

YOUR JUNGLE GUIDE TO CHESS TACTICS

SHARPEN YOUR
TACTICAL SKILLS!

by
Peter Prohaszka



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Managing Editor
Romain Edouard

Assistant Editor
Daniël Vanheirzeele

Proofreader
Bob Holliman

Graphic Artist
Philippe Tonnard

Cover design
Iwan Kerkhof

Typesetting
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KEY TO SYMBOLS

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
▷	better is
≤	worse is
N	novelty
+	check
#	mate

EXERCISES DIFFICULTY

★ Very easy

★★ Easy

★★★ Medium

★★★★ Hard

★★★★★ Very hard

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- <https://chess24.com/en>
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- <https://www.youtube.com/>

DATABASE

Mega Database 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Starting a journey as a chess author is not easy. Fortunately, I was not alone on the way. I received a great amount of help in writing this book to make it significantly better than it would otherwise have been. I would like to express my gratitude to everybody who helped me.

IM Yuriy Krykun shared from his own experience as an author, provided some general advice and wrote a kind foreword.

IM Brian Escalante, IM Aaron Grabinsky and GM Aleksandr Lenderman solved many puzzles and made important suggestions to improve the analysis.

GM Viktor Erdos, GM Tamas Banusz, GM Gabor Papp and GM Le Quang Liem sent me several amazing puzzles from their own practice.

GM John Burke, GM Gergely Antal, GM Benjamin Gledura, and GM Aram Hakobyan gave invaluable help with proof-solving many of the chapters while making a lot of great suggestions along the way. In addition, all of them drew my attention to great combinations from their own practice, and most of them made their way into this book.

I would like to thank my friend NM Tom Polgar-Shutzman who undoubtedly helped me the most with this project. He checked every puzzle I put in the book, recommending a difficulty level for each one of them – after proof-solving almost all of the book! He also gave me invaluable help in improving on the clarity of the ideas the reader will encounter. In addition, the reader will meet a few of his combinations he generously shared with me.

Special thanks go to my former student and 2018 Hungarian Woman's Champion, WIM Bianka Havanecz, who dedicated a lot of her time and proof-solved almost half of the book! Thanks to her I made a great number of changes, all for the better. The reader can find one of her games in the

introduction to the chapter about traps, as I could not have possibly found a better illustration for the theme!

I would also like to say thank you to Romain Edouard and Thinkers Publishing for giving me a shot in writing my first book and believing in the project.

This book would not have been written in the first place without the support and encouragement of former World Champion GM Susan Polgar. I hope I managed to live up to her faith in me and in this book!

Last, but not least I would like to thank YOU, for purchasing the book. As you can see, it is a result of teamwork. It is going to be a useful guide for you to discover and rediscover the rich tactical landscape of the royal game. I wish you fruitful work and a lot of fun!

FOREWORD

I first met Peter at several tournaments in Europe earlier in my chess career — the chess world is small, after all! But I really got to know him when I started my graduate degree in St. Louis and joined the Webster University chess team.

There is no shortage of Grandmasters in 2020, and many of them happen to create various types of chess content, such as writing books and articles, or recording video courses. Some are quite gifted in this respect, while others are not as passionate or good at what they are doing. However, very soon after getting to know Peter, I came to realize that his passion for chess was endless. He is always curious about learning and discovering more when it comes to our royal game, and he won't stop until he finds the truth and every little finesse is addressed. On top of that, he is a very diligent person, a perfectionist: having been roommates with him for a while, I can tell you from experience that while it might be hard for him to start doing something, there is no stopping him when the process is already underway!

Such a personality and attitude, undoubtedly, couldn't result in a bad book. Quite the opposite: I believe that what you are holding in your hands is a fantastic toolbox and workbook for perfecting your tactical craft. At the same time, you are guaranteed to find plenty of beauty and entertainment within these pages.

The author has put an infinite amount of effort into handpicking these combinations — he even had to abstain from adding another few hundred stunning puzzles that happened not to suit his strictest criteria. The positions have been carefully checked with the best engines out there, so you surely won't find any combinations that are fishy or contain multiple winning lines.

To the best of my knowledge — and I speak as someone rather familiar with the chess market and various books of tactical puzzles — there isn't

a single other book that provides such an outstanding and comprehensive structure of tactical themes and motifs; this means your chess study will be as efficient as it gets.

All in all, I wholeheartedly recommend this work, and I genuinely believe it will help a wide variety of players feel a lot more confident when it comes to their tactical skills. Effort will be required on your part, but along the way you will also have a lot of fun, which definitely doesn't hurt!

Sincerely,
IM Yuriy Krykun
Saint Louis
November 2020

INTRODUCTION

Pattern recognition is perhaps the single most important thing in Chess. This is true in all three phases of the game and it applies to both positional and tactical themes.

The book you hold in your hands provides a sufficiently comprehensive overview of the latter. The main goal of this book is aimed at improving pattern recognition and tactical vision, while also treating the reader with nice combinations.

There are two parts to this book. The first 17 chapters elaborate on the most important motifs in practical chess. The remaining 8 chapters showcase the art of attack and defense. Certain motifs feel like they belong together and the order of the chapters in which they are discussed reflects that. All 25 chapters of this book begin with an introduction which is always designed to clearly illustrate the motif or theme at hand. Most but not all of the games here are classics. All the introductions are followed by training puzzles in order to reinforce pattern recognition and learning for what has been discussed beforehand.

It has to be emphasized that motifs in chess are interwoven and it is the rarest occasion in practical games that only one motif is present. Often, even a single move features multiple motifs and the one we are studying depends on which aspect of the move we are looking at. It was not an easy feat to sort the puzzles appropriately. Therefore, the approach I took when assorting the puzzles was to decide which theme or motif best characterizes the tactic. The total number of training puzzles is 365, one for every day of the calendar year. All of them are from real games and most from Grandmaster practice. This should give the book more practical value. In some of the games the player found the solution, while in others the combination was missed.

With the training puzzles I put a lot of emphasis on being original. This means that during my research I mostly collected puzzles from recent games while also incorporating tactics from my own practice. There are a number of combinations from my friends' games as well that I am immensely grateful they shared with me.

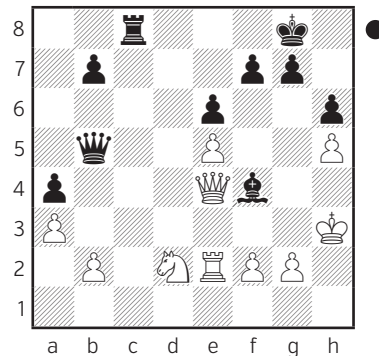
Every puzzle is rated from 1 to 5 stars with a 5-star puzzle being the hardest. Although I thought things through carefully, assessing the difficulty of a puzzle is clearly subjective. While many of the puzzles are fairly advanced, knowing the motif or theme and difficulty should somewhat ease the solving process. Generally, there are more difficult puzzles towards the end of the book. All of the puzzles are analyzed with strong cloud engines. Many of my friends helped me by proof-solving them as well; they spotted a lot of defensive resources that engines do not consider best but which look logical to human players. Sometimes, although not very often, the puzzles will have introductory moves as well. In many instances I continued analyzing the game, even when it was not part of the solution if I thought doing so provided additional value and entertainment. The solutions are quite detailed. In many of them the reader will find additional diagrams which often can be considered as extra challenges. The reader can decide to go for side quests which I hope provide extra value. Of course, it is also possible to just read the solutions.

Finally, I would like to mention that when I researched the puzzles, a huge criterion was that they should have only one solution. This

is true for the introduction and the 365 training puzzles alike. It also meant that I had to cut a huge number of puzzles where there were alternative ways to win. A number of these were extremely beautiful, so this process was not without pain. I would like to show two from these, just to give a better sense of what has been left out.

1

▷ **Zhaozhi Li (2395)**
▷ **John M. Burke (2562)**
Washington 2019



The problem with this puzzle is that the game continuation, although not the strongest, also wins.

38... ♖c2?!

38...f5!! A beautiful move that disrupts the harmony among White's pieces! **39.exf6** (**39. ♖f3** abandons the c2-square. **39... ♗c2-+**; **39. ♖xf4**

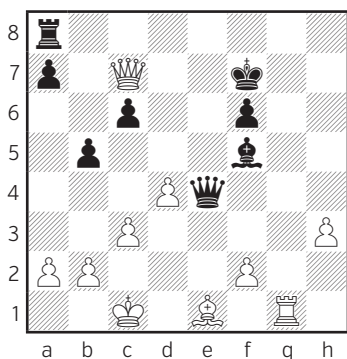
♖xe2–+) The 5th rank has been cleared. 39...♗xh5#

39.♖xc2 ♖xe2 40.♖c8+ ♔h7
41.♖c2+ ♖g6 42.hxg6+ ♔g7! 43.g3
♖xd2 44.♖c7 ♔xg6 45.gxf4 ♖xf2–+

...and Black won on move 57.

2

▷ J. Vykouk (2440)
▷ Gergely Antal (2553)
Slovakia 2018



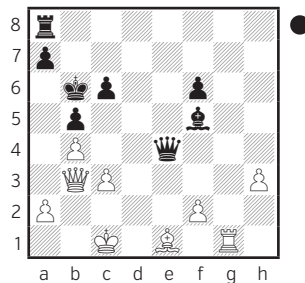
There is a remarkable win which my friend Gergely Antal missed.

25...♔f8?

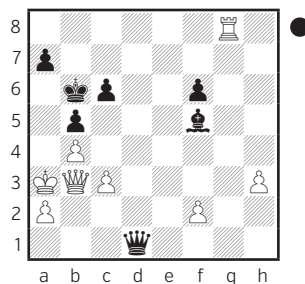
Since this move also wins, I could not include it in one of the chapters.

25...♔e6! A brave move. Black has to see very far to be able to make this decision with clear a conscious. 26.d5+! White is forced to give

checks for a while to avoid mate. 26...♔xd5 27.♖f7+ ♔c5! 28.b4+ ♔b6 29.♖b3 It seems as though White has everything under control, except there is...

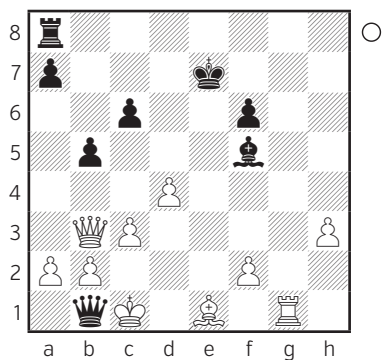


29...♖g8!! A beautiful deflecting move! 30.♖xg8 (30.♖xg8 ♖c2#) 30...♖xe1+ 31.♔b2 ♖b1+ 32.♔a3 ♖c1+ 33.♖b2 ♖d1 34.♖b3 Gergely told me that at move 25, he calculated until here(!), but believed it to only be a perpetual check after 34...♖c1+. However, Black has a win...

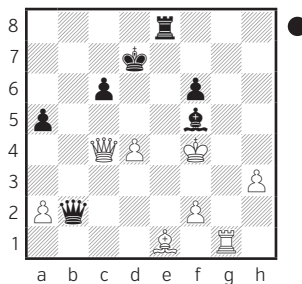


34...♔c2! (34...♖c1+) 35.♖b2 (35.♖e6 ♖c1#) 35...♔h7!!–+ and a double attack on g8 and a4 wins the game. What a beautiful variation!

26.♖g7+ ♔e8 27.♖g8+ ♔e7 28.♖b3 ♖b1+?



bxc4 33. ♕xc4 ♖xb2+ 34. ♔e3 ♔d7+
35. ♕f4



Two pawns down, Black was not sure about the strength of his attack and went for the draw.

Here is where he still had a complicated win.

28...a5! Here I will give a semi-forced computer line. 29. ♔d2 ♕d3+ 30. ♔c1 ♖e8! 31. c4 ♖b1+ 32. ♔d2

35... ♖xe1! 36. ♖g7+ (36. ♖xe1 ♕xf2#)
36... ♔d8 37. ♖g8+ ♔c7 38. ♔xf5
♕xf2+ 39. ♔g6 ♖g3+ 40. ♔f7
♕d6 41. ♖g7 ♖e7+ 42. ♔g8 ♖xg7+
43. ♔xg7 f5-+ According to strong engines, Black should win this end-game.

29. ♔d2 ♕d3+ 30. ♔c1 $\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$

PART 1. THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF TACTICS IN CHESS

1. DOUBLE ATTACK

INTRODUCTION

The double attack is perhaps the most common tactical motif, so I feel it appropriate to start my book with a chapter about it. Many times, other motifs are connected with or built upon a double attack, so you are going to see it throughout the whole book.

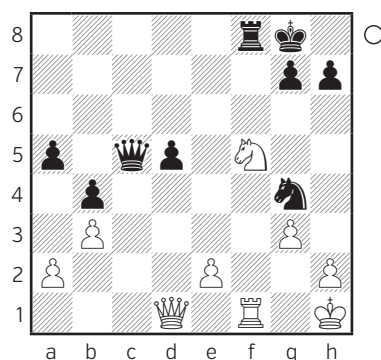
Usually, if you attack an enemy piece, it can be moved away or defended. Although sometimes the opponent can respond by creating a bigger threat on his own. What if we threaten to capture two pieces at the same time though? Suddenly, it becomes much harder if not outright impossible to cover everything.

There are a few forms of a double attack. One piece can attack two enemy pieces. It can attack a piece and simultaneously threaten mate. It is also possible that we “only” create two possible threats. As Nimzowitsch said: sometimes a threat is

stronger than its execution. In some infrequent cases, two different pieces create two different threats. You can create a double attack with any unit on the chessboard, but double attacks created by knights and pawns deserve their own separate chapter. For now, let us look at a few examples how long-range pieces do it.

1

► **Borje Jansson**
► **Krzysztof Pytel**
Stockholm 1975



27. ♕d4!

White has created actually not two, but three threats. The c5-queen and

the g4-knight are hanging, while White is also threatening mate in one on g7.

27... ♖xf5

Black eliminated the dangerous knight, but this cost him a queen.

We can already see how tactics are interconnected. Black cannot take the queen because of a knight's check and a back-rank mate!

a) 27... ♖xd4 28. ♘e7+! ♔h8 29. ♖xf8#;

b) 27... ♖c7 Black could save his queen and defend the g7-pawn, but he loses his knight on g4. 28. ♖xg4+- White achieve d his objective and won a piece.

28. ♖xc5 ♖xf1+ 29. ♔g2

The rest was a formality.

29... ♖f2+ 30. ♔h3 h5 31. ♖xd5+ ♔f8 32. ♖xh5!?

White transformed his queen advantage into a winning pawn endgame. We are going to touch on the "simplification" motif briefly in the Endgame Chapter.

32... ♖xh2+ 33. ♔xg4 ♖xh5 34. ♔xh5 ♔f7 35. ♔g5 ♔e6 36. ♔f4 ♔d5 37. e4+

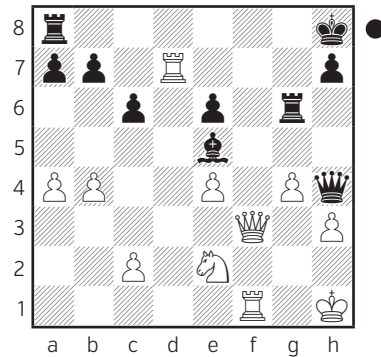
♔e6 38. e5 ♔e7 39. ♔f5 ♔f7 40. e6+ ♔e7 41. ♔e5 ♔e8 42. ♔d6 1-0

2

▷ Nelson Dantas

▷ Bernardo Wexler

Mar del Plata 1951



In this example we are going to witness strong, precise play by Black with a double attack crowning his efforts at the end!

29... ♖f6!

Leaves White no option but to move his queen to g2, the only square where she can defend the f1-rook.

30. ♖g2 ♖af8!

Black follows the rule of thumb that says, when you are attacking, include all your pieces!"

31. ♖xf6

White is forced to take. If he moves his rook away from f1 or defends it with the other rook, Black will invade on f2 with dire consequences.

31. ♖fd1 ♜f2–+ or 31. ♞dd1 ♜f2!–+

31... ♜xf6 32. ♘g1!

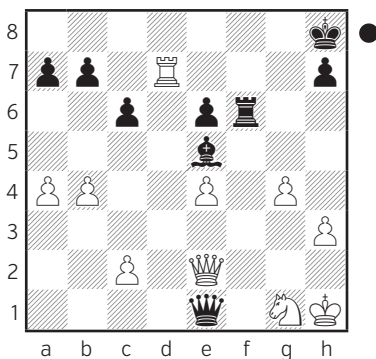
White sets up a clever trap.

32. ♜d1 ♜f2–+

32... ♞e1!

32... ♜f2? This move would decide the game in many variations but here it runs into the very strong 33. ♘f3! and suddenly White would be back in the game. This line should warn us never to underestimate our opponent's position, even when it seems to have collapsed. 33... ♜xg2 34. ♘xh4=

33. ♞e2



White is trying to exchange queens which would give him relief, but...

33... ♜f2!

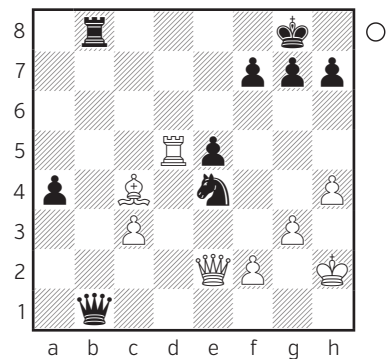
The double attack decides the fate of the game! White cannot avoid losing a queen or getting mated on h2, so he resigned. A worthy finish of a strongly led attack!

33... ♜f2! 34. ♞xe1 ♜h2#

0–1

3

► Bent Larsen
 ► Laszlo Szabo
 Beverwijk 1967



The great Dane defeated Hungarian GM Laszlo Szabo, a three-time World Championship Candidate, by creating double attack after double attack until Black could not defend anymore!

32. ♕d3!

The first double attack which hits the queen and knight. But Black can still fight on by creating a counter threat.

32. ♖xe5? would lead nowhere: 32... ♗d6=.

32... ♗xc3!

If White takes the queen, his own would be lost. He had other plans in mind...

33. ♖xe5!

The second double attack!

The bishop is still attacking the queen while the queen now attacks the knight. Notice that Black's rook is also in sight of the queen on e5, even if it is protected for the moment...

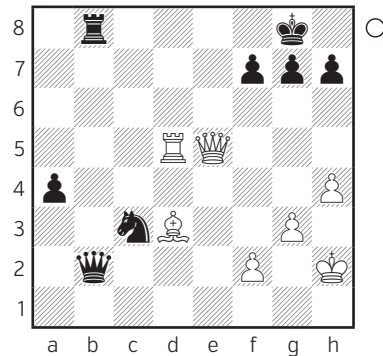
33. ♕xb1? ♗xe2≠ would actually leave Black on top because he is two pawns up for the moment.

33... ♖b2

33... ♖b4!? This move was perhaps a better try and would have demanded precise play from White. 34. ♖d4! The strongest move and not an obvious one.

[34. ♖b5?! is still playable, but after 34... ♖xb5 (Of course not 34... ♗xb5 35. ♖xb8+-.) 35. ♖e8+ ♖f8 36. ♕xh7+! ♗xh7 37. ♖xf8 ♖f5 Black might be able to erect a fortress.]

34... ♖f8 (34... ♖b2 35. ♖f4+-) 35. ♖f4 ♖c8 36. ♕c4!+- Attacks c3 and f7 simultaneously and finishes the game.

**34. ♖b5!!**

Again, we see how a double attack is related to other motifs. If Black did not have back rank issues, he would have been just fine. White attacks everything and disrupts the communication between the black pieces.

34... ♖xf2+

Black still had an intermediate check. Unfortunately for him, after the white king moves away, he is not able to harass it or defend both of his currently hanging pieces.

a) 34... ♖xb5 35. ♕e8#;

36. ♕xc3

b) 34... ♘xb5 35. ♕xb8#;

Thanks to three subsequent double attacks(!), White won a piece and a few moves later the game.

c) 34... ♕xb5 35. ♙xb5+- Black cannot recapture on b5 so it is hopeless.

35. ♔h3 ♖f8

36...g6 37. ♙c4 ♕g1 38. ♕f3 ♕c1
39. ♖c5 ♙g7 40. ♖c7 ♔h6 41.g4 f6
42.g5+

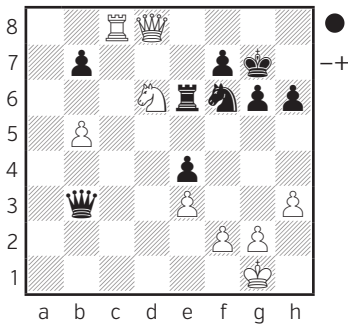
35... ♖c8 36. ♖b8+- is actually even stronger than taking on c3.

1-0

PUZZLES

1

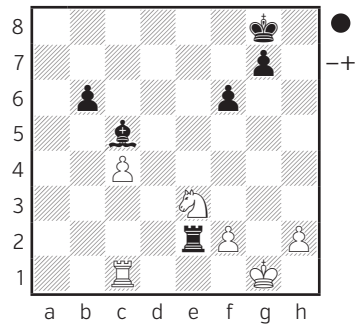
▷ Kacper Piorun [2637]
 ▶ Hrant Melkumyan [2654]
 World Blitz Championship 2019



★
 Black to move

2

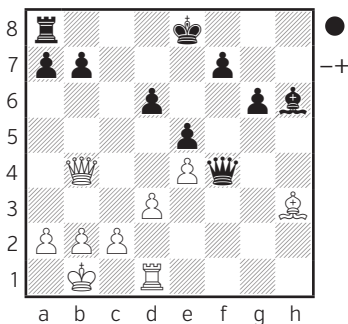
▷ David Mirzoyan [2350]
 ▶ Christopher Repka [2524]
 Batumi 2018



★
 Black to move

3

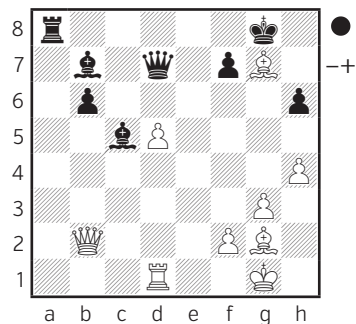
▷ Azamat Utegaliyev [2502]
 ▶ Vladimir Fedoseev [2677]
 Moscow 2019



★
 Black to move

4

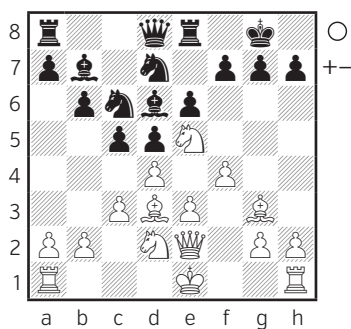
▷ Andrey Esipenko [2412]
 ▶ Valeriy Kazakovskiy [2342]
 World Blitz Championship 2019



★
 White previously took on g7 with his bishop. What is your response?

5

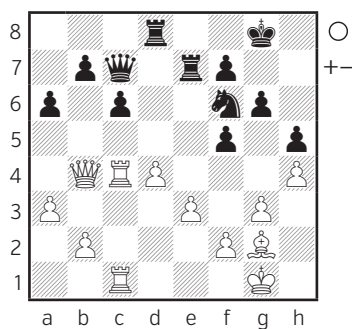
- ▷ Peter Prohaszka [2591]
 ▶ Christopher Repka [2473]
 Austria 2016



★
 Black just played 11...♘f6-d7.
 What would you do?

6

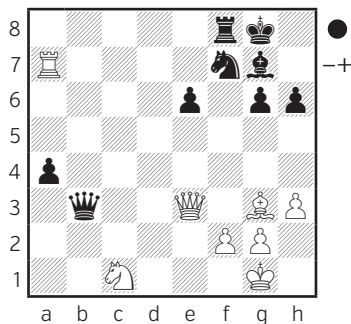
- ▷ Baadur Jobava [2673]
 ▶ Aleksandar Indjic [2566]
 World Blitz Championship 2019



★★
 White to move

7

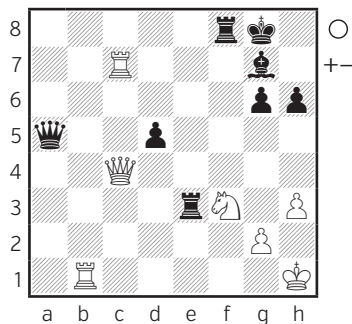
- ▷ Dmitry Bocharov [2524]
 ▶ Yangyi Yu [2738]
 World Rapid Championship 2019



★★
 Black to move

8

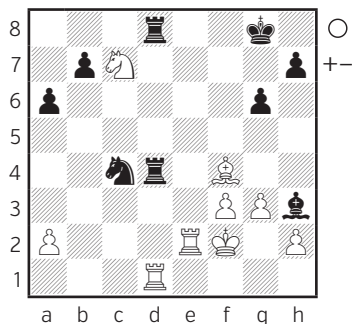
- ▷ Alexander Motylev [2640]
 ▶ Aleksandar Indjic [2619]
 World Rapid Championship 2019



★★
 White to move

9

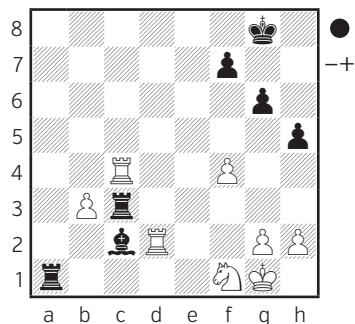
- ▷ **Shakhriyar Mamedyarov**
 ▶ **Boris Gelfand**
 World Rapid Championship 2019



White to move

10

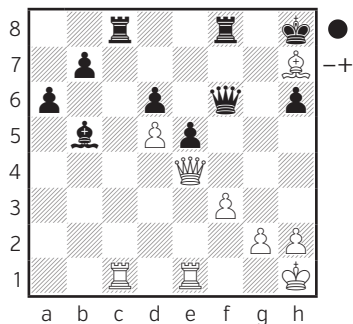
- ▷ **Anton Demchenko [2655]**
 ▶ **S.L. Narayanan [2611]**
 Grand Swiss 2019



White wanted to exchange rooks with
 35. ♖b4-c4. What did he forget about?

11

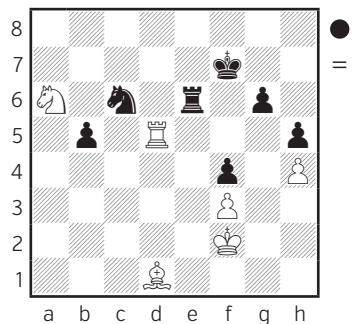
- ▷ **Jerzy Jesus Perez Leiva [2313]**
 ▶ **Nikolas Theodorou [2546]**
 Merida 2018



Black has a clearly better position, even
 by making a neutral move. However, he
 can also decide the game immediately
 with precise play. How to do it?

12

- ▷ **Dmitry Andreikin [2724]**
 ▶ **Alireza Firouzja [2723]**
 World Rapid Championship 2019



White took on a6 on the previous move.
 How would you react with Black?