

5 The Modern Benoni

The Benoni creates special problems for the Zukertort player for it combines the restrained d-pawn with a K-side fianchetto, either of which is enough to cause a headache by itself!

Summerscale has a separate defense against the Benoni, but for those who do not wish to learn much theory, here is a novelty to try.

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 c5 3. e3 g6

Other options should not pose White special difficulty.

3... cxd4 4. exd4 g6 (4... d5, transposing to an Exchange Caro-Kann, should wind up in a line from section 3 of chapter 10) is often met by a plan of transferring the b-Knight with Bd3, 0-0, Re1, Nbd2-f1. This idea has been played by Michael Adams and Tony Miles, among others. Kovacevic has played this as well, but with Be2 instead.

3... e6 transposes to the QID.

3... b6 occurs surprisingly often given that after 4. dxc5 bxc5 White can play 5. e4!

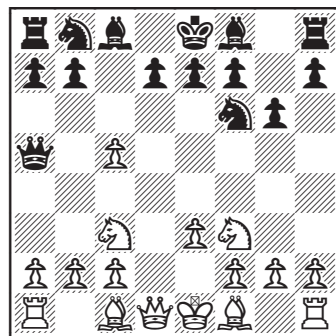
with impunity. In practice, Black has responded with 5... Bb7, after which White should have the more comfortable position after 6. e5 Nd5 7. Bd3 Nc7 8. 0-0 g6. White will put a Knight on c4 and play h4!?

3... d6 should be met similarly to the mainline. 4. dxc5 Qa5+ 5. Nc6 Qxc5 6. e4 leaves White plenty of opportunities to make Black question the wisdom of his Queen's placement.

4. dxc5 Qa5+

4... Bg7 5. c3 has had great success in practice, leading into a reversed Réti. 5. Nc3 looks even better as Black does not get enough for the pawn (e.g. 5... Nc6?! 6. Bb5; 5... 0-0 6. Be2 b6 7. cxb6 axb6 8. 0-0 Bb7 8. Nd4 with f3 and e4 planned.)

5. Nc3!?



The Queen's Indian and Benoni

This bizarre move, which no one plays, keeps the Queen free to help out on the d-file.

5... Bg7

Of course, 5... Qxc5 simply gives White a good game after 6. Qd4. 6. e4 might even be better. The Queen on c5 will help White develop and complicate Black's life.

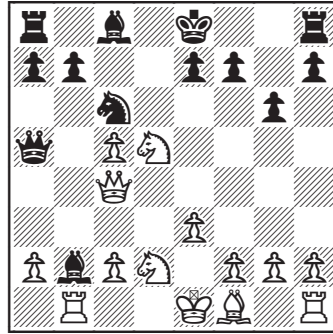
6. Qd4!?

This looks ridiculous, like a duffer trying to hold onto a pawn that is moribund. However, it is not easy for Black to retake the pawn. This move also pins the N/f6, supports a possible b4, and will allow Bd2 to be played without boxing in as many of White's pieces.

6... Nc6 7. Qc4 Ne4 8. Bd2 Nxd2 9. Nxd2 d5

Most other moves would allow 10. 0-0-0 or 10. Nb3, neither of which Black wants. The exchange with 9... Bxc3 will not give Black enough compensation since the c5-pawn is easy to trade off. 9... b5 10. Qb3 does not leave Black better off than the text.

10. Nxd5 Bxb2 11. Rb1



The threat of Nc7+ pins Black's Queen to the a5-d8 diagonal. Thus, the cowardly 11... Bg7 can be addressed by simply 12. Qb5 Qd8 (12... Qxb5 13. Bxb5 and the King has to move: 13... 0-0? 14. Bxc6 bxc6 15. Nxe7+) 13. Bc4 0-0 14. Rd1 and Black has difficulty completing development. He cannot kick the Knight away without shutting in his Bishop, but if he sends his Bishop out the b7-square hangs.

On the other hand, 11...Be5 is an over-reaction because the Bishop will eventually be a target. All White has to do is unwind his position by using a R/b5 to move the Queen. An example is 12. Be2 0-0 13. Rb5 Qd8 14. Nf3.

One problem for Black in

the above lines is that they do nothing by way of development. Instead, Black might play 11... Be6?!, developing the Bishop and clearing the way for a possible ...Rad8 (which is why this move does not lose a piece: 12. Rxb2 Bxd5 13. Qxd5? Rad8).

White can respond with the imaginative 12. e4!? Bxd5 13. exd5 Bc3 14. dxc6 Bxd2+ 15. Ke2! bxc6 16. g3 and the King is strangely safe due to the mass of material on the c-file while his pieces are on excellent squares. White is also looking good after 12. Qb5 Bxd5 13. Qxa5 Nxa5 14. Rxb2 0-0-0 15. e4 Be6 16. Nb3, when Black has nowhere near adequate compensation since White can simply hand-castle if need be (e.g., 16... Nc4 17. Bxc4 Bxc4 18. f3 Rd7 19. Kf2).