

Chapter 1

Why?

The cover of this book may have invited certain questions into your brain:

1. Why should I play the Colle-Zukertort?
2. Why on Earth do we need another book on the Colle?
3. Why should I get this book; I already have a Colle-Zukertort book?
4. Why did Heather D. Carroll dump me for Stu Campbell in 8th grade?

1 Why should I play the C-Z?

The Colle-Zukertort is everything you could ever want in an opening!

- You have real attacking possibilities early on.
- You don't have to sacrifice material or position to gain initiative.
- You have excellent King safety.
- It helps you to lose weight.
- It increases your vertical leap.

Why?

AND

- It makes young women (or men) of all ages and nationalities go crazy for you!

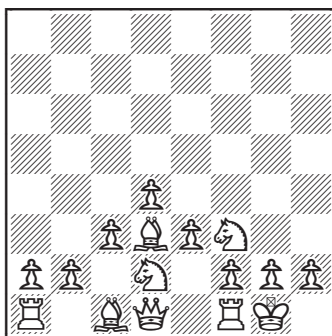
Okay, some of the statements above might not be completely accurate. However, it is true that the Colle-Zukertort:

- has a fair amount of poison in it
- follows sound opening principles
- requires no long-term concessions
- gives Black little early counter play

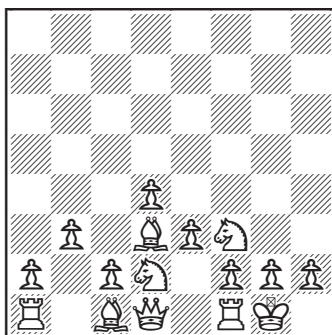
Notice that I did not say anything about the Colle-Zukertort being a “thematic” opening where you just have to “understand” the position instead of learning a bunch of “theory.” While it is true that the C-Z requires memorization of fewer lines than the Semi-Slav, thinking of any opening as a purely thematic undertaking will get you roasted! You cannot be lazy in chess!

Hold on a sec. I need some clarification. Is the Colle-Zukertort the same as the Colle?

Good question. The Colle has two flavors. The “normal” branch is now known as the **Colle-Koltanowski** and refers to the setup below:



The **Colle-Zukertort** is considered the more ambitious branch and has the b-pawn advanced instead of the c-pawn.



Since I am coming from a Colle-Zukertort perspective, I will use “Colle” to refer to the Zukertort version.

So if I play the Colle-Koltanowski, this book will not be of any use to me?

Not true! The Koltanowski variation suffers from many of the same problems as the Zukertort. In particular, there are several pet defenses that people use against both. The two openings do not branch from each other until move 5, so any deviation by Black prior to then is equally problematic to players of both Colle variations. In fact, the majority of this book is as useful to Koltanowski players as Zukertort players.

Finally, you, like I, may decide to change from the Koltanowski variation to the more highly regarded C-Z. For many years the Colle-Koltanowski was the only opening I would play. Then I made the switch to the Zukertort line, and I never looked back!

2 Why another Colle book?

There are two answers—one concrete, the other vague.

2.1 The concrete answer

The concrete answer is simple. The Colle-Zukertort needs help! It suffers from two major problems:

- There are many Anti-Colles out there that Black can use to avoid the Zukertort, and several of them appear to give Black a good game.
- Even when Black does not play a pet defense against the C-Z, several of the standard setups White aims for have simply not done that well in practice!

I know, I know, I just did the unthinkable... in Chapter 1 I cast aspersions on the very opening I am treating! I'm afraid you'll just have to get used to this book's not being the standard type.

Why?

I wrote this book to address these two issues. I think the Colle is a fantastic opening—why else would I have played it exclusively for 15 years!! But, it has some problems that simply must be addressed. Let's take a look at some of them.

Anti-Colles

Many systems have anti-systems devoted to them. The normal reason for this is that Black wants to avoid sharp lines, even if it means using an opening that scores less well. I wish I could say the same thing about the C-Z, but the situation is the reverse. Black's deviations tend to sharpen play and increase his chances.

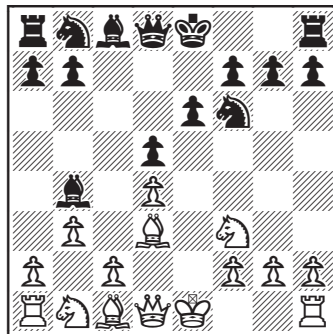
Some of these pet defenses are known thorns in the side of Zukertort players. Even authors of opening books (which typically tend to laud an opening more than it deserves) have admitted the following are particularly challenging responses:

- The delayed Grünfeld: 1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 g6
- The QID
- The Benoni

I don't list the KID or the Dutch defense in the above lines because they deviate before White has locked in his c-Bishop. Nor do they transpose to a normal QP (Queen Pawn) game (as the QID and Benoni can).

In addition to the above, there are even systems that books suggest as bad for Black but actually are not! For example, consider the early Bishop check variation shown below:

- 1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 e6
4. Bd3 c5 5. b3 cxd4 6. exd4
Bb4+**



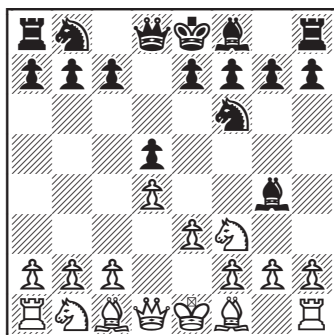
Chapter One

Smith & Hall give Black's 5th move a ?!, claim it leaves his position poor, and then say his 6th was ineffective.

Other authors do not respect this line enough to even discuss it. However, in my 3 million+ game database, I find Black winning more often than White. It gets worse if you only count games between 2000+ players; I found Black winning twice as often as White! This includes multiple GM-level games from just the past few years.

Let's look at another example. Since Black's problem piece in this opening tends to be his c-Bishop, developing this Bishop early via ...Bf5 or ...Bg4 is a standard defense. A basic example of this is:

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 Bg4



Gary Lane, in *The Ultimate Colle*, groups this with a couple other openings that he says are not played often "for good reason." The claim is that "with prior book knowledge, they can be shown to be bad."

He (and everyone else) then suggests the move 4. c4, with the idea of getting the Queen out to attack the b6-pawn that is now undefended.

While that plan is certainly a reasonable one, Lane's remarks on this defense are rather unfounded. I found over 200 games played between strong players (2000+) in this line, with Black scoring nearly 50%. And it is not a mere consequence of those players lacking the basic book knowledge to play this opening. In fact, the most common response to 4. c4 is 4... c6, which NO ONE (not Lane, not Summerscale, not Smith & Hall) even mentions! Is there some conspiracy here?

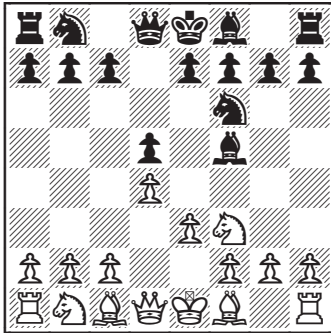
If this opening is so bad, then there are some IM/GMs who haven't gotten that memo

Why?

yet, like *Fridman* (who used it in 2006 against *Yusupov*).

To reinforce my point, let's look at one more example.

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 Bf5



Oddly enough, this variation occurs more frequently in practice than the last, yet it has received less attention. Gary Lane does not mention it at all. Summerscale mentions it in a note, saying it transposes to another line, but he assumes the continuation 4. c4 c6 5. cxd5 cxd5 when in reality Black does better with 4... e6, after which White cannot really hope to transpose to the 1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Bf5 line because the B/c1 is blocked by the e3-pawn, and after 5. cxd5 exd5 6. Qb3 Nc6 White does not appear to have any-

thing since 7. Qxb7 Nb4 8. Bb5+ Nd7 is certainly not what White was looking for and 8. Na3 a6! is even worse.

In the nearly 2000 games I found with 3... Bf5, Black won more games than White. So it appears this line is plagued by both theoretical and practical concerns. The practical concerns persist in all major lines: 4. c4 e6, 4. c4 c6, and 4. Bd3. They also persist when considering only games between strong players (2000+).

Yet Smith & Hall say that in all ...Bf5 lines Black "faces an uphill defensive task" and that "the middle game will favor White." With regard to this particular line, they say "as analysis and games have shown, the development of the c-Bishop is premature."

(To his credit, Summerscale indicates that White's advantage in the line he mentions is minimal, so this line could have been placed in the previous category as well.)

Mainline problems

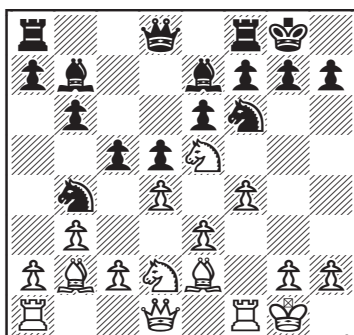
In addition to the known,

Chapter One

and unknown, Anti-Colle problems discussed above, there are standard lines suggested to White that simply have generated little success in practice.

Consider the position arising after the following moves:

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 e6 4. Bd3 c5 5. b3 Nc6 6. 0-0 Be7 7. Bb2 0-0 8. Nbd2 b6 9. Ne5 Bb7 10. f4 Nb4 11. Be2



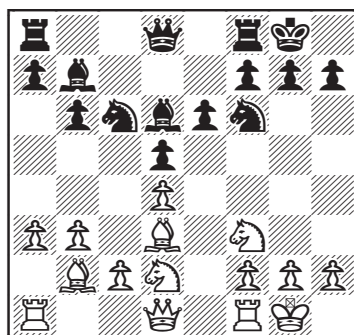
This is a standard line where Black has played ...Be7, a move some writers (Smith & Hall) explicitly say is bad for Black while others implicitly indicate as not critical because it is not the “main” line.

How has White done after this deviation? I found 10 games with this variation between players 2000+, and

the results are 1:3:6! (1 win, 3 draws, 6 losses)—not exactly inspiring. When searching *all* games, the only wins I can find in this line are the ones everyone quotes (not counting a game from a Juniors event).

Let’s look at another standard position:

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 e6 4. Bd3 c5 5. b3 Nc6 6. 0-0 Bd6 7. Bb2 0-0 8. Nbd2 cxd4 9. exd4 b6 10. a3 Bb7



Now, it’s bad enough that Sadler may have found an improvement on this last move by 10... Bf5! But, let’s go with the likely inferior text move, which represents the end of established theory in this line. From here, both Lane and Summerscale show multiple ideas for White.

I found 20 games with this

Why?

position in OTB play. The aggregated results of those games are 4:5:11!

In fairness to the other writers, the records in these lines have really tanked in the past years. Most of the losses came after Summerscale's book, and about half of them post-date Lane's. My point is that even these standard positions need some work!

One leveling remark bears mention. Black tends to be the stronger player in these positions... possibly through happenstance, possibly through White choosing a safer system against a stronger opponent. However, the results suggest a reexamination of theory, that caveat notwithstanding.

2.2 The vague answer

The vague answer as to why there could possibly be a need for a new Colle book is that the opening is very much virgin territory—an opinion given by Jeremy Silman, with whom I agree.

One reason is that strong players, as Black, will tend to

avoid the mainline Colle setup (which should give us some optimism!), using any of several pet defenses instead. Another reason is strong players, as White, tend to use the C-Z setup against only certain lines or as a transpositional device, switching to a QGD later.

For example, Yusupov has used the C-Z setup in over 50 games... yet I cannot find a single game of his that opened in either of the so-called "normal" ways: 1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 e6 4. Bd3 c5 or 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 e6 3. Bd3 c5. This is due to both the factors I mentioned above. He tends to use the C-Z primarily after 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6, and those few times where he has offered it in the more normal order, his grandmaster opponents have declined to follow suit!

Another example is Vlatko Kovacevic, who has used the C-Z with some frequency against all setups, but really appears to like it against the Benoni. Just as in Yusupov's case, his opponents do not tend to play the "mainline." In 16 games of his that began 1.

Chapter One

d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 or 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3, his opponent played the “normal” 3... e6 in only 1.

Statistics validate my observations on a large scale. I found the position after 1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 in 244 games where both players were 2400 or above. Among these high-level games, less than 23 percent continued with 3... e6, the “mainline” move. Fewer than 10% continued 4. Bd3 c5. Yes, this means that there exist only about 20 GM-level games with even the first 4 moves of the mainline!

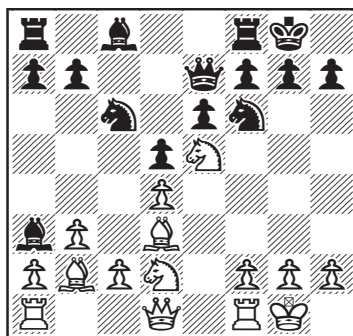
Compare the same statistics for lower-level games. I found over 2500 games after 1960 in which the 1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 position arose. The likelihood of the Colle-Zukertort continuation (at both stages) in these games was 50% higher than at the GM-level. However, since these players tend to follow blindly the suggestions of the repertoire books they read, the level of experimentation has been small.

Interestingly enough, the converse of the above is also

true. Many, many of the games we see quoted by theory arrived at positions through some odd transposition of moves, so a large percentage of the games that opening manuals quote are played by high-level players who are looking at critical positions for the first time or simply happen to have a personal repertoire that shares lines with a C-Z repertoire via transpositions. It’s no wonder that the plans chosen by titled players with a Frankensteinian repertoire might differ from class players using a thematic one.

For example, consider the so-called mainline:

- 1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 e6**
- 4. Bd3 c5 5. b3 Nc6 6. 0-0**
- Bd6 7. Bb2 0-0 8. Nbd2 Qe7**
- 9. Ne5 cxd4 10. exd4 Ba3**



Why?

I found 55 games with this position. Fully 2/3 of them came from a non-standard move order (normally a transposition from a QID).

Another problem is that authors of previous books on the Colle-Zukertort have generally not been active practitioners of the opening. Other than Summerscale, none of the recent authors (Lane, Schiller, Smith & Hall) used the Zukertort even semi-frequently prior to the years immediately before writing their books. This has obvious disadvantages when writing a book on such a thematic opening.

For example, you'll find moves like Re1 or Qe2 described in almost every book as "supporting a Knight on e5." Baloney! The N/e5 has plenty of support. (To find out the real reason for these moves, see later chapters.)

3 Why should I buy this book?

The answer to that depends on who you are. My belief is that the solutions I have

found to many of the problems Colle players face make this book required reading for all practitioners, especially those who play the Zukertort version.

If you have dabbled with the Zukertort and are interested in hearing a new viewpoint/philosophy on the opening from someone who has played it exclusively for many years, this book is for you.

If you face the Colle a lot and want to see what surprises lie in wait for Black in certain lines, or want some analysis on your pet defense to the opening, this book will serve as a foil.

As a class-level player, I bring a different perspective to the table. In addition to analysis, I provide guidance in English about ideas and pitfalls to avoid. One of the most important things to understand is not just why a certain move makes sense in a certain situation, but why another "natural" move should be avoided.

To put a sharper point on how this book differs from a

Chapter One

typical opening manual: that one.

- Typical books focus on showing what has been done, This book focuses on what might be better where new ideas are needed.
- Typical books use model games and trees, I focus on ideas coupled to analysis.
- Typical books expect you to be familiar and fluent with all types of advantages and imbalances. I have tried, when possible, to focus on those advantages/imbalances that tournament players can best use: Bishops in open or tactically quiet positions, an attack on the opponent's King when the opponent has no counterplay, and the endgame advantages of better pawn structure.

4 Why did Heather D. Carroll dump me for Stu Campbell in 8th grade?

Sorry, can't help you with

5 Final notes

As I alluded earlier, this book is a bit different than most opening manuals. The method I've used to familiarize readers with the opening in the next two chapters is atypical. Perhaps it will prove a successful method for introducing an opening system.

In an effort to make this book as valuable as possible, I've consigned certain chunks of the least important analysis to a separate chapter so readers do not lose the forest for the trees. I've also added a quiz/training bonus chapter and a separate chapter giving a non-comprehensive index of new ideas of mine and not-quite-new ideas that I have fleshed out more than earlier books. Thus, different people can efficiently use this book in different ways.

I often refer to previous books, and one could easily get the impression that I am denigrating the work of earlier authors. I do not wish to sug-

Why?

gest that earlier books are not worthwhile.

Smith & Hall was *the* Colle book for many years, and I would never have become a devotee were it not for their work.

Summerscale's book remains to this day a book I would recommend to other players, managing to pack an entire repertoire into 144 pages. I have written nothing at all on the KID, Pirc, Modern, Dutch, or "normal" Grünfeld defenses because I did not think I had anything to add to Summerscale's recommendations.

While I have not found Lane's book to be an improvement on Summerscale's in terms of his coverage of the Zukertort, I have found his extensive discussion of the Colle-Koltanowski helpful to me personally. For example, a line he recommends against the QID really saved my bacon when preparing this book.

Finally, Palliser's book on the Colle-Koltanowski is to be praised for obsoleting the Koltanowski half of Smith &

Hall, much as Summerscale did to the Zukertort half. Palliser's book is notable for taking a stark departure from conventional style by having a tone that, relative to the norm, comes across as abject pessimism. His book is the chess equivalent of *Ecclesiastes*.

If you are under the impression that the Colle allows you to comfortably play the opening without worrying about the nitty-gritty realities of move-orders and tactics, then allow me to disabuse you of that illusion. The Colle is not the sharpest of openings, but trying to navigate the opening using vague ideas, no matter what those ideas are, is a recipe for disaster!

The structure of this book respects this admonition. The sectioning of the chapters is predominantly based on a combination of plan and move-order options for Black. I have tried to highlight exactly why different move-orders call for different responses.

Finally, I must ask future readers to keep in mind that I am essentially trying to fix a

Chapter One

raft of problems that previous writers have either ignored or been oblivious to. It should not be a surprise if some of the ideas and analysis I give prove faulty under the magnifying glass of time and practice.

I've spent a good deal of time over the last 4 years writing this book on the Zukertort, my adopted child. If there is something you don't like

about it, or lines you think are nugatory, or anything else you think could be improved, I welcome your suggestions and comments!

If any of you *Zuke Dukes* play the lines I introduce here in tournaments, please feel free to send me your game scores. I may include them in a later book.