Bc4 against the Open Games

Alexander Delchev
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New in Chess

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Databases
The Week In Chess (www.theweekinchess.com)
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This book offers a White repertoire against the Open Games. The reader will find the first deep investigation of the modern treatment of the Italian Game.

The variations you will find in this book greatly differ from anything published so far.

I had to change a lot of traditional “main lines”. I share my analyses and 25 years of experience, hoping that my work will help you to build a flexible and varied repertoire. Its fundamental is the line: 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.0-0 Nf6 5.d3!

Then we meet 5...0-0 by 6.Bg5, and 5...d6 by 6.c3.
I developed fine-tuned lines, aimed to extract maximum value from the opening. That is possible only with precise move orders, which exploit the subtleties of every opening choice of the opponent. I explain them in the “Step by Step” sections, but the principal dish should be the “Main Ideas”. You’ll find there analyses of the most important pawn structures and plans. Besides the Italian, I also cover the Bishop’s Opening. By playing 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4, you could avoid one of the toughest nuts in chess theory – the Petroff. I devised a new plan against the trendy line 2...c6 3.d3 c6 4.Bf3 d5 5.b3 a5 6.a4 Bb4+, which should face your opponents with complex tasks.

The Bishop’s Opening is not a stand-alone opening because Black could transpose to the Italian with 2...c6 and 3...c5.
Which is the best path for you depends on your preparation for the Petroff.
I considered games played before the end of January 2018.

Alexander Delchev
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At first sight 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.0-0 Nf6 5.d3 looks boring.

We have grown up with 19th century’s evergreens in the Evans Gambit and 4.c3, and we used to associate the Italian with an open centre and bold sacrifices.

**Why would we play the modest Giuoco Pianissimo?!**

Most of our readers know at least some of the reasons. Here are a number of answers for the rest of them:

1. It is easier to play for a win in a complex position with a tiny edge, than in analysed up to a forced draw variations, as it is often the case in most so called “romantic gambits”.

Why do you think everybody now plays d3 in the Ruy Lopez?! Because the Marshall Attack has become a synonym of a draw.

2. The “Berlin wall” is solid as ever.

White has exhausted all his ideas of obtaining even the slightest edge against this system.

3. Giuoco Pianissimo is not what it used to be in the previous century, and even 5 years ago. Top players do not chose it to avoid sharp fight and theoretical dispute anymore. On the contrary, in the last 2 years they introduced many aggressive new ideas. Anand, Vachier Lagrave, and other 2700+ players have more than 30 games each in 2016-2017. Every encounter at their level requires a constant fine tuning of the repertoire and fresh plans up their sleeves.

4. There is still a lot of uncharted territory and an overwhelming abundance of move orders which are still waiting to be filtered and channelled in a comprehensible way. Black’s best lines are not established yet, or they are too complex to be understood by most players.

5. White comes out of the opening (and of the opponent’s home preparation!) with plenty of pieces and pawns. That means, he has fair chances to win in the ensuing non-computer aided battle.
I started playing $\texttt{\#c4}$ many years ago.

My result in classical time controls is $+30 = 7 -3$.

I have always loved flexible opening systems which fitted well with my positional style, based on gradual restraining of opponent’s counter-play. The great variety of move orders limited the possibilities of effective home preparation, and strong theoreticians often proved helpless when they could not foresee the position which would arise on the board.

Here is an early example:

**Delchev – Beliavsky**  
Plovdiv 2003

1.e4 e5 2.$\texttt{\#f3}$ $\texttt{\#c6}$ 3.$\texttt{\#c4}$ $\texttt{\#f6}$ 4.d3 $\texttt{\#e7}$ 5.0-0 0-0 6.$\texttt{\#e1}$ d6 7.a4 $\texttt{\#e6}$ 8.$\texttt{\#bd2}$ $\texttt{\#d7}$ 9.c3 $\texttt{\#ad8}$ 10.b4 $\texttt{\#c8}$ 11.$\texttt{\#b2}$ g6 12.$\texttt{\#xe6}$ $\texttt{\#xe6}$ 13.b5 $\texttt{\#b8}$ 14.d4 $\texttt{\#h5}$ 15.g3 $\texttt{\#d7}$ 16.$\texttt{\#e2}$ $\texttt{\#f6}$ 17.$\texttt{\#c4}$ $\texttt{\#c8}$ 18.$\texttt{\#xe6}$ fxex6 19.$\texttt{\#c4}$ $\texttt{\#e7}$ 20.$\texttt{\#fd2}$ exd4 21.cxd4

Do you believe I could get such a clear, safe advantage on move 21 against Beliavsky in mainstream openings?! The game went 21...b6 22.a5 $\texttt{\#f7}$ 23.axb6 axb6 24.$\texttt{\#a7}$ d5 25.exd5 exd5 26.$\texttt{\#e3}$ $\texttt{\#b4}$ 27.$\texttt{\#e2}$ $\texttt{\#xd2}$ 28.$\texttt{\#xd2}$ $\texttt{\#df6}$ 29.$\texttt{\#c2}$ $\texttt{\#g7}$ 30.$\texttt{\#b7}$ $\texttt{\#ge8}$ 31.$\texttt{\#xb6}$ and I converted the pawn.

I even won miniatures against 2600+ players:

**Delchev – Kazhgaleyev**  
Gonfreville 2006

1.e4 e5 2.$\texttt{\#f3}$ $\texttt{\#c6}$ 3.$\texttt{\#c4}$ $\texttt{\#c54}$ 4.$\texttt{\#c3}$ $\texttt{\#f6}$ 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 $\texttt{\#a7}$ 7.$\texttt{\#b3}$ d6 8.$\texttt{\#e1}$ 0-0 9.$\texttt{\#h3}$ $\texttt{\#e6}$ 10.$\texttt{\#c2}$ d5 11.exd5 $\texttt{\#xd5}$ 12.$\texttt{\#g5}$ $\texttt{\#d7}$ 13.$\texttt{\#bd2}$ $\texttt{\#ae8}$ 14.$\texttt{\#c4}$ $\texttt{\#c5}$ 15.$\texttt{\#e4}$ $\texttt{\#b6}$ 16.$\texttt{\#a4}!+$

Black is already losing the exchange. 16...$\texttt{\#d4}$ 17.$\texttt{\#xd4}$ exd4 18.$\texttt{\#c5}$ $\texttt{\#xc5}$ 19.$\texttt{\#xe8}$ $\texttt{\#xe8}$ 20.$\texttt{\#xc5}$ $\texttt{\#xc5}$ 21.$\texttt{\#f4}$ c6 22.$\texttt{\#f3}$ f6 23.$\texttt{\#e2}$ $\texttt{\#e7}$ 24.$\texttt{\#ae1}$ $\texttt{\#d7}$ 25.$\texttt{\#h5}$ g6 26.$\texttt{\#h4}$ $\texttt{\#f7}$ 27.$\texttt{\#d6}$ $\texttt{\#b6}$ 28.$\texttt{\#h6}$ 1-0

The Italian Game proved to be a perfect psychological weapon. I chose different variations according to my current form and opponent, without paying much attention on their theoretical status. I managed to achieve an incredible for our computer era deed – I won two twin games!
Delchev – Agdestein, Llucmajor 2014

1.e4 e5 2.\(\text{\=f}3\) \(\text{\=c}6\) 3.\(\text{\=c}4\) \(\text{\=c}5\) 4.\(\text{\=c}3\) \(\text{\=f}6\) 5.d3 0-0 6.0-0 a6 7.\(\text{\=e}1\) \(\text{\=a}7\) 8.\(\text{\=b}3\) (8.a4!) 8...d6 9.h3 \(\text{\=e}7\) 10.\(\text{\=bd}2\) \(\text{\=g}6\) 11.\(\text{\=f}1\) \(\text{\=h}5\) 12.d4 \(\text{\=h}4\) 13.\(\text{\=g}3\) \(\text{\=f}?)! 14.\(\text{\=h}5\)! \(\text{\=e}7\) (14...\(\text{\=xh}5\) 15.\(\text{\=g}5\)) 15.\(\text{\=xf}4\) \(\text{\=xf}4\) 16.\(\text{\=xf}4\) \(\text{\=xf}4\) 17.e5 c5 18.\(\text{\=d}3\) with a huge advantage. One month later Valsecchi got into the same impasse after move 18!

The Italian is a perfect weapon for rapid and blitz. I used it in very important games of the play off of Bulgarian championship 2017 against Kiril Georgiev. Both encounters unfolded under my command. I played almost without thinking, and gained an enormous edge in time. Only Kiril’s fantastic composure and a timely exchange sacrifice allowed him to escape in the first game.

I have also a lot of games as Black. That allowed me to better conceive the subtleties of this opening. That is even more important than concrete knowledge of variations.

New horizons

Most chess openings have reached a state of equilibrium, with established main lines and only occasional one-game novelties. Just the opposite is true for the Italian. 2017 was the year of the Giuoco Pianissimo. Every new tournament introduces entirely new plans and pushes forth our understanding of it. It all began with the shift of the focus from the kingside and the slow manoeuvre \(\text{\=b}1\)-d2-f1-g3 to the centre and the queenside. Instead of spending a tempo on \(\text{\=c}4\)-b3, White began to secure the bishop against the threat of ...\(\text{\=a}5\) by a4:

This approach is so new, that it is practically ignored by the books published so far. At the same time it is the only way to fight with Black’s plan to trade bishops and push ...d5.

My book is based on it, and I do not even consider the old plan with c3 and \(\text{\=b}3\).

Thus it does not overlap with any previous work on the Giuoco Pianissimo. I would say, I analyse a different opening. Another corner-
stone of the new approach is the line
1.e4 e5 2.\( \text{\`f} \text{f} \text{f} \text{f} \text{c} \text{c} \) 3.\( \text{\`c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c} \text{c}
Introduction

I have always treated this opening in the spirit of the new ideas in the Italian:

**Delchev – Bologan**
French Championship 2006


I'm a clear pawn up and went on win.

Finally, I also decided to cover the variation:


The last chapter discusses 1.e4 e5 2.d4 c6 3.d3 c5 4.0-0 f6 5.d3 0-0 6.c3 d5. Although I prefer 6.g5, the standard 6.c3 is also a popular option. It might transpose to other chapters of the book. If you do not like 6.g5, you have no other choice. You gamble with 6.c3, hoping to see 6...d6 or 6...h6. Only 33% of the second players opt for 6...d5, but it is a viable option. You must be prepared for it. Black’s best lines are solid, although White plays with a draw in the pocket.