

# MASTER CHESS

## How to Attack in Chess

1



Lars Bo Hansen

# HOW TO ATTACK IN CHESS

Lars Bo Hansen



Master Chess

Lesson 1

**Text copyright © 2015 Lars Bo Hansen  
All Rights Reserved**

## **Table of contents**

[Introduction](#)

[How to read and study this lesson](#)

[How to attack in chess](#)

[Attacking principles in action](#)

[Tips for self-improvement](#)

[Master another chess topic](#)



## Introduction

As a chess player, you wish to win games, many games. But there is one thing you wish even more – to win in a spectacular manner. To organize your pieces in the best possible way and make the final strike at the right moment, check-mating your opponent.

This lesson is designed to help you become a skillful attacking player. You are going to learn *how to think* when building an attack, how to go forward with your plans without ‘losing the ball’, and bring home some well-deserved points. All you need to do it is learn the basic rules of attack and how to apply them.

Are you ready? Good. Let’s get started!

First, find a notebook and write down these four action steps. You are going to need them throughout the lesson, so you really don’t want to skip this part:

Step 1: Find the right target to attack!

Step 2: Activate all your pieces and bring them into the attack!

Step 3: Generate direct threats, forcing your opponent onto the defensive

Step 4: Look for forcing moves, combinations and strikes!

These are the four fundamental steps of conducting an attack in chess. They are universal, no matter if you play on scholastic or international level. Keep them next to your chess board while you are working on this lesson – and a copy under your pillow – until you realize that your mind is running the steps as an automated background process every time you play, without even being conscious about them.

Next, you’ll need to see the four steps in action. I have chosen a number of instructive Grandmaster games to show how the GMs apply the same four steps in their games.

Then, going through the games, pay close attention to my comments. They will keep you on track and help you see the logic behind the apparent magic at the board. Next time you play a game of your own, stick to what you’ve learned. Build your game in accordance with the same logic, use your creativity along the way, and I am sure you will

start enjoying chess on a whole new level.



## How to read and study this lesson

This edition is based on material from our Master Chess Workshops, which we conduct once a month in Orlando, Florida. The volume of the study corresponds to approximately one weekend of work. Studying chess on your own requires a good portion of self-discipline. On the plus side, you get a Grandmaster Lesson which you can return to over and over again.

How can you get the most out of the time spent on this lesson?

First of all, start with the chapter “How to Attack in Chess”. It builds the foundation for understanding the rest of the lesson.

Secondly, as I already said, write the four attacking principles down and prepare to see them in action. When going through the games, pay close attention to how Grandmasters apply these rules.

Then go over the games. Take your time. Read the comments. Try to guess the next moves. It is best if you do it with a study-friend. Talk to each other about what is happening in the game as it unfolds, about how the events reflect the rules. Don't get too caught up with specific variations; focus on understanding how the principles are used.

If you are an advanced tournament player and used to chess notation, you can proceed and go through the rest of the lesson directly on your digital device. All games are richly illustrated with diagrams of the key positions. When you visualize the moves between the diagrams without using a chess board you also improve your calculation ability.

If you are in the early stages of your chess career and calculating more than 3-4 moves ahead still feels challenging, the best way for you to study is to use a chess set.

Remember, in chess all principles serve as guidance; they are by no means a rigid checklist. There are no universal rules in chess. In all situations, pay close attention to the specific nature of the position! Then consider if and how the principles apply in this particular position.

Enjoy the lesson!

Lars Bo Hansen



## How to attack in chess

Conducting an attack is one of the most exciting aspects of chess. You zoom in on the Grand Prize – your opponent's king. Chess databases and magazines are filled with examples of beautiful attacks conducted by some of the greatest attacking players in chess history – Morphy, Alekhine, Tal, Fischer, Kasparov, to name just a few.

But how do they do it? What is the secret of successful attacking chess? It turns out that almost all decisive attacks follow four guiding principles:

- Find the right target to attack!
- Activate all your pieces and bring them into the attack!
- Generate direct threats, forcing your opponent onto the defensive
- Look for forcing moves, combinations and strikes!

Let's discuss these principles in a little more detail before seeing how they are applied in practice by Grandmasters.

Finding the right target to attack is the first step. But what is a good target? As already pointed out more than 100 years ago by the first World Chess Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz, a defensive line is strongest when all links in the chain are equally strong. But few defensive lines are equally strong in all links. Almost any chain has a weak link, including chess defenses.

When searching for a good target you should therefore start by looking for the weakest link in the opponent's defenses around the king. Often this is a pawn or square that is only defended by the king himself. The king is a poor defender! Remember also that it may be prudent to change your target as the attack moves along. The defender will often reinforce the initial target but in the process leave other targets vulnerable.

The next step is to include as many pieces as possible into the attack – preferably all pieces! Remember the maxim of former World Champion Garry Kasparov – probably the strongest player in chess history – that pawns are also attacking units and should be included as well. The overall objective is to maximize the attacking force so that it outnumbers the defense. That is what “The Wizard of Riga”, the

attacking genius and World Champion Mikhail Tal called the “Attacking Ratio”. If the Attacking Ratio is higher than one – that is when there are more attacking pieces than defensive pieces in the battle zone around the king – there is a good chance that the attack will crash through due to sheer force. Notice that Tal’s Attacking Ratio refers to relative force, not absolute force. The relevant measure is the relative number of pieces close to the king, not the absolute number of pieces on the board! A rook placed far away on the other side of the board is not included. This is why Tal, and all the other attacking giants, didn’t mind sacrificing material if that could help further the attack. They never bothered about piece count on the entire board, only in the vicinity of the king!

The third step of the attack involves generating direct threats that the opponent has to react to. This is important for two reasons. First, it maintains the initiative on your hands and prevents the opponent from launching a counterattack on YOUR king. Second, in order to organize a defense against direct threats the opponent often has to accept further weaknesses that can be targeted.

The fourth step in attacking chess is to look out for tactical shots, forcing moves, and combinations. Of course you should ALWAYS be attentive to tactical shots, even in earlier stages, but the likelihood that there will actually be a combination or tactical shot in the position increases dramatically if you have completed the three initial steps successfully! Combinations don’t materialize out of nothing; they are a consequence of active pieces and weaknesses in the opponent’s position. Sometimes a combinatory opportunity arises from a mistake by the opponent, but most often you have to “earn the right” to a tactical shot by putting the opponent under pressure through the prior three steps. I cannot stress this point enough. I have had chess students who complain that they spend hours solving puzzles or combination exercises but never get a chance to actually carry out a combination in their own games. When we then examine their games it almost always transpires that they have not followed the previous attacking principles, forgetting to do the groundwork that leads to combinatory opportunities. They have initiated unfounded attacks with too few pieces or targeted the wrong (strong) points in the opponent’s defensive line. In that case it is quite natural that they never get a

chance to show their combinatory skills! The more you adhere to the principles of attack, the more beautiful combinations you will have the pleasure of playing!

Of course the steps are interrelated. It might be that you first activate your pieces and bring them closer to the opponent's king – Tal called this strategy “launching” – and only then decide on the target. Or as you move attacking pieces into position, some direct threats emerge along the way. In any case systematically thinking in terms of targets – piece activation – direct threats – combinations is certain to improve your chances of successfully conducting an attack on the opponent's king.



## Attacking principles in action

Now, let us see how the four steps of attack are used by Grandmasters in real games.

### Carlsen – Wang Hao

*Biel 2012*

The World Number One on the rating list, the Norwegian prodigy Magnus Carlsen, is well known as an outstanding endgame player, but above all he is a universal player who is capable of playing all kinds of positions. In this game he shows how to conduct an attack using the four principles.

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0–0 5 Nf3**

As usual Carlsen quickly leaves the most well-trodden paths. The main line in this Nimzo-Indian is 5 a3.

**5...b6?!**

Although this has been played by a few strong Grandmasters, I believe 5...d5 or 5...c5 are better, taking a stance in the center.

**6 e4!**

Of course White seizes the chance to grab space in the center.

**6...c5**



**7 e5! Ne8**

7...cxd4 is strongly met by either 8 Nxd4 or 8 a3!

**8 d5! exd5 9 cxd5**



Clearly White has won the opening battle. His dominance of the center gives him a strong initiative.

**9...d6**

Black tries to fight back in the center.

**10 Bg5 f6 11 exf6 Nxf6**



**12 0-0-0! Bxc3**

Giving up the two bishops is a concession but otherwise the bishop might be stranded on b4 once White proceeds with Bd3 and Ne4.

**13 bxc3 Bg4 14 Re1!**

White is not afraid of the doubled pawns on the f-file as this provides him with play down the open g-file.

**14...Bxf3 15 gxf3**



Let's take stock now that the opening is over. White's pawns are not a happy sight from a structural perspective but he has a lot of active opportunities with the two bishops and open e- and g-files for the rooks. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, his king is safer than Black's. The next steps for White consist of activating the remaining pieces – Bf1 and Rh1 – and identify targets.

**15...Nbd7 16 Bd3**

The first target is found and Black has to react defensively – the threat is 17 Bxh7+.

**16...h6 17 Bf4 c4!**

A good idea; Black looks for counterplay against White's king. But of course White would never grab this pawn; it is much more important to keep the king safe while preparing the attack on the kingside.

**18 Bf5 Nc5 19 Rhg1**

The first target – h7 – has moved and White instead puts his sights on a new target – g7.

**19...Kh8**



**20 Rg6!**

Preparing to activate the second rook and batter up against the target on g7. Again Black has to react defensively.

**20...Rf7 21 Reg1 Qf8**



**22 Be3!**

In my view the most instructive move in the game. White asks himself how he can step up the pressure and infuse his pieces with even more

dynamic power. The text move prepares to transfer the bishop to d4, eyeing the target on g7.

### 22...Nxd5?!

So far Black has defended well, but this is too greedy. The pawn is of little significance – remember that attackers don't really care much about material – and it was better to defend g7 with 22...Nh5! Paradoxically, the knight on the rim turns out to be a strong defender, and Black would still be in the game.



### 23 Bd4!?

A difficult choice and I am not sure that Carlsen made the right one here. The move in the game is strong and follows the principles, but two other moves were perhaps even better. First, 23 Bxh6!? gxh6 24 Qd2! (threatens mate on h6) 24...Rf6 25 Qxd5 leads to a clear advantage for White because of Black's vulnerable king. Second, the simple 23 Bxc5! bxc5 (23...Rxf5 24 Bd4! wins – the target on g7 collapses!) 24 Be6 Nf4 25 Bxf7 Nd3+ 26 Kb1 Qxf7 27 Rxc7 Qxc7 28 Rxc7 Kxc7 29 Qa4 seems to lead to a winning position by force.

### 23...Nf6 24 Qd2!

A little move with large effect. The queen is activated and White sets up threats on g7 and h6.

### 24...Re8?!

The last chance for Black was 24...Nd3+, hoping to relieve some of the pressure by forcing White to take some pieces off. After 25 Bxd3 cxd3 26 Qxd3 Re8 27 Qf5 White is clearly better but Black is still kicking.



### 25 Rxd7!

All pieces are now in attack position – it is time to look for some forcing moves! White now crashes through at the target point.

### 25...Qxg7

Forced, as 25...Rxd7? 26 Qxd7+ Kg8 (26...Rh7 27 Qxd7+ mate – notice the power of the bishop on d4, re-routed to this active square a few moves ago)



27 Bh7+! and wins.

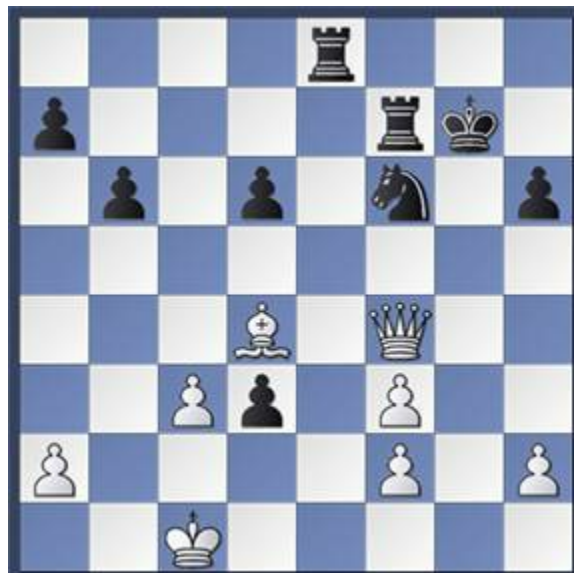
**26 Rxd7 Kxd7**



**27 Qf4!**

Material-wise Black is doing OK with two rooks for the queen but his king is too exposed. White now threatens to infiltrate with his queen on d6 or g6 after 28 Qg3+.

**27...Nd3+ 28 Bxd3 cxd3**



**29 Kd2!**

Black's problem is that he cannot break the pin on the long dark diagonal in a convenient way – the bishop on d4 is a monster, cutting

through Black's king position. White has plenty of time to pick up the d-pawn with his king.

**29...Kg6 30 Kxd3 Re6**



How to increase the pressure decisively? By including one more foot soldier in the attack on the king! As Kasparov noted, pawns are also attacking units.

**31 h4! Rfe7**

31...h5 32 Qg5+ Kh7 33 Qf5+ wins.

**32 h5+! Kf7**

32...Nxe5 33 Qg4+ or 32...Kxe5 33 Qf5+ both lose immediately.



### 33 Qf5!

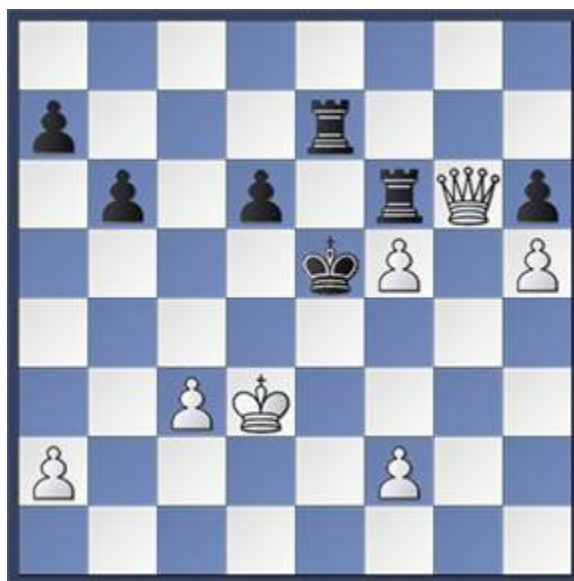
The queen penetrates to g6, concluding this fine attacking game.

### 33...Re5 34 Qg6+!

Even better than 34 Bxe5.

### 33...Ke6 35 f4 1-0

Black resigned, as 35...Rf5 36 Bxf6 Rxf6 37 f5+ Ke5



38 f4+ wins material. It is fitting that the second f-pawn, which so far has had no role in the attack, suddenly is promoted to the star performer that concludes the game. All pieces must be included in the attacking force!

-----

### Hou Yifan – Sebag

*Hangzhou 2011*

Hou Yifan of China was Women's World Champion from 2010 to 2012. From a young age the Chinese prodigy – born 1994 – has shown a special talent for attacking chess. In this game she conducts a powerful attack on the king by following the principles outlined above.

### 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4

Avoiding the main lines with 4 Nxd4.

**4...Nc6 5 Bb5 Bd7 6 Bxc6 Bxc6 7 Nc3 Nf6 8 Bg5 e6 9 Qd3**

Making room for the knight on f3 to go to a more active square on d4.

**9...Be7 10 Nd4 Qa5 11 Bd2 Qc7 12 0–0–0 0–0**

The battle lines are drawn. With the two sides castling in opposite directions, it is clear that this game will be decided by an attack on the king. The question is whose attack will be the fastest and most forceful.

**13 f4!**

White begins to mobilize pieces for the attack. Remember that pawns are also attacking units!

**13...Rab8 14 f5!**

Setting up a direct threat against Black's e6-pawn, forcing Black to spend time on a defensive move while placing the light-squared bishop passively on d7. Black is reluctant to play 14...e5 as that would leave a big gap on d5.

**14...Bd7**



**15 g4!**

This is where the fun starts. White includes another foot soldier into the attack and offers a pawn sacrifice. Remember that attacking specialists don't care much about material. Taking the pawn with 15...Nxg4 would be suicidal for Black because of the open g-file that would

allow White to quickly batter up with Rhg1, Bh6, and Qg3 against the juicy target on g7!

**15...Rfc8 16 g5 Ng4 17 Rhf1 Qc4! 18 Qh3!**

The best square for the queen, rather than g3. Why? Because Hou Yifan has rightly spotted that h7 is the weakest link in Black's defenses since it is only defended by the king! At the same time the queen puts pressure on the e6-pawn, forcing Black to passively defend that point.

**18...Ne5 19 Nf3 b5!**

Black defends well and needs only one more move – b5-b4 – to have a really dangerous counterattack going, targeting c2. So White must act fast.



**20 f6! Bf8**

I am sure that Marie Sebag, the French Grandmaster who is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> on the women's world rating list, did not spend many seconds considering 20...gxf6. This would open the king's position, leaving the king disastrously unprotected. Still, the concrete lines that would secure White of victory are beautiful: 21 Nxe5! (the simple 21 gxf6, opening lines, would also be sufficient but this wins immediately through a series of forcing moves) 21...fxe5 22 Rxf7! Kxf7 23 g6+! hxg6 (23...Kxg6 24 Rg1+ or 23...Ke8 24 g7! Kf7 25 Qxh7 Rg8 26 Qh5+ Kxg7 27 Rg1+ Kf8 28 Bh6+ both win for White) 24 Qh7+ Ke8 25 Qg8+ Bf8



26 Bg5! (A beautiful quiet move that cuts off Black's king and threatens 27 Qxg6++ – notice how the absolute number of pieces does not matter, the Attacking Ratio around the king is in White's favor!) 26...Bc6 27 Qxg6+ Kd7 27 Qf7+ Be7 28 Qxe7++). Notice how White's consistent build-up – activating pieces, identifying targets, and setting up direct threats – laid the groundwork for these fireworks! But what now? Black still threatens b5-b4 so White has to find a forceful follow-up. Hou Yifan does so by exploiting the target on h7 – this is the weakest link in Black's defenses!



**21 g6!**

Opens the path for White's knight to g5 to target h7. Black's reply is forced as 21...hxg6 22 Ng5 or 21...Nxg6 22 Ng5 h6 23 Nxf7! Kxf7

(otherwise 24 fxg7 and h6 falls with immediate collapse) 24 fxg7+ Kxg7  
25 Qxh6+ Kg8 26 Qxg6+ Bg7 27 Rf7 are both out of question.

**21...fxg6 22 Nxe5!**

Now 22 Ng5 can be safely met by 22...h6 so Hou Yifan finds a more forceful continuation, again targeting h7.

**22...dxe5 23 f7+ Kh8**



**24 Rf3!**

This rook lift – a typical way of activating rooks in attacking chess – sets up the combination 25 Qxh7+! Kxh7 26 Rh3++, so again Black has no choice.

**24...h6 25 Bxh6?!**

White continues her forceful attacking play, but this is the only point in the game where Hou Yifan does not play the best attacking move. With this piece sacrifice she moves directly to step four – a tactical shot – but it does allow Black a surprising defensive resource. White could win by shifting the target – now that Black has played h7-h6, eliminating the h7 target – to the g6-pawn by 25 Qg2! After either 25...Kh7 26 Rg1 g5 27 h4! or 25...b4 26 Qxg6 bxc3 27 Bxc3 Bc6 28 Rh3, White's attack arrives first. There is no defense against 29 Rxh6+ gxh6 30 Qg8++.

**25...gxh6 26 Qg4!**

Eying a new target on g6. Targets shift during an attack!



**26...g5?**

Black misses her chance. 26...b4 is still too slow because of 27 Qxg6 Bg7 28 Rh3 and 29 Rxh6+, but Black could exploit White's inaccuracy on the previous move by the amazing save 26...Kg7 27 h4 Bc6 28 Rg1



28...Bxe4!, arriving in time to cover g6. In that case White has nothing better than a drawn ending after 29 Qxe4 (of course not 29 Nxe4?? Qxc2++) 29...Qxe4 30 Nxe4 Be7 (30...Rc4 31 Nf6 Rxh4 32 Ne8+ Kh7 33 Nf6+ Kg7 34 Ne8+ also leads to a draw through repetition of moves) 31 Rfg3 Kxf7 32 Rxc6 Rg8 33 Rxc6 Rg8 34 Rxc6 Kxg8 35 h5 with a draw. Now Black gets no more chances.

**27 Qh5!**

Again threatening to penetrate on g6. 27...Kh7 28 Rf6 or 27...b4 28 Qg6 Bg7 29 Rh3 both win, so once more Black has no choice. She is just one move short of taking over the initiative with b5-b4 but White never lets her off the hook long enough to carry out this thrust!

**27...Kg7**



**28 Rh3!**

Black managed to defend the two previous targets – h7 and g6 – but now White shifts her attention to the third target, the h6-pawn. That is too much for Black's strained defenses to handle.

**28...Kf6**

28...Bc6 29 Qxh6+ Kf7 30 Rf3+ Kg8 (or 30...Ke7 31 Qh7+ Ke8 32 Qf7++) 31 Qg6+ Bg7 32 Rf7 mates.

**29 Rxd7**

Restoring material equality is not high on White's agenda but grabbing a bishop while preventing Black's king from escaping to e7 is nice!

**29...b4**

It is fitting that Black finally manages this advance which has been in the air for so many moves but for which there was never a good time. It doesn't work now either but does force White to find a beautiful combination to finish the game. Probably that was not too hard for the then-Women's World Champion as all the preceding groundwork had

already been done by adhering to the attacking principles, and when that is the case combinations “automatically” appear!



**30 Qxh6+! Bxh6 31 Rxh6+ Kg7 32 f8Q+!**

The final touch. Black is mated after 32...Kxf8 33 Rh8++.

**1-0**

-----

**L.B. Hansen - Brinck Claussen**

*Rønne 2008*

My opponent in this game, IM Bjørn Brinck Claussen, is one of the Grand Old Men of Danish chess. He has won multiple National Championships and represented Denmark at a number of Chess Olympiads. Internationally, though, he might be best known for being on the receiving end of one former World Champion Mikhail Tal's famous combinations. If you like beautiful combinations, you may do well to look up the game Tal-Brinck Claussen, Havana Olympiad 1966!

**1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 d5 4 Nc3 c6 5 e3 Nbd7**

This is the Meran Variation of the Semi-Slav Defense, very popular on the highest level. It helped the current World Champion Vishy Anand score two crucial wins as Black en route to his successful title defense in the World Championship match against Kramnik in 2008. It is also one of my own favorite openings.

## 6 Bd3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5

This is Black's idea in the Meran Variation. He solves the typical problem of what to do with the rather inactive light-squared bishop in this kind of structure by dxc4, b7-b5, a7-a6 (or b5-b4) and c6-c5.

## 8 Be2!?

This is a rare sideline which I have successfully employed in a number of games. More common is 8 Bd3 as in the Kramnik-Anand games mentioned above.

## 8...Bb7 9 0-0 Be7 10 e4 b4 11 e5 bxc3 12 exf6 Bxf6

12...cxb2? 13 fxe7 (13 fxg7 bxa1Q 14 gxh8Q+ Nf8 15 Ne5...



... leads to a curious position with four queens on the board. White is clearly better here, though, because of the more safe king. For example, 15...Qaxd4 16 Qxd4 Qxd4 loses immediately to 17 Rd1 Qe4 18 Bh5!) 13... bxa1Q 14 exd8Q+ Rxd8 15 Qc2 traps Black's new queen on a1 and conquers it with 16 Bg5 next.

## 13 bxc3 0-0 14 Rb1!

Following the principle of activating the pieces – rooks belong on open files.

## 14...Qc8



Now White is at crossroads. How to proceed? If Black is given time to play c6-c5 he will solve all opening problems. So White has to act fast and a possible attack on the kingside presents itself as Black's queen is currently a bit tied up on the queenside. The first step according to the principles is to look for a target and as we know a good target is a pawn around the opponent's king which is only protected by the king. So...

### **15 Ng5!**

Zooming in on the target on h7!

### **15...c5**

15...h6 is simply met by 16 Ne4 followed by moves like Bd3 and Qh5. Suddenly White would have a strong attack based on a favorable Attacking Ratio.

### **16 Qd3!**

By setting up a direct mating threat on the target on h7, White forces Black to make a tough choice: 16...Bxg5 or 16...g6? Both options have some drawbacks for Black. The first one hands White the advantage of the two bishops and dark-squared supremacy; the other is strongly met by 17 Qh3, renewing the mating threat on the target h7 and forcing a further weakening of Black's king's position with 17...h5. I think Black makes the right call here but White has a dangerous initiative out of the opening. The task is now to build on this initiative by following the attacking principles.

**16...Bxg5 17 Bxg5 cxd4**



**18 Qg3!**

A powerful intermediate move that sets up the threat of 19 Bh6, hitting a new vulnerable target on g7. 18...dxc3 19 Bh6 g6 (necessary to prevent mate on g7) 20 Bxf8 Kxf8 21 Rfc1 is good for White as he picks up the c3-pawn and remains an exchange up. Notice how White shifted his attention from the h7 target to a new and even juicier one on g7. Once Black parted with his dark-squared bishop it makes sense to start focusing on dark-squared targets. In the defense of these weaknesses, Black will sorely miss his dark-squared bishop. The little move 14 Rb1 also comes in handy; by hitting Black's loose bishop on b7 the rook indirectly participates in the attack, preventing Black from playing 18... Qxc3 because of 19 Qxc3 dxc3 20 Rxb7 and wins.

**18...Kh8?!**

A natural reaction to the threat of 19 Bh6 but probably not best. In order to improve the Attacking Ratio (or rather Defensive Ratio seen from Black's point of view) Black should play 18...Be4, transferring the bishop to g6, aiding the defense. White would continue with 19 Rb4!, exploiting the pin on the fourth rank (19...dxc3? 20 Rxe4 or 19...Qxc3? 20 Qxc3 dxc3 21 Rxe4 and wins) to include the rook more directly into the attack. After 19...Bg6 20 Rxd4 White has some advantage but Black is still in the game.

**19 cxd4 Nb6 20 Rfc1**

Including the rook into the attack, as the principle recommends.



### 20...Qb8?!

Too obedient. This allows White a maneuver that he would want to play anyway: bringing the dark-squared bishop from g5 via f4 to e5 to hit the target on g7. It was necessary to include the queen into the defense by 20...Qd7 21 Rc7 Qd5, exploiting the fact that 22 Bf3? is not dangerous because of 22...Qxa2, hitting the rook on b1. Instead White should play 22 Bf4!, again with the intention of bringing the bishop to e5 to hit the g7 target. Black appears to have nothing better than 22...Qf5 (22...Qxa2 is now too dangerous because of 23 Bd3 when the Attacking Ratio on the kingside is clearly to White's advantage and suggests that Black will have a tough time surviving the onslaught) 23 Rxb6 (the rook was hanging on b1; White now wins two bishops for a rook) 23...axb6 24 Rxb7 Rxa2 25 Bf1 Qg6 26 Qxg6 hxg6 27 Rxb6 and White should win in the long run with the two powerful bishops. Still, Black would be able to put up a long and hard fight.

### 21 Bf4 Qd8



**22 Be5!**

Piling up on the target on g7. 22...f6 loses to 23 Rc7! (again hitting g7)  
 23...Rg8 24 Rxb7 fxe5 25 Qxe5 with an extra pawn and an overwhelming position.

**22...Rg8 23 Rc7 Be4**



**24 Rxf7!**

Intermediate moves are important attacking tools. Without having to care about the hanging rook on b1, White grabs a free pawn while in the process threatening mate on the prolonged target on g7. Remember that setting up direct threats is a key to successful attacks as such threats force the defender into a passive position with

uncoordinated pieces. White is now clearly winning.

**24...Bg6 25 Rb7?!**

More than sufficient to win as the rook on b1 is still immune. However, there was an even easier (and prettier) win based on a small combination that I missed. Given that Black's pieces are uncoordinated it is not surprising that there is a combination in this position, but I missed the last crucial move in this line: 25 Bd3! Bxf7 (25...Nd7 26 Bxg6 Nxe5 27 Qxe5 hxg6 28 Rb3! followed by 29 Rh3+ mates) 26 Qh3! h5 (26...h6 27 Qxh6++ - the powerful bishops seal the deal!) and now the decisive quiet move...



27 Qe3!, and Black has no defense against 28 Qh6+, mating. 27...Rf8 28 Qh6+ Kg8 29 Qxg7++ doesn't help.

**25...Nd7 26 Rc1 Rc8 27 Rxc8 Qxc8 28 Rc7 Qd8 29 h3 a5 30 Bc4!**

Activating the bishop and planning d4-d5. Since the rook on g8 is tied to the defense of the g7-pawn, Black cannot really survive an opening of the diagonal a2-g8. After 30...Nxe5 31 Qxe5 the queen takes over the bishop's dominating role in the center.

**30...Bf5 31 d5! Qe8 32 d6**



Black resigned as 32...Nxe5 33 Qxe5 is hopeless – the combined threats on g7 and the passed d6-pawn are too much to handle at once.

**1-0**



## Tips for self-improvement

This lesson gave you the basic knowledge of how to build successful attacks. Now it's time to practice this knowledge – in your preparation and your games. Mastery consists of knowledge *plus* training, in chess as in any other area. So how can you develop your attacking skills to a true master level?

To begin with, choose a sufficient number of games played by your favorite attacking player. Tal, Fischer and Shirov are just some good options; you are free to choose anyone else you like. Pick up 50 or even 100 games and go over them spending no more than 10-15 minutes on each. Pay attention to how the Grandmasters choose a target, pile up against it mobilizing their pieces, how they use a series of threats to demobilize their opponents and finally, when the time is right, how they make the final strike.

You will notice that these steps are not always straightforward. Sometimes you will need to go back and forth in a game to understand why the Grandmasters did what they did. You might also notice that they often switch targets, or need to spend some moves blocking their opponent's counterplay before proceeding with their own plans. Pay attention to this too! As you will learn in Lesson 4 from this series, attack, defense and counterattack are all part of the integrated wholeness of active play.

Do your homework, believe in your own abilities and trust your instincts!



## Master another chess topic

