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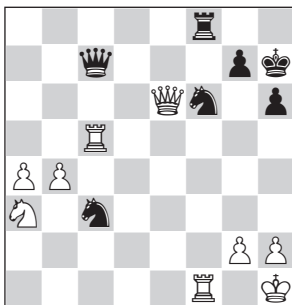
Introduction

We live in a Puzzle Rush world. Just like chess players studied openings in the Kasparov era, today's enthusiasts spend countless hours solving tactical puzzles. Certainly there is a lot of value in that effort, and increasing pattern recognition will help find moves in tournament games. But there is a downside – we always know who is supposed to win!

Chess in real life is not that way, and not just in the obvious point that no one taps us on the shoulder and tells us to look for tactics. Sometimes tactics work, and sometimes they don't. Sometimes your opponent (who also studies tactics) has a few tricks up their sleeve, too.

One of my favorite books when I was a child was *Chess Traps, Pitfalls and Swindles* by I.A. Horowitz and Fred Reinfeld. Full of colorful descriptions of Caissic battles, it imprinted upon me the give-and-take nature of chess tactics. On several occasions I have used positions from the book in camp classes. Several students, steeped in the 21st century mindset, asked me which side was supposed to win, when that was in fact part of the question posed to them.

Several of the examples here could be classified as traps and swindles in the Horowitz/Reinfeld mode, but that is not the overall theme. Players, mostly grandmasters, face all kinds of challenges in attack, defense, and counterattack. I love the tone of the struggle I learned from my favorite childhood book, which we see in the following memorable example:



1... ♘g4! 2. ♖g8+!! ♔g6!! 3. ♜e6+ ♕h7 4. ♜g8+ 1/2-1/2

What a thrill ride in a handful of moves! At various points we expect all three possible results. I'm sure the position was staged (and ingeniously so!); the knights in particular seem conveniently placed. But all of the positions I have included in this book are real. In many cases, the players didn't know which result to expect either.

It's Black's move. We can easily run the gamut in how this one should end.

I'm hoping to capture some of that Horowitz/Reinfeld spirit here. Tactics should be fun, to be enjoyed, not grinded out. I am certain that the games here will entertain the readers, but we all want to take something away to help improve our tactical understanding. There are lessons to be learned from the dozens of skirmishes in these pages. I have striven to find rules and give useful advice wherever possible. That said, if a logical approach was all we needed to get the tactics right, we would all be grandmasters.

The largest chapter I have dubbed 'Strike, Counterstrike'. That term encapsulates the fundamental principle of the book, the two-way nature of tactics in chess. From there the games are grouped according to theme and situation. Negotiating tactics in special circumstances like having a difficult position or having the possibility of a draw require their own set of practical ideas.

My Game of the Week/Weekly Recap video series on the Internet Chess Club provided the primary source for games. It makes sense that so many of those games fit the bill for this book; back and forth tactics particularly appeal to me, so those games were chosen for a good reason in the first place. Most of the games are of relatively recent (21st century) vintage, though there are some classics and lesser known gems from the past.

In annotating many of the ICC games I found much of the analysis had to be greatly reworked because the newer, stronger engines saw things differently than their predecessors!

As usual, I have something to say about the role of chess engines in this book. Several games are pre-computer classics that have been enjoyed for years. The engines not only permit a greater degree of correct analysis, they uncover a lot of hidden resources that might otherwise never come to light. Many of the newer games might not even make the cut without this extra set of 'eyes.' Engines allow a level of tactical sophistication that we otherwise would not be able to reach; certainly it is more than Horowitz and Reinfeld could have dreamed of.

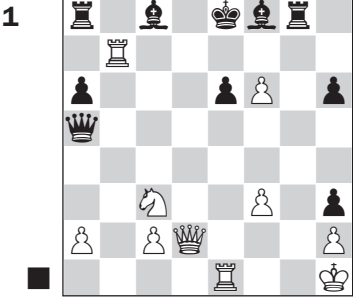
While I think the games are enriched by computer analysis, I try to keep it all in perspective. There are limits to what humans can expect to see, especially with increasingly faster time limits. The computer move is not necessarily the best move by human standards – an important point in ensuring that my advice stays genuinely practical. I should also say that pointing out so many mistakes found or confirmed by chess engines does not diminish my admiration for the great abilities of most of these players. I am even more impressed when the grandmasters get everything right! Readers should likewise not be too discouraged if they can't always find the best answer either.

A book on tactics should give the readers an opportunity to test their mettle. The nature of these games, which often have several critical tactical moments, don't always yield a definitive result after tactical shots. Still, I have chosen positions for each chapter to put in quiz form. All the positions, presented before their main chapters, are taken from games in the text. Most positions occurred in the games, but some are just reflected in the notes. Either way, all solutions can be found in the chapters.

Joel Benjamin

Waldwick NJ, USA, February 2023

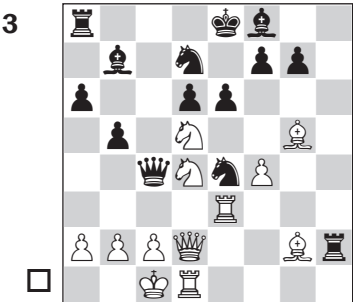
Strike, Counterstrike – Puzzles



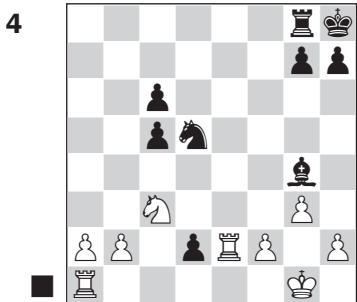
Black to play wins
Pichot-Cheparinov (p.17)



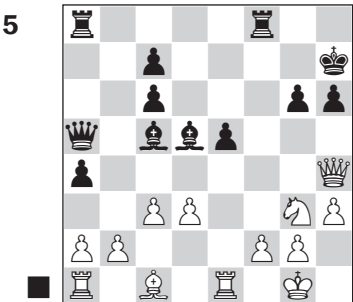
Black to play wins
Krasenkow-Nakamura (p.18)



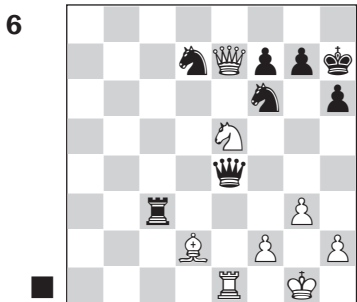
White to play wins
Antipov-Schwartz (p.22)



Black to play wins
Onischuk-Akobian (p.24)

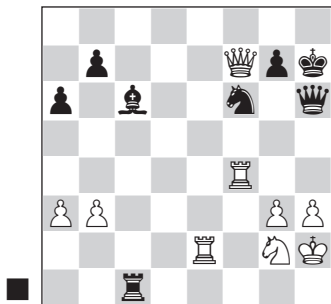


Black to play draws
Mamedyarov-Karjakin (p.26)



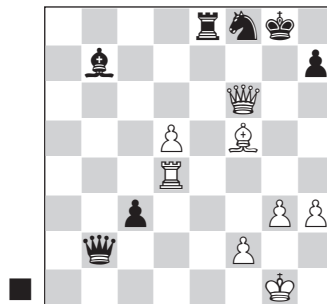
Black to play wins
Jones-Huschenbeth (p.27)

7



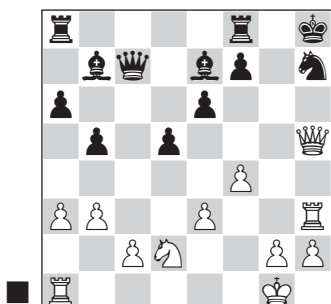
Black to play wins
B.Kogan-Benjamin (p.28)

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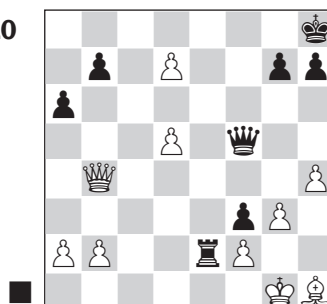
Black to play draws
Eljanov-Andreikin (p.30)

9



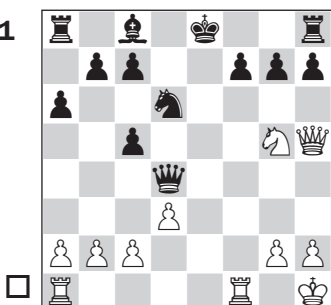
Black to play wins
Filatov-Mayer (p.35)

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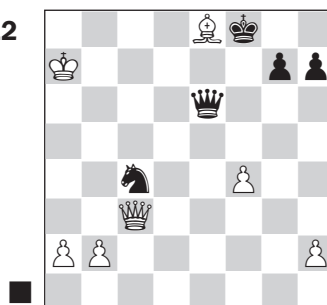
Black to play wins
Kamsky-Polgar (p.44)

11

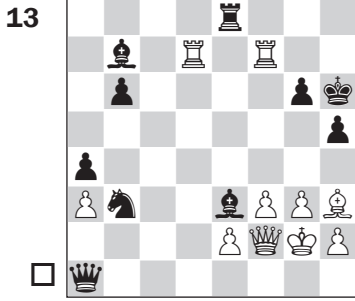


White to play wins
Benjamin-Kamsky (p.47)

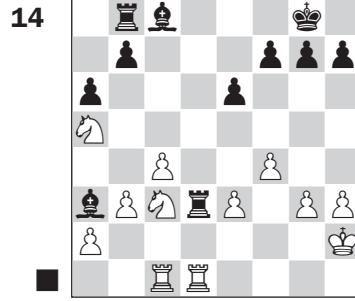
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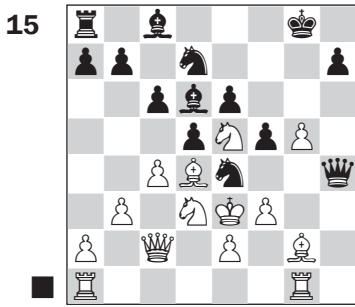
Black to play wins
Arulaid-Tal (p.50)



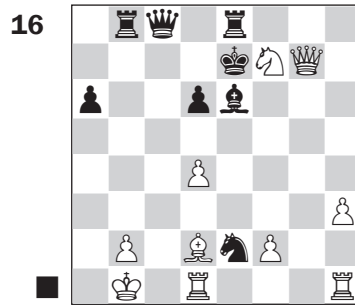
Dubov-Carlson (p.54)



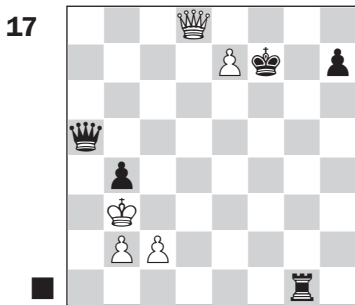
Mamedyarov-Lenderman (p.58)



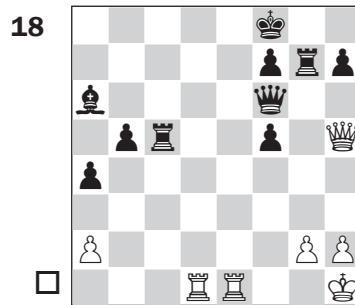
Kotov-Bondarevsky (p.59)



Babula-Kovacevic (p.62)



Sevian-Bok (p.68)



Emms-Yermolinsky (p.71)

CHAPTER 1

Strike, Counterstrike

Here we see the fundamental give-and-take nature of chess tactics. In this chapter we explore various tactical motifs; the one common thread is the battle between the two players to put their stamp on the tactics of the game.

Me First

We must always be alert to our opponent's potential threats, but 'ignoring' them can work if our own attacks can solve the problem.

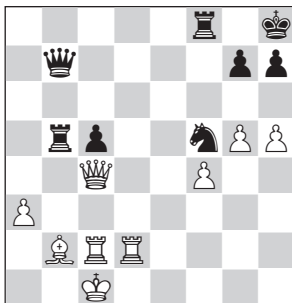
Game 1 English Opening

Hikaru Nakamura 2753

Francisco Vallejo Pons 2716

Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.g3 ♙c5 4.♙g2 a6 5.e3 d6 6.♗ge2 ♗ge7 7.b3 ♙a7 8.♙b2 ♖b8 9.d3 ♙f5 10.♙d2 ♙d7 11.h3 0-0 12.f4 ♙e6 13.d4 ♗f5 14.♙xc6 bxc6 15.0-0-0 exd4 16.exd4 ♗e7 17.g4 f5 18.g5 ♙f7 19.♗g3 a5 20.h4 a4 21.♗xa4 ♙xc4 22.bxc4 c5 23.♗c3 ♖b4 24.♙d3 cxd4 25.♗b5 d5 26.♗xa7 c5 27.cxd5 ♙xa7 28.a3 ♖b6 29.♙c4 ♗c8 30.d6+ ♗h8 31.d7 ♙xd7 32.♖h2 ♙b7 33.♖c2 ♖b5 34.♗xf5 ♖xf5 35.♖xd4 ♖f8 36.♖dd2 ♗e7 37.h5 ♗f5



Black has set up forking threats, either by the direct ...♗f5-e3 or ...♙b7-h1+ first. But Black gains no respite as Nakamura sidesteps the threats with more offense.

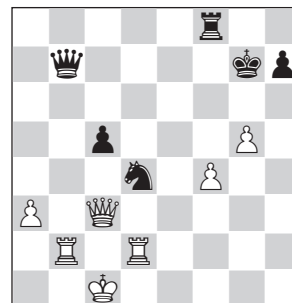
38.h6! ♖xb2

38...♙h1+ 39.♖d1 ♙xd1+ 40.♗xd1 ♗e3+ 41.♗c1 and Black is reminded of the threat to the g7-pawn.

39.hxg7+ ♗xg7 40.♙c3+!

The in-between check dashes Black's hopes for a fork again. 40.♖xb2 ♙h1+ 41.♖d1 ♙xd1+ 42.♗xd1 ♗e3+.

40...♗d4 41.♖xb2



White was able to overcome resistance and convert his material advantage.

Queen See One, Too

Akiba Rubinstein is famous for his slick endgame play, which has been praised in the next two games, for example. But he knew how to use tactics to get those superior endgames! What is odd about this duo (the first appeared in Horowitz and Reinfeld), is that the key move in the tactics is the same, and one you wouldn't expect to decide a game. GM and chess personality Ben Finegold used to say (for some reason I can't recall) '♖c2 wins.' Maybe he was off by one square?

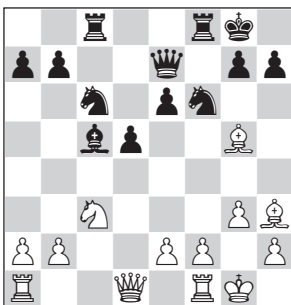
Game 2 Tarrasch Defense

Akiba Rubinstein

Jose Raul Capablanca

San Sebastian 1911

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5
exd5 5.♗c3 ♘c6 6.g3 ♖e6 7.♖g2
♙e7 8.0-0 ♜c8 9.dxc5 ♗xc5 10.♗g5
♘f6 11.♗xe6 fxe6 12.♖h3 ♚e7
13.♖g5 0-0



White has a tactic, but it's only just the beginning.

14.♗xf6 ♚xf6 15.♗xd5

The knight won't be captured, at least not right away – 15...exd5

16.♗xd5+ ♔h8 17.♗xc8 is a non-starter. But Rubinstein had to reckon with a potential pin on this piece.

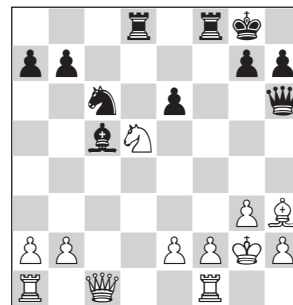
15...♚h6!?

This counterattack seems to call White's combination into question. Objectively stronger was 15...♗xf2+ 16.♔h1 (16.♔g2 ♚e5 17.♜xf2 ♜xf2+ 18.♔xf2 ♜d8 19.♘e7+ ♔h8 20.♘xc6? ♚f6+) 16...♚h6 (now 16...♚e5 17.♘f4 is strong, as the king is better protected than on g2) 17.♔g2 and White retains some advantage.

16.♔g2!

It is important to keep the bishop working on the h3-c8 diagonal, and not just to keep pieces protected. After 16.♗g2 ♘e5! Black suddenly has a kingside attack, as four pieces are converging on f2 and h2.

16...♜cd8 17.♚c1!!



White escapes the pin with a counterattack.

Two captures are hopeless – 17...♚xc1 18.♗xe6+ ♔h8 19.♜axc1, and 17...♜xd5 18.♚xh6 gxh6 19.♗xe6+.

So Capa had to settle for

17...exd5 18.♚xc5

and Rubinstein eventually won in the endgame.

Rubinstein must have played the killer move with a wry smile on his face. The blow bears an eerie similarity to this gem from two years before.

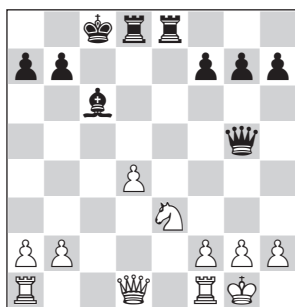
Game 3 Queen's Gambit Declined

Akiba Rubinstein

Emanuel Lasker

St Petersburg 1909

**1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♙g5
c5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♗c3 cxd4 7.♗xd4
♗c6 8.e3 ♙e7 9.♙b5 ♙d7 10.♙xf6
♙xf6 11.♗xd5 ♙xd4 12.exd4 ♖g5
13.♙xc6 ♙xc6 14.♗e3 0-0-0 15.0-0
♞he8**



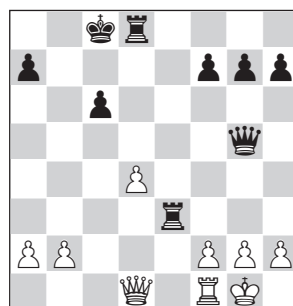
White has plucked a pawn, but the black pieces have become suddenly active, with the threat of 16...♞xe3 drawing attention. 16.♞d2 is an obvious defensive move, and a clever try at that because 16...♙xg2? 17.f4! is a devious piece-winning trap. But Black can proceed calmly; 16...♞e4 17.♞ad1 ♞exd4 18.♞xd4 ♞xd4 19.♞xd4 keeps the game tight. There's no rule that says White has to choose a defensive move. 16.d5 ♙xd5 17.f4 ♞e7! 18.♗xd5

♞c5+ comes up short, though this variation is useful for the future.

16.♞c1!

The key to this indirect defense appears in a few moves. Black doesn't have a great choice because after 16...♗b8 17.d5! is now working: 17...♙xd5 18.h4! (18.f4 ♞e7 19.♗xd5 ♞d6 saves the piece) 18...♞e5 (after 18...♞xh4 19.♗xd5 ♞e4 20.♞c5 White holds on to the extra piece) 19.♞c5 and the pin is deadly.

16...♞xe3 17.♞xc6+ bxc6



18.♞c1!

The pin keeps the pawn count in White's favor.

18...♞xd4 19.fxe3!

Black cannot defend both the c6- and the f7-pawns.

19...♞d7 20.♞xc6+ ♙d8 21.♞f4

Rubinstein converted his advantage in a rook ending.

Good timing

When a sacrificial attack requires the investment of a great deal of material, the chances of meeting terrifying threats with a counter-sacrifice will often turn the game around.

Game 4 Sicilian Defense

Alan Pichot

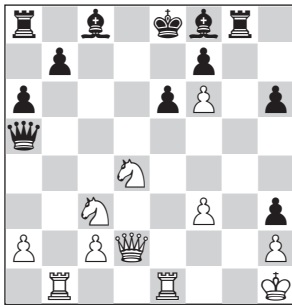
2552

Ivan Cheparinov

2699

Gibraltar 2018

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♙g5 e6 7.f4 h6
 8.♙h4 ♖b6 9.♙d2 ♗xb2 10.♖b1
 ♗a3 11.e5 dxe5 12.fxe5 g5 13.exf6
 gxh4 14.♙e2 ♗a5 15.0-0 h3 16.♙f3
 ♘d7 17.♙h1 ♘e5 18.♗fe1 ♘xf3
 19.gxf3 ♗g8



It is so often kill or be killed in the Poisoned Pawn Najdorf. The engine will say that White can retain decent chances with 20.♗d3, but how could Pichot resist the beautiful sacrifice?

20.♘xe6?!

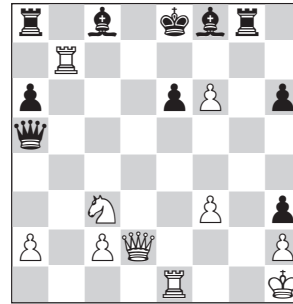
I threw in the exclamation mark because I like the spirit. Black is almost lost; indeed, 20...♙xe6 21.♖xb7 would leave him with no good defense to the threats of 22.♗d7# and 22.♖xe6+.

20...fxe6 21.♖xb7

Solution to Puzzle 1:

White looked forward to a heroic victory after 21...♙xb7 22.♖xe6+ ♔f7 23.♗d7+ ♔g6 24.f7+ ♔h7 25.fxg8♗+ ♔xg8 26.♗g6+ ♔h8

27.♗f7. But Black has a miracle of his own.



21...♗g1+!!

Well, Black does have some surplus stuff with all the wood White is throwing onto the fire. Capturing this rook will either deflect his attacking rook – 22.♖xg1 ♙xb7–+ – or win a critical tempo for defense.

22.♔xg1 ♗c5+!

This intermezzo makes a huge difference, as White would have a perpetual after 22...♙xb7? 23.♖xe6+ ♔f7 24.♗d7+ ♔g8 25.f7+ ♔g7 26.♗d4+, etc.

23.♔h1 ♙xb7 24.♖xe6+ ♔f7

25.♗d7+ ♔g8

The king is much more snug after the rook gave its life to vacate this square.

26.f7+ ♔g7 27.♗d3 ♗g5 28.♗d4+ ♔xf7 0-1

Direct to Offense (Queen Sac Edition)

Sometimes the best defense is a good offense. It can come at a moment when the opponent expects only a defensive move of some kind. The sweetest examples occur when the defender, in

the face of an attack or threat, launches a counter-sacrifice to turn the tables, and nothing stuns the opponent quite like a queen sacrifice. Amazingly, two strikingly similar examples happened in grandmaster play within a month of each other!

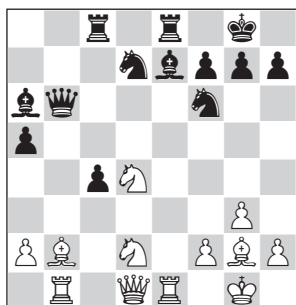
Game 5 Réti Opening

Michal Krasenkow 2668

Hikaru Nakamura 2648

Barcelona 2007

1. ♘f3 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. g3 d5 4. ♖g2
 ♙e7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. b3 a5 7. ♗c3 c6 8. d4
 ♘bd7 9. ♖c2 b6 10. e4 ♙a6 11. ♘d2
 c5 12. exd5 cxd4 13. ♘b5 exd5
 14. ♘xd4 ♖c8 15. ♗e1 b5 16. ♙b2
 ♗e8 17. ♖d1 bxc4 18. bxc4 ♖b6
 19. ♗b1 dxc4!



Nakamura has boldly concluded that White cannot exploit the exposed position of the black queen. After the tame 20. ♙c3 ♖c5 Black would have retained slightly better chances.

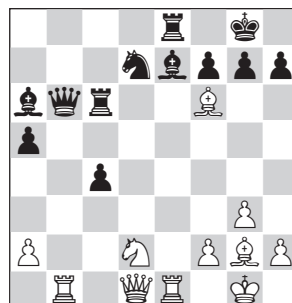
20. ♘c6?

One can hardly fault Krasenkow for believing the knight to be invulnerable. Nakamura's

counterpunch is slightly obscured by the presence of a reasonable answer in 20... ♙b4.

Solution to Puzzle 2:

20... ♗xc6! 21. ♙xf6



21... ♖xf2+!!

Necessity is the mother of invention – without this shocker, Black would simply be lost. The achievement is in the anticipation of this move rather than its calculation, which is not very difficult. These moves tend to be overlooked more often by the victim, as the sacker is more motivated to find such a special move and make it work, while Krasenkow likely focused on more plausible moves.

22. ♙xf2

Krasenkow has no choice but to allow Nakamura his fun, as 22. ♖h1 ♗xf6 23. ♘e4 ♖a7 just leaves Black distinctly ahead in material.

22... ♙c5+ 23. ♙f3

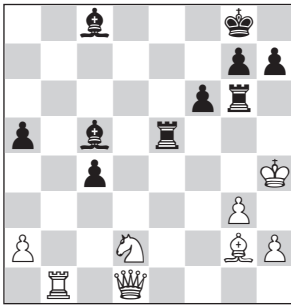
Venturing into the wild blue yonder is the only option. 23. ♙f1 c3+! (Black only has to avoid 23... ♗xf6+? 24. ♙f3) 24. ♗e2 c2 is utterly devastating. 23. ♙d4 ♙xd4+ 24. ♙f3 ♗f6+ 25. ♙g4 ♘e5+ is more or less the same as the game.

23...♖xf6+ 24.♔g4 ♘e5+ 25.♔g5
 After 25.♖xe5 ♘c8+ 26.♔h4 ♖xe5,
 White can only avoid mate for a few
 moves.

25...♖g6+ 26.♔h5
 26.♔f4 fares no better: 26...♘d3+
 27.♔f3 ♖f6+ 28.♔g4 ♘c8+ 29.♔g5
 ♖xe1 and White cannot survive
 more than a few moves, e.g. 30.♖xe1
 ♖g6+ 31.♔h4 ♖h6+ 32.♔g5 f6#.

26...f6
 26...♘c8 is apparently a forced mate,
 but either quiet move offers White
 zero hope so there is no reason to
 quibble.

27.♖xe5 ♖xe5+ 28.♔h4 ♘c8 0-1



Mate is unavoidable. 29.g4 ♘f2+
 30.♔h3 ♖h5# paints a pretty
 picture.

The second queen sac counterstrike
 was considerably more complex.

Game 6 Ruy Lopez

Ivan Cheparinov 2670

David Navara 2656

Crete Ech-tt 2007

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘b5 a6 4.♘a4
♘f6 5.0-0 ♘e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♘b3

0-0 8.h3 ♘b7 9.d3 d6 10.a3 ♖d7
11.♘c3 ♖fe8 12.a4 b4 13.♘e2
d5 14.exd5 ♘xd5 15.♘g3 ♘f8
16.♘d2 a5 17.♘a2 ♘d4 18.♘xe5
♖d6 19.♘f3 ♖xe1+ 20.♘xe1 ♘f4
21.♘xd4 ♖xd4 22.♖g4 ♖e8 23.♘f5
h5



Black's counterattack on the queen
 presents a choice to try big or play
 safe.

24.♘h6+?!

Cheparinov finds a remarkable
 tactical idea that runs into an
 equally formidable tactical
 response!

24.♘xd4 hxg4 25.hxg4 ♘xg2
 26.♘d2 ♘h4 27.♘e3 is the safe
 continuation, with Black having
 sufficient compensation for the
 pawn.

24...♔h7 25.♖f5+ ♔xh6

25...g6 26.♖xf7+ +-.

26.♘d2 ♘d6!

It turns out that the crazily
 complicated 26...g5 was also an
 effective response: 27.h4 ♘e2+!
 (27...f6 28.♘g8 ♖e7 29.c3 bxc3
 30.bxc3 ♖d6 31.hxg5+ fxg5
 32.♖xf8+ ♔g6 33.♘e3! with
 approximately balanced chances)
 28.♔f1 ♖xh4 29.♖f6+ ♔h7

30. ♖xf7+ ♕g7 31. ♖xe8 ♜d4 and Black's counterattack is crushing, e.g. 32. ♖g1 b3 33. ♕xb3 ♕xg2 34. f4 ♜xb3—+.

Navara's choice requires great creativity but perhaps less calculation.

27. ♕xf7



27... ♖xf2+!!

As in our previous example, this shocking move is forced. While Krasenkow might have been alerted to the possibility because he was attacking the queen, that is not the case here. I think Cheparinov anticipating this sac on move 24 was a practical impossibility.

28. ♖xf2 ♖e2+ 29. ♖g1

29. ♖f1? ♕xg2+ 30. ♖g1 ♖xd2 and White will lose the queen.

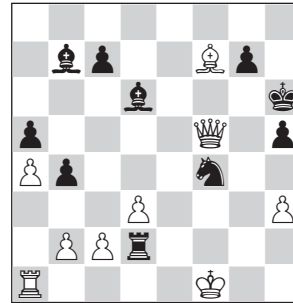
29... ♖xg2+?

Navara commits a subtle yet serious error.

29... ♖xd2! is the killer, the point being that 30. h4 ♖e2+ would end the game. Play could continue with a number of star moves: 30. ♖e1! g6! 31. ♖e6! (31. ♖f6 ♜xh3+ 32. gxh3 ♕h2+ 33. ♖f1 ♕g2#; 31. ♖d7 ♕c5 mates or wins the queen) 31... ♖xg2+ 32. ♖f1 ♖g3! 33. ♖b5 (33. ♕xg6 ♕c8)

33... ♖f3+ 34. ♖e1 ♜g2+ 35. ♖e2 ♖xf7 and Black's minor pieces should triumph.

30. ♖f1 ♖xd2



31. ♕g8

31. h4!! generates enough counterplay to draw; for example, 31... ♕g2+ (31... g6 32. ♕xg6!) 32. ♖e1 ♖e2+ 33. ♖d1 ♕f3 34. ♖g5+ ♖h7 35. ♖f5+ ♖h8 36. ♖c1 (36. ♖c8+?? ♖e8+) 36... ♕g4 37. ♖xa5 ♖e1+ 38. ♖d2 and here Black has no time to take the rook because of White's back-rank threat and must settle for a perpetual.

31... ♕g2+ 32. ♖e1 ♖e2+ 33. ♖d1 ♕f3 34. ♖h7+ ♖g5

The difference is that after 35. ♖c1 ♖e1+ 36. ♖d2 ♖xa1 Black has too much material for the queen and his king can hide from checks.

35. ♖a2 ♖h2+ 36. ♖e1 ♜xd3+!

White resigned.

37. cxd3 ♕g3+ 38. ♖f1 ♖h1# would have been the finish.

Leave it

Those queen sacrifices on f2 were startling and crowd-pleasing to be sure, but a passive queen sac might produce even more of a shock.

CHAPTER 7

In the Beginning... and in the End

Beginnings

Tactics are generally thought to be in the province of the middlegame. We have seen tactics arise from all manner of openings, but the choice of opening can have a profound impact on creating tactical situations. In this chapter we will examine a couple of openings that always seem to lead to fireworks.

King's Indian

It can be maddening today to watch the procession of Berlin Defenses/Giuoco Pianos and Queen's Gambits of various persuasions. A lot of fans call for more Chess 960. I'm not one of them – these games don't look like chess to me, with pieces in weird places and lack of familiar pawn structures.

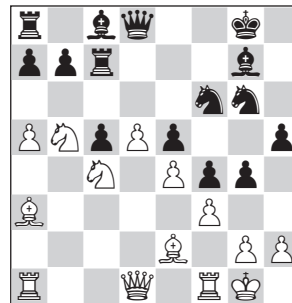
The increased strength of chess engines, which can push the theory deep into the middlegame, have perhaps made edgier openings more problematic. Young Nakamura created some great entertainment with the King's Indian. Elite players (especially post-Kasparov) hesitate to take on positions the engines (figuratively) frown upon. Hopefully the approach of Hikaru 1.0 will return to the scene with more frequency, but in the meantime we can appreciate some slightly older swashbuckling.

In Passing

Beliavsky deals with all kinds of piece sacrifices here, but a sneaky pawn move does him in.

Game 103 King's Indian Defense
Alexander Beliavsky 2662
Hikaru Nakamura 2710
Amsterdam 2009

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗f3 0-0 6.♞e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘d2 ♘e8 10.b4 f5 11.c5 ♘f6 12.f3 f4 13.♘c4 g5 14.a4 ♘g6 15.♞a3 ♖f7 16.a5 h5 17.b5 dxc5 18.b6 g4 19.bxc7 ♖xc7 20.♘b5



Nakamura has played *va banque* from the get-go, allowing White

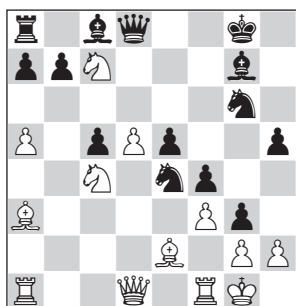
significant progress on the queen-side. The engines want us to believe that White is winning, but Hikaru is just beginning to throw punches.

20...g3! 21.♟xc7

I feel this is a mistake which allows Black's position to gain momentum.

21.♞c2! not only supports e4 but guards the second rank for tactics. Black may have to play defense for a while.

21...♟xe4!



This sacrifice clears the way for the queen to jump into the attack. White has many options here but no chance to slow things down.

22.♟e6

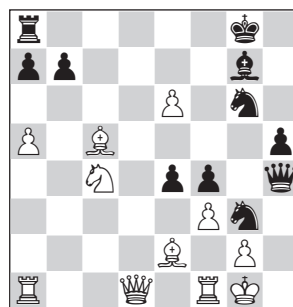
The knight, which has just taken a rook, can take another one... yet it moves in the other direction. But 22.♟xa8? would be a lazy 'let's grab stuff and see what happens' kind of move. The punishment – 22...♞h4 23.h3 ♟xh3 – comes swiftly.

The other capture removes an attacking piece, so fares quite a bit better. After 22.fxe4 ♞h4 23.h3 ♟xh3 24.gxh3 ♞xh3 25.♞f2 gxf2+ 26.♟xf2 ♞g3+ 27.♟f1 f3 28.♟xa8 fxe2+ 29.♟xe2 ♟f4+ 30.♟d2 ♞d3+ 31.♟c1 ♞xc4+ White's king is

relatively safe and he still holds a material advantage. The problem is that this line is difficult to calculate, and hardly reliable from a human standpoint. Black looks very close to a knockout along the way!

There are a few other playable but unlikely moves here. The most natural seems 22.h3 ♟c3 23.♞c2 e4 with sufficient counterplay. 22.♞a2 ♞h4 23.h3 ♟f2 24.♞xf2 gxf2+ 25.♟f1 ♞g3 26.♟d3 e4 27.♞xf2 ♟d4 is certainly okay for Black, but I doubt that either player considered that computer line. Beliavsky's move is responsible – by knocking out the bishop, he eliminates nasty sacrifices on h3 – but his counterplay is slow while Black builds up his attack.

22...♟xe6 23.dxe6 gxh2+ 24.♟xh2 ♞h4+ 25.♟g1 ♟g3 26.♟xc5 e4



27.♞a4

We shall see the downside to this square, but it does prevent 27...e3 thanks to 28.♟xe3 with a pin along the fourth rank.

27.♞a2 e3 28.♟xe3 fxe3 29.♟xe3 ♟f4 seems dynamically balanced.

27...♞c8!

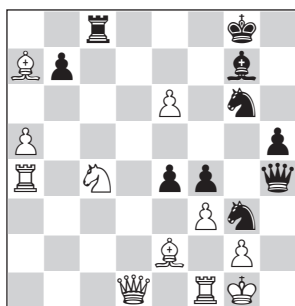
The ancillary pieces have to pitch in. If they can't directly attack the king, they can help by harassing important defensive pieces.

28. ♖xa7?

This meets with a lovely refutation. We have one of those moments when the defender has to look for some measure of counter-play to break or slow down the attack. White has two options. Neither of these lines is entirely forced, or, for that matter, all that natural to find.

A) 28.e7 exf3 29. ♖xf3 ♜xe7 30. ♖xa7 b5 31. ♖b4 bxc4 32. ♖e1 ♖c3 33. ♖b7 ♖xe1 34. ♖xe1 ♖f8 is slightly better for White;

B) 28. ♜d6 exf3 29. ♖xf3 ♖xc5 30. ♜e4 ♖h1+ 31. ♖f2 ♖c2+ 32. ♖e2 ♖xe2+ 33. ♖xe2 ♖h4 34. ♖c4 ♜xe4+ 35. ♖g1 ♜g3 36.e7+ ♖h7 37. ♖e1 ♖h1+ 38. ♖f2 ♖h4 39.e8 ♖ ♜e4+ 40. ♖g1 (40. ♖e2 ♖f2+ 41. ♖d3 ♖d2+ 42. ♖xe4 ♖xe1+-) 40... ♖f2+ 41. ♖h2 ♖h4+ and drawn!



Solution to Puzzle 61:

28...b5!

A lovely and unexpected tactic for strong players, who have internalized the en passant rule!

29. ♖b4

If 29.axb6?, 29... ♖d4+ mates. But the piece drop is fatal here because White cannot consolidate.

29...bxc4 30. ♖xc4 ♖h1+ 31. ♖f2 e3+ 32. ♖xe3 fxe3+ 33. ♖xe3 ♜xf1+ 34. ♖xf1

Or 34. ♖xf1 ♖h4.

34... ♖g1+ 0-1

Mirror, Mirror

The next year, Nakamura scored another brilliancy in a game that mirrored the Beliavsky game for fifteen moves!

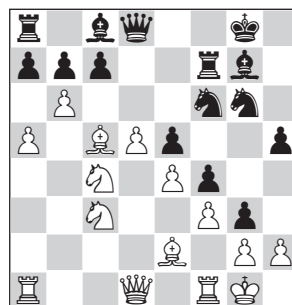
Game 104 King's Indian Defense

Boris Gelfand 2761

Hikaru Nakamura 2708

Bursa Wch-tt 2010

1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 g6 3. ♜c3 ♖g7 4.e4 d6 5. ♜f3 0-0 6. ♖e2 e5 7.0-0 ♜c6 8.d5 ♜e7 9. ♜d2 ♜e8 10.b4 f5 11.c5 ♜f6 12.f3 f4 13. ♜c4 g5 14.a4 ♜g6 15. ♖a3 ♖f7 16.b5 dxc5 17. ♖xc5 h5 18.a5 g4 19.b6 g3



My old friend GM John Fedorowicz liked to say of such positions that both sides are 'playing alone'. White has received a free hand

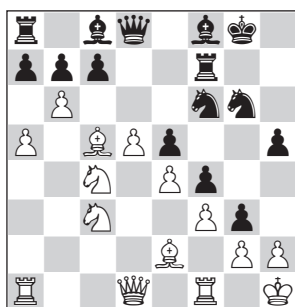
on the queenside but he will pay dearly if he takes his eye off Black's emerging attack on the other wing. 20. ♖b5? collapses the black queenside but leaves White vulnerable on the other side. Black is set up for a hail of thematic sacrifices: 20... ♗d7! 21. ♖b4 ♜h4 22. h3 ♘xb6! 23. axb6 ♙xh3 24. gxh3 ♜xh3 25. ♜f2 gxf2+ 26. ♔xf2 ♜g3+ 27. ♔f1 ♙f6 and White is helpless to defend his king.

20. ♔h1!

This typical defensive move allows the bishop to drop back to defend from g1.

20... ♙f8

Black isn't simply offering a trade of bishops; White can't think about capturing – if 21. ♙xf8?, 21... ♗xe4 22. ♗xe4 ♜h4 mates.



21. d6

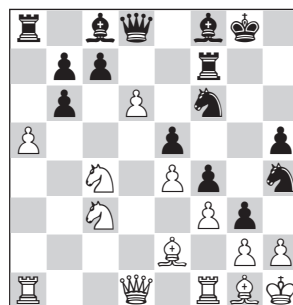
21. ♙g1 ♗h4 22. ♜e1? ♗xg2! 23. ♔xg2 ♜g7 24. ♗xe5 gxh2+ 25. ♔h1 ♗xe4 resulted in a quick win for Black in Roussel Roozmon-Charbonneau, Montreal 2008. Pascal and Hikaru were teammates on the New York Knights in the USCL, and that game likely convinced Nakamura the line was worth playing for Black.

21... axb6 22. ♙g1

22. axb6 ♜xa1 23. ♜xa1 cxd6 is much better for Black.

22... ♗h4!?

Now that White has h2 securely guarded, Black shifts the focus to the poorly protected g2-pawn. If 22... h4 23. h3 and the knight will not have access to the dangerous attacking post.



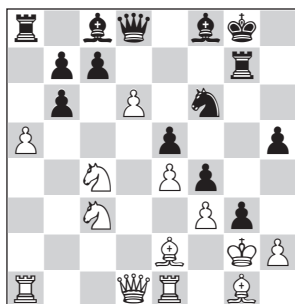
23. ♜e1!?

Again, Black's threats demand a reaction; if 23. dxc7?, 23... ♙h3! crashes through. White prepares to fortify the kingside with ♙f1, so Black has to make a big move now. Despite Black's success in this game, 22... ♗h4 was not repeated in later games. This is likely due to 23. hxg3!? fxg3 24. ♙e3, which seems to be quite good for White. White is vulnerable on the h-file, but Black's pieces are all on the wrong squares now. The attack on g2 can be turned aside, e.g. 24... ♙h3 25. ♜g1 ♜c8 26. ♙f1. This moment is a microcosm of why people do and don't play the King's Indian!

23... ♗xg2! 24. dxc7?

The text utterly fails as an in-between move! White had to

bite the bullet and grab the knight:
24. ♖xg2 ♜g7 and now White has
three reasonable continuations:



analysis diagram

A) 25. hxg3 ♛d7! (25... ♜xg3+ 26. ♖h1 ♜h3+ 27. ♙h2 ♘g4 28. ♛d5+ ♖h7 29. ♛f7+ ♙g7 30. fxg4 ♜xh2+ 31. ♖xh2 ♛h4+ 32. ♖g2 ♛g3+ only leads to perpetual check) 26. g4 hxg4 27. fxg4 ♘xg4 28. ♙xg4 ♜xg4+ and I would prefer Black's chances here;

B) 25. ♘xe5 gxh2+ 26. ♖xh2 ♘g4+ 27. fxg4 ♛h4+ 28. ♖g2 hxg4 29. ♛d5+ ♖h7 30. ♜ec1 with an insane position that only gets crazier: 30... ♙e6 31. ♛xe6 ♛h3+ 32. ♖f2 g3+ 33. ♖f3 ♛xe6 34. ♙d4 ♜g5 and anything can happen;

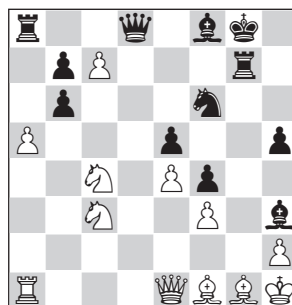
C) 25. dxc7 gxh2+ (25... ♛e7 could be tried here as well) 26. ♖h1 hxg1 ♛+ 27. ♜xg1 ♛xc7 and Nakamura described this position as 'roughly balanced', which seems fair.

24... ♘xe1!

This is the first of several IBMs exploiting the mate threat on g2 – 25. cxd8 ♛? g2#.

25. ♛xe1 g2+ 26. ♖xg2 ♜g7+ 27. ♖h1 ♙h3 28. ♙f1

Solution to Puzzle 62:



Black will win after the prosaic 28... ♛xc7, but Nakamura's next bolt ends the game most thematically.

28... ♛d3!

White cannot capture the queen on pain of mate on g2 for the third time... with one more time to go!

29. ♘xe5

Avoiding the immediate finish after 29. ♙xd3 ♙g2# or 29. ♙xh3 ♛xf3+.

29... ♙xf1! 30. ♛xf1 ♛xc3 31. ♜c1 ♛xe5 32. c8 ♛ ♜xc8 33. ♜xc8 ♛e6 0-1

Born under Punches

The faith is kept by many hard-working if less heralded players who appreciate the puncher's chance the KID always seems to provide.

Game 105 King's Indian Defense

Klaus Bischoff 2553

Mark Hebden 2556

Dun Laoghaire 2010

1. ♘f3 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 ♙g7 4. e4 d6 5. d4 0-0 6. ♙e2 e5 7. 0-0 ♘c6 8. d5 ♘e7 9. ♘e1 ♘d7 10. ♘d3 f5 11. ♙d2

♟f6 12.f3 f4 13.c5 g5 14.cxd6 cxd6
15.♞f2 ♞g6 16.♚c2 ♜f7 17.♞fc1
♙f8 18.a4 h5 19.♞b5 ♞e8 20.♞a3
♙d7 21.♞c3 ♞g7 22.h3 a6 23.♞a3
♙e7 24.♙e1 ♚b8 25.♚b3 ♙d8
26.♚b4 ♚a7 27.a5 b6 28.♞c4
bxa5 29.♞xa5 ♙b6 30.♞f1 ♞b8
31.♞b3 ♞e7 32.♞a1 ♙c7 33.♚a3
♞f6 34.♞xb8+ ♚xb8 35.♚b3 ♚e8
36.♞c6 g4



Black could hardly wait any longer for the thematic breakthrough, but White has an entire chess set trained on the square.

37.♞xe5?

White really had no need for this combination. The only question was how to capture on g4, with 37.fxg4 hxg4 38.hxg4 being the simplest. There is simply no follow-up – 38...♞xg4 39.♙xg4 ♙xg4 40.♞xg4 ♞xg4 41.♞xe7+ ♚xe7 42.♞xa6 is just winning for White. His queen covers everything along the third rank.

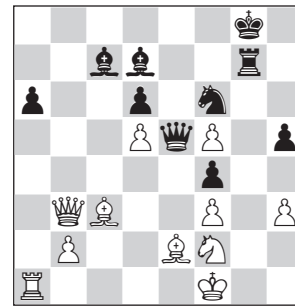
Moreover, however Black answers to this shot, White's king will be less safe with the g-file open.

37...gxf3 38.gxf3 ♞f5!

This counterstrike breaks Black's queen into the game, though the

long diagonal could be problematic for him.

39.exf5 ♚xe5 40.♙c3



40...♚e3?!

Though this sets up the winning blow, objectively it shouldn't have worked. The queen should have headed to the g-file: 40...♚xf5 41.♞xa6 ♚g5 42.♞a8+! (otherwise the rook comes strongly to the e-file) 42...♞f7 43.♞e1 ♚g1+ 44.♙f1 ♞g6 45.♙xf6 ♞xf6 and the game remains tense as both kings are under fire. 46.♚c4 ♞e7+ 47.♞e4+ ♞e5! is an amusing line; Black has about equalized despite leading with his king!

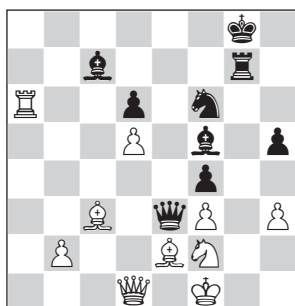
41.♞xa6 ♙xf5

It seems clear that it would be a good idea to unpin the c3-bishop, but which square to move the queen to?

42.♚c4 gives White a big advantage. The combination from the game doesn't work because White's king would walk out into the center. Bischoff probably felt his move to be more defensively responsible because he prevented 42...♚c1+, which chases the bishop off its strong diagonal and scoops up

a pawn. But after 43. ♖e1 ♜xb2 44. ♖a8+! (44. ♜xf4 ♘xd5 45. ♖a8+ ♙b8 46. ♙c4? ♙xh3+ 47. ♘xh3 ♜g2#) 44... ♙b8 (or 44... ♙h7 45. ♙d3, and White starts to take over) 45. ♙b4 ♜b1+ 46. ♙d1, White takes over the initiative. Now, 46... ♙xh3+? 47. ♘xh3 ♜xd1+ 48. ♙f2 ♘d7 49. ♖xb8+ ♘xb8 50. ♜c8+ ♙h7 51. ♜f5+ ♙g8 52. ♙c3 wins for White.

42. ♜d1??



Solution to Puzzle 63:

Black is completely lost, except for one move that is completely winning.

42... ♘e4!

That's the ballgame. It's funny how ♜d1 appears more defensive than ♜c4, but allows the winning shot.

43. ♜d4

The key difference is that 43.fxe4 ♙xh3+ 44. ♘xh3 ♜xh3+ 45. ♙e1 ♖g1+ costs White the queen.

43... ♙xh3+! 0-1

Hebden avoids an optical illusion – 43... ♘g3+ 44. ♙g2 ♘xe2+?? 45. ♜xg7#. But now 44. ♘xh3 ♘g3+ 45. ♙g2 ♜xe2+ 46. ♘f2 ♘f5+ will disappear White's queen. So Bischoff **resigned**.

Marshall Law

The Marshall Attack in the Ruy Lopez has been a bold counter-attacking choice since Frank Marshall introduced the gambit against Capablanca in 1921. It has taken quite a different turn from the King's Indian, though. The Marshall lends itself so much to forcing variations that engines have beaten it to death. Indeed, grandmasters (and club players, in a trickle-down effect) tend to sidestep it not out of fear of losing, but out of fear of drawing! Let's go back to a time when the engines were a bit less scary and the theory still developing, to see some home-cooked strikes.

Game 106 Ruy Lopez

Jan Smeets 2573

Etienne Bacrot 2700

Wijk aan Zee B 2008

1.e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♙b5 a6 4. ♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♙e7 6. ♖e1 b5 7. ♙b3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10. ♘xe5 ♘xe5 11. ♖xe5 c6 12.d3 ♙d6 13. ♖e1 ♙f5 14. ♜f3 ♜h4 15.g3 ♜h3 16. ♙xd5 cxd5 17. ♜xd5 ♖ad8 18. ♜g2 ♜h5 19. ♙e3 ♙h3!?

I believe this had not been played OTB at the time, with the safer 19... ♙xd3 20. ♘d2 ♙f5 21. ♜c6 seen a few times.

20. ♜h1 f5 21. ♙b6 ♖d7

On the morning of the game, Bacrot's second Naiditsch found a flaw in his analysis: 21...f4 22. ♙xd8 f3 23. ♙b6 ♙g2 24. ♜xg2 fxg2 25. ♘d2

♔g6 26. ♖d4 ♗xd3 27. ♘e4, and only White can realistically play for a win. This actually befell an unsuspecting victim three years later in a correspondence game.

22. ♗d5+!?

This puts the queen in a hot spot, of course, but otherwise Black would play 22...f4.

22... ♖h8 23. ♘d2



23... ♖g3!

White's pinning strategy is put to the test!

24. ♗xd7 ♖f4

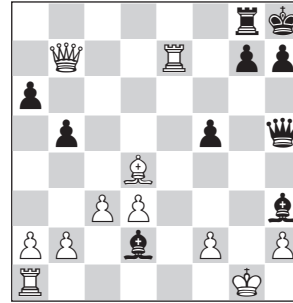
Black has to chill a bit, as 24... ♖xh2+? 25. ♖xh2 offers no follow up.

25. ♗b7

The queen needs to go on the long diagonal, but where is quite a problem to solve at the board. The text keeps pressure on g7, which has its plusses. 25. ♗d5 ♖xd2 26. ♗d6 ♗g5+ 27. ♗g3 ♗h6 was explored in a few subsequent games.

25... ♖xd2 26. ♖d4 ♗g8 27. ♗e7?

This looks like a powerful move, securing the initiative, but it backfires after Black's shock rejoinder. White could have maintained the balance with several moves, 27. ♖h1 and 27. ♗d5 seeming most plausible.

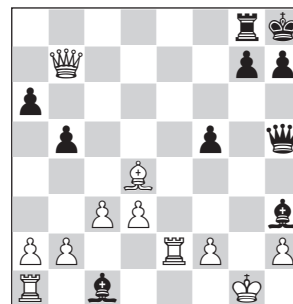


27... ♖c1!!

This awesome move was found in home analysis just before the game. We can certainly see how Smeets could have overlooked it. White's threat to g7 looks lethal, but any non-check is met by 28... ♗d1 mate.

28. ♗e1?

There seems to be no alternative to this ignominious retreat which provides Black with a critical tempo. 28. ♗xc1 ♗g5+ 29. ♖h1 ♗xc1+ and 28. ♖xg7+ ♗xg7+ 29. ♗xg7 ♗d1# are both non-starters. But White has a remarkable counterstrike of his own in 28. ♗e2!!.



analysis diagram

Now the rook is prepared to guard the second rank in the event of 28... ♖f4 29. f3. The rook can of course be captured, but then White

takes the bishop without further penalty. White is short of moves, but with intricate play he can hold:

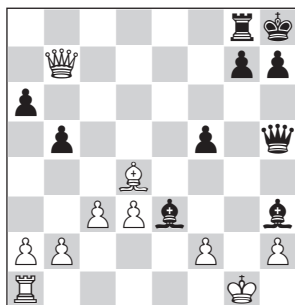
A) 28...♖g4+ 29.♔h1 ♗xe2 30.♜xc1 h5 31.♜g1 ♕g4 32.♔g2 ♗xd3 33.f3 ♗e2+ 34.♕f2 ♕h3+ 35.♔xh3 ♗xf2 36.♜g2 and White should survive;

B) 28...♗xe2 29.♜xc1 a5!? (29...h5 30.♗c7!) and now not the hasty 30.♗c7? f4! 31.♗xf4 ♜e8 (this doesn't work if the h-pawn has moved, as there would be 32.♗h6+) 32.♕e3 ♗xb2 with a big advantage, but 30.b3 and 30.♔h1 should both suffice.

28...♕f4 29.♜e3!?

Black threatened to win the queen with 29...♕xh2+ 30.♔xh2 ♕g4+ 31.♔g2 (if 31.♔g3, 31...f4 mates against most 29th moves) 31...♗h3+ 32.♔g1 ♕f3. It may be the case though that the threat is stronger than the execution!

29...♕xe3



30.♕xe3

30.fxe3, keeping the black rook frozen, seems a better defense. But with White reduced to passivity, Black has an intricate winning plan that could play out like this: 30...♗e2 31.b3 h6 32.c4 b4 33.♗c6

♔h7 34.♗b7 ♔g6 35.♔h1 ♔h5 36.♜g1 g5 37.♜g3 ♗f1+ 38.♜g1 ♗f2 39.♜g3 ♕g4 40.♗g2 ♗e1+ 41.♗g1 ♗e2 42.h3 ♕f3+ and Black wins.

30...♜e8

Apparently, 30...f4 first leads to a forced win, and White has chances to hold now with 31.♗c7. But in practice White is unlikely to make a successful defense regardless.

31.♕d4 ♗g4+ 32.♔h1 h6

With this and the next move, Black consolidates his king position in preparation for the final assault.

33.f4

33.♜g1 ♗xg1+ 34.♔xg1 ♜e1#.

33...♜e7 34.♗a8+ ♔h7 35.♕e5

After 35.♜g1 ♗xf4, Black maintains decisive threats to the white king.

35...♗e2 36.♜g1 ♕g4 37.♜xg4 fxg4 38.d4

Hmmm. 38.♗e4+ ♗xe4+ 39.dxe4 g5 is hopeless.

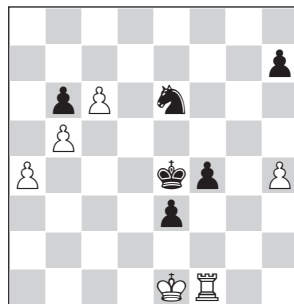
38...♗f1#

This is the End

Endgames can be as much about tactics as technique. Those who are fortunate and clever enough to have digested Van Perlo's *Endgame Tactics* know what I'm talking about. It may be the case that the back-and-forth battles we seek here are less frequent than in middlegames, but when we find them, they are as beautiful and instructive as can be.

Promoting pawns come to the forefront, and indeed they are the essence of endgames. We've all seen tactics to force a pawn through to

the eighth rank, but sometimes the battle is about actually overcoming the opponent's countertactics. Checkmate can still be on the menu with limited material on the board. One cannot take their eyes off of stalemate possibilities as well.



Funky Cold Madina

When pawns are unstoppable, the only way out may be to use your passed pawns to create mating threats. It all comes down to timing, like slowing down the opposition by any means necessary.

Game 107 Sicilian Defence

Madina Davletbayeva 2165

Ding Yixin 2424

Istanbul ol W 2012

1.e4 c5 2.c3 d6 3.d4 ♟f6 4.dxc5
 ♟c6 5.f3 d5 6.exd5 ♟xd5 7.c4 ♟db4
 8.a3 ♞xd1+ 9.♙xd1 ♟a6 10.b4 ♟d4
 11.♙e3 ♟f5 12.♙f2 g6 13.♙d3
 ♙e6 14.♟c3 ♙h6 15.♟ge2 0-0-0
 16.♙c2 ♙e3 17.♙e1 ♙d4 18.♙d2
 ♙e3 19.♙e1 ♟c7 20.g4 ♟d4+
 21.♟xd4 ♞xd4 22.♙g3 a6 23.♙e5
 ♞hd8 24.♙xd4 ♙xd4 25.♞ad1 ♙d7
 26.♙e4 e5 27.♞d2 ♙b8 28.♟e2
 ♙a4+ 29.♙b1 ♟e6 30.♟xd4 ♟xd4
 31.♞e1 ♙c7 32.g5 ♙d7 33.♙d5
 ♙f5+ 34.♙e4 ♟xf3 35.♞xd8 ♙xd8
 36.♙xf5 gxf5 37.♞e2 e4 38.♞f2 f4
 39.♙c2 ♟d4+ 40.♙d1 ♟e6 41.h4
 ♙e7 42.♙e1 f5 43.gxf6+ ♙xf6 44.b5
 e3 45.♞f1 axb5 46.cxb5 ♙e5 47.c6
 b6 48.a4 ♙e4

Both sides are just a few moves away from a big splash.

49.a5

White could have been proactive in stopping Black's counterplay with 49.♞g1 f3 50.♞g4+ ♟d3 51.a5 bxa5 52.b6 e2 53.♞a4 (or 53.♙f2) 53...♟d4 54.♞xd4+ ♙xd4 55.♙d2.

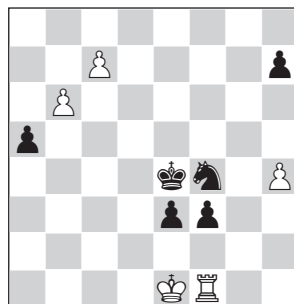
49...bxa5

The pawn is less relevant than the tempo expended, so 49...f3 would probably have been a better try.

Solution to Puzzle 64:

White has some plausible ways to go wrong, like 50.axb6?? ♟f4-+ and 50.c7? ♟xc7 51.axb6 ♟e6 52.b7 ♟c5=. But she could win as in the game with 50.♞f2!! exf2+ (50...♟f4 51.c7) 51.♙xf2 ♟d5 and now the key trick is 52.c7 (52.axb6 ♟d6 holds) 52...♟xc7 53.axb6 and the b-pawn queens.

50.b6 f3 51.c7 ♟f4



52. ♖f2!

Of course not 52.c8♖? ♜g2+ 53.♔d1 e2+, but now only White gets a queen.

52... ♜d3+ 53. ♔f1 ♜xf2 54.c8♖ ♔d4 55. ♖d7+ ♔c5 56.b7 ♜e4 57.b8♖ ♜d2+ 58. ♖xd2 exd2 59. ♖d8 ♔c4 60. ♖xd2 1-0

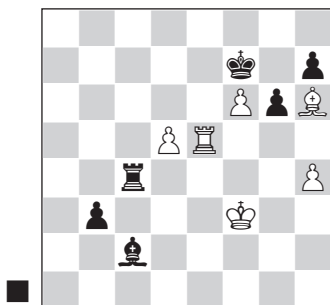
Net Loss

A passed pawn may have a free run to paydirt, but a sneaky mating net must be broken to promote in peace.

Game 108

Bela Radnoti**Laszlo Liptay**

Hungary 1971



Black is on the verge of queening the b-pawn, but easy does it with his king in a precarious position.

1... ♖e4!

1...b2? 2. ♖e7+ ♔xf6 3. ♖b7! would have cost Black his pride and joy, as 3...b1♖? 4. ♔g7+ ♔f5 5. ♖f7# is a surprise checkmate that we will revisit. Sure, Black can also win with 1...♔xf6 2. ♖e6+ ♔f7 3. ♖b6 ♖xh4, but he will have some work

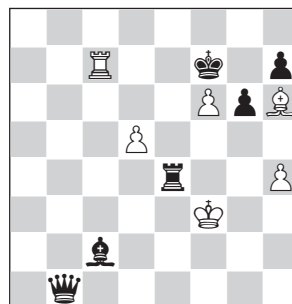
to do with the opposite-colored bishops.

2. ♖e6!

White doesn't go quietly. There wouldn't be any cheapos after 2...♖xe6 3.dxe6+ ♔xe6 4. ♔c1 ♔xf6, but Black doesn't mind offering a little false hope.

2...b2 3. ♖c6! b1♖

3...♔d1+ 4. ♔g3 ♖g4+ 5. ♔f2 b1♖ may be a bit cleaner but not nearly as aesthetic.

4. ♖c7+**4... ♖e7!!**

Sometimes the mind doesn't register such a move, as pieces don't go where they can obviously be taken. But White's devious mating net is destroyed.

4...♔xf6?? 5. ♔g7+ ♔f5 6. ♖f7# would have elicited quite different emotions for the players.

5. ♖xe7+ ♔xf6 6. ♔g7+ ♔f5

And **White resigned.**

Give a Queen, Make a Queen

Checkmating threats can gain time in the race of passed pawns; the last subtlety can make the difference.