



## C O L U M N I S T S

*From the  
Archives*

Hosted by  
Mark Donlan



*Chess Mazes*  
by Bruce Alberston

## From the Archives...

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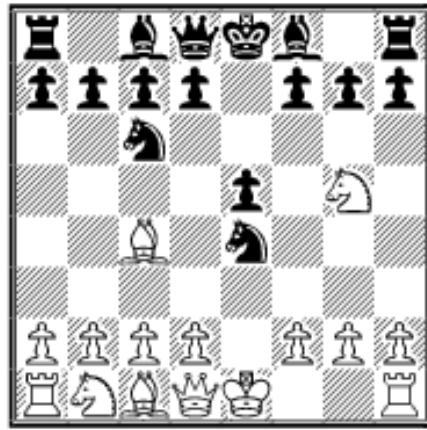
## The Kibitzer by Tim Harding

## Two Knights Defence: The Amazing Counterattack

Do you meet 1 e4 e5 by 2 Nf3 Nc6 and after 3 Bc4 wonder whether you dare face the Evans Gambit after 3...Bc5? You think that moves like 3...Be7 and 3...d6 are too passive and prefer to play the Two Knights Defence. However, 4 Ng5 (the “bungler’s move” as Tarrasch called it) is not so easy to refute and you know White will be ready for the 4...d5 main line and the Wilkes-Barre, 4...Bc5.

How about a move that your opponent has almost certainly not considered, a move that may make him fall off his seat? I cannot promise you it is 100% sound, but it has an excellent practical chance of success below master level.

So here goes. After 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 you play the amazing counter-attack, 4 Nxe4!?



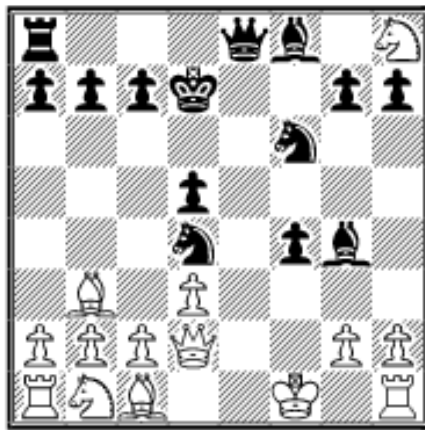
Of course White can capture the f-pawn, but he can do that in two ways in the Wilkes-Barre whereas after 4...Nxe4 the option 5 Nxf7 Qh4 is definitely bad for him: e.g. 6 0-0 Bc5 7 Nxh8 Nxf2! 8 Rxf2 Bxf2+ was given by Staunton 150 years ago; he also analysed 7 d4!? Bxd4 8 Nxh8 Nxf2 9 Bf7+ Kf8 10 Rxf2 Qxf2+ 11 Kh1 d6 12 Bd5 Bg4 13 Bf3 Bxf3 14 gxf3 Kg8 while the late V. Zagorovsky's book *Romantic Chess Openings* gives instead 7...Nxd4 8 Be3 d6! "with a very strong attack for Black."

Here is a practical example, a correspondence game played in Germany in 1993, Rieszbeck- Leisebein: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 Nxe4 5 Nxf7 Qh4 6 0-0 Bc5 7 Nxh8 Nxf2 8 Bf7+ Ke7 9 Rxf2 Qxf2+ 10 Kh1 d5 11 d4 Nxd4 12 Bg5+ Kd6 13 Nc3 c6 14 Na4 Bf5 15 Nxc5 Kxc5 16 c3 Nc2 17 Qf1 Qxf1+ 18 Rxf1 Bd3 19 Rf2 Rxh8 20 Bh5 d4 21 Rf7 dxc3 22 bxc3 e4 23 Rxc3 e3 24 Rxb7 e2 25 Bxe2 Bxe2 26 Bf6 Re8 27 Rxh7 Bd3 28 Re7 Rxe7 29 Bxe7+ Kc4 30 Bf6 Ne3 0-1.

I first encountered the move 4 Nxe4 in 1993 when a reader of my Irish newspaper column asked what was wrong with it; after all, 5 Nxe4 d5 is dull and clearly OK for Black. I could not give a satisfactory answer at the time, but later I found articles by Yugoslav IM Rudolf Maric in the first volume of the magazine *Gambit Revue*, nos. 6 and 7. I then traced variation back to Steinitz's *Modern Chess Instructor* (p.102). Recently I tracked down the analysis by Zukertort dating from 1875 which Steinitz had consulted.

Evidently White should take on f7 with the bishop check, but what then? It took me three years of research into old and new books and periodicals to get (I think) to the bottom of the story of this variation. White has a good variation, perhaps the only one, but it's not obvious. Most books I looked into had wrong lines or nothing. *ECO* was on the right track but stopped too early; only the 1989 edition of Euwe's *Theory of Chess Openings* edited by Heyken and Fette gave the key reference in full, a wartime amateur game in the Netherlands.

The earliest attempt to refute 4 Nxe4, as given by Bilguer (1839) and later by Staunton (e.g. *Chess Player's Handbook* 1872, p.145) followed the line 5 Bxf7+ Ke7 6 d3 Nf6! (6...Nxg5?? 7.Bxg5+ +-; 6...Nd6 7 Ne6! dxe6 8 Bg5+ - Staunton) 7 Bb3 d5 8 f4 Bg4 9 Qd2 h6? leading to an easy win for White. Zukertort seems to have been the first master to give anything like a proper analysis of 4...Nxe4 for in the *City of London Chess Magazine* of 1875 (p.75) he revealed the resource 9...Kd7, played against him by Dr. Stosch, a Berlin amateur, in 1867. After 10 Nf7 Qe8 11 Nxh8 exf4+ 12 Kf1 comes 12...Nd4!

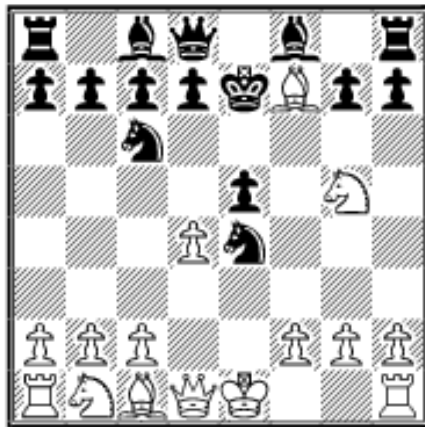


(Stosch played the much inferior 12...Bc5 against Zukertort.) 13 Nc3 Bc5 This turns the variation on its head. White has no good defence, as Steinitz agreed, e.g., 14 h3 (Zukertort also analysed 14 Qe1 Qh5 15 Bxf4 Re8 16 Qd2 Be2+ 17 Nxe2 Rxe2.) 14...Qh5 15 Nf7 Re8 16 Ng5 Be2+ 17 Nxe2 Nxe2 (17...Rxe2? 18 Qxf4) 18 g4 (18 Ne4 Nxe4 -+) 18...Nxg4 19 Ne4 Rxe4 20 dxe4 Ne3+ 21 Ke1 Ng2+ and mate next move in a game Dufresne-Zukertort, 1869. Zukertort also examined 6 Nxe4 Kxf7 7 Qf3+ ("This

attack cannot lead to anything, as White has no forces in the field to proceed with.") 7...Ke8 8 d4 d5 and 7 Nbc3 g6 ("a far stronger move than the check with the queen") 8 0-0 d5 again leading to advantage for Black.

As a footnote to the Stosch line, *Gambit Revue* published a game Laks-Maric, Novi Sad, 1947, in which Maric played instead 9...e4 10 dxe4 (Better 10 h3) 10...Nxe4 11 Qxd5 Qxd5 12 Bxd5 Nxg5 13 Bxc6 (13 fxg5 Rd8) 13...bxc6 14 fxg5 Kd7! 15 Be3 Rb8 16 b3 Bb4+ 17 c3 Rhe8 18 Kd2 Rb5 19 cxb4 Rd5+ 20 Kc2 Rxe3 21 Kb2 a5 22 Ka3 c5 23 bxa5 c4 24 Kb4 c5+ 25 Kxc4 Kc6 0-1.

Therefore 6 d4!, (after 5 Bxf7+ Ke7) as rightly given by *ECO*, is the only response that Black need fear when playing 4...Nxe4.



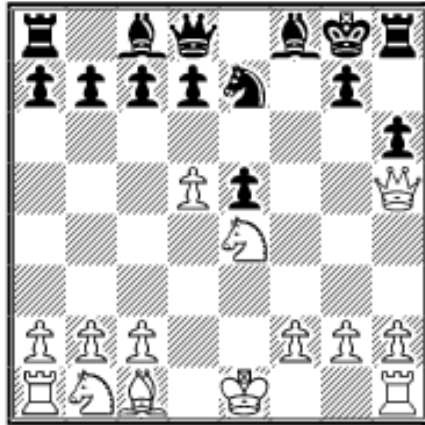
Not now 6...exd4?? 7 Bd5! Nf6 8 Qe2+ nor 6...Nxd4 7 c3 Nc6 8 Bd5+- (Steinitz) while 6...Nd6?! (hoping to rule out usual White tactics) blocks queenside development and allows 7 Ne6!! which wins the queen for two minor pieces.

Most books therefore give Black the move 6...d5 which would be all right after 7 dxe5 h6 (Zukertort only analysed 7...Nxe5.) 8 Nxe4 Kxf7 9 Nec3 d4 10 Ne4 (or 10 Qf3+ Kg8 11 Qd5+ Qxd5 12 Nxd5 Bf5)

10...Nxe5 (Keres) but White has 7 Nc3!! which is a widely-published refutation following analysis by the Russian player Lopukhin, e.g. 7...Nxc3 (7...Nf6 8 dxe5 Nxe5 9 Qe2 with advantage to White) 8 bxc3 Qd6 (8...Bf5 9 Qf3 or 8...e4 9 f3! with advantage to White in both cases) 9 a4 (threat Ba3) 9...Kd8 10 Bg8! Ke8 11 Bxh7 with advantage to White. I have two miniatures in my database with 6...d5, both quick wins by White.

However, Maric made a good case for playing 6...h6!? in the diagrammed position and this is where you should concentrate your analysis if you are thinking of playing this line with either colour. This gets a ? from *ECO*, but that is misleading; I doubt if anybody below GM strength would find the refutation over the board without preparation.

For example, Csanyi-Maric, Vojvodina Champ. 1949, continued: 6 d4! h6! 7 Nxe4 Kxf7 8 d5 Ne7 (Not 8...Nd4? 9 c3! Qh4 10 Ng3 Nb5 11 0-0 and f4 with no good defence for Black according to Maric) 9 Qh5+ Kg8!!

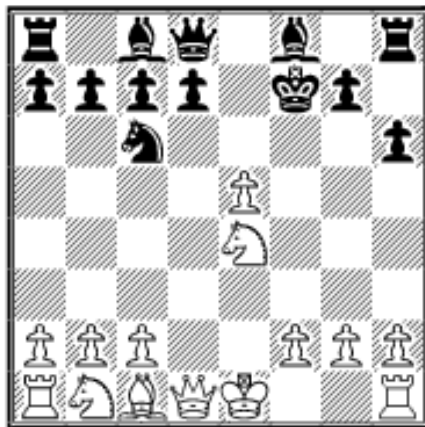


In Maric's opinion, Black now has an initiative worth at least equality. Most books, if they give anything, mention only 9...g6? 10 Qxe5 Bg7 11 Qf4+ Kg8 12 Nbc3, a variation inaccurately attributed to Staunton by Steinitz.

This line is given by Zukertort and it is probably his, for he remarks of 6 d4 (*City of London Chess Magazine* 1875, p.144) that "this move was first proposed by Mr. Staunton, but he neither analysed its

consequences exhaustively nor did he prove the insufficiency of 6 d3." After the improvement 9...Kg8!, the Maric game continued 10 Qxe5 d6 11 Qd4 c6! 12 dxc6? (12 c4 cxd5 13 cxd5 Qa5+ 14 Nbc3 Nf5 is obviously more critical.) 12...d5! 13 Ng3 Nxc6 14 Qa4 Qe8+ 15 Ne2 Bb4+ 16 Bd2 Bg4! 17 f3 Nd4!! 18 Qxe8+ Rxe8 19 Bxb4 Rxe2+ 20 Kd1 Rxc2! 21 fxc4 Nxc2 22 Bd2 Nxa1 23 Nc3 Kh7 24 Kc1 d4 25 Ne4 Rc8+ 0-1.

White should instead of 8 d5, play 8 dxe5, as recommended by ECO and Estrin.



This wins a pawn (8...Nxe5?? 9 Qh5+ Ng6 10 Qf5+) and the question is whether Black can get compensation, unlikely with his king still unsafe. Maric, in fact, met 8 dxe5 by 8...Qe8 and his game with Krgin at Novi Sad 1950 continued 9 Qd5+ Kg6 10 f4 Nb4?! and he eventually won, but he wrote that he should have played 10...d6 as there were a lot of errors in this game. The remaining moves were: 11 Qc4? (11 Qb3 d5 12 Ng3 Qc6 13 Na3 Bc5) 11...d5! 12 exd6 Bxd6 13 0-0 b5 14 Nxd6 (14 Qe2 Bc5+ 15

Kh1 Bf5 16 Nbc3 Bd4 17 g4 Bc8 unclear) 14...bxc4 15 Nxe8 Rxe8 16 Na3 Ba6 17 c3 Nd3 18 Nc2 Re2 19 Nd4 Rae8! 20 Nxe2 Rxe2 21 b3 Bb7 22 Rf3 Bxf3 23 gxf3 Re1+ 0-1.

In my opinion 8 dxe5 is definitely stronger than 8 d5; White should be opening lines, not closing them. Also the extra pawn means that Black cannot afford slow play.

White has two dangerous possibilities against 8...Qe8. Firstly, he could play 9 Qh5+!? (Maric doesn't mention this obvious move) but after 9...g6 10 Qf3+ Kg7 11 Qf6+ (11 0-0!? Qxe5! unclear) 11...Kg8 12 Qxc6! although White obtains some advantage the resulting position may be defensible. Finally we

come to the real problem with 4...Nxe4. After 8...Qe8 *ECO* gives 9 f4 d6 10 0-0 when Maric gave 10...Kg8 (to play dxe5) and he claimed Black should have few problems. However, he apparently did not know the continuation quoted by Heyken and Fette: 11 Nbc3 dxe5 12 f5 Qf7 13 Nd5 Bd7 14 f6 g6 15.Ne7+! and White won in van Steenis-Vlagsma, Beverwijk 1942. Had Black played 8...Qe7 instead of 8...Qe8 this would have been even worse for him, as after 9 f4 d6 10 0-0 Kg8 11 Nbc3 dxe5 there would be 12 Nd5 attacking the queen.

Can Black's game be salvaged? Can something better be found after 6...d5 7 Nc3 or a different sixth move altogether for Black? Over to you!



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