



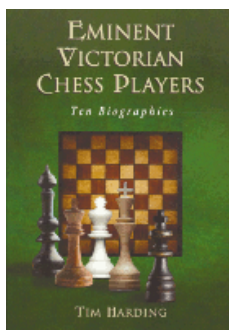
COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding



Translate this page



Play through and download the games from [ChessCafe.com](#) in the [ChessBase Game Viewer](#).

## Adventures in the Aviary: Bird's Defence

Following up last month's column on Bird's Opening, I now look at my attempts to imitate Henry Bird's handling of his defence to the Spanish.

**James Mason – Henry Bird**  
 Ruy Lopez, Bird's Defence [C61]  
 Paris International (11), 23 July 1878.

Notes by Schallopp, from his tournament book, *Der internationale Schachkongress zu Paris 1878*, pages 144-5.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 h5!?

This bizarre-looking thrust was Bird's regular choice in later years. Andrew Greet's book *Play the Ruy Lopez* (Everyman Chess 2006) is the only one to give it any serious coverage. Greet commented that "the move is nowhere near as bad as it looks and has been used by some very strong players" including Morozevich. He added, "White should remember the old cliché 'flank activity is best met by a counter-attack in the centre' and respond with 6 c3." That was played in a game Leko-Morozevich.

6 f4

Safer and better was 6 d3.

6...c6 7 Be2 d5 8 d3 dxe4 9 dxe4 Bc5 10 Bd3 Nf6 11 f5 Ng4

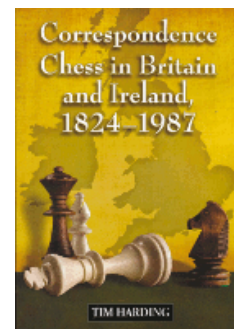


[FEN "r1bqk2r/pp3pp1/2p5/2b2P1p/3pP1n1/3B4/PPP3PP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 12"]

Black has now achieved a good attacking position.

12 Bf4 Bd7 13 Na3 Qe7 14 Nc4 b5 15 Na5 Ne3 16 Bxe3 dxe3 17 Qe2 Qe5 18 c3 h4 19 Rf3 g6

Purchases from our [chess shop](#) help keep [ChessCafe.com](#) freely accessible:



*Correspondence Chess in Britain and Ireland*  
 by Tim Harding



*ECO C*  
 by Chess Informant



*Chess Informant 114*  
 by Chess Informant

**Free Shipping!**  
 On all Orders  
 More than \$95!

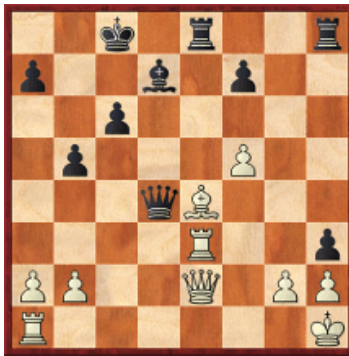
Parcel Post or Media Mail



[FEN "r3k2r/p2b1p2/2p3p1/Npb1qP2/4P2p/2PBpR2/PP2Q1PP/R5K1 w kq - 0 20"]

This strengthens the attack equally if White captures on g7 or allows Black to capture.

**20 Nb3 Bb6 21 Nd4 0-0-0 22 Rxe3 gxf5 23 exf5 Bxd4 24 cxd4 Qxd4 25 Kh1 Rde8 26 Be4 h3**



[FEN "2k1r2r/p2b1p2/2p5/1p3P2/3qB3/4R2p/PP2Q1PP/R6K w - - 0 27"]

**27 g3**

On 27 gxh3, there would follow 27...Rh4 28 Rd1 (28 Re1 c5) 28...Qb6 29 Qd2 Qc7 followed by ...c5.

**27...Re5 28 Rd1 Qb6 29 Qd2 Rd8 30 g4 c5 31 Kg1**

White takes advantage of the temporary obstruction of the black queen (on the a7-g1 diagonal) to remove the danger to the bishop. (Schallopp means that Black was threatening 31...Rxe4 32 Rxe4 Bc6.)

**31...c4 32 Qf2 Rde8 33 Rde1 Bc6 34 Bxc6 Rxe3 35 Rxe3 Rxe3 36 Kf1 Qd4 37 Bf3 Qd3+ 0-1**

Blackburne played Bird's Defence many times in his final active decade. In his last international tournament, at St. Petersburg 1914, he nearly beat Alekhine with it.

**Alexander Alekhine – Joseph Blackburne**  
St. Petersburg preliminary, 22 April 1914

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 g6**

This was Blackburne's favourite way of handling the defence, a move he introduced against Tarrasch at Ostend 1905.

**6 d3 Bg7 7 f4 c6 8 Bc4 d5 9 exd5 cxd5 10 Bb5+ Kf8!**



[FEN "r1bq1knr/pp3pbp/6p1/1B1p4/3p1P2/3P4/PPP3PP/RNBQ1RK1 w - - 0 11"]

This is a typical idea in the Bird Defence. White's bishop now looks rather silly and will lose time; Alekhine was apparently unaware of the finer points of Bird's defence though it was well known in England. However, Blackburne unwisely repeated the defence against Tarrasch and Capablanca who had prepared themselves better.

**11 Nd2??**

The future world champion blunders a piece.

**11...Qa5 12 a4 a6 13 Nb3 Qd8 14 Bd2 axb5**

Tarrasch, in his book of the tournament, preferred 14...Nh6 intending ...Nf5, as there is no need to take the piece yet.

**15 axb5 Rxa1 16 Bb4+ Ne7 17 Qxa1 Bf6 18 Qa7 b6 19 Re1 Be6 20 Kh1 h5**

20...Kg7 is better according to Tarrasch.

**21 Bxe7+ Qxe7 22 Qxb6 Qb4 23 Qc5+ Qxc5 24 Nxc5**



[FEN "5k1r/5p2/4bbp1/1PNp3p/3p1P2/3P4/1PP3PP/4R2K b - - 0 24"]

Clearly White is beginning to obtain some counterplay but it should not be sufficient to save the game. Commentators did not agree on how Black should respond.

**24...Bd8**

24...Ke7 would not be good enough according to Tarrasch, because of 25 b6 Kd6 26 b4 Bd8 27 b7 Bb6 28 Na6 Ba7 29 b5 but Georg Marco pointed out the resource 29...Rb8!!; e.g., 30 b6! (If White takes the rook, the pawns will easily be stopped.) 30...Rxb7 31 bxa7 Rxa7 32 Nb4 Kc5! 33 c3 dxc3 34 Nc2 Ra2 and Black wins.

**25 Nxe6+ fxe6 26 Rxe6 Kf7 27 Rd6 Be7 28 Rxd5 Rc8 29 c4 dxc3 30 bxc3 Rxc3 31 Kg1 Ke6**

31...Bf6 was better, wrote Tarrasch. Black is making things harder for himself as Alekhine keeps finding resources. As the material becomes reduced,

White's drawing chances increase.

**32 Re5+ Kd6 33 Re3 Rb3 34 Kf1 Rb4 35 Re4 Rb2 36 Re3 h4 37 Re4 Bf6  
38 b6 Kd5 39 Re8 Rxb6 40 Kf2 Rb3 41 Rg8 Rxd3 42 Rxb6 Ke6**



[FEN "8/8/4kbR1/8/5P1p/3r4/5KPP/8 w - - 0 43"]

**43 g4?!**

Here White should force a draw by 43 g3! since if 43...h3 44 Rh6 Rd2+ 45 Kf3 Rxh2 46 g4 followed by Kg3 to pick up the pawn.

**43...h3g3+?**

Evidently Blackburne (seventy-two years old!) was tired and thought it was a draw anyway, but Tarrasch could not understand why he consented to exchange his last pawn so readily. 43...Kf7! retains some winning chances: 44 Rh6 h3 45 g5 Bd4+ 46 Ke2 Re3+ "and the defence is very onerous" wrote Tarrasch.

**44 hxg3 Kf5 45 Rg8 1/2-1/2**

Now we shall look at my efforts with this defence, on a variation-by-variation, rather than chronological basis.

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4**

Bird's invention.

**4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0**

All the eight games I have played with Bird's Defence followed this normal course. I have tried three different replies – but not Blackburne's recipe.

- **A: A game with Bird's 5...h5**
- **B: Games with 5...c6**
- **C: Games with 5...Bc5**

**A: Bird's 5...h5**

The only game I have played with the immediate 5...h5 is still unfinished at the time of writing, although it is likely to end in a draw early in the New Year. So I shall only show the first phase of the game.

**Jacques Leroy – Harding**

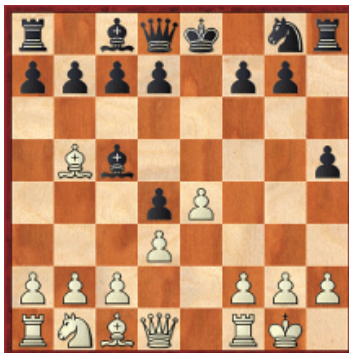
ICCF European Team Championship 2011-12

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 h5 6 d3**

My opponent played this quickly, but 6 c3 is the recommendation for White in Greet's book.

**6...Bc5**

As Bird always played here. White now has a wide choice.



[FEN "r1bqk1nr/pppp1pp1/8/1Bb4p/3pP3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 7"]

Note, also, a game below where I played 5...Bc5 in conjunction with a later ...h5. Arguably there is little point in playing ...h5 until White is actually threatening Qh5 or Qg4; it shows Black's hand rather early. The opposite argument is that if you intend to do it anyway, maybe do it early and White (if he doesn't know the idea) may react poorly.

**7 Nd2 c6 8 Bc4**

8 Ba4 can also be played.

**8...d5 9 exd5**

9 Bb3 is supposedly strong; would Bird have played 9...Be6 then?

**9...cxd5**



[FEN "r1bqk1nr/pp3pp1/8/2bp3p/2Bp4/3P4/PPPN1PPP/R1BQ1RK1 w kq - 0 10"]

**10 Nb3!?**

Can this novelty be good? Previously 10 Bb5+, 10 Bb3 and 10 Re1+ were all known. For example, 10 Bb3 Bg4 11 f3 Be6 12 Re1 Ne7 led to a sixty-move draw in Mason-Bird, London BCA 1887.

**10...Bb6 11 Bb5+ Kf8 12 Re1 Be6**

Computers like White's position but I reckon that if early threats can be met, White has two pieces out of play on queenside.

**13 a4 a6 14 a5 Ba7 15 Ba4**

White's plan is Qd2, then c2-c3 (or c4 if I don't inhibit that).

**15...Ne7**

This gives me various options and frees g8 for my king to evade pins. It would be attractive to play 15...Qf6 (preventing both Bf4 and c3) but it is refuted by 16 Qd2 followed by Qb4.

**16 Qd2 Qd6 17 Qf4 Qxf4 18 Bxf4 Nf5 19 g3 Bb8**



[FEN "rb3k1r/1p3pp1/p3b3/P2p1n1p/B2p1B2/1N1P2P1/1PP2P1P/R3R1K1 w - - 0 20"]

White decides to keep the dark squared bishops on the board, since after the superficial 20 Bxb8 Rxb8 21 Nc5 my king will soon migrate to the handy square d6.

**20 Bg5 Bd6 21 h3 Bb4**

Now his a-pawn is kept under observation and c2-c3 is ruled out for the near future. The cramping effect of the doubled d-pawn (which Tarrasch mentioned in his notes to the Alekhine-Blackburne game) is evident to the human judgment although computers always think White has the edge.

**22 Re2 Rc8 23 Bf4 Rg8 24 Be5 g5**

Very much in the Bird style.

**25 Kg2 Rg6 26 Rd1 Kg8**



[FEN "2r3k1/1p3p2/p3b1r1/P2pBnpp/Bb1p4/1N1P2PP/1PP1RPK1/3R4 w - - 0 27"]

White now began an almost endless series of manoeuvres with his rook, which I countered by bringing my king up to h6/h7 and waiting. All my other pieces are optimally placed and White's only way to make anything happen is to capture on d4, exchanging knights and giving up the a-pawn.

There were numerous double repetitions but my opponent was careful to avoid a third one, until eventually it got to the stage where any sensible move was very soon going to allow me to claim a draw. Throughout this phase, my computers continued to assess White's position as preferable but also to believe that the meaningless rook shuffles were stronger than the capture of the d-pawn.

My opponent finally played Nxd4 at move fifty-three! However, I was soon able to establish another stable defence and offered a draw at move seventy-three. This was silently declined but two moves later my opponent blundered away a pawn. Unfortunately, it was possible for him to reach a completely drawn endgame by careful play thereafter, because it really would have served him right to lose the game.

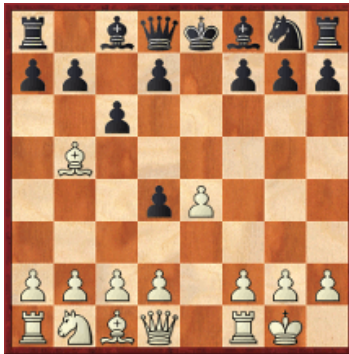
**B:**

**Jonathan O'Connor – Harding**

Armstrong Cup (league competition), Dublin, 2010

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 c6**

This was my first game with the Bird and I could not remember which move was supposed to be best.



[FEN "r1bqkbnr/pp1p1ppp/2p5/1B6/3pP3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 6"]

**6 Ba4 Nf6**

6...Bd6 also comes into consideration. Now if 7 e5 Ne4 and ...Nc5.

**7 d3**

This is a well-known position where Black normally chooses between 7...d5, 7...d6 and 7...Be7. At the board I found an interesting alternative.

**7...Qc7! 8 e5**

This looks premature; 8 Nd2 would be more normal. Clearly 8...Qxe5 is a blunder (9 Re1) but Black now gets a central square for his knight.

**8...Nd5 9 Re1**

9 c4 might be better.

**9...Bb4 10 Re4!?**

White could also consider 10 Bd2 or 10 Nd2, but perhaps best is 10 c3! dxc3 (10...b5!?) 11 bxc3 (11 Bb3? c2) 11...Nxc3 12 Qg4.

**10...0-0**



[FEN "r1b2rk1/ppqp1ppp/2p5/3nP3/Bb1pR3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQ2K1 w - - 0 11"]

**11 Bb3**

Not 11 Qg4? f5 12 exf6?? Nxf6.

11 Qh5! was rejected by my opponent but it would have led to sharper play

and is probably White's best continuation.

My opponent was worried about the possibility 11...d6 12 Rh4 h6 13 Bxh6 gxh6 14 Qxh6 f5 but White's sacrifice looks sound to me. I was therefore considering 11...Re8, setting up a back rank trick so that 12 Rh4? is refuted by 12...Nf6!, but the simple reply 12 Bb3 is harder to meet. Then if 12...Re6 13 c3! (stronger than Bxd5) leads to complications where White will have the bishop-pair in a position that is becoming open.

Black's safest line is probably 11...Be7 (to prevent Rh4) 12 Rxd4 g6 13 Qe2 d6 when if 14 Bh6 he can definitely consider 14...dxe5 15 Bxf8 Kxf8.

### 11...d6!

Black has no problems after this.

### 12 exd6

If 12 Bxd5 cxd5 13 Rxd4 Bc5, while after 12 Qh5?! dxe5 13 Bxd5 cxd5 14 Rh4 h6 15 Bxh6 the attempted sacrifice can be met by 15...g6! 16 Qe2 Be7 17 Bxf8 Bxh4 18 Bh6 Kh7 when Black has the bishop-pair and the better developed game.

### 12...Bxd6 13 Qf3

If 13 Bxd5 cxd5 14 Rxd4 Bxh2+ 15 Kh1 Be5.

### 13...Be6 ½-½

I proposed a premature draw but perhaps Black even stands better here. In the next game, by correspondence against an experienced international master, the shortcomings of the 5...c6 line were more apparent.

### Manfred Dorer – Harding

2nd ICCF Veterans World Cup semifinal 2011.

### 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 c6

To avoid the risk of having three games in the same tournament going down the 5...Bc5 6 Bc4 line (see below), I chose a different fifth move here, but I should be reluctant to repeat it.

### 6 Bc4!

More usual, and stronger, than 6 Ba4 which O'Connor played against me.



[FEN "r1bqkbnr/pp1p1ppp/2p5/8/2BpP3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQ1RK1 b kq - 0 6"]

### 6...g6!?

The obvious 6...d5?! was shown to be good for White in a rapid game Kasparov-Khalifman, Moscow 2002, after 7 exd5 cxd5 8 Bb5+ Bd7 (Here the square f8 is unavailable for the king!) 9 Re1+ Ne7 (9...Be7? 10 Qg4) 10 c4!

In a later game I tried 6...Nf6 (see below).



The move 6...g6 in this position was first played by Spassky, and is somewhat in the Blackburne mode, but White's eighth move points up the flaw when Black has played ...c6 rather than ...d6 in conjunction with ...g7-g6. In most of Blackburne's games White had kept the king's bishop inside the pawn chain – clearly less of an immediate threat to Black.

**7 d3 Bg7 8 Qf3 Qe7 9 c3**



[FEN "r1b1k1nr/pp1pqbpb/2p3p1/8/2BpP3/2PP1Q2/PP3PPP/RNB2RK1 b kq - 0 9"]

**9...dxc3?!**

This innovation gives White too fluid a game. Spassky (against Ljubojevic at the 1982 London Phillips and Drew international) preferred to sacrifice a pawn by 9...Nf6 10 cxd4 d5 11 exd5 cxd5 12 Bb5+ Kf8, followed by ...Be6, ...h6 and marching his king to h7, but White won in the end.

**10 bxc3 b5 11 Bb3 a5 12 d4 Nh6 13 Bf4 0-0**



[FEN "r1b2rk1/3pqbbp/2p3pn/pp6/3PPB2/1BP2Q2/P4PPP/RN3RK1 w - - 0 14"]

Black's idea is the promising exchange sacrifice 14 Qe3!? Ng4 15 Qg3 Nf6 16 Bd6 Qxe4 17 Bxf8 Bxf8, with a pawn and good compensation, but White is not fooled by the material grab.

**14 Nd2!**

This move is more problematic for Black. Black tries to unpin and create a defensive wall but I was unable to maintain it and eventually was crushed.

**14...a4 15 Bc2 f6 16 Rfe1 d6 17 Nf1 Bd7 18 Qg3 Nf7 19 h4 Bh6 20 Bxh6 Nxh6 21 h5**



[FEN "r4rk1/3bq2p/2pp1ppn/1p5P/p2PP3/2P3Q1/P1B2PP1/R3RNK1 b - - 0 21"]

This is horrible for Black and I lost without finding any real counterplay.

### Michael Granski – Harding

ICCF European Team Championship 2011-12

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 c6 6 Bc4 Nf6**

Varying from the previous game. 6...Nf6 has been played successfully many times in English correspondence chess by Kevin McLaughlin has played successfully. Unfortunately, it is not quite good enough as this game shows.

**7 Re1**

If White plays 7 e5, the reply is simply 7...d5.

**7...d6 8 c3**

8 e5 is again premature. McLaughlin used to reply 8...dxe5 (8...Nd5 has been seen: 9 exd6+ Be6.) 9 Rxe5+ (9 f4? e4) 9...Be7 and Black was OK.

**8...Ng4 9 h3**

Not 9 cxd4? Qh4.

**9...Ne5 10 d3**

As recommended in Greet's book. The sharp alternative 10 Bf1 d3 11 f4 (or 11 Re3) 11...Qb6+ 12 Kh2 g5 was well covered in an article by Jonathan Tait in issue 159-160 of the BCCA magazine *Correspondence Chess* where 6...Nf6 was recommended.

**10...Nxc4**

10...dxc3 11 Nxc3 Nxc4 12 dxc4 transposes. 11...Be7 without taking on c4 is also known.

**11 dxc4 dxc3 12 Nxc3 Be7**

12...Be6!? 13 Nd5 f6 14 Bf4 Kf7 15 Ne3 Qb6!? occurred in Sutton-McLaughlin, corr 2001, but Greet recommends the simple alternative 13 Qd3.

**13 Bf4**



[FEN "r1bqk2r/pp2bppp/2pp4/8/2P1PB2/2N4P/PP3PP1/R2QR1K1 b kq - 0 13"]

### 13...0-0

13...Be6 may transpose, but it need not do so. I decided to follow McLaughlin

### 14 Qd2

Instead of usual 14 Qd3; other queen moves have also been tried.

### 14...Be6 15 b3 Bf6

Not 15...Qa5? 16 Nd5! winning a pawn; e.g., 16...Qd8 (16...Bd8 17 Ne7+! Kh8 18 Qxd6 Re8 19 Nf5 Bxf5 20 Bd2! – Tait) 17 Nxe7+ Qxe7 18 Bxd6 Qd7 19 Rad1 with advantage in Guseinov-Dzhmamuradov, Moscow 1979 (1-0, 38).

15...Qd7 can be considered also.

### 16 Rad1

Black's problem d-pawn cannot be taken yet (16 Bxd6?? Bxc3+) but White could also consider 16 Re3!? which protects c3 and so threatens d6.

### 16...Be5 17 Ne2!

Tait's article mentioned this as another option but it seems much stronger than 17 Be3 f5!? 18 f4 (18 exf5 Bxf5 19 Ne2 – Tait) 18...Bxc3 19 Qxc3 fxe4 and Black has no problems to draw in a Sutton-McLaughlin postal game.



[FEN "r2q1rk1/pp3ppp/2ppb3/4b3/2P1PB2/1P5P/P2QNPP1/3RR1K1 b - - 0 17"]

### 17...Qe7 18 Be3 Rfd8

18...g6 loses a pawn to 19 f4 Bg7 20 Qxd6; also not 18...d5? 19 f4.

### 19 f4 Bf6 20 f5 Bd7

After 20...Bc8 White gets a middlegame attack, so I preferred to try my luck in the ending, but I could not hold it. Maybe I missed a better line somewhere.

### 21 Qxd6 Qxe4 22 Ng3 Qe5

22...Qe7 also comes into consideration but after 23 Qxe7 Bxe7 24 Bb6 Bb4 (24...axb6 25 Rxe7) 25 Bxd8 Bxe1 26 Rxd7 Bxg3 27 Bc7 Bxc7 28 Rxc7 Rb8 29 h4 Black is virtually paralysed.

**23 Qxe5 Bxe5 24 Bg5 Bxg3 25 Bxd8 Bxe1 26 Rxd7 b5 27 Be7 bxc4 28 bxc4 a5 29 Kf1 Bg3 30 a4 Be5 31 c5 g6 32 f6 h5 33 Ke2 Rb8 34 Rd6!**



[FEN "1r4k1/4Bp2/2pR1Pp1/p1P1b2p/P7/7P/4K1P1/8 b - - 0 34"]

There is no question of taking this rook and giving him a monster passed pawn, but everything else eventually loses too, I think.

**34...Rb4 35 Rxc6 Rxa4 36 Ra6 Kh7 37 Bd6** and White eventually won.

**C:**

The following is the second over-the-board game I played with 3...Nd4 and the first time I played the 5...Bc5 line.

**Justin Daly – Harding**

Armstrong Cup, Dublin, 26 October 2010

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 Bc5 6 d3 c6 7 Bc4**

I think that Black is now OK, whereas 7 Ba4!, played against me in a later game, is much more worrying.

**7...d5 8 exd5 cxd5**



[FEN "r1bqk1nr/pp3ppp/8/2bp4/2Bp4/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 9"]

**9 Re1+**

Here or next move, Bb5+ would be simply met by ...Kf8 leaving the white bishop loose and out of play, the same idea as in Alekhine-Blackburne. The black king is safe on f8 (the main problem being activating the king's rook) but now Black will be able to castle.

**9...Ne7 10 Bb3 0-0 11 Qf3 Be6 12 Bg5 Qd7**

If I could get positions like this regularly, I would be more inclined to repeat Bird's Defence. The doubled d-pawn is not so serious because the file is not



**17 Red1!**

Avoiding the last trap 17 Re2? Bg4 18 hxg4 (18 Qxg4 Qxg4 19 hxg4 Nxf4) 18...Rxe2.

**17...Nh4**

The position is about equal. I decided to settle for a draw by repetition rather than a long heavyweight bout where I would always regret the oversight at move fourteen.

**18 Qg3 Nf5 19 Qf3 Nh4 20 Qg3 Nf5 ½-½****Peter Opitz – Harding**

2nd ICCF Veterans World Cup semifinal 2011

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 Bc5**

This ought to be best and Bird played many games with it, until switching to 5...h5.



[FEN "r1bqk1nr/pppp1ppp/8/1Bb5/3pP3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 6"]

**6 Bc4**

It is uncertain whether Bird ever had to meet this. He probably did – but not in a surviving game; only a small fraction of his countless rapid informal games were recorded or ever printed. Now 6...c6? is met by 7 Bxf7+ Kxf7 8 Qh5+ and 9 Qxc5.

**6...d6**

I played 6...h5 in the more exciting game against Hladecek, below.

**7 d3**

White didn't go down the dangerous 7 b4 line and instead probably intended to follow a model correspondence game Hamarat-Burger. 7 c3 is another line he rejected, when 7...c6 is probably best.

**7...c6**

As recommended by Glenn Flear in his book [Offbeat Spanish](#).

**8 Qh5**

If 8 f4 Nf6!? (or immediately 8...f5), hoping for 9 e5?! Nd5 (Flear); 8 a4!? comes into consideration.

**8...Qe7**

This is critical according to Flear.

## 9 Bg5

If 9 Nd2 Nf6 10 Qh4, and now 10...Be6 (Flear) is more solid than 10...g5!?  
(Dvoiris-Meister, Russia 1992) 11 Qxg5 Rg8 12 Qf4 (12 Qh4 Rg4 13 Qh6 Rg6 repeats.) 12...Bh3 13 g3 when White has compensation for the exchange.

## 9...Nf6 10 Qh4 h6

I decided it was best to play this now while Black retains the option of ...0-0 or ...Rg8 depending on whether White responds f4 or Nd2.

## 11 f4 0-0

After a lot of thought I decided to follow the line seen in previous master games, and which is recommended by Flear, but might consider one of the other moves in future. I have the same position as a game Serper-Naumkin, the path recommended by Flear.

## 12 Bxf6

This is forced, the point being that White must exchange queens, else Black is completely level. Although Black's kingside pawns are shattered, it is remarkably difficult for White to take advantage of this factor.

## 12...Qxf6 13 Qxf6 gxf6 14 f5

Else Black himself plays ...f5 and eliminates at least one pawn weakness.



[FEN "r1b2rk1/pp3p2/2pp1p1p/2b2P2/2BpP3/3P4/PPP3PP/RN3RK1 b - - 0 14"]

Big decisions are coming up for Black now.

## 14...b5

Serper-Naumkin, Agzamov Memorial, Tashkent 1987, continued 14...Rd8 15. Nd2 d5 16.exd5 cxd5 17.Bb3 a5 18.a4 Bb4 19.Nf3 Bxf5 20.Nxd4 Bc5 21. Rxf5 Bxd4+ 22.Kf1 Bxb2 23 Rd1 and eventually Black drew in an endgame of rooks and bishops of opposite colour. However, at Opatija in 2003, Zlatko Topalovic played the more dynamic 23.Rb1 Be5 24.d4 Bxd4 25.Bxd5 Rab8 26.Rxb7 against Naumkin and won in fifty-four moves.

## 15 Bb3 Bb4

This major alternative was suggested by Deep Rybka-3 on my laptop. I preferred it to 15...a5 which was played in V. Bologan-E. Najer, Moscow 1995, continuing 16.a4 Bb4 17.Rd1 Bd7 18.Nd2 Bxd2 19.Rxd2 Rfb8 20.Ra2 Kf8 21.Rd1 Ke7 22.Rda1 b4 23.Rf1 Rg8 24.Rf4 Rg5 25.Rh4 Rag8 26.g3 h5 27.Ra1 Rh8 28.Rf1 Rhg8 29.Rf3 c5 30.Kf2 Bc6 31.Rff4 Rd8 32.g4 hxg4 33. Rfxg4 d5 34.Rxg5 fxg5 35.Rh6 Rd6 36.Rxd6 Kxd6 37.Bxd5 Bxa4 38.Bxf7 Bxc2 39.Ke2 Ke5 40.Bc4 Ba4 41.Kf3 Bd1+ 42.Kf2 Bc2 43.Ke1 Ba4 44.Ke2 Bc2 45.Kf2 Bd1 46.Ke1 ½-½. Najer has played a lot of games with Bird's Defence and always seemed comfortably drawing in that game, but I liked the idea of putting my bishop rather than my pawn on a5.

## 16 Rf4 Bb7 17 a3

My opponent played this without delay, and the next move pair also followed rapidly.

**17...Ba5 18 a4 a6**

After about an hour more (in a game where five days per move was allowed!), White played:

**19 Rg4+ Kh7 20 Kf1 Rg8**

This required some thought but the 20...Bb4 alternative does nothing really. 20...Rg8 is good, to exchange his only active piece for an inactive one.



[FEN "r5r1/1b3p1k/p1pp1p1p/bp3P2/P2pP1R1/1B1P4/1PP3PP/RN3K2 w - - 0 21"]

**21 Rxg8 Kxg8 22 Ke2**

22 g4!? was possible, but I think the game is now destined for a draw anyway.

Either through due care, or just by luck, White evades a wicked trap. If he opened the a-file here, or next move, he could lose; viz., 22 axb5 axb5 23 Ke2 d5!? and now I was hoping for 24 Nd2? (24 exd5 cxd5 is more critical.) 24... Bxd2!! 25 Rxa8+ Bxa8 26 Kxd2 dxe4 27 dxe4 c5 28 Bd5 Bxd5 29 exd5 c4 when I think Black wins. A player who was slavishly following the advice of his computer could fall into this because programs do not easily see the strength of 24...Bxd2, especially not several moves ahead.

**22...d5 23 Nd2 Bxd2 24 Kxd2 dxe4 25 dxe4 c5 26 Bd5 Bxd5 27 exd5**



[FEN "r5k1/5p2/p4p1p/1ppP1P2/P2p4/8/1PPK2PP/R7 b - - 0 27"]

Here White offered a draw, which I eventually decided to decline as I saw little risk in playing out the endgame. There are still a few chances for White to go wrong. The main issue is what will White do at move thirty after the forced sequence.

**27...Rd8 28 axb5 axb5 29 Ra5 Rxd5 30 Rxb5 Rxf5 31 Kd3 Re5 32 b4**

White plays the obvious safe moves rather than trying to be subtle and create chances for me to err.



### 32...cxb4 33 Rxb4 ½-½

White offered the draw again and there was now no point in declining.

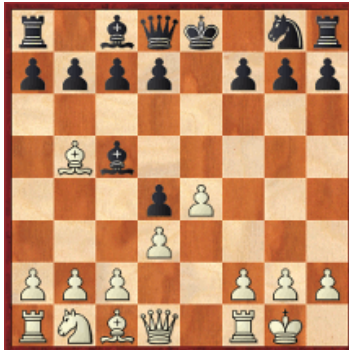
### Jacqueline Roos – Harding

ICCF European Team Championship 2011-12.

The veteran French correspondence player earned an ICCF women's grandmaster norm in this tournament – in part thanks to me!

### 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 Bc5 6 d3

This is stronger than 6 Bc4.



[FEN "r1bqk1nr/pppp1ppp/8/1Bb5/3pP3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQ1RK1 b kq - 0 6"]

### 6...c6

Bird eventually came around to choosing this after mostly unsuccessful experiments with other moves, but he did not have to meet the critical 7 Ba4.

6...h5 transposes to a line Bird sometimes played (5 0-0 h5 6 d3 Bc5).

### 7 Ba4!

Recommended for White by Gary Lane and others. I found no games of Henry Bird in this position; his opponents played Bc4. Flear in *Offbeat Spanish* calls this "One of White's best system against the Bird's. The pin along the a2-g8 diagonal is maintained and the ...d5 break is delayed and thus becomes less effective."

### 7...d6

ECO and GM Glenn Flear prefer this to the usual formula 7...Ne7 8 f4 f5 although the a2-g8 weakness remains a problem.

7...d5 has been played several times of late (though not in over-the-board master games) but now 8 exd5 Qxd5 (8...b5 9 Bb3 cxd5 was seen in one game.) 9 Bb3 Qf5 10 Re1+ Ne7 11 Nd2 0-0 12 Ne4 looked awkward.

### 8 Nd2

8 f4 (more normal) 8...f5 is considered critical by Flear, but Roos's natural choice avoids the immediate lock on the kingside.

### 8...Nf6

8...Be6 9 f4 (9 Bb3 Qd7) 9...b5 has been played but White can sacrifice a pawn: 10 f5 (10 Bb3 Qd7) 10...bxa4 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 e5. Maybe I should have tried 10...Bd7!? 11 Bb3 Nf6 in this line; it may be OK for Black.

8...Ne7 is a known move but White has a plus score. I avoided it on the basis that my French opponent would most likely know the game Bacrot-Morozevich in which 8...Ne7 was played.

**9 h3**

White could also play 9 f4 now that ...f5 is no longer available, but Black can consider 9...0-0, 9...Ng4 and 9...a5 for example. 9 Bb3 is another idea.

**9...0-0 10 c3 Be6**

Perhaps I should have preferred 10...Re8!? 11 Nf3 dxc3 12 bxc3 Qa5!?

**11 Nf3 dxc3 12 bxc3 h6 13 Bc2 Re8**

This complicated position with a fluid center seems to be in White's favour. My opponent judged the possibilities much better than me.

13...Qa5 also came into consideration.

**14 Re1**

Black would probably rather meet the direct 14 d4, i.e. 14...Bb6 (threatening ...Bc4) 15 Bd3 (not 15 e5?! dxe5 16 dxe5 Qxd1 17 Rxd1 Nd5) 15...Ba5 (15...d5 16 e5 Ne4).

**14...Qd7!?**

With the rather crude idea of a bishop sacrifice on h3.

**15 d4 Bb6 16 Qd3 Bc7 17 a4**

Opening a second front. My analysis had concentrated on 17 e5 and 17 Bf4 which seemed more forcing.

**17...d5!? 18 e5 Ne4 19 Nd2 f5 20 Nb3 b6 21 f3 Ng5**

21...Ng3 loses the knight after 22 Kf2 Nh5 23 g4.

**22 a5 Rf8**

Not a computer move, but it helps to provide a secure defence for f5.

**23 Ba3 Rf7 24 h4 Nh7 25 f4**

In case I might have been planning ...g5.

**25...Nf8 26 Bb4 Qe8**

Black is really grovelling now. My long-term plan was to get the knight to e6, the Nimzowitsch blockade square, but I am never able to do this, mostly because of the weakness of the f5-pawn.

**27 Qg3 Rc8 28 axb6 axb6 29 Reb1 Ra8 30 h5 Rxa1 31 Rxa1 Bb8 32 Ra8 Ra7 33 Rxa7 Bxa7 34 Qh3**

Of course not 34 Bd6? Qxh5.

**34...Qf7 35 Bd6 Kh8**

Waiting; to make White find a winning plan rather than make a committal move. It is no use, though.

**36 Qh4 Qe8 37 g4 ... (1-0)**

The rest was too horrible to relive. White won at move fifty-five.

The following is definitely the most fun game that I have had with Bird's Defence and it involved hair-raising complications. I suspect I was lost at one point but I am proud of the way I generated lively counterplay at the critical moment, and an interesting endgame also arose. In an over-the-board game

White might have even lost from the critical position.

### Miloslav Hladecek – Harding

2nd ICCF Veterans World Cup semifinal 2011.

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nd4 4 Nxd4 exd4 5 0-0 Bc5 6 Bc4 h5!?**

This is surely what Bird would have replied. There are two Winawer-Bird games reaching this position via 5...h5. This turned out more exciting than the 6...d6 I played against Opitz, but perhaps I followed up incorrectly.

**7 d3**

7 Qf3 Qf6= was Winawer-Bird, London 1883. If 7 c3 Nf6 (7...Ne7!?) hoping for 8 e5?! Ng4.

**7...c6**

Rather overdoes the underdevelopment? 7...d6 was played by Bird (or reached by transposition from 5...h5).



[FEN "r1bqk1nr/pp1p1pp1/2p5/2b4p/2BpP3/3P4/PPP2PPP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 8"]

**8 e5**

White has played a wide variety of moves here. This has only been played in three games. Computer thinks that the one Black won was unsound so I suppose he found an improvement there.

8 c3 was expected, when I intended 8...Nf6!? 9 Nd2 (9 e5 Ng4 is more or less OK for Black.) 9...d5 10 exd5 cxd5 11 cxd4 (11 Bb5+ Kf8 is the usual story.) 11...dxc4 (11...Bd6? 12 Re1+ Kf8 13 Bb3; 11...Bxd4) 12 dxc5 cxd3 which is very messy!

8 Nd2 d5 9 exd5 cxd5 10 Bb3 (10 Bb5+ Kf8 thematic) 10...Ne7 led to a draw in 29 moves in A. Dobrowolski-Z. Wieczorek, Polanica Zdroj 2007.

If 8 Re1 (to prevent ...d5), Black can play 8...a5 (threatening ...b5, ...a4) 9 a4 d6 10 Nd2 Bg4 11 f3 Be6.

**8...d5 9 exd6 Bxd6!?**

Thus I managed to disimprove on previous games, although 9...Qxd6 was better for White in M. Kolosowski -P. Mickiewicz, Koszalin 2007, until he messed up the endgame.

**10 Nd2**

I had agonised over the complications following rook check but he played this within an hour.

**10...Nf6**

This had only been played in one game where Black made a bad mistake. 10...Bg4 was the alternative, when 11 f3 (rather than checking on e1) may prove

awkward.

### 11 Re1+

V. Ivanov-Najer, Moscow championship 1992, continued 11 Nf3 Bg4 (11...0-0 may be good also.) 12 Qe1+ (12 Re1+ is probably better.) 12...Kf8 13 Nxd4 Bxh2+ 14 Kxh2 Qxd4 15 a4 Qd6+ 16 f4 and now Najer played 16...b5? but 16...Re8 is strong.

### 11...Kf8

Unfortunately, now my king's knight blocks ...Qh4 ideas.

### 12 Nf3 Bg4 13 h3 Qa5!



[FEN "r4k1r/pp3pp1/2pb1n2/q6p/2Bp2b1/3P1N1P/PPP2PP1/R1BQR1K1 w - - 0 14"]

The note I made in my database reads: "PIECE SAC GUNG HO!" White prudently declined.

### 14 c3!

14 hxg4 allows Black a strong attack after 14...hxg4 and possibly even loses. Now:

a) 15 Ng5!? Bxh2+ 16 Kf1 Bd6 17 Nxf7 (if 17 Qd2 Bb4) 17...Rh1+ 18 Ke2 Re8+ 19 Be3 dxe3 (19...Rh2 leads to a draw.) 20 Rxf7 exf2+ 21 Kxf2 Qf5+ 22 Kg1 Bc5+ 23 d4 Re1+! 24 Qxe1 Bxd4+ 25 Kh2 g3+! 26 Qxg3 Ng4+ winning White's queen.

b) 15 Nxd4 Qh5 is the critical line: 16 Kf1 b5 (probably better than B moves or Q checks) 17 Bb3 a6! (Preparing ...c5: an amazing slow move after the piece sacrifice). Now computers think White stands better, with 18 c3 maybe best (to provide a retreat for the knight) but there are many possibilities which one would explore deeply in a correspondence game. Clearly my opponent did not feel secure in that variation.

### 14...dxc3 15 bxc3 Bxf3

Not 15...Qxc3? 16 hxg4 Qxa1 17 Qb3 b5 18 Ba3, nor 15...Qf5?? 16 Nd4. Instead 15...b5 looked tempting for a moment but 16 Bb3!+- shows it is weakening.

### 16 Qxf3 Rd8

The pawn grab on c3 again seems too risky.

### 17 d4 h4 18 Bf4 Rh5 19 Rab1 Qc7



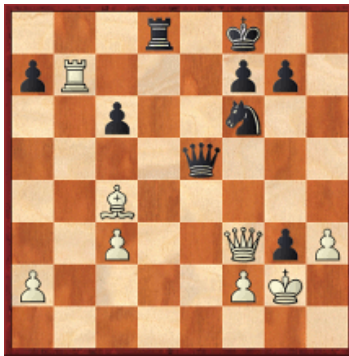
[FEN "3r1k2/ppq2pp1/2pb1n2/7r/2BP1B1p/2P2Q1P/P4PP1/1R2R1K1 w - - 0 20"]

At this point I thought I should probably lose – but White's, only superficially strong, next move brought about a simplification. I have to give up a pawn but obtain counterplay.

**20 Be5?! Bxe5**

After this there is actually a very long forced sequence.

**21 dxe5 Rxe5 22 Rxe5 Qxe5 23 Rxb7 Qe1+ 24 Kh2 Qe5+ 25 g3 hxg3+ 26 Kg2**



[FEN "3r1k2/pR3pp1/2p2n2/4q3/2B5/2P2QpP/P4PK1/8 b - - 0 26"]

At this point Black has a choice.

**26...Rd6!**

And now White had a choice:

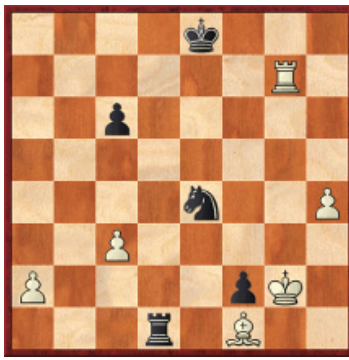
**27 Rxa7?!**

I actually had not expected this move which I think costs him whatever winning chances remained. I have not preserved all the variations I analysed in great depth while the game was in progress. Probably White should play one or other of the obvious moves instead: 27 Rxf7+ or 27 fxg3 Rd2+ 28 Kf1, but in either case the position is very messy because White's king is not altogether secure and there are long-term tactical chances for Black.

**27...gxf2!**

Now my counterplay against his king is so strong that he is forced to accept an endgame.

**28 Rxf7+ Ke8 29 Rxc7 Qe4 30 Bf1 Rd1 31 Qxe4+ Nxe4 32 h4**



[FEN "4k3/6R1/2p5/8/4n2P/2P5/P4pK1/  
3r1B2 b - - 0 32"]

This is another critical moment on which I spent a lot of time.

### 32...Nxc3!

32...Nd2 might seem better. However, in this line White will sacrifice his bishop while my knight is stuck on the edge. It may be possible to reduce to a drawn rook vs. rook plus a- and c-pawn ending but unpleasant. The move I chose, correctly followed up, is good for a draw with fewer headaches.

### 33 h5 Rd6 34 Rg6 Rxc6+ 35 hxc6 Ke7 36 a3! Kf6

Now White surprisingly did not try (or did not see) one last trap.

### 37 Kxf2 Kxc6 1/2-1/2

In his position I would have played 37 Bd3 when Black must find the "only move" 37...Nd1!. By preventing Kxf2, I tie his king down and he cannot play 38 Bc2?? nor 38 Bf5?? nor 38 Bc4?? because of 38...Ne3+.

Play could then go as follows:

a) 38 Kf1 (trying to do nothing and outmanoeuvre me) is met by 38...Nb2. Now, wherever his bishop goes I have an easy draw thanks to forks, and if he tries to save his a-pawn I can win his bishop and the game.

b) 38 a4 Nb2 (attacks both a-pawn and bishop) 39 a5 (Else I capture the a-pawn with an obvious draw.) 39...Nxd3 40 a6 and there is only one way to stop his pawn: 40...Nf4+ 41 Kxf2 Nd5 (41...Ne6 is equivalent.) 42 a7 Nc7 43 Ke3 and I cannot save my pawn, but I can stop his, so it is a draw: 43...Kxc6 44 a8Q (44 Kd4?? Nb5+) 44...Nxa8 45 Kd4= etc.

c) 38 Be4 c5! 39 a4 Nc3 40 a5 Nxe4 41 a6 Nd2 (41...f1Q+ comes to the same but maybe here he could blunder with a6-a7.) 42 Kxf2 Nc4 43 Ke2 Nb6.

d) 38 Bb1? may be met by 38...c5 (not the only move) 39 Kf1 (39 a4 Nc3 40 Bc2 Nxa4 41 Bxa4 Kxc6=) 39...c4. He cannot play Ke2 and so liquidation is inevitable soon.

e) 38 Ba6? is obviously not good as it undefends g6 and blocks the a-pawn and so gives me more time.

f) 38 Be2 is simplest, but Black secures the half point by 38...Nb2! 39 Kxf2 Kxc6 which is a tablebase draw. If White insists on playing on, then ...N-a4-b6 and then Black brings the king across. Also 38...Nc3 is good enough.

---

© 2012 Tim Harding. All Rights Reserved.

---

A PDF file of [this month's column](#), along with all previous columns, is available in the [ChessCafe.com Archives](#).

---

Comment on this month's column via our [Contact Page](#)! Pertinent responses will be posted below daily.

---

 [TOP OF PAGE](#)

 [HOME](#)

 [COLUMNS](#)

 [LINKS](#)

 [ARCHIVES](#)

 [ABOUT THE CHESS CAFE](#)

[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)  
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[ChessCafe Archives\]](#)  
[\[ChessCafe Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#)  
[\[Contact ChessCafe.com\]](#) [\[Advertising\]](#)

© 2012 BrainGamz, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
"ChessCafe.com®" is a registered trademark of BrainGamz, Inc.