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Foreword by Michael Adams

Viswanathan Anand wrote a kind thread on Twitter/X after my win in the 2023 London Chess Classic, in which he recalled a couple of our games. I hadn't forgotten this relevant position, from one of our earliest encounters over three decades ago, either.

Viswanathan Anand Michael Adams

London 1987



I decided to defend the knight tactically with

13...♖c8,

as 14.b5 ♖a5 works out alright. Vishy continued

14.♙b2,

instead defending his knight.

Now, I got a bit too clever, and rejected the obvious and good 14...♙c4!

Instead I 'prevented' the fork with

14...♘d5? 15.b5 ♘xc3



as 16.♙xc3 ♙xb5 is fine.

16.♚d3!

An elegant solution. The Zwischenzug threatens mate and supports the pawn on b5. There is no way to save the piece.

16...g6 17.♙xc3 ♚c7 18.bxa6 ♘a5

19.♙xa5 1-0

Anand mentioned he was twenty minutes late for the round, after struggling with the geography of Hyde Park, but was too polite to reveal that it only took him around a quarter of that time to win the game!

Although being on the receiving end of a Zwischenzug is never a pleasant experience, there is still something rather pleasing about this kind of tactic. I always thought it suffered from a marketing problem. 'Intermediate move' or 'in-between move' doesn't sound that exciting for a move that is amongst the most devious, devilish and devastating in chess.

I'm not sure I can add much wisdom to the excellent advice in these pages about finding Zwischenzugs, but I will try to give a couple of pointers.

Generally speaking, as players calculate a line, their thinking and ability to assess becomes cloudier move by move. To make things more problematic, to find a hidden resource like a Zwischenzug frequently requires rejecting an obvious response and keeping an open mind about the position, whilst navigating further into a variation. It's crucial to keep looking for alternatives at every step of the process. The emphasis in this book is on playing Zwischenzugs yourself, but spotting the potential for your opponent to play a strong Zwischenzug, and not allowing them that possibility often requires looking one step further still, and even greater alertness.

It is worth bearing in mind that captures clear space on the board, which opens up new avenues and possibilities for the remaining pieces, even more so if there is a series of exchanges. Moving an attacked piece can be a reflex action, when you are likely to have switched on autopilot, but it is immensely satisfying when you ignore the automatic response to find a special alternative instead.

There is no doubt that a greater awareness of Zwischenzugs will also lead to a greater general tactical awareness, as your thinking becomes more rigorous. Natasha's and Matt's advice that when you start studying Zwischenzugs, you begin to notice them elsewhere, makes good sense to me, and can only be a healthy development.

I particularly enjoyed the 'Dingtermezzo' chapter. When you have two such talented tacticians as Ding Liren and Ian Nepomniachtchi, these concepts seem second nature to them. I was still very surprised that so much appropriate material could be found purely from just the games in their World Championship Match, the thrust and parry of Zwischenzugs seem automatic with their expertise. Perhaps the Zwischenzug per game ratio is a good indicator of the entertainment value of a match?

I hope you enjoy the book, and use the exercises to pick up a few tips, or even a new perspective, and they are certainly fun to solve. The conclusion of Indjic-Adams (Puzzle 18 in the Super Sequences chapter) certainly brought me a lot of pleasure, and I trust you will find and enjoy the conclusion to that one too!

Preface

What will you learn by reading this book?

This book is a comprehensive guide to the chess tactic known as the intermediate move, or Zwischenzug, an exciting manoeuvre that can catch our opponent off-guard because it is against the expected run of play. It is, as far as we know, the first time that anyone has attempted to categorize the different types of Zwischenzug and to distil them into easily accessible themes.

We guide the reader in how to spot Zwischenzugs, when to look out for them, and how to set them up in our own games.

Our research has included a review of Zwischenzug annotations by masters, automated searches, commentaries of top events, and playing through thousands of games. This has allowed us to form our own view on which patterns arise frequently in practical play, and has led to a diverse mix of example puzzles to learn from and to practise.

We have given our concepts engaging names to make them more memorable, and we have added historical details throughout. We believe that this way of learning is fun and effective, and this view is supported by feedback from our Chessable readers, and is also borne out by the authors now finding plenty of Zwischenzugs in their own games!

How is the book structured?

The first four parts take us from Zwischenzug basics to how master players use the technique to their advantage in their games. We provide many real-game examples throughout as puzzles to solve.

In **Part I** we look at forcing moves that can be used to interrupt the expected sequence. These include checks, captures, checkmating threats and threats to promote.

Part II covers patterns where Zwischenzugs frequently occur such as when each side has a piece en prise or when a white knight can land on e7 or f6 with check.

In **Part III** we focus on the opening and endgame to examine Zwischenzugs that can occur in these phases of the game.

Chapters in **Part IV** feature predominantly master games, and we have grouped them by outcomes. Sometimes the outcomes are very direct, such as the win of material or an attack on the king. Other outcomes are more subtle; provoking an enemy weakness, or an improvement of our own pieces.

Part V brings us 18 exceptional master games containing Zwischenzugs. These can be enjoyed by playing through the games and reading the annotations, or daring readers can solve them as ‘Fiendish level puzzles’.

The **sixth and final part** presents intermediate moves from the 2023 World Championship Match, which turned out to be a veritable goldmine of Zwischenzugs. It includes every type of forcing move from Part I, all of the patterns from Part II and all of the outcomes from Part IV, providing instant revision of everything we have learned as well as illustrating how significant Zwischenzugs were on the outcome of the most important match in 2023.

Between the main parts we have also added two bonus sections – **Zwischen-spiels** – that cover how we retrain our brain’s auto-pilot, and the practical aspects of playing Zwischenzugs, such as psychology, and when not to play one.

The puzzles and how to approach them

There is a wide range of difficulty in the puzzles included in this book, making it suitable for many different types of players – from intermediate-level club players right up to experienced tournament players rated well over 2200. The content progresses from basic tactics to a mixture of higher-level positional and tactical themes.

We have included a difficulty rating of one to five stars with each puzzle to help the reader know what to expect. One star is the simplest, all the way up to five stars which denotes the hardest puzzles to solve. In addition, we have a ‘Super sequences’ chapter with master games that contain some lovely complex Zwischenzug sequences that we have categorized as Fiendish difficulty level - a level beyond our five-star rating.

When solving the puzzles, remember that the intermediate move itself may not be the first move in the sequence, particularly for those with more stars.

In order that the examples are typical of actual play, we have taken all our puzzles from real games and their variations. We deliberately cast our net widely when choosing which games to include. We wanted to show that the Zwischenzug is not simply the preserve of grandmasters, it is played (and sometimes missed) at every level. In this book there are games from, among others, club players to super grandmasters; juniors and all the way up to seniors; tournaments and players from around the world as well as top chess engines.

The games also comprise a wide variety of time controls: standard play, rapidplay and blitz. They come from both over-the-board chess and online chess (such as Titled Tuesday games as well as casual internet games by lower rated players) and they draw from classical games of the past right up to the latest modern games. There are brilliant examples of shocking sacrificial attacks and instructive quieter sequences leading to longer-term gain.

How did the book come about?

This book is based on our Chessable course *Zwischenzug! A comprehensive guide to intermediate moves* which was published in June 2023. The content here goes beyond our Chessable course. We have added puzzles from games that took place after the Chessable course was published and we have incorporated feedback and suggestions we received from users and from players who attended the presentations we gave at chess clubs. We have also developed our ideas around topics such as practical play, learnings from other board games and the psychology of Zwischenzugs – these are covered in two sections we call Zwischenspiels where we also provide a handy checklist of when not to play a Zwischenzug, another idea we have extended significantly since publishing our Chessable course.

Our (Natasha and Matt's) collaboration arose following the highly successful 2022 World Senior Teams Championship in Italy where we both played for the English squad (squadmates again for the first time since about forty years earlier when we both played junior chess for the English county of Buckinghamshire). The author of our Foreword GM Mickey Adams also played in the event and the England seniors won gold in all of the over 50s, over 65s and over 50s women sections!

Inspired by a friend, Matt had begun introducing the juniors at his club to intermediate moves, and we both felt this was an interesting topic. Natasha had plenty of ideas about how to take it forward drawing on her experience from the co-authoring the popular New In Chess book *Game Changer* and the associated Chessable course.

Acknowledgements

We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we have enjoyed researching and compiling it. We would like to extend our thanks to:

- all the players whose games, sequences and annotations we have included;
- everyone who provided feedback and reviews on our Chessable course which gave us so much encouragement;
- the staff at New In Chess and Chessable who have all been wonderful to work with;
- Andrew McGettigan, Phil Crocker and James Vigus for their reviews of our early material and ideas;
- Michael Adams for writing the foreword;
- Matt's wife, Ursula, and Natasha's partner, Matthew, for their support;
- Ray Cannon for the spark of inspiration.

We hope you will enjoy this book. Whatever level or type of chess you play, make the Zwischenzug your friend, and when you play a good one let us know – we'd love to see it!

WIM Natasha Regan and NI Matt Ball
London, 2024

PART 0

Introduction to Zwischenzugs

Welcome to this guide to intermediate moves! In the coming pages we will not only solve hundreds of Zwischenzug puzzles from real play to sharpen our tactics, we will also explore the key patterns and dynamic positional features to help us set them up and use them in our own games.

So, what is a Zwischenzug?

Through years of match play and study, chess players build up their expectations of the natural flow of a sequence of moves. For example, if our piece is attacked we move it; or if our piece is captured, we recapture... or do we?

A Zwischenzug is a move which interrupts this normal – or expected – sequence, and typically poses a threat in the hope of gaining an advantage. This can often come as a big surprise to our opponent because we have to be alert to spot such moves – almost by definition they are not what our autopilot expects.

‘Zwischenzug’ comes from German, ‘zwischen’ meaning ‘between’ and ‘Zug’ meaning ‘move’. Some people use the term ‘intermezzo’, others call it an ‘intermediate move’ or an ‘in-between move’ – no problem, they all mean the same thing. Whatever word you prefer to use, what we are talking about is a great move for ambushing our opponent and we’ll use all those words interchangeably in this book.

Zwischenzug!

One thing to understand right now about Zwischenzugs is that timing can be critical. Take a look at this position from Rossolimo-Castaldi, Hilversum 1947, where it is Black to move:



After Black captures with **10...♙xc3**, recapturing immediately with 11.bxc3 exd5 would allow Black to get a pawn in the centre to guard e4, a square White would like to use. Therefore, White must act now to play a tactical sequence before recapturing on c3. It's time to find a Zwischenzug...

11.♚e4!

White threatens mate in one on h7. Black must take action right away, there is no time for the bishop on c3 to evacuate to safety.

11...♖d8



Again, recapturing now on c3 for White is too slow; there is a bigger opportunity that is available now *only* with the next move:

12.d6!

The mating threat is renewed because the pawn on d6 covers the flight square on e7 for the king. So, Black must deal with that first, but White is now also threatening the rook on a8 (and the bishop on c3 is still en prise). White has turned the tables here.

12...♜f8 13.bxc3

Only now is the bishop recaptured and White is going to win material on his next move.

13...♞c6 14.♚xc6

And that series of forcing moves, played at just the right moment, left White a piece and a pawn up.

Why study Zwischenzugs?

The example we have just seen is one of many ways we can use a Zwischenzug to our advantage. Interrupting a tactical sequence with a forcing move to win material is one of the more basic themes. At the other end of the spectrum, a surprising move that gains a tempo to create a positional advantage is often how the term 'Zwischenzug' is used by high-level players when they annotate their own and others' games.

Like any tactic – or indeed any part of chess – the more we study it, the better we will understand it.

Recent developments in chess, however, do not favour the thinking needed to spot a good Zwischenzug. They include:

- (i) faster time controls, increasingly prevalent over the board and online, give us less time to search for the in-between move;
- (ii) the popularity of online chess, which allows pre-moving, thereby encouraging us to play an instant recapture. This might save fractions of a second but can lead to the bad habit of never looking for an intermezzo.

Finding intermediate moves requires us to slow down and calculate whereas modern chess requires us to speed up and play on intuition. We are more likely than ever *not* to find them, but reading this book and learning from its ideas, we believe, will fix that.

This book advises on when and how to look for a Zwischenzug, giving plenty of practice examples and helping us to retrain our autopilot.

We have distilled what we have learned from our reviews of numerous games and master annotations to categorize the different types of Zwischenzugs and present them in an easily digestible and fun way.

We believe that this is the first time Zwischenzugs have been categorized and explained in this way.

Our approach – how did we find our puzzles?

We used a wide range of sources to find as much fresh material as possible. We avoided rummaging through dozens of old tactics books (where, as we discovered, Zwischenzugs sometimes receive a superficial level of coverage relative to other tactics) and instead adopted an approach using the following sources:

- (i) targeted database searches using annotations. We looked for keywords in the annotations to master-level games where players write their analysis

including variations considered but not played in the game. In the Annotations tab of the Mega Database search we specified terms such as 'Zwischenzug', 'Intermezzo', 'Zwischenschach', 'intermediate move' and so on and retrieved a treasure trove of ideas and tactics. The results proved highly rewarding in that the sequences found this way were typically quite subtle and positional in nature, and provided a great supplement to the puzzles found by other means.

- (ii) database searches using functionality. The ability to search automatically for Zwischenzugs became one of the options in the Chessbase Mega Database Manoeuvres tab towards the end of 2022. This search retrieved thousands of games – we refined the results using functions such as date range or player ratings – and it provided a good starting point, though the results do not cover the full range of intermediate moves as we have defined them, because the automatic search results typically include only intermediate moves interrupting capture-recapture sequences.
- (iii) tournament commentary and games. We played through a large number of games from tournaments taking place during our research. This provided new material from the very latest matches. We also followed live commentary (and commented ourselves!) and kept a note of variations that were being discussed to analyse them afterwards.
- (iv) social media. Players, commentators and platforms regularly share interesting tactics and ideas on services such as Facebook and X (previously Twitter). We followed these sources to pick up on more new games.
- (v) online puzzles. We played through tactical sequences using services such as Puzzle Rush on Chess.com and daily puzzles on chessguesser.com.
- (vi) our own and friends' games. We always get a special buzz when we know the Zwischenzug perpetrator!

We lost count of the number of games we looked at, but we know it ran into several thousand.

What we learned

As we compiled the material for this book and looked through many games, we came to these five conclusions:

1. The Zwischenzug is a neglected move; it receives less attention from most courses and books than other tactics. It is a more complex sequence that is built on other tactics, all of which have to be learned first.

2. There is a wide variety of Zwischenzugs – a range of different forcing moves can be used to execute one and the outcomes achieved can extend from an immediate tactical gain right up to a long-term positional benefit. Master players'

use of the Zwischenzug, in particular, is often more subtle than just winning material. Studying examples from higher-level games helps improve our overall play, including, crucially, our recognition of important dynamic factors within the position.

3. Zwischenzugs occur more frequently than we had initially expected.

Sometimes they are played successfully, sometimes they are threatened and prevented, and sometimes they are overlooked. Others lurk in the variations shown during live commentary as well as in players' post-game analysis.

4. Once we started studying them, we found more and more of them in our own games and in games we watched or commentated on. The more material we prepared for this book, the more we developed the feeling for when there would be a Zwischenzug in the position. Classifying the Zwischenzug patterns that we noticed cropping up regularly enabled us to find them more easily than we would have before, including several of our own (for example, a nice tactic played by Matt – see the Connected Queens chapter – and two from Natasha's games in Seniors Teams Championships in 2023 – see the Threaten to Promote chapter and the Provoke a Weakness chapter).

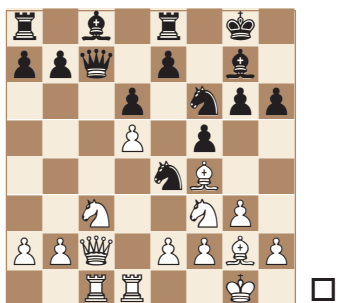
5. Studying Zwischenzugs is fun. Learning some lines of arcane opening theory or rook and pawn endgames can feel dry and laborious for some players. Finding, analysing and sharing Zwischenzugs – for us and, we hope, for our readers – is a source of excitement and always feels rewarding. The variety and richness of the topic, the fact that a Zwischenzug can land on the board as a big surprise or can be overlooked by both players, all contribute to this sentiment. The more sequences we see and the more we learn, the more we want to discover further nuances, patterns and ideas.

The fun we have had also pervades this book, not only with moves and tactics that we have enjoyed seeing and sharing but also in our writing. The more fun a topic is to learn, the more learning stays with us, so we have included the occasional Easter Egg within these pages. Not the chocolate variety, of course, just the one software developers define as 'an unexpected or undocumented feature included as a joke or a bonus'. So look out for: lively prose; snippets of historical information about some players, particularly those you might not have heard of; a sprinkling of Matt's terrible puns; and unconventional names for manoeuvres or patterns. The latter is designed with a particular goal in mind – the more evocative the name, the more likely we are to remember it.

Three special Zwischenzugs

To whet your appetite, and to illustrate some of the points above, we now present three Zwischenzugs that were played while we were writing our Chessable course and this book, and that have become special to us.

Our first example is basic level and extremely thematic. It was played by chess personality Maurits van der Meer in the 2023 online ChessPunks tournament. Even before the tournament, Maurits had tweeted that he had been enjoying our Zwischenzug Chessable course, and then in his first game of the match he reached the following position as White:



Black had just played 14...♘df6.

15.♘xe4!

Van der Meer takes advantage of the 'connected queens' motif to grab a knight. Black has to attend to her undefended queen, there is no time to recapture on e4.

15...♙xc2 16.♘xf6+

An intermediate capture with check on f6 before the queen is recaptured on c2.

16...♙xf6 17.♙xc2

Van der Meer is a piece up with a better position and won a few moves later.

As played in Van der Meer-Friberg, Chess.com 2023.

It is a joy for any author to see the ideas they have written about flourish in games of players who have adopted their method. After the game, Van der Meer commented on X (formerly

known as Twitter): 'I spotted "connected queens" and potential "knight check on e7/f6" and the rest was history.'

We will find out much more about connected queens and the importance of these knight checks later in the book!

Our second example is taken from Orton-Shafi, UK minor counties final 2023.



An intermediate-level Zwischenzug

was found here by Scottish international Declan Shafi. Natasha was commentating live online, and the moment the Zwischenzug was played it was a candidate to go into this book. It gained a place in our hearts when we later presented the position at a lecture during the 2023 British Championships. Some (clearly talented) juniors in the room instantly offered the following tactical sequence: 27...♙xg5 28.♙xg5 ♘xh3+ 29.♙g2 ♘xg5. Black has won a pawn and a piece.

The tactic looks attractive but fails precisely because they rushed to find a solution and did not look for the possibility of an intermediate move. This seemed all the more surprising given that they knew they were attending a session about Zwischenzugs!

When we pointed out that after 27...♖xg5, White does not have to play the expected move – capturing the black queen – and can instead take the knight with 28.gxf4, they stopped to think for a moment. The sequence works if the g-pawn cannot make that capture, so they suddenly realized an extra move had to be inserted and soon came up with the successful line played in the game:

27...h5

A clever intermezzo, deflecting the queen off the g-file.

28.♖h4 ♖xg5

Now the white g-pawn is pinned to its king and cannot capture the black knight.

29.♖xg5 ♖xh3+ 30.♔g2 ♖xg5

Our final example is from the highest level, the 2023 World Championship Match. Here we present just one of numerous Zwischenzugs played in the match. The match was exciting for us, not just because it was too close to call throughout, but also because of the number of Zwischenzugs that were played. We had just finished writing the Chessable course, and every new intermezzo gave rise to frenzied Whatsapp messages between us discussing the latest moves, and the growing realization that we would need to write a new chapter dedicated to the sequences in this match – we decided to call it ‘Dingtermezzo!’.

The example we have selected is easy to understand, but also subtle, as a quiet-looking move has a devastating effect. It is a lovely example of what we call ‘the bouncing rook’.

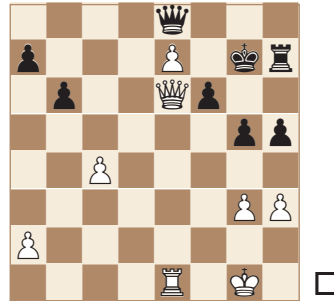
Ding Liren

2788

Ian Nepomniachtchi

2795

Astana Wch m 2023 (4)



Ding is in control here and would like to put his rook on the d-file, but doing so immediately would lose some of White’s advantage because Black can mount a defence: 41.♖d1 ♔g6 42.♖d8 ♖xe7. Therefore, he needs to find an intermediate move to make his plan work.

41.♖f1

A sneaky intermezzo, threatening to capture on f6. It forces a deflection of the rook away from the seventh rank.

41...♖h6 42.♖d1

The rook bounces from f1 to d1, the square it had wanted to land on at the start of the sequence. This provokes a weakness, because Black is now forced to open up his king’s defences to prevent the white rook reaching d8 immediately – but it’s already hopeless, and resignation followed shortly.

42...f5 43.♖e5+ ♔f7 44.♖xf5+ ♖f6 45.♖h7+ ♔e6 46.♖g7 ♖g6 47.♖f8 1-0

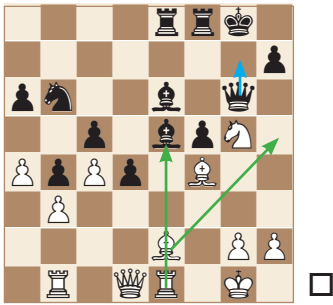
We will meet more bouncing rooks, queens and bishops in Part II of this book.

CHAPTER 1.4

Threaten to capture

Introduction

Making a threat against an opponent's piece can be a good way to disrupt their defences or to bring our own pieces into the action with gain of tempo. It's particularly forceful when we attack a major piece because such a move usually requires an urgent reply from our adversary.



In the diagram, Black has just captured the e pawn with 29...♙xe5 with the idea that an immediate recapture of the bishop would leave the knight on g5

undefended. But White is ready to hit back with a good move:

30. ♖h5

Threatening to capture the queen and opening the e-file for the rook. Black has no time to retreat the bishop because it's the queen that must evacuate.

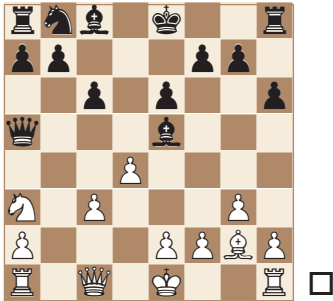
30... ♛g7 31. ♖xe5

White grabs the bishop with the rook so that the knight on g5 is still protected. Better still, White is attacking the rook on e8 and the bishop on e6. As played in Neukirch-Bienert, Burg ch-DDR 1965.

Puzzles

Puzzle 25

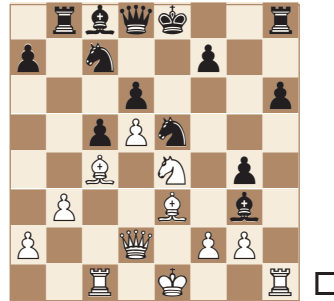
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Black has just captured a knight on e5. How should White reply?

Puzzle 26

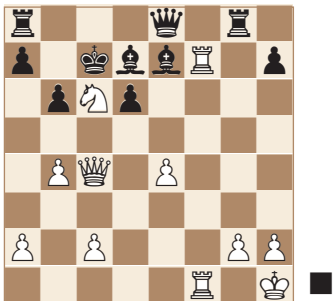
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Black has just taken a knight on g3. What surprising move was played here by White?

Puzzle 27

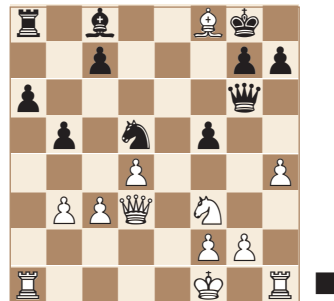
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White has just captured a pawn on the c6-square. What is Black's most ruthless reply?

Puzzle 28

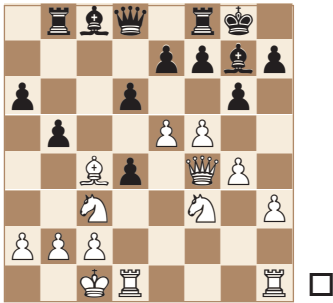
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White has grabbed a rook on f8. What had he overlooked?

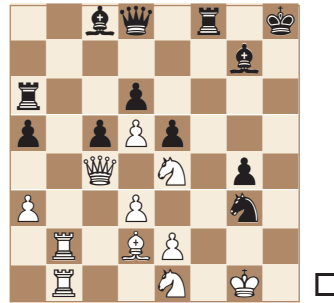
Puzzle 29

**



With the intermezzo capture 16...cxd4, Black has put two of his opponent's pieces en prise. It looks like White will have to give up a piece... or will he?

Puzzle 30



Black offers up a knight on g3 to get counterplay, intending to bring his queen to the h4-square. How did White reply?

CHAPTER 2.10

Zwischenantwort!**Hit their Zwischenzug with one of our own****Introduction**

If our opponent has caught us off-guard with an in-between move, we can look to see if we can reply immediately with one of our own. We were surprised how many times this opportunity is available; positions with one potential intermezzo will often yield a second or third intermezzo due to the dynamics of the situation – or, as we like to say, Zwischenzugs rarely travel alone.

Sometimes a sequence of consecutive intermediate moves can be inflicted by one player on a hapless opponent, other times an intermediate move can be played as a surprise response to an opponent's intermezzo, and that is what we will be learning in this chapter.

A Zwischenzug that replies to a Zwischenzug even has a name of its own: Zwischenantwort!

Let's look at an example from
Perevoznic-Nünchert, Lodz zt W 1963.



In this position White has just grabbed Black's h-pawn with 16. ♕xh6. It looks like White is going to be a pawn up here, but rather than recapturing on h6 Black plays a Zwischenzug by taking White's h-pawn:

16... ♖g5

Now material is even again. Recapturing immediately on h3 doesn't give White

anything: 17.gxh3 ♕xh6 and if White replies 18. ♖xh6, 18... ♖h4 gives Black a winning attack. Or Black can bring in the queen via an intermezzo: 17.gxh3 ♖h4. Instead, White replies with her own Zwischenzug...

17. ♕xg7

... and it looks like Black will be a piece down if she recaptures immediately on g7. But she has yet another intermezzo up her sleeve...

17... ♖g5

... threatening to capture on g2, which would be devastating for the white king. There is no time for the bishop on g7 to run away and the pawn on g2 is pinned so it can't recapture on h3. White has to defend g2...

18. ♕e4

... and now Black can recapture the bishop and the material is even:

18...♖xg7

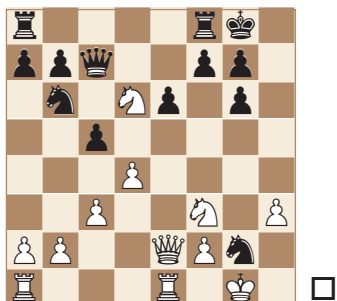
If White now tries to attack the rook,
Black can offer the exchange with

dynamic play against the weakened
white king: 19.f4 ♖g4 20.♗f3 ♘g3
21.♗xg4 ♗xg4.

In this chapter, look out for Mario Born's Zwischenantwort which we like because it is simple and powerful yet at the same time surprisingly difficult to spot!

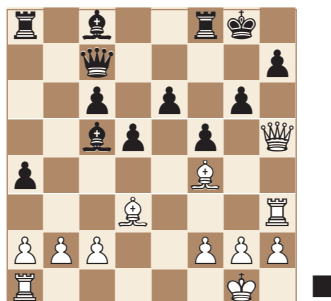
Puzzles

Puzzle 127 *



Black has tried a desperado intermezzo, grabbing a pawn on g2 and hoping to exchange knights, but White can turn the tables here. How?

Puzzle 128 **



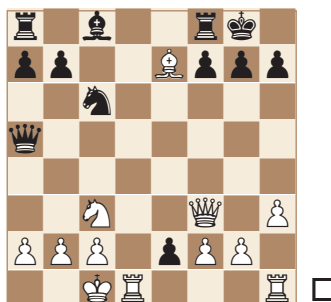
White has ignored the threat against his own queen and instead attacked the black queen with his bishop to prevent Black from playing ...e5, but it fails to another Zwischenzug that Black uncorked here. Can you find it?

Puzzle 129 **



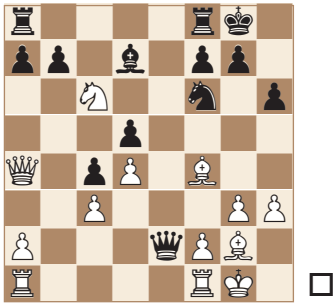
Before recapturing the bishop on d5, White has thrown in an intermezzo, attacking Black's queen. It's a clever move... or is it?

Puzzle 130 **



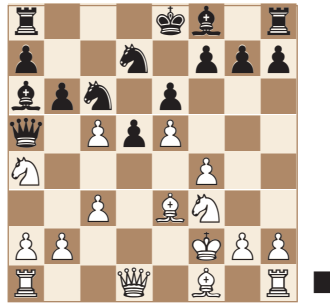
Black could have recaptured on e7 but instead has thrown in an intermediate capture on e2. What is White's best reply?

Puzzle 131 ***



Black has just played a Zwischenzug here, capturing a pawn on e2 before recapturing the pinned knight on c6. But White has a surprise lined up!

Puzzle 132 ****



White has just captured a pawn on c5. How does Black continue in this position arising from the French Defence?

Our trained responses in chess

We wanted to select a game to show the normal sequence of events: captures recaptures, attack a piece move it, attack a piece defend it. We looked to Capablanca as a past World Champion with a reputation of quiet and sound play. He had a legendary understanding of chess even from a very young age.

We started off by looking at his World Championship Match with Alekhine but found many games full of tactics, including Zwischenzugs.

The game we chose instead is from Capablanca's 1921 match with Emanuel Lasker (Havana, Game 11), when Capablanca first took the World Championship title +4 -0 =10. This game is a relatively quiet draw.

**1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 ♘f6 4.♙g5
♙e7 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♘c3 0-0 7.♖c1**

Capablanca frequently played this opening, both in this 1921 match against Lasker and in his 1927 match against Alekhine. And the funny thing was that Alekhine played exactly the same opening too!

7...c6 8.♚c2 c5

This move and White's reply look a bit strange to modern eyes as they contravene the wisdom of not to move the same piece twice in the opening. The engine prefers 8...h6, putting the question to the bishop.

9.♞d1

Moving a piece moved just two moves earlier! White could instead consider exchanges with a quiet position that is

Memorable and manageable

Two principles we have worked to in compiling this content are that we need to make our ideas memorable (to help them stick in the mind) and manageable (provide a small number of ideas so that a player does not feel overwhelmed trying to learn them).

To make the Zwischenzug patterns memorable we used creative and descriptive names such as 'bouncing bishop', 'mutual en prise' and 'connected queens'; we figured this would be more appealing to read than 'pattern one', 'pattern two' etc.

To keep the learning manageable, we chose no more than eight patterns that we saw cropping up frequently in games. A section called 'The Awesome Eight' feels much more appetizing – and more digestible – than '250 sequences you must learn'.

slightly better for White: 9.cxd5 cxd4
10.♘xd4 ♘xd5 11.♙xe7 ♘xe7.

9...♚a5



Now the sequences we want to illustrate begin. This part of the game could also be played on autopilot.

10.cxd5 ♖xd5

Captures recaptures.

11.♙xe7 ♗xe7

Captures recaptures.

12.♙d3

Threatens to capture on h7.

12...♗f6

Defends the h7-pawn.

13.0-0 cxd4 14.♗xd4

Captures recaptures.

14...♙d7 15.♗e4

Threatens to capture.

15...♗ed5

Defends.



16.♗b3

Attacks the queen.

16...♙d8

Moves away from capture.

17.♗xf6+ ♗xf6

Captures recaptures.

18.♙c5 ♙b6

Attacks the queen.

19.♖c1

Defends.

19...♖fc8

Attacks the queen.

20.♙xb6

Evades capture by taking the queen.

20...axb6

Recaptures.



21.♖xc8+ ♖xc8

Captures recaptures.

22.♖c1 ♖xc1+ 23.♗xc1

Captures recaptures.

23...♙f8 ½-½

This quiet game, with no tactical surprises, ends in a draw. It contained simple expected sequences such as captures... recaptures; attack it... defend it; attack it... move it; offer a trade... trade accepted, and so on. If only chess were that easy we could all be World Champions! To be clear, there was nothing wrong with any of those autopilot moves. They are a vital part of chess and will be used in almost every game, but it is not the whole picture.

In addition to considering these expected moves we also need to think about other moves that are also available in certain positions. The Zwischenzug is a counterintuitive move. Instead of playing the expected move, we play something else and to do that we have to override our autopilot.

To stay alert to the possibility of intermediate moves, it makes sense to adopt the habit of performing a brief check for an intermezzo before we play each autopilot move and, if it looks like there may be a possibility of a Zwischenzug then we can slow down and calculate it.

However, we can't calculate for ten minutes every time we just want to recapture something.

The idea of identifying and naming the patterns in Part II, and then practising the examples, is that these patterns end up in the autopilot part of our brain; and when a particular pattern arises on the board we spot it, using our fast-thinking intuition. The connected queens pattern becomes as familiar to us as the position of the pieces just before a simple bank rank or smothered mate sequence begins. Once we see a connected queens pattern we will know to calculate whether there is an intermezzo sequence.

Aji

Having got into the habit of looking for a forcing move before playing an autopilot response and knowing our common Zwischenzug patterns, we can take it a step further by thinking of our patterns as just some of the building blocks to help us set up tactics such as Zwischenzugs. Continuing with our principle of naming things to help discuss them we are using the word 'aji' as a general term to refer to the various possibilities in our position. Aji is Japanese, literally meaning 'taste', and is used in the game of Go to describe the potential in a position. For example, in chess terms, if our opponent has an undefended knight at the edge of the board, it's bad aji for them and good aji for us (loose pieces can drop off!). Aji is undoubtedly related to the chess concept of dynamic play and potential in the position, and it trips off the tongue faster!

In Go, a player may place a stone among their opponent's forces, not knowing at the time exactly how (or if) they will use that stone. But having it there generates possibilities for later play that the opponent needs to always be alert to. Returning to the example of an opponent's undefended piece in chess, having this feature in the position gives us a little plus, some possibilities, some aji. Sometimes we may wish to attack that knight forcing it to move and gaining us a tempo. But other times we will want to preserve that aji – and not attack the knight, because we like to have our opponent's undefended piece sitting there all vulnerable as it could give us extra possibilities later. We could then say that if we were to mistakenly attack the knight and force it to move to safety, this is 'aji keshi' – bad aji – as it reduces the good possibilities we have in our position. On occasion, you may hear a chess commentator say that the threat is better than the execution – a similar idea.

Let's have a look at a couple of chess positions through the lens of aji. Our idea is to give a general name to sum up all the little bits of excitement in our position, with

a view to us noticing them, and building them up to the point that favourable tactics such as Zwischenzugs start to appear.

By thinking about patterns and aji, we are learning to recognise positions with high potential for Zwischenzugs in them. There may not be an immediate opportunity, but understanding the longer-term potential in a position will encourage us to keep the tension and not let our guard down.

The following two examples from master games show contrasting positions after move 20.

Our first game between IM Brandon Clarke and Lik Zang Lye shows a high aji position which later led to Zwischenzugs. We compare this with the game Deep Fritz-Kramnik which has much less aji and ends in a draw – Kramnik deliberately set out to take the play out of the position against his extremely strong computer opponent.

Brandon Clarke

2484

Lik Zang Lye

2241

Sitges 2022



This position, the one reached after 20...♔b6, has high aji and we can expect tactics to ensue. White has more favourable aji than Black does.

The good aji for White includes:

- The open e-file, occupied by White's rook;
- Black's king is a target in the centre;
- Black's bishop is pinned and immobile, and defended only by Black's king;
- White's knight is well-placed in front of Black's isolated d-pawn – the knight can't be budged;

- Black's rooks are disconnected and can't coordinate across the board;
- White has passed a- and b-pawns which could become extremely dangerous in an endgame;
- While castling is possible in theory for Black, there are complications with a bishop being loose and the black king exposed due to the open g-file. Black also has some good aji, including:
 - The black queen and rook are lined up creating a battery against b2 and the white king;
 - White's bishop on a6 is loose;
 - Connected bishops potential on the h4-d8 diagonal.

Here Clarke is down an exchange for two pawns, having earlier played a sacrifice. We're often told that activity is more important than material; high aji positions have not only active pieces but also the potential for them to combine to deliver deadly threats and tactics.

We don't yet know which of the features of Clarke's position will enable concrete

Fast and fearless: accelerate the attack

Introduction

Now be warned, this chapter is a violent one! Whereas the previous chapter was about improving the position of our pieces, this one is all about speeding up the attack and play is more direct, going straight for the king.

These intermediate moves help to land a decisive blow more quickly. Ignoring a piece being en prise and just going for it, is one way of achieving this outcome.

Natasha Regan

1981

Kajus Mikalajunas

1698

London rapid 2023

**16...♗b4 17.dxc5 ♖g4 18.♘c3 ♘d3+
19.♙f1 ♜g2+ 20.♙e2 ♜f3+ 21.♙f1
♜xf2#**

Here Natasha faced the wrong end of this scenario. Earlier she had achieved an advantage out of the opening against her rapidly improving junior opponent, but disaster struck (for her) after she played too casually and Kajus wasted no time in counter-attacking.



16.exd4

Attacking the bishop. I willed my opponent to recapture so I could develop my knight, but the threat is simply ignored and Black gets on with the job:

Our second introductory game is between two amateur players from the Luxembourg Team Championship played in 2013.

Franck Scherer

2090

Alain Schartz

2187

Luxembourg tt 2012/13

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♜xd5 3.♘c3 ♜d6
4.d4 ♘f6 5.♘f3 a6 6.g3 ♙g4 7.♙g2
♘c6 8.0-0 0-0-0 9.♙f4 ♜b4 10.a3
♜c4 11.d5 e6**



Material is level. White needs to calculate carefully here. Only one line wins:

12.dxc6

Temporarily giving up material to attack the king.

12...♖xd1

Again, there is only one winning move for White here:

13.cxb7+

Recapturing right away leaves White slightly worse after 13.♖fxd1 ♖xc6, having given up the queen for a rook and a knight.

13...♖b8

The pawn can't be taken: 13...♖xb7 14.♗e5+ ♖d5 (14...♖c8 15.♗xc4) 15.♖axd1 ♖xg2+ 16.♖xg2 and White is decisive material up.

14.♖fxd1

Only now does White recapture.

14...♗xf3



Another intermediate move is needed here to keep things rolling on:

15.♖d8+

A back rank check to deflect the king to b7. It also pins the f8-bishop to prevent Black getting out his kingside pieces.

15.♗xf3 ♗e7 16.♗e2 ♗c5.

15...♖xb7 16.♗xf3+

Now this recapture comes with check.

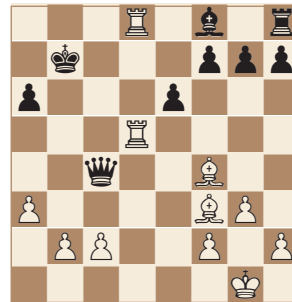
16...c6



17.♖ad1 ♗d5 18.♗xd5 cxd5

18...exd5 loses to 19.♖1xd5 ♖xf4 20.gxf4 cxd5 21.♗xd5+.

19.♖1xd5



Black resigned.

Play could have continued 19...♖xd5 20.♗xd5+ exd5 21.♗d6.

In this chapter we will discover many more thrilling, attacking gems.

One of our favourite puzzles in the chapter is Steve Dishman's triple – and it could have been quadruple – intermezzo from the European Seniors Teams Championship. We especially like it because Natasha was watching the game live and Steve was her teammate!

Another awesome combination involved Zwischenmeister Mickey Adams hitting Nils Grandelius with a surprise tactic. We liked it so much we have given the full game in the solution for you to enjoy.



Mickey Adams

PART VI

Dingtermezzo

The World Championship 2023 between Ding Liren and Ian Nepomniachtchi was a very exciting match.

Rather than get mired in drawish theoretical battles, both players decided to go for it.

This led to many tactical skirmishes, but one tactic stood out for the number of times it was played: we counted more than thirty *Zwischenzugs* in this match.

Other intermediate moves were threatened but avoided and even more could be found in variations not played on the board.

In this chapter we have provided puzzles in chronological order for some of the *Zwischenzugs* played or threatened that we found. We have also included some of the most interesting and instructive variations.

We were delighted to see that these positions feature all the Fearsome Five forcing moves, all of the Awesome Eight patterns and all seven of the master level Outcomes that we have detailed in this book. There is even a *Zwischenantwort*, too.

In our annotations, we have highlighted each of these themes in italics so that you can easily pick them out as you read through our comments.

More than two-thirds of the *Zwischenzugs* played in the games were unleashed by Ding. He seemed to have decided to use a style in the match that created tension and tactical potential – what we refer to in this book as *aji*, the term borrowed from the game of Go.

Ding's approach led to many opportunities for intermediate moves and explains why we have called this chapter 'Dingtermezzo'.

Nepo did play some nice *Zwischenzugs* of his own, too. The stunning sequence he set up in the first tiebreak game was certainly one of the best of the match – and to have found it in a rapidplay game was all the more impressive.

By way of introduction, here is a variation quite a long way from the line played in the first game of the match – most of the variations in the puzzles stick much more closely to the moves from the games.

Ian Nepomniachtchi 2795
Ding Liren 2788

Astana Wch m 2023 (7) (variation)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♘gf3 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘f6 6.exd5 ♘xd5 7.♘2f3 ♙e7 8.♙c4 ♘c6 9.♘xc6 bxc6 10.0-0 0-0 11.♚e2 ♙b7 12.♙d3 ♚c7 13.♚e4 ♘f6 14.♚h4 c5 15.♙f4 ♚b6 16.♘e5 ♜ad8 17.♜ae1 g6 18.♙g5 ♜d4 19.♚h3 ♚c7 20.b3 ♘h5 21.♙h6

In the actual game this line was played:
 21.f4 ♙d6 22.c3 ♘xf4 23.♙xf4 ♜xf4
 24.♜xf4 ♙xe5 25.♜h4 ♜d8 26.♙e4
 ♙xe4 27.♜hx4 ♜d5 28.♜h4 ♚d6

29.♚e3 h5 30.g3 ♙f6 31.♜c4 h4
 32.gxh4 ♜d2 33.♜e2 ♜d3? 34.♚xc5
 ♜d1+ 35.♙g2 ♚d3 36.♜f2 ♙g7
 37.♜cf4 ♚xc3 1-0.
21...♘f4 22.♚g3 ♘xg2



White to move. In this variation, what is the best continuation?

23.♘xg6

Connected queens!

23...♚xg3 24.♘xe7+

Our old friend, the intermediate *knight capture on e7 with check*.

24...♙h8 25.hxg3 ♘xe1 26.♜xe1