

Key Concepts in Chess 1

The Hedgehog

Herman Grooten

First edition 2021 by Thinkers Publishing
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All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

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Photos: Frans Peeters and Jos Sutmuller

Production: BESTinGraphics

ISBN: 9789464201253

D/2020/13730/42

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www.thinkerspublishing.com

Symbols used:

!	strong move	±	White has a clear advantage
?	weak move	∓	Black has a clear advantage
!!	brilliant move	+ -	White has a decisive advantage
??	blunder	- +	Black has a decisive advantage
!?	interesting move	→	with an attack
?!	dubious move	↑	with the initiative
□	only move	↔	with counterplay
=	equal position	Δ	with the idea of...
∞	unclear position	∩	better is...
∞̄	compensation for lost material	N	novelty
±	White is slightly better	#	checkmate
∓	Black is slightly better	+	check

Next to most diagrams you will find a small box. The colour of the box indicates which side is to move in that position.

Bibliography

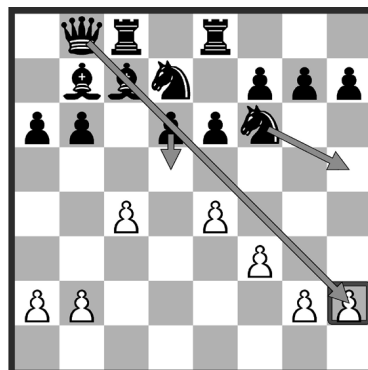
Megadatabase
Schach für Igel

– Chessbase
– Magnus Georg Grabitz

Explanation of visual aids






In this book we will regularly make use of various types of visual aids. As a chess coach I have observed the impact that these can have on students' understanding.

This means that my diagrams will feature arrows (to indicate the specific manoeuvres that one or both sides would like to execute) as well as highlighted squares or pieces which are the ones being targeted in a more general sense.



Our software developer Hub van de Laar has found ways to illustrate the visual aids in the book so that the positions can be understood at a glance. In the diagram above we can immediately see what Black's intentions are, as well as the weapons that are present in his arsenal. The position shows us one of the "standard concepts" of the hedgehog.

We will not be using letters to denote chess pieces (as these might not be familiar to non-native English speakers) but rather the 'figurine' symbols, as follows:

Chess piece	Letter	Figurine
King	K	
Queen	Q	
Rook	R	
Bishop	B	
Knight	N	
Pawn	–	–

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Foreword

A new series? Absolutely! The idea for this came while writing the books in my other series 'Understanding before Moving' at Thinkers Publishing. This series covers the backgrounds of openings. In order to discuss the ideas of certain opening variations, I couldn't help but explain the plans and concepts of certain middlegame situations in relation to their typical pawn structures. Before you know it, you're already going pretty deep into the stereotypical maneuvers that go with those middle games. Since the books are primarily about the opening itself, I was limited to only giving basic explanations. Somehow this grated on me- if, for example, a position with an 'isolated pawn' or the so-called 'hanging pawns' had arisen, why couldn't I say much more about it? What about the exchange sacrifice on c3 in the Sicilian, wasn't the explanation in the discussion of the compensation of this exchange sacrifice too brief? And so, as I was writing, more cases came to mind in which I thought: am I not doing the reader an injustice by not recording what I know?

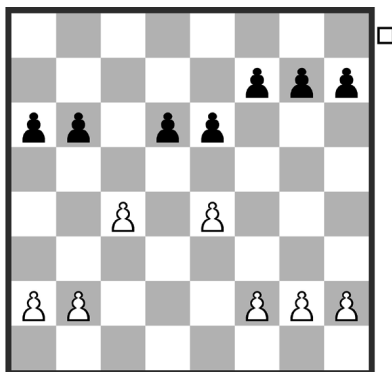
I decided to make a list of middlegame topics that I came across in the books on openings that perhaps could be better, or at least elaborated further on. As a chess trainer, I was always constructing teaching material on the middle game. This was initially intended for the top youth in the Netherlands, whom I often took under my wing. Given the high level of many of these youth players, I had to look for striking, well crystallized examples and corresponding processing. On the one hand these were tactical assignments, strategic tasks, blind exercises; on the other, positions that they could play out among themselves or in a simultaneous game against the trainer, after which the game fragments were analyzed together. Later my activities shifted more and more to the growing group of club chess players who also needed chess training. In the past forty odd years I have developed training materials on several levels that may be of interest to club level players worldwide.

That is why I decided to put these kinds of topics into book form as well. Although some of these topics have also been the subject of books, I hope to add value with a clear structure and a sophisticated selection of instructive examples.

The subject of this first book is the hedgehog system. This is for two reasons. When I was working on my book 'Understanding before Moving' Volume 3- Part 2, the Taimanov, Kan & Richter Rauzer, I could not avoid also cobbling together a separate Chapter on the hedgehog System.

Because of the length of the chapter and in order not to lapse into lengthy explanations I limited myself to what was purely necessary. However, because of that, certain elements were left out.

The second reason for putting this book together is that the hedgehog system is special to me. After my first introduction, I immediately became "hooked" on this trench work. Attempting a breakout at an unexpected moment after hiding patiently on your first three ranks appealed to me. What I did not get around to with the 'Sicilian Hedgehog', of course, are the positions that arise from various other openings, including the flank openings and variants from, for example, the Queen's Indian and the Nimzo Indian.



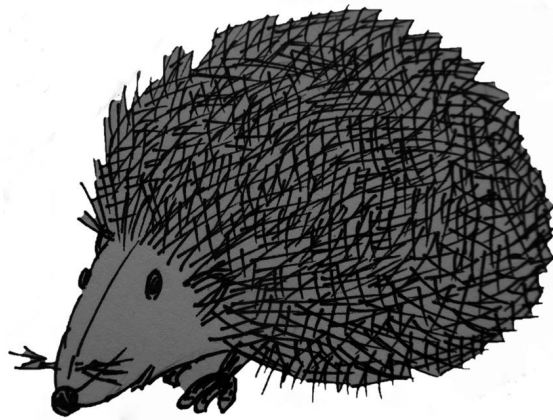
The strongest players in the world have the hedgehog in their repertoire simply because the underlying tensions in the position are ideally suited to playing black for a win.

It remains for me to thank Daniel Fernandez for the translation. I'm also grateful to Jos Sutmuller for editing all the photo material and for the correction work. And Daniël Vanheirzeele who helped me with proofreading the book. I hope that the reader will enjoy working through this book as much as I have enjoyed putting it together!

Herman Grooten, Eindhoven juli 2021.



Chapter 1



**Learn from the
Hedgehog Classics**

1.1 Introduction

As a player I have benefited a lot from playing through classic games from grandmasters. I did this not only because I enjoyed doing it, but also because I was curious about the ideas and concepts that the titans of our game had created. For practicality, at some point I started to focus on those games played in opening lines that interested me, enabling me to kill two birds with one stone: opening study alongside general strategy. This relates, naturally, to the principle I had in mind while writing my other series of books, *"Understanding before Moving"*. If you understand the underlying mechanics of a position, it is much easier to find good plans in a game. Each game is different, but the ideas and concepts serve as a useful mental compass to the concrete details one needs to calculate. I said my focus was on games played by top players that related to my own repertoire and, fortunately, it was not an exclusive focus. Some games make such an indelible mark on the chess canon that they simply must be analysed. Another group of games that is worth analysing is that of your personal chess 'heroes'.

For me, while growing up, I wanted to analyse every game of my compatriot Jan Timman because his style left a special impression on me. I always thought it was amazing to see how Jan (later the world's #2 player!) could completely annihilate someone purely on the basis of pawn structures. When he had a better structure, 'by magic' his pieces would appear on good squares, and those of his opponent would lack good squares, creating the illusion of an effortless win. In the shadow of Timman, many Dutch players of later generations tried to master this same "Timman style".

Likewise, I was always very impressed with the on-board achievements of world champion Bobby Fischer (though in other areas of life, he unfortunately marred his reputation and legacy.) When you play through his earlier games, the feeling of inspiration is but slightly dimmed from what it would have been, watching him in the flesh 50 years ago. These are two of the players from whom practically every game is worth analysing for me. It is from this group of players that I have assembled a special collection of Hedgehog 'classics' with which to open the book. I hope you enjoy replaying them as much as I did analysing them.

1.2 Bobby Fischer

That Robert James Fischer (better known as Bobby Fischer) was far ahead of his time, is almost beyond dispute. By replaying his games, one is inevitably left with a sense of the clarity of strategic thought that he possessed, and the ability to execute the logical consequences of his plans, by means of spectacular combinations if necessary. In fact, almost every one of his wins is in some sense a classic masterpiece that deserves wide study and contains instructive themes. Out of all the chess titans, Fischer had a special knack for making the game



look easy. In our case, I chose to open this book with a true work of art from Fischer. Over the board, Fischer found a concept that at first sight seemed completely illogical, but as it unfolded a form of deeper logic began to manifest. Top modern players still use the plan that he demonstrated in this game against Ulf Andersson. Perhaps this game was even an inspiration for the Swedish grandmaster to study the Hedgehog system later in his career, and to include it in his own repertoire (as we shall see in a couple of games' time.)

♁ Fischer, Robert James

♚ Andersson, Ulf

🌐 Siegen exhibition 1970

8. ♘c3 ♖d6 9. ♘f3 ♙f5 10. ♖c2 ♜fd8
[10... ♜ad8!?] 11. ♜d1 h6 12. h3 ♖e6 13.
♘d2 ♘d7 14. ♙e2 to a somewhat un-
clear position. Fischer – Tukmakov, 1970
14... ♖g6!∞

1. b3 e5 2. ♙b2 ♘c6 3. c4 ♘f6 4. e3
♙e7 5. a3 0-0 6. ♖c2

6... ♜e8 7. d3

In one earlier game Fischer had played 6.
d3, which led after 6... d5 7. cxd5 ♖xd5

Also interesting here is 7. b4!?

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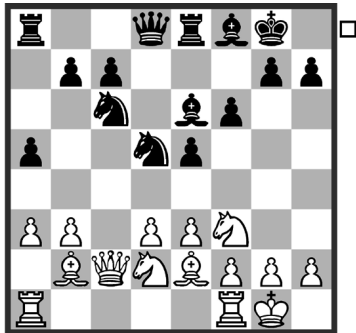
7... ♖f8 8. ♗f3 a5

It's possible to keep play within pure English territory with 8... g6 but Black is a few tempi down on the normal versions.

9. ♕e2 d5?!

Andersson coerces a kind of Scheveningen position with reversed colours, which doesn't seem like the right path here.

10. cxd5 ♗xd5 11. ♗bd2 f6 12. 0-0 ♕e6



Position after: 12... ♕e6

In this thematic position (which normally occurs, with reversed colours, from the Scheveningen variation of the Sicilian) it's high time both sides came up with a plan. Common plans for White are to try and get a knight to c5 (♗d2-e4-c5), or to arrange the freeing push d3-d4.

13. ♔h1!!

The first exclamation mark is for the move's actual quality, and the second is for the original insight and plan behind it. Fischer was before his time in this regard: the idea he contributed here is nowadays commonly emulated by grandmasters.

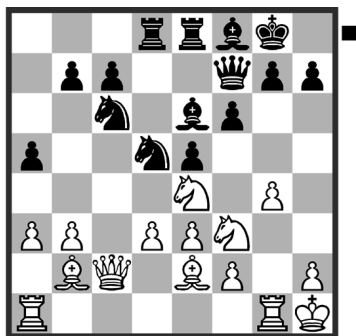
Also possible was 13. d4 exd4 14. ♗xd4 ♗xd4 15. ♕xd4 and now 15... c6 restricts White's advantage to very manageable proportions. [It seems possible to reply in maximalist fashion with 15... ♗f4?! but the move seems somewhat wasted if White plays simply 16. ♕f3 c6 17. ♗c4.]

13... ♔d7 14. ♖g1

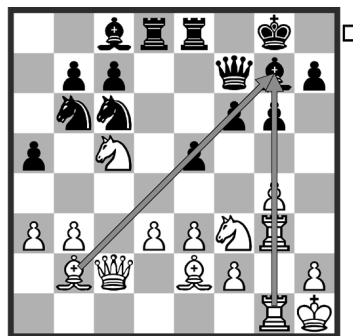
This was the intention behind White's previous move. White is trying to push g2-g4 and gain space on the kingside, keeping in mind a medium-term end of an attack on the opposing king. The first objection to this plan might be that in executing it, White would also expose his own king. But Fischer shows his class with the insight that by posting a knight at e4 as well as pushing the g-pawn, he can avoid almost all problems to do with his own king position.

14... ♖ad8 15. ♗e4 ♔f7 16. g4

White has finished the initial stage of his plan.



Position after: 16. g4



Position after: 19... ♖c8

16... g6?

In light of the game continuation, I unfortunately have to award this move a question mark. White's b2-bishop was biting on the granite of the e5/f6/ g7 pawn chain and a key component of his plan was g5xf6 to reduce the chain to a slightly less solid two pawns (while opening the g-file.) However, after Black's last move a future g4-g5 could easily (and soon does!) turn the pawn chain to rubble. Then the b2-bishop will reign supreme.

17. ♖g3

Doubling rooks on the g-file is a logical part of the general plan to bring more pieces to the kingside.

17... ♕g7 18. ♖ag1 ♘b6 19. ♘c5 ♕c8

Since Black's light-squared bishop must now defend the b7-pawn, he will almost

never get a chance to trade it for a knight. But how can White make any progress?

20. ♘h4!

According to the plan. The knight jumps into f5!

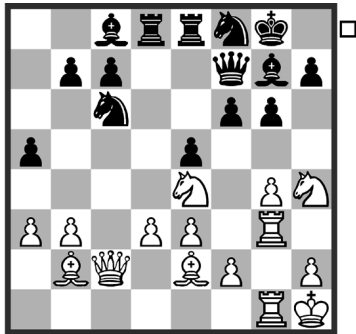
20... ♘d7?!

This move is poor but understandable: Black wanted to chase the powerful c5-knight away and re-route his own b6-knight, otherwise bereft of any useful occupation, to the defence of the kingside.

An objectively better move seems to be 20... ♔h8!? but while the king now no longer stands on the g-file, it has of course moved onto the long diagonal...

21. ♘e4 ♘f8

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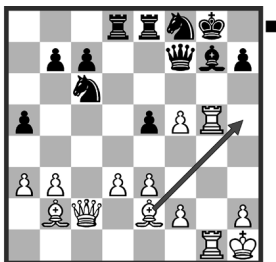
Position after: 21... Nf8

22. Nf5!

A pseudo-sacrifice that White had clearly intended and telegraphed, but of course it still has to be calculated.

22... Qe6

A) After 22... Qxf5 23. gxf5 g5 Fischer had 24. Nxg5 up his sleeve: 24... fxg5 25. Bxg5+–



Position after: 25. Bxg5+–

with numerous threats and the inevitable regaining (with interest!) of all the sacrificed material.

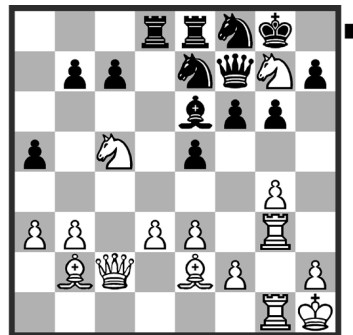
B) Meanwhile 22... gxf5 is met by: 23. gxf5 Qxf5 [23... Qh8 doesn't help either:

24. Bxg7 Qxg7 25. Bxg7 Qxg7 and now 26. Ng3, intending some combination of Nh5+ and f2-f4, is close to decisive.] 24. Bxg7+ Qxg7 25. Nxf6+! A nice in-between move. 25... Qf7 26. Bxg7+ Qxg7 27. Nxe8+ Bxe8 White has a decisive material advantage.

23. Nc5 Qe7?!

Possibly Black had to return with the bishop. 23... Qc8!?

24. Nxg7



Position after: 24. Nxg7

This trade is foundational to White's above-mentioned plan of clearing the long diagonal for his dark-squared bishop.

24... Qxg7 25. g5!

And this is the moment we've been waiting for, when the b2-bishop gets transformed into a monster.

25... Nf5

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25... fxg5 26. ♖f3 ♘f5 [A nice winning line is 26... ♗g8 27. ♙xe5+ ♚h6 28. ♗b2! White's threat is ♘xe6, (♙g7+) and ♖h3 with mate, and 28... ♙c8 is convincingly met by 29. h4!+-] 27. e4 White wins a piece.

26. ♖f3

Even stronger was the immediate 26. gxf6+.

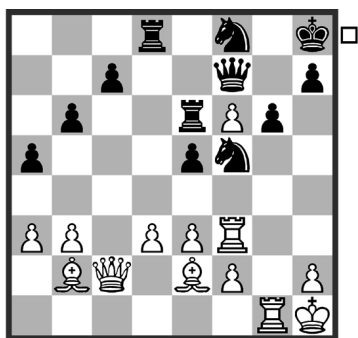
26... b6 27. gxf6+ ♚h8

27... ♗xf6 28. ♘e4+- wins.

28. ♘e6

Swapping off the second Black bishop, so that White's bishop pair can come into its own.

28... ♖xe6



Position after: 28... ♖xe6

29. d4!

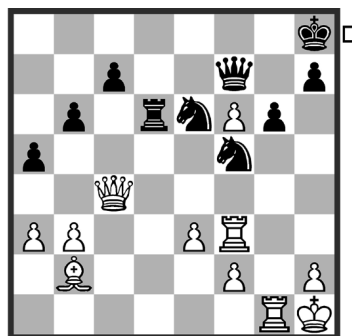
The idea of ♙c4 can't be stopped.

29... exd4 30. ♙c4 d3 31. ♙xd3 ♖xd3

Black has to give up the exchange, albeit he has chosen a different way of doing so.

After 31... ♖ed6 32. ♙c4! [Also winning is 32. ♙xf5!] 32... ♖d2 White has the elegant knockout 33. ♗xf5! gxf5 34. ♙xf7

32. ♗xd3 ♖d6 33. ♗c4 ♘e6



Position after: 33... ♘e6

34. ♙e5

A tranquil and no-nonsense choice.

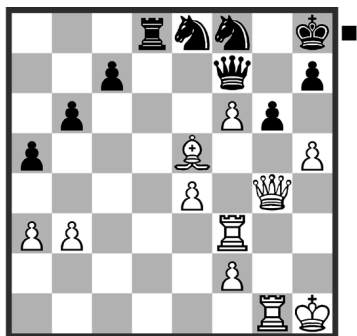
Had Fischer looked harder he'd probably have found the instantly terminal blow 34. ♖xf5! : after 34... gxf5 35. ♖g7! ♗f8 [35... ♗h5 36. f7 ♗f3+ 37. ♖g2+-] 36. ♗c2! there is no defence to be found against the threats on the long diagonal. For instance 36... ♖d5 37. ♖g1 ♗f7 38. ♗c6+- and White threatens ♗e8, ♗xe6 and let's not forget the rook itself.

34... ♖d8 35. h4

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35. ♖xf5 also wins, but there's nothing wrong with Fischer's choice.

35... ♘d6 36. ♔g4 ♘f8 37. h5 ♘e8 38. e4



Position after: 38. e4

38... ♖d2

A picturesque mate occurs in the line 38... gxf5 39. ♔g8+ ♖xg8 40. ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 41. f7#.

39. ♖h3 ♔g8 40. hxg6 ♘xg6 41. f4 ♔f8 42. ♔g5 ♘d6 43. ♔xd6+

And here Andersson gave up the ghost.

After 43. ♔xd6+ ♖xd6 44. f5 he would lose even more material.

1-0

1.2 Julian Hodgson

The English grandmaster Julian Hodgson is a former prodigy and one of the most talented players that the UK ever produced, winning the national championships four times and representing England a couple of times at Olympiads. Hodgson has now left the competitive circuit, but during his career he was especially known for the depth of his original ideas, his well thought-out concepts and his penchant for whimsical or spectacular finishes. I know Julian myself from a number of different



Julian Hodgson (photo by Jos Suttmuller)

tournaments on the European circuit. His post-mortems were often a delight to behold, not least because of his ability to see rich and exotic 'fantasy variations' and share these with the spectators. His sense of humour was typically British and ice-cold. In victory as in defeat Hodgson was a true lover of our beautiful game, and merely being on the receiving end of a masterpiece would not dull his appreciation for its inspirational and aesthetic merit. He wrote two books: *Attack with Julian Hodgson* (Vols. 1 and 2) which can still be seen on my bookshelf, and in which he