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Rock Solid Chess

Volume 3 – Searching for the Right Move

Tiviakov's Unbeatable Strategy

New In Chess 2025

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Introduction

The first nine months of 2024 were very eventful for me: I played 72 tournament games in England, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, the Netherlands, Taiwan and Italy, helped dozens of chess players from different countries to improve their skills, received many enthusiastic messages from readers and signed countless copies of books. I am glad that my efforts were appreciated: the first volume of the Rock Solid Chess series (Pawn Structures) was awarded the Yuri Averbakh/Isaac Boleslavsky award in 2023 as the best book of 2022 according to FIDE.

All these pleasant moments inspire me to work for the benefit of the chess community. I am grateful to everyone I have been fortunate to communicate with recently: my critics for their warm reviews, my students for their interest in the lessons, and their parents and organizers of chess tournaments and training lectures for their financial support and patience! You are my source of new chess ideas, which serve as an impetus for continuing the Rock Solid Chess series.

My new work Rock Solid Chess 3: Searching for the Right Move consists of eleven chapters, in which 118 games are analysed. Using these examples, I explain how to develop intuition, how to reason correctly and what principles and methods to use to find a good move; I share practical and psychological secrets of a professional grandmaster. After reading it, you will learn how to avoid superficial play, act strongly at the chessboard, avoid time trouble and put your opponent in a difficult position. The book is written in simple language and is designed for a wide range of chess fans, including strong players.

Everyone who works with this book diligently is guaranteed to improve the class of his play.

Enjoy your studies!

Sergei Tiviakov,
Groningen, the Netherlands
January 2025

CHAPTER 1

Moves found with the aid of intuition

In my previous books, I showed myself as a rational chess player and coach who teaches correct thinking and develops the student's ability to reason logically at the board. But in addition to all of this, I am also a person who has been searching for some secret knowledge throughout my life.

I have visited many places of power in the world, hoping to see magical lands and be filled with miraculous energy; I have communicated with healers, bioenergetics specialists and ufologists, and I believe in the power of blessing and the evil eye.

When a new thing, information or person comes into my life, I think about why we met and how I can interact profitably with the event. During trips to tournaments, I learned from other chess players that they also believe in things that are not explained by official science; for example, in a lucky city, a hotel neighbour, a room number, a 'lucky' pen that brings good luck in the game, and various signs. According to the results of one socionics study (<https://modernsocionics.ru/texts/chess>, Vladimir Lvov, 2023), most strong chess players belong to the 'intuitive logician' type, and I think that the topic of intuition in the game is interesting not only to me.

While selecting the material for this chapter, I found many interesting books, but I will not refer to them – I do not claim to be academic and to comprehensively cover the issues of chess intuition. Nevertheless, at the board I often had to quickly evaluate a position and make a move based only on my feelings, anticipate danger and make an assumption about the need for defence. And I want to tell my story about how I made intuitive moves, to demonstrate the development of my sixth sense from the level of 'Sergei Tiviakov then' to 'Sergei Tiviakov now', using the example of games that were important to me.

A person has intuition, the ability to draw correct conclusions and make error-free decisions without prior analysis. In the scientific community, this is defined differently. For me, intuition is unconscious knowledge based on experience, lived events and emotions, a useful aid for a chess player in moments of fatigue, lack of time, strong excitement, inability to concentrate on a position or to calculate a large number of sharp variations or a desire to save mental energy.

According to my observations, in our professional activities, there are three most common situations when help from our intuition is needed:

- 1) when searching for a move in highly complicated and irrational positions;
- 2) when in time trouble;
- 3) when guessing the opponent's reaction and likely actions, for example in response to a clearly inferior move on our part.

The last point concerns a player's psychological intuition and his ability to feel and understand the opponent's emotions and desires.

My intuition is my inner advisor, which influences my decisions at the chessboard, turning to the knowledge accumulated over time for an answer, constantly developing along with the growth of my professional experience. There is an opinion that when making decisions, children rely on their intuition, and adults on logic. But when I was a child, it seems to me that this did not work for me at all, because I had no life experience and no understanding of the situations that were happening.

However, thanks to my hard work and love for chess, I achieved the International Master and Grandmaster standards in foreign tournaments, and as many as six times in the GM category alone. And I have only one memory of that period of time: I played well and won everything in a row. In 1993 (when I was twenty years old), a very important event for me took place in Groningen: an 11-round Interzonal tournament played under the Swiss system. 54 players took part in it, and I was among the first seven who qualified for the PCA quarterfinal matches. It is noteworthy that the future US President Donald Trump was present at their opening, and we played these very matches in Trump Tower in New York in June 1994.

But I will first show you my game against Leonid Yudasin, who in the 1990s was among the strongest players in the Soviet Union, although at the moment of our game, he had already recently changed his country and federation.

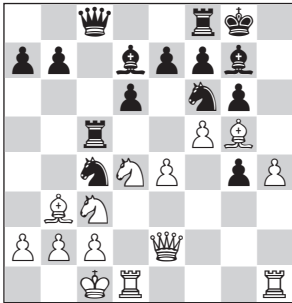
Game 1 Sicilian Defence

Leonid Yudasin 2605

Sergei Tiviakov 2635

Interzonal Tournament, Groningen 1993

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 g6 5.♘c3 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙c4 0-0 8.♙b3 d6 9.f3 ♙d7 10.♙d2 ♖c8 11.0-0-0 ♘e5 12.h4 h5 13.♙g5 ♖c5 14.g4 hxg4 15.f4 ♘c4 16.♙e2 ♙c8= 17.f5?

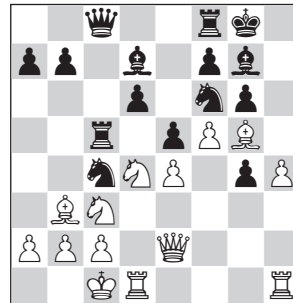


This continuation was very popular in the late 80s and early 90s. I kept up with the fashion, constantly playing the Dragon Variation for Black, and it brought me a lot of points. But after 2008, I practically abandoned it, not only because, like many other openings, it was critically judged by computers, but also because my chess taste changed: I developed an antipathy to some positional set-ups.

17...e5?

At that time, this move was a novelty, which I had prepared in advance through deep home analysis. However, despite my ability to effectively process a large volume of chess information, further events in the game will show that I chose a very bad position for the game.

After the simple human capture 17...gxf5, Black's position is already no worse. According to Stockfish 17, the strongest move is 17...♘xb2: 18.♙xb2 ♖xc3 19.fxg6 ♖xb3+ 20.axb3 fxg6 21.c3 ♙c5 22.b4 ♙e5, winning.



Point to note: When a player is just beginning his chess career, there are many things he does not understand. His 'inexperienced intuition' is a poor assistant.

Since this is a position with opposite-side castling, before deciding to play it and invent a 'surprise' for the opponent, I needed to assess the safety of the kings. When I went for this continuation, I was in the prime of my career, was among the top twenty strongest chess players in the world, but did not have sufficient chess knowledge,

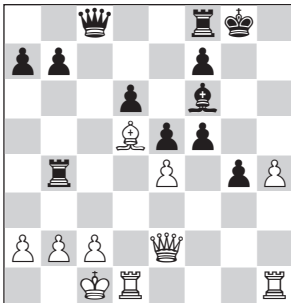
professional and life experience, had limited ideas about the game, zero intuition, youthful maximalism and blatant optimism. Now, when I look at this position (or a similar one) without calculating variations, without analysis, without using a computer, my inner adviser loudly shouts that it is impossible to play 17...e5, that White wins with almost any possible move: he is attacking and Black is doomed.

Question: How could Yudasin have checkmated me most simply?

18. ♖db5

The second strongest move, preserving White's considerable advantage, but leading away from a forced win. According to the principles of attacking the king, my opponent should have chosen 18.h5, with a straightforward rout of Black's position after 18...exd4 19.h6 dxc3, and having an extra knight does not save me: 20.hxg7 ♕xg7 21. ♖xc4 ♜xc4 22. ♞xd6 – after a long think, the engine raises the evaluation up to +5.00.

18... ♖xb5 19. ♗xb5 ♜xb5 20. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 21. ♖xc4 ♜b4 22. ♖d5 gxf5



Along with the development of my personality, learning about the world during chess travels (at the time of writing this book, I have visited 95 countries), communicating with new people, getting to know the cultures of different countries, learning chess from my own and others' mistakes and playing at a high level for a long time, my positional intuition also improved. Now, I no longer make the mistakes that I made in my chess 'childhood' (by which I mean my first thirty years). Now, without a detailed immersion in a position, without looking for a refutation, I can immediately say that one can't play like this, and then my opinion is usually confirmed by analysis.

Question: Which move leads to a win for White?

A typical position with opposite-coloured bishops has arisen (see my second book). The white king is absolutely safe, and the pawn array around my king is flawed. In addition, the difference in the quality of the bishops is noticeable: the f6-bishop stares at his own pawns. In general, the coordination of the black pieces is reprehensible. This means that by attacking, White can win the game. However, his initial task is to win back one of the pawns in order to level out the material inequality.

23. ♞df1

The rule about attacking the king applies here: do not make

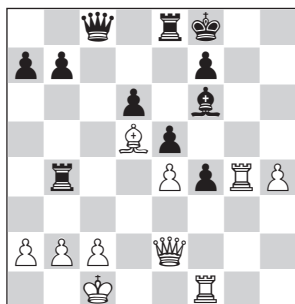
redundant moves (such as 23.a3) but activate as many forces as possible, so as to create an advantage in the number of attacking pieces.

There is no win with 23.♖d2, because of 23...♖d4 24.♗h6 ♕g7, whilst 23.♖dg1 does not create any threats – 23...♕g7.

23...f4 24.♖hg1 ♖e8

On 24...g3? White had prepared the combination 25.♖xg3+ fxg3 26.♖xf6 with mate in seven.

25.♖xg4+ ♖f8



Question: Find the simplest and most effective winning plan for White.

26.♖g3?

In order to realize his huge advantage, my opponent should have advanced the h-pawn to h7, starting with 26.h5: 26...♕e7 27.h6 ♖h8 28.♖h1 ♖d4 29.♖gg1 ♖xd5 (the best chance for Black) 30.exd5 ♗c5 31.♗g4 ♗xd5 32.♖b1, and Black has insufficient compensation for the sacrificed material.

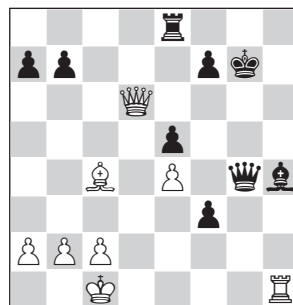
26...♖d4

As a result of my opponent's error, I have now obtained some counterplay.

27.♖d3 ♖xd3 28.♗xd3=

The exchange of rooks has relieved me of a bad piece.

28...♕xh4 29.♖h1? ♗g4! 30.♕c4? f3 31.♗xd6+ ♖g7



The threat is 32...♗f4+ and 33...f2 with an easy win.

32.♗d5 ♖e7 33.a3 f2+ 34.♖d1 b6

35.♖b1 ♗f4 36.♖a2 ♖e6 37.♖h1

♖f6 38.♗a8 a5 39.a4 ♖d6 40.c3

♖g6 41.♗e8 ♖g1 42.♖xh4 ♗xh4

43.♗xf7+ ♖h6 44.♗f8+ ♖h7

45.♗f5+ ♖g6 46.♕f7 ♗f6 47.♕xg6+

♖g7 48.♗d7+ ♖xg6 49.♗g4+

♖f7 50.♗d7+ ♖f8 51.♖c8+ ♖g7

52.♗g4+ ♗g6 0-1

My positional intuition (I decided to play 17...e5? without any information about the subsequent development of the game) let me down with the choice, but unexpectedly it turned out that my psychological intuition worked: I unconsciously chose such a dangerous position for myself, in which my opponent was confused, could not find the right plan and lost.

Six months after this game, I went to New York for a match against Michael Adams. In classical chess

it ended in a draw (4-4), but then I lost in rapid (3½-2½).

Game 2 Sicilian Defence

Michael Adams 2660

Sergei Tiviakov 2630

Candidates Match, New York 1994

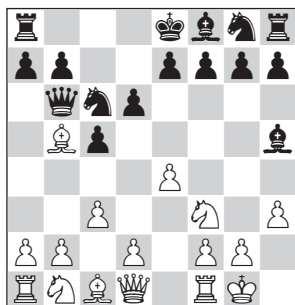
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♙b5+ ♘c6 4.0-0 ♙g4

At that time, I was very intensively and successfully playing the continuation with the move 4...♙g4 (nowadays, modern theory says that Black should play 4...♙d7). I did especially well with the line 5.c3 ♙b6, with which I had won all five previous games, so I decided to repeat this same variation.

5.h3

But that was not to be.

5...♙h5 6.c3 ♙b6



Question: Assess this position on general considerations.

The players have made only six moves. None of Black's kingside pieces are developed. It is obvious, even without the aid of the computer, that White has a large advantage and that I should not

start from this position. Nowadays, it would not enter my head to put my pieces on the edge of the board with moves like 5...♙h5 and 6...♙b6.

7.♘a3!

Adams had prepared using those previous games of which I was so proud.

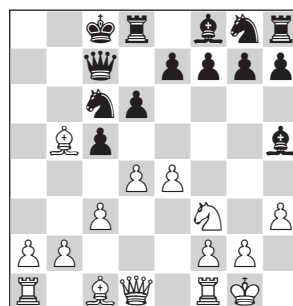
7...a6? 8.♙a4 ♙c7?

The last two question marks are awarded for not developing my pieces.

9.d4 b5

This move was the basis of my play in previous games. The point is to break the pin of the bishop.

10.♘xb5! axb5 11.♙xb5 0-0-0



Question: According to the principles of attack, in order to get at the enemy king, White needs to open lines and diagonals. Which move meets the requirements of the position?

12.b4!

Black's position is tragic. I could say that I lost the second game of the match in just six moves. When my opponent deviated from my usual variation, I found myself in a line that was new to me and my

positional intuition remained silent about the fact that I was going the wrong way. But I believed in my strength and was convinced that I was playing well.

12...♙xf3 13.gxf3 ♘b8

All roads lead White to victory.

14.♚a4

The opponent's plan is simple – to advance his pawns on the flank.

14...c4 15.d5 ♘f6 16.♙e3 ♘fd7

17.♙c6 e6 18.b5 exd5 19.exd5 ♘b6

20.♚b4 ♙e7 21.a4 ♙f6 22.a5 ♘xc6

23.bxc6 ♘xd5 24.♚b5 ♙de8 25.♙b6

Black resigned.

I lost in a rather crushing style, but along with this shameful defeat, I realized that intuition is a thing in chess that needs to be developed.

Later I started playing very solidly, avoiding unfamiliar, sharp situations. And this allowed me to reduce the number of tournament zeros to almost a minimum, and ten years later I practically never had to resign. I mentally imagined myself as Tigran Petrosian, Vasily Smyslov and Anatoly Karpov – chess players with highly developed positional intuition, who subconsciously sensed all the threats that an opponent could create and stopped them.

Fourteen years after my game with Adams (by then I was 34 years old, a grown-up chess player!), together with experience and knowledge, my intuition had improved and it became something which

could help me take decisions in complicated situations. I stopped making the sort of opening mistakes of earlier years.

Game 3 Ruy Lopez

Sergei Tiviakov

2648

Pavel Eljanov

2701

Montreal 2007

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4

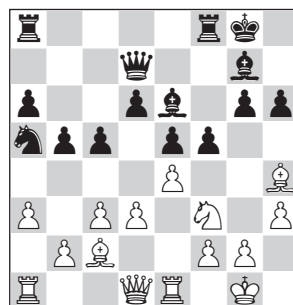
♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 g6 7.♙g5 ♙g7

8.♘bd2 0-0 9.♘f1 h6 10.♙h4 b5

11.♙b3 ♘a5 12.♙c2 c5 13.♘e3

♙e6 14.0-0 ♚d7 15.a3 ♘g4

16.♘xg4 ♙xg4 17.h3 ♙e6 18.♙e1 f5



The position is roughly equal, but very complicated: the centre is unstable and there are many dynamics – calculating correctly all of the variations is impossible.

Question: Which move in the style of Tal did I play (I am sure you have all seen some of the 8th World Champion's games)?

19.d4

I decided to sacrifice material, so as to start a counterattack in the centre, in response to the opponent's flank attack (18...f5).

Point to note: To develop your intuition, you should regularly widen your knowledge.

Question: Find the strongest continuation for Black, which maintains the unclear nature of the position.

19...f4?

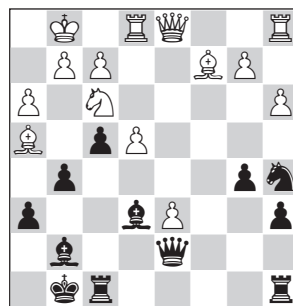
My psychological intuition did not deceive me – deep down I was hoping for the reply 19...f4: Eljanov wants to trap my bishop.

Point to note: Your opponent will very probably go for a gain of material, if there is no clear refutation to be seen.

Black should have opened the position with 19...cxd4 or 19...exd4, so that the disappearance of the pawns on e5 and c3 activates his bishop on g7.

For example, 19...exd4 20.cxd4 g5 21.exf5 ♖xf5 22.♗g3, and the position is equal. If 20...f4, then 21.e5! (the computer suggests starting with 21.d5 ♗f7 22.e5 dxe5 23.♞xe5 ♗xe5 24.♞xe5 ♞d6 25.♞e2 ♞ae8= (25...g5 26.♞d3 ♗g6 27.♞xg6+ ♞xg6 28.♗xg6 gxh4+-; 25...♞fe8 26.f3 ♞xe2 27.♞xe2 ♞e8 28.♗e4±)) 21...g5 (21...dxe5? 22.♞xe5 ♗xe5 23.♞xe5+-) 22.exd6 ♞xd6 23.♗xg5 hxg5 24.♞xg5 ♗f5 25.♗xf5 ♞xf5 26.♞g4 ♞g6 27.h4.

An interesting variation arises after 19...cxd4 20.cxd4 (20.exf5 ♗xf5 21.cxd4 ♗xc2?) 20...f4 21.dxe5 g5 22.exd6.



analysis diagram

Question about this variation:

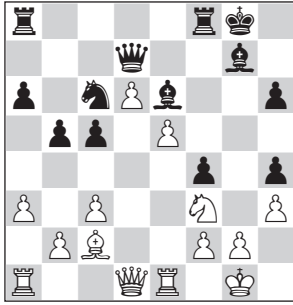
Find the strongest zwischenzug for Black.

Black does not immediately win back the trapped piece, but uses the fact that now his ♗g7 is open: 22...♗xb2!. And this important inclusion allows him to maintain the balance in the position. White can remove the rook from under attack, 23.♞b1 ♗c3=, or choose equivalent moves like 23.♗xg5 or 23.e5, which do not change the evaluation of the position, but are more responsible. For example, 23.e5 does not save the rook, but creates a protected passed pawn with a strong pawn centre. After 23...♗xa1 24.♗xg5 hxg5 25.♞xa1, a balanced situation is obtained, which the computer evaluates as 0.00.

20.dxe5 g5

20...dxe5 leads to the loss of the pawn on c5 or e5 after 21.♞xd7 ♗xd7 22.♗e7 ♞fc8 23.♗d6 and if 23...♞c4, then 24.♗b3 with an unpleasant pin.

21.exd6 gxh4 22.e5 ♞c6



Question: How do we convert the advantage to a full point?

23.b4

I did not choose the strongest move. Instead, I should have remembered the principle of two weaknesses. I had already achieved one type of advantage (a strong centre), but this is not enough to win. The possibility of parrying the threats of an attack on the king with 23. ♖d3 by 23... ♖f5, both blocking the diagonal b1-h7 and simultaneously attacking the pawn on e5, convinced me that I had to open a second front. In order not to lose precious time, it would have been better immediately to play 23. a4!, with the idea of creating a weakness on the queenside. Most likely, it would have been the b-pawn, which could have been attacked by the fork ♖d3 if necessary. But the most important thing in this move was to involve my rook in the game after 23... ♖a8 24. axb5 axb5 with 25. ♗a6.

23...c4

My knight now has the splendid square d4.

24.a4 bxa4?

24...♖ae8 would have made the win more difficult: 25.axb5 axb5 26.♙b1±.

25. xa4 b7 **26.** xc6 xc6

27. d4

Maximum centralization of the knight!

27...♔d7 28.♔f3 ♕h8 29.♖a5

The rook will join the game via c5 and c7.

29... ♔f7 30. ♖c5 ♜a7 31. ♔e4 ♜e8

32.♔f1 ♖d7 33.♖e2 ♔g8 34.♖a2

♔h5 35.f3 ♔g5 36.♖xa6

Black's position starts to collapse.

**36... ♖xh3 37.gxh3 ♜xe5 38.♘f5 ♚f6
39.♖aa5**

Black resigned; the ♖e5 is lost.

This was an interesting example of an intuitive sacrifice: I could not fully calculate its consequences, but my bold decision turned out to be correct, not only from the point of view of the final result of the game, but also from the computer analysis. I am very pleased with this game, because I played it not in my usual calm manner, but in the style of the outstanding World Champion Mikhail Tal. By the way, it received a brilliancy prize on the chesspro.ru website as the best game of the month.

And now I want to dilute my creativity with a delightful sacrifice by another grandmaster, trainer, second of champions and challengers, commentator and author of some fine chess books and articles, Alexey Suetin.

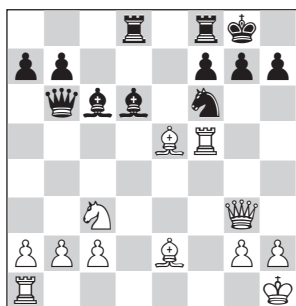
Game 4 Sicilian Defence

Alexey Suetin

Vladimir Bagirov

Leningrad 1963

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4
 ♟f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.f4 ♘c6 7.♙e3 ♙e7
 8.♙e2 0-0 9.0-0 ♖c7 10.♚e1 ♙d7
 11.♚g3 ♘xd4 12.♙xd4 ♙c6 13.♙h1
 ♜ad8 14.e5 dxe5 15.♙xe5 ♚b6
 16.f5 exf5 17.♜xf5 ♙d6



Question: What would you play?

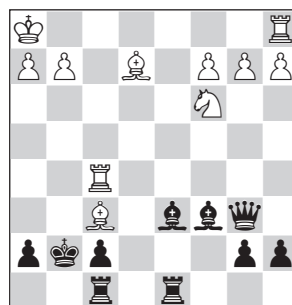
18.♚xg7+

We can agree that the hand is just itching to make this move! However, after it, very complex positions arise: it is impossible to calculate them without error – a typical example of an intuitive creative sacrifice. And you need to have great faith in yourself and courage to just go and give up a whole queen for a pawn! After 18.♚xg7+ the computer evaluates the position as winning for Black, the sacrifice being refuted by correct defence, but Bagirov could not figure it out, and Suetin managed to create a real masterpiece.

By the way, another, more modest sacrifice, did not lead to anything good: 18.♜xf6?? ♙xe5 19.♚xe5 gxf6 20.♚g3+ ♙h8 21.♙d3 ♜g8 and now the white king is in danger.

18...♙xg7 19.♙xf6+

I wonder why Suetin went for this continuation, risking miscalculating somewhere and ending up in a clearly lost position. Perhaps he intuitively decided, based on his previous baggage of chess knowledge, that White has compensation: the black king is brought out from its shelter into the open, where it will be met by three or four attacking pieces.



Question: Where should the black king go: g6 or h6?

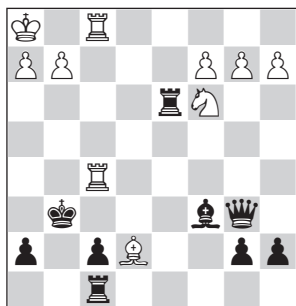
19...♙h6?

The correct move is 19...♙g6!. Then White has two replies: 20.♜af1 (20...♚e3--+) and 20.♙d3, creating the threat of a discovered check.

Question: Find the only continuation for Black after 20.♙d3.

20...♙e5? leads at best to equality after 21.♙xe5 ♜xd3 because of the in-between check 22.♜f6+.

It is not easy to find the correct move 20...♙e7, but it refutes White's idea, by creating threats against both white bishops: 21.♙xe7 ♖xd3. Because the white rook is attacked, it must be defended by 22.♖af1, and here, Black can win in several ways.



analysis diagram

Question about this variation:

Find the most improbable move, reducing the white attack to nothing.

The computer suggests putting the rook under triple attack with 22...♖f3! 23.♖g5+ ♙h6 24.gxf3, in order after 24...♗e3 to leave White with many pieces hanging. But the human preference is to retain some extra material in a solid way by means of 22...♖xc3 23.bxc3 ♖e8.

20.♖af1 ♗e3?

20...♙xg2+ 21.♙xg2 ♖g8+ 22.♙h1 ♖de8 23.♖h5+ ♙g6 24.♖g5+ leads to a draw.

21.♖h5+ ♙g6 22.♖h4

White has created several threats: 23.♙h5+ and 23.♙d3+.

22...♙f4 23.♖hxf4 h5 24.♙xd8 ♖xd8 25.♙d3+ ♖xd3?

Black had to play the cold-blooded quiet move 25...♙g7: 26.♖xf7+ ♙h8

27.♖7f4. I would prefer to be White here because, from a material viewpoint, his rook, two minor pieces and two pawns are better than the queen.

26.cxd3 ♗xd3 27.♖f6+ ♙g5

28.♖xf7=

28.♖1f2±.

28...h4 29.♙g1 ♗e3+ 30.♖7f2

♙h5 31.♙e2 ♙h6 32.♙f4 a5

33.♖d1 a4 34.h3 ♙h7 35.♙d5

♗c5 36.♙f6+ ♙g7 37.a3 ♙g6

38.♙g4 ♙g7 39.♖e1 ♗d6 40.♙e3

♙g6 41.♙f5 ♗d8 42.♖e6+ ♙f7

43.♙d4+ ♙g7 44.♖e4 ♙d7 45.♙f3

♙f5 46.♖d4 ♗e8 47.♖xh4 ♗e3

48.♖c4 b5 49.♖c3 ♙d3 50.♙d2

♗e1+ 51.♙f1 ♗b1 52.♙h2 ♗e1

53.♖c7+ ♙g6 54.♖cf7 ♙xf1 55.♖xf1

♗e5+ 56.♖7f4 ♗xb2 57.♖1f3

♗e5 58.♖g3+ ♙h5 59.♖b4 ♗b8

60.♖bg4 ♗e5 61.h4 ♙h6 62.♖g6+

♙h7 63.♖g5 ♗e8 64.♖g3

♗b8+ 65.♙h3 ♗e8 66.♖f5 ♗e3+

67.♙h2 ♗e8 68.♖b4 ♗e3 69.♖fxb5

♗xa3 70.♖b7+ ♙g6 71.♖g4+

♙h6 72.♖b6+ ♙h7 73.♖bb4 ♗e3

74.♖xa4 ♗e5+ 75.♖gf4 ♙g6

76.♖a6+ ♙h7 77.♖af6 ♙g7 78.♖f5

♗e2 79.♙h3 ♗e1 80.♖f1 ♗e3+

81.♖5f3 ♗e5 82.g4 ♗d5 83.h5 ♗e5

84.g5 1-0

In the end, Suetin went down in history for having made a beautiful intuitive combination.

Point to note: For further understanding of intuitive sacrifices, look at the works of Mikhail Tal; for example, in the book 'Attack', which has many similar, well-commented examples.

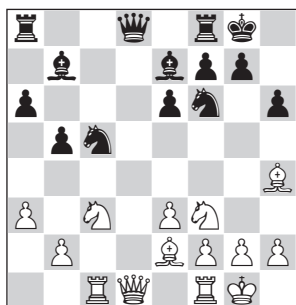
Game 86 Queen's Gambit Declined

Jose Raul Capablanca

Alexander Alekhine

World Championship Match, Buenos Aires 1927

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5
 ♘bd7 5.e3 ♙e7 6.♗f3 0-0 7.♖c1
 a6 8.a3 h6 9.♙h4 dxc4! 10.♙xc4
 b5 11.♙e2 ♙b7 12.0-0 c5 13.dxc5
 ♗xc5



The absence of pawns on the c- and d-files is a characteristic feature of the Queen's Gambit, but similar structures can arise from other openings as well.

Question: Evaluate this position.

I suspect that Capablanca began to make mistakes due to an incorrect evaluation of this position. The position is approximately equal, but it is necessary to take into account the differences in the arrangement of the opponents' pieces. The difference in the dark-squared bishops is especially noticeable: the ♙h4 seems to be out of play. Due to this, Black can play for a win.

Question: Find a clear way to equalize for White.

Point to note: If you see that, under some circumstances, your position can become dangerous, then you need to quickly reduce the game to a draw by applying the method of forced defence.

14.♗d4?!

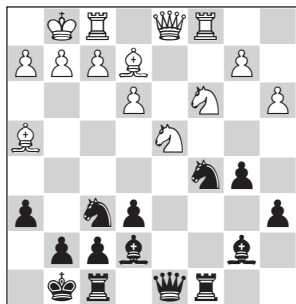
A move which allows Black to play to strengthen the position.

Point to note: There are different methods of defence. If you have a choice between a quiet and a forcing method, then you should choose the second because it is easier to control the situation on the board.

The strongest move in this position is 14.♙xf6, leading to a precise forced draw. However, in his somewhat sketchy analysis, Alekhine gives the move a question mark: 14...♙xf6 (14...gxf6±) and now it is necessary to calculate one tactical variation: 15.♗xb5. The ♗c5 is undefended, therefore 15...♖xd1 16.♖fxd1 ♗b3. White has many pieces hanging, but he has the important inclusion 17.♖c7 ♙xf3 18.♙xf3 axb5 19.♙xa8 ♖xa8. According to Alekhine, Black is better here, but the position remains level after a mutual massacre of pieces: 20.♖b7 ♙xb2 21.♖xb5 ♖xa3 22.♖b1 ♗d2 23.♖5xb2 ♗xb1 24.♖xb1.

14...♖c8

A useful move, taking control of the c6-square, so as to rule out tactics based on ♙xf6 and ♗xb5.



Question: Indicate a possible plan for Black, which may give him the advantage if White does not decide to change the position radically.

There is nothing concrete in this position. Black wants to strengthen the position by placing the pieces as follows: ...♔b6, ...♕fd8, pinning the knight on d4 and threatening ...e6-e5. Carrying out this plan will result not only in the queen on d1 not being able to find a good square, but also the other white pieces realizing how poorly they are coordinated. Moreover, the unloading exchange of light-squared bishops with 15.♕f3 will not solve the problem, and will lead to a weakening of the c4-square.

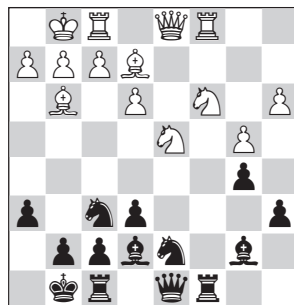
15.b4

Black's further plan will involve exploiting the weak c4-square.

15...♘cd7 16.♕g3?

The move 16.♔b3 defended the b4-pawn and prepared a3-a4, so as to exchange off the b5-pawn and thereby solve the problem of the potential outpost on c4. After the exchange off the b4- and a6-pawns, all the remaining pawns would be

on one flank, and a draw would not be far off.



Question: How can Black further strengthen his position?

Alekhine's task is to prevent his opponent's plan, involving ♔b3 and a3-a4, leaving him with the weak pawns on a3 and b4, and securing control of c4 and thus dooming White to passive defence. The search for an answer to the above question depends on logical reasoning. Which white piece takes part in controlling a4? Yes, the ♘c3. This means that we have to exchange that piece; for example, with ...♘d5.

Question: Immediately or after some preparation?

16...♘b6

In the event of the immediate 16...♘d5 17.♘xd5 ♕xd5, White, by playing 18.a4, gets rid of his weakness: 18...♔xc1 (18...♕xb4 19.axb5) 19.♔xc1 bxa4 20.♘c6 ♕xc6 21.♔xc6 ♕xb4 22.♔xa4 with compensation for the pawn in the shape of the bishop pair, or 22.♔d1 ♘b8 23.♔xa4 ♔b6 with a simple

draw). Therefore, Black should first take control of a4.

17. ♖b3 ♜fd5

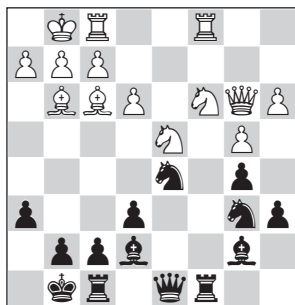
Also good was 17... ♖d7.

Question: White is on the precipice. Which natural move helps him retain chances of a successful defence?

18. ♙f3?

Without having made a single blunder and having made natural moves, Capablanca finds himself in a difficult situation.

It was absolutely necessary to play 18. ♙e4 now, to force Black to move away from the c4-square with 18... ♜a4.



Question: How can Black increase his advantage?

Alekhine's advantage is that he controls the light squares, so his plan must be based on their use. Ideally, he wants to get a 'good knight versus a bad dark-squared bishop' position.

18... ♜c4

The text move has a disadvantage: Black does not force the desired mass exchange of pieces.

Point to note: Outposts are best occupied by a knight or bishop, whereas for a rook it is an unstable post because it can be attacked by a minor piece or exchanged off.

Black needed to regroup. But after 18... ♖d7, the queen could be vulnerable to an x-ray along the d-file.

The strongest continuation was 18... ♜c4 with the threat of a fork on d2: 19. ♜fd1 ♜xc3 20. ♜xc3 (20. ♙xb7 20... ♜xd1) 20... ♖b6, and after any white move Black continues favourable exchanges; for example, 21. ♜cd3 ♙f6 22. h3 ♙xf3 23. ♜xf3 ♜b2 (the move 23... e5 also seems interesting to me, since it sets White difficult problems because of his bad bishop) 24. ♜d6 ♖b7 25. ♜b1 ♜c4 26. ♜d3 ♖e4 and Black clearly has the upper hand.

19. ♙e4 ♖c8 20. ♜xc4?

Better was 20. ♖b1 ♜d8 21. ♙d2 ♜xc1 22. ♜xc1 ♖a8 23. ♙c7.

20... ♜xc4 21. ♜c1 ♖a8 22. ♙c3?

22. ♙c5 ♙xc5 23. bxc5 ♜c8 24. e4 ♙e7 25. a4 leads to a draw.

22... ♜c8

The best continuation was 22... ♜xc3 23. ♖xc3 with the compulsory inclusion 23... ♙f6 24. ♙xb7 ♖xb7 25. a4 ♜d8 26. axb5 axb5 27. h3 ♖d5, so that in the end White finishes up a pawn down.

23. ♙xd5 ♙xd5 24. ♙xd5 ♖xd5

25. a4 ♙f6 26. ♙f3 ♙b2 27. ♜e1 ♜d8

28. axb5 axb5 29. h3 e5! 30. ♜b1 e4

31. ♙d4 ♙xd4 32. ♜d1 ♜xe3 0-1

Game 87 Caro-Kann Defence

Vladimir Kramnik

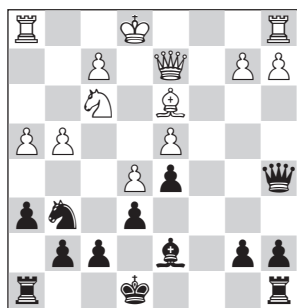
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Peter Leko

2741

World Championship Match, Brissago 2004

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♟f5 4.h4 h6
 5.g4 ♟d7 6.♞d2 c5 7.dxc5 e6 8.♞b3
 ♟xc5 9.♞xc5 ♞a5+ 10.c3 ♞xc5
 11.♞f3 ♞e7 12.♟d3 ♞bc6 13.♟e3
 ♞a5 14.♞d2 ♞g6 15.♟d4 ♞xd4
 16.cxd4



Question: Should Leko exchange queens?

The pawn structure reminds one of a French Defence, so one must always remember the basic black problem in such positions – his bad light-squared bishop.

16... ♞xd2+?

I play the French Defence myself, and if I had been in Leko's seat then, I would not have made such a mistake. Leko, by the way, specialized in open games (1...e5), as well as the Sicilian Defence and the Caro-Kann Defence. The latter opening has a closed variation in which Black brings the queen with check to a5, and then exchanges it with the move ... ♞a6 – 1.e4 c6 2.d4

d5 3.e5 ♟f5 4.♟d3 ♟xd3 5.♞xd3 e6 6.♞f3 ♞a5+ 7.♟d2 ♞a6. Probably, by analogy with this generally accepted manoeuvre, Leko happily went for simplifications without thinking about how to exchange the bad bishop on d7.

The correct move was to retreat one rank back with 16... ♞b6, in order to protect the b5-square for the light-squared bishop to enter. In addition, with the queens on, Black can create counterplay against the weakened king:

A) It is not good to place a pawn on the light square: 17.a4. After 17...a5 Black has counterplay related to the weakness of the b4-square: 18.h5 ♞e7-c6-b4 and thanks to the stable pawn structure on the queenside the king can castle long;

B) 17.0-0 ♟b5.

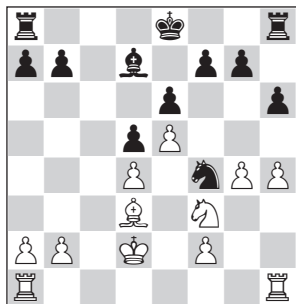
Psychological factors may also have played their part – this was the final game of the World Championship Match and Leko needed only a draw to become World Champion, which may have tempted him to go for the queen exchange.

17. ♟xd2±

Throughout the remaining part of the game, White will play against the bad bishop on d7.

17... ♞f4?

Black's last move was made with the aim of exchanging off the bishop on d3. But this helps White, who is left with his good knight against the bad bishop, in a closed position with a symmetrical structure.



Question: With which plan can Kramnik strengthen his position?

The white rook should be placed on c1, so as to exploit the only open file.

18.♖ac1!

Provoking the piece exchange by 18.♕e3 would lose a tempo.

18...h5?

Black opens the h-file, the second front, being the weaker side on the kingside, where the white pawns have already advanced. And this will only worsen his position.

White indicated his intention to invade with his rook on c7, but it was also advantageous for him to start play on the kingside.

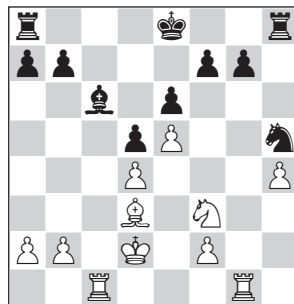
Black's chances of a draw would have been better after 18...♗xd3?! 19.♕xd3 ♖e7.

Point to note: In chess, one mistake often follows another – the opponent loses the thread of the game.

19.♖hg1 ♕c6

Black is trying to keep the c-file closed.

20.gxh5 ♗xh5



White has a huge advantage, but nothing forced is in sight. This means that the position needs to be strengthened somehow, the pressure needs to be increased, and tempo chess needs to be played to prevent the opponent from reorganizing and defending. But before moving on to specific actions, it is necessary to decide on which part of the board to play. At the moment, the situation on the kingside is frozen (the only weakness on g7 is reliably protected and there is no way to get to the f7-pawn). This suggests that White should act on the queenside.

The main plan is to break into the seventh rank with the rook. Moreover, if we hesitate, the black king will go to e7, the rooks will reunite, and after ...♖hc8, White will not be able to break into c7.

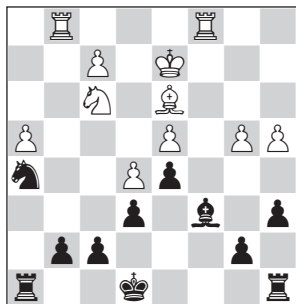
21.b4!

White creates the threat of b4-b5 and ♖c7.

Therefore, Black is obliged to play:

21...a6 22.a4

Energetic, but hasty play! The computer thinks 22.♖c5 is stronger. Let us turn the board around.



Question: What should Black do for a successful defence?

Despite the mistakes Leko has committed, his position is not yet lost. Of course, it is unpleasant to have to defend a bad position, but in chess, this happens occasionally when one side attacks and the other grimly defends.

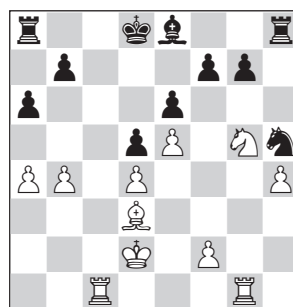
Point to note: If the opponent sacrifices a pawn and there is no immediate forced loss if we take it, then we should definitely take it so as to have some compensation for our sufferings – otherwise, the opponent will have a free advantage.

22...♔d8?

22...♙xa4 23.♖c7, and although White threatens to regain the pawn with ♖xb7, it is best to castle: 23...0-0! 24.♖xb7 ♙b5 with counterplay against the white king after 25.♙xb5; 25.♙c2 ♖fb8. Not good is 23...♙b5, since after 24.♙b1! ♙d7 25.♗g5, White can exploit the principle of two weaknesses: he can attack the queenside and the f7-pawn.

23.♗g5 ♙e8

Black has failed to connect his rooks, and his pieces are still out of coordination. In the line 23...♙e7 24.♙e3! ♖ac8 25.♙e2, the stranded knight prevents Leko from taking the a4-pawn, and he would have had to spend time reinforcing it with 25...g6 26.♙xh5 gxh5 (26...♖xh5 27.b5) 27.a5 with a decisive advantage. Note that all Black's pawns are fixed on the squares of his bishop's colour, which further enhances the strategic and aesthetic effect of the position.



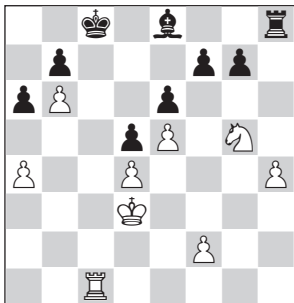
White has made great progress. He has succeeded on the queenside, but he is stopped by the fact that the intention to double the rooks with 24.♖c3, for the sake of an invasion along the seventh rank, can be met with 24...♖c8 or 24...♗f4.

Question: How else can he take control of the c7-square?

24.b5

The only move that leads to a precise win. After 24...axb5 25.♙xb5, the king is overloaded – he must defend both the bishop (and the f7-pawn in case of ♙xe8 ♗xe8) and at the same time

prevent the rook from entering via c7 (of course, White should not recapture 25.axb5? because after the opening of the a-file, Black gets counterplay). A sample line: 25...♖f4 26.♔e3 ♘g6 27.♙xe8 ♜xe8 28.♘xe6. **24...♗f4 25.b6 ♘xd3 26.♙xd3 ♜c8 27.♜xc8+ ♜xc8 28.♜c1+**



The rook will break through to the seventh rank and the knight will come to d6, and in conjunction with the fixed weakness on b7, White wins in all variations.

28...♙c6 29.♗xf7 ♜xh4 30.♘d6+ ♜d8 31.♜g1 ♜h3+ 32.♔e2 ♜a3 33.♜xg7 ♜xa4 34.f4

Intending f4-f5 and the king perishes.

34...♜a2+ 35.♔f3 ♜a3+ 36.♔g4 ♜d3 37.f5! ♜xd4+ 38.♔g5 exf5 39.♔f6 ♜g4 40.♜c7 ♜h4 41.♗f7+ 1-0

If 41...♔e8 42.♜c8+ ♔d7 43.♜d8#. Kramnik played the game very well: he converted his advantage according to the principle of two weaknesses. Having beaten Leko, he retained the PCA World Championship title.

We have looked at this example quite superficially. But if you want to understand the smallest details,

you can refer to the comments in the chess database.

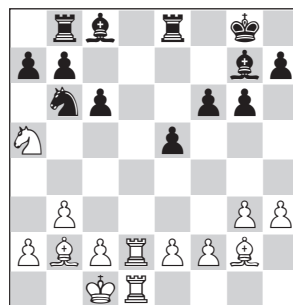
Game 88 King's Indian Defence

Vasily Smyslov

Lev Polugaevsky

Interzonal tournament, Palma de Mallorca 1970

1.♗f3 ♗f6 2.g3 g6 3.b3 ♙g7 4.♙b2 d6 5.d4 0-0 6.♙g2 e5 7.dxe5 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗xe5 9.♗xe5 dxe5 10.♜xd8 ♜xd8 11.♘d2 ♘d7 12.0-0 ♜e8 13.♗c4 ♗b6 14.♗a5 ♜b8 15.♜d2 c6 16.♜hd1 f6



Question: Assess the position and indicate a plan to strengthen it.

White has a decisive advantage. The only way to win is to make correct use of the weak squares d6 and d8, located on the open d-file. This is an example on the topic 'One open file in the centre' discussed in my first book. Although the black pieces are passive, White needs to make some effort to cope with the opponent's solid position.

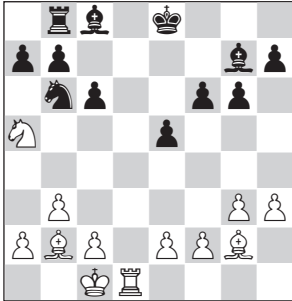
17.♜d8

The d6-square will be exploited by a different white piece. Of course, he should not breach the principles

of positional play by 17.f4?: 17...exf4
18.gxf4 ♖h6 19.♖f1 ♜d5±.
Black was forced to reply
17...♙f7.

Question: What must we do to ensure that the other rook reaches d8?

18.♖xe8 ♜xe8



Because the back rank is insufficiently defended, it is possible to exploit the weaknesses of d6 and d8 with the bishop manoeuvre ♗b2-a3-d6-c7.

19.♗a3! ♜d5

The best defence in the circumstances is to block the d-file.

Exchanging the enemy's attacking piece with 19...♗f8 fails because of 20.♗xf8 ♜xf8 21.♖d8+ ♜e7 22.♖h8 with the loss of a pawn.

20.♗d6

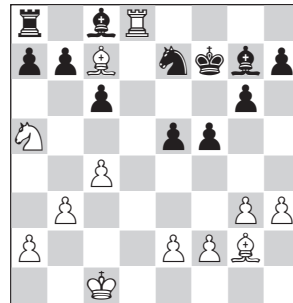
Smyslov's move retains a large advantage, but the strongest continuation was 20.♜c4: 20...♗f8 21.♗d6 ♖a8 22.♗xf8 ♜xf8 23.e4 ♜c7 24.♖d8+, forcing the win of a pawn: 24...♙g7 (or 24...♙e7 25.♖h8) 25.♜d6.

20...♖a8 21.c4 ♜e7

Polugaevsky continues to defend passively, but could instead have

chosen 21...♜c3 22.♖d2 f5 23.e3 (on 23.♜xc6, the pawn sacrifice 23...e4 was prepared), retaining drawing chances.

22.♗c7 f5 23.♖d8+ ♙f7



White has completed the first part of his plan: he has penetrated to d8 with his rook. The second stage is to exploit the d6-square.

24.c5

Intending ♜a5-c4-d6.

24...♜d5 25.♗d6

In the variation 25.♖xd5 cxd5 26.♗xd5+ ♗e6 27.♗xb7 ♖e8 28.♜c4, the white pawns promote.

25...♗f6 26.♖f8+ ♙g7 27.♜c4 e4

28.f3

The battle becomes slightly more complicated, but the anticipated result remains unchanged.

28...exf3 29.♗xf3 ♗g5+ 30.♙d1

♜c3+ 31.♙e1 ♜b5 32.♖e8 ♙f7

33.♖h8 ♗f6 34.♜e5+ ♙g7 35.♖e8

h5 36.e3 ♜c3 37.♜xc6 bxc6 38.♗xc6

♗b7 39.♖xa8 ♗xc6 40.♖xa7+ ♙g8

41.♖a6 ♗d5 42.c6 ♜e4 43.c7 ♗b7

44.♖a8+ ♙f7 45.♗b4 1-0

Smyslov accurately strengthened his position based on the fundamental principles of play in typical pawn structures with a single open file.