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DEADLY CHECKMATE 2

The Missing Defensive f-pawn

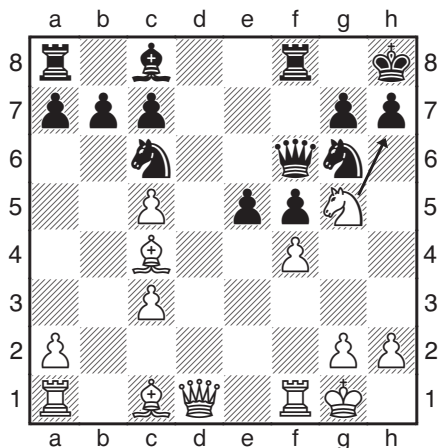
An absent f-pawn makes the diagonal longer

The black f7-pawn is important for defence. If it has been moved, lost or exchanged, the castled king is often more vulnerable.

This is particularly the case when White has a bishop placed on the a2-g8 diagonal (usually on the c4- or b3-square). Black's king is usually on the h8-square, shielded from attack by its own pawns on g7 and h7. The problem is that *the black king has very few escape squares, as the white bishop controls the g8-square*.

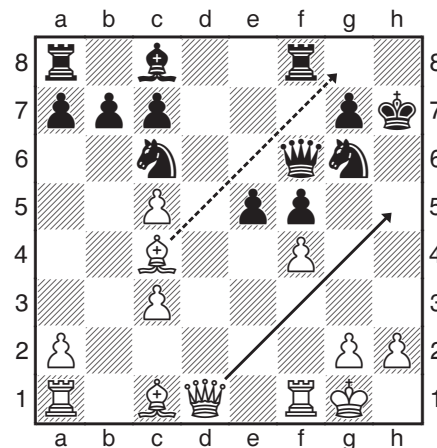
If White can administer a check with queen or rook on the h-file, the black king is invariably in major trouble. White's goal is therefore to open the h-file in any way possible, which usually means a sacrifice.

Typical Pattern with the Missing f7-pawn



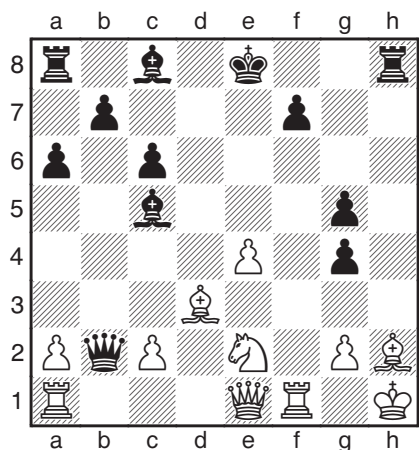
12a) White moves

The black king is currently shielded by the h7-pawn. White sacrifices his knight with 1 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 (12b), opening the h-file.



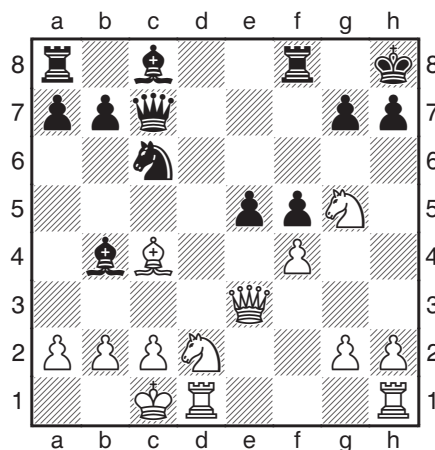
12b) White moves

There follows 2 ♕h5 checkmate. Note how the white bishop on c4 prevents the black king escaping (via g8) *because there is no black pawn on f7*.



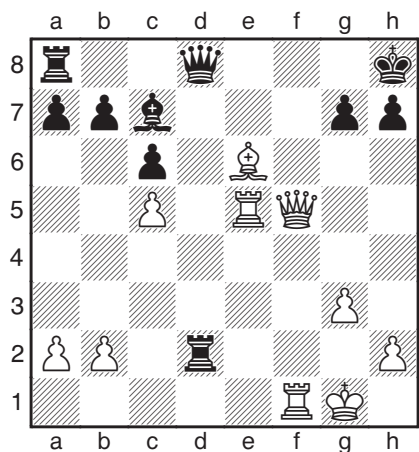
13) Black moves

Here the h-file is already open, and the black rook is itching to exploit this. After 1...♖xh2+ 2 ♔xh2 ♕h8+ White is mated following 3 ♕g3 ♖h4.



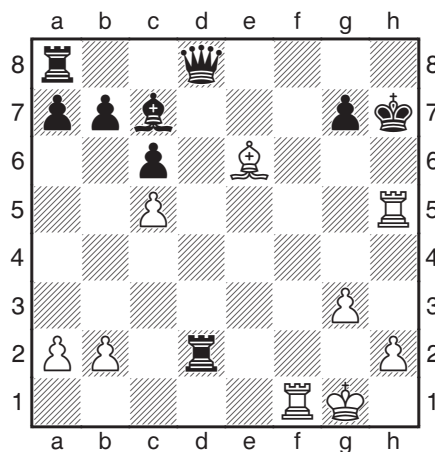
14) White moves

After 1 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 2 ♕h3+ ♔g6 White has to close in with the queen: 3 ♕g3+ ♔h7 (3...♔f6 4 ♕g5 is mate) 4 ♕h4+ ♔g6 5 ♕g5+ ♔h7 6 ♕h5 mate.



15a) White moves

Before sacrificing the queen, it must be established that the black king cannot escape to safety via the g6-square. White plays 1 ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 2 ♖h5+ (15b).



15b) Black moves

The king can escape – but only temporarily. After 2...♔g6 comes the pretty finish 3 ♖f7 checkmate.