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Introduction

From time to time we all find ourselves in a good position. However, in practical play, winning a good position proves to be not quite so easy. Of course, the question is: how can we find our way in a labyrinth of variations? And how can we work our way through them to attack the enemy king?

These are questions to which no simple answers can be given. There's more to many chess positions than meets the eye. In this book, we will make an attempt to chart a number of aspects of the attack systematically.

We will opt for an approach that rather deviates from other instruction books in this field. Besides supplying 'tools' and 'weapons' that are useful in an attack on the king, we also hope to enhance the skills level of the chess student.

In our practice as chess trainers, we have established that competitive chess involves more than just relying on knowledge. Whereas a Dutch proverb has it that 'knowledge is power', in chess this will suffice only to a certain extent. Many chess players think that if they accumulate enough knowledge, they will automatically play better. If only that were true! Or, perhaps, it's just as well that it isn't true?

Knowledge has to be put into practice. And practice is much harder to grasp than many people think. Is it not frequently the case that during a game we think we know something, but in reality things are just a little bit different? So the question arises which skills a chess player should have in order to be labelled as a strong player.

Our training course is grafted onto the famous 'Step-By-Step Method' (www.stappenmethode.nl), developed by IM Cor van Wijgerden and the psychologist/pedagogue Rob Brunia. Especially Brunia, who unfortunately died at an early age, propagated the training of certain skills. His former associate is still passing on his ideas in this area, and has drastically expanded the method in recent years. From both these top Dutch trainers we have learned a lot.

In the course of an attack on the enemy king, tactical tricks have to be found which may sometimes be hidden under the surface. And the calculation of variations is inextricably bound up with this. Also, a player cannot do without visualizing the position that arises after a few calculated moves. This is where the shoe pinches with many chess players. Not everyone finds it easy to visualize clearly in his mind a position which will arise a few moves later. In our experience, what finds its way into most players' minds is only a 'blurred image' of the position. And the more blurred it gets, the less chance there is of a good result. On the other hand: the sharper the image is, the easier it will be to find a good continuation. And this is only one of a whole range of skills that a chess player should learn. In this book, we hope to give the reader a helping hand in this area. When I visited the chess-playing Polgar sisters in Hungary in 1983, I was stunned by their abilities,

especially in the area of blindfold chess. We will also have a thing or two to say about them in this book.

Before we devote ourselves to the main theme of this book – the attack on the king, it may be a good thing to make a comparison of our chess game with warfare. As we shall see further on, many parallels can be drawn between the two.

The game of chess is often used as a metaphor – it is seen as a kind of 'peaceful wargame'. It is therefore wonderful to see how the popularity of this age-old game remains unabated to this very day. There are sources that assume that our game was invented by Buddhist monks. These monks developed a game which imitated a battle between two Indian armies. The aim was to show a struggle that offered diversity, and was devoid of all physical violence. This game agrees with the Buddhist way of thinking, and the pieces were designed by analogy with the Indian army, which was divided into foot-soldiers, cavalry, elephants, and war chariots. And so the foundation was laid for a game that would prove its worth through the ages. With the rise of the dynamic Norwegian Magnus Carlsen and his win of the World Championship in 2015, chess has acquired a fresh image that also appeals to young people. With Internet coverage, giving a good view of the players via live streams, and with commentators providing analyses and explanations, modern chess has wonderful means at its disposal to distinguish itself from other competitive games. Unfortunately, big sponsors are still disregarding our noble game, mostly misled by the idea that the greatest media exposure is obtained by means of an outdated medium like television. Let's hope this will change soon. For today we know that chess, among many other things, can promote learning skills and work performance for students at school.

Why playing chess benefits school performance

- Visualization
- Thinking ahead
- Structuralization, weighing up possibilities
- Analysing
- Abstract thinking
- Anticipating changing circumstances
- Memory functions are improved
- Focussing and concentration are improved
- Multitasking
- Mental aspects are addressed

Some chess players say that chess helps them in their daily life. Apart from the fact that it helps to develop certain skills that are also useful in other fields, playing chess may draw to your attention personal shortcomings of which you weren't aware before. And by working on these purposefully within the context of chess

study, a person may sometimes be able to make substantial mental progress. What more could you wish for?

N.B.

When making general considerations about attacking positions, in this book we often implicitly start from a position where Black has castled kingside. The attacking motifs we discuss are automatically called 'the ♗xh7 sacrifice', or 'the exchange sacrifice on f6'. Obviously, we know in the back of our minds that the same things also apply to the ♗xh2 sacrifice, or the exchange sacrifice on f3, i.e. from Black's perspective. Besides these, mirrored versions along the vertical axe can apply equally well, i.e. if the enemy king has entrenched itself on the queenside. So when we speak of an invasion on the seventh rank, keep in mind that from the black player's viewpoint this may also apply to the second rank.

Herman Grooten
Eindhoven, April 2016

Chapter 2
Cooperation between the pieces

2.1 Introduction

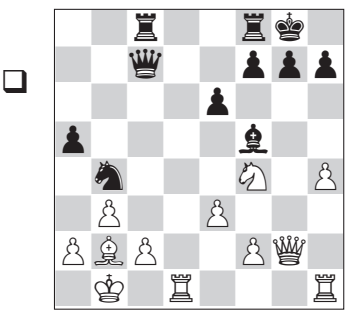
Cooperation between the pieces is extremely important. It is not so easy to indicate what exactly is meant by such cooperation between the pieces in chess literature. We can imagine a few things, though. There are different forms of cooperation, which will be discussed further on in this chapter.

We will single out two elementary phenomena:

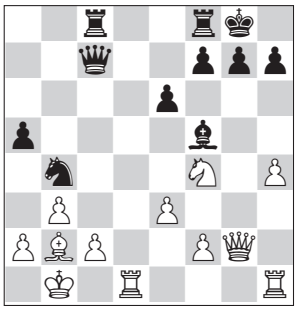
Cooperation against one point

We only need to think of the 'banal' Scholar's Mate in order to see that it can be important to be able to attack a weak point with two different pieces. If the opponent neglects its protection, the pieces, working together, will be able to achieve a certain result.

Here are two other, not too difficult examples:



1.♕xg7#



Here the black queen, bishop and knight cooperate against the weak point c2.

1...♕xc2+ 2.♔a1

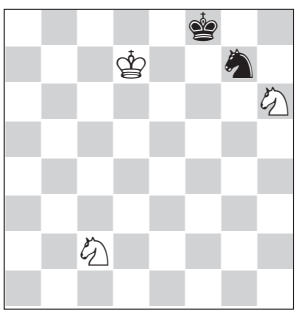
And without the knight there wouldn't be much for White to worry about, but now there is!

2...♕b1+! 3.♖xb1 ♘c2#

Smothered mate!

Control of squares

White gives mate in two (Grooten)



Surprisingly, White can give mate in two:

1.♘d4!

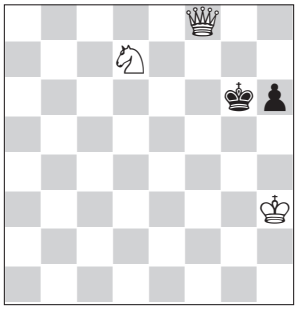
Black is in zugzwang now:

1...♘f5 2.♘e6#

When I saw this position for the first time, I had to blink an eye because I couldn't believe that the black king was mated! Together with the white king, the two knights control no less than six squares, and that is enough for this mate pattern.

White gives mate in two (Grooten)

❑



This position could have been taken from the 'Polgar book', but I have invented it myself, inspired by a mate pattern that I came across in one of Judit Polgar's own games. More about that later!

1.♕g8+!

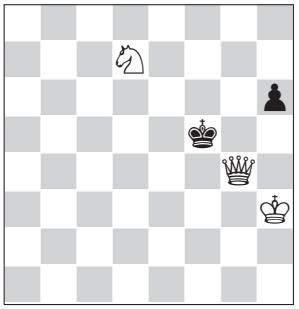
The only move that leads to the desired goal. Curiously, the enemy king is chased towards the centre, where it will have more squares at its disposal. But all the same it will be 'victimized' there.

Many (strong) players start with a quiet move like 1.♕e7, but then there is absolutely no mate on the next move after, for example, 1...♔f5.

1...♔f5

1...♔h5 2.♕g4#.

2.♕g4#



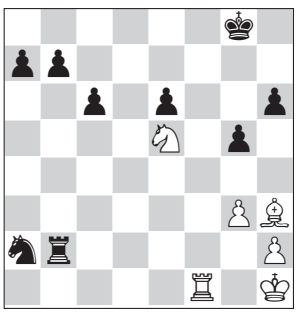
A highly picturesque mate, where the control of squares by the queen in collaboration with the knight is striking. The queen takes care of the lines (files, diagonals and ranks), while the knight deprives the black king of the 'complementary squares' (in this case, e5 and f6). We will encounter this mate pattern more often!

It's time to look at a few examples from competitive practice.

If three white pieces, i.e. a rook, a bishop and a knight, can freely act against an unprotected black king, then in most cases a win is possible. Especially if there are a few black pawns standing in the way, the slaughter will not take long:

Igor Blekhtsin
Sauli Tiitta
Jyväskylä 2000 (5)

❑



The three white pieces cooperate fabulously, starting with

33.♗xe6+ ♔h8

33...♔g7 is met by 34.♖f7+ ♔h8 (moving the king 'into' a discovered check is mostly not a good idea: 34...♔g8. White can win a rook now, but obviously he goes for the mate. It is again attractive to see how the pieces manage to weave a mating net together: 35.♖e7+ ♔f8 or 35...♔h8 36.♘g6#) 35.♘g6+ ♔g8 36.♖xb7# and again we get this typical mate picture on the board.

34.♖f8+ ♔g7

34...♔h7 35.♖f7+ ♔g8 (as well as 35...♔h8 36.♘g6+ ♔g8 37.♖xb7#) 36.♖e7+ also leads to mate.

35.♖f7+ ♔g8

The collaboration of the pieces works in the same way after 35...♔h8 36.♘g6+ ♔g8 37.♖xb7#.

36.♖e7+!

The rook has to go to this square, if White wants to give mate right away.

36...♔f8

36...♔h8 37.♘g6#.

37.♘g6#

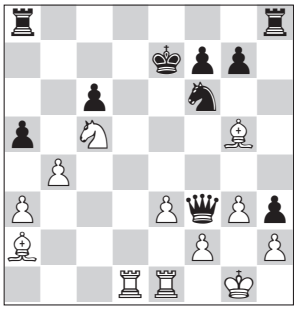
Also here we saw a brotherly cooperation between the three white pieces.

I once had a game in which I already got a winning position soon after the opening. In his enthusiasm, my opponent had put some material on offer, and I had thankfully accepted. The most important concession was that my king had to stay in the middle of the board, but soon his compensation disappeared like snow in summer. In fact, in a higher sense the game was over when my opponent also hurled a queen at me. I accepted that sacrifice, too, and then wanted to finish off quickly, until, at the last moment, I saw the motif that he had woven into the position.

I haven't been able to trace the game itself, and I haven't managed to completely reconstruct it. Therefore I constructed the following position, in which the gist of the trick becomes visible.

Mate combination (Grooten)

❑



White, to move, had envisaged some magnificent teamwork between three of his pieces, which he had manoeuvred into attacking positions. This teamwork develops as follows:

1.♖d7+

This is possible thanks to the pin on the ♘f6 by the ♗g5.

1...♔f8!

Fortunately, I took heart at the last moment, and managed to avert the calamity that I had almost brought down on my own head.

The king has to move into the check by the rook. I had almost played 1...♔e8?? here, and then White would have been able to close a perfect mating net with 2.♗xf7+! ♔f8 3.♘e6# !

2.♖xf7+ ♔e8

And now all the compensation is gone. Black is winning, for example after

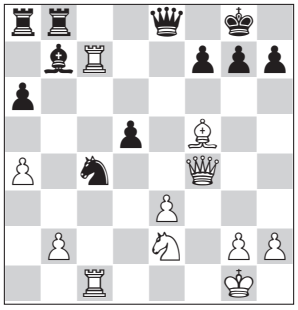
3.♔f1 ♖f8 4.♖b7 ♘d5

and it's all over.

Sometimes the value of the cooperation between pieces is so difficult to assess that even the strongest players lose track. In the fragment below, from a game between two former World Champions, it turned out that there were so many beautiful things hidden beneath the surface that we may count ourselves fortunate that the winner of this game divulged his findings to the wonderful *New In Chess* magazine. During the game, the white player did manage to find a win, but when he turned on the computer later, he saw that he had missed an exquisite combination.

What makes this combination so special is that White, although he is no less than a rook down, allows the exchange of queens, after which he drives the black king into a mating net with a quiet move. The splendid cooperation between the white pieces is something we cannot withhold from future generations!

Rustam Kasimdzhanov
Vladimir Kramnik
Tromsø ol 2014 (6)

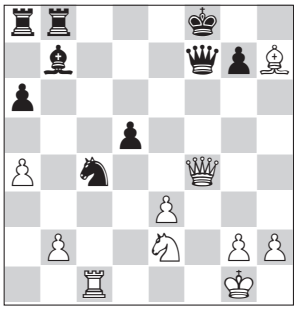


The struggle is at its peak here. Kramnik had made a slight miscalculation shortly before this, and as a result now a white rook has entered the black camp, causing quite a bit of 'malheur' there.

26.♗d7

Kasimdzhanov gives an exclamation mark to this move in *New In Chess* magazine, adding the following comment: 'This is very strong and very clean, and I was rightly proud of it after the game. White did, however, have a win of preternatural beauty:'

Here the engine comes up with a formidable move: **26.♖xf7!!** Kasimdzhanov: 'I was not (yet) looking in this direction!' **26...♕xf7** (quite worthless is 26...♔xf7 in view of 27.♗d7+ ♔g8 28.♗xe8 ♖xe8 and, aside from the fact that White is already material up, his pieces will also be able to join the attack soon. Just an example: 29.b3 ♘e5 30.♖c7 ♖ab8 31.♕g3 ♘g6 32.♘f4, winning) **27.♗xh7+ ♔f8**

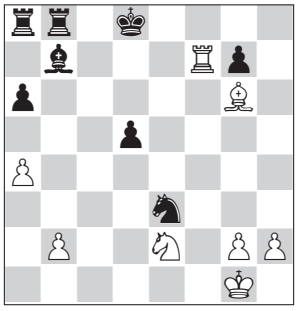


analysis diagram

At first sight, White is simply a rook down now. But here he has a strong move: **28.♕d4!**. A difficult move to consider far in advance. The main threat is, of course, 29.♖f1, after which the white pieces are positioned more effectively against the slightly exposed black king. **28...♔e8 29.♖f1 ♕e7** Other queen moves, like 29...♕e6, fail to 30.♕xg7 ♕xe3+ 31.♔h1 ♕e7 and now the wonderful move 32.♖f8+!: 32...♕xf8 (after 32...♔d7 the strongest continuation is 33.♗f5+!,

since now Black not only has to give his queen, but he is also driven into a mating net in an ingenious way by the superbly cooperating white pieces: 33...♔d6 34.♖f6+ ♕xf6 35.♕xf6+ ♔c5 36.♕e7+ ♔b6 37.a5+ ♘xa5 38.♕b4+ ♔c7 39.♕xa5+ ♔d6 40.♕b4+ ♔e5 41.♕f4+ ♔f6 42.♕d6+ ♔xf5 43.♘g3+ ♔g4 44.h3+ ♔g5 45.h4+ ♔g4 (45...♔xh4 46.♕f4#) 46.♕g6+ ♔f4 (46...♔xh4 47.♘f5#) 47.♕g5#) 33.♗g6+ ♔d8 34.♕xf8+ ♔c7 35.♕e7+ ♔b6 36.a5+! and White wins analogously to the variation given above.

At first sight, Black doesn't seem to have too many problems here. After all, he has woven the move ...♕xe3+, forcing the exchange of queens, into the position, after which you would expect the attack to lose momentum. But wonders will never cease...: **30.♗g6+ ♔d8 31.♖f7!** Brilliant! White allows the queen trade, even with a rook less, and even though not all of his pieces appear to be participating in the attack. The white player wrote the quite honest comment: 'When my computer showed me this, I didn't believe my eyes for a second!' **31...♕xe3+ 32.♕xe3 ♘xe3**



analysis diagram

33.♘d4!! The miracle has happened: the three white pieces are collectively creating mate patterns that cannot be parried. The black pieces are so clumsily placed that there is no way he can prevent all the different mates. This is certainly not an everyday game. **33...♗c8** 33...♔e8 34.♖xg7+ ♔d8 (34...♔f8 35.♘e6#) 35.♘e6+ ♔c8 36.♖c7#; 33...♘c4 34.♘e6+ ♔c8 (34...♔e8 35.♖xb7#) 35.♖c7#. **34.♘c6+ ♔e8 35.♖e7+ ♔f8 36.♖e8#**

The game continuation was also quite interesting, but we will give it without further comment:

26...♕f8 27.b3 ♘b6 28.♗f5! d4 29.♖xf7! ♔xf7 30.♗xh7+

And Black resigned.

2.2 Cooperation between ♕ + ♗

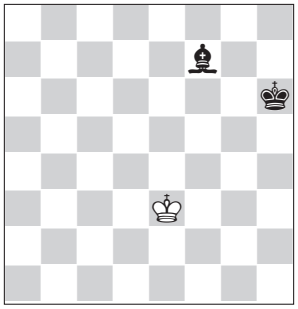
In the first paragraph, we saw how the pieces can cooperate. Attacking a certain point together is important, but the control of squares is essential. That was something Laszlo Polgar understood well when he made up exercises to teach his daughters to play chess. 'Seeing' the geometrical operation of the pieces is a skill that is enormously useful if you have to search for patterns in a complicated position. This is why practicing checkmate patterns is a good step towards the accumulation of variations when you are attacking the enemy king. This skill can be trained, and it will help us later when we calculate variations.

We start with a few typical checkmate patterns, after which we will look at a number of standard attacking ideas with ♕ and ♗. After that, we will focus on practical examples. We will conclude this paragraph with several attacking positions with opposite-coloured bishops.

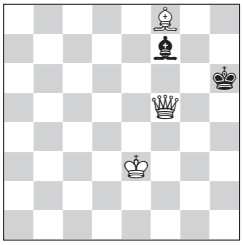
Checkmate patterns

Since in chess it is crucial to put new knowledge into practice immediately, we would like to invite the reader to get to work with a small series of exercises in which checkmate patterns have to be conceptualized. To start with, we have two typical checkmates, which will return several times

Constructed position (2012)

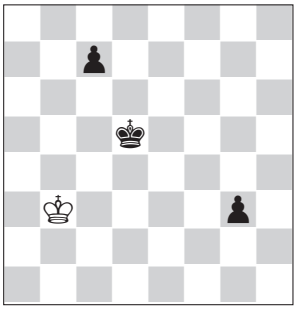


TASK: Place a white queen and bishop on the board in such a way that the black king is mated.

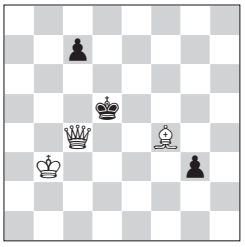


SOLUTION: A surprising mate picture... In order to get a good picture of the different types of checkmate with ♕+♗, it is a good thing to think them through yourself. Therefore, it is useful to try to find mating motifs yourself on an empty board (with two bare kings).

Constructed position (2012)

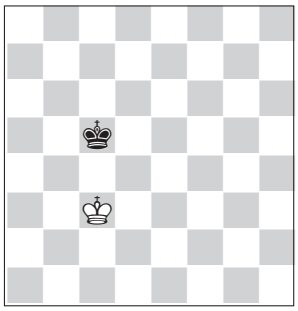


TASK: Place a white queen and bishop on the board in such a way that the black king is mated.

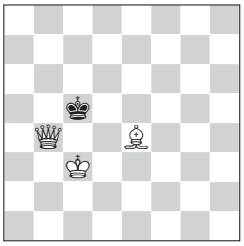


SOLUTION: This is the only way to achieve this.

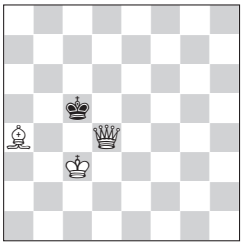
Find the mate with ♕+♗



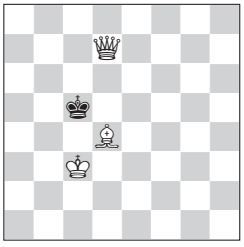
TASK: Think of three different types of mate with ♕+♗ – mirrored and analogous solutions are regarded as one and the same type.



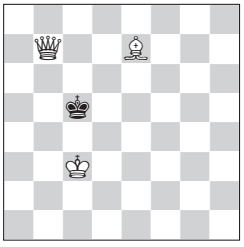
SOLUTION: Possibility 1.1



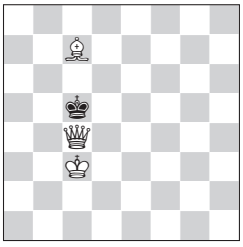
SOLUTION: Possibility 1.2



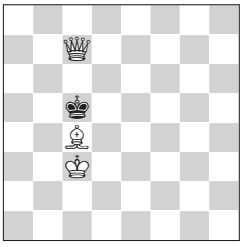
SOLUTION: Possibility 1.3



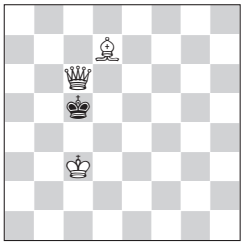
SOLUTION: Possibility 1.4



SOLUTION: Possibility 2



SOLUTION: Possibility 3



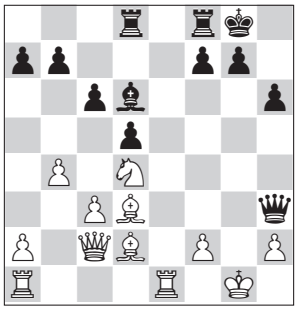
SOLUTION: Possibility 4

2.3 ABC's

In virtually every branch of sports we can see that it is important to master a certain technique by means of endless repetition. In chess, this is a little bit different. Nevertheless, there is a certain logic that can be discovered, if a pattern emerges that can also be applied in a completely different situation.

Because chess is largely based on pattern recognition, it is important to practice frequently occurring tactics. Below we will discuss a number of standard motifs that play a role in the attack with queen and bishop.

■



With no defenders close at hand, the white king does not stand a chance against the strong cooperation of the queen and bishop.

1...♗xh2+!

The right move. It is important to not allow the king to run away and to keep it in the corner. After 1...♕xh2+ 2.♔f1, 2...♖de8 is another attempt to prevent the escape of the king (2...♕h3+ doesn't achieve anything after 3.♔e2 ♖fe8+ 4.♔d1 ♖xe1+ 5.♗xe1 and the king has reached safety): 3.♗e3 ♗f4 4.♘f5 and White has everything under control. He has to consider, however, what to play in reply to 4...g6. Then it turns out that 5.f3! staves off the attack. For example: 5...♕h1+ 6.♔e2 ♕h3 7.♔d1 ♕xf3+ 8.♗e2 and White holds with ease.

2.♔h1 ♗g3+

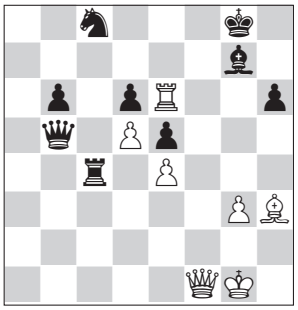
With this discovered check, Black attacks the weak f2-square, which sets up the checkmate pattern.

3.♔g1 ♕h2+ 4.♔f1 ♕xf2#

Every chess player should know the type of mating attack given above. We move on to a slightly more complicated attacking method.

Garry Kasparov
Ilya Smirin
Moscow 1988 (12)

❑



In contrast to the previous position, here Black does have a defender close at hand. However, the (opposite-coloured) bishop is no contest for the white pieces, which will soon penetrate the black position. White will play round the black bishop, as it were. After

39.♖xh6! ♗xh6

the attack plays itself. This is a piece of cake for strong (grand-)masters. Therefore, after

40.♗e6+ ♔h8 41.♕f6+

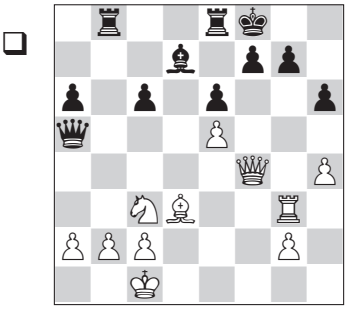
Black called it a day. It may be less obvious to the reader, so let's see how the attack continues: 41...♔h7 (the other defence is 41...♗g7, but then things go wrong (even) more quickly: 42.♕h4+ ♗h6 43.♕xh6#) 42.♕f7+

♗g7 (42...♔h8 runs into 43.♕g8#) 43.♗f5+ ♔h8 (or 43...♔h6 44.♕g6#) 44.♕h5+ ♔g8 45.♗e6+ ♔f8 46.♕f7# and we have realized one of our mate patterns.

2.4 Breaking open the position

Around the enemy king it's not always an 'open house'; often a breach has to be created first. For this purpose, we reach for one of the weapons we defined earlier: breaking open the enemy king's position.

Paul Keres
Laszlo Szabo
USSR vs Hungary m Budapest 1955



The black king is well hidden behind its pawns. But not for long...

1.♖xg7! ♔xg7

Defending the f7-pawn with 1...♖e7 doesn't help: 2.♕xh6 ♖ee8 3.♕g5 and mate is inevitable. This set-up (queen behind the rook) is worth remembering. We will encounter it again!

2.♕f6+ ♔g8

After 2...♔f8 3.♗g6 the battle is immediately decided: 3...♖e7 (3...♔g8 4.♕xf7+ ♔h8 5.♕h7#) 4.♕h8#.

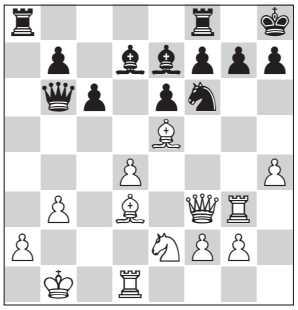
3.♕xh6 ♕xe5

If 3...f5 4.exf6.

With the previous ABC in mind, this is no longer difficult...

4.♗h7+ ♔h8 5.♗g6+ ♔g8 6.♕h7+ ♔f8 7.♕xf7#

Ivan Radulov
Berndt Söderborg
Helsinki tt 1961 (11)



With his queen, his rook on g3, and two bishops, White has a lot of attacking power. But first a breach has to be made in the black king's position. This is done in the same violent way as in the previous fragment:

1.♖xg7! ♔xg7

Black has no time to go for an attack himself. For example: 1...♕a5 2.♖xh7+! ♔g8 3.♕g4+ (a little joke to finish) 3...♘xg4 4.♖h8#.

2.♕g4+!

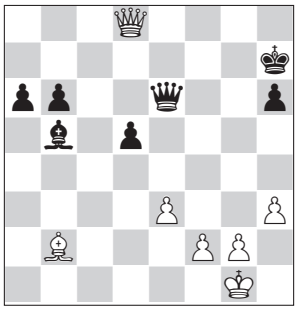
White makes clever use of the pin on the knight.

Here Black resigned. There could follow: 2...♔h8 (not 2...♔h6 in view of 3.♕g5#) 3.♕h5! (again, White exploits the pin. 3.♕e4 leads to the same result) 3...♔g8 and now only the defender of h7 has to be eliminated: 4.♗xf6 ♗xf6 5.♕xh7#.

2.5 Typical mates in practice

Sometimes also top players have trouble spotting typical mates. This is illustrated in the following two examples.

Levon Aronian
Sergey Karjakin
Nice rapid 2010 (1)



Karjakin, who became the challenger of World Champion Magnus Carlsen in 2016, here played

39...a5?

With 39...♗e8, to prevent White from entering on h8, the struggle could have been continued.

There followed:

40.♕h8+ ♔g6 41.♕g7+

and now Black allowed White to checkmate him:

41...♔f5

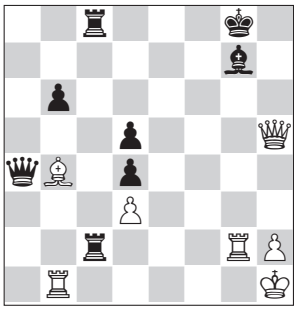
41...♔h5 is strongly met by 42.g4+ ♔h4: 43.♔h2 and there is no remedy against the threats of ♗f6+ or ♗e5 and ♗g3. 43.♗f6+ is also a forced mate: 43...♔xh3 44.♕xh6+ ♔xg4 45.♕f4+ ♔h5 46.♕g5# or 45...♔h3 46.♕g3#.

42.♕g4#

Here is the beautiful checkmate pattern that we already saw at the beginning of this section.

Curiously, in the same tournament another typical mate with ♕+♗ came on the board. This example is by the player who was the world's number one at the time, and is currently the World Champion: Magnus Carlsen.

Magnus Carlsen
Boris Gelfand
Nice blindfold 2010 (6)



48.♖xg7+!

The only defender has been removed. The black king is unable to deal with all the mayhem that White now pours over him. After

48...♔xg7 49.♖g1+ ♔f6

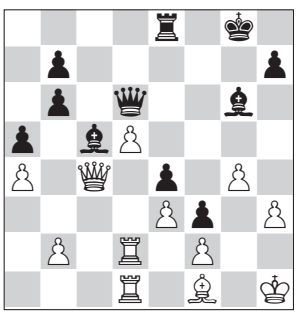
it is mate in two:

50.♕g6+ ♔e5 51.♗d6#

A 'new' mate pattern. Please note that the black pawns on d5 and d4 function as 'helpers'.

2.6 Setting up a battery

In the previous examples, we have seen a number of typical checkmate patterns, where the queen and bishop complemented each other excellently. Now we will look at another powerful type of cooperation between the bishop and the queen.



In this example, Black would like to put both attacking pieces on the same diagonal (b8-h2) to be able to give mate on h2. But we haven't come this far yet – there are some preparations that need to be made. Winning is

1...b5!

The concept of 1...♕e5, with the idea ...♗d6, would have been spoiled by 2.d6+!.

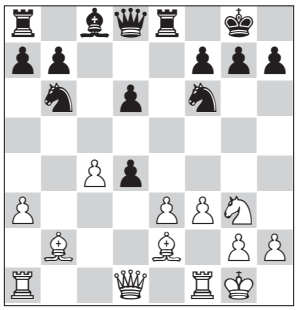
2.♕xb5 ♗a7

and the bishop will go to b8. The white king is not able to defend himself against the mate threat on h2. This instructive example was invented by the Dutch trainer Dolf Meijer.

Now it is time to move on to a slightly more strategic example. In order to get the queen and bishop to line up on the same diagonal, sometimes you have to find something clever.

Mikhail Botvinnik
Paul Keres

The Hague/Moscow 1948 (10)



White faces a difficult choice: how should he take back the pawn on d4?

14.e4!

White doesn't take it back just yet! With this move Botvinnik prepares to take back on d4 with the queen. The bishop on b2 is a monster, which is going to decide this game.

Less good is 14.♕xd4 in view of 14...♘a4, and now the bishop has to leave the beautiful diagonal: 15.♗c1 ♘c5 and White has trouble setting up his pieces harmoniously.

14...♗e6 15.♖c1 ♖e7

A slightly curious move. The intention is to perhaps play ...♘f6-e8 at some point, followed by ...f7-f6. The normal continuation would be 15...♖c8, and then, for example: 16.♕xd4 ♘a4 17.♗a1 ♘c5. However, after 18.♖cd1 Black's position will collapse due to the weakness of the pawn on d6.

16.♕xd4!

Now that the bishop can move to a1, it is time to set up the battery against g7.

16...♕c7

Now Black declined the idea of 16...♘e8 because he would also have major problems after 17.♘h5. For example: 17...f6 18.♘f4 ♗f7 19.♘d5 and Black is under heavy pressure.

17.c5!

Thus, White resolves his (and Black's!) weakness, avoiding the exchange of queens, and opening the position even further, which benefits his bishop pair.

17...dxc5 18.♖xc5 ♕f4

With hindsight, 18...♕d8 would have been slightly better, although with 19.♕b4 White would also maintain plenty of winning chances.

19.♗c1

Botvinnik removes the bishop from the long diagonal, in order to prepare the manoeuvre of his rook to g5. Another, slightly curious but very strong move is 19.♗b5!. Its intention is to prevent ...♖d7 and at the same time clear the square e2 for the knight. As soon as the black queen is driven from f4, White can move his rook to g5, just as in the game: 19...♘bd7 20.♘e2 ♕b8 (with

20...♕h4 the black queen would be sidetracked) 21.♖g5.

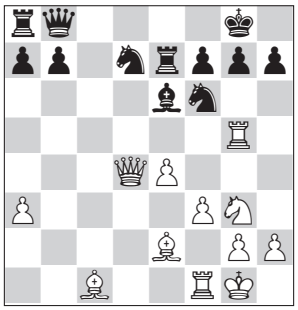
19...♕b8

The queen is moving to faraway regions, after which Black is doomed. However, 19...♖d7 wouldn't have helped him back on his feet either: 20.♕a1 ♕d6 21.♗e3, avoiding the queen swap with 21...♕d4+, after which White can build up an offensive with renewed vigour.

20.♖g5!

As we predicted, g7 is the target.

20...♘bd7



Now there follows a surprising execution. As we have seen before in this section, the g7-pawn is the 'victim'.

20...♘e8 doesn't help either after 21.♘h5 f6 22.♘xf6+.

21.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 22.♘h5+ ♔g6

Now Black will be mated by force. However, also after the relatively better 22...♔h8 Black would have tasted defeat: 23.♘xf6 ♕e5 24.♗b2!, and the effect of the white pieces along the long diagonal is again decisive.

Or 22...♔g8 23.♘xf6+ ♘xf6 24.♕xf6 with the threat of 25.♗b2, and Black will not come out unscathed.

23.♕e3!

The nice thing here is that the final blow is dealt on the c1-h6 diagonal, where the white queen and bishop have set up a new battery! Mate is inevitable, and therefore Black resigned.

2.7 Opening a diagonal

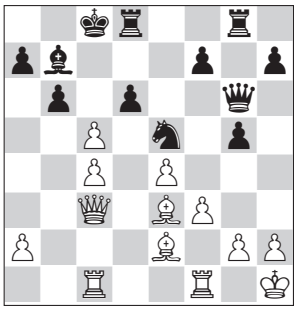
It goes without saying that bishops need open diagonals. That is why sometimes an opponent erects a 'pawn block' in order to reduce such a bishop to silence. For example, there are countless examples of fianchettoed bishops on b2 facing a 'stone wall' of pawns on e5-f6-g7. The bishop is, as we say, 'biting on granite'.

In order to bring the bishop to life, such a pawn formation needs to be attacked. This can be done with actions like f2-f4, or g2-g4-g5xf6, or a combination of the two.

In the following example, the wall is pulverized with great violence. This example was already featured in my previous book, *Chess Strategy for Club Players*, but it is also excellently suited to illustrate our theme here.

Mark Hebden
Julian Hodgson
Guernsey 1985 (6)

■



After White's move b4xc5, the black player had planned something quite different than the simple recapture of this pawn:

18...g4!!

A fantastic move, with which Hodgson tries to 'extend' the long diagonal of his bishop on b7. At the same time he wants to open the g-file.

19.♖g1?

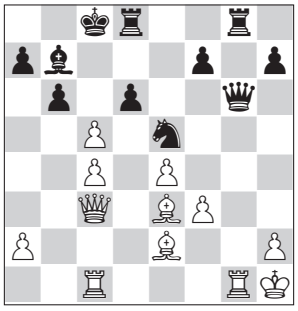
This looks like bitter necessity; apparently there was no longer an adequate defence against the approaching calamity. 19.♖f2 would have been met by 19...gxf3 20.gxf3 ♗xe4!, winning a nice pawn, while creating more threats.

In fact, 19.♕c2!?, in order to protect square g2 indirectly and give the e4-pawn extra support, was the only move to stay in the game. After 19...gxf3 White has to take back with 20.♗xf3 (20.gxf3 ♕g2#), but then Black stands excellently after 20...dxc5, and it looks as if White can't save himself here.

The text move loses by force, but the following action was hard to anticipate:

19...gxf3 20.gxf3

20.♗xf3 ♘xf3 21.gxf3 is met with the same phenomenal queen sacrifice as in the game: 21...♕xe4!!, winning.



20...♕xe4!!

The fabulous apotheosis of a wonderfully conducted strategy. The long diagonal (a8-h1) is now definitively opened, allowing the black queen and bishop to carry out an immaculate demolition job. It is curtains for White, and therefore he resigned after

21.♖xg8 ♖xg8

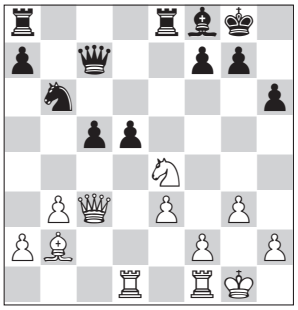
White resigned.

22.♖f1 runs into the deadly 22...♕g4!.

In the next two examples, the question is whether White can afford to play 1.♘f6+, in order to open up the long diagonal. Of course, Black is ready to close the diagonal again with ...d5-d4. How strong is the battery of queen and bishop? Are the sacrifices White has to make worth all this?

The ♘f6 sacrifice (analysis)

❑



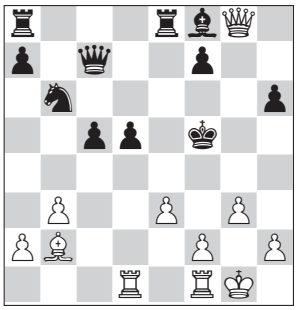
White tries to calculate a forced sequence of moves, starting with

1.♘f6+ gxf6 2.♕xf6

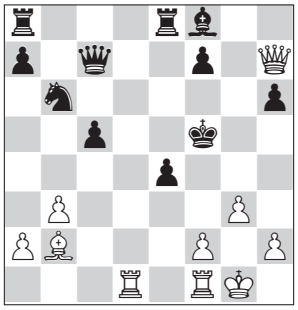
With his queen and bishop, White has set up a nice battery against the black king.

2...d4

The direct **2...♔h7** loses to **3.♕h8+ ♔g6 4.♕g8+ ♔f5** After 4...♔h5 5.f3 Black will be quickly mated. For example: 5...♕d7 6.♗f6 with the threat of g3-g4.



Now White has to find a problem move: **5.e4+!!** The all-important breakthrough, in order to open lines against the black king. **5...♔e6**
After 5...dxe4 6.♕h7, mate is forced:

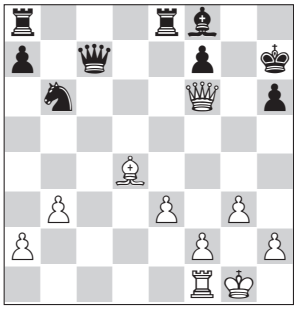


6...♔g4 (the alternative 6...♔g5 is objectively better, but it doesn't bring Black salvation either: 7.f4+ ♔g4 (on 7...exf3 8.♕g8+ ♔f5 (8...♔h5 9.g4+ ♔h4 10.♗f6+ ♔h3 11.♖xf3+ ♕g3+ 12.♖xg3#) 9.♖xf3+ ♔e4 10.♕g4+ the black king will be mated) 8.h3+ (the quiet move 8.♔g2! also wins) 8...♔xg3 9.♕g8+ ♔xh3 10.♖d3+ exd3 11.♖f3+ ♔h4 12.♗f6+ ♔h5 13.♖h3#) 7.h3+! ♔g5 (7...♔xh3 8.♕f5#) 8.♕g8+ ♔f5 and here we have one of our typical checkmate patterns again!: 9.♕g4#.
Also losing is 5...♖xe4 6.f3 ♖b4. The rook has to guard the g4-square, but this means that Black has to give up the e-file: 7.♖de1! d4 8.g4+ ♔f6 9.f4 ♘d5 10.g5+ ♔f5 11.♖e5+ and it's over.
6.exd5+ ♔d6 7.♕g4 and White has a tremendous attack against the exposed black king.
With the text move, it looks as if Black can close the long diagonal, but...

3.♖xd4!

White even sacrifices his rook, because the queen and bishop battery is of crucial importance.

3...cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♔h7



Black is a rook and a piece up now. Has White gone too far?

5.g4!!

No, he hasn't! White still had this brilliant move up his sleeve, constructing a beautiful checkmate picture.
It was essential to see that the black king was threatening to escape along the light squares. The text move prevents this.
White could still have badly overplayed his hand here with 5.♕h8+?. It's quite deceptive that the other move order doesn't work, as after 5...♔g6 6.g4? Black has a brilliant defence: 6...♕xh2+!! is the hidden trick! 7.♔xh2 ♗d6+ 8.♔g2 ♖xh8 and Black wins!

5...h5

After other moves, like 5...♖e6, Black gets mated: 6.♕h8+ ♔g6 7.♕g8+ ♗g7 8.♕xg7#.
The text move is the only way to avoid being mated in the above-mentioned way, but now a classic mate pattern comes on the board:

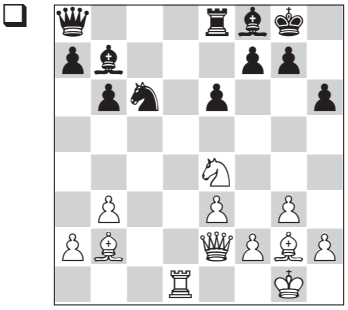
6.♕h8+ ♔g6 7.♕xh5#

And here we have our familiar checkmate again.

Now we will give the promised example, in which the variations and motifs have a remarkable analogy with the previous one, particularly the

brilliant idea from the first example can be used to solve this complicated case.

Mikhail Botvinnik
Bent Larsen
Palma de Mallorca 1967 (14)



The big question, of course, is whether White can play

21.♘f6+

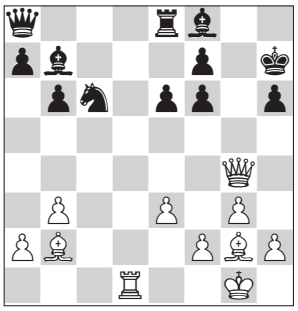
here. This is a forcing move; if Black declines the sacrifice, he will lose the exchange without a fight.

In the game, Botvinnik played the 'lazy' 21.♖d7, winning only much later. We will give the moves of the game without commentary: 21...f5 22.♘d6 ♗xd6 23.♖xd6 ♘d4 24.♖xd4 ♗xg2 25.♖d7 ♗h3 26.f3 ♖d8 27.♖xg7+ ♔f8 28.♖h7 ♕d5 29.♔f2 ♕d1 30.♖h8+ ♔f7 31.♖xd8 ♕xd8 32.♕c2 ♕d5 33.♕c7+ ♔e8 34.♕b8+ ♔d7 35.♕xa7+ ♔c8 36.♕a6+ ♔c7 37.♕c4+ ♕xc4 38.bxc4 ♔c6 39.♗d4 h5 40.a4 ♔c7 41.c5 bxc5 42.♗xc5 ♔c6 43.♗b4 ♔b6 44.g4 hxg4 45.♔g3 e5 46.e4 fxe4 47.fxg4 1-0.

With 21.♘d6 White could have conquered the bishop pair. Then, after 21...♗xd6 (21...♖d8 22.♘xb7) 22.♖xd6 he also has the advantage.

21...gxf6 22.♕g4+ ♔h7

This is an important moment. Here White has to calculate an entire analysis tree in order to check if his sacrifice is correct.

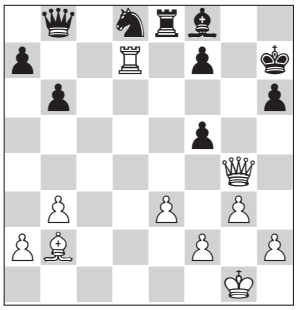


The direct approach with

23.♗e4+!

wins by force. But it takes a lot of calculation.

Bringing up the rook also wins fairly easily: **23.♖d7!?** ♘**d8** Protects the f7-square, but the knight has too many tasks here. 23...♘e7 was hopeless, since White simply wins back his piece with 24.♗xb7 ♕b8 and then continues his attack with 25.♗xf6; 23...♖e7 looks reasonably principled, but it transposes to the note to Black's 24th move in the main line, starting with 24.♗e4+ f5 25.♗xf5+ exf5 26.♕xf5+ ♔g8 27.♕f6 (27.♕g4+ ♔h7) 27...♔h7 28.♖xe7! (elimination of the chief defender) 28...♘xe7 29.♕xf7+ and mate. **24.♗xb7** White regains his piece, after which Black might as well stop the clock. **24...♕b8 25.♗e4+ f5 26.♗xf5+ exf5**



analysis diagram

27.♖xf7+! In this attractive way, the last remnants of the black king's fortress are demolished. **27...♘xf7 28.♕xf5+ ♔g8 29.♕g6+ ♗g7 30.♕xg7#**

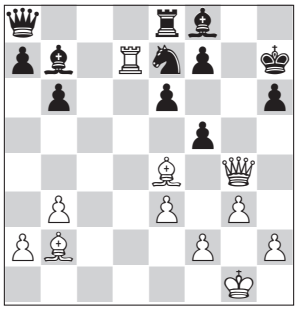
23...f5 24.♖d7!

Well timed. Now the last piece also takes part in the attack, With this important zwischenzug, the attack gains decisive strength.

24.♗xf5+ also ends in the same way.

24...♘e7

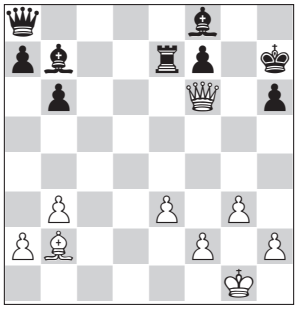
The mate would be quicker after 24...♖e7 25.♗xf5+ exf5 26.♕xf5+ ♔g8 27.♕f6 ♔h7 28.♖xe7 ♘xe7 29.♕xf7+.



25.♖xe7!

A beautiful sacrifice, which serves to prevent the interposing of the knight on the long diagonal. This is the strongest continuation, leading to a forced mate.

25...♖xe7 26.♗xf5+ exf5 27.♕xf5+ ♔g8 28.♕f6 ♔h7



An enormously important position, which White had to visualize in advance. At this moment he is no less than a rook and a piece behind (against two pawns), and he has staked everything on his possession of the long diagonal. But is that enough? Can't the king defend itself by taking flight?

29.♕h8+ doesn't bring White anything special after 29...♔g6, and this even loses for White after 30.♕g8+ ♔f5, when the king escapes via the light squares.

Light squares? As soon as we formulate it this way, White's 29th move will be quickly found. In any case, the 11-year-old Loek van Wely, to whom I showed this position at the time, managed to find it.

29.g4!!

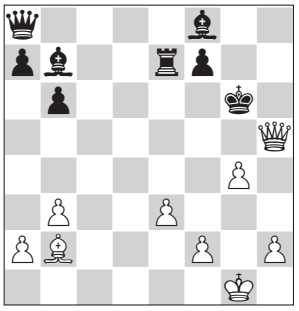
This brilliant, 'quiet' pawn move cuts off the passage of the black king through the centre. White is now ready for the scheme ♕h8+, followed by ♕g8+, after which the pawn on g4 covers the f5- and h5-squares, preventing the king's escape.

29...h5

The only way to create 'luft' for the king; however, now it will be put to the sword anyway, in an artistic way.

After other moves, such as 29...♗h1, White will carry out his plan: 30.♕h8+ ♔g6 31.♕g8+ ♗g7 32.♕xg7#.

30.♕h8+ ♔g6 31.♕xh5#



A famous mate picture, which should have crowned a sharply conducted attack on the king.

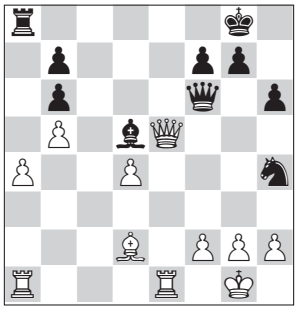
2.8 Attack with opposite-coloured bishops

We cannot stop here without showing a pair of examples of middlegame situations with opposite-coloured bishops.

As we saw earlier, in the game Kasparov-Smirin, sometimes the bishop is not such a great help in the defence. The 'problem' with opposite-coloured bishops is that the defending bishop cannot protect the squares that are controlled by the attacking bishop. Because of this, a material advantage is often of secondary importance in such positions; piece play and initiative are all that counts. We will see this illustrated in the examples below.

Karl Kopetzky
Esteban Canal
Vienna 1951/52 (11)

■



In this position Black appears to stand badly: White is threatening to exchange queens, and then his material advantage will be decisive. However, Black has a killing move up his sleeve:

23...♘f3+! 24.gxf3 ♕xf3 25.♔f1

Relatively best is 25.♕xd5, but understandably, that was not what White wanted.

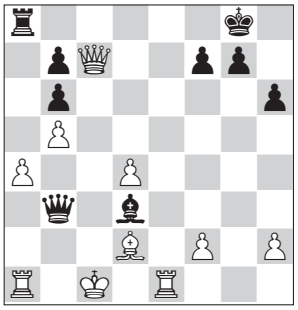
25...♕h3+!

The king is sent into the 'open field'. Please note that soon the white bishop will only be in the way: the king wants to hide on the dark squares, but that is hardly possible now.

26.♔e2

26.♔g1? is met by an immediate mate: 26...♕g2#.

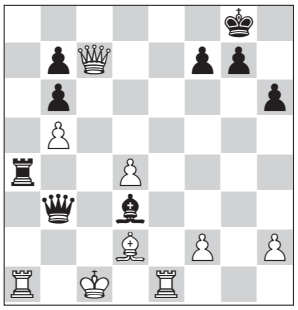
26...♗c4+ 27.♔d1 ♕b3+ 28.♔c1 ♗d3 29.♕c7



It seems that White has defended everything, but now the last piece comes into action:

29...♖xa4!

The decisive blow, after which White could just as well have resigned. Black threatens both 29...♖xa1 and 29...♖c4+. White drained the poisoned cup with



30.♗b4

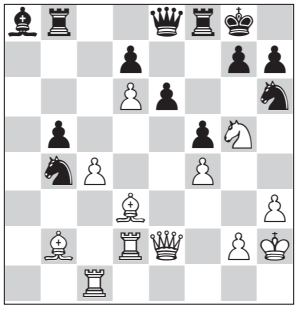
30.♖xa4 ♕b1#.

30...♖xa1+ 31.♔d2 ♕xb4+

White resigned

Garry Kasparov
Francisco Vallejo Pons
Linares 2002 (8)

■



Comments are based on notes by Ribli and Ftacnik in ChessBase MegaBase.

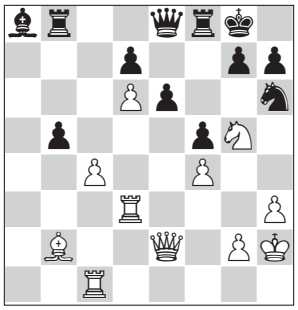
33...♘xd3?

Black would like to rid himself of the 'strong' bishop on d3, but this exchange is mistaken.

Ftacnik: 'Only this illogical swap will catapult white's rook to the third rank and send black's chances for a fruitful defense to the land of dreams.'

Better was 33...bxc4 34.♗xc4 (34.♖xc4 is strongly met with 34...♘d5) 34...♘d5 and Black holds.

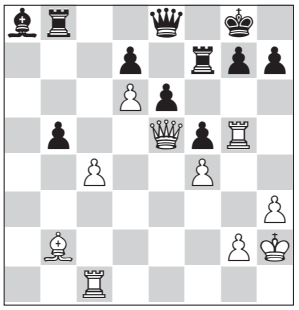
34.♖xd3



34...♘f7

Now, 34...bxc4 35.♖g3 ♖b3 would also be good for White on account of 36.♖cc3! with a wonderful position. 36...♕g6 already virtually loses: 37.♖xb3 cxb3 38.♘xe6!. For example: 38...♘g4+ (38...dxe6 39.♖xg6 hxg6 40.♕e5; 38...♕xe6 39.♕xe6+ dxe6 40.♖xg7+ ♔h8 41.♖g6+ with mate – a convincing triumph for the bishop on b2!) 39.hxg4 ♕h6+ 40.♔g1 ♕xe6 41.♕xe6+ dxe6 42.gxf5 ♖xf5 43.d7 ♖d5 44.♖xb3! and White wins material.

35.♖g3 ♘xg5 36.♖xg5 ♖f7 37.♕e5!

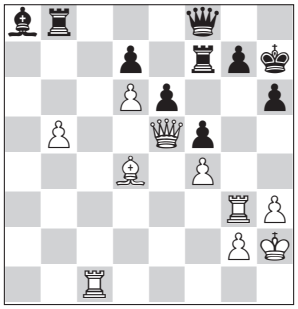


Thus, White makes optimal use of the long diagonal. It is clear that the ♗b2 is playing a much more important role than the ♗a8. White's forces are directed at the enemy king's position, while the black pieces are playing a purely passive role.

37...♕f8 38.cxb5

Materially it's equal, but it is clear that White is superior here. His pieces control the entire board, while Black's pieces have to stand by and watch how White will increase his advantage. This will be done by combining the pressure along the long a1-h8 diagonal with the use of the passed pawn on b5.

38...h6 39.♖g3 ♔h7 40.♗d4



Now the main threat is 41.b6.

40...♗d5 41.b6

White has two trumps: the long diagonal and the strong passed b-pawn.

41...♖f6

The bishop cannot move to c6 because White then has a decisive combination: 41...♗c6 42.♖xc6! dxc6 43.♕xe6 ♖e8 44.♕g6+ ♔g8 45.♕xh6, winning.

It is interesting to see how White gains the point if Black does 'nothing': **41...♗e4 42.♖c7 ♗d5 43.h4 ♗e4** If Black does not want to allow the white pawn to go to h5 and plays 43... h5 himself, then follows 44.♖g5 g6 45.♔g1 and now: 45...♔h6 (45...♗b7 46.g4! ♗f3 (46...hxg4 47.h5; 46...fxg4 47.♖xh5+) 47.gxh5 gxh5 48.b7 and the decisive blow cannot be averted) 46.g4 hxg4 (46...fxg4 47.♖xg6+ ♔xg6 48.♕g5+ ♔h7 49.♕xh5+ ♕h6 50.♕xf7+) 47.h5 gxh5 48.♕e1 followed by 49.♕h4. **44.h5 ♗d5 45.♖g6 ♗e4 46.♖c3 ♕h8 47.♖cg3 ♖g8 48.♕b5 ♗c6 49.♕b2 ♗b7 50.♗e5** Black has been manoeuvred into total zugzwang!

42.♖cc3

Slowly but surely, Kasparov increases the pressure.

42...♖f7 43.♖c7 ♗e4 44.♖b3

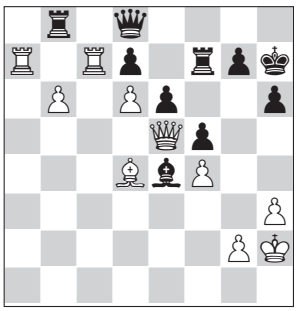
Now he turns to the queenside.

44...♗d5 45.♖b5

Threatening 46.♖xd5, followed by 47.b7.

45...♗b7 46.♖a5 ♕d8 47.♖a7 ♗e4?

47...♗d5 was necessary, but then White would win with 48.♕e2 ♕h4 49.g3 ♕d8 50.♕b5.



48.♕xe6!

An elegant finish to a neatly played strategic game.

48...♕h4

Acceptance of the queen sacrifice with 48...dxe6 49.♖xf7 ♔g8 50.♖xg7+ ♔f8 51.♖af7+ ♔e8 52.d7+ would of course lose.

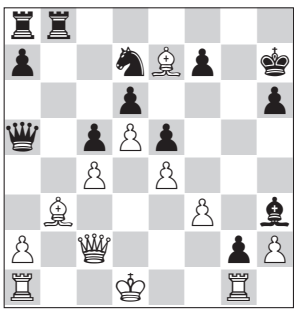
49.♕xf7 ♕xf4+ 50.♔g1

There are no more checks, and therefore Vallejo lowered the flag.

Now for an example from my own practice, where the weakened light squares in the white camp play a crucial role.

Leon Pliester
Herman Grooten
Eindhoven ch-NED sf 1980 (2)

■



This is a curious position, which has arisen from the Nimzo-Indian. White had hoped to obtain an attack on the black king, but had missed a couple of chances. Now he finds himself in a situation where his king is not safe, while his rooks have not yet come to life either. Another important trump card for Black is the strong pawn on g2.

25...♖xb3!

At first sight, an illogical sacrifice. Black gives up a rook for White's worst piece! I remember that during the game I really had to exert myself when deciding on this exchange sacrifice.

I could already hear the comments ringing in my ears: 'This guy is giving up a rook for White's bad bishop!' But since my other rook can operate on the b-file, the sacrifice is more than justified!

26.♕xb3 ♖b8 27.♕d3

Now a position with opposite-coloured bishops has arisen. It is clear that Black will seek his chances on the light squares, while White hardly has anything to say on the dark squares.

Immediately losing would be 27.♕c2 in view of 27...♕a3 with the threefold threat of 28...♖b2, 28...♕e3 and 28...♕xf3+.

27...♖b2 28.♗h4

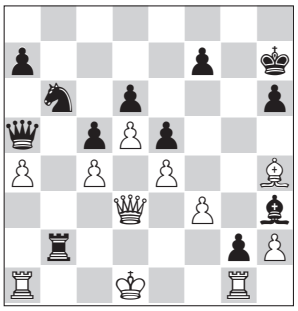
Pliester tries to organize his defence. Black was ready for a new knight manoeuvre: ...♘d7-b6-a4, etc.

28...♘b6

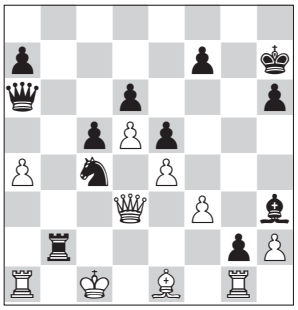
Here comes the knight. Even more accurate was 28...♕a4+ 29.♔c1 ♖xa2 30.♖xa2 ♕xa2 with a decisive advantage to Black.

29.a4

Now Black finds an amusing way to bring the knight into the attack:



29...♘xc4! 30.♗e1 ♕a6 31.♔c1



For a moment, it looks as if White has brought the black initiative to a halt. The knight is pinned, the rook is more or less hanging in the air (it certainly will be after ♗c3), and it isn't clear how Black can create any threats to the white king. But now follows a move that I consider to be one of the most aesthetic I have ever played.

31...♗c8!!

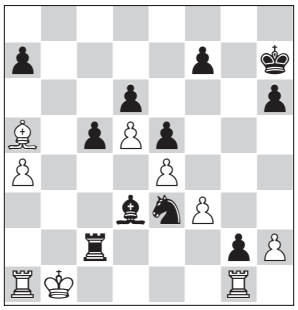
It took me a while to realize that White is in a kind of positional zugzwang. Any move with a piece will have a major drawback. Because I want to move my knight in some variations, my queen has to be protected.

32.f4

This is a pawn move, but White thereby weakens his position so much that he will inevitably be saddled with new problems. Moves with any other piece would have failed immediately, as the following variations demonstrate:

A) Bad is 32.♖b1 in view of 32...♖a2, and the a4-pawn falls, after which there is no defence;

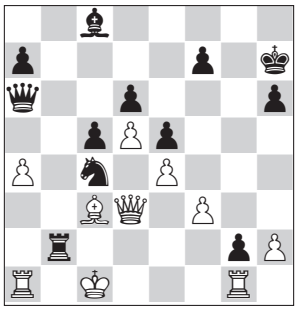
B) On 32.♕c3 I had prepared 32...♖e2, with the point that after 33.♕d3 White will be confronted with the beautiful 33...♘e3! 34.♕xa6 ♗xa6, which threatens 35...♖c2 followed by 36...♗d3. Here we see the tremendous power of the three black pieces on the light squares. All of White's pieces are powerless in the face of this concentration of energy. 35.♗d2 is met quite artistically by 35...♘f1! 36.♗c3 ♗d3 37.♗a5 ♖c2+ 38.♔b1 ♘e3



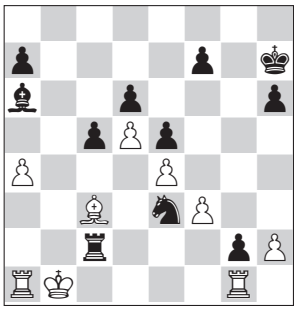
analysis diagram

and the three black attacking pieces, in combination with the dangerous passed pawn, will provide the win.

C) I was very proud of the variation that arises after 32.♗c3.



Here I had planned 32...♘e3!!. After this move everything seems to be hanging in Black's position, but it all works like a charm! It took me a while before I saw this move, and had checked its correctness: 33.♕xe3 (33.♕xa6 runs into the zwischenzug 33...♖c2+ 34.♔b1 and after 34...♗xa6,

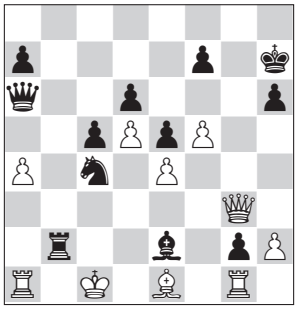


again, the black pieces cooperate fantastically. Against this superior force, there is nothing White can do. For example: 35.♗a5 ♗d3 36.♖a3 ♖f2+ 37.♖xd3 ♖f1+ 38.♔a2 ♖xg1 39.♖xe3 ♖h1 and the pawn queens) 33...♖e2 with an original queen capture. Materially it is still equal after 34.♕d2 ♖xd2 35.♔xd2, but after 35...♗h3 Black will decide the game on the light squares. An illustrative variation runs as follows: 36.a5 f5 37.♔e3 fxe4 38.fxe4 ♕b7 39.♔f2 ♕f7+ 40.♔g3 (40.♔e3 c4!) and now comes a beautiful finish: 40...♕f4+ 41.♔xh3 ♕f3+ 42.♔h4 h5 43.♔g5 (43.h3 ♔g6 44.♗d2 ♕f2#) 43...♔g7! 44.♖ac1 ♕g4#.

32...♗g4!

Now that White has weakened his light squares, the bishop can enter from the other side. Again, Black's operations are running along the light squares.

33.f5 ♗e2 34.♕g3



White tries to create some confusion with the threat of f5-f6, but the black attack is running at full steam.

34...♕b7!

The final hammer blow.

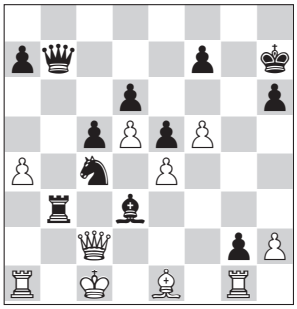
35.♕c3

The only move to prevent an immediate mate, but now he gets subjected to a 'light-square massage'.

After 35.f6 White would even be mated with 35...♖c2+! 36.♔xc2 ♕b2#.

35...♖b3 36.♕c2 ♗d3

Here, Leon Pliester, who later unfortunately died at far too young an age, shook my hand, absolutely dizzy after this tornado had raged over him. During the analysis he was very friendly, informing me that he had rarely lost in such a beautiful way.



A possible continuation is 37.♕a2 ♖b2, after which the curtain falls for White.

This game was played in the second round of the semi-finals of the Dutch Championship. Later, partly thanks to this victory, I managed to qualify as a total outsider for the Dutch Championship in Leeuwarden, where I was to experience my first confrontation with the top national players.

Conclusions

With regard to the attacking combination of ♕+♗ we pay attention to the following:

– the cooperation between queen and bishop is best if they are standing on squares of different colours
– and if they are covering complementary squares in case of a diagonal checkmate

We know a number of attacking techniques – among others:

- a few elementary 'ABC's'
- breaking open the king's position
- detecting typical checkmates
- setting up a battery
- opening diagonals
- attacking with opposite-coloured bishops