Winning Chess

Combinations

Yasser Seirawan
International Grand Master

proven principles from one of the world's top chess players

EVERYMAN CHESS

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INTRODUCTION

For many years, I have wanted to write a book about chess combinations. After I learned the rules of chess, combinations were simply thrilling. As explained in *Winning Chess Tactics (page 55)*, when shown a smothered mate featuring a Queen sacrifice I rushed home to show my mother the wonder of it all. I lost my audience quickly as she soon returned to washing the dishes. It surprised me that chess combinations aren't everyone's cup of tea. However, for those who appreciate chess the combination represents the most stunning and beautiful aspects of our wonderful game.

Unfortunately, *Winning Chess Combinations*, the seventh book in the series, has had to wait its turn. It has been a lengthy stint and the extra time has given me a chance for deep reflection about the kind of book that I would like to write. If not for the prodding of my publisher, Dan Addelman of Everyman Chess, this book would never have come to print. Dan was tenacious in his harping and in order to enjoy the comforts of blissful retirement I felt compelled to gather my research material and launch into writing my fourteenth book. In hindsight I am much obliged to Dan for his, ahem, gentle persuasions as I am hopeful that you, dear reader, will benefit from my efforts.

With the *Winning Chess* series now completed it is a good time to reflect upon what I hoped to accomplish. When planning the series in 1989 I thought to write four books. The idea was to create a kind of curriculum about chess with each work becoming progressively harder as ever more difficult concepts were introduced with each volume. Well, that at least was the plan. It failed. Within months the plan was changed. Before the envisioned four courses my publishers felt that an appetizer was needed.

This preliminary work would feature chess rules and basic information including chess notation, and would introduce the four elements of space, time, material/force and pawn structure. Hence the first book, *Play Winning Chess*, was created as the basis for future books. The four courses were intended to be *Winning Chess Openings, Winning Chess Middlegames* and *Winning Chess Endgames.* As entire books have been written on a single pawn structure, the *Isolated Queen Pawn,* for instance, it seemed reasonable to break the middlegame into two parts, *Winning Chess Tactics* and *Winning Chess Strategies*. Then *Winning Chess Openings and Winning Chess Endings* would nicely complete the banquet. Great plan. This too failed. My publishers felt that a dessert book, *Winning Chess Brilliancies,* should trump the endings. *Winning Chess Brilliancies,* would be the work that would cap all the lessons of the previous volumes and show how in the hands of the world's supreme masters the openings, strategies, tactics and endings were woven together to create masterpieces. Twelve years later six titles had been published. While *Play Winning Chess* was meant to be read first and *Winning Chess Tactics* second *Winning Chess Brilliancies* was meant to be read last. The other books could be read out of turn.

Since the series started I've been able to enjoy many letters from readers and happily correct the inevitable typos and analytical mistakes that crept into my manuscripts. Surprisingly, there was an underlying current within a large number of the letters, now electronic messages, that something was missing from the middlegame. Hadn't two books been enough? The answer was a resounding no. Readers wanted to learn more about chess combinations. As this is my favorite aspect about chess I am more than happy to oblige. My thoughts began to turn to what kind of *Winning Chess Combinations* book I would like to write.

With hundreds of books written about chess combinations what could I hope to write that would distinguish my work from others? I simply cannot hide my arrogance on this score and I have to say a lot. While I enjoyed many of the combination books that I've read, I found fault with them all! That is quite a statement. While all combination books are fun,

showing many beautiful classical and modern combinations, the works struck me as artificial. While reading these books I realized, this is **not** how I played chess! Let us take a typical combinations book from a prolific author, Fred Reinfeld, *1001 Brilliant Chess Sacrifices and Combinations*. Here lies a marvelous example of the lazy writer's way of making a combinations book. The author makes a simple compendium of combinations broken into various themes. Readers are given 1001 chess diagram positions and you have to find the winning *sacrifice* for each one. Hmm. The very first thing that was wrong is that in practice I wanted to **keep** my pieces and sacrifice my opponent's! The second thing that I did not like at all was that all the combinations were sound. Good grief. I should be so lucky! Many of my combinations were not winning at all. Sometimes I would take an advantageous position, uncork an appealing combination and soon be forced to accept a perpetual check. I had transformed my better position into a forced draw. Brilliant or stupid? What about those combinations that missed their mark entirely or even boomeranged owing to a hidden *zwischenzug* tactic or just an obvious defensive resource? Why weren't they included in Fred Reinfeld's book? Even worse, I felt that a reader of such books could hardly benefit in actual practice. After all, Fred wouldn't be there to tap me on my shoulders during a championship game and whisper to me, "*Now Yasser. Now you can sacrifice a piece for a winning combination!*" It seemed to me that I'd more often miss a combination than not.

While most books on chess combinations offer good puzzles and excel at kick-starting my mental alertness, they did not in fact teach me about combinations and how to recognize their possible existence in *my* games. The biggest lessons appeared to be the repetitive **patterns** that were frequent guests. Back-rank mates, surprising double-attacks and clearance sacrifices were quite prominent. I admired the masters' ability to win with a flourish and hoped to discover the winning solution similarly. Early in my chess career winning meant mauling my opponent's entire army. Once it was suitably denuded, my thoughts turned to checkmating my opponent's hapless King. I was saved from such tedium when a dear friend and

a chess teacher, Vladimir Pafnutieff, said to me, "*Chess Combinations are the punch in chess. You have to develop your chess skills by understanding combinations. Virtually every chess game has a chess combination. You have to learn to* ***recognize*** *when a combination is available and you must land the blow! If you do this you will win a lot of games. If not, I can teach you tennis.*"

Vladimir was right. Combinations are the cornerstone of a well-played chess game. Either avoiding a losing combination or creating the proper advantages necessary for a winning combination. I needed to learn to coordinate my pieces, develop rapidly and target vulnerable pieces, pawns and squares. Then maybe, just maybe, my combinations might work.

Still, I was uncomfortable with Vladimir's sage advice. Combinative play meant sacrificing and I wanted to protect my pieces and pawns. Not give them away. As the combinative genius, Mikhail Tal, said after losing the World Chess Championship title to Mikhail Botvinnik in the 1961 return match, "*My loss was a great relief to Soviet children. Now they could go back to protecting their pawns.*" Tal's witty insight was exactly how I felt over a decade later; I wanted to win my opponent's army while protecting my own. Heads up trades were okay but I worried when I was behind in the force count.

My materialistic approach to chess could be summed up by a post-mortem conversation I had after a hard-played game. My opponent explained that, "*In such positions the extra pawn makes no difference.*" My response was, "*You may be right. But if the extra pawn makes no difference, give me the difference!*"

When reflecting on my style, I most often considered myself to be a positional player. I like the boa-constrictor method of gaining a central advantage, limiting the mobility of my opponent and plucking pawns and misplaced pieces. An early hero of mine was the great player Tigran Petrosian, who was renowned for his careful, steady play. What surprised me was when, analyzing his games, I discovered not a dry strategist but rather a fellow who was a gifted tactician. How was this possible? Such a quiet player happily concocting strategic masterpieces could outplay the best of

them in tactics. In fact, Petrosian became a chess legend for sacrificing the Exchange. I began to rethink. Perhaps I wasn't so positionally monodimensional either. I began to look at my own play in a new light and discovered that I loved to attack. I was happy to sacrifice an Exchange or more if my remaining forces dominated the position. My appreciation for being ahead in material actually makes me qualified to write about combinational play. My search has been for sound attacking ideas.

Instead of creating yet another artificial construction of a combination book featuring a compendium of endless winning, **sound** combinations neatly sorted by theme, I've set out to write a work that is a deliberate mixture of the sophisticated and elementary. One that is far more realistic and challenging. You will not be asked merely to find a pretty solution. You'll be asked, does the diagrammed position possess a winning combination? What advantages are there that might be enough for a successful combination? Is the obvious solution flawed? Indeed, would it boomerang against us and lose us the game? Yikes! To my way of thinking, such questions are right on the mark, as I ask myself them before sacrificing *my* pawns or pieces. Combinations are risky. We could lose the game, ruin our appetites and fail to enjoy the good weather. Or a cream puff may never have tasted so good after uncorking our latest brilliancy! What is it to be? Accolades of genius or bitter sweets?

The first thing we must learn is that combinations, and especially those that lead to checkmate, do not materialize out of thin air. We have to create the conditions for their successful introduction. We must establish an **advantage**. The easiest type of advantage for us to understand is when we are ahead in force. Our favorite living condition. From a position of supreme material superiority we can afford to be magnanimous. Yes, combinations come easily when we are ahead in material. Imagine a position where we may be a pawn or two to the good with only a few pieces on the board. From a situation of material and positional superiority we sacrifice a pawn to introduce a combination that forces the trade of all the remaining pieces. Then our superior King's position motors through the opponent's position vacuuming up the remaining pawns for an easy win. Sheer

happiness carries us through the rest of our day. Our combination to force the trade of all the pieces worked!

A second obvious advantage is being ahead in development. We have activated our pawns and pieces, taking them from their original squares, castled, connecting our Rooks, controlling the center, doing all the right things according to the rules of strategy while our opponent has been dabbling about squandering tempi. In such situations our superior, well-mobilized army overwhelms the defenders. To quote Reuben Fine, *"Combinations are as natural as a baby's smile."*

What I hope this book will teach is how to set the table for a successful combination. You must learn to recognize the advantages and disadvantages in a given position. Combinations spring from advantages in force, greater mobility, more space, better pawn structure, safer King, a serious weakness in our opponent's position, a misplaced piece, occupation of a vital outpost, a stable pawn wedge, better coordination of our forces, and so on. **Something** has to be in our favor for a combination to be sound. Chess is a game of supreme logic. It only stands to reason that we must have some advantage if our combinations **may** actually be correct. Yet even this is not all there is to combinations. There is a lot more, including psychology, temperament, time pressure, mood, tiredness and even laziness. Chess combinations are tactical short-term opportunities. A back-rank mate no longer exists when our opponents create luft. A better developed army may yield a combination but if we dither the opportunity will pass us by. When we do go for it and uncork a sacrifice we immediately put pressure on our opponents. To accept the sacrifice or deftly decline the offer? It is not everyone's pleasure to be under pressure, constantly having to find the only move to stave off defeat. Many of Tal's sacrifices were unsound but time and time again his opponents cracked under the pressure of his relentless initiative. In a lecture Tal explained his approach: *"I like to take my opponent for a walk in a dense forest. One where the path is obscure and easy to miss. I feel comfortable in such wild places."* How cool is that! Sometimes we cannot be sure of the correctness of our sacrifice and we have to trust our fate to the chess gods. So be it! Let us de-

velop our chess noses and learn the conditions that we need to become combinative super-stars. When we have developed the confidence of fearlessness our opponents will feel our radiating aura of confidence and they will become afraid.

Finally, I would like to give a nod of thanks to Veselin Topalov. While working on this book I was a commentator for the 2005 M-Tel Masters tournament, won by Topalov. After the tournament I thanked him, explaining that he gave me inspiration and material for three chapters! The timing was perfect for both of us.

May all your combinations be grounded on solid advantages.

Yasser Seirawan,
Seattle, Washington,
April 2006

CHAPTER ONE

Starting Out: Three Combination Types

As I mentioned in the Introduction as well as on page 55 of *Winning Chess Tactics,* the Smothered Mate combination, where a diabolical Queen sacrifice leads to a graceful Knight checkmate, had me spinning my wheels with excitement for weeks. I was deliriously happy. The idea that I could use my opponent's army to ensnare his King had me thrilled! I began to plot all types of devious ways of using my opponent's pawns and pieces to my own advantage. The possibilities were too humorous for words. I even found positions where my opponent's pawn helped shield my own King from attack. Such concepts charmed me completely. One combination that sent me over the moon is called Legall's Mate. An early chess teacher showed me the *pattern* after the sequence:

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bc4 h6?

Wasting a tempo whereas developing moves with the minor pieces are needed.

4.Nc3 Bg4?

A premature pin.

5.Nxe5!!

Winning a pawn. When my obvious question of *"What happens when I capture the Queen?"* was answered with...

5...Bxd1?? 6.Bxf7+ Ke7 7.Nd5 checkmate!

... my mouth dropped open in wonderment! Simply outstanding. Let us give that one our first diagram.

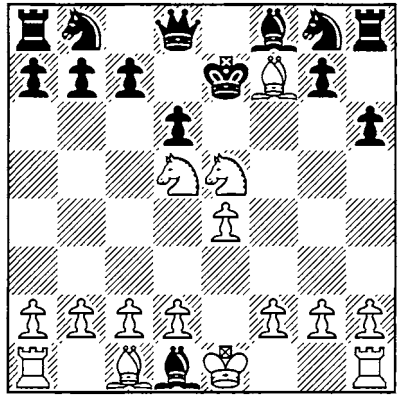


DIAGRAM 1. Checkmate

Isn't the position in Diagram 1 just too good for words? Have another look. Black is a Queen ahead and has virtually his whole army intact yet the King is checkmated and the game is over. Boy, was I excited! I just couldn't wait to spring my new-found knowledge on some poor unsuspecting soul. The whole of Seattle industry would stop to acknowledge my outstanding talent. I must have spent the next hundred-odd casual games trying to recreate Legall's Mate. The closest I ever came was an exhibition game versus a Seattle Radio disc jockey.

Almost at the very start of my chess career, I learned the cruelest lesson of chess combinations: *once you have learned a beautiful combination you cannot impose it on a game.* In fact, in my whole life after playing tens of thousands of off-hand casual games and about three thousand tournament games, I have never been able to give any opponent Legall's Mate. That did not stop me from trying. However, I was never successful. Not once. How cruel is that? Here I was, this young boy of twelve, having learned this stunning pattern, and I could never duplicate it. Rats! My only solace was that Seattle's industry could keep chugging along. In time, I

came to understand the most important lesson in chess combinations: each position is unique and will require its own particular combination. It is hard to make a Royal Fork without a Knight. Back-rank mates become useless checks after luft is made. I had to adjust myself to the specific needs of each position. That insight alone was an intimidating thought. I had to develop an arsenal of combinative *patterns* and properly use the right combination for a particular position. The idea was overwhelming. Aren't there countless positions in chess? Hadn't some clever fellow suggested ten to the twelfth power for all the possible chess moves? It was all too much for my tiny cranium. It would never work.

The above thinking was a lucky happenstance for me. I was right. The memorization alone would be too much. The effort too great, I would inevitably fail. I needed help. I had to make a short cut, and many as well. I would have to try to classify the most *common* combinations as best I could. Then I would not have to memorize all the possible combinations; rather I would just have to master the basic patterns and look for the telltale signposts. Breaking down combinations into groups and learning their basic patterns meant that suddenly the workload didn't seem overwhelming after all. In fact, it seemed straightforward and fun as well. I would just learn a slew of patterns, mix them up to suit the needs of a given position and make the combination work for the specifics of each position! Presto. Instant chess mastery. In the meantime, I continued to lose most of my games.

What did I mean? Let me give a concrete example of my thinking and looking for a telltale sign. From the starting position, let us say my opponent opened:

1.g3

Aha! I would think. Now we really have something to work with! White is fatally weakening the f3-square. After the further moves:

1...Nc6 2.e3 Ne5? 3.Ne2?? Nf3 checkmate.

Well admittedly, it does not rise to the level of brilliant but Diagram 2 is a nice one.

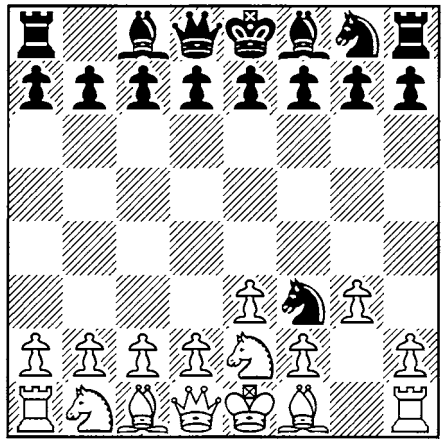


DIAGRAM 2. Checkmate

I was beginning to feel better and better about my chess understanding. Yes siree! As Black, I need only plunge my Knight onto the f3-square and White's King was sure to be bagged. Before we smile and move on let us dwell on this sequence a little longer so that we are sure that such elemental thinking should not be so easily tossed aside. Indeed, I had learned something special: *when a vital square is unprotected, it can spell instant doom for my opponent or – shudder – for me.* Recognizing the vulnerability of vital squares is something of which we should always be aware. Another important lesson from this second example is that Black had taken a risk. He has spent three tempi to checkmate White. Not bad, but on move two Black gambles on a mistake by White. If White had caught on to the idea that the f3-square was the Knight's destination he would have played 3.d4, simply booting the e5-Knight out of the center while developing the d2-pawn with tempo. What this means is that it costs us tempi to bring attacking units into action. When going into attacking mode we have to be sure that the tempi invested will be rewarded. Otherwise, our moves will have been wasted.

Another beauty that captured my heart is shown after.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7 5.Qe2?! Ngf6??

Overlooking White's threat.

6.Nd6 checkmate!

Now that is brilliant! Have a look at Diagram 3. Once again, Black, with virtually his entire army intact, is defeated. Yes, I was improving by leaps and bounds! A couple more of these patterns and I would be mowing the poor opposition down.

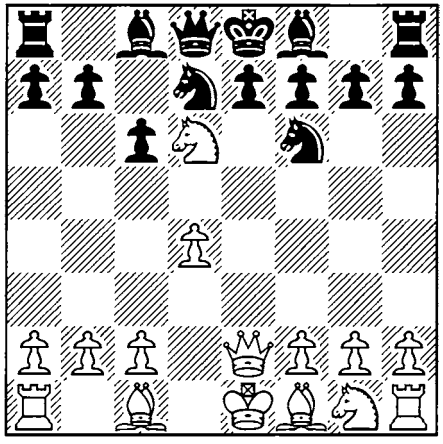


DIAGRAM 3. Checkmate

By this time, a new thought was taking shape. In the examples just shown there were two common threads: the winning side had fallen victim to a *surprising Knight jump* and the Knight *had played through the center.* Although I was intimidated by the Knight and its unusual hops, it quickly became my favorite minor piece. My cavalry, as I liked to imagine my two Knights, were remarkably dangerous for my opponent. Best of all, it seemed it was only necessary to secure them upon some wonderful *central* outposts and good things would happen.

Now squares began to be important, and not just any squares but weak ones – squares my opponent could not protect with a pawn. As my oppo-

nent advanced his pawns or, better still, lost them, I could just put my pieces upon those squares that my opponent could no longer defend with his pawns. Soon my pieces would become ever more powerful, controlling territory, making threats and giving me a chance to launch a devastating attack.

Surprisingly enough, armed with just the above knowledge I was well on my way to mastering chess combinations! In fact, the great secrets are not such mysteries at all. Combinations do not require too much. I only had to mobilize my pieces into good offensive squares, play through the center and opportunity would inevitably knock on the door of my creative imagination. I began to look at the chessboard in a new light: Control the squares within the borders from c3-f3-f6-c6-c3 with pawns and my pieces would take roost and reign supreme, radiating influence to all four corners of the chessboard. Isn't chess easy?

My losses, while still piling up, seemed to be less and less frequent. The occasional win also saw three times as many draws. Best of all, during my many losses I could see how my opponents were smashing their way through. Knights needed advanced outposts, Bishops open diagonals, Rooks open files or ranks and Queens hardly needed any help. The Queen merely swooped into the vacated or trampled squares for the graceful coup. I became elated by *batteries*. When my opponent doubled guns on a file or diagonal, I inevitably got it. I would be sunk and that was that.

Many of these early losses hardly dealt with combinations at all. Quite the contrary; my opponents simply outmaneuvered me. They merely took the material I offered or rather blundered, and would then overwhelm whatever remained. Combinations were rare. Little was purposefully sacrificed. A lot of pawns and pieces were traded but most things were simply taken because they were not protected or had been misplaced *away from the center*.

Fortunately, my many losses were bringing me a great deal of insight. I soon learned to mobilize my army, build a house, castle, shelter my King, grab a share of the center and lose the game later rather than in the opening. Chess mastery was getting closer and closer.

I knew I was getting better when I started losing well. That is, my opponents would have to play a good game to beat me. My defensive skill – such as it was – meant that I was cutting down on my mistakes. I stopped leaving pawns and pieces *en prise*. I followed where my opponent *aimed* his forces and I reacted by building up strong points. To break through, my opponents would have to sacrifice something. They played well and won a good game. I got the cold comfort of knowing I had survived longer and longer. I was beginning to form an understanding of the chess elements: Time, Force, Space and Pawn Structure. Understanding these elements made it easier to understand the conditions necessary for tactics and combinations to work. The mysteries of chess were becoming simple.

As I continued to improve, what made chess ever more fascinating and enjoyable was the delightful beauty of chess combinations. I was amazed that players willingly sacrificed pieces. Wow! The very units that I worked so hard to keep safe, master players would toss away. What also intrigued me was that in many combinations I saw, the *patterns repeated*. I realized that the basic patterns were always the same, arguably with infinite variety, but still the same patterns were there, only wearing different masks.

Very early in my career I learned to fianchetto my King's Bishop and thought it the most wonderful of pieces. It would steadfastly protect my King while helping me control the center and rake the long diagonal. Right across the *center* of the board! I had mastered the *back-rank* checkmate pattern and was supremely confident in my ability to ward off any such threat. When from a fianchettoed position my opponent checked my King with a Rook on the back rank, I would merely block the check by retreating my fianchettoed Bishop. One day my confidence was shattered when my opponent slid a Bishop to the h6-square. Diagram 4 shows the basic pattern.

I felt so *physically* helpless! I wanted to pluck up White's destructive h6-Bishop and hurl it across the room. My impregnable King's position was ruined by a move away from the center. As much as I despised that h6-Bishop, I respected it. I dreaded when the next h6-Bishop move would visit my King's premises. My theories about chess combinations were

evolving. I would have to appreciate that threats did not have to come from the center only. Threats could come from anywhere – the sides as well as from above or below the chessboard. Threats or combinations that came from the sides seemed to be quite distinctive; they were aimed against my castled King.

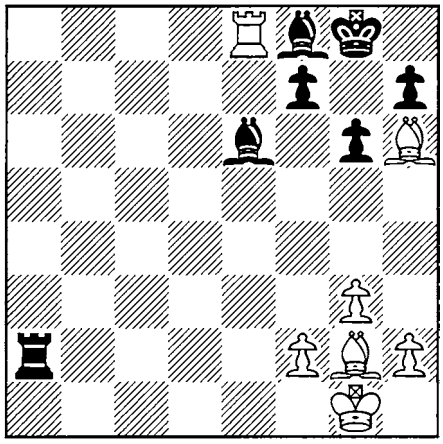


DIAGRAM 4.

At this point, we should pause and make certain of our chess terminology with a definition of the combination. In *Winning Chess Tactics*, page 5, I gave the following one. *"A combination is a sacrifice combined with a forced sequence of moves, which exploits specific peculiarities of the position in the hope of attaining a certain goal."*

A forced sequence of moves can also be intimidating. What is a forced series of moves? Aren't there dozens of choices at each turn? Can it be that only one is right? I was worried. Then yet another chess teacher, Jeffrey Parson, explained it to me as follows: *"Yasser, let us say your King is in check to a Queen and you have only one move. You make the forced move and are checked again. But this time by a Bishop. Your King has only one move, up the board. Now the Queen checks you again and your King is forced further up the board. Now the Bishop checks you again.*

Your King is walking up the board into a waiting checkmating net. You have no choice." Got it! Now I understood what a sequence of forced moves could look like. Perhaps my King wasn't the object of my opponent's attack. My Queen, Rook or a minor piece might be harassed and forced to move away to avoid capture. Sequences of forced moves were responses to threats of being captured or checked. Our dozens of possibilities per move had just been chopped in size. Sometimes we have no choice at all, but one defensive move such as blocking a check on the back rank.

With that background, we can now progress to how I classify the three types of combinations: Checkmating Combinations, Material Combinations, and Defensive or Strategic Combinations. Each set has its distinct characteristics. Mating combinations are clear; we can happily sacrifice all of our pieces if we end up checkmating our opponent with a lowly pawn. Such combinations can be quite pretty and satisfying too! Material combinations have a broad set of goals, rather than just trying to trap the enemy King. We may be trying to hunt down an errant Knight or Rook. We could go on a sacrificial binge to trap our opponent's Queen, keeping in mind we shouldn't get carried away! Or we may embark on a material combination not necessarily with the idea of winning material. Our goal may be to obtain a strong Knight outpost, rupture our opponent's pawn structure or make a pathway for our King to enter the position. Such combinations can be especially powerful in an endgame. Finally, a defensive (strategic) combination is exactly what the term suggests. Imagine a game in which we are trying to save our bacon. We may see a combination that allows us to trade the opponent's attacking forces so that we can sail our way into a fortress position despite a material deficit. This latter set of combinations is often overlooked in books on combinations. The skillful player can spot a moment when things have gone wrong, shift priorities and play to save the game. Furthermore, defensive combinations do not get the credit they deserve because they are not spectacular, aggressive or even charming. They are good *defensive* chess. The tendency of most authors is to feed their readers with combinations that bring victory, not a hard-earned half point. A deft Knight sacrifice, a knockout Rook offer and a series of ka-

mikaze pawn gambits are far more enjoyable than saving a game by a long-winded perpetual check. Yet for all of that, defensive combinations occur frequently and can frustrate even the most creative attacker. I can assure you that saving a lost position through a nifty series of sacrifices to earn a draw through perpetual check will make you smile.

The goal of this book is to show you how combination patterns spring from possessing an advantage. Defensive combinations can have a tinge of desperation in them. While it stands to reason that a truly rotten position will produce a combination good enough only to speed up our defeat, that does not mean a bad or worse position does not offer us a chance to save the game.

Another often overlooked element in combinative play is psychological. While chess players like to believe that chess is a game played with open cards and that iron logic prevails at all times, this is certainly not the case! A combination introduces *risk,* which elevates the tension of the battle, heightening the possibility of mistakes. While we cannot measure risk in scientific terms, we are guided by our experience and we can happily play a combination if we like the resultant positions. Some players, however, love to provoke their opponents into sacrificing, gleefully collecting wood, as they believe in their defensive ability. I probably stand in this latter category of players. I like being ahead on material and get nervous when I am behind on material and do not see a clear way of regaining the material sacrificed. Modern dynamic players, such as Judith Polgar, Veselin Topalov, Alexey Shirov and Garry Kasparov, are very comfortable sacrificing material to gain the initiative (the ability to make threats). Oftentimes their opponents hunker down and go into long thinking spells trying to diffuse the tension in the position. This frequently leads to time trouble and an overlooked blow. As the old saying goes, *"The threat is stronger than the execution."*

It is easy during the heat of battle to become mesmerized by our opponent's every threat, spending lengthy amounts of time to be sure that we have a satisfactory counter. Such discomfiture, playing under pressure, doesn't suit everyone. However, a good experienced defender will know

when his position is sound and will happily capture the offered loot. It will help you enormously to find your balance or comfort zone in combinative play. Are you a knockout specialist like Rudolf Spielmann, Frank Marshall and Mikhail Tal or a counter-puncher like Victor Korchnoi and Bent Larsen? Alternatively, are you a universal player like Vassily Ivanchuk, Jan Timman or Anatoly Karpov, happy to play either side of a risky position?

In noting the psychological aspects of the combination, it is good to reflect on the motto of the former World Champion Mikhail Tal who said, *"Years of analysis and minutes of play are not the same thing."* Tal enjoyed unbalancing the scales and taking his opponents out of their comfort zones. Tal's death-defying daring more often than not earned him victory. His combinations were so complex that finding the one saving resource was beyond the ability of most of his opponents. In short, Tal found it best for him to be on the attacking side of the chessboard.

Tal's opponents were often on the ropes not only on account of the complexity of the positions but also because of the pressure of their ticking chess clocks. Double-checking and re-checking their calculations often left them short of time. When players are forced by time pressure to hurry their moves, an unexpected tactical blow is easily overlooked. As Rashid Ziatdinov said, *"Chess isn't 99% tactics; it's just that tactics take up 99% of your time!"* Searching for the winning shot or warding one off is what consumes the allotted time on our chess clocks.

Where would I like to lead us next? Well, we have established that there are three types of combinations: Checkmating; Material Gain and Defensive. Where I would like to focus this work is on the first of these, checkmating combinations. As Nigel Short would say, *"Forget about pawn structure or any other nuance of a position. Checkmate is the goal and ends the game!"* Yes, indeed, checkmate does end the game. As we learn those combinations and the patterns that lead to checkmate many other combinations are learned along the way, including when to break off an attack against the King in order to win material and when to launch a defensive combination in the face of an impending attack.

The first thing we have to do is have a complete grasp of the basic checkmating patterns. They should not be memorized. Like a vocabulary or a pictogram, we must just *know* them. It is not enough to familiarize ourselves with the patterns; they must stand out clearly and crisply in our consciousness. Once we have a fixed position in our minds that we know with absolute certainty will lead to checkmate, calculating combinations becomes much easier. If we see that we are able to force a particular position that we know will deliver us checkmate, we can unhesitatingly take the plunge and make our sacrifice. Confident in the knowledge that our combination is correct.

CHAPTER TWO

Checkmate! Recognizing Patterns

The single best piece of advice that I can give any players wishing to improve their chess skills is to *write your thoughts down!* The acts of thinking and analyzing are not enough. Thoughts become reinforced memories when we write them on a piece of paper. These days, typing, if anything, is what folks do. However, writing by hand strengthens the memory process. Write things down! Which dovetails nicely into my next piece of advice: Keep a notebook. In gathering my materials for this book, I looked through the thirty-two(!) notebooks that I kept. It astonished me to see how much effort I had put into them. Perhaps there is some correlation in the fact that I started chess as a twelve-year-old and became a grandmaster by nineteen.

What we are going to do now is to go through the most common mating patterns and not just learn them but also know them. The way I was taught, which I found very effective, was seeing the final pattern in a skeletal setting. Once I was satisfied that, yes, the enemy King was well and truly checkmated, no hidden defenses, no escape squares, the pattern was fixed. Then what would happen is that the position would get complicated. A new position was set up on the board and a combination of moves was played in order to reach the original pattern. I was charmed by this

way of presenting patterns and learned quickly. Clearing away two Rooks in order to bring the Queen into the attack with check made perfect sense. Sacrificing a Queen for a vital defending minor piece became self-evident. Checkmate ends the game and who cared if the body count was against us? Once I learned the basic patterns, I divided my notebook into sections and would look for games or fragments that I could either copy or paste into the various sections of my notebook. In this way, I became conversant with back-rank mates, smothered mates, perpetual checks and so on.

Back-Rank Mates

When I first saw the book *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess*, I was more than a bit surprised. It seemed to me that one of the greatest chess players ever had one thing to teach: The back-rank checkmate. The book had one example after another after another, all reinforcing the same theme: checkmate on the back rank. Boy, I thought to myself, *"This guy is a one-trick pony!"* All I have to do to become World Champion is to checkmate every opponent on the last rank. Obviously, it worked for Bobby so put this pattern to work for you as well.

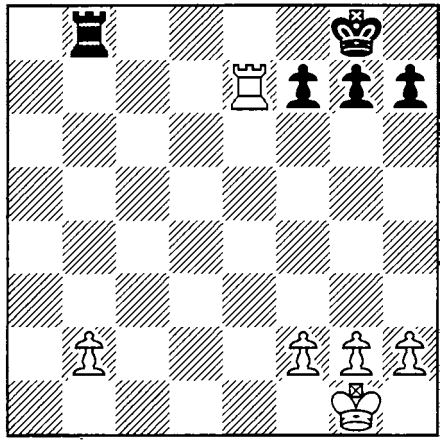


DIAGRAM 5. Black to Play

Taking up where Bobby left off, our first and most common checkmating pattern will be the back-rank mate shown in Diagram 5.
In its most basic form, the back-rank checkmate pattern occurs when Black errs with...
1...Rxb2?? 2.Re8 checkmate.

Experienced players will see Diagram 5 and smile in recognition of an old friend but I can only recall the wonder I first felt when I understood the situation. Black's own loyal pawn shield traps the King! This pattern is virtually inexhaustible as it keeps cropping up repeatedly even in the games of the world's best players. Back-rank checkmates are administered by the major pieces, Queens and Rooks, and their presence means that we should always be alert for such opportunities.

Strangely enough, experienced players can fall into the back-rank checkmate, and especially when they are confident that they have taken precautions and have stopped the threat. In Diagram 6,

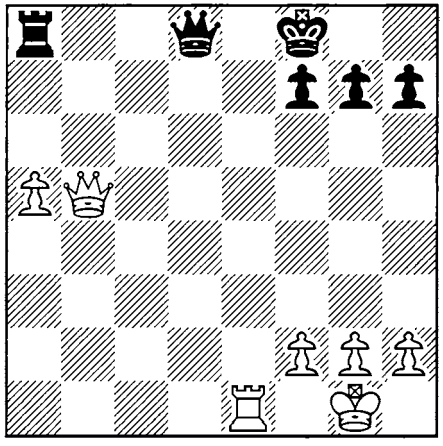


DIAGRAM 6. Black to Play

Black has been anxious to capture the a5-pawn and restore material equality. His reasoning for capturing the pawn appears faultless: *"Both my*

King and Queen protect the e8-square, so there is no chance that White can invade with either Queen or Rook. Therefore I should grab the a5-pawn before White can play Re1-a1 to protect it."

1...Rxa5??

Black's illusion of invincibility is shattered by an introductory checking move.

2.Qb4+!

Black's King is forced to abandon its control of the e8-square and the ensuing play is clear.

2...Kg8 3.Qxa5!

Winning Black's Rook.

3...Qxa5 4.Re8 checkmate.

Snares another victim.

Let us take a second look at Diagram 6 for a moment. Recall that I mentioned that Black was an experienced player. He had been looking at a different combinational motif and was considering capturing the a5-pawn with his Queen.

1...Qxa5

Black had rejected this capture, which aims for instant material equality, because of a deflection tactic.

2.Re8+!

Forces Black to give up the protection of his Queen.

2...Rxe8 3.Qxa5

Black had seen all of these moves and didn't immediately stop looking further despite the loss of his Queen. Black realized that White's King was also susceptible to a back-rank checkmate. He saw that White's plucky Queen on the a5-square prevents an important line of play:

3...Re1 (checkmate!) 4.Qxe1 (No checkmate!).

It is interesting to observe that when a player sees a variation that almost wins on the spot it brings heightened feelings of confidence. After all, as Black is so close to winning in one line (if only the e1-square

wasn't protected!) then the capture of the a5-pawn with the Rook somehow feels safer.

This secondary motif of losing the Queen owing to a vulnerable back rank brings back a memory of a last-round tournament game:

James Magorian-Yasser Seirawan
Montana, 1979
Modern Defense

1.e4 g6 2.d4 d6 3.Nc3 a6 4.Be3 Bg7 5.f4 b5 6.e5 Bb7 7.Nf3 b4 8.Ne2? Bxf3 9.gxf3 e6 10.Qd2 Nc6 11.Ng3 Nge7 12.Bd3 Nd5 13.Be4 Nce7 14.c4? bxc3 15.bxc3 Rb8 16.c4? Nxe3 17.Qxe3 c5! 18.dxc5 dxe5 19.Rd1 Qc7 20.fxe5 Bxe5 21.Ne2 0-0 22.f4 Bf6 23.h4 Rfc8 24.h5 Qxc5??

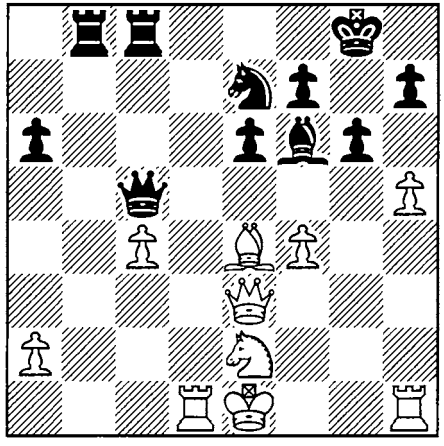


DIAGRAM 7. White to Play

A terrible time for a last-round blunder. Satisfied with my position I was confused when my visibly excited opponent offered me a draw before making his 25th move. I thought I was cruising to an easy win. White's sudden invasion on the back rank hit like a freezing cold shower.

25.Rd8+!

After this move, I should have gratefully accepted my opponent's draw offer. However, I was chasing the dream of making the US Olympiad Team and to succeed I had to go on an eighteen-game winning streak. Fortune in this case smiled on the brave, or rather the foolish. I would be fighting with only a Rook for the Queen.

25...Rxd8

Since 25...Kg7 26.h6 checkmate would end the suffering immediately.

26.Qxc5 Rb2 27.Qa5! Nf5 28.hxg6?!

When ahead in material the guiding principle is trade pieces. The simplest line was 28.Bxf5 exf5 29.h6! Re8 30.Rh2, winning.

28...hxg6 29.Rh3?!

Again, 29.Bxf5!, trading pieces, was best.

29...Nd4 30.Nxd4 Rxd4 31.Bd3 Rxf4 32.Qa3?

Missing the chance to go after my King: 32.Qc7! Rd4 33.Bxg6 fxg6 34.Qh7+ Kf8 35.Qxg6, with a checkmating attack.

32...Rg4?! 33.Qxa6??

With 33.Rf3 White would still be winning.

33...Bh4+! 34.Rxh4 Rxh4 35.Qc8+?

White continues to slip. Now 35.Qa8+ Kg7 36.a4 was best.

35...Kg7 36.Qc6 Rxa2 37.Be2?! Rh2 38.Bd1 Rag2 39.Kf1 Rd2 40.Kg1?!

Another slip in time trouble 40.Ke1 was better.

40...Rh4! 41.Qa4 Re4 42.Kf1 e5!

A powerful quiet move made in White's time trouble. The time control was 45 moves in 2 hours.

43.Qb3 Rh4! 44.Ke1? Rdd4 0-1

White now lost on time. I was expecting the finish 45.Be2 Rh1+ 46.Kf2 Rh2+ 47.Ke3 Rh3+ 48.Bf3 Rf4, winning.

However, I've gotten off track with our back-rank checkmate patterns. Let's see a nice display taking advantage of our theme.

Lázaro Bruzón-Baadur Jobava
Havana, 2005
Trompowsky Attack

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 Ne4 3.Bf4 d5 4.e3 c5 5.Bd3 Nc6 6.Bxe4 dxe4 7.Ne2 cxd4 8.exd4 Bg4 9.h3 Bxe2 10.Qxe2 Qxd4 11.Nc3 e5 12.Be3 Qb4 13.0-0-0 Be7 14.Qg4 Kf8 15.Nd5 Qa5 16.Nxe7 Nxe7 17.Qd7 Rc8

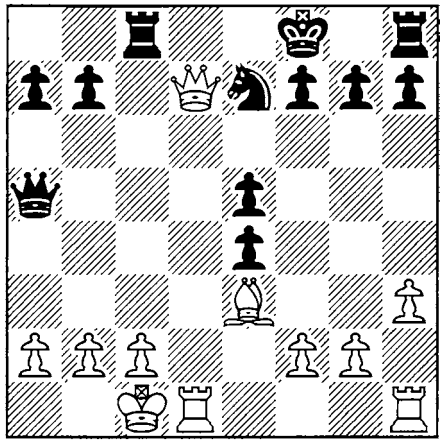


DIAGRAM 8. White to Play

White has sacrificed a pawn for an overwhelming attacking position. He is better mobilized, as Black's King and h8-Rook are misplaced. Now is the time for a knockout blow.

18.Bc5!

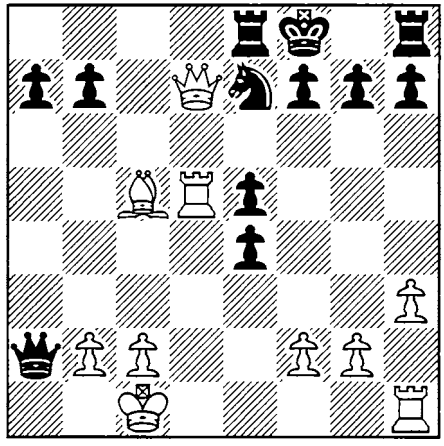
Exploiting Black's weak back rank. The Bishop is immune to either capture, 18...Rxc5 or 18...Qxc5, as 19.Qd8+ and 20.Rxd8 will create checkmate.

18...Re8 19.Rd5! 1-0

Black now gave up in view of the threat of 20.Bxe7+, with a discovered attack against the Black Queen. Black's Queen must keep the d8-square protected. For instance, if Black grabs the a2-pawn we have the

position in Diagram 9.

19...Qxa2



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 9. White to Play

The pattern in Diagram 9 occurs frequently. It too belongs in our combination pictogram vocabulary. White has a nice coup.

20.Qxe7+!

Forcing the e8-Rook into a fatal absolute pin.

20...Rxe7 21.Rd8 checkmate.

The most frequent setting for the pattern in Diagram 9 usually takes place against the f2-pawn or the f7-pawn. Diagram 10 is the skeletal setting.

Black is a Bishop and two pawns behind and clearly faces a losing battle. However, the b6-pawn is *en prise* and Black is happy to cut his material losses and so grabs the b6-pawn.

1...Qxb6

Black is not worried about a back-rank checkmate as his f8-Rook stands guard. He is not to be condemned for capturing the pawn. In fact, we heartily applaud such pawn grabs. It does, however, allow White the

opportunity to repeat the pattern shown in Diagram 9.
2.Qxf7+! Rxf7 3.Re8, with another back-rank checkmate.

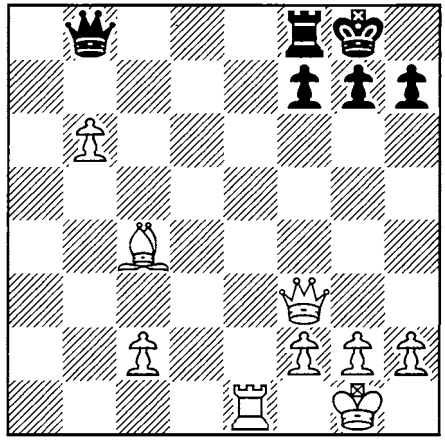


DIAGRAM 10. Black to Play

A kind of close cousin of the pattern shown in Diagrams 9 and 10 is demonstrated in our next example, played in the World Cup. White wins material by taking advantage of his opponent's seemingly impregnable back rank.

Ruben Felgaer-Gregory Kaidanov
Khanty Mansyisk, 2005
Ruy Lopez

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5 8.dxe5 Be6 9.Be3 Bc5 10.Qe2 0-0 11.Rd1 Bxe3 12.Qxe3 Na5 13.Nbd2 Nxd2 14.Rxd2 c6 15.Re1 Qc7 16.c3 Rad8 17.Rd4 c5 18.Rh4 Bf5 19.Rf4 Bg6 20.e6 Rfe8

The position in Diagram 11 was reached after enterprising play. Black had thought his position safe enough, never imagining that his King is vulnerable to a back-rank pattern.

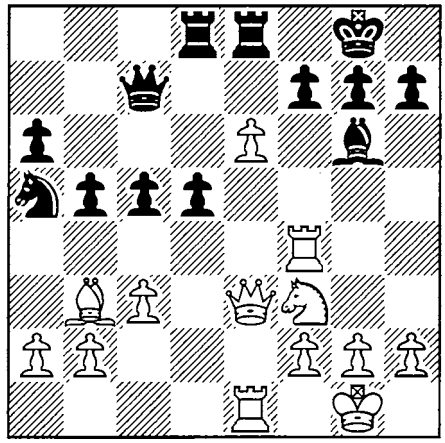


DIAGRAM 11. White to Play

21.exf7+ Bxf7 22.Qxe8+!!

A devastating stroke that wins material on the spot. White's ambition is to invade on either the e8 or f8-squares with a Rook.

22...Bxe8 23.Bxd5+ Bf7

Black has no choice but to block with the Bishop. Both 23...Rxd5?? 24.Rxe8 checkmate and 23...Kh8?? 24.Rf8 checkmate lose at once.

24.Rxf7 Qxf7

Again, Black has no choice but to return the Queen. Black's Queen cannot flee to a safe square, as the f7-Rook will hunt it down with a devastating discovered check.

25.Bxf7+ Kxf7

White's combination has netted him an extra pawn and a winning ending. The remaining moves were...

26.Ng5+ Kg6 27.h4 h6 28.Re6+ Kf5 29.Rxa6 Nc4 30.Ne6 Rd7 31.b3 Ne5 32.f3 h5 33.Nxc5 Rd1+ 34.Kh2 Rd2 35.Kg3 Ng6 36.Ne6 1-0

While I was mastering the back-rank checkmate, the Queen was the object of my affection. As a beginner, I was constantly alert to opportunities to swoop into my opponent's position to snag a pawn or make a simul-

taneous attack on two pieces. If my opponent unwisely weakened his King's position, I would immediately look for an opportunity to introduce my Queen with a fierce check. As the most powerful piece on the board, it was only natural that I would favor combinations where the Queen landed the decisive blow. Because I valued the Queen so greatly, combinations in which the Queen was sacrificed were especially eye-catching. Like the Legall's Mate, for example, in Chapter One.

Before moving on to the next basic mating pattern I again advise you to create a loose-leaf notebook and for your first section make it "Back-rank Checkmates". Then when you play through a game, cut, copy or paste it into your notebook. Also, note that even if the game itself didn't feature a back-rank mate, look for a possible back-rank mate combination that was avoided. Carefully consider possible variations and especially the analysis of the players.

Queen and Pawn Mates

The two most common checkmates with the Queen, besides a back-rank mate, are shown in Diagrams 12 and 13.

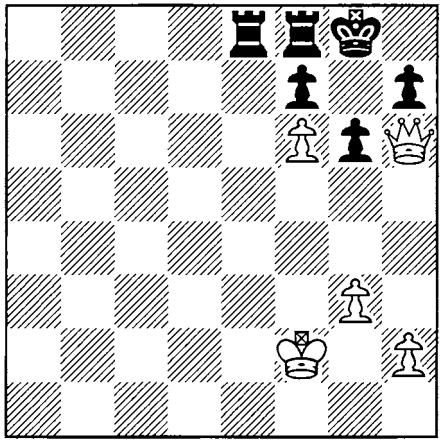


DIAGRAM 12. Black to Play

In Diagram 12, Black's g7-square is fatally weak and he is unable to prevent Qh6-g7 checkmate. While Black can give a few spite checks with his Rooks, he must inevitably succumb to White's unstoppable threat. This pattern of Queen supported by pawn or Bishop is a constant guest in top chess. When I first saw this pattern my immediate thought was, *"Why would Black allow himself to get in such a tangle?"* To which I was shown the sequence of taking back a few moves to set up the pattern. Retreat White's Queen to the c1-square and retreat Black's g6-pawn to the g7-square. White would now play **1.Qg5!**, forcing Black to create a fatal weakness. **1...g6 2.Qh6!** and, presto, we are back to our skeletal position.

Once I learned this pattern, I would start to look for ways to recreate it my own games. This was much easier than creating Legall's Mate. It is a winner and I can assure you that every experienced player has been both victor and victim with the pattern. It is equally powerful for White if the squares of Queen and the f6-pawn are interchanged. If we set up the skeletal position with White's Queen on the f6-square and the f6-pawn on the h6-square, Black's King will be checkmated just as effectively.

In Diagram 13, we make another shift between the Queen and pawn.

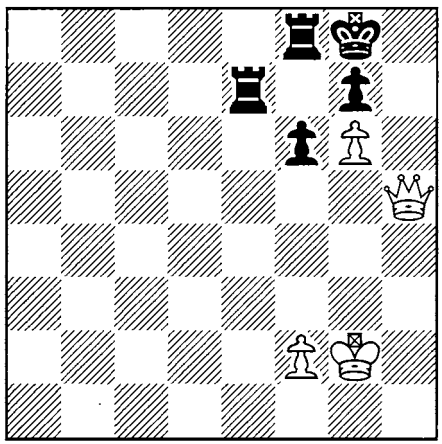


DIAGRAM 13. Black to Play

The simple brutality of Diagram 13 delighted me. The Queen teams up with a pawn protecting a vital square in the King's camp. Black is helpless to prevent the invasion of the Queen. Suddenly, trying to wedge a pawn into my opponent's King's fortress made perfect sense. Who knows, the pawn might support an invasion or jam things up to create a back-rank checkmate. My earnestness to press a pawn into a King's pawn-shield was heightened by the flashy pattern shown in Diagram 14.

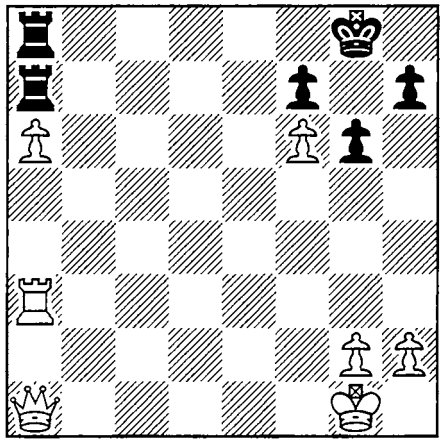


DIAGRAM 14. White to Play

As we see in Diagram 14, Black is down a passed pawn and a Queen versus Rook as well. Winning is a virtual certainty, but White has a continuation that wins at once.

1.Qc1

Aiming for Qc1-h6, repeating the friendly pattern. White is not worried about the loss of the a6-pawn in view of the back-rank mate.

1..Kh8 2.Qh6 Rg8

While Black has successfully warded off the threat of invasion of the g7-square he has hemmed in his own King. Now comes a surprising capture.

3.Qxh7+!

Let's give that one its own diagram as well.

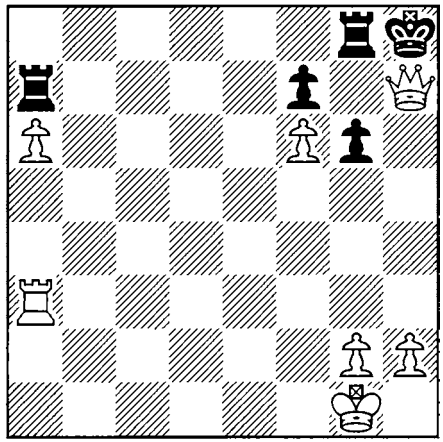


DIAGRAM 15. Black to Play

Winning with a flourish! Now **3...Kxh7 4.Rh3** is checkmate along the h-file. It is good to note that 3.Rh3 would also have produced checkmate. However, winning by a series of checks is much more *forcing*. In different circumstances, a move like 3.Rh3 might have allowed our opponent a defensive move such as bringing a Knight to the f8-square to protect the h7-pawn. If such a defensive move wasn't possible our opponent might be able to knock out our own King or administer a perpetual check, costing us victory. This pattern of forcing ...Ra8-g8, immobilizing the King, sacrificing the Queen followed by a Rook checkmate is a common one and definitely merits inclusion in our notebook.

If White employs these two common Queen and Pawn checkmating patterns ruthless, certain victory awaits him. Let's spice up these patterns a little.

Diagram 16 features a favorite clearance pattern.

1...Qa5

A move of outstanding strength! Firstly, Black threatens the unstoppable ...Qa5-a1, checkmating White. Secondly, the move defends against

White's threat of Qd1-d5+, winning. White's position suddenly seems to be doomed. However, he has the highly pleasing clearance sacrifice of two Rooks. White needs to bring his Queen to the h-file with tempo. The *forcing* sequence begins.

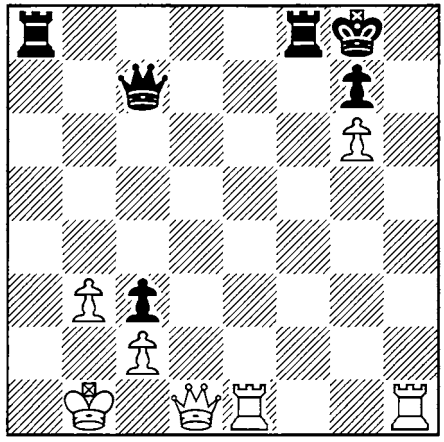


DIAGRAM 16. Black to Play

2.Rh8+! Kxh8 3.Rh1+ Kg8 4.Rxh8+! Kxh8 5.Qh1+

Mission accomplished. White has brought his Queen to the h-file with tempo.

5...Qh5 6.Qxh5+ Kg8 7.Qh7 checkmate.

As powerful as a cramping f6, g6 or h6-pawn may be, a Bishop is even better. For example, while a White h6-pawn controls the vital g7-square, a White Bishop on the h6-square does the same while also controlling the f8-square. This extra reach could prevent the King from taking flight. Combining our back-rank mate motif with a Rook and Bishop we are treated to the following common pattern featuring a Queen sacrifice...

Rook and Bishop Mates

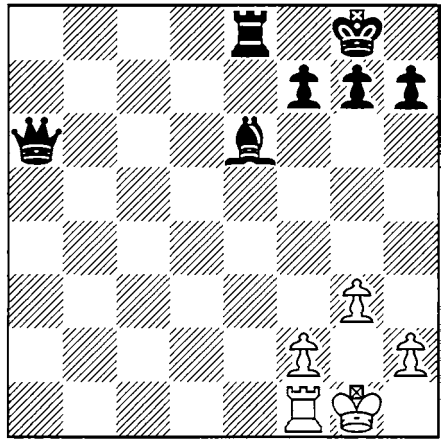


DIAGRAM 17. Black to Play

In Diagram 17, with a Queen and Bishop to the good Black is easily winning. The surprise is that he has a combination that produces a forced checkmate in a mere three moves!

1...Qxf1+! 2.Kxf1 Bh3+ 3.Kg1 Re1 checkmate.

With another back-rank checkmate. Note that all of Black's moves came with check and that each White move was forced. White had no respite.

A nifty motif to know! The same sequence lead to this quick knockout.

Vladislav Vorotnikov-Igor Ivanov
Vilnius, 1977
Vienna Game

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 Bb4 4.Bg2 c6 5.Nge2 0-0 6.0-0 d5 7.d4?! exd4 8.Qxd4 c5 9.Qd1 dxe4 10.Nxe4 Nxe4 11.Bxe4 Qe7 12.Qd3 Re8 13.Bxh7+?

An irresistible pawn grab and a mistake. White should play, 13.Bf3, accepting an inferior position.

13...Kh8 14.c3 c4! 15.Qc2 Qxe2 16.cxb4

The play brings us to Diagram 18.

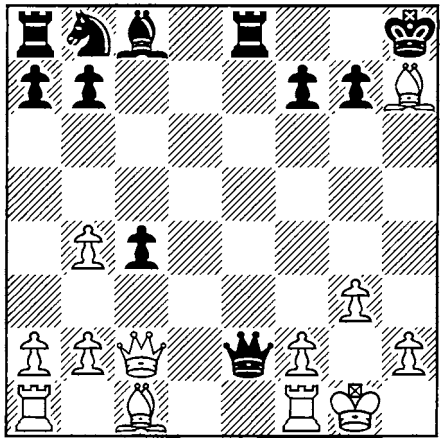


DIAGRAM 18. Black to Play

16...Qxf1+!!

Boof! Bang! Pow! Checkmating combinations happen that way. The knockout blow can be sudden. White now resigned rather than allow the conclusion 17.Kxf1 Bh3+ 18.Kg1 Re1 checkmate.

Diagram 19 shows a slightly more challenging example of this mating pattern.

Sponya-Miglan
Riga, 1964

Without any forewarning about our Rook and Bishop mating pattern, Diagram 19 features a position well in Black's favor. He is better developed; he has more control of the center and a safer King. Black's posses-

sion of the half-open g-file makes us alert to sacrificial possibilities. With these advantages in mind, Black should be looking for a knockout blow. The first move to investigate is a check. As the expression goes, *"Always check, it might be mate!"* This teaches us that we shouldn't necessarily move with check, but rather that we should always analyze the consequences of a checking move.

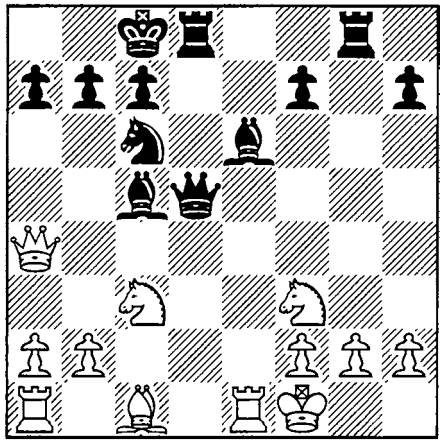


DIAGRAM 19. Black to Play

These are my thought processes as to how Black should proceed. As Black's Queen is threatened, the natural thing to do is to move the Queen or capture the offending piece. In this case, the c3-Knight cannot be captured. The prudent option is to move the Queen away from the threat of capture. Where? Well, the most natural move would be a check.

1...Qd3+

This appears to be a nice forcing move. White has to block the check with either a Rook or a Knight, neither of which attacks Black's Queen. A very attractive check indeed! The move 2.Kg1 would be a bone-headed loser. The capture 2...Qxf3 wins a Knight for free and continues the attack.

2.Re2

The good news is that we no longer have to worry about the Queen being lopped off the board. We can now look for the next attractive move. Piling up with 2...Bc4 is a really nice option. White's pieces are being placed in an absolute pin and we are sure to bag an Exchange in the near future. In short 2...Bc4 is a very strong move indeed. Before making it we have to ask ourselves if Black has anything better. Such a question causes us to consider a different direction of the Bishop: 2...Bh3! looks mighty tempting. Much more crisp than 2...Bc4, which was so luring a moment ago. White's position appears to be torn apart. Threats include captures of the g2-pawn and the f3-Knight. Can White defend? The move 3.Ne1 is annoying. White sidesteps the capture of the Knight while protecting the g2-pawn. Furthermore, the Knight's retreat attacks our Queen. Therefore, we start looking at more forcing moves such as captures. Soon we spy 2...Rxg2!, a truly forcing move! Black's threat of ...Rg2xf2+ means the Rook must be taken: 3.Kxg2 Bh3+, another forcing check. Black is on a roll: 4.Kg3 Rg8+ 5.Kh4 Qxf3, and Black can be confident of victory. For an Exchange, Black has earned a pawn and, most importantly, White's King has taken flight to the edge of the board, where it is surely mated. However, in this last line the idea of utilizing the Rook on the g-file provokes another thought: can Black penetrate on the g-file? Suddenly, we spot the right move.

2...Qxf3!!

And Black resigned. If the Queen is captured we have our Rook and Bishop pattern: **3.gxf3? Bh3+ 4.Ke1 Rg1 checkmate.** The best defense is 3.Qe4, accepting the loss of a piece. In the long run White's position is lost.

Before we make these moves, we ask ourselves, *"Well, that certainly is one sweet win. But why not start with **1...Qxf3**? Doesn't the pattern work one move faster?* After **2.gxf3 Bh3+ 3.Ke2**, the answer is a frightful *"No!"* The White King has been allowed to escape. The starting move **1...Qd3+** forced White to block the e2-square with one of his pieces. Once the e2-square was blocked, the combination pattern worked like a charm.

These patterns of ...Qxf1+ and ...Qxf3 deserve their own section in our notebook.

Queen Perpetual Checks

Before we move on to other mating patterns it is good to have an escape in our arsenal of combinations in case things go disastrously wrong: the perpetual check. All experienced players are familiar with perpetual check motifs, and especially those with the Queen. These patterns are vital parts of our weaponry. Once we calculate and recognize a pattern that leads to a perpetual check we have reached a moment of safety. Our sacrificial combination is going to be sound to the degree that we can bail out with at least a draw. This is a very good thing. As Pal Benko is fond of saying, *"First secure the draw, then play for the win!"* The following examples of perpetual checking patterns with the Queen are the most basic.

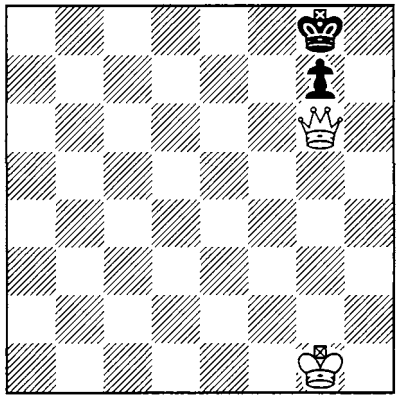


DIAGRAM 20. White to Play

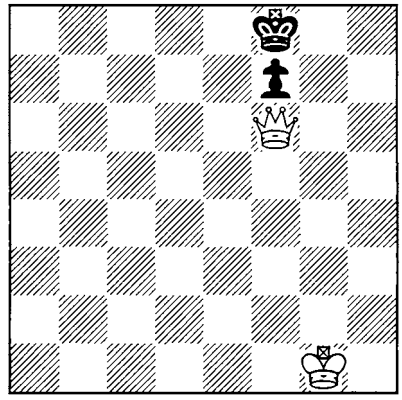


DIAGRAM 21. White to Play

White plays **1.Qe8+ Kh7 2.Qh5+ Kg8 3.Qe8+**, giving perpetual check to Black's King and the game is drawn. It is important to note that the first move **1.Qe6+**, is a potential error as the Black King could play **1...Kf8**, and slip away to the Queenside after further checks.

In Diagram 21, White has to work a little harder but the outcome is the

same: **1.Qd8+ Kg7 2.Qg5+ Kh7 3.Qh5+ Kg8 4.Qg5+ Kf8 5.Qd8+**, and the position is repeated. As before, checks on the h8 or h6 squares would allow **...Kf8-e7**, when the King could potentially run to the Queenside. Be precise when making a perpetual check. The sequence of moves can be as vital as the most difficult of combinations.

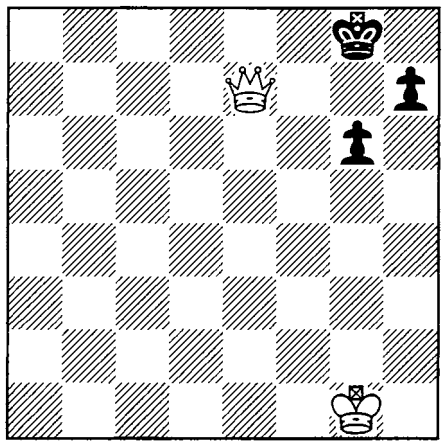


DIAGRAM 22. White to Play

Asserting a perpetual check oftentimes requires an extra effort when the harried King has an extra pawn or two lending additional protection and potential escape. In Diagram 22, White is well within the comfort zone of calculating an easy perpetual check: **1.Qe8+ Kg7 2.Qe7+ Kh6 3.Qh4+ Kg7 4.Qe7+ Kg8 5.Qe8+**, repeating the position. Note that on move three White had the chance to spoil things with **3.Qe3+?**, allowing Black the opportunity to escape the routine perpetual check by **3...Kh5 4.Qh3+ Kg5 5.Qg3+ Kf5 6.Qf3+ Ke6**, when Black's King may be skipping on its way to the Queenside. Also on move three, Black may be able to avoid perpetual check by **3...g5**, blocking the check. When visualizing these perpetual checking patterns be *accurate*. Make sure that the vital checking squares like e7, e8 and h4, as in Diagram 22, are available to the White Queen.

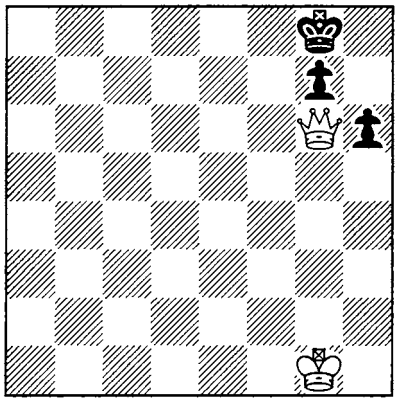


DIAGRAM 23. White to Play

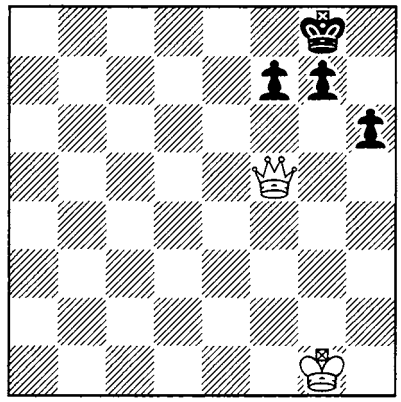


DIAGRAM 24. White to Play

In Diagram 23, Black's King is able to block a check with a pawn but it isn't enough to stop a perpetual check: **1.Qe8+ Kh7 2.Qe4+ Kg8 3.Qe8+ Kh7 4.Qe4+ g6 5.Qe7+ Kg8 6.Qe8+ Kg7 7.Qe7+!**, and the perpetual check is assured.

In Diagram 24, the defender has three pawns protecting his King. Surprisingly, the drawing pattern is immediate and no escapes are possible: **1.Qc8+! Kh7 2.Qf5+ Kg8 3.Qc8+ Kh7 4.Qf5+ g6 5.Qxf7+ Kh8 6.Qf8+** And as we saw in Diagram 23, the draw is assured.

These examples of perpetual check may induce you to ask, *"Why is White trying to draw these positions? Isn't he winning with his extra Queen?"* Great question! I'm glad I asked it myself. Indeed, White is winning these positions. What we have to imagine is that something has gone wrong elsewhere with White's position. Perhaps White's King is under an unstoppable threat of checkmate, or he may be way behind in the force count. The point is that by recognizing these perpetual checking patterns in your own games, you will be able to bail out of a fright and avoid defeat.

Rook and Bishop Mates

The two long-range pieces Rook and Bishop are a deadly attacking duo. It is impressive how well they coordinate with one another.

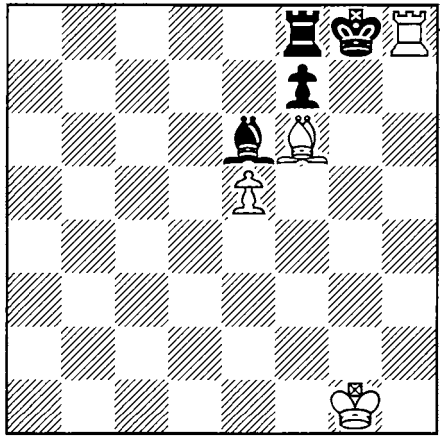


DIAGRAM 25. Checkmate

Diagram 25 is the veritable Holy Grail of a coordinated Rook and Bishop checkmate. White's f6-Bishop is a monster, having seized the *long a1-h8 diagonal*, while White's Rook has utilized the *open h-file* to land on the h8-square. These two lines of attack, the long diagonals and the open h-file, constitute the ideal avenues of attack for Bishops and Rooks. Indeed, whole games are fought over the strategic possession of such diagonals and files.

For Diagram 26, we are going to aid the Black King by kindly giving him an extra pawn.

From the diagram White begins by driving Black's King into the corner: **1.Rg3+ Kh8**, and now he could continue by gobbling the f8-Rook. Every fiber of our being should be alert to such captures. But in doing so, White would miss the chance to redeploy the Bishop on the long diagonal for an easy checkmate: **2.Bg7+! Kg8 3.Bf6+ Bg4 4.Rxg4 checkmate.**

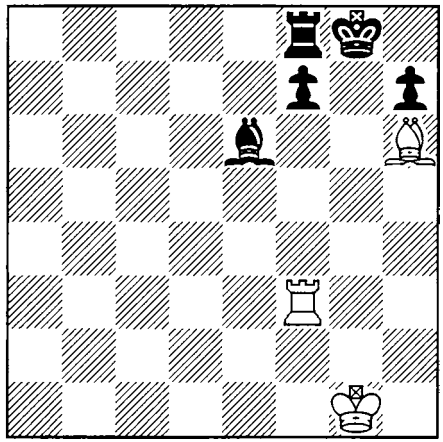


DIAGRAM 26. White to Play

A simple and easy pattern to remember but there are two important elements in this pattern worth recognizing and committing to knowledge. The first was the idea of forcing the opponent's King to walk into a *discovered check.* By bringing Black's King to the open g-file, White was able to redeploy his Bishop to the long diagonal with tempo.

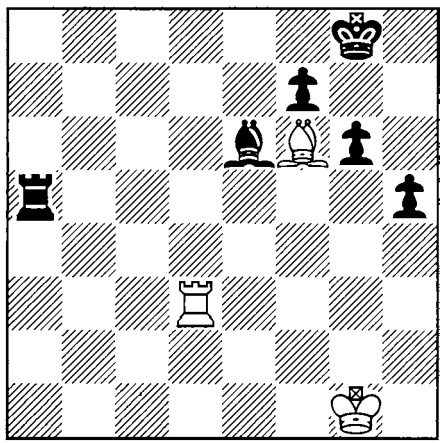


DIAGRAM 27. White to Play

This device of creating a discovered check for piece redeployment is a constant theme in checkmating attacks. The second element to note was the Bishop's redeployment to the *center* of the board. Of course, we are happy to move our pieces away to the flanks if they produce a checkmate but many combinations feature redeployment of the pieces towards the center. This is certainly not always the case, but pay attention to the games of the masters and to how often these maneuvers take place. Being able to drag the opposing King into a potential discovered check is a key part of the redeployment process.

Another major avenue of attack for the Rook is the conquest of the eighth rank. White nabs his quarry from behind, as we see in Diagram 27.

White's goal is the h8-square but with the h-file closed, another route is needed: **1.Rd8+ Kh7 2.Rh8 checkmate.** Let's spice up these Rook and Bishop checkmating patterns...

Aron Nimzowitsch-E. Verner Nielsen
Simultaneous exhibition, Copenhagen, 1930

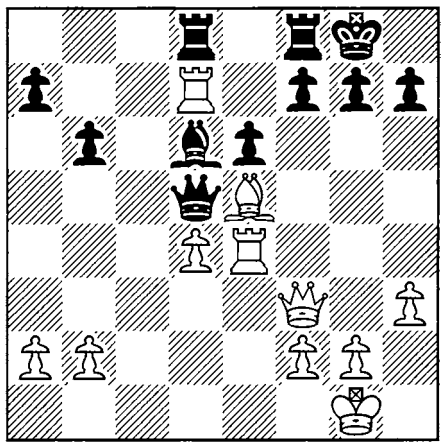


DIAGRAM 28. White to Play

The position in Diagram 28 is certainly appealing for White. He has the more active pieces, including a Rook on the seventh rank. Happy

thoughts of munching a pawn with 1.Rxa7 are tempered by 1...Bxe5 2.dxe5 Ra8 3.Rxa8 Rxa8 4.a3, producing an ending with a healthy extra pawn but a hard slog to victory.

Instead, our eyes are cast towards Black's King. A healthy pawn shield with no vital weaknesses gives stalwart protection. But! White's powerful e5-Bishop occupies the long diagonal and plucks the creative chords. Isn't there a way to take advantage of the Bishop's presence? Well, one try would be 1.Bxg7 Rxd7 2.Bf6, setting up our Rook and Bishop pattern. Black then has the annoying blocking move 2...Qf5 3.Rg4+ Qg6, when White can capture the Queen for two Rooks. Such a sequence is not a bad deal at all considering the weakened dark squares in Black's camp. White can continue this variation with 4.h4 h5 5.Rg5 Be7, and Black seems to be holding on, if just barely. White would certainly have a superior position following 6.Bxe7 Rxe7 7.Qxh5, plucking a number of Black's pawns. Just a quick double-check of our capture 1.Bxg7 produces 1...f5!, when things are confused. The e4-Rook is attacked, our envisioned set-up with a g4-Rook is foiled and suddenly all of White's pieces seem exposed to capture. Continuing, we note that 2.Bxf8 Rxd7 leaves both the e4-Rook and f8-Bishop to be taken. Therefore, it is necessary to glance back to the original Diagram 28 and discern if stronger measures will suffice. Soon, we notice the idea of eliminating the d6-Bishop to prevent a Bishop trade.

1.Rxd6! Rxd6

A forced recapture. White has won control over the long diagonal. Excellent! Now the move 2.Rg4 draws our attention but 2...f6! blocks the dream of crashing through on the g7-square. Suddenly, our Rook and Bishop pattern is recalled.

2.Qf6!!

That's the ticket! Defenses based on ...f7-f6 or ...f7-f5 are quelled and Black resigned. The conclusion would be:

2...gxf6 3.Rg4+ Kh8 4.Bxf6 checkmate.

Our friendly pattern from Diagram 26 is on the board. Simply charming. Black could be a spoil-sport by playing **2...Qxe5**, the best move. After **3.Qxe5** White is a Queen for a Rook to the good with a won position.

Sometimes the long diagonal is blocked and forceful means are necessary to break the clog. In Diagram 29, White realizes that the pot-of-gold at the end of the rainbow could be his if the long diagonal opened.

Korpas-Bokor
Hungary, 1972

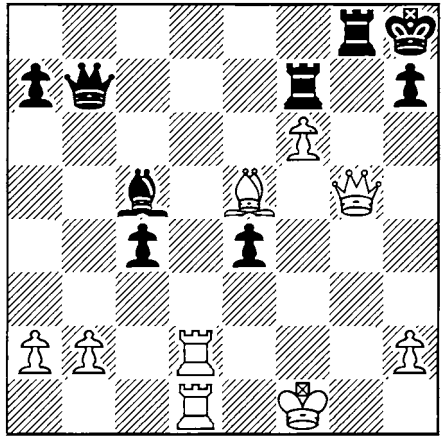


DIAGRAM 29. White to Play

In Diagram 29, White's battery of Rooks on the d-file makes a pleasing impression but after the powerful-looking 1.Rd8 Bf8 White is stymied. The attractive idea of Qg5-g7+ is foiled by the pin on the f-file. Aided by an artistic eye, White found a nice continuation.

1.Qxg8+! Kxg8 2.Rg2+!

A vital move as Black's King is forced back into the corner since 2...Kf8 3.Rd8 is a back-rank checkmate. At this point, Black gave it up, not allowing White his thrills. He intended **2...Kh8 3.Rd8+ Bf8 4.Rxf8+! Rxf8 5.f7 checkmate.** Mission accomplished. The long diagonal has been pried open and Black's King is bagged. In fact, the final position is an important pattern of checkmate with a Bishop only. The g2-Rook is not needed.

The following game is a classic example of our Rook and Bishop mating theme, as demonstrated by Max Euwe.

Max Euwe-Rudolf Loman
Rotterdam, 1923
Réti Opening

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.b4 g6 4.Bb2 Bg7 5.Na3 e5 6.Nc2 Bg4 7.e3 Ne7 8.exd4 exd4 9.h3 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 c6 11.h4 0-0 12.h5 Re8 13.0-0-0 a5 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.Qh3 axb4

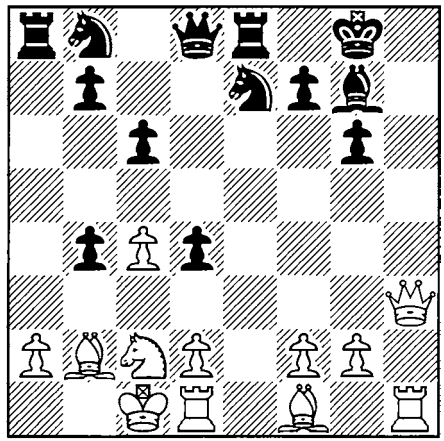


DIAGRAM 30. White to Play

As we see in Diagram 30, White's position is crackling with possibilities. He has successfully opened the h-file, giving him a Queen and Rook battery. With the b2-Bishop and g7-Bishop fighting for supremacy on the long diagonal the presence of a combinational motif **must** exist.

16.Nxd4!

White sacrifices a Knight in order to open the long diagonal. White now threatens to play 17.Qh7+ Kf8 18.Qxg7+! Kxg7 19.Ne6++ Kg8 20.Rh8 checkmate. Therefore, Black feels compelled to capture White's

Knight.

16...Bxd4??

A terrible move for two reasons: Firstly, it allows White to conclude a classical x-ray combination resulting in checkmate. Secondly, after the capturing of the Knight with the Bishop, the game is soon immortalized in print. Had Black played the forced 16...Qxd4 17.Bxd4 Bxd4 he would undoubtedly have lost the game, given his material deficit. Besides avoiding checkmate, Black has some kicking opportunities.

17.Qh8+!!

A pleasing smash. We mustn't forget that even though the b2-Bishop doesn't directly see the h8-square, its influence is x-rayed through the long diagonal. Black resigned. **17...Bxf8 18.Rxh8 checkmate** features the Holy Grail of Rook and Bishop coordination shown in the skeletal Diagram 25.

Augustin Neumann-Dawid Przepiórka
Vienna, 1904

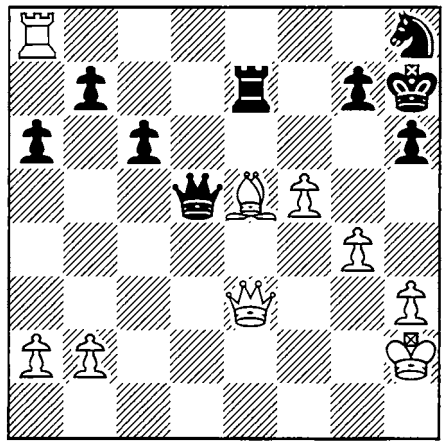


DIAGRAM 31. White to Play

In Diagram 31, White has been preparing for the following sacrifice.

1.Qxh6+!! Kxh6 2.Rxh8+ Kg5 3.Rh5 checkmate.

In this combination White was aided by the fact that he was able to *flush* out Black's King into a waiting checkmating net. Be careful! This will not always be the case!

Long Diagonal

As we saw in Diagram 29, sometimes the sole strategic motif of a successful combination is control of the long diagonal. In the following game, the key to White's combination is the long diagonal.

Zoltán Ribli-Bjorn Thorfinnsson

Saint Vincent, 2005

Réti Opening

1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c6 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.0-0 Bf5 5.b3 Nbd7 6.Bb2 Qc7 7.d3 e5 8.Nbd2 Bd6 9.e4! dxe4 10.dxe4 Bxe4 11.Nc4! Be7 12.Nfxe5 Bxg2 13.Kxg2 Rd8 14.Qf3 0-0 15.Rfe1 Rfe8 16.Rad1 Bf8?

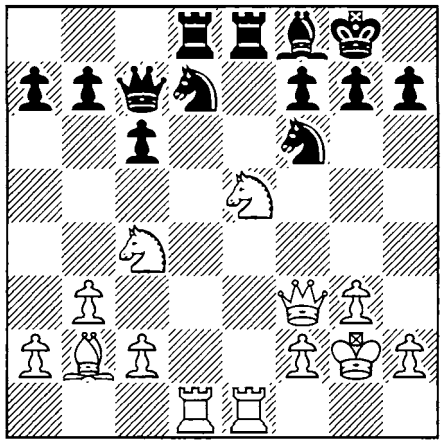


DIAGRAM 32. White to Play

A first impression of the position in Diagram 32 is one of balance. Material is equal, both players have completed their development and White

appears to have only marginally more active pieces. It is surprising how White, armed with so little advantage, has a smashing continuation. White's critical plus is that his b2-Bishop is on the open long diagonal, aiming squarely at Black's King, whereas the f8-Bishop is wholly passive, performing important guard duty but nothing more.

17.Rxd7! Rxd7!

Of course, Black has no interest in the variation 17...Nxd7?? 18.Qxf7+ Kh8 19.Ng6+ hxg6 20.Rxe8 Rxe8 21.Qxe8, winning comfortably.

18.Ng4!!

This is White's real surprise. The move is rather visual and makes a pleasing impression, White's only trump, the long diagonal, must be exploited. The anticipated capture 18.Nxd7 Qxd7 19.Rxe8 Nxe8 would have led to an equal game.

18...Re6

Capitulation. But the alternative 18...Rxe1 19.Nxf6+ Kh8 (not 19...gxf6 20.Qxf6, with the decisive threat of Qf6-h8 checkmate.) 20.Qf5! g6 21.Nxd7+ Kg8 (21...Bg7 22.Qxf7 wins.) 22.Nf6+ Kh8 23.Qh3 h6 24.Ne8+ wins Black's Queen and the game.

Another variation 18...Nxg4 19.Rxe8 h5 20.h3 Nh6 21.Be5! would trap Black's Queen.

19.Rxe6 fxe6 20.Bxf6! h5

Black's game is snowballing down hill, but not by choice: 20...gxf6? 21.Nxf6+ Kg7 (after 21...Kh8 22.Nxd7 White wins a piece) 22.Ne8+ forks King and Queen.

21.Nge5 Rd5 22.Bg5 b5

Can't blame Black for trying this one. Especially as the alternative 22...Rxe5 23.Bf4! Bd6 25.Bxe5 Bxe5 26.Qxh5 Bf6 27.Qe8+ Kh7 28.Qxe6 is pretty depressing. Two pawns down in an ending with no counterplay had to be rejected.

23.Ng6 Qf7 24.Qxf7+ Kxf7 25.Nce5+ Ke8 26.Be3 1-0

Rook and Knight Mates

As the Knight is a *short-range piece*, for it to take part in checkmating at-

tacks it has to be near the targeted King. While a Bishop hidden away on the a1-square can check a King on the opposite side of the board, a Knight must be close. At least within hopping distance. This means that for a Knight to participate in a checkmating attack two likely advantages have to be in the attacker's favor: The defender has a vital square weakness which the Knight can inhabit, or the Knight is protected against capture. Just as we saw in Diagram 3, the magnetic squares for Knights are f3 and f6, in case of Kingside castling, and c3 and c6 in the case of Queenside castling.

The most common Knight and Rook mate, also called the *Arabian Mate*, is shown in Diagram 33. White's Knight has taken roost on **the** most attractive f6-square and the Rook has conquered the seventh rank. The Rook's version of nirvana. Both pieces have reached their zenith.

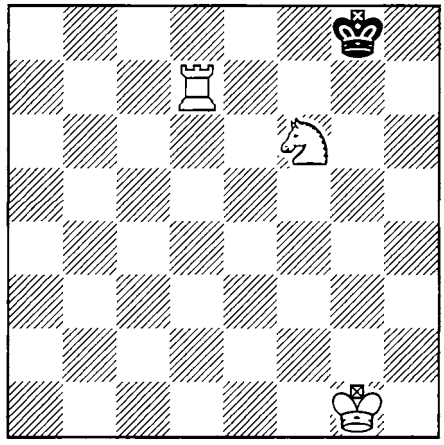


DIAGRAM 33. Black to Play

1...Kh8 2.Rh7 checkmate is the standard finish, most often because the f8-square is occupied or covered by a White piece, forcing Black's King into the corner.

Diagram 33 features an equally important pattern for another reason: perpetual check. If Black is able to play **1...Kf8**, White has **2.Nh7+ Ke8**

3.Nf6+ Kf8 4.Nh7+, with perpetual check and a draw.

We can spice up Diagram 33 with a few more units, giving us Diagram 34.

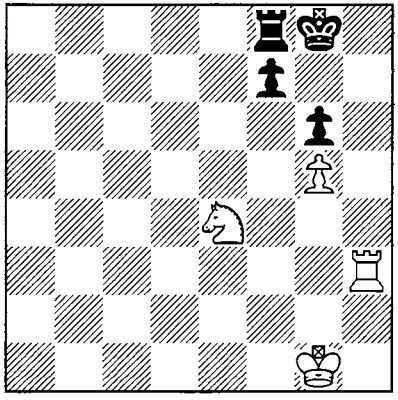


DIAGRAM 34. White to Play

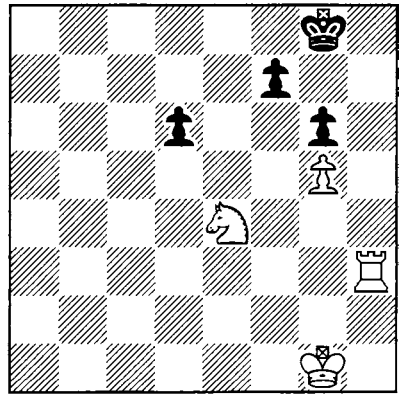


DIAGRAM 35. White to Play

The common pattern that experienced players will know best is the *automatic* **1.Nf6+**, bringing the Knight to its ideal square with check: **1...Kg7 2.Rh7 checkmate.**

Diagram 35 is a twin of Diagram 34, this time with the King mated from the eighth rank. White starts with the ideal routing move **1.Nf6+ Kg7 2.Rh7+ Kf8 3.Rh8+**, when Black can choose his poison: **3...Kg7 4.Rg8 checkmate or 3...Ke7 4.Re8 checkmate.** Thanks to the d6-pawn that I so thoughtfully included.

Besides these Rook and Knight mates, Diagram 36 shows a completely different form of coordination which is also quite common. This time, White's Knight is denied the ideal f6-square, but thanks to the blocking f8-Rook and *open h-file* White has the checkmating coup: **1.Ne7+ Kh7 2.Rh3 checkmate**.

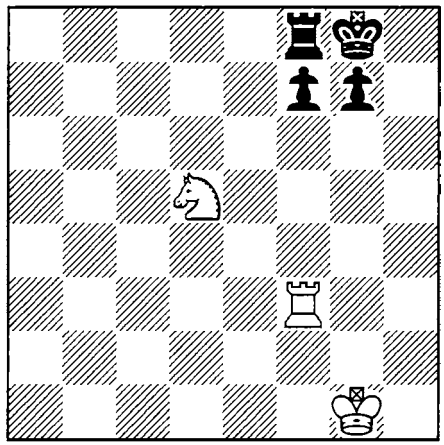


DIAGRAM 36. White to Play

This pattern surprised me in the sense that somehow the Knight's control over the g6-square is key to the checkmate and easily missed. I quickly thought to myself that if in Diagram 36 I were to add a Black Pawn at h7 and a White Queen on c2 I would show my prowess with the brilliant **1.Ne7+ Kh8 2.Qxh7+! Kxh7 3.Rh3 checkmate.** I scared myself by my sudden willingness to part with my Queen!

Diagram 37 features but a thinly disguised mask of the skeletal mate in Diagram 36. Dear reader, you are expected instantly to recognize the pattern. Failure to do so will be met with author exasperation and self-doubt. Please! Do not fail.

Abrosikov-Amujuis
USSR, 1975

White's winning combination in Diagram 37 is obvious. Right?
1.R1xd4! exd4 2.Qxh7+!! Kxh7 3.Rh5 checkmate.

Since *everyone* saw that one coming a mile away let's disguise the pattern rather more heavily and move on to Diagram 38.

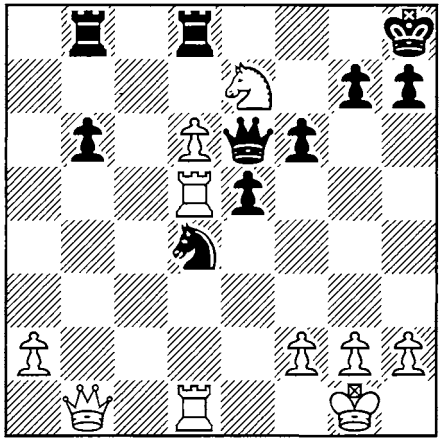


DIAGRAM 37. White to Play

Celso Golmayo-Samuel Loyd
Paris, 1867

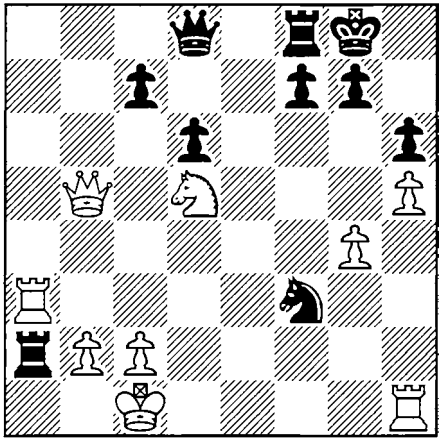


DIAGRAM 38. Black to Play

In Diagram 38, we have a real classic. Black begins the checkmating

pattern of Rook and Knight with a spectacular start.

1...Ra1+!! 2.Rxa1 Qg5+ 3.Kb1 Nd2+ 4.Kc1 Nb3++ 5.Kb1 Qc1+!! 6.Rxc1 Nd2+ 7.Ka2 Ra8+

White gave up a move before mate: **8.Qa4 Rxa4 checkmate.**

On move five White had a better defense by declining the Queen sacrifice: **6.Ka2 Qxc2.** Black wins, although not as beautifully as in the actual game. Various wins include:

a) **7.Qxb3 Ra8+ 8.Qa3 Qc4+ 9.Kb1 (9.b3 Qc2 checkmate) Qe4+ 10.Ka2 Qxd5+ 11.Kb1 Qxh1+**, with decisive material gains.

b) **7.Nxc7 Nxa1 8.Na6 Nb3 9.Qxb3 Qc6 10.Rd1 Qxa6+**, with a winning ending.

c) **7.Qb7 Nc5! 8.Qc6 Rb8 9.Rab1 (9.Rhb1 Qb3 checkmate) Qc4+ 10.Ka1 Nb3+ 11.Ka2 Nc1++ 12.Ka3 Qa2 checkmate.**

Another forgotten gem, shown in Diagram 39, is taken from Edward Winter's *Chess Notes.*

Delfino Gastaldi-Angelo Giusti

Italy (correspondence), 1953-54

Slav Defense

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 6.Ne5 e6 7.f3 Bb4 8.e4 Bxe4 9.fxe4 Nxe4 10.Bd2 Qxd4 11.Nxe4 Qxe4+ 12.Qe2 Bxd2+ 13.Kxd2 Qd5+ 14.Kc2 0-0 15.Nxc4 b5 16.Ne3 Qc5+ 17.Kb1 Nd7 18.g3 Nb6 19.axb5 cxb5 20.Bg2 Rab8 21.Rc1 Qe5 22.Rxa7 Nc4 23.Re1 Qd4 24.Ra6 Nd2+ 25.Ka2

Brings us the position shown in Diagram 39.

25...Qb6!

Inviting the continuation 26.Rxb6?? Ra8+ 27.Bxa8 Rxa8+ 28.Ra6 Rxa6, checkmate. Which White, of course, refuses.

26.Ra3 b4 27.Ra4 Qd4!

With the transparent threat of 28...b3+ 29.Ka3 Qc5+, with mate to fol-

low.

28.Ka1 Rfc8! 29.Rd1 b3!

Yet another offer of the Queen to set up our Rook and Knight checkmating pattern.

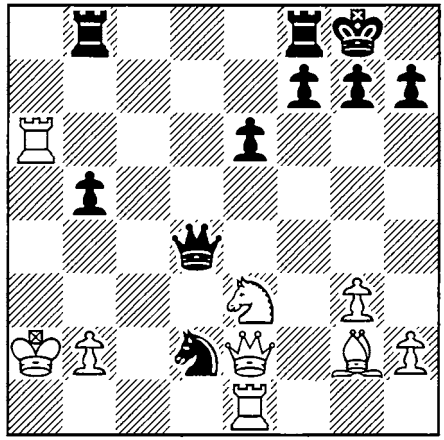


DIAGRAM 39. Black to Play

30.Ra3 Rc2!

A devastating invasion. White now posted his resignation. A pleasing finale would have been: 31.Rb1 Qxb2+!! 32.Rxb2 Rc1+ 33.Rb1 Rxb1, checkmate. A fine combination that maximized our Rook and Knight mating motif.

Bishop and Knight Mates

The concept that opposites attract and fit well together is not necessarily sound advice where Bishops and Knights are concerned. They are very different pieces performing different tasks. Personally, I've found it much easier to have my two Bishops or two Knights working in harmony. As we can easily guess, when the pieces do coordinate they click well together. As usual, in setting up a checkmating pattern the Bishop struts its stuff on the long diagonal. Diagrams 40 and 41 are the most common mates.

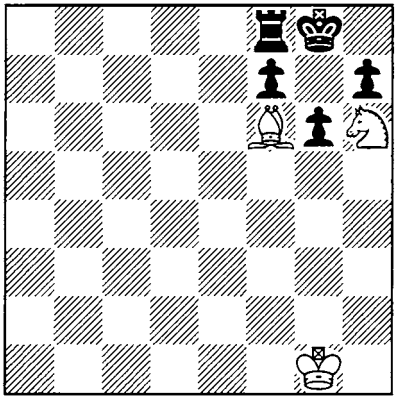


DIAGRAM 40. Checkmate

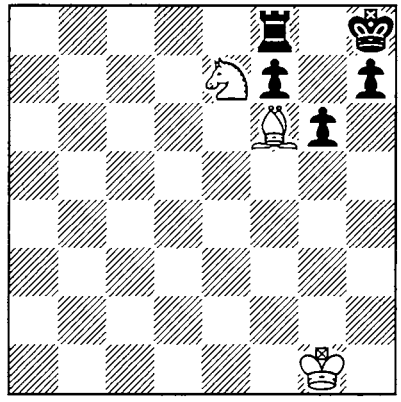


DIAGRAM 41. Checkmate

In Diagram 40, the Knight provides the honors; in Diagram 41 it is the Bishop. Now we take these patterns and give them a combinative setting.

Mark Taimanov-Evgeny Kuzminykh
Leningrad, 1950

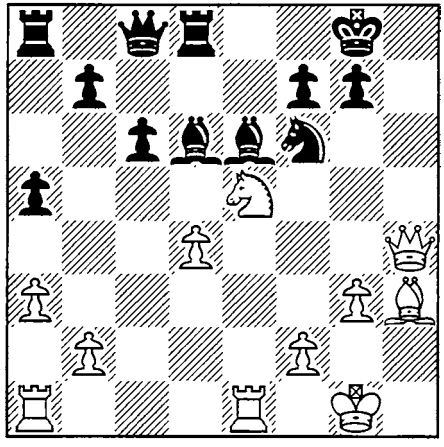


DIAGRAM 42. White to Play

In Diagram 42 White has a nicely disguised combination.

1.Ng6! Nh7

A forced response, as Qh4-h8 checkmate had to be blocked, while 1...fxg6 2.Bxe6+ costs Black his Queen.

2.Rxe6! fxe6 3.Qxd8+!! Black resigns.

The pattern **3...Qxd8 4.Bxe6 checkmate**, belongs in everyone's combination notebook.

Two Bishop Mates

The two Bishops with their sweeping powers work very well together in creating mating nets. The standard mate is to drive the targeted King into a corner as in Diagram 43.

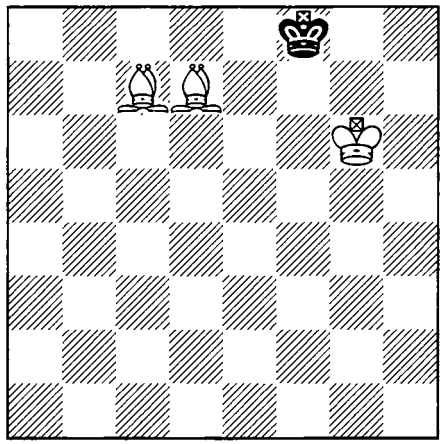


DIAGRAM 43. White to Play

White moves with check, forcing the Black King into the corner: **1.Bd6+ Kg8 2.Be6+ Kh8 3.Be5 checkmate.** While it is fun to adorn the final position with various pieces, note that the long diagonal was again the key.

Diagram 44 is a combination motif known as Boden's Mate which is usually reserved for a King which has castled on the Queenside. The ele-

ment here is to control the h2-b8 diagonal, freezing the Black King, and then to give a check on the a6-square when Black's King is blocked from escaping along the d-file.

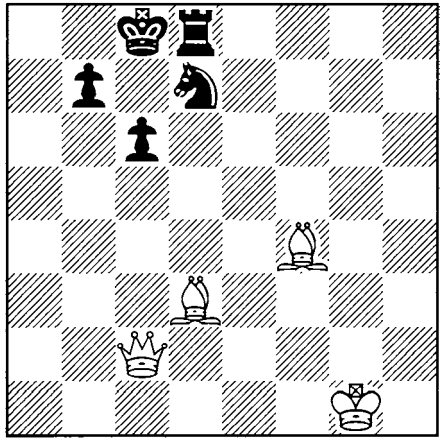


DIAGRAM 44. White to Play

Diagram 44 features the skeletal setting. With the d8 and d7 escape squares blocked, White begins with the pleasing capture **1.Qxc6+! bxc6 2.Ba6 checkmate.** This pattern is also a winner when White controls the d-file with a Rook.

Just to show that the pattern isn't exclusive to Queenside castling, I present Diagram 45.

Par Ofstad-Wolfgang Uhlmann

Halle Zonal, 1963

French Defense

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.exd5 Qxd5 5.Ngf3 cxd4 6.Bc4 Qd6 7.0-0 Nc6 8.Re1 a6 9.a4 Qc7 10.Ne4 Bd7 11.Nxd4 Be7 12.Nf5 exf5 13.Nd6+ Kf8 14.Nxf7 Be8 15.Qd5 Qa5 16.Qe6 Nd4 17.Ng5 Bxg5 18.Qd6+ Be7

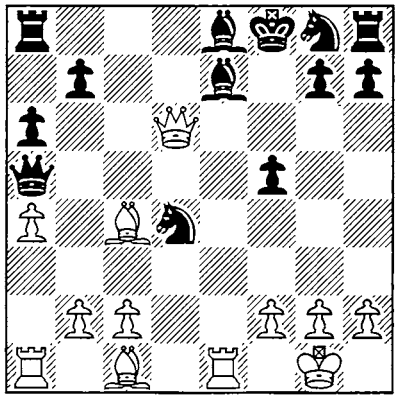


DIAGRAM 45. White to Play

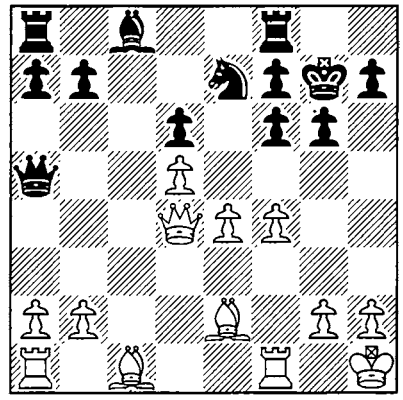


DIAGRAM 46. White to Play

In Diagram 45 White begins by helping Black to immobilize his King and taking away a flight square: **19.Rxe7! Black resigns.** The pattern is completed after **19...Nxe7 20.Qf6+!! gxf6 21.Bh6 checkmate.**

Lone Bishop Mate

As we saw at the tail end of Diagram 29, checkmates with a lone Bishop are possible but rare. Two examples are rather eye-catching.

Vanka-Skala
Prague, 1960

In Diagram 46, White possesses the much-vaunted advantage of the two Bishops. Additional advantages include more space and the soon to be critical better pawn structure. White begins matters with a natural boot.

1.b4 Qb6

He then stunned his opponent with an immediate zinger.

2.Qxf6+!!

Pow! Black was quick to give it a rest. The finish would have been an aesthetically pleasing one.

2...Kxf6 3.Bb2+ Qd4 4.Bxd4 checkmate.

A testament to the power of the Bishop on the long diagonal.

The second example comes courtesy of my buddy Larry Christiansen. He had written *Rocking the Ramparts*, and wanting to be able to enjoy some good-natured teasing I considered it a necessary read. The game position from Diagram 47 was on page 210 in the section *"Instructive Combinations and Inspirational Attacks"*. As the Swedish grandmaster Ulf Andersson is a good friend who enjoys a massive plus record against me, I was more than curious as to the game's outcome. Larry writes, *"White could not resist playing Qxc7 last move but came in for a severe shock after Black's reply."*

Ulf Andersson-William Hartston
Hastings, 1972/73

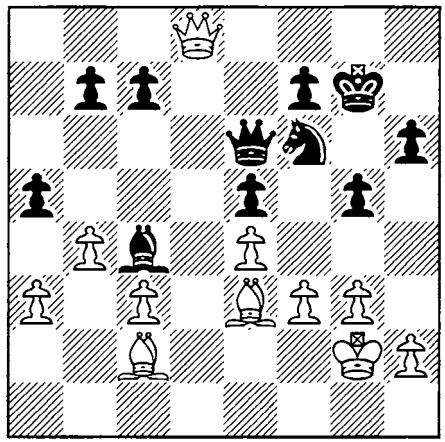


DIAGRAM 47. White to Play

1.Qxc7? Qh3+!! 2. White resigns.

It is mate by the lone Bishop after 2.Kxh3 Bf1 checkmate. While the Queen does the honors after 2.Kh1 Qf1+ 3.Bg1 Qxf3 checkmate. I'm not

so sure Larry's use of "inspiring" to describe the result is as accurate as horrifying. Ulf must have felt as if a bolt of lightning had hit him on a sunny day. Knowing Ulf's extreme aversion to losses, I suspect that he wasn't regular for the rest of the tournament.

Let's hurriedly move on to the last of our basic mating patterns before we frighten ourselves further.

Double Rook Mates

The two checkmates shown in Diagrams 48 and 49 hardly deserve diagrams but I thought I would make the effort. It just makes the imagery that much clearer to see how easily two Rooks can handle a naked King.

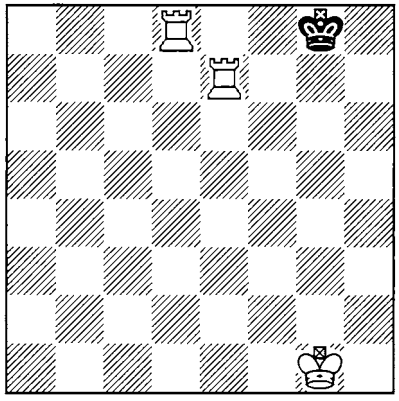


DIAGRAM 48. Checkmate

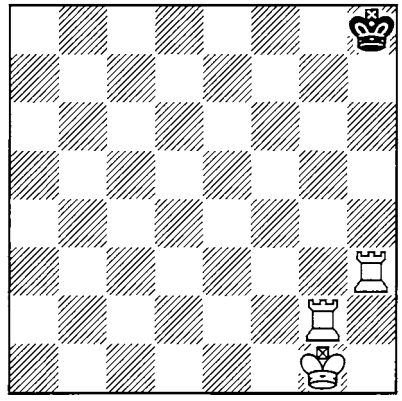


DIAGRAM 49. Checkmate

The diagrams aren't very exciting but trying to achieve these patterns can be a lot of fun. Here is a recent example.

Victor Bologan-Edwin Van Haastert

Saint Vincent, 2005

Sicilian Defense

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nf3 Be7 8.Bc4 0-0 9.0-0 Be6 10.Qe2 Re8 11.Rfd1 Qc7 12.Bb3 Nbd7 13.Bg5

Rac8 14.Rac1 h6 15.Bxf6 Nxf6 16.Nh4 Bg4 17.f3 Qc5+ 18.Kh1 Be6 19.g3 Nd7 20.Ng2 Nb6 21.Rd3 Nc4 22.Rb1 b5 23.Nd5 Bg5 24.c3 Be7 25.Nge3 Bf8 26.Rdd1 Red8 27.Bxc4 bxc4 28.b3 cxb3 29. axb3 Qb5 30.c4 Qb7 31.b4 g6 32.b5 h5? 33.f4! exf4 34.gxf4 axb5 35.f5! Bxd5 36.Nxd5 Bg7 37.Rg1 Kh7 38.Rxb5 Qa7

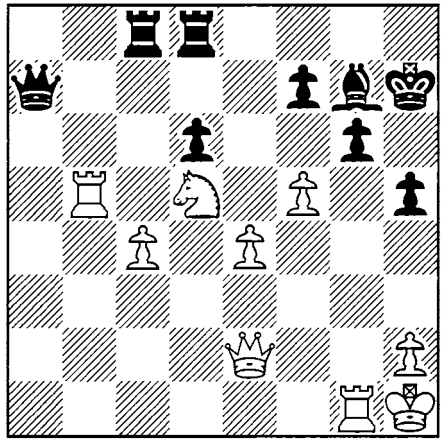


DIAGRAM 50. White to Play

From Diagram 50 White now methodically proceeded to strip away all of the Black King's protection.

39.fxg6+ fxg6 40.Qxh5+! gxh5 41.Nf6+! Bxf6

Black chooses to allow mate with the two Rooks rather than the Arabian Mate after 41...Kh8 42.Rxh5+ Bh6 43.Rxh6+ Qh7 44.Rxh7 checkmate.

42.Rxh5 checkmate.

What I especially like about this example is the sequence of stripping Black's King bare after the weakening move 32...h5 was played. Thereafter, White started to train his sights on the Kingside.

Two other mating patterns are vital to understanding the power of Rooks. When doubled on the opponent's seventh rank a common check-

mate occurs daily.

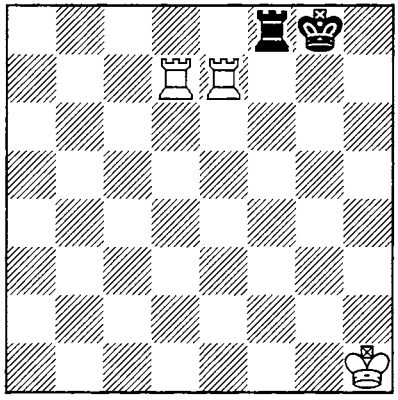


DIAGRAM 51. White to Play

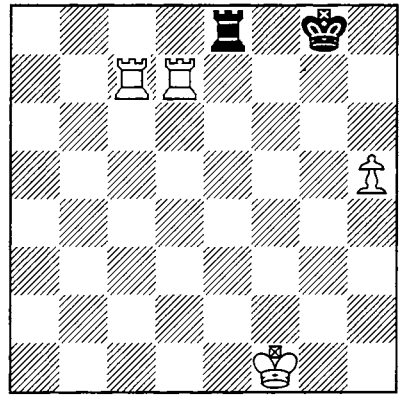


DIAGRAM 52. White to Play

In Diagram 51, Black's f8-Rook prevents a back-rank mate but its presence allows a mate up-front. White's play is straightforward: **1.Rg7+ Kh8 2.Rh7+ Kg8 3.Rdg7 checkmate.**

Rooks doubled on the seventh rank can also greatly benefit from the assistance of a pawn near the targeted King. Diagram 52 shows an important pattern.

White begins by setting the table for his Rooks: **1.Rg7+ Kh8 2.Rh7+ Kg8 3.Rcg7+ Kf8**. Now the presence of the h-pawn is felt: **4.h6!**, giving the g7-Rook a protective boost. Black is helpless to prevent a future **Rh8 checkmate.** If in Diagram 52, we were to move Black's Rook to the a8-square, the pattern can be reset by **1.Rg7+ Kf8 2.Rh7 Kg8** (in order to protect against Rh7-h8 checkmate) **3.Rcg7+ Kf8 4.h6**, with Rh7-h8 checkmate to follow after Black has exhausted the spite checks.

Let's see a few more examples of the two Rooks barreling their way into the enemy position.

Lajos Portisch-Robert Hübner
Bugojno, 1978
Nimzo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 b6 5.Nge2 Ba6 6.a3 Bxc3+ 7.Nxc3 d5 8.b4 0-0 9.b5 Bb7 10.cxd5 Nxd5 11.Nxd5 Qxd5 12.f3 a6 13.Bd3 f5 14.a4 axb5 15.Ba3 b4 16.Bxb4 Rf7 17.Rc1 Ba6 18.Bc2 Nc6 19.Bb3 Qd7 20.Bc3 Ne7 21.Kf2 Nd5 22.Bd2 Qd6 23.Qc2 Bb7 24.Qc4 Rf6 25.g3 h5 26.Rhd1 h4 27.Rg1 Raf8 28.a5 Rh6 29.axb6 cxb6 30.Ra1 Kh7 31.Ra7 Qb8 32.Raa1 Nf6 33.Bd1 Bd5 34.Qc2 hxg3+ 35.hxg3 Rh3 36.Rc1 Rf7 37.Be2

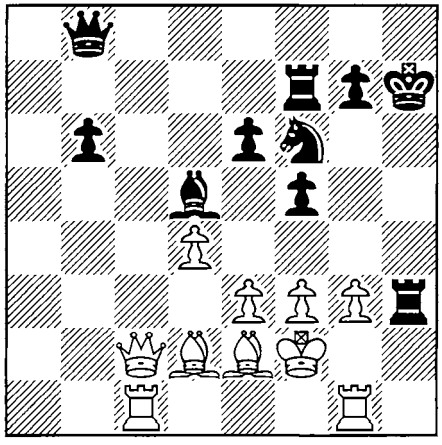


DIAGRAM 53. Black to Play

In Diagram 53, White's King is in a bit of trouble. Black has invaded down the h-file and is putting nice pressure on the g3-pawn. At first sight, the move 37...Nh5 is attractive, attacking the g3-pawn. If White blocks the attack with 38.f4, the Knight returns: 38...Nf6, with every intention of jumping to the e4-outpost, when along with ...Rh3-h2+ White is in serious trouble. Dr. Hübner, however, realized he had an even stronger continuation by opening up the position for his Rooks.

37...Ne4+! 38.fxe4 fxe4+ 39.Ke1 Qxg3+!! White resigns.

The continuation **40.Rxg3 Rh1+ 41.Bf1 Rhxf1+ 42.Ke2 R7f2 checkmate** was coming up.

By now, dear reader, we are ascertaining a clear and unmistakable message: Rooks need open files and ranks to flex their full powers. When such ranks and files are opened, especially in the vicinity of our opponent's King, they are deadly. In Diagram 54, Alexander Alekhine was upended by a classical combination.

Paul Keres-Alexander Alekhine

Margate, 1937

Ruy Lopez

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 d6 5.c4 Bd7 6.Nc3 g6 7.d4 Bg7 8.Be3 Nf6 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.Bc5 Nh5 11.Nd5 Nf4 12.Nxf4 exf4 13.e5 g5 14.Qd5 Bf8 15.Bxf8 Rxf8 16.0-0-0 Qe7 17.Bxc6 Bxc6 18.Qd3 Bd7 19.Nxg5 0-0-0 20.Nf3 f6 21.exf6 Rxf6 22.Rhe1 Qb4

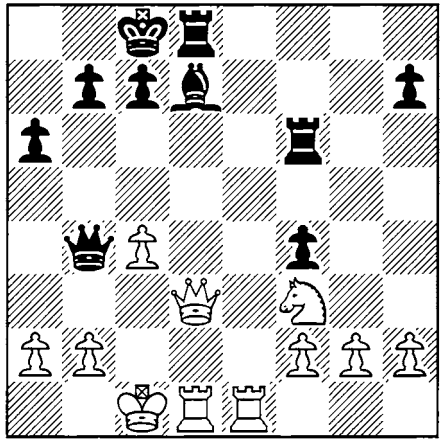


DIAGRAM 54. White to Play

White, a pawn to the good, has a technical win but there is no reason for such tedium, as White's Rooks are ideally poised for work.

23. Qxd7+!!

A devastating Queen sacrifice, which is impossible either to accept or to refuse. So, Alekhine **resigned**. If Black grabs the Queen, the dénouement is immediate: **23...Rxd7 24.Re8+ Rd8 25.Rdxd8 checkmate.** This classical pattern of the two Rooks working side by side is well worth rewarding with a section in our notebook.

Double Knight Mates

As we know, the Knights are close-range fighting pieces and once they occupy an outpost near the opposing King they can really flex their influence. When they coordinate to achieve checkmate, the patterns can be quite pleasing. Let's make a skeletal pattern that won me over:

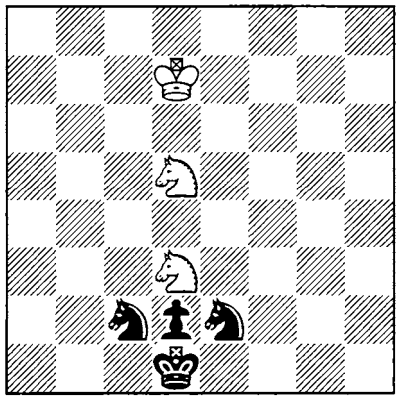


DIAGRAM 55. White to Play

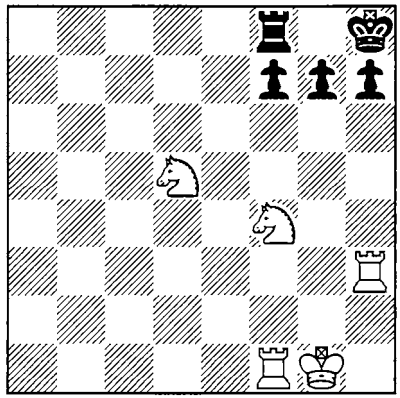


DIAGRAM 56. White to Play

When I first saw the position in Diagram 55, my impression was that White was in deep trouble. Black's passed d-pawn is a step away from promotion and I wondered how White could save the game. I was astounded that White could announce mate in two moves by moving his King, giving Black the "right" to make a move: **1.Kd8** and Black must

choose his poison. One of his Knights must move giving up control of a vital square. With his next move, White is able to give checkmate! How cool is that?

A more common mate with the cavalry is shown in Diagram 56. As we see, White is a Rook and two Knights ahead with an easy win. Nevertheless the finish is nice: **1.Ng6+!**, taking advantage of the pinned pawns. Since 1...fxg6 2.Rxf8 allows a back-rank mate, **1...Kg8 2.Nde7 checkmate**, showcases how the Knights use their jumping ability to deliver the coup.

The next two combinations feature the Knights most frequent working patterns. The first one is easy to spot.

F. Eggenberger-Schumacher
Basle, 1958/59

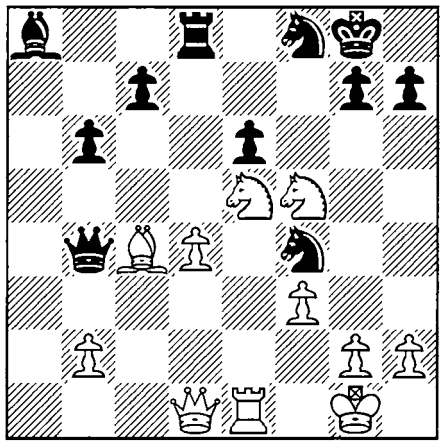


DIAGRAM 57. White to Play

In Diagram 57, White's Knights are poised to give a Two Knight Mate. The only problem is that Black's Queen guards the e7-square. The solution therefore is to attack the Queen at once.

1.Qd2!!

An incredibly destructive move. Black has no good way to protect either his Queen or the e7-square. If the sacrifice is accepted: **1...Qxd2 2.Ne7+ Kh8 3.Nf7 checkmate.** Therefore, **Black resigned.**

Horvath-Eperjesi
Hungary, 1971

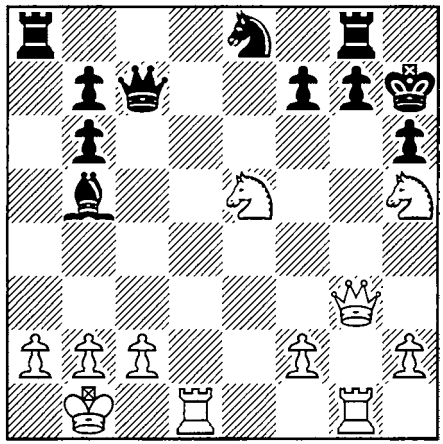


DIAGRAM 58. White to Play

In Diagram 58, White's Knights are menacingly near the Black King. The open g-file is a clear avenue of attack but an instant win doesn't seem apparent. That is until we notice how nice it would be if White was able to capture the f7-pawn. Just the prelude is necessary to make the combination work. White initiates the charge of the cavalry with a blocking move.

1.Rd7!! Bxd7

Black's only reasonable move is this capture. Trying to bail out with 1...Qxd7 2.Nxd7 Bxd7 3.Qd3+ g6 4.Qxd7 would land Black in a hopelessly lost position.

2.Qxg7+!! Rxg7 3.Rxg7+ Nxg7 4.Nf6+ Kh8 5.Nxf7 checkmate.

A pretty finish as the Knights work in splendid harmony.

Queen and Bishop Mates

We have seen how the Queen and Bishop can work wonders on the long diagonal. The following pattern is an absolute must to have in our pictogram mating vocabulary. Diagram 59 shows the skeletal example.

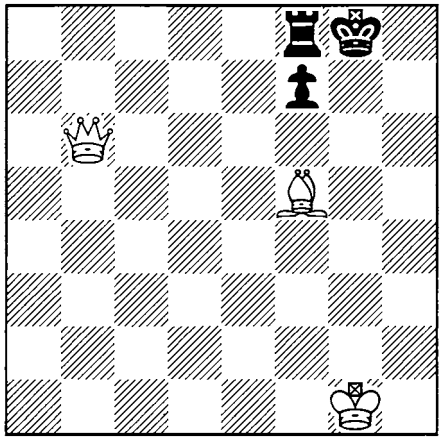


DIAGRAM 59. White to Play

That White is winning in Diagram 59 is no surprise at all. The fact that he has a checkmate in a mere five moves should make us curious about the sequence.

1.Qh6

With the direct threat to checkmate on the h7-square. Black has to make room for his King to flee the scene by moving the Rook.

1...Re8

Now the unique interplay between Queen and Bishop is set and our pattern revealed. White must avoid rashly checking with the Queen, playing instead the surprising check with the Bishop.

2.Bh7+!

Forcing Black's King into the corner and into a future discovered check.

2...Kh8 3.Bg6+!

White successfully repositions his Bishop with gain of tempo. Black's Rook has abandoned the protection of the f7-pawn and it is there that White has trained his sights.

3...Kg8 4.Qh7+

Now is the time for this check.

4...Kf8 5.Qxf7 checkmate.

This is a vital pattern to all advanced tacticians. Be sure to make it a section in your notebook and look for examples to cut and paste.

Epaulette Mates

The word epaulette is not one that rolls easily off the tongue and I admit that when I first heard the term it confused me. When we think of an epaulette it is good to imagine a military general dressed in full splendor with golden braids gracing both shoulders. These are epaulettes. In chess parlance, an Epaulette Mate should evoke an image of a King hemmed in by loyal pieces on both sides. The King is thus unable to escape from a direct frontal check. Two snapshots of this mate are shown in Diagrams 60 and 61.

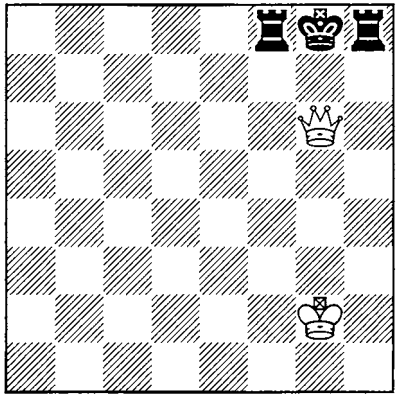


DIAGRAM 60. Checkmate

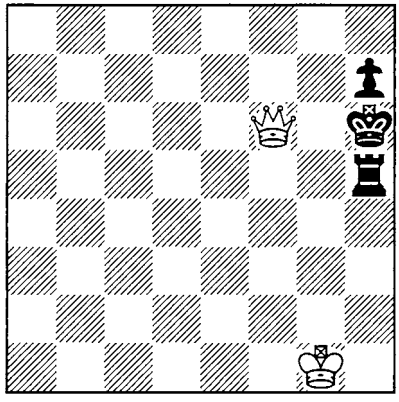


DIAGRAM 61. Checkmate

The purpose of this chapter, arguably the centerpiece of this book, is to show the most common checkmating patterns and types of attacks. By knowing these patterns and fixing them in our minds as a chess vocabulary we are able to utilize them in our games. Armed with this knowledge we can accelerate our calculations as patterns either to create or to avoid. Finally, the one thing I would really like this chapter to have done is to persuade you to make your own loose-leaf notebook of chess combinations. Make as many sections as you like. The more the better. Identify each section with a heading that causes you instant recollection. For example, you might label a back-rank mate with the Queen as "Back-Rank Heavy". Alternatively, a back-rank mate with the Rook as "Back-Rank Light". Whatever works for *you* and will create a near-instant recall. The point is that your notebook heading for each section should describe the pattern that will give you a verbal trigger that causes you to recognize a pattern. Rook and Bishop Mates might become "R&B", "Rhythm and Blues", in your notebook. It is your notebook, your sections, your headings. Finally, don't just copy and paste every example that you come across, be *selective.* Ferret out examples that cause you surprise and wonderment. Look for *excellence* and have fun! Learn to enjoy the training and all goals are possible.

CHAPTER THREE

The Classical Bishop Sacrifice

Master players understand the grave risks associated with advancing the King's protective pawn-shield. Pawns don't move backwards and for every advance made, unguarded squares are left behind which become like lighthouses for the opponent's pieces. If we imagine a normal White structure of f2, g2 and h2, we realize that when we fianchetto our King's Bishop with g2-g3, we have weakened our control of the f3 and h3-squares. Similarly, if we advance our g2-pawn to the g4-square, then in turn our f4 and h4-squares become compelling outposts for our opponent's pieces. When we advance our h2-pawn to the h3-square, we take control of the g4-square but, in turn, our g3-square has lost a defender. Therefore, masters are reluctant to weaken the vital squares around their King and they carefully weigh the pros and cons of making luft. It is no accident that experienced players are happy to keep their pawns, protecting their King, on their original squares. This is where the Classical Bishop sacrifice comes in handy.

In *Winning Chess Strategies,* the concept of the Classical Bishop Sacrifice or "The Greek Gift" was introduced. Numerous games feature this combination, which can wreck the sturdiest-looking castled position. In this chapter, I would like to explore this combinative theme in greater

depth. We have to develop our arsenal of checkmating attacks to complement our knowledge of the mating patterns and this sacrifice is one in which every player should become fluent. Let us see the Classical Bishop Sacrifice in a *skeletal* setting. The following game is a creation in which this combination is featured.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bd3!?

White's fourth move is not a particularly effective one. However, if Black makes a mistake the d3-Bishop lies in wait to make an ambush. Stronger moves are 4.e5 or 4.Bg5, pinning Black's Knight.

4...Bb4?!

White's innocent fourth move has caused his opponent to mix opening systems. A common mistake. Black should play 4...c5, with good chances to equalize the game.

5.e5 Nfd7 6.Nf3 0-0??

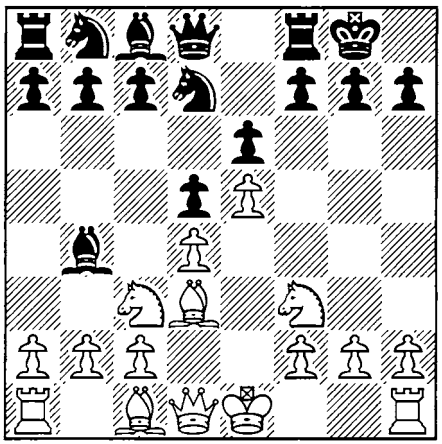


DIAGRAM 62. White to Play

The six moves just played result in Diagram 62. On the surface, everything appears normal. Black has developed his Kingside pieces, castled early, safely tucking away his King, and in general is comfortable with his

game. In reality, Black has just put his King on the carving block! Yikes! How did that happen? What "advantages" does White possess that permit him to uncork a winning combination? The answer is not as obvious as being ahead on material or having superior development or a wrecked pawn structure. There are two keys at work here: The first and most important is that Black's h7-square is a potential weakness as it is defended only by the King. White's e5-pawn is performing important services: It denies Black's Knight the f6-square, which would guard the h7-square. White's Knight has free and clear access to the g5-square. Yet even these advantages are not obvious enough to prompt a combinative adventure if we are not familiar with the following Bishop Sacrifice:

7.Bxh7+!

A stunning shot that blasts open Black's Kingside pawn-shield. His self-confidence about having a safe King is shattered. Now Black faces the daunting choice of "damned if you do, damned if you don't." If Black declines the sacrifice with 7...Kh8, he loses a pawn for no compensation. After the further moves 8.Ng5, intending to introduce the Queen with Qd1-h5, 8...g6 9.h4 Kg7 10.h5, Black's King would be under horrific fire without the solace of a material advantage. As we want to explore the *patterns* and tactical themes associated with this sacrifice, Black will accept the offered gift.

7...Kxh7 8.Ng5+

The Knight check presents Black with an awkward choice: Retreat by 8...Kg8, or step up the board? We shall look at each move in turn. First, let us look at gliding backwards into what Black hopes will be the comfort of a secure home.

8...Kg8 9.Qh5!

A key follow-up of the Bishop sacrifice is that the Queen immediately joins the hunt for Black's King. This is a vital moment of which we must be fully conscious. If Black were now able to guard the h7-square with, say, the moves ...Bc8-f5, ...Qd8-d3 or ...Nd7-f6, the Bishop sacrifice would fail. As the first two moves are illegal, we don't have to worry about them. The e5-pawn is performing outstanding sentry duty and keeps

the f6-square firmly under guard, so 9...Nf6? 10.exf6 just clips a piece.

9...Re8

Played with reluctance and foreboding. Black's King has to escape from Qh5-h7 checkmate, so the Rook makes room. Black's best move, 9...Qxg5, would cost him material and a lost position after 10.Bxg5. However, he would be able to stave off mate for many moves.

10.Qxf7+!

Being the most sordid of pawn-grabbers, I heartily applaud this capture. What could be sweeter than capturing a pawn with check? Best of all, it really is the strongest move in the position. The mistake 10.Qh7+? Kf8 11.Qh8+ Ke7 12.Qxg7 Rf8 would have allowed Black's King to escape our immediate clutches.

10...Kh8 11.Qh5+ Kg8 12.Qh7+!

Timing is everything. Now this move works like a charm.

12...Kf8 13.Qh8+ Ke7 14.Qxg7 checkmate.

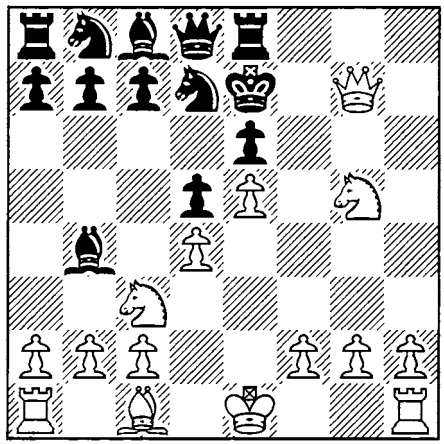


DIAGRAM 63. Checkmate

As we see in Diagram 63, capturing the f7-pawn with check on move ten makes all the difference in the world. Black's King has been sacked. Therefore, let's go back to move eight and see what the consequences

would be if Black had moved up the board with his King.

8...Kg6

Note that 8...Kh6?? 9.Nxe6+ or 9.Nxf7++ is a discovered check from the c1-Bishop and would cost Black his Queen. This discovered checking device is yet another key ingredient in the Bishop sacrifice. The c1-Bishop plays a key role "from afar". It controls the g5-square, which protected the Knight jump, while also denying Black's King the h6-square as a sanctuary. Elements such as these make the Bishop Sacrifice so hidden.

How should White continue the attack? The most common way is to introduce the Queen into battle.

9.Qg4

With this powerful-looking move, White prepares a devastating discovered check. It turns out that in this particular version of the Bishop sacrifice, White has a significantly stronger continuation that we will analyze shortly. The text allows a crafty defense.

9...f5!

Black cannot sit idle and allow White the opportunity to play 10.Nxe6+, followed by 11.Qxg7 checkmate. He must attack White's Queen at once!

10.Qg3

White sticks to his guns, preparing for a discovered check. A horrible mistake would be 10.exf6?? Nxf6 11.Qg3 Nh5, when the corralled d7-Knight is allowed to participate in the defense of his King. In general, a key motif for the attacker in these patterns is to retain the e5-pawn for as long as possible.

10...Qe7!

Black decides that he has nothing better than to allow the discovered check and puts his Queen beyond the reaches of the g5-Knight. A common defensive idea for Black is to play 10...f4, again attacking White's Queen. The problem is that 11.Bxf4 Rxf4 12.Nxe6+ wins Black's Queen and more! White can now spoil his attack by greedily grabbing material.

11.Nxe6+? Kf7 12.Nxc7 Nb6 13.Nxa8 Nxa8

White has won material, three pawns and a Rook for Bishop and

Knight, but his checkmating forces have deserted the board. Let's restore the position to move eleven. At this moment, White realizes that capturing the e6-pawn allows the escape we have just witnessed. Instead, White reckons it is time to bring more units into the attack.

11.h4!

White envisions forcing Black's King onto the c1-h6 diagonal and into a discovered check. Black faces a grim future. He cannot prevent White's h-pawn from advancing as 11...Rh8 12.h5+ Rxh5 13.Rxh5 Kxh5 14.Qh3–Kg6 15.Qh7 results in checkmate. Black has spotted one redeeming feature: he may be able to block the discovered check by the c1-Bishop with the move ...f5-f4 if needed. Note that the move 11.h4 not only brought more attacking units to the party, it also defended against the ...f5-f4 thrust by again protecting the g5-Knight.

11...Nc6

Black closes his eyes to White's nasty threat and decides that his only chance is to develop a counter-attack in the center.

12.h5+ Kh6 13.Nxe6+ Kh7

Black couldn't block the Bishop check with 13...f4 as, thanks to the h5-pawn, Qg3-g6 mate was the threat as well.

14.Qg6+ Kg8 15.Ng5 Nf6!

The only move. Black takes advantage of the pin on the e-file in order to defend the h7-square and to keep his hopes of defending alive. Black intends to play: 16...Qe7-e8, in order to break the attack; to return the piece with 16...Nc6xe5, so that the f6-Knight will be stabilized; or 16...Nc6xd4, with a counter-attack. While 16.Be3 still gives White the much superior game, he has to feel that somewhere he missed something and can do better. Let's go back to move eleven.

11.Be3!

A much stronger move than 11.Nxe6, as White develops a piece. blocks the potential pin on the e-file and once again leaves it up to Black to find a good move. Not an easy task. At this point, if Black tries:

11...Nb6

He faces a fierce discovered check. A likely line would be...

12.h5+ Kh6 13.Nxe6+ Kh7 14.Qg6+ Kg8 15.Ng5!

With a winning position shown in Diagram 64.

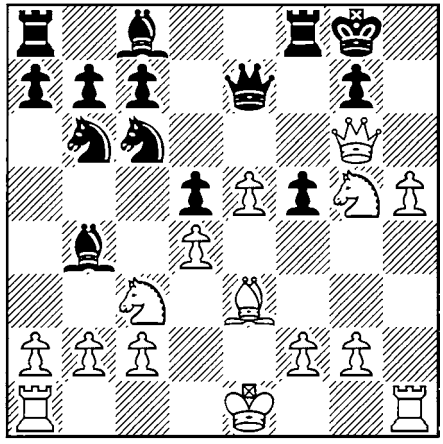


DIAGRAM 64. Black to Play

All these variations and the themes should be carefully explored so that you are conversant with many of the patterns that emerge from the Bishop Sacrifice. Now let's return to move nine. White realizes that, desirable as it would be to bring the Queen into the attack at once, he should expand his selection. His strongest move is actually with a pawn!

9.h4!

In this setting, the pawn advance is a diabolical follow-up to the Bishop Sacrifice. White is intent on pushing Black's King to the h6-square, where the discovered check is lethal. Note that White could also have tried 9.Qd3+ f5 10.Qg3, which transposes to the lines given above. White would certainly avoid 9.Qd3+ f5 10.exf6+? Kxf6, which gives the King excellent opportunities to escape. In other settings, the maneuver Qd1-d3+ could well be stronger than Qd1-g4 as Black might not have an f7-pawn with which to block the check. In such cases the further moves ...Rf8-f5 and g2-g4 would cost the defender a whole Rook.

9...Qe7

Black realizes a discovered check by the Knight is impossible to prevent. Therefore, the Queen gets out of the Knight's clutches.

10.h5+ Kh6

Black has no choice. The advance 10...Kf5 is met by 11.Qf3 and Black is finished.

11.Qd3!

Now the Queen's entrance into the attack is devastating. White threatens Qd3-h7 checkmate and Black has no satisfactory defense.

11...Qxg5

An admission of defeat. Black couldn't guard against the threat by 11...Rh8 because of 12.Nxf7 double-check and mate! Blocking with 11...f5, 12.exf6! is now an immediate winner as checkmate beckons on both the g6 and h7-squares. Finally, 11...g6 prevents Qd3-h7, but opens the h-file for a discovered check with the h1-Rook: 12.hxg6+ Kg7 13.Rh7+ Kg8 14.Qh3, with a quick checkmate in view. The final position from this variation is really impressive. Don't you find it amazing how many of White's pieces flooded the Kingside? So quickly and with tempo too!

12.Bxg5+ Kxg6 13.Qe3+! Kf5 14.g4+ Kxg4 15.Rg1+

And Black's King will be mated shortly.

The overall impression that you should get from this skeletal example is that when the defense is unable to protect the h7-square it is with remarkable speed that the attacking pieces can swoop into position. We will now look at some recent practical examples to see how the Classical Bishop Sacrifice has wreaked havoc at the highest levels.

As mentioned in the Introduction, I owe Bulgaria's World Champion, Veselin Topalov a debt of gratitude as he inspired this chapter. We shall begin with this beauty.

Veselin Topalov-Ruslan Ponomariov
Sofia, 2005
Queen's Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.b3 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 Be7 7.Nc3 0-0 8.Rc1 c6 9.e4 d5 10.e5

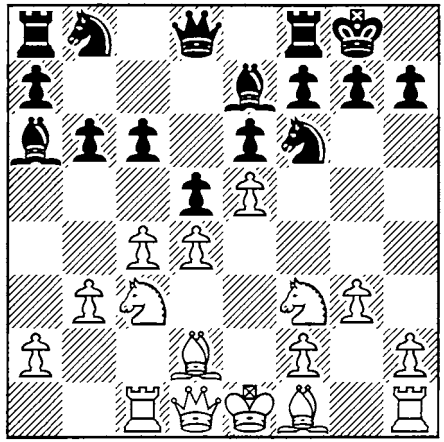


DIAGRAM 65. Black to Play

Thus far the players are following the theoretical recommended moves of a topical line in the Queen's Indian Defense. With his tenth move, as we see in Diagram 65, Topalov played a new idea. The common continuation had been 10.cxd5 Bxf1 11.Kxf1 cxd5 12.e5 Ne4 13.Kg2, with a dynamically balanced game.

10...Ne4 11.Bd3 Nxc3

Only with hindsight can 11...Nxd2 12.Qxd2 Bb7 13.cxd5 cxd5 be recommended, when Black has a reasonable game. At the time, either capture seemed to lead to a balanced position.

12.Rxc3!

The start of the deeper point behind White's novelty.

12...c5 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.h4!

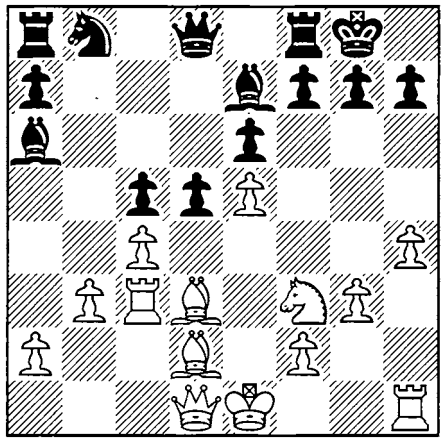


DIAGRAM 66. Black to Play

Topalov now plays his trump card. He intends to play the Classical Bishop Sacrifice and follow up with Nf3-g5+ and if Black captures the Knight with ...Be7xg5 the recapture h4xg5+ will open the h-file for a devastating attack. Diagram 66 shows us Black's dilemma. How to stop the announced sacrifice?

14...h6?

Seeking a cure for the impending sacrifice, Black advances his h-pawn. The move is, however, a mistake that weakens the pawn-shield with long-term consequences. He wasn't interested in playing 14...g6, which only encourages a future h4-h5, in order to pry open the h-file. Again, only in hindsight would it be revealed that 14...f5 was a necessity. Ponomariov was reluctant to allow the resulting Bishop Sacrifice: 15.exf6 Bxf6 16.Bxh7+! Kxh7 17.Ng5+ Kg8 (With White's h4-pawn at the ready, 17...Kg6? 18.h5+ Kf5 19.Qf3+ is mate next move.) 18.Qh5 Re8 19.Qf7+! Kh8 20.Qg6 Kg8 21.Rf3 offered White a dangerous attack. It is pleasing to see how the c3-Rook participates in the attack from this variation. Inspired preparation by Topalov!

15.Bb1!

A classical and powerful maneuver that we must include in our combinational notebook. An appropriate heading would be "Batteries". Make room for diagonal and file batteries. While the immediate Bishop Sacrifice has been foiled, the cure is now punished. White intends to play Qd1-c2, creating a battery on the b1-h7 diagonal. This will induce Black into a further weakening of his Kingside pawn-shield. This maneuver is another deeper concept behind White's tenth move novelty.

15...f5

Not a happy decision at all. Black's problem is that after the forthcoming move Qd1-c2 he is unable to play ...g7-g6, as Bd2xh6 clips a pawn and in conjunction with h4-h5 would give White a winning attack. Such variations explain why I opened this chapter with a discussion about moving the pawn-shield in front of the King. Arguably Black could have tried 15...Nd7 16.Qc2 f5 17.exf6 Nxf6 18.Qg6 (Utilizing the third rank by 18.Re3 is also good for White.) 18...Qe8 19.Ne5, but he was understandably worried that his position would suffer.

Ruslan, sitting in the defender's hot-seat, was more worried about the sacrificial possibility (15...Nd7) 16.Bxh6!? gxh6 17.Qc2 f5 18.exf6 Rxf6 (18...Nxf6 19.Qg6+ Kh8 20.Qxh6+ Kg8 21.Qg6+ Kh8 22.Ng5 gives White a winning attack. For example we could see the Queen and Bishop motif from the previous chapter: 22...Qe8 23.Qh6+ Kg8 24.Bh7+! Kh8 25.Bg6+ Kg8 26.Bxe8, winning the Queen.) 19.Qh7+ Kf8 20.Ng5! hxg5 21.hxg5! offers White excellent prospects for a successful attack. Ruslan was rightly worried about the h6-pawn capture and therefore rushed to block the b1-h7 diagonal.

Viewed from a different prospective, White's threat of the Bishop Sacrifice induced ...h7-h6 and then the threat of a Bishop and Queen battery induced ...f7-f5, two pawn advances in front of the King. The result of these two pawn advances will be made obvious: vital squares in front of Black's King have been permanently weakened. White's pieces rush to take advantage.

16.exf6 Bxf6 17.Qc2!

Logical play, as White completes his b1-h7 battery. White is not in the

least concerned that his c3-Rook would be captured, as 17...Bxc3? 18.Qh7+ Kf7 19.Bxc3 would be suicidal. The f6-Bishop is a vital defende of the g7-pawn.

17...d4

A desperate attempt to bog down White's attack. Black is hoping tha White will play 18.Rd3?, which would block his Queen and Bishop fror the Kingside. A more reasonable expectation is that White would pla 18.Qh7+ Kf7 19.Rc1 (Not 19.Bg6+? Ke7 20.Rd3? Rh8! when White ha successfully trapped his own Queen.) 19...Bb7 20.Be4 Nc6 when Black i still in the game. We now move on to Diagram 67, where Topalov has jus uncorked a brilliant move.

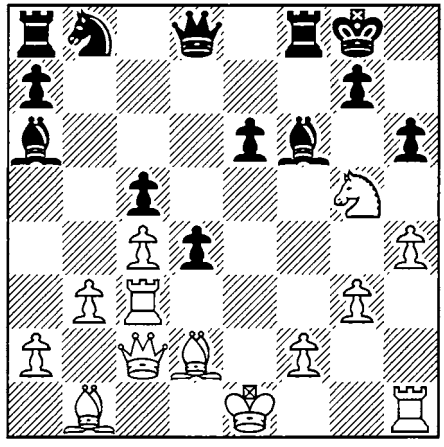


DIAGRAM 67. Black to Play

18.Ng5!!

Simply outstanding! White forces the opening of the h-file whic brings his last piece, the h1-Rook, into the attack. Black has no choice bu to accept the offer as Qc2-h7 checkmate is threatened.

18...hxg5 19.hxg5 dxc3 20.Bf4

This powerful quiet move is a nice addition to the whole combinatior Despite being a Knight and a Rook ahead Black is lost! White's immedi

ate threat is 21.Rh8+! Kf7 22.Qg6+ Ke7 23.gxf6+ gxf6 24.Rh7+ winning. While the game was being played, I thought this move best. But combinational play is the art of looking at *forcing* moves and the most forcing moves are checks! While the text is a winner, the best continuation was 20.Rh8+! Kf7 21.Qg6+ Ke7 22.gxf6+ Kd7 23.Qd3+! Kc8 24.Qxd8+ Rxd8 25.Rxd8+ Kxd8 26.fxg7, and the glorious career of the h-pawn clinches victory.

It is not necessary to be too critical. Veselin had seen that the text leads to victory as well.

20...Kf7

Trying to make the best of a bad situation. Black's King wants to sprint away from the Kingside mayhem. There was no chance to bail out by 20...Qd2+ 21.Bxd2 cxd2+ 22.Kd1!! Bd4 23.Qg6!, with the threat of Rh1-h8+, when Black is unable to stave off checkmate for very long. The moves 20...Bd4 and 20...Be5 are both discouraged by 21.Qg6, with the same killing Rh1-h8+ sacrifice. Finally, 20...Bxg5? 21.Rh8+ Kf7 22.Qg6+ Ke7 23.Qxg7+ Rf7 24.Bxg5+ would cost Black massive material loss.

21.Qg6+ Ke7 22.gxf6+

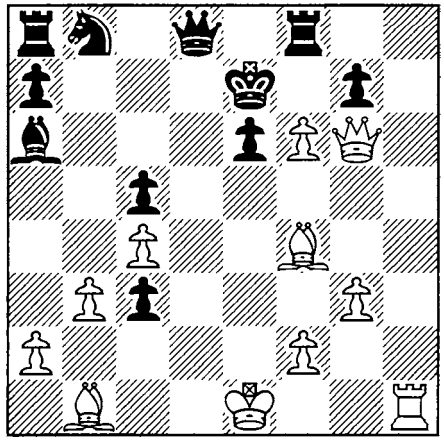


DIAGRAM 68. Black to Play

22...Rxf6

Black continues to ride the tiger of forced moves. If he tries to sprint further away with 22...Kd7 23.fxg7 Rg8 (Or 23...Re8 24.g8=Q! Rxg8 25.Rh7+ Kc8 26.Qxe6+ Nd7 27.Qxa6 checkmate.) 24.Qf7+ Kc8 25.Rh8! Rxh8 26.gxh8 Qxh8 27.Qc7 checkmate. Note in these variations how the powerful f4-Bishop controls crucial flight squares surrounding Black's King. It is from lines such as these that we can really appreciate the power of the twentieth move and why Topalov ultimately chose it.

23.Qxg7+ Rf7 24.Bg5+ Kd6 25.Qxf7 Qxg5

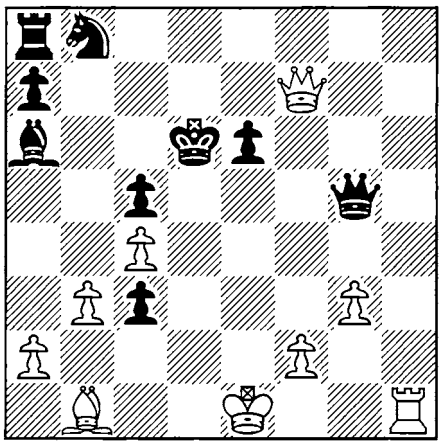


DIAGRAM 69. White to Play

From the threat of a Classical Bishop Sacrifice, things have moved right along. Does Black have reason to be optimistic? As we see in Diagram 69, Black is a mere one move away from playing ...Nb8-d7 and consolidating. But it is White to move and once the Rook is introduced into the attack it is all over.

26.Rh7! Qe5+

Other checks with the Queen, 26...Qc1+ 27.Ke2 Qd2+ 28.Kf3, are ineffective. The retreat 26...Qd8 27.Qf4+ Kc6 (28...e5 29.Qh6+ and mate next move.) 28.Qe4+ Kb6 29.Qxa8, results in a lost position.

27.Kf1 Kc6

Preventing immediate mate on the c7-square but only delaying the inevitable.

28.Qe8+!

Further misery lies in store for Black: 28...Nd7 29.Qxd7+ Kb6 30.Re7 Bc8(?) 31.Qb5 checkmate. Ruslan decides to hang onto his extra piece and loses the game with a full tummy.

28...Kb6 29.Qd8+ Kc6 30.Be4+! Black resigns.

The finish would be 30...Qxe4 31.Qc7 checkmate. A fantastic game where the threat of the Bishop Sacrifice provoked a pawn weaknesses that lead to a sacrificial smorgasborg. The future World Champion Veselin Topalov was relentless in the attack and we applaud his superb play.

Something about this game nagged at my thoughts. If there is one thing I'd like this book to teach about combinational play it is this: Sound combinations result from our opponent's *mistakes*. If our opponent plays perfectly, then our combinations have no chance of success. So, what "mistake" did Ruslan make that allowed White to uncork such a brilliant combination? While I'm still not certain of the answer, deductive reasoning has caused me to pinpoint Black's automatic recapture 13...bxc5 as the likely culprit. As we saw in the game, Black tried ...d5-d4 to bog down White's attack. It didn't work and White ignored the threat. It is here that Black should try 13...d4! 14.Rc1 Bb7, repositioning the Bishop on the long diagonal. White now wins a pawn with 15.cxb6 Qxb6, when Black has good compensation. Enterprising players might even consider 14...Nd7 or possibly 14...bxc5! 15.Be4 Nd7, with good play for the lost Exchange.

The following game is from the 2003 six-game match played between Garry Kasparov, the world's number one ranked human player, and Deep Junior, the World Micro-Computer Champion. The contest was tied 2-2 with two games to play. Kasparov would have to win this game as White to have a realistic chance of winning the match. The tension was palpable as Garry settled down to play. Maurice Ashley and I were the commenta-

tors for an ESPN television broadcast providing insights into the moves to an audience of millions of viewers. In no time at all, our jaws had dropped into open-mouthed amazement.

Garry Kasparov-Deep Junior
New York, 2003
Nimzo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 d5 6.cxd5

Kasparov defines the pawn structure early in the game. Popular continuations include 6.Ne2 and 6.Nf3, keeping the central pawn structure fluid. The trade of pawns in the center frees the c8-Bishop, but gives White the opportunity to play a future f2-f3, followed by e3-e4, building a classical pawn center.

6...exd5 7.Ne2 Re8 8.0-0 Bd6 9.a3

Remarkable restraint by Kasparov. However, he has a concrete reason for delaying the direct 9.f3, as Black counters with 9...c5!, obtaining approximate equality. What Garry has in mind is to play a future b2-b4, initiating either a minority attack or simply preventing ...c7-c5, which hits back in the center. A deeper idea is to give the computer an opportunity to go wrong. Garry hoped to induce the premature developing move 9...Bg4?, as he would play 10.f3 with gain of tempo.

9...c6 10.Qc2

Again, coyly keeping his plans hidden for the moment. Garry still hopes the computer will err by 10...Bg4? 11.f3 Bh5 12.e4!, when White has successfully achieved a classical pawn center and has a powerful initiative. He threatens to advance with e4-e5, chasing away the f6-Knight and clipping the h7-pawn. The position reached is now shown in Diagram 70.

Up to this moment, Maurice Ashley and I had been happily nattering away, describing the various strategic plans for both sides when Deep Junior uncorked...

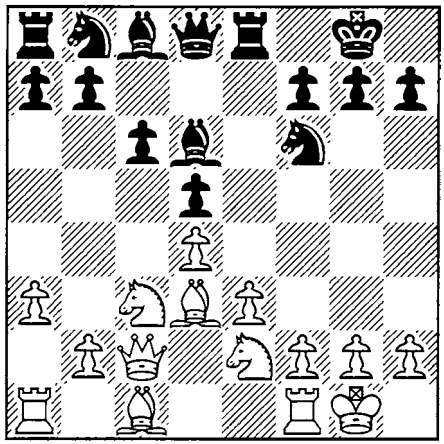


DIAGRAM 70. Black to Play

10...Bxh2+!?

Kapow! We were stunned into silence. Computers aren't supposed to sacrifice material unless their algorithm indicates that recovery will be immediate. Good grief, we wondered. Could this Classical Bishop Sacrifice really work? Garry, too, was rocked back in his chair. He has no choice but to accept the offer.

11.Kxh2 Ng4+ 12.Kg3

As we have seen from our skeletal game, retreating with the King is usually punished quickly: 12.Kg1? Qh4 13.Rd1 Qxf2+ 14.Kh1 Rxe3!, with a winning attack for Black. As 12.Kh3?? walks into a fatal discovered check: 12...Nxe3+ 13.Kh2 Nxc2, winning White's Queen, Garry is forced to play the text.

12...Qg5!

Readying the standard discovered check. Our television audience was beginning to panic. Were the merciless impulses of a binary machine superior to human intellect?

13.f4!

Sidestepping the optically tempting option 13.e4, which appears to

break the attack by hitting Black's Queen. A fearsome response is 13...Ne3+!, with a discovered check that blocks White's threat of capturing Black's Queen. After 14.Kf3, the conclusion 14...Bg4+ 15.Kg3 Nxf1 checkmate would cause any human to shudder!

At this moment, with his King walking the plank, Garry had to weigh the option of "bailing out" of the game by 13.Bxh7+?! Kh8 14.f4 Qh5 15.Bd3 Qh2+ 16.Kf3 Qh4 17.Ng3 Nh2+ 18.Kf2 Ng4+ 19.Kf3, when the game ends in a repetition and a draw. The point is that, much like the commentators, Garry could not yet believe in the soundness of the sacrifice and wanted to check if he didn't have winning chances.

13...Qh5 14.Bd2

White is a move away from playing Rf1-h1, not only breaking Black's attack but also winning the Queen!

14...Qh2+!

Deep Junior correctly avoids grabbing a second pawn as compensation for the Bishop: 14...Rxe3+? 15.Bxe3 Nxe3 16.Qd2 Nxf1+ 17.Rxf1, only trades Black's attacking pieces, allowing White to consolidate his material edge. In this variation, Garry would have a big advantage.

15.Kf3 Qh4

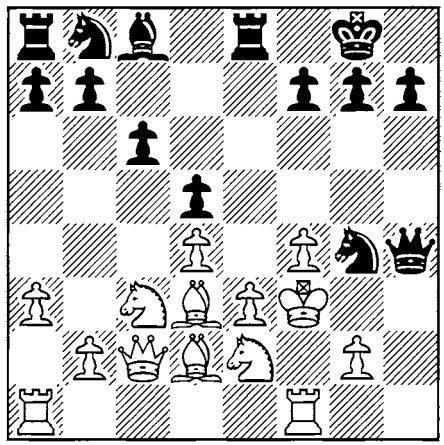


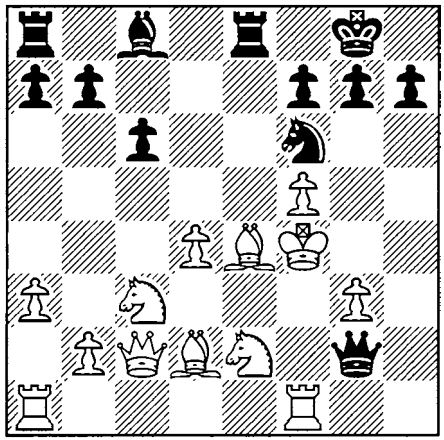
DIAGRAM 71. White to Play

16.Bxh7+

Reluctantly played after all, as Garry reconciles himself to a draw. The position in Diagram 71 is the key moment before White plays his sixteenth move. The question is, was the sacrifice sound or not? Garry was looking at dizzying tactical complications that required his King to take a forced march. The following analysis, by no means exhaustive, illustrates the variations that Garry was trying to work out.

In view of Black's threat ...Ng4-h2 checkmate, the only fighting move is **16.g3!**, to refute the attack. Play should continue **16...Qh2!**, covering the f2-square. Black freezes White's f1-Rook from moving. A blunder would be 16...Nh2+? 17.Kf2 Ng4+ 18.Ke1, which would allow the King to skip away from the danger zone. Now we see another standard theme in the Bishop Sacrifice: **17.f5**, blocking the c8-Bishop's protection of the g4-Knight. White is trying to keep the c8-Bishop out of the attack altogether. It seems that Black has no choice but to sacrifice another piece: **17...Nd7!** Defensive moves like 17...Qh3? 18.Rh1 Nh2+ 19.Kf2 and 17...h5 18.e4 Nd7 19.Bf4 result in favorable positions for White. In view of Black's threatened 18...Nde5+ 19.dxe5 Nxe5+ 20.Kf4 Qh6 checkmate, White plays **18.Kxg4**. White is now two pieces ahead and Black has no real development to speak of. Garry was anxious to give this position a tryout but he has a remarkable gift for the attack. He had spotted the problem-like move **18...Qg2!**, taking control of the f3-square and preventing White's King from slipping back. Now Black threatens a possible perpetual check by 19...Nf6+ 20.Kf4 Nh5+ 21.Kg4 Nf6+, and so the most reasonable try is **19.e4!**, vacating the e3-square for a possible retreat. Garry had seen all these moves and many more to come. **19...Nf6+ 20.Kf4 dxe4!**. The only way to continue the attack. Black cannot allow e4-e5, blocking the e-file. **21.Bxe4!**, leads us to the *analysis* position shown in Diagram 72.

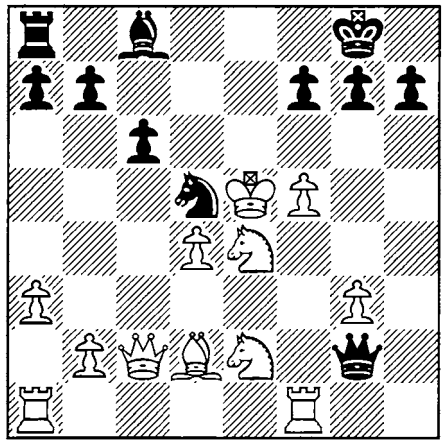
With two extra pieces in hand and Black's near total lack of development, Garry was quite optimistic about this position. Again, his attacking instincts revealed that not all was in harmony.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 72. Black to Play

21...Rxe4+!!, tossing more material into the fire. Winning a piece back by 21...Nxe4? 22.Nxe4 Qxe2 23.Rae1, with the discovered check 24.Nf6+ in view, would leave Black lost. The never-ending series of forced moves seems to continue. **22.Nxe4 Nd5+ 23.Ke5** is the tactical pathway that Garry analyzed. Good grief. White's King march has either been a walk to the gallows or a fruitful harvesting. But which one? By most measures, a King hunt. Still Garry continued his analysis. A further check by 23...f6+? 24.Kd6 would seem to be safe for White. If Black continued 24...Qxe2 25.Rae1 Qa6 26.Nc3!, intending to walk home with his King by Ke5-e4-f3, is certain victory. Garry envisioned that the attack would be easily broken. Since ...f7-f6 is only helpful for White, the obvious move was 23...Bd7, developing a piece and opening the way for the Rook. Now 24.Nf4! Re8+ 25.Kd6 Nxf4 26.Kxd7 not only holds comfortably but White's King has picked up another piece along the march. Is it to be a fruitful stroll after all? We now find ourselves in the labyrinth of Analysis Diagram 73.

This is when Garry spotted **23...Bxf5!**. This caused him to recoil and think again about challenging the computer in such a wild tactical jungle.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 73. Black to Play

In view of Black's threat to play 24...Re8+ 25.Kd6 Bxe4, winning a piece with tempo, logic dictated the capture of the Bishop **24.Rxf5**. This is a forced capture as 24.Kxf5? Qh3+ 25.g4 Re8 would quickly lead to checkmate. Here Garry's extraordinary tactical skills had reached the limits. He was at a loss as to how to evaluate such a position. A Rook and two pieces ahead, White has a won game. Full stop. Except if he is mated! And Garry realized that it certainly was a distinct possibility. Unsure of Black's best move, the quiet 24...Rd8 or the capture 24...Qxe2, Garry continued by analyzing the forcing check first: 24...Re8+ 25.Kd6 Qxe2 26.Re5?? Rd8+ 27.Kc5 Qb5 checkmate and reached for the "off" switch. The game ended peacefully as follows:

16...Kh8 17.Ng3 Nh2+ 18.Kf2 Ng4+ 19.Kf3 Nh2+ Draw.

A dramatic game and a remarkable piece of analysis at the board. Is the position after 24.Rxf5 good or bad for White? I leave this question for you, dear reader, to answer yourself.

I found myself disquieted by the game. Television audiences want to *see* action! In this case, *all* the drama remained hidden behind the cloak of

possibility. The television audience could hardly appreciate the human torment that Garry was putting himself through. I thought that this is the hardship that chess faces; sponsors were slavishly devoted to television broadcasting. Without television shows and viewer ratings, sponsors weren't interested in supporting our sport. How to reveal the extraordinary drama contained in this analysis? Perhaps the Internet has arrived just in time for our rescue.

One important and ironic point worth noting takes us back to the position before White's tenth move. If the Bishop Sacrifice was good enough for a draw or at least one fathomless combination, why didn't Deep Junior play it on move nine, when White's Queen was still on the d1-square? The answer is that White can break the attack as follows: 9...Bxh2+? 10.Kxh2 Ng4+ 11.Kg3 Qg5 12.f4! Qh5 13.Rh1!, a defense that makes all the difference in the world. Now that the Queen protects the h1-square, the attack is routed. It must have been highly annoying to Garry that by choosing the reasonable Qd1-c2 "waiting move", in the hope of inducing ...Bc8-g4, he had inadvertently inspired a new chapter in the Classical Bishop Sacrifice.

I certainly have had my fair share of scrapes with the Classical Bishop Sacrifice. One highly frightening memory came from the 1985 Interzonal tournament in Biel, Switzerland. I was in a good position to qualify into the circle of Candidates for the World Championship when in round twelve I found myself facing the dreaded combination.

Miguel Angel Quinteros-Yasser Seirawan
Biel Interzonal, 1985
Bogo-Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+ 4.Bd2 c5!?

At the time, this fourth move by Black was just beginning to come into vogue. Strategically it is a risky choice as Black's c-pawn is forced to capture away from the center, which gives White the opportunity for a large occupation there.

5.Bxb4 cxb4 6.Nbd2 0-0 7.e4 d6 8.Bd3 Qc7?

A very poor move. 8...e5! was necessary, trying to make a blockade on the dark squares. Black's strategy would be justified if he could coax White into then playing 9.d5? Nbd7, when Black holds the c5-outpost. After 8...e5 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.Nxe5 does not win a pawn since Black has the move 10...Qd4, followed by capturing the b2-pawn.

9.0-0 Nbd7

I played my last move with foreboding, as I knew what to expect. Unfortunately, my position is a wreck as my intended move 9...e5? 10.c5! exd4 11.cxd6 wins for White. We have reached the position shown in Diagram 74.

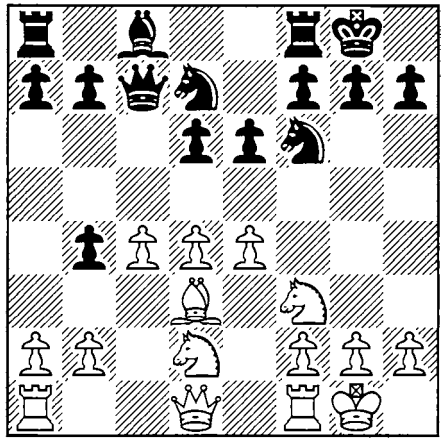


DIAGRAM 74. White to Play

10.c5! dxc5

The text is my only choice. There was no time for 10...e5? 11.cxd6 Qxd6 12.Nc4, when White wins a pawn and has total command of the center.

11.e5! Nd5 12.Bxh7+!

Painful. Along with my King, my chances to qualify for the World Championship Candidates were being swept away.

12...Kxh7 13.Ng5+ Kg6

In view of the option of returning the piece on the f6-square, the text isn't automatic. I had to torment myself analyzing the consequences of 13...Kg8 14.Qh5 N7f6 15.exf6 Nxf6 16.Qh4, when I didn't see an adequate defense to the threat of Nd2-e4, hitting my vital f6-Knight and invasion of the h7-square.

14.Qg4 f5! 15.Qg3! f4

After a forced sequence of moves, we have reached Diagram 75. Here Miguel spent a good deal of time working out the best move. His choices were all so tempting! But which move is right?

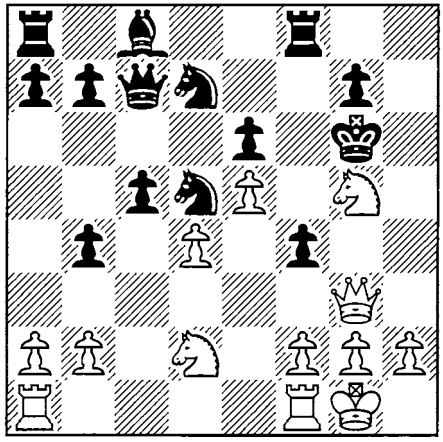
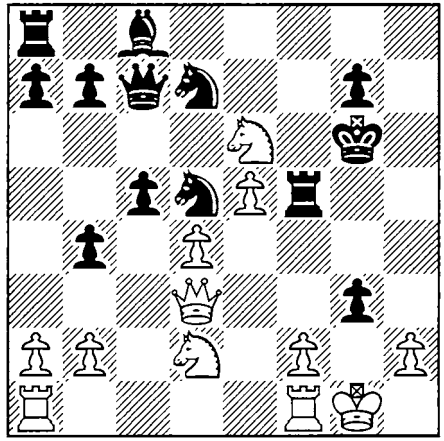


DIAGRAM 75. White to Play

16.Qh3?!

Oftentimes a winning attack can carry the burden of a major detriment: too many winning tries! As the player sifts the choices, issues of style, temperament and even playing for the audience trip us up. Miguel spots what he thought was a win worthy of the brilliancy prize and goes astray. I had hoped for the variation 16.Qg4 N7f6 17.exf6 Nxf6 18.Nxe6+ Nxg4 19.Nxc7 Rb8 20.dxc5, when I've staggered into an inferior ending which I hoped was salvageable. The line I dreaded most was 16.Qd3+!! Rf5 (As in the game, the g5-Knight is poisoned: 16...Kxg5?? 17.Qh7! Nxe5 18.dxe5

f3 [In order to stop 19.Nf3+ Kg4 20.h3 checkmate.] 20.h4+ Kf4 21.Rae1 Qxe5 22.Re4+! Qxe4 23.Qxe4 checkmate.) 17.g4 fxg3 18.Nxe6! brings us to the analysis diagram shown in Diagram 76:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 76. Black to Play

In my mind's eye, I knew my position was lost. The continuation was forced: 18...Qb6!, the best move. Other tries are worse: 18...Qc6? 19.Qxg3+! Kf7 20.Nd8+! forks King and Queen. While capturing the h2-pawn really would allow my opponent to win the brilliancy prize: 18...gxh2+? 19.Kh1! Qb6 20.Rg1+! hxg1=Q+ (Let's spare a moment to applaud the effort of this noble pawn.) 21.Rxg1+ Kf7 22.Qxf5+ Ke8 23.Rxg7, and I could resign with a clear conscience. We pick up again after 18...Qb6 19.fxg3 Qxe6 20.g4!. I feared this was a lost position. With my lousy development and exposed King, I anticipated playing 20...Nxe5 (Probably best is 20...Kh7 21.gxf5 Qh6, with a grim future.) 21.gxf5+ Qxf5! 22.Qg3+ Qg4!, when I saw that I'm sailing towards a bad ending. At least I had the comfort of *getting to an ending.*

We now return to the game, where I could happily get rid of the trauma these variations caused.

16...N7f6

A forced move to protect the h7-square. As we have seen already, 16...Kxg5?? 17.Qh7! Nxe5 18.dxe5 f3 (In order to stop 19.Nf3+ Kg4 20.h3 checkmate.) 20.h4+ Kf4 21.Rae1 Qxe5 22.Re4+! Qxe4 23.Qxe4 checkmate.) Now a new wave of fears gripped me...

17.Nde4?

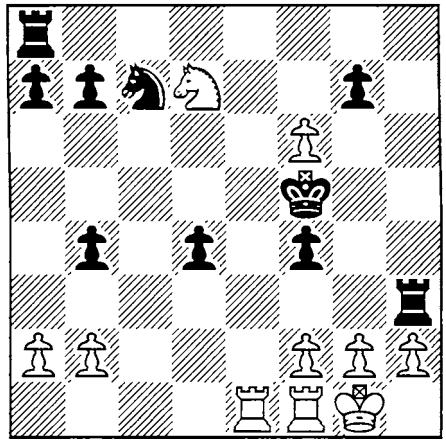
While my opponent was consuming vast amounts of time on his chess clock, I had begun to have a strange revelation: White should *not* capture my f6-Knight. At first, my intention had been to play 17.exf6? gxf6, covering the h7-square with my Queen. I was unhappy to discover that after the subsequent moves 18.Nxe6 Bxe6 19.Qxe6 Qf7 20.Qg4+ Kh6, lo and behold, my position was terrible. Necessity being the mother of invention, I began to have another look at capturing the "poisoned g5-Knight": 17.exf6? Kxg5! 18.Qh7 Kxf6! is now possible and the King can happily retreat. Since capturing my f6-Knight was impossible, I knew White would have to play either 17.Ndf3 or 17.Nde4, but which move would Miguel choose?

Knowing Miguel's penchant for beauty, I correctly guessed the siren call. He is playing for a three-piece sacrifice! I too had spotted 17...Nxe4?? 18.Qh7+!! Kxg5 19.h4+ Kg4 20.f3+ Kg3 21.Qg6+ Kxh4 22.Qg4 checkmate. This line had to be avoided! And therein lies the rub; my moves would be forced and good.

I still hadn't decided whether or not I was lost after the best move, 17.Ndf3!, supporting the g5-Knight, preparing to capture the f6-Knight – or to let the Knight live – and leaving it up to Black to find a defense. I was completely unsure of how I should then continue. Keeping my extra piece by 17...Nh5? 18.Nxe6 Qe7 19.Nxf8+ Qxf8 20.e6 seemed like a sure prescription for disaster. My only choices were 17...cxd4, 17...Bd7 and my most likely move 17...Qe7, covering the e6-pawn. Let us see them in turn:

1) 17...cxd4 18.Rae1!! (Moving the right Rook. White should avoid the temptation of the open c-file, as the action is not there! Instead, he brings as many pieces to the center and Kingside, the theater of battle, as possible. The f1-Rook may play a future role after a possible g2-g4, eyeing the h5-square, and an en passant capture ...f4xg3 is met by f2xg3,

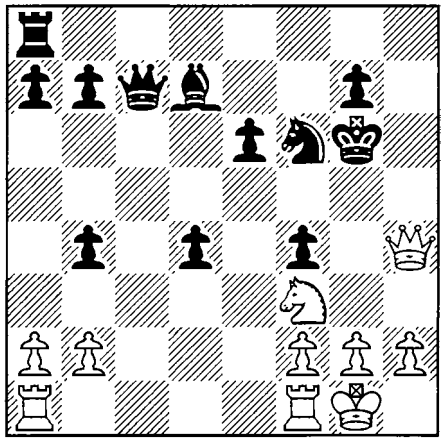
opening up the f-file. White now threatens the simple capture 19.exf6 Nxf6 [As we've seen above, my intended capture 19...gxf6 20.Nxe6 results in a terrible position.] 20.Ne5+ spells disaster.) 18...Bd7 19.exf6 Rh8 20.Nxe6 Rxh3 21.Nxc7 Nxc7 22.Ne5+! Kf5 23.Nxd7, when I considered the position shown in Diagram 77 hopelessly lost. Amongst other things, with the f8-square covered, White can just advance his f6-pawn.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 77. Black to Play

2) 17...Bd7 (Seemed quite logical. As in the line above, Black intends ...Rf8-h8, trying to trap White's Queen. White no longer has the luxury of spending a tempo to bring his a1-Rook into the attack.) 18.exf6! (A forced capture can also be very good. Heart-warming too! White recovers his piece and threatens Nf3-e5+ along with other brutal ideas.) 18...Rh8 19.Qg4 (With hindsight, I'm a bit surprised how I was more frightened by setting up a discovered check than the simple 19.Nxe6, which is also winning for White.) 19...Nxf6 (There is no choice. 19...e5? 20.Nxe5+ Qxe5 21.Ne6+! is a pretty discovered check which wins.) 20.Nh4+ Rxh4 21.Qxh4 cxd4 22.Nf3!, achieving Diagram 78.

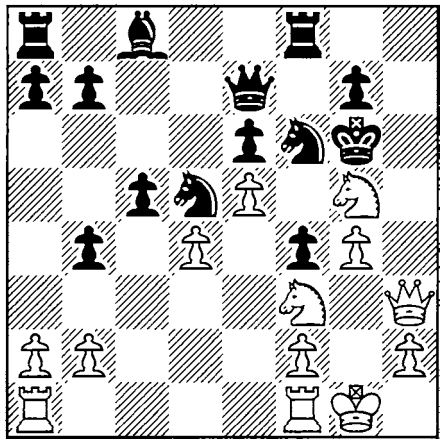
Yet another lost position. Amongst other things, White is aiming for Qh4-g5+ and Nf3-e5 in order to slurp the f4-pawn.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 78. Black to Play

3) 17...Qe7 (As you can realize from the above, I had reconciled myself to the thought that this move was my best hope to save the game. White should now continue to delay the capture e5xf6 for as long as possible. A dream for me is that White would continue 18.exf6? gxf6! 19.Ne4 cxd4!, and although White might be for choice, I would be alive and kicking. Especially if I could play ...e6-e5, liberating my c8-Bishop. White's problem is that if he delays capturing the f6-Knight for too long it might simply jump away to the h5-square. This line of reasoning gave rise to the improbable-looking move 18.g4!!, when I felt sunk. The position is shown in Diagram 79.

18.g4!! is a spectacular and highly unusual move. White refuses to capture anything and instead readies himself for a future Qh3-h5+, which will be devastating. My hopes of breaking White's central bind with a timely ...c5xd4 seemed suddenly far away. My problem is revealed after 18...Bd7? 19.exf6! (Now threatening Qh3-h5+ and mate next move.) 19...Nxf6 20.Qh4!, when Nf3-e5+ is really going to be convincing. How am I to continue in the position from Diagram 79?



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 79. Black to Play

Instinct told me I shouldn't seriously consider 18...fxg3 19.fxg3, when I've successfully awoken the sleeping f1-Rook. However, that isn't the dreadful news. The really bad news was when I saw 18...fxg3? 19.Nh4+! Kxg5 20.f4+!, and another fearsome discovered check awaited. Sigh. Once more, necessity caused me to find: 18...Rg8!, the only way to continue the game. Again, I'm hoping that White will assist me by capturing my f6-Knight: 19.exf6? gxf6 20.Qh5+? Kg7, when the f8-square has been vacated for my King. This "trade" of attacking move, g2-g4, for defensive move, ...Rf8-g8, made me extremely unhappy and worried. In the lines above, I saw an opportunity or two to play ...Rf8-h8, chasing White's Queen, but now such chances would be lost. In truth, I had awful misgivings about this position, but even so, Black's position is not completely gone. Back to the game!

17...cxd4!

Played with the happiness of an exonerated man. The awful nightmare that the central bind would remain is stripped away. My delight was furthered when I realized that White was now forced to recapture his sacrificed piece.

18.exf6 Nxf6 19.Nxf6 gxf6! 20.Nxe6 Bxe6 21.Qxe6

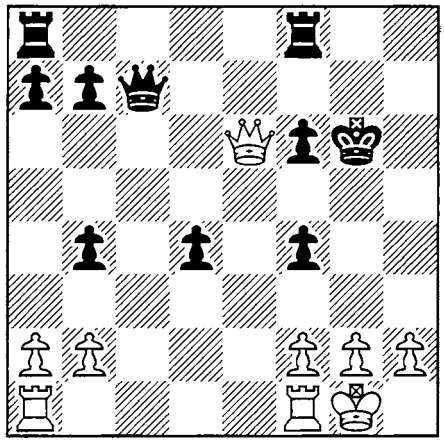


DIAGRAM 80. Black to Play

For the first time since the clocks were started, I was wildly optimistic. Finding myself in the position in Diagram 80, I was elated to be in an ending where I wouldn't be mated. As I wrote in the Introduction and Chapter One, combinations are influenced by many factors: psychological, time pressure, style and so on. At this point, Miguel had consumed virtually all but a few minutes on his clock and had to make nineteen further moves to the time control. His grateful acceptance speech for the brilliancy prize was shelved and the setting has radically changed. White has to be careful! With such a shift, it is hard to stay objective and play to keep the position. I knew all too well that the sacrificial risks taken earlier, the kicking of oneself for the missed opportunities, and time pressure were foremost in Miguel's mind. These factors were now in my favor and it made me want to play hard for the win. My thoughts at least had shifted quickly indeed!

21...Qe5! 22.Qg4+ Qg5! 23.Qf3 Rad8! 24.Rad1 Qf5!

Unlike my opponent's, my last series of moves was compelled out of defensive necessity on the one hand and goodness on the other. I had no choice! My goals were to protect my King and support my trump card, the

passed d-pawn as well.

25.Rd3?

Time trouble rears its ugly head. White should restore material equality by 25.Qxb7! a5 26.Qf3 d3 27.Rd2, when the game should be drawn.

25.Rd5 26.Rfd1?

White is being helpful, expecting only 26...Rfd8 27.g3, with a likely draw. The following surprise causes panic.

26...Re8!

Reminding White about a back-rank checkmate. Suddenly, the intended 27.g3 Re4 wasn't an attractive option. With his flag in the upright prone position, further errors came quickly...

27.h4? Re4 28.R3d2 a5 29.Rd3 Qe6! 30.Qh3? Qxh3 31.gxh3 Re2 32.h5+? Kxh5 33.R1d2 f3! 34.Rxd4

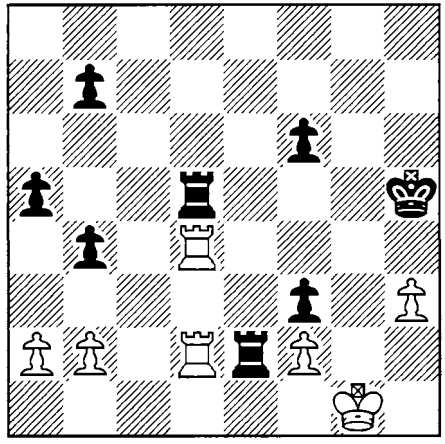


DIAGRAM 81. Black to Play

As you are familiar with double Rook checkmates, from Diagram 81 I would expect you, dear reader, to spot the winning pattern immediately.

34...Rg5+ 0-1

With the realization that 35.Kf1 Re1+! 36.Kxe1 Rg1 checkmates, Miguel offered his hand in resignation. The irony of the position in Diagram

81 is that I hadn't seen the simple continuation 34...Rxd2, winning a Rook. Strange how on the one hand I could calculate so many complex variations spotted earlier and miss an obvious capture. The tensions of battle can cloud your vision. Somehow, I managed to qualify for the Candidates and swore I never wanted to be the victim of a Classical Bishop Sacrifice again! Make room in your notebook for the "Bishop Sacrifice", and put it to work in your attacking arsenal.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Case of the Clumsy Rook

When I began chess, comprehending the movement of *all* the pieces – simultaneously, no less – seemed impossible. I was quite proud when I managed to play a lengthy *legal* game of chess. The unique movements of the pieces and pawns meant playing correctly was a challenge. As I explained in *Play Winning Chess*, I helped and hindered myself by creating an imagery of a medieval army. The King was, of course, the general; for the Bishops I thought of archers and that imagery helped me with the diagonals; for the Knights, cavalry and jumping horses that would leap over enemy lines; for the Rooks, cannons seemed appropriate. The Queen was simply my pride and joy. So powerful and awe-inspiring. My "game", such as it was, simply collapsed when my Queen was either lost or traded.

As I improved, it became more and more obvious to me that my understanding of how the Rook moved had seriously lagged. This seems strange to me now as its up-and-down and side-to-side movements are simple to grasp. Yet for all that my play with the Rooks was terrible. In the opening, it was common for me to lose a Rook to a Knight fork, a double attack or some other outburst by my opponent. It seemed that for ages I was either a Rook or an Exchange down after the opening. Not that I worried; more blunders awaited.

The Rooks seemed clumsy in the defense. When my King was being chased, it would have to climb over a Rook that was in the way. Rooks don't do much to protect weak squares and it seemed they were a constant target for my opponent's forces. In short, my play with Rooks was terrible.

I now realize that the imagery of a cannon for a Rook hindered my understanding. To state the obvious: a Rook is not a cannon – they have nothing in common. A cannon fires a shot and remains behind while the ball does the damage. Whereas a Rook has to move physically into the opponent's camp to inflict damage by capturing pawns and pieces. A Rook is closer to a battering ram but even that imagery is incorrect. In *Play Winning Chess* I also shared an early game where my Queen was pinned to my King on an open file. Suddenly, everything was clear! *Rooks needed open files!* When I spoke with other chess players and shared my glorious insight, they approved. I was right. However, this vital insight was only *half* the truth. Effective play with the Rook was still elusive to me because I didn't *know* the other half of the truth: *Rooks play on open ranks!*

Let's see what I mean from a few skeletal examples. In Diagram 82, we have a common-looking endgame position. This type of situation is reached daily around the world.

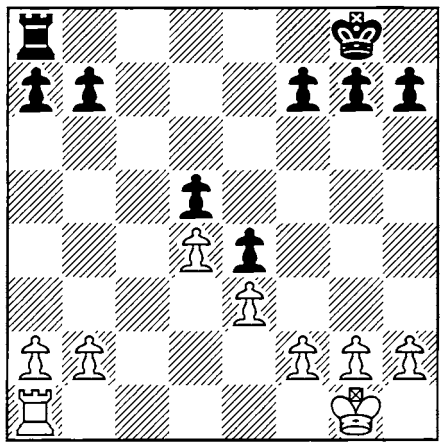


DIAGRAM 82. Either side to move

Whoever is to move in Diagram 82 will have a big, probably winning advantage. Either player will rush to seize the c-file at once. Then penetrate the opponent's camp with either Rc1-c7 or ...Rc8-c2 to great effect. Moving on to Diagram 83, I'm going to make just a few changes and we shall see the second half of the truth about Rooks.

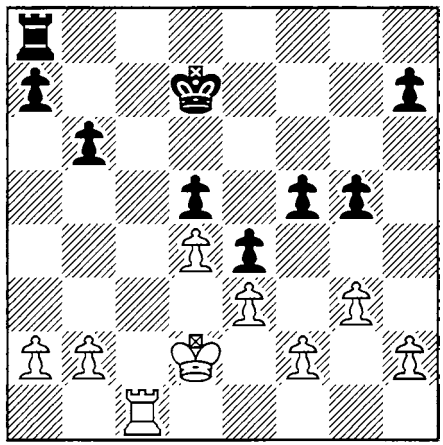


DIAGRAM 83. Black to Play

While the changes in the positions between Diagrams 82 and 83 appear to be minor, they make all the difference in the world. At first glance, White is for choice. His Rook has seized the only open file in the position. Proud possessor of the superior Rook, White *must* be better. White would naturally expect Black to choose 1...Rc8 2.Rxc8 Kxc8 3.Kc3, when White might fancy that because of his more active King he has the better of a drawn ending. White is surprised by a mysterious move.

1...Rg8

Not challenging the open file! White may think, *"Hmm, I'm playing a rabbit. He doesn't understand that I possess the open file."* In truth, Black has an excellent understanding of the position. All the *business squares* on the c-file, c5, c6, c7 and c8 are covered. White's volley of cannon fire down the c-file is meaningless. With his starting move, Black is attempt-

ing to improve the position of his Rook by playing on the sixth *rank.* Let's consider one line of play.

2.Ke2 Rg6!

With the move ...Rg8-g6 Black executes a "Rook Lift". The Rook lifts itself up to the sixth rank where it plays an active role by swinging from side to side.

3.Kf1 Rh6 4.Kg2

White is just in time to protect his h-pawn. The scare is over. Now comes an unpleasant surprise.

4...Rc6!

How very annoying! Black switches and challenges the open c-file after all. The difference now is that White's King has been pulled away from the center and sits on the passive g2-square. White no longer finds himself on the better side of a drawn King and Pawn ending but rather he stands worse. The rabbit has teeth!

In the world of chess combinations, key motifs for Rooks on the attack are Rook Lifts. Just as we've seen from Diagram 83. By the way, it is worth pointing out from Diagram 83 that Black's Rook Lift would have been just as effective had he started with **1...Re8** or **1...Rf8**, continuing the same maneuver as before. There are oftentimes a number of files available for making Rook Lifts. Should you be fortunate enough to possess an open file, Rook Lifts are used to double Rooks on it. Such purposeful play often leads us to overlook a potential superior play of utilizing the rank.

Great attacking players *know* two keys about the Rooks: They need open files and they play very well on open ranks! It was this second key that dogged me for years. It meant that my play with the Rooks, a *major piece,* was limited to *half* of its effectiveness.

Let me now create a brutally crushing position where Black is being badly abused. In Diagram 84, I've given the White player as many positional advantages as I can imagine.

The situation in Diagram 84 looks like a King's Indian Defense gone horribly wrong. From the Queenside to the center and the Kingside, White

is for choice. In fact, White's attack on the Kingside is decisive already.

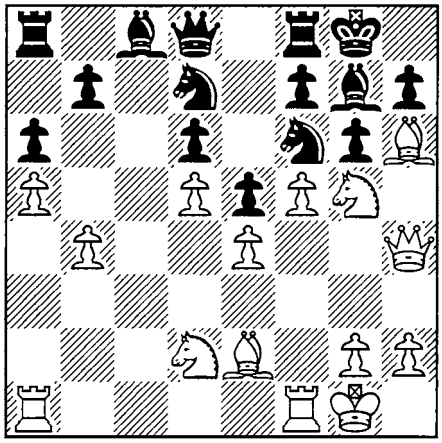


DIAGRAM 84. White to Play

However, the breakthrough isn't immediately obvious. White would like to play something like Bh7xg7 and Qh4xh7 checkmate, but the f6-Knight stands at guard. White could therefore begin to consider something with f5xg6, opening the f-file, sacrificing a Rook for the f6-Knight and crashing through on the h7-square. Brilliant! Unfortunately, this too isn't correct, as the d7-Knight protects his colleague and the recapture ...Nd7xf6, foils that one. Perhaps the Kingside attack is stymied and White should grab the open c-file instead. Indeed, it would be quite suggestive to bring the a1-Rook "into play" by Ra1-c1, double Rooks on the c-file and penetrate to the c7-square... Where the Rook does nothing! Hmm.

The correct plan of attack is indeed to go Kingside. White plays **1.Ra3!**, and the attack virtually plays itself. White's plan is as clear as a sunny day. White wants to play Ra3-h3, trade Bishops on g7, and continue with Qh4-h6+ as the Queen will be protected by the h3-Rook, and then capture the h7-pawn, with a winning attack. Black is helpless to prevent this operation. Let's consider the position in Diagram 84 a little more. If the Rook Lift with the a1-Rook is so good, why not Rf1-f3, with the same

idea? The answer is obvious: the f1-Rook is already *involved* in the Kingside attack. White wants to invite everyone to the party on the Kingside and the a1-Rook is absent. In view of White's plan of invading down the h-file, Black has to consider a defense based on ...Nf6-h5, blocking the h-file. Now, White's e2-Bishop hits the h5-square; the move Rf1-f3 blocks the Bishop's view. After the text, Black is sunk. If he tries **1...Nh5 2.Bxg7 Kxg7 3.Bxh5 gxh5 4.Rg3 Kh8 5.Qxh5 Nf6 6.Qh6** he is left helpless. He is a pawn down, his Kingside structure has been shattered and there is nothing to prevent the many deadly threats. If Black tries **1...b6**, trying to break the Queenside bind, White implements his plan of going Kingside: **2.Rh3! bxa5 3.Bxg7 Kxg7 4.Qh6+ Kg8 5.Nxh7**, and White breaks through Black's Kingside fortress and wins.

Okay, a situation like Diagram 84 practically screamed for White to make a Rook Lift and most games will not be quite so absolute. The Rook Lift motif *must become* part of our attacking arsenal.

Let's now turn to a few real games and see the play of the Rook in action. As I stated in the Introduction, this work is intended to be a bit of a mix of easy and hard. That, after all, is the nature of combinational play. You don't get to know during a tournament game that a combination exists or does not exist. You create your plans, pursue your goals and if along the way your creative imagination is inspired by a sacrifice, you hope that everything works well. So, for the following example, I will not show a combination at all! Rather, I'll share a strategic plan that leads to combinational play.

The following game was played at the 1980 tournament in Wijk aan Zee, Holland. The Wijk aan Zee chess festival is a fixture on the chess calendar and is considered a major annual event. At that time, it was my first foray into the big leagues. I was a rookie, not even a grandmaster, yet going up against veteran players. I was supposed to be one of the members of the welcoming committee for the distinguished company. I failed my role. Instead, my compatriot Walter Browne and I tied for first. At the time, my play in this game created quite a stir.

Vlado Kovačević-Yasser Seirawan
Wijk aan Zee, 1980
Modern Defense

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6

As mentioned in *Winning Chess Openings,* I played the Pirc Defense with a ferocious loyalty. As a young player, I loved to fianchetto my King's Bishop, where it would rake across the center of the board while providing extra protection to my King.

4.Be2 Bg7 5.g4!?

An enterprising pawn thrust on the Kingside to which I didn't pay much attention. I should now play the cautious 5...h6, to restrain the g-pawn from getting any friskier. At the time, I wondered what my opponent was up to and wanted to give him some rope with which to hang himself...

5...c6?! 6.g5! Nfd7 7.h4 b5 8.h5 Rg8!?

Up until now, I was pleased by the investment of tempi my opponent was making on the Kingside. In view of the possibility of h5-h6, I wanted to vacate the h8-retreat square for the Bishop. But playing ...Rh8-g8, to a closed file, is a pretty miserable move to have to make in the opening. Especially if you happen to be a Rook!

9.hxg6 hxg6 10.Nf3 b4 11.Nb1 a5

It seems that both players are pursuing their respective plans on the flanks, happily ignoring one another. White plays for space on the Kingside, Black on the Queenside.

12.a4

Annoying, as White holds up my Queenside advance. I was daydreaming about a future ...c6-c5, opening up the long diagonal and continuing with ...a5-a4-a3, in order to exploit the a1-Rook.

12...c5 13.d5 Nb6 14.c4

Play has brought us to the position shown in Diagram 85. Again, White has nipped in the bud my Queenside intentions of ...Bc8-a6, fighting for control of the c4-square.

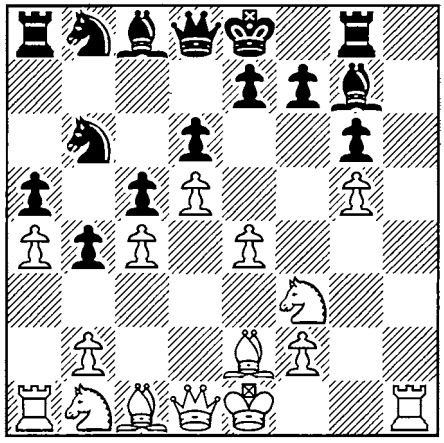


DIAGRAM 85. Black to Play

14...Kd7!!

A stunning move that had the knowledgeable spectators buzzing. In such high-level tournaments, players appreciated the rights of castling and didn't make such forays voluntarily. Yet to my mind, the move was entirely correct. Even natural... The logic of the move is clear. From the opening, we need to find a safe place for the King to hang out. In this case, the Kingside is like a leaky ship; the Queenside, however, has a *locked pawn formation.* No open lines there! My King will be perfectly safe. However, my real concern was not so much any worries about King safety. For the moment, the center is safe enough, the key to the position was the *open h-file* and the *open long (a1-h8) diagonal.* I wanted to challenge White for control of the h-file as soon as possible. That meant connecting my Queen and Rook. My King was simply in the way...

15.Nbd2

Vlado quietly develops his pieces. Nothing is gained by 15.Rh7 Qf8! 16.Nbd2 Rh8! 17.Rxh8 Qxh8, when I take over the h-file and strengthen my grip on the long diagonal.

15...Rh8 16.Rg1 Kc7 17.Rb1 Rh3!

Okay, this isn't a "Rook Lift" so much as a Rook invasion! My plan is to make my pieces as effective as possible. The h8-square is evacuated for the Queen. From h8, the Queen will be ideally placed, creating a double battery on the h-file and long diagonal.

18.b3 Qh8 19.Nf1 N8d7

It is time to complete the rest of my development.

20.Bf4

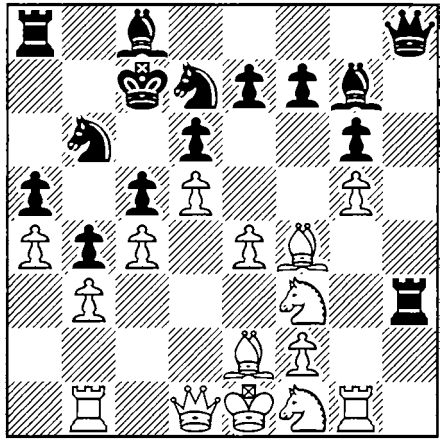


DIAGRAM 86. Black to Play

20...Ne5!

Played without prejudice. An excellent rule of thumb for the attacking side is to avoid *unnecessary exchanges.* While I am proud of my dark-squared Bishop, chess is a *team* game. That is, if you want to win the game you must make your army work as a team. At the moment, my Queenside pieces are languishing. They need to get into the game too. The forthcoming trades on the e5-square make room for the rest of the guys.

21.Nxe5 Bxe5 22.Bxe5 Qxe5 23.f3 Bd7! 24.Qc2 Qd4!

White's f2-f3 has blocked the view of my h3-Rook along the third rank. It needs a more effective square. By tickling the g1-Rook, I gain access to the first rank.

25.Rg2 Rh1! 26.Rf2 Qh8!

A very fine retreat indeed. While on the d4-square, the Black Queen appeared to lord over the position but didn't actually hit anything that wasn't well protected. From the h4-square, however, the f2-Rook will be placed in an absolute pin, keeping White well on the defensive.

27.f4

In anticipation of having to defend the g5-pawn. But with each pawn advance more squares are being weakened and White has taken on a very big responsibility by advancing so many pawns.

27...Qh4 28.Rd1 f6!

The time has come to open up lines for my superior-placed forces. My immediate goal is to play ...f6xg5 in order to open up the f-file with ...Ra8-f8 in view. In that way I will pressure the f2-Rook, which is in an absolute pin. While the text is certainly the best move, I had pangs of regret that my b6-Knight is languishing out of play. If you thought the best play was 28...Bh3, intending ...Nb6-d7 to bring the Knight into the action, good for you! Treat yourself to an ice cream. Chocolate chip mint is my favorite.

29.gxf6 exf6 30.e5

White has a final fling before conceding. Now that the e-file is half-opened, a line of play with ...Ra8-e8 followed by ...Bd7-f5, offering my Bishop, was being conjured. If White accepted by e4xf5 then ...Rh1xf1+ offered a crispy finish.

30...fxe5 31.fxe5 Rf8!

Lucky me! The f-file is opened after all.

32.exd6+ Kb7! 33.Bd3 Re8+ 0-1

When things go my way, it really looks good. White gave up before my combination 34.Be2 Rxf1+ 35.Kxf1 Qh1 checkmate could be executed. Again, this game is not so much about playing a beautiful combination as about the strategic placement of the pieces. In this case, the open h-file was the major avenue of attack. Once I took control of the file, it was about penetrating the opponent's camp, tying up his pieces and then opening lines. When your pieces are in superior positions, combinations such as 34...Rh1xf1+ play themselves. In the end, my King was ideally placed.

With perfect hindsight, however, I'm not so proud of this game. My opening play was not very accurate and in truth after eight moves I much preferred White's position. So where did White err? Move nine! While White's ninth move looked perfectly natural, his Rook was well placed to exploit the open h-file, it was here that White committed a mistake: He made an *unnecessary trade.* Black had no threat to play ...g6xh5 and by trading pawns on g6 I was able to exploit the open h-file, not my opponent. White should have continued his development as in the game and kept the h-pawns on the board.

A twin of my own game is the following one, played a little earlier. At the time, it too created quite a sensation. Jan Hein Donner was a famous Dutch grandmaster with a deserved reputation as a top player. His opponent from China was untitled, unrated and completely unknown. At the time, China was a mysterious closed nation. Many were unsure that the Chinese even played the Western form of chess, having their own games of Chinese Chess and Go. This game therefore came as quite a wake-up call. Indeed, the Chinese players did play the Western game of chess and they played with flair!

Liu Wenzhe-Jan Hein Donner
Buenos Aires Olympiad, 1978
Pirc Defense

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be2 Bg7 5.g4 h6

Unlike in my game with Kovačević, Donner makes the superior and more cautious choice, 5...h6.

6.h3

Not exactly a determined attempt to pursue a Kingside "attack". White would gain nothing from 6.h4, as there is no threat of g4-g5 because the h1-Rook is not protected. White wants to complete his development with a future Ng1-f3, and so spends a tempo to guard his g4-pawn.

6...c5 7.d5 0-0?

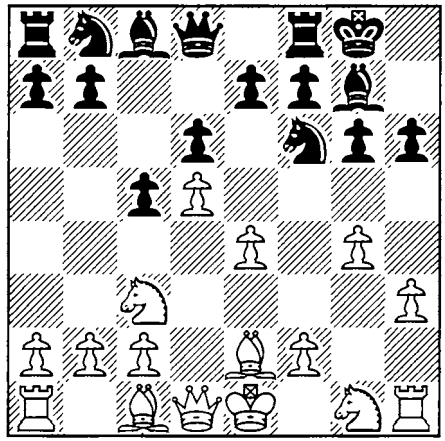


DIAGRAM 87. White to Play

A terrible choice as Black bravely – no, foolishly – castles into the attack. Perhaps Donner was swayed by the innocent appearance of White's sixth move h2-h3 and felt that White had given up his Kingside ambitions.

Black should have delayed castling for as long as possible. Two superior plans were 7...Na6, intending ...Na6-c7 and ...Bc8-d7 with ...b7-b5 to come, and 7...a6! 8.a4 e6, in order to break up White's central pawn wedge.

8.h4!

White's feint has worked. As a chess teacher, James Harley McCormick would say, "Now that we know the address of Black's King let's get *busy!*" Suddenly the "undeveloped" Rook on h1 has a formidable say in the forthcoming play, as it is ideally stationed. Rooks attack on open files and ranks. The h-file is the natural avenue of attack. After all, the chess gods have placed the Rooks in the corners.

8...e6

"A flank attack is met best by a counter in the center" is an old and very good adage. Under the circumstances, Black simply has no other possibility.

9.g5 hxg5 10.hxg5 Ne8?

Rattled by the sudden vehemence of White's attack, Donner commits a grievous error. He had to play 10...Nh7 11.Qd2 Re8 12.Qf4 Nf8, and hope for the best.

11.Qd3!

Now the attack is simply unstoppable. White's Queen is Kingside-bound and the case of the clumsy f8-Rook is revisited.

11...exd5 12.Nxd5 Nc6 13.Qg3! Be6 14.Qh4! f5

In the face of Qh4-h7 checkmate, Black's King needs luft.

15.Qh7+ Kf7

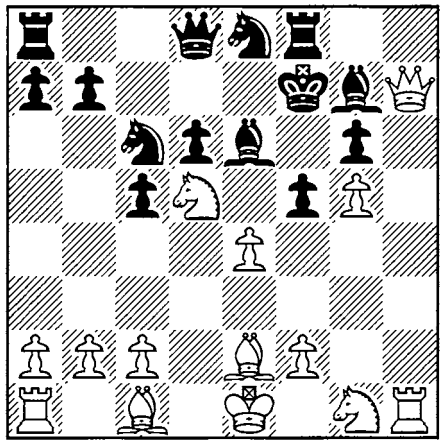


DIAGRAM 88. White to Play

We have now reached the position shown in Diagram 88. White now played the thunder-stroke heard around the world.

16.Qxg6+!!

Brilliant! Okay, White could have chosen 16.Rh6 Ne7 17.Nxe7 Kxe7 18.Rxg6, which would also have won. In that case, Liu Wenzhe would have missed a chance to appear in this volume of combinations.

16...Kxg6 17.Bh5+ Kh7 18.Bf7+!

Such a position is an inspiration for all Rooks.

18...Bh6 19.g6+! Kg7

There is no joy in mudville. Black's other choice, 19...Kh8 20.Rxh6+ Kg7 21.Rh7 checkmate, also ends disastrously.

20.Bxh6+ 1-0

Donner had no desire to endure 20...Kh8 21.Bxf8 checkmate. A glorious career for the h1-Rook. Which never moved!

Unfortunately, my research for this chapter has been overkill. I could give a never-ending stream of examples of mating along the open h-file and Rook Lifts. Instead, I'll limit myself to three further examples which I enjoyed. The following became known as an opening trap.

Hans Bohm-Román Hernández

Amsterdam, 1979

Ruy Lopez

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Bg4

The International Master Hans Bohm is known in Dutch chess circles as an excellent positional player. His fine handling of the Ruy Lopez Exchange Variation has brought him many victories, including a win over American chess giant Samuel Reshevsky in the main line: 5...f6 6.d4 cxd4 7.Nxd4 c5 8.Nb3 Qxd1 9.Rxd1, where White's Kingside pawn majority battles against Black's two Bishops. For these reasons, it is understandable that his opponent avoided the main line. With the text, Black hopes to stall the d2-d4 central break.

6.h3!

This type of move is known as "putting the question to the Bishop". Black faces a difficult decision. If he trades by 6.Bxf3 Qxf3, Black gives up the advantage of the two Bishops and has no recompense for his doubled c-pawns. If the Bishop retreats with 6...Bh5 7.g4! Bg6 8.Nxe5 clips a central pawn at a time when Black's King is stuck in the center. Black therefore opts for a third choice.

6...h5!

Keeping the pin in place for now. White can't accept the Bishop as 7.hxg4? hxg4 8.Nxe5 Qh4! 9.f4 g3! results in a quick checkmate thanks to the open h-file. Such tactics form an important theme in this variation of the Exchange Variation.

7.d3 Qf6 8.Be3 Ne7

Black's development seems rather cumbersome but he has his plan. Black didn't want to trade by 8...Bxf3 9.Qxf3 Qxf3 10.gxf3, when White will be able to break with either d3-d4 or f3-f4 with an edge. Instead, Black wants to bring his Knight to the g6-square, when he will control the f4-square.

9.Nbd2 Ng6 10.hxg4?

Thanks to this game the move 10.Re1 is preferred. In that case, White is ready, at last, to play 11.hxg4 hxg4 12.Nh2! Qh4 13.Ndf1!, blocking the h-file and gaining a piece.

10...hxg4 11.Ng5

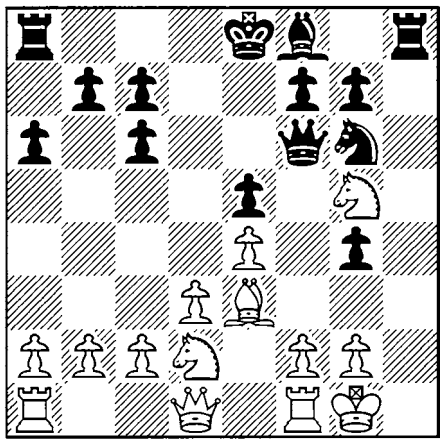


DIAGRAM 89. Black to Play

We have now reached Diagram 89. Hans was quite happy with his position. He has blocked Black's Queen from invading the h4-square while Black has blocked it from the h6-square.

11...Nf4 12.Qxg4

A timely capture indeed! With the g4-pawn gone, White can block a battery along the h-file with Ng5-h3 when needed. In addition, White is poised to play Be3xf4, eliminating another attacker.

12...Qxg5!! 0-1

Whoops! Hans was so preoccupied with preventing a Queen and Rook battery down the h-file he missed the point that 13.Qxg5 Ne2 is both check and mate!

The following game was played in the sixth round of the 2005 Politiken Cup in Copenhagen. Professional grandmaster Nick de Firmian was trying to position himself for a top prize while his young Icelandic opponent was trying to earn his spurs.

Sigurður Sigfússon-Nick de Firmian
Copenhagen, 2005
Sicilian Defense

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6

Nick plays his favorite Najdorf Sicilian Defense. Black takes a flexible, if slightly passive, approach to the center while readying ...b7-b5 as a source of counterplay.

6.Bc4

A favorite move of Bobby Fischer. White's idea is to take control of the d5-square. If Black tries to play ...e7-e6, White plays for f4-f5, when the c4-Bishop and d4-Knight attack the e6-pawn.

6...e6 7.Bb3 Nbd7 8.f4 Nc5 9.Qf3

Thus far, the play for both sides has been eminently logical. White is trying to play f4-f5, to pressure the e6-pawn, while Black has positioned his c5-Knight for the defense and the option to lop off the b3-Bishop.

9...b5?!

This thrust is mistimed. Black wants to threaten ...b5-b4 and capture the e4-pawn. Also, he hopes to lure White into 10.e5, hitting the f6-Knight

and a8-Rook, when Black has the counter-strike 10...Bb7!, with a gain of tempo. 9...Be7 was better, awaiting further developments.

10.f5! e5

Black has no choice, as 10...b4 11.Na4 Nfxe4? 12.Nxc5 Nxc5 13.Qxa8 wins a Rook, while 11...Ncxe4 12.fxe6 fxe6 13.Bxe6 wrecks Black's pawn structure.

11.Nbd2?!

Failing to take advantage of the d5-square. White should have played 11.Nc6! Qd7 12.Nb4, when possession of the d5-outpost gives a superior game.

11...Nxb3! 12.axb3 b4! 13.Nd5 Nxd5 14.exd5

At the moment, Black has to be satisfied with the results of the opening. White has had to occupy the d5-outpost with a pawn and he has earned the two Bishops. Furthermore, Black's counterplay down the half-open c-file is easy to spot. However, a deeper look into the position, which we will get to in a moment, reveals that not all is rosy with Black's position.

14...Be7 15.0-0 0-0 16.Ng3 Bb7

Play has brought us to the position shown in Diagram 90.

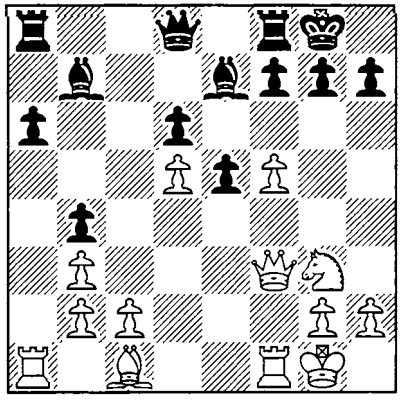


DIAGRAM 90. White to Play

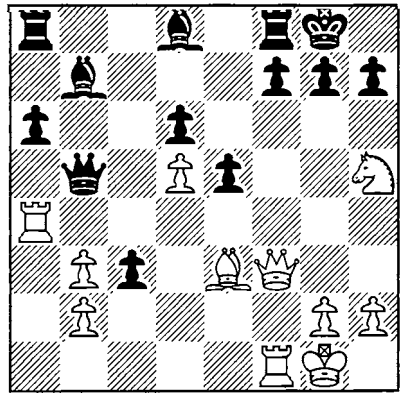


DIAGRAM 91. White to Play

From a strategic point of view, the position is extremely sharp. White wants to play Ng3-e4, where the Knight is a formidable piece. Black has played to stop this plan by pressuring the d5-pawn. White would like to play c2-c4, protecting the d5-pawn, which also has the added benefit of making the b7-Bishop a septic cleric. Unfortunately for White 16.c4? bxc3 17.bxc3 Qb6+ 18.Kh1 Qxb3! not only grabs a pawn but also puts the d5-pawn under fire. White finds an inspired attacking idea.

17.Ra4! Qb6+ 18.Be3 Qb5

Black is quite pleased with his efforts. He has a coordinated attack against the d5-pawn and after the expected 19.Rd1 Rac8 20.Rd2 White's pieces are seizing the defensive.

19.c4!!

This one came as a freezing cold shower. The point of Ra1-a4 is strikingly revealed: A Rook Lift to the Kingside suddenly means that *all* of White's pieces are coordinating for a checkmating strike. From a strategic perspective, Black has no choice but to capture the c4-pawn, allowing the a4-Rook to sweep across the fourth rank. The retreat 19...Qd7 would mean positional bankruptcy after a future Ng3-e4, as well as the loss of the b4-pawn.

19...bxc4 20.f6!

From a cold shower to a hot sauna! Black is being tenderized. Again, capture is obligatory: 20...Bxd5? 21.Qg4 Bxf6 22.Nh5! Kh8 23.Nxf6 gxf6 24.Qh4 Rg8 25.Qxf6+ Rg7 26.Rg4 Rg8 27.Bh6 winning.

20...Bxf6 21.Nh5! Bd8!

A forced retreat. This brings us to Diagram 91.

22.Rg4!

The Rook makes a triumphant entry into battle. As Nick explained in *New in Chess* magazine, he felt like the English in a seventh-century raid by the Vikings. A sudden and unexpected attacking horde is banging at the fortress gates. Desperation is in order.

22...f5!

His only realistic chance to fight back is to jettison the g7-pawn – with check! After 22...g6? 23.Nf6+ Kg7 (23...Bxf6 24.Qxf6 means there is no

cure for Be3-h6 and our Queen and Bishop Mate, while 23...Kh8 24.Rh4! h5 25.Rxh5+ gxh5 26.Qxh5 Kg7 27.Qh6 checkmate.) 24.Rh4! h5 (As 24...Rh8? 25.Bh6 is checkmate.) 25.Bh6+! Kh8 26.Bxf8 wins a Rook, with Rh4xh5+ to follow and checkmate next.

23.Rxg7+ Kh8

We now see the reason for Black's retreat 21...Bd8 and not 21...Be7, as White would continue 22.Rxe7, winning the e7-Bishop. White's double pawn sacrifice has been rewarded with the position shown in Diagram 92. It is White to move and win. Ponder the position before making your choice. What would you do?

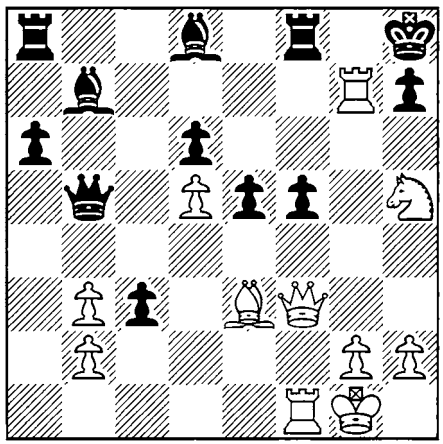


DIAGRAM 92. White to Play

Before revealing the answer, I'd like to move on to a higher level of combinational understanding. I call it *focus of the pieces.* Sometimes in the excitement of battle players should simply stop calculating for a moment and ask themselves a simple question: Where are my pieces focused? Well, clearly in this case, the quarry is Black's King! Checkmate is the goal, not the focus of the attack. In this case, it is the g7-square that has been conquered and it is for *that* square that the White Queen must aim. White's h5-Knight and g7-Rook give us our focus. By the simple move

24.Qg3 Black is mated. The immediate threat is Rg7xh7+ and Qg3-g7 checkmate. Black's only defense is 24...Bf6 25.Rxf5 cxb2 (Black has no better choice.) 26.Rxh7+ Kxh7 27.Nxf6+ Rxf6 28.Rh5+ Rh6 29.Rxh6 checkmate.

If we go back to Diagram 92 for a moment, I'd like to verbalize my thought patterns. Although the solution has been given, I'd take a fleeting look at the move 24.Qxf5, sacrificing the Queen, but would have quickly realized that 24...Rxf5 25.Rxf5 Bb6 stops the "brilliant" plan of Rf5-f8 checkmate. I'd also give up this idea for a second reason: 24.Qxf5? Qxf1+! forces White to trade his attacking pieces: 25.Qxf1 Rxf1+ 26.Kxf1 cxb2, which must be avoided. Indeed, this second reason would give me the shivers and I would be *very attracted* to capturing the c3-pawn at once! As this is Black's only counter-chance, the move 24.bxc3! is very good indeed. This time-out from the attack wins a pawn and puts an end to all of Black's hopes. Black would be unable to trade Queens by 24...Qxd5? as 25.Rxb7 simply wins a Bishop. After 24...Bxd5 I would then try to decide the best square for my Queen, pleased with the knowledge that I had eliminated Black's only real counterplay.

This brings us to the move played in the game. Again, from Diagram 92 if my calculations weren't guided by my focus of the pieces approach, I'd also consider the move 24.Qh3, taking aim against the h7-pawn. The threat is easy to spot: 25.Rxh7+ Kxh7 26.Nf6++ Kg7 27.Qh7+! Kxf6 28.Rxf5 checkmate. The idea is rather tempting indeed...

24.Qh3??

In the heat of battle, this entirely reasonable move tosses away a brilliant victory. Now the situation is reversed. You are now pressed, dear reader, to find Black's only defense from Diagram 93. What would you play?

Before revealing the proper defense, let's again verbalize the thought process. We know that White's threat is 25.Rxh7+ Kxh7 26.Nf6++ Kg7 27.Qh7+! Kxf6 28.Rxf5 checkmate, as pointed out above. We can defend the f5-pawn with the Queen by 25...Qd3, but is this a good move? Our Queen would be "hanging" on the d3-square and after 26.Rxh7+ Kxh7

27.Nf4+ Kg8 28.Nxd3 our Queen is swept off the board. We have to reject 25...Qd3 as a defense.

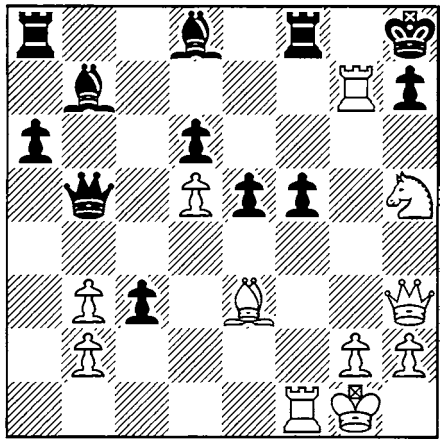


DIAGRAM 93. Black to Play

A second defensive possibility is 24...f4, stopping White's threat but allowing 25.Nxf4! Kxg7 26.Ne6+ and the f8-Rook falls with check, when Black is busted.

We are forced to the realization that White's attacking forces are simply overwhelming! Something must be done and we are forced to look at any and *every* capture. We are reduced to considering 24...Qxf1+, sacrificing the Queen for Rook. Well, such a move certainly does reduce White's attacking forces! After the recapture 25.Kxf1, we look at the position with new eyes. At least White's threat of 25.Rxh7+ Kxh7 26.Nf6++ Kg7 27.Qh7+ Kxf6 28.Rxf5 checkmate has been eliminated. A very good thing! Then our eyes alight on the sweet little fellow on the c3-square. Its valiant effort after 25...cxb2 would mean that it is one square away from the cherished coronation. We stop our calculations and recognize that our play is forced.

24...Qxf1+!! 25.Kxf1 cxb2

Good grief! Now it is White's turn to panic! It is obvious to one and

all that the move ...b2-b1=Q+ will mean a new Black Queen will arrive with check! From the b1-square a future ...f5-f4, will defend the h7-pawn and White's planned conquest of this pawn will be a lost dream. It is time for White to think about saving the game.

26.Rxh7+! Kxh7 27.Nf4+ Kg8 28.Qg3+ Kh7

Black has to be agreeable to the halving of the point. Climbing over the clumsy Rook by 28...Kf7?? 29.Qg6+ Ke7 30.Qe6 walks into a kind of Epaulette checkmate.

29.Qg6+ Kh8 30.Qh6+ Draw.

The position was agreed a draw in view of the perpetual checking pattern that we saw in Chapter Two. A blood-curling example of combinative play! This is chess in all its glory. In the heat of battle, we spoil our combinations. Mistakes are part of the human condition. White's inspired play rewarded him with the knowledge that his sacrifices were correct. Had he found the right continuation with 24.Qg3, his effort would have been destined for the Combinational Hall of Fame!

At the time the following game was played, Holland's top two players were fighting for recognition as the best Dutch player. The battle was tense throughout, with riveting maneuvers by both players.

Loek Van Wely-Jeroen Piket

Wijk aan Zee, 1996

English Opening

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.e3 Bb4 5.Qc2 Bxc3

A confusing capture that isn't so easy to explain. In general, Black would only trade after 6.a3, putting the question to his Bishop. After the routine 5...0-0 the move 6.Nd5! means that the b4-Bishop is no longer the hunter but is rather misplaced. White will play a quick a2-a3 and b2-b4, expanding on the Queenside with tempo.

6.Qxc3 Qe7!

Although trading Bishop for Knight has been a plus for White, Black

has benefited as well. Black's scheme of development means that the f8-Bishop didn't have many useful squares, and its elimination has meant that Black has an easier time developing the rest of his forces. For the moment, it is a good idea for Black to restrain the b2-pawn.

Looking at matters from White's side of the board, the c1-Bishop has no future on the c1-h6 diagonal and a Queenside fianchetto is nearly mandatory if the c1-Bishop is going to play a useful role. That means the b2-pawn is going to be advanced and Black makes sure that the b2-pawn doesn't go too far.

7.a3 a5

It would be an egregious mistake to play 7...e4, which appears quite tempting. Why? The answer has to do with the long a1-h8 diagonal. As noted, the c1-Bishop is heading to the b2-square and the move ...e5-e4 would open up the long diagonal. The text continues to restrain the b2-pawn.

8.b3

A bit passive for my taste. In 1979, against Gerardo Barbero I played 8.b4 and won a nice game.

8...0-0 9.Bb2 Re8

The opening moves have brought us to Diagram 94.

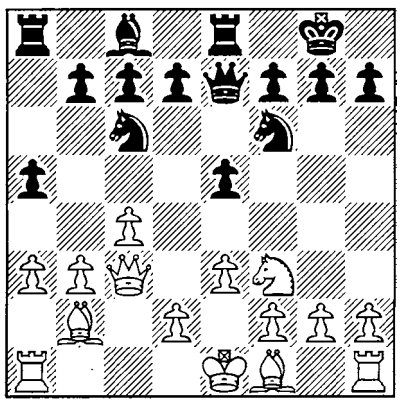


DIAGRAM 94. White to Play

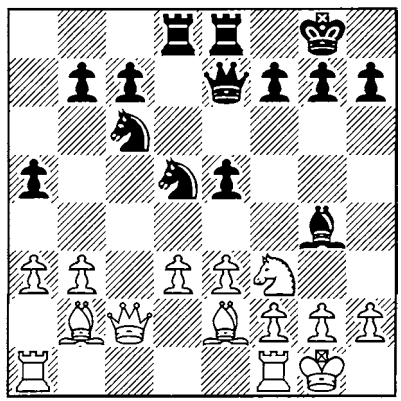


DIAGRAM 95. Black to Play

10.d3

Again, the same flexible yet passive approach to the position. It was more logical to play 10.d4!, trying to blast open the long diagonal. Surprisingly, that move would likely be coupled with a pawn sacrifice after 10...e4 11.d5, again to keep the long diagonal open. If White plays 11.Nd2 d5! keeps the long diagonal closed. Play would continue 11...exf3 12.dxc6 fxg2 13.Bxg2 dxc6, when Black has won a pawn while White has a dangerous Kingside initiative. In the parlance of the lazy annotators' guide to evaluation, the position would be "unclear".

10...d5 11.cxd5 Nxd5 12.Qc2 Bg4 13.Be2 Rad8 14.0-0

The position in Diagram 95 looks like a typical Sicilian type of game with colors reversed. From the perspective of the long-term, Black does not have an easy task. Why? As proud possessor of the two Bishops, White is looking forwards to the late middlegame and endgame. As the position opens, owing to pawn trades, the Bishops will become more powerful. Furthermore, as in many Sicilian positions, White will utilize the half-open c-file to create play. It will be a simple matter for White to play Ra1-c1 and dream of sacrificing an Exchange on c6 and to grab the e5-pawn as well. As the long-term outlook for Black is bleak, he needs to look to the short term and generate counterplay lickety-split. But where? The center doesn't offer anything special. If Black plays ...f7-f5 and ...e5-e4, he will be playing right into White's hands by opening the a1-h8 diagonal. Playing for ...f5-f4 is quite plausible but there is a tactical problem: 14...f5 15.h3 Bh5 16.Nxe5! Bxe2 17.Nxc6 bxc6 18.Qxe2 Nf4 19.Qc2 Nxd3 results in a ruined Queenside structure.

With no play on the Queenside and with forcing play in the center sure to boomerang, Black *must* consider ways of creating play on the Kingside.

14...Rd6!

In a single stroke Black has discovered a superb plan sure to generate a lot of counterplay and a headache for White. A Kingside migration is Black's blueprint. With this Rook Lift, Black wants to play ...Rd6-g6, try for ...Bg4-h3 and start to hassle White's King.

As a young player, such a maneuver simply wouldn't have occurred to

me. I would have thought that Black should double Rooks on the half-open d-file in order to "pressure" the d3-pawn. In such a case, as mentioned, I would only be using half of the Rook's powers.

15.Qc4?!

Suddenly, it is not so easy for White to find an active plan. Advancing by 15.d4? e4 16.Ne5 Bxe2 17.Qxe2 helps Black trade Bishops and the advance of the other center pawn by 15.e4? Nf4, just concedes the f4-square. It would seem that White has to play only on the Queenside. The move b3-b4 will be difficult if not impossible to enforce. Therefore, play is limited to the c-file. The move 15.Rac1 appears to be the most logical choice. In that case, White could prepare the maneuver Qc2-c5-b5, gearing up for a potential Exchange sacrifice.

A quick question: Why didn't White play 15.Nxe5? The answer is at the end of the chapter.

15...Qd7

Not just protecting the g4-Bishop, Black is repositioning his Queen with an eye towards further Kingside migration. Black is now gearing up for a plausible ...Bg4-h3, combined with ...Rd6-g6, when everything starts heading in that direction.

16.Rac1 Nb6

A reasonable defensive move, which aims to drive White's Queen backwards. Black realizes that as long as the Queen is perched on the c4-square, Kingside violence will fail as the Queen will swoop across the fourth rank for the defense. While it is a pity the b6-Knight won't be involved in the Kingside migration, the move has another useful purpose: to open the d-file and pressure the d3-pawn.

17.Qc2?!

White cooperates by this passive retreat. Much better was 17.Qb5!, keeping his hoped-for Queenside play alive. The position after 17...Bxf3 18.Bxf3 Nd4! 19.Qxd7 Nxf3+ 20.gxf3 Rxd7 21.Rfd1 would be a rough equality. White would also welcome a trade of Rooks by 17...Rd5 18.Rc5 Rxc5 19.Qxc5, as the potential attack by ...Rd6-g6 is gone. Note that 17.Qe4?? f5! successfully traps White's Queen.

17...Rg6!

Consistently played. Now Black is threatening ...Bg4-h3 and to besiege White's King. Black could have won a pawn by 17...Bxf3 18.Bxf3 Rxd3 19.Bxc6 bxc6 20.Rfd1 Rxd1+ 21.Rxd1 Qe6, although White would have good compensation.

18.Kh1

Sidestepping the threat. Play has brought us to Diagram 96.

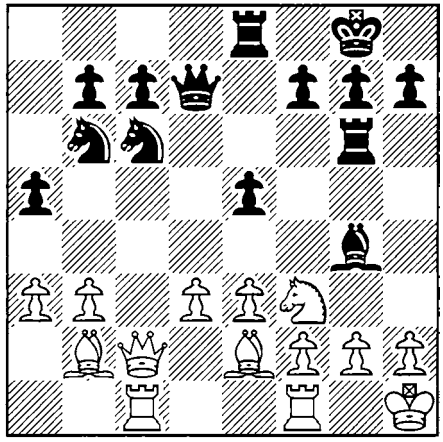


DIAGRAM 96. Black to Play

18...Rh6!

A fine change of direction. Black's new focus is the h2-pawn. The plan of attack is properly revealed if White now pursues his Queenside play: 19.b4? axb4 20.axb4 Qf5! 21.b5? Qh5!, when White is lost. There is no good way to guard the h2-pawn: 21.h3 Bxh3 22.Nh2 Bxg2+ 23.Kxg2 Qh3+ 24.Kg1 Qxh2 checkmate.

19.Ng1

A retreat that reveals White's concern.

19...Rd8!?

Jeroen decides on a new plan. I would have played 19...Bxe2 20.Nxe2 Qg4 21.Ng3 Ree6!, pursuing the Kingside initiative.

20.Rfd1 Rd6!

Completing the change of direction. Black's Kingside feint has gained the concession of two tempi: the moves Kg1-h1 and Nf3-g1. Now the new focus is the d3-pawn.

21.Nf3

Loek is a very aggressive player who often asks for more from his position than he should. He ought to take the opportunity to play 21.Bxg4! and trade Bishops. After the further moves 21...Qxg4 22.Nf3, White would have a passive but solid game. Such a line, however, would be an acknowledgement that Black has the initiative. Loek wanted to keep his two Bishops as consolation for his cramped position.

21...Qf5!

Although the Kingside attack has temporarily stalled, that doesn't mean that matters have been settled. All options are still possible. The d3-pawn is eyeballed and Black may still load up for ...Qf5-h5 and ...Rd6-h6 going after the h2-pawn.

22.b4?

In a cramped position, the tendency is for players to seek active moves. This is usually a mistake. Cramped positions are best relieved by piece trades, not by trading pawns. Again, 22.Nh4! Qh5 23.Bxg4 Qxg4 24.Nf3 was White's correct choice, giving up the two Bishops.

I shouldn't be so harsh regarding the text. White has kept a battery on the c-file for just such an advance. Indeed, he has been spoiling for this move from the very opening! Unfortunately for him, it meets with a tactical refutation.

22...axb4 23.axb4 Bxf3! 24.gxf3

A very ugly, yet forced recapture. If 24.Bxf3? Nxb4! 25.Qxc7 Nxd3 is simply winning for Black. The problem is that White is susceptible to a back-rank checkmate from the two main options of play:

26.e4 Qf4! 27.Rxd3 Rxd3 28.Qxb6 Qxc1+! 29.Bxc1 Rd1+ 30.Bxd1 Rxd1 checkmate.

26.Rxd3 Qxd3 27.Bxe5 Qd1+! 28.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 29.Bxd1 Rxd1 checkmate.

24...Nd5! 25.b5

In view of Black's threat simply to play ...Nd5xb4, White has no alternative to the text. The try 25.e4? Qf4 26.exd5 Rh6! hands Black a mating attack. The play has brought us to Diagram 97.

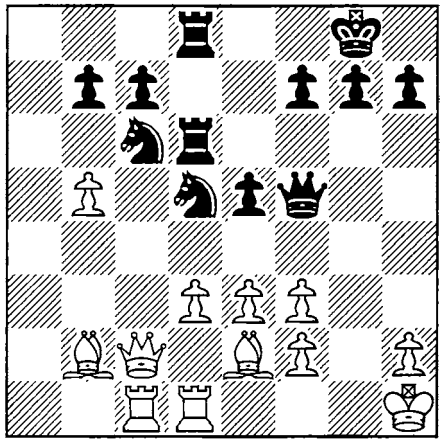


DIAGRAM 97. Black to Play

The position in Diagram 97 features a classic pattern of attack that definitely belongs in our repertoire. Make a section in your notebook for the following Knight leap.

25...Nd4!!

While the text is in many ways an *automatic* sacrifice, it is still a beauty. Black sacrifices one Knight in order that his colleague will have access to the f4-square.

26.exd4?!

White is sunk after either capture, but a harder nut to crack was 26.Bxd4! Rh6!! (Not 26...exd4? 27.e4 Qh5 28.exd5 Rh6 29.Qxc7, when White wins.) 27.Bxe5 (Something has to be done about the threats of ...e5xd4 ...Nd5-f4 and ...Qf5-h5, thus 27.Ba1? Nf4!!, with a quick checkmate in the offing. Positional bankruptcy awaits after 27.Rg1 exd4 28.Qc5 *(28...e4? Qh3 29.Rg2 Nf4 wins.)* 28...Rh4, when Black has all the play.)

27...Qxe5 28.f4 Nxf4 29.Qxc7 (The Knight is immune: 29.exf4? Qxf4 30.Qxc7 Rxh2+ 31.Kg1 Qxf2 checkmate.) 29...Qd5+ 30.e4 Qg5 31.Bf3 (31.Bf1 Rg6 and White will be quickly checkmated. While 31.Rg1 is checkmate in two moves.) 31...Qh4 32.Kg1 Qxh2+ 33.Kf1 Qh1+!, with a Rook and Knight checkmate.

26...Rh6 27.Rg1

White rushes to bolster the Kingside defenses. 27.Bf1 Qh5 28.h3 Nf4 29.Qxc7 Qxh3+ was no better, with a quick checkmate in view.

27...Nf4!

The point of Black's combination is revealed: the Knight enters the attack with dreadful impact. The immediate threat is 28...Rxh2+, with mate to follow on the next move.

28.Rg4

Jeroen Piket shares the following nifty variation: 28.Rg3 Qh5 29.Kg1 Qxh2+ 30.Kf1 Qh1+ 31.Rg1 Qxg1+! 32.Kxg1 Rdd6, when White is helpless to prevent checkmate.

28...Qh5 29.h4

The game position is shown in Diagram 98. Black delivered a knockout blow.

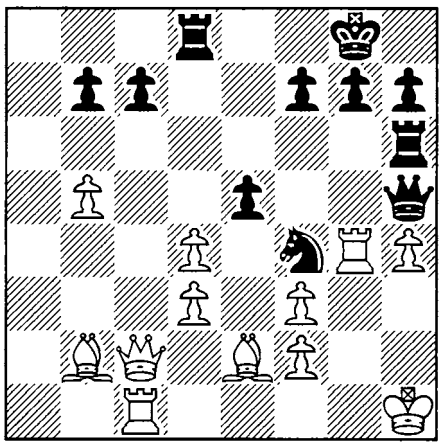


DIAGRAM 98. Black to Play

29...Qxh4+!! 30.Rxh4 Rxh4+ 31.Kg1 Rd6! 0-1

The triumph of the second Rook Lift is a nice end to this chapter.

I will close with the advice that for your combination notebook add two sections for the Rook: "Lifts" and "Open Files".

The answer to our little quiz on page 133 is: 15.Nxe5 is a mistake. Black would play 15...Nxe5 16.Bxe5 Rc6!, winning a tempo against White's Queen. Once the Queen moves, 17...Bxe2 and 18...Qxe5 would win a piece for Black.

CHAPTER FIVE

Blunders and Boomerangs

For our combinations to work, logic dictates that our position must possess an advantage of some type. Sometimes an advantage is simply not so obvious and we must consider another way to justify our sacrificial intentions: Combinations are a way to *punish our opponent for having made a mistake.* Let's ponder the following situation in which chess players often find themselves. We've spotted an exciting sacrifice that seems to be dictated by the needs of the position. However, the complications to be calculated seem too hard to work out. What should we do? Go for the glory and trust in our fate? Alternatively, should we settle down for a moment and consider the moves of our opponent. Has our esteemed, honorable competitor committed an error of some type which justifies our combination or not? If the guidelines of general strategy haven't been trampled, there is a very good chance that our combination simply will not work. This concept, however, cannot be taken too far, especially if we find ourselves deep into the game. Such a method of reconsideration is usually reserved for the opening phase. When we uncork a combination during this phase of the game, we either have a tangible advantage in development: superior mobility, force, space and so on. Something is in our favor! Alternatively, we are punishing our opponent for having neglected an important nuance,

such as prematurely castling into a Bishop Sacrifice. Our opponent committed a mistake! If neither, we will likely fall victim to a combinational boomerang, where the hunted becomes the prey.

In his book *How to Beat Bobby Fischer* Edmar Mednis opines that the reason for virtually all of Bobby's tournament and match game losses was that he was smitten by his own ideas and plans and had neglected to pay enough attention to what the opponent was doing. Hmm. This extraordinary piece of insight may well apply to *every* chess player! My losses are certainly attributable to the play of my opponent...

My losses due to a faulty combination on my part are attributable to another reason: I missed a hidden defense. Rather, a defense that I didn't see but was quite visible to my gleeful opponent! The most important defensive device for wrecking a combination is the *zwischenzug*. The what? I hear you say. *Zwischenzug* is a German term that may be translated as "an in-between move". An in-between what? Again, when we speak of combinational play, we are talking about a forced series of moves. A series of checks to the King, a series of captures, or both. Let us imagine a situation where we have made a sacrifice to take advantage of a back-rank checkmate. Terrific waves of enthusiasm engulf us as we soar to the glory of our amazing concept. Suddenly, instead of accepting our sacrifice our opponent makes luft. Unfortunately, luft comes with a tempo and attacks our Queen. Our Queen is forced to move, the back-rank checkmate is no longer in place and *now* our sacrifice is accepted. Suddenly, we are a piece down with no compensation. Our combination failed. This chapter will discuss combinational failures and how we might consider whether or not the defender has a hidden defense.

A *zwischenzug* isn't a tactical tool just for the defender. It is just as often used by the attacker. Again, if we imagine a situation where a forced series of trades is about to take place, the attacker may often play a check to force the defender to misplace his King. Once that is done, the trading begins and the resulting position is won as the King can no longer stop a passed pawn.

During the 2005 M-Tel Masters' tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria I wit-

nessed just such a boomerang. In the third-round game of the tournament, the Classical Chess World Champion Vladimir Kramnik uncorked a masterful sacrificial stroke against the British grandmaster Michael Adams. Yet the game took a very unusual turn...

Michael Adams-Vladimir Kramnik
Sofia, 2005
Petroff Defense

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6

When Vladimir is intent upon neutralizing White's opening advantage he plays the *Petroff Defense* or what is appropriately called the *Russian Defense.* White attacks Black's e-pawn and he returns the compliment. In modern times it has grown increasingly difficult for White to gain an opening advantage. Michael plays a topical main line.

3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5 6.Bd3 Nc6 7.0-0 Be7 8.c4 Nb4 9.Be2 0-0 10.Nc3 Bf5 11.a3 Nxc3 12.bxc3 Nc6 13.Re1 Re8 14.cxd5 Qxd5 15.Bf4 Rac8 16.Bg3 Bf6

Thus far, both players have been following a highly fashionable line of opening play. On the surface things should favor White: He has more central pawns, which are restricting Black's pieces, and especially the c6-Knight and the f6-Bishop. Black's c8-Rook is tied to the defense of the c7-pawn and so on. While White can add up the various plusses, translating all of these advantages into something tangible is difficult. Michael had an idea that he should try to rearrange the position of his e2-Bishop and f3-Knight. In particular, it is the f3-Knight that needs a better vista. As the e5-square is well guarded, his next move seemed quite logical.

17.Nd2 Qa5

Vladimir immediately recognized the plan. White wants to play Be2-f3 with tempo and Nd2-e4, harassing his f6-Bishop. In this variation, it is quite common for Black to retreat his Queen to the d7-square, protecting his c7-pawn and then to try to reposition his c6-Knight by either ...Nc6-a5, with ...c7-c5 to follow, or by ...Nc6-e7-d5, with a central outpost. This lat-

ter continuation also explains 16.Bg3, getting out of harm's way. Vladimir spent a lot of time on the text as he had spotted a combination.

18.Qc1

Protecting the c3-pawn and now readying the stroke, Nd2-c4, jumping forwards with a gain of tempo. Play has brought us to Diagram 99.

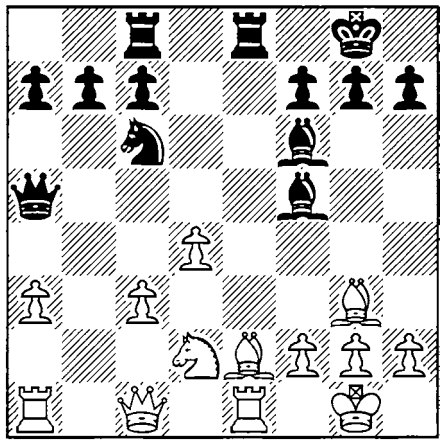


DIAGRAM 99. Black to Play

Before it is revealed what was played we should stop to understand fully the motivation behind Black's next move. What Vladimir was thinking about was the *focus of the pieces.* It is clear that Black's Bishops are aiming at the center and Queenside. His e8-Rook is well placed on the open file, his Queen is on the a5-e1 diagonal, which means that it too is focused on the e1-square. Vladimir is considering 18...Bxd4 19.cxd4 Nxd4, a tactical stroke that wipes away White's pawn center, solves the dilemma of how to "activate" the c6-Knight, and appears to give Black the immediate initiative. Vladimir can also see that an inevitable Rook trade on the e1-square will force White to allow ...Nd4-c2, forking Queen (e1) and Rook (a1). Finally, White's d2-Knight is also a tactical target for the a5-Queen. Using this method of looking at the focus of his pieces, Vladimir decided to strike!

18...Bxd4

A mistake. Which only fails to a diabolical counter. Before embarking on his combination by 17...Qa5 and 18...Bxd4, Vladimir should have stopped and asked himself a simple question: What did White do *wrong* that allows me to punish his play? In answer he would have realized that in fact White did nothing wrong at all. His first sixteen moves have been seen dozens of times in top-flight events. Perhaps the move, Nf3-d2, was the culprit? A waste of time or a standard move? It is against the guidelines of combinational play that Black's sacrifice should succeed. Now it was up to Michael to prove that Black's enterprising play is to be punished.

The continuation 18...Bg5 was a better choice.

19.cxd4

As noted, forced moves are sometimes good ones. White is mighty pleased to remove the offending Bishop.

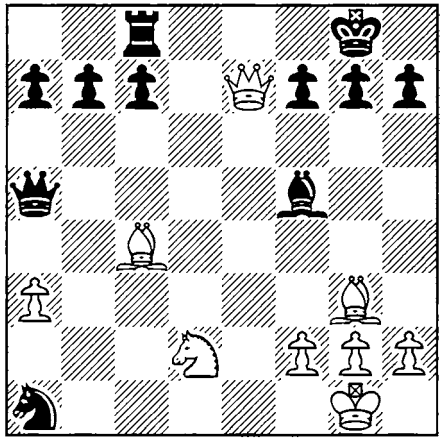
19...Nxd4 20.Bc4

A fine move and an only move as well! Michael had to restore his sense of confidence in his position. He did that by asking himself whether he had done anything wrong. Convinced that he had not, he now has to look at how to gain the initiative and the Bishop takes up a threatening post. A lame retreat such as 20.Bf1? Rxe1 21.Qxe1 Nc2 22.Qc1 Nxa1 would allow Black to win material.

20...Nc2

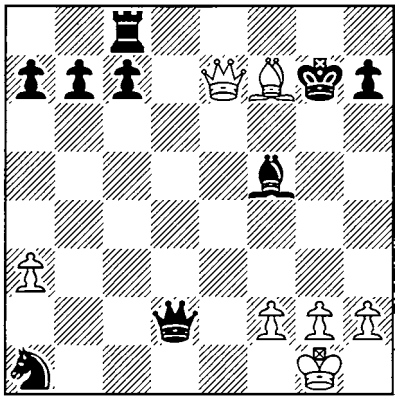
This is definitely **not** the move Vladimir intended to make when embarking on his combination. Too late he had now spotted the "hole" in his calculations. Let us look at what he had wanted to play: 20...Rxe1+ 21.Qxe1 Nc2, forking Queen and Rook. White has no choice but to go on the offense and kiss his Rook goodbye. The only move is thus 22.Qe7!, with a counter-attack against the f7-pawn and Black's King. Black cannot now grab the hanging d2-Knight: 22...Qxd2? 23.Qxf7+ Kh8 24.Qxf5 wins back the piece with a tempo against the c8-Rook. After the c8-Rook moves, White in turn will play 25.Rf1, with a piece to the good. Vladimir had anticipated losing the f7-pawn and was ready to grab the Rook with

22...Nxa1. This brings us to Analysis Diagram 100:

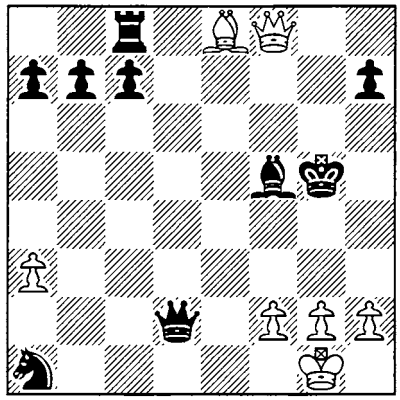


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 100. White to Play

Vladimir was quite pleased with the situation for him in the analysis diagram. In the first place, he is ahead on material. Always an excellent plus! More importantly, both Kings are susceptible to back-rank checkmates and having an extra Exchange is quite an edge in such circumstances. Furthermore, Black is ready to play ...Qa5xd2 and ...Qd2-d1+, taking advantage of the back rank. Vladimir had expected the natural capture 23.Qxf7+?? Kh8 24.Nf3 Bg6 25.Qd7 Re8!, when he is in time to prevent Bg3-e5 and is ready for the defensive reaction ...Qa5-f5, defending his Kingside. Suddenly, the power of the move Bg3-e5 began to take a fearful form and the hole was quickly discovered. White would play 23.Bxf7+! Kh8 24.Be5!. White is in full-throttle attack mode. His material deficit means he must continue his "desperate" attack at all costs. Black too has to ride the back of the tiger with 24...Qxd2!. Who is mating whom? White has no choice, and his moves must come with check. 25.Bxg7+ Kxg7 brings us to Analysis Diagram 101.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 101.
White to Play



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 102.
White to Play

Both players had anticipated reaching this position. Michael was happy to realize that with 26.Be6+ Kh6 (Certainly not 26...Kh8?? 27.Qf6 and Black has walked into checkmate.) 27.Qf6+ Bg6 28.Qh4+ Bh5 29.Qf6+ he has at least a perpetual check. From Diagram 101, can you spot White's winning continuation?

A vital aspect of combinational play is *improving* your own pieces while *limiting* the scope of your opponent's pieces. In this particular case, the c8-Rook protects the crucial f8-square. White can block the Rook with a discovered check! Play is again forced: 26.Be8+!! Kh6 (There is no going back: 26...Kg8?? 27.Qf7+ Kh8 28.Qf8+ with a back rank mate.) Black is forced to march forwards: 27.Qf8!+ Kg5, which brings us to our Analysis Diagram 102.

Vladimir had already gotten this far and realized he wanted no further role in this variation. Still, the finish is really excellent. White now plays 28.f4+!!, winning in spectacular fashion. Black's Queen cannot capture the f4-pawn: 28...Qxf4? 29.Qe7+ Kh6 (29...Kg4 30.h3+ Kg3 31.Qe1+ Qf2+ 32.Qxf2 checkmate. An interesting series of checks, tailor-made for a television commercial.) 30.Qf6+! and Black is forced to block by

30...Bg6 31.Qxf4+, losing his Queen with check. Neither is the King allowed to capture the f4-pawn, owing to a skewer: 28...Kxf4? 29.Qh6+ Ke5 30.Qxd2, winning. Black has to march forwards once more with 28...Kg4, to which White has only one winning move but it is a goody! 29.Bh5+, when Black is forced to capture the f4-pawn after all and loses his Queen. He cannot allow 29...Kxh5? 30.Qxf5+ and Qf5-g5 checkmate. 29...Kxf4 30.Qh6+ Ke5 31.Qxd2 and White wins.

A marvelous example of a desperate counter-attack hitting the mark. Although quite lengthy, the path is very narrow and it was easy for the players to calculate. As mentioned, once Michael saw the perpetual check he knew he was "safe" and would start to look for the win thereafter. Let's return to the game, now that we understand why Vladimir had been stopped from his intended course.

21.Rxe8+ Rxe8 22.Rb1 Re1+

Black has nothing better than to win White's Queen.

23.Qxe1 Nxe1 24.Rxe1 Kf8 25.Nf3 f6

An unusual position of Rook, Bishop and Knight for Queen and two pawns has been reached, as we see in Diagram 103:

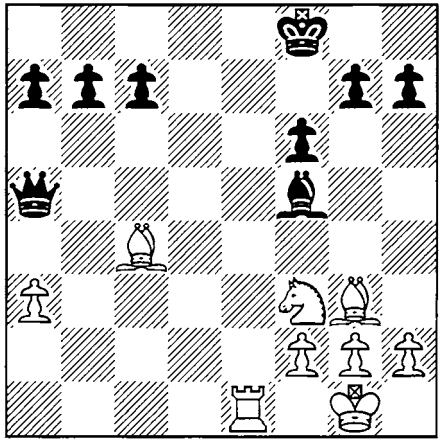


DIAGRAM 103. White to Play

In reality, Black's combination has boomeranged and White has the advantage. What White now needs to do is to coordinate his pieces by bringing them to aggressive positions while keeping tabs on his a3-pawn. Michael played the rest of the game in fine style to bring home the victory.

26.Rd1 Qc5 27.Bf1 Ke8 28.Nd4 Bd7 29.Rd3 a5 30.h3 b5 31.Nb3 Qxa3 32.Bxc7 a4 33.Bd6 Qb2 34.Nc5 a3

A mistake that will cost Black his passed pawn. His best chance was 34...Bf5 35.Re3+ Kf7 36.Nb7!. A difficult move to find. White intends to play 37.Ba3 and Nd6+ to grab the b5-pawn. The play becomes rather forceful again: 36...Kg8 37.Ba3! Qa1 38.Re8+ Kf7 39.Nd6+ Kg6 40.Re3! Bd7 41.Rg3+ Kh5 42.Rxg7, with a big if not winning advantage. Black cannot play 42...Qxa3? 43.Nf7!, when White weaves a mating net.

35.Re3+ Kf7

Black would not last very long after 35...Kd8? 36.Re7 Bf5 37.Rf7! Bg6 38.Rb7! Bf5 39.Bxb5, intending Rb7-b8+ and Nc5-e6 checkmate.

36.Nd3 Qb1

The passed pawn is lost. If 36...Qa1 37.Bxa3! Qxa3? 38.Ne5+ is discovered check, winning Black's Queen.

37.Bxa3 Be6 38.Nf4 b4 39.Bxb4 Qxb4 40.Nxe6 g6 41.g3 1-0

A truly excellent refutation of an attractive but faulty combination. Most refutations, fortunately, will not require such hard effort. Let's look at simpler examples involving overlooked defenses.

One of the major reasons that our combinations can fail is that we put too much confidence in a pin. Having mentally made a note to ourselves that "the f6-Knight is pinned and can't move", we stop imagining ways the defender can use the pinned piece. The reality is that if the pin is not an absolute pin, one where the piece can't move as it will expose the King to check, the pin is relative not absolute. The pinned piece may move, accepting the loss of something but getting something else in return. The clearest examples of a pinned piece moving occur most often in the opening. The single most famous example of this kind of oversight occurs in the Queen's Gambit Declined.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Nbd7

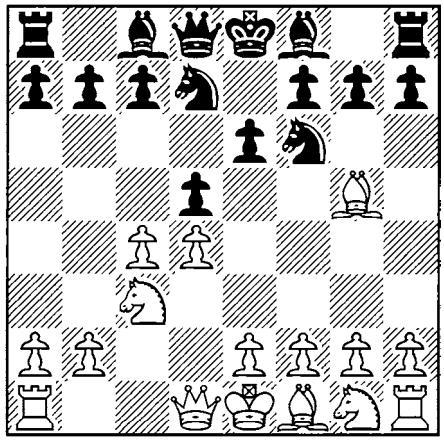


DIAGRAM 104. White to Play

In the position in Diagram 104, countless players have looked at the position and said to themselves, *"Hmm. Hold on a minute here. I just pinned the f6-Knight, which is guarding the d5-pawn. My opponent has left his pawn hanging! I can just take twice, he can't take back because he loses his Queen."* With a gleeful smile the d5-pawn is devoured and another victim snared.

5.cxd5 exd5 6.Nxd5?? Nxd5! 7.Bxd8 Bb4+

The scorpion's sting at the end of the tail. The White player had stopped further "analysis" once the Queen had been mentally captured. The pinned Knight moved and thereafter White was forced to return the Queen.

8.Qd2 Bxd2+ 9.Kxd2 Kxd8 10.e4 N5f6

Black has won a Knight for a pawn and has a won position. This same false belief in the power of a relative pin has also been shown in Legall's Mate (Diagram 1). Another common example is seen from the Scandinavian Defense.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qd8

The text is not the most popular treatment. The usual move is 3...Qa5, and even 3...Qd6 has its supporters.

4.Nf3 Bg4

An old saying to guide players making their first steps in the chess world is *"Knights before Bishops"*. The idea is that a better diagonal may appear if we delay our development for a moment. Alternatively, it could just be that variations like this example are seen as too dangerous in the hands of beginning players.

5.d4 Nc6?

A very bad move. Black was already anxious to snack a pawn by 5...Bxf3 6.Qxf3 Qxd4, but in the nick of time saw the move 7.Qxb7, snaring the a8-Rook. A reminder of numerous games from my early years...

6.d5 Ne5?

The position is shown in Diagram 105. Black is putting blind faith in the pinned f3-Knight.

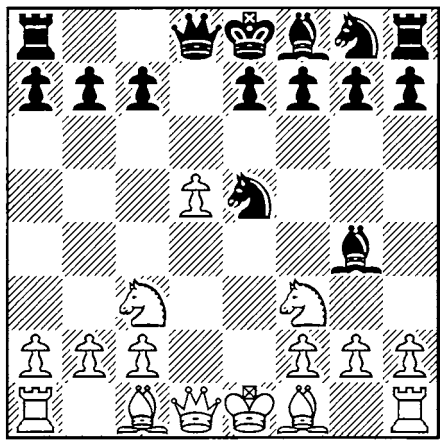


DIAGRAM 105. White to Play

White now happily munches the e5-Knight and the game is quickly won.

7.Nxe5! Bxd1 8.Bb5+ c6 9.dxc6

No matter how he squirms, Black will lose material. The threats of c6-c7+ and c6xb7+ are winning. The relatively best line is to accept the loss of a piece.

9...a6 10.c7+ axb5 11.cxd8=Q+

Arguably, White's last move is the strongest that is not a checkmate...

11...Rxd8 12.Nxd1 White has won a piece.

Recently, I was reading an article by Genna Sosonko and I was quite surprised to discover a tactical idea in a defense that I was quite familiar with, having played it my whole career.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Bg5

With this move White returns the favor of pinning Knights. The line is known as the Leningrad Variation of the Nimzo-Indian. It has an ultra-aggressive reputation for White, but with correct play Black gets a decent position.

4...c5 5.d5

Brings us to Diagram 106.

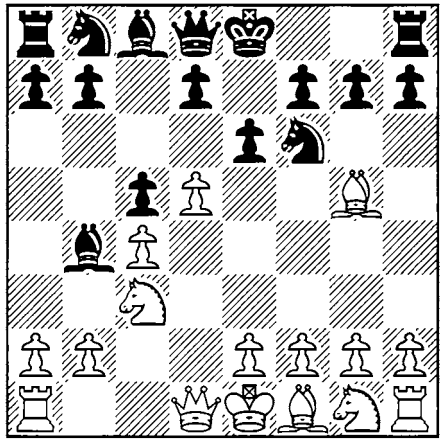


DIAGRAM 106. Black to Play

From Diagram 106, I have played the approved move 5...Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 d6 on numerous occasions. The established theory is that Black locks up the center quickly, thereby neutralizing the effective range of White's Bishops. In particular, the f1-Bishop has a hard time earning its keep. Sosonko's article mentions a Russian blitz chess player who routinely played a fascinating if speculative sacrifice.

5...Nxd5!? 6.Bxd8 Nxc3 7.Qb3

Unlike our previous examples, Black has no way of winning back his Queen.

7...Ne4+ 8.Kd1 Kxd8

When a highly unusual position appears on our board. Black has two pieces and a pawn for the Queen, which hardly seems like a good deal. Material considerations aside, the idea has its charms and not just for its originality. Well, at least it proved successful in blitz chess!

One final example of a deceptive pin is featured in the following line of the English Opening:

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Nf3 f5 4.d4 e4 5.Bg5 Nf6 6.d5?

A mistake that loses a pawn. Superior moves are 6.Ne5 and 6.Nd2 with an edge for White.

6...exf3 7.dxc6 fxg2 8.cxd7+??

A further mistake that loses a piece. White had to play 8.Bxg2 bxc6 and accept the loss of a pawn.

8...Nxd7!

The deceptive pin strikes again. White is stunned by Black's momentary willingness to part with his Queen. Realizing that 9.Bxd8 gxh1=Q costs a Rook, White can resign.

The point of these few examples is clear enough: Put your blind faith in an absolute pin. Otherwise, be careful. Pinned pieces can move and, as we have seen, oftentimes with decisive effect.

Besides the all too common blind spot of overestimating the pin the single biggest piece of advice I can offer concerns the blunder. First, to state boldly the obvious, we all blunder. If you want to be a good chess player, you have to be prepared to lose many, many games. That is tough. Mistakes are part of the game. In many ways, they are inevitable. Chess is just too complex a game to master without making a ton of mistakes. The trick is to react well to your own inevitable blunders. When you make a mistake and, worse still, realize that you've erred, the first thing that you have to do is rein in your emotions and stay calm!

In poker, professional players speak about "tells". Tells are signals that we give away in gestures of which we aren't even aware. We may break our concentration to look away in the far distance, blush, twiddle our thumbs. Unconsciously we do something out of the ordinary when we have a great hand or when we are bluffing. Chess is no different. At the board, despite the inner turmoil we feel after making a mistake, we must fight against our deep desire to throw our pieces out of the window in disgust. We have to keep a mask of complete serenity. We have to project the image that all is well with our position and that we are implementing the final phase of our blue print to score another majestic victory. It is far more difficult to react to a mistake when the opponent is not silently cursing his bad play. Be calm!

The next thing to be aware of is that mistakes come in bunches. When our opponent makes a mistake, we expect more of the same. Thank you very much! In the same way, our opponent will expect the same from us. After making a mistake, assess the situation. If it was a bone-headed loser, well too bad. That was that. Get over it and learn from your mistake. If the mistake merely threw away your advantage, knuckle down. Focus and get the advantage back. Resolve to concentrate and do your best not to err again. Put up the best resistance you can. Your improved play is sure to discourage your opponent and may just lure the mistake right back. If your game is bad, play for complications, try to avoid simplification or else you'll just be dragged to your doom. Keep presenting your opponent with as many problems as you can muster.

In my chess career, I've had numerous opponents who were a real nemesis for me. Included in this long line were Peter Biyiasas, Walter Browne, Ulf Andersson, Predrag Nikolić and Garry Kasparov. Without question, the worst was Peter. I think I lost our first six games and they weren't slugfests either. The imagery that comes to mind is a hot knife going through soft butter. Sometime around our seventh game, usually in a last round with first prize on the line, Peter did something well and truly awful; he blundered a Rook for not a trace of compensation. With a perfectly calm voice, Peter leaned across the board and said, *"Yasser. Would you like a draw?"* Somewhere between zero and a nano-second later, my hand was across the board to accept. The spell was broken. At least I thought. We then played this horror-piece.

Yasser Seirawan-Peter Biyiasas
Lone Pine, 1981
London System

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Bf4 Bg7 4.e3 0-0 5.h3 d6 6.Be2 Nbd7 7.0-0 c5 8.c3 b6

I was playing the single safest system that I knew against the King's Indian Defense. A favorite of my opponent. White's idea is that in the envisaged future Kingside attack, notorious for this defense, I would put my f4-Bishop back on the h2-square to give added protection for my King. If I was going to lose the game, it wasn't going to be a checkmating attack that sunk the ship.

9.a4 Bb7 10.Bh2 Ne4?!

An almost imperceptible error. It was better to play 10...a6, and contain White's plans for Queenside expansion. Black then has a perfectly fine position.

11.a5! Rb8?!

Another slip. This time a bit more serious. Black should play 11...Qc7 12.Na3 Bc6 or 11...Ndf6 12.Na3 Qd7, when White has some play on the Queenside but nothing serious.

12.Na3 cxd4

Black is feeling some pressure. There was the distinct possibility that White would play a5-a6 and plant a Knight on the b5-square with a long-term massage on the a7-pawn. Therefore, Black trades a few pawns to open up the position, so that his pieces can breathe better.

13.exd4 bxa5?!

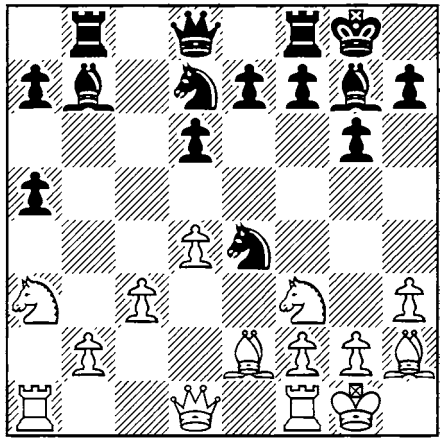


DIAGRAM 107. White to Play

I was delighted by this capture as well. After I inevitably win back the a5-pawn, the open a-file will mean that the little fella on a7 will become the object of my affections. Maybe this would be my day after all!

14.Nc4 Ba8 15.Qc2!

A moment of caution, please. The overly zealous 15.Rxa5?? Rxb2! would have been a painful blow. Giving up my base b2-pawn for the ugly duckling on the a5-square would really have been bad.

15...Nb6 16.Nxa5 e6 17.Nb3 Ng5 18.Nbd2 Nxf3+ 19.Bxf3 Bxf3 20.Nxf3 Rb7 21.c4!

My excessively cautious play in the opening has worked wonders. My pieces are well placed and I can begin to train my sights on the a7-pawn. Meanwhile, Black's pieces are quite limited and suggestions aren't easy.

21...Qd7 22.b3 Ra8 23.Ra6! Nc8 24.Rfa1 Rb4 25.R1a3! Qb7 26.Bxd6 Nxd6 27.Rxd6 a5

The last few moves have been like living a beautiful dream. Black's pieces go backwards, mine move up the board. Best of all, as we see in Diagram 108, I have achieved my favorite living condition: I'm ahead in material. Happy visions of humbly accepting the best game of the tournament award began to fill my head...

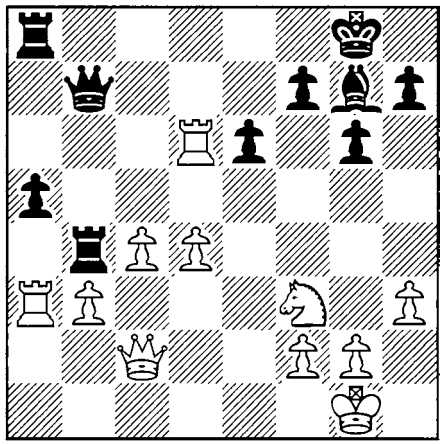


DIAGRAM 108. White to Play

28.c5??

But this one is a howler. Even now, years later, I have no idea what possessed me to make such a move. The correct 28.Ne5 would see White in cruise control, having an extra pawn and "compensation" (the superior position) as well. Hard to believe, but I now realized my intended line drops a whole Rook! Somehow, the a3-Rook didn't seem susceptible to attack...

28...Bf8!

I went to write down my opponent's move on my score-sheet. My hand simply froze in mid-air. Only now did I realize the extent of my mistake and I was horrified. Peter, of course, immediately registered my tell

that acknowledged my blunder. His legend in the North West of tricking his opponents was sure to grow with this one.

29.c6 Qc8 30.Rd7!

After calmly regaining my composure and recognizing my mistake, I began to think of what line would give my opponent the most problems. I was afraid to play 30.Qc5, walking into a pin. I feared that besides 30...Ra6 31.Ne5 Rbb6, intending wholesale swaps with the better position for Black, there was a chance to play 30...Be7, intending ...Qc8-f8, to capture the Rook. In evaluating these lines compared to the game, I thought it would be better to be on the attack and to worry my opponent's King. If I lost, I wanted to go down with the image of a fearless attacker...

30...Rb6

Hubba-hubba, there goes the Rook.

31.Ne5 Bxa3 32.Qe4!

Of course, if my planned attack has any chance of success, it must include the Queen. The text has the idea of Ne5xf7-h6+, when my Queen would be very useful on the e4-square.

Now a very interesting psychological moment passed between Peter and me. He realized that he could just "bail out" of the position by 32...Rxc6 33.Qxc6 Qxc6 35.Nxc6 Ra6 37.Ne5 Rd6, forcing a draw. Alternatively, he could "punish" me for blundering a Rook by playing for the win. To do so involved subjecting himself to a mean attack. He struggled with his decision and decided that I deserved a reprimand.

32...Qe8?

If there is one thing I have learned in my career it is this: It is much more fun to attack than to defend. As the aggressor, the imagination fills with all kinds of attractive-looking variations. As the defender, you are under pressure, looking at dangers both real and imagined. It takes its toll. Unless you are certain that the defense holds, it is time to bail out. When Peter played the text, he saw all my moves and didn't see a good defense. He just felt that he couldn't let me off the hook so easily. He may have once offered me a draw a Rook behind but he certainly wasn't going to force a draw when a Rook ahead!

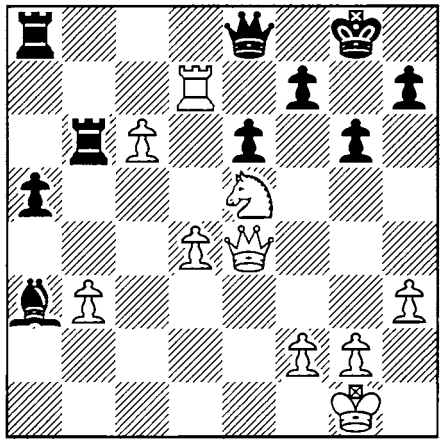


DIAGRAM 109. White to Play

We've now arrived at Diagram 109, where both players were in for a mutual surprise: despite being a Rook down, White now stands better!

33.Nxf7 Bf8?

Peter is still gripped by the inability to "let me escape". He should trade, of course, by 33...Qxf7 34.Rxf7 Kxf7 35.d5!, when I thought my position had real prospects. In hindsight, the game is probably still drawn after 35...Re8 36.c7! Rc8! 37.Qa4! Rd6! (37...Rxc7? 38.Qf4+ wins.) 38.dxe6+ Ke7! 39.Qxa3 Rxc7, when the two Rooks should hold.

With the text Black intends to scurry back and weather the storm.

34.Ng5!

There was a temptation to play 34.Qe5 Bg7 35.Qc7, seizing control of the seventh rank, but after 35...Rxb3, it wasn't clear what my pieces were doing. In particular, the f7-Knight is simply in the way. By this jump, the Knight is placed on a much more effective square.

34...Rd8

Black has to do something about the monster living on the doorstep. Both 34...Rc8 and 34...Rxb3 fail to 35.Qh4 h6 36.Ne4, when White's Knight is heading to its favorite f6-destination.

35.Rxd8 Qxd8 36.Qxe6+ Kg7 37.Qe5+ Kg8 38.Qe6+ Kg7 39.Qf7+ Kh6 40.c7!

A powerful move that concludes the game. Black's King is in a mating net while the c7-passer keeps the defenders at bay.

40...Qc8 41.h4?!

Best was 41.f4! Bg7 42.Qe7!, which would have led to forced mate. I missed the idea of Ng5-f7+ and Qe7-g5 checkmate. For example: 42...Rf6 43.g4!, and mate is inescapable. Fortunately, the text doesn't spoil the win.

41...Bg7

I had seen a mate in 41...Kh5 42.Qxh7+ Kg4 (42...Bh6 43.Ne4) 43.f3+ Kg3 44.Ne4+ Kf4 45.Kf2, a most pleasing line of analysis. In fact, I was so pleased that I hadn't really considered anything else. Mentally, I had already chalked up the win and expected resignation. Laziness had gripped me and I was surprised by the text. Believing there were plenty of wins, I seized the opportunity to make a double threat and win the Bishop.

42.Ne6?

Sloppy: 42.Qf4! wins at once. Black to play in Diagram 110.

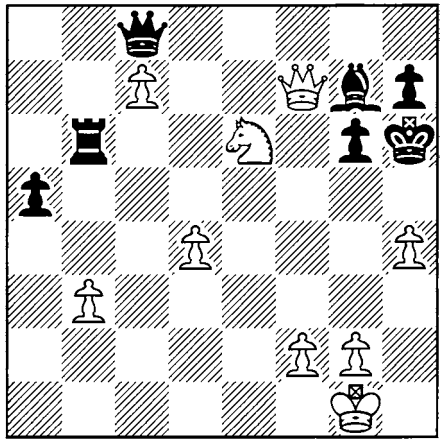


DIAGRAM 110. Black to Play

42...Bf6?

Normally, Peter is tactically alert but the heavy tension had taken its toll. He might have saved the game by 42...Be5!!, covering f4. My monumentally stupid intention was to Queen with check by 43.d5 Rxe6! 44.dxe6 Bxc7 45.e7 Bd6. I had seen that Black now threatens a back-rank mate, so no points for promotion. I thought I could defend against the back-rank mate by playing 46.Qf8+?? Qxf8 47.exf8=Q+ Bxf8. Whoops. Yes, Bishops move backwards. Instead, I would have to play 46.g3 Bxe7 47.Qxe7, when Black has, with my help, survived to a lost Queen ending.

Please note that 42...Be5 43.dxe5?? Rxe6 is just bad for White. There is no checkmate, and after 44.g4 Rxe5 45.g5+ Kh5 46.Qxh7+ Kg4 Black's King is more than happy to go for a stroll.

43.d5

Now I'm back on track and the game is won.

43...Be5 44.g4 Rb4 45.f3?

It wasn't that difficult to find 45.Qf3, winning on the spot.

45...Qh8 46.g5+ Kh5 47.c8=Q Bh2+ 48.Kxh2

It still wasn't too late for self-immolation by 48.Kg2? Qb2+ 49.Kh3?? Rxh4 checkmate!

48...Rxh4+ 49.Kg3 Qe5+ 50.Nf4+ Rxf4 51.Qxh7+ Kxg5

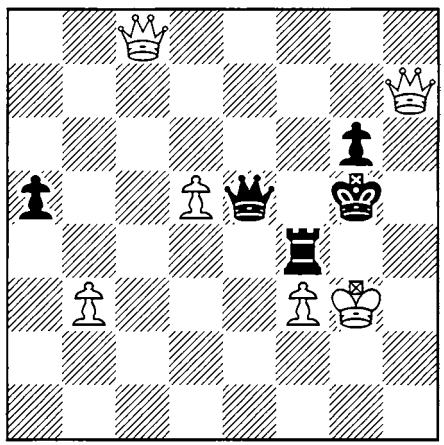


DIAGRAM 111. White to Play

52.Qc1! 1-0

Remember to put your faith into absolute pins! Now there is no way of escaping checkmate and Peter mercifully resigned.

This game had the unsettling effect of reminding me of a witticism by a dear friend Viktors Pupols, more endearingly known as old "Unkle Vik". When he had me in an awful positional grip, he would sportingly say, *"The struggling young artist improves while he suffers!"*

Let's quickly move on from the world of blunders and boomerangs to our chapter of inspiring combinations. Just in time!

CHAPTER SIX

Inspiring Combinations

As stated in the Introduction, combinations are the magical, mystical element of chess that makes it such an extraordinary sport, game, art and science. Reuben Fine eloquently stated, "*Combinations have always been the most intriguing aspect of Chess. The masters look for them, the public applauds them, the critics praise them. It is because combinations are possible that Chess is more than a lifeless mathematical exercise. They are the poetry of the game; they are to Chess what melody is to music. They represent the triumph of mind over matter.*" A well-known saying is: *"The combination is the heart of chess."* Combinations inspire us to work harder and learn more, so that we too may one day play a profoundly brilliant game. If this work can stir such a spirit in you, I will be well and truly happy with my effort. The following games will lift the passions of every chess enthusiast. Can you imagine a game in which you sacrifice not one, not two, not three but *all* of your pieces? Toss in the promotion of two pawns as well and you have a game to last!

Gregory Serper-Ioannis Nikolaidis
St. Petersburg, 1993
King's Indian Defense

1.c4 g6 2.e4 Bg7 3.d4 d6 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.Nge2

Black is playing the King's Indian Defense, against which White has chosen a rather sophisticated line of development. In the KID, Black frequently aspires to play ...f7-f5, generating Kingside play. White's opening scheme is to try to discourage this plan by bringing a Knight to the g3-square.

5...Nbd7 6.Ng3 c6 7.Be2 a6 8.Be3 h5?! 9.f3 b5 10.c5 dxc5 11.dxc5 Qc7 12.0-0 h4 13.Nh1 Nh5 14.Qd2 e5 15.Nf2 Nf8?

Black's last move asks too much of the position. He has played to win the f4 and d4-outposts while making concessions such as weakening the Kingside with ...h7-h5-h4 and neglecting development. The best line was 15...Nf4 16.Nd3! Bh6 17.a4!, with advantage to White. Black envisions playing ...Nf8-e6-d4, occupying a fine central square. The play has brought us to Diagram 112.

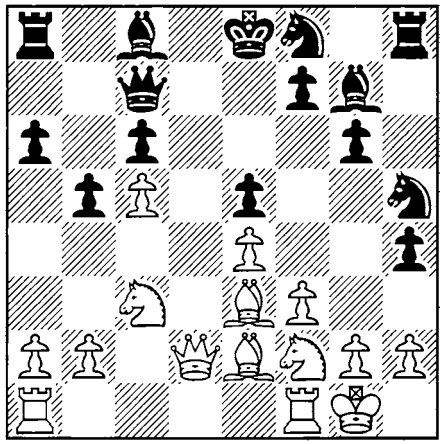


DIAGRAM 112. White to Play

16.a4!

The prelude to a long-winded combination. White has to look for play, but where? There aren't any breaks on the Kingside and the center is fixed. While it may appear tempting to play for the d6-square, 16.Rfd1

Ne6 17.Qd6 Bf8! 18.Qxc7 Nxc7 achieves nothing. Black is doing fine as the d6-square is now protected. He is ready to reload by ...Nc7-e6-d8, aiming to occupy the d4-outpost. Also, by trading Queens so quickly White will lose the opportunity to punish his opponent's lack of development by trading an important attacker. Black's disdain for development compels White to mete out some kind of punishment for his neglect. How to open lines and take advantage of the superior mobilization? The meek 16.b4 Ne6 17.a4 does the trick, but Black will play 17...Rb8, sink his Knights onto the f4 and d4-squares and it is anyone's guess as to who stands better.

16...b4 17.Nd5!

The only plausible follow-up to his previous move. White is intent upon opening up the position. The quiet choice 17.Na2?! a5 means Black has successfully kept the position closed and can look forwards to a leap by his f8-Knight.

17...cxd5 18.exd5

I think it was impossible for Gregory to calculate the consequences of his sacrifice. Instead, he was guided by several principles. Firstly, his opponent had neglected his development and had to be punished. Secondly, with the Knight on f8, Black's King could easily get caught in the center. White has ideas like Nf2-e4-d6+, causing mayhem. And, of course, White has his trumps of two connected passers on the fifth rank ready to advance with tempo. All White has to do is play Ra1-c1, c5-c6 and d5-d6 will come next.

18...f5!

A very good move indeed. Black's provocation has worked. In view of White's threats, Black takes the e4-square under control and introduces his own threat of ...f5-f4, trapping White's Bishop. White is not given time to advance his connected passers slowly.

19.d6! Qc6

Trying to block the march of the pawns. An overly provocative line would be 19...Qb7? 20.c6! Qxc6 21.Rfc1! Qb7 22.Rc7 Qb8 23.Re7+ Kd8 24.Qd5 a5 25.Qf7, with a checkmating attack. We now come to our next diagram.

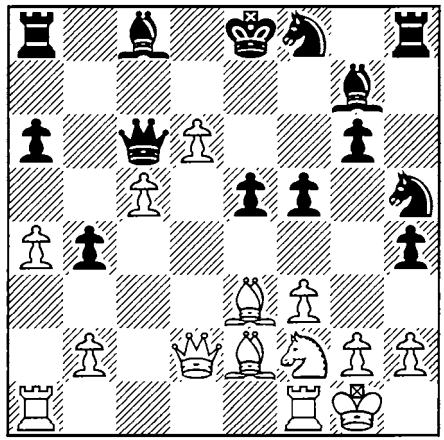


DIAGRAM 113. White to Play

20.Bb5!

Breaking the blockade before it gets a chance to be established. I have to admit that I'd also be tempted by 20.Nd3, in order to grab the b4-pawn with tempo. The positional player within me would also seek to side-step the ...f5-f4 threat. The text is far more forcing and I'd like to think that I'd get around to considering it as well.

20...axb5 21.axb5 Qxb5

Black has to give up his Rook as 21...Qb7 22.c6 Qb8 (22...Qxb5 23.d7+ wins) 23.Qd5! Rxa1 24.Rxa1 is winning for White. For example, 24...Nf6 25.Qxe5+ Kf7 26.Ra7+, and White's attack is decisive.

22.Rxa8 Qc6 23.Rfa1 f4

Black has nothing better than to accept the third piece offer. The attempt to escape with 23...Ne6? 24.R1a6! Qxa6 25.d7+! is a nice winning line.

24.R1a7 Nd7

Avoiding a mate with two Rooks which would occur after 24...fxe3? 25.Qd5! Qxd5 26.Rxc8 checkmate. Black is hoping to weather the storm as he is but a step away from castling, as we see in our next diagram.

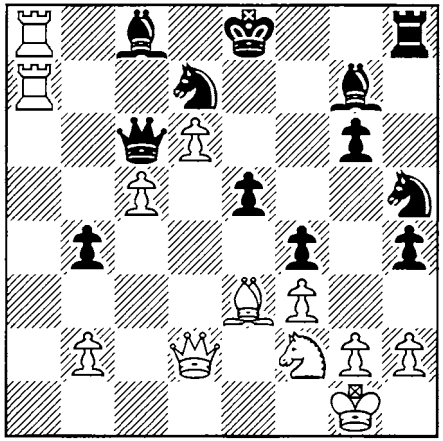


DIAGRAM 114. White to Play

25.Rxc8+!

White has no choice but to continue to sacrifice. Black cannot be permitted to castle. A *faulty combination* would be 25.Qd5?, which looks good but leads to a dead end: 25...Qxd5 26.Rxc8+ Kf7 27.Rxd7+ Kf6 28.Ne4+ Kf5, when White can resign.

25...Qxc8 26.Qd5! fxe3

Accepting the next sacrifice. Black could have tried 26...Nhf6 but 27.Qe6+ Kf8 28.Ne4! would create too many threats. If Black captures with 28...fxe3? then 29.Ng5 Qe8 30.Ra8! wins. Black would have to trade Queens by 28...Qe8 29.Qxe8+ Nxe8 (not 29...Kxe8? 30.Ra8+ Kf7 31.Ng5 checkmate.) 30.Rxd7 fxe3 31.c6!, and the passers break through.

27.Qe6+ Kf8 28.Rxd7 exf2+

All of White's minor pieces have been tossed into the sacrificial flames, along with a Rook. But White has crashed through on the seventh rank and checkmate seems imminent.

29.Kf1 Qe8

The only move to cover the mate on the f7-square. Capturing the Rook by 29...Qxd7? 30.Qxd7 loses mundanely. The c-pawn is too strong. Black

had two other interesting tries which fail by a smidgen: 29...Qa6+ 30.Kxf2 Qe2+! 31.Kxe2 Nf4+ 32.Kf1 Nxe6 33.c6! Kg8 34.Re7!, when the pawns are off and running. An amazing counter-attack just misses the mark: 29...Ng3+ 30.hxg3 Qxd7 31.Qxd7 hxg3, when Black's Rook threatens a decisive penetration. White deals with the threat by grabbing pawns: 32.Qe7+ Kg8 33.Qe8+ Bf8 (33...Kh7 34.d7 wins) 34.Qxg6+ Bg7 35.Qxg3, breaking the attack and winning with the passers. We now move to our next diagram, which features an important pattern.

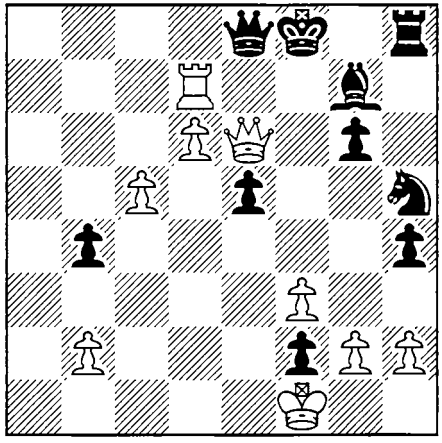


DIAGRAM 115. White to Play

30.Rf7+!! Qxf7 31.Qc8+ Qe8 32.d7!

I'm not sure how to label this type of tactic where the defender is forced to block on the last rank and the checking piece is supported by a pawn. Whatever it is, it is a goodie! And a pattern sure worth remembering. With the last sequence, White has sacrificed all of his pieces. Now it is up to the Queen and pawns alone to win the game.

32...Kf7 33.dxe8=Q+ Rxe8 34.Qb7+ Re7 35.c6!

White is now winning as he can see that the c-pawn is running for a touchdown. Now is a dangerous moment. The successful combination has run its course and the win is in sight. At just such moments it is important

to remain vigilant. The game is not won before the opponent resigns or is checkmated.

35...e4!

Laying a fine cheapo indeed. If White is startled by the sudden appearance of the advancing Black pawns he could make a fatal error...

36.c7!

Sidestepping a disaster. The safe 36.fxe4?? Rxb7 39.cxb7 Be5! would have won for Black! The role of the g7-Bishop has been such a quiet one that it is easy to forget its existence. Such a variation should cause a shiver. Just imagine making such an oversight after playing so brilliantly...

36...e3

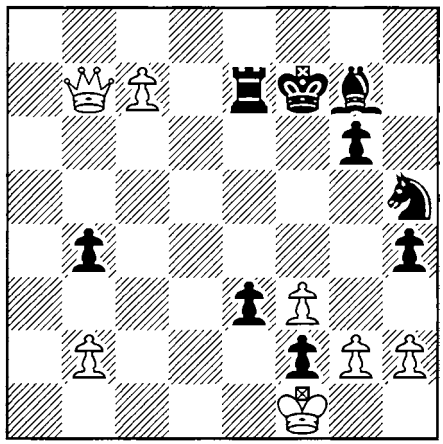


DIAGRAM 116. White to Play

Good grief! Black is one determined player! Again, precise play is called for with White on high alert.

37.Qd5+! Kf6 38.Qd6+ Kf7 39.Qd5+ Kf6 40.Qd6+ Kf7 41.Qxe7+!

And with that last sacrifice, Gregory Serper managed to give away all of his pieces and still win the game! An outstanding creative achievement!

41...Kxe7 42.c8=Q Bh6 43.Qc5+ Ke8 44.Qb5+ Kd8 45.Qb6+ Kd7 46.Qxg6 e2+ 47.Kxf2 Be3+ 48.Ke1 1-0

When I first laid eyes on the following game, I was thrilled. Chasing the King across the board made me love King hunts. Each move is like a high wire circus act. Any slip and it is a long way down. Later in life, I got the chance to speak with Lev about this game. In Lev's words, *"I must have beaten Rashid a dozen times. But that one loss was so good I would have traded them all to be on the other side of the board."*

Lev Polugaevsky-Rashid Nezhmetdinov
Sochi, 1958
Old Indian Defense

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 d6 3.Nc3 e5

Black is playing a variation of the Old Indian. Later, players would first fianchetto their King's Bishop before making a stake in the center. Black's move order is designed to avoid certain lines of the King's Indian, which can give White an early initiative, such as the Four Pawns Attack.

4.e4

The most principled response, as White grabs as much of the center as he can. The ending 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 does not promise White any advantage. Black will quickly play ...c7-c6 and the King will be cozy enough on the c7-square. A key alternative is 4.Nf3, when Black can play 4...Nbd7, with a future fianchetto in mind. Again, in that case Black has cut down White's opening options. Black can also play for an unbalanced game by 4...e4!? 5.Ng5 Bf5 6.g4 Bxg4 7.Bg2, when White will have a central advantage at the expense of a weakened Kingside structure.

4...exd4

With this capture, Black intends to lure forwards the White Queen so that he may be able to develop with tempo.

5.Qxd4 Nc6 6.Qd2 g6 7.b3 Bg7 8.Bb2 0-0 9.Bd3?!

The Bishop isn't particularly effective on the d3-square and is easily attacked. Although White has seized control of the center, it is also a big responsibility to defend all the squares and pawns. It is easy to see that Black has intentions of ...Rf8-e8 and to play a future ...f7-f5, attacking the e4-pawn. White has an awkward development if he tries 9.Nf3? Re8

10.Bd3 Bg4, quite apart from 10...Nxe4. If White plays 9.f3, suggestions as to how to develop the baying g1-horse don't come easily. The best move was probably 9.Nge2, awaiting ...Rf8-e8 and only playing f2-f3 when forced to do so. In that case, the f1-Bishop can be fianchettoed. After White has castled and brought his King to safety, he can plan to use his superior central control.

If my commentary gives the impression that White has troubles developing harmoniously, this is indeed the case. On move seven, White chose to invest time fianchettoing his Queen's Bishop. A fine, aggressive idea, but it might have been more prudent to fianchetto the King's Bishop first. Then quickly castle and worry about Queenside development later.

9...Ng4!

We are told that we shouldn't move the same piece twice in the opening. However, such sage advice is only a guiding principle, not a rule. In this particular case, Black has a concrete desire to fight for central control and ...f7-f5 is a necessary lever. In addition, should the g4-Knight be chased, the e5-square is a fine central outpost.

10.Nge2

Play has brought us to Diagram 117. What would you do?

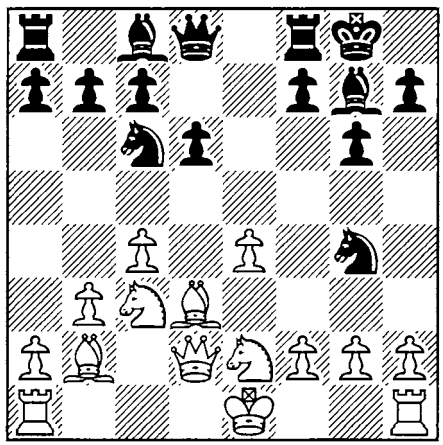


DIAGRAM 117. Black to Play

10...Qh4!

A fine attacking move! Now that the e2-Knight has committed itself, Black no longer has to worry about his Queen being attacked on the h4-square. The threat to the f2-pawn is easily parried, but Black wants to make life as uncomfortable as possible for White's King. The move is not, however, without risk. It is clear that White dreams of one day playing Nc3-d5, with a fine outlook for the Knight. This will mean that the c7-pawn is under attack. Now that the Black Queen is off on an adventure, the seeds of sacrifice are being sown.

11.Ng3 Nge5 12.0-0?

White cannot be happy about the outcome of the opening but the text is a mistake. He had to play 12.Be2 Nd4 13.0-0, with a scrappy fight in view.

12...f5!?

The attacker's choice. The pawn-grabber in me would have gleefully played 12...Ng4 13.h3 Nxf2 14.Rxf2 (14.Qxf2 Bd4 wins and demonstrates why I like my Bishops on the long diagonals.) 14...Qxg3, when White has lost a pawn without adequate compensation. The variation would likely continue 15.Ne2 Qh4 16.Bxg7 Kxg7 17.Raf1, when Black will have to do some consolidating before claiming a clear advantage. Admittedly, the text certainly puts more pressure on White's position. Black intends to barrel ahead with his f-pawn as far as it will go!

13.f3?!

White is panicking in the face of Black's impending attack. A careful think would have made White choose 13.exf5 gxf5! (Black could also play 13...Nxd3 14.Qxd3 Bxf5 15.Qd2!, when White is ready for Nc3-d5 in order to trade more pieces.) 14.Nge2 f4 15.f3, when Black has the easier play. However, in this case White could aspire to use the e4-square as a future outpost. Another concession that Black has made is that his King-side structure is split. The f4-pawn could become a tower of strength or a weakness to be plucked. We now move to our Diagram 118.

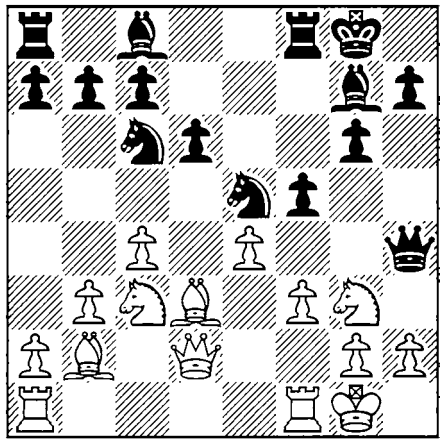


DIAGRAM 118. Black to Play

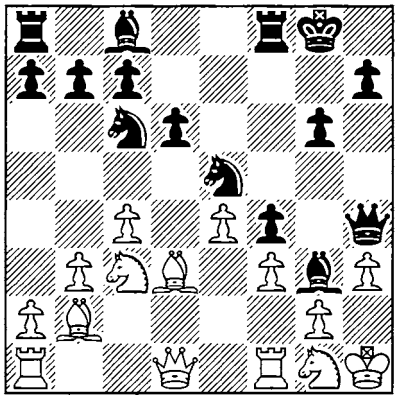
13...Bh6!

I would like to adorn this move with a second exclamation mark but I will restrain myself. What Black envisions is a pawn storm by ...f5-f4 and ...g5-g4-g3. In that case, the f4-pawn needs reinforcing and, better still, a potential attacker of the f4-pawn is given the boot. In our handling of the Bishops we must be constantly vigilant about a simple truth: Bishops need open diagonals. Chess understanding can be so simple; the e5-Knight is a tremendous mule. It sits on the e5-square, high and mighty. It isn't moving. Hence, the g7-Bishop has a blocked view and naturally seeks a better vista.

14.Qd1 f4

Staying true to his plan. I would be more than tempted to force a Kingside pawn weakness by first activating the h6-Bishop. My choice would have been 14...Be3+! (I would reject the option 14...Bf4 15.Nd5 Bxg3 16.hxg3 Qxg3 17.Nxc7 on several counts. First, the position is not so clear; Black's forces are not well coordinated to pursue his Kingside attack. Secondly, I would value the h6-Bishop much more highly than the passive g3-Knight.) 15.Kh1 f4 16.Nge2 Bf2!; another vital part of our

combination play is the need to force our opponents to *create weaknesses in their pawn-shield* guarding the enemy King. White is forced further on the defensive: 17.Ng1 (17.Rxf2 Qxf2 18.Nd5 Bh3 19.Ndxf4 Rxf4! 20.Nxf4 Qxb2 is winning for Black.) 17...Bg3 18.h3 brings us to our Analysis Diagram 119.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 119. White to Play

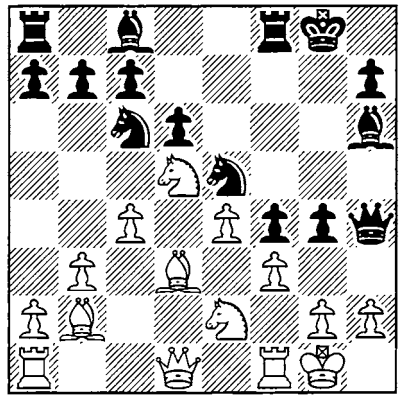


DIAGRAM 120. White to Play

The g7-Bishop has certainly found a cozy spot in the heart of White's fortress. If Black were now to continue his pawn storm, with 18...g5, ...h7-h5 and ...g5-g4, White's King would be in deep doo-doo. This explains why I gave the move 13...Bh6 a single exclamation mark. Let's return to the game.

15.Nge2 g5! 16.Nd5 g4!

Black is in full attacking throttle and pays no heed to his hanging c7-pawn. White's position has become desperate. Have a look at Diagram 120. What would you play if you were White? (No cheating and looking ahead.)

17.g3?!

White fails to rise to the challenge. A cardinal rule for the defense when facing an attack is *trade attacking pieces for defending ones*. Best was 17.Nexf4! Bxf4 18.Nxf4 Rxf4 19.Bxe5! Nxe5 20.g3 Qh3 21.gxf4,

which is a mighty fine series of trades for the defender! The final position after the further moves 21...Nxf3+ 22.Kf2 (22.Rxf3 gxf3 23.Kf2 Qxh2+ 24.Ke3! Bg4 25.Qh1 Qb2! 26.Rg1 Qg7! favors Black.) 22...Qxh2+ 23.Ke3 was forced. While Black is better in this line, White is an exchange ahead and most of the attacking hordes have been traded, making the defense much easier.

17...fxg3 18.hxg3 Qh3 19.f4 Be6!

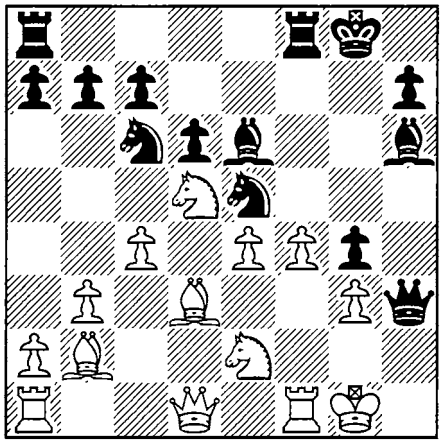


DIAGRAM 121. White to Play

From this point forwards, Black plays in fantastic style. He doesn't forget the cardinal rule of attack: *Invite everybody to the party!* Thus, Black develops his dormant Queenside pieces. As we see in Diagram 121, Black doesn't haphazardly toss in a few checks by 19...Nf3+? 20.Kf2 Qh2+? 21.Ke3, when White's King has fled the danger zone and Black's pieces are simply over-extended. In that case, White could initiate his own threats, like Rf1-h1, playing to grab the h6-Bishop. What White had missed is his peculiarly helpless situation. He has no active moves! As 20.fxe5? is no threat because of 20...Bxd5, with 21...Be3+ and mate next move, the e5-Knight is not budging.

20.Bc2

A clear sign of the bad news facing White. He could not play 20.Nxc7 as this weakens his control of the f4-square. In that case, Black has the immediate sacrifice 20...Bxf4! 21.Rxf4 Rxf4 22.gxf4 g3, winning. If White tries 22.Nxe6 then 22..Rf6! sets up threats like ...Rf6xe6, ...Rf6-h6. After the further moves 23.Ng5 Nf3+! 24.Nxf3 gxf3, the move ...f3-f2 is a killer. White is forced to bide his time and made a waiting move. Also, Black's last move introduced the threat of capturing the d5-Knight and then sacrificing with ...Bh6xf4, as we've just seen. With the text, White will recapture on d5-with check.

20...Rf7!

Black is not waiting but is gathering his forces for a coordinated strike against the f4-pawn. The move prepares ...Rh8-f8 and protects the c7-pawn. It poses a question for White: *"What are you going to do?"* White's pieces are immobilized. 21.Rf2? Nf3+ and 21.Qd2 Nf3+ are instant wins. Unable to develop his game and not wishing to wait for Black to bring his attacking units into play, White decides to flee the Kingside before violence erupts.

21.Kf2!

By no means a happy move but under the circumstances a very good decision. White makes a mad dash to the center and hopes that he will have the chance to play Rf1-h1, fighting back. It is also good to note that White has avoided capturing with 21.Bxe5, after which Black has a choice between 21...Nxe5 and 21...dxe5!, when he would have brought the d6-pawn into play and opened up possibilities for ...Bh6-f8-c5+, as well as ...Nc6-d4, seeking to undermine the g3-pawn.

21...Qh2+ 22.Ke3 Bxd5!

It is often debated which minor piece is superior, the Bishop or the Knight. For me the answer is certainly the Bishop. Owing to its superior mobility, one of the great advantages Bishops possess is their ability to trade for the Knight, far more easily than the Knight can trade for the Bishop. Case in point. The d5-Knight is a mighty beast, clogging up the center, defending the f4-pawn, reaching into Black's camp and in general being a nuisance. This is not an *unnecessary* trade for the attacker, but

rather one that will enhance his attack.

23.cxd5!

White is playing well and avoids 23.Qxd5?!, when 23...Nb4! 24.Qd2 Bxf4+! 25.Rxf4 Rxf4 26.gxf4 Qh3+ 27.Kf2 g3+! is an instant winner.

23...Nb4 24.Rh1?

Lev Polugaevsky certainly can't be blamed for making this move. It is his first threat of the game! Furthermore, it is the culmination of his plan to break the attack. It does, however, allow a spectacular combination that will be immortalized. In hindsight, the best move was 24.a3 and to keep the f4-pawn securely defended. We are now at Diagram 122, where Rashid Nezhmetdinov uncorked the combination of his career.

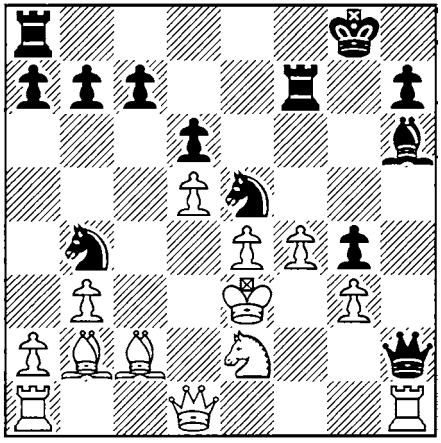


DIAGRAM 122. Black to Play

24...Rxf4!!

Smashing through in brilliant fashion. The Rook can't be captured because of 25.gxf4? Bxf4+ 26.Nxf4 (26.Kd4? Qf2+ 27.Kc3 Qc5 checkmate. Such a variation would cause anyone to regret that Bb2xe5 hadn't been played earlier.) Nxc2+ 27.Qxc2 Qxc2, and Black wins in prosaic fashion. White decides to take a whole Queen.

25.Rxh2 Rf3++ 26.Kd4 Bg7!

A quiet move that aims itself squarely against White's King, which is frozen in the center of the board! Black is now intent upon weaving a mating net by ...b7-b5 and ...Ne5-c6, double check and mate.

27.a4

Seeking to prevent the aforementioned threat merely invites another. In truth, despite being a Queen ahead, White has no defense. The plausible 27.Ng1 c5+! 28.dxc6 Ned3+ 29.Kc4 b5+! 30.Kxb5 Rb8+ 31.Ka4 Nxb2+ 32.Ka3 Nxd1 33.Rxd1 (33.Nxf3?? Bb2+ 34.Ka4 Nc3+ 35.Ka5 Nxc6+ 36.Ka6 Rb6 checkmate.) 33...Rc3, led to a won position for Black. He is threatening to play ...Rc3xc6-a6 checkmate.

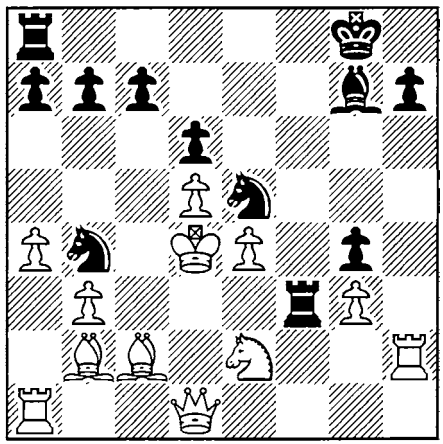


DIAGRAM 123. Black to Play

The game has progressed to Diagram 123, where the question is how Black should rein in his hard-earned victory.

27...c5+! 28.dxc6 bxc6 29.Bd3

In view of the threatened ...c6-c5 checkmate, White has no choice but to grant his King access to the c3-square. Black now has a forcing sequence leading to mate.

29...Nexd3+ 30.Kc4 d5+ 31.exd5 cxd5+ 32.Kb5 Rb8+ 33.Ka5 Nc6+ 0-1

The finish would have been 34.Ka6 Rb6 checkmate.

The Pearl of Wijk aan Zee

The pilgrimage to the North Sea village of Wijk aan Zee, Holland takes place each January. As it is one of the most important tournaments on the chess calendar, the best players in the world regularly compete there. After sixty-five events, the following game towers above all others and has been proclaimed "The Pearl of Wijk aan Zee". My colleague Larry Christiansen had this to say about it: *"A work of art. It deserves to hang in the Louvre Museum."* I couldn't agree with him more.

Garry Kasparov-Veselin Topalov

Wijk aan Zee, 1999

Pirc Defense

1.e4 d6

When two of the most fearless dynamic players in the world sit down to battle, the sparks can start to fly in no time. Veselin's choice of the Pirc Defense was a good surprise. Undoubtedly Garry had focused his preparations on a Sicilian, but now his first dozen moves won't come at great speed. Interestingly, Garry hadn't faced the Pirc that often in practice. At all levels of play, it is nice to catch the opponent in positions that are unfamiliar to him.

2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3

In an earlier game that I played with Garry, he chose 3.f3 Bg7 4.c4 0-0 and the opening had changed from a Pirc Defense to a King's Indian Defense. That game ended in a draw where I had sacrificed my Queen for two Bishops and two pawns.

3...g6 4.Be3 Bg7?!

Black shows that he isn't so well prepared either. White's fourth move has become a favorite amongst top grandmasters. The idea is to keep the position flexible. White might revert to the classical channels by 5.h3, 6.Nf3, 7.Be2 and 8.0-0 and he feints the possibility of Qd1-d2, Be3-h6 and 0-0-0 with the aim of a Kingside attack. Viewed from this perspective, Black should save the ...Bf8-g7 tempo for now and play 4...c6 5.h3 Nbd7

and wait for White to commit himself. In that case, Black is ready for ...b7-b5 or ...e7-e5, with a flexible game.

Black should avoid the temptation of 4...Ng4 5.Bg5!, when Black doesn't gain a tempo. White will play Bf1-e2 with gain of time.

5.Qd2 c6 6.f3?!

Unnecessarily delaying the proceedings. White should just complete his idea of getting rid of the fianchettoed Bishop: 6.Bh6! Bxh6 7.Qxh6, when White is ready for e4-e5 and a possible Qh6-g7 invasion. (Recall my comments in the Introduction section.) Black usually tries to stop this with 7...Qa5, threatening to capture the e4-pawn. If White plays 8.0-0-0?! then 8...b5! offers Black a quick attack. The more restrained 8.Bd3! leaves Black in rather a quandary. How will he evict the unwelcome guest on the h6-square? In the forthcoming play, White may want to play f2-f4, in order to advance with e4-e5 and the text robs him of this opportunity. After this early exchange of opening hiccups, the players settle down.

6...b5!

At first sight this move seems to be pointless. White has overprotected the e4-pawn and ...b5-b4 is not a threat. Actually, the move is a good one, Black grabs a little Queenside space and allows himself to develop his c8-Bishop. Black may aspire to play ...Nb8-d7-b6-c4, with a discouraging hint to White not to castle Queenside.

7.Nge2 Nbd7 8.Bh6 Bxh6 9.Qxh6 Bb7

A surprising choice, as Black decides to allow the h6-intruder a peaceful stay. I'd issue an eviction notice by 9...Qa5 10.Nc1 b4 11.Nb3 Qh5! 12.Qxh5 Nxh5 13.Nd1 a5, with a dynamically balanced position.

10.a3

Some commentators liked this move, whereas I am doubtful. In the first place, it costs a tempo and may allow Black the future possibility of ...a7-a5 and ...b5-b4, prying open the Queenside should White castle there. It seems to me that White can hope for an edge by 10.Nc1 e5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.Nb3 a6 13.0-0-0 Qc7!? 14.g3 0-0-0 15.Bh3 Kb8 16.Bxd7 Nxd7 17.Rd2, with easier play.

10...e5!

While staking his claim to the center, Black prepares ...Qd8-e7 and a Queenside evacuation.

11.0-0-0 Qe7

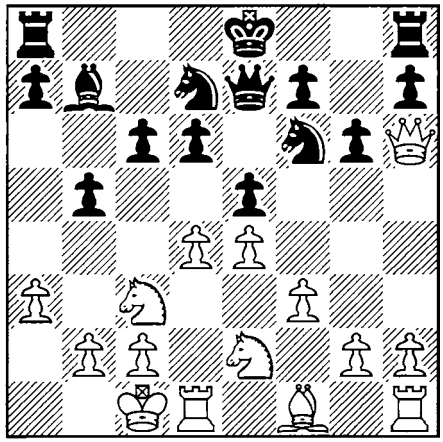


DIAGRAM 124. White to Play

An eminently reasonable move as Black covers a few potential weaknesses and plays to complete his development. On the other hand, the opportunity to start slinging pawns forwards by 11...a5 may cause White a scare. There is the distinct possibility that White's Queen will be a long way from the action. Black's caveman approach of ...b5-b4 might just club the mark. The move a2-a3 has made such provocation more appealing.

12.Kb1

By no means the only move. White can also consider 12.g3 with Bf1-h3 to follow. As well as 12.g4 with Ne2-g3 and g4-g5 in view. This latter line is quite committing and again it is entirely possible that White's Queen will end up misplaced. In general, the downside of Queenside castling is that players feel compelled to spend an extra tempo in this manner, to keep things "tidy" around their King. Garry has another plan to redeploy his e2-Knight and thus he vacates the c1-square.

12...a6

Along with White's a2-a3, this is a debatable choice. White is practically issuing an invitation for 12...a5! 13.Na2 (White is feeling the heat. The intention of 13.Nc1 b4 14.Na4 bxa3 isn't inspiring for him.) 13...Nb6, when Black is planning ...Nf6-d7 and a Queenside migration.

The text casts an eye towards the center. With the b5-pawn defended, Black is playing for ...c6-c5, with or without a d4-pawn exchange, when it would come with tempo.

13.Nc1 0-0-0 14.Nb3

Play has brought us to Diagram 125.

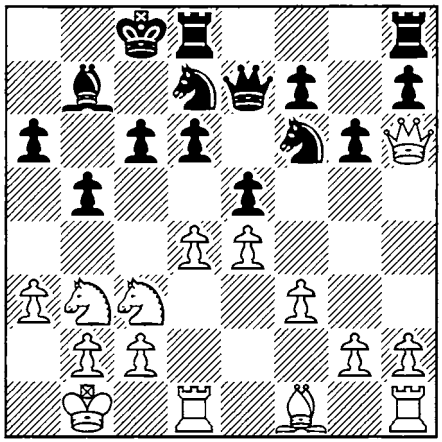


DIAGRAM 125. Black to Play

14...exd4!

This type of capture is referred to as "*surrendering the center*". In general, the resulting positions of e4-pawn versus d6-pawn favor White as he has more central space. Veselin's problem is that although he has completed his development, further activation of the pieces isn't easy. He would like to play 14...c5 15.d5! (15.dxc5? dxc5 is Black's dream. In that case, he could play for ...c5-c4 and ...Nd7-c5, bringing his pieces forwards.) 15...c4 16.Na5 Nc5 17.b4! shuts Black down on the Queenside. After the further moves 17...cxb3 18.axb3 Qc7 19.b4! we see why the

move Kc1-b1 can be useful. White will quickly occupy the open c-file. While 14...d5?! 15.exd5 cxd5 16.dxe5 Nxe5 17.Nd4 leaves Black with an uncomfortable isolated Queen's Pawn.

Another reasonable choice was 14...Kb8, also tidying up the Queenside, while waiting for further developments. A possible problem is that after 15.Qe3 Black is running out of active options. With the text, Black has a concrete plan to open the position beneficially.

15.Rxd4 c5 16.Rd1 Nb6

Not so quietly, Black is preparing ...d6-d5 to burst open the center. Black's slightly superior development makes such a plan the most natural thing in the world.

17.g3

Garry is aware that the position could be slipping away from him. His Queen now seems misplaced and he has yet to develop his wayward Kingside pieces. With the a6-b5 pawn barrier the f1-a6 diagonal doesn't hold any real prospects for the Bishop. A different diagonal is needed. For instance, 17.Be2?! d5 18.exd5 Nfxd5 19.Nxd5 Rxd5, and the e2-Bishop is left standing on an open freeway.

17...Kb8!?

In view of the coming Bf1-h3+, I shouldn't double-guess this move too closely. It is quite a natural move in fact. However, chess often requires that you find the right move at precisely the right moment in the right order of moves! (Whew, chess can be tough.) Failure to do so means that the opportunity is lost. Often for good. A key line was 17...d5! 18.Bh3+ (Veselin may not have liked 18.Qf4 d4 19.Bh3+ Nfd7 20.Na2!?, when his King isn't as "comfortable" as he would like. Even so, I don't think Black has any problems in this position.) 18...Kb8 19.exd5 Nbxd5 20.Nxd5 Nxd5 or 20...Rxd5, when the game is equal.

18.Na5?!

Kasparov takes a plunge into the abyss. He saw the upcoming sacrifices and they were like a Siren's call. A call he had to accept. Probably he should have transposed into the line given above: 18.Bh3 d5 19.exd5 Nbxd5, when the game is equal.

Another intriguing sacrificial line was offered: 18.Qf4 Ka7 (The right square in terms of getting out of the pin. 18...Ka8? 19.Na5 forces the trade of the good b7-Bishop.) 19.Bxb5 Nh5 20.Qd2!? axb5 21.Nxb5+ Kb8 22.Qa5 Nc8, with an unclear position.

18...Ba8! 19.Bh3 d5 20.Qf4+ Ka7 21.Rhe1 d4!

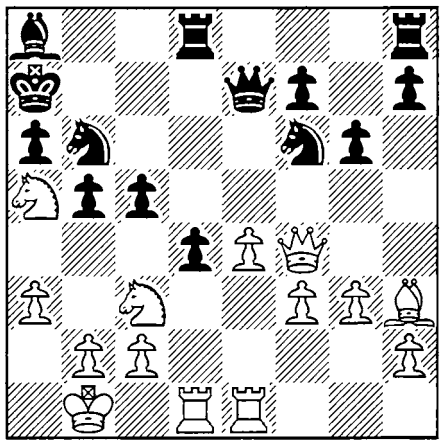


DIAGRAM 126. White to Play

As we see in Diagram 126, Veselin can be especially pleased with his position. He has converted his backward d6-pawn from a weakling into a muscular force. Once the c3-Knight has been booted backwards, Black can start to conjure up ways to take advantage of the a5-Knight, which appears to be hanging in mid air. Alternatively, Black may even be generous and consider ...Nb6-c4 as a way to open the b-file. In short, Black's prospects look very bright.

Kasparov, however, is no easy victim. He fully understood that something had gone wrong and had prepared a series of extraordinary sacrifices.

By the way, it is important to note that Veselin did not miss the win of a pawn. As we know, I'm especially greedy where pawns are concerned but 21...dxe4? 22.fxe4 Rxd1+? 23.Rxd1 Nxe4? 24.Rd7+! Nxd7 25.Qc7+

and mate next move is a really painful way of getting caught with your hand in the cookie jar.

22.Nd5!

Essentially the only move. If the c3-Knight were to retreat, White's whole strategy would be a bust.

22...Nbxd5 23.exd5 Qd6 24.Rxd4!

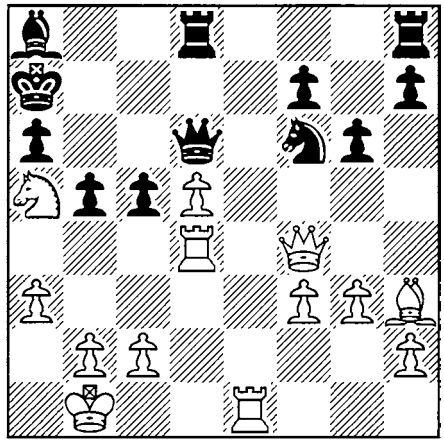


DIAGRAM 127. Black to Play

As we see in Diagram 127, this is White's only move. It must have come as quite a disappointment for Veselin. The two other reasonable moves both favor Black: 24.Qxd6? Rxd6 25.b4 cxb4 26.axb4 Nxd5 and 24.Nc6+ Bxc6 25.dxc6 Qxf4 26.Re7+ Kb6 27.gxf4 Nd5 28.Rxf7 Rdf8.

Take a closer look at the position in Diagram 127 and reflect for a moment. Try to imagine what Veselin was thinking. After playing ...d5-d4, he must have been very optimistic and believed that he had seized both the initiative and the advantage. He may have viewed the text as a *desperate* attempt to confuse matters. Believing that he held an advantageous position and that therefore the combination could not work, Veselin felt obliged to accept the sacrifice.

The position is actually a magical moment in chess. Had Veselin

played the *best move* we would have been robbed of one of the greatest combinations in history!

24...cxd4?

It is almost unbelievable that this capture is a mistake. Black should play 24...Kb6! 25.b4 Qxf4 26.Rxf4 Nxd5 27.Rxf7 cxb4 28.axb4 Nxb4 29.Nb3 Rd6 30.f4 Bd5, with only a slight advantage.

Black had to avoid several other landmines as well: 24...Bxd5? 25.Rxd5! Nxd5 (25...Qxf4? 26.Rxd8! Qh6 *(26...Qc7 27.Rxh8 Qxa5 28.Re7+* wins for White.*)* 27.Re7+ Kb6 28.b4! sets up a Rook and Knight checkmate.) 26.Qxf7+ Nc7 27.Re6 Rd7 (27...Qd1+ 28.Ka2 Rd7 29.Re7 Qd5+ *(29...Rxe7? 30.Qxe7 Kb6 31.Nb3, wins for White.)* 30.Qxd5 Rxd5 31.Rxc7+ Kb6 32.Rc6+! Kxa5 33.Bc8!, with the superior position.) 28.Rxd6 Rxf7 29.Nc6+ Ka8 30.f4!, when White has a pawn for the Exchange and a raging initiative as well.

25.Re7+!!

The key point of the combination is the invasion by the second Rook. Black defends very well after the mistaken 25.Qxd4+? Qb6! 26.Re7+ Nd7 27.Rxd7+ (27.Qc3 Qg1+ 28.Ka2 Bxd5+ 29.b3 f5!, and the attack falls short.) 27...Rxd7 28.Qxh8 Rxd5, with a material advantage for Black.

25...Kb6

In order to refute the attack, Black's King goes on the march. Capturing by 25...Qxe7? 26.Qxd4+ Kb8 27.Qb6+ Bb7 (27...Qb7 28.Nc6 checkmate) 28.Nc6+ Ka8 29.Qa7 checkmate. Going backwards with 25...Kb8 26.Qxd4 Nd7 27.Bxd7! Bxd5 (The Bishop is immune due to the hanging h8-Rook.) 28.c4! (White must not get anxious with 28.Nc6+?? Qxc6! 29.Bxc6 Ba2+!, surprise! Black recaptures White's Queen and should survive.) 28...bxc4 29.Nc6+!. Now this move works like a charm. White has a mating attack.

26.Qxd4+ Kxa5

Veselin was probably nervous about this capture but he certainly wasn't going to give back any material himself: 26...Qc5 27.Qxf6+ Qd6 28.Qd4+ and White has a perpetual check. Unfortunately for Black, White can play for the win by 28.Be6!! Bxd5 29.b4!, constructing several mating

nets around Black's King. The good news is that with the text Black no longer has to worry about Rook and Knight checkmates.

27.b4+ Ka4

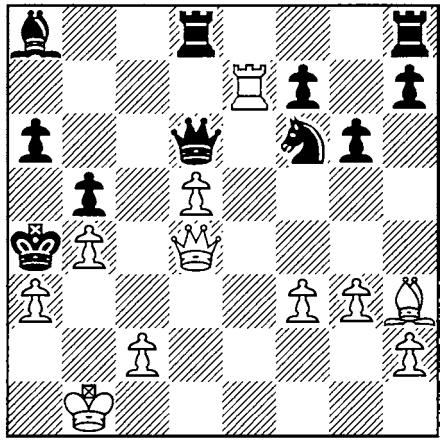


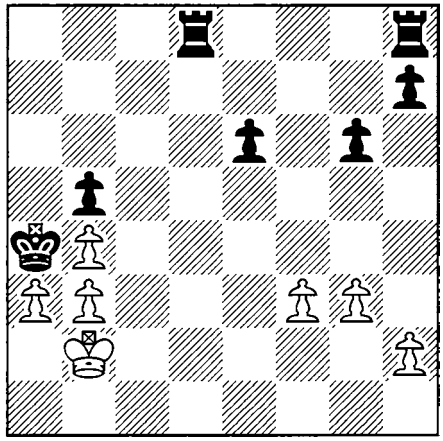
DIAGRAM 128. White to Play

White has come to the end of his combination, as we see in Diagram 128. Garry had intuitively guessed that despite his material losses Black's King would be unable to escape. Would he be proven right? How would you proceed? If White has a free hand, he will have no problems constructing a checkmate by Kb1-b2, Qd4-c3 and Qc3-b3 checkmate. But Black is allowed to move as well. Given a chance, Black is ready for ...Nf6xd5xb4, breaking up the Queenside pawn prison and taking over the game. Remarkably, back at move twenty-two Garry had envisioned this position and had correctly guessed he was winning.

28.Qc3

Not bad but not the very best either. Lubosh Kavalek found a spectacular win with 28.Ra7!!, which firmly puts the finger to the pulse of the position. It is vital that Black's Queen plays a role in the defense. The point of 28.Ra7 is to freeze Black's Queen from moving. Moreover, even to lure her away from the defense. In its prettiest moment, we would see

28.Ra7 Nxd5 29.Rxa6+!! Qxa6 30.Qb2! Nc3+ 31.Qxc3 Bd5 32.Kb2 Qe6 33.Bxe6 fxe6 34.Qb3+ Bxb3 35.cxb3 checkmate. A beauty deserving an Analysis Diagram 129 of its own.



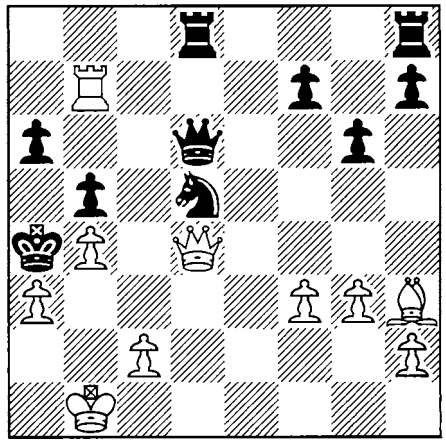
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 129. Checkmate

It seems that Black has only one defensive move: (28.Ra7) 28...Bb7, to hold the a6-pawn and release the Queen. Play would continue 29.Rxb7, capturing a Bishop and now threatening Rb7-b6. Black faces a crossroads. How to capture the d5-pawn?

The natural continuation would be 29...Qxd5, desperately trying to trade Queens. White continues in fine style by 30.Rb6!, threatening to capture the a6-pawn for mate. After 30...Ra8 31.Qxf6 a5 32.Bd7! Qxd7 33.Qc3 Qd5 34.Kb2, with the same mating pattern. Another pretty win in this line is seen after 28.Ra7 Bb7 29.Rxb7 Qxd5 30.Rb6 a5 31.Ra6 Ra8 32.Qe3!!, loading up for our pattern shown in Analysis Diagram 129. Black takes a Rook: 32...Rxa6 (32...Rhe8 33.Rxa8! Rxa8 *(33...Rxe3 34.Rxa5 checkmate.)* 34.Kb2 axb4 35.axb4 Kxb4 36.Qc3+ Ka4 37.Qa3 checkmate.) 33.Kb2 axb4 34.axb4 Kxb4 35.Qc3+ Ka4 36.Qa3 checkmate.

Now we will walk along the crossroads of the unnatural. Something that is truly stupefying: 28.Ra7 Bb7 29.Rxb7 Nxd5, when Black intends

...Nd5xb4 to break up and crash the party. We now move to Analysis Diagram 130. I won't even try to torment you with the question what would you play. It is almost beyond reasoning!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 130. White to Play

From Analysis Diagram 130 White conjures up the mystical move 30.Bd7!!, which is simply outstanding. In the first place, Black's intention of ...Nd5xb4 is stopped as his Queen lacks protection. Secondly, White now threatens Bd7xb5+, followed by checkmate on the a-file. Black's Rook is lured to the d7-square: 30...Rxd7 31.Qb2 Nxb4, Black has no choice but to give up the Knight in this way. The try 31...Nc3+ 32.Qxc3 Qd1+ 33.Kb2 Rd3 34.Ra7! leads to checkmate again. After 31...Nxb4 we now understand why the Rook is badly placed on the d7-square: 32.Rxd7! Qc5 33.axb4 Qxb4 34.Rd4 wins.

A series of amazing and beautiful winning lines. Let's get back to the game, where Garry is trying to deliver checkmate on the b3-square.

28...Qxd5

The only defense. A crude error would be 28...Bxd5? 29.Kb2 and, as we have seen, Black has no answer for Qc3-b3 and c2xb3 checkmate.

29.Ra7!

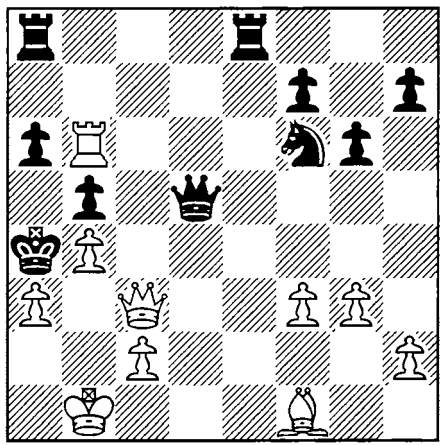
In turn, White avoids a crude error of his own: 29.Kb2? Qd4!, this time pinning the Queen.

29...Bb7 30.Rxb7

Another egregious mistake would be 30.Qc7?, allowing 30...Qd1+ 31.Kb2 Qd4+, and a draw by perpetual check.

30...Qc4?!

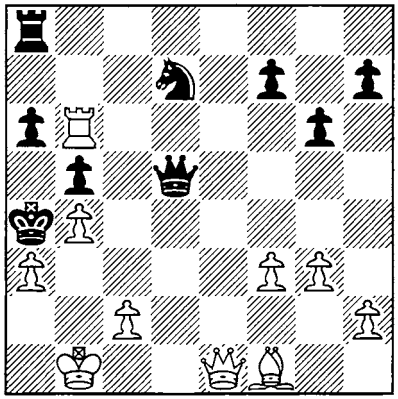
With all the heavy turbulence going on, it is understandable that Topalov makes a defensive slip. It was better to activate the h8-Rook with 30...Rhe8! 31.Rb6! (Black's tricky defense is that after 31.Ra7? Rd6 32.Kb2 Qe5! gives the Queen a different protector. Black wins!) 31...Ra8, when White faces a crossroads of his own. The optically attractive 32.Be6 fails to deliver the point: 32...Rxe6 33.Rxe6 Qc4!! 34.Qxc4 bxc4 35.Rxf6 Kxa3, when Black is doing well in a Rook ending. The correct move is 32.Bf1!!, another astonishing change of direction. This too deserves an analysis diagram.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 131. Black to Play

As we see in Analysis Diagram 131, White is loading up for Rb6-d6 and it is incredible that Black is unable to find a reasonable move. For example, 32...Re6 33.Rxe6 Qxe6 34.Kb2 and Black no longer has ...Qe6-e5

as a defensive resource. It seems that Black's only try is 32...Re1+ (32...Rec8? 33.Qxc8! or 32...a5? 33.Bxb5+ Qxb5 34.Qb3 checkmate. Finally, 32...Nd7 33.Rd6! Rec8 34.Qb2! wins.) 33.Qxe1 Nd7 brings us along to Analysis Diagram 132, when it appears that White's Rook is trapped. There is a saving coup. Can you find it?



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 132. White to Play

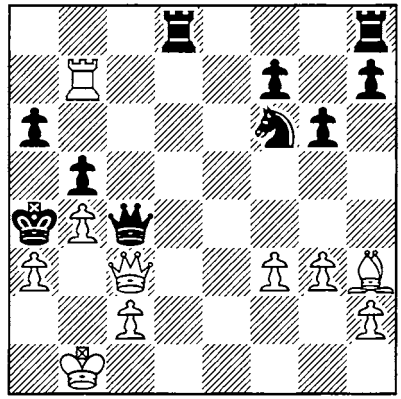


DIAGRAM 133. White to Play

White puts his Rook *en prise* without batting an eye: 34.Rb7!! Qxb7 35.Qd1! Kxa3 36.c3 and, squirm as he may, Black cannot prevent checkmate.

In this thicket of analysis, let's have a picture of the game (Diagram 133) so that we can see how it continued!

31.Qxf6 Kxa3?

Having just jettisoned a Knight, Veselin quite understandably wanted something back, and getting rid of the prison of White pawns seemed like a good deal at the time. Especially if we bear in mind that one of his defensive resources was to play ...Nf6xd5xb4, capturing the Queenside pawns. Instead, he had to try a difficult, probably lost, ending after 31...Rd1+ 32.Kb2 Ra8 (Avoiding a Queen exchange: 32...Qd4+ 33.Qxd4 Rxd4 34.Rxf7 Rd6 35.Re7!, with the idea of Bh3-e6-b3 checkmate. Black is lost.) 33.Qb6 Qd4+ (Black has to agree to the trade of Queens after all:

33...a5? 34.Bd7! Rd5 35.Qe3 axb4 36.Ra7+ Rxa7 37.Qxa7 checkmate) 34.Qxd4 Rxd4 35.Rxf7 a5 36.Be6 axb4 37.Bb3+ Ka5 38.axb4+ Kb6 (38...Rxb4 39.c3! snares Black's Rook and produces a won Rook ending.) 39.Rxh7; White has three pawns for the Exchange and should win.

At this moment, Black has the joy of threatening checkmate in one move!

32.Qxa6+ Kxb4 33.c3+!

Not only a fine tactic, this is White's only move!

33...Kxc3 34.Qa1+! Kd2!

This is Black's best chance. Otherwise 34...Kb4 35.Qb2+ Ka5 (35...Qb3 36.Rxb5+! wins Black's Queen with check.) 36.Qa3+ Qa4 37.Ra7+, and again Black loses his Queen and the game.

35.Qb2+ Kd1

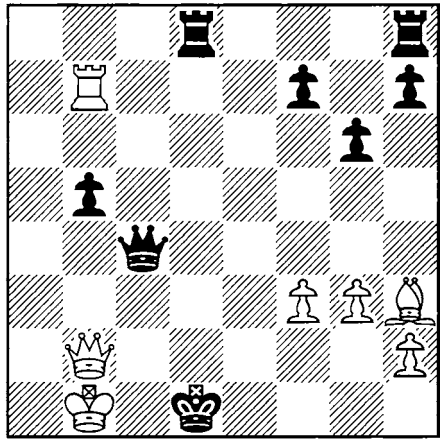


DIAGRAM 134. White to Play

The amazing march of the Black King is shown in Diagram 134. The game has reached its concluding phase and is about to pass into the realm of the problem composer. Does Black have reason to be optimistic? He threatens both ...Qc4-d3+ and ...Rd8-d2 winning! In our analysis of this extraordinary game we have seen White's Bishop swing around the board.

It is time to swing back.

36.Bf1!!

Beautiful beyond words. The Bishop is immune from capture as 36...Qxf1 37.Qc2+ Ke1 38.Re7+ and mate next turn.

36...Rd2!

Veselin is down to his last trick.

37.Rd7!

As often mentioned, only moves can be good moves too.

37...Rxd7 38.Bxc4 bxc4

In view of 39.Qc1 checkmate, Black is forced to part with his h8-Rook, which never took part in the game.

39.Qxh8 Rd3

The players still had to make the time control, forty moves in two hours per player, so the following moves were blitzed out quickly. Black cannot save his c-pawn because of 39...Rb7+ 40.Ka2 Kc2 41.Qd4! Rc7 (41...c3 42.Qe4+ wins the Rook) 42. Qe4+ Kd1 43.Kb1 c3 44.Qd5+ Ke2 45.Qe5+ and Black loses his Rook.

40.Qa8 c3 41.Qa4+ Ke1 42.f4 f5 43.Kc1 Rd2 44.Qa7 1-0

A truly marvelous game that will inspire us for decades. What to say? Welcome to the world of chess combinations!

CHAPTER SEVEN

Test Positions

Dear reader, hopefully you have enjoyed this unusual romp through the fascinating world of chess combinations. As stated at the start, this book has been a deliberate mix, snapping back and forth between the difficult and easy. My intention has been to reflect actual practice, where things can go smoothly as well as dreadfully wrong within a single move. Not all combinations are sound and even good ones are spoiled. If you've enjoyed the roller-coaster ride and learned some useful insights for your games I am elated. Unfortunately, after this chapter you may well end up disliking me for a long time to come. You are forewarned that this chapter of the book is sure to stretch and strain your imagination as well as your understanding of chess combinations. Throughout I've stressed that a successful combination can work only if the position offers you some type of an advantage. If not, forget about tactics and think plans and strategy instead. Even if a position does possess an advantage, it is not a given that a sound combination exists. The defending forces may be superior to the attackers or a *zwischenzug* may exist that utterly refutes the attack. Who knows?

We are told that every lengthy game has a combination of some type. Either played or hidden in some sub-variation. Putting this theory to the test, this chapter features games from the 2005 FIDE World Champion-

ships, played in San Luis, Argentina. If the theory holds true I will have plenty of material for this chapter. If not, the coming torture will be of a short duration. The tests will be several-fold: You should look at the diagrammed position and, after reading the questions posed, verbally articulate to yourself what advantages in the position exist. After carefully weighing the advantages from the perspectives of material, superior pieces (development), pawn structure, King safety, open files, ranks and diagonals, you must then determine the answers. I may ask if a combination exists or not. If you believe a combination exists, *write down your analysis and save it in your notebook.* If you rejected a possible combination, write why you thought the combination was a false trail.

The good news about these tests is that there are no wrong answers. *All analysis is good work.* When you have completed a test, carefully compare your thoughts with my own solution. Did you recognize the key candidate moves? How far did you calculate? Did your calculations end with a proper judgment of the resulting positions? Did your analysis improve on my own? My introductory comments may offer you a tantalizing idea, which ends in ruin. I may try to trick you and goad you into sacrificing your beloved pawns and pieces for nothing. Will you take a promising position and turn it into a frightful mess? If you find a sound combination well done! I will be mighty pleased. Next time I will try harder.

Each test will have a very lengthy solution, which gives an in-depth description of the advantages and disadvantages of the position. The analysis will also be quite deep. I challenge you to match my understanding and analysis with your own. Set the test positions up on a chessboard. Don't be afraid to move the pieces around, although mental visualization is to be preferred. Write your thoughts down and do your best to answer my questions. I have been expansive in the solutions and shared my approach to the position. The only way for you to compare properly is to be expansive as well. How will you perform? Perhaps you started on the right track and then switched rails mid-way. You may have gone in a different direction altogether. Pay attention to advantages possessed and the *focus of the pieces* approach. By using this approach, you may miss a hidden

combination but the majority of the time this approach will serve you well. Good luck!

The Tests

Test One

Judith Polgar-Viswanathan Anand
FIDE Championship, San Luis, 2005
Caro-Kann Defense

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7 5.Bd3 Ngf6 6.Nf3 Nxe4 7.Bxe4 Nf6 8.Bd3 Bg4 9.Be3 e6 10.c3 Bd6 11.h3 Bh5 12.Qe2 Qa5 13.a4 0-0 14.Qc2 Bxf3 15.gxf3 Qh5 16.0-0-0 Nd5 17.Kb1 b5 18.Rdg1 f6 19.axb5 cxb5 20.Bc1 Rab8 21.Qe2 Rfe8

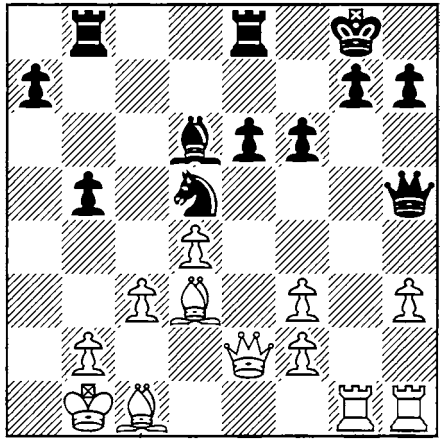


DIAGRAM 135. White to Play

We will warm ourselves up with an easy one. As we see in Diagram 135, with the move 21.Qe2 Judith found a double attack hitting both the

b5 and e6-pawns. Black chose to defend the e6-pawn. The question is whether Judith should now capture the b5-pawn. Would the e8-Rook then have to move, allowing White to continue with 23.c4, booting the d5-Knight? In short, is 22.Bxb5 is a good move?

Test Two

Judith Polgar-Viswanathan Anand
FIDE Championship, San Luis, 2005

This next position is from the same game as Test One. After 21...Rfe8 the game continued...

22.Qe4 Kh8 23.h4 f5 24.Qe2 Qf7 25.Rg2 Bf4 26.Rhg1 Rg8 27.Be3 Qd7 28.Qd2 Bd6 29.Bc2 Qb7 30.Bg5

...reaching the following position.

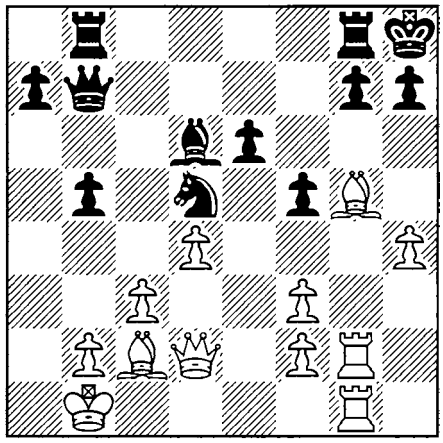


DIAGRAM 136. Black to Play

In Diagram 136, with the two sides castled on opposite flanks the players are anxious to open lines and gnaw at the opponent's King. While White has already opened the g-file, Black is behind in terms of opening

files against White's King. The question is how Black should proceed. Should ...a7-a5-a4-a3 be played to undermine the c3-pawn? Or is the violent 30...b4 best? If 30...b4 31.c4 kicks the d5-Knight. Would you then plunge ahead with 31...Nc3+ 32.Kc1 Qxf3, snagging a pawn? Or would you play 31...b3 32.Bd3! when Black's Knight is left precariously hanging? Your choice is either to march the a7-pawn or force the action by advancing the b4-pawn. Analyze the ramifications of both lines.

Test Three

Peter Leko-Veselin Topalov

FIDE Championship, San Luis, 2005

Sicilian Defense

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.f3 e6 7.Be3 b5 8.Qd2 b4 9.Na4 Nbd7 10.0-0-0 d5 11.exd5 Nxd5 12.Bc4 N7f6 13.Bg5 Qc7 14.Bxd5 Nxd5 15.Rhe1 Bb7 16.Qe2 Qd6 17.Kb1 h6 18.Bh4 Nf4 19.Qf2 Qc7

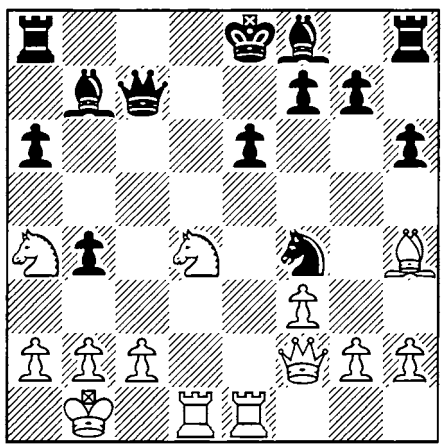


DIAGRAM 137. White to Play

In a first-round match-up of two pre-tournament favorites, Leko with the White pieces is to move. How would you assess the position? List the advantages and disadvantages for each side before deciding whether or not White has a forcing combination. The immediate sacrifice against the e6-pawn 20.Nxe6 is calmly answered by 20...Nxe6, when Black is fine. Correct?

In the game, Leko played 20.Nf5, freezing Black's Kingside development. Is this the best move?

Test Four

Viswanathan Anand-Michael Adams

FIDE Championship, San Luis, 2005

Ruy Lopez

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Bb7 10.d4 Re8 11.Nbd2 Bf8 12.a4 h6 13.Bc2 exd4 14.cxd4 Nb4 15.Bb1 c5 16.d5 Nd7 17.Ra3 c4 18.axb5 axb5 19.Nd4 Qb6 20.Nf5 Ne5 21.Rg3 g6 22.Nf3 Ned3

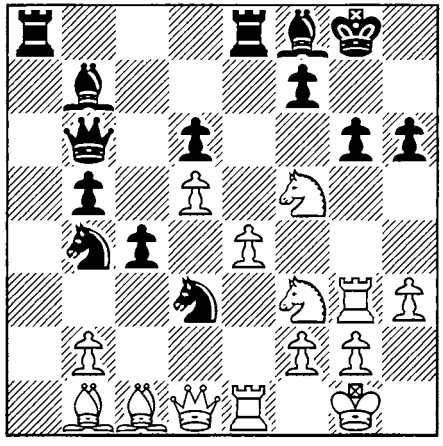


DIAGRAM 138. White to Play

Test Diagram 138 features one of the sharpest positions reached during the San Luis championship. White has made a Rook Lift to the Kingside in order to launch a fierce attack. Black has responded by plunging a Knight into the d3-square, attacking both the f2-pawn and the e1-Rook. Who is attacking whom? Which side has the advantage? What would you play as White? Would you play the careful 23.Re2 defending the f2-pawn while getting the Rook out of harm's way? Would you play 23.Bxd3, reducing Black's attacking forces? Would you play the natural 23.Be3, simultaneously protecting the f2-pawn while developing with tempo? Alternatively, would you play another move? There are many questions to be answered in an ultra sharp position. Your task is to analyze the ramifications as deeply as possible. The solution is extremely lengthy, so work hard!

Test Five

Peter Svidler-Rustam Kasimdzhanov

FIDE Championship, San Luis, 2005

Sicilian Defense

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.f3 e5 7.Nb3 Be6 8.Be3 Be7 9.Qd2 0-0 10.0-0-0 Nbd7 11.g4 b5 12.g5 b4 13.Ne2 Ne8 14.Ng3 a5 15.Kb1 a4 16.Nc1 Qb8 17.f4 exf4 18.Bxf4 b3 19.cxb3 axb3 20.a3 Qb7 21.Nce2 Bd8 22.Nd4 Ba5 23.Qe2 Nc5 24.Bg2 Bc3 25.e5 d5 26.Qb5

After such a difficult test as the last one, it is time for a respite, and Test Diagram 139 is an easy one. From everything this work has taught, clearly Black, who is on move, has a powerful Queenside attack. The b3-pawn has been wedged into White's fortress and there are nasty threats down the a-file. Black's only problem is that his e8-f8 brigade is sleeping. What would you play as Black? Analyze the best attacking and defensive lines as deeply as you can.

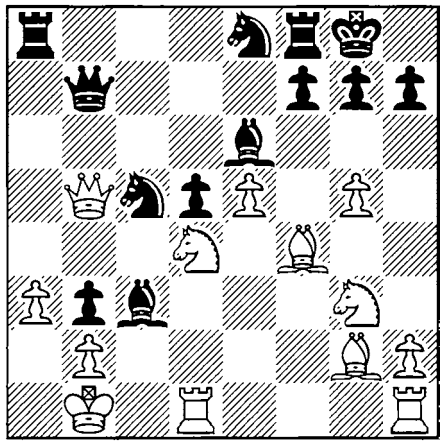


DIAGRAM 139. Black to Play

Test Six

Viswanathan Anand-Alexander Morozevich
FIDE Championship, San Luis, 2005
French Defense

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4 c5 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Be3 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bc5 9.Qd2 0-0 10.0-0-0 a6 11.Nb3 Bb4 12.Bd3 b5 13.Rhf1 Nb6 14.a3 Be7 15.Nd4 Qc7 16.Nxc6 Qxc6 17.Bd4 Nc4 18.Qe2 Rb8

The test in Diagram 140 is going to be tricky. Essentially three tests within one diagram. With Kings castled on opposite sides the decisive factor will be who can seize the initiative. Black's threat of ...b5-b4, ripping open the Queenside, is a given. White must react quickly. Your job is to analyze three candidate moves: 19.f5, 19.Qh5 and 19.Bxh7+. Which move is best?

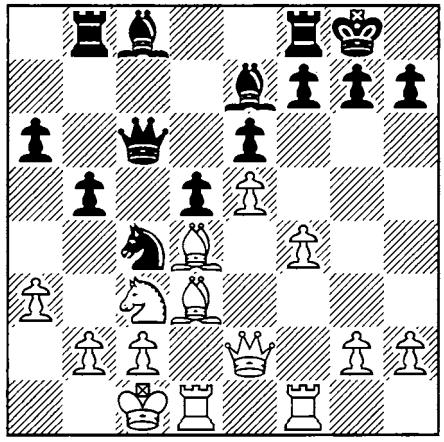


DIAGRAM 140. White to Play

CHAPTER EIGHT

Solutions

Test One

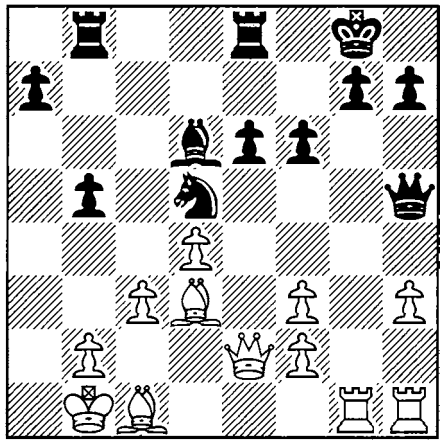


DIAGRAM 141. White to Play

Grabbing the b5-pawn would be a bone-headed clunker of a move for many reasons. The first one is that, as greedy as I am where pawns are concerned, such a capture would open up the b-file. The very file occupied by White's King! Warning bells should go off that such a grab would put

our King in immediate danger. It is with great trepidation that we should capture a pawn and expose our King to attack. The real problem is that with 22...Rxb5 Black would win a Bishop and threatens 23...Nxc3+, forking King and Queen. If White captures the Rook 23.Qxb5? Nxc3+ 24.bxc3 Qxb5+ White loses his Queen.

Even if the Bishop wasn't lost immediately, Black could also consider a combination where, after a b5-capture, he plays ...Nd5xc3+ and ...a7-a6, winning back the sacrificed piece and exposing White's King.

Test Two

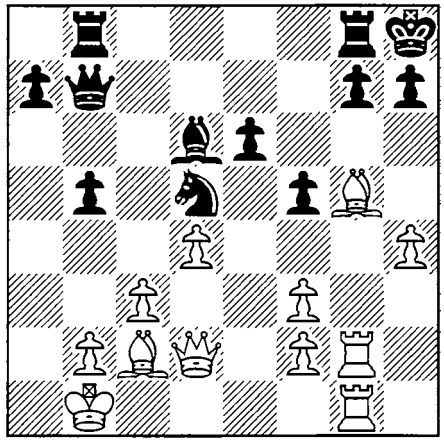


DIAGRAM 142. Black to Play

A cruel test of which I'm quite proud. Strategically, Black has a won position. White is completely stymied on the Kingside as the g7-pawn is well fortified. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible for White to conjure up any type of real threat. If White spends two tempi to advance the h4-pawn to the h6-square, the subsequent ...g7-g6 is quite safe for Black. If you thought 30...a5 was a good move, you were right. It is an excellent move. Black's plan of ...a5-a4-a3 is crystal clear and White hardly has a good answer. It is likely that White would have to play 31.Re1 Rge8 32.Qd3 a4

33.Bd2, when White is on the defensive. In fact, White is devoid of useful moves. Black can continue quietly reinforcing his Queenside attack and without an adequate counter White's position is terrible. In this line, it is important to note that 33.Rxe6 would have failed to 33...Rxe6 34.Qxf5 Re1+! 35.Ka2 Nf6!, preparing ...Qb7-f7+.

In his wonderful book *Improve Your Chess Now,* Jonathan Tisdall writes on page 166: *"I heard Kasparov say something to the effect that an attack begins when you get a pawn near the (enemy) King. He should know..."* When first reading this piece of wisdom or advice I objected. A host of middlegame positions flooded my mind from various openings and defenses like the Sicilian Dragon, the Grünfeld, the Open Ruy Lopez and many others where play is dominated by the pieces, with pawn attacks tending to be rare. As Kasparov's main defense was the King's Indian. where a pawn storm is a key strategy, I realized that the influence of the KID was having a too pronounced effect. Kasparov's observation couldn't possibly serve as a broad general rule. Satisfied that I could dismiss Kasparov's tip, I double-checked to be sure and began to think more carefully about attacking play and the role of the pawn. Recalling patterns from our Queen and Pawn checkmates, I began to have second thoughts. I soon realized how I'd desperately try to wedge a pawn into my opponent's castled King position and changed my mind. Kasparov was completely right. An attack does begin when we get a pawn near the enemy King! In our test position, the discussion concerns whether Black should play the violent 30...b4 or the creeping 30...a5, followed by the a-pawn advance. An excellent example proving the validity of Kasparov's insight. Black is trying to create an attack by advancing his pawns.

As combinative play is the art of *forcing* moves, we absolutely have to consider the ramifications of 30...b4!, when Black is ready for either ...b4xc3 or ...b4-b3 jamming White's King as the assault begins in earnest. White cannot allow the opening of the b-file so we are certain that 30...b4 31.c4 must be played and the further move 31...b3 will force White's

Bishop to move. White will have to play 32.Bd3, as 32.Bd1 Qa6 wins immediately in view of the invasion of the a2-square.

Before playing 31...b3, we note that 31...Nc3+ 32.Kc1 Qxf3, does indeed snag a pawn for which we are deeply grateful. Practically speaking, White's only move is 33.Bd3! Ne4 34.Qe2 Bf4+ 35.Kb1 when, annoyingly, White is still in the game. Breaking the attack against the King in order to win the doubled f3-pawn is a meager reward. Thus 31...b3 is infinitely superior and the response 32.Bd3 is forced.

Now we are at an important crossroads in our analysis. The moves 30...b4! 31.c4! b3! 32.Bd3 are all forcing and good.

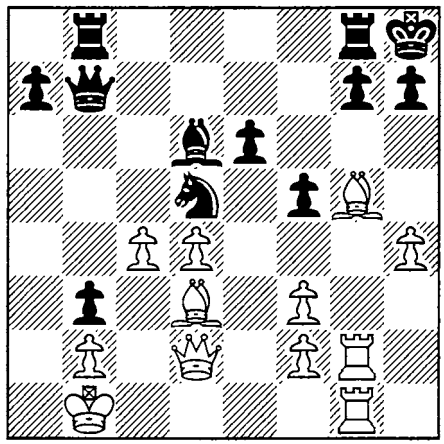


DIAGRAM 143. Black to Play

The time has come to introduce the Queen into the attack. The move 32...Qa6 is most compelling but is it the best move? Black's Knight cannot be captured as this would open the c-file and cost White the game immediately: 33.cxd5? Qa2+ 34.Kc1 Qa1+ 35.Bb1 Rgc8+ 36.Kd1 Rc2!, with a decisive attack. This motif of playing ...Qb7-a6-a2+-a1+ will force White to play Bd3-b1, blocking the check. White's b1-Bishop will be in an absolute pin and the open c-file will accelerate White's defeat. Indeed, with the Bishop on the b1-square a Rook will rush to the c-file as the c4-

pawn will lack protection. It would seem that White will be forced to play c4-c5 in order to keep the c-file closed. At this point, we should note that with White's King on the c1-square, it would be very useful for the d6-Bishop to play a role on the a5-e1 diagonal. With the Bishop on b4 controlling the d2-square, White's King would be further hemmed in. Best of all, this move would come with tempo. Since we now expect that White will be forced to play a future c4-c5, playing 32...Bb4 first is the best route in our crossroads. White is forced to choose between 33.Qd1 and 33.Qe2. It is an easy choice. On the d1-square White's Queen is useless, further hemming in White's King. As we can dismiss 33.Qd1 Qa6 34.Qxb3? Bc3 as suicide, White will have to play 33.Qe2, when Black's Bishop has joined the attack with gain of tempo. We should be constantly vigilant for opportunities of bringing pieces into the attack with tempo.

All of these forcing moves have been very attractive for Black. We have reached the following position in our analysis: 30...b4! 31.c4! b3! 32.Bd3 Bb4 33.Qe2.

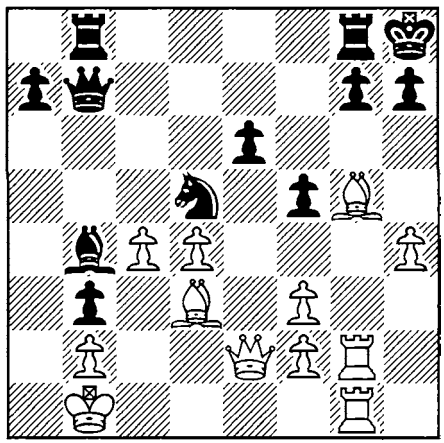


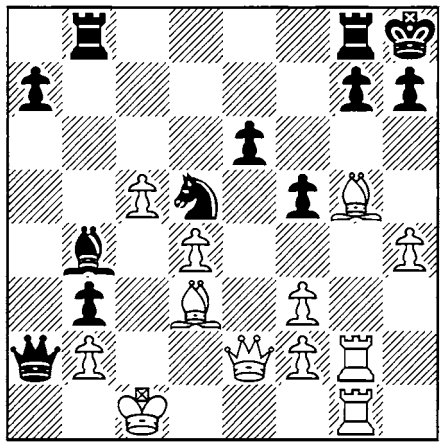
DIAGRAM 144. Black to Play

Now Black is ready for the introduction of the Queen with 33...Qa6, when White is facing insurmountable threats. Besides the invasion of

Black's Queen, there is the crushing blow ...Nd5-c3+ in the offing. It would appear that White has little else except 34.c5 Qa2+ 35.Kc1, when Black has many attractive choices, such as 35...Rbc8, preparing a sacrifice on the c5-square. While alluring, the b8-Rook is doing excellent work on the b-file.

At this point in a practical game, I would stop calculating and play the moves. My reason for plunging ahead is that my reluctance to play 30...b4 was entirely due to 31.c4, attacking my unassailable Knight. Once I realized that White would shortly have to play c4-c5, when my Knight is no longer under threat of capture, my reluctance to play 30...b4 would disappear. I'd make the moves on the board. After realizing that c4-c5 is virtually forced, getting the d6-Bishop out of harm's way with tempo, would make that decision easy. Such a series of moves is completely in Black's favor. He has wedged the b-pawn nicely into the b3-square while White has had to react by moving the protective c3-pawn up the board and away from White's beleaguered King.

Having realized the following moves are all forced, as Black I'd play 30...b4 31.c4 b3 32.Bd3 Bb4 33.Qe2 Qa6 34.c5 Qa2+ 35.Kc1 and start to calculate that position once it was on the board.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 145. Black to Play

I would be drawn to 35...Rbc8 briefly, then to 35...Ba3 which looks splendid, and finally my eyes would latch onto the move 35...Nc3!, when everything falls neatly into place. White's Queen is attacked, the move ...Qa2-a1+ is decisive as the d3-Bishop cannot block on the b1-square. The only move is 36.bxc3 b2+! and the pawn cannot be captured because 37.Qxb2 Ba3 wins White's Queen. If White plays 37.Kd1 Bxc3! is a winner. Therefore 30...b4! leads to a winning position. The actual moves of the game were:

30...b4 31.c4 b3 32.Bd3 Bb4 33.Qe2 Qa6 34.Bh6

This could be classified as a desperate last fling. As we've seen, White's position is lost even after the relatively best move 34.c5, so why not take a parting shot?

34...Nc3+ 35.bxc3 Bxc3 36.Kc1 Qa3+ 37.Kd1 Qa1+ 38.Bc1 b2 39.Qe3 Bxd4 40.Qd2 bxc1=Q+ 41.Qxc1 Qa2 0-1

Test Three

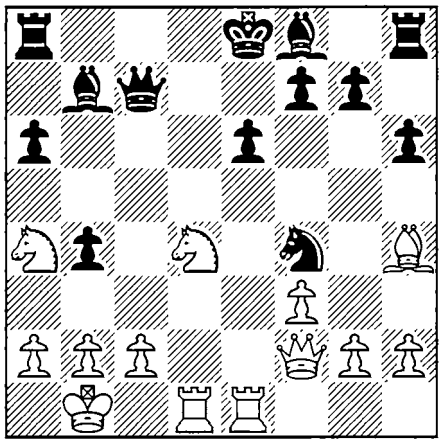


DIAGRAM 146. White to Play

I would assess the position as greatly in White's favor. While material is level (our most important consideration), Black is seriously lagging in

development and a knockout blow practically screams to be played. After tempering my initial enthusiasm, I see that Black's position is by no means terrible. In fact, if Black can survive an impending combination his position has a number of trumps. In the first place, he has the two Bishops, giving him a long-term advantage. The b4-pawn is a plus as it hampers White's Queenside majority and makes luft awkward. There is the central d5-outpost to consider. Black might be able to plant a Bishop there which would block the d-file and further fortify the e6-pawn. Finally, if Black can play ...g7-g5 gaining a tempo by attacking the h4-Bishop he will follow with ...Bf8-e7, covering up the exposed King. In that case, Black may be able to castle, making a quick exit out of the center.

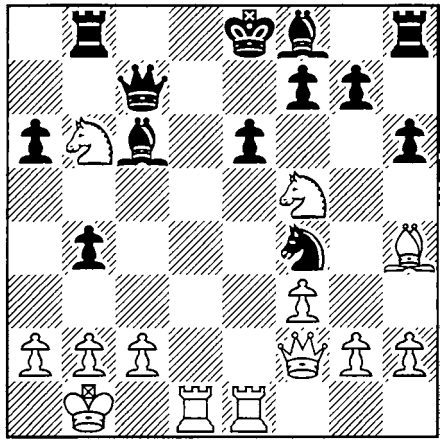
From the above preliminary inspection, it is clear that White must strike while the opportunity exists. An advantage in development is only temporary. If we dither, our opponent will start to develop and will catch up. With all the White pieces ready to strike, a combination *must* exist but where? The move 20.Nxe6?? is a real howler. (A move that is so terrible it causes us to howl in anguish. After the game is over and at a suitable distance from the playing hall, of course...) With the capture 20...Nxe6 White would lose a piece for no compensation whatsoever. That cannot be the right move.

While the move played, 20.Nf5, *looks* good it is actually mistimed. Indeed, it is a mistake that throws away the lion's share of White's advantage. Getting to the heart of the position, we notice the a4-Knight, which has been pushed away from the center. That piece is not participating in the attack and is sitting out of play. The key move and a winner has to be 20.Nb6!, fearlessly plunging the Knight into the game. Once we see the wondrous variation 20...Qxb6? 21.Nxe6! Qxf2 22.Nxg7 or 22.Nc7 double check and checkmate!!, our excitement is stirred. Yes sirree! We quickly verify the variation again: 20.Nb6 Qxb6 21.Nxe6 Qxe6, hoping to win two Knights and a Rook for the Queen. Hmm. That is a bummer. Wait! There is the move 23.Qb6!, threatening to checkmate on the d8-square while attacking the b7-Bishop. Black appears to be lost. The only try is 23...Bd5

24.Rxd5! Qxe1+ (24...Nxd5 25.Qc6 is a splendid checkmate) 25.Bxe1 Nxd5 26.Qc6+ and White wins the house.

From the above it is clear that 20.Nb6! is really stirring the juices. The Knight cannot be captured and Black is forced to answer 20...Rb8, moving the Rook out of danger. Now the move 21.Nf5!, is really powerful. White is threatening to invade on the d7-square with decisive effect. With the d4-square vacated the move Qf2-d4 will be a killing centralization. The Queen will attack the d8-square as well as the g7-pawn. What can Black do? "Developing" by 21...Bc5?? 22.Nxg7+ Kf8 23.Nd7+ Kxg7 24.Qg3+ Kh7? (24...Ng6 25.Bf6+! and Qg3xc7 snags Black's Queen.) 25.Nf6 checkmate, achieves another savory victory.

It would seem that Black's only defensive try is 20.Nb6! Rb8 21.Nf5! Bc6, covering the d7-square.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 147. White to Play

White's continuation is both natural and powerful: 22.Qd4 Rg8, protecting the g7-pawn. The b6-Knight is untouchable owing to checkmate on the d8-square. Now White has the powerful *centralizing* move 23.Nc4!, when White has successfully repositioned his wayward a4-Knight to decisive effect. Black has to play 23...g5 to block the h4-Bishop. The simple

retreat 24.Bg3 now leaves it up to Black to find a defense to the threatened Nc4-d6+ invasion. In fact, Black has no answer. Blocking with 24...Bd5 25.Nce3! unclogs the d-file thanks to the absolute pin along the e-file. After the retreat 25...Ba8 26.Ng4! the a4-Knight has completed a remarkable journey which will be shortly rewarded. Black is lost!

20.Nf5? g5 21.Bg3 Rc8!

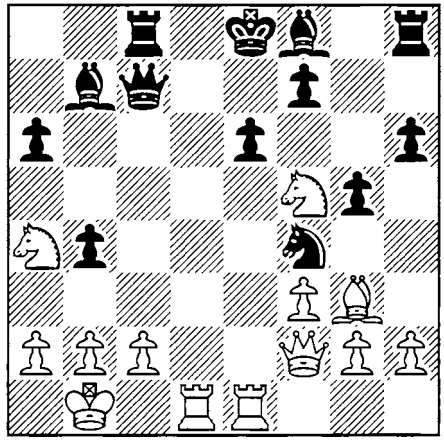


DIAGRAM 148. White to Play

We now see the vital difference in White's move order and what it means. The expected grand entrance of the a4-Knight no longer delivers the goods. With 22.Nb6 Bc5! 23.Nd6+ (23.Ng7+ no longer captures a pawn. After the further moves 23...Kf8 24.Nd7+ Kxg7 25.Nxc5 Qxc5 thanks to the c8-Rook Black now wins a piece and has a won game.) 23...Qxd6! 24.Rxd6 Bxf2 25.Bxf2 Rc7, an approximately equal ending is reached. White strives for more and soon finds himself in trouble.

22.Qd4?

Another optically appealing move, which will badly miss the mark. Either White should bail out to the equal ending in the previous note or, if he is in a feisty mood, he should play 22.Rd2, intending to double Rooks. After 22...Rd8 23.Rxd8+ Qxd8 24.Bxf4 (The immediate 24.Qa7 Nxg2! is a

highly annoying capture.) 24...gxf4 25.Nc5 (25.Qa7 Qc7 keeps the a4-Knight under wraps.) 25...Bd5 26.Nd3 produces a difficult position to assess. It is possible that White can squeeze out a slight plus but, equally, things can go disastrously wrong, as the attacking forces have been reduced.

22...Rg8

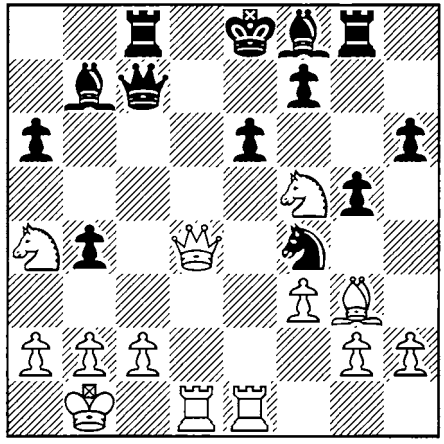


DIAGRAM 149. White to Play

23.c3?

The decisive mistake! White's attack has floundered. Black is threatening to play 23...Rd8, forcing the trade of major pieces. If White is forced to play Re1xd1, recapturing a Rook, the f5-Knight is left high and dry. White must bail out with 23.Nb6! (Again the key piece enters the game, this time with the intention of rendering a perpetual check.) 23...Rd8! 24.Qe3 Rxd1+ (Black must avoid 24...Bc5?? 25.Rxd8+ Kxd8 26.Qd2+ Ke8 27.Nc4!, when White has successfully repositioned his Knight with advantage.) 25.Rxd1 Bc5 26.Nd7! Bxe3 27.Nf6+ Kf8 28.Nh7+ draw! In this line Black may be inclined to sacrifice an exchange with 26...Qxd7 27.Rxd7 Bxe3 28.Rxb7 exf5 29.Rb8+ Ke7 30.Rxg8 Nxg2 31.Bc7! f4, with an unclear position. Black's plan of ...Ng2-h4xf3 will produce a

powerful passed f4-pawn, but with 32.Ba5 White should have enough counterplay either to hold the balance or even to gain an advantage.

23...Rd8 24.Qxd8+ Qxd8 25.Rxd8+ Kxd8

White is routed in the ending. He will have multiple pawn weaknesses and the two Bishops will strut their stuff. A promising attack lies in ruins. The final moves were:

26.Ne3 Bc6 27.Nb6 bxc3 28.bxc3 Bg7 29.Bxf4 gxf4 30.Nd1 Bb5 31.a4 Bd3+ 32.Kc1 Kc7 33.a5 Bh8 34.Kd2 Bb5 35.Rg1 Bc6 36.Ke2 Be5 37.c4 Bd4 38.Nf2 Bc3 39.Ne4 Bxa5 40.c5 f5 0-1

Test Four

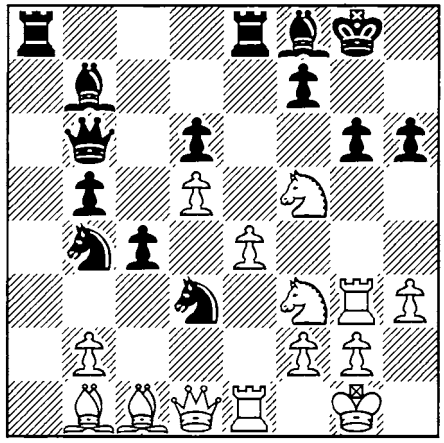


DIAGRAM 150. White to Play

Before we plunge into concrete analysis, it is vital that we make every effort to weigh the pros and cons of the position for each side. In the first place, we quickly realize that in view of the extreme threats that both players face, the position is do or die. In such a razor-sharp position any mistake will cost the game. White's advantages are extremely clear: all his pieces are poised for a Kingside attack. The battle will be decided there. White has a wonderful central pawn wedge, which is keeping the b7-

Bishop out of the game. In fact, the b7-Bishop is hardly a consideration; the entire issue is whether Black's King is sacked. Let us answer the questions I have posed.

Firstly, White is definitely on the attack. This determination is simple: *count the pieces* on the Kingside! A lone Bishop defends Black's King whereas White is attacking with both Knights, a Rook and two Bishops staring directly at the Kingside. Only the kitchen sink is missing.

The move 23.Re2? would be a truly lame decision on several fronts: It wastes a vital tempo for the attack and it weakens the first rank. After the natural move 23...Ra1 Black takes over the initiative.

Once we have determined that White is on the attack in a razor-sharp position we must immediately reject 23.Bxd3 as a bad move. It would unnecessarily trade an attacking piece. After the natural recapture 23...Nxd3 White faces the same problems as before. Even worse, the b4-Knight, which was only performing sentry duty, takes an active role. The b1-Bishop serves several functions: It indirectly protects the e4-pawn; it helps block the first rank against a future ...Ra8-a1 invasion; it may play a vital role, in case of a future e4-e5, of attacking the Kingside and the g6-pawn. The b1-Bishop may appear passive but it is a guided missile aimed at Black's King.

Now that we have weighed the particulars of the position, we have to consider specifics. What are the focus points of the position? From White's perspective, it is definitely the f2-pawn. This one requires immediate attention. The move 23.Be3! is automatic. The move addresses the immediate needs of the position by protecting the f2-pawn while attacking the b6-Queen. White develops with tempo. An obvious, powerful, natural move. Black is forced to retreat his Queen and then White can concentrate on the squares on which he is focused.

The focus of White's pieces is clear: Black's Kingside dark squares. The g7-square and h6-pawn are vulnerable. White must attack these at full throttle. Therefore, the c1-Bishop must play a crucial role and grab the h6-pawn. This will result in the trade of Black's lone defender, and a whole complex of dark squares becomes available to White's pieces. Once this

operation is carried out, White's Queen can make a triumphant entrance with Qd1-d2 and invade on the trampled h6-square. The whole attack, while complicated, is natural. Black's Kingside will be overrun.

As the main line is difficult to navigate, I will use bold type for our primary line of analysis. Our first move must be **23.Be3**, forcing the retreat of Black's Queen. To try to defend the Kingside **23...Qd8** is the best retreat. The following lines of analysis will make it clear that 23...Qc7? would be a markedly inferior choice. Now White is at a crossroads.

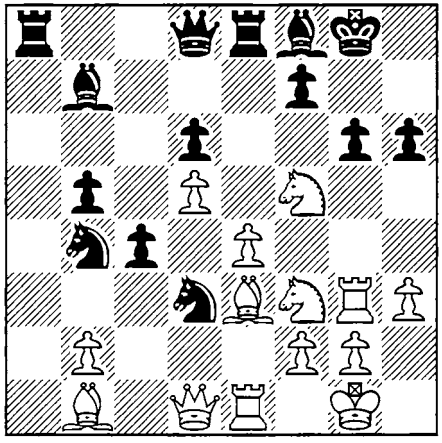


DIAGRAM 151. White to Play

Both the e4-pawn and the e1-Rook are under attack. He cannot pause to defend against both threats and must capture the h6-pawn. But with which piece, the e3-Bishop or the f5-Knight? The general guidelines of attack would suggest the Bishop. The lone f8-defender must be eliminated. Furthermore, the f5-Knight is already involved in the attack, while the e3-Bishop is still playing from afar. Unfortunately, such guidelines don't provide a definitive answer. Concrete analysis is needed. First, we must consider check!

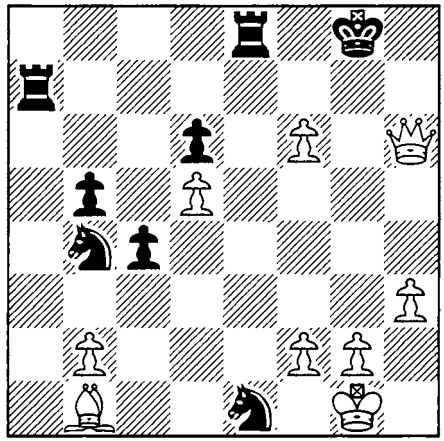
The move 24.Nxh6+ takes priority. Play is forced: 24...Bxh6 25.Bxh6, when White has won a pawn and eliminated the dark-squared Bishop.

Black is challenged to capture, and 25...Nxe1 would appear forced. We immediately consider 26.Qd4, threatening checkmate! Black must play 26...Nxf3+ 27.gxf3 Re5, blocking the threat 28.f4 Qh4!, when the line hits a dead end. Black's extra material means that White is lost. The e1-Knight will have to be taken. We have to reject 26.Nxe1? as a lousy recapture. Such a retreat by the Knight in a razor-edged attacking position cannot be correct. Much superior is 26.Qxe1! with a double threat of gobbling the b4-Knight (a good reason not to have traded pieces on the d3-square) and playing Qe1-c3, threatening a g7-checkmate. Black has to play 26...Nxd5!, defending against both threats, and again White has hit a dead end. No visible win is in sight. Thus, we are forced to reject 24.Nxh6+ as a good move. We have no choice but to continue **24.Bxh6**, bringing the Bishop into the attack.

Our analysis has brought us to the conclusion that 23.Be3! Qd8 24.Bxh6 is the most natural and powerful course of play. White has won a pawn with further threats to Black's fortress. White is prepared to play Qd1-d2, capture on f8 and invade on the h6-square. Black has little choice but to gain some compensation with **24...Nxe1**, and capturing the e1-Rook will be our main line of play.

Before we accept that the e1-capture is Black's best move, we have to consider 24...Bxh6, which looks like a really lame capture. Black is helping White accelerate his attack. White plays 25.Nxh6+ Kg7 26.Qd2, when his attack is unstoppable. Black has to wake up to the fact that he is a pawn down and White has the initiative as well. The e1-capture has now become mandatory: 26...Nxe1 27.Nf5+ Kg8 and White has to find the nice move 28.N3h4!, when the blow Nh4xg6 cannot be parried. For example: 28...Bc8 (28...Qf6 29.Nxg6 fxg6 30.Qh6 Kf7 31.Qh7+ Kf8 32.Rxg6 doesn't offer even a fig leaf of protection.) 29.Nxg6 Bxf5 30.exf5 Qf6 31.Qh6 fxg6 32.Rxg6+ Qxg6 33.Qxg6+ Kf8 34.f6 Ra7 35.Qh6+ Kg8 – see Diagram 152.

And now 36.Bh7+!. This is a thematic checking device that again emphasizes the importance of not trading pieces on the d3-square at the start.

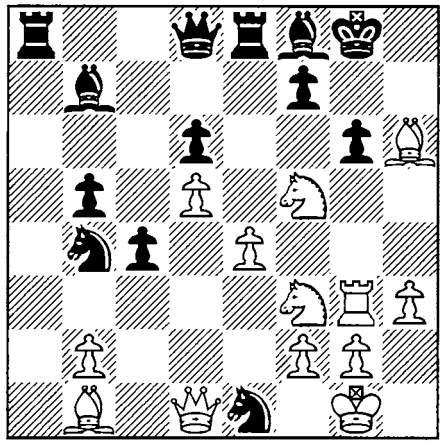


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 152. White to Play

As we see in the analysis diagram Black is forced to lose material: 36.Bh7+! Rxh7 37.Qg6+ Kf8 38.Qxh7 and White wins. It was obvious from the start that 26...Bxh6 was a poor move that just aided White's attack. I'm sure we are anxious to get to the main line of play, 24...Nxe1, so let's proceed.

Our analysis has established a forcing main line of play: **23.Be3! Qd8 24.Bxh6! Nxe1**, which leads to our next analysis diagram – see Diagram 153.

As we see in our analysis diagram, White has parted with a Rook but is crashing through on the Kingside. It is necessary only to find one key move and the attack wins. We have dismissed capturing the e1-Knight as a wasted tempo. The force count has stopped being a consideration; the attack is do or die. White's g3-Rook is focused on the g6-pawn and that is our target. The key move is **25.N3h4!**, readying a g6-blow that will destroy Black's Kingside fortress. On the surface, there appear to be many defenses but, in view of the menacing Qd1-h5 strike, Black's options are limited. In truth, the attack is already decisive. Let's find out why. We will analyze three candidate moves, 25...Bxh6, 25...Kh7 and 25...Qf6.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 153. White to Play

1) As usual, forcing play requires that we look for checks or captures first. The check 25...Nf3+ makes little sense, so 25...Bxh6 is the first line to be refuted. We have previously seen that such a capture helps White accelerate his attack and this is true here. 26.Nxg6! threatens 27.Nge7++ and 28.Qh5 winning on the spot. Further captures are awful. 26...fxg6? 27.Rxg6+ Kf8 28.Qh5 is a dream for White as the attack is completely overwhelming. Black should try 26...Qf6 27.Nxh6+ Kh7 28.Nxf7!, when Black's King has been stripped bare and the attack is decisive. Also note that in this line White has the pretty intermediary move 28.e5, opening up the game for the b1-Bishop. Clearly, 25...Bxh6 is not a viable defense as it assists White in his plan of trading off the lone defender of Black's King.

2) Removing the King from the g-file to prevent Qd1-h5 by 25...Kh7 seems reasonable. Owing to our focus of the pieces approach and our plan of stripping Black's King of his lone defender, he is quickly routed on the dark squares: 26.Bxf8 Rxf8 27.Qd2 gxf5 28.Rg7+! Kxg7 29.Nxf5+ Kg8 30.Qh6 and Black is checkmated in a few more moves.

3) Clearly, Black's King is being overwhelmed and the only real defense requires the services of Black's Queen. The move **25...Qf6** is forced.

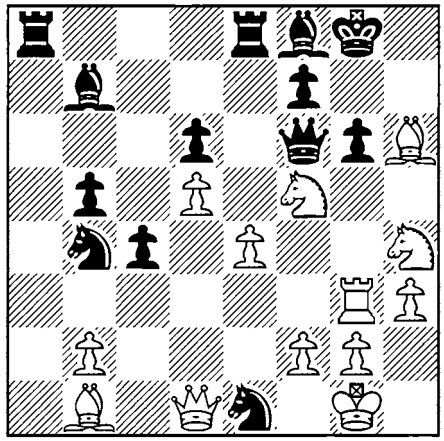


DIAGRAM 154. White to Play

White continues **26.Qd2** in order to invade on the dark squares. White has to avoid 26.Qh5? Kh7!, when White's Queen is left *en prise*.

Black is at a crossroads. He can again capture with 26...Bxh6, try to consolidate by 26...Ned3, or counter-attack with 26...Ra1.

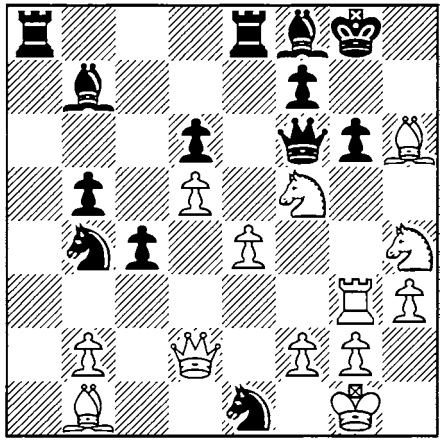
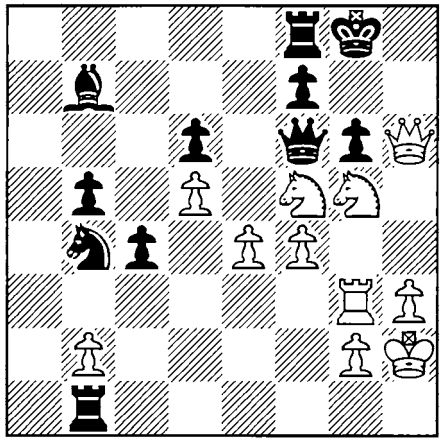


DIAGRAM 155. Black to Play

We shall look at each in turn:

1) 26...Bxh6? 27.Qxh6 Qh8 (trying to meet the threat of Nh3xg6) 28.Rxg6+ fxg6 29.Qxg6+ Kf8 30.Qxd6+ Kf7 31.Nh6+ Qxh6 32.Qxh6 wins as Black's forces are scattered and uncoordinated.

2) 26...Ned3 27.Bxf8 Rxf8, preventing Bf8-g7, appears to be a serious defense. Black, after all, is a Rook to the good. (Note that Black cannot afford to abandon the protection of the g6-pawn: 26...Qxb2?? 27.Nxg6 Qxd2 28.Ne5+ Kxf8 29.Nd7 checkmate is a beauty. Almost deserving a diagram.) Nevertheless, White wins quickly. 28.Qh6 Ne5 (28...Nf4 29.Qxf4 Nxd5 30.Qh6 Ne7 31.Nxe7+ Qxe7 32.Nxg6 fxg6 33.Qxg6+ Kh8 34.e5! forces checkmate and is a vivid reminder of the b1-Bishop's importance.) 29.f4 with the simple threat to capture the e5-Knight and then the g6-pawn. Black has to part with material. 29...Nf3+ (Note that 29...Qh8 30.Ne7 is checkmate. It is good when Knights are close to the enemy King!) 30.Nxf3! Ra1 31.Ng5 Rxb1+ 32.Kh2 leads to our next analysis diagram and a triumph of the attack.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 156. Black to Play

In the analysis diagram, White's attack is beautifully choreographed. Simply overwhelming! Play would continue 32...Re8 33.Nxf7! Kxf7 34.Qh7+ Kf8 35.Rxg6 winning.

The defensive presence of Black's Queen isn't enough to fend off the attacking hordes. Our main line will feature a counter-attack.

3) **26...Ra1** Black tries a desperate counter-attack.

It is often remarked, *"The best defense is a strong attack!"* As we have seen, Black's defenses are being overrun. The text is our main line. White now continues to focus on dark-squared domination, ignoring the material losses. **27.Bxf8! Rxb1 28.Kh2** brings us to another important crossroads and our next analysis diagram.

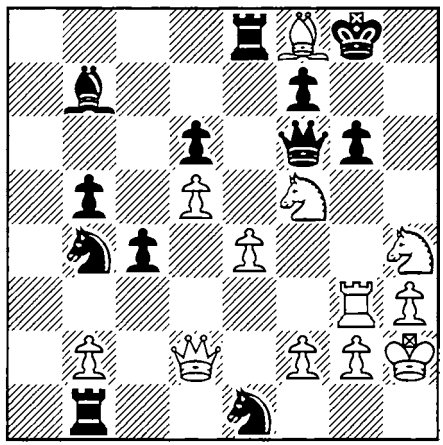


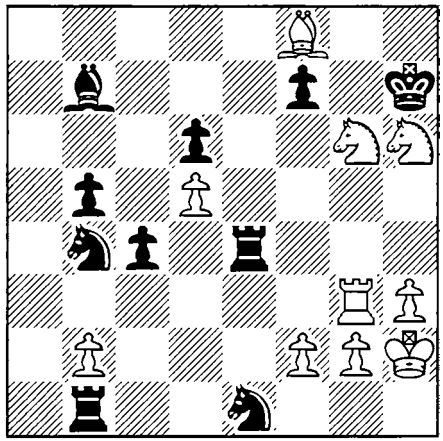
DIAGRAM 157. Black to Play

From our analysis diagram, Black has to make a crucial decision. Although he is a boxful of pieces ahead in the force count, White's threats on the Kingside are menacing as Black's dark-squares are a chronic weakness. The immediate problem, Bf8-g7, is as serious as a heart-attack. White is ready to play Qd2-h6 and smash his way through the g6-pawn. I see only two reasonable choices: 28...Rxb2 and 28...Rxe4. We reject

28...Rxf8?? and 28...Kxf8 as both moves are answered by 29.Qh6 and instant doom.

3a) 28...Rxb2 seems to be an invitation to trouble as it only encourages 29.Qh6, which looks fatal. However, Black has a trick to stay alive: 29...Qh8!, the only move. Now the immediate strikes against the g6-pawn no longer work. White has to cool his jets and retreat his Queen: 30.Qf4!, setting up a new threat of Nf5-h6+ taking aim against the f7-pawn. Black is forced to cough up a Rook, and 30...Rxf2 is a desperate bid to stay in the game. (If 30...Rxf8?? 31.Nxg6 fxg6 32.Rxg6+ Kf7 33.Nh4+ Ke8 34.Re6+ Kd8 35.Qxd6+ Kc8 36.Re7 is a terminal King Hunt. Capturing with the King, 30...Kxf8??, leads to 31.Nxg6+ fxg6 32.Qxd6+ Kf7 33.Qxg6+ Kf8 34.Qxd6+ Kf7 35.Rg7+! Qxg7 36.Qd7+ and White can announce mate. Another desperate sacrifice is 30...Bxd5?, after which 31.Nxg6! fxg6 32.Rxg6+ Kxf8 33.Nh6 is curtains. Finally, 30...Qe5?? 31.Nh6+ allows White to execute his threat and execute Black's King in the process.) But White accepts the Rook, 31.Qxf2, while keeping the same Nf5-h6+ threat. Black is unable to resist. The f8-Bishop is immune from capture because of the strike on the g6-pawn. The only remaining option is 31...Nbd3, trying to bring his Knight into play. White now invades from the other side of the board by 32.Qb6!, readying all kinds of captures. Black is lost.

3b) **28...Rxe4** seems best as it presents the most difficulties for White to crown his play. It will constitute our main line. Now Black is ready to capture the h4-Knight and rout the attack. White continues with the natural **29.Qh6!**, defending the h4-Knight and winding up for the g6-blow. Black plays **29...Qh8**, desperately trying to trade Queens. Note that 29...Rxh4?? 30.Ne7+ Qxe7 31.Qg7 is checkmate. Other moves, such as 29...Bxd5, allow 30.Nxg6! fxg6 31.Bg7! Qxf5 (31...Rh4 32.Nxh4 Qxg7 33.Rxg6 is the breakthrough White seeks.) 32.Qh8+ Kf7 33.Qf8+ Ke6 34.Qe8 checkmate. Now, White strikes with **30.Nxg6**, a blow he has been winding up for a long time. Even in the absence of the Queens White weaves a mating net. Play is forced: **30...Qxh6 31.Nxh6+ Kh7** leads us to our next analysis diagram:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 158. White to Play

White now plays **32.Ne5!**, a visually pleasing move. White intends to capture the f7-pawn and to play Rg3-g7 checkmate. Black is helpless to prevent the threat. For example, 32...Bxd5? 33.Nexf7 Bxf7 34.Nxf7 and White's play is crowned in glory. Clearly, Black has to interfere with the script, and he tries his own counter: **32...Nf3+ 33.gxf3 Ree1**, when Black has disrupted the rhythm of White's attack. Black intends ...Re1-h1+ and ...Rb1-g1+ trading Rooks. A different approach is required: **34.Rg7+! Kxh6 35.Rxf7+** and checkmate in two moves.

Well, that was certainly a lengthy bit of analysis. I trust you found these pathways as well. Smile. Let's do a recap. From the start, White began 23.Be3! Qd8 24.Bxh6!, ripping at Black's fortress, winning a pawn and planning an attack on the dark-squares. Black is dared to carry out his threat to capture the Rook with 24...Nxe1 25.N3h4! Qf6 26.Qd2 and, as we've seen, White wins despite being a Rook behind. As the pearl of wisdom states, *"Don't look at what comes off the board but at what is left on the board."*

From the start it is worth mentioning that the moves 23...Qa5? and 23...Qc7 are both markedly inferior. In each case, White will just crash

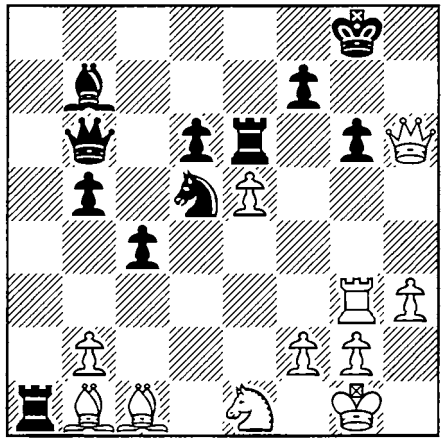
through on the Kingside with overkill. Let's just dot our i's and cross our t's. The active-looking 23...Qa5 only misplaces the Queen and blocks the a-file. As before, White's pieces party on the Kingside: 24.Bxh6 Nxe1 25.N3h4! Qa1 26.Nxg6 and Black doesn't have the ghost of a chance of defending. Finally, 23...Qc7 hardly deserves comment. Black's Queen plays no role in either the attack or the defense and is out of play. White proceeds as before and cleaves through Black's Kingside.

Bobby Fischer once wrote an article, *A bust to the King's Gambit* where he concluded, *"White can play differently then he loses differently."* The same can be said about this particular line of the Ruy Lopez Zaitsev variation.

What is truly remarkable is that Anand did not play the natural, automatic 23.Be3!, which begs to be played. Instead, he chose 23.Qd2? following home-brewed analysis, made a decade earlier. The move he chose does look very tempting. White defends his f2-pawn, ignoring the threat to his e1-Rook and aims to go Kingside, the theater of battle. Although the move is an error, it definitely merits consideration. Kudos if you considered it as well! Treat yourself to another round of ice-cream. Butterscotch pecan is my second favorite.

In the 8/2005 *New in Chess* magazine, Anand's trainer for San Luis, Peter Heine Nielsen, adorned Anand's twenty-third move with two exclamation marks, describing it as brilliant. I was quite curious how an intuitive attacking player like Anand could convince himself not to play 23.Be3, the most natural move on the board. Nielsen's main line of analysis with punctuation runs as follows, *"Black's only saving continuation appears to be 23...Nxe1! 24.Nxe1 Ra1 25.Nxh6+ Bxh6 26.Qxh6 Nxd5! 27.e5 Re6."* He explains that 27...Rxb1? would lose for Black. His main line has brought us to our next analysis diagram – see Diagram 159.

From the analysis diagram, we continue with Nielsen's main line: *"28.Rg4 Qd8 29.Bxg6 Rxg6 30.Rxg6+ fxg6 31.Qxg6+ Kh8, with a draw by perpetual check."*



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 159. White to Play

Much to his credit, Nielsen also gives a telling sub-variation: *"28.Nf3 Rxb1 29.Ng5 Rxc1+ 30.Kh2, when 30...Qxf2 is the unfortunate problem."* The reason I find this sub-variation "telling" has to do with the start of the combination. Combinative play is the art of *forcing moves.* There are many other dimensions to combinative play. It is vital that we activate *our* pieces on open files, ranks and diagonals, sinking our Knights on central outposts, and a winning combination will come our way. It is equally important to prevent our opponent from doing the same things! From the start, White allowed Black's Queen to remain active on the b6-square. Why allow the opponent to keep his forces active? The Black Queen created an "unfortunate problem" in an important sub-variation. This shouldn't come as a surprise. I say, "Kick 'em back!"

A very neat piece of homework by Anand. With the move 23.Qd2 he knew he was never in trouble and would be able to bail out to a perpetual check if needed. In the meanwhile, his opponent, Michael Adams, would have to find a series of only moves, avoiding a few landmines along the way. An eminently practical, one might even say professional, approach. Surprise the opponent with a sharp novelty that doesn't lose and may win!

In the game, Anand's preparation worked wonders. An out-of-form Michael Adams blundered immediately: **(23.Qd2) Bxd5??** was a dreadful moment to awaken the sleeping Bishop. As Nielsen noted, with 23...Nxe1, following through with his threat, Black could hold. Now the attack plays itself:

24.Nxh6+ Bxh6 25.Qxh6 Qxf2+ 26.Kh2 Nxe1

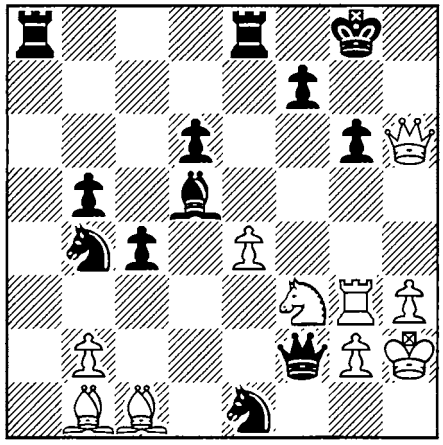


DIAGRAM 160. White to Play

27.Nh4!

We have seen this move before. It is the crucial point. The focus of White's pieces is the g6-pawn and it must be destroyed. To be fair, the threat Nh4-f5 also deserves an honorable mention.

27...Ned3 28.Nxg6 Qxg3+ 29.Kxg3 fxg6 30.Qxg6+ Kf8 31.Qf6+ Kg8 32.Bh6 1-0

Test Five

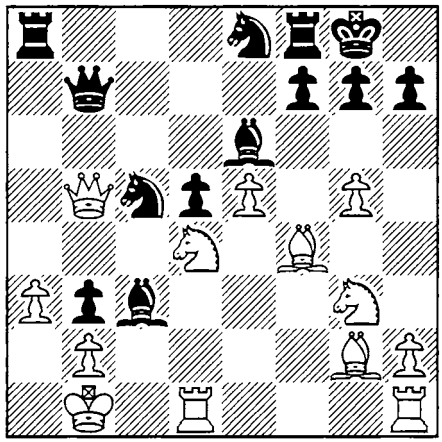


DIAGRAM 161. Black to Play

To begin with, it is imperative that Black avoids trading Queens. In that case, Black's attack would simply disappear: 26...Qxb5?? 27.Nxb5 leaves the c3-Bishop hanging and White will happily munch the d5-pawn. Black must move his Queen. If you chose 26...Qa7!, intending to sacrifice either the Queen on the a3-square or the Bishop against the b2-pawn, good for you! That is the correct move. If you were prepared to answer 27.Nc6 by 27...Qxa3!, kudos once again. After 28.bxa3 Rxa3 29.Qxb3 White is forced to return the Queen. Continuing with 29...Rxb3+ 30.Kc2 Nc7, Black has a material advantage to go along with his attack. He has a winning game.

After 26...Qa7! 27.Qe2 is White's only defense. How did you intend to continue? Before reading further, make sure that you have written down your analysis. See Diagram 162.

If you wanted to continue with forcing moves did you analyze 27...Na4 28.Nb5! Qa5 29.Nxc3 Nxc3+ 30.bxc3 Nc7! as your main line? If so, well done! You wield a heavy tactical club.

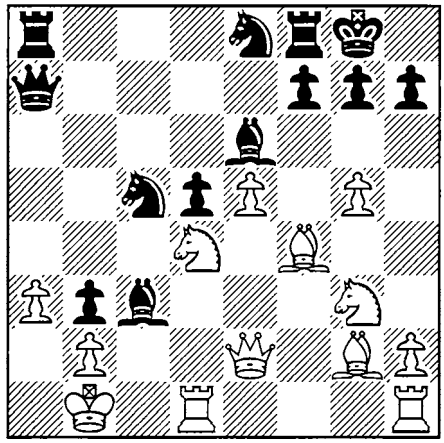


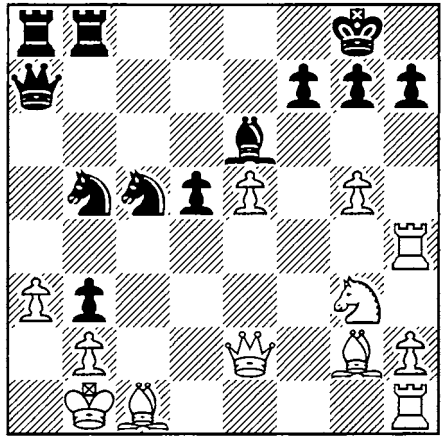
DIAGRAM 162. Black to Play

After the further moves 31.Bc1 Nb5 32.Bb2 Nxa3+ 33.Bxa3 Qxa3 34.Qb2 Black has a pleasant choice. He can play 34...Qxb2+ 35.Kxb2 Ra2+ 36.Kxb3 Rxg2, winning back the piece with a superior ending. Alternatively, 34...Qc5! continues the attack against White's King. With the g2 and g3-pieces languishing on the Kingside and the invasion ...Ra8-a2 on the horizon we can conclude White is lost.

If you saw that (27...Na4 28.Nb5! Qa5) 29.Bd2! was White's best defense, outstanding work! If you had further seen that 29...Bxd2 30.Rxd2 Nc7! 31.Nxc7 Nc3+! would lead to 32.bxc3 Qxa3 33.Nxa8 Rxa8 34.Ra2 bxa2+ 35.Ka1 Qxc3+ 36.Qb2, when White is still putting up a defense, you have really done well.

You would have done much better, however, if you had remembered that chess is a team game and you have to involve your whole army. Although (26...Qa7! 27.Qe2) 27...Na4 is an attractive forcing move, the e8-f8 brigade is not involved. An invitation to join the party with 27...Nc7! is the correct move. I don't see an adequate defense for White. After the more or less forced 28.Bc1 Bxd4 29.Rxd4 Rfb8 30.Rh4 Nb5 Black has

gathered all his forces to the Queenside and a crushing blow will be struck. This is properly visualized in our analysis diagram:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM 163. White to Play

The analysis diagram offers a near-complete model of how one should attack. Black has amassed his whole army to the Queenside and created a formidable attacking unit. Combinations with ...Nb5xa3+, followed by ...b3-b2, are sure to crash through White's defenses. Conclusion? White is lost.

Remarkably enough, Kasimdzhanov played an egregious error from the very start! He chose 26...Qc7??, which deserves two question marks, and not just one. The first question mark is for not creating a battery on the a-file, where Black's pieces are focused. The second question mark is for standing in the way of the baying e8-Knight. How can you invite pieces to a party and keep the doorway blocked? The only explanation is that Kasimdzhanov was suffering a blackout. He was very fortunate that this error didn't cost him the game. Let's see how the game continued.

26...Qc7??

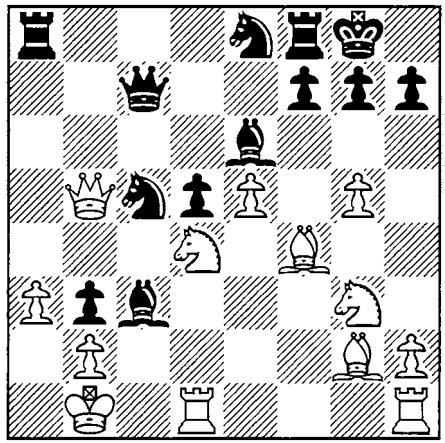


DIAGRAM 164. White to Play

27.Nge2!

White is just in time to bring the g3-Knight into the game. He had to avoid 27.bxc3? Rxa3 28.Bc1 Ra1+!. This is a motif from Chapter Two. Black tosses a Rook in order to bring his Queen into the attack with tempo. White must accept the offer. 29.Kxa1 Qa7+ 30.Ba3 Qxa3+ 31.Kb1 *Nd6! 32.Qe2 (32.exd6 Ra8 and the brigade arrives just in time.) 32...Nc4* and Black wins. A better defense for White is 28.Nc6, trying to freeze Black's Queen out of the attack but it is a difficult position to defend. The text is much more natural. If White can just hold off the attackers for a few moves, he will have an opportunity to play Rd1-c1 or Qb5-c6, routing the attack.

27...Bd7

When playing his twenty-sixth move, Kasimdzhanov may have thought that 27...Ra5 28.Qc6 Bf5+ was a winner. That would be the case if White were forced to play 29.Kc1??, after which 29...Bxb2+ would lead to victory. He may now have realized that against such intentions White has 29.Nxf5! Qxc6 30.Ne7+ forking King and Queen, when White wins.

28.e6

The only move but a good one.

28...Bxb5 29.Bxc7 Bxd4 30.Nxd4!

Play has brought us to our next diagram.

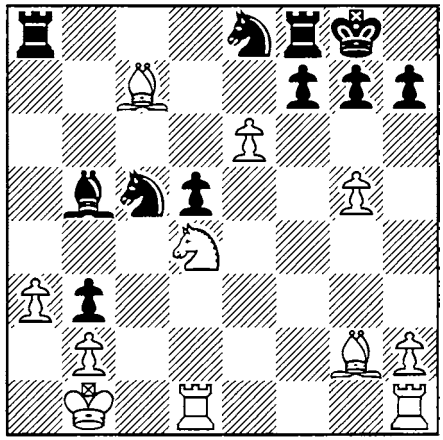


DIAGRAM 165. Black to Play

30...fxe6!!

A truly remarkable escape from a difficult position. After 30...Bd3+ 31.Rxd3 Nxd3 32.Bg3! the advantage has swung in White's favor. His threats include e6-e7, winning a Rook, and Bg2xd5 with or without e6xf7+ as an intermediary move. The really bad news in this line is the tragic position of the e8-Knight. While the natural capture 30...Nxc7 meets 31.exf7+! Rxf7 32.Nxb5 Nxb5 33.Bxd5 Rb8 34.Rc1! Nd7 (34...Nd3 35.Rhf1 Nd6 36.Rc3 Ne5 37.Re1 and Black is struggling to remain in the game.) 35.Rhd1 Ne5 36.Rc5 with advantage. Finally, 30...Nxe6 31.Nxb5 N8xc7 32.Nxc7 Nxc7 33.Rd3 is good for White.

31.Nxb5 Nxc7 32.Nxc7 Rf2!

The dramatic point of his previous play. Despite being massive amounts of material behind Black has sufficient remaining forces for a perpetual check. I enjoyed Peter Svidler's comments in the 8/2005 *New in Chess* magazine. In explaining the nuances of this opening variation, Peter

said, *"In 'Just Checking', a while ago, Paco Vallejo called the game he won against me in this line in Monaco 2004 his best ever. While it is always nice to be part of something special, I was not too eager to repeat the experience."* At the game's end Peter continued, *"By now I had accepted that I was part of something quite special again. Black has only two pieces left – but they are all he needs."*

33.Nxa8 Na4 34.Rd3 Draw agreed.

Test Six

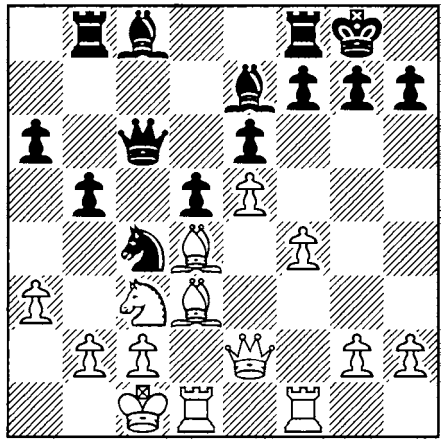


DIAGRAM 166. White to Play

Whenever positions pop up with Kings on opposite sides, the players have a responsibility to open lines and to try to maul the opponent's King. Black's ...b5-b4 is coming fast and White has to generate his own threats as quickly as possible.

If you rejected the attractive-looking 19.f5? because of 19...Bg5+! 20.Kb1 b4! 21.axb4 Nxb2! pat yourself on the back. Black's attack lands first and White is road-kill.

Another tempting move is 19.Qh5, bringing the Queen into an attacking position. Unfortunately, after 19...g6! 20.Qh6 Re8! White isn't given the chance to stabilize the Queen and make a Rook Lift.

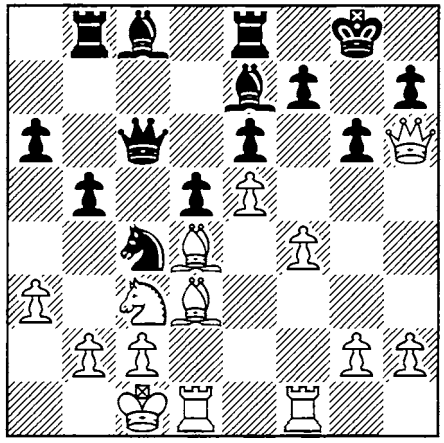


DIAGRAM 167. White to Play

White is obliged to try to burst open the position for the Bishops: 21.f5 (21.Rf3 Bf8 22.Qh4 b4 23.Rh3 h6 and Black takes over the initiative.) 21...Bf8! 22.Qh4 exf5 23.e6 Rxe6! 24.Bxf5 leads to a rich and fascinating position. I'm going to take the Black side of this sharp variation and state that after 24...gxf5! 25.Qg3+ Rg6 26.Qxb8 Bd6 27.Qa7 f6 (27...f4!?) Black has wrested the initiative. Just a few lines will confirm this judgment. As Black threatens to trap White's Queen 28.Bf2 is compelled. In that case 28...Bf4+ will regain the Exchange. Black could try 28...Nxb2 29.Kxb2 Bxa3+ 30.Kxa3 Qxc3+, which is good for perpetual check. Black is lacking the resources for more. White might try 28.Bg1, when Black has 28...Nxb2, the same combination for perpetual check. Black can also consider 28...Nxa3!?, as well as 28...Rxg2, when White is fortunate that 29.Nxd5 Nxa3 30.Nxf6+ Kf8 31.Nxh7+ Kg8 offers him perpetual check. We have to conclude that 19.Qh5 is simply too slow.

If you wanted to play 19.Bxh7+ you made the right choice! And so did Anand. Play is forced and for the sacrificed Bishop White grabs the initiative and puts all the pressure on his opponent to defend resourcefully. Let's see how the game proceeded.

19.Bxh7!+ Kxh7 20.Qh5+ Kg8 21.Rd3 f5

A forced move. In view of the impending Rook Lift, Rd3-h3, and Qh5-h8 checkmate, Black has to make luft for his King. A disastrous line would be 21...g6?? 22.Qh6 and Black is quickly checkmated. Opening up the Kingside by 21...f6? 22.Rh3 fxe5 23.Qh8+ Kf7 24.fxe5+ would be suicidal. Black has brought the f1-Rook into the attack. Violating the rules of the defender, *"Keep the position closed"*. Black is soon lost: 24...Ke8 25.Rxf8+ Bxf8 26.Rf3 wins. This line also explains why Anand chose a Rook Lift with the d1-Rook. Remember Chapter Four, Diagram 83 on Rook Lifts and which one to use. Utilize the Rook that is *not* involved in the attack. As this variation shows, the f1-Rook is already involved.

22.Rh3

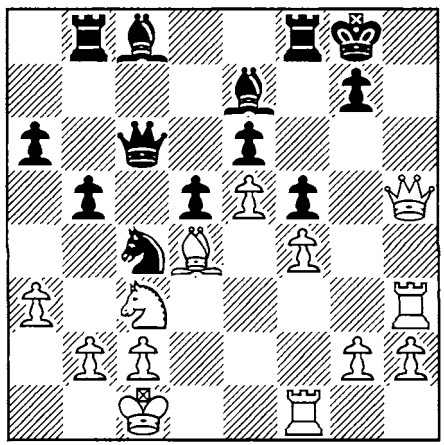


DIAGRAM 168. Black to Play

22...Bc5!

Morozevich is up for the challenge and finds the only defense. The text envisions defending the seventh rank by ...Rb8-b7, protecting the g7-pawn. In addition, the Bishop frees the e7-square in case the Black King has to sprint to safety. A crucial point that we shall soon understand. In case of a Bishop trade on the c5-square, Black's Queen has been activated and can quickly attack White's King.

Going on the defensive with 22...Qe8? is like playing dead. In the first place, Black would surrender an immediate 23.Qh7+ Kf7 24.Qh5+ Kg8 perpetual check, but White has the aggressive 24.Rh6! with the threat of capturing the d5-pawn and can continue with e5-e6+, winning back the Bishop. Black must make room for his King but after 24...Rg8 25.Rf6+! Bxf6 26.exf6 he faces a difficult problem.

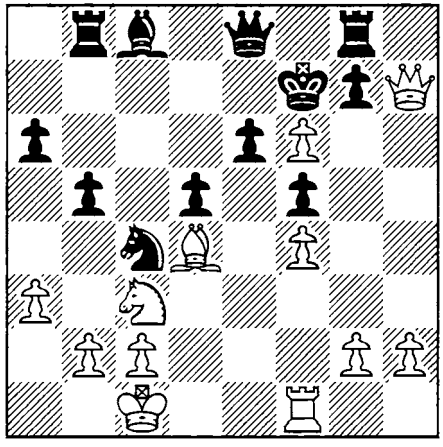


DIAGRAM 169. Black to Play

White is threatening 27.Qh5+ g6 28.Qh7+ Kf8 29.Bc5+ with mate to follow. If Black plays 26...Qd7 to be able to block by ...Nc4-d6, 27.Rf3! tightens the noose. The second Rook Lift is decisive, as Black has no remedy against Rf3-g3, crashing through on the g7-square. If Black tries 26...Qc6 27.Qh5+ Kf8, 28.f7 will win back the Rook and the attack continues.

While other moves are decidedly inferior, it was worth considering 22...b4, playing for a counter-attack. The problem is that it is too slow. After 23.axb4 Nxb2 24.Rff3! sets up the winning combination Rf3-g3xg7 with mate to follow. A likely line of play is 24...Bxb4 25.Rfg3 Rb7 26.Qh7+ Kf7 27.Rxg7+ Ke8 28.Rxb7 Qxb7 29.Kxb2 with advantage for White as he is material ahead. This line begs the question, can Black essay 22...Nxb2, offering back the piece? The key difference is that the c4-square is vacated, making possible ...Qc6-c4 with a double hit against the d4-Bishop and f1-Rook. The question is such an interesting one that it deserves its own analysis diagram:

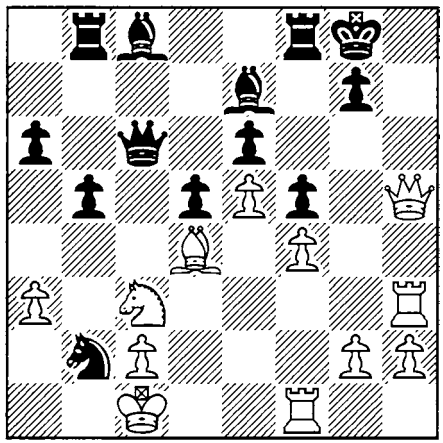


DIAGRAM 170. White to Play

Our analysis diagram has provoked me to discuss a combinational motif I have struggled with for virtually my whole career. As a young boy, I was quite proud to triple on an open file. Two Rooks in front and a Queen behind. This formation was called "Alekhine's Gun" in our Seattle chess circles and I was pleased with my sophistication in knowing and understanding the formation. The Rooks would be the barrel and the Queen the trigger. Now, after thousands of tournament games, I am less than certain of such an understanding. When creating a battery, is it better to lead with

the Queen or have it follow a Rook? The answer is not clear to me. There are times when the Queen should lead, and other times when it is best to follow. It seems impossible to make a broad-based determination. Each position is unique. In our diagrammed position, White has only one move but it is a good one and a key combinational motif worth knowing. White must "switch" the position of Queen and Rook on the h-file so that the Rook leads. White must play 23.Qg6!. The idea is best seen after 23...Bxa3? 24.Rh7 Rf7 25.Qh5! Kf8 26.Rh8+ Ke7 27.Qg5+ Kd7 28.Qd8 checkmate. This "switching technique" deserves its own section in our notebook as it is featured in dozens of combinations.

We have just made quite a leap, so let's review a few variations. Morozevich may have been terribly tempted by 22...Nxb2 as 23.Kxb2 b4! hands Black the initiative.

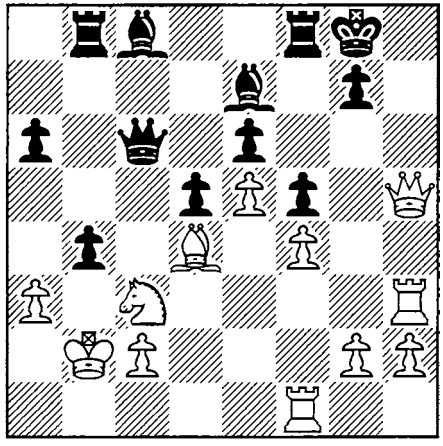


DIAGRAM 171. White to Play

For example, 24.Ne2 bxa3++ 25.Ka1 Qxc2!? (25...a2!?) 26.Rc1 Qa4 and White has been dangerously distracted from his Kingside attack. With this in mind 22...Nxb2 23.Qg6 sets up the switching mechanism that we have just seen. Black completes his threat with 23...Qc4 and a double attack. It may be that Morozevich's intuition told him that this line would be

dangerous for him. If so, it explains why he is a world-class player. It would be easy for White to go wrong: 24.Rh7? Rf7 25.Qh5 Qxf1+ 26.Kxb2 Bxa3+ gives Black the crucial tempo he needs to evacuate the e7-square and to sprint with his King. The line would continue 27.Kxa3 b4+! 28.Ka2 Qc4+ 29.Ka1 Kf8, when Black is in fair shape.

Remarkably, White has a continuation that beggars belief: 22...Nxb2(?) 23.Qg6! Qc4 24.Nxd5!!.

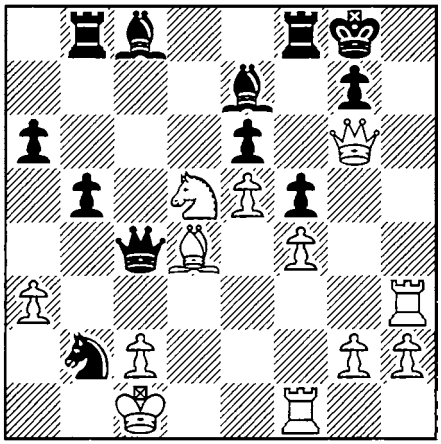


DIAGRAM 172. Black to Play

White protects the a3-pawn with his Rook and allows the d4-Bishop to play a defensive role. Black is left trying to find a way through a tactical minefield. A beautiful loss awaits 24...Qxf1+? 25.Kxb2 Rb7 26.Nf6+ Bxf6 27.exf6 b4 28.f7+ Rfxf7 29.Bxg7!! bxa3+ 30.Kxa3 Qc1+ 31.Bb2+, a devastating discovered check.

Black would lose simply after 24...Qxd5 25.Rh7 Rf7 26.Qh5 Nd3+ 27.Kb1!, when Black is mated. His best chance is 24...Bxa3 25.Qh7+! Kf7 26.Rxa3!, when three White pieces are *en prise* but Black can only capture one at a time! Black is mated after 26...Qxd4? 27.Qh5+ g6 (or 27...Kg8 28.Ne7 checkmate) 28.Qh7+ Ke8 29.Qe7 checkmate. If 26...Qxf1+

27.Kxb2 exd5 28.e6+! Bxe6 29.Qxg7+ Ke8 30.Re3 and Black is checkmated soon.

An amazing amount of tactical fireworks bubbled below the surface in this game. We have to applaud Sasha for his fantastic defensive play. Let's see how it continued.

23.Rff3

Pursuing the attack at full throttle. Anand wasn't interested in 23.Bxc5 Qxc5, when Black's Queen is ready for invasion and inhibits the second Rook Lift. Meanwhile 23.Ne2 is not the kind of move White wants to make, responding to Black's threats. After 23...b4 24.Rff3 bxa3 25.Rfg3 axb2+ 26.Bxb2 Be3+! Black is just in time to break up the Kingside party.

23...Bxd4 24.Rfg3 Rb7

We have reached the position shown in the following diagram:

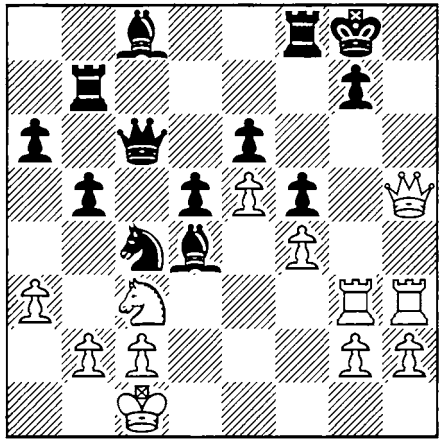


DIAGRAM 173. White to Play

Well, it has been an eventful game but White has run out of further things to sacrifice. He therefore decides to force perpetual check.

25.Qh7+ Kf7 26.Qxg7+ Ke8 27.Qxf8+! Draw.

The final moves would be 27...Kxf8 28.Rh8+ Kf7 29.Rh7+ Kf8. Other Black moves would allow a double Rook checkmate. Wow!

SUMMARY

After writing, reading, re-reading, editing and touching up this work, I realized that with so much information and tips provided it would be best to give a summary of the most important advice offered. The following list is a practical guide of what this work comprises. Keep in mind that these are only *guidelines*, and not hard and fast rules unless otherwise indicated.

Attacking Advice

- Keep a combinations notebook. This is the single best advice I can give players wishing to improve their game. Make numerous sections and look for outstanding combinations to be neatly tucked into each section. Many combinations will feature differing patterns. Find those that exemplify each section and keep your notebook updated. It is fun work!
- Practice your checkmating pictogram patterns. They are your basic chess vocabulary. Know your chess vocabulary so that your calculations during play are accelerated.
- Do your best to expand your combinational repertoire by studying standard attacks such as the Classical Bishop Sacrifice.
- Become conversant with attacks such as those aimed against the f7-square (or f2-square).
- Observe how outposts such as a Knight on the d5 or f5-squares can be levered into a Kingside attack.
- Study isolated Queen's Pawn positions and how the break d4-d5 can lead to forcing play.

- Combinational play is the art of *forcing continuations.* This means calculating lines of play that feature checks, captures and moves that create threats. When embarking on a checkmating sacrifice have a clear picture of the checkmating pattern that you are trying to achieve.
- Checkmating combinations occur because we have an *advantage* of some type. Exploit the advantages that you possess. If you do not, the opportunity for a combination will likely pass undetected.
- Use the *focus of pieces* approach to a combination. What *squares* do your pieces control? These squares will be like magnets for your pieces in the ensuing play.
- At all times, pay attention to the center. Control the central squares and good things will happen.

Attacking Rules

- Combinational play occurs when our opponent has made a mistake. Another way of thinking about a successful, sound combination is punishment for a fault by our opponent.
- When embarking on a combination in the opening have a clear idea of what fault occurred and that the punishment is a direct consequence of the mistake.
- Don't place blind faith in a relative pin. Pinned pieces can be deceptive. They might move! Often with unexpected consequences. Put blind faith in absolute pins and gang up on the piece in the line of fire!

Defending Advice

- Defending is fun only when we are ahead in material.
- Trade pieces to reduce the attacking potential of the opponent. Consider returning material to foil an attack.
- Be leery of accepting pawn sacrifices that open lines against your

King. Carefully weigh up the consequences of any such captures.

Defensive Rules

- Avoid active pawn breaks and pawn trades which will open the position. This is especially important if your army is passively placed. Opening the position is sure to benefit the opponent.

Good luck!

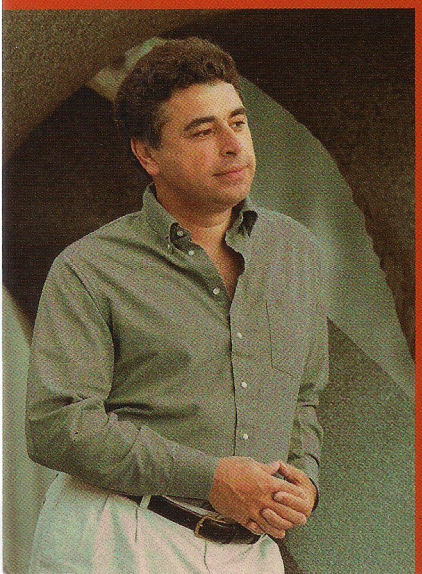
Winning Chess Combinations

Combinations are the central element in chess; they make the game so magical and captivating. The beautiful point of sacrificing a queen, the strongest piece, in order to checkmate with a lowly pawn brings a smile of joy to all chess lovers. Virtually all chess games possess a combination, either one hidden in the shadows of analysis carefully avoided or one that provides a decisive blow.

Winning Chess Combinations is a unique work that doesn't merely repeat the wonderfully rich and vast numbers of combinations, asking readers to solve a particular diagrammed position; it is a work that is far more realistic. A combination involves a sacrifice upsetting the balance of forces, but will it work or tragically boomerang? The reader is invited to solve this critical question by identifying the advantages that a specific position holds which might make the combination successful.

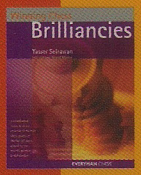
Winning Chess Combinations is the seventh in Yasser Seirawan's highly acclaimed Winning Chess series – probably the best-selling series of chess books ever published.

- A complete guide to chess combinations
- Includes stunning sacrifices
- Ideal for the improving player

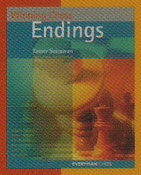


Yasser Seirawan is one of the top-ranked chess players in the USA and was the first American candidate for the World Championship title since Bobby Fischer. He is a four-time US Champion, the 1989 Western Hemisphere Champion, and a ten-time member of the US Chess Olympiad team.
His achievements distinguish him as one of only a handful of players to defeat world champions Garry Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov in tournament play.

Winning Chess Series



Winning Chess Brilliancies – a taste of the most dazzling chess combinations, devious strategies, and downright cruel blows as world champions risk it all! This book is truly a celebration of the sport of chess.



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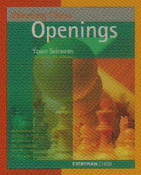

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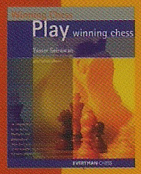

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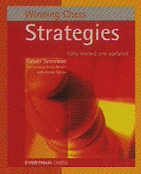

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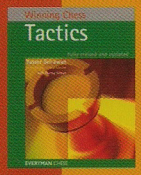

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