

Remote Chess Academy



Top 25 MIDDLEGAME Concepts

GM Igor Smirnov



chess-teacher.com

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Finally, all of my work is only possible due to the inspiration and support of my wife and family. Thank you for this!

Instructions for the Video Course

I would like to give you a few recommendations, which will make your study of the video lessons more effective.

- Focus on the study. Turn off your mobile phone, music, TV, etc.
- Stop (pause) the video lesson sometimes. When you stop the video, you can THINK about an interesting idea and digest it better. It is very important to do it.
- Print the text versions of the video lessons. When you think about different ideas of the course, you will see them at the same time. It is very helpful. After the study of one video lesson, please look through its text version. Pay attention to the enhanced font –it will help you remember all the key ideas.
- Write the important ideas. While studying the video lessons, you will find a lot of useful rules, principles and so on. Also, you will probably make your own conclusions. If you write them, you will remember and classify them better.
- Make pauses. Your brain needs to have some free time to digest new information. Don't try to study everything at once.
- Repeat the lessons. Study the lessons several times. Of course, it is hard to remember a lot of information after a quick acquaintance. So, you need to repeat it sometimes.

Introduction: The most important guidelines in chess

What's up and welcome into this new course! I am Grandmaster Igor Smirnov and I'll be your host throughout this course. The purpose of this course is to provide you with the 25 most crucial middlegame concepts, so that the course runs as a complete middlegame guide for you. You don't need to study hundreds of books, courses and videos out there; you just get it all with this most comprehensive course. Also, I'm narrowing it down to the most important ones, so that you get the best of the best, once again, within the shortest amount of time available. Now, the first question I have is: What is a concept? What is it that I'm talking about in this course? A chess concept is just a rule, a guideline, a certain relatively universal pattern that you can use in every game in chess.

Let's take a look at one of the most well-known chess concepts, which is a rule that says: A knight on the rim is dim.

1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 d6

Looking at the current position, we can see that, in this case, it's White to move.

4.d5



White can advance their pawn forward in the center of the board and attack Black's c6-knight. So, the question would be: Where should the knight go?

Equipped with this concept, you already know that the knight should not move to the edge of the board, to the rim, right? Because there the knight is restricted.

It's partly restricted just by the edge of the board. The c4-square is taken away by the bishop, and the c6-square is taken away by the pawn; therefore, the knight really has nowhere to go! It's a completely useless piece for Black.

Moreover, in the next moves, White may decide to attack and capture this c6- knight.

4...Na5 5. a3

For example, they can play a3 and, in the next move, they will be playing b4; and since the knight has nowhere to escape, now the knight will be captured in the next move. That's why you should not move your knight there (to a5). Knowing this pattern, knowing this rule makes your life so much easier. If we move back right here (after 4. d5), we can already know without any calculation or without any consideration really; you already know that the knight should not go there (to a5). So, that's how chess concepts really make your life and your decision making in chess a lot, a lot simpler. This is a simple example, but of course, throughout this course we'll study different examples from the basic ones, going all the way to the most advanced level ones. The next note that I'd like to make here is that even though we're talking about middlegame concepts, in fact, they're quite universal. For example, in the current position, we're actually seeing an opening position and yet, the rule, the concept is still completely applicable. A similar concept would be 100% suitable for endgame just as well. (See the next game).

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1.Kf6



In this case, we can see that it's an endgame position, it's White to move. Even though, theoretically, a knight should easily make a draw against a single pawn, in this case, Black is actually lost because their knight is on the edge and rather in the corner of the board, so it's completely restricted. If it's White to move, White could just move their king to f6 so that the knight completely cannot get out of the corner and, after that, White's d4-pawn will simply be promoted because Black cannot do anything about that. That's how bad it is for Black to keep their knight on the edge even in an endgame. That's why I'm saying that these concepts are in fact universal. That's why this course is called Middlegame Concepts. It's because mostly they will help you in the middlegame.

In an opening, you can sometimes rely on your opening knowledge. In an endgame, very often, it'll either not happen at all because you finish the game earlier or you're already having some decisive advantage by the time you reach an endgame position. That's why these rules are most crucial for the middlegame even though, in fact, they're universal and will serve you throughout. Another note that I'd like to make here is that, in fact, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of different middlegame chess rules. Just for reference, I'll open here a chess glossary. Of course, not every chess term stands for a rule, but very often it correlates, ok? You can see here, as I keep scrolling, that it just keeps going, right? It keeps scrolling and keeps going and it's really endless. So, if you just try to study different chess books, videos and courses, etc., you can spend your lifetime learning chess without really mastering it. But then, how's it that there are some 12-year old kids who are already chess masters?

It's because they're focused on the most important concepts. You don't need to know everything; you just need to know the best and most important ones. This course will equip you with 25 of the most important concepts based on my experience as a coach. I've seen one of the most common errors that amateur players make as well as one of the ideas that bring people the most progress. I'm actually amazed myself to see how, sometimes, people get all the way to the master FIDE level just by basically following these concepts, and it seems too simple to be true; but in the end, it's true because the most important themes work the best.

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Riddick, EIS (1900) -Hitchcock (1645) D06

Barnstaple op (3) 1972
[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

The final note for this introductory video that I'd like to make here is that we're talking about a system, not just a set of random, individual rules because, if you're only equipped with different random rules that you learned here and there, then it's always hard to actually make decisions in chess. It's even hard to memorize those rules, let alone to apply them; we only have some several seconds to make your decision to make the right move. Let me put some opening position which is slightly unfamiliar, so that you have space to think about this.

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 d5 3.cxd5 Nxd5 4.e4 Nb6 5.d4



Let's start right here. It's just a trivial, very simple opening position. Black needs to make a decision on which move is the best here. Which move should Black play here? Let's just try to apply different rules that we know about chess, and some of them are probably familiar to you as well. What should Black be doing here? Well, normally, in an opening, you've got to develop pieces. OK. Let's try doing that. Another rule says: Develop knights before bishops, so perhaps we can bring our knight out at c6; it looks like a completely reasonable move. All right, what else do we have here? If we develop bishops, we can either develop this c8-bishop somewhere along this g4-d7 diagonal, that would be another option to consider or we may say: Hey, let's develop our dark-squared bishop first because there's another rule that says that you should try to castle as quickly as possible in an opening, right? So, maybe I want to move that bishop away so that our king can possibly be castled later.

How do we develop our dark-squared bishop? We can play g6 and the bishop will be fianchettoed to the g7-square; it looks like a good option. Another option would be pushing the e7-pawn forward to e6, so that the bishop can be developed and can be active on this b4- e7 diagonal. It also seems like a completely reasonable move. Finally, if we're forgetting about the bishop for a second, there is another rule which says that in an opening, you've got to fight for the center. If your opponent has these strong pawns in the center, you want to attack them, you want to undermine them. With that in mind, you may consider moves such as c5, attacking White's center. Even though the pawn can be captured here, in this case, we can trade queens on the d1-square because the line will be open, forcing White's king to move and, perhaps, we'll have some compensation for that little pawn that we sacrificed. All in all, just to summarize, you can see that in this extremely simple opening position, you've got so much to think about, so many rules and they all seem decent, but how do you find the best one? That's why you need to have a system so that you can, first of all, get to know, get to memorize those rules.

And, second, even most importantly, so that you can prioritize them and you know which one is the most important, which ones are the most fundamental in every position and you can just follow that. It's enough for this introductory video. Without further ado, I'm waiting for you in my second video where we're going to be more specific and I'll show you that system that I'm talking about right here, so that you can advance your chess in no time. I've got students who advanced several hundred rating points, occasionally 400 rating points, just after mastering the content of this course, so I'm

really excited for you. So, let's go ahead and get started!

5...e6

[5...Nc6]

[5...Bg4]

[5...c5]

[5...g6]

6.Nc3 Be7 7. Bf4 a6 8. Rc1 c6 9. Bd3 N8d7 10.0-0 Nf6 11. Qc2 h6 12. Rfd1 Nh5 13. Be3 Bg5 14. Qe2 Nf4 15. Bxf4 Bxf4 16. Rc2 g5 17. g3 Bb8 18. Qe3 Rg8 19. e5 Nd5 20. Qe4 f5 21. exf6 Nxf6 22. Qe3 Bf4 23. Qe2 g4 24. Ne5 Bxe5 25. dxe5 Nd5 26. Ne4 Ke7 27. Nd6 Qf8 28. Rc4 Qf3 29. Qd2 h5 30. Be4 Qf8 31. Bxd5 exd5 32. Rf4 Qd8 33. Rf7+ Ke6 34. Qh6+ Kxe5 35. Qf4+

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A simple system that explains everything

Welcome into the second video lesson, where we're going to be talking about the grand scheme of things in chess. In a nutshell, a chess game can be explained with a single, simple scheme that explains literally everything in general, and 99.9% of people are unaware of that. That's why they think that chess is a very complex game, that you've got to have some innate talent, and you've got to spend your whole life learning this. But it's not true. Again, think about those little kids who are playing at a master level; it cannot be that complex. You just have to know the simple system to follow. Within this simple video, we're going to break down the entire chess strategy, isn't that cool? I think it is. If you're familiar with my other courses, then studying this lesson will be easier for you, you will reinforce the knowledge that you already have. But if you're new, if you haven't study any of my courses in the past, then it's going to be an eye opener, and the game will change for you for sure. Without further ado, let's get to it! First of all, how do you win the game of chess? You win by attacking, right?

How do you attack? What can you attack? You can attack the opponent's king, pawns or pieces; that's all there is; there is nothing else unless you want to attack your opponent himself or herself :). If you want to attack the opponent's king, how can it look like?

1.f4

For example, White has played f4, weakening their king a little bit, exposing the king along the h4-f7 and

2...d6 3. exd6 Bxd6

Then the other one, so that they can get their bishop out and, now White is careless and just plays some random move:

4.Nc3



4...Qh4+

Black will play Qh4+. Black manages to find a way to take advantage of this weakness and now, it's over. The only way to delay the checkmate is to play

5.g3 Bxg3+

But now, Black may sacrifice the queen or the bishop first.

6.hxg3 Qxg3#

And it ends up with this nice, smooth checkmate. In this case, Black relies on the most straightforward, the simplest, most classical attack of the opponent's king. This plan is great, no doubt about that. The only problem here is that, very often, your opponent's king is so well defended that you cannot attack it in any near future. Then, you've got to settle for attacking something else.

0-1

When you cannot attack the opponent's king, you've got to try attacking his or her pieces. In this case, that may help you gain material advantage, so that you start dominating and you can develop a checkmating attack later on in the game.

1.e4 Nf6

For example, in the Alekhine's Defense, with Black's response Nf6,

2.e5

White can start and try attacking the knight by pushing the pawn forward.

2...Nd5

The knight is attacked, so it can run away. That's the main problem with attacking opponent's pieces, trying to capture them. The pieces are usually too mobile to really capture them. They can always run away. Let's try to make it right now.

3.c4

White tries chasing the knight.

3...Nb6 4.c5

[4. d4]

4...Nd5

The knight goes back.

5.Bc4



Now, we cannot attack it with pawns anymore; let's try attacking it with a piece.

5...e6

But now, Black can defend it because the bishop and the knight are approximately of equal value. Black can now defend it. The best White can get here is just an exchange, but it does not give White an advantage; White couldn't win the game. At first, it may seem like attacking the opponent's pieces is just completely useless; it just doesn't work. In most of the cases, indeed, you cannot capture an opponent's piece unless it's misplaced or there is some tactical opportunity.

But still it makes sense to attack the opponent's pieces. Let's come back to the starting position (after 1...Nf6) when Black just dropped their knight out, exposing it to some potential attack.

Does it make even sense for White to try to push their pawn forward and attack it, knowing that the knight can run away? Well, it still makes sense because even though White didn't manage to capture the knight at the end, we could gain some other advantages along the way. For example, right now with the move 2. e5, we gain a tempo by attacking the knight. Along the way, we're getting more space for advancing, right? Now, the knight goes away, let's say 2...Nd5, we're playing 3.c4.

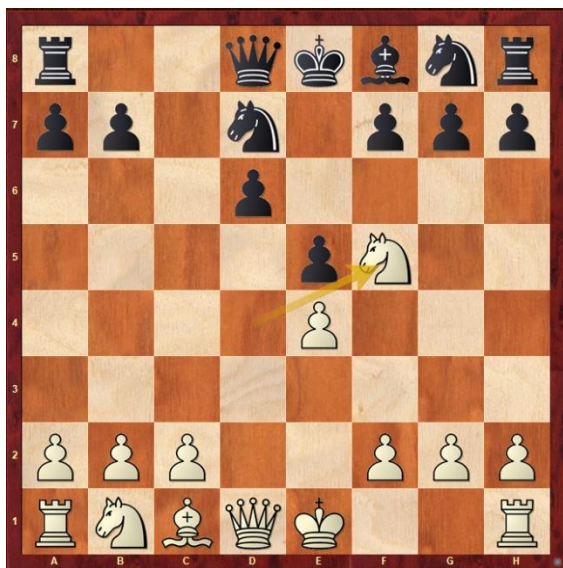
Once again, we're gaining more space, putting one more pawn that can influence the center of the board and we do this without any extra spending of tempo, so the knight can retreat one again (3...Nb6). And now, we just stop chasing the knight and, instead, play a move such as 4. d4. You can see that ok, we couldn't capture the knight, but along the way we managed to build this beautiful pawn center; we gained a lot of space. In the future, it will be easier for us to develop our pieces, so they can be developed quickly on the following moves. Finally, the knight on b6 is misplaced, it's pushed closer to the edge of the board, and now the knight has nowhere to go, so it's a more passive piece. That's why even though you cannot capture the knight, along the way we got some other advantages. That's why in 99% of the cases, that's the reason for attacking opponent's pieces. You don't get to win them, but you get some other advantages for attacking them.

And a final and good target for your attack is the opponent's pawns. Let me show you one of the opening lines where this idea works really well for White.

1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 e5 5. Bb5+

Let's say here in the Sicilian Defense, White plays this intermediate check.

5...Bd7 6. Bxd7+ Nxd7 7. Nf5



After a trade of bishops, the knight can go to f5 and cannot be capture by the opponent's bishop anymore. The purpose of this move is that White is attacking the weakness on this position, the pawn on d6. Now White is attacking it with their knight and queen along the d-file; so, if Black does not defend the pawn, it can be captured in the next move. The really great point about attacking the opponent's pawns is that, unlike pieces, they're not mobile; they cannot really run away.

So, even if your opponent manages to defend the pawn temporarily, you can always bring more and more pieces and concentrate them against the same target and, ultimately, capture it. That's why pawns, and especially weak pawns, are great targets for your long term planning, and there is nothing your opponent can do about that. By the way, you can notice in the high level games of Carlsen and other players, very often they are actually focused on winning opponent's pawns which get spectators confused. They cannot comprehend why it is that they don't attack the opponent's king. That seems to be the purpose of the chess game: to checkmate the opponent's king. Why don't they do this? It's because the king is usually well defended, such as in this position. The king is surrounded by its defenders. There is nothing White can do about that. Therefore, instead of trying to attack the king, which is not going to work anyway, White picks a more realistic target; to capture a pawn. That gives White some advantage and, later on, they can use this advantage to win the game one or the other way. I just applied some dark magic and the pawn disappeared from d6, so there is no pawn there anymore. You can try this on your own games of course :).

Coming back to seriousness, what's the purpose of trying so hard to win an opponent's pawn if it seems such a little target, why care after all? Well, it's not just a pawn. It gives

some material advantage, that's true, and now White has this c-pawn which can possibly be pushed forward in some endgame position, for example, and be promoted into a new queen; so, that's great!

Having an extra pawn can be a winning advantage on its own. But in addition to that, it gives you a lot of other advantages connected to a loss of pawn. For example, in the future, White can land their knight to d5 (Nc3 and Nd5) and land it on this d5 outpost. It's great for White. If Black can try to do the same and try to land some of their pieces into the symmetric square d4, that's not going to work for Black. White can always use their extra pawn by playing c3 and the piece will be kicked away from d4. So that's a side advantage that you got by having this extra pawn. The lack of this pawn on d6, it does not cover those 2 squares (c5 and e5), it does not defend the e5-pawn anymore; so, again, in the future, White can take advantage of that as well. So, you can see that even though it's just a little pawn, there are different side advantages that you get by gaining this pawn; and the overall idea is that before you transition into a winning checkmate and attack the opponent's king, you've got to have certain advantage, you've got to have a certain reason. Why would your attack be successful? Why would your opponent be unable to defend his or her king?

The reason is: you've got to have certain advantages. Getting this material advantage is one of the ways for you to dominate and to transition to your successful attack later on.

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Johansson, Sven (1665) - Andreasson, Arthur (1560) B24

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[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Now we've got the first crucial element of our grand scheme of things in chess. How do you play chess? How do you find the right move in chess? How do you know what to think about when it's your turn? The first and most critical thing that you think about is an attack.

How do you attack? That's how you get advantage, that's how you win! What can you attack? You can attack the opponent's king, pawns or pieces. If you want to actually capture something, you've got to attack the king or pawns because they're realistic targets. When you attack the opponent's pieces even though ideally you'd love to capture them, in most of the cases, it's not going to happen; but, by attacking pieces, you push them back or you get other side advantages by doing that. That's the first thing that you've got to think about, and this single idea already will explain a lot of specific rules that you know about chess. I'm explaining this, by the way in so much detail, because understanding these foundation elements so well will allow you to later on remember and, not only remember, just to understand all the other concepts we're going to be talking about so easily because they'll just come naturally to you. You'll understand them. They are only logical consequences of this grand scheme of the chess game.

1.e4 c5 2. Nc3 a6 3. g3 e6 4. Bg2 Nc6 5. d3 Nf6 6. f4 d6 7. Nf3 h6 8.0-0 Be7 9. Bd2 Nd7 10. Rb1 Nd4 11. Nxd4 cxd4 12. Ne2 Bf6 13. Qe1 Rb8 14. Qf2 e5 15.h3 Qc7



It's White to move. Can you attack the opponent's king? No. The position is closed; the king is well defended, so you can't attack it. Can you attack any of Black's pawns and pieces? Not really. You cannot really capture anything. Maybe you can trade here on e5 (fxe5), but that would only be an exchange; Black will recapture (dxe5) and that doesn't give you any advantage. Then, what do you do?

That's the question that puzzles so many players. It's one of the most common questions that people send to me: "You're publishing some great opening videos in YouTube, I'm getting a great position out of the opening, but then, I'm not sure what to do next". Here is what it is. You've got to activate your pieces. White cannot really attack anything in Black's position because if you look at White's pieces, mostly, they're focused here on the first two ranks. They're just too far away from Black's position and that's why they cannot possibly attack anything. So, before your pieces can start attacking anything, you've got to bring them forward; you've got to activate them; you've got to provide them with more opportunities, more open lines, more open diagonals, more space, and more squares that they can go to, right? With that in mind, White played

16.c3

attacking the d-pawn here

16...dxc3

forcing Black to take

17.Nxc3

and that's how they bring their knight closer, so the knight has come forward

17...0-0 18. Nd5

Now the knight can jump even forward to d5. From here, the knight is a lot more advanced; it already starts hitting some of Black's pieces

18...Qd8

so, the queen has to move. (See the 19. fxe5 variation).



19.Bb4

[19. fxe5 White decided to play fxe5. What's the purpose of this trade? dxe5 That does not win the pawn because Black will just recapture. But doing that opens up this f-file, so that the queen and the rook can possibly get involved; they can start attacking Black's kingside. In addition to that, White noticed that there's another diagonal which got opened and they played 20. Bb4 Now the bishop is getting active and is attacking the rook here on f8. So, because we traded this pawn out from d6, this c5-f8 diagonal is not blocked anymore and the bishop can be active along the diagonal and can attack the rook. Re8 21. Bd6 White plays this move once again, advancing forward, bringing their pieces closer to Black's army, making them more active. This time the bishop hits the rook on b8. Ra8 The rook goes away. 22.Bc7+- Finally, we just captured the queen here on d8. You can see that, overall, 1 White's pieces are so active: the bishop is active here, the knight controls so many squares, and White has pieces putting pressure along the f-file. So, overall, White's pieces got so active that now White's attack results in actually winning the game.

Even if the queen could "magically" escape from d8, White's position would be anyway dominating and White will win anyway just because they would create more and more threats with their active pieces. So, that's it. Now, we're having the second piece of our puzzle. When you cannot attack, you need to activate your pieces. Now we're having this complete scheme of chess strategy. That's how you play the game of chess, and you can see that it's not that complicated and you don't have to spend the rest of your life mastering it. That's just about it.

As simple as it is; it's super effective because all the other rules that you'll ever learn about chess would fall into one of these two categories. You're trained to attack and activate your pieces and you're trained to prevent them from doing the same, and that is basically it. By the way, those two concepts complement each other really well: If you want to attack, anyway, you need to activate your pieces first, right? And vice versa, it's true as well.

When you start activating your pieces, moving them forward, bringing them closer to the center, taking control of a greater number of squares in the chessboard; inevitably, you start hitting the opponent's pieces, pawns and king at some point because the more squares you control, the more opportunities your pieces have to attack something on the opponent's half of the board. So, that's it. And now we're moving to the actual 25 concepts that we're talking about, but mastering them will become much easier for you now because you know that they all would just explain some element of this grand system of the chess game.]

19...Nc5 20. Bxc5 dxc5 21. Qxc5 Be6 22. Nxf6+ Qxf6 23. fxe5 Qg5 24. Qf2 Qxe5 25. d4 Qa5 26. b3 Qb6 27. d5 Qxf2+ 28. Kxf2 Bd7 29. Ke3 f6 30. Rfc1 Rbc8 31. Kd4 Rfe8 32. Rc4 b5 33. Rc3 Rxc3 34. Kxc3 Rc8+ 35. Kd2 Kf8 36. Rc1 Ke7 37. Rxc8 Bxc8 38. Kc3 Kd6 39. Kd4 g5 40. h4 Bg4 41. Bf1 Bd7 42. Be2 Bc8 43. Bh5 Bd7 44. Bg6 a5 45. a3 Bc8 46. b4 axb4 47. axb4 Bd7 48. Bh5 Bh3 49. Be2 Bd7 50. hxg5 hxg5 51. Bh5 Bh3 52. Bg6 Bf1 53. Bf5 Be2 54. Ke3 Bc4 55. Bg4 Ke5 56. Be2 Bxe2 57. Kxe2 f5 58. d6 Kxd6 59. exf5 Ke5 60. g4

1-0

Chapter -1: Fundamentals

1. The most important principle

Stoeckl,Christian (1423) - Skorzinski,Frederik (1458) C10

Wuerttemberg-ch U14 (5) 04.04.2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Now we're leading the third foundation, so that you understand what the chess game is all about, how do you play the chess game, generally speaking? Now, let's break it down into more specific concepts: Exactly how you play in specific situations using those different 25 most important chess patterns, chess concepts. The first one is: Prioritize piece activity. It's no wonder that activating your pieces is one of the most critical foundational chess concepts. It's right in our great scheme of things, right? Activate your pieces is the same way as saying prioritize piece activity. That gives you a great guideline, what you are going to be doing in your middlegame positions.

1.e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Nc6 5. Nf3 Nf6 6. Bg5 Be7 7. Bd3 0-0 8.c3 b6 9. Qc2 h6 10. Be3 Bb7 11.0-0-0 Nxe4 12. Bxe4 Bd6



Let's start with this really standard middlegame position. Both sides just finished their development and now start to play the middlegame. You've got to decide what you should do.

It's White to move. Let's first talk about activity in general. What is activity? It's the quantity of squares under your control. We can also talk about the activity of a particular piece. For example, we can look at White's e4- bishop; we can see that it's active along this b1-h7 diagonal, as well as along this a8-d5 diagonal, putting some pressure to some of Black's pieces.

That's how active White's light-squared bishop is. If we're talking about his counterpart - Black's light-squared bishop, we can see that it's less active. It can only go to these two

squares (a6 and c8), possibly, and it defends the knight on c6; but making this defensive function is less good for Black compared to the attacking function. That's why we can say that overall White's bishop on e4 is more active compared to Black's bishop. White's bishop controls more squares and attacks more squares. That's why we say it's more active. Theoretically speaking, we can control overall all of White's pawns and pieces. How many squares do they control? And compare this with the same thing for Black in order to say who is more active. But as we're not computers, we're not going to be sitting there and mathematically calculate that, but you just have an overall "feeling" of the position. Who is controlling more space? Who is more advanced? Whose pieces are more centralized? because in the center they're more active. Who is the one attacking? Those general things give you the overall picture of the position. In this case, for example, White is more active. You can see that, overall, White's pieces have more freedom and they're going to decide who is going to be attacking here, ok? That's about the concept of activity in general. Let's also take a look at what happens in this game. It's a game between two amateur players rated 1400.

13.Rdg1?

Here White played Rdg1. The purpose of this move is quite clear. White knows that to win, you've got to attack the opponent's king and White aims to push their g-pawn forward to open up the g- file and to start attacking Black's king.

Overall, the plan sounds completely logical, but the problem here is that we're moving the rook from a position where it was currently more active on d1; it's controlling more squares. We moved it into a position where it stands behind the pawn. Even though we hope to move it forward, right now it's stuck there and also blocks the other rook in the corner of the board, so we rather decreased the activity of the rook, right? Even though there was a reason for doing that, right now, Black can play 13...f5 to start attacking. The bishop would probably move back (14. Bd3), and after that, we consider that White didn't really achieve much. Probably, White would be unable to push this g- pawn forward anyway, the bishop was pushed back. White probably has no advantage if you look at this. Black plays 14...Qf6. Now, already it doesn't seem like overall White is more active, White is controlling more space, White is attacking. It looks like a more balanced position. So White tried to come up with some logical plan but it failed.

I would dare to say one thing which is controversial to everything that you read in classical chess books and tutorials. Very often, you don't need any plan really. Again, very strictly speaking, it's not true. At grandmaster level, it's not true, but for players below 2300 rating, this is true. Very often, you don't need any plan. You just prioritize piece activity. What does that mean? You look at all the pieces you have. You think which ones are already active, which ones are not and you need to improve their position. If they're already active, you may think, how can I improve their activity further? How can I make them even more active? One question you may have here is: Why are we talking about pieces and not pawns? Well, the answer is clear because pieces are stronger than pawns; that's why they have a lot greater influence on the position and that's why we care about them first and foremost. It just means that for the most part; we prioritize piece activity and that's what we care about. (See the 13. Rhe1 variation).

[Now we're looking at White's pieces overall and we try to follow this concept of prioritize piece activity. How can you improve the activity of White's pieces? How can you make White's pieces control more squares on the board? 13.Rhe1 One idea would

be to bring this rook from h1, which is currently doing nothing, closer to the other pieces of White, closer to the center of the board, and now this rook potentially can be active along this e-file sometime in the future. Again, there's no plan here at all. It's not that you're planning something specific with this rook.

You're just bringing it to a better square, and that's it. Now Black will need to do something. They would also want to have their heavy pieces involved. Qe7 They want to move their queen away, and then, possibly, bring the rooks to the center of the board. Once again, it's the same question. How can White do something right now to activate their position, to let their pieces have more freedom, to let their piece's attack maybe in some future? With that in mind, maybe we can consider a move such as d5. 14.d5 attacking the knight, exd5 but of course, Black can trade here 15. Bxd5 but after that exchange, what we managed to achieve was that now we have these open files (d- and e-files) for our rooks, so that they can be more active along these files. Also the queen is more active along this d3-h7 diagonal, the bishop on d5 is having even more freedom there; it now attacks along this a8-c6 diagonal, along that g8-e6 diagonal pointing towards the king.

The great thing about this is that you don't still have any specific plan, any long term plan that you're going to somehow transition into something complex -any maneuver that captures the king. There's no plan at all.

You're just thinking how to make your pieces more active, and that's it. Along the way, any way creates automatically some threats. For example, right now this e-rook standing opposite to Black's queen can be used in some discovered attack; we can capture this pawn (Bxh6), for example, and the queen will be attacked. We can create some threats, even though we didn't plan them anyway, they automatically appeared in the position. Very often, if you just focus on prioritizing your piece activity, you're going to win games just like that with simple threats without any deep thinking, without any deep strategy, by making your pieces more active than the opponent's pieces.]

13...Qf6?

[13...f5! 14.Bd3 Qf6]

14.g4 Bf4 15. g5+- Bxe3+ 16. fxe3 hxc5 17. Rxc5 Qh6 18. Rhg1 f5 19. Bd3 Rf7 20. Kb1 Nb4 21. cxb4 Bxf3 22. Qb3 Bg4 23.h4 Qxh4 24. Rg6 Qf2 25. Rh1 Qxe3 26. Ka1 Re7 27. Qc3 Kf7 28. d5 Kxc6 29. Bxf5+ exf5

0-1

danielkob (2314) - jjurquiza (2345) B43

Rated Blitz game 26.12.2021

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Here is our next example. This time the players were stronger; both of them are around 2300 rating.

1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. Nc3 a6 4. d4 cxd4 5. Nxd4 Qc7 6. Be3 Bb4 7. Qd3 Nf6 8.0-0-0 Bxc3 9. bxc3 Nc6 10. Nxc6 bxc6 11. Bc5



White played Bc5 here, which is an interesting option because a lot of players in this position would be concerned with the fact that White's king is exposed and Black can try attacking it somehow, maybe bringing their rook to b8, so that it can be active along this b- file; maybe the queen can come out somewhere here on a5 and start attacking the king one way or the other. A lot of players would be concerned with this and will start doing something to protect their king. But instead, in the game, White played Bc5, ignoring that completely. That's an interesting point, isn't it? The point here is that the activity of your pieces is a dominant factor; that's why we say: prioritize it. It's more important than other factors; very often it's even more important than the safety of your king. What's the purpose? What's the point of that? The point is: An opponent's attack cannot be successful if your defenders are stronger than the attacker's, right? In order for the attack to be successful logically, attackers should have certain advantage, there could be a greater quantity of them or they're going to be more active, more powerful, right? But in this example, it's not the case; all of White's pieces are quite active here.

Many of Black's pieces are completely out of the game, such as the c8-bishop and the h8-rook; they are completely out of the game. With that being said, they cannot really develop any efficient attack on the queenside. So, White simply ignored all the weaknesses and just played Bc5, trying to bring the bishop to a more active square.

11...Qe5

It turns out that Bc5 was even a sacrifice because now thanks to this double attack, Black can win a central pawn, but White is aware of that.

12.Bd6 Qxe4 Black captured this pawn. White is not concerned about the safety of his king. White is not trying to trade queens.

13.Qg3

Trying to transition into his own attack, now, the pawn on g7 being attacked, **13...Rg8** Black decided to defend it.

14.Bd3+-

bringing one more piece into play.

14...Qa4

Trying to attack something here.

15.a3 White decided to play a3, but I would say that White could even sacrifice this pawn because, again, a single queen cannot cause any problems for White because White is so much more active.

15...Ra7

Since the rook cannot go here to b8 because it would be captured by the d6-bishop, he decided to relocate it to the b-file with this little maneuver and transition to b7 in the next move.

16.Bc5

even helping Black to do that.

16...Rb7



Here White transitioned into a winning attack, but before we get there, let's just analyze that Black's attack in this position has no power and no potential because White is more active. It's a great insight actually because very often I see that people start caring about the safety of their king too much and they start to play defensively. They start moving their pieces backward, protecting their king, instead of moving them forward, trying to attack and trying to activate their position, which is the right thing to do. In this position, just think about this. Let's say White would not try attacking at all. Let me just play some normal move (17. Rhe1), bringing the rook into play. How can Black possibly attack here? The rook can't come anywhere here on the b- file; all the squares are already attacked by White. The queen doesn't have many squares to move around either, right? It cannot really do much. Overall, you can see that it could go Qa4, for example.

Again, I don't see any way for Black to really create a serious threat. If anything, the king can always go here on d2 and can retreat. And it happens for a reason because all of White's pieces are extremely active; they're controlling a lot of squares. White has five strong pieces into play, while Black has two attackers. How can two attackers be stronger than five defenders? That just doesn't happen. That's why we're saying that if you prioritize piece activity, very often you don't have to overprotect your king because your pieces will take care of it automatically. In the current position, White didn't care about that.

17.Qd6

So, instead of Rhe1, they played Qd6. It turns out that there is this Qe7# checkmate threat.

[17. Rhe1]

17...Nd5 18.c4

Black actually resigned because, once the knight goes away, White delivers this Qe7#. It was a great example of how you prioritize piece activity over other factors, including the safety of your king.

1-0

2. The simplest way to find the right move

Simon, Christopher (1446) - Henniges, Malte (1310) C02

chleswig Holstein-ch U16 q (8) 10.4.02

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

The second most important chess concept is: Check attacking moves first. This doesn't come as a big surprise because it's just another piece of our grand scheme of chess. Here is our grand scheme of things, and attack here stands right on the first place because that's how you win games; that's the most powerful move that you can possibly play: an attacking move. Another question you may have is that we have two foundational concepts, which are attack and activity of your pieces; then, which one is more important? The answer is: both because, actually, they don't contradict, they go hand in hand. In order to attack, you've got to move your pieces forward; you're going to activate them. If you start activating your pieces, they will inevitably, at some point, start attacking. So, there is no contradiction here; but if you have to pick one, I would say that you've got to check attacking moves first because if you can attack, that's what you should do.

1.e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 c5 4. Nf3 Nc6 5. Bb5 Qb6 6. Nc3 a6 7. Bxc6+ bxc6 8.0-0 cxd4 9. Nxd4



This position is taken from a game between two amateur players. It was Black to move. Black played 9...Bc5 attacking White's knight here in the center of the board. What would you play here as White? By the way, I love taking those games of amateur players, not just Carlsen and Caruana and all the other top Grandmasters because they are all relevant. We're going to be looking at games of Grandmasters as well, but looking at these games of amateur players can be more relevant. You can actually see what the common mistakes they make are, so that you don't play them. You can also easily see how to improve in those common patterns that players below 1800 rating carry on and how you can improve from there, ok? It's White to move. In the game, White noticed that the knight is being attacked and they moved them to f3, which is not a super bad mistake, but it is a mistake. Definitely, White could have played a better

move. You may think about this yourself. How would you play here as White? The rule says: Check attacking moves first, right? In any position, regardless of whether you're being attacked or not, you've got to check attacking moves first. You don't always have them, but if you have them, you can consider them first of all and possibly play them. In this position, White could have an attacking move, Na4, which would be a counterblow to the queen and the bishop. Instead of retreating White's knight from d4, White managed to counterattack now, forcing Black to defend, and that would be the best move for White to play here. You may say here: OK. The white player just missed the counterblow, a tactical opportunity that White missed. Let's take a move back. Let's forget about this Na4 opportunity for a second. It was the strongest move, but let's say that White didn't notice this tactical opportunity. What about the knight from d4? (See the Nb3 variation).

10. Nf3?

[10. Na4!]

[10. Nb3!? Nf3 was not a good idea because it's a passive move; it does not attack anything. Instead, the knight could go to b3, and now it puts pressure onto this bishop on c5; anyway it does create some threat. The bishop is a bit stronger than the knight, so, normally, trading a knight for a bishop gives you some advantage and, in this position, that would probably force the bishop to retreat. Moreover, in this case, White actually still reserves the threat of Na4 with the additional attack to Black's queen and bishop; the bishop would have to retreat anyway. Nb3, an attacking move, forces Black to defend. That's a great thing about attack. Now your opponent cannot play any move here that he or she wants. They have to just react to your threat, and so, you automatically block all their possible opportunities, all their plans. Be7 Let's say the bishop goes back here to safety. Which move will you play here next? Once again, prioritize attacking moves. Think about attacking moves first and foremost. How do you find an attacking move? That's another practical question, right? Well, you need to bring your pieces forward and attack something on the opponent's half of the board. So, you look at the opponent's half of the board and you think: OK. What do I attack there? How can I move one of my pieces forward and attack something there? One of the moves could be Qg4: it hits this pawn on g7, from there the queen will also hit the rook in the corner so Qg4 would help White attack the pawn and, simultaneously, bring the queen forward; so now it's more active than it was before on d1; great for White! Qg4 definitely is a good move for White to play here.

Let's check if there is anything else. How about the move Na4, attacking the queen here on b6? It does attack the queen, but the problem here is that we call it an attack when it forces the opponent to defend, right? to go backwards, to worsen the position in some way. Na4 is just one threat which does not force really Black to defend; the queen does not have to go backwards. It can go forward (Qb4) and attack the knight and, maybe, even the knight would have to retreat back to c3 now. Na4 is not really an attacking move because it doesn't force Black to defend, it doesn't worsen Black's position in any way, it doesn't give White any advantages along the way; so, Na4 was not a real attack, it was just a one-time move which didn't really change anything. Let's see if there is anything else we can do here. You can also train yourself if you wish, so pause this video for a second and think if you can find any attacking move here for White. 11.Be3 Another opportunity would be Be3, hitting the queen and developing the bishop. Here we activate the bishop and we attack, and that's great. If you can combine those two most crucial ideas: the activity of your pieces and attack, that's the ideal, that's what you

should do for sure. For that reason, I would say that, overall, in this position, White has two moves: Be3 or Qg4. Both of them are good candidates, so that's how simple it is for you to play when you keep this idea in mind: Check attacking moves first, OK? I like Be3 slightly more because it also helps White to develop their minor pieces. Normally, we need to develop minor pieces first, so Be3 looks slightly better for me. If the queen could go backwards, that would be great for White because we push the opponent's pieces back and we develop the bishop simultaneously. c5 Black doesn't want to go back. He tries c5, just blocking out this diagonal. What would you play in this case? That's another good question to think about. A lot of players, in this case, would start getting worried about Black pushing d4, attacking one of these two minor pieces (Nc3 and Be3), and they would start thinking how to defend from that. That's not how you've got to think about this, at least after studying this course, you'll be ahead of the crowd. You've still got to think about attacking moves, right? Ask yourself about it. How can I attack here? Is there any other attacking opportunity here? We've still got this Qg4 move; it's one of the good options for White to play. In this position, the move Na4 actually starts making a lot more sense because now, not only it attacks the queen, but it also attacks that pawn on c5; so, you can actually win the pawn when the queen goes back. In that case, it's great because winning material is always great.

Overall, it makes your position more dominant, more powerful, so you can transition into a more successful checkmating attack later. 12.Na4 Na4 would be the move for White to play here. Qc7 If Black doesn't want to lose their pawn; they will have to counterattack White's pawn on e5. Here's another question: Do you wish to defend the pawn or maybe to take the pawn on c5? Since we're talking about checking attacking moves first, it automatically means that, normally, you don't want to defend, right? If possible, you should try to avoid defensive moves. I say "if possible" because, sometimes, you're forced to. You're being attacked; there is a serious threat and you have to address it. You're forced to defend; you need to play a defensive move. But if you're not forced, if you have some better options, you've definitely got to use them. In this case, you don't have to defend the e5-pawn 13. Naxc5 because you can take this pawn on c5, advancing your knight forward, also following the idea of activating your pieces.

Qxe5 Black now takes the pawn on e5. Once again, we've got the same question: How do you play here? You see, it's very practical. I'm not just talking about this particular position, right? We're talking in general about the game of chess, you can apply the same type of logical thinking in any position that you have. It's White to move. How do you play here? Can you have any attack here, any immediate attack? I don't see much outside of just one move: Bd4. I don't really see any other attacking option here. 14.Bd4 If there's just one attacking option, then you've got to play it. That's simple. Bd4 attacks the queen indirectly; it also attacks the pawn on g7, so the queen will have to move away to keep defending the pawn Qg5 is forced. Can you attack anything here? Once again, I can only just find one move that would attack something here; it is 15. f4 attacking the queen. It's a great move to play. You move forward; it gives more space for your rook and, overall, for your position; it makes your pawn also involved into the game, controlling more squares here on Black's side of the board and it kicks the queen away. f4 is a classical attack; you've got to play it. You see, you can play such moves just within one second of thinking, after a little bit of training, of course! You don't need to consider two options. When you ask yourself: how can I attack? Very often, you'll see that there is only one move, such as in this position, and you just play it, and you don't have to think about anything else at all. Qg6 Can White attack somehow here? I don't see many options. Ideally, we would love to push the pawn forward and keep

kicking the queen; but in this case, the square is under the control of the black pawn, so it can take it. That's why the move doesn't seem to work that way immediately. Even though when you cannot attack immediately, the next question that you've got to ask yourself is: OK. I cannot attack immediately, so how do I prepare an attack in the next move? Or in a not too distant future, a short term future, how do you prepare your attack in the coming moves? Well, we see that the black king got stuck in the middle of the board, we'd love to attack it; but you need to open up some files first, so I actually still love the move 16. f5. 16. f5 exf5 Even though, in this case, it would be a sacrifice, it opens up the e-file, so that you can use it to attack the opponent's king 17. Qe2

Even though, again, right now, it's not an attacking move yet, we're setting it up for attack in the future. We can bring the other rook here to e1, forcing our pieces against the black king and, hopefully, we'll develop a checkmating attack very soon. In fact, I think that White is just winning here because you've got so much domination of your pieces: they are so much more active than Black's ones and the king is exposed. So, probably, you're going to checkmate Black's king after just a couple of more preparatory moves like Rae1, and then you start advancing forward; the queen can come forward to e5 and start hitting everything around. So, that's how you basically play chess middle games. You ask yourself: Is there any attacking move that I can play? And if so, you just go ahead and play it. If it's a real attacking move, then it forces your opponent to defend or to worsen their position. And if you cannot attack right away, you ask yourself: How do I prepare an attack, so that I can attack in the following moves?

This is a great concept. If you take a look at many of the great players, that's just how they play blitz games so well. They don't think about hundreds of rules. They just think about one single theme: How do I move forward and attack something on the opponent's territory. With this single guideline, you can become a stronger player; also you're putting pressure onto your opponents as frequently as you can, provoking them to make mistakes because your opponents will usually make mistakes when you create threats even when there is not a chance for them to go wrong, right? You never pressure them, they'll just play whatever they want and, very often, it will be a decent move. But when you create problems, they'll often go wrong and you'll be able to win a lot more games.]

10...Ne7 11. Na4 Qa7 12. Nxc5 Qxc5 13. Be3 Qb5 14. Rb1 Nf5 15. Bf4 Qa4 16. Bd2 Qxa2 17. Bb4 Qc4 18. Ba3 Bd7 19. Re1 h5 20. Qd2 Rh6 21. Rbc1 Rg6 22.h3 Nh4 23. Nxb4 Qxb4 24. Qc3 f5 25. Qc5 Kd8 26. Qf8+ Be8 27. Qd6+ Bd7 28. Qf8+ Be8 29. Bc5 Rb8 30. Qd6+ Kc8 31. Ba7 Rb7 32. Qf8 Rxa7 33. Qxe8+ Qd8 34. Qxg6 Rb7

1-0

3. How do you know when it's time to attack?

Jehle,Anja (1390) - Fichter,Fabian (1341) B22

Wuerttemberg-ch U12 (3) 03.04.2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Welcome into the third most important middlegame chess concept which is: Don't start unprepared attacks. Let's take a look at our grand scheme of things because, once again, it explains pretty much everything in chess. First of all, we're going to understand deeply what it does really mean to play attacking moves because a lot of moves that seem attacking on the surface, in fact they're not attacking, and we're going to take a look at this in just a moment. Secondly, we're going to also analyze how to make sure that your attack is successful, how to make sure that you don't start premature, unprepared attacks which only backfires and, in fact, worsens your position. The key here still lies within this scheme. The key here is to make sure that your pieces are active, at least as active as your opponent's pieces and, preferably, even more active because chess is a logical game, right? Why would your attack be successful if attacking pieces are fewer or weaker compared to the defender's pieces? That doesn't make sense, right? And therefore, you've got to make sure that your position is ready, that your pieces are active enough, so that you can begin an attack which will turn out to be successful. Now we're going to take a look at a couple of examples explaining all that easily in just a couple of minutes so stay tuned.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3.c3 Nc6 4. d4 cxd4 5. cxd4 Nf6 6. Nc3 Bb4 7. Bg5 Be7 8. e5 Ng8 9. Bxe7 Ngxe7



Here's our first example, the game between two 1400 rated players. It's White to move. In the game, White decided to push their pawn forward by playing

10.d5

Now, what do you think about this move? Is it a good move, a bad one or just a normal move? On the one hand, we've talked previously about the kind of attack you should be doing; and therefore, it seems only natural to move forward and to attack this knight on c6, putting some pressure onto Black's position. On the other hand, there is a very crucial idea that says that an attack should force a defense. That's the definition of an attack, right? Because if your opponent can easily ignore your threat, then there was no real threat, right? There was no attack. In the current case, even though the knight is attacked,

10...exd5

Black can just trade pawns in the center and, yes, that's it; that solves the problem.

11.Nxd5

After Nxd5, now White is not creating any problems for Black, and Black does not have to defend; Black can play any kind of move that he or she wants. For example, Black can just castle and nothing happens. So, we can see here that White's attack did not result in anything, and White just started a premature attack when the other pieces were not ready to support this attack. You cannot achieve great results with just a single knight attacking: A single knight cannot defend an opponent's army. We need a lot more resources out there so that they can actually create some decisive threats. Therefore, in this case, this d5 move will rather backfire because it also weakens White's position. For example, this pawn on e5 is now weak and Black can possibly attack it in the future. Maybe, they can bring their knight to g6, attack the pawn this way or maybe they can put a rook on the open e-file; and it can also join the attack on this pawn. In fact, instead of castling, let's take a move back here. In the game Black just found a way to exploit White's weaknesses right away.

11...Qa5+

Black played Qa5+ and it put pressure to White's king, but also along this big rank (the 5th rank) to White's hanging knight and pawn.

[11...0-0]

12. Nc3 in order to save the knight, White had to actually retreat, which already shows that White's plan failed; but after that

12...Nxe5

Black can grab the pawn in the center of the board and the knight is defended by the queen, so White cannot win the knight after a possible exchange. Black just won a pawn for nothing; White had to retreat, so White's attack completely failed. Again, we may see that in this case Qa5+, which Black played a move back, was like just a more sudden tactical opportunity; but we can see that White's attack was unprepared in any case because the key here, again, is that an attack should force a defense. If your opponent is not forced to defend, to worsen his position, to go back, to make some sort of concessions in their position, then this attack is premature and you shouldn't even try it. Instead, you should just activate your pieces first and wait until the moment when your opponent can really bring you some decent results.

13. Be2 Nxf3+ 14. Bxf3 0-0 15. 0-0 Nc6 16. Re1 Qb6 17. b3 a6 18. Nd5 Qd8 19. Rc1 Kh8 20. Rc2 h6 21. Rce2 b5 22. Ne7 Bb7 23. a3 Rb8 24. h3 Nxe7 25. Bxb7 Nc6 26. Bxc6 dxc6 27. Qc2 Qd6 28. b4 Rbc8 29. Rc1 Rfe8 30. Rxe8+ Rxe8 31. Qxc6 Re1+ 32. Rxe1 Qxc6

0-1

Tonteri, Ari (2009) - Orvisky, Vladimir C14

IBCA-ol blind 12th (7.2) 09.11.2004

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Welcome into the second example where we're going to explore when it is suitable to start an attack early in the game and when it isn't, so that you can again distinguish this easily. Let's start with this game between two players about 2000 rating. Here we see the French Defense.

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. c3 Nf6 4. Bg5



Let's start here. White played Bg5. We can say that it is a little bit of an attacking move. Of course, it's not a real, massive attack but, nevertheless, White put a bishop over here. Therefore, White is threatening to push the e-pawn forward and, since the knight will be unable to escape, White can possibly capture it with the pawn in the next move. Therefore, we can say that Bg5 helped a potential attack in the next move.

Can we really say that this attacking move is just too early in the game? White's other pieces aren't developed yet. White isn't ready to attack right now. It doesn't mean that Bg5 is a bad move. In this case, no, because we can say that while playing this Bg5 move, the bishop moved over there to g5; White actually combined a development and creation of a small threat. Bg5 brought an extra piece into play; it develops a bishop and, therefore, it does follow the principle of development, it doesn't waste time for this attack. Simultaneously, White creates a little threat along the way. In that case, it's a great move to play. It's like you're getting two for the price of one. You're developing a piece and you're creating a little threat. That is great. Bg5 is absolutely great. 4...Be7 Black played Be7 to neutralize this pin.

5. e5

Again, this move attacks the knight. Can we say that it is too early for White to attack here, that White should have developed pieces instead? No, because e5 is actually a real threat; it's a real attacking move. It forces Black to move their knight away. Black cannot just play any move they want, they cannot develop the other knight, for example, or else they will lose their knight on f6. Therefore, they have to do something about this knight. And this is a definition of a real attacking move: It forces your opponent to defend. Therefore, Black cannot have any lead in development either; they cannot spend their time to do something that they want because they have to do something about their knight; they have to defend.

5...Nfd7

If the knight goes backwards, it's also an accomplishment for White, a little position accomplishment putting the knight back and, since normally, it's better to keep your pieces forward in the game, putting your opponent's pieces back is always a nice thing to do.

6. Bxe7 Qxe7

Now White trades the bishop on e7 and, in this position, White decided that ok, I'll bring up my other pieces into play.

7.f4

White played f4 to solidify the center.

7...Qb4

Now, it's their turn to begin the attack, and so, they played Qb4, threatening Qxb2. What do you think about Qb4? Is it a good move to play, an average move or a bad move? I'll give you a second to think about this, so that you can also get involved in this lesson, don't just be a passive learner, but also try to figure out on your own; then you actually memorize and understand everything a lot better. Speaking about Qb4, we can see that it is a little bit of an attack indeed; it attacks the pawn but, on the other hand, it breaks the principle of development because the queen on e7 was already developed.

Therefore, we cannot say that Qb4 is bringing an extra piece into play because the queen was already developed. In contrast to this, Black has many other pieces which are completely out of the game, right? Then Black should instead develop those pieces. Therefore, in this case we may say that Qb4 is premature in time because it indeed tries an attack with a single piece without trying to get other pieces involved, and it's quite a little threat. It doesn't force White that much to care about it because it's just a little pawn; and therefore, it is indeed a waste of time and a premature attack. In the game, in fact, White found a real clever way to refute this idea. 8.a3 White just played a3, saying: Hey, if you want to take this pawn, go ahead, do this! In fact, Black actually captured the pawn and, after White's knight is going over there to a4, all of a sudden, the queen is trapped because all the other squares where the queen could go are already under control of White. b5 is under the control of the bishop, and the other squares are controlled by the knight or the pawn; therefore, the queen is just trapped! That is a clear illustration that Qb4 was too early for Black to try an attack.

8...Qa5

[8...Qxb2 9. Na4]

9. b4 Qb6 10. Na4 Qc6 11. b5 Qc4 12. Bxc4

1-0

Munstermann, Peter (1301) - Schmueser, Florian (1321) B13

Schleswig Holstein-ch U18 q (4) 7.4.02

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Here is the next game, also a game between two amateur players, rated 1300.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4. Nc3 Nf6 5.Bb5+ Bd7 6.Qe2 e6 7. Nf3 Bb4 8. Bd2 Qa5

9. Ne5 0-0 10. Nxd7 Nbx d7 11. a3 Rac8 12.0-0 Bxc3 13. Bxc3 Qc7 14. f4?



It was White to move and White in this position decided: Hey, in this case, where we already finalized the development, and therefore, in the middlegame it's time to attack. White pushed their pawn forward by playing f4, hoping to expand on the kingside and start some sort of an attack there, maybe pushing the f-pawn forward to open up the f-file or to lift the rook over there to the kingside and to attack that way (Rf3, Rg3). All in all, White wanted to attack somehow there on the kingside, so White played f4. What can you say about this move? Is it already a good time for White to begin their attack or not? For this, let's temporarily recollect our general grand scheme of things. I'll put this back on the screen for a second.

We can see that, yes, attack is great, you've got to care about attack, you've got to also care equally about the activity of your pieces, the one which is highlighted by red color. Your pieces should be as active as your opponent's pieces, preferably more active before you can begin a successful attack. Now let's go back to the game. Can we really say in this position that White's pieces are active enough? They are ready to join the party and to attack Black's king on the kingside. Let's just examine White's pieces. Both rooks aren't doing much right now, maybe the rook on f1 is slightly active, at least it has a few squares; but, overall it's not active. The bishop on c3 is completely passive, right? It is

blocked by its own pawns, so it looks like a tall pawn. The bishop on b5 also looks a little bit misplaced, maybe puts some pressure on the d7-knight, but the knight is already defended, and if Black actually moves their knight away (Nb6), we can see this b5-bishop's emptiness, and it actually does nothing there at all, so the bishop is also misplaced. Therefore, maybe the only piece which is more or less fine for White is White's queen on e2. We can say that it's possibly a good square for the queen. Basically, pretty much, all of White's pieces aren't well placed, they aren't really ready to attack, and that's why trying to push there on the kingside is just too early. White needs to activate their other pieces first before they can start creating some decisive threats. Therefore, the f4 move in this case is also an example of a too early attack. Let's take a move back and try to figure out what White should have played instead. When you can't attack immediately, you need to improve the activity of your pieces, you've got to find better positions for your pieces and you've got to start doing that. We discussed that, apart from the queen, pretty much everything else is misplaced. (See the 14. Bd3 variation). White thought: I have to attack; I need to attack somehow. Let's play f4 and start to launch some attack over there. But they just missed the point that, generally speaking, you want to attack, but when it is prepared. In this case, it was too early, White's pieces are not ready and it actually backfired.

[14. Bd3 moving the bishop to a more active square. It would take aim to the kingside, possibly in the future. Right now, it doesn't do much if it will join White's attack. a6 15. Rae1 You may say: Hey, my rook here on the corner hasn't played a move in this game yet. Let's bring it up! Let's bring it here somewhere closer to the center of the board. b5 16. Bd2 I can think: Hey, this bishop looks like a tall pawn; it doesn't do much, it's restricted by the other pawns of White. Let's relocate it to a better position. Bb4 could be a good move for White potentially, it's an active diagonal there; but the only concern here is that in the future Black can push the a-pawn and just kick this bishop away. Therefore, even though Bb4 would be great, perhaps White would have to settle for Bd2; and anyway, the bishop is more active along this c1-g5 diagonal. It can go to g5 in the future or just stay there on d2. Anyway, it's more active than it was there on c3, where it was completely passive. Speaking about this position, now White's pieces are much better compared to the positions they took a couple of moves ago. At this point, yes, maybe in the future, White can start considering to push f4 on the kingside for some sort of attack on the kingside when your pieces are ready. There is an old rule formulated by the first World Champion Steinitz, who said: He who has an advantage should begin an attack. Just to clarify what he meant is: he who has an advantage in activity should begin an attack, which also means that you shouldn't begin an attack otherwise, right? If you don't have an advantage in activity... So, that's the point that a lot of players misunderstand; they just think: Oh, it's my turn, I've got to start attacking. Let's come back to the original game.]

14...Ne4

It turned out that the f4 move also weakened this e4-square because the pawns cannot go back. As the pawn can never move backwards, it can never take control of this square, right? Therefore, Black's knight can land there forever very comfortably. And it attacks the bishop. The bishop can't really go back because if it retreats anywhere, then White can possibly lose the c2-pawn along the c-file.

15.Qd3

White tried desperately to defend it somehow.

15...Nb6 16. Rf3

overlooking another threat of Black.

16...a6

After a6, it turns out that the bishop is captured; it has no way to escape. Basically, White played a couple more moves and resigned, but White could resign right here. You see how White spoiled their good position with just two moves. If White had avoided those premature attacks, White's position would be completely solid, and that's the mistake that you should avoid. So, the third most important middlegame concept is: Don't start unprepared attacks.

17.Bxa6 bxa6 18. Qxa6 Ra8 19. Qd3 Rfc8 20. Rc1 Nxc3 21. Qxc3 Qxc3 22. Rxc3 Rxc3 23. bxc3 Rxa3

0-1

4. The most common mistake of amateur players

Schleiffer,Helen (1331) - Stroehle,Kathrin (1396) C46

Wuerttemberg-ch U18 Girls (1) 02.04.02

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Welcome into the next video. Now, we're going to analyze the fourth most important middlegame concepts. But before we got into it, let me just mention that even though in this course you're going to master 25 most important middlegame concepts, there are 9 of them that are most critical. Roughly speaking, we're half way through to mastering those 9 most important principles because even if you get these 9 principles -9 concepts out of this course-, you'll already be way above of the crowd, and you will dramatically increase your chess strength. So, stay tuned and let's get to the fourth middlegame concept which is: Don't play hope chess. This concept is not really about the chess strategy, it's more about our psychology; how we approach things. It's natural for us humans to hope for our plans to work out, to be optimistic, to look for things turn out to be in our favor, etc. But chess teaches us to be objective and to find the moves which are objectively the best.

1.e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Bc5 4. Nxe5 Bxf2+ 5. Kxf2 Nxe5 6. d4 Nc6 7. Be3 d6 8. Bc4 Nf6 9.h3 Qe7 10. Qf3 Bd7 11. Rhd1 h6 12. Kg1 0-0-0 13. Bf2 g5 14. Qe3 b6 15. Re1 Rde8 16. Nb5 Kb7 17. Qa3 a5 18. Nc3



Here is our first example. It's Black to move. It's a game from the German Championship; the players are under 18 years old. Black decided: OK, we've got opposite side castling's, and therefore, perhaps it's time for Black to start attacking there on the kingside.

18...g4?

hoping that White would take over there (hxg4). In that case, then Black will recapture on g4 (Nxc4), and things work out really well for Black. Now we have this d4-knight in close proximity to the black king. This knight attacks the bishop on f2, which completely exposes the black king.

We also have this open g-file where we can put our rook and it will be opposite to White's king, so it looks like Black can possibly checkmate White's king really fast. That's what Black was hoping for and that's why they played g4. But chess teaches us to be objective. What does this really mean? It means to think whether a move is objectively the best one or not. For example, that's how computers play chess. You can see that very often strong players try to emulate computers and play by the first line, as they call it. They are basically playing with the first top recommendation of the computer engine, right?

That's how you should calculate the variations; whether this move is good or not depends on whether your opponent has any strong response. You shouldn't just hope for your opponent to be cooperative and help you in the execution of your plans. You've got to check for the most ambitious, aggressive responses of your opponent. That's how we really test if our move is good or not, right? Because we don't care if your opponent plays passive moves or bad moves or defensive moves, or help you execute your plan. We don't have to worry about that; then, everything will be good for sure. We only have to worry about the potential opponent's aggressive response. How do you find the aggressive responses of your opponent? Well, you've got to focus in your half of the board and ask yourself this question: How can my opponent move forward in my territory and take and attack something there? With that in mind, let's just check if White has any attacking moves here. Let's say that Black pushes the d-pawn forward in the center (d5). Is this dangerous for Black? It attacks the knight, but it can comfortably land on e5, so there is no danger here. OK, no problem. What about e5? That would attack the other knight, but at least we can trade here on e5. It's complicated; maybe we need to calculate it through, but at least it's not completely losing for Black right away. Maybe we've got to think about e5 a little more, but it's not too bad. What if White brings this knight forward to d5? (See the 19. Nd5 variation). In the real game, White even found another way to refute the idea, even though Nd5 was the strongest, White played Bh4.

19.Bh4

She found this idea of putting a pin to the c6-knight and now, when the knight is pinned, it's pretty hard for Black to escape by the way because the queen cannot move because the knight will be just captured immediately. Black tries to ignore and push their plan and take there on h3 (gxh3). White will push their plan, in this case, Nd5; the c6-knight still cannot move or else Black will lose the queen and this d5-knight double attacks the queen and the knight, it looks pretty bad for Black. If the queen moves away somewhere (Qc8), White can now happily capture the knight (Nxc6), winning the knight and attack here all around (to the rook on e8 and the bishop on d7), and just getting too much material advantage. So, in this example, Black's idea had so many flaws. There were even a couple of ways for White to refute it and Black found none of them. I think that not because Black was a weak player, but just because it is our human nature to hope for the best.

Let me come back to the starting position of this example. Black was playing g4 quite carelessly, just hoping for White to take there and for Black to recapture with the knight and that whole variation looks so good that you don't want to look for other options of

White. You don't want to think about those unpleasant responses of White, but that's what chess teaches us to do, right? The idea here is that you shouldn't play hope chess; you should consider the most aggressive responses of your opponent. That's how you find really if your move is good enough or not.

[19. Nd5 OK. It attacks the queen, attacks this knight on f6; it looks a bit unpleasant. Nxd5 Probably, we need to take this and White can either recapture with the bishop or 20. exd5 with the pawn which looks in this case really strong. Not only it attacks this knight on c6, but it's also a discovered attack to Black's queen. Therefore, the queen has to go, and White would win the knight on c6, winning material advantage. Therefore, it already goes to show that this variation is actually bad for Black, going a couple of moves back.]

19...Nxd4 20. Bd3 Qe6 21. Rf1 Nh7 22. Nd5 gxh3 23. g3 Ng5 24. Qc3 Nc6 25. Rf6 Qe5 26. Qxe5 Nxe5 27. Be2 Nxe4 28. Rf4 Ng5 29. Nf6 Re7 30. Nxd7 Nxd7 31. Bg4 Ne5 32. Bh5 Ng6 33. Rf6 Re6 34. Bxg5 hxg5 35. Rxe6 Rxh5 36. Re2 g4 37. Kh2 Rd5 38. Rf1 Ne5 39. Ref2 b5 40. a3 Kb6 41. Re2 Rd4 42.c3 Rd3 43. Rfe1 Nf3+ 44. Kh1 Nxe1 45. Rxe1 Rxe3

0-1

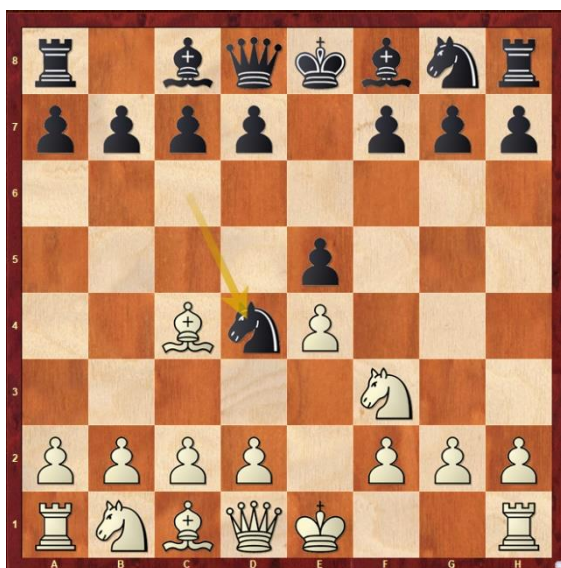
Maslov, Vladimir (2343) - Levin, Mikhail Eduardovich (1759) C50

Novosibirsk (6)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

All right. In the next example, let's explore another very common and quite bad pattern of chess players.

1.e4 e5 2. Bc4 Nc6 3. Nf3 Nd4



After a couple of first moves here, Black played Nd4. This move is a relatively known trap. If you're following my YouTube channel, I've got a lot of opening traps, so hopefully you're familiar with it. The point here is that White just shouldn't take this

pawn on e5. That's what Black was hoping for, and that's basically how this whole opening traps work. You hope for an opponent's bad move, so you can win the game afterwards. Here if White is seduced by this pawn sacrifice Nxc5, then indeed, they overlook the strong response by Black, Qg5, with a double attack to this e5-knight and the g2-pawn. As soon as Black captures that pawn, you can easily see that it creates a massive distraction in White's position. So, let's play here Nxf7 because the knight was attacked anyway. Now Qxg2, completely destroying White's position and attacking the rook over there. If the rook moves, the queen can quickly take this pawn on e4 (Qxe4+), check to the king and if the king is covered, then Nf3 delivers a beautiful smothered checkmate. The bishop can't move because it's pinned and, therefore, it's actually a checkmate. So, that's what Black was hoping for in this trap. Let's come back to the starting position of this trap. But, of course, the major problem is that White doesn't have to be cooperative, right? White doesn't have to play the move you want them to play. So, instead of taking here on e5 (Nxe5), which is wrong and has a refutation, for example, in the game they simply castled:

4.0-0

And now, Black's position here in the center is shaky. Now White is actually threatening to take this pawn,

4...Nxf3+

so, Black had to take there on f3 on their own.

5.Qxf3

threatening this f7-square because it's also attacked by the c4-bishop over here. Now, we can see that White already castled; they brought up the queen, the bishop and they have a significant lead in development; and therefore, they're probably going to crush Black quite easily, or at least there is a great chance of that because, again, when you have an advantage in activity, it's time for you to attack, right? That's what we talked about in the previous video. For example, Black tries to cover the f-file by playing Nf6 and White may try to break through the defense by playing d4 here, just to really blow up the center. After exd4, White can play e5 trying to drive this knight away and, if it goes away, then White can play Qxf7#, supported by the bishop, and that would be checkmate. If not, Black will lose the knight. You can just see that trying to hope for a quick opening trap could really, really badly backfire Black. White just doesn't play the move that Black hopes White would play.

5...Qf6 6. Qg3 d6 7. f4 Be6 8. fxe5 Qxe5 9. Bxe6 Qxe6 10. Qf3 f6 11. Qh5+ Qf7 12. Qb5+ c6 13. Qa5 Qc4 14. Qh5+ g6 15. Qd1 Qd4+ 16. Kh1 0-0-0 17. d3 h5 18.c3 Qe5 19. Be3 c5 20. Nd2 Bh6 21. Nc4 Qe6 22. Bg1 d5 23. exd5 Qxd5 24. Qa4 Kb8 25. d4 Qc6 26. Qxc6 bxc6 27. dxc5 Bg7 28. Nd6 Nh6 29. Bd4 Rhf8 Rae1 Ng8 31. Re6 Kc7 32. b4 a6 33. Rfe1 Bh6 34. Nc4 Kd7 35. Na5 Bf4 36. Nxc6 Rde8 37. Rxe8 Rxe8 38. Rxe8 39. Kxe8 39.c4 Ne7 40. Nxe7 Kxe7 41. g3 Bd2 42. b5

1-0

Janowski, Dawid Markelowicz - Schlechter, Carl D35

Hastings (19) 1895

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Let's take a look at another example with the game between Janowski versus Schlechter, two famous players of the past. We're going to the Queen's Gambit Declined, one of the most classical openings of all.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Nbd7

This actually sets a trap here. Black offers this pawn on d5 because, after the exchange here

5. cxd5 exd5



the thing is that since the f6-knight is pinned, White may hope that they can now win this pawn on d5, hoping that White's knight cannot move. But if White actually takes this knight... (See the 6. Nxd5 variation). Here White could play Nxd5. In the game though, White noticed that the white player was strong and he played 6. e3 Now, does it mean that Nd7 was refuted? Not really, Black needed to develop their knight anyway, right? So, in the game, Black just continued their development.

[6. Nxd5 It turns out that they can't win a pawn because that was a trap. Nxd5 Black will temporarily sacrifice the queen. 7.Bxd8 Bb4+ A nasty check which puts a check on the king and, because White is underdeveloped, 8. Qd2 the only way for them to cover their king is to use their queen. Bxd2+ So, they have to give their queen back and, now, after this exchange 9. Kxd2 Kxd8 Black can grab the bishop on d8 and, as a result of this, Black has three minor pieces versus White's two minor pieces; so, Black is a piece up and is winning. This is an opening trap, a classical opening trap; but, in this case, there is a big difference compared to the previous example. Let's come back to the position before White got into this trap.]

6...Be7

There was a long game afterwards, so Black still got a good position. Again, Nd7 was

not a waste of time, it was just not hoping for a trap because it was developing a piece anyway, right? That's the kind of traps that is acceptable for you to use in your games where you don't just hope for a bad move from your opponent, you play a decent move which sets the trap along the way. But I certainly will never command you to play a bad move, just hoping for your opponent to overlook something. This is a classic example of this "hope chess"; it's just one of the most common mistakes that chess amateur players lead into a lot of losses. The key to get from this lesson is very simple: Don't play hope chess, always consider the best responses of your opponent while deciding which move you're going to play.

7.Nf3 0-0 8. Bd3 c6 9.0-0 Re8 10. Rc1 Ne4 11. Bf4 Nxc3 12. bxc3 Nf8 13. Rb1 Bd6 14. Bxd6 Qxd6 15. Ne5 f6 16. Nf3 Re7 17.c4 dxc4 18. Bxc4+ Be6 19. Qb3 Kh8 20. Nd2 Bxc4 21. Nxc4 Qd5 22. Rfc1 Rae8 23. Qa3 Ng6 24. Qd6 Rd8 25. Qg3 f5 26. Qg5 Rde8 27. h4 f4 28. Qxd5 cxd5 29. Nd6 Rf8 30. h5 Nh4 31. exf4 h6 32. Kf1 Rxf4 33. g3 Rf6 34. Nc8 Ref7 35. gxh4 Rxf2+ 36. Kg1 Rxa2 37. Rf1 Rc7 38. Rbc1 Rxc1 39. Rxc1

1-0

5. An unknown principle that makes you a great attacker

Kites, Henrike (1404) - Mueller, Anna Louise (1581)

BL2 Ost 0809 (Women) (6.6) 07.03.2009

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

The fifth middle game concept is something that you're going to absolutely love or, at the very least, you're going to benefit massively because that's something that pretty much all of the players have in common in terms of doing it wrongly; and that's one of the very first things that I would fix when I have a new student. Here is the concept: Don't defend when you aren't attacked. The explanation of this middle game principle is just absolutely simple. Generally, in chess we want to attack, right? That's one of the first middle game concepts, generally speaking, strategic ideas. This also means that you don't want to defend unless you're forced to. I'm not saying that you should never defend. Yes, sometimes you have to do that. Sometimes in life, we have to do things that we aren't particularly thrilled about; but, nevertheless, generally speaking, if you aren't completely forced to defend, then you don't want to do that.

1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 Nc6 9.0-0-0 d5 10. Nxc6 bxc6



Here is our first example. It's White to move. We have a quite normal early middle game position, and here White decided to play

11.Bh6

to trade off Black's fianchettoed bishop. OK, a possible idea.

11...Qa5

White started to get concerned about this queen, looking towards the white king somehow;

12. Bxg7 Kxg7

so, White traded on g7 first and, after that, decided to play a3 just to defend this pawn, so Black's queen can never really capture this. And that's what we're talking about because if we take this move back, this pawn looks a little bit pressured; but nevertheless, the pawn is already defended by the knight, so there is no actual threat right now. Black is not actually threatening to take a pawn. Therefore, why would you defend if there is no real attack? You don't have to. And if you don't have to, you normally need to take care of your own plans, right? Because in chess, you want to attack and activate your pieces, that's what you should be doing as much as you can. Therefore, in this position, this a3 move is just a time waster and, instead, White should realize their own plan. There are many ways for White to proceed here. (See the 13. exd5 variation). Instead, in the game, White played this a3 move, which just wastes time and just gives Black simply more time to execute their own plans to do something on the queenside; maybe, to play a rook there (Rb8). Black's plan could be faster because White wasted time with this unforced defensive move.

13. a3

[13. exd5 cxd5 for example, White could trade in the center 14. g4 and, maybe, start expanding on the kingside, pushing their own pawn forward so, maybe, they can play g5; and then, if the knight goes away, White can win the central pawn (Qxd5) or just to continue expanding on the kingside. Either way, it was time for White to push their own plan and to only start defending when they absolutely have to.]

13...Be6 14.h4 dxe4 15. Nxe4 Qxd2+ 16. Nxd2 Rfd8 17. g4 h5 18. g5 Nd5 19. Ne4 Ne3 20. Rxd8 21. Bd3 Bc4 22. Bxc4 Nxc4 23. Re1 Rd5 24. Nc3 Re5 25. Re4 Rxe4 26. fxe4 Ne5 27. b4 Nf3 28. b5 cxb5 29. Nxb5 a6 30. Na7 Nxh4 31.c4 Kf8 32.c5 Ke8 33. Kd2 Nf3+ 34. Ke3 Ne5 35. a4 Kd8 36. Kd4 f6 37. gxf6 exf6 38. Kd5 Kc7 39. Ke6 h4 40. Kxf6 Nd7+ 41. Kg5 h3

0-1

Biddick, EIS. (1900) - Hitchcock. (1645)

Barnstaple op (3) 1972

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Here is another game. In this case, the white player is rated 1900, Black is rated 1600.

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 d5 3.cxd5 Nxd5 4.e4 Nb6 5.d4 e6 6.Nc3 Be7 7. Bf4 a6 8. Rc1



It was White to move and White played Rc1. Here Black noticed that this rook on c1 potentially teams up with the bishop to somehow attack this pawn on c7 in the future. I'm saying in the future because right now there is this knight on c3 that covers this line, right? So, it's not a threat yet. Black thought: OK, maybe at some future, this threat may get real, and they decided to play

8...c6?

just in case, so you never have to worry about White capturing that pawn somehow in the future. But again, c6 is a passive defensive move. We never want to defend when we aren't really attacked. It takes the c6-square from the knight and, overall, makes Black's position more passive. Also, it's going to be hard for Black to bring their light-squared bishop out because now all these pawns around are blocking the way out for the bishop. All in all, the c6 move worsens Black's position for no reason. On top of that, the main reason is, once again: Don't defend when you aren't attacked. There was no attack yet. Coming back to the previous position, maybe, White would actually execute this threat and, if that happens, then Black would indeed need to think about this somehow. For now, there is no threat yet, Black could just castle or play any other move, and if White ever moves this c3-knight somewhere and actually attacks this pawn on c7, then you'll think what to do. Maybe put it to c6 or maybe put it more actively to c5 to also attack White's center. Maybe, instead, you could play Nc6 to block the c-file that way while bringing your knight into play; so then, depending on the situation, you'll decide which move is the best. Also, if White ever moves this c3-knight away, you can always bring your bishop out there and deliver check to White's king; and reminding that they also have some weaknesses in their own position, they're underdeveloped; so, therefore, removing this knight from c3 could also expose White's king additionally. Therefore, once again, the key concern is: Don't defend when you aren't attacked. It's very good to notice opponent's threats; that's absolutely a critical skill, but it doesn't mean you have to react to them when they aren't really dangerous.

[8...0-0]

9. Bd3 N8d7 10.0-0 Nf6 11. Qc2 h6 12. Rfd1 Nh5 13. Be3 Bg5 14. Qe2 Nf4 15. Bxf4 Bxf4 16. Rc2 g5 17. g3 Bb8 18. Qe3 Rg8 19. e5 Nd5 20. Qe4 f5 21. exf6 Nxf6 22. Qe3

Bf4 23. Qe2 g4 24. Ne5 Bxe5 25. dxe5 Nd5 26. Ne4 Ke7 27. Nd6 Qf8 28. Rc4 Qf3 29. Qd2 h5 30. Be4 Qf8 31. Bxd5 exd5 32. Rf4 Qd8 33. Rf7+ Ke6 34. Qh6+ Kxe5 35. Qf4+

1-0

Stange,Joerg (1454) - Menz,Robert (1572)

Steinfurt Bezirksklasse 0304 (4.3)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Get ready for the final example of this lesson. Here we go! This time we've got a 1400 rated player, playing against a 1500 rated player. By the way, I'm not telling you the players' names because they aren't famous players. But if you want to know the players' names, all the games that I'm sharing with you are also presented in PGN format; you can open them using any chess software; therefore, you can always find out who the players were.

1.d4 f5 2. Bg5 Nf6 3. e3 e6 4. Nd2 Be7

In this position already, White decided to rush into the attack

5.Bxf6 Bxf6

They traded here and they played

6.Qh5+

trying to already create some threats to the black king.

6...g6 7. Qh6

Very often, a very common mistake that I see here that chess players make is that as soon as they see the opponent's pieces starting to approach your king or your kingside, very often, they start getting nervous and try to get rid of those pieces, trade them and start defending. But, as we know, you shouldn't defend when you aren't attacked. And the second really great idea is to really ask yourself what's the exact threat because when you need to decide how to defend, you need to, first of all, figure out what was the attack, right? What is the threat? Then, you know how to respond. So, what is the threat right now for Black? Is there any threat? What do you think? Well, I don't see any threats. OK, the queen is standing there on a forward-looking position, but everything is defended; it can't take the h-pawn because it's defended by the rook, the g-pawn is defended by the other pawn, so there is just nothing. So, Black can ignore this and just play their own move.

7...Qe7 8.h4



White keeps playing aggressively, trying to play h5 and, somehow, break out Black's position on the kingside. Again, I'm sure that a lot of players in a position like that would just start getting worried about White destroying their kingside and would start offering the queen exchange, or maybe would play Bg7, trying to kick the queen away; so, that's a very natural reaction. But again, we shouldn't panic too early :), right? The good question to ask yourself is: What is the exact threat of my opponent? Let's imagine that White executed the threat.

8...b6

Let's just play some random move just to see what White's idea is. OK. White's idea is pushing the h-pawn forward, probably to play h5, so they can capture this g6-pawn in the next move. Now, what's going to happen? They attack the pawn. What would you do here? OK, we can push the pawn forward and just defend it that way; the position on the kingside remains completely blocked. This queen is caught out of the game, right? It has no way to escape now and that's looking very good for Black. Is there anything else? If we are worried about this queen, we can just play Bg7 to kick the queen away; they would have to go all the way back to f4 (Qf4) and, now, there are no threats, right? White could take there on g6, but that's just a pawn exchange. There are no threats, no danger. Let's take a move back. Instead of playing Bg7, we can play Bg5 and, hey, the queen is actually trapped there! We can see that if White played h5, that would be a losing mistake; Black would just capture White's queen. On top of that, you can see that there were so many good responses of Black, so we certainly don't have to worry about White playing this move h5 whatsoever.

Let's go back a couple of moves to the actual game. In the game, White played b6, trying to fianchetto their bishop and finalize their development, and it's one of the decent moves for Black to play.

9. Ngf3

Still, does that really change something?

[9.h5 Bg5 (9...g5)]

9...Bb7

Not really, because you can still play Bb7; and, as we discussed earlier, after h5, you have a number of good moves for Black to play, so you don't have to worry about this.

10.c3 Nc6

Here White finally realized that, again, this queen on h6 is actually misplaced because if White tries to play h5, Black could play g5, locking the queen out of the game. Also, the pawn on g5 becomes quite active; it can actually go forward in the next move. The pawn could go forward and kick the knight away; and, if the knight goes away (Ng1), then you can actually execute your main threat Bg5, just capturing the queen over there; it has no escape square. Therefore, the queen would be captured. So you could easily see how, during this game, Black completely ignored White's threat and, even if White ever tried to execute it, it just backfired and White would completely lose the game immediately. That's a great example of not being too reactive to the opponent's threats; instead, you start to ask yourself: What is the exact threat? If it's not dangerous, then just ignore it. So, again, the moral of the story is pretty clear: Don't defend when you aren't attacked. And knowing this single key already puts you ahead of so many players who are just getting worried whenever they feel a little bit of a danger, and they start to overprotect and play extremely passive moves. If you don't do that, you've already automatically become a much stronger player.

11.Qf4 0-0-0 12.0-0-0 e5

[12...h6]

13. dxe5 Nxe5 14. Qa4 Ng4 15. Qxa7 Nxf2 16. Ba6 Bxa6 17. Qa8#

1-0

6. How to start your attack?

Fischer, Patrick (1369) - Jehle, Anja (1390)

Wuerttemberg-ch U12 (6) 05.04.2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Welcome into the middle game concept number 6, which says this: Open lines to start your attack. We already know that attack is one of the most fundamental ideas in the game of chess. Just looking at our grand scheme of things, you could easily see why attack is so critical and we've been talking about this quite a lot. Now, the next logical question is: How do you begin an effective attack? The first answer to this is already obvious, once again, looking at the grand scheme of things and it is to activate your pieces. As soon as you do that, you have a great chance that, at some point, attack will come naturally without you even playing this specifically because active pieces will start targeting some of your opponent's weaknesses in his or her position. OK, that's cool. But what else can you do? There is an additional element that you can keep in mind, and this is that you need to open up the position first before you can begin a successful attack.

1.e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Bc5 5.0-0 d6 6.h3 Bd7 7.c3 h6 8. d3 Nf6 9. Be3 Ba7 10. Nbd2 0-0 11. Bc2 Be6 12. Qe2 Qd7



Here is a very common middle game position. It's also one of the most popular questions that I always get from students: Igor, how to play in the middle game? In an opening, it's more or less clear, you just bring your pieces out, you need to develop, OK. That's fine. But what do you do after that? After that, in the middle game, generally speaking you want to start attacking, but how do you do that?

It's White to move here. How would you play here? How can White develop any attack here? White's pieces are already developed; they castled their king, yes; White's rooks aren't active; they haven't moved in this game yet, apart from the kingside rook and the castling. White could possibly move the rook to the center of the board, but that doesn't really change much; the rook is still passive. What's the missing point in White's

position? Why is it that White's pieces aren't that active? Why is it that White can't really start an attack? It's because White's pieces don't have any open lines and diagonals. That's the missing point. In order to do that, the most common way to open up lines is to push your pawns forward and trade them. (See the 13. Bxa7 variation).

13. Nb3

[13. Bxa7 Rxa7 So, in this position, White could first trade those bishops and after that 14. d4 White could push the pawn to the center of the board by playing d4. Now, what it does is actually a number of things. It gives White greater space to maneuver the pieces, OK. Also, the pawn is threatening d5 with a double attack to Black's minor pieces; cool. Also, from d4 the pawn is now attacking this pawn on f5 even though right now the pawn is defended; but, nevertheless, White's knight from f3 becomes an attacking piece. It wasn't just a move ago, but now it puts pressure into this pawn and Black has to watch over this pawn so that it is not lost in the future. White's knight becomes a little bit more active automatically. OK, what else? Also, this bishop on c2, before the pawn was moved, was completely blocked by the pawn; now it has a little bit of hope. Even though the bishop is still restricted by the other pawn, nevertheless, it has more space to move around and at some future, maybe, it can get involved into the attack if White manages to open this h7-d3 diagonal. All in all, you can see that while moving your pawn forward, it actually gives more breathing space to your pieces and they start being more active. Also if White now brings the rook to the center of the board, right now or in the future, this rook is not a passive piece because White can always open up the d-file and this rook will get active along the d-file. So, Rd1 in this case, in this scenario, would be a more meaningful move and the rook would be active because any time White wants, White can trade pawns in the center and the d-file will become open. You could see that a little pawn advancement, just pushing this pawn one square forward gives so much more opportunities for White's pieces. All White's pieces are standing backwards, and that's why moving your pawns and trading them is a great way to start your middle game attack.

OK, let's try to think about this particular position and what could possibly happen if White were to move their pawn. They didn't in the game, but let's look at the correct example. Black has to deal with the immediate threat: d5. In order to stop that, maybe Black would decide that they need to trade exd4 15. cxd4 d5 and put their own pawn forward to d5, so that White can't advance and win the piece, OK. In this case, 16. e5 White could move their own pawn forward, and now it kicks the knight away and White's bishop finally becomes an active piece along this h7-d3 diagonal; cool! Nh7 The knight goes back, how can White attack here? 17. Qd3 Since we now have this new open diagonal, we could play Qd3 and line up our pieces against Black's king and, particularly, against the knight, so that Qxh7# is coming. You could see that a couple of moves ago, White had absolutely no attacking opportunities and now we have a checkmating threat in one move Qxh7#. Now what can Black do? f5 Maybe they play f5 to block this diagonal, 18. exf6 but we could still take end passant and, after that, we renew the threat, once again, opening up more lines for our pieces and more diagonals, so that they can get involved and start getting Black's king. Black would need to recapture. How can we attack here? There are a couple of things here. Nxf6 19. Ne5 for example, White can land their knight on e5. Again, this square was not available previously. If you remember a couple of moves ago, there was a black pawn standing there and White's knight could not possibly move there. But now, it has this opportunity because we traded those pawns off. From e5, the knight is doing a great job, attacking the queen, the knight. Nxe5 If Black ever decides to take this knight 20. dxe5 White will

recapture, attacking the other knight. Ne8 If this knight goes off, 21. Qh7+ then the queen can land on h7. We can see how great it turned out for White. A couple of moves ago, White had no idea how to attack, and now, look at this, we have our queen on h7, which would be completely impossible to imagine just a few moves ago. But because we opened up this diagonal, White pushed the central pawns forward; now we have this super powerful attack. Kf7 The king goes away. There is still an interesting question: How can White finalize their attack? Yes, now the black king is exposed; it looks pretty dangerous, but nevertheless, you cannot checkmate the king with just the queen and the bishop; therefore, you need a little bit of more pieces. 22.f4 The way to get them involved is by playing f4. It can either take the bishop or maybe push forward to f6. What it does is open up the line for the rook, so the rook will get also involved, and White would probably checkmate Black's king soon after that. An interesting thing to think about here is previously we talked about activity of your pieces.

We noticed that, basically the chess game revolves around the activity of your pieces; you've got to care about your pieces first and foremost, not about your pawns. But very often, you have to play a pawn move in order to activate your pieces, such as in the current example. White is pushing a pawn forward, but the real intent is not really to activate the pawn itself, but rather to get the rook involved. So, that's a really key takeaway; how just playing a plain, simple pawn move can make such a big difference in the activity of all your pieces standing behind the pawn, so that they can get active and start moving forward on the opponent's half of the board and start creating real threats.]

13...Bxe3 14. fxe3 Rfd8 15. d4 Bxb3 16. axb3 exd4 17. exd4 Re8 18. Rae1 Re7 19. Qf2 Rae8 20. Nd2 Nh7 21. Nf3 Nf6 22. Nd2 Nh7 23. Re2 Nf6 24. Rfe1 b6 25. Nf3 a5 26. e5 dxe5 27. dxe5 Nd5 28. Qg3 f6 29. Rd2 b5 30. Qg6 Kf8 31. Qh7 Rd8 32. Bg6 Qe6 33. Qh8+ Qg8 34. Qxg8+ Kxg8 35. Red1 Nxe5 36. Nxe5 Rxe5 37.c4 c6 38. cxd5 Rxd5 39. Rxd5 Rxd5 40. Rxd5 cxd5

1-0

Heaton, Robert (1704) - Quintana Hernández, Marcos Iván

BCF-chT3 0102 (4NCL) (10.7) 05.05.2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1. d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 d6 3.Nc3 Nbd7 4.e4 c5 5.Nf3 cxd4 6.Nxd4 a6 7.Bd3 g6 8. Qd2 Bg7 9.Nde2 Nc5 10.f3 b5 11. Ng3 b4 12. Nce2 Nxd3+ 13. cxd3 a5 14.0-0-0 Be6 15. Kb1 Qd7 16. Nf4



So, we are still talking about the same middle game concept: Open lines to start your attack. We already know that pushing your pawns forward can activate your pieces and help you transition into the attack after that. But there is also another way for you to open up a position. Yes, you can, for example in the current case, Black could just push one of their pawns forward trying to open up a position on the queenside. That is a completely possible plan, and it's, in fact, the most common plan by pushing your pawns forward, trading them and opening up lines and diagonals that way. But there is also the second possible way to open up lines which is to sacrifice a piece. 16...Bxa2+ Black, in this case, sacrificed a piece to open up more lines against White's king. And we can also see that opening up lines, in fact, can do two different things for you. It can activate your pieces, but it can also expose the opponent's king or the opponent's weaknesses. Here after

16...Bxa2+, 17. Kxa2

we're exposing this king

17...Qa4+

so that now we can start attacking it. We now have this new open a-file to use for our attack, but also the king is weak. So, in this case, opening up lines serves these two purposes, not just one. We open up more lines for our attack, but we also expose the opponent's king or the opponent's weaknesses.

18.Kb1

Now the king has to move.

18...b3

Now we use this open a-file to prepare Qa2+, which is almost a checkmate, or at least it's going to be in the next move.

19. Qc3

trying to provide an escape path for their king, but Black found a creative way to win the game by playing

19...Nxe4

which is an attack to the queen with the knight and also with the bishop, a discovered attack. Therefore, in order to save the queen, White would have to possibly capture that bishop (Qxg7); then Qa2+, Kc1 is forced and Qa1# is now a checkmate; and this knight on e4, which is almost a lost piece, still controls the d2-square. Therefore, the king cannot escape, and it is a checkmate. That's also a pretty cool example; you need to open up lines to activate your pieces, but also to expose the opponent's weaknesses and, all in all, it's just one of the most common ways to start your attack: it's to open up files, lines and diagonals to start your attack.

20.Nxe4 Bxc3 21. Nxc3 Qd4 22. Nfd5 Rc8 23. Rhe1 0-0 24. Nxe7+ Kg7 25. Ncd5 Qa4 26. Bf6+ Kh6 27. Nc3 Rxc3 28. Bxc3 Qa2+ 29. Kc1 Qa1+ 30. Kd2 Qa4 31. Re4 Qb5 32. Rh4+ Kg5 33. Rg4+ Kh6 34. Bf6 g5 35. Bxg5+ Kh5 36. Bf6 Qb4+ 37. Rxb4 axb4 38. g4+ Kh6 39. Rg1 Ra8

1-0

7. How to avoid blunders?

HAHHHAHAHAHXDD (3467) - v0xx_v2 (2975)

<https://lichess.org/ifW648vf> 17.10.2020

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Blitz 5min. Hey and welcome into the next lesson, where we're going to be talking about the middle game concept number 7: Always be looking for your opponent's attacking moves. Using our grand scheme of things as a reference, once again, we can easily see that the most important thing for you to do in chess is attack, which also means that the flip side of the same coin is that you've got to watch over your opponent's potential attacking moves. In fact, you don't have to care about any other moves of your opponent. But those attacking, forcing moves are those which are possibly challenging for you; so you really need to watch over them all the time because, sometimes, it's enough just to miss one powerful shot of your opponent to lose a game completely right away.

1.e4 d5 2. d4 dxe4 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. f3 exf3 5. Qxf3 Qxd4 6. Be3 Qb4 7.0-0-0



Here is our first example. This is, in fact, a theoretical position; it's an interesting opening trap. Here it was Black to play.

7...Bg4

which looks like a very strong move; it is a skewer, trying to win some heavy material along this diagonal. It looks like Black is actually winning here.

8. Nb5

White's response was Nb5. Guess which move is the more powerful response of Black here. Let me show you the statistics. I've just opened the same position in a game database. Here in the right bottom corner, you can see the statistics, the frequency of

every move played here. Here in the first column we have the move, and in the second column the number of games played with each of those moves. And the top move, the most popular move of Black is Bxf3, which in fact, misses the checkmate Nxc7#. It looks a pretty simple thing, right? Checkmate in one. Even a beginner level player can notice usually checkmate in one.

If we look at the players here a little bit below that, we can see that we have 2300 players, even 2900 rated players, almost a 3000 rated player missed the move Nxc7#, and it was actually a 5-minute game. So, it's crazy; Black had a lot of time to think and then missed checkmate in one, being that much of a strong player. So, we see that it's not a coincidence; it's not just a sudden overlook of all these common patterns that people don't look for the strongest attacking moves of their opponent.

Now, how do you apply this in your own games? The first practical aspect of this is once your opponent played their move, such as in this case the knight going to b5, you've got to stop for a second and ask yourself: What's the idea of my opponent? What is he or she going to do next? While thinking about this, you've got to watch over an attacking move that your opponent can possibly play next because, again, that's the only thing that would care, right? We don't care if White played Kb1, right? That move doesn't do anything, so you don't have to worry about this at all; you only care about attacking moves, those moves that your opponent can play forward into your half of the board and cause some damage there: to take something, to attack something, to deliver a check, something like that, OK? With that being said, what's the purpose of Nb5? From here the knight can possibly go forward. Nd6 doesn't do anything, Nxc7, yes. We already know that it is a checkmating threat. Nxa7 would win a pawn, but that doesn't look good; the knight will be offside and it's just a little pawn, so that's probably not a real thing to worry about. We can easily see that Nxc7 is the only possible reason for White to move their knight to b5, and if Black would ask themselves that question, so many players would not miss checkmate in one. That's how you significantly reduce the number of blunders in your own games, just by thinking a little bit about the purpose of your opponent's moves, and asking yourself what's the attacking move that he or she can play next.

8...Bxf3 9. Nxc7#

1-0

Zikeli, Julia (1301) - Schloetzer, Waldemar (1498)

Wuerttemberg-ch U12 (2) 03.04.2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 g6 6. Be3 Bg7 7. f3 0-0 8. Qd2 Nc6 9. Bc4 Bd7 10.0-0-0 Rc8 11. Bb3 Ne5 12.h4 h5 13. Rhg1 Nc4 14. Bxc4 Rxc4



Now, we got another example. It's White to move; it's the game between two 1300 rated players. What do you think about this? We have a relatively standard middle game position; all the forces are developed, so it's probably time for White to try to attack somehow. White thought: How do I attack here? If White wants to attack the king, playing g4 seems quite risky; Black can actually take and, probably, capture and win this pawn, so White thought: OK, g4 doesn't work, let me just play f4 15. f4? and try to attack that way, so maybe I can push e5 in the next move or maybe f5 and somehow deliver my attack there on the kingside. So, that's the way of thinking of the white player here; but, what's the correct way of thinking instead? The correct way of thinking is that you shouldn't just think about your own plans; you should also check the opponent's attacking moves, potential attacking moves. And the way to do that is to ask yourself again, how can my opponent move forward into my territory and take or attack something? And it's a very quick thing to check because, most often, your opponent has just one or two possible attacking moves that you really need to worry about.

For example, in this position, as always, we don't care about any passive move your opponent can possibly play. What about attacking moves on White's half of the board? By saying White's half of the board I mean the first 4 ranks, right? We divide the board in two halves; we say White's territory is the first 4 ranks, OK? How can Black possibly move one of their pieces there and take or attack something?

Now, if we're looking at the rook, it could take one of the knights; but White would just recapture, so that would just lose the Exchange; so, that's not a problem. How about the bishop coming here to g4? That would attack the rook on d1; but yes, the rook could move away. It's actually not that great for White if we allow this bishop to move forward onto our half of the board. But, anyway, we can move the rook away so, at least, it's not that big of a deal. OK, what else? There's the e5 move. It's not a move in our half of the board, but it's a move forward that attacks something in our half of the board; it attacks the knight in this case. In this case, at least we can trade pawns and we have these heavy pieces along the d-file, so it doesn't look too bad, all things considered. And, finally, we have Ng4. 15...Ng4 The knight can land there on a strong square, and this actually looks pretty strong for Black because the knight attacks this e3-bishop; it also opens up this d4-f6 diagonal for the fianchettoed bishop to put pressure into the other White's minor piece. Together with this rook pressure, now we can see that White's position starts getting shaky. All of White's minor pieces are somewhat under

the massive fire of Black and that doesn't look good at all. So, by playing f4, by moving this pawn from f3, where we controlled the g4-square, by moving to f4, we weaken the square allowing this massive attack of Black. 16.f5 Now it's hard to do something.

16...Nxe3

Black took this bishop indeed

17. Qxe3 Qb6

Putting a pin and even a stronger pressure onto this central knight on d4 and White's position has actually fallen apart. Black is having so much pressure, particularly on this knight on d4, which is also pinned, and White got in a losing position. So, it's amazing how White spoiled a pretty good position with just basically one careless move: f4.

Coming back to the starting position of this example, right here we have an about equal middle game position; and with just one move, f4, White turned it into a completely lost game just because White didn't care about the opponent's attacking moves. And that's what you should not do. So, always look for your opponent's attacking moves, while considering which move you should play.

18. Nce2 Rfc8 19.c3 Kh7 20. f4 g6 21. Nc2 Bh6 22. Nf4 Qxe3+ 23. Nxe3 Bxf4 24. Rd2 Bxe3

0-1

Carrot, Patrick (1780) - Walter, Alain (1740)

Loire-ch op (7) 25.05.2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. Be2 g6 7.0-0 Bg7 8. Be3 0-0 9.h3 Bd7 10. Qd2 a6 11. Rad1 Qc7



Now, we've got the final example for the current video. Again, we have a pretty standard middle game position right after an opening; it's time for White to decide on their middle game plan, and White decided to play Bh6.

12.Bh6??

Generally speaking, it's quite a common maneuver to trade off this fianchetto bishop which would also somewhat weaken the king's position over there on the kingside, so Bh6, generally speaking, is a fine move. But there is one major flaw here that this move just loses in one move :); that's one major flaw here. The point here if we think about the opponent's attacking as well as the forcing moves; there is Nxd4 here, which actually wins the game for Black. And was it difficult for White or notices this move? No, it wasn't really because, again, we've got to think about attacking moves and also about forcing moves of your opponent: checks and captures. Those are moves that can really cause troubles either to your king or to your material, so you can get down on material. That's why you've got to check opponent's attacking moves as well as forcing moves, meaning checks and captures.

OK. Here before playing Bh6, White should have cared about the opponent's potential attacking moves. And it wasn't really hard to do that because Black's pieces can't really move to White's half of the board at all, so there aren't any attacking moves that Black can possibly play here. So, we only have to care about potential forcing moves, which are checks or captures. There are no checks; so, once again, it's very simple; so you only have to care about captures. Thus, we only need to think about Nxd4, Bxh6 because if something doesn't work out, we could lose a piece in this exchange, right? So, that's why we've got to care about that front.

In this case, if Black took here on h6, White would recapture with their own queen, so that's fine; that's an exchange. But if Nxd4, it is actually problematic for White because White can now recapture here. If White does that, that would lead this bishop on h6 undefended and Black can just take it, right? So, White will lose that bishop. And if White instead tries to first trade bishops there, then instead of just recapturing, Black can play an in-between move, Nxe2+, checks to White's king. So, White has to take here (Qxe2), and now, only now, Black can take back on g7 (Kxg7) and, as a result of this forcing line, Black has two minor pieces versus one of White. Black won a piece, and it's a winning advantage. Again, White spoiled a very good position with just a single careless move because they didn't care about the opponent's attacking forcing moves.

So, the conclusion from this lesson is pretty simple stated within the concept itself: Always be looking for your opponent's attacking moves. When thinking about the move, you're going to play; when evaluating the opponent's moves, just think about attacking, forcing moves of your opponent.

Very often, there will be only one or two moves that you really need to worry about, and you need to check and make sure that those moves are safe and secure for you.

12...Nxd4 13. Bxg7

[13. Qxd4 Bxh6]

13...Nxe2+ 14. Qxe2 Kxg7 15. Rfe1 Be6 16. Rd4 Rac8 17. Red1 b5 18. Kh1 Qb7 19. a3 Rc4 20. Rxc4 Bxc4 21. Qe3 Qc7 22. f4 e5 23. f5 Qc5 Qxc5 dxc5 25. b3 b4 26. bxc4

**bxc3 27. fxg6 hxg6 28. Rd6 Ra8 29. g3 Nxe4 30. Rd5 Re8 31. Kg2 Re6 32. a4 Kf6 33.
Rd3 Rd6 34. Rf3+ Ke6 35. Re3 f5 36. g4 Rd2+**

0-1

8. The evergreen rule

Example 01 B00

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1. e4 a6 2. d4 b6 3. Nf3

Example 02 C70

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Hey and welcome into the lesson about the middlegame concept number 8; this states: You've got to control the center, meaning control the center the board. While talking about the center of the board, we mainly imply these 4 most central squares, as well as the squares around them because they still have a little bit of an influence in the central squares. So, once again, the 4 most central squares are the most critical, but the squares around still have quite a bit of an importance, and you normally want to move your pawns and pieces towards this central area.

Why do we have to care about the center? Why do we have to try to put our pawns and pieces there? Well, as always, we have our grand scheme of things that explain everything in chess, so we can see that one of the most important things we've got to do is activate our pieces, right? Putting them in the center of the board is one of the most straightforward ways to keep our pieces active because, from the middle of the board, they control the greatest number of squares all around and they're also pretty mobile. They can be easily transferred from one area of the chessboard to another area within the shortest amount of moves.

This simple, straightforward principle - control of the center-, pretty much explains a lot of the first moves in any kind of opening. Just think about this: why is it that the two most common moves are either e4 or d4? It's because we're putting one of our pawns right in the center of the board and they are the only two possible moves that White really can do to achieve that. That's the only way for White to put anything onto one of those 4 central squares, right? That's why we should play either e4 or d4.

1.e4 e5 2. Nf3

Another quite common move for White to play is Nf3. And that is also not a big surprise because from there, it would also control a number of central squares, particularly, e5 and d4 if we land our knight on f3. That also explains why we don't want to play moves such as h3, a3 or a4 because that would have no influence in the center of the board whatsoever. The same can be said about pushing the b-pawn forward, pushing the g-pawn forward, that would have zero influence on the center; that's why we don't want to play them. We also have the second best moves, such as c4 or f4. They're not putting a pawn in the center of the board, but at least, to some extent they're influencing the center; that's why they're worth considering even though they are the second best compared to moving your central pawns forward. So, you can easily see that this move works from the very beginning of the game. Why is it that the best move here is not f3? Why is it not any other move? Because from f3, the knight controls 2 central squares: e5 and d4, right? So, it has the greatest influence in the center.

Let's take this move back. We can develop this knight to e2. That would only control one square of the board in the middle of the board, but not 2. In addition to this, that would block the bishop. If instead, we move our knight to h3, it would control no central squares at all; so, that's why that would be the weakest move for White. You can easily see again that the simple idea of moving towards the center -moving your pawns and pieces towards the center-, makes your life really, really simple. OK. We know that the knight should go here to f3 to attack the center of the board.

[2. Ne2]

[2. Nh3]

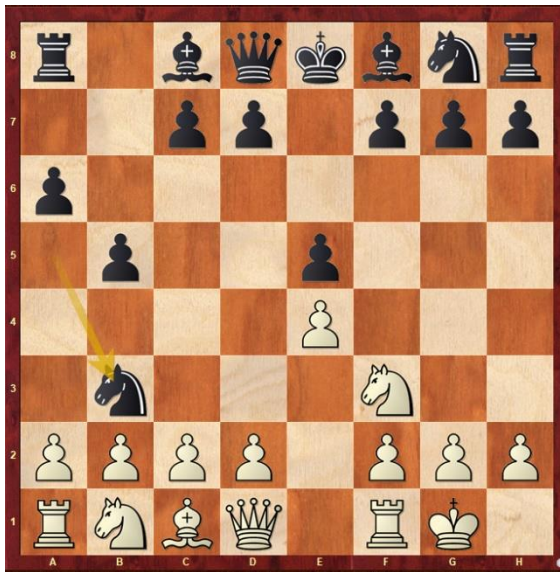
2...Nc6

Let's say Black defends by playing Nc6. Now, let's examine another possible situation, really, really common.

3. Bb5 a6

Black responds with a6.

4.Ba4 b5 5. Bb3 Na5 6.0-0 Nxb3



Here is the next question: Do we capture with the a-pawn or with the c-pawn? What's the right move here? If you are a more advanced level player, then perhaps you already know that you should take with the a-pawn because, again, you're taking towards the center. Even if you're familiar with this idea -that you should take with the a-pawn-, it's still a little bit of a confusing idea. Why would this exchange on b3 be considered influence in the center? It looks like this pawn on b3 is too far from the center anyway. So, why do we say that axb3 is correct? It's because we keep this other pawn on c2; that's the key point, that's the key difference. If instead here, we captured with the c-pawn, we remove this pawn from the c-file where it could possibly influence the center towards the flank, so this pawn will never be able to influence the center anymore, right? So, that's why this move is a mistake, that would remove the pawn from at least a more

central line towards a completely flank line. Let's play the correct move here: axb3. Now, even though again it doesn't seem like we're really influencing the center right away, nevertheless, we keep the c-pawn, so it can go forward to c3 and it would control the d4-square. Or it can go forward in the future to c4 and it could control d5. So, in the future, this c-pawn can be valuable for us to help us get control of the center of the board; for example, in the Roy Lopez, very often, you see White playing c3, preparing d4. If White does that, then these two pawns, in that case, would be relocated to c3 and d4; they would help White altogether to form this nice pawn center, and so the c-pawn makes a valuable role in this whole setup.

So, that just reminds us of another secondary rule which says: When you have a choice, such as in this case, you've got to take towards the center. You can see that all these things that we're talking about are just more specific ways of saying the same thing: Control the center, move towards the center; that's a great middlegame concept, great key for you to know what to do in the middlegame.

7.axb3

[7. cxb3]

Loskop, Petr (1955) - Hlavacek, Karel (1840)

CZE-chTJ 0102 (8)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 e5 5. Nb5 d6 6. N1c3 a6 7. Na3 Be6 8. Bc4 b5 9. Bd5 Rc8 10. Ne2 Bxd5 11. Qxd5 Nf6 12. Qd3



Here is another example. This isn't an opening position, but anyway, it correlates to the middlegame plan quite a lot. So, we already know that you want to control the center, and that means that you want to keep your pieces and pawns in the center of the board, you want to remove the opponent's pawns and pieces from the center of the board. Speaking about the real practical game of chess, even though you want, ideally

speaking, to keep your pieces in the middle of the board, very often, you cannot really do that. Let's take a look at this position.

It's Black to move but, can you really land this knight to the central squares? Well no, because it would be captured if you actually try to move it there; same thing to this other knight. Even though you could possibly move it to d4 in the center of the board, but if you do, that wouldn't work really well because Black can just take it and win a pawn after this exchange, right? Because then, they can recapture with the queen, so that doesn't really work. It's quite a common theme: very often you cannot really land your piece on the middle of the board because it would be captured with the opponent's pawn or piece. That's why very often this battle for the center starts with pawn moves because pawns are something that you can safely advance to the middle of the board, you don't care about it as much as about your pieces because they're too valuable. And one of the major ideas here becomes that you want to keep your pawns in the center and remove the opponent's pawns from the center. A lot of openings, again, revolve just around this idea. For example, right now, Black can actually play here the move d5, and try to achieve just that. This would force this exchange in the middle of the board (exd5) and, after that, we achieve what we wanted to achieve. Now we have our pawn in the middle of the board and there aren't any of White's pawns in the middle of the board. Many players would think: So, what? Is that really a big deal, just having this pawn in the center? It doesn't seem like it's doing that much or is helping Black to win somehow. I mean, yes, directly of course, it's not that this pawn will win the game in the next move. But let's just take a look at what can possibly happen here.

12...d5 13. exd5 Qxd5 14.0-0

[14. Qxd5 Nxd5 Let's say White would trade here on d5 (Qxd5, Nxd5), and then castle. I'm just trying to continue playing normal moves. 15.0-0 Bxa3 16. bxa3 for example, Black needs to finish their development, but here in this case, they can, in addition to that, break out White's pawn structure and 0-0 let's say Black will castle here.

Now, let's think about this position. How would White possibly proceed here? How would they try to activate their pieces? Because we know that's what they will try doing. Let's look at this e2-knight. It can't go forward because those squares are controlled by your pawn, so it's actually doing a really good job there, right? Even though, of course, the knight can go elsewhere, it can go to g3 or some other position potentially, I don't know if to g1 in the future. We don't care about those squares, they don't control the middle of the board, and so they aren't that favorable for the knight anyway. So, ideally the knight would wish to go forward, right? Ideally it would wish to go to d4 or f4, but it can't because of your pawn.

Now, let's speak about White's bishop for a second. What about the bishop? Again, ideally it would love to move forward. If it goes to g5, it doesn't attack anything, right? It attacks emptiness, and you can chase it away, so that move doesn't look too good. Ideally, the bishop would love to be placed here on f4, but it can't be placed there because of your central pawn; the bishop would be captured. Of course, White could play Bd2, but it's a passive move; it's not a forward move, that doesn't create any attack; so it's quite bad for White to keep the bishop just there. 17.Bb2 What if White tries playing Bb2 to fianchetto the bishop? They can, but this pawn is also somewhat restricting the diagonal for the bishop. f6 Black can even solidify this pawn further, and now we have this rock solid pawn chain. And so the bishop is again doing nothing because it just attacks a pawn that is already defended, so it can't do anything; there

aren't any opportunities for this bishop in the future. And again, it's all about this little pawn on e5. All in all, you can see that this little pawn does so much to help Black control more of the space here, more territory. To make sure White's pieces are inactive, make sure Black's pieces are active. This little pawn makes such a big difference, and that's why it's so beneficial in the long term to try to keep your pawns in the middle of the board and to remove your opponent's pawns from the board; and you will do this just with an exchange, just like Black did in this example. Let me just move back at the beginning of this position. Here the position is about equal. Just by playing d5, and trading off White's central pawn, you can see how quickly Black could achieve a dominant position in terms of the activity of your pieces just because, thanks to this pawn advancement, they could centralize their pieces and they could get this pawn in the center without any counterpart of your opponent.]

14...Qxd3 15. cxd3 Bxa3 16. bxa3 0-0 17. Bb2 Rfd8 18. Rfd1 Nd5 19. Rac1 f6 20. Kf1 Nb6 21. f4 Nd5 22. Kf2 exf4 23. Kf3 Ne5+ 24. Bxe5 fxe5 25. Ke4 Ne3 26. Rg1 Ng4 27. Rxc8 Rxc8 28. Kf5 Nxe2 29. Kxe5 Re8+ 30. Kd6 Rxe2 31. d4 Rxa2 32. d5 Rd2 33. Kc6 Ng4 34. d6 Ne5+ 35. Kc7 Kf7 36. Re1 Ke6

0-1

9. How to counter an opponent's attack?

Robert James Fischer - Vasily Smyslov

Bled, Zagreb & Belgrade YUG (21)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Hey and welcome into the middlegame concept number 9. This says: Counter a flank attack with a central attack. This is a counterintuitive concept, and yet, very important. Now, let's take a look at a few examples to see how you can apply this practically.

1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6. Bc4 Be7 7.0-0 a6 8. Bb3 b5 9. f4 0-0 10. f5 b4 11. Nce2 e5 12. Nf3 Bb7 13. Ng3 Nxe4 14. Nxe4 Bxe4 15. Qe1 Bxf3 16. Rxf3 Nc6 17. Qe4 Nd4 18. Rh3 Bf6 19. Bd5 Rc8 20.c3 bxc3 21. bxc3 Nb5 22. Bd2



Here we've got a position from the game between Fischer, playing White, against Smyslov, playing Black, and it's a really high quality game because both players were World Champions. Here it is Black to play, and we can see a quite common middlegame scenario, where your opponent tries to attack you on the kingside because your king is there, right? So, we can see that White lifted the rook from f1 to h3 (Rf3, Rh3), trying to create some attack along the h-file and, overall, both of White's bishops are also pointing towards Black's kingside. All in all, it looks pretty dangerous for Black because White has a lot of possibilities. This pawn on f5 is also giving White space advantage on the kingside, and the queen is somewhere near; so, it's ready to be brought there to the kingside. All in all, White seems to have a really strong attacking potential there on the kingside.

Now, how do you deal with that? How do you deal with those situations when your opponent tries to move their pieces towards your kingside position and tries to attack there? It's actually quite an interesting situation because our natural reaction is to be concerned, to be worried about our king safety. And we start thinking: Oh, our king is in

danger; we've got to do something about that, to defend it somehow; and we start getting worried about the opponent's attack. But there is one strategic concept which says that generally we should try to play in the middle of the board, in the center because central squares are the most powerful squares, and if you put your pieces there, they're going to be the most powerful. Therefore, when your opponent shifts from the center towards a flank, it's actually strategically dubious and, even though naturally we tend to get worried about that, sometimes we can be happy knowing that it can very well be that your opponent is doing something wrong and they're weakening their position; they're putting their pieces to worse positions; they're moving them from stronger central positions towards weaker flank positions. Therefore, that's how we come to the concept that you may counterattack a flank attack with a central attack. With that in mind, here in this position, Black played

22...Rc5

This is a move which has nothing to do with the kingside position, but rather, it tries to counterattack in the center. Black noticed that White here imposed this quite strong blockade (the e4-queen and the d5-bishop) in the middle of the board, and Black wants to put these pieces away, and then, possibly move his own pawns forward. Rc5 takes aim at the bishop, trying to bring more pieces closer and push it away.

23.Kh1

A prophylactic move just to make sure that there are no possible checks along this g1-b6 diagonal for the white king.

23...Qd7

This time the queen is also taking aim at this pawn on f5, so that the queen now cannot move away. Here White noticed that perhaps Black's threat here is to play Nc7, which would also attack White's bishop in the middle of the board from there,

24.Bb3

and Fischer decided to move the bishop away in advance. Now Black managed to achieve what they wanted to achieve,

24...d5 and pushed the central pawn forward. Here is an interesting change in the position that you may notice. Even though it seems like Black did nothing to defend their kingside, there is still one positive change in the position. Previously, White's bishop (let's take one move back) was looking towards Black's king and, in some variations, that could be dangerous; but now that Black pushed their central pawn forward, this diagonal is closed and White's bishop can no longer take part into White's attack. So, it's quite an interesting situation, where by playing in the middle of the board, Black already achieved something that can secure their kingside position, even though they did nothing seemingly to do that. All right, let's move on.

25.Qf3 Nd6

keeping the same centralization game, so they're bringing all of their pieces closer to the middle of the board and pawns as well. From d6, the knight is helping the queen; it attacks the pawn on f5; also the knight, generally speaking, which stands in the middle of the board, can jump to e4 in the future potentially. You may notice the same pattern

where White says: Hey, I don't care about the pawn; I just want to checkmate Black. Let's say White plays Qh5 and, from there, plays Qxh7#. In this case, Black may actually grab a pawn (Qxf5), and this will simultaneously defend that pawn on h7. So, once again, we see the same pattern that happens again. Black is seemingly playing in the middle of the board, but somehow, those centralized pieces still influence the kingside position as well, helping Black defend. Therefore, this idea doesn't work and White has to do something else. Let's take this move back.

26.Rf1

In the game, Fischer played Rf1, just to defend this pawn on f5. Since this pawn is defended,

26...Ne4

Black moved their knight to another central square, this time attacking the bishop over there on d2. Now, what should White do? It actually turns out that White's position is already quite challenging because, where can the bishop go? It's being attacked by the knight, so White normally needs to do something about that. Let's say the bishop goes backwards to c1. In this case, Black's knight and rook are ready to take this pawn (Rxc3), and not only winning the pawn, but also, indirectly, this rook attacks all White's pieces that were trying to create some threats in the kingside. So at the very least, Black will be able to just trade off the rooks once the queen goes away, and White will have very few attacking pieces on the board. So that doesn't seem to be an option for White. Let's try to find some other move. What if the bishop goes to e1 (27? Be1), trying to keep defending the c3-pawn? Then, there is another tactical opportunity that Black has: Ng5 forking the queen and the rook; and, again, Black will just win the material, in this case, eliminating one of the attackers. So, automatically, the task of defense will be solved. It may seem like the sudden tactics, but it's not that sudden, just a matter of the fact that your knight is standing in the middle of the board is so strong that it creates all this tactical opportunity for Black. Because it attacks so many squares around, naturally, it creates a lot of tactical opportunities. Because it can jump one way or the other, it can attack something there. So, White figured out at this point that, actually, there is no convenient way to defend the bishop and they tried to go all out in the attack.

27. Qh5

and they played Qh5, saying: I don't care about the bishop, I just want to deliver the checkmate here on h7.

[27. Bc1 Rxc3]

[27. Be1 Ng5]

27...h6

Since Qh7# is really a checkmating threat, Black played h6 and White sacrificed the bishop here on h6. It looks quite dangerous at first. It looks like, after this, it forces to open up the king's position, and now

28.Bxh6 gxh6 29. Bc2

[29. Qxh6 White is going to deliver checkmate somehow along this h-file, or maybe along the g-file. It looks really bad at first, but let's think about this more specifically. What is the checkmating threat of White? What can White really do? First of all, White cannot really move any of their heavy pieces to the g-file trying to checkmate here on the g-file because all those squares are already controlled by Black. The g3-square is controlled by the knight, the g5-square is controlled by the knight again, and the g7-square is controlled by the bishop; so, there is no opportunity for White to move their pieces to the g-file because everything is already under control. Again, Black's centralized pieces are doing a great job here. Let's see if there is anything else. The only other option of White would be threatening Qh7#, and that's indeed a threat; but that's the only threat that White has, and it's very simple for Black to parry it. Rd8 They just move the rook away, so that the king has the escape path. 30.Qh7+ It's just a single check. Kf8 The king goes away, and White's tactic is over. It's really interesting to see how Black seemingly did nothing to defend their kingside, but it was automatically defended by their so strong centralized pieces. 31.Qh6+ Trying to deliver one more check, Black can certainly cover with the bishop, but they can even boldly play Ke7 just because, again, his position in the center of the board is so strong that the king feels absolutely secure here. And let's not forget that Black is a piece up; White sacrificed a piece to try to open up the position of the kingside, so having an extra piece; Black's position is winning. That's a great example and, again, it's not a coincidence or some sudden tactical variation; it's just a matter of the fact that centralized pieces are stronger than opponent's pieces that are moved towards a flank. And that's why countering the center is often the best response to your opponent, trying to achieve their pieces towards the kingside and checkmating you there. Ke7]

29...Bg5

[29...Rxc3 30. Rxc3 Nxc3 31. Qxh6 Bg7 32. Qh5]

30. f6 Rb8 31. Bxe4 dxe4 32. Rg3 Qf5 33. Kg1 Qg6 34. Qe2 Rc6 35.h4 Rxf6 36. Rxf6 Qxf6 37. Qh5 Qf4 38. Kh2 Kg7 39. hxc5 hxc5 40. Qxg5+ Qxg5 41. Rxc5+ Kf6 42. Rh5 Rb1 43. Kg3 Rf1 44. Rh4 Kf5 45. Rh5+ Ke6 46. Rh6+ f6 47. Rh4 e3 48. Re4 f5

0-1

Gawai, Siddhant (1733) - Amonatov, Farrukh (2631) B96

New Delhi Parsvnath blitz op 18th (8)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Bg5 e6 7. f4 Qc7 8. Qf3 b5 9. a3 Nbd7 10.0-0-0 Bb7 11. Bd3 Qb6 12. Nb3 Rc8

OK. Here is another example that would illustrate another point about this general rule that you've got to counter a flank attack with a central attack. In this case, it's the game between Gawain against Amonatov. It looks like more or less normal quite a middlegame position for White because they already finished their development and White decided: Hey, I'm going to attack on the kingside.

13. g4



anticipating Black to castle within a few moves and so, they're ready to begin this pawn assault on the kingside. Again, at first, it looks like that's a perfect plan for White to develop an attack there, but there is another drawback of pushing pawns on a flank. That weakens the position, creates weaker pawns and weak squares that you can take advantage of. But, in order to do that, you need to open up the position first; you need to trade off some pawns in the middle of the board, so that your pieces have more open lines and diagonals and they can start taking advantage and targeting those weaknesses, OK? Here Black decided that, ideally, they would love to push the pawn on the middle of the board; but since White controls that pretty well,

13...Rxc3

Black decided to sacrifice an Exchange first here on c3

14.bxc3 which would also break up White's pawn structure on the queenside and, potentially, make the king more vulnerable as well

14...d5

and then push d5, which was their main intent to open up the position there. And now, you can already see that White may start feeling uncomfortable because of their g4 move. Let's say White would take here on d5 (15. exd5), Black may recapture by the bishop (Bxd5), and now, in the next move, they would be able to grab either the queen or most likely the rook on h1 because the pawn on g4 has weakened this diagonal. Imagine the pawn is still standing on g2. There's no problem for White at all; the rook would not be attacked because it's covered by the pawn. But now, it is a weakness. So, in the game White did not take on d5, instead they tried to keep the position closed and they played

15. e5

[15. exd5 Bxd5]

15...Bxa3+

Black captured on a3 because it's check to White's king.

16. Kd2

[16. Kb1 The king has to move and, now after the king moves, Black found another pretty cool move to open up the position; they played d4 which is a counterblow once again. Even though the knight is being attacked, by pushing the pawn in the middle of the board, Black is counterattacking White's queen and, possibly, the rook. And now, let's think of what could happen here. The queen is attacked, so it would need to move somewhere. Also, Black is potentially creating some threats on the queenside; maybe the knight can go there and maybe take here on c3 and attack the king. 17.Qf2 So, let's say the queen would decide to move to f2, so that it potentially pins the pawn to the queen or is ready to capture. Now we can, once again, see some drawbacks of having this pawn here on g4 and having the diagonal exposed. So, Black can start attacking all these weaknesses. First of all, Black can just grab this pawn on g4 because it was undefended. Nxc4 18. Qxd4 Qxd4 Black can trade queens. 19.cxd4 Bxc1 and now there is the rook which was also exposed, so Black can take it. 20. Rxc1 as a result of this forcing line, we can see that Black is a pawn up in an endgame and should have a winning game; they can even play Nf2 to keep attacking White's weaknesses because now this is a fork to the rook and the bishop; 21. Rf1 and if the rook moves somewhere, Nxd3 Black could take here to double White's pawns. 22. cxd3 Nb6 and now, it's quite clear that Black has a much better position here; for example, Nb6, to move the knight to this excellent d5-square. And, in the endgame, after Black castles or just moves the rook into the game somehow, these two passed pawns will just move forward (b5- and a6-pawns), and will win the game for Black probably. So, you can see how trying to attack on the kingside for White, really backfired badly because Black just opened up the position in the middle of the board and a lot of the weaknesses somehow became vulnerable for White; and Black could start capturing all these weak materials, the pawns that occupied all these weak squares.

So, that's another great example of you trying to counter a flank attack with a central attack. Let me put that original position back here on the board. From this point, when Black played g4, it looks like White just starts this potentially dangerous attack on the kingside; in the future it will move forward and attack you. But you can see how badly this backfired. If you stay cool, you don't just worry about your opponent's attack to your king. But you think: OK, I've got a counter flank attack with a central attack, and you start opening up the position there. You see that very often your counterattack can be way more powerful than the opponent's potential intent to attack on the side.]

16...d4 17. Qh3 dxc3+ 18. Ke2 Nd5 19. Rhf1 Nb4 20. f5 Nxd3 21. Rxd3 Bd5 22. Rfd1 0-0 23. f6 Nxe5 24. fxg7 Rc8 25. Rd4 Bc4+ 26. Ke1 Bd5 27. Be3 Nf3+ 28. Kf2 Nxd4 29. Rxd4 Qc7 30. Qh6 Qe5 31. g5

0-1

Chapter 1- Summary

Congratulations! You've done a great job. Even though there are 25 middlegame concepts that we're going to cover in this course, out of those 25, there are 9 which are most critical, most fundamental. And we've just studied them all, so now you're ready to have this firm foundation to understand entirely the chess strategy overall; and also to know how to play in the middlegame.

Now, let's also come back to our general scheme of things, the grand scheme of chess strategy. We'll try to summarize all these concepts because you will see that when you understand the general idea, all this more specific patterns and concepts will be easy to understand. First of all, we have quite a number of rules and concepts tied to the concept of attack. It makes sense because attack wins the game, right? That's why we say: Check attacking moves first. Yes, they're most powerful. Don't defend when you aren't attacked, meaning do not defend up front, do not defend in advance when it's not truly needed. Wait for your opponent to actually attack you, to actually create that threat and, only then, attack to defend because, normally, you don't want to defend, right? You want to attack; you want to play actively. That's why we shouldn't be too much concerned in advance.

Another rule says that when you are attacked in the flank, the kingside; let's say, you need to counterattack in the center. And that is the concept of attack and activity. If your opponent is doing something wrong, then you may counterattack in the center so that, first of all, you attack, you don't even need to defend that much; but secondly, activate your pieces because you bring them to the center. In the center of the board, they are stronger pieces.

Another concept says that if you aren't sure what to do, if there is no powerful attack and you aren't sure which plan to take, very often, you don't have to think hard; you just need to remember this general scheme, the grand scheme of chess, right? Activate your pieces: that's the theme which will always be an evergreen chess strategy. Just move your pieces closer to the center of the board, move them forward, try to make them active, make them controlling more squares on the board; and, usually, automatically, it will start creating attacking opportunities later on for you, even if you don't really have any specific idea right now; it will arise naturally in the future, OK? That's about activity of the pieces.

And, of course, now these two concepts are tied together. One of the concepts was: Don't play hope chess. Don't just play a random attacking move hoping that your opponent will blunder; overlook you're attacking, let's say, his queen or something like that, or you're threatening checkmate in one move. Instead, try to create a real, powerful attack and you do that by activating your pieces, right? So, if your pieces are active, they're controlling a large number of squares on the board; yes, then your attack will indeed be powerful. Don't play hope chess, create a really well prepared attack by

activating your pieces; that will start creating threats and, then, it naturally transitions into a powerful attack.

We also say that while you think about your own plans and intents that you want, we still need to keep an eye on our opponent as well, right? Because he or she will want to do just the same. Most of all, again, we've got to be concerned about the opponent's attacking moves. So, that's why while calculating variations, thinking about the move you're going to do, you need to always ask yourself: What are the attacking moves that my opponent can play? Because that's the only thing that you really need to be worried about. Because an opponent's powerful attacking move can possibly destroy your position, you could lose the game if you overlook a powerful attacking move.

So, you don't need to think about lots of things of your opponent, but you've got to think about the attacking moves, just to make sure that you are secure, right? And then, you don't become too much of this tunnel vision when you just focus on your own plan and completely forget about your opponent; but he or she is still there, right? :) They're playing against you; they're trying to do something as well; so, we've got to keep an eye on their attacking moves.

So, you've got to ask yourself: How can they move forward in my half of the board and take or attack something there. And if you always keep this idea in mind, you'll always consider the opponent's attacking, forcing moves; then you will never blunder, right? Your plans will always be sound and you will gradually execute them.

So, that's the grand scheme of things and, even if you can't remember all the 9 concepts right now literally, don't worry. First of all, we've got practice, so later on you will be able to also train them on the course.

Secondly, again, even if you could keep this general idea, this general grand scheme of things that you can see right now on the screen, it already explains a lot and it gives you a lot of guidelines. Many of those patterns that we're going to learn, these 9 patterns or those that you're going to learn later, they serve as a key; so, when something happens, you know how to react. If your opponent attacks you on the flank: Hey, I've got to counter that with a central attack, right? It pops up in your head like a key, like a pattern; if this happens, then I'm going to do that. And so, it's really helpful for your practical games, of course, because you're already well prepared in advance, and you know how to react. So, once again, congratulations!

And now, we're moving on to the next section, where we're going to be talking about the middlegame concepts connected to different pieces and, yes, without further ado, I'm waiting for you in the next lesson.

Chapter – 2: Pawns & Pawn Structure

10. The easiest target to attack

Kobalia, Mikhail (2596) - Toczek, Grzegorz (2290) B60

World Rapid 2021 (2.58) 26.12.2021

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Congratulations! We have just finished studying the 9 most universal and most critical middlegame concepts that will help you eliminate any doubts in how you're going to be playing the middlegame because now you have a lot of valuable principles to rely on, so that you know how to brush that. In addition to that, we have some additional concepts which are more specific to a particular piece or a pawn, so that it serves as a pattern. As soon as you see it, you already know what you're going to do there. We're starting off discussing about pawns because there are some really simple and valuable ideas about how to use your pawns and how to treat the opponent's pawns. And again, those are keys or patterns that, as soon as you see that pattern in a real game, you're going to know what to do. The first piece of advice here, the first pattern which is also our middlegame concept number 10 is: Attack your opponent's weak pawns. Attacking the opponent's weak pawns is one of the most underrated plans and underrated concepts that most people completely misunderstand because when they're playing the game of chess, they know that the goal of chess is to checkmate the opponent's king. So, they're thinking: OK, how do I attack the opponent's king? But very often, there is just no way to do that. If you try forcing that, it only backfires because there is no real way to get to the opponent's king; and trying to force that will only weaken your own position. If you cannot attack the opponent's king because it is too well defended, what do you do then? Well, you can try attacking the opponent's pieces, but they are too mobile, they can run away. As we discussed at the beginning of the course, usually attacking opponent's pieces not even capture them because, usually, that's not happening, but rather to get other side benefits. For example, you can push your opponent's pieces backwards and, therefore, make his position less active. But what is it that you can really use as a target for your attack then? Well, the good target is pawns. They are not mobile, they cannot run away easily and they also stay in the wrong position for a long period of time; therefore, you can bring up more and more pieces to attack the same weakness. And it's very easy for you to create your complete plan just based on that single weakness.

OK. Let's take a look at this game. It's quite a high level game. The white player is a Grandmaster, the black player is rated 2300, and it's a FIDE rating, not online rating, so it's comparable to the level of a FIDE master; both of them are quite strong players.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6. Bg5 g6

The purpose is quite clear. Black wants to fianchetto their bishop. But there is one major flaw:

7.Bxf6

It allows White to trade here on f6 and to disrupt Black's pawn structure. And yet, it doesn't seem like a big deal.

7...exf6



OK, Black would trade here, so what? A lot of players would not really realize what's going on here, but here is the deal. Let's take a couple of moves back here, and let's talk about this position for a second (after 6. Bg5). How can White possibly attack Black, right now or even in the future, within the next 5 moves, within the next 10 moves? How can White do that? There is no obvious way at all, right? Black's king is very well defended. We know that attacking the opponent's pieces usually doesn't work; attacking the opponent's pawns neither because Black does not have any weaknesses, any weak pawns that you can possibly target; so, it's completely unclear for White how do I compose any aggressive plan here. What happens after Black plays g6 and allows White to just trade here and to disrupt the pawn chain, so that now after this trade (Bxf6, exf6), we've got this weak pawn on d6? By the way, what is a weak pawn? A weak pawn is a pawn for Black on the sixth or fifth rank which is undefended and cannot be defended by another pawn. So, in this case, the pawn on d6 is apparently weak and the pawn on f6 is also quite weak because, again, it cannot be defended by another pawn.

So, those are the two major weaknesses for Black in this position, and the biggest problem for Black would be that pawn on d6 because it also stands on a semi-open file. Therefore, in the future, White would easily be able to use his queen and rooks to pressure along this d-file to that weak pawn. Even though right now it does not seem like a big problem for Black, the pawn on d6 is already defended; there is no issue for Black with this pawn. But here is the problem. It's a long term weakness. Black cannot do anything to eliminate this weakness, while White will be able to bring more and more pieces along the next 5 moves, 10 moves, 15 moves.

White can bring up more and more pieces, eliminate defenders, trying to capture that pawn; so, this single little weakness gives White a complete potential winning plan; that's how important this thing is because yet an extra pawn doesn't win by itself, as we discussed earlier; this gives you a more dominant position. From there, you can

transition into a more winning attack. Or you can trade all the pieces and go into an endgame, where you can just promote your pawn into a queen. Let's see how it turned out in this game.

8.Bb5

Just to develop.

8...Bd7

Black defended the knight.

9.Nde2

Already showing Black: Hey, I am looking up for this pawn; I'm going to capture it sooner or later. Right now, it is defended, but White is just starting to take aim at this pawn.

9...Be7 10. Qd2

Again, White says: Hey, I'm going to castle queenside and bring my rook over there as well, so that I can now put pressure on this pawn with my queen and rook. White just keeps focusing his pieces against this weakness.

10...0-0 11. Nd5

What's the purpose? From here, it's just a good square for the knight; but this also takes aim at this f6-weak pawn and, potentially, White is ready to eliminate the defender of Black's weak pawn on d6, so that in the future White can easily capture it by eliminating the defender. Again, you can see how easy it became for White to plan their entire game just focusing on this single weakness.

11...f5

trying to trade a pawn there.

12.exf5

White allowed that.

12...Bxf5 13. Nxe7+

And White took that bishop on e7 to eliminate the defender.

13...Qxe7 14.0-0

And now, White would already potentially start threatening to capture this pawn on d6 at some point, meaning not right now but in the future. Again, the great simplicity of White's plan is that you can just keep going there; you can keep attacking. Right now, Black can defend the pawn, but White can keep attacking; that's the problem. It's been a long game that I will not show you the continuation of this game just not to overload

you with a lot of moves, but I think that the key point is pretty clear. The 10 positional concept says that you should not create weak pawns in your position and, if your opponent's position has a weak pawn, then you're going to attack it and just concentrate all your pieces against it; and you can ultimately capture it getting a decisive advantage, so you can later on use one way or the other to win the game.

14...Qe5 15. Nc3 Nd4 16. Rfe1 Qc5 Ba4 b5 18. Bb3 Bxc2 19. Bxc2 Nxc2 20. Ne4 Qc6 21. Rac1 Rac8 22. Re2 d5 23. Ng3 Qa6 24. Rxc2 Rxc2 25. Qxc2 Qxa2 26.h4 Qc4 27.h5 a5 28. Qd2 a4 29. Nf5 gxf5 30. Qg5+ Kh8 31. Qf6+ Kg8 32. Re3

1-0

Carlsson, Pontus (2457) - Riazantsev, Alexander (2634) B12

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[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

All right, here is the next example; a game between two strong players: Carlsson against Riazantsev. It's not Magnus Carlsen; it's Pontus Carlsson.

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 Bf5 4.h4 h5 5. c4 e6 6. Nc3 Bb4 7. a3 Bxc3+ 8. bxc3 Ne7 9. a4



It was Black to play here. What would you do here as Black? That's a good question to think about, right? Yes, Black would love to finalize their development fair enough, but what would be your middlegame plan? How would you attack here? Attacking White's king doesn't seem to be realistic at the moment; there is just no way for you to target it. Attacking the opponent's pieces, generally speaking, is hard in this case as well. How about pawns? White actually has a lot of weak pawns in this position because the more your opponent advances his pawns forward, the more they become vulnerable to your attack because they are closer to your position, so it gets easier for you to attack them. In this case, if we're looking at White's pawns, the a4-pawn cannot be defended by other pawns, the c3-pawn cannot be defended by other pawns in the third or fourth rank

because White's weaknesses would normally stand there. There is also this pawn on h4 which is not particularly weak, but anyway, it's advanced and it may be a problem for White in the future because if White ever tries to castle, this pawn on h4 may become weak. This pawn on c4 is slightly shaky. Not all but a lot of White's pawns are possibly weak. Now, how can Black begin the attack? We know another middlegame concept which says: Open up to start an attack. Open the position to begin your attack.

9...c5

Trying to target all White's weaknesses, but also just to open up the position, so that Black's pieces have more space to maneuver and start the attack.

10.Nf3 Nbc6 11. dxc5

Another mistake! Because, previously, White's pawn structure was shaky; but now, White completely separated all their pawns so they can never support each other and Black would now be able to attack all of them. You can see that even strong players can misunderstand this thing. Also, now this pawn on e5 lost its protection from the other pawn and it's also an advanced pawn, so it also becomes weak. Now White has just so many weaknesses that Black can target. 11...Qa5 trying to take aim at some of these weaknesses right away

12. Qb3

defending one of them.

12...0-0

Black just castled for now because those pawns cannot run away anyway; Black can capture them later.

13.cxd5 Nxd5

Now this pawn on c3 is under the fire of the queen and the knight.

14.Bd2

White tried to defend it.

14...Qxc5

Black collected the other pawn on c5, and now White also got nervous for a reason because even though White could just finalize their development putting the bishop out, but the c3-pawn is very weak and Black can play Rc8, move the knight from c6 to a5 and finally capture that pawn; something like this. Black has a very simple attacking plan and White has nothing, that's the problem with the weak pawns.

15.Qb5

White tried to offer a queen exchange, but

15...Qe7

Black just went back temporarily

16.Bd3

trying to offer an exchange again

16...Bg4

saying: Hey, you also have another weakness, this weak pawn on e5 and I want to eliminate the defender on f3 and, after that, I'm going to go ahead and just capture the pawn. It's already quite unclear how White can possibly defend it; there is in fact no way.

17.Ng5

White tried some kind of desperate attack on the kingside,

17...a6

but Black just kicked the queen away

18.Qb1 Nxe5

and then, captured this pawn. There is no attack of White there anyway.

19.c4

White is trying to do something to mix things up.

19...Nxd3+ 20. Qxd3

Black now trades here on d3

20...Nf6

and plays his knight back to f6. They just covered the only threat that White had: Qh7. Now the square is covered; White cannot do that and White is left with a destroyed position; White is a pawn down right now and

21.0-0

if White tries castling, Black will play

21...Rfd8 22. Qe3

If the queen moves away somewhere, Black can play Rac8 and target another weak pawn and this just gives Black a completely winning position. So, you can see how Black easily converted this seemingly complex position into a completely won game just by targeting the opponent's weak pawns and simply pushing against them. You can

also see how dangerous is to create weak pawns in your position because it's a long term problem that you can never fix, or at least it's extremely difficult to fix, while your opponent can just keep pushing against it. So, this middlegame concept says: Attack opponent's weak pawns; and that's one of the easiest middlegame plans to win a game of chess.

22...Bf5 23. Bc3 Rd3 24. Qe5 Rc8 25. Rfd1 Rxd1+ 26. Rxd1 Ne8 27. Qd4 f6 28. Nf3 e5 29. Qb6 Rxc4 30. Bd2 Rc6 31. Qb3+ Qf7 32. Qe3 Bc2 33. Ra1 Nd6 34. Bb4 Nf5 35. Qd2 Qc4 36. Qd8+ Kh7 37. Bd2 e4 38. Qe8 exf3 39. Qxh5+ Nh6 40. Bxh6 Bg6 41. Qxf3 Kxh6 42. Qe3+ Kh7

0-1

11. This is the real way to win fast

Rossolimo, N. - Romanenko, A.

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Hey, what's up? In this video, we'll talk about a very interesting concept which overlooked lesser known and yet, it's super powerful; and we're going to see how it can help you win games easily and to completely dominate over your opponent. Here's the concept: Blockade your opponent's pawns to hinder development. Let's take a look at this example.

1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 g6 4.0-0 Bg7 5. Re1 Nf6 6. Nc3 Nd4 7. e5 Ng8 8. d3 Nxb5 9. Nxb5



At this point, Black played

9...a6

hoping that White's knight is being attacked, and it's going to go back. But, all of a sudden, instead of retreating with the knight,

10.Nd6+

White actually just gave up the knight here on the d6-square. And, what's the point? Why would you give up the knight for just a pawn?

10...exd6

After pawn takes, if White recaptures here, we can see an interesting transformation of the position. White has this pawn on d6 and it blockades Black's d7-pawn, so it can't be

moved and because the pawn cannot be moved, it simultaneously also restricts the bishop on c8, right? The bishop cannot be developed there on the h3-d7 diagonal and because the bishop cannot move, Black cannot move their rook either and bring the rook into play. You can see how big of an influence this seemingly little pawn on d6 has; it's blockading half of Black's forces, cutting them off the game. So, in reality, it's definitely worth a knight if you can eliminate the bishop, the rook, even a couple of pawns and let them cut off from the rest of Black's army, so that they cannot get involved into the game. Actually, let's take a look how it happened in the real game. Instead on taking immediately, White played an in-between move:

11.Bg5

attacking here the queen.

11...Qa5 12. exd6+

After the queen went away, White played exd6+. Essentially, it's quite a similar position. Now, it's also check to the king,

12...Kf8

so, the king has to move. Now, being completely honest, White could with a very simple move, such as Qe2, and in the next move, the queen could just enter there on the e-file and start attacking Black. Again, because Black's pieces are disorganized and cut in two parts, White will probably win the game easily within several moves.

13.Re8+

But in the game, White found a much more spectacular way, so we've got to be grateful :). He sacrificed the rook on e8

13...Kxe8 14. Qe2+

After the rook sacrifice is accepted, White can bring the queen into play with a tempo, with a check to Black's king.

14...Kf8

So, the king has to move again

15. Be7+

White keeps attacking. And if Black took the bishop -but they didn't-, in the game, they moved the king back. Let's see what would happen. White would recapture (Qxe7+), the king is forced to go to g8 and, now, we have this really funny position where Black has an extra bishop and the rook; so, theoretically they're having a great material advantage, completely winning material advantage; but in reality, this a-rook is out of the game, the c-bishop is out of the game still thanks to White's monstrous pawn on d6. And now, because Black's king is misplaced, the h-rook is also out of the game and also cannot be used. If the rook stood on f8, Black's other rook would be in the game; Black would probably have an easily winning position thanks to their extra material.

But now, they're completely lost, and White can just play Ng5. And that's it. There is a very simple checkmate in one move (Qxf7#), and there is nothing Black can do. It's literally a checkmate in the next move. Black is having so much material, but he's completely defenseless. That's the power of this whole thing: how you can hinder the development of your opponent. And it's largely achieved by this seemingly little pawn on d6. Let's take a couple of moves back and let's see what happened in the game.

15...Ke8

Black, instead of taking, played Ke8.

16. Bd8+

And White sacrificed the bishop this time. It's a really amazing game! The bishop is also attacking the queen

16...Kxd8

so, Black had to take it, but

17. Ng5

after Ng5, all of a sudden, there is no defense against this Nxf7# threat. Again, it was a really cool game. You can see how this d6-pawn also locks the king out so it cannot escape there to the kingside, and the bishop is also locking the king. So, again, it's just a great illustration overall, how you can hinder the development of your opponent by blockading.

By the way, instead of the pawn on d6, White could use a piece. If White had a bishop here on d6, it would do the job just as well, or a knight. Basically, any piece would blockade the development, and therefore, blockade all the other Black's pieces standing behind.

1-0

Naroditsky, Daniel (2811) - Eljanov, Pavel (2658) B11

Titled Tuesday intern op 1st May blitz (7)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

This is another game. This time is a blitz game between Naroditsky and Eljanov. Both of them are Grandmasters.

1.e4 c6 2. Nc3 d5 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. e5 Ne4 5. Bd3 Nc5 6. Bf1 d4 7. Ne2 d3 8. Nf4 Bf5 9. cxd3 Nxd3+ 10. Bxd3 11. Qb3 Be4



It's White to play, and here it seems like the most natural thing for White to do is just to win the b-pawn, capture the pawn on b7 and attack the rook. Even though White would have the advantage there in this variation, he played another move instead. He played

12.e6

following the concept, we're talking about: Blockade pawns to hinder development. The idea of this move is not even to attack the king, it's not really the main purpose of this; but rather to blockade this pawn on e7, so that it can't be moved forward. And now, if Black traded off, by the way, White would achieve the same goal with the knight, so the knight could blockade Black's development just as well.

12...f6

Black decided not to expose their king and decided to keep the position close by playing f6, but with

13.Qxb7

all of a sudden, Black can safely resign here because the queen is now attacking this rook on a8, the knight cannot move because this pawn has taken control of the d7-square, and because of the same pawn, Black can't get their bishop out. They can't get their rook out, the king is also restricted on e8, and there are some potential checkmating threats along the 8th rank, which could be possible thanks to this pawn, and White is winning this rook on a8.

Can you see how much you can achieve with a little pawn? So, that's why I'm saying how powerful this idea is: Blockading opponent's pawns to hinder development.

13...g5 14. Ne2 Bg7 15. Qxa8 Qc7 16. d3 Bxf3 17. gxf3 0-0 18. Be3 f5 19. Qxa7 Qd6 20. Bd4 c5 21. Qxc5

1-0

12. Champion lesson's: Karpov's winning plan

Hey and welcome into the next video. Here, we're going to be talking about the middlegame concept number 12, which speaks about the passed pawns. And the rule states like this: Passed pawns must be pushed. Now, let's take a look at the first example.

Kesaris, Evangelos (1844) – Kyriazi, Smaragda (1302) A96

Christmas Iraklio Attikis 2022

<https://chess-teacher.com>

1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3. g3 Nf6 4. Bg2 Be7 5. Nf3 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7. Nc3 a5 8. Qc2 Nc6 9. Rd1 Qe8 10. e4 e5 11. exf5 Qh5 12. Bg5 Nxd4 13. Nxd4 Qxg5 14. Ne6 Bxe6 15. fxe6 c6 16. Qb3 Ng4 17. Ne4 Qf5 18. f3 Nf6 19. Nxd6 Qxe6 20.c5 Qxb3 21. axb3 Nd5 22. Re1 Bxd6 23. cxd6

It's Black to play. First of all, let's evaluate the position overall, and then decide what both players are going to do here. We can see that the material balance is equal; there is nothing too special about this; so, normally, it should be a balanced approximately equal position.

23...Rfe8



Black decided to protect their pawn on e5, which is currently under the attack of the rook, and Black played Rfe8. It's a move which makes perfect sense, but it overlooks one of the major factors in the position, the fact that White has this passed pawn on d6. And probably, Black was not really concerned about this pawn because there is no clear way for this pawn to be promoted. If White ever wants to

promote the pawn, he'll have to push it to d7, then, all the way forward to d8, and ultimately, promote it into a queen. But right now, Black controls the d8-square really well and there is just no way for White's pawn to go there. Therefore, Black thought that it's not a big deal for White having that passed pawn on d6. But let's see what happened in the real game.

[23...Rfd8 24. Rxe5 Rxd6]

24.d7

White pushed the pawn forward correctly because, when you have a passed pawn, normally, you should be looking for opportunities to push it forward. Once again, the middlegame concept states: Passed pawns must be pushed. It's true for middlegame, and true for the endgame as well.

24...Red8

As the rook was being attacked, Black played Red8. And now, instead of trading pawns, maybe Black was hoping for an exchange; White would capture the e-pawn, Black would capture the d- pawn and the position would remain equal. 25.Bh3 White decided to defend their passed pawn by playing Bh3. And, actually, this position is already winning for White because even though the passed pawn cannot be promoted, it just restricts Black greatly.

Now Black's rooks have to stand there just to guard the last rank, so that pawn cannot be pushed and, basically, this completely paralyzes Black.

25...Nf6

Black tried playing Nf6 to attack the pawn again.

26.Rad1

White defended it. Actually, putting your rook behind a pawn is usually a great idea because it not only defends the pawn, but potentially, it helps the pawn move forward if there is an opportunity. The rook supports that advancement.

26...b6 27. Rxe5

White captured the pawn now for nothing.

27...Ra7

Black is trying something.

28.Rd6

You can see how White completely dominates here over Black. Once again, this pawn gives White space advantage. Also, Black's pieces can't really move. Imagine if this d-rook ever moves somewhere, immediately the pawn is going to be promoted and Black is lost. Let's take this move back. Imagine this f6-knight ever moves anywhere, guess what's going to happen. White is going to play Re8, trade off this rook and the pawn is going to be promoted. That way Black really cannot move at all. Putting this knight backward means that Black is completely paralyzed, all because of that passed pawn. So, the key takeaway from this is that you shouldn't underestimate the power of a passed pawn; even if it's not promoted, it can totally paralyze your opponent and it gives you a clear plan. So, first of all, a passed pawn must be pushed and while doing so, you ensure that you have space advantage and that you dominate overall.

28...Nxd7

Here in this position, in this game, Black decided to capture the pawn, but it fails because after

29. Re7

Black is pinned all around. Black is pinning the knight down to both rooks; so, the knight is going to be lost for sure because it's under the fire of both Black's rooks, as well as the bishop here from h3; and therefore, White wins a piece and the game.

29...Nf8 30. Rxc7+

[30. Be6+! Nxe6 31. Rxd8+ Nxd8 32. Rxa7]

30...Kxc7 31. Rxd8 Rf7 32. f4 Re7 33. Rd6 Re3 34. Rxc6 Rxb3 35. Rc2 b5 36. Kf2 b4 37. Bf1 Ne6 38. Bc4 Rf3+ 39. Kg2 Re3 40. Bxe6 Rxe6 41. Kf3 Kf6 42. g4 h6 43.h4 a4 44. g5+ hxg5 45. hxg5+ Kg6 46. Kg4 Rb6 47. Rh2 Kg7 48. f5 a3 49. f6+ Kf7 50. bxa3 51. Rh7+ Kg8 52. Ra7 Rb3 53. Kf5 Kf8 54. Kg6 Rb8 55. Rxa3 Rc8 56. Ra7 Rb8 57. Rh7 Kg8 58. f7+

1-0

Adly, Ahmed (2596) - Cuenca Jiménez, José Fernando (2552) A05

World Rapid 2021 (2.67)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Now, I've got a game between two Grandmasters, Adly, playing White against Cuenca. It's interesting to see that even Grandmasters sometimes make the mistakes that we've been talking about.

1.Nf3 Nf6 2. g3 d5 3. Bg2 e6 4.0-0 Be7 5. d4 0-0 6.c4 dxc4 7. Qc2 a6 8. a4 Bd7 9. Qxc4 Bc6 10. Bg5 Bd5 11. Qc1 h6 12. Bxf6 13. Nc3 Bxf3 14. Bxf3 c6 15. e3 a5 16. Ne4 Na6 17. Qc3 Be7 18.h4 Nb4 19. Kg2 Qc7 20. Rh1 Rad8 21. Rad1 Kh8 22. Qc4 Nd5 23. Qc2 Kg8 24. Nd2 Bd6 25. Nc4 Bb4 26. e4 Nb6 27. Ne3 Rd7 28. Rd3 Rfd8 29. Rhd1 c5 30. d5 c4 31. Rd4



It was Black to move here. Let's think about this position for a second. Both players mobilized their pieces here; both players are standing more or less actively, but we can see here that White has a passed pawn on the d-file, meaning that, theoretically speaking, this pawn can be moved forward, and there are no pawns of Black that can stop this advancement. Therefore, this is definitely something that both players should keep an eye on. White should try to push the pawn forward, and Black should make their best to prevent White from doing so. It was Black to move, and here Black noticed that White's rook on d4 is actually trapped; it doesn't have any square to go to. White decided to take advantage of this opportunity to win the rook, and therefore, they played

31...e5?

Now, indeed, the rook has nowhere to retreat, as this d2-square is controlled by the bishop,

[31...Bc5 32. Rxc4 Nxc4 White may trade here on c4 33. Nxc4 exd5 34. exd5 but now, after trading on d5, we can see that this is still a passed pawn but it's not a protected passed pawn meaning there is no other pawn of White either on e4 or c4 that would defend the pawn. Now, even though White has this passed pawn which is good for White, but White's pieces, the rook and the bishop have to stand there to keep defending the rook. For example, let me play some move for Black here, b6 or anything, just to see what White could possibly play here 35. Bg4 The bishop cannot move to g4 anymore as White did in the game because then, Black would simply capture the pawn and win the game. They would have material advantage for no reason, with no compensation for White. (35. Rc1 Even if let's say that White ever moves their rook away somewhere,

Black can, if they want, trade here on d5, sacrifice the rook Exchange back and get an equal game once again. I mean, they don't have to, but Rxd5 36. Bxd5 Rxd5 Now, after this exchange, White has no advantage, so Black equalized very easily. You can see how whether the pawn is defended or not makes all the big difference. Let me just put it back to this position where White still has a passed pawn, but it's not defended by another pawn; White's pieces have to stand behind the pawn and keep defending it. And therefore, White cannot increase their advantage that easily, so the position remains to be balanced. So, that's how a protected passed pawn is even better than a passed pawn, but both of them are fairly strong) 35...Rxd5]

32.Rxc4

Therefore, White had to sacrifice the Exchange, so they took here on c4,

32...Nxc4 33. Nxc4

and traded over there. Black probably thought that they got a winning material advantage because they got a rook against a minor piece and a pawn. But now there's another important change that you can see in the position. Now, White's pawn on d5 is a protected passed pawn, meaning that it is defended by another pawn of White. And the rule here states that: Protected passed pawns are extremely powerful and, very often, it is a decisive winning advantage, not yet; but overall the problem for Black is that since the pawn is already defended by another pawn, there is just no chance for Black throughout the entire game to ever capture this pawn. They can just never do this, meaning that White can always reserve an option to keep the pawn here in a well-defended position, but when the opportunity arises, they can start pushing the pawn forward, right? Black has to always keep their pieces in front of the pawn just to watch over this little pawn on d5; while White's pieces are free to maneuver all around because, again, the pawn is defended, so there is no need for White's pieces to keep protecting the pawn. Now let's see what happened next.

33...Bc5 34. Bg4

White moved the bishop to a more active square to attack the rook.

34...Re7

The rook went away

35.Qd2

already saying: Hey, I'm going to push the pawn forward

35...Bb4

attacking the queen.

36.Qe2 Qc5

[36...Bd6]



At this point, Black made a decisive mistake. Instead of trying to blockade this pawn at least by playing Bd6, so it can't move forward, they tried to play more actively by moving Qc5; but that allowed White to unleash the power of their passed pawn. And we know that passed pawns must be pushed, so White waited for this opportunity, and now they can actually do this.

37.d6

The most forward pawn is defended by the knight and the rook of White; therefore, White cannot take it. It also attacks the rook

37...Ree8

so, the rook is pushed back.

38.Rd5

We saw this similar motif in the previous game as well. Whenever you push your pawn forward, you get more space, so that your pieces can advance just as well using this d-pawn as a shield

38...Qc6 39. d7

The pawn keeps moving forward.

39...Rf8

And now, thanks to this pawn, we can just push Black all the way backwards. These rooks of Black are already out of the game; they cannot do anything and White is just dominating.

40.Nxe5

attacking the queen.

40...Qxa4 41. Qc4

We can see how dominant White's pieces are. All of White's pieces are so active, pointing towards Black's position and ready for some sort of an attack here or there, and Black is just completely paralyzed.

41...Qa1

hoping for some sort of counterattack, but White just ignored that and played

42.Bh5

aiming for a king attack.

42...Qxb2 43. Bxf7+

Now, White sacrificed the bishop here on f7, and it turns out that Black cannot really capture there (See the 43...Rxf7 variation).

43...Kh7

[43...Rxf7 44. Nxf7 Kxf7 45. Rd2+ because after a series of exchanges, White has discovered check with the rook, check to the king as well as attack to the queen and, therefore, White's going to capture the queen in the next move and win the game. White's attack was very simple and successful here because their position was just so much dominant and Black was completely paralyzed, and couldn't make anything against it. This just, once again, illustrates the power of a defended passed pawn.]

44.Bg6+

Let's just come back to the starting position of this example once again, and show you how this seemingly little detail, whether a passed pawn is protected or not can make all the difference. In the game, Black played e5, letting White's pawn become a protected passed pawn. What if instead, Black would decide to win the rook by attacking it with their bishop? (See the 31... Bc5 variation).

44...Kh8 45. Bf5 Rf6 46. Rb5 Qc3 47. Nf7+ Rxf7 48. Qxf7 Qf6 49. Qe8+ Qf8 50. Qg6 Qg8 51. Re5

1-0

Chapter – 3: Rules for Knights

13. It's supposed to be a well-known rule...

Hey! Welcome into the next video. Within this video, we're going to discuss a relatively well known concept which states: A knight on the rim is dim, meaning do not put your knight on the edge of the board. Now why is that so? Because one question that sometimes students ask me is: Why does the rule talk about the knight? Because there is another concept which says that you've got to centralize your pieces, right? All of them, not just knights. But why is it that we're talking about the knight staying barely on the edge of the board? Let's take a look at a chess board to figure this out. Normally, it is indeed true that you want to move all of your pieces forward and closer to the center, to the middle of the board, but it's especially true for the knight because it is a short range piece. If we're looking at this g1-knight for example, it has very few squares that it can possibly go to, only 3 squares. Now, if you move the knight to the middle of the board, it will start controlling 8; therefore, you can see that you can increase the strength of your knight more than twice; you can more than double the strength of the knight if you just move it from the edge towards the center. While that's completely true for the knight, it's also true for the other pieces, but a little bit less critical. Let's say your rook, for example, sometimes can become active on its original square. If White starts pushing his h-pawn forward -I'm not talking about right now the current position-, it's just to illustrate the principle; your rook can possibly become active along the h-file from its original square, even though it stands on the edge just because it's a long range piece. And the same is true for the other pieces of White. Let's say we just move the pawn here (e4), we can see that already the bishop and the queen are active; they're already controlling some squares, quite a number of squares even from their original squares. This is true for a bishop, for a queen and it's completely untrue for the knight. That's why the rule states: A knight on the rim is dim. Again, it simply means that you should not really put your knight to the edge of the board and if it stands there, you've got to try to centralize it as soon as possible. All right, let's take a look at one of the practical examples, the game between 2 Grandmasters. Here I'll skip the opening moves.

Spyridon, Kapnisis – Pier Luigi, Basso C26

International Chess Tournament 2021

<https://chess-teacher.com>

1.e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. d4 exd4 4. Qxd4 Nc6 5. Qd3 Bc5 6. Bf4

Right now, we're having a more or less normal game of chess. The game has just begun and, normally, Black will need to play d6 or maybe castle, just continuing their development, and the game would move normally. But instead, Black decided: Hey, let me play

6...Nh5

to attack this bishop and to kick it away, to kick it back. You may say that, normally, it makes sense to attack and push the opponent's pieces back; in this case, it violates the rule that you don't want your knight to be on the edge of the board, right? That's because the knight there is limited. Anyway, let's see what happens next

7.Bd2

White moved their bishop back indeed.

7...0-0



8. Qd5

All of a sudden, White played Qd5, and it turns out that it double attacks the bishop and the knight, and Black is already lost right now because they can't defend both pieces. Maybe, it may seem like a sudden tactical motif, the double attack. But anyway, let's continue the game.

8...Bxf2+

Black decided to take here on f2, at least winning a pawn.

9.Kxf2 Qh4+

Black is down a piece; he's trying to somehow create threats and mix things up.

10.g3 Qf6+

Another check.

11.Nf3

to cover their king. Now, look at this h5-knight once again; it's still attacked and Black is still in trouble. Black checks are over, and now they have to think how to defend this knight. Just look at it. It can't really move anywhere, right?

Because it's so limited on the edge of the board. One of the very few ways to defend it would be to play Qg6. That's just what they did in the game. (See the 12. Nh4

variation).

11...Qg6 12. Qg5

[12. Nh4 Challenging this g6-queen, but the queen cannot really move away again because of that troublesome knight. Qf6+ 13. Kg2 The knight is still on trouble. It still has no way to escape. Ne5 It tried to cover it with the other knight. 14.Be2 Once again, hitting the knight and, once again, it has nowhere to escape; and now Black's position is completely lost. To defend the knight, Black would probably have to play something like g6 but that would allow White to capture there: 15. Bxh5 gxh5 completely destroying Black's castling. 16.Rhf1 attacking the queen, attacking the e5-knight with the queen; and White is a piece up. You can just see how this knight on the edge of the board, which was previously standing there on h5, was a continuous trouble for Black during the entire game; and this just makes sense because a knight on the edge is limited and, therefore, there is always an idea for your opponent to attack it and try to actually capture it or at least to gain a lot of extra tempos by attacking that knight.]

12...d5 13. exd5 Qxc2 14. dxc6 Nf6 15. Rc1 Qxb2 16. Qb5 Ng4+ 17. Kg2 Qa3 18. cxb7 Bxb7 19. Qxb7 Rad8 20. Be2 Rfe8 21. Rhe1 Qc5 22. Nd1 Qh5 23.h3

1-0

Kesaris, Evangelos (1810) - Magkias, Vasilios (1671) E00

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

There is another game between two amateur players.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 Bb4+ 4.Bd2 Qe7 5. Bg2 Nc6 6.e3 0-0 7.Ne2 Bxd2+ 8.Qxd2 d6 9.0-0 e5 10.Nbc3 a5 11.Nd5 Nxd5 12.cxd5 Nb8 13.Rac1 Ra6 14.Rc3 c6 15.Rfc1 Bd7 16.Rb3 Ra7 17.dxc6 Bxc6 18.Bxc6 bxc6 19.Ra3 Qc7 20.dxe5 dxe5 21.Nc3 Rd8 22.Qc2 Rb7 23.Ne4 h6 24.Rc3 Rb5 25.Rc4 Rbd5 26.Rc5 Qb6 27.g4 Qb4 28.Rc4 Qe7 29.Qe2 Kh8 30.R4c2 Qb4 31.Qf3 Qe7 32.Kg2 Kg8 33.Ng3 Rd2 34.Nf5 Qe6 35.b3 R2d5 36.h3 h5 37.Qe4 g6 38.Ng3 hxg4 39.hxg4 Rd2



40.Qf3

It's Black to move. First of all, let's try to comprehend what is going on here in this position because it's a complex middlegame position. The material balance right now is equal. Black has this active rook on d2, even though White has everything defended, so the rook can't really attack anything. We can see that Black has this really lousy knight on b8, on the edge of the board. Right now, Black put it there just to defend a weak pawn, but anyway, Black should definitely be concerned about the knight position there on the rim and try to move it as closer to the center as they can. It was Black to move. Black should have really thought about this knight and how to bring it back. By the way, here we see how these middlegame concepts make your life easier. You don't have to think about so many things, when you notice a certain pattern; you can just go forward and make your following moves based on that concept. For example, here Black should have thought about how to move this knight closer. Perhaps they cannot do this right now because, otherwise, White can win this pawn on c6 and attack Black; but still Black needs to think how to do that. That's impossible right now, but maybe Black needs to first trade off the rooks (Rxc2, Rxc2), and White still takes aim at this pawn, so the knight still cannot be moved out of there right away. But Black can think how to defend the pawn first and move the knight out there then. Maybe they can go Rd5 for example, trying to block this c6-e4 diagonal and move the knight out then. Black's position is still pretty bad because they have a lot of weaknesses, but they could at least try to coordinate their pieces, bringing the knight and to organize some defense. Who knows how the game would end. Anyway, let's come back to the actual game. Here in this position, instead of doing all that, Black played

40...Kg7

A move which makes some sense, but it doesn't solve the main problem, this lousy knight on b8: knight on the rim. 41.Ne4 Once again, instead of trading rooks and trying to bring this knight out, Black played

41...R2d5

for some reason

42.Rh1

trying to organize some attack on the kingside.

42...Rh8

Black seemingly played symmetrically Rh8, but here is the problem. White has a queen, a rook and a knight which are ready to attack. Black only has a queen and a rook. For lack of the knight, White is having an extra piece in their attack.

43.Ng5

attacking the queen here. Also, together with the queen, it attacks the f7-square.

43...Qe7 44. Rxf8 Kxf8

Now, White traded rooks there. And White could already win this f7-pawn by taking it,

but instead, they played

45.Qh3+ Kg7 46. Qh7+

White's attack goes so easily again because of this extra knight that White has in the game and because Black didn't manage to bring their own knight closer. Imagine if Black's knight were on f6, there would be just no attack of White whatsoever. But now, when the knight is still standing there on b8, White's attack goes flawlessly.

46...Kf6 47. Qh8+

White is temporarily sacrificing the knight

47...Kxg5 48. Kg3

because, after Kg3, quite a funny finish of the game. All of a sudden, the king is in a cage and White can checkmate it even with f4. In the next move, it would be quite funny to deliver checkmate with a pawn like that or maybe with Qh4, White has a lot of options and Black just resigned. Again, you could see how violating this rule: A knight on the rim is dim leded Black to a very bad outcome and it also serves as a great guideline. If you know this theme, you don't need to think too hard about many things; you just say: OK. I've got a knight on the rim, so I've got to move it closer to the center as soon as I can. So, it's very simple and very practical.

1-0

14. Dealing with your opponent's passed pawns

Hey! Welcome into the next lesson.

Kramnik, Vladimir - Grischuk, Alexander

FIDE Candidates Matches 2011 (2.2)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1.Nf3 c5 2.c4 Nc6 3. Nc3 e5 4. e3 Nf6 5. d4 cxd4 6. exd4 e4 7. Ne5 Bd6 8.c5 Bb8 9. Nc4 d5 10. cxd6 0-0 11. Bf4 Na5 12. Ne3 Bxd6 13. Bxd6 Qxd6 14. d5 Qe5 15. Be2 Rd8 16. Qd2 Nc6 17. Rd1 Ne7 18. Qd4 Qxd4 19. Rxd4 Nf5 20. Nxf5 Bxf5 21. Kd2



The concept we're going to discuss here relates to knights and pawns as well. It states: Knights are the best blockaders of pawns, such as in this position. We've got a game between Kramnik, playing White, against Grischuk, playing Black. Both of them are very strong Grandmasters, world class players. It was Black to play here, and we can see that White has a passed pawn. When you see a position like that, where your opponent has a pawn that is ready to move forward, it is better to blockade it as early as you can because the more the pawn advances, the more space it gives to your opponent, and the less space is left free for your own pieces to move around. And you have to blockade it anyway because, otherwise, it will be just pushed forward all the way to the last rank and be promoted to a new queen. So you will have to blockade it anyway, and it's better to do this early. All right, now that we cleared that out, that you should blockade the pawn anyway -a passed pawn-, the next question that we have is how to do that? Which piece to pick to blockade the pawn? In this case, I think that the most natural way, and the way which probably a lot of players would do is to make the most straightforward move. If you want to blockade this d5-pawn, then we can play Rd6 (See 21...Rd6 the variation). In the game, Black chose another way to blockade the pawn. Since we know that knights are the best blockaders of pawns, it gives us a hint that maybe we need to find the way to use our knight to blockade this pawn and, with that in mind, we can

easily come to the maneuver Ne8 and, finally, land it to d6 to blockade the pawn.

21...Ne8

That's what Black did.

[21...Rd6 Then, the rook is blockading the pawn, right? It's cool. Temporarily, it is indeed true, but let's imagine what could happen next. Let's say White decides to double the rooks. 22.Ke3 to support this pawn they need to move their king away first Rad8 to attack the pawn 23. Rhd1 to defend the pawn. Now, temporarily, Black is holding the position; everything seems to be more or less fine. But, first of all, the rook is such a powerful piece; the second most powerful piece after the queen, right? Currently it does a pretty minor job just blockading a little pawn. The rook is probably a bit pissed off about that. The rook is a valuable piece; therefore, your opponent can use his minor pieces to attack it. For example, the knight can attack it from b5, or maybe from e4 at some distant future, not right now because right now it's covered. It can sometimes be attacked by the knight, or White may think: Hey, how do I relocate this knight to c4 in the future, not right now, in the future, and still hit the rook. Not only the rook is not happy doing such a lousy job -the small job of blockading a pawn-, but also it can be attacked. And that's why in the future for Black it would be hard to do something because the rook cannot really move away to attack something because it has to guard this d5-pawn. Without the rook -without this powerful piece-, it cannot take here on d5 because it's defended; so, without the rook, which is a powerful piece, it would be hard for Black to develop any other powerful attack anywhere. So, Black is stuck here in this passive defensive position where White still has some ideas on how White can possibly improve their situation, right? Let's imagine that. Let's start by playing a6. Right now the knight cannot move because it needs to defend the pawn. What if White plays f3? Forcing the trade: exf3 Bxf3; and now the bishop is defending the pawn, and the knight is free to move around and, who knows, maybe, it can actually transfer to c4 in the future and hit the rook. So, you can see that White would have a lot of ideas about how they can improve their situation here and how White can get some more progress here in this position. This didn't happen in the actual game, so let's come back to the actual game to see what happened there.]

22.g4 Bg6 23. Rc1 Rac8

Black symmetrically played Rac8 just to put the rook in the central file. Here even White found the opportunity to win the pawn

24.Nxe4 Rxc1 25. Kxc1

because, after this trade of rooks,

25...Bxe4 26. Rxe4

it turns out that after all these exchanges, Black cannot take here on d5 because the knight will be left undefended.

26...Kf8

Even being a pawn down, Black still played calmly Kf8.

27.Ra4

attacking the pawn here on a7.

27...a6 28. Rb4

White is trying hard to put pressure, this time attacking Black's b-pawn.

28...Nd6

Black, finally played Nd6 to finalize their maneuver. And here, what's funny about this position? White seems to be more advanced attacking, having an extra pawn; but there is just no way for White to make any progress. If you think about this, what can White really do? The pawn is being blockaded, it can't move forward anymore, and there is nothing White can do about this knight. Also, the knight is doing a great job because it attacks a whole lot of squares here; therefore, it makes harder for White's pieces to maneuver or it gets harder for White's king to get closer to the knight and attack just because the knight is attacking all squares around. It's also defending these backward pawns as well, just in case, so that White's rook cannot attack it because it's really a monstrous knight. Moreover, the fact that there is White's pawn here on d5 in a way even helps the knight because, without this pawn on d5, maybe, White would be able to play Rd4 and start to attack the knight along the d-file. The pawn itself is blockading, and it's going to create a shield for this knight, so that it will feel completely safe here on d6. Finally, enough, despite of the seemingly big advantage, the game ended in a draw within a couple of moves just because there is no way for White to make any progress. That's how a powerful piece the knight is when you need it to blockade the opponent's pawns.

29.Kd2 h6 30. Bd3 Ke7 31. Ke3 Kd7 32. f3 Re8+ 33. Be4 g6 34. Kd4 Rc8 35.h4 Rc1 36. Ke5 Ke7 37. g5 hxg5 38. hxg5 Rg1 39. Kf4 f6 40. Bxg6 Rxb6 41. Be4 Rg2 42. a4 a5 43. Rb3 Kd8 44. Ke3 Rh2 45. Kf4 Rg2 46. Bb1 Rd2 47. Bd3 Rg2 48. Ke3 Rh2 49. Kd4 Rh4+ 50. Kc5 Kc7 51. Rb6 Rxa4 52. b3 Rb4 53. Rxb4 axb4 54. Kxb4 b6 55. Kc3 Kd8 56. Kd4 Ke7

1-0

Nedev, T (2528) - Gajewski, G (2573) B90

ETCC Crete (9)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>] 06.11.2007

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be3 e5 7. Nb3 Be7 8. Qd2 Be6 9. f3 0-0 10. 0-0-0 a5 11. Qe1 Qc8 12. a4 Na6 13. g4 Nb4 14. Kb1 d5 15. g5 Ne8 16. exd5 Bf5 17. Rd2 Nc7 18. Bc4 b5 19. axb5



This game is a lot of fun; the game between Nedev and Gajewski, both Grandmasters. It's Black to move. Here the position is extremely complicated. Black sacrificed a couple of pawns in the queenside trying to deliver some attack there but, of course, White has extra material; these pawns (b- and d-pawns) are ready to be pushed forward either to b6 or d6. These are extremely dangerous because he not only advances a pawn, but also double attacks Black's minor pieces. Therefore, Black needs to be concerned probably, first of all, about this d6 threat of White. So, how do we blockade a pawn? Well, knowing the title of this video, probably the answer isn't hard to find; but, again, when you know this middlegame concept really well, the most natural thing to blockade a pawn would just be Bd6. I'm sure a lot of players would just play this most natural move. But here's the problem. OK, the pawn is being blockaded, but what does the bishop do apart from blockading the pawn? Quite nothing, really, right? It just blockades the pawn; it doesn't attack anything; it doesn't help Black in anything else; so, it's just this one function. Basically, a pawn standing here on d6 would have a similar function to the bishop, right? That's how we diminish the value of our bishop. Therefore, instead of that, Black, once again, found a way to use their knight to blockade a pawn and, similarly to the previous example, they played

19...Ne8

aiming to bring the knight here to d6. All right.

[19...Bd6]

20.Qe2 a4 21. Nc1 Nd6

And, finally, Black moves the knight to d6. Similar to the previous example, we can see that the knight is not only blockading a pawn, but it's attacking the c4-bishop, potentially attacking the b5-pawn; right now it's very well defended, but anyway, it's putting some pressure. And, generally speaking, it controls a lot of squares all around, so it's, generally speaking, a strong piece. It doesn't just blockade a pawn; it creates a lot of valuable functions for Black. Right now, the major thing is that the bishop's being attacked,

22.Bd3

so, White moved it back

22...Nxd3 23. Nxd3

Black traded this bishop out and then played

23...Nc4

The good thing about the knight is that it controls so many squares, it can always jump somewhere to start attacking. So, the knight on c4 from here starts attacking the rook and the bishop, potentially looking towards White's king; but it still keeps an eye on the d-pawn as well (attacking the d6-square); so, still it's blockaded.

24.Rdd1

The rook being attacked, it goes back.

24...a3

Now they can transition to their own attack on the queenside, which was their original plan.

25.Ne4 Bxe4 26. fxe4 axb2

trying to expose White's king,

27.Nxb2

offering an exchange of knights because the knight is such a powerful piece.

27...Na3+

White doesn't want to trade it. Finally, Black went away from this defensive function; but it went away when Black is almost winning the game. He's now ready to attack and, possibly, checkmate the king.

28.Kc1 Qc3

Black has a really beautiful intent here. Black's idea is to get ready to play Rfc8, and just keep attacking and, potentially, crush White here on the c2-square after Rfc8. If White tries to do something against this queen,

29.Qd3 let's say, Qd3, then there is a really beautiful refutation for Black.

29...Nc4

Black has a shocking combination, Nc4. Black is sacrificing both their queen and the knight but, wherever White does here, Ra1 in the next move is a checkmate. A really beautiful position! And it's just amazing that it happened in a real practical game, not an artificial composition. For example, if White takes here with the queen or the knight, whatever it happens, it's Ra1#. Finally, enough, this knight from c4 covers the d2-square, so White cannot go there, and its checkmate because the king is under check. A

really cool example that shows you how the knight standing there from d6 could perform both a defensive function, blockading a pawn, and anytime you want, it can always jump forward and, all of a sudden, create a whole lot of threats. And, in this case, it was just devastating.

30.Qxc3

[30. Qxc4 Ra1#]

30...Ra1#

0-1

15. A flawless method to start your attack

Boukobza, Adrien (1930) - Baudson, Charles (1760) D36

FRA-chT 0102 U18 (9.5)

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Welcome into the middlegame concept number 15: Put your knight on a weak square. This is one of the most favorite concepts of Robert Fischer, one of the former champions of the world. Indeed, it very often gives you a very clear guideline for the middlegame play. But before we dive into it, let me just first explain generally speaking why the rule is such. So, why do we have to put a knight on a weak square? Not some other piece. Well, it's because other pieces, queens, rooks and bishops are long range pieces; meaning that they are active from distance, and they can hit your opponent along the distance. Therefore, there is no need for you to bring them very close to the opponent's position. That's not the case with the knight; here from g1 it cannot attack Black at all; there is just no way. Therefore, when it comes to the knight, you have to move it forward; you have to advance it close to the opponent's position, so that it can attack something later. Just in case, I'm not discussing opening theory right now; I'm just talking about this general middlegame concept. What if you try to advance your knight just like that: Nf3, Ne5, just directly advancing forward, closer to the opponent's position. Will it work? Well, not really because they can just use their pawns to attack the knight. Since the pawn is less valuable than a knight, White would just have to retreat, so that doesn't work that way. This leads to the next conclusion, that we need to advance our knight, that's true, but why not putting it to a square that cannot be attacked by the opponent's pawn, and such square is called a weak square. Let's say the game goes like this: Nf3, d5, d4 and, in the next move, f5. Now, that would create this perfect weak e5-square, and now not only the knight can move there, but it can stay there. There is no easy way for Black to drive the knight away because all these pawns already moved forward; they can't go back; they can't cover the square anymore; so, going Ne5 would ensure that the knight is standing extremely actively, attacking a lot of squares in Black's position. Now, a little bit about the terminology because sometimes if you study classical chess books or tutorials, it can get complicated about what is considered a weak square, an outpost square, etc., etc.

But the thing is very simple: The weak square is a square that can hardly be controlled by an opponent's pawn on the fifth or sixth rank, talking from White's perspective. So, when do we move our knight to the opponent's half of the board? Why are we talking about these 2 ranks: fifth and sixth? Well, it's because if we're looking at the other squares on Black's half of the board, such as the seventh or eighth rank, then, first of all, usually those squares are just too good defended by opponent's pawns; there are just too many of them there and there is no opportunity for you to put your knight there. Secondly, generally speaking, we don't want to put our knight on the edge of the board, right? So, we don't even want our knight to be on the edge. So, that would exclude the eighth rank for that reason, and also for the reason of practicality, you cannot do that simply. That's why we're focusing on those lines on the opponent's half of the board which are still quite successful for us in some situations. So, that's why these fifth and sixth ranks are looking at the position from White's perspective. Now, what is considered a weak square? A weak square is the one which can hardly be defended by a pawn. I say hardly be defended because, for example, the e5-square cannot be defended

by a pawn, definitely. The e6-square is a weak square as well. If our knight could stand there, we would love that as well. The knight would just be a monstrous knight standing there to attack Black. But there are some additional squares which are a little bit weaker as well, for example the g5-square. Let's move the knight back to f3.

Let's say, theoretically, Black can cover this g5-square by playing h6. But doing so would expose another weakness. If they play h6, that would make the g6-square weak, right? That's why we are saying that it can be hardly defended by a pawn. Or let me just create another situation. Let's move a couple of moves back here. (Now it's d4, d5, Nf3).

Now Black's move is Nf6. In this case, we can say that e5-square is not really a weak square; but right now, it is slightly problematic because there is this knight here on this square. So, the e5-square is a bit weak; you can put your knight there. Even though Black can in the future use their pawn to push it away, it's not truly a weak square. But still this square is weaker compared to other squares of Black because here it causes troubles for Black; they would have to move their knight away first (Ne4), and then move the f-pawn, so it's more complicated; they can't drive this knight away immediately. That's why we're saying this general practical rule, which is that you want to land your knight on the squares of the fifth or sixth rank, which can hardly be attacked by an opponent's pawn. Ideally, it cannot be attacked at all; but potentially, it can be attacked by a pawn; but it takes time, effort and it's inconvenient for your opponent for some reason. So, those are the squares where you want ideally your knight to stand and, with that in mind, it gives you a lot of ideas for how exactly to play in the middlegame. Now, let's get to practical examples, and let's see how you can implement it in your own games. Now, let's see how to apply this general concept in a practical game.

1.d4 e6 2.c4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Nf3 c6 5. cxd5 exd5 6. Bg5 Nbd7 7. e3 Be7 8. Bd3 0-0 9.0-0 Re8 10. Qc2 Nf8



We have quite a standard middlegame position, where both players more or less developed their pieces, and it's time for White to decide what to do next. As we discussed earlier, sometimes, you don't even have to come out with a real, well thought middlegame plan; you just rely on these middlegame concepts and simply follow them.

OK, in this position, White decided to follow this idea of putting their knight to a weak square, and they just played

11.Ne5

Even though, strictly speaking, this is not a completely weak square because Black can use their pawn in the future to drive the knight away, right now, it's complicated. They would need to move their knight away first, so it's not that simple for Black. And that's why I always say that it can hardly be defended by a pawn, and you can still put your knight there.

11...Be6 12. f4

Here White played another common move: f4. It's always great when your knight is defended by a pawn. Here White solidifies it further by defending it twice with a pawn. What's the point here? Well, we'll see it in a moment.

12...Ng4

trying to trade off the knight, and it's probably a right decision, so this exposes this tension between bishops

13.Bxe7

And White decided to trade here

13...Qxe7 14. Qe2

attacking this knight, and even provoking Black to take on e5. What's the point?

14...Nxe5

Black took this knight on e5; they managed to trade off the strong knight,

15.fxe5

but White has some other advantages as a result of this exchange. Now, they have this advanced pawn on e5 which takes away some squares from Black. It also opens up the f-file for the rook, so White has now this really great file for White's rook; White can even double rooks there in the future or they can use this file to lift the rook to the kingside and deliver some attack there. So, all in all, White got a lot of other advantages as a result of this exchange. That's why it's always good to defend your knight with a pawn to find those squares which are not only weak but those which are defended by your pawns. Now, let's see what happened next. Here the position remains playable; Black correctly traded of White's knight here and, even though White looks a bit more active here on the position, of course, the game goes on.

15...c5

What do you think about this move? Is it a good move, a bad move or average move? What do you think? It's interesting because, at first, yes, it's natural to maybe open up some file for the rook there on the queenside or maybe Black wants to counterattack in

the center of the board somehow, and it's all good; but it overlooks one really decisive factor. Moving the pawn from c6 to c5 allows White's knight to go there to b5, a square which was previously defended by a pawn, but it's no longer defended by a pawn, and through that square the knight can land on a perfectly weak square: d6. The d6-square can no longer be attacked by a pawn at all, so this is a classical weak square; there's nothing Black can do about this and, as soon as the knight lands there, it would attack so many squares in Black's position. If you just think about this, imagine the knight is already there; the number of squares it could control is insane; it would attack all these squares: f7, e8, c8, b7, b5 and f5, which could make it completely impossible for Black to move around, to coordinate their forces, to drive their forces from one side to the other side. It's disrupting Black's position altogether. And that's why having a single knight on a strong position for White or a weak position for Black already makes this position completely winning. This really shows you how powerful this concept is. Just think about this. Just one move ago, the position was a playable position, more or less equal, and now, when Black pushed the pawn from c6 to c5, letting White's knight to jump to the d6-square, the position became completely winning for White. That's just the power of this concept: Put your knight on the opponent's weak square. Let's see what happened next.

16.Nb5 c4 17. Bc2 Red8

Black is concerned about the knight coming to d6 and hitting possibly the e-rook, so they're already defending.

18.Rf2

to double the rooks along the f-file.

18...Qb4 19. Nd6

Now White finally landed on the d6-square. By the way, the knight there is a monstrous knight. It does not allow Black to do anything, and it's usually in those positions better for Black to sacrifice the Exchange here; but, at least, they would be able to coordinate their pieces to keep fighting.

19...a6

Black didn't do this; they just tried to do something on the queenside.

20.Qh5

focusing their pieces against Black's king, and the knight is, of course, supporting this attack with the queen and the rook

20...Rd7

to defend it

21.Raf1

Another rook came to double on the f-file.

21...g6 22. Qg5 b5

Black is still trying to defend on the queenside, or maybe, to defend along the seventh rank

23.Bf5

trying to eliminate one of the defenders. The bishop cannot be taken by the pawn because it's pinned to the king

23...Raa7

trying to defend.

24.a3 Qa5

And now they found another weak square in Black's position, which is the new weakness. Black just pushed their pawn forward to g6 a few moves ago. Whenever your opponent pushes a pawn forward, that usually exposes some weaknesses around the pawn or behind the pawn. In this case, White found a really creative way to bring the knight to a weak square:

25.Ne8

to the e8-square. Now, since Black moved all their pieces forward, this e8-square became available, but the ultimate goal is to land it to f6; it's another perfect weak square for the knight and it will attack Black's king.

25...Qd8

trying to get the queen involved into the defense

26.Nf6+ Kh8 27. Bxe6 fxe6

White traded off the bishops. Black could finish the game with a beautiful shot. The knight here could go to e8, and that would be a discovered attack regardless of what Black does here.

Let's say they accept the queen sacrifice; there's Rxf8, checkmate. It's a really great example of how White continuously drove the entire game, simply trying to put their knight on a weak square and that factor alone was enough to win the game. If you also see how Black underestimated this factor a couple of times during this game, they allowed White's knight to be transferred to a weak square; and when they could trade off the rook for the knight, they didn't do this thinking that would be stronger and they underestimated the power of the knight on a weak square. You can just see that when you see an opportunity for your knight to land in an opponent's weak square; it's almost always a good idea to do so.

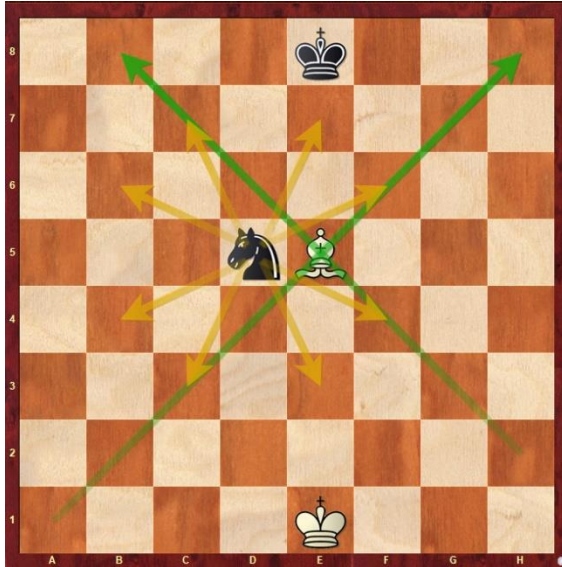
28.Qh6 Rf7 29. Nxb7 Kg8 30. Nf6+ Rxf6 31. Rxf6 Nh7 32. Rxb6+

1-0

16. Are knights truly better in closed positions?

Example 01

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]



Hey and welcome to the next video, where we're going to be talking about knights and bishops. The concept states this: Knights are better in closed positions, bishops are better in open positions. If you're a more advanced player, perhaps you've heard about this concept. But let me tell you that, in a way, even though it's something that you can rely on, maybe I'm confusing you. Let me explain what I mean here. First of all, let's decide which is stronger, whether the bishop or the knight. How do we do this? How do we know which piece is stronger? Well, I count how many squares it can possibly attack. If we do this for a bishop, it can attack 13 squares whereas the knight controls 8 squares if it stands in the middle of the board: 13 versus 8. It's quite clear that the bishop is stronger actually, normally. But sometimes, there are positions where the bishop is restricted by pawns -by pawn chains-, and then, it can be greatly restricted and can become inferior to the knight. And if we're talking about positions with a lot of pawn chains, they are closed types of positions, right? So, that's why the rule says that in closed positions, when a bishop is a bad piece, when it's passive, the knight can become a stronger piece. And that's how this rule was formulated: that knights are better in closed positions and bishops are better in open positions. So, I would say that while it's not 100% true, still it works. It would be more appropriate to say that bishops are generally speaking stronger, but if the position is closed and the position is restricted, then a knight can become a stronger piece and the bishop is a bad piece. Anyway, let's come to specific examples and let's see how it works in practical games.

Blumin, Boris - Fine, Reuben E33

American CF-06 (Western op-40) Finals (4) 23.07.1939

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Here is the first example from the game Blumin against Fine. Fine was actually one of the best players in the world at that time. He's playing Black here.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Qc2 Nc6 5. Nf3 d5 6. e3 0-0 7. a3 Bxc3+ 8. Qxc3 Bd7 9. Bd3 a5 10. b3 a4 11. b4 dxc4 12. Bxc4 Na7 13. Ne5 Bb5 14. Bb2



Bxc4 15. Qxc4

Now, let's take a look at this position. The position looks again normal, rather a middlegame position.

15...Qd5

Black here played Qd5, offering an exchange of queens. White hardly accepted this exchange because they didn't know the concept that bishops are bad in closed positions. What does it mean that the position is closed? It means that there are pawn chains which are static, which can't really move. As here we have a bishop for White against the knight, so White should take this factor into account. If White takes here on d5,

16.Qxd5

something they did in the game

16...exd5

Black can recapture with their pawn, and the pawn structure changes. Now we've got these pawn chains in the middle of the board. This pawn on d4 cannot move, this pawn from e3 can also very hardly be moved to e4 because Black controls this square so well. So, we've got this steady pawn structure. Also we've got these quite static pawns (b4 and a3) on the queenside. All things considered, meaning all these pawns considered, White's bishop on b2 becomes completely locked by these pawns; it can't get out. Wherever it goes, it can't get out, right? So, this piece becomes quite useless, it cannot attack Black anymore, and that's why Black's position right now actually becomes close to winning just because of this single factor that the bishop is so bad in these closed

positions. By the way, the bishop is so bad not just by itself because it's locked by the pawns. Imagine if White's bishop were standing in front of the pawn barrier, let's say on f4, it would change the situation drastically. The bishop here would be able to attack Black along the diagonals, then it would not be such a bad piece. But when it stands there on b2, as it was in the game, then it's completely locked; it can't get out and basically; White's position is lost probably. It's quite funny that the white player certainly did not realize that; otherwise, he wouldn't have taken here on d5. Let's say White castled or make some other move, the position would not be that close. And White could advance e4 in the future after some preparation. Imagine if right now White played f3, in the future they would be ready to play e4, and now the bishop would have a lot of space to move around (the dark-squared bishop), right? Even White would be able, maybe, after some preparation, to push another pawn forward in the middle of the board and the bishop would have that h6-c1 diagonal as well or, at least, White would secure this f6-c3 diagonal for the bishop. So, the bishop in the future would be an active participant of this complete battle, right? Here, White's position maybe is slightly more active, maybe it's slightly better. But, instead, when they take here on d5, making the position closed, his bishop is completely stuck and the game is almost lost. And I'm sure the white player didn't realize that; he probably thought that it's about equal.

17.Rc1 Nb5

Black is doing a great job actually finding these squares for his knight.

18.0-0 Ne4

You see that Black is trying to do what we talked about previously: put your knights on weak squares, squares that cannot be attacked by the opponent's pawns.

19.Rc2 Ned6

The knight is aiming at this c4-square, just White's weakness. Right now it's controlled by the knight, but Black is ready to push it away by playing f6; that would be the plan.

20.Bc1 Rfe8 21. Rd1 f6

kicking this knight away

22.Nd7

And now, after the knight goes away (Nd3), Black can put the knights to these strong squares (Nc4) and, actually, White's position is lost: the a-pawn would be lost, the bishop is still completely out of the game; it can't get out and, after that, Black's own passed pawn probably will be advanced forward, and Black will win the game. White cannot defend it with Ra2 because, first of all, that would be too sad and too passive for all of White's pieces; and secondly, after Nc3, there would be this double attack to White's rooks. But the actual source of the entire trouble for White was that lousy bishop on c1 which is completely out of the game. So, you can easily see how White in this game, being a quite strong player, completely misunderstood this factor: that bishops are maybe bad in closed positions when they are restricted by pawns.

[22. Nd3 Nc4]

22...b6 23. Rc6 Re7 24. Nc5 bxc5 25. Rxc5 Rc8 26. f3 f5 27. Rd3 c6 28. Kf2 Nc4 29. g4 fxg4 30. e4 dxe4 31. fxe4 Ncd6 32. Re5 Rf8+ 33. Ke2 Rxe5 34. dxe5 Nxe4 35. Re3 Nec3+ 36. Ke1 Rf3

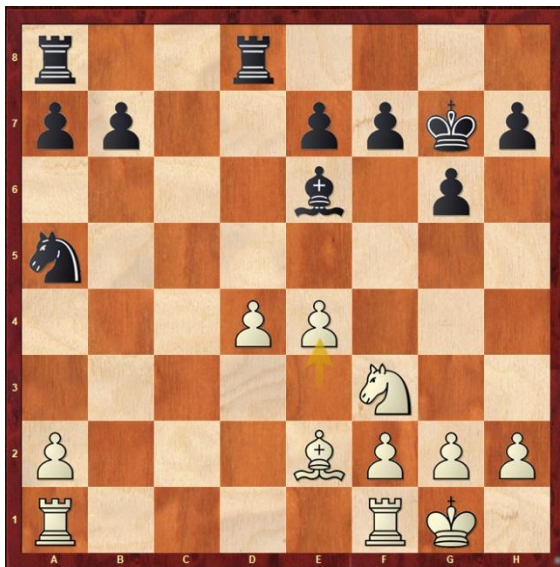
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Eliskases, Erich Gottlieb - Flohr, Salo D93

Semmering und Baden bei Wien (4) 11.09.1937

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4. Bf4 Bg7 5. e3 0-0 6. Nf3 c5 7. cxd5 Nxd5 8. Be5 Nxc3 9. bxc3 cxd4 10. Bxg7 Kxg7 11. cxd4 Qa5+ 12. Qd2 Nc6 13. Be2 Rd8 14. Qxa5 Nxa5 15. 0-0 Be6 16. e4



16...Bg4 17. Rfd1 e6 18. Kf1 Bxf3 19. Bxf3 Rac8 20. Rd2

Now I've got another game. It's Black to move. These concepts are universal; they work in the middlegame just as well. Once again, we've got bishop against knight, no wonder because the lesson is about that. Meaning that White has a bishop, White would probably aim to open up the position or at least to give some space for his bishop to move around, to be active. Maybe, White may try to push a pawn and make some trades, and make the position more open; maybe, they would move this e-pawn instead to open the diagonal for the bishop. Knowing that, Black tried to keep the position closed and played

20...e5

They're using a little tactic as the pawn is actually pinned; so, White cannot take there or else they would lose the rook, and they need to care about the defense of this d-pawn now.

21.d5

So, White played d5. This turns the position into a closed position with these pawn chains in the middle of the board, which can no longer be moved; and this central pawn

chain (e4, d5) makes White's light-squared bishop being on the same light square, being restricted and being possibly a bad piece. Now, Black here uses another concept: that knights are the best blockaders of passed pawns

21...Nc4

and they played Nc4, transferring his knight to this great blockading square (d6). Along the way, it attacks the rook, so, maybe, it needs to move away.

22.Re2 Nd6-+

And the knight landed here to d6. As a result of this little transformation of the position, Black actually achieved a strategically winning position. Now, for a beginner level player, it might seem completely weird to say that Black is winning here because the material balance is equal: White has this passed pawn on d5, potentially, and it doesn't seem like there is any winning plan for Black here. But in reality, there are a number of those factors which may make Black's position strategically winning. So, we've got this great blockader knight on d6. One thing, we've got White's bad bishop restricted by pawns, it cannot really move, it cannot really do anything. Also, since White's passed pawn is blockaded, Black has these pawns (b7 and a7), which are ready to be pushed forward in the future. After some preparation, Black will start pushing these pawns forward and will create a passed pawn which will move forward and at least eliminate White's options a lot, or maybe will even be promoted; and White's pieces also have to keep guarding this weak pawn on e4, so they can't really do much there. All things considered, Black will just keep advancing along the c-file, keep pushing their passed pawn and, gradually, it will keep improving his position until it becomes completely winning. That's how easily Black transferred a more or less equal position into a completely winning position, strategically, just by following this concept that bishops can be bad in closed positions. Again, not always. Imagine White has, instead of the light-squared bishop, a dark-squared bishop. That would change the situation drastically, right? Because the dark-squared bishop would not be limited by a pawn chain and it would be active along these diagonals, so it's not exactly correct to say that bishops are bad in closed positions, not really. They are only bad if they are restricted by a pawn chain and they cannot move, then yes, they are so restricted that they are indeed bad. Actually, in the next video, we'll talk about bad bishops a little more to solidify that concept even further. But for now, let's just summarize: knights can be stronger in closed positions and bishops are usually stronger, generally speaking, than a knight especially for open positions.

23.Rb1 Rc4 24. g3 Rdc8 25. Bg2 Rc1+ 26. Rxc1 Rxc1+ 27. Re1 Rxe1+ 28. Kxe1 f5 29. f3 fxe4 30. fxe4 b5 31. Kd2 a5 32. Kd3 Kf6 33. Bf3 Ke7 34.h4 h6 35. Bd1 Kd8 36. a4 bxa4 37. Bxa4 Kc7 38. Bc2 Kb6 39. Kc3 Kb5 40. Kb3 Kc5 41. Ka4 Nc4 42. Bb3 Nd2 43. Bc2 Nf1 44. Kxa5 Nxc3 45. Ka4 Nh5 46. Kb3 Kd4 47. Kb4 Nf6 48. d6 g5 49. hxg5 hxg5 50. Kb5 g4 51. Bd1 g3 52. Bf3 Ke3 53. Bh1 Kf2 54. Kc6 g2 55. Bxg2 Kxg2 56. d7 Nxd7 57. Kxd7 Kf3

0-1

Chapter – 4: Rules for the Bishops

17. Champion's lesson: Petrosian 's favorite plan

Welcome into the seventeenth middlegame concept, which is very straightforward: Avoid bad bishops. While the rule is quite known, generally speaking, we're going to also dive deeper, understand and also take a look at slightly more advanced features of this middlegame concept. What is a bad bishop? It's a bishop that is restricted by many pawns standing on the same color of the bishop.

Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian - Samuel Schweber E73

Stockholm Interzonal (20) 28.02.1962

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Be2 0-0 6. Bg5 h6 7. Be3 e5 8. d5 c6 9.h4
cxd5 10. cxd5 Nbd7 11.h5 g5 12. f3 a6 13. g4 b5 14. a4 b4 15. Nb1 a5 16. Nd2 Nc5
17. Bxc5 dxc5



For example, in this position, we've got this dark-squared bishop (the g7-bishop), and almost all of Black's pawns are on the dark squares as well. Therefore, it's really difficult for this bishop to somehow become active, to somehow be transferred to White's half of the board or to attack White. Basically, this bishop becomes much like just another pawn of Black, and it can't really do much at all; so, those pieces are called bad pieces. Now, this is especially true when the bishop is locked behind the pawn chain, behind the pawn wall and it can't get out, such as in this case. There is just no way for this bishop to somehow be brought in front of the pawn chain. If Black could, somehow, magically, bring this bishop from g7 to d4, it would not be a bad piece at all; it would attack a lot in White's position or the bishop could stay here on f4. It would again be a good piece of Black. But because it's behind the pawn wall, there is no way for Black to possibly jump and cross those pawns. Yes, the bishop will stay there and will be passive forever. So, that's the classical definition of a bad bishop. But there is another interesting point to think about here, when talking about the bad bishops. Let's talk about White's light-squared bishop (the e2-bishop). It seems like the situation is just the same. Almost all of

White's pawns, except one, are on the light squares, and therefore, it may seem like White's bishop is bad. But is it actually true? Well, almost and, in fact no, because there is still this single f1-a6 diagonal that can be used for the bishop to attack some squares into Black's position. White can also use this diagonal to bring this bishop out to b5 and, from there, it will possibly be able to infiltrate (Bc6) into Black's position and start doing some damage there. For that reason, White's bishop is not a bad piece. Even though if we relocate this pawn from d5 to c4, just to lock White's bishop, then indeed, the bishop will be really bad, and if the pawn is on d5, it looks almost bad, but it's not.

18.Bb5

White actually just played Bb5. By the way, the game is between Petrosian and Schweber, which became one of the most classical examples for bad bishops, and it is indeed a great example. Now the bishop is not bad anymore; it attacks here in the center the b5-d7 diagonal and can land into the c6-square.

18...Bb7

Another less-known aspect of bad bishops is that not only your opponent's pawns can restrict your bishop, but also your pawns. For example, take a look at the b7-bishop now. At first, it seems like all Black's pawns are on dark-squares, almost all with the exception of one, so it seems like a good bishop. It seems like the g7-bishop is the bad bishop because most pawns are on dark-squares and this b7-bishop is a good one -the light-squared bishop is a good one. But in fact, it's not really true because, in this case, White's pawn chain restricts this bishop greatly because along this h1-c6 diagonal, it can't really move, it cannot really do anything because there are pawns. On c8, along this h3-d7 diagonal, it cannot really do anything either because White's pawns are blocking all the squares. So, the only thing that this bishop could do is be moved to a6 and to trade it off. But other than that, that's the only opportunity for this bishop, so it's really a bad piece although it's better than the dark-squared bishop because at least you can trade it off, but that's the only thing that Black can do, it's still a relatively bad piece of Black.

19.Ne2 Ne8

With the correct intent to use the knight to blockade a passed pawn, one of the subjects we discussed previously.

20.Bxe8

And White decided to eliminate this knight. Since in closed positions knights often are at least equal, if not better, than bishops, White feels OK keeping knights in this closed position.

20...Rxe8 21. Nc4

completely blockading the position and Black's pieces, and it's not only bishops. Even take a look at Black's rooks. Because of the pawns, they can't really get out, so White managed to establish this great blockade.

21...Ba6

attacking the knight.

22.Qb3

to defend it. Now, White's position is actually strategically winning and, for the most part because of this bad bishop on g7, there is nothing Black can do about this; it's like a tall pawn. It gives White almost like an extra piece in the game, so White has this excellent knight on c4; the other knight can also be relocated somewhere, let's say, Ng3, Nf5. White has this passed pawn along the d-file, and White can, in the future, after some preparation, start advancing forward. Black has some weak squares, such as this weak a5-pawn -this weak c5-pawn-, that White may target in the future with their pieces. In fact, White's knight is ready to take this a5-pawn. All in all, White can slowly and materially improve, while Black is completely stuck, he just cannot do anything and, again, they're playing as if without a piece. With that bad bishop, for that reason, White's position becomes completely winning and, later on, White won this game slowly but surely. If you wish to check this out, as always, all the games that we analyzed will be provided with pgn files, generally speaking, with these multiple arrows, so you can already understand how the game is going to roll out in the future. So, White achieved this completely winning and dominant position thanks to Black's bad bishop.

22...Qf6 23. Rc1 Bf8 24. Ng3 Bc8 25.0-0 Rd8 26. Kg2 Ra7 27. Rf2 Kh7 28. Rfc2 Qa6 29. Nxe5 Rc7 30. Nc4 Bg7 31. Qd3 Kg8 32. Rd2 Re7 33. e5 Bxe5 34. Nxe5 Rxe5 35. Qxa6 Bxa6 36. Rxc5 Bc8 37. Rxa5 f5 38. gxf5 Bxf5 39. Nxf5 Rxf5 40. Rb5 Rdf8 41. d6 Rxb5 42. axb5 Kf7 43. d7

1-0

Flohr, Salo - Petrosian, Tigran V E94

URS-ch18 Final (9) 24.11.1950

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1. Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. d4 0-0 6. Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nbd7 8. d5 Nc5 9. Nd2 a5 10. Qc2



What to do if you found yourself having a bad bishop? Well, in that case you've got to

either find a way to bring it out in front of the pawn chain or at least, try to find a way to trade it off, so that you eliminate this bad piece altogether. Let's take a look at this position. This happened in the game played between Flohr and Petrosian, playing Black at this time. I don't know why we have another example from Petrosian. Although I didn't try to deliberately picking more games from that guy, it seems like he knew something about the bad bishops, and he was a great positional player overall. It was Black to move. It's the King's Indian Defense, we can see based on the pawn structure, and here is an interesting point. Very often, most beginner level players, and even advanced level players, believe that if your opponent has a fianchettoed bishop near their king, it's super advantageous for White to trade it off because that would weaken Black's king. Well, it is partially true; in some positions, it may actually be true; but there is a more dominant, more important thing to consider, which is activity of the pieces, right? This is the most dominant factor above any other factor at all. We want to have more active pieces, in other words, stronger pieces compared to the opponent's and, if that's the case, we'll always be dominating, we'll always feel good. Speaking about the activity of the pieces, Black's dark-squared bishop -within this pawn structure with Black's central pawns on the dark colors-, becomes technically a bad bishop, right? It can't get out. And, talking about the activity of your pieces, we can see that within this pawn structure, Black's dark-squared bishop is a bad bishop because we have central pawns on dark squares, the same color as the bishop, and therefore, it is restricted; it cannot control the entire f6-a1 diagonal; but it only controls one square (f6) in Black's half of the board; and that's it. Now, what to do when you find yourself in a situation like that. You've got to think about this bishop and very often, ideally you want to either have it in front of the pawn chain, such as somehow transfer it over there to d4 or, if that's impossible -which very often is the case-, then you've got to at least trade it off. Here, with that being said, Black played

10...Bh6!

initiating the exchange of the bishop along this g5-c1 diagonal.

11.Nb3 Bxc1

Black traded this bishop off so Black got rid of this passive piece. A lot of players who are more beginner level players would think that it's an accomplishment for White, trying to weaken Black's king but, in fact, it's an accomplishment of Black because they managed to trade off their bad piece.

12.Raxc1 Nfd7

to support their strong knight there.

13.Rcd1 Nxb3

Black traded the knights

14.Qxb3 Nc5

and put the other one on c5.

15.Qc2

Notice, once again, just talking about another middlegame concept, nevertheless, we've

got this knight which can hardly be attacked by a pawn because the d-pawn is too much advanced and the b-pawn cannot be moved to b4, White would have to spend a lot of time to prepare that; so, that's why we say that it is quite a good square for the knight.

15...f5

Now Black can start expanding and start their own attack.

16.exf5 Bxf5

traded with the bishop. Now Black's light-squared bishop is actually a good piece because we have these central pawns on the other color.

17.Qc1 g5

putting one more pawn on the dark squares and, potentially, preventing White from playing f4 because now Black controls this square as well and just gains more space overall.

18.Qe3 Qf6 19. Rd2

Here, for some reason, Black accepted a draw offer which I'm not exactly sure why because Black has a dominant position and great chances to win. Maybe, in this tournament situation, it was enough for Black to get half the point to score some high place; I'm not exactly sure, but we can just imagine what would happen next.

19...Bd7

[19...Bg6 20. b3 Qf4 Black can keep advancing, and we can easily see how this g6-bishop dominates over White's light-squared bishop because this bishop controls this long f5-b1 diagonal. White's bishop is restricted by a pawn. Of course, ideally speaking, White would wish to bring this bishop out and to transfer it somewhere to g4, and then to e6; but since all the squares are under the control of Black, realistically, it would be difficult for White to do that; and this bishop on e2 will likely stay a passive piece restricted by White's pawns of the same color, while Black's bishop would be active. And because of that, Black can keep advancing, keep finding ways to attack later on. So, that's how having this single concept in place, you can outplay even a strong opponent and get a winning position.]

20.Ne4 Nxe4 21. Qxe4 Qf4 22. Qe3

1/2-1/2

18. How classical books/tutorial deceived you...

What's up? Welcome into the middlegame concept number eighteen which states this: The bishop is stronger than the knight. It is a common misconception that both the knight and the bishop are minor pieces and they have equal value. Even though classical chess tutorials present it that way, it's not exactly accurate. It's rather a simplification for complete beginners just to not overload them with little details about chess, so the beginners can have an overall picture of what a chess game is. But in reality, a bishop is stronger than a knight.

Bonnerjee, Mohishunder - Cochrane, John C41

Casuals Cochrane-Mahescandra 01.08.1851

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1.e4 e5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bc4 Be7 4.0-0 Nf6 5. Re1 0-0 6.h3 c6 7.c3



Let's take a look at this example and, after the first more or less trivial opening moves, we've got this position. It's Black to move. The game is between Bonnerjee and Cochrane. Black decided to advance in the center by playing

7...d5

Now, White was at the crossroad. What to do about this intention in the middle of the board? The pawn is attacking the bishop and the pawn; therefore, obviously, White needs to do something about that. White could just take here on d5 (exd5), but White didn't choose this move because perhaps they didn't like the fact that after cxd5, it attacks the bishop, but also Black got this 2 pawns in the center of the board where White has nothing. So White didn't love that option even though, objectively speaking, it was the best option for White. Yes, it's a temporary situation where White will move their bishop back (Bb3), and in the future, White can also advance in the center by playing d4 to equalize the game. But instead, let's move these pieces back; White didn't

love that and they decided to play

8. Bd3

just to hold the position to defend it. But here is the great factor that they underestimated. Regarding this position,

8...dxe4 9. Bxe4

White underestimated the fact that after an exchange in the center, Black can win this advantage of taking (Nxe4), so Black can win this advantage of grabbing White's bishop in exchange for the knight. White clearly believed in that misconception that these are equal value pieces, but in fact it's not. By initiating such an exchange, Black would have some material advantage. But Black actually didn't do that, so Black also underestimated the same factor; Black definitely should take the bishop, but instead, they played

9...Bd6

And now, once again, White failed to the same concept. Instead of saving their bishop by moving it back and avoiding the potential exchange with the knight, White played

10.d4

which is a normal move, again, generally speaking, but it just lets Black win the bishop:

10...Nxe4

That's the problem. Black did that.

11.Rxe4

Now, after that, Black has this advantage of having a bishop versus a knight. Let's see how it goes.

11...Bf5 12. Re1 exd4

Black traded in the center.

13.Nxd4 Bg6

This position looks just like about an equal game. Both players out there will think it's an about equal position; the pawn structure is exactly symmetric, it's White to move, the pieces have seemingly equal activity, etc., etc.; so it looks like an equal position. Let me show you something interesting though. I've just turned on the engine to let it evaluate the current position. You can see the engine evaluation of Stockfish in the top right corner of the screen, you can see that the engine gives -0.5, meaning that Black is quite clearly better in this position, and -1 just for reference would mean that Black is up a pawn, right? So -0.5 means that Black is having an advantage equal to having an extra half pawn. Now, you cannot have an extra half pawn unless you somehow cut it by half :); but it just gives you the overall picture that Black is clearly better in the eyes of the engine. Engines are really very strong, so they give us a very perfect evaluation. Why is that so? Just for that single reason only: It is for the fact that Black has a bishop

against a knight. The engine actually knows that a bishop is stronger, so it gives the advantage here for Black, even though, other than that, the position is completely symmetric; it may even seem like White is slightly more active here. Anyway, let's see what happened next.

14.Qg4 Nd7 15. Bg5

Both players are just bringing their pieces out.

15...Qc7 16. Nd2 Ne5

attacking the queen here on g4

17.Qh4

so, the queen goes somewhere. You can just see how stronger Black's bishops are; they're attacking the entire board and the knight also attacks some squares, but not as much as the bishop. The same is true for the other pair, if we compared the dark-squared bishop to this knight on d4. The knight on d4 is centralized; therefore, normally, it's a good piece. But it just can't control as many squares as the bishop because we already know that a bishop can control 13 squares in the middle of the board, while the knight only controls 8. Therefore, 13 versus 8, the bishop is stronger compared to the knight. Let's see how it goes in the game. Black played

17...Nd3

attacking here the rook as well as the pawn on b2

18.Re2

White decided to move the rook away

18...Rfe8

Both players are bringing their pieces out into the game and now White is already somewhat in trouble. The knight on d3 is really strong; these bishops are controlling so many squares that it's really hard for White's pieces to move around and to maneuver because all the squares are already taken away under the fire of Black's pieces.

19.Nc4

putting the knight to an active position.

19...Rxe2

Black traded the rooks here.

20.Nxe2 Re8

Black put the other rook into the center.

21.Nd4 Re4

Once again, they use the support of the bishop, this time to land the rook on this highly active square. By now, it's pretty clear that White is in a big trouble. This knight on d3 is still extremely strong, it controls a lot of squares in White's territory. The rook on e4 attacks here the queen and it's not easy to cover it, but also it somewhat puts pressure onto these both knights so that they don't feel comfortable; there's sort of an x-ray along the fourth rank. Yes, basically, White's position is already lost. Black didn't do anything special, right? They just brought their pieces out, but it turns out their pieces are stronger.

22.g4

So, the only way to cover the queen would be playing g4. Here Black has a lot of ways to win. They can just keep pushing, keep advancing their pieces and pushing White's pieces back. (See the 22...f6 variation).

22...Ne5

[22...f6 to keep the bishop back. 23.Be3 c5 kicking the knight away 24. Nxd6 Qxd6 Even if White managed to trade off one of Black's bishops, it's just too late because now Black's position is just so better 25. Ne2 Nxb2 Now, Black can win a pawn here. White has weaknesses on the kingside, the knight can come back to c4 or d3 in the future and keep attacking; and there is not much that White can do here. White can safely resign right here. That just goes to show you how strong your position can be just by knowing the single rule that a bishop is in fact stronger than a knight.]

23.Nxe5 Bxe5 24. Rd1 Qd7 25. f3 Bxd4+ 26. Kh1 f6 27. Bc1 Qd5 28. Qg3 Be5 29. Rxd5 Bxg3 30. Rd8+ Re8 31. Rxe8+ Bxe8 32. f4 Bf2

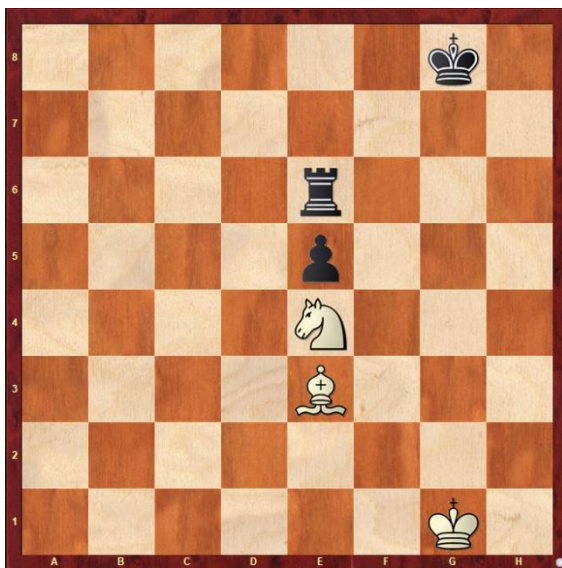
0-1

19. Answering popular question from students

Hey and welcome into the middlegame concept number 19, which states this: Two minor pieces are usually stronger than a rook + a pawn. It's one of my most favorite subjects because this is a question that so many students ask me about. Let's figure this out. First of all, let's take a look at the material balance right here. Just to clarify, it's not a position, it's not an example; this is just to illustrate what we're talking about. Therefore, normally, we know that a minor piece equals 3 pawns. Therefore, if we just mathematically calculate the material balance, we would say that White has 3 pawns + 3 pawns, 2 minor pieces' equals 6 pawns. If we're talking about Black's position, Black's rook is worth 5 pawns plus 1, these are 6 pawns just as well. Therefore, the material balance seems to be equal. It looks at first that this kind of material balance is just equal, that it's really 6 versus 6, right? What else can you talk about here? Yes, it's very simple. But in reality, it's not the case. Maybe it's slightly paradoxical, but we're going to figure this out very soon with some examples. Why is it so that 2 minor pieces are usually taking the upper hand over the rook and the pawn, especially in the opening and middlegame because, in an endgame, sometimes a rook and a pawn can be stronger; but again, just not to overcomplicate, in the vast majority of the positions, 2 minor pieces are stronger. We're talking about not just minor pieces; we're talking about particularly a knight and a bishop, right?

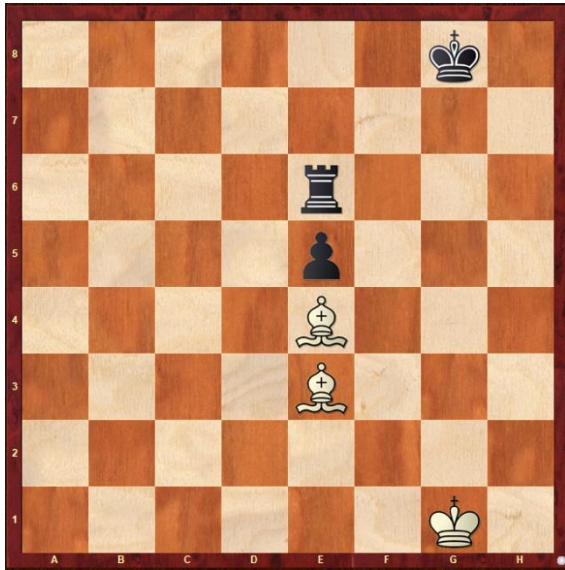
Example – position

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]



2 bishops - VS rook

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]



If we had 2 bishops in this position, in a position like that, 2 bishops would pretty much always be much stronger than a rook and a pawn. We know that a bishop is generally speaking stronger than a knight. 2 bishops are especially strong because they also coordinate really well and they just control the entire board really, so that when you have 2 bishops you control so much here in Black's territory as well as in your own territory that it is really hard for your opponent to move around to do anything just because really they control everything. So, 2 bishops will always be stronger than a rook and a pawn, maybe with some rare exceptions. But the positions when you've got a knight and a bishop are trickier. Let's talk about that.

Hebestreit, Roman (1106) - Banken, Gerd (1239) C55

Dortmund ABC Anfaenger 18th (3) 18.10.2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Here is the question that lots of students ask me about, and maybe you have some doubts about that as well, so let's clarify that. Let's play a couple of first moves, standard opening moves

1.e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5

Let's say in a position like that or something similar to that, the question is: What if White plays Ng5 here?

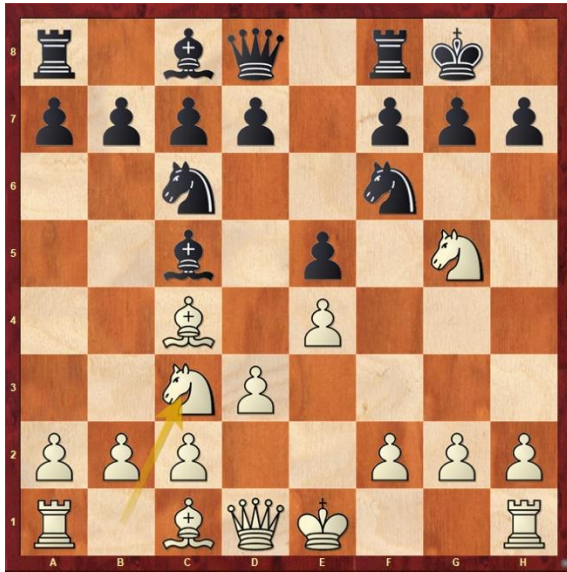
5.Ng5

with a double attack on f7 by the knight and bishop. It looks like a good idea at first because attacking is always nice, right?

5...0-0

Black castles to defend the pawn.

6.Nc3



Black plays h6 to kick the knight away. Here's the question: Should White capture here on f7 or should it retreat back to f3? It's an interesting question because if we assume that trading on f7 would exchange 2 minor pieces -the bishop and a knight-, against a rook and a pawn, then it should be an equal exchange, theoretically speaking. Therefore, White has nothing to lose here and White would avoid spending extra time on the retreat of their knight. Therefore, at first, it may seem like it's the best solution for White because moving the knight backwards to f3 seems slightly passive, acknowledging that the Ng5 attack failed; therefore, White may be tempted to capture here on f7. But, in reality, it is a losing mistake. Right here if White plays Nxf7, White is lost. So, Nf3 would be a much better option for White. Nf3 wastes one tempo moving the knight back and forth; but after all, it's not such a big deal, the position remains to be equal. Let's imagine what actually happens if White actually captures here on f7.

6...h6 7. Nxf7

[7. Nf3]

7...Rxf7

Black would recapture.

8.Bxf7+ Kxf7

Now, after this trade, we have this seemingly paradoxical position where, normally, it seems like the material balance is equal; but in fact, Black is winning because of this material ratio. 9.0-0 d6 Let me show you one position which happened some moves later in this game that illustrates the point clearly.

10.h3 Be6 11. Na4 Bb6 12. Nxb6 axb6 13. f4 Kg8 14. f5 Bf7 15. Qf3 Nd4 16. Qd1 c5 17. Be3 Qf8 18. Bxd4 exd4 19. Qf3 Qe7 20. a3 Qe5 21. g4 c4 22. dxc4 Bxc4 23. Rfe1 Rf8 24. b3 Bb5 25. Rac1 Bc6

After a couple of moves, playing back and forth, we have this position. Let's see why it is so that the 2 minor pieces are overpowering the rook. They can attack something

twice on e4 while the rook can only defend it once, and that's the big problem of the rook. Therefore, there is just not enough defense here. Both Black and White have queens here, but let's disregard them for a second and only compare the minor pieces against the rook. So, the bishop and the knight can team up together; they can attack an opponent's pawn twice and the rook would only be able to defend it once; therefore, Black will be able to capture that pawn and, after that, they can shift the angle of the attack and target another pawn of White. And once again, attack it twice, and the rook will not be able to defend it because it can only defend it once. So, this way, Black can gradually just keep picking up White's pawns and increase their advantage. It's not only true for pawns. Instead of just trying to pick up the pawn, Black could similarly target the opponent's king with their 2 minor pieces while White would only have one defender, the rook. Let's take a look at an example of that.

26.c3 Bxe4 27. cxd4 Qxd4+ 28. Qf2 Qd3 29. Re3 Qd4 30. Rec3 Qe5 31. Qxb6 Nd5 32. Qb5 Qd4+ 33. Kf1 Nxc3 34. Qc4+ Qxc4+ 35. bxc4 Na4 36. Kf2 Nc5 37. Rd1 Rd8 38. Rb1

0-1

José Raúl Capablanca - Alexander Alekhine A47

Buenos Aires WCh (03) (3) 21.09.1927

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 b6 3. g3 Bb7 4. Bg2 c5 5.0-0 cxd4 6. Nxd4 Bxg2 7. Kxg2 d5 8.c4 e6 9. Qa4+ Qd7 10. Nb5 Nc6 11. cxd5 exd5 12. Bf4 Rc8 13. Rc1 Bc5 14. b4 Bxb4 15. Rxc6 Rxc6 16. Qxb4 Ne4 17. Nd2 Nxd2 18. Qxd2 0-0 19. Rd1 Rc5 20. Nd4 Re8 21. Nb3 Rcc8 22. e3 Qa4 23. Qxd5 Rc2 24. Rd2 Rxa2 25. Rxa2 Qxa2



Now, we've got a really high quality, high level game between Capablanca, playing White against Alekhine, playing Black. It's a game from their World Championship match. It's White to move. We see the same material balance. White's got 2 minor pieces against a rook and a pawn. In this case, White decided to target the opponent's king, so they started to move their pieces forward closer to the opponent's king. First they played

26.Qc6

attacking this rook over there in the back rank.

26...Rf8

Black decided to move their rook to safety.

27.Nd4

The knight comes closer, and here Black realized that they are somewhat in trouble because White is threatening Bd6, attacking the rook from there and the rook does not have that many squares to go to because a lot of squares are controlled by the queen as well. So, Black started to be concerned about that. They decided to provide an escape path for the rook, so they played

27...Kh8 28. Be5

They just keep their pieces closer to the opponent's king, and now they said: Hey, potentially I can attack this g7-square or even sacrifice my bishop there and deliver checkmate. For example, imagine Black says: I don't care. I just want to push my pawns forward. (See the 28...a5 variation). In the game, Black correctly played 28...f6 to shut this down.

[28...a5 It's not what Black did in the game, but let's just imagine what could happen here. Now, Black's position on the kingside looks seemingly well defended; even the queen from a2 actually, indirectly, takes part in the defense of Black's kingside, so it seems like it's not that easy for White to develop their attack. But, once again, White has this advantage that they have 2 pieces versus 1. Even though the rook is a bit stronger than a minor piece, but nevertheless, 2 pieces versus 1 gives White an extra attacker. 29.Bxg7+ Now White can even sacrifice one of the pieces to open up Black's king and Kxg7 30. Nf5+ after that, just chase it very simply. Kg8 31. Qf6 and there is no defense against Qg7#. Therefore, Black can't go for this line, and instead, they've got to do something else. Let's come back to the position before the sacrifice happened.]

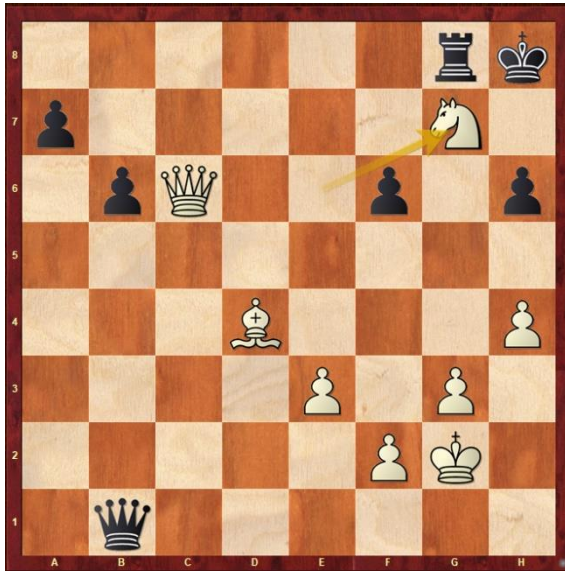
29.Ne6

White, instead of moving the bishop, decided to play Ne6 saying: Hey, I can counterattack here on f8. See how 2 pieces create so many threats to Black.

29...Rg8 30. Bd4

White just moved the bishop back to safety.

30...h6 31.h4 Qb1 32. Nxc7!



White sacrificed the other minor piece, and it turns out that this sacrifice is winning just as well because if it is accepted.... (See the 32...Rxc7 variation).

32...Qg6

[32...Rxc7 33. Qxf6 threatening Qxg7#, and Black is defenseless because, in addition to that, it has a couple of other threats, Qf8+ or Qxh6+. Qh7 Black tries desperately to defend their rook by their queen. 34.Qf8+ Qg8 35. Bxc7+ It wins the rook because Black cannot capture it because there is a pin. So, White would end up with an extra piece, just clearly an extra piece in an endgame, and therefore, White is winning. So, it's interesting to see how Black was completely defenseless even though theoretically speaking, again it seems like there is no problem for Black. Let me just come back to the starting position of this example (after 25...Qxa2). At this point, it was absolutely not clear that White is absolutely winning, but in reality, it is the case. White is absolutely winning right here because they have these 2 minor pieces versus a rook. Overall, this is a very useful concept to remember: 2 minor pieces are stronger than a rook + a pawn. While there are some exceptions, in most of the cases, it is true. And again, the great thing about this is that lots of your opponents will be completely unaware of this idea or will misunderstand it one way or the other, so they will not have a clear idea that you have right now after studying this lesson.]

33.h5 Qf7 34. Nf5 Kh7 35. Qe4 Re8 36. Qf4 Qf8 37. Nd6 Re7 38. Bxf6 Qa8+ 39. e4 Rg7 40. Bxc7 Kxc7 41. Nf5+ Kf7 42. Qc7+

1-0

20. What can make your attack an easy success?

Hey and welcome into the next video, where we're going to be talking about positions with opposite-colored bishops. The middlegame concept about this states: Opposite-colored bishops favor the attacker. What does that mean? It means that in positions with opposite-colored bishops, if you are the attacking side, then you will have a big, sometimes winning advantage just by itself. Let me show you why it is such and how you need to develop your attack.

Saric, Ivan (2652)- Shirov, Alexei (2689) B90

EU-chT (Men) 20th (5.1) 17.11.2015

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be3 e5 7. Nb3 Be6 8. f3 Be7 9. Qd2 0-0 10.0-0-0 a5 11. a4 Nc6 12. Kb1 Nb4 13. g4 Rc8 14. g5 Nd7 15. f4 exf4 16. Bxf4 Bxb3 17. cxb3 Ne5 18.h4 f6 19. Bh3 Rc6 20. Qe2 Qe8 21. Bxe5 fxe5



Now, we've got an example of a middlegame position with opposite-colored bishops, meaning that White has a light-squared bishop versus Black having a dark-squared bishop. It's the game between Saric and Shirov, two strong grandmasters; and it is White to move. What do we see here in the position? We see this opposite-colored bishops, of course. One more pattern you may notice here that we've discussed about earlier is that also Black's bishop is restricted by pawn chains, along the e7-h4 diagonal; it is restricted by White's pawn chain, along the a3-e7 diagonal and it is restricted by Black's own pawn chain in the middle of the board. Therefore, Black's bishop is bad in this case, while White's bishop has these open diagonals (the h3-c8 diagonal and the c4-g8 diagonal). Other than that, there is another interesting point that we've discussed already a little bit at the very beginning of this lesson; it is that opposite-colored bishops favors the attacking side. Therefore, if you can develop an attack, often it will go flawlessly. Let's try a couple of moves and let's see how it goes for White using the advantage that they have to develop the attack.

22.Rhf1

At first, they just bring rooks into play.

22...Kh8

just a prophylactic move to keep the king on a safer square.

23.Rxf8+ Qxf8 24. Rf1

After trading the rooks, White put the other rook on an open file.

24...Qd8 25. Qf3

Here we can start to notice, little by little, White's plan. White's plan is that even though Black has a bishop standing seemingly close to Black's king, it cannot help Black at all if White is going to penetrate into Black's position through the light squares. We're going to use those squares to get into Black's position; there is nothing that Black can do because this e7-bishop cannot possibly cover them because it's a dark-squared bishop. White's plan is to move forward, occupying weak squares, getting closer to Black's king and to keep putting their pieces onto light-colored squares and just advance that way.

25...g6 26. Be6



occupying one of the light squares.

26...Rc7 27. Nb5

bringing the knight closer and, again, putting it into a light square.

27...Rc2 28.h5

White wants to open up the position around the king.

28...Bxg5 29. hxg6 Bf4

Black is desperately trying to somehow use this dark-squared bishop to close the position, to keep it close.

30.Qh5

Notice that all of White's pieces are on the light squares, so this f4-bishop is completely useless. That's why we say that opposite-colored bishops favor the attacker because it's like you're having an extra piece in the attack; you're having a piece that your opponent has nothing to oppose to, and that's why your attack is going to be largely successful.

30...Rh2

Black is actually quite creative in trying to complicate matters.

31.g7+ Kxg7**32. Rg1+**

And the king is completely exposed.

32...Kh8 33. Nxd6

White found the winning shot here with Nxd6, a really beautiful sacrifice, and now, if the rook captures the queen (Rxh5), there is a beautiful checkmate with the knight on f7 (Nf7#). Let's take these moves back. If Black decides to instead take this knight over here (Qxd6) with their own queen, then White is going to play for example Qe8# or Rg8#, similarly checkmate. Either way you can see how putting your pieces on the colors unavailable to your opponent's bishop can make it so easy for you to move forward penetrating to the opponent's position without even a big need to sacrifice something or to open up the position; you just occupy those light squares, get closer to the opponent's king and checkmate it; it's that simple! And while the opponent's bishop may be seemingly close to the king, it just cannot help.

1-0

Chapter – 5: Rules for Rooks

21. Everyone forgets about this

Welcome into the next chapter. This one is going to be short and sweet, and it talks about the usage of your rooks. Here we've got only 2 middlegame principles relevant to the proper play of your rooks. The first one may seem simple, but in reality, it's so important. The concept is very simple. It says: Bring your rooks into play. It's one of the most common errors that lots of amateur players from beginner to intermediate level players commit.

Zahorbensky, Jaroslav (2128) - Jelinek, Vaclav (2148) B09

CZE-chTV 0102 (5) 2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1.e4 g6 2. d4 Bg7 3. f4 d6 4. Nf3 Nf6 5. Nc3 c5 6. dxc5 Qa5 7. Bd3 Qxc5 8. Qe2 0-0 9. Be3 Qa5 10.0-0 Bg4 11.h3 Bxf3 12. Qxf3 Nc6 13. a3 Nd7 14. Rab1 a6 15. b4 Qd8 16. Ne2 e6 17. Qf2



Here, we've got a relatively standard position, after an opening. It's Black to move. How would you play here as Black? I'll give you a couple of seconds to think about it. There are a number of options here. Here is the first rule in regards to your rooks. You've got to connect your rooks; so, in an opening, after you move your minor pieces out and castle, the next thing you've got to do is connect your rooks, meaning you need to move your queen away. For example, Black could move his queen over here to e7, and now the rooks are connected, meaning that they are supporting each other; they're looking at each other. From the vast practice, it's been concluded that this is a good situation for the rooks. The rooks are in great harmony when they are connected; and also, an additional benefit is that now you can easily move your rooks into play to one of the central files. Both rooks can be moved there and the queen is not standing in the way of the rooks. So, that's basically the move (Qe7) that I want you to consider first of all in positions like this. Let's take this move back, and let's see what happens usually

instead. Instead the player thinks: OK, the opening is finished, I finished my development, now it's middlegame, I've got to think how to attack, how I can advance forward? What I can do now? And they start planning their middlegame activities now and forget about the rooks. They forget about the fact that the rooks are still not connected and not activated. Let me share what happened in this game. Black played

17...f5

trying to expand and do something in the center, maybe on the kingside.

[17...Qe7]

18.Bc4

attacking the e6-pawn.

18...Qe7

I'm not going to comment every move. Just notice the general pattern throughout the series of the next moves. Black's both rooks never took part into this game even though we're not talking about a game of beginners. We're talking about the game of 2 players rated approximately 2150, and this is a FIDE rating, meaning that these are expert level players; they are not beginners. But you can notice how Black never uses the rooks.

19.exf5 gxf5 20. Nd4 d5

Decent move, blockading the bishop out.

21.Bb3 Nxd4 22. Bxd4 b5 23. Rbe1 Qf7 24. Bxg7 Kxg7 25. Qg3+ Kh8 26. Qc3+ Nf6

Notice that Black's moves aren't bad; that's another interesting point that I want to highlight. They always pursue some idea, they make sense, but they just forget about the rooks a little bit.

27.Rf3 h5

At this point, Black played h5. Again, I can see the point of the move. Black was concerned that because of this pin the f6-knight cannot move, and maybe, White is going to play g4 and maybe g5; so, Black played h5 to stop that from happening. So, we can see that the move makes sense, so again, we're not talking about a beginner player; but for all these moves, Black is not using their rooks. It's like they're playing odd chess, the situation where a master level player plays a much weaker opponent; sometimes, they would give a rook away at the beginning of the game or even the queen away just to equalize chances when the players are of different levels. So, if you don't bring your rooks into play, you're giving your rook away to your opponent, saying: Hey, I'm so much stronger that I'm going to beat you without my rooks, right? :) But you don't want to play like that. I'm just kidding here. So, you do want to move your rooks into play. So, the first task, right after an opening is to connect rooks, meaning that one rook is looking at the other rook and, after that, the next task is to bring them into play, meaning to move them usually to the central files or to open files to activate them. For instance, in this position, Black could easily move the a-rook to c8 (Rac8), so that it attacks the queen and the rook stands on a semi-open file. Or the other rook could easily go to the

g-file (Rg8), so that it will also block White's pawns from going there; but it will also be active along this file. So, Black could easily move one of their rooks to more active squares and bring them into play, but instead, they played h5.

[27...Rg8]

[27...Rac8]

28.Rfe3 Qa7

Again, an interesting move, which puts the pin on the rook, threatens d4; I get it, but after

29.Qe5 Rae8

Finally, Black played Rae8. Notice that it is the 29th move of the game. So, almost for 30 moves, Black never used their rooks into this game. It's such a common mistake that happens even for relatively advanced players, so that I really wanted to highlight here is that you never play this mistake yourself. Let's come back once again to the very beginning of the game (the position after 17. Qf2), and I will show you, once again, what you should think about. Here is how you should think in this and similar positions because it's not about this game, it's just a very standard position after an opening. Therefore, you will definitely face similar positions multiple times almost all the time in your own chess games. The first thing that Black needs to care about is to connect rooks, meaning they need to bring the queen out. It's too early yet to think about the middlegame plan, really because still your heavy pieces are not involved into the game. Black developed minor pieces, castled, great, almost fine; but now it's time to use your heavy pieces and to also activate them, to develop them. So the first thing to do is to play 17...Qe7, and the next moves that you should be thinking about is how to bring my rooks to more active positions, usually to one of the central files. For instance, the queenside rook could easily be moved somewhere here to the c-file (Rac8) because it's a semi-open file, it's going to be active there. And as for the kingside rook, it's slightly hard indeed; there aren't many good options for the rook right now, but usually they need to move it to e8 or d8, one of the central squares to get it involved into the game somehow. And, after that, once all your heavy pieces are developed, then you can actually say that yes, now my development is complete: I developed my minor pieces, I developed my heavy pieces, I castled, I did everything, now it's time for the middlegame plan. Let me show you another game, this time from Grandmasters, and we'll see how they did it in their own game.

30.Kh2 Kh7 31. Rc3 Rf7 32. Rc6 Qf2 33. Rxe6 Rxe6 34. Qxf5+ Kg8 35. Qxe6 Qxf4+ 36. Kh1 Qf2 37. Rd1 Kg7 38. Qe5 Rd7 39. Rxd5

1-0

Skrzyczek, Bartłomiej (2022) - Heberla, Bartłomiej A55

Opole rapid (2) 17.07.2021

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Now, we've got another game. This time the white player is Skrzyczek, rated 2000, and

the black player is a Grandmaster.

1.c4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Nf3 d6 4. d4 Nbd7 5. g3 Be7 6. Bg2 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8. e4 a6 9. a4 a5 10. Re1 Re8 11.h3 exd4 12. Nxd4 Nc5 13. Qc2 Bf8 14. Bg5 h6 15. Bf4 Qb6 16. Rad1



It's Black to move here. Once again, think about this yourself for a second. How would you play here in this position? You can see it's the finishing stage of an opening, it's seemingly time for Black to go for the middlegame plan, but instead, he made a much smarter thing. Instead of thinking: How do I attack here? He realized that his rooks were still not connected. The rooks weren't connected, so he just moved Bd7.

16...Bd7

It does not pursue any plan whatsoever. It just develops the bishop, so the rooks get connected.

17.Re2

Is it time for Black to attack now? Well, in some positions, you may attack, but again, usually very often, you need to bring your rooks into the center first. So, Black played

17...Rad8

Now both the rooks are involved, at least to some extent; this rook on e8 is particularly active, putting pressure onto White's center.

18.Red2

Now, Black realized that even though this rook is indeed very active, the other one on d8 is passive; Black's bishop is standing in the way of the rook, and it's not active. So, Black just played

18...Bc8

Just so the rook has this potential open file. Now both rooks are quite active indeed, the e-rook is putting some pressure into White's e-pawn; that's great. The other one is less active, but at least, it provides some support for this pawn on d6. Maybe, in some potential distant future, Black will push d5 themselves and open up the file for their rook. Right now, White is controlling very well, but thanks to the rook standing in the center of the board, you can have some influence in the game. So far, Black never thought about their middlegame plan at all, they just wanted to bring their rooks into play, connect the rooks and then bring them into play. Another good thing about this is that, very often, while activating your heavy pieces, your opponent will do something that will simplify your middlegame plan, and you won't have to think about it at all. For instance, in this case, White played

19.Nf5

which makes Black's task simpler. Now White is threatening to capture the d6-pawn,

19...Bxf5

so, Black has to exchange here on f5. Black didn't need to think about this, it's just an exchange. Only now, Black needs to start thinking: OK, what am I going to do now? Right now, also it's not really about planning because White is going to capture this d6-pawn; therefore, Black needs to think how to defend it or how to counterattack an opponent's pawn. Therefore, for defending it, there are not many good options: Qc7 looks very passive, instead, he played Qb4.

20.exf5 Qb4

to counterattack this pawn on c4.

21.Bf1

to defend the pawn, but now Black has a lot of better options on how to defend the pawn. He played

21...Nce4

This not only defends the pawn over there on d6, but also attacks the rook.

22.Nxe4 Nxe4 23. Rd4 Nc5

Black decided that since the knight is attacked, he moved it here to c5, which will also double attack this pawn on a4.

24.Bxd6

White decided to trade here on d6.

24...Rxd6 25. Rxd6 Bxd6 26. Rxd6 Qxa4 27. Qxa4 Nxa4 28. b3 Nc5

All of a sudden, White resigned. There is no way for them to defend the b3-pawn and, after that, Black has a very strong passed pawn on the a-file and White has nothing. So, Black could get away pretty much without any planning here throughout the entire

game. They never needed to think about their plan. Initially, they just wanted to activate the rooks and, after that, they simply responded to specific threats of White. How to defend the pawn or how to attack the pawn, it was that simple? So, here you can see how a Grandmaster played seemingly simple looking moves, but they are simple when you understand this concept. The concept, once again, states: You've got to bring your rooks into play, especially in the early middlegame stage; very often that's exactly what you should do before even thinking about any other plans.

0-1

22. Champion's lesson: Carlsen's way to win

In this video, we're going to be talking about the second and the final concept relative to the usage of your rooks and the rule states: Rooks love open files.

Vokhidov, Shamsiddin (2536) - Petrovskyi, Vadym (2239) B90

World Rapid 2021 (2.57) 26.12.2021

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6.h3 e5 7. Nb3 h5 8. Bg5 Be7 9. Bc4 Be6 10. Bxe6 fxe6 11.0-0 Nbd7



Here is our first example. The white player is Vokhidov; the black player is Petrovskyi; both are relatively strong players. The white player is probably a Grandmaster. Here it was White to move. Now, you may, once again, practice what you studied in the previous videos. Ask yourself this question: How would you play here if you are White? Of course, there are a number of options, but there is a single correct answer and anything else is wrong. White played a good move; he played

12.Qe2

because, usually, as we discussed previously, at the beginning of the middlegame, you need to connect rooks by moving your queen, so White brought the queen into play by playing Qe2.

12...Qc7 13. Rad1

What's the purpose of this move? We say that rooks really need open files. The rook, as a linear piece can become completely inactive if there is a pawn standing in front of it. For instance, the rook on a1 is completely passive right now because there is this pawn on a2, so the rook cannot move forward at all; it cannot attack anything there. And the same case happens for the other rook of White. It cannot move forward at all; it cannot

attack Black at all because there is a pawn that's blocking the way of the rook. That's why rooks hate those closed positions and they need open files instead. So, White played Rad1, putting the rook to a so-called semi-open file or half-open file, where there is only one pawn -the pawn of your opponent-; so, the rook has some space to move back and forth and it also puts pressure onto Black's pawn. Now, of course, the rook is a lot happier as it gets involved actively into the game.

13...0-0-0 14. Rd3

Now White is concerned about the other rook. The other rook on f1 is passive and, perhaps, White is going to double rooks, putting both rooks to the semi-open file and putting pressure along the semi-open file to Black's d6-pawn.

14...Nb6



Black decided to relocate the knight. White decided to also change their plan, and they played another good move. Rooks love open files; there are basically two ways for you to proceed here. You may either put your rook to an existing open file or you may open up the file for the rook by pushing a pawn forward. So, we say that the f2-pawn is blocking the rook on f1 and if we want to activate the rook, we need to either relocate it to a better position or we can push the pawn forward to give space and open up the position for the rook. White chose this latter option.

15.f4!? exf4 16. Bxf4

Now White has a classical open file where there are no pawns of either color, and the rook is going to be extremely active there in the long run in the future. Right now, there are some minor pieces which are blocking the way of the rook. But if you imagine that there are no pieces there, if they move away at some point, then the rook will be able to even penetrate all the way forward to f7 and put a lot of problems for Black there in the long run; not right now.

16...Nbd7

Black decided to relocate their knight. Here White has a number of options relevant to the usage of their rooks. For example, the rook could go here to g3 (Rg3) to attack this pawn on g7; that was one option. Another option that they missed in the game, but would win the game on the spot was Nd5. (See the 17. Nd5 variation).

17.Rfd1

[17. Nd5 It's not really a sacrifice because we vacate this c3-square for the rook. exd5 18. Rc3 The rook is now relocated to another active position where it puts this pin on the queen and it cannot escape, so White is just winning the material and will get the winning material advantage. Nc5 to blockade this pin. Now the d6-pawn is also pinned, so we've got all pins around here and, therefore, Black cannot escape at all. Anyway, they'll have to give up their queen. 19.Rxc5 dxc5 20. Bxc7 and they'll win the game just as well.]

17...Ne5 18. Rg3? h4 19. Rg5 Ne8 20. Nd4 Bxg5 21. Bxg5 Rd7 22. Nxe6 Qc4 23. Qxc4+ Nxc4 24. Nd5± Kb8 25. b3 Ne5 26.c4 Nf6 27. Nc3 Re8 28. Nd4 Nc6 29. Nxc6+ bxc6 30. Bxh4 Nxe4 31. Nxe4 Rxe4 32. Bg3 Kb7 33. Bxd6 c5 34. Rd5 Rd4 35. Rxd4 cxd4 36.c5 Rf7 37. Be5 d3 38. Bc3 Kc6 39. b4 Kb5 40. Be1 Ka4 41. g4 Ka3 42.c6 Kxa2

0-1

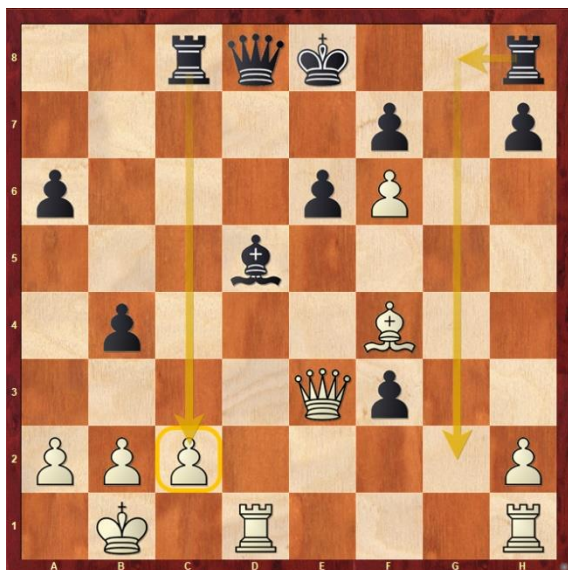
Nepomniachtchi, Ian (2773) - Carlsen, Magnus (2865) B48

Airthings Masters KO 2022 (3.23) 26.02.2022

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

I just realized that, perhaps, so far we have no games of Magnus Carlsen, the World Champion, and we're going to fix this issue right now. We have the game of Carlsen, playing Black against Nepomniachtchi, playing White.

1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Nc3 Qc7 6. Be3 a6 7. g4 Nxd4 8. Qxd4 b5 9.0-0 Bb7 10. Kb1 Nf6 11. f3 Rc8 12. g5 Nh5 13. Qd2 Be7 14. Bh3 b4 15. Ne2 d5 16. Bg4 g6 17. Bxh5 gxh5 18. Nf4 dxe4 19. Nxh5 exf3 20. Bf4 Qd8 21. Qe3 Bd5 22. Nf6+ Bxf6 23. gxf6



It was Black to move here. Here is a good question: What would you play here as Black? Normally, we need to castle, but in this case, castling over here and putting the king to such an exposed position would certainly be a bad mistake for Black because White can just attack the king directly; so the king feels a lot safer in the middle of the board actually. Then, if not castle, then you need to activate your pieces, right? We've got the bishop here on d5, which is already very active in the middle of the board; we've got the queenside rook standing on a semi-open file, putting pressure along the semi-open file; that's great! So, we have one rook completely out of the game (the h8-rook), and we know that rooks love open files; therefore, Carlsen just played

23...Rg8

putting the rook to an open file where it can operate and it can move somewhere.

[23...0-0]

24.Rhe1

Also activating their rook, and the second concept which is also really worth remembering is that your rooks, ideally speaking, should be brought to the second rank, and here is exactly what Carlsen did.

24...Rg2

When your rook stands there, first of all, it attacks all the pawns of your opponent or at least most of them because, in the initial position of the game, your opponent has pawns in the second rank. Therefore, you can put your rook right there to attack them massively. Secondly, apart from trying to win a couple of pawns, your rook will also somewhat restrict the opponent's king and, therefore, create a lot of potential checkmating threats in some near future. Let's take a look at what's going to happen here.

25.Qa7

It's also quite a tricky move. He's potentially ready to deliver some checkmate over here on e7 if Black is careless and lets their queen go away.

25...Qd7

just to defend.

26.Qd4

White moved their queen back.

26...Rcxc2

Now, Black managed to put the other rook on c2. If a single rook is powerful in the second rank, imagine how powerful 2 rooks are in the second rank. That is usually deadly. 2 rooks are there, they can still capture the pawns; in addition to that, they can attack the king; so, having 2 rooks in the second rank very often is the winning

advantage.

27.Bc1

to defend the king.

27...Rxc1+

Black was ready to sacrifice the rook and to start the final attack. White cannot recapture with the rook; if they do so, that would fail to this tactics Bxa2+, check to the king and White loses the queen over there. So, desperation would be losing for White, and Black noticed that as he is a strong player. So, instead of that,

28.Kxc1

he captured it with the king.

28...Qc6+

Now, Black just started to attack the king

29.Kb1 Qa4

threatening potentially Qxa2 or, maybe in some variations, Qc2, and White is defenseless. White resigned because here, ideally, White would love to play Qxd5 here taking advantage of the pin on the e-file. Black cannot recapture, but then, Black plays Qc2+, and they utilize the power of their heavy pieces along the second rank. Kh1 and Qxb2# is just a checkmate. This game illustrates that after you put your rook to an open or semi-open file, ideally, your maximum plan is to bring your rook to the second rank and, if you can do so, very often, it's a winning advantage.

30.Rd2 Bxa2+

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Chapter - 6: Rules for exchanges

23. Everyone knows the 1st half of this rule

Hey and welcome into the final chapter of this course, where we're going to be discussing exchanges. When to exchange pieces and when not to? What are the common patterns right here? In this chapter, we're going to be talking about 3 concepts relevant to exchanges that you need to know, the most important principles of chess about exchanges. The first one states: When you're up in material, you want to trade pieces, and when you're down in material, you want to complicate, you want to avoid exchanges. Let's take a look at a specific example and see how you can realize this general concept practically.

Ipatov, Alexander (2265) - Smirnov, Igor E58

Lvov Vasylyshyn Memorial (9) 06.11.2007

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e3 0-0 5. Bd3 d5 6. Nf3 c5 7.0-0 Nc6 8. a3 Bxc3 9. bxc3 Qc7 10. a4 dxc4 11. Bxc4 Rd8 12. Ba3 b6 13. Qe2 Bb7 14. Rfd1 Na5 15. Ba6 Bxa6 16. Qxa6 Rac8 17. Rac1 Ne4 18.c4 Nb3 19. Rc2 cxd4 20. exd4 e5 21. d5 Nbc5 22. Qb5 Nd6 23. Qb2 f6 24. Qa2 Qd7 25. a5 bxa5 26. Nd2 Qa4 27. Rb1 Rd7 28.h3 h6 29. Kh2 Kh7 30.h4 h5 31. Rc3 Nce4 32. Nxe4 Nxe4 33. Rc2 Rxd5 34.c5



Here's my game. I was playing Black against Ipatov. It's Black to move. Black here has 2 extra pawns, which is a material advantage enough for a win; but now, what should Black do here? I played

34...Rd3

which attacks the bishop right here on a3 twice with the rook and queen. While the

bishop, of course, could easily escape, that would achieve Black's overall plan. That would allow Black to trade queens, following the idea that when you're up in material, you want to trade material. Why is this so? Let's say White plays that move, to retreat with their bishop. (See the 35. Bc1 variation). In the actual game, White played a smart move: instead of allowing Black to trade off the queens, White followed the second half of the concept. The concept states that when up in material, you want to trade, and when you're down in material, you want to avoid exchanges of pieces and, instead, you want to see counter play and see complications because if you just play normal moves, you're going to lose. Therefore, you need to complicate matters. With that in mind, White played

35.Qe6

Objectively speaking, it's not a good move, but practically, in a real practical game, it's a great idea because he's creating some counter-threats. Maybe, Qxc8, Qf5+; it's easy for Black to blunder something. For example, if Black wants to capture somewhere here on c2. First, Qe6 looks bad because it allows White to capture either the rook or the bishop. Let's say Black captures here the rook on c2. (See the 35...Qxc2 variation). Coming back to the position from the game, where right after White played Qe6, instead of trying to capture here (Qxc2) and allow White to complicate matters, it is safer for Black to keep insisting on exchanges. You want to trade queens and eliminate White's counter play. What do you do? Well, you can either play Qd7 or Qc6, the move that I played in the game.

[35. Bc1 allowing Black here to trade on a2 Qxa2 36. Rxa2 Now, what is going to happen here? The position simplifies. Actually, right now I noticed that there is Nc3 with a fork. But even if we forget about this tactics, let's just play a simpler move: Rxc5. Now with a couple of extra pawns -a simple endgame position-, White doesn't have any counterattack; they cannot possibly create any threats to the black king, so White really has nothing to do here; he's hopeless. Black will just gradually advance their passed pawns forward; that's how trading pieces basically secures your win by eliminating any counter play of your opponent. Let's play a couple of moves back. Nc3 (36...Rxc5)]

35...Qc6

It's like saying: Hey, let's just trade queens and, with 2 extra pawns, I'm going to win an endgame very easily.

[35...Qxc2 Instead of taking the rook over there immediately, White can play a nasty in-between check here (36. Qf5+).

A) 36. Qf5+ and, all of a sudden, it complicates matters a lot. What can Black do now? They played Kg8 but in that case, not only White can capture the rook back (Qxc8+), but it will be done with check; and, if White keeps checking after that, it doesn't look good. If instead Black plays g6 (36...g6 to cover their king; this would blunder another in-between move, 37. Rb7+ a massive attack to Black's king, and Black is actually lost here. So, that's how Black could lose the game easily even though it's a completely won game by Black. Very often, those kinds of situations really annoy when you feel like you outplay your opponent, you've got the winning advantage; but then, you just blunder some little trick and you're lost. In order to avoid that, once again, it's better to trade pieces, not letting those things happen.) 37. Qxc8+;

B) 36. Qxc8]

[35...Qd7]

36.Qf7

White tried one last time to play Qf7, saying: Hey, at least I'm going to capture the h5-pawn and create some counter play.

36...Qe8

Once again, this just offers an exchange of queens with the same purpose: Let's just eliminate any counter play and then, win easily.

37.Qc4 Rd4

The white queen was finally pushed back,

38.Qe2

The queen went all the way back to e2, but White has no attack whatsoever and, with 2 extra pawns, Black could win the game easily. So, that's how trading pieces can help you win, secure your win in a winning position because if you put the position in a computer, it will show you the best moves objectively. But those are the best moves for computers, not necessarily for a human being because for humans it's much easier just to trade off the pieces, go into a winning endgame and win there safely without risking anything. Objectively speaking, for example, playing Qe8 for Black here was probably not the best move because it brings the queen back to a more passive position, but practically speaking, in a real practical game it was a good choice for Black because it offered an exchange of queens to ensure that there is no counter play for White; and then, Black can win easily.

38...f5 39. Rb7 Nf6 40. Rc4 Ng4+ 41. Kh3 Nxf2+ 42. Qxf2 Rxc4 43. Qxf5+ Kh8 44. Bb2 R4xc5 45. Rf7 Kg8 46. Rxa7 R8c7 47. Ra6 Qc8 48. Re6 Rf7 49. Qg6 Rc6

0-1

24. How exchanges can favor or harm your attack

Welcome into the middlegame concept number 24, which states: when defending, you should trade pieces. Now the flipside of the coin is also true: when attacking, you should avoid exchanges.

Grill, Roman (2102) - Janacek, Jaroslav (2123) B23

CZE-chTJ 0102 (6) 2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1.e4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. f4 e6 4. Nf3 Nge7 5. Bb5 a6 6. Bxc6 Nxc6 7. d3 d5 8.0-0 Be7 9. Ne5 Bf6 10. Nxc6 bxc6 11. e5 Be7 12. b3 a5 13. Na4 Ba6 14. Qf3 Bb5 15.c4 Bxa4 16. bxa4 Rb8 17. Ba3 0-0 18. Rac1 Qc7 19. Qe3 d4 20. Qe4 g6 21. g4 Rfe8 22. Rc2 Bf8 23.h4 Rb6 24.h5 Reb8 25. hxg6 fxg6 26. f5 exf5 27. gxf5 gxf5 28. Qxf5

Here is our first example. It's Black to move here. Black realized that White is going to attack them on the kingside by bringing the rook over here to g2 and hitting the king. Therefore, Black decided that since they are defending, they need to trade pieces. So, they played

28...Rb1



which is a correct idea. Now, what should White do here? A lot of players always exchange, basically, when there is an opportunity. In a position like this, they always take here on b1, or maybe Rf2 to support the pawn. Let's just imagine what could happen if White decides to take here on b1. (See the 29. Rxb1 variation).

29.Bc1!

White played a smart move: Bc1 to prevent the exchange. Let's see how the game turns out in this case.

[29. Rxb1? Rxb1+Black would obviously recapture and check White's king. 30.Kh2 It has to move somewhere. Bg7 Also to cover their king as well as to attack this pawn on e5. How can White attack here? It's certainly unclear. There is no clear way for White to attack or checkmate Black's king. Now let's revert these moves to the starting position of this example before the exchange.]

29...Re8

trying to attack the pawn.

30.e6

Now it moves forward. The problem for Black is that after the rook coming here to g2, there is this massive attack along the 2 open files (the g- and the f-file) and, basically, Black is defenseless against it.

30...Qe7

trying to somehow bring their pieces closer.

31.Rg2+ Bg7 32. Qf7+!

As we discussed, White is using these both open files to penetrate into Black's position to attack, and it's time for Black to resign right now. If they take here on f7 (32... Qxf7), White recaptures (exf7+), which is a double attack to the rook and the king. Therefore, White is going to capture all of Black's material in the next move. You can see how easily White managed to win the game just because they saved their rooks for the attack. It's very simple. If you are attacking, you want more pieces to get involved into the attack. While defending, the defender wants the opposite. He wants to eliminate the attacking pieces, to trade them off and finish the attack that way.

32...Kh8

[32...Qxf7 33. exf7+]

33.Rxg7 Qxf7 34. exf7 Rf8 35. Bh6 Rxf1+ 36. Kxf1 Rxf7+ 37. Rxf7 Kg8 38. Rf8#

1-0

Ilesas Córdoba, Miguel (2585) - Nogueiras Santiago, Jesús (2535) D36

ESP-chT Ponferrada (6) 1997

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

Now, this example is also very interesting as well as very practical because it's going to show you how you can refute the opponent's attacks against your king.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Nf3 e6 5. Bg5 Nbd7 6. cxd5 exd5 7. e3 Be7 8. Bd3 0-0 9. Qc2 Re8 10.h3 Nf8 11. Bf4 Ne6 12. Bh2 g6 13.0-0-0 c5 14. Bb5 Rf8 15. Ne5 c4 16. Qe2 Bb4 17. Nxd5 Nxd5 18. Bxc4 Nb6 19. Bb3 Bd6 20. Kb1 Qe7 21. f4 Bxe5 22. fxe5 Bd7 23. d5 Nc5 24. Bc2 Nca4 25. Rd4 Qc5 26. e6 Bb5 27. Qg4 f5 28. Qd1



It was Black to play here. The position is from the Championship of Spain, a game between 2 Grandmasters; it's a high level game. Now, what do we see here? We can see that Black is having some material advantage; they're having a knight against 2 pawns of White. Therefore, it gives Black material advantage, but those pawns are strong passed pawns ready to be pushed forward and, of course, they're also dangerous. Black needs to be careful with them. Anyway, it was Black to move.

28...Nxb2

And Black decided to sacrifice their knight here on b2 to open up White's king and to start the attack against the king.

29.Kxb2 Nc4+

With Nc4+, attack to the king, it looks quite dangerous because the king is exposed while Black has 3 pieces there, attacking the king, ready to create some threats and so, it can really be dangerous. For example, if the king goes back to b1 (Kb1), the knight is ready to jump here to either a3 with check or maybe take this pawn over here on e3, and also hit the queen and the bishop, so it can get dangerous for White. Therefore, instead of moving the king, White decided here to sacrifice the rook, following the idea that while defending, you want to trade, you want to eliminate attackers.

30.Rxc4

[30. Kb1 Nxe3 (30...Na3+)]

30...Bxc4

Now, once again, White is ready to deliver some sort of checks or to capture the d5-pawn; and, what should be White's defending idea? The defensive idea should be to eliminate these attackers (the c4-bishop and the c5-queen), how can you possibly do this? If you want to trade queens, you play Qd4. If you want to trade the bishop, what can you do? You can play Bb3. So, if you play these 2 moves, you're going to trade off all the opponent's attackers and the attack will be gone! White played

31.Bb3

first, offering the exchange of bishops. Just imagine if Black accepts it: Bxb3, then Qxb3. How can Black attack here? There is just no way. We traded off all the attackers. Now we have just one queen, but one queen is not enough to create any threats, and we also have White's queen to defend the king; so, White defended their king successfully. Let's take this move back. Black in the game played Rd8 instead.

[31. Qd4]

31...Rfd8

To attack the pawn on d5, but White doesn't even need to defend it because it can be pushed forward.

[31...Bxb3 32. Qxb3]

32.d6 b5 33. Qd4

It's a move that we discussed previously. White is offering an exchange of queens, saying: Hey, if we trade queens, there is no chance for Black to attack here my king whatsoever; while my pawns are strong, even in an endgame, I can keep pushing them.

33...Qc6

trying to keep the queens on the board. Now the queen is pushed back to a passive position, while White's queen is standing here on a dominant place in the middle of the board.

34.Rc1

bringing the rook into play. Now, it's quite clear that Black has no chance for any kind of attack on the queenside because White's king is surrounded by strong defenders and Black doesn't have really anything there.

34...Rac8

This move lost the game.

35.e7 Rd7 36. Rxc4

A final little combo! It's a temporary sacrifice because after bxc4, Bxc4, Qxc4, Qxc4, this massive trade on c4, Rxc4; after all the exchanges it turns out that White's pawn is ready to be pushed to e8Q+, and it's check to the king. It also attacks the rook. Therefore, White is going to at least win one rook in the next move and it wins the game for sure; so, Black just resigned. This game showed how you can defend your game very easily just by trading off all the attackers. It's a great defensive strategy; so, once again, the middlegame concept states that while defending, you should trade pieces; and therefore, while attacking, you should do the opposite, to avoid exchanges.

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25. Champion's lesson: Capablanca's way to defend

Welcome into the final middlegame concept number 25 which states: In cramped positions, you need to trade off pieces.

Rozkovec, Hynek (2159) - Hlavacek, Robert (2194) C10

CZE-chTV 0102 (5) 2002

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

1.e4 e6 2. Nc3 d5 3. d4 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Nd7 5. Nf3 Ngf6 6. Bd3 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8. Qe2 b6 9. Rd1 Bb7 10. Nxf6+ Nxf6 11.c4 Qd6 12. Ne5 g6 13. Bg5 Rad8 14. Bc2

Here is a relatively standard position, a game from 2 players rated 2100; it's a FIDE rating, so they are quite strong players. It's Black to move. What do you think about this? Is it a good position for Black overall or is it a bad position? Also, what should Black do? At first, it looks like Black's position is pretty good: he has developed all their pieces, castled their king and everything is pretty good. But in reality, if you start thinking: OK, what am I going to do now? It's quite hard to find any reasonable moves for Black really because the position is cramped, Black's pieces are standing in the way of each other, and so, it's hard for Black to really move and do anything constructive. For example, the bishop on e7 cannot move at all, right? Theoretically, there are no squares; all those squares are taken by some piece of Black. Similarly, the rook from f8, ideally speaking, would love to go to the d-file, so it can operate on the semi-open file; but it can't move to d8 because that square is already taken by another rook of Black. Because Black's pieces are hampering each other, the good rule of thumb here is that in cramped positions, you want to trade off some pieces to create more free space available for your remaining pieces to move around. With that in mind, Black played

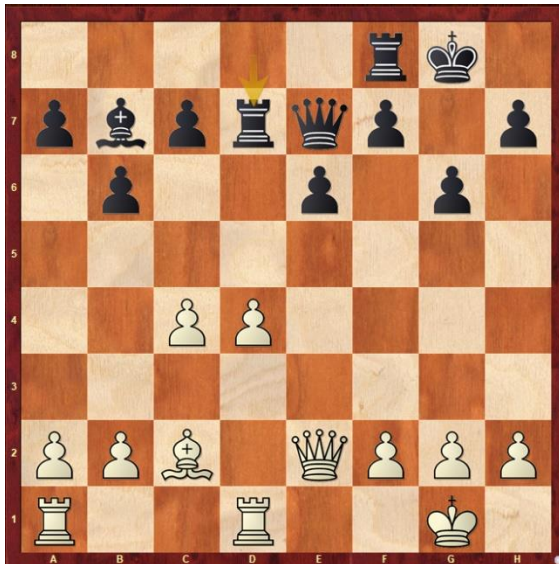
14...Nd7

An absolutely great idea, offering an exchange of 2 minor pieces. So, we're hoping to trade off the bishop somewhat here, hoping to trade off the knights. In the game, White refused to trade off the bishops correctly; but let's imagine what would happen if White said: OK, let's trade off. (See the 15. Bxe7 variation). So, Black played Nd7 and White correctly refused to trade off the bishop because since the side with cramped positions should aim for trading pieces, it's natural to assume that the opposite side, White in this case, the side with space advantage should avoid exchanges because, otherwise, it makes Black's life easier.

15.Bh6

White correctly refused to trade and played Bh6, attacking the rook.

[15. Bxe7? Qxe7 16. Nxd7 Rxd7



Now, let's evaluate this position. Now, first of all, we can see that Black solved their main problem because the position is not cramped anymore; they can easily maneuver, relocate their pieces however they want. For example, the rook on f8 finally can be brought to d8 easily and can put strong pressure against this weak pawn on d4. The bishop on b7 is, of course, very active. The queen from e7 can easily move to g5 or, maybe, along the e7-b4 diagonal and also create a lot of threats. All in all, Black's position is very active here. Moreover, in reality, Black has a strategically winning position here because, after he plays Rfd8 and puts pressure onto White's pawn on d4, Black is going to attack this pawn and White will have a hard time defending it. Therefore, Black has a simple attacking plan, to attack the weak pawn and White has nothing here, really, just to try to defend passively, and it's very likely that Black is going to win in this game. That's an interesting conclusion, isn't it? Think about this: A couple of moves ago. Let me put the original position back on the board. It looked like White had a good position and they indeed had a good position. Just by trading off a couple of minor pieces, Black got a winning position, isn't it interesting? Usually, we think that in order to win, you've got to attack, you've got to move forward, sacrifice something, play brilliant moves and win the game. But you can see that it's not always the case. In cramped positions, sometimes just by trading off a couple pieces, you're getting a winning advantage. It's crazy!]

15...Rfe8

[15...Nxe5! 16.Bxf8 Nf3+ 17. gxf3 Bxf8]

16.Ba4

attacking the knight here once again. So, once again, Black suffers for a lack of free space, and now White starts putting pressure on Black, so it becomes a bit unpleasant for Black.

16...c6

He had to play c6 just to block White's bishop, so it cannot capture this knight on d7. White didn't figure out how to keep the attack and they allowed an exchange on e5.

17.Bf4 Nxe5 18. Bxe5

Black's position, once again, became a little bit easier than it was before.

18...Qb4

He played Qb4 because he's being attacked. And now, since Black managed to at least trade one pair of minor pieces, they have slightly more space to move around for the other pieces and they are having a decent position here. Ideally speaking, if they could also play Bd6 and trade off that bishop, then they would have complete freedom for their remaining pieces to operate. But in the game, White actually played a blunder here. They played

19.b3?

trying to maintain an active position of the bishop over there, but they forgot about the rule that very often, it's dangerous to keep your piece on the edge.

19...a6

It turns out that Black is going to play b5 and simply capture that bishop with their pawn, and there is nothing that White can do here because the bishop is trapped there on the edge of the board. Black won the game with this little tactics, but prior to that, they already improved their position quite dramatically just by trading off a little bit of pieces.

20.c5 b5 21. Rab1 Rd7 22. d5 cxd5 23. Rbc1 Bxc5 24. a3 Qxa3 25. Bb2 Qb4 26. Qe5 d4 27. Rxc5 f6 28. Bc3 dxc3 29. Rxd7 fxe5 30. Rcc7 Qf4 31. Rg7+ Kf8 32. g3 Qf3 33. Rxb7 c2 34. Rbc7 c1Q+ 35. Rxc1 Kxg7

0-1

Lasker, Emanuel - Capablanca, José Raúl C66

New York (2) 17.03.1924

[<https://chess-teacher.com>]

The next game is a very high level game. It's the game between Lasker and Capablanca; both of them are former World Champions.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 d6 4.d4 Bd7 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.0-0 exd4 7. Nxd4 Be7 8. b3



It was Black to move. Of course, it would be natural to assume that in a position like that, you just castle and it's not a bad move, of course. It's a perfectly fine move, generally speaking. But for lack of space here, Black is having a hard time moving their pieces. For example, once again, we can see that the e7-bishop has no moves at all. Also, how can Black use their heavy pieces here? How can they activate them? It's quite hard for them to somehow bring them forward because, again, the seventh rank is completely occupied by pawns and other pieces of Black, so Black's heavy pieces just don't have any space to breathe; they don't have any idea how to be relocated to a better square. Because of that, Capablanca decided to do another thing instead. Instead of castling, Black noticed that he has a cramped position and he decided to trade off some pieces to simplify his life.

8...Nxd4

First, he trades the knight here on d4.

[8...0-0]

9. Qxd4 Bxb5

After that, he traded the bishops here.

10.Nxb5

We may notice a nice little tactics here.

10...Nd7!

He played Nd7, and then, the idea is to relocate the bishop to f6, to a more active square. Temporarily, this pawn on g7 seems to be hanging. But White cannot really capture it (Qxg7), because after Bf6, it attacks the queen, with this x-ray defends the rook, but it also hits White's rook on a1. So, the bishop is really the hero of the day here; it does a great job and it wins the game. Therefore, Qxg7 cannot be played by White. Instead, White played

11.Ba3

[11. Qxg7? Bf6]

11...a6

to kick the knight back

12.Nc3 Bf6

relocating the bishop to a better square.

13.Qe3 0-0

Finally, Black castled.

14.Rad1

Here White played another counter-intuitive move. We know that a bishop is normally stronger than a knight and, in open positions, especially, that should be true. But here, once again, Black noticed that their pieces are lacking space. Normally, you would wish to move your queen (14...Qe7) and connect the rooks. But if you play that slightly awkward move, the knight can come (15. Nd5) and attack the queen, so the rooks can't get out. If you don't move the queen, then, OK, you can maybe activate this f-rook to e8; but how, do you activate that rook from a8? There is just no way, right? It's blocked in the corner and it's hard to mention how Black can bring that rook into play. Therefore, instead of all that,

14...Bxc3

Capablanca decided to trade off one more piece; so, he simply took here on c3

[14...Qe7? 15.Nd5]

15.Qxc3

just to trade off a little more piece. Again, normally it's an unfavorable exchange, but here Black used the rule that in cramped positions, it's good to trade off pieces.

15...Re8

attacking this pawn on e4. And now he has a lot more space for his pieces to move. The position basically becomes more or less equal.

16.Rfe1 Rc8

just temporarily to defend the pawn, so that the queen can get out somewhere along that h4-e7 diagonal without worrying about the defense of that pawn on c7.

17.Qh3 Ne5 18. Bb2 Qg5

Black started to move their pieces forward; and we can see how easily Black could

unfold their potential and unleashed power of the pieces bringing them forward. Now they all stand comfortably: they're not in the way of each other; all the pieces are pretty active. Maybe this rook on c8 is temporarily passive, but Black can bring it closer to the center very easily and, after a couple of moves, they agreed for a draw. So, this is how in this game, Black initially had a rather dangerous position -a cramped position-, without many things to do; but just by trading off a couple of pieces, they simplified matters a lot, gaining more space for their other pieces to move and equalized the game very easily. So, the rule is pretty simple: In cramped positions, trade pieces, and vice versa it's true as well; when you have space advantage, avoid exchanges that would make the life of your opponent easier.

19.Qg3 Qxg3 20. hxg3 f6 21. f3 Kf7 22. g4 h6 23. Re2 Nc6 24. Kf2 Re7 25. Bc3 a5 26. Rd5 b6 27. a4 Re6 28. Rd1 Rce8 29. Red2 Ke7 30. Ke3 Kd7

1/2-1/2

Conclusion: Applying the system practically

Hooray! Congratulations. You reached all the way to the end of the video part of this course. Congratulations, you've done it really well. Not many people have the patience and the consistency to actually study what they planned to study, but you did that. Congratulations, you've done a great job! Now, besides my cat, no other players in the world know these 25 concepts the way that you do know, and so, this certainly gives you a great advantage over most of your competitors. Now, I do understand that you probably cannot remember all these rules in one go, all these middlegame concepts just after studying the video lessons once. How do you solidify this knowledge?

First of all, we've got a text version of all these videos. Therefore, whenever you want to recap what you studied, you can always go there to the text version and study one or a couple of the middlegame concepts, and just refresh that knowledge quickly. Secondly, we've got practice. Where you have certain tasks, you can practice this knowledge and develop the relevant skills and, once again, reinforce and memorize these concepts better.

Therefore, I would certainly recommend that you go now to practice and gradually, start little by little, making those tasks, solving those puzzles, practicing this knowledge that you just acquired. But before that, of course, you've got to celebrate and congratulate yourself for being such a great student and for studying the complete course. And I think that you deserve rewarding yourself somehow; so, go ahead, celebrate this and, after that, I'm looking forward to seeing you in the practical part of the course.

Practice

INSTRUCTIONS

The video lessons of the course, “Top 25 Middlegame concepts”, give you a lot of useful knowledge. It’s highly recommended that you watch these video lessons **SEVERAL TIMES**. This will help you digest and automate the skills that separate the amateurs from the pros.

Now it is necessary to put the knowledge received into practice. This practical addition to the course will help you do so. I am giving you the training program which accurately explains exactly what you should do.

Remember, **you MUST train and automate these skills (especially your thinking process) before you can use them in real games.**

What will this practical part give you?

- ✓ You will understand the ideas of the course better.
- ✓ You will remember the ideas of the course better.
- ✓ And the main thing: you will start putting the course’s ideas into practice. Thus, you will acquire these practical skills fully.

The practical course contains 50 tasks divided into six parts, each of the parts refers to the six chapters of this course. Each part is in a separate folder. All tasks have a small instruction for their solution. You should carry out all of these tasks consistently (from **1st to 50th**), following the corresponding instructions.

NOTES:

- In each task, you will see that it is White’s or Black’s turn.
- Remember that you should focus on the quality of your training, not on the quantity of work performed.
- Do not use computer engines while performing these tasks. In order to train your skills, you should think for yourself.
- If something is not clear to you – watch a corresponding video lesson once again.
- Even if any task seems simple to you – I strongly recommend that you perform it seriously.
- The chess games are in *.pgn format. Any chess program can open this.
- You should think about every puzzle for 3-15 minutes.
- In most tasks, you will need to find the next move in a given position. Then you will study the answer. While looking at the answer, I recommend you to go over the whole game (not only the first move). These games are very instructive and you can find a lot of useful ideas in them.

Now you should start performing the tasks:

- 1. Read the instruction for a certain task (it's provided below).**
- 2. Go to the corresponding folder and open a 'Task' file; try your best to find the right solution.**
- 3. After that, open an 'Answer' file and check yourself.**

While performing these tasks, you will encounter a lot of positions where you need to find the following move. Please take note of **the main purpose of such training: you should THINK about it, APPLY the general ideas (from the video lessons) and UNDERSTAND more deeply how these ideas work practically.** These ideas can help you find the answers to the puzzle positions.

While you often need to find the best move in a certain position, your main goal is NOT simply to guess the right move. Your objective is **to train your correct system of thinking.**

Please don't be upset if you can't find the solution to all tasks: after all, "no pain, no gain!" ☺ **The HARDER and SMARTER your training, the GREATER your progress!**

Good luck! ☺

GM Igor Smirnov

Task -1

The tasks contained in part-1 are about **Fundamental Aspects of the Middlegame**.

Try to apply the knowledge acquired in the first chapter of the course.

Open the file “Task-1” and try to find the best move in the position.
Then, open the file “Answer-1” and check the solution.

Task - 2

The tasks contained in part-2 are about **Pawns & Pawn Structure**.

Try to apply the knowledge acquired in the second chapter of the course.

Open the file “Task-2” and try to find the best move in the position.
Then, open the file “Answer-2” and check the solution and the game.

Task - 3

The tasks contained in part-3 are about **Rules for the Knights**.

Try to apply the knowledge acquired in the third chapter of the course.

Open the file “Task-3” and try to find the best move in the position.
Then, open the file “Answer-3” and check the solution and the game.

Task - 4

The tasks contained in part-4 are about **Rules for Bishops**.

Try to apply the knowledge acquired in the fourth chapter of the course.

Open the file “Task-4” and try to find the best move in the position.

Then, open the file “Answer-4” and check the solution and the game.

Task - 5

The tasks contained in part-5 are about **Rules for Rooks**.

Try to apply the knowledge acquired in the fifth chapter of the course.

Open the file “Task-5” and try to find the best move in the position.
Then, open the file “Answer-5” and check the solution and the game.

Task - 6

The tasks contained in part-6 are about **Rules for Exchanges**.

Try to apply the knowledge acquired in the sixth chapter of the course.

Open the file “Task-6” and try to find the best move in the position.
Then, open the file “Answer-6” and check the solution and the game.

With every good wish,

GM Igor Smirnov

P.S. If you’ve made it this far, kudos to you! 😊