

IM Steven Zierk Wins In Reno

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by US Chess Online

World Under 18 Champion and IM Steven Zierk took clear first at the [Far West Open in Reno](#) with 5.5 out of 6. Zierk told CLO, "Overall, the games were remarkably tactical. Especially in the last round, where the top 2 games, often a GM draw situation, quickly became serious fights (Mezentsev-Zierk and Sevillano-Khachiyan) that both ended decisively. It was a welcome tournament for me after a terrible performance I had in a small Kentucky tournament last week."

Steven also wrote about his victory on his blog, <http://zierkchess.blogspot.com/>. See [full tournament standings on MSA](#) and check out one of Steven's key tactical victories over IM Vladimir Mezentsev. Annotations are by Zierk's coach, GM Melikset Khachiyan. Khachiyan took second place with 5/6.



1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 Nf6 4.Ngf3 Bc5

The idea of this move is to provoke d4 and e5, and transpose the game to a more typical French position.

5.e5 Nfd7 6.d4 Bb6

Seems to me that move is kind of awkward, but according to Steve, he analyzed it. Against the King's Indian Attack, we talked about 6...Be7, but it was a long time ago.

7.c4

Very logical. White is trying to get more space.

7...f6?!

I thought Black was obligated to fight back for the center with 7...c5. Steve didn't react here properly by allowing White to gain space.

8.Nb3

8.exf6 was for sure better to immediately try to punish Black for not having his bishop on the kingside.

8...c6 9.Bd3 0-0 10.0-0 Bc7 11.Re1 h6 12.Bd2

After this move Black is getting back into the game. I think White should take on f6. The whole point is, White doesn't need to have a pawn on e5, it makes the d5 pawn stronger. White needs to create control on e5 square with pieces and eventually try to organize an attack on the diagonal b1-h7.

12...fxe5 13.Nxe5

I would consider here a dxe5 move, since it keeps more pieces on the board, and leaves Black's position squeezed.

13...Nxe5 14.dxe5 Nd7 15.f4 dxc4 16.Bxc4 Nb6 17.Bf1 Nd5 18.Qg4 b6

I like the idea to restrict the knight, but I think the move 18...a5 here, and pretty much forcing White to play 19.a4, and play b5, and c5 was better idea. This would weaken the pawn on a4 and tie the white rook to its defense. But in general, Black has the right strategy--create counterplay ASAP.

19.Rad1 c5 20.Bc1 Qe8 21.Bd3 Rb8 22.Bg6 Qe7 23.Bb1 Qf7 24.Bg6 Qe7 25.Be4 Qf7 26.Rf1

Here both sides start to entered time pressure, and here White decided to refuse a draw by repetition.

26...Ba6 27.Bg6 Qe7 28.Rfe1 Rbd8 29.f5??

According Steve, it was better for White to hold the tension by playing let's say 29.h4. White not getting any benefits by playing f5 and in fact only creating problems for himself.

29...exf5 30.Bxf5 Bxe5

30...Bxe5 31.Be6+ Kh8 32.Bxd5 (32.Rxe5 Nf6 33.Qf3 (33.Qe2) 33...Nd7) 32...Rxd5 33.Rxd5 Bd4+ 34.Be3 Qxe3+ 35.Rxe3 Rf1#

31.Bxh6??

The only move was 31.Be6 + Kh8 32.Rxe5, leading to better position for Black, but at least White isn't losing there.

31...Nf6 32.Qg6 Rxd1 33.Rxd1 Bxb2 34.h4 Bc8 35.Bd3 Kh8 36.Rf1 g3 37.Qxh6+ Kg8 38.Bc4+ Rf7 39.Qd2 Be5 40.Re1 Ng4 41.Bxf7+ Kxf7 42.Qd5+ Kf8 43.g3 Qf6 44.Qg2 Be6 45.Nd2 Bd5

A very interesting and complicated game. I think this game exemplifies the strengths of my student Steven Zierk, his ability to create and his very strong tactical sense. He outplayed and out-calculated his opponent in sharp tactical battle.

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