

Emmanuel Neiman

Tune Your Chess Tactics Antenna

Know when (and where!) to look for winning combinations

New In Chess 2012

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Foreword

In this book, I suggest a thinking method that is intended to help the practical chess player. I am sure that using this technique, the reader will improve his play as a whole, meaning both his tactical abilities (i.e. the ability to foresee combinations) and his positional abilities.

The idea of this work is to provide the reader with a kind of 'antenna'. This antenna has seven 'filters' (what I call signals) that will allow a chess player to detect tactical possibilities.

The two main points are:

- Follow carefully the necessary steps of reflection (see the 5 phases in the Introduction);
- Detect the signals for you and for your opponent (Part I and II).

First look, then analyse, plan, and only then start to look for the right move! See Part III of this book.

A great trainer and champion¹ once advised his pupils to calculate like machines. I'd say: be human ! Do not calculate without ideas.

Good luck to all !

Emmanuel Neiman
November 2012

1 Alexander Kotov.

Introduction

Improving the ability to solve chess combinations is the main road to progress for the learning chess player. As soon as he is given the magic formula 'White to play and win', the seeker will try to find as quickly as possible the best move in order to provoke events and in so doing, he will improve his capacity to calculate forced lines.

After some practice, in general the improvement is significant and as a trainer I am often surprised by the ability of some people to quickly find the solution to a non-obvious puzzle.

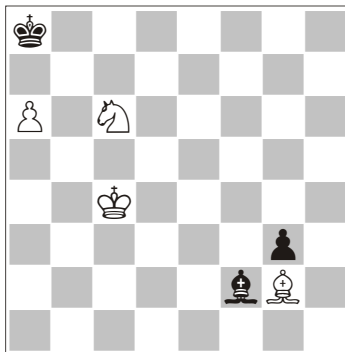
When I congratulate a pupil on good solving, his/her reaction is often: 'That was not difficult, you told us that there was a combination!' Most of them add: 'The real problem is that when we are playing, we don't know when to look for a tactic'. This started me thinking about the idea of an 'antenna' that 'alarms' a player when a combination is available.

Once I found in a newspaper the following position, which I gave to grandmaster Anatoly Vaisser to solve:

Lingnau, Carsten

Orso, Miklos

Budapest 1992 (4)



White to play and win

One, maybe two seconds after I showed him the position, he indicated the right solution by drawing a kind of 'Z' with his finger in the air.

Nevertheless, in the actual game White was unable to win, and had to be content with a draw after

65.♙d5 ♖g1 66.♚e6 ♜f2 67.♚d7 ♜g1 68.♙c8 ♜e3 69.♘a5+ ♚a7 70.♜b7 g2 1/2-1/2

Here we have a basic illustration of our theme. White was not advised that there was a forced win, so he just continued in the ‘logical’ way, bringing his king toward the enemy monarch.

What did Vaisser immediately detect here ?

We can observe, before doing any calculation, that the black king is already ‘stalemated’ by the knight on c6 and the pawn on a6. This observation should lead us to look for some chance to give check without moving the two guards (knight and pawn). Then we might notice that the light-squared bishop is able to deliver the mate, for it can reach the b7-square via the route h3-c8-b7 and mate.

Did Vaisser follow all these steps?

I doubt it – in one or two seconds. What (as I think) he did instantly was just:

1. Checking the enemy king position.
2. Looking for a mating possibility.
3. Seeing the right route.

Is it the same process?

No, the trained grandmaster (at this time, Vaisser was one of the best rapid players in the world), knowing that there is something to be found, concentrates on the essential. First, the king! Probably, almost immediately after he is given the diagram position, he looks for a mate, because he instantly realizes that the black king is trapped.

If you tried some fancies along the long diagonal, or, like in the actual game, started a long march with the king, then you did not investigate the most crucial problem in the position (and most generally in chess): the king’s position.

I hope that after reading this book, you will go for the real stuff in this kind of position, and that before looking for moves, you will look for ideas.

Here the idea is relative to the poor king’s position. Such an idea is classically called the motif of a combination. The motif is the reason why there’s a combination or a forced win (a combination normally implies a sacrifice, here we look for ‘tactics’ – that is, a forced variation with or without a sacrifice).

Generally, puzzle books are arranged according to theme. This classification: double attack, pin, deflection, decoy, etc., is a useful tool for solving purposes. When we know that there is a combination, the motif provides a valuable answer to the ‘How’. In this book, we deal with the ‘Why’: we want to discover if there is a chance of winning by force.

We are looking for hints, and if we can find some, then we will look at the position with a solver’s eyes – a solver who has already done part of the job. The antenna has been erected, and it involves seven filters. In classical chess literature these filters are called motifs. In this book, in accordance with our ‘antenna’ theme, we will call them **signals**.

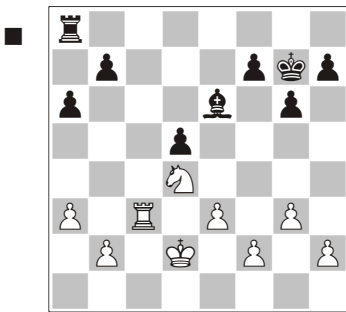
A. What is a signal?

A signal is a weakness in the opponent’s position.

When we look for a signal, we look for a reason why we should be winning. Since Steinitz, we know that the combination

does not appear randomly, but as a consequence of the positional superiority of one side. This superiority lies in positive factors, let's say more active pieces. But we can take the opposite approach: looking at the opponent's position, we can establish that he has passive pieces; or they may be trapped, locked in or lacking coordination. This way of looking gives us hints, and those hints we will call signals, in other words: reasons to believe that there is a possible win.

Take another position:



White has no weaknesses for the time being. All his men are well protected, and Black is unable to threaten any of them. Not a single white piece is on a light square, so the bishop is useless for offensive purposes. No file is available for the black rook (Black might dream about ...h7-h5-h4, ...♖h8 and ...h4xg3 with a possible attack on f2, but in the meantime White will have taken all the pawns on the queenside, beginning with ♜c7 or ♘e6). In short, there's no chance of any winning tactics for Black. When we are winning, or at least in a very advantageous situation like this one, the study of the signals will also help us keep the opponent in the defence, without allowing him any tactical possibilities.

What is the difference between a signal and a theme?

The signal (the motif) is the reason why the combination exists. The theme is the main mechanism which allows us to make it work.

Christiansen, Larry Karpov, Anatoly

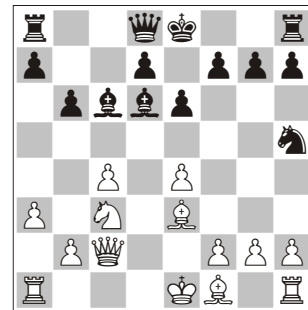
Wijk aan Zee (m/1) 1993

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.a3
♙a6 5.♞c2 ♙b7 6.♘c3 c5 7.e4
cxd4 8.♘xd4 ♘c6 9.♘xc6 ♙xc6
10.♙f4 ♘h5**

Chasing the white bishop, but also provisionally misplacing the knight. The move is correct here, but not with Karpov's follow-up in mind...

11.♙e3 ♙d6

11...♙c5 or 11...♞b8 are better.



An important signal is the unprotected piece. Here Karpov has placed two unprotected men on open lines: the h5-knight and the d6-bishop.

12.♞d1

1-0

A double attack winning a piece in the opening, quite a rare bird in the practice of World Champions!

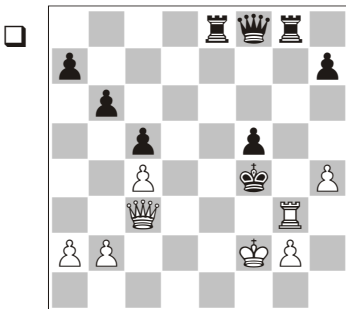
Here we can clearly see the distinction: the signal can be found in the unpro-

tected pieces. A single unprotected piece is already a reason to look for a forced continuation – here we have two of them. So there could (should?) be some win. The theme is the realization of the winning tactic. Here the classical way of responding to the signal is to look for a double attack.

If we don't find the thematic double attack, we won't win, of course. But the win exists only because of the signal, and here, once we are aware of the motif, the realization is not difficult.

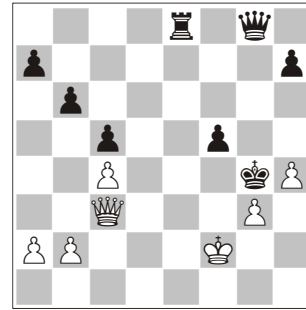
Both are complementaries; for example sometimes the signal is clear, yet the combination is difficult to work out, because we need to use complex calculation. Here the theme is a useful help.

Study position



The signal is obvious here. Black's problem lies in the position of his king, stuck in the white camp, while the rest of his army is far away. Note that the king cannot go to e4, because then 2. ♖e3 is checkmate. Yet, finding the win is not simple, and White has to act quickly, otherwise Black could force more exchanges with 1... ♖e2+, and after 2. ♗xe2, then 2... ♗xg3.

Let's first calculate the most forced variation: 1. ♗xg8 ♗xg8 2. g3+ ♗g4 (if 2... ♗e4 then 3. ♖e3 mate)



In this position, White has a draw with 3. ♖f3+ ♗h3 4. ♗g2+ ♗g4 5. ♖f3+ etc.

After 3. ♖f3+ ♗h3 White could try 4. g4+, but then 4... ♗xh4 (not 4... ♗h2 because of 5. ♗g2 mate) 5. ♗g3+ and Black has an escape with 5... ♗g5.

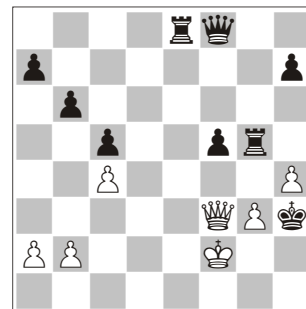
Hence the first move, which is based on the theme of square closing, a typical theme when hunting the enemy king. With the same idea, instead of ♗xg8 White plays

1. ♗g5! ♗xg5 2. g3+ ♗g4

2... ♗e4 3. ♖e3#.

2... ♗xg3 3. ♗xg3+ ♗e4 4. ♖e3#.

3. ♖f3+ ♗h3



4. g4+ ♗xh4

4... ♗h2 5. ♖g2#.

5. ♗g3#

Chapter 8

King Position

The king's position is the most important factor in the evaluation of a position, both from a tactical and a positional point of view. This is the consequence of the modern rules, which state that the game is usually won thanks to a checkmate (certain earlier rules stated that stalemate or taking all the opponent's men were also ways to win). Chess is 'Shah', the king!

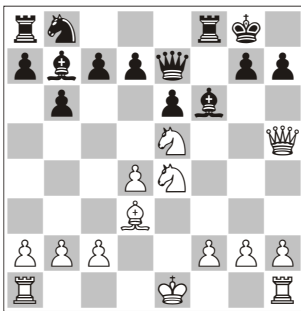
There are two possible defects in the king's position: either it is too tightly covered, or it is too exposed. In both cases, the king may catch a bad cold.

Usually the king castles. After that it is standing in the corner, which eases the task for the attacker. However, usually the king is well protected by a shelter of three pawns. The basic method of attacking the king is extraction, which means that you pull the king out of his castle with some sacrifice in order to drive him towards your men.

Lasker, Edward
Thomas, George Alan

London 1912 (casual game)

1.d4 e6 2.♘f3 f5 3.♘c3 ♘f6
4.♙g5 ♙e7 5.♙xf6 ♙xf6 6.e4
fxe4 7.♗xe4 b6 8.♗e5 0-0
9.♙d3 ♙b7 10.♚h5 ♚e7



Black's idea is that in case of the discovered attack 11.♗xf6+, attacking h7 twice, he has the 'uncovering defence' 11...gxf6, when the protection of h7 is taken care of.

10...g6 or 10...♙xe5 was better.

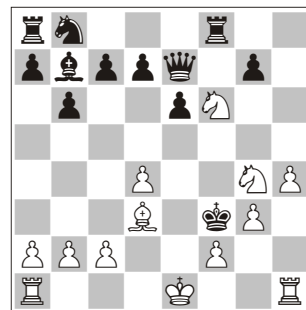
11.♚xh7+!! ♚xh7 12.♗xf6+ ♚h6

12...♙h8 leads to a nice mate picture:
13.♗g6#.

13.♗eg4+ ♚g5 14.h4+

14.f4+ is just as strong: 14...♙xf4 (14...♙h4 15.g3+ ♙h3 16.0-0! and mates next move with 17.♗f2) 15.g3+ ♙f3 16.0-0#.

14...♙f4 15.g3+ ♙f3



16.♙e2+

This is the most stylish solution. 16.♙f1, with the double threat of 17.♗h2 and 17.♙e2, would have mated one move earlier; and so would the simple 16.0-0,

with the single but completely undefendable threat of 17.♘h2+ with checkmate on the next move.

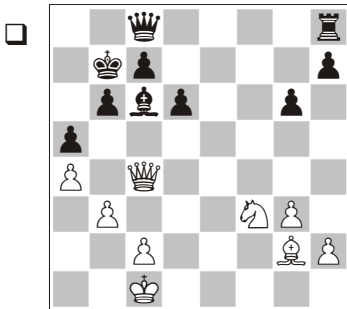
16...♔g2 17.♗h2+ ♔g1
18.♔d2#!

18.0-0-0 mate was a less elegant, but valid alternative.

The following example demonstrates once again that when our short-range king is driven far inside the enemy camp, we should calculate the variations carefully, because the way back is long and arduous.

Kasparian & Manlevian

1936



However costly it is, here we must consider the sacrifice of the queen, which drives the black king into unknown territory. The signal is the alignment between the g2-bishop and the king, but above all the poor position of the king after the queen has been sacrificed on c6.

The general technique of attracting the king is, from the attacker's point of view, firstly to make sure that the monarch can't get back, secondly to lure him as close as possible to our pawns, and then thirdly to accurately calculate the checkmate line.

1.♗xc6+ ♔xc6

If 1...♖b8, 2.♘d4 ♗a6 3.♗d7 is completely crushing.

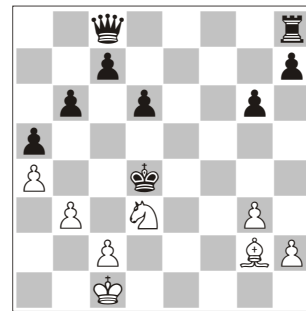
2.♘e5+

This check prevents the monarch from returning home via d7. The calculation is not so difficult here, because Black has nothing but only moves.

2...♔c5 3.♘d3+

Nice geometry: while the knight takes care of the dark squares, the bishop and pawns look after the white ones.

3...♔d4



Now the third rank (the squares e3, d3 and c3) needs control. This job is done by the white king:

4.♔d2 ♗f5

Or any other move, since there are no checks available...

5.c3#

Another important tip for the attacker is to learn by heart the classical mating patterns (see in the bibliography, p. 223, *L'Art de faire mat*, or *Improve your Chess Now*). We will give an example in order to demonstrate how far in advance a strong player can anticipate a basic pattern.

Exercises

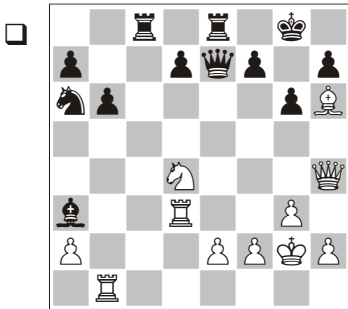
Exercise 1 Signal 6

*

Le Roux, Jean Pierre
Mocquard, Yves

Guingamp 2012 (1)

1. ♘f3 ♘f6 2. c4 c5 3. ♘c3 b6
4. g3 ♖b7 5. ♙g2 g6 6. 0-0 ♙g7
7. d4 cxd4 8. ♗xd4 0-0 9. ♗h4
♗c7 10. ♖d1 ♘a6 11. ♙h6
♖fe8 12. ♘d5 ♘xd5 13. cxd5
♙xb2 14. d6 ♗c3 15. ♖ab1
♖ac8 16. ♘d4 ♙xg2 17. ♙xg2
♙a3 18. ♖d3 ♗c5 19. dxe7
♗xe7



(Solution on page 154)

Exercise 2 Signal 6

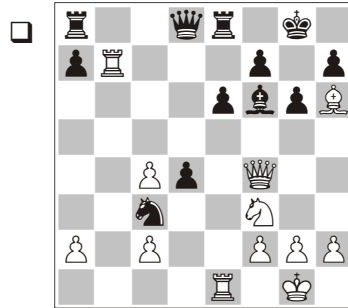
*

Hounie Fleurquin, Carlos
Castillo Larenas, Mariano

Buenos Aires 1935 (15)

1. e4 ♘f6 2. ♘c3 d5 3. exd5 ♘xd5
4. ♙c4 ♘xc3 5. bxc3 ♘d7 6. ♘f3
e6 7. d4 ♙e7 8. ♗e2 c5 9. 0-0 0-0
10. ♖e1 ♙f6 11. ♖b1 g6 12. ♙h6
♖e8 13. ♗e3 ♘b6 14. ♙b5 ♙d7
15. ♙xd7 ♘d5 16. ♗e4 ♗xd7

17. c4 ♘c3 18. ♖xb7 ♗d8 19. ♗f4
cxd4



(Solution on page 155)

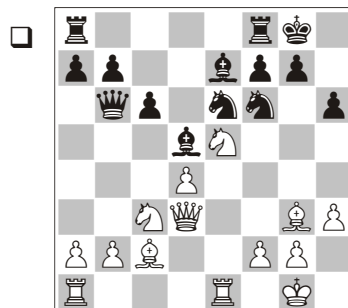
Exercise 3 Signal 6

*

Milov, Vadim
Erismann, Peter

Neuchatel 2012 (2)

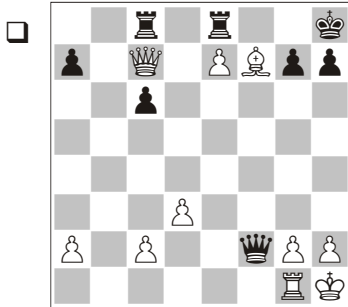
1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. e3 e5
4. ♙xc4 exd4 5. exd4 ♘f6
6. ♘f3 ♙e7 7. 0-0 0-0 8. ♘c3
♘bd7 9. ♖e1 ♘b6 10. ♙b3 c6
11. h3 ♘bd5 12. ♙g5 ♙e6
13. ♘e5 h6 14. ♙h4 ♘f4 15. ♙c2
♙d5 16. ♙g3 ♘e6 17. ♗d3
♗b6



(Solution on page 155)

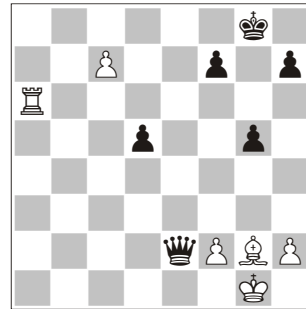
36. Obstructions

Tarrasch,Siegbert
NN



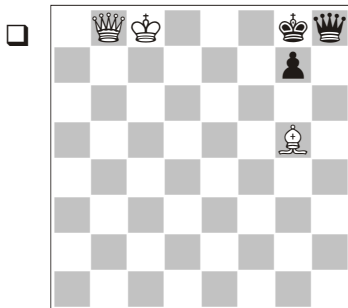
(Solution on page 212)

15.♖bxd4 ♔d6 16.♚h4 ♕e7
17.♚f4 ♕f6 18.♖c2 a5 19.♖d1
a4 20.b4 a3 21.bxc5 axb2 22.c6
♖xa2 23.♖b1 g5 24.♚e3 ♔a6
25.♖xb2 ♖xb2 26.♖xb2 ♗xg3
27.c7 ♚a8 28.♚xe8+ ♚xe8
29.♖xb6 ♕xd4 30.♗xd4 ♗e2+
31.♗xe2 ♚xe2 32.♖xa6



(Solution on page 214)

37. Around the corners



(Solution on page 213)

39. Coordination

Gaprindashvili,Nona
Servaty,Rudolf

Dortmund 1974 (3)

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 g6 5.c4 ♕g7 6.♕e3 ♗f6
7.♗c3 ♗g4 8.♚xg4 ♗xd4 9.♚d1
e5 10.♗b5 0-0 11.♕e2 ♚h4
12.♗xd4 exd4 13.♕xd4 ♚xe4
14.♕xg7 ♚xg2

38. A draw in hand

Brady,Stephen
Collins, Sam

Brannigan Cup 2012 (2)

1.♗f3 ♗f6 2.g3 c5 3.c4 b6
4.♕g2 ♕b7 5.0-0 e6 6.♗c3 ♕e7
7.b3 0-0 8.♕b2 d5 9.cxd5 exd5
10.d4 ♗a6 11.♖c1 ♖e8 12.♚d2
♗e4 13.♚f4 cxd4 14.♗b5 ♗ac5

