

Magic Chess Moves

Puzzles Powering Practical Performance

By

Michal Konopka



Quality Chess
www.qualitychess.co.uk

Contents

Key to Symbols Used	4
Foreword by David Navara – Combine the Pleasant with the Useful	5
Preface – Beginning from the end...	9
Introduction	17
1 The Chess Shop on Wenceslas Square	19
2 A Few Words on Tactics	27
3 Solving Positions – A Trainer’s Card Index	31
4 Studies – Excellent Material for Training	35
5 Selecting Positions for the Card Index	47
6 Exercises Level 1	75
7 Exercises Level 2	97
8 Exercises Level 3	115
9 Solutions to Level 1	139
10 Solutions to Level 2	219
11 Solutions to Level 3	294
Name Index	363

Combine the Pleasant with the Useful



A headline can sometimes mislead. I am not going to encourage you to study chess websites while at work, or to play with a chess set under your desk at school, or to read chess magazines over dinner. At the end of the day, I know from personal experience that people who are drawn to such bad habits should not generally be encouraged in them. But if you very much love the royal game, there is something else that I advise you to do – buy this book, find some free time, and try to solve the exercises in it. I am sure that will be both pleasurable and useful to you.

The author of the book, International Master Michal Konopka, is not only a strong practical player but also a highly qualified trainer. His achievements in the latter field make for particularly impressive reading. He was especially successful in working with IM Jan Bernášek and Grandmasters Viktor Láznička and Jan Krejčí during their rise up the rankings. Michal also has experience of working as a second. For example he helped WGM Eliška Richtrová to her success in the 1990 Interzonal Tournament at Azov, and in 1997 he was my own helper in the second half of the Dutch super-tournament at Wijk aan Zee. Michal prepared Láznička for his trip to the 2009 World Cup, where the Czech grandmaster eliminated the star players Morozevich and Bologan from the contest. And not the least significant fact is that for the past ten years Michal Konopka has been selected to be captain of the Czech national team. We have known each other for a long time, and I can confirm that he takes a responsible approach to his work.

This book contains a large collection of examples aimed mainly at training your calculation and developing your combinative vision. As a rule, the examples incorporate surprising tactical motifs that will command your attention. The author has gathered his material from games, chess literature and databases of endgame studies, but he has not been content with simply collecting positions. These days there is a large amount of material accessible, but by no means all of it is suited to the training process. The author has taken great care to include only the most effective examples in his book, and I can assure you his efforts have not been in vain. As a trainer and a strong player, he has given attention not only to the dramatic impact of the solution, but above all to its efficacy as material for training. For this very reason the book avoids giving positions where, in addition to the pretty combination, there is an alternative simple solution. Moreover, in several cases the author has found a combination to be unsound, and where necessary he has corrected many an error which less self-critical authors have permitted to migrate from book to book. Nor has Michal included in his collection any examples where the solution is so obvious as to come to mind straight away. To be suitable, the examples shouldn't be too complicated, but must always require a distinct effort. You will not succeed in solving them just by applying familiar stereotypes.

The endgame studies, like the positions from play, have been selected most expediently from the viewpoint of training. Of their soundness – the fact that there is only one solution – I think there is no need to write. What is more important is that the author has unfailingly avoided any “number-crunching” studies – such studies, while culminating in stupendous wins or astounding stalemates, cannot be solved within a reasonable time without the aid of computer technology, even by strong grandmasters. The studies in this book can be solved perfectly well, given a certain level of playing strength, inventiveness and persistence. They therefore serve not only to train your powers of calculation and combinative vision, but also to deepen your endgame knowledge.

In selecting the examples, the author has also given much attention to how the solver's task should be worded. Michal has proceeded from the logical assumption that the training process is all the more fruitful the more closely it resembles an actual game. He doesn't announce how complicated the exercise is, and as a rule he presents it without any prompts of the “White to play and win” type. Your task will usually be to find the strongest move, to work out the main variations and, where necessary, to evaluate them correctly.

A difference between this book and other collections of chess tests is that an attractive combination may come up against a no-less-remarkable refutation. So in trying to find the solution, you will be learning to detect your own tactical possibilities while not forgetting about your opponent's either.

I must also point out the painstaking care with which the author has worked on the positions he presents. He has collaborated with chess historians and others to unearth extra facts about the publication of games whose origins were shrouded in mystery.

The examples that went into this book are not widely known, but I had met with some of them before. A few years ago, I participated in some of Michal Konopka's training sessions with Viktor Láznička, and I also often visited Michal at home. After a chat about chess matters, there was always some time for the solving of studies or combinations from games. Some were not difficult, others were quite complicated – but they were all interesting and demanded patience, chess-playing strength and imagination for their solution. I admit I didn't by any means always succeed. But that just goes to show that the solving of exercises is not an empty waste of time, even for grandmasters. This book contains positions of the most varied degrees of difficulty, so it will interest chessplayers of a wide range of strengths. But above all the book is intended for trainers and for those who want to improve their tactical powers or practise them in an entertaining way. True, exercises of this kind will not help you fill the gaps in your opening repertoire, but if you work at solving them conscientiously, they will teach you to react better in situations where you need to think with your own head. And in chess, fortunately, that means most situations.

In the period from 2005 to 2007, I regularly solved a variety of positions and was fairly well prepared in the tactics department. Although I didn't know the openings too well at that time, I succeeded in scoring 50% in the Wijk aan Zee super-tournament. Five years later, I scored two fewer points in the same event. There were of course a number of reasons for this, but a major one was that I had neglected to train my calculating skill and solve exercises. I would emerge from the opening with an acceptable position, but afterwards commit crude oversights. Why hadn't I practised solving exercise positions before the tournament? Again there were several reasons, but not the least important was the fact that I didn't have a suitable collection of such positions to hand. One such collection is the book that you now have before you. I wish you success, and may solving the exercises give you pleasure!

David Navara

Introduction

Dear Readers!

You are holding in your hands a book that aims to entertain you and test your chess abilities at the same time. You will be invited to solve a collection of exercise positions, something in the nature of chess crosswords or Sudoku. But my wish was not just to publish an anthology of positions with no accompanying text. I therefore appended some of my reflections on combinations, on tactics (and how tactics can be coached), and especially on the stock of positions in a card index – that is, on topics that could be of interest to a chess trainer. It is only after this prelude that you will proceed to the diagrams of positions for solution – an assortment of interesting situations from practice and from chess compositions. It is possible (even highly probable) that some of the positions are familiar to you already. But then as Ringo Starr said at his concert in Prague, before performing the “Yellow Submarine” song: “Anyone who doesn’t know this next number has most likely come to the wrong concert.” It would indeed be a shame if you didn’t know at least some of the examples that this book contains. But I hope there will be many unfamiliar positions that will give you enjoyment and teach you something.

Books on tactics, unlike those devoted to the openings, don’t lose their topicality with the passing of time. In the openings there is always something going on, improvements are made, the assessments of variations are refined. Openings monographs that came out in the 1970s and 80s are today mostly obsolete. Yet a dual attack carried out by a chess master of the nineteenth century can even now be included in our book without hesitation.

Needless to say, in our country [*Editor’s Note: This means Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic.*] books on tactics and collections of positions for solution have appeared before. Two classics immediately spring to mind: *Modern Chess Tactics* by Luděk Pachman, and *The Best Move* by Vlastimil Hort and Vlastimil Jansa. Pachman’s book is intended for study, the combinations in it are classified by theme, and at the end of each chapter there are diagrams of positions for solution (as there ought to be, in books of this kind!). An analogous structure has also been adopted by authors of similar books published in other countries. The book by the two Vlastimils went down very well with its readers, and became widely known not only here but all over the world. It contains 230 positions for solution, with some witty commentaries. I suspect that one cause of the book’s great popularity was the fact that the positions were taken exclusively from the two grandmasters’ own games, and from all phases of play. In that book, the reader is set some exercises even in the opening stage, he has to demonstrate knowledge of the endings, calculate variations competently, and cope with positional problems. Points are awarded for correct answers, and in this way the reader acquires knowledge and skills in a playful manner, wholly in keeping with the spirit of chess.

In recent years, numerous books on this subject have been published abroad. Ingenious authors have thought up all kinds of novelties to attract readers. John Emms, for instance, in *The Ultimate Chess Puzzle Book* (2001), added a chapter with the heading “Find the Wrong Move!” The reader’s task is to discover some losing continuation which allows a combination from the opposing side. And Maxim Blokh, in *his* works on tactics, incorporated some artificially-constructed positions that have two solutions – one if White is to move, the other if Black is. Joe Gallagher, in *365 Ways to Checkmate* (2013), gives the reader some hints according to an interesting system. On the other hand, hastily concocted publications keep appearing in quite large numbers. The authors have simply gathered a vast quantity of positions and brought out a book of them – a mass of diagrams, and at the end (very briefly) the solutions. In general, only the main variations are given, with no verbal commentary – at most there is sometimes a preface. And although there are computer programs to detect unsound combinations, we often find that such books contain positions with no solution, that is, combinations with “holes” in them.

Why have I written a book of my own on this subject? During my activity as a chess trainer, I put together a card index of positions that appealed to me and attracted me, for one reason or another. (Some positions from my card index have already been published in *100+1 Nejkrásnějších studií aneb Absolutní pohoda* (2006) by David Kaňovský. I had shown them to meetings of juniors many years ago, and David had noted down some of the positions he particularly liked.) I demonstrate the positions from my card index in training sessions, and give them to my students to solve. They are basically exercises with an original solution or some noteworthy method of play. The wish to acquaint a wider circle of chessplayers with this or that position is what spurred me to write the book.

Chapter 2

A Few Words on Tactics

The vast majority of exercises in this book will involve tactics and a test of the reader's combinative powers. This is not the place to examine a theory of combinations and classify individual combinative types – our aim is different. On the subject of tactics I will, however, say a few words.

A Brief Digression: Who was the greatest tactician?

The ability to play good combinations – to discern tactical motifs and correctly work out variations, at speed – this is among the most important qualities that any strong player must possess. You may have superb knowledge of openings, middlegame plans and basic endgames, but without accurate calculation of variations you will not go far. This quality is often directly dependent on a chess player's age. For example, veteran players will generally calculate variations less precisely and more slowly, and rely more on experience and intuition, and efficiency gradually declines. This decline can be slowed (and perhaps even halted totally for a while) with the help of regular training to exercise your tactics. Fortunately, at the present time there are a number of excellent books that can assist you in this. Every chessplayer ought to, from time to time, open an anthology of combinations and try to solve some examples, giving his brain a "workout" and ascertaining its current condition.

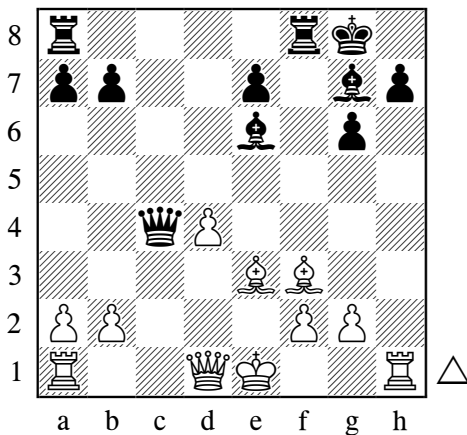
At the Turin Olympiad in 2006 I was very surprised to see how Richard Belek, the then-captain of the Czech women's team, gave the players tactical exercises to solve even in the moments before their games started. I had always thought that just before play this was inadmissible. A player has to be relaxed, mentally fresh, and prepared above all in the opening department. But Richard knew what he was doing – this system is also applied by some other trainers, and even Mark Dvoretsky gave his opinion that it could be very useful.

Here is a paradox. When speaking of combinative players or simply tacticians, most of us chessplayers have "attacking players" in mind – those striving constantly to attack, such as Mikhail Tal, Alexei Shirov or someone from the ranks of the old masters. I recall, however, what one wise grandmaster once said: in his opinion the greatest tacticians were Tigran Petrosian and Anatoly Karpov – who were renowned as positional players. He said they played so cautiously because they saw any potential tactical possibilities a long way ahead. And they implemented plans that were always reinforced with fine tactical nuances and small traps. Was he right? His viewpoint

is an interesting one, but I dare say it merely confirms the fact that any great player has to be an excellent tactician apart from anything else. And from this, one important conclusion follows: an excellent tactician is by no means necessarily an aggressive, attacking player.

**Some episodes from history:
Even the great and famous can sometimes
make mistakes**

In this context I would like to recall a self-critical passage in the annotations by **Mikhail Botvinnik**, the sixth World Champion, to the 7th game of his return title match against **Vassily Smyslov** in 1958.



From the diagram position, Smyslov, with White, played:

16. ♖b3

And offered a draw, which Botvinnik accepted. On this subject he writes:

“After the game, my old friend Abram Model pointed out that I could have played 16... ♜xf3! with advantage. This was a case of my old malady – weak combinative vision! During the game I had examined the sacrifice only after a preliminary queen exchange on b3, overlooking that after 17. ♛xc4 Black has the

important intermediate move 17... ♜xe3†, winning. In fact, after 16... ♜xf3 17. gxf3 ♛c6 18. ♛d1 ♘d5 19. ♜h3 (19. ♜c1 ♛e6 20. b3 ♜f8 also favours Black) 19... ♛e6, in return for the exchange, Black wins the pawn on a2 – and then by creating a second passed pawn, on the queenside, and attacking the white king which lacks a safe shelter, he would have excellent chances of success.”

In his books, Botvinnik repeatedly mentions that tactics were not his strongest suit. The reason, as he saw it, was that he had learnt to play chess too late – at the age of twelve. I think Mikhail Moiseyevich was judging himself too severely: the author of the famous combination in Botvinnik – Capablanca, AVRO 1938, cannot of course have been a bad tactician. And as to the fact that he missed something – well, that can happen to anyone...

Let’s continue our historical excursus. Here is what the fourth World Champion, Alexander Alekhine, wrote about his successor, Dr Max Euwe:

“In evaluating Euwe’s style, critics have made many mistakes. Euwe’s chess talent is purely tactical, in contrast to such masters as Steinitz, Rubinstein, Capablanca or Nimzowitsch. Euwe is a tactician who has resolved to turn himself into a good strategist at any price. Thanks to his tactical abilities, Euwe has never once embarked on an unsound combination through miscalculating.”

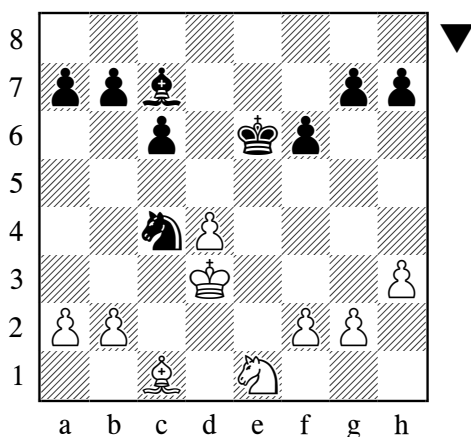
This is an excerpt from Alekhine’s article “Struggle for the Title of World Champion”, published in the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper in 1937, after the end of the return title match. Incidentally, Alekhine had already given a similar characterization of Euwe in 1927 after their first duel (a training match of 10 games, which Alekhine won by the

minimal margin of $5\frac{1}{2}$ – $4\frac{1}{2}$) and before their first World Championship match in 1935.

Anyone familiar with Max Euwe's games might find such an assessment of his style surprising. Yet who was better placed than Alekhine to perceive and feel the qualities of an opponent he had played about 90 times? And who other than the superb "tactician" Euwe could have won a match against a player of Alekhine's attacking style? However, we are now going to see two examples of how even an acknowledged tactician can go wrong. Both games were played by Euwe during his tenure as World Champion, that is, when he was at the height of his powers.

Emanuel Lasker – Max Euwe

Nottingham 1936



After $23\dots b5$ or $23\dots d6$, Black is slightly better. Yet Euwe played:

23...♙a5??

He was overlooking an obvious intermediate move:

24.b4!

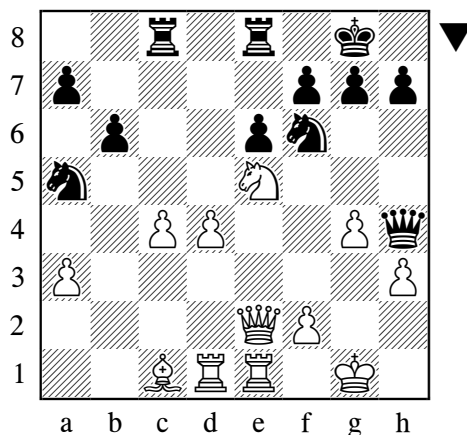
After this, White wins a piece.

24...♙xb4 25.♘c2

And Black soon resigned.

Alexander Alekhine – Max Euwe

The Hague (10) 1937



Alekhine's last move was $23.g4$. Black's queen is in a dubious position, and White plans ♔g2 followed by ♗f3 . Objectively, however, the position is only slightly in White's favour. Black has time to cope with the threat, for example by $23\dots h6$ when after $24.\text{♔g2}$ Black has $24\dots \text{♗h7}$, creating an escape route for the black queen.

But Euwe played:

23...♗c6??

And after White's reply, he lost a whole piece:

24.♔g2

The threat is $25.\text{♗f3}$, and the black knight on $f6$ has no square to move away to. There followed:

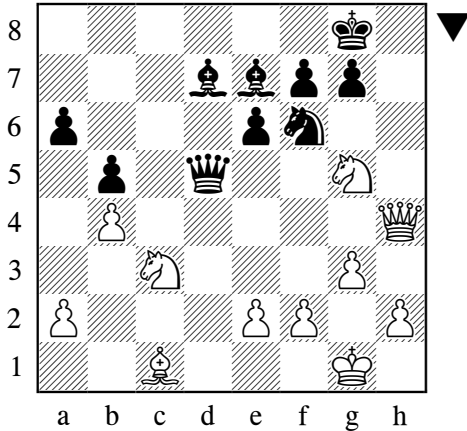
24...♗xe5 25.dxe5

And White won.

And now one more example, this time one of *mutual blindness* on the part of the two legendary tacticians. Again it is taken from their 1937 rematch.

Alexander Alekhine – Max Euwe

Rotterdam (16) 1937



Euwe should have played 25...♖d6, with approximate equality. Instead, he chose:

25...♖e5?

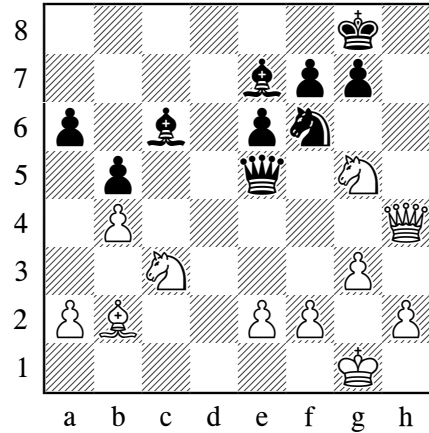
It's astounding that both World Champions failed to notice a familiar tactical ploy (and this quickly became a worldwide sensation). Alekhine replied:

26.♘b2?

And yet he could have played: 26.♖h8†! ♜xh8 27.♞xf7† ♜g8 28.♞xe5 ♘xb4 29.♞xd7 ♞xd7 30.♞e4 White would be much better. Euwe didn't notice anything either. He continued:

26...♘c6?

And again Alekhine missed it...

**27.a3?**

In this position 27.♖h8†! is even stronger, because after 27...♜xh8 28.♞xf7† ♜g8 29.♞xe5 the bishop on c6 is hanging.

27...♘d6

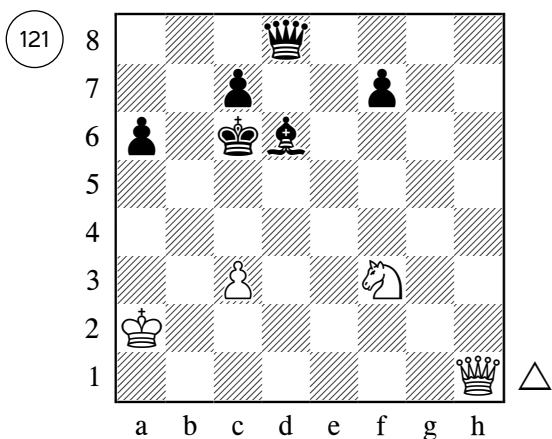
The combination is now no longer playable, and the game was finally drawn on the 65th move.

The above examples merely serve as confirmation that mistakes can be made even by players who calculate variations superbly. "To err is human."

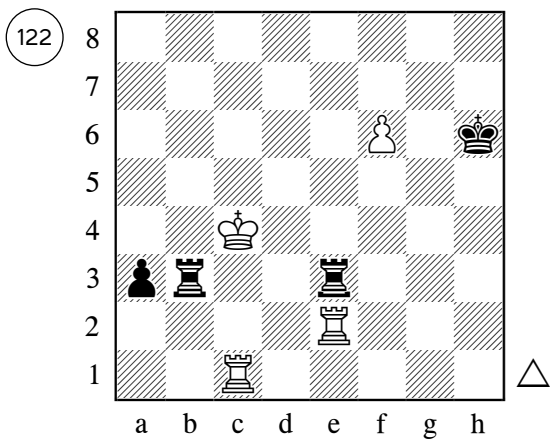
Chapter 7

Exercises Level 2

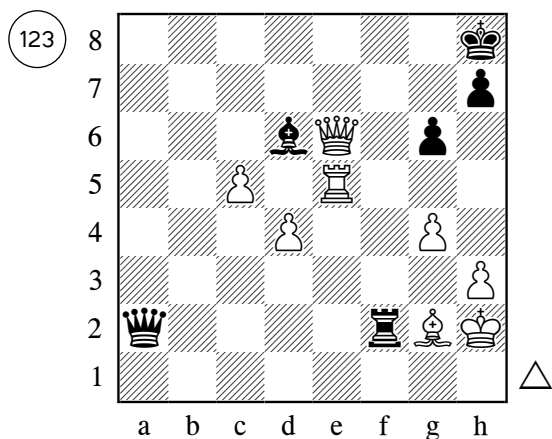
Kubbel, 1938



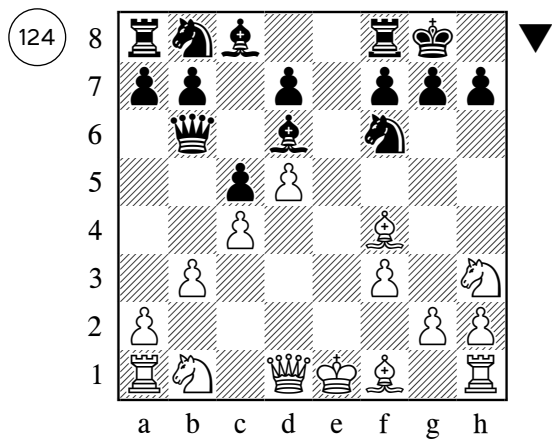
Mandler & König, 1924



Navara – Sokolov, Mainz 2009



Gormally – Hebden, Paignton (var) 2000

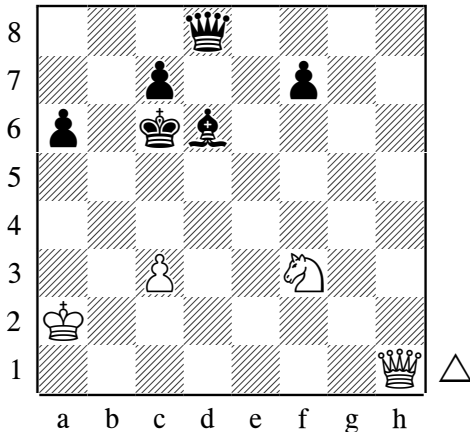


Chapter 10

Solutions to Level 2

121. Leonid Kubbel

hm Shakhmaty v SSSR 1938



It looks as if a tempting double check on d4 or e5 ought to settle matters quickly, but that is not the case. White will have to harness all the powers at his command to achieve the maximum cooperation between queen and knight, and to exploit the unfortunate placing of Black's forces.

1. ♖e5† ♜b6 2. ♝b1†!

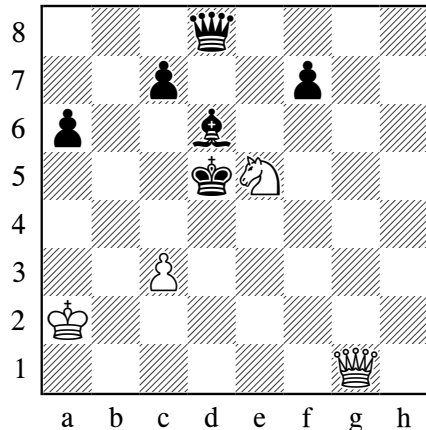
Instead 2. ♝c6† ♜a7 would be completely harmless.

2... ♜c5 3. ♝g1†

In the event of 3. ♝b4† ♜d5, Black defends.

3... ♜d5

The only answer, as 3... ♜b5 would lose the queen to 4.c4† ♜a4 5. ♝d1† ♜b4 6. ♖c6†.



4. ♝e3!

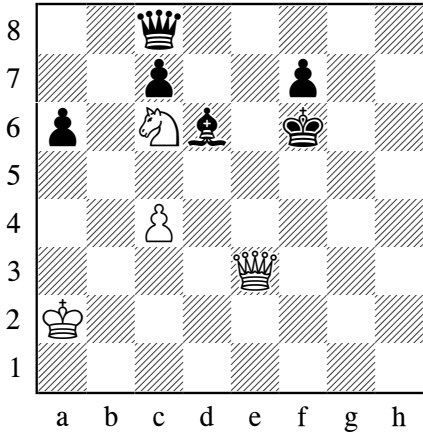
Bravo! Here it is – the winning formation. White threatens c3-c4†, winning the queen. Since 4... ♖xe5 loses to 5. ♝d3†, Black must move his queen away. Of all the possible squares to move to, we can immediately eliminate the dark ones, since after 5.c4† ♜e6 White would pick up the queen with the aid of a discovered check.

4... ♝c8

The alternatives are easier to refute:

4... ♝e8 5.c4† ♜e6 6. ♖g4† ♜d7 7. ♖f6†; or 4... ♝a8 5. ♝f3†; or finally 4... ♝g8 5.c4† ♜e6 6. ♖g4†.

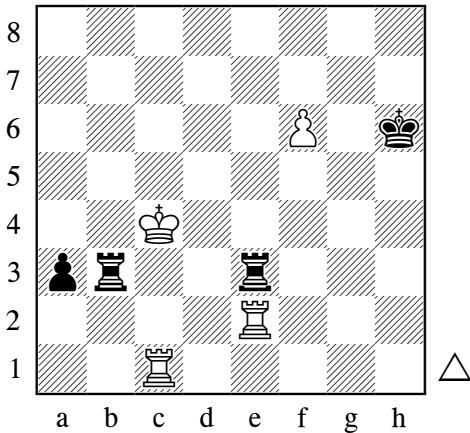
5.c4† ♔e6 6.♘c6†! ♕f6
Or 6...♔d7 7.♖h3†.



7.♖h6† ♕f5 8.♖h3†

122. Artur Mandler & Imre König

Wiener Schachzeitung 1924



Black loses a rook by force. It turns out that his own pawn on a3 spoils his defence!

1.f7! ♕g7

Against 1...♖f3, White wins with either the bloodthirsty 2.♖g2 or the prosaic 2.f8=♖† ♖xf8 3.♔xb3.

2.f8=♖† ♕xf8 3.♖f1† ♕e8

On 3...♖f3, the key idea is carried out by 4.♖ef2!. We now see clearly that without his a3-pawn, Black would be able to save himself by giving perpetual check with his rook along the third rank.

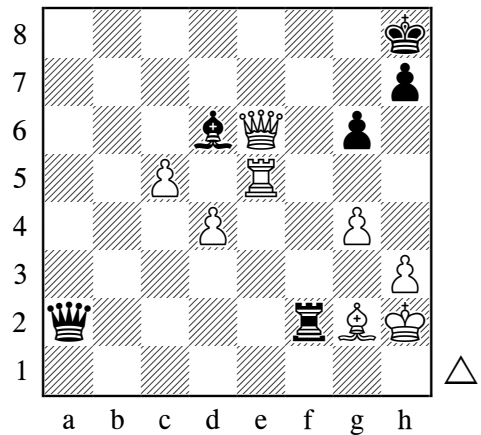
The same mechanism works in the case of 3...♔g7 4.♖g2† ♖g3 (or 4...♔h6 5.♖h1† ♖h3 6.♖gh2) 5.♖fg1.

4.♖fe1

White wins.

123. David Navara – Ivan Sokolov

Mainz (Fischer Random) 2009



And now for an example from “Fischer Random” chess! David was in time trouble and played a weak move:

37.♖xa2?

In his own words: “After the game I discovered the right idea with 37.♔h1!!. Black has no defence, as the following variations demonstrate: 37...♕xe5 (37...♖xg2 38.♖f6† ♕g8 39.♖e8†; 37...♖a1† 38.♖e1) 38.♖xe5† ♕g8 39.♕d5† This means he would have to exchange queens and withdraw his bishop to f8, and I could have won such a position even with my flag dangling.”

37...♙xe5† 38.dxe5

“Incredibly (there was an increment of about five seconds per move), in playing this move I lost on time.”

38...♞xa2

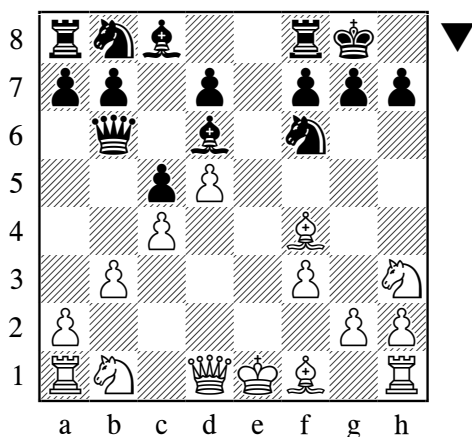
“By now the endgame is not easy for White. He loses one of his pawns and could have difficulty reaching a draw. Still, I feel that 39.♙g3 ought to be adequate to save him. After 39...♞e2 40.c6 ♞xe5 41.♙f4, his activity could be enough to draw in the case of 41...♞e7 42.g5; while in the event of 41...♞c5?! 42.♙e3 followed by 43.♙d4, it is Black who is taking the risks. (*Editor’s note:* According to the engine, the former is an understatement and 41...♞c5 42.♙e3 is winning for White.) But in time trouble I would quite likely have lost anyway.” – David Navara.

12...♙xf4 13.♘xf4 ♚f6

With a big advantage for Black.

124. Daniel Gormally – Mark Hebden

Paignton (var) 2000



Thanks to the weakening of the a1-h8 diagonal, the following combination is possible:

11...♘xd5! 12.cxd5

White also loses material after 12.♚xd5 ♙xf4 13.♘xf4 ♚f6; or 12.♙xd6 ♚xd6 13.♚xd5 ♚f6.