

Richard Palliser

The Killer Colle-Zukertort System



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by Richard Palliser

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Introduction

Welcome to the Colle–Zukertort! This club player favourite remains a killer weapon in 2025 and continues to notch up the points at club and tournament level, as well as online. That’s no surprise when we consider that White’s set-up is both easy to play and offers decent attacking chances.

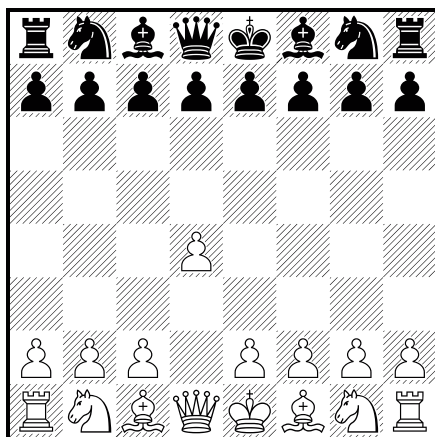
As you’ll quickly discover, I’ve made good use of the opening in my own games over the years and here offer lines I very much believe in. There’s a full repertoire for White after 1 d4 d5, as well as coverage of the Colle against the Queen’s Indian (1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 e3), and when Black attempts a Benoni-style approach (1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 c5 3 e3).

The second of those is new for this book, as is the Ding Liren–approved option of 4 ♘bd2 as an alternative to 4 dxc5 for White after 1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 e3 c5. I’ve also added a short section on 3...a6!? there, but otherwise the material is largely the same as when it was first published on the Chessable platform as *The Killer Colle–Zukertort System*. It has though been fully revised and significantly updated in places, including the addition of a few more illustrative games.

Overall, there is the odd forcing sequence, but in short White’s ideas are easy to grasp and, yes, the odd very modern twist is thrown in to bamboozle even an experienced black player along the way.

The Early Moves

1 d4

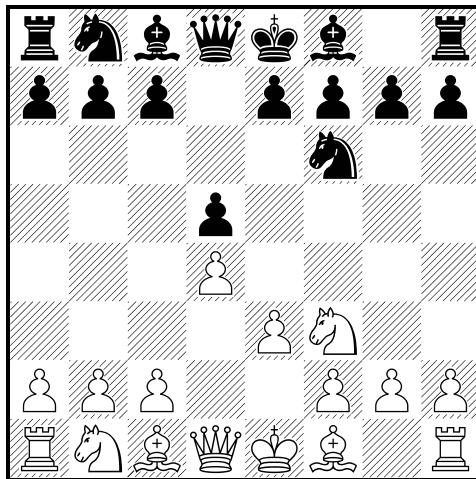


This classic opening move should need no introduction. White seizes central space. We'll now see what happens when, as so often occurs in practice, Black copies for the first few moves.

1...d5 2 ♘f3

The second key move before we implement the Colle System. While we do want to play e2-e3, we hold back on that advance for a move, preferring to develop an important piece while waiting to see if Black will copy, as is usually the case.

2...♘f6 3 e3



The characteristic Colle advance and one patented by Edgard Colle (1897 – 1932), six-time Belgian Champion and a world-class player before he died tragically young due to a gastric ulcer. While White does block in the dark-squared bishop, there's another diagonal than c1-h6 we want to deploy that key piece too and in the meantime, White prepares to deploy the light-squared bishop to a fine spot on d3.

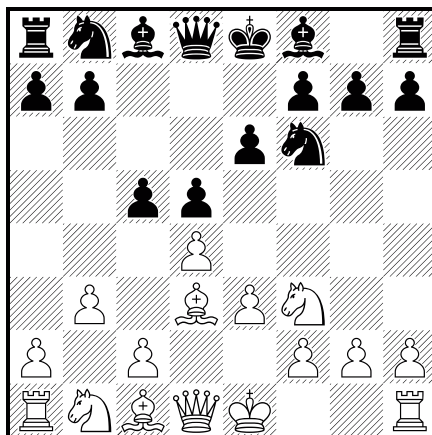
3...e6 4 ♘d3

The first bishop takes up position. Now Black often reacts in the centre, but whether he does so or, say, prefers to develop his own bishop from f8, White has the same plan in mind, a queenside fianchetto.

4...c5 5 b3

The key move which denotes our favourite Colle-Zukertort System. Colle himself liked to set up with c2-c3 and aim for the e3-e4 break. There's nothing wrong with that solid approach, but the fianchetto is generally considered more challenging for Black to face. The great Polish player Johannes Zukertort (1842 – 1888) preferred the set-up with a bishop on b2, hence the name of the opening, and it should be said that in the 1880s the likes of J. H. Blackburne ('The Black

Death'), and Curt von Bardeleben also experimented with the opening.



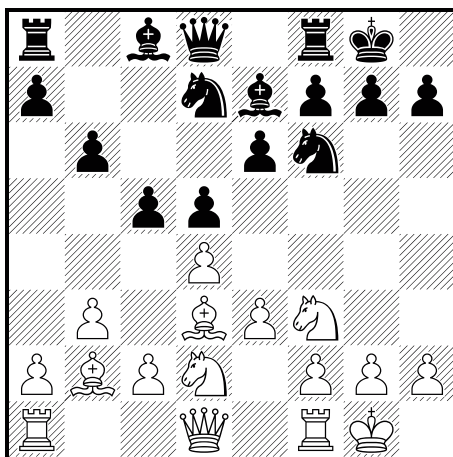
White's plan to complete development is quite straightforward: Bb2 , O-O , Nbd2 and, if Black trades on d4, to recapture with exd4 . That helps to ensure that White has control of the key e5-square. Moreover, once the minor pieces have been developed and White has castled, we'll often exploit our control of e5 to begin to expand with Ne5 and f2-f4 , ideally leading to an attack on the kingside.

Chapter One

Key Concepts and Instructional Encounters

We'll begin by studying some key concepts and plans at White's disposal before seeing a few classic Colle-Zukertort games in an opening which has appealed over the years to such greats as Jose Raul Capablanca, David Janowski and Akiba Rubinstein, as well as Vassily Smyslov and Vladimir Kramnik towards the end of their great careers, and those modern-day dynamic forces, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and Alireza Firouzja.

1) The e5 Outpost



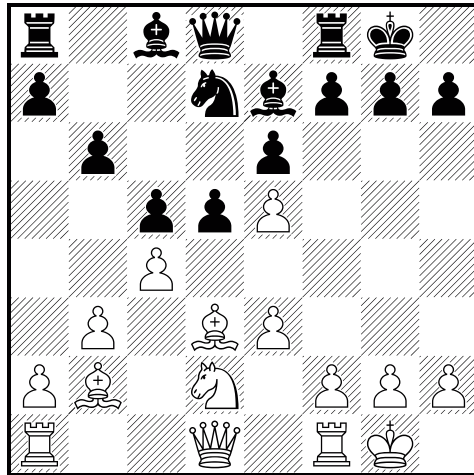
Here we see a typical Colle-Zukertort situation. White has completed development, bar deploying the major pieces, while Black is still to complete his own queenside fianchetto. As such, it's time to strike and head forwards.

9 ♘e5!

The thematic advance. White clears the way for the f-pawn to advance, if needed, and the f3-square is also cleared, be it for the queen, d2-knight or, after f2-f4, the rook on f1.

9...♙b7

The misguided exchange 9...♘xe5?! 10 dxe5 worries some players new to the Colle-Zukertort, but White should rarely fear the exchange on knights on e5. Note here how Black cannot leap into e4 without losing a pawn and how powerful the bishop on d3 is beginning to look. After 10...♘d7 11 c4!? (there's absolutely nothing wrong with 11 f4, as we'll see in Chapter Three, and 11 ♖h5!? is also quite tempting and decent, but here this is a well-timed advance, one which secures White an early and clear advantage), there are three short but important lines:



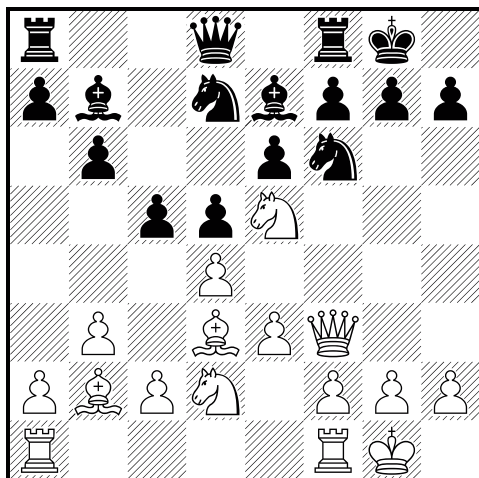
a) 11...♙b7 12 cxd5 exd5 13 f4. Talk about a powerful pawn roller. While Black is quite passive and devoid of play, White's set-up bristles with energy and potential. Next up may well be ♖h5 to force a weakness, after which ♗f3-h3 or ♗f3-g3 could follow and, yes, the fianchettoed bishop may also join in the attack after an e5-e6 breakthrough. In short, this would be a dream scenario for White.

b) 11...dxc4 12 ♘xc4 (the best way to recapture as the knight is quick to eye up a certain hole in the black position: d6) 12...♙b7 13 ♖g4. Once again, we see a dream opening scenario for White. The simple plan is ♗ad1 followed by ♘d6, after which the knight will either dominate Black or the bishop on b2 become a monster in the event of a ...♙xd6; exd6 exchange.

c) The rather desperate-looking advance 11...d4!? is the best try that the engines can come up with. Leading in development, White should not panic and should just find the best way to exploit his lead in development and the target on d4: 12 exd4 cxd4 13 ♙xd4! (yes, the pawn can simply be snaffled as both forward discoveries caused by the knight on d7 can be met by ♙e4) 13...♘xe5?! 14 ♙e4 when Black can't save his knight and rook, and so must give up the exchange for clearly nowhere near enough compensation. For example: 14...♖xd4 15 ♙xa8 ♗d8

16 ♘f3 ♜f4 17 ♚e2 when the bishop on a8 is quite safe, meaning White is just the exchange up and with the rooks coming quickly to the d-file.

10 ♚f3!?



There's unsurprisingly nothing too much wrong with 10 f4 here, as we'll see later on, where 10 ♚e2 is our main recommendation (line 'b' of Chapter Five; see page 167), but it's always tempting to take control of the e4-square with the queen, so long as there are no tricks involving ...c4 tactics.

Bringing the queen to f3 denies Black any liberating ...♘e4 manoeuvre. We should also note that the queen, as well as a rook, might be quite happy to slide over to h3, thereby applying definite pressure to h7.

10...a6?!

A slightly slow move, if a typical one in such positions where Black often finds it hard to find a plan. At least ...a6 prepares a possible ...b5 and also prevents any potentially awkward ♗b5 pins in the event of ...♙e8.

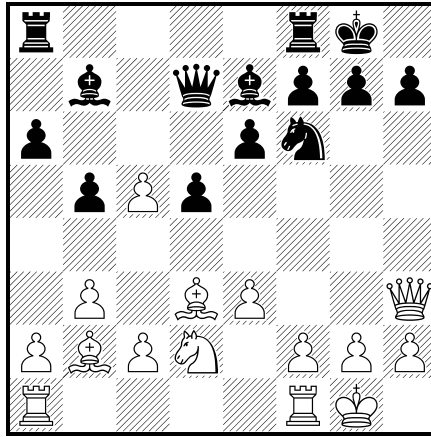
11 ♚h3!

I once preferred 11 ♙ad1, calmly building up, in Palliser-M.Houska, British League (4NCL) 2001, but should have continued to deploy the queen. Can you spot White's threat now that the queen is on h3?

11...♘e4!

Black's best defence, closing down the b1-h7 diagonal and not falling for the trap.

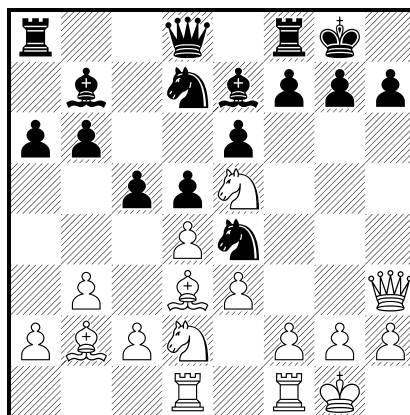
11...b5? 12 ♘xd7 reveals White's big idea. Clearly Black can't recapture with the knight due to mate and taking back with the queen also has a rather obvious downside: 12...♙xd7 13 dxc5!. White threatens to remove the key defender on f6 and is also ready to secure the extra pawn with b3-b4.



After 13...dxe4! 14 f3 d5 15 Qg3 Black remains under pressure on the kingside, with h2-h4 but one threat, and White will at least manage to secure the rather handy extra pawn with b3-b4. Talk about an ideal outcome from the opening!

Likewise, if 11...cxd4?! when White can simply recapture on d4, but 12 dxd7! is even stronger. Keep an eye on White's bishops and queen! Here 12...Qxd7 13 exd4 is the key follow-up. Once again White threatens a game-ending capture on f6 and is also ready to both take control of e5 and expand with f2-f4 followed by Bf3-g3. With 13...h6 14 f4! we continue the plan and rightly refuse to be deterred by material gains (14 exb6 b4 15 dxf3 exd3! isn't so clear), leaving White clearly better. Now Bf3-g3 will increase the pressure and, due to the hook on h6, White might even consider g2-g4-g5.

12 Bf3

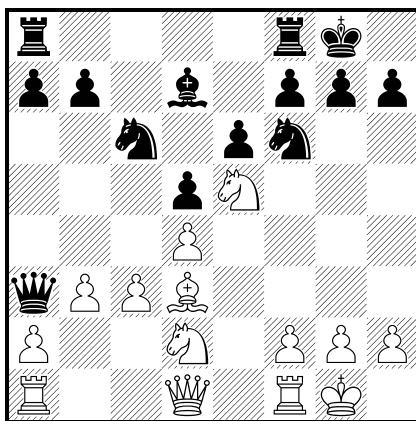


Bringing a further piece into play (12 f3 ♘g5 13 ♖g3 f6! isn't as effective). White now threatens to win material down the d-file with exchanges on d7, c5 and e4.

12...♘xe5 13 dxe5

The position is already uncomfortable for Black. Not only is there serious pressure down the d-file, but White is threatening to ask some major questions on the kingside with 14 f3 ♘g5 (to keep h7 protected) 15 ♖g3.

2) The Kingside Attack



Here we see a not uncommon scenario. Black has exchanged on d4, which increases White's control of e5 (a rook or queen can support the knight there from behind on the e-file), but has managed to exchange off the potentially venomous Zukertort bishop on b2. Given time, he will try to gang up on the pawn on c3, which is doing a fine job holding the b4 and d4 points, but while that is happening, White can very much build up an attack.

13 f4!

Now ...♘xe5; fxe5 is only going to give White a dream attack and in any case, ♖f3-h3 is coming.

13...♖ac8 14 ♖f3!

Consistent and we might note that even if Black did manage to get ...♖xc3 in, that capture might run into a discovered check on h7.

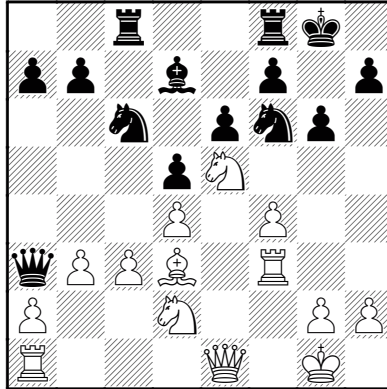
14...g6

14...♖b2?? 15 ♘dc4! is a neat trap and the reason the black queen cannot stray too far forwards. Black is losing the queen and a pawn for just two minor pieces.

Instead, 14...♖c7!? 15 ♖h3 is consistent and now we should see what might happen if Black refuses to make a potentially weakening advance on the kingside:

15...♖fc8 16 ♘xd7 ♖xd7 17 ♙xh7+!. Ouch! White has just netted a clear pawn and broken through to the black king. After 17...♘xh7? 18 ♖h5 ♔f8 19 ♖xh7 Black's position is already in tatters with the g-pawn set to fall.

15 ♖e1!



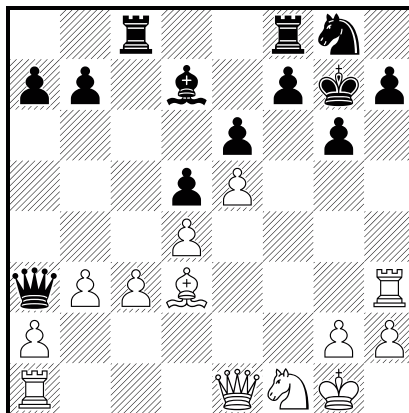
A third strong move in a row from White who simply wants to attack with ♖h4 and ♗h3.

15...♔g7!? 16 ♗h3

16 g4!? is also promising, but after Black's last move, it's wise to keep the queen on e1 for now and not fall for 16 ♖h4? ♖b2 when Black would this time win material.

16...♙e8?!

After 16...♙xe5 17 fxe5 ♘g8 18 ♙f1!?, like in the main line, we see Black hunkering down for a long defence, but his vulnerable kingside means that White is still definitely for choice.



White would like to go Ng3 followed by crashing through with Nh5+! and is also quite happy to offer a pawn to retain control of the position: 18... Bb2 19 Bc1! Bxa2 20 Ne3 . Now we can appreciate a second strong point behind regrouping the knight via f1. White simply intends to crash through on the dark squares with Ng4 and Nf6 , and is just doing pretty well:

a) 20... Bxb3? 21 Ng4 Bb5 22 Nf6! (threatening mate) 22... Nxf6 23 exf6+ Kxf6 24 Bh4+ (Black's king can now run, but it can't really hide) 24... g5 25 Bh6+ Kg7 26 Bxg5+ Kg8 27 Bb1! when White is winning material and the game.

b) Even 20... f5!? 21 exf6+ Nxf6 22 Bh4 is still a very dangerous attack for White, with h7 the main target and everything secure enough at the back: 22... Bd2? 23 Bh6+ Kg8 24 Bd1! Bb2 25 Kxg6! and the black king is a goner.

17 Ndf3!

Bringing another piece closer to the black king while moving the knight away from any potential ... Bb2 issues.

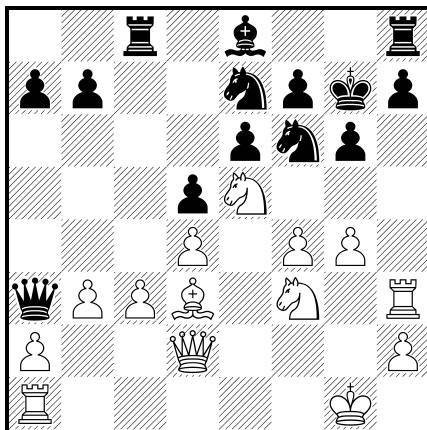
17... Bh8 18 Bd2

While ruling out ... Bb2 for good cannot be bad and with 18 Bh4 h5! fighting on for Black, White should have got his advance under way straight away by throwing the g-pawn forwards: 18 g4! . As well as the option of breaking through with f4-f5 and/or g4-g5, there is also now a threat of Nxc6 followed by Be5 , pinning the knight on f6: 18... a6? 19 Nxc6 Bxc6 20 Be5 Bd6 21 g5 Bxe5 22 Nxe5 . Black can now move the attacked knight, but only at the cost of the exchange.

18... Ne7?

Too slow and 18...h5 or even 18...h6!? would have been a much better defensive try.

19 g4!



Keeping the black knight out of f5 as White enjoys a turbocharged attack. The simple and rather strong threat is f4-f5 followed by Bh6+ . Having been treated to

such a Colle–Zukertort masterclass, we might as well see how Hoi–Danielsen, Danish Championship, Ringsted 1995, concluded:

19...♔a5 20 ♖c1

The brutal breakthrough 20 f5! would have been even stronger than sensibly maintaining control: 20...♔xc3 21 ♔h6+ ♕g8 22 ♖f1!. The final piece joins in the attack and surely Black isn't going to survive, with one simply and deadly plan that of ♔h1 (so that ...♔xd4 isn't check) followed by ♖g5 and a massacre down the f-file.

20...♕b5?

20...h6! 21 f5! is still a pretty dangerous attack, but better than the game for Black.

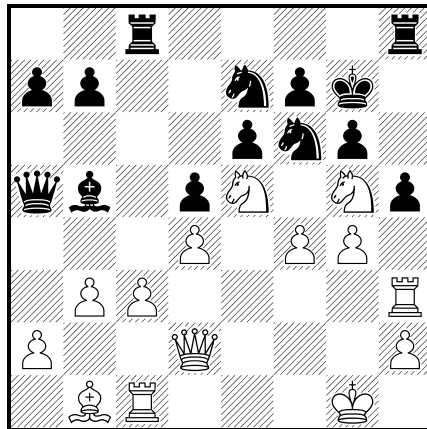
21 ♕b1

Continuing to maintain full control ahead of striking on the other flank.

21...h5!?

Desperation with f4–f5 imminent and with Black completely lacking any counterplay due to White's fine prophylactic play on the queenside.

22 ♖g5!



Never forget to identify not just what your opponent's move threatens and/or prepares, but also if there are any downsides to it! Here Danish GM Hoi, a long-time leading Colle exponent, spots that Black's last move rather weakened g5. As such, White can hop forwards, ignoring the attack on g4 to target f7.

22...♖cf8

22...hxg4 23 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 24 ♖exf7 is also extremely bad news for Black. White's knight on f7 may cause further chaos from e5, d6 or even d8, and sooner or later, e6 or g6 is surely going to fall.

23 f5!

Boom! Black might have two knights and two rooks around his king, but there just isn't a defence.

23...♔a6

Alternatively:

a) 23...hxg4 24 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 25 fxe6 is just a game-ender as White is about to break through to the king: 25...fxe6? 26 ♜xe6+ ♔g8 27 ♚g5. The only surprise here is that it's only mate in eight.

b) 23...exf5 24 gxf5 (White now threatens to capture on g6 then invade on e6) 24...♜xf5!? 25 ♙xf5 gxf5? 26 ♜e6+! when the arrival of the white queen spells the end and Black doesn't even have a tricky defence: 26...♔h7!? 27 ♚g5! ♖fg8 28 ♜f8+! ♖xf8 29 ♚xf5+. There's surely no surprise here that it's now mate in five.

24 ♖e1

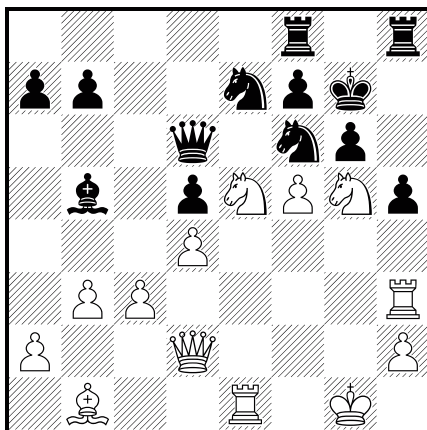
Simple chess, threatening to exchange on e6 then crash through with a sacrifice on g6.

24...exf5

24...hxg4 25 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 26 fxg6 fxg6 27 ♜xg6! would have been a stylish finish, decisively ripping open lines: 27...♜xg6 28 ♜xe6+ ♔f7? 29 ♙xg6+ ♔xg6 30 ♚g5+. Once again, it's soon going to be mate.

25 gxf5 ♚d6

After 25...♜e4!? 26 ♜xe4 (calmly countering Black's last-ditch try) 26...dxe4 27 c4 ♙e8 28 ♙xe4 White has netted a pawn, gaining a dangerous central pawn-roller in the process and all the while as the black defences remain extremely shaky on g6 and f7.



26 ♖ee3?!

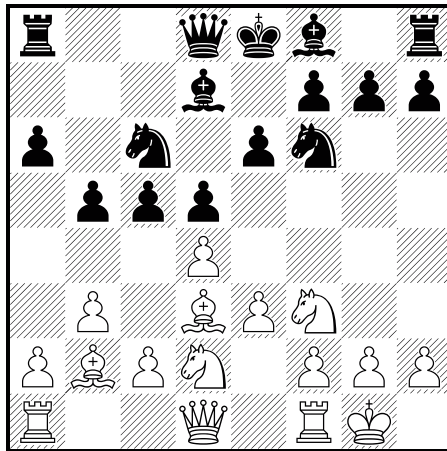
Hardly terrible, but White might have spotted that he already had a rather strong threat: 26 fxg6! fxg6 27 ♜xg6! ♜xg6 28 ♜e6+. Once again, we find Black in a position where resigns is the recommended move, since he must either ditch his queen or see, after ♙xg6, the white queen decisively invade via g5.

26...♘fg8?

Even 26...gxf5!? was unlikely to save the day: 27 c4! (while the overwhelming focus may be on the kingside, White is still happy to make major gains elsewhere) 27...dxc4 28 bxc4 ♕e8 29 c5! (forcing the black queen to a worse square, especially if it wants to continue protecting the knight on e7, thereby allowing ...♘g4 to be an option) 29...♖d8 30 ♜hg3 ♘g4 31 ♜ef3. With the knight on e7 defended, clearly ♘xg4 and ♜xe7 wasn't on, but White doesn't need to win material right away. He now threatens both ♕xf5 and h2-h3, and there isn't even anything resembling a satisfactory defence for Black.

27 fxg6 ♖f6 1-0

This was a strange point to resign in Hoi-Danielsen, but White would surely have spotted the threat of mate and won with 28 ♜ef3. In any case there was no longer a defence: if 27...♘xg6? 28 ♘xg6 fxg6 29 ♘e6+ and the horrendously exposed black king clearly isn't going to survive, since moving to h7 walks into White taking h5 with check; or 27...fxg6!? 28 c4! dxc4 29 bxc4 ♕e8 30 d5! when Black has avoided being poleaxed on g6, but has lost the key battle for e6, meaning ♘e6+ and/or ♖d4 is clearly going to clean him up.

3) Exchanging on c5

Here we see a slightly unusual approach from Black, if one which is by no means unknown at club or online amateur level, an early queenside expansion. Clearly Black wants to push White back with ...c4, so White should react on the queenside.

9 dxc5!

Opening up the bishop on b2, while being aware that White has two central pawns breaks: c2-c4 and e3-e4.

9...♕xc5 10 e4!?

10 c4 also looks like a decent try, preparing to exchange on d5: 10...bxc4 11 bxc4 ♖b4!? 12 ♕e2. White has a pleasant edge, since the knight on b4 can easily be kicked backwards, after which White's bishops will rake the black kingside from b2 and d3. First, though, White may consider leaping forwards with ♖e5 and would also be delighted to activate the other knight with ...dxc4; ♖xc4.

10...d4?

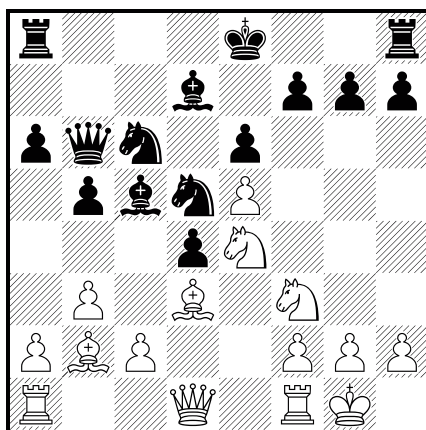
With 10...dxe4? 11 ♖xe4 the position has opened up before Black is ready, thereby landing him in early trouble: 11...♖xe4 (or 11...♕e7 12 ♖e2 and again Black is under heavy pressure, with ♖fd1 and the undermining a2-a4 high on the agenda) 12 ♕xe4 O-O 13 ♖e5 and Black is losing the exchange.

The best defence is 10...O-O! when after 11 e5 ♖g4 12 ♖e2 White's extra space and ability to drive the black knight back to h6 gives him an edge, but no more than that. If allowed, White should look to expand with a2-a3, b3-b4 and ♖b3, taking full control of d4 while preserving the light-squared bishop.

11 e5! ♖d5

After 11...♖g4 12 ♖e4 ♕e7 13 ♖d6+! (this reminds us to never forget about the potential power of the fianchettoed bishop) 13...♕xd6 14 exd6 e5 15 h3 ♖h6 16 ♖e1 Black's centre is collapsing and the unopposed dark-squared bishop is about to become a pretty powerful piece indeed.

12 ♖e4 ♖b6



Now in Palliser-C.Price, Yeovil Open 2002, I took control of b4 with 13 a3!?, but removing the bishop-pair would have been even stronger:

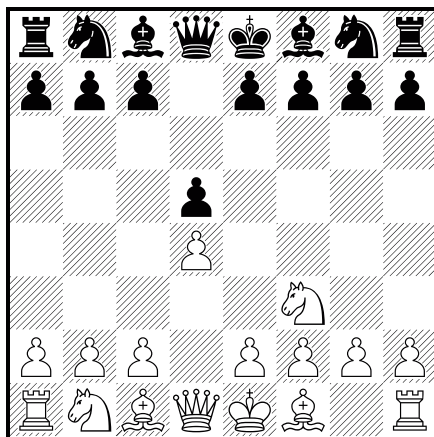
13 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 14 ♖e1

White is clearly somewhat better. We might expand with ♖g5, striking against h7 and both members of Black's royal family, since ♖e4 is also an issue. White also has ideas of simply ♖d2 and ganging up on d4, while if Black ever castles kingside, he may well walk into a ♖xd4 trick.

Chapter Eight

Second Move Alternatives

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3



By a huge margin, Black's most popular move here is 2...♗f6, but on the odd occasion an enterprising soul may prefer something else and we should also be ready for any and all of:

A: 2...♙g4

B: 2...♙f5

C: 2...♞c6

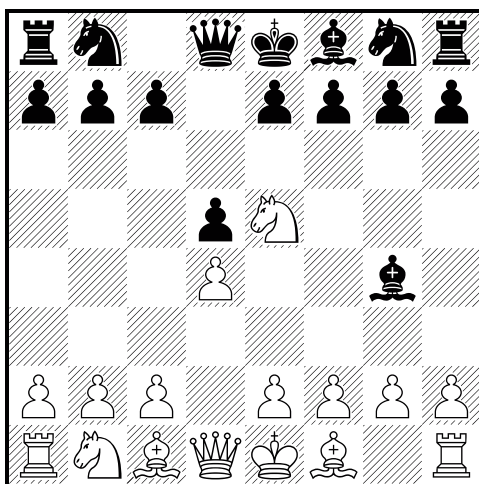
D: 2...e6

E: 2...c5

We'll again aim to meet these in a logical enough manner, while also creating some early obstacles for Black. As we've already seen, Black also has 2...c6 when after 3 e3 play is extremely likely to transpose, either back to Line B of the previous chapter (after 3...♗f6 or 3...♙f5), or with 3...e6 4 ♙d3 to a position we'll briefly cover in Line D here.

Line A

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♙g4?! 3 ♞e5!



Rather than self-pin our knight with 3 e3, we take up the challenge and immediately begin to harry the bishop which Black has developed a little too early.

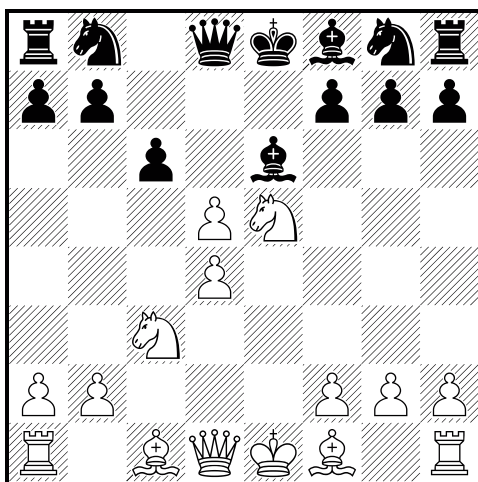
3...h5

This keeps the e-pawn pinned, but is by no means forced in this reversed Trompowsky situation:

a) Retreating with 3...h5 is likely to be the choice of a stronger player, but Black is still faced with definite problems to solve after the central break 4 c4!. White would now be delighted to net the bishop-pair after all following 4...xb1 5 Bxb1 and meanwhile frees a path for the queen to exploit the absence of the bishop on c8. Yes, Bb3 is already quite a threat and even Ba4(+) may prove useful, especially in the event of 4...dxc6?! 5 Ba4, pinning. That leaves Black with:

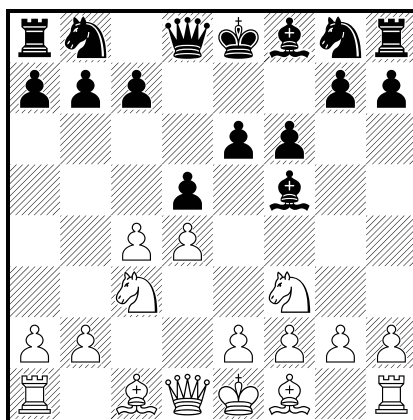
a1) After 4...dxc6?! 5 dxc3 (supporting e2-e4 to take over the centre, although the gambit 5 e4!? is also extremely tempting – and strong) 5...dxc6 6 f3 White is about to obtain an ideal centre, while regaining the pawn on c4 and leaving Black looking a little cramped.

a2) 4...e6 5 dxc3 is a case of simple development again, as we avoid any complications with 5 Bb3 dxc6! (5 cxd5!? exd5 6 e4! is worth investigating though if you're happy to gambit for the initiative). With 5 dxc3, White keeps Bb3 in reserve and would be happy enough with the transposition after 5...f6 6 dxf3 into variation 'a3', below. Instead, 5...c6? 6 cxd5 would be a well-timed exchange. Suddenly Black has big problems as 6...cxd5? 7 Ba4+ is just extremely strong, and if 7...d7 8 e4!. Even after 6...exd5 7 e4! (a powerful pawn sacrifice and the prelude to Bb3) 7...e6 (or 7...dxe4 8 Bb3 Be7 9 dxc4 when Black's position is already in tatters, a factor which 9...e6 10 dxe6 fxe6 11 dxc4 would be quick to emphasise) 8 exd5 Black is in trouble.



White's development would be a thing of beauty after 8...cxd5 9 ♘b5+ when even 9...♗d7 10 ♗xd5! is on. However, the alternative recapture is far from ideal either for Black: 8...♘xd5 9 ♗xd5 ♙xc4! (the g2-pawn doesn't matter when we can hit f7 so quickly) 10...♙xg2 11 ♖e2! ♙e4+ 12 ♘e3. It would be a great feeling to be able to calmly go 11 ♖e2 in an actual game. Now ♙b3 will follow and the engines opine that Black's undeveloped position is already undefendable.

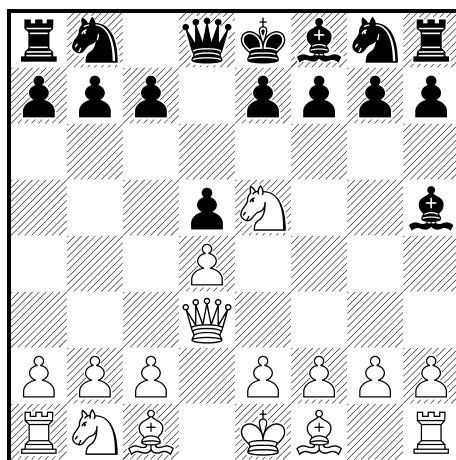
a3) 4...f6!? 5 ♗f3 (renewing the idea of ♙b3, as well as simply threatening to develop with tempo through cxd5 and ♗c3) 5...e6 (5...dxc4 6 ♗c3 e5!? 7 e4 was also something of a disaster for Black in Aradhya-Fancy, Al Ain 2025, where 7...♘g4 8 ♘xc4 ♘d6? 9 dxe5 ♘xf3 10 ♙d5! ♘h5 11 exd6 caused Black to resign rather than witness 11...♘g6 12 ♙xb7 ♗d7 13 dxc7) 6 ♗c3! is straightforward development.



White fights for the e4-square, in contrast to which 6 ♖b3 ♘c6! isn't so clear. Now, though, 6...♘c6 might just be met calmly by 7 a3, stopping all Black's fun on b4 and preparing a later b2-b4, although first White is likely to go e2-e3 and then, if allowed, ♘h4 to bag the bishop-pair. Instead, 6...c6 7 e3 (simple chess, preparing the way for ♕d3 followed by looking to take over the centre with e3-e4, as we also introduce ♘h4 ideas) 7...♘d7 8 ♘h4!? quickly left White with a handy unopposed light-squared bishop and very pleasant edge in Yilmaz-Grigoriev, Gebze 2013.

b) In the Trompowsky, 2...♘e4 3 h4!? is a pretty decent weapon, but the reversed version, 3...h5!?, fails to convince when with 4 c4 White can so quickly challenge in the centre, and begin to pressure both d5 and b7: for example, 4...♘c6 5 ♖a4 (a powerful pin and 5...♗d6? 6 c5 would now not be especially wise for Black when e2-e4 may follow) 5...♘d7 6 ♘xd7 (calmly taking the bishop after all ahead of breaking up Black's centre) 6...♗xd7 7 cxd5 ♗xd5 8 e3 is not a good version of a Chigorin Defence for Black. They lack counterplay and are about to be further buffeted about by ♘c3 and ♕b5.

4 ♖d3!



The key move to remember and an even stronger choice than 4 c4 here. Suddenly White has two threats in ♖b5+ and ♖h3 and, for instance, 4...♘d7?! 5 ♖b5 just costs Black a clear pawn.

4...♗c8

Following 4...c6? 5 ♖h3 ♘f6 6 g4! (forcing the bishop backwards to g6 after all) 6...♕g6 7 ♘xg6 fxg6 8 ♘c3 White already has a large advantage with Black so weak on the light squares. It may well even be possible to follow up with g4-g5 and then expand with e2-e4.

5 c4

With Black having taken steps to deal with 5 ♖h3 and go 5 ♖b5+ c6, we

switch back to undermining d5 and would now be delighted to take over the centre after 5...dxc4 6 ♖xc4 followed by ♜c3 and e2-e4.

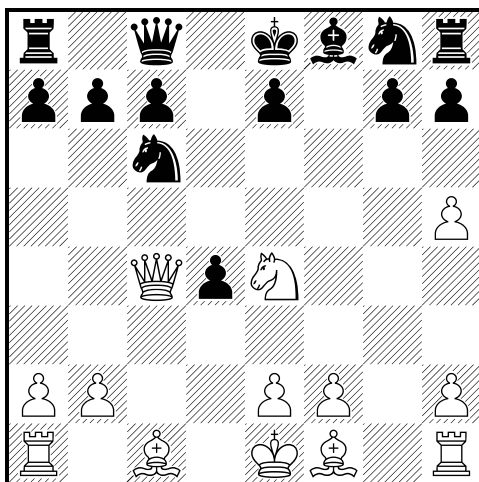
5...f6 6 g4!

This perhaps unexpected advance seizes a strong initiative, whether we get to swap a flank pawn for a central one and the bishop-pair, with 6...♙xg4 7 ♘xg4 ♙xg4 8 cxd5, or see the structure become unbalanced in an even more radical manner.

6...fxe5 7 gxh5 dxc4 8 ♖xc4

The h-pawns might be doubled, but just look at Black's light squares! Also where on earth is their king ever going to find long-term shelter?

8...exd4 9 ♘d2!? ♘c6 10 ♘e4



Revealing the point behind our strong if hardly forced pawn sacrifice. White wastes no time in targeting the light squares, not least e6, with ♘g5 one threat and ♘c5 another awkward possibility for Black to meet.

Line B

1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3 ♙f5!? 3 c4!

Freeing a route for the queen while pressuring d5 is the best way of dealing with Black's Baltic Defence, a line which has attracted the support of some pretty decent players on the odd occasion. In keeping with our approach back in Line B of the previous chapter, if you want to spring an early counter-surprise then 3 ♘h4!? might also be considered.

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1 d4 d5

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-  **A complete repertoire for White after 1 d4 d5 2 ♘f3**
-  **An easy-to-play opening system for the club and online player**
-  **A simple-to-learn set-up offering good attacking chances**

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IM Richard Palliser is a highly experienced player who has often done well in the British Championship, finishing third in 2019. He has worked with Gawain Jones, edited *CHESS Magazine* since 2012, and written many books and courses, including the bestselling *The Complete Chess Workout* and, with Simon Williams, *The Iron English*.

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