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# How to Play Chess: Lessons from an International Master

Course Guidebook

Jeremy Silman  
International Master



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## Jeremy Silman

International Master

Jeremy Silman is an International Master and a world-class chess teacher, writer, and player who has won the U.S. Open (1981), the National Open (1990), and the American Open (1992).

Considered by many to be the game's preeminent instructive writer, Mr. Silman is the author or coauthor of 39 books, including *How to Reassess Your Chess: Chess Mastery through Chess Imbalances* (winner of the Guardian Chess Book of the Year award), *Silman's Complete Endgame Course: From Beginner to Master* (winner of the ChessCafe.com Book of the Year award), and *Pal Benko: My Life, Games and Compositions* (the only chess book to have won all three of the major chess book awards). He also has served as a chess consultant for television shows (*Monk*, *Malcolm in the Middle*, *Criminal Minds*, and HBO's *Arliss*) and movies (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* and *Pawn Sacrifice*).

Other writings include content for websites; a screenplay that was optioned by LMK Productions; a novel entitled *Autobiography of a Goat*; and hundreds of articles for a variety of chess magazines, including *Chess Life*, the Dutch magazine *New in Chess*, the *British Chess Magazine*, *Chess Chow*, and many more.

Mr. Silman also has lectured and given simultaneous exhibitions in Tokyo, Japan. His chess career has taken him to all of western and eastern Europe, Brazil, Argentina, India, China, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, New Zealand, and all over the United States (including Alaska), Canada, and Mexico.

Mr. Silman's chess website ([www.jeremysilman.com](http://www.jeremysilman.com)) offers reviews that take an honest look at many of the significant chess books from the past and bring much-needed guidance to the avalanche of new books coming out every month. ■

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# How to Play Chess: Lessons from an International Master

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## Scope:

Games are supposed to be fun, and chess has delighted players and fans for 1500 years. The game is easily accessible to people of all ages, is easy to learn, and promises a lifetime of pleasure. But chess goes beyond mere fun. Studies have shown that playing chess improves concentration and study habits and keeps older minds sharp, while an appreciation of chess culture offers further layers of enjoyment.

This course is designed to take you from a complete beginner to being ready for an entry-level tournament. Lessons 1 and 2 teach you the pieces' movements and history, the correct way to set up the board, point count, and the now-standard algebraic system of chess notation. Lesson 3 explains important chess miscellany, such as castling, checkmate versus stalemate, how to offer a draw, the proper way to resign, touch move, the chess clock, simultaneous exhibitions, chess computers, and even blindfold chess.

Tactics and attack are explored in great detail in lessons 4–10, with basic concepts like pins, forks, double attack, calculation, combinations, and sacrifice. More colorful mating patterns—Legall's mate, Blackburne's mate, Boden's mate, Morphy's mate, Anastasia's mate, Reti's mate—illustrate other ways to drag down an enemy King.

The concept of attack is further highlighted by a series of short-but-brutal games and by a study of the history and masterpieces of some of the greatest search-and-destroy players: Paul Morphy, Alexander Alekhine, Mikhail Tal, Garry Kasparov, Joseph Henry Blackburne, Adolf Anderssen, and Baron Ignatz von Kolisch. The tactics-and-attack theme ends with something that seems more fantasy than reality: the creation of the Turk, the world's first chess automaton, in 1769.

Although endless online experts claim that chess is 99% tactics, the truth is that a real understanding of the game calls for balance between tactical blows (which often don't exist) and the subtle (yet ubiquitous) strategic buildups of positional chess. Most tactics only occur from a strategically superior position, which means that one can't prosper without the other. Lessons 11–17 strive to give you the tools that will create this much-needed balance.

Lesson 11, which is all about the positional use of the Rooks, covers the creation and domination of open files (the roads that Rooks need to enter the enemy position), doubled Rooks, placing Rooks on the seventh rank, and placing 2 Rooks on the seventh rank (known as pigs on the seventh).

Lessons 12 and 13 are all about pawns, which François-André Danican Philidor considered to be the “soul of chess.” The study of the pawn structure and the chess skeleton (the framework of everything your position is and can be) is perhaps the most profound and important concept in chess. Other pawn patterns include the big center as a fence, the big center as a target, pawn chain, passed pawn, blockading a passed pawn, weak squares (holes), backward pawns, isolated pawns, doubled pawns, and even tripled pawns.

Lessons 14 and 15 cover closed and open positions, development of your pieces (and how to punish a lack of development), how closed and open positions affect Bishops and Knights, and the eternal battle of statics (long term) versus dynamics (short term).

In lesson 16, you'll learn how to use imbalances to create plans, manipulate the pawn structure, and incorporate all the things you've learned in the previous lessons into one universal method of thought.

Your positional studies end in lesson 17, in which you will study the history and games of 4 legendary chess teachers who changed how the game was played: François-André Danican Philidor (the man who loved pawns), Wilhelm Steinitz (the father of modern chess), Siegbert Tarrasch (who honed Steinitz's concepts), and Aron Nimzowitsch (who championed the hypermodern school of chess).



Lessons 18–20 address a subject that many players try to avoid: the endgame. Things are kept simple to ensure that you learn some must-know basics that will serve you for as long as you play chess. The material covers overkill mates (2 Queens versus the lone enemy King, King and Rook versus the lone enemy King, etc.), opposition and distant opposition (you can't play King-and-pawn endgames if you don't understand the opposition), King and pawn versus lone King, and King and 2 pawns versus lone King. Your endgame study ends with the 2 most important Rook endgames in chess: the Lucena position and the Philidor position.

Lesson 21 gives you advice about the creation of an opening repertoire. Lesson 22 is all about chess psychology. Lesson 23 takes you on a journey through the amateur's mind—how to notice typical amateur failings and how to fix them.

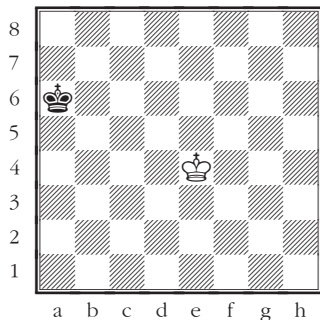
In the concluding lesson of the course, the recommendation is that you choose 1 or more chess heroes. You should look at their history, study their games, and follow their successes and failures. Carefully looking at master games will give you insight into every aspect of chess, and it will help you improve at a rapid rate.

There are many reasons for taking up chess, whether it is for fun, health, improved educational skills, or the game's history—or even to become a true citizen of the world, thanks to the game's international footprint. These lessons, a chessboard and pieces, and some experience are all you need to become a strong, well-versed player. ■

## How the Pieces Move

**King**   
infinite value

The King can move 1 square in any direction.



*Find the squares both Kings can move to*

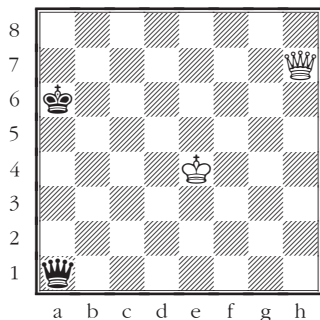
White's King can move to f3, f4, f5, e3, e5, d3, d4, and d5—a total of 8 squares.

Black's King can move to a7, a5, b7, b6, and b5—a total of 5 squares.

## Queen

9 points

The Queen is the strongest piece on the board. It can move as far as it wishes (until another piece, friend or foe, gets in its way) on diagonals, ranks, and files.



*Find the squares both Queens can move to*

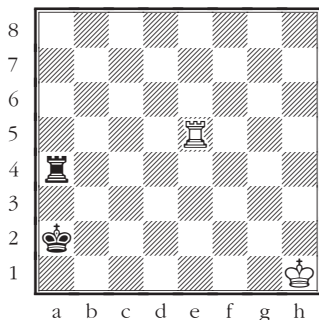
White's Queen can move to all the squares along the h-file, all the squares along the seventh rank, g8, g6, and f5—a total of 17 squares. Note that White's Queen couldn't move to e4 (you can't take your own pieces) or any diagonal squares past White's King.

Black's Queen can move to all the squares along the first rank, the a1-h8 diagonal, a2, a3, a4, and a5—a total of 18 squares. Note that Black's Queen couldn't move to a6 (you can't take your own pieces) or any a-file squares past Black's King.

## Rook ♖

5 points

Rooks are the masters of files and ranks. A Rook can move as far as it wants (until another piece, friend or foe, gets in its way) on files and ranks.



*Find the squares both Rooks can move to*

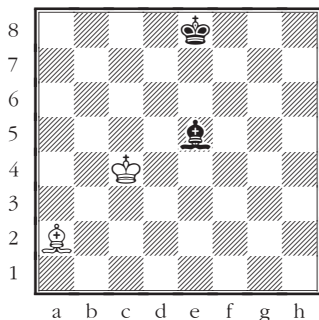
White's Rook can move to all the squares along the fifth rank and the e-file—a total of 14 squares.

Black's Rook can move to all the squares along the fourth rank and all the squares on the a-file from a8 to a3—a total of 12 squares.

## Bishop ♖

3 points

Bishops are the masters of diagonals. A Bishop can move as far as it wants (until another piece, friend or foe, gets in its way) on any diagonal.



*Find the squares both Bishops can move to*

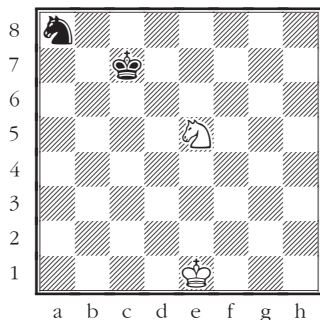
White's Bishop can only move to 2 squares: b1 and b3.

Black's Bishop can move to all the squares on the h2-b8 diagonal and all the squares along the a1-h8 diagonal—a total of 13 squares.

## Knight

3 points

Knights have the strangest move. A Knight moves 2 squares on a file and then 1 square on the nearest rank, or 2 squares on a rank and then 1 square on the nearest file.



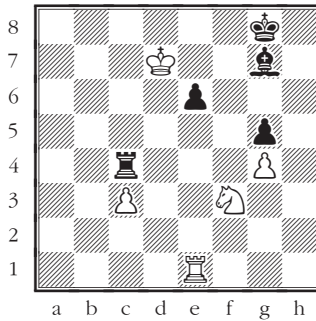
*Find the squares both Knights can move to*

White's Knight can only move to f3, d3, c4, c6, d7, f7, g6, and g4—a total of 8 squares.

Black's Knight can only move to 1 square: b6.

**All of these pieces can move forward or backward or to the sides.**

**All of these pieces capture in the same manner: You remove the piece you wish to take and place your piece on that square.**



*Which pieces can be captured?*

White's King can capture Black's e6-pawn (Kxe6).

White's Rook can capture Black's e6-pawn (Rxe6).

White's Knight can capture Black's g5-pawn (Nxc3).

Black's King can't capture anything.

Black's Rook can capture the c3-pawn (...Rxc3) or the g4-pawn (...Rxc4).

Black's Bishop can capture the c3-pawn (...Bxc3).

## Pawn ♟

1 point

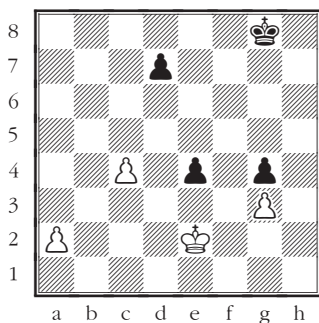
Pawns are the weakest units on the board. They can only move 1 square at a time, straight ahead.

### Pawn Exceptions

If a pawn has never been moved (it's still on its original starting square), then you can make use of the 2-move option: You have the option of moving it 1 square or 2 squares, straight ahead. However, once you move that pawn (1 square or 2 squares), you can only move it 1 ahead from then on.

Pawns *can't* capture straight ahead; they only capture on a diagonal.

When a pawn reaches the end of the board, it must turn into another piece. You can choose among a Queen, Rook, Bishop, or Knight. Of course, the vast majority of players choose the Queen.



*Where can the White pawns move to?*



White's c4-pawn can only move to c5. White's g3-pawn can't move at all because it's blocked by Black's g4-pawn. If White's c-pawn marches to c6 (after c4-c5-c6), Black's d7-pawn can capture it by ...dxc6. However, White's a2-pawn doesn't have anything in front of it or to the side of it. So, it can march all the way to the end of the board and turn into a Queen after a2-a4 (using the 2-move option), a5, a6, a7, and a8=Q.

# Algebraic Notation

BLACK

8	a8	b8	c8	d8	e8	f8	g8	h8
7	a7	b7	c7	d7	e7	f7	g7	h7
6	a6	b6	c6	d6	e6	f6	g6	h6
5	a5	b5	c5	d5	e5	f5	g5	h5
4	a4	b4	c4	d4	e4	f4	g4	h4
3	a3	b3	c3	d3	e3	f3	g3	h3
2	a2	b2	c2	d2	e2	f2	g2	h2
1	a1	b1	c1	d1	e1	f1	g1	h1
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h

WHITE

## Piece Initials

- K = King
- Q = Queen
- N = Knight
- B = Bishop
- R = Rook

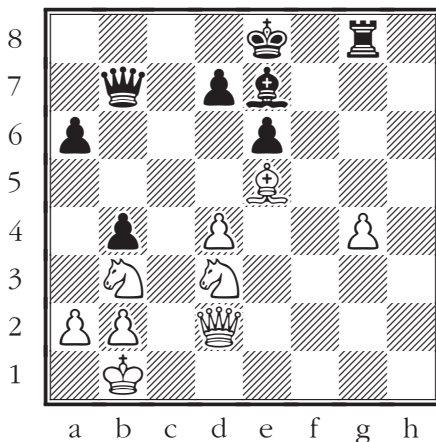
A pawn move has no initial. Just give the name of the square.

## Extra Symbols

If you wish, you can add certain symbols at the end of your written move. However, it's not something you have to do.

- ! = good move
- !! = brilliant move
- !? = interesting move
- ? = bad move
- ?? = blunder
- ?! = dubious move
- + = check
- e.p. = en passant
- x = a capture

## Writing Down the Moves



Writing down notation is simple: Just use the initial for the piece and add the name of the square it's moving to. In a chess book, you'll notice that a lone Black move starts with an ellipsis ("..."); those 3 dots show that it's a Black move.

**Possible White moves:**

White's King can move to the a1-, c2-, and c1-squares:

- **Ka1, Kc2, Kc1**

White's b3 Knight can move to the a5-, c5-, a1-, and c1-squares:

- **Na5, Nbc5** (the other White Knight can also move to that square, so you add the "b" to show which Knight went there), **Na1, Nc1**

If White's Ka1 move was a very good move, you could write it this way:

- **Ka1!**

White's a-pawn can move 1 square or 2 squares (thanks to the 2-square option).

- **a3, a4**

Note that you don't give an initial for a pawn move—just the square it's going to.

*A Queen move*

White has many Queen moves, but let's settle for **Qxb4** and **Qh6**.

**Possible Black moves:**

*Black checks with his Queen*

- **...Qh1+** (the "..." shows that it's a Black move, while the "+" shows that there was a check)

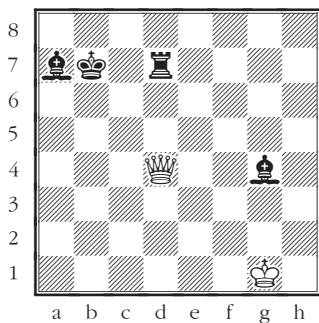
This small amount of information should be enough to get you started with reading and writing chess notation.

# The World of Chess

## Lesson 1

The first tools of a chess player's trade are point count (which gives you the value of each individual piece), algebraic notation (so you can write down your games or read chess books), and acquiring a clear understanding of how all the pieces move. On the surface, a chess piece might seem to be a simple piece of wood or plastic with easily grasped movements. However, under the surface of each piece's facade is more than a thousand years of history, evolution, and specific strategies. This lesson will address all these things, with the King, Queen, Bishop, and Rook taking center stage.

### PUZZLE 1



White to Move

White's Queen is facing off against 3 enemy pieces. Should White capture Black's Rook or Black's light-squared Bishop (on g4)?

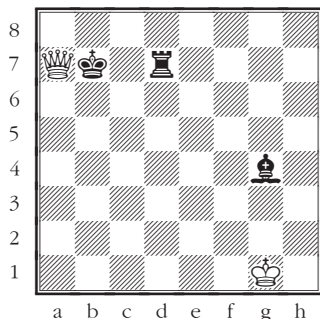
*Answer:*

You are not allowed to place your King in jeopardy!

Alas, White can't capture Black's Rook or g4-Bishop because that would leave White's King in check by Black's a7-Bishop. Because you are not allowed to put your own King in a position where it can be captured, both 1.Qxd7 and 1.Qxg4 are illegal. White's best move, which sadly loses, is

- **1.Qxa7+**

It's a kamikaze Queen move!

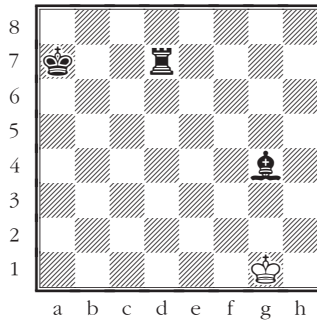


**Black to Move**

*Black needs to capture White's Queen*

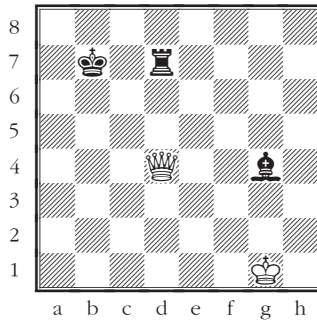
- **1...Kxa7**

Black has an extra Rook and Bishop (a huge 8-point lead).



*White is dead in the water*

## PUZZLE 2



**White to Move**

*Which piece should White capture?*

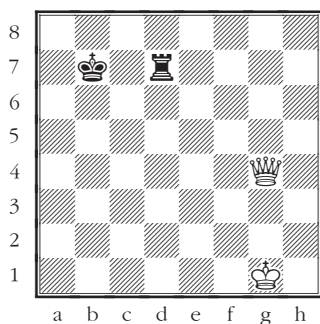
White's Queen is facing off against 2 enemy pieces. Should White capture Black's Rook or Black's light-squared Bishop (on g4)? After the capture, what is the point count situation?

*Answer:*

White should capture Black's Bishop by

- **1.Qxg4**

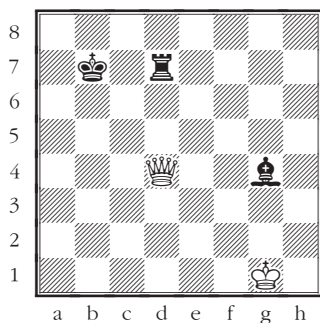
White now has a point count advantage of 9 points to 5, meaning that White enjoys a 4-point advantage.



**Black to Move**

*White enjoys a 4-point advantage*

Returning to our initial position:



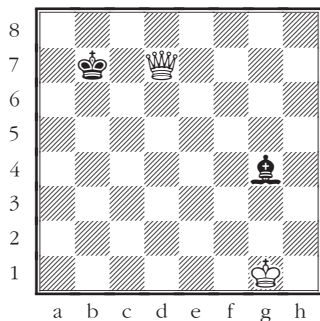
**White to Move**

*Why not take Black's Rook?*



○ **1.Qxd7+??**

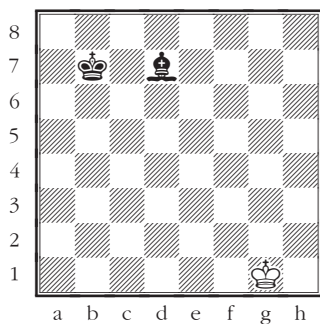
This is very tempting, because you capture a Rook and put Black's King in check. However, there's a flaw.



**Black to Move**  
*Punish White's blunder*

● **1...Bxd7**

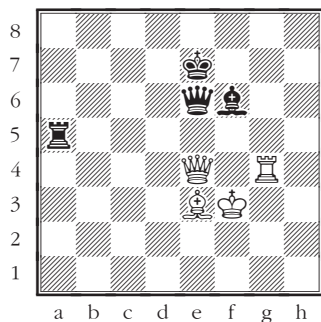
White forgot that the Rook was defended by Black's Bishop.



*Where did White's Queen go?*

Before taking something, always make sure that the "something" you're after isn't protected by an enemy piece.

## PUZZLE 3

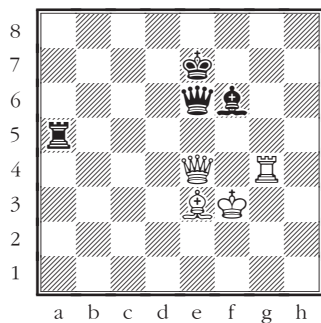


**Black to Move**

It's Black to move. Set up your board and pieces (real or digital) with this position and see if you can play these moves on your board.

- 1...Qxe4+ 2.Rxe4+ Re5 3.Rxe5+ Bxe5 4.Bf4 Bxf4 5.Kxf4, 1/2-1/2.

*Answer:*

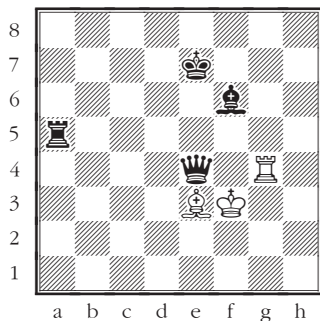


**Black to Move**

*He decides to swap pieces*

- **1...Qxe4+**

Black decides to trade everything off and make a draw (a tie game).  
Note that after 1...Qxe4, White's King is in check.

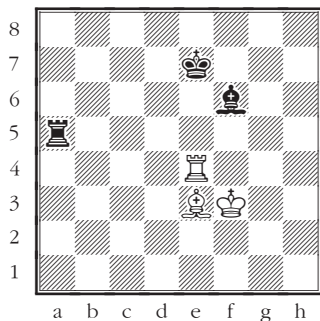


**White to Move**

*Black's Queen has to be captured*

- **2.Rxe4+**

White removes Black's Queen and checks the Black King at the same time.

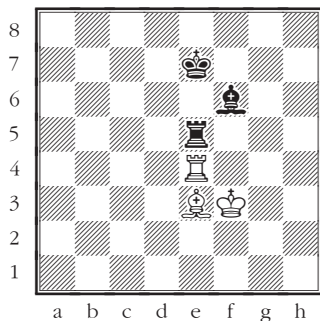


**Black to Move**

*His King is in check*

- **2...Re5**

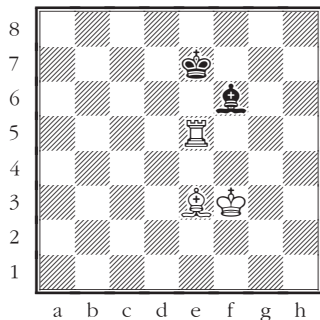
Getting out of check by blocking White's Rook and also offering another trade.



**White to Move**

*Why not trade the Rooks?*

- **3.Rxe5+**

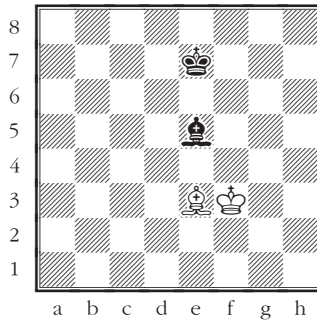


**Black to Move**

*Once again, Black's King is in check*

- **3...Bxe5**

Black chops White's Rook and assures the draw.

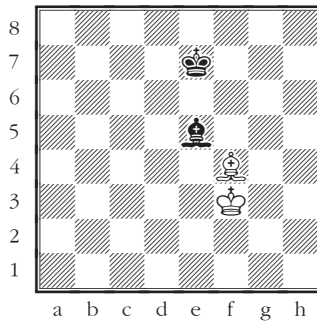


**White to Move**

*Might as well empty the board!*

○ **4.Bf4**

Offering to clear everything but the Kings from the chessboard.

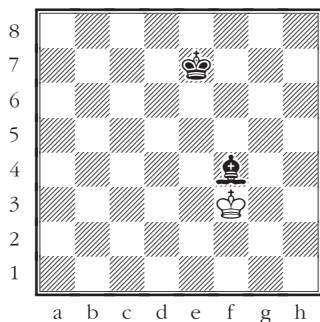


**Black to Move**

*One final capture for Black*

● **4...Bxf4**

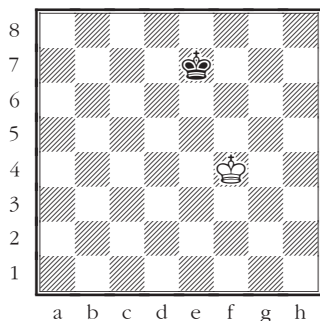
Black's final capture.



**White to Move**

*One final capture for White*

- **5.Kxf4**, 1/2-1/2 (tie game).



*Final position: Draw*

## PUZZLE 4

If you were in a situation where you could trade your Queen for your opponent's Knight, Bishop, and 4 pawns, would point count give you a go-ahead?

*Answer:*

A Queen is worth 9 points. So, if you gave up her majesty for a Knight (worth 3 points), a Bishop (worth 3 points), and 4 pawns (each is worth 1 point, with 4 pawns being worth 4 points), you would get 10 points for the enemy Queen's 9.

Point count would be pleased, because you would have come out of the trade with an extra 1 point. However, although point count is a good tool to know, chess is more than just the pieces' values. The particular position you get on your board, with its mysteries and dynamics, is the ultimate judge of whether that series of exchanges is a good or bad idea.

## Summing Up

- You need to be very sure that any piece you want to capture isn't defended.
- Point count is a very useful tool, but each individual position should be the final judge of whether or not a point count number is valid.
- Even swaps (e.g., Bishop for Bishop, Rook for Rook, etc.) are usually fine. However, sometimes one piece is more active than the other. In that case, although each Bishop is worth 3 points, if your Bishop is more active than the enemy Bishop, you might want to avoid swapping them.
- The movements of the King, Queen, Bishops, and Rooks are remarkably simple. A little practice and experience will make these piece movements second nature.

- Chess notation is easy to use, and it becomes easier and easier as time goes by. If you don't know chess notation, you can't write down your games, and you can't read a chess book. So, practice reading and writing chess notation as often as possible.

## Suggested Reading

Chandler and Milligan, *Chess for Children*.

Eade, *Chess for Dummies*.

## Key Terms

**illegal:** Anything that steps outside the rules of the game.

**major pieces:** Also called heavy pieces. The term applies to Queens and Rooks.

**material:** The pieces and pawns, excluding the King. A material advantage is obtained by winning a piece of greater value than the one you gave up. For example, giving up a pawn to win a Rook means that you have an advantage in material.

**minor pieces:** The Bishops and the Knights.

**open file:** A column of 8 squares that is free of pawns. It is on open files (and ranks) that Rooks come to their maximum potential.

**point count:** A system of figuring out the worth of the pieces by giving each of them a numerical value: King, priceless; Queen, 9 points; Rook, 5 points; Bishop, 3 points; Knight, 3 points; and pawn, 1 point. The flaw in the system is that it does not take into account other factors (such as position, tactics, etc.) that often drastically change the relative value of an individual piece.



**rank:** A row of 8 squares. The seventh rank in particular is the subject of much activity, especially when a Rook settles there. Control of the seventh rank is considered to be an important advantage.

## Key People

**Alexander Alekhine** (1892–1946): Born in Russia, he was one of the strongest players of all time. He defeated the great Capablanca in a match in 1927, thereby becoming the fourth world chess champion.

**Stepan Levitsky** (1876–1924): One of the strongest Russian chess masters of this time, he became the Russian national chess champion in 1911.

**Luis Ramirez de Lucena** (1465–1530): A Spanish chess player who wrote the first (still existing) chess book.

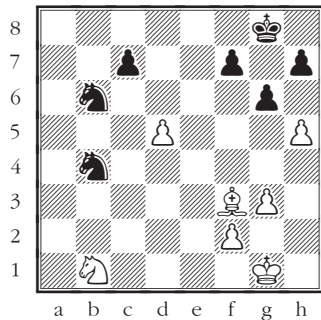
**Frank Marshall** (1877–1944): One of the strongest players in the world, he was the best American chess grandmaster from 1904 to 1930. He held the U.S. championship title for an astounding 27 straight years.

# Secrets of the Pawns and Knights

## Lesson 2

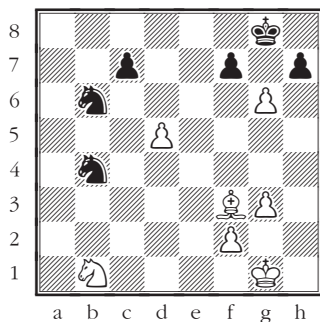
**A**lthough the King, Queen, Rook, and Bishop can only move along files, ranks, and diagonals, the Knight is a mutant. The Knight, imbued with personality, does a jig—a 2-square jaunt on a file or rank and a 1-square quickstep to the side. No wonder amateurs view the Knight as the trickiest piece on the board! This lesson will focus on Knights and pawns. And while the Knight does its crazy dance, it's the pawn that is the most complex piece on the board. This vastly underestimated foot soldier, with its primitive 1-step-forward movement, is jam-packed with secret powers.

### PUZZLE 1



White to Move

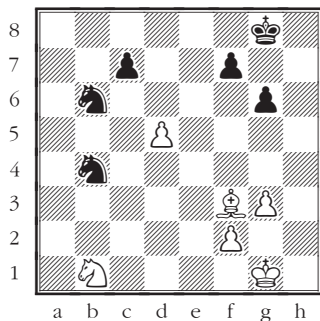
White played **1.hxg6**, capturing a pawn.



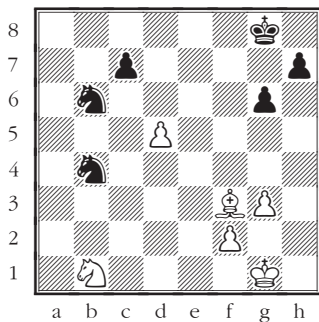
Black can capture the d5-pawn in 2 different ways and the g6-pawn in 2 different ways. Write down all 4 captures and see if you get the notation right.

*Answer:*

Black plays **1...hxg6**:



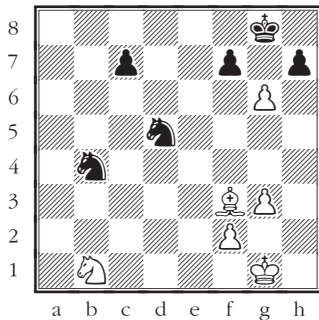
Black plays **1...fxg6**:



*Capture 2: 1...fxg6*

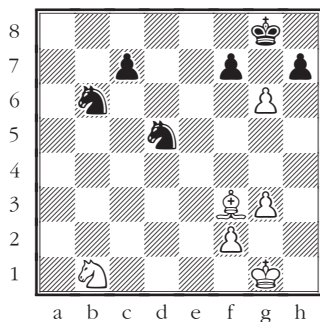
Black plays **1...N6xd5**:

Writing **1...Nbx d5** is incorrect because both Black Knights are on the b-file.



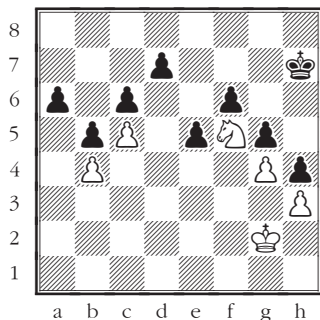
*Capture 3: 1...N6xd5*

Black plays **1...N4xd5**:



*Capture 4: 1...N4xd5*

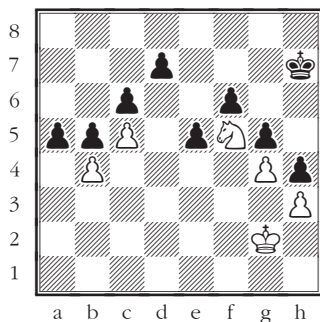
## PUZZLE 2



**Black to Move**

White has an extra Knight (worth 3 points), but Black has 4 extra pawns (worth 4 points). Although Black is a point ahead, if Black's pawns can't get going, they aren't worth much of anything.

Is **1...a5** a good idea?

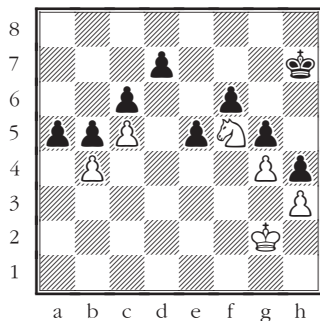


**White to Move**  
*Position after 1...a5*

*Answer:*

- 1...a5

Black dreams of pushing this pawn all the way to a1 when it will become a mighty Queen. Unfortunately, good intentions don't always work.

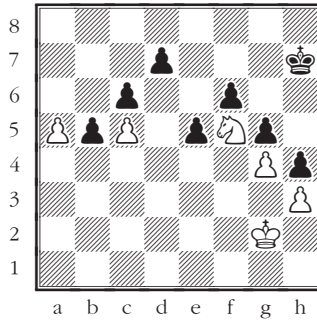


**White to Move**  
*Position after 1...a5*

Black's a6-pawn would love to rush down the a-file (starting with **1...a5**) and turn into a Queen.

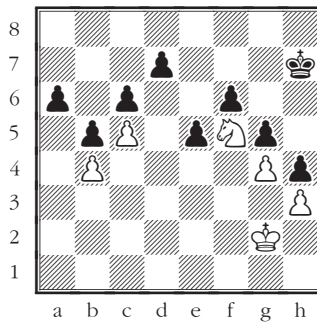
○ **2.bxa5**

By gobbling up the pawn, it's White's pawn that will turn into a Queen, not Black's.



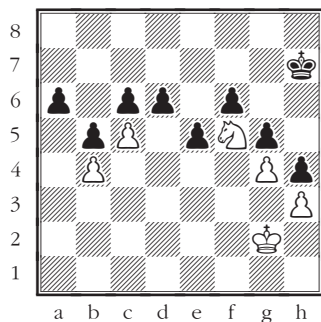
*Black's a-pawn has vanished*

**PUZZLE 3**

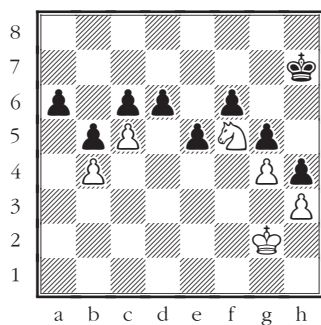


**Black to Move**

Black wants to get his pawns going. 1...a5 failed, but what about 1...d6?



*Answer:*

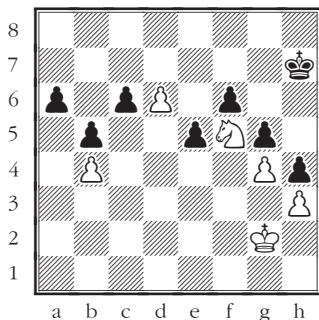




1...d6 is a blunder, because White can chop off the d6-pawn in 2 ways:

○ **2.cxd6**

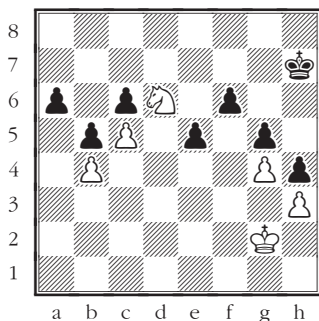
White captures the d6-pawn with his c5-pawn. Now White's advanced pawn on d6 is only 2 squares away from turning into a Queen.



*White played 2.cxd6*

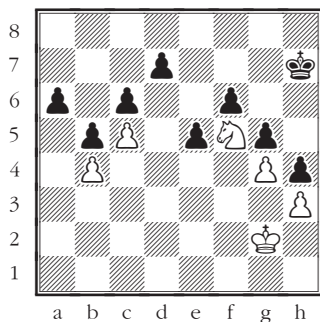
○ **2.Nxd6**

White's c-pawn wasn't the only thing that could capture Black's d6-pawn. The Knight was also waiting to feed (don't forget that Knights can jump over either side's pieces).



*White played 2.Nxd6*

## PUZZLE 4

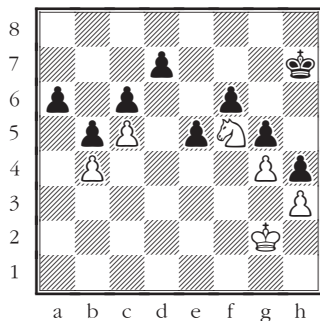


**Black to Move**

*Okay, why not 1...d5?*

Instead of moving the d-pawn to d6 (as in puzzle 3), Black could avoid those 2 captures with **1...d5**, taking advantage of the 2-move rule. Is this wise?

*Answer:*



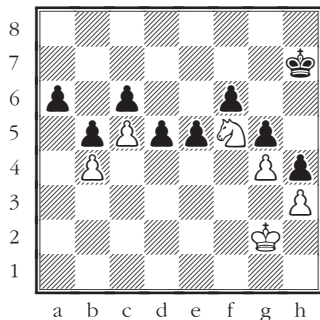
**Black to Move**

*What about using the 2-move rule?*

Black desperately wants to get his d7-pawn into the game. So, he pushes it 2 squares instead of 1.

- **1...d5**

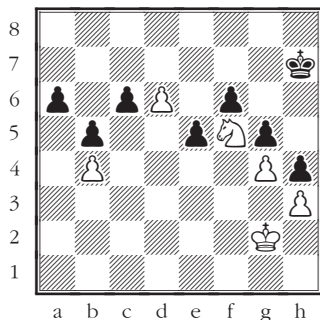
This would be worth a look, but it completely overlooks the en passant rule.



*Black played 1...d5  
Is the d5-pawn safe?*

- **2.cxd6 e.p.**

Unfortunately for Black, there's a thing called en passant. White's pawn will 2-step to d8 and turn into a Queen.



*Black, a victim of en passant, has to resign*

## PUZZLE 5

**True or false:** “A Knight on the side is full of pride” is an old chess saying.

*Answer:*

**False.** That old chess saying actually goes like this: “A Knight on the rim is dim.”

The reason for this is that Knights on the side/rim of the board control fewer squares than they would in the center.

### Summing Up

Knights are very tricky, and it’s important to remember that they are the only pieces that can jump over both your pieces and your opponent’s pieces. Pawns are also tricky, especially when you factor in pawn promotion, the 2-move option, and, even stranger, the en passant rule. All 3 of these pawn moves need to be mastered, or you’ll become another pawn casualty.

### Suggested Reading

Seirawan with Silman, *Play Winning Chess*.

### Key Terms

**center:** Usually considered to be the e4-, d4-, e5-, and d5-squares, although the territory within the c4, c5, f4, and f5 parameters can also be thought of as central.

**development:** The process of moving your pieces from their starting posts to new positions where their activity and mobility are enhanced. Your pieces should be developed to squares where

they work with the rest of their army toward a particular goal. If an individual piece is providing a useful service on its original square, then there might be no reason to move it.

**en passant:** A French term that means “in passing.” When a pawn advances 2 squares (something it can only do if it has not yet moved) and passes an enemy pawn on an adjacent file that has advanced to its fifth rank, it might be captured by that enemy pawn, as if the advancing pawn had moved only 1 square. This optional capture might be made only on the first opportunity, or else the right in that instance is permanently lost.

**exchange:** To trade pieces of equal worth. Trading a piece for something of lesser value is called a blunder or a sacrifice.

**file:** A column of 8 squares. An open file is a file that is not blocked by either side’s pawns.

**hanging:** An unprotected piece or pawn exposed to capture.

**material:** The pieces and pawns, excluding the King. A material advantage is obtained by winning a piece of greater value than the one you gave up. For example, giving up a pawn to win a Rook means that you have an advantage in material.

**open file:** A column of 8 squares that is free of pawns. It is on open files (and ranks) that Rooks come to their maximum potential.

**point count:** A system of figuring out the worth of the pieces by giving each of them a numerical value: King, priceless; Queen, 9 points; Rook, 5 points; Bishop, 3 points; Knight, 3 points; and pawn, 1 point. The flaw in the system is that it does not take into account other factors (such as position, tactics, etc.) that often drastically change the relative value of an individual piece.

**promotion:** Also called queening. When a pawn reaches the final rank, it becomes another piece, usually a Queen. However, the pawn can be promoted to anything other than a pawn or a King.

**rank:** A row of 8 squares. The seventh rank in particular is the subject of much activity, especially when a Rook settles there. Control of the seventh rank is considered to be an important advantage.

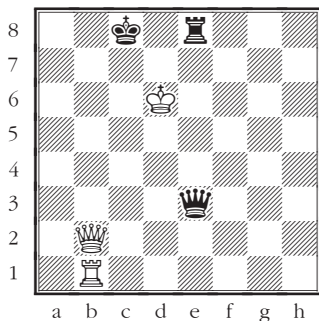
**resigns:** Realizing the hopeless nature of a position and not wanting to insult the intelligence of the opponent, a player can surrender the game (resign) without having to wait for a checkmate. Resignation occurs in the vast majority of tournament games, while actual checkmates are quite rare.

# Castling, Checkmate, Chess Engines, Draws

## Lesson 3

This lesson covers a potpourri of chess tidbits, including how to castle and when it is and isn't possible to do so, the difference between checkmate and stalemate, what a draw is and how it occurs, proper etiquette when you want to resign, and the touch-move rule. You also will learn about the history of the chess clock and how it's a must-have accessory in every chess tournament. In addition, you will be introduced to simultaneous exhibitions, where masters play hundreds of people at the same time, and blindfold exhibitions, where a master is blindfolded versus sometimes dozens of sighted opponents. Furthermore, you will learn about chess computers, which can see millions of moves per second.

### PUZZLE 1



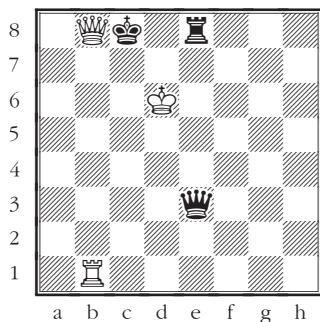
**White to Move**

*Mate in 1*

White can checkmate Black's King in 1 move.

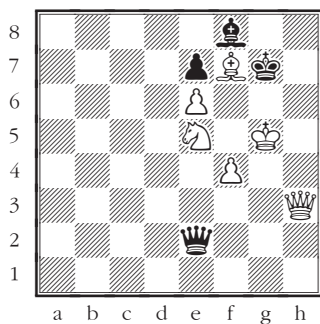
*Answer:*

1.Qb7+ isn't mate because Black's King can move to d8. However, **1.Qb8+** is mate because Black's King is in check and there is no way to escape it.



*Black's King is checkmated*

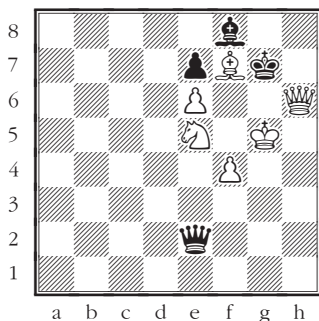
## PUZZLE 2



**Black to Move**

White has an extra Knight and pawn, which usually means that the side with the material inferiority will lose. To make matters even worse, White threatens **2.Qh6** mate.



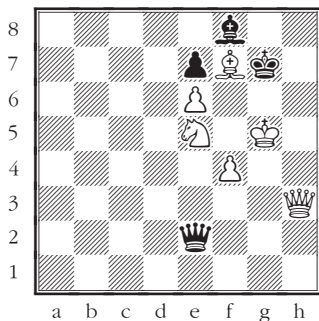


*After 2.Qh6+, Black's King is checkmated*

Why is it mate? Black's King is attacked by White's Queen (in other words, Black's King is in check), White's Queen is protected by its King, and Black's King can't move to g8 because that square is covered by White's Bishop (which is protected by his Knight and e6-pawn).

It's clear that Black can't allow Qh6 mate. But what can he do about it?

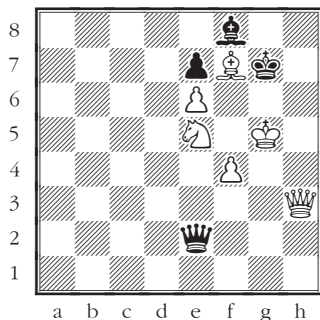
Let's return to our initial position:



**Black to Move**

Black is desperate, so he decides to try 1 of 2 moves: **1...Qxe5+** and **1...Qh5+**. Are both moves ridiculous, or does one save the day?

*Answer:*

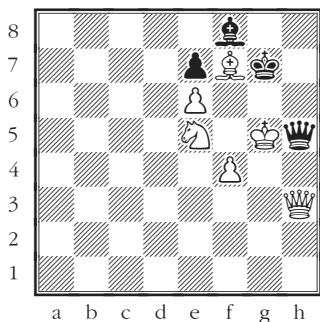


**Black to Move**

*Is a miracle stalemate hiding somewhere?*

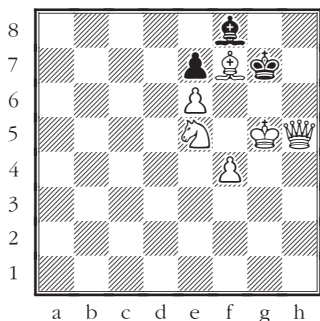
Black has noticed something: His King has no legal move, and his lone pawn and Bishop are also unable to move. Thus, if Black's Queen was off the board and it was Black's move, the game would be drawn due to stalemate.

One of the 2 moves that caught Black's eye was **1...Qh5+**.



*Crazy, or crazy like a fox?*

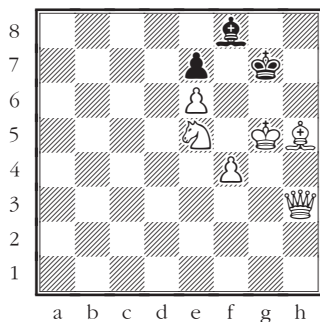
This absurd-looking move is actually tricky: **2.Qxh5** is a draw by stalemate because Black isn't allowed to move any piece.



*Stalemate*

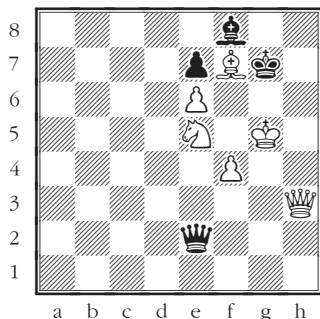
Of course, if Black's King was in check and he couldn't move any piece, that would be checkmate. But his King is not in check, so the game is drawn.

Unfortunately, instead of 2.Qxh5, White should play **2.Bxh5** (2.Kxh5, giving Black's King access to the f6-square, also wins) when the g8-square is now open for Black's King. Thus, it's not a stalemate, and White, who is way ahead in material, will easily win.



*Black loses because his King can move to g8*

Let's return to our initial position:

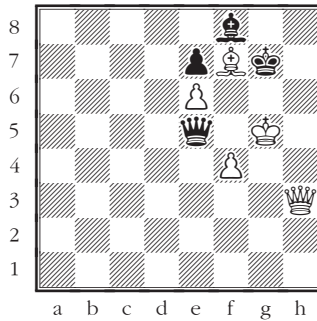


**Black to Move**

*Black needs to find a stalemate*

Because  $1...Qh5+$  didn't work, let's try the other "suicide" move:  
 **$1...Qxe5!$**

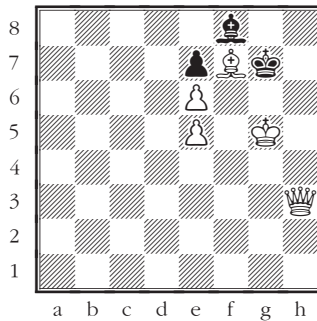
Black has captured White's Knight, so he's only 1 pawn down, and White's in check. The only flaw with Black's move is that White's f-pawn can capture it.



**White to Move**  
*This saves the game*

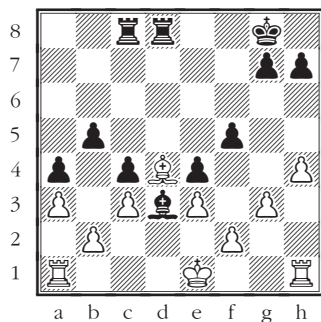
○ **2.fxe5**

White has won a Queen but lost his win. Black's King isn't in check, and he has no legal move, so the game is a draw by stalemate.



*Draw by stalemate*

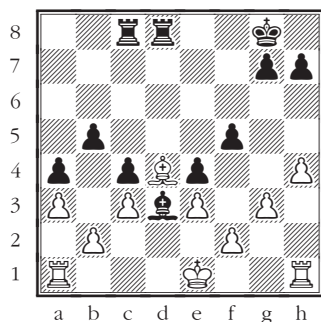
## PUZZLE 3



White to Move

White never castled, but he's thinking about doing so now. His King and both Rooks have never moved. Can White castle kingside or queenside?

*Answer:*

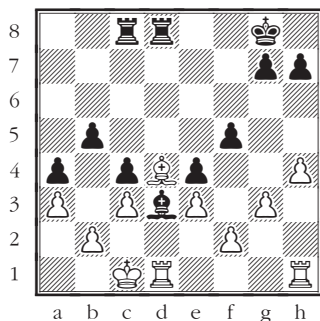


White to Move

*Can he castle?*

White can't castle kingside because you're not allowed to move your King through an attacked square. Because Black's Bishop is attacking the f1-square, kingside castling isn't allowed.

White can castle queenside. Yes, the a1-Rook has to move through an attacked square (b1 is eyed by Black's Bishop), but that's perfectly okay. And because White's King won't be moving through an attacked square if he castles queenside, it's perfectly legal to do so.



*White castled queenside*

## Summing Up

Castling, checkmate, and stalemate are things every chess player needs to know. In fact, if you don't understand those things, you won't be able to play a real game of chess. Castling and stalemate can be particularly confusing.

### Castling:

- If your King ever moved, you can't castle.
- If you have to move your King through an attacked square, you can't castle on that side.

- If your Rook moved, you can't castle on that side.

### Stalemate:

- Unlike checkmate, where the enemy King is attacked and can't avoid capture, stalemate is a situation where one side has no legal moves (that means that Rooks, Knights, and all other pieces, including the King, can't legally move). If that occurs, the game is drawn by stalemate.

### Suggested Reading

Hearst and Knott, *Blindfold Chess*.

Silman, *The Complete Book of Chess Strategy*.

### Key Terms

**castling:** A move that combines the movements of 2 pieces (the King and the Rook) at the same time.

**checkmate:** It means that you are threatening to capture the enemy King and nothing your opponent can do will prevent its loss. When this happens, you have won the game.

**draw:** A tie, where neither player wins the game.

**engines:** Chess-playing software that can be found on a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Modern chess engines can be incredibly strong.

**resigns:** Realizing the hopeless nature of a position and not wanting to insult the intelligence of the opponent, a player can surrender the game (resign) without having to wait for a checkmate. Resignation occurs in the vast majority of tournament games, while actual checkmates are quite rare.



**touch move:** In serious chess, if you touch a piece, you have to move it.

**Zugzwang:** Meaning “compulsion to move,” a German term referring to a situation in which a player would like to do nothing (pass), because any move will damage his or her game.

## Key People

**Alexander Alekhine** (1892–1946): Born in Russia, he was one of the strongest players of all time. He defeated the great Capablanca in a match in 1927, thereby becoming the fourth world chess champion.

**Pierre St. Amant** (1800–1872): A French chess master and one of the world’s best players.

**Joseph Blackburne** (1841–1924): An Englishman and one of the world’s elite players for many decades. His nickname was “the Black Death.”

**Larry Evans** (1932–2010): A close friend of Bobby Fischer, he won the U.S. Chess Championship 4 times and was also an excellent chess writer.

**Bobby Fischer** (1943–2008): The 11<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, he is considered to be one of the 5 best players of all time, with many ranking him as number 1. He singlehandedly took American chess to a whole new level.

**Garry Kasparov** (1963– ): Born in Azerbaijan, he is the 13<sup>th</sup> world chess champion and is viewed as the best player of all time by many.

**George Koltanowski** (1903–2000): Born in Belgium, he is famous for his amazing blindfold exhibitions.

**Marc Lang** (1969– ): Born in Germany, he set a new blindfold record, playing 46 games at the same time. He won 25, drew 19, and only lost 2 games.

**Ehsan Maghami** (1983– ): Born in Iran, he is a grandmaster who is skilled in normal chess and also in simultaneous exhibitions. He set a record by playing 614 games at once, winning 590, losing 8, and drawing 16.

**Paul Morphy** (1837–1884): A legendary American player, he effortlessly mowed down all the world’s best players.

**Louis Paulsen** (1833–1891): Born in Germany, he was one of the world’s top 5 players.

**Harry Nelson Pillsbury** (1872–1906): Probably the second-best player in the world (behind World Chess Champion Emanuel Lasker), he exploded on the international chess scene by winning one of the strongest tournaments of all time at the age of 22.

**François-André Danican Philidor** (1726–1795): A Frenchman, he was the world’s best player and also a famous composer of operas.

**Richard Reti** (1889–1926): Born in Prague, he was one of the top 5 players in the world during the 1920s.

**Samuel Reshevsky** (1911–1992): Born in Poland but living his adult life in the United States, he was a child prodigy and, in his prime, one of the top 2 or 3 players in the world.

**Howard Staunton** (1810–1874): An Englishman, he was considered the world’s best player until Morphy appeared on the scene.

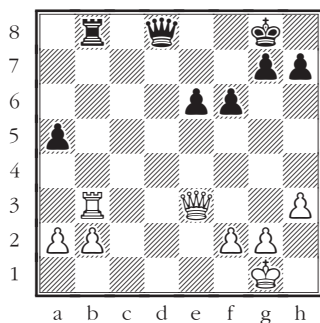
**Marion Tinsley** (1927–1995): Born in Ohio, he was (by far) the greatest checker player who ever lived.

# Must-Know Tactical Patterns in Chess

## Lesson 4

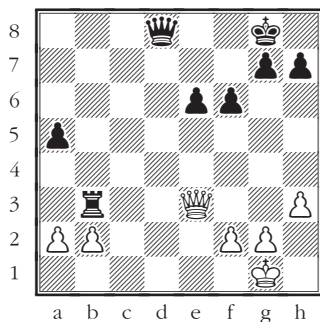
Chess is filled with tactical themes. However, there are a few that occur all the time. These are a major part of your chess foundation, because if you don't know them, you'll be blown out of the water time and time again. The patterns in question are pin, skewer, fork, decoy, *Zwischenzug*, discovered attack, and double attack. Once you master all 7 of these powerful and fun themes, you'll find yourself smiling as you use them on the opposition.

### PUZZLE 1



*Black decides to make a trade*

Black decides to trade Rooks, so he plays **1...Rxb3**, expecting White to recapture the Rook by **2.Qxb3** or **2.axb3**.

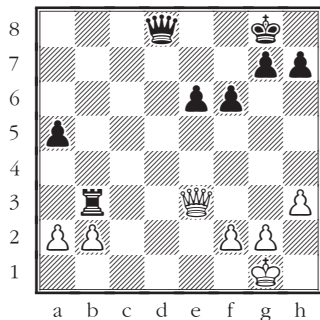


**White to Move**

*White needs to get his Rook back*

What is White's best move?

*Answer:*



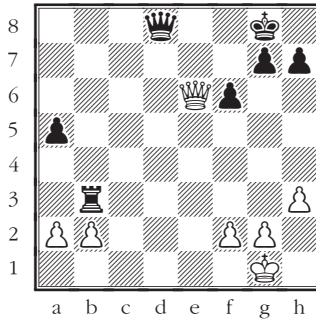
**White to Move**

*Black is in for a surprise*

Although Black has captured White's Rook, White doesn't recapture right away. Instead, he uses a *Zwischenzug* (an in-between move) to win a pawn.

- **2.Qxe6+**

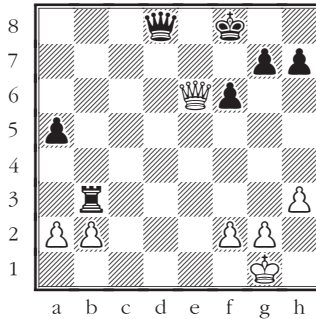
Black can't move his Rook to safety because his King is in check.  
So, Black is forced to move his King.



**Black to Move**  
*Black is in check*

● **2...Kf8**

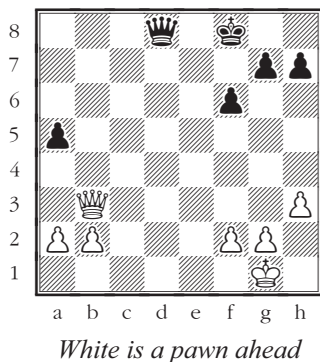
Only now, after winning a free pawn, will White recapture the Rook on b3.



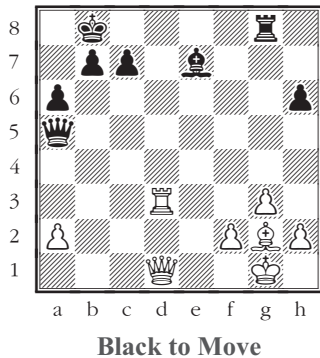
**White to Move**  
*Time to regain that Rook!*

○ **3.Qxb3**

Black wanted a Rook trade, but he didn't anticipate that the loss of a pawn was part of the package.

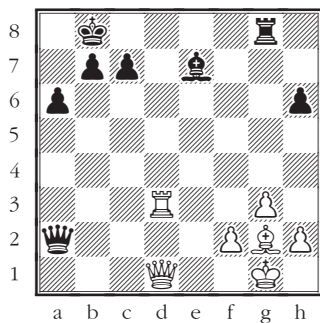


## PUZZLE 2



Black can capture a seemingly free pawn by **1...Qxa2**. Would you make that move?

*Answer:*

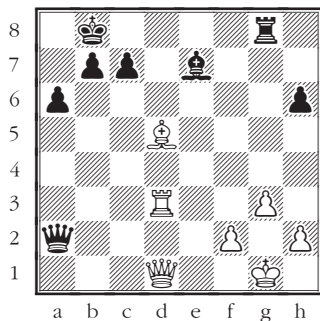


**White to Move**

Black has just captured White's pawn on a2. It turns out that taking on a2 is a losing blunder.

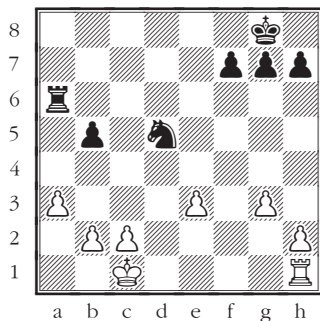
- **2.Bd5!**

Forking Black's Queen and Rook, and winning a full Rook.



*White's Bishop simultaneously attacks Black's Queen and Rook*

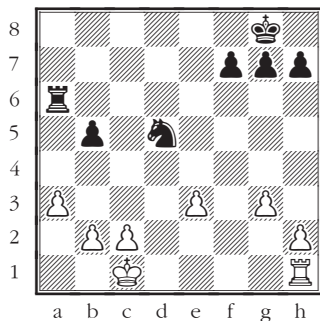
## PUZZLE 3



**White to Move**

White has 2 pawns for a Knight, which means that Black is up material. However, White's proper move shows that a simple material count doesn't have any meaning in this particular position. What is White's best move?

*Answer:*



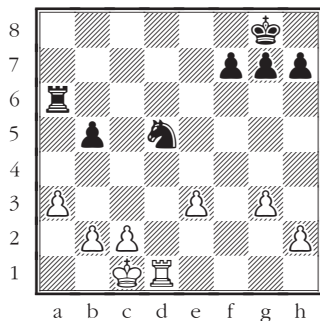
**White to Move**

*One move changes everything*

- 1.Rd1



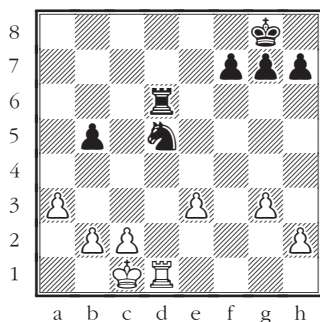
This not-very-subtle move creates a pin against the Knight and the eighth rank. Because moving the Knight (1...Nf6, for example) walks into a mate by 2.Rd8+ Ne8 3.Rxe8 mate, Black finds himself facing a difficult decision.



**Black to Move**  
*Can Black save his Knight?*

- 1...Rd6

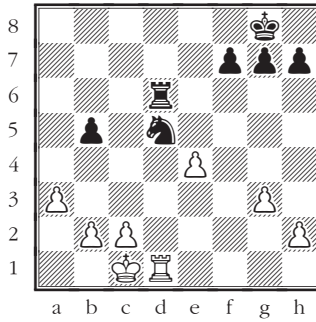
Black decides to protect his Knight with his Rook.



**White to Move**  
*Find the decisive blow*

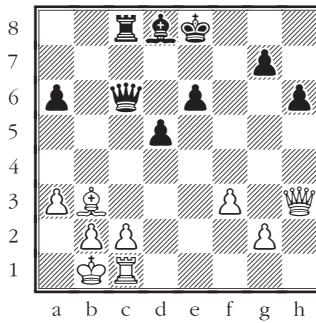
- 2.e4

Thanks to the fact that Black's Knight is pinned to its Rook, White will capture the Knight and end up with a decisive material advantage.



*Black's Knight will soon be a mere memory*

### PUZZLE 4



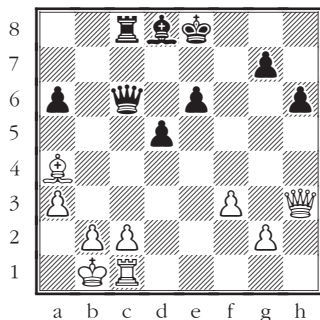
**White to Move**

Black's King is in the center, which is never good if several pieces remain on the board. How can White take advantage of Black's unfortunate King position?

*Answer:*

○ **1.Ba4!**

White creates a decoy by the use of this Bishop pin against Black's Queen and King.

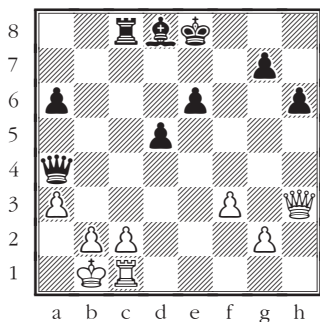


**Black to Move**

*He doesn't have much of a choice*

● **1...Qxa4**

Black's Queen had to capture that Bishop, but now Black's Queen is no longer protecting the e6-pawn.

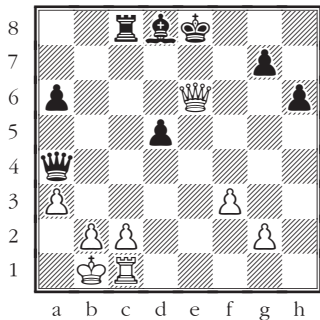


**White to Move**

*The e6-pawn is about to fall*

○ **2.Qxe6+**

This check carries a heavy punch: It wins a pawn, checks Black's King, and threatens Black's Rook (a double attack against Black's King and Rook).

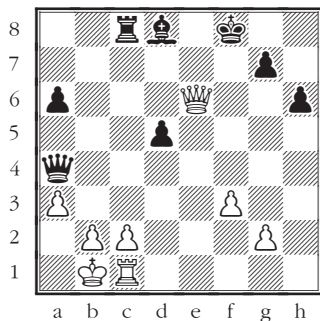


**Black to Move**

*Black has to move his King and give up his Rook*

- **2...Kf8**

2...Be7 3.Qxc8+ is just as bad.

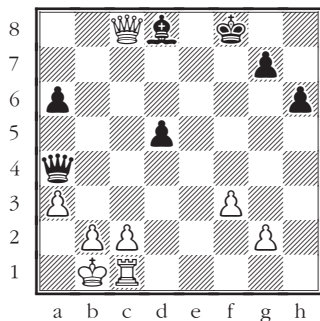


**White to Move**

*Time for White to cash in*

- **3.Qxc8**

White easily won the game due to Black's vulnerable King and having a Rook and a pawn for Black's Bishop (point count: 3 extra points for White).



*Black is hopelessly lost*

## Summing Up

Pins, forks, decoys, double attacks, and *Zwischenzugs* are all tactical building blocks that constantly appear in the games of beginners and world champions. One might think that if they can take down the world's best players, then they must be difficult to learn. However, the opposite is true: A bit of study and practice, and they will be with you for life.

### Suggested Reading

Masetti and Messa, *1001 Chess Exercises for Beginners*.

Weteschnik, *Chess Tactics from Scratch*.

### Key Terms

**decoy:** The idea is to pull a piece away from an important job (often by making use of a pin, a skewer, or some other tactical device), leading to doom in another area, or to pull a piece to a square it doesn't want to be on, with agonizing results for the opponent.

**double attack:** In a way, you can think of forks, skewers, and pins as double attacks, because 1 piece attacks 2 at the same time. In fact, the main idea of a double attack—making 2 threats at once—is the backbone of the vast majority of tactical themes.

**fork:** A tactical maneuver in which a piece or pawn attacks 2 enemy pieces or pawns at the same time.

**pin:** An attack against 2 pieces at once—one a direct attack and the other an X-ray attack. A true pin attacks the less-valuable piece first, while the more-valuable piece is the one attacked via X-ray.

**skewer:** The same as a pin, except the more-valuable enemy piece is attacked and the X-rayed piece is the less-valuable one.

**Zwischenzug:** Meaning “in-between move,” a German term for an often unexpected reply thrown into an expected sequence of moves.

## Key People

**Jose Raul Capablanca** (1888–1942): Born in Cuba, he was the third world chess champion and, in his prime, considered to be almost unbeatable.

**Gregory Shahade** (1979–): An American international chess master and poker player. His sister is Woman Grandmaster Jennifer Shahade.

**Saviely Tartakower** (1887–1956): A Polish grandmaster, he was a brilliant chess writer and one of the world’s finest players.

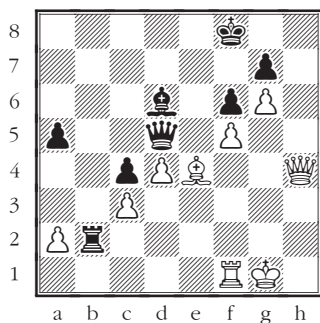
**Josh Waitzkin** (1976–): Born in New York, he is an international chess master and renowned martial artist. A movie called *Searching for Bobby Fischer* was made about his childhood and coach.

# Chess Combinations and Kings in Check

## Lesson 5

Everyone dreams of creating a lovely combination, and this lesson will discuss what a combination is and how calculation is an important part of it. The folly of leaving one's King in the center will also be discussed, because it's a very common mistake. It's important that you do everything possible to avoid this bad habit, while punishing opponents that aren't aware of its considerable downside. Three other patterns will add to your attacking acumen: the mating net (the art of stopping a King from running for its life), the X-ray (which is common) and the windmill (which is rare but thrilling).

### PUZZLE 1



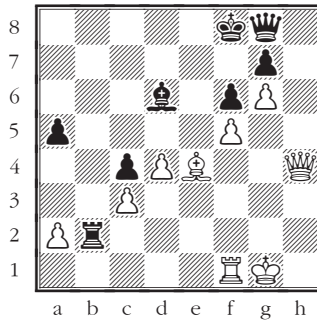
Black to Move

Preston Ware vs. Wilhelm Steinitz, Vienna 1882

Black's Queen is under attack, and to make matters worse, White threatens Qh8+ in many lines. One possible defense for Black is **41...Qg8**, preventing White's Qh8+ idea (in the actual game, Steinitz tried another defense and eventually lost).

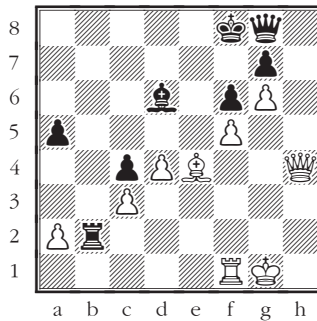


What would you do if your opponent played 41...Qg8?



**White to Move**  
*Position after 41...Qg8*

*Answer:*

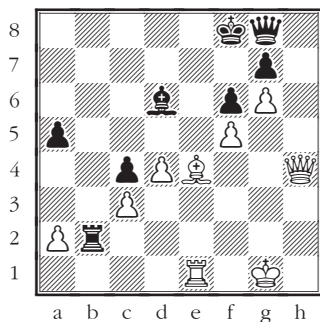


**White to Move**  
*How can he continue his attack?*

If need be, Black's King can make a run for the queenside by ...Ke8 or ...Ke7. White, who doesn't want to allow this, should calmly set up a mating net.

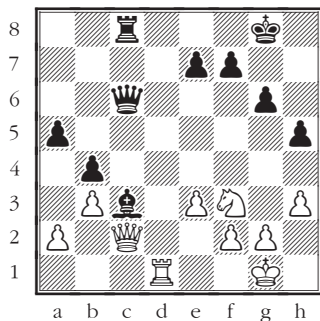
- **42.Re1!**

This keeps Black's King in its cage, because **42...Ke7** allows **43.Bd5+** (a discovered check with the Rook, while White's Bishop is attacking the Black Queen), winning Black's Queen and the game. White could then follow up with Bc6 (threatening Re8 mate), and Black will be overwhelmed.



*A mating net  
Black's King is in a hopeless situation*

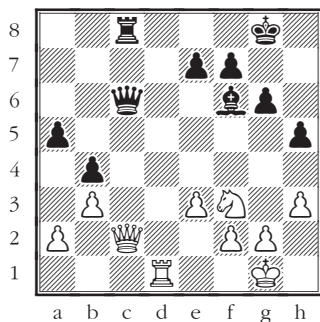
## PUZZLE 2



**Black to Move**

Black has a very comfortable position, and he has many reasonable moves that will give him a very small advantage (thanks to his Bishop's activity).

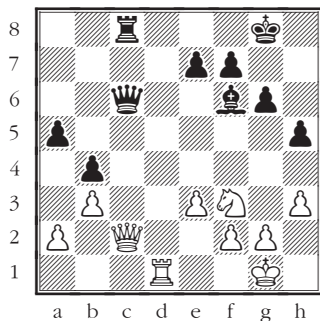
Is **1...Bf6**, offering a trade of Queens, a good idea?



**White to Move**

*To trade Queens or not to trade Queens?*

*Answer:*

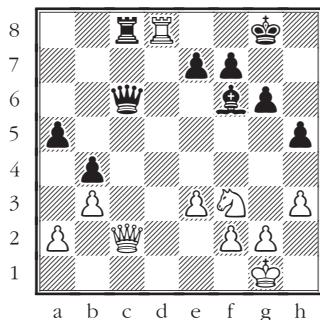


**White to Move**

Unfortunately for Black, **1...Bf6??** is an instant loser.

○ **2.Rd8+**

Black will suffer a fatal loss of material, thanks to 2 themes: a decoy and an X-ray. 2.Rd8+ is the decoy because if Black captures White's Rook by 2...Rxd8, the Rook would be decoyed away from protecting its Queen, allowing 3.Qxc6.

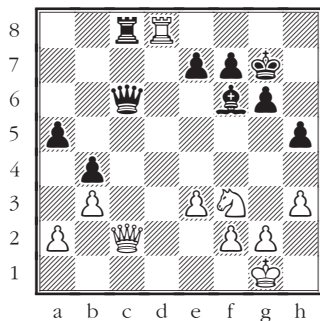


**Black to Move**

*He realizes his mistake, but it's too late*

● **2...Kg7**

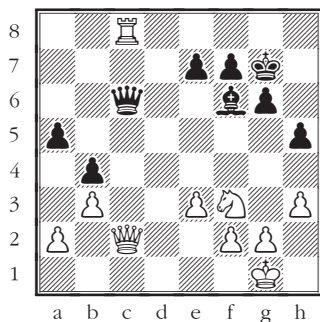
2...Rxd8 loses the Queen to 3.Qxc6.



**White to Move**

*Time for Black's X-ray*

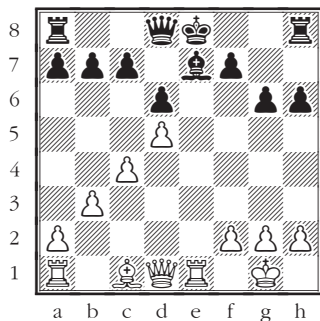
○ 3.Rxc8



*Black resigns*

Black gives up because White's Rook has captured the enemy Rook while at the same time attacking Black's Queen and defending its own Queen via the X-ray.

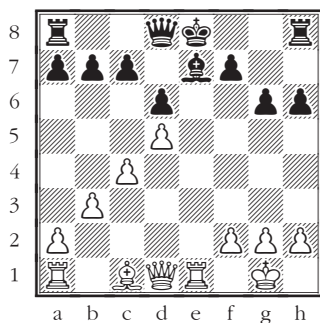
**PUZZLE 3**



**White to Move**

Material is even, but Black is facing serious difficulties. Can you see Black's problem? How should White try to take advantage of this situation?

Answer:



**White to Move**

*Black's central King needs to be punished*

The problem for Black is that White's King is safely castled while Black's King is still in the middle of the board. This is something you need to recognize because, if you don't notice it, you won't be able to take advantage of it.

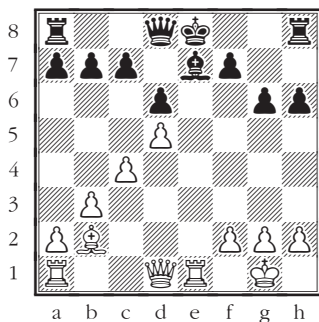
So, how should White milk this position for all it's worth? First, if Black were to castle, White's Bishop would be able to chop off the h6-pawn because the h8-Rook would no longer be defending it.

Another problem for Black is the a1-h8 diagonal, which White can dominate with Bb2.

In general, White often plays a move like 1.Qe2 here, putting enormous heat down the e-file and stopping Black from castling because Black's Bishop would be lost (1.Qe2 0-0 2.Qxe7). However, after 1.Qe2, Black would do better to play 1...Kf8 when his game isn't very good, but at least he hasn't lost any material.

○ **1.Bb2**

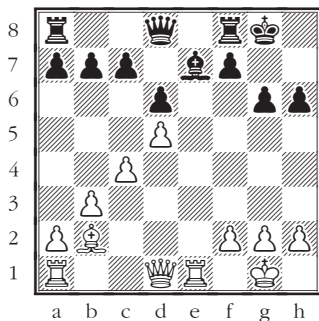
This is the best move. It not only dominates the a1-h8 diagonal, but it also attacks Black's h8-Rook.



**Black to Move**

- **1...0-0**

Because a Rook move like 1...Rg8 loses to 2.Bf6 (the pin on the e-file means that Black's Bishop is a goner), Black decided to castle, hoping that White didn't have something up his sleeve.

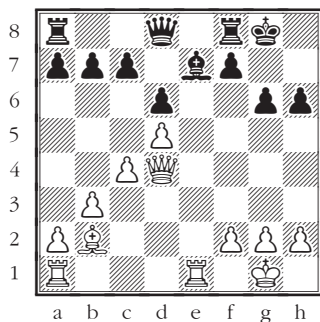


**White to Move**

*Time for White to show his cards*

- **2.Qd4**

This is not subtle. White threatens 3.Qg7 mate. Because 2...Bf6 loses to the simple 3.Qxf6, winning a full piece and the game, Black has to push his f-pawn and block the deadly diagonal.

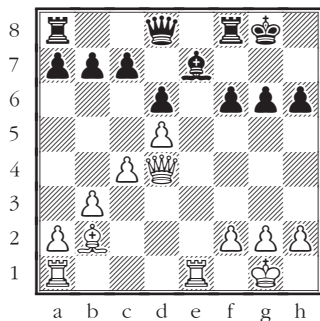


**Black to Move**

*Only 2 ways to stop mate, but both lose*

- **2...f6**

Black is hoping that the worst is over, but sadly for Black, the worst is yet to come.



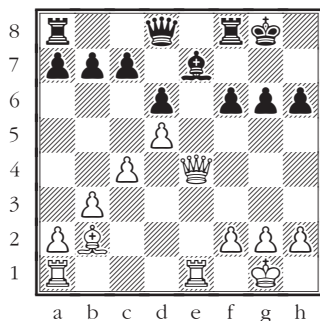
**White to Move**

*Black's 2 weaknesses: e7 and g6*

- **3.Qe4**

The double threat of 4.Qxe7 and 4.Qxg6+ is more than Black can handle. White wins material because Black can't successfully defend against both threats.



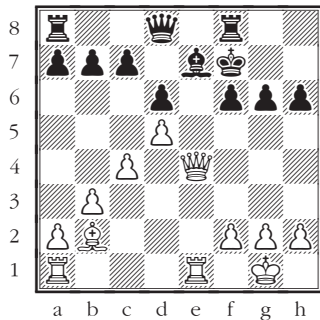


**Black to Move**

*Too much heat*

- **3...Kf7**

This is the only way to defend both e7 and g6 at the same time. No better is 3...Rf7 4.Qxg6+ Rg7 5.Qxh6 when White is 2 pawns up and still has an attack.

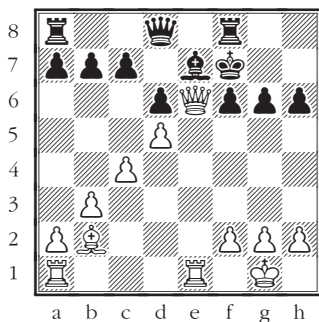


**White to Move**

*Keep the attack going*

- **4.Qe6+**

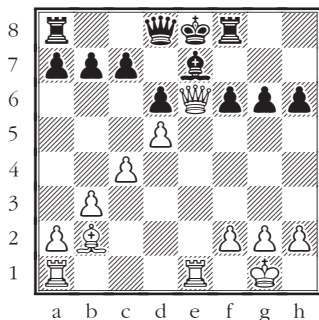
There is no rest for Black.



**Black to Move**

- **4...Ke8**

4...Kg7 5.Qxe7+ is a free piece for White.

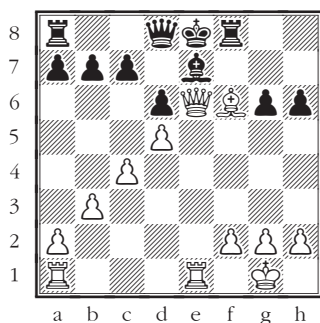


**Black to Move**

*His last stand*

- **5.Bxf6!**

Black is a pawn down, his King is back in the center, White threatens to win Black's Bishop, and more material will certainly fall as White's attack gets more and more virulent. Because 5...Rxf6 fails to 6.Qxf6 (the pin along the e-file stops Black's Bishop from taking White's Queen), Black should resign.



*Black resigns*

## Summing Up

Tactical building blocks sometimes come out of nowhere to smite the opponent, but usually they are a logical part of an ongoing attack. Although the main focus of this lesson was attacks, combinations, a central King, and mating nets, the tools that made these things so destructive were decoys, an X-ray, double attacks, and pins. Everything is connected, and none of these things live in isolation.

### Suggested Reading

Lakdawala, *Larsen*.

Spielmann, *The Art of Sacrifice in Chess*.

Sukhin, *Chess Gems*.

### Key Terms

**attack:** To make a threat or threats against a specific piece or area of the board.

**combination:** A tactical move or series of moves based on the opponent's weakened King, hanging or undefended pieces, or inadequately guarded pieces. Involving a sacrifice, it is a calculable series of moves leading to material or positional gains.

**double attack:** In a way, you can think of forks, skewers, and pins as double attacks, because 1 piece attacks 2 at the same time. In fact, the main idea of a double attack—making 2 threats at once—is the backbone of the vast majority of tactical themes.

**fork:** A tactical maneuver in which a piece or pawn attacks 2 enemy pieces or pawns at the same time.

**mating net:** Preventing the enemy King from running away from an embattled area.

## Key People

**Irving Chernev** (1900–1981): He is the author of 20 chess books, many of which are classics.

**Bent Larsen** (1935–2010): A Danish grandmaster and world championship contender, he was the first Western player to challenge the Soviet Union's chess domination.

**Emanuel Lasker** (1868–1941): He was the second official world chess champion and retained the title for an outrageous 27 years. He is considered to be one of the greatest players who ever lived.

**Richard Reti** (1889–1926): Born in Prague, he was one of the top 5 players in the world during the 1920s.

**Wilhelm Steinitz** (1836–1900): Born in Austria, he became the first official world chess champion. He is also revered as a writer; his writings explained his theories about chess strategy.

**Carlos Torre** (1904–1978): A Mexican grandmaster, his greatest moment was his sacrificial masterpiece over Emanuel Lasker.

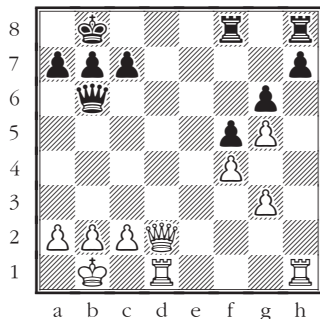
**Preston Ware** (1821–1890): An American chess player, he was famous for his use of various unorthodox openings.

# Checkmate! Back-Rank, Smothered, and More

## Lesson 6

This lesson supplies you with more arrows for your attacking quiver. You will learn how to use the extremely common back-rank mate (a Rook or Queen gives mate on the back rank). You'll be introduced to the fan-favorite smothered mate. And you'll get your first look at famous mates named after legendary players: Legall's mate, Anastasia's mate, Blackburne's mate, Reti's mate, Morphy's mate, and the flashy Boden's mate, which drags down the enemy King with just 2 Bishops.

### PUZZLE 1

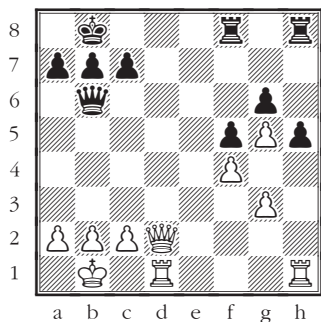


**Black to Move**

Here are 3 moves that Black might play: **1...h5** (when the g6-pawn will now defend Black's h-pawn), **1...a6** (luft), and **1...Re8** (placing the Rook on an open file). Which is best, and what, if anything, is wrong with the others?

*Answer:*

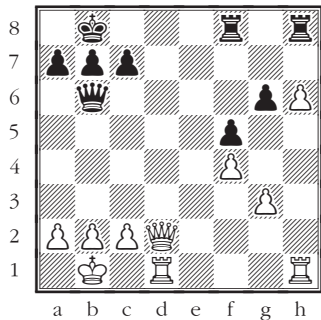
**1...h5??** is a serious error.



**White to Move**

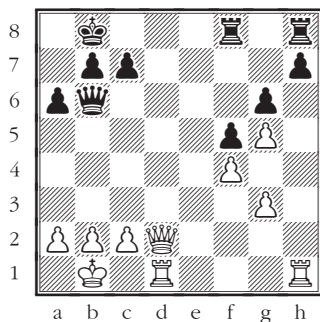
*Another en passant victim*

White punishes Black's **1...h5** with **2.gxh6 e.p.**



*White wins a pawn*

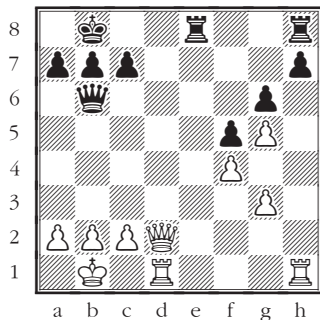
**1...a6** doesn't seem impressive, but it avoids possible back-rank mate tricks.



*Luft*

Black's King can run to a7 if White ever checks with a Queen or Rook on the eighth rank.

1...Re8?? is well intentioned, but it overlooks a tactic that's based on back-rank mate.



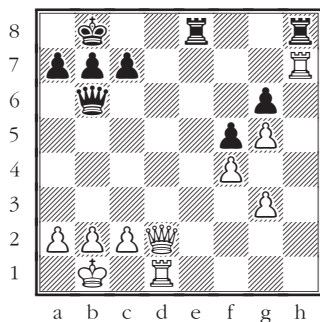
**White to Move**

*A little combination*

- **2.Rxh7!**

White wins a pawn and tries to pull the h8-Rook off the back rank.

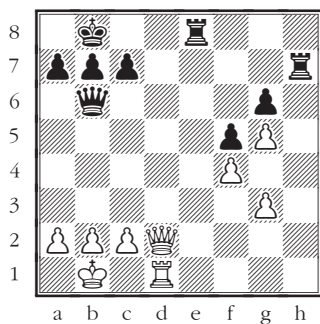




**Black to Move**  
*Black has lost a pawn*

- **2...Rxh7??**

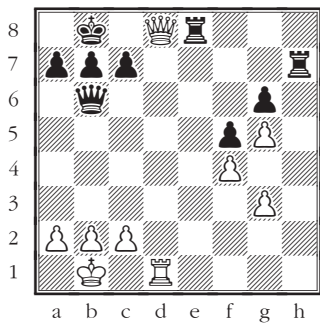
Black was in bad shape, but this walks into mate.



**White to Move**  
*Death on the back rank*

- **3.Qd8+!**

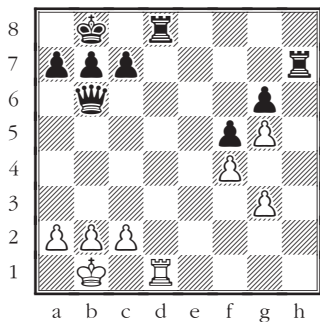
Forcing mate.



**Black to Move**

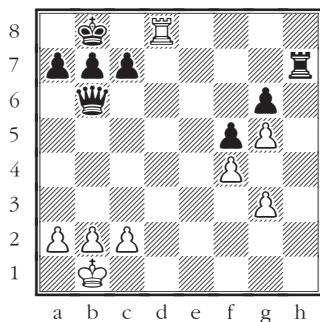
*The hammer has already fallen*

- 3...Rxd8



**White to Move**

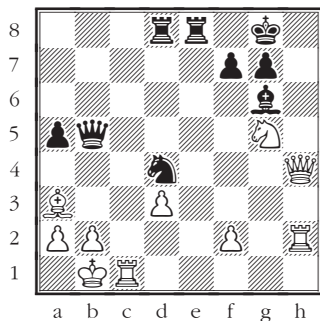
- 4.Rxd8 mate.



*Mate*

It's clear that of the 3 choices (1...h5, 1...a6, and 1...Re8), **1...a6** was by far the most useful, because it ended all back-rank tricks.

## PUZZLE 2

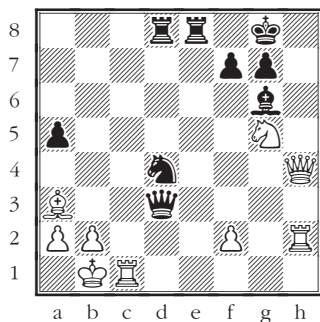


**Black to Move**

White threatens Qh8 mate. Because there's no way to prevent that mate, Black's fate hinges on whether or not he can drag White's King down first. What should Black do?

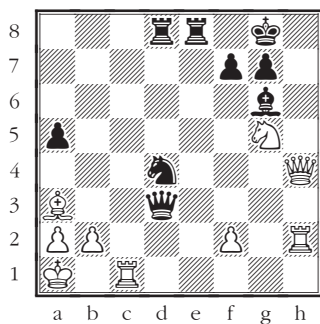
Answer:

Black strikes first with **1...Qxd3+**.



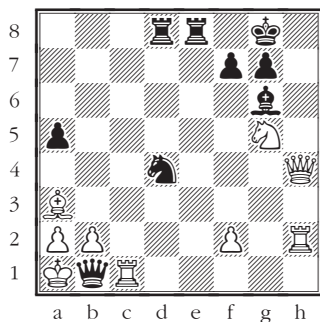
- **2.Ka1**

Getting out of check and once again threatening Qh8 mate.



- **2...Qb1+!**

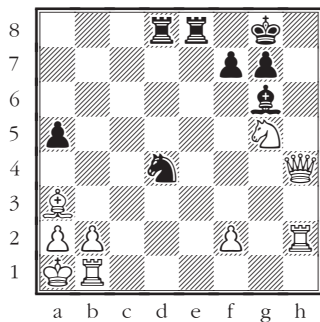
Sacrificing the Queen so that White's King will be trapped in a corner.



**White to Move**

○ **3.Rxb1**

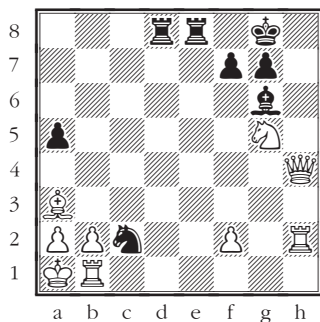
Now White's King has no legal move, so any lasting check against White's King will be mate.



**Black to Move**

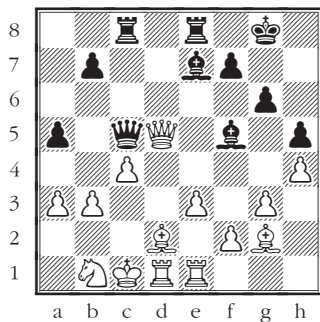
● **3...Nc2 mate.**

A smothered mate.



*White is mated*

### PUZZLE 3



**Black to Move**

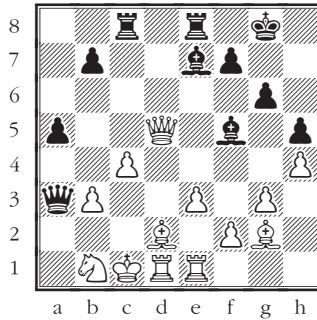
Black is a whopping Knight and 2 pawns down, which means that he is going to lose (and lose badly!) if he can't pull a rabbit out of his hat. Find the rabbit.

Answer:

Black saves himself by making use of a form of Boden's mate:

- 1...Qxa3+!

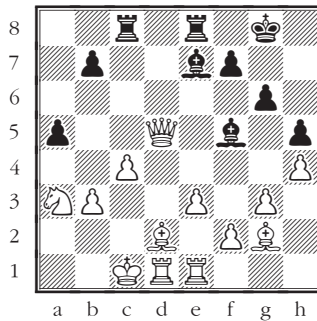
Ignoring the fact that this pawn is protected by White's Knight.



White to Move

- 2.Nxa3

The only legal reply.

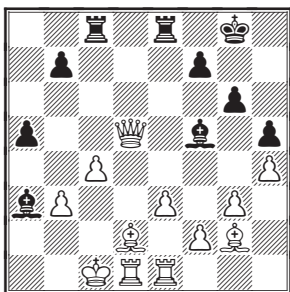


Black to Move

*Black is a Queen down, so he has to find a mate*

- 2...Bxa3 mate.

A lovely 2-Bishop mate. The dark-squared Bishop covers the a3-c1 diagonal while Black's light-squared Bishop covers the b1-h7 diagonal.



*White's King is mated*

## Summing Up

The puzzles in this lesson explored smothered mate, Boden's mate, luft, and back-rank mate. Imagine your delight when these same mating patterns appear in your games—and they will.

### Suggested Reading

Horowitz and Reinfeld, *Chess Traps, Pitfalls, & Swindles*.

Renaud and Kahn, *The Art of the Checkmate*.

### Key Terms

**back-rank mate:** When a King is sitting on its back rank, checked by an enemy Rook or Queen, and it can't escape that check.



**luft:** Meaning “air,” it describes a pawn move in front of one’s King that prevents back-rank mate possibilities.

**smothered mate:** Occurs when a King is surrounded by its own pieces, making it impossible for the King to move, and it’s in check by an enemy piece.

## Key People

**Joseph Blackburne** (1841–1924): An Englishman and one of the world’s elite players for many decades. His nickname was “the Black Death.”

**Samuel Boden** (1826–1882): One of England’s strongest players, he’s most famous for a matting pattern that is named after him.

**Francois Legall de Kermeur** (1702–1792): Usually referred to as Legall, he was France’s best player.

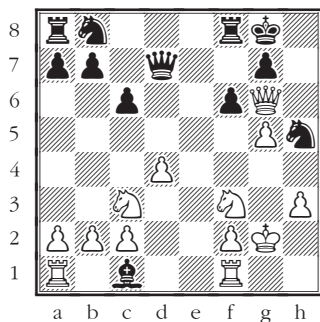
**Paul Morphy** (1837–1884): A legendary American player, he effortlessly mowed down all the world’s best players.

**Richard Reti** (1889–1926): Born in Prague, he was one of the top 5 players in the world during the 1920s.





Black continues his plan of a Knight or Bishop fork. In fact, he now threatens both: 17...Bxb2, forking White's Rook and c3-Knight; and 17...Nf4+, forking White's King and Queen.

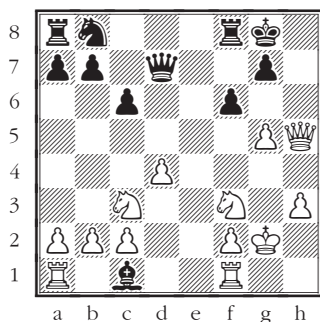


White to Move

Threatening 17...Nf4+, forking White's King and Queen.

- 17.Qxh5!

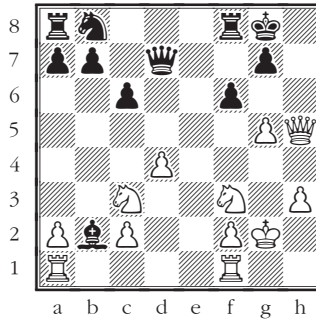
This prevents the Knight fork on f4 but allows Black to fork White's a1-Rook and c3-Knight. However, there's a method to White's madness.



Black to Move

- 17...Bxb2

Forking White's a1-Rook and c3-Knight. It seems that Black is going to win material. Is this so?

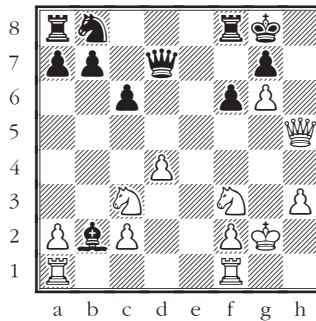


**White to Move**

*He doesn't care about Black's Bishop fork*

- **18.g6!**

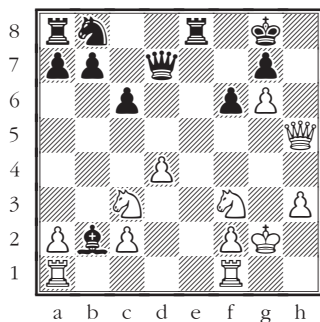
The mix of a powerful pawn on g6 and a Queen often means mate on h7. This game is no exception.



**Black to Move**

- **18...Re8**

This is the only move. By freeing the f8-square, Black hopes to run to safety via ...Kg8-f8-e7-d8.



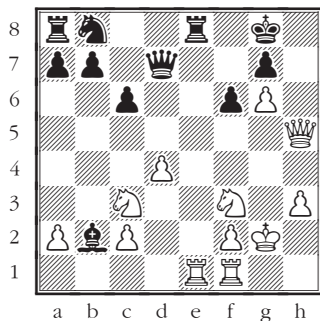
**White to Move**

*To check or not to check?*

○ **19.Rae1!**

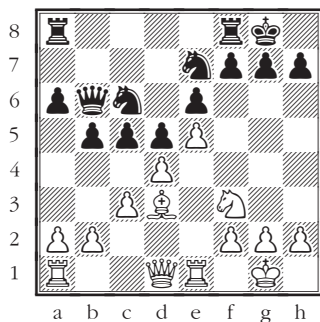
This is building a mating net. White doesn't let the enemy King run: 19.Qh7+ Kf8 20.Qh8+ Ke7 21.Qxg7+ Kd8 when Black's King is safe (although his position is still very bad).

After 19.Rae1, Black's King can no longer cross the e-file, and White's Qh7+ followed by Qh8 mate is unstoppable. White, of course, wins the game.



*Black should resign*

## PUZZLE 2



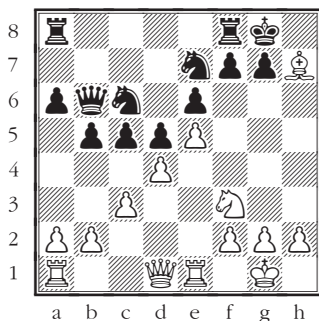
How would you play White's position?

*Answer:*

White wins by making use of the classic Bishop sacrifice.

- **1.Bxh7+!**

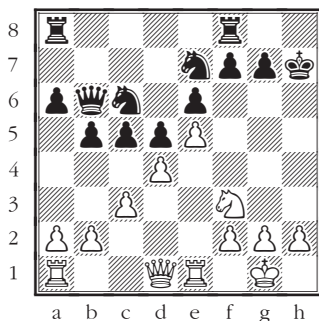
Because Black is now a pawn down, he might as well take the Bishop and hope for the best.



**Black to Move**

*It's going to be a bumpy ride*

- 1...Kxh7



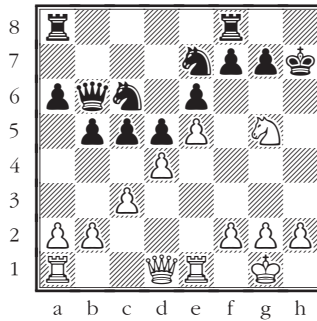
**White to Move**

*Material down, White has to keep the attack going*

- 2.Ng5+

White's pieces stream toward the open enemy King. Now 2...Kg6 3.Qg4 gives White a winning attack. Also bad is 2...Kh6 3.Re3! Kxg5 4.Rg3+ Kh6 5.Rh3+ Kg5 6.Qh5+ Kf4 7.Rh4 mate.

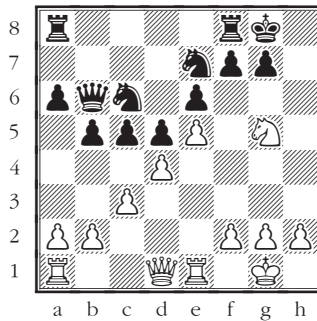




**Black to Move**  
*There is no defense*

- **2...Kg8**

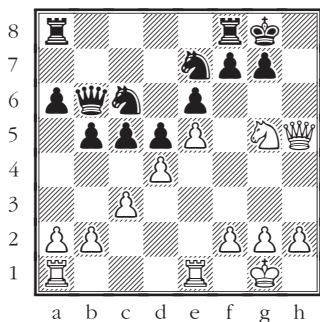
Black had 4 ways to retreat (2...Kg8, 2...Kh8, 2...Kg6, and 2...Kh6), but all get crushed.



**White to Move**

- **3.Qh5**

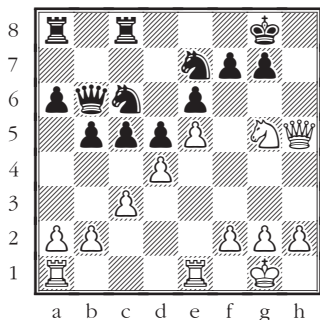
Threatening 4.Qh7 mate.



**Black to Move**

- **3...Rfc8**

Intending to meet 4.Qh7+ with 4...Kf8, running for his life.

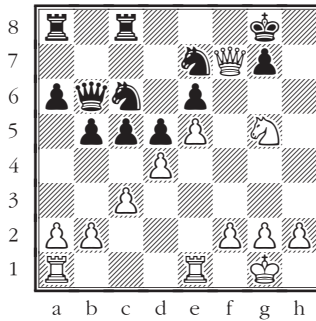


**White to Move**

*Push Black's King to the side of the board*

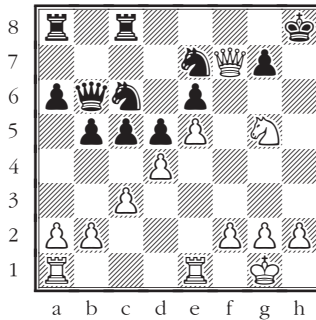
- **4.Qxf7+!**

Forcing Black's King into a corner.



- **4...Kh8**

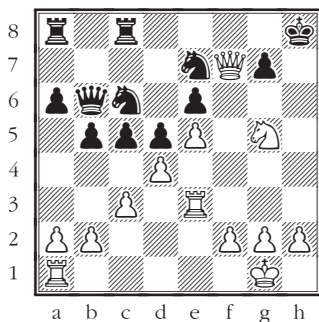
This is the only legal move.



*White needs more firepower*

- **5.Re3!**

White brings another piece into the attack. Now the threat is 6.Rh3 mate.

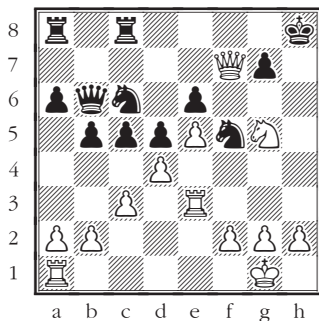


**Black to Move**

*The writing is on the wall*

- **5...Nf5**

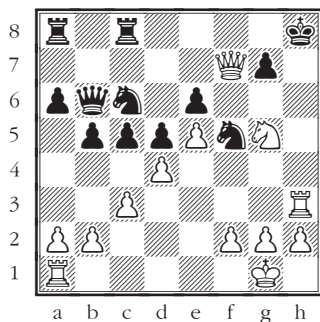
Using this Knight to block White's Rook on the h-file is Black's only defensive chance.



**White to Move**

- **6.Rh3+**

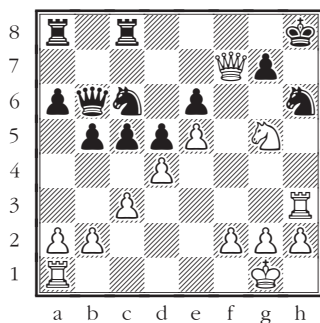
Forcing mate.



**Black to Move**  
*No miracles for Black*

- **6...Nh6**

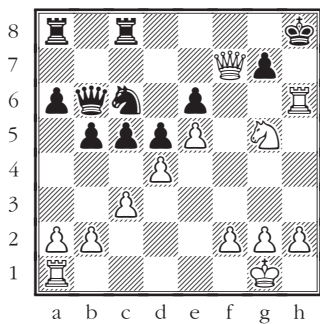
Forced.



**White to Move**  
*One last bit of flash and the game ends*

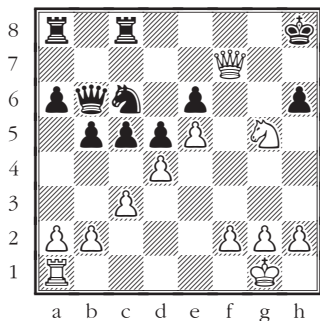
- **7.Rxh6+!**

Removing Black's only defender and forcing the g7-pawn to step away, thereby giving White's Queen access to the h7-square.



Black to Move

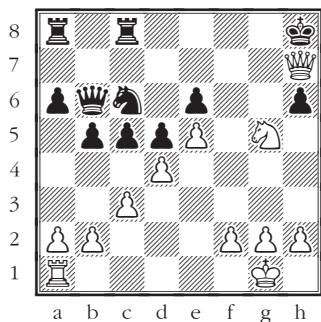
- 7...gxf6



White to Move

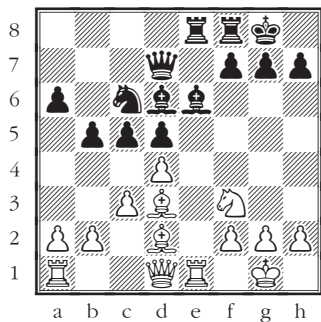
*Mate in 1*

- 8.Qh7 mate.



*Black's King never had a chance*

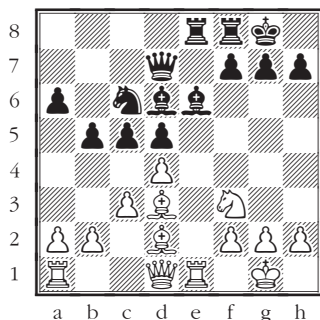
### PUZZLE 3



**White to Move**

Once again, White has the option of a classic Bishop sacrifice. Is the sacrifice on h7 wise in this position?

Answer:



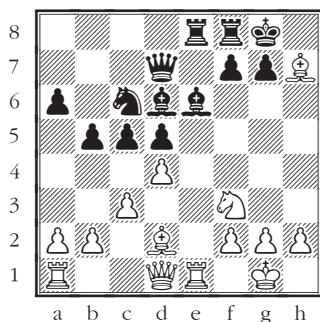
**White to Move**

*Should White use the classic Bishop sacrifice?*

No, it's not wise at all. Black can take the sacrificed Bishop and easily turn back the attack. Let's take a look.

- **1.Bxh7??**

Tempting, but keep in mind that this sacrifice doesn't work if the defending side is able to control the key h7-square with his Bishop or Queen.



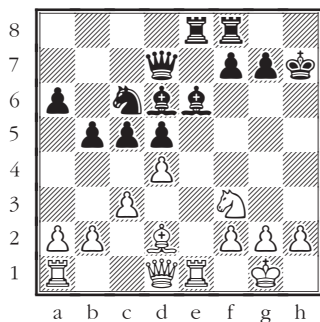
**Black to Move**

*It just doesn't work*

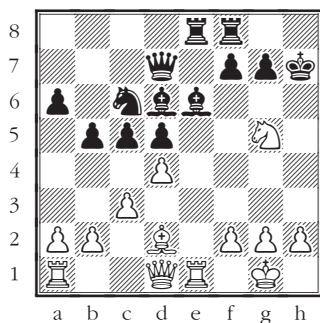


- **1...Kxh7**

Black has won a piece, but now it's White's turn to crank up the pressure with the usual Knight and Queen move. This is scary stuff, but it's insufficient due to Black's key idea.

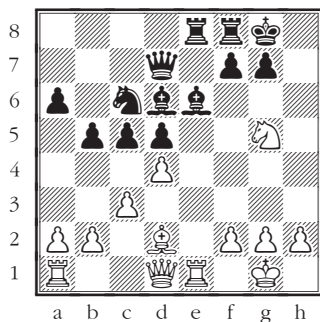


- **2.Ng5+**



- **2...Kg8**

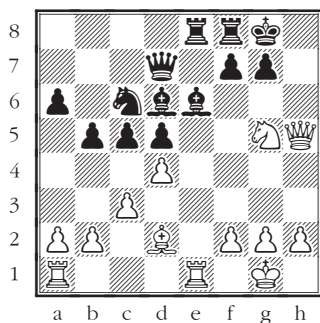
Of course, 2...Kh8?? allows a quick mate after 3.Qh5+ Kh8 4.Qh7 mate.



White to Move

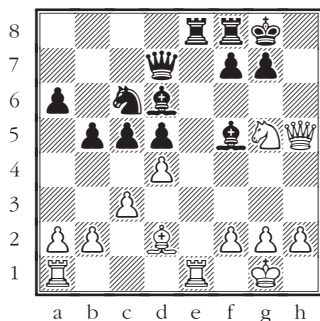
○ 3.Qh5

You've seen this setup before, but that doesn't mean it's always going to work. The main point is that White threatens 4.Qh7 mate. If Black can stop that threat, then the attack will most likely fail. If White is able to safely play Qh7+, then the attack will most likely succeed.



Black to Move

● 3...Bf5



*White's attack has failed*

Black's light-squared Bishop is defending the critical h7-square, and White isn't able to add more fuel to the fire. A general classic Bishop sacrifice rule is this: If the defender is able to control the h7-square with a Bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal or a Knight on f8 or f6, the attack is probably going to fail. Simply put, it's all about the h7-square—whoever owns it, wins.

## Summing Up

Getting a pawn to g6—the heart of the enemy kingside—is quite an achievement, because that pawn (which controls the f7- and h7-squares) creates some very dangerous mating possibilities against the enemy King.

The classic Bishop sacrifice is quite a different animal, but it also targets the h7-square and creates an immediate disruption in the enemy King's pawn cover. Keep in mind that once White sacrifices his Bishop, both sides live or die on who can control the h7-square. If Black can get a Knight or light-squared Bishop or his Queen to protect that square, the sacrifice usually fails. If Black isn't able to bring a defensive piece to protect h7, then the sacrifice usually crashes through.

## Suggested Reading

Edwards, *Sacking the Citadel*.

Vukovic, *The Art of Attack in Chess*.

## Key Terms

**classic Bishop sacrifice:** A famous kingside attacking pattern where White pulls the enemy King into the open by sacrificing his light-squared Bishop on h7.

**dark-square complex:** A very common kingside attacking pattern where White's pieces are able to infiltrate onto Black's kingside holes on f6, g7, and h6.

## Key Person

**Emil Schallopp** (1843–1919): Born in Germany, he played in many international tournaments. However, he was most famous for books he wrote about chess.

# Legendary Attacking Greats of Chess

## Lesson 8

Chess isn't just about playing—it's about the colorful tales from more than a thousand years of chess history and seeing beauty in master games. In this lesson, you will learn about the history and games of 4 chess greats: the American Paul Morphy, who dominated the chess world in 1858 and was universally recognized as the greatest player who ever lived; the Russian Alexander Alekhine, the fourth world chess champion; the Latvian genius Mikhail Tal, the ninth world chess champion; and the man from Azerbaijan, Garry Kasparov, the 13<sup>th</sup> world chess champion. All of these men mastered every aspect of chess, but their greatest strength was their fierce attacks, ripping their opponents limb from limb.

### PUZZLE 1

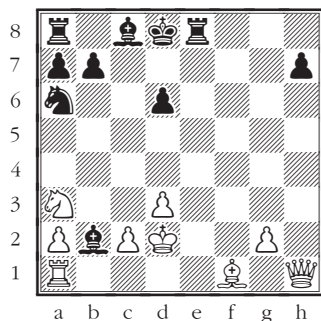
**True or false:** Paul Morphy was the first official world chess champion.

*Answer:*

**False.** In Morphy's day, there was no official world chess champion. However, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that Morphy was not only the best player in the world, but also the best player who ever lived.

The first official world chess champion was Wilhelm Steinitz, who won it in a match in 1886 against Johann Zukertort.

## PUZZLE 2



White to Move

**Paul Morphy vs. Adolf Anderssen, Paris 1858**

This position isn't about mate or immediate attack; it's all about material. At the moment, Black has a Bishop and Rook for White's Queen—but that's not enough (9 points for White, 8 for Black). However, Black's dark-squared Bishop is forking White's Rook and Knight, and if Black wins one of those pieces, then he'll be the one with a point count lead.

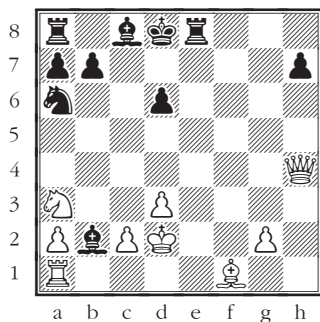
Who will win the battle for material superiority?

*Answer:*

White wins the point count battle by mixing checks against Black's vulnerable King with a double attack.

○ **1.Qh4+**

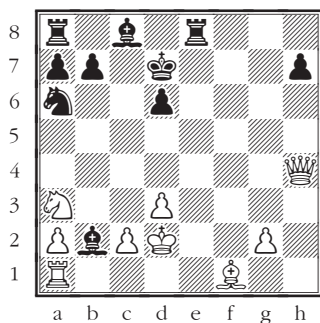
This gets the Queen into the battle with gain of time. Black's King is in check, so Black's dark-squared Bishop can't capture the 2 White pieces he's forking.



**Black to Move**

- **1...Kd7**

1...Kc7 2.Nb5+ gets the Knight out of the b2-Bishop's sight, while 1...Re7 fails to 2.Re1 when the e7-Rook is pinned.

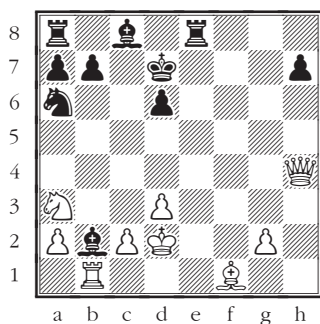


**White to Move**

*He sets up a double attack*

- **2.Rb1**

Placing his Rook on a safe square, getting his Rook into the battle, and threatening Black's b2-Bishop.

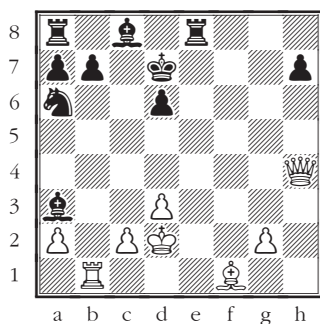


**Black to Move**

*It's take the Knight or bust!*

- **2...Bxa3**

It seems that Black has won the battle for material domination, but White has seen deeper. He intends to make use of Black's undefended a3-Bishop and the vulnerable Black King to end this material contest once and for all.

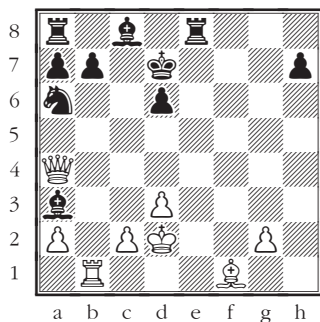


**White to Move**

*The double attack wins the game*

- **3.Qa4+!**

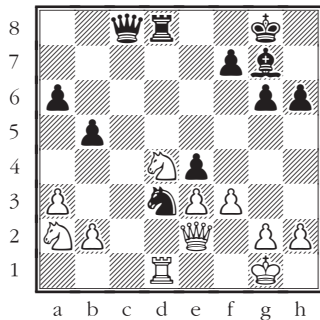




*Black resigns*

Why did Black give up? White has just forked Black's King and a3-Bishop. After Black's King moves to safety, White will gobble up the a3-Bishop and enjoy a winning material advantage.

### PUZZLE 3



**Black to Move**

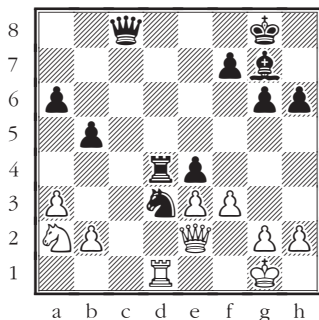
**Ernst Gruenfeld vs. Alexander Alekhine, Karlsbad 1923**

Black is much better due to his powerful advanced Knight and his laser-beam Bishop. Alekhine finished up with style. Can you find his combinative finish? Whether you do or don't, you'll enjoy Alekhine's brilliant concept.

*Answer:*

● **30...Rxd4!!**

This is a lovely sacrifice that is designed to bring the Bishop to d4, which would give Black a serious attack against White's King.



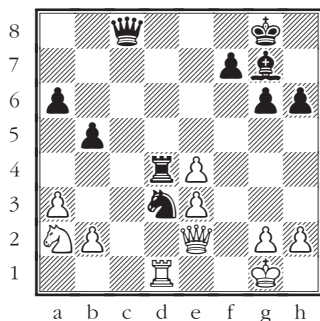
**White to Move**

*He has to make a difficult decision*

○ **31.fxe4**

Also losing is 31.exd4 Bxd4+ 32.Kf1 (32.Kh1 Nf2+ forks the King and Rook) 32...Nf4! 33.Qxe4 Qc4+ (White's King is being attacked by Black's Queen, Bishop, and Knight) 34.Ke1 Nxe2+ 35.Kd2 Be3+ 36.Qxe3 (White's only legal move) 36...Nxe3, and Black is left with a decisive material advantage.

With 31.fxe4, White now threatens to take Black's Knight and Rook.

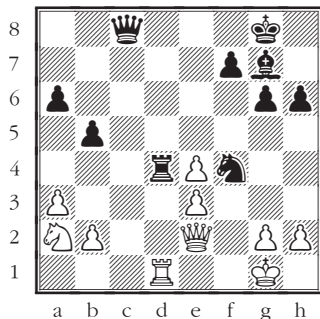


**Black to Move**

*Has White turned the tables?*

- **31...Nf4!!**

This is a stunning move that Gruenfeld probably missed. Black's Knight, which is attacking White's Queen, has to be taken.

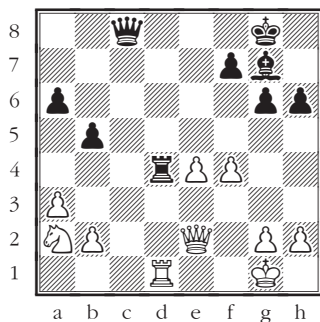


**White to Move**

*Black's Knight must die!*

- **32.exf4**

White is a pawn up and seems to be safe. Of course, Alekhine saw that this wasn't the case several moves earlier.

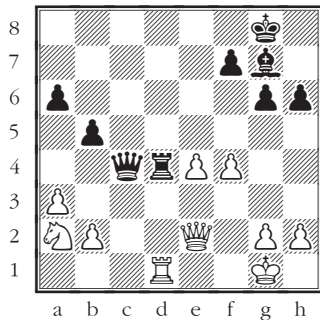


**Black to Move**

*Time to surprise White again*

● **32...Qc4!**

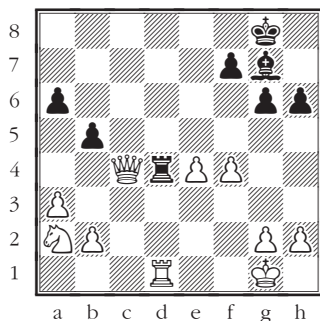
This is the point of Black's earlier moves. Black threatens both ...Qxe2 and ...Qxa2 (a double attack), so White is compelled to capture Black's Queen.



**White to Move**

*Desperately trying to hold on*

○ **33.Qxc4**

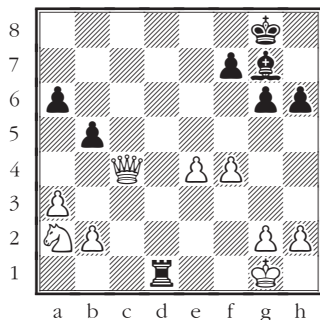


**Black to Move**

*Time for a little Zwischenzug*

- **33...Rxd1+**

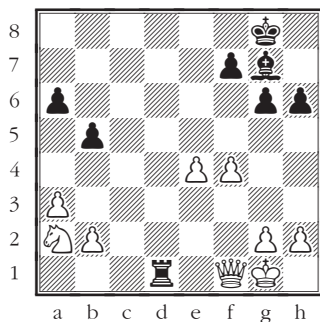
White has 2 legal replies, but both lose—one by mate and the other by massive material deficit.



**White to Move**

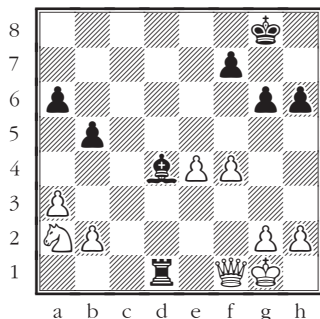
- **34.Qf1**

Because 34.Kf2 bxc4 leaves Black up a whole Rook, which is hopeless for White, he retreated his Queen, allowing the audience to see what Alekhine had in mind.



**Black to Move**

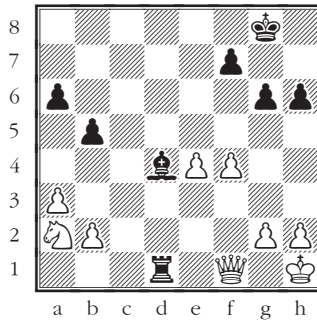
- 34...Bd4+



**White to Move**

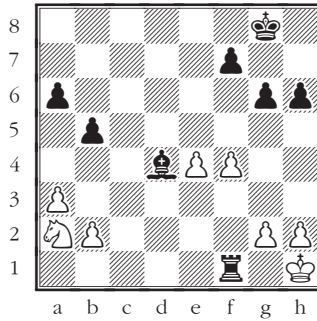
- 35.Kh1

Of course, 35.Qf2 is impossible because the Queen is pinned to its King.



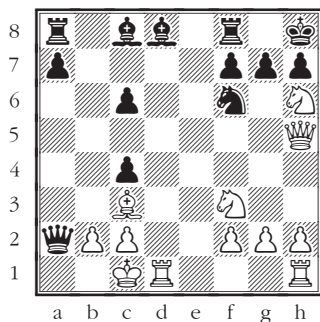
**Black to Move**

- **35...Rxf1** mate.



*White must have felt like he was hit by a storm*

## PUZZLE 4



White to Move

**Mikhail Tal vs. Vassily Smyslov, Candidates Tournament 1959**

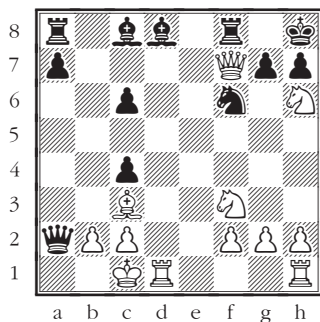
Can you find Tal's brilliant move?

*Answer:*

- **19.Qxf7!!**

Shocking his opponent with a Queen sacrifice. In the actual game, Black played 19...Qa1+ and lost in a few moves (20.Kd2 Rxf7 21.Nxf7+ Kg8 22.Rxa1 Kxf7 23.Ne5+ Ke6 24.Nxc6 Ne4+ 25.Ke3 Bb6+ 26.Bd4, 1-0), but let's look at what happens if Black captures White's Queen.

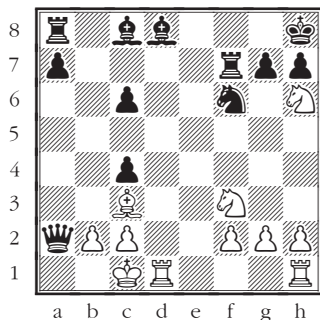




**Black to Move**

- **19...Rxf7**

By taking White's Queen, Black's Rook no longer protects the d8-Bishop. This allows White's d1-Rook to claim the back rank with lethal effect.

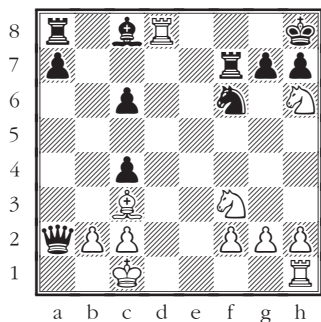


**White to Move**

*Black will be mated*

- **20.Rxd8+**

Forcing mate.

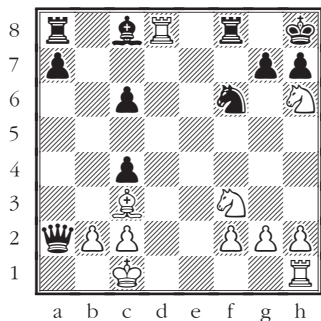


**Black to Move**

*Most people would resign here*

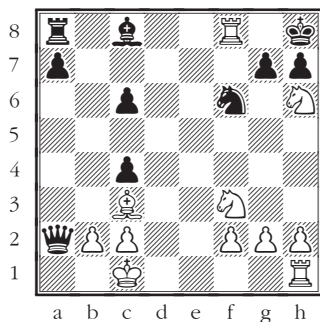
- **20...Rf8**

All Black can do is sacrifice his pieces to temporarily block the checks.



**White to Move**

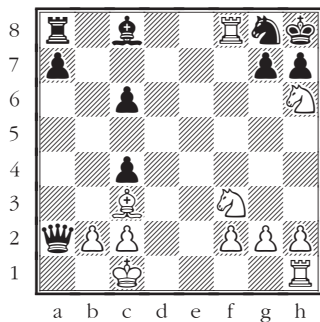
- **21.Rxf8+**



**Black to Move**

- **21...Ng8**

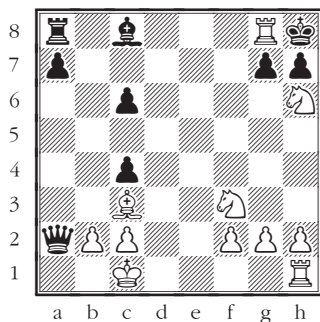
Not a happy move, but there was no choice.



**White to Move**

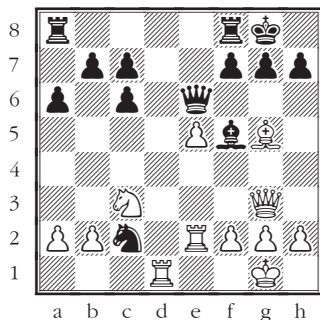
- **22.Rxg8** mate.

This is a back-rank mate. White also could have mated his opponent by a smothered mate: 22.Nf7 mate.



*Mate*

### PUZZLE 5



**White to Move**

**Garry Kasparov vs. Shohrat Muratkuliev, Baku 1973**

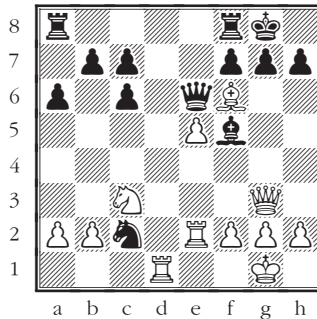
Black is a pawn ahead and seems to be doing well. How can White turn the tables?

*Answer:*

Two pins allow White to regain his pawn with a clear advantage.

○ **18.Bf6!**

The f6-Bishop can't be captured due to the pin along the g-file. In fact, White now threatens 19.Qxg7 mate. Black can't stop the mate by 18...g6 because the dark squares on f6, g7, and h6 would be gaping wounds, leaving Black helpless to stop an enemy invasion: 19.Qf4 when Qh6 followed by Qg7 will mate Black's King.

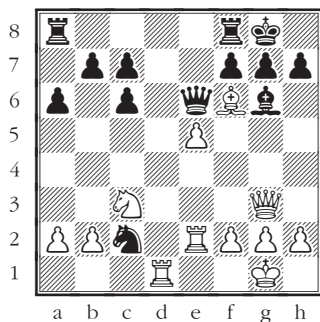


**Black to Move**

*Mate has to be stopped*

● **18...Bg6**

With 18...Bg6, Black stops White's Qxg7 mate threat and also ends the pin along the g-file. This means that 19...gxf6 is now a threat.

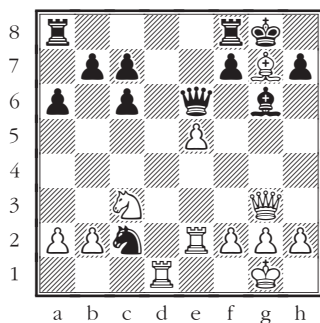


**White to Move**

*Kasparov shows the true point of 18.Bf6*

- **19.Bxg7!**

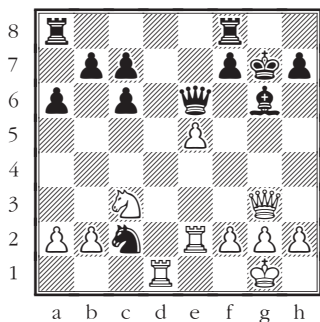
White creates a new pin by temporarily sacrificing the Bishop.



**Black to Move**

*White's Bishop has to be captured*

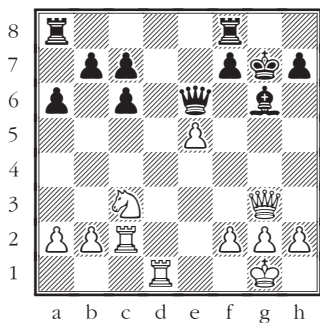
- **19...Kxg7**



**White to Move**

○ **20.Rxc2**

Now we can see White's point. The g6-Bishop, which was defending its Knight on c2, is pinned by the White Queen (X-raying to the Black King) and, as a result, can't capture White's c2-Rook. The resulting position, with equal material, is clearly better for White: Black's pawn structure is inferior to White's, and Black's King is vulnerable due to the rupturing of its pawn cover. White won in another 12 moves.



*White's strategy has succeeded*

## Summing Up

All 4 of these amazing players were the best in the world during their heyday. And all 4 players still have millions of fans who go over all of their games, read books about them, carefully study their history, and do their best to emulate these legendary attacking giants.

### Suggested Reading

Alekhine, *My Best Games of Chess, 1908–1937*.

Lawson, *Paul Morphy*.

Muller and Stolze, *The Magic Tactics of Mikhail Tal*.

Tal, *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal*.

### Key People

**Alexander Alekhine** (1892–1946): Born in Russia, he was one of the strongest players of all time. He defeated the great Capablanca in a match in 1927, thereby becoming the fourth world chess champion.

**Adolf Anderssen** (1818–1879): A German master, he was considered to be the world's best player during his prime. He's most famous for his amazing attacking masterpieces.

**Efim Bogoljubov** (1889–1952): Born in Russia, he was one of the world's best players. He played for the World Chess Championship twice against Alekhine, losing both times.

**Mikhail Botvinnik** (1911–1995): Born in Moscow, he became the sixth world chess champion. He was one of the world's finest players for more than 30 years.

**Florin Gheorghiu** (1944– ): Born in Romania, he was a successful grandmaster. His finest moment was when he beat Bobby Fischer in the Havana Olympiad in 1966.



**Garry Kasparov** (1963– ): Born in Azerbaijan, he is the 13<sup>th</sup> world chess champion and is viewed as the best player of all time by many.

**Johann Lowenthal** (1810–1876): Born in Hungary, he was a professional chess master. He was most famous for his 2 matches against Morphy, both of which he lost.

**Paul Morphy** (1837–1884): A legendary American player, he effortlessly mowed down all the world's best players.

**Aron Nimzowitsch** (1886–1935): Born in Latvia, he wrote some of the most important chess books in history. He was also a great player, rising to number 3 in the world during his prime.

**Tigran Petrosian** (1929–1984): Born in Tbilisi, Georgia, he became the ninth world chess champion. In his prime, he was considered to be almost unbeatable.

**Friedrich Samisch** (1896–1975): A German grandmaster, he held his own against many of the greats. Today, 2 well-known opening variations bear his name: the Samisch variation of the King's Indian Defense and the Samisch variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defense.

**Vassily Smyslov** (1921–2010): A Russian grandmaster, he was the seventh world chess champion. He was famous for his pristine positional and endgame play.

**Wilhelm Steinitz** (1836–1900): Born in Austria, he became the first official world chess champion. He is also revered as a writer; his writings explained his theories about chess strategy.

**Mikhail Tal** (1936–1992): Born in Latvia, he was the eighth world chess champion and was famous for his outrageous attacking play.

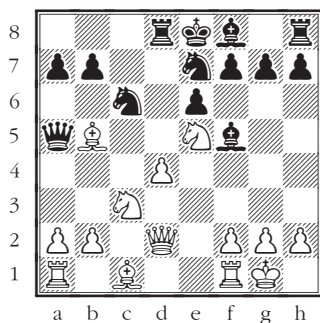
**Johann Zukertort** (1842–1888): Born in Poland, he was one of the top 3 players in the world. He also excelled in blindfold chess, playing 16 games at the same time.

# A Cascade of Short, Brutal Chess Games!

## Lesson 9

Sometimes even the greatest players lose quickly. In this lesson, you will be exposed to several games (all of which employ patterns you have been introduced to previously) where one side was thrashed before the game even began. Understanding these games will allow you to do the same to your opponents. These kinds of games can be very exciting; in fact, they can be so exciting that players never tire of looking at them.

### PUZZLE 1

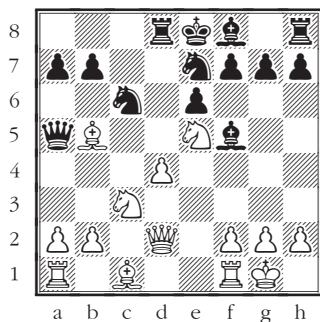


White to Move

Arnold Denker vs. Chiera, Washington 1936

White's King is safely castled. Black's King is in the center. Can White punish his opponent's refusal to safeguard his King?

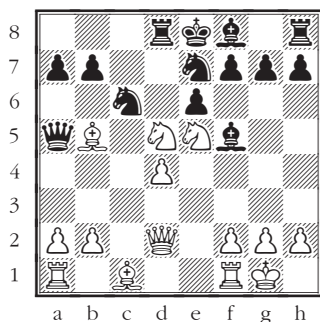
Answer:



Grandmaster Arnold Denker was the U.S. champion in 1944 and 1946. He was famous for his hyperaggressive style, which resulted in many beautiful attacking masterpieces.

○ **12.Nd5!!**

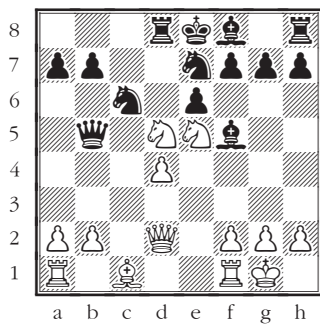
Black resigned on the spot! The problem is that Black's Queen is under attack by White's Queen; note that the b5-Bishop is pinning the c6-Knight, which means that Black's Queen isn't protected.



Let's take a look at what might have occurred:

- 12...Qxb5

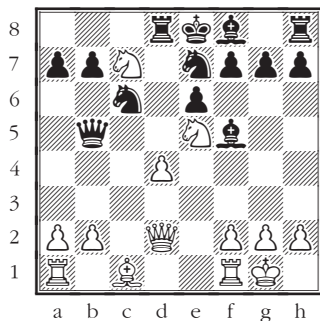
The same reply would be used against 12...Qxd2.



**White to Move**  
*Mate in 1*

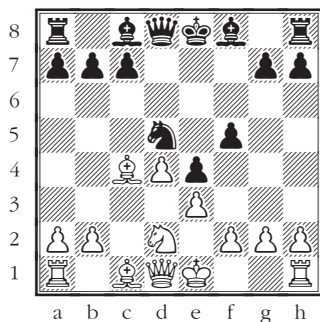
- 13.Nc7 mate.

A rare family fork mate!



*Black is mated*

## PUZZLE 2

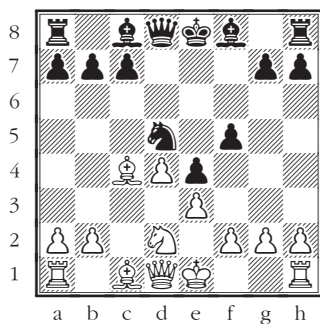


White to Move

**Frank Marshall vs. Edgar McCormick, New York 1938**

Black is in for a surprise. How can White turn Black's satisfied smile into a frown?

*Answer:*



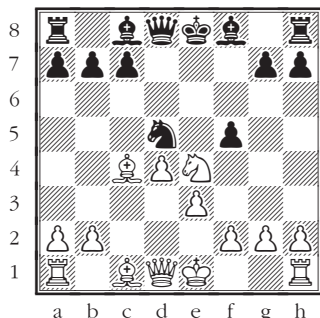
White to Move

Frank Marshall was one of the world's best players and held the U.S. championship for an astounding 27 years. He was famous for his attacking acumen, dragging one world-class opponent after the other down to ignominious defeat.

○ **10.Nxe4!**

This move must have shocked his opponent to the core.

Not wanting to be down material for nothing after 10...fxe4 11.Qh5+ (a double attack, hitting the d5-Knight and the King at the same time) 11...g6 12.Qxd5, he tries to wiggle out, which quickly made things even worse.



**Black to Move**

*He's in trouble and tries to find a way out*

● **10...Nxe3**

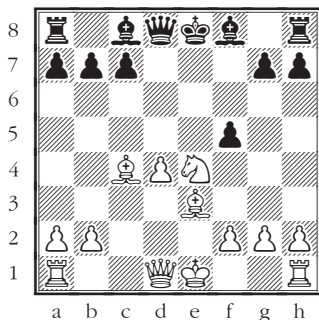
Black's idea is that because his Knight would be lost anyway, he might as well get a pawn for it before capturing White's Knight on e4. This sounds reasonable, but it doesn't work out as he planned.



**White to Move**  
*The e3-Knight has to go*

○ **11.Bxe3**

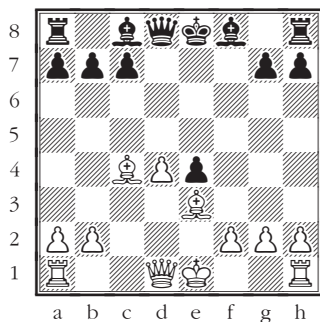
Taking the piece and developing at the same time. Quick development is always very important.



**Black to Move**  
*White's e4-Knight must be captured*

● **11...fxe4**

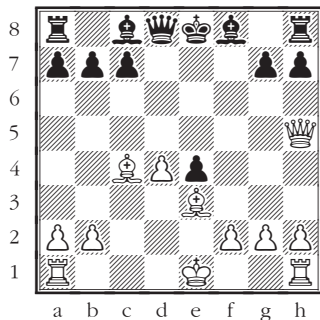
Material is even. So, Black is okay, right? No, he's not at all okay!



White to Move

- 12.Qh5+

Black realizes that 12...g6 loses his Rook to 13.Qe5+, forking Black's King and h8-Rook. So, with a heavy heart, he moves his King out of check.

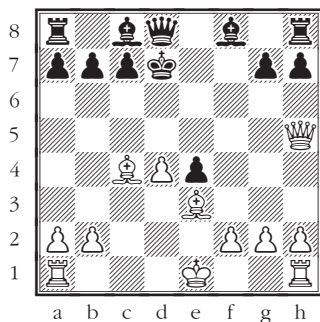


Black to Move

*The King goes on a journey*

- 12...Kd7

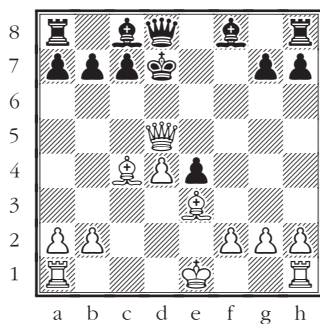




**White to Move**  
*Black is mated by force*

- **13.Qd5+**

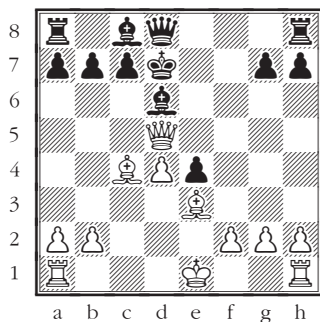
Black can't prevent mate.



**Black to Move**

- **13...Bd6**

Other moves also lead to mate: 13...Ke7 (13...Ke8 14.Qf7 mate),  
 14.Bg5+ Ke8 15.Qxd8 mate (or 15.Qf7 mate).

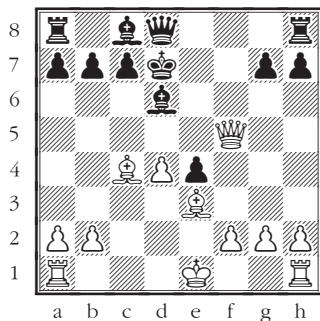


**White to Move**

*Mate in 2*

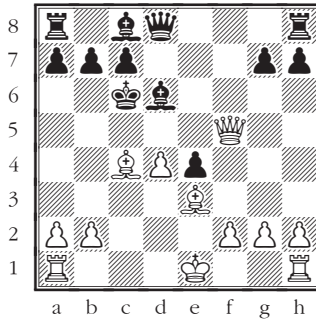
- 14.Qf5+

Because 14...Ke8 is met by 15.Qf7 mate, Black runs his King to the queenside. Alas, his monarch still falls to its knees.



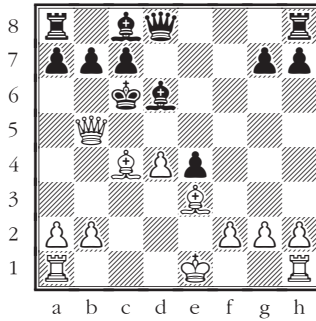
**Black to Move**

- 14...Kc6



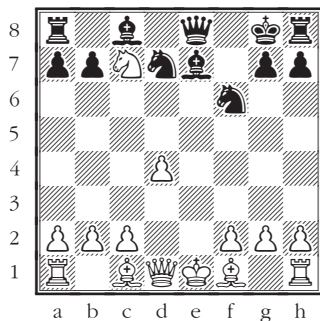
White to Move

15.Qb5 mate (15.d5 mate is also picturesque).



*Black's King didn't know what hit him*

## PUZZLE 3

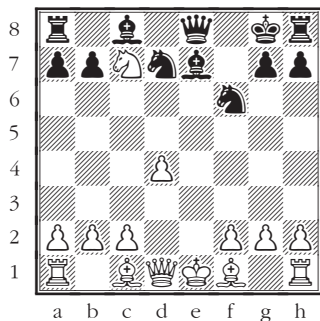


**Black to Move**

**Heinrich Lohmann vs. Rudolf Teschner, Bad Pyrmont 1950**

White is very happy. His Knight is forking Black's Queen and h8-Rook, and Bc4+ is another annoying threat. What can possibly go wrong?

*Answer:*

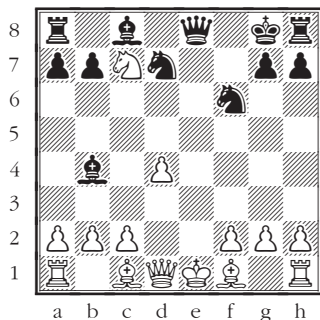


**Black to Move**

Rudolf Teschner was an international chess master and a highly regarded chess writer. FIDE, the international chess federation, gave him the grandmaster title in 1992.

- **10...Bb4 mate!**

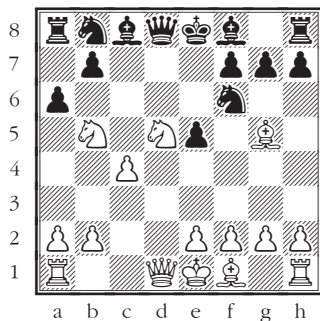
This is a rare double discovered checkmate; White's King is attacked by Black's dark-squared Bishop (along the e1-a5 diagonal) and the Black Queen (along the e1-e8 file).



*What? It's mate?*

The lesson here is to never say, "What can go wrong?"

## PUZZLE 4

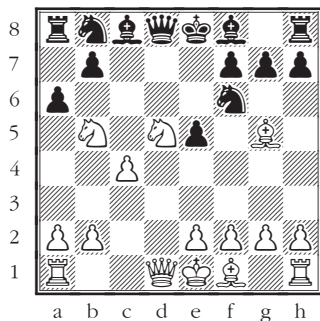


**Black to Move**

**Reuben Fine vs. Mikhail Yudovich, Moscow 1937**

White, who threatens both  $9.Nbc7+$  and  $9.Nxf6+$ , thinks that Black has walked into an opening trap, but the reverse is actually the case. Do you see how Black can turn the tables?

*Answer:*



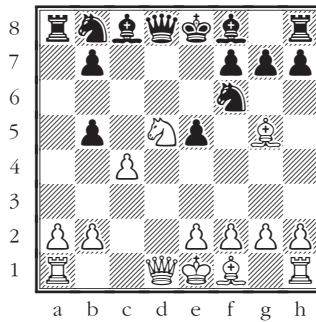
**Black to Move**

Mikhail Yudovich was a Russian international master, a correspondence chess grandmaster, and a chess writer.

Reuben Fine was an American chess grandmaster and, in his prime, was considered to be one of the top 4 or 5 players in the world.

- **8...axb5!**

Black's move seems obvious, but White had noticed a flaw in Black's logic—or so he thought.

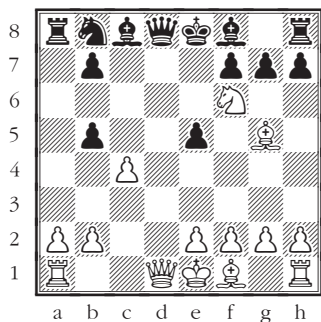


**White to Move**

*He thinks that Black has fallen for his trap*

- **9.Nxf6+**

White's point is that 9...gxf6 loses to 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8 11.Bxf6+, forking Black's King and h8-Rook. In that case, White would indeed win. However, reality did an about-face after Black's reply.

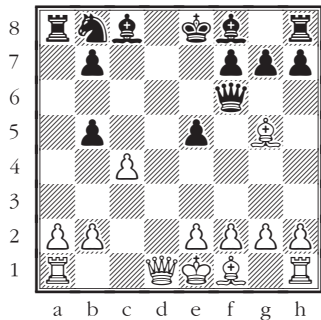


**Black to Move**

*A surprise reply turns the tables*

● **9...Qxf6!!**

Suddenly, White is dead lost. But why? Didn't Black just give away his Queen? Yes, he did, but he'll soon win White's Queen, leaving Black with a winning material advantage.



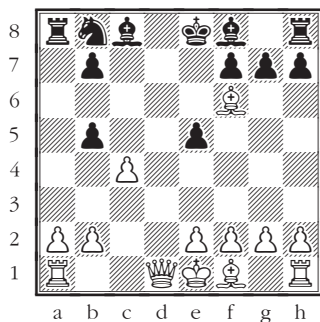
**White to Move**

*The trapper has become the trapped*

○ **10.Bxf6**

This move wins Black's Queen and threatens 11.Qd8 mate—yet Black is the one who is winning.



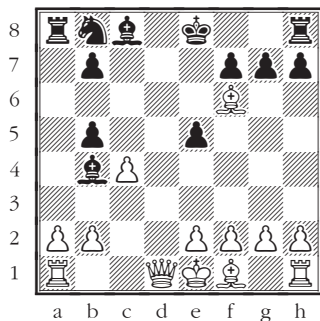


**Black to Move**

*Everything makes sense after Black's next move*

- **10...Bb4+!**

Now things are clear. White is in check and has nowhere to run. His only legal move is to block with his Queen.

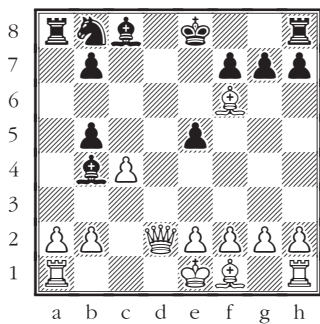


**White to Move**

*He has no choice*

- **11.Qd2**

The only legal move.

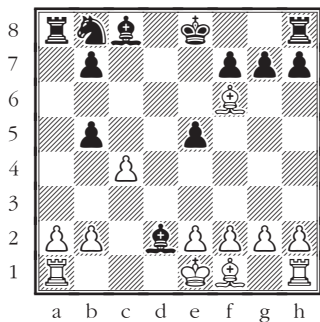


**Black to Move**

*Time to eat some White pieces*

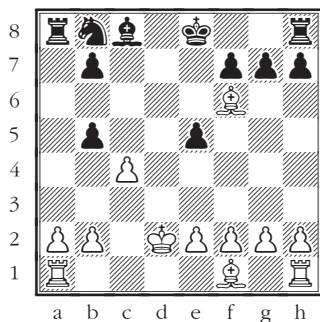
- **11...Bxd2+**

Regaining his sacrificed Queen.



**White to Move**

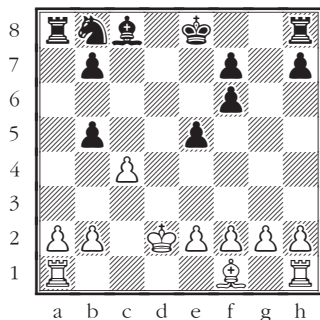
- **12.Kxd2**



**Black to Move**

- **12...gxf6**

Somehow, by some miracle, Black has a piece more than White (who doesn't have a Knight, while Black does). Seeing this, Fine resigned.



*Time to use point count*

## Summing Up

Quick losses are caused by blunders. These blunders can be boring (e.g., giving away a piece for nothing), meaning that the game is pretty much useless, or they can allow some beautiful tactical stroke that makes the game thrilling and memorable. The games in this lesson are in the latter category. In fact, this kind of tactical reprisal is often so exciting that players never tire of looking at them.

### Suggested Reading

Chernev, *Logical Chess*.

———, *The 1000 Best Short Games of Chess*.

### Key Terms

**double attack:** In a way, you can think of forks, skewers, and pins as double attacks, because 1 piece attacks 2 at the same time. In fact, the main idea of a double attack—making 2 threats at once—is the backbone of the vast majority of tactical themes.

**fool's mate:** The fastest possible mate: 1.f4 e6 2.g4 Qh4 mate.

**fork:** A tactical maneuver in which a piece or pawn attacks 2 enemy pieces or pawns at the same time.

**smothered mate:** Occurs when a King is surrounded by its own pieces, making it impossible for the King to move, and it's in check by an enemy piece.

### Key People

**Arnold Denker** (1914–2005): He was the U.S. champion in 1945 and 1946. He was famous for his sparkling attack games.

**Reuben Fine** (1914–1993): An American grandmaster and psychologist, he was clearly among the top 5 players during the 1930s and 1940s. When World War II ended, he gave up chess and concentrated on psychology.

**Edward Lasker** (1885–1981): Born in Poland, he was skilled at both chess and Go. During his prime years, he battled against the world's best players. He was also an excellent writer, and his books are still read today.

**Frederic Lazard** (1883–1948): A French chess master, he crossed swords with legends like Tartakower and Alekhine.

**Frank Marshall** (1877–1944): One of the strongest players in the world, he was the best American chess grandmaster from 1904 to 1930. He held the U.S. championship title for an astounding 27 straight years.

**Rudolf Teschner** (1922–2006): He was a German grandmaster and a highly respected chess writer.

**Sir George Thomas** (1881–1972): A very strong British chess master, he was also top class in badminton and tennis. He played in the famous Wimbledon tennis tournament in 1911.

# Chess Heroes of the Romantic Age

## Lesson 10

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the top chess players played to create art on the chessboard. They attacked each other at the same time, and every game was an adventure. This period was known as the romantic age of chess. This lesson will introduce you to 3 legends of that age: the German destroyer Adolf Anderssen, the Englishman Joseph Henry Blackburne (nicknamed “the Black Death”), and the Slovakian Baron Ignatz von Kolisch. You also will learn about the Turk, a chess-playing mechanical construct that, though made of wood, looked human and beat everyone who dared to challenge it.

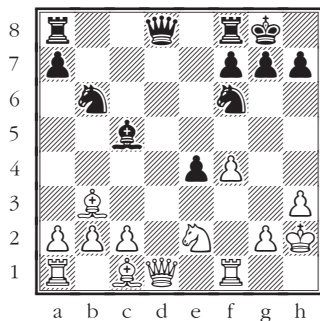
### PUZZLE 1

**True or false:** The Turk was a very strong player from Turkey who ruled the European chess scene in the mid-1700s to the early 1800s.

*Answer:*

**False.** The Turk, “born” in 1769, was the first chess-playing machine. The machine’s moves were played by a robot that resembled a man dressed in Turkish attire and was attached to a large chest. People from around the world were both astounded and terrified by this seemingly impossible contraption. It took many decades before the Turk’s secret was discovered.

## PUZZLE 2

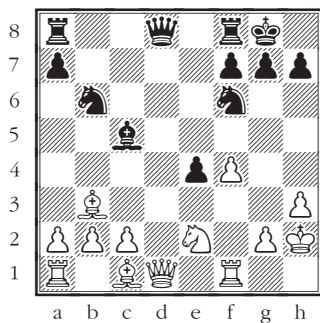


**Black to Move**

**Bernhard Horwitz vs. Ignatz von Kolisch, Manchester 1860**

Kolisch loved to attack, so it shouldn't be any surprise that he did just that. Try to blaze the same trail Kolisch did.

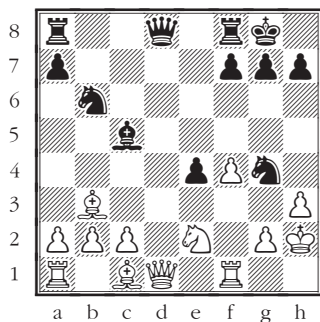
*Answer:*



**Black to Move**

- 15...Ng4+!

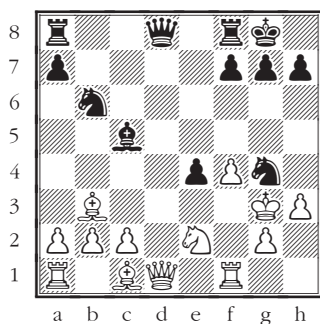
This move puts White in a quandary: He can capture the Knight (16.hxg4) and allow 16...Qh4 mate; he can give up his Queen by 16.Kh1 Nf2+ (forking the King and Queen) 17.Rxf2 Qxd1+, etc.; or he can run for his life. He chose to run.



**White to Move**

*The King goes for a stroll*

- 16.Kg3



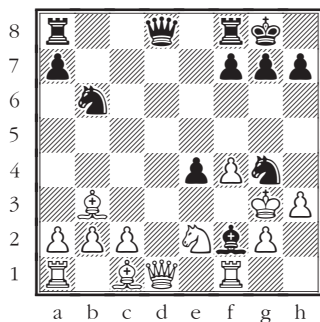
**Black to Move**

*Keep the attack rolling*

- 16...Bf2+!



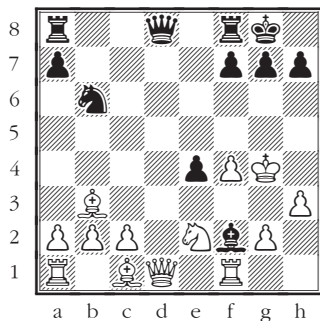
Once again, White has to decide between a rock and a hard place. The rock is 17.Rxf2 Qxd1, which was actually played in the game. However, because White lost his Queen, he had no chance and went down in defeat.



**White to Move**  
*A difficult decision*

○ 17.Kxg4

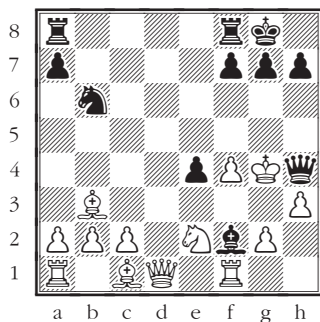
This is the hard place. White retains his Queen, but his King appears to be defecting as it marches down the board into the enemy camp.



**Black to Move**  
*White's King must die*

● 17...Qh4+

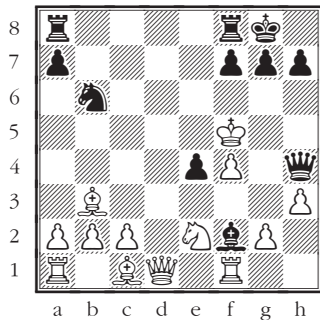
This forces White's King even deeper into the enemy camp. It's clear that White's King will never find its way home again.



White to Move

- 18.Kf5

The only legal move.

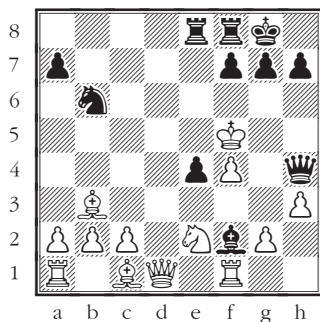


Black to Move

*Don't let White's King run away*

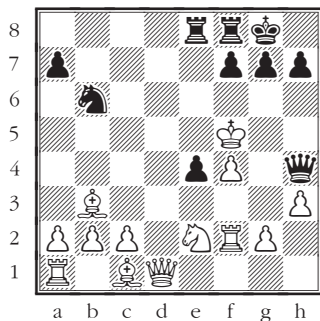
- 18...Rac8!

This is building a mating net. White's King can't capture the e4-pawn, nor can it walk across the e-file. Trapped in its horrendous position, mate is clearly just around the corner.



**White to Move**

- 19.Rxf2

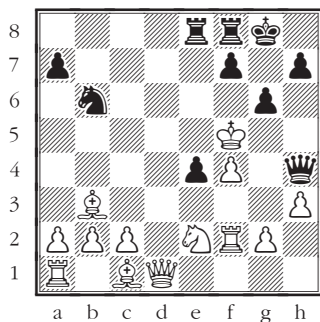


**Black to Move**

*Mate in 1*

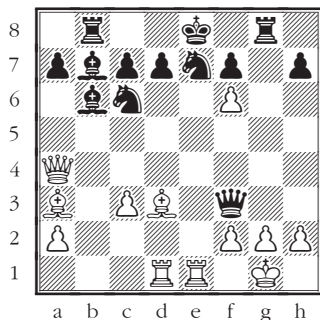
- 19...g6 mate.

Everyone loves a pawn mate!



*Mate*

### PUZZLE 3

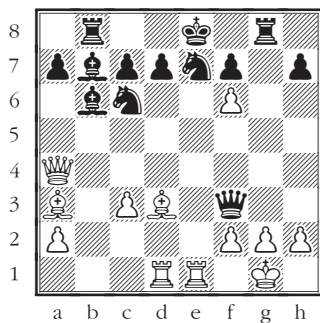


**White to Move**

**Adolf Anderssen vs. Jean Dufresne, Berlin 1852**

It looks like White is dead meat, because Black threatens 20...Qxg2 mate and 20...Qxf2+. However, Anderssen had prepared a brilliant response. What would you do in this scenario?

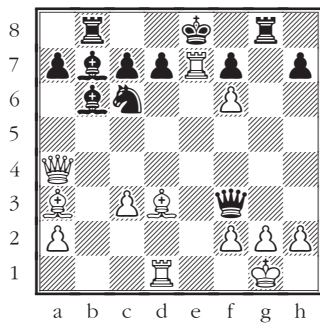
Answer:



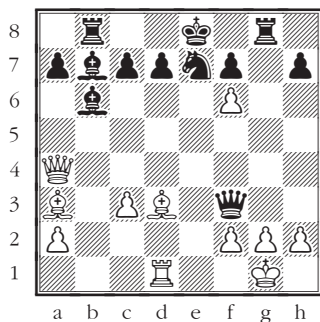
This game is very famous and is known as the “evergreen.”

- **20.Rxe7+!**

It’s now or never. And because Black has so many threats, every move White makes has to be a check.



- **20...Nxe7**

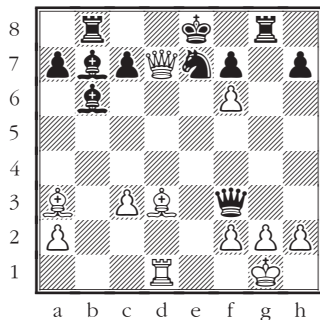


**White to Move**

*Lightning hits the board!*

- **21.Qxd7+!!**

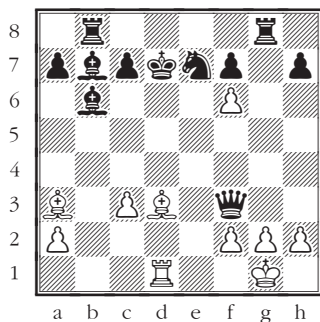
Wonderful! First White gave up his Rook, and now he is giving up his Queen.



**Black to Move**

- **21...Kxd7**

White only has 3 pieces left. Will it be enough? In the meantime, Black is attacking White's King with both of his Bishops, his Queen, and his g8-Rook. All Black needs is 1 move and White's King will be exterminated.

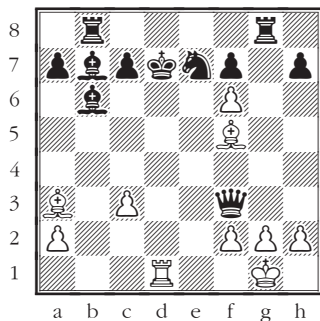


**White to Move**

*White mates his opponent by force*

○ **22.Bf5+**

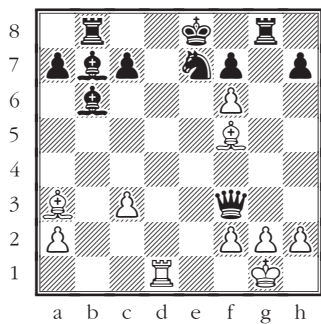
This is a double attack, because Black's King is being hit by both the f5-Bishop and the d1-Rook.



**Black to Move**

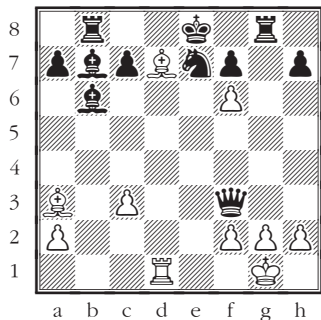
*Every move Black makes is forced*

● **22...Ke8**



White to Move

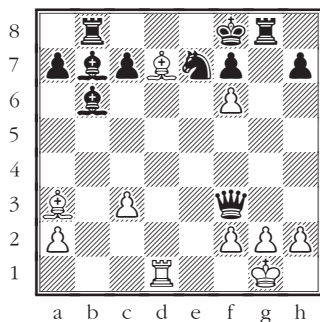
- 23.Bd7+



Black to Move

- 23...Kf8

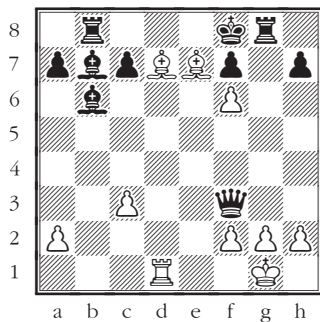




**White to Move**

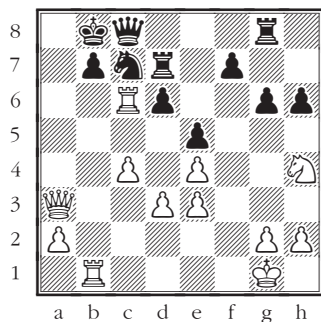
- **24. Bxe7** mate.

Absolutely beautiful! White's small army overcomes Black's enormous forces.



*A stunning finish*

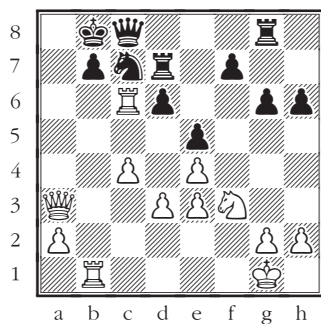
## PUZZLE 4



**White to Move**

**Blackburne/Steel vs. Zukertort/Hoffer, London 1851**

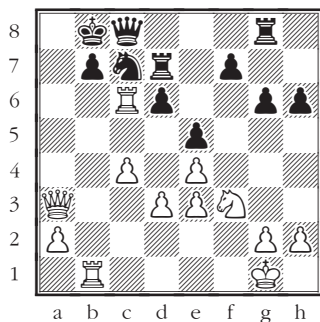
White has a monster attack against the enemy King. Note that the c6-Rook is safe because Black's b-pawn is pinned by the Rook on b1. White has many good moves to choose from, but he decided to play 31.Nf3. Why did he do this, and what very useful rule does this teach us?



**Black to Move**

*Why did White play the Knight to f3?*

*Answer:*



**Black to Move**

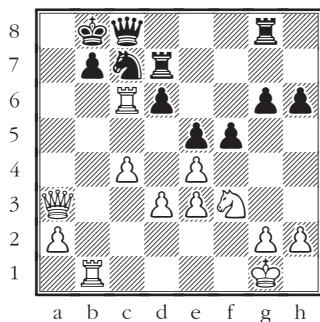
*Why did White play the Knight to f3?*

The lesson is that many players just use the pieces that are within reach. The idea of dragging a piece that's far afield into the fray never enters their mind. But often that 1 extra piece can make all the difference.

Follow the rest of the game and you'll discover just how important an extra attacking unit can be.

- **31...f5**

Black is trying to get something going on the other side of the board.

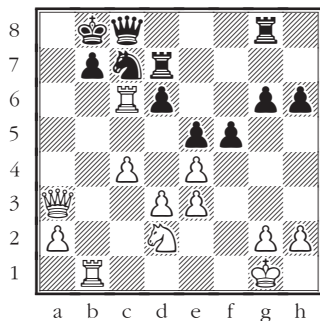


**White to Move**

*White's Knight heads for battle*

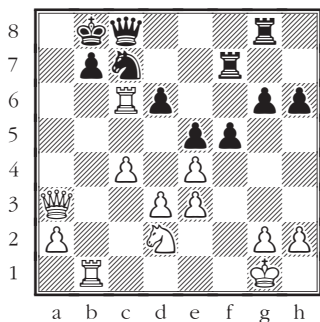
- **32.Nd2!**

The Knight is rushing to the queenside, where it can help its fellow pieces finish off the enemy King.



**Black to Move**

- **32...Rf7**

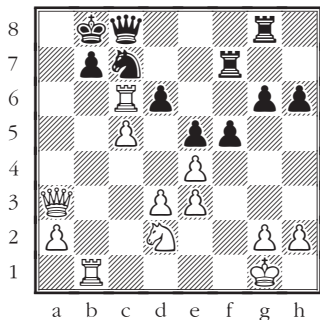


**White to Move**

*Create an ideal square for White's Knight*

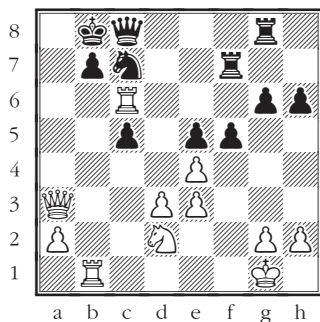
- **33.c5!**

This move threatens cxd6, but it also opens up the c4-square for White's Knight.



**Black to Move**

- **33...dxc5**

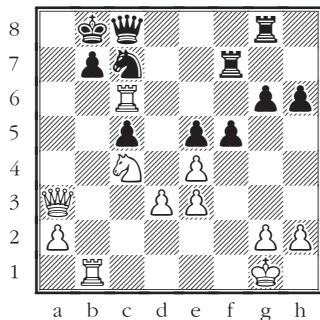


**White to Move**

*The White Knight's journey isn't over*

○ **34.Nc4**

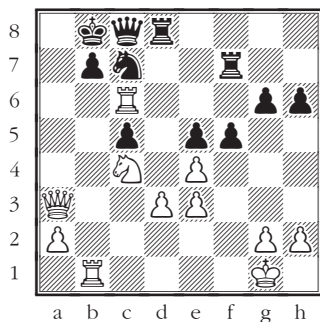
The Knight takes matters into its own hands. Threats like Nb6 and Nd6 are more than Black can handle.



**Black to Move**

*There's no defense*

● **34...Rd8**

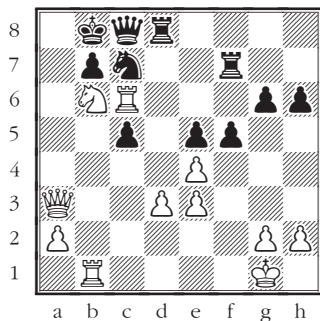


**White to Move**

*The Knight continues its rampage*

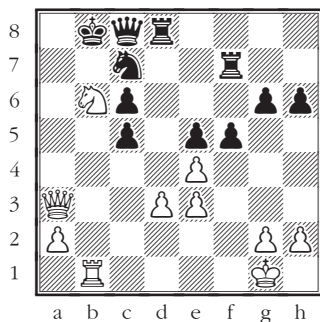
○ **35.Nb6**

The Knight has arrived in the heart of the enemy camp (attacking the Black Queen), and Black is doomed.



**Black to Move**

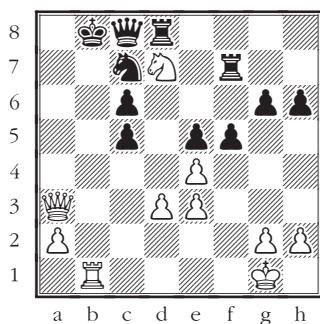
● **35...bxc6**



White to Move

- 36.Nd7 mate.

After its long journey, it's quite nice to see the horse finish off the game. It is a double discovered mate because Black's King is attacked by the Knight and the b1-Rook. It can't run to the a-file because White's Queen is covering that, so the King is dead and the game is over.



*The Knight smites the enemy King*



## Summing Up

The romantic age of chess (1800 to about 1880) was all about swashbuckling attacks and outrageous tactical creations that served as a sort of emotional expression that transformed the game of chess into true art. And, of course, it was fun and exciting to watch.

Although there were several amazing players who dominated this period, it's difficult not to pay homage to 3 particular people: Joseph Henry Blackburne (nicknamed “the Black Death”), Ignatz von Kolisch, and Adolf Anderssen. In addition, created in 1769, the chess-playing machine known as the Turk continued to beat all who challenged it until its destruction in 1854.

### Suggested Reading

Reti, *Masters of the Chessboard*.

Saidy and Lessing, *The World of Chess*.

### Key People

**Adolf Anderssen** (1818–1879): A German master, he was considered to be the world's best player during his prime. He's most famous for his amazing attacking masterpieces.

**Joseph Blackburne** (1841–1924): An Englishman and one of the world's elite players for many decades. His nickname was “the Black Death.”

**Louis-Charles Mahe de la Bourdonnais** (1795–1840): Born in France, he played an 85-game match in 1834 against Alexander McDonnell to determine who the best player in the world was. De la Bourdonnais dominated the match.

**Jean Dufresne** (1829–1893): Born in Germany, he was a strong chess player who wrote several chess books and was also an excellent chess composer.

**Bernhard Horwitz** (1807–1885): A German chess master and writer, he was also a member of a German chess group known as “the Pleiades.”

**Ignatz Kolisch** (1837–1889): A brilliant attacking player, he was thought to be the best player in the world after winning a powerful tournament in Paris.

**Alexander McDonnell** (1798–1835): Born in Belfast, he played an 85-game match in 1834 against Louis-Charles Mahe de la Bourdonnais to determine who the best player in the world was. He had his moments but was, overall, badly outclassed.

**The Turk**: “Born” in 1769, this was the first chess-playing machine. The machine’s moves were played by a robot that resembled a man dressed in Turkish attire and was attached to a large chest.

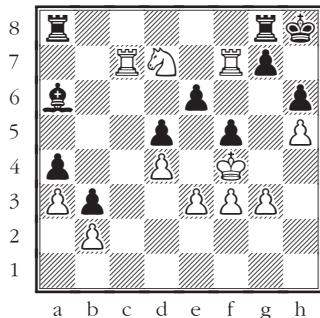
**Johann Zukertort** (1842–1888): Born in Poland, he was one of the top 3 players in the world. He also excelled in blindfold chess, playing 16 games at the same time.

# Open Files and the Positional Rook

## Lesson 11

**R**ooks are the most difficult pieces to get into play. The problem is that they are stuck in the corners, and because they are only effective if they are on an open file, it takes some time to get the pawns, Knight, Bishop, King, and Queen out of its way and then create a file for it to live on. This lesson will show you how to open files for your Rooks, how doubling Rooks on a file can be a powerhouse strategy, and how a Rook (or both Rooks) on the seventh rank (also known as pigs on the seventh) can leave your opponent on his knees.

### PUZZLE 1

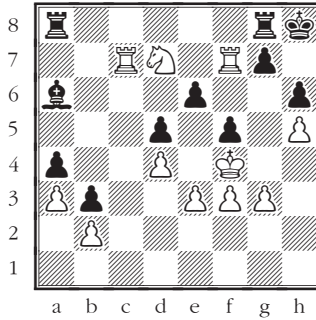


White to Move

Alexander Alekhine vs. Frederick Yates, London 1922

White has the classic pigs on the seventh rank, but the g7-pawn is safely protected by Black's g8-Rook. Can White break through?

Answer:

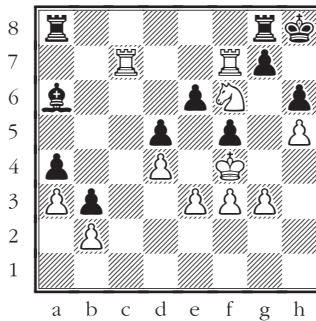


White to Move

White wins by using his 2 Rooks, his Knight, and his King.

○ 36.Nf6!

This threatens the Rook, but Black thinks he has a way out. Notice that 36...gxf6?? is a bad idea due to 37.Rh7 mate, showing the full power of the seventh-rank pigs.

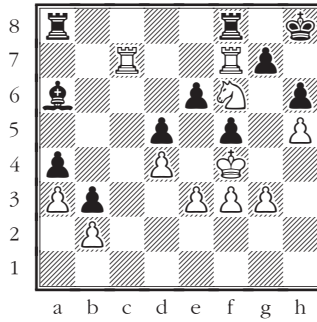


Black to Move

*He can't allow Nxg8*

● 36...Rgf8

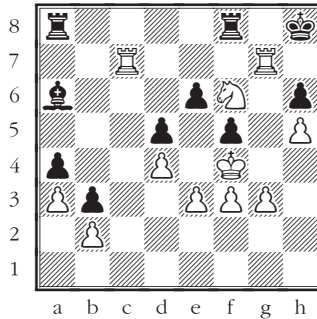
This is the move Black counted on to save himself. White's Knight will fall if White takes on g7.



**White to Move**  
*Another brilliant Alekhine move*

- **37.Rxg7!!**

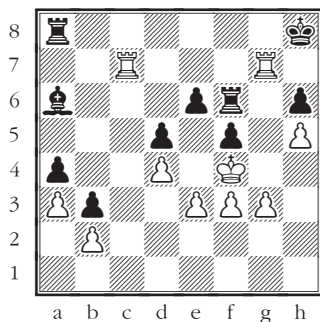
White gives up his Knight! Because White threatens 38.Rh7 mate, Black has no choice but to accept the gift.



**Black to Move**  
*The Knight must be taken*

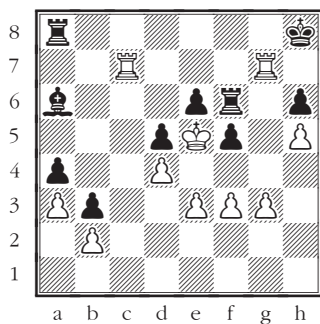
- **37...Rxf6**

Has White missed something? No, he had seen this position many moves earlier.



- **38.Ke5!**

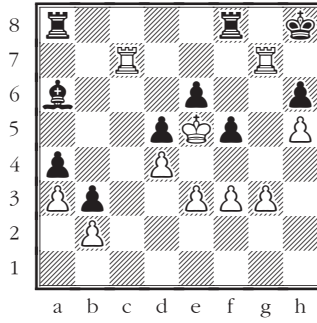
Black resigned. The reason for Black's resignation is that if Black leaves his Rook on f6, White's King will take it. However, if he retreats to the only safe square, f8, then Black's King won't have access to f8 and he'll be mated.



*Let's see how it might end*

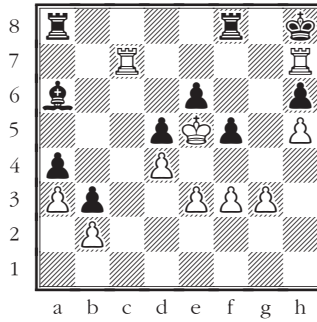
- **38...R6f8**

The same White mate would happen after 38...Raf8.



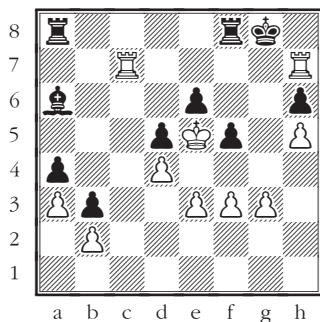
White to Move

- 39.Rh7+



Black to Move

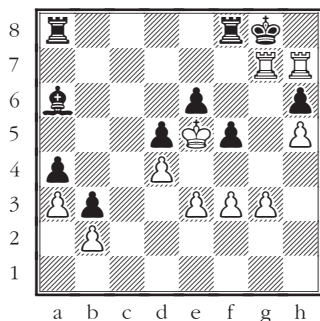
- 39...Kg8



White to Move

*Mate in 1*

- **40.Rcg7** mate.

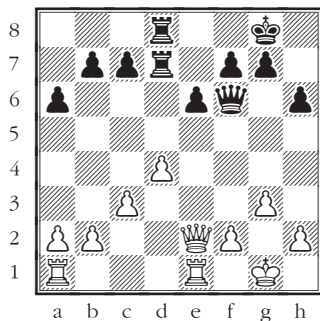


*Checkmate*

This game demonstrated the raw power of the pawns on the seventh and how advancing a King in the endgame is often a very important thing to do.



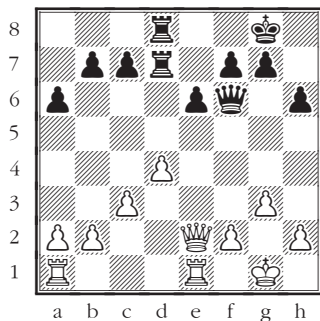
## PUZZLE 2



**Black to Move**

Material is even, and nobody appears to have any threats. However, even if a game is tightly balanced or a rollover, you still have to find a move that, in some way, improves your position. What should Black do?

*Answer:*

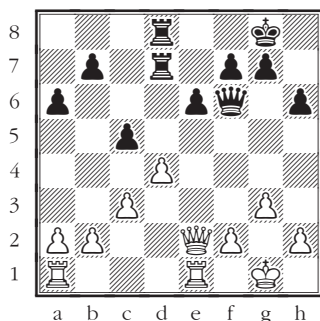


**Black to Move**

Black has doubled Rooks on the d-file, but the file isn't open. Thus, the Rooks are staring at the solid d4-pawn and, apparently, aren't doing much of anything. However, wouldn't Black's life be much better if the d-file *were* open? Then, his Rooks could leap into White's position and cause some serious damage.

- **1...c5!**

Although Black's c-pawn isn't protected, he realized the vast importance of unleashing his doubled Rooks. Because the only way to do that was with the ...c5 push, Black does what the board is begging him to do, sacrificing the c-pawn to maximize the power of his Rooks.

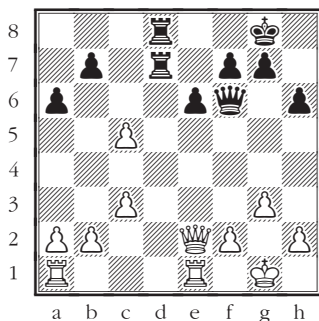


**White to Move**

*He might as well take the pawn*

- **2.dxc5**

2.Rad1 cxd4 3.cxd4 Rxd4 4.Rxd4 Rxd4 leaves Black with an extra pawn in the endgame. Instead of losing a pawn, White decides to win one.



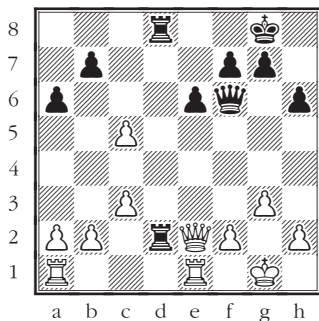
### Black to Move

*Rooks belong on the seventh rank (in Black's case, the second rank)*

- **2...Rd2!**

Black is a pawn down, but he now dominates the open d-file and also controls White's second rank (in other words, Black's pieces have penetrated into the enemy position). The Rook on the second rank is hitting White's Queen, attacking the b2-pawn, and also putting pressure on the f2-pawn.

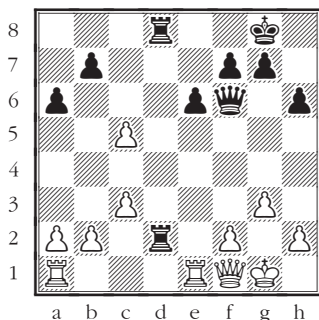
The overall difference in both side's Rooks is clear: Black's Rooks are now extremely active while White's are bystanders. Also notice that White's Queen has to defend f2. For example, 3.Qe5?? is a sort of self-mate after 3...Qxf2+ 4.Kh1 Qxh2 mate.



### White to Move

## ○ 3.Qf1

It's time for Black to nosh on a White pawn.

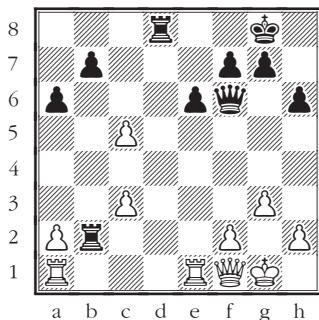


**Black to Move**

*Regain the pawn and continue the pressure*

## ● 3...Rxb2

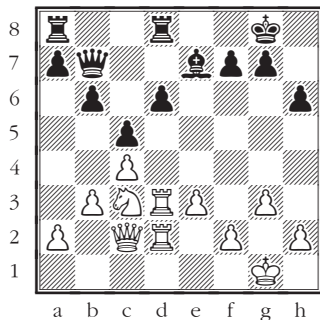
White is in trouble. Material is even, but Black's Queen threatens the c3-pawn. The c5-pawn is a doubled isolated pawn and is very vulnerable. White's Rook on a1 is defending the a2-pawn (if the a1-Rook moves, then a2 falls). And White's Queen has to continue to defend f2. Finally, Black threatens to double on the second rank (pigs!) by ...Rdd2.



*White is in serious trouble*

The lesson is that in many instances, if you want to make use of an open file, you have to crack that file open by yourself. You do this by blasting the enemy pawn (the one that is blocking the file) out of the way with one of your own pawns.

### PUZZLE 3

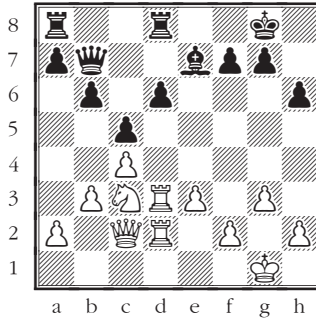


**White to Move**

White is doubled on the d-file, and although it's not a fully open file, White's Rooks are placing pressure on Black's weak d6-pawn.

How should White continue?

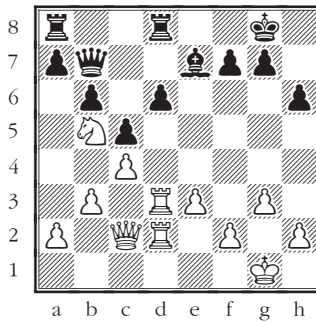
Answer:



White to Move

- 1.Nb5

White's Knight joins with his Rooks to attack the d6-pawn with 3 pieces (the Knight and 2 Rooks), while Black is only defending his pawn with 2 pieces (his d8-Rook and e7-Bishop).

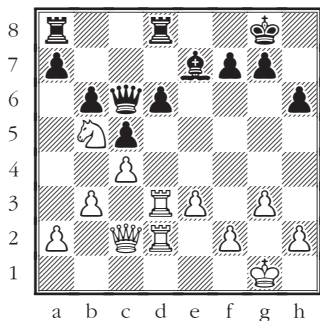


Black to Move

*He needs to defend his d6-pawn*

- 1...Qc6

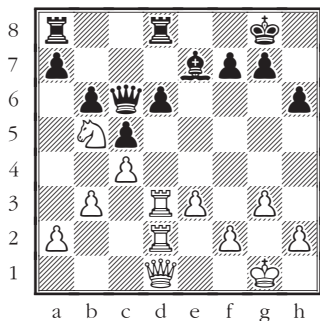
Black defends his d6-pawn with his Queen, thereby creating a form of balance: White has 3 pieces attacking d6 (both Rooks and the Knight) while Black has 3 defenders (the d8-Rook, the e7-Bishop, and the Queen).



**White to Move**

○ **2.Qd1!**

White triples on the d-file and now attacks d6 with 4 pieces (both Rooks, the Queen, and the Knight). Black can only bring 3 defenders to the party. Thus, Black will lose a pawn (via Nxd6) and will most likely lose the game.



*More than Black can handle*

## Summing Up

Rooks are the masters of files and ranks. A White Rook on the seventh rank (or a Black Rook on the second rank) is, at times, a decisive advantage. Two Rooks on the seventh (known as pigs on the seventh) is simply terrifying.

However, the most important and common Rook battle is finding a file or half-open file. Without files, Rooks would be weaker than a Knight or Bishop. Sometimes a file will just be there, but when it's not, it's up to you to create one (a closed file won't open by itself).

### Suggested Reading

Grooten, *Chess Strategy for Club Players*.

### Key Terms

**Alekhine's gun:** Domination on an open file when a player places 2 Rooks on that file with the Queen behind it.

**file:** A column of 8 squares. An open file is a file that is not blocked by either side's pawns.

**open file:** A column of 8 squares that is free of pawns. It is on open files (and ranks) that Rooks come to their maximum potential.

**pressure:** A pawn or square is said to have pressure on it when one or more pieces are directly attacking it.

**rank:** A row of 8 squares. The seventh rank in particular is the subject of much activity, especially when a Rook settles there. Control of the seventh rank is considered to be an important advantage.



## Key People

**Alexander Alekhine** (1892–1946): Born in Russia, he was one of the strongest players of all time. He defeated the great Capablanca in a match in 1927, thereby becoming the fourth world chess champion.

**Ben Finegold** (1969– ): Born in Detroit, he is an American grandmaster and is also a captivating public speaker and humorist.

**Harry Golombek** (1911–1995): A chess grandmaster, he won the British Chess Championships 3 times. He was also an excellent chess writer.

**Petar Trifunovic** (1910–1980): A Yugoslav grandmaster, he was a fierce attacking player in his youth. As a result, he was given the nickname “Typhoonovic.”

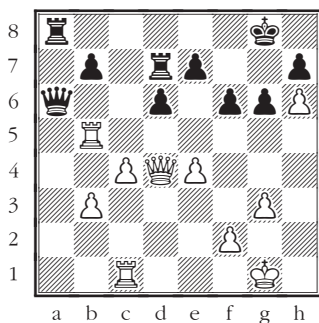
**Frederick Yates** (1884–1932): He was a very strong English chess master who crossed swords with, and often beat, some of the world’s finest players. He won the British Chess Championships 6 times.

# Pawns: The Positional Soul of Chess

## Lesson 12

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the world's best player, François-André Danican Philidor, said, "Pawns are the soul of chess." In this lesson, you're going to discover what Philidor meant and how you can use it to improve your chess skills. There are many pawn-related strategies to explore; the pawn skeleton as a whole tells a trained player, at a glance, what both sides need to do. The big pawn center is a huge advantage, according to the classical school, but is a target to be deconstructed in the eyes of the hypermodern school (the truth is somewhere in between). And passed pawns can be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on various other factors.

### PUZZLE 1



White to Move

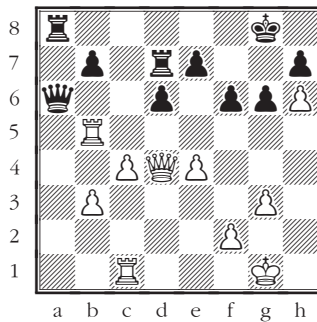
Magnus Carlsen vs. Eduardo Iturrizaga, Dubai 2014 (Part 1)

This game (played by World Champion Magnus Carlsen) is a positional masterpiece, but it all starts with the desire for mate. The justification for mate is White's h6-pawn, which, if Black is not

careful, might lead to a painful Qg7 mate. Mate can't be forced, but avoiding it will allow White to create long-term weaknesses in the enemy camp.

What do you think White should do?

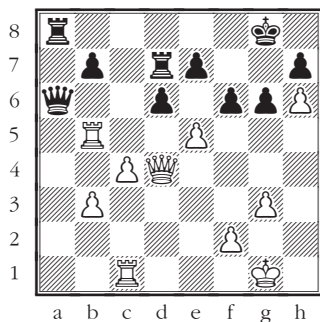
*Answer:*



Black's King isn't safe, thanks to White's pawn on h6. White's goal is to open central and kingside lines so that the enemy King feels the heat, while weakening Black's pawn structure at the same time.

- **28.e5!**

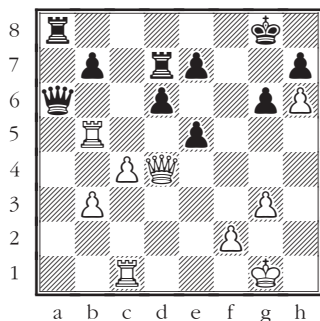
This move makes use of a pin on the d-file. White's Queen is staring down Black's d7-Rook, and taking on e5 (28...dxe5??) loses a whole Rook to 29.Qxd7.



### Black to Move

*White's e5-pawn move is cracking Black's pawn structure*

- 28...fxe5

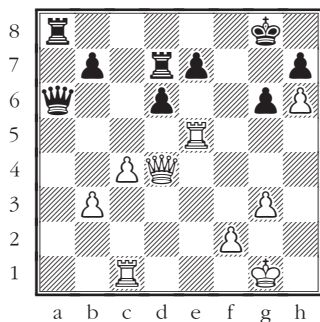


### White to Move

*A tactical theme aids White's positional hopes*

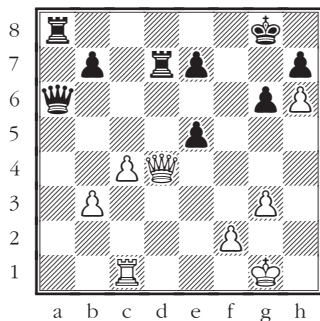
- 29.Rxe5!

This move continues to make use of the Queen-versus-Rook pin along the d-file. Now White threatens 30.Ra5! Qxa5 31.Qg7 mate, so Black has to capture White's Rook.



**Black to Move**

- **29...dxe5**

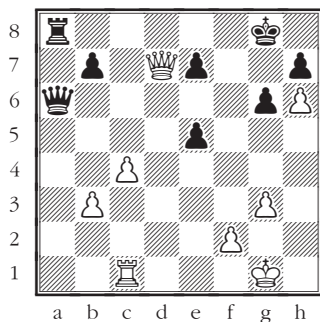


**White to Move**

*The Rook must be captured*

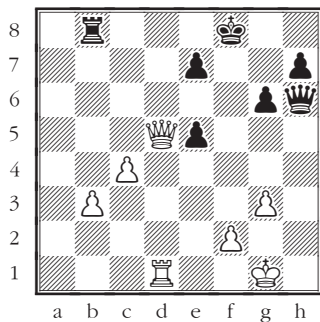
- **30.Qxd7**

White's pawn structure is sound while Black's structure is fragmented (i.e., Black's very weak pawns on e7 and e5). White also has 2 healthy queenside pawns versus Black's 1 queenside pawn.



*White has achieved his initial goals*

## PUZZLE 2

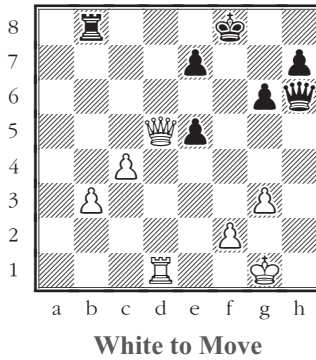


**White to Move**

**Magnus Carlsen vs. Eduardo Iturrizaga, Dubai 2014 (Part 2)**

We are a few moves down the road from the end of puzzle 1. Material is even (though Black threatens ...Rxb3), but White has a winning advantage. How would you play this position?

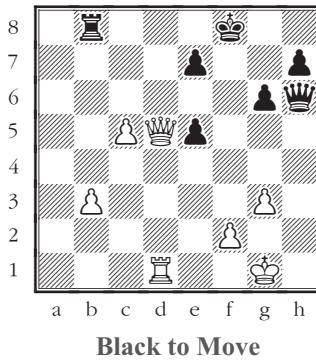
Answer:



○ 35.c5

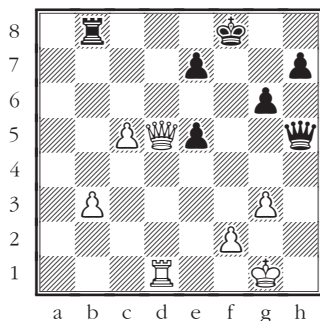
Here's an old saying: "Passed pawns should be pushed!"

Magnus is making use of that little bit of wisdom, because the farther down the board that passed pawn goes, the more dangerous it will be. Note that ...Rxb3 is no longer wise because White's Queen now defends b3.



● 35...Qh5

Black's Queen was offside, so he's trying to get his Queen back in the game.

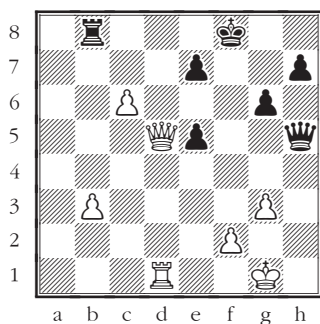


**White to Move**

*Passed pawns should be pushed!*

○ **36.c6**

Suddenly, White's c-pawn is alarmingly close to the end of the board.



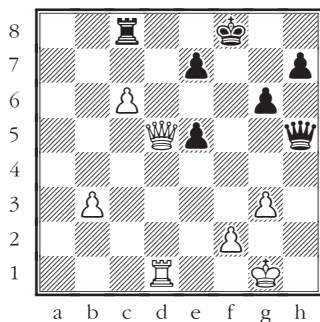
**Black to Move**

*He needs to stop White's advanced pawn*

● **36...Rc8**

Black is desperately trying to put a halt to the enemy pawn's advance.



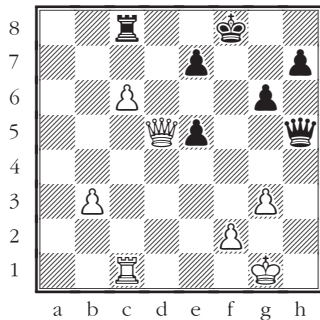


**White to Move**

*Support the c6-pawn's advance*

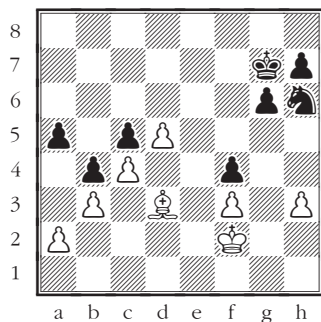
- **37.Rc1!**

Placing one's Rook behind its passed pawn is usually a good idea because it gives support as the pawn marches forward. Black held on for another 11 moves, and then he resigned.



*Black is lost*

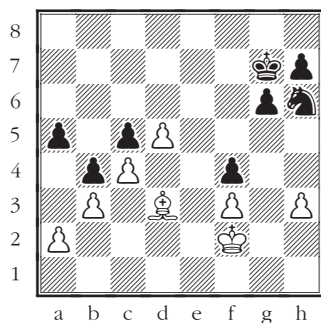
## PUZZLE 3



**Black to Move**

Material is even, but White has a protected passed pawn. One would think that White is better, but that's not the case. In fact, the only side that can even dream of winning (though a draw is probably the correct result) is Black. Why?

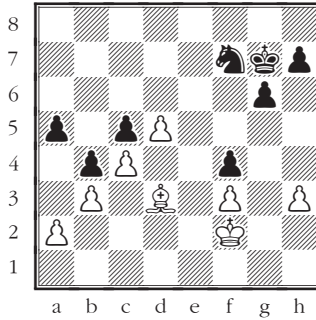
*Answer:*



**Black to Move**

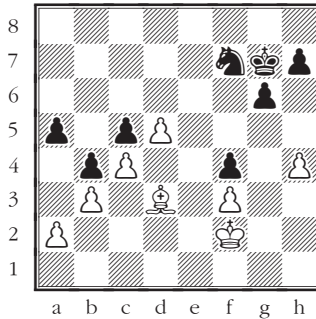
- 1...Nf7!

Black has the more comfortable position because White's d-pawn can be frozen solid by ...Nd6, and the King can (if allowed) walk into White's camp by ...Kf6-e5-d4.



**White to Move**

- **2.h4**

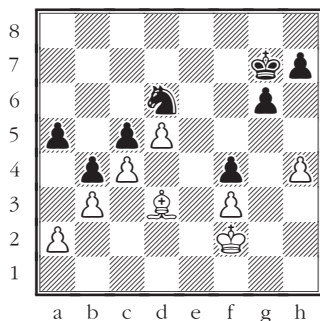


**Black to Move**

*White's passed pawn needs to be blocked*

- **2...Nd6**

Remember: Knights are ideal blockaders of passed pawns.



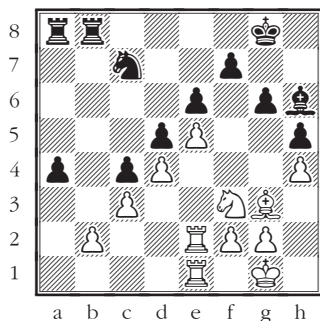
*White's passed pawn has been nullified*

#### PUZZLE 4

Where should you attack a pawn chain?

*Answer:*

Although attacking the front of a pawn chain can be effective, the general wisdom is to attack it at its base. The reasoning is obvious: The front pawn is usually guarded by one of its own pawns, while the base of a pawn chain won't have a protective pawn.



**Black to Move**

On the chessboard, White's front pawn is on e5, while the base of the pawn chain is b2 (the chain goes from b2 to c3 to d4 to e5). The e5-pawn is rock solid because it's protected by the d4-pawn and also by most of its army. On the other hand, the base of the chain, b2, can never be protected by a pawn. Black can double Rooks and try to win it, or he can destroy the b2-base by a well-timed ...a4-a3, when a trade there creates a new base, the c3-pawn.

A sequence like 1...a3 2.bxa3 Rxa3 3.Rc2 Rbb3 wins the c3-base right away, because 4.Re3 or 4.Rc1 would lose the Rook to Black's Bishop. Clearly, the base is the most vulnerable part of a pawn chain.

## Summing Up

Pawns make the chess world go around. If your opponent has built a huge pawn center, attack it and try to show that it's weak. If you have a huge pawn center, protect it and show that it's a tower of strength. If you have a passed pawn, push it. If your opponent has a passed pawn, try to block it (a Knight is the ultimate blockader). And if your opponent has a long pawn chain, attack it at its base.

Knowing these strategies is enormously helpful because different pawn structures will constantly appear. And when they do appear, you won't have to wonder what should be done—you'll already know.

### Suggested Reading

Soltis, *Pawn Structure Chess*.

### Key Terms

**blockade:** Conceptualized and popularized by Aron Nimzowitsch (1886–1935), this refers to the tying down (immobilization) of an enemy pawn by placing a piece (in particular, a Knight) directly in front of it.

**passed pawn:** A pawn that has passed by all enemy pawns capable of capturing it.

**pawn center:** Pawns placed in the center. White pawns on f4, e4, and d4, for example, would constitute a large pawn center. A common opening that allows White to build such a center in the hope of attacking it later is 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.f4, etc.

**pawn structure:** The positioning of the whole pawn mass. Also referred to as the pawn skeleton. This positioning of the pawns is what usually dictates the types of plans available in a given position due to open files, space, pawn weaknesses, etc.

**target:** A weak square or pawn that is vulnerable to attack.

## Key People

**Amos Burn** (1848–1925): One of England’s strongest players, he was memorialized by Richard Forster, who wrote a magnificent book about him that is just a little less than 1000 pages long.

**Magnus Carlsen** (1990–): Born in Norway, he’s the present world chess champion (in 2015) and also the highest-rated player in history.

**Gyozo Forintos** (1935–): Born in Budapest, he is a solid grandmaster and a very good chess writer.

**Eduardo Iturrizaga** (1989–): He is Venezuela’s only grandmaster.

**Paul Saladin Leonhardt** (1877–1934): Born in Poland (which at that time was part of the German Empire), he was an extremely strong grandmaster who beat most of the elite players of his time.

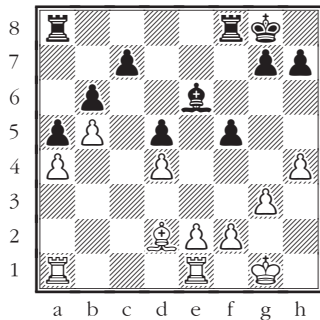
**François-André Danican Philidor** (1726–1795): A Frenchman, he was the world’s best player and also a famous composer of operas.

# Positional Weaknesses and Targets in Chess

## Lesson 13

The idea behind the phrase “target consciousness” is that a chess player needs to train his or her mind to instantly see targets and also see potential targets. If the target already exists, pile up on it. If there isn’t an existing target, create one. Under the umbrella of target consciousness, you will learn about weak squares/holes (conquer a hole and turn it into a home for one of your pieces), backward pawns (pressure them), isolated pawns (smash them), doubled pawns (sometimes better than they seem), and even tripled pawns (quite unfortunate).

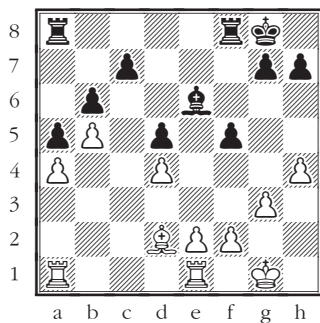
### PUZZLE 1



White to Move

This is a lesson in target consciousness. That should be all you need to find the right move.

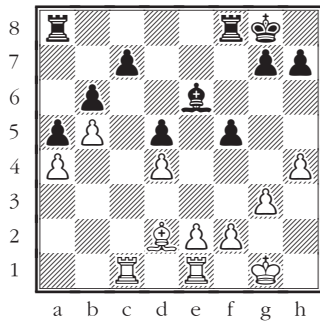
Answer:



White to Move

- **1.Rac1**

If you tried 1.Rec1 or 1.Bf4, then well done! All these moves target the backward, weak pawn on c7.

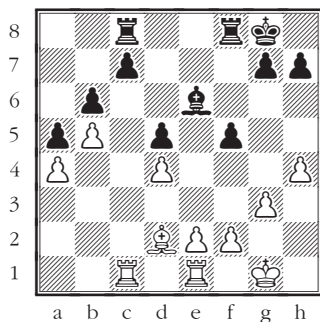


Black to Move

*c7 needs to be defended*

- **1...Rac8**



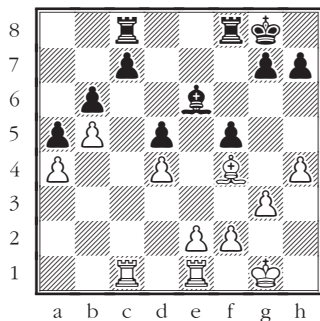


**White to Move**

*Pile up on c7*

○ **2.Bf4**

White continues to bash away at the c7-target. Of course, 2...c5 fails to 3.bxc6 e.p.

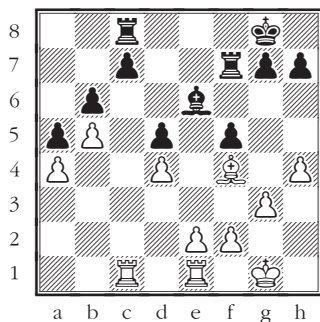


**Black to Move**

*All he can do is defend c7*

● **2...Rf7**

Desperately trying to hold body and soul together.

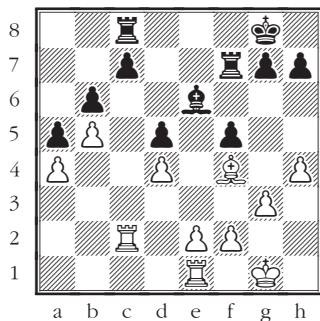


**White to Move**

*Both White Rooks need to join in the c7 assault*

○ **3.Rc2**

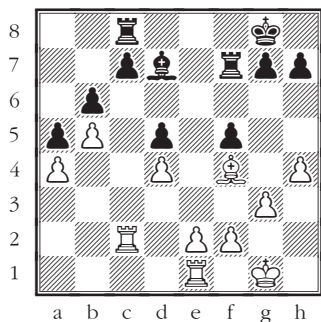
White prepares to double Rooks on the c-file, which will create maximum firepower against c7.



**Black to Move**

● **3...Bd7**

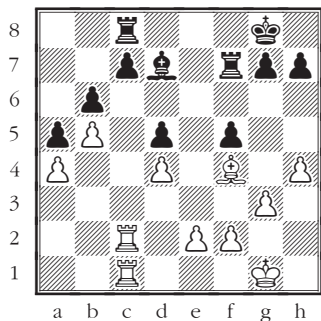
Black is hoping to play 4...c6, ridding himself of the weakling pawn. Of course, White doesn't allow this to happen.



White to Move

○ 4.Rec1

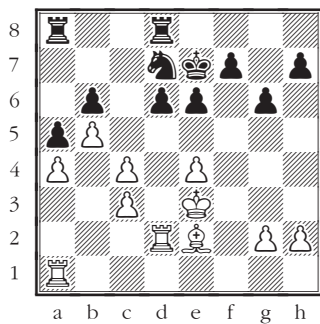
There's too much firepower. Black's c7-pawn will fall (leaving White a pawn ahead), and eventually the game will be won by White. Note that after c7 is captured, White's Bishop will then turn its attention to the b6-pawn, which will be vulnerable because it's on a dark square. And after the b6-pawn falls, the a5-pawn will be the next target.



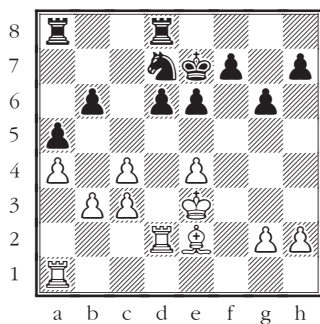
*White's target on c7 will fall*

## PUZZLE 2

Take a close look at position A and position B. Both diagrams feature doubled c-pawns for White. Which set of doubled c-pawns is more vulnerable?



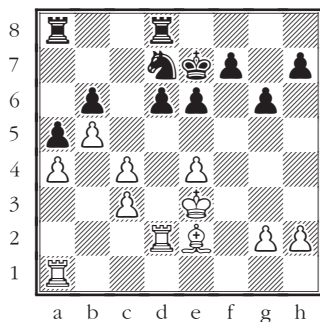
**Black to Move**  
*Position A*



**Black to Move**  
*Position B*

*Answer:*

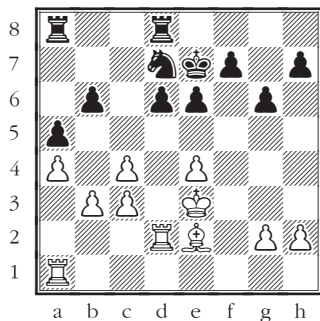
Black has an edge in both diagrams, and both diagrams are identical except for one “small” detail: In position A, White’s b-pawn is on b5, while in position B, White’s b-pawn is on b3.



**Black to Move**

*Position A*

In position A, the pawn on c4 can't be protected by a White pawn. This means that it's vulnerable to Rook attacks on the c-file and a Knight attack via ...Ne5.



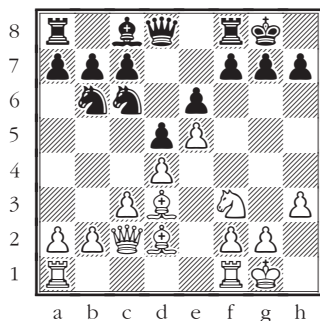
**Black to Move**

*Position B*

In position B, the lead c-pawn on c4 is firmly guarded by the pawn on b3. Thus, moves like ...Ne5 or ...Rac8 don't have the same punch as in position A.

The answer is clear: The doubled pawns in position A are much more vulnerable than those in position B. In general, double pawns are okay if the lead pawn is protected by another one of its pawns. If the lead pawn doesn't have a pawn protector (as in position A), then the pawns are usually viewed as weak.

### PUZZLE 3



**Black to Move**

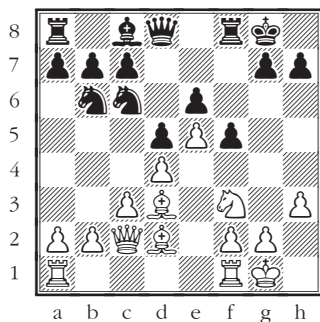
White threatens to chop off Black's h7-pawn by Bxh7+. Black has 3 ways to prevent this: **1...h6**, **1...g6**, and **1...f5**. Which would you choose?

*Answer:*

Let's look at 1...f5 first.

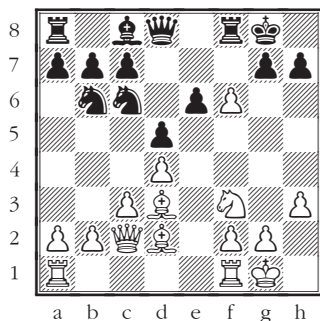
- **1...f5??**

This forgets about en passant.



**White to Move**  
*Remember en passant*

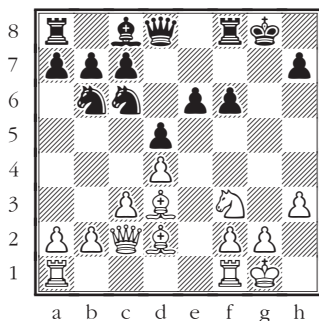
- 2...xf6 e.p.



**Black to Move**  
*Material loss is unavoidable*

- 2...gxf6

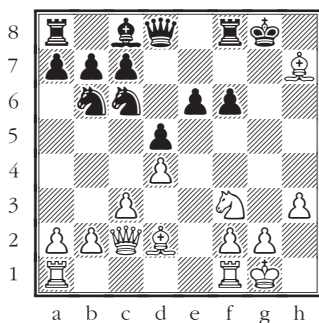
No better are 2...Qxf6 3.Bxh7+ and 2...g6 when White can defend his f6-pawn with 3.Bg5 or rip Black's kingside apart with 3.Bxg6.



White to Move

- 3.Bxh7+

White won the pawn and also destroyed Black's kingside pawn structure. White should win.



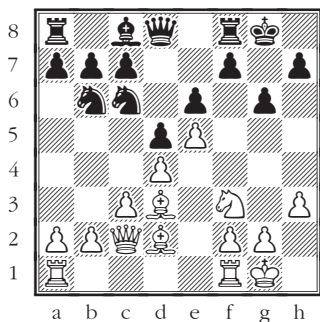
*Black is in bad shape*

Next, let's take a look at 1...g6.

- 1...g6??

This move is a positional blunder that creates horrendous dark-squared holes in Black's kingside (f6, g7, and h6). Moves like 2.Bh6 or 2.Bg5 highlight the damage Black's seemingly innocent 1...g6 did.

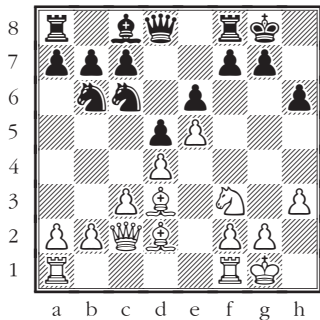




*Death on the dark squares*

- **1...h6**

Although White has the better position, thanks to his lead in development and extra central space, playing 1...h6 is Black's best bet. It protects his h-pawn and keeps White's pieces off of the g5-square.



*The best chance*

## Summing Up

Pawns can be tricky, delicate, powerful, and incredibly important. Every pawn move needs to be carefully considered. If you have to move a pawn, do your best to avoid creating holes in your own camp, moving a pawn to a vulnerable square, and moving a pawn if it makes other pawns weak.

In general, double pawns are okay if the lead pawn is protected by another one of its pawns. If the lead pawn doesn't have a pawn protector, then the pawns are usually viewed as weak.

When you have a pawn target, you need to attack it with as many pieces as possible. Remember to use all of your pieces in a way that they work together toward a single goal. Attacking a vulnerable pawn with 1 piece won't make much of a splash; attacking that same vulnerable pawn with 3 or 4 pieces might signal its doom.

### Suggested Reading

Sokolov, *Winning Chess Middlegames*.

### Key Terms

**backward pawn:** A pawn that has fallen behind its comrades and thus no longer can be supported or guarded by other pawns of its own persuasion.

**doubled pawns:** Two pawns of the same color lined up on a file as the result of a capture. Such pawns are generally considered to be weak, although quite often their ability to control certain squares makes them very useful.

**isolated pawn:** A pawn with no friendly pawns on either adjacent file. A common opening that allows an isolated pawn is 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.exd5 exd5 5.Ngf3 Nc6 6.Bb5 Bd6 7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.0-0 Nge7 9.Nb3 Bd6 10.Nbd4. The negatives of an isolated pawn are

its inability to be guarded by a friendly pawn and the fact that the square directly in front of it usually makes a fine home for an enemy piece because no pawns can chase it away. On the positive side, it offers plenty of space and the use of 2 half-open files (on either side of it), with the result that the player's pieces usually become active.

**kingside:** The half of the board originally occupied by the King, K-Bishop, K-Knight, and K-Rook. The kingside is on the right of the player with the White pieces and on the left of the player with the Black pieces.

**weakness/target:** Any pawn or square that is difficult or impossible to defend.

## Key People

**Bobby Fischer** (1943–2008): The 11<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, he is considered to be one of the 5 best players of all time, with many ranking him as number 1. He singlehandedly took American chess to a whole new level.

**Rustam Kasimdzhanov** (1979–): Born in Uzbekistan, he has been an elite player for many years.

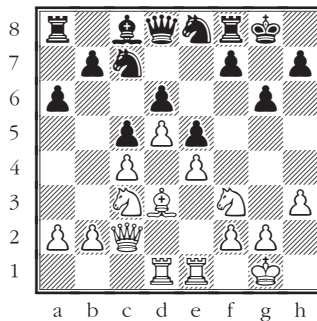
**Vallejo Pons** (1982–): Born in Spain, he achieved the grandmaster title at 16 years of age.

# Closed and Open Positions on the Chessboard

## Lesson 14

**W**hen pawns block the center, the position is called “closed.” When there is no central blockage, or very little, the position is called “open.” Both of these positions—closed and open—change the overall game in profound ways. For example, quick development is critically important in an open position because there are many unblocked files and diagonals, thereby allowing potential entry into the enemy position. A closed position doesn’t have these speedy roads, and in many cases, the pieces bounce off the mutual pawn walls. In this lesson, you also will be introduced to the “octopus,” a Knight that is deep in the enemy position, with its arms/tentacles going in all directions. Such a Knight can be stronger than a Rook.

### PUZZLE 1

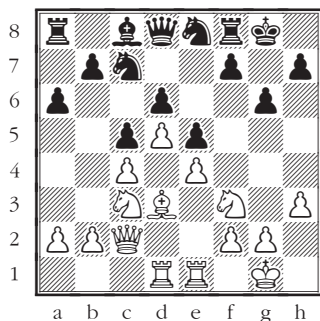


**Black to Move**

The center is completely locked up, but White has a big lead in development. In fact, all but 1 of Black’s pieces are on the back rank, while White’s pieces are all developed and ready to go to battle.

How would you assess this position? Here are your choices: Black is in serious trouble, Black is worse but alive, both sides have chances, or the game is equal.

*Answer:*

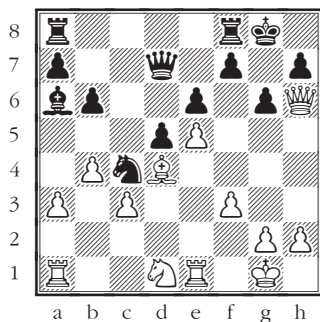


**Black to Move**

This might surprise you, but both sides have chances. Normally, having a big lead in development (as White does here) promises you a serious advantage or, in many cases, a won game. But what good is development if your pieces are running into a wall? That wall is the center pawns, and if neither side can get something going in the middle, then the action will usually occur on the queenside and kingside.

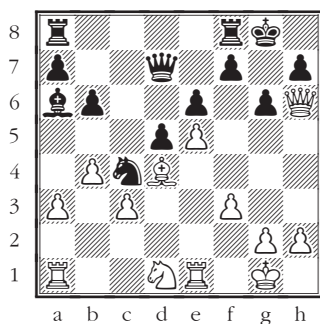
Because this is a closed center, all eyes will turn to the sides. Pawn breaks are the key in that situation so that roads can be opened toward the side of your choice. And it just so happens that Black's pawn structure is well suited for wing play. He can play for a queenside break with ...b7-b5 (Black can do it right away or prepare it with ...Rb8 and/or ...Bd7). If he decides to expand on the kingside, then a well-timed ...f7-f5 is thematic.

## PUZZLE 2



Is there an octopus in the house?

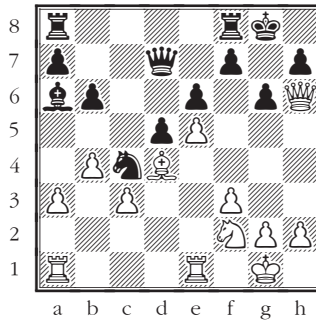
*Answer:*



The dark squares around Black's King are in horrible shape, with White's Queen setting up home on h6. White's laziest piece is, quite clearly, the Knight, which is sitting on its first rank. White's goal is to turn the board's laziest piece into the board's most lethal piece.

○ **1.Nf2!**

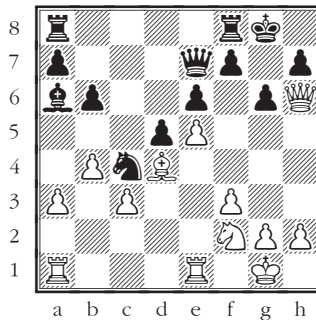
White's target is the hole on f6. Knights love weak squares/holes, and it's worth making many moves to get the horse there. White's 1.Nf2 is the first step in that journey.



**Black to Move**  
*Octopus alert!*

● **1...Qe7**

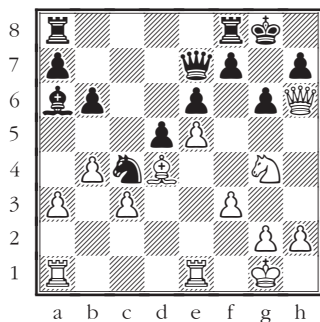
Black is dead lost. For example, if he tries 1...f5 (stopping the Knight from moving to g4), then 2.exf6 e.p. wins a pawn, activates the d4-Bishop, and once again allows White's Knight access to g4.



**White to Move**  
*f6 or bust!*

- 2.Ng4

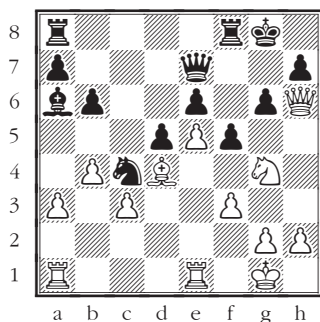
What a difference 2 moves make! This horse was happily sleeping a second ago and is now the most-feared piece on the board. White now threatens Nf6+, followed by Qxh7 mate.



**Black to Move**  
*There is no defense*

- 2...f5

This is Black's only hope. Now Black's Queen protects the h7-square, and 3.Nf6 can be met with 3...Kh8.

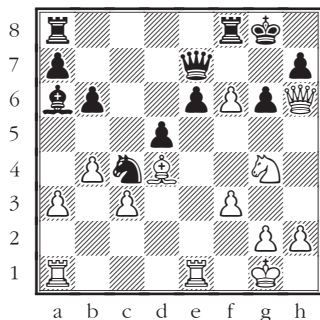


**White to Move**  
*Our old friend en passant*



○ **3.exf6 e.p.**

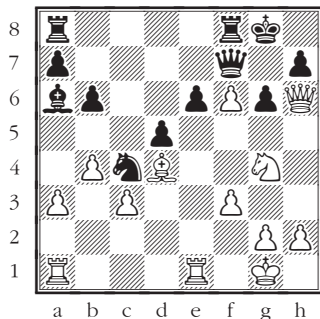
The mix of White's advanced f6-pawn, the d4-Bishop's domination of the d4-h8 diagonal (aiming at the Black King), the e-Rook's pressure against e6, and the presence of the octopus (it's reaching to e5, f6, and h6) doesn't bode well for Black.



**Black to Move**

● **3...Qf7**

White has many ways to win. For example, 4.Qg5, opening up the h6-square for White's Knight, is a stone-cold winner. However, let's enjoy the prettiest way.

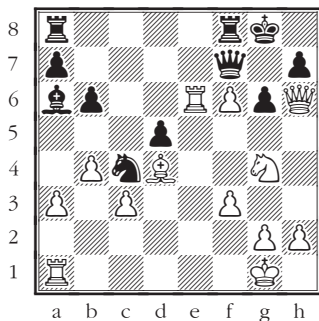


**White to Move**

*Many ways to win*

○ **4.Rxe6!**

White's threat is Re7 when reality as we know it comes to an end.

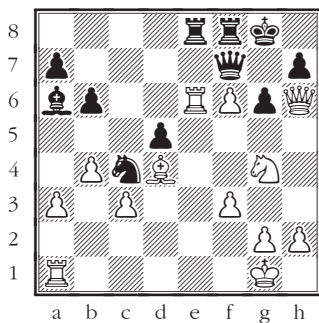


**Black to Move**

*The start of a good finish*

● **4...Rae8**

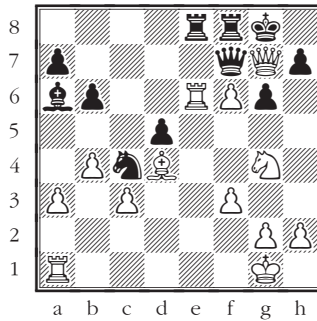
Black couldn't capture the Rook (4...Qxe6) because 5.Qg7 mate would be a good reply.



**White to Move**

○ **5.Qg7+!**

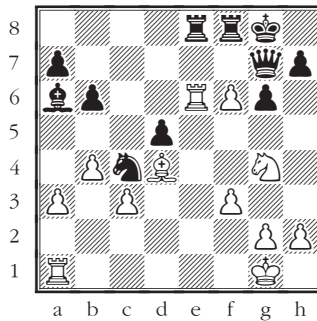
Once again, White had a smorgasbord of delightful moves to choose from. But we're heading for the prettiest.



**Black to Move**

*The dark squares continue to leak*

- 5...Qxg7

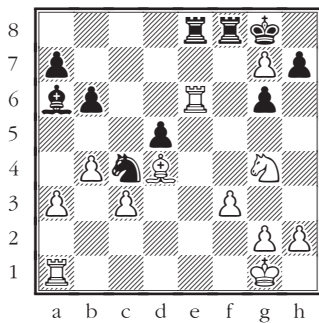


**White to Move**

*Obvious but very powerful*

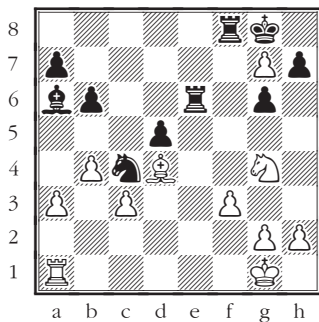
- 6.fxg7

White regains his Queen and threatens the f8-Rook with his g7-pawn.



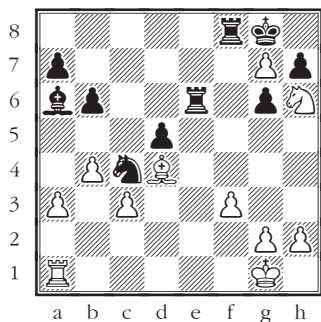
**Black to Move**  
*His position is hopeless*

- 6...Rxe6



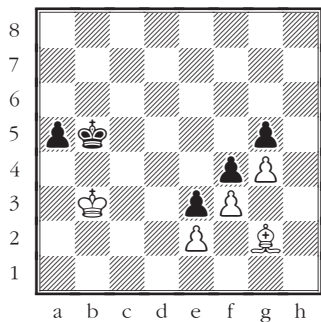
**White to Move**  
*Another dark square, another mate*

- 7.Nh6 mate.



*Death by dark squares*

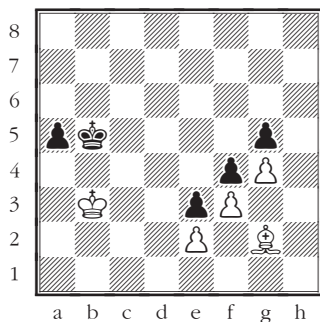
### PUZZLE 3



**White to Move**

White is up a piece for a pawn; that's a 2-point advantage. Is White winning?

*Answer:*



**White to Move**

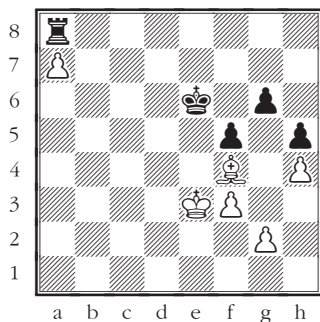
Actually, White is hopelessly lost.

White's problem is that his Bishop isn't really a Bishop—it's an entombed Bishop. Just as a closed pawn center curtails at least some of the activity of both armies, an entombed piece can prove to be useless.

In our present position, Black's queenside pawn will pull White's King to that side, allowing Black's King to enter the White kingside and eat up everything. In the meantime, White's Bishop will sadly watch as Rome burns.

Here's an example of what might happen: 1.Bf1 a4+ 2.Kc3 (Black's King penetrates even faster after 2.Ka3 Kc4) 2...Kc5 3.Bg2 a3 (using the a-pawn as a decoy) 4.Kb3 Kd4 5.Bf1 a2 (forcing White's King to step away from its control of the c3-square) 6.Kxa2 Kc3 7.Kb1 Kd2 8.Kb2 Ke1 9.Bh3 Kxe2 10.Kc3 Kf2, and White resigned because Black's e-pawn will turn into a Queen.

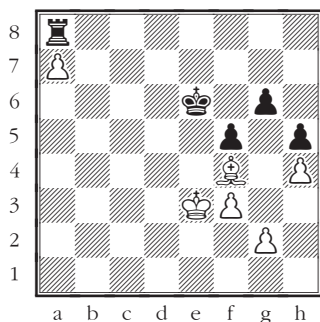
## PUZZLE 4



**White to Move**

Black is a point up (Bishop and pawn versus Rook), but just like Bishops and Knights, a Rook can also get entombed. Is Black's Rook entombed? If not, can you entomb it?

*Answer:*

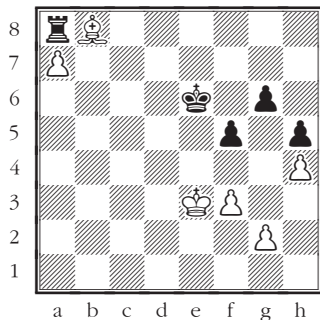


**White to Move**

Black's Rook isn't entombed at the moment, and it even threatens to capture White's critically important passed pawn on a7. Fortunately for White, he has one move that turns a loss into a win.

○ **1.Bb8!**

Black's Rook is stuck in the corner. It can't capture the a7-pawn (1...Rxa7??) because White's Bishop is protecting it. And it can't capture the Bishop (1...Rxb8??) because the pawn will take the Rook and (from bad to extremely bad) turn into a Queen (2.axb8=Q).



**Black to Move**

1...Kf6 2.Kd4 Ke7 3.Kc5 Kd7 4.Kb6 Kc8 5.Kc6, and White's King will skip to the kingside and eat all of Black's pawns.

After 1.Bb8, Black loses because if his King stays on the kingside, White's King will rush to the queenside and win the Rook. If Black's King rushes to the queenside, White's King will enjoy a leisurely 3-pawn meal.



## Summing Up

The main point of these puzzles is piece activity, including developing one's pieces quickly and understanding that closed positions often block the scope of one's army and that using your pawns to open up files and diagonals on the wings is a common way to play when the center pawns crowd everything else out. You also learned about entombed pieces and how Knights can be boss in closed positions, with the dreaded octopus being a particularly virulent form of Knight.

### Suggested Reading

Euwe and Kramer, *The Middle Game, Book 1*.

### Key Terms

**closed game:** A position locked by pawns. Such a position tends to lessen the strength of Bishops and other long-range pieces simply because the pawns get in their way. Knights, not being long-range pieces, can jump over other pieces and pawns and thus are very useful in such closed situations. A typical series of opening moves that leads to a closed position is 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.Nc3 d6 5.e4, etc.

**octopus:** A Knight that is deep in enemy territory, reaching out in all directions.

**open game:** A type of position that is characterized by many open lines and few center pawns. A lead in development becomes very important in positions of this type.

**pawn structure:** The positioning of the whole pawn mass. Also referred to as the pawn skeleton. This positioning of the pawns is what usually dictates the types of plans available in a given position due to open files, space, pawn weaknesses, etc.

## Key People

**Gioachino Greco** (1600–1634): A legendary Italian who is considered by many to be the first professional chess player, he was a century ahead of his time and wrote a book that demonstrated various opening traps and tactical patterns.

**Gustav Neumann** (1838–1881): A German master, he was one of the world's elite players, beating many of the top players of his day.

**Louis Paulsen** (1833–1891): Born in Germany, he was one of the world's top 5 players.

**Wilhelm Steinitz** (1836–1900): Born in Austria, he became the first official world chess champion. He is also revered as a writer; his writings explained his theories about chess strategy.

# Chess Statics vs. Dynamics: An Eternal Battle

## Lesson 15

**S**tatics are long-term advantages, such as material superiority, a superior pawn structure, more space, etc. Dynamics are short-term advantages, such as penetrating into the enemy position with a Rook, some kind of attack, or a lead in development. In this lesson, you will learn that players with a static advantage can patiently improve their position because their advantages will remain on the board for a long time. You also will discover why players with a dynamic advantage have to hurry up—because, for example, a lead in development might vanish in a few moves, so making use of it can be a do-it-now-or-die proposition.

### PUZZLE 1

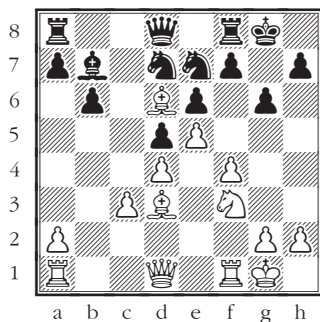
What are chess statics, and what are chess dynamics?

*Answer:*

Chess statics are long-term advantages, usually a material advantage or superior pawn structure. For example, if your opponent has doubled isolated pawns, those doubled pawns can be viewed as targets. Pressuring these pawns can take a long time, but because isolated pawns aren't usually going anywhere (they tend to be stuck in one position; in other words, they are static), you can calmly aim your army at them and devote yourself to their eventual annihilation.

Chess dynamics are short-term advantages. For example, if a King has failed to castle and finds itself in the center, the opponent needs to make immediate use of that or the King will rectify its error and castle to safety. The central enemy King in jeopardy is a short-term dynamic advantage.

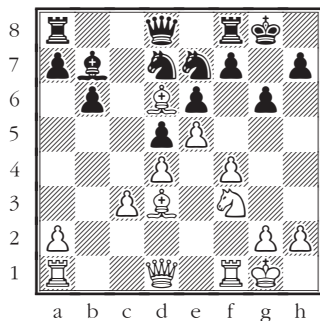
## PUZZLE 2



**White to Move**

Point out the static and dynamic advantages for both sides. Then, make an educated guess about which player has the superior position.

*Answer:*



**White to Move**

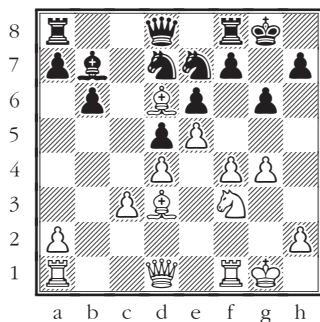
White has an obvious central space advantage, thanks to his advanced pawns. This can prove to be both a static (because that space will be around for a long time) and dynamic advantage. Notice that much of his spatial advantage is aimed at the kingside, with his e5- and f4-pawns gobbling up a lot of territory. Other important White advantages: His 2 Bishops (the d6-Bishop in particular) are extremely dynamic and strong. Black's kingside dark squares are vulnerable, with holes f6, g7, and h6. Finally, White has 5 pieces taking aim at Black's kingside: his Queen (eyeing the d1-h5 diagonal), both Bishops, his Knight, and the f1-Rook.

Black has a static target to aim at, namely the backward pawn on c3. An eventual ...Rc8 will put lasting pressure on it.

It's obvious that White's advantages, most of which are dynamic, are far superior to Black's (the weakness of the c3-pawn). However, if White sits around and does nothing, that c3-weakness might turn out to be a problem. So, because his advantages are dynamic, and because everything is aimed at the kingside, White needs to go after Black's King. There are several excellent ways to go about this, including 14.Qe1, intending to get closer to the enemy King with Qg3 or Qh4; 14.Ng5 with Qg4 to follow (swamping Black's kingside with White pieces); and 14.Qd2, intending an eventual f4-f5 followed by Qh6 when White's Queen is in the Black King's face.

- **14.g4!**

This is a great move. White intends to splatter Black's kingside with f4-f5 when all of White's army will pour into that sector. Remember that the way to get open files for your Rooks is to break open the pawn formation with pawn advances.

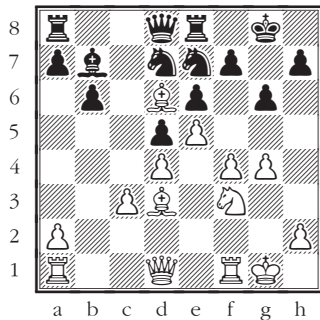


**Black to Move**

*Time for Black to panic*

● **14...Re8**

And not 14...f5 15.Ng5, when the e6-pawn falls. By moving the Rook to e8, the e7-Knight is no longer pinned to the Rook along the a2-f8 diagonal.

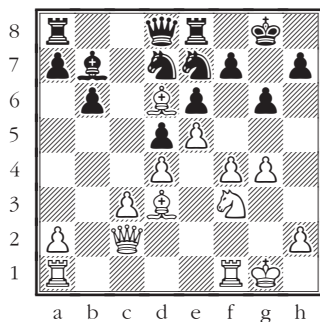


**White to Move**

*Bring a new piece into the attack*

○ **15.Qc2**

15.Qd2 is also strong.

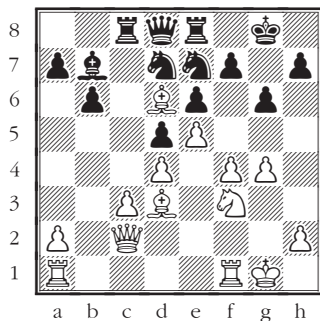


**Black to Move**

*He needs counterplay or he'll be run over*

- **15...Rc8**

Black finally puts pressure against White's backward pawn, but it's too little too late.

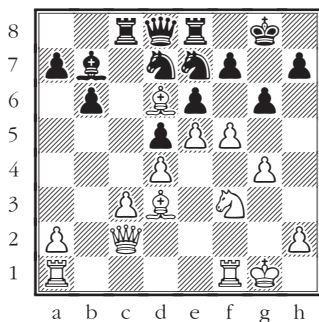


**White to Move**

*Blast through the enemy position*

- **16.f5!**

White cracks open Black's kingside. The threats are 17.f6 and simply 17.fxe6 opening the f-file. Because Black is woefully outgunned in that area, he won't survive.

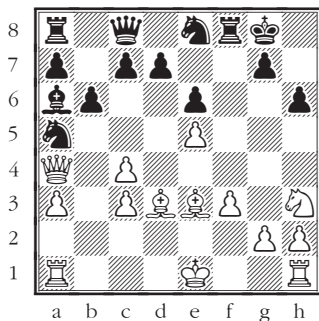


**Black to Move**

*Nobody could defend this position*

Here's an example of what might occur: 16...exf5 17.gxf5 Nxf5 18.Bxf5 gxf5 19.Qg2+ Kh8 20.Ng5 (threatening Nxf7 mate) 20...Rf8 (guarding f7) 21.Bxf8 Qxf8 22.Rxf5, and with f7 falling and moves like Raf1 (doubling on the f-file), Black should resign.

### PUZZLE 3



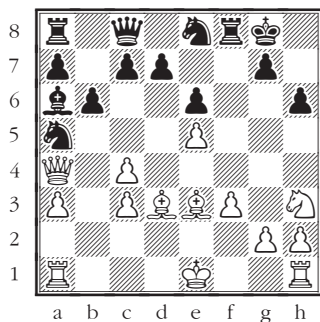
**Black to Move**

**Laszlo Szabo vs. Mark Taimanov, Przepiorka Memorial 1950**

Who is after dynamics, and who is after statics? Once you figure that out, what do you think Black's best move is?



Answer:

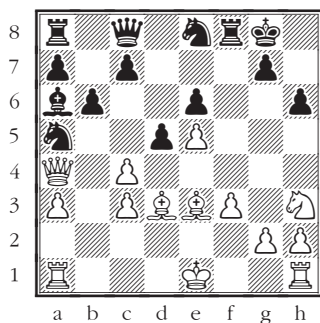


**Black to Move**

White's Bishops and Knight are aiming at Black's kingside. Thus, White is seeking dynamic play against Black's King. Black is targeting the static weakness on c4 with his a5-Knight and a6-Bishop.

- **15...d5!**

A third attacker hits c4, and that's 1 too many for White. Thanks to the pin along the a6-f1 diagonal, White can't capture on d5 without losing a full piece.

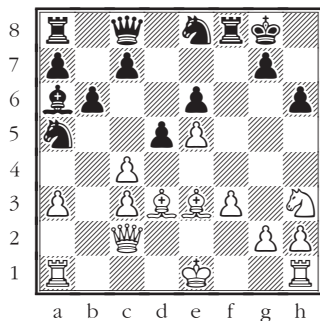


**White to Move**

*He's losing a pawn*

- 16.Qc2

Realizing his pawn is a goner, he brings his Queen back so that it points at Black's King.

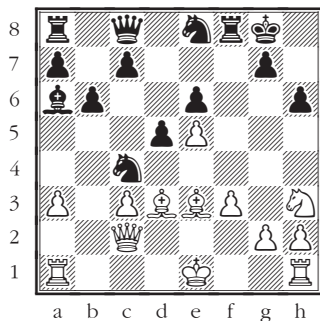


**Black to Move**

*Time to grab the material*

- 16...Nxc4

With a solid position, an extra pawn, and a powerful Knight, Black doesn't have a problem winning the game.



*Black cashes in*

## Summing Up

At times, chess can be easy: You find a static weakness, go after it with as many pieces as possible, and eventually win it. If you have a lead in development (a dynamic advantage), use it to take down the enemy King or to create a long-lasting static advantage of your own. But don't let that dynamic advantage fade away without trying to do something with it.

### Suggested Reading

Euwe and Kramer, *The Middle Game, Book 2*.

### Key Terms

**dynamics:** Usually short term, dynamics seek immediate rewards, such as an attack, material gain, and/or a transition into a superior static situation.

**initiative:** When your opponent is defending and you are attacking or putting pressure on him or her, it is said that you have the initiative.

**statics:** A long-term advantage, such as material gain, superior pawn structure, or the pursuit of weaknesses in the enemy camp.

### Key People

**Adolf Albin** (1848–1920): Born in Bucharest, he was an exceptionally strong player who enjoyed some very fine tournament results against the world's best. This is amazing because he didn't start his international career until he was in his 40s.

**Mikhail Botvinnik** (1911–1995): Born in Moscow, he became the sixth world chess champion. He was one of the world's finest players for more than 30 years.

**Bobby Fischer** (1943–2008): The 11<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, he is considered to be one of the 5 best players of all time, with many ranking him as number 1. He singlehandedly took American chess to a whole new level.

**Lubomir Ftacnik** (1957– ): Born in Bratislava, he is the consummate modern chess professional. He plays in tournaments all over the world, competes in team tournaments, teaches chess, and also wrote a book in 2004.

**Anatoly Karpov** (1951– ): Born in Russia, he was the 12<sup>th</sup> world chess champion. He dominated the competition with his exquisite position style and is now considered to be one of the greatest players ever.

**Garry Kasparov** (1963– ): Born in Azerbaijan, he is the 13<sup>th</sup> world chess champion and is viewed as the best player of all time by many.

**Emanuel Lasker** (1868–1941): He was the second official world chess champion and retained the title for an outrageous 27 years. He is considered to be one of the greatest players who ever lived.

**Samuel Reshevsky** (1911–1992): Born in Poland but living his adult life in the United States, he was a child prodigy and, in his prime, one of the top 2 or 3 players in the world.

**Yasser Seirawan**: (1960– ): Born in Damascus, his childhood was spent in Seattle. A 4-time U.S. chess champion, he was one of the world's best players in his prime and also a highly celebrated chess writer.

**Boris Spassky** (1937– ): Born in Leningrad, he became the 10<sup>th</sup> world chess champion in 1968. In 1972, he lost his title to Bobby Fischer.

**Laszlo Szabo** (1917–1998): Born in Budapest, he was imprisoned by the Russians during World War II, but afterward enjoyed a fantastic chess career, holding his own against the world's elite.

**Mark Taimanov** (1926– ): Born in Russia, he was, in his prime, an incredibly strong player. He is also a concert pianist, and his recordings can be found wherever music is sold.

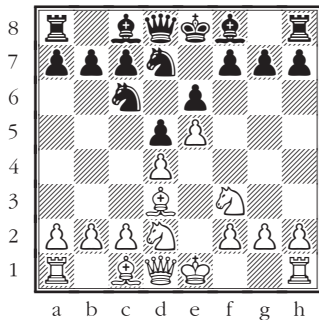
**Artur Yusupov** (1960– ): Born in Moscow, he was one of the world's best in his prime and came close to getting a World Chess Championship match. After being shot by thieves in his Moscow apartment, he permanently moved to Germany.

# Using Chessboard Imbalances to Create Plans

## Lesson 16

In this lesson, you'll use what you've learned in past lessons (superior minor piece, pawn structure, space, material, control of a key file, weak squares, lead in development, King safety, statics versus dynamics, etc.) and discover how to make plans by simply pointing out the differences between what one side has (superior pawn structure, for example) versus what the other side has (a huge lead in development). Each of these disparate things is an imbalance, and once you recognize its existence, along with the existence of what your opponent has, the board will tell you what to do.

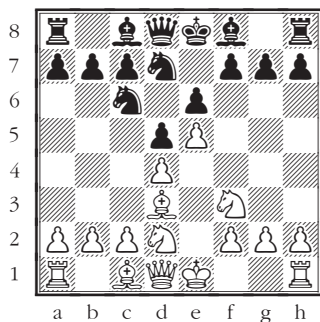
### PUZZLE 1



**Black to Move**

List the imbalances for both sides. Then, based on your view of these imbalances, make Black's most logical move.

*Answer:*

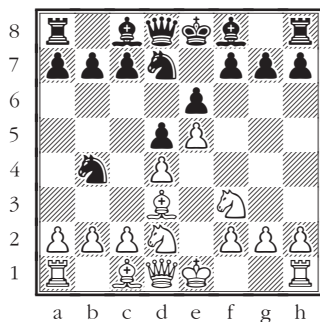


**Black to Move**

The imbalances include the following: White has a central space advantage, thanks to his advanced e5-pawn. White's pawn chain (b2-e5) is aiming at the kingside. Black's pawn chain (f7-d5) is aiming at the queenside. White's center takes away many squares from Black's pieces. Black should not accept that. Finally, there aren't any open files for either side's Rooks. Because the way to create files is to advance your pawns so that they "hit" the enemy pawn, Black's thematic advances are ...c5, gaining queenside space and also creating an open c-file, and ...f6, hitting e5 and preparing to create an open f-file. Of course, ...c5 isn't possible at the moment, but that doesn't mean that it can't be done. If the move is important, find a way to make it happen.

- **6...Nb4!**

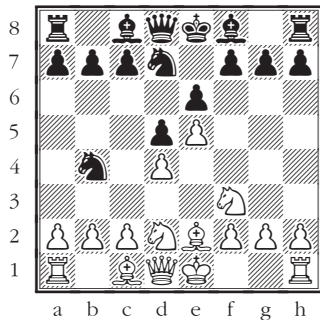
Black attacks White's attacking Bishop. However, the real point isn't to attack something that can safely move away but to free up the c7-pawn so that it can advance to c5 and lay claim to queenside space and pressure against d4.



**White to Move**  
*Protect his d3-Bishop*

○ **7.Be2**

White didn't want to give up his attacking light-squared Bishop, so he moves it away, intending to kick Black's Knight back with c2-c3.

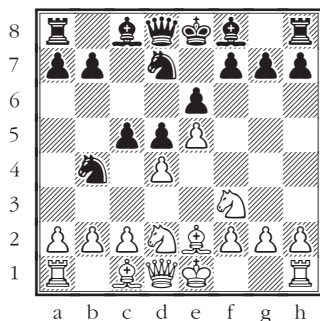


**Black to Move**  
*Carry out the proper plan*

● **7...c5!**

Black attacks White's strong center, gains queenside space, puts pressure on d4, and creates a file (the c-file) that can be used by a Rook. That's a lot of goodness for a single pawn move.

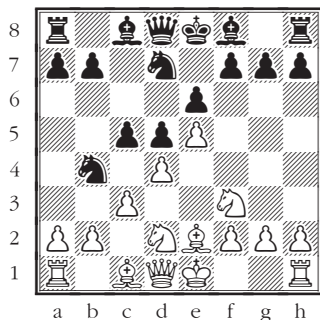




**White to Move**  
*Solidify his center*

○ **8.c3**

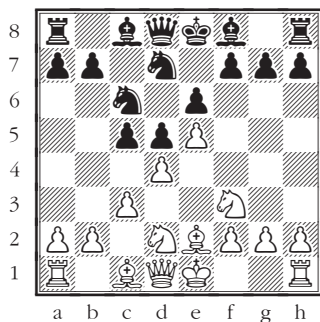
This is a good move that solidifies White's central d-pawn and kicks the Knight out of White's territory.



**Black to Move**  
*Protect his b4-Knight*

● **8...Nc6**

Black ran from the nasty c3-pawn while simultaneously adding to the pressure against d4. Notice how really good moves usually have more than 1 point.

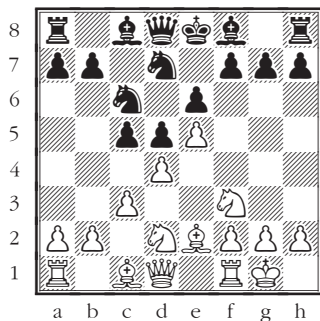


**White to Move**

*Time to castle*

○ **9.0-0**

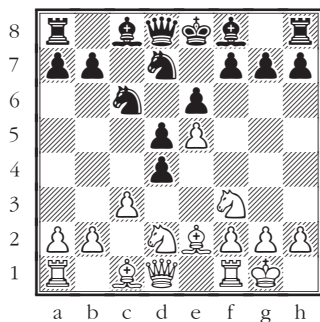
The center will soon be a battleground, so castling should be a no-brainer.



**Black to Move**

*Open a file*

● **9...cxd4**

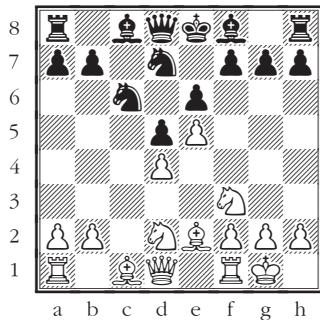


**White to Move**

*He has to recapture his pawn*

○ **10.cxd4**

Black's capture forces White to recapture, but also opens the c-file for Black's Rook and opens the a3-f8 diagonal for Black's dark-squared Bishop.

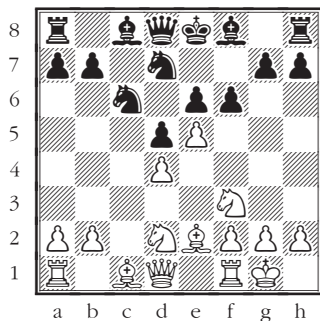


**Black to Move**

*Continue his central onslaught*

● **10...f6!**

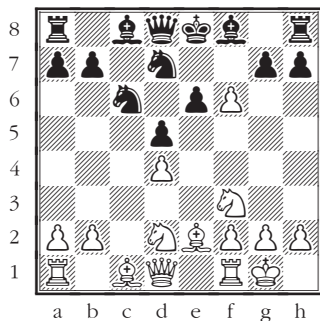
White has a lead in development and his King is castled, but Black is deconstructing White's center by putting maximum pressure against d4 and e5. At the moment, White's e5-pawn is defended twice but attacked 3 times.



**White to Move**  
*Open a file*

- 11.exf6

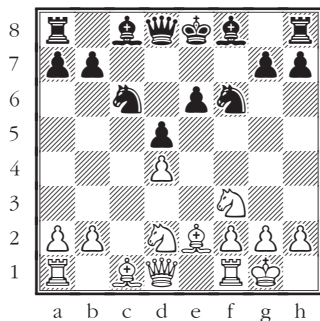
Avoiding the loss of a pawn and opening up the e-file for White's Rooks.



**Black to Move**

- 11...Nxf6

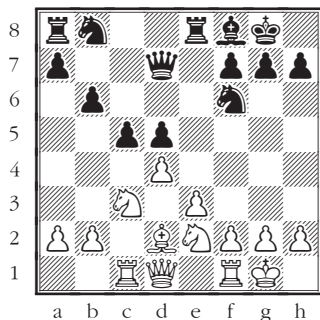
Recapturing the pawn and improving the position of the Knight (f6 is more advanced than d7).



*An interesting battle is in store*

Both sides achieved their goals: White has created a backward, potentially weak pawn on e6 and an open e-file for White's Rooks. Black has created an open c-file and f-file; his dark-squared Bishop will be very happy on d6; and Black will castle, placing his Rook on f8 (the open file). Anyone can win.

## PUZZLE 2

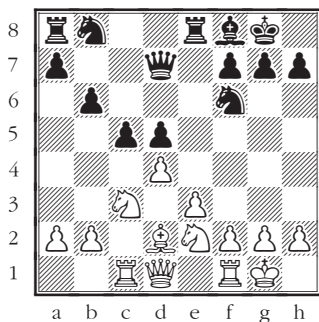


**White to Move**

**Nigel Short vs. G. Gajewsky, EU-chT 2013**

List the imbalances for both sides. Then, based on your view of these imbalances, make White's most logical move.

*Answer:*

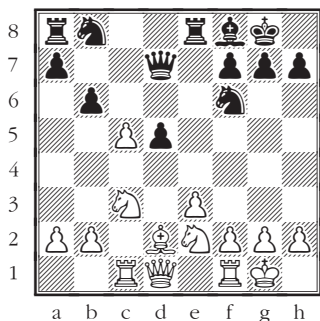


**White to Move**

At the moment, Black has more central and queenside space because he has 2 advanced center pawns (c5 and d5) while White only has 1 (d4). Black also has his e8-Rook on the half-open e-file. White has a Rook on c1, where it is looking (via X-ray through the c3-Knight) at the c5-pawn, hoping to make it a target.

○ **13.dxc5**

White changes the pawn structure. By getting his d-pawn off the d-file, a “road” (file) has been created for a White Rook, which will eventually move to d1, where it will put pressure against Black’s d5-pawn. Remember that targets don’t magically appear; you have to make them appear.

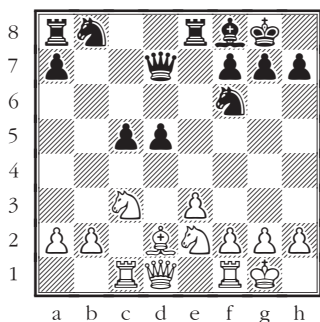


**Black to Move**

*He will create “hanging pawns”*

● **13...bxc5**

This move regains his pawn, opens the b-file for a Black Rook, and also gains control of the b4- and d4-squares. Black’s new structure is called “hanging pawns,” and although they might become weak on the half-open c- and d-files, they also offer many positional and dynamic perks. For example, these pawns control the critical b4-, c4-, d4-, and e4-squares.

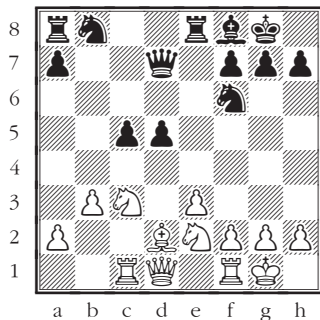


**White to Move**

*Freeze the central pawn targets*

○ **14.b3**

White sees that Black will eventually place a Rook on the b-file and pressure the b2-pawn. White would also like to move his Knight to a4, where it would put serious pressure on Black's c5-pawn. However, the Queen would have to babysit the a4-Knight because Black's Queen is eyeing that square. With 14.b3, White no longer has to worry about b-file pressure from Black, and the b3-pawn will also protect the Knight when it moves to a4.



**Black to Move**

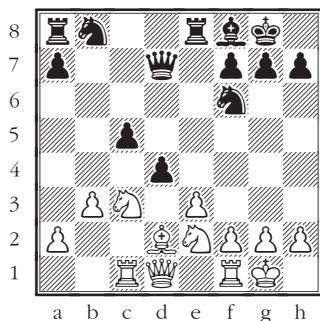
*Change the structure again*

- **14...d4**

Imbalances have a habit of morphing into something else, and it's important that you are aware of these changes because each one often demands a new strategy and/or plan. With 14...d4, Black trades in his square-grabbing hanging pawns for a more dynamic passed pawn.

Is a passed pawn better than hanging pawns? Not necessarily. Both structures have their own advantages and disadvantages. Whether or not to give up one for the other depends on the needs of each specific position.



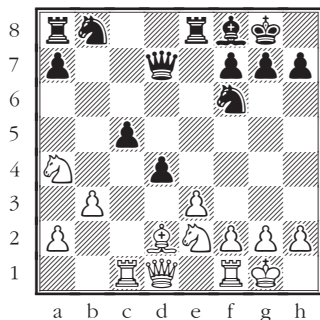


**White to Move**

*To capture or not to capture?*

○ **15.Na4**

15.exd4 was also possible, but moving the Knight to a4 first forces Black to defend c5.

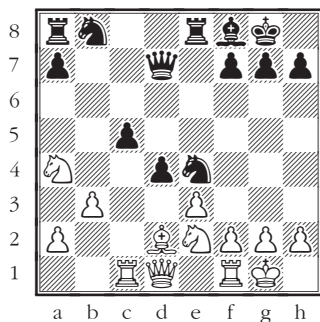


**Black to Move**

*Defend c5*

● **15...Ne4**

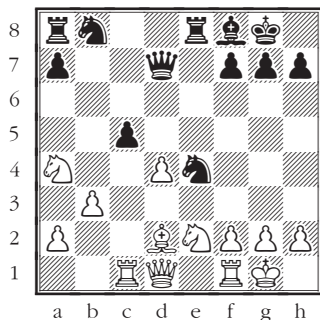
Black defends his c5-pawn and, at the same time, places his Knight on an advanced central square.



**White to Move**  
*Should he take on d4?*

○ **16.exd4**

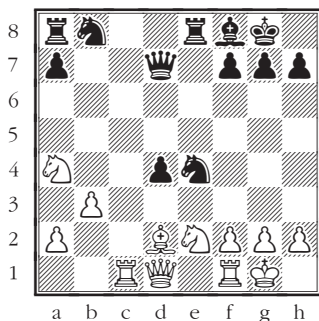
White captures, giving Black a passed pawn but opening the c-file for White's Rook.



**Black to Move**  
*He needs to get his pawn back*

● **16...cxd4**

Black regains his pawn and will now put his faith in the passed d-pawn.



*Both sides have chances in this strategically complicated position*

Both sides have to wrap their minds around a whole new list of imbalances. Black still has more central space, thanks to his d4-pawn. White will claim that the d4-pawn is weak. Black will claim that it's extremely powerful. White will try to blockade the passed pawn by placing a Knight on d3; Black might push the pawn before that happens (but would that make the pawn stronger or weaker?); or Black might try to make use of the c3-hole. Black would like to get something going down the e-file (because he has a Rook on e8), while White would like to penetrate into the enemy position on the c-file (courtesy of the c1-Rook).

In other words, anything can happen!

### **PUZZLE 3**

Is a material advantage more important than the other imbalances?

*Answer:*

Material superiority is highly prized, and in the majority of cases, it's something you should strive for. However, every imbalance can win a game. It's up to you to decide just how valuable a particular imbalance is in each position.

## Summing Up

You always need to be aware of every imbalance in every position for both sides. Then, look for a move (or moves) that cater to those imbalances. If a particular move or plan will cause the opponent some serious problems, find a way to make it happen.

### Suggested Reading

Silman, *How to Reassess Your Chess, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*.

### Key Terms

**body language of the board:** Based on the accumulation of chess patterns, you are able to glance at the board and know what it wants you to do.

**imbalance:** Any difference between the White and Black positions. Material advantage, superior pawn structure, superior minor piece, space, development, and the initiative are all typical imbalances.

### Key People

**Pal Benko** (1928– ): Born in France, he was raised in Hungary and eventually emigrated to the United States in 1958. A close friend of Bobby Fischer, he is a world-class player, a chess writer, and an amazing composer of endgame studies.

**Nigel Short** (1965– ): Born in England, he played a match against World Chess Champion Gary Kasparov for the title but was soundly beaten. Nevertheless, he remained one of the world's best players, and his excellent pen and quick wit make his articles and live commentaries extremely popular.

# Legendary Teachers Who Transformed Chess

## Lesson 17

The ultimate success of every endeavor (whether it's in art, science, or chess) rests in the hands of people who think differently than others—those who see what others see in completely different tones. This lesson is about 4 men who changed the way chess was played. François-André Danican Philidor (1726–1795) was the first player to put importance on the pawn structure. Wilhelm Steinitz (1836–1900) ended the romantic era by showing the world that positional play often defeated crazy attacks. Siegbert Tarrasch (1862–1934) streamlined Steinitz's theories. And Aron Nimzowitsch (1886–1935), not happy with Tarrasch's teachings, introduced hypermodernism to the world.

### PUZZLE 1

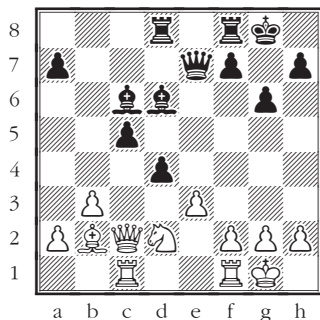
Of the 4 legendary teachers (Nimzowitsch, Steinitz, Philidor, and Tarrasch), which one ...

- a) ... was part of the hypermodern school?
- b) ... was the master of pawns?
- c) ... was at war with Tarrasch?
- d) ... was universally viewed as the father of modern chess?

*Answer:*

- Nimzowitsch was part of the hypermodern school. Other prestigious members were Richard Reti (along with Nimzowitsch, one of the world's top players in the 1920s), Savielly Tartakower, and Ernst Grunfeld.
- Philidor was the master of pawns.
- Nimzowitsch was at war with Tarrasch, because Tarrasch represented the classical school while Nimzowitsch was the priest of hypermodernism.
- The father of modern chess was Wilhelm Steinitz.

## PUZZLE 2

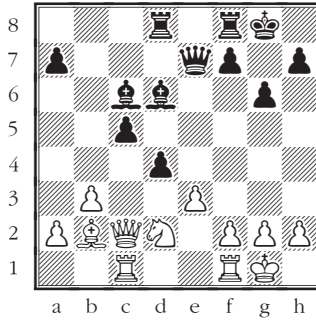


**White to Move**

**Aron Nimzowitsch vs. Siegbert Tarrasch, Saint Petersburg 1914**

Black has just advanced his d5-pawn to d4. Should White capture the d-pawn with his e3-pawn?

*Answer:*

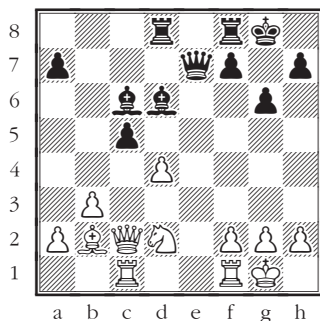


The advance of Black's d-pawn opened up the h1-a8 diagonal for Black's c6-Bishop. Note that both Black Bishops are aiming directly at White's King and that Black's Queen can jump into the attack by ...Qh4. If White can stop Black's kingside assault and eventually play a move like Nc4 or simply go after Black's c5-pawn with Ba3, then all will be well in White's camp. However, Black's Bishops are so strong that White is in a bit of trouble.

Once you realize that your opponent's dynamic potential is red-hot dangerous, running after a pawn is rarely a wise idea. Nimzowitsch, though, went for it.

○ **19.exd4??**

White needed to play 19.Rfe1 and then hold on for dear life.

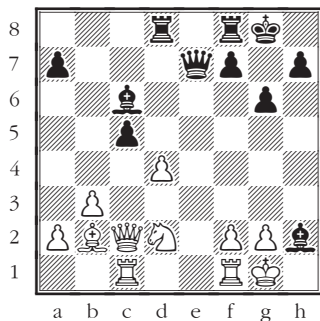


**Black to Move**

*Time to strike*

● **19...Bxh2+!!**

Both Nimzowitsch and Tarrasch should have been (and probably were) well acquainted with the famous battle between Emanuel Lasker and Johann Hermann Bauer that took place in Amsterdam in 1889 (today, this double Bishop sacrifice is often called Lasker's sacrifice). In that game, Lasker played an identical sacrifice and wiped his opponent off the map—so why Nimzowitsch walked into this is a mystery.



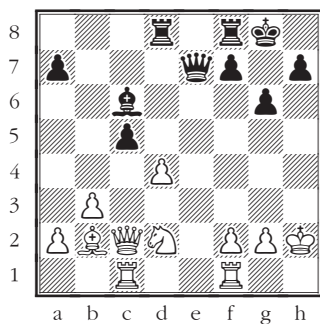
**White to Move**

*The hammer has fallen*

○ **20.Kxh2**



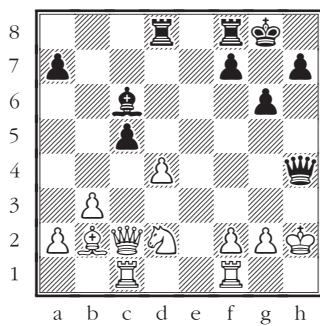
20.Kh1 Qh4 is even worse for White.



**Black to Move**

*Keep the attack going*

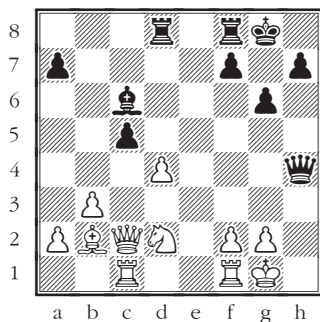
- 20...Qh4+



**White to Move**

*There is only 1 legal move*

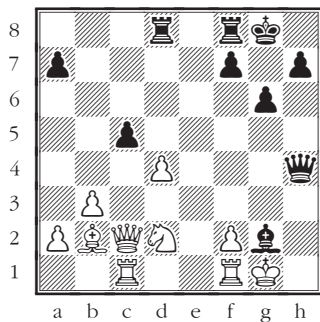
- 21.Kg1



**Black to Move**  
*Copy Lasker*

- **21...Bxg2!!**

Ripping away the White King's pawn cover.

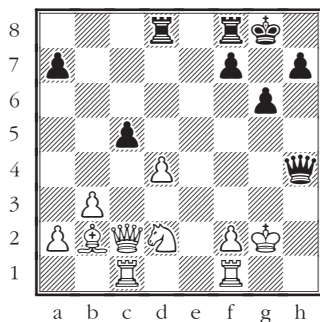


**White to Move**  
*But he is doomed*

- **22.Kxg2**

In the actual game, White didn't capture the Bishop. Here's what happened: 22.f3 Rfe8 23.Ne4 Qh1+ 24.Kf2 Bxf1 25.d5 (25.Rxf1 Qh2+ picks up White's Queen) 25...f5 26.Qc3 (this threatens Qg7 mate, and retreating the Knight leads to a quick finish: 26.Ng3 Qg2

mate) 26...Qg2+ 27.Ke3 Rxe4+ 28.fxe4 f4+! 29.Kxf4 Rf8+ 30.Ke5 Qh2+ 31.Ke6 Re8+ 32.Kd7 Bb5 mate. It must have given Tarrasch great pleasure to beat his enemy in this fashion.

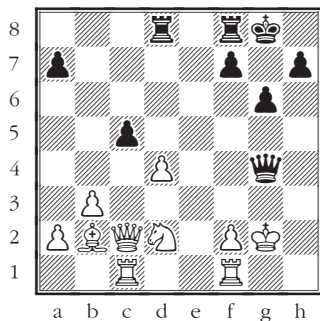


**Black to Move**

*First herd the King onto the side of the board*

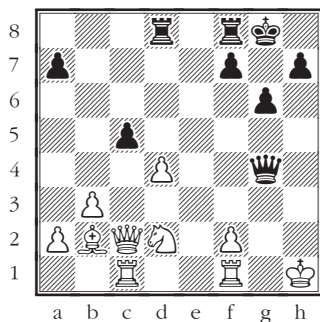
- **22...Qg4+**

This pushes the enemy King to the side of the board, where it will have nowhere to run. The immediate 22...Rd5?? actually loses to 23.Ne4.



**White to Move**

- **23.Kh1**

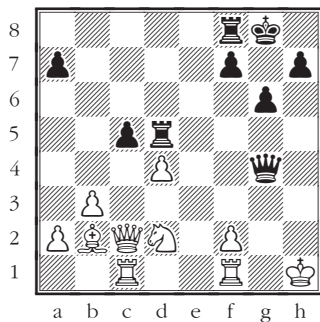


**Black to Move**

*Then bring another piece to aid in the attack*

- **23...Rd5!**

White has no defense against ...Rh5 mate.



*White resigns*

If White wants to stop mate, he has to give up his Queen: 24.Qxc5 Rh5+ 25.Qxh5 Qxh5+ 26.Kg1 Qg5+ (a double attack against White's King and Knight) 27.Kh1 Qxd2, and Black has a winning material advantage.

### PUZZLE 3

- a) Which school (classical or hypermodern) was the second official world chess champion, Emmanuel Lasker, affiliated with?
- b) Who said, “Pawns are the soul of chess”?
- c) Which of the 4 legendary teachers (Nimzowitsch, Steinitz, Philidor, and Tarrasch) was a famous musician?
- d) Which of the 4 legendary teachers was a medical doctor?

*Answer:*

- a) Lasker was never affiliated with any chess school. When he won a strong tournament that was filled with the young hypermodernists, he quashed the long-standing war between the 2 schools by saying that both schools were valid and that serious players have to incorporate the teachings of both schools if they want to be successful. Today, there is no classical or hypermodern school. Every good player has blended the ideas of both into one cohesive method.
- b) François-André Danican Philidor famously said, “Pawns are the soul of chess.”
- c) Philidor was one of the leading opera composers in France, and much of his music can still be found today.
- d) Siegbert Tarrasch was a medical doctor and actually refused to play a world championship match with Steinitz in 1882 because it would interfere with his medical practice.

## Summing Up

As in all arts and sciences, we wouldn't be where we are today in chess without the geniuses who dragged us into the modern age. Each of the 4 pioneers of chess—Philidor, Steinitz, Tarrasch, and Nimzowitsch—took us a step closer to understanding the world's greatest game, and a true appreciation of chess isn't possible without being acquainted with all 4 of these gentlemen.

### Suggested Reading

Kasparov, *Garry Kasparov on My Great Predecessors*.

Linder and Linder, *Wilhelm Steinitz*.

Nimzowitsch, *Chess Praxis*.

Tarrasch, *Three Hundred Chess Games*.

### Key Term

**hypermodernism:** A school of thought that insists that indirect control of the center is better than direct occupation. In particular, Reti and Nimzovich successfully propagated the idea of central control from the flanks. Unfortunately, they took their ideas to extremes—just as the classicists did. Today, it is recognized that both schools of thought are correct, and a blending of the 2 is the only truly balanced method.

### Key People

**Isidor Gunsberg** (1854–1930): Born in Hungary, he was among the top 5 players on Earth. He played a World Chess Championship match against Steinitz (a total of 19 games) and lost by 2 points.

**Emanuel Lasker** (1868–1941): He was the second official world chess champion and retained the title for an outrageous 27 years. He is considered to be one of the greatest players who ever lived.

**Aron Nimzowitsch** (1886–1935): Born in Latvia, he wrote some of the most important chess books in history. He was also a great player, rising to number 3 in the world during his prime.

**François-André Danican Philidor** (1726–1795): A Frenchman, he was the world's best player and also a famous composer of operas.

**Georg Salwe** (1862–1920): A Polish grandmaster, he played in tournaments and matches against the world's best and held his own.

**Carl Schlechter** (1874–1918): Born in Austria, he was one of the world's top 5 players. He drew a World Chess Championship match against Emanuel Lasker (a tied match leaves the champion with the title).

**Wilhelm Steinitz** (1836–1900): Born in Austria, he became the first official world chess champion. He is also revered as a writer; his writings explained his theories about chess strategy.

**Siegbert Tarrasch** (1862–1934): A magnificent player and one of the most influential chess teachers in history, he might have been world champion if he hadn't decided that medicine, and being a medical doctor, came first and chess came second.

**Frederick Yates** (1884–1932): He was a very strong English chess master who crossed swords with, and often beat, some of the world's finest players. He won the British Chess Championships 6 times.

**Johann Zukertort** (1842–1888): Born in Poland, he was one of the top 3 players in the world. He also excelled in blindfold chess, playing 16 games at the same time.

# Chess Endgames and the King's Magical Powers

## Lesson 18

**W**hen a chess game starts, we are taught to tuck our King away (via castling) in a safe corner. However, as the game progresses and most of the pieces are traded, the King shuffles out of its bunker and takes matters into its own hands. This often leads to a King-versus-King battle, and the only way to win this battle is to make use of opposition, which is a technique that makes one King stronger than the other. This lesson explores some key basic mates (King and Queen versus lone King, King and Rook versus lone King, etc.), but the main focus is on basic opposition, distant opposition, and outflanking.

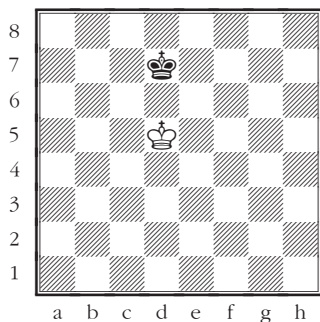
### PUZZLE 1

**True or false:** In the endgame, if the Kings are only 1 square apart and are directly facing each other on a diagonal or file or rank, whoever moves has the opposition.

*Answer:*

**False.** In the endgame, if the Kings are only 1 square apart and are directly facing each other on a diagonal or file or rank, whoever moves does *not* have the opposition.





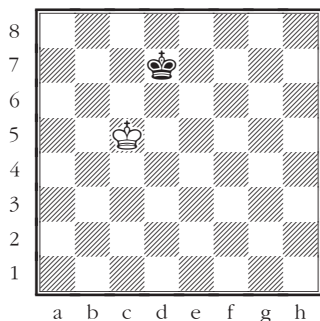
**White to Move**

*Black has the opposition*

Black does *not* have the move, so he has the opposition. Black can use this to stay in front of the enemy King or advance up the board (although this will usually give the opposition to the opponent).

○ **1.Kc5**

White moved his King from d5 to c5. Now Black can stay in front of White's King with 1...Kc7 (stopping White from moving forward and also retaining the opposition), or he can step forward with 1...Ke6, although after that, White can regain the opposition with 2.Kc4 or 2.Kc6.

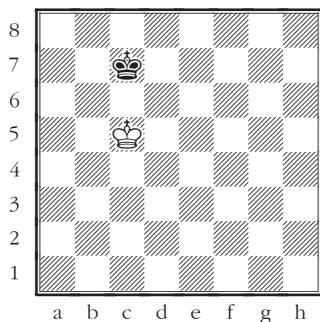


**Black to Move**

*He needs to make a decision*

- **1...Kc7**

White's King can't move forward, and Black retains the opposition.

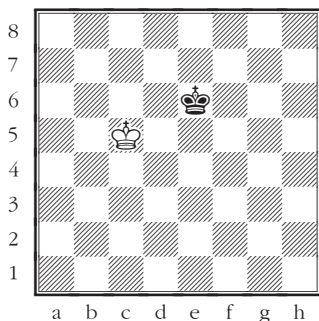


*Black has retained the opposition*

- **1...Ke6** (instead of 1...Kc7)

**Note:** These King-versus-King scenarios are bare-skeleton examples that help clarify opponent. In a real game, there would be pawns on the board.

Although Black has given up the opposition (White can grab it by 2.Kc6, rank opposition, or 2.Kc4, diagonal opposition), it might be worth it if he can penetrate into White's camp and/or win a White pawn, or help escort his own passed pawn down the board.



*Black gives up the opposition for some particular gain*

## PUZZLE 2

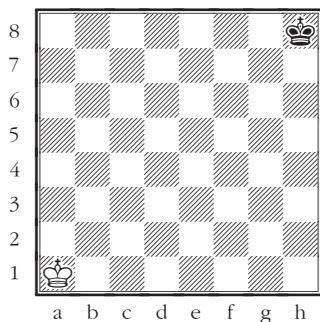
**True or false:** If the Kings are far away from each other, then opposition doesn't come into play.

*Answer:*

**False.** In a King-and-pawn endgame, one can usually gauge who has the opposition no matter how distant the Kings might be.

The rules for basic distant opponent are as follows:

- If the Kings have an odd number of squares between them and are directly facing each other on a diagonal or file or rank, the person who has to move does *not* have the opposition.
- Conversely, if the Kings have an even number of squares between them and are directly facing each other on a diagonal or file or rank, the person who has to move also has the opposition.

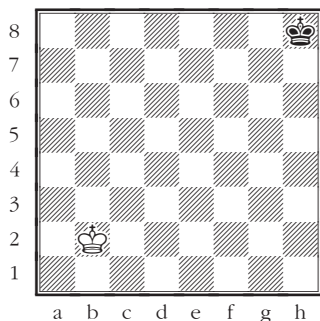


**White to Move**  
*Claim the opposition*

White has the opposition because there is a direct connection on the a1-h8 diagonal and White has the move. The rule verifies that White does indeed own the opposition: If the Kings have an even number of squares between them and are directly facing each other on a diagonal or file or rank, the person who has to move also has the opposition.

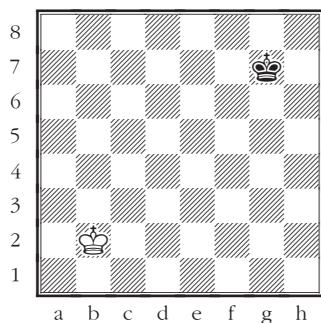
○ **1.Kb2**

The Kings will rush at each other on the diagonal. White, who knows the above rule, is certain that he will end up with the opposition.



**Black to Move**

- 1...Kg7

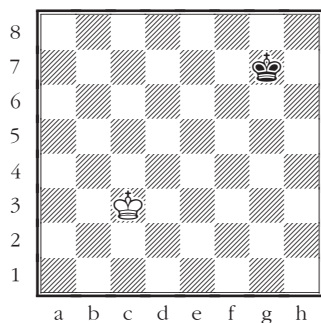


**White to Move**

*Get closer to Black's King*

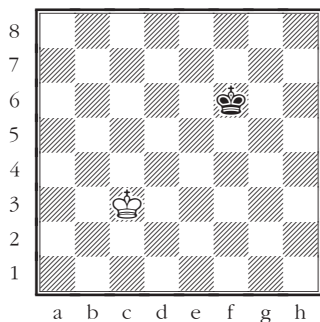
- 2.Kc3

White understands the opposition while Black doesn't. However, even if Black did understand it, he would still have to give the opposition to White.



**Black to Move**

- 2...Kf6



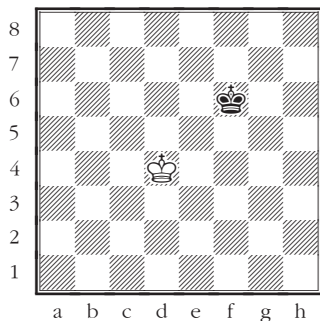
**White to Move**

*Clarify his opposition ownership*

○ **3.Kd4**

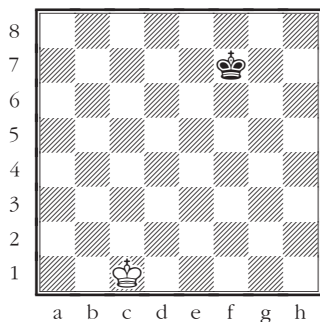
White has proven that he owns the opposition because the Kings are only 1 square apart, which takes us back to an earlier rule: If the Kings are only 1 square apart and are directly facing each other on a diagonal or file or rank, whoever moves does *not* have the opposition.

Because White's King is 1 diagonal square away from Black's, and because Black has the move, White has the opposition.



*It's now clear that White has the opposition*

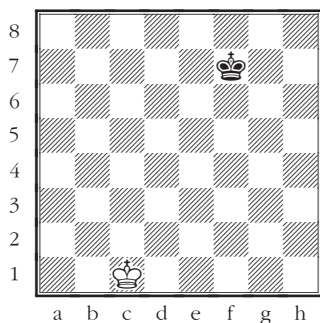
## PUZZLE 3



**White to Move**

Who has the opposition, and why?

*Answer:*



**White to Move**

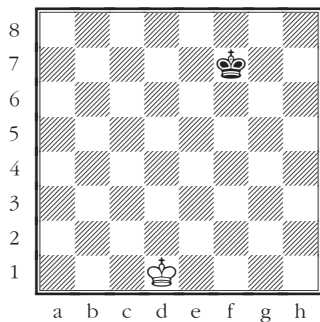
White has the opposition. If it were Black's move, then Black would have the opposition. But how do you know if one side or the other has the opposition if there isn't a straight line (file, rank, or diagonal)? Here's the rule:

- If the Kings aren't connected on a file, rank, or diagonal and if you can connect the Kings and create a square or rectangle with all the corners being the same color with the opponent to move, you'll have the opposition.

We will say that there's proof once White creates a direct connection along a file, diagonal, or rank.

○ **1.Kd1**

This creates a rectangle (d1-d7-f7-f1) with all the corners being the same color (White). White also could have claimed the opposition with 1.Kb1 (b1-b7-f7-f1), but that would have put more distance between the Kings. Note that 1.Kc2? does not follow the rule, because all the corners of the rectangle are not the same color (c2 is white; c7 is black; f7 is white; f2 is black).

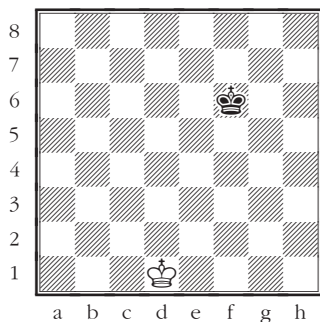


**Black to Move**

*Avoid a direct connection*

- **1...Kf6**



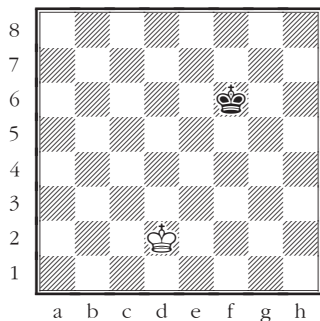


**White to Move**

*Get closer to Black's King*

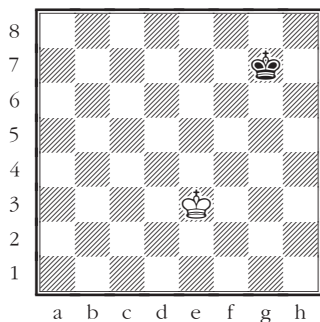
○ **2.Kd2**

Now the rectangle (d2-d6-f6-f2) is tighter, and, of course, all the corners are the same color (Black).



**Black to Move**

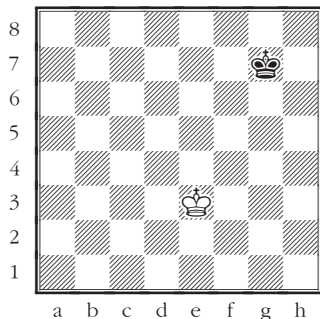
● **2...Kg7**



**White to Move**  
*Crowd the Black King*

○ **3.Ke3**

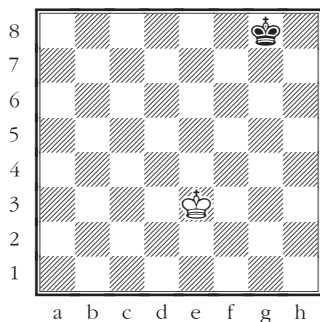
This move creates a new rectangle, with all the corners being the same color: e3-e7-g7-g3.



**Black to Move**  
*His world is getting smaller*

● **3...Kg8**

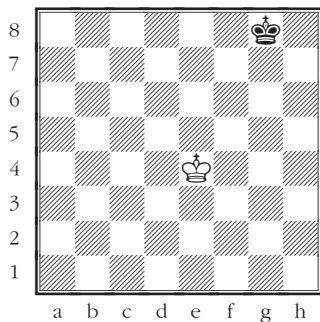
White would have proved his claim to opposition after 3...Kg6 4.Ke4, and 3...Kh7 4.Kd3 (although 4.Kf3 is more consistent).



**White to Move**  
*Continue the squeeze*

○ **4.Ke4**

White keeps getting closer. Now the rectangle is e4-e8-g8-g4.



*Black can't stop a direct connection*

Let's look at all of Black's moves and show how White creates a direct connection:

- 4...Kh8 5.Kd4 creates a diagonal connection with an odd number between the Kings with Black to move (5...Kg7 6.Ke5).
- 4...Kh7 5.Kf5 creates a diagonal connection with an odd number between the Kings with Black to move.

- 4...Kg7 5.Ke5 creates a diagonal connection with an odd number between the Kings with Black to move.
- 4...Kf8 5.Kf4 creates a file connection with an odd number between the Kings with Black to move.
- 4...Kf7 5.Kf5 creates a file connection with an odd number between the Kings with Black to move.

## Summing Up

Basic opposition, distant opposition, diagonal opposition, and the ability to see who has the opposition even if the Kings aren't connected are critically important skills that will serve you for as long as you play the game. Although these skills might sound complicated, they are actually very easy to learn. Fortunately, most players will think that these skills are massively complicated and ignore them altogether. Thus, knowing this material will give you a serious advantage over most of your opponents.

### Suggested Reading

Silman, *Silman's Complete Endgame Course*.

### Key Term

**opposition:** An endgame term, it is a means by which one King can dominate another.

### Key Person

**Jose Raul Capablanca** (1888–1942): Born in Cuba, he was the third world chess champion and, in his prime, considered to be almost unbeatable.

# Kings and Pawns in Next-Level Endgames

## Lesson 19

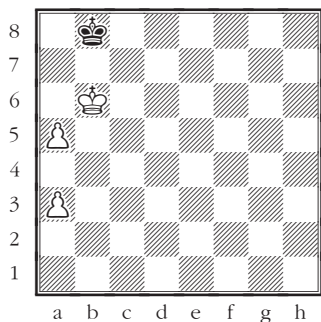
In his classic book *Chess Fundamentals*, Jose Capablanca, the third world chess champion, recommended that beginners study the endgame first. However, very few players study the endgame at all. This is unfortunate because everyone of every rating will find himself in one endgame after another, and if you don't know the basics, every endgame will turn into a disaster. This lesson continues our use of opposition, this time in the most common endgame of all: King and pawn versus lone King. Other topics include the creation of a passed pawn, the outside passed pawn, and the square of the pawn.

### PUZZLE 1

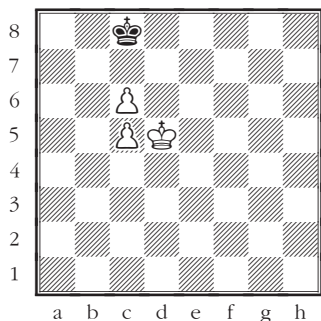
**True or false:** Although a King and pawn versus a lone King is often drawn (depending on King position and who has the opposition), a King and 2 pawns versus a lone King is always a win.

*Answer:*

**False.** A 2-pawn advantage is almost always decisive unless the pawns are doubled. Even so, if the doubled pawns aren't on the a- or h-files, then it's still a win if you don't push the 2 pawns down the board together.



*Doubled a-pawn = A dead draw*



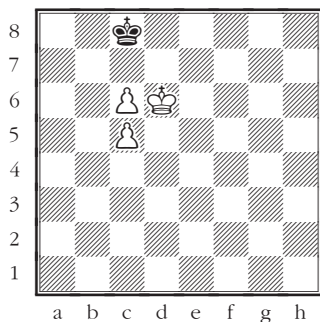
**White to Move**

*Draw*

White made the mistake of pushing his pawns together. As a result, the game is a draw.

○ **1.Kd6**

There's nothing White can do. For example, 1.Kc4 Kc7 2.Kb5 Kc8 3.Kb6 Kb8 is a reversed version of our main line.

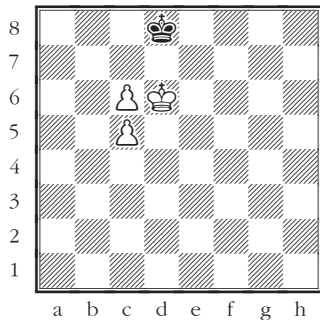


**Black to Move**

*Keep White's King from advancing*

- **1...Kd8**

The purpose of this move is not allowing White's King to advance. Of course, 1...Kb8?? lets the White King take control of the queening square: 2.Kd7 followed by c6-c7-c8=Q.

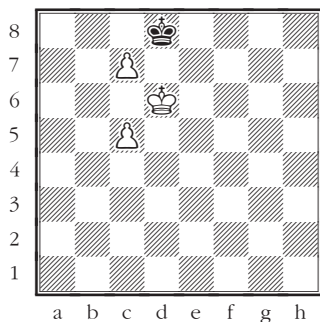


**White to Move**

*He has no way to win*

- **2.c7+**

2.Ke6 Kc7 3.Kd5 Kc8 gets White nowhere.

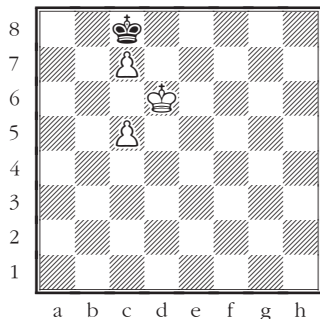


**Black to Move**

*1 move loses; 1 move draws*

- **2...Kc8**

2...Ke8?? is nothing less than madness because it allows White's pawn to turn into a Queen by 3.c8=Q+.



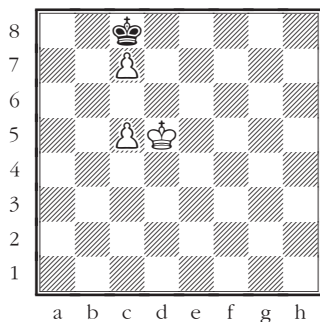
**White to Move**

*He gives it 1 more shot*

- **3.Kd5**

This move gives away the advanced pawn. However, this leads to a very basic King-and-pawn-versus-King draw. The alternatives allow a faster finish: 3.Kc6 stalemate and 3.c6 stalemate.



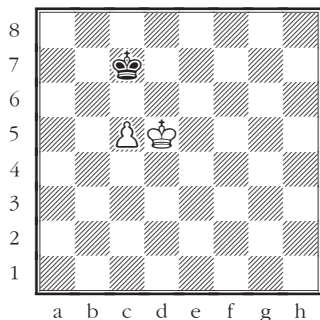


**Black to Move**

*Draw*

- **3...Kxc7**

Black is only down 1 pawn, and because his King is in front of it, the game will end in a draw.

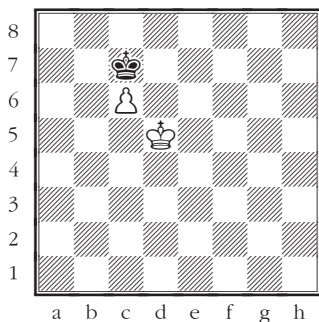


**White to Move**

*It's still a draw*

- **4.c6**

The pawn dreams of becoming a Queen, but it will only happen if Black botches his next move.



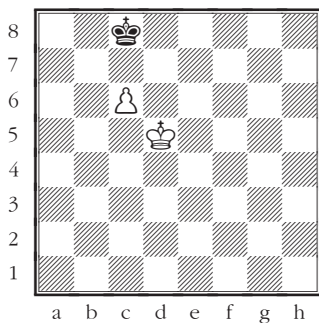
**Black to Move**

*Find the only saving move*

● **4...Kc8!!**

The rule for these situations is to always step straight back so that when White's King moves forward, Black's King can step right in front of it, gaining the opposition.

4...Kd8?? loses the game because 5.Kd6 hands the opposition to White: 5...Kc8 6.c7 Kb7 7.Kd7, and the pawn will turn into a Queen.

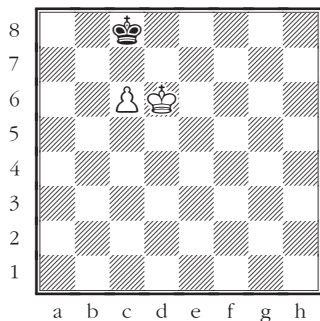


**White to Move**

*The writing is on the wall*

○ **5.Kd6**

The hope is that Black goes berserk and plays 5...Kb8, leaving the battlefield and losing the war.

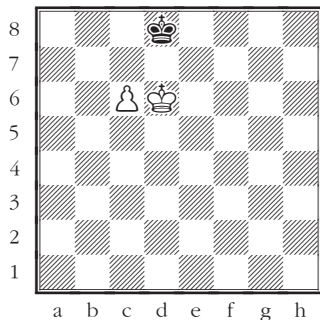


**Black to Move**

*Draw*

- **5...Kd8**

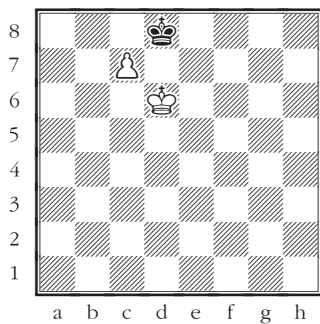
Black takes the opposition and makes it clear that he knows what he's doing.



**White to Move**

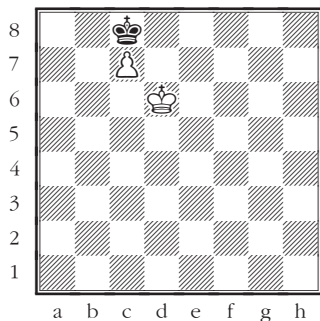
- **6.c7+**

6.Kc5 Kc7 would only waste both players' time.



**Black to Move**

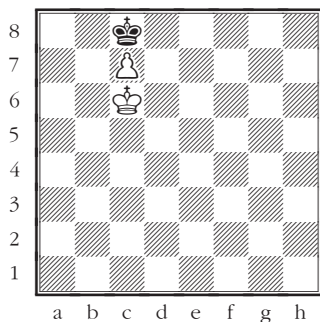
- **6...Kc8**



**White to Move**

*The game finally ends*

- **7.Kc6** stalemate.



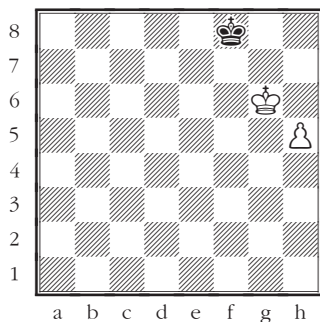
*Draw by stalemate*

## PUZZLE 2

**True or false:** If the side with the extra pawn can get his King in front of it, he'll always win.

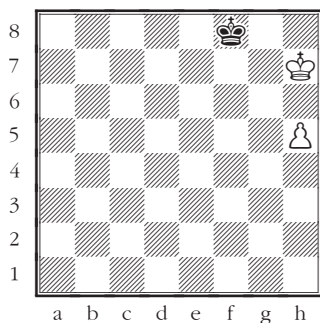
*Answer:*

**False.** Although it's a very good idea to get your King in front of your pawn because it often does lead to victory, there are exceptions. The following are 2 examples.

**Example 1:****White to Move***His King gets in front of his pawn*

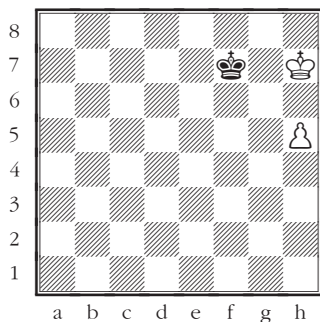
- **1.Kh7**

He might as well try this because 1.h6 Kg8 2.h7+ Kh8 3.Kh6 is a quick stalemate.

**Black to Move***Trap White's King*

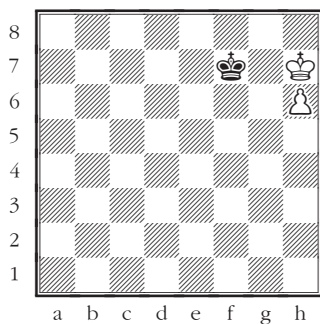
- **1...Kf7**

By trapping White's King on the h-file, White's pawn is actually blocked by its own King!



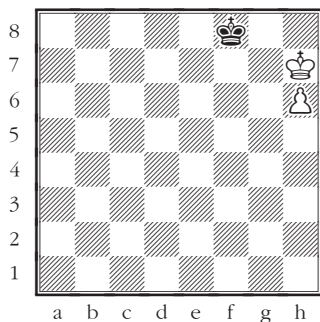
○ **2.h6**

This is as good as anything else because 2.Kh8 Kf8 and 2.Kh6 Kf6 get White nowhere.



● **2...Kf8**

And not 2...Kf6?? 3.Kg8, followed by h7 and h8=Q.

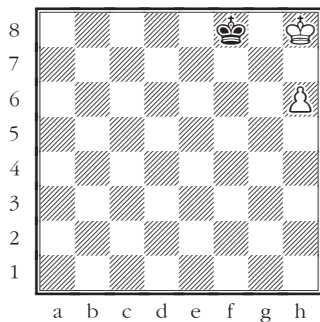


**White to Move**

*It's just a draw*

○ **3.Kh8**

3.Kg6 Kg8 4.h7+ Kh8 5.Kh6 is the other way to accept the draw.



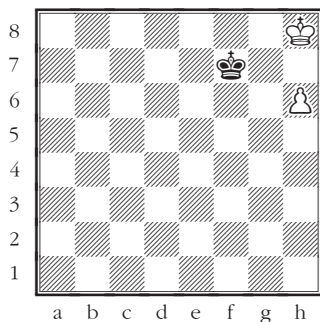
**Black to Move**

*An easy draw*

● **3...Kf7**

A crazy move like 3...Ke7?? (running away from the battlefield!) allows 4.Kg7 when the pawn will promote.

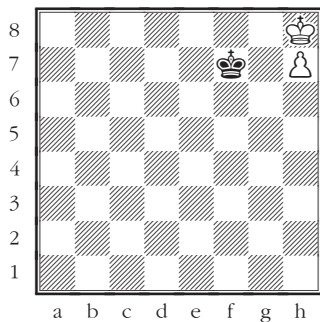




**White to Move**

○ **4.h7**

4.Kh7 Kf8 5.Kg6 Kg8 takes us back to a previous note (6.h7+ Kh8 7.Kh6 stalemate).

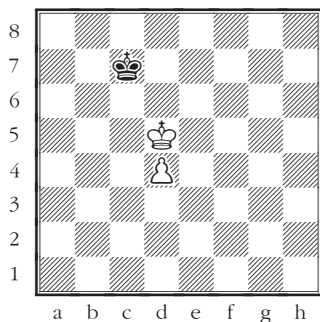


**Black to Move**

*Stalemate the enemy King*

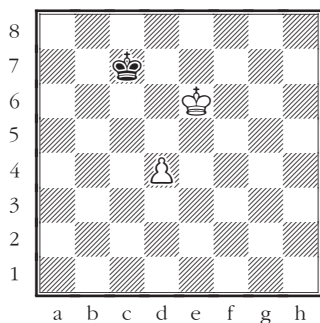
● **4...Kf8** stalemate.

The following are 2 important examples of a King in front of its pawn.

**Example 2a:****White to Move***An easy win*

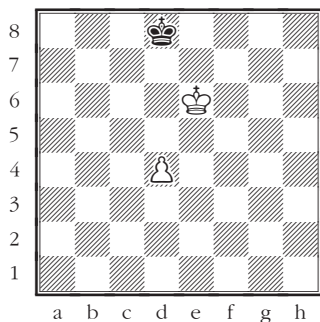
- **1.Ke6!**

Now the King is 2 squares in front of the pawn. This is always decisive, unless the pawn is an a- or h-pawn.

**Black to Move***There is no defense*

- **1...Kd8**

1...Kc6 2.d5+ Kc7 3.Ke7 is also hopeless for Black.

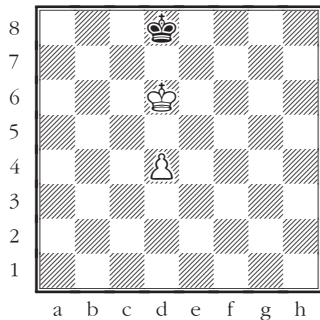


**White to Move**

*A trivial win*

○ **2.Kd6**

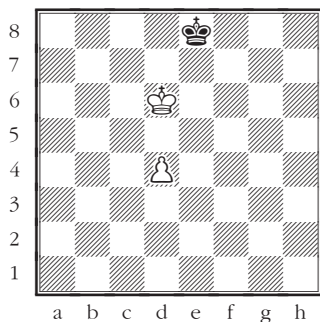
White can also win with 2.d5 Ke8 3.d6 Kd8 4.d7 Kc7 5.Ke7, etc. However, 2.Kd6 is preferred because it avoids all basic draws and stalemates by wresting the promotion square away from Black.



**Black to Move**

● **2...Ke8**

2...Kc8 3.Ke7 is also game over.

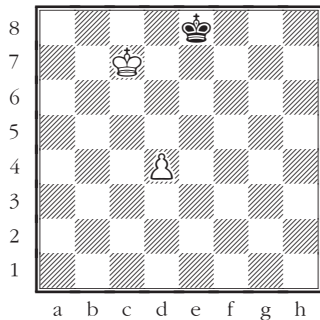


**White to Move**

*Claim the promotion square*

○ **3.Kc7**

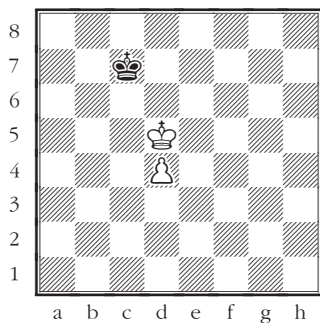
This move takes hold of the promotion square and ensures the win. Thanks to the White King's powerful position on c7, Black can't stop White's pawn from rushing down to d8 by d4-d5-d6-d7-d8.



*Black resigns*

Doesn't the game we just looked at prove that putting the King in front of the pawn wins? No, not at all. If we take our previous starting position and give Black the move instead of White, the result is completely different.

### Example 2b:

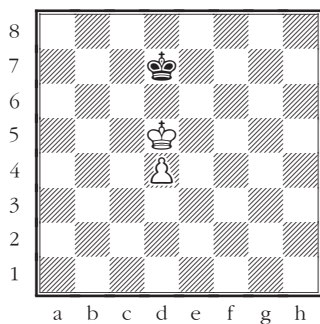


**Black to Move**

*Draw*

- **1...Kd7!**

This takes the opposition and prevents the White King from moving forward.

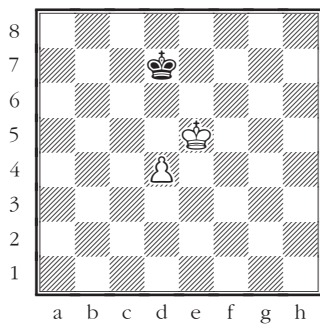


**White to Move**

*He needs to make his pawn mobile*

- **2.Ke5**

Making way for the pawn.

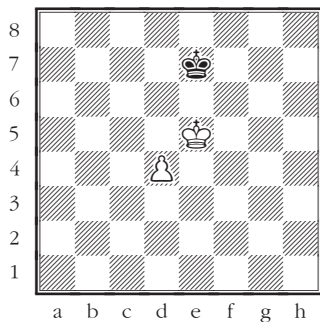


**Black to Move**

*Keep White's King at bay*

- 2...Ke7

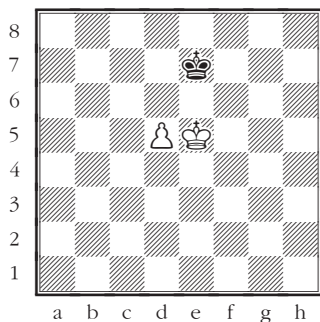
Making sure White's King can't move forward.



**White to Move**

*It's a draw*

- 3.d5

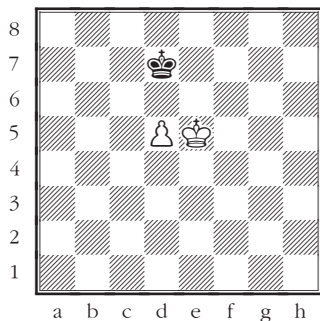


**Black to Move**

*Draw*

- **3...Kd7**

We have now reached the basic drawing position, and it's time for the players to shake hands and agree to a draw (4.d6 Kd8 5.Ke6 Ke8 6.d7+ Kd8 7.Kd6 stalemate). Instead of the correct 3...Kd7, preventing White's King from advancing, he could have botched it by 3...Kf7?? 4.Kd6, followed by 5.Kc7, 3...Ke8?? 4.Ke6 taking the opposition, or 3...Kd8?? 4.Kd6 (taking the opposition) 4...Ke8 5.Kc7, laying claim to the promotion square.



*Draw*

## Summing Up

King-and-pawn-versus-lone-King endgames occur all the time. Knowing the basic King-and-pawn-versus-King drawn positions is critical, but don't forget that all of it is based on opposition. Once you realize that these King-and-pawn-versus-King endgames are all about one King dominating the other and vying to take control of the queening square, these positions will become much easier to play.

### Suggested Reading

Seirawan, *Winning Chess Endings*.

### Key Term

**opposition:** An endgame term, it is a means by which one King can dominate another.



# Triangulation and Two Critical Rook Endgames

## Lesson 20

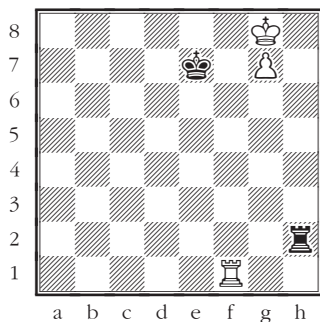
This lesson illustrates another King-and-pawn endgame technique called triangulation. Then, you'll finish your King-and-pawn endgame study with tactical bombs. After that, you'll tackle the 2 most important Rook endgames in chess: the Lucena position, which shows you how to win a Rook-and-pawn-versus-Rook endgame when your King is in front of your pawn, and the Philidor position, which is a simple technique that allows you to draw (if your King is in front of the enemy pawn) when your opponent has a Rook and pawn versus your lone Rook.

### PUZZLE 1

**True or false:** The Lucena position is a technique that allows the side with a lone Rook to draw the game against the side with a Rook and pawn.

*Answer:*

**False.** The Lucena position is a technique that allows the side with the extra pawn to win the game. The stronger side first places his King in front of his pawn, uses his Rook to keep the defending King a file or 2 away from the action, advances the pawn to the seventh rank, and then uses his Rook to create a “bridge” that enables the stronger side to avoid defensive checks.



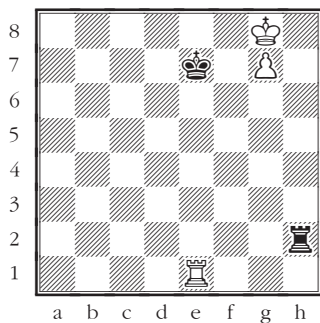
**White to Move**

*Lucena position*

Black is holding on as well as he can. Black's King stops White's King from moving to the f-file, and Black's Rook is stopping White's King from moving to the h-file. White's first order of business is to chase the defending King as far away from the action as possible.

- **1.Re1+**

This move forces Black's King to give ground. Because 1...Kf6 allows 2.Kf8 followed by g8=Q, Black has to go in a direction he doesn't want to go—the d-file.

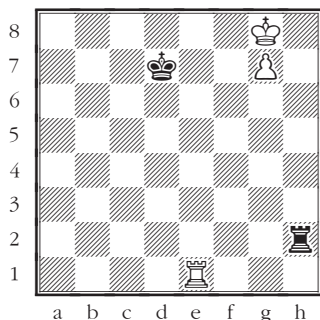


**Black to Move**

*He must get out of check*

- **1...Kd7**

The battle is being fought on the kingside, so having to move in the opposite direction is a real blow.

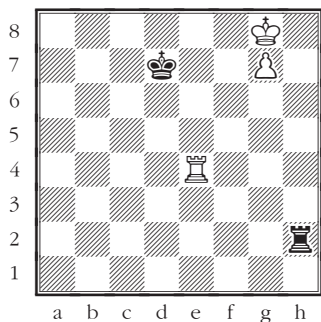


**White to Move**  
*Build a bridge*

- **2.Re4!**

The most logical move would be 2.Kf7, but this fails to 2...Rf2+ 3.Kg6 Rg2+ 4.Kf6 (4.Kf5 Rxd7) 4...Rf2+ 5.Kg5 Rg2+, and White's King has to move back to its pawn or the enemy Rook will capture it.

So, why 2.Re4? The point is that White, after stepping away from the front of his pawn (otherwise, it's impossible to promote the pawn), will be able to shield his King from enemy check by using his Rook as a block.

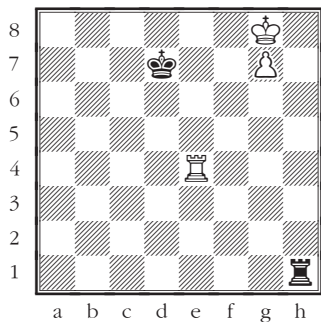


**Black to Move**

*He doesn't have much to do*

- **2...Rh1**

Waiting for White to show his cards.

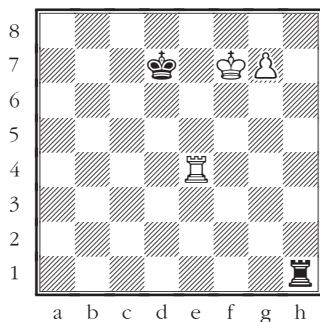


**White to Move**

*Start the winning sequence*

- **3.Kf7**

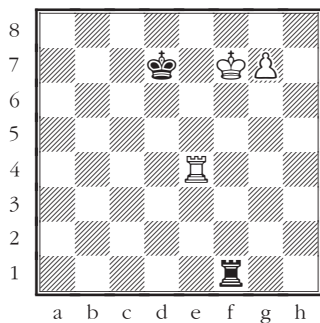
White threatens  $g8=Q$ , so Black has to check White's King and hope for a miracle.



**Black to Move**

*Try to prevent the pawn from queening*

- **3...Rf1+**

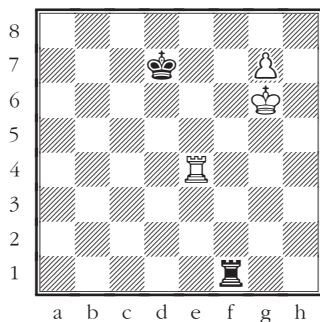


**White to Move**

*He has to block the checks*

- **4.Kg6**

Still threatening g8=Q.

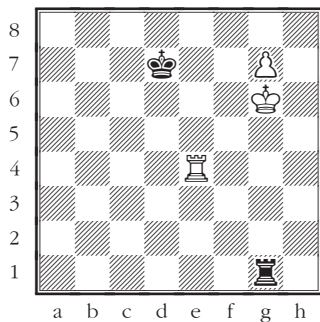


**Black to Move**

*He has to check*

- **4...Rg1+**

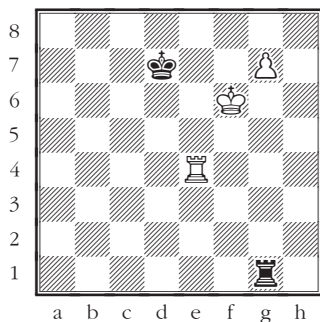
This is not subtle, but it's the only defense he has.



**White to Move**

- **5.Kf6**

Patience! The hurried 5.Kf5?? tosses the win out the window after 5...Rxg7.

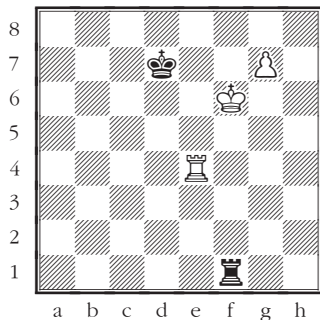


**Black to Move**

*Keep checking*

- **5...Rf1+**

Unfortunately for Black, 5...Rg2 (treading water) doesn't work: 6.Re5 Rg1 7.Rg5 Rf1+ 8.Kg6, and the checks have ended.

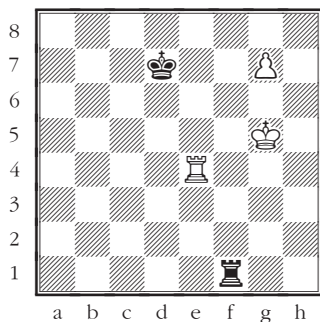


**White to Move**

*Create the first part of the bridge*

- **6.Kg5**

This is the first step toward the game-ending bridge. Black has to check, or White will make a new Queen.

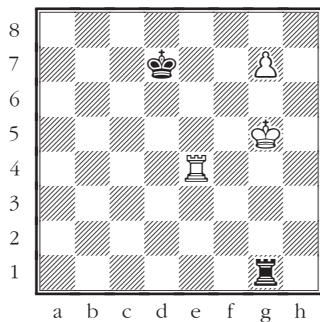


**Black to Move**

*He can give 1 final check*

- **6...Rg1+**

Black has no choice.



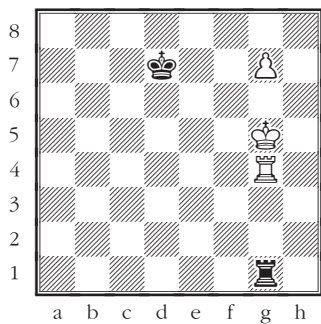
**White to Move**

*Finish the bridge*

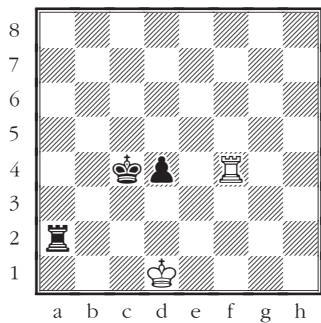
- **7.Rg4**

White's pawn will turn into a Queen, so it's time for Black to give up.



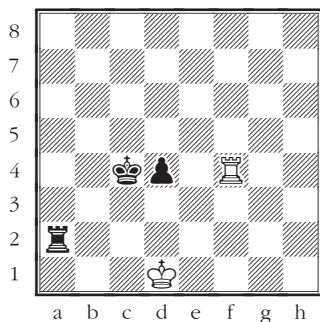


## PUZZLE 2



What is this position called, and what is White's best move?

Answer:

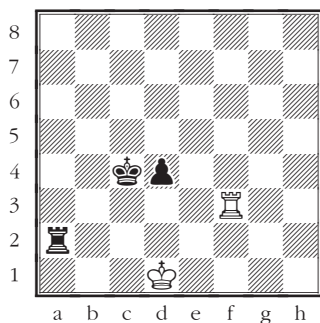


**White to Move**

This position is known as the **Philidor position**, and although White is down a pawn, it's a dead draw if you know the proper defensive technique.

- **1.Rf3!**

This is the key defensive move in the Philidor position. By stopping Black's King from moving forward, Black finds himself hard-pressed to improve his position.



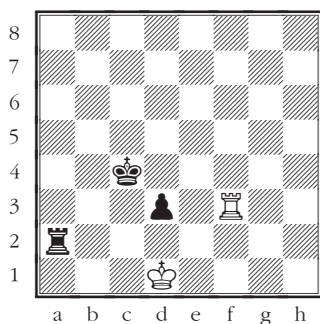
**Black to Move**

*Can he make progress?*

- **1...d3**

Black didn't have much choice because other moves accomplished nothing: 1...Ra1+ chases White's King to a better square, 2.Kd2 Ra2+ 3.Kd1, and it's clear that Black is on a road to nowhere. Other moves will be answered by White just moving his Rook back and forth along the third rank.

After 1...d3, Black threatens to win by ...Kc3, followed by ...Ra1 mate.

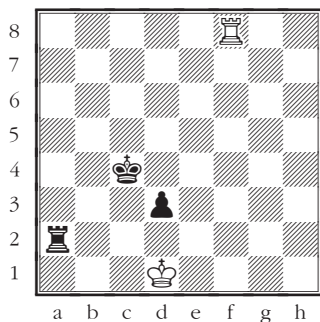


**White to Move**  
*End Black's dreams*

- **2.Rf8!**

This move avoids the horrendous 2.Rf4+?? Kc3 when White has forced the Black King to do what it wanted to do.

After 2.Rf8, White moves as far away from Black's King as possible and prepares to rain nonstop checks from the eighth rank.

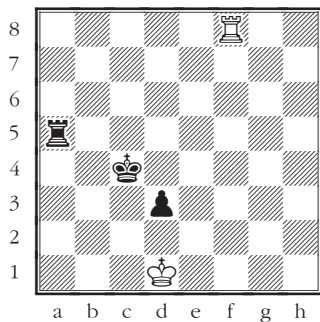


**Black to Move**

*It's just a draw*

● **2...Ra5**

The hope is that his Rook will block White's upcoming Rook checks. A move like 2...Kc3, threatening 3...Ra1 mate, is easily rebuffed by 3.Rc8+ Kd4 4.Rd8+ Ke4 5.Re8+, and it's time to accept a draw.



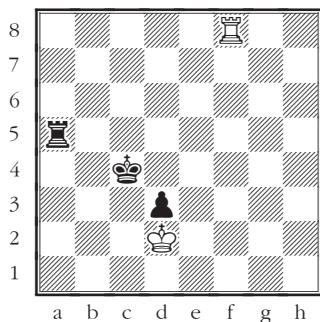
**White to Move**

*Demonstrate the draw*

○ **3.Kd2**

This takes the c3-square away from Black's King and threatens to win Black's pawn by Rf4+.

White could also draw by 3.Rc8+ Kd5 4.Rd8+ Ke4 5.Re8+ Re5 6.Rxe5+ Kxe5 7.Kd2 Kd4 8.Kd1 with a basic King-and-pawn-versus-King draw: 8...Ke3 9.Ke1 d2+ 10.Kd1 Kd3 stalemate.

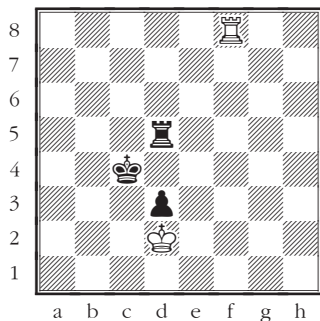


**Black to Move**

*Try to keep the game alive*

- **3...Rd5**

Defending his pawn and hoping to give his King a bit of cover.

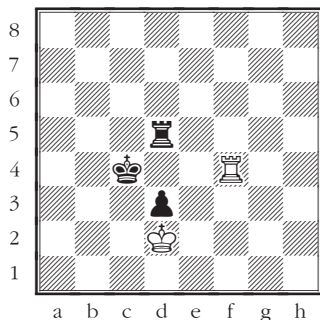


**White to Move**

*He has several satisfactory defenses*

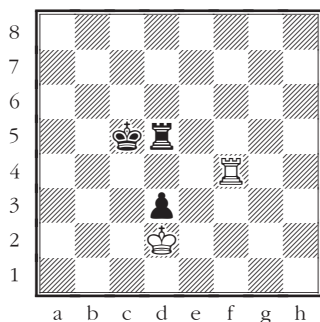
- **4.Rf4+**

Black didn't have a threat, so White could pretty much play anything. Another choice was 4.Rc8+ Kd4 (a Rook exchange leads to a basic drawn King-and-pawn endgame) 5.Rc3 (just one of many quick draws) 5...Ke4 6.Rc4+ Kf3 7.Rc3 Ke4 8.Rc4+ Rd4 9.Rxd4+ (9.Rc8 was another easy draw) 9...Kxd4 10.Kd1 Kc3 11.Kc1 d2+ 12.Kd1 Kd3 stalemate.



- 4...Kc5

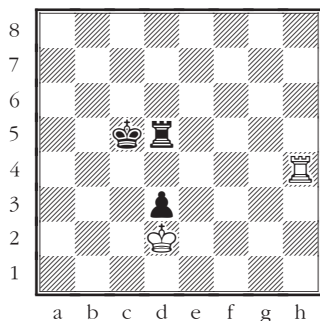
4...Rd4 leads to a dead drawn King-and-pawn endgame, which was already addressed in the previous notes.



**White to Move**  
*Convince Black that it's a draw*

○ **5.Rh4**

Again, White could draw with many moves. 5.Rh4 takes the fourth rank away from Black's King, meaning that the only thing defending the d3-pawn is Black's Rook. White will now move his Rook back and forth along the fourth rank, when Black will either endlessly waste time (perhaps a bunch of King moves); swap Rooks with ...Rd4, creating a dead drawn King-and-pawn-versus-King endgame; or move the Rook away from the defense of the d-pawn, allowing White to take it with his King. Because all of these scenarios get Black nowhere, a draw should be agreed upon.



*Draw*

## Summing Up

Although the Lucena position seems ponderous and a bit difficult, once you understand the main idea, it will, with a bit of practice, become a no-brainer. The Philidor position, with the idea of taking the third rank away from Black's King, turns what looks like a difficult defensive chore into a piece of cake. Both of these Rook endgames are enormously important, because they occur surprisingly often, and they also give you a feel for Rook endgames in general.

## Suggested Reading

Perlo, *Van Perlo's Endgame Tactics*.

## Key Terms

**Lucena position:** Created by Luis Ramirez de Lucena, this is a technique (in a Rook-and-pawn-versus-Rook endgame) that demonstrates how the player with the extra pawn can win if the stronger side's King is in front of its pawn.

**opposition:** An endgame term, it is a means by which one King can dominate another.

**Philidor position:** Created by François-André Danican Philidor, this is a technique (in a Rook-and-pawn-versus-Rook endgame) that demonstrates how the player without the pawn can force a draw if the defending King is in front of the pawn.

**triangulation:** In basic terms, this is a fancy way to give up a move and gain the opposition.

## Key People

**Luis Ramirez de Lucena** (1465–1530): A Spanish chess player who wrote the first (still existing) chess book.

**François-André Danican Philidor** (1726–1795): A Frenchman, he was the world's best player and also a famous composer of operas.

## Best Endgame Players

**Jose Raul Capablanca**

**Magnus Carlsen**

**Bobby Fischer** (master of Bishop endgames)



**Anatoly Karpov** (master of endgames with Bishops of opposite colors)

**Emanuel Lasker**

**Geza Maroczy** (master of Queen endgames)

**Akiba Rubinstein** (master of Rook endgames)

**Vassily Smyslov**

# Chess Openings: The Right and Wrong Way

## Lesson 21

Unlike other stages of chess, the openings are the most personal. Choosing an opening repertoire is all about your tastes. If you like to attack, perhaps gambits would be your cup of tea. If you fancy positional play, you devote yourself to openings that cater to that preference. This lesson gives you opening pointers, offers a complete opening repertoire for both White and Black, and explains why memorization should take a back seat to understanding. In short, a chess opening is all about setting up some kind of strategy, while the middle game is all about employing that strategy.

### PUZZLE 1

**True or false:** If you see a grandmaster game that features an interesting opening that you never saw before, don't play it until you understand what that opening is really about.

*Answer:*

**True.** Choosing a particular opening (or openings) shouldn't be based solely on who played it or the game's result. Instead, you need to consider quite a few things, such as the following.

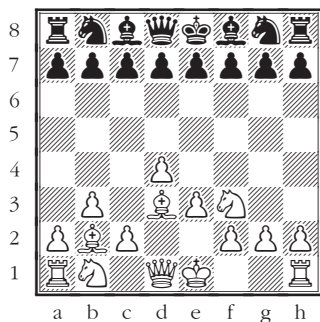
- Is the opening complicated and heavily analyzed? If so, that means you'll need to memorize dozens of pages of opening analysis. If you have a great memory and enough free time to put months of effort into this opening, then fine. If your memory isn't up to snuff, don't touch it.

- An opening should make sense to you. If you don't have a clue, then don't play it until you learn the basics of that particular system or variation.
- If you love sharp tactical play but your opening usually leads to quiet strategic positions, only play it if you want to fix your weak points. You'll lose a lot of games doing this, but you'll find that you can understand and do things you never could before. On the other hand, if you just want to have fun and wallow in the wonders of those sharp positions, toss that strategic opening out the window and look for something more in tune with your tastes and needs.
- Creating a theme repertoire is a good way to start out. If you want to attack and then attack some more, go for an all-gambit repertoire. If you like openings that call for deep strategic understanding, go for openings that take you to those kinds of positions. In short, choose a theme that pleases you, find openings for both White and Black that cater to your chosen theme, and stick with it until you eventually decide to expand your horizons.
- If you just want to play chess (it doesn't matter what style you're looking for) and don't want to deal with serious opening theory, embrace systems that are not quite mainstream. As White, look into 1.f4 (Bird's opening); 1.b3 (the Larsen opening); 1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 (the Reti opening); and even the English opening (1.c4), although that is actually quite theoretical (nonetheless, very few nonprofessionals study the English, so you'll have an edge when the game starts). As Black, you can try 1...b6 against everything; 1...g6, intending 2...Bg7, 3...d6, etc. (1...g6 is quite well known, but once again, White won't be as prepared as he would be if you played some mainstream opening); the Dutch stonewall versus 1.d4 (1.d4 f5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 c6 5.Bg2 d5, with a firm center and an interesting game ahead); etc.

- If you find that you're not excited when you play your favorite openings, then they shouldn't be your favorites!

## PUZZLE 2

If you decided to follow the recommended opening repertoire, think back to the very dangerous (but easy to learn) Zukertort system, which you will now play for White.



*Basic Zukertort setup*

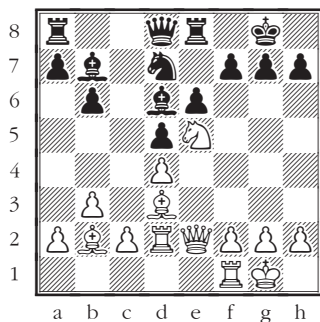
In the Zukertort system, what common Knight maneuver is used by White to set up a kingside attack?

*Answer:*

White's Knight on f3 often leaps to e5 (usually followed by f2-f4), where it places pressure in all directions. However, the most notable point of attack is f7.

The following are 2 examples of a White Knight finding glory on e5.

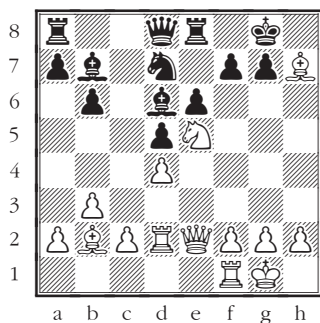
### Example 1:



**John Owen vs. Isidor Gunsberg, Manchester 1890**

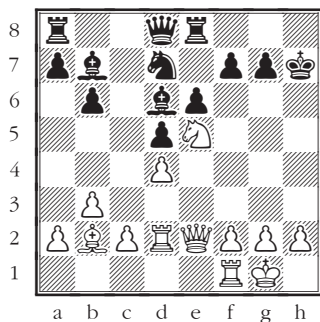
- 14. Bxh7+!

This offshoot of the classic Bishop sacrifice only works if White's Knight is on the e5-square.



- 14...Kxh7

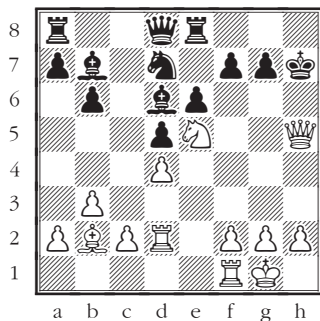
In the actual game, Black meekly shuffled his King to the side by 14...Kf8 when he was a pawn down and still faced a strong attack. White went on to win.



**White to Move**  
*Smash his opponent*

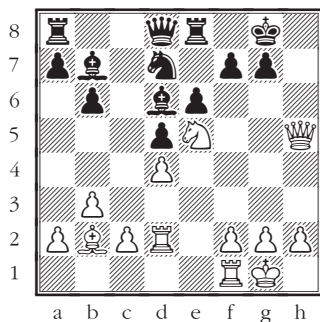
- 15.Qh5+

Threatening the King and simultaneously threatening the f7-pawn.



**Black to Move**

- 15...Kg8

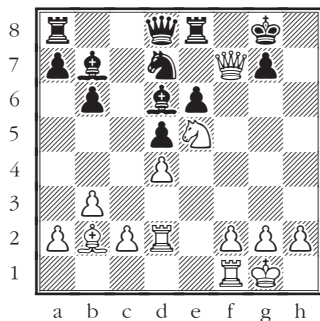


**White to Move**

*Make use of the e5-Knight's position*

- **16.Qxf7+**

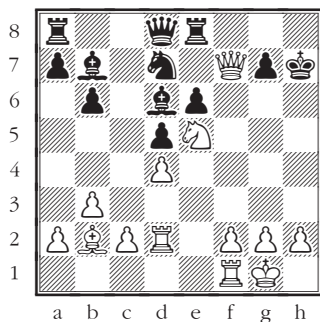
Winning a pawn, forcing Black's King to the side, and threatening Black's d7-Knight twice.



**Black to Move**

*Get out of check*

- **16...Kh7**

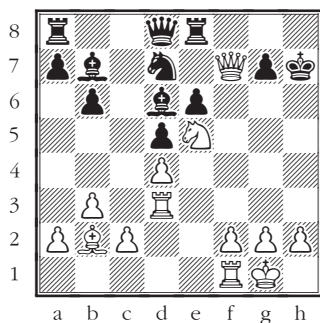


**White to Move**

*Finish Black off*

- **17.Rd3!**

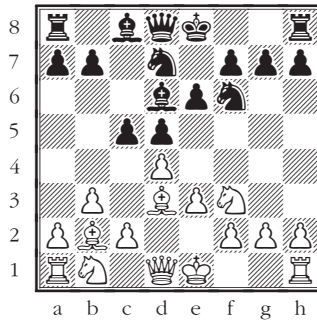
It's always important to bring as many pieces as possible into the attack. This Rook move ends the game because the only way Black can avoid being mated by Rh3 is to give up huge amounts of material. Because his cause is completely hopeless, Black resigns.



*Black gave up*



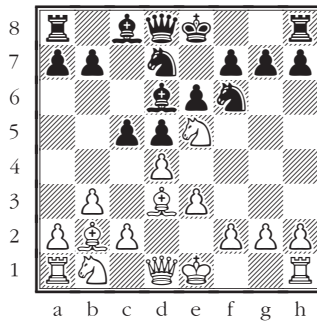
**Example 2:**



**Jose Capablanca vs. Jacob Bernstein, New York 1913**

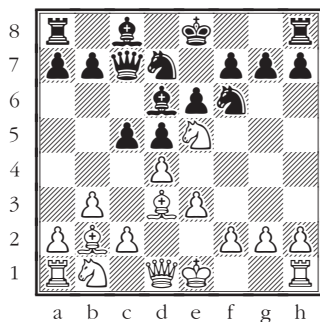
- 7.Ne5

This is a very common occurrence in the Zukertort system.



- 7...Qc7

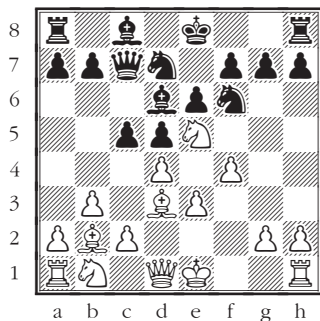
Now the Knight is threatened 3 ways (Queen, d7-Knight, and d6-Bishop). However, White isn't worried at all.



**White to Move**  
*Protect his e5-Knight*

○ **8.f4**

This is a key idea. The Knight is now rock solid because it's protected by 2 pawns and the b2-Bishop.



*White has a good position and eventually won*

### PUZZLE 3

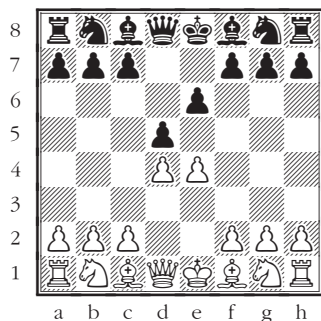
In the French Defense (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5), what is Black's most important pawn break?

*Answer:*

The ...c7-c5 pawn break is the signature (and most important) pawn break in the French Defense. Why? It not only gains queenside space and will eventually open a file (the c-file) for a Black Rook, but it also puts pressure on White's d4-pawn.

The following are 2 examples.

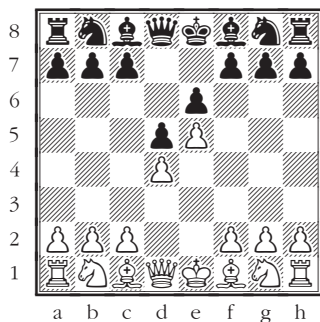
### Example 1:



**White to Move**  
*Save his threatened e4-pawn*

- **3.e5**

This is the advance variation. White places his pawn on a safe square and also gains valuable central space.

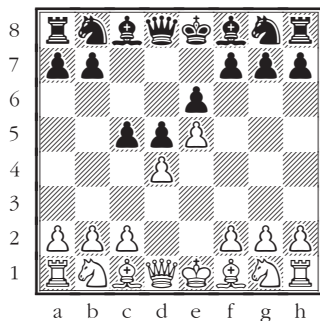


**Black to Move**  
*Grab some space*

- **3...c5**

This one seemingly small move does a lot:

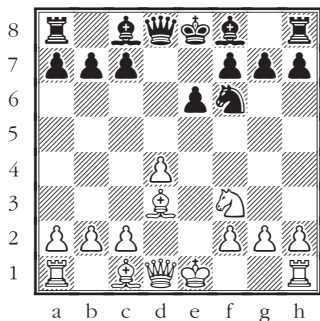
- It gains queenside space.
- Black will be able to open the c-file and, in time, place a Rook on that file.
- Black's c5-pawn is putting pressure on White's d4-pawn.



*An important position with both sides having chances*

### Example 2:

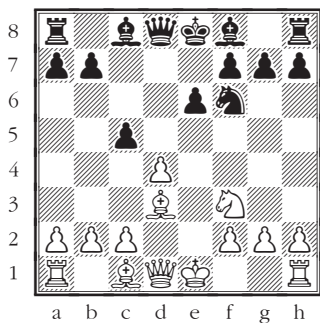
The next illustration is quite different than the previous one, but it still makes use of Black's most thematic idea.



**Black to Move**  
*Crack White's center*

- 7...c5!

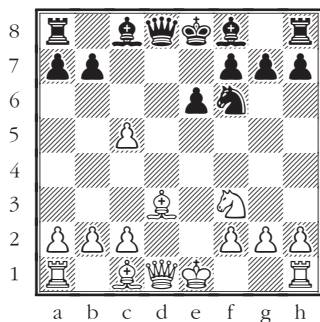
Immediately striking at White's center.



**White to Move**  
*Deal with Black's pesky c5-pawn*

- 8.dxc5

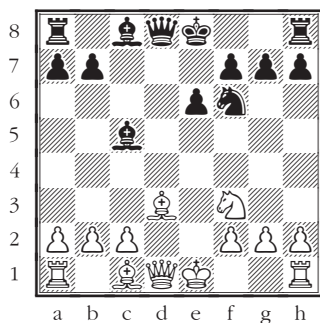
After this, the only side that still owns a center pawn is Black (e6).



**Black to Move**  
*Recapture his pawn*

- **8...Bxc5**

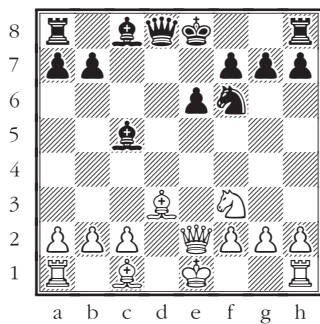
Taking his pawn back, developing his Bishop to an active square, and preparing to castle kingside.



**White to Move**  
*Get his pieces out*

- **9.Qe2**

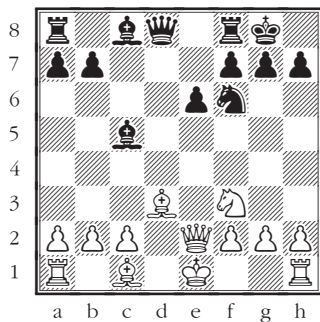
Developing and intending to move his c1-Bishop and castle queenside.



**Black to Move**  
*Get his King to safety*

• **9...0-0**

Both sides have played well, and the chances are more or less even.



*Black has a good development and safe King*

## Summing Up

Many people believe that openings are all about memorizing moves—but that’s not true. The real way to understand your opening is to know the typical squares your pieces would like to migrate to and to be fully conversant about the pawn structure in general. If you just know that White’s Knight is well placed on e5 in the Zuckertort system and that ...c5 is the critical pawn push in the French Defense, many of your decisions will be automatic and, surprisingly, exactly what the position needed.

### Suggested Reading

Van Der Sterren, *FCO*.

### Key Term

**gambit:** A voluntary sacrifice of a pawn or a piece in the opening with the idea of gaining the initiative, a lead in development, or some other compensating factor.

### Key People

**Viswanathan Anand** (1969– ): Born in India, he became the undisputed world chess champion in 2007. He lost the title to Magnus Carlsen in 2013 but is, at the age of 45, still one of the top 3 or 4 players in the world.

**Jose Raul Capablanca** (1888–1942): Born in Cuba, he was the third world chess champion and, in his prime, considered to be almost unbeatable.

**Fabiano Caruana** (1992– ): Born in Miami, he is the second-highest rated player in the world, behind World Chess Champion Magnus Carlsen.



**Pia Cramling** (1963– ): Born in Stockholm, she has been a major force in women's chess for decades. In 1992, she became the sixth woman to ever receive the grandmaster title.

**Bobby Fischer** (1943–2008): The 11<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, he is considered to be one of the 5 best players of all time, with many ranking him as number 1. He singlehandedly took American chess to a whole new level.

**Isidor Gunsberg** (1854–1930): Born in Hungary, he was among the top 5 players on Earth. He played a World Chess Championship match against Steinitz (a total of 19 games) and lost by 2 points.

**John Owen** (1827–1901): An English vicar, he won a victory over Paul Morphy in 1858.

**Boris Spassky** (1937– ): Born in Leningrad, he became the 10<sup>th</sup> world chess champion in 1968. In 1972, he lost his title to Bobby Fischer.

**Aaron Summerscale** (1969– ): He is an English grandmaster and chess writer.

**Saviely Tartakower** (1887–1956): A Polish grandmaster, he was a brilliant chess writer and one of the world's finest players.

**Jan Timman** (1951– ): Born in Amsterdam, he was one of the world's elite players during the late 1970s and early 1990s and still competes in tournaments today. He lost a World Chess Championship match against Karpov in 1993.

**Johann Zukertort** (1842–1888): Born in Poland, he was one of the top 3 players in the world. He also excelled in blindfold chess, playing 16 games at the same time.

# Chess Psychology and the Known Unknown

## Lesson 22

In chess, sometimes the game is lost before the battle even begins. Your opponent makes a brave move, you think you see the point and understand that you need to defend against his or her threat, and you go down in flames. The person who lost this fantasy game, upon seeing the opponent's brave move, thought, "I have to defend." And once you say, "I have to," you really do have to. It's a form of psychic self-immolation. This lesson is all about chess psychology and how "I have to" and "I can't" become self-fulfilling prophecies and how you can avoid falling victim to them.

### PUZZLE 1

You enter your first chess tournament and are paired against a very strong player. Your first thought might be, "I have no chance, but I'll fight to the bitter end!"

Nonetheless, you do your best, the game is long and tense, and suddenly your opponent moves his Knight to an undefended square. You can capture it—a free Knight! You realize that it has to be a trick, and you then notice that if you take his piece, he'll be able to check you with his Queen. You smile, and think, "I'm not falling for that" and make another move, leaving that Trojan Knight alone.

Does this sound reasonable, or does something seem a bit off? If it's reasonable, fine. If you think there's something odd going on, what would that be?

*Answer:*

When a person gets paired with a much stronger player, everyone secretly thinks that the person has little to no chance. However, as long as you toss self-destructive thoughts away and play as hard as you can, you're on the right track. Nobody can ask you to do more than your best.

In the example of the stronger player “offering” a free Knight, the debacle starts when you convince yourself, without any real analysis or proof, that it has to be a trick. Why? Suddenly, you're not playing the board; you're playing your opponent's rating. Once you cave in to that thought, then the mind is free to make sandcastles in the sky. You notice that capturing the Knight would allow a check. You compound things by smiling (a way to pat yourself on the back for not falling for the “trap”). You say, “I'm not falling for that,” and the deed is done—and so is the game. Your mind has dragged you into a made-up world, and there's no way to escape it.

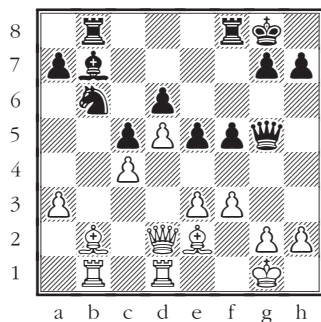
Once you noticed the possible Queen check, why didn't you ask yourself, “Okay, it's a check—but so what? Let me take a long look and see if it's really dangerous.”

In the end, you didn't take the Knight and lost, although you put up a great fight. You and your opponent shake hands, and then he says, “Why didn't you take the Knight? I just hung the thing. If you had taken it, I would have resigned right away.”

You fell for “he can't”—as in, “Such a good player can't make such an error.” And once you voice that in your mind, it becomes reality.

When you play anyone of any rating, always remember that everyone blunders—even the world champion. So, in the future, never “believe” your opponent's moves, rating, or anything else. Challenge everything.

## PUZZLE 2

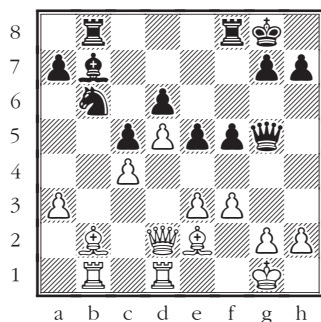


White to Move

Jeremy Silman vs. R. Adamson, Western Open 1987

Chess is a game of agendas, and proper agendas are based on the imbalances. What do you think Black's agenda(s) should be, and what do you think White's agenda(s) should be? Once you figure those things out, find White's best move.

*Answer:*



White to Move

Black's Queen is the only piece close to White's King, so Black has no right to even dream of a kingside attack. His main agendas should be placing pressure against c4 (...Ba6, for example) and also trying to get his Rooks into play on the b-file. These things don't sound very exciting, but that's all he has.

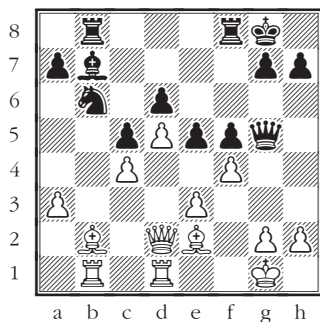
White has more central space (his d5-pawn gives him extra territory and also blocks Black's Bishop), and he owns 2 Bishops, with his dark-squared Bishop being particularly important. One might ask, "White's dark-squared Bishop is blocked by Black's e5-pawn, so why is it important?"

That question—and it's a good one—is the spark that tells White exactly what needs to be done. White's agenda is to turn his blocked Bishop into a powerhouse.

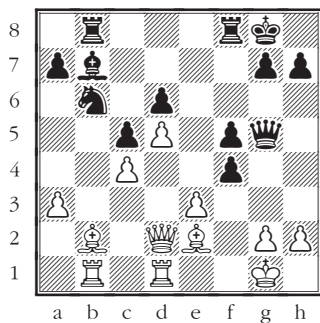
Notice that White isn't going to fret about Black's plans/agendas because White (quite rightly) thinks that his agenda is much more important. So, he plays:

○ **21.f4!**

Just because your piece isn't active at any particular moment doesn't mean that you can't make it active. Once you realize what your agenda should be, do everything possible to make the dream a reality.

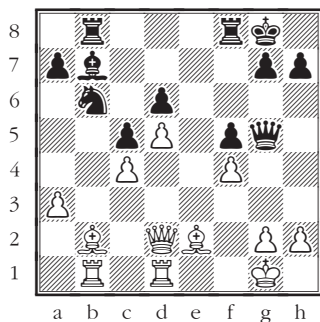


- 21...exf4



- 22.exf4

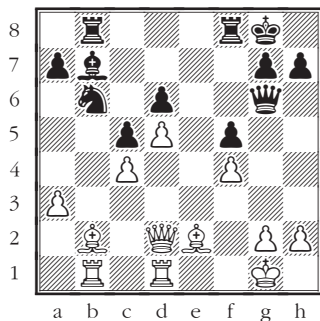
The first part of White's agenda is successful. The a1-h8 diagonal is wide open for White's dark-squared Bishop. The next step is to make use of it.



**Black to Move**  
*Protect his Queen*

● **22...Qg6**

Did you notice that while White is successfully pushing his agenda, Black hasn't even started his own? Quite often, one player's dream will be stillborn when, instead of being first out of the box, he reacts to the enemy plans. Once that happens, the psychological battle is decided, and the game is decided with it.



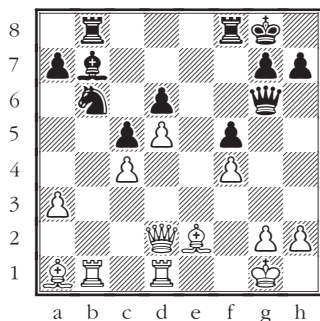
**White to Move**  
*Continue his agenda*

○ **23.Ba1!**

Retreating this Bishop opens up the b-file for White's b1-Rook, but that's only half the story. The full point of White's "mysterious" Bishop retreat is still completely connected to the open a1-h8 diagonal. Notice how White's dark-squared Bishop is striking at g7. By moving that Bishop and freeing up the b1-Rook, White now intends to continue with Rb1-b3-g3, adding to the pressure against g7.

Remember that attacking a piece or pawn with 1 unit is, at best, annoying for the opponent. Attacking it with 2 or more pieces is often, for the defender, a tragedy.

In the actual game, White played 23.Bd3 and eventually won in the same manner as the example we are moving through.

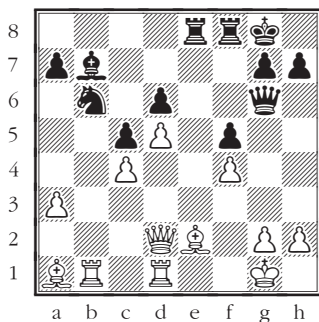


**Black to Move**

- **23...Rbe8**

Black decides to become lord of the e-file. This is a good idea, but White's conquest of the a1-h8 diagonal takes precedence over all other considerations.

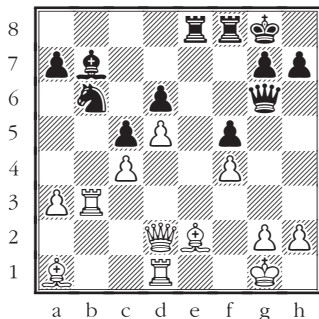




**White to Move**  
*Torch Black's position*

○ **24.Rb3!**

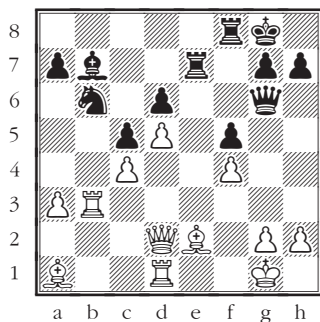
The threat of Rg3 can't be stopped, and Black will discover that he has no defense to White's dark-square attack.



**Black to Move**  
*Nothing will quash his suffering*

● **24...Re7**

Defending g7 (because White is about to attack that point) and hoping to double on the e-file and get something going.

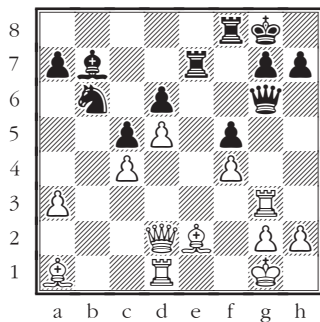


**White to Move**

*Continue pushing his dark-squared agenda*

○ **25.Rg3**

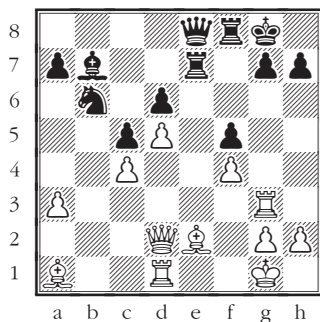
Hitting Black's Queen and adding a second attacker against g7.



**Black to Move**

● **25...Qe8**

Black is protecting his Queen, doubling on the e-file, and attacking White's light-squared Bishop. Is Black making a comeback?

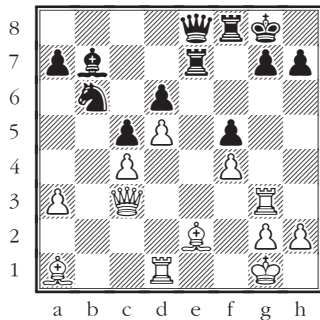


**White to Move**

*Add more heat against g7*

○ **26.Qc3**

A third piece takes aim at g7. Now 27.Rxg7+ is a massive threat, and 26...g6?? completely opens the diagonal, allowing 27.Qh8+ Kf7 28.Qg7 mate.

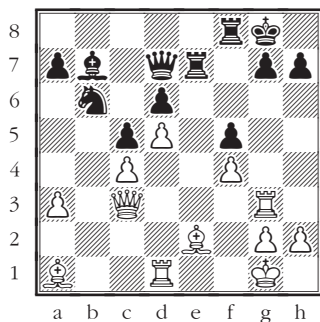


**Black to Move**

*If g7 falls, the Black position falls*

● **26...Qd7**

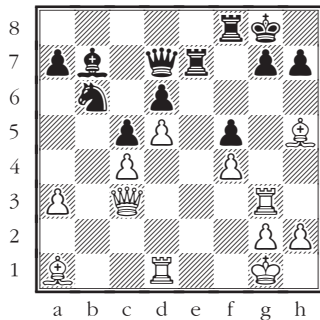
Black avoids 26...Rff7 because 27.Bh5 pins the Rook and wins material.



**White to Move**  
*Continue his assault*

○ **27.Bh5**

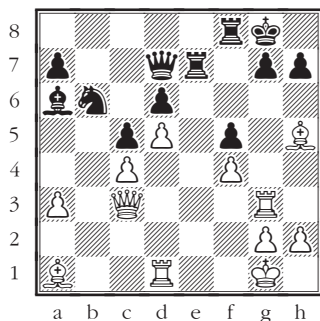
This move gets the light-squared Bishop out of danger and also stops Black from doubling on the e-file by ...Rfe8 because White's Bishop would snap it off.



**Black to Move**  
*Somehow get back on track*

● **27...Ba6**

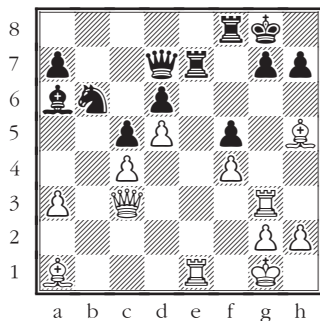
After a long defensive lull, Black returns to his “kill c4” agenda. Is it White's turn to defend against Black's plan?



**White to Move**  
*Laugh at Black's threat*

○ **28.Re1!**

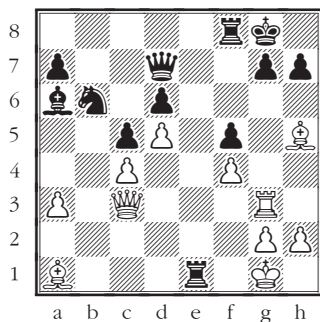
This is a wonderful move that completely ignores Black's threat. The logic is this: White's dark-squared Bishop, Queen, g3-Rook, and light-squared Bishop are all attacking g7 or preventing new defenders to guard that point. The only piece that isn't part of the attack is the other Rook. But with the act of trading the lazy Rook for Black's key defensive Rook, Black's position will quickly disintegrate.



**Black to Move**

● **28...Rxe1+**

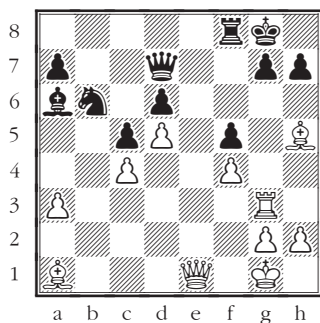
Pulling White's Queen off the a1-h8 diagonal.



**White to Move**  
*Regain his Rook*

- **29.Qxe1**

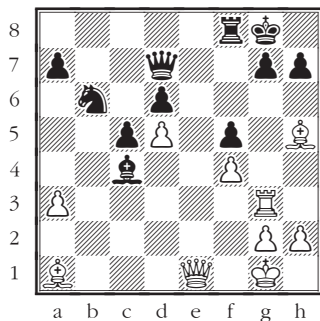
Taking the Rook back and threatening to win Black's Queen with  $Rxg7+$ .



**Black to Move**  
*g7 can no longer be defended*

- **29...Bxc4**

Black is defiant, and claims that winning the c4-pawn means that his agenda won. Unfortunately for Black, this has no bearing on reality. No better is 29...g6, when both 30.Qc3 and 30.Bxg6 win for White.

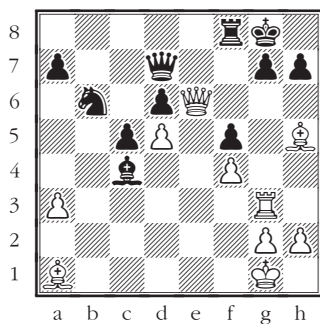


**White to Move**

*Begin the mating sequence*

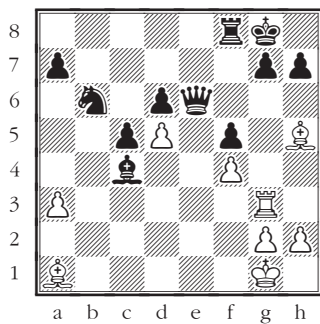
- **30.Qe6+!**

This pulls away the only Black piece that's defending g7.



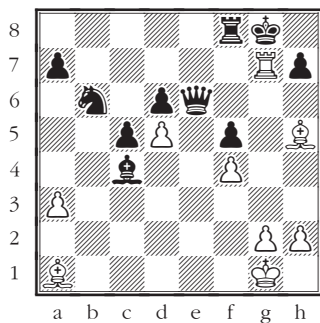
**Black to Move**

- **30...Qxe6**



**White to Move**  
*Black will soon be mated*

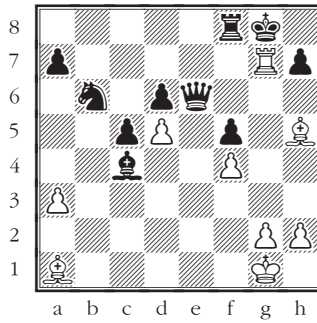
- 31.Rxg7+



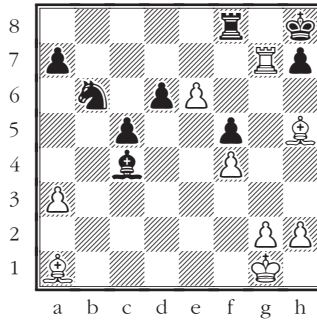
**Black to Move**

- 31...Kh8



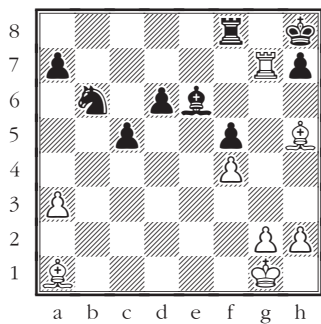


- 32.dxe6

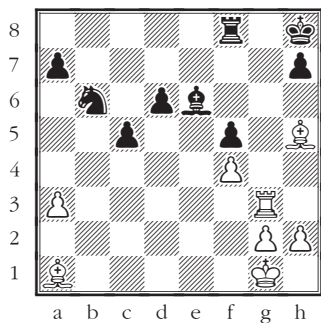


- 32...Bxe6

32...d5, trying to close down the a1-h8 diagonal with ...d4, fails to 33.Be5.

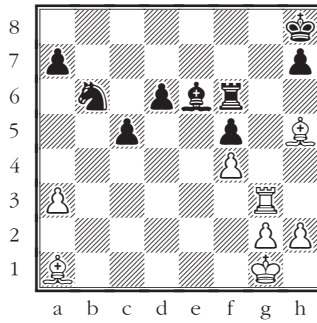


- 33.Rg3+



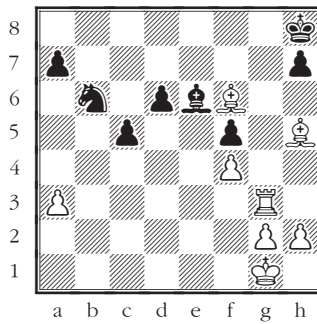
- 33...Rf6

This is Black's only legal move.



**White to Move**  
*Mate in 1*

- **34.Bxf6** mate.



*Mate on the a1-h8 diagonal*

## Summing Up

Psychology plays an enormous role in chess. When you fear an opponent, your moves will often show that fear. If your opponent makes a mistake, it's easy to justify what he did by saying, "I can't punish it." And once you say, "I can't," then you've made that a reality. So, be brave, push your agenda at all costs, and don't listen to your lizard brain whispering why you "can't" do something.

One of the most important things in chess is to find an agenda/plan based on the imbalances. However, your opponent will (if he's well trained) be doing the same thing. In general, the first person to bow to the opponent's agenda is going to crash in ignominious defeat. It's critically important to have faith in your agenda and push it with as much energy as possible.

### Suggested Reading

Rowson, *Chess For Zebras*.

Silman, *How to Reassess Your Chess*.

### Key Terms

**I can't/I have to:** Never allow yourself to think, "I can't" or "I have to," because once you say it and believe it, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

**soft moves:** A less-than-ideal move that is played quickly or without serious thought. Your moves are only as good as the energy you put into them.

### Key People

**Magnus Carlsen** (1990– ): Born in Norway, he's the present world chess champion (in 2015) and also the highest-rated player in history.

**Garry Kasparov** (1963– ): Born in Azerbaijan, he is the 13<sup>th</sup> world chess champion and is viewed as the best player of all time by many.

**Vladimir Kramnik** (1975– ): Born in Russia, he held the world chess champion title from 2000 to 2006, when he lost it to Anand.

**Frank Marshall** (1877–1944): One of the strongest players in the world, he was the best American chess grandmaster from 1904 to 1930. He held the U.S. championship title for an astounding 27 straight years.

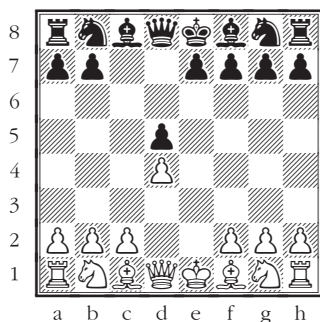
# The Chess Amateur's Mind

## Lesson 23

**W**hen we learn something new, we make mistakes—many mistakes. It's unavoidable. But some people never get beyond these mistakes, while others isolate every error and do their very best to fix them. In this lesson, you will learn about several typical amateur errors, why these errors were made, and how to avoid them. This includes discussions about intelligent opening choices, how amateurs create weaknesses in their own camp, and the folly of ignoring your opponent's best reply. In other words, chess is a battle between 2 people; you can't play in a vacuum by only considering your own ideas.

### PUZZLE 1

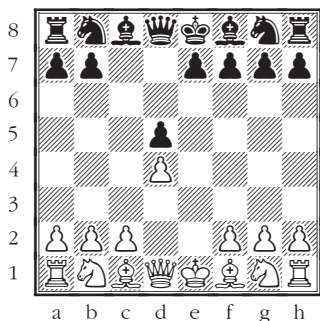
Here's a common position in the Caro-Kann Defense (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5):



White to Move

All 4 of these moves—4.Bb5+, 4.Nc3, 4.c4, and 4.Bd3—are playable. But what are the 2 worst choices, and why did you pick them?

*Answer:*

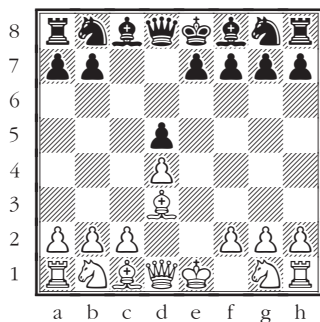


**White to Move**

Of the 4 moves (4.Bb5+, 4.Nc3, 4.c4, 4.Bd3), the most popular moves are 4.c4 (the Panov-Botvinnik attack) and 4.Bd3. However, the other moves, 4.Bb5+ and 4.Nc3, are very popular among inexperienced players. Both develop a piece, so what's wrong with them?

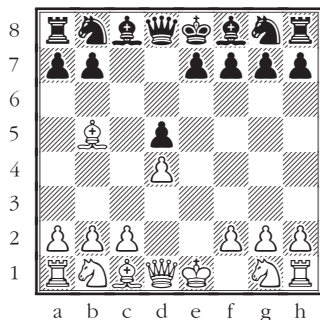
The problem with both is that they actually help the opponent to a small degree. Compare 4.Bd3 (which places a Bishop on 2 active diagonals—one looking at the queenside and the other looking at the kingside) with 4.Bb5+, which gives a check but forces Black to make a move he might have made anyway.

White plays **4.Bd3**:



*White's light-squared Bishop is much more active than Black's*

White plays **4.Bb5+**:



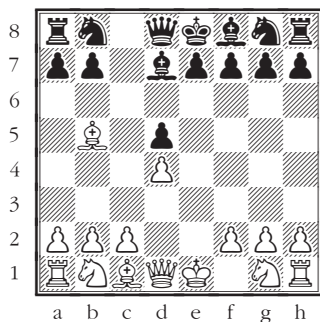
**Black to Move**

*He easily gets out of check*

Black can safely respond with 4...Nc6, but the most principled reply is 4...Bd7, when suddenly White's Bishop is attacked, forcing him to waste time by retreating or exchanging the Bishops.

- **4...Bd7**



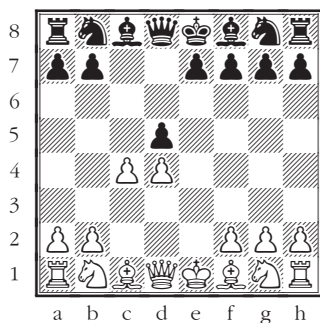


**White to Move**

White has to exchange Bishops (taking 2 moves to trade a Bishop that has only moved once), or he can retreat, in effect giving Black a free move.

Now let's compare 4.c4 with 4.Nc3.

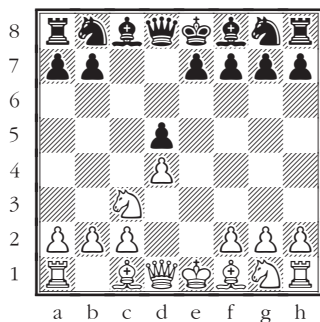
White plays **4.c4**:



*A move with many points*

White's 4.c4 places pressure against d5. When White follows up with 5.Nc3, the pressure becomes serious. 4.c4 also gives White a potential open c-file. Finally, in some lines, White can gain queenside space with a well-timed c4-c5.

White plays **4.Nc3**:

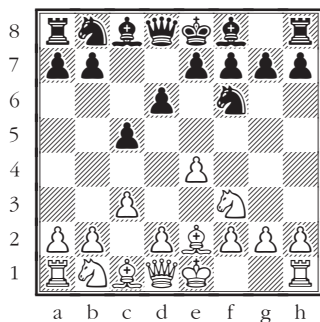


*A move that doesn't do much*

This move hits d5, but it blocked the c-pawn, meaning that the pawn can't work with the Knight to pressure d5. The Knight is also not going anywhere on c3. The d-pawn is protected by the Queen, Ne4 hangs the Knight, Ne2 retreats for reasons unknown, Nb5 can be kicked by ...a6 when the Knight has to retreat in shame, and Na4 isn't happy on the side of the board.

Before you move a piece, consider the pawn structure—if the piece will be active or inactive on the square you are thinking of moving it to—and consider your opponent's response, which might refute your move altogether.

## PUZZLE 2



**Black to Move**

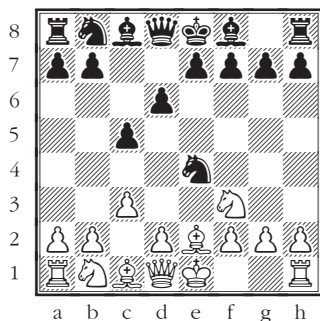
White just moved his Bishop to e2. Black, thrilled that his opponent gave away a pawn for nothing, took the pawn with his Knight (**4...Nxe4**).

Was that wise?

*Answer:*

- **4...Nxe4**

Black captured the “free” pawn, and why not? Nothing was protecting the pawn, and a free point is a free point.



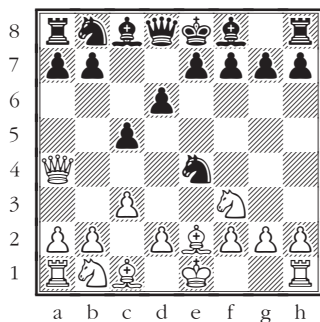
**White to Move**

Amateurs often ignore undefended pieces. It's important to train your mind to have alarms go off whenever you see an undefended piece. If you're about to leave such a piece floating without a defender, be extra careful that there's no way your opponent can punish you. If your opponent leaves an unguarded piece close to your territory, pay serious attention to it and see if there's some way to make him pay.

Of course, it turns out that the capture on e4 by the Knight leaves the horse sitting on White's side of the board without a defender. The punishment comes in the form of a double attack.

○ **5.Qa4+**

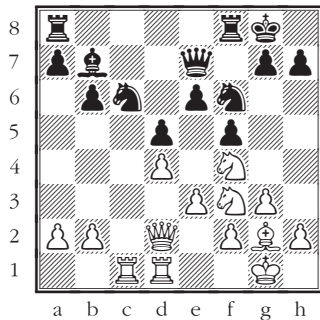
This attacks Black's King and e4-Knight at the same time. After Black gets out of check, White will capture the e4-Knight with his Queen (Qxe4), winning a piece and the game.



*Black resigns*

### PUZZLE 3

It's very important to know what your opponent intends to do. Playing your own game without trying to figure out what your opponent is up to is often fatal.

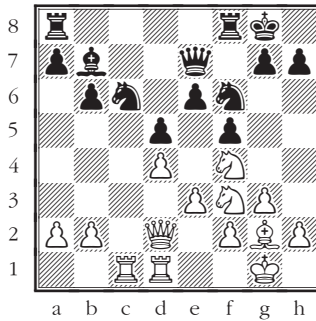


**White to Move**

In the diagrammed position, White is starting to worry about some of Black's possibilities. The 2 that caught his eye are 1...g5, attacking White's f4-Knight, and 1...Nb4, attacking White's a2-pawn.

Fortunately for White, it's his turn. How should he react to these 2 potential threats?

*Answer:*



**White to Move**

White shouldn't react at all! Both moves are weak, and White should welcome them.  $1...g5??$  hangs the pawn to  $2.Nxg5$ .  $1...Nb4$ , threatening the a2-pawn, is easily rebuffed by  $2.a3$ , when Black's Knight has to retreat.

Unfortunately, amateurs often panic in the face of threats, even if they aren't threats at all. Because it's White's turn, imagine him playing  $1.h4$ , stopping  $...g5$ . What he has actually done is prevent Black from giving away a pawn. That's not very productive.  $1.a3$  is playable, but it creates a hole on b3 (which may or may not be important, but you need to notice it), and it also wastes an opportunity to make a better move.

The moral is to only defend if you are certain that there's a need to defend something.

## Summing Up

Typical amateur mistakes include the following.

- A typical amateur mistake is to develop a piece, only to realize that it has to retreat, thus losing time. Another amateur error in the opening is to block his pawns with his pieces so that he's unable to create files for his Rooks.
- Amateurs also love to give check, even if it forces the opponent to improve his position. You should only check if it achieves something positive. Checking for the sake of checking is a very bad idea.
- Yet another amateur foible is the undefended piece. It's really important to make sure that your pieces are protected. If you think that you can make some serious gain by stepping for a moment into enemy territory, make sure that your piece is defended. And if your opponent leaves one of his pieces floating around, train yourself to notice it and then look in earnest for some sort of punishment.
- Amateurs easily notice threats that aren't threats. This often leads to self-created weakness and a loss of time. If you must defend against a threat, make sure that it's really a threat.

### Suggested Reading

Gulko and Sneed, *Lessons with a Grandmaster*.

Silman, *The Amateur's Mind*.

### Key Terms

**hiding behind the safety of checks:** Amateurs often feel safe when they check their opponent's King. Just like any other move, a check needs to have a particular, hopefully positive, purpose. Checking

for the joy of the check can force your opponent to improve his or her position, make a move he or she intended to make anyway, move the checking piece to a bad square, or simply prove to be a complete waste of time.

**ignoring the opponent's reply:** Amateurs often play as if they don't have an opponent. This mentality will lead to one disaster after another. To avoid this, train yourself to always look hard for your opponent's best reply to what you intend to do.

**squares:** Amateurs don't pay much attention to individual squares. However, if you don't understand the vast importance of every square—if you don't know how to read the body language of the board—then your chess career won't be nearly as fulfilling as it could be.

**understanding the minor pieces:** Amateurs see pieces, especially the Knights and Bishops, as just things to move around. However, the amateur's strength will vastly improve once he or she takes a deep look into the needs, strengths, and weaknesses of all the pieces. For example, a Knight dreams of finding an advanced support point (a hole/weak square). If you aren't aware of this, you'll never get the most out of your horse. If you do everything possible to make the Knight's dream come true, your Knights will rule the board.



# Picking a Chess Hero

## Lesson 24

**S**tudying grandmaster games is a wonderful way to improve your chess. Just one game shows you how a particular opening should be handled, how weaknesses in the enemy pawn structure should be punished, and how the grandmaster effortlessly finished off his opponent in the endgame. One great way to study grandmaster games is to pick a chess hero, read about his or her history, and go through as many of your hero's games as possible. In this lesson, you will be introduced to 4 chess heroes: Jose Raul Capablanca, the third world chess champion; Vera Menchik, who won the Women's World Chess Championship 7 times; Robert Fischer, the mercurial American chess genius; and Hou Yifan, who won the Women's World Chess Championship at the age of 16.

### PUZZLE 1

**True or false:** Hou Yifan, a Chinese chess prodigy, won the Women's World Chess Championship at the age of 16, in 2010.

*Answer:*

**True.** After winning the Women's World Chess Championship in 2010, she lost her title in 2012, but won it back in 2013.

### PUZZLE 2

**True or false:** Hou Yifan is (in 2015) the highest-rated woman in the world, ranking at number 55 in the world, ahead of hundreds of male grandmasters.

*Answer:*

**True.** The only female that ever had a higher rating than Hou Yifan is the Hungarian Judit Polgar, who was rated the eighth strongest player in the world.

### PUZZLE 3

**True or false:** Hou Yifan is famous for her incredible positional skills and endgame play.

*Answer:*

**False.** Of course, a superstrong grandmaster like Hou Yifan is skilled in every part of the game, but she excels in aggressive attacking chess.

### PUZZLE 4

**True or false:** Robert Fischer was the 11<sup>th</sup> official world chess champion.

*Answer:*

**True.** He took the title from the official 10<sup>th</sup> world champion, Boris Spassky, in 1972.

### PUZZLE 5

In what year and what city did Fischer die?

*Answer:*

Fischer died in 2008 (at the age of 64) in Reykjavik, Iceland, which, oddly, was where he experienced his greatest moment—winning the 1972 World Chess Championship.

## PUZZLE 6

**True or false:** Dick Cavett had Fischer on his show 3 times, although years later Mr. Cavett admitted that he didn't particularly like him.

*Answer:*

**False.** Dick Cavett was very fond of Fischer. Here's what he said when Fischer passed away:

Among this year's worst news, for me, was the death of Bobby Fischer.... Towering genius, riches, international fame, and a far from normal childhood might be too heady a mix for anyone to handle. For him they proved fatal. I'm still sad about his death. In our three encounters on my late-night show, I became quite fond of him.

## PUZZLE 7

**True or false:** Capablanca was the fourth official world chess champion.

*Answer:*

**False.** Capablanca was the third official world chess champion. The first champion was Wilhelm Steinitz, and the second champion was Emanuel Lasker.

## PUZZLE 8

Capablanca won the title of world chess champion from Emanuel Lasker in 1921. His first defense of his title occurred in 1927. Who was the challenger?

*Answer:*

In 1927, Alexander Alekhine shocked the world by beating Capablanca in a marathon match in Buenos Aires. The match consisted of 34 games, with Alekhine winning 6 games, losing 3 games, and drawing 25.

## PUZZLE 9

**True or false:** Capablanca, who went to Columbia University, was a chemical engineer before he decided to devote himself to chess.

*Answer:*

**False.** Capablanca did go to Columbia University and did study chemical engineering, but he left school in 1908 when he decided that a chess professional's life was much more fun. In 1913, Capablanca accepted a position in the Cuban Foreign Office as an ambassador-at-large. This consisted of traveling around the world—all expenses paid—playing chess, and attending parties with other dignitaries. He pocketed any and all monies from his tournament victories, and the job itself promised lifelong financial security.

## PUZZLE 10

**True or false:** Capablanca was often referred to as “the chess machine.”

*Answer:*

**True.** He was famous for his positional mastery and magnificent endgame play. In his prime, he was almost unbeatable.

### PUZZLE 11

**True or false:** Vera Menchik won the Women's World Chess Championship 5 times.

*Answer:*

**False.** She actually won the championship 7 times! Her combined record in all 7 Women's World Chess Championship events was 1 loss, 4 draws, and 78 wins.

### PUZZLE 12

**True or false:** Although Vera Menchik's tactics were excellent, her greatest strength was her endgame play.

*Answer:*

**True.** She was a world-class endgame player, and she proved it by beating some of the world's finest male players.

### PUZZLE 13

**True or false:** The "Vera Menchik Club" was put together by her many fans.

*Answer:*

**False.** The club was created by a strong male master who said that any man who lost to her would be inducted into this imaginary club. As it turned out, he and Menchik played right after he announced his club, and he lost. Thus, he became the first official member, with many other top male players also joining the club over the years.

## Summing Up

Chess history brings the old masters to life by showing us the highs and lows of their lives, how chess evolved, and how much we can learn by looking at their games.

Capablanca and Fischer were the chess giants of their time. Vera Menchik ruled women's chess in ways that no other women's champion ever did. In fact, she was light-years ahead of every other woman on Earth and held her own against many of the top male players. Hou Yifan, only 21 years old (in 2015), has dominated all her rivals to such an extent that it's difficult to see who can challenge her.

### Suggested Reading

Kasparov, *Garry Kasparov on Fischer*.

Lakdawala, *Capablanca*.

Linder and Linder, *Jose Raul Capablanca*.

### Key People

**Alexander Alekhine** (1892–1946): Born in Russia, he was one of the strongest players of all time. He defeated the great Capablanca in a match in 1927, thereby becoming the fourth world chess champion.

**Jose Raul Capablanca** (1888–1942): Born in Cuba, he was the third world chess champion and, in his prime, considered to be almost unbeatable.

**Max Euwe** (1901–1981): Born in Amsterdam, he was the fifth world chess champion, taking it from Alekhine in 1935. However, Alekhine regained his title in the 1937 rematch.

**Bobby Fischer** (1943–2008): The 11<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, he is considered to be one of the 5 best players of all time, with many ranking him as number 1. He singlehandedly took American chess to a whole new level.

**Florin Gheorghiu** (1944– ): Born in Romania, he was a successful grandmaster. His finest moment was when he beat Bobby Fischer in the Havana Olympiad in 1966.

**Alexandra Kosteniuk** (1984– ): Born in Russia, she is a grandmaster and a former women's world champion. She has dual Swiss-Russian citizenship, which led to something unique: She won both the women's and the men's Swiss Chess Championship (she got both titles in 2013).

**Emanuel Lasker** (1868–1941): He was the second official world chess champion and retained the title for an outrageous 27 years. He is considered to be one of the greatest players who ever lived.

**Geza Maroczy** (1870–1951): A wonderful defensive player, he was among the world's best for many years. He was, perhaps, the greatest master of Queen endgames in history.

**Vera Menchik** (1906–1944): Born in Russia, she moved (with her family) to England in 1921. Once there, she dominated women's chess, winning the Women's World Chess Championship 7 times.

**Judit Polgar** (1976– ): Born in Budapest, she earned the grandmaster title at the age of 15 and is recognized as the strongest female player of all time. In her prime, she was rated the eighth strongest player on Earth.

**Samuel Reshevsky** (1911–1992): Born in Poland but living his adult life in the United States, he was a child prodigy and, in his prime, one of the top 2 or 3 players in the world.

**Friedrich Samisch** (1896–1975): A German grandmaster, he held his own against many of the greats. Today, 2 well-known opening variations bear his name: the Samisch variation of the King’s Indian Defense and the Samisch variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defense.

**Boris Spassky** (1937– ): Born in Leningrad, he became the 10<sup>th</sup> world chess champion in 1968. In 1972, he lost his title to Bobby Fischer.

**Anna Ushenina** (1985– ): A Ukrainian grandmaster, she earned the Women’s World Chess Championship in 2012 but lost the title in 2013 to Hou Yifan.

**Hou Yifan** (1994– ): Born in China, she is the youngest female world chess champion (winning the title in 2010 at 16 years of age). After losing her title in 2012, she promptly regained it in 2013. She is, by far, the highest-rated female player on Earth.



## Timeline

**6<sup>th</sup> century** .....The first version of chess, *chaturanga*, appears in India.

**7<sup>th</sup> century** .....*Chaturanga* migrates to Persia.

**1173**.....Algebraic notation is recorded. Nobody knows when this form of chess notation was first created.

### **13<sup>th</sup>-century**

**Europe**.....The pawn is given the 2-move option. It was also able to turn into any piece other than the King when it reached the end of the board.

### **13<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup>-century**

**Europe**.....Europeans start to experiment with various new kinds of King moves. This metamorphosis ended with modern-day castling, which was accepted by the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### **14<sup>th</sup>-century**

**Europe**.....Pawns are given a new power: the en passant rule.

**1471 Europe**.....The first book about chess and only chess, called the Göttingen manuscript, appears.

**1475 Europe**.....The Queen—which was a weak piece in *chaturanga*—is given superpowers, becoming the strongest piece on the chessboard.

**1497 Europe**.....Luis Ramirez de Lucena publishes the book on chess openings.

**16<sup>th</sup>-century**

**Europe**.....The Bishop gets a new look and new powers.

**17<sup>th</sup> century** .....Gioacchino Greco publishes the first book on chess traps and mating patterns.

**1726** .....The birth of François-André Danican Philidor. He died in 1795.

**1744** .....François-André Danican Philidor stuns the world by playing 2 opponents at the same time while blindfolded.

**1769** .....Baron Wolfgang von Kempelen, under orders from the Empress Maria Theresa, builds the Turk, a mechanical chess-playing machine.

**1800–1880** .....This period was considered be chess’s romantic age.

**1818** .....The birth of Adolf Anderssen. He died in 1879.

**1834** .....Louis de la Bourdonnais and Alexander McDonnell play a series of small matches (85 games total). Many viewed this as a world championship match.

**1836** .....The birth of the first official world chess champion, Wilhelm Steinitz. He died in 1900.

**1837** .....The birth of Baron Ignatz von Kolisch. He died in 1889.

**1837** .....The birth of Paul Morphy. He died in 1884.

**1841** .....The birth of Joseph Henry Blackburne (nicknamed “the Black Death”). He died in 1924.

- 1859** .....Paul Morphy was declared (unofficially) the world chess champion.
- 1862** .....The birth of Siegbert Tarrasch. He died in 1934.
- 1867** .....Mechanical chess clocks were introduced into tournament play.
- 1868** .....The birth of the second official world chess champion, Emanuel Lasker. He died in 1941.
- 1872** .....Wilhelm Steinitz, previously a wild attacking player, changes his style and effectively ushers in the classical school of chess.
- 1886** .....The birth of Aron Nimzowitsch. He died in 1935.
- 1886** .....Wilhelm Steinitz becomes the first official world chess champion.
- 1888** .....The birth of the third official world chess champion, Jose Raul Capablanca. He died in 1942.
- 1892** .....The birth of the fourth official world chess champion, Alexander Alekhine. He died in 1946.
- 1894** .....Emanuel Lasker defeats Steinitz in a match, thereby becoming the second official world chess champion.
- 1901** .....The birth of Max Euwe, who became the fifth world chess champion. He died in 1981.
- 1906** .....The birth of 7-time Women's World Chess Champion Vera Menchik. She died in 1944.

- 1911**.....The birth of Mikhail Botvinnik, who became the sixth world chess champion in 1948. He died in 1995.
- 1920s**.....Hypermodernism—a school of chess thought championed by Aron Nimzowitsch, Richard Reti, Savielly Tartakower, and others—leaps into prominence and challenges the long-standing classical school.
- 1921** .....Jose Capablanca beats Emanuel Lasker in a match, thereby becoming the third official world chess champion.
- 1921** .....The birth of Vasily Smyslov, who became the seventh world chess champion in 1957. He died in 2010.
- 1927** .....Alexander Alekhine beats Jose Capablanca in their title match in Buenos Aires, making Alekhine the fourth official world chess champion.
- 1929** .....The birth of Tigran Petrosian, who became the ninth world chess champion by defeating Botvinnik in 1963. He died in 1984.
- 1935** .....Max Euwe becomes the fifth world chess champion by beating Alekhine in their championship match.
- 1936** .....The birth of the eighth world chess champion, Mikhail Tal. He died in 1992.
- 1937** .....Alekhine regains his title by beating Euwe in a rematch. He becomes the only world chess champion to die with the title.

- 1937** .....The birth of the 10<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, Boris Spassky.
- 1943** .....The birth of the 11<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, Robert Fischer. He died in 2008.
- 1951** .....The birth of the 12<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, Anatoly Karpov.
- 1960** .....Mikhail Tal wins the World Chess Championship, beating Mikhail Botvinnik, who had regained his title by defeating Smyslov in a return match.
- 1961** .....Mikhail Botvinnik regains his title by defeating Tal in their rematch.
- 1963** .....The birth of the 13<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, Garry Kasparov.
- 1969** .....Boris Spassky beats Tigran Petrosian to become the 10<sup>th</sup> world chess champion.
- 1972** .....Bobby Fischer takes the title from Spassky, becoming the 11<sup>th</sup> world chess champion.
- 1975** .....Bobby Fischer refuses to defend his title after FIDE, the international chess federation, wouldn't accept one of Fischer's match conditions. He didn't appear again until 1992, when he played an unofficial match against Boris Spassky.
- 1975** .....The birth of the 14<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, Vladimir Kramnik.
- 1985** .....Garry Kasparov becomes the 13<sup>th</sup> world chess champion by beating Anatoly Karpov.

- 1994** .....The birth of 2-time Women's World Chess Champion Hou Yifan.
- 1996** .....Garry Kasparov beats the IBM supercomputer Deep Blue in a 6-game match (4–2).
- 1997** .....Garry Kasparov loses a 6-game rematch to Deep Blue (3.5–2.5). This was the first time a reigning world chess champion lost a match to a computer under tournament conditions.
- 2000** .....Vladimir Kramnik wins the World Chess Championship by defeating Gary Kasparov.
- 2005** .....Gary Kasparov retires from competitive chess.
- 2007** .....Viswanathan Anand becomes the 15<sup>th</sup> world chess champion.
- 2013** .....Magnus Carlsen beats Anand to become the 16<sup>th</sup> world chess champion.

## Glossary

**Alekhine's gun:** Domination on an open file when a player places 2 Rooks on that file with the Queen behind it.

**attack:** To make a threat or threats against a specific piece or area of the board.

**back-rank mate:** When a King is sitting on its back rank, checked by an enemy Rook or Queen, and it can't escape that check.

**backward pawn:** A pawn that has fallen behind its comrades and thus no longer can be supported or guarded by other pawns of its own persuasion.

**blockade:** Conceptualized and popularized by Aron Nimzowitsch (1886–1935), this refers to the tying down (immobilization) of an enemy pawn by placing a piece (in particular, a Knight) directly in front of it.

**body language of the board:** Based on the accumulation of chess patterns, you are able to glance at the board and know what it wants you to do.

**castling:** A move that combines the movements of 2 pieces (the King and the Rook) at the same time.

**center:** Usually considered to be the e4-, d4-, e5-, and d5-squares, although the territory within the c4, c5, f4, and f5 parameters can also be thought of as central.

**checkmate:** It means that you are threatening to capture the enemy King and nothing your opponent can do will prevent its loss. When this happens, you have won the game.

**classic Bishop sacrifice:** A famous kingside attacking pattern where White pulls the enemy King into the open by sacrificing his light-squared Bishop on h7.

**closed game:** A position locked by pawns. Such a position tends to lessen the strength of Bishops and other long-range pieces simply because the pawns get in their way. Knights, not being long-range pieces, can jump over other pieces and pawns and thus are very useful in such closed situations. A typical series of opening moves that leads to a closed position is 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e5 4.Nc3 d6 5.e4, etc.

**combination:** A tactical move or series of moves based on the opponent's weakened King, hanging or undefended pieces, or inadequately guarded pieces. Involving a sacrifice, it is a calculable series of moves leading to material or positional gains.

**dark-square complex:** A very common kingside attacking pattern where White's pieces are able to infiltrate onto Black's kingside holes on f6, g7, and h6.

**decoy:** The idea is to pull a piece away from an important job (often by making use of a pin, a skewer, or some other tactical device), leading to doom in another area, or to pull a piece to a square it doesn't want to be on, with agonizing results for the opponent.

**development:** The process of moving your pieces from their starting posts to new positions where their activity and mobility are enhanced. Your pieces should be developed to squares where they work with the rest of their army toward a particular goal. If an individual piece is providing a useful service on its original square, then there might be no reason to move it.

**double attack:** In a way, you can think of forks, skewers, and pins as double attacks, because 1 piece attacks 2 at the same time. In fact, the main idea of a double attack—making 2 threats at once—is the backbone of the vast majority of tactical themes.



**doubled pawns:** Two pawns of the same color lined up on a file as the result of a capture. Such pawns are generally considered to be weak, although quite often their ability to control certain squares makes them very useful.

**draw:** A tie, where neither player wins the game.

**dynamics:** Usually short term, dynamics seek immediate rewards, such as an attack, material gain, and/or a transition into a superior static situation.

**en passant:** A French term that means “in passing.” When a pawn advances 2 squares (something it can only do if it has not yet moved) and passes an enemy pawn on an adjacent file that has advanced to its fifth rank, it might be captured by that enemy pawn, as if the advancing pawn had moved only 1 square. This optional capture might be made only on the first opportunity, or else the right in that instance is permanently lost.

**engines:** Chess-playing software that can be found on a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Modern chess engines can be incredibly strong.

**exchange:** To trade pieces of equal worth. Trading a piece for something of lesser value is called a blunder or a sacrifice.

**file:** A column of 8 squares. An open file is a file that is not blocked by either side’s pawns.

**fool’s mate:** The fastest possible mate: 1.f4 e6 2.g4 Qh4 mate.

**fork:** A tactical maneuver in which a piece or pawn attacks 2 enemy pieces or pawns at the same time.

**gambit:** A voluntary sacrifice of a pawn or a piece in the opening with the idea of gaining the initiative, a lead in development, or some other compensating factor.

**hanging:** An unprotected piece or pawn exposed to capture.

**hiding behind the safety of checks:** Amateurs often feel safe when they check their opponent's King. Just like any other move, a check needs to have a particular, hopefully positive, purpose. Checking for the joy of the check can force your opponent to improve his or her position, make a move he or she intended to make anyway, move the checking piece to a bad square, or simply prove to be a complete waste of time.

**hypermodernism:** A school of thought that insists that indirect control of the center is better than direct occupation. In particular, Reti and Nimzovich successfully propagated the idea of central control from the flanks. Unfortunately, they took their ideas to extremes—just as the classicists did. Today, it is recognized that both schools of thought are correct, and a blending of the 2 is the only truly balanced method.

**I can't/I have to:** Never allow yourself to think, "I can't" or "I have to," because once you say it and believe it, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

**ignoring the opponent's reply:** Amateurs often play as if they don't have an opponent. This mentality will lead to one disaster after another. To avoid this, train yourself to always look hard for your opponent's best reply to what you intend to do.

**illegal:** Anything that steps outside the rules of the game.

**imbalance:** Any difference between the White and Black positions. Material advantage, superior pawn structure, superior minor piece, space, development, and the initiative are all typical imbalances.

**initiative:** When your opponent is defending and you are attacking or putting pressure on him or her, it is said that you have the initiative.

**kingside:** The half of the board originally occupied by the King, K-Bishop, K-Knight, and K-Rook. The kingside is on the right of the player with the White pieces and on the left of the player with the Black pieces.

**Lucena position:** Created by Luis Ramirez de Lucena, this is a technique (in a Rook-and-pawn-versus-Rook endgame) that demonstrates how the player with the extra pawn can win if the stronger side's King is in front of its pawn.

**luft:** Meaning "air," it describes a pawn move in front of one's King that prevents back-rank mate possibilities.

**major pieces:** Also called heavy pieces. The term applies to Queens and Rooks.

**material:** The pieces and pawns, excluding the King. A material advantage is obtained by winning a piece of greater value than the one you gave up. For example, giving up a pawn to win a Rook means that you have an advantage in material.

**mating net:** Preventing the enemy King from running away from an embattled area.

**minor pieces:** The Bishops and the Knights.

**octopus:** A Knight that is deep in enemy territory, reaching out in all directions.

**open file:** A column of 8 squares that is free of pawns. It is on open files (and ranks) that Rooks come to their maximum potential.

**open game:** A type of position that is characterized by many open lines and few center pawns. A lead in development becomes very important in positions of this type.

**opposition:** An endgame term, it is a means by which one King can dominate another.

**passed pawn:** A pawn that has passed by all enemy pawns capable of capturing it.

**pawn center:** Pawns placed in the center. White pawns on f4, e4, and d4, for example, would constitute a large pawn center. A common opening that allows White to build such a center in the hope of attacking it later is 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.f4, etc.

**pawn structure:** The positioning of the whole pawn mass. Also referred to as the pawn skeleton. This positioning of the pawns is what usually dictates the types of plans available in a given position due to open files, space, pawn weaknesses, etc.

**Philidor position:** Created by François-André Danican Philidor, this is a technique (in a Rook-and-pawn-versus-Rook endgame) that demonstrates how the player without the pawn can force a draw if the defending King is in front of the pawn.

**pin:** An attack against 2 pieces at once—one a direct attack and the other an X-ray attack. A true pin attacks the less-valuable piece first, while the more-valuable piece is the one attacked via X-ray.

**point count:** A system of figuring out the worth of the pieces by giving each of them a numerical value: King, priceless; Queen, 9 points; Rook, 5 points; Bishop, 3 points; Knight, 3 points; and pawn, 1 point. The flaw in the system is that it does not take into account other factors (such as position, tactics, etc.) that often drastically change the relative value of an individual piece.

**positional:** A move, maneuver, or style of play that is based on an exploitation of small advantages.

**pressure:** A pawn or square is said to have pressure on it when one or more pieces are directly attacking it.

**promotion:** Also called queening. When a pawn reaches the final rank, it becomes another piece, usually a Queen. However, the pawn can be promoted to anything other than a pawn or a King.

**rank:** A row of 8 squares. The seventh rank in particular is the subject of much activity, especially when a Rook settles there. Control of the seventh rank is considered to be an important advantage.

**resigns:** Realizing the hopeless nature of a position and not wanting to insult the intelligence of the opponent, a player can surrender the game (resign) without having to wait for a checkmate. Resignation occurs in the vast majority of tournament games, while actual checkmates are quite rare.

**skewer:** The same as a pin, except the more-valuable enemy piece is attacked and the X-rayed piece is the less-valuable one.

**smothered mate:** Occurs when a King is surrounded by its own pieces, making it impossible for the King to move, and it's in check by an enemy piece.

**soft moves:** A less-than-ideal move that is played quickly or without serious thought. Your moves are only as good as the energy you put into them.

**squares:** Amateurs don't pay much attention to individual squares. However, if you don't understand the vast importance of every square—if you don't know how to read the body language of the board—then your chess career won't be nearly as fulfilling as it could be.

**statics:** A long-term advantage, such as material gain, superior pawn structure, or the pursuit of weaknesses in the enemy camp.

**tactics:** Traps, threats, and schemes based on the calculation of variations (at times rather long-winded). A position with many combinative motifs present is considered tactical.

**target:** A weak square or pawn that is vulnerable to attack.

**touch move:** In serious chess, if you touch a piece, you have to move it.

**triangulation:** In basic terms, this is a fancy way to give up a move and gain the opposition.

**understanding the minor pieces:** Amateurs see pieces, especially the Knights and Bishops, as just things to move around. However, the amateur's strength will vastly improve once he or she takes a deep look into the needs, strengths, and weaknesses of all the pieces. For example, a Knight dreams of finding an advanced support point (a hole/weak square). If you aren't aware of this, you'll never get the most out of your horse. If you do everything possible to make the Knight's dream come true, your Knights will rule the board.

**weakness/target:** Any pawn or square that is difficult or impossible to defend.

**Zugzwang:** Meaning "compulsion to move," a German term referring to a situation in which a player would like to do nothing (pass), because any move will damage his or her game.

**Zwischenzug:** Meaning "in-between move," a German term for an often unexpected reply thrown into an expected sequence of moves.

## Key People

**Alexander Alekhine** (1892–1946): Born in Russia, he was one of the strongest players of all time. He defeated the great Capablanca in a match in 1927, thereby becoming the fourth world chess champion.

**Adolf Albin** (1848–1920): Born in Bucharest, he was an exceptionally strong player who enjoyed some very fine tournament results against the world’s best. This is amazing because he didn’t start his international career until he was in his 40s.

**Viswanathan Anand** (1969– ): Born in India, he became the undisputed world chess champion in 2007. He lost the title to Magnus Carlsen in 2013 but is, at the age of 45, still one of the top 3 or 4 players in the world.

**Adolf Anderssen** (1818–1879): A German master, he was considered to be the world’s best player during his prime. He’s most famous for his amazing attacking masterpieces.

**Pierre St. Amant** (1800–1872): A French chess master and one of the world’s best players.

**Pal Benko** (1928– ): Born in France, he was raised in Hungary and eventually emigrated to the United States in 1958. A close friend of Bobby Fischer, he is a world-class player, a chess writer, and an amazing composer of endgame studies.

**Joseph Blackburne** (1841–1924): An Englishman and one of the world’s elite players for many decades. His nickname was “the Black Death.”

**Samuel Boden** (1826–1882): One of England’s strongest players, he’s most famous for a matting pattern that is named after him.

**Efim Boglojubov** (1889–1952): Born in Russia, he was one of the world’s best players. He played for the World Chess Championship twice against Alekhine, losing both times.

**Mikhail Botvinnik** (1911–1995): Born in Moscow, he became the sixth world chess champion. He was one of the world’s finest players for more than 30 years.

**Louis-Charles Mahe de la Bourdonnais** (1795–1840): Born in France, he played an 85-game match in 1834 against Alexander McDonnell to determine who the best player in the world was. De la Bourdonnais dominated the match.

**Amos Burn** (1848–1925): One of England’s strongest players, he was memorialized by Richard Forster, who wrote a magnificent book about him that is just a little less than 1000 pages long.

**Jose Raul Capablanca** (1888–1942): Born in Cuba, he was the third world chess champion and, in his prime, considered to be almost unbeatable.

**Magnus Carlsen** (1990– ): Born in Norway, he’s the present world chess champion (in 2015) and also the highest-rated player in history.

**Fabiano Caruana** (1992– ): Born in Miami, he is the second-highest rated player in the world, behind World Chess Champion Magnus Carlsen.

**Irving Chernev** (1900–1981): He is the author of 20 chess books, many of which are classics.

**Pia Cramling** (1963– ): Born in Stockholm, she has been a major force in women’s chess for decades. In 1992, she became the sixth woman to ever receive the grandmaster title.

**Arnold Denker** (1914–2005): He was the U.S. champion in 1945 and 1946. He was famous for his sparkling attack games.



**Jean Dufresne** (1829–1893): Born in Germany, he was a strong chess player who wrote several chess books and was also an excellent chess composer.

**Larry Evans** (1932–2010): A close friend of Bobby Fischer, he won the U.S. Chess Championship 4 times and was also an excellent chess writer.

**Max Euwe** (1901–1981): Born in Amsterdam, he was the fifth world chess champion, taking it from Alekhine in 1935. However, Alekhine regained his title in the 1937 rematch.

**Reuben Fine** (1914–1993): An American grandmaster and psychologist, he was clearly among the top 5 players during the 1930s and 1940s. When World War II ended, he gave up chess and concentrated on psychology.

**Ben Finegold** (1969– ): Born in Detroit, he is an American grandmaster and is also a captivating public speaker and humorist.

**Bobby Fischer** (1943–2008): The 11<sup>th</sup> world chess champion, he is considered to be one of the 5 best players of all time, with many ranking him as number 1. He singlehandedly took American chess to a whole new level.

**Gyozo Forintos** (1935– ): Born in Budapest, he is a solid grandmaster and a very good chess writer.

**Lubomir Ftacnik** (1957– ): Born in Bratislava, he is the consummate modern chess professional. He plays in tournaments all over the world, competes in team tournaments, teaches chess, and also wrote a book in 2004.

**Florin Gheorghiu** (1944– ): Born in Romania, he was a successful grandmaster. His finest moment was when he beat Bobby Fischer in the Havana Olympiad in 1966.

**Harry Golombek** (1911–1995): A chess grandmaster, he won the British Chess Championships 3 times. He was also an excellent chess writer.

**Gioachino Greco** (1600–1634): A legendary Italian who is considered by many to be the first professional chess player, he was a century ahead of his time and wrote a book that demonstrated various opening traps and tactical patterns.

**Isidor Gunsberg** (1854–1930): Born in Hungary, he was among the top 5 players on Earth. He played a World Chess Championship match against Steinitz (a total of 19 games) and lost by 2 points.

**Bernhard Horwitz** (1807–1885): A German chess master and writer, he was also a member of a German chess group known as “the Pleiades.”

**Eduardo Iturrizaga** (1989– ): He is Venezuela’s only grandmaster.

**Anatoly Karpov** (1951– ): Born in Russia, he was the 12<sup>th</sup> world chess champion. He dominated the competition with his exquisite position style and is now considered to be one of the greatest players ever.

**Rustam Kasimdzhanov** (1979– ): Born in Uzbekistan, he has been an elite player for many years.

**Garry Kasparov** (1963– ): Born in Azerbaijan, he is the 13<sup>th</sup> world chess champion and is viewed as the best player of all time by many.

**Ignatz Kolisch** (1837–1889): A brilliant attacking player, he was thought to be the best player in the world after winning a powerful tournament in Paris.

**George Koltanowski** (1903–2000): Born in Belgium, he is famous for his amazing blindfold exhibitions.

**Alexandra Kosteniuk** (1984– ): Born in Russia, she is a grandmaster and a former women’s world champion. She has dual Swiss-Russian citizenship, which led to something unique: She won both the women’s and the men’s Swiss Chess Championship (she got both titles in 2013).

**Vladimir Kramnik** (1975– ): Born in Russia, he held the world chess champion title from 2000 to 2006, when he lost it to Anand.

**Marc Lang** (1969– ): Born in Germany, he set a new blindfold record, playing 46 games at the same time. He won 25, drew 19, and only lost 2 games.

**Bent Larsen** (1935–2010): A Danish grandmaster and world championship contender, he was the first Western player to challenge the Soviet Union’s chess domination.

**Edward Lasker** (1885–1981): Born in Poland, he was skilled at both chess and Go. During his prime years, he battled against the world’s best players. He was also an excellent writer, and his books are still read today.

**Emanuel Lasker** (1868–1941): He was the second official world chess champion and retained the title for an outrageous 27 years. He is considered to be one of the greatest players who ever lived.

**Frederic Lazard** (1883–1948): A French chess master, he crossed swords with legends like Tartakower and Alekhine.

**Francois Legall de Kermeur** (1702–1792): Usually referred to as Legall, he was France’s best player.

**Paul Saladin Leonhardt** (1877–1934): Born in Poland (which at that time was part of the German Empire), he was an extremely strong grandmaster who beat most of the elite players of his time.

**Stepan Levitsky** (1876–1924): One of the strongest Russian chess masters of this time, he became the Russian national chess champion in 1911.

**Johann Lowenthal** (1810–1876): Born in Hungary, he was a professional chess master. He was most famous for his 2 matches against Morphy, both of which he lost.

**Luis Ramirez de Lucena** (1465–1530): A Spanish chess player who wrote the first (still existing) chess book.

**Ehsan Maghami** (1983– ): Born in Iran, he is a grandmaster who is skilled in normal chess and also in simultaneous exhibitions. He set a record by playing 614 games at once, winning 590, losing 8, and drawing 16.

**Geza Maroczky** (1870–1951): A wonderful defensive player, he was among the world's best for many years. He was, perhaps, the greatest master of Queen endgames in history.

**Frank Marshall** (1877–1944): One of the strongest players in the world, he was the best American chess grandmaster from 1904 to 1930. He held the U.S. championship title for an astounding 27 straight years.

**Alexander McDonnell** (1798–1835): Born in Belfast, he played an 85-game match in 1834 against Louis-Charles Mahe de la Bourdonnais to determine who the best player in the world was. He had his moments but was, overall, badly outclassed.

**Vera Menchik** (1906–1944): Born in Russia, she moved (with her family) to England in 1921. Once there, she dominated women's chess, winning the Women's World Chess Championship 7 times.

**Paul Morphy** (1837–1884): A legendary American player, he effortlessly mowed down all the world's best players.

**Gustav Neumann** (1838–1881): A German master, he was one of the world's elite players, beating many of the top players of his day.

**Aron Nimzowitsch** (1886–1935): Born in Latvia, he wrote some of the most important chess books in history. He was also a great player, rising to number 3 in the world during his prime.

**John Owen** (1827–1901): An English vicar, he won a victory over Paul Morphy in 1858.

**Louis Paulsen** (1833–1891): Born in Germany, he was one of the world's top 5 players.

**Tigran Petrosian** (1929–1984): Born in Tbilisi, Georgia, he became the ninth world chess champion. In his prime, he was considered to be almost unbeatable.

**Harry Nelson Pillsbury** (1872–1906): Probably the second-best player in the world (behind World Chess Champion Emanuel Lasker), he exploded on the international chess scene by winning one of the strongest tournaments of all time at the age of 22.

**François-André Danican Philidor** (1726–1795): A Frenchman, he was the world's best player and also a famous composer of operas.

**Judit Polgar** (1976– ): Born in Budapest, she earned the grandmaster title at the age of 15 and is recognized as the strongest female player of all time. In her prime, she was rated the eighth strongest player on Earth.

**Vallejo Pons** (1982– ): Born in Spain, he achieved the grandmaster title at 16 years of age.

**Richard Reti** (1889–1926): Born in Prague, he was one of the top 5 players in the world during the 1920s.

**Samuel Reshevsky** (1911–1992): Born in Poland but living his adult life in the United States, he was a child prodigy and, in his prime, one of the top 2 or 3 players in the world.

**Akiba Rubinstein** (1880–1961): A Polish grandmaster, he was thought to be the number 2 player in the world (behind Emanuel Lasker) before World War I. Sadly, after World War I, mental illness ended his world championship dreams.

**Georg Salwe** (1862–1920): A Polish grandmaster, he played in tournaments and matches against the world’s best and held his own.

**Friedrich Samisch** (1896–1975): A German grandmaster, he held his own against many of the greats. Today, 2 well-known opening variations bear his name: the Samisch variation of the King’s Indian Defense and the Samisch variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defense.

**Emil Schallopp** (1843–1919): Born in Germany, he played in many international tournaments. However, he was most famous for books he wrote about chess.

**Carl Schlechter** (1874–1918): Born in Austria, he was one of the world’s top 5 players. He drew a World Chess Championship match against Emanuel Lasker (a tied match leaves the champion with the title).

**Yasser Seirawan**: (1960– ): Born in Damascus, his childhood was spent in Seattle. A 4-time U.S. chess champion, he was one of the world’s best players in his prime and also a highly celebrated chess writer.

**Gregory Shahade** (1979– ): An American international chess master and poker player. His sister is Woman Grandmaster Jennifer Shahade.

**Nigel Short** (1965– ): Born in England, he played a match against World Chess Champion Gary Kasparov for the title but was soundly beaten. Nevertheless, he remained one of the world's best players, and his excellent pen and quick wit make his articles and live commentaries extremely popular.

**Vassily Smyslov** (1921–2010): A Russian grandmaster, he was the seventh world chess champion. He was famous for his pristine positional and endgame play.

**Boris Spassky** (1937– ): Born in Leningrad, he became the 10<sup>th</sup> world chess champion in 1968. In 1972, he lost his title to Bobby Fischer.

**Howard Staunton** (1810–1874): An Englishman, he was considered the world's best player until Morphy appeared on the scene.

**Wilhelm Steinitz** (1836–1900): Born in Austria, he became the first official world chess champion. He is also revered as a writer; his writings explained his theories about chess strategy.

**Aaron Summerscale** (1969– ): He is an English grandmaster and chess writer.

**Laszlo Szabo** (1917–1998): Born in Budapest, he was imprisoned by the Russians during World War II, but afterward enjoyed a fantastic chess career, holding his own against the world's elite.

**Mikhail Tal** (1936–1992): Born in Latvia, he was the eighth world chess champion and was famous for his outrageous attacking play.

**Mark Taimanov** (1926– ): Born in Russia, he was, in his prime, an incredibly strong player. He is also a concert pianist, and his recordings can be found wherever music is sold.

**Siegbert Tarrasch** (1862–1934): A magnificent player and one of the most influential chess teachers in history, he might have been world champion if he hadn't decided that medicine, and being a medical doctor, came first and chess came second.

**Saviely Tartakower** (1887–1956): A Polish grandmaster, he was a brilliant chess writer and one of the world's finest players.

**Rudolf Teschner** (1922–2006): He was a German grandmaster and a highly respected chess writer.

**Sir George Thomas** (1881–1972): A very strong British chess master, he was also top class in badminton and tennis. He played in the famous Wimbledon tennis tournament in 1911.

**Jan Timman** (1951– ): Born in Amsterdam, he was one of the world's elite players during the late 1970s and early 1990s and still competes in tournaments today. He lost a World Chess Championship match against Karpov in 1993.

**Marion Tinsley** (1927–1995): Born in Ohio, he was (by far) the greatest checker player who ever lived.

**Carlos Torre** (1904–1978): A Mexican grandmaster, his greatest moment was his sacrificial masterpiece over Emanuel Lasker.

**Petar Trifunovic** (1910–1980): A Yugoslav grandmaster, he was a fierce attacking player in his youth. As a result, he was given the nickname “Typhoonovic.”

**The Turk:** “Born” in 1769, this was the first chess-playing machine. The machine's moves were played by a robot that resembled a man dressed in Turkish attire and was attached to a large chest.

**Anna Ushenina** (1985– ): A Ukrainian grandmaster, she earned the Women's World Chess Championship in 2012 but lost the title in 2013 to Hou Yifan.



**Josh Waitzkin** (1976– ): Born in New York, he is an international chess master and renowned martial artist. A movie called *Searching for Bobby Fischer* was made about his childhood and coach.

**Preston Ware** (1821–1890): An American chess player, he was famous for his use of various unorthodox openings.

**Frederick Yates** (1884–1932): He was a very strong English chess master who crossed swords with, and often beat, some of the world's finest players. He won the British Chess Championships 6 times.

**Hou Yifan** (1994– ): Born in China, she is the youngest female world chess champion (winning the title in 2010 at 16 years of age). After losing her title in 2012, she promptly regained it in 2013. She is, by far, the highest-rated female player on Earth.

**Artur Yusupov** (1960– ): Born in Moscow, he was one of the world's best in his prime and came close to getting a World Chess Championship match. After being shot by thieves in his Moscow apartment, he permanently moved to Germany.

**Johann Zukertort** (1842–1888): Born in Poland, he was one of the top 3 players in the world. He also excelled in blindfold chess, playing 16 games at the same time.

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Lakdawala, Cyrus. *Capablanca: Move by Move*. London: Everyman Chess, 2012. The Cuban's greatest games, with instructive notes after every move.

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Lawson, David. *Paul Morphy: The Pride and Sorrow of Chess*. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette, 2010. The best biography of the legendary genius.

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Masetti, Franco, and Roberto Messa. *1001 Chess Exercises for Beginners*. Alkmaar, Netherlands: New in Chess, 2012. Puzzles that will test your understanding of tactical basics, such as pins, decoys, double attacks, etc.

Muller, Karsten, and Raymund Stolze. *The Magic Tactics of Mikhail Tal: Learn From the Legend*. Alkmaar, Netherlands: New in Chess, 2012. A lovely book that breaks down the tactical themes Tal made use of.

Nimzowitsch, Aron. *Chess Praxis*. United Kingdom: Quality Chess, 2007. A collection of Nimzowitsch's games, each illustrating his theories in action. A truly beloved classic.

Perlo, Van. *Van Perlo's Endgame Tactics*. Alkmaar, Netherlands: New in Chess, 2009. An award-winning book that demonstrates the beauty of tactical endgames.

Renaud, Georges, and Victor Kahn. *The Art of the Checkmate*. London: Batsford, 2015. A classic book on mating themes that will teach and delight.

Reti, Richard. *Masters of the Chessboard*. Milford, CT: Russell Enterprises, 2011. A profound look at chess from 1850 to 1925, including Adolf Anderssen, Morphy, Steinitz, etc.

Rowson, Jonathan. *Chess For Zebras*. United Kingdom: Gambit Publications, 2014. Focuses on the human factor in all phases of the game.

Saidy, Anthony, and Norman Lessing. *The World of Chess*. New York: Random House, 1974. A beautiful coffee-table book that takes you back in time to the beginnings of chess, to the romantic era, and onward. Wonderful illustrations.

Seirawan, Yasser, with Jeremy Silman. *Play Winning Chess*. London: Everyman Chess, 2003. Piece movement, chess notation, rules of chess, historical details, strategy, tactics, etc.

———. *Winning Chess Endings*. London: Everyman Chess, 2012. All the basic endgames are explained in an entertaining, clear, and instructive manner.

Silman, Jeremy. *How to Reassess Your Chess, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Los Angeles: Siles Press, 2010. The book that originally coined the term “imbalances.” Positional themes, chess psychology, how to read the body language of the board, etc.

———. *Silman’s Complete Endgame Course: From Beginner to Master*. Los Angeles: Siles Press, 2006. The lessons are by rating/strength, meaning that you only study what your level needs and then put the book away until it’s needed again.

———. *The Amateur's Mind: Turning Chess Misconceptions into Chess Mastery*. Los Angeles: Siles Press, 1999. Amateurs play games with the author, who writes down their thoughts and then discusses the typical mistakes amateurs make.

———. *The Complete Book of Chess Strategy*. Los Angeles: Siles Press, 1998. Everything you need to know to play chess: point count, notation, tactics, openings, how to attack, positional play, chess psychology, etc. Every topic is short (so you don't get overwhelmed) and to the point.

Sokolov, Ivan. *Winning Chess Middlegames: An Essential Guide to Pawn Structures*. Alkmaar, Netherlands: New in Chess, 2009. A fairly advanced study of doubled pawns, isolated pawns, etc.

Soltis, Andrew. *Pawn Structure Chess*. London: B T Batsford, 2013. An instructive study of pawn structure.

Spielmann, Rudolf. *The Art of Sacrifice in Chess*. New York: David McKay Company, 1951. A classic, written by one of the world's finest players, that uses the author's games to illustrate various kinds of brutal attacks.

Sukhin, Igor. *Chess Gems: 1,000 Combinations You Should Know*. Boston: Mongoose Press, 2007. A remarkable book that takes you on a tactical timeline journey, mixing history with 1000 combinative puzzles/examples.

Tal, Mikhail. *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal*. London: Everyman Chess, 1997. His life and games, by none other than the late world chess champion himself. A book that is revered by everyone who reads it.

Tarrasch, Siegbert. *Three Hundred Chess Games*. Texas: Hays Pub, 1999. Contains 300 games of Siegbert Tarrasch, annotated by the great man himself.

Van Der Sterren, Paul. *FCO: Fundamental Chess Openings*. United Kingdom: Gambit Publications, 2009. In a prose-rich style that explains the ideas of virtually every opening, the author gives plenty of variations but focuses on understanding more than memorization.

Vukovic, Vladimir. *The Art of Attack in Chess*. London: Everyman Chess, 1999. A celebrated book on attack, with wonderful material on the classic Bishop sacrifice.

Weteschnik, Martin. *Chess Tactics from Scratch*. United Kingdom: Quality Chess, 2012. A magnificent, extremely enjoyable look at tactical themes.