philidor structure with 4...e5 whilst avoiding some of the move order problems that occur if you go for a Philidor with 1...e5. The critical line is 4 f4 e5 5 ♘f3 exd4 6 ♖xd4 c6 (6...♘c5!?)

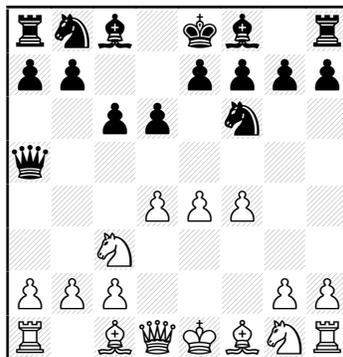
Ponomariov,R–Beliaevsky,A/Bled SLO 1999) 7 ♖e3 as in Wells,P–Oratovsky,M/Budapest HUN 1999.

3...e5 can be played immediately: 4 ♘ge2 (4 dxe5 dxe5 5 ♗xd8+ ♕xd8 6 ♙g5 ♙d6 7 0-0-0 ♘bd7? But this is inaccurate. Black should aim to play ...♙e6 first, BEFORE ...♘bd7, if only to get the pieces out. 8 ♙c4 ♕e8 9 f3 a6 10 ♘ge2 b5 11 ♙b3 h6 12 ♙h4 b4 13 ♘a4 ♙b7 14 ♖d2 ♙c6 15 ♖hd1± Cebalo,M–Marzano,C/Bratto ITA 2004) 4...♙e7 5 f3 White's opening play is rather sluggish. 5...0-0 6 ♙e3 exd4 7 ♘xd4 this transposes into a Philidor's Defence, (7 ♗xd4 ♘c6 8 ♗d2 looks better) 7...d5! Black opens the game with the white King still in the middle. 8 e5 ♘fd7 (Better still seems to be 8...c5!) 9 f4 ♘b6 10 ♘b3 c6 11 ♙d3 ♘8d7 12 ♗f3 a5∞ Mahjoob,M–Azmaiparashvili,Z/Tripoli LBA 2004.

4 f4

4 ♘f3 is the main alternative to the text and after the usual 4...♙g4 the same position occurs as after the moves 1.d4 d6 2.Nf3 Bg4 3.e4 Nf6 4.Nc3.
4 a4! White tries to win the war of elasticity. Curiously, it is Black who has to set a formation now! 4...e5 5 ♘ge2 ♙e7 6 g3 0-0 7 ♙g2 ♖e8 8 h3 ♗c7 9 ♙e3 ♘bd7 10 0-0 ♘b6 11 b3! Cutting down on counterplay. 11...a5 12 g4 ♙f8 13 ♘g3 ♘bd7 14 f4!± Kazhgaleyev,M–Gallegos,C/playchess.com INT 2004, Black has nothing to set against the White initiative on the Kingside.

4...♗a5



5 ♙d3

The main continuation.

5 e5!? ♘e4

a) 6 ♙d3!? ♘xc3 7 ♗d2 g6 This move doesn't look good since the Bishop on g7 will be restricted by White's pawn chain, but Black plans something unusual. (Many commentators recommended the Queen sacrifice: 7...♗xa2!? 8 ♖xa2 ♘xa2 9 ♘f3 and this position was evaluated as unclear, but I believe that White is clearly better here

as it's difficult for Black to complete his development. 7...c5! is more solid in my opinion.) 8 bxc3! (If 8 ♖xc3?! ♖xc3+ 9 bxc3 with equal chances in a complicated endgame.) 8...dxe5 9 fxe5 (If 9 dxe5 ♖a6 intending ...Nc5 with very comfortable play for Black.) 9...♗h6 This is the idea behind Black's previous move. Now wild complications occur, [Finkel,A–Oratovsky,M/Israel 1994](#).

b) 6 ♖f3

b1) 6...d5 7 ♗d3 c5!/? (7...♗f5? is just bad for Black due to 8 g4! ♖xc3 9 gxf5 ♖e4+ 10 c3) 8 ♖ge2?! (According to Jovan Petronic, White should have tried 8 ♗xe4 dxe4 9 ♖xe4 cxd4 10 ♖xd4) 8...♖xc3 9 ♖xc3 e6 [Petronic,J–Djuric,S/Jugoslavija 1998](#).

b2) 6...♖xc3 7 ♗d2

b2a) 7...♖d5?! This continuation is known to be dubious. 8 ♖xc3 ♗f5?! Again not the best move. (8...c5!/? deserves attention, according to Alexander Beliavsky.) 9 ♖f3 dxe5 10 ♗c4! A very strong and well calculated move. White launches a very strong attack, [Beliavsky,A–Bezold,M/Portoroz 1996](#).

b2b) 7...♗f5 8 ♗d3!/? The only way to fight for an opening advantage. Alternatives lead White nowhere. 8...♗xd3 Not the best, in my opinion. Alternatively: (8...e6!/? This interesting blockade idea is worth considering.) 9 cxd3 ♖d5 10 bxc3 dxe5 11 fxe5 ♖xf3 12 ♖xf3 e6 13 ♗e2 ♖d7 14 ♖hb1! Now Black is compelled to weaken his position, [Motwani,P–Adams,M/Moscow 1994](#).

5 ♗d2 Here, with careful play, only White has to solve problems in the opening. 5...e5! The best reaction. 6 ♖f3 exd4!/? 7 ♖xd4 ♖b6 8 ♖b3 a5! A good idea. Black tries either to push back the Knight or to provoke a weakening a2–a4, [Tal,M–Rivas Pastor,M/Barcelona 1992](#).

5...e5

5...♗g4?! is not good in view of 6 ♖d2! and Black's Bishop is clearly misplaced: 6...e6 (6...♗d7 looks ugly, but this move seems to be the only one) 7 h3 ♖h5 8 ♖f2 d5 9 e5 ♖fd7 10 ♖h2! ♗e7 11 f5! ♗xf5 12 g4 ♗xg4 13 hxg4 ♖xg4 14 ♖g2 ♖h5 15 ♗e2 and Black resigned, [Khenkin–Schebler, Eupen 1993](#).

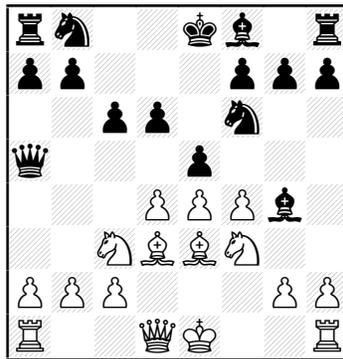
6 ♖f3

6 dxe5 dxe5 7 f5 In a position with the open d–file and fixed e4/e5 pawns White's pawn on e4 is weaker than Black's, on the other hand White has space and attacking chances on the King–side, as the following examples illustrate. Therefore Black must seek active counterplay on the other flank as soon as possible. 7...b5! (Routine play with 7...♖bd7 8 ♖f3 ♗c5 allows White to finish his development comfortably.) 8 ♖f3 ♖bd7 9 ♗d2 ♖c5 10 ♖d5 (Something like 10 g4!/? h6 11 h4∞ was worthy of consideration.) 10...♖d8 11 ♖xf6+ gxf6! A good decision, [Tolnai,T–Bezold,M/Balatonbereny 1995](#), now White's main idea – an attack with K–side pawns – looks pointless. On the other hand, Black's Rook has got the g–file...

6...♗g4

Or 6...♖bd7 7 ♔e3 White intends to castle Q-side but this aggressive plan is unlikely to be the best in the position. (7 0-0 is more popular and promises the better chances for White:) 7...♔e7 8 ♖d2 ♗c7 9 0-0-0 0-0 10 ♘e2?! A dubious move – White wastes time and loosens the pawn on e4. (Something like 10 h3!? intending g2–g4 looked more to the point.) 10...♞e8 11 h3 exd4 12 ♔xd4 (12 ♘exd4? was bad as after 12...♔f8 White would have had problems with the pawn on e4.) 12...c5!? A double-edge d move. Black weakens the d5 square but forces White to part with a strong Bishop, [Tiviakov,S–Piskov,Y/Imperia 1993](#).

7 ♔e3



7 dxe5 This continuation promises nothing special for White. 7...dxe5 8 h3?! An inaccuracy which gives Black slightly the better chances. (8 fxe5 ♘fd7 9 ♔f4 is critical for the evaluation of this line:) 8...♔xf3 9 ♗xf3 exf4 10 0-0 ♖bd7 The weakness of the dark squares in White's position and the bad placement of the knight on c3, and bishop on d3, makes Black's position superior, [Magomedov,M–Nikolaidis,I/Koszalin 1999](#).

7...♖bd7

is a solid but passive move. In the forthcoming struggle the strong pawn centre and considerable space advantage secure White the better chances. However, this move has been Black's usual choice in recent games since the complications after 7...exd4 or 7...exf4 are even worse for him.

7...exd4 8 ♔xd4 ♗b4 9 ♔e2 ♘xe4 10 0-0! At the cost of only one pawn White has an overwhelming development advantage in an open position. Practice proves Black's defence is very hard: [Ibragimov,I–Chekhov,V/Moscow 1998](#).

8 0-0 ♔e7 9 h3 ♔xf3 10 ♗xf3 0-0 11 ♘e2!

[Yakovich,Y–Romero Garcia,M/Sevilla 1999](#).

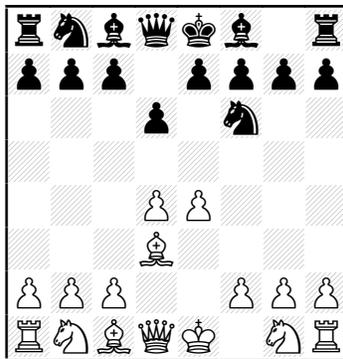
Pirc – The system with c3 & Bd3 [B07]

Last updated: 10/07/04 by Andy Martin

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6

2...g6 3 c3 ♗g7 4 f4 is a very ambitious attempt to combine the advantages of Dolmatov's set-up (the protected d4 square) and Austrian attack (a strong pawn centre). 4...♘f6 5 ♗d3 0-0 6 ♘f3 c5! Black has to attack White's centre without delay, otherwise White will complete his development and launch dangerous kingside attack with 0-0, Qe1, e5 etc. 7 dxc5 ♘bd7! By this unexpected temporary pawn sacrifice Black manages to solve all his problems. 8 ♖e2?! This move allows Black to seize the initiative. 8...♘xc5 9 ♗c2 b6! Black exploits the drawbacks of White's set-up very convincingly, [Landa,K-Korotylev,A/Moscow 1999](#).

3 ♗d3



This system was initially employed against the Modern Defence (in the move order with 1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 c3 d6 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Bd3 etc), but since the 80s this line has also become common after 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Bd3, primarily due to the efforts of GM Sergey Dolmatov. The characteristic feature of this set-up is that White doesn't strive to "refute" the Pirc as he does in the Austrian Attack, the Saemisch-like 4 f3 and other sharp lines. Instead he limits Black's counterplay and aims for a minimal advantage, delaying the main struggle until the middlegame. This quiet way of playing against the Pirc or Modern has many supporters so the line occurs very frequently in practice.

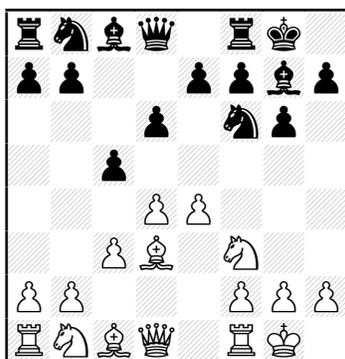
3...g6

- 3...e5 4 c3 d5! In my opinion this is the best possibility. Black exploits the drawback of 3 Bd3 which is the lack of control over d5, and breaks in the center. 5 dxe5 ♖xe4 (5...dxe4 is dubious as White has a nice way to obtain an edge: 6 ♗b5+ ♕d7 7 ♗c4!)
- a) White could win a pawn here: 6 ♗xe4 dxe4 7 ♖a4+ ♕d7 8 ♖xc4 but Black's light-square domination gives him tremendous compensation: 8...♗c6 9 ♖g4 h5 10 ♖h3 (10 ♖g3 h4 11 ♖h3 ♖d7 12 ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 gives Black more than enough for his pawn.) 10...♖d7!
- b) 6 ♗d2 ♗c5 7 ♗b1 Rausis intended this as an improvement on his game against Khalifman from Eupen 1994. 7...♗c6 8 ♗gf3 ♗g4 9 0-0 ♖d7 10 ♖e1 0-0-0!? With the bishop on b1 I felt justified in castling queenside, though this is not a plan for the faint of heart, [Rausis, I–Davies, N/Dhaka BAN 2001](#). (Black has safer alternatives in 10...♗e7 and 10...♖d8)
- c) 6 ♗f3 6...♗c6 7 ♗bd2 ♗c5 This position is very typical for the Ruy Lopez Open Variation: (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Nxe4 6 d4 b5 7 Bb3 d5 8 de Be6 9 Nbd2 Nc5 10 c3). The important difference is that Black's Q-side pawns are still in their initial positions. This clearly favors Black as in the Ruy Lopez the b5-pawn is a good target (White plays a2-a4 in the right moment), and the weakness of the c5-square is also rather important especially after a knight exchange on d4. 8 ♗b5 (8 ♗c2 ♗g4! The Bishop transfer to g6 (via the h5-square) which is typical for the Ruy Lopez Open Variation is the best possibility here as well. 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 ♖e1 ♖d7 [Yegiazarian, A–Marin, M/Bucharest 1998](#).) 8...♗d7 Threatening 9...Nxe5. 9 ♖e2 (9 0-0? blunders a pawn: 9...♗xe5 10 ♗xe5 ♗xb5) 9...a6 10 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 11 ♗d4 ♗d7 12 0-0 ♗e6 [Fedorov, A–Korotylev, A/St.Petersburg 1994](#). The critical position for the evaluation of this line. Although Black lags a bit in development, the absence of his important light-squared Bishop doesn't allow White to create real threats.

4 c3 ♗g7 5 ♗f3 0-0 6 0-0 ♗c6

The critical position of this line. Now White has to choose a plan. The inventor of this variation, GM Dolmatov, prefers 7 Re1 and 8 h3. His games provide White with a standard way of playing this line.

6...c5!?



This move has had a certain rise in popularity over the last year and was played even at top level. Similar positions may also arise from the Alapin Sicilian (1.e4 c5 2.c3 d6 3.d4 Nf6 4.Bd3 g6 etc.) and the Torre Attack. 7 h3 The most common reply. (7 dxc5 dxc5 aiming for a minimal advantage deserves certain attention. The similar idea is normal in the Torre Attack after 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 Bg5 Bg7 4 Nbd2 0-0 5 c3 d6 6 e4 c5 7 dxc5! dxc5, but there White can put the bishop in an active position 8 Bc4! Nc6 9 Qe2 with chances of a serious opening advantage (see for example the game Speelman–Howell, Calcutta, 1996). Although this idea here looks rather harmless, Black has to play very attentively.) 7...cxd4 (7...dxc6!? This move leads to very complicated play which is more typical of a King's Indian. 8 d5 dxa5 9 c4 Zagrebelny,S–Morozevich,A/Novgorod 1997.) 8 cxd4 Fedorov,A–Bologan,V/Belfort 1999.

7 ♖e1

7 d2 e5 8 ♖e1 This modification of Dolmatov's system is worthy of consideration. White intends to strengthen the d4 square by playing Nb3, and it's important he avoids playing 7 h3 (aimed against ...Bg4) which amounts to rather a considerable weakening of the K-side. Russian GM Konstantin Aseev is the main adherent of this set-up. 8...d5 9 d3! Aseev,K–Korotylev,A/Sankt Peterburg 1994.

7 d5?! Although White wins a tempo this move is not consistent with the ideas behind his set-up because it opens the diagonal for Black's dark-squared bishop.

7 b4 This move was introduced in early 90s and brought White many victories but it's no longer considered dangerous for Black: 7...d5!? In my opinion, the best. Black intends 8...e5.

7 ♗g5 d7?! This game was the first where 7 Bg5 was introduced and Black's reaction is far from the best. (Later Black improved with 7...h6 8 ♗h4 e5! and as practice shows he has good chances to equalise here.) 8 a4! ♖e8 9 d3! a6 (9...e5 is impossible in view of 10 d5) 10 ♖d2 f6 11 ♗h6 e5 12 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 13 b4 Black has no counterplay while White has lots of possibilities to improve his position, Vaganian,R–Ermenkov,E/Thessaloniki 1984.

7...e5 8 h3 h6

The main line. Black's prepares counterplay on the K-side.

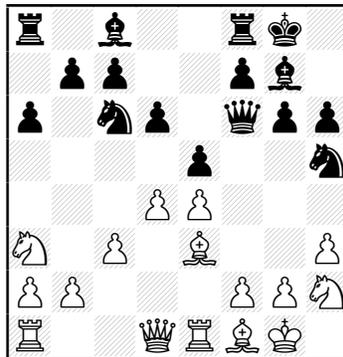
8...♔d7 A move is a move, 9 ♕e3 exd4 (9...♖e8 10 ♖bd2 ♗h5 11 a3 ♗f4 12 ♕xf4! exf4 13 ♖c2 g5 14 e5! Taleb,M–Pavlov,M/Alushta UKR 2004, noting that the pawn on h7 hangs and giving White the advantage.) 10 cxd4 ♗b4 11 ♗c3 ♗xd3 12 ♖xd3 Dolmatov,S–Eingorn,V/USSR 1983– Black has managed to exchange White's light-squared Bishop, but the price is too high. White has a strong pawn centre, and the threat of e5 is very unpleasant for Black.

8...♗h5 9 ♕e3 d5 10 ♕g5! This very strong move was an unpleasant surprise for Azmai who had already played this position and equalized easily. Now very interesting complications arise, Beliavsky, A–Azmaiparashvili,Z/Portoroz 1997.

9 ♗a3!?

A novelty.

9...♗h5 10 ♕e3 a6 11 ♗h2 ♖f6 12 ♕f1!

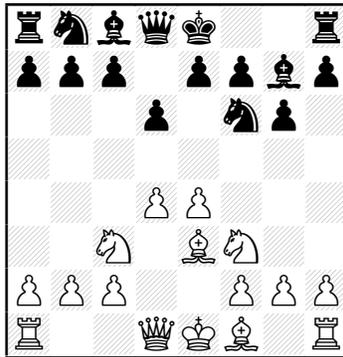


An important prophylactic move: now ...Nf4 is pointless in view of g3, Smirin,I–Bologan,V/Debreceen 1992. For this game see in C44! Now it's time to draw certain conclusions. The examined line is rather unpleasant for Black especially if develops his dark-squared Bishop on g7. So I recommend Black players to play the line with 4...d5 and if the Bishop is already on g7 as in the Modern Defence in my opinion Morozevich's plan with ...Nc6 is worth playing. In any case this line leads to very complicated positions with mutual chances and I hope that this material will help you to feel confident playing either color.

Pirc – The 150 Attack [B08]

Last updated: 08/01/04 by Andy Martin

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 ♗f3 ♕g7 5 ♕e3



The 150 Attack is a very dangerous line used by many GMs. As a Pirc and Modern player myself I've found this line more than a little annoying, and it hasn't been very clear how Black should equalise.

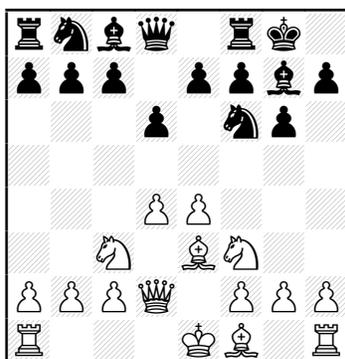
5 h3 0-0 6 ♕e3 is a system which has been championed by Boris Spassky. It's an attempt to get a superior version of the Classical although it's a little slow. One can easily transpose to this line from the 150 Attack, 6...a6 7 a4 b6 8 ♕d3 e6 9 0-0 ♕b7 10 ♖e1 ♗bd7 11 ♔d2 ♖e8 12 ♕g5 c5 13 e5? a typically rash advance when one is feeling overplayed, [Hulburd,G–Kamberi,S/22nd NAO, Oklahoma USA 2003](#).

5...0-0

If this move proves playable then the 150 attack loses much of its attraction. I think that after 5...0-0 White has to go directly for the throat.

5...c6 6 ♔d2 (6 a4 0-0 7 h3 ♗bd7 8 a5 ♖b8 9 ♕e2 b5 10 axb6 axb6 11 0-0 ♔c7 12 d5 [Motwani,P–Rahman,Z/British Championship 2003](#).) 6...♔a5 7 ♕d3 (7 h3! would be my preferred choice, cramping Black's pieces.) 7...♗bd7 8 ♕h6 ♕xh6 9 ♔xh6 e5 10 0-0 exd4 11 ♗xd4 ♔h5 12 ♔xh5 ♗xh5 13 f4 0-0 14 f5?! [Haskell,R–Donaldson,J/22nd NAO, Oklahoma USA 2003](#) After ceding e5 White's game starts to go downhill.

6 ♔d2



6 h3 c6 7 a4 ♖c7?! Unless Black is intending to play with...e7–e5, I do not see the value of the Queen on c7. Better is 7...d5! 8 a5 d5 9 e5 ♗e4 10 ♗xe4 dxe4 11 ♗g5 c5 12 c3 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♗c6 14 ♖c2 ♜d8 15 ♙c4 e6± [Motwani, P–Carlier, B/TCh–BEL 2003](#) Much later Carlier drew, but only after a very dour defence.

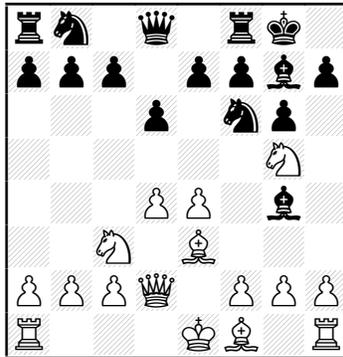
6...♗g4!?

The various alternatives:

6...c6 A lot of the more solid breed of Pirc players have this move as their stock response to a variety of White plans. I tend to try and leave this square for my knight on b8 – or if I want to expand on the queenside expand with ...a6 and ...b5. That way my light squared bishop gets to attack e4 from b7, and I also get the chance to go for ...c7–c5 in one move (rather than ...c6–c7–c5). 7 ♙h6 Exchanging off the dark–squared bishop can be use as a prelude to either mega–violence (castling long and charging up the right flank) or the more gentle approach of ♙d3, 0-0, ♗e2 etc. (7 ♙d3 is more solid, 7...♙g4 8 ♗g5 e5! 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 f3 ♙c8 11 h4 ♗h5 12 0-0-0 b5 13 ♗e2 ♖f6! 14 c4 h6 White is slowed down on the kingside and with 14 c4 announces a change of direction, one that suits Black very well, [Jonkman, H–Iordachescu, V/12th Monarch Assurance, Port Erin IOM 2003](#). This example would tend to indicate that given even the slightest respite, Black can develop serious counterplay. 7 h4 is consistent anyway. Maybe Black has to bite his lip here and play 7...h5) 7...♙g4 With storm clouds gathering around Black's king, I definitely prefer the look of development and play in the centre. 8 ♙xg7 ♗xg7 9 ♗g5 h6 10 h3 ♙c8 11 ♗f3 ♖a5 [Degraeve, J–Ponomariov, R/Hastings \(England\) 1998](#), another dangerous line for Black, who only kept himself on the board with some careful and energetic play.

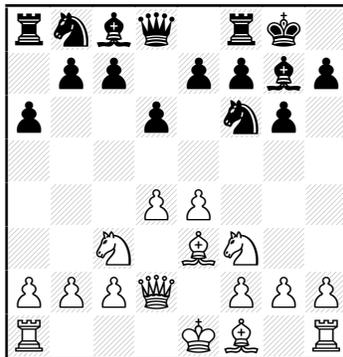
6...e5 Why should Black prepare this move if he can play it right away? One of the arguments in its favour is that Qd1–d2xd8 loses some time. 7 dxe5 This probably gives White nothing. (Aggressive White players should therefore consider 7 0-0-0) 7...dxe5 8 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 9 ♙c4 ♗c6 10 0-0 h6 11 h3 ♗e8 [Hebden, M–Sutovsky, E/Port Erin 1999](#).

6...♙g4 (one of the main arguments against White omitting h2–h3) is met by 7 ♗g5!



- a) The point behind White's last move is that 7...h6 can be countered by 8 h3 ♔h5 (or 8...♔d7 9 ♖f3) 9 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 10 g4 with a strong attack
- b) 7...♗c6 8 d5 ♗b8 9 f3 ♔d7 10 h4 h5 11 g4! Wow! Khalifman announces that he's in no mood to take prisoners. Black is in big trouble. 11...c6 (11...hxg4 would have been answered by 12 ♔e2 after which White wants to rip Black's king limb from limb with various combinations of castling long and h4-h5.) 12 gxh5 ♗xh5 13 0-0-0 Khalifman,A-Adams,M/Lucerne (Switzerland) 1997.

6...a6



- This would probably be my choice too, though I might have considered playing it on move 5. Black wants to expand on the queenside with ...b5. 7 ♔h6 b5 8 ♔d3 ♗c6 This seems like the most solid move to me, hitting back at the central dark squares. (Black has also played 8...♔b7 which was just about OK.)
- a) A more critical and dangerous line seems to be 9 ♔xg7 ♗xg7 10 e5 with a full-blooded struggle in prospect. (10 h3 e5 11 d5 ♗e7 12 0-0 ♔b7 13 a4 c6 14 dxc6 ♔xc6 gave Black adequate counterplay in Anand,V-Chernin,A/Corsica Masters Rapid 2001)
- b) 9 d5 After this Black gets pretty good counterplay. 9...♗e5 10 ♗xe5 dxe5 11 ♔xg7 ♗xg7 12 a4 Kozakov,M-Chernin,A/London ENG 2000.
- 6...d5 Probably the best of the odds and ends. 7 exd5 ♗xd5 8 ♔h6 ♔f5 9 ♔xg7 ♗xg7 10 0-0 c6 11 ♗h4 ♔g4 12 f3 ♔e6 13 ♗e4 f6 14 g3 ♗d7 15 c4 ♗c7 16 ♗g2 Ye

[Jiangchuan–Gulko,B/Seattle USA 2001](#), White is for choice on account of his space, but Black's position is very solid.

7 ♗g5 f6

This is much better than 7...h6 8 ♗h4 g5 (8...c6 is possible) 9 ♗g3

8 ♗h4 ♗h6 9 ♖d1

Gufeld pointed out that 9 ♗c4+ can be answered by 9...d5

9...♗g7 10 ♗c4+ ♔h8 11 ♖e2 a6 12 a4 ♗c6 13 ♖d1

The position is probably about equal, [Benjamin,J–Gufeld,E/Las Vegas USA 2000](#). This treatment for Black looked pretty tough, and we will probably be seeing some more of it.

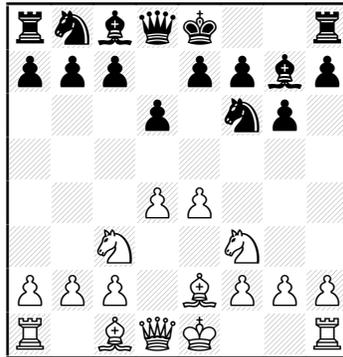
Pirc – Classical [B08]

Last updated: 16/05/03 by Andy Martin

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 ♗f3

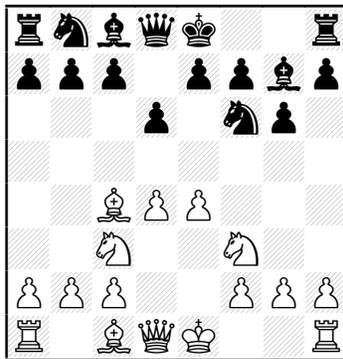
4 h3 ♗g7 5 ♗f3 0-0 6 ♗e3 A version of the Classical where White hopes to develop the Bishop on f1 to either c4 or d3 thus giving his position a more aggressive slant. 6...c6 (6...a6! recommended by Alburt and Chernin in their excellent 'Pirc Alert' is my favoured choice.) 7 a4 b6 8 ♕d2 ♗b7 9 ♗d3 ♗a6 10 ♗h6 ♗b4 11 ♗xg7 ♖xg7 12 0-0 ♜e8! 13 ♗c4 e5 [Zhigalko,S–Kupreichik,V/Minsk 2003](#) From move 12 onwards, Black's play was a model..

4...♗g7 5 ♗e2



This is the solid Classical set-up, Karpov's career-long favourite. The outstanding Soviet Grandmaster Efim Geller has also greatly contributed to the theory of this line.

5 ♗c4



Holmov's line, again.

- a) 5...0-0 A small inaccuracy which allows White to undertake action in the center. 6 ♖e2! c6 7 e5! White has managed to execute his opening plan in the most favourable circumstances and Black has difficult problems to solve. However even here he should be able to maintain the balance. 7...♗d5 8 ♗d2 dxe5!? 9 dxe5 ♘xc3?! This move is a real mistake which allows White to seize the initiative. (After this game the position was considered as insufficient for Black. However recently Khalifman found a good improvement: 9...♗g4!?) 10 ♗xc3 b5 11 ♗b3 ♘a6 12 e6! [Rublevsky,S–Markowski,T/Polanica Zdroj 1996](#). After Black has given up the outpost in the center White's light-squared Bishop becomes really strong.
- b) 5...c6 This is the most precise move order.
- b1) 6 e5 ♗d5! 7 ♗xd5 (7 ♗xd5 cxd5 8 ♗xd5? ♖a5+-+ 7 exd6 ♗xc3 8 bxc3 ♖xd6=) 7...cxd5 8 ♗xd5 ♖a5+ 9 ♗c3 dxe5 10 dxe5 ♗c6 with excellent compensation.
- b2) 6 ♗b3 6...0-0 7 ♖c2 ♗g4! A very logical plan. Black exchanges his light-squared Bishop and then builds a pawn chain on the light squares (e6, d5), restricting White's Bishop on b3. 8 h3 ♗xf3 9 ♖xf3 e6 10 ♗g5 h6 11 ♗h4 ♗bd7 12 0-0-0?! Here the King is a good target, [Medina Garsia,A–Botvinnik,M/Palma de Mallorca 1967](#). (12 0-0 was better, with level chances.)

5...0-0 6 0-0 ♗g4

The main line, and Black's most popular response to the Classical system, it's not easy for White to prove his advantage.

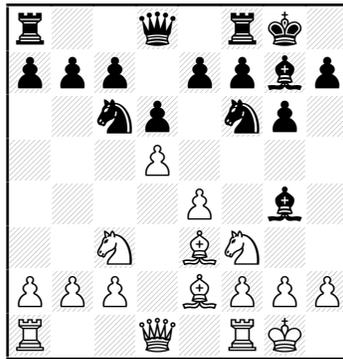
6...c6 This line is also in fashion now. 7 ♖e1

- a) If 7...♗bd7 8 e5! (After 8 h3 e5 it's difficult to prove White's advantage.) 8...♗e8 9 ♗f4 dxe5 10 dxe5 ♗c7 11 ♖c1 [Lutz,C–Svidler,P/Bad Homburg 1997](#), White intends to exchange the dark-squared Bishops. (11 ♖d2?! is weaker, as after 11...♗e6! 12 ♗h6? is strongly met by 12...♗xe5! winning a pawn for nothing.)
- b) 7...♖c7 8 ♗f4 ♗bd7 9 e5 ♗h5 10 ♗g5 Before this game this line was considered to be dangerous for Black but here he finds new resources. 10...dxe5! 11 ♗xe7 ♖e8 12 d5 ♖b6 13 ♗a3 ♗f4! 14 ♗c4 ♗f6! Black already has the better chances. White's main problem is the bad position of his dark-squared Bishop, [Asrian,K–Kasimdzhanov,R/Yerevan 1999](#).

Black can also play 6...♘bd7 Both moves normally lead to the same position.
6...♘c6 Provocative.

- a) 7 h3 allows 7...e5 8 dxe5 (After 8 d5 ♘e7 the position looks similar to a main line King's Indian, but with White's pawn on c2. Now it's difficult for White to organise a Queen-side attack, so by playing Nh5 (or Nd7) and f5 Black obtains good counterplay.) 8...dxe5 with equality.
- b) 7 d5 The only way to fight for the advantage. 7...♘b8 8 ♖e1 e5 9 dxc6 ♙xe6 10 ♙f4 h6?! (10...♘c6 is better) 11 ♘d4 ♙d7 Now all Black's pieces are very passive. (11...♗d7 should be preferred, although White's advantage is undisputable.) 12 ♗d2 ♖h7 13 e5! Very logical: White has a development advantage, so he opens the central files, [Tal,M–Petrosian,T/USSR 1974](#). Other moves allow Black to complete his development (Nc6), when White only has a small advantage.

7 ♙e3 ♘c6 8 d5



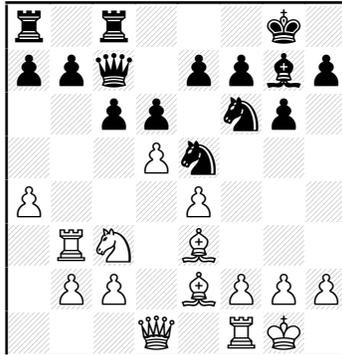
This move has recently become White's main weapon.

- 8 ♗d2 The old line, which leads to KID-style positions. 8...e5 9 d5 ♘e7 10 ♖ad1
- a) 10...b5 This move brought Azmaiparashvili a sensational win over Karpov, but White is able to improve on that game: 11 a3 a5 12 ♙xb5! (The above mentioned game continued 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 ♖a3 14 ♙g5 ♖xc3 15 ♙xf6 ♙xf3 16 ♙xf3 ♖a3 17 ♙xg7 ♖xg7, with a comfortable game for Black.) 12...♙xf3 (12...♘e4 13 ♘e4 f5 14 ♘e5 f4 15 ♙c5 dxc5 16 ♙c4) 13 gxf3 ♘h5 14 ♖h1 and in a game Liberzon – Quinteros, Netanya, 1983, Black had failed to prove he had something for the pawn.
- b) 10...♙d7 11 ♘e1 b5 12 a3 a5 13 ♘d3 ♗b8 14 f3 [Kuczynski,R–Chernin,A/Budapest 1993](#).

8...♙xf3

8...♘b8!?! This move which was introduced by the Hungarian GM Alex Chernin, an expert in the Pirc, becomes more and more popular. I think this is because in the 8... Bxf3 line White has found ways to fight for an opening edge. 9 ♖e1!?! White has a wide choice here. 9...c6 10 ♗d2 ♗c7 11 ♖ad1 ♘bd7 12 ♙h6 ♙xf3 13 ♙xf3 ♙xh6 14 ♗xh6 a6 [Rytshagov,M–Chernin,A/Erean 1996](#), Black is at least equal.

9 ♙xf3 ♘e5 10 ♙e2 c6 11 a4 ♚a5 12 ♖a3 ♜fc8 13 ♖b3 ♚c7



13...♖ab8 is the main alternative to the text, but it seems that there White also has chances for an opening advantage: 14 ♚d4! c5 15 ♚d2

14 f3!? e6?!

This natural move seems to be the source of amazingly rapid problems for Black! It gives White the opportunity to launch a sudden Kingside attack.

14...♘ed7!? deserves serious attention.

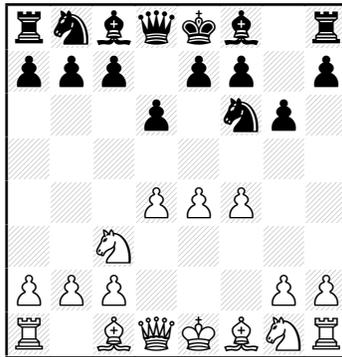
15 f4 ♘ed7 16 dxe6 fxe6 17 g4!

An unexpected and very strong move. [Lutz,C–Espig,L/Bremen 1998](#)– A great performance by Lutz!

Pirc – Austrian Attack– 5 0-0 [B09]

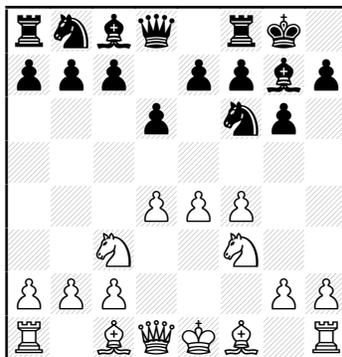
Last updated: 10/07/04 by Andy Martin

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 f4



This features one of White's sharpest weapons – the Austrian Attack. By playing e4, d4 and f4 White creates a very strong pawn centre and prepares a kingside attack. On the other hand this ambitious plan gives Black counterchances, as the seemingly strong central pawns may become a target. That is why this line usually leads to very interesting encounters.

4...♗g7 5 ♘f3 0-0



This is the major alternative to

5...c5

6 ♖d3

During the last decade this move has become White's main weapon against 5...0-0.

6 ♖e3 Rather an interesting move. White strengthens his central position and asks Black to find a plan. e4–e5 is in the offing but there are several dangerous attacking plans that Black has to combat.

a) 6...♗a6 7 ♖d3?! This is dubious. When White plays the 6.Bd3 system 6...Na6 is one of the best replies after which White plays 7. 0-0 but not 7. Be3. (White has a lot of possibilities here: 7 ♜e2 7 e5 7 h3) 7...c5 8 d5 ♗c7 Surprisingly Black is already better! 9 a4 (Usually White has already castled here but now he does not have time for 9 0-0 because after 9...b5! Black is taking the initiative.) 9...e6 10 dxe6 ♖xe6 (The text seems logical although I prefer 10...fxe6! 11 0-0 b6 with d6–d5 to follow with a clear edge.) 11 f5? Too ambitious. White has probably underestimated Black's reply... or just missed it. (After 11 0-0 ♜e7 12 ♖f2 White could obtain reasonable play although Black is already slightly better.) 11...♗xf5! Of course! 12 exf5 ♜e8 13 ♔d2 d5! [Bareev,E–Ivkov,B/Roma 1990](#).

b) 6...♗bd7 is also a possible move after 6.Be3. 7 ♜d2 c5 8 0-0-0 ♗g4 9 dxc5 (9 ♖g1!? cxd4 10 ♗xd4 deserves attention. The position is double-edged but White keeps his dark squared bishop in this line.) 9...♗xe3 10 ♜xe3 ♗xc5 11 e5 This was the idea behind 9.dc but it does not look very inspiring. 11...♜a5 12 ♔b1 dxe5!? (12...♖e6!? 13 ♗d4 dxe5 14 fxe5 ♜fd8 was also good for Black.) 13 ♜d5 b6 14 ♗xe5 ♖b7 15 ♗c4 The queen is trapped but Black gets enough material for it. 15...♜xc3! 16 bxc3 ♖xd5 [Sideif–Zade–Gipslis,A/USSR 1983](#). The Queen sacrifice was forced, but strong. To assess this position is not easy. Black has only a Rook and Bishop for the Queen, but his dark-squared Bishop is very strong as is the knight on c5. Also White's King is exposed, so in a game situation in my opinion, Black's chances are preferable.

c) 6...b6 Recommended in various textbooks but Black is living on the edge. He prepares c7–c5 and will develop his Bishop but invites a massive attack. Others:

c1) 7 ♖c4!? ♖b7 (Black has a lot of possibilities: 7...♗xe4?! is dubious: 8 ♗xe4 d5 9 ♖d3 dxe4 10 ♖xe4 c6 11 ♗e5 ♖b7 12 ♜f3 leads to a clear advantage for White.

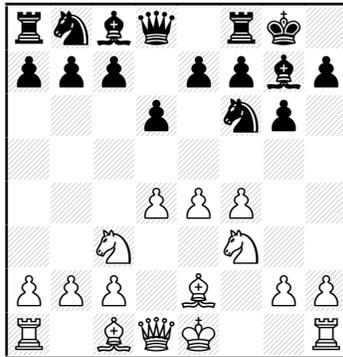
but 7...c5

or 7...e6 are quite playable.) 8 e5 ♗g4 9 ♜e2 c5 (After 9...♗xe3 10 ♜xe3 c5 11 d5 both Black's bishops are passive.) 10 0-0-0 (10 ♖g1 also came into consideration, the text move is a more direct try.) 10...♗xf3 Other continuations do not solve Black's problems. 11 ♜xf3 ♗xe3 12 ♜xe3 [Lanka,Z–Sznepik,A/Manila \(ol\) 1992](#).

c2) 7 ♜e2!? ♖b7 8 e5 ♗d5 9 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 10 0-0-0 e6 11 ♔b1 ♗d7 12 h4! [Bologan,V–Fridman,D/playchess.com INT 2004](#), route one chess and Black is under heavy fire.

c3) 7 e5 The principled decision. 7...♗g4 8 ♖g1 c5 9 h3 ♗h6 The play was logical and almost forced till this moment where White chooses the most ambitious option. 10 d5 ♖b7 Black has some alternatives here: (10...♗f5 11 ♖f2 ♗d7 12 g4 ♗d4 13 ♗xd4 cxd4 14 ♜xd4 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♗xe5 16 ♜e3∞ with mutual chances in [Mikhailchishin – Kosten, Budapest 1989](#)) 11 ♜d2 ♗f5 12 ♖h2 dxe5 13 fxe5 e6 Destroying White's powerful looking pawn centre, [Beliavsky,A–Anand,V/Munich 1991](#).

6 ♖e2



This move isn't very popular these days, but it's far from harmless. 6...c5 7 dxc5 ♖a5 8 0-0 ♜xc5+ 9 ♔h1 ♘c6 Besides this move Black has other interesting possibilities. (9...b5 9...♗bd7) 10 ♙d3 (Black is OK after 10 ♗d2 ♜b6 11 ♗c4 ♜c7 12 ♗d5 ♗xd5 13 exd5 ♗a5) 10...e5 I don't like this move. (10...♙g4 should be preferred and after 11 ♜e1 a position from the line 6. Bd3 can be reached. Instead of losing a tempo with Qe2–e1, White has lost a tempo with the manoeuvre Be2–d3.) 11 ♜e1! The h4–square is a very good square for White's Queen. 11...exf4 12 ♙xf4 Sax,Gy–Nikolic,P/Manila (izt) 1990.

An old idea of Velimirovic I believe. White sets the scene for a very violent struggle with 6 e5 ♗e8!? Rahman makes a practical choice and throws Lodhi on to his own resources. (6...♗fd7! is thought to be the main line and Black comes out on top if he knows all the theory.) 7 ♙e3 (7 h4 or some such move is much more challenging.) 7...c6 8 a4?! ♗c7 9 ♙c4 ♗ba6 10 0-0 ♗b4 11 ♜e2 a5 12 ♜fd1 ♔h8 13 ♙b3 f6∞ Lodhi,M–Rahman,Z/Dhaka BAN 2004.

6...♗c6

6...♗a6 This is the most popular response to 6.Bd3. 7 0-0 (It's too optimistic to play 7 e5 as Black plays 7...♗d7 with c5 to follow, and obtains strong counterplay.) 7...c5 8 d5 ♜b8 (8...♙g4 is a major alternative to the text.)

a) Later Dolmatov improved with 9 e5! dxe5?! (9...♗e8 is better, with mutual chances.) 10 ♙xa6 bxa6 11 fxe5 ♗g4 12 ♙f4 ♜xb2 13 h3 and Black was in trouble in Dolmatov–Pfleger 1991, as 13...♗h6 fails to 14 ♜c1!

b) 9 ♜e2 9...♗c7 10 a4 a6 (10...b6 Tzermiadianos,A–Anagnostopoulos,D/ch–GRE, Athens GRE 2002) 11 a5 b5 12 axb6 ♜xb6 13 ♗a4 ♜b8 14 c4 Now the pawn centre is very strong and White is ready to attack in the centre with e4–e5. Black has to do something immediately, or he will be smashed soon. Grandmaster Aivars Gipslis finds a brilliant rook sacrifice. 14...e6! Dolmatov,S–Gipslis,A/USSR 1985.

6...c5 7 dxc5 ♖a5 is impossible in view of 8 cxd6

7 e5

The main alternative to the text seems to be 7 0-0 ♔g4 (7...e5 is regarded as the main line.) 8 e5 dxe5 9 dxe5 ♘d5 10 h3 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♙f5 12 ♖e2 ♗d5 13 ♙e3 ♗a5 14 ♙xf5 gxf5 15 ♗c4 White is clearly better. The weakness of his queenside pawns is of no importance here because Black has no real possibilities to exploit it, while White has good prospects over on the kingside with g2-g4 at the right moment, [Yegiazarian,A-Minasian,A/ch-ARM, Yerevan 1999](#). An excellent example of attacking, but also positionally sound chess. A textbook game both from the positional and tactical point of view.

7...dxe5 8 fxe5

8 dxe5 ♘d5 9 ♙d2 ♘cb4 10 ♙c4 c6

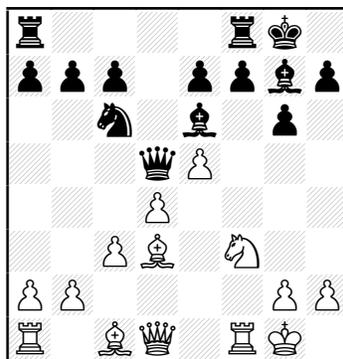
a) Probably 11 a3 was best: 11...♘xc3 (11...♘a6 12 b4!?) 12 ♙xc3 ♘d5 13 ♗d2!? with mutual chances.

b) 11 ♘e2?! This looks logical but Black has a strong reply. 11...♘a6 An excellent resource! The knight is going to c5. 12 ♘fd4?! Another inaccuracy which leads to real problems for White. (12 c3 was the normal continuation but Black's chances are already preferable.) 12...f6 13 exf6 ♘xf6 14 ♙f3 e5! Opening the position. White has no time to complete his development without any material loss– [Marjanovic,S-Beliavsky,A/ Jugoslavija 1992](#).

8...♘d5

8...♘h5!? deserves attention.

9 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 10 c3 ♙e6 11 0-0



White's position looks promising now, he is going to begin direct action on the kingside.

11...♞ad8 12 ♙f4!

The immediate 12 ♗e1 could be met by 12...f6!?

12...♖d7 13 ♗e1 ♘f5 14 ♘xf5 ♗xf5 15 ♗g3 h6 16 ♖ae1

Swapping off the light squared bishops has not made Black's life easier, [Ehlvest,J-Anand,V/Reggio Emilia 1988](#).

Pirc – Austrian Attack– 5...c5 [B09]

Last updated: 30/03/03 by Andy Martin

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♖f6 3 ♗c3 g6 4 f4 ♙g7 5 ♗f3

5 e5 White's most direct attempt to blow Black off the board. Theoretically dubious yet highly dangerous, Pirc players need to study this line or prepare to be quickly checkmated. 5...♗fd7 (The endgame after 5...dxe5 6 dxe5 ♖xd1+ 7 ♗xd1 ♗g4 8 ♗e1 is slightly better for White.) 6 ♗f3

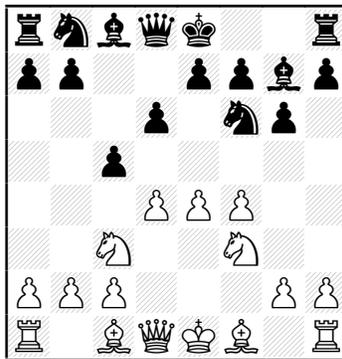
a) 6...0-0 also looks good, we consider this line in the game Skvortsov – Erymovsky, where big complications arose after 7 h4 Starting an attack but it does not look very inspiring as the centre is unstable here and White has minimal development. 7...c5

The logical reaction, meeting a wing attack with a central breakthrough. 8 h5 cxd4 a1) Sharp and very risky but 9 ♖xd4 dxe5 10 ♖f2 (10 ♖g1 e4 with counterplay 10.fxe5? ♗xe5 11 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 with the advantage) 10...c6!? is fine for Black.

a2) 9 hxg6 9...dxc3 10 gxf7+ ♗xf7 11 ♙c4 [Skvortsov,O–Erymovsky/USSR 1989](#).

b) 6...c5 A direct and logical reaction but 7 exd6 0-0! Black is just continuing his development, not counting the pawns. 8 dxc5 (In my opinion, 8 ♙e3 is best: 8...exd6 9 ♖d2 ♗c6 10 0-0-0 ♖a5 11 f5 with mutual chances, Sax – Sigurjonsson,1975.) 8...♖a5!? An interesting attempt. (After 8...♗xc5 9 ♙c4 exd6 10 0-0 White was able to hide his king in a safe place although Black is also fine here, as the weakness of the d6-pawn is compensated by the activity of Black's pieces.) 9 ♙e2 (9 ♙e3!? was interesting.) 9...♙xc3+ We have also see this kind of concrete approach elsewhere. Of course the bishop on g7 is a very powerful piece but Black achieves other pluses instead. 10 bxc3 ♖xc3+ 11 ♙d2 ♖xc5 12 dxc7 ♗e8 13 ♗b1 ♗c6 So White has problems castling his king. One can hardly talk seriously about the dark square weaknesses in the black king's camp, [Ivanovic,B–Gurevich,M/Luzern 1989](#).

5...c5



This move is often played by such Pirc experts as Gurevich, Chernin, Seirawan, Timman and many others.

6 dxc5

After some failed attempts to get an advantage with 6.Bb5, White has switched to this move.

6 ♖b5+ ♗d7 (6... ♗c6 7 dxc5 ♜a5 8 0-0 0-0 9 cxd6 exd6 10 ♗d3 ♗g4 11 ♗d5 f5 was difficult to believe for Black in [Stefansson,H–Kohler,A/Leeuwarden 1995](#)) 7 e5 (7 ♗xd7+ ♗fxd7 8 d5 b5! 9 ♜e2 b4 10 ♗d1 ♗b6 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♗f2 ♜c8 13 f5 ♜a6 led to very sharp play in [Hernandez,G–Khalifman,A/Mexico 2001](#)) 7... ♗g4

a) This spectacular move leads to interesting complications. White can also play 8 h3!? and after 8...cxd4 9 ♜xd4 ♗h6 White has several possible continuations.

b) The other possibility is 8 ♗xd7+ ♜xd7 9 d5 dxe5 10 h3 e4

b1) 11 ♗xe4 ♗f6 12 ♗xf6+ (12 ♗e5 ♜a4 [Zaja,I–Beliavsky,A/Slovenian Team Ch 2001](#)) 12... ♗xf6 13 0-0 ♜d6 was very comfortable for Black in [Senff,M–Gurevich,M/Pardubice 2000](#)

b2) 11 hxg4 11...exf3 12 ♜xf3 ♗a6 13 ♗d2 ♗b4 gave Black adequate counterplay in [Bracaglia,C–Korsunsky,Y/Montecatini Terme 1999](#)

c) 8 e6

c1) 8... ♗xb5 For decades this was considered the only move. But in the mid 80s Jan Timman introduced 8...fxe6. 9 exf7+

c1a) 9... ♗f8!? Very rare and not too bad it seems. 10 ♗xb5 ♜a5+ Not forced by any means. Black can consider both (10... ♜b6 and 10... ♜d7! perhaps the latter move is best of all, attacking and defending at the same time.) 11 ♗c3 ♗c6 12 d5! [Korneev,O–Cebada Benitez,F/Coria del Rio 2001](#).

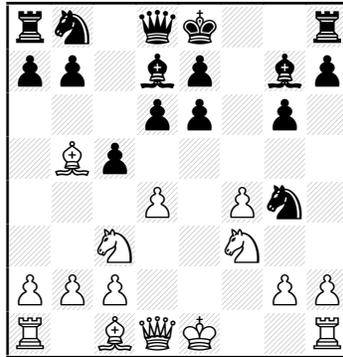
c1b) 9... ♗d7

c1b1) 10 ♗g5 h5 11 ♜f3 ♗c6 12 d5 ♗xc3+! The position is very unusual and calls for a concrete approach. (After 12... ♗d4 13 ♜e4 Black's pieces are uncoordinated while White's initiative is growing.) 13 bxc3 ♜a5! 14 ♗d2 ♜a4 [Dorenberg,G–Gurevich,M/Gent 1992](#).

c1b2) 10 ♗xb5 This natural move is far superior to 10... ♜a5+ 11 ♗c3 cxd4 12 ♗xd4 ♗xd4!? (12... h5 is another possibility but it does not promise full equality for Black:

13 h3 ♖c6 14 ♜de2 ♜h6 15 ♙e3) 13 ♜xd4 ♜c6 14 ♜c4 The best square for the queen.
 14...♜b6! This natural looking move hadn't been played before, but it's very strong,
 Korneev,O–Zimmerman,Y/Katowice 1993.

c2) 8...fxe6



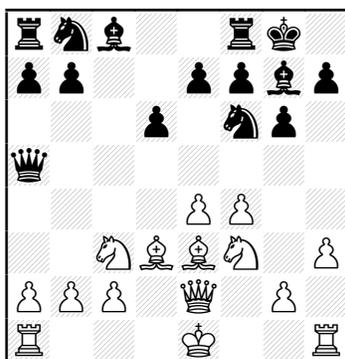
Nowadays this is the main line. 9 ♜g5 ♙xb5 10 ♜xb5 (The seemingly strong 10 ♜xe6 leads only to a draw after the sudden queen sacrifice: 10...♙xd4! 11 ♜xd8 ♙f2+ 12 ♜d2 ♙e3+ with a perpetual. This is the tactical justification of the whole line.) 10...♜a5+ 11 c3 ♜xb5 12 ♜xe6 ♜a6 13 ♜xg7+ ♜f7 14 ♜xg4 ♜xg7 The critical position. In my opinion, Black has good chances, Anand,V–Gurevich,M/Linares 1991.

By the way, 6 ♙e2 cxd4 7 ♜xd4 is a Sicilian Dragon!

6...♜a5 7 ♙d3 ♜xc5 8 ♜e2 0-0

8...♙g4 9 ♙c3 ♜a5 10 0-0 ♜c6 11 a3!? (11 h3 ♙xf3 12 ♜xf3 is known to be the main line.)
 11...♜d7 (11...0-0 deserves attention.) 12 ♜d2 ♙xf3?! Premature. (The natural 12...0-0 should be preferred.) 13 ♜xf3 0-0 14 ♜e1! To tell the truth, I missed this strong move. White takes advantage of having not playing h2–h3 early, and prepares a quite unpleasant kingside attack (Qh4, Rh3). Now Black should be very careful—Klovans,J–Volzhin,A/Graz 1999.

9 ♙e3 ♜a5 10 h3



Preventing ...Bg4.

10 0-0 ♔g4

a) 11 ♖e1 A Mortensen speciality. White is trying to get his opponent to capture on f3 without playing h2–h3. The big idea is that he might want to put a rook on that square when he later tries to attack Black's king. 11...♗c6 12 ♗d2 ♕d7 13 ♗b3 Reaching a position very similar to the Classical Dragon.

a1) An earlier Mortensen game (Mortensen – Yrjola, Espoo 1989) went 13...♖d8 14 h3?! (If Black had repeated this I think that Mortensen would have improved with 14 ♖h1) 14...♗b4 15 ♖f2 b5 16 a3 ♗xd3 17 cxd3 ♖b8 with counterplay based on ...b5–b4 coming.

a2) 13...♖c7 14 ♖h1 ♗b4 15 f5 e6? A horrible move that weakens the dark squares around his king. (15...♗xd3 16 cxd3 b5 is a better try, but it still looks quite good for White. (and not 15...b5? because of 16 ♗xb5 ♕xb5 17 ♖xb4)) 16 ♖h4 [Mortensen,E–Nilsson,N/Copenhagen DEN 2001](#).

b) 11 h3 11...♕xf3 12 ♖xf3 ♗c6 This critical position has occurred hundreds of times. 13 a3 ♗d7 14 ♕d2 ♖b6+ (14...♖d8!? When someone as strong as Gurevich plays this, take careful note. Black carefully moves his queen away from potential harassment by White's minor pieces. 15 ♖ae1 e6! Nice prophylaxis against a potential White attack. 16 ♖h1 [Fierz,M–Gurevich,M/Cappelle la Grande FRA 2001](#).) 15 ♖h1 ♗c5 16 ♖ab1 ♗xd3 17 cxd3

b1) 17...e6?! is less precise: 18 f5!? It is not so easy to parry White's initiative on the kingside. 18...exf5 (18...♗e5 does not solve the problems: 19 ♖g3 ♖d4 20 f6 ♕h8 21 ♖e3! ♖xd3 22 ♖xd3 ♗xd3 23 g4 and it is hard to see any prospects for the bishop on h8.) 19 exf5 ♗d4 20 ♖g3 [Tolnai,T–Gurevich,M/Luzern 1989](#).

b2) 17...f5!? This blocking move ...f7–f5 was introduced in this game and it became a popular method of defending against White's attack. 18 ♗d5 ♖b3!? An ambitious decision. (18...♖d8 was safer.) 19 ♕c3 (Black was fine after 19 exf5 ♖xf5 20 ♗e3 ♖f7) 19...♖f7 20 ♕xg7 ♖xg7 21 ♖e3 e6 22 ♗c3 d5! Taking the initiative thanks to the fact that the white queen is badly placed on e3, [Kindermann,S–Gurevich,M/Haifa 1989](#).

10...♗bd7

This looks like a good move. Black adopts a set-up in which 10.h3 is useless at best.

10...h5!? The attempt at outright refutation. 11 f2 e5 (11...f5!? is an interesting suggestion of Nunn and McNab, preventing g4 and attempting to expose White's king along the f-file.) 12 f5 h4 13 xf4 exf4 14 d2 c6? After this White gets a dangerous attack. (Black should play 14...b6+ 15 e2 e8!? 16 fxg6 hxg6 17 d5 c5 with very reasonable chances.) 15 xf4 b6+ 16 e3 xb2 17 d5 [Polgar,J-Hennigan,M/London \(England\) 1988](#).

10...e5 11 0-0-0!? A very sharp and interesting continuation. (After 11 0-0 c6 Black is OK.) 11...bd7 12 g4 d5! The central breakthrough is a typical reaction to a wing attack. (After 12...exf4 13 xf4 e5 14 xe5 dxe5 15 c4± White has achieved a superior position.) 13 exd5 e4 14 xe4

a) 14...xe4 15 xe4 e8 (15...xa2 16 c3) 16 d4± is bad for Black

b) 14...xa2 15 c3 a1+ 16 d2 xb2 17 d4 [Polgar,J-Azmayparashvili,Z/Amsterdam II 1989](#).

11 0-0 a6 12 d2 c7 13 a4 h6

13...b6 followed by ...Bb7 seems more consistent to me.

14 e2 e6 15 f5 c4 16 fxg6 hxg6 17 a5

Now Black has to strengthen White's centre after which I don't like her position that much, [Computer-Ioseliani,N/Hague \(Netherlands\) 1993](#).