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improve your middlegame play

ANDREW KINSMAN



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EVERYMAN CHESS

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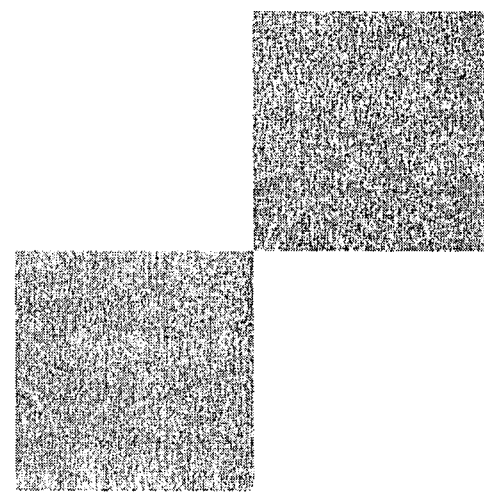
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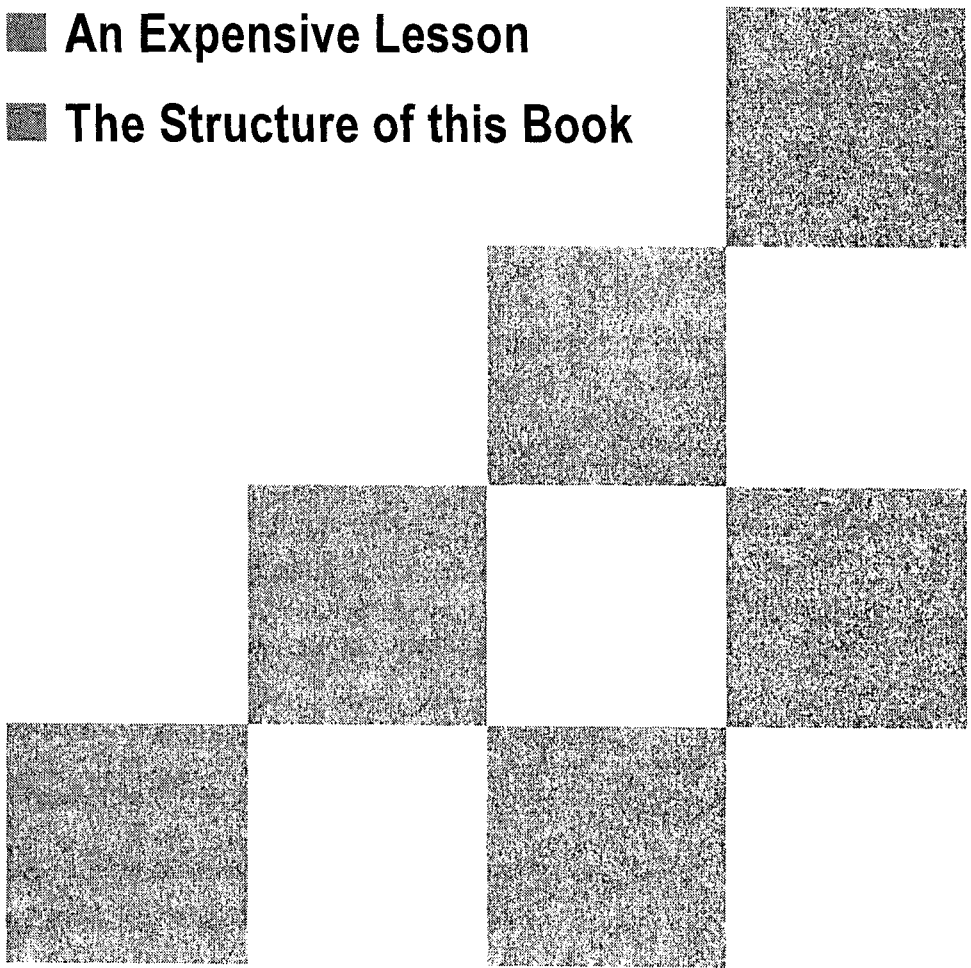
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Chapter One

What is the Middlegame?

- A Beginning, a Middle and an End
- Tactical and Positional Play
- A Simple Plan
- An Expensive Lesson
- The Structure of this Book



A Beginning, a Middle and an End

It is impossible to define exactly where the opening finishes and the middlegame begins. Some games even pass from opening to endgame with barely a middlegame at all! However, most games do feature a stage in which both sides have deployed most or all of their army and are striving to attack weaknesses in their opponent's position. As long as most of the pieces remain on the board, we can safely regard this as the 'middlegame', regardless of whether we are at move 10, move 20 or move 50. Having said that, it is impossible to talk about the middlegame without reference to the opening or endgame, chess is a far too well integrated game for that.

Tactical and Positional Play

Do you consider yourself to be a tactical player or a positional player? If you answered 'just a chessplayer' then go to the top of the class! It is not necessary to pigeonhole yourself. All very strong players are pretty much equally adept at positional and tactical play. If you don't have a good understanding of positional play, then how can you expect to achieve the kinds of position from which an attack can be launched? And if you are always afraid of tactics, then you will never be able to make the critical decisions that will turn your good positional play into victory. The purpose of this book is to improve your all-round middlegame play. If you are already a good tactical player, then you will probably gain most benefit from the sections on positional play, whereas if positional play is your forte then the tactical material should come in very useful. Just remember – if you want to be a stronger player then you need to improve the areas in which you are weak, otherwise your play will be one-dimensional and you will become an easy person to play and prepare against.



NOTE: Grandmasters never specialise in one area of the game – they are good all-round players.

A Simple Plan

Most middlegames are full of cut and thrust, with both players constantly introducing new ideas and countering their

opponent's threats with threats of their own. On occasion, however, the game takes a much smoother path. Let's start by looking at a game in which a single, simple idea dominated virtually the whole battle.

□ Karpov ■ Lautier
Biel 1992

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1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 (Diagram 1)

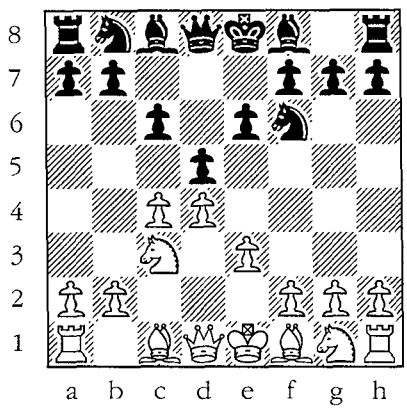


Diagram 1
The Semi-Slav Defence

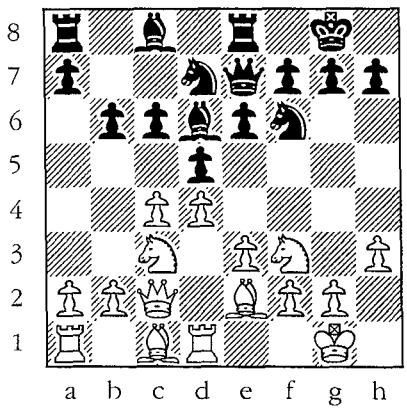


Diagram 2
The middlegame begins...

Here we see the solid Semi-Slav Defence to the Queen's Gambit. Black has a very firm base in the centre, but he will eventually have to do something about the light-squared bishop on c8, which is somewhat entombed by the pawns on e6 and c6. White's bishop on c1 has a happier future as it will be hard for Black to prevent his opponent from playing e3-e4 in the long run.

5 Nf3 Nbd7 6 Qc2 Bd6 7 Be2 0–0 8 0–0 Re8 9 Rd1 Qe7 10 h3 b6 (Diagram 2)

Both sides have been developing in normal fashion, waiting for their opponent to commit himself. I would say that White's next move, beginning active operations in the centre, marks the transition from opening to middlegame.

11 e4 Nxe4 12 Nxe4 dxe4 13 Qxe4 Bb7 (Diagram 3)

The first thing to notice about this position is that White has much more space. He pretty much controls the first four ranks

on the board, whereas all of Black's forces reside on the back three rows. The crucial battle will revolve around the fifth rank. If White can assume control of this area of the board then he will be able to launch an attack on the black position. For his part, Black would ultimately like to free his light-squared bishop with ...c6-c5.

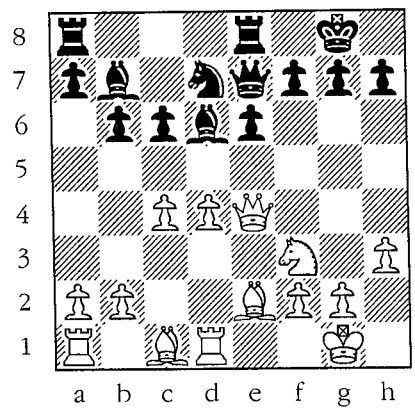


Diagram 3
White has a space advantage

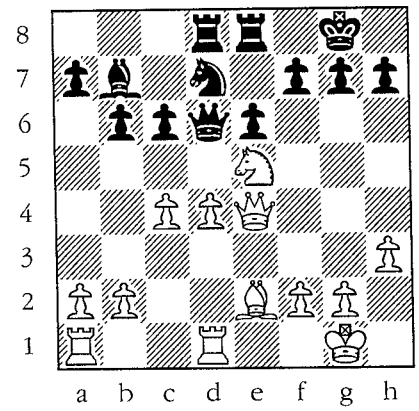


Diagram 4
The white knight finds an outpost

14 Bf4

White is not afraid of exchanges, provided that the bishop remains boxed in on b7.

14...Rad8

Despite the fact that he has played seemingly natural moves, Black has slipped into a difficult position. Perhaps he could have tried Korchnoi's idea of 14...Rab8, breaking the pin on the c6-pawn and intending a quick ...c6-c5, but after 15 Bxd6 Qxd6 16 Ne5 c5 17 Qe3 White still has a very pleasant position.

15 Bxd6 Qxd6 16 Ne5! (Diagram 4)

White makes his first foray into the black camp, attempting to establish an outpost on the fifth rank.

16...Nxe5?

Black remains unaware of the danger and continues to exchange pieces willy-nilly. It would have been better to free the bishop with 16...Nf6 17 Qe3 c5, although Black would have had a slightly unpleasant ending after 18 dxc5 Qxc5 19 Qxc5 bxc5

due to his isolated queenside pawns. Note that 16...Ba8 would also have been a mistake due to 17 Nxd7 Rxd7 18 c5!, when the bishop would be permanently shut in.

17 dxe5 Qc7

Black finally threatens to free his position with ...c7-c5, but a series of accurate moves by Karpov keeps the black bishop tied up.

18 Bf3! Ba8

Renewing the threat of ...c7-c5.

19 Rxd8! Rxd8 20 Rd1 Rxd1+

Black didn't have time for 20...c5? due to 21 Rxd8+ Qxd8 22 Qxa8 winning a piece.

21 Bxd1 Qd8

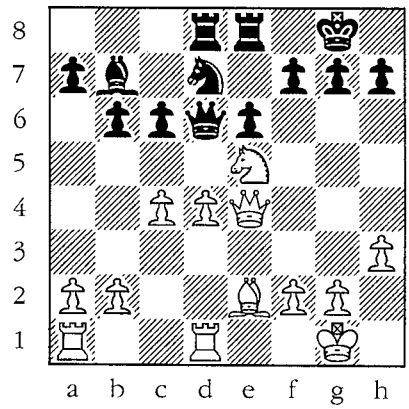


Diagram 5
White has a strong grip on the position

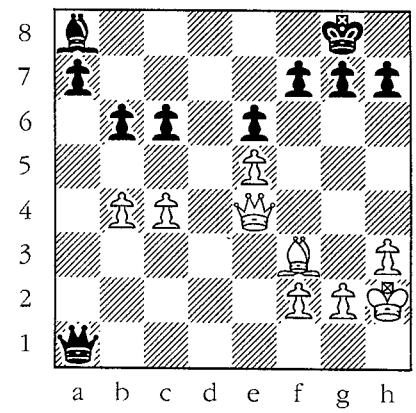


Diagram 6
Black misses a chance for counterplay

Black continues with the vain hope of freeing his bishop with ...c6-c5, but White again counters this idea. He is even prepared to give up a pawn to hold the bishop in check.

22 Bf3 Qd2 23 b3 Qxa2 24 b4!

24 Qd4 was tempting, but after 24...Qa3 Black's queen is able to return to the defence of the back rank. Now, however, Qd4 will be much more powerful, whereas Black also has to contend with threat of b4-b5!

24...Qa1+ 25 Kh2 (Diagram 6) **25...Qa6?!**

After this move Black is too passive. Korchnoi's suggestion of the active 25...Qa3! would still have offered drawing chances.

26 Qd4!

Lautier was probably counting on 26 b5 Qc8 27 bxc6 g6 with a messy position. However, Karpov is not distracted by the opportunity to regain his pawn and instead strives to keep up the pressure on Black's position.

26...Qc8 27 c5!

Finally sealing the fate of Black's bishop.

27...bxc5 28 Qxc5 a6

This rules out b4-b5, but allows the white queen to infiltrate.

29 Qe7 g6 30 h4!

Karpov decides to soften up the black kingside a little.

30...h5 31 Kg3! Qb7?

The fatal mistake. There is no way that Black can survive the bishop ending with such a bad minor piece. A waiting move such as 31...Qb8 would have been a much better choice, though Black's game leaves a lot to be desired.

32 Qxb7 Bxb7 33 Kf4 Kf8 34 Kg5 Ke7 35 Be4 Ba8 36 f3 Bb7

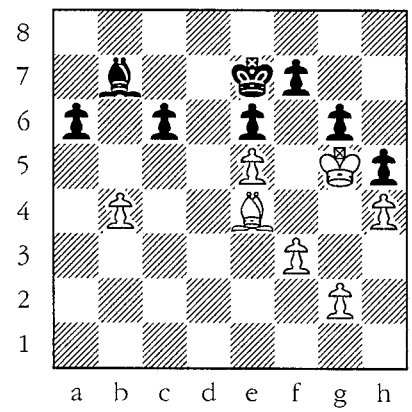


Diagram 7
Black can only sit and await his fate

37 g4 Ba8

37...hxg4 38 fxg4 Ba8 39 h5 gxh5 40 gxh5 Kf8 41 Kf6 was equally hopeless.

38 gxh5 gxh5 39 f4 Bb7 40 Bf3 Ba8 41 Kxh5 1–0

This game is remarkable in that one can trace the roots of Black's defeat all the way back to move four. White single-mindedly played to exploit the one defect in Black's position – the inactive light-squared bishop – from the opening to the middlegame right through to the endgame. He barely had to calculate anything – simply to exchange pieces until there was nothing left but his good bishop and Black's bad bishop. Naturally, there were a few points at which Black's play might have been improved, but the main point is that Black was under pressure the whole game. He had numerous difficult decisions to make, and it is not surprising that he eventually took the wrong path. Karpov was effectively playing with the draw 'in hand', and he was able to create enough problems for his opponent that this draw could eventually transformed into a full point.



TIP: Always try to play with the draw 'in hand' if possible.

You will find that very few of your games will follow such a straightforward path as this one – and not just because you don't play chess quite as well as Anatoly Karpov! In 99% of games, your opponent will manage to muddy the waters at some point, even if it is just in a desperate last-gasp bid for freedom after you have positionally outplayed him. That is why it is important to be an all-round player – to not only take advantage of the possibilities generated by good positional play when things are going well, but also to be able to spot opportunities to complicate matters when something has gone awry with your position.

An Expensive Lesson

Sometimes we learn our lessons the hard way. I have vivid recollections of one game that I played more than ten years ago – and it is still a very painful memory.



TIP: It is better to learn from other people's mistakes than your own!

□ Kinsman ■ Finegold
Le Touquet open 1989

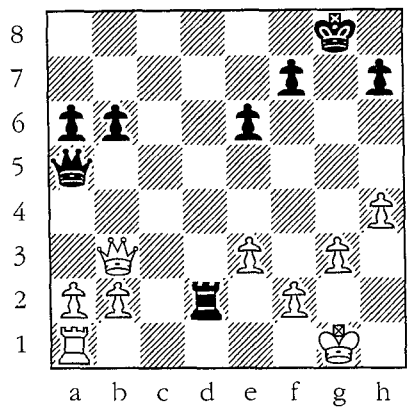


Diagram 8
White has an extra pawn

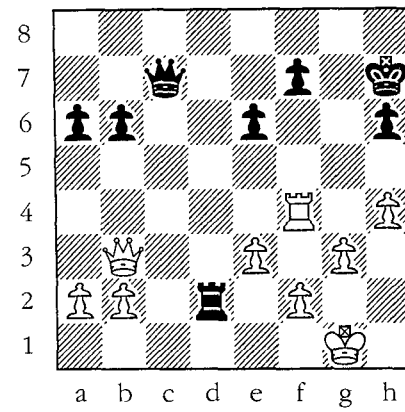


Diagram 9
White has activated his rook

The position in Diagram 8 was reached after 27 moves of this last-round game. The winner would win a share of first place and a sizeable prize, whereas the loser would go home with barely enough prize money to buy a round of drinks. I had played some reasonable positional chess up to this point, and had managed to bag a pawn, but in the process I had used up far more time on my clock than was strictly necessary. The conclusion of the game should have been a matter of technique, but here mine was severely found wanting!

28 Rc1 h6 29 Rc8+ Kh7 30 Rc4! Qe5 31 Rf4 Qc7 (Diagram 9)

Nothing wrong so far. My rook is doing a good job protecting the f2-pawn, while at the same time bearing down on Black's weakened kingside.

32 Kh2!

I like this move. There is no need to hurry as Black can't generate any threats for the time being. If White can just reach move unscathed, he will have enough time to sit and work out how to convert the extra pawn.

32...Kg7 33 Rg4+ Kh7 34 Rf4! (Diagram 10)

Another fine move, repeating moves to get closer to the time control.

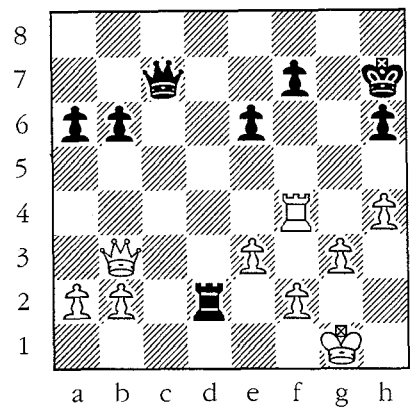


Diagram 10
White starts to lose the plot

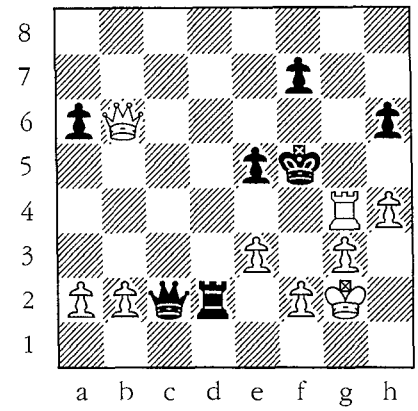


Diagram 11
White blunders the game away

34...Kg7 35 Qb4 Qc2 36 Kg2 e5 37 Rg4+?

A daft choice. 37 Rf3 was solid and good.

37...Kf6!??

37...Kh7 was also possible, and almost certainly a better objective move. However, Black was playing to take full advantage of my obvious confusion and lack of time.

38 Qxb6+ Kf5 (Diagram 11) **39 e4+??**

Perhaps the worst move I have ever played, converting a +7.5 advantage into a -5.5 deficit on the 'Fritz' scale. I simply panicked in time-trouble and altogether failed to spot the one and only winning move for White, the 'obvious' 39 Kh3, threatening the killing 40 e4+.

39...Kxg4 40 Qe3 Rd3 41 Qxh6 Rxg3+ 0–1

Ouch! As painful (and expensive) as this lesson was, it is a perfect example of how good positional play can only get you so far before you need to calculate, of how even the most sedate positions can suddenly explode in your face.

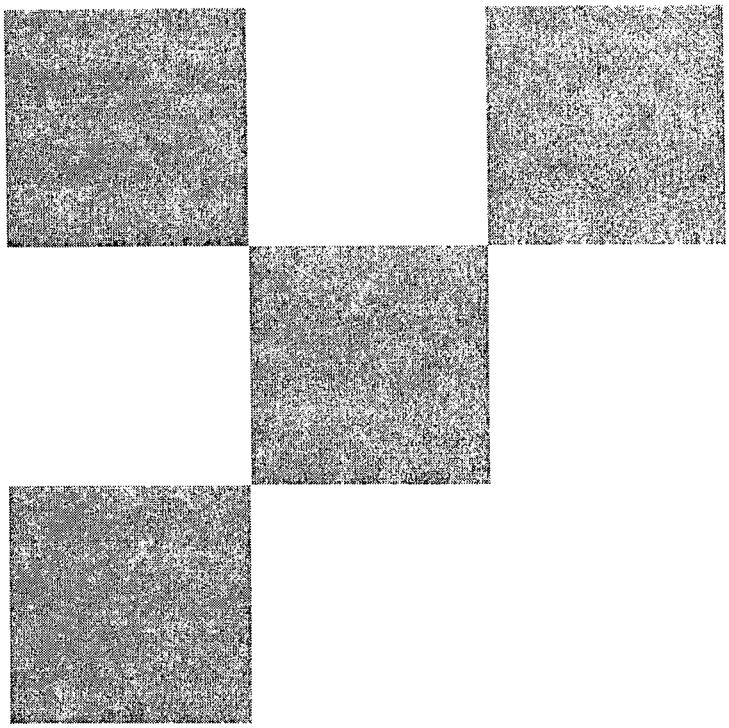


WARNING: Never assume that a winning position will 'win itself'.

The Structure of this Book

The roots of good middlegame play lie in understanding the

position. If you are able to identify and attack your opponent's weaknesses then you are already well on the way to success. Chapter Two, Fundamentals of Positional Play will show you some of the typical middlegame structures and how you should handle them. Once you have established a good position, the most important thing is to keep it under control, preventing your opponent from launching a counterattack (as I conspicuously failed to do in the example given above). This issue will be dealt with in Chapter Three, before we move on to ways of avoiding blunders in Chapter Four. Attacking Play is the subject of Chapter Five, while Chapter Six will look at ways to fight back when your opponent is on top. Finally, we shall look at how to avoid and play in time-trouble in Chapter Seven.



Summary

All Grandmasters are good all-round players.

Always try to play with the draw 'in hand' if possible.

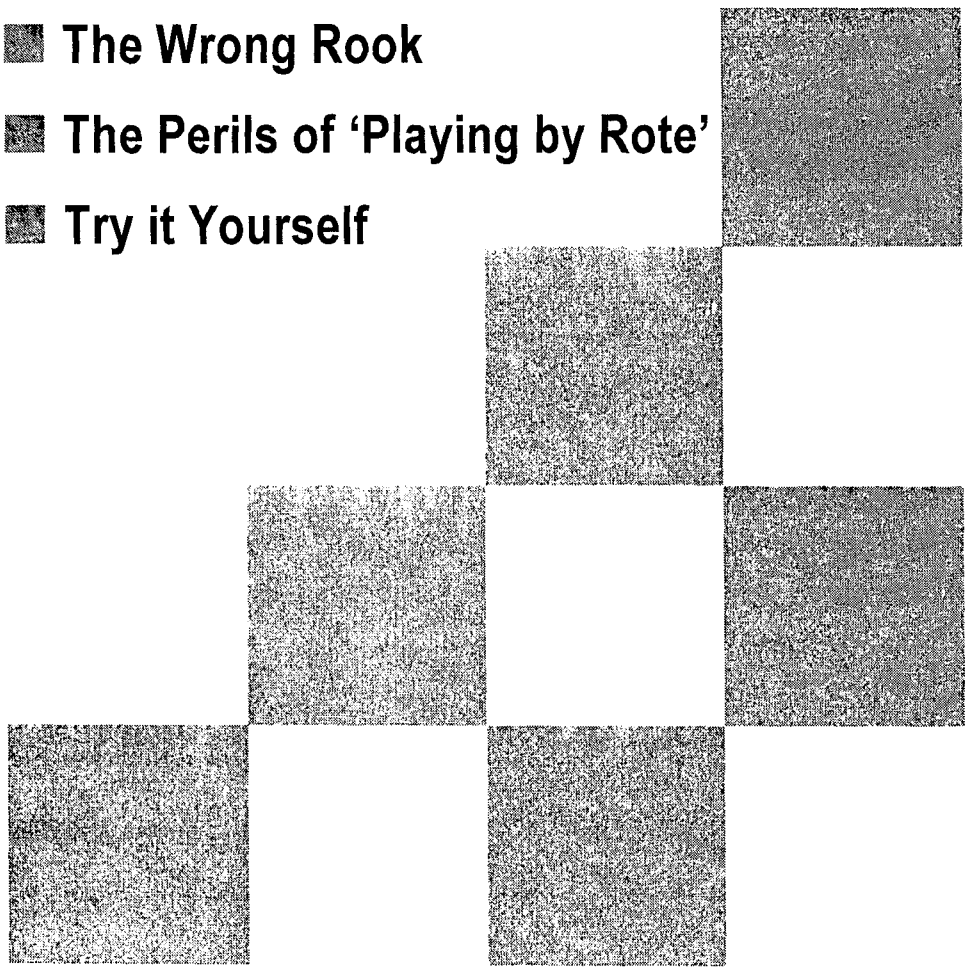
It is better to learn from other people's mistakes than your own!

Never assume that a position will 'win itself'.

Chapter Two

Fundamentals of Positional Play

- The Role of Pawn Structure
- 'Worst Piece First'
- The Wrong Rook
- The Perils of 'Playing by Rote'
- Try it Yourself



The Role of Pawn Structure in Middlegame Play

Those terms you hear bandied around all the time, bad bishop, open file, weak square etc., all relate to one thing: pawn structure. In a sense positional play begins not in the middlegame, but right from move one. The decisions you make early on in the game form the roots from which your whole game will grow. If you carelessly leave yourself with weak pawns and a bad bishop in the opening, then you can fully expect to have weak pawns and a bad bishop in the middlegame (and the endgame too, should you even manage to last that long). How often have we heard our friends say 'I made a mistake in the middlegame' or 'I should have drawn really', only to discover that in fact they were always struggling after some poor opening play left them with a bad position to start with? So, if you want to be a good positional player you have to start thinking about the middlegame straight from the opening, at least in general terms.

To illustrate what I mean, let's take a look at some of the typical pawn structures that can arise from various popular openings, and see how the middlegame may turn out from each of them.

Isolated Queen's Pawn

The isolated queen's pawn (IQP) structure can arise from so many different openings that it is sure to crop up in your own games from time to time. It is a particular feature of certain openings such as the c3 Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 c3), Panov-Botvinnik Attack (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4), Tarrasch French (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 c5), Tarrasch Queen's Gambit (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5) and several other openings. Is the IQP strong or weak? Well, that all depends on the particular circumstances at hand. Sometimes the IQP will become a pathetic blight on your position, and other times it will enable you to launch a vicious attack. It all depends on the specific position. Certainly there are several grandmasters who specialise in playing with the IQP, and others who would much prefer to saddle their opponent with one. It's basically a matter of taste.

Let's start with an example in which Black was able to utilise

his IQP to deadly effect.

□ Darga ■ Nunn
Rotterdam 1979

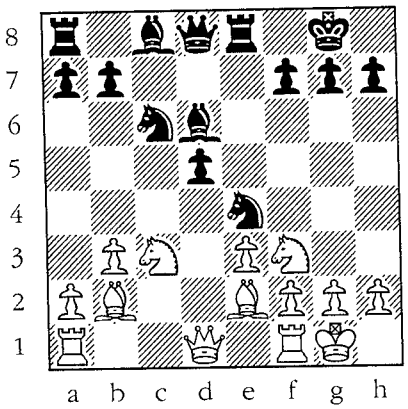


Diagram 1
A normal-looking IQP position

Here White appears to have few problems. The d-pawn is well blockaded and White has ideas of Nxd5 or Nb5-d4. However, Black was able to win the battle for the d4-square with a series of fine moves.

12...Ba3! 13 Bxa3 Nxc3 14 Qc2 Nxe2+ 15 Qxe2 Bg4!

Threatening ...d5-d4, ...Nd4, ...Ne5 or ...Qf6.

16 Bb2 d4!

Despite the fact that White has three pieces attacking the d4-square, he is unable to capture this pawn.

17 h3 d3

To all intents and purposes the positional battle is over. Black has an huge pawn on d3 and very active pieces. White struggled on for a while, but the result was never in doubt.

18 Qd2 Bxf3 19 gxf3 Ne5 20 Bxe5 Rxe5 21 Kh2 Qd7 22 Rg1 Rc8 23 Rad1 Rd5 24 e4 Qd6+ 25 Kh1 Rd4 26 Rc1 Rxc1 27 Rxc1 h6 28 Qc3 d2 29 Rd1 Qd7 30 Kg2 Rd6 31 Qe3 Qb5 32 f4 Rd3 0–1

The important aspect of Black's play in moves 12-16 to bear in

mind, is that he was constantly fighting for control of the d4-square. In IQP positions, the square *in front of* the IQP possesses almost magical properties. The reason for this is that the side with the IQP has no way of attacking this square with a pawn, so if a piece can be established on this outpost, then it is likely to remain there for a long time. If White had been able to blockade this square in the above example then he would have ultimately had good prospects of picking off the d-pawn.

Here we see another example along the same lines.

□ **Wirthensohn** ■ **Tal**
Lucerne 1982

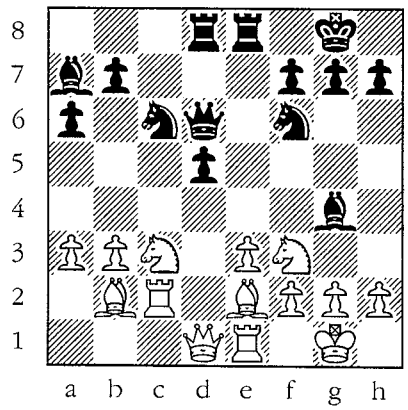


Diagram 2
Black controls of the d4-square

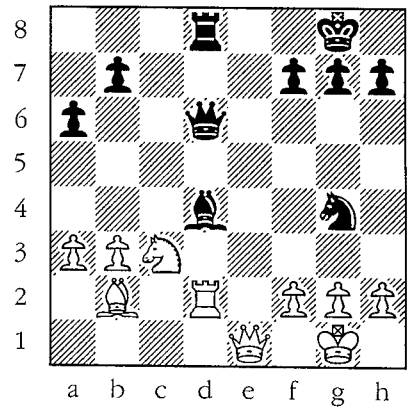


Diagram 3
White is under tremendous pressure

In Diagram 2 Black has smoothly completed his development and won the battle for the d4-square. White tried to fight for d4 with

16 Rd2

but after

16...d4! 17 Nxd4 Nxd4 18 exd4 Bxd4 19 Bxg4 Rxe1+ 20 Qxe1 Nxg4 (Diagram 3)

Black's pieces were suddenly streaming into the white position.

21 Ne4

A really grovelly move, but 21 g3 was no better due to the queen sacrifice 21...Qh6 22 h4 Qxd2! 23 Qxd2 Bxf2+ 24 Qxf2

Nxf2 25 Kxf2 Rd2+.

21...Qxh2+ 22 Kf1 Qh1+ 23 Ke2 Qxg2 24 Kd1 Qf3+ 25 Qe2 Qh1+ 26 Qe1 Qf3+ 27 Qe2 Qxb3+ 28 Ke1 Ne5 29 Ng5 Bc3 0–1

In our next example White is actually able to put the strategy of blockading the d-pawn into effect.

□ **Berg** ■ **Fugslang**
Lyngby 1991

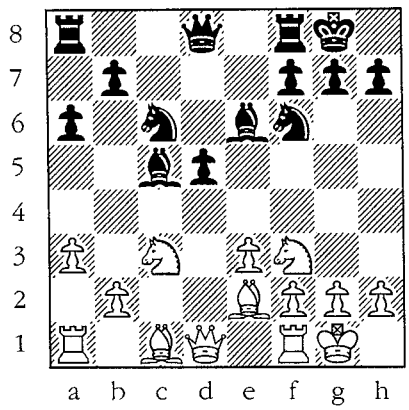


Diagram 4
White is able to fight for the d4-square

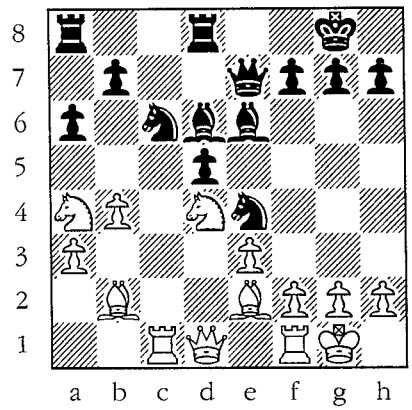


Diagram 5
The knight on d4 occupies a key outpost

At first sight there does not appear to be a great deal of difference between Diagram 4 and the previous one. However, with a series of accurate moves White is able to make a claim for the d4-square.

12 b4! Bd6 13 Bb2 Qe7 14 Rc1 Rfd8 15 Na4 Ne4 16 Nd4 (Diagram 5)

White makes full use of the outpost on d4. If Black exchanges pieces on this square then White will always be able to replace the knight with one of his other pieces. Black tries to avoid exchanges, but he cannot do so for long.

16...Ne5 17 f4

Winning a pawn due to the idea of 17...Ng6 or 17...Nd7 18 f5. Also possible was 17 Nxe6 fxe6 18 f3 Nf6 19 Nb6 Rab8 20 f4 with a slight edge for White.

17...Nc4 18 Bxc4 dxc4 19 Nb6 Rab8 20 Nxc4 Rbc8 21 Nxd6 Nxd6 22 Nxe6 Qxe6 23 Qf3 Qb3

23...f5!, establishing an outpost on e4, would have offered more resistance.

24 Rxc8 Rxc8 25 Be5 Nc4

Or 25...Qe6 26 Bxd6 Qxd6 27 Qxb7.

26 Qg4 1–0

The dual threat of 27 Qxg7 mate and 27 Qxc8+ is decisive.

In our next example White is able to use his control of d4 to win the d5-pawn.

□ **Kallai** ■ **Lick**
Lenk open 1989

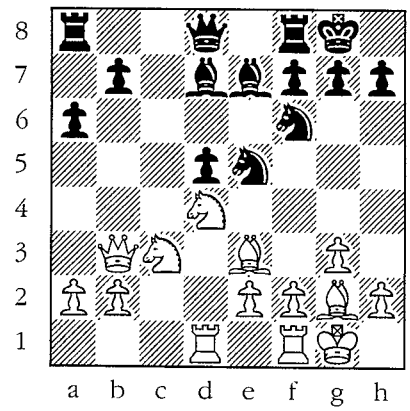


Diagram 6
Black has real problems defending his d5-pawn

Here too White has the d-pawn firmly blockaded. In fact, Black has surprising difficulty even defending the pawn as 13...Be6 is met by 14 Nxe6 fxe6 15 Bxd5! exd5 16 Nxd5 with a won game. Black opted for

13...Bc6

but this allowed White into the f5-square with

14 Nf5 Qd7

Or 14...Re8 15 Nxd5 Nxd5 16 Bxd5.

15 Nxe7+ Qxe7 16 Bg5

Now there are simply too many pieces ganging up on the d-pawn.

16...d4 17 Rxd4 Bxg2 18 Kxg2 Qc5 19 Rfd1 Qc6+ 20 f3 b5 21 Rd6 Qc4 22 Bf4 Qc5 23 R6d5 1–0

Once you have established control of the d4-square, it is important not to relinquish it without a fight.

□ Flear ■ Arkell
Isle of Man open 1992

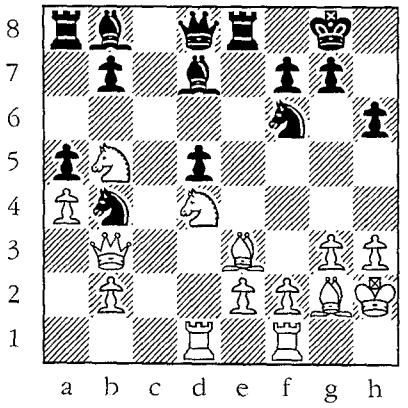


Diagram 7
A balanced IQP situation

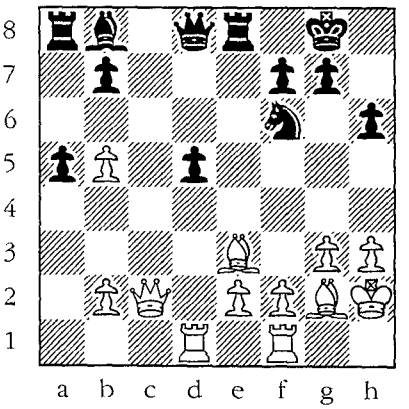


Diagram 8
Black goes over to the offensive

Here White should probably settle for 20 Bd2 Bxb5 21 axb5 Bd6 22 Bxb4 Bxb4 23 e3, when his control of the d4-square keeps the game in the balance. Instead, he voluntarily retreated his powerful knight with

20 Nc2?! Nxc2 21 Qxc2 Bxb5 22 axb5 (Diagram 8)

This allowed Black the opportunity for a speculative sacrifice with

22...Bxg3+!? 23 Kxg3 Qd6+ 24 Kf3 Re4

Although White has chances to defend in this position, the precarious position of his king makes his task very difficult.

25 Bc1

Or 25 Qb3 Nh5 26 Bh1 Rae8.

25...Qe5 26 Qd3

Perhaps White could flick in 26 Qc3 d4 and only now 27 Qd3, e.g. 27...Re8 28 Bh1 Qh2 29 e3 R4e6 30 Qxd4 Ne4 31 Ke2 Ng3+ 32 Kd3 Nxf1 33 Rxf1 with an unclear position.

26...Nh5

It might have been better to bring the last piece into the attack with 26...Re8 27 e3 Nh5 28 Bh1 Qh2 29 Bg2 R4e6, when Black has a dangerous attack.

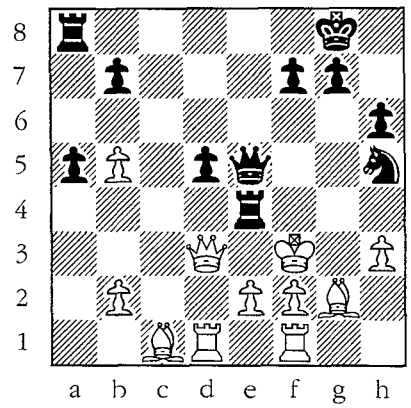


Diagram 9
The white king feels the draught

27 e3??

A fatal blunder in a difficult position. White's only chance was 27 Bh1 Qh2 28 Qxd5 Qxh3+ 29 Kxe4 Nf6+ 30 Kd4 Nxd5 31 Bxd5 Qd7 32 e4 Qxb5 33 Ke3 Rc8 with a very unclear endgame.

27...Qf6+ 28 Ke2 Nf4+ 0–1

It is not enough to establish control of the square in front of the isolated pawn, if it means neglecting your development. In our next example (Diagram 10) Black had total control of the d5-square – but hardly any control at all over any of the other squares on the board!

□ Korchnoi ■ Zaitsev
Yerevan 1962

White is already using the isolated pawn to support his knight

outpost on c5, and now uses the other outpost on e5.

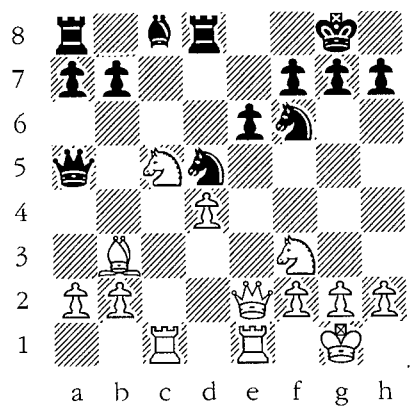


Diagram 10
Black is struggling to complete his development

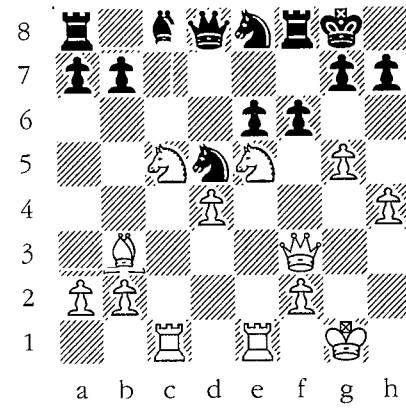


Diagram 11
Time for the decisive blow!

18 Ne5! Qb6

The greedy 18...Nf4 19 Qf3 Rxd4 fails to 20 Nxb7 Bxb7 (or 20...Qd2 21 Rcd1) 21 Qxb7 Rf8 22 Nc6.

19 Qf3 Rf8 20 g4! Qd8 21 g5 Ne8

Black is now in full retreat.

22 h4 f6 (Diagram 11) **23 g6! h6**

Neither 23...hxg6 24 Nxg6 Rf7 25 Bxd5 exd5 (nor 25...Qxd5 26 Qxd5 exd5 27 Rxe8+) 26 Qh5, nor 23...fxe5 24 gxh7+ Kxh7 25 Qxf8 offer Black any chance of salvation.

24 Nf7 Rxf7

A desperate sacrifice as 24...Qe7 25 Bxd5 and 24...Qb6 25 Nxe6 Bxe6 26 Rxe6 Qxe6 27 Bxd5 are hopeless.

25 gxf7+ Kxf7 26 Nxe6 Bxe6 27 Rxe6 Kxe6 28 Qe4+ Kf7 29 Bxd5+ 1–0



TIP: In IQP positions the square in front of the isolated pawn is of great importance.

Black's Bad French Bishop

The most important position feature of many variations off the French Defence is Black's 'bad' light-squared bishop. The

moves 1...e6 and 2...d5 place this bishop in an unenviable position, severely hampered by its own pawns. Very often this bishop will remain bad for the rest of the game as shown by the next example.

□ A.Smith ■ Kinsman
Thames Valley League 1989/90

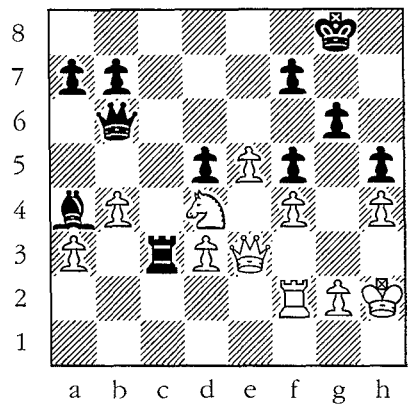


Diagram 12
The bishop is hampered by the pawns

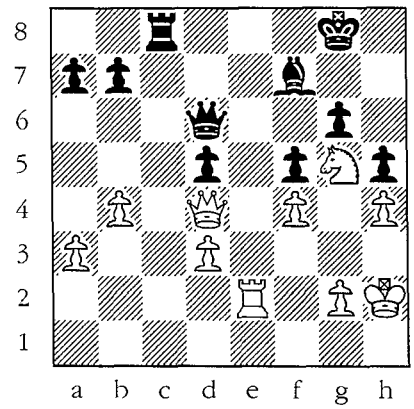


Diagram 13
White has a beautiful queen sacrifice

In Diagram 12 White has cleverly exchanged three sets of minor pieces, leaving him a powerful knight on d4 against Black's bishop. Here White decided that it was time to open up the position with

26 e6 fxe6

I didn't like 26...Rxa3 because of 27 e7 Be8 28 Rc2, but perhaps Black can defend this position.

27 Qe5!

Intending to infiltrate the kingside with 28 Qf6.

27...Rc7?!

Rather passive. 27...Qc7 looks like a better defence.

28 Qf6 Be8 29 Nxe6 Qd6 30 Re2 Qe7 31 Qb2!

An excellent pawn sacrifice, as after 31...Qxh4+ 32 Kg1 Re7 33 Ng5 Rxe2 34 Qxe2 Kf8 35 Qe5 White has a dominant combination of queen and knight.

31...Rc8 32 Ng5 Qd6 33 Qd4 Bf7? (Diagram 13)

A blunder in a poor position.

34 Qh8+!! 1–0

It's somewhat fitting that the game should be decided by the loss of Black's bad French bishop.

It is to avoid positions like that in the previous example that whole variations in the French have been designed with the express aim of exchanging the light-squared bishop at the earliest opportunity.

For example, in the Advance variation one popular line runs

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Qb6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 Be2 Bb5 (Diagram 14)

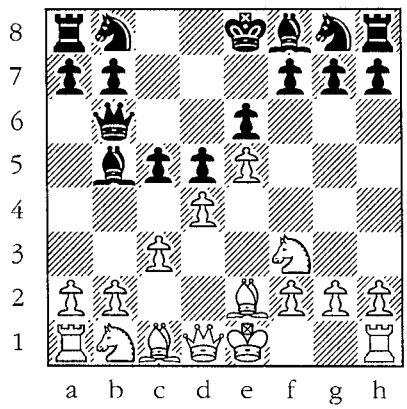


Diagram 14
Black exchanges his bad bishop

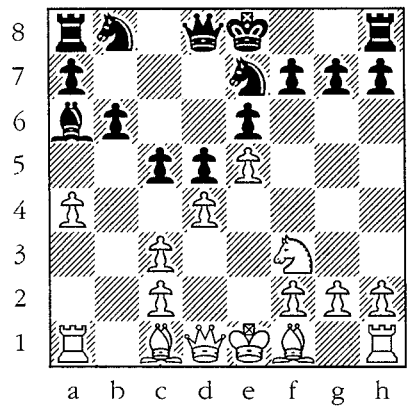


Diagram 15
Black exchanges his worst piece

while an important line in the Winawer Variation is seen after

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Nf3 b6 8 a4 Ba6 (Diagram 15)

A knowledge that Black always needs to be thinking about what to do with his queen's bishop will also help you in other variations as well, as in the next example.

□ Paschall ■ Quinn
York 1999

The position in Diagram 16 arises from quite a fashionable

variation of the Classical French after the moves 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 f4 c5 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 Be3 cxd4 8 Nxd4 Bc5 9 Qd2 a6 10 0–0–0 0–0 11 h4 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 b5 13 Rh3. In the game Black played a move which has been tried several times in grandmaster games.

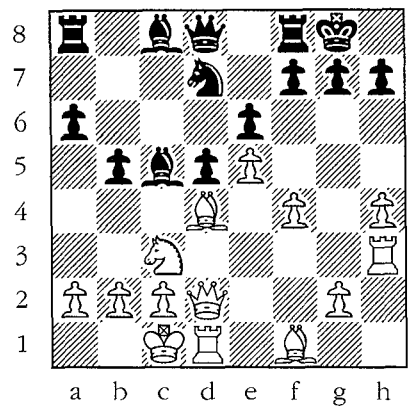


Diagram 16
Time to think about that bad bishop

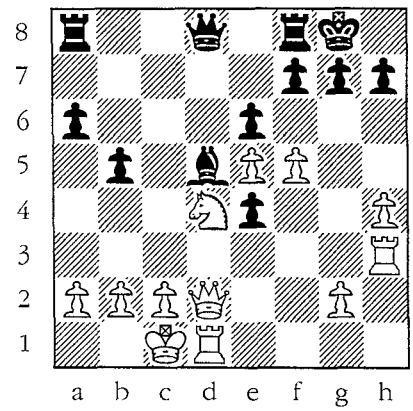


Diagram 17
The knight dominates the bishop

13...Bb7?! 14 Ne2!

Regrouping the knight to get to the all-important d4-square.

14...Bxd4 15 Nxd4 Nc5 16 Bd3 Ne4

A better defence would have been offered by 16...f6 17 Re1 fxe5 18 Rxe5 Qf6 19 g3, though White is still slightly better here.

17 Bxe4 dxe4 18 f5! Bd5? (Diagram 17)

A blunder, but White has a good game after 18...Qd5 19 Qf4.

19 f6 gxf6 20 Qh6 1–0

Black will have to give up his queen after 20...Kh8 21 Nc6!

A knowledge of the principles of the French Defence would suggest that instead of the routine 13...Bb7, which leaves the light-squared bishop without real prospects, Black should continue 13...b4! 14 Ne2 (or 14 Na4 Bxd4 15 Qxd4 a5) 14...a5 followed by ...Ba6, when the bishop does get to play an important role in the game.

Sometimes Black resorts to drastic measures to make his 'bad' bishop 'good', as in our next example.

□ Savon ■ Gleizerov
Cheliabinsk 1991

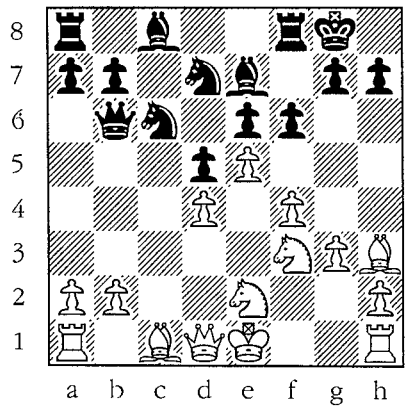


Diagram 18
A sacrifice to free Black's position

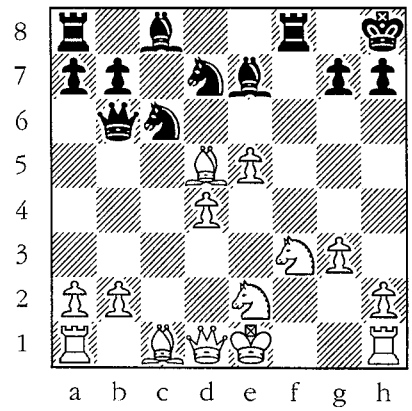


Diagram 19
The white king comes under attack

The position in Diagram 18 arises in a common line of the Tarrasch variation. Black is prepared to give up a pawn (or two) in order to activate his bad bishop. Here White played the greedy

12 Bxe6+ Kh8 13 Bxd5?! fxe5 14 fxe5 (Diagram 19)

and was rocked by a series of sacrifices:

14...Ncxe5! 15 dxe5 Nxe5 16 Nf4 Bb4+ 17 Kf1 (Diagram 20)

17 Bd2 Re8 is very dangerous for White.

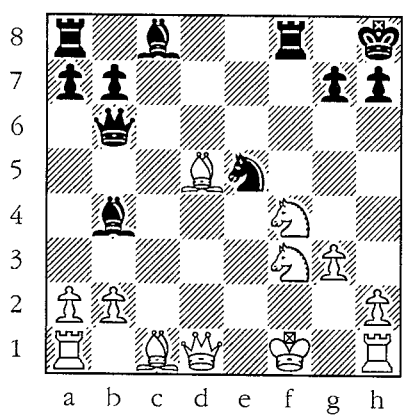


Diagram 20
Black adds more fuel to the fire

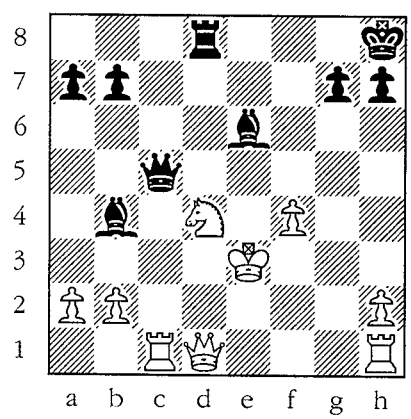


Diagram 21
The finishing touch

And now Black was able to bring his light-squared bishop into the game with decisive effect by playing

17...Rxf4! 18 gxf4

18 Bxf4 Bh3+ 19 Ke2 Qb5+ 20 Ke3 Ng4+ is even more catastrophic for White.

18...Bh3+ 19 Ke2 Ng4 20 Nd4 Qc5 21 Be6 Rd8 22 Be3 Nxe3 23 Kxe3 Bxe6 24 Rc1 (Diagram 21) **24...Rxd4! 25 Qxd4 Bd2+ 0–1**

A truly remarkable advertisement for the French Defence.

In some situations the 'bad' bishop can enjoy a full and healthy life on the kingside.

□ Schulz ■ Hertneck
German Bundesliga 1987/88

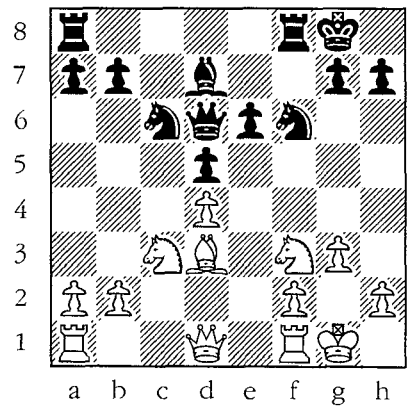


Diagram 22
The black bishop spies a route

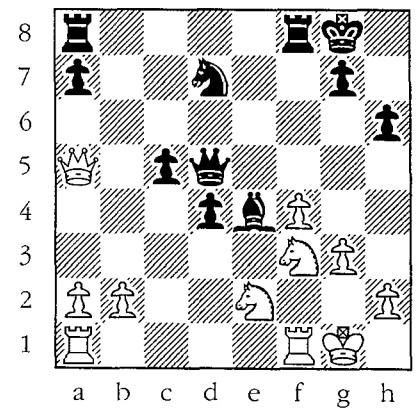


Diagram 23
Did someone say something about a bad bishop?

Here Black seized the opportunity to transfer the bishop to the kingside with

15...Be8! 16 Bb5 Bh5 17 Bxc6 bxc6 18 Qd3 Nd7 19 Ng5

White has managed to break the pin on the f3-knight, but now the bishop can take up a good position on g6.

19...Bg6 20 Qe3! e5 21 dxe5 Qxe5 22 Qd2

If the queens are exchanged then the passed d-pawn will

surely decide in the endgame.

22...d4 23 Ne2 h6 24 f4 Qd5 25 Nf3 c5 26 Qa5 Be4 (Diagram 23) **27 Nd2 Bd3 28 Rf2 Rae8 29 Re1 Rf7 30 Nf1 Rfe7 31 Qd2 c4 0–1**

The black knight will invade via c5 or f6.



TIP: In the French Defence Black should always be thinking about what to do with his light-squared bishop.

'Worst Piece First'

In the heat of battle it is easy to get caught up with tactical aspects in the position and neglect the fact that you need to coordinate your whole army, not just some of it! Often a quick check to see which of your pieces is least effective will lead you to the correct tactical solution.

□ **Comas Fabrego** ■ **Dautov**
European Team Championship, Batumi 1999

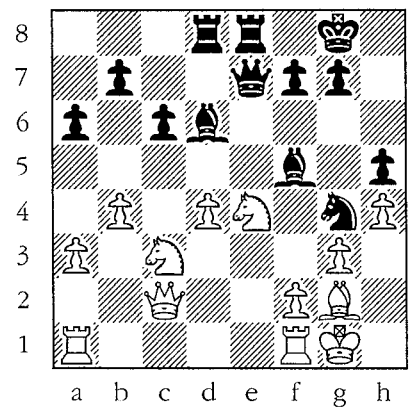


Diagram 24
Which is Black's worst piece?

Here Black has a very attractive position. He has established a dangerous pin on the knight on e4 and that white pawn on d4 looks rather sickly. However, how should he continue? All of his pieces are already on good squares and there aren't any good-looking pawn breaks to speak of. Let's take a quick look

at each piece in turn: the rook on d8 is well centralised; the rook on e8 combines well with the queen on e7 and the bishop on f5 in the pin on the e4-knight; and the knight on g4 patrols the kingside. That only really leaves the bishop on d6. At first sight, this bishop might appear to be doing a good job. It occupies a nice central position, eyeing both the kingside and the queenside. However, let's imagine that the bishop wasn't on d6, then the rook on d8 would be attacking the d4-pawn. That's a good start! So where could the bishop be more effective? Dautov showed the answer:

20...Bb8! 21 Rad1 Ba7!

The switch in diagonal causes White to lose the d-pawn. He tried

22 d5

but his position was already beyond repair. The game finished

22...cxd5 23 Nxd5 Rxd5! 24 Rxd5 Bxe4 25 Bxe4 Qxe4 26 Qxe4 Rxe4 27 Rd8+ Kh7 28 Rd7 Re2 0–1

This position below could have arisen in Rodriguez-Krilov, correspondence 1959/60.

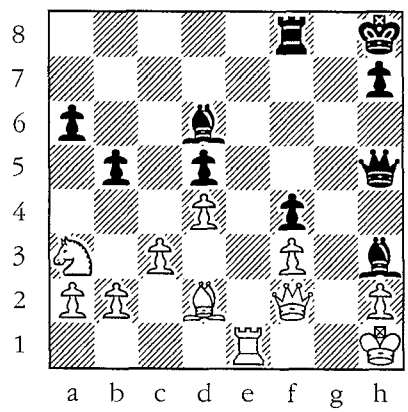


Diagram 25
Can Black turn the screw?

Black is a pawn down, but he clearly has decent attacking chances. In fact, he has a forced win if he follows the principle of 'worst piece first'! It's not hard to see that Black's rook is his least effective piece, so the first two moves are obvious:

26...Rg8! 27 Rg1

Forced, as otherwise Black can infiltrate on g2.

27...Rxg1+ 28 Kxg1 (Diagram 26)

Let's apply the principle of 'worst piece first' again. The bishop on h3 is doing a fine job of keeping the white king hemmed in, whereas its counterpart on d6 is performing a useful function defending the f-pawn. So let's think where the queen might be better placed. Hey, there's an unprotected square on d3 – let's go for it!

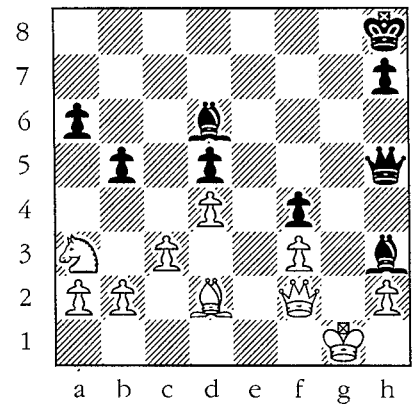


Diagram 26
The black queen finds a way in

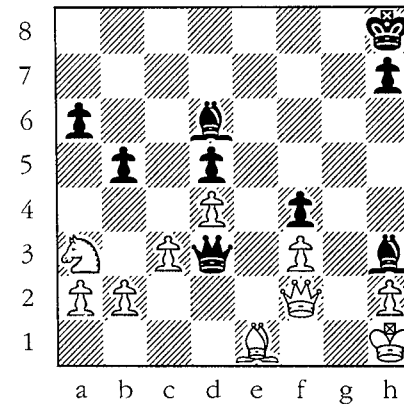


Diagram 27
The bishop finds a better diagonal

28...Qg6+ 29 Kh1 Qd3! 30 Be1 (Diagram 27)

Hoping to bring the knight back into play with 31 Nc2. Okay, you know the drill by now – 'worst piece first'!

30...Be7! 31 Nc2 Bh4!

The bishop cannot be captured due to 32...Qf1 mate.

32 Nb4 Qd1

and White is utterly lost.

Note that 30 b4 would not have helped White, because 30...Be7! is still just as effective.



TIP: Always be aware of your worst-placed piece and try to find a way of bringing it into the game.

The 'Wrong Rook'

One of the most difficult positional decisions in the middle-game arises when you have developed all your pieces and have your rooks connected on, say, a1 and f1. In the normal course of events you may decide to place one of these rooks on c1, d1 or e1, but then a tricky question arises: Which rook belongs on which square? There is no hard and fast rule about this, I'm afraid, you just have to trust your judgement on a case-by-case basis. As your positional judgement improves you should be able to get it right nine times out of ten, but even strong players have been known to experience problems with this type of decision. Probably the most well-known example of the 'wrong rook' is the following classic.

□ R.Byrne ■ Fischer
USA Championship, New York 1963

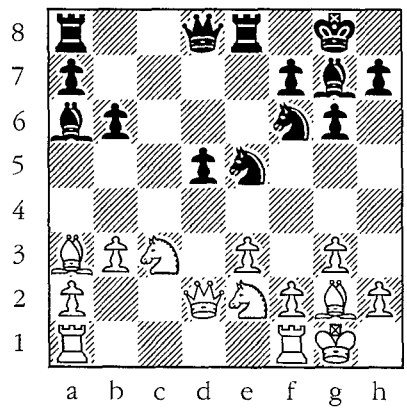


Diagram 28
Which rook should go to d1?

Both sides have pretty much completed their development. Although Black has an isolated d-pawn, he can claim some compensation for this in view of his active minor pieces, particularly the bishop on a6 and knight on e5, which may be able to hop into d3 at some point. It is pretty clear that White would like to place a rook on d1 to put pressure on the black d-pawn, but which one? Robert Byrne decided that he didn't like the pin on his knight on e2 and opted for

14 Rfd1?

As Fischer points out, 14 Rad1! would have been much stronger as his intended pawn sacrifice 14...Ne4 15 Nxe4 dxe4 16 Bxe4 Qxd2 17 Rxd2 Nc4 18 Bxa8 Nxd2 19 Rd1 Nc4 fails to 20 Bc6! Nxa3 21 Bxe8 Bxe2 (21...Kf8 may be better) 22 Rd7. Instead he suggests 14...Qc8 and if 15 Nxd5 Nxd5 16 Bxd5 Rd8 17 f4 then 17...Rxd5 18 Qxd5 Bb7 19 Qd2 Qh3, although this all looks rather speculative to me. It seems more logical to connect the rooks with 14...Qd7 as the variation 15 Nxd5 Nxd5 16 Bxd5 Rad8 17 f4 Ng4 18 e4 Nf6 is in Black's favour.

14...Nd3!

Watch this knight!

15 Qc2

White acts quickly to evict the knight before it is cemented by ...Nxe4, Nxe4 dxe4.

15...Nxf2!

By this stage White must have been regretting moving his rook away from the defence of the pawn on f2.

16 Kxf2 Ng4+ 17 Kg1 Nxe3 18 Qd2 Nxg2!

18...Nxd1 would just have let White off the hook. Black intends to launch a massive assault on the white king.

19 Kxg2 d4 20 Nxd4 Bb7+ 21 Kf1

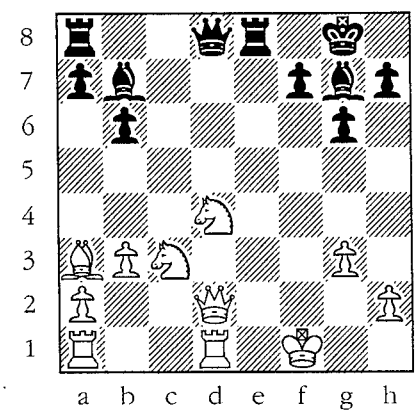


Diagram 29
White's position caves in

21 Kg1 loses to 21...Bxd4+ 22 Qxd4 Re1+ 23 Kf2 Qxd4+ 24 Rxd4 Rxa1, while 21 Kf2 Qd7! is also very dangerous for White (Fischer).

21...Qd7 0–1

Here White resigned rather than give his opponent the satisfaction of 22 Qf2 Qh3+ 23 Kg1 Re1+ 24 Rxe1 Bxd4 25 Qxd4 Qg2 mate.

The following is an interesting recent example of the 'wrong rook' dilemma.

□ Kir.Georgiev ■ Van der Sterren
German Bundesliga 1998/99

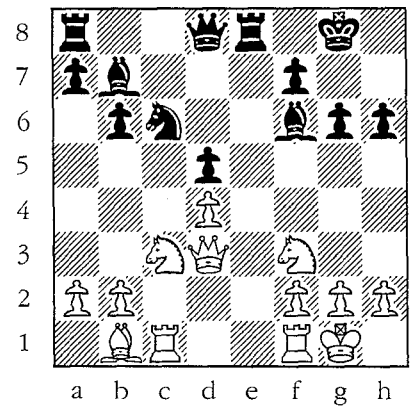


Diagram 30
16 Rfe1 or 16 Rce1 here?

This position arises in a fairly fashionable variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined, Tartakower variation. Naturally White wants to play a rook to the open e-file, but the question arises: Which one? In the game Pinter-Portisch, Austria 1997, White went for the 'natural' 16 Rfe1, giving himself a rook on each of the two open files on the board. Black responded by connecting his rooks with 16...Qd6 and White decided to try and double on the e-file with 17 Re3!?, and after 17...Rxe3 he responded 18 fxe3, strengthening his position in the centre.

In the quiet of his own study, Kiril Georgiev must have looked at this game and found the highly original

16 Rce1!?

This looks very strange as it blocks the king's rook in on f1, but after

16...Qd6 17 Re3

we have the same position as in the Pinter-Portisch game, except that there is a white rook on f1 rather than e1. Here, however, 17...Rxe3 18 fxe3 looks a lot more attractive for White as his rook is now conveniently placed on f1, attacking down the f-file.

Unfortunately, Black was not obliged to take on e3 straight away and after

17...Bg7

the game was eventually drawn, but this example serves to illustrate that every 'wrong rook' decision has to be judged on its merits!

The Perils of 'Playing by Rote'

As you play more competitive chess you will become more and more familiar with the types of middlegame that arise from your favourite openings. You should study as many grandmaster games as possible from those openings to broaden your knowledge of the typical plans for both sides. Don't memorise the moves, just try to work out what each side is playing for, and don't just ignore those games which fail to coincide precisely with your own intended opening variation. The chances are that some of the ideas in those games will still come in very useful.

In my view this kind of general 'ideas-based' opening study will serve you much better, than if you were to spend hours and hours trying to commit complicated opening variations to memory. Indeed, the perils of such an approach are graphically illustrated in our next three examples.

□ Hall ■ Collinson
Oakham 1992

---

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0–0 b5 6 Bb3 Bb7

Back in 1992, this particular line of the Ruy Lopez (also known as the 'Spanish') was very much the 'in' thing. Indeed, several

exciting games with it had recently been published in *Informator* and other important periodicals.

7 c3 Nxe4 8 d4 Na5 9 Nxe5 Nxb3 10 Qxb3 Qf6 11 f3 Nc5 12 Ng4!?

This sharp move was introduced in the game Wolff-Tal, San Francisco 1991, a game which appeared with detailed analysis by Patrick Wolff in *Informator 52.*

12...Nxb3 13 Nxf6+ Ke7

In his notes Wolff gave this move an exclamation mark, criticising Tal's 13...gxf6 on account of 14 Re1+ Be7 15 axb3 with a small plus for White.

14 Bg5

Wolff gives this a question mark, suggesting that 14 axb3 Kxf6 is equal. Indeed, it is that note that appears in the 1997 edition of *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings*, with no mention at all of the critical 14 Bg5.

14...Nxa1 15 Re1+ Kd6

15...Be4 16 Rxe4+ Kd6 17 Bf4+ Kc6 18 d5+ Kb7 19 Nxd7 Rd8 20 Nxf8 Rxd5.

16 Bf4+ Kc6 17 d5+ Kc5 (Diagram 31)

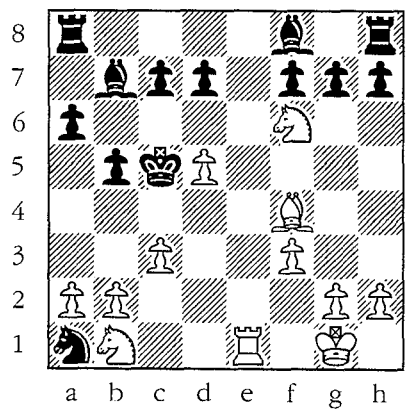


Diagram 31
Mate in nine

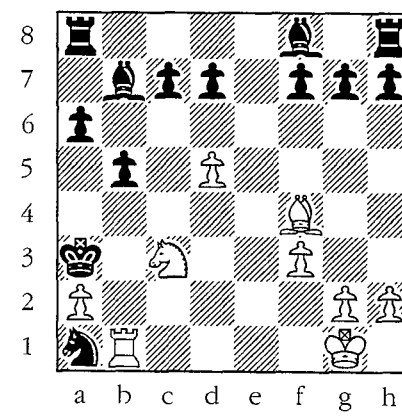


Diagram 32
The black king finally perishes

Here Wolff ends his analysis in *Informator* with the comment that Black is winning. Actually, White has mate in nine!

18 b4+! Kc4 19 Na3+ Kxc3 20 Ne4+ Kxb4 21 Rb1+ Kxa3

21...Ka5 22 Bxc7+ Ka4 23 Nc3+ Kxa3 24 Bf4 boils down to the same thing.

22 Nc3 1-0 (Diagram 32)

A brilliant piece of pre-game preparation by White – or perhaps a very easy one if he had come across this whole piece of analysis in a letter by Larry Christiansen in *New in Chess* no.6, 1991!

However, 22 moves of preparation would only have scratched the surface of the next game, where White introduces a brilliant new idea on move 29, no less.

□ Magomedov ■ Khosseinov
Dushanbe 1999

---

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 5 Bd3 Nf6 6 0–0 Qc7

I don't profess to know anything about this opening variation and won't pass comment on the incredibly sharp course that the game now takes. Suffice it to say that both players were almost certainly aware that they were following a well-trodden path.

7 Qe2 Bd6 8 f4 Bc5 9 Be3 Qb6 10 c3 Nc6 11 Kh1 Nxd4 12 cxd4 Bxd4 13 Bxd4 Qxd4 14 Nc3 0–0 15 Rad1 Qb4 16 e5 Ne8 17 a3 Qe7 18 Na4 Qd8 19 Bb1 d5 20 exd6 Bd7 21 Nc5 Bb5 22 Bd3 Qxd6 23 Bxh7+ Kh8 24 Qe3 Qe7 25 Qh3 Nf6 26 Ne4

The next ten moves are remarkable in that White manages to keep open the discovered check for an inordinate amount of time. Note that 26...Nxh7 fails immediately to 27 Ng5.

26...Rfd8 27 Rfe1 Bc6 28 Ng5 Be8 (Diagram 33)

One would have thought that after no less than 28 moves from each side, the game would have diverged into a unique path, but not a bit of it! The earlier game Luther-Borges Mateos, Elista Olympiad 1998, had reached exactly the same position. Here the German Grandmaster Thomas Luther continued 29 Rd3 Rxd3 30 Bxd3+ Kg8 31 Bh7+ Kf8 32 Bf5 Kg8 33 Bh7+ Kf8 34 Bf5 Kg8 35 Rxe6 Qc7 36 Re1 and the game was eventually drawn. Unfortunately for Black, who was probably familiar

with this game, White had something else in mind!

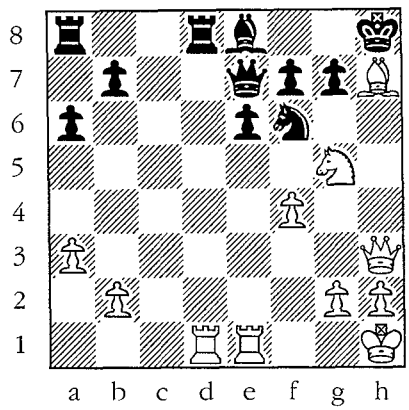


Diagram 33
The discovered check looks dangerous

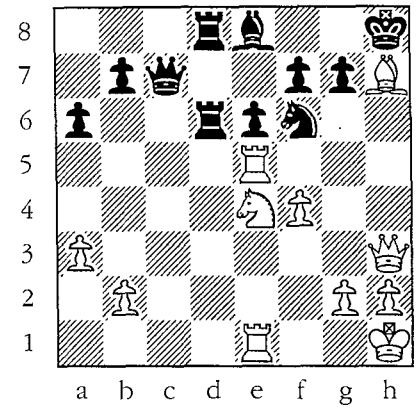


Diagram 34
White's attack is decisive!

29 Ra1!!

A truly beautiful move, removing the rook to the corner to avoid exchanges. Suddenly Black has to worry about 30 Bf5+ Kg8 31 Rxe6 with a devastating attack.

29...Rd6 30 Re5 Rad8 31 Rae1

An now the rook returns to the fray, menacing f4-f5.

31...Qc7 32 Ne4! (Diagram 34)

Since Black cannot play 32...Nxh7 because of 33 Ng5, he has to allow the destruction of his king's pawn cover, after which White is able to bring his pieces in for the kill.

32...Rd1 33 Nxf6

Now the spectacular 33...Qxe5 comes unstuck after 34 Be4+ with mate to follow (Magomedov), whereas 33...gxf6 34 Bg6+! Kg7 35 Qh7+ Kf8 36 Rxe6! fxe6 37 Qh8+ Ke7 38 Qg7+ Kd6 39 Rxd1+ Kc6 40 Rc1+ wins the house.

33...Rxe1+ 34 Rxe1 gxf6 35 Bf5+

White finally takes advantage of the discovered check – with devastating effect!

35...Kg8 36 Qh7+ Kf8 37 Bxe6 Qxf4 38 Qh8+ Ke7 39 Bxf7+ Kxf7 40 Qh7+ Kf8 41 Qe7+ 1–0

If you want to specialise in sharp Sicilian variations such as this, I would not try and persuade you otherwise – as long as you are prepared to experience reverses like this one from time to time. Still not convinced? Take a look at this game, where White didn't really get to play a real game at all!

□ Relange ■ Sadler
Hastings Premier 1997/98

Here we see another incredibly sharp Sicilian variation.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Be7 8 Qf3 Qc7 9 0–0–0 Nbd7 10 g4 b5 11 Bxf6 Nxf6 12 g5 Nd7 13 f5 Bxg5+ 14 Kb1 Ne5 15 Qh5 Qd8 16 Nxe6 Bxe6 17 fxe6 0–0 18 Rg1 Bf6 19 exf7+ Kh8 20 Nd5 g6 21 Qh3 Rxf7 22 Nf4 Qd7 23 Qb3 Qc6 24 Bh3 Bg7 25 Rgf1 Raf8 26 Ne6 Rxf1 27 Bxf1 Rf2 28 a4 bxa4

An earlier game, Oll-Sadler, Koge 1997, had gone 28...b4? 29 h3 h6 30 Nd4 and White went on to win. The game move was analysed in Oll's notes in *Informator 70*, with the following continuation:

29 Qb8+ Bf8 30 Nxf8 Qxc2+ 31 Ka2

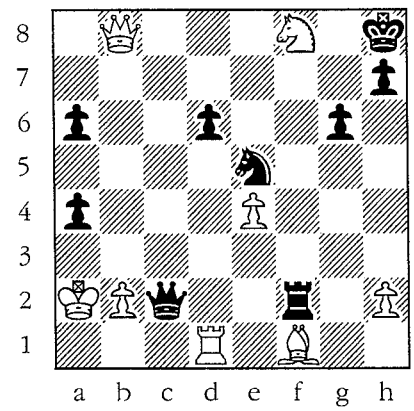


Diagram 35
White's preparation goes badly awry

Here Oll gave 31...Qb3+ 32 Qxb3 axb3+ 33 Kxb3 Rxf8 34 Bxa6 with a small plus for White and 31...Kg7 32 Ne6+ Kh6 33 Qb6 and White is on top. In fact, the latter conclusion is incorrect due to 33...Rf3! However, Black has an even better continua-

tion:

31...Nc6! 32 Nxg6+ Kg7 33 Qc7+

33 Qh8+ Kh6 is also grim for White.

33...Rf7 34 Qb6

34 Qxd6 Rxf1 35 Rxf1 Qc4+ is hopeless.

34...a5! 0–1

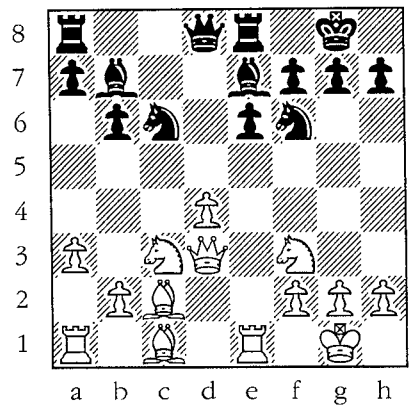
A nice move to finish with. The threat of 35...Nb4+ is terminal, e.g. 35 Re1 Nb4+ 36 Ka1 Qd2! 37 Rb1 a3!, as pointed out by John Nunn.



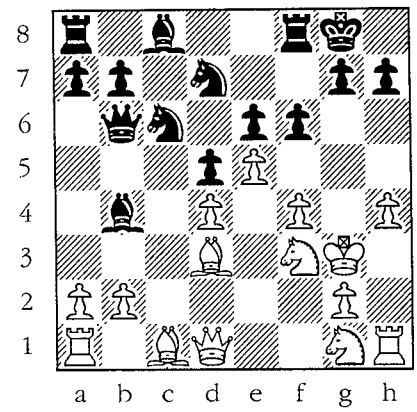
WARNING: Try to avoid opening variations which involve long, complicated variations – or you may never even reach a playable middlegame.

Frequently in grandmaster chess you will find games in which one player deliberately takes on weaknesses from an early stage of the game in order to achieve dynamic piece play of one kind or another. However, when we lesser mortals try and repeat their experiments we invariably come unstuck. As you become a stronger player you will develop a better grasp of what you can and cannot get away with, but for now I recommend that you concentrate on the fundamentals. There is plenty of time for experimentation later on.

Try it Yourself



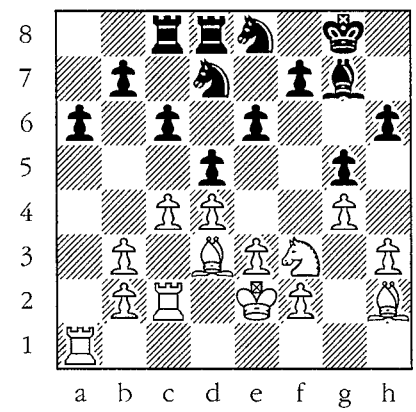
Exercise 1



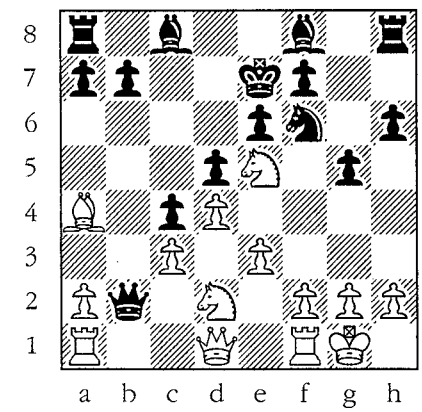
Exercise 2

Exercise 1: White to move. Who is winning the battle for the d5-square?

Exercise 2: Can you see how Black might be able to get his light-squared bishop into the game over the next few moves?



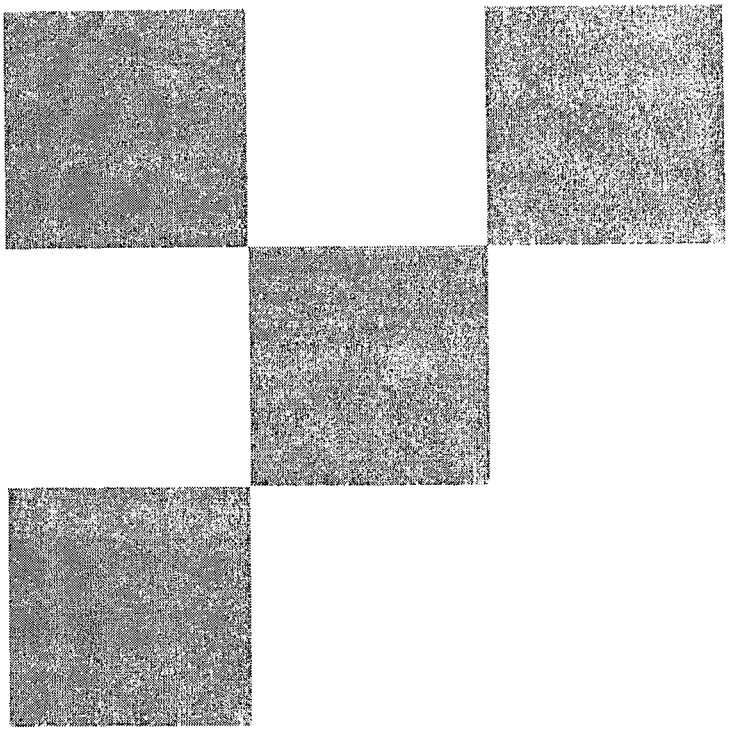
Exercise 3



Exercise 4

Exercise 3: Is 20 e4, seizing space in the centre, a good idea?

Exercise 4: What about 15 e4 here?



Summary

In IQP positions the square in front of the isolated pawn is of great importance.

In the French Defence Black should always be thinking about what to do with his light-squared bishop.

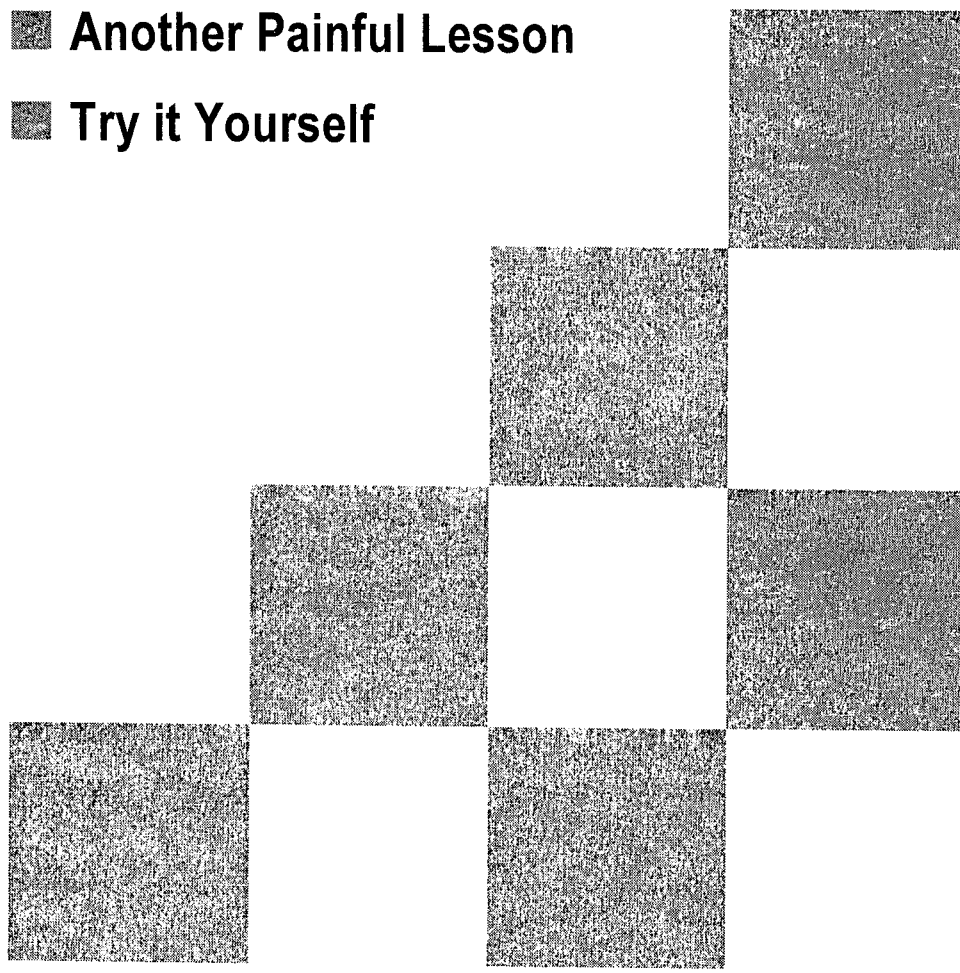
Always be aware of your worst-placed piece and try to find a way of bringing it into the game.

Try to avoid opening variations which involve long, complicated variations – or you may never even reach a playable middle-game.

Chapter Three

Keeping Control

- It's a Jungle out there!
- Pawns cannot move Backwards!
- Opposite-Coloured Bishops
- Another Painful Lesson
- Try it Yourself



It's a Jungle out there!

We have already discussed the fact that most strong players are really 'all-round' players, comfortable both in quiet positions and tactical melees. You should therefore focus your efforts on becoming the best all-round player that you can be. That way, you will never be afraid of tactics but nor will you always have to attack like a 'mad caveman' regardless of the dictates of the position.

The only time I would possibly recommend a different approach is when you are up against an opponent who is markedly stronger or weaker than yourself. In his excellent battle manual *Chess for Tigers*, the English International Master Simon Webb suggests that you should tailor your style in such circumstances. Against a much stronger opponent, or a 'heffalump' as he puts it, you should try to play sharper chess than you would normally. If you simply sit there playing positional chess and exchanging pieces your opponent will eventually be able to use his superior understanding to beat you, whereas if you play more aggressively and try to randomise the position there is a good chance that your opponent will become as confused as you are. He may then make a critical mistake before you do!



NOTE: Even very strong players can lose the plot if things don't go the way they expect.

□ Kinsman ■ Jansa
Wrexham 1997

Having started the tournament with two wins and two draws, I was feeling quite confident before this game. 'A draw is not a disaster, so don't do anything silly; just keep it tight at the back and hope he makes a mistake,' I was telling myself. Sound advice, but sadly it fell on deaf ears!

1 d4 d6 2 e4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Nbd7 4 Nf3 e5 5 Bc4 Be7 6 0–0 0–0 7 a4 c6 8 Re1 b6 (Diagram 1) **9 d5!**

A standard move, taking advantage of the permanent weakness of the d5-square, since after Black has moved his b-pawn he can no longer meet d5xc6 with ...b7xc6.

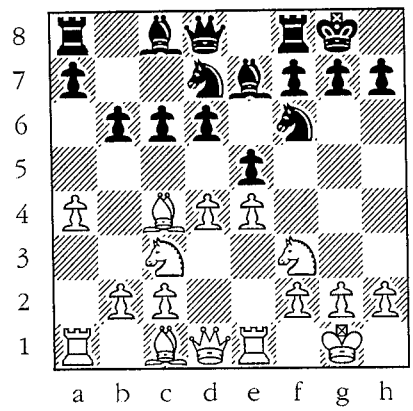


Diagram 1
White gets going in the centre

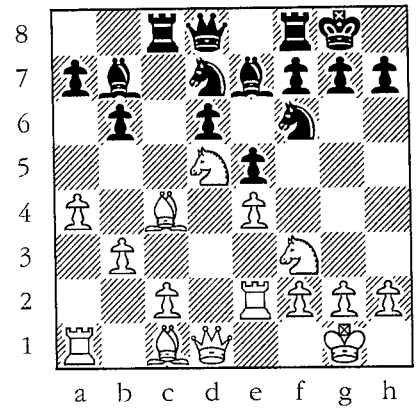


Diagram 2
The rook is used laterally

9...cxd5

9...c5 leaves Black rather cramped, and 9...Bb7 10 dxc6 Bxc6 11 Bg5! is also promising for White.

10 Nxd5 Bb7 11 b3 Rc8 12 Re2 (Diagram 2)

Thus far we had been following my pre-game preparation. Law-Summerscale, Four Nations Chess League, Rotherham 1997, continued 12...Nxd5 13 Bxd5 Ba6 14 c4 Nf6 15 Ba3 with a very pleasant position for White, whose idea in this line is to always be ready to meet any exchange on d5 with a recapture by a piece rather than a pawn in order to keep the black d-pawn under fire. Instead, my opponent introduced a new and not particularly good move that provoked an even worse response.

12...Rc5?!

Hoping to force White into recapturing with the e-pawn on d5.

13 Nc3?!

Too convoluted. I was trying to arrange Ba3 in a situation where Black would not have....Bxd5, but a better way to take the exchange was 13 Nxe7+ Qxe7 14 Ba3 Nxe4 15 Bxc5 bxc5 16 Re3, as Black is then unable to set up the powerful battery on the long diagonal that occurred in the game.

13...Qa8!

An unpleasant surprise. Black is now able to sacrifice the exchange in very attractive circumstances. So much for 'keeping it tight at the back'!

14 Ba3 Nxe4 15 Nxe4 Bxe4 16 Bxc5 bxc5 17 Rd2 Nb6 18 Bf1 Bb7 19 c4 Nc8 (Diagram 3)

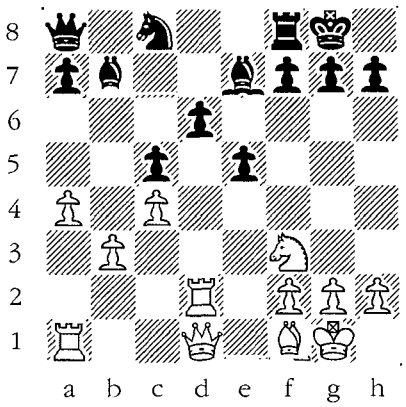


Diagram 3
The extra exchange is meaningless

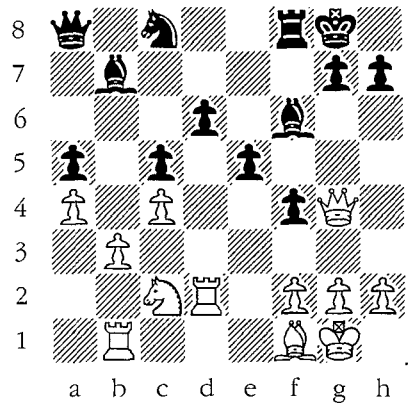


Diagram 4
White makes a bid for activity

By now I was feeling rather uncomfortable. Only just out of the opening and White is already without an active plan! My whole 'positional' approach was in tatters.

20 Qe2 f5 21 Ne1 Bf6 22 Nc2 f4

Another surprise – and again one that meets with a weak response. I had expected 22...e4 followed by....Be5.

23 Rb1?

23 Qg4 was necessary.

23...a5?!

Clamping down on the queenside, but 23...f3!? 24 gxf3 Bg5 would have caused serious problems.

24 Qg4! (Diagram 4)

Fortunately I didn't miss the second chance to play this move. From now on the game becomes so complicated that both players make several mistakes. However, the evidence of the first 23 moves reveals that my opponent is clearly a far stronger positional player than I am, so the introduction of an entirely

random element to the game was more than welcome.



TIP: If all else fails – randomise!

24...Be7 25 f3 Na7 26 Qe6+ Rf7 27 Bd3 g6 (Diagram 5)

By now I was becoming quite excited about my position – so excited that I had stopped thinking clearly! I had imagined that Black was threatening 28...Bc8 29 Qd5 Bb7 with a draw, but had missed that ...Bc8 can always be met by Be4!

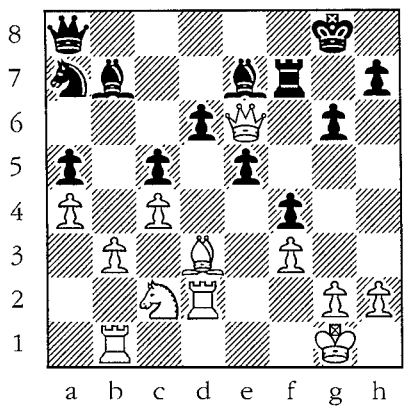


Diagram 5
The queen enters the lion's den

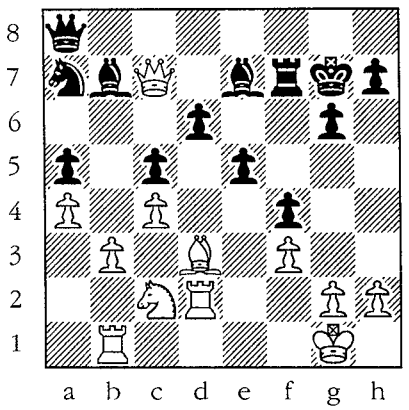


Diagram 6
Confused? You will be!

28 Qd7?!

Having survived the worst, I now decided to send my queen on a 'suicide' mission. Instead 28 Re2! Bc8 29 Be4! was called for.

28...Kg7 29 Qc7!? (Diagram 6)

I don't know about my opponent, but I was completely confused by now! It is hard to imagine that the queen could be well placed on c7, right in the line of fire of Black's pieces, but at least it was causing my opponent to use up most of his remaining time on the clock trying to find a way to trap it!

29...Nc8 30 Qd7 Nb6 31 Qb5 Bc6

31...Bd8!? 32 Be4 Bxe4 33 fxe4 Qxe4 34 Re1 Qf5 35 Qc6 is just a mess.

32 Be4!

Fortunately, I had spotted this move by now! Not 32 Qxb6??

Bd8 when the queen is trapped.

32...d5 33 Qxb6 dxe4 34 fxe4 Bxe4 35 Rf1 Bc6 36 Ne1?

Too passive. White should slow the pawns down with 36 Rdf2! and if 36...Bd6 then 37 Rd1.

36...e4 37 Qc7 Bf6 38 Qd6 Bd4+ 39 Kh1 g5?

Just as on the 23rd move, 39...f3! would have left White in grave danger. I was fortunate that this opportunity arose just before the time control rather than just after it!

40 Nc2 Bc3 41 Re2 f3 42 Re3

It looks rather risky to blockade the pawns the other way with 42 gxf3 exf3 43 Ref2, but in the cold light of day I can't see anything wrong with it. White is threatening simply to 'hoover' up the c-pawn.

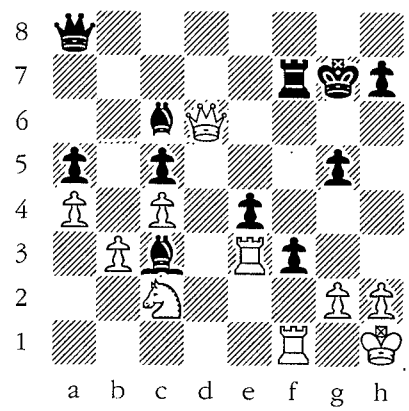


Diagram 7
Random chess

42...Bf6

I had assumed that this was forced, but my trusty computer (Fritz 5) tells me that Black can play the incredible 42...Qc8!!? Apparently White cannot take the bishop because of 43 Rxc3 fxg2+ 44 Kxg2 Qg4+ 45 Rg3 Qe2+, so he has to grovel around with something like 43 Kg1, although this may be okay for him.

43 Qxc5

Having finally snaffled the c-pawn, I was feeling a lot happier

about my position.

43...Rd7 44 Kg1 h6

It would have been more accurate to play 44...Rd2 and only after 45 Ne1 h6, since 45 Rf2 can be met by 45...Qd8. If in reply to 45 Ne1 Black plays 45...Bd4 then after 46 Qxg5+ Kh8 not 46 Kh1 Qg8! when after 47 Qxg8+ Rxf8, the white rook has nowhere to go, but 47 Rf2! and White is over the worst.

45 Ree1 Rd2 46 Rf2 Rd3?!

A poor choice, after which I began to sense chances of victory. 46...Qd8! would have been better, when the game is still in the balance after 47 Rxd2 (not 47 Qxc6? Rxf2 and either 48 Kxf2 Qd2+ or 48 Qb7+ Kf8 49 gxf3 Rxc2 50 Qxe4 Rb2 winning) 47...Qxd2 48 Qa7+ Kg8 49 Qf2.

47 gxf3 exf3 48 Ne3 Be4

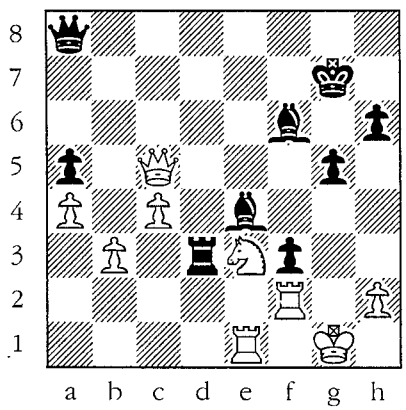


Diagram 8
White misses a golden opportunity

49 Nf5+

This seemed perfectly logical to me, but again my computer has politely pointed out a remarkable alternative: 49 Qc7+!? Kh8 50 Rd1!! Rxd1+ (since 50...Rxe3 is met by the stunning 51 Qb6!) 51 Nxd1 with a clear plus for White.



NOTE: Computers sometimes find the most bizarre ideas that one could never spot over the board.

49...Kg6 50 Ng3 Bd4 51 Qd6+ Kf7 52 Qc7+ Kg6

Playing for a win instead of settling for 52...Kg8 53 Kf1 (53 Nxe4 Qxe4!) 53...Bxf2 54 Nxe4 Bxe1 55 Nf6+ with a perpetual.

53 Kf1!?

Again 53 Nxe4 Qxe4! is fine for Black as 54 Kf1 can be met by 54...Re3!

53...Bxf2

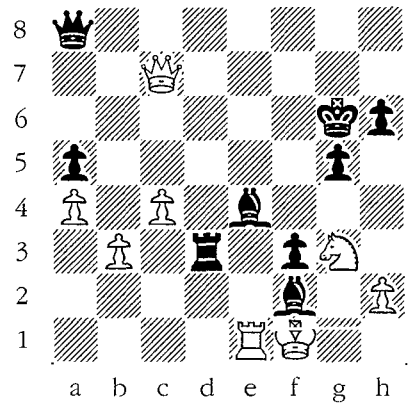


Diagram 9
Going for Broke

54 Rxe4!?

Having spotted that 54 Kxf2 Rd2+ 55 Ke3 Rd3+ 56 Kf2 Rd2+ is another perpetual, I decided to gamble on one more (slightly risky) winning try since my opponent was slightly short of time.

54...Bd4??

An own goal. After 54...Bxg3 55 Re6+ Kh5 White has to bail out with 56 hxg3 Qh8 57 Qf7+ Kg4 58 Rf6 Kxg3 59 Qc7+ Kg4 60 Qc6 because 56 Qf7+ Kg4 57 h3+ Kxh3 58 Qf5+ g4 59 Rxh6+ (My opponent might have imagined that this was mate!) 59...Bh4 60 Qxd3 Qe8! leaves White in some difficulty.

55 Qd6+ 1–0

Black resigned since 55...Bf6 is met by 56 Qxd3.

It you thought that game was way too complicated – you're exactly right! In the early middlegame my opponent was able to use his superior positional ability to build up an almost

winning position, but after around move 23 I was at least able to randomise the game along the lines suggested by Simon Webb's 'tiger' approach. After that, anything could – and did – happen and I ended up with a 'lucky' win!

Lightning doesn't (quite) strike Twice!

By a bizarre twist of fate I ended up facing the same opponent the following year with the same colours in an equally complicated game... with almost the same result!

□ Kinsman ■ Jansa
Wrexham 1998

1 d4 Nf6 2 Bg5 Ne4 3 Bf4 d5 4 e3 Bf5 5 f3 Nf6 6 c4 e6 7 Qb3 b6 8 Nc3 c6 9 g4!?

There is nothing wrong with this move, gaining space on kingside, as White can always castle queenside. However, as we shall discuss in greater detail in the next section of this chapter, pawns can't move backwards!

9...Bg6 10 h4 h5 11 g5

I had reached this position in my home preparation. Here the 'natural' 11...Nfd7? fails to 12 cxd5 cxd5 13 Nxd5, while 11...dxc4 12 Qxc4! is also nice for White since 12...Nd5 is met by 13 Bxb8 and the c-pawn drops. However, my opponent had another idea in mind.

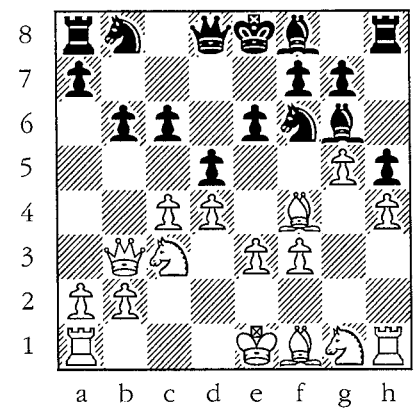


Diagram 10
The knight goes all the way back again

11...Ng8!

After the bishop is developed to d6, this knight will sit very happily on the e7-square, supporting the d5-pawn and patrolling the g6- and f5-squares.

12 0–0–0 Bd6 13 Nh3 Ne7 14 e4 0–0 15 Kb1?! (Diagram 11)

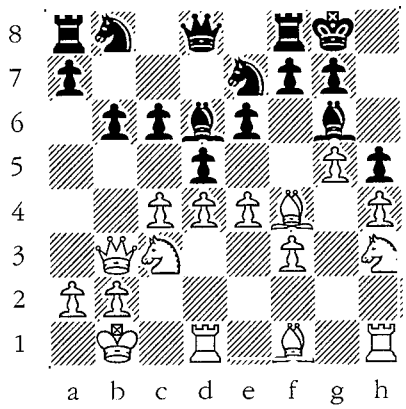


Diagram 11
White starts to drift

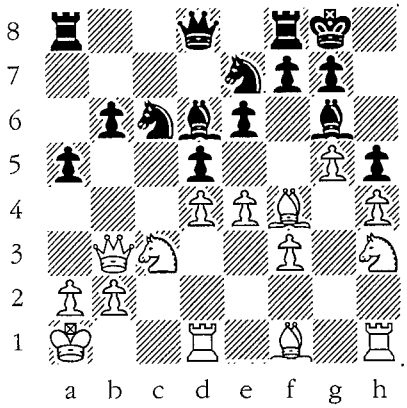


Diagram 12
Things have gone wrong for White

It is tempting to shuffle the king to safety on a1, but with the benefit of hindsight 15 Bd3 would have been better.

15...a5!

A very fine positional move.

16 cxd5

Of course, White would prefer not to release the tension as it gives the black knight access to the c6-square. However, 16 Bxd6 Qxd6 17 Qxb6 Qb4! provides Black with more than enough for the pawn, while 16 Bd3 a4 17 Qc2 dxc4 18 Bxc4 Nd5 is also fine for Black.

16...cxd5 17 Ka1 Nbc6 (Diagram 12)

By now I was experiencing more than a degree of *déjà vu*. Yet again I already had a difficult position with White soon after the opening. Black is well placed to attack on the queenside, whereas White's less than dynamic pawn duo on d4 and e4 could turn out to be sitting ducks.

18 Bb5

I realised that I had to put something on this weak square and 18 Nb5 Bb4! (not 18...a4 19 Qe3 as now 19...Bb4 can be met by 20 a3) was distinctly unappealing, e.g. 19 a3? dxe4! 20 axb4 axb4+ 21 Kb1 Ra5! 22 Nd6 exf3+ 23 Kc1 Nf5 24 Nxf5 Bxf5 and Black has a fantastic game for the piece.

18...a4!?

An inventive pawn sacrifice to open lines against the white king. Against 18...dxe4 I was ready to flick in 19 Qa4!

19 Bxa4 Na5!?

Just as in our early game, things begin to take on something of a random nature. After 19...dxe4 20 Bxc6! (not 20 fxe4? Bxf4 21 Nxf4 Nxd4 22 Qc4 e5) 20...Nxc6 21 fxe4 Bxf4 22 Nxf4 Nxd4 23 Qc4 Nc2+! 24 Kb1 Ne3 25 Rxd8 Nxc4 26 Rd7 Ne5 27 Rd6 Nc4 28 Rd7 Ne5 neither side can make any progress.

20 Qb5

20 Qc2 Nc4 looked too passive to me.

20...Nc4 21 Rhe1 Ra5 22 Qb3 Qa8!? 23 Bxd6 Nxd6

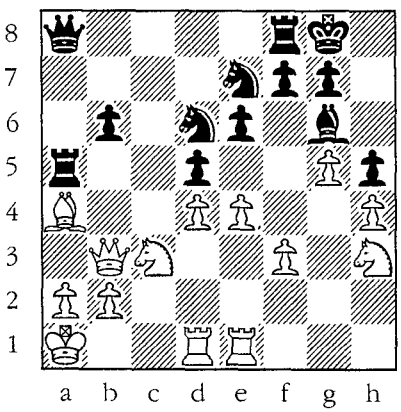


Diagram 13
Can the b6-pawn be taken?

24 Qb4?!

Here I perhaps showed too much respect for my opponent. I was worried about my queen being trapped after 24 Qxb6 Nc4 25 Qb4 Qa7, but then White has 26 exd5! Nxd5 27 Qxc4 Nxc3

28 Qxc3 Rxa4 29 a3 Qb8 30 Re5 Rd8 31 Nf2 with two extra pawns, though the activity of the black pieces is such that the win is far from routine.

24...Rd8 25 Nf4 b5

White's position begins to come together after 25...dxe4 26 Nxg6 Nxg6 27 fxe4 Nxh4 28 d5.

26 Nxg6 fxg6

The greedy 26...Nxg6 27 Bc2 (but not 27 Bb3 Nc4!) 27...Nxh4 28 exd5 Nxf3 is punished after 29 Rh1 exd5 30 g6, when the black king is suddenly under attack.

27 Bc2 Nc6 28 Qb3 b4!?

Faced with inevitable defeat if he plays passively, my opponent decides to add yet more fuel to the fire. Just as in our game the previous year, we had by now reached a totally random position with pieces flying all over the place.

29 exd5

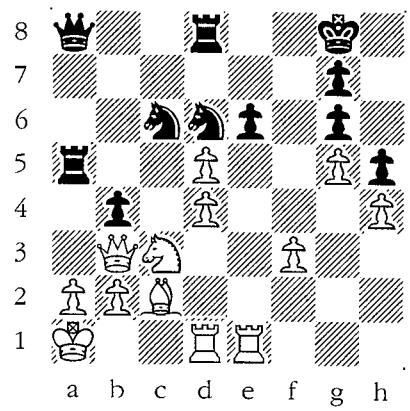


Diagram 14
White has a strong initiative

White should be winning but I was running short of time.

29...bxc3

29...Nxd4 30 Rxd4 bxc3 31 dxe6 Rb8 32 e7+ Rxb3 33 Bxb3+ Kh7 34 Rxd6 is very bad for Black.

30 dxc6 cxb2+ 31 Kb1 Nb5 (Diagram 15)

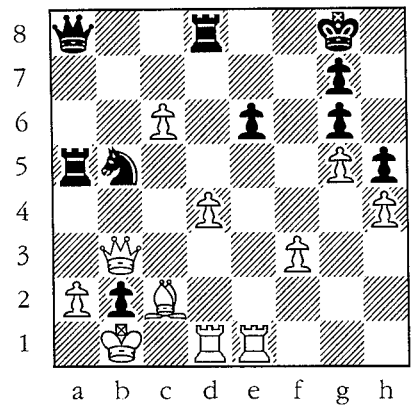


Diagram 15
White misses a win

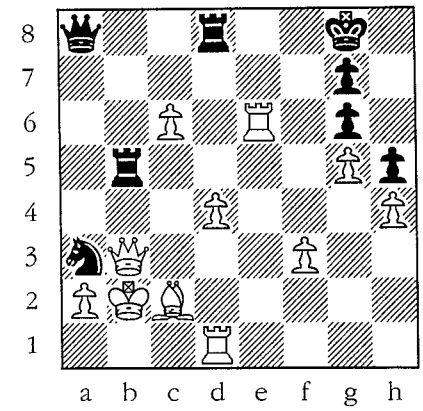


Diagram 16
Another win slips away!

I wanted to play 32 Qxe6+ here, but started to panic about a knight check on c3 after 32...Kh8. In fact 33 Rd3! would have been good, as 33...Na3+?? loses to 34 Rxa3 Rxa3 35 Qxg6.

32 Rxe6? Na3+ 33 Kxb2 Rb5 (Diagram 16)

I had seen that my queen was lost here, but reasoned that my passed pawns would be very strong. However, in all the excitement I missed that after 34 c7! Rxb3+ 35 Bxb3 Black is in dire straits as 36 Ra6+ is threatened as well as 36 cxd8+.

34 Re8+?? Kh7 35 Rxd8 Qxd8 36 Kxa3 Qd6+ 37 Kb2 Qxc6 38 d5 Rxb3+ 39 axb3 Qd6 40 Be4 Kg8

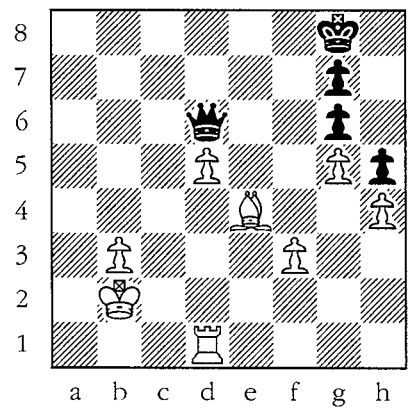


Diagram 17
A dynamic material imbalance

NOTE: It is hard to keep a clear head when you have a chance to beat a stronger player.

With rook, bishop and two pawns for the queen White should be a little better here. One sensible idea is to move the king towards the shelter of the kingside pawns with 41 Kc3!? Qc5+ 42 Kd3 Qb5+ 43 Kd2 Qxb3 44 d6 Kf7 45 Ke2, but it is hard to keep your composure straight after a time scramble.

41 Rc1 Kf7 42 Rc6 Qh2+ 43 Ka3 Qxh4 (Diagram 18)

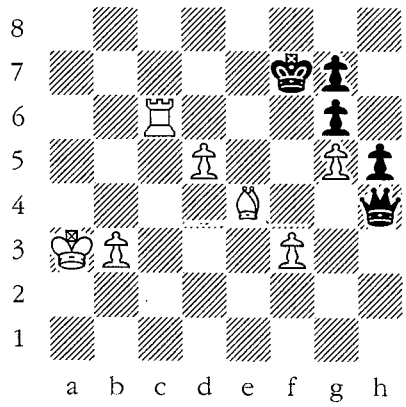


Diagram 18
The complications continue

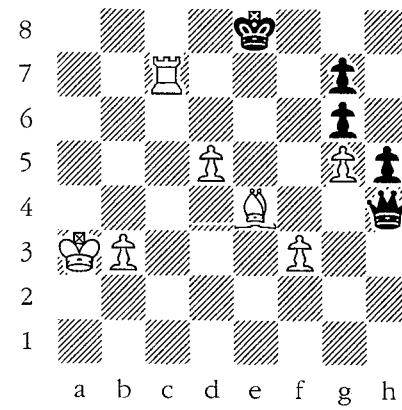


Diagram 19
White scrambles a draw

44 Rc7+

The king and pawn endgame after 44 Re6 Qxg5 45 Bxg6+ Qxg6 46 Rxg6 Kxg6 47 Kb4 h4 (not 47...Kf6 48 Kc5 Ke7 49 Kc6 Kd8 50 b4 h4 51 b5 h3 52 b6 h2 53 b7 h1Q 54 b8Q+) 48 Kc5 h3 49 d6 h2 50 d7 h1Q 51 d8Q Qxf3 is only a draw.

44...Ke8 (Diagram 19) **45 d6!**

White must play actively. The craven 45 Rxg7 Qxg5 46 Rxg6 is risky due to 46...Qd2, when Black threatens to simply advance his passed h-pawn.

45...Qxg5

45...Qf4 should also be met by 46 Bc6+! rather than 46 Bxg6+? Kd8 47 Rxg7 Qxd6+ 48 b4 Qa6+ 49 Kb3 Qe6+ 50 Ka4 (50 Ka3 Qe3+ 51 Ka4 Qxg5 is the same thing) 50...Qa2+ 51 Kb5 Qd5+ 52 Ka4 Qxg5.

46 Bc6+ Kd8 47 Rd7+ Kc8 48 Rc7+ Kd8 49 Rd7+ Kc8 50 Rc7+ ½–½

So the 'rematch' ultimately ended in a draw. I hope these games have served to illustrate that anything can happen when the game gets really complicated. You should always try to seek such positions when you are up against a much stronger opponent. However, when you are the higher-rated player it is far better for your piece of mind to avoid messy positions and trust that your better chess understanding will shine through in the end.

The next section demonstrates one way in which a stronger player can utilise such an approach.

Pawns cannot move Backwards!

From time to time you will encounter a situation in which you have a choice between 'hanging tough' and just playing sensible, solid moves and 'going for it' with a piece attack or pawn storm. At this point you need to weigh up the situation, asking yourself such as questions as: 'If I play solidly will my opponent be able to comfortably improve his position and establish an advantage?' and 'What are the chances of my attack being successful?' However, if you are considering a pawn storm it is also important to consider another question: 'If I advance my pawns and my attack is rebuffed, will my position be fatally weakened?' Whereas if you launch an unsuccessful piece attack and it gets nowhere you may possibly be able to retreat your pieces without incurring any weaknesses, unsuccessful pawn attacks often have fatal consequences. The problem is that once you advance a pawn, it cannot go backwards. The pawn itself may become weak, or the unprotected squares it leaves behind may become footholds into your position. Take a look at the next example:

□ Bouaziz ■ Ribli
Riga Interzonal 1979

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1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be2 e6 7 0–0 Be7 8 f4 0–0 9 Kh1 Qc7 10 a4 Nc6 11 Nb3 b6 12 Bf3 Bb7 13 Qe1 Rac8 14 Be3 Rfe8 15 Rc1

White has played rather inanely in response to his opponent's so-called 'Hedgehog' set-up. Although Black's pieces are all curled up on the back three ranks, they are well co-ordinated and it has hard to see how White can make any inroads into the black position. Meanwhile, Black has long-term pressure on the queenside, using the open c-file.

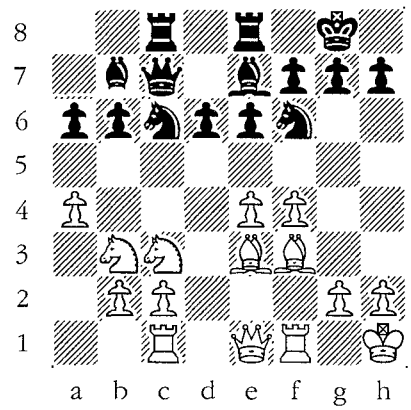


Diagram 20
Black has an ideal 'hedgehog' set-up

15...Nd7!

A thematic move in these kinds of position. The knight heads for the queenside and takes the sting out of a potential g2-g4-g5 pawn thrust by his opponent. It also possible that the dark-squared bishop may be able to play an active role in the game on the long diagonal, either on f6 or on g7 (after ...Bf8 and ...g7-g6).

16 g4?

The black knight has already fled, so this move merely clutches thin air and White soon has cause to regret having weakened himself. A solid move such as 16 Qd2, 16 Qf2 or 16 Qg3 would have been preferable. Black would still have had a perfectly respectable position, but White should be able to keep things under control.

16...Na5! 17 Nxa5 bxa5 (Diagram 21)

At first sight it seems odd that Black would voluntarily saddle himself with doubled pawns. However, here he has a concrete plan in mind, based on exploiting the long light-squared diago-

nal and the open a- and b-files.

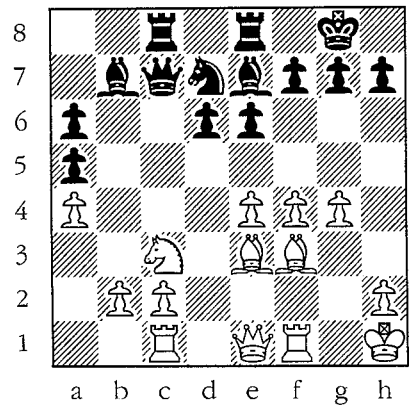


Diagram 21
The doubled a-pawns are irrelevant

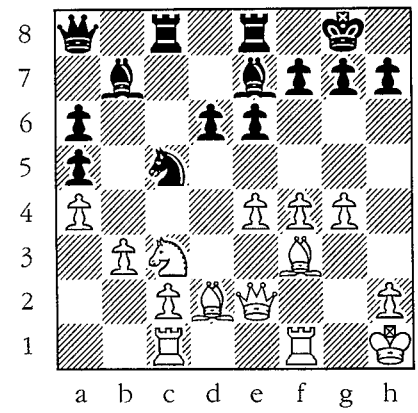


Diagram 22
White would love to play g4-g2!

18 Bd2

White's dreams of an attack with his g-pawn are over and he is forced back on to the defensive.

18...Nc5

Threatening to play ...Bf6 at some point, when the white knight on c3, which is currently holding White's position together, can be removed at will.

19 b3 Qb8!

There is no rush to play ...Bf6. First Black decides to set up a battery on the long diagonal, leading down to the white king on h1.

20 Qe2 Qa8 (Diagram 22)

By now White must have been wishing that g4-g2 was a legal move!

21 g5

Since the g-pawn cannot move backwards, White may as well use it to prevent ...Bf6.

21...d5!

Continuing the theme of opening the h1-a8 diagonal. Here 22 e5 is met by 22..d4.

22 exd5 exd5 23 Qg2 Ne4! 24 Nb1

A sad retreat, but both 24 Nd1 and 24 Na2 can be met by 24...Ba3! when White has grave problems with his c-pawn.

24...Nxd2 25 Qxd2

25 Nxd2 Ba3 is horrible, so White is forced to leave the knight stranded on its starting square.

25...Bb4 26 c3?

26 Qg2 Re3 was also very unappetising, but at least it would avoided Black's next move.

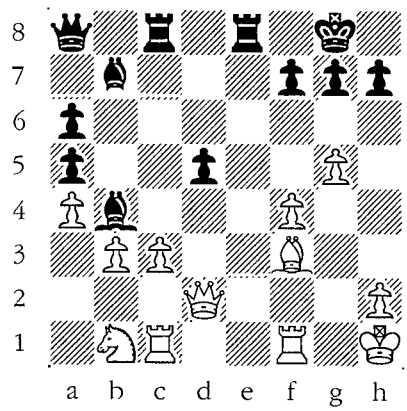


Diagram 23
Black takes over the long diagonal

26...d4!

Opening the long diagonal with grave consequences for White.

27 cxb4 Bxf3+ 28 Kg1

If only that g-pawn were still on g2!

28...Re2 29 Rxf3 Rxd2 30 Rxc8+ Qxc8 31 Nxd2 Qc1+ 32 Nf1 axb4 33 Kg2 Qc2+ 34 Kg3 Kf8 0–1

A beautifully played game by Ribli, who managed to take control of the game without allowing his opponent a single opportunity for active counterplay. There was an air of inevitability about the game right from the moment that White weakened his king's pawn cover with that reckless 16 g4? move.

Here is another example in which a couple of reckless pawn

moves come back to haunt White.

□ Bates ■ Kinsman
Thames Valley League 1994/95

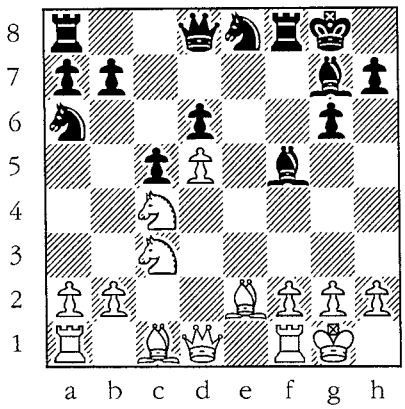


Diagram 24
A standard position from the Modern Benoni

This is a known position from the Modern Benoni Defence. Normally White simply develops his last minor piece with 13 Bf4, but my opponent started to throw his pawns forward with

13 f4?! Rb8

Threatening to break out with ...b7-b5. Note that if White counters with 14 a4 then the black knight can hop into an ideal outpost with 14...Nb4.

14 g4?!

WARNING: Don't rush forward with your pawns without good reason.

14...Bd7 15 Ne4 b5! 16 Ne3

The knight must retreat as 16 Ncxd6 loses a piece after 16...Nxd6 17 Nxd6 Qe7.

16...Qe7 17 Nc3 b4 18 Nb1

A truly ignominious retreat.

18...Bd4

18...Bxb2! is perhaps more accurate, but Black has a huge posi-

tion in any case.

19 Qd2 Nec7 20 Kg2 Rbe8 21 Rf3

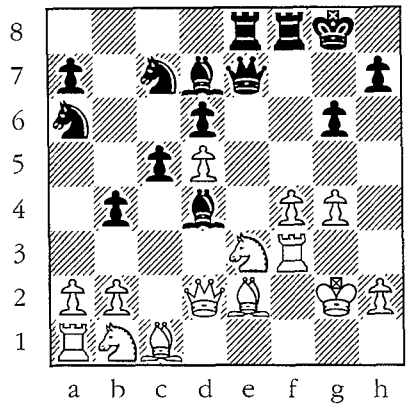


Diagram 25
White pays the price for his pawn advances

21...Bxg4!

The earlier advance of the g-pawn doesn't look quite so good!

22 Nxg4 Qxe2+ 23 Qxe2 Rxe2+ 24 Kf1 Rxb2 25 Nh6+ 0–1

Opposite-Coloured Bishops are far from Drawish

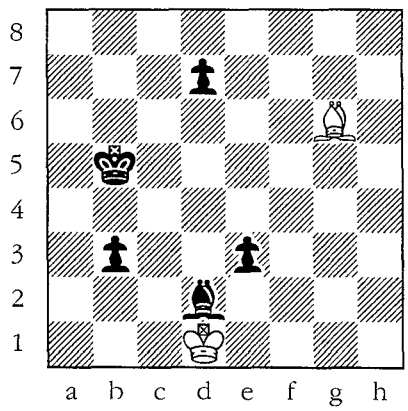


Diagram 26
Can Black win?

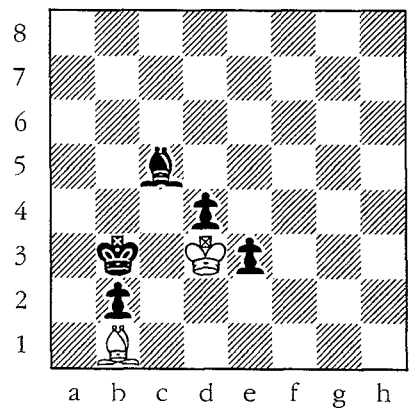


Diagram 27
White has a complete blockade

From an early age we are taught that endgames with opposite-coloured bishops are very drawish. Sometimes one player or

the other can be two or even three pawns up and is still unable to force a win, as in the 1950 study by the Soviet chess composer Vitaly Chekhover (Diagram 26).

Three pawns up, you would assume that a Black win would be a formality. However, Chekhover shows that it is possible for White to lure the black pawns forward and blockade them.

1 Be8! Kc6

After the pawn sacrifice 1...Kb4 2 Bxd7 Ka3 3 Bf5 (to meet 3...b2 with 4 Bb1!) 3...Kb2 4 Be6! Ka2 5 Bf7 Ka3 6 Bg6 Black goes round in circles.

2 Ke2!

Not 2 Bf7?? d5 and Black is winning.

2...Bc1 3 Kd1 Bb2 4 Ke2 Bd4 5 Kd1 Kd6

Black has improved the position of his bishop, but in order to advance d-pawn he must move the king out of the pin. Instead 5...Kc7 6 Bf7! b2 7 Bg6 is basically the same thing.

6 Bf7!

White seizes his chance to force another pawn forward.

6...b2 7 Bg6 Kc5 8 Ke2 d5 9 Bf5 Kb4 10 Bg6 Ka3 11 Bb1!

The blockade is now firmly in place.

11...Kb3 12 Kd1 Kc3 13 Ke2 Bc5 14 Kd1 d4 15 Ke2 Kb3 16 Kd3 (Diagram 27)

There is no way for Black to make progress.

Although in the endgame, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops makes the position more drawish, in the middlegame the reverse is true. Very often one player is able to launch a dangerous attack using his bishop, as his opponent has no means of countering threats on the squares of that colour.

□ Adams ■ Djurhuus
Oakham 1992

In Diagram 28 White has won a pawn. However, the extra pawn is almost irrelevant – the key element is the presence of opposite-coloured bishops.

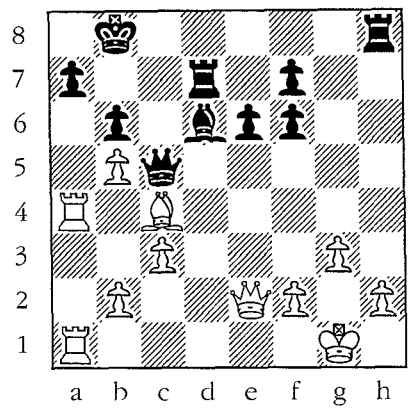


Diagram 28
The opposite-coloured bishops help White's attack

22 Qf3!

Threatening to swing the bishop back to f1 and then to g2 to construct a devastating attack down the g2-a8 diagonal.

22...Rh5 23 Bd3!

Notice how White is in no hurry. The careless 23 Bf1 Qd5! 24 Qxf6 Bc5 would have needlessly granted Black some counter-play.

23...Qd5 24 Be4 Qe5 25 Bc6 Rc7 (Diagram 29)

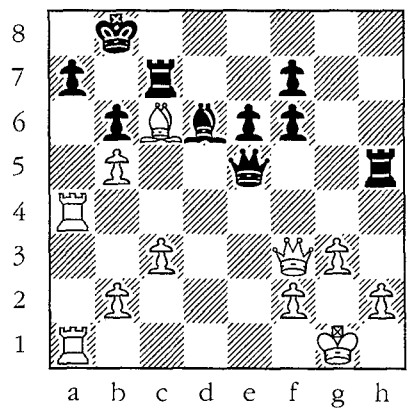


Diagram 29
White has complete control

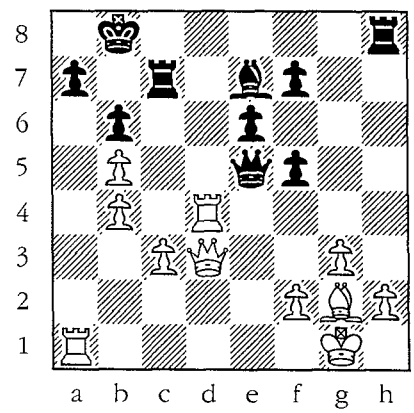


Diagram 30
The bishop makes its presence felt

Thus far all of Black's moves have been practically forced.

White now decides that the time has come to take control of the open d-file.

26 Rd4! Rh8 27 b4!

Merely re-emphasising the hopelessness of Black's task.

27...Be7 28 Qd3 f5 29 Bg2! 1-0 (Diagram 30)

White is finally ready to complete his battery down the long diagonal with 30 Qf3.

□ Bjerke ■ Tisdall
Gausdal 1996

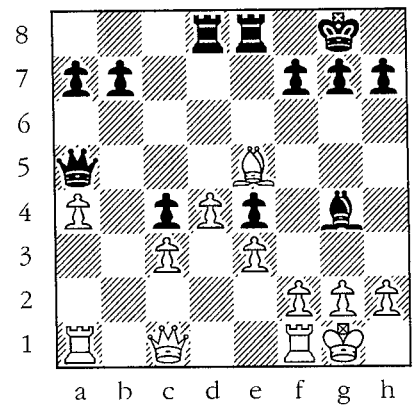


Diagram 31
Who stands better?

At first glance this position might appear to be relatively equal. However, in fact Black has a number of positional trumps: more space, an isolated white pawn on a4 to attack and a very powerful bishop after

19...Be2!

It is notable that Black avoids 19...f6? to kick away the white bishop, as this would block the route of his major pieces to the kingside.

20 Re1 Bd3

Here the black bishop dominates the white rooks. White's bishop on e5 looks powerful, but in fact it is impotent, cut off from the rest of the white army. Indeed, White now decides to

retreat the bishop in view of a possible exchange sacrifice on e5 in the near future.

21 Bg3 Rd5 22 Qa3 (Diagram 32)

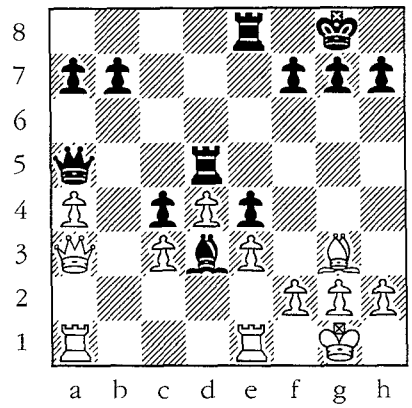


Diagram 32
The black bishop is like an octopus

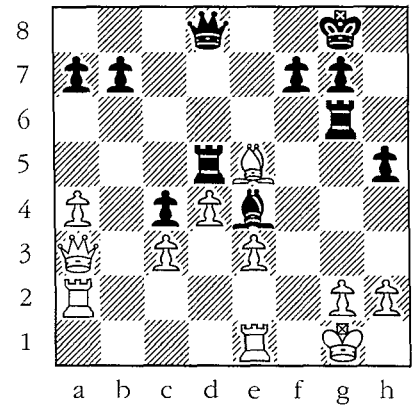


Diagram 33
Black uses his rooks in the attack

In the space of only a few moves Black has assumed complete control of the position. His next move is particularly unpleasant for his opponent, both removing any back-rank mate problems and intending to soften up the white kingside at some point with ...h5-h4-h3.

22...h5! 23 Ra2 Re6 24 f3 Qd8!

Now Black is ready to advance the h-pawn and his opponent feels obliged to resolve matters in the centre. However, this only adds to the scope of Black's monster bishop.

25 fxe4 Bxe4 26 Be5 Rg6 (Diagram 33)

The rook swings across, building up the kingside barrage. Now 27 Ree2?? would be a blunder because of 27...Rxe5 28 dxe5 Qd1+ and mate to follow.

27 Qc1 h4 28 Rf1

It might have been better to block the advance of the h-pawn with 28 h3, so that the white bishop can always retreat to h2 if necessary. The game move commits White to simply await his fate.

28...Qg5 29 Rff2 (Diagram 34)

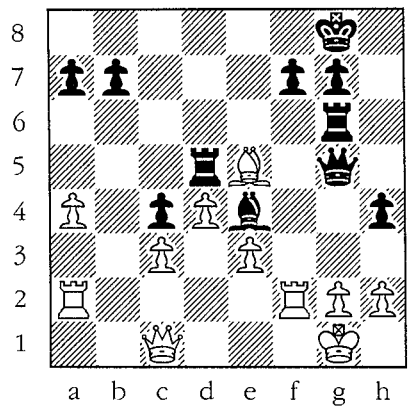


Diagram 34
White is almost paralysed

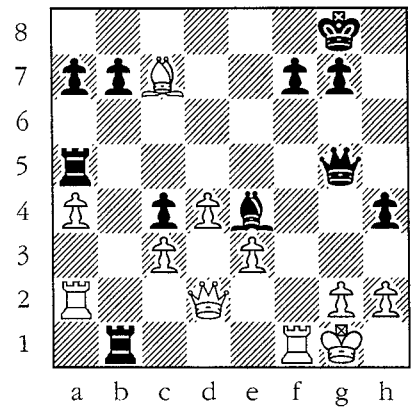


Diagram 35
Time for the final breakthrough

29...Ra5!

Just as in the previous example, there is no need to hurry. Black has time to improve the position of his least well-placed piece before taking further action. Unless he is very careful, at some point White may run into the idea of ...Rxa4 followed by ...Bxg2.

30 Qd2 Rb6!

There is no immediate way through on the kingside, but the rook has another route into the white position. Black makes very impressive use of the ranks in this game, swinging his rooks from one side of the board to the other in front of his pawns.

31 Bc7

31 h3 Rxe5!! 32 dxe5 Bxg2! 33 Rxg2 Rb1+ leads to mate.

31...Rb1+ 32 Rf1 (Diagram 35) **32...Bxg2!**

Such is Black's domination that it is hardly surprising that the sacrifice works.

33 Qxg2

Tisdall points out that 33 Rxb1 Be4+ 34 Kf1 Rf5+ 35 Bf4 Bxb1 36 Ra1 Be4! is also hopeless for White.

33...Qxe3+

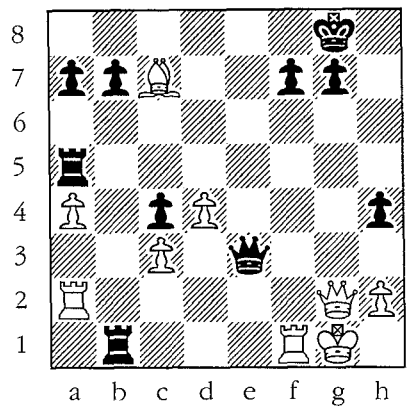


Diagram 36
White has no satisfactory defence

34 Raf2

34 Qf2 Rg5+ 35 Bg3 Rxf1+ 36 Kxf1 Qd3+ and 34 Kh1 h3 35 Qf2 Rf5!! 36 Qxf5 Qe4+ 27 Qxe4 Rxf1 mate (Tisdall) also win.

34...Rg5

The white queen is lost. He manages to struggle on until the time control but then gives up the ghost.

35 Rxb1 Rxg2+ 36 Kxg2 Qe4+ 37 Kh3 Qxb1 38 Kxh4 Qe1 39 Bg3 Qxc3 40 Be5 f6 0–1

Ironically, the game ends with the move that Black avoided for so long. Now, however, it wins material!



TIP: Opposite-coloured bishops are often deadly in the middlegame.

Another Painful Lesson

A problem of practical play is that, when you reach a position you know is a draw, there is a tendency to relax, imagining that the game will quickly be over. The next game was indeed over very quickly, but not quite in the way I had envisaged!

□ Kosten ■ Kinsman
Four Nations League, West Bromwich 1996

The presence of opposite-coloured bishops ensures that the po-

sition is totally drawn. Well, actually not quite 'totally'! Instead of, for example 27...Qc1+ 28 Kh2 Be3, 27...Be3+ 28 Kh2 Qf8, or even 27...Qc3, I came up with...

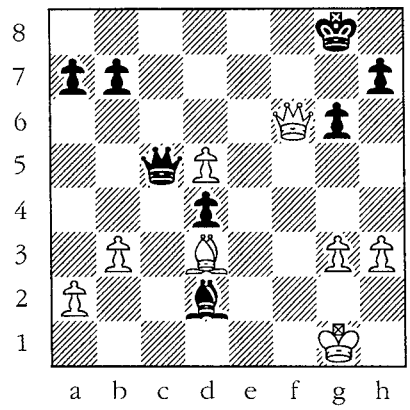


Diagram 37
A dead draw?

27...Bb4??

I had reasoned that all I had to do was place my queen back to d6 and that would be that, but after...

28 d6!

Black is totally lost, as 28...Qxd6 loses to 29 Bc4+.

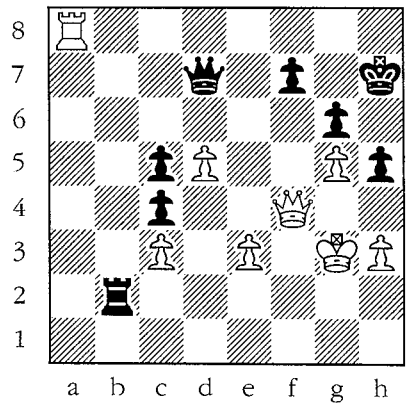
28...Qc1+ 29 Bf1 d3 30 d7 1–0

30 Qd8+ Kf7 31 Qc7+ was even more decisive, but the game move was enough to force resignation. Black runs out of checks after 30...Qe3+ 31 Kh2 Qd2+ 32 Bg2.

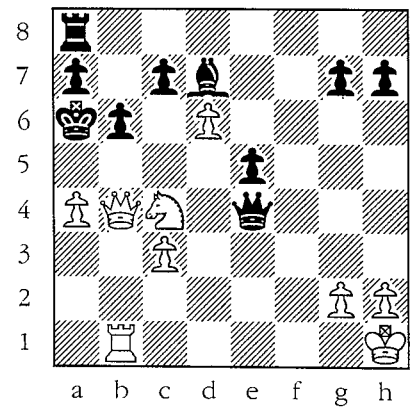


TIP: 'Lack of patience is probably the most common reason for losing a game, or drawing games that should have been won.' Grandmaster Bent Larsen

Try it Yourself



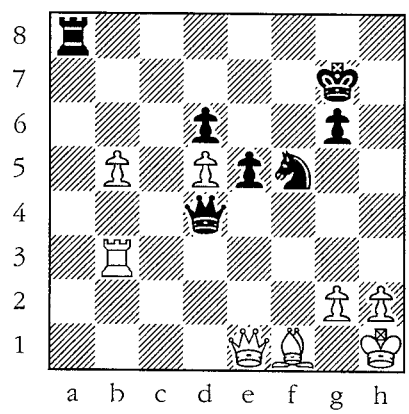
Exercise 1



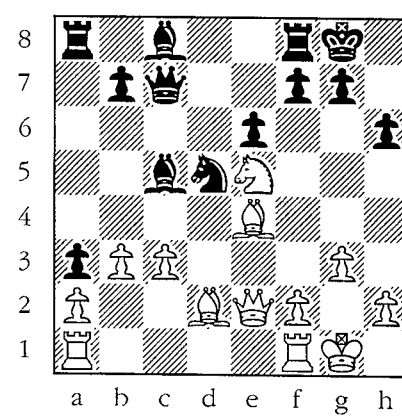
Exercise 2

Exercise 1: Should White play 42 Qf6 or 42 Qe5 here?

Exercise 2: What would you play here for Black?



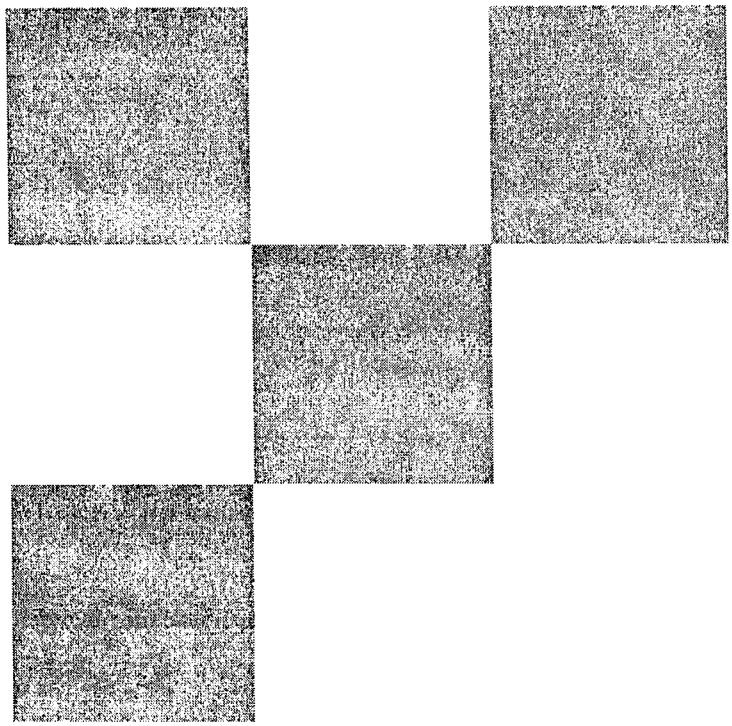
Exercise 1



Exercise 1

Exercise 3: Is it safe to play 37 b6 here?

Exercise 4: Imagine that you are playing Black against the World Champion, Garry Kasparov, in this position. You could play a solid move such as 21...Rd8, but he may very well find a way to outplay you in the end. Can you see a way to confuse the issue and perhaps throw him off track?



Summary

Even very strong players can lose the plot if things don't go the way they expect.

If all else fails – randomise!

Computers sometimes find the most bizarre ideas that one could never spot over the board.

It is hard to keep a clear head when you have a chance to beat a stronger player.

Don't rush forward with your pawns without good reason.

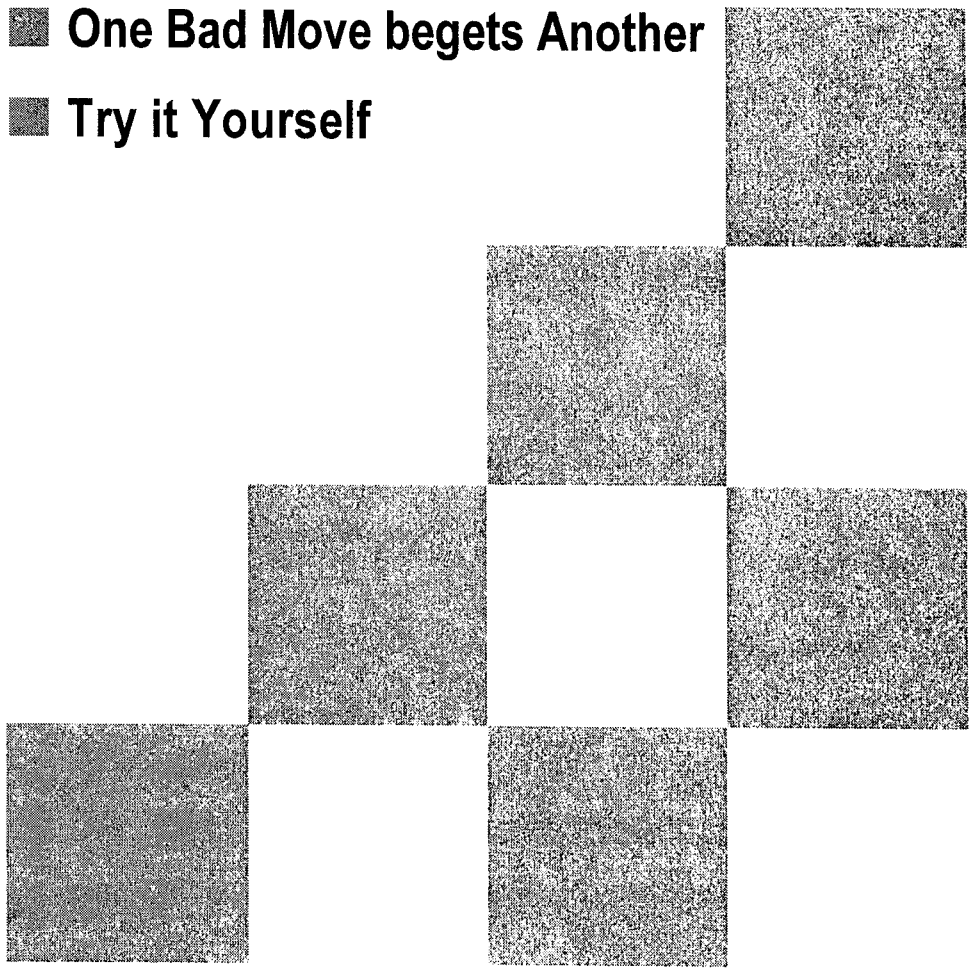
Opposite-coloured bishops are often deadly in the middlegame.

Be patient!

Chapter Four

Avoiding Blunders

- Introducing 'Mr Blunderbuss'
- It can happen to the Best of Us
- Don't be too Clever
- One Bad Move begets Another
- Try it Yourself



Introducing 'Mr Blunderbuss'

In his classic book *Think Like a Grandmaster*, Alexander Kotov recommends a unique approach for avoiding the kind of horrific mistakes that can lose you the game on the spot. He suggests that once you have decided which move you intend to play, you should pause and place yourself in the shoes of a 'patzer', who we shall call 'Mr Blunderbuss', asking yourself the question: 'What would Mr Blunderbuss do here?' If you discover that the move you were about to play coincides with that of Mr Blunderbuss, then it is probably a good idea to try something else instead!



NOTE: The word *'Blunderbuss'* – definition: *a clumsy, unsubtle person!*

It can happen to the Best of Us!

This advice may seem somewhat trivial, but I would imagine that Vasilly Ivanchuk was probably wishing that he had consulted Mr Blunderbuss before making the following move:

□ Nisipeanu ■ Ivanchuk
FIDE World Championship, Las Vegas 1999

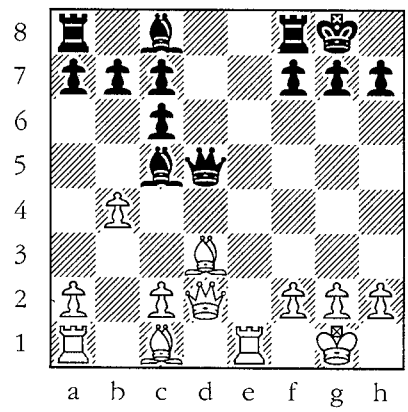


Diagram 1
Where should the bishop go?

Here either 13...Bd6, 13...Bb6 or 13...Bd4 suggests itself. However, Ivanchuk decided to play

13...Bxf2+??

presumably expecting 14 Kxf2 Qd4+, when Black picks up the stray rook on a1. However, after

14 Qxf2 1–0

his World Championship dreams were in tatters.

It is hard to imagine how such a strong player as Ivanchuk can make an oversight of this monumental nature. What makes it even more bizarre, is that he must have believed that his opponent had blundered to allow him to win the rook on a1! Perhaps in his mind's eye the white queen stood on d1 rather than the 'unnatural' d2-square? In any case, if ever there was a case for using the Mr Blunderbuss concept in your own games, then this is surely it!

Here is another occasion on which a world-class player makes a world-class oversight.

□ Leko ■ Piket
Tilburg 1997

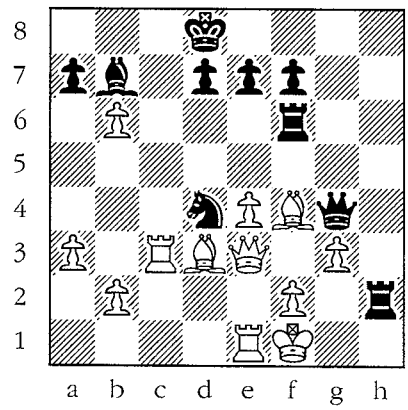


Diagram 2
Resigning gets you nowhere!

White was probably on the verge of resigning as he has no defence to Black's attack. However, resigning doesn't get you any points so he decided that he might as well capture the knight.

29 Qxd4

Now 29...Rxf4! 30 Kg1 Qh3 really would have forced Leko to

resign, but Piket opted for

29...Qf3?? 30 Qxd7+ 1–0

After 30...Kxd7 31 Rxf3 White regains the queen.

In his book Kotov suggests an interesting remedy for avoiding blunders – writing your move down before you play it and only then looking at the move through the eyes of Mr Blunderbuss. When I started playing chess in the 1970s, this approach was very popular and it is still used by some grandmasters, notably Britain's Tony Miles. The disadvantage of writing down your moves first is that under the current regulations you are not allowed to cover up your score-sheet, which means that your opponent can see your intended move before you play it on the board. In my view this gives your opponent some precious extra time on every move, but if you feel that you will make fewer blunders by adopting this approach then I would not discourage you from experimenting with it.



NOTE: 'Chess is a game of bad moves.' Grandmaster Andrew Soltis

Don't be too Clever!

Although there is always scope for blunders of the kind in which the brain becomes totally disengaged for a few moments, the fact remains that most blunders can actually be explained quite easily. The most common of these, is of course, time-trouble, which we shall discuss in a later chapter. However, there is also another major cause of blunders: being too clever for your own good. We have all had experiences where we try and trick our opponents, only to find that the trick rebounds on us! Take a look at the following example.

□ Kasparov ■ Anand
Dortmund 1992

In Diagram 3 Kasparov was threatening to take control of the centre with 14 e4. Anand relied with the imaginative

13...Nd5!?

and after

14 Na2

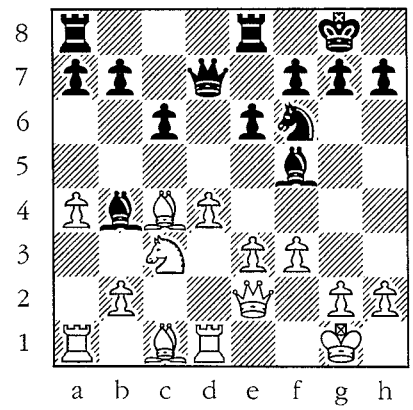


Diagram 3
Black has a solid position.

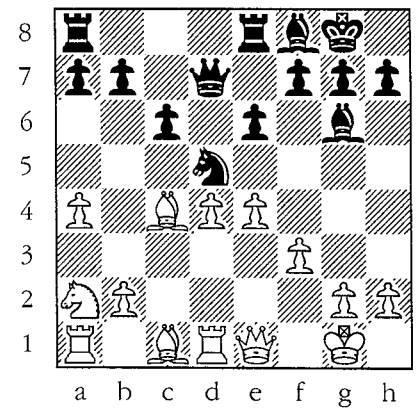


Diagram 4
Don't forget that knight!

he calmly played

14...Bf8

with the idea that after

15 e4 Bg6

After 16 exd5 exd5 Black regains his piece due to the discovered attack on the queen. Here White played

16 Qe1 (Diagram 4)

and Black responded

16...f5?? 17 exd5 1–0

Now after 17 exd5 the bishop can calmly drop back to e2. Of course, Anand should have played something like 16...Nb6 17 Bb3 Rad8, when White has a space advantage but the game goes on. His problems can be traced to the fact that he must have thought he was being clever by allowing White to fork two pieces with 15 e4. After that he lost his sense of danger, imagining that the tactics would still work for him a move later.

Here is a similar example from my own experience.

□ Singh ■ Kinsman
London 1989

In Diagram 5 White stands lightly better. However, his passed pawn on e5 is firmly blockaded and Black has long-term

chances of making something of his queenside pawn majority. I took advantage of the exposed location of the white bishop with

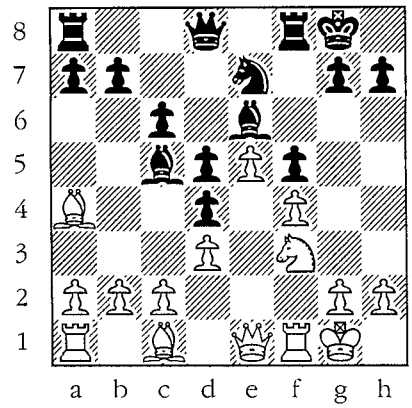


Diagram 5
Black has a playable game.

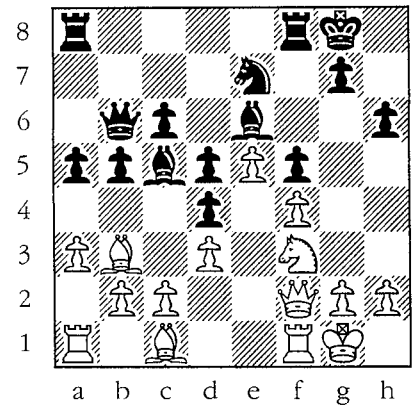


Diagram 6
White has a surprising move

12...a5!

Threatening ...b7-b5 and ...a5-a4.

13 a3 b5 14 Bb3

Now I was feeling reasonably happy. All that remains is to put a stop to any funny business on the kingside with

14...h6??

Simply 14...Bb6 was okay, to meet 15 Ng5 with 15...Qd7 and 15 Qh4 with 15...h6.

15 Qf2

So what? I can simply defend that pawn...

15...Qb6 (Diagram 6) **16 c3!**

Ouch! If 16...dxc3 then 17 d4 traps the bishop and otherwise White wins the d-pawn. So much for my 'clever' play!

Here is another occasion on which I was punished for being 'too big for my boots'!

□ McMahon ■ Kinsman
Sheffield 1996

In Diagram 7 Black's slightly cramped pieces are counterbal-

anced by his control of the open e-file and the long diagonal. Something like 19...Re7 20 Re3 Rxe3 21 Qxe3 Re8 was called for, with balanced chances, but I saw the opportunity to exploit the loose situation of the white rooks with

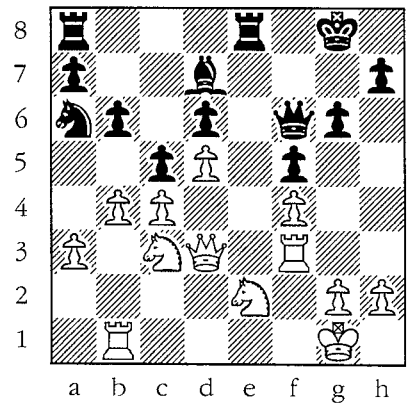


Diagram 7
Black gets carried away with himself

19...Re4??

reasoning that the rook was immune from capture: 20 Nxe4 fxe4 21 Qxe4 Bf5 picks up the rook on b1. However, my 'clever' tactical play was refuted by

20 Nxe4 fxe4 21 Qc3!

Now 21...exf3 is impossible as the queen is en prise on f6. I was forced to resort to

21...Qxc3 22 Rxc3 Nc7

and the endgame was hopelessly lost.



TIP: Always double-check 'clever' moves.

□ Aagaard ■ Hillarp Persson
Hampstead 1998

In Diagram 8 White was probably daydreaming about an attack down the h-file. However, instead of the neutral 18 g4! he decided to take time out to play

18 0-0-0??

and was unpleasantly surprised by

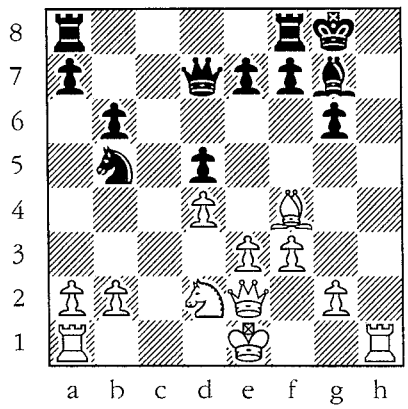


Diagram 8
Time to castle queenside?

18...Qf5 0–1

There is no real defence to the rook check on the c-file.

Kotov associates errors such as those we have just seen to a phenomenon he calls 'dizziness due to success'. After a few good moves it is terribly easy to become full of self-admiration – at which point all sense of objectivity is lost and the risk of a blunder is greatly enhanced.



TIP: Be careful of becoming too pleased with yourself. Don't get 'dizzy' – get 'busy'!

One Bad Move begets Another

The problem with making bad moves, is that not only do they damage your position, but they also encourage you to follow up with yet more bad moves. After realising that you have played a bad move, it is easy to become distracted and start thinking what you should have done last move instead of what you should be doing now!

Here is an example to show what I mean.

□ Kr.Georgiev ■ Epishin
Cutro 1999

In Diagram 9 White has played fairly insipidly in the opening moves, but there is nothing seriously wrong with his position.

He just needs to get his pieces out and the game will go on. However, for some reason White felt the need to undertake active operations.

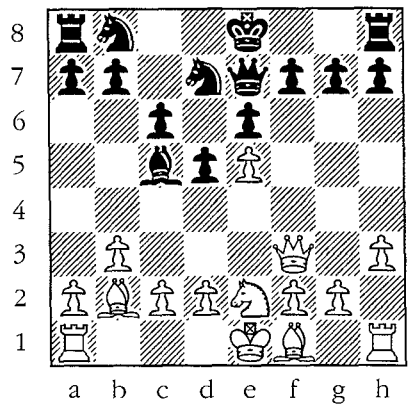


Diagram 9
Don't forget about development

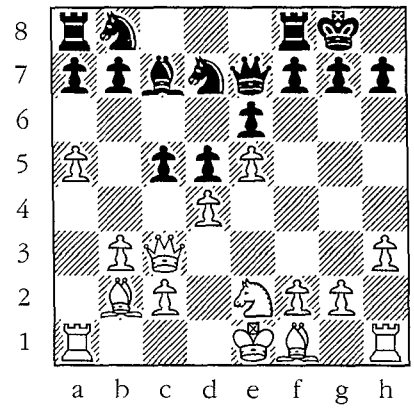


Diagram 10
White has totally lost the plot

10 a4?!

This would fall into the category of being an 'unnecessary pawn move'.

10...0–0 11 d4 Bb6 12 a5?!

White gets itchy fingers again and moves the pawn forward.

12...Bc7 13 Qc3?!

This really doesn't look like a good square for the queen. What happened to the idea of kingside development?

13...c5 (Diagram 10)

White should now support the e-pawn with 14 f4, but instead he decided to 'exploit' the pin by the queen on the bishop on c7 with

14 b4?? cxd4 0–1

After 15 Qxc7 Qxb4+ Black regains the bishop.

It is easy to lose the thread of a game in such a fashion. One minute you are just happily playing chess, and the next the world seems to close in around you and you lose all sense of objectivity.

□ Mestel ■ Kinsman
London 1994

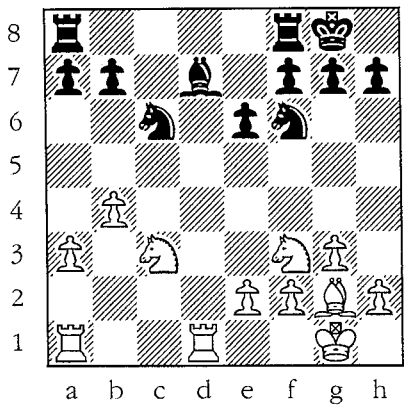


Diagram 11
Black slides to a quick defeat

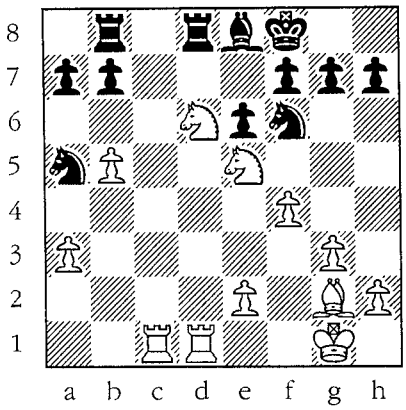


Diagram 12
It's all gone fuzzy for Black

In this queenless middlegame (Diagram 11) White has a very pleasant edge due to his space advantage and powerful bishop on the long diagonal. However, that is no excuse for Black to lose the game in only eight more moves!

16...Rac8?!

This rook does nothing here, and is obliged to move again after only two more moves. 16...Rad8 was preferable.

17 Nb5 Rfd8 18 Nd6 Rb8 19 b5 Na5?!

'Knights on the rim are dim' – 19...Ne7 was better

20 Ne5 Be8 21 Rac1 Kf8 22 f4 (Diagram 12)

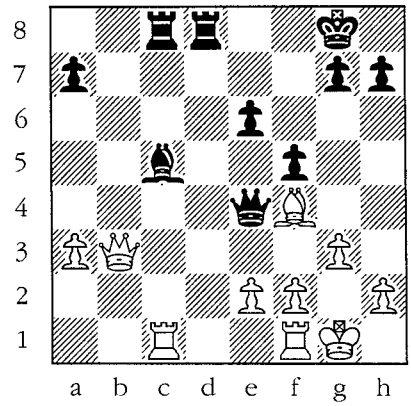
By now I was obviously completely 'on tilt', as the best I could come up with was

22...Nd7?? 23 Ndxf7 1–0

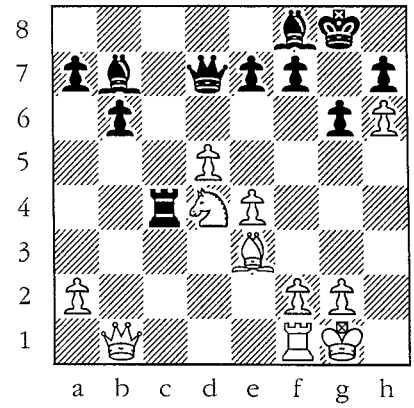


TIP: If you sense that you are losing the thread of the position, stop and have a long think so that you can regroup!

Try it Yourself



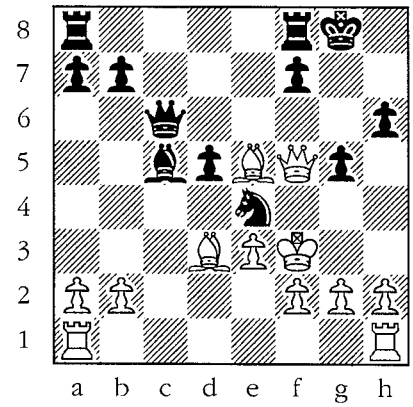
Exercise 1



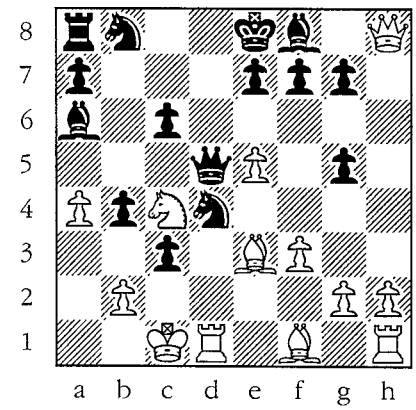
Exercise 2

Exercise 1: Is it safe to take the pawn with 24...Qxe2 here?

Exercise 2: Would you prefer 21...Bxh6 or 21...Qa4 here?



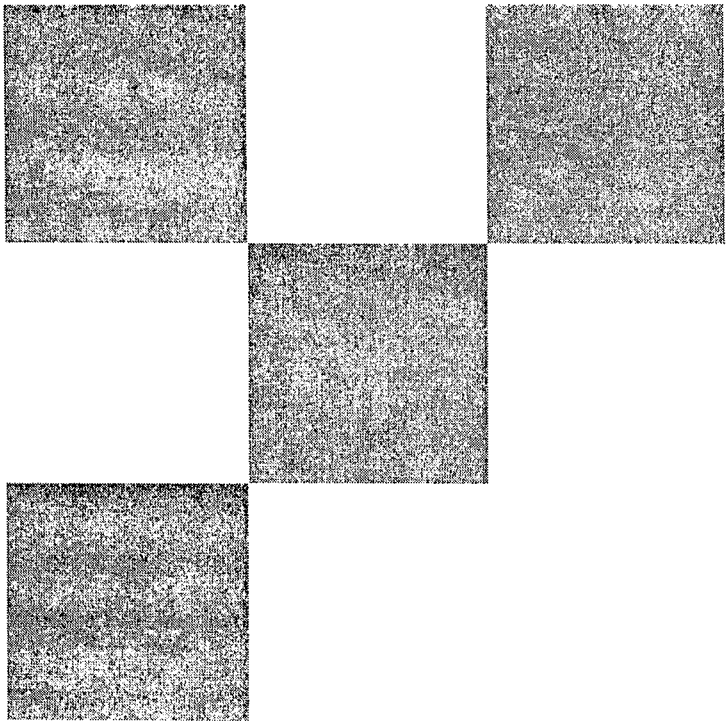
Exercise 3



Exercise 4

Exercise 3: What would you play here for White?

Exercise 4: Black has excellent compensation for the exchange in the form of his control of the centre and the offside white queen on h8. Can you see a good way for Black to continue?



Summary

Chess is a game of bad moves.

Always double-check 'clever' moves.

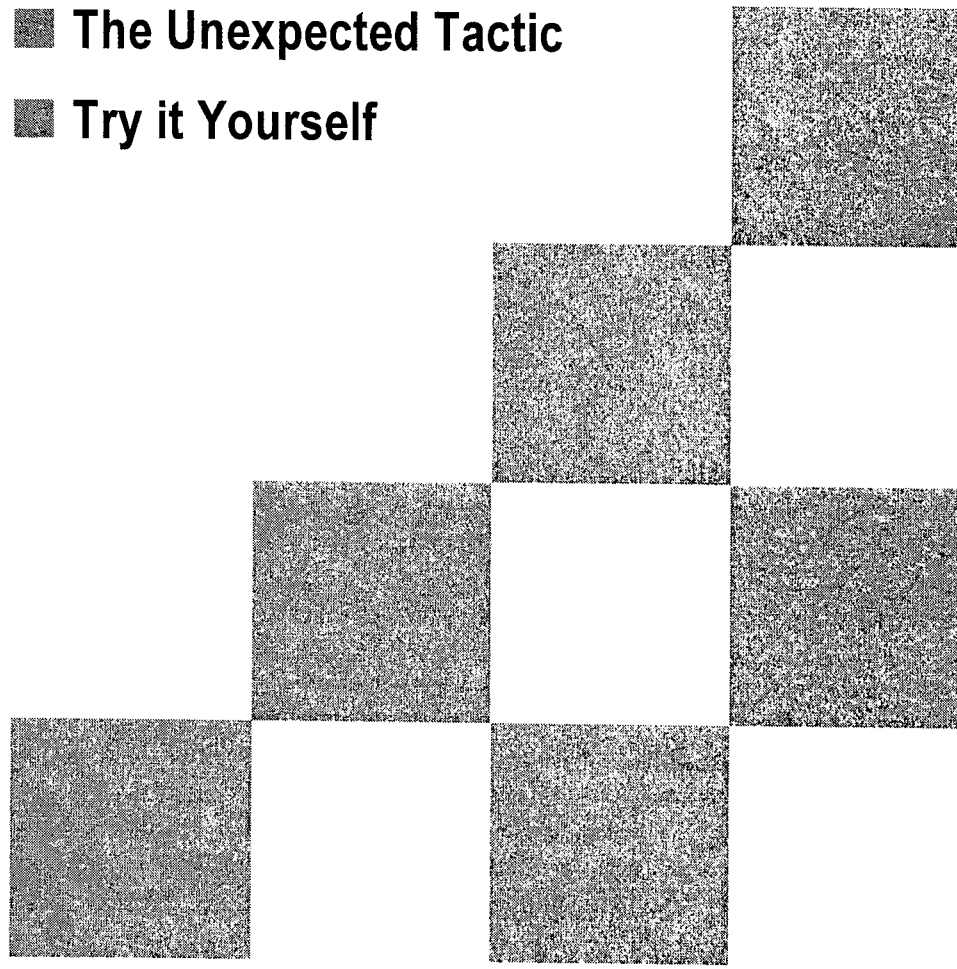
Don't get 'dizzy' – get 'busy'!

If you sense that you are losing the thread of the position, stop and have a long think so that you can regroup!

Chapter Five

Attacking Play

- The Greatest Attacking Player
- Boxing Clever
- (Almost) following in Tal's Footsteps
- The Unexpected Tactic
- Try it Yourself



The Greatest Attacking Player?

It is impossible to contemplate writing a chapter on attacking play without considering the influence of the former World Champion, Mikhail Tal. From the mid-1950s until his death in 1992, Tal's name was synonymous with brilliant sacrificial play. Whereas many grandmasters from the 'Soviet School of Chess' were content to take an easy life, drawing with their compatriots and grinding out wins against lesser opposition, Tal's seemingly 'devil-may-care' attitude was a breath of fresh air. Of the countless examples of his attacking genius that I could use, the following comes closest to capturing the spirit of his approach.

□ **Tal** ■ **Rantanen**
Tallinn 1979

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 e6 4 0–0 Nge7 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bxc6 Nxc6 7 d4 cxd4 8 Nxd4 d6 9 Re1 Bd7 10 Nxc6 bxc6

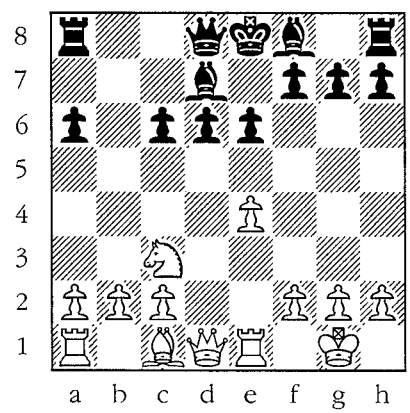


Diagram 1
White has a pleasant lead in development.

In this line of the 'Anti-Sicilian' or Rossolimo variation, White gives up the two bishops for a lead in development. In particular, the black king's bishop is still on its starting square and that gives White the opportunity to tie up his opponent a little.

11 Qg4

Nowadays 11 e5 is more popular, and only after 11...d5 then 12

Qg4.

11...e5 12 Qg3 f6?!

I prefer 12...Qf6 either here or on the previous move, intending ...Be7 and ...0-0.

13 Be3 Kf7 14 Rad1 Be7 (Diagram 2)

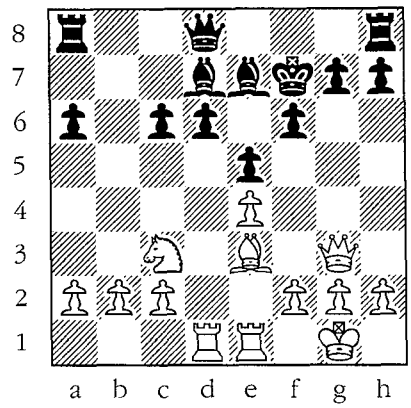


Diagram 2
White needs a plan

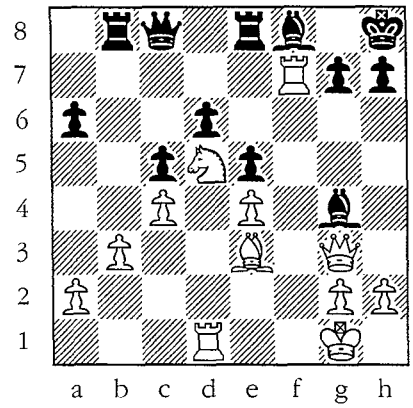


Diagram 3
Tal launches a firework display

Having developed all of his pieces harmoniously, White is somewhat better here. However, the obvious 15 f4 Rf8 16 fxe5 fxe5 17 Rf1+ Kg8 leads nowhere. Tal therefore embarks on a clever regrouping manoeuvre.

15 Na4! Rb8 16 b3 Re8 17 c4

Now the threat of c4-c5 persuades Black to concede the d5-square.

17...c5 18 Nc3

Having done its job on a4, the knight slips back to the centre, ready to drop in at d5 at a convenient moment.

18...Bf8 19 f4 Kg8 20 Rf1 Qc8 21 fxe5 fxe5 22 Nd5 Kh8 23 Rf7 Bg4 (Diagram 3)

In the space of only nine moves since the last diagram White has established a dominating position. And if you are still waiting for some real attacking play, remember that the following combination was made possible by White's excellent positional play earlier in the game! Most players would be con-

tent to try and win the endgame after the obvious 24 Rdf1 Bh5 25 R7f2 Qg4. However, Tal's make-up dictated that he would always be looking for sacrifices and here he found a great one:

24 Nf6!! gxf6

24...Bxd1 fails to 25 Qh4 h5 26 Qg5 with Qg6 and mate on h7 to follow, while 24...Qe6 25 Nxe8 Qxf7 26 Nxd6 Qd7 27 Nf7+! Qxf7 28 Qxg4 is also hopeless.

25 Qh4 Bg7 26 Bh6!!

All of White's pieces join the hunt.

26...Bxd1?

Although this is not the best defence, White is winning in every variation:

a) 26...Bxh6 27 Qxh6 and White forces mate on g7 or h7.

b) 26...Qe6 27 Bxg7+ Kg8 28 Bxf6 Kxf7 (or 28...Qxf7 29 Qxg4+ Qg6 30 Qxg6+ hxg6 31 Rxd6 with a big advantage in the endgame) 29 Qxh7+ Kxf6 30 Rf1+ Bf5 31 Rxf5+ Qxf5 32 exf5 and White should win comfortably.

c) 26...Rb7 27 Bxg7+ Kg8 28 Rxb7 Qxb7 29 Qxg4 Qxg7 30 Qxg7+ Kxg7 31 Rxd6 with an easy win.

d) 26...Rg8 27 Rxd6 Rb7 28 Bxg7+ Rxg7 29 Rxb7 Qxb7 30 Rd8+ Rg8 31 Rxg8+ Kxg8 32 Qxg4+ winning.

27 Bxg7+ Kg8

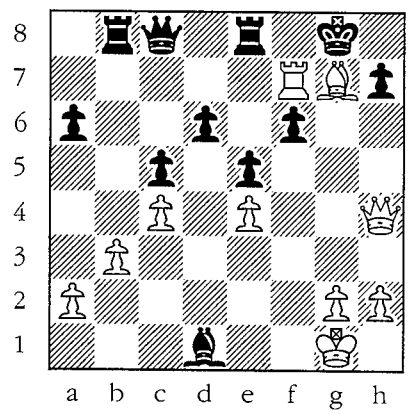


Diagram 4
Can you see the killing move?

Black was probably expecting 28 Qxf6 Rb7! However...

28 Bh8!! Kxf7 29 Qxf6+ Kg8 30 Qg7 mate 1–0

Most of us would just like to play one brilliant attacking game like that in our lives – Tal must have played hundreds. However, when I came to play through this game again, it wasn't the brilliant attack that struck me, so much as the seemingly effortless positional play earlier. From a situation in which not much appeared to be happening, Tal managed to establish a firm bind on the position – the final attack was only made possible by some excellent positional play. For all his obvious attacking talent, Tal didn't just throw his pieces towards the enemy king, in boxing parlance he set things up with the jab over the first twenty moves before going for the knock-out punch.



NOTE: Good positional play underlies all successful attacks.

(Almost) Following in Tal's Footsteps

In our next example the Bulgarian Grandmaster Veselin Topalov carries out the same idea almost to perfection.

□ Topalov ■ Svidler
Linares 1998

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bb5+ c6 8 Ba4 0–0 9 Ne2 c5 10 0–0 Nc6 11 Be3 Na5

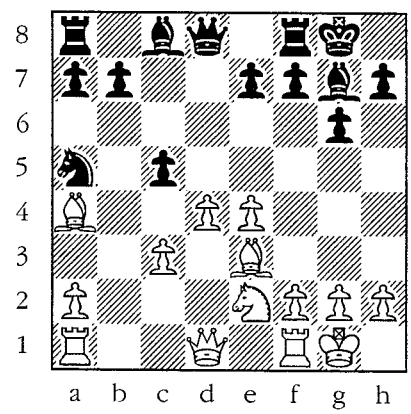


Diagram 5
A typical Grünfeld position

We have reached a standard type of position for the Grünfeld Defence, with the slight difference that the white bishop stands on the slightly unusual a4-square.

12 Rb1!

Rooks belong on open files and this one hampers the development of Black's kingside

12...Nc4 13 Bg5 h6 14 Bh4 b6?

A slightly careless-looking move. 14...a6 with the idea of ...b7-b5 would perhaps have been better.

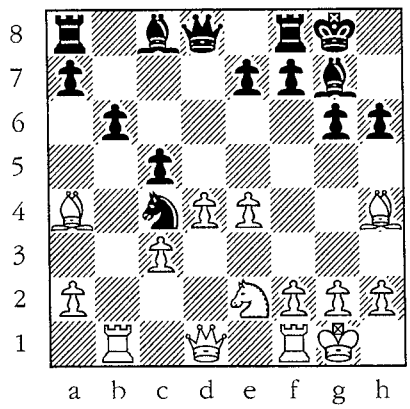


Diagram 6
White needs a plan

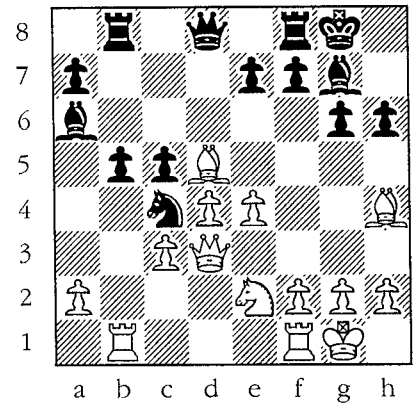


Diagram 7
White has seized the initiative

White has already developed most of his pieces to good squares. Now it is time for one of those mini-plans that we saw in the Tal game.



TIP: Try to keep an eye open for 'mini-plans'.

15 Bc6! Rb8 16 Bd5

The bishop manoeuvre has allowed White to establish a powerful grip on the centre. He now sets about trying to dislodge the black knight from the c4-square.

16...Ba6 17 Qd3 b5 (Diagram 7) **18 a4!?**

White could have grabbed a pawn with 18 dxc5, but Topalov probably didn't want to dissipate his initiative.

18...cxd4 19 Nxd4 Bxd4 20 cxd4

20 Qxd4 was also very nice for White. After the game continuation Black finally has to concede that his knight cannot remain on c4, and this enables White to seize control of the open c-file.

20...Nd6 21 Rfc1 Rb6 22 a5 Rb8 23 Rc6 Bb7

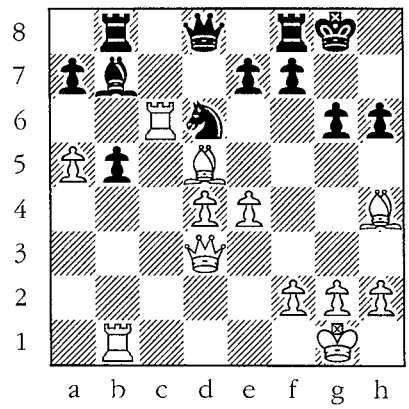


Diagram 8
Topalov uncorks a vicious attack

By virtue of some very fine positional play, White has established a powerful attacking position. The next few moves very much reflect the spirit of Mikhail Tal.

24 e5! Nf5

The rook cannot be captured as 24...Bxc6 25 Qxg6+ Kh8 26 Qxh6+ Kg8 27 Rb3 Nf5 28 Qg6+ Kh8 29 Bf6+ exf6 30 Rh3+ leads to mate.

25 Rxg6+ Kh8 26 Bxf7

With so many pieces en prise for both sides it is difficult to know what to do next. Svidler has suggested that 26 Bf6+! exf6 27 Bxf7 would have been a more accurate continuation, but it is hard to criticise White's choice.

26...Rxf7 27 e6?!

27 Bf6+! would have transposed to the previous note.

27...Rf8 28 Bg3

Threatening a deadly windmill with 29 Be5+ Kh7 30 Rg7+.

28...Kh7 29 Rg4 Rc8

29...h5! would have offered better resistance according to Svidler.

30 Be5 Rc5 31 Rg7+ Kh8

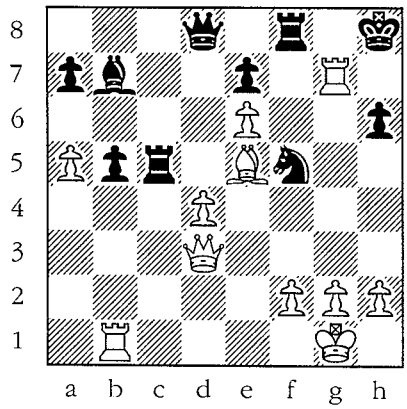


Diagram 9
The tactics continue

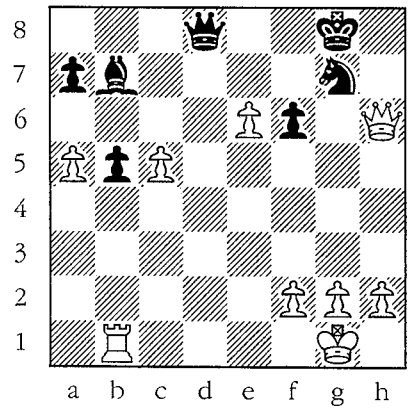


Diagram 10
White misses a big opportunity

32 dxc5!! Nxg7

The queen is immune from capture due to 32...Qxd3 33 Rg3+ Kh7 34 Rxd3.

33 Qg6 Rf6 34 Bxf6 exf6 35 Qxh6+ Kg8 (Diagram 10) **36 Re1?**

Topalov starts to spoil things. It is hard to imagine that Black could have survived after 36 Qg6 Bc6 37 h4.

36...Nxe6 37 h4 Ng7 38 Qf4 Qd5 39 Qg3?

The win finally escapes from Toplaov's grasp. After 39 Qg4 Qxc5 (not 39...Kf7 40 Rd1) 40 Qg6 Qf8 41 h5 Qf7 42 Qxf7+ Kxf7 43 h6 Nf5 44 h7 Kg7 45 g4 White wins one of the two black minor pieces.

39...Kf7! 40 Qc7+ Kg6 41 Qg3+ Kf7 42 Qc7+ ½–½

A real shame for Topalov, whose earlier play deserved a better fate.

Boxing Clever

In some ways chess can be compared to boxing. Over the first ten or twelve moves the two players are sparring with each

other, trying to feel out their opponents, without going for any of the heavy punches that may expose their own chin. However, once the opening is over, the gloves come off and each player starts trying to line up their opponent for a big shot, so that in the crucial phase in the ten or fifteen moves before the time control they can either deliver a knock-out punch or at least fatally weaken their opponent so that they can mop up in the endgame. The best attacking players are those who are not only able to deliver heavy blows when the opportunity presents itself, but are also skilled at creating those kinds of positions in which their tactical ability can shine through.

There are two ways in which to do this:

1. By playing openings which provide active scope for your pieces. If you always play the Caro-Kann and the main line Queen's Gambit Declined as Black, then it is no wonder that you find it hard to generate the right kind of position to launch a kingside attack! You should gear your opening repertoire towards the types of position in which you feel most comfortable. If you always feel most at home in positions in which you have an isolated queen's pawn positions but have plenty of scope for you pieces, then look towards openings such as the c3 Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 c3) and Panov-Botvinnik Attack (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4) as White and the Tarrasch French (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 c5) and Tarrasch Queen's Gambit (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5) as Black (see the section on IQP positions in Chapter 2), but if you always struggle in these kind of positions then steer clear of them like the plague! Even if the 'books' promise you a theoretical advantage, if you don't enjoy playing those positions then you will probably go astray. It is far better to find a line which gives you the kind of positions you play well, even if it is not the most currently fashionable variation.

2. Assuming you have followed the first point(!) and haven't spent too much time on the opening moves, when you reach the middlegame stop and have a good think as to exactly where you want to place your pieces. The roots of Tal's victory in the previous game were lain by his fine play in the early middlegame with 15 Na4!, 16 b3 and 17 c4. It is this type of mini-plan that you should be looking for at this stage of the game, gradually improving your pawn structure and the position of your pieces.

The following game is a good example of how to build up a powerful attacking position. Unfortunately, I can't play anything like Tal or Topalov, but I was still able to carry out some nice tactics as a result of carefully building up an attacking position.

□ **Kinsman** ■ **Touzane**
Toulouse open 1990

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1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 c5 3 d5 d6 4 c4 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 e4 0–0 7 h3 e6 8 Bd3 exd5 9 exd5 Re8+ 10 Be3 Na6 11 0–0 Nc7

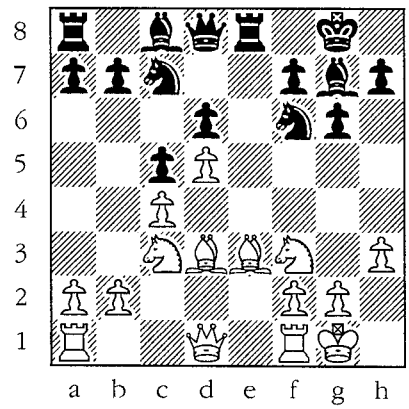


Diagram 11
White has a comfortable space advantage

There are plenty of sharper ways for White to play against this opening, a kind of King's Indian Defence/Modern Benoni Defence hybrid. However, I have always felt comfortable playing this line for White. The books say that White enjoys only a very slight edge in these positions, but in my opinion they are much easier for White to handle than his opponent. The pawn on d5 promises White a long-term space advantage and the pawn on d6 will always be a weakness in Black's position.

12 a4

The careless 12 Re1?! allows 12...b5! 13 cxb5 Nfxd5, when the pride and joy of White's position, that pawn on d5, has been removed.

12...Na6

The only drawback of a2-a4 is that White has weakened the

b4-square, which Black now hastens to occupy. Instead 12...b6 13 Qd2 a6 14 Bg5 leaves Black very cramped.

13 Qd2?!

Probably 13 Rc1 Nb4 14 Bb1 is preferable, as in several grandmaster games.

13...Nb4 14 Bb1

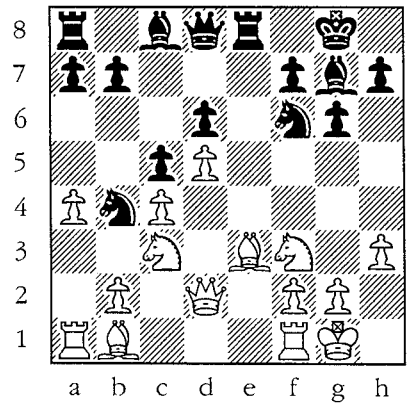


Diagram 12
Black should play 14...b6!

It seems strange to block in the rook on a1, but in the Modern Benoni this rook often comes to a3 and then either to b3 or over to the kingside. At the time I had not appreciated that the c-pawn is left slightly weak. If Black had now played 14...b6! followed by ...Ba6 he would have had a perfectly respectable game. He was probably afraid of the pin with 15 Bg5, but that can be broken by 15...Ba6 16 Nb5 Qd7.

14...Nd7?!

Although this move is superficially attractive as the knight can come to b6 or e5, it does nothing for Black's queenside development. Having already spent four moves placing his queen's knight on b4, it is risky for Black to delay his mobilisation any longer.

15 Bg5 Qc7

15...f6 is met by 16 Bf4, when Black has created a big hole on e6.

16 Ra3!

Things are starting to slot into place now. Neither 16...a6 17 Bf4 b6 18 Ne4 Ne5 19 Re1 nor 16...Nb6 17 b3 (it is a shame to block the rook on a3, but Black now has some problems to solve) 17...a6 18 Ne4 Nd7 19 Bf4, and if 19...Ne5? 20 Nxe5 Bxe5 21 Bxe5 Rxe5 22 Nf6+ Kg7 23 f4 Re7 24 Qc3, is particularly attractive for Black

16...Ne5? 17 Nxe5 Bxe5 18 Nb5 (Diagram 13)

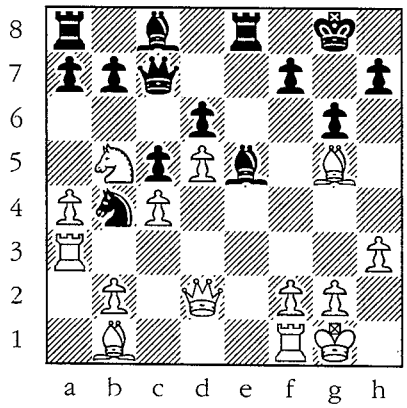


Diagram 13
White starts to invade the black position

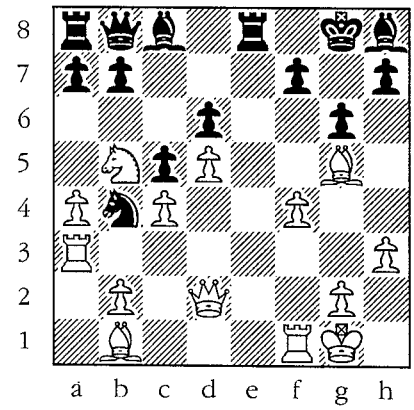


Diagram 14
Watch out for the f-pawn!

Suddenly that rook on a3 looks like a very dangerous piece.

18...Qb8?!

Of course, 18...Qb6 19 a5 Qa6 20 Nc7 was impossible, but 18...Qd7 was probably necessary though decidedly ugly.

19 f4 Bh8?! (Diagram 14)

The bishop belongs on g7.

From now on White's position begins to almost play itself.

20 f5 a6

It is hard to imagine that Black can survive for long after 20...Bd7 21 Qf2.

21 fxg6 hxg6

Or 21...fxg6 22 Qf4.

22 Qf4 f5

22...Bf5 23 Bxf5 Be5 24 Qf3 is hopeless.

23 Qh4!

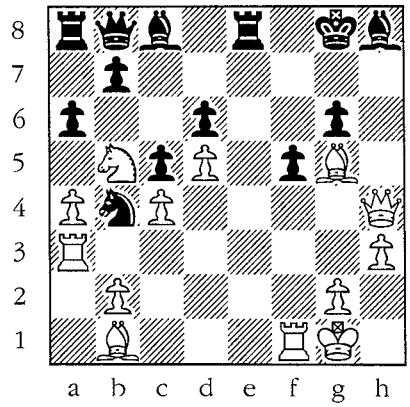


Diagram 15
White has a choice of sacrifices

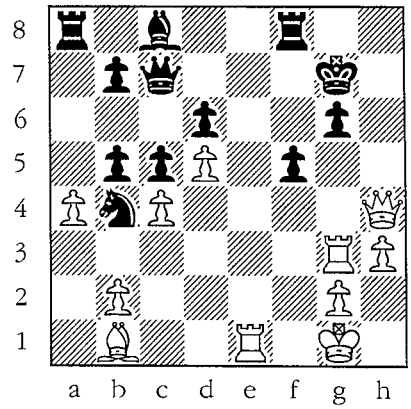


Diagram 16
The end is near

An attractive piece sacrifice, though the queen sacrifice 23 Nxd6!? Be5 24 Nxe8 Bxf4 25 Bxf4 Qa7 26 Re1 was also quite strong.

23...Bg7

23...axb5 24 Bf6! Bg7 (not 24...Bxf6? 25 Qxf6 and the g6-pawn caves in) transposes to the game.

24 Bf6! axb5 25 Rg3 Rf8 26 Bxg7

26 Rxg6 Rf7 27 Re1 was also very tempting.

26...Kxg7 27 Re1

The threat of 28 Re7+ is devastating, since 27...Rf7 can be met by 28 Re8.

27...Qc7 (Diagram 16) **28 Re7+**

It is hard to criticise such an obviously winning move, but in fact Fritz points out that the flashy 28 Qh5! forces mate in five: 28...Qf7 (both 28...Rf6 29 Re8 and 28...Kg8 29 Qxg6+ Kh8 30 Qh6+ Qh7 31 Qxf8+ also lead to mate) 29 Re7! Qxe7 30 Qxg6+ Kh8 31 Qh6+ Qh7 32 Qxf8+ and mates.

28...Qxe7 29 Qxe7+ Rf7 30 Qxd6 Rf6 31 Qxc5 Na6 32 Qe7+ Rf7 33 Qe5+ 1–0

The Unexpected Tactic

Sometimes you will see something in the position that looks slightly fishy. Perhaps it is an unprotected piece, a weak square or the possibility of a knight fork. At such moments, it is time to take stock and see if there is any way in which to exploit this opportunity. The solution will often lay in an unexpected move that your opponent has completely overlooked.

□ Quillan ■ Emms
Four Nations Chess League 1998/99

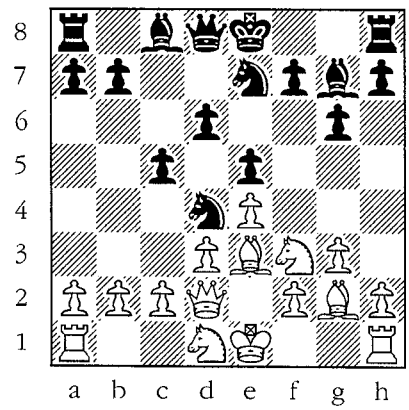


Diagram 17
A quiet position?

This looks like a routine Closed Sicilian position. White has retreated his knight from d1 in order to kick the black knight from the d4-square with c2-c3. However, here there is a hidden tactic.

10 c3?

It was better to castle.

10...Bh3!

Suddenly White is in grave danger of losing material.

11 Kf1 Nxf3 12 Qe2 Nd4

Emms points out that 12...Qd7! would have been much more accurate as 13 Qxf3 drops the queen to ...Bg4. However, Black still wins a pawn, and ultimately the game.

13 cxd4 Bxg2+ 14 Kxg2 cxd4 15 Bd2 Rc8 16 f3 0–0 17 h4 Qb6 18 Rc1 Rxc1 19 Bxc1 Rc8 20 Nf2 Rc6 21 h5 Qc7 22 Qd1 Rc2 23 g4 f6 24 Kg3 Kf7 25 hxg6+ hxg6 26 a3 g5 0–1

Opportunities for an early 'shock' tactic are much more likely to arise when one player has neglected his development, as in the next example.

□ **Klinger** ■ **King**
Lucerne 1989

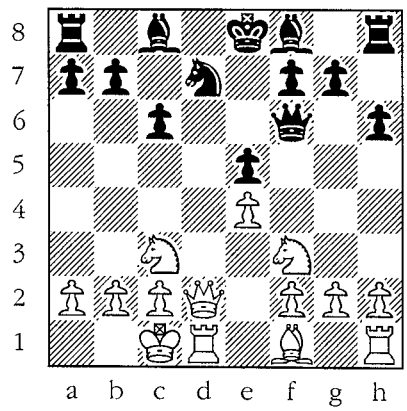


Diagram 18
White has a fantastic sacrifice

This position, which can arise from either the Trompowsky Attack or the Torre Attack, has claimed numerous victims over the years. White has the unexpected

10 Nb5! Rb8

Neither 10...cxb5 11 Bxb5 Qe6 12 Nxe5! Qxe5 13 Bxd7+ Ke7 14 Bxc8, nor 10...Kd8 11 Qa5+ b6 12 Qc3 cxb5 13 Bxb5 are very attractive for Black.

11 Nxa7 Nc5?!

It is probably better to bail out into an endgame a pawn down with 11...Qf4.

12 Nxc8 Rxc8 13 b4 Qe6 14 bxc5 Bxc5 15 Qc3 Bd6 16 Bc4 Qe7 17 Rxd6 Qxd6 18 Rd1 Qe7 19 Qxe5 Qxe5 20 Nxe5 0–0 21 Rd7 1–0

Here is another example of a surprising tactic early on:

□ K.Voelker ■ Palliser
MSO Masters, London 1999

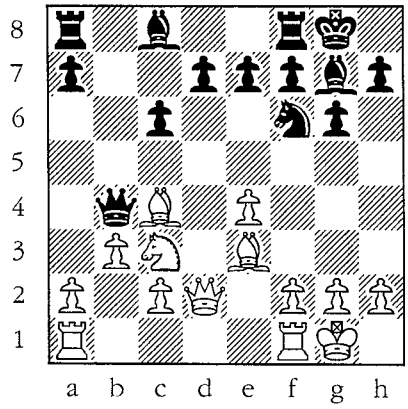


Diagram 19
Black has a snap attack

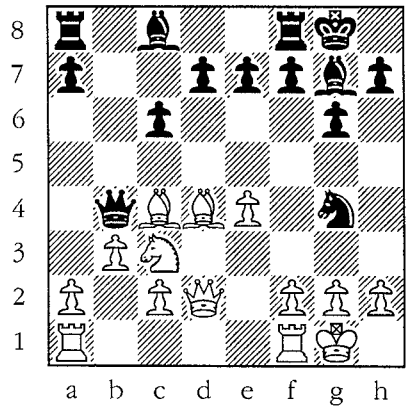


Diagram 20
Can you see the winning move?

Here the white set-up on the long diagonal is loose. However, at first sight there doesn't appear to be any way to exploit this as 11...Ng4 can be met by 12 Bd4, blocking the diagonal. However, Black found a surprising follow-up:

11...Ng4! 12 Bd4 (Diagram 20) **12...Qd6! 0-1**

A devastating fork. White resigned as 13 Rfd1 Qxh2+ 14 Kf1 Bxd4 15 Qxd4 d6 leaves him a pawn down with a hopeless position.



WARNING: Unguarded pieces are always vulnerable to a double attack. Beware leaving loose pieces lying about and try to keep a look out for loose enemy pieces.

□ Kinsman ■ Mabbs
Thames Valley League 1992/93

In Diagram 21 an unexpected move caused a quick surrender.

12...Nc7?

12...Qd6 was slightly more resilient.

13 Qb1! 1-0

Black resigned as 13...h6 14 Bh7+ forces mate and 13...g6 14 Bxg6 is also curtains.

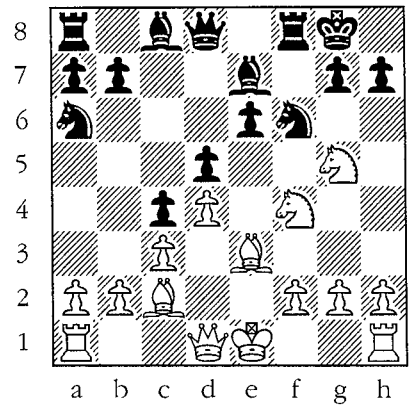
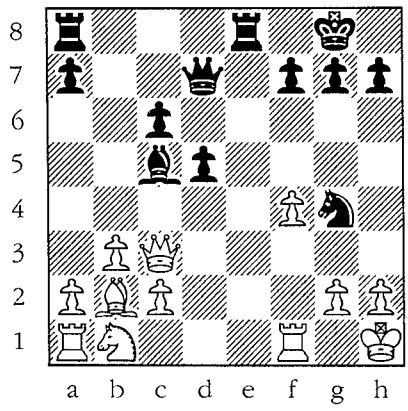


Diagram 21
Black stumbles to defeat

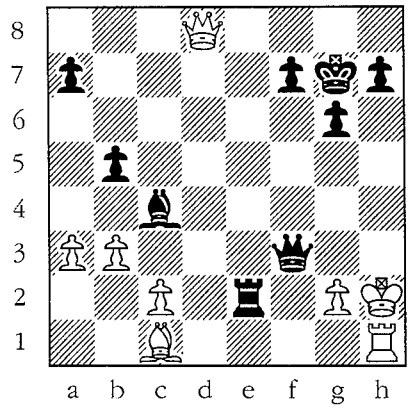


TIP: Always beware the unexpected tactic.

Try it Yourself



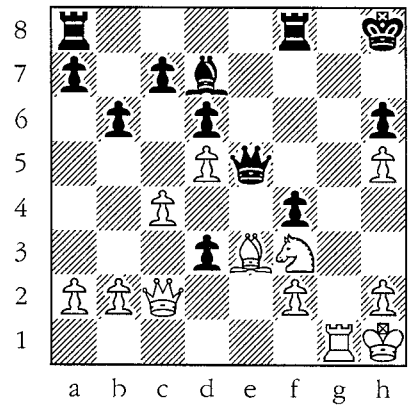
Exercise 1



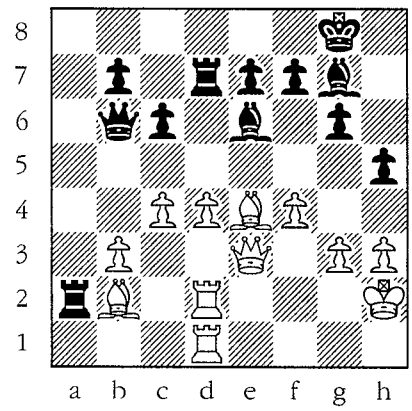
Exercise 2

Exercise 1: White is threatening both mate on g7 and the bishop on c5. Can you see a good response?

Exercise 2: White to play. Who is winning and why?



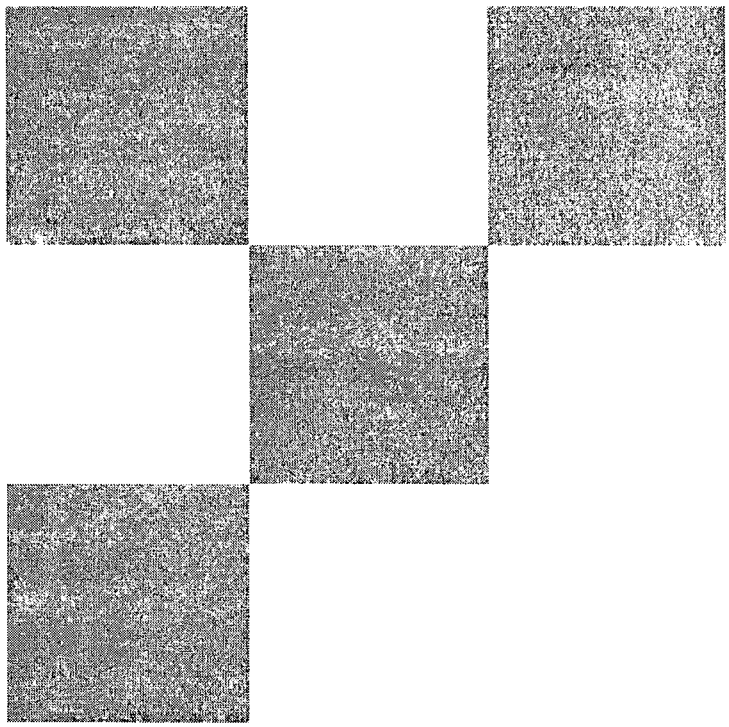
Exercise 3



Exercise 4

Exercise 3: Can you calculate the consequences of 32 Nxe5 and 32 Qxd3 here?

Exercise 4: White's position is under real pressure. Would you prefer 24 Bxg6 or 24 Ba1 here?



Summary

Good positional play lies at the root of all successful attacks.

Try to keep an eye open for 'mini-plans'.

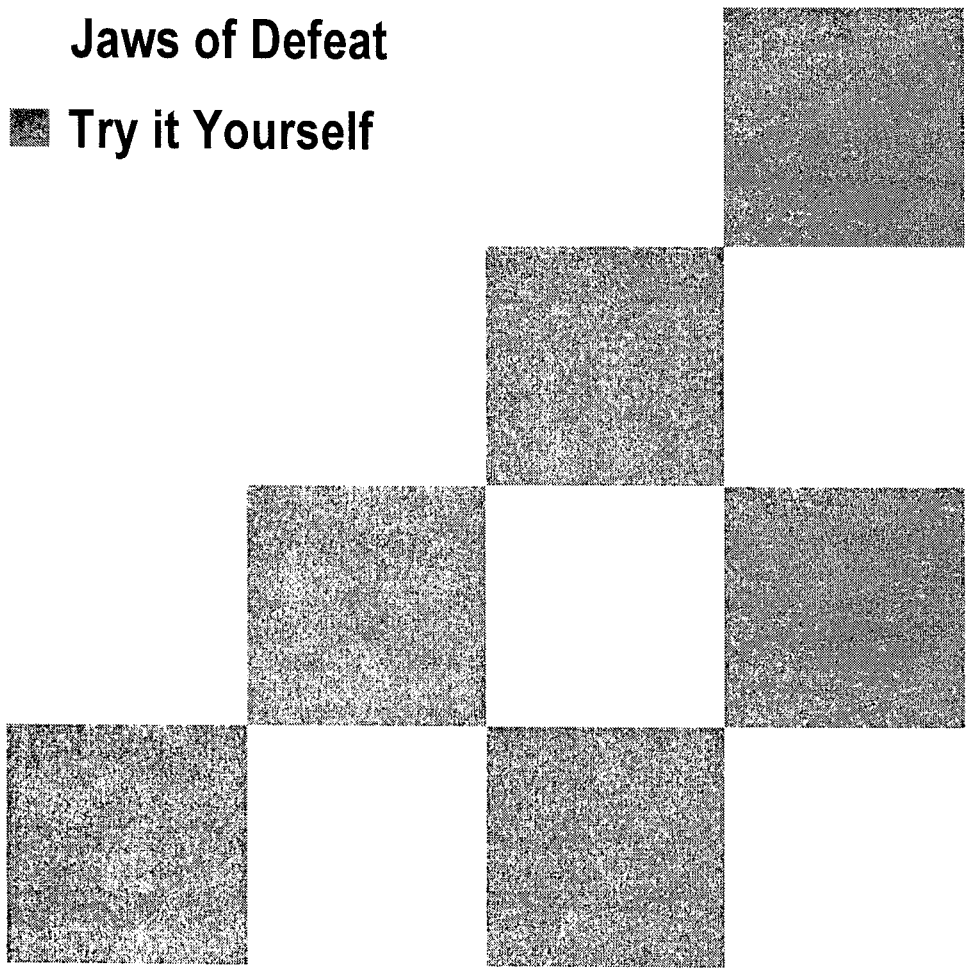
Unguarded pieces are always vulnerable to a double attack. Beware leaving loose pieces lying about and try to keep a look out for loose enemy pieces.

Always beware the unexpected tactic.

Chapter Six

Turning Things Around

- Playing the Percentages
- Throwing in the 'Impossible' Move
- Snatching Victory from the Jaws of Defeat
- Try it Yourself



Playing the Percentages

It is often overlooked in the hurly-burly world of competitive chess that to win any game, your opponent has to make at least one mistake. Some grandmasters, such as Britain's Julian Hodgson, specialise in presenting their opponents with as many difficult choices on each and every move as possible. Inevitably, most players will crack under the strain in the end! It is this kind of practical approach to the game that I would recommend you to adopt in your own games. Most reasonable players are capable of countering a string of one-move threats – they just have to see the threat and find a way of meeting it. However, if you can give your opponent several options on every single move then he is much more likely to eventually take a wrong path!

There is nothing harder than winning a won game. Somehow, part of your brain always tells you that you can relax a little, and at this point it is easy to overlook a last-ditch resource for your opponent. Even at World Championship level, players often find strange and wonderful ways to lose winning positions, as the following game illustrates:

□ Topalov ■ Kramnik
FIDE World Championship, Las Vegas 1999

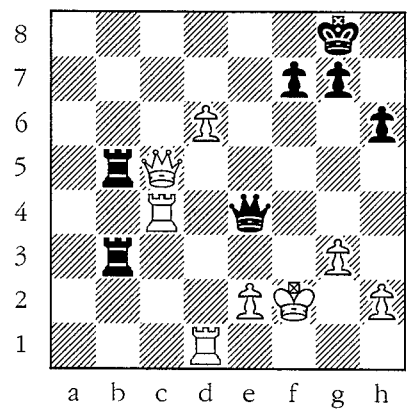


Diagram 1
Black is hoping for a miracle

Black is basically just a passed d-pawn down here. Since

38...Rxc5 39 Rxe4 is easily winning for White, Black tried

38...Rf3+!

and must have nearly fallen off his chair when White replied

39 Kg1??

After 39 Ke1 Black can resign with a clear conscience as the d-pawn will decide the game once the queens are exchanged.

39...Qxe2

Now it's all gone horribly wrong for White.

40 Qd4 Rb2 0–1

Incidentally, the *British Chess Magazine* described 38...Rf3+ as a 'fifty-percenter'. This seems rather harsh as White must have been thrown off by the fact that 39 exf3 Rb2+ 40 Kg1 Qxf3 is also fine for Black. Perhaps 'sixty-six-and-two-thirds-percenter' would have been a fairer description! In any case 38...Rf3+! at least gave White a chance to go wrong, whereas any other move would have been practically a 'nil-percenter'.

And if you think that was a fluke, take a look at the next example in a game played between two strong grandmasters.

□ Rausis ■ Sadler
Enghien-les-Bains 1999

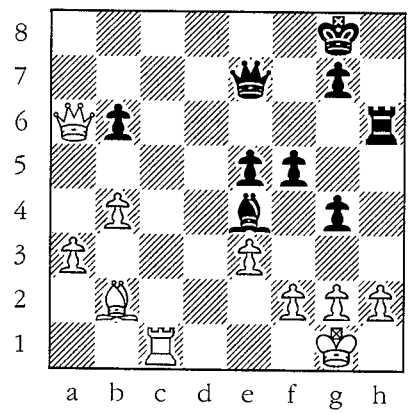


Diagram 2
Black tries to confuse his opponent

In this position both players were in serious time-trouble. In

the normal course of events White should be winning easily, as it is not too difficult for him to consolidate his extra pawn and rebuff Black's ambitions on the kingside. However, Black was by now in 'swindle-mode' and was able to bamboozle his opponent with

31...Kh7!

This type of move is always difficult to face in time-trouble. White was ready to bring his queen back into the game with a check on c4 or c8, but now finds that he doesn't have a check at his disposal. With very little time left on the clock, he is faced with a wide choice of plausible queen moves, some of which have possibly disastrous consequences!

32 Qc8??

This natural move is almost a fatal error. Instead 32 Qb5 would have left Black a pawn down for next to nothing, as he is forced to resort to 32...Re6 to defend the e-pawn. In fact, even the 'safety-first' 32 Qe2 would probably have been okay.

32...g3!! 33 fxg3?

Fortune favours the brave. White rejected 33 hxg3! in view of 33...Qg5 (threatening ...Qh5) and now:

a) 34 Qe8 Qg4 (with the idea of 35...Rh1+! 36 Kxh1 Qh3+ 37 Kg1 Qxg2 mate) 35 f3 Bxf3! and if 36 Kf2 then 36...f4! (Sadler).

b) 34 Qc4! would have been White's best chance, and if 34...Qh5 (this time 34...Qg4 can be met by 35 Qf1!) then 35 f3 Bxf3 36 Qf1! with good chances of a draw. It is hardly surprising that in time-trouble White failed to spot this far from obvious resource!

33...Qg5

Now White has to cope with the threat to his e-pawn as well as ...Qh5. The obvious 34 Re1 would have been refuted by 34...Qh5 35 h3 Rc6, when the rook swings down to c2.

34 Qc3 Qh5 35 Kf2

35 h3 fails to 35...Qe2.

35...Qxh2 36 Rg1 Rc6

Now it is all over for White.

37 Qxe5 Rc2+ 38 Kf1 Bd3+ 0–1

This example perfectly illustrates the theory that if you offer your opponent enough chances to go astray, he may eventually feel obliged to accept one of them!



WARNING: There is nothing harder than winning a 'won' game.

Throwing in the 'Impossible' Move

Sometimes playing an unlikely move can completely throw your opponent off-balance, as in the next example.

□ **Bischoff** ■ **McShane**
Lippstadt 1998

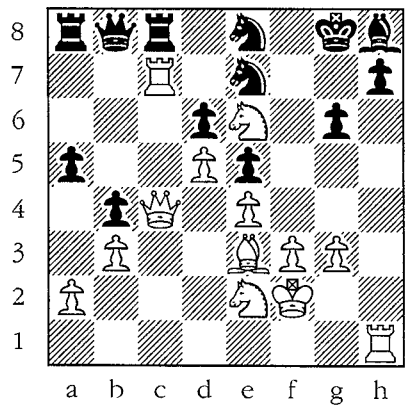


Diagram 3
White has a brilliant queen sacrifice

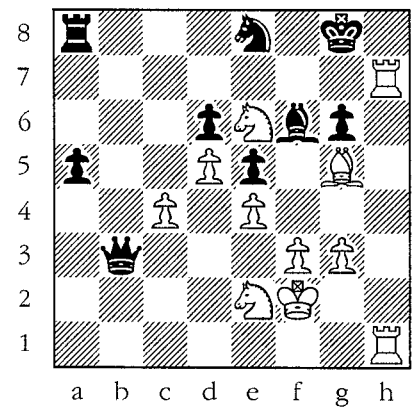


Diagram 4
Black counters with a sacrifice of his own

In Diagram 3 White decided that it was time to crown a fine positional accomplishment with a queen sacrifice.

34 Rxe7! Rxc4 35 Rexh7 Bf6 36 bxc4

Not 36 Bg5 Ra7!

36...b3!

Black must at least strive for some activity.

37 axb3 Qxb3 38 Bg5! (Diagram 4)

White probably thought that he would soon be mating his op-

ponent, e.g. 38...Bxg5 39 Rh8+ Kf7 40 Rf8+ Ke7 41 Rh7+. However, he was probably shocked when Black played

38...Ra7!!

At first this looks like it just places a rook en prise, but White was probably taken aback to discover that after 39 Rxa7 Bxg5 40 Nxg5 Black can regain the rook with 40...Qb6+. It is hardly surprising that in time-trouble he panicked with

39 R7h2??

White could have won here with Speelman's 39 Rxa7 Bxg5 40 Ra8! Qe3+ 41 Kg2! Qxe2+ 42 Kh3 Be7 43 Rxe8+ Kf7 44 Rh8, as Black cannot meet the threat of 45 Kg4 with 44...Qxf3 due to 45 Rf8+! and 46 Ng5+. After the text Black is able to consolidate his position and the passed a-pawn will decide the game.

39...Bg7 40 Be3 Rb7 41 c5 Qd3 42 Re1 Rb3 43 Nc1 Rb2+ 44 Re2 Rxe2+ 45 Nxe2 dxc5 46 Nxc5 Qb5 47 Rh1 Bf8 48 Rc1 a4 49 Nxa4 Qxa4 50 Ng1 Nd6 51 Kg2 Qa3 52 Re1 Nc4 53 Bf2 Bb4 54 Re2 Qd3 0–1



TIP: When there is nothing to lose – go for complications.

An even more startling example of the 'impossible' move was seen in the next game.

□ **Hillarp Persson** ■ **Liss**
Copenhagen 1996

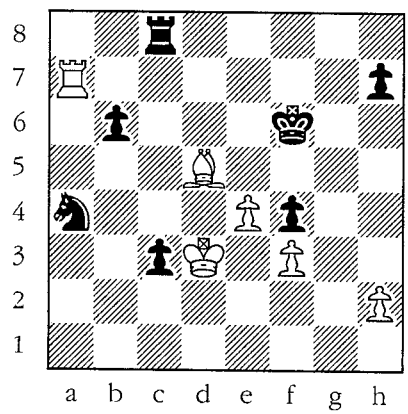


Diagram 5
White tries an amazing bluff

Here Black, who had only moments left on his clock, is a pawn up. No doubt his mind was focusing on the possibilities after the 'natural' 40 Kc2 or 40 Rf7+, as he was stunned by

40 Kd4!??

Here Liss was so shocked by the opportunity of playing 40...c2 that he lost on time!



TIP: 'Perhaps the most important trait a player needs is a warped sense of humour.' Grandmaster Tony Miles

If I had to pick my all-time favourite swindle it would be a close-run thing between Hillarp-Persson's audacious 40 Kd4 and the following offering by Alexei Shirov.

□ Kramnik ■ Shirov
Linares 1994

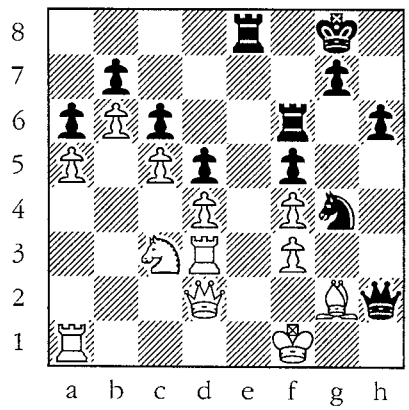


Diagram 6
Shirov pulls a rabbit out of the hat

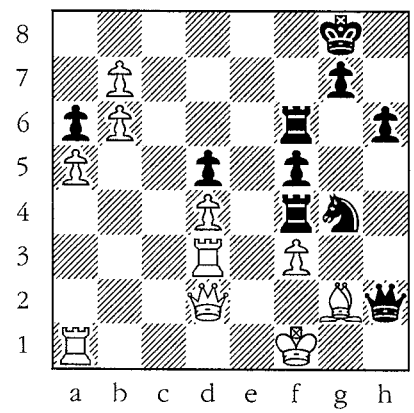


Diagram 7
And another rabbit appears!

In Diagram 6 Black has given up a piece for nebulous compensation. However, the ever-creative Alexei Shirov found a fantastic way to add fuel to the flames, placing his pieces in a pawn fork with

31...Re4!!

If the rook is captured then after 32 fxe4 fxe4 Black really does have a dangerous attack. In fact, White could probably have won here with the calm 32 Ne2, e.g. 32...Ne3+ 33 Rxe3 Rg6 34 Ng3 Rxe3 35 Qxe3 Qxg3 36 Ra2. However, probably thrown off

beam by Shirov's move, Kramnik decided to launch a counter-attack of his own with

32 Nxd5!? cxd5 33 c6

Black's reply is forced as both 33...bxc6 34 b7 and 33...Rxc6 34 fxe4 are hopeless for him.

33...Rxf4 34 cxb7 (Diagram 7)

After 34 c7 Rf8 35 Rc1 Rc8 Black has time to blockade the pawn.

34...Re4!

It's that same incredible move again!

35 Rc1

Shirov suggests that White could have won here with 35 b8Q+ Qxb8 36 fxg4 Rxg4 37 Bxd5+, but 36...Qh2! still looks very complicated to me.

35...Kh7 36 b8Q

White could have bailed out with a draw here by playing 36 Rc8 Qg3 37 b8Q Nh2+ 38 Kg1 Re1+ 39 Qxe1 Qxe1+ 40 Kxh2 Qh4+.

36...Qxb8 37 fxg4 Qh2 38 Rf3 Rxg4 39 b7?!

In the fact of Shirov's sustained onslaught, Kramnik begins to falter. After 39 Rf2! Rfg6 40 Bxd5 Qh3+ 41 Ke2 Rd6 (Kramnik) the game is still very much in the balance.

39...Rfg6 40 Rc2?

The fatal error on the last move before the time control. 40 b8Q Qxb8 41 Rf2 would still have offered drawing chances.

40...Rxg2 41 Qxg2 Rxg2 42 Rxg2 Qh1+ 43 Kf2 Qb1 0–1

A truly miraculous save by Shirov.



TIP: 'Impossible' moves will often throw your opponent off track in otherwise hopeless situations.

Snatching Victory from the Jaws of Defeat

When you have lost a pawn or more, it is usually time to enter 'swindle-mode', playing much the sharpest possible move on

every turn in order to confuse your opponent. One minute, they are positionally 'winning', with everything under control, and the next they may be 'materially winning', but facing the ordeal of negotiating a series of tricky tactics. It is hard for even world-class players to maintain their equilibrium in the face of a determined 'swindle-mode' onslaught, as the following game shows.

□ Vaganian ■ Dunnington
Paris open 1998

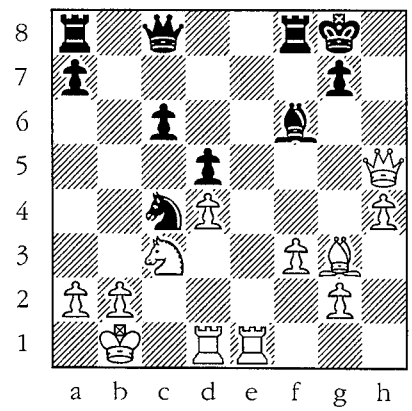


Diagram 8
Black switches to 'swindle-mode'

By the time the diagram position arose Black was already running very short of time, with only a few minutes to reach the time control at move 40, whereas his opponent, a former World Championship Candidate, had more than an hour left on his clock – and two extra pawns to boot.

24...Qb7

Okay, let's go to work!

25 Re2

The immediate 25 b3 would have maintained control of the open e-file.

25...Rae8!

The first sign that things aren't straightforward for White. 26 Rde1 Rxe2 27 Rxe2 Bxd4 drops the d-pawn, so White decides

that he has to move his b-pawn after all. The main problem is that his queen is stuck out of play on h5.

26 b3 Qb4!

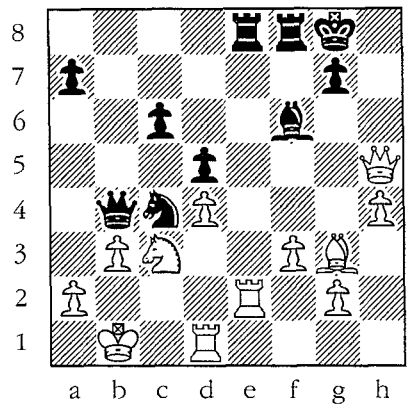


Diagram 9
Suddenly things aren't so straightforward

Regardless of whether this works or not, Black has to play sharply and this move fits the bill perfectly. If White is allowed even one move to consolidate then the game will be over, but here he has to make a critical decision. Is 27 Rxe8 possible or not?

27 Be1

A practical decision. It was not easy to see that after 27 Rxe8! Qxc3 28 Rxf8+ Kxf8 29 bxc4 Qb4+ 30 Kc2 Qxc4+ 31 Kd2, the white king should be able to escape the checks. In any case, by this time White had succumbed to the temptation to 'blitz' his opponent. Both sides were moving almost instantaneously despite the fact that White had over an hour left on his clock!

27...Na3+

27...Qa3 was also possible as 28 bxc4?? Rxe2 29 Nxe2 Rb8+ wins for Black and after 28 f4 Re3 the position is still very complicated.

28 Kb2

28 Kc1 Rxe2 29 Nxe2 Qe7 30 Nc3 Bxd4 was not especially appealing for White.

28...Nc4+ 29 Ka1 (Diagram 10)

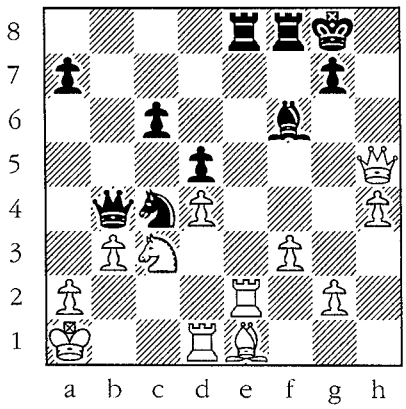


Diagram 10
Black whips up a dangerous attack

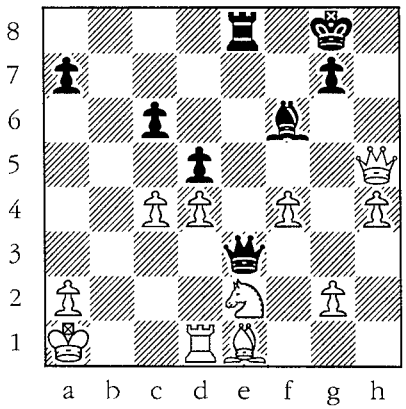


Diagram 11
White panics

29...Rxe2

With only seconds left on his clock, Black missed 29...Bxd4! 30 Rxe8 Bxc3+ 31 Kb1 Bxe1, when the best White can do is force perpetual with 32 Rxf8+ (or 32 Rdxe1 Na3+ 33 Kb2 Nc4+ 34 Kb1 Na3+) 32...Kxf8 33 Qf5+ Ke7 34 Qg5+.

30 Nxe2 Qa3 31 bxc4 Qe3! 32 f4 Re8 (Diagram 11)

Now things are very murky indeed, but one would still expect that a player of Vaganian's experience would have realised that it was time to stop for a long think. However, by now he was completely 'on tilt', to the visible enjoyment of the large crowd of spectators who had gathered around the board.

33 Nc3??

33 Rd2! should enable White to consolidate his position.

33...Bxd4 34 Qf3??

A shocking mistake. 34 Kb2 Bxc3+ 35 Bxc3 Rb8+ 36 Kc2 Qe4+ 37 Kd2 Qxf4+ 38 Ke2 Qxc4+ 39 Rd3 Qe4+ should be a draw.

34...Qxf3 35 gxf3 (Diagram 12) **35...Rxe1! 36 Rxe1 Bxc3+ 37 Kb1 Bxe1 38 Kc2 dxc4 39 h5 Kf7 40 f5 Kf6 0–1**

Now that Black has made the time control, Vaganian decided that it was time to make a beeline for the nearest exit! Full marks to Dunnington, though, who made the best of what

looked like a disastrous position at move 24.

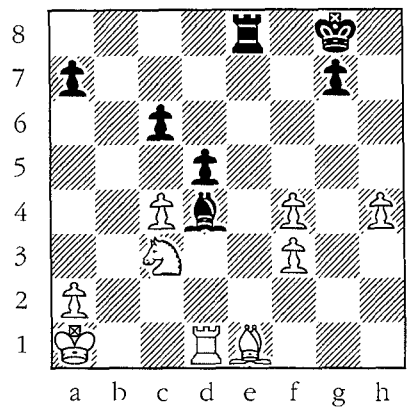


Diagram 12
Black finishes with a fine combination

In the next chapter we shall look at ways in which the clock can be handled rather more effectively!



WARNING: Never try and rush your opponent into a mistake.

In chess, once the wheels start to come off, it is very hard to keep the rest of the machine running, as the next example demonstrates.

□ Lyell ■ Lehtivaara
Four Nations Chess League 1998/99

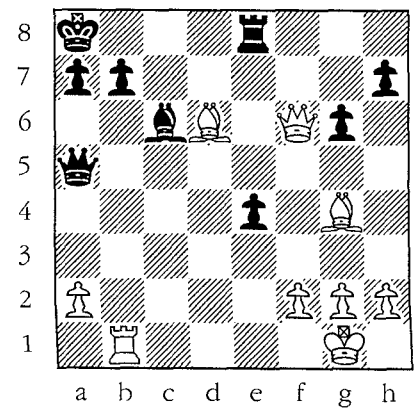


Diagram 13
White has an extra piece

White is basically just a piece for a pawn up here. After a calm move such as 29 Bf4 he should have been able to reach the time control without too many problems. However, he unfortunately decided to 'block' the progress of the black e-pawn with

29 Be6?? e3!

Anyway, since 30 fxe3 can be met by 30...Qd2.

30 Bb4 Qb6

Suddenly Black has a dangerous pin.

31 Bc4 a5 32 Bf7??

Having entirely lost the thread, White misses the opportunity to bail out for a draw with 32 fxe3 Qxe3+ 33 Qf2 Qxf2+ 34 Kxf2 axb4 35 Rxb4.

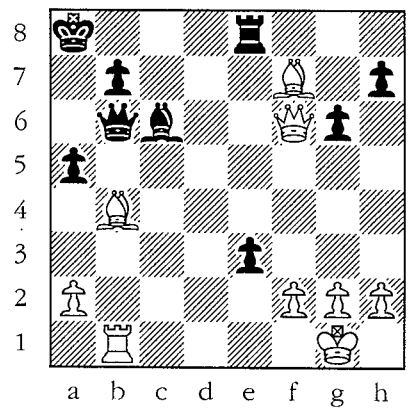


Diagram 14
Black pulls off a shocking tactic

32...Qxb4!

After this queen sacrifice there is no way to stop the e-pawn from queening.

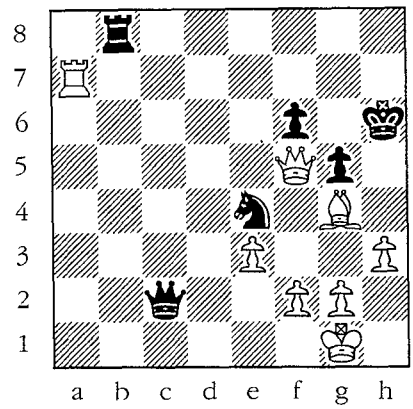
33 Rxb4 e2 34 h3 e1Q+ 35 Kh2 axb4 36 Bxe8 Qxe8 37 Qd6 Qb8 0–1

White was terribly unlucky in this game, but Black showed great character to come back from the dead.

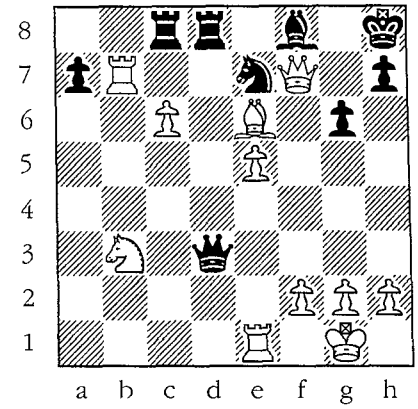


TIP: 'Never lose heart, chess is a sport and you must learn to fight to the bitter end.' Grandmaster Julian Hodgson

Try it Yourself



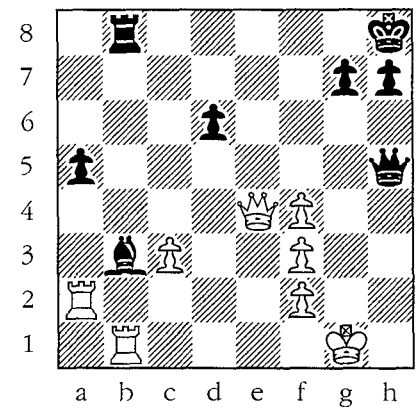
Exercise 1



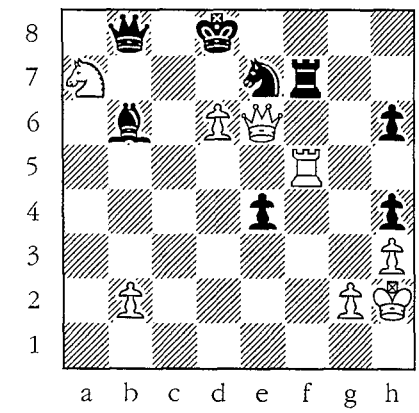
Exercise 2

Exercise 1: It looks like the game is up for Black. Or is it?

Exercise 2: White is winning but has only a few seconds to make the time control. Is there a way for Black to give himself some practical chances?



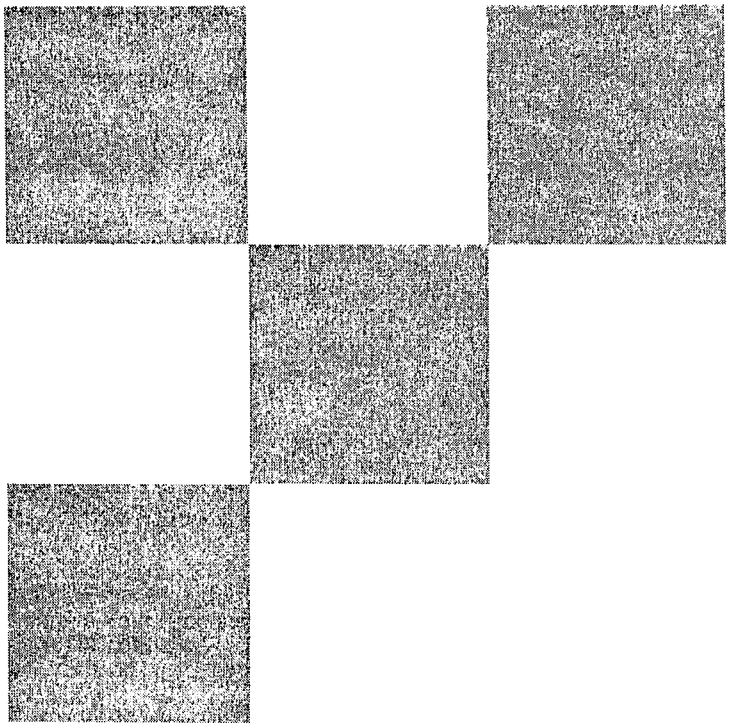
Exercise 3



Exercise 4

Exercise 3: Can you see how Black can stay on the board?

Exercise 4: With both a rook and knight under attack things look pretty grim for Black here. His one saving grace is that White has only a few seconds for the last five moves before the time control. How can Black make the most of his chances?



Summary

There is nothing harder than winning a 'won' game.

When there is nothing to lose – go all out for complications.

'Impossible' moves will often throw your opponent off track in otherwise hopeless situations.

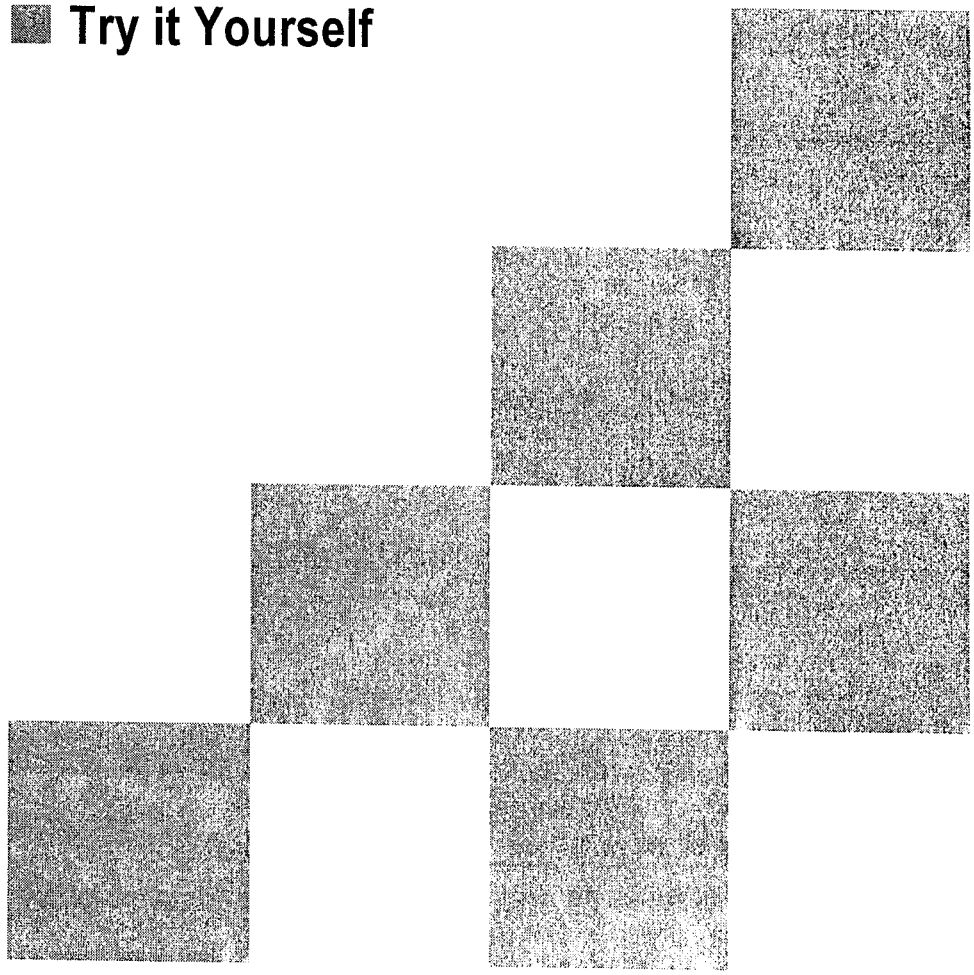
Never try and rush your opponent into a mistake.

Never lose heart, chess is a sport and you must learn to fight to the bitter end.

Chapter Seven

The Time Control

- Beating the Clock
- Countering the Opponent's Time-Trouble
- After the Time Control
- Try it Yourself



Beating the Clock

As the time control approaches, a third 'player' takes a more and more important role in the game – the clock! How many times have we heard our friends say 'I messed it up in time-trouble', only to see them back in the same situation, battling against both their opponent and the clock, in their very next game.



TIP: The best way to handle time pressure is to avoid it.

Different players have different ways in which they try and avoid time-trouble. One grandmaster I know always pretends that the time control comes at five minutes before the hour. That way he has at least five minutes in hand if things start to get really complicated as the time control approaches. In fact, he once confessed to me that if I ever saw him with less than five minutes to go before the time control, this probably meant that his position was practically beyond repair and he was just desperately trying to find a last-ditch resource!

Perhaps this approach is a little too drastic for you, but it at least serves to illustrate that there are ways to avoid time-trouble. Both players start with the same amount of time and part of the skill of the game is to manage that time effectively. A rushed decision early on may leave you in a difficult position for the rest of the game, whereas a shortage of thinking time at the time control can easily spoil a good position. The most practical decision is to allocate your time in such a way that you spend more time on the *critical* positions. Not every move is as important as the next. It is easy to waste precious time on decisions that will not have much bearing on the final outcome, when two or three equally playable moves are possible. The choice between move A, move B and move C may come down to a matter of taste rather than anything objective in the position. Surely it is best to spend only a few minutes deciding on your preference and save time for later than to sit deep in thought for twenty minutes on a marginal decision and find yourself with hardly any time in the bank for later, when critical decisions *do* have to be made?



TIP: Allocate your time so that you can spend more time on the *important* decisions.

I recall one episode I witnessed at a weekend tournament some years ago. An International Master (whom I shan't name to protect the guilty!) was playing White against a club player. White was very short of time, whereas his opponent still had a few minutes on his clock. Black made his move, offered a draw and pressed his clock. The IM instantly declined the draw, made his move, and ... lost on time before he could press his clock!

In the following game my opponent, with his time about to expire, missed a win on the very last move before the time control!

□ Kinsman ■ T.Nielsen
Wrexham 1997

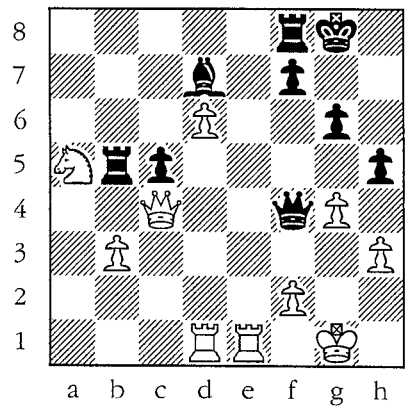


Diagram 1
Black goes astray on the 40th move

Having had a very pleasant position earlier on in the game, I had completely lost control of the position by move 40 (the time control). With only seconds left on his clock my opponent panicked with

40...Qxc4??

40...Qf3! would have been terminal for White as the knight is trapped on a5, e.g. 41 Rd3 Qa8! 42 Re7 Rxa5 43 Rxd7 Ra1+ 44 Kh2 Qh1+ 45 Kg3 g5! with mate to follow.

41 Nxc4 Rxb3

Black has regained his pawn (and even goes on to win another

one), but the passed d-pawn decides the game for White.

42 Re7 Be6 43 Ne5 Rxh3 44 g5!

There is no hurry. 44 d7 Bxd7 45 Rdxd7 hxg4 would have left White with very few pawns, although he should still win.

44...Rd8 45 d7 Kf8 46 Rxe6! fxe6 47 Nxg6+ Kf7 48 Ne5+ Kg7 49 Rd6

49 Nc6 Rxd7 50 Rxd7+ Kg6 51 Nd8 e5 52 Rd5 looks simpler in the cold light of day.

49...Ra3 50 Rxe6 Ra7?

50...Kf8 was Black's last chance.

51 Re7+ 1–0

Was I lucky in this game? Yes, but in a sense I didn't deserve to lose the game. Although I missed the strength of 40...Qf3! in combination with 41...Qa8, overall I played some reasonable chess and managed the clock better than my opponent.

Here's one game in which I wasn't so lucky.

□ Berresheim ■ Kinsman
German Bundesliga 1997/98

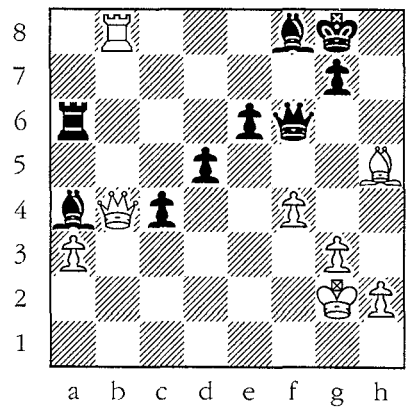


Diagram 2
A tense middlegame position

In this position White could have bailed out with a draw by playing 38 Bg6!, e.g. 38...Bc6 39 Rxf8+ Qxf8 40 Bh7+ Kf7 41 Bg6+ Kg8 with a perpetual. However, both players missed this

resource and White played

38 Qb7?? Ra5 39 Qb4

Here Black can win with either 39...Ra7 or 39...Rb5. Unfortunately, I didn't realise quite how little time I had left on my clock and hesitated for a few seconds. I was amazed and embarrassed when I realised that I had lost on time – and my team-mates were none too pleased with me, either!

One of the problems of being short of time is that your brain is always telling you that you should be doing something active, when sometimes it's best just to sit and wait.

□ Cafferty ■ Kaiumov
Hastings Challengers 1997/98

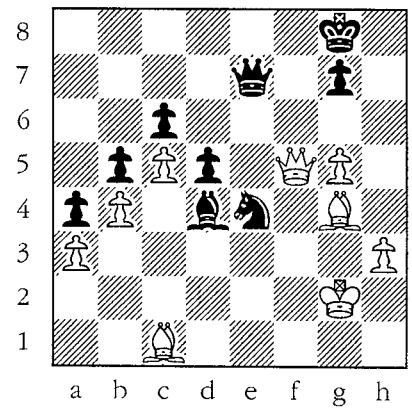


Diagram 3
Black makes his opponent's task easy

White has a pleasant advantage in this position due to his active queen and two bishops. Black should probably sit tight with something like 40...Qe8, but his hand was probably itching to do play an active move. Unfortunately, that only helped White's task.

40...Nf2?? 41 Qc8+ Kf7

41...Qf8 loses the queen to 42 Be6+ and 41...Kh7 42 g6+ is similar to the game.

42 g6+ 1–0

It will be mate next move with 43 Qf5+.

Countering Your Opponent's Time-Trouble

Imagine that you have plenty of time left on your clock, but your opponent has only a few seconds left and is bashing his moves out instantly. It's all too tempting in such a situation to make some quick moves and try to 'rush' him into a mistake, but unless your position is pretty dreadful, this is always a mistake (see 'Snatching Victory from the Jaws of Defeat' in the previous chapter.) Instead you should keep playing to your normal rhythm, after all, that's what got him into this mess in the first place. Believe me, there is nothing worse than sitting at the board with hardly any time while your opponent calmly and methodically improves his position. Kotov recommends that if you really do have plenty of time, you might even like to stake a little stroll between moves!

Having said that, even the greatest players have been known to make a mess of things in their opponent's time-trouble. Take a look at this shocker.

□ Petrosian ■ Bronstein
Amsterdam Candidates 1956

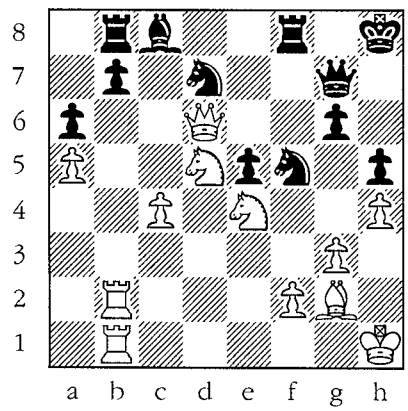


Diagram 4
A queen retreat is called for

Having played a fine positional game, Petrosian had established an overwhelming position. Black had already been in desperate time-trouble for several moves, but Petrosian had simply been improving his pieces and letting his opponent suf-

fer. Bronstein had just played 35...Nf5, and Petrosian continued in calm fashion with

36 Ng5?? Nxd6 0–1

Oops! Perhaps 36 Qc7, 36 Qa3 or 36 Qb4 would have been a better choice!

Incidentally, the Czech Grandmaster Ludek Pachman once suggested that: 'When you have a hopeless position you should allow your clock to run very short of time. Then you should play blitz in the hopes that your opponent will get excited, move quickly, and make a game-losing blunder!' Naturally, I could not possibly recommend such an unsporting approach...!

After the Time Control

One problem that time-trouble 'addicts' often face, is that they often lose track of exactly how many moves they have made. Most of us have witnessed games in which both players have continued blitzing out moves long after they made the required number of moves. This is always very entertaining for the spectators – but not so much fun for the player who blunders his position away playing instantaneous moves when he has already made the time control! Even if you are able to tick off the moves as you make them, there is still always the fear at the back of your mind that you may have made a mistake on your score-sheet. Inevitably that one extra move that you make 'just in case' can have severe repercussions, as the following example illustrates:

□ Tan ■ Erenburg
World U-16 Championship, Oropesa del Mar 1999

In Diagram 5 White had established a clear advantage with some fine positional play. The black pieces are tied down to the defence of the e-pawn and White has a potential passed pawn on the queenside. Both sides had made the time control, but White decided to make one extra quick move to make sure.

41 g3?

This move throws away White's advantage. After the obvious 41 b4! axb4 42 cxb4 White must queen the a-pawn in the long run.

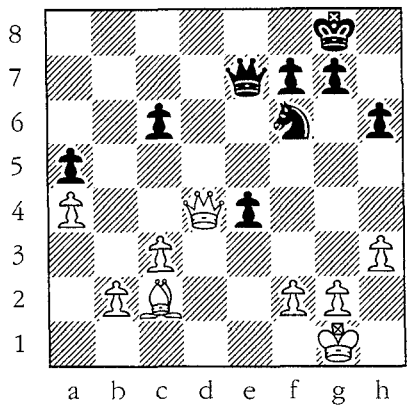


Diagram 5
White makes a 'safe' move

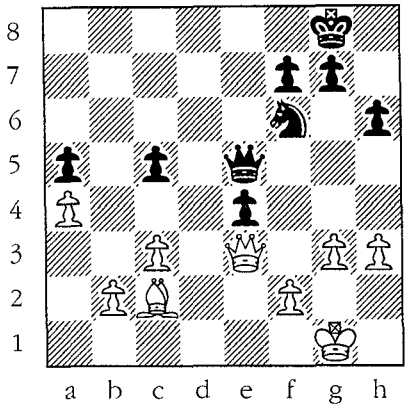


Diagram 6
Black is now in control

41...c5! 42 Qe3 Qe5

Now the chance of an outside passed pawn has evaporated and suddenly Black has established his queen on a powerful square. White did eventually manage to salvage a draw, but it was only by virtue of some fine rearguard action.



WARNING: It can be fatal to relax after the time control.

Apart from the danger of making a quick extra move or two, there is another pitfall after the time control. With time-trouble over, it is easy to succumb to the temptation to relax, feeling that most of the hard work has been done and most of your troubles are behind you. My advice is: Don't, otherwise you'll have experience plenty of disappointments like this shocker of mine!

□ Marciano ■ Kinsman
Toulouse 1996

Although he is a pawn down in Diagram 7 Black should be fine after 43...Qg4, since the king and pawn endgame after 44 Qg5 Qxg5 45 fxg5 Kf7 is a draw, e.g. 46 Kg3 Ke6 47 Kf4 Kd5 48 g3 Kd6 49 Ke3 Ke5 50 Kd3 Kd5. Without even thinking for very long in this position I carelessly played

43...Kh7?? 44 Qf7+ Kh6

and after

45 Qg8! 1–0

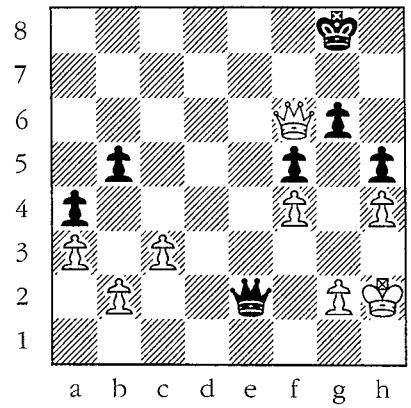


Diagram 7
Black fails to spot the danger

I was left feeling rather embarrassed. The only way to prevent mate is to go for the ending after 45...Qe7 46 Qh8+ Qh7 47 Qxh7+ Kxh7, but 48 Kg3 Kg7 49 Kf3 Kf6 50 Ke3 Ke6 51 Kd4 Kd6 52 g3 is completely hopeless.

If that wasn't bad enough, take a look at this real horror story!

□ Gunnarsson ■ Kinsman
Hafnarfjordur 1997

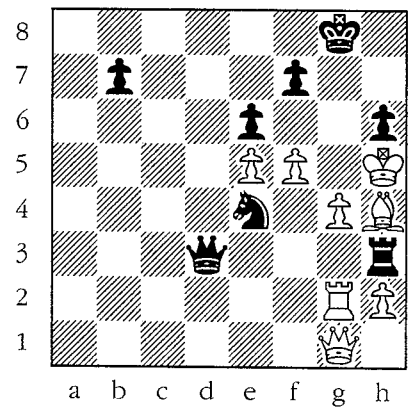


Diagram 8
'Anything' wins

It has to imagine how Black can go wrong here. For example,

after 46...Qf3 Black threatens mate with 47...Qf4 and 48...Qg5, e.g. 47 Rc2 Qf4 48 Qc1 Qg5+ 49 Qxg5+ hxg5 and mate follows. However, on the basis that 'everything must win' I played

46...Ng5??

reasoning that ...Nf3 will be a devastating fork whatever White's response.

47 Rg3 Nf3?? 48 Rxh3 1–0

Sadly, I suffered a 'blind-spot' and completely missed the slight tactical point that after 48...Nxg1 my queen is en prise!

Even grandmasters are not immune from the temptation to relax once the time control has been reached, as the next example shows:

□ **Rowson** ■ **Sutovsky**
Isle of Man open 1999

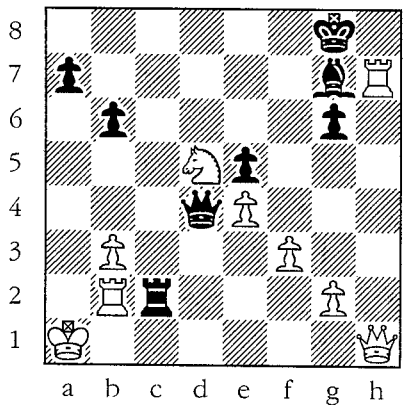


Diagram 9
White seems to be winning easily

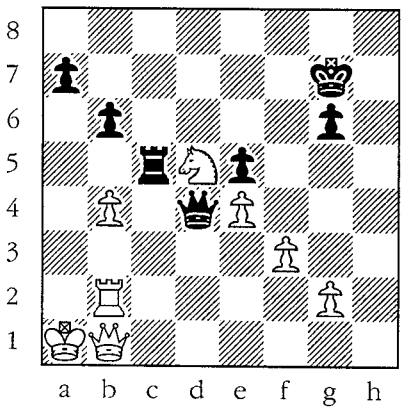


Diagram 10
Black has an amazing resource

With an extra rook, surely White just has to deal with the threat to his rook on b2? So he played the 'obvious'

41 Rxg7+?? Kxg7 42 Qb1

Expecting his opponent to resign. However, after

42...Rc5 43 Qf1 Rc2 44 Qb1 Rc5 45 b4 (Diagram 10)

Black has

45...Ra5+!! 46 bxa5 Qa4+ 47 Qa2 Qd1+ 48 Rb1 Qd4+ 49 Nc3 ½–½

In his notes to this game in the *British Chess Magazine*, Rowson confesses that this slip was caused by the natural temptation to let one's guard down after the time control has been reached. Instead of 41 Rxg7+, he gives the fine winning sequence 41 Qb1!! Rc5 (if 41...Rxb2 White flicks in 42 Rxg7+!) 42 b4 Ra5+ (or 42...Kxh7 43 Qh1+ and 44 bxc5) 43 bxa5 Qa4+ 44 Qa2 Qd1+ 45 Rb1 Qd4+ 46 Nc3+. The key distinction here is that with the black king on g8 rather than g7, Nc3 is now *check*. In fact, I believe that White even has another, admittedly rather less attractive, way to win on move 41: 41 Ne7+ (to deflect the black king to a bad square) 41...Kf7 (or 41...Kf8 42 Nxg6+ Ke8 43 Qb1 Rc5 44 Qf1 Rc2 45 Qb5+) 42 Qb1 Rc5 43 b4 Ra5+ 44 bxa5 Qa4+ 45 Qa2+.

□ D.Anderton ■ J.Saunders
Four Nations Chess League 1997/98

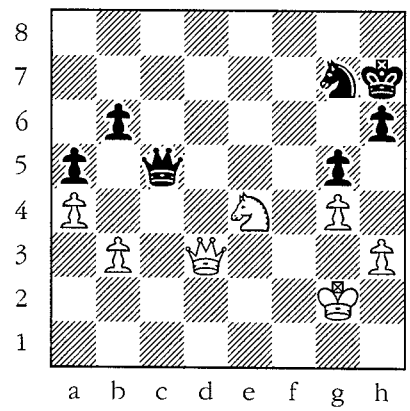


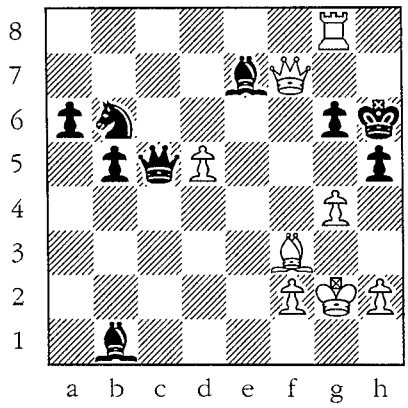
Diagram 11
Black imagines that he is lost

Sometimes a time scramble can send you completely 'on tilt'. Here, having just made the time control at move 40, Black realised that a fatal discovered check was coming and resigned. However, if he hadn't been so flustered he would have quickly seen that 41...Qc6! would have been a better course of action.

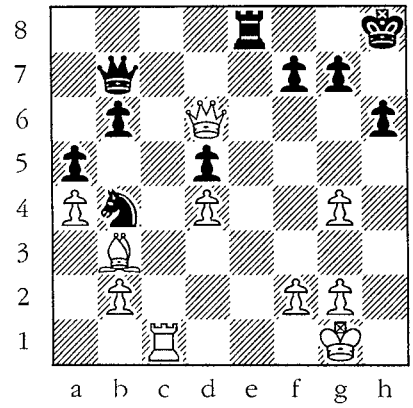


TIP: It is often a good idea to take a quick break if you have just had to endure an emotional time scramble.

Try it Yourself



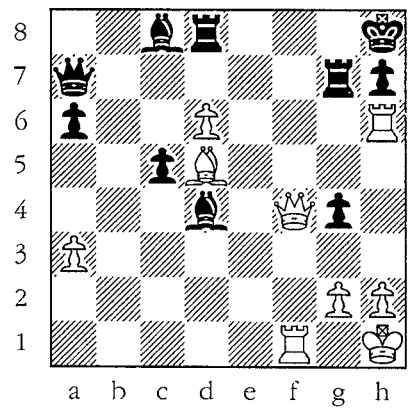
Exercise 1



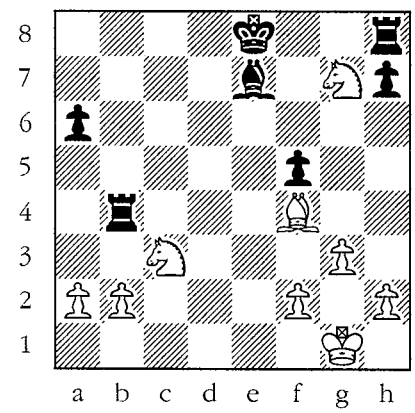
Exercise 2

Exercise 1: You are White and have half a minute left on your clock. Can you see how to finish the game in one move?

Exercise 2: In this position Black was in serious time-trouble. Which move do you prefer: 32 Rc7 or 32 g3 here?



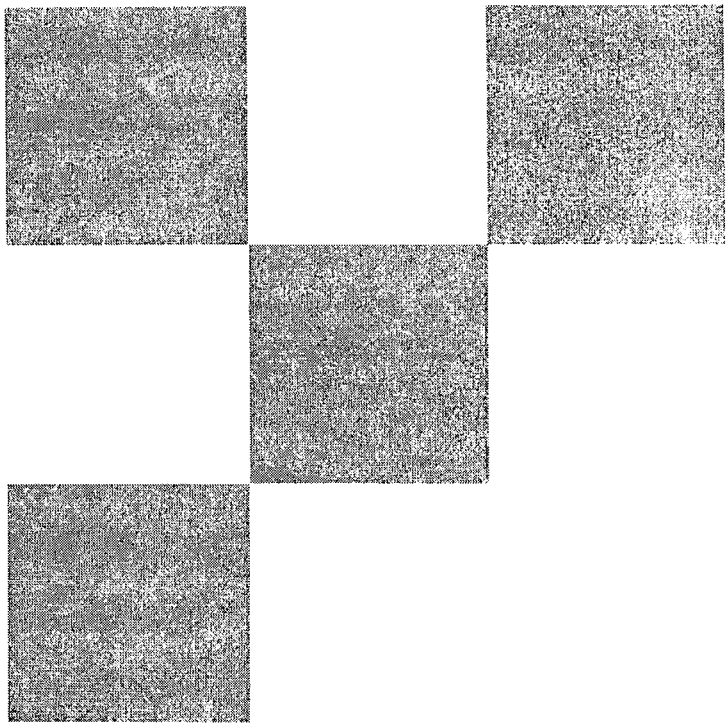
Exercise 3



Exercise 4

Exercise 3: Imagine that you have only 15 seconds to make a move for Black. Can you choose between 40...Re8, 40...Rgg8, 40...Rdg8, 40...Rd7 and 40...Qd7 here?

Exercise 4: In a time scramble White (who has just played 30 Nxg7+) resigned after his opponent's next move. What was it?



Summary

The best way to handle time pressure is to avoid it altogether.

Allocate your time so that you can spend more time on the *important* decisions.

It can be fatal to relax after the time control.

It is often a good idea to take a quick break from the board if you have just had to endure an emotional time scramble.

Chapter Two: Solutions

Exercise 1

□ Borik ■ Werner
Germany 1981

White is better, provided he finds

14 d5! exd5 15 Bg5

Suddenly Black has serious problems defending his h7-square.

15...Ne4

Or 15...g6 16 Rxe7 Qxe7 17 Nxd5 and wins.

16 Nxe4 dxe4 17 Qxe4 g6 18 Qh4 Qc7 19 Bb3 h5 20 Bf6 Bc5 21 Qg5 Kh7 22 Bc2 1–0

This entire game was repeated in Dizdar-Dizdarevic, Sarajevo 1988!

Exercise 2

□ Ljubojevic ■ M.Gurevich
Linares 1991

Black found the sensational sacrifice

12...Nxd4! 13 Nxd4 fxe5 14 fxe5 Nxe5

Now Black is threatening to move his knight from e5 and catch the white king in the crossfire.

15 Bc2 Ng6 16 Bxg6 hxg6 17 Nde2

Or 17 Ngf3 Bd6+ followed by ...e6-e5.

17...Qf2+ 18 Kh3 Bd6 19 Qb3 e5+

The bishop enters the game with a decisive check – and hasn't even had to move yet!

20 Kh2 Qxh4+ 21 Nh3 Bxh3 0–1

After 22 Qxh3 e4+ 23 g3 Rf2+ 24 Kg1 Qxh3 25 Rxh3 Rxe2 the game is up for White.

Exercise 3

□ Kinsman ■ Dunn
London 1993

In the game I played the impetuous

20 e4??

20 Bg3 with the idea of 21 h4 was a much better idea. My move simply opened the centre for Black's pieces to invade.

20...dxe4 21 Bxe4 Nef6 22 Bd3 c5! 23 Rd2

23 Be5 cxd4 24 Bxd4 e5 wins a piece since unless White takes on e5, which runs into a pin on the e-file, ...e5-e4 will follow.

23...cxd4 24 Nxd4 Nc5

White's position is now a total wreck.

25 Bc2 Nfe4 0–1

Exercise 4

□ Collier ■ Pein
Four Nations Chess League 1998/99

This time

15 e4

is a reasonable positional idea. Having sacrificed a pawn, White would like to open up the position to get at the displaced black king on e7. However, after

15...Qxc3 16 exd5 Qxd4 17 d6+ Qxd6 18 Nexc4 Qd4

White doesn't really have enough to justify his sacrifices. In this example, a tactical solution was called for: 15 Ndxc4! dxc4 16 Nxc4 Qxc3 17 Rc1 and White traps the black queen, as 17...Qb4 is met by 18 a3.

Chapter Three: Solutions

Exercise 1

□ Chernin ■ Dunnington
Cappelle la Grande open 1994

In the game White played

42 Qf6??

42 Qe5 should win easily.

42...h4+! 43 Kxh4 Rb8!! 44 Rxb8

If White declines the sacrifice with 44 Ra6 Qxd5 45 Ra7 Kg8, the game should still end in a draw.

44...Qxh3+!! 45 Kxh3 ½–½

A beautiful stalemate swindle!

Exercise 2

□ Bogatirev ■ Emalianov
Moscow 1975

There are two good ways for Black to play here:

a) 1...c5 2 Qb3 (or 2 Nd2 Qxg2+! 3 Kxg2 cxb4 4 Rxb4 Rc8 5 Nc4 Rc5! and Black should win the endgame) 2...Bc6 3 Ne3 Rd8 (not 3...Qxe3? 4 Qc4+ Kb7 5 Qf7+ with a draw by perpetual check) 4 Qc4+ (4 a5 is met simply by 4...b5) 4...Qxc4 5 Nxc4 Bxa4 and again the ending should be straightforward for Black.

b) 1...Bc6! 2 Rg1 Rd8! (2...Rf8, as recommended by Livshits, is slightly less precise due to 3 Nd2! Qxb4 4 cxb4 Kb7 5 dxc7 Kxc7 6 Rc1) 3 Nd2 (3 dxc7 Qxg2+! and 3 Qb5+ Bxb5 4 dxc7 Qh4 5 cxd8Q Qxd8 6 axb5+ Kxb5 7 Nxe5 Qd2 are easily winning for Black) Qxb4 4 cxb4 Kb7 5 b5 Be8! and the pin on the d-file ensures that Black will win the d-pawn as well.

However, in the game Black played the greedy

1...cxd6?? 2 Qb5+!! Bxb5 3 axb5+ Kb7 4 Nxd6+ Kc7 5 Nxe4 1–0

Exercise 3

□ Karpov ■ Taimanov
Leningrad 1977

37 b6??

37 Rb1 was necessary, and if 37...Ne3 then 38 Be2, when White just about has things under control.

37...Ra1 38 Rb1

38 Qe2 Qxd5, threatening a knight fork on d4, is also very unpleasant for White. Have you spotted Black's next move?

38...Ng3+!! 0–1

After 39 hxg3 Black plays 39...Ra8!! and then 40...Rh8 mating.

Exercise 4

□ Kasparov ■ Speelman
Linares 1992

In this position Jon Speelman took a practical decision to upset Kasparov's equilibrium. He tried the speculative

21...Be3!?

I think it's safe to say that very few players would even consider this bizarre move!

22 fxe3

22 Bxe3 is met by 22...Nxc3! with a very complicated position.

22...Qxe5 23 Qd3

Or 23 Bc2 f5!?

23...Ra6!

Another strange-looking move. By now Kasparov must have been wondering what on earth was going on. In fact, he handled the next few moves excellently, but eventually went astray and Speelman's enterprising play was ultimately rewarded with a draw.

Chapter Four: Solutions

Exercise 1

□ Kinsman ■ Harley
Thames Valley League 1989

Black would have had a very pleasant edge in the endgame after 24...Bf8 25 Rxf8 Rxf8, but instead he fell for

24...Qxe2??

25 Rce1 and 25 Rfe1 both fail to 25...Bxf2+, but White can cut off the defence of the e6-pawn with

25 Be3! Bxe3 26 Qxe6+ Kf8 27 Qxf5+ Ke7 28 Qe5+ Kd7 29 Rfd1+ Bd2 30 Qxe2 1–0

Exercise 2

□ Lputian ■ Lau
Dortmund 1988

21...Bxh6?

Black has a pleasant position after 21...Qa4.

22 Qd3 Qa4?

Black had to try 22...Bxe3 23 Qxc4, but White should be winning comfortably.

23 Bxh6 Rxd4 24 Qg3! 1–0

There is no defence to the threats of 25 Qb8+ and 25 Qe5.

Exercise 3

□ Relange ■ Emms
Paris-London 1994

White thought that it was safe to snatch the pawn with

19 Bxe4?? dxe4+ 20 Qxe4

and was rocked back on his heels by

20...f6!! 21 Qxc6

After 21 Bd4 (21 Bc3 and 21 Bg3 come to the same thing) 21...g4+ 22 Kf4 Bd6+ the queen drops.

21...fxe5+

White must have missed this *intermezzo*.

22 Ke4 bxc6 23 Rac1 Bb6 24 Rxc6 Rxf2 25 Rxh6 Kg7 26 Re6 Rxb2 27 Rc1 Re2 28 Rc3 Rf8 29 Rxe5 Rxg2 0–1

Instead of the greedy 19 Bxe4?? White should have tried 19 Rac1 with an unclear position.

Exercise 4

□ Ward ■ Summerscale
British Championship, Nottingham 1996

Black was tempted by

16...Bxc4??

The safe 16...c5! would have given Black total central domination.

17 Rxd4 Qxe5

17...cxb2+ 18 Kxb2 Qxe5 19 Bxc4 is also hopeless.

18 Qxf8+! 1–0

18...Kxf8 19 Rd8 is mate.

Chapter Five: Solutions

Exercise 1

□ Marciniak ■ Dobosz
Poland 1973

15...Nf2+! 16 Rxf2

16 Kg1 Ne4+ was obviously very bad for White, but now Black has the star move:

16...Bd4!! 0–1

After 17 Qxd4 Black delivers back-rank mate with 17...Re1.

Exercise 2

□ Lyell ■ Sowray
Four Nations Chess League 1997/98

White has a winning position because of the spectacular

28 Bh6+!! Kxh6 29 Kg1+!

This breaks the pin on the g-file and wins the black queen.

29...Qh5 30 Qf8+ Kg5 31 Rxh5+ Kxh5 32 bxc4 bxc4 33 Qxf7 Rxc2 34 Qxh7+ Kg5 35 Qxa7 c3 36 Qc5+ Kf4 37 Qd4+ Kg5 38 Kh2 Kh6 39 Kg3 Kh7 40 Qd7+ Kh6 41 Qd1 1–0

Exercise 3

□ Petrosian ■ Spassky
World Championship (12th matchgame), Moscow 1966

In the game White set up a 'windmill' with

32 Nxe5 dxc2 33 Bd4 dxe5 34 Bxe5+ Kh7 35 Rg7+ Kh8

Here White can 'hoover' up some material on the seventh rank, but the passed pawn on c2 ensures that he will have to take a draw by perpetual in the end.

36 Rf7+ Kg8 37 Rg7+ Kh8 38 Rg6+ Kh7 39 Rg7+ ½–½

In fact, Petrosian missed a win with 32 Qxd3! Bf5 33 Nxe5! Bxd3 34 Bd4! dxe5 35 Bxe5+ Kh7 36 Rg7+ Kh8 37 Rxc7+ Kg8 38 Rg7+ Kh8 39 Rxa7+ Kg8 40 Rg7+ Kh8 41 Rg3+! Kh7 42 Rxd3, when White's pawns will ultimately decide the game.

Exercise 4

□ Kinsman ■ Branford
Thames Valley League 1989

I played

24 Ba1?

and after

24...Bxd4?? 25 Rxa2 Black resigned

The queen is taboo: 25...Bxe3 (or 25...Bxa1 26 Qxb6) 26 Ra8+ Rd8 27 Rdxd8+ and mates.

However, after 24 Ba1 the calm 24...Qa7! would have given White terrible problems with his d4- and b3-pawns, e.g. 25 Rxa2 Qxa2+ 26 Bg2 Bf5! with the threat of ...c6-c5.

In fact 24 Bxg6! is the better choice. I was afraid of 24...Bxc4, when the pins down the b-file and seventh rank look very dangerous. However, White has several possible responses:

a) 25 Bxh5 is too risky after 25...Qxb3 26 Qf2 c5! 27 Ra1 Rxa1 28 Bxa1 e6, as White cannot easily resolve the pin on the long diagonal, e.g. 29 dxc5? Rxd2 30 Qxd2 Bxa1 31 Qd8+ Kh7 32 Qh4!? Bf6!! 33 Qxf6 (33 Bd1+ Bxh4 34 Bxb3 Bxg3+ 35 Kxg3 Bxb3 is also hopeless) 33...Qc2+ 34 Kg1 Qc1+ 35 Kh2 Qd2+ 36 Kg1 Qe1+ 37 Kh2 Qf2+ 38 Kh1 Bd5+ and mates.

b) 25 bxc4 Rxb2 26 Bxh5 Rxd4 27 Rxb2 Qxb2+ 28 Qe2 Rxd1 29 Qxb2 Bxb2 30 Bxd1 with a draw.

c) 25 Bb1! (I'm sure I altogether missed that this was even possible) 25...Qxb3 26 Qxb3 Bxb3 27 Bxa2 Bxa2 28 Ra1 Be6 (28...Bd5 29 Ra7 leaves Black somewhat tied up) 29 Ra7 b5 30 Rxd7 Bxd7 31 Ba3! Bf6 32 d5 and White has excellent winning chances in the ending.

Chapter Six: Solutions

Exercise 1

□ Ormos ■ Betotsky
Budapest 1951

An easy one to start with:

1...Rb1+ 2 Kh2 Rh1+!

The first in a trio of 'desperado' sacrifices.

3 Kxh1 Ng3+! 4 fxg3 Qxg2+! 5 Kxg2 ½–½

It's stalemate!

Exercise 2

□ Reshevsky ■ Kotov
Zurich Candidates 1953

Since 34...Qd1 is calmly met by 35 Rf1, Kotov played the inspired

34...Qe2!

Now 35 Rf1 Rd1! 36 Nd2 Qxd2 37 g3 Rxf1+ 38 Kxf1 Qc1+ 39 Ke2 Qc2+ 40 Kf1 Qc1+ is a draw, but unfortunately for Black Reshevsky managed to find the only winning move:

35 Qxf8+!!

Deflecting the rook from the d-file.

35...Rxf8 36 Rxe2 Rxc6 37 Rxe7 a5 38 h4 a4 39 Nd4 Rc1+ 40 Kh2 Rd1 41 Nb5 Rb1 42 Nd6 1–0

Okay, that swindle didn't work, but Kotov certainly deserved full marks for trying!

Exercise 3

□ Geller ■ Sveshnikov
USSR 1978

32...Re8! 33 Rxa5

If the queen moves away from the e-file then Black simply captures the rook on a2. Now, however, 33...Rxe4 is met by 34 Rxh5 with a won game.

33...d5!

Now both 34 Rxb3 Rxe4 35 fxe4 Qg4+ and 34 Qd3 Bc4 35 Qd1 Be2 36 Qxe2! Rxe2 37 Ra8+ Re8 38 Rbb8 Qg6+ end in a draw by perpetual check, whereas after 34 Qxe8+ Qxe8 35 Rxb3 Qg6+ 36 Kf1 Qd3+ White should probably repeat moves with 37 Kg2 Qg6+, since after 37 Ke1 h5 the passed h-pawn is very dangerous. However, White, who was probably feeling quite flustered as this point, thought he could win with

34 Re1??

Can you see how Black can turn the tables here?

Black's resourcefulness is rewarded by

34...Qg6+! 0–1

After 35 Qxg6 Black flicks in 35...Rxe1+ and only then recaptures on g6.

Exercise 4

□ Arnason ■ Timman
Reykjavik 1987

Timman played the wild and wacky

40...Bc5!

The last practical chance, which was elegantly described by the Dutch Grandmaster Hans Ree as 'inspired nonsense'. Black places yet another piece en prise in the hope of completely bamboozling his opponent. Given such a wide choice of pieces to take, White now unfortunately took the wrong one.

41 Rxf7??

41 Rxc5 would have ended the game.

41...Qxd6+ 42 Qxd6+ Bxd6+ 43 Kh1 e3

Suddenly the passed pawn is getting very dangerous.

44 Kg1?

Timman gives 44 Rxe7! Kxe7 45 Nc6+ Ke6 46 Nd4+ Kd5 47 Ne2 Ke4 48 Kg1 with a fortress position, but in fact White should probably also be able to draw with 44 Rf6!? Bg3 (not 44...Nf5 45 Nc6+! Kd7 46 Rxf5 e2 47 Re5! and wins) 45 Re6 Nf5 46 Nb5 Kd7! 47 Re4 Bf2 48 Kh2 Ng3 49 Rd4+ Kc6 50 Nc3 e2 51 Rc4+ Kb6 52 Nxe2.

44...Bc5 0–1

Here White lost on time in the act of playing 45 Kf1, although in fact after 45...Bxa7 46 Rf4 he would still have had fighting chances of a draw.

Chapter Seven: Solutions

Exercise 1

□ Reshevsky ■ Savon
Petropolis Interzonal 1973

White played

40 Qxg6+??

when after

40...Bxg6 0–1

he was indeed forced to resign without playing any more moves. In fact White had no less than four ways to checkmate his opponent, the quickest being 40 g5+! (40 Rh8+, 40 gxh5 and 40 Qg7+ would still have done the trick) 40...Kxg5 (40...Bxg5 41 Rh8 mate) 41 h4+ Kxh4 (41...Kh6 42 Rh8 mate) 42 Qf4 mate.

Exercise 2

□ Polugayevsky ■ Hort
Manila Interzonal 1976

In the game White went for the forcing line

32 Rc7?!

It looks good to take the seventh rank, but White is just walking into a self-pin.

32...Qb8 33 Qd7??

33 g3 would have been a lot better.

33...Re1+ 34 Kh2 Rc1! 35 g3 Rxc7 36 Qd6 Rb7 0–1

Can you imagine how uncomfortable Black would have been if his opponent had calmly played 32 g3 Re7 33 Kg2 instead? White just slowly improves his bishop and Black is left with no time to work out what he should really be doing.

Exercise 3

□ Tal ■ Smyslov
Bled Candidates 1959

Three of the possibilities listed are good for Black, whereas two result in defeat. Smyslov played

40...Rgd7?

but after

41 Rf6 1-0

he was forced to resign at the threat of Rf8 mate is devastating.

Also losing is 40...Re8? 41 Qf8+ Rg8 42 Bxg8 Rxf8 43 Rxf8 Bf5 44 d7! Qxd7 45 Be6+ Kg7 46 Bxd7 Bxd7 47 Rxh7+ Kxh7 48 Rf7+ Kg6 49 Rxd7. However, Black can defend with either:

a) 40...Rgg8 41 Bxg8 Rxg8 42 Re1 Qb7;

b) 40...Rdg8 41 Rh5 (41 Bxg8 Rxg8 42 Re1 Qb7 transposes to the previous note) 41...Qd7! 42 Bxg8 Rxg8 43 Qf7 Qxf7 44 Rxf7 Rd8; or

c) 40...Qd7! 41 Qf8+ (41 Be6 Qe8 42 Qf5 Bxe6 43 Rxe6 Qd7 also wins) 41...Rg8 42 Bxg8 Rxf8 43 Rxf8 Kg7 44 Rxh7+ Kxf8 45 Rxd7 Bxd7 and Black is a piece up in the endgame.

Exercise 4

□ Motwani ■ Chandler
Blackpool Zonal 1990

If you suggested

30...Rxf4!!? 0-1

then either you need to go back and brush up on the rules or you've seen this position before! White completely forgot that his opponent was in check and, recognising that 31 gxf4!!? loses to 31...Rg8!!? he resigned. A more normal conclusion to the game might have been 30...Kf7 31 Nxf5 Rxb2 32 Nxe7 Kxe7 33 Be5 Rd8! 34 Nd5+ Rxd5 35 Bxb2 Rd2 and Black really can resign with a clear conscience!