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2 The Grand Prix Attack

The so-called Grand-Prix Attack was developed by several English players in the 1970s and early 1980s and it is based on an early f4 advance, seeking to generate activity on the kingside. It can prove quite a dangerous weapon if Black isn't well prepared. When Black chooses to fianchetto his king's bishop (traditionally the best method against many Anti-Sicilians), White would ideally arrange pieces in the following way: f4, ♘f3, ♗c4, ♖c3, 0-0, d3 and then f5, followed by ♗e1-h4 or ♗g5. This works out best when Black is committed to an early ...d6, since otherwise Black can create quick counterplay in the centre by means of ...d5.

Besides a direct attack on the kingside, White has another, more positional, plan: to develop the bishop on b5, and disrupt Black's pawn-structure by means of ♗xc6. This is best done when Black cannot answer ...♗d4, or when White's knight is still on b1, so that after ♗xd4 cxd4 Black's d4-pawn doesn't attack the c3-knight.

Move-orders are a very important issue in the Grand Prix Attack. White would like to start with 2 f4, keeping the knight on b1 for a while and first of all developing his kingside pieces. However, this allows the central advance 2...d5! (Line A), when 3 exd5

♗f6 gives Black the initiative. To prevent a quick ...d5 White must start with 2 ♗c3 (Line B), which has become the main move-order if White wishes to play the Grand Prix Attack.

1 e4 c5

Now:

A: 2 f4 20

B: 2 ♗c3 23

Note that in Line B we only consider lines where White follows up with f4.

A)

2 f4 d5 3 exd5

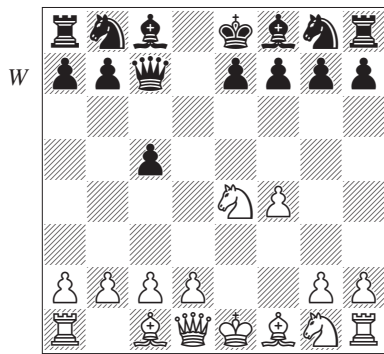
Or:

a) 3 e5?! is dubious. It easy to see why: we see this position in other opening variations, such as 1 e4 c6 2 f4 d5 3 e5 c5 or 1 e4 d6 2 f4 d5 3 e5 c5, when although it is White's turn to move, Black is doing fine. In both those lines, 2 f4 is not of course the strongest move. In our line, Black hasn't even lost time – he has played both ...c5 and ...d5 in one step – so obviously he is doing more than fine. 3...♗c6 and now:

a1) 4 ♗b5 ♗f5 5 ♗f3 e6 6 c3 ♗b6 7 ♗e2 c4 8 ♗xc6+ bxc6 9 d4 cxd3 10 ♗f2 c5 11 ♗e3 ♗h6 12 h3 ♗e4 13 g4 ♗xf3 14 ♗xf3 ♗xb2 15 ♗d1 ♗e7 16 ♗c1 ♗h4+ 0-1 Hasler-Gallagher, Lenk 1992.

a2) 4 ♖f3 ♕g4 5 ♜e2 (5 ♜b5 e6 6 ♜xc6+ bxc6 7 d3 ♘e7 8 0-0 ♘f5 ♞ Schroeder-Teske, Aschach 1998) 5...e6 6 0-0 ♘ge7 7 d3 ♘f5 8 c3 ♜e7 9 ♘a3 ♞b6 10 ♘c2 0-0-0 11 ♞b1 f6 12 exf6 gxf6 13 ♘e3 h5 14 ♘xf5 ♜xf5 15 ♘h4 c4+ 16 ♘h1 cxd3 17 ♘xf5 dxe2 18 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 19 ♞xe2 ♘f5 20 ♜d2 h4 ♞ Jabbusch-Dobos, Cattolica 1993.

b) 3 ♘c3 is probably no worse than the main lines (i.e. 3 exd5 ♘f6), where White must play very precisely in order to keep equality. 3...dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♞c7 (D).



With this flexible move, Black protects the c5-pawn, keeps an eye on f4 and will decide later how to arrange his pieces. One of the main ideas of 4...♞c7 is to play a quick ...♘f6 with the pawn on e7, in order to be able to recapture with ...exf6.

b1) 5 g3 b6 6 ♜g2 ♜b7 7 ♞e2 ♘c6 8 ♘f3 g6 9 0-0 ♜g7 10 ♘h1 ♘h6 11 c3 0-0 12 ♘h4 ♞ad8 13 d3 ♜a6 14 ♘f2 ♞fe8 ♞ Basualto-A.Hoffman, Santiago 1999.

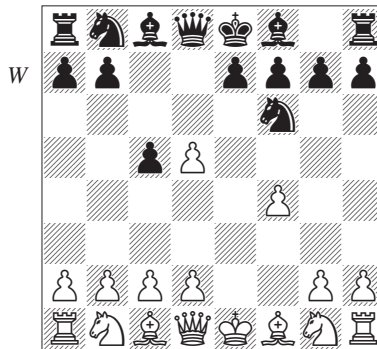
b2) 5 ♜c4 ♘f6 (after 5...♞xf4 6 d3 ♞c7 7 ♘e2 White's lead in development compensates for his slight material deficiency) 6 d3 ♘c6 7 ♘f3 b5! 8 ♜xb5 ♘xe4 9 ♜xc6+ ♞xc6 10 dxe4 ♞xe4+ 11 ♞e2 ♞xe2+ 12 ♘xe2 ♜f5 ♞ Horn-Hauchard, Geneva 1996.

b3) 5 ♘f3 ♘f6 and then:

b31) 6 ♘xf6+ exf6 (the main reason why Black can be happy with this change of the structure is that the f6-pawn controls the vital e5-square) 7 g3 ♜e7 8 ♜g2 0-0 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 b3 ♜g4 11 h3 ♜e6 12 d3 ♞fd8 13 ♜e3 ♞ac8 14 a4 b6 15 ♘h2 h6! 16 ♞e2 f5 17 ♞ae1 ♜f6 ♞ Ermenkov-Adorjan, Budapest Z 1993.

b32) 6 d3 ♘bd7 7 g3 g6 8 ♜g2 ♜g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♞e2 b6 =.

3...♘f6! (D)



This strong move has practically forced White to adopt the 2 ♘c3 move-order if he wishes to play the Grand Prix Attack. If Black is allowed to take on d5 with his knight he will have a clear positional advantage, since the pawn on f4 then serves no purpose