



THE MODERN RÉTI

AN ANTI-SLAV REPERTOIRE

ALEXANDER DELCHEV

Chess Stars

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Current Theory and Practice Series

The Modern Réti. An Anti-Slav Repertoire

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Foreword

In 2010, ex-world champion Antoaneta Stefanova invited me to assist her in preparing for the forthcoming FIDE Gran Prix series of tournaments. My concrete task looked relatively easy to me – I had to improve her “service”, that is, the effectiveness of her play with White.

Without sufficient familiarity with top level women’s chess and, more importantly, with Antoaneta’s playing style and psychology, I rushed to acquaint her with the latest opening developments in the most popular lines. My analyses were detailed and promised a solid edge in various topical variations.

However, this approach failed altogether. We were ruthlessly punished twice and she was generally lacking in confidence in the most principled openings. Although her result was not a catastrophe (3-4th place), for the next tournament we decided to make a U-turn and embrace another approach. This time, we would be aiming to throw the opponents out of their home preparation and made them use their own brains in unfamiliar positions. We switched from move-by-move memorisation to plan-oriented thinking. This tactic proved to be

especially unpleasant for the Chinese girls, who were deprived of their opening preparation and had to fight on our ground. The result was excellent – a victory in the last game would have brought first prize.

Stefanova–Hou Yifan FIDE GP Ulaanbaatar 2010

1. ♖f3 ♜f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4. ♘g2
♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3 b6 7. ♘b2 c5
8.e3 ♘b7 9. ♜c3 ♜c6 10.cxd5 ♜xd5
11. ♜xd5 ♜xd5 12.d4 ♜a5 13. ♜h4
(13.dxc5!±, Part 8) 13... ♜d8 14.dxc5
♙xh4 15.gxh4 ♜xh4 16. ♘xb7 ♜xb7
17.c6 ♜c5 18. ♜d4 ♜h6 19. ♙ad1 ♙ac8
20.b4 ♜a4 21. ♙a1 e5 22. ♜xe5 ♜g6+
23. ♜h1 ♜xc6+ 24.f3 f6 25. ♜g3 ♙f7
26. ♙g1 ♜c3 27. ♙d2 ♜c7



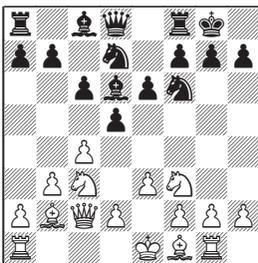
28. ♜g2 (28. ♜g4+-) 28...
♜b5 29.e4 (29. ♙xf6!+-) 29... ♜a3
30. ♜g4 ♜c4 31. ♙d3 ♜e5 32. ♙xe5

fxe5 33.♖g1 ♜cf8 34.♗d7 ♚c6
 35.♙xf7 ♜xf7 36.♗d8+ ♜f8 37.♙xf8+
 ♜xf8 38.♞f5+ and a draw was
 signed 20 moves later.

The Chinese super-GM who eventually won the tournament and the Grand Prix and went on to become a World Champion, was visibly nervous during the opening. She had to find a series of accurate moves over the board, spent a lot of effort and, not surprisingly, committed some serious mistakes in the middlegame, being short of time. One final blow on move 28 or 29, and Stefanova would have won the tournament.

This experience has convinced me that in the computer era one might achieve better practical results with a flexible opening strategy, based on understanding of the middlegames plans.

One year later I have decided to present my analyses to the reader. Many of them deal with positions which are blank spots in opening theory. In my opinion, the most interesting section is about the bayonet attack, where Slav fans face a head-on assault on their king after 1.♖f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♖f6 4.♗c3 e6 5.♚c2 ♖bd7 6.b3 ♗d6 7.♗b2 0-0 8.♙g1



Instead of the usual struggle for gradual equalisation in the Classical Slav, Black has to solve urgent, very concrete problems – how to avoid a debacle in the next 10-15 moves. Don't worry though, for less blood-thirsty players (of which I am one!), I also cover the set-up with 8.♗e2. This leads us to the question:

For whom is this book written?

Club players have probably noticed that their opponents as a rule are well prepared against the central openings 1.e4/1.d4. If you are disappointed with your results, or just tired of endlessly studying the latest analyses in the most explored variations, you'll find here a viable repertoire versus 1...d5. You might also use my suggestions as surprise weapons.

Note, however, that my work has nothing in common with the SOS-type articles. It was meant for a top-level professional and this repertoire is designed to serve for many years. It is based on complex positions without early pawn clashes in the centre. This shifts the focus towards middlegame plans and reduces the impact of home-brewed novelties. At the same time, it is no less ambitious than the Sicilian, or the Grünfeld, which were the subject of my previous books. Most of the material is fresh and is not covered anywhere else.

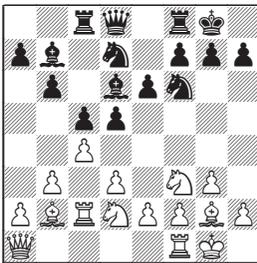
Alexander Delchev
 February 2012

Introduction

In 1923 Richard Réti introduced an amazing new set-up:

Réti–Fischer Vienna 1923

1.♠f3 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♙g2
c6 5.b3 ♗bd7 6.♘b2 ♙e7 7.0-0 0-0
8.d3 b6 9.♗bd2 ♘b7 10.♞c1 ♞c8
11.♞c2 c5 12.♚a1 ♙d6



13.cxd5 exd5 14.♗h4 ♞e8
15.♗f5 ♙f8 16.♗c4 ♚c7 17.♗ce3
♚b8 18.♙xf6 ♗xf6 19.♗h6+ gxh6
20.♚xf6, with a big advantage.

Réti was a universal player who had been successfully opening with both 1.d4 and 1.e4, but in this game he placed his faith in a flank strategy. After the double fianchetto, he continued his attack with pieces to

achieve a winning position in only 19 moves. At this stage he had no pawns beyond the third rank!

This strategy brought him a notable success in that year. He beat Rubinstein and Tartakower, but his biggest triumph was yet to come. In the New York super-tournament of 1924, Réti used his system to crush the reigning World Champion Capablanca (his first loss in 8 years!), the ex-Champion Lasker and the future Champion Alekhine. After that, no one would dispute the name of the new-born opening system.

Réti was the first to notice that the mainstream openings were running short of fresh ideas. Lasker and Capablanca also thought that chess would suffer a “draw death”, but they were too strong to worry about that. Réti was the thinker who pushed forward chess understanding.

To be sure, his ideas were swiftly put under the microscope. Black has since discovered some solid set-ups which has taken the sting out of his system to some extent. However, White has been struggling

Introduction

lately to achieve even the slightest advantage in the Slav/Meran and the Queen's Gambit. These openings have been explored in detail up to move 30. This has brought about the now frequent phenomenon of some grandmasters' games consisting entirely of home preparation. The players sit behind the board and finish the game without having made a single move of their own. This approach requires most of all a photographic memory. 90% of the time for preparation goes into opening analysis and tracking the latest trends in the theory. Many youngsters are willing to pay the price in their pursuit of quick results. The flip-side is that the flood of information has made the latest novelties available to all. Nowadays even a very weak opponent might catch you unawares and crush you without a fight. That's why many good players begin to revise their approach. They seek flexibility and surprise. That accounts for the growing popularity of flank openings as the English and the Réti. Frankly, I believe that it will be more and more difficult and unrewarding to play the most principled openings.

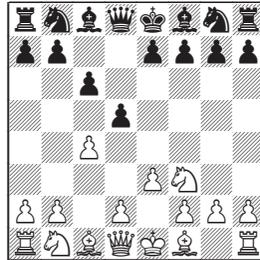
The modern Réti has significantly evolved in the last few years. It has transformed into an English-Réti hybrid which is often used as a tricky move order aimed at sidestepping certain systems. Instead of employing a double fianchetto versus any and every black set-up,

White often transposes to other openings. For instance: 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 – Anti-Nimzo, or 1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 – Anti-Grünfeld.

In this book I consider only the pure Réti schemes which arise after 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4. Note that Sicilian fans might prefer 1.c4 and turn to 2.♘f3 in the event of 1...e6 or 1...c6. Thus they would avoid 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4, which is by far the sharpest Black's response.

The main section of my book is the Anti-Slav set-up:

1. ♘f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3!.



It borrows from Réti the idea of delaying d2-d4. White does not rule out this move permanently, he merely waits for the best moment for it. In my opinion, this approach has no drawbacks. The pluses are obvious:

We avoid the Slav because our move order discourages an early ...♙g4 or ...♙f5 owing to the possibility of ♖b3.

We avoid the main lines of the Chebanenko System.

Introduction

We rule out the Noteboom and other “triangle” variations.

We can always transpose to some mainline Meran, but we should do so only rarely, when the resulting position is known to be in White’s favour. My repertoire hardly requires any knowledge of the Meran. I examine instead a kingside pawn storm with $\text{g}1$ and $\text{g}4$, and, as an alternative, quiet development with $\text{e}2$ and kingside castling. In both plans, the delay in playing $\text{d}4$ enables dangerous tactical blows, based on the latent power of the $\text{b}2$ -bishop. In the latter set-up, White commonly controls the centre with $\text{f}2$ - $\text{f}4$, leaving the long dark diagonal open.

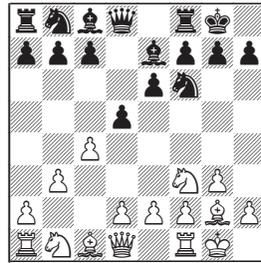
The delay in playing $\text{d}4$ is also very useful versus the Queen’s Gambit Accepted: $1.\text{d}1\text{f}3 \text{ d}5 \text{ 2.c}4 \text{ dxc}4 \text{ 3.e}3! \text{ f}6 \text{ 4.gxc}4 \text{ e}6 \text{ 5.0-0 a}6 \text{ 6.w}2! \text{ c}5 \text{ 7.d}1!$



We could have transposed to the QGA with $7.\text{d}4$, having sidestepped the Romanishin Variation with $\dots\text{g}4$, but the rook move contains more venom. The main point is that it keeps open the option of $\text{d}2$ - $\text{d}3!$,

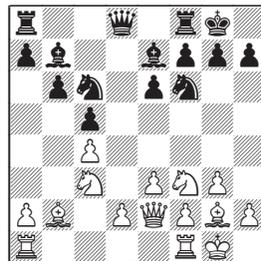
which will be good if Black advances his b -pawn to $\text{b}4$.

My proposed repertoire would have been vulnerable to move order tricks had not I devoted two sections to $1.\text{d}1\text{f}3 \text{ d}5 \text{ 2.c}4 \text{ e}6$. Now $3.\text{d}4 \text{ c}6$ would have been awkward, so I consider $3.\text{g}3$, with the main branches $3\dots\text{dxc}4 \text{ 4.w}a4+!$ and $3\dots\text{f}6 \text{ 4.g}2 \text{ e}7 \text{ 5.0-0 0-0 6.b}3!?$



I’m not against the Catalan, but it has been heavily explored lately and the character of the game is more suitable for Kramnik than for a club player.

In the diagram position Black can choose to keep the tension in the centre, when we should switch to $\text{d}4$, or he can take on $\text{c}4$, e.g. $6\dots\text{c}5 \text{ 7.g}2 \text{ c}6 \text{ 8.e}3 \text{ b}6 \text{ 9.d}c3 \text{ dxc}4 \text{ 10.bxc}4 \text{ g}b7 \text{ 11.w}e2$



Introduction

This variation is still inadequately covered in opening books. Mihail Marin advocates in his *The English Opening, volume 2* a plan with d2-d4, but it is ineffective, for many reasons.

I investigate the classic plan of a kingside pawn storm with f2-f4/g2-g4, also keeping h2-h4-h5-h6 in mind. It leads to strategically unbalanced positions without forcing variations, where the cost of every move is higher for Black because his king is in danger.

Of course, I also examine the reversed Benoni set-up 1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 d4. This part is slightly out of step with the rest of the book. I consider three different options for White.

The emphasis, however, is on the extremely sharp gambit 3.b4 f6 4.e3 e5 5.c5 a5 6.♗b5+!? c6 7.♗c4.

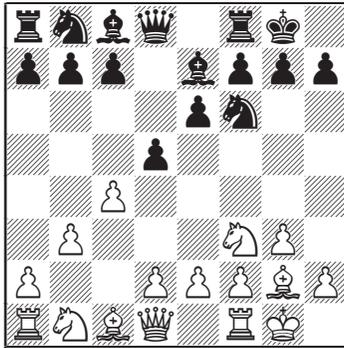
I also analyse in detail 3.e3 ♘c6! 4.b4. I'm afraid that general considerations and plans would be useless here. White aims to open up the centre at any cost and tactics should prevail over strategy.

Finally, I should like to stress that most of the book is based on my own original analyses. I have found my sources to be mostly unsatisfactory for the aims of this book, so I had to develop my own theory in many lines. You'll find very few overlaps with other publications. That should give you an edge over your opponents.

Part 8

Anti-Queen's Gambit II

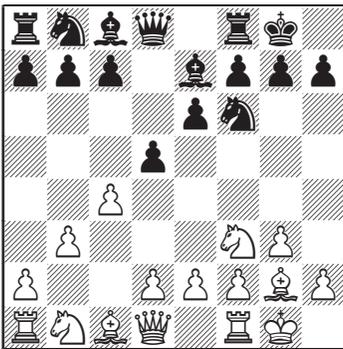
1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 e6 3. g3 Nf6 4. Bg2 Qe7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. b3



Part 8

Main Ideas

1.♖f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2
♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3



I had a very difficult choice to make between the Catalan with 6.d4 and the Réti-style 6.b3. In practice, players' preferences are divided almost equally between the two options. In my opinion, Black is very close to equality in the Catalan, with accurate play. The focus in this opening is on the endgame so one needs good technique and subtle positional understanding.

Eventually, I chose to advocate 6.b3. It is more flexible and allows different move orders. At the same time, the strategic ideas are clear and easy to play even by beginners.

A repertoire with 6.b3 can also be a bonus against other popular openings. Here are two examples:

1.♖f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2
♗b7 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.b3 0-0 7.♗b2 c5
8.e3 d5 9.♘c3;

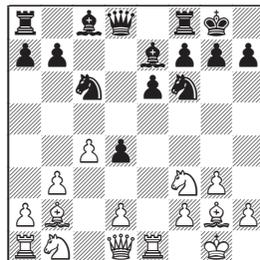
1.♖f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2
♗b7 5.0-0 e6 6.b3 ♗e7 7.♗b2 0-0
8.e3 d5 9.♘c3.

You see that this set-up could be used to avoid the Hedgehog and the main lines of the Queen's Indian.

Black has two main approaches against 6.b3. One of them is to define the pawn structure by taking on c4 – set-up A. The other one is to maintain the tension in the centre and leave White to exchange on d5. I'll consider it as set-up B. In both cases Black fianchettoes his light-squared bishop.

Much less often Black chooses the reversed Modern Benoni:

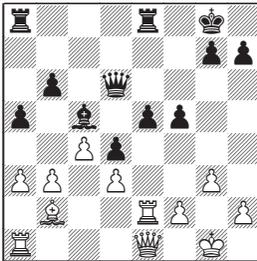
6...c5 7. ♗b2 ♘c6 8.e3 d4 9.exd4
cxd4 10.♗e1!



1.♭f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

White should not rely on the fact that he has one or two extra tempos compared to the Modern Benoni. He has less space in the centre. If Black consolidates and carries on ...e6-e5, the ♙b2 may turn into a really ugly piece. Look at the game Obukhov-Kolomensky, Orsk 2000:

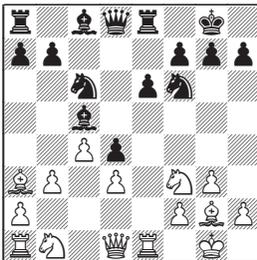
10...♞e8 11.a3?! a5 12.d3 ♙c5 13.♘e5 ♘xe5 14.♞xe5 ♚d6! 15.♞e1 ♙d7 16.♞e2 e5 17.♘d2 ♙f5 18.♘e4 ♘xe4 19.♙xe4 ♙xe4 20.♞xe4 f5 21.♞e2 b6



This is the worst positional scenario into which White could be entrapped. It took him only 20 opening moves to get into a murky cramped position. And he has not committed any apparent mistake!

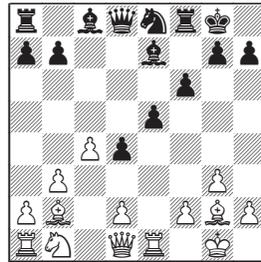
The moral of this example is that White should get rid of his restricted bishop at the first opportunity:

10...♞e8 11.d3 ♙c5 12.♙a3!



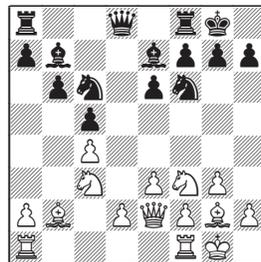
I believe that only this plan leaves White in the battle for the opening advantage. See **game 15 Sherbakov-Grigoriants**, Moscow 1999 for more details.

It is also a good idea to trade a pair of knights. This is especially true when ...e5 looms as after 10...f6. Then best is 11.♘e5! ♘xe5 12.♞xe5 f6 13.♞e1 e5



Again: 14.♙a3!. Then we quickly roll our queenside pawns, starting with c4-c5.

A. 6...c5 7.♙b2 ♘c6 8.e3 b6 9.♘c3 dxc4 10.bxc4 ♙b7 11.♞e2



This variation is still inadequately covered in opening books. It is true that Mihail Marin has spent tons of ink on it in his *The English Opening, Volume 2*, but in

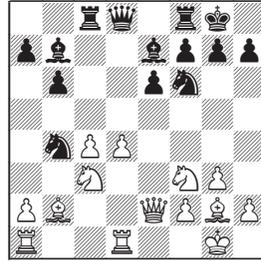
fact his work has hardly advanced theory any further. We'll see in the "Step by Step" chapter that the plan he advocates in the main line does not work.

Marin bases his repertoire on the idea of playing ♞fd1 followed by d2-d4 against any Black's set-up. However, I see at least four variations where this plan does not give any advantage. Thus the question how to play this position as White remains open.

I will investigate the old classic plan of a kingside pawn storm with f2-f4/g2-g4 , having also h2-h4-h5-h6 in mind. It leads to strategically unbalanced positions without forced variations, where the cost of every move is higher for Black because his king is in danger.

Black has tried nearly all legal moves in the diagram position. His only real counterplay is based on the breakthrough $\dots\text{b6-b5}$ (with, or without the preparatory $\dots\text{a6}$). Thus the most consistent answer should be $11\dots\text{a6}$. Amazingly, this continuation is relatively rare. More often Black chooses developing moves. Two of them – $11\dots\text{♜b4}$ and $11\dots\text{♞d7}$, allow a simple and straightforward approach from White. He does play d4 , followed by d4-d5 (if possible!) and takes over the initiative:

a) $11\dots\text{♜b4}$ $12.\text{d4 cxd4}$ $13.\text{exd4 ♞c8}$ $14.\text{♞fd1}$

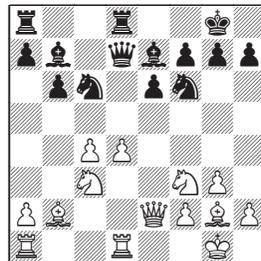


$14\dots\text{♞e8}$ $15.\text{a3}$ ♜c6 $16.\text{d5}!?$ exd5 $17.\text{♜xd5}$ ♜xd5 , A.Petrosian-G. Kuzmin, Baku 1977. Here, $18.\text{♞xd5!}$ ♞c7 $19.\text{♞e1}$ would have bound Black up and down.

b) $11\dots\text{♞d7}$ $12.\text{♞fd1!}$ ♞fd8!

$12\dots\text{♞ad8}$ is bad due to $13.\text{d4 cxd4}$ $14.\text{exd4}$ ♜a5 $15.\text{♜e5}$ ♞c8 $16.\text{d5}$

$13.\text{d4 cxd4}$ $14.\text{exd4}$



As a rule, White is slightly better with hanging pawns if his knights are active, as in the diagram position, where d4-d5 is always on the agenda. Shift the knight from c3 to d2 with the manoeuvre ♜c3-b1-d2 (if the c4 -pawn required extra protection), and the game would be balanced if not even more pleasant for Black.

1. ♖f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♗f6 4. ♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

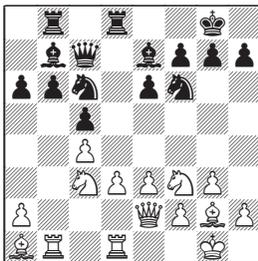
Unfortunately, the early d2-d4 hardly brings White an edge after 11...a6, 11...♞c8 or 11...♞c7. Instead, White has another plan which is well tested, but it is still hiding a lot of fine points. He remains passive in the centre and launches a pawn storm on the kingside with the help of the f- and g- (or g- and h-) pawns. This set-up has a slower version with ♞ab1+♞fd1, and a sharper variant with ♞ad1 (or ♞ab1)+♞f1. The former is universal and it works against most Black's defences. The latter is more risky, but it is tactically justified in the event of passive inaccurate play from the opponent.

Note that engine's evaluations may be misleading!

White's attack usually develops slowly and decisive collisions happen after 15 or more moves of redeployment and manoeuvring. Thus a depth of 22-25 half-moves is typically insufficient for the best engines to assess correctly the full potential of White's assault.

Let us now investigate:

1. 11...a6 12.♞fd1!? ♞c7
13.♞ab1! ♞ab8 14.♙a1 ♞fd8 15.d3



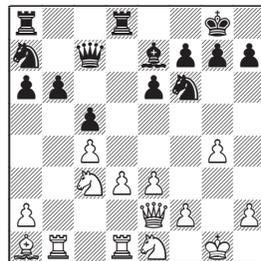
The first stage of our plan is complete. We have firm control of b5, eventually we can reinforce it with a2-a4. Any troubles along the d-file are also ruled out for nearest future. In short, White has won time for regrouping and launching the pawn storm on the flank. His next step will be ♗e1, followed up by f2-f4 or g2-g4.

Black's task is to wait for us to loosen the grip and counterattack with ...b6-b5 or even ...f7-f5. If he rushed on the 14th or 15th move to prepare ...b6-b5 with ...♗a7, then d4! would have taken the initiative. So he makes another useful move:

15...♙a8 16.♗e1 and only now 16...♗a7

The continuation of the waiting strategy with 16...♗e8 17.f4 is considered in **game 19 Zaichik-Tiviakov**, Moscow 1994.

17.♙xa8 ♞xa8 18.g4!



White's design is to push g4-g5, ♞g4, ♗e4, h2-h4-h5-h6.

Note that White's set-up is possible against practically any move order of Black.

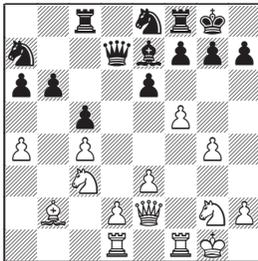
2. 11...♖c8?!

This move is a pure waste of time. It does not prepare ...b6-b5 so White can ignore this threat and opt for a more aggressive set-up than in the previous line:

12.♖ad1!?

Leaving the other rook on f1. It will enhance the effect of f2-f4-f5 and the rook lift ♖f1-f3-h3 is also a valuable attacking resource. White often begins with 12.♗e1, but the text is more accurate. In this set-up, the best stand of Black's queen is d7 from where it is eyeing all four critical squares: b5, f5, d3 and d2. However, 12.♖ad1 ♗d7 would be dubious due to 13.d4 cxd4 14.exd4 ♗b4 15.d5 ♗a5 16.♗e5±.

An example of White's further play is the following variation: 12... ♗c7 13.♗e1 a6 14.f4 ♗a7 15.a4 ♗xg2 16.♗xg2 ♗d7 17.g4 ♗e8 18.f5



You should also see **game 17 Kharlov-Kosyrev**, Samara 20.06.2000 for 12...♗a5 13.♗e1.

Finally, **11...♗c7** is a particular

case. Play may transpose to line 1 after 12.♖fd1, or take a sharper course following 12.♗e1. In the latter case, White plays similarly to line 2, but he is a tempo down. His attack is still dangerous, though.

I was often hesitant during my analyses how to recapture on g2 when Black exchanges the bishops himself. Perhaps there is no general recipe, but I suggest to take by knight – ♗xg2, when our rook is on f1. We may send it later to f4-h5. In the set-up with ♖fd1, our attack will often feature g4-g5 instead of f4-f5. Then we'll need our knight on another route – f3-e5-g4(f7)-f6/h6, so we should prefer ♗xg2 (or ♖f1-f2xg2).

I have avoided more details on purpose, because play is not forced and both sides have too many decent possibilities. It would be impossible to analyse them branch by branch. It is better to remember the main plans and build up a good understanding of the position. I hope the next lines will arm you adequately for practical battles.

Attacking Guide

I'll try now to present the most typical patterns of White's kingside attack. I begin with a few examples where White's rook remains on f1. This enables tactical solutions along the f-file:

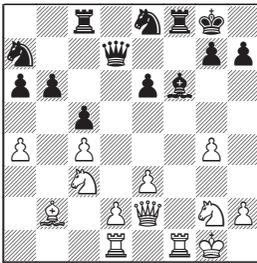
1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

Analysis



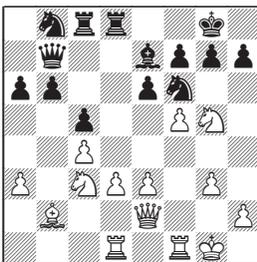
21.♘h5 b5 22.♗e4 bxc4
23.♞xf8+! ♙xf8 24.♞f1+- ♖b7
25.♞f2 ♖e7 26.♗xc5 cxd3 27.♗xe6.

Sherbakov–Loginov St. Petersburg 1998



20.g5!! ♙xg5 21.♞xf8+ ♗xf8
22.♗e4 ♙h6 23.a5 (or 23.♞f1+
♗g8 24.♞g4+- ♖e7 25.♗f6+ ♗xf6
26.♞xf6 g6 27.♞xe6) 23...bxa5
24.♗xc5 1-0.

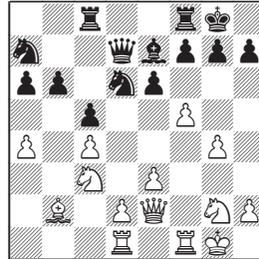
Markus–Perunovic Subotica 2008



The pressure on e6 forces Black to concede the d5-square as 20... ♗d7 is bad in view of 21.♗ce4 or 21.fxe6 fxe6 22.d4.

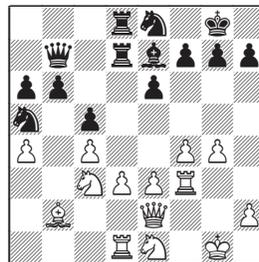
20...exf5 21.♞xf5 ♗bd7 22.♗d5
♞e8 23.♞df1 ♞c6 24.e4 ♙d8 25.♗xf7
♗xf7 26.♞h5+ ♗g8 27.♗xf6+ 1-0.

Analysis



19.f6!! gxf6 (19...♙xf6 20.♞xf6!
gxf6 21.♗f4 ♞f8 22.♗h5 ♗e8
23.♗e4) 20.♗f4 b5 21.axb5 axb5
22.d3 b4 23.♗e4 ♗xe4 24.dxe4
♖b7 25.♗h5 e5 26.g5+-.

Kharlov–Kosyrev Samara 2000



White has simply followed the typical attacking scheme and went on to obtain a promising position despite Black's ingenious resistance: 21.♞h3 b5 22.axb5 axb5 23.cxb5 c4

24.d4 ♖d6 25.g5 g6 26.♗f3 ♜xb5
 27.♗e5 ♝c7. Here, best would have
 been 28.♗xf7 ♖xf7 29.♝xh7+ ♔g8
 30.♝h6 ♗f8 31.♝xg6+ ♗g7 32.♝xe6±.

White's attack is much slower after ♝fd1. We needs additional resources and that is usually the h-pawn. The following diagram is a model position with an advantage for White:

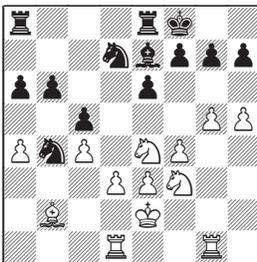
Analysis



1.h6±. On the left wing White is balancing while on the kingside he enjoys a serious spatial advantage. Black's pieces are on the defensive.

Note that this plan is no less effective without queens:

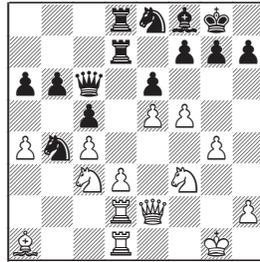
**A.Sokolov–Thesing
 Berlin 1993**



29.g6 fxg6 30.♗fg5 ♗xg5 when
 31.hxg6!! was winning beautifully.

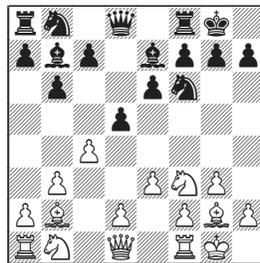
White often resorts to the e-pawn in order to repel the enemy pieces. This commonly happens when Black has sent his c6-knight away from d4, for example to a7 or b4:

**Zaichik–Tiviakov
 Moscow 1994**



Ribli suggests here 27.f6 and again, Black is significantly cramped.

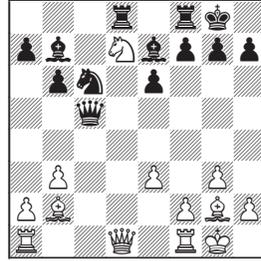
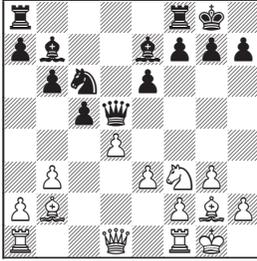
B. 6...b6 7.♗b2 ♗b7 8.e3



Now Black has two major possibilities: to develop the knight on c6 or d7.

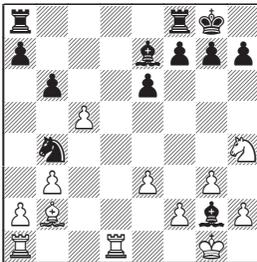
a) 8...c5 9.♗c3 ♗c6 10.cxd5
 ♗xd5 11.♗xd5 ♝xd5 12.d4

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♙g2 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3



Black opts for this variation mainly in order to kill all the action (and trade as many pieces as possible), and dry up the position practically by force. It is a tough nut to crack, indeed. We should be glad to obtain even the slightest edge in the endgame after:

12...♘b4 13.♘h4 ♙d7 14.dxc5 ♙xd1 15.♟fxd1 ♙xg2



16.♙xg2 ♙xc5 17.a3

The good news is that White still has some lead in development while Black is playing for two results only.

There is one long variation that requires memorisation:

12...♟ad8 13.♘e5 ♙d6 14.dxc5 ♙xc5 15.♘d7

15...♙f5 (15...♙g5 16.h4 ♙h6 17.♟c1±) 16.e4 ♙g5 17.h4 ♙h6 18.♙c1 g5 19.hxg5 ♙g7 20.e5! ♘h8! 21.♙f4 ♙a3 22.b4! ♙xb4

This was Rath-G.Flear, Esbjerg 1982. Marin points out here to 23.♟c1 ♙c5 24.♟c3, intending ♟d3, and White is on top.

b) 8...♘bd7 9.♘c3 (9.♙e2 a5!? is unclear to me) **9...♘e4**

The waiting strategy 9...c5 10.♙e2 ♟c8 (10...♘e4 11.♟fd1!) 11.♟ac1 ♙c7 leads to the following position:

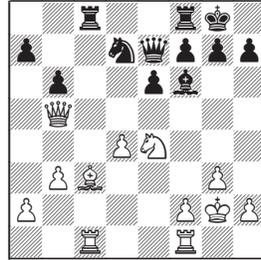


I like Malakhov's idea 12.♘h4!? dxc4, transposing to the structures from set-up A.

10.♙e2! ♙f6 11. cxd5 ♘xc3 12.♙xc3



12...♙xd5 13.d4 ♗e4 14.♖ac1 ♜e7
 15.♘d2! ♙xg2 16.♔xg2 c5 17.♘e4
 cxd4 18.exd4 ♖ac8 19.♝b5±



Black has delayed ...c5 and he may be unable to achieve it at all. That makes the whole complex of light squares on the queenside, and especially c6, rather weak, for instance: 12...♙xc3 13.dxc3 ♗xd5 14.♖ad1 ♜e7 15.♘d4 or:

White is menacing ♗b4. All his pieces are active, in a sharp contrast to the opponent's army.

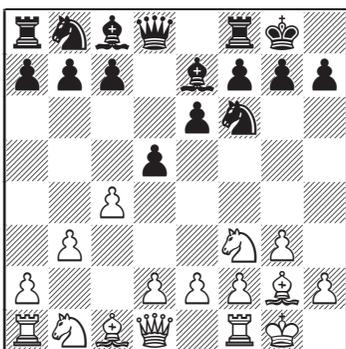
Points to remember:

- In the reversed Modern Benoni, trade bishops with ♗a3.
- If Black takes on c4, our main plan is ♘e1 and a pawn storm on the kingside. Only 11...♝d7 and 11...♘b4 call for d4.
- If Black plays ...♘bd7 and waits, we prepare f2-f4 by ♘h4.
- If Black plays ...♘c6 and waits, we open the centre by exchanging on d5 and later on c5, hoping to use our lead in development.

Part 8

Step by Step

1. ♖f3 d5 2. c4 e6 3. g3 ♘f6 4. ♙g2
♙e7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. b3



Of course, the Catalan, which arises after 6.d4, is an excellent alternative. Moreover, White has sidestepped quite a few complex branches, for instance, the check from b4.

After 6.b3, I will focus on:

A. 6...c5; B. 6...b6

Minor alternatives are:

a) 6...d4

White can transpose to the variations I consider on move 8 with:

7.e3 c5

7...♘c6 8.exd4 ♘xd4 9.♙b2 ♘xf3+ (Black cannot hold the d4-square anyway – 9...♙c5 10.♖a3 followed by ♘c2.) 10.♙xf3 ♖b8 11.♙e2 b6 12.♘c3 ♙b7 13.♙ad1 ♙xg2 14.♙xg2 offers White some space advantage. Botvinnik-Stahlberg, Amsterdam 1954, went 14...c6 15.♘e4 ♖b7 16.♖g5 ♘d7 17.♘f3 ♙f6 18.d4±.

8.exd4 cxd4 9.♙b2.

Besides, 9.d3 ♘c6 10.♙e1 ♘d7! 11.♖a3 is also playable and leads to typical Modern Benoni positions with reversed colours.

b) 6...a5 7.♘c3 d4

After 7...b6 8.♙b2 ♙b7, White will play d4 at once or after 9.e3 ♘a6. It looks like a side-line Catalan, where Black's plan is not too clear while White will exchange on d5 and will try to put pressure along the c-file.

7...♘bd7 8.♙b2 ♘b6 9.d3 a4 10.♙c2 a3 11.♙c1 d4 12.♘e4 turned well for White in Altykenov-Polivanov, Alushta 2009. Of course, 8.d4 is also a sound choice.

Index of Variations

Part 1. Anti-QGA

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3

3...c5 (3...b5 14; 3...♗c6 14; 3...♙g4 15; 3...♙e6 15) 4.♙xc4 ♗f6 5.0-0 e6
6.♖e2 a6 7.♗d1! 19

6...♗c6 7.♗d1 ♙e7 (7...a6 8.d4 19) 8.♗c3 0-0 9.d4 cxd4 (9...♖c7 17)
10.exd4 17
10.♗xd4 18

Part 2. Reversed Benoni

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 d4

3.g3 ♗c6 29

3.e3 ♗c6 (3...c5 42) 4.exd4 30

4. b4 dxe3 (4...♙g4 32) 5.fxe3 ♗xb4 6.d4 e5 32
6...c5 34
6...e6 38

3.b4 f6 (3...g6 40; 3...a5 41; 3...c5 42) 4.e3 e5 (4...dxe3 42; 4...c5 42) 5.c5

5...a5 6.♗xe5 44

6.♙c4 44

6.♙b5+ 46

Part 3. Anti-Slav; Anti-Chebanenko

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3

3...♗d7 59

3...g6 60

3...♙f5 60

3...♗f6 (3...♙g4 61) 4.♗c3 ♙g4 61

3...e6 4.b3 f5 63

3...♗f6 4.♗c3 a6 5.♖c2 65 (5.b3 65)

5...♙g4 65

5...e6 6.d4 66

6.b3 68

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5...g6 70

Part 4. Anti-meran I

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 e6

5.b3 (5.♖c2 87) ♗bd7 (5...♙d6 88; 5...b6 89) 6.♖c2 ♙e7 90

6...b6 91

Part 5. Anti-meran II

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♠f6 4.♠c3 e6 5.b3 ♠bd7 6.♞c2 ♠d6 7.♠b2
7...0-0 (7...a6 101; 7...♞e7 102) 8.♠g1!? (8.♠e2 – Part 6) ♞e7 103
8...a6 104
8...e5 107

Part 6. Anti-meran III

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 c6 3.e3 ♠f6 4.♠c3 e6 5.b3 ♠bd7 6.♞c2 ♠d6 7.♠b2
0-0 8.♠e2
8...♠e8 9.0-0 dxc4 120
9...e5 121
9...b6 122
8...♞e7 9.0-0 b6 125
9...e5 125
9...♠e8 126
9...a6 127
9...dxc4 128
8...a6 9.d4 b5 130
9...e5 131
8...dxc4 131
8...b6 132

Part 7. Anti-Queen's Gambit I

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3
3...c6 4.♠g2 dxc4 153 (4...♠d6 153)
4...♠f6 154
3...g6 155
3...dxc4 4.♞a4+ (4.♠a3 156) 4...♠d7 5.♞xc4 ♠c6 156
5...c5 157
4...c6 159
4...♠d7 5.♠g2 ♠f6 6.♞xc4 a6 165
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Part 8. Anti-Queen's Gambit II

1.♠f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♠f6 4.♠g2 ♠e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3
6...c5 7.♠b2 ♠c6 8.e3 b6 9.♠c3 ♠b7 10.cxd5 ♠xd5 11.♠xd5 ♞xd5 12.d4
♠ad8 185; 12...♠a5 186; 12...♠b4 186
9...dxc4 10.bxc4 ♠b7 11.♞e2 ♠c8 187;
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9...c5 199