



# **Bc4 against the Open Games**

Alexander Delchev

Chess Stars Publishing  
Current Theory and Practice Series

**♟c4 against the Open Games**

Cover design by Kaloyan Nachev, Semko Semkov  
Translation and editing by Semko Semkov

Copyright © 2018 by Alexander Delchev

Printed in Bulgaria  
ISBN: 978-619-7188-17-2

# Contents

Bibliography 4

Preface 5

Introduction 7

**Chapter 1.** 1.e4 e5 2.♘c4 ♟f6 3.d3 c6 4.♟f3 ♘e7

Main Ideas 13 Step by Step 17 Annotated Games 33

**Chapter 2.** 1.e4 e5 2.♘c4 ♟f6 3.d3 c6 4.♟f3 d5

Main Ideas 41 Step by Step 47 Annotated Games 69

**Chapter 3.** 1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.♘c4 ♟f6 4.d3 ♘e7

Main Ideas 83 Step by Step 88 Annotated Games 113

**Chapter 4.** 1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♟c6 3.♘c4 ♟f6 4.d3 h6

Main Ideas 127 Step by Step 130 Annotated Games 142

**Chapter 5.** Giuoco Pianissimo with ...a6

Main Ideas 149 Pawn Structure with e6, e5 157 Step by Step 161

Annotated Games 180

**Chapter 6.** Plans without ...a6

Main Ideas 145 Step by Step 194 Annotated Games 201

**Chapter 7.** Plan with ♘g5

Main Ideas 203 Step by Step 207 Annotated Games 222

**Chapter 8.** 5.0-0 0-0 6.c3 d5

Main Ideas 235 Step by Step 237 Annotated Games 242

Index of Variations 244

# Bibliography

## Books

*Open Games for Black*, Igor Lysyj and Roman Ovetchkin, Chess Stars 2012

*The Petroff: an Expert Repertoire for Black*, Konstantin Sakaev, Chess Stars 2011

*Bologan's Black Weapons in the Open Games*, Victor Bologan, New in Chess 2014

*Playing 1.e4 e5*, Nikolaos Ntirlis, Quality Chess 2016

*Winning with the Slow (but Venomous!) Italian*, Georgios Souleidis, Karsten Müller, New in Chess 2016

## Periodicals

Chess Informant

New in Chess

## Internet resources

Databases

The Week In Chess ([www.theweekinchess.com](http://www.theweekinchess.com))

Chess Publishing ([www.chesspublishing.com](http://www.chesspublishing.com))

# Preface

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.

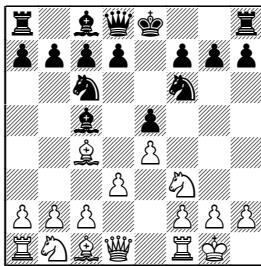
---

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:

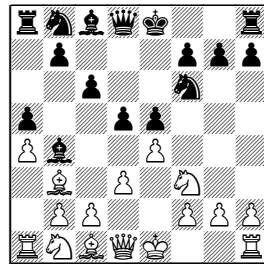
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0-0 ♚f6 5.d3!



Then we meet 5...0-0 by 6.♙g5, 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.♙c4, you could avoid one of the toughest nuts in chess theory – the Petroff. I devised a new plan against the trendy line 2...♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 d5 5.♙b3 a5 6.a4 ♙b4+,



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.

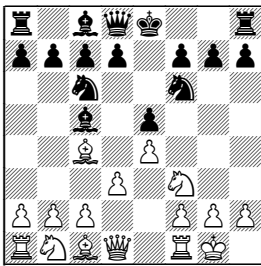
I considered games played before the end of January 2018.

*Alexander Delchev  
February 2018*



# Introduction

At first sight 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 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.

## Introduction

I started playing ♠c4 many years ago.

---

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

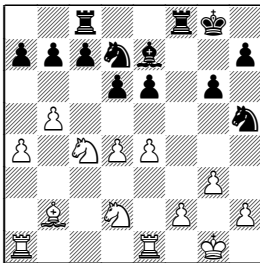
---

I have always loved flexible opening systems which fitted well with my positional style, based on gradual restraining of opponent's counterplay. 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.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6 4.d3 ♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♞e1 d6 7.a4 ♙e6 8.♗bd2 ♚d7 9.c3 ♞ad8 10.b4 ♚c8 11.♙b2 g6 12.♙xe6 ♚xe6 13.b5 ♗b8 14.d4 ♗h5 15.g3 ♗d7 16.♚e2 ♙f6 17.♚c4 ♞c8 18.♚xe6 fxe6 19.♗c4 ♙e7 20.♗fd2 exd4 21.cxd4



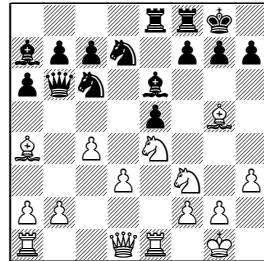
Do you believe I could get such a clear, safe advantage on move 21 against Beliavsky in mainstream

openings?! The game went 21...b6 22.a5 ♞f7 23.axb6 axb6 24.♞a7 d5 25.exd5 exd5 26.♗e3 ♙b4 27.♞e2 ♙xd2 28.♞xd2 ♗df6 29.♞c2 ♗g7 30.♞b7 ♗ge8 31.♞xb6 and I converted the pawn.

I even won miniatures against 2600+ players:

Delchev – Kazhgaleyev  
Gonfreville 2006

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.c3 ♗f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 ♙a7 7.♙b3 d6 8.♞e1 0-0 9.h3 ♙e6 10.♙c2 d5 11.exd5 ♚xd5 12.♙g5 ♗d7 13.♗bd2 ♞ae8 14.c4 ♚c5 15.♗e4 ♚b6 16.♙a4!±



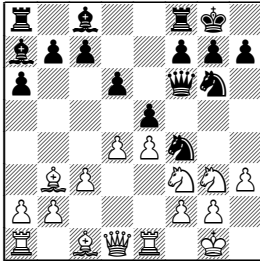
Black is already losing the exchange. 16...♗d4 17.♗xd4 exd4 18.c5 ♗xc5 19.♙xe8 ♞xe8 20.♗xc5 ♚xc5 21.♙f4 c6 22.♚f3 f6 23.♞e2 ♚e7 24.♞ae1 ♚d7 25.♚h5 g6 26.♚h4 ♚f7 27.♙d6 ♙b6 28.♚h6 1-0

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.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.c3  
♚f6 5.d3 0-0 6.0-0 a6 7.♞e1 ♙a7  
8.♙b3 (8.a4!) 8...d6 9.h3 ♘e7  
10.♚bd2 ♘g6 11.♚f1 ♘h5 12.d4  
♘hf4 13.♚g3 ♞f6?!



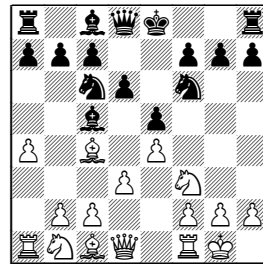
14.♘h5! ♞e7 (14...♘xh5 15.♙g5)  
15.♙xf4 ♘xf4 16.♚xf4 exf4 17.e5 c5  
18.♞d3 with a huge advantage. One  
month later Valsecchi got into the  
same impasse after move 18!

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 ♚b1-d2-f1-g3 to the centre and the queenside. Instead of spending a tempo on ♙c4-b3, White began to secure the bishop against the threat of ...♚a5 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.

---

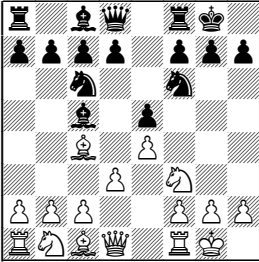
My book is based on it, and I do not even consider the old plan with c3 and ♙b3.

---

Thus it does not overlap with any previous work on the Giuoco Pianissimo. I would say, I analyse a different opening. Another corner-

## Introduction

stone of the new approach is the line  
 1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.0-0  
 ♘f6 5.d3 0-0



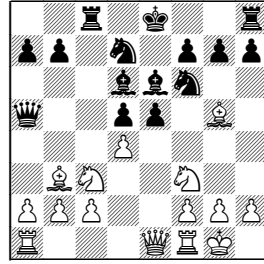
6.♙g5! which is the only way to avoid 6.c3 d5.

I faced the plan with ♙g5 as Black against Demchenko in the summer, and failed to find an adequate resort. That incited me to pay a closer attention to this bishop's development. I encountered many sharp lines where Black has not found yet clear equality.

**The Bishop's Opening** is less principled than the Italian, as it allows Black to seize the centre with 1.e4 e5 2.♙c4 ♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 d5!. Still, I prefer this dynamic system over the boring symmetry of the Russian Game. Black's pawn centre could be easily destroyed, as in the following game:

Delchev – Jovanic  
 Zadar 2004

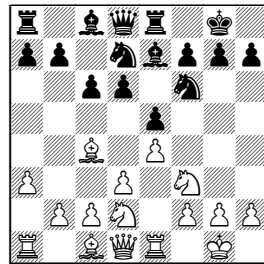
1.e4 e5 2.♙c4 ♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘f3 d5  
 5.♙b3 ♙d6 6.exd5 cxd5 7.♙g5 ♙e6  
 8.♘c3 ♖a5 9.0-0 ♘bd7 10.♗e1! ♖c8  
 11.d4±



11...♙b4 (Giri-Jones, Warsaw 2013, saw 11...e4?! 12.♘xe4+-) 12.♙d2 ♙xc3 13.♙xc3 ♖xc3 14.bxc3 e4 15.♘g5 0-0 16.c4 ♗xe1 17.♗axe1 h6 18.♘xe6 fxe6 19.f3 exf3 20.♗xf3 ♖c8 21.cxd5 exd5 22.♗e7 ♗d8 23.♗g3 g5 24.♗f3 1-0

The passive approach does not spare Black from trouble. The following game illustrates a typical mistake, which occurs in various settings:

Delchev – Bielek  
 Imperia 2002



9.♙xf7+!! 1-0. Two players after me missed this blow!

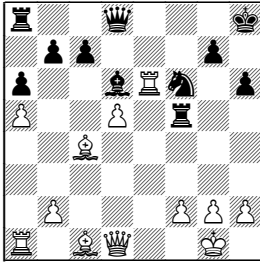
My repertoire would not be complete without a rather huge chapter on the **Hungarian Defence**.

## Introduction

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

Delchev – Bologan  
French Championship 2006

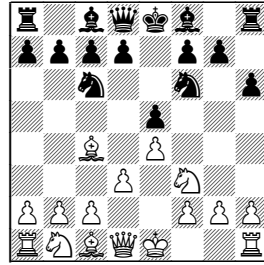
1.e4 e5 2.♘c4 ♘f6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.♗f3  
♙e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.♞e1! d6 7.a4! ♖h8  
8.a5 a6 9.c3 h6 10.♗bd2 ♗h7 11.d4  
exd4 12.cxd4 f5 13.d5 ♗e5 14.♗xe5  
dxe5 15.♗f3 ♙d6 16.exf5 e4 17.♗d4  
♙xf5 18.♗xf5 ♞xf5 19.♞xe4 ♗f6  
20.♞e6±



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

Finally, I also decided to cover the variation:

1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6  
4.d3 h6



Black follows up with ...d6 and ...g6.

The last chapter discusses 1.e4 e5 2.♗f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙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.