

Attacking 101: Volume #001

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Edited by: Patrick Hammond

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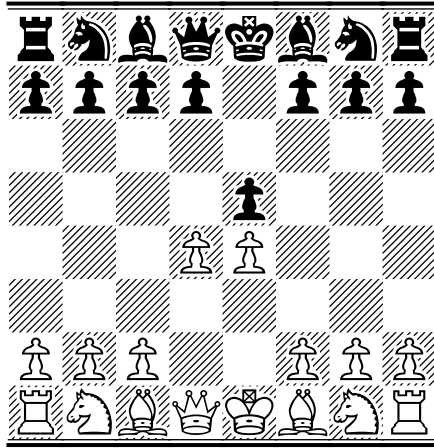
CONTENTS

Preface	7
Opening Selection	7
Dropping Pieces	8
Volume #001	8
Computer Software	8
Kudos	8
Center Game	9
Techniques Learned	9
Game #001 – MassCarnage – king92 (1339)	10
Game #002 – Joel Johnson – Daniel Pecherski (1134)	12
Game #003 – Joel Johnson – Gianni Giaconi (1280)	15
Game #004 – Joel Johnson – Phil Kusner (1380)	16
Game #005 – MassCarnage – cajo321 (1330)	17
Game #006 – FearNoEvil – Clever (1444)	19
Game #007 – MassCarnage – mukundan (1647)	20
Game #008 – MassCarnage – onti (1358)	21
Game #009 – MassCarnage – Drums (1459)	23
Game #010 – Joel Johnson – Phil Kusner (1480)	24
Game #011 – MassCarnage – esadpo (1542)	25
Game #012 – FearNoEvil – theKing (1583)	27
Danish Gambit	28
Techniques Learned	28
Game #013 – MassCarnage – adna (1479)	28
Game #014 – MassCarnage – adna (1473)	30
Alekhine’s Defense	31
Techniques Learned	31
Game #015 – MassCarnage – thisurthat (1654)	32
Game #016 – FearNoEvil – Boletus (1792)	34
Game #017 – Joel Johnson – Tyler Sypherd (1580)	35
Game #018 – Joel Johnson – Nikola Ogrizovic (1706)	36

Nge2 Caro Kahn	39
Techniques Learned	39
Game #019 – MassCarnage – ucanthide (1279)	39
Game #020 – MassCarnage – Akaba (1648)	41
Game #021 – MassCarnage – Clockwork64 (1477)	43
Sicilian Grand Prix	44
Techniques Learned	44
Game #022 – MassCarnage – Mondrogan (1445)	44
Game #023 – Joel Johnson – Mark Webb (1246)	46
Game #024 – MysteryMan – blackending (1674)	48
Game #025 – MassCarnage – mwu2007 (1327)	50
Game #026 – MysteryMan – happychess (1629)	51
Game #027 – MassCarnage – sergiofabian (1445)	52
Game #028 – MassCarnage – mentor123 (1642)	53
Game #029 – MassCarnage – qs16 (1663)	54
Game #030 – MassCarnage – jasep (1644)	55
Game #031 – Joel Johnson – Tim Suzman (1780)	56
Game #032 – MassCarnage – killaduck44 (1361)	58
Smith-Morra Gambit	59
Techniques Learned	59
Game #033 – MassCarnage – jimh (1456)	60
Game #034 – MassCarnage – nando3 (1633)	61
Game #035 – MassCarnage – DADASH (1651)	62
Game #036 – MassCarnage – jusmove (1559)	64
Game #037 – MassCarnage – jusmove (1540)	65
Game #038 – Joel Johnson – Richard Smouse (1521)	68
Pirc/Modern Defense	70
Techniques Learned	70
Game #039 – MassCarnage – lzeelden (1568)	70
Game #040 – MassCarnage – gladiator46 (1672)	71
Game #041 – MassCarnage – Green-Pigeon (1623)	74
Game #042 – MassCarnage – JorgeIV (1727)	76
Game #043 – MassCarnage – RRCHESSMAN2009 (1412)	78

Yugoslav Attack	79
Techniques Learned	79
Game #044 – FearNoEvil - baron25 (1545)	79
Center Counter	82
Techniques Learned	82
Game #045 – MassCarnage - Floppyboard (1573)	82
Game #046 – MassCarnage - torre1217 (1685)	85
♔d3 French	87
Techniques Learned	87
Game #047 – FearNoEvil – SnowTiger (1793)	87
Game #048 – Joel Johnson – Kevin Huynh (1434)	89
Game #049 – Joel Johnson – Anu Menon (1093)	91
Game #050 – MysteryMan – Lzmann (1763)	92
Game #051 – MassCarnage – BillietheKid (1375)	95
Game #052 – MassCarnage – Superman (1792)	97
Blackmar-Diemer Gambit	98
Techniques Learned	98
Game #053 – MassCarnage – Nielsferatu (1511)	98
Game #054 – MysteryMan – Kendo (1641)	99
Stonewall Attack	101
Techniques Learned	101
Game #055 – MassCarnage -- Launchywiggin (1501)	102
Game #056 – MassCarnage -- nigelst (1551)	103
Game #057 – MassCarnage -- orien (1680)	104
Game #058 – MassCarnage -- Reyad86 (1505)	105
Unusual Openings	106
Techniques Learned	106
Game #059 – FearNoEvil_US -- OrangSemelai (1516)	106
Game #060 – MassCarnage -- jnader (1171)	108

Center Game



Opening Lines

My definition of the Center Game includes all of the openings that can be transposed from the starting position above. The list would include the following openings:

Center Game (C21)
1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4

Bishop's Opening (C24)
1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4 3. Qc4 f6 4. f3 d5

Verasov's Gambit (C24)
1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4 3. Qc4 f6 4. f3 dxe4

Philidor Defense (C41)

1. e4 e5 2. d4 d6 3. Qc4

King Pawn Game (C44)
1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4 3. Qc4 c6 4. f3 Qc5

Scotch Game (C45)
1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4 3. Qc4 c6 4. f3 d6 5. dxd4 dxd4 6. cxd4

Giuoco Piano (C50)
1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4 3. Qc4 c6 4. f3 d6 5. dxd4

Two Knight's Defense (C55)
1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4 3. Qc4 f6 4. f3 c6

Transpositions

The Center Game is loaded with move transpositions. One has to be constantly aware of them.

Techniques Learned

The Center Game is designed for wide-open play. You immediately open up the diagonals for both of your Bishops. You want to develop your pieces quickly and attack fast. You are not concerned about recapturing the Black pawn on d4 right away should Black capture it with 2. ... exd4 as most players

do. You would prefer to capture the pawn back later with your Knight on g1 (♖g1-♗f3-♗xd4). The decision to delay the capture of the Black pawn on d4 provides Black with an opportunity to err by defending the advanced d-pawn with c5.

Our first attack game just happens to be a case where Black did exactly that.

----- **Game #001** -----

(W) MassCarnage (2200)

(B) king92 (1339)

[C21] ICC 5 12, 11/20/2010

1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.♗c4 c5?

So many weaker players are material mongers. They grab every piece of material they can and play to hang onto it as long as they can. As I tell my students, when your opponent plays 3. ... c5? to hang onto the pawn, let them keep it! The plan here is to play 4. ♗f3, 5. 0-0, and 6. c3 to permanently give them the pawn. Our compensation for the pawn will come in the form of faster development and weak squares to attack namely d5 and d6. Under the worse case scenario, where your opponent “plays like a

Grandmaster”, you will win back the Black d-pawn and have a very good position. Of course, I must point out that Grandmasters will not play c5 to hang onto the pawn. They will develop their pieces instead.

4.♗f3 h6?

So many players have been burned by the Fried Liver Attack that they consider the move h6 necessary to their survival. The truth is, developing a piece is more beneficial, like ♗c6.

5.0-0

White can already win with the move ♗e5! because of the Black errors. However, Chess Masters are not out to blast you off the board, even if at times it seems that way. Generally speaking, we want to develop most or all of our pieces before attacking. Undermanned attacks can be a very risky venture especially if the defender repels your premature advances. Part of a player’s growth is related to knowing when to attack and when to wait for more forces before proceeding.

5. ... ♗e7?

Once again Black should develop his Knight to c6. For the most part you want to develop your Knights before your Bishops because of the Knight's limited range.

6.c3

Once again 6. ♖e5 wins right away.

6. ... dxc3?

♗f6, d5, and ♖c6 are all better choices.

7. ♖xc3?

Shame on me!, I should never, ever miss the game ending move 7. ♖d5!. The move ♖d5 must always be checked out because frequently it wins a piece and the game instantly. Games #003 and #004 provide other examples of this opening trap.

7. ... ♗f6 8.e5

Another key move in this opening is e5. The move e5 causes problems for Black by:

- 1) forcing the Knight on f6 to move from his best square;
- 2) enabling White to open the e-file for his kingside Rook should Black decide to play d6 to develop his queenside Bishop; and

3) gaining space for White's pieces.

8. ... ♗h7

Unfortunately Black has no other quality alternatives.

9. ♗e1

This move is designed to prevent Black from playing d6 to complete the development of his queenside.

9. ... 0-0

The move 9. ... d6 would lose the Bishop on e7 after 10. exd6. Black would compound his issues by following up with 10. ... ♖xd6 11. ♖xd6 losing his Queen.

10. ♗f4

White continues to deter the Black move d6.

10. ... ♖c6 11. ♖e2

The White Queen vacates the d1 square for the queenside Rook.

11. ... ♗g5 12. ♗xg5!

Why trade the White Bishop for the Black Knight instead of the White Knight? The answer lies in square control. The White Knight on f3 controls the critical d4 square. If Black is able to play

♘d4, he will be able to block the White pressure down the d-file and unravel his bad position.

12. ... ♕xg5 13. ♖ad1

White completes the development of all his pieces. The White Rook exerts a great deal of pressure along the d-file. White's advantage in the position is roughly a pawn despite being down a pawn.

13. ... ♗e8 14. ♖e4

Once you have finished developing, the next step is to improve your position in some way. In games between strong chess players, the winner is usually decided by these piece improvement maneuvers. The other moves I considered in this position were:

14. h3 to remove the possibility of a back rank checkmate.

14. ♘e4 to attack the weak d6 and c5 squares.

I chose 14. ♖e4 because I liked the additional possible options of h4, ♕d3, ♖d5, ♗f5, etc.

14. ... d5?

Frequently when you apply

immense pressure on an opponent, they crack and lash out with a poor move. The move played fits into that category.

15. ♕xd5

♘xd5, ♕xd5, and ♖xd5 are all good moves. I chose ♕xd5 because I felt the threats of ♕xf7+ and ♕xc6 could not be adequately defended.

15. ... ♖e7?

Black needed to try 15. ... ♖b6 to defend his Knight on c6 again.

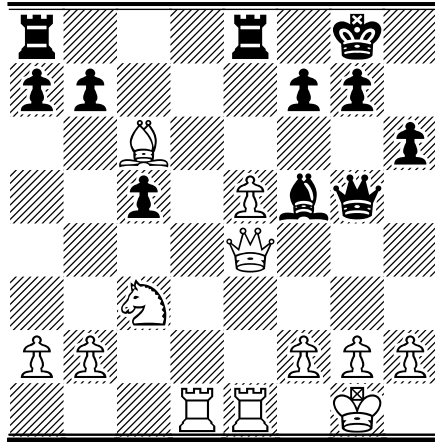
16. ♘xg5

The decision to capture the Black Bishop at this point in the game is predicated by the upcoming White capture of the Black Knight on c6. Basically the White Knight on f3 will no longer be required to defend against a subsequent ♘d4 move by Black. The other reason for the move is that White is winning and trading down helps the winning side.

16. ... ♖xg5 17. ♕xc6 ♕f5?

Black counters with a very poor move. When making moves of this type, you always have to ask yourself, "what happens if he just ignores my threat?" Here I can see

that I will end up with a Rook, Bishop, Knight, and a great position after the smoke clears.



18. ♕×e8! ♕×e4 19. ♖×e4

This move provides White with a tempo by attacking the Black Queen. The extra tempo will be utilized to rescue the White Bishop from danger.

19. ... ♖×e5 20. ♗d6 ♖×b2

Black is pawn grabbing in an attempt to reach material equality.

21. ♕×f7+ ♖h7 22. h4

White removes all back rank issues and plans on wedging in his Bishop on g6 after the move h5.

**22. ... ♖f8 23. h5 ♖f6
24. ♕g6+ ♖g8 25. f3**

Black was threatening to capture the White f-pawn with
25. ... ♖×f2+.

25. ... ♖g5 26. ♖e2

After realizing that Black could not capture the White f-pawn, White simply ignores the possibility and dares Black to capture the poisoned pawn.

26. ... ♖×f3?

Black's error leads to a quick finish.

**27. ♖e8+ ♖f8 28. ♖de1 ♖f6
29. ♖×f8+ ♖×f8 30. ♖e8 1-0**

In the Center Game you must always check for the move ♖d5 to determine if it works. I refer to this move as the Knockout Punch. The move works in a multitude of positions. The next two games illustrate the two types of positions where the move can be employed. As a general rule you never want to play ♖d5 if your opponent can defend all the threats. Your Queen being located on the d5 square leaves her susceptible to counterattack.

----- **Game #002** -----

This is another example of Black refusing to return the pawn on d4. The initial White strategy is

the same as when Black played c5. You still want to play ♖f3, 0-0, and c3 to let him have it.

(W) Joel Johnson (2250)

(B) Daniel Pecherski (1134)

[C21] Dave Small Invitational,
Phoenix, AZ, (Round 3),
06/10/2006

**1.e4 e5 2.d4 e×d4 3.♗c4 ♗c6
4.♗f3 ♗c5**

Once again Black refuses to return the pawn.

5.0-0 d6 6.c3

Frequently I play the alternate move h3 here to prevent the pin move, ♗g4, before proceeding with the original plan.

6. ... d×c3 7.♗×c3 ♗f6 8.♗g5

The determination of where to place the White dark-squared Bishop relates directly to what Black does with his dark-squared Bishop. If the Black dark-squared Bishop is outside the pawn chain (c7, d6) and cannot return to e7 breaking the pin, then White's dark-squared Bishop should be placed on g5 to pin the Black Knight on f6. If the Black Bishop is defensively posted on e7, then White should play h3 to prevent ♗g4, followed by ♗e3.

8. ... h6 9.♗h4

The purpose of pinning an enemy piece is to create pressure and opportunities for exploitation. Capturing the Knight on f6 would release the pressure and be a mistake.

9. ... ♗e6 10.♗d5 ♗×d5?

Black needed to play g5 to break the pin. The move ♗×d5? enables White to open the e-file for his Rook and displaces the Black Knight on c6 to a less desirable location.

11.e×d5 ♗e7?

Black should return the pawn with the move 11. ... ♗e5 12. ♖e1 0-0 13. ♗×e5 d×e5 14. ♖×e5. However many players have difficulty with the decision to return material, even if it relieves the pressure.

12.♗×f6

This move destroys the Black kingside pawn structure. Black was willing to head down this route because he plans on castling queenside and will attempt to utilize the open g-file to attack the White King.

12. ... g×f6 13.♖e1

In order to prevent Black's plan, White will apply severe pressure to the Black Knight on e7.

13. ... ♔d7

Black proceeds with his plan to castle queenside.

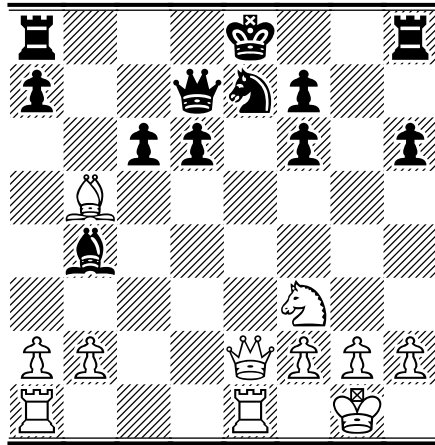
14. ♖e2

White brings a halt to the Black plan. If Black castles here, he will lose his Knight on e7.

14. ... ♕b4??

Black does nothing to remedy his problem. The moves ♖f8 and ♖d8 remove the pin on Black's Knight and are the first step towards preventing what happened in the game.

15. ♕b5! c6 16. dxc6 bxc6



17. ♕xc6!

The Black Queen is stuck between a rock and a hard place, she needs to defend the checkmate on e7.

17. ... ♕xe1 18. ♖xe1 ♖d8
19. ♗xe7# 1-0

Checkmate, not Queen capture!

----- Game #003 -----

The first example of the Knockout Punch occurs because the f7 square is extremely weak and defending the square causes a significant loss of material.

(W) Joel Johnson (2201)

(B) Gianni Giaconi (1280)

[C24] Valley Chess, Phoenix, AZ,
(Round 3), 06/08/2008

1. e4 e5 2. d4 exd4 3. ♕c4 ♗f6
4. ♗f3 ♕b4+ 5. c3 dxc3 6. bxc3
♕e7??

Black needed to play 6. ... ♕c5 so if White eventually played ♖d5, both the f7 square and his Bishop on c5 could be defended with the move ♖e7.

7. e5 ♗g8 8. ♖d5!

White heads right for Black's fatal weakness. I cannot stress enough that I would not play this move if the threat were not lethal. If you place your Queen on d5 and he

can defend your threat or you do not have a threat, your Queen will be misplaced and vulnerable to attack. I also would never play the move with the hope he will not see the checkmate. If I decide to threaten checkmate at any time, it is because the move is:

- 1) unstoppable;
- 2) creates a weakness;
- 3) gains a free tempo; or
- 4) wins material.

8. ... ♖h6

Black defends the threatened checkmate, ♜xf7#.

9. ♙xh6

White captures the defender and the checkmate threat is in play again.

9. ... ♜f8 10. ♙xg7 1-0

----- **Game #004** -----

The second example of the Knockout Punch demonstrates another situation where the move is lethal.

(W) Joel Johnson (2200)

(B) Phil Kusner (1380)

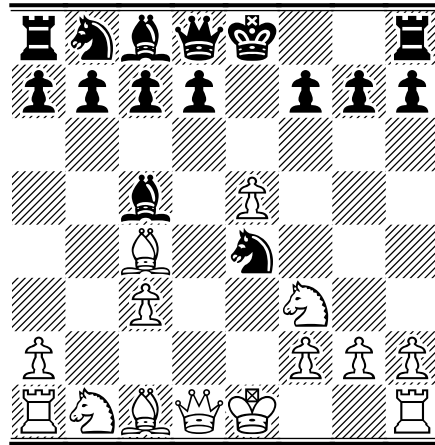
[C24] Valley Chess, Phoenix, AZ,
(Round 4), 08/31/2008

**1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.♙c4 ♘f6
4.♗f3 ♙b4+ 5.c3 dxc3 6.bxc3
♙c5**

This time around Black plays the correct move ♙c5.

7.e5 ♗e4??

A poor response to the move e5, as Black needed to play the move d5. White would have a small advantage after 7. ... d5 8. exf6 dxc4 9. ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 10. fxg7 ♜e8+ 11. ♜d1.



8. ♜d5!

The double attack Knockout Punch wins the Black Knight on e4 after Black defends the checkmate on f7. Both Black Knight moves that defend the f7 square, namely ♗g5 and ♗d6, just leave Black in deeper trouble after White captures the Knight.

8. ... ♖e7 9. ♗x e4

Many high rated players resign here because of the piece loss. Much like Black, I need more convincing before proceeding down that path. Also I have won many, many completely lost positions. It is a special skill of mine. How did I reach the point where I could accomplish this feat on a regular basis? By fighting to the bitter end in every game. Resigning at the first sign that you are losing robs you of the opportunity to work on this skill. And conversely if you compete regularly against players who resign early, you will never learn how to put people away, another important chess skill.

9. ... d6 10.0-0

When you have won enough material to win the game, as in this case, you want to complete your development and prevent any counter play. What you should not do is spend moves grabbing more material before all your defensive issues have been resolved.

10. ... ♗c6 11. ♖e1

This move defends the White Queen, which breaks the pin on

the White e-pawn. As a result, the move threatens to capture on d6 followed by trading Queens. After all trading is a primary method of closing out a game for the player who is winning. If you trade all the pieces off the board, Black will find himself still down the Knight.

11. ... ♗e6 12. e×d6 ♗×d6

Over the next few moves White proceeds to trade everything he can.

13. ♗×e6 ♗×e6 14. ♗×e6+ f×e6 15. ♖×e6+ ♗f7 16. ♗g5+ ♗f8 17. ♗a3 ♖e8 18. ♖×e8+ ♗×e8 19. ♗×d6 c×d6 20. ♗d2 h6 21. ♗e6 g5 22. ♖e1 ♗d7 23. ♗d4 1-0

----- Game #005 -----

Black's passive play leads to a Lay Down Sacrifice to expose all the weak dark squares around the Black King.

(W) MassCarnage (2200)

(B) cajob321 (1330)

[C21] ICC tourney 387829 (3 0), (Round 4), 08/31/2011

1. e4 e5 2. d4 e×d4 3. ♗c4 ♗c6 4. ♗f3 ♗b4+ 5. c3 d×c3 6. b×c3

The move ♗×c3 is also good but I prefer b×c3.

6. ... ♗c5

The move ♔e7?? would be a blunder due to the Knockout Punch move, ♖d5.

7.0-0 ♜f6

Black should play d6 hindering the White move e5.

8.e5! ♜g8?

Black's first choice in response to White's move e5, should be the counterattacking move d5!. The only exception is when Black has a Bishop on e7 and White can capture two pieces for one.

9. ♕g5

Another alternative for White is 9. ♕xf7+ ♖xf7 10. ♖d5+ ♖f8 11. ♖xc5+ winning the pawn back and preventing the Black King from castling.

9. ... ♜ge7 10. ♜bd2 0-0 11. ♜e4 ♜b6?

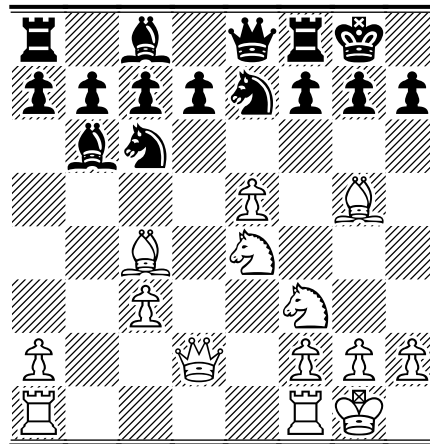
Black had to play either d5 or d6. Now Black is losing.

12. ♖d2

White is eyeing the Lay Down Sacrifice move, ♜f6+. The move ♖d2 prepares for a subsequent invasion of the weak dark squares around the Black King. As it turns out the move ♜f6+ could have

been played immediately.

12. ... ♖e8



13. ♜f6+!!

A very powerful Lay Down Sacrifice because Black has no choice but to accept the material, otherwise White will capture his Queen on the next move. The other reason why this move is so strong relates to the exposing of all the weak dark squares around the Black King.

13. ... gxf6 14. ♕xf6

Now White controls the g7 and h8 squares and Black has no means of fending off the invading White Queen.

14. ... ♜f5

The move ♖g6 stops the White check along the g-file but leaves the weak g7 square as easy pickings after ♙h6. And the problem with ♗f5 is ...

15. ♙g5+ ♗g7 16. ♙xg7# 1-0