

Recognizing Your Opponent's Resources

Developing Preventive Thinking

by
Mark Dvoretzky



2015
Russell Enterprises, Inc.
Milford, CT USA

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Signs and Symbols

!	a strong move
!!	a brilliant or unobvious move
?	a weak move, an error
??	a grave error
!?	a move worth consideration
?!	a dubious move
=	an equal position
≅	White stands slightly better
±	White has a clear advantage
+−	White has a winning position
≒	Black stands slightly better
∓	Black has a clear advantage
−+	Black has a winning position
∞	an unclear position
#	mate
(D)	See the next diagram
W	White to move
B	Black to move

Foreword

Your opponent also has a right to exist – Savielly Tartakower remarked with his characteristic irony. Absorbed in our own thoughts, we sometimes forget this, for which we have to pay dearly. As Viktor Kortchnoi wrote, *Well, if you do not check what your opponent is doing, you will end up complaining about bad luck after every game*. No chessplayer has managed to completely exclude this kind of mistake, but some make it less often and others more often. Many who are over-self-confident optimists make it with unenviable regularity. I hope that the collection of exercises which you have opened will help you to make tangible progress in this area, which in turn should trigger improvement in your results and your overall level of play.

This book consists of four chapters, all somehow or other associated with the ability to think not only for yourself, but also for your opponent, to put yourself in his place. The examples from the first three, “Pay Attention to your Opponent’s Resources,” “The Process of Elimination” and “Traps” are mainly tactical. The fourth chapter, “Prophylactic Thinking,” is predominantly comprised of positional exercises. Then again, the boundary between positional and tactical play is notional nowadays, and sometimes it is impossible to identify even in analysis of an individual position, never mind in the chapters of a book that contain a multitude of varied examples.

My goal is to supply the reader with high-quality material for independent training in the above-mentioned important areas by calculating variations that are usually ignored by the authors of chess books. Of course, examples of this nature can be found in any collection of exercises, but they are scattered there among the mountains of positions that are offered, while I have almost never found a specialized selection of material on these topics. The rare exceptions that I know of are Artur Yusupov’s books and Jakob Aagard’s monograph *Calculation*, which were designed on the same principle as this collection.

Each chapter starts with a short “theoretical” section. Then several dozen exercises are given, arranged (not strictly, of course, but with a considerable dollop of wiggle room) on the principle “from easy, even elementary, to difficult.” Training your skills in searching for a move and calculating variations will help you at all stages of the game – which is why among the exercises there are opening, middlegame and endgame positions, and not only ones that are taken from practical games, but also studies. You may also independently solve the introductory examples from each chapter and the positions in the diagrams in the “Solutions” in those cases when there is a question mark and an indication of who is to play under the diagrams.

The comments in the “Solutions” are quite detailed, not limited to giving the only correct sequence of moves and explaining side variations. I have tried to detail the logic of the search for a solution, to show how a player can come to the right conclusions at the board. Then again, the reasoning and calculations I offer are far from compulsory for everyone. Most likely, in many cases you will manage to achieve the aim another way. This is to be expected, as each of us has our own head on our shoulders and our own approach to decision-making.

I will also mention a few technical details. As in all my books and articles, quotes included in the text are given in italics. In the examples which are investigated in the introductions to each chapter, the moves made by the players are highlighted in bold text. In the solutions to the exercises things are different: the moves in the main variation of the solution are highlighted, regardless of whether or not they occurred in the game. Positions that came about during analysis of side variations, and also positions in the “Solutions,” are shown in small diagrams. Studies are often not given from their initial position – and then the name of the study composer is furnished with an asterisk. The same symbol is also used for practical positions that did not occur in a game, but came about during its analysis.

The majority of examples are taken from my “card index of exercises,” work on which has been going on for decades. Obviously I have already used many of the successful examples from my card index in my previous books. So was it worth giving them here again? I made a compromise decision.

At the end of each of the four books in the series “School of Chess Excellence,” there is a thematic index that sorts all the exercises by the thinking skills that they are designed to develop, and among those skills are all of the four that are the objects of examination here. I did not include the exercises from those books here (apart from one or two), and if you want to you can find and use them, if subsequently you decide to continue working in this direction. There are also no exercises here from the text “8x12” that can be found in the first book of the series “School of Future Champions.” In the list of 12 different topics (each of which has eight exercises) you will find “Pay Attention to your Opponent’s Resources,” “Traps” and “Prophylaxis.”

There are relevant examples in all my other books too, but it will be harder for you to extract them from there because of the absence of corresponding indexes. So I considered it possible to use those exercises here. Then again, there are not many of them – I haven’t included the overwhelming majority of examples in my books before.

A significant portion of the games and fragments that I offer for your attention could be characterized by the term “tragicomedy” (widely used for the first time in my *Endgame Manual*) – as in them one player then the other made crude blunders. Selecting this kind of material was not intentional, but it was not accidental either. It is these kinds of episodes that most often draw the attention of commentators during analysis of games and end up on the pages of magazines, books and websites, and from there the most interesting of them get into my card index. There is a positive side to the demonstration of simple mistakes made by grandmasters: it becomes clear that you can successfully oppose even very strong players if you make progress with your own play. And since this task is hardly super-complicated, but completely feasible by means of systematic training, it makes sense to try it.

Mark Dvoretzky
Moscow
May 2015

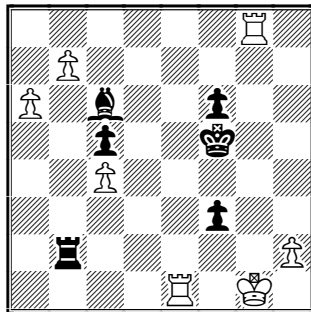
Chapter I: Pay Attention to your Opponent's Resources

The key word in the title of this chapter is “attention.” It is no accident that a significant proportion of mistakes (we call them “oversights” and “blunders”) are by no means associated with your own failed ideas, but with strong opposition on the part of your opponent. You do not notice them because your attention is mainly directed towards looking for and studying your own strongest moves. You should put yourself in the position of your partner a little more often, and think about how he is going to react to the idea you have in store for him. However, this very important skill that forms the title of this chapter (like any other skill) does not appear by itself.

Training it in tournament battles is difficult: you are being bombarded with too many different problems and overwhelmed by emotions that are too strong. But if you set up the pieces on the board in peaceful surroundings (at home, at a chess school or during a training meet), it is easier to correct your approach to decision-making. Even more so when there are positions in front of you that you are unlikely to successfully investigate without paying enough attention to your opponent's resources.

By learning to confidently and accurately solve the exercises from this book, you will subsequently be able to deal with similar problems confidently in tournament games too. To get a better idea of the challenges on this road, let's have a look at some practical examples and think about the reasons for the mistakes which were made in them.

Vallin – Nielsen
1968



W?

Does 1.b8♖ win?

White has an overwhelming advantage and there is no way he is going to allow the blow ...f3-f2+. Simplest of all is 1.♖f1! or 1.♖f1! – his opponent has to capitulate immediately.

In completely winning positions, when almost all roads apparently lead

to Rome, it is easy to lose your caution and concentration, which, obviously, also happens to the person playing White. The classic formula: “Winning a won position is the most difficult thing of all,” warns against dangerous complacency. In situations like this you have to be a “predator,” trying to choose out of several possibilities the one path on which your opponent will not get even the tiniest chance.

1.b8♖? f2+ 2.♖f1 ♕g2+!!

White probably overlooked this ingenious thrust, which should put him on his guard, but does not. By taking with the rook on g2 he forces a transposition into a rook ending, in which he retains a big advantage. But he did not want to drag out the battle.

3.♖xg2?

In the variation 3...fe♖+? 4.♖x♖b2, the king easily gets away from the

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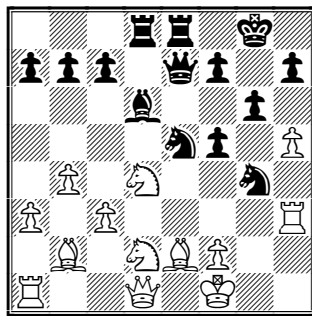
checks: 4...♖e4+ 5.♗h3 ♖f3+ 6.♖g3 ♖h5+ 7.♗g2. But here a new surprise follows.

3...f1♖+! **4.♗×f1 ♖f2+!**, and the rook pursues the king on the squares f2, g2, and h2 – taking it is stalemate.

The answer to the question under the diagram is: Yes! In the rook endgame, White wins.

3.♖xg2! fe♖+ 4.♗×e1 ♖×b8, and now either 5.a7 ♖b1+ 6.♗d2 ♖a1 7.♖g7 ♗e6 8.h4 f5 9.h5 ♖f6 10.h6+-, or 5.♖a2 ♗e4 6.a7 ♖a8 7.h4 ♖f4 8.♖f2 ♗g4 9.♗e3 f5 10.h5+-.

Taimanov – Vorotnikov
Leningrad 1978



Evaluate 21.f4

Black only has two pawns for the piece with no direct threats, and that means that he should probably lose. But sometimes a single careless move is enough to change the evaluation to its diametrical opposite.

21.f4?

Commenting on one of his games against Mark Taimanov, Mikhail Botvinnik remarked: *He did not like doubt, which often led to rushed decisions.* Taimanov himself also acknowledges the fairness of that characterization: *I often make “natural” moves without thinking, and*

sometimes even completely let my opponent's ‘time trouble rhythm’ draw me in.

White was reckoning on 21...♗c6 22.♖×g4 fg 23.♖×g4+-, and missed the very strong counter-blow.

21...♗f3! **22.♖×f3?!** “Mistakes never come singly!” 22.♗2×f3? ♗e3+ 23.♗g1 ♗×d1 24.♖×d1 ♗×f4 does not promise chances for salvation either, but 22.♗c4! is considerably more stubborn. However, in the variation 22...♗fh2+! 23.♗g1 ♗×f4 24.♖c1 ♗×c1 25.♖×c1 b5!, Black retains an overwhelming advantage.

22...♖h4! **23.♖g3** (the only defense to the threat of mate on h1) **23...♖h1+** **24.♖g1 ♗e3+** **25.♖f2 ♖h2+** White resigned.

The center of gravity in these examples is not in determining the strongest continuation (there may be several good moves), but in avoiding a tempting but erroneous path. Still, let's try to make the best choice for White.

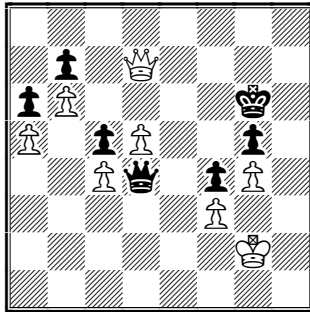
Taimanov recommends 21.♗c4!± (you can also play this way after a preliminary exchange of pawns on g6). Since White is a piece up, simplifying the position is favorable in principle. The ingenious try 21...♗×c4 22.♖×c4 ♗g3!? (and if 23.♖×g3?, then 23...♖h4 24.♖×g4 ♖h1+ 25.♖g1 ♖h3+ with perpetual check), suggested by Artur Yusupov, is refuted by 23.hg hg 24.♖b3!, preparing the decisive blow 25.♗×f7+!

Another way to force a simplification, 21.♗e4 fe 22.♖×g4, looks worse: after 22...♗d3 Black is left with good compensation for the piece.

The most energetic and strongest decision is associated with switching to a counterattack: 21.hg hg 22.c4!, and if 22...c5, then 23.♗×f5! gf 24.♖×g4 fg 25.♖×g4+! with unavoidable mate.

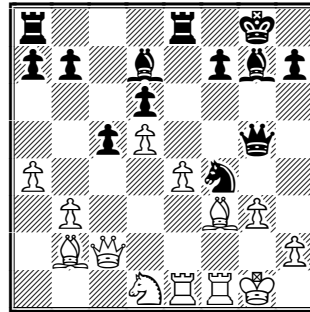
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4-151 Ftacnik – Hazai
Sochi 1982



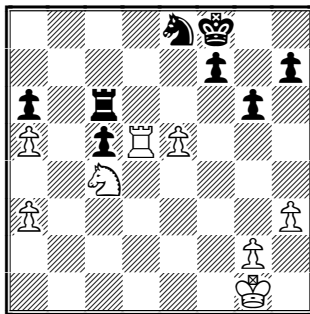
W?

4-152 Gligoric – Gruenfeld
European Team Championship
Skara 1980



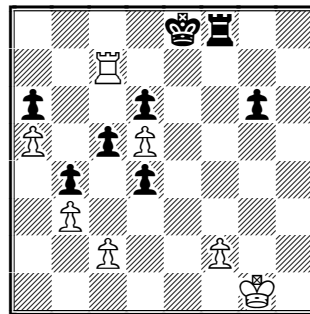
W?

4-153 Botvinnik – Levenfish
8th Match Game, Moscow 1937



W?

4-154 Kasparov – Short *
1st Match Game, London 1993

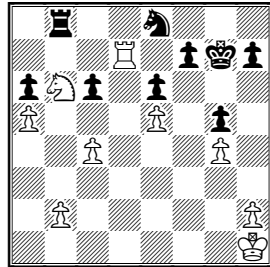


W?

Prophylactic Thinking

White's position is strategically won. Dolmatov precisely exploits his advantage.

32...♖g7 33.♗d6! ♜b8 34.♗xc6 bc
35.♞d7 ♜e8 (35...♜a8 36.c5) 36.g4! g5



Of course, White could simply bring his king into the center or go after the a6-pawn. Instead of that, there again followed prophylaxis, and very specific, aggressive prophylaxis. Black wants to free his knight in the only possible way: 37...♖g6 and 38...f6. The next two moves are made bearing those intentions in mind.

37.b4! ♖g6 38.♞e7! (now not ...f7-f6, but was it worth letting the enemy rook out to freedom?) 38...♞d8 39.b5! (that is what it is about!) 39...cb 40.cb ab 41.a6 b4 42.a7, Black resigned.

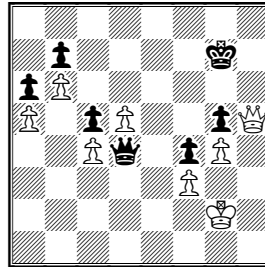
4-151 Ftacnik – Hazai

Black has a specific threat, which he carries out, for example, on 67.d6? – 67...♗b2+! 68.♖h3 ♗a1!=. It is useful to point out that in this variation the queen keeps control of the important f6-square; while 67...♗d2+? 68.♖h3 ♗f2 loses because of a typical maneuver that secures the capture of the g5-pawn with a series of checks: 69.♗f5+ ♖h6 70.♗f6+ ♖h7 71.♗f7+ and 72.♗h5+.

67.♗f5+ ♖h6 68.♗f7? (threatening 69.♗h5+) does not work because of stalemate after 68...♗d2+ 69.♖h3 ♗h2+!.

Finally, on 67.♗e6+ ♖g7 68.♗e2? ♖f8 the white queen is positioned too passively.

67.♗e8+! ♖g7 68.♗h5!+-



Only in this way, by tying the queen to the defense of the g5-pawn, can White parry his opponent's counterplay. Later he advances the d-pawn, exchanging it for the g5-pawn, and gets an easily-winning ending. Here is a sample variation:

68...♗b2+ 69.♖h3 ♗f6 (69...♗f2 70.♗xg5+; 69...♗e5 70.d6 ♗xd6 71.♗xg5+ ♖f7 72.♗f5+ ♖g7 73.g5 and 74.♖g4) 70.d6 ♖f8 71.d7 ♖g7 72.♗e8 ♗a1 73.♗e7+ ♖g6 74.♗xg5+ (74.♗d6+ ♖f7 75.♗d5+ ♖g6 76.♖g2 also wins) 74...♖xg5 75.d8♗+ ♖g6 76.♗g8+ ♖h6 77.♗f8+ ♖h7 78.♖h4, and so on (while the incautious 78.♗xf4? allows the opponent to obtain perpetual check: 78...♗f1+ 79.♖h4 ♗h1+ 80.♖g5 ♗h6+ 81.♖f5 ♗g6+ 82.♖e5 ♗e8+ 83.♖d5 ♗c6+).

The game ended 68...♗e5 69.♖h3! ♖f8 70.♗h6+ (70.d6!?) 70...♖e7 71.♗h7+ ♖e8 (71...♖d6 72.♗c7#; 71...♖f8 72.♗f5+; 71...♖d8 72.d6! ♗xd6 73.♗g8+ ♖d7 74.♗xg5) 72.♗g6+ (72.d6 ♗xd6 73.♗g8+) 72...♖e7 73.♗g8 ♖d7 (73...♗f6 74.d6+) 74.♗f7+ ♖d8 75.♗f8+ ♖d7 76.♗f5+, Black resigned.

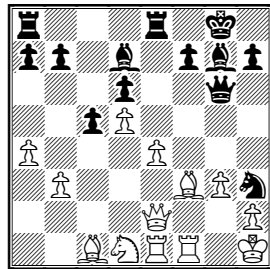
Recognizing Your Opponent's Resources

4-152 Gligoric – Gruenfeld

White is better on almost any development of events – because of the weakness of his opponent's kingside. The only question is how to extract the maximum possible from the situation. And here a great deal depends on where Black's knight goes. It is easier for him to defend if the knight transfers to e5 via g6 or will be exchanged for one of the enemy pieces. As, for example, in the variation 21. ♖xg7 ♜xg7 22. ♖g4!? (22. ♖e3 ♖g6±) 22... ♖h3+ 23. ♖xh3 ♖xh3±/±. Not much is promised by 21. ♜c1! ♖h3+ 22. ♜h1 ♜xc1 23. ♖xc1 h6∞.

To prevent the maneuver ... ♖f4-g6-e5 and push the knight to a bad position, Svetozar Gligoric temporarily rejects the exchange of dark-square bishops that is otherwise favorable to him.

21. ♖c1! ♖h3+ 22. ♜h1 (the g2-square is needed for the bishop) **22... ♜g6 23. ♜e2±**



23... ♖e5 (24. ♖h5 was threatened) 24. ♖b2 (now it is time to exchange bishops) 24... ♖g5 25. ♖xg7 ♜xg7 26. ♖e3 ♖e8 27. ♖g2 h5 28. ♜d2 (intending 29. ♖f5) 28... ♖g4 29. ♖f5 ♜g6 30. ♖xd6 (30. b4! is no less strong) 30... ♜xd6 31. ♖xh3 – White is a pawn up and has an overwhelming position.

4-153 Botvinnik – Levenfish

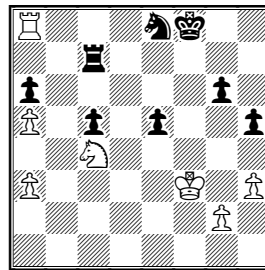
It is important to stop the king from coming out to e7.

41. ♖d7! ♖c7

The most natural reply, which has to be dealt with before anything else. Let's have a look at other tries.

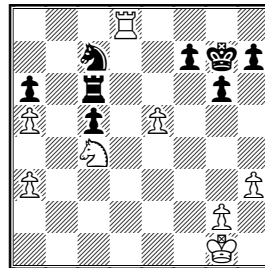
41... f6? 42. ♖xh7+- does not work.

If an exchange of pawns is prepared by playing 41... h5!?, then there follows 42. ♜f2 f6 43. ♜f3! (43. ♖b7!±) 43... ♖c7 (43... fe 44. ♖xe5 ♖e6 45. ♖d5±) 44. ♖d8 fe 45. ♖a8 (Botvinnik).



45... ♖c6 (45... ♖f7+ 46. ♜e4±) 46. ♖xe5 ♖f6+ 47. ♜e4 ♜e7 48. ♖a7+ ♜d8 49. h4! is then possible, and Black's position remains difficult.

On 41... ♖c7 42. ♖d8+, the king is forced to distance itself from the center: 42... ♜g7 (42... ♖e8? 43. ♖d6+-; 42... ♜e7? 43. ♖d6!+-).



W?

The move given by Mikhail Botvinnik, 43. ♖c8!?, is not too effective in connection with 43... f5! 44. ♜f2 (44. ♖d6 c4) 44... ♜f7. Stronger is 43. ♜f2 ♖e6 44. ♖d7±.

42. ♖d8 ♜e7 43. ♖d6!±