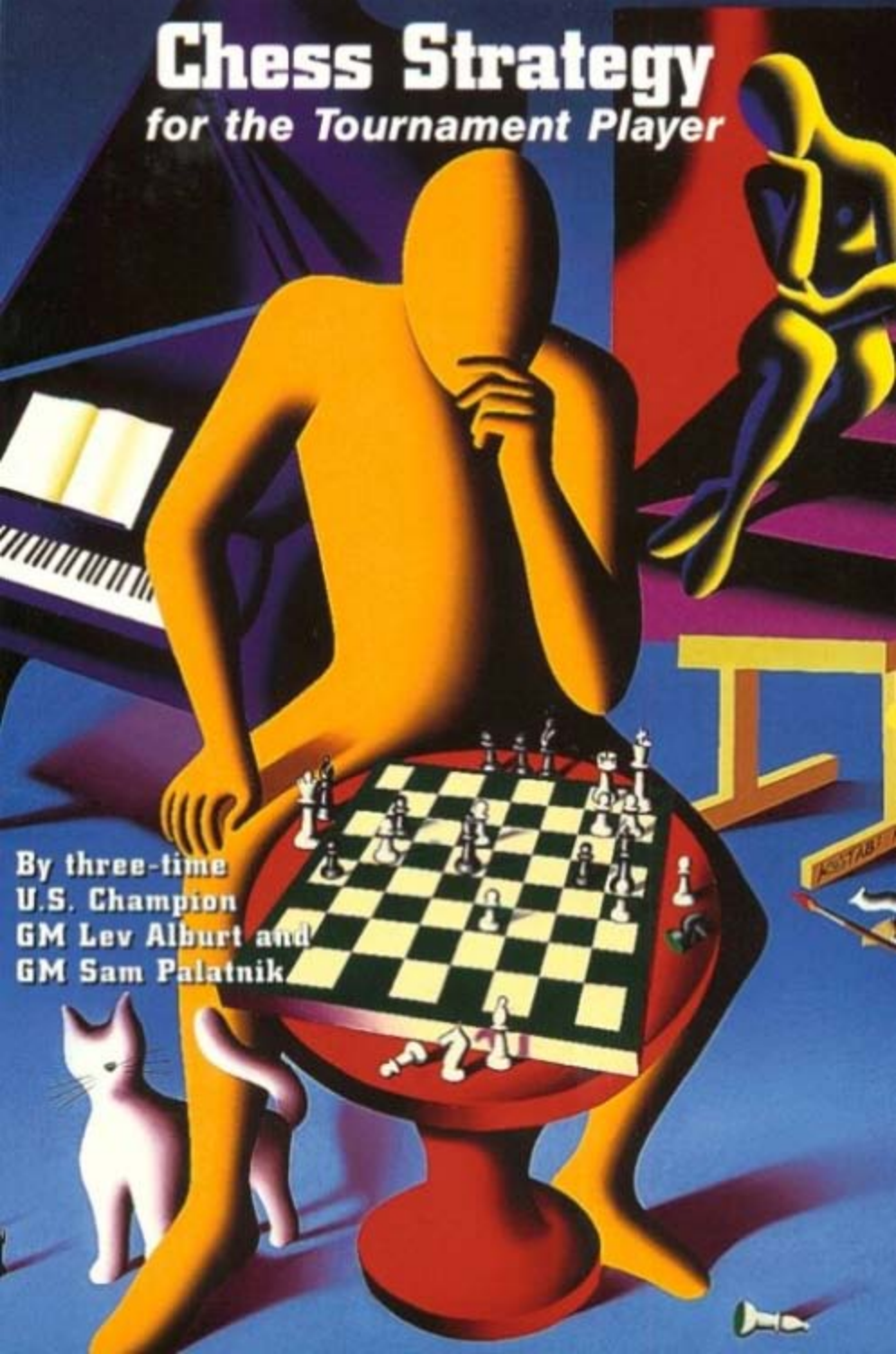


COMPREHENSIVE CHESS COURSE SERIES

Chess Strategy

for the Tournament Player

By three-time
U.S. Champion
GM Lev Alburt and
GM Sam Palatnik



INTRODUCTION

The goal of this very practical book is to show you how to play the middlegame correctly. We do this by acquainting you with the basis of chess strategy, and by demonstrating the laws of positional play with both classical and modern examples.

Whether you prefer “quiet” positions or wild, tactical melees, the methods you’ll learn from this book can become the very foundation of your future success in chess.

Importantly, the strategy examined and explained in this book is applicable to all phases of chess—opening, middle game, and endgame. (Given today’s emphasis on “specialty” books of all kinds, we could claim to give you “three books in one”!) Regardless of the fashions of opening sequences or the transient evaluations of specific, “hot” positions, the knowledge in this book can successfully guide your play for a lifetime. It distills centuries of the most important and practical strategic chess knowledge into twelve chapters.

The basis of modern positional, or strategic, play is the theory of the first World Chess Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz. His ideas have been further developed by Tarrasch, Nimzovich, Capablanca, Alekhine, Euwe, Botvinnik, Fischer, Karpov, Kasparov, and many others.

Before going any further, let’s define a few terms. These definitions aren’t absolutely rigid—but they’re useful generalizations, and by themselves introduce important strategic concepts.

All operations should be undertaken with a certain goal, the object of attack, in mind. To swim without a goal is strategic confusion. — Grandmaster Aron Nimzovich

A plan is a visualized series of steps that make it possible to achieve a goal. Learning to plan is absolutely essential for every player who wishes to improve. Indeed, one of the attractions of chess is the way in which it teaches foresight and planning.

Strategy is the art of forming an overall plan. Frequently the fact that correct strategic planning dictates the choice of objectives is understated. Strategy is the “grand scheme” for a game. In a sense, strategy is the opposite of tactics, which are the application of a short series of forced moves to achieve an immediate improvement. The words positional and strategic are frequently used interchangeably.

The very first step in composing an appropriate strategy is to evaluate the position correctly. All of us at first see the challenge of such a comprehensive evaluation as daunting and confusing. This book is planned, however, to take the mystery out of

such positional analysis. Here we are lucky to have the benefit of the great masters to show us how to evaluate positions logically and methodically.

The method for evaluating a position was initially developed by Steinitz in the 19th century. He first divided the position into elements. Next he compared the elements of White's and Black's positions, and only then formed an opinion, determined a plan, and, finally, looked for a specific move. Based on the accomplishments of his predecessors and contemporaries, as well as his own experience, Steinitz formulated the following positional elements:

1. Development
2. Mobility
3. Control of the center
4. The positions of the kings
5. Weak and strong squares in both camps
6. Pawn structure
7. Queenside pawn majority
8. Open files
9. Two bishops against bishop and knight or against two knights

The above elements still form the strategic basis for tournament players. Understanding these elements will enrich and broaden your strategic ideas, and will provide a foundation for a deeper understanding of the laws and principles of chess.

Based on these elements, a chess player can evaluate a position and develop a strategic plan. The evaluation must be confirmed by a concrete calculation of variations, the range of which depends on the character of the position. The merits and demerits of one side can be balanced by pluses and minuses of the opposite side, and in such a case we might say that the game is equal. But if a player's position does not have enough pluses to compensate, for example, for the opponent's control of an open file, then we would conclude that his opponent stands better.

When a player has enough broad concepts at his fingertips and understands their relative importance, he can correctly evaluate the position and create a strategic plan. We hope to persuade our readers that the true "picture" of the position is determined by the pawns, that their location can suggest a plan of action, that moves are often made not just to create or banish a threat, but also to strengthen the position.

Our study of strategy is divided into 12 chapters, covering most of Steinitz's original elements, albeit in a different order. We do not discuss "development" and "the positions of the kings." These subjects were covered in volume 4 of our Comprehensive Chess Course series, *The King In Jeopardy*.

Steinitz's Four Rules of Strategy

1. The right to attack belongs to the side that has a positional advantage, and that side not only has the right to attack but also the obligation to do so, or else his advantage may evaporate. The attack should be concentrated on the weakest square in the opponent's position.
2. If in an inferior position, the defender should be ready to defend and make compromises, or take other measures, such as a desperate counterattack.
3. In an equal position, the opponents should maneuver, trying to achieve a position in which they have an advantage. If both sides play correctly, an equal position will remain equal.
4. The advantage may be a big, indivisible one (for example, a rook on the seventh rank), or it may be a whole series of small advantages. The goal of the stronger side is to store up the advantages, and to convert temporary advantages into permanent ones.

— CHAPTER 1 —

Good and Bad Bishops

The activity of the bishop greatly depends on the location of the pawns. A bishop that is not blocked by its own pawns is called a good bishop, while a bad bishop is one whose mobility is limited by its own pawns (and sometimes the opponent's pawns too). The following principle of interaction between the pawns and the bishop was formulated by former World Champion Jose Raul Capablanca:

When your opponent has a bishop, you should place your pawns on the same color squares as the bishop. However, if you have a bishop yourself, then you should try to keep the pawns on different colored squares than your bishop, no matter if your opponent has a bishop or not.

Of course, the general correctness of these principles does not mean that we should follow them dogmatically. We will demonstrate later how these principles are malleable, depending on the need of the position.

Game 1

Alatortsev — Levenfish

Leningrad, 1937



Diagram 1 Black to move

In Diagram 1, all but one of the Black pawns are located on dark squares, while most of the White pawns and the bishops of both sides are located on light squares.

There is a noticeable difference in the activity of the bishops: the Black bishop on d7 is definitely a good bishop. Its movement is not obstructed by its own pawns and it protects the light squares from enemy invaders. This bishop and its own pawns complement each other in controlling both light and dark squares. In particular, Black controls e5, an important central square that cannot be attacked

by a White bishop or pawn.

The bishop on g2 can be condemned as a bad bishop because its movement is greatly restricted by its own pawns. White's position contains weak dark squares because neither his pawns nor his bishop are able to protect them.

Based on these factors we can conclude that Black's position is strategically better. Thus Black should be able to develop a plan that realizes the advantages inherent in the position.

1. ... Kf6

2. Ke2 Rh5!

The rook finds an even more active position.

3. Rh1 Ke5!

Centralization of the king in the endgame is usually very useful.

4. Kd3 h6

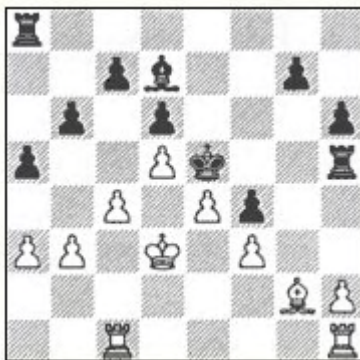


Diagram 2 Position after 4. ... h6

Now all Black's pawns are on dark squares.

5. h3? Rg5!

6. Rh2 Rg3

7. h4 Rg8

8. Ke2 g5

9. hxg5 hxg5

10. Kf2 g4!

11. Rh5+ Kd4

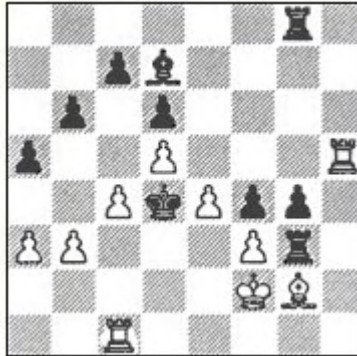


Diagram 3 Position after 11. ... Kd4

12. Rd1+?

With this move, White only accelerates his own demise, but other moves are bad too. For example, after 12. Rh7 gxf3 13. Bxf3 Bg4 14. Bxg4 R8xg4 15. Rxc7 Rh4!, Black wins.

12. ... Kc3

13. Rh7 gxf3

14. Bf1

Or 14. Bxf3? Rxf3+ 15. Kxf3 Bg4+ 16. Kxf4 Bxd1, with a winning advantage for Black.

14. ... Kc2!

15. Rd3

Or 15. Ra1 Bg4 16. Rxc7 Rh8, with a decisive attack.

15. ... Bh3!?

Black can also win with 15. ... Bg4 16. Rxc7 Rg2+ 17. Bxg2 (17. Ke1 f2 mate) 17. ... fxg2.

16. Rxf3 Rxf3+

17. Kxf3 Bxf1

18. Rxc7 Rf8

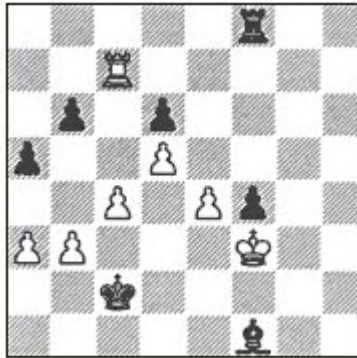


Diagram 4 Position after 18. ... Rf8

With an extra bishop and a strong passed pawn, Black wins easily.

19. Rd7 Kd3 20. Rxd6 Be2+ 21. Kf2 f3 22. Rh6 Rg8 23. Rh2 Kxe4 24. Rh4+ Kd3 25. Rh2 Rg6 26. b4 axb4, White resigns.

Black's dominance of the dark squares allowed him to bring his king deep into White's position, with decisive effect.

Game 2

Taylor — Alekhine

Hastings, 1936/37



Diagram 5 Position after White's 20th move

If only White is given the opportunity to play e3-e4, his bishop on d2 will be able to exert its force over a greater number of squares. Black takes immediate steps

to restrict this bishop, and in so doing he turns a temporarily passive bishop into a permanently bad bishop.

20. ... Qd7

21. Bc1

Black wins a piece after 21. Qc2 Rc8 22. Qd1 Rd8, while 21. Rd1 Rd8 leads to a decisive pin.

21. ... a4

22. Qc2

The endgame after 22. Qd1 Qxd1 23. Rxd1 Rc8 would be very difficult for White because Black's rook penetrates to the second rank.

22. ... Rc8

23. Qe2 Qd5



Diagram 6 Position after 23. ... Qd5

Forcing the a-pawn to a “wrong” square.

24. a3 b3



Position after 24. ... b3

And now the White bishop, forced to remain on c1 to defend the b2-pawn, will forever play the role of the bad bishop.

25. e4 Qc4

26. Qe1 Qc2

27. f4 Bc5+

28. Kh1 Bd4

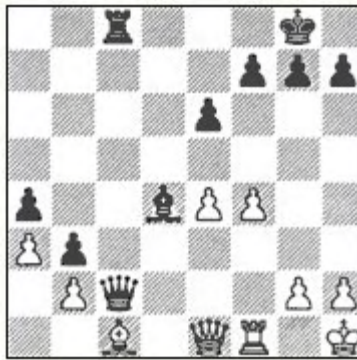


Diagram 7 Position after 28. ... Bd4

And b2 is a target for the good bishop.

29. f5 Bxb2

30. Bxb2 Qxb2

White resigns

Game 2 showed us Alekhine's winning strategy. He made his opponent's bishop "bad." He fixed White's queenside pawns on the "wrong" squares. Then he occupied the c-file and the second rank. This accumulation of advantages led to the collapse of White's position.

Game 3

Palatnik — Dandridge

Chicago, 1996

1. d4 d5
2. c4 c6
3. Nf3 Nf6
4. Qc2 e6

This move restricts the activity of the c8-bishop.

5. g3 Nbd7
6. Bg2 Bd6
7. 0-0 0-0
8. Bf4



Diagram 8 Position after 8. Bf4

With this move, White challenges Black for control of the e5 square, deciding that an exchange of the dark-squared bishops would be in his favor. If Black retreats (8. ... Be7), he loses a tempo. His best chance was 8. ... Bxf4, with some compensation for the exchange of his better bishop in the doubling of White's pawns after 9. gxf4.

8. ... Qc7?!
9. Bxd6 Qxd6
10. Nbd2 h6?!

This move doesn't address Black's main problem—namely, how to improve his bad bishop on c8. Better was 10. ... b6.

11. e4 Nxe4

12. Nxe4 dxe4

13. Qxe4



Diagram 9 Position after 13. Qxe4

The position is now clearly better for White, and he begins to think about how to win. His plan is to keep the Black bishop in “prison” on c8, while being ready for ... c6-c5. This move would give White control over the d-file, make the bishop on g2 more powerful, and lead to a White pawn majority on the queenside.

13. ... Nf6

14. Qe2 Bd7

15. Rad1 Rad8

16. Ne5

Placing the knight on the right square while opening more space for the g2-bishop.

16. ... Bc8



Diagram 10 Position after 16. ... Bc8

Black has made some progress: He has at least connected his rooks and is now

ready to play ... c6-c5.

17. c5!

Although this move relinquishes White's control over the d5 square, it is clearly best, since it is a life sentence for the prisoner on c8.

17. ... Qc7

18. b4 Nd5

19. Qb2 Rde8

20. Rfe1 Qd8

21. a4

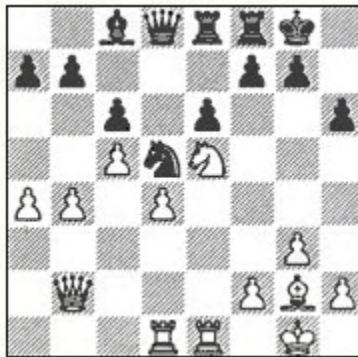


Diagram 11 Position after 21. a4

White is in no hurry. He first tries to improve his position.

21. ... a6

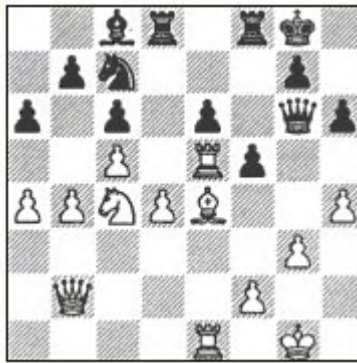
22. Nc4 Nc7

23. h4 Qf6

24. Re5 Rd8

25. Rde1 Qg6

26. Be4 f5



If 26. ... Qg4 then 27. Ne3 Qh3 28. Bg2, and the Black queen falls. Black's last move, 26. ... f5, however, not only makes it even more difficult to free the bishop, but also weakens both the e6-pawn and the e5-square.

27. Bg2 Qg4

28. Nd6 Rd7

29. Qd2 g5

30. hxg5 hxg5



Diagram 12 Position after 30. ... hxg5

Now White is ready to trade queens.

31. Qd1

Less clear is 31. R1e4 Qh5 (not 31. ... fxe4 32. Rxc5+) 32. g4 Qg6.

31. ... Qxd1

32. Rxd1 g4

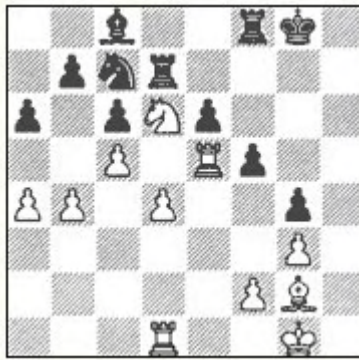


Diagram 13 Position after 32. ... g4

Black's last pawn has taken its place along with all the others on the light squares; now the bishop on c8 is nothing more than a tall pawn

33. Kf1 Kg7

34. Ke2 Kf6

35. Rh1 Kg6

36. Kd3 Rh7

37. Rxh7 Kxh7

38. Re1 Kg7

39. Rh1 Rd8

40. Ke3 Ne8



Diagram 14 Position after 40. ... Ne8

Trading knights could have helped Black's defense, so

41. Nc4 Bd7

42. Kf4

The White king will use the dark squares to cut through the enemy camp like a hot knife through butter.

42. ... Rc8

43. Ke5 Rc7

44. Nb6 Kg8

45. Bf1 Black resigns

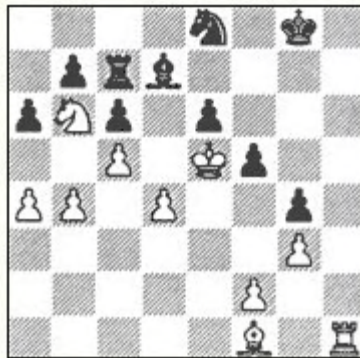


Diagram 15 Final position

White's bishop will come to c4 with irresistible threats. If now 45. ... Ng7, then 46. Kd6 Ne8+ 47. Ke7, and the White king's invasion decides the struggle.

The last part of Game 3 — after Black's bishop was made permanently bad — reminds us of Game 1, Alatortsev - Levenfish. As in that game, the king's intrusion into the enemy camp via weak squares — controlled neither by the enemy bishop nor his pawns — proved decisive.

Game 4

Botvinnik — Kan

11th USSR Championship

Leningrad, 1939



Diagram 16 Position after Black's 25th move

Some positions with bishops that would ordinarily be considered good or bad by the usual criteria require a more subtle evaluation. It is not always as simple as Capablanca suggested; that is, to place your pawns on the opposite color of your bishop.

26. e4

The White bishop is now surrounded by his own pawns. But from its protected position on d5 it exerts power from the center toward both enemy flanks. It can't protect its king, but here this isn't a very important consideration. The range and impact of the bishop's activity from d5 is greater than it would be from any other square; e.g., it would be more restricted and less effective on d3. The Black bishop, facing impenetrable barriers on all sides, is much more restricted than White's bishop. The position is better for White.

26. ... Bc8

26. ... b5 leads to the loss of the c5-pawn after 27. cxb5 Bxb5 28. Rb1.

27. Qa4 Bd7

28. Qa7 Be8

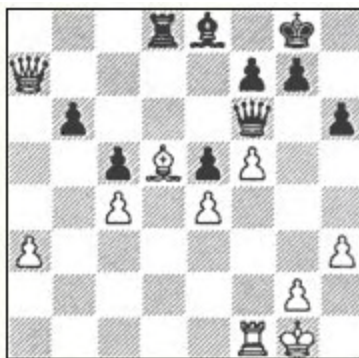


Diagram 17 Position after 28. ... Be8

Black must protect his pawn on f7, which is attacked by White's queen and bishop. (It should be clear by now that White's bishop, although blocked by his pawns on c4 and e4, is not "bad" at all!)

Furthermore, White's queen on a7 and the half open b-file point to another weakness in Black's position — his b6-pawn.

29. Rb1 Rd6

30. a4

This maneuver will soon win a pawn.

30. . . . Kh7

31. a5 bxa5

32. Qxa5

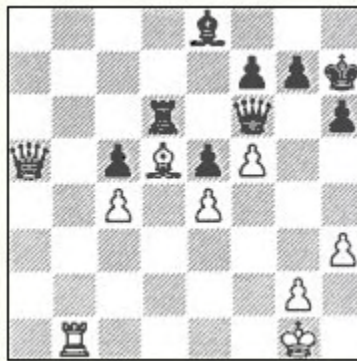


Diagram 18 Position after 32. Qxa5

Now nothing can protect the c5-pawn.

32. ... Ra6

33. Qxc5 Ra2

34. Qe3



Diagram 19 Position after 34. Qe3

Defending against the threat ... Qg5, with which Black could try to create counterplay. Note that Black's bishop on e8 still remains passive.

34. ... Qa6

With White's kingside protected, Black now attempts to activate his heavy pieces from the queenside.

35. Rb8 Qa4

36. Kh2

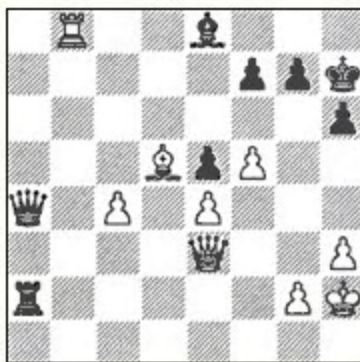


Diagram 20 Position after 36. Kh2

36. ... Ra3

Or 36. ... Qc2 37. Qg3 Ra1 38. Rxe8 Qd1 39. Qg6+! fxc6 40. Bg8+ Kh8 41. Bf7+ Kh7 42. Bxc6 mate, or 42. fxc6 mate.

37. Qc5 Ra2

38. Ra8

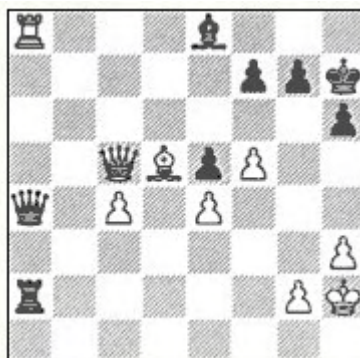


Diagram 21 Position after 38. Ra8

38. ... Qxa8

Or 38. ... Qc2 39. Rxa2 Qxa2 40. Qe7, and White wins.

39. Bxa8 Rxa8

40. Qxe5 Bc6

41. Qc7 Black resigns

Botvinnik masterfully used his dominant bishop to win first a pawn, and then the game.

Learning Exercise 1-1:

A “bad” bishop to the defense!

Sometimes a “bad” bishop is not so bad in defense, as we will see in the next two instructive examples.

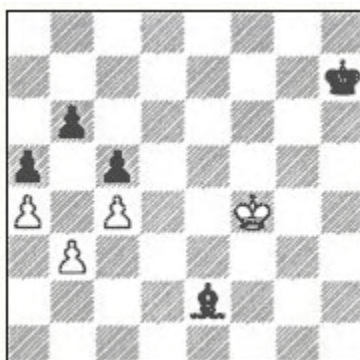


Diagram 22

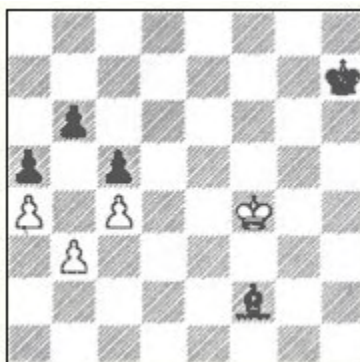


Diagram 23

*Which position is preferable for Black —
should his bishop be on e2 or f2?*

In Diagram 22 above, Black's pawns are located "correctly" just as Capablanca's principle tells us, but White's king can win them all!

1. Ke5 Bd1

After 1. ... Kg6 2. Kd6 Kf6 3. Kc6 Ke5 4. Kxb6 Kd4, then 5. Kxa5 and 6. b4 secures the draw.

2. Kd6 Bxb3

3. Kc6

And Black's pawns will be captured by the White king, resulting in a draw.

But Diagram 23 is a different story. This position is winning for Black regardless of who is to move. Here Black has what may ordinarily be called a bad bishop since its activity is somewhat limited by his own pawns and it has no targets. But in this position, Black's goal is to use his bishop to protect his pawns from being destroyed by the enemy king until his own king can join the game. Then, through the combined action of his king, bishop and pawns, he will gobble up all the White pawns and win.

Thus the extent to which a bishop is blocked by its own pawns (the usual criterion that determines whether it is good or bad) is not the only measure of a bishop's usefulness in practical play.

Learning Exercise 1-2:

Exchanging the fianchettoed bishop

Chess players frequently wish to exchange an opponent's fianchettoed bishop. A fianchettoed bishop, as a rule, is a good one if its mobility is not limited by its own central pawns. In addition, the exchange of this bishop leads to the weakening of a complex of squares. In the case of a fianchettoed bishop near the king, this weakening may open up avenues for an attack. In general, if your opponent has a good bishop, it makes sense to exchange it. Such an exchange creates weak squares throughout the opponent's position as a result of the bishop's absence. Thus we not only get rid of the opponent's active piece through the exchange, but we also receive an opportunity to operate on the weak squares in his camp.

Finally, there is one other point that we need to make. At the beginning of the game the activity of the other pieces may mask the effect of a bad bishop, but when these pieces are exchanged in the transition to the endgame, the bad bishop is often the cause of defeat.

With these facts in mind, here is an assignment for you, taken from a position that occurred in a real game.

Petrosian — Gheorghiu

Moscow, 1967



Diagram 24 Position after Black's 14th move

With his last move, Black offered the exchange of his bishop for the long-range fianchettoed White bishop on g2. How should White respond?

15. e4!

Facing the prospect of an exchange of bishops, White changes the pawn structure, closing the diagonal for the g2-bishop and preparing for a pawn assault with f2-f4.

This negates the value of its exchange. Now if Black reconsiders trading and retreats his bishop to e6 or d7, losing two tempi, then f2-f4 will follow, with better play for White.

Conclusion: After 15. e4! White stands better.

— CHAPTER 2 —

Bishops of Opposite Color

The following example is a simple illustration of how the harmonious and focused placement of forces can successfully influence the outcome in a position with bishops of opposite color.

Instructive example

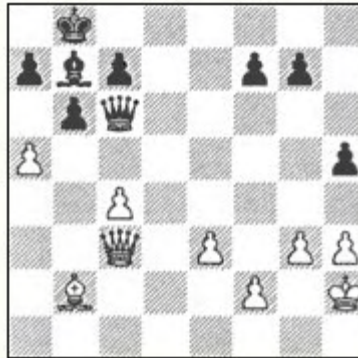


Diagram 25

The bishop and queen on both sides are in harmony, working well together. But the target of Black's attack is the enemy king, while White's bishop and queen aim at a mere pawn. Black is winning, even with White to move.

The next example offers a similar situation.

Game 5

Matulovich — Botvinnik

Belgrade, Match of the Century, 1970



Diagram 26 Black to move

Black is a pawn down, but notice his dark-squared bishop that glares menacingly at the b2 square near the White king. Only the king himself protects this square. Compare Black's cleric to the White bishop, which does not pose any immediate threat to the Black king because the g6 pawn is well protected by the pawn on f7. Thus, Black is clearly much better and has a choice of promising moves to consider, such as 1. ... c3!?, 1. ... Qb6 (actually played), and finally 1. ... Qa7! which gives Black a decisive edge.

1 Qa7!

2. Re2

If2. Kb1 Ra8! 3. Qa3 Qd4!. This is the point — the variation shows the strength of the queen-and-bishop battery when it is aimed at the main target, the king. Now after 4. Qc3 Qxc3 5. bxc3 Bxc3, Black wins the rook.

2. ... Qa1+

3. Bb1 Rd1+!

4. Kxd1 Qxb1+

5. Kd2 Qxb2+

6. Kd1

6. Ke3 Qd4 mate; 6. Ke1 Qc1 mate.

6. ... Qb1+

7. Kd2 c3+

and Black wins.

In our next example we will try to look inside the chess “soul” of the bishop in order to understand the unique characteristics of its play.

The bishop's ability to outmaneuver the opposing knight when the play is on both flanks is well known, as is the bishop's ability to fence in the knight and limit its movement.

And there are many examples of how easy it is for the bishop to coordinate its force with that of friendly pieces, especially with his counterpart who moves on the opposite color. One has only to recall the “classic” bishop sacrifice on h7, as well as the “Lasker sacrifice” (double-bishop sacrifice on h7 and g7), to illustrate this

point.

No chess piece (and certainly not the more valuable queen or rook!) wants to be embarrassed by being pinned by a bishop, which — although counted as a minor piece — can certainly exert major force under such circumstances.

The bishop also has a significant drawback: It can be hemmed in by pawns, either his own or by the opponent's. But when a player avoids this aspect of the bishop's character, then the piece can be transformed into a diagonally-moving tyrant!

Game 6

Durisch, Han & Hisler — Tarrasch

Nuremberg, 1904

In this game, Dr. Tarrasch played against three opponents in consultation.

We will occasionally refer to his comments, based on those appearing in chess historian Jacob Neishtadt's 1983 Russian-language biography Siegbert Tarrasch. Tarrasch's notes, which were made nearly 100 years ago, permit us to observe the classic approach to the art of chess and therefore draw historical parallels. Many of his conclusions, which were the fir bricks in the foundation of chess theory, continue to be important to us today.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6 4. 0-0 Nxe4 5. d4 Be7 6. dxe5

Dr. Tarrasch prefers 6. Qe2.

6. ... d5

7. c3

Tarrasch calls this a weak move and indicates that it would have been better for White to continue to develop his pieces.

7. ... 0-0



Diagram 27 Position after 7. ... 0-0

Black has overcome the opening difficulties and has reached a game with good prospects. His central pawn occupies a more profitable position than the enemy pawn. Says Dr. Tarrasch, "White does not even hint about making an attack." It is hard to disagree with his assessment!

8. Bxc6?

This is a weak move because White trades away a good bishop that guards the light squares, but Dr. Tarrasch said that no other White moves seem good either, remarking that "In a bad position all moves seem bad." This statement is certainly true in general, but not all analysts would agree that the position prior to the exchange on c6 is so bad for White. We should nevertheless remember his conclusion — that in a bad position all moves DO seem bad!

8. ... bxc6

9. Nd4 Bd7

10. f3 Nc5

11. Qe2 Ne6

12. Nxe6? fxe6!

Opening the f-file. Dr. Tarrasch states that 12. Nxe6? was a decisive mistake. Until this moment White still had hopes of using his pawn majority on the kingside. But now White's kingside chances become nonexistent, while Black has two bishops, open files for his rooks, a queenside pawn majority, and a potential passed pawn in the center. After Black's previous move, Tarrasch told the spectators that if White ever played f3-f4, then Black would deliver checkmate on g2! His prophecy came true, but only after another 47 moves. Looking at the position in the diagram, especially considering the temporarily fenced-in bishop on d7, one can only marvel at Tarrasch's deep understanding of the position.



Diagram 28 Position after 12. ... fxe6

13. f4?

The consequences of this move provide us with an instructive lesson.

13. ... c5

14. Be3 Rb8

The bishop is getting ready to show his teeth.

15. Qd2 Bb5

16. Rd1 Bc6

Already, on the distant horizon, we can see that a checkmate is brewing on g2.

17. Na3 Qe8

18. Rab1 Rd8

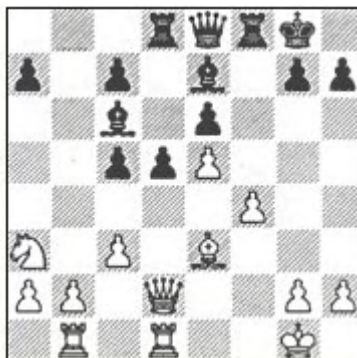


Diagram 29 Position after 18. ... Rd8

19. Rbc1

If 19. Nc2 then 19. ... d4 20. cxd4 cxd4 21. Bxd4 Be4, with the threats of ... Qg6 and ... c5 to follow.

19. ... d4

Anyway!

20. cxd4 cxd4

21. Bf2

White cannot capture the pawn on d4 because of 21. ... Ba4, followed by ... c5.

21. ... Ba4

22. Re1 c5

23. Nc4 Bc6

24. Nd6

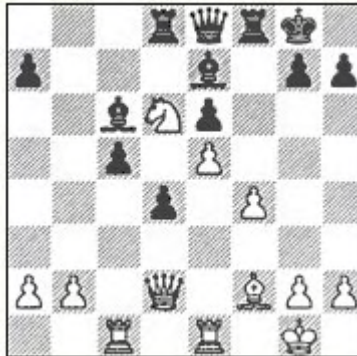


Diagram 30 Position after 24. Nd6

24. ... Rxd6!

This Exchange sacrifice gives Black an extra pawn, two bishops, a passed pawn, a strong attack, and a much better game.

25. exd6 Bxd6

26. Bg3

The move 26. g3 fatally weakens the light squares around White's king. Black would attack with ... Qe8-Qh5-Qd5 — possibly followed by ... Qg2 mate!

26. ... h5

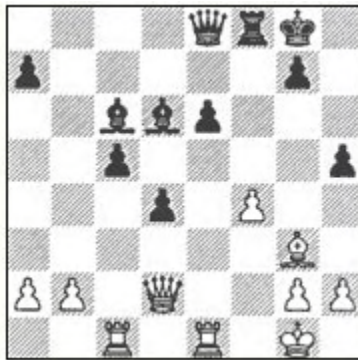


Diagram 31 Position after 26. ... h5

27. b4

If White tries to stop 27. ... h4 by first playing 27. h4 himself, Black would reply 27. ... Qg6. With a lingering threat of checkmate on g2, Black would capture the pawn on f4 for free.

27. ... h4

28. bxc5 Bc7

29. Bxh4 Bxf4

30. Qxd4 Qh5!

31. Bg3 Bxc1

32. Rxc1 Qe2

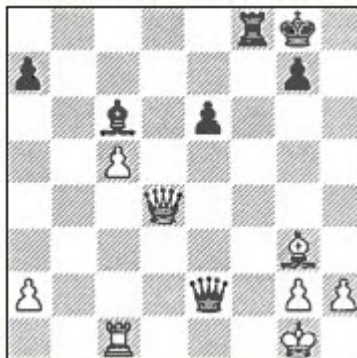


Diagram 32 Position after 32. ... Qe2

Black equalizes material and continues his attack. Now Black's threats against g2 become serious.

33. Bf2 Qxa2

34. Qe3

No help is 34. Ra1, as after 34. ... Qc2 White can't take on a7.

34. ... a5

Activating another of Black's assets.

35. Re1 Rf6

36. Re2 Qd5

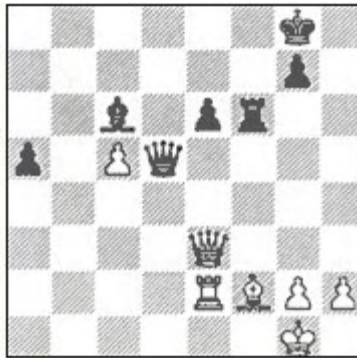


Diagram 33 Position after 36. ... Qd5

Another mate threat on g2! It's clear that Black's prediction of mate on g2 was not an empty threat.

37. Bg3 a4

38. Rd2 Qc4

39. h3

As 39. Rd8+ Kf7 promises White nothing, he makes luft for his king.

39. ... Qc1+

40. Kh2 Bd5

Preventing Rd8+.

41. Be5 Rg6

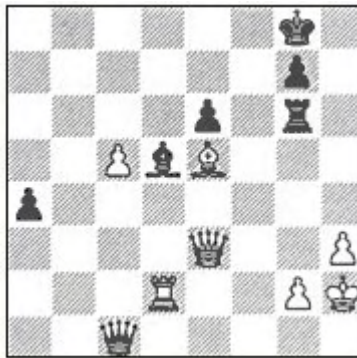


Diagram 34 Position after 41. ... Rg6

42. Qd3

The threat was 42. ... Rxc2+.

42. ... Rg5

43. Rc2 Qb1

44. Bg3 Rf5

45. Rc3 Qa1



Diagram 35 Position after 45. ... Qa1

46. c6

White tries to deflect Black from his plans, because otherwise he can't stop the invasion of Black's rook into his camp. After 46. Ra3 Qb2, Black wins.

46. ... Rf1

47. Bh4

Again the White king needs more room, but White also needs to keep control of

the e1-square. If White's bishop leaves its defense of e1, then Black plays 47. ...Qe1, followed by ...Rh1 mate.

47. ... Rh1+

48. Kg3 Rd1

49. Qe3 Re1

50. Qd3 Qb2

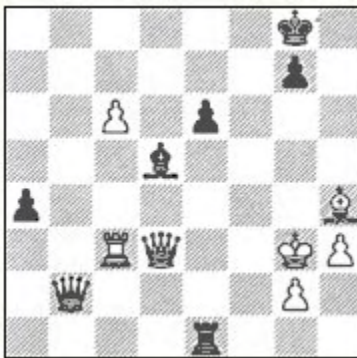


Diagram 36 Position after 50. ... Qb2

51. Rc2

On 51. Qc2, Black wins by deflecting White's rook with 51. ... Re3+!.

51. ... Qe5+

52. Kf2 Rb1

It's simple to attack the enemy king when he leaves his castle! Now Black threatens mate on e1.

53. Qd2

53. Qe2 Qf4+, 53. Re2 Qf4+, or 53. Qe3 Qf5+ all lose immediately.

53. ... Qe4

54. Kg3 Rb3+

55. Kh2

If 55. Rc3, then 55. ... Qe5+ wins the rook.

55. ... Qxh4

56. c7

If the consultants had heard Tarrasch's prediction of "mate on g2," they might have resigned here instead of allowing it to occur.

56. ... Qg3+

57. Kg1 Rb1+

58. Rc1 Rxc1+

59. Qxc1 Qxg2 mate

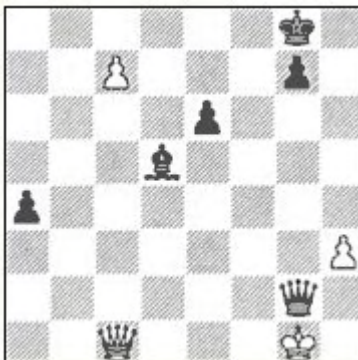


Diagram 37 Final position

And Tarrasch said "Quod erat demonstrandum!" (Just what we needed to prove.) The threat against g2 forecast on the twelfth move was a leitmotiv throughout the game.

Game 7

Rubinstein — Spielmann

Zemmering, 1926

1. c4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e3 Nf6 4. Nf3 e6 5. Nbd2 g6?! 6. b3 Qa5 7. Be2 Bg7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Qc2 Nbd7 10. Bb2 Rd8 11. a3



Diagram 38 Position after 11. a3

11. ... Ne8

Can Black activate his light-squared bishop? Not by 11. ... c5?, as 12. b4 cxb4 13. axb4 Qxb4 14. c5 traps Black's queen.

12. Rfc1 Qc7

13. b4 Nb6

14. a4 Nxc4

15. Nxc4 dxc4

16. Qxc4 Bd7

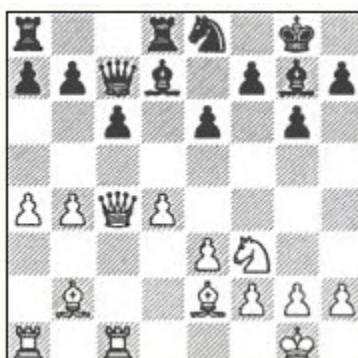


Diagram 39 Position after 16. ... Bd7

The bishop does as much as it can.

17. Ne5 Rac8

18. b5

White develops a queenside initiative. He's ready to give Black an isolated, weak

pawn on c6. Black had no choice but to defend passively. Since Black can't activate his light-squared bishop, he puts it on e8.

18. ... Nd6

19. Qb3 Be8

20. Rc2 Nf5

21. bxc6 bxc6

22. Rac1 Ne7

23. Bf3 Rb8

24. Qa2

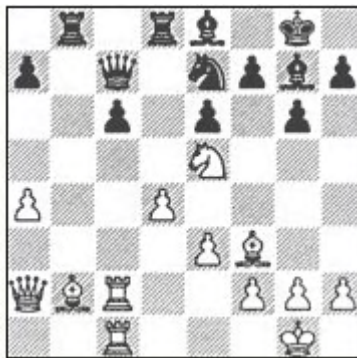


Diagram 40 Position after 24. Qa2

White maximizes his pressure, creating a weakness on c6 and attacking it. Black now must exchange his dark-squared bishop to decrease the pressure, but this leads to other problems — namely, weakness on the dark squares.

24. ... Bxe5

25. dxe5 Nd5



Diagram 41 Position after 25. ... Nd5

26. Bxd5!

White cold-bloodedly exchanges his bishop for the Black knight, which is Black's best placed piece. With bishops of opposite color on the board, White should be able to exploit the weakness of Black's dark squares on the kingside. White's bishop will dominate the dark diagonals, while Black's unemployed bishop idles like a big pawn on e8.

26. ... Rxd5

The alternative 26. ...exd5 is very dangerous for Black: for example, with White's queen on d4, a breakthrough with e5-e6 would follow. White could even play 27. e6 immediately — after 27. ...fxe6 comes 28. f4 with the threat 29. Be5.

27. Bd4 Qa5

28. h3

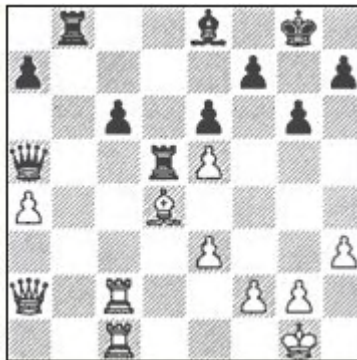


Diagram 42 Position after 28. h3

28. ... Qa6

Bishops of opposite color can be drawish in an endgame. *But for the attacker, an opposite-color bishop can be like an extra piece!*

Black's best defense here was 28. ... c5. Still, after 29. Rxc5 Rxc5 30. Rxc5 Qxa4 31. Qxa4 Bxa4 32. Ra5 and 33. Ra5xa7, Black is more likely to lose than to draw. Not only is he a pawn down, but most important, with rooks on the board, Black's king remains very vulnerable.

29. Rc4 h5

30. Qa3 Rb7

- 31. e4 Rd8
- 32. Qc3 Rbd7
- 33. Qe3 Kh7
- 34. Bc5 Rd1+
- 35. Kh2

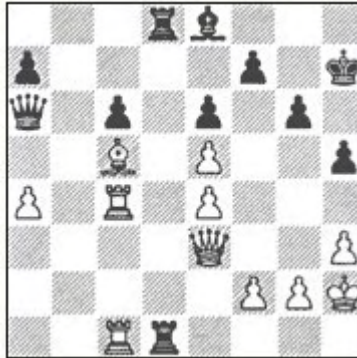


Diagram 43 Position after 35. Kh2

35. ... Rxc1?

This move loses immediately, but even the stronger 35. ... Kg7 does not save Black. For example: 36. Rxd1 Rxd1 37. Rd4 Qf1 38. Rxd1 Qxd1 39. Qg5 Qd7 40. Qf6+ Kg8 41. Be3 Kh7 42. h4, with the threat of Bh6.

36. Bf8 Black resigns

White was able to dominate the dark squares with only his queen and bishop, while their Black counterparts were functionally out of the game.

Learning Exercise 2-1:

Opposite-color bishop as “top dog”

Petrosian — Polugaevsky

Candidates’ Match, 4th Game, 1970

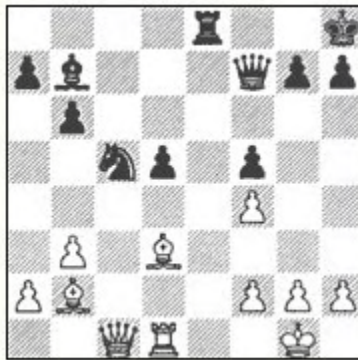


Diagram 44 Position after Black's 28th move

Examine this position and evaluate White's next move.

29. Be5

White doesn't mind getting opposite-color bishops because his bishop would be the "top dog." 29. Be5 not only places the bishop on a better square but also blocks the e-file, restricting Black's rook.

29. ... Rc8

30. Qb2 Nxd3

31. Rxd3 Rc6

32. h3 h6

33. Re3



Diagram 45 Position after 33. Re3

33. ... Rg6

Better to sac a pawn with 33. ... d4, as it is probably Black's last chance to reanimate his bishop on b7.

34. Bd4 Kh7

35. Qc2 Qd7

36. Kh2 Bc8

Black has no better move. He must watch out for both 37. Qe2 and 37. Rc3.

37. Rc3 Ba6

38. Rc7 Qe6

White has coordinated all of his pieces in the attack — and still has something in reserve.

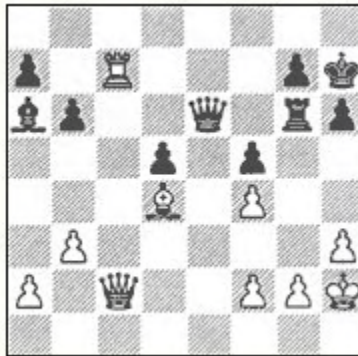


Diagram 46 Position after 38. ... Qe6

39. g4! Bf1

40. Qxf5 Qxf5

41. gxf5 Rg2+

42. Kh1 Black resigns



Diagram 47 Final position

There is no defense to 43. Rc1, as Black's rook has no place to go.

Exercise 2-2:

Weak battery

Larsen — Gligoric

Moscow, 1956

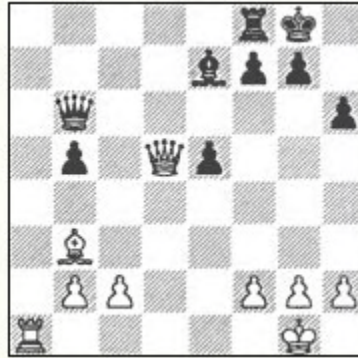


Diagram 48 Position after White's 25th move

Evaluate Black's next move:

25. ... Bc5

White is putting pressure on f7 and e5. His rook controls the a-file, and he has a pawn majority on the queenside, which may become important in the endgame. White's position is already better.

25. ... Bc5? attempts to counter with a battery attack on f2. However, when the bishop stands in front of the queen in this kind of battery, it is not as dangerous as when the queen stands in front of the bishop. Better was 25. ... Qc5, and Black should hold. The game continued

26. Ra8! Bxf2+??

Although this attacking move looks like an achievement for Black, it loses!

Black's only defense was 26. ... Rxa8 27. Qxa8+ Bf8 (27. ... Kh7? 28. Bxf7, and there is no protection against Qg8+) 28. Qd5 Qa7! 29. h4 b4 30. Qxe5 Qe7, and White keeps winning chances because of his extra pawn on the queenside and his threats against the opponent's king, but the game isn't over yet.

27. Kf1 Qf6

27. ... Rxa8 28. Qxa8+ Kh7 29. Bxf7 is hopeless for Black.

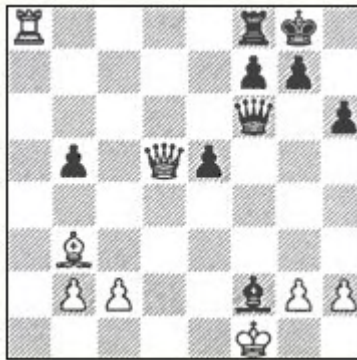


Diagram 49 Position after 27. ... Qf6

28. Qxf7+!

White simplifies into a won pawn ending.

28. ... Qxf7

29. Bxf7+

Not 29. Rxf8+ Kxf8 30. Bxf7 Bd4.

29. ... Kxf7

30. Rxf8+ Kxf8

31. Kxf2 Ke7

32. Ke3 Kd6

33. Ke4

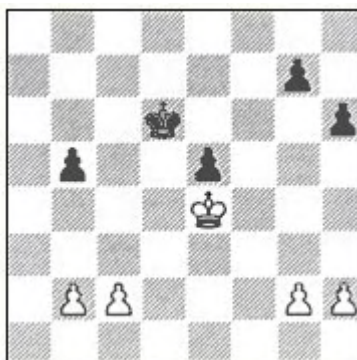


Diagram 50 Position after 33. Ke4

White wins this pawn ending with the following strategic plan: (1) create an outside passed pawn (or protected passed pawn) on the c-file; (2) force the exchange of all central and queenside pawns, ending up with his king on e5, while Black's king is on the c-file; (3) move his king to the g-file, and the Black pawns fall.

Remember: In middlegames featuring opposite-color bishops, when one side has an attack, the bishop of the defending side cannot participate fully in the fight. For the attacker, it's almost like having an extra piece.

Game 8

Kaidanov — Palatnik

Asheville, 1995

1. d4 f5 2. g3 Nf6 3. c4 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7 5. Nh3

White makes this move with a new strategic idea in mind. Usually the best square for this knight is f3.

5. ... 0-0

6. Nf4 d6

7. d5 c6

8. Nc3 e5

9. dxe6 e.p. Qe7



Diagram 51 Position after 9. ... Qe7

If White now plays 10. 0-0, after 10. ... Bxe6 11. Nxe6 Qxe6, he can reach a

position known to theory. Then it wouldn't matter whether White had played 5. Nf3 or 5. Nh3. But it was at this point in the game that White introduced his new idea.

10. h4!?

Because this move is not consistent with castling short, it becomes apparent that White has another plan in mind, which includes opening the h-file and creating some targets on the kingside for the knight sitting on f4. Because this plan requires several tempi, White must be ready for some material sacrifices in order to realize his idea. If he is not ready to make some sacrifices, it will be very difficult to finish his development.

10. ... Bxe6

11. h5

It doesn't make sense for White to lose a tempo in order to protect the c4-pawn, so he continues to prepare his attack on the kingside.

11. ... Bf7

Black saves this bishop, using it to protect the g6 square and to keep pressure on the c4-pawn. Normally, in the Leningrad System, this piece is exchanged, leaving White with two bishops. White, however, is ready for some concessions to pursue his attack.

12. hxg6

To open the h-file. Instead, 12. h6 would be a mistake because it would end White's initiative on the kingside, and in the endgame this pawn could become an easy target.

12. ... hxg6

13. Be3 Nbd7

14. Bd4

White develops his bishop on the long, dark diagonal, a plan that is usually advantageous. Here this is clearly the best position for it because White's own knight on f4 limits the bishop's actions on the c1-h6 diagonal.



Diagram 52 Position after 14. Bd4

14. ... Rfd8?

This natural-looking move (which places the rook on a central file, where it looks across at the White queen, and also makes room for the Black king) is a mistake! In this very sharp position, it is not the most important move — and if it is not, then it wastes a crucial tempo. Better would have been 14. ... Nb6, with an attack on the c4 pawn, putting White on the defensive and calling his whole strategy into question.

15. Qc2

After 15. b3? (to defend the c4-pawn), Black would have an extra tempo compared to the game.

15. ... Nb6

16. 0-0-0!



Diagram 53 Position after 16. 0-0-0!

White continues to play in gambit style. He is ready to make material sacrifices in order to maintain his initiative. For example, if Black now plays 16. ... Nxc4, White will break through with 17. e4!. The open files and diagonals will become highways to the Black king.

16. ... d5!?

This move, designed to prevent e4, puts the pawn on d5 in danger, and White will finally win it. But this material gain will not be decisive because Black gets counterplay.

17. cxd5 Nbx d5

18. Nfx d5 cxd5

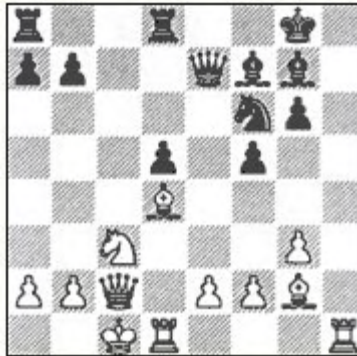


Diagram 54 Position after 18. ... cxd5

19. Bxf6

At a crucial point, White goes wrong. This pawn grab allows Black strong counterplay. Better was 19. Kb1.

19. ... Bxf6

20. Nxd5 Bxd5

21. Bxd5+ Kg7



Diagram 55 Position after 21. ... Kg7

What can we say about this position? White's extra pawn isn't too meaningful in

this very sharp situation. The kings have castled on opposite sides of the board, and neither looks very safe. White has built a net around the Black king with his control of the open h-file and his bishop is watching important squares in the king's vicinity. As for Black, he has the open c-file for his operations, and his bishop can support an attack on b2, which is very close to the residence of the White king. The Black rook on d8 has his sights on the active bishop on d5.

Which bishop will work more effectively with its own troops?

22. Kb1

Before he does anything else, White must guard his queen from the threatened pin on the c-file.

22. ... Rac8

The last undeveloped Black piece comes into the game with tempo.

23. Qd2

This move threatens Qh6 mate, but does not achieve the desired result because it creates a pin on White's own bishop on d5. However, even after the relatively better 23. Qb3 Rd6 White still has serious problems. We should conclude that Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn.

23. ... g5

24. Qd3 Qe5

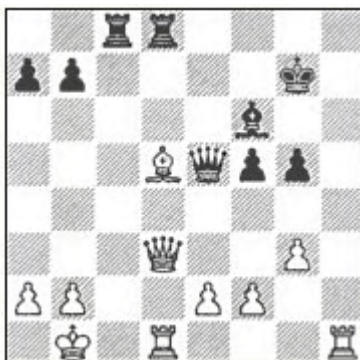


Diagram 56 Position after 24. ... Qe5

25. Rd2

To protect against the threat of 25. ... Qxb2 mate. No help is 25. Qb3 because after 25. ... Rxd5!, White's pieces are overloaded: 26. Qxd5 Qxb2 mate, or 26. Rxd5 Qe4+, winning the rook on h1.

25. ... Rc5

White is about to lose his bishop, and after ...

26. e4 fxe4 27. Qe2 Rcx d5 28. Rc2 Qf5 29. Qc4 e3, White resigns.

The game was decided chiefly by the differences between the opposing bishops. Black's bishop supported the attack and protected his king, while White's became a stationary target and later a victim.

— CHAPTER 3 —

Cutting Off a Piece from the Main Action

In his book, *Chess Fundamentals*, former World Champion Jose Raul Capablanca called this typical strategical maneuver “Pushing the opponent’s piece away from the ‘theater of military actions.’” By cutting off one of the enemy pieces from the region of the main struggle, you can achieve a significant advantage. There is a considerable number of cases when a bishop or a knight has been driven out of the action completely. In these cases, one of the combatants has the advantage of a de facto extra piece. Capablanca worked out a method for realizing this advantage. In essence, it involves transferring the decisive operations to the side of the board where one has the advantage in firepower.

The bishop is the most frequent victim of this strategem. Indeed, in such cases, the poor cleric is an extreme version of a bad bishop.

Here is the classic example of this technique.

Game 9

Winter — Capablanca

Hastings, 1919

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bb5 Bb4 5. 0-0 0-0 6. Bxc6 dxc6 7. d3 Bd6 8. Bg5



Diagram 57 Position after 8. Bg5

With his next move, Black begins to realize his plan, which is to push back the White bishop.

8. ... h6!

9. Bh4 c5

easy.

16. Kg2 a5

17. a4 Kf7

18. Rh1 Ke6

19. h4 Rfb8!

Black stays with his main plan — to open the position on the queenside. He does not compete with White for ownership of the h-file, since this can lead only to the exchange of rooks, which might help White to build a fortress.

20. hxg5 hxg5

21. b3 c6

22. Ra2 b5

23. Rha1

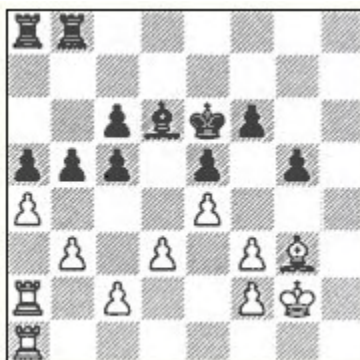


Diagram 59 Position after 23. Rha1

White does his best to restrain Black's queenside initiative, but with his next brilliant move Black makes a breakthrough.

23. ... c4!

24. axb5

24. bxc4 bxc4 25. dxc4 Rb4 helps Black achieve his goal.

24. ... cxb3

25. cxb3 Rxb5



Diagram 61 Position after 11. g5

White has created a blockade on Black's kingside. By sacrificing his pawn on f5, White has temporarily excluded the bishop on g6 from the game.

11. ... Nd7

12. Nb3 Qc7

13. Nh3 0-0-0

14. Bf4 Bd6

15. Qh2



Diagram 62 Position after 15. Qh2

White focuses all his efforts on controlling f4 because this vital point holds the key to the prison on Black's kingside.

15. ... Nf8

16. 0-0-0 Ne6

17. Bxd6 Rxd6

Black would have been better served by immediately trading queens on d6.

18. Bc4 Ne7

19. Nf4 Nxf4

20. Qxf4 Rdd8

21. Qxc7+ Kxc7

22. c3 Rhe8

23. Nc5

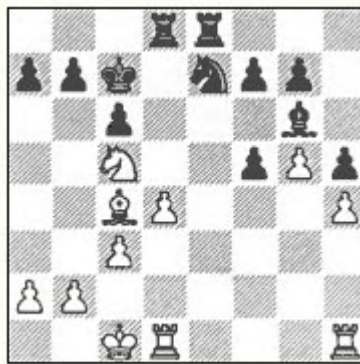


Diagram 63 Position after 23. Nc5

The knight is going to f4 to create a permanent blockade. If Black could now play 23. ... f4, he would give a little more breathing space to his bishop on g6, but after 24. Rhf1, White regains the sacrificed pawn and threatens the remaining f-pawn.

23. ... Nc8

24. Nd3 Nd6

25. Bb3 Re3

26. Nf4 Rde8

27. Rhg1

This subtle move prevents Black from playing ... Rg3-Rg4 which would give him some pressure on the all-important f4-square.

27. ... R8e7

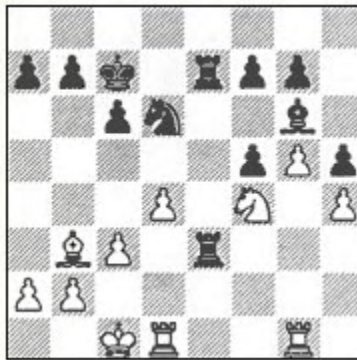


Diagram 64 Position after 27. ... R8e7

Black owns the e-file and has an extra pawn; however, these advantages are problematic compensation for the imprisoned bishop on g6.

28. Rdf1 Ne4

29. Bd1 Kd6

30. Bf3

Of course White can capture Black's extra pawn after Bxh5, but this would exchange his strong piece for the prisoner on g6.

30. ... c5

31. dxc5+ Kxc5

32. Ng2 Rd3

33. Nf4



Diagram 65 Position after 33. Nf4

33. ... Rd8?!

This move allows White to exchange both rooks and then create a passed pawn on the queenside. It would have been better to repeat moves with 33. ... Re3, inviting White to play Ng2 again, perhaps leading to a draw by repetition.

But Black overestimates his chances, and avoids the repetition. However, it is White who is better in the resulting ending, even though he is a pawn down.

34. Rd1 Red7

35. Rxd7 Rxd7

36. Rd1 Rxd1+

37. Kxd1 Nd6

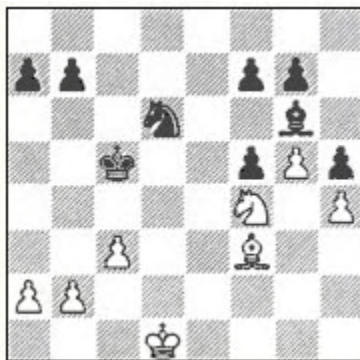


Diagram 66 Position after 37. ... Nd6

Black maintains his material advantage, but White is the one who has winning chances because of the walled-in bishop on g6.

38. Kc2 a5

39. a4 Kb6

Perhaps Black's best try was 39. ... Ne4, while 39. ... b6 leads to checkmate after 40. Nd3+ Kc4 41. b3 mate.

40. Kd3 Kc7

41. Kd4

White has improved his position by centralizing his king. In the next phase, White activates his pawn majority on the queenside and occupies more and more space, finally achieving total dominance.

41. ... Nc8

42. b4 axb4

43. cxb4 Ne7

44. a5 f6

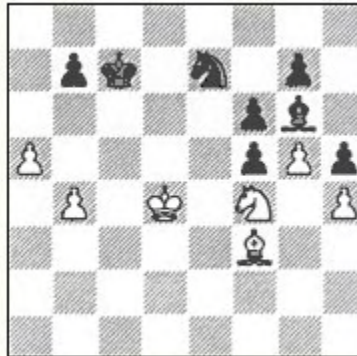


Diagram 67 Position after 44. ... f6

Black tries to open a “back door” for his bishop, but it doesn’t help.

45. gxf6 gxf6

46. Kc5 Bf7

47. b5 Kc8

48. b6 Black resigns

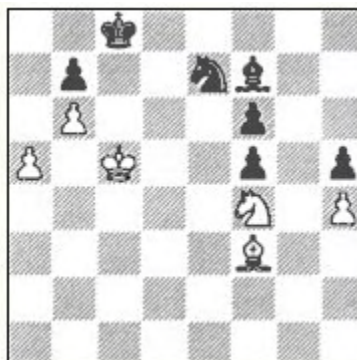


Diagram 68 Final position

The steady process of cutting off Black’s bishop on g6 from the game (starting with 10. f5!) finally triumphed.

Summary: From the previous examples, we’ve learned to understand the difference between a good and a bad bishop. These two latest examples show us that a bishop that has been fully cut off from the game is a very bad bishop!

Game 11

Anand — Ivanchuk

Las Palmas, 1996

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. 0-0 Bc5 6. Nxe5 Nxe5 7. d4 Nxe4 8. Re1 Be7 9. Rxe4 Ng6



Diagram 69 Position after 9. ... Ng6

10. c4

A very important move. White enhances his control in the center, while keeping the bishop on a4 active and secure (by preventing 10. ... b5 and 11. ... d5).

10. ... 0-0

11. Nc3 d6

12. Nd5 Bh4

Black doesn't want to give his opponent the bishop pair.

13. Qh5 c6

Permitting an unexpected combination.



Diagram 70 Position after 13. ... c6

14. Rxh4! Qxh4

If 14. ... Nxh4 15. Bg5, with a promising attack.

15. Qxh4 Nxh4

16. Nb6 Rb8

The rook would stand even worse on a7.

17. Bf4 Nf5

On 17. ... Rd8, 18. c5 is also good for White.



Diagram 71 Position after 17. ... Nf5

18. d5!

The point of Anand's combination, removing the pawn from attack and making prisoners of the bishop on c8 and the rook on b8.

18. ... Re8

19. Kf1 h6

20. h3 Re4

21. Bh2 cxd5

22. g4

Now if the Black knight leaves his post on f5, White plays Bxd6 and wins the rook on b8.

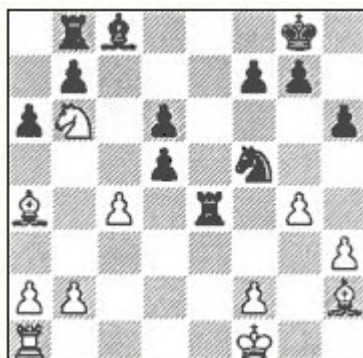


Diagram 72 Position after 22. g4

22. ... Rxc4

23. Nxc4 dxc4

24. Re1!

Gaining a tempo.

24. ... Be6

25. gxf5 Bxf5

26. Bxd6 Bxh3+

27. Kg1 Rd8

28. Re8+ Rxe8

29. Bxe8

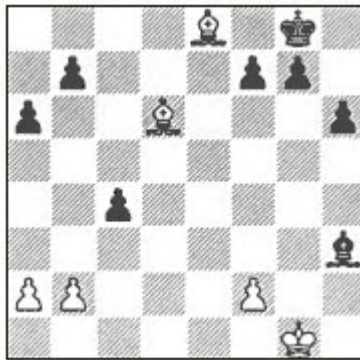


Diagram 73 Position after 29. Bxe8

Black has three pawns for a bishop, but White's bishop pair proves its superiority.

29. ... Be6 30. a4 g5 31. a5 Kg7 32. Ba4 Kg6 33. Bd1 Bd5 34. Bc2+ Kf6 35. Bc7 Ke6 36. Bh7 Bf3 37. Kh2 Kd5 38. Bc2 Be4 39. Bd1 Kd4 40. Be2 Bd3 41. Bb6+ Kd5 42. Bd1 f5 43. Kg3 Ke5 44. Bc5 Kf6 45. Bh5 f4+ 46. Kh2

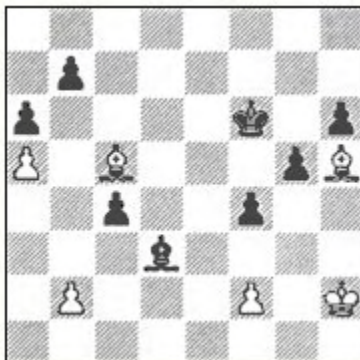


Diagram 74 Final position

Black resigns — he can't protect his pawns from the dual threats 47. Bf8 (followed by Bxh6) and 47. Bf3 (followed by Bxb7).

Starting with the combination on moves 14-16, White's knight on b6, assisted by his dark-squared bishop, paralyzed the superior Black forces on the queenside. This strategy eventually decided the outcome of the game.

Game 12

Hort — Alburt

Decin, 1977

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 b5 4. cxb5 a6 5. bxa6 g6 6. Nc3 Bxa6 7. Nf3 d6 8.

g3 Bg7 9. Bg2 Nbd7 10. 0-0 Nb6



Diagram 75 Position after 10. ... Nb6

In the Benko Gambit, tactics almost always take a secondary role, and moves made early in the opening such as ... O-O and ... Rfb8 are almost automatic. But there are no rules without exceptions, and Black has been forced to adopt some effective but non-standard approaches to counter deployments of the White pieces that could create serious problems for Black's plan. The main idea of 10. ... Nb6 prior to castling is to prevent White from playing 11. Qc2 and 12. Rd1. On the negative side, it prevents the Black queen from going to a5.

11. Re1

This move prepares for the defense of the d5 pawn by e2-e4, should it become necessary. Still, it is a concession, as the best square for White's rook is actually d1, not e1.

11. ... 0-0

12. Nd2 Qc7

13. Rb1 Qb7



Diagram 76 Position after 13. ... Qb7

Also possible was 13. ... Ng4, which would have served to counter White's planned b2-b3, with the further idea of forcing White (after ... Bd4) to create a weakness on the d3-square after inducing White to play e2-e3.

14. b3 Nfxd5

If Black lacked the courage to take this pawn, his 13th move would have been pointless. So he had to calculate and evaluate all the variations, including a possible queen sacrifice.

15. Nxd5 Nxd5



Diagram 77 Position after 15. ... Nxd5

16. Nf1?!

White's only chances in this position lie along the h1-a8 diagonal. If Black can neutralize the bishop on g2 with, for example, a series of moves such as ... Ba6-b5-c6, or after White's a2-a4 with ... Rad8, ... Qa8 and ... Bb7, he would have a clear advantage because of his better pawn structure and other typical Benko Gambit advantages. White should have played 16. Ne4, hoping for equalizing chances in the ensuing complications.

16. ... Nc3

17. Bxb7 Bxb7!

After 17. ... Nxd1 18. Bxa6 (18. Bxa8? Nc3) 18. ... Nc3 19. Bd3, White stands better.

18. Qd3?!

As will soon become apparent, White would have had better defensive chances with 18. Qd2 Nxb1 19. Qe3.

18. ... Be4

19. Qe3 Bd4

20. Qh6 Bxb1



Diagram 78 Position after 20. ... Bxb1

Because of White's 18th move, Black has been able to centralize his pieces. Now he has the option of capturing the a2 pawn with his bishop and retaining his knight on a dominant and more effective post than at b1.

21. a3

White seeks to exchange his two weak pawns for the strong pawn on c5.

21. ... Ba2

22. Nd2 Rfb8

23. b4 cxb4

24. axb4 Rxb4



Diagram 79 Position after 24. ... Rxb4

With his last move, Black's once-passive rook on f8 becomes very active on b4. Material is now even. But Black's pieces are active and better-coordinated than

White's.

25. Nf3 Bg7

The first of many questions to White's queen.

26. Qh3

Also bad is 26. Qe3 Re4 27. Qd2 Bc4, with the winning threat of 28. ... Ra2, or 26. Qd2 Bc4 with the same threat, when White's position is hopeless. Also 26. Qg5 (gaining a tempo by the attack on the e7-pawn) is no better because of 26. ... Re4, attacking the e2 pawn and protecting the e7-pawn. If White now plays 27. e3 or 27. Be3, the reply 27. ... h6 or the equally effective 27. ... f6 spells disaster. This is a rare case of a queen having apparently free play in the middle of the board, but actually being restricted by the opponent's army. Now the queen has been forced into a very unpleasant position.

26. ... Be6

27. Qf1

Protecting the pawn on e2.

27. ... Bc4

28. Kg2

Preparing to protect the e2-pawn with the knight.

28. ... Ra1

29. Ng1

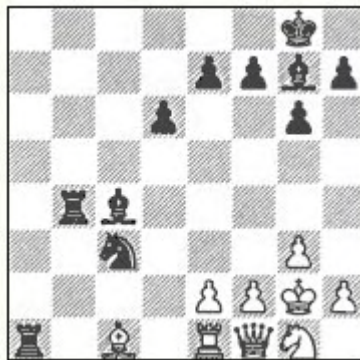


Diagram 80 Position after 29. Ng1

An astonishing smothering of the queen: She has no moves and is completely

surrounded by her own pieces. This is the culmination of Black's strategy. White's other pieces are also poorly placed, especially when compared with the effectiveness of their counterparts. Now it is not difficult for Black to find a win.

29. ... Rbb1

30. Kh3

To make space for the queen! However, such moves are made from desperation and cannot really save the game.

30. ... h5

To answer 31. Qg2 with 31. ... Be6+ 32. Kh4 Rxc1, and then ... Bf6 mate.

31. f4

This makes space, but at the same time creates a decisive weakness.

31. ... Be6+

32. Kg2 Nd5

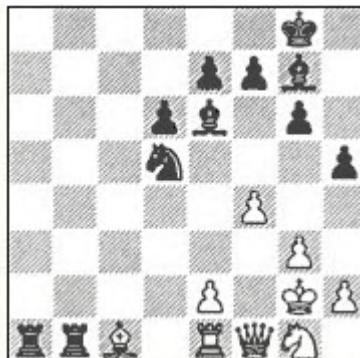


Diagram 81 Position after 32. ... Nd5

With the threat of 33. ... Rxc1 and 34. ... Ne3+.

33. Kf3 Bc3

34. Rd1 Bb2

White resigns

White's queen proved less than all-powerful because of Black's excellent pawn structure and well protected king. With no weaknesses to attack, Her Majesty became a constant target for the more numerous and well coordinated Black

pieces.

— CHAPTER 4 —

When the Bishop is Stronger Than the Knight

In many chess positions, the pieces on each side appear to be equally well placed except for one minor piece. In this section we discuss the very practical and important relationship between the superior bishop and the inferior knight. A stronger bishop is by definition a good bishop that can operate on open diagonals, moving freely among his pawns that are placed in accordance with the second part of Capablanca's rule — on squares of the opposite color from the bishop. Capablanca called a good bishop against a poorly located knight the advantage of the "minor Exchange."

Game 13

Smyslov — Tal

Moscow, 1964

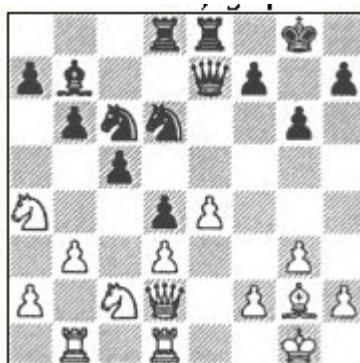


Diagram 82 Position after White's 20th move

20. ... f5

White's pieces have been deflected to the queenside. With his last move, Black wants to take advantage of this situation. He tries to open the game in the center and on the kingside where he has a greater chance for an active game. Although this move destroys the pawn cover around the Black king, it is not dangerous because White is in no position to launch an attack.

21. exf5 Ne5!

Now 22. Bxb7 Qxb7 would be bad for White, with the decisive threat of 23. ... Nf3+. So White has to exchange his bishop for the enemy knight.

22.f4 Nf3+

23. Bxf3 Bxf3

24. Re1

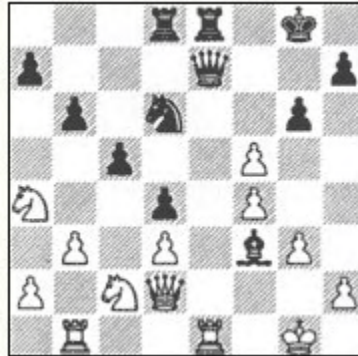


Diagram 83 Position after 24. Re1

24. ... Qe2!!

This move is beautiful, but it's also necessary! Without it, White would be able to protect his position from all of Black's threats.

25. Rxe2 Rxe2

26. Qxe2

White returns the queen immediately because trying to save it with 26. Qc1 fails to 26. ... Rg2+ 27. Kf1 Rxh2 28. Ne1 Bd5 29. Rb2 Rh1+ 30. Kf2 Re8. White has no good moves, and Black is winning even though he has only a rook for a queen!

26. ... Bxe2

27. Nb2 gxf5



Diagram 84 Position after 27. ... gxf5

Now material is equal, but Black has the advantage because of his powerful

bishop.

28. Re1 Bh5

29. Nc4

If 29. Re7, then 29. ... Re8.

29. ... Nxc4

30. bxc4 Re8

31. Kf2 Rxe1

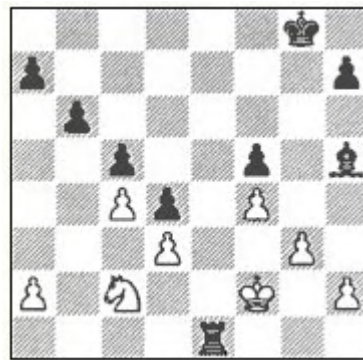


Diagram 85 Position after 31. ... Rxe1

32. Kxe1

Stronger is 32. Nxe1, with the idea of transferring the knight to e5. In the game White hopes to hang on by building a fortress, but he doesn't succeed.

32. ... Kf8

33. Kd2 Ke7

34. Ne1 a6

35. a4 a5

36. Kc2 Be8

37. Kb3 Bc6

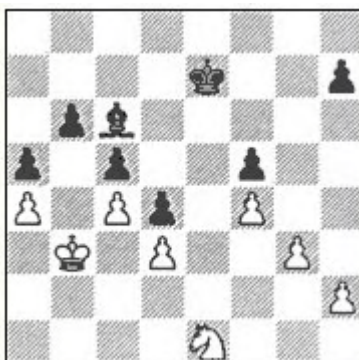


Diagram 86 Position after 37. ... Bc6

Black's active, good bishop attacks White's weak pawn on a4, forcing White's king to defend it, while White's knight is very limited in mobility because it cannot move to f3 or g2. An attempt to bring the knight to b5 doesn't work, e.g.: 38. Nc2 Bf3 39. Na3? Bd1+, winning the a-pawn.

The winning plan for Black consists of two steps:

- 1) Transferring his king to h5, forcing White to play h2-h3 (otherwise the Black king will penetrate into the enemy camp).
- 2) Bringing his king back to f6 and repositioning his bishop on f1, attacking the pawn on h3. If White defends the pawn with h3-h4, then the Black king will invade White's camp via the weakened g4-square.

The game continued:

38. Ka3 Kf6

39. Kb3 Kg6

40. Ka3 Kh5

41. h3

The pawn has moved, and the first part of the plan is complete.

41. ... Kg6

42. Kb3 Kg7

43. Ka3 Kf6

44. Kb3 Be8

The bishop is being transferred to f1.

45. Ng2 Bh5

This is a preparation for the attack on the h3 pawn.

46. Kc2 Be2

47. Ne1 Bf1

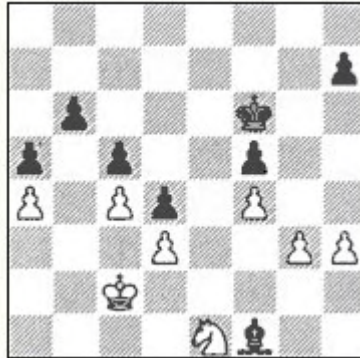


Diagram 87 Position after 47. ... Bf1

48. Nf3

If 48. h4, then the bishop would return to c6, and the king walks straight into the enemy camp through the hole on g4.

48. ... Bxh3

49. Ng5 Bg2

50. Nxh7+ Kg7

51. Ng5 Kg6

52. Kd2 Bc6

53. Kc1

White gives up a pawn in order to activate the knight. Black, however, is not required to rush to capture it.

53. ... Bg2

54. Kd2 Kh5

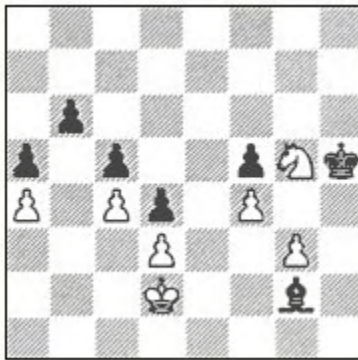


Diagram 88 Position after 54. ... Kh5

55. Ne6

If White brings his king to f2 to defend the pawn on g3, then, after Black captures on a4, nothing could stop the victory march of the a-pawn.

55. ... Bc6

56. Nc7 Kg4

57. Nd5 Kxg3

58. Ne7 Bd7

59. Nd5 Bxa4

60. Nxb6

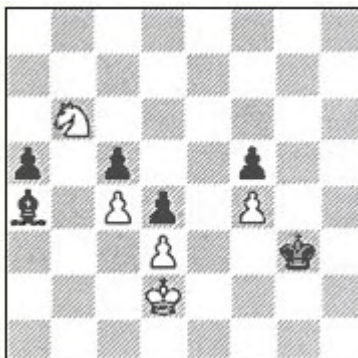


Diagram 89 Position after 60. Nxb6

The knight has finally captured the pawn on b6, but Black's a- and f-pawns are too much for White to handle.

60. ... Be8

It would be more precise to play 60. ... Bc6 61. Nd5 Kf3 62. Ne7 Bd7 63. Nd5 a4.

61. Nd5 Kf3

62. Nc7

Now the pawn on c5 will be lost, but it is difficult for the side with a knight to repulse attacks occurring on both flanks.

62. ... Bc6

63. Ne6 a4

Black mobilizes his a-pawn.

64. Nxc5 a3

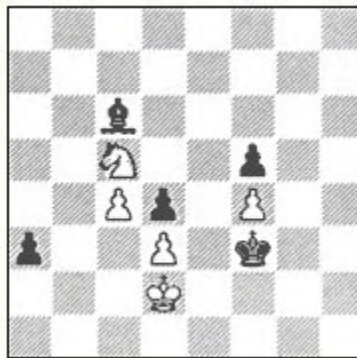


Diagram 90 Position after 64. ... a3

65. Nb3

Or 65. Ne6 a2 66. Nxd4+ Kxf4 67. Nc2 Ba4 68. Na1 Kg3, with an easy win for Black. In both cases, the rest is easy.

65. ... a2 66. Kc1 Kxf4 67. Kb2 Ke3 68. Na5 Be8 69. c5 f4 70. c6 Bxc6 71. Nxc6 f3 72. Ne5 f2, White resigns.

This game showed that even if the side with an active bishop against a restricted knight does not achieve success in the middlegame, he can still count on realizing his advantage in the endgame.

Let's take a look at another example of a superior bishop triumphing over its weaker knight counterpart.

Game 14

Dolmatov — Smirin

Rostov-on-Don, 1993

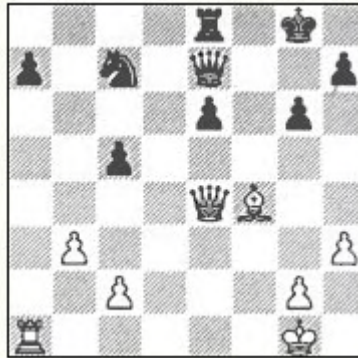


Diagram 91 Position after White's 22nd move

Even though Black has an extra pawn, White stands better. His rook on the a-file is attacking the pawn, his queen is centralized, and his bishop is much stronger than Black's knight. Black has too many troubles in this position.

Let us see if the course of the game supports our conclusion.

22. ... Nb5

23. Be3 Rc8

24. Ra6 Nd6

25. Qe5



Diagram 92 Position after 25. Qe5

25. ... Nf7

Black is unable to protect all of his weaknesses.

26. Qxe6 Qxe6

27. Rxe6 a5

28. Bd2 Ra8

29. Rc6 a4

30. bxa4 Rxa4

Black correctly tries to exchange a pair of pawns.

31. Rxc5

Remember: When behind in material, exchange pawns, not pieces.

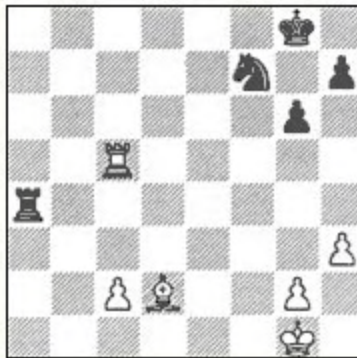


Diagram 93 Position after 31. Rxc5

In addition to his positional advantage, White now enjoys an extra pawn.

31. ... Nd6

32. Rc6 Nc4

33. Bg5!

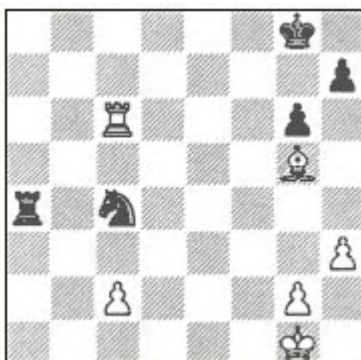


Diagram 94 Position after 33. Bg5!

From here White's bishop controls many important squares.

33. ... Kf7

34. Kf2 Ke8

35. Rc7 Nd6

36. Ke2 Rc4

37. Rxc4 Nxc4

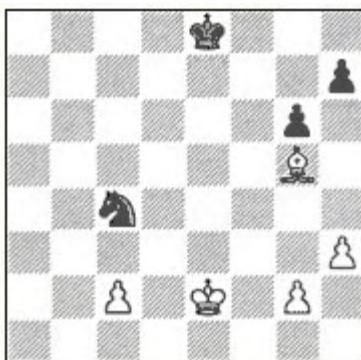


Diagram 95 Position after 37. ... Nxc4

This endgame is won for White.

38.Kd3 Ne5+

39.Kd4 Nc6+

40. Kc5 Kd7

41. Bf6!

Limiting the mobility of Black's knight.

41. ... Na7

42. Kd5

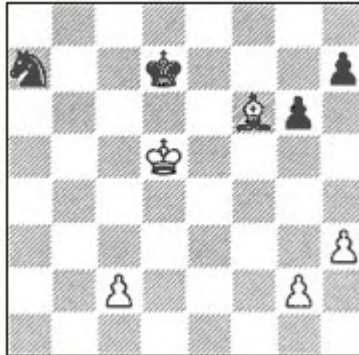


Diagram 96 Position after 42. Kd5

Taking the opposition. White's plan — a typical one — is to distract Black's forces with his outside passed pawn, and then to win Black's remaining pawns on the kingside.

42. ... Nc8 43. Bg5 Nb6+ 44. Ke5 Nc4+ 45. Kf6 Na3 46. Kg7, Black resigns.

When the Knight is Stronger Than the Bishop

Logic tells us that it should be an advantage to have a knight against a bishop when the knight is “good” and the bishop is “bad.” We’ve seen examples of what it means to have a “bad” bishop, but what is a “good” knight?

The short-hopping knight is able to show its best qualities when: (a) it is able to take part in the decisive area of the battle; (b) its maneuverability is not limited by being close to the edge of the board; and especially (c) the opponent’s pawn structure permits the knight to sit comfortably on a central square — or even better, deep within the enemy’s position, where it can disrupt the coordination of the enemy forces.

What other characteristics are typical of the knight?

- A knight, like the queen, is very good at double attacks (forks).
- A knight on a central square supported by a friendly pawn is often worth a rook, if the horseman can’t be driven away by an enemy pawn or exchanged for another minor piece.
- A knight located on the edge of the board is often bad.
- Two knights cannot checkmate a lone king without help from the opponent.
- The coordination between a knight and a queen is usually better than between bishop and queen.

In discussing the knight’s heroic deeds, we can point out different locations (for example, “d5,” “b5,” “e6,” “f7,” etc.) where the knight has often broken into the enemy stronghold by sacrificing itself for one or two pawns.

On the other hand, devices for neutralizing the knight’s “hostile actions” include:

- Pinning it,
- Restricting its mobility with pawns,
- Isolating it, and
- Eliminating it.

Game 15

Lasker, Em. — Cohn

St. Petersburg, 1909

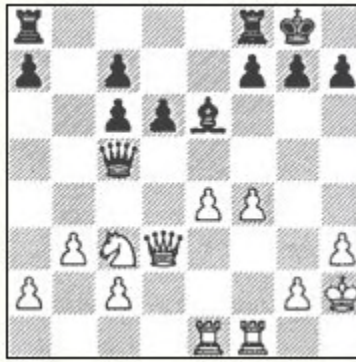


Diagram 97 Position after 18. b3

Here we can clearly see the conflict between the knight and the bishop. White is threatening next move to play f4-f5, a pawn advance that will limit the mobility of Black's bishop. The player of the Black pieces was not yet (in 1909) acquainted with Capablanca's Rule, and instead of the correct 18. ... f7-f6, played:

18. ... f5?

And after

19. e5

erred again:

19. ... d5?

After these two anti-positional moves, Black's bishop is now permanently blocked by his own d- and f-pawns.



Diagram 98 Position after 19. ... d5?

20. Na4 Qe7

21. Qd4

Taking firm control of the c5 square.

21. ... Rfb8

22. Nc5 a5

23. a3 Kf7

24. Ra1 Rb5

25. b4 Rab8

26. c3



Diagram 99 Position after 26. c3

26. ... Rxc5

Desperation.

27. bxc5 Rb5

28. Rab1 Qxc5

29. a4 **Black resigns**

We can make a useful conclusion. When the side with a bishop puts his pawns on the same color squares as his bishop (thus making it “bad”), then a successful blockade of those pawns by an opponent’s piece, especially his knight, can rapidly reduce the bishop’s value to that of a “tall pawn.”

Game 16

Savon — Spassky

Erevan, 1962

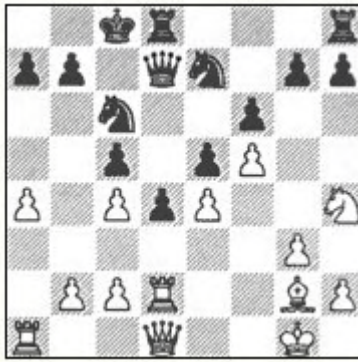


Diagram 100 Position after White's 17th move

As usual, let's start with an evaluation of the position: Black stands somewhat better, in part because White's bishop is blocked by his own pawns.

What kind of plan should Black choose? Spassky first moves his king to "b8" — a safer square. This is a good example of prophylaxis. Then Black plans to improve the position of his e7-knight by moving it to d6, and to play ... g7-g6, giving the rooks play on the kingside. This is a good, and realistic, plan.

17. ... Kb8

18. Qf3 Qc7

19. Bf1 Nc8

20. g4 Nd6

21. Rg2 Qf7

22. Qe2

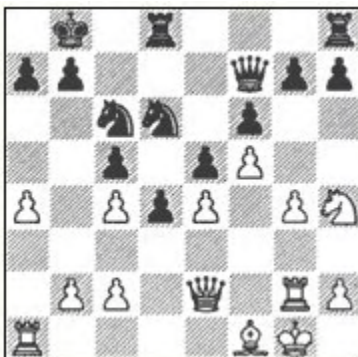


Diagram 101 Position after 22. Qe2

22. ... g6!

Now Black breaks through on the kingside, opening the h-file. White's position deteriorates because his "bad" bishop is an organic weakness that cannot be repaired.

23. fxg6 hxg6

24. Nf3 g5!

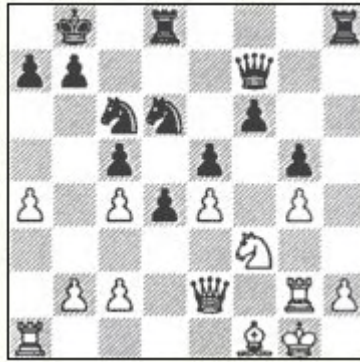


Diagram 102 Position after 24. ... g5!

This pawn push keeps the bishop in the light-squared cage. Black's plan includes transferring the knight to f4 and taking control of the h-file with the rooks.

25. Rf2 Qe6

26. Ne1 Rh6

27. b3 Qe7

28. Nd3 Ne8

29. Bg2 Nc7

30. Re1 Ne6

31. Rf5 Rdh8

32. h3

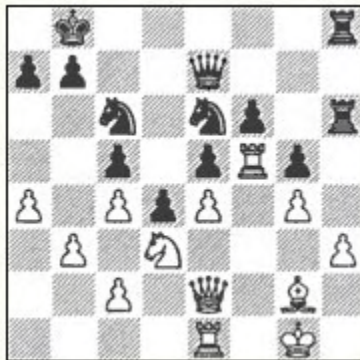


Diagram 103 Position after 32. h3

32. ... Nb4!

After the exchange of the knights, the advantage of knight over bishop becomes decisive.

33. Ref1 Nxd3

34. Qxd3 Nf4

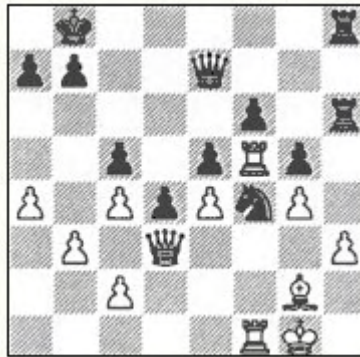


Diagram 104 Position after 34. ... Nf4

The Black knight comes to f4 with decisive effect. Note the difference between the f4-knight and the g2-bishop. White's next move is forced. Clearly, Black's strategy was a complete success.

Now comes the final stage of the game — the realization of Black's material advantage.

35. R1xf4 gxf4

36. Kf2 Qc7

37. Qd2 Rg8

38. Ke2 Rg5

39. Rxc5 fxc5

40. Kf3 Qb6

41. Bf1 Qb4

42. Qxb4 cxb4

43. Kg2

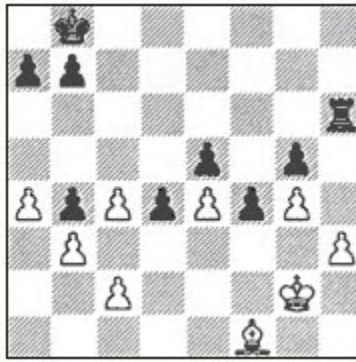


Diagram 105 Position after 43. Kg2

43. ... d3!

This is the simplest way to win. Black's king invades White's camp along the indefensible dark squares.

44. Bxd3 Kc7 45. Bf1 Kd6, White resigns.

Many chess players could improve their strategic arsenal by making use of Tarrasch's principle, given in the box below. Even temporarily restricting an enemy piece from the main action often leads to a long-lasting advantage.

In the next fascinating example, this principle is valid only until the moment when White succeeds in correcting the defects of his position — the bad location of his knight. The next part of the game is useful to us as an example of the advantage of the "good" knight over the "bad" bishop.

If one piece is badly placed, your whole game is bad.

— Grandmaster Siegbert Tarrasch

Game 17

Karpov — Taimanov

USSR, 1983



Diagram 106 Position after Black's 16th move

17. Qe3!

White prepares a kingside attack. Taimanov countered with immediate counterplay on the opposite side of the board and in the center.

17. ... b4!

18. Nb1

This is not the most desirable square for a knight, but after 18. axb4 Nxb4 19. Rd2 d5, Black recaptures the initiative.

18. ... bxa3

19. Nxa3 d5

20. Qg3 Bf8

21. e5 Ne7

22. Bd3 Rac8

Not the best move. Black should consider 22. ... g6 instead to create a barrier against White's d3-bishop.

23. Qh3 Nf5



Diagram 107 Position after 23. ... Nf5

Now 24. g4 Nh6 is double-edged, while 24. Bxf5 exf5 25. Qxf5 Bxa3 26. Bxa3 Qxc2 27. Qg4 d4! is clearly good for Black.

Karpov decided to play a three-move maneuver, redeploying the knight toward the kingside, in accordance with Tarrasch's principle.

24. Nb1!? g6

25. Nd2

Now the big question — what should Black do while White relocates his knight?

25. ... Qb6

If he hadn't played 22. ... Rac8, Black could now try 25. ... a5 and 26. ... a4. It seems he has lost time, while White, despite temporary difficulties, carries out the planned regrouping of his forces.

26. Bxf5!

This is a difficult but correct decision. At first it looks good to play 26. Nf3 Ne3? 27. Bd4 Bc5 28. Ng5 h5 29. Bxc5 Qxc5 30. Nxe6!, and White wins. But Black responds 26. ... d4!, and on 27. Bxf5 follows up with 27. ... Bxf3, reducing White's attacking pieces.

26. ... exf5

27. Nf3!

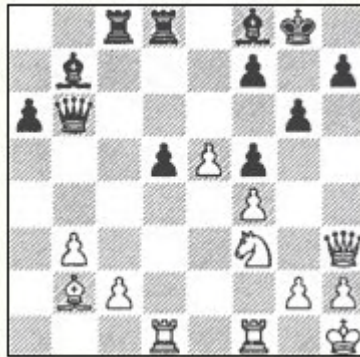


Diagram 108 Position after 27. Nf3!

27. ... Rxc2

It is too late now for 27. ... d4, because of 28. Bxd4 Qb5 29. Ng5 h6 30. c4 Qc6 31. e6!

28. Bd4!

But not 28. Ng5? h5 29. Bd4 Bc5.

28. ... Qc6

Forced. Other moves lose miserably. For example, 28. ... Bc5 29. Qh6!, or if 28. ... Qxb3 29. Qh4 Re8 30. Ng5 h6 31. Nxf7! Kxf7 32. Qf6+. On 28. ... Qc7, White responds 29. Ng5 h6 30. e6!.

29. Qh4 Re8

Bad is 29. ... Rd7 30. e6! fxe6 31. Ne5, or 30. ... Qxe6 31. Ng5. But even in these variations, especially after the breakthrough e5-e6, we can forecast the weather for the Black kingdom — hurricane-force winds!

30. e6 fxe6

31. Ne5

Stronger than 31. Qf6 e5!.

31. ... Qc7

32. Nxg6

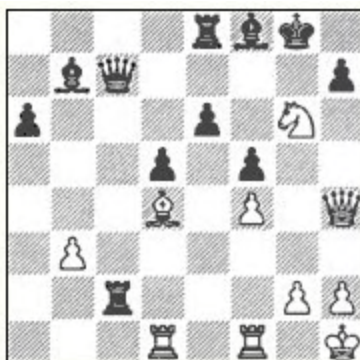


Diagram 109 Position after 32. Nxg6

The “world-wide tour” of the knight from a3 has turned out to be a complete success.

32. ... Bg7

33. Ne5 Qe7

34. Qg3 Rec8

35. Rfe1 R8c7

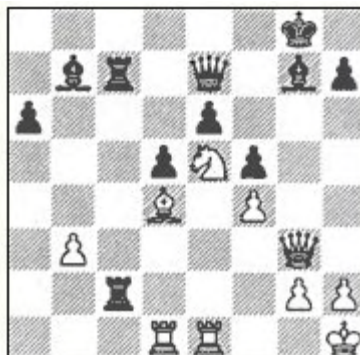


Diagram 110 Position after 35. ... R8c7

White has been able to occupy the important central squares d4 and e5. The Black bishop on b7 is limited in mobility by his own pawns. And even though Black has taken control of the c-file, gained entrance to White's second rank, and, importantly, is up a pawn — White's position is still better!

Karpov decided to exchange dark-squared bishops and transfer his knight to d4, pressuring the e6-pawn. In this case, even the exchange of queens would not ease Black's defense.

36. Nf3 Kh8

37. Bxg7+ Qxg7

38. Nd4 Qxg3

39. hxg3 R2c3

40. Nxe6 Rc8

41. Kh2

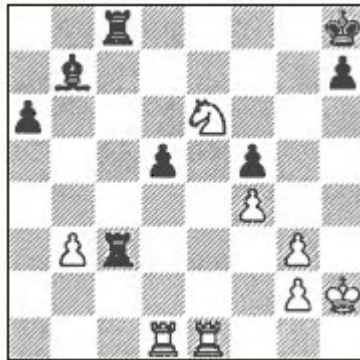


Diagram 111 Position after 41. Kh2

41. ... Rxb3?!

It is difficult to refrain from capturing this pawn, but probably the best chance for Black was playing 41. ... d4!, seizing the opportunity to activate the bishop. For example: 42. Nxd4 Be4, and it is rather difficult for White to realize his advantage.

42. Nd4 Rb6

43. Nxf5 Rf8

44. Nd4 Rg8

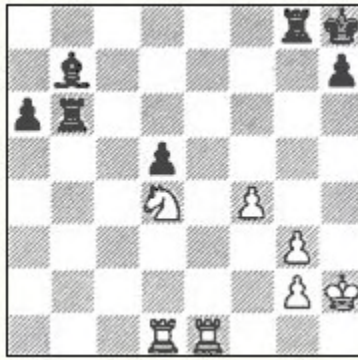


Diagram 112 Position after 44. ... Rg8

We again see the “good” knight blockading the “bad” bishop. From here on, White is practically playing with an extra piece.

45. Re7 Rg7

46. Rde1 Rh6+

47. Kg1 Rhg6

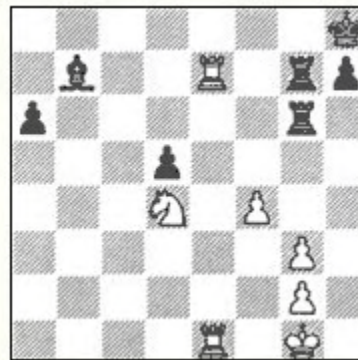


Diagram 113 Position after 47. ... Rhg6

48. f5! Rb6

If 48. ... Rxc3, then 49. f6! Rxc2+ 50. Kh1; if 48. ... Rf6, 49. g4!

49. R7e6

The rest is easy.

49. ... Rxe6

On 49. ... Rb2, 50. Re8+ Rg8 51. f6 ends it.

50. fxe6 Rg8 51. e7 Re8 52. Nf5 Bc6 53. Nd6 Rg8 54. e8(Q) Bxe8 55. Nxe8 Rxc3 56. Nf6, Black Resigns.

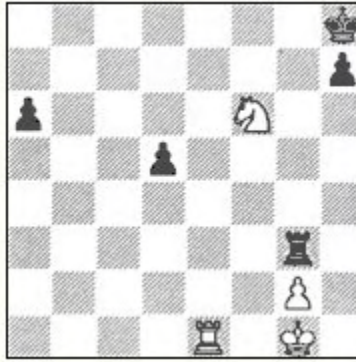


Diagram 114 Final position

An amazing cavalry raid — this knight made a total of 19 moves, conducting more than one third of the game by itself!

Own what you've learned in this chapter for life by thinking through the following training exercises.

Learning Exercise 5-1:

Knights or bishops?

Lputian — Gufeld

USSR, 1983



Diagram 115 Position after White's 17th move

In this position, it is important for Black to evaluate correctly the potential of various minor pieces. Support your conclusion by calculating relevant variations.

17. ... Bxc3!

Black's knights are stronger than White's bishops.

18. bxc3

Forced, as 18. Qxc3 loses a pawn.

18. ... Ne5

19. Be2 Qd7

20. Kh2 Qf5

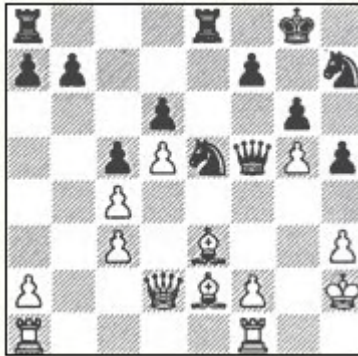


Diagram 116 Position after 20. ... Qf5

21. f4

After 21. f3, Black would double his rooks on the e-file.

21. ... Qe4!

Ready to meet 22. fxe5 with 22. ... Qxe5+.

22. Rae1 Nxc4

23. Bxc4 Qxc4

Black wins a pawn, with decisive advantage.

Learning Exercise 5-2:

Well coordinated effort!

Kasparov — Nunn

Brussels, 1989

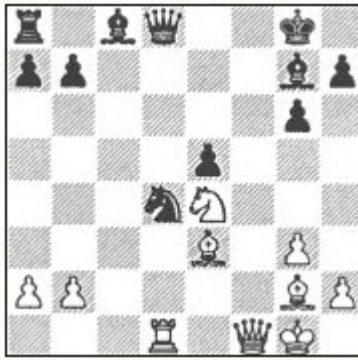


Diagram 117 White to move

Give yourself 15 minutes to evaluate this position.

Answer: Black has a protected knight on d4 in the center of the board—but much more important is the threat of the coordinated attack by the White knight and queen.

After **1. Ng5!**, Black resigned. He has no defense against Qc4+, and 1. ... Qc7 loses to 2. Bd5+.

Learning Exercise 5-3:

Geller's pawn sac

Pilnik — Geller

Goteborg, 1955

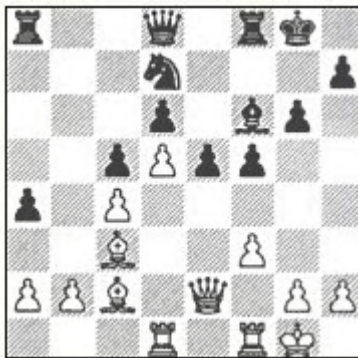


Diagram 118 Black to move

Explain the reason for **1. ... e4.**

Answer: After 2. Bxf6 Qxf6 3. fxe4, Black plays 3. ... f4!, with 4. ... Ne5 to follow. Black then has a powerful knight against a bad bishop, and good chances for a pawn storm on the kingside.

The Bishop Pair

The bishop is a “long-distance” piece; however, a lone bishop is able to control only the squares of one color. But when you can rely upon the strength of two bishops, then both the light and the dark squares are under your influence.

The more squares these pieces control, the greater the threat to the opponent. Such is the case in open positions, when the diagonals are unobstructed by pawns. The strength of two well coordinated bishops can be illustrated by numerous mating combinations. Most chess masters do not like to exchange their bishops for knights without some compensation.

A. Two bishops as an advantage in the middlegame

The advantage of the two bishops is debatable. Indeed, some specialists think that this facet of Steinitz’s theory is incorrect. In his book *Middlegame*, Peter Romanovsky writes that “during the evaluation period, the factor of two bishops should not be considered a special kind of advantage.” He also says “This kind of advantage does not exist The superiority of the bishop is based on the existence of weak squares or of some other weaknesses in the position, on a peculiarity of the given, concrete position as a whole.”

In our opinion, the most correct viewpoint came from GM Bondarevsky in his work, *Attack On The King*: “In most positions created in everyday practice, the two bishops are stronger than other minor pieces.” So with these provisos, we can indeed talk about the advantage of the two bishops.

Typical Advantages Resulting from the Two Bishops

- The opponent’s bishop and knight (or two knights) are uncoordinated.
- The two bishops exert concentrated influence over the decisive section of the board — and sometimes over the entire board.
- The enemy’s pieces, due to the limited mobility of the knight, arrive late to the important action. (This advantage can sometimes be transformed into cutting off one of the enemy’s minor pieces, usually a knight.)
- At the moment of your choice, one of your bishops can be exchanged for the opponent’s knight, while it is much more difficult for your opponent, at any given moment, to exchange his knight for your bishop.

Here we must remind ourselves that the two bishops are not always dangerous. When the position is blocked or where there are no open diagonals for the bishops to use, the knights turn out to be stronger.

Now let’s analyse some positions featuring the two bishops.

Game 18

Alekhine — Wennik

Prague, 1931



Diagram 119 Position after Black's 22nd move

White has a significant positional advantage. All of White's pieces are ready for an attack. The White bishops are ideally located, and Black is unable to oppose their activity. Alekhine finds an energetic method of conducting the attack that uses his g2-pawn.

23. g4! Qd6

In order to meet 23. g5 with 23. ... Qd5.

24. Bg6! Rf8

By threatening Black's rook, White has protected his queen with the bishop and prepared the next move.

25. g5 Bxd4

Now 24. ... Qd5 loses.

26. gxh6 Ndf6

Protecting himself from immediate checkmate.

27. hxg7+ Kxg7

28. Qh6+



Diagram 120 Position after 28. Qh6+

28. ... Kh8

If 28. ... Kg8, then 29. Nxd4 Qxd4 30. Rg3 winning.

29. Nxd4 Qxd4

30. Bb2 Black resigns

After 30. ... Qd7 31. Rd3! Qg7 32. Bxf6, overloading the Black pieces, leads to checkmate.

The above game features the overwhelming activity by the bishops. White achieved a decisive opening of the game and finished with an attack on the king.

Game 19

Bogoljubov — Janowsky

New York, 1924



Diagram 121 Position after White's 23rd move

Black sacrificed a pawn to reach this position — and he was right!

23. ... Bf6

24. Qh5 Ba4!

25. Re1 Qd6

26. h3 Bc2!

27. Qf3 b5

28. Qe2 Ba4

29. Qf3 Rc4

30. Ba1

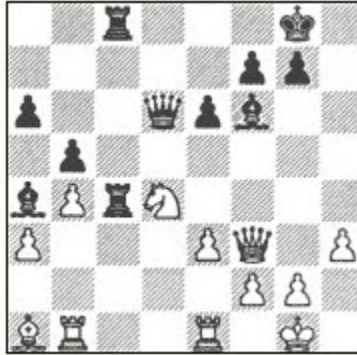


Diagram 122 Position after 30. Ba1

For the last couple of moves, Black improved his position substantially, while White couldn't do anything constructive. Notice that 30. Rxc4 bxc4 31. Bc3 favors Black.

30. ... Rdc8

31. Rb1

White can't protect his light squares — his pawns are located on dark squares, and he does not have a light-squared bishop.

31. ... e5

32. Ne2 Bc2

33. Rbc1 Be4

34. Qg4 Bb7

The bishop has taken up a threatening position.

35. Rxc4 Rxc4

36. f4

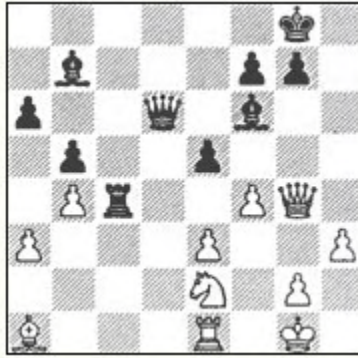


Diagram 123 Position after 36. f4

This weakens the squares e4 and g2, as well as the e3-pawn.

36. ... Qd2

37. Qg3 Re4

38. Bc3 Qd5

39. Bxe5



Diagram 124 Position after 39. Bxe5

And now comes the final stroke!

39. ... Rxe3!

Also winning was 39. ... Rxe5! 40. fxe5 Bh4!.

40. Qg4 Bxe5

41. fxe5 Rxe5

42. Kh2 Qd2

43. Qg3 f6!

44. h4 Bd5

45. Qf2 Bc4

White resigns

The Black bishop has put on a successful and instructive show!

The next game, given in full, is a struggle between two of the most talented young contemporary players. It is a good example of how young players can absorb the experiences and knowledge of the previous generations, and then apply it creatively. In the hands of Grandmaster Ivanchuk, the old violin of two bishops plays new melodies!

Game 20

Ivanchuk — Anand

Buenos Aires, 1994

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 g6 5. c4

The Maroczy Bind system in the Sicilian Defense foreshadows a strong pawn position in the center for White. However, it is not enough simply to occupy the center with pawns — more important is to control the central squares.

5. ... Nf6

6. Nc3 d6

7. Be2 Nxd4

In this way the White queen is enticed onto the d4 square, which is under the influence of the bishop on g7.

8. Qxd4 Bg7

9. Be3



Diagram 125 Position after 9. Be3

With his last move White made an important choice concerning the position of his bishop. Many players choose to develop the bishop on g5, placing it on the h4-d8 diagonal to pressure the e7-pawn. Ivanchuck prefers to control the g1-a7 diagonal from the e3 square.

9. ... 0-0

10. Qd2

Otherwise ... Ng4 would follow, attacking the queen and then exchanging the important e3-bishop, with an excellent game for Black.

10. ... Be6

Another possibility is to play 10. ... Ng4, which is usually met by 11. Bxg4. White would stand better after this exchange because the “Maroczy Bind” pawns on c4 and e4 restrict the mobility of Black’s light-squared bishop, while complementing White’s dark-squared cleric. Black will have two bishops. On the other hand, White will have more space, will have no “bad” pieces, and the position will be of a closed character, where Black’s two bishops aren’t so powerful. In addition, White could always exchange dark-squared bishops, aiming for a position where a White knight will be stronger than Black’s remaining bishop.

11. 0-0 Qa5



Diagram 126 Position after 11. ... Qa5

12. Rab1!?

This is a very subtle move. It is often a problem to decide where to place your rooks. The most natural deployment here is Rfd1 and Rac1, but the text creates the threat of b2-b4, which may be important if Black tries to bring a knight to c5. Thus, White decides that right now it makes more sense to place the rooks on b1 and c1.

12. ... Rfc8

13. b3 Nd7

It is interesting that after 13. ... Ng4, White has 14. Nd5, and Black will not be able to exchange the dark-squared bishop. After 14. ... Qxd2 15. Bxd2, the Black knight on g4 is not accomplishing anything, and White has the better endgame.

14. Rfc1 Qd8

15. Nd5

This is the ideal position for the White knight. What if it is exchanged for a bishop White is prepared to prove that the two bishops would be an advantage in such a position.

15. ... Nc5

16. Bf3

Once again, a very important decision. Natural is 16. f3, firmly protecting the pawn on e4 but significantly decreasing the potential of White's light-squared bishop.

16. ... a5

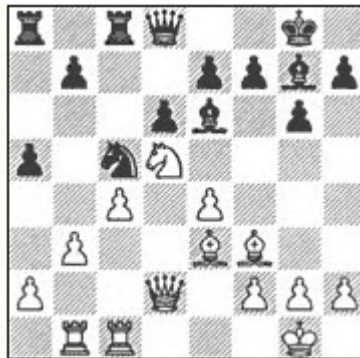


Diagram 127 Position after 16. ... a5

17. h4!

Black's last move secures the c5-square as an outpost for his knight. But from c5 the knight cannot be very active in helping to defend the king on the other side of the board. White's last move begins an attack on Black's underprotected king. The Black knight remains entrenched on the queenside and cannot really work on both flanks.

17. ... Bxd5

How long could Black continue to tolerate this knight?

18. exd5

Black's defense would be easier after the "symmetrical" 18. cxd5.

18. ... Qd7

Without first exchanging the knight from d5, this move would be impossible because of the fork Nb6.

19. Qe2!?



Diagram 128 Position after 19. Qe2!?

This position deserves careful attention. It is logical to assume that with his next moves White will try to broaden the influence of his bishops, impeding the coordination of the opponent's forces.

19. ... Re8

The attempt to compete for space on the kingside with 19. ... h5 would lead to the opening of the game in White's favor after 20. g4 hxg4 21. Bxg4 f5 22. Bh3, with an attack on the open g-file.

20. h5 Qf5

21. Rd1

Controlling the d3-square and preventing the knight from shifting through it to the kingside.

21. ... Be5



Diagram 129 Position after 21. ... Be5

22. g4!? Qc8

23. Kg2 Bg7

24. Rh1 Nd7

25. hxg6 hxg6

26. Rh4

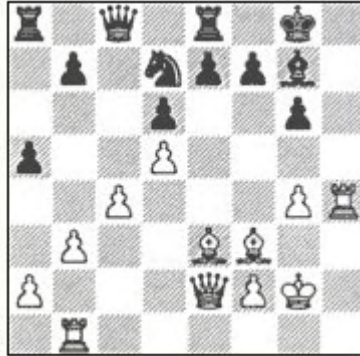


Diagram 130 Position after 26. Rh4

Under the powerful cover of the two bishops, White was able to open the h-file. Now White's position is further strengthened by the buildup of heavy pieces on that file.

26. ... a4!?

Black searches for compensation in return for White's opening of the h-file, so he opens the a-file. If we judge the position simply by the number of open files, then the game is equal. But controlling the file that is closer to the enemy king can be a large advantage.

27. Rbh1 axb3

28. axb3 Ra1?

This move does not lead to the exchange of rooks, which would provide Black some relief. Black should have tried 28. ... b5!

29. R1h3! Qa8

30. Rh7 Qa2

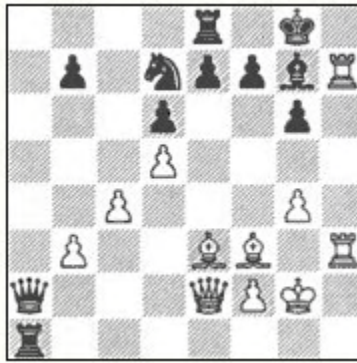


Diagram 131 Position after 30. ... Qa2

Black is correct in his desire to exchange heavy pieces, but his goal is not achievable.

31. Rxc7+! Kxc7

32. Bd4+ f6

Or 32. ... Nf6 33. Qxa2 Rxa2 34. g5 +-.

33. Qe3 Nf8

34. Be4!

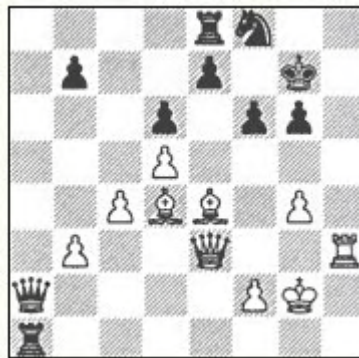


Diagram 132 Position after 34. Be4!

Ignoring the rook on a1, this move represents the triumph of the two bishops. They control the whole board. Black is lost.

34. ... Kf7 35. Rh8. There is no defense against Qh6, threatening Bxc6+ or Rxf8+. Black resigns.

B. How to play against two bishops

We now know that the bishops are very dangerous if they have open diagonals. That's why the basic method of play against two bishops is (1) to limit their

activity by creating pawn blockades, and (2) to conquer support squares for the knight(s). The following game shows these “antidotes” in action.

Game 21

Brinkman — Nimzovich

Denmark, 1922

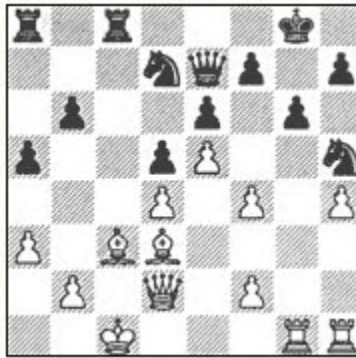


Diagram 133 Position after White's 20th move

20. ... b5!!

Nimzovich wrote: “Sacrifice for the blockade. Black gives up a pawn in order to create the possibility of exchanging the opponent’s light-squared bishop.” White will lose control of the light squares and will be in danger.

21. Bxb5 Rab8

22. Be2 Nb6

23. Kd1

It was best for White to accept the sacrifice with 23. Bxh5 Nc4 24. Qc2 Nxa3! 25. Qd2 Nc4!, with a draw by repetition.

23. ... Nc4

The exchange of one of the opponent’s bishops is profitable for Black. The strength of his other knight will increase tremendously.

24. Bxc4 Rxc4

25. Rg5 Ng7

26. h5 Nf5

27. hxg6 fxg6

28. Rxf5

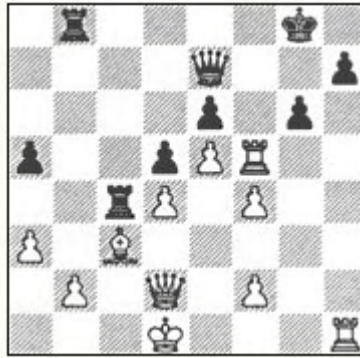


Diagram 134 Position after 28. Rxf5

This is not really an Exchange sacrifice but rather a trade, because this knight was equal to the rook.

28. ... exf5

29. Bxa5 Rb3!

30. Ke2 Qb7

31. Bb4 Qa6

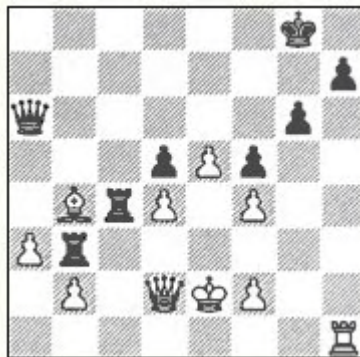


Diagram 135 Final position

White resigns. The threat is a discovered check, and 31. Ke1 loses to 31. ... Rbxb4 32. axb4 Qa1+ 33. Qd1 Rc1.

Game 22

Psakhis — Tukmakov

Rostov-on-Don, 1993



Diagram 136 White to move

The White knights are well placed in the center. Let's see how they make use of weaknesses in the enemy camp.

20. Nh4! Rh6

21. b3 Qd5

It was probably better to play 21. ... g5 and 22. ... Rg6.

22. Qc4!

White is correct in offering the exchange of queens.

22. ... Kd7

23. Qxd5+ Rxd5

24. Nc5+

An unpleasant shot. Now there will be no talk about the "advantage of the two bishops" since at least one of them will be exchanged.

24. ... Bxc5

25. Rxc5 Rh8

26. Nf3!



Diagram 137 Position after 26. Nf3!

The game has been transferred into an ending where the White knight is stronger than the opponent's bishop. Now it is very important to use the knight's abilities to the maximum, so White returns it to the center.

26. ... Rb8

On 25. ... Kd6, 26. Nd2! will follow, and if 26. ... f5, then 27. Rxa5!.

27. Nd2 Ba8

28. R5c4 Kc7

29. Ne4 Rb4

30. Kg2!

White is activating the king. Its ideal post would be h4.

30. ... f5

31. Ng5 Kd6

32. f4 exf4

33. gxf4 c5?!

34. Kf2

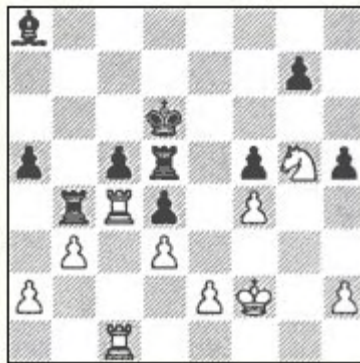


Diagram 138 Position after 34. Kf2

It is difficult for Black to untie his pieces. His rook on d5 can't move, and his bishop on a8 has no future.

34. ... Rb7

35. Ne4+! fxe4

If Black retreats his king, the pawn on c5 would be lost, and Black's position would fall apart.

36. dxe4 Rf7

37. exd5 Rxf4+

38. Ke1 Bxd5

39. Rxc5



Diagram 139 Position after 39. Rxc5

White's positional advantage has been transformed into a material advantage. An extra Exchange in this position is enough to win.

The game concluded:

39. ... Rg4 40. Rxa5 Rg1+ 41. Kd2 Rg2, and Black resigns.

- CHAPTER 7 -

Fighting on the Long Diagonals

The long diagonals (a1-h8 and h1-a8), where the bishops can use their special abilities to the maximum effect, normally have a very important role. A queen + bishop battery on such a diagonal often allows a player to attack his opponent's king successfully. In order to make full use of a long diagonal's power, the attacking side often makes sacrifices - not only pawns, but also the Exchange, or sometimes even a full piece.

The struggle to control the long, dark diagonal is a characteristic of many openings; for example, the King's Indian Defense, Pirc Defense, Grunfeld Defense, and the Dragon variation of the Sicilian Defense. And in the Reti Opening, English Opening, and Catalan opening, White similarly puts his hopes in the light-squared bishop.

Game 23

Instructive Example

The following position could be reached after these moves:

1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4 3. c3 dxc3 4. Bc4 cxb2 5. Bxb2 Bb4+ 6. Nc3 Nf6 7. Nge2 Nxe4?! 8. 0-0 Nxc3 9. Nxc3 Bxc3 10. Bxc3 0-0

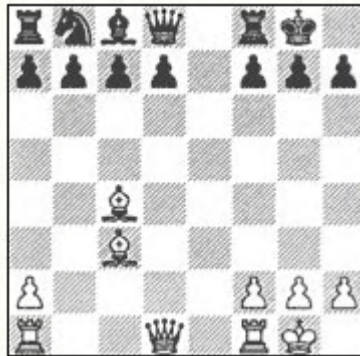


Diagram 140 Position after 10. ... 0-0

Black is extremely behind in development, so it is no surprise that he is losing after ...

11. Qg4!

Not 11. Qd4 because of 11. ... Qf6.

11. ... g6

12. Qd4

Now occupying the long diagonal leads to forced checkmate.

Game 24

Barczay — Mikhalchishin

Keckemet, 1983



Diagram 141 White to move

Here the White queen occupies the strong central square e5, located on the long diagonal. Black's last move (13. ... Qd8-b6?) was a terrible mistake because now White forces the Black queen to capture on g2, opening the g-file and thereby accelerating White's threats along the a1-h8 diagonal. The game continued:

14. Na4! Qc6

If 14. ... Qb4 15. Rd4, or if 14. ... Qf2 15. Rd2.

15. Bb5! Qxg2

This forced pawn capture opens the g-file against Black's own king.

16. Rhg1 Qxh2

Now the long diagonal will be "cleared out" by White, with decisive effect.

17. Bxf6 Bxf6

18. Qxf6

And White won a piece and the game.

In the next example, Black strives from the outset to create pressure on the h1-a8 diagonal. White takes no steps against this plan — and look at the result!

Game 25

Rutkovsky — Neff

Krasnojarsk, 1992

1. d4 e6 2. c4 b6 3. e4 Bb7 4. Nc3

Better is 4. Bd3!, to meet 4. ... f5 with 5. exf5 Bxg2 6. Qh5+.

4. ... Bb4

5. Bd3

5. Nf3 is safer.

5. ... f5!



Diagram 142 Position after 5. ... f5!

A daring move, designed to expand the scope of the bishop on b7.

6. Qc2 Qh4

7. g3 Qh5

8. f3 Nf6

9. Kf2

With this move, White frees the knight on c3 from the pin, and makes it possible for the other knight to move on e2 (because White's pawn on f3 will be protected by the king). Nevertheless, the position of the White king is rather provocative!

9. ... Bxc3

10. bxc3 fxe4

Black opens up more lines for the attack.

11. fxe4 0-0

12. Kg2

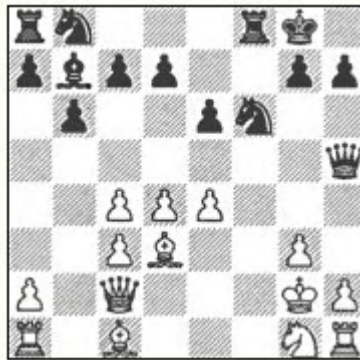


Diagram 143 Position after 12. Kg2

Now the position is ripe for the final combination.

12. ... Nxe4!!

13. Bxe4 Qf5!



Diagram 144 Final position

White resigns. The pins are devastating! In addition to the fact that after 14. Bxb7 White's queen on c2 would be under attack, Black also has the powerful move 14. ... Qf1 mate.

Game 26

Reti — Yates

New York, 1924

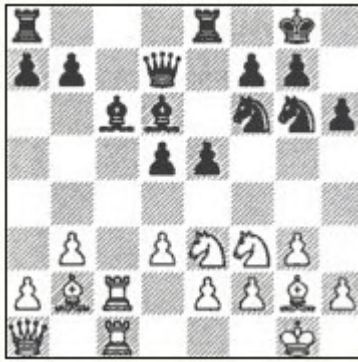


Diagram 145 Position after 16. ... h6

With his last move Black missed the opportunity to close the a1-h8 diagonal by playing 16. ... d4 17. Nc4 Bc7.

17. d4!

White will obtain either the d4-square for his pieces, or the e5-square for his knight.

17. ... e4

18. Ne5 Bxe5

19. dxe5 Nh7



Diagram 146 Position after 19. ... Nh7

Now White has control over the dark squares, and his opponent has a weak pawn on d5. Black's position is strategically lost.

20. f4! exf3

21. exf3 Ng5

22. f4 Nh3+

23. Kh1 d4

This move only hastens Black's defeat.

24. Bxd4 Rad8

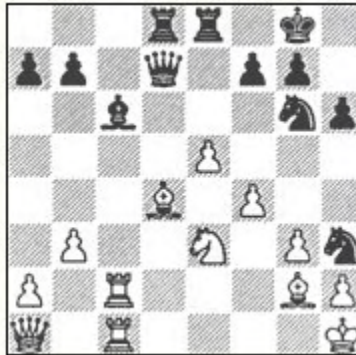


Diagram 147 Position after 24. ... Rad8

25. Rxc6

Thanks to this energetic move, White's bishop on the long, light-square diagonal will be empowered.

25. ... bxc6

26. Bxc6 Nf2+

27. Kg2 Qxd4

28. Qxd4 Rxd4

29. Bxe8 Ne4

30. e6!



Diagram 148 Position after 30. e6!

With two extra pawns and a positional advantage, it is not much of a challenge for White to win the game.

30. ... Rd2+

31. Kf3 Black resigns

The next two games by Grandmaster Palatnik feature sharp play on the long diagonals. Sometimes the commandments governing this kind of fighting require plenty of sacrificial offerings, and any square on the long diagonal can become an altar for the slaughter of pieces! Sometimes these same principles also require the construction of hastily-built dams and barricades, which could be swept away at any time, but by some engineering miracle manage to keep the long diagonal closed. And sometimes it happens that after we have gone to great lengths to open fire along the long diagonals, our opponent is not there, and we find ourselves shooting at nothing!

Game 27

Palatnik — Stohl

Tallinn, 1986

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 3. c4 Bg7 4. Nc3 d5 5. cxd5 Nxd5 6. g3



Diagram 149 Position after 6. g3

6. ... c5

This move highlights the strategic idea of the Gruenfeld Defense: Black will emphasize the power of his g7-bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal. His attack will be supported by a pawn on c5, a knight on c6, and a queen on a5.

7. Bg2 Nc6

8. 0-0

This move already intends a pawn sacrifice.

8. ... Nxc3

9. bxc3

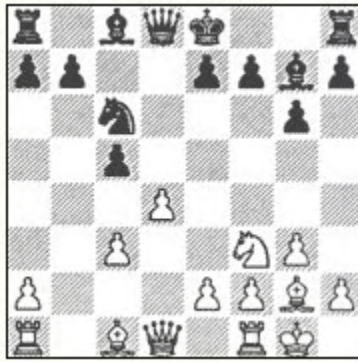


Diagram 150 Position after 9. bxc3

White has thrown up a fragile barrier on the a1-h8 diagonal, and with his next move Black could have destroyed it.

After 9. ... cxd4 10. Nxd4! Nxd4 11. cxd4 Bxd4 (11. ... Qxd4 12. Rb1 0-0 13. Be3 Qxd1 14. Rfxd1) 12. Rb1, Black's attack on the a1-h8 diagonal wins a pawn. Meanwhile, however, White would have good play on the h1-a8 diagonal.

9. ... 0-0

Black is not tempted by the above variation and makes a useful developing move.

10. dxc5!

Instead 10. e3 would make White's position in the center stronger, but the price would be the demise of the bishop on c1. Now after 10. ... Bxc3 11. Bh6 Bxa1, 12. Qxa1 takes control of the long diagonal and its dark squares. If 10. ... Qxd1 11. Rxd1 Bxc3 12. Rb1, the play on the long diagonal would end — there would be nothing remaining on the diagonal for Black's bishop to attack. White, whose pieces would be better developed, would have easy targets.

10. ... Qa5

Now Black wants to take White's pawns in comfort. The queen has taken the right position for interaction with the bishop and has freed a place for activating a rook.

11. Nd4!



Diagram 151 Position after 11. Nd4!

Once again White creates a temporary and unsteady barrier, and also introduces obvious counter-pressure on the h1-a8 diagonal. At this moment Black can win the Exchange. However, after 11. ... Qxc3 12. Nxc6 Qxa1 13. Nxe7+ Kh8 14. Be3, and now, for example, 14. ... Qxd1 15. Rxd1, White gets strong threats — such as 16. Nxc8 and 17. Bxb7. And the c-pawn supported by the two bishops would give White the better chances. Notice that throughout this entire variation, the bishop on g7 plays no active part.

11. ... Rd8

And why not? The rook is developed to an active position, it pins the knight, and the rest of Black's threats are still alive. But White also has a useful move.

12. Be3!

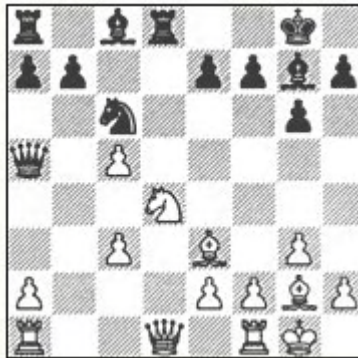


Diagram 152 Position after 12. Be3!

Fortifying the knight on d4. The tension is growing and can't last long! Black must destroy the White knight's point of support at c3, since 12. ... Nxd4 13. cxd4 will just leave White with an extra pawn — 13. ... Bxd4? 14. Bxd4 e5 15. Bc3!, and on 12. ... Bd7, 13. Qb3 will follow. So:

12. ... Qxc3

All of the barriers on the long diagonal have been removed, and Black is truly the owner of the highway from h8 to a1! But

13. Nxc6!

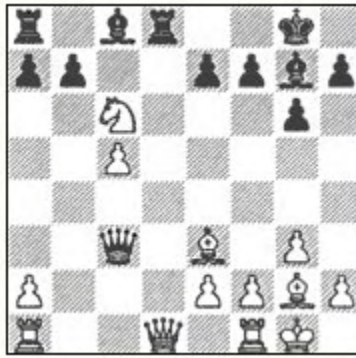


Diagram 153 Position after 13. Nxc6!

Now Black gets the bill! He has declined an extra pawn, he has declined an Exchange — but now he must accept an extra queen!

13. ... Rxd1

14. Raxd1

White's plan is clear. His knight on c6 cannot be taken because of the variation 14. ... bxc6 15. Bxc6! (but not 15. Rd8+ Bf8 16. Bh6 Bb7 and Black wins), and Black's choices are unpalatable: After 15. ... Rb8 comes the decisive 16. Rd8+ Bf8 17. Bh6; and after 15. ... Bh3 16. Bxa8, the c-pawn and the threats to the Black king make Black's position indefensible.

14. ... Bf6



Diagram 154 Position after 14. ... Bf6

Supporting the pawn on e7 and opening the g7-square for the king. It looks like White's threats have subsided, and White has only a rook and a knight for the queen.

15. Rd8+ Kg7

What is going to happen next?

16. Nxe7!

A decisive blow. The knight that has traveled through the mine fields (d4, c6, and now e7) brings victory to White. How do you like the threat of 17. Rg8 checkmate? Black must play:

16. ... Bxe7

17. Bd4+

Now who owns the long diagonal?

17. ... Qxd4

18. Rxd4 Bxc5

19. Rd8 Black Resigns

The pin on the h1-a8 diagonal, the pin on the eighth rank, and the Exchange make further resistance meaningless.

So it turns out that reaping a rich harvest on the long diagonal is not the same as winning the game!

In the next example, the main action takes place on the long, light diagonal, h1-a8.

Game 28

Palatnik — Mestrovich

Albena, 1977

1. d4 Nc6

Let's not be distracted by the unusual opening.

2. Nf3 d6

3. d5 Ne5

4. Nxe5 dxe5

5. g3 e6

6. c4

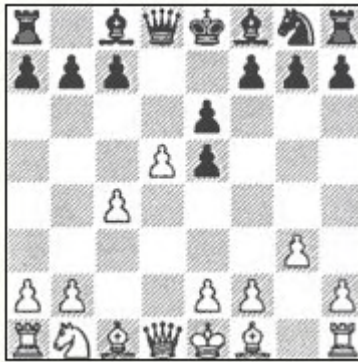


Diagram 155 Position after 6. c4

6. ... Bb4+

Dubious. Better is 6. ... exd5 7. cxd5, which would open up the bishop on c8 and allow the dark-squared bishop to be placed on d6 (where it could be protected from White's knight by ... a7-a6), with approximately equal chances.

7. Nc3!

Now Black has problems because of threats such as Qa4+ and Qxb4. One of those problems is how to deny his opponent the advantage of the two bishops and the domination of the h1-a8 diagonal.

7. ... c6

8. Qb3 Qd6

If 8. ... Bxc3+ 9. Qxc3, the pawn on e5 will be under attack and White will have the advantage.

9. dxc6 Ne7!?

The alternative 9. ... Qxc6 would permit the promising Exchange sacrifice with 10. Qxb4. White would also have the simple 10. Rg1, with an attack on the bishop on b4, followed by Bg2 and a pawn advantage on the queenside. Now White's acceptance of the pawn sacrifice after 10. cxb7 Bxb7 would help Black develop, and would make it hard for White to activate his pieces.

10. a3!

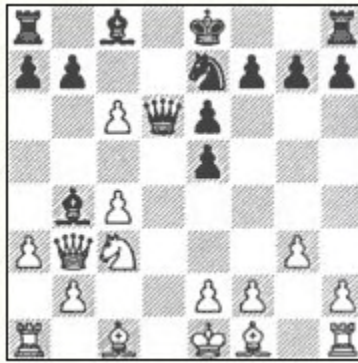


Diagram 156 Position after 10. a3!

White wants to dictate the course of the events! Now 10. ... Bxc3+ 11. Qxc3 would leave White with the two bishops and a better pawn structure. Retreating the bishop is impossible because then 11.

cx b7 wins a piece. The only thing left is the move made in the game:

10. ... Qxc6

Now it seems as if the attack on White's rook wins time for Black to retreat his bishop.

11. Qxb4!

Inviting the Black queen to travel the long light diagonal.

11. ... Qxh1

12. Nb5

Threatening Nc7+. Castling is impossible for Black because the knight on e7 would be left unprotected.

12. ... Qc6

The Black queen takes the long-diagonal shuttle!

13. Be3

White simply plays a developing move. Now the pawn on a7 is under attack, and castling is still impossible for Black. With his next move Black not only moves his pawn out of the line of fire, but also tries to push the knight back from its active post.

13. ... a6



Diagram 157 Position after 13. ... a6

14. Bg2!

The bishop nevertheless occupies the long diagonal and does it with a tempo. This is an interesting example of decoy and deflection. If Black's queen once again rides the shuttle to take the bishop with 14. ... Qxg2, then the follow-up would be 15. Nc7+. Black could choose his poison: 15. ... Kd8 16. 0-0-0+ Kxc7 17. Qd6 mate; or 15. ... Kf8 16. 0-0-0 g6 17. Bh6+ Kg8 18. Rd8 mate; or in the last line, 16. ... f6 17. Rd8+ Kf7 18. Rxh8 and, with equal material, White still has an unstoppable attack.

14. ... Nd5

This weak attempt at covering up does not help.

15. Nd6+ Kd7

16. cxd5 Qxd6

17. dxe6+

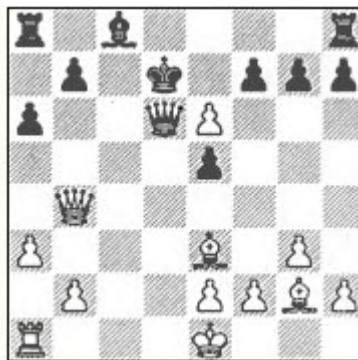


Diagram 158 Position after 17. dxe6+

17. ... Kxe6

Also bad are 18. ... Kc7 19. Rc1+ and 18. ... Ke7 19. Bc5. The best try is 18. ... Qxe6 19. Bxb7 Rb8 (19. ... Bxb7 20.

Qxb7+ Ke8 21. Qxa8+) 20. Qa4+ Kc7 21. Be4, which would leave Black in a difficult position, but a better one than in the game.

18. Bh3+

The bishop has changed its diagonal with decisive effect. Black resigns, because 18. ... f5 would be met by 19. Bxf5+; and 18. ... Ke7 loses to 19. Bc5, with the loss of the queen.

In the next example, a spectacular rook sacrifice gives White rich play due to the pin on the h4-d8 diagonal and to the weaknesses of the dark squares in Black's position.

Game 29

Geller — Velimirovich

Havana, 1971



Diagram 159 Position after Black's 13th move

14. Ndx4!! Nxe4 15. Nxe4 Bxa1 16. Bg5 Bf6 17. Nxf6+ Rxf6 18. Qa1 Kf7 19. Re1



Diagram 160 Position after 19. Re1

Even though his queen's rook is missing, White has an advantage in force in the

main direction of the attack. It is difficult for Black to bring his pieces from the queenside, especially the short-stepping knight on a5.

19. ... Rb8

A year after the game was over, the best defense was found: 19. ... Qh8 20. Qc3! b6 21. Re6 Rxe6! 22. dxe6+ (22. Qxh8 Re1+ 23. Bf1 Rxf1+! 24. Kxf1 Bh3+, followed by ... Rxh8) 22. ... Bxe6 23. Qf3+ Bf5 24. Qd5+ Be6 25. Qf3+, with a draw by perpetual check. Black did not have the luck to find this variation while playing the game.

20. Re3 b6

21. Rf3 Bf5

22. g4 Qh8



Diagram 161 Position after 22. ... Qh8

23. Bxf6

The simplest continuation. White wins back the sacrificed material and goes into a winning ending.

23. ... Qxf6

24. Qxf6+ Kxf6

25. gxf5 gxf5

26. Re3 Nb7

27. Re6+ Kf7

28. Bf3 Rg8+

29. Kf1 Kf8

30. Bh5

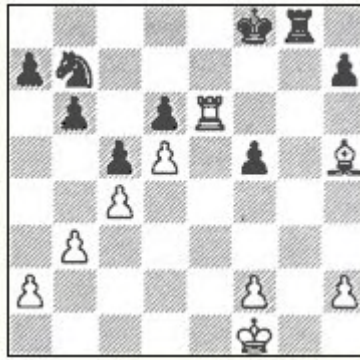


Diagram 162 Position after 30. Bh5

White wins the game step by step. Notice that the Black knight remains misplaced.

30. ... Rg5

31. Re8+ Kg7

32. Re7+ Kh6

33. Rxb7 Rxh5

34. Rxa7 Rxh2

35. Rd7

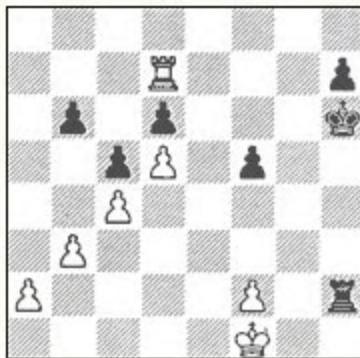


Diagram 163 Position after 35. Rd7

Because of his much more active rook, White has a winning endgame.

35. ... Kg5

36. Rxd6 Kf4

37. Ke2

Not the “greedy” 37. Rxb6 because of 37. ... Kf3. The rest is easy.

37. ... b5 38. cxb5 Ke5 39. Rd7 Rh4 40. a3 Rh3 41. f3 Kd4 42. b6 Rh2+ 43.

Ke1 Rh1+ 44. Kf2 Rh2+ 45. Ke1 Rh1+ 46. Kf2 Rh2+ 47. Kg3 Rb2 48. b7

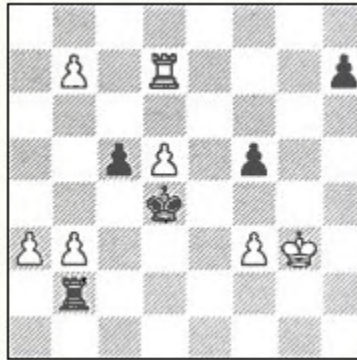


Diagram 164 Position after 48. b7

48. ... Rxb3 49. a4 c4 50. a5 c3 51. a6 Rb6 52. Rc7 1-0

Analyze the next position to make sure you remember the winning ideas.

Learning Exercise 7-1:

Open or closed?

Hartloub — Aficio

1887



Diagram 165 White to move

1. Can White's previous gambit play be justified in this position?
2. Is the long diagonal a1-h8 closed?

Answer:

White's play can be justified by 1. Rxb3+. After 1. ... Kxb3 2. Rg1+ Kh8 [2. ... Kf6 3. Qh4+ Kf5 4. Rg5+ Kf6 5. Rxe5+ Kg6 6. Rg5 mate; 2. ... Kh6 3. Qh4 mate] 3. Qxe5+! (the diagonal is wide open!) 3. ... dxe5 4. Bxe5+ f6 (the last interference), 5. Bxf6+! is winning.

Open Files and Diagonals

The previous chapter focused on the special characteristics of the long diagonals. But all open lines are important. Control of an open line (a diagonal, a file, and sometimes even a rank) often paves the way for success because your pieces can use it as a highway into the enemy camp. The queen and the bishops operate effectively along diagonals, while the queen and the rooks use files. The following three examples illustrate the general importance of open lines.

Game 30

Korchnoi — I. Sokolov

Wijk-aan-Zee, 1993

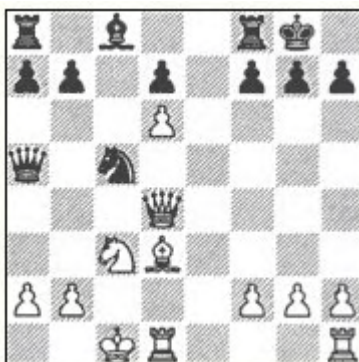


Diagram 166 Position after Black's 17th move

Here, for example, White's advantage is clear: His bishop controls the b1-h7 diagonal, and the d6-pawn not only hems in his opponent's pieces but also provides a springboard for dangerous piece attacks. The White queen is marvelously located in the center, and his knight is ready to join in via d5. Black's pieces are distant from his kingside. This situation gives White the opportunity for a combinative blow.

18. Bxh7+! Kxh7

19. Qh4+ Kg8

20. Nd5!

Threatening Ne7 mate.

20. ... g6

21. Qh6 Nb3+

22. Kb1 Black resigns

In the next example, look how energetically the former Women's World Champion concludes her game. She does not hesitate to sacrifice her queen in order to open the a1-h8 diagonal.

Game 31

Chiburdanidze — Larsen

Vienna, 1993



Diagram 167 Position after Black's 30th move

31. Qxh6+! gxh6

32. Nf7+ Kg8

33. Nxh6 mate

Here line-opening tactics represented the fulfillment of White's strategy.

Game 32

Botvinnik — Larsen

Palma de Majorca, 1967



Diagram 168 Position after Black's 20th move

White has a big positional advantage:

He has control over the open file, his bishop on b2 dominates the a1-h8 diagonal, the White knight is located in the center, and the only piece protecting the Black king is the bishop on f8. These factors allow White to play a winning combination:

21. Nf6+!

In the actual game White, with little time to make a decision, played 21. Rd7, which also leads to a win but only after long and tedious play.

21. ... gxf6

22. Qg4+ Kh7

23. Rd7!



Diagram 169 Position after 23. Rd7!

23. ... Re7

If 23. ... Be7, 24. Be4+ Kh8 25. Rxe7 etc.

24. Be4+ f5 25. Bxf5+ exf5 26. Qxf5+ Kg8 27. Qf6 Ne5 28. Bxe5 Rxe5 29. Qxf7+ Kh8 30. Qh7 mate.

A game that illustrates Nimzovich's famous principle (see quotation below) on the use of open files!

The main objective of any operation on an open file is the eventual occupation of the 7th or 8th rank.

—Grandmaster Aron Nimzovich

A. Exploitation of open and half-open files

An open file is one which is entirely free of pawns. A half-open (also called semi-open) file is one free of your own pawns, but which still contains one or more of the opponent's pawns. For example, after 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4, White has a half-open d-file and Black has a half-open c-file.

The heavy pieces (queen and rooks) can effectively show their strength both on open and half-open files. Open files in particular represent the main roads for penetrating to the seventh or eighth (or White's second or first) ranks by the heavy artillery. Possession and control of an open file is often a large advantage.

Game 33

Meduna — Palatnik

Frunze, 1979



Diagram 170 Position after White's 28th move

Black's control over the open b-file serves as his gateway to the enemy camp.

28. ... Rb8!

29. Bd1 Bxd1

The exchange of light-squared bishops does not ease the pressure on the b-file.

30. Rxd1 Qb3

31. Ra1 Qb2

32. Ra2 Qxd2

33. Rxd2

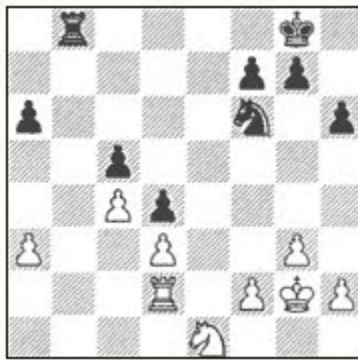


Diagram 171 Position after 33. Rxd2

Black's only remaining heavy piece is enough to control the b-file.

33. ... Rb3

34. Ra2

We can see the difference in the function of the rooks. The Black rook attacks, while White's rook only defends.

34. ... Nd7

The knight aims for the queenside as well, in order to participate actively in the operations.

35. Kf3

With the help of the king, White tries to cover up his weaknesses.

35. ... Nb6

36. Ke2

If 36. a4 instead, Black would play 36. ... a5 and then ... Rb4, winning the a-pawn.

36. ... Na4

37. Kd2 Rb1

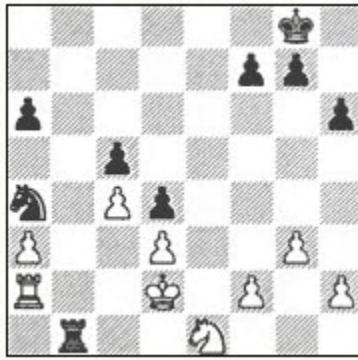


Diagram 172 Position after 37. ... Rb1!

Despite the reduced material, White remains cramped. His pieces are passive and unable to create any threats. Additionally, the White king unexpectedly turns out to be unsafe: if — for instance — 38. f4?, then 38. ... Nc3 39. Rc2 Rd1 mate.

38. Nc2 Rf1!

Wins a pawn.

39. Ke2 Rh1

40. Ra1

White does not have time to save the pawn on h2 because of the threat ... Nc3+, winning the rook.

40. ... Rxh2

41. Kf3 g5

42. Nb4



Diagram 173 Position after 42. Nb4

It is difficult to give advice to White in this position!

42. ... g4+!

A deflecting sacrifice that lets Black take the knight in comfort. It would not be good to grab the knight immediately: for example, 42. ... cxb4 43. axb4 Nb2? 44. Ke2.

43. Kxg4 cxb4

44. axb4 Nb2

45. Ra3 Rxf2

46. b5 axb5

47. cxb5 Nd1

Finally, Black is able to use his extra knight in weaving a mating attack.

48. Rb3 Ne3+

49. Kh3 f5!

White resigns, because of the threat 50. ... Ng4 with ... Rh2 checkmate; or 50. g4 fxg4+ 51. Kh4 Rf3! 52. Kh5 Kg7, and then ... Rh3 mate.

In the next example, White tries to profit from his control of the d-file.

Game 34

Botvinnik — Boleslavsky

Moscow, 1945

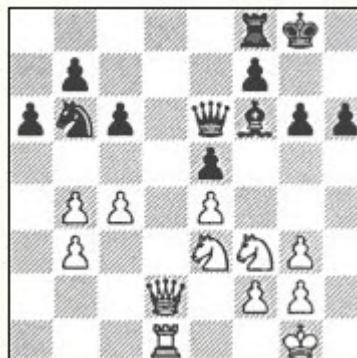


Diagram 174 Position after Black's 26th move

White has placed his heavy pieces on the open d-file and can penetrate the Black camp, but first he has to drive away the opponent's knight.

27. c5!

Thanks to this pawn advance, Black does not have time to place his rook on the open file.

27. ... Nc8

After 27. ... Rd8, White plays 28. Qxd8+ Bxd8 29. Rxd8+ Kg7 30. cxb6 +-.

28. Qd7 Qxb3

Or 28. ... Rd8 29. Qxe6 (also strong is 29. Qxb7 Rxd1+ 30. Nxd1 Ne7 31. Ne3 Qxb3 32. Qb8+ Kg7 33. Ng4) 29. ... Rxd1+ 30. Nxd1 fxe6 31. Ne3, and after 32. Nc4, White will win the e5-pawn.

29. Qxb7 Bg5

30. Nxc5 hxg5

31. Qxa6

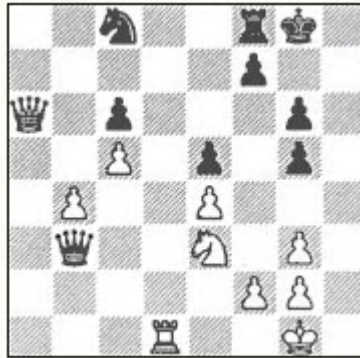


Diagram 175 Position after 31. Qxa6

White has a positional as well as a material advantage—enough for a win.

31. ... Ne7

32. Qb7 Re8

33. Qd7 Kf8

34. Qd6 Qxb4

35. Ng4!

White is still attacking.

35. ... Ra8

36. Qxe5

Stronger was 36. Nxe5 Qxe4 37. Qf6 Qf5 38. Nd7+, winning a piece.

36. ... Qb3

37. Rd7 Ng8

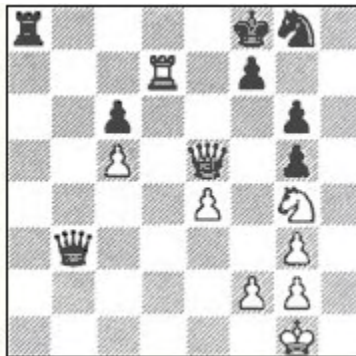


Diagram 176 Position after 37. ... Ng8

38. Qd6+

The prophylactic 38. Kh2 was even stronger.

38. ... Kg7

39. Qd4+ Kh7

40. Nf6+ Nxf6

41. Qxf6 Kg8

42. Kh2 Rf8

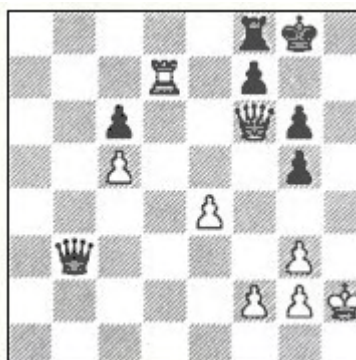


Diagram 177 Position after 42. ... Rf8

Here the game was adjourned. Upon resumption White won quickly after 43. Qxc6 Kg7 44. Qd5 Qb1 45. Qd4+ Kh7 46. c6, Black resigned, as 46. ... Rh8 loses to 47. Qxh8+ and 48. c7.

In the next example, Black brilliantly exploits the potential of the half-open c-file.

Game 35

Nimzovich — Capablanca

New York, 1927

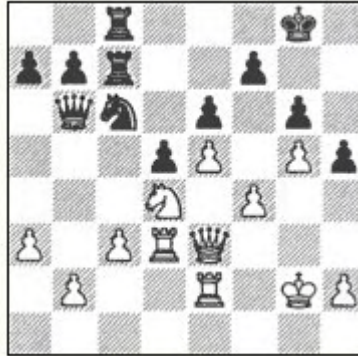


Diagram 178 Position after White's 26th move

26. ... Ne7!

Avoiding the exchange of knights and transferring his own knight to the kingside. The big question here is whether or not Black can profit from ownership of the semi-open c-file.

27. Red2 Rc4

28. Qh3

The best place for the queen is on f2; on h3 it has little to do.

28. ... Kg7

29. Rf2 a5

Expanding on the queenside.

30. Re2 Nf5

31. Nxf5+

Or 31. Red2 Nxd4 32. Rxd4 Rxd4 33. cxd4 Rc4 34. Qe3 a4.

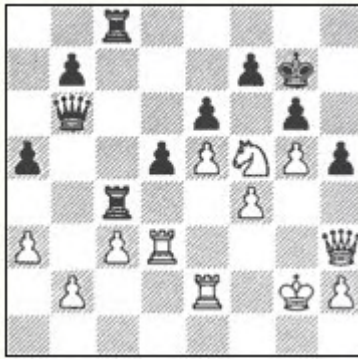


Diagram 179 Position after 31. Nxf5+

Black's control of the half-open c-file and of the 4th rank gives him the advantage.

31. ... gxf5

32. Qf3

Bad for White is 32. Qxh5 Rh8 33. Qf3 Rh4.

32. ... Kg6

33. Red2 Re4!

Black's rook has taken up an excellent position. Now in addition to the semi-open c-file and the 4th rank, Black controls the e-file, the b-file, and the a7-g1 diagonal!

34. Rd4 Rc4

Black sneaks another rook into White's camp through the 4th rank.

35. Qf2 Qb5

36. Kg3

Or 36. Rxc4 Qxc4 37. Rd4 Qb3.

36. ... Rcx d4

37. cxd4 Qc4

38. Kg2

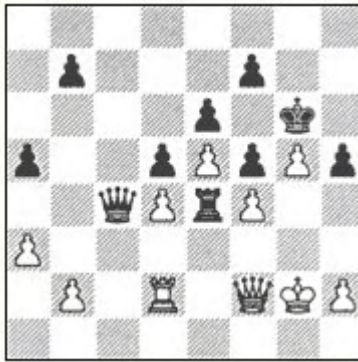


Diagram 180 Position after 38. Kg2

Through his purposeful play, Black has taken control of the c-file, now completely open, while placing his rook within the enemy camp.

38. ... b5

Improving his position without allowing any counterplay.

39. Kg1 b4

40. axb4 axb4

41. Kg2 Qc1

42. Kg3 Qh1

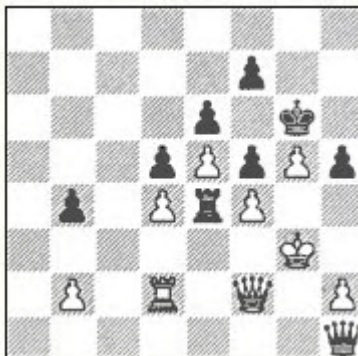


Diagram 181 Position after 42. ... Qh1

White is in Zugzwang.

43. Rd3 Re1. A decisive infiltration. 44. Rf3 Rd1 45. b3 Rc1! 46. Re3. If 46. Kh3 Rc2. 46. ... Rf1, White resigns.

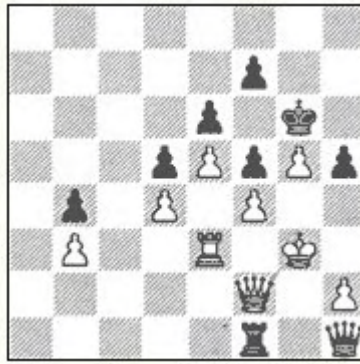


Diagram 182 Position after 46. ... Rf1

Black wins after 47. Qe2 Qg1+ 48. Kh3 Rf2.

A masterpiece, and an exemplary demonstration of how to use open and semi-open files and ranks.

The next game shows White imaginatively using both the e- and g-files.

Game 36

Kramnik — Kozlov

USSR, 1989

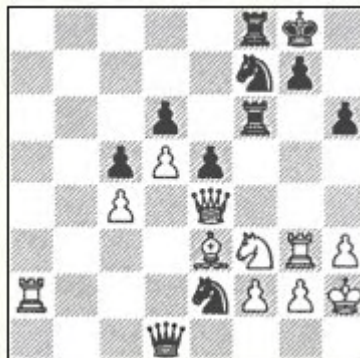


Diagram 183 Position after Black's 24th move

25. Rxe2!

White finds a tactical key to the problems locked up in this position, decoying the Black queen to a "mined" square.

25. ... Qxe2

26. Rxe2

Another decoy.

26. ... Kxg7

Not 26. ... Kh8? 27. Qh7 mate.

27. Bxh6+

Followed by capturing Black's queen on e2. Black resigns. White used the g-file to decoy the opponent's king and win material.

B. Open files and the attack on the king

The value of open files is often determined by the degree to which they represent a strategic road along which the attacker's pieces can travel into the enemy's position. The goal of such an invasion might be to win material or to create an attack on the king. As we've seen, possession of an open file is a positional advantage which, by itself, can often be a decisive factor.

Game 37

Keres — Capablanca

AVRO Tournament, Amsterdam, 1938



Diagram 184 Position after Black's 21st move

Black must protect his weak pawns at a6 and c6. All White's pieces are strongly placed, especially the knight on d4 and the bishop on b2. From the c4-square, the White queen puts pressure on the square f7, and White's rooks are located on important files. White has a significant positional advantage. His active pieces make it not only possible but also obligatory for him to attack (as indicated by Steinitz's principles).

22. Ne6!

Simultaneously attacking the g7-square and the Black queen.

22. ... Qb8

Or 22. ... Bh2+ 23. Kh1 fxe6 (23. ... Ne5 24. Nxc7 Nxc4 25. Kxh2 Nxb2 26. Rd2

+ -) 24. Qxe6+ Kh8 25. Rd7.

23. Ng5!

Not 23. Nxg7 Be5! 24. Bxe5 Nxe5 25. Qc3 Kxg7 26. f4 Rb5.

23. ... Rb7

24. Qg4 Bf4

25. Rc4 Rb5?!

Better is 25. ... Bxg5.

26. Nxf7! Re8!

Of course not 26. ... Kxf7 27. Rd7+.

27. g3



Diagram 185 Position after 27. g3

27. ... Qc8

This is the equivalent of surrender, but what else can Black do?

28. Rxf4 Qxg4

29. Rxg4 Kxf7

30. Rd7+ Re7

31. Rxe7+ Kxe7

32. Bxg7

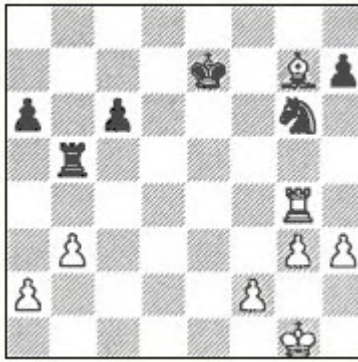


Diagram 186 Position after 32. Bxg7

White has two extra pawns, and the rest is easy.

32. ... Ra5 33. a4 Rc5 34. Rb4 Ke6 35. Kg2 h5 36. Rc4 Rxc4 37. bxc4 Kd6 38. f4, Black resigns, as 38. ... Kc5 is met by 39. f5 Ne7 40. Bf8.

Game 38

Lempert — Tiviakov

St. Petersburg, 1993

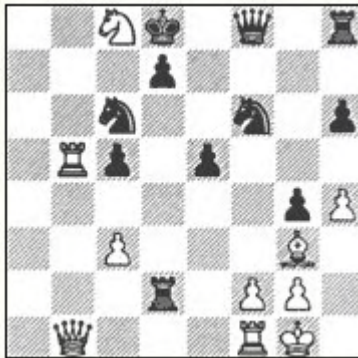


Diagram 187 Position after Black's 26th move

27. Bxe5

With this sacrifice, White gets his rook onto the 8th rank.

27. ... Nxe5

28. Rb8 Nc6

29. Re1!

Seizing the e-file and keeping Black's king from escaping the mating net.

29. ... Nxb8

30. Qxb8 Ne4

31. Nd6+ Ke7

32. Rxe4+ Kf6

33. Ne8+

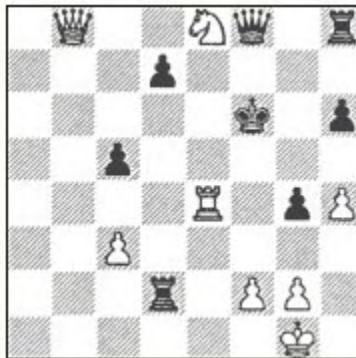


Diagram 188 Final Position

Black resigns since mate or decisive loss of material is imminent; for example, 33. ... Kg6 34. Rxc4+ Kh5 (34. ... Kh7 35. Qb1+ with mate) 35. Qe5+! Kxc4 36. f3+ Kxh4 37. g3+ Kh3 38. Qh5+ Kxc3 39. Qg4 mate.

C. Outpost on the open file

A piece or a pawn can serve as an outpost — an advanced encampment —, around which your army can operate against the enemy's home territory. Usually such outposts are placed on the 5th or 6th rank (for White) or on the 4th or 3rd rank (for Black). A piece outpost is usually protected by a pawn, and cannot be attacked by an opponent's pawn. An outpost is useful because it not only weakens the enemy position but also can support the development of the attack in the center as well as on the flanks.

Discovered check is the dive-bomber of the chessboard.

— Grandmaster Reuben Fine

Game 39

Fine — Botvinnik

AVRO Tournament, Amsterdam, 1938



Diagram 189 Position after Black's 21st move

Here the White rook on d6 occupies an outpost, located on the open file. Behind this outpost, White regroups his forces, first winning the isolated a-pawn.

22. Qe3 Ra7

23. Nd2 a3

24. c4 Ba4

25. exf6 Qxf6

26. Rxa3 Re8

27. h3

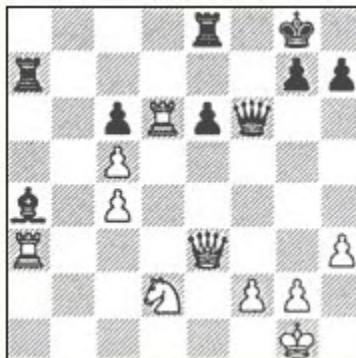


Diagram 190 Position after 27. h3

White's last move underlines his decisive advantage. Black has no counterplay. Besides, White's knight is stronger than Black's bishop.

27. ... Raa8 28. Nf3 Qb2 29. Ne5 Qb1+ 30. Kh2 Qf5 31. Qg3, Black resigns.

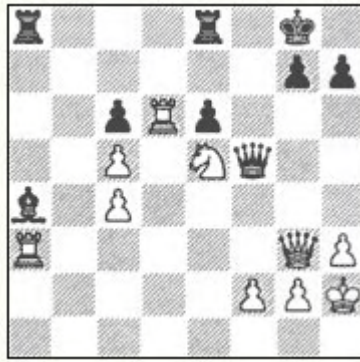


Diagram 191 Final position

Now 31. ... Rf8 loses to 32. Nd7 and 33. Nb6, and on 31. ... Re7 (to stop 32. Rd7), White wins by 32. Rxa4!

In the next game we will see the creation and use of an outpost on a semi-open file.

Game 40

Tarrasch — Blackburne

Manchester, 1890



Diagram 192 Position after Black's 9th move

10. Nd5! Nxd4

11. Bxd7 Qxd7

Not 11. ... Nxc2 12. Bxe8 Nxa1 13. Bb5 ± .

12. Qxd4 Bd8

13. Rad1 Qe6

14. Qd3 c6

Black's patience has come to an end, and he decides to push the White knight away from the outpost on d5. But this weakens the d6-pawn.

15. Ne3 f6

On 15. ... Bf6, 16. Ba3 further pressures the d6-pawn.

16. Nf5 Bc7

17. Rfe1 Rd8

18. c4

Fixing the weakness on d6. It is now hard to imagine that the backward d-pawn will ever advance. White's position is much better.

18. ... Rf7

19. Qh3 Kh8



Diagram 193 Position after 19. ... Kh8?

It was necessary to play 19. ... Qc8. Now Black loses the Exchange.

20. Nh6! Qxh3

Or 20. ... Re7 21. Qxe6 Rxe6 22. Nf7+.

21. Nxf7+ Kg8

22. gxh3 Kxf7

23. f4

And White was able to realize his advantage.

Strictly speaking, both the d5- and f5-squares were not outposts, as the White knight could be driven away from them—but only at the high cost of damaging Black's pawn structure.

Game 41

Karpov — Timman

Zwolle, 1993



Diagram 194 Position after White's 17th move

17. ... Ne5!!

This unexpected and beautiful move leads to the winning of the Exchange.

18. Bc3

Or 18. dxe5 Qd4+ 19. Kh1 Qxb4 20. fxe4 Rcd8 -+.

18. ... Nd3

Black's knight occupies a very strong outpost on d3. White now realizes that this knight is as strong as a rook.

19. fxe4

Or 19. Rf1 Bf6!, with a winning position for Black.

19. ... Nxe1

20. Qxe1 e5!

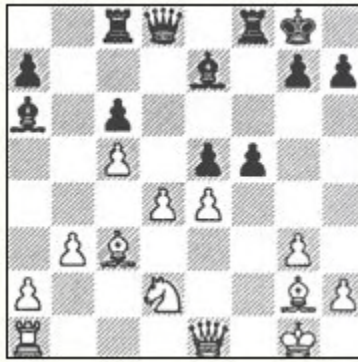


Diagram 195 Position after 20. ... e5!

Destroying White's center!

21. Nf3 exd4

22. Bxd4 fxe4

23. Qxe4 Bf6

24. Re1 Re8



Diagram 196 Position after 24. ... Re8

25. Bxf6

Also unsatisfactory for White is 25. Qxe8+ Qxe8 26. Rxe8+ Rxe8 27. Bxf6 gxf6 28. Nd4 Re1+ 29. Kf2 Rd1!.

25. ... Rxe4

26. Bxd8 Rxe1+

27. Nxe1 Rxd8

28. Bxc6

The game has reached an ending where White does not have full compensation for his lost Exchange. Black's win is now a question of technique.

28. ... Rd1

29. Kf2 Rd2+

30. Kf3 Rxa2

31. h4

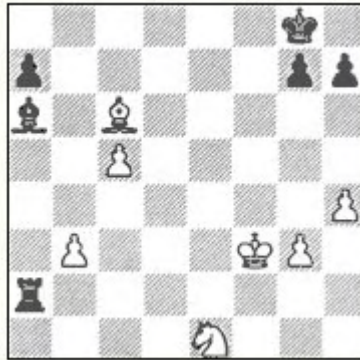


Diagram 197 Position after 31. h4

It is difficult for White to protect his numerous pawn weaknesses and to coordinate his pieces.

31. ... Kf8 32. Kf4 Ke7 33. Nf3 Rf2 34. h5 Be2 35. Ke3 Bxf3 36. Bxf3 Rb2 37. Bd5 Rc2 38. Kd4. If 38. Bc4, then 38. ... Rxc4! reaches a winning pawn endgame. 38. ... Rh2 39. g4. Or 39. Bf3 Rh3. 39. ... Rh3 40. Ke5 Re3+ 41. Kf4 Rc3 42. c6 Kd6 43. Bg8 h6 44. Kf5 Rxc6 45. Kg6 Ke5+ 46. Kxg7 Kf4, White resigns.

D. The 7th (2nd) rank

The major pieces (queen and rook) gain maximum activity when placed on open files. They are then often in position to invade the enemy camp. Especially effective is an intrusion on the 7th or 8th rank, where the opponent's pawns (7th) or king (8th) are usually located.

Game 42

Vasiliev — Zilberstein

Ukraine, 1993



Diagram 198 Position after White's 16th move

16. ... a5!

17. a3

White is forced to play this move; otherwise, 17. ... axb4 18. cxb4 creates a protected passed pawn on c4 for Black.

17. ... Ra6!

Black first builds up his forces on the a-file, and then threatens to exchange a-pawns to open the file to his advantage.

18. Ne2 Rfa8

19. Rab1

White is forced to abandon the a-file.

19. ... axb4

20. axb4 Ra3

21. Ng3 R8a4!

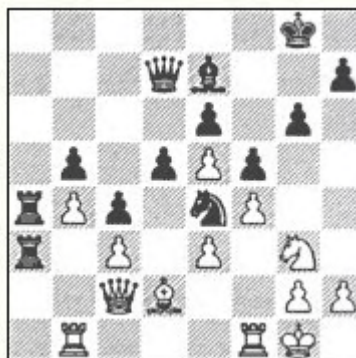


Diagram 199 Position after 21. ... R8a4!

Preparing a major invasion into the enemy camp. Black's idea is to play 22. ... Qa7

and then move onto the 2nd rank.

22. Nxe4 dxe4

Now Black also has the d-file, including his stronghold on d3, under control.

23. Rf2 Qd3!

24. Qc1 Ra2

The Black rooks begin to occupy the 2nd rank. Black has a decisive advantage.

25. Qe1 Rc2!

26. Rd1 Raa2

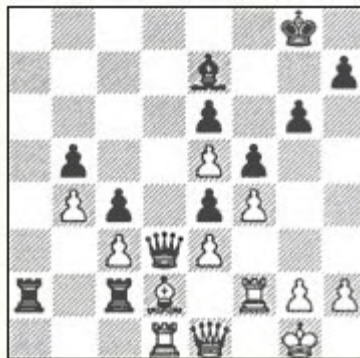


Diagram 200 Position after 26. ... Raa2

After penetrating the 2nd rank, Black now has a dominating position. He's winning.

27. g3 Bd8

With the idea of 28. ... Bb6.

28. Bc1 Rxf2

29. Rxd3 Rg2+

30. Kf1 exd3

White resigns

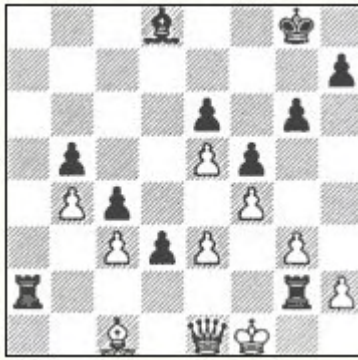


Diagram 201 Final position

The Black rooks dominate the position!

Let's review Black's winning plan, starting from diagram 198:

1. Creating tension on the a-file with 16. ... a5!.
2. Doubling rooks on the a-file.
3. Opening the a-file and seizing full control of it.
4. Bringing his queen opportunistically to the newly created d3 stronghold.
5. Penetrating the 2nd rank.
6. Doubling the rooks on the 2nd rank.

The intrusion of the queen on the 7th rank can also be very effective, as we see in our next example.

Game 43

Gelfand — Anand

Biel, 1993



Diagram 202 Position after Black's 18th move

19. Qxd7! Rfd8

20. Bxh7+ Kxh7?

Better was 20. ... Kf8. Black's pawn deficit would then be partly compensated for by the activity of his pieces.

21. Qxf7 Rxd2?

This move doesn't help. Neither does 21. ... Bxg2!? 22. Kxg2 Qg5+ (22. ... Rxd2 23. Qxe6 Rb6 24. Qe4+ Rg6+ 25. Kh1) 23. Kh1 Rxd2 24. Rg1 Qd5+ 25. f3 Qe5 26. Rg3 Rxh2+ 27. Kxh2 Qxb2+ 28. Kh3 Qxa1 29. Kg4!.

22. Ra4 Qg5

23. g3!

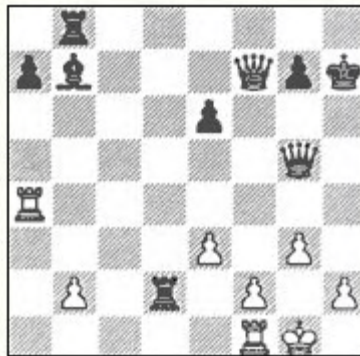


Diagram 203 Position after 23. g3!

Both protecting against checkmate on g2 and threatening a dangerous check on h4.

23. ... e5

24. Rh4+ Qxh4

25. gxh4 Rd6

White has a decisive material advantage. But he still has to be careful to avoid last-minute tricks.

26. h5 Be4

27. Qe7 Rbb6

28. Qxe5

Not dangerous for White is 28. ... Rg6+ 29. hxg6 Rxg6+ 30. Qg3.

28. ... Re6

29. Qf4 Black resigns

Game 44

Vokach — Van der Wiel

Dortmund, 1989

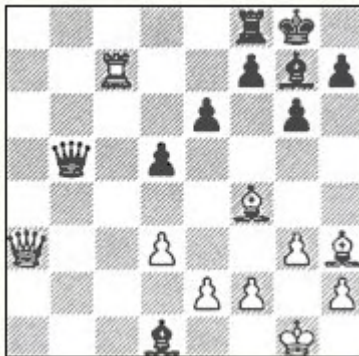


Diagram 204 Position after Black's 26th move

All of White's pieces are actively placed, but the biggest danger to Black is White's activity on the 7th rank.

27. Bxe6!

This sacrifice exposes the entire 7th rank to White's attack.

27. ... Bxe2

Accepting the sacrifice would lead to catastrophic results: 27. ... fxe6 28. Qe7 Qb2 29. Qxe6+ Kh8 30. Rxg7! Bxe2 31. Rg8+ Rxg8 32. Be5+.

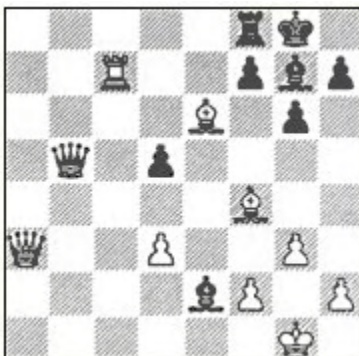


Diagram 205 Position after 27. ... Bxe2.

28. Qxf8+!!

Wow!!

28. ... Kxf8

Or 28. ... Bxf8 29. Bxf7+ Kh8 (29. ... Kg7 30. Be8+) 30. Be5+ Bg7 31. Rc8+.

29. Bd6+ Kg8

If 29. ... Ke8 30. Rc8 mate.

30. Bxf7+ Kh8

31. Rc8+ Bf8

32. Be5 mate

Learning Exercise 8-1:

Open lines of attack

Geller — Novotelnov

Moscow, 1951



Diagram 206 White to move

Use the open lines to attack the king and obtain a material advantage.

Learning Exercise 8-2:

7th-rank advantage

Serper — Nicolaides

St. Petersburg, 1993

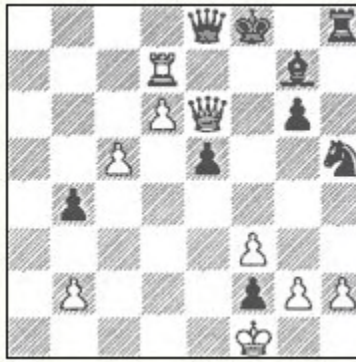


Diagram 207 White to move

White's rook is on the 7th rank! But how can White use this advantage? Find at least the best first three moves.

Learning Exercises 8-3:

Which continuation?

Botvinnik — Szabo

Moscow, 1956



Diagram 208 White to move

Which would be the best move for White?

- a) 1. Rxb7 b) 1. c5

Learning Exercise 8-4:

Use the open files

Pillsbury — Wolf

Monte Carlo, 1903



Diagram 209 White to move and win

Hint: Open the files!

Learning Exercise 8-5:

Roosting your opponent

Study

XIII century

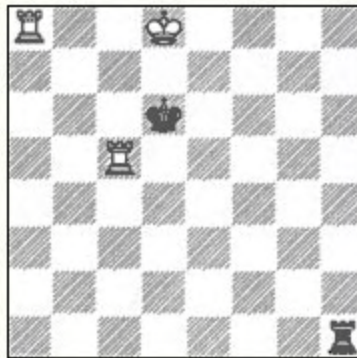


Diagram 210 White to move

Find a win.

Learning Exercise 8-6:

A rare double attack

Barbeli — Kovach

Bucharest, 1948

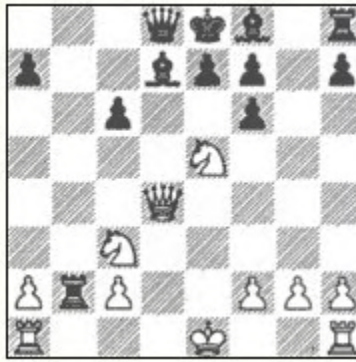


Diagram 211 White to move

How can White win a piece?

Answers to Learning Exercises

8-1) 1. Rxf8+! Kxf8 (or 1. ... Qxf8 2. Bh7+ Kh8 3. Bg6+ Kg8 4. Qh7 mate) 2. Qh8+ Kf7 3. Bg6+! Ke6 (3. ... Kxg6 4. Qh5 mate) 4. Qg8+ Kd7 5. Bf5+, with a win.

8-2) The game continued: 1. Rf7+! Qxf7 2. Qc8+ Qe8 3. d7 (In a real game, you need not see further than this!) 3. ... Kf7 4. dxe8(Q)+ Rxe8 5. Qb7+ Re7 6. c6!. This combinational idea has occurred for the second time in this game. It is not possible to accept the queen sacrifice. 6. ... e4 7. c7 e3 8. Qd5+ Kf6 9. Qd6+ Kf7 10. Qd5+ Kf6 11. Qd6+ Kf7 (White was probably repeating moves in time trouble in order to reach the time control.) 12. Qxe7+ Kxe7 13. c8Q Bh6 14. Qc5+ Ke8 15. Qb5+ Kd8 16. Qb6+ Kd7 17. Qxg6 e2+ 18. Kxf2 Be3+ 19. Ke1, Black resigns.

8-3) If you played 1. c5! then you were correct. (After 1. Rxb7, Black would take the d-file.) The game continued: 1. ... Rfe8 2. Rfd1 f5 (on 2. ... Rab8 or 2. ... Ra7, White can play 3. Rc7, and the second White rook will enter the 7th rank with decisive effect.) 3. Rxb7 fxe4 4. Rd6 Kf7 5. Nf4 Reb8 6. Rbd7 Ke8 7. Ne6, Black resigns. On 7. ... Nd5, White would play 8. Bg5, with the threat of 9. Rxd5 and 10. Re7 mate.

8-4) 1. ... Bxg6 and Black resigned. If 1. ... Nxg6, then 2. Rxg6+ hxg3 3. Rh4; and on 1. ... Rb6, White just plays 2. Bxh7+.

8-5) 1. Rh5! Rxh5 2. Ra6+, and then 3. Ra5+ and 4. Rxh5, with an extra rook.

8-6) 1. Nxd7! (Not 1. Qxd7+? because of 1. ... Qxd7 2. Nxd7 Rxc2!.) 1. ... Qxd7 2. Qxd7+ Kxd7 3. 0-0-0+! and 4. Kxb2. The d-file helped White to win!

Weak and Strong Squares

A weak square is one which cannot be defended by a pawn, and is thus open to occupation by an enemy piece. For White such squares frequently occur along the 4th and 3rd ranks, and for Black, they occur most often on the 5th and 6th ranks. Such a square becomes a serious weakness when there is a threat that it might be used by the opponent — and it is of course very tempting to put your pieces on such a safe and comfortable square. One of the qualities of a weak square is that it increases the value of the piece that occupies it, especially a knight or bishop.

The term weak point has a broader definition. It can be both a weak square and a weak pawn.

Your opponent's weak square has to be within his camp, but a weak enemy pawn can occur anywhere on the chess board.

Reflecting upon these definitions, we might recall how many weak points we have created for our opponents to use during our chess experience. Now that we understand the importance of such squares, we can make a resolution — never to surrender valuable squares into enemy hands unless we have compelling reasons!

A strong square is under a player's permanent control, and can be used for realizing strategic and tactical threats. To activate a piece means to transfer it to a strong square. As we'll see in the next position, converting your opponent's weak squares into your own strong points can yield good results!

Game 45

Botvinnik — Flohr

Moscow, 1936

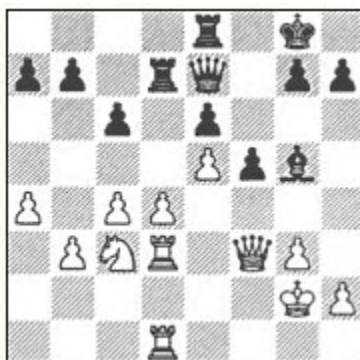


Diagram 212 Position after Black's 32nd move

33. c5!

A multi-purpose move. The first purpose is to attack with b3-b4-b5, and the

second one is to transfer the knight to the outpost on d6, Black's weak spot and White's stronghold.

33. ... a5

To stop the advance of the b-pawn.

34. Nb1 Qf8

35. Na3 Bd8

36. Nc4 Bc7

37. Nd6

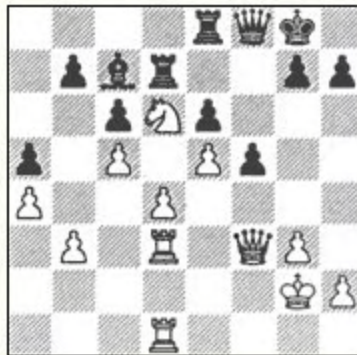


Diagram 213 Position after 37. Nd6

White has executed his second plan and is not afraid of the exchange on d6, because he would then have a strong, protected passed pawn.

37. ... Rb8

38. Rb1

Here White could have also played 38. Nxb7 Rxb7 39. Qxc6 and 40. Qxe6+, but the move played in the game is very strong too.

38. ... Qd8

39. b4 axb4

40. Rxb4 Bxd6

41. exd6

With the exchange on d6, White creates a very strong pawn on that square and pressures the weak points b7 and e6.

41. ... Qa5

42. Rdb3 Re8

43. Qe2 Qa8!?

44. Re3 Kf7

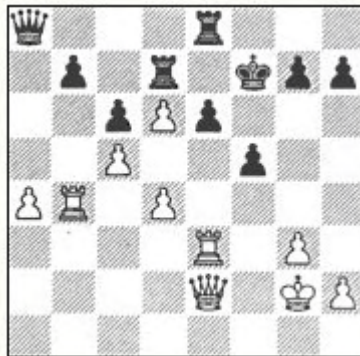


Diagram 214 Position after 44. ... Kf7

Here White should have been careful first to move his king away from the long diagonal (in order to take the sting out of the threatened ... b7-b5!), and only then played Qc4, after which White's victory would not be in doubt. Botvinnik erred with 45. Qc4? b5!, but still maintained a decisive advantage and won after:

46. Qc2 Rxd6 47. cxd6 c5+ 48. Kh3 cxb4 49. Qc7+ Kg8 50. d7 Rf8 51. Qd6 h6 52. Qxe6+ Kh7 53. Qe8 b3 54. Qxa8 Rxa8 55. axb5 Rd8 56. Rxb3 Rxd7 57. b6 1-0

Game 46

Tarrasch — Lasker, Em.

2nd match game, Dusseldorf, 1908



Diagram 215 Position after Black's 24th move

In this position it is unclear if Black has any compensation for the pawn after, for example, 25. Nf5. But in the game White played:

25. exd5?

After which Black gained a stronghold on e3.

25. ... Be3+

26. Kf1 cxd5

27. Rd3

Better was 27. Nf5.

27. ... Qe6

28. Re2 f5

29. Rd1 f4

30. Nh1

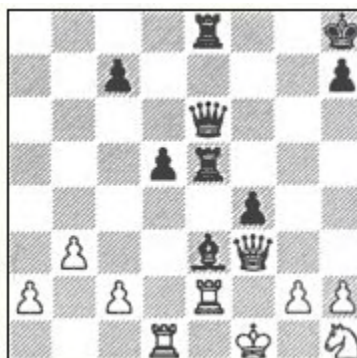


Diagram 216 Position after 30. Nh1

This move speaks for itself. White is in trouble.

30. ... d4

31. Nf2 Qa6

32. Nd3 Rg5

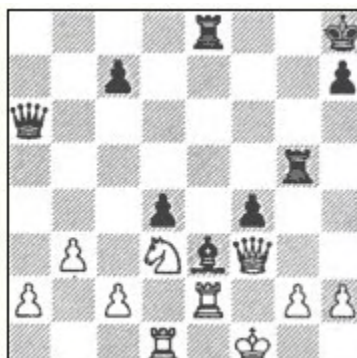


Diagram 217 Position after 32. ... Rg5

Now is the time to exploit the power of the bishop, which dominates the game and splits White's position in two.

33. Ra1 Qh6

34. Ke1

Losing is 34. h3 Rg3 35. Qd5 f3!, reaching White's king.

34. ... Qxh2

35. Kd1 Qg1+

36. Ne1 Rge5

37. Qc6 R5e6

Deflecting the queen from controlling the e8-square, so that the bishop can move to f2.

38. Qxc7 R8e7

39. Qd8+ Kg7

40. a4

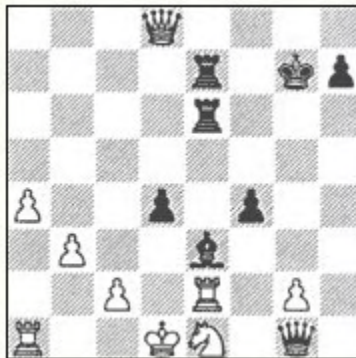


Diagram 218 Position after 40. a4

Now Black breaks through.

40. ... f3!

41. gxf3 Bg5!

White resigns. He is lost because there is a decisive pin on the knight. The Black bishop did his work well. Behind it Black was able to build up a decisive attack. At the same time, this bishop prevented White from coordinating his own army.

From the very first moves of a chess game, the pawn structure begins to change. Its condition at any moment during a game is important in determining the correct evaluation of the position. One must consider not only the weaknesses of the pawns themselves, but also the weaknesses of nearby squares. This is why thoughtless pawn moves can result in the creation of weak squares.

But how can a weak square in the opponent's camp be used?

Game 47

Milner-Barry — Znosko-Borovski

Tainby, 1928

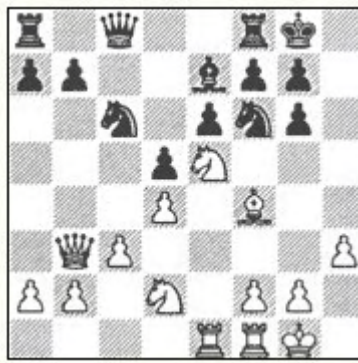


Diagram 219 Position after White's 14th move

What is the correct evaluation of this position? In his book *Judgment and Planning in Chess*, the 5th World Champion, Dr. Max Euwe, says of this position:

“White has the better game because of his strong square at e5 and the greater freedom of movement of his forces on the kingside.

The plan: Support the activities of the piece posted at e5 (bishop or knight) by bringing the major pieces to the kingside.

The success of this operation is made considerably easier by Black's doubled g-pawn.”

The most important factor in the position is White's possession of the e5-square, even though it is not a permanent outpost. Black could, in case of an emergency, play ... f7-f6, although this would weaken the e6-pawn. White has the half-open e-file under control, which is more important than Black's influence on the half-open c-file. Yes, Black can relocate his knight to c4, but that square is located far from White's king, while the e5-square is in the very center of the board and is dangerously close to the residence of the Black king.

14. ... Nd7

15. Ndf3 Ncxe5

16. Nxe5!

The best! Capturing instead with a pawn on e5 would deprive that square of much of its strategic value.

16. ... Nxe5

17. Bxe5

This bishop pressures the opponent's kingside no less than the knight did.

17. ... Qc6

If 17. ... f6, then 18. Bh2, and the pawn on e6 is weak.

18. Re3!

One for all and all for one! The White troops line up to support their comrade on e5.

18. ... b5

Counterplay on the queenside comes a bit too late.

19. Qd1

An important regrouping.

19. ... b4

A better try is 19. ... Bd6.



Diagram 220 Position after 19. ... b4

20. h4!

Opening the file is the direct way to attack the Black king.

20. ... bxc3?

Of course taking on h4 is suicidal. Relatively best is 20. ... f6.

21. Rxc3 Qb6



Diagram 221 Position after 21. ... Qb6

22. h5! g5

If 22. ... f6, then 23. hxg6 fxe5 24. Qh5, winning.

23. h6!! f6

Other moves also lose; for example, 23. ... g6 24. h7+; 23. ... gxh6 24. Qh5; or 23. ... Bf6 24. hxg7 Bxg7 (24. ... Kxg7 25. Qh5) 25. Bxg7 Kxg7 26. Qh5 f6 27. Rfc1 Rf7 28. Rh3, winning.

24. Qh5! Bd8

On 24. ... fxe5, White plays 25. Qg6 Bf6 26. Rfc1, with the idea of 27. Rc7, when the invasion on the 7th rank wins.

25. Qg6 Qb7



Diagram 222 Position after 25. ... Qb7

26. Rc7! Black resigns

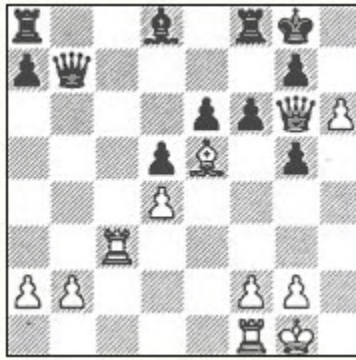


Diagram 222 Position after 25. ... Qb7

26. Rc7! Black resigns



Diagram 223 Position after Black's 18th move

Black has a weak, backward pawn on c6. White needs to blockade it, thus turning the c5-square into a strong square.

19. Bf1!

White regroups his forces.

19. ... Rec8

20. e3

Black has no counterplay, while White's pieces are active and well-coordinated.

20. ... Qb7

21. Nc5 Nxc5

22. Rxc5 Rc7

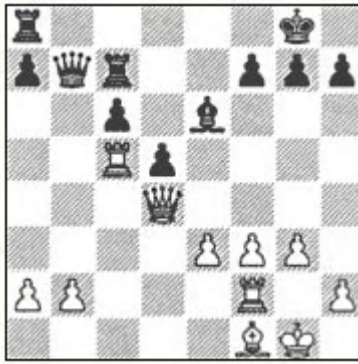


Diagram 224 Position 22. ... Rc7

Now White has a good bishop, and Black has a bad one. Black had better chances for a successful defense with 22. ... a5!?, gaining some space.

23. Rfc2 Qb6

24. b4

Now c5 is truly in White's hands.

24. ... a6

Necessary to stop 20. b5, but now this pawn is also on a wrong color — and weak.

25. Ra5 Rb8

Or 25. ... Qxd4 26. exd4 Bc8 27. Rxd5.

26. a3 Ra7



Diagram 225 Position after 26. ... Ra7

27. Rxc6!

Now White obtains a material advantage.

27. ... Qxc6

28. Qxa7 Ra8

29. Qc5 Qb7

30. Kf2 h5

31. Be2



Diagram 226 Position after 31. Be2

31. ... g6

31. ... Rc8 will be followed by 32. Bxa6!

32. Qd6 Qc8

33. Rc5

Once again White uses this square for his pieces. The rest is easy:

33. ... Qb7 34. h4 a5 35. Rc7 Qb8 36. b5 a4 37. b6 Ra5 38. b7, Black resigns.

This game is a good example of the struggle against “hanging” pawns at c6 and d5.

Now let's take a look at a modern-day example of Botvinnik-like technique.

Game 49

Oll —Woitkevich

New York Open, 1994



Diagram 227 Position after Black's 17th move

18. Ne1!

White has a plan in the style of Game 45 (Botvinnik-Flohr): Nd3, b4, Ndc5, and after ... Nxc5, bxc5 – followed by Nd6, and White has a won position! In the game Black was helpless against this plan. Oll benefited from his knowledge of the classics!

18. ... Qe8

18. ... c5 was clearly better.

19. Nd3 g5

20. b4! Qg6

21. Ndc5

Black can't endure this knight for long.

21. ... Nxc5

22. bxc5 Rad8

23. Nd6



Diagram 228 Position after 23. Nd6

This knight is a nail in Black's chair!

23. ... Bxd6

24. exd6!

Now e6 is a real weakness.

24. ... Rd7

25. Ra3



Diagram 229 Position after 25. Ra3

White has completed his plan, and stands much better thanks to the strong pawn at d6 and to the weaknesses at b7 and e6. Now White needs to double his rooks on the b-file, while activating his other pieces as well.

25. ... Rf6

26. Rg3 Qf7

27. Bd2 Qe8

28. Qe4 Qh5



Diagram 230 Position after 28. ... Qh5

29. Rb3

This rook does a great job on both flanks.

29. ... Qh4

30. f3! Qxe4

31. fxe4 Rxf1+

32. Kxf1 Nf6

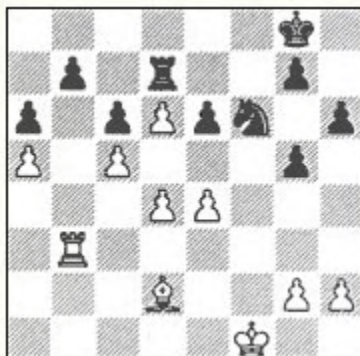


Diagram 231 Position after 32. ... Nf6

33. d5!

Not 33. e5 Nd5, and Black's knight has his own strong square.

33. ... cxd5

The only try since 33. ... exd5 34. e5 Ne4 35. e6 Nxd2+ 36. Ke1 (It is not too late to lose! 36. Ke2?? Nxb3 37. exd7 Nd4+ and 38. ... Ne6.) would cost Black the game immediately.

34. e5 Ne4



Diagram 232 Position after 34. ... Ne4

35. Ke2!

The point. Not clear are 35. Be3 d4!; and 35. Rxb7 Rxb7 36. c6 Rf7+ 37. Ke2

Nc5!.

35. ... Nxc5

After 35. ... Nxd2, White does not even need to play 36. Rxb7—the rook ending following 36. Kxd2 is winning after Rb6-c6-Rxa6-Ra8. The a-pawn is decisive.

36. Rc3 Ne4

37. Rc7 Rd8

38. Be3

Black resigns. He's going to lose a lot of material.

When a Complex of Squares is Weak

In order to win, it is often necessary to create at least two weak points in the enemy camp. Alternating attacks between the two weaknesses can then shake the foundation of your opponent's position, and his pieces can become overworked trying to defend all his weak points.

Sometimes one side has not just one weak square, but a whole series, or complex, of weak squares. When several squares of the same color — whether light or dark — become weak, then we are already talking about a complex of weak squares.

We have already encountered this idea when we were discussing opposite-color bishops in the middlegame.

With opposite-color bishops, the weakness of a complex of squares is exaggerated. The side suffering from a weak square complex suffers many difficulties. The opponent's pieces are completely unopposed throughout the weak square complex, and can actively influence neighboring squares as well.

In positions with a weak complex of squares, a special role is played by the queen, and by the bishop of the same color as the weak squares. In attacking via these weak squares, the activity of these pieces rapidly increases. In defending such squares, they help neutralize the attacking forces. If these defensive pieces are removed (by exchanging them, for example), there is often nothing left to guard the weak square complex.

Game 50

Keres — Guti

Tel Aviv, 1964

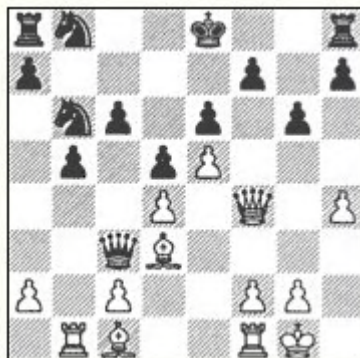


Diagram 233 Position after Black's 14th move

Black has a weak dark-square complex on d6-e7-f6-g7, and as a result, White's queen and bishop can make use of the diagonals a3-f8 and h4-d8. The game ended very quickly.

15. Bd2 Qa3

16. Bb4 Qa4

17. Qf6 Black resigns

Both threats (Qe7 mate and Qxh8+) cannot be answered at the same time.

Game 51

Instructive example

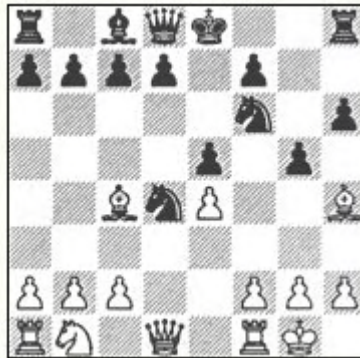


Diagram 234 Position after Black's 8th move

Here Black's attempt to control the dark squares on the kingside and in the center fails because of his lag in development.

9. f4!! gxf4

If 9. ... exf4, then 10. Qxd4 gxh4 11. Rxf4 d5 12. exd5; or 9. ... gxh4 10. fxe5. Also of no help is 9. ... Nxe4 10. fxe5 (10. Bxf7!?) Ne6 11. Qf3, and Black's position is uncomfortable.

10. Rxf4! exf4

There is no alternative.

11. Qxd4 0-0

12. Bxf6 Qe8

13. Bh8

And checkmate in two.

Game 52

Nikolayevski — Geller

Championship of the USSR, 1966

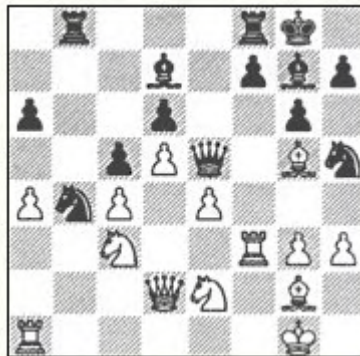


Diagram 235 Position after White's 18th move

Black's knight on b4 does very little. In fact, it blocks his own rook. White, on the other hand, is ready to double rooks on the f-file and to start hunting the knight on h5 with g3-g4. White's grip on the dark squares looks dependable, especially on the c1-h6 diagonal. But as often happens in King's Indian positions, tactics come to Black's rescue.

18. ... Nc2!

19. Bf4

Of course not 19. Qxc2 Qxg5 or 19. Rac(d)1 Nd4, with a better game for Black in both cases. Now Black must sacrifice his queen.

19. ... Nxa1

20. Bxe5 Nb3

An important in-between move — White's own queen comes under attack.

21. Qd1 Bxe5



Diagram 236 Position after 21. ... Bxe5

White has the material advantage of a queen over a rook and a minor piece. But on the other side of the ledger, White has a bad bishop on g2, Black dominates the dark squares, Black owns the b-file, and his rooks are ready to invade the enemy camp.

22. Nb1 Nd4 23. Nxd4 Bxd4+ 24. Kh2 Rb4

And Black went on to win after doubling his rooks on the b-file.

Game 53

Stahlberg — Stein

Erevan, 1965

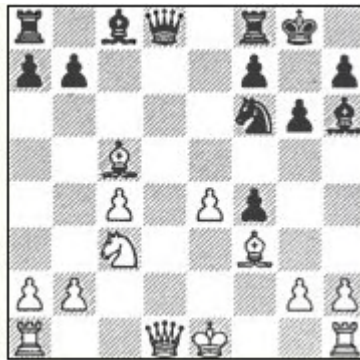


Diagram 237 Position after White's 15th move

15. ... Nd7!!

A truly great move — Black blocks his c8-bishop and leaves his rook under attack! But Black does all this simply in order to remove White's dark-squared bishop from the board. This bishop is the main gatekeeper of the complex of dark squares in White's position. It is also important to Black that the queens do not get exchanged.

16. Bxf8 Qh4+!

17. Kd2

Not 17. g3 f3, with the threat of ... g3-g2+.

17. ... Bxf8

18. Qe1 Qe7

19. Kc2

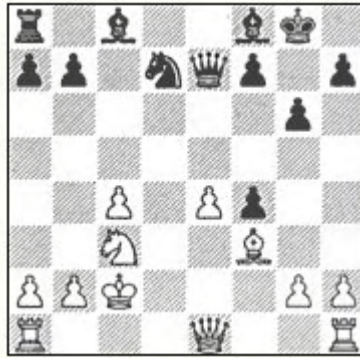


Diagram 238 Position after 19. Kc2

The White king seeks safety on the queenside, but he will be reached even there.

19. ... Ne5

20. Rc1

Defending the c4-pawn with b2-b3 would fatally weaken the dark squares.

20. ... Bg7

Not 20. ... Nxc4 21. Nd5, with an unclear game.

21. Nd5 Qc5

22. Qg1 Qxc4+

23. Kb1 Qd3+

24. Rc2 Be6

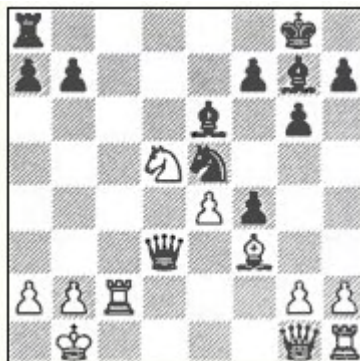


Diagram 239 Position after 24. ... Be6

The rest of Black's pieces take up active squares as well, and he has enough compensation for his small material deficit.

25. Be2?

An understandable mistake: Can this “defective” bishop at least attack something for once? But now the e4-pawn is lost, and White loses his grip on the center. Better is 25. Qd1.

25. ... Qxe4

26. Nc3 Qf5

27. Qc1 Nc6

28. Ka1

White’s king searches for safety.

28. ... Nb4

29. Rd2



Diagram 240 Position after 29. Rd2

29. ... Nxa2!

This beautiful combination was strategically prepared.

30. Nxa2 Qa5

31. Bc4 Bxc4

32. Qxc4 Qxd2

33. Rb1 Rd8

34. Nc3 Qxg2

White resigns

The “dark-squared strategy” is the main theme in the next game.

Game 54

Tukmakov — Palatnik

Odessa, 1970

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nc3 dxc4 5. a4 Bf5 6. Ne5 e6 7. f3 Bb4 8. Nxc4



Diagram 241 Position after 8. Nxc4

8. ... Nd5!?

White threatened to play e2-e4 and to push the f5-bishop to g6. If Black permits this, after the subsequent Bc1-e3 (protecting the d4-pawn), the bishop on g6 and the knight on f6 will be out of the game. White will have an advantage in the center and will stand clearly better.

It would be natural for Black to play 8. ... 0-0, ready to meet 9. e2-e4 with 9. ... Bxe4 10. fxe4 Nxe4, but White could prepare e2-e4 by playing 9. Bg5, pinning the knight first. Black avoids this pin, attacks c3, and opens the d8-h4 diagonal for his queen, with an eye on the h4-e1 diagonal weakened by f2-f3.

9. Qd2

Not 9. Bd2? Qh4+, and Black wins a pawn — 10. g3 Qxd4 11. e4 Nxc3.

9. ... c5

Black gives White one more tempo, as the pawn has come to c5 in two moves. But White's last move also lost time.

10. e4

Finally! Worse was 10. dxc5 Qh4+ (once again this check) 11. g3 Qxc4 12. e4 Qxc5, and Black is better.

10. ... cxd4

11. Qxd4



Diagram 242 Position after 11. Qxd4

11. ... 0-0!

Of course not 11. ... Nc6 because of 12. Qxg7, and White wins. Premature is 11. ... Nxc3 12. Qxd8+ (12. ... bxc3?? loses the queen after 12. ... Qxd4) 12. ... Kxd8 13. Bd2 Bg6 14. bxc3, with advantage to White.

12. exd5

Or 12. exf5 Nxc3 13. Qxd8 Rxd8 14. Bd2 Nd5, and Black is all right.

12. ... Nc6

Another move that gains time.

13. Qf4

Weaker is 13. Qd2 exd5 14. Ne3 Be6, threatening d5-d4. Now the queen attacks the bishop on f5.

13. ... exd5

14. Qxf5 dxc4



Diagram 243 Position after 14. ... dxc4

Black must have foreseen this position when playing 8. ... Nd5. For the sacrificed piece he has dangerous threats, and the White king is still in the wide-open center. Now the natural 15. Bxc4 is bad because of 15. ... Qh4+ and 16. ... Qxc4 capturing the bishop. Also 15. Be2 would not help: After 15. ... Nd4 16. Qb1 Re8, White is in trouble. And 15. Be3 exposes the main defender of the weak dark squares — 15. ... Re8 16. Kf2 Rxe3! 17. Kxe3 Qd4+ 18. Ke2 Re8+ 19. Ne4 Qd2 mate.

15. Kf2

Moving away from the open e-file and the pin.

15. ... Re8

16. Ne4

16. Bxc4? would still not work because of 16. ... Qh4+ and 17. Qxc4, while 16. Be3 Rxe3 transposes to the variation in our comments above prior to White's 15th move.

16. ... Qd4+

17. Be3 Qxb2+

18. Be2 Nd4

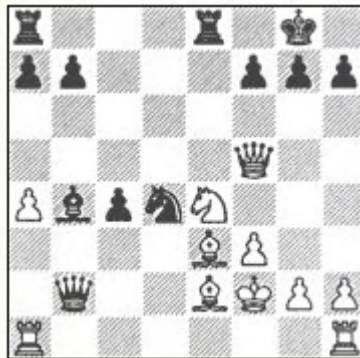


Diagram 244 Position after 18. ... Nd4

19. Nf6+!?

This interesting attempt to recapture the initiative meets a not-so-obvious refutation. The alternative was 19. Bxd4 Qxd4+, and Black exchanges his opponent's important dark-squared bishop. With two pawns for the piece, dominance of the dark squares, plus the unsafe position of White's king, Black's chances are at least equal.

19. ... gxf6

20. Qg4+ Kh8

21. Qxd4 Bc3

22. Qxc4

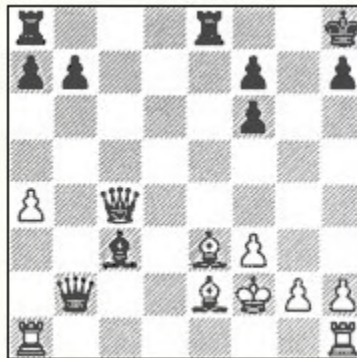


Diagram 245 Position after 22. Qxc4

It looks as if Black is doomed: He is a piece down, his kingside pawns are not a pretty sight, and White has nearly completed his development, but ... the idea of controlling the dark squares is still alive!

22. ... Rxe3!!

The rook has achieved its goal — to sacrifice itself for the dark-squared bishop and give the remaining Black pieces total control over the dark squares.

23. Kxe3

Or 23. Rab1 Rxe2+ 24. Qxe2 Bd4+ and Black would win easily. White's last chance was 23. Rfb1 Rxe2+ 24. Qxe2 Qxe2+ 25. Kxe2 Bxa1 26. Rxa1, even though in the resulting rook ending Black has good chances of winning with his extra pawn.

23. ... Re8+

24. Kf2 Bd4+

25. Kg3

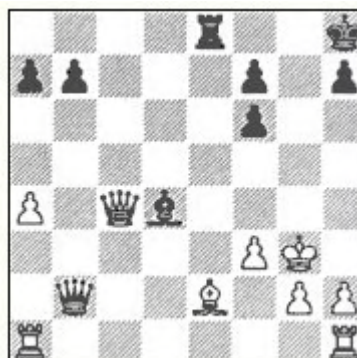


Diagram 246 Position after 25. Kg3

25. ... Qd2!

This quiet and very useful move continues to follow the theme of dominating the dark squares. It is interesting that Black, a rook down, is threatening the linear checkmate 26. ... Rg8+ and 27. ... Qh6 mate.

26. f4

After 26. Qxf7 Rg8+ 27. Qxg8+ Kxg8, White can't stop the attack on the dark squares.

26. ... Rxe2

27. Ra3 Rxc2+

28. Kh3 Rg6

29. Rg3 Rh6+

White resigns because of 30. Kg4 f5+ 31. Kxf5 Rf6+ 32. Kg4 Qxf4+ 33. Kh3 Rh6+ 34. Kg2 Qf2 mate.

Game 55

Mukhin — Palatnik

USSR, 1974

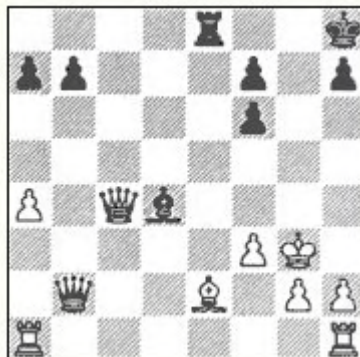


Diagram 247 Position after White's 16th move

White's play to this point has been simple and straightforward: He has struggled to obtain the advantage of two bishops and to create a strong and well-supported center. He has attained the former objective, but the latter problem has not been solved.

16. ... h6

17. Nxf5 exf5

18. Be3 cxd4

The starting point of Black's counterattack. Even though it exchanges White's doubled pawn, this move weakens the defense of the important d4-square.

19. cxd4



Diagram 248 Position after 19. cxd4

19. ... Ndx5!

This hardly looks like a convincing example of the “advantage” of the two bishops! Accepting the knight sacrifice is dangerous: 20. dx5 Qxe5 21. Bf2 Rad8 22. Qc1 Rfe8 23. Ra2 Nd4 (this is why Black needed to eliminate the c3-pawn). But White had in mind another continuation.

20. 0-0

Completing his development.

20. ... Rad8

21. Rxf5



Diagram 249 Position after 21. Rxf5

So far the center has been the critical issue in this game, but after Black's next move, it becomes a question of who controls the dark squares.

21. ... Rxd4!

It is interesting that Black can successfully fight for control of the dark squares without having a dark-squared bishop!

Not 21. ... Nxd4? 22. Bxd4 Nc6 because of 23. Rd5!, and White wins.

22. Bxd4 Rd8

23. Rxe5

If White does not play this, then after 23. ... Nxd4, the Black knights in the center of the board would have no competition.

23. ... Nxe5



Diagram 250 Position after 23. ... Nxe5

How can White protect himself from 24. ... Nc6 here? Not with 24. Raa2 Nc6 25. Rd2 Nxd4 26. Rxd4 Qc5, pinning the rook. Instead, White tries to counterattack.

24. Bd3!?

Now after 24. ... Rxd4?, White replies 25. Bh7+ Kxh7 and 26. Qxd4.

24. ... Qd6

It's clear once again that White is losing because of the weaknesses on his dark squares. For example, 25. Bxe5 Qxe5 26. Bh7+ (26. Ra3 Qc5+ and 27. ... Qxa3, or 26. Kh1 would be met by 26. ... Rxd3) 26. ... Kxh7 27. Qxd8 Qxa1+, and Black wins.

25. Be2 Qxd4+

26. Qxd4 Rxd4

And soon Black was able to convert his material advantage into victory.

The weakness of the light squares often exists as a reflection of the weakness of the dark squares, and vice versa. Let's consider several examples of the interrelationship between light-squared and dark-squared weaknesses.

Game 56

Letelier — Smyslov

Havana, 1967

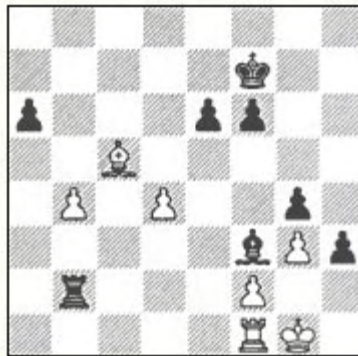


Diagram 251 Position after White's 42nd move

The light squares around the White king are very weak. Please pay attention to the difference in strength of the bishops: Black's f3-bishop is very powerful, while White's c5-bishop is accomplishing little. The weakness in White's position enables Black to exploit his advantage with a direct attack on White's king.

42. ... a5

"Freeing the rook from prison" on the second rank!

43. bxa5 h2+!

Another line-clearing pawn sacrifice, and the point of Black's play.

44. Kxh2 Rb8

Is this a retreat? Yes, but only as preparation for a decisive invasion on the h-file. Now there is no defense against checkmate on h1, so White resigns.

Game 57

Kapengut — Tukmakov

USSR, 1963

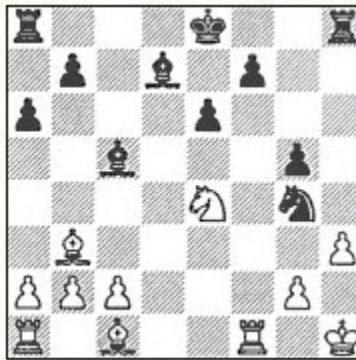


Diagram 252 Position after White's 18th move

18. ... Bc6!

With the strategic goal of dominating the White squares, Black sacrifices his dark-squared bishop.

19. Nxc5

Or 19. Re1 Bxe4 20. Rxe4 Nf2+.

19. ... Rxh3

20. Kg1 Rg3

Targeting the g2-pawn.

21. Rd1 Rxc2+

22. Kf1

If 22. Kh1, Nf2 mate.

22. ... Nh2+

23. Ke1



Diagram 253 Position after 23. Ke1

23. ... Ke7!

Bringing the rook at a8 into the attack.

24. Nd3 Rh8

25. Be3 Nf3+

26. Kf1 Nd2+

27. Rxd2 Rh1+

28. Bg1 Rhxg1 mate

In considering the topic of weak and strong squares, we must inevitably revisit some previously considered topics, such as two bishops, bad and good bishops, and fighting on the long diagonals. Pay special attention to the connection between these themes. In a tournament game, it is usually the intermingling of several concepts that shapes the battle. This fact complicates the task of correctly evaluating the position. You will often need to weigh the various strategic problems in order to determine which ones are most important.

Learning Exercise 10-1:

Virtual Zugzwang

Ranniku — Grinfeld

Riga, 1975



Diagram 254 Black to move

Evaluate the position.

Learning Exercise 10-2:

Re-charge your battery

Kalegin — Obodchuk

Moscow, 1993

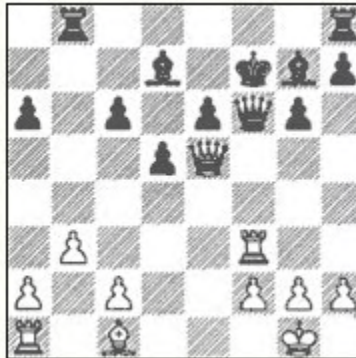


Diagram 255 White to move

Find the best move.

Learning Exercise 10-3:

Queen for a tempo

Mizzto — Kloza

Poland, 1935

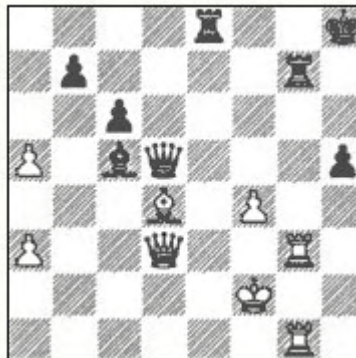


Diagram 256 White to move

How can White use the diagonal a1-h8?

Learning Exercise 10-4:

Exploiting the weaknesses

Liapunova — Manukian

Erevan, 1960



Diagram 257 White to move

How can White break through into Black's camp and win using a light-square strategy?

Learning Exercise 10-5:

Opening the diagonal

Korchnoi — Bellotti

Novi Sad, 1990



Diagram 258 White to move

How can White open the long diagonal a1-h8?

Learning Exercise 10-6:

Tactics to the rescue

Van Vely — Steinegrimsson

Novi Sad, 1990



Diagram 259 White to move

How would you exploit the weak squares in Black's position?

Learning Exercise 10-7:

Lust to expand!

Shirov — Kramnik

Linares, 1993



Diagram 260 White to move

How can White achieve a positional advantage?

Learning Exercise 10-8:

Exploiting the file

Kremenetski — Kholmov

Moscow, 1987

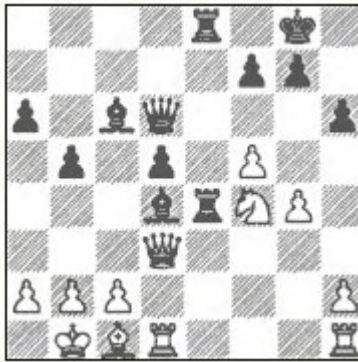


Diagram 261 White to move

Should White play 1. h3?

Learning Exercise 10-9:

Dominant square

Gelfand — Anand

Linares, 1993



Diagram 262 Black to move

Find the possibility of using an outpost.

Learning Exercise 10-10:

Pseudo-sacrifice

Euwe — Keres

Netherlands, 1939



Diagram 263 Black to move

How can Black improve the role of his dark-squared bishop?

Learning Exercise 10-11:

Direct assault

Lautier — Karpov

Dortmund, 1990



Diagram 264 White to move

White dominates the long diagonal. What is his best continuation?

Learning Exercise 10-12:

Setting up the double attack

Arakhamia — Epstein

Novi Sad, 1990



Diagram 265 White to move

What's the best continuation?

Answers to Learning Exercises

10-1) White is winning: Black's pieces have no useful moves, and there is no defense against Rdf1 and Rf8 mate.

10-2) 1. Bb2!, and Black resigned.

10-3) White used the long dark diagonal successfully after 1. Qh7+!! Kxh7 2. Rxg7+ Kh8 3. Rg8++ Kh7 4. R1g7+ Kh6 5. Rg6+ Kh7 6. R8g7+ Kh8 and 7. Rh6 mate.

10-4) 1. Rxe5 fxe5 2. Ng4 Rh8 3. Qh5 Be8 4. Bg6! Bxg6 5. Rf7+! Bxf7 6. Qxf7 mate.

10-5) 1. Rxa7! Bxc5 2. Rxc7 Nxc7 3. dxc5 (now the diagonal is open!) 3. ... d4 (the only move) 4. Qxd4 Qxd4 5. Bxd4, with a decisive advantage for White.

10-6) Here tactics can assist strategy: 1. Qe4!! Qc7. (Not 1. ... Bxe4 2. Bb5+ Bc6 3. Bxc6 mate!) 2. Bb5! Rc8 3. Bxc6+ Qxc6 4. Qxe5 Qxc5 5. Qxg7 Qxc2+ 6. Ka1 Ke7 7. Rhe1 Rhd8 8. Rxe6+! Kxe6 9. Qe5 mate.

10-7) The right move here is 1. Rxe7!. The Exchange is not too big a price for domination on the diagonals! 1. ... Qxe7 2. d6! Qh4 3. Qd5 Rb8 4. Nxf5! gxf5 5. Re1 Qg4 6. f3 Qg6 7. Re7 Bb7 8. Qd3 Nb6 9. Ba1! Nxc4 10. Qc3 f6 11. Qxc4+ Kh8 12. Kf2 Qh6 13. Bc3 Qg6 14. d7 Rbd8 15. Qxc5 Rg8 16. g3 f4 17. g4 Rdf8 18. Qd4 Qh6 19. h3 Ba6 20. Kg1 Qh4 21. Qxf4!, and Black resigned. Perhaps White foresaw the variation as deeply as his 4th or 5th move, and drew a conclusion that he would be better — if not winning — as his pieces and powerful passed d-pawn more than compensate for a missing rook.

10-8) 1. h3? Be3! 2. Ne6 Qe5 3. Rhe1 Bxc1 4. Rxe4 Qxb2 mate.

10-9) 1. ... Nb4!! 2. fxe4 Nd3+ 3. Kd2 g6! 4. b3?! Bg7 5. bxc4 Nxf4 6. Nxf4 Bxe5 7. Ne2 and now 7. ... b4! 8. Qa4+ Qxa4 9. Nxa4 Bxa1, and Black realised his material advantage.

10-10) The right move is 1. ... d3!. The game continued: 2. Rxd3 Qxd3! 3. Qxd3 Bd4+ 4. Rf2 Rxe6, with a clear advantage for Black.

10-11) 1. Rf5! Qh7 2. Bxf6 Rf7 3. Qg5 c6 4. e5 dxe5 5. dxc6 Kf8 6. Rxe5 Rxe5 7. Qxe5 Bc7 8. Qe6 Bg4 9. Qxg4 Rxf6 10. Qc8+, and Black resigned.

10-12) 1. Rxd7! Qxd7 2. Qxe5 Bf8 3. Qxb8 Qd1+ 4. Kb2 Qe2+ 5. Kc1 Qf1+ 6. Kc2 Qe2+ 7. Bd2, Black resigned.

Weak and Strong Pawns

If pieces are the muscles of the chess position, then the pawn formation (also called pawn structure) is its skeleton.

The structure of the pawns determines the character of the position. There are many different kinds of weak pawns: They can be isolated, doubled, both isolated and doubled (and even isolated and tripled), backward, and hanging. But it is important to note that such pawns are not always actually weak. The pawn structure must be considered together with the location of the pieces in order to make an objective evaluation. The degree to which the pieces and pawns interact harmoniously is usually a good measure of the strength of the position.

A. Pawn islands

In contrast to the middlegame (where the activity of the pieces is paramount), in the endgame the value of the pawns themselves and of their placement increase significantly. Such considerations should be kept in mind at all stages of the game. For example, when making an exchange, it is useful to consider how it might alter the pawn structure. In this context, the number of pawn islands for each side is very important, as in our first example.

As the endgame draws nearer, the possibility of exploiting pawn weaknesses increases.

Game 58

Averbakh — Taimanov

Moscow, 1948



Diagram 266 White to move

Here Black has a serious deficiency in pawn structure — he has four pawn islands, while White has only two. It is difficult for Black to defend all these weaknesses. He has a bad game.

33. Rb3 Nc8

34. Rb5 Rc3

35. Re5+! Ne6

Or 35. ... Kd8. 36. Nd5.

36. Nxe6 dxe6

37. Rxe6+ Kf7

38. Rh6

One by one, Black's pawn islands sink in the ocean of threats.

38. ... Kg8

39. Rf6

And White won the game shortly.

Game 59

Gligoric — Keres

Zurich, 1953



Diagram 267 Position after Black's 39th move

White has a solid-looking defensive position, but Black has a long-term advantage based on his better pawn structure. To be concrete:

1. All of the Black pawns are tied together in a continent, while White's pawns are broken into three islands.
2. The pawns on d5 and f5 guarantee that Black's knight will be able to use e4. If White trades knights on that square, Black will then have a protected passed pawn.

3. If Black wins the pawn on a4, then his passed a-pawn has an open road to the queening square. Meanwhile, White's passed pawn on h3 cannot do likewise, since White's pieces do not have the power to clear the way for its advance.

These important indications explain well enough why Black is always attacking and White is condemned to holding on. Under these conditions, sooner or later, the defense is likely to break.

40. Kg1 Qb3

41. Ne2 Qc2

42. g4

Desperation in a lost position.

42. ... fxg4

43. hxg4 Rh4

44. Rc1 Qh7



Diagram 268 Position after 44. ... Qh7

The end is near. Black's pieces penetrate the enemy camp through the open files.

45. c4 Rh3

46. Qg2 Qd3

47. cxd5 Ne4

48. dxe6 Qe3+

49. Kf1 Rf3+

White resigns

B. Doubled and tripled pawns

Doubled pawns, and especially tripled pawns (a rare occurrence) have less mobility than normal pawns, so they often come under attack from enemy pieces. This is especially true of doubled or tripled pawns that are also isolated. Additionally, isolated doubled pawns in front of a king provide the monarch shaky protection.

Compensation for having doubled pawns often occurs as possession of open and half-open files. And although doubled pawns often make it impossible to create your own passed pawn, as defenders, if not isolated, they are often just as good as healthy pawns.

Game 60

Smyslov — Stahlberg

Zurich, 1953

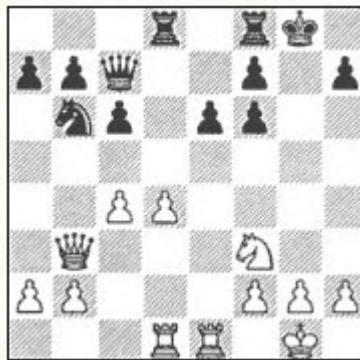


Diagram 269 Position after Black's 18th move

Black's problem is not the doubled f-pawns per se, but a weakened position of the king.

19. Qe3 Kg7

Not 19. ... Nxc4 20. Qh6 Qe7 21. Nh4; or 19. ... Kh8 because of 20. Qh6 Nd7 21. d5.

20. Ne5

With the idea of going to g4. If 20. ... fxe5, then 21. Qg5+, 22. Qf6+ and 23. Re3, winning.

20. ... Qe7

21. Ng4 Rg8

22. Nh6

Winning the Exchange, since the rook cannot move away because of Nf5+.

22. ... Qc7 23. Nxg8 Rxc8 24. b3 Kh8 25. Qh6 Rg6 26. Qh4 Nd7 27. Re3
Qa5 28. Rh3 Nf8 29. Rg3 Qxa2 30. Rxc6 Nxc6 31. Qxf6+ Kg8 32. Qf3 Qc2
33. Qd3, Black resigns.

Game 61

Malanjuk — Andrianov

USSR, 1982



Diagram 270 Position after Black's 10th move

Weak squares inevitably appear when the pawn structure is damaged, and the opponent can use them to his advantage in maneuvering and creating strong squares for himself. In this example, White plays an exchanging combination in order to create tripled pawns for his opponent, thereby gaining an endgame advantage.

11. Qxb4! cxb4

12. Bxb6 axb6

13. cxd5 exd5

14. Nfd4



Diagram 271 Position after 14. Nfd4

White's superior pawn structure guarantees him a long-lasting advantage.

In the next example, doubled pawns play a positive role in controlling center squares, resulting in White's domination of the center.

Game 62

Botvinnik — Kan

Moscow, 1939



Diagram 272 Position after Black's 13th move

14. f4! Nd7

Opening files with 14. ... exf4 15. exf4 is obviously good for White, who is better developed.

15. f5

This typical maneuver greatly restricts Black's bishop.

15. ... Nf6?

Somewhat better was 15. ... f6.

16. Ne4!

A useful exchange. Without the knights, the strength of the White bishop will grow sharply.

16. ... Qd8

17. Nxf6+ Qxf6

18. Be4 Rb8

19. Rad1 b6

20. h3

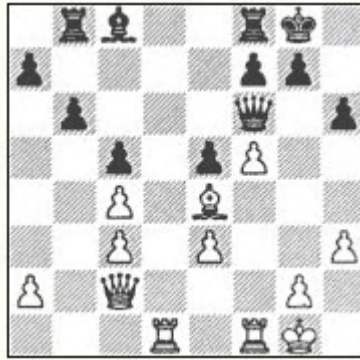


Diagram 273 Position after 20. h3

20. ... Ba6

After 20. ... Bb7, White's control of the d-file spreads to the 7th rank after 21. Rd7.

21. Bd5 b5

22. cxb5 Rxb5

Relatively better was 22. ... Bxb5 23. c4 Bc6, with some counterplay.

23. c4 Rb6

24. Rb1



Diagram 274 Position after 24. Rb1

24. ... Rd8

White has a clear advantage, e.g., 24. ... Rfb8 25. Rxb6 Rxb6 (25. ... Qxb6? 26. f6 with Qg6 to follow and an attack against the enemy king) 26. Qa4.

25. Rxb6 axb6

26. e4

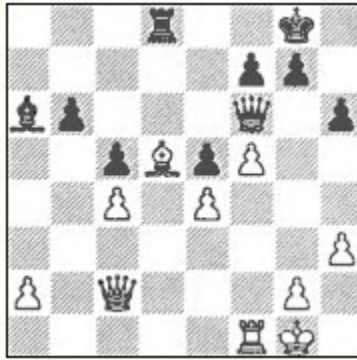


Diagram 275 Position after 26. e4

For the rest of this game, see Chapter One, which deals with “Good and Bad Bishops.”

C. Backward pawn on the half-open file

A backward pawn can be a serious defect, especially if the square in front of it is under the control of the opponent’s pieces.

Game 63

Lilienthal — Makogonov

Moscow, 1936

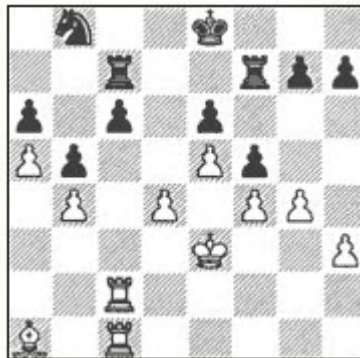


Diagram 276 Position after Black’s 32nd move

The main strategic problem for Black is his backward pawn on the half-open c-file, on which White has doubled his rooks to create strong pressure. Black’s pieces occupy passive positions. White can’t concentrate any more pieces directly against the c-pawn, but that’s not necessary. By sacrificing a pawn, he can create a breakthrough, activating his king, bishop and e-pawn. This maneuver underlines the advantage White’s pieces have against their passive Black counterparts.

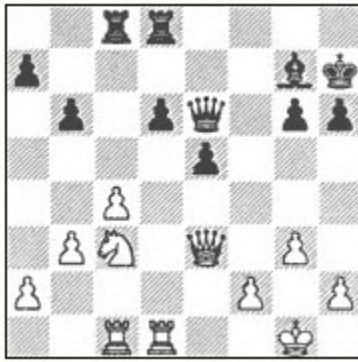


Diagram 278 Position after Black's 30th move

Here is another position with a backward pawn on a half-open file. White's position is strategically won because he can organize a siege of the d6-pawn. The culmination of such a strategy is the winning of material and then the game.

31. Rd3 Rc7

32. Rcd1 Rf7

33. Ne4 Bf8

34. Rd5



Diagram 279 Position after 34. Rd5

Blockading the backward pawn.

34. ... Qg4

35. R1d3 Be7

36. Nxd6

The weak backward pawn falls. Smyslov won the ending.

D. The passed pawn

The passed pawn, if it is well supported by friendly forces, can become very dangerous. Accordingly, passed pawns must be blockaded at the proper time. This technique is a specific example in the general theory of limiting the opponent's mobility. To blockade means to stop the forward progress of the pawn by placing one of your men directly in its path. In our first example, Black isn't successful in blockading White's passer.

Game 65

Miles — Rodriguez

Riga, 1979



Diagram 280 Position after Black's 12th move

13. d6!

The far-advanced pawn disrupts the coordination between the opponent's pieces.

13. ... e5?

A good idea, but an inaccurate move order. Better was 13. ... Nc6 14. 0-0 e5, intending ... Nd4.

14. Rc7! Be6

Or 14. ... Bg4 15. Qd5 Bxf3 16. Bxf3.

15. Ng5! Rc8

15. ... Bxa2 16. Qa4 gives White a material advantage.

16. Nxe6 fxe6

17. Rxc8 Qxc8

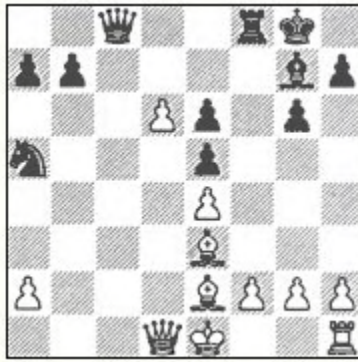


Diagram 281 Position after 17. ... Qxc8

18. 0-0

Black's pawn structure has been compromised, and the passed d-pawn is not White's only advantage. But it is this pawn that determines the result of the game.

18. ... Nc6

19. d7 Qc7

20. Bg4 Nd4

The d-file has been closed, but the pawn on d7 continues to menace Black.

21. Bxd4 exd4

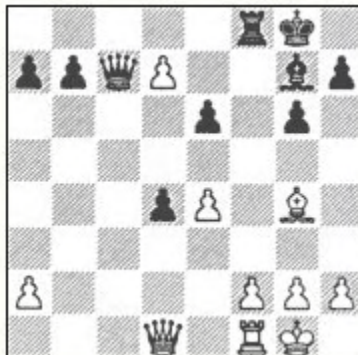


Diagram 282 Position after 21. ... exd4

22. Qb3!

This move is even better than 22. Bxe6+.

22. ... Kh8

23. Qxe6 Be5

24. g3 Bf6

25. Kg2 Kg7

26. Qd5 b6

27. Re1

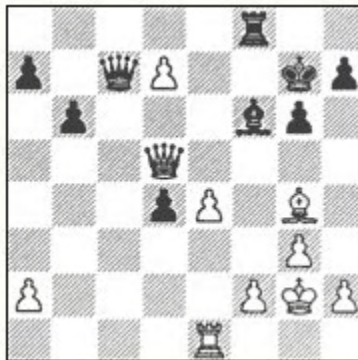


Diagram 283 Position after 27. Re1

Also strong is 27. f4 Qc5 28. Qxc5 bxc5 29. e5 Be7 30. Be6 Rb8 31. g4.

27. ... Qc5

28. Qb7

Even the opposite-color bishops do not give Black any real chances for a draw.

28. ... Bd8

The last line of defense against the d-pawn.

29. e5 d3

30. Re3

Black's last move created a threat against f2, but also weakened his d-pawn.

30. ... d2

31. e6 Kh6

32. Qe4 Be7

33. h4 Kg7

Or 33. ... Qc1 34. Rd3 Qe1 35. Qe3+, winning the d2-pawn.

34. Qe5+

Now the queens can be exchanged.

34. ... Qxe5

35. Rxe5

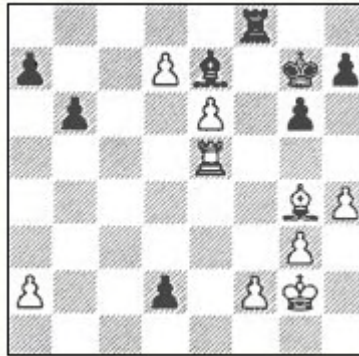


Diagram 284 Position after 35. Rxe5

35. ... h5

36. Bd1 Kf6

37. Re4 Bc5?

A blunder in a lost position.

38. Rf4+ Black resigns

After the exchange of rooks, nothing can prevent White's pawn from queening.

Game 66

Spassky — Petrosian

Moscow, 1969



Diagram 285 Position after White's 19th move

White has an excellent position: His rooks are on central files, his passed pawn is

very dangerous, and his queen and knight can create numerous threats.

19. ... Qc2

20. Qf4!

Sacrificing a pawn, but preserving the queen for the attack.

20. ... Qxa2

21. d6 Rcd8

22. d7

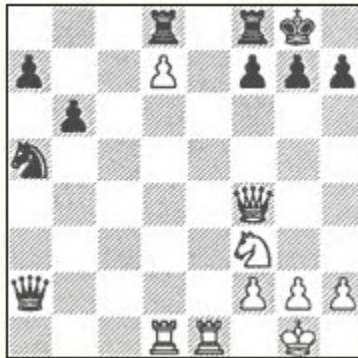


Diagram 286 Position after 22. d7

Despite his material advantage, Black is lost. The passed d-pawn ties up his pieces and creates motifs for White's tactical assault.

22. ... Qc4

23. Qf5 h6

Or 23. ... Qc6 24. Ne5 Qe6 25. Qc2 h6 26. Qc7 a6 27. Ng6! Qxg6 28. Qxd8, winning.

24. Rc1 Qa6

25. Rc7

White activates his pieces under the cover of the d7-pawn.

25. ... b5

26. Nd4 Qb6?

Better was 26. ... Qd6 27. Nxb5 Qd2.

27. Rc8 Nb7

Also bad is 27. ... b4 28. Re8 Qxd4 29. Rxf8+ Rxf8 30. Rxf8+ Kxf8 31. Qc5+! Qxc5 32. d8(Q) mate; or 27. ... g6 28. Rxd8 Qxd8 (28. ... gxf5 29. Rxf8+ Kxf8 30. Re8+ Kg7 31. d8[Q]) 29. Qxb5, with a simple win.

28. Nc6 Nd6



Diagram 287 Position after 28. ... Nd6

29. Nxd8! Nxf5

30. Nc6 Black resigns

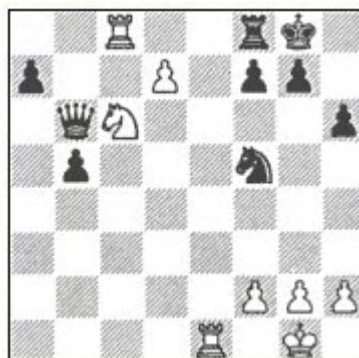


Diagram 288 Final position

E. Isolated pawn in the center

A central isolated pawn on the 4th rank, which occurs frequently and in many different openings, exhibits both strengths and weaknesses. On the positive side, such a pawn not only helps to restrain the enemy's position in the center, but also (in the case of a d4-pawn, for example) helps control e5 and c5. Additionally, the open e- and c-files adjacent to the isolani can be used to activate the rooks very quickly. Very often, when White plays an isolated queen pawn position, he achieves an advantage in development, and is able to advance his isolani.

On the negative side, an isolated center pawn requires protection. There are also many weak squares in the vicinity of such a pawn. For example, with an isolated White d-pawn, d5, c4, and e4 may all become weak.

Because isolani positions contain both strengths and weaknesses, such games often reach a dynamic balance. Making a special study of this kind of position can help improve your positional intuition and understanding.

The main antagonist against Tarrasch's point of view, given in the box below, was Grandmaster Akiba Rubinstein, who demonstrated the classic method of fighting against the isolani. For example, see game 48, Rubinstein-Salwe.

The following example is one of Rubinstein's most outstanding games.

Game 67

Rubinstein—Marshall

Breslau 1912

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 c5 3. c4 e6 4. cxd5 exd5 5. Nc3 Nf6 6. g3 Nc6 7. Bg2 cxd4

He who is afraid of an isolated pawn should not play chess.

— Grandmaster Siegbert Tarrasch

Modern theory prefers 7. ... Be7.

8. Nxd4



Diagram 289 Position after 8. Nxd4

8. ... Bc5

9. Nb3 Bb4

10. 0-0 Bxc3

11. bxc3 0-0

12. Bg5 Be6

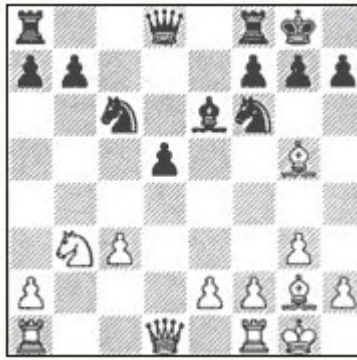


Diagram 290 Position after 12. ... Be6

Now we have a typical isolated queen pawn.

13. Nc5!!

White not only has a wealth of ideas in this position, he also shows us a great technical performance. Rubinstein forces the transition to an ending where Black's defensive chances are bleak. This style later was also evident in the games of Bobby Fischer.

13. ... Qe7

14. Nxe6

Not so strong is 14. Bxf6, permitting 14. ... Qxc5!.

14. ... fxe6



Diagram 291 Position after 14. ... fxe6

15. c4! dxc4

16. Bxc6!

This move is the key to understanding White's idea. Now the Black pawns at a7, c6, c4, and e6 are all targets, and can all meet the same fate—being captured!

16. ... bxc6

17. Qd4 Qd8

18. Bxf6 Rxf6

19. Qxc4 Qd5

20. Rac1 Raf8

21. e4 Qh5

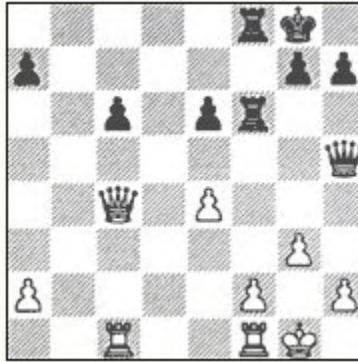


Diagram 292 Position after 21. ... Qh5

22. f4!

This move shows that Black has no chance for counterplay. The ending was easily won by White.

This game is a classic example of how to exploit the negatives of the isolated queen pawn.

Former World Champion Botvinnik made many valuable contributions to the theory of how to play positions with an isolated pawn.

Game 68

Botvinnik — Vidmar

Nottingham, 1936

1. c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3. d4 Nf6 4. Nc3 Be7 5. Bg5 0-0 6. e3 Nbd7 7. Bd3 c5 8. 0-0 cxd4 9. exd4 dxc4 10. Bxc4 Nb6 11. Bb3 Bd7 12. Qd3

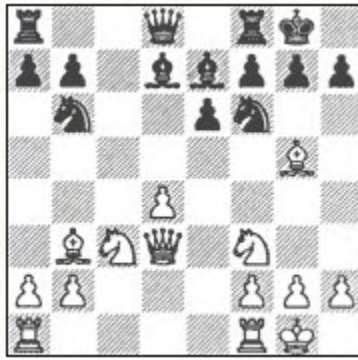


Diagram 293 Position after 12. Qd3

Another typical position with an isolani on d4.

12. ... Nbd5?!

This natural move is not best. The main method of fighting against an isolated pawn is to exchange pieces. Thus, 12. ... Nfd5 is better.

13. Ne5 Bc6

14. Rad1 Nb4

15. Qh3 Bd5

16. Nxd5 Nbx d5?

The same kind of mistake as before. Better is 16. ... Nfxd5.



Diagram 294 Position after 16. ... Nbx d5?

17. f4!

Planning to play f4-f5. White creates a new file for his attack, and also extends the diagonal for his bishop on b3. Thanks to Botvinnik, this plan is now the standard way to play such positions.

17. ... Rc8

18. f5 exf5

19. Rxf5 Qd6

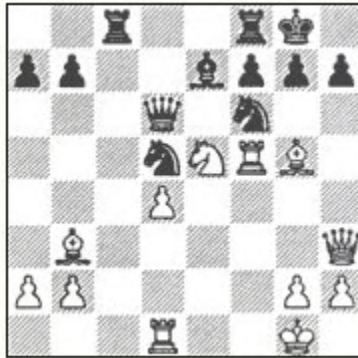


Diagram 295 Position after 19. ... Qd6

20. Nxf7!

This decisive combination is the logical follow-up to White's play.

20. ... Rxf7

21. Bxf6 Bxf6

22. Rxd5 Qc6

23. Rd6 Qe8

24. Rd7 Black resigns.

The next game is by one of the authors.

Game 69

Antoshin — Palatnik

USSR, 1979

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 c5

The classical Tarrasch Defense to the Queen's Gambit.

4. cxd5 exd5 5. Nf3 Nc6 6. g3 Nf6 7. Bg2 Be7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Bg5 cxd4 10. Nxd4 h6 11. Be3 Bg4

Also possible is 11. ... Re8.

12. h3

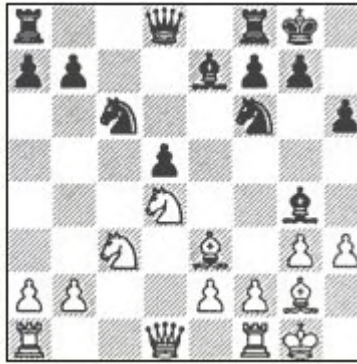


Diagram 296 Position after 12. h3

It is natural to put the question to the bishop, but the pawn on h3 occupies a square that the bishop on g2 might use and also creates a temporary target, weakening g3. On the positive side, White's last move restricts Black's bishop and removes it from the diagonal h5-d1.

12. ... Be6

13. Rc1

In case of 13. Nxe6 fxe6, White cannot play Bh3 to attack e6 because White has occupied h3 with a pawn.

13. ... Qd7

14. Nxe6

The h3-pawn was attacked.

14. ... fxe6

15. Qb3



Diagram 297 Position after 15. Qb3

15. ... Rf7!

Black wants to use his rooks not on the c- and d-files, but along the f-file, which was opened by the previous exchange on e6. Black's chances for success are increased by the fact that White's most natural next move, Rfd1, helps Black. Also, the rook on f7 helps decrease threats along the a2-g8 diagonal.

Instead, if Black plays 15. ... Na5, then 16. Qb5 can lead to an ending where White has the advantage of the two bishops.

16. Rfd1 Raf8

17. Nb5

White attacks a7 because Black's rook has just left a8.

17. ... a6

18. Nd4 e5

Now Black's center pawns begin to realize their dynamic potential. If Black can play ... d5-d4, White's bishop on e3 must abandon the defense of the f2-square, thereby increasing Black's chances along the f-file.

19. Nxc6 bxc6

20. Qb6

White created a weakness on c6 and now attacks it. But Black continues his plan.

20. ... d4



Diagram 298 Position after 21. ... d4

21. Rxc6

Instead 21. Qxc6? loses a piece after 21. ... Qxc6 22. Rxc6 dxe3; or 21. Bxc6 Qxh3 with an unstoppable attack on the kingside.

21. ... Nd5

22. Qb3

After 22. Qxa6, Nb4 wins; or 22. Bxd5 Qxd5 23. f3 Rxf3! 24. exf3 Qxf3, with a winning attack for Black.

22. ... Qxc6

23. Bxd5 Qf6

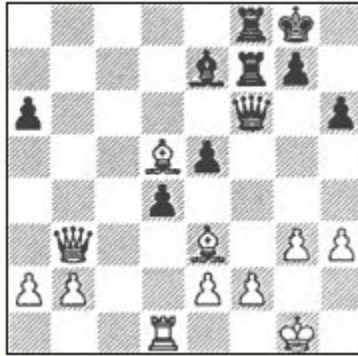


Diagram 299 Position after 23. ... Qf6

The triumph of Black's strategy: He has tripled his major pieces on the f-file, and the bishop on e3 is under attack — but if it leaves its outpost on e3, who will defend the f2-square?

24. Bxf7+ Rxf7

White resigns

The Significance of the Center

Control of the center is the most important element in chess strategy. The center of the chess board is formed by squares e4, e5, d4, d5. The so-called broad center also includes the squares within the rectangle enclosing c3, c6, f3 and f6. From the very first moves, the chess struggle revolves around the battle for possession of the center. Pawns and especially pieces are more active and have greater potential in the center. From their central positions, they may have a great influence on the opponent's position and limit his choices. "The center is the soul of chess," said World Champion Alexander Alekhine.

White is usually the offensive side in the struggle for the center—he can be first to advance a center pawn. Black's strategy early in the game often amounts simply to neutralizing White's first-move advantage by claiming his own share of the center.

A. Pawn center

The "classic" pawn formation in the center is the duo d4 + e4 (for Black d5 + e5). If the central pawns are strong and well protected, then the pawn center is a positional advantage. But if the pawns are weak and can be objects of attack, then this kind of center can be a serious liability.

In many modern openings Black simply allows White to create a strong pawn center, and in return gets the chance to undermine it. In such cases, the power of the center depends on its ability to advance, as in the following example.

Game 70

Keres — Fine

Ostende, 1937

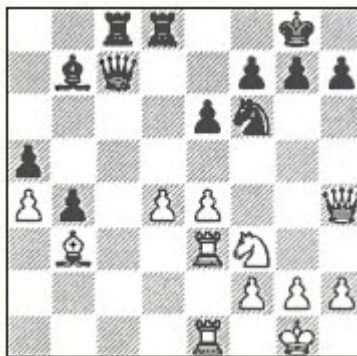


Diagram 300 Position after Black's 20th move

Here White has the central duo at e4 and d4, opposed by Black's e6-pawn. Black must be alert to any movement by White's center.

21. d5!

By sacrificing a pawn, White makes an important breakthrough in the center and starts a strong attack.

21. ... exd5

22. e5 Nd7

Or 22. ... Ne4 23. e6! fxe6 24. Rxe4 dxe4 25. Ng5 Qc3! 26. Bxe6+ Kf8 27. Rf1.

23. Ng5 Nf8?

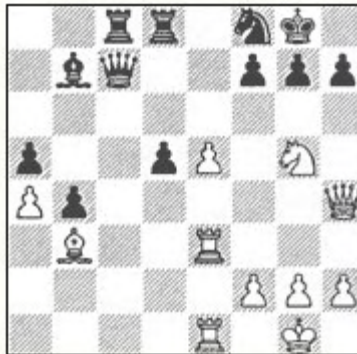


Diagram 301 Position after 23. ... Nf8?

After this move, Black loses quickly. It was necessary to play 23. ... h6! 24. e6 hxg5 25. exf7+ Kxf7 26. Re7+, even though White still has a dangerous attack.

24. Nxf7!

This typical sacrifice opens the h-file for the heavy pieces.

24. ... Nxf7

25. Rh3 Qc1

This is only an imitation of counterplay.

26. Qxh7+ Kf8

27. Rhe3 d4

28. Qh8+ Ke7

29. Qxg7

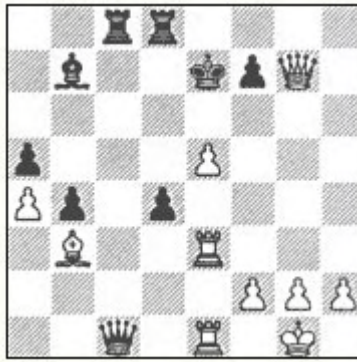


Diagram 302 Position after 29. Qxg7

29. ... Rf8

If 29. ... dxe3, then 30. Qxf7 mate.

30. Qf6+ Ke8

31. e6! Black resigns

After the forced 31. ... dxe3 32. exf7+ Rxf7 33. Bxf7+, Black can choose between being checkmated or losing his queen.

Game 71

Furman — Lilienthal

Moscow, 1949



Diagram 303 Position after Black's 20th move

White's center is very well protected, and this assures his advantage. He begins an attack in the center as well as on the kingside. For future reference, it's useful to notice that often an attack that begins in the center concludes on the wing where the king resides.

21. e5!

This move opens the f-file for White's rook and also prepares an outpost on d6 for White's knight. But this move also has a disadvantage: Black establishes control over the d5-square.

21. ... Nd5

22. Nf5 Re6

23. Qf2 Qd7

The threat was 24. Nh6+, Qxf7 and Qxe6.

24. h4! f6

The thrust 24. ... h5 is not to be recommended because of 25. Qf3.

25. Qg3 fxe5

26. dxe5 Nde7

27. Nd6

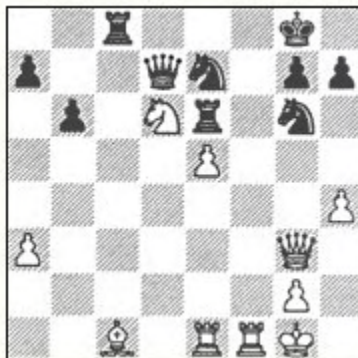


Diagram 304 Position after 27. Nd6

Black's position is difficult, so he decides to sac the Exchange for a pawn. It would be bad to play 27. ... Rd8 28. Bg5! h6 29. Bxe7 Nxe7 30. Rf7 Rg6 31. Rxe7! Rxg3 32. Rxd7 Rxd7 33. e6, with a win for White.

27. ... Rxc1

28. Rxc1 Nxe5

29. Qf2

White makes the most of his possession of the f-file.

29. ... h6

30. Qf8+ Kh7

31. Nf5 Nxf5

If 31. ... N7g6, then 32. Qb8! Nxh4 33. Rc7 Nef3+ 34. Kh1 Nxf5 35. Rxd7, and now in case of 35. ... Ng3+, White avoids the two-knight mate by playing 36. Qxg3.

32. Qxf5+ g6

White continues to realize his material and positional advantage.

33. Qf8 Re8 34. Qf4 h5 35. Rc3 Re7 36. Re3 Black resigns because he can't prevent the transition to a lost endgame.

Game 72

Lputian — Epishin

Rostov-on-Don, 1993

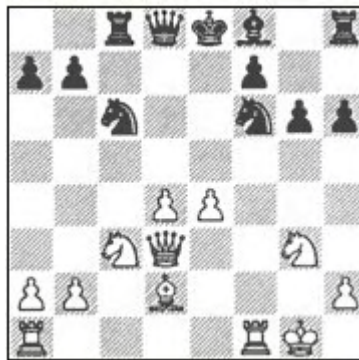


Diagram 305 Position after White's 17th move

White's center is not sufficiently supported by his own pieces.

17. ... Bc5!

White's d4-pawn is attacked and pinned.

18. Kh1 Bxd4

19. Rad1 Ng4

20. Qe2 Qh4

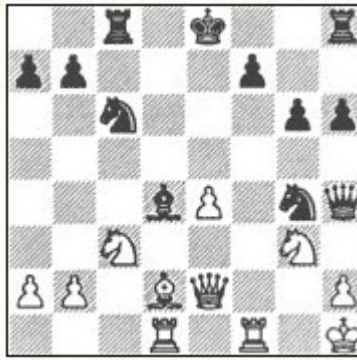


Diagram 306 Position after 20. ... Qh4

Very little is left of White's "powerful" center. All that remains for Black to do is to move his king into safety.

21. Nb5 0-0

22. Rf4 h5

23. Nxd4 Nxd4

24. Qg2 Rc2

This occupation of the 2nd rank signals that the end is near.

25. e5 Ne6

26. Rb4 a5

27. Re4 Rd8

28. h3 Rd3

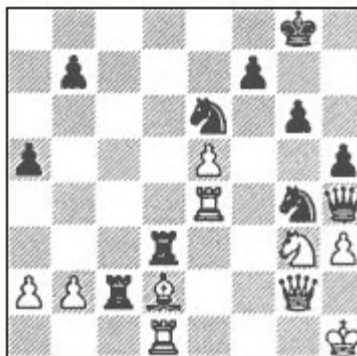


Diagram 307 Final Position

White resigns. He is completely tied up.

Game 73

Keres — Geller

Moscow, 1962



Diagram 308 Position after Black's 15th move

It is important to notice here that White's central pawns are strongly protected. As we already know, this circumstance determines whether or not the side with these pawns has the advantage. In addition, White's bishops are aimed at the enemy king, so that the only thing left for them to do is to open up the diagonals. White's strong pawn center has pushed back Black's pieces on the queenside, especially the knight. The time has come for White to take action.

16. d5!

White's center starts to move. Soon nothing will be left of its previous beauty, but it will achieve its goal. White's advantage in the center turns into a direct attack on the king.

16. ... exd5

17. exd5 Qe7

It would be very bad to play 17. ... Bxd5 because of 18. Qe5 f6 19. Qh5; or 17. ... Bc3 18. Bf5! Rc4 19. Ne5; or 17. ... Re8 18. Ne5 f6 19. Bxh7+, in all cases with a big advantage for White.

18. Ne5 f6



Diagram 309 Position after 18. ... f6

19. Qh5!

After this move, White cannot conclude the game without sacrifices — but they are as natural as a baby's smile.

19. ... g6

20. Nxc6! hxc6

21. Bxc6 Qg7

For a piece, White has two pawns and a strong attack against the Black king, who is protected by only a queen. With his next move, White brings a rook into the attack.

22. Rd3 Bd6

If 22. ... Ba6, then 23. Rg3, with decisive threats. For instance, the greedy 23. ... Bxf1? leads to forced mate: 24. Bh7+ Kh8 25. Bf5+ Kg8 26. Rxc7+ Kxc7 27. Qh7 mate.

23. f4!



Diagram 310 Position after 23. f4!

After this move (guaranteeing the White rook entrance to the g-file), Black cannot hold off the attack.

23. ... Qh8

24. Qg4 Bc5+

25. Kh1 Rc7

And now for the mating finale.

26. Bh7++! Kf7

27. Qe6+ Kg7

28. Rg3+

Black resigns because of the unstoppable checkmate next move.

Modern chess theory teaches us that simply occupying the center with pawns is not necessarily advantageous. The most important idea is to control the center, not merely to fill it with pawns. So it is important to take into account the number of White and Black pieces in the center, or controlling the central squares. After all, the center is made up of squares, not pawns! This point is very important to remember.

B. Undermining the pawn center

Undermining is one of the most effective ways of fighting against a pawn center. Properly timed, undermining can weaken the opponent's central position and sharply change the character of the game. This strategy can occur during any phase of the game. Let's look at some examples.

Game 74

Letelier — Fischer

Leipzig, 1960

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 0-0 5. e5 Ne8 6. f4 d6 7. Be3



Diagram 311 Position after 7. Be3

7. ... c5!

White's pawn center is under attack and begins to fall apart. There is no coordination between White's pawn center and the rest of his pieces.

8. dxc5 Nc6

9. cxd6

White gains a pawn, but is significantly behind in development.

9. ... exd6

10. Ne4 Bf5!

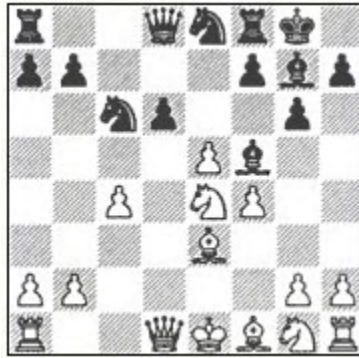


Diagram 312 Position after 10. ... Bf5!

11. Ng3

Relatively better was 11. Nxd6 Nxd6 12. Qxd6 Qxd6 13. exd6 Bxb2 14. Rd1 Nb4! 15. Kf2 Nxa2 16. Ne2 (16. Rd2 Nc3!) 16. ... a5.

11. ... Be6

12. Nf3 Qc7

13. Qb1 dxe5

14. f5

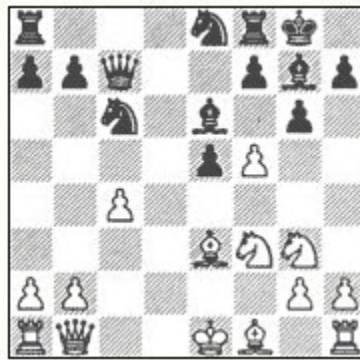


Diagram 313 Position after 14. f5

14. ... e4!

A beautiful kick in the center, in the same place where White's army of pawns once stood.

15. fxe6

On 15. Qxe4 Black replies 15. ... gxf5!, and if 16. Nxf5? then 16. ... Qa5+, winning a piece.

15. ... exf3

16. gxf3 f5

The attack comes first, above all!

17. f4 Nf6

18. Be2 Rfe8

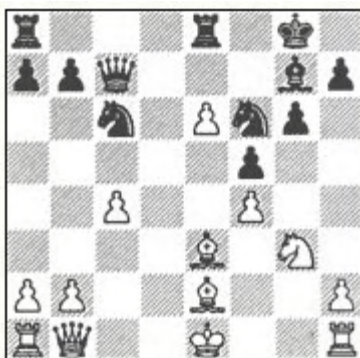


Diagram 314 Position after 18. ... Rfe8

The time has come for Black's heavy pieces to pay attention to the e-file.

19. Kf2 Rxe6

20. Re1 Rae8

21. Bf3 Rxe3!

The idea of this move should be understandable now, since we have already discussed weak square complexes.

22. Rxe3 Rxe3

23. Kxe3

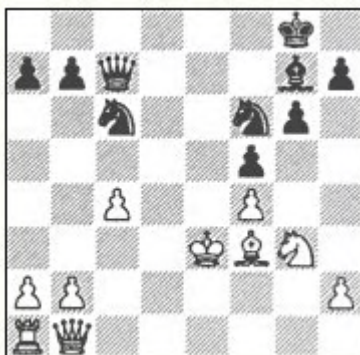


Diagram 315 Position after 23. Kxe3

23. ... Qxf4+!

White resigns because of 24. Kxf4 Bh6 mate; or 24. Kf2 Ng4+ 25. Kg2 Ne3+ 26. Kf2 Nd4 27. Qh1 Ng4+ 28. Kf1 Nxf3, with a clear win.

Game 75

Botvinnik — Petrosian

Moscow, 1963

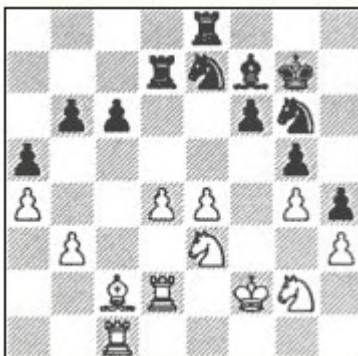


Diagram 316 Position after White's 42nd move

42. ... c5!

Undermining White's pawn center, taking control of the dark squares, decreasing

the value of White's bishop, and turning White's pawns into targets for attack. A worthwhile move!

43. d5 Ne5

44. Rf1?

Better was 44. Nc4 Nxc4 45. bxc4 Bg6 (or 45. ... Nc8) 46. e5!, and in return for the pawn White gets drawing chances.

44. ... Bg6

45. Ke1 Nc8

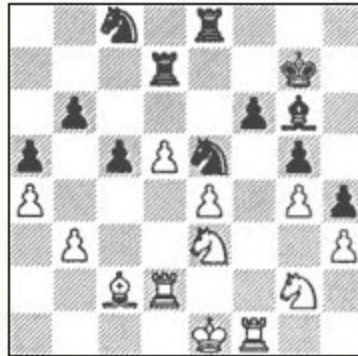


Diagram 317 Position after 45. ... Nc8

Black has all the necessary conditions for improving the position of his pieces. With the Black knight on d6, Black will exert more power on the center of the board.

46. Rdf2 Rf7

47. Kd2 Nd6

48. Nf5+

This move is necessary because the pawn on e4 is being attacked, but the move brings White's counterplay on the f-file to an end.

48. ... Bxf5

49. exf5 c4!

After this it is easier for Black to coordinate his threats.

50. Rb1 b5!

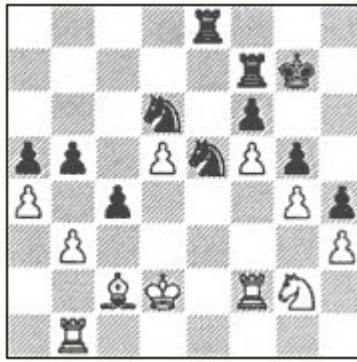


Diagram 318 Position after 50. ... b5!

Making even more trouble for White. The initiative is firmly in Black's hands.

51. b4 c3+

52. Kxc3 Rc7+

Now White's king becomes a target.

53. Kd2 Nec4+

54. Kd1 Na3

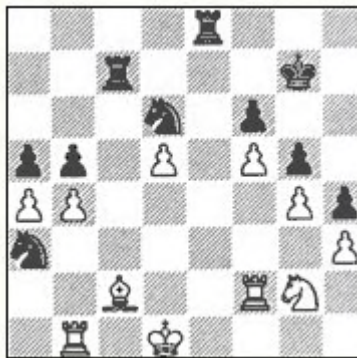


Diagram 319 Position after 54. ... Na3

All of Black's pieces attack.

55. Rb2 Ndc4

56. Ra2 axb4

57. axb5 Nxb5

58. Ra6 Nc3+

The struggle is over.

59. Kc1 Nxd5

60. Ba4 Rec8

61. Ne1 Nf4

White resigns

To help us understand both the strengths and weaknesses of the pawn center, let's look at a variation of Alekhine's Defense.

Game 76

Instructive Example

Alekhine's Defense

1. e4 Nf6 2. e5 Nd5 3. d4 d6 4. c4 Nb6 5. f4 dxe5 6. fxe5 c5 7. d5 e6 8. Nc3 exd5 9. cxd5 Qh4+ 10. g3 Qd4



Diagram 320 Position after 10. ... Qd4

Black has moved his queen into the center behind White's advanced pawns. But as the course of the game will show, Black will not be able to win those pawns, and White will have a significant space advantage.

11. Bb5+!

This way White gets to keep the queens on the board, and can comfortably deploy his pieces. It would be a mistake to play 11. Qxd4 because of 11. ... cxd4 12. Nb5 Nxd5.

11. ... Bd7

12. Qe2! Nxd5

It looks as if the goal has been reached: White's pawns in the center have been destroyed. But there is a big price to pay!

13. e6! fxe6

It would be bad to play 13. ... Bxb5 because of 14. Nxb5 Qb4+ 15. Bd2 Qxb2 16. exf7+ Kxf7 17. Qh5+ Ke6 18. Nf3! Qxa1+ 19. Kf2!.

14. Qxe6+ Ne7

15. Nf3



Diagram 321 Position after 15. Nf3

This position is better for White.

Even though Black has an extra pawn, his king is in the center, his queen is in an exposed location, and it will be difficult for Black to develop his pieces. After 15. ... Qf6 16. Qe2 White will develop with tempo (e.g. Bg5) and his initiative will grow.

C. Pieces against the pawn center

In this section we will consider the role of pieces in the struggle against the pawn center. Pawns are the best units for creation of the center because, unlike pieces, they are able to maintain control of this vital area in the face of central attacks by opposing pawns. Nevertheless, sometimes pieces in the center are effective. “Long-distance” pressure created by the combined forces of the rooks and bishops can have a significant impact as well.

Game 77

Nezmetdinov — Tal

Moscow, 1957



Diagram 322 Position after White's 13th move

13. ... Ncxe5

White has broken apart his pawn structure in the center in order to open up files. Black, in return, has overestimated the position and played to gain the advantage by capturing the center pawn. The right move here is the more modest 13. ... Nxc5.

14. Nxe5 Nxe5

15. Qd4 f6

16. f4 Nc6?

Better was 16. ... Nd7 17. f5 Re8 18. fxe6 Nxc5 19. Bf3 Bxe6, leading to an endgame that may be tenable.

17. Qe3 Rd8

18. Rad1 e5

19. fxe5 fxe5

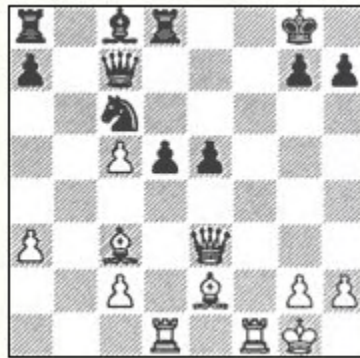


Diagram 323 Position after 19. ... fxe5

Black has a central pawn duo, but how shaky it is!

20. Bb5! Bb7

Or 20. ... d4 21. Bc4+ Kh8 22. Qg5 Be6 23. Bxe6 dxc3 24. Bd5, with an advantage for White.

21. Qg3 Rd7



Diagram 324 Position after 21. ... Rd7

22. Rf2! Re8

22. ... d4? would be met by 23. Bc4+ Kh8 24. Rdf1.

23. h3 Ba8

24. Ba4 Bb7

Black waits because he has no useful moves, while White continues to build up a decisive assault.

25. Kh1 Ba8

26. Rf5



Diagram 325 Position after 26. Rf5

26. ... e4

A mistake made in time trouble. More resistance is offered by 26. ... g6, even though after 27. Bxc6 Qxc6 28. Rxe5 Rf8 29. Bd4, White should win.

27. Qxc7 Rxc7

28. Rfxd5

Now White's decisive advantage has materialized.

28. ... e3

29. Rd7 e2

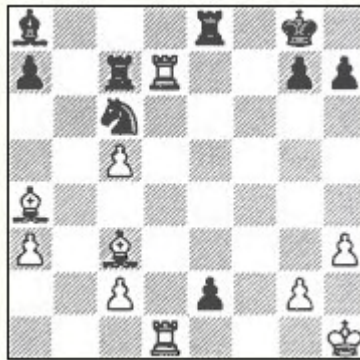


Diagram 326 Position after 29. ... e2

This looks dangerous, but ...

30. Bb3+ Re6

31. Bxe6+ Kf8

32. Bxg7+ Black resigns

One move before checkmate: 32. ... Ke8 33. Bf7 mate.

D. The center and wing operations

Successful execution of wing operations depends largely on the position in the center. If one player has a strong and stable center, then his beginning a strategic operation on the flank (relying on this center) can be correct. But if the center is not well supported, then the success of a flank attack is in doubt. The opponent should look for opportunities for counterplay, especially in the center of the board.

Game 78

A. Rodriguez — Tringov

Buenos Aires, 1978



Diagram 327 Position after White's 18th move

18. ... d5!

All Black's kingside pawns are on their initial squares, so it appears that it would be difficult for White to attack there. But this is not true. Indeed, there is an avalanche of pawns hanging over Black's head! This makes it imperative for Black to counterattack in the center.

19. Kg2

Bad is 19. exd5 because of 19. ... Qc5+ and 20. ... Bxd5.

19. ... dxe4

20. Kh2 e3!

Now we can see that White's pawn advance on the kingside has only weakened his own position. Black's central counterplay has been more effective.

21. Bg2 Rd8

White resigns, because there is no defense to 22. ... Rd2.

In the next example we will get acquainted with a wing attack when the center is stable.

Game 79

Botvinnik — Smyslov

Moscow, 1954



Diagram 328 Position after Black's 9th move

10. g4!

White threatens to drive away one of the defenders of the d5-pawn, the knight on f6.

10. ... c6

Protecting the d-pawn.

11. g5 Nfd7

12. h4 Bd6

13. e4!



Diagram 329 Position after 13. e4!

After pushing back Black's pieces and hindering his development, White correctly decides to open up the game in the center.

13. ... dxe4

14. Nxe4 Bxf4

15. Bxf4 0-0

Finally Black castles, but White is ready.

16. h5!

With the positional threat h5-h6.

16. ... Re8

17. Nd6 Re6

18. d5! Rxd6

Also bad is 18. ... cxd5 19. Qxd5 Na6 20. Nxf7! Kxf7 21. g6+ Ke7 22. Bd6+!

19. Bxd6 Qxg5

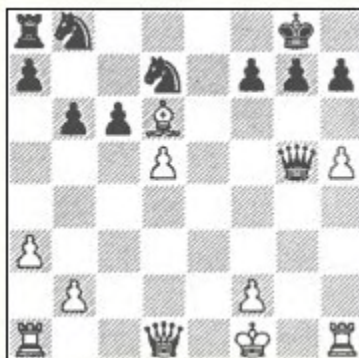


Diagram 330 Position after 19. ... Qxg5

To conclude this game successfully, White must play accurately.

20. Qf3! Qxd5

Or 20. ... cxd5 21. Rg1 Qh4 22. Rg4 Qd8 23. Rc1+- .

21. Qxd5 cxd5

22. Rc1 Na6

23. b4

This ending is won for White.

23. ... h6 24. Rh3 Kh7 25. Rd3 Nf6 26. b5 Nc5 27. Bxc5 bxc5 28. Rxc5 Rb8 29. a4 Rb7 30. Rdc3 Ne4 31. Rc7, Black resigns.

E. Opening the game in the center

Many modern openings give rise to positions in which the pawns of both sides are exchanged, creating an open position where active piece play in the center is most important. Sometimes this kind of position occurs following a piece sacrifice, after which the character of the game becomes more combinative than strategic.

The opening of the center often requires detailed, precise calculations. In these positions, the side with a developmental advantage is able to assume the initiative, and the locations of the kings become critical. Active piece play in the center reaches its peak during the attack on the king.

Game 80

Alekhine — Eliskases

Podebrad, 1936



Diagram 331 Position after White's 14th move

14. ... d5?

This break is premature. Better was 14. ... Bf8.

15. exd5 Nxd5

16. Nxd5 Qxd5



Diagram 332 Position after 16. ... Qxd5

17. d4!

This is the best way to exploit Black's weaknesses: Open up the center and attack with pieces.

17. ... exd4

18. Be4 Qd7

Or 18. ... Qd6 19. Bf4.

19. cxd4 Bf6



Diagram 333 Position after 19. ... Bf6

If 19. ... Bb7 20. d5 Nd8 21. Ne5 Qd6 22. Bf4.

20. Bg5!



Diagram 334 Position after 20. Bg5!

20. ... Rxe4!

Black's best, albeit not fully sufficient, defense. Bad is 20. ... Bxd4 21. Bf5! (emphasizing Black's lack of development) 21. ... Rxe1+ 22. Qxe1 Qd6 23. Qe8+ Qf8 24. Bxh7+, winning the queen; or 20. ... Bxg5 21. Nxg5 g6 22. dxc5, and White has an extra pawn.

21. Rxe4 Bxd4

22. Nxd4 Nxd4



Diagram 335 Position after 22. ... Nxd4

23. Qh5! Bb7

24. Rh4 Qf5

25. Be3 Rd8?

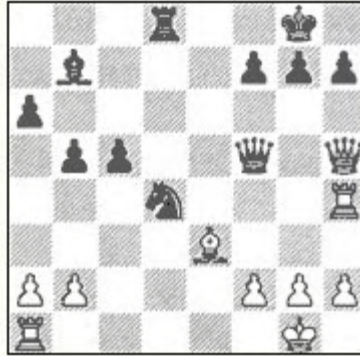


Diagram 336 Position after 25. ... Rd8?

Of course this is a serious mistake that hastens Black's defeat. However, in this position Black cannot avoid a queen trade, which leads to a lost endgame: 25. ... Qxh5 26. Rxh5 Nc2 27. Rd1 Nxe3 28. fxe3 c4 29. Rc5 +- .

26. Rxd4 Black resigns

Learning Exercise 12-1:

Chipping away the king's pawn cover

Nimzovich — Salwe

Karlsbad, 1911



Diagram 337 White to move

Analyze 1. **Bxh7**. Multiple choice:

1. It is correct and gives White the advantage;
2. It is incorrect and gives Black the advantage.

Support your answer with variations.

**Learning Exercise 12-2:
Counterattack in the center**

Browne — Keres

Vancouver, 1975



Diagram 338 Black to move

Does it make sense for Black to play 1. ... d5?

Learning Exercise 12-3:

Creating threats

Suetin — Malikh

Berlin, 1965



Diagram 339 White to move

White played 1. exd5 (opening up the center) and after 1. ... Qxd5, played 2. Qf5. White's position is:

1. *Winning*
2. *Equal*
3. *Somewhat better*

Learning Exercise 12-4:

Whose attack is first?

Hort — Schauwecker

Biel, 1987



Diagram 340 White to move

Evaluate this position. Multiple choice:

1. White has a decisive attack.
2. Black has a winning counterattack.

Support your evaluation with variations.

Answers to Learning Exercises

12-1) 1. Bxh7! is the strongest move, e.g.: 1. ... Nxh7? 2. Rh3!; or 1. ... e5 2. Bg6 Re7 3. Re1, with an advantage for White.

12-2) 1. ... d5! is the strongest move. Black's kingside is well protected, and Black has the better chances in the center because White's rook is out of play.

12-3) White's position is strategically winning. Black cannot defend against the threats Qh5, Be4, and Ng5. The game concluded: 2. ... Qd6 3. Ng5 Qf6 4. Qxf6 gxf6 5. Ne4 Kg7 6. Nfg3 exd4 7. Bh6+! Kh8 (not 7. ... Kxh6 because of 8. NF5+! Kh5 9. Bd1 mate) 8. Nxf6 Rg8 9. Nxc8 Kxc8 10. Bg5!, Black resigns.

12-4) At first glance, the main conflict seems to be in the center, but White has a winning flank attack: 1. Nf6+ gxf6 2. Rh8+! Kxh8 (2. ... Kg7 3. Qe7+) 3. Qh1+ Kg8 4. Qh7+ Kf8 5. g7+, and Black resigns.

— A Final Word —

The 12 chapters of this book bear frequent revisiting. They will continue to reward you with practical success throughout your chess career. The principles of good

strategy will not change, and knowing them will improve all phases of your game — opening, middle game, and ending. Certainly, the example games used as demonstrations will never stale. In fact, they will teach you more and more, as you review them and your strategic skills grow. Your notes and questions in the margins will become an historical record of your progress.

Remember — to play winning chess, you must have a plan. Your first step in planning is to evaluate the position on the board, paying special attention to its pawn skeleton. By applying the strategic principles in this book, the right objectives will become clear — and then the right plans to achieve these objectives. At the last step, you'll find the move you believe in.

Consistently apply the time-tested and combat-proven strategic principles you've read about here to your own games. Practice, and its inevitable trial and error, is the prerequisite to mastering chess strategy. You'll see that the strategic principles of the great masters will start to become second nature more quickly than you thought possible!

What's ahead?

The Comprehensive Chess Course, of which this book is volume 5, is based on formerly secret Russian training methods and documents, and is designed to take even a beginner to expert strength and beyond in the shortest amount of time possible. Currently available are five books and a companion volume, Chess Training Pocket Book: 300 Most Important Chess Positions & Ideas.

At the time of this printing, two more books are planned for release in the next year. Both will follow our tradition of distilling the essential, practical knowledge and explaining it in a way that helps you win more games. Chess Endings for the Tournament Player and The Chess Struggle with Uneven Material will make the Comprehensive Chess Course a complete lyceum, a resource to return to again and again as you grow in chess strength and understanding.

The authors hope that you become one of the thousands to reach new levels of both enjoyment and achievement after reading the Comprehensive Chess Course. Please let us hear from you! We enjoy and learn from both your suggestions and your success stories!

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International Grandmaster Lev Alburt

Grandmaster Lev Alburt was born in Orenburg, Russia, on August 21, 1945. For many years, he lived in Odessa, a Ukrainian city located on the Black Sea. A three-time champion of the Ukraine (1972-74), he became European Cup champion in 1976. In 1979, while in West Germany for a chess competition, he defected and came to the US, making his home in New York City.



Mentored by three-time World Champion and eminent teacher Mikhail Botvinnik, Grandmaster Alburt first taught chess in the Soviet Union. He is now in the forefront of the innovative movement known as “the new chess pedagogy,” which seeks new ways to teach chess to both beginners and more advanced players, regardless of their age or backgrounds. GM Alburt’s Comprehensive Chess Course is one of the most important works of this movement.

GM Alburt has won the U.S. Championship an impressive three times—in 1984, 1985, and 1990. He is known as the “Grandmaster of chess teachers.” He is the only top-echelon GM to devote his career to teaching those below master strength.

Currently, GM Alburt is a popular columnist for Chess Life, a best-selling chess author, and a renowned teacher. He provides lessons through-the-mail, over-the-telephone, and face-to-face. Write to GM Alburt at P.O. Box 534, Gracie Station, New York, NY 10028, or call him at (212) 794-8706.

Grandmaster Sam Palatnik (far right) serves as trainer for some of the world’s leading players. Former coach of the Ukrainian chess team, he holds the title of “Honored Coach.” Palatnik is not only an internationally famous chess instructor but also a popular writer: His two previous books in the Comprehensive Chess Course (co-authored with GM Lev Alburt) — Chess Tactics for the Tournament Player and The King in Jeopardy — are chess best-sellers.



GM Palatnik's impressive list of victories includes: Soviet Union Team Champion, World Student Chess Champion (1974- 1976), European Chess Cup Champion (1976- 1979), World Open Co-Champion (1991), Tennessee State Champion (1994- 1995), and Governor's Cup winner (1996). He is regularly among the leaders in the annual Grand Prix competition, and is currently Grandmaster-in-Residence at the Nashville Chess Center in Nashville, Tennessee.

GM Palatnik is available for game analysis and/or private lessons in person or by telephone by appointment. In addition, he and his ChessPro partner, NM Mark Ishee, conduct weekend chess camps, organize and direct tournaments, and write and publish chess instructional books and articles.

Olga Palatnik (above left) was born in Kiev in 1981. She has been living in the United States since 1994, and currently attends Harpeth Hall School in Nashville, Tennessee. She has eight years of chess experience, including not only tournament play but also lessons from her father, GM Sam Palatnik, and her mother, WM Polina Kaganovska. Olga currently ranks among the top 50 women in the United States and among the top 50 in her age group. This volume is her second book translation in the Comprehensive Chess Course series; her first was *The King in Jeopardy*.