

Foreword by Robert Hess

I would not be where – or who – I am without Miron Sher.

Today I have the privilege of commentating on the most prestigious chess events, from celebrity tournaments to world championships, and teaching the game to an ever-growing audience that numbers in the hundreds of millions. My job requires me to break down complicated positions to spectators of varying strength, and it is Miron who helped me find my chess voice.

I met Miron Sher in 1999, when I was seven. He taught chess at the after-school program I attended, and would watch me lose with queen odds against one of the other instructors. According to him, I never shied away from this challenge and he could see my passion every time I reset the pieces and tried again. He saw a talent in me that there was no way anyone else could recognize.



Robert Hess (right) with his coach Miron Sher.

Even though I was hardly old enough to make such life-altering decisions, I knew that he was the coach for me. His teaching was the most engaging, his love for the game so palpable that every position felt like a piece of his heart. I requested that my parents set up lessons, and although he was four decades my senior and his English was rough around the edges, something about our dynamic clicked. Chess, namely our passion for it, was a shared language. Sometimes we also split a pineapple that he brought to our lessons. He remembered that it was my favorite fruit.

Our first year together resulted in little outward progress. My rating hardly budged and it was unclear that the time and effort being invested was leading anywhere. Miron remained my fiercest backer, assuring my parents that I was on the cusp of a breakthrough. During my entire playing career he always said that my greatest strength was that I gave 1000% at the board, and he understood that my steadfast determination and hard work would catapult me forward. He gave me the tools to succeed, but I'm not sure he ever knew that he fostered in me that quest for the truth a chess player must always venture on.

His belief in me was rewarded in 2001, our second year working together, when I took home city, state, and national scholastic championships. After that he told me that there was no limit to the possibilities, if I wanted to strive for them. Accomplishments piled up – the master rating, the US high school and junior championships, IM and GM titles, runner-up in the US Championship, and a place on the US national team – and every step of the way Miron was not just a teacher, but a true mentor.

He challenged me to step outside my comfort zones, both as a chess player and as a person. He never demanded I play a certain opening, there were no preconceived notions; instead he tailored his coaching to the individual. He knew when to be firm, but also let me take my own path to understanding.

We traveled to faraway places like Argentina, France, Greece, and Siberia, and no matter where we went he made the unfamiliar feel like home. I fondly remember trudging through snowstorms in wintry Moscow as his thick mustache grew icicles, his only focus being to get us dinner before the restaurants closed. This after a long day of preparation and play for me, not to mention the hours of lectures he generously gave to aspiring trainers. I'll never forget how revered he was in that setting, with some of the world's most prominent chess coaches asking me if I knew how lucky I was to work with Miron.

He knew how to sharpen my strengths while minimizing my weaknesses. He took responsibility for my failures, but gave me all of the credit for my successes. This was made evident when I cried after I lost an

important game in a world youth championship and blamed him for not teaching me the specifics of the opening (he undoubtedly had). Instead of pointing to my notes, he consoled me and said it was on him. He knew that was what I needed at the time. I think about that moment often.

His humility and selflessness were permanent, with no clearer example than after the Twin Towers were attacked on September 11, 2001. As New York suffered devastation and much of the city went up in smoke, my dad could not return home from a business trip. Rather than cancel our scheduled September 12th lesson, Miron informed my mom that he was coming to create a sense of normalcy for me, a nine-year-old child who could hardly comprehend the gravity of what was occurring around me. In that moment, and forever after, Miron was a part of the family.

Miron cared so deeply about his students as people that he actually advised them to do things outside of chess. As enriching as it is, he wanted chess to be fun, not mandatory. It may sound counterintuitive, but he believed that well-roundedness improved one's chess. That meant accepting that I wanted to limit my number of lessons in middle school to pursue sports and extracurriculars. He was happy to see my successes off the board, just so long as I did my homework.

Oh, was there ever homework! Miron would leave me puzzles printed out on a sheet of paper. I was tasked with responding in the margins and onto the back page, and one-move answers were completely unacceptable. One of Miron's best teaching habits was asking for the last move of a solution. In a classroom setting it allowed all students to participate, and in the privacy of my home it forced me to not just intuit (or guess) the first couple of moves of a variation but to calculate it to the end. I was marked wrong if I did not show my work, including natural continuations and why they failed.

When we could not do in-person lessons for a summer, Miron performed an arts and crafts miracle. He cut out, glued, and pasted puzzles to postcards and I was required to send them back with my solutions. I'm not sure this has been tried before or since, but it was effective and demonstrated his dedication to my growth.

Many of the training methods that I use in my own coaching are inherited from Miron. He had me analyze every move of every game I played inside a purple graph paper notebook. I scribbled my calculations and intuitions, my fears and wishes, my plans and random thoughts. I was encouraged to discover the why – why was I so worried about my king's safety, why didn't I notice a tactic was available, why did I think the way I did? Miron forced me to dig deep and think for myself, such as when he'd purposely tell me something wrong just to make sure I wasn't lazily taking his word for it. In chess, we can't just trust; we must always calculate.

Miron was my one and only trainer from 1999 until 2011, when I went off to college and stepped back from tournament play. Later, we jointly hosted chess camps in New York City and he also called on me to assist with his students if he was unavailable or felt they could use another friendly voice for a particular lesson. He told me he was so proud when I became the US national team's coach, a position he'd held for the Russian team thirty years prior. And he never stopped disseminating his wisdom. When I was paired against the legendary World Champion Viswanathan Anand in 2018, Miron emailed me some preparation ideas out of the blue. True to his nature, he ended his note by wishing my parents and siblings well. Family always came first with Miron, and he so treasured his wife Alla and son Mikhail.

This book is the product of Miron Sher's life's work. The exercises in the forthcoming pages are ones that his students, including Fabiano Caruana, the third-highest rated player of all time, attempted to solve. Some were even played by those very pupils. Herein there are hundreds of positions that Miron selected to introduce the conceptual elements of our beautiful game.

Pattern recognition is essential, a muscle that is aided by tactical training. Please use these tests as a path towards improvement.

I know they worked for me.

Foreword by Mikhail Sher and Alla Grinfeld

There are people that come and go and people who create a lasting impact. Everyone who was fortunate enough to know Miron Sher recognized that Miron was someone from the latter group.

Most of you know Miron as a coach, but he was also a very successful chess player in his own right. He won Novi Sad (1988), Balatonbereny (1989), Pula (1990), Belgorod (1990, 1991), Geneva (1992), Silvaplane (1993), Farum (1993) and Hastings (1993) tournaments. In the first year that he arrived in the United States, he won both the Manhattan Chess Club and the Marshall Chess Club Championships. Right now, there are more than 1,000 chess grandmasters in the world. When Miron got the title there were less than 300.

However, the reason Miron went into coaching was because he was the kind of person who derived the most pleasure from sharing with others. He instantly connected with all the students he taught. Miron coached the Russian National Team, he coached in Armenia, he coached in Grozny, Chechnya, he coached in Denmark.



Miron was born in Chernivtsi, Ukraine, and graduated from Chernivtsi State University with a degree in mathematics. Perhaps this training in math and hard sciences is what allowed him to develop his systematic approach to teaching chess, which yielded so much success for his students. In 1987, Miron earned a Masters degree in Chess Education from the Moscow Institute of Physical Culture.

In New York he taught at CES 70, IS 318, Browning, Buckley, Churchill, Collegiate, Dalton, Harlem Children's Zone, Stuyvesant, Trinity and a number of other schools. I have never met a man who had such a knack for connecting with everyone – it did not matter if it was Armenia, Chechnya, a beginner's class in a public school in the Bronx, or an advanced group at Dalton. Miron's students everywhere loved him, because Miron deeply understood his students as individuals, loved them, and helped them achieve their goals.

Some of Miron's students, such as Smbat **Lputian**, Peter Heine **Nielsen**, Robert **Hess** and Fabiano **Caruana** wanted to be top players in the world – he got them there.

Some of Miron's students like Michael **Chiang**, Gus **Huston**, Darrian **Robinson**, Andrew and Nicholas **Ryba**, and Eigen **Wang** wanted to win national titles, while combining chess with a bunch of other interests and extracurricular activities – Miron got them there.

Some of Miron's students simply wanted to use chess as a tool to improve their critical thinking skills and get into a top College or University – surely, Miron got them there as well.

Miron possessed an exceptional memory. He remembered all important games of his students: even those that took place more than thirty years ago. One time I (Alla) was teaching a class on the King's Indian Defense. Miron instantly told me ten most demonstrative games in that opening I could use in my lesson preparation.

Miron was a fighter. Even when he was very ill in his final years, he was never one to complain or even share information about his illness with others, because he wanted everyone around him to feel good. He was the living embodiment of positive energy and good vibes. Miron always thought about others, but never about himself.

Miron was a very loving husband, father, brother and son. Some of his favorite memories involved simple things like taking his little brother to school when he was a high-schooler. He also always encouraged others to make a positive difference as well. Miron has taught me (Mikhail) to do things well or not do them at all. Miron has taught me to focus on making a positive difference and was very happy when I pursued a career in higher education as that way I could touch more lives.

While Miron may have been on this earth for only 68 short years, he created so much positive impact and made a positive difference in so many lives, many of his friends and colleagues have remarked that it feels like he has lived several lives in these 68 years.

Mikhail M. Sher, Ph.D
Alla Grinfeld, WGM

Introduction

When I get home I shall write a book about this place – Alice in Wonderland.

The idea of this book was born several years ago. One time during my lesson with young Robert **Hess**, Robert asked me which book the chess problems I gave him came from. I replied: 'I will write that book when you become a grandmaster.' I never expected that to happen so quickly, but promises must be kept and here is that book!

My extensive coaching experience (over forty years) gave me an opportunity to develop a comprehensive system for training young chess players and thoroughly test its effectiveness.

When you work with young talented players, it is of paramount importance to develop their skills, while allowing them to keep their individuality and unique style of play. In fact, the first law of chess coaching shall be the same as that of medicine: 'First, though shalt do no harm'. My work with the talented tactician Smbat **Lputian** was drastically different from my approach to the superb positional player Peter Heine **Nielsen**. Members of my younger generation of students, Fabiano



With his pupils Darrian Robinson (left) and Robert Hess.

Caruana, Robert Hess and Keaton Kiewra, also possess styles of play that completely differ from one another.

In this book I have shared my vision of chess and recommended approaches for rapid chess improvement for players of all ages. Individual chapters contain key chess ideas that prepare readers for tournament play as well as 89 illustrated chess games and examples and more than 300 practice problems arranged by level of difficulty. The book will be beneficial to chess players of all levels, as the majority of the concepts introduced in it have not been priorly addressed in chess literature, while the arrangement of problems by level of difficulty will allow players to come back to this text as their level of chess understanding and playing skills grow over time.

Miron Sher

Improving calculational ability

The important thing is to not stop questioning – Albert Einstein.

Standing in the lobby of any major tournament, you can frequently hear players say: 'I almost won.' Almost invariably that indicates a drastically opposite result. A player might say: 'My position was totally won, but I blundered a back rank checkmate' or 'I was winning, but missed my opponent's perpetual check.' Any competitive chess player knows a multitude of such patterns. In the initial stages of a young chess player's development, solving tactical positions (like the 309 positions contained in this book) and analyzing one's own games help develop these skills.

At the end of the fragments given in the book, the results given do not necessarily indicate that the game was immediately over; they indicate that one of the sides has a winning (or drawn, in case of $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$) position.

CHAPTER 3

The 20% rule

80% of the results are generated by 20% of the efforts – the Pareto Principle.

Tactical opportunities do not typically come out of nowhere. One of the major triggers helping players recognize such chances is the pawn structure. If the pawn is positioned on the fifth or better yet the sixth rank (fourth and third ranks respectively if one is playing Black), the 20% rule comes into play. This rule states that when considering candidate moves in such positions, pushing the pawn should be the first of those candidate moves. In my experience, in roughly 20% of such cases, such a pawn move proves to be the best continuation. We will take a look at several examples illustrating this important principle.

Annotated games

Game 38

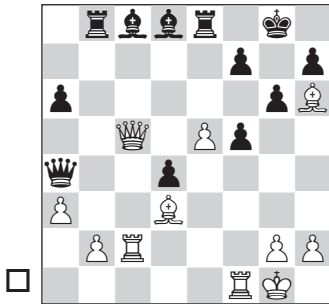
Gyula Sax

2560

Jan Timman

2605

Arnhem/Amsterdam 1983



Black is desperately trying to protect the critical e6-square – in fact it is now defended three times. Still, White plays the brilliant:

24.e6!

The e5-pawn is the key to unlocking this puzzle.

Timman opted for

24... ♖a5,

retaining the extra pawn. However, that leaves the black king in a mating net.

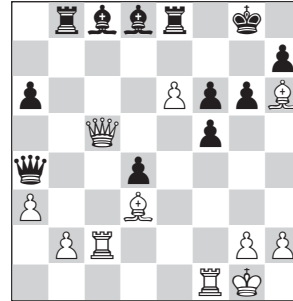
None of the captures leads to a satisfactory outcome for Black:

24... ♖xe6 leads to 25. ♖f8

checkmate.

24... ♗xe6 or 24... ♗xe6 allows the double attack 25. ♖e5, threatening 26. ♖g7# while simultaneously attacking Black's rook on b8.

The attempt to protect the e5-square by playing 24...f6

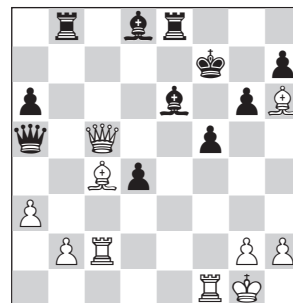


analysis diagram

would have been unsuccessful due to 25.e7!! (the 20% rule applies again!) 25... ♗xe7 (if 25... ♖xe7 26. ♖d6! forks) 26. ♖d5+ ♗h8 27. ♖f7 and checkmate is imminent.

25.exf7+ ♗xf7 26. ♗c4+ ♗e6

Instead 26... ♗f6 loses quickly to 27. ♖xd4+ ♗e7 28. ♗g5+ ♗f8 29. ♖h8#.



27. ♖a7+

27. ♗xe6+ was even more efficient; for example, 27... ♖xe6 28. ♖f8#, or

27...♙xe6 28.♖e2+ ♘d7 29.♗xd4+ or
 28...♙f7 29.♗c4+ and White wins.
27...♙e7 28.♙e6+ ♙xe6 29.♖e2+
♙f6

29...♙f7 loses to 30.♙g5.

30.♗xd4+

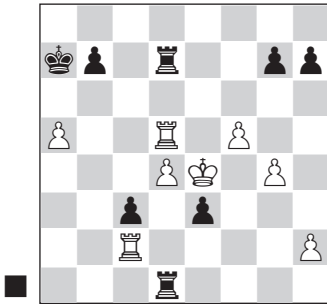
And here Black resigned because of
 30...♙f7 31.♗g7#.

Game 39

Salo Flohr

Herz

1971



Black has two pawns on the third rank, but surprisingly there is only a singular path to victory. It requires sacrificing both of these foot soldiers!

1...e2!!

Opening up the e-file in order to allow Black to win White's rook on d5.

2.♖xe2 c2!

The 20% rule executed twice in a row!

3.♖xc2 ♖e1+ 4.♙d3

And now Black can finally enjoy the fruits of his labor:

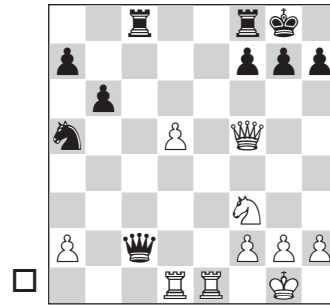
4...♖xd5 0-1

Game 40

Boris Spassky

Tigran Petrosian

Moscow Wch m 1969



This example comes from the 1969 World Championship Match between the two all-time greats **Boris Spassky** and **Tigran Petrosian**.

It showcases that the 20% rule is not just a tactical resource, but can be successfully utilized for positional purposes as well.

Black has just played 19...♗c2; however, White's advantage is based on the combination of two threats: the passed d-pawn and Black's weak king. Therefore White is not going to oblige Black by trading queens:

20.♗f4!

Spassky avoids the queen trade to maximize his winning chances.

20.♗xc2 ♖xc2 21.♖e7! and while White is still better, Black should have pretty good chances to hold here.

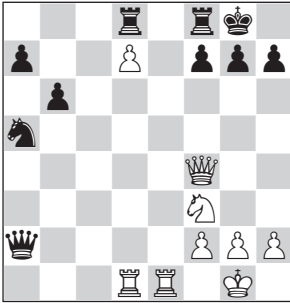
20...♗xa2 21.d6!

Here White's pawn advance forces Black on the defensive.

21...♖cd8

21...♖c4.

22.d7!



Now White's d-pawn effectively handcuffs both black rooks.

22... ♖c4

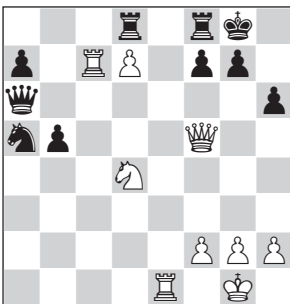
Black is trying to trade queens again, but White is obviously not interested.

23. ♕f5 h6

23... ♖c6 would not have been any better for Black since after 24. ♘e5 ♕e6 25. ♕c2 he is in zugzwang!

24. ♖c1 ♕a6 25. ♖c7 b5 26. ♘d4

26. ♖e8! would have won even more quickly; for example, 26... ♕d6 27. ♖c8 ♘c6 28. ♕xb5 ♕xd7 29. ♖cxd8.



26... ♖b6?

A misstep, allowing White to invade the back rank.

26... ♕d6! would have required White to be precise: 27. ♘xb5!

♕d2 28. ♖f1 ♘b3 gives Black some practical chances, for example after 29. ♘xa7? (29. ♖xa7? g6 30. ♕f3 ♘d4 31. ♘xd4 ♕xd4 32. ♖b7 ♖b8 33. ♕c7 ♖b2=; the winning continuation 29. ♕f3! is not at all trivial, e.g. 29... ♘d4 30. ♘xd4 ♕xd4 31. ♖d1 ♖b6 32. ♖b7 ♕a5 33. ♕c6 ♖h5 34. ♕a4+-) 29... ♘d4 30. ♕g4 White's advantage would be gone; following 30... ♘e6 White loses the all-important pawn on d7 and the position becomes a dead draw.

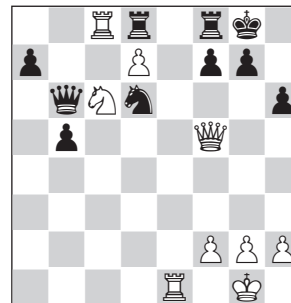
27. ♖c8!

At this point, Black's position is lost.

27... ♘b7

Nor would 27... b4 28. ♖e8 ♕xd4 29. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 30. ♖xf8+ ♘xf8 31. ♕c5+!!, 27... g6 28. ♖xd8 ♕xd8 29. ♕xb5, or 27... ♕xd4 28. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 29. ♖e8+ have saved the game for Black.

28. ♘c6! ♘d6



Black's fork gets countered with the brilliant

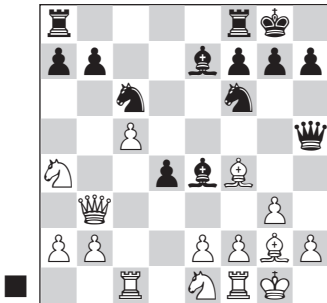
29. ♘xd8!! ♘xf5 30. ♘c6

And here Petrosian resigned as after 30... ♘d6 31. ♖xf8+ ♘xf8 32. d8 ♕+ Black will be down a full rook.

Game 41

Vlastimil Hort
Stefano Tatai

Madonna di Campiglio 1974



Black's pieces are much better coordinated and that turns out to be more important than White's extra pawn. The biggest problem for White is the bad positioning of his two knights, which are unable to help the rest of their army.

14...d3!

In positions with an advantage in development, especially ones where one of the players is down material, it is important to act quickly before the other side gets a chance to improve or trade his bad pieces.

15.exd3?!

15. ♖xe4 dxe2 16. ♔g2 ♖; 15.e3? loses immediately to 15...d2.

15...♟d4 16.dxe4

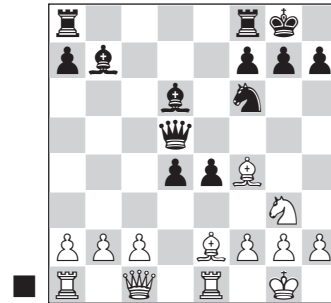
Hort has no choice but to give up his queen to avoid the checkmate. 16. ♖b4 is met with 16...♞e2+ 17. ♟h1 ♟g4 18.h4 ♔xh4 and Black's attack is decisive, while 16. ♖d1 leads to mate after 16...♞e2+ 17. ♟h1 ♟g4 18.h4 ♔xh4 19. ♔xe4 ♔f6+ 20. ♟g2 ♖h2+ 21. ♟f3 ♟d4+ 22. ♟xg4 h5#.

16...♞xb3 17.axb3 g5 18. ♔d2 ♖ad8
Black is winning now but he failed to convert his material advantage.

Game 42

Rogelio Ortega
Viktor Korchnoi

Havana 1963



Perennial World Championship contender Viktor **Korchnoi** played this game in the second edition of the Capablanca Memorial held in Havana, Cuba in 1963; an annual event dedicated to the legendary Cuban World Champion.

Black's advantage in the center is clearly visible. White lacks any viable options to create counterplay. With his next move **Korchnoi** converts his positional advantage into a decisive attack:

17...d3!

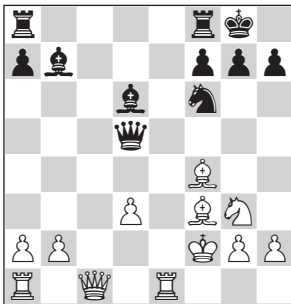
The plan for Black is to open up the h1-a8 and g1-a7 diagonals and free the d4-square which will later prove very important for his attack. Black's ♖ + ♔ battery is aimed at the g2-square and the white king. However, playing 17...e3 right away gives White some chances to

survive after 18.♙f3 ♘xf4 19.♙xd5 exf2+ 20.♖xf2 ♙xc1 21.♙xb7 ♙e3+ 22.♖f1 ♖ab8♯.

18.cxd3 e3!

Korchnoi utilizes the 20% rule not once, but twice!

19.♙f3 exf2+ 20.♖xf2



20...♗g4+!

Forcing the white king to retreat to g1 and allowing Black to set up a devastating pin that will decide the game just a few moves later.

21.♖g1

The knight turns out to be poisoned, and if White was to capture it with 21.♙xg4?, he would have found himself quickly checkmated after 21...♖xg2+ 22.♖e3 ♙xf4+ 23.♖xf4 ♖f2+ 24.♖g5 ♖f6+ 25.♖h5 g6+ 26.♖h6 g5+ 27.♖h5 ♖g6#.

21...♖d4+ 22.♙e3

22.♖h1? allows a well-known smothered mate combination: 22...♗f2+! 23.♖g1 ♗h3+ 24.♖h1 ♖g1+ 25.♖xg1 ♗f2#.

22...♗xe3

White's position is hopeless and both 23.♖xe3 and 23.♖xe3 result in a loss of material:

23.♖xe3

Also losing are 23.♖xe3 ♙xg3 24.hxg3 ♖ae8 25.♙xb7 (25.♖f2 ♖xe3 26.♖xe3 ♖xb2+) 25...♖xe3 and 23.♙xb7 ♗g4+ 24.♖h1 ♗f2+ with smothered mate.

23...♖xe3+ 24.♖xe3 ♙c5

This absolute pin renders White's position hopeless, forcing **Ortega** to resign: 25.♙xb7 ♙xe3+ 26.♖h1 ♖ab8 27.♙d5 ♖xb2.

Game 43 E97

Miron Sher 2470

Gabriela Hitzgerova 2170

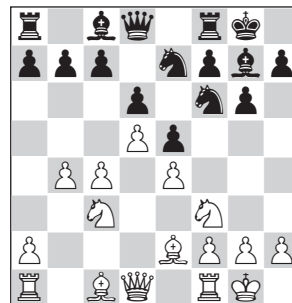
Baden-Baden 1997

This game was played in the Baden-Baden Casino, a location perfectly fit for enterprising chess and taking chances!

1.c4 ♗f6 2.♗c3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.d4 ♙g7 5.♗f3 0-0 6.♙e2 e5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.d5 ♗e7

One of the most critical lines in the King's Indian Defense.

9.b4



9...♗h5

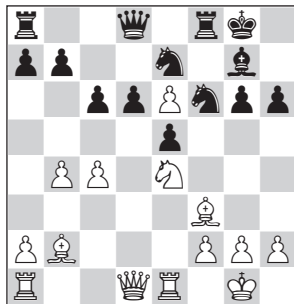
Black could have tried to break White's momentum with 9...a5, but here 10.♙a3 stops Black's ...c5 idea in its tracks and after 10...axb4 (10...b6 11.bxa5 ♗h5 12.♖e1

f5 13. ♖b4 bxa5 14. ♗a3 ♜f4 15.c5 ♜xe2+ 16. ♜xe2± (Eljanov-Smirin, Porto Carras Ech tt 2011) 16...fxe4 17.cxd6 cxd6 18. ♜xe4 ♜f5 19. ♜c1+—) 11. ♗xb4 ♜d7 12.a4 ♗h6 13.a5 f5 14. ♜d2 ♗h8 15. ♗d3 ♜f6 16. ♜a4 it is White who retains the initiative and threatens 17.c5, **Kramnik-Topalov**, Las Palmas 1996.

10. ♜e1 f5 11. ♜g5 ♜f6 12. ♗f3 12.f3 was another popular option for White; for example, 12...♗h8 13. ♜e6 ♗xe6 14.dxe6 ♜h5 15.c5 ♜f4 16. ♗c4±, but 12. ♗f3 is more flexible.

12...h6 12...fxe4 13. ♜gx4 ♜f5 14. ♗g5± In my opinion 12...c6! is the strongest response; for example, 13.b5 cxd5 14.cxd5 h6 15. ♜e6 ♗xe6 16.dxe6 fxe4 17. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 18. ♗xe4 d5 19. ♗a3 is equal.

13. ♜e6 ♗xe6 14.dxe6 c6 15. ♗b2 fxe4 16. ♜xe4



16...♜f5?

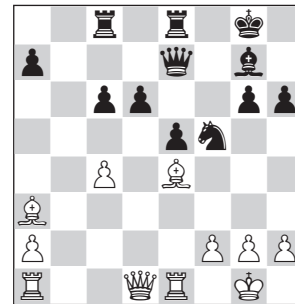
It is a standard idea in the King's Indian Defense for Black to play ...♜f5 followed by ...♜d4, but it turns out to be a serious mistake in this instance.

16...♜xe4 was absolutely necessary for Black to stay in the game, e.g.

17. ♜xe4 d5 18.cxd5 cxd5 19. ♜xe5 ♗xe5 20. ♗xe5±.

17.b5! ♜c8 18. ♗a3± ♜xe4 19. ♗xe4 ♜d4?

Black doubles down on this wrong plan that started with 16...♜f5. While 19...♜e8 was certainly better than the move played, White still retains a serious advantage with 20.e7! ♜xe7 21.bxc6 bxc6



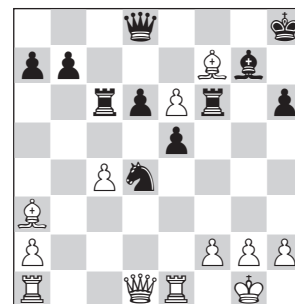
analysis diagram

22. ♗xc6! ♜ed8 (22...♜xc6 23. ♜d5+) 23. ♗e4.

20. ♗xg6 ♜f6

20...♜f6!? 21.e7! ♜xe7 22. ♜xd4!+—; 20...♜xe6? is simply not an option due to 21. ♗xd6 ♜f6 22. ♗e4.

21. ♗f7+ ♗h8 22.bxc6 ♜xc6



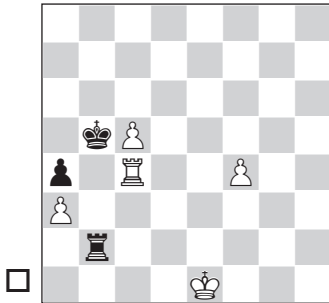
23. ♜xd4!!

The decisive blow, after which the e6-pawn becomes unstoppable.

Exercises

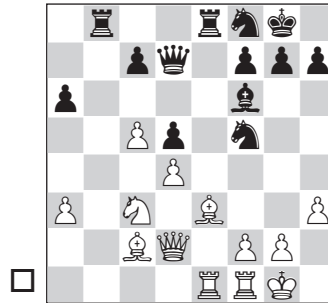
Easy

Exercise 121



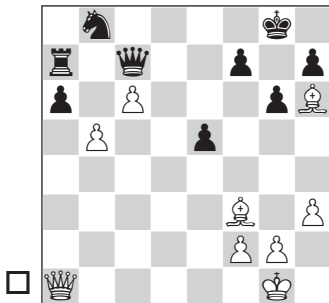
White's rook is under attack. How should he proceed?

Exercise 122



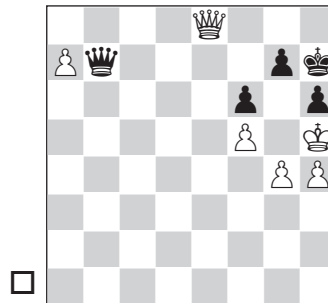
Black queen is overloaded. How can White take advantage?

Exercise 123



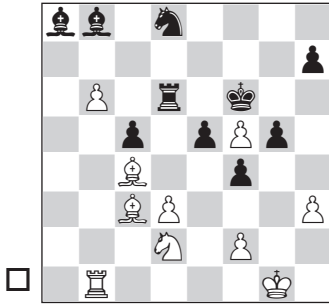
Black's king is in danger. Can White's pawns on the queenside help him to successfully finish his attack?

Exercise 124



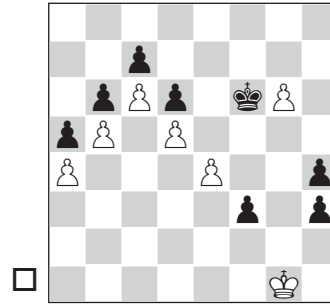
White to move, but please take your time. Remember that your first idea is not always correct!

Exercise 125



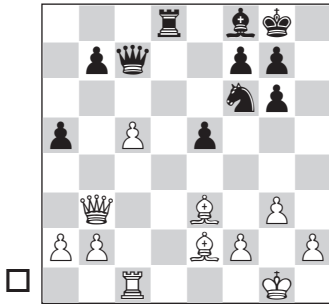
Black is in a passive defense. How should White proceed?

Exercise 126



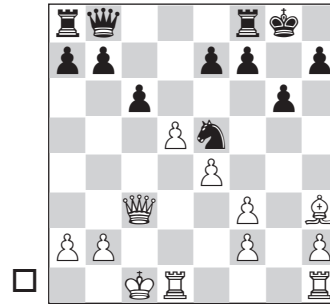
Black is up a pawn. Who is winning if it is White to move?

Exercise 127



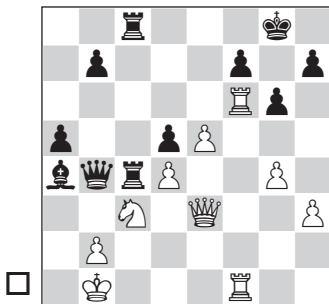
Trade one of White's bishops to achieve a winning position.

Exercise 128



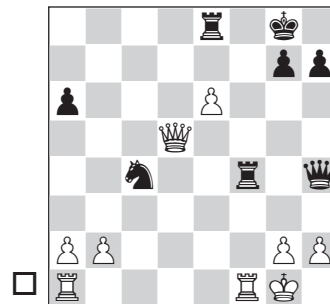
Is the knight on e5 sufficiently protected?

Exercise 129



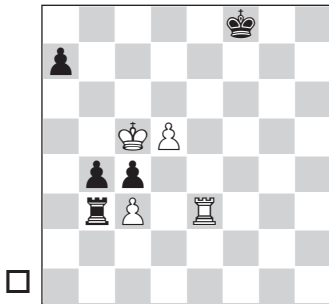
Black is threatening $32... \text{Rxc3}$ and White has no time to waste.

Exercise 130



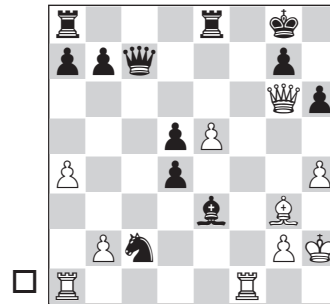
Does White have enough compensation for the missing knight?

Exercise 131



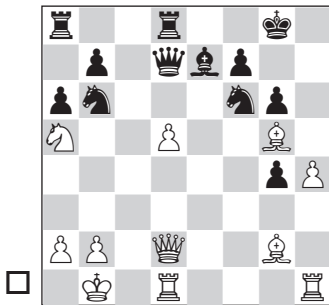
Should White take on c4 or does he have a better option?

Exercise 132



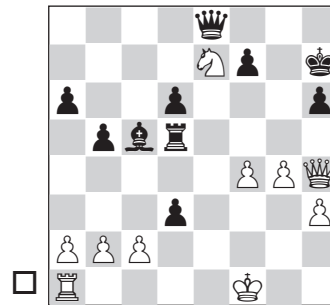
White's rook is under attack. What would be your advice?

Exercise 133



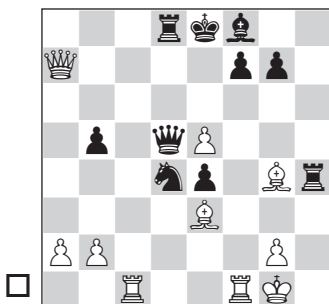
Can you help White win one of the black knights?

Exercise 134



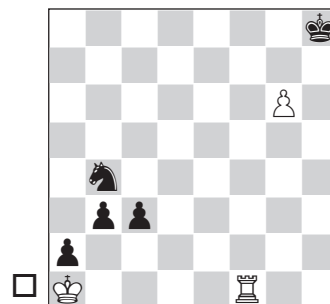
29. ♖xd5 loses to 29... ♔e2#. How should White play?

Exercise 135



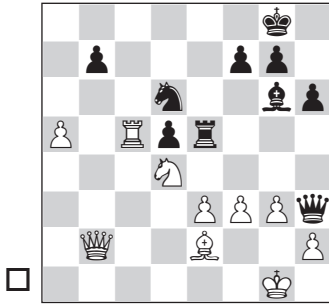
How does White continue his attack?

Exercise 136



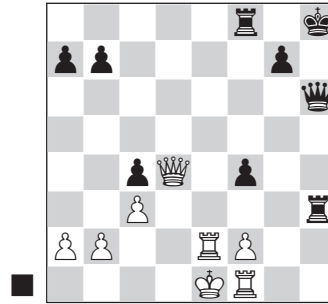
One must never give up. White to play and draw.

Exercise 137



How can White exploit Black's vulnerable knight on d6?

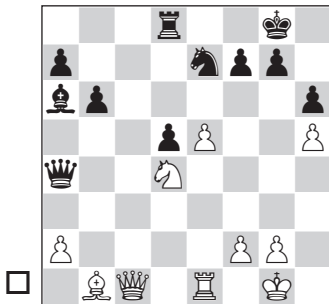
Exercise 138



White's king is trapped. How can Black get the job done?

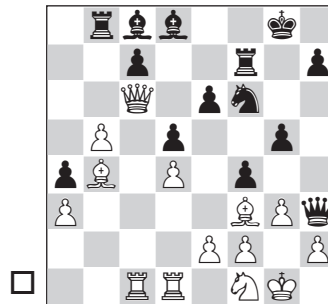
Medium

Exercise 139



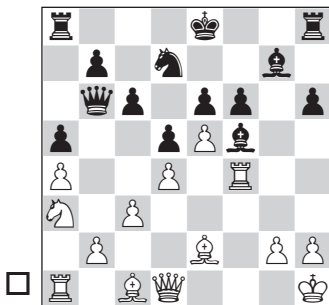
What is White's best option here?

Exercise 140



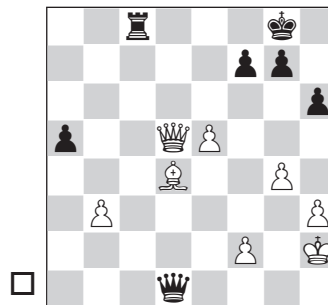
Choose between 23. ♕g2 and 23.b6.

Exercise 141



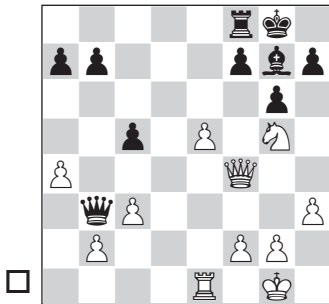
How should White respond to the threat to e5?

Exercise 142



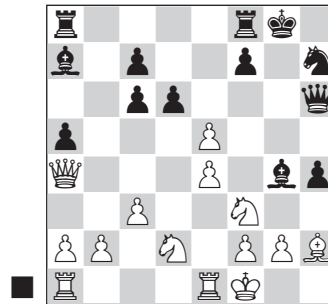
Black is threatening 35... ♖c1 and 36... ♔g1#. Can White strike first?

Exercise 143



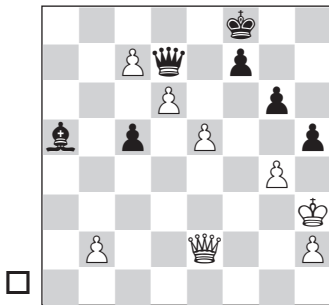
White is up a pawn with more active pieces. Is there a quick win?

Exercise 144



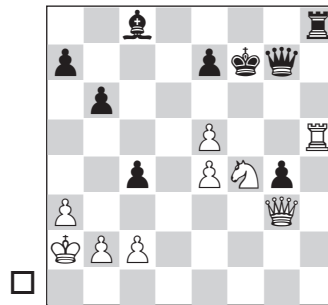
Does Black have enough firepower for a successful attack on the king?

Exercise 145



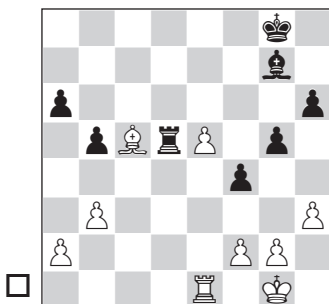
Black threatens to draw with 36...♙xc7. How would you play?

Exercise 146



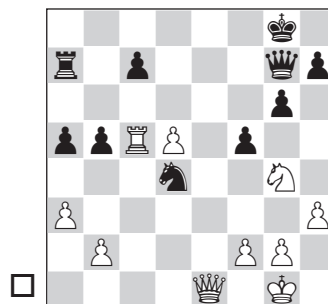
Black is offering a rook exchange. Should White take him up on it?

Exercise 147



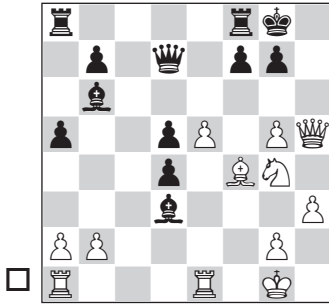
This looks trivial, but only one move wins for White. Find it!

Exercise 148



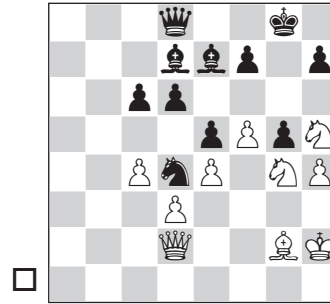
Find the strongest continuation for White.

Exercise 149



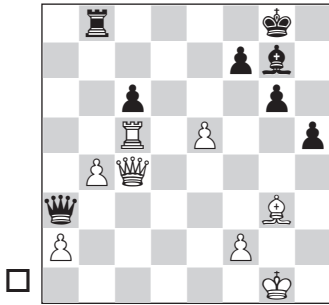
After ...♙f5 Black would have a serious edge. But it's White to move.

Exercise 150



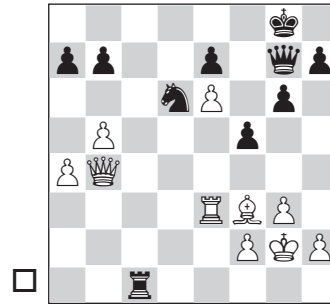
Active knights dominate bad bishops. How should White attack?

Exercise 151



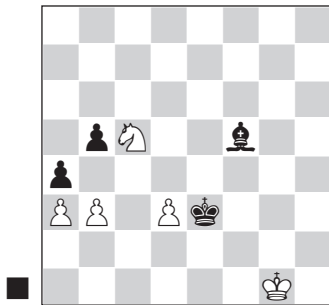
Black threatens to play 31...♖xb4. How should White respond?

Exercise 152



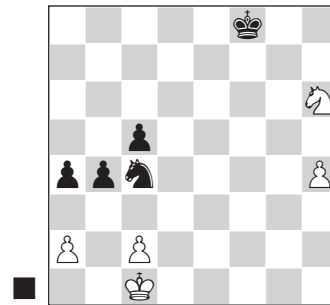
Find the win for White.

Exercise 153



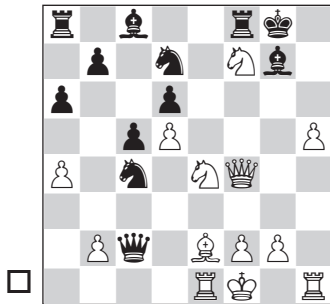
Help Black put together a decisive pawn breakthrough.

Exercise 154



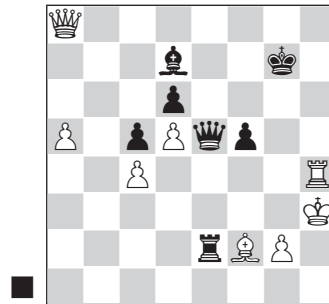
Here is another chance to solve a pawn breakthrough tactic.

Exercise 155



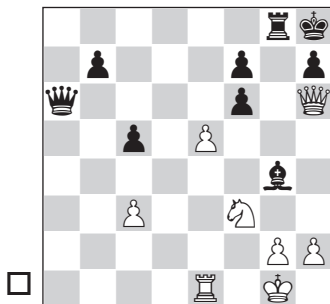
Black's monarch has no pawn protection. How can White exploit this?

Exercise 156



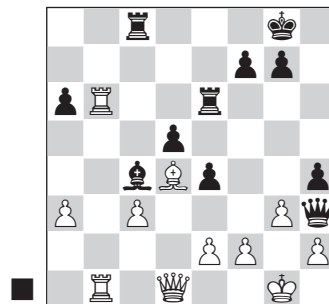
White threatens 41. ♖h8+ with checkmate. But Black has a checkmate of her own!

Exercise 157



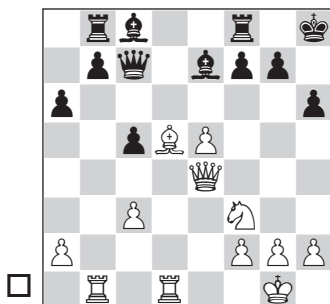
White to play and win.

Exercise 158



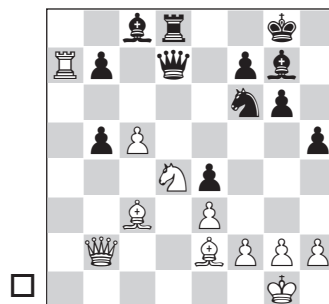
How should Black attack?

Exercise 159



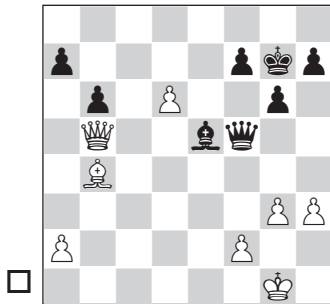
How should White attack without allowing the freeing ...b5 and ...♗b7?

Exercise 160



How can White best convert his positional advantage?

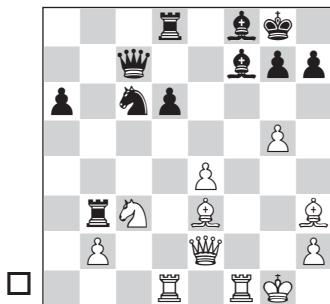
Exercise 161



White to play and win.

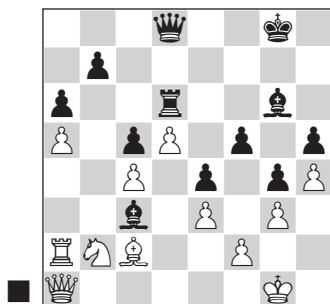
Difficult

Exercise 163



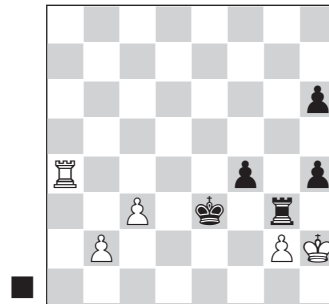
Find the strongest continuation.

Exercise 165



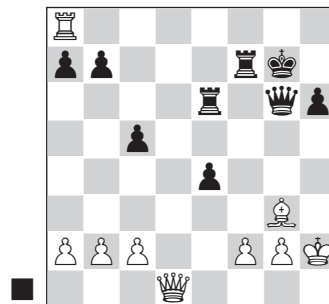
How can Black put together an attack on the white king?

Exercise 162



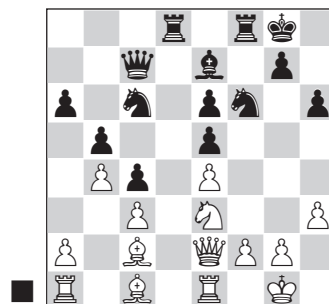
Can Black promote one of his pawns?

Exercise 164

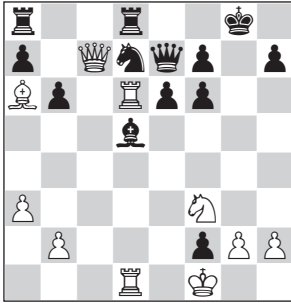


Does Black have time for 31...e3 ?

Exercise 166



How can Black win here?



19... ♕f8!

The most precise move. The queen on e7 is now protected and Black is ready to play 20... ♖c5, exchanging queens with White running out of ammo.

20. ♖6xd5

Desperation. White sacrifices an exchange and transfers his queen to the kingside.

20... exd5 21. ♕f4 ♖c5!

Attacking the bishop, taking away the d3-square and simultaneously developing the knight.

22. ♗b5 ♘e4 23. ♘d4 ♕e5!

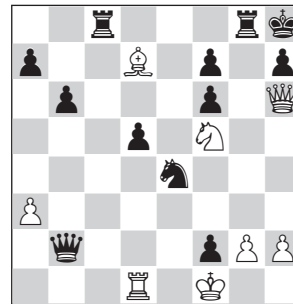
Completely negating White's attack.

24. ♕h6+

This is just one check.

24... ♗g8 25. ♘c6 ♕xb2 26. ♘d4 ♗h8!

27. ♗c6 ♖ac8 28. ♘f5 ♖g8 29. ♗d7



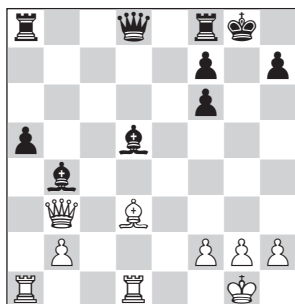
29... ♖xg2!

And while White might have thought he was the attacking side, it is he who in fact gets checkmated:

30. ♗xg2 f1♕+ 31. ♗xf1 ♕f2#.

Perea chose to go with:

1...exd5? 2.♘xd5! ♕xd5



3.♕xh7+!

White does not hesitate to sacrifice both of his light pieces to remove the black king's last defender, as the resulting attack is decisive!

3...♖xh7

3...♖h8 loses to 4.♗h3 ♖g7 5.♗g4+ ♖h8 6.♗d3; 3...♖g7 also only delays the inevitable: 4.♗g3+ ♖xh7 5.♗h3+ ♖g6 6.♗g4+ ♖h7 7.♗d3+-.

4.♗h3+ 1-0

Game 81

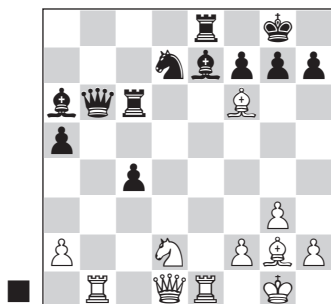
Michal Krasenkow

2668

Hikaru Nakamura

2648

Barcelona 2007



Black's queen, rook and bishop are all under attack and it looks like

his position is difficult. However, Nakamura uncorks a spectacular queen sacrifice to turn the tide in his favor:

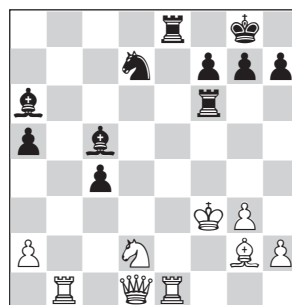
21...♗xf2+!! 22.♖xf2 ♕c5+!

Suddenly all black pieces come to life for a decisive attack.

23.♖f3

23.♖f1 also cannot save the day for White, as Black's piece activity offers more than enough compensation for the sacrificed queen: 23...c3+! 24.♗e2 c2! 25.♕xc6 (25.♗xc2 ♕xe2+ 26.♖e1 ♕d3+) 25...cxd1♗+ 26.♗xd1 ♗xe2 and White wins.

23...♗xf6+!



Black has achieved his dream of dragging the white king out of his castle into the open field, and checkmate is now forced!

24.♖g4 ♖e5+! 25.♖g5

25.♗xe5 cannot save the day due to 25...♕c8+! 26.♗f5 ♕xf5+ 27.♖h4 ♗h6+ 28.♖g5 ♕c8.

25...♗g6+! 26.♖h5 f6 27.♗xe5

27.♕d5+ is just one more check for White: 27...♖h8 28.♖xc4 ♗h6#.

27...♗xe5+ 28.♖h4 ♕c8! 0-1

White gets mated after 29.g4 ♕f2+ 30.♖h3 ♗h6#.

Game 82

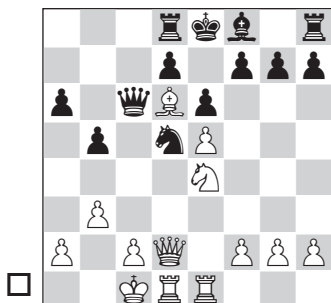
Mateusz Bartel

2641

Gergely Szabo

2540

Hungary tt 2017



This example of a Dream Move is a beautiful combination that would have undoubtedly made both Paul **Morphy** and Mikhail **Tal** proud! Black's king got held up in the center of the board, while his bishop on f8 and rook on h8 could never get out of the hangar and join the battle. It is not unreasonable to sacrifice a queen for Black's only active piece – the knight on d5:

19. ♖xd5!!

White sacrifices his queen to expose the position of the black king.

19...exd5

Rejecting the sacrifice and capturing with the queen instead does not change the outcome:

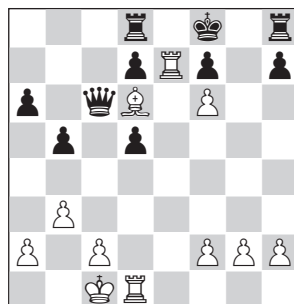
19...♖xd5 20.♖xd5 exd5 21.♘f6+! gxf6 22.exf6+ ♔e7 23.♖xe7+ ♕f8 24.♖e5+ ♖g8 25.♖g5#.

20. ♘f6+!

Now Black's king is caught in his own kingdom, and there is no escape as he is blocked off by his own helpless pieces.

20...gxf6 21.exf6+ ♔e7

22. ♖xe7+ ♕f8



23. ♖e8+!

Decoy and double check work together to help White finish the game in spectacular fashion. 23.♖e8+! is a Dream Move White needed to see at least four moves ago in order to be able to even consider 19.♖xd5!! in the first place!

23...♕xe8 24. ♖e1#

Game 83

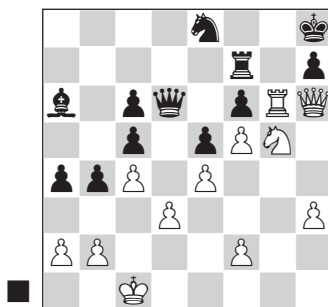
Francisco Vallejo Pons

2710

Teimour Radjabov

2710

Moscow 2017



White has sacrificed a piece to achieve this position, feeling that his attack was going to be decisive. Black's rook is under

attack, his queen must guard the f8-square, White is threatening f2-f4, Black's knight and bishop are out of play. The Dream Move for Black is to protect his rook while simultaneously avoiding checkmate:

29...♙xc4!!

The seemingly useless bishop decimates White's pawn chain and now all the black pieces suddenly come alive. Not sufficient were:

A) 29...♖e7? protects the rook; however, in the ensuing position Black's two minor pieces are weaker than the white rook after 30.♜xf7+ ♗xf7 31.♖g1;

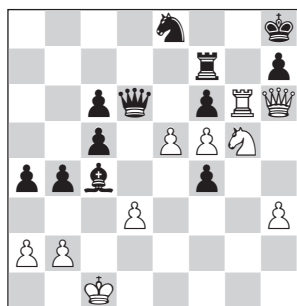
B) 29...♗d7? loses by force to 30.f4! exf4 31.e5!;

C) 29...♗b7? is also not enough to stop White's attack: 30.f4! ♙xc4 31.fxe5 ♗e7 32.exf6 ♜xf6 33.♖xf6.

30.f4

30.dxc4? ♗d7! 31.♖h5 ♗d2+ 32.♚b1 ♗e1+ 33.♚c2 ♗d2#.

30...exf4! 31.e5



31...♗e7! 32.♜xf7+

32.exf6? was not an option due to 32...♗e1+ 33.♚c2 ♗b3+ 34.axb3 ♙xb3#.

32...♙xf7 33.♖g1 ♙xa2 34.e6 f3! 0-1

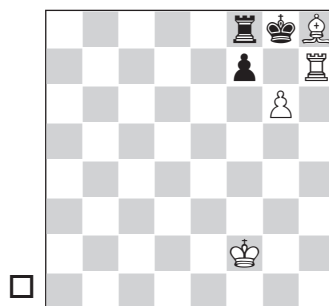
After 35.♗f4 ♙d5 Black is about to produce a passed pawn on the a-file

and the two passed pawns will be enough to secure the victory.

Game 84

Szaja Kozłowski

Study 1931



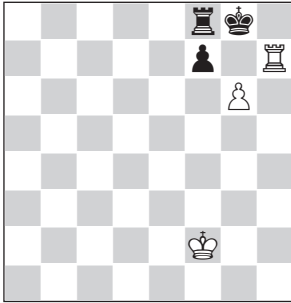
This instructional position shows us that obvious moves do not always lead us to the promised land.

1.♖g7+!!

The bishop occupies an important square that White needs for the winning combination to follow. Therefore, it must be sacrificed for the greater good.

If White was to play 1.g7? instead of 1.♖g7+!!, Black would respond with 1...♖a8! or any other square along the eighth rank (1...♚xh7?? 2.gxf8♗): 2.♗h5 (or any other square on the h-file) and it's easy to see that the resulting position is a simple draw. Black can just shuffle the rook across the eighth rank or use the a-file to give checks, and if White gets to play ♚e7 and exchange the rooks on d8, after this ... f7-f5 Black's f-pawn becomes unstoppable and Black is the one collecting the full point.

1... ♖xh8 2. ♜h7+! ♔g8



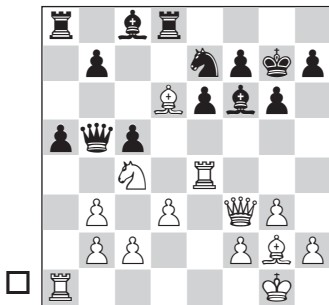
3.g7!

And now Black is out of options as taking the rook allows the Dream Move 4.gxf8♔, while moving the rook loses to 4. ♜h8+. This is called the vanished piece theme. White is better off without the bishop on h8.

Game 85

Tigran Petrosian
Ludek Pachman

Bled 1961



Tigran Vartanovich was mostly known for his positional chess; however, he was also not averse to tactics when opportunities presented themselves!

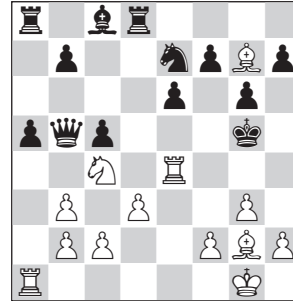
19. ♔xf6+!

The brave white queen sacrifices herself in order to force the black king to leave his fortress.

19... ♖xf6

Now how can we stop the black king from returning to his safe haven?

20. ♙e5+! ♔g5 21. ♙g7!



And now the mating net is all set:

21... ♖f5 22.h4+ ♖xh4 23.gxh4+ ♔h5 24. ♙f3# or 21...e5 22.h4+ ♔h5 23. ♙f3+ ♙g4 24. ♙xg4#.

1-0

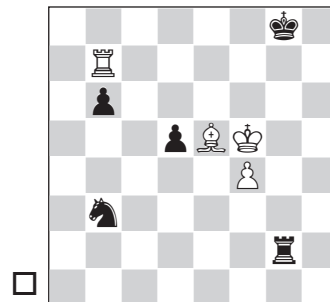
Game 86

Daniil Yuffa
Baskaran Adhiban

2566

2654

Gibraltar 2020



Can White use his superior piece activity to checkmate the black

king or can the black knight return to the kingside and save the day?

44. ♖f6!

White's king enters the battle, taking away the vital f7-square from the black king and setting up a decisive attack. The extra black pawn cannot influence the outcome of the game, as the knight cannot get back in time to protect its king.

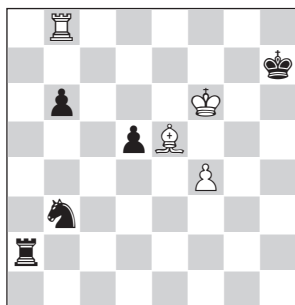
44. ♖xb6? would prove too materialistic, as the black knight could then get back to protect its king and stop the f-pawn: 44... ♗c5!

45. ♖b5 ♖c2 46. ♖f6 ♗e4+ 47. ♖e6 ♖c8 48. ♖xd5 ♗g3 49. f5 ♗e4 50. f6 ♗g5+ 51. ♖f5 ♗f7 with Black successfully building a fortress!

44... ♖a2

44... ♗c5 would now be too little, too late: 45. ♖b8+ ♖h7 46. ♖f7!.

45. ♖b8+ ♖h7



46. ♖f5!

The king triumphantly returns to its original square and checkmate is imminent.

A savvy reader might ask: 'But where is the Dream Move here?' The rook + bishop tandem sets up White's dream move: 47. ♖h8#. Unfortunately, Black resigned

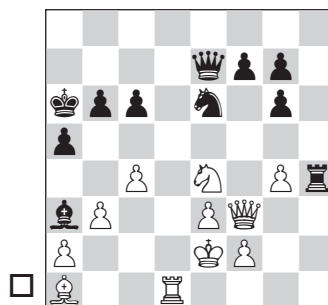
without giving Daniil a chance to play his Dream Move on the board.

Game 87

Miron Sher

Viktor Korchnoi

Nordhorn rapid 1996



I would like to show the reader an example from my game with perennial World Championship contender Viktor **Korchnoi**. The game took place in the last round of the tournament, and a win would give both myself and my opponent serious chances to finish first. In the early stages of the game, **Korchnoi** played actively and was able to gain the initiative. However, later on, I regained the momentum and in the diagram position White's advantage is without doubt.

1. ♗f6!

A move that brings all the white pieces to life: I am threatening both 2. ♖xc6 and 2. ♖d7, while 1...gxf6 would be swiftly met with 2. ♗xf6 – a Dream Move of its own after which White's material advantage makes the victory all but assured. If 2... ♖h3 3. ♗xe7 ♖xf3 4. ♗xa3.

Another interesting plan was 1.♔e5 with the idea of ♔d6.

1...♗d6 2.♖xc6! ♘f4+ 3.♙f1 gxf6



4.♔xf6?

It looks like the game is all but over, but here **Korchnoi** showcased why he is considered one of the all-time greats. See if you can find the Dream Move for Mr. **Korchnoi**! The strongest continuation, leading to victory for White, was 4.♖xd6! ♗b7 5.♖xb7+ ♙xb7 6.exf4 ♖h1+ 7.♙g2 ♖xa1 8.♖xf6 ♖xa2 9.♖xf7+ ♙a6 10.f5! gx f5 11.g5!. I actually saw this line during the game, but chose 4.♔xf6?, which I thought led to a quicker victory because of the time pressure.

4...♖e8!!

A rude awakening. **Korchnoi** protects against White's main idea 5.♖a8# and now threatens checkmate on h1 himself. Unfortunately, Dream Moves are not limited to one's own; our opponents are allowed to dream too!!!

5.♖b5+!

5.♖xe8?? ♖h1#.

5...♙a7!!

5...♖xb5?? loses to 6.cxb5+ ♙xb5

7.♔xh4.

6.♔xh4 ♖e4 7.exf4 ♖h1+ 8.♙e2 ♖e4+ 1/2-1/2

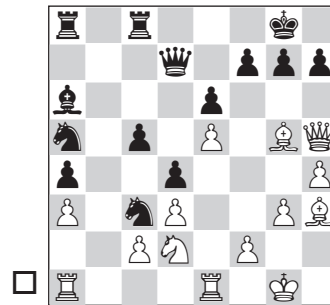
As neither of the opponents could avoid the perpetual, the game ended in a draw with both of us tying for third place along with Dutch grandmaster Jan **Timman**, behind the tournament winner, Igor **Khenkin**.

Game 88

Bobby Fischer

Lhamsuren Myagmarsuren

Sousse izt 1967



Many of the all time greats have Dream Moves in their game collections. However, Bobby Fischer is one of the first names that comes to mind when a dedicated student of the game thinks about Dream Moves. In this position, White's attack on the kingside nullifies Black's queenside activity. The bishop on a6, the knight on a5 and the two black rooks are too far from the epicenter of the impending doom to help their monarch.

23.♔f6!

White begins his brilliant attack.

23...♖e8