

Introduction

Gathering material for the last chapter of my second chess book, *The Moment of Zuke: Critical Positions and Pivotal Decisions for Colle System Players* was a rather eye-opening experience. I wasn't surprised by the number of times Bxh7+ occurred in high-level games — it is not for nothing that the Greek Gift is well known. Rather, it was the play afterward that I had not expected.

You were surprised strong players screwed up the sacrifice?

I wouldn't put it that way. Titled chess players do not get those shiny letters before their names based on poor calculation skills or a lack of danger sense. It isn't that somehow strong players lost their ability to analyze once the Trojan horse was munching on h7-grass. Rather, the material, drawn almost exclusively from expert level or higher games, suggested the players were using their raw (generally good) analysis skills without having spent much focused training on the sacrifice. There are a bundle of tips and tricks that are useful to know (on both sides of the board), and it seems that kit bag is not widely assimilated among chess players.

But is it worth spending a bunch of energy on a sacrifice that you might only face or use in one game out of a hundred?

That's a fair question. Of course, if you play the Colle, French, or some other opening given to frequent Bishop sacs, it's obvious that special study of Bxh7+ is valuable. However, I would claim that knowledge of the sacrifice is worth the necessary effort for the broader chess-playing community.

Even if the number of times the actual sacrifice hits the board is small, the

number of times it is an option is significantly larger. Considering the frequency one has to consider the sacrifice (on both offense and defense) and the value in terms of peace-of-mind and confidence in practical play, devoting some time to the sacrifice is a legitimate way of increasing one's overall chess preparation.

Of course, if one had to go to the effort of coordinating and studying all the ins and outs of these sacrifices without assistance, it would represent a rather large (but rewarding) endeavor. That's where this book comes in. By studying about 32 pages, you can see pretty much every important trick, trap, and idea there is to know about the Greek Gift. The rest of the book contains exercises and solutions (with commentary), so you can test and reinforce the material in the lesson sections.

Organization

There are two main parts to the book. The first part of the book features formulaic attacks, mostly in the late-opening phase, that allow White a powerful assault due to Black's blunder: a blundersault (a fitting term, for White's pieces often appear to dance acrobatically about Black's King while cutting his position to ribbons). The second part of the book treats the sacrifice in broader terms where the proper attack is less scripted.

Put another way, the first part describes reliable rules that work in the opening phase assuming semi-normal piece development, etc. These rules are mostly meant to save Black from being the losing party of a miniature. The second part makes no such assumptions but equips both attackers and defenders with a variety of ideas, tools, and weapons.

The material is divided into modules, each of which starts with a lesson followed by a collection of exercises drawn from actual games (presented with *huge* diagrams, the reason behind the rather squarish page dimensions). After the exercises, solutions are presented which contain general commentary, specific analysis, and a complete game score.

Because the modules in the first part cover more formulaic combinations, strong players will likely want to simply read the lesson to inoculate themselves from falling prey to the tactics shown while intermediate players may want to work out the exercises to warm up for the more difficult analysis to be found in the second part. Weaker players should take two passes through the early modules — first simply

determining which positions are safe for Black based on the criteria given in the lessons, and then taking a second pass to get the proper attacks and defenses down.

Working the Exercises

This book is meant as a self-contained training kit and contains 116 exercises drawn from real games. The more you put into solving the exercises, the more you'll gain from them. If you do not already do so, I recommend keeping a training/analysis journal. When solving the exercises, write down everything you see. There is something psychologically meaningful in committing to an idea enough to actually write it down. Sometimes what you write down will be wrong... and that's okay. Fear of making mistakes is one of the greatest stumbling blocks to personal growth in general (and chess training in particular).

While the exercises in the first few modules, the blundersault modules, may seem pretty simple after reading the lessons, there is something to be gained by working through them nonetheless. Many of the tactics in the second part are related to the more scripted attacks found in the first. Working through the easier, formulaic attacks will make the later modules feel less like a standing jump onto a moving train.

Note to Colle Players

If a Colle-System reader happens to have bought this book by accident, I recommend he immediately put it on e-bay and grab a copy of *The Moment of Zuke* instead. Much of the material here can be found in *TMoZ*, and the presentation there is much more directed at Colle System players. *TMoZ* also contains several Colle-centered lessons that have nothing to do with the Bishop sacrifice.

Contact the Author

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