


***Chess Tactics
with
GM Thomas Luther***



Thomas Luther

JBV Chess Books

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Dear Reader!

Tactic is not only the most exciting and enjoyable part of chess but also the means for quickest improvement. If you know the tactical motifs you can not only win more often but even more important recognize possible threats of your opponent earlier and defend yourself better. Tactic is helpful for players of all categories. I myself and many of my grandmaster colleagues solve regularly combinations and studies; especially as preparation for a tournament to give the brain a kick.

Therefore I advice my students always to study tactics regularly. This book is a collection of material that I have given some of my students. I see it not only as training but also to introduce them to the different areas of tactics. Endgames and studies are all too often neglected, what is a big mistake as they are very important to become an accomplished player.

Additionally I wanted to pass on some knowledge about the history of chess. This topic is often seen as not interesting by young players. But it shows the development of chess and many interesting ideas and motifs.

They may look simple but are still valid and occur in the more sophisticated positions of modern day chess.

Readers who are not so much interested in improvement of their playing strength may enjoy the many brilliant and surprising ideas which smart players invented during about five hundred years.

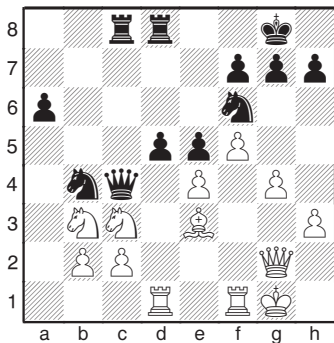
I wish you much fun and success with this book!

GM Thomas Luther

Combinations – the highlights of a game

A successful combination is always something special. It strengthens your motivation and confidence and especially for young players it brings them recognition, acceptance and praise.

Naturally the combinations of young players are most the time rather simple. With growing experience and knowledge the level of our combinations improves. Combinations often are stepping stones in ones chess career. I can show this with two of my own combinations:



Thomas Luther – Jens Buck

GDR Youth CH 11/12 Krostitz

1. ♖e3-b6 ♜d8-d7

If Black had seen the threat he could have done a bit better with

1... ♜d8-d6 2. ♘b3-a5 ♙c4xf1+

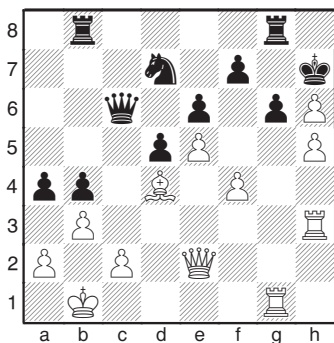
3. ♔g1xf1 ♜d6xb6

But probably he did not recognize that the attack on the ♜ was only a byproduct of the real threat

2. ♘b3-a5 and the ♙ is trapped.

2... d5-d4 3. ♘a5xc4 ♜c8xc4 winning

My earliest recorded combination at the age of eleven years. Later when I already had become an international master, I found a much deeper, longer and more sophisticated combination:



Thomas Luther (2385) – Stefan Mohr (2430)

GM tournament Altensteig 1990

1. f4-f5 e6xf5

[1... g6xf5 2. ♜h3-g3 ♙g8xg3

3. ♜g1xg3 a4xb3 4. a2xb3]

2. e5-e6 ♜b8-e8 3. e6xf7 ♜e8xe2

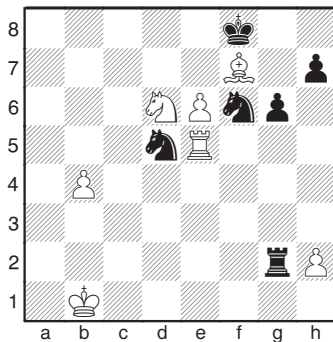
4. f7xg8 ♙+ ♔h7xg8 5. h6-h7+ ♔g8-f7

6. h5xg6+ ♔f7-e6 7. ♜h3-e3+ ♜e2xe3

8. ♙d4xe3 ♙c6-c3 9. g6-g7 resigns

This combination was chosen as best of the year 1990/91 by the German chess magazine "Schach" which made me very happy and raised my profile as a player on the way up. Today I fondly remember a lot of combinations which were nice and more important decisive for a tournament. But even for a grandmaster such combinations are rare. Out of my more than 3000 recorded games I guess around 150 combinations are worth mentioning and not only bread & butter positions. Collect your own combinations and look at them from time to time. It should be fun and boosting your confidence for the next tournament!

Combinations of very young players indicate their level of natural talent and potential. A nice example is the following position played by an eight and a half year old boy:



Etienne Bacrot – Luke McShane

WCC u10 boys Duisburg 1992

The white pawns are on the way to queening but Black shows strong nerves and a very good understanding of the position:

35...♞d5-c3+ 36.♚b1-c1 ♞f6-d5

37.b4-b5 ♞d5-b4 38.e6-e7+ ♚f8-g7

and White resigned as mate is unavoidable.

39. -- ♞b4-d3# oder 39...♞g2-c2#

We often see astonishing combinations made by chess prodigies. It's a sign of great talent und creativity. In critical situations they are able to find baffling solutions.

Luke McShane won the world championship u10 as a clear outsider. Etienne Bacrot some years later became the youngest grandmaster ever and is until today a world class player. McShane did not pursue a career as a professional player but nevertheless reached the elo 2700 ranks and is recognized as one of the most talented players. GM Nigel Short called him the "amateur world champion".

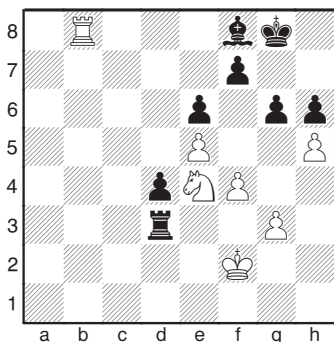
1. Beginning and developing of tactics

More than one thousand years ago in the early times of chess we find already tactical motifs. But from this time only the motif with rook and knight is employable today, known as the Arabian mate. With the change of rules around the year 1500 bishops and queen, afore slow and powerless cripples, became quick and far reaching pieces. It was a revolutionary development that changed the game completely. In the Arabian chess fifteen moves or more were needed till the first combat contact. The players used prefabricated positions to avoid the long and boring deployment. Now winning or losing could happen in only two moves or, even with a bit more playing skill, at a very early stage of the game.

In the following centuries our ancestors laid the ground work for today's tactical knowledge. Younger players often have no high opinion about the good old time of chess. In respect of the playing strength they are right, but the basics and ideas are mostly valid today and it is helpful to know the classical positions. They can occur any time even under totally other circumstances. Maybe not as a checkmate but as a threat which wins material or leads to some disadvantage. Let's have a look at some examples:

Arabian mate

The pure motif is possible in a corner. But with some "support" of enemy pawns or pieces that are blocking the path of their king it's possible in many other positions too. In the following example the Arabian mate occurs suddenly after an exchange of pawns opens 7th rank:



Peter Svidler (2727) – Sergey Karjakin (2762)
World Cup Baku (rapid) 2015

The game continued

43. ♘e4-c5 ♜d3-d2+ 44. ♚f2-e1

and White won at the end. Better was:

43. ♘e4-f6+ ♚g8-g7 44. h5xg6 f7xg6

45. ♜b8-b7+ ♚f8-e7

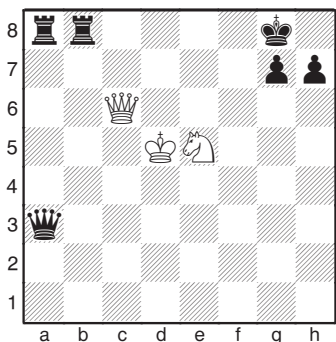
[45... ♚g7-h8?? 46. ♜b7-h7#

The old Arabian mate is still alive!]

46. ♜b7xe7+ ♚g7-f8 47. ♜e7xe6

winning.

Even in games between super grandmasters we see the old classical motifs!



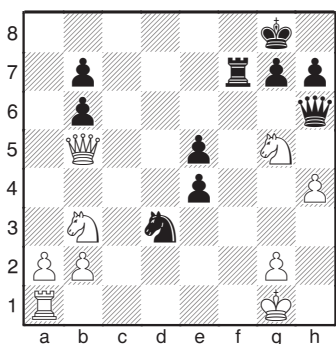
Lucena's "Smothered mate"

The Spaniard **Luis Ramires Lucena**, author of the oldest printed chess book, presented 1497 in his work the "smothered mate":

1. ♖c6-e6+ ♔g8-h8
- [1... ♔g8-f8? 2. ♜e6-f7# or 2. ♘e5-d7#]
2. ♘e5-f7+ ♔h8-g8 3. ♘f7-h6+ ♔g8-h8
4. ♜e6-g8+ ♜b8xg8 5. ♘h6-f7#

It's not an absolutely clear solutions as a second one is possible:

3. ♘f7-d8+ ♔g8-h8 4. ♜e6-e8+ ♜a3-f8
5. ♜e8xf8#



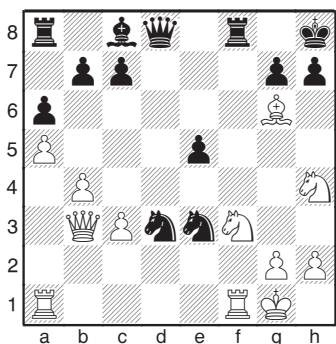
500 years later we find a nearly identical position in a game between two strong grandmasters:

- Kritz, L (2600) – Sadorra, J (2577)**
Dallas UTD 2013

With **28... ♜h6xh4??** [Expecting 29. ♘g5xf7 ♜h4-f2+ 30. ♔g1-h2 ♜f2-h4+ =]

Black freed the way for the smothered mate:

29. ♜b5-e8+ ♜f7-f8 30. ♜e8-e6+ ♔g8-h8
31. ♘g5-f7+ ♔h8-g8 32. ♘f7-h6+ ♔g8-h8
33. ♜e6-g8+ ♜f8xg8 34. ♘h6-f7#



Here the smothered mate is only a part of the solution:

- Vajda, L (2597) – Li, Z (2326)**
Sydney Open 2014

After **19. ♘f3-g5** Black missed the threat:

19... ♘e3xf1? [19... ♘d3-f4 20. ♜f1xf4 ♜f8xf4 21. ♘g6xh7 +-]

20. ♜b3-g8+ resigns, ♜f8xg8 **21. ♘g5-f7#;**

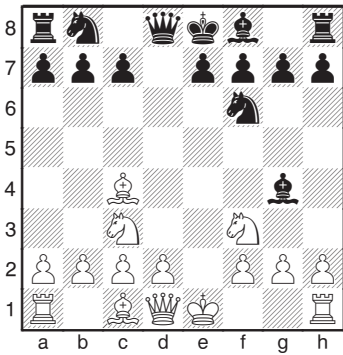
Hardly better is **20... ♔h8xg8**

21. ♘g6xh7+ ♔g8-h8 22. ♘h4-g6#

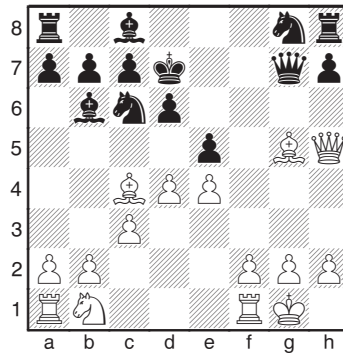
2. From the beginnings of modern chess to 1899

The experienced reader may miss here some of the famous combinations like Adolph Anderssen's "immortal game" or Paul Morphy's surprising sacrifice at the Paris opera. We let these out as the reader know them already or shall see them sooner or later in other books anyway and used less known combinations.

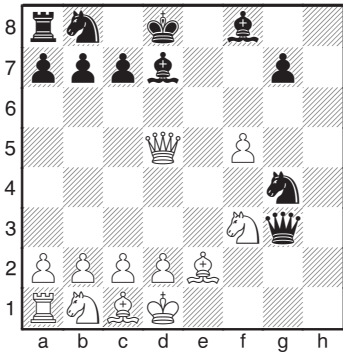
We show also some combinatorial endgame techniques analyzed and invented by great experts or masters in this time.



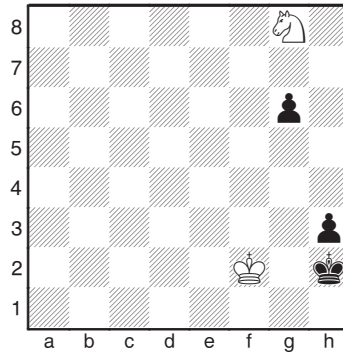
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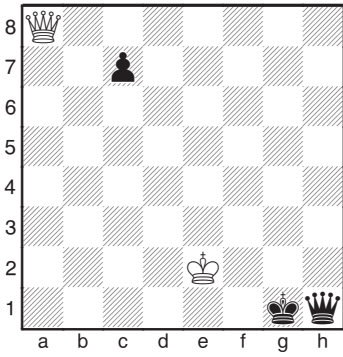
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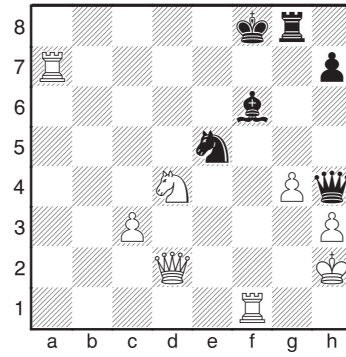
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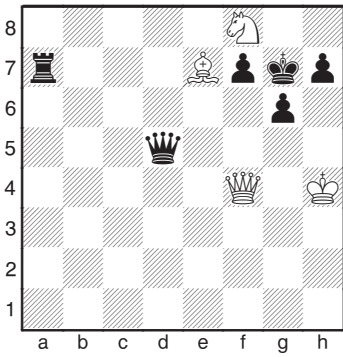
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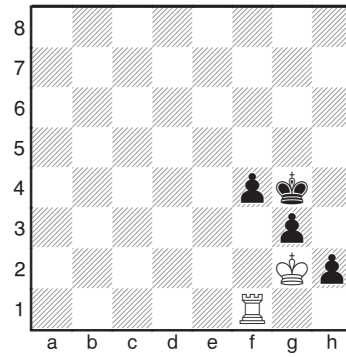
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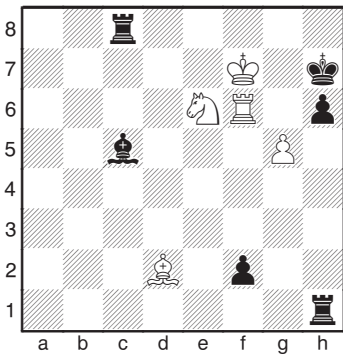
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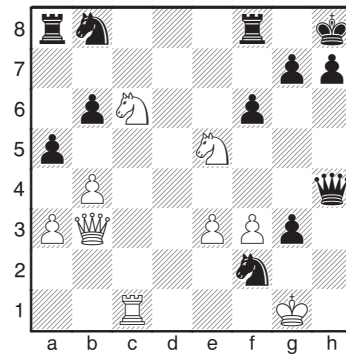
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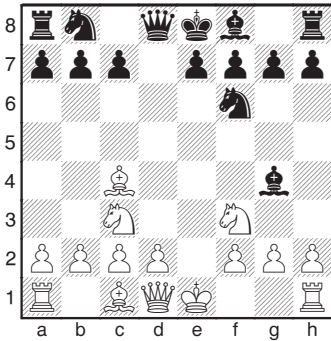
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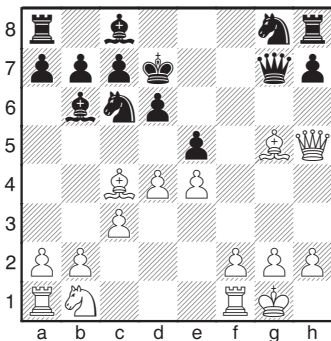


1

Solutions
"From the beginning to modern chess until 1899"

Francisco de Castelini – Narcisco Vinales
 Barcelona 1485

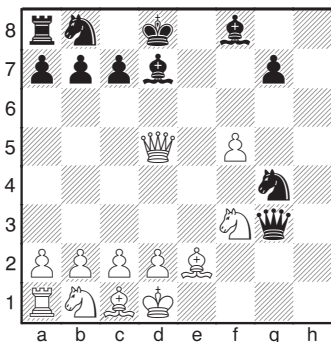
This is the oldest known combination with the rules of the new chess. But White overlooked
4.♙c4xf7+ ♚e8xf7 5.♘f3-e5+ ♚f7-g8
6.♘e5xg4 ♜f6xg4 7.♚d1xg4
 and played instead 4.h2-h3.



2

Greco – 1621

Gioacchino Greco (1600–1634) was not only the best player of his time, but a collector of combinations. Many of these we find still today in books about opening traps
1.♙c4-e6+ ♚d7xe6 2.♚h5-e8+ ♘g8-e7
 [2...♜c6-e7; 2...♚g7-e7 changes nothing]
3.d4-d5#



3 ●

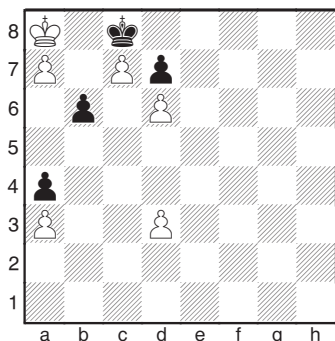
Greco – 1620

In Greco's manuscripts one can find some variations of the smothered mate. Here one of these:

1...♘g4-f2+ 2.♙d1-e1 ♘f2-d3+
3.♙e1-d1 ♚g3-e1+ 4.♘f3xe1 ♘d3-f2#

4. Checkmate - the ultimate goal

Checkmate is the ultimate goal of chess. But it's a rare guest in tournaments except of those for beginners and young kids. In a normal open we often find in let's say one thousand games only a few checkmates or even none at all. Players with some experience do not easily make grave mistakes which lead to an unavoidable mate. Or if an ending leads inevitable to mate they would resign early as playing to the end would only be an agonizing waste of time. If a mate is forced by tactical means we see two different types. One kind is individual and based on the special features of the position. The other kind are mates of a rather technical nature, e.g. the bishop sacrifice on h7, which oldest version we have seen already in the chapter "history", shown by Greco 400 years ago. The same can be said about the smothered mate that only needs some adaptation to the given position, but is easy to use in its different variations. Such kinds of mate need not much and sometimes no calculation at all but only recognition of their pattern. A trained player will see the opportunity in a split second and can move without thinking as the end – even if it may need a lot of moves - is well known, we could say pre-programmed. To become a good player you should know all the typical mate techniques. For the "individual" mates it's not so easy. You need good, deep and correct calculation. Checkmate puzzles are generally a good training as they let no room for guesswork or sloppy calculation. Either you find the mate or not, everything else means you did not well enough. Most players look down on mate puzzles of only a few moves but this can be wrong. Sometimes such a mate may not be easy to spot. This will be even harder in a real game where you are not told that such a solution is on the board. There's a big difference between training and real fight which means we have to work especially hard to be prepared for tournament chess. Here we see a mate in only two moves. You have enough material at your disposal so it should be no problem to find the mate in a few seconds, shouldn't it?



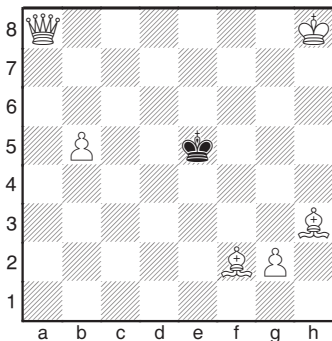
Checkmate in 5+ moves

Some readers may have an uneasy feeling about solving mates with so many moves. In fact we start here where we have ended in the first part. But remember: the difficulty of a checkmate task is not exclusively defined by length but at the degree of complication. Let's start with an example that should boost your confidence. I show you a **checkmate in 6 moves** and I'm absolutely sure you will solve it, quickly and unfallibly. I really can promise it. Here it is:

Lösung auf der übernächsten Seite

Would you imagine that a mate in 6 moves could be that easy? Okay, that's a composed position and an exception but in many cases it's easier as it looks. Many long mate lines lead to a kind of king hunt and this must not be exactly calculated. If you e. g. successfully pull out the king of his fortress in the open you will find a way to catch him. It's necessary to calculate the moves to break open his position. After that you can trust your instincts that a possibility for a mate should occur one way or another. Or, if there is really no mate, you will gain enough material to win the game. More than often this is the realistic solution as a mate is not forced but the game will be lost at the end. If you try to calculate all possible variations you will need a lot of time and may get confused and miss something at the end. The human horizon for calculations is not as far-reaching as the Computer's and our brain can neither store a lot of calculations nor compare these at the end. Concentrate on the first moves and don't worry if it will be mate or not. Did young Magnus Carlsen in the following example see or at least guess that his sacrifice would culminate 14 moves later in a mate?

The Californian grandmaster Jesse Krai wrote in 2013 a nice book called "LISA". Protagonist is the girl Lisa who wants to become a better chess player. She wanted to be taken as a student of grandmaster Igor Ivanov but had to go through the test to solve 500 two move problems until the next day. The position shown above caused her big problems. Are **you** dear reader ready to become a student of a grandmaster? Let's hope so or better let's work hard in this direction!



This position with five solutions – that information is given to you – caused her problems.

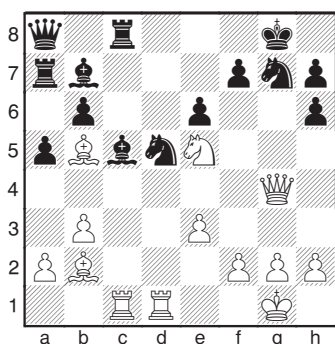
Can you, dear reader, solve the riddle and get accepted as a student of a grandmaster?

White has enough material at his disposal and it shouldn't be a problem to find the solutions in a few seconds, shouldn't it?

Solution on the next page

To get checkmated means to lose a game what's always a bit hard. But a good mate is although a kind of intellectual achievement of your opponent and you should respect this and give him credit for his skill. And if you have to lose isn't it better to do so quickly with a nice piece of tactic as e. g. after a boring game or even worse a long stretched gruelling ending?

Sometimes I think the advancement of chess comes at the price of the loss of fun at the game for many players. A nice example of a good attitude was shown by Thailand's chess team during the Olympiad Dresden 2008:



Rainer Buhmann – Boonsuep Saeheng
Olympiad Dresden 2008 GER – THA

1. Nxe5xf7 Kc5-f8
[1... Kg8xf7?? 2. Qg4xg7#]
2. Nf7xh6+ Kg8-h8 3. Qg4xe6 Nd5-e7
4. Qe6-g8+ resigns,
4... Ne7xg8 5. Nh6-f7#

Surely the reader has instantly recognized the motif "smotherd mate".

The player and his comrades were not sad or angry but smiled and took pictures of the winning opponent and the position. Thailand may not be the strongest chess country in the world but definitely one where players have a lot of fun.

And now let's have fun with the nice 30 checkmates of a lot of good players on the following pages. You can do it!

Solutions of the combinations on the previous page:

Mate in 6 moves – V. Ropke

1.d3-d4 b6-b5 2.d4-d5 b5-b4 3.a3xb4 a4-a3 4.b4-b5 a3-a2
5.b5-b6 a2-a1Q 6.b6-b7# As promised nobody can avoid the mate 6!

Lisa had to find the following mates in 2 moves:

1.Qa8-a7 Ke5-d5 2.Qa7-d4#

[1.Qa8-d8 Ke5-f4 (1... Ke5-e4 2.Qd8-d4#)]

2.Qd8-f6+ Kf4-e4 3.Qf6-d4#/f5#]

1... Ke5-e4/f4 2.Qa7-e3/d4#; 1... Ke5-f6 2.Qa7-g7#; and the last one is

1... Ke5-d6 2.Qa7-c5#

5. Chess in the time of 1900 – 1971

In the early years of the 20th century we see more strong players than ever and a lot of important international tournaments. The 2nd world champion Lasker is more or less inactive for many years but new young players come to the top, especially the world champions Capablanca and Alekhine, also Rubinstein and Nimzowitsch, later the founder of a new kind of chess openings.

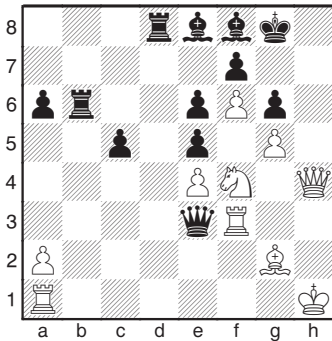
1914 the tournament in St. Petersburg is the highlight and the end of this era. The Russian czar awarded the title "grandmaster" to the five finalists of the tournament: Emanuel Lasker, Siegbert Tarrasch, Alexander Aljechin, Jose Raoul Capablanca and Frank Marshall. The Great War and its aftermath brought chess to a standstill until with the world championship match Lasker vs. Capablanca Havana 1921 slowly things got back to normal. In the time between the wars new ideas are prospering. The "hypermodern school" with their revolutionary view of the center and challenging the orthodox dogma changed the whole opening theory. Capablanca lost the title 1926 in an uncommonly long match against Alekhine in Buenos Aires (+ 3, - 6, = 25). Capablanca was one of the greatest prodigies of chess ever. His successor was much more the modern type of chess master, hardworking and with a lot of analytical preparation. He was the first world champion to retake his title after he lost a match against the Dutchman Max Euwe in 1935 (+ 8, - 9, = 13). The return match 1937 showed a much stronger Alekhine: + 10, - 4, = 11.

But the most important development in the chess world remains hidden for a long time. After the Russian Revolution and the turbulent and brutal years that followed the Russian – now Soviet – chess was nearly non-existent. Most of the prominent players had left the country (Alekhine and Bogoljubov would follow a few years later) and chess was even forbidden for a short time as a bourgeois pastime. Nobody would have expected that this stricken country would ever be on top of the chess world. The change was caused by young Ilyin-Genevski (1894-1941). As an ensign at the front line he was shell shocked and became a medical phenomenon. He, a strong amateur player, had forgotten everything about chess including the basic moves and had to learn anew from the very beginning! Ilyin-Genevski had been a communist since his youth, was even expelled from high school and had to live in Switzerland to finish his education. After the revolution he became a commissar of Vsevobuch, an organization for the pre-draft preparation of working people and a part of the Red Army. He used his influence to organize tournaments and started with his activities a chess mass movement. Helpful was that Lenin himself was a keen and skilled chess player but he was not directly involved as he was already ill and isolated by Stalin, his would-be successor.

The new national chess organization started in 1922 with 32 clubs and 1159 players, growing quickly to 24000 players two years later and made chess to a sport of highest national interest until today.

(Source to Ilyin-Genevski is his autobiographical work: Notes of a Soviet Master, translated by Bernard Cafferty, Yorklyn 1986.)

Nikolai Krylenko (1885-1938), the commissar of justice took over the lead from Ilyin-Genevski. He was surely not as friendly as Ilyin-Genevski but much more powerful (but nevertheless executed later). His power enabled the first international chess tournament of the newly founded Soviet Union 1925. Ilyin-Genevski, now free again to play himself and on the way to master rank, participated too and could beat world champion Capablanca:



Capablanca – Ilyin–Genevsky Moscow 1925

Capablanca planned obviously a mating attack with f3-h3 . Black sacrificed his f3 to prevent this and started a counter attack:

1...e5xf4 2...f3xe3

[2...f3-h3 e3xh3+ 3...h4xh3 b6-b2 is more or less the same as in the game.]

2...f4xe3 3...h4-e1 b6-b2

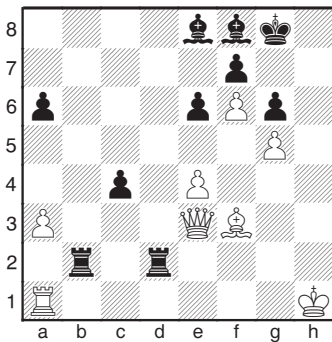
4...e1xe3 d8-d2 5...g2-f3 c5-c4

6.a2-a3 (D2)

To avoid g2-b4 with control of the c3-square and supporting the c-pawn. But Black has still another way to do so:

6...f8-d6 7...e3-a7 c4-c3

and Capablanca resigned. His lone h4 can not do much and the passed pawn will be decisive soon. One of the very rare losses of the "chess machine" Capablanca.



● D2

In the following ten years the Soviet Union developed with Mikhail Botvinnik a world class player. After the World War world champion Alekhine had died unbeaten as well as the women world champion Vera Menchik-Stevenson.

A tournament held in The Hague and Moscow 1948 showed clearly the strength of the Soviet chess: 1.Botvinnik 14; 2.Smyslov 11; 3./4. Keres and Reshevsky 8,5; 5, Euwe 4 points out of 20 rounds. In 1949 after a tournament at Moscow the women title was in Soviet hands too. Ludmilla Rudenko was the new world champion with 11,5 out of 15 games, followed by three other Russian players.

Botvinnik won some more matches or rematches in the following years and more than that developed a system of learning and preparation unknown to chess players before. Physical preparation, psychological support and scientific research on all areas of chess made the Soviet chess the hegemony of the chess world. In the Soviet Union chess was seen as a sport with regular training, selection of talents and creating of teaching materials. As a consequence of this, players like Tal, Petrosian, Bronstein, Korchnoi to mention only some household names dominated the top tournaments in the decades after the world war. This elite could challenge the whole chess world (As successfully proven in the match "USSR vs. the rest of the world" on ten boards at Belgrade 1970, result 20,5 : 19,5 for the Soviet team.) until 1972 a lone-some "American cowboy" could beat the system.

Important points for the development of chess tactics:

A shift from the open openings to half-open and the new group of closed (Indian) opening what means new combinatorial techniques;

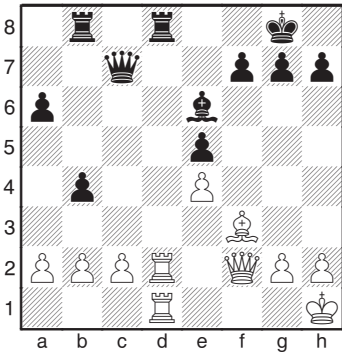
A generally improved playing level and a better understanding of openings even by amateurs;

More tournaments and more annotated games;

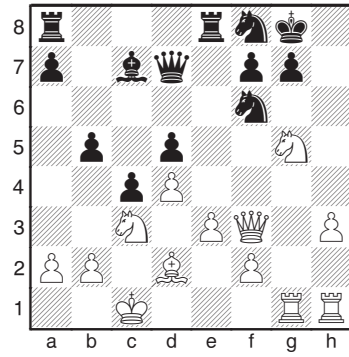
More textbooks and collections of tactics, to name some the works of Dr. Tarasch aimed to explain chess to a broad audience; or Nimzowitsch's "My System", or in the USA Fred Reinfeld (1910 – 1964), who published nearly 100 titles including "1001 Brilliant Ways to Checkmate" and "1001 Chess Sacrifices and Combinations", even published in Burmese Language. Now it was possible for a talented amateur to learn a lot about chess self-thought.

1960 introduction of the "elo-system" by the United States Chess Federation, constructed by the American mathematician Dr. Arpad Elo, after whom it is named. 1970 it was adopted by FIDE for worldwide use, delivering a tool for the award of international titles and for correct ranking lists.

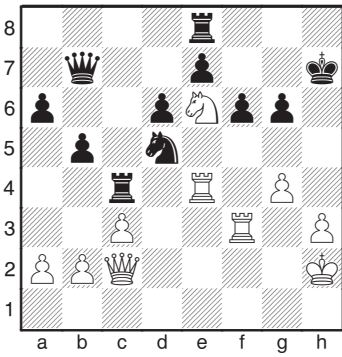
The "Chess Informant" was published 1966 for the first time. A twice-yearly book with around 700 new games, classified by openings, it was soon a must have for every ambitious or professional chess player. The use of figurines and algebraic notation made it easy to read worldwide. From 1968 onwards the Chess Informant also published selected combinations, collected on a CD 1991 (3000 pieces!).



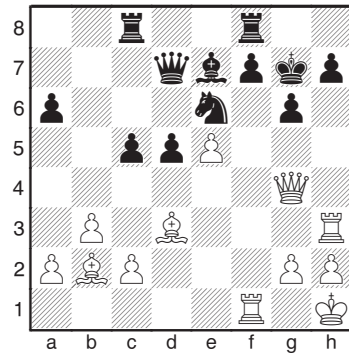
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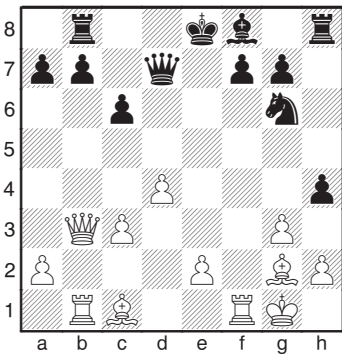
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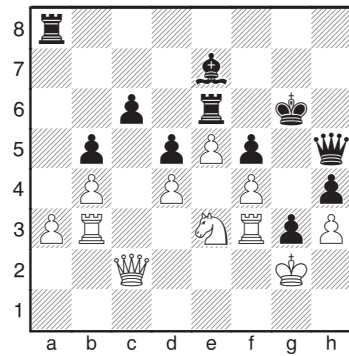
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