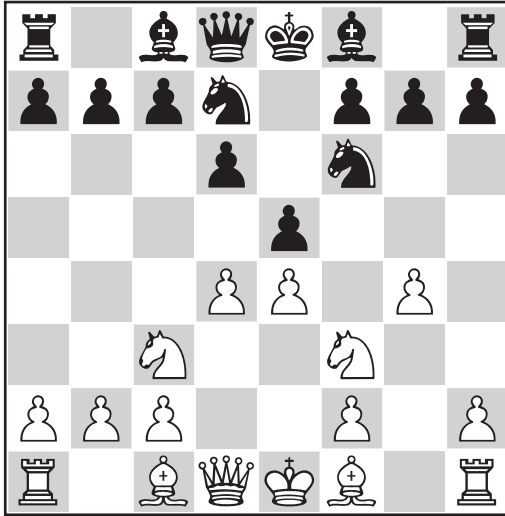


## CHAPTER 5

*Friso Nijboer*

# The Shirov Gambit versus the Philidor



Let's play 5.g4!

In my opinion, White is slightly better in the main line Philidor after 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 e5 4.♗f3 ♗bd7 5.♙c4 ♙e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♞e1 c6 8.a4 a5. However, it is not so easy to make something of this small edge against a player experienced in defending this type of closed position. The same goes for the slightly better ending after 4.dxe5.

When Shirov played 5.g4 in 2003 against Azmaiparashvili the chess world looked on in amazement. The fact that Shirov repeated his line in several games demonstrates that this idea should to be taken seriously and is anything but a one-off novelty.

Black has three different methods of responding to 5.g4. When Black accepts the

pawn on offer with 5...♗xg4 then he must be prepared to walk through a veritable mine field of tactical traps. White's compensation derives from the fact that Black's king will find it hard to reach a safe haven.

Black needs to keep the position closed and must seek counterplay against White's powerful light-squared bishop. The crucial game in my opinion is Stevic-Sebenic, Nova Gorica 2007.

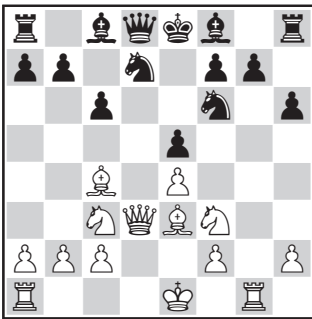
It is possible to neglect 5.g4 with the simple 5...g6. Black moves his knight to h5 after 6.g5 and then goes on to fianchetto his bishop. In my opinion, this reaction is a little too simple. White obtains a better ending as may be seen from Nijboer-Strikovic, Calvia 2006.

The third possibility is 5...h6. At first sight this appears ridiculous as 6.g5 hxg5 7.♘xg5 gives White an untouchable knight on g5 – the square f7 is extremely vulnerable. However, the correct response was played in a 1999 game between Vaissier and Bauer: Black must play 8...c6 threatening the annoying... ♖b6 to trade queens.

In conclusion, the whole 5.g4 line leads to lively play with chances for both sides. There is plenty of room for creativity and I am curious how the Shirov Gambit will develop.

□ Alexey Shirov  
 ■ John Shaw  
 Gibraltar 2005

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♁f6 3.♁c3 e5 4.♁f3  
 ♁bd7 5.g4 ♁xg4 6.♞g1 ♁gf6 7.♙c4  
 h6 8.♙e3 c6 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♚d3

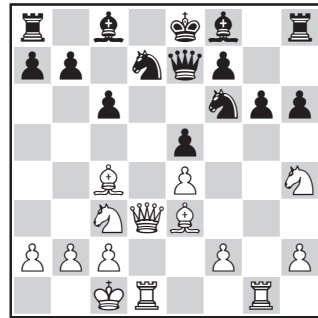


**10...♁h5?!**

A mistake after 5...♁xg4 is nearly almost fatal. Thus, one year later Shirov-Klinova, Gibraltar 2006, went: 10...♚c7? 11.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 12.♚c4+ ♔e7 (no better is 12...♔e8 13.♚e6+ ♙e7 14.♞xg7 ♚d6 15.♚f7+ ♔d8 16.♞d1 ♞f8 17.♞xd6 ♞xf7 18.♞xd7+ ♔xd7 19.♞xf7 and White is two pawns up) 13.♁h4 ♁b6 14.♁g6+ ♔e8 15.♙xb6 axb6 16.♁xh8

g5 17.♁g6 ♙c5 18.0-0-0 and Black resigned.

In the game Berg-Seeman, Kusadasi 2006, Black opted for 10...♚e7. After 11.0-0-0 g6 12.♁h4 White was ready to march with his f-pawn and eager to sacrifice somewhere.



– Seeman now played the timid 12...♞g8?!. After the forceful 13.f4 a6 14.♁f3 exf4 15.♙xf4 b5 16.e5 bxc4 17.♚xc4 White held a huge initiative. So Black went for the ending after 17...♚b4 (no good is 17...♚c5 18.♚e2 ♁h5 19.e6 ♁df6 20.exf7+ ♔xf7 21.♁e5+ ♔g7 22.♙e3 with a huge attack) 18.♚xb4 ♙xb4 19.exf6 ♙xc3 20.bxc3 ♁xf6 21.♙xh6 ♙e6 22.♁d4. Although Black may not be lost, it is hard to defend in practice and Berg won on move 30.

– The real question is how White should respond to 12...♁h5. The positional 13.♁g2 is possible to prepare f2-f4. The sacrifice 13.♙xf7+ ♚xf7 14.♁xg6 ♁f4 15.♙xf4 ♞g8 16.♙xe5 ♞xg6 17.♞xg6 ♚xg6 18.♙g3 ♁c5 is interesting, but at best unclear.

In my opinion, 10...b5 is the most principal reply. See the next game. Now we continue with Shaw's 10...♁h5?!.

**11.♙xf7+**

Shirov immediately seeks to punish Black. The sacrifice may be good, but the resulting position is so complex that a mistake is easily made.

Meanwhile, White had the much more practical 11.0-0-0 at his disposal. It is important that Black's positional threat of 11...♖f6 fails tactically to the brutal 12.♗b5! cxb5 (after 12...♗f4 13.♙xf4 ♜xf4+ 14.♗b1 Black can no longer parry all the threats) 13.♙xb5 ♜e7 14.♗xe5 ♗f6 15.f4! a6 16.♙c5! ♜xc5 17.♗xd7 ♙xd7 18.♙xd7+ ♗d8 19.e5 and White's attack is too strong.

**11...♗xf7 12.♗xe5+ ♗xe5 13.♜xd8 ♗f3+ 14.♗d1 ♗xg1 15.♗c1 ♗h3 16.f4 ♙c5 17.♜c7+ ♙e7 18.♙c5 ♖e8 19.f5 ♗f8 20.♙xe7+ ♖xe7 21.♜d8+ ♗f7 22.b3 ♗f6**



**23.♗b2?**

White is still better after 23.♜d4 ♗g4 24.♗b2 ♗e5. The text allows a neat drawing motif.

**23...♗g5 24.♖g1 ♖d7 25.♜h8 ♖e7 26.♜d8 ♖d7 27.♜h8 ♖e7 1/2-1/2**

□ Hrvoje Stevic  
 ■ Matej Sebenik  
 Nova Gorica 2007

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♗f6 3.♗c3 e5 4.♗f3 ♗bd7 5.g4 ♗xg4 6.♙g1 ♗gf6 7.♙c4 h6**

It is dangerous to give up the centre with 7...exd4. White develops fast after 8.♜xd4, while 8.♗xd4 also gives him a big initiative.

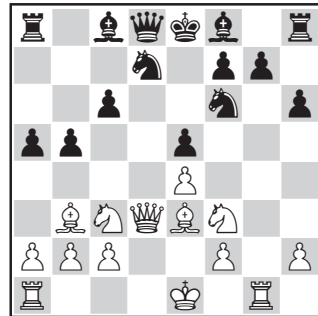
**8.♙e3 c6 9.dxe5**

This is the correct moment to fix the pawn structure. Otherwise Black will obtain additional possibilities. An attempt to circumvent the game with 9.♜d3?! has a contrary effect after 9...b5 10.♙b3 a5 11.d5 a4 12.dxc6 axb3 13.cxd7+ ♜xd7 14.cxb3 b4 and Black is better.

**9...dxe5 10.♜d3 b5 11.♙b3**

Here 11.♙xf7+?! fails to 11...♗xf7 12.♗xe5+ ♗xe5! 13.♜xd8 ♗f3+ 14.♗d1 ♗xg1 15.♗c1 ♙e7 16.♜c7 (very bad is 16.♜xh8 ♙b7 17.♜xa8 ♙xa8 and Black has a won position) 16...♙g4! 17.♙c5 ♖he8 and his activity guarantees Black an edge.

**11...a5**



In my opinion this is the critical position of the whole 5.g4 complex.

**12.a4 bxa4**

If 12...b4? then 13.♜c4 ♜e7 14.♜xc6 ♖b8 15.♗b5 and White wins.

**13.♙c4?!**

White wants to keep his attacking bishop, but Black's response in the game is excellent.

The standard 13.♙xf7+? is bad due to 13...♗xf7 14.♜c4+ ♙e8 15.♗h4 (15.♜e6!?) 15...g5 16.♗g6 ♖g8 17.♜e6+ ♙e7 18.♗xe7 ♜xe7 19.♜xc6 ♖b8 and Black has nothing to fear.

In case of 13.♖xa4 ♙a6 14.♙c4 ♙xc4



**7. ♖xd4**

Here everybody always automatically takes back on d4. However, in my opinion 7. ♖g5 is a dangerous option:

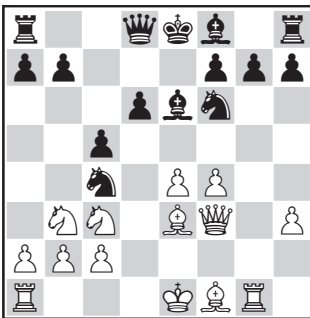
– in case of 7... ♗df6 8. ♖xd4, or 7... ♗gf6 8. ♖xd4, White develops fast and has dangerous attacking chances.

– 7... ♗e7?! is bad due to 8. ♗xe7 ♖xe7 9. ♗d5 ♖xe4+ 10. ♖e2 ♗e3! 11. ♗xc7+ ♗d8 12. ♗xa8 (easier to evaluate is 12.fxe3 ♗xc7 13. ♗xd4 ♖h4+ 14. ♖g3 ♗e5 15. ♖d2 with an attack for White) 12... ♗xc2+ 13. ♗d2 ♖xe2+ 14. ♗xe2 ♗xa1 15. ♗xd4 and in all likelihood White has a good position.

– 7...f6 8. ♗xd4 ♗xf2 9. ♖e2 ♗e5 10. ♗f4 ♗fg4 11.h3 g5 12. ♗g3 c6 (not 12... ♗h6 13. ♖h5+ with an edge in development for White and play on the light squares) 13.hxg4 ♖b6 14.0-0-0 ♗xg4 15. ♖f2! ♗xd1 and now White wins after the spectacular 16. ♗d5! cxd5 17. ♖xf6 ♗c6 18. ♗b5 ♗e2 19.exd5 ♗xb5 20.dxc6.

**7... ♗de5 8.h3 ♗f6 9. ♗e3 c5 10. ♗b3 ♗e6 11.f4 ♗c4 12. ♖f3**

Entirely possible was 12. ♗xc4 ♗xc4 13. ♖f3 ♖b6 14.0-0-0 0-0-0 15. ♗f2 followed by ♗h4 with a good game.



**12... ♖b6?!**

I see nothing against the greedy 12... ♗xb2!. After 13. ♗b5+ ♗d7 14. ♗c1 ♗c4 15.f5 ♗e5 16. ♖g3 ♗c4 17. ♗xc4 ♗xc4 18. ♗f4

White's compensation is negligible.

**13.0-0-0 0-0-0 14. ♗f2 g6 15. ♗a4?!**

Correct was 15. ♗h4 ♗e7 16. ♗xc4 ♗xc4 17. ♗d2 ♖a6 18.e5 ♗g8 19. ♗de4 ♗xh4 20. ♖g4+.

15... ♖c6 16. ♗axc5 dxc5 17. ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 18. ♖c3 ♗e7 19. ♗xc4 ♗xc4 20. ♖xc4 ♖xe4 21. ♖c3 ♖e8 22. ♗xc5 ♖xf4+ 23. ♗e3 ♖c7 24. ♖f1 ♗c8 25. ♗d4 ♗d7 26. ♗xd7 ♖xc3 27. ♗xc3 ♗g5+ 28. ♗b1 ♗xd7 29. ♖xf7+

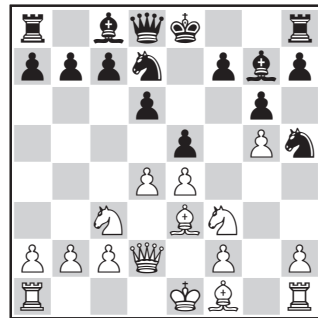
And the game ended in a draw on move 43.

□ Friso Nijboer

■ Aleksa Strikovic

Calvia 2006

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♗f6 3. ♗c3 e5 4. ♗f3 ♗bd7 5.g4 g6 6.g5 ♗h5 7. ♗e3 ♗g7 8. ♖d2**



**8...c6**

After 8...0-0 9.0-0-0, the game Lastin-Azmaiparashvili, Tripoli Wch 2004, continued with the suicidal 9...f5?, after 10.exf5 ♖xf5 Lastin played 11.dxe5. Best would have been 11. ♗e2! ♖f8 12. ♗h4 ♖f4 13. ♗g2 exd4 14. ♗xf4 dxc3 15. ♖d5+ ♗h8 16. ♗xh5 ♗b6 17. ♖b3 gxh5 18. ♗xh5 and wins.

Interesting, but also incorrect, is 9... ♗b6?! 10.dxe5 ♗g4 11. ♗e2 ♗c4 (11... ♗xf3 is eas-

ier to refute: 12.♙xf3 ♘c4 13.♚e2 ♘xe3 14.♚xe3 ♙xe5 15.♘e2! ♘g7 16.♙g2 ♘e6 17.f4 ♘xf4 18.♘xf4 ♚xg5 19.♚hf1 ♙xf4 20.♚xf4 ♚xg2 21.♚h4 and White wins) 12.♙xc4 ♙xf3 13.exd6 cxd6 (after 13...♙xd6 14.♚xd6 cxd6 15.♙d5 White has lots of squares and the initiative) and with his control over square d5 and his active pieces White must be better.

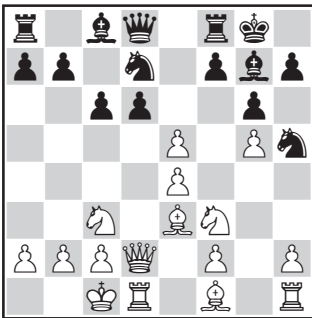
I therefore conclude that 9...c6 is best to transpose into the main game.

### 9.0-0-0 0-0

9...♚a5 has no independent meaning – after 10.dxe5 Black must take back with the pawn: 10...dxe5 (10...♘xe5? fails to 11.♚xd6 ♘xf3 12.♚d5) 11...♙h3 0-0.

### 10.dxe5

Inferior is 10.♙b1?! ♚a5 11.d5 c5 12.♘b5 ♚b6 13.a4 ♘b8 14.♘e1 ♚d8 15.♙e2 a6 16.♘a3 b5 and Black's attack is faster, Leon Hoyos-Hernandez, Mexico City 2006.



### 10...dxe5

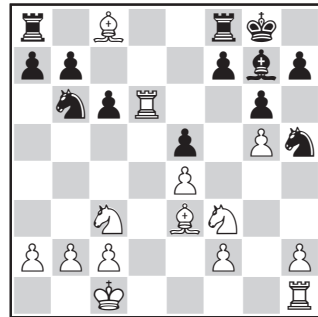
Bad is 10...♘xe5? 11.♘xe5 ♙xe5 12.♙e2 ♚a5 13.f4 ♙xc3 14.♚xc3 ♚xc3 (White has a great attack after 14...♚xa2 15.♙c4 ♚a4 16.♙b1) 15.bxc3 d5 16.exd5 ♚e8 17.♚he1! (excellent, the invasion on the 8th rank guarantees a big edge) 17...♚xe3 18.♙xh5 ♚xe1 (insufficient is 18...♚xc3 19.♚d3 ♚c4 20.♚e8+ ♙g7 21.♙e2) 19.♚e1 ♙d7 (in case of 19...gxh5 White has 20.♚e8+ ♙g7

21.d6 and wins) 20.♙f3 and White has a superior position.

### 11.♙h3 ♚c7

An important alternative is 11...♚a5 12.♙d7 ♚d8 13.♘a4! ♚xd2+ (the point is that 13...♚xa4? fails to 14.♙xc6 ♚xd2 15.♙xa4; possible is 13...♚a6 14.♚d3 ♚xd3 15.♚xd3 ♚xd7 16.♚a3! ♚d8 17.h3! ♙f8 18.♙c5 ♙xc5 19.♘xc5 but White retains an edge) 14.♘xd2 ♙xd7 15.♘c5 b6 16.♘xd7 ♚xd7 17.♘c4 ♚ad8 18.♚xd7 ♚xd7 19.♚d1 ♚xd1+ 20.♙xd1 and White is better in the ending.

### 12.♚d6 ♚xd6 13.♚xd6 ♘b6 14.♙xc8



### 14...♚fxc8?!

More accurate is 14...♚axc8 15.b3 ♚cd8 (the optimistic 15...f5 16.a4 fxg4 17.♘d2 ♘f4 18.♘xe4 is also better for White) 16.♚hd1 (16.♚xd8 ♚xd8 17.♚d1 transposes to the game) 16...♚xd6 17.♚xd6 f6 18.a4 fxg5 19.♘xg5 ♘f4 20.a5 and White has a large advantage.

### 15.b3 ♚d8 16.♚xd8+?!

This is unnatural. Instead, 16.♚hd1 ♚xd8 17.♚xd6 f5 18.a4 ♙f8 19.♙c5! would have given White a lovely position.

### 16...♚xd8 17.♚d1 ♚xd1+ 18.♘xd1 f6

No good is 18...f5? because of 19.exf5 gxf5 20.♙xb6 axb6 21.♘e3.

### 19.h4?

After this loss of time Black is able to take over the initiative in the ending. White had to

continue with his plan by means of 19.♖b2 ♘f5 22.exf5 gxf5 23.♙xb6 axb6 24.♗c4 e4 25.♗h4 f4 and White still holds the better chances.

**19...♗f7 20.♖b2 f5 21.♙xb6 axb6 22.♗c4 ♗e6 23.♗xb6 fxe4 24.♗d2 ♙f8 25.♗xe4 ♗f5 26.f3 ♗f4 27.♗d2**

Black is also better after 27.♗d7 ♙a3+ 28.♗d1 ♗xf3 29.♗d2+ ♗g4 30.♗c4 ♙b4 31.♗cxe5+ ♗hx4 32.♗d3.

**27...♗g3 28.♗d7 ♙e7 29.♗c4 ♗f5 30.♗a5 ♗hx4 31.♗xb7 ♗xf3 32.a4 e4 33.♗dc5 ♗d4?**

Black had an easy win with 33...e3. In the game White won after mutual inaccuracies.

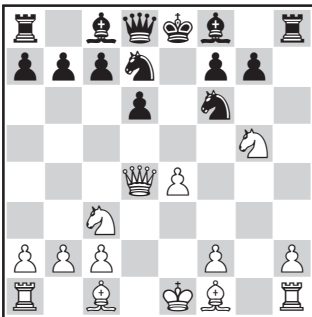
□ Anatoly Vaisser

■ Christian Bauer

Besançon ch-FRA 1999

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♗f6 3.♗c3 ♗bd7 4.g4**

Note the move order. Now Black has to defend with 4...h6. The game transposes to 1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♗f6 3.♗c3 e5 4.♗f3 ♗bd7 5.g4 h6. **4...h6 5.♗f3 e5 6.g5 hxg5 7.♗xg5 exd4 8.♙xd4**



**8...c6!**

This flexible move is best. In Nepomniachtchi-Hautot, Fügen 2006, 8...♗e5?! led to a clearly inferior game after 9.♙e2 ♙e7 10.f4 ♗f4 11.h3 ♗h6 12.♙g1 ♗c6 13.♙d3

♗g8 14.♙e3 f6 15.♗f3 ♙f8 16.0-0-0.

**9.♙f4**

White has lots of possibilities here, but it is not so easy to determine which move is best. The text is logical: White controls square e5, thereby threatening 10.♙c4, attacking pawn d6 and developing a piece.

The alternatives are less good:

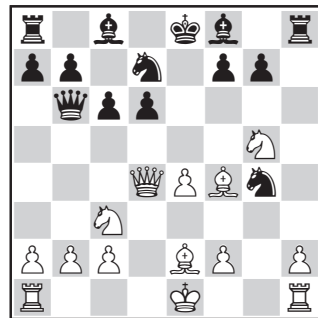
– 9.f4 ♗h7! (a standard move in the ...h6 variation; bad is 9...d5? 10.exd5 ♙c5 11.♙d3 0-0 12.♙d2 with an attack) 10.♗f3 (not 10.♗xh7? ♙h4+) 10...♙b6 with an unclear position.

– 9.♙c4? is bad because of 9...♗e5 10.♙e2.

**9...♗g4 10.♙e2?!**

A complex position. I believe that White obtains an edge if he succeeds in castling queenside without allowing the exchange of queens. That is why I would recommend 10.f3 and now 10...♗ge5 11.0-0-0 ♙b6 12.♙d2 ♙e7 13.♙e2 is perhaps not entirely clear, but I would prefer White.

**10...♙b6**



**11.♙d1?**

This is a mistake, but 11.♙xb6 ♗xb6 12.♙g1 ♗e5 13.0-0-0 f6 14.♗f3 g5 is also better for Black.

**11...♙xd4 12.♙xd4 ♗de5 13.♙g3 f6 14.♗f3 ♙e6 15.0-0 g5 16.♙fd1 ♗xf3+ 17.♙xf3 ♗e5 18.♙e2 ♙e7 19.a4 a5**

With a clear positional edge for Black, who won on move 54.