

Victor Bologan

Bologan's Black Weapons

in the Open Games

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Introduction

My personal story

My acquaintance with the Open Games began with the study of the Italian Game with Viacheslav Andreievich Chebanenko, and then of the Ruy Lopez with GM Zigurds Lanka, in both cases strictly for White. Then, as a junior, I began to play the Philidor. In my transition from 2...d6 to 2...c6, I was greatly aided by GM Yuri Balashov and IM Mikhail Podgaets.

I was already in the middle of my career when I played my first official game (as Black) with the Ruy Lopez, in 1998 in Bastia, versus GM Leonid Gofshtein. I won that game and this helped me to qualify for the knock-out stage of the event. In those days a good friend, GM Andrei Shchekachev, gave me a very simple and efficient piece of advice: on 1 e4 play 1...e5, on 1 d4 – 1...d5, and on 1 c4 – 1...c5. I still think this is excellent advice!

In the year 2000, I started to play in strong round-robin tournaments, and I thought that the Ruy Lopez would fit perfectly into my repertoire, especially considering that it's very difficult to find a player in the top 10 who doesn't play the Ruy Lopez as Black.

I played against the Ruy Lopez during the World Cup in Tromsø, 2013, and it was not at all easy. I wasn't able to demonstrate an inkling of an advantage against either Svidler or Hracek. In the rapid game against Svidler, I even switched to 1 f3. Let me add that Anand had the same problem with Carlsen, and played 1 d4 against him in the 9th game of their 2013 match because he couldn't do anything against the Berlin Defense.

The work on this book started four years ago, when I realized that I didn't want to just write another repertoire book, but also a book that discusses the openings in a way that would suit chess teachers and trainers. I also came to the conclusion that it was time to re-evaluate all the gambits after 1 e4 e5, to examine which of them still stand the test of time (or the 'engine-test'), and which are just a (good) bluff and nothing more. If Black isn't caught by surprise, he will have an excellent game against all the gambits.

I am obliged to offer a special word of gratitude to FM Robert Dabo-Peranic for his enormous help and co-work with this book. Over the years he pestered me with questions such as: 'Victor, why does Black play...' or 'Could you explain why White...', but in the end it was precisely those questions that improved the quality of this book. With the help of his library I also discovered what different authors recommend for White in their repertoire books. The bad news (for me) is that he has already started to annoy me about some lines in the Ruy Lopez...:)

Why should you play (or teach) 1...e5

Against 1 e4, play 1...e5 and I will try to teach you everything you need to know about chess: how to play with no pawns in the center, or with a blocked center; what

the advantage of the ♖-pair means, and when it is good to have two ♘s against the ♗-pair; why it is so natural to put ♙s on e8 and d8, and when the 'Fat Bertha' does the job from its starting square; why the black ♚ sometimes gives check on h4, and what to do when the ♙s are off the board; what to do when your opponent is generous and sacrifices a ♗ in the opening stage, and how to stay calm as an iceberg while playing a line two ♗s down. When to accept a sacrificed piece, and when it is natural to give up the exchange; how to play (almost) all types of middlegame, and what to do when the opening leads immediately into the endgame.

Studying the move 1...e5, you will also learn about the history of chess. We will see how, in the XVIth century, Greco attacked, and why Polerio's Counterattack is still valid; why Philidor will always matter, where Staunton was wrong, and what Morphy teaches us about the Open Games; when one can grab a ♗ in the style of Steinitz, or sacrifice à la Chigorin.

If you are a beginner, the move 1...e5 will help you to grasp the essence of chess. If you are a trainer, 1...e5 will be the best teaching tool you will ever find. If you're a contender for the World Championship title, your knowledge of the move 1...e5 will make your opponent think twice before playing 1 e4. And what do I think about those players who never in their life played a single game with 1...e5 ? Well... I think they never played real chess :))))). Of course, I'm joking, but they would definitely discover a fascinating new world if they started playing 1...e5.

Most significantly, if 1...e5 is going to be your 'one and only' move against 1 e4, then you are riding the coattails of (maybe) the first universal player, the legendary Paul Keres, who once wrote:

My practice of almost always answering 1 e4 with 1...e5 has been criticized because it makes it easier for my opponents to prepare for their games against me. That is true. But I have faith in this reply; I am absolutely convinced that Black has less to fear from possible opening innovations with 1...e5 than with, for instance, many variations of the Sicilian Defense.

Paul Keres,
Power Chess: Great Grandmaster Battles from Russia

How the material is organized

This book is divided into five Parts. Each Part begins with a number of general guidelines for all the chapters featured in it, giving the reader an instant overview of all the options.

We live in a time when your opponent can, with just a few clicks of the mouse, find out what you play in the opening. Therefore I have tried to develop two **completely different** approaches in each part of my repertoire.

One is based on common-sense moves and on trying to avoid the gambits. The priority here is to equalize and get a good game as soon as possible.

The second approach is quite the opposite. It is impossible to avoid every gambit in the Open Games. Moreover, some gambits are of dubious quality, at least theoretically speaking. My second approach will involve detailed analyses of the acceptance of the sacrificed material in those gambits that I consider dubious.

In fact, dear reader, you are holding two 250-page books in your hands

Each chapter starts with the '**Fast Lane**': a list of lines to which the reader should in any case pay attention if he doesn't have time to go through the whole chapter.

Move numbers inside a square (4) indicate a new move or comment.

Move numbers inside a circle (4) indicate that there is more than just one subline.

For example:

3 exd5 several alternatives the asterisk is for the game which is referred to twice

What else, since White would play too many moves with his light-squared ♘ after ③ ♘g2 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘f6, while after ③ ♘c3 comes 3...d4 4 ♘ce2, and now Black can choose between ④...f5 and the Night Attack: 4...d3!? 5 cxd3 ♘c6^{*}, with compensation.

3... ♖xd5 4 ♘f3 new move see **Index of Games** for the source game

At the end of each chapter the reader will find three things:

1. First, a reminder of the **Traps** (♘ for White and ♚ for Black) that appear in this chapter.
2. Andrew Soltis's book *Transpo Tricks in Chess* highlights the importance of 'dribbling' from one variation into the other. In the Open Games the possibilities for **Transpositions** (↔) are enormous, both between the openings and inside them. Another way to 'dribble your opponent' is by changing the **Move Order** (↔), so I have also mentioned those cases.
3. However, I also mention the specific **Strategic Ideas** discussed in the chapter again. Those ideas are represented throughout the book with beveled and embossed diagrams.

Index of Games

Almost every chess book has an index of games, but for this book I have decided to present things a little differently, copying the approach from other scientific works: where there is a game in the databases with the given variation, it gets a number, and at the end of the book the specifics of the game are given behind those numbers. The reader gets a better overview because the source games are presented in one list, and the chapters are more easily readable. The games used for **the main bold lines** are underlined. Where the same move has appeared in several games I have tried to quote the **oldest** source game. Of course, my database doesn't include all the Open Games (C20-C59) ever played, so I may have occasionally missed an older game. If you find any older games, please let me know and I'll be happy to include corrections in the next edition of this book.

Index of Variations

At the end of the book we also give an Index of Variations, highlighting all the variations that belong to what we might call the **Very Fast Lane**:

Very Fast Lane

If you are going to play 1...e5 for the first time and you have to prepare your repertoire in a short time span, you should read the following chapters:

1. Against the Italian Game (**Part V**), there is less theory in the Two Knights Defense (2...sD) (Chapters 54-57). Moreover, Black will be able to transpose from many other gambits into the Center Gambit (Chapter 55).
2. The second item on the list of priorities is the Scotch Game (**Part III**). There is slightly less theory after 4...c5 (Chapters 27-31), and the arising positions are not as complex as in the Modern Mieses Line (Chapter 25-26). The remedy for the Göring (Scotch) Gambit is to transpose to Paulsen's Defense in the Ponziani (Chapter 19).
3. The next step is **Part IV**. To complete your repertoire against the Scotch, against the Scotch Four Knights you should learn to apply the Modern Defence (Chapter 40), while against the Spanish Four Knights Game the simplest line is the Symmetrical Defense (Chapter 42). The missing chapter of the Two Knights Defense is covered in the Italian Four Knights Game (Chapter 36).
4. Since I doubt that it is possible to grasp the nuances of many lines in the King's Gambit in a short period of time, I recommend 1...d5 with the aim of transposing to the Modern Defence after 3 exd5 exf4 4 f3 f6 (Chapters 14-16).
5. To conclude the Very Fast Lane we have (from **Part IV**) Glek's Four Knights Game (Chapter 35), and from **Part I** the Center Game (Chapter 2). And if White plays the Bishop's Opening, then Black will transpose to the Vienna Game (Chapters 5-7). All together, that makes twenty-one chapters.

However, I strongly encourage readers to also study all of the other chapters as soon as possible. In the age of chess databases it is advisable to change your repertoire from time to time, and moreover – accepting gambits can bring more points!

The Gambits

Most of the time when trainers and coaches work with students, they prefer to avoid all gambits. They teach neither how to sacrifice pieces nor how to sacrifice pawns. In our 'quick-result society', such a pragmatic approach is quite understandable. Still, in chess one is bound to often end up in positions with a material advantage – and how often do we fail to convert a material advantage into a full point? Well, this is exactly what you can learn by accepting gambits. After you lose several games against a computer playing Black against Polerio's Gambit, you will eventually learn how to win positions with a material plus.

I don't advocate accepting the Göring Gambit or Urusov's Gambit. While it is true that Black is not lost in those gambits, for now (to my surprise!) I cannot show you a winning line against either. I won't give up searching, however, and perhaps I will discover some promising lines for Black before other editions of this book are published.

And what to say to those players who never play gambits because they are afraid of being a ♖ down? I recommend that they begin by analyzing Chapter 57, Line B, in which they will have to play two ♖s down. As Mikhail Tal would say: 'Let's have a bit of hooliganism!'

The arsenal of strategic ideas and themes

Initially I wasn't sure if I should include this chapter. The idea of grouping variations with the same ♖-structure was certainly appealing. However, most strategic themes connected with pieces have never been labeled, which I find strange since all the basic tactical themes do have specific names, which helps one to memorize the themes.

I don't know who was the first to call the ♘ on the 6th (3rd) rank an 'octopus', but I like this name and it inspired me to give names to some other interesting ♘-maneuvers. My original intention was to put this chapter as an index at the end of the book, with only diagrams and a list of variations. However, when I saw Nunn's introduction to *The New Classical King's Indian*, I decided to add some text and move this section to the beginning of the book.

Trainers often look for additional examples regarding certain specific issues. I hope that this chapter will help them to improve their lectures by making it easy to find similar examples of ♖-structures, **piece play**, **material imbalances**, or **attack & defense** issues they wish to discuss.

This chapter will also help you answering questions such as: in which lines am I obligated to accept the sacrificed ♖, or: which gambits should I not accept; when should Black's ♔ remain in the center; are there any lines in which Black exchanges both of his ♘s, and so on.

Also, players who want to apply only one of the given approaches and are not interested in the lines from the 'alternative repertoire', but do like to learn new ideas, can easily see what other types of entertaining maneuvers and themes can also appear in the Open Games.

For example, take a look at the following two positions (throughout the book, half-white/half-black pieces are important for the strategic theme).



In the diagram on the left, we have a position given in Averbakh & Beilin's manual *Journey into the Kingdom of Chess* (in Russian, published by Fizkultura i Sport, Moscow, 1976) and many others. In this position Steinitz (as Black) played 8...h5! (Chapter 44 Line B2).

In the diagram on the right we have an almost identical position, which arose in the game Andreikin-Nybäck (Chapter 53 Line B). In this position Black didn't play 10...h5!?. When I observed that two 2600+ players didn't realize that they had entered a slightly different version of the Steinitz Attack, I considered this the final proof that an overview of strategic ideas should be included in this book. If players like Andreikin and Nybäck could overlook a standard strategic idea, so could anyone else!

I was inspired by GM Mihail Marin's book *Beating the Open Games* and the Russian edition of *Techniques of Positional Play* by Anatoly Terekhin (I use his expressions of the 'Pendulum Maneuver/disappearing move' and the 'wave-breaker') – they were among the first who introduced names for certain strategic themes in a real game. However, dear reader, if you have different (maybe funnier) names for them, please inform me and I'll be glad to adopt them if I find them more suitable than mine.

Victor Bologan
Doha, Qatar, July 2014

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to New In Chess publisher Allard Hoogland, who recognized that there was still room for another repertoire book for 1...e5. I am also glad that he supported the decision to 'unzip' my 380 pages of compressed text into a book of over 500 pages. Finally, his invitation to Robert Dabo-Peranic to join the publishing team was a guarantee that the project would finish on time.

Thanks to the huge efforts of the editor, George Kosinski, my clumsy Slavic English has been transformed into a smooth text. His inspiring interventions have really improved the book.

The sharp eye for detail of this project's supervisor FM Peter Boel has, among other things, even noticed a transposition (man, what a headache all these transpositions gave me!) which had escaped my attention. And I was so sure that I had covered them all!

Unfortunately for my friend Robert Dabo-Peranic, he had the boring part of the job: the countless updates of the game index, for example. But to my surprise he managed to do it without too much complaining.

Gentlemen, thank you, thank you, thank you and thank you!

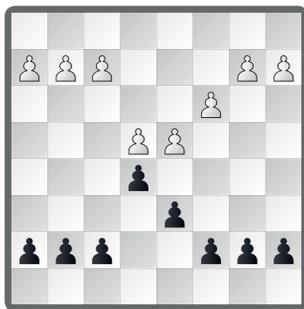
Arsenal of Strategic Ideas & Themes

♟-structure

We start with the most important center.

White's Central Phalanx

Since in this book we don't analyze the Ruy Lopez, the chances that White will create a strong central phalanx are small.



White comes very close to this strong phalanx in the Giuoco Piano (**Chapter 45 Line C2**), but it lasts for just one move, while the phalanx in **Chapter 44 Line C1** and **Chapter 52 Line A** will last slightly longer.

Black's Central Phalanx

Although Black is always one tempo behind, he will try to create his own phalanx in the center and try to hold it as long as possible.



In the Bishop's Opening (**Chapter 4**), White provokes Black from the very beginning into occupying the center with his ♟s, while in **Chapter 50 Line B**, it takes time to prepare the central break ...d7-d5. Another rare case of Black dominating in the center occurs in the Reversed Philidor (**Chapter 17 Line E3**).

The clash of the two phalanxes (the white e4/d4 vs the black e5/d5 duos) appears in the Italian Game: **Chapter 50 Line B1 Subline γ**.

Keep in mind that McDonnell's Maneuver ...♘c6-e7-g6 is also closely connected with the preparation for the central break with ...c7-c6 followed by ...d7-d5, and if necessary Black uses Blackburne's ♖ to keep his phalanx intact.

The Wedge on d4

When Black cannot maintain his phalanx any longer, he takes on e4 or grabs space in the center with ...d5-d4.



In the arising \triangle -structure the most important thing is to neutralize White's \triangle , which is usually hidden on a2. The most important line with this \triangle -structure is in the Bishop's Opening (**Chapter 4 Line B1a**).

For the fight over the dark squares, Black will also advance his \triangle to d4 in the reversed Philidor (**Chapter 17 Line B2**).

In the Italian Game, Black usually plays ...d7-d5xe4, but there are some exceptions, such as those in **Chapter 43 Line A2**.

Finally, in the 2 \triangle sD (= Two Knights Defense) after Black has executed **Paulsen's Maneuver** (... \triangle a5 and ...c7-c5),

In the Center Game (**Chapter 2**), Black subsequently reacts in two ways: by organizing pressure against the white e4- \triangle (**Line B1**), or by utilizing the 'eye for an eye' strategy with the central ...d7-d5 break (**Line B2**), thus clearing the center of the remaining central \triangle s.

The Scotch Game has numerous lines in which Black tries to annihilate White's small center, as in **Chapters 23-24 Line B**, or **Chapter 29 Line C, D**.

In Potter's Line (**Chapter 27**) Black deliberately leaves his \triangle on d7, hoping to achieve ...d7-d5 in one step (**Line B3a**). However, sometimes he delays this idea until he has completed his development (**Chapter 23-24 Line A**). And if he cannot break in the center, Black will at least try to control the d5-square (see Smyslov's \triangle and the Scotch Hedgehog).



he is not far from the central breakthrough ...d6-d5-d4, as in **Ch 54 Line B2g1**.

The Small Center

Whenever White plays d2-d4 without the support of his c- \triangle , Black automatically exchanges \triangle s with ...exd4.

The 'eye for an eye' strategy sometimes leads to the next symmetrical position.



Here, activity is everything! And if White's ♔ finishes on f1 after the center has been cleared of ♖s, as in the Italian Game (**Chapter 55 Line A2**), then he is in trouble.

The dynamic play can even compensate a ruined wing. For instance, in **Chapter 24 Line A1** (with ♖s on the board) and **B1** (without ♖s) Black has doubled c-♖s, but in both cases he easily controls the damage.

The ♖-Majority

In the Exchange Line of the Ruy Lopez, White must give his ♖-pair to gain the ♖-majority on the ♔-side. In the Scotch Game, on the other hand, after ♖xd4 White is just one step away from another exchange on c6.



In Kasparov's Variation (**Chapter 33**), the price White must pay for the better ♖-structure is weaker development and the somewhat clumsy position of his ♔ on d2. Not to mention that in the middlegame, White's e4-♖ is more a target than an asset, while the e5-square offers an excellent post for Black's ♘.

Sometimes this ♖-structure goes through further changes. In **Line A1a**, Black will allow the doubling of his f-♖s with ...gxf6, while in **Line B1a**, Black will allow the exchange of ♖s on g6. Black will also allow

his ♔-side ♖-structure to be damaged with ...fxe6 in **Lines A1b** and **B1c**.

The Scotch Trio

If he wishes, Black can avoid the previous ♖-structure by playing ...bxc6 instead of ...dxc6.



In the Scotch, Black sometimes chooses to play with the d6/c6/c7-trio, as in **Chapter 23 Line A**. In **Chapter 24 Line A1**, White will try to break up this trio with e4-e5, but Black will have some activity.

In **Line A2**, Black goes for ...d6-d5 only after completing the development of his ♔-side.

Klovan's Lever

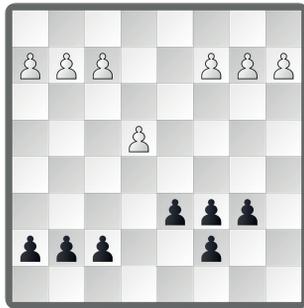
If Black has doubled White's f-♖s then, instead of ...d6-d5, the ...f7-f5 lever becomes much more important.



This is a very important weapon which Black utilizes to put pressure on White's f2/f3/e4 trio (see the Scotch: **Chapter 32 Line B, D1a and D2**).

The ♖-Quartet

In comparison with the Scotch trio, the additional exchange of ♙s on b6 just increases the dynamic potential of Black's ♖-structure.



The black 'quartet' is a pure joy for the Black ♖s because it offers files for both of them, as in the Scotch 4♞sG: **Chapter 40 Lines A, B1, and B3a**, or **Ch 31 Line B2**.

White gets his own quartet in the Vienna Attack: **Chapter 7 Line A1**.

The 3-2-1 Set-up

If the ...d7-d5 break is supported by the doubled ♖ on c6, then an exchange on d5 leads to the next ♖-structure.



White has two plans: attempting to block Black's ♖-side, or to create a 2-1 majority on the ♖-side with the c2-c4 lever. However, his third island offers Black enough activity to easily neutralize all White's intentions, as in the Scotch: **Chapter 23 Line B**, and **Chapter 24 Lines B3a1 and B3b2**.

The positions arising in the Scotch 4♞sG (**Chapter 38 Line B**, and **Chapter 39 Line C**) are more complex to play.

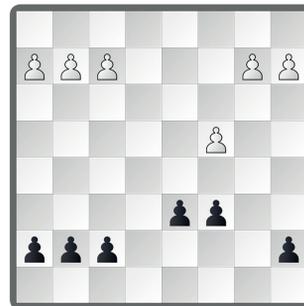
White obtains the 3-2-1 ♖-structure in the Reversed Scotch 4♞sG (**Chapter 34 Line B2b4**).

In **Chapter 39 Lines B1, C1a**, and **C1c/d**, Black accepts the doubling of his f-♖s as the price for obtaining the ♙-pair.



White gets the 3-2-1 ♖-structure with the doubled f-♖s in the Reversed Scotch: **Ch 34 Line B2b3**.

In the next diagram Black has the passive version of the 3-2-1 set-up.



For White, this is the most favorable version of the 3-2-1 \triangleleft -structure. It appears in **Chapter 26 Line A1c** (subline 10...d5) of the Scotch. **Line B1d** explains how Black avoids an inferior endgame.

The Scotch isolani

As previously mentioned, White can attack the 3-2-1 \triangleleft -structure with the c2-c4 lever, and after the exchange cxd5, Black accepts the following \triangleleft -structure with the capture ... \triangleleft xd5.



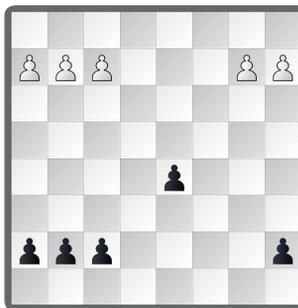
The isolated \triangleleft on c6, which I will label 'the Scotch isolani', will not be a problem as long as Black plays actively, as in **Chapter 24 Lines B3a2/3** and **B3b1**.

When Black exchanges \triangleleft s with ...cxd5, we have the \triangleleft -structure in the diagram below.

The passed \triangleleft

One of the rare cases in the Scotch where Black plays with the central passed \triangleleft in the middlegame occurs in **Chapter 39 Line B2**. In this line, White never gets a chance to utilize his 2-1 majority because of Black's active play in the center.

White also has such a central passed \triangleleft (but with the 2-3 \triangleleft -minority on the \triangleleft -side) in **Chapter 14 Line C4**,



but in that line he has to accept playing without the \triangleleft s, which suits Black.

The Nimzo Nightmare

While most of the time White can play d2-d4 in casual fashion, Black must know exactly when he can create the small center and how to defuse the pressure on e5 and d5. For this reason this is probably the most important \triangleleft -structure for Black, regardless of whether he plays 3... \triangleleft c5 or 3... \triangleleft f6 against the Italian Game.



Why Black is in trouble if he plays ...d7-d5 prematurely is explained in **Chapter 54 Line B**.

Black can open the center and survive if White first loses a tempo somehow. In **Chapter 43 Line A1**, we can see several different ways that Black can protect his center, depending on how White plays on the 5th move. In most cases the key motif



The **Cuban Variation** (7...0-0 0-0 b6) is a small but efficient aspin for all Black's headaches in this line.

31 Among GMs, the **Exchange Line** with 5 ♘xc6 is the most popular choice. As in Chapters 25 & 26 White puts his money on his superior ♖-structure.



With the far less popular **Paris Variation** (5...bxc6) Black ignores the creation of the third ♖-island and relies on attacking possibilities on the ♗-side.

32 Recently the **Lange Variation** (6 ♗f3) has become the main line in the Exchange Variation, which is logical.



In comparison with the old main line, here Black must allow the third island with the capture 6...bxc6.

33 Although **Kasparov's Variation** (6 ♗d2) is no longer the main line, Black still must know how to play against it.



After 6...dxc6! 7 ♘c3 I have prepared two different options: the prophylactic 7...♗d4!? (the third most popular line), in which Black is willing to allow the exchange of the ♗s, and Alexander Morozevich's 7...♗e7 (the fifth most popular line), which keeps the ♗s on the board.

Chapter 17



Rare Third Moves



Fast Lane

☞ For now, save your energy and go to the next chapter, as you'll rarely see the openings discussed in this chapter.

After...

1 e4 e5

... by far the most popular move is...

2 ♖f3

... against which Black plays the 'no-name' defense...

2... ♗c6



There is a good joke about the so-called Chicago or Irish Gambit 3 ♖xe5:

A player named Dennis O'Flaherty played it in his first game and he won. On his deathbed he was asked 'to explain how he ever conceived this brilliant sacrifice'. He replied, 'Why, you old fool, I did not see that the ♖ was protected.' (Hugh Meyers Opening Bulletin No. 4 of October 1993)

However, keep in mind that even as esteemed a player as Harry N. Pillsbury lost against it. After 3... ♗xe5 4 d4 ♗c6 5 d5 ♗b8!? 6 ♗d3 d6 7 0-0 ♗d7 8 c4!, the simplest way to continue is 8...g6,

followed ...♗g7, ...♗f6, ...0-0, ...♖e8 and then probably ...♗c5 and ...c7-c6.

As in Chapter 1, after 3 ♗g3 Black can play **3...d5!?** (those who wish to play the daring 3...f5 must be prepared for 4 exf5! ♗f6 (4...d6 5 ♗h4) 5 ♗h3!?) **4 exd5** (if White does not take on d5, Black will himself capture on e4) **4...♗xd5 5 ♗c3²** (the move order is important. After 5 ♗g2, Black would insert the check on e4) 5...♗d6 (5...♗a5 is also good) **6 ♗g2 ♗g4 7 0-0 0-0-0**, followed by ...f7-f5 and ...♗f6 with a good game.

Against the blocking 3 c4, in addition to the more popular 3...♗c5 4 ♗c3 d6 5 d3 f5 6 ♗e2 ♗f6 7 ♗g5 0-0 8 0-0³ h6, Black can also play **3...f5!?** (the point of the text move is to have ...♗b4+ in reserve) **4 d3** (the counter-gambit move 4 d4 leads to sharp play after 4...exd4 5 ♗xd4 ♗b4+ 6 ♗c3+ fxe4 7 ♗xc6 bxc6 8 ♗h5+ ♗f8) **4...♗b4+!?** **5 ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 6 ♗xd2 fxe4 7 dxe4 ♗f6 8 ♗c3 d6 9 h3 0-0⁵**, and in the next phase Black can play, for instance ...♗d7-c5-e6. Black's ♗ goes to f6, while his light-squared ♗ will find a way out after ...♗d7-e8-h5.

In this chapter the issues are the following rare lines:

A) 3 d3

B) 3 ♗e2

A) With Georgi Tringov's 3 d3, both options are open: the Reversed Pirc and the Reversed Philidor.

B) The Csom-Jobava Opening, 3 ♖e2, has one big advantage over the previous line: White will get his beloved Philidor set-up, and at the same time avoids sharp ideas, such as 3 d3 d5 4 ♘bd2 f5!? (or 4...f6).

A) 3 d3 d5

I was very close to including the move 3...f5, until I realized that White can play 4 d4!?, transposing to the Reversed Vienna Gambit.



Since 4 exd5 ♗xd5 5 ♘c3 (5 a3 ♖e6 6 ♘c3 ♗d7) 5...♗b4 6 ♖d2 ♖xc3 (6...♗d6 is also good) 7 bxc3 (7 ♖xc3 is covered in Chapter 1 Line D) 7...♗f6 leads to a Reversed Steinitz-Ruy Lopez, where Black stands well after 8 c4 (after 8 ♖e2, Black can try the combative 8...♗f5 and 9...0-0-0) 8...♗d6 9 ♖e2 0-0 (9...e4!?) 10 0-0 b6 (or 10...e4), White usually chooses one of the next two lines:

A1) 4 ♘c3 ∞

A2) 4 ♘bd2 ∞

A1) The fianchetto of Black's dark-squared ♗ is the safest way to neutralize the future pressure along the e-file.

A2) If White plays 5 g3 before the exchange on d5, Black will close the h1-a8 diagonal with 5...dxe4.

A1) 4 ♘c3 ♗f6 5 exd5

In case of the provocative 5 d4, the correct reaction is 5...dxe4, while after 5 ♖g5, Black retains the tension with 5...♗b4, and only after 6 ♘d2 does he play 6...dxe4 7 dxe4 ♖e6 8 ♗b5 ♗d6 with a good game.

5...♗xd5



6 g3

The exchange 6 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 only facilitates the idea of castling ♗-side.

After 6 ♖e2, Black can play as in the main line with 6...g6, or he can continue with development by playing 6...♗b4 7 ♖d2 0-0 8 0-0 ♖e8 9 ♖e1 ♗xc3 10 bxc3 ♖a5 11 ♖f1 h6 12 ♖b1 ♗b6.

6...g6

Black has time for the fianchetto because he can answer 7 d4?! with 7...♗b4.

7 ♖g2 ♖g7 8 0-0 ♗de7 9 ♖e1

After 9 ♖b1 0-0 10 b4 ♗d4 11 ♘d2 c6 12 a4⁸, besides 12...♗d5, Black can first insert 12...h5 with the idea 13 h3 h4 14 g4 ♗d5.

9...0-0 10 ♖g5 f6

10...h6 is also good.

11 ♖d2⁹

Black would attack the opponent's ♗ one more time after 11 ♖e3 ♗f5.

11...♖e6

... followed by ...♗d7, ...a7-a5, ...b7-b6 and ...♗f5 with an equal position.

A2) 4 ♖bd2 ♜f6



B) 3 ♗e2



5 g3

After 5 exd5, since there is no threat of ♖c3, Black can recapture with his ♗, intending to castle on the ♗-side.

5...dxe4

Since White plans to fianchetto his light-squared ♗, it makes sense to keep the long diagonal closed by eliminating the possibility of the exd5 exchange. This idea works even with a tempo down: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖d2 ♖f6 4 g3 dxe4!? 5 dxe4 e5, as GM Fabiano Caruana played.

6 dxe4 ♗c5 7 ♗g2

After 7 h3 h6 8 ♗g2, Black could also go for opposite-side castling with 8...♗e6 9 0-0 (the flimsy ♖c3?! allows 9...♗d3N) 9...♗d7 10 ♖h2 0-0-0 11 ♗e2, after which he can play the combative 11...g5 12 ♖c4 ♖d4 13 ♖xd4¹⁰ ♗xd4.

7...0-0 8 0-0 a5!?

The text move tries to provoke a reaction like ♖a4, after which a logical follow up is 9...b6 followed by ...♗a6.

9 ♖c4¹¹

After a move like ♖e1, Black grabs the space with 9...a4.

9...♗e7 10 ♗e2 b6

Or 10...a4 11 ♗g5 (with the idea ♖c4-e3-d5) 11...h6.

11 a4 ♗a6 12 b3 ♗e6

... and before the exchange on c4, Black will probably insert ...♗ad8.

If White wants to avoid the early ♗-breaks, this is the correct move order because now, after 3...f5 comes 4 d4!, ♗ which is the Reversed Vienna Gambit with a useful extra tempo, while after 3...d5 4 exd5 ♗xd5 5 ♖c3 in the Reversed Center Game, White is bound to profit from the already developed ♗ on e2.

That means that Black has to prepare ...d7-d5 with...

3...♖f6 4 d3 d5

Now, heading toward the Reversed Ruy Lopez (or, more precisely, the Steinitz Defense), is the variation 5 ♖c3 ♗b4 6 exd5 (after 6 ♗d2, Black cranks up the tension on e4 with 6...♗xc3 7 ♗xc3 ♗d6, and after 8 exd5 ♖xd5 9 0-0, he has to decide whether to castle ♖-side and ♗-side) 6...♖xd5 7 ♗d2 ♗xc3 8 bxc3 0-0 9 0-0 (if 9 ♗g5 ♗d6 10 ♗d2, Black can then play 10...♗a3!? 11 c4 ♖c3 12 0-0¹² f6 13 ♗e3 ♗d8, with an edge) 9...♗f6! with the idea 10 c4 ♖f4 11 ♗xf4 ♗xf4¹³ followed by ...b7-b6 and ...♗b7.

White more often plays:

B1) 5 exd5 =

B2) 5 ♖bd2 ∞

B1) In the Reversed Larsen Variation, GM Zlatko Ilincic lost two games with

black, so it's advisable to play cautiously against this opening.

B2) The Reversed Hanham Variation is the most popular choice for White.

B1) 5 exd5 ♖xd5 6 0-0 ♙e7

This time 6...g6?! is not good because of 7 d4!.

7 ♖e1

After 7 c4 ♗f6 8 ♗c3 0-0 9 ♙e3, Black has 9...♙f5 or 9...♗g4.

Black will gladly let White play on the wing in exchange for domination in the center after 7 a3 0-0 8 b4 ♙f6 9 ♖a2 (9 ♙b2?! e4!) 9...♙f5 10 c4 (10 g3 b5!? followed by ...a7-a5) 10...♗f4 11 ♙xf4 exf4 12 b5 ♗d4 13 ♗xd4 ♖xd4¹⁴.

7...0-0 8 ♙f1

If White delays this move, Black will have time to reinforce his center with ...♖e8 and ...♙f8.



8...♙f6

A sharper reply is 8...♗g4!? 9 h3 ♙h5 10 g4 ♙g6 11 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 12 ♖xe5 c6 13 ♖e1 f5¹⁵ with compensation.

9 ♗bd2 ♖e8

There is no reason to abandon the h6-square to the opponent's dark-squared ♙ with 9...g6¹⁶.

10 ♗e4¹⁷ ♙f5

... and ...a7-a5 with equality (10...♙e7 is also good).

B2) 5 ♗bd2 ♙c5 6 0-0 0-0 7 c3 a5



Black will continue to push his a-♙, as in 8 ♖c2 a4, and now it's too early for 9 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 10 d4 ♙xd4 11 cxd4 ♗c6 12 ♖d3¹⁸ ♗xe4, while White has to accept an inferior ♙-structure if he plays, without preparation, 9 b4 axb3 10 ♗xb3¹⁹ ♙d6. That leaves us with the thematic 9 ♖b1²⁰, against which I suggest 9...♖e7, with the idea 10 b4 axb3 11 axb3 b5!? 12 b4 ♙b6.

Of course, White can stop ...a5-a4 once and for all with 8 a4, a move that not only prepares exd5 and ♗d2-c4, but also ♖b3. With all this in mind, Black's 8...h6 turns out to be quite useful, when 9 ♖b3 or 9 ♖c2 allows 9...♙e6, and if White continues with 10 exd5²¹, Black can take 10...♖xd5 without worrying about ♗g5-e4.

If after 8 a4 h6 9 ♖c2 ♙e6, White decides to regroup behind his ♙-wall, Black will reciprocate, waiting for the right moment to push ...d5-d4. For example:

α) 10 h3 ♖d7 11 ♖e1 ♖ad8 12 ♙f1 ♖fe8 13 ♗b3 ♙b6 14 ♙e3 ♙xe3 15 ♖xe3²² ♖d6 with the idea ...♗d7 and ...d5-d4;

β) or 10 b3 ♖e8 11 ♙b2 ♙a7 12 ♙a3 ♗h5!? 13 g3 ♗f6 14 ♗h4 ♙h3 15 ♗g2²³ d4.

8 b3

Once White moves this ♖, the idea of pushing ...d5-d4 becomes very attractive. However, I would delay the solid 8...d4, and try to prepare it with...

8...♙g4

8...♙e7, with the idea ...♖d8, is also worthy of consideration.

9 ♙b2

A move like ♙e1 allows Black to execute his idea in the purest form: **9...♙xf3 10 ♙xf3 d4 11 c4 a4 12 bxa4²⁴** (if ♙b2 then 12...a3 followed by ...♙b4-c3 and ...♘b4) ♙b4 and Black has a lot of play on the ♙-side.

Also playable for White is ♙a3, when Black has to decide between 9...dxe4²⁵ (which is just equal), ♙...d4 10 c4 ♘h5!? (with a complex struggle), and the non-committal **9...♙e7 10 ♙b2 ♖fd8 11 ♙c2** (11 b4? exd4!) **11...♘h5!?**, with chances for both sides.

9...♙xf3

Again there's nothing wrong with 9...♙e7²⁶, but why not exploit the fact that after...

10 ♙xf3 d4 11 c4 a4



... Black threatens 12...a3 followed by ...♙b4 and ...♘d7-c5, which forces White to play...

12 bxa4 ♙e7

... and, once again, Black has the better chances on the ♙-side.

GM Vladimir Malaniuk may have been the first player to execute this interesting break (with reversed colors).

Traps

⚠ Be careful with the ...f7-f5 lever. It doesn't always work the way you expect it to.

Transpositions & Move Order

↪ The main task of the systems mentioned here is to create a kind of Reversed Philidor or Reversed Pirc.

Ideas To Remember

♣ The ...f7-f5 lever (against 3 c4).

♣ Malaniuk's Break (**Line B2**).

Chapter 18

The Ponziani Opening: the Harrwitz Attack & the Steinitz Defense



Fast Lane

☛ **Line A2b** is one of the refutations of the Harrwitz Attack.

☛ **Line B2b** offers Black a chance to outplay White.

In the very first game (1846) where Daniel Harrwitz played...

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♗c6 3 c3

... Bernhard Horwitz answered with...

3...d5



Before we start to deal with the main variations – a few words about some minor lines.

Among the solid moves are ④ d3, which transposes to Tringov's Opening, and ④ **exd5 ♖xd5 5 d4** (weaker is 5 ♙e2 e4, or 5 d3 ♙f5), which transposes to Chapter 1 Line F after **5...e4!?** (5...exd4 transposes to the Capablanca Defense, Chapter 22).

An inferior line is ④ **♙d3 ♗f6! 5 exd5** (if 5 ♖e2, Black grabs his chance in the center with 5...dxe4 6 ♙xe4 ♗xe4 7 ♖xe4 f5 8 ♖e2 e4!) **5...♖xd5 6 ♖e2 ♙e6 7 ♙b5 0-0-0 ⑧ 0-0² e4.**

A) 4 ♙b5

B) 4 ♖a4

A) It's too late to switch to the Ruy Lopez, but many players are still unaware of this fact.

B) When Mikhail Chigorin started to play and win regularly with 4 ♖a4, this line became White's main weapon.

A) 4 ♙b5 dxe4 5 ♗xe5

If White inserts 5 ♙xc6+ bxc6 before capturing with 6 ♗xe5, then comes 6...♖g5!, as in the main line.

5...♖g5!

This is much better than 5...♖d5, which was played in the stem game. It's strange that 5...♖d5 is still the more popular move, because in a similar position in the Jaenisch Gambit (after 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♙b5 f5 4 ♗c3 fxe4 5 ♗xe4 d5 6 ♗xe5 dxe4 7 ♗xc6) Ossip Bernstein already played 7...♖g5 in 1905.



It took over 100 years to discover that Dixon's Counterattack on g2 should lead to the refutation of the whole line.

While Black's ♘ on c6 is not adequately defended, it turns out that – for the moment – White can't exploit this feature. For instance:

α) ⑥ ♘xc6? ♖xb5 7 ♘d4 ♖g5 (GM John Emms);

β) ⑥ ♙xc6+ bxc6 7 ♖a4 (worse is 7 d4 ♖xg2 8 ♖f1 ♙h3³) 7... ♖xg2 transposes to Line A2.

A1) 6 d4

A2) 6 ♖a4

A1) In the first line White is clearly weaker.

A2) The attack along the a4-e8 diagonal includes some forcing lines, but the final evaluation is even worse for White. He is completely lost.

A1) 6 d4 ♖xg2 7 ♖f1 ♙d6



Since now a move like 8 ♙f4 allows Black to consolidate his position with 8... ♘ge7, we will analyze:

A1a) 8 ♘xc6 ♖

A1b) 8 ♖h5 ♖

A1a) This is the most popular move, but after 8... ♙d7! and 9...c6! Black is better.

A1b) The always creative GM Dragoljub Velimirovic survived with this experiment, but only because he had an inferior opponent.

A1a) 8 ♘xc6 ♙d7! 9 ♘xa7

Weaker is 9 ♖a4 because of 9...a6! 10 ♘a3 (not 10 d5?! because of 10... ♖d8!, and if 11 ♙xa6 bxc6 12 dxc6, then 12... ♙g4! with an almost decisive advantage) 10... ♖c8 11 ♙c4⁴ ♙xc6 12 ♖b3 ♖g6, followed by ... ♘e7, ...b7-b5 and ... ♙d5 with a clearly better position. 9...c6!



Already Harry N. Pillsbury suggested this counterattack in a similar position.

10 ♙c4

Black castles after 10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 ♙e2 ♘f6 12 ♘d2 0-0N, but I'm not sure that White will be able to do the same.

10... ♖xa7 11 d5 c5 12 ♘a3

White tries to stop ...b7-b5, but Black is stubborn.

After 12 ♖a3 comes 12...b5!? 13 ♙xb5 ♘f6 14 ♘a3 0-0 with a better game.

12... ♖xa3! 13 bxa3 b5 14 ♙e2

♘f6 15 ♙e3 0-0 16 ♖d2 ♖xh2

17 0-0-0 ♖a8⁵

... and Black will take on a3 or play ... ♘g4 with advantage.

A1b) 8 ♖h5 g6 9 ♖h4⁶ ♘ge7!?



A2a) 7 ♖f1 ♚

A2b) 7 ♜xc6+



The first line leads to a depressing endgame with White down the exchange, unless he transposes to Line A2b with 8 ♜xc6.

A2a) 7 ♖f1 ♜h3

There is no need to hurry with the exchange on e5.

10 ♖f6

Weaker is 10 ♜f4 (10 ♜h6? ♜xe5 11 dxe5 ♜g4) 10... ♜h3 11 ♞d2 0-0, threatening to trap White's ♖ with 12... ♞f5 13 ♖f6 ♜a8-e8-e6.

10... ♜f8 11 ♞c4

After 11 ♜h6 comes 11... ♞g8! forcing 12 ♖g5 ♖xg5 13 ♜xg5 f6 14 ♞xc6 fxg5 15 ♞xa7+ ♜d7 16 ♜xd7+ ♞xd7 17 ♞b5 ♜f4, and Black has the better endgame (Black will play ... ♞f6, when he's threatening to take on h2).

11... ♖xh2 12 ♞xd6+ ♖xd6

13 ♖h4 ♖d5 14 ♞a3 ♜e6

15 ♜c4 ♖f5

... and since he is two ♖s up, Black can sacrifice the h-♖ if White tries to prevent him from castling.

A2) 6 ♖a4 ♖xg2



8 ♞xc6

White can forget about ⑧ d4 because of 8...exd3! 9 ♞d2 ♞ge7 10 ♜c4 (10 ♜xd3 ♖d5!, J. Emms) 10...0-0-0 11 ♞xf7 ♜e8 (or 11... ♜d7) 12 ♜xd3 ♖d5!?, while ⑧ ♜xc6+ bxc6 9 ♖xc6+ ♞d8! 10 ♖xa8+ ♞e7 11 ♞d1 ♖xf1+ 12 ♞c2 ♜f5! transposes to Line A1b.

The text move could be White's best practical choice, since after, for instance, ⑧ f3 ♜d6 (⑧...0-0-0!?) 9 ♞xc6 bxc6 (⑨... ♞f6!? 10 ♞d4+ c6) 10 ♖xe4+ (10 ♜xc6+ ♞f8) 10... ♞e7 11 ♜xc6+ ♞d8 12 ♜b5 ♜b8 ⑩ ♖e2⁸ ♜xb5! 14 ♖xg2 (14 ♖xb5 ♜e8) 14... ♜xg2 15 ♜g1 ♜xf3, he is simply lost.

8...bxc6 9 ♜xc6+ ♞d8 10 ♖c4

Threatening to take on e4. Weaker is 10 ♖b5 ♜c8.

10... ♖xf1+ 11 ♖xf1 ♜xf1

12 ♜xa8?! ♜d3⁹

... with a depressing position for White. Better is ⑫ ♞xf1 ♜b8, but this is not a huge improvement.