

THE CHESS SCALPEL

32 MASTER GAMES DISSECTED

Predict the Moves and Maximize
Your Chess Understanding!

by

Zenon Franco



Thinkers Publishing

www.thinkerspublishing.com

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Typesetting
i-Press <www.i-press.pl>

First edition 2022 by Thinkers Publishing

The Chess Scalpel. 32 Master Games Dissected
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ISBN 978-94-6420-151-2
D/2022/13732/23

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
▷	better is
≤	worse is
N	novelty
+	check
#	mate

INTRODUCTION

It is a real pleasure for me to start my collaboration with Thinkers Publishing by writing a volume on a theme with which I am very familiar. I have written several books on this topic; since I first learned how the pieces move I have been linked to the ‘Guess the Move’ format, first as a student, then as a trainer, and now as an author.

The idea behind this book is for you to ‘play’ as in a real game, and it is my job to ensure you have a pleasant time while training. I suggest you take at least an hour and a half for each game and as your coach I will indicate when to guess the moves. Sometimes there will be suggestions — including tricky ones — to measure your concentration level. The ideas behind the moves are always explained.

Points are awarded for the ‘right answers’ as well as for some other moves, and at the end there is a general assessment plus a review of some of the things to be learned from the game. During my coaching period I was able to witness how motivating it is for kids to receive points for the right answers, their ‘lives are at stake’ when they try to find the answers, and it is a challenge much appreciated by them. Later I also noticed a similar effect with adults although, unlike the kids, the older students try to hide it.

The final score is not that important; it is not scientifically based. But of course the more points you get the better you ‘would have played’. The effort you put into trying to find the best move every time is what matters most. I firmly believe it really helps to learn a little more about playing chess with every game.

The methodology recommended for solving the exercises is the ‘old-school’ one of using a piece of paper to cover the text and scrolling down the page as you advance.

The games have been chosen according to my personal liking and commentaries are based on those by the players themselves, which is a great help in understanding what indeed happened.

In some games you will have to guess moves for the losing side too. Indeed, I expect that as you proceed you will become familiar with the question of Mark Dvoretsky: “What could my opponent play?”.

Importance has also been given to the practical aspect, which doesn't always coincide with the suggestions offered by the engines as best. This is to make it more like ‘a real game’.

It was enlightening to read that the current world champion, Magnus Carlsen, mentioned that the difficulty involved in playing a position is a factor to take into consideration, and that in such cases the engine's assessment is not that useful.

Let's go back to how this book originated: the main reason for this ‘guessing moves’ pastime stems from the immense popularity that chess has always had in Argentina, where I lived for many years.

As we know, the 1939 Chess Olympiad in Buenos Aires coincided with the outbreak of World War II. This terrible event saw a considerable number of chess masters staying in Argentina.

In some cases, like Gideon Stahlberg, Savielly Tartakower, Moshe Czerniak, Ludwig Engels etc., it was just a temporary stay, but for some, such as Miguel Najdorf, Paulino Frydman, Erich Eliskases, Paul Michel, Albert Beckert, Enrique Reinhardt and many others, it turned out to be permanent. In such a short list, the gold-medal winning team of Germany, as well as several members of the silver medallists, Poland, are included.

Their presence left a heritage that invigorated the Argentinian chess atmosphere, which by then was already at a high level. Brilliant performances in the Olympiads such as second places in Dubrovnik 1950, Helsinki 1952 and Amsterdam 1954, with third in Munich 1958 and fourth in Moscow 1956, were accompanied by other accomplishments. For example, the sudden appearance of two junior world champions — Oscar Panno and Carlos Bielicki in the 1950s — as well as Argentinian participation in the 1953 and 1956 Candidates tournaments, were some of the fruits of the period.

In that favorable atmosphere, chess clubs such as Jaque Mate, Club Argentino, Club Villa Martelli, Club Vélez Sarsfield, and many others, with excellent masters as coaches, proliferated everywhere. Even several football clubs featured an important chess section: GM Oscar Panno and IM Bernardo Wexler, among others, taught chess at two of the most popular clubs, Boca Juniors and River Plate, while IM Jacobo Bolbochán did the same at Club Jaque Mate.

Miguel Najdorf's presence, displaying his infectious enthusiasm for the game, was another important factor. The influence of Don Miguel, or 'El Viejo' (the Old Man) as he was referred to (even by himself), explains part of the popularity of chess in a country so distant from the game's epicenter.

Amateurs anxiously awaited the blitz tournaments as well as the 'guess the moves' contests. I was particularly attracted by the latter and, most likely together with the impact of a Bent Larsen exercise published in the Argentinian magazine *Ajedrez* in his admirable style, I started the same practice some forty years ago in the now-defunct Argentinian chess magazine, *El Rey* (The King).

It is not far-fetched to assert, as I wrote above, that this book was born — in part — as a result of all those events, and that I consider myself to be very lucky for having lived through such a period in the chess history of Buenos Aires.

I hope you, dear readers, will enjoy reading and 'guessing the moves' in this book as much I did writing it, and that you all learn from it to the best of your ability.

GM Zenón Franco Ocampos
Ponteareas, September 2021

Dedicated to Yudania

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

There are thirty-two games in this book, divided into four chapters:

Chapter 1. Attack

Featuring nine games in which the main theme is the attack on the king.

Chapter 2. Attack and Defense

The nine games in this chapter are devoted to positions where attack, defense and counterattack are the main topics.

Chapter 3. Positional Play/Structures

This chapter contains nine games where the fight centers on positional play and/or typical structures.

Chapter 4. Endings

The main topic in the five games of the final chapter is endgame play.

* * *

It is clear though that the division is just partial, since in chess — as a general rule — themes are interconnected one with another. We, of course, can only see a fraction of the possibilities out there. There is a lot to discover, a plethora of things to learn, and all sorts of improvements to each and every game. Who knows — maybe you will contribute to finding them!

CHAPTER 1

ATTACK

Game 1

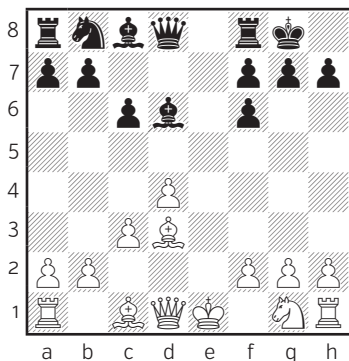
▷ White: You
▶ Black: Master

Caro-Kann Defense [B15]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♗xe4
♘f6 5.♗xf6+ exf6 6.c3

Most usual is 6.♙c4, but White has another idea.

6...♙d6 7.♙d3 o-o



What do you think White's idea is?

8. Your move.

8.♙h5

1 point. Good deduction, since that is the point of the bishop going to d3. White, right from the start, is looking for ways to put his own stamp on the game. Objectively, there is not that much poison contained in the offensive but neither should it be underestimated.

Both 8.♙c2 (**1 point**) and 8.♘e2 (**1 point**) are more common.

8...g6 9.♙h4 c5

Black opts for a strike in the center, in order to develop the knight via c6. There were several possibilities to choose from. Another idea is to try to bring the knight to d5 or e4 followed by a timely ...f5. Vukovic, in *The Art of Attack in Chess*, recommended 9...♘d7 10.♗e2 ♙e7! 11.o-o

f5 12. ♖g3 ♘f6. Also interesting is 9... ♜e8+ 10. ♘e2 b6 followed by ... ♙a6, or directly 9...b6. These are all satisfactory continuations.

10. ♘e2 ♘c6 11. ♙h6 f5

Black does not want to play the obvious 11... ♜e8, although it has no particular downsides.

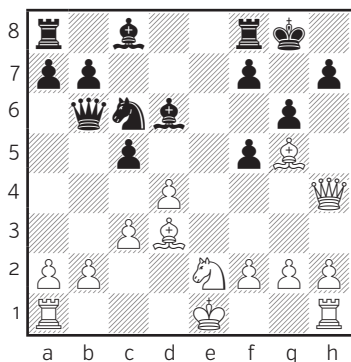
12. Your move.

12. ♙g5!

2 points. After the move ...f5, which weakened Black's king position, White naturally does not consider trading queens, although in that case his superior pawn structure would offer a good position.

12... ♖b6

It is unpleasant to exchange bishops because after 12... ♙e7 13. ♙xe7 ♘xe7 14. 0-0-0 White has harmonious development, a better bishop and a preferable position.



13. 0-0

This leads to an IQP (Isolated Queen Pawn) position which is not that bad for Black, but which also 'insists' on White's initial idea of attacking.

At first sight, 13.dxc5 looks better and to then play b4 if necessary, followed by castling, with a slight advantage for White, but things are not so clear. Why didn't White play that way?

Your move after: 13.dxc5 ♙xc5 14.b4.

Answer:

Black would play 14... ♘e5! and after 15. ♙c2 comes the counterpunch 15... f6! (**3 points**), when after 16. ♙h6? (or inserting 16. ♙b3+ ♙h8) Black takes advantage of the fact that White is not castled with 16... ♙xf2+! 17. ♖xf2+ followed by 18... ♘g4+, while after 16.bxc5 fxc5 17. ♖xh7+ ♙xh7 18.cxb6 axb6 the position is equal.

13... cxd4 14. cxd4

14. ♘f4 is not dangerous due to 14... ♙e6, controlling d5, and after 15. ♘xe6 fxe6 16. ♙c4 ♜ae8 the position offers equal chances.

I suggest you now flip the board and this time play with the black pieces.

14... Your move.

14... ♜e8?!

Black wants to compete in activity, but this move has its drawbacks and collects no points.

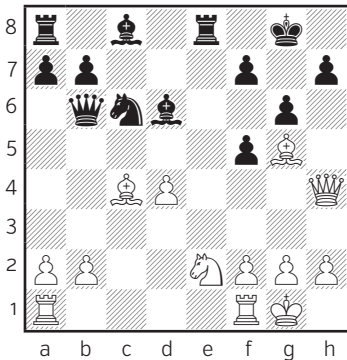
Best was to go for defense and reinforce the position with 14...♖b4! followed by 15.♗c3 ♕e6! stopping ♗d5, or after 15.♕c4 ♕e6 Black controls d5 and achieves a satisfactory position. (3 points).

Also acceptable is 14...♕e6! (2 points), with a sound position, for example 15.♕f6 ♖fe8 16.♗c3 ♗b4 or 15.d5 ♕xd5 16.♕xf5 ♗xb2!, but not 16...gxf5?? 16.♕f6, winning for White.

15. Your move.

15. ♕c4!

2 points. Of course, hitting f7 which was weakened by Black's last move.



15...h5

Practically forced.

In response to a careless move like 15...♕f8? the main threat follows:

16. ♕xf7+! ♖xf7 17. ♗xh7+ ♕g7 18. ♕h6 ♗g8 19. ♗f4 targeting g6, followed by ♗fe1, with a decisive attack.

16. Your move.

16. ♗ae1?

Bringing an inactive piece into the fight. This is an ambitious and risky move, but objectively imprecise as it releases the tension. It therefore gets no points.

16. ♕f6! was very strong (3 points), in order to play 17. ♗g5 ♕xf6 threaten both 18. ♗h6 and 18. ♗xg6+.

16...♕e7? fails due to 17. ♗g5 ♕xf6 18. ♗xg6+, while the resourceful 16...♕e6? 17.d5 ♕xd5 18. ♕xd5 ♖xe2 does not hold because of 19. ♗c4.

However, 19. ♗g5 is not so strong. Why not?

Your move after 19. ♗g5.

Answer:

Because of the simple 19...♗e7! (1 point), reinforcing the defense of g6 and Black lives.

After 16. ♕f6 the most stubborn defense seems to be 16...♗a5, diverting the bishop from the ever-so-annoying diagonal, though after 17. ♕d3 ♕d7 there follows 18.d5! with a clear advantage. Besides the weakness of the black king and the awkward po-

sition of the a5-knight, White practically has a passed pawn advantage.

There is another move leading to an advantage, but it involves trading queens, so in practice it is difficult to consider when there are alternatives. After 16. ♖c3! (1 point) 16... ♙xd4 17. ♙xd4 ♘xd4 18. ♘d5, threatening ♘f6+ with the idea of ♗ad1, Black is punished for being behind in development and after just a few moves material loss is inevitable.

16... ♖e4?!

Black aims at immediate activity. A less aggressive player would have opted for the more cautious 16... ♙d7! since on 17. ♙f6?! (playing for ♙g5) there could follow 17... ♘a5!, expelling the bishop from the a2–g8 diagonal. Now 18. ♙g5? is not possible due to 18... ♘xc4 19. ♙h6 ♙xh2+! winning.

17. Your move.

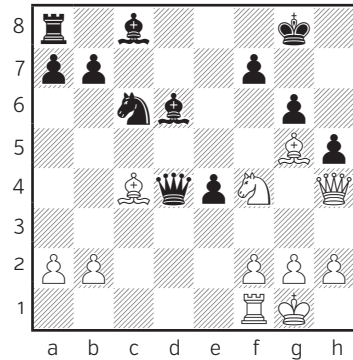
17. ♘f4!

2 points. Of course, threatening 18. ♖xe4 and 19. ♘xg6. The loss of the d4-pawn had been taken into consideration when playing 16. ♖ae1.

17... ♙xd4 18. ♖xe4 fxe4?

Black did not want to enter a somewhat inferior endgame after 18... ♙xe4 19. ♘xg6 ♙xh4 20. ♘xh4 ♙e6, but objectively it was the best course of action.

It is true that not everyone can play the next phase with the same accuracy and forcefulness as the player of the white pieces.



White has sacrificed a central pawn and from now on will need to make several only moves to justify it.

19. Your move.

19. ♘xh5!

4 points. A beautiful strike! There are two white pieces hanging, but White's offensive is unstoppable.

19... ♙gxh5

It is obvious that on 19... ♙xc4? it is mate after 20. ♘f6+.

20. Your move.

20. ♙f6!

2 points. 20... ♙xc4? is met by 21. ♙xh5! and mate follows.

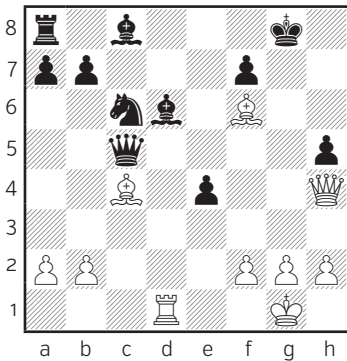
20... ♙c5

Necessary defense of the 5th rank.
How does White now enliven the attack?

21. Your move.

21. ♖d1!

2 points. With the threat of 22. ♖d5.



21... ♔f8

Aiming at escaping with the king.
Let's have a look at some other insufficient defenses.

Your move against 21... ♔e6.

Answer:

There follows 22. ♖d5! (2 points) 22... ♗xc4 (or 22... ♕xd5 23. ♗xh5!) 23. ♗g5+ ♔f8 24. ♖xd6 and a quick mate.

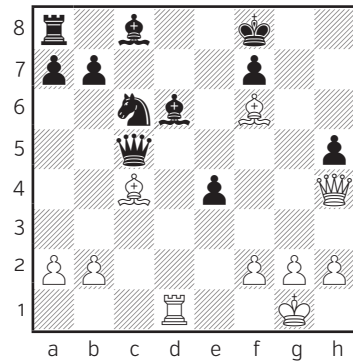
Your move against 21... ♕e7.

Answer:

The same reply follows, 22. ♖d5! (1 point) 22... ♗xc4 (or 22... ♕xf6

23. ♗g3+) 23. ♗g5+ ♔f8 24. ♕xe7+ ♔e8 25. ♕c5 winning.

The most stubborn defense was 21... e3! though unfortunately for Black this would not save the game either as White obtains a big advantage by continuing in similar vein to the game.



White has sacrificed a piece to get this attacking position: Black's king is weak and White has dynamic superiority, which must be used, otherwise Black will complete his development.

22. Your move.

22. b4!!

4 points. A superb move which pinpoints that the black queen is overloaded: it defends both h5 and d6. What about the knight?

What does it defend?

On the contrary, 22. ♖d5 was incorrect (and loses 1 point), but why?

Answer:

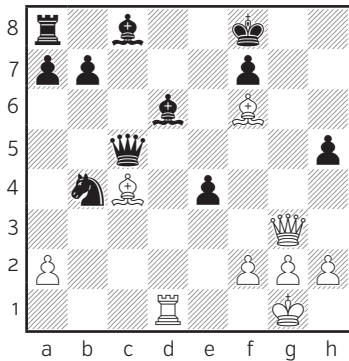
Because 22... ♖xc4! (2 points) is possible, and on 23. ♖xh5 there is the saving resource 23... ♖c1+, when after 24. ♜d1, among others, Black can simplify as follows: 24... ♖xd1+ 25. ♖xd1 ♙e7 and Black defends with a material advantage.

22... ♞xb4

Now on 22... ♖xc4, 23. ♖xh5 wins, for example: 23... ♙e8 24. ♜xd6 ♖c1+ 25. ♜d1.

23. Your move.

23. ♖g3!!



4 points. As this beautiful move shows, the knight was defending the d8-square.

This is the strongest move, but not the only winning one.

Also strong was 23. ♙d4 (2 points) 23... ♖c7 (defending d8) 24. ♖xh5, and now 24... ♖xc4, 25. ♙f6 decides,

while on 24... ♙g4, there is the decisive 25. ♖h8+ ♙e7 26. ♖h4+ ♙e8 (or 26... ♙f8 27. ♙f6!) 27. ♙b5+ ♜c6 28. ♖xg4 with a deadly attack despite being a piece down. 23. ♖xe4 was also good (2 points).

23... ♙g4

Avoiding the threat of 24. ♖g7+. The queen is untouchable due to 24. ♜d8#.

24. ♜xd6 ♞d3

24... ♖xc4 is not better. Why not?

Your move after 24... ♖xc4.

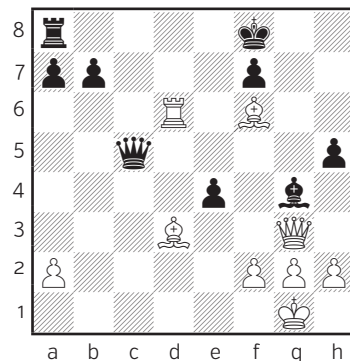
Answer:

The queen infiltrates with 25. ♖e3! (or 25. ♖f4!) 25... ♙e8 26. ♖h6 and mate. (1 point).

Black controls f4 and e3, so how should White continue?

25. Your move.

25. ♙xd3



1 point. Of course, there is no longer a good defense available to Black. Any other move loses **3 points**.

25... ♔c1+

How would you have refuted 25...
exd3?

Answer:

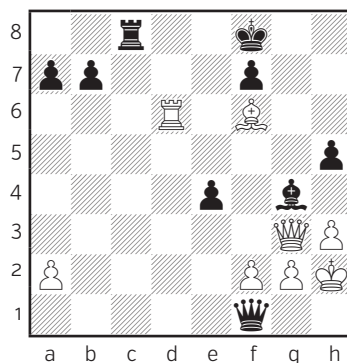
With 26. ♖f4! (**1 point**), defending c1
and winning.

26. ♙f1 ♜c8 **27.** h3 ♚xf1+

28. Your move.

28. ♔h2!

1 point. But not 28. ♔xf1?? ♜c1+
29. ♜d1 ♜xd1#.



28... ♔c1

The rook cannot join the attack with
28... ♜c1 due to 29. ♜d8# and the bish-
op cannot move due to 29. ♚g7+ and
mate.

29. hxg4 **30.** ♚xg4 ♚h6+ **31.** ♔g3
♜c3+ **32.** f3 1-0

Herman Pilnik–Miguel Najdorf, Mar
del Plata, 23.03.1942

SOME LESSONS FROM THE GAME*

* Italics indicate that the move belongs to a line and not to the actual game.

1. Which pieces to exchange? Which ones to keep? These are questions to be properly answered at several moments of any game: **12. ♕g5!**
2. Determining if it is time to bring more pieces into action or if more concrete measures should be taken is an aspect which can tip the balance one way or the other. **14... ♖e8? 14... ♗b4! 16. ♖ae1? 16. ♕f6!**
3. After sacrificing material, accuracy and speed are essential for a successful attack: **17. ♗f4! 19. ♗xh5! 21. ♖d1! 22. b4!! 23. ♔g3!!**
4. Always be alert, even when you are winning. Never relax: **28. ♔h2!**

MAXIMUM SCORE: 42 POINTS

- ◆ More than 38 points: Super Grandmaster.
- ◆ Between 35 and 38 points: Grandmaster.
- ◆ Between 30 and 34 points: International Master.
- ◆ Between 24 and 29 points: Master.
- ◆ Between 17 and 23 points: You found some important moves.
- ◆ Between 8 and 16 points: Isn't it admirable how Grandmaster Herman Pilnik attacked?