



COLUMNISTS

Opening Lanes

Gary Lane



CHESS THEATRE

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Opening Lanes is based in large part on readers' questions. Do you have a question about a particular opening line? Baffled by a branch of the Benoni or Budapest? Submit your questions (with your full name and country of residence please) and perhaps Gary will reply in his next ChessCafe.com column...

[Yes, I have a question for Gary!](#)

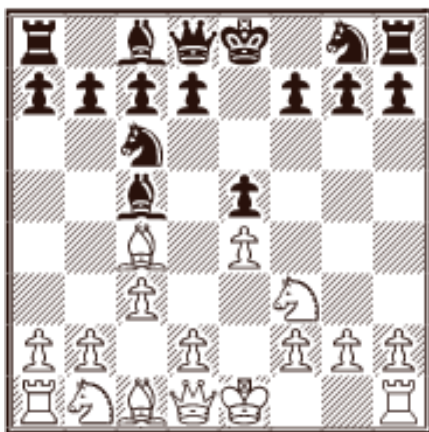
Stardust

It seems that everyone is looking for something new in the opening, but why not take lessons from the old masters? A little bit of study, maybe aided by computer software, can make the forgotten lines respectable again.

Natan Estivallet from **Brazil** e-mailed to say "I'm concerned with this line in the Giuoco Piano: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Nc3 Nxe4 8.0-0 Bxc3 9 d5 Ne5 (!). Black's ninth move is dissuading me from playing it with white. Karpov, Spassky and Lasker played Ne5 with success. In the line 9...Ne5 10 bxc3 Nxc4 11 Qd4 f5 12 Qxc4 d6 13.Nd4 0-0 14 f3 Nf6, White has lost a pawn and his attack seems to have vanished. I'm aware of the complications with 9...Bf6, but 9...Ne5 seems to be effective (and perhaps easier) for Black in games between average players. Is 10 Bb3 the best against 9...Ne5? Or should I try to play 7 Bd2 and avoid this line? Any advice will be of great help!"

I have always played 9...Bf6, probably because an old version of *Modern Chess Openings* recommended the move. Then again, 9...Ne5 has the benefit of being a relatively forgotten move that certainly looks promising:

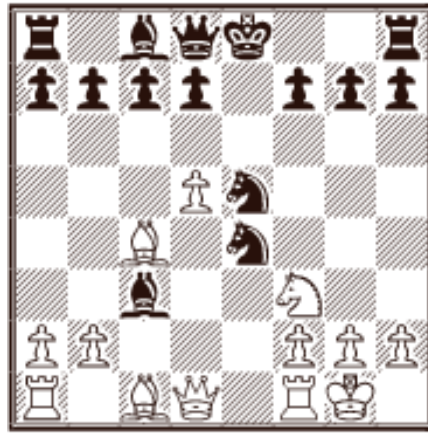
Pierre Geronim-Loek Van Wely Euro Blitz Championship, Ajaccio 2007
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3



4...Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ The retreat with 6...Bb6 allows White to use his central pawns to take control. 7 d5 Na5 8 Bd3 c5 to stop b2-b4 trapping the knight 9 d6 0-0 10 e5 Ng4 (or 10...Nd5 11 Bxh7+ Kxh7 12 Ng5+ Kg8 13 Qd3 g6 14 Qh3 is brilliant for White) 11 0-0 is wonderful for White, because Black's pieces lack harmony. 7 Nc3 7 Bd2 is examined in the next game. 7...Nxe4 Taking the pawn is the true test of the gambit. 8 0-0 Bxc3 9 d5 It looks odd, but this has been well known since 1898, when J.Moller suggested it as an attempt to revive the line. Instead, 9

bxc3 is fine for Black after 9...d5 and now: a) 10 Bb5 0-0 11 Qc2 Bf5 12 Bd3 Re8

with the superior chances, M.Zuriel-M.Sarquis, Coronel Suarez 2004. b) 10 Ba3 was popular over 100 years ago and appeared in the celebrated match Steintiz-Lasker 1896. Play might continue: 10...dxc4 11 Re1 f5! (this makes more sense than the old book move 11...Be6, which hands back the piece upon 12 Rxe4, when 12...Qd5 13 Qe2 0-0-0 offers equal chances) 12 Nd2 Kf7 13 Nxe4 fxe4 14 d5 Ne7 15 Rxe4 Ng6!, when it appears that White has no obvious way of denting Black's defensive posture. c) 10 Re1 0-0 11 Bd3 f5?! (11...Bf5! maintains Black's advantage) 12 c4 Be6 13 Nd2 Qf6 14 Ba3 Qxd4 15 Bxe4 fxe4 16 Bxf8 Rxf8 17 Qe2 dxc4 18 Nxe4 Bd5 (18...Nb4! aiming for the d3-square is good for Black) 19 Rad1! Qxe4 20 Qxe4 Bxe4 21 Rxe4 b5 22 Rd5 c3? (the simple 22...a6, to defend the b5-pawn, would keep the game going as a contest, when 23 a4 Rb8 is roughly equal) 23 Rc5 gave White a winning ending in J.Walker-A.Brusey, Teignmouth 1980. **9...Ne5!?**



This has the big plus of not being well known, so that White will probably have to think for himself. It must be a decent reply because Van Wely is an expert on the opening and would not play something dubious. 9...Bf6 is considered the main line, when 10 Re1 Ne7 11 Rxe4 is the alternative continuation. 11...d6 12 Bg5 Bxg5 13 Nxd6 0-0 (instead, 13...h6!? is favoured by the experts, but invites complications) 14 Nxh7 Kxh7 15 Qh5+ Kg8 16 Rh4 f5 17 Re1 Bd7? (I wonder what White had planned for the big improvement 17...Ng6!, when it seems that

White's attack fades away upon 18 Rh3 Rf6 19 Qh7+ Kf7 and White is a piece down) 18 Re6! White does his best to exploit Black's slip in defence by playing crushing chess 18...Qe8 (18...Bxe6 19 dxe6 and checkmate cannot be avoided) 19 Qh7+ Kf7 20 Rhh6 1-0, B.Veremiy-R.Boryshkevich, Evpatoria 2007. **10 bxc3** Mr. Estivallet suggests 10 Bb3, but it is well met by 10...0-0 with a clear advantage to Black. **10...Nxc4 11 Re1** White is keen to regain his piece and pins the knight. Also possible: 11 Qd4, as suggested by Mr. Estivallet, when play might continue: a) 11...0-0 12 Qxe4 Nd6 and now: a1) 13 Qd3 Qf6 14 Bg5 Qf5 15 Qd2 Ne4 16 Qc2 d6 17 c4?? (Yes, White has forgotten that the black queen is now protected) 17...Nxd6 18 Qxf5 0-1, R.Molina Munoz-K.Sundararajan, Dos Hermanas 2004. a2) 13 Qf4 Ne8!? (Black is a pawn up and wants to slowly unravel his pieces by preparing ...d7-d6) 14 d6!? Nxd6 15 Ba3 b6 16 Rad1 Ba6 17 Rfe1 Re8 18 Bxd6 cxd6 19 Rxe8+ Qxe8 20 Re1 (if 20 Qxd6, then 20...Bc4 favours Black) 20...Qf8 21 Qa4 Bb7 22 Qxd7 Bxf3 23 gxf3 Qc8 (Black is happy to head for the ending, because the white pawn structure is a mess and he remains a pawn down) 24 Re7 Qxd7 25 Rxd7 Kf8 26 Kf1 Rc8 27 Rxa7 Rxc3 28 Rb7 Rc6 with a winning ending, D.Leygue-G.Flear, Besancon 2003. b) 11...Ncd6!? 12 Qxg7 Qf6 13 Qxf6 Nxf6 14 Re1+ Nfe4 15 Ng5 f5 16 f3 (this is supposed to be good for White and is quoted in the excellent book from the 1970s *The Italian Game* by Harding and Botterill. However, computers have come up with an improvement) 16...h6! 17 Nh3 Kf7 18 fxe4 Nxe4 (Black is a pawn up in the ending and must be favourite to win) 19 Rf1 d6 20 g4? Rg8 21 c4 Rxd4+ 22 Kh1 Bd7 23 Be3 Re8 24 Rael Ng3+! 0-1, A.Vicente Montesinos-M.Fenollar Jorda, Spain 2004. c) 11...f5 (as recommended by the reader) 12 Qxc4 d6 13 Nd4 0-0 14 f3, when White does have some active play, because it is difficult for Black to develop smoothly. For example: c1) 14...Nc5 15 Ba3 b6 16 Bxc5 bxc5 16 Nc6 Qd7 17 Rfe1 Re8 18 Rab1 with a slight initiative. c2) 14...Nf6 15 Bg5 Bd7 16 Rfe1, when it is easier for White to manoeuvre the pieces, because the obvious 16...Rfe8 allows 17 Bxf6 Qxf6 (17...gxf6?! shatters the kingside pawns making them very weak) 18 Qxc7 with advantage. **11...Ncd6 12 Ng5**

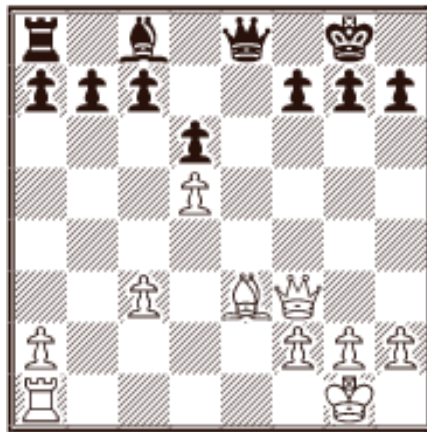


12...0-0 A safe response to allow



exchanges and then try to win the middlegame. It is curious that 12...f5 has not been tested at this point. A sample line runs 13 Nxe4 fxe4 14 Qh5+ g6 15 Qe5+ Kf7 16 Bg5 Qf8 17 Bf6 Rg8 18 c4 Nf5 and Black is hanging on, but White has some compensation for the material. **13 Nxe4 Nxe4 14 Rxe4 d6** After all the excitement in the opening things have settled down. Basically, Black has an extra pawn, but that is not the end of the story because White has active play. 15 Qf3 Re8 16 Rxe8+ I was surprised to find that line has been

played before, although 16 Bd2 did not help much. For instance, the game S.Nielsen-T.Bae, Copenhagen 2004, continued: 16...Rxe4 17 Qxe4 Bd7 18 Re1 Qf6 19 Qb4 b6 20 Qc4 Rc8 this is rather passive because it restricts the black rook to a dull defence (20...Qg6! looks better, when 21 Qxc7 is not much good upon 21...Bh3 22 g3 Qd3 and the weakness of the light-squares is a cause for concern) 21 Qa6 Qd8 22 a4, when Black is slightly better, but White on to win. **16...Qxe8 17 Be3**

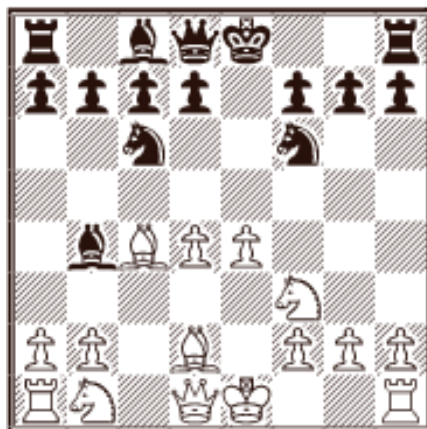


Geronimi is a pawn down against a formidable player, but one can always hope for an opposite-colored bishop ending if the queen and rook are exchanged. Still, you never save a game by resigning, so White tries to keep Black at bay. **17...f6 18 Re1 Bd7 19 Qg3 Qe5** At the first opportunity Black is eager to enter the ending, so he can exploit the extra pawn without having to worry about an attack. **20 Qxe5 fxe5 21 c4 b6** The advance of the white c-pawn is halted and now c4 is a target. **22 Bg5 h6 23 Bh4 g5 24 Bg3 Bf5 25 Re2?** Oops, a blunder that helps Black win swiftly. **25...**

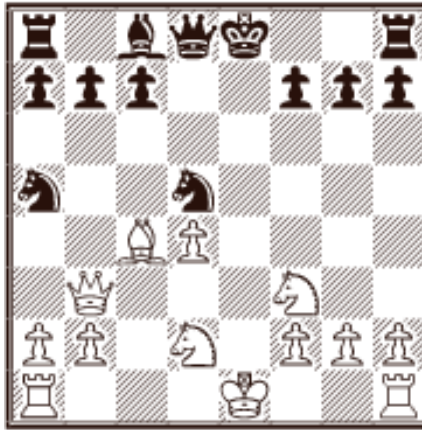
Bd3 26 Rd2 Bxc4 0-1

The idea of resorting to 7 Bd2 is understandable, because it has a reputation of giving White a slight edge. However, there is a problem with this line that has put it out of business at the top level. That is 10...Na5, which is a regular way for grandmasters to draw when in need of a rest.

Natacha Benmesbah-Sabine Fruteau French Women Championship, Chartres 2005
1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Nc6 3 Nf3 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 Bb4+ 7 Bd2

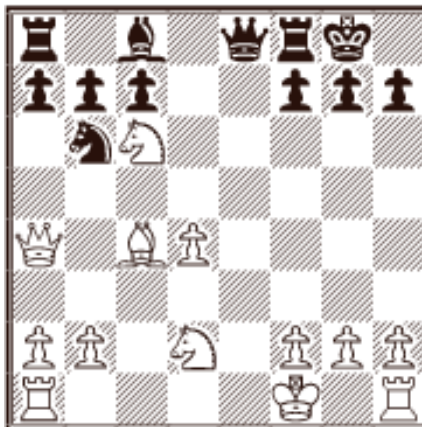


This move was originally suggested by Gioacchino Greco, which demonstrates that the old moves are still the best, as he died in 1634. Yes, that date is not a misprint. **7... Bxd2+ 8 Nbx d2 d5 9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Qb3** The only way to maintain a slight initiative. Instead, 10 0-0 0-0 11 Qb3 is different because after 11...Na5, there is no check on a5, when 12 Qd3 Nxc4 13 Nxc4 is fine for Black, who has a slight edge because his long-term goal is to undermine the isolated d-pawn. **10...Na5!?**



This is the big problem with the 7 Bd2-line, because Black is proposing a draw with this move. The first time I saw this move was in the game Miles-Korchnoi, Johannesburg 1979, where White decided he could not make reasonable progress and was to repeat the position a couple of times. The main alternative is 10...Nce7, which has been heavily analysed over the years. The conclusion seems to be that White has a slight plus, but Black should be able to hold the position. For example, the game R. Pujari-C.Divyasri, Pune 2007, continued 11 0-0 0-0 12 Rfe1 c6 13 Ne4 h6 14 h3

(perhaps 14 Ne5 should be considered) 14...Qb6 15 Nc5 Rd8 16 Rad1 Qxb3 17 Bxb3 b6 with equal chances and the game was soon drawn. **11 Qa4+ Nc6 12 Ne5** The computer tends to like this move because it takes advantage of a pin. However, nobody at the top level seems confident enough to give it a go and Black should have no problems. The meek continuation 12 Qb3 Na5 13 Qa4+ Nc6 is the usual way for people to agree a draw. **12...0-0 13 Nxc6 Qe8+!** This is the key move, which saves the position for Black by hanging on to the c-pawn. The point is that the knight on c6 cannot retreat because of the pin. **14 Kf1 Nb6**



15 Qb5 It is a sign of the times that this is all preparation. This is because Fruteau played the line some time ago, but I think in this case White is misguided to follow such a line. Just for the record: D.Jose Queralto-S.Fruteau, Monte Carlo 1996, continued: 15 Qb4 Qxc6 16 Be2 (or 16 Bb5 Qg6 17 Nf3 c6 18 Be2 Be6 is better for Black) 16...Be6 17 Qc5 Qd7 18 h3 Rad8 19 Nf3 Bd5 (19...f6 looks reasonable, because the white knight is deprived of the e5-square) 20 Ne5 Qf5 21 a4 Nxa4 22 Qxc7 Nb6 (22...Qf4 is great because 23 Rxa4 allows 23...Rc8 winning) 23 f3 Rc8

24 Qe7 Qf4 25 Qb4 Rfe8 26 Rd1 f6 27 Ng4 h5 28 Nf2 Rc2 29 Bd3 Rc1 30 Kg1 Rec8 with a big advantage. **15...bxc6 16 Qe5?!** Now that she has moved her king, it is understandable that Benmesbah is eager to exchange queens to thwart an attack. 16 Qc5 is the safe alternative, when 16...Nxc4 17 Qxc4 Be6 slightly favours Black because of the poor position of the white king. **16...Qxe5 17 dxe5**



17...Nxc4?! Fruteau misses a great chance to seize the advantage at this point. 17... Rd8! should be tried 18 Ke1 (18 Rd1? is revealed as a self-pin upon 18...Nxc4) 18... Rxd2 19 Bxf7+ Kxf7 20 Kxd2 Nc4+ 21 Kc3 Nxe5 and Black is on top. **18 Nxc4 Ba6 19 Rc1 Rfe8 20 f4 Rad8 21 g3 Rd4 22 b3 g5** 22...Rd2! is the way forward, in view of 23 a4 Rb2, when 24 Rc3 fails to the stunning 24...Rxb3! and White can resign. **23 fxg5 Rxe5 24 Kf2 Rxc5 25 Rcd1 Rgd5 26 Rxd4 Rxd4 27 Ke3 c5**



Black has a nagging initiative and eventually the long-term pressure makes

White suffer. **28 Nb2 Bb5 29 Rc1 Rd5 30 a4** 30 Nc4 is a safe choice and leaves the pawn structure alone. **30...Ba6 31 Rc2 Kf8 32 Nc4 Ke7 33 Nb2 Ke6 34 Nc4** It is a dangerous policy to do nothing in the ending by repeating moves. In this case Black has at least improved the position of her king. **34...Rd4 35 Na5 Kd5** The king protects the c5-pawn, which allows the black rook to go on the rampage by probing for weaknesses. **36 Rc3 Rb4 37 Rc1 Re4+ 38 Kf3 Be2+ 39 Kf2 Bg4 40 Rc2** Instead, 40 Nc4 Re2+ 41 Kg1 Bh3 is good for Black. **40...Bd1 41 Rc1 Be2 42 b4 c4 43 b5 Bd3 44 Nc6 Kc5 45 Nxa7** The knight is a long way from the action so the c-pawn can be advanced. **45...Re2+ 46 Kf3 Ra2 47 Nc6 Rxa4 48 Ne5 Bg6 0-1**

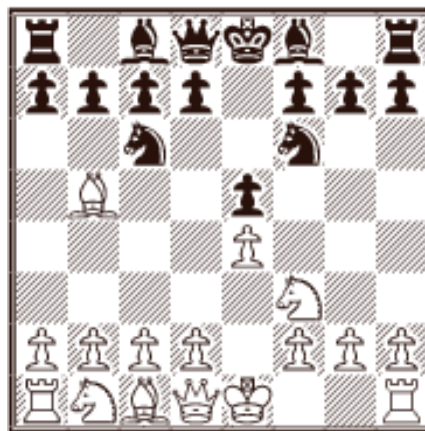
If you really like the Giuoco Piano, then you could try the Closed Variation that occurs upon 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 and now 5 d3. I have played it many times and wrote about it in my book [The Bishop's Opening Explained](#). Of course, there are plenty of other openings to choose from and I wish you luck.

Giachos Gerasimos from **Greece** asks an interesting question: “In modern chess practice the Berlin Defence of the Ruy Lopez scores the best statistics after 1 e4. The question is can White maintain a slight advantage from the opening? It is interesting to mention here that Kramnik stated that White can get a positional advantage, while Kasparov believes that this is mostly an unclear position. Since such a debate exists between top players, it leads me to believe that no one can be sure whether White can get an advantage or not. However, I’m really happy to keep an archive of ideas about the position that arises after: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4.0-0 Nxe4 5d4 Nd6 6 Bxc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 Nf5 8 Qxd8 Kxd8. So could you share your opinion with me?”

I think the Berlin is great for elite players who want to draw as Black. This means that I am of the opinion that it is tough for club players to defend in the same high-class fashion as grandmasters. Instead, Black ends up with a laboured, dour struggle that will only lead to a win if White gets carried away and does something daring. The following game is a recent example of how things can go terribly wrong for Black.

Ramachandran Ramesh-Bandyopadhyay Roktim Commonwealth Championship, New Dehli 2007

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6

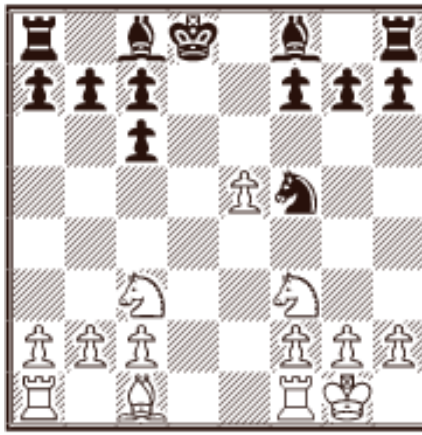


Nc3

This is the opening used by Kramnik against Kasparov in his World Championship match in London 2000. Basically, the grand plan was to lessen Kasparov’s famed attacking prowess by encouraging the exchange of queens at the first opportunity. The Berlin is considered to offer simplification and decent chances if White goes wrong. The variation was analysed at length in the 1950s by the Berliners Heinz Lehmann and Rudolf Teschner, thus ensuring that the old name “Berlin” has stuck. **4 0-0 Nxe4 5 d4 Nd6 6 Bxc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 Nf5 8 Qxd8+ Kxd8 9**



A key position in the Berlin Defence,



where Black has given up his castling rights and has a seemingly passive position. However, Black is hoping in the long-term to exploit his bishop-pair and undermine the advanced white e-pawn. By contrast White is relying on his space advantage to stifle the smooth development of Black's pieces and in some cases his four versus three pawn majority on the kingside will be enough to help establish a passed pawn. **9... h6** The h-pawn is advanced to allow ...Be6 without having to worry about Ng5. **10 h3 Bd7 11 b3** Another major way to develop

is 11 Bf4, when A.Shirov-Z.Almasi, Polanica Zdroj 2000, continued 11...b6 12 a4 a5 13 Rad1 Kc8 (13...Be7 is also possible, because 14 e6 fails to impress upon 14... fxe6 15 Ne5 Nd6 with roughly equal chances) 14 b3 Bb4 15 Ne4 Be6 16 c4 c5 17 g4 Ne7 18 Ne1 Bd7 19 Ng3 g5 20 Be3 Ng6 21 Nd3 Bc6 with roughly equal chances. **11...Kc8 12 Bb2 b6 13 Rad1 Be6?! This** seems to be a harmless way to activate the bishop, but any small positional slip in this line can be costly. The problem is that it encourages a white knight to take up residence on the d4-square with a view to exchanging on e6. 13...Ne7 is a worthy alternative, with the plan being to continue ...c6-c5, ...Bd7-c6 and Kb7. Now: a) 14 Nd4 This has been promoted by Shirov and toys with the idea of e5-e6, which has an echo in the main game: a1) 14...a5 15 e6! (the whole point of the line with Nd4) 15...fxe6 16 Rfe1 Nd5 17 Nxe6 Bb4 (17...Nxc3 is popular, but White should be fine 18 Bxc3 Bb4 19 Bxb4 axb4 20 Nxg7 Rxa2 21 Re7 Rd8 22 f4 Rxc2 23 f5 is better for White) 18 Nxd5! cxd5 (18...Bxe1? is a terrible mistake in view of 19 Ne7+ Kb7 20 Rxd7 winning) 19 Re3 Re8 20 Nf4! Rxe3 21 fxe3 Bc5 22 Kf2 g6 23 Nxd5 Bc6 (23...a4 backfires tactically, because after 24 b4!, then 24...Bd6 is natural to stop a white bishop exerting pressure against c7, but it allows 25 Nxb6+ with a clear advantage) 24 a4 Kb7 25 c4 (this position has been analysed in the chess press, so it is surprising that Black allows this to crop up 25...Re8 26 Bd4 Bd6 27 Ke2 with an excellent ending thanks to the extra pawn, L.Dominguez Perez-P.Eljanov, Foros 2007. a2) 14...c5 the argument is that now the knight on d4 has been edged away, then the b5- and d5-squares are available for the white knights: 15 Nde2 Bf5 16 Rd2 Kb7 17 g4 Bc8 18 Ng3 g6 19 Nce4 Bg7 20 f4 h5! (Black does well to fight for the initiative and goads White's pawns forward in the hope that he can later undermine them) 21 f5 gxf5 22 Nxf5 Nxf5 23 gxf5 Re8! 24 Rd5 Ka6 25 Rf4 Bh6 26 Nf6 Bxf4 27 Nxe8 Kb7 28 Ng7 Be3+ 29 Kh2 Bf4+ 30 Kg1 Be3+ 31 Kg2 Bh6 32 e6! gave White a promising position and he eventually won in A.Volokitin-N.Mitkov, Crete 2007. b) 14 Rfe1 This will likely be the fashion for a while, given that Adams is a top positional player and his games set the fashion in the openings 14...c5 15 Ne2 (or 15 Nd2 Be6 16 Nf1 Kb7 17 g4?! h5! leads to good play for Black) 15...Ng6 16 h4 Bg4 17 Nh2 Bxe2 18 Rxe2 Nxe4 19 Re4 Be7 (the main alternatives favour White: 19...Nf5? 20 Rf4 g6 21 g4 Ng7 22 Rxf7 is very strong; 19...Ng6 is well met by 20 e6 fxe6 21 Rxe6 Nf4 22 Re4 Nh5 23 Ng4 with the superior position thanks to his active pieces) 20 g3 Ng6 21 e6 f5 (or 21...fxe6 22 Rxe6 Bf6 23 Bxf6 gxf6 24 Rxf6 gives White the much better game) 22 Re3 Bf6 23 Bxf6 gxf6 24 Rf3 Rd8 25 Rxd8+ Kxd8 26 Rxf5 Ke7 27 Ng4 Rf8 28 Rh5 Kxe6 29 Rxh6 Ne7 30 Ne3 if you count the pawns it is equal, but White has an edge because it is easier for him to create a passed pawn on the kingside and he won after seventy-two moves, M. Adams-K.Georgiev, Kemer 2007. **14 g4 Ne7 15 Nd4 Bd7 16 Rfe1 c5?! Roktim** wants to shoo away the centralised knight. However, the theme of many of these positions is White angling for a way to play e5-e6 and he won't be disappointed. Instead, 16...Ng6 17 e6 fxe6 18 Nxe6 h5 gives Black some chances although White has better coordinated pieces. **17 e6!**



This is the star move that transforms the



game in favour of White. The point is that White is able to use his better development to infiltrate Black's position. **17...cxd4** After 17...fxe6 18 Nxe6 (the obvious threat is Nxf8 to remove the defender of the knight on e7) 18...Ng6 19 Nd5 c6 (19... Bd6 allows 20 Nxg7 with the advantage) 20 Nxf8 Rxf8 21 Ne7+ Nxe7 22 Rxe7, the rook on the seventh rank is a formidable presence and White is on course for victory. **18 exd7+ Kxd7 19 Rxd4+ Kc6 20 Red1** White introduces the option of Rd7 or even Rc4+, followed by planting a rook

on the seventh rank. **20...f6** Black wants to avoid his f-pawn being a target when a rook reaches d7; a sign that things have gone wrong. Or 20...Ng6 21 Rc4+ Bc5 (21...Kb7 allows 22 Rd7 and the white rooks dominate the position) 22 Ne4 with the better position. **21 Ba3 b5** Black is understandably wary of the threat to play Rc4+ and wants to cut out the option. Perhaps 21...Ng6 has the merit of trying to get his pieces into play, although admittedly White is on top upon 22 Bxf8 Nxf8 to cover the d7-square 23 Re4!, when White can play Re7 at his leisure with a strong initiative. **22 Re4** Now that he has been denied the c4-square, White takes aim at the knight on e7, while allowing him the luxury of contemplating a check on e6. Black's plight can be traced back to allowing e5-e6, but the lack of development in this line is always going to pose Black problems unless he is a master of defence. **22...Ng6 23 Re6+ Kb7 24 Bxf8 Rxf8 25 Rd7!** An accurate continuation that gives Black no hint of counterplay. Instead, 25 Nxb5 wins a pawn immediately, but 25...Rd8! 26 Ree1 Rxd1 27 Rxd1 Nf4 28 Kh2 h5 gives Black some play for the pawn. **25...Rhg8 26 Nxb5** The difference compared to the note to White's twenty-fifth move is that now the c7-pawn is under attack, forcing Black to respond defensively. **26...Rc8 27 Rf7 Nf4 28 Nd6+ 28 Ree7** is simple and good. **28...Kb8 29 Nxc8 Nxe6 30 Ne7 Re8** Maybe 30...Ng5 31 Nxg8 Nxf7 would extend the game, but White should emerge as the winner in the long-term. **31 Kf1 Kb7 32 Nf5 Ng5 33 Nd6+ 1-0** After 33...Kc6 34 Nxe8 Nxf7 35 Nxg7, the position is truly hopeless for Black, who is two pawns down.

Finally, **Paul Lowry** from the **USA** e-mailed the following question "I recently played this variation of the Philidor Defense in an online game. 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3 f5?!. Is 3...f5 playable? Are there examples of it?"

At first glance 3...f5 does seem a sharp response, but if White comes up with 4 d4 you have been lured into a well known position.

Richard Borgen-Timothy Taylor Western Pacific Open, Burbank 2004

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3 f5 I think it looks aggressive and great stuff for Blitz on the Internet. However, with a bit more time your opponent will realise that he can trick you into a well known book line. **4 d4!**



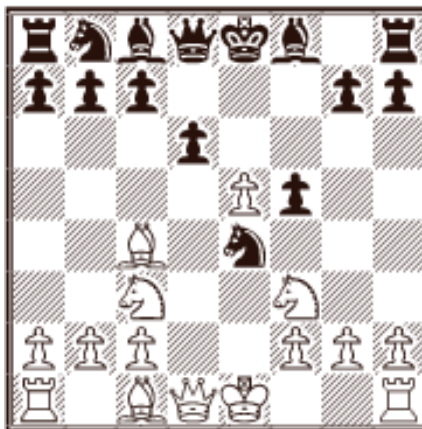
This transposes to the Mestel Variation in the Philidor Defence named after the English grandmaster. It is known to be a sharp line, but recently the practical examples have been in White's favour. **4... Nf6** Also possible: a) 4...exd4 5 Nxd4 (maybe 5 Qxd4 also merits serious attention, because it increases White's lead in development, and 5...Nc6 can be answered by 6 Bb5) 5...fxe4 and now: a1)



6 Nxe4 Nf6 7 Nxf6+ Qxf6 8 Bc4 Nc6 9 Nxc6 (or 9 Nb5 Qe7+ 10 Be3 a6 11 Nc3 looks great for White) 9...bxc6 10 0-0 d5 11 Re1+ Be7 12 Bb3?! (12 Qh5+ g6 allows

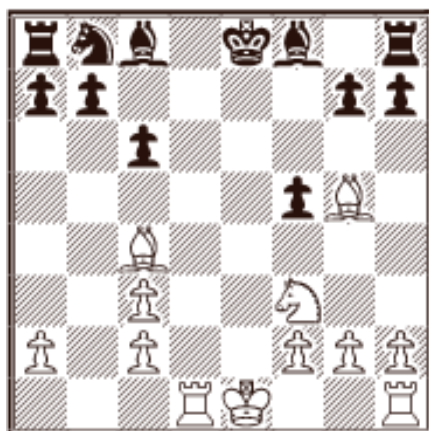
13 Bg5! and 12...Qf7 13 Qxf7+ Kxf7 14 Bb3 with the slightly better chances) 12... 0-0 (Black has survived the opening and, although the position is roughly equal, he soon goes on the offensive) 13 f3 Bd6! (a classic predict-a-move situation. Basically, Black anticipates what his opponent is about to do next and then finds a move that conceals a deadly trap if he just blindly carries on with his plan) 14 Bxd5 + cxd5 15 Qxd5+ Kh8 16 Qxa8 Bxh2+! (this is the move that White missed when embarking on his plan to capture on d5) 17 Kxh2 (of course 17 Kf1 allows Ba6+ winning) 17...Qh4+ 18 Kg1 Qxe1+ 19 Kh2 Re8! 0-1, J.Rguez-D.Ruiz, Correspondence 1993. a2) 6 Bc4 Nf6 7 Bg5 Be7 8 0-0 Bg4 (of course Black cannot castle kingside because of the bishop on c4, so he must look elsewhere for activity) 9 f3 (9 Qe1 looks odd, but is good news because it wins a pawn, in view of 9...d5 being hopeless: 10 Bxf6! Bxf6 11 Nxd5 Bxd4 12 Qxe4+ with a big advantage) 9... exf3 10 gxf3 Bh3 11 Re1 c6 12 Be6! (a clever idea, but with so much development White is always going to have more attacking options) 12...Bxe6 13 Nxe6 Qa5 14 Nxe7+ Kf7 15 Rxe7+! Kxe7 16 Ne4 Kf7 17 Qxd6 Nxe4 18 Qe6+ 1-0, V.Gomez Jordan-L.Alonso Arteaga, Mexico City 2006. b) 4...Nc6 5 Bb5 (5 dxe5 dxe5 6 Qxd8 + Kxd8 7 Bg5+ also looks good) 5...Nge7 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 8 Ng5 Nd4?? (this threatens to win a rook by taking on c2, but Black missed something big) 9 Nf7 checkmate 1-0, S.Simov-A.Aleksandrov, Pernik 2003. c) 4...fxe4 5 Nxe4 d5 6 Neg5 (6 Ng3 e4 7 Ne5 Nf6 8 f3 with a clear advantage to White) 6...h6? (it might look obvious to try to kick the white knight away, but it allows White to win in style) (or 6...e4 7 Ne5 Nh6 8 Nxh7! Be6 9 Bxh6 Rxh7 10 Qh5+ Ke7 11 Qg5+ Ke8 12 Qg6+ Ke7 13 Bg5+ 1-0, A.Karklins-G.Krauss, Los Angeles 2003) 7 Nf7 Kxf7 8 Nxe5+ Ke7 9 Bd3 (the chase for the black king continues) 9...Qe8 10 0-0 Be6 11 Re1 Nc6 12 Ng6+ Kd7 13 Nf4 Bd6 14 Nxe6 Qf7 15 Qg4 1-0, M.Pavlovic-D.Van Dooren, Cappelle la Grande 2006.

5 dxe5 Nxe4 6 Bc4

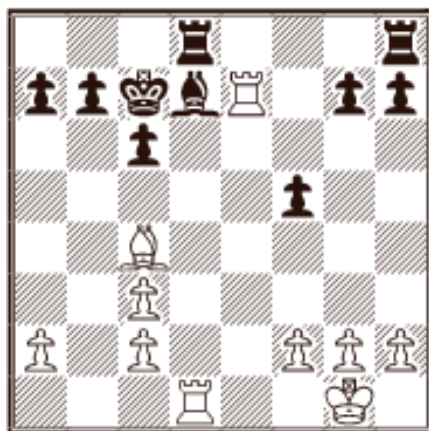


This has been tried before and it is logical enough to develop another piece. White has also tried 6 Nxe4 fxe4 7 Ng5, when play might proceed: a) 7...Bf5? in this sort of position Black tends to be forever one move from disaster 8 Qd5! Qd7 9 Qxb7 1-0, E.Sergeant-F.Senneck, Nottingham 1946. b) 7...d5 8 e6 Bc5 9 Nxe4 Be7 (9... dxe4 10 Qh5+ g6 11 Qxc5 gives White a big advantage) 10 Ng5 (I prefer 10 Qh5+!, when 10...g6 11 Qe5 looks excellent for White) 10...Qd6 11 Qf3 (or 11 Bd3!? Bxg5 12 Qh5+ g6 13 Qxg5 Qxe6+ 14 Be3 d4 15 Bc4! Qxc4 16 Qe5+ is better for White)

11...Rf8? (11...Bxe6 is a better idea, when 12 Be2 favours White) 12 Qh5+ g6 13 Qxh7 Qe5+ 14 Be2 Bb4+ 15 Kf1 Qf5 16 Nf3 Qxc2 17 Bh6 Qxb2 18 Qxg6+ Kd8 19 Rb1 1-0, F.Mueller-J.Lau, Porz 1993. **6...c6** Taylor is a strong player, but even he can do little to resurrect this poor position. Instead, 6...dxe5 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 8 Nxe4 fxe4 9 Nxe5 is awful for Black. **7 exd6 Nxc3 8 bxc3 Qxd6 9 Bg5 Qxd1+ 10 Rxd1**



If you look in the books they always go about the need to develop quickly in the opening and this game is a model example of how Black can go wrong. The queens might have been exchanged, but the white attack continues and their number one target is the black king. **10...Nd7 11 0-0 Be7 12 Bxe7 Kxe7 13 Rfe1+ Kd8 14 Ne5** The pin on the d-file is decisive. **Kc7 15 Nxd7 Bxd7 16 Re7 Rad8**



17 g3 White has a fantastic position and feels confident enough to stop any bank rank checkmate threats. However, surely **17 Be6!** would prompt resignation in view of **17...Rhe8 18 Rxd7+ Rxd7 19 Rxd7+ Kb6 20 Bc4** (the move that White missed?) **20...Re1+ 21 Bf1** winning comfortably. **17...Kc8 18 Rxd7 Rxd7 19 Be6** This pretty little combination picks up a pawn and seals Black's fate. **19...Rhd8 20 Bxf5 Kc7 21 Rxd7+ Rxd7 22 Bxd7 Kxd7 23 f4** White is a pawn up and will create a passed pawn on the kingside. When this distracts the black king, the white king will be able

to mop up the black queenside pawns. **23...Kd6 24 Kf2 Kd5 25 Ke3 Kc4 26 g4 Kxc3** This is too slow, but Black is in a hopeless position. **27 f5 Kc4 28 Ke4!** Borgen wisely stops the black king from being able to retreat to the kingside. **28...h6 29 h4 Kc5 30 Ke5 b5 31 g5 hxg5 32 hxg5 1-0**

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