

**HYPERMODERN
OPENING
REPERTOIRE
FOR WHITE**

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OPENING
REPERTOIRE
FOR WHITE**

Eric Schiller

Cardoza Publishing

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INTRODUCTION

This powerful and complete opening repertoire for White using Hypermodern ideas, which are all the rage now in modern chess, will give you a decisive advantage against lesser prepared opponents accustomed to playing against traditional openings.

Instead of placing pawns in the center of the board, as traditional openings advise, you'll stun opponents by actually "allowing" Black to occupy the center with its pawns. But while Black is trying to hold the center together, you'll be setting up ambushes and building a crushing phalanx from the flanks, ready to smash the center apart with Black's slightest mistake.

White's approach is not only simple to learn—because White almost always develops pieces in the same manner—but can be used against all Black defenses no matter what Black plays!

The Réti and English openings, which form the basis of the Hypermodern approach, lead to lively games with many possibilities for brilliant sacrificial play and subtle maneuvering. The flexibility of these transpositional openings is reflected in the strategic handling of the play, where understanding of general ideas is much more important than memorizing specific moves.

Complete games are presented in order to give a full picture of these openings, from the first moves through the endgame, and to illustrate all of the important strategic and tactical ideas of the opening as they were played in actual games. The latest theoretical opinions have been checked and evaluated, and the moves we recommend should hold up against experienced opponents.

Once you learn to achieve good positions from the start, many of your opponents will start to crumble and you will have all you need to bring home the point and be a winner!

THE HYPERMODERN OPENING

A hypermodern opening allows the opponent to establish a broad center while the hypermodernist works from the flanks. The enemy center will become a focus of attack from many pieces and pawns, and will, if all goes as planned, collapse.

This strategy, however, is not without risk. A strong center enables pieces to move between flanks comfortably, and usually leads to an advantage in space. These are serious considerations, and hypermodern play requires good defensive technique to ward off attacks that the opponent may launch, supported by active pieces and a big center.

THE RÉTI OPENING, ENGLISH OPENING, AND RELATED LINES

Our opening repertoire combines elements of several different openings, primarily the Réti Opening (1.Nf3 d5; 2.c4), but also the English Opening (1.c4), into which it can transpose, and some other flank games used to meet some of Black's more unusual defenses.

The Réti was developed in the 1920s, a product of the Hypermodern revolution. Richard Réti's premature death slowed the momentum a bit, but the opening that bears his name had achieved a reputation of full respectability, if a bit unambitious. The success of the New York System gave Black a good defense, easy to learn and easy to play. Since Black is able to achieve equality without too much work, few players wanted to try to make a living by using the Réti all the time as White.

The English Opening dates back to the early days of serious chess. Howard Staunton, and Englishman, was one of the best

THE HYPERMODERN OPENING

players in the world for much of the mid 19th Century, and his patronage for 1.c4 gave the opening its name. There are many players who prefer 1.c4 to 1.Nf3 as White, willing to allow an immediate ...d5 rather than ...d5 which is available against 1.Nf3. This is a matter of personal taste. Since 1.c4 e5 is a reversed Sicilian, those who enjoy the Sicilian Defense as Black often find it convenient to play it with the White pieces and an extra tempo. Sometimes the extra tempo is awkward, as White is forced to show future intentions earlier than planned, allowing Black to react.

My own reaction to 1.c4 is that it is an invitation to learn a lot more theory without great benefits to offset the work. After all, with 1...e6 or 1...c6, Black can play ...d5 on the second move no matter what White does. On 1.Nf3 d6, however, White could always deny ...e5 with 2.d4. If you are going to play in hypermodern style, then why worry about Black getting a pawn to the center. That's all part of the strategy!

PLAYERS OF THE HYPERMODERN REPERTOIRE

Hypermodernism is so well established that most players adopt the style from time to time. Some players, including Jon Speelman, Bent Larsen, Pal Benko and former World Champion Vasily Smyslov, have a great fondness for the style and use hypermodern openings frequently as White. Others, such as Garry Kasparov, use it only when it fits certain needs.

I have had extraordinary success with the Réti as White, defeating two Grandmasters in serious tournament competition, but like most players I prefer to use it as a “second string” opening. This repertoire requires patience, and sometimes I play too impatiently, attacking prematurely and trying to precipitate a crisis even in the early stages of the game. The hypermodern repertoire restrains these impulses and keeps me in line. Strong players sometimes use hypermodern openings when facing lower ranked opposition, in order to avoid prepared opening surprises or the disclosure of home preparation in their first string openings.

HOW TO STUDY THE HYPERMODERN REPERTOIRE

The many transpositional possibilities make the hypermodern openings difficult to study in a systematic way. Our approach concentrates on the different types of defensive structures that Black

can use to react to the Hypermodern openings. We will look at many of these structures in the next chapters.

Each defensive formation presents its own challenge. These are outlined in the chapter on defenses. In the Illustrative Games chapter I go into much greater depth and recommend strategies for White against all the move orders Black has tried. I don't recommend that you try to absorb all of the fine points of move orders at once. It is difficult to keep straight all of the similar positions. Instead, you should try to follow White's typical piece formations and tactics, and track the general strategy of the line.

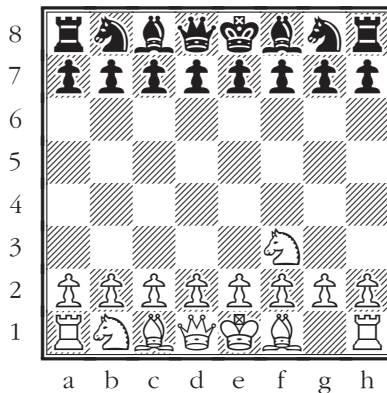
While very small differences in move order can have great consequences, keep in mind that if this is one of your main openings as White, you will see the positions far more frequently than your opponent. You will gain confidence as your experience with the line grows and the subtle points of move orders and transpositions will eventually come under your command. Do not try to rush the process through memorization. You'll only get confused.

Play over the games and all the notes, looking for tactics and positional finesses. When you play, don't just blindly follow the paths of others. Try to use your understanding of the position to improvise at the board. It is entirely possible that you can improve on existing moves. The hypermodern repertoire is not as thoroughly studied as more traditional openings, so there are many positions which have not yet been "discussed" by top players in competitive environments. There is much yet to be discovered.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPERTOIRE

Before undertaking a look at Black's defensive options, let's consider White's intended formation. Réti gave us a clear formula to follow. We develop the knight to f3, take a small stake in the center with c4, fianchetto and castle on the kingside, set up a fianchetto on the queenside, develop the other knight, and eventually place our queen and rooks in the most useful positions.

Let's consider Black's options after our initial move **1.Nf3**.



Black has twenty legal replies, though some are simply ridiculous. Nevertheless, let us consider each of Black's options and consider our reply. This section contains my recommended move order, but other transpositional paths are available and some may be good alternatives if you are willing to accept the structures Black may select. The most common Black replies are listed first.

So that you know which defenses you are (statistically) most likely to encounter, here is a chart showing the popularity of the

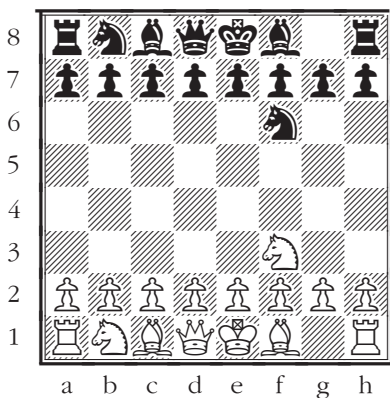
CHART: TWENTY LEGAL RESPONSES TO 1.NF3
Eric to Supply Chart

OVERVIEW OF THE REPERTOIRE

replies in 2500 recent games that began 1.Nf3. Note that there is no sign of 1...h5, 1...h6, 1...Nh6, 1...g5, 1...f6, 1...e5, 1...Na6, 1...a5, or 1...a6. Not all of these moves lead to immediate disaster, but for reasons you can probably guess (or will read below), they are not likely to bother you much as you play the White side. Also extremely rare are 1...b5, 1...b6 and 1...c6. Leaving aside those moves, there are still eight replies that are encountered in tournament play.

Following is the entire range of Black options. I have only pointed out the most important transpositions in the comments. We'll look at transpositional possibilities in more detail later on.

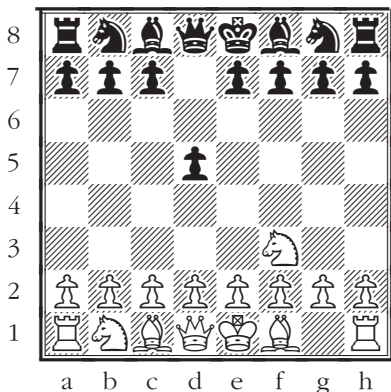
Black Replies 1...Nf6



Against 1...Nf6

This is far and away the most popular move, seen in almost half the games. Black discloses nothing, maintains symmetry, and awaits further developments. The game can lead almost anywhere from here.

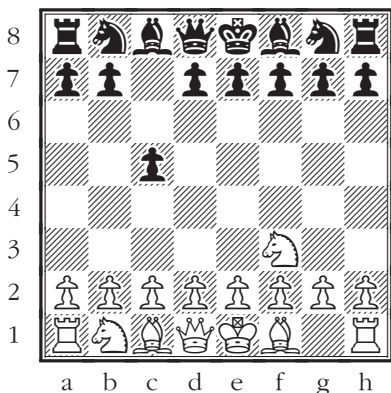
Black Replies 1...d5



Against 1...d5

This is the second most popular option. Black stakes a firm claim on the center. It does commit Black to accept a Queen Pawn Game after 2.d4, so it does not appeal, for example, to King's Indian players.

Black Replies 1...c5

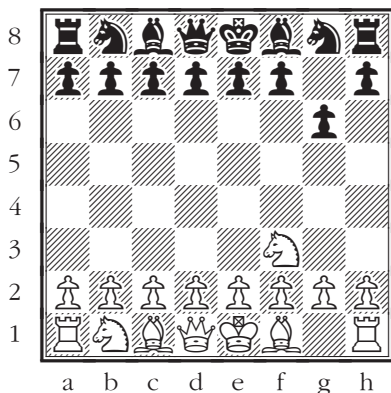


Against 1...c5

This is an open invitation to the Sicilian Defense after 2.e4, which limits its appeal to those who enjoy the Sicilian as Black. That's a lot of people! Black often plays ...c5 against the Réti so not a lot of intent is disclosed here. It is the future of the d-pawn that determines the contour of the middlegame.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPERTOIRE

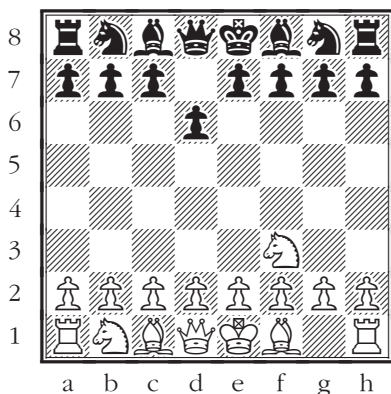
Black Replies 1...g6



Against 1...g6

Fans of the Modern Defense and King's Indian use this move to declare their intention to fianchetto on the kingside no matter what White does. After 2.e4, White can lead the game into the Modern or Pirc by refraining from an early c4.

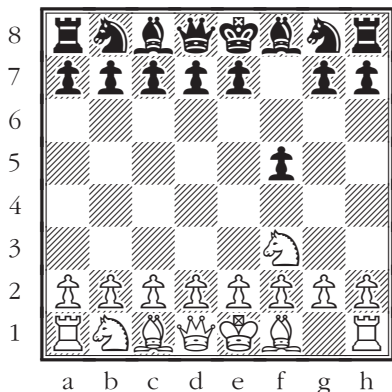
Black Replies 1...d6



Against 1...d6

In my opinion, this is the move that drives 1.Nf3 players crazy, and I play it frequently as Black. The idea is to play ...e5. The only way to stop that is 2.d4, transposing to the Wade Defense. Of course, White can choose 2.e4, after which Black selects from among the Philidor, Sicilian, Modern, Gurgendidze or Czech defenses.

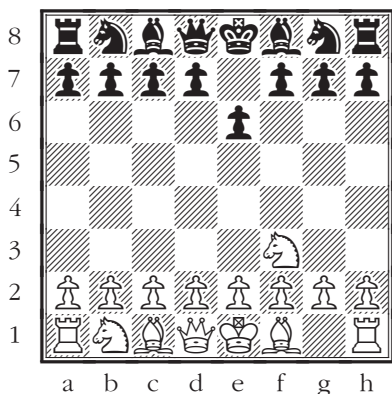
Black Replies 1...f5



Against 1...f5

This move is the obvious way to head for a Dutch Defense, but it has some serious drawbacks. White can offer a dangerous gambit right away with 2.e4 or delay it for a while. This is enough to discourage many players from using the immediate f-pawn thrust. The Réti formation is an excellent reply by White, who can delay e4 until the early middlegame.

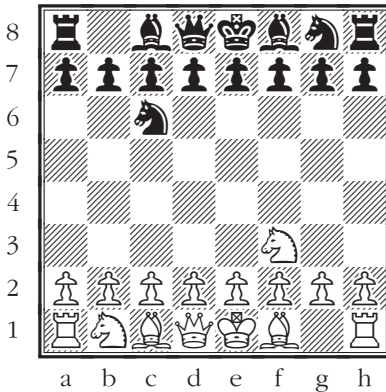
Black Replies 1...e6



Against 1...e6

This flexible move is rare. White can, of course, dive into French or Sicilian territory with 2.e4, but usually White just continues with the standard Réti plan. Once Black has clearly indicated a reluctance to play ...e5, an early b3 is more effective than usual.

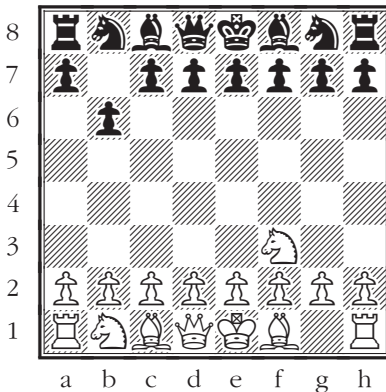
Black Replies 1...Nc6



Against 1...Nc6

The immediate development of the knight to c6 invites the Chigorin Defense after 2.d4 d5, or a Mexican Defense after 2.d4 Nf6. White can play 2.e4, which can lead to an Open Game after 2...e5 or a form of the Nimzowitsch Defense after other moves. Any move other than 2.d4 allows an immediate ...e5 in reply.

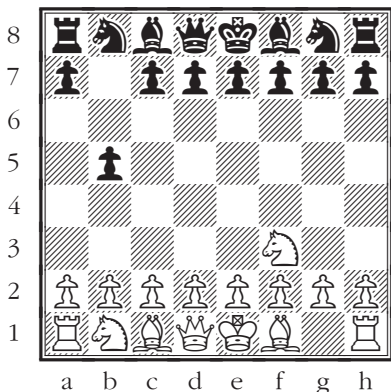
Black Replies 1...b6



Against 1...b6

Here we enter the nether realms of truly rare beasts. The problem with 1...b6 is that after 2.e4 we are in an Owen Defense, where simple development brings White a comfortable advantage without much work. To continue with the Réti, play 2.g3 so that the knight will be defended by the bishop.

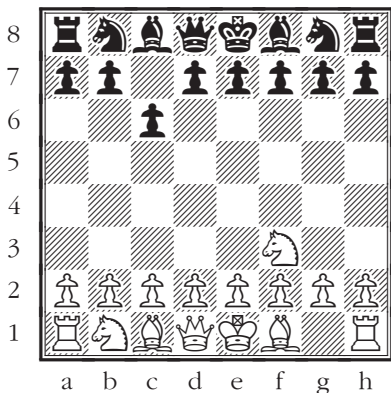
Black Replies 1...b5



Against 1...b5

A very provocative move which has the advantage of preventing the Réti, as now Black can capture at c4 with the b-pawn. The down side is that White can transpose to the St. George with 2.e4. White can also just fianchetto on the kingside and try to get in c4 later, though that is certainly less ambitious.

Black Replies 1...c6

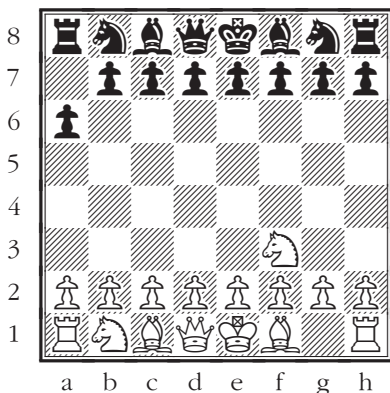


Against 1...c6

This move has no independent significance. Black is likely to set up a Slav or Semi-Slav formation, and this move order offers no advantage over the standard 1...d5 or 1...Nf6 move orders.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPERTOIRE

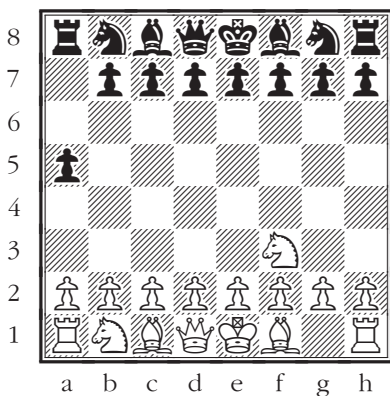
Black Replies 1...a6



Against 1...a6

If Black wants to play a St. George with ...a6 and a5, then this isn't the way to go about it because after 2.c4 Black would have to resort to the dubious gambit play 2...b5. White can also play 2.g3, or of course accept the challenge and play 2.e4.

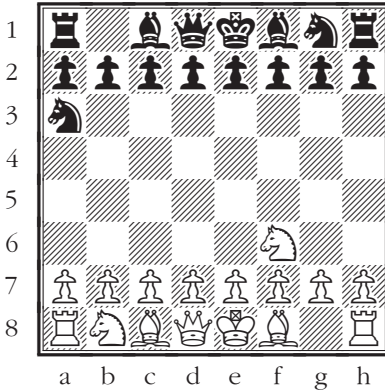
Black Replies 1...a5



Against 1...a5

White has to do some work to make this move worthwhile for Black, and 2.e4 is the best remedy. It makes little sense to adopt a normal Réti, where the move 1...a5 can be of some use, but there is no harm in doing so.

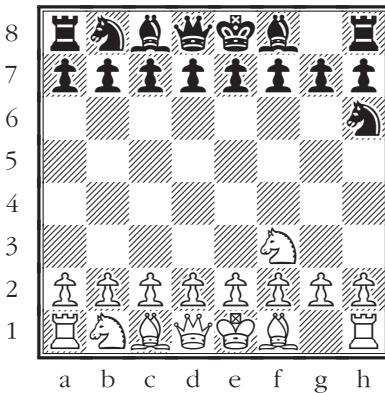
Black Replies 1...Na6



Against 1...Na6

Here, too, 2.e4 is objectively best, not the standard Réti via 2.g3. The knight at a6 will eventually find its way into the game, but is far from the center and Black will need to waste time repositioning the knight in a more useful position.

Black Replies 1...Nh6

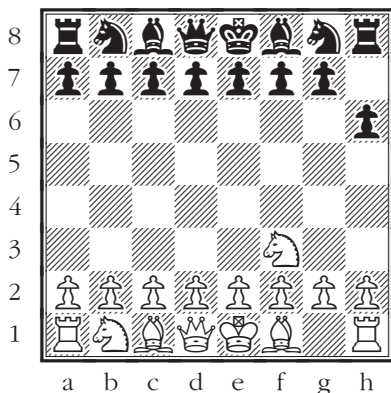


Against 1...Nh6

The knight does not belong here, and the Réti formula works well. Start with 2.b3, preventing Black from fianchettoing at g7. Of course 2.e4 makes a lot of sense here, too, and it is the strongest move, though it leads outside our repertoire.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPERTOIRE

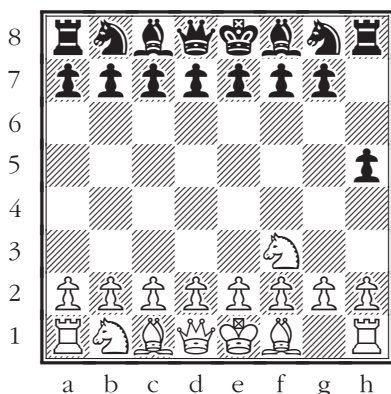
Black Replies 1...h6



Against 1...h6

A nondescript move, which may lead to a New York System. 2.e4 can lead to an obscure Sicilian Defense after 2...c5. Since ...h6 is less useful in the closed openings and Indian games, 2.d4 comes strongly into consideration. The normal Réti is fine, too.

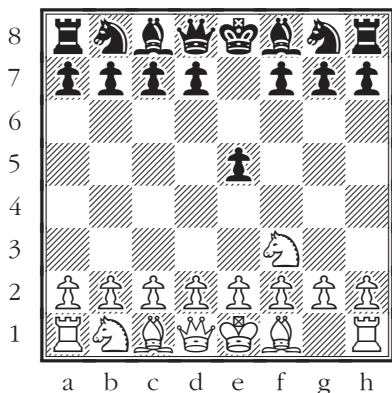
Black Replies 1...h5



Against 1...h5

This unnecessary weakening of the kingside intends, perhaps, a further advance, after which a kingside fianchetto will be more difficult. So to stay with the Réti, 2.g3 is indicated. Either 2.d4 or 2.e4 is likely to be even more effective, however, as ...h5 is a pretty lousy move in any case.

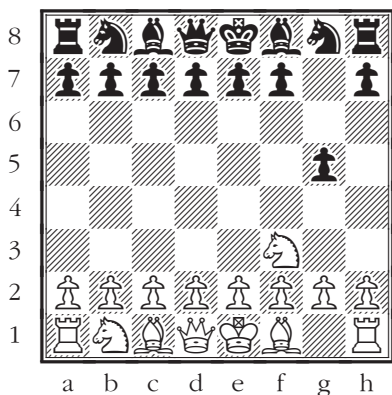
Black Replies 1...e5



Against 1...e5

We are now in the realm of utter foolishness. Black gets nothing for the pawn and 2.Nxe5 is really the only move worth considering. Once the pawn is in hand, a queenside fianchetto, e3, and development of the bishops followed by castling is one recipe for success.

Black Replies 1...g5



Against 1...g5

Another silly gambit. Take the pawn, develop sensibly and victory is likely. Placing pawns at d4 and c3 will blunt the power of the bishop.

OVERVIEW OF THE REPERTOIRE

We won't have much more to say about the bottom dwellers. Any sensible moves will confer an advantage in the worst lines. Our concern is primarily with the six best replies: 1...Nf6, 1...d5, 1...c5, 1...g6, 1...d6 and 1...f5. In most cases Black will be able to achieve a roughly equal game using these moves, and therefore they are the most challenging, as well as the most popular.