MICHAL KRASENKOW

FINDING CHESS JEWELS

improve your imagination and calculation

About the Author

Michal Krasenkow is a Grandmaster, a multiple international tournament winner, a former World top-ten player who reached the 2700 rating, and a two-time Polish Champion. He's a FIDE Senior Trainer, has worked with many top players including Vishy Anand, and has been the national coach of Poland since 2010. He's made numerous major contributions to opening theory, and has written books on the Open Spanish and the Sveshnikov Sicilian.

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Introduction

In general I consider that in chess everything rests on tactics. If one thinks of strategy as a block of marble, then tactics are the chisel with which a master operates, in creating works of chess art.

Tigran Petrosian

I am sure this is not the first workbook of chess tactics you hold in your hands. However, it is a bit different from the collections of exercises based on the principle of competition, in which you collect points and then proudly count yourself amongst experts or, regretfully, amongst dullards. Here, however, you will enjoy every exercise, whether you find its solution or have to look back after seemingly fruitless efforts. That's because the solutions are always hidden, unexpected and spectacular – that was the criteria of selection.

There are two kinds of beauty in chess: the 'beauty of paradox', where the Gordian knot of problems is cut with a tactical strike or a subtle, hidden manoeuvre; and the 'beauty of logic', where a player, using his opponent's minor inaccuracies, consistently imposing more and more strokes, paints the canvas of victory. This book deals with the first kind of beauty. Pay attention to the fact that I have not said anything about sacrifices. Indeed, a sacrifice, a break from the routine notion of material relations, always causes fascination, but it is by no means a compulsory condition of brilliancy.

Imagination is one of the most important qualities of a chess player. Partly, of course, predetermined by a player's innate abilities, it can, however, be significantly developed. The room for progress is vast. In fact, most of possibilities hidden in the multitude of chess positions could hardly be discovered before we obtained tools possessing perfect imagination: chess programs. For an inanimate computer, all moves, obvious or phenomenal, are equivalent, and when you analyse with a chess engine, you can only wonder what huge reservoirs of niceties remain out of human sight. So, the unattainable ideal is with us; the only problem is how to approach it. There is no other way than training your brain: solving numerous tactical exercises, tackling endgame studies, and analyzing games without computer assistance. The more positions you solve and analyze, the better your brain works, the greater the pool of tactical methods you master, and the

easier you can find the right way in a number of similar situations.

What signals suggest a possible tactical solution? A poor position of the king is probably the most common of them. Far advanced passed pawns often create tactical possibilities too. However, the most important thing is to detect so-called tactical weaknesses: pieces and pawns which can be attacked or captured. In many books you can find a formal definition: a tactical weakness is a piece or pawn which is unprotected or protected as many, or less than the number of, times as it is attacked. That is true, but not completely true. A piece (or pawn) can be protected twice or thrice, but all those defences can be delusionary. Such weaknesses are difficult to detect, and the capture of such pieces or pawns is usually hard to find and spectacular.

The other kind of tactics, the most difficult for many players, is placing your own pieces (without making a capture) on squares attacked by enemy pawns. Such moves are relatively easy to find in attack, but very hard in other circumstances. Only training and experience can help here.

Calculation

The other important issue related to chess tactics is how to calculate variations. A number of theories have been created on this matter by various authors, from Alexander Kotov to Valeri Beim. However, I agree with Mark Dvoretsky, who said: "A human is not a machine, hence there is no ideal algorithm of calculation."

Some tips are indisputable: you should calculate in sharp, critical positions and stop if the position can be evaluated without further calculation or when the calculation doesn't impact your choice of a move. Here are some others, based on my own experience and practice:

i. I recommend that before you start calculating, you set up a target, adequate to the evaluation of the current position. It can be, for instance, a win, an advantage, but also, for instance, the way of putting up the most stubborn resistance in a poor position. If you have a lot of time, you can set up a more ambitious target; under approaching time pressure it can be more modest. It often happens that you must choose between a simple move, easy to evaluate and not requiring extra calculation, and a complicated continuation, which demands deep immersion. In that case the target of calculation is clear: to get more than the simple continuation promises. Knowing what you want to achieve will help you to accept or decline particular moves and variations. It will be your guide in looking for your or your opponent's 'candidate moves' (i.e. those which can help you to achieve your goal or to prevent that, respectively).

ii. Don't move too fast into the variations: it is more important not to miss anything, to take into consideration as many candidate moves as possible, especially at the beginning of each line. It is less essential at the end of variations, when you are approaching your target and just need to find one of the ways, such as how to deliver a mate or to reach a draw.

iii. Regarding the order of variations to examine, there are two main criteria: effectiveness and simplicity. Start with the variations which are most likely to lead to the target (or for your opponent, to prevent his target), and, ceteris paribus, the apparently easiest to calculate, the simplest and most forcing.

iv. When you find a way to reach the target, you can either stop the calculation, picking the continuation you have just found and skipping the remaining options (a final check, including the 'Blumenfeld test', is still needed – see below) or, if you have a lot of time and feel that you have 'made a bad bargain', try to find something better: raise your target, correct your set of candidate moves accordingly, and go on.

v. It is much worse if you have apparently examined all possibilities and have not found a way to reach the target. Then everything depends on your feeling and the time on your clock. If it is running out, lower your target, adjust your candidate moves accordingly and continue your calculation within the new framework. It must be easier now; one of the variations you have already found may fit the new target. If, however, the moment is crucial, you have a lot of time and feel that your target should be reachable, try to find new ideas, new candidate moves at some points of your variation tree, and continue calculating.

vi. Of course, there can be various situations during the calculation phase. Although normally you should try to calculate every variation to the final conclusion (first of all, whether it suits you or not), you can, however, abandon it if you feel that you are going in a wrong direction (the line is too complicated and hardly right); at other times a new idea may cross your mind, and if it is really crucial, you sometimes have to switch to it immediately.

Additionally, Mark Dvoretsky has formulated several methods, which work in particular situations:

i. Exclusion: when one of the moves (difficult to calculate) is definitely not worse than all the others (for example, all the others lose, or they lead to a draw while the move in question, being also good for a draw, may give some winning chances), it can be made without calculation.

ii. Comparison: if one of the moves is definitely worse than another (for instance, it simply loses a tempo), then you needn't calculate it.

iii. 'The emergency exit': in the middle of a promising variation you have a simple way that doesn't completely satisfy you, but minimizes your losses. It could be, say, a perpetual check or an opportunity to keep a small advantage. Then you can go for that line, reach the critical point, and look for a way to reach your target from a shorter distance without risking too much in case that way doesn't exist.

It often happens, however, that a promising variation is too complicated to calculate and that you don't see an emergency exit either. If there is no other line leading to the

target, experienced players often take a risk and go for complications, trusting their intuition. Alas, their intuition occasionally betrays them, causing spectacular disasters.

Finally, there is a rule formulated by the Russian master and psychologist Benjamin Blumenfeld. When you have picked a move, don't make it immediately. First, take a short break (Blumenfeld recommended writing down the intended move on the scoresheet, but, unfortunately, that is not allowed under the present rules). Now cast a fresh look at the position and check whether that move is not just a blunder meeting a simple refutation. If it is not, you can make it, but if you suddenly discover an oversight, it is a worrying sign: something is probably wrong with your mental shape that day. Of course, you should renew your calculation, but it is recommended to lower your target and aim for simplifications, if possible.

You can accept these tips or prefer the advice of other authors, but tactical training is the most important thing in any case.

The Exercises

The exercises collected in this book are taken from my own games and from the grandmaster practice of recent decades. In fact, it is a collection of jewels I have met on my road as a player and chess commentator. Most of them are probably unknown to you. Indeed, game continuations don't always coincide with solutions. Alas, grandmasters are humans too and their imagination is not perfect. You will, of course, have the advantage of knowing that the position contains something unusual; still, it will not always be easy to find the hidden point.

The whole set of exercises consists of three parts. The first one ('Jewels') contains a number of relatively easy positions with single, although beautiful tactical blows. The second part ('Brooches') contains small combinations, where tactical niceties are more covert. The third part ('Necklaces') is a selection of wonderful, often difficult combinations (or sometimes 'forced manoeuvres', according to Botvinnik's classification, when they don't contain sacrifices), requiring more or less deep calculation of variations or/and evaluation of the position, with beautiful ideas emerging at the most unexpected moments. Of course, this division is very subjective since every player has his own feeling of difficulty.

The last part of each chapter contains solutions and plenty of analysis. In many cases, especially regarding the fragments of my own games, I can explain the psychological context: how and why the solutions were or were not found. Mental barriers and cues, preventing or helping to find the right way, will be considered there.

The exercises in each part are placed in order of increasing difficulty (according, of course, to the author's judgement). Each position is accompanied by an indication of which side is to move, with some featuring clarifying questions, but mostly you should decide yourself what you should aim for (a win, a draw, the advantage, how best to continue the defender's resistance, etc).

Although I assume that you are familiar with the terminology of chess tactics (deflec-

tion, decoy, interference, etc), I give some classifying comments in the final section of each chapter, especially regarding the exercises from the first chapter. Of course, though, during a game you will hardly bother yourself with the exact type of the tactical blow you are going to strike.

Michal Krasenkow,
Warsaw, Poland,
December 2013

Chapter Three: Necklaces

3.1
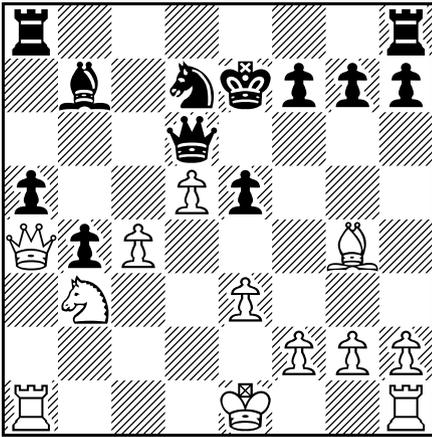
Black to Play

3.3
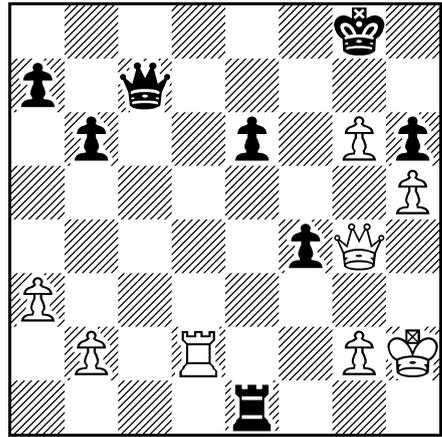
Black to Play

3.2
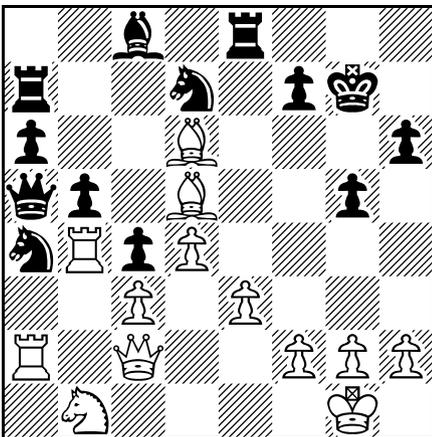
White to Play

3.4
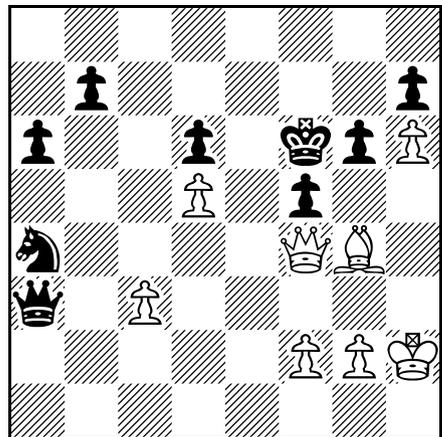
White to Play

Solutions

3.1 I.Rogers-M.Krasenkow,
Hastings 1993/94
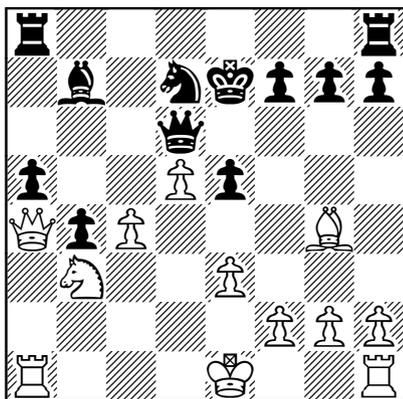
18...♘b6! **19 c5** (if 19 ♕b5 ♗a6) **19...♕xd5 20 cxb6 ♗c6!**
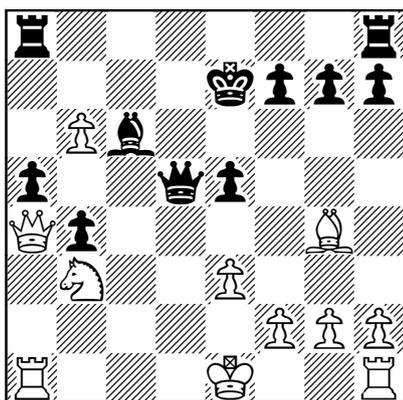
It is hard to say whether White over-looked this intermediate move or the fact that 21 ♗f3 doesn't help due to 21...e4.
21 ♕a2 ♕xg2 22 ♖f1

Black wins too after 22 0-0-0 ♕xg4 23 ♘xa5 ♖xa5 24 ♕xa5 ♕c4+.

22...♕xg4

Black has won material and White's king is vulnerable. The game continued:
23 ♘xa5

23 ♕c2 was relatively best, but, of course, the endgame after 23...♕g6 24 ♕c5+ ♔d6 25 ♕xd6+ ♔xd6 26 ♘xa5 ♗f3 is winning for Black.

23...♗b5 24 ♕b2 ♕e4 25 b7 ♖a6 26 ♖g1 ♖d8! 27 ♕c1 ♕d3 28 ♕b2 ♔f6 0-1

## 3.2 M.Krasenkow-
D.Garcia Ilundain,
Las Palmas 1993
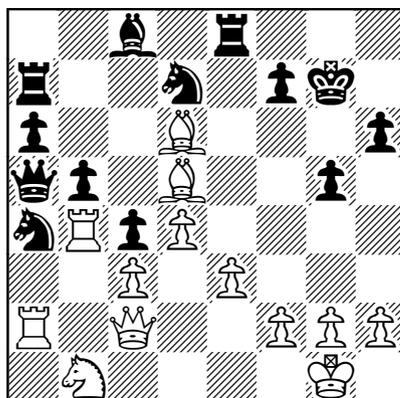
White won after **24 ♗xf7! ♔xf7 25 ♕h7+ ♔e6** (or 25...♔f6 26 ♕xh6+ ♔f7 27 ♕h5+, winning the e8-rook) **26 ♕g6+ ♘f6 27 ♗e5 ♖f8** (to 27...♕d8 28 ♗xf6 ♖g8 White can simply reply 29 d5+! ♔d6 30 ♕xh6) **28 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 29 ♕e4+** (29 ♕e8+ is equally good) **29...♔f7 30 ♕h7+ ♔f8 31 ♕xa7**.

3.3 R.Kempinski-M.Krasenkow,
Krynica 1997
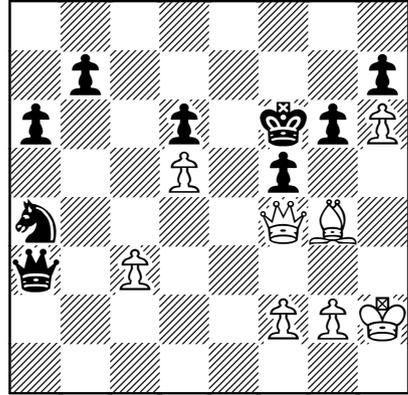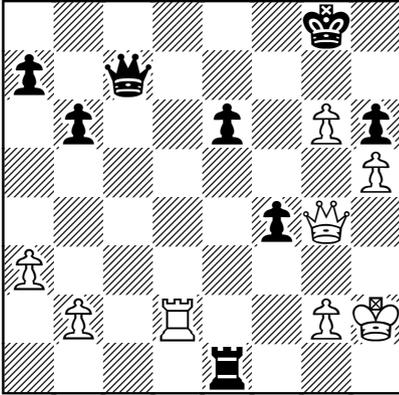
45...f3+ 46 g3 (if 46 ♕g3 ♖h1+)
**46...♖h1+! 47 ♔xh1 ♕c1+ 48 ♔h2 ♕xd2+ 49
♔h3**

So far everything has been quite obvious. The main difficulty for Black was foreseeing the way to deactivate White's queen:
**49...♕g2+ 50 ♔h4 ♕h1+! 51 ♕h3 ♕e1! 0-1**

As 52...f2 and 53...f1♕ can't be stopped, White resigned.

3.4 M.Krasenkow-V.Vulfson,
Moscow 1980

31 ♗xf5! gxf5 32 ♕d4+ ♔g6 (otherwise, after 32...♔e7 33 ♕g7+ ♔d8 34 ♕g8+ ♔c7 35 ♕xh7+ ♔b6 36 ♕g7+ White's h-pawn queens, while 32...♔g5 33 ♕g7+ ♔f4 34 ♕g3+ ♔e4 35 ♕e3+ ♔xd5 36 c4+! is the main nicety: Black loses his queen) **33 ♕g7+
♔h5 34 f4** with inevitable mate, so Black resigned.
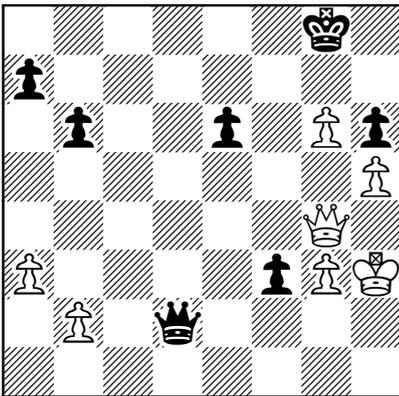
3.5 E.Geller-M.Krasenkow,
Cappelle la Grande 1992
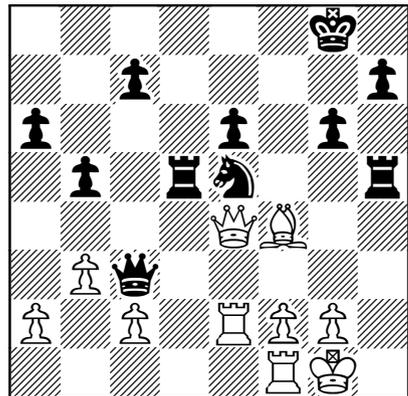
Black should play something simple like 24...♖f5. Instead, I found a 'brilliant' tactical