



FRED REINFELD CHESS CLASSICS Bruce Alberston, General Editor

How TO
BE A WINNER
AT
CHESS

Fred Reinfeld

Foreword by Bruce Pandolfini

21st Century Edition



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Bruce Alberston, General Editor

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Chapter Two

Don't Give Up the Ship!

Resigning

As you've just seen, checkmate is the objective in every game of chess. This doesn't mean, however, that every won game winds up with checkmate. Very often a player "resigns" – concedes his opponent's victory before checkmate actually takes place.

Now why in the world, you may wonder, should a player surrender before he is actually beaten? What kind of position does he have that makes him feel his "resignation" is in order?

A player resigns when he feels his position is hopeless.

Our next diagram (page 21) is a good example. Black resigns because he cannot avoid checkmate on the very next move. Some players feel they have to "save face" by resigning instead of submitting to checkmate.

The other main reason for resigning is a crushing loss of material. In an upcoming diagram Black loses his queen, by far the most powerful piece on the board. There is no hope for him now, and no fun in dragging out the game.

When to resign

There are some quirks to resigning that you need to know about. Some players are very stubborn and play on long after all hope is gone. Thus they waste their opponent's time and their own.

Others are all too faint-hearted and resign too readily. This is just as great a fault.

Of course there is a golden mean between these two extremes. It is pointless to resign too quickly. No general ever won a battle by surrendering, and no chess player ever won a game by resigning.

I once saw Reuben Fine, one of the world's greatest players resign a very important match game because he thought that checkmate was unavoidable.

He was wrong! As soon as the game was over, he was shown a perfectly adequate defense that would have saved his position from defeat. But it was too late – he'd already resigned. The game was over.

When it comes to resigning, then, don't be too sure that the situation is hopeless. A bit of skepticism, a bit of "I'm from Missouri" is in order. Maybe you don't see all there is in the position. Maybe you give your opponent too much credit.

On that score, here's a useful point to keep in mind: *If your opponent is a much better player than you are*, a hopeless position is really hopeless.

But suppose the two of you are about equally matched. Suppose, you're much the better player? What then?

Don't Give Up the Ship!

When not to resign

If you and your opponent are about equally matched, a hopeless position may not be so hopeless, after all!

Does your opponent have weak spots in his play? Is he prone to overconfidence or carelessness in winning positions? Perhaps he scares easily, so that a sham threat on your part may throw him off balance.

On the other hand, *if your opponent is much weaker than you*, then even a serious oversight on your part may not justify your resigning the game. Why give him credit for a degree of ability he hasn't demonstrated in the past?

Loss of the queen – which is fatal against a *good* player – may be quite bearable against a duffer. This is a principle which I learned the hard way.

When I was about fourteen years old I often used to play in the ten-second tournaments at the Marshall Chess Club. (In such events the rule is that you can take no more than ten seconds on any move!)

Very often I would be required to give queen odds – that is, start the game with my queen removed from the board – against dignified, elderly opponents who had been playing chess before I was born.

I was always appalled to have to spot these players such an enormous handicap. The fact was, though, that they were not very good players. They had no notion of how to exploit their overwhelming material advantage.

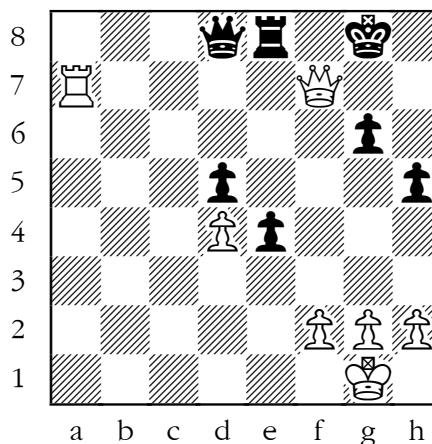
After a few moves they would overlook the loss of a piece. Naturally I would capture it and feel a bit relieved. Then another oversight – I'd be almost even in material. Then still another blunder, and I'd actually be ahead.

This process happens time and again when we blunder away an important piece against a very weak player. Keep on playing, and you will regain the lost material with interest.

Ripe for resigning

Now let's see two situations where resignation is called for: (D)

Black to play



Black is in check by White's queen. His king cannot capture the white queen, as she is guarded by White's rook. Black, in fact, has only one move: ...king to h8 (...Kh8). But in this case White forces checkmate by queen to h7 (Qh7) or queen to g7 (Qg7).

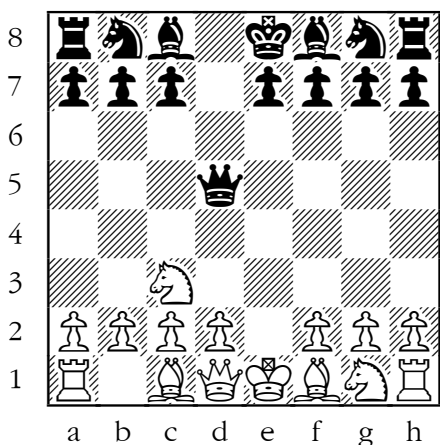
All this, you see, is absolutely forced. Black has no way to avoid checkmate. If he is matched with a strong opponent, resignation is in order.

If White were a weak player, Black

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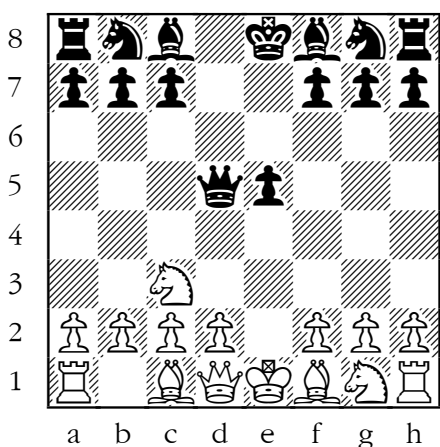
might just as well try ...king to h8 (...Kh8). The chance that White will miss the checkmate is a microscopically small one, but it can be tried.

In the next diagram it is Black's move. Note that his queen is attacked: (D)



White has played out a knight to attack Black's queen. Black should of course move his queen out of harm's way. Instead, overlooking the attack on his queen, he plays ...pawn to e5?? (D)

After 3...e7-e5??



As you've probably guessed, those question marks tell us that Black has just played a very bad move. White naturally captures the black queen with his knight, (Nxd5), remaining with an overwhelming material advantage.

The game has gone only four moves, and Black is a queen down! Not much point in playing out this one.

By now you probably realize that to enforce checkmate or bring about your opponent's resignation, you will generally have to be considerably ahead in material.

You must therefore be familiar with the values of the different pieces *in relation to each other*. What those values are, and why they are important, will be shown in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, remember these rules about resigning:

Hold out against weak players!

Don't delay unduly in resigning a hopeless game against a good player!