

Tadej Sakašek
Adrian Mikhalchishin

THE POWER OF TACTICS

**Volume 1
Tactics according
to Smyslov**



Chess
Evolution

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate

PREFACE

The middlegame is the most important part of the game, as the majority of encounters are decided there. We know that sometimes it is difficult to divide strategy and tactics, as they both have the same aim — to win the game. Strategy is the more difficult subject, because it involves planning and structures: tactics helps to conduct these plans in the fastest way.

In olden times there was a division of the style of players — TACTICAL and STRATEGIC. In modern chess this division practically does not exist, as every top player is able to operate with all tools. Still we can name as tactical-style players such great attackers as Mikhail Tal, Rashid Nezhmetdinov, Albin Planinc and Victor Kupreichik. Perhaps, in reality, their strategy was a bit simpler with the aim of direct attack on the opponent's king, and not simply attacking some weakness on the queenside, for example. During the times of the Soviet chess school, the label TACTICIAN led to an underestimation of attackers. But we all know that the chess public enjoy attacking play and admire great attackers much more than pure, boring strategists. Of course, this attitude is connected with the openings.

For example, in gambits, players have to consider many more tactical elements than in, for example, the Carlsbad variation of the Queen's Gambit. Likewise, the Sicilian Defence with kings castled on different sides and fierce pawn attacks on both flanks; here tactics and sacrifices are in the air as the strategy was prepared from the first moves of the openings.

There are many valuable books on tactics, and many authors have presented classifications of tactical motifs and themes. But some of them are too academic — in modern times we require a much more practical education. For this reason, nowadays different test books are becoming very popular. In this book there is a simpler model of tactics described, one according to the great former World Champion Vassily Smyslov.

In my opinion this method is simple and universal. For trainers and pupils, it can be very useful to use this simple classification. Additionally, there are many exercises to improve the pupil's tactical abilities.

IGM Aleksandr Beliavsky

INTRODUCTION

Tactics, including the calculation of variations, is the most important part of chess. Knowledge of openings, middlegames, endgames, strategy, technique, realization of the advantage and similar is also extremely important. But all this knowledge doesn't help us if we don't calculate properly. There are many great books on tactics, wherein the authors have assembled different tactical motifs and elements.

This area of chess is more or less very well covered in literature. This begs the question, why then have we decided to write and publish our book?

Firstly, during all these years that we have been working as chess coaches, we collected a huge amount of instructive material, and it made sense to us to share it with our readers as well.

Secondly, you can never have enough tactics. Every chess player must solve as many puzzles as possible in order to grow stronger.

Lastly, we have been friends for many years and work well together, and we simply decided to show this through our books. Our plan was rather ambitious — to publish a series of three books. The books are designed for different levels.

The first book is appropriate for players with ratings up to 1800, the second for ratings up to 2100 and the third for ratings above 2000.

This opening book in the series is divided into three parts:

1. A theoretical part where you will get to know the basics about tactical elements according to Smyslov (check, pin, double attack, unprotected piece).
2. Exercises and solutions for level 1.
3. Exercises and solutions for level 2.

We prepared clear nice examples plus a lot of exercises for levels up to 1500. Study, enjoy and use tactics as much as possible in your games! Combinations really are brilliant moments in a chess game.

RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT SOLVING THE PUZZLES

At first try to solve every puzzle from the diagram itself. If it proves too difficult, then put the position on the board and try to solve it without moving the pieces. Exercises are divided into two levels, easier and then more complicated.

Adrian Mikhalchishin
Tadej Sakelšek

TACTICS IN THE AIR

Tactics are everywhere — so it is extremely important to recognize tactical motifs and elements in every position. We use tactical elements in both attack and defense and it is especially valuable to accelerate plans in different situations.

Most authors and trainers believe that tactics are the most important part of chess as it includes the most important matter — coordination of the pieces. The great GM of yesterday Richard Teichmann used to say that the game of chess is 90% tactics!

TACTICS AND STRATEGY

When we try to define tactics, we cannot overlook the term known as strategy. Strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim. It serves also to prepare the forces to develop, to improve and coordinate the pieces in the position. All these elements are creating a base for the tactics. So, tactics is in the service of strategy and is in reality the art of fighting. It's main

task is to solve strategic aims in the fastest or shortest way.

However, we must understand that tactics is not an ordinary operation, such as the exchange of pieces, for example, but rather an act of fast and direct solution in some part of the board. For tactics we can use all the pieces and pawns that are in this area. Sometimes the bad position of the opponent's pieces, or an unprotected piece perhaps, can help us to execute a tactical operation. The legendary Jose Raul Capablanca taught us that after increasing all the strategic factors (elements) in the position, the cooperation of the pieces reaches their highest level and it is time for a tactical explosion.

He usually completed his strategic plans with the help of small, final combinations. It was a very important input to chess knowledge that tactical operation has to be prepared with positional build up, improvement of the pieces and increment of their coordination. Another base for tactics is also a weakness in the opponent's position, or simply a mistake made by the opponent,

which allows tactical elements to appear in some areas of the chess board.

COMBINATION, SACRIFICE AND CALCULATION

Next, we have to understand what a combination and a sacrifice are — and what sets them apart. We know different definitions. The simplest one is: a combination is a process, where we use different tactical measures (motifs and themes) and combine them to achieve some aim — such as mate, material or positional advantage or even a draw.

Finally, we come to the second important definition, that of the sacrifice. It has many purposes, such as opening the position of the opponent's king, creating long-term compensation, creating opportunities for future powerful strikes, like

a double-attack or some other tactical possibilities.

The main difference between a combination and a sacrifice is in the length of the operation. Combination is a short-term operation, while a sacrifice is a long term one. For example, if we sacrifice a piece for some sort of material gain, or a checkmate, the sacrifice is in fact a part of combination — it's like an explosion that starts the whole process. If we sacrifice a piece, for example, for long-term compensation, then this is what we can call a sacrifice.

All these processes demand correct calculation. It is one of the most important tools which every chess player uses and accordingly must train constantly. The calculation process demands strategical understanding, but at the same time a lot of tactics, on both sides, are used during this process. The best players are also the best 'calculators'.

TACTICS ACCORDING TO SMYSLOV

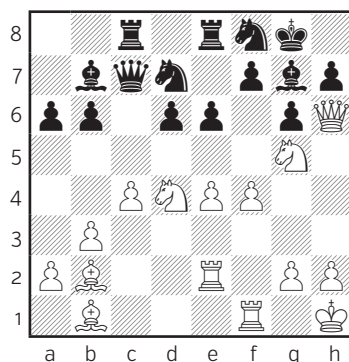
The great ex-World Champion Vassily Smyslov came up with his own fantastic and very simple system to prioritise tactical elements. He considered check, pin, double attack and the unprotected piece as the main tactical elements. All other elements are, according to him, of lesser importance.

CHECK

The most important element was considered by Smyslov to be the simple check! Adrian was very surprised by this and, given an opportunity, asked him why he considers a simple check to be the most important tactical element. He explained that check is the most forcing move, one that demands the opponent react to the threat to their king. This win of time allows the player to use his gain of the next move for different actions. In this way check changes a lot of elements in the position. For example, it helps to improve the piece that gave the check and it doesn't allow the opponent to play freely — he is forced to either move the king to avoid the

check, cover the check with some piece, or take the piece that is giving the check if possible. There are technically a few kinds of checks — ordinary, discovered check, double check.

Example 1



21. ♔xg7+!

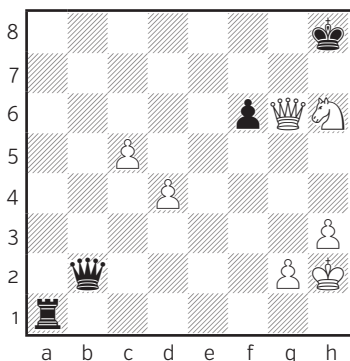
A typical combination. White will finish the game with a series of checks.

21... ♖xg7 22. ♘f5+!

Discovered and double check at the same time.

22... ♖g8 23. ♘h6# 1-0

Example 2



48... ♖b8!

Backward tactics are not easy to see. Remember — pieces can go in all directions!

49. ♖g3

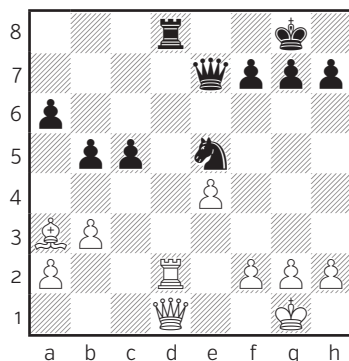
49.g3 is not possible since White will get mated! 49... ♖b2+ 50. ♖c2 ♖xc2#

49... ♜h1!

Another check after which White loses the queen.

50. ♔xh1 ♖xg3-+ 0-1

Example 3



1... ♞f3+

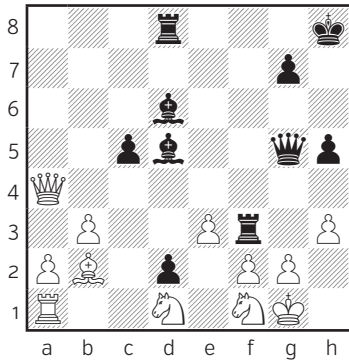
With this check Black opens up White's king and creates a double attack at the same time.

2.gxf3 ♖g5+

Combination of check and double attack. Black wins!

0-1

Example 4



Black is winning in different ways but he decided to finish the game with a series of checks.

36... ♔xg2+!

The start of a very instructive combination!

37. ♔xg2 ♖g3+

The first double check...

38. ♔h2 ♖g2+

second double check...

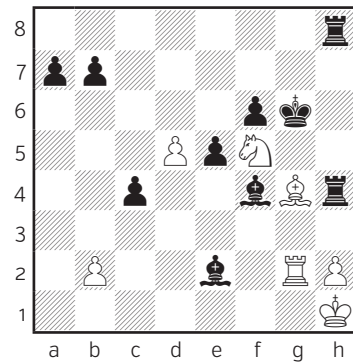
39. ♔h1 ♖h2+

and third double check!

40. ♔g1 ♖h1# 0-1

Many times in chess we can save the game with the help of check! Let's see another example:

Example 5



Black has a big material advantage and White's position seems hopeless. But White has a saving option, using the theme of perpetual check.

1. ♕h5+! ♔xh5

1... ♔xf5?? 2. ♕g6#

2. ♖g7+ ♔h6 3. ♖f5+ ♔h5

Black's king cannot run away and the game will end in a draw.

3... ♔h7?? 4. ♖g7#

1/2

PIN

The pin is one of the most powerful elements in chess. It creates very unpleasant situations, especially if the king is involved in the pin.

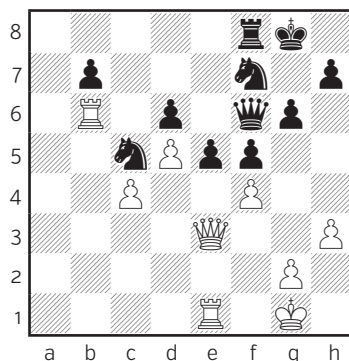
We can make a pin with a queen, rook or bishop. We also know different kinds of pin: horizontal (queen or rook), vertical (queen or rook) and diagonal (queen or bishop) pins.

Usually there is a more precious piece placed behind the pinned piece. The most dangerous pins involve the king.

The most important feature of the pin is that the process of unpinning demands effort and time from the opponent. In some cases we can unpin with the help of tactics. We might sacrifice the piece which was placed behind the pinned piece due to more important actions in some other part of the board. In many cases pins lead to material wins.

It is important to understand that not all pins are problematic, especially when the pinned piece is well protected.

Example 1



Black has two pieces for the rook but it is White to play.

1. ♔xc5!

An example of the horizontal pin.

1...dxc5 2. ♖xf6+-

After this “small” combination White is an exchange up and has good chances of winning the game.

1-0

Tadej Sakešek
Adrian Mikhalchishin

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Volume 2

**Become
a tactical wizard**



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For example, in gambits, players have to consider many more tactical elements than in, for example, the Carlsbad variation of the Queen's Gambit. Likewise, the Sicilian Defence with kings castled on opposite sides and fierce pawn attacks on both flanks; here tactics and sacrifices are in the air as the strategy was prepared from the first moves of the openings.

There are many valuable books on tactics, and many authors have presented classifications of tactical motifs and themes. But some of them are too academic — in modern times we require a much more practical education. For this reason, nowadays different test books have become very popular.

Become a Tactical Wizard is the second book in the series The Power of Tactics. In this second volume, the authors continue to develop their ideas from the first book — Tactics According to Smyslov — where they explain that in chess there are four main tactical elements (check, pin, double attack and unprotected pieces).

They have added very instructive exercises revolving around mating attacks and queen sacrifices to achieve different goals and, in my opinion an extremely important element, defensive tactics.

IGM Aleksandr Beliavsky.

INTRODUCTION

Tactics, including the calculation of variations, is the most important part of chess. Knowledge of openings, middlegames, endgames, strategy, technique, realization of the advantage and similar is also extremely important. But all this knowledge doesn't help us if we don't calculate properly.

There are many great books on tactics, wherein the authors have assembled different tactical motifs and elements. This area of chess is more or less very well covered in literature. This begs the question, why then have we decided to write and publish our book?

Firstly, during all these years that we have been working as chess coaches, we have collected a huge amount of instructive material, and it made sense to us to share it with our readers as well.

Secondly, you can never have enough tactics. Every chess player must solve as many puzzles as possible in order to grow stronger.

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Our plan was rather ambitious — to publish a series of three books. The books are designed for different levels.

The second book in the series is divided into three parts:

1. A theoretical part where you will get to know the basics about tactical elements according to Smyslov (check, pin, double attack, unprotected piece). Mating attacks (typical motifs and mating construction), queen sacrifice and defensive tactics.
2. Exercises and solutions for level 3.
3. Exercises and solutions for level 4.

We prepared clear and, we hope, nice examples, plus a lot of exercises for levels up to 2100. Study, enjoy and use tactics as much as possible in your games! Combinations really are brilliant moments in a chess game.

RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT SOLVING THE PUZZLES

At first try to solve every puzzle from the diagram itself. If it proves too difficult, then put the position on the board and try to solve it without moving the pieces. Exercises are divided into two levels, easier and then more complicated.

Adrian Mikhalchishin
Tadej Sakelšek

BECOME A TACTICAL WIZARD

In the first book we tried to demonstrate a slightly different approach to studying tactics, and we chose tactical elements according to a great champion — Vasily Smyslov — to do so. The second book is devoted to much more complicated tactical ideas and motifs. We will also continue to develop the ideas from the first book.

Every great player used tactics to achieve different aims. Some of them used simple tactical ideas for positional reasons, especially to ac-

celerate their own plans or to stop the opponent's plan. Great players like Botvinnik, Smyslov, Petrosian, Fischer and Karpov used a lot of tactics after establishing fundamental positional preparation first — we usually call these tactical ideas Capablanca's small tactical gems. Some other great champions, such as Morphy, Alekhine, Tal and Kasparov, used more powerful tactical ideas to attack the opponent's king. In this book we will try to concentrate more on these beautiful and powerful tactical methods.

TACTICS ACCORDING TO SMYSLOV

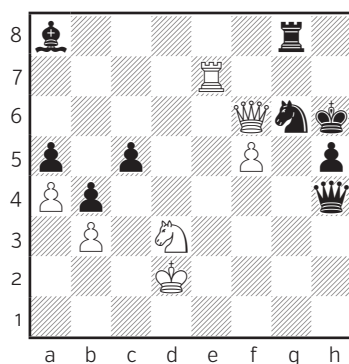
As we have already mentioned in the first book, the great World Champion Vasily Smyslov came up with his own fantastic and very simple system to prioritise tactical elements. He considered check, pin, double attack and unprotected piece as the main tactical elements. All other elements are, according to him, of lesser importance. In games we mostly come across a combination of the afore-mentioned elements.

Let us see an example of each of the elements:

CHECK

Example 1

- ▷ Miklos Nemeth
- ▷ Mateusz Bartel



42. ♖e6??

This was played in the game and Black won without any great problems. Instead he could have used one of the most common tactical elements — CHECK.

42. ♖h7+! ♔xh7 43. fxg6+

Again check, which at the same time creates an unprotected piece on h4. Now White is winning.

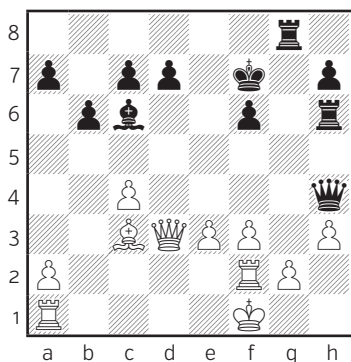
43... ♖xg6 44. ♔xh4+-

42...♔xf6 43.♖xf6 ♔g5 44.♖xg6+
♗xg6 45.fxg6 ♔xg6--+ 0-1

PIN

Example 2

- ▷ Svetozar Gligoric
▷ Bent Larsen



25...♖xg2!

With this rook sacrifice Black creates a very annoying pin.

26.♖xg2 ♔xh3 27.e4

27.♔f2 ♔xf3+-+;

27.♗d2 ♔xf3

Black is bringing extra pieces to the attack.

28.♔g1 (28.♖b1 ♖g6--+ and the final piece joins the attack. Black is winning.) 28...♔h1+-+

27...♖g6--+

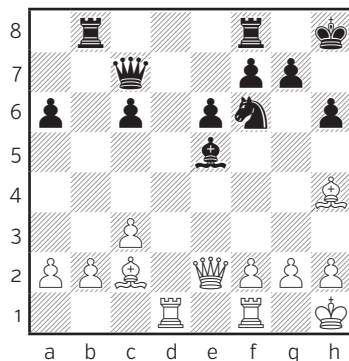
27...♖g6 White resigned in view of 28.♗d2 ♔h1+-+

0-1

DOUBLE ATTACK

Example 3

- ▷ Mikhail Nikitenko
▷ Magnus Teitsson



The position is slightly better for White due to the superior pawn structure and the bishop pair. But White can create a nice double attack at the end of the variation.

21.f4! ♕xf4

21... ♕d6 22. ♕xf6 gxf6 23. ♖d3+-

22. ♕xf6! gxf6 23. ♖e4+-

White is threatening to mate the opponent's king or otherwise capture the bishop on f4.

23...f5 24. ♖xf4 1-0

37. ♖xd5?

and after

37... ♘xd5=

the position became equal and the game eventually ended in a draw.

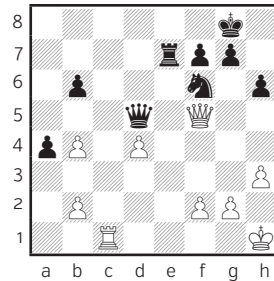
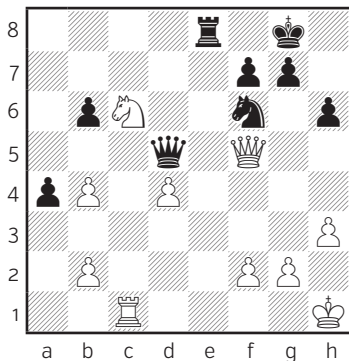
Instead 37. ♘e7+! would have won the game.

On 37... ♖xe7 Black will have to give up his queen due to the weakness of the back rank.

UNPROTECTED PIECE

Example 4

- ▷ Anatoly Karpov
- ▷ Lubomir Kavalek



38. ♖c8+! ♖e8 39. ♖xe8+ ♘xe8
40. ♖xd5+-

1/2

The former World Champion had an option here to create an unprotected piece and win the game in fine style. Instead he played

ATTACK ON THE KING

In chess we generally follow two strategies — the first one is connected with the idea of winning material. The second one is directed against the opponent's king. For both strategies we use different tactics. For the second strategy we tend, in many cases, to use different sacrifices to achieve an advantage in our development and to accelerate it. We also use the sacrifices to create weaknesses in the opponent's position around the king.

TYPICAL MATING MOTIFS AND ATTACKS

Before starting any direct mating attack on the king it is necessary to involve as many of our forces as possible. Our pieces should be active and mobile, able to come closer to the opponent's king as quickly as possible.

The first step in this process is fast development of our pieces, together with sufficient control in the center. The second step involves the mobility of attacking pieces which

will be necessary for a successful attack. The rule is simple — we should bring to the attack as many pieces as possible, preferably more than the defending side.

The preparation process applies to both sides — for the attacking and the defending sides alike. The player who is able to prepare his plan faster is usually more successful. In most cases the opponent's king has huge problems facing the attacking pieces if his own pieces don't match the attacking ones. Some trainers recommend counting the pieces participating in attack and defense. After that we should make a preliminary evaluation of the attack and defense based on which side has pure mathematical advantage in quantity. Of course, we should not use this rule automatically, but rather use it as a practical recommendation to bring to the critical place more forces if possible. Sometimes the quantity of the pieces is not as important as their coordination.

An attack must be directed into certain weakened points in the opponent's camp. For this reason, it is necessary to first weaken the po-

sition of the king. Usually players achieve this goal by charging forward with pawns, as for example in the Sicilian Defense or King's Indian Defense. It is a very natural and, in most cases, the 'cheapest' way to start the attack, as major material sacrifices are not necessary at this time.

Another way is more complicated and involves mostly pieces to weaken the opponent's king defenses. In many cases to achieve this goal it is necessary to sacrifice some of our pieces. We know a few typical or classical sacrifices to open the opponent's king position, as for example the Lasker sacrifice of two bishops, sacrifices of the bishop on h7 (h2) and h6 (h3) squares, sacrifices of different pieces on g7 (g2) and f7 (f2) squares. In positions with opposite-side castling, similar sacrifices can be used on the a2 (a7), b2 (b7), c2 (c7) and a3 (a6) squares. We can also use sacrifices to open the files in front of the king in order to clear the way for the heavy pieces to join the attack. At the end of the day, in such cases heavy pieces frequently decide the game.

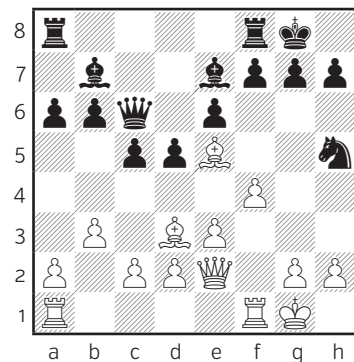
We can also use sacrifices to prevent the opponent from castling, stranding our opponent's king in the center. These kinds of sacrifices were typical for representatives of 'middle

ages' chess, such as Leonardo Giovanni da Cutri or Ruy Lopez. Players of these generations invented attacking play from the very start. They used sacrifices in the opening to accelerate their development and to keep the opponent's king in the center. Nowadays we call these kinds of openings gambits.

LASKER SACRIFICE

Example 5

▷ Emanuel Lasker
▶ Johann Hermann Bauer



Emanuel Lasker, the 2nd World Champion, is remembered also by the sacrifice that carries his name — the Lasker sacrifice of the two bishops.

15. ♖xh7+!

White sacrifices the first bishop to open the opponent's king.

15. ♖xh5 f5=

15... ♔xh7 16. ♖xh5+ ♔g8 17. ♕xg7!

And another sacrifice. The idea behind this one is to open the second line in front of the king, leaving the monarch without protection.

17... ♔xg7

17... f6 18. ♕h6! (18. ♖g6?! ♖e8 19. ♖h6 ♔f7,) 18... ♖e8 19. ♖g4+ ♔h7 20. ♖g7#; 17... f5 18. ♕e5 ♖f6 19. ♖f3 ♕f8 20. ♖g3+ ♕g7 21. ♕xf6+-

18. ♖g4+!

An important check. Remember — you will be able to checkmate the opponent much easier on the edge of the board.

18. ♖f3? ♖h8 19. ♖g3+ ♕g5 20. ♖xg5+ (20. ♖xg5+ ♔f6+-) 20... ♔f8 21. ♖f6 ♖g8

18... ♔h7 19. ♖f3

Now the second piece joins the attack and the game is basically over.

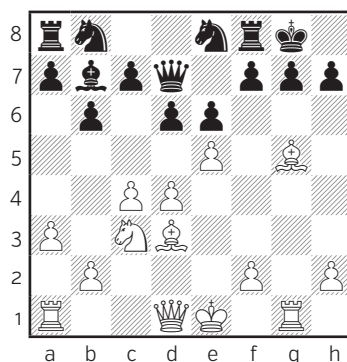
19... e5 20. ♖h3+ ♖h6 21. ♖xh6+ ♔xh6 22. ♖d7!+- 1-0

SACRIFICES ON h7 {h2}

Example 6

▷ G. Aczel

▷ I. Kincs



White's pieces are much better placed than Black's. It is time for action!

13. ♕xh7+-

A typical sacrifice of the bishop on h7, with the idea being to open the position around Black's king.

13. ♕xh7+

Black resigned in view of 13... ♔xh7 14. ♖h5+ ♔g8 15. ♕f6!+- and Black will simply get mated in the next few moves.

1-0