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Improve Your Chess Tactics

700 Practical Lessons & Exercises

Second, improved edition

New In Chess 2024

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Concerning chess improvement, and this book

It is well-known that the best form of training is practical play, and taking part in tournaments. In order to play better, one must play more, and with strong opponents wherever possible. However, this axiomatic advice requires a little amendment.

Every game is an examination in itself. But it is an examination without precise model answers to the questions that are most important. Did we (and our opponent) handle the changing situation from move to move correctly? Which moment was the turning point – where was the decisive mistake made, and was it exploited in the best way?

‘To know that, we have to analyse the game,’ – the reader will doubtlessly tell us. Indeed, but it would be very useful to compare our conclusions with those of a more qualified judge, a player who is significantly stronger than ourselves. Your analysis, no matter how serious it may be, is limited by the level of your chess understanding. Suppose that you have found the place where, it seems to you, your play departed from the best line, where you committed some inaccuracies and mistakes, and now you know how you should have played. But have you found the best moves for sure? How accurate is your tactical vision? Can you be sure you have not missed any combinative possibilities for yourself or your opponent? Finally, no matter how well-developed your feeling for position may be, are your assessments totally objective? In a word, aren't you taking on too much, and setting yourself a task that is unfulfillable? Have you missed a decisive continuation, before you are convinced that the position cannot possibly contain anything out of the ordinary?

But even if you have an experienced helper on hand, you are unlikely to achieve great successes if you only study your own games. You also have to study others' games, both classical and modern: instructive master games, typical and original combinations and characteristic plans. Added to that is the required basic knowledge of opening and endgame theory.

We can find all of this (or, at least, we should be able to find it) in the traditional chess textbooks. When playing over the games given, one remembers what one has seen, and tries in similar situations to implement the knowledge obtained. However, it is hard to judge how and to what extent the material is mastered, since there is no direct contact between the book's author and its reader. In general, both methods of self-improvement –

analysing one's games (not only won games, but losses as well) and working with textbooks, have their pluses and minuses, and complement each other.

But isn't it important to bring together knowledge and practical play?

In your hands, you have a textbook (a schooling in combinations) and a collection of exercises (practice). In short, a self-tutor and a sparring-partner.

These positions, taken from the games of masters and grandmasters, as well as lesser players, are given immediately before the decisive moment in the game. You have to find the winning line, or, in the case of difficult positions, the saving resource. A few of the positions are compositions, or are taken from compositions, close in style to practical play. A number of them have also featured in my book *Test Your Tactical Ability* (Batsford 1981), but I have reorganized the material and added many new examples in this new book.

In the first part of this book, the positions are grouped by theme, which, of course, makes them easier to solve. In the second part, the themes are not indicated, and so the reader has no extra hints in this 'Finishing School'. However, the basic fact that all of the positions require a combinative solution is itself a sufficient hint for the experienced player to find the correct path.

Try at first to solve the questions without moving the pieces, and go over to detailed analysis only when you are convinced that you cannot solve the exercise in your head.

The reader will no doubt notice that far from all of the famous grandmasters are represented here. But the book is not intended as an anthology of combinations by the great, and the examples have not been chosen on the principle of being representative, but for their instructional value. The level of the event in which the game was played has also not been used as a factor in the selection. Alongside fragments from the games of the most famous masters, you will meet examples from simultaneous displays and quite insignificant competitions.

And so, in conclusion: this book, which is aimed at a wide range of chess amateurs, may also be used by an experienced player, a master, or even a grandmaster. Even he will find many positions that are unknown to him, and which he can use to show to his own pupils.

Yakov Neishtadt
November 2010

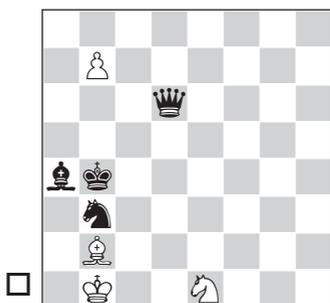
Editor's note to this second edition: We have updated this edition and checked all the exercises with modern engines. As a result, many of them have been corrected, and a few have even been removed.

Decoying

In combinations on this theme, an enemy piece is again induced to leave its position, but in this case, it is lured to a specific position. In this position, the piece then turns out to be badly placed, either for itself, or in relation to other pieces.

We begin with a textbook position.

Position 87

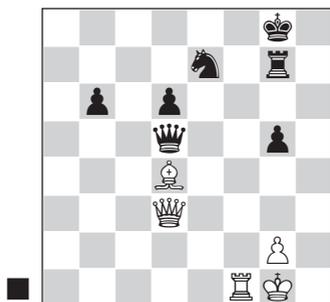


By continuing **1. ♖a3+**! White either entices the king to a3 and gives mate with **2. ♘c2**, or (if the king retreats) wins the queen.

Position 88

**Stanciu
Drimer**

Bucharest, 1969



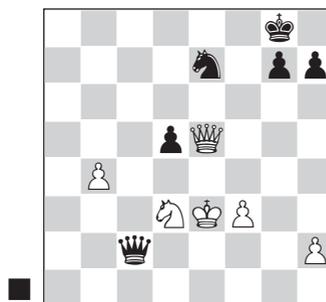
With the tempting move **1... ♗c6?** Black attacked the pinned bishop. However, after **2. ♖f8+**! he had to resign. The king is lured to f8, allowing the pinned bishop to land a deadly blow (**2... ♙xf8 3. ♕xg7+**).

Now several examples in which the king is lured into a fork.

Position 89

**Raitza
Casper**

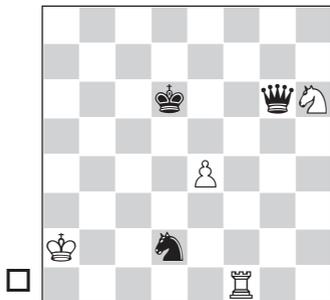
Brandenburg, 1973



1...d4+! After every capture of the pawn, as well as a king retreat, White loses his queen: **2. ♕xd4 ♗f5+**; **2. ♙xd4 ♗c6+**; **2. ♙f4 ♗g6+**;

2.♔e4 ♖e2+ 3.♔f4 ♘g6+ or 3.♔xd4 ♘c6+.

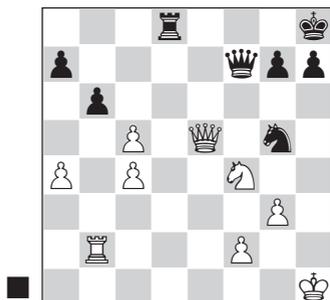
Position 90



In this textbook example, Black has queen for rook, but **1.♖f6+! ♗xf6 2.e5+ saves White** (2...♔xe5 3.♘g4+ or 2...♗xe5 3.♘f7+).

Position 91
Przepiorka
Ahues

Kecskemet, 1927

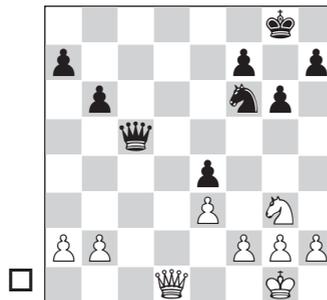


1...♖d1+ 2.♔g2 ♖g1+! 3.♔xg1 ♘f3+ and 4...♘xe5 – the white queen is lost.

Position 92

Euwe
Davidson

Amsterdam, 1925

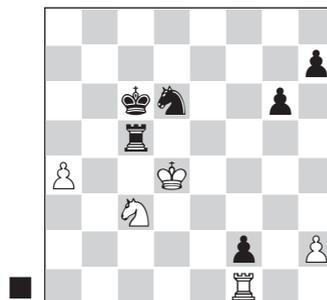


1.♗d8+ ♔g7 2.♗xf6+! ♔xf6 3.♘xe4+ ♔e5 4.♘xc5 bxc5 5.♔f1 and 1-0.

Position 93

Pirc
R. Byrne

Helsinki ol, 1952



Byrne forced a transposition into a winning endgame by means of **1...♘f5+ 2.♔d3 ♖xc3+! 3.♔xc3 ♘e3! 4.♖xf2 ♘d1+ 5.♔d4 ♘xf2.** The king cannot cope with the pawns – 6.♔e5 ♘g4+, and after 6.h4

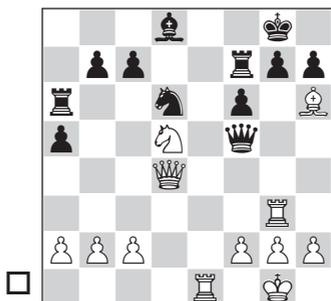
Clearing lines, eliminating defenders, deflection and pinning, decoy

Position 280

Korchmar

Polyak

USSR, 1938



If it were not for the knight on d6, White could win immediately with a rook check on e8, and therefore he played **1. ♖b4!**, clearing the d-file. **1...axb4 2. ♕xd6!** Eliminating a defender. The queen cannot be taken, but it seems that Black can defend against the threats by means of **2...♗d7**.



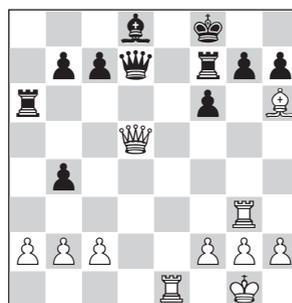
Now **3. ♕xd7 ♖xd7 4. ♖e8+ ♔f7** favours Black.

However, the combination is not finished. By using the ideas of deflection and pinning, White again puts his queen en prise:

3. ♕d5!!

If it is taken, then **4. ♖e8+ ♖f8 5. ♖xg7+** and **6. ♖xf8+**. Meanwhile, there is a threat of **4. ♖xg7+**. After **3...g6** there follows **4. ♖ge3** and Black is mated.

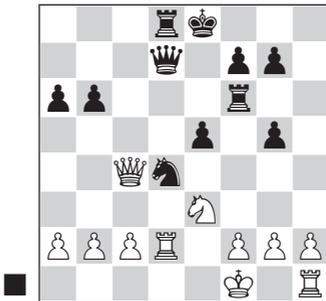
That leaves the move **3...♔f8**, unpinning the rook on f7.



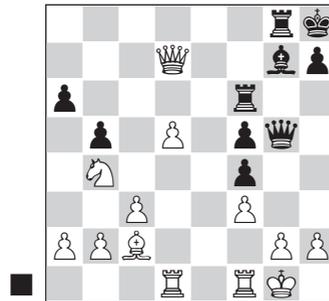
4. ♖xg7!

Now another pin decides. After **4...♖xg7** the queen is undefended. After **4...♕xd5** there follows **5. ♖g8+!** (decoying) **5...♔xg8 6. ♖e8+ ♖f8 7. ♖xf8#**.

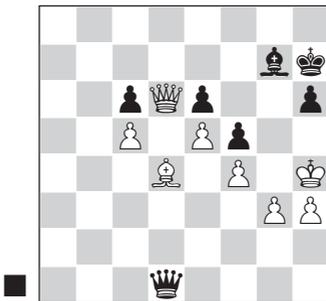
Position 493



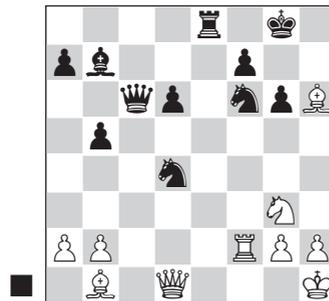
Position 494



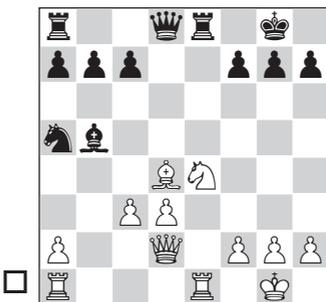
Position 495



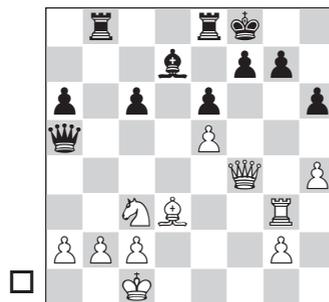
Position 496



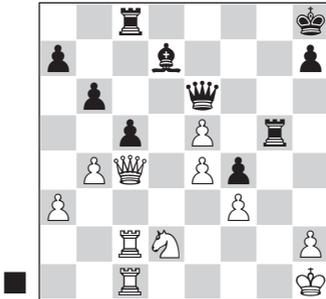
Position 497



Position 498

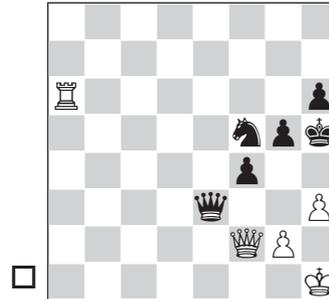


Position 725



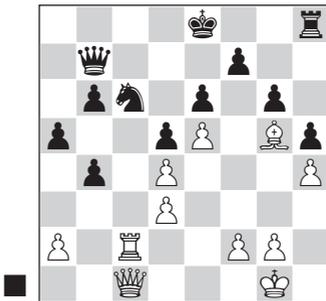
Assess the consequences of the queen sacrifice on h2 after **1...♙h3**
2.♚f1.

Position 726



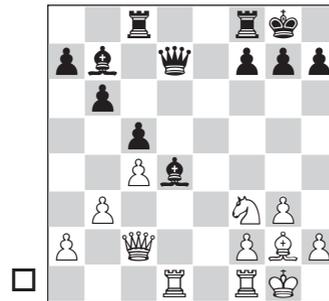
Black has offered the exchange of queens. Can White win?

Position 727



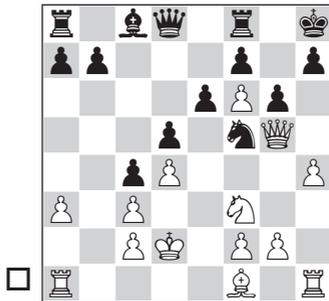
Would you take the pawn on d4?

Position 728



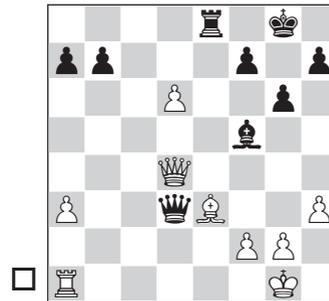
White played **1.♘d4**, having in mind the sharp variation **1...♙xg2**
2.♘f5 ♚b7 **3.♘d6 ♚f3** **4.♙d3 ♚a8**
5.♘xc8 ♙xf1 **6.♘e7+ ♚h8**. Assess the resulting position.

Position 729



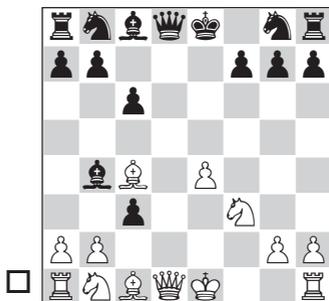
To develop his attack on the king-side, White played **1.g4** and after **1...♘d6 – 2.♖e1**. Now **2...♗e4+** is impossible because of **3.♗xe4 dxe4 4.♖h6 ♖g8 5.♗g5** with mate. But after **2...♗e8** Black wins the pawn on f6. How should we continue the attack?

Position 730



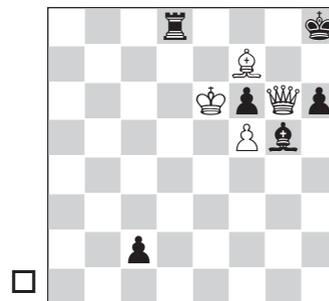
How should White meet the offer of a queen exchange?

Position 731



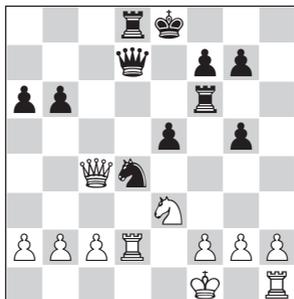
This position, typical for open games, arose from the Caro-Kann after **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 dxe4 4.fxe4 e5 5.♗f3 exd4 6.♙c4 ♙b4+ 7.c3 dxc3**. Consider the consequences of the move **8.♙xf7+**.

Position 732



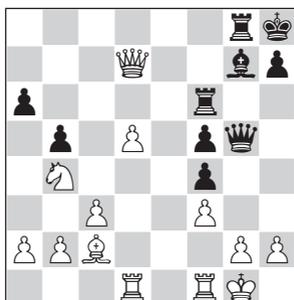
The c-pawn is one square from promoting. What should be done?

Position 493



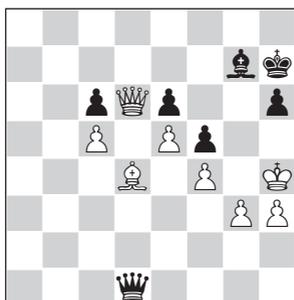
The move **1...♗f5!** wins a piece. After 2.♖xd7 there is 2...♘xe3+ 3.♙e2 ♘xc4. If 2.♗e2, then 2...♙d1+ 3.♘xd1 (3.♗e1 ♘xe3+) 3...♖xd1+ 4.♗e1 ♘e3+ 5.♙e2 ♖xe1+ and 6...♘xc4 (Nikolaev-Karasik, Israel 2005).

Position 494



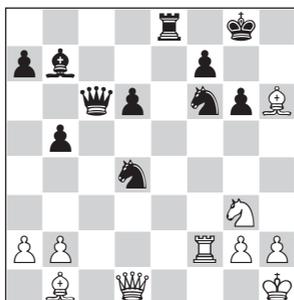
There followed **1...♖f7!**, and White resigned. After 2.♙xf7 (and also any other queen move) there follows 2...♙d4+ and then 3...♙xg2# (Zinn-Sveshnikov, Decin 1974).

Position 495



In order to give mate, Black needs to play ...♙g6 and ...♙h5#. But after 1...♙g6 there follows 2.♙xe6+. Therefore **1...♙f6+!** (interference). After **2.exf6** the move **2...♙g6** decides (3.g4 ♙e1+), Buksa-Kovacs, Hungary 1965.

Position 496



1...♗g4! wins. After 2.♙xg4, 2...♙xg2+! decides: 3.♖xg2 ♖e1+ and 4...♖xf1#. And 2.♗d2 loses to both 2...♙xg2+ and 2...♘xh6 (Potze-Bitalzadeh, Hoogeveen 2005).

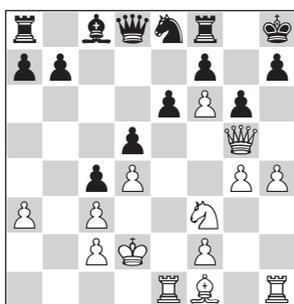
Position 728



In calculating the variation, the opponents assessed this position differently. 'If,' thought the black player, 'White takes the bishop, I can immediately re-establish material equality: 7. ♖xf1 ♜h1+ 8. ♜e2 ♜e4+ and 9... ♜xe7. There is nothing else, since mate is threatened and the rook is attacked. If he closes the diagonal with the move 7. ♜d5, then the bishop retreats to h3, and 8. ♜h5 does not work because of the mate threat on g2...'

But the move **7. ♜d5** was played, and Black resigned! (Lengyel-Sliwa, Szczawno Zdroj 1966) There is a threat, missed by Black in his calculations, of mate by 8. ♜xh7+ ♜xh7 9. ♜h5#, which would follow after 7... ♜h3. This means that he loses a bishop.

Position 729



3. ♜h6 ♜xf6 4. ♜g5 White threatens the manoeuvre ♜h3-f3xf6. During these three tempi, Black can defend the square f7 and free his rook for the manoeuvre ... ♜f8-g8-g7. After this, the knight on f6 is ready to cause White serious trouble, as the queen on f6 will be in danger. Thus, **4... ♜e7 5. ♜h3 ♜g8**. In the event of **5... ♜g8 6. ♜f3 ♜d8** the threat of a sacrifice on f6 forces **7. ♜ee3 (7...b5 8. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 9. ♜xh7+ ♜f8 10. ♜f3; 7... ♜e4+ 8. ♜xe4 f6 9. ♜ef4)**. **6. ♜f3 ♜g7** The square h7 is defended, and both **7... ♜xg4** and **7... ♜g8** are threatened. But the outcome of the game is decided by two deflecting blows. (see next diagram)

7. ♜xf6!

If it were not for this move, Black would be winning the game. Now, however, he has to resign. After **7... ♜xf6** there follows **8. ♜xh7!**, and in order to avoid mate, Black has to surrender his queen: **8... ♜xf2+ (8... ♜xh7 9. ♜f8#) 9. ♜e2 ♜xh4 10. ♜xh4 ♜xh7**, after which further resistance makes no sense (Neishtadt-Szeiler, correspondence game, 1963/64).

