

Chapter 2

Introduction: The Enigmatic Zukertort

The Zukertort is a symphony of irony.

Why do you say that?

Well, to begin at the beginning, in his annotations to the oft-quoted seminal game on his opening, *Zukertort v. Blackburne 1883*, Zukertort wrote that he planned to play the whole game on the Q-side. Now players typically think of the system as one long, prepared attack on the enemy's King. Secondly, the opening is called the "Colle-Zukertort," even though Colle practically never played it. In fact, in my own personal database I have many hundreds of games where Colle played what is now known as the "Colle-Koltanowski," but not a single game where he played the Zukertort except when his opponent used the Queen's Indian Defense.

Thirdly, it is unclear why the Colle-Koltanowski and the Colle-Zukertort are so often put in the same book. We do not see books for Black containing in-depth coverage of both the Dragon and Najdorf variations of the Sicilian. We do not see repertoire books for White going deeply into both the Botvinnik and Meran variations of the Semi-slav. Why package these two very different systems in the same text?

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Fourthly, a thorough investigation of the Zukertort will show that it appears to have no real mainline! Or, rather, its “mainline” is so tactically different than most of its other lines that it is hard to say whether it is the mainline of the system or a popular deviation!

Lastly, the Zukertort is an opening whose deviations are probably more important to study than the lines that are considered “standard.”

This is, in fact, one of the major roadblocks for the student of the Zukertort. Books often cage it as “thematic.” One of its major appeals is that it can be played against many different set-ups and should require less study time to play well. The problem with this viewpoint is that the student may not understand that the themes that are important vary from one subtree to another. This is particularly true when Black “deviates” relatively late (say move 7 or 8). For example, if Black opts to delay castling for a bit, he can press matters in a way

very much different than he can if he castles early (as we shall see).

I would suggest the student understand the Zukertort as an opening in which White presents Black the same choice given to the protagonists at the end of the movie *Ghostbusters*. Black may choose to defuse certain themes, but with 5 pieces aimed at his K-side, he cannot stop all of White’s attacking chances. White’s goal is to give Black the unsavory choice of being slowly crushed or reacting in an over-aggressive manner early on.

The frustrating challenge of the student attempting to play the Zukertort is that it is practically never really played at top level except by transposition. The upshot of this is that the lower-ranked player is quite likely to see lines that have been infrequent or non-existent at higher levels. This is especially true of variations that do not involve a c4 advance by White, the most common gate of transposition.

1 Familiarization: White's Basic Plan

Enough yammering! Let's take a look at the opening.

From the first move, Colle-Zukertort players attempt to set up a particular attacking configuration. We will be spending most of the book discussing attempts by Black to thwart that setup and how you (the C-Z player) can adapt advantageously.

For now, though, let's get a feel for what White is aiming for and why Black is generally so anxious to stop him. I know of no other game between strong players that shows so clearly how White intends to ruin Black's day than *Maroczy – Blake, 1923*.

The person playing White in this game was one of the strongest players of his day, and FIDE retroactively granted him a Grandmaster Title in 1950. Other than Paul Keres, he is probably the best player (relative to his own era) never to be world champion. Chess statisticians have suggested his rating back in 1907 would

have been 2820, higher than any other similarly estimated rating for a player at that time.

The person playing Black beat Maroczy and everyone else the previous year at the Weston-super-Mare tourney, so he was no slouch either.

Maroczy – Blake Hastings 1923

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3

White signals he may be playing something a bit off-beat. 2. c4 is the more common move, immediately grabbing a bunch of central space. However, this move also invites Black to have significant say in how the center evolves. So long as White keeps his own c-pawn back, the center is likely to stay mostly static for a long time.

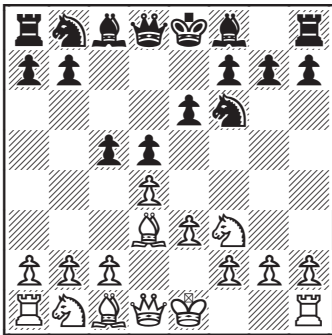
(Historically speaking, White was probably more interested in avoiding the Budapest Gambit [2. c4 e5]. Nowadays this opening is not highly regarded, but during the early 20s it enjoyed significant popularity.)

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2... c5 3. e3

This, above all else, indicates that White is playing the Colle System. He has announced he has no interest in developing his dark-squared bishop along the c1-h6 diagonal any time soon.

3... e6 4. Bd3 d5



We have arrived at the mainline position after the first four moves. White allows Black plenty of space, but none of it on the K-side. He is not giving Black any opportunities to move the pawns on d5 and e6. That pawn chain causes transportation problems for Black.

5. b3

This move indicates which variation of the Colle System White has chosen. His Bishop on d3 is very powerful, so

White wants to stop Black from knocking it off the b1-h7 diagonal by playing ...c4. In the Zukertort variation, White uses b3 to stop this. In the Koltanowski variation, White plays c3, creating a pocket on c2 for his Bishop to retreat to if need be.

It's worth pointing out that White does not absolutely have to deal with this now. He could play 5. 0-0 instead because 5... c4?! is annoying but not particularly good.

You only need to know one of these two variations (though knowing both helps), and this book assumes you want to play the Zukertort option.

Why does knowing both variations help if you only need to use one?

As we will see, Black players often do anything they can to prevent White from getting the setup he is aiming for. When dealing with these various pet defenses and monkey wrenches, White may find one Colle System varia-

tion is better than the other. The suggestions in this book never force you to use the Colle-Koltanowski, but there are a couple of lines where knowing it might allow you to gain a greater advantage.

5... Nc6 6. 0-0 cxd4 7. exd4

Black almost always makes this exchange, but normally not this early. The semi-open e-file helps White at this stage more than the semi-open c-file helps Black.

Why?

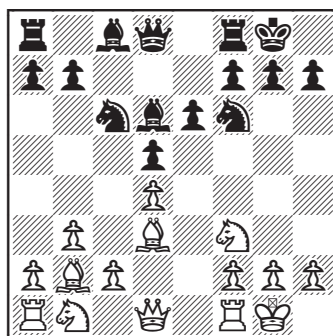
One of Black's best early defensive ploys is to establish a Knight on e4. This blocks the wonderful Bishop White has on d3 and gives Black space on the K-side for maneuvering. For example, the f-pawn can now move forward and the d8-h4 corridor is opened.

With the e3-pawn out of the way so early, White can more easily cover the e4-square. Less critically, he also has more choices for how to support the Knight he plans to put on e5.

Then why do you say Black "almost always" makes this exchange if it helps White?

I said it helps White more at the very beginning. Later in the game this exchange is critical for two reasons. First, it opens the c-file for Black's major pieces. This is the most direct (and sometimes the only) way for Black to get counterplay. Secondly, if Black does not exchange pawns soon enough, White can play dxc5 to open up the diagonal for his Bishop on b2. This can be quite deadly; we will see an example in our third game.

7... Bd6 8. Bb2 0-0



From here, White has three main goals.

- Play his Knight to d2 to stop ...Ne4.

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- Play a3 to stop ...Nb4, harrying his prize Bishop on d3.
- Play Ne5 and f4 to stuff up the center and gain K-side space so he can launch an attack without any real fear for his own King.

Unfortunately, White is only allowed to make one move at a time. Black can limit White to only achieving two of these three if he is prepared. We will discuss this in chapter four... as well as how White can now turn the tables to achieve an advantage even against the most prepared opponent!

9. a3

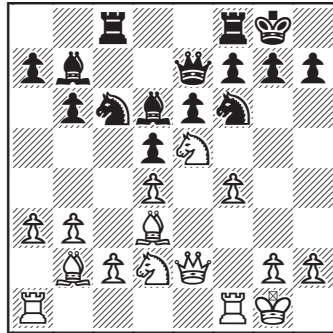
I would prefer playing 9.Nbd2 since stopping 9...Nb4 is less important than stopping 9...Ne4. After 9.Nbd2 Nb4, White can just retreat his Bishop (10.Be2) and kick the Knight away later. If Black plays 10...Qc7, it turns out White is fine after either 11.a3 or 11.c4, the latter threatening to open the c-file and attack the Queen with Rc1. We will discuss these lines in chapter 4.

9... b6 10. Nbd2 Bb7 11. Qe2

Once again, we have a slight

inaccuracy. Playing 11. Ne5 immediately would be better as it prevents Black from sneaking his Bishop behind enemy lines with 11... Bf4.

11... Rc8 12. Ne5 Qe7 13. f4



White has gotten everything he wants now. All of Black's obvious means of causing problems have been restricted and White can look forward to a pleasant (for him!) K-side attack.

13... Rfe8

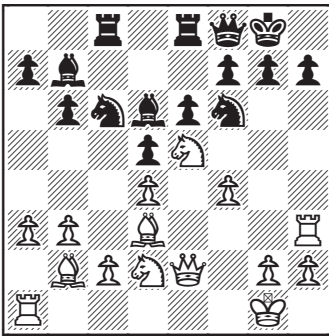
Black is alert to the danger to his King, so he starts a defensive plan whereby his Queen will come to g7.

14. Rf3

White uses a standard tactic in the Colle-Zukertort, a "Rook Lift." His opening strategy has gained him space on the K-side. He now begins a

phase of transporting pieces to fill up that space prior to any actual exchanges. C-Z players must have patience to fully realize their space advantage. Frequently you will be in a position where Black has little he can do with his space. If you do not see a decisive tactic and Black has no meaningful counterplay or significant ways to improve his position, there is no reason to rush.

14...Qf8 15.Rh3



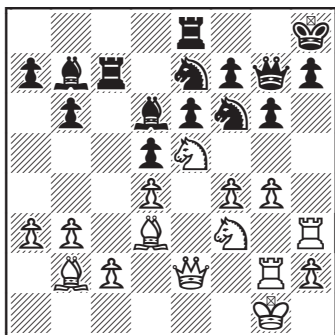
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this a bit too early and/or too frequently. It is more commonly appropriate in the other variation of the Colle (where White plays c3 instead of b3). The f3-square is an important transition point for White, and there is a certain cost to having it occupied by a piece that may not move for a while.

18... Kh8 19. Rg2

Maroczy is exhibiting the kind of patience I mentioned earlier. A computer would find slightly more powerful attacking moves, but White's choices have severely restricted any Black counter-thrusts. Note how helpless Black's position is because there are so few good squares for his pieces to alight on.

19... Rc7 20. Ndf3



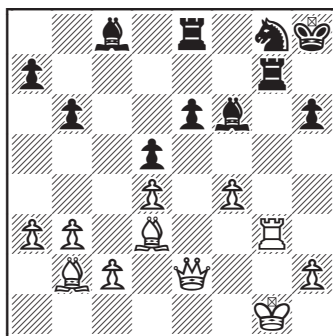
20... Neg8?

White had slowly been building up a dominating position, but neither side had made severe errors until now. Black's last move allows White to display the power of his d3-Bishop. 20... Rf8 would be a better way of putting extra defense on f7.

21. Ng5 h6 22. Ngxf7+

White uses a standard tool available when he has Knights on e5 and g5. One destroys f7, the other hits whatever f7 was protecting. In this case the Bishop on d3 is crucial since g6 is defended by the Queen.

22... Rxf7 23. Nxcg6+ Kh7 24. Nf8+ Kh8 25. Ng6+ Kh7 26. Ne5+ Kh8 27. g5 Bxe5 28. gxf6 Bxf6 29. Rxc7 Rxc7+ 30. Rg3 Bc8



31. c4

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There are several ways for White to convert his positional and material advantage into a win, but whatever he does should involve activating his Bishop on b2. One way to do this is to threaten c5. Black's pieces are tied down defending his King. His defenses would be stretched thin trying to stop a Q-side pawn march, but exchanging on c5 would open up the Bishop on b2.

Another option would be to play a4 and then Ba3, taking away some key squares in Black's camp.

This is all moot since Black's next move is a blunder.

31... Ne7?

As mentioned above, Black's pieces are too tied down to defense. This Knight, for example, had to keep h6 protected.

32. Qh5 Bd7 33. Qxh6+ 1-0.

If you are new to the C-Z, I would play through the above game a few times using a board. It is a model for White's general plan. Some would say Black's defense

was pretty poor, but it's worth pointing out that there was no serious blunder until the twentieth move. It should not be surprising that Black did not find the perfect defenses; humans tend to make more significant blunders on defense than attack.

In case I have not convinced you that White's success was not simply a result of Black's errors, let's look at a much more recent game where the current world champion met the same fate for the same reason. This was at "action chess" time settings, but I don't think that significantly detracts from my point that Black has a difficult time if he does not try to prevent White's general strategy early on.

In this game Black chose to spend his moves setting up a defense rather than preventing the attack. By the time Black manages to establish his own Knight on a central outpost, White has so much artillery leveled at his monarch that even the World Champion could not find a sufficient defense.

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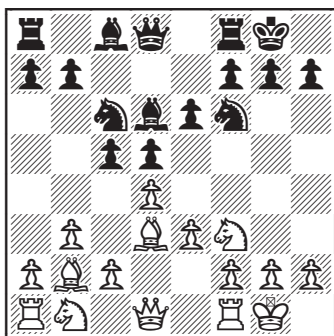
Bruzon – Anand

XIX Ciudad de Leon Masters 2006

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. e3 d5 4. Bd3 c5

The move order is different, but we have arrived at the same position as in the first game.

5. b3 Bd6 6. 0-0 0-0 7. Bb2 Nc6



You'll see the above position frequently when playing the C-Z. Now White aims for the three goals I mentioned in the first game.

8. Nbd2 cxd4 9. exd4 b6 10. a3 Bb7 11. Ne5

Because Black took the time to develop his last minor piece, White has been able to safely grab this spot for his Knight.

11... Qc7

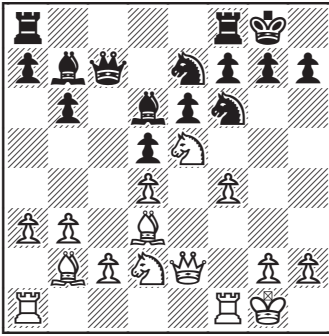
Taking the Knight is not a good idea. 11... Nxe5? lets White fork the Bishop and Knight with 12. dxe5. Taking with the Bishop instead (11... Bxe5!?) is not quite as bad, but still gives White a great position. Not only was Black's dark-squared Bishop his best attacking minor piece, but when the pawn recaptures (12. dxe5) it displaces the only minor piece guarding Black's King.

Instead, Black attacks the Knight while putting his Queen on that semi-open c-file I mentioned earlier.

12. Qe2 Ne7

Black decides not to challenge White's setup directly, but plans on re-routing his Knight to the K-side. This is in line with his earlier moves. Had Black wanted to directly frustrate White's opening aims, he would not have used two early moves to develop his Bishop to b7.

13. f4



White has now achieved the type of position he was looking for. He has a bunch of pieces in the middle that could all quickly target the K-side, and he has a powerful Knight clogging up the center, putting a pinch in Black's position. Note how difficult it is for Black to transfer pieces to defend his K-side. He has begun to transfer his Knight, but that Knight is temporarily blocking his Queen from defending sideways. Even after that Knight moves, it would be difficult for either of his Bishops to get over there, especially since the Knight on f6 has no good place to go.

Nevertheless, White has some sensitive spots — in particular the pawn on c2 and the e4-square. The Bishop on d3

is required to defend both of them. This double duty allows Black's next move, which discourages c4. The good news is that White need not advance his c-pawn to do well.

13... b5 14. Rf3

You have probably already guessed that this is yet another thematic tactic. However, White would do better either playing 14. Rac1 (protecting the pawn on c2 and hence threatening to take the b4-pawn) or playing 14. g4!? immediately. After this latter option, Black is probably best advised to sacrifice a pawn with ...Ne4 since otherwise he faces a formidable assault. For example, 14... Rac8 15. c3 Ng6 16. g5 Nd7 17. Qh5 is pretty rough, but White should check to make sure 17... Nc5?! 18. dxc5 Bxc5+ 19. Kh1 d4+ 20. Be4 dxc3 is not a problem. It isn't.

14... Rac8 15. Rc1 b4?

This is Black's first blunder. Black often pushes his Q-side pawns to break open lines so he can eventually penetrate White's camp. Here, though, Black is ensuring that White

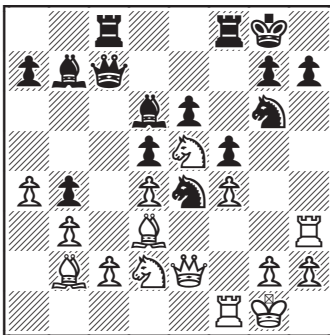
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cannot play b4 later. This means c5 will be a safe haven to put a piece should the pawn on d4 move. We will see in chapter 4 how critical this can be.

All the above is rather academic, though, since 16. axb4! Bxb4 17. c3 Bd6 would have given White a significant advantage. His Bishop on d3 is free now that there is no longer a pawn on c2 to defend. He can present threats on both sides of the board with Rh3 and c4 while Black has a hard time making headway in either sector.

Instead of skirmishing on the Q-side, White chose to lock things up so he could assault Black on the K-side.

16. a4? Ng6 17. Rcf1 Ne4 18. Rh3 f5



Black has managed to establish a Knight on e4. White cannot take this Knight without allowing Black to invade on c2, illustrating the problem I discussed earlier.

For this reason, I suggest White consider Rf2 sometimes as a useful way of adding protection to this pawn while also allowing White to double his Rooks on the f-file and keeping the f3-square open for his Knight. Such a play would prevent the Knight move Black just made.

This game shows that establishing this Knight does not solve all of Black's problems, especially when White has already deployed his Rooks to active attacking posts.

19. Bxe4!

Normally, White should play Nxe4 and then Bc4 to get rid of the Knight, an idea we will discuss in chapter five. However, White has enough firepower for the dissolution of the center to give him significant practical chances. I'm not sure how much White saw in the actual game, but it

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appears Black has only one, hard-to-find defense.

19... dxe4?!

This is the worst of Black's reasonable options.

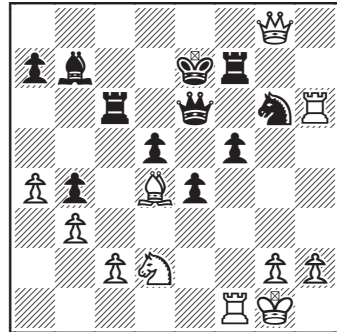
Taking with the other pawn gets messy. The critical line is 19... fxe4 20. Qh5 h6 21. Nxc6 Rf5 22. Qg4 Qxc2 23. Rg3 Rc7 24. Bc1 Rf6 25. Re1 e3 26. Nf3 Kh7 27. Nge5 Qxc1 28. Nd7! Qxe1+ 29. Nxe1 Rxd7 30. Nd3, and White can finally pick up the e3-pawn with an advantage intact.

Even more interesting is the scrappy 19... Bxe5! This move has the effect of making it White who has a pawn on the f-file rather than Black (compare to the game continuation) after 20. dxe5 (20.fxe5 fxe4 21. Qh5 Rxf1+ is very good for Black.) 20... fxe4 21. Qh5 Kf7. White would need to calculate carefully because 22. f5 exf5 23. Rxf5+? Ke8 leaves White in much more danger than Black, largely due to Qb6+ and Qc5+.

Instead, White has to first block the sensitive a7-g1 diagonal with 23. Bd4! Then 23... Ke8 (23... Ke6?! 24.

Qxh7 Nxe5 25. Nf3!) 24. e6 Qe7 25. Qxh7 Qxe6 (this is a superb square for the Queen, almost single-handedly holding together Black's position) 26. Bxg7 Rf7 27. Rh6 Rc6 (27...Qb6+!? 28. Rf2 Rc6 29. a5! Qa6 30. Nf1 is hardly attractive) 28. Qg8+ Kd7 is at least unclear.

On the other hand, 28... Ke7? 29. Bd4! gives White an irresistible position, which gives some indication of how sharp an attack White has.



White's last move was a crusher. 29. Bd4! threatens the a7-pawn on the surface, but it also shuts down Black's meaningful efforts at counterplay (e.g., ...e3 and ...Qc8) while extricating White's only vulnerable piece to allow for several new threats (e.g.,

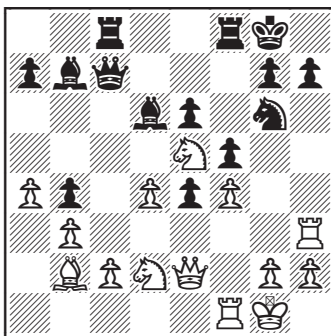
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marching the h-pawn, Be3-g5, and Qb8!).

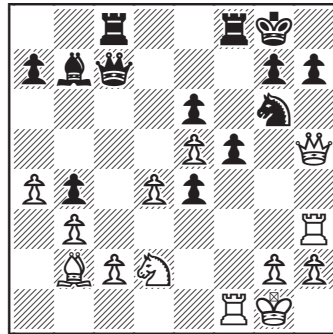
How does 29. Bd4! shut down ...e3 and ...Qc8?

The Bishop had earlier been shielding Black's Knight on g6 from the Queen on g8. Now that Knight needs two defenders, so the Queen is stuck. With regard ...e3, it is true that the Queen protects this pawn, but Black really wants to play ...e2 and ...Qe3+ afterward. The Bishop on d4 removes this lethal follow-up, defanging the whole operation. After 29... e3? 30. Nf3, White threatens a lethal Ng5.

Okay, enough fun with that line. Back to the position from the actual game after 19... dxe4



20. Qh5 Bxe5 21. fxe5



21... Qxc2

This is desperation. 21... Kf7 lets Black slow the attack, but there would be no hope against the likes of Bruzon. 22. Nc4 Ke7 (22... Rh8 23. Nd6+; 22... Rcd8 23. g4) 23. Qg5+ Kd7 24. Rxh7

22. Qxh7+ Kf7 23. Rg3 Qxd2

Now it is just a rout.

24. Rxg6 Rg8 25. Rxe6 Kxe6

26. Qxf5+ Ke7 27. Qf7+ Kd8

28. e6 e3 1-0.

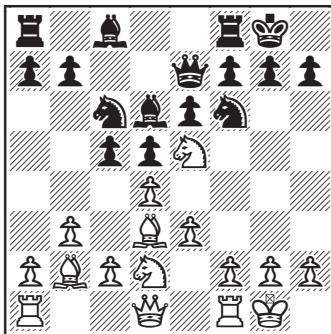
In the above two games, by the time Black had addressed White's powerful Bishop on d3, White had either developed more threats or enjoyed enough board control that he could launch a pawn storm. Now let's look at an example where Black invests moves much earlier aimed at frus-

trating that Bishop. We will see how even with this first threat neutralized, the pawn skeleton and space limitations make White's attack much easier to play than Black's defense.

This is another "action chess" game between Grandmasters. White is a coach who promotes the idea of having "happy pieces." It makes sense that the C-Z fits his interests since all White's pieces get useful posts.

**Kogan-Kravtsiv
AIG Life (Warsaw) 2007**

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. e3 d5 4. Bd3 c5 5. b3 Nc6 6. Bb2 Bd6 7. Nbd2 0-0 8. 0-0 Qe7 9. Ne5



White has played standard moves (though we will see in

chapter four why they are not the best moves). Black has a number of ways to frustrate White from this position. A well-known method is 9... cxd4 10. exd4 Ba3, which changes the nature of the game substantially. A less well-known option is 9... Qc7! since 10. f4 cxd4 11. exd4 Nb4 will mean the loss of White's prized Bishop.

However, Black uses a method that can best be described as "blunt," both in terms of its simplicity and its effect.

9... Nd7?! 10. f4 f5

GM Kravtsiv must have thought he was in a time warp. Just three rounds earlier in the same tournament he had played GM Yusupov who had also played the C-Z and reached the same position. Perhaps GM Kogan looked over the previous game and thought he could improve on Yusupov's response to Kravtsiv's defense.

11. Rf3?!

This move is no surprise, but is a bit optimistic. White could take advantage of

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Black's temporary retreat with 11. Bb5! Ndx e5 12. fxe5 and White's Bishop (which Black's ...f5 was meant to contain) is quite annoying for Black. After 12... Bc7 13. a4 (the Bishop needs protection, for example 13. Qh5? cxd4 14. exd4 Nxe5 15. dxe5 Qc5+), White is happy to exchange on c6 and has Ba3 and Qf3 as options.

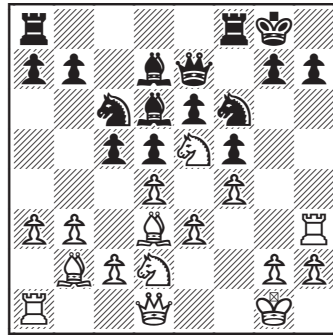
I should point out that all three of these games have featured Rf3 by White, but frequently it is better to attack with an immediate Qh5 and then pull the Queen back to h3 (hitting h7 and e6) rather than put the Rook on that square. The Qf3 idea mentioned at the end of the last paragraph is another common move, putting strain on the a8-h1 diagonal and allowing for several possible final destinations for the Queen.

11... Nf6 12. Rh3 Bd7

Black normally prefers putting his Bishop on b7, but with the Queen on e7 that is harder to do. Moving the b-pawn would drop the Knight on c6. Instead, Black decides to use

several moves to find a K-side position for this Bishop.

13. a3



13... Rac8 14. Ndf3 Be8 15. Qe1

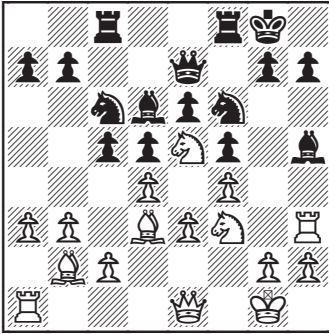
Since Black appears to be keeping his Knight on f6 (stopping Qh5 and Qg4), White uses an extra move to allow transport for the Queen to the K-side.

15... Bh5?

You may recall that I mentioned Black *eventually* needs to take on d4. He has not done so in this game, and White could have crushed him here. Had Black taken on d4, White's best chance at maintaining some attack would be 16. Nxc6 bxc6 17. Bxd4 c5 18. Be5 Ng4 19. Bxd6 Qxd6

As it is, though, Black did not exchange. In the position

below (after 15...Bh5?) try to find how White can gain a decisive advantage.

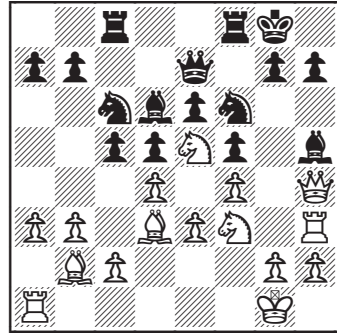


If you did not find it, don't feel too bad. White was so set on his simple attacking plan that he did not see it either.

16. Qh4?

16. dxc5 Bxc5 17. Nxc6 Rxc6 18. Bxf6 Qxf6 19. Rxh5 gives White a material plus. 19... Bxe3+ 20. Qxe3 Qxa1+ does not save Black due to the weaknesses on a7 and e6: 21. Kf2 g6 22. Rh6 Rfc8 23. Nd4.

Coming back to the position after 16. Qh4?



16... h6?!

This does not address the problems in the above note, but White would get less of an advantage now because the Queen is no longer able to take on e3 (see variation in the next note.)

17. c4?!

17. Nxc6 bxc6 18. dxc5 Bxc5 19. Bxf6 Rxf6 20. Qxh5 Bxe3+ 21. Kh1 Bxf4 is still in White's favor.

Instead, White chooses to allow play in the center. I encourage White players to continue to pressure the K-side as long as meaningful progress can be made. For example, assuming White did not see 17. Nxc6 line given above, 17. Rg3 is certainly a reasonable move. It pins the g7-pawn and makes room for h3 (in case Black is

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tempted to play ...Bg4). Note that 17... Bxf3?! would not refute this: 18. gxf3 cxd4 19. Nxc6! with Qxh6 to follow.

17...Bxf3 18.gxf3 dxc4 19.bxc4 Bxe5?!

19... cxd4! 20. exd4 Rfd8! would have shown the danger in White's choice to open the center.

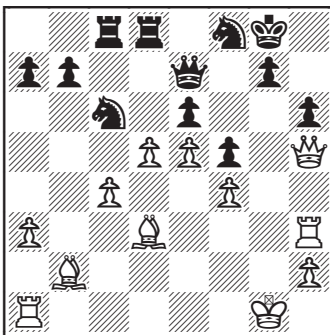
20.fxe5 Nd7 21.Qh5

21. Qg3, threatening Rxh6, was probably a bit better.

21... cxd4 22. exd4 Rfd8

As is so often the case, Black settles on a defensive configuration that does not suffice. It's hard to say what Black's best defense is (that is why it is better to be the attacker!)

23. f4 Nf8 24. d5



Look at that central pawn wall!

24... exd5 25 .Bxf5 Rc7 26. Kh1!

A smart play, removing ... Qc5+ as a tactical resource in the future while allowing his Rook to come to the g-file.

26... dxc4 27. Rg1 Qf7

Other commentators have suggested this is an error, with 27... Qc5 28. Be4 Qf2 29. Bc1 Qd4 giving White only a moderate advantage. However, there is no need to protect the f-pawn or the Bishop when Black's Queen comes to f2. Instead of 29. Bc1?, White can play 29. e6!, allowing Bd5, Qe5, or Qg6. 29... Qxb2 would be ignored since 30. Qxh6 forces Black to give up his Queen to stop mate on h8 (e.g., 30... Nxe6 31. Qxe6+ Rf7 32. Bh7+ Kf8 33. Bg6).

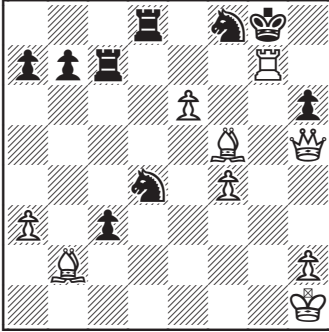
28. Rxg7+ Qxg7 29. Rg3 Nd4 30. e6?

White is going to get Black's Queen eventually, but it appears the time pressure did not allow him to consider the total material imbalance this move allows. The more pedestrian 30. Rxg7+ Rxg7 31. e6 Nxf5 32. Bxg7 Nxe6 33. Qxf5 Nxc7 is much better.

30... c3?

30... Nxf5 leaves Black up considerable material

31. Rxc3+



31... Kxg7 32. Bxc3 Rd5

32... Rxc3? 33. Qf7+

33. Qg4+ Kf6 34. Be4

Material is equal, but Black's King is in the eye of White's tornado. Queening the e-pawn is also no mild threat.

34... Rxc3 35. Bxd5 Nfxe6 36. Qh4+ Kf5 37. Qe1 Rxa3 38. Qe5+ Kg4 39. Bxe6+ Nxe6 40. Qxe6+ Kf3 1-0.

I hope these games have given you a taste of why the C-Z is such an attractive opening. Note how hard it was for Black to develop counterplay. Even when Black got counterplay, White was the only

player allowed to attack the enemy monarch because he could unilaterally delay any transformation of the center by holding back his c-pawn. There was only one check by Black in all three games.

2 Philosophy

The Zukertort is based on a simple concept. Everything in the "mainline" of the Zukertort flows from one principle:

In Queen Pawn openings, Black has problems developing his c-Bishop.

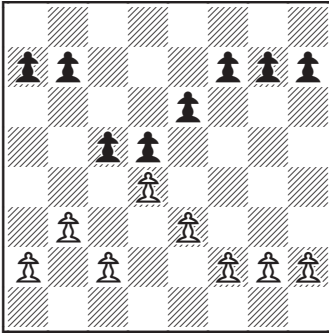
That one idea forms the foundation. Everything from pawn structure to choice of target to philosophy about counterplay flows from this one premise. White's goal is to make Black's c-Bishop the most useless piece of wood that ever graced a chess board.

How does he do that?

Since White holds c4 back, he cedes some center pres-

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sure in exchange for stability. By taking away the option of ...dxc4 and making ...e5 impossible, White forces the following pawn skeleton:



Black will likely play ... cxd4 at some point, but that is the only real control Black has over the central pawn structure in the early and middle parts of the game. Black has to move his Bishop from c8 eventually so his Rooks have space. Since the pawn on e6 is stuck, Black generally plays ...b6 and ...Bb7.

Why does Black have to fianchetto? Why not play ...Bd7 instead?

Good question! The main reason is that ...Bd7 makes the option of g4-g5 very pow-

erful for White since the N/f6 has few good flight squares. A Bishop on d7 also clogs Black's position. In particular, it can be a lethal divider blocking a Queen on c7 from defending Black's K-side pawns.

White plans on keeping the center blocked until it is advantageous for him to open it. Since Black fianchettoes his light-squared Bishop, this lessens considerably the scope of that piece.

But what about White's Bishop on b2?

It is true that its power is lessened as well, but there are four significant differences.

1. One of the jobs of the B/b2 is supporting a N/e5; Black is much less likely to successfully establish a N/e4.

2. The B/b2 supports d4, mirroring the coverage of d5 by the B/b7. However, White does not give a fig about the d5-pawn, so what does he care if it is supported? Black, however, would sincerely love to destroy the d4-pawn. This pawn keeps Black from

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occupying c5 with a piece. A Knight there would harass White's prized Bishop on d3 while a Bishop or Queen there can give a painful check to White's King later in the game. Furthermore, the d4-pawn stops Black from advancing his e-pawn, which would greatly free his position.

3. As far as White is concerned, the inactivity of Black's Bishop is important primarily because it makes Black's light squares on the flanks easier to attack, since this is where the B/b7 does not have influence. Contrarily, Black does not have much prospect of attacking White's dark squares on either flank any time soon, so White's Bishop being blocked in on b2 is not particularly helpful for Black.

4. So long as Black has played ...c5 without having played ...cxd4, it is White, and not Black, who has the power to choose when to open up the center.

These four combine to make White's B/b2 much more useful than Black's B/b7.

The next way the penury of the B/b7 shapes White's plans is his choice of color-influence. White will attempt to control the light squares on the flanks, in particular the K-side, while controlling the dark squares in the center. This will allow him to pressure the light squares that the B/b7 can't defend. For example, it is standard to post a Knight on e5 and to put a Queen on f3 or h3 (these light squares are safe havens for the major pieces). These pieces and, of course, the B/d3, combine to put pressure on Black's light squares, in particular e6 and h7. b5 is another important square for White to control, but we will get to that later.

The N/e5 attacks light squares deep in Black's camp. If it is captured, the pawn that recaptures furthers this motif indirectly by knocking the Knight from f6, where it is optimally placed to defend h7 and the K-side in general. Sometimes the B/b2 aids the light-square domination by capturing this Knight as well.

Finally, the B/b7 hinders

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Black's own counterplay. Black's standard plan is to advance on the Q-side, gaining space and eventually breaking open lines on that sector. It turns out tactically that this can take several moves, largely due to the placement of the B/b7.

How? Why? I'm confused.

Two ways in particular. The first is that a common option for the attacking side in these situations is ...Rb8. However, that only works when the Bishop is anywhere else than b7. On b7, the Bishop blocks the Rook. Secondly, with the Bishop on b7, White has complete control of many of the light squares on that side of the board. In particular, he controls b5, so Black has to waste a move with ...a6 to get ...b5 in. However, by the time Black has worked this up, White will have played a3, which makes it harder to advance his pawns without letting White lock up the Q-side.

The c2-pawn is a natural target for Black, but it is hard

for Black's minor pieces to get to it (especially once White plays a3). Furthermore, it is naturally protected by the B/d3 and easily protected by the a-Rook as well. Other than the thematic Nb4 + Qc7 attack, there are very few good ways of attacking the Q-side quickly with pieces or pawns.

The final key aspect to the Zukertort is space. White allows Black Q-side space and time to use it without grabbing a significant amount for himself because his plans are based on a future f4 and garnering of K-side space. This is one reason why central control is so important for White. He is banking on being able to advance a K-side pawn or two (or three), and that would be a bit dodgy if the center were not stable.

3 Repertoire breakdown

With the exception of Summerscale's, previous books have presented a skewed representation of what one can expect when using a reper-

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toire based on the C-Z. This gets back to a previous point I made about the deviations being as important as the so-called mainline.

To give an idea of how often one can expect various defenses, I analyzed a large collection of games between players rated below 2000. Here are the results assuming a d4, Nf3, e3, Bd3 move order. (See chart on the next page).

Other options, like the Englund Gambit and random openings that may or may not transpose several moves later make up the remaining 8½%.

Note that the various c-Bishop variations represent roughly the same number of games as the mainline. The prevalence of openings such as the KID and Grünfeld are not as troubling because White has not locked in his B/c1 with e3 yet. The reader can pick whatever variations he wishes to play against these defenses, but the Barry and 150 found in Summerscale's and Palliser's book are fun and potent. Another interest-

ing option against the K-side fianchetto, suggested by Yusupov in his recent *Build Up Your Chess: Volume 3*, is the Smyslov variation. He avoids the Russian variation by playing e3 against the Grünfeld, allowing him to recapture on c4 with the Bishop rather than the Queen: 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 3. c4 Bg7 4. Nc3 d5 5. e3 0-0 6. Qb3 and now ...dxc4 can be answered with Bxc4.

I will give a separate alternative for these K-side fianchetto defenses in a sequel to this book, *The Zuke 'Em Companion*, but that volume won't be out until 2011. I may also try my hand at a novel response to the Dutch Defense, but the suggestions given by Summerscale (1. d4 f5 2. Bg5! and 1. d4 e6 2. Nf3 f5 3. d5!?) are perfectly playable, though stronger players might want to choose something different for the latter.

Summerscale's book has been updated by Sverre Johnsen and will be available in 2010. I highly recommend picking up this work.

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Line	Sample variations	%
Pirc, KID, Grünfeld	1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d6	24
Basic mainline	1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 e6 4. Bd3 c5	15
QID and related openings	1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. e3 c5 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. e3 b6 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 b6	10
Reversed London	1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 Bf5	6
Symmetric pawns	1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 e6 4. Bd3 Bd6 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 e6 4. Bd3 Be7	6
Dutch	1. d4 f5 1. d4 e6 2. Nf3 f5	5½ 5
Chigorin-style	1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nc6 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 Nc6	5½ 5
Reversed Torre	1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 Bg4	5
Slav	1. d4 c6 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 c6 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 c6	4
Benoni	1. d4 c5 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 c5	3
Sneaky Grünfeld	1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 g6	2½
Reversed QG	1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 c5 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 c5	5 2
Baltic Defense	1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Bf5	2
Reversed Trompowski	1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Bg4	1