

Chess Analytics

Training with a Grandmaster

by

Efstratios Grivas

Foreword by Robert Zysk



2012

Russell Enterprises, Inc.
Milford, CT USA

Chess Analytics
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by Efstratios Grivas

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Foreword

Why do we read a chess book? There are mainly two reasons: we seek entertainment and we want to improve our play.

While certainly entertaining, this book is clearly dedicated to the ambitious player who has reached a certain level and wants to improve even further.

You want to advance from a medium player to a stronger player, from a strong player to a master? Well, you have made an excellent choice.

Based on the analysis of high level games you will be presented with and have explained (this is something that your chess engine won't do for you!) important middlegame and endgame patterns, winning strategic plans, and typical mistakes. Several personal remarks about the author's and his students' tournament practice add another dimension, as you get an idea about the emotions involved in a tournament game.

There is a broad range of the subjects which are covered. You will find well-known subjects like back rank mate combinations, chapters about isolated pawns, strong squares, etc., as well as less commonly presented patterns, such as the chapters "False Guards" or "The King's Golden Cage." The guiding principle of these themes is their practical value. This is particularly true in the endgame section where the author deals with structures which occur relatively often but are rarely presented in chess literature.

The structure of each chapter is clear and methodical. The concept is explained in a few lines and illustrated in carefully selected, annotated master games. A conclusion with practical hints rounds off each section.

Working through the book will increase your general understanding of chess. Thus your progress will be permanent and sustainable. Unlike opening theory which is subject to rather dramatic changes in a relatively short period, the principal rules of chess strategy have remained the same over time.

Personally, I particularly enjoyed the chapters about "Dancing Knights" and "Decisive Games" and the entire section about endings. Yes, sometimes you will need to go through a lot of analysis in this section but there is a good chance that this work will bring you the desired extra half-point in your tournament games.

Some remarks about your author. I have known and have been good friends with Efstratios (Stratos) Grivas now for 30 years. He is a grandmaster and by definition an excellent player. But more importantly for you he is one of the world's leading chess trainers, one of those who can help you to become a grandmaster. (Well, I do admit that achieving that goal takes more than reading one book. It takes talent, time and tournament practice and... some luck!)

Having been "brought up" as a chessplayer by leading trainers of the Eastern European Chess School, he has devoted almost two decades of his life to chess training. Consequently he is now an executive member of the FIDE trainer's commission. This position compels him to travel a lot, giving classes to future FIDE Trainers.

Bottom line: you are in the safe hands of a real expert who is dedicated to chess training. That's the good news.

Chess Analytics

Now the bad news: buying Stratos' book and even reading it is not enough. You have to work with it, you have to play through the games, follow the analyses and understand the concepts presented to reap the real benefits. This means that you will have to spend time and effort. And, of course, you will need to play some tournaments to put into practice what you learned.

On the other hand, if you make that effort, you are almost sure to improve your success at chess substantially. And that's what you *really* want, right?

I sincerely wish to all of you that you will experience this effect!

International Master Robert Zysk

Germany

March 2012

Pinning

The Middlegame

Pinning

Concept

The concept of pinning is a very simple one, as its definition is rather basic: the piece that is pinned cannot move either because it allows the opponent to win material or because it is simply forbidden to do so!

Pinning a piece is an everyday action during a chess game, but the question remains: how can we really benefit from a pin? Well, there are many ways but the most often met are:

- (1) Instantly winning material;
- (2) Long-term win of material;
- (3) Disrupting the opponent's camp; and
- (4) Help an attack or a defense.

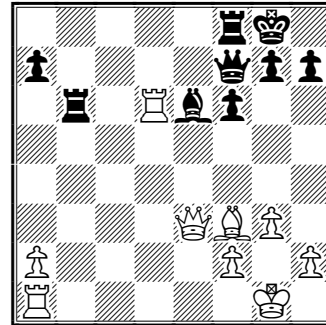
Here we are going to see some examples that mostly deal with the second concept. We shall start with the long-term pinned rook concept and the way to benefit from it. The first game is a clear case of our theme:

(1) Sulava – Kryvoruchko

Calvi 2007

Queen's Gambit Declined [D41]

1. $\text{d}4 \text{f}3 \text{c}5$ 2. $\text{c}4 \text{d}f6$ 3. $\text{d}c3 \text{d}c6$
 4. $\text{g}3 \text{d}5$ 5. $\text{d}4 \text{e}6$ 6. $\text{c} \times \text{d}5 \text{d} \times \text{d}5$
 7. $\text{d}g2 \text{d}e7$ 8. $0-0 0-0$ 9. $\text{d} \times \text{d}5$
 $\text{e} \times \text{d}5$ 10. $\text{d} \times \text{c}5 \text{d} \times \text{c}5$ 11. $\text{d}g5 \text{f}6$
 12. $\text{d}d2 \text{d}e6$ 13. $\text{e}3 \text{d}4$ 14. $\text{e} \times \text{d}4$
 $\text{d} \times \text{d}4$ 15. $\text{d}e3 \text{d} \times \text{f}3+$ 16. $\text{c} \times \text{f}3$
 $\text{d} \times \text{e}3$ 17. $\text{c} \times \text{e}3 \text{c}d7$ 18. $\text{f}d1 \text{c}f7$
 19. $\text{d} \times \text{b}7 \text{f}ab8$ 20. $\text{d}f3 \text{f} \times \text{b}2$
 21. $\text{f}d6 \text{f}b6$ (D)

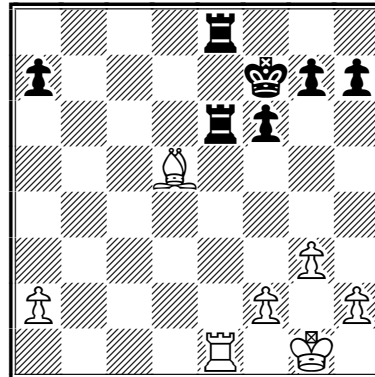


Black seemed to have everything under control, but he had missed a detail:

22. $\text{c} \times \text{e}6!$ $\text{c} \times \text{e}6$ 23. $\text{f} \times \text{e}6 \text{f} \times \text{e}6$
 24. $\text{d}d5 \text{f}fe8$

Or 24... $\text{c}f7$ 25. $\text{f}e1 \text{f}fe8$.

25. $\text{f}e1 \text{c}f7$ (D)



Of course Black had counted on that position, based on his ...f5 and ... $\text{c}f6$ plan.

26. $\text{f}4! \text{f}5$

Or 26... $\text{g}6$ 27. $\text{g}4 \text{f}5$ 28. $\text{g}5+-$.

27. $\text{g}4! \text{g}6$

27... $\text{c}f6$ 28. $\text{g}5+$

28. $\text{g}5$

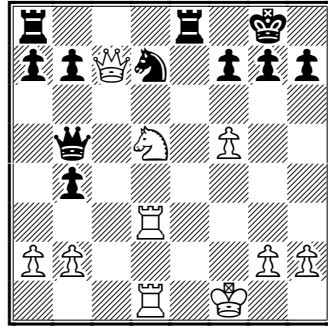
And now Black can never unpin his rook without losing a great deal of material.

28... $\text{h}5$ 29. $\text{f}e5!$ (D)

The Central Strike

the purpose of protecting the back rank. 25.♖h1 ♜f2! would only help Black.

25...♞b5 (D)



26.♞g3!

By switching the queen to the kingside, White renews the threats of ♖c7 and f6.

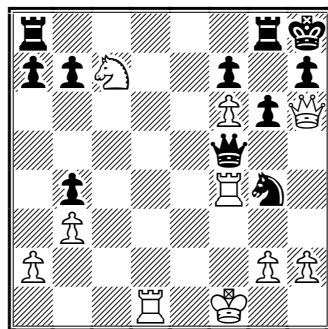
26...♞e5?!

26...♞ac8 may have been more tenacious, but after 27.f6 g6 28.♞e7+ (28.♞c7? ♞xc7! 29.♞xc7 ♞c5) 28...♞xe7 29.fxe7 ♞e5 30.♞f2 ♞xd3+ 31.♞xd3, Black's position remains unpleasant because of the strong passed e7-pawn. 26...♞ad8?! does not help either: 27.f6 g6 28.♞c7 ♞f5+ 29.♞f3+-.

27.f6 g6 28.♞g5 ♞h8 29.♞h6 ♞g8 30.♞c7 ♞c4

For the second time in this game, Black faces the threat of ♞xh7+!. Therefore, he has to keep the d3-rook pinned (30...♞c6? 31.♞xh7+!), or the h3-square under control.

31.b3 ♞g4 32.♞d4 ♞f5+ 33.♞f4 ♞g4 (D)



If 33...♞c2?, then the usual 34.♞xh7+! comes and if 33...♞h5, then 34.♞xh5 gxh5 35.♞xa8+-.

34.♞g7+!

White simplifies to a won ending with an extra knight.

34...♞xg7 35.fxg7+ ♞xg7 36.♞xf5 gxh5 37.♞xa8 ♞e3+ 38.♞e2 ♞xd1 39.♞xd1 ♞f6 40.♞d2 ♞e5 41.♞c7 f4 42.♞d3 a6 43.♞a8 1-0

Conclusion

The initiative should not be handed over “free of charge,” as our opponent should not be our cooperative friend – at least this should not happen often and not without a weak move or a bad opening by our opponent. So, sacrifices for the initiative should be on the daily menu but they should be handled with care and with a strong positional foundation. Non-standard combinations are based on sound positional domination grounds and they crown our ideas and plans, resulting in nice points!

The Central Strike

Concept

One of the less acknowledged and analyzed strategic/tactical elements is the so-called “central strike.” This concept refers to the unexpected advance of a central pawn or pawns, temporarily disrupting the flow of the position. Its aim is destruction or domination of the opponent's pawn center or pawn chain.

The element of the central strike is of a short-term nature and, while initially giving rise to a multitude of dynamic continuations, it eventually resolves itself, becoming stable, following the expected central clarification. Taking into account that the situation

in the center is the basic point of reference for both sides' plans, such a violent mutation may force a reassessment of the situation or even fundamentally reshape the position.

It has often been observed that after the execution of a central strike, one's opponent temporarily lies in a state of shock, as this violent attempt to disturb the existing situation causes immense psychological pressure.

(25) Grivas – Svetushkin

Athens 2001

English Opening [A11]

**1.c4 c6 2.♟f3 ♟f6 3.♟c3 d5
4.e3 ♟bd7**

This seems more accurate than 4...e6 as Black retains the option of 5...e5. After 4...e6 5.b3 ♟d6 6.♟b2 0-0 7.d4 (7.♟e2 ♟bd7 8.0-0 ♟e7 9.♟c2 ♞e8 10.♞fd1 dxc4 11.♟xc4 b5 12.♟f1 ♟b7 13.a4 a6 14.♟e4 ♟xe4 15.♟xe4 e5 16.d4 is unclear, Grivas-Mastrovasilis, Athens 2001) 7...♟bd7 8.♟e2 ♞e8 (8...♟e4!? 9.♟xe4 dxe4 10.♟d2 f5 11.0-0 ♟e7 12.c5 ♟c7 13.♟c4 is unclear, Grivas-Khenkin, Albania 1996; 8...a6 9.0-0 dxc4 10.bxc4 c5 11.a4± Grivas-Mastrovasilis, Ikaria 1997) 9.0-0 a6 10.♟c2 dxc4 11.bxc4 e5 12.a4 ♟e7 13.a5 e4 14.♟d2 ♟f8 15.c5 ♟c7 16.♟c4 ♟g4 the position is unclear, Grivas-Mastrovasilis, Thessaloniki 1998.

5.♟c2

The evaluation of 5.b3 e5 is a matter of personal taste.

5...e6

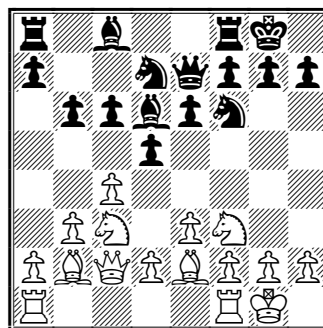
5...e5? 6.cxd5 ♟xd5 (6...cxd5? 7.♟b5!) 7.a3 leads to a favorable "Sicilian Defense" type of position with

reversed colors. If Black is determined to play ...e5 then he should insert 5...a6!?

**6.b3 ♟d6 7.♟b2 0-0 8.♟e2
♟e7**

Another option for Black is 8...a6 9.d4 ♟e7 (9...e5 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.dxe5 ♟xe5 12.0-0±) 10.0-0 dxc4 11.bxc4 e5 12.a4, with unclear play.

9.0-0 b6?! (D)



9...♞e8 or 9...a6 was to be preferred. The move ...b6 is good when White has already played d4.

10.cxd5! cxd5?!

A second consecutive inaccuracy by Black, who should have accepted a slightly worse position after 10...♟xd5. Note that 10...exd5 is even worse because of 11.♟d4! ♟b7 12.♟f5!.

11.♟b5! ♟a6 12.♞fc1

White treats the position accurately. Since the main conflict will take place on the queenside, the white pieces are transferred to the battlefield without interrupting their mutual coverage, simultaneously freeing a path for the queen's retreat.

12...♞fc8 13.♟d1 ♟c5

Black does not wish to surrender the bishop pair. 13...♟xb5 14.♟xb5 ♟a3 15.♟xa3 ♟xa3 16.♟d4! a6 17.♟c6 ♞ab8 18.♟xd7! ♟xd7 19.♟c6 ♞a8 20.b4! would lead to a distinct superiority for White.

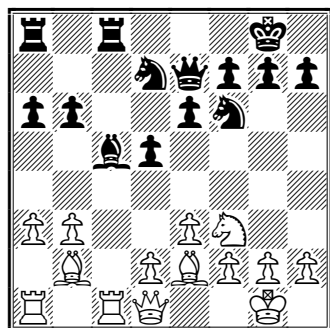
14.a3! ♟xb5

In face of the threat 15.b4, Black

The Central Strike

had no choice. Now, however, White obtains the advantage of the two bishops which will prove to be of decisive importance.

15. ♖×b5 a6 16. ♗e2 (D)



16...b5

Seemingly strong, but in fact it only succeeds in further weakening Black's queenside. 16...a5 is better, though after 17. ♗b5 White has the advantage. I would say that in this position Black's main problem is the absence of a decent plan. He is condemned to passivity and defense without much chance for the full point.

17. a4! b×a4

Compulsory, as 17...b4? loses immediately to 18. d4 ♗d6 19. ♖×c8+ ♖×c8 20. ♗×a6.

18. b×a4 a5 19. ♗b5

The b5-bishop's field of action has now grown. The light squares in Black's queenside (and especially c6) are very weak.

19... ♗b4 20. ♘d4 ♘e5 21. d3!

What a huge difference it would have made if White had mechanically played d4. The b2-bishop would be restricted, the d4-knight would be unable to come across to c6 while the c4-square would become an outpost for a black knight! White is better as he has the two bishops and better-placed pieces, aiming at Black's weakened queenside. Black remains passive, defending White's threats.

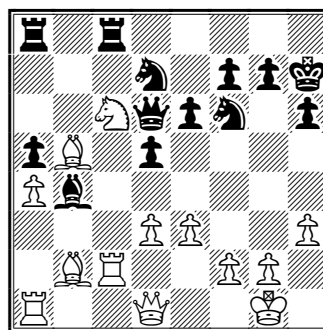
21... ♗d6 22. h3

Making *luft* for the king, preventing a future ... ♘g4 and also threatening f4.

22... h6 23. ♖c2!

White now threatens to wrest control of the c-file as well with 24. ♖ac1.

23... ♘ed7 24. ♘c6 ♖h7 (D)

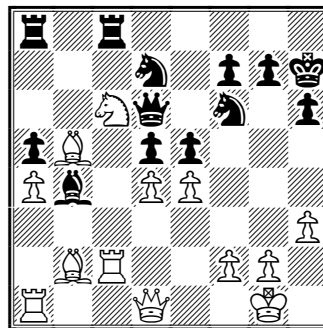


White has a clear advantage and could continue with the simple 25. ♖ac1 or with 25. ♘×b4. However, my attention was drawn to the possibility of opening up the center...

25. e4! e5

Forced in view of the threatened 26. e5. 25...d×e4? would be refuted simply: 26. d×e4 ♘×e4 27. ♘×b4 ♖×b4 28. ♗×d7 ♖d8 29. ♖g4.

26. d4!! (D)



A powerful central strike, after which Black's position collapses. The black pieces remain uncoordinated and unprepared to react to the explosion in the center.

26... e×d4

Black's alternatives were hardly of any help: after 26...d×e4? 27. d×e5

♖xd1+ 28.♞xd1 he loses a piece while he also loses material in the event of 26...♗xe4 27.dxe5 ♖e6 28.♗d4! ♖e7 29.♗c6!.

27.♗xb4 axb4?!

Unpleasant as it may have been, 27...♖xb4 28.exd5 was Black's only chance.

28.♞xc8! ♞xc8 29.♖xd4 ♖c5

Black submits to his fate as the only move, 29...♗e8, after 30.exd5, would promise White a slow but certain victory.

30.e5 1-0

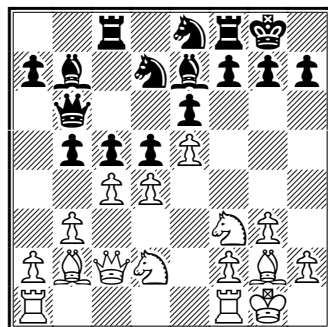
The central strike is an old concept; see the following game of the great Mikhail Botvinnik:

(26) Botvinnik – Bisguier

Hastings 1961

English Opening [A14]

1.g3 d5 2.♗f3 ♗f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.0-0 ♗e7 5.c4 0-0 6.b3 c6 7.♗b2 b5 8.d3 ♗bd7 9.♗bd2 ♗b7 10.♖c2 ♞c8 11.e4 ♖b6 12.e5 ♗e8 13.d4 c5 (D)



Black seems to be doing fine, although his passive e8-knight needs to be relocated. But White is on move and he can set the board on fire...

14.b4!

A pawn sacrifice that allows White to obtain a protected passed pawn.

14...cxb4

Black is forced to accept the chal-

lenge, as 14...bxc4?! 15.bxc5 ♖a6 16.♗b1± or 14...dxc4? 15.dxc5 ♖c7 16.a4 a6 17.♗e4+- were unpleasant alternatives.

15.c5 ♖c7 16.♖d3 ♗c6 17.♞fe1

White could consider 17.a3!? a5 (17...bxa3 18.♖xa3 ♞a8 19.♗c3 ∞/=) 18.axb4 a4 19.♞fe1±.

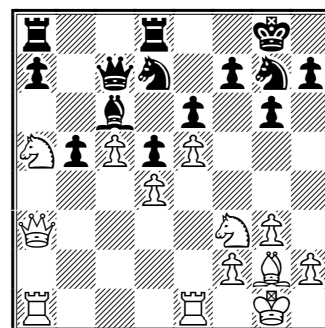
17...g6?!

Black should have played, 17...a5 stopping White's potential activity on the queenside. White has compensation after 18.♗f1 ∞/= when he will be focused only on the kingside.

18.a3! bxa3 19.♖xa3 ♞a8 20.♗c3 ♗d8 21.♗b3

White's compensation is obvious based on his space advantage and his passed c-pawn. Black can hardly move because of his lack of space.

21...♗g7 22.♗a5 ♖b7 23.♗xd8 ♞fxd8 24.♗a5 ♖c7 (D)



25.♞e2!

With the simple plan of ♗e1-d3-b4 and also tripling the heavy forces on the a-file, winning back the sacrificed pawn. Black is in trouble as he cannot oppose any decent plan.

25...a6 26.♗e1 ♗f5 27.♖c3 b4?

Black is trying to find some counterplay and breathe but he was obliged to hang onto his extra pawn. Good or bad, he had to stay passive with 27...♗b8 28.♗d3 ♗e7 29.♗b4 ♗b7

The Central Strike

30. ♖ea2±.

28. ♖×b4 ♜db8 29. ♖c3 ♜b5
30. ♖ea2 f6 31. ♗×c6

31. f4 f×e5 32. f×e5± was good enough.

31... ♖×c6 32. ♗f1

Safer was 32. e×f6 ♗×f6 33. ♗f1+–.

32... f×e5 33. ♗×b5 ♖×b5
34. d×e5

White has won material and the end is near; he only needs to make some exchanges!

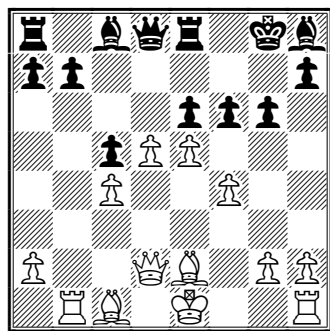
34... d4 35. ♖d3 ♖×c5 36. ♜×a6
♜×a6 37. ♖×a6 ♖×e5 38. ♗d3 ♖f6
39. ♖c8+ ♗f8 40. ♜a8 ♗d6
41. ♖d8 ♖×d8 42. ♜×d8 ♗b5
43. ♗e5 ♖g7 44. ♗c6 1-0±

The central strike can be used to open lines and diagonals for various beneficial reasons. One of them is to attack the king, as can be seen in the following example:

(27) McCambridge – Hjartarson
 Grindavik 1984

Grünfeld Defense [D85]

1. d4 ♗f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♗c3 d5
4. c×d5 ♗×d5 5. e4 ♗×c3 6. b×c3
♗g7 7. ♗f3 c5 8. ♜b1 0-0 9. ♗e2
♗c6 10. d5 ♗e5 11. ♗×e5 ♗×e5
12. ♖d2 e6 13. f4 ♗h8 14. c4 ♜e8
15. e5 f6 (D)



This is a theoretical position in which White seems to be doing fine, but his strong pawn center is under fire.

16. f5!?

A full central strike, with the participation of five pawns! White aims to strip the black king and then attack it.

16... g×f5?!

16... f×e5?! probably is not that good: 17. f×g6! (17. f×e6 ♖h4+ 18. ♖d1 ♗×e6! 19. ♜×b7 ♗c8∞) 17... h×g6 18. 0-0 ± but 16... e×d5!? 17. f×g6 h×g6 18. c×d5 ♜×e5 19. 0-0∞/= Agzamov-Pribyl, Sochi 1984, is interesting.

17. ♜b3

New forces are joining the attack!

17... ♜e7

If 17... ♗g7?!, then 18. ♜g3 f×e5 19. ♖h6 ♜e7 20. ♗b2 e×d5 21. ♗×e5 ♖d7 22. ♗f6 ♜f7 23. 0-0±.

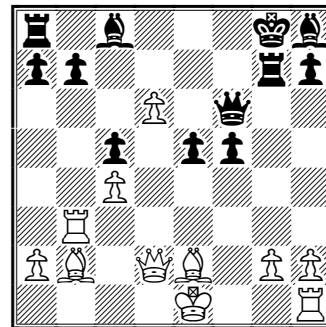
18. d6!

Excellent! There wasn't much in 18. ♗b2?! f×e5 19. ♖g5+ ♗g7 20. ♗×e5 h6! =, Eingorn-Tukmakov, Lvov 1984.

18... ♜g7 19. e×f6 ♖×f6

Black's options are limited: 19... ♜×g2 20. ♖f1! ♜g6 21. ♗h5±.

20. ♗b2 e5?! (D)



20... ♖d8 21. ♗×g7 ♗×g7 22. ♗f3± was Black's only chance.

21. ♗×e5!

A nice combination, but 21. ♜e3! was good as well.

21... ♖×e5 22. ♜e3 ♖e6

Black decided to give up his queen. He could instead win a second piece as well with 22... ♖a1+ 23. ♖f2 ♖×h1 but he would not be saved after 24. ♜e8+ ♖f7 25. ♗h5+ ♜g6 26. ♗×g6+ ♖×g6

(26...h×g6 27.♖e7+ ♘f6 28.♙c3+ ♘g5 29.♙g3+ ♘f6 30.♙h4+ g5 31.♙h6#) 27.♖g8+ ♘f6 28.♙e3+- and if 22...♙d4, then 23.♖e8+ ♘f7 24.♗h5+ ♖g6 25.♙×d4 ♗×d4 26.d7+-.

23.♖×e6 ♗×e6 24.♙e3 ♖e8
25.♙×c5

And now White wins.

25...♖×g2

25...b6 26.♙b5 ♖d8 27.c5+-

26.d7 ♖×e2+ 27.♙×e2 ♗×d7+
28.♙d2 ♗e6 29.♙c7 ♗d4 30.♖b1
♗b6 31.♙g3+ ♘f7 32.♙h4 ♖d8+
33.♙c2 ♖d4 34.♙×h7+ ♘f6
35.♙h8+ ♘f7 36.♙h7+ ♘f6
37.♖×b6! ♖×c4+ 38.♙d3 a×b6
39.h4 ♖a4 40.♙h6+ ♘f7 41.h5 f4
42.♙g6+ ♙e7 43.h6 ♖a3+ 44.♙e4
♖a4+ 45.♙e5 ♖a5+ 46.♙×f4 ♖a4+
47.♙e3 ♖a3+ 48.♙d4 1-0

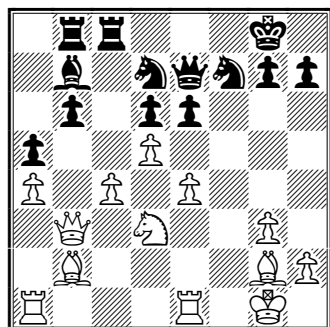
Well, the central strike is not always the proper reaction. Here is an instructive example that can prove it:

(28) Smyslov – Chandler

Hastings 1988

Nimzo-Indian Defense [E32]

1.d4 ♗f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.c4 b6
4.♗c3 ♗b4 5.♙b3 ♙e7 6.a3
♗×c3+ 7.♙×c3 ♗b7 8.g3 0-0
9.♗g2 d6 10.0-0 ♗bd7 11.b4 ♗e4
12.♙c2 f5 13.♗b2 ♗df6 14.a4 a5
15.b5 ♖ae8 16.♗e1 c6 17.b×c6
♗×c6 18.f3 ♗g5 19.♗d3 ♗f7
20.♖fe1 ♖b8 21.e4 f×e4 22.f×e4
♖fc8 23.d5 ♗b7 24.♙b3 ♗d7 (D)



White's advantage is obvious and it is based mostly on his space advantage and the bishop pair. But Black seems to be defending on his three first ranks.

25.e5?

The exchanges that are invited by White cannot be correct. 25.♙b5 would preserve White's advantage.

25...d×e5 26.♗×e5 ♗f×e5
27.♗×e5 ♙c5+! 28.♙h1 ♗×e5
29.♖×e5 e×d5?

After the obvious 29...♙×c4 30.♙×c4 ♖×c4 31.d×e6 ♗×g2+ 32.♙×g2 ♖e8 Black should hold easily.

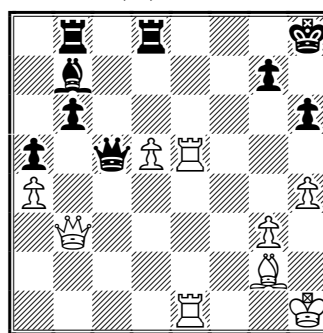
30.c×d5 ♙h8 31.♖ae1

Now White's strong passed pawn and his well-placed rooks will tell in the end.

31...h6 32.h4

32.♙d3! ♖f8 33.♙g6± was stronger.

32...♖d8 (D)



33.♙d3!

White finally found the correct idea; now Black is in deep trouble...

33...♖bc8 34.♙g6 ♖g8
35.♗e4! 1-0

Conclusion

The concept of the central strike is not easy to explain with rules and plans. It is not often encountered and its peculiarities are unique in practically every single game. Nevertheless, I have