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Foreword by John Hartmann

Dear reader:

When I took over as editor of *Chess Life* in June 2020, one of the first things I wanted to do was introduce a tactics column to the magazine.

Everyone knows that solving tactics is a critical component of chess improvement. Today there are any number of websites where a player can try their hand at almost innumerable positions, something that was unimaginable when I started playing chess some 30 years ago.

Still, I believe there is value in solving hand-selected, expertly curated tactical positions. A human author and trainer will find positions that contain useful, thematic ideas, as well as those that require particularly vexing calculation.

So, when I decided that I wanted to bring a monthly tactics column to *Chess Life*, I began to think about who I might ask to take on such a duty. It might not seem like much work to find a handful of positions each month, but as someone who once wrote a monthly column himself, let me assure you that having to turn in text every four weeks can be a real grind.

As it turned out, there was only one person I wanted for this job. And fortunately for me, he was amenable.

FM Carsten Hansen has shown himself — both online in his Twitter and Facebook posts, and in his print books — to be immensely skilled at both selecting positions for solving and explaining the underlying ideas in his solutions. Every month he provides *Chess Life* readers with nine terrific tactical tests, each with pithy hints or nudges in case one gets stuck.

This book contains the best of Carsten's work for *Chess Life*, or, perhaps better put, his best work *so far*. I hope you enjoy solving these puzzles and that your time spent doing so translates into concrete results over the board.

And if you like these, why not become a US Chess member and get fresh positions to solve from Carsten in each new *Chess Life* issue?

(I had to try.)

John Hartmann
Editor, *Chess Life*, and *Chess Life Online*

How to work with this book

The puzzles start from easy and gradually move toward being difficult. It is worth noting that “easy” is a relative thing; if you are a recently started player, then the easy ones can also represent a challenge.

Try first to solve the puzzle before reading the text under the diagram. If unsuccessful, play through the solution, but return to the puzzle in 1-2 weeks to see if you can now solve it. That way, you gradually expand your tactical vision, and it will be more likely that you will spot tactics as they occur in your own games. Whatever you do, do not use an engine to solve the puzzles; that will only cheat you out of improving your game.

Puzzles July 2020



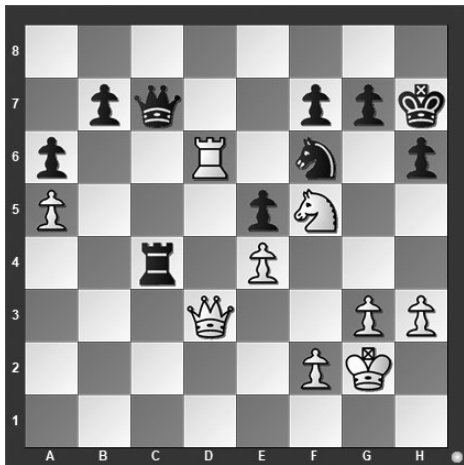
20.07.01

Nakamura-Firouzja

Carlsen Invitational

White to move

Hint: Insufficient protection



20.07.02

Ding Liren-Carlsen

Carlsen Invitational

White to move

Hint: Queen and Knight are dangerous together



20.07.03

Ding Liren-Nakamura

Carlsen Invitational

Black to move

Hint: Loose targets are good targets



20.07.04

E.Paetz – Belenkaya
Isolated Queens II
White to move

Hint: Prepare the Greek



20.07.05

G.Shahade-Zatonskih
IM not a GM
White to move

Hint: Overburdened defender



20.07.06

Sjugirov-Carlsen
Banter Blitz Cup
Black to move

Hint: Clear the right spaces



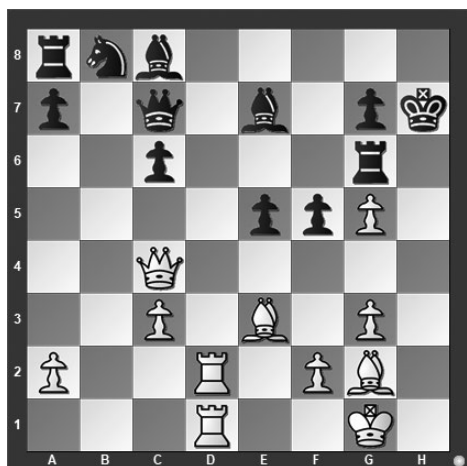
20.07.07

Kashlinskaya-Rosen

IM not a GM

Black to move

Hint: Sudden isolation



20.07.08

Yu Yangyi-So

Online Nations Cup

White to move

Hint: Where is that king going?



20.07.09

Caruana – Wang Hao

Online Nations Cup

White to move

Hint: Locate Black's weakest spot

Solutions July 2020

- 20.07.01) 14.Nxf7!** Black resigned. White also had 14.Nxe7+ Qxe7 15.Nxf7! available, also winning. The game could have continued 14.Nxf7! Kxf7 (or 14...Bxf7 15.Nxe7+) 15.Rxe6! and White is winning. **1–0 Nakamura - Firouzja** Carlsen Invitational 2020.
- 20.07.02) 32.Rxf6! gxf6 33.Qe3!** Black resigned as there is no way to stop White from playing Qxh6 followed by Qg7#. **1–0 Ding Liren – Carlsen** Carlsen Invitational 2020.
- 20.07.03) 28...b5! 29.Qd3 Qb7** White resigned. After 30.Rc5 Re5, the pinned rook on d5 falls. **0–1 Ding Liren – Nakamura** Carlsen Invitational 2020.
- 20.07.04) 18.Bxf6!** Preparing the softening of Black's kingside. **18...Bxf6 19.Bxh7+ Kxh7** Or 19...Kf8 20.f4 and White has a winning advantage. **20.Qh5+ Kg8 21.Qxf7+ Kh7**, and here White should have played **22.Ng4!** The game continued 22.Nxc6? Qxc6 23.Rxe6 Rd6 24.Rfe1, and now instead of the losing 24...Bg5?? (**E.Paehltz – Belenkaya**, Isolated Queens II 2020), Black could have saved herself with 24...Rf8!. **22...Be7 23.Rxe6!** The point: the threat is Rh6#. **23...Rd6 24.Rxd6 Bxd6 25.Nf6+ Kh8 26.Qh5#.**
- 20.07.05) 31.Nxf6!** 31.Ng5!? is also unpleasant for Black but not nearly as good. **31...Qxf6** The other capture is even worse: 31...Nxf6 32.Rxd8 Qxd8 33.Ne6+. Black's best defense is probably 31...Kf7 32.Nxh5! (both 32.Nxd5 and 32.Bxd5+ cxd5 33.Rd4 are also sufficient to win) 32...gxh5 33.e4 Nf6 34.Qb3+ Kg6 35.Rxd8 Qxd8 36.e5 Nd5 37.Qc2+ and White is winning. **32.Ne6+ Kf7 33.Qxf6+ Nxf6 34.Rxd8 Ke7 35.Rxb8** and Black resigned. **1–0 G.Shahade – Zatonskih** IM Not A GM 2020.
- 20.07.06) 23...Rxe5!** A devious move that Carlsen spotted after just a few seconds of thought. The point is that White will have to make one of two concessions; either one loses on the spot! **24.dxe5** Or 24.Nxe5 Qg5 when White cannot simultaneously defend against both ...Qxg2# and ...Nxh3+, winning the unprotected queen on d2. **24...Qg3** White resigned. Black's last move only became possible after opening the a7–g1 diagonal, and now there is an unstoppable mate. **0–1 Sjugirov - Carlsen** Banter Blitz Cup 2020
- 20.07.07) 15...Nfxe4! 16.fxe4??** White should have pulled the emergency brake with either 16.Kh1 Nxc3 17.Qxc3 or 16.Bxe4 dxe4 17.Bxg5 (both 17.f4 and 17.Nxe4 are met by 17...Nxh3+, for instance, 18.gxh3 Qxh4 19.Nxd6 Bxh3 20.Rf2 Re6 with a decisive attack for Black) 17...Qxg5 18.Nxe4 Bf5 19.N2c3 Qf4 with a clear positional advantage for Black. **16...Nxh3+! 17.gxh3 Qxh4** The white king is suddenly very open and very much alone. **18.e5** Or 18.Rf2 Bxh3 19.e5 Rxe5 20.dxe5 Bc5 21.Ne4 Bxf2+ 22.Nxf2 Qg5+ 23.Ng4 Qxg4+ 24.Kf2 Qh4+ and Black is winning. **18...Rxe5 19.Bf5 Qg5+ 20.Kh1 Bxf5 21.Qc1 Re3** Black is winning. **22.Ng1 Qg3 23.Qd2 Bxh3 24.Rfe1 Bg2+ 25.Qxg2 Qh4+ 26.Nh3 Rxh3+** and White resigned. **0–1 Kashlinskaya – Rosen** IM Not A GM Speed 2020.
- 20.07.08) 28.Bd5!** Keeping the Black king stuck on the h-file is crucial. Note that 28.Qh4+?? is strongly met by 28...Rh6! and Black survives. **28...f4** Black tries to block White's access to the h-file. The alternatives are interesting to analyze: 28...Rxc5 29.Kg2! (a theme we will see a couple of times, the h-file now becomes accessible for the rook;

White also wins after 29.Bxg5 Bxg5 30.Bg8+! Kh8 31.Rd6! Qe7 32.Kg2!, clearing the path to the h-file for the rook) 29...Rh5 30.Bf7 Rh6 31.Bxh6 gxh6 32.Bg6+ Kxg6 33.Qg8+ Kf6 34.Rh1, and there is no defense for the black king. Or 28...Bxg5 29.Bxg5 Rxg5 30.Qh4+ Kg6 31.Bg8!, threatening Rdd6 with mate. **29.Be4!** Pinning the rook and keeping the king stuck. **29...Bxg5** Or 29...Bf8 30.f3 fxg3 31.Kg2 and Black will get mated on the h-file. **30.Rd6 Bf6 31.Kg2!** Again! **31...f3+ 32.Kxf3 Bg4+ 33.Kg2 Bxd1 34.Rxd1** and Black resigned. **1–0 Yu Yangyi – So** Online Nations Cup (final) 2020.

20.07.09) 21.Qf4! Bd7? A mistake. The best defense was 21...h6, when White after 22.Nxf7! Kxf7 23.g5 Bd7 24.Bh7! hxg5 25.hxg5 g6 26.gxf6 Qxf6 27.Bg8+! Kg7 28.Bd5 and the bishop has concluded its journey, helping White to secure a clear positional advantage. **22.Bxh7+! Kh8** Or 22...Nxb7 23.Qxf7+ Kh8 24.Qh5 and White wins. **23.Bf5 Bxf5 24.Qxf5 Kg8 25.h5 Qc6 26.Nxf7 Kxf7 27.g5 Qd7 28.Qg6+** and Black resigned. **1–0 Caruana - Wang Hao** Online Nations Cup (Prelim) 2020.