

Viktor Moskalenko

The Perfect Pirc-Modern
Strategic Ideas & Powerful Weapons
New Edition – 10 Years Later

New In Chess 2023

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The Perfect Pirc-Modern – ten years later

'Only ideas are immortal..., and this gift is priceless. So be grateful, even if your time is gone..., you will be remembered and you will share eternity with angels and ghosts' – excerpts from a dialogue in the film 'Babylon' (Hollywood 2022)

Dear chess friends!

Given the significant influence of our New In Chess book on the Pirc and Modern defences in 2013, together we have decided to create a new version geared to 2023.

Exploring the most important sequences in these two openings, the author will share his thoughts with Pirc/Modern fans on virtually all the main lines.

Compared to the 2013 version, this new book on the Pirc/Modern has:

- a total of 42 games (instead of 37)
- 33 new games
- 9 old games updated
- updates and, where necessary, expansions in every chapter
- hundreds of improvements, alternatives and new ideas.

The chapters have been re-structured; lines that have become more important have been turned into separate games. Some of the 'old' games have been replaced by others.

In this book, we can also learn more about Pirc and Modern systems through studying the best correspondence games. Thanks to powerful computer analysis (and despite the well-known drawish trends), their opening concepts have been of great theoretical value. So, dear reader, they might offer something for you as well!

I wish you good luck on your chess journey!

Remember: the path to success can only be found through creativity. On the other hand, we are living in times when dreams and desires are less important than our intentions.

Viktor Moskalenko,
Barcelona, May 2023

Foreword by Vasyl Ivanchuk

Dear reader!

You are interested in chess, and accordingly, you cannot pass by such an important aspect of the game as the theory of the openings. Admittedly, Jose Raul Capablanca advised players to begin by studying the endgame, but it is hard to imagine how we can survive into an ending, without at least some elementary idea of opening principles. This is especially true in our day, when practically every player can absorb different opening variations with the greatest speed, by an adroit use of textbooks and the computer.



The present book is devoted to the Pirc and Modern Defences, although in many books (especially Soviet ones!), the Pirc is given the name of the master from Kustan, Anatoly Ufimtsev. The author gives detailed coverage of various lines of this opening. Although in the main, the book is aimed at highly-qualified players, I think it will also be useful to the average amateur... as well as the main strategic plans, the author also draws attention to traps and non-standard tactical tricks.

And now to the opening itself. When playing the Pirc Defence, the Black player does not aim to equalize the position. He tries to obtain complicated play, and even invites the danger of a direct attack on his king. But playing such positions, and making full use of one's (often far from obvious) resources, requires great skill, developing which is very valuable for players of all levels.

Viktor Moskalenko has already written a number of books, on various openings. One can think of the Nimzo-Indian with 4.f3 in his book *Revolutionize Your Chess*, the French Defence and the Budapest Gambit. By way of illustration, the author uses many of his own games, with very interesting annotations – not just regarding chess, but also from the psychological point of view. Consequently, this is not just an opening book, but it is also useful for further study of certain middlegame and even endgame positions. In addition, you can also become familiar with the particular methodology of analysing employed by Viktor Moskalenko, which will undoubtedly help you to master not just the Pirc and Modern Defences, but also to systematize and perfect your understanding of the key points of other openings.

I wish you success!

Vasyl Ivanchuk

Introduction



Surprise your opponent with the Perfect Pirc-Modern!

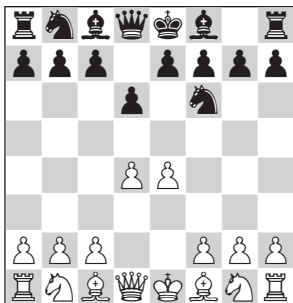
In the beginning of the 20th century, hypermodernism made its appearance in chess.

Since then, many chess players have finally discovered its 'dark side' (the dynamic style); the chess game proved to be richer than it had been thought to be before, and it began to change, from classical chess to a more active and unpredictable game.

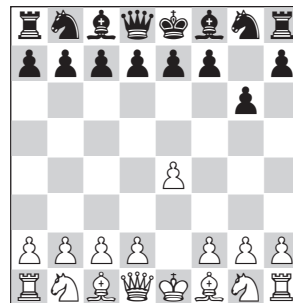
As a consequence of this development, new openings were tested. In some of them, the influence on the centre was exerted from a distance.

This book is about two such systems: the **Pirc** and the **Modern Defence**.

Pirc Defence: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6



Modern Defence: 1.e4 g6



Both systems have long since established themselves as universal opening weapons for the creative player.

The failure of many attempts to refute Black's defence outright with a quick occupation of the centre and a straight assault (such as the Austrian Attack with f2-f4) prove that it is still very much alive and kicking.

All main lines for White and Black are covered in this book, as well as some rare options.

The main opening resources and pawn structures

White:

- maintain his centre and develop
- attack in the centre (e4-e5)
- attack on the kingside (h2-h4)
- a typical attacking set-up with pieces is f3/♘e3/♗d2/♙h6 etc.

Black:

- usually prepares ...e7-e5
- the universal set-up with ...c6/b5
- the modern set-up with ...a6/b5
- sometimes the Sicilian Dragon structure appears after ...c7-c5
- Benoni structure: ...c7-c5 and White replies d4-d5
- King's Indian: ...e7-e5 and White replies d4-d5
- Ruy Lopez: ...e7-e5
- Philidor: ...e7-e5 and ...exd4

This list of options shows the great flexibility of the combative Pirc-Modern defences. Many times we can see motifs from the Sicilian, the Benoni and certain other openings, and also transpositions, in a single game.

During my study for this book I have discovered a huge number of powerful ideas for both sides; surprising new plans, and even some unexplored but attractive systems.

The perfect player

From the beginning, White can choose to go for forced and aggressive lines, and he can also choose among many positional plans, trying a different playing style every time. However, most of the time the character of the positions and the play in the Pirc-Modern is ultra-dynamic.

This factor enabled me to collect many great and memorable games for the book, for both White and Black.

As usual in my books, I have tried not to be too heavily influenced by computer lines and to offer material mainly based on healthy concepts instead. One of the strong points of the best players is that they allow us to learn how to play with a solid basis. After that we can learn how to use computers to our benefit.

‘One of the secrets of success nowadays is to use computers in your favour and not let computers rule your thinking ability,’ said Grandmaster Boris Gelfand in his video interview *Nobody’s invincible, nobody’s immune to mistakes*, before playing his World Championship match against Vishy Anand.

Nowadays, the Pirc-Modern remains in the repertoire of many players as a nice dynamic option in must-win situations with Black. On the other hand, it is also played by super-grandmasters such as Ivanchuk, Grischuk, Kramnik, Nakamura and Carlsen: they also know perfectly well how to use the ‘active side’ of their chess talent. This perspective allows them as it were to take the chess game into a new dimension.

The perfect Pirc-Modern player doesn’t need to have a phenomenal memory combined with wishful thinking. He should first of all get the feel of this fascinating opening, and then use his fighting spirit!



Vasja Pirc (1907-1980).

Viktor Moskalenko,
Barcelona, May 2023

Seven symbols

For the convenience of the reader of my books, certain special lines in the analysis are marked with either of the following seven symbols:



TRICK: hidden tactics and tricky ideas, e.g. traps you can set and pitfalls you have to avoid.



PUZZLE: exercises, possible transpositions, move-order subtleties, curiosities and rare lines.



WEAPON: the best lines to choose; strong or surprising options for both attack and defence, which deserve attention.



PLAN: the main ideas for one of the sides in the next phase of the game.



STATISTICS: winning percentages for a line or for either side/player.



WORKSHOP: how the author plans to construct the chapter at hand.

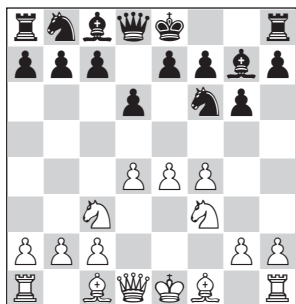


KEEP IN MIND: here, fundamental ideas for either side are given.

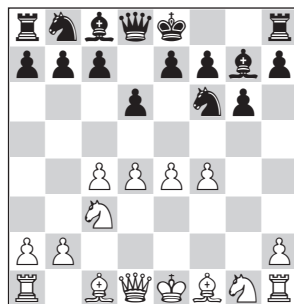
CHAPTER 1

The Austrian Attack: introduction

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.f4 ♙g7 5.♘f3



Austrian Attack



(Four Pawns Attack vs KID)



A small puzzle

Why was the Austrian Attack considered one of the most dangerous ways to fight the Pirc Defence for such a long time? First of all, let's compare the two quite similar opening positions given above with a keen eye – try to find the differences!

With the pawn on c4 in the diagram on the right, White has more space and has an advantage based on strategic rules. But his pieces are still undeveloped, so embarking on tactical adventures is hardly possible within the next few moves.

By keeping the pawn on c2 (diagram left), White gains a tempo to develop his knight (♘f3), and this factor makes the position much more dynamic – the direct attack with e4-e5 is now a dangerous threat!

Main features

- The fight for the initiative (or for a strategic advantage) develops mainly in the centre and on the kingside.
- White will need to throw in some more developing moves, otherwise his attack will fail (see Game 1).
- The typical pawn structures are similar to those in the King's Indian, the Benoni and the Classical Variation of the Sicilian Dragon, determining the typical attacking and defensive methods (see 'directions').
- There are lots of sharp lines and premature attacks here – but thanks to computers and the progress of modern opening analysis, most of them can be thrown into the wastebin!

Game 1 – The bull and the matador: 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.h4



KEEP IN MIND: The advance e4-e5 is always the most straightforward and concrete attempt to refute the Pirc Defence. As also happens in this line, White is usually not sufficiently developed for this pawn thrust. His impulse to play this dynamic move may be compared to the fighting instincts of a bull – or the matador, depending on the final result.

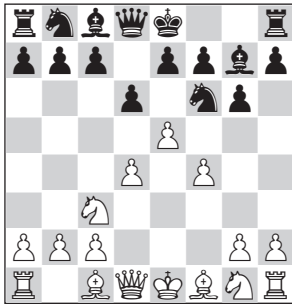
Game 1

Nicolo Napoli 2298

Viktor Moskalenko 2523

Barcelona 2012

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.f4 ♙g7
5.e5



This enthusiastic advance introduces our sharp variation.

5...♘fd7!

Black is going to break the pawn wedge with the typical push ...c7-c5.

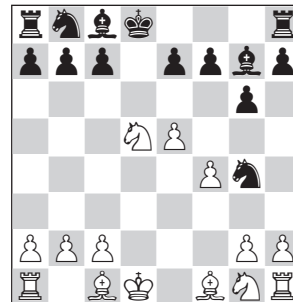


KEEP IN MIND: As we will see in the next chapters, the pawn exchange 5...dxe5 is a less attractive defensive option, but it usually serves to reduce White's initiative. After 6.fxe5 in this concrete case, the best method for Black would be 6...♘fd7 7.♘f3 c5!⇒.



Matador vs bull

Instead, 5...dxe5 6.dxe5 ♙xd1+ 7.♙xd1 ♘g4 8.♘d5 (8.♙e1 f6!?) 8...♙d8 (we will see an important endgame with the same pawn structure in the notes to Game 11, the line with 6.e5 dxe5)



analysis diagram

9.♔e1 and now 9...♙e6 (or 9...f6)
10.♘c3 f6!?⇒.

6.h4

A typical 'bull attack', however in this move-order this is almost a novelty (on move 6!). Only very few games have been played with it. When I see such a move on the board, I have to remind myself that I am a grandmaster, not a patzer.

6.♘f3 c5! transposes to Game 5 and 6...0-0 7.h4 to Game 10.

6...c5 7.h5

7.d5 h5!

7...cxd4!



This results in a true jigsaw puzzle.

8.h6N

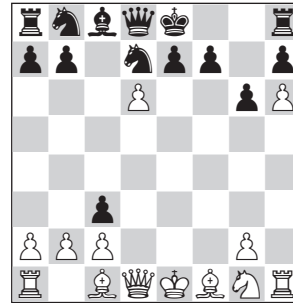
During the game I expected this in-between attack on my fianchettoed position. Remarkably, my young opponent had this tactical operation in mind as his main weapon against the Pirc Defence! The original 8.♖xd4 simply loses a pawn without much compensation: 8...dxe5 9.♖f2 ♘c6 10.hxg6 hxg6 11.♗xh8+ ♙xh8 12.f5 gxf5 13.♖xf5 ♘f6--+ Tredup-Ötzel, Krumpa 1972.

8...♙xe5!

The best practical solution. Since the h-file is now blocked, kingside

castling will be possible. The option 8...♙xh6!?♠ would continue the puzzle!

9.fxe5 dxc3 10.exd6



The critical moment for Black.

PUZZLE: How to continue?

10...♗a5!?

PLAN: The computer recommends simple development as the best option: 10...♘c6 (or 10...♘f6) 11.♘e2 cxb2 12.♙xb2 ♘de5 gives Black a clear advantage.

11.b3 0-0

Better was 11...♘c6!♠.

12.♖d4!?

Another wake-up call for me:

13.♖g7 mate is the threat.

12.dxe7 only helps Black: 12...♖e8

13.♖d4 ♖xe7+ 14.♘e2 ♘e5♠.

12...e5 13.♖f2 ♘c6

