

Attacking Manual 1

2nd edition

By

Jacob Aagaard



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Attacking Manual 1 - 2nd edition

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Key to symbols used

?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
!?	a move worth considering
?!	a move of doubtful value
#	mate
(n)	n th match game
±	White is slightly better
∓	Black is slightly better
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
=	equality
≡	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
∞	unclear

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Thank you!

Jacob Aagaard

Glasgow, March 2008 and September 2009

Preface to the second edition

Confession: I used to be a serial writer. From 2000 to 2004 I wrote more than twenty books; some of them with other people, some of them alone, some of them with my name on the cover, some of them not. I was doing so without a true goal or direction, simply pleasing people, or helping the publishers to fill a hole in their schedule. I think these books were not too bad in general and some of them even a good deal above average. One of them even picked up an award, while another was nominated for one.

But deep down I knew that my books were not as good as they could be. I felt that the work I was doing was pleasing a lot of people, but not me. It was somewhere during this period, in 2001 to be a bit more exact, that the idea of this book came into being. I was very interested in generalisations in chess (despite this having been unfashionable for a long time) not because I believe that there are any shortcuts to playing good chess, but because I believe that there are recurring strategic themes in chess, and to know them will help you to develop your chess intuition.

I had written a few chapters in 2003, when I decided that I wanted to set up a chess publishing house, and in this way move to a different place in the chain of people creating chess books. I had done so mainly because I had produced 35% of the Everyman Catalogue that year, but felt that I had very little control over the final product. With Everyman still going strong six years later, and Quality Chess not doing too badly either, it seems that it was mainly a matter of taste.

In 2004 I finished all my contracts with Everyman and co-founded Quality Chess. At first I was working as an editor and trying to make a living without writing for other companies, while Quality Chess struggled through the always tricky first years of business. I wanted to finish this book, but it was difficult to find the time and then I got distracted, and wrote *Practical Chess Defence*, which was always meant to be a small quick project, along the lines of what I had done with Everyman. However, it had become clear that once released, it was not possible to cram the beast back into the cage. That book was big, difficult and almost anti-commercial. I still love it dearly.

It was only in 2008 that I finally finished this book. I have to admit that over time I became very emotionally attached to this project, because of what it meant. I had left Everyman and founded Quality Chess because I wanted full control over the look of this book, and because I wanted to publish *Questions of Modern Chess Theory* and *The Berlin Wall*. The latter two were published in the autumn of 2008 to great critical acclaim, while the *Attacking Manual 1* was a bit of a disappointment – not least to the author.

The first edition of this book was written from the heart. It had a lot of interesting ideas, I think. However, the typesetting and the proofreading had gone all wrong and this ruined the experience for many readers, as well as for the author.

I am not sure that this book can justify a second edition, nor if what I feel are valuable insights into chess strategy and dynamics are really so, but because of its history, I was able to talk my editor John Shaw into having it printed.

One of the questions about this book is if it is truly original. To some extent yes, and to some extent, no. Obviously there has been a lot written about dynamics in chess in general. However, the books I have read have all mentioned dynamics as a self-explanatory phenomenon, or even confused tactics with dynamics. I have yet to come across a coherent theory of dynamics, which is why I decided to bring some often-described elements together with some observations of my own. It is very difficult for me to evaluate to what extent this has been a success or not, as no one has challenged this theory. I hope the reader will make up his own mind, but most of all, I hope he will find this book helpful in understanding the great mystery which is chess strategy.

Jacob Aagaard

Glasgow, September 2009

Bring it on – an introduction

My aim with this book and its companion volume is to teach you everything there is to know about attacking chess. Not a small aim and already by its very definition it is clear that failure in this project is guaranteed.

However as a chess player I know there is almost always more to be learned from defeats than victories, especially the spectacular ones. So, though these two books will inevitably fall short of their aim, I hope the reader will agree that at least I fought valiantly to make sure that it was not by much.

In this volume I will present the general rules underlying attacking chess. This statement alone requests scrutiny, so we might as well get specific immediately.

By rules, I mean standard replies that can be beneficially used in many situations, not sentences you have to repeat at the board and use to thump your ability to reason. Another word commonly used for having such standard replies in your fingers is “intuition”.

Before we get ahead of ourselves by assuming that we agree on a term commonly used in chess writing, I had better define what I think when I say intuition.

Intuition is the word we use for the quick splurge of automatic interpretation provided by the subconscious part of the brain. This is based on conclusions you have made in the past, sometimes consciously, sometimes not. These could be good interpretations or they could be bad. Mostly they are good, but often they are not good enough. In this book I will offer a number of strategies to add to your intuition regarding the nature of attacking play, by presenting simple effective guidelines.

When I talk about attacking chess I am talking about an attack against the king, although I, in general, am trying to describe how dynamics (also known as short-term factors) can be utilised in the best way. Let me explain:

The rules we know from Tarrasch and Lasker and others mainly relate to static (long-term) factors, such as pawn structure, space and other positional factors. Even though they have elements of dynamic thinking in them, they came out of a worldview that was inherently mechanical.

The only exception I can think of is from possibly the greatest contributor to chess, the first World Champion, Wilhelm Steinitz. Steinitz said: **“if you have an advantage, you must use it immediately, or it will disappear”**. This is incompatible with a more modern rule relating to winning technically won endings, known since the days of Rubinstein and preached by all trainers today, “do not hurry”.

Both rules are correct. The Steinitz rule relates to an advantage in time, while the Rubinstein rule relates to an advantage in structure and/or material.

These two opposing and/or supplementing factors are well known from physics. There they call them *potential* (static) and *kinetic* (dynamic) energy. The rules we will investigate in this book are all related to getting a feeling for general dynamics. The static aspects of chess will have to wait till another day.

The style of this book and how to use it

My experience with chess books is as follows: If you want to use them to improve your playing strength, you need to work with them. But to be able to enjoy them, you need to be able to read them.

So in a Solomonic attempt to please everyone, I have divided this book up as follows:

The first seven chapters discuss various principles of attacking chess. I have tried to design the material in such a way that this part of the book will be as pleasant to read as possible, and it can all be read and understood by decent players. I hope the target audience of this book, players rated between 1700 and 2500, will be able to follow most of the action in the games by reading the text and following the moves in their head between the diagrams. This might sound too pleasant to be able to offer the conditions for improvement you would normally associate with hard work. I am not sure this is so. I want to explain these principles and hopefully I will be successful in doing so without boring the reader.

However, if you are into hard work, deep ideas and complex chess, then Chapter 8 is definitely written for you. There I will illustrate these principles in action in a handful of great games. In that chapter we will go into the analytical details we have sporadically waved at in the previous chapters. I am afraid to say that most readers will need a chessboard and a place you can relax in to get the most out of these games.

Finally, I have collected 50 exercises. I spent a long time selecting them and then pruned my collection more often than I would have liked to get down to this number. I apologise in advance to those who find these exercises hard. They are hard. At the end of the day, effort has to be put in before new abilities can be taken out.

Diagram introduction – a new idea

I have included something I have not seen in other books. Before each chapter I have selected a number of diagrams representing positions from the coming chapter for you to consider, should you feel so inclined. It is my experience as a trainer, as well as someone who has had to work to improve, that “reading and nodding” (Daniel King) can create a false impression of how difficult chess really is. By thinking over these positions for up to 10 minutes each, you will have a first impression of what your intuition has to say about these positions, before I say what I think about them. Though we might never meet, this is a way for us to have a constructive dialogue. I hope you will accept this offer.

A sneak preview

Although the chapters are colourfully named, the principles discussed in this book are very simple.

They are:

- 1) **Include all your pieces in the attack**
- 2) **Momentum**
- 3) **Colour schemes**
- 4) **Numbers over Size**
- 5) **Attack the weakest point in your opponent's position**
- 6) **Attack the strongest point in your opponent's position**
- 7) **Evolution and revolution**

These principles are what I would call **global principles**, not so much because they are relevant in all positions, but because they are relevant in *all kinds of positions*. A good understanding of them will certainly improve your attacking chess, even without the techniques I will discuss in Volume 2.

Before we go into the details of each of these principles, I would like to show three games where they are in play.

Although I am out to teach a few principles and show their use in a dynamic environment, I have also tried to present games that in themselves are attractive and instructive. I think this is always an obligation for a chess writer, but never more so than in a book that aims to improve your chess intuition.

Wolfgang Nicklich – Ralph Junge

Sokolsky Opening
Correspondence, East Germany 1980

1.b4

The Orang-Utan or Sokolsky Opening. Not a great opening. Actually it is possible to imagine that White's position is worse than if this move had not been played. It should be mentioned in White's defence that the two players also played a game with reversed colours in the same opening, again with Black prevailing. The suspicion is that this was a theme tournament...

1...e5!

The most energetic response.

2.♙b2 ♘xb4 3.♙xe5

White's idea is to take this centre pawn and hope for some positional reward later on. Unfortunately it costs a lot of time, which allows Black to build up an attacking position.

3...♘f6 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♙b2 0-0 6.e3 d5

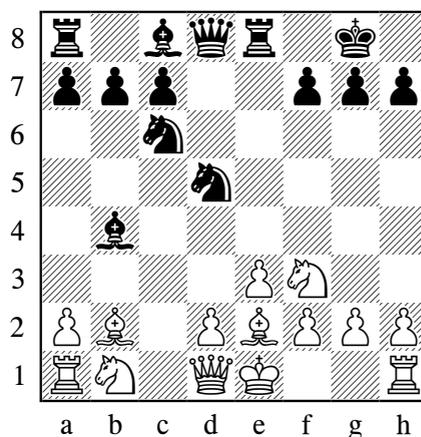
Black's position is pleasant. He has control over the centre and has completed his development.

7.c4

This and the next few moves are theory, but the keen observer will realise that White is continuing to neglect his development, while Black is getting his pieces to more and more attractive squares.

7...♞e8 8.cxd5 ♘xd5 9.♙e2

This is the first interesting moment of the game.



Black has a solid lead in development and decides to go for an idea that is more fascinating than correct. His argument goes like this: because White can get his king into safety on the next move, Black decides that he has to

attack. After a normal move such as 12.♘c3 the chances are probably even.

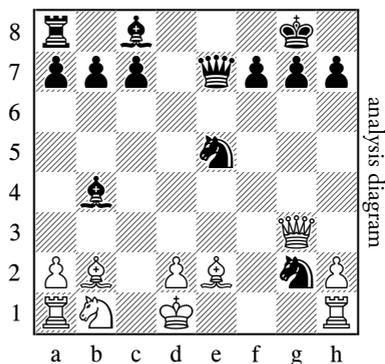
The tempting move was 12.♘e5!, trying to frustrate Black's build-up. In a strict sense this is not improving White's development, but I ask you to take in these "rules" with an open mind. We want to respect our development, but also to neglect it when it is beneficial to do so.

In this particular position White is obstructing Black's development as well. Black does not have time to gain a tempo with ...♙e6, which is why the shallow observation on move 11 is incorrect. Meaning, it was correct in the way that the game proceeds, but incorrect in the way it should proceed with best play.

It turns out that Black is not fully prepared to back up his sacrifice with the full force of his army. Only by starting the conflict now will White be able to exploit it. This is an important part of the Evolution/Revolution aspect, and one we will look at when we are talking about Momentum in Chapter 2.

In dynamic chess you will only get one chance to do something. If you do not take it, the tide can change and your dreams can be washed away.

After the critical 12.♘e5! play should probably continue with 12...♘g4† 13.♖d1. The point behind White's play is that after: 13...♘e5 14.♙g3!



he has created play against the black king. The best move appears to be 14...f6.

In this position White is a rook up for three pawns. His king is quite shaky, but Black has exchanged his most prominent attacker and will therefore have to show exceptional play to justify this heavy investment.

12...♘g4†

Suddenly all Black's moves are coming with tempo. This is a typical illustration of momentum as seen in Chapter 2.

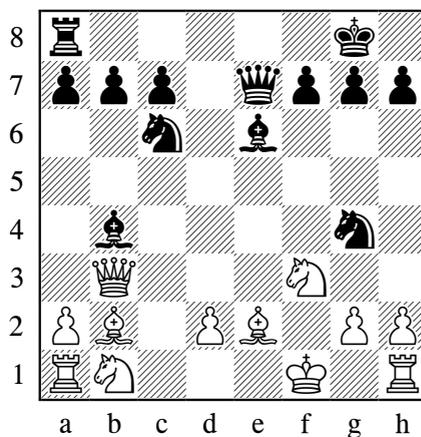
13.♖f1

13.♖e1 ♙e6 is no better.

13...♙e6

Another tempo move. Black is aware that in order to succeed he will need to get all of his pieces into the attack.

We have reached another critical moment for White. There are three options, but only one of them does not lose.



14.♙a4?

It seems that it was absolutely necessary for White to keep the bishop on e2 protected.

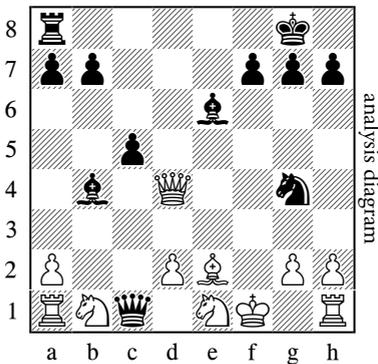
Also insufficient was 14.♙c2? ♙e8 15.♘c3 ♙c5! and Black was already winning in

Dopper – Van Loon, Netherlands 1990. The point is that White cannot protect f2 without moving the d-pawn forwards, which would leave a big hole on e3. From there we have the characteristic distance to the king and the queen, which the g4-knight will be happy to exploit after the c6-knight has surrendered itself for the common good.

14. ♖d3! was the only move.

It is very tempting to bring in the rook, and a superficial reading of the first chapter, which discusses including all the pieces into the attack, would certainly make you reach for the rook. But if you stop and look at the position more critically, spooked by the obvious nature of the rook move, you will realise that the queen is not only well placed on d3 for defending e2, it is also in the way of the d-pawn.

Realising this, you will see that Black has an option that he should not waste in 14... ♗c5!, targeting f2. Then 15. ♕d4 is forced and so is 15... ♖c1† 16. ♘e1 ♘xd4 17. ♖xd4 c5.

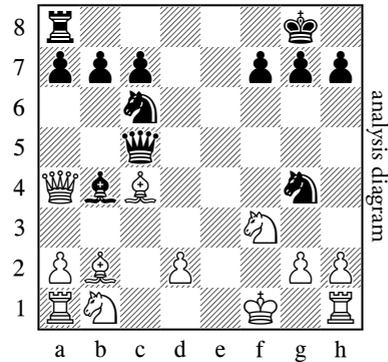


We will stop here. Black has sacrificed a rook, but has arrived at a position where of the white pieces, only the queen has any influence on the course of the game. White's knights are both pinned and his rooks trapped in the corners. I think a modest evaluation would be 'sufficient compensation for the rook', while a more objective evaluation might be 'with a crushing position'.

In the game after 14. ♖a4? Black also faces this interesting choice. It is tempting to bring in the rook, but as we have just seen, we should never yield uncritically to the impulse of playing the most natural move without investigating whether or not it is also the best move. Chess is far too complicated to be played with a superficial approach.

14... ♜e8?!

This turns out to be an inaccuracy. Though it does not lose all of Black's advantage, it is not as convincing as the winning shot 14... ♕c4!. The point is that after 15. ♕xc4 Black has 15... ♖c5.



The double threat is lethal and the defence is playing peek-a-boo.

We could imagine White would want to get as much as possible for his bishop, but after 16. ♕xf7† ♖xf7 17. ♘d4 Black is ready to bring in the rook with 17... ♜f8!, after which he is completely winning.

This line is very instructive in the sense that it shows how we should understand the notion of bringing all our pieces into the attack – intelligently. Black wants to bring the rook into the attack, so it should be a constant factor in his calculation, but he should also be open to other options, such as the stunning bishop sacrifice.

We can also choose to look at this option from another side. Once at c4 the bishop is

attacking e2 and the sequence is based on an attack against the f2-square. These are the squares where Black is likely to find success as they are the least protected in the white position. I, surprisingly, call them the weakest squares. We will discuss them in Chapter 5.

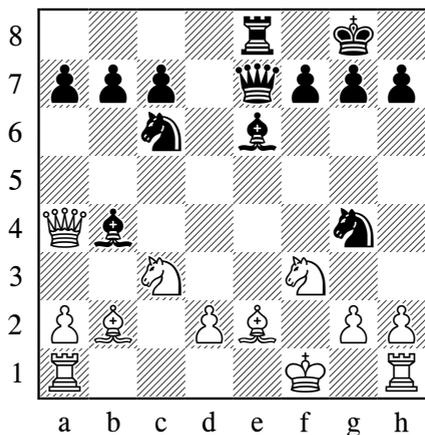
Though objectively 14...♖e8 is dubious, it is hard in practice to find White's defence on the next move. But it was certainly possible to find the bishop sacrifice and notice its devastating effect.

15. ♘c3

White tries to catch up in development, but he needed a non-standard solution to climb out of the hole he is in and over his mountain of problems.

After 15. ♘a3? Black has the blow 15... ♙xd2!, based on 16. ♘xd2?! ♙f5 17. ♖e1 ♗e3! with a winning position.

The best move was 15. h3!. After Black executes his threat of 15... ♙b3 and White replies with the forced 16. ♗b5 a6 17. ♗d3 ♙c2, he would have to fight with three pieces for the queen after 18. hxg4! ♙xd3 19. ♙xd3. Black is better here, maybe even much better. But simply because the position is non-standard it is much harder to win than a position where you have an extra pawn without concessions.



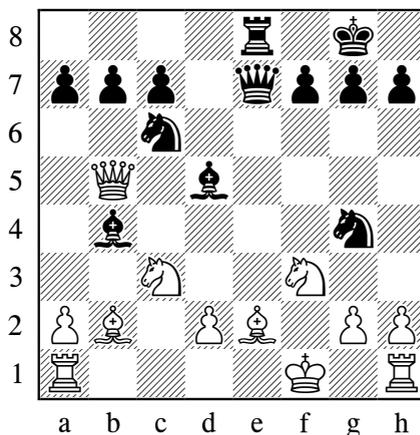
15... ♙d5!

Creating the double threat of taking on f3 and c3. White's choices are limited.

16. ♗b5

Black's main point comes out in the following nice variation: 16. ♖e1 ♙xf3 17. gxf3 ♗h4! 18. fxg4 ♗h3† 19. ♔f2 ♙c5† winning.

The best defence was 16. ♗d1, when Black has a winning endgame after 16... ♗c5 17. d4 ♘e3† 18. ♔g1 ♘xd1 19. dxc5 ♘xc3 20. ♙xc3 ♙xc3, but once again White will be grateful to have an exchange for (soon) three pawns, as the imbalance gives him something to fight with.



Black now cannot strengthen his position any further through normal means (Evolution). The build-up is over and he will have to execute his attack (Revolution) or it will lose its sting (Momentum). The main weaknesses in the white position are still e2 and f2, Black therefore focuses his efforts in this direction.

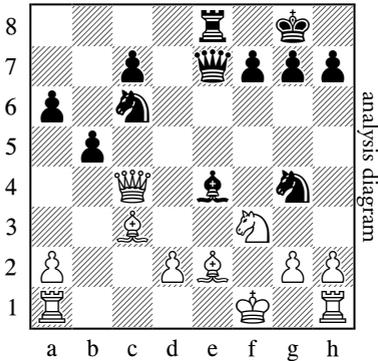
16... ♙xc3 17. ♙xc3 a6 18. ♗d3 ♙e4!

The queen is out of squares. We see the power the black pieces have simply because they are in play, as well as the futility of the white rooks. In Chapter 4 we will have a closer look at how material should be viewed in dynamic chess.

19. ♖b4!?

An attempt to give the queen somewhere to go. A later game also reached exactly this position.

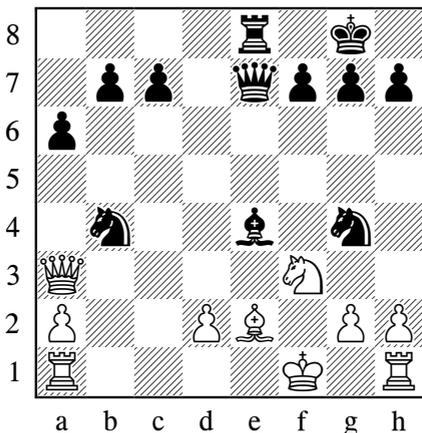
In this game Black won after: 19. ♖c4 b5



20. ♖f6!?! A desperate echo of our main game. (20. ♖b3 loses to 20... ♖c2!) 20... ♗xf6 21. ♖b3 ♖d5 22. ♖e3 ♖d6 23. ♖f2 ♗g4 24. ♖g3 ♖xf3 25. ♖xf3 ♗d4 26. ♖xg4 ♖f6† 0-1 Jeschke – Rost, Germany 1995.

19... ♗xb4 20. ♖a3

White has found a square for the queen, but it is far away from the weak squares in need of protection, so the euphoria is very short-lived.



20... ♖d3!

One of many winning moves. This book will not deal much with combinations, as we will be talking about the build-up. All I can say is that the attack is ripe and the flesh is tasty.

21. ♖xd3 ♖c5

The idea behind the previous move was to attack the other weak square, f2. White is beyond salvation.

22. ♖xh7† ♗xh7 23. d4 ♖c2 24. ♗g5† ♗g6 25. ♖g3 ♖c4†

0-1

This game illustrates the intelligence we need to apply when we talk about including all the pieces in the attack. It also shows the value of attacking the weakest squares in the opponent's position, the sense of momentum and a few other principles illustrated in this book. This will be a common occurrence, as it is common for most of the global rules to be in play at the same time.

In the next game we shall see the notion of 'attacking the opponent where he is strongest' in action. Especially look out for moves 14 and 17.

Jonny Hector – Erling Mortensen

Sicilian Defence, Keres Attack
Denmark 1990

1. e4 c5 2. ♗f3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. ♗c3 d6

After a lot of bad experiences in the late 80's and early 90's, people decided not to allow the Keres Attack anymore and instead headed for the Scheveningen through the Najdorf. Only in the last few years have players such as Movsesian and Van Wely tried to restore the reputation of this risky line.