

Battling the Aggressive Italian Game

**Calm Precision Against
Fierce Attacks**

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Battling the Aggressive Italian Game

Calm Precision Against Fierce Attacks

Milos Pavlovic

Thinkers Publishing 2025



Key to Symbols

| | |
|----|---|
| ! | a good move |
| ? | a weak move |
| !! | an excellent move |
| ?? | a blunder |
| !? | an interesting move |
| ?! | a dubious move |
| □ | only move |
| N | novelty |
| ☞ | lead in development |
| ⊙ | zugzwang |
| = | equality |
| ∞ | unclear position |
| ≈ | with compensation for the sacrificed material |
| ± | White stands slightly better |
| ∓ | Black stands slightly better |
| ± | White has a serious advantage |
| ∓ | Black has a serious advantage |
| +− | White has a decisive advantage |
| −+ | Black has a decisive advantage |
| → | with an attack |
| ↑ | with initiative |
| ↔ | with counterplay |
| Δ | with the idea of |
| ⌢ | better is |
| ≤ | worse is |
| + | check |
| # | mate |

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Introduction

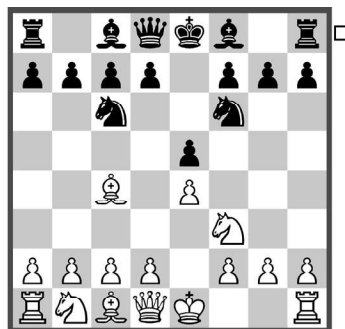
All the lines presented in this book are very old, some even dating back to medieval times! Lots of things were known about these systems before chess engines started to become very strong, but now we have completely new ideas from not only a tactical, but also positional, point of view on positions that have simply resurfaced in recent times. The rebirth of these lines has become so popular that during my work on this book I was amazed to see such a level of popularity.

To make this book readable I broke some positions into smaller files wherever I could. In all my books I try to present at least the basics of many openings and lines: the problem is that basic knowledge about openings is growing even bigger, and it is not an easy job to comprehend and assimilate all that material. That's why I have also tried in this book to be as concise as possible. After all, reading a book should not only be an aesthetic/interesting endeavour, but also a practical/useful thing at the same time.

I decided to add in this introduction some additional explanations of what the reader can expect.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 This is the starting position of this book and now I split the material into two logical paths:

First, 3... Nf6



Position after: 3... Nf6

Now White has a few very sharp choices: 4. Ng5 and 4.d4.

Second, 3... ♖c5



Position after: 3... ♖c5

This is yet another way for Black to go where White uses sharp ideas that mainly start with 4.c3 but there is also 4.b4

It may not look like such a gigantic mass of material, but it is. I have included numerous diagrams along the way to aid the reader and highlight the most important positions. It is fascinating to see such exponential growth of those romantic ideas in the 21st century and I trust after reading this book you will agree!

Milos Pavlovic, 2025

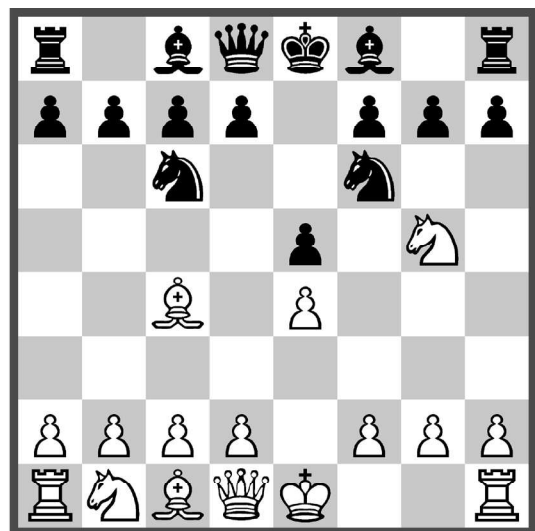
Part I

3...  f6



4.  g5

1.e4 e5 2.  f3  c6 3.  c4
 f6 4.  g5



Chapter Guide

Chapter 1 – 4. ♘g5

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6 4.♘g5 d5 5.exd5 ♗a5

a) 6.-- & 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙a4..... 13

b) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♗f3 cxb5 9.♗xa8 ♗c7 16

c) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♗f3 cxb5 9.♗xa8 ♙e7..... 20

d) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙e2 h6 9.♗h3 25

e) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙e2 h6 9.♗f3 e4 10.♗e5 ♙c5 11.0-0 0-0
12.♙h1 ♙d6..... 31

f) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙e2 h6 9.♗f3 e4 10.♗e5 ♙c5 11.0-0 0-0
12.♙h1 ♗e8..... 36

f) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙e2 h6 9.♗f3 e4 10.♗e5 ♙d6 11.d4 exd3 (e.p.)
12.♗xd3 0-0 13.b3..... 38

g) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙e2 h6 9.♗f3 e4 10.♗e5 ♙d6 11.d4 exd3 (e.p.)
12.♗xd3 0-0 13.0-0..... 42

h) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙d3 ♗d5 9.♗e4 45

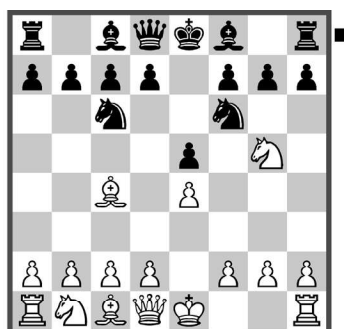
i) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙d3 ♗d5 9.h4 49

j) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙d3 ♗d5 9.♗f3 ♙d6 10.0-0 ♗f4
11.♗c3 ♗xd3 12.cxd3 0-0 13.♗e4..... 52

k) 6.♙b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.♙d3 ♗d5 9.♗f3 ♙d6 10.0-0 ♗f4
11.♗c3 ♗xd3 12.cxd3 0-0 13.♗e1..... 55

a) 6.-- & 6. ♖b5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8. ♖a4

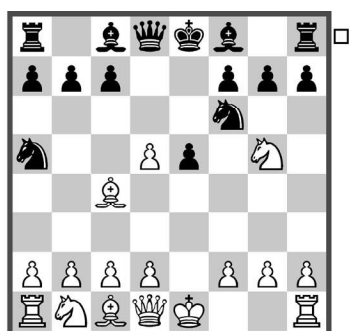
1. e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♖c4 ♘f6 4. ♘g5



Position after: 4. ♘g5

One of the first documented openings together with the King's Gambit going all the way back to time of El Greco, now living a renaissance due to a surprisingly completely new look from a chess engine prospective. There are many new ideas that have resurfaced so I will try to bring them out to light.

4... d5 5. exd5 ♘a5



Position after: 5... ♘a5

Considered as the main line for decades, Black is going for a positional pawn sac in order to speed up development. I will mainly focus on this reply because most of the improvements and completely new lines have appeared here.

6. ♖b5+

This is not entirely forced; White has one interesting, old option here worth noting:

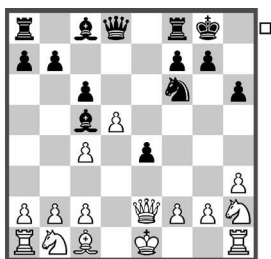
6. d3 h6 7. ♘f3 e4 8. ♔e2 ♘xc4 9. dxc4 ♖c5



Position after: 9... ♖c5

A) 10. 0-0-0 11. ♘fd2 ♖g4 12. ♔e1 ♖e8 13. ♘b3 ♖d6 14. h3 ♖f5 15. ♘c3 ♔d7 16. ♔e3 ♘h5 17. ♘e2 ♖g6 18. ♘bd4 c5 19. dxc6 bxc6 Black has compensation here: the idea is to go for the ...f5 plan. (0-1 (47) Mei, A (1962) – Sychev, K (2572) chess.com INT 2020).

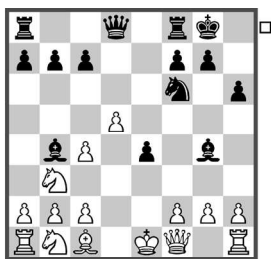
B) 10. h3 This is an old reaction in this line played in the 19th century! The idea is to transfer a knight via h2 to f1. 10... 0-0 11. ♘h2 c6!?



Position after: 11... c6!?

Played only a few times but it seems strong... 12. dxc6 e3 13. ♙xe3 ♙xe3 14. fxe3 ♘e4 15. 0-0 ♘g3 16. ♚e1 ♘xf1 17. cxb7 ♙xb7 18. ♘xf1 ♚g5 19. ♚g3 ♚f6 20. ♘c3 ♙ac8 21. e4 ♙xc4 Black is more than fine.

C) 10. ♘fd2 White has few options here: 10... 0-0 11. ♘b3 ♙g4 12. ♚f1 [Very bad for White is: 12. ♚d2? e3! 13. fxe3 ♘e4 14. ♚d3 ♚h4+ (0-1 (14) Cuesta Bustos, R (1985) – Shirov, A (2665) Mengibar ESP 2024)] 12... ♙b4+!



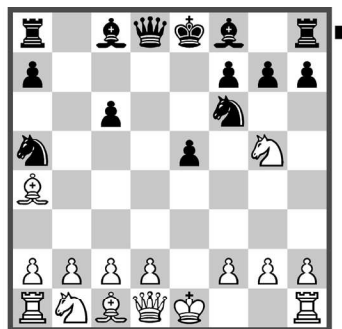
Position after: 12... ♙b4+!

13. c3 [13. ♙d2 ♙xd2+ 14. ♘1xd2 ♙e8 15. ♚g1 ♚d6 16. h3 e3! 17. fxe3 ♚g3+ 18. ♚f1 ♙xe3 Black has a very strong attack.] 13... ♙e7 14. h3 ♙h5 15. ♙e3 ♘d7 16. g4 ♙g6 17. ♘1d2 ♘e5 18. 0-0-0 ♘d3+ 19. ♚b1 b5 We can say that Black has achieved a very good game. (0-1 (62) Zeng, C (2561) – Vidit, S (2707) Xingtai CHN 2019).

6... c6 7. dxc6 bxc6

Black is gaining time to put pressure on the g5-knight with ...h6 and ...e4. We will see that the knight on a5, although at the edge of the board, is doing a fine job in many lines. Also, the pawn on c6 often goes to c5, creating further control of the centre.

8. ♙a4



Position after: 8. ♙a4

This is the weakest of all White's options. The main replies 8. ♙d3, 8. ♙e2 and 8. ♚f3 will be dealt with in later files.

8... h6 9. ♘f3 e4 10. ♚e2

Other moves are even weaker:

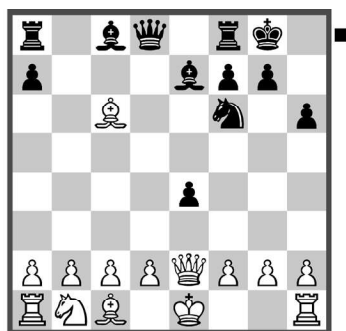
A) 10. ♘e5 ♔d4 Winning on the spot.

B) 10. ♘g1 ♕c5 11. d4 The only way in order not to lose at once. [11. c3 ♔b6 also gives Black a quick win; 11. ♘e2 ♘g4 wins easily.] 11... exd3 12. cxd3 0-0 13. ♘e2 ♕a6 14. ♘bc3 ♖e8 15. 0-0 ♔xd3 16. ♔xd3 ♕xd3 Black is clearly better.

10... ♕e7 11. ♘e5 0-0 12. ♘xc6

12. ♘c3 ♔c7 13. d4 ♔b6 14. ♕b3 ♕a6 15. ♘a4 ♕b4+ 16. c3 ♕xe2 17. ♘xb6 axb6 18. ♕a4 ♕b5 19. cxb4 ♕xa4 20. bxa5 ♖xa5 Black has an edge. This is just one example showing how White suffers from serious underdevelopment.

12... ♘xc6 13. ♕xc6



Position after: 13. ♕xc6

13... ♕g4!

13... ♖b8 14. ♘c3!

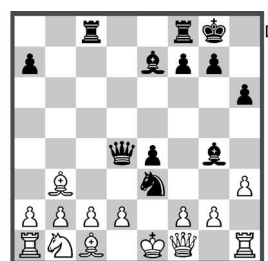


Position after: 14. ♘c3!

[14. 0-0 ♕g4 15. f3 ♔b6+ 16. ♔h1 ♕xf3 17. ♖xf3 exf3 18. ♕xf3 ♖fe8 19. d3 ♕a3 20. ♔xe8+ ♖xe8 21. ♘xa3 ♖e1# (0-1 (21) Ahmed, A (1479) – Amin, B (2692) Sharjah UAE 2023)] 14... ♖b6 15. ♕a4 ♕c5 16. 0-0 ♕g4 17. ♔e1 ♕f5 18. ♔e2 ♕g4 19. ♔e1 ♕f5 with a possible repetition of moves.

14. ♔a6

14. ♔f1 ♖c8 15. ♕a4 ♔d4 16. ♕b3 ♘d5 17. h3 ♘e3!



Position after: 17... ♘e3!

A fantastic tactical motif that gives Black a crushing early victory.

14... ♖b8 15. ♕a4 ♘d5 16. ♘c3 ♘f4 17. 0-0 ♖b6

Black has a winning attack.