# Contents

7 Development and the Centre

The main goals of opening strategy for both players are to get their pieces quickly doing something useful, and to control the centre of the board. In particular, in the first few moves Black must fight hard to deny White complete domination of the centre, and may need to use tactics to do so. Our first diagram is a typical case where alert play is essential. The moves to consider are 6...d5 and 6...♘e4. 6...♘e4? might be a good idea if Black could secure his knight on this central square by playing ...d5, but 7 ♗d5! rules that out. After 7...f5 (7...♘xf2 8 ♔xf2 dxc3+ 9 ♔g3 doesn't give Black enough for the piece) 8 cxd4 ♗b4+ 9 ♘bd2 (or 9 ♗d2) Black has a new problem: his king will not find a safe home on the kingside. The right move is 6...d5!. After the c4-bishop moves, the black knight will move to e4 and Black will have a share of the centre and good development; e.g., 7 ♗b5 ♘e4 8 cxd4 ♗b6 or 7 ♗e2 ♘e4 8 cxd4 ♗b4+, while 7 exf6?! dxc4 8 fxg7 ♖g8 is good for Black.

Our second position above shows the importance of getting the pieces out quickly. White is well up on material but his development is terrible. 12 d3! simply must be the right move, as it gets White's pieces moving. After 12...♗xd3+ 13 ♔g1 ♘g4 14 ♗c6+ ♔d8 15 ♗g5 we see a specific line where this is valuable – White wins easily here. Instead the greedy 12 ♔g1?? ♘g4 is winning for *Black* because White's queen and king are both in grave danger: 13 ♗c6+ (13 ♗xa8 ♘xf2 14 ♔xf2 ♕f6+ leads to mate) 13...♔d8 14 ♘f7+ and now 14...♔c8! wins since the white queen dare not abandon the g1-a7 diagonal.

- The ...d5 advance is such an important idea for Black that it is worth thinking about in almost any position where White is creating an 'ideal' centre with pawns on d4 and e4.
- A temporary knight sacrifice followed by a pawn fork is a common way to break White's grip on the centre – we shall see several examples in this chapter.
- The player who is in charge of the central squares of the board sets the pace and can quickly move pieces from one part of the board to another.
- If you are behind in development, seek ways to catch up as a matter of urgency.
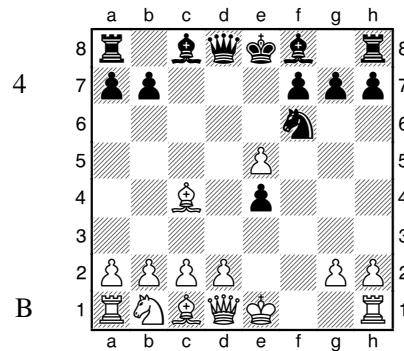
1 (W)
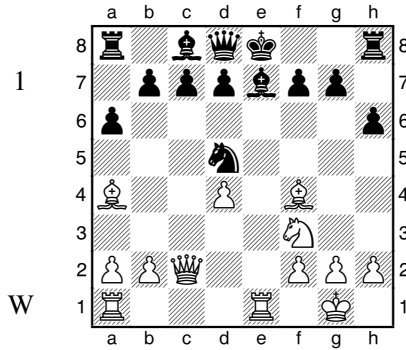
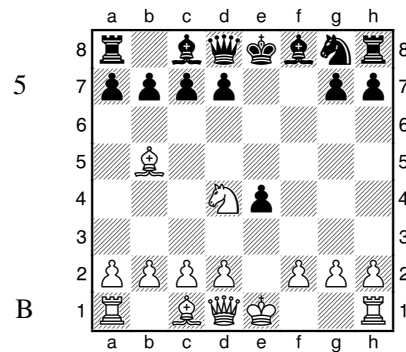White exploits Black's slow development in an amazing way.

2 (W)
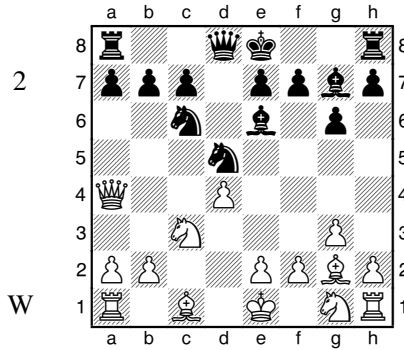
Black has developed rapidly, but White's mobile pawns now decide the game.
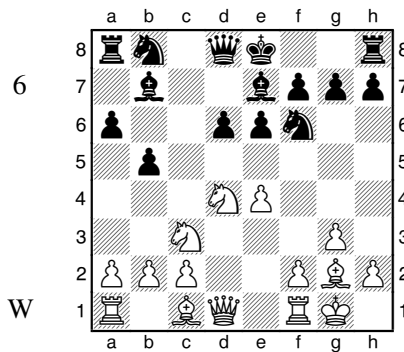

3 (W)
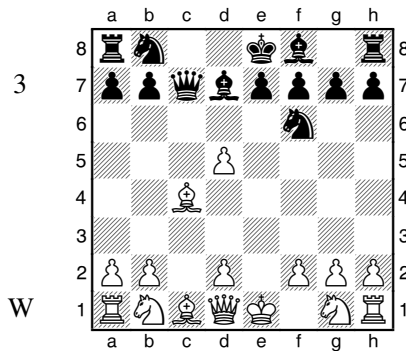
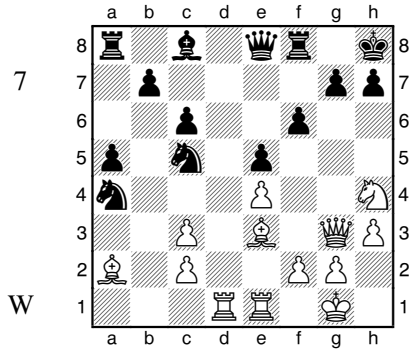White's bishop is attacked. Choose between 7 d3 and 7 ♕b3.

4 (B)

Is centralization the key? Choose between 8...♗g4 and 8...♕d4.

5 (B)

Choose between 7...♘f6 and 7...♕f6.

6 (W)

Black has developed carelessly. What do you play now?

7

Black's queenside is undeveloped. Exploit that in dramatic fashion!

8
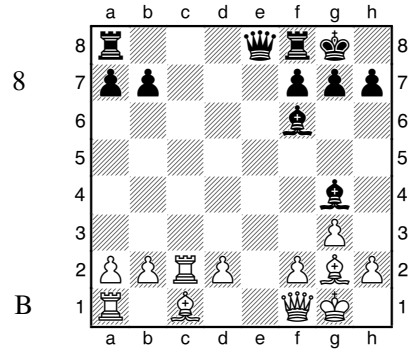
Take full advantage of White's lack of development.

9
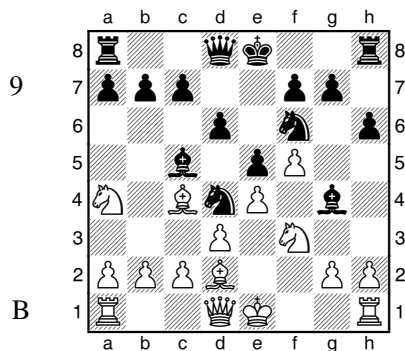
White has forgotten about controlling the centre. How does Black punish him?

10
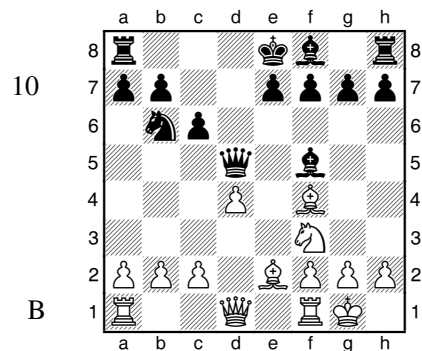
Does Black have anything better than simply developing?

11

Make a practical decision: is 6...♘xc3 or 6...dxc3 safer?

12

Black's development is a disaster. Take full advantage and force an immediate win.

Solutions to Development and the Centre Exercises

1) 15 ♖xe7+! wins. 15...♕xe7 16 ♖e1 pins the queen, but 15...♘xe7 16 ♗xc7, trapping the queen on its home square, is the main point. After 15...♔xe7 the simplest win is 16 ♕e4+.
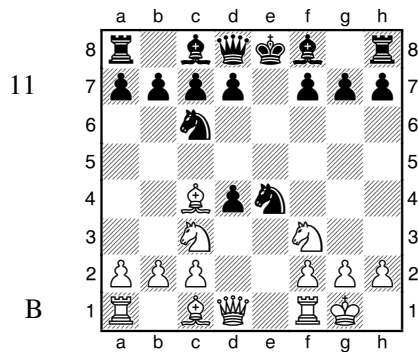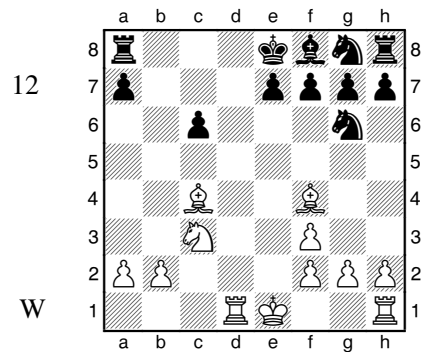
2) Black had missed that 8 ♘xd5! paves the way for the pawns to roll forward: 8...♗xd5 9 e4 ♗e6 10 d5 and White wins a piece. Although Black got his pieces out quickly, he failed to establish a central foothold and paid a heavy price. Instead 8 e4?? is bad because of 8...♘b6 followed by taking on d4.

3) If you chose 7 ♕b3??, then you were perhaps thinking too much of your own ideas (i.e. the d6 advance) and not enough about your opponent's possibilities. 7...b5! wins a piece thanks to the pin against the undefended bishop on c1. On the other hand, 7 d3 is a good move that keeps everything solidly defended and prepares further development.

4) 8...♗g4?? hits the queen, but is a blunder because of 9 exf6! ♗xd1 10 ♗b5+, regaining the queen (and keeping an extra piece) because the black king has nowhere to run. Even if you didn't see that, then 9 ♗e2 is also good for White, and reason enough to reject 8...♗g4??. Instead 8...♕d4 is a good move, countering by attacking the c4-bishop and installing the queen on a powerful central square.

5) 7...♘f6?? is a blunder. Even though the pin-based 8 ♘e6! doesn't trap the queen, it wins because 8...♕e7 9 ♘xc7+ picks up the rook on a8. 7...♕f6! is far better, avoiding tactical accidents before catching up with development – the fact that White's pieces aren't well-anchored will help with this.

6) 10 e5! unleashes a *rampant pawn*, creating a double attack on f6 and b7. After 10...♗xg2 11 exf6 Black still has two pieces under attack, so the best he can do is 11...♗xf1 12 fxe7 ♕xe7 13 ♕xf1, though two pieces for rook and pawn is a serious material advantage in the middlegame.

7) The fact that Black's queen's rook is not covering d8 allows White to play 19 ♖d8!, deflecting the queen from its vital role covering the g6-square. After 19...♕xd8 20 ♘g6+! hxg6 21 ♕h4# Black is mated.

8) 17...♗e2! 18 ♕e1 ♗d3! attacks both queen and rook, and after 19 ♕xe8 ♖axe8 White can't save his rook without allowing a deadly check on his back rank: 20 ♖c7 ♖e1+ 21 ♗f1 ♗xf1.

9) By ploughing right through the centre to attack the white king: 9...♘xe4! (9...♘xf3+ 10 gxf3 ♘xe4! is good too) 10 dxe4 (10 ♘xc5 ♗xf3 11 gxf3 ♕h4+ also mates, while 10 h4 ♘g3 is obviously a disaster for White) 10...♘xf3+ 11 gxf3 ♕h4+ leads to mate: 12 ♔e2 ♕f2+ 13 ♔d3 ♕d4+ 14 ♔e2 ♕xe4+ 15 ♔f1 ♗h3#.

10) Yes! The loose bishop on f4 is a clue that there is a double attack in the position: 11...♕e4! wins a pawn on c2.

11) 6...dxc3?! is extremely risky, as White replies 7 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 8 ♕d5+ ♔f6 (8...♔e8 9 ♖e1) 9 ♖e1 ♘e7 10 ♕xe4 ♔f7 11 ♗g5, when Black may still be better, but in practice anything could happen. 6...♘xc3! is not only safer, but stronger. 7 bxc3 (7 ♖e1+ ♗e7 8 bxc3 is similar) 7...♗e7 8 cxd4 d5 simply leaves Black a pawn up with a great position.

12) With 11 ♘b5! White threatens ♘c7#, and 11...cxb5 allows 12 ♗xb5#, while 11...♖c8 12 ♘c7+ ♖xc7 13 ♗xc7 is hopeless for Black. After 11...e5 12 ♘c7+ ♔e7 13 ♗g5+ f6 14 ♗e3 White threatens ♗c5#, so Black loses a whole rook. 11 ♘d5! is also good, with the same ideas.