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Introduction

My first two books for Batsford – *300 Most Important Chess Positions* (2018) and *300 Most Important Tactical Chess Positions* (2021) – are manuals for positional and tactical ideas, rather than handbooks, because the overall aim has been to support the solutions with instructive comments. However I felt it my duty to round off with a third book and create a trilogy. One strong argument was the following statement made by the most respected chess instructor Mark Dvoretsky (1947-2016) in his preface to *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual* (Russell Enterprises 2003):

“A confident retention of theory cannot be accomplished solely by looking at one example: one must also get some practical training with it. For this purpose additional examples [...] will be helpful.”

Dvoretsky is highlighting the fact that practical training is the same thing as solving appropriate exercises. Therefore here you will find 300 additional positions of a wide variety. Many of the positions will contain similar positional and tactical ideas which have been published in my two earlier books, so the third volume is an exercise book.

300 Most Important Chess Exercises starts off with 150 opening and middlegame positions to solve and the quota is 75 exercises where you practice positional ideas, and 75

exercises where the focus is on tactics. The other half of the book deals with 75 positional endings and 75 tactical endings. This is the only hint the solver will get. The best training is the one Botvinnik advocates – that the training environment should be as similar as possible to a tournament situation. The methods of analysing from positions with hints or several alternatives to choose from are to my mind questionable because this is too far removed from the harsh reality where you are sitting alone with a ticking clock, while trying to solve a difficult position under pressure. The best practice is to find out on your own the possible candidate moves, just as you would in real life competitive play, and without any outside help. The key method is to learn how to think and how to come up with suggestions, and in that way develop your **own** creativity and only then compare your thoughts with the suggested solution.

The reader will be offered complete solutions to the positions at the end of each section of the book in the style of a manual. The main reason for placing the solutions there is to help the reader resist the temptation to quickly look at the solutions before trying to solve the positions from the diagram, or preferably from a real chessboard. Indeed, the ideal situation is to sit in front of a chessboard equipped with

the exercise it was possible for Black to draw by cutting off the white king with 56...♖a1!. The most important points of discussion here were the two sides' ways of handling the penetration into Black's camp.

Another example showing how to deal with exercises with or without prior knowledge is the following:

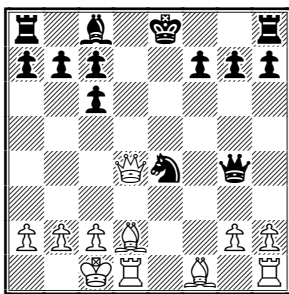
Maczuski – Kolisch
Match, Paris 1864

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4
4 ♗xd4 ♖h4 5 ♗c3 ♙b4 6 ♖d3
♗f6 7 ♗xc6 dxc6 8 ♙d2 ♙xc3
9 ♙xc3 ♗xe4 10 ♖d4 ♖e7 11 0-0-0
♖g5+?

Correct was 11...♗xc3 12 ♖xg7
♗xa2+ 13 ♙b1 ♖f8 14 ♗xa2 ♙d7
with a slight advantage to Black.

12 f4 ♖xf4+ 13 ♙d2 ♖g4?

13...♖h4 was necessary to avoid
mate but Black was clearly lost
anyway after 14 ♙d3, when e4 as
well as g7 is hanging.



White to move

14 ♖d8+!

Due to the fact that Black's queen
was threatened the decisive
discoverer was somewhat concealed.

14...♙xd8 15 ♙g5+ ♙e8 16 ♖d8
mate.

Maczuski beat Kolisch with the
same discoverer 46 years before the
famous miniature game Réti –
Tartakower, Vienna 1910.

Compare that game with the
following, published as position
number 4 in *300 Most Important
Tactical Chess Positions*.

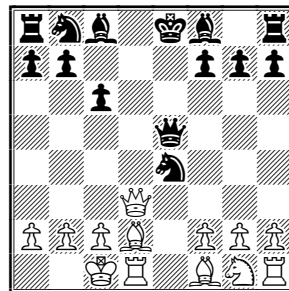
Réti – Tartakower
Vienna 1910

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗c3 dxe4
4 ♗xe4 ♗f6 5 ♖d3 e5?

Black makes a mistake, which was
very common before Morphy
entered the arena, i.e. opening up the
game when White has more pieces
in play. Surprisingly, Tartakower
commits the same kind of “ancient”
error.

6 dxe5 ♖a5+ 7 ♙d2 ♖xe5 8 0-0-0
♗xe4??

8...♙e7 was necessary.



White to move

As a young amateur, Réti managed
to beat Tartakower with the most
famous discoverer in history.

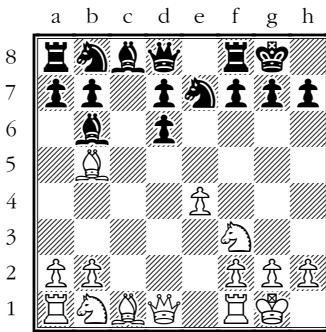
9 ♖d8+! ♙xd8 10 ♙g5+

Of course the double check
10 ♙a5+?? would be a huge mistake
leading nowhere after 10...♙e8
or 10...♙e7.

Part 1:

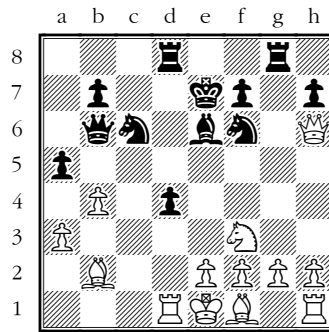
75 most important exercises in the Opening and the Middlegame

1



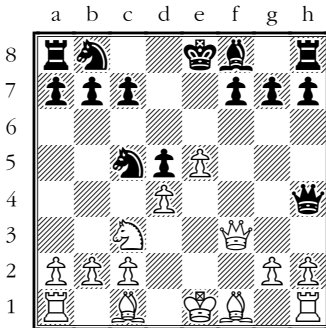
White to move

3



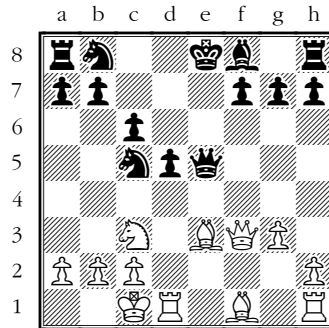
White to move

2



White to move

4

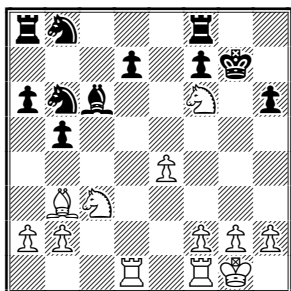


White to move

This is the point of Morphy's exchange of queens, exploiting the unprotected knight on b6. More precise however was 21 ♖e3! followed by 22 ♗f5+ and Black will slowly be suffocated. This kind of "strangulation play" was not Morphy's cup of tea. We had to wait for players like Schlechter and Tarrasch at the beginning of the 19th century for that kind of "torturous" play.

21...♗c6?

Better was 21...♗xf6 22 ♖d6+ ♗e7 23 ♗xb6 ♗c6 and White's rook is temporarily trapped. Black can catch it by the manoeuvre ...♗d8-c7 but this is just an illusion after 24 ♖c1 due to the manoeuvring point d5.



22 e5

22 ♗h5+! would simultaneously hit all three weaknesses, the king on g7 and the pawns on f7 and h6. 22...♗h7 (22...♗g6 23 ♖d6+! ♗xh5 24 ♗d1+ ♗h4 [Or 24...♗g5 25 f4+ ♗h4 26 ♖xh6 mate] 25 g3+ ♗g5 [If 25...♗h3 then 26 ♖xh6 mate] 26 f4 mate) 23 ♖d6 followed by 24 e5 is a tough nut for Black to crack. 23...♗c8 is answered by 24 ♖f6 and the f7-pawn is lost.

22...a5 23 ♖d3

Morphy's plan is to play on the g-file rather than the sixth rank.

23...♖h8 24 ♗cd5 ♗c4 25 ♗xc4 bxc4 26 ♖g3+ ♗f8 27 ♗b6 ♖a7 28 ♖d1 ♗b5 29 ♖d4 ♖c7 30 ♖dg4 Black resigns.

"Winning by force," says Morphy. "This game has certainly no claims to brilliancy, but illustrates the difficulty of a correct defence to the Ruy Lopez game" (A.C.M. 1858).

Maróczy, however, claims the game as one of Morphy's best performances, owing to the iron precision of his moves. Note that one important reason for Black's loss in this game was a reluctance to develop his b8-knight. In essence Black played a piece down right from the start. It seems that Schulten just forgot about this knight after it returned to the stable, with the move 8...♗b8.

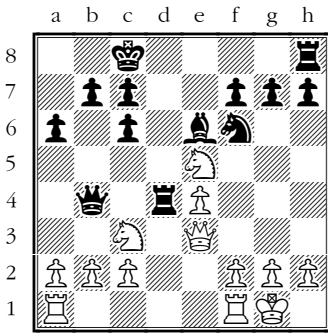
Don't forget to assimilate games played by Morphy even though he didn't meet the toughest opponents, because his games are nevertheless very instructive. He's one of the most important players in chess history to study in depth and really understand. It's no coincidence that geniuses like Bobby Fischer and Anatoly Karpov regarded him very highly.

One of the best English language books about his play and contributions is *Paul Morphy – A Modern Perspective* by the Austrian GM Valeri Beim.

Part 2:

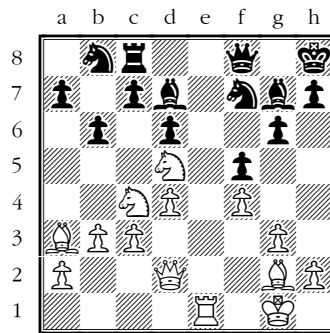
75 most important tactical exercises in the Opening and the Middlegame

76



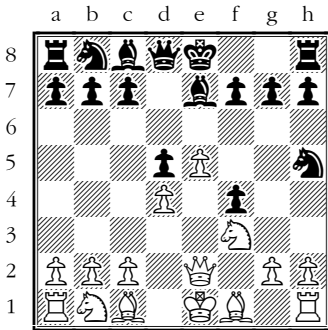
White to move

78



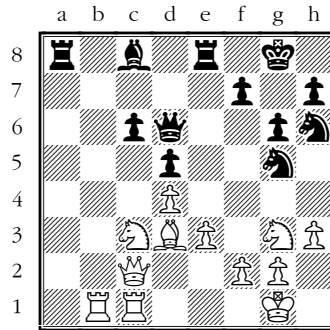
White to move

77



(after 6...d7-d5) White to move

79

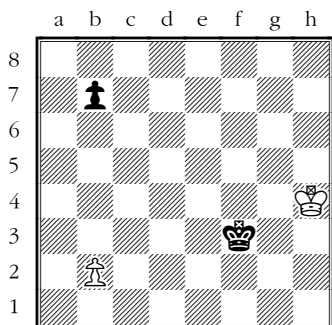


White to move

Part 3:

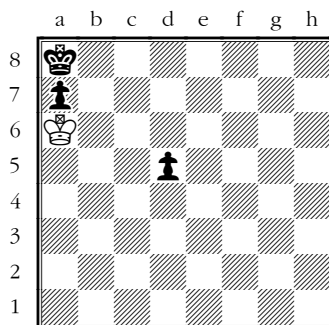
75 most important exercises in the Endgame

151



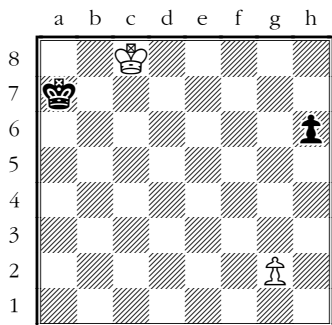
White to move

153



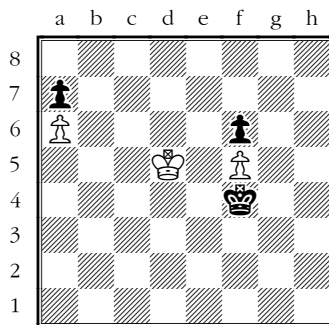
White to move

152



White to move

154



White to move