The Art of Checkmate

Georges Renaud & Victor Kahn

21st Century Edition

The Art of Checkmate

by

Georges Renaud
and
Victor Kahn

2014
Russell Enterprises, Inc.
Milford, CT USA

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ISBN: 978-1-936490-84-4

Published by:
Russell Enterprises, Inc.
PO Box 3131
Milford, CT 06460 USA

http://www.russell-enterprises.com
info@russell-enterprises.com

Cover design by Janel Lowrance
Editing and proofreading by Peter Kurzdorfer

Printed in the United States of America

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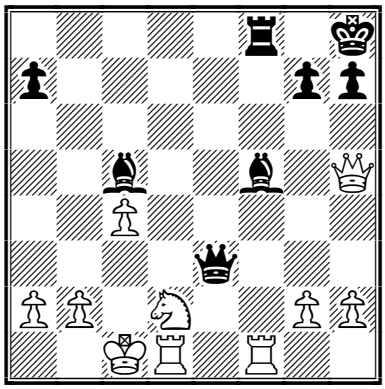
Introduction

When a player, after examining a position carefully, has selected and played what seems to him the best move, it is very annoying to hear one of the onlookers remark: "Everyone to his own taste. Personally, I should have announced mate in two."

The player is astonished and disappointed to realize that such is the case and that the too hasty exchanges he has made have deprived him of the chance of mating his opponent.

Endgame 1 (D)



Black to play

This is a typical position, which occurred in a club tournament. It was Black's turn to play. He thought a while, lifted the queen and triumphantly placed it on d3, threatening 2...Qc2#.

White played 2.Rxf5, giving back the exchange, and managed to exchange queens a few moves later. He had two pawns to the good, and won the game easily. When the game was over, the loser said: "There was nothing I could do. I had already sacrificed two pawns and the exchange for an attack, which never came off."

Replacing the pieces in their original position, we showed him that there was a forced mate in two moves. The player looked carefully at the position and exclaimed: "Well, I never…" He had discovered too late:

1...Qc3+ 2.bxc3 Ba3#

This is a classic mate discovered by Boden in 1857, and has occurred many times since. It is quite possible that the player we have just mentioned had come across it in a chess book or magazine and had forgotten it because it had never been properly explained to him.

The first thing for the reader to learn is to see every possible mate; this is one of the requisites of a good player.

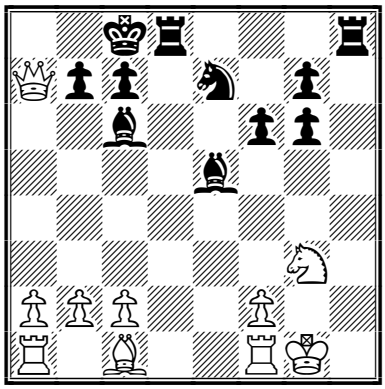
If one points out to a player a position in which there is a mate in five moves, he will find it in time; but let the same position occur in a game and the chances are 80 to a hundred he will be blind to the fact.

Even the greatest chess masters have been no exception to the rule. Here are two very instructive examples:

In a match game Schiffers-Chigorin Berlin 1897), the following position was reached:

Endgame No. 2 (D)

Black played 1...b6 and the game was drawn, whereas he might have announced mate in five moves,

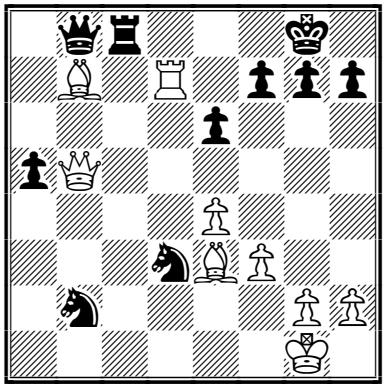


Black mates in 5 moves

1...Rh1+ 2.Nxh1 Bh2+ 3.Kxh2 Rh8+ 4.Kg3 Nf5+ 5.Kf4 Rh4#

At Hastings in 1938, the following position arose in a game Fairhurst-Reshevsky.

Endgame No. 3
Fairhurst – Reshevsky
Hastings 1938 (D)



Black mates in 7 moves

Reshevsky thought for a long while and played 1...h6?. He had overlooked a classic mate in seven moves.

1...Rc1+ 2.Bxc1 Qa7+ 3.Qb6 Qxb6+ 4.Rd4 Qxd4+ 5.Kh1 Nf2+ 6.Kg1 Nh3+ 7.K plays **7...Q** mates.

A number of these oversights can be detected in master play. In fact, certain chess newspapers publish whole columns under the heading "Master Blunders." Such human failings should be encouraging to the average player.

But if great masters like Chigorin and Reshevsky fail to see such mates because of time trouble, how much more likely it is in the case of the average player.

Moreover, these mates are the easiest combinations to be found over the board, for they consist of a series of checks with forced answers. Above all, these mates can be practically reduced to a few types with easily remembered characteristics.

It is necessary to know the typical mating patterns for the following reasons:

(1) To apply the mating maneuvers mechanically without loss of time when met with in games.
(2) To try and obtain such positions when one has the initiative.
(3) To avoid becoming a victim.

When a move is about to be played there is no guardian angel to whisper: "Careful, friend. There is a forced mate in four moves; look out for it."

The aim of this book is to impart to you the information which will enable you to miss no opportunity of mating in typical positions.

Many chess books quote a famous handicap game in which three chess masters, Walker, Morphy and Steinitz, mated amateurs in exactly the same manner. Let us see how.

(1) Morphy – Amateur
Evans Gambit Accepted
New York 1857
(without the a1-rook)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4 5.c3 Ba5 6.d4 exd4 7.0-0

A century ago this opening was played as automatically as the Queen's Gambit Declined is played nowadays.

7...Nf6?

Experience has taught us that in this position the only right move is 7...Bb6.

8.Ba3 Bb6?

There is, even at this point, no satisfactory move. The only one which allows Black further resistance is 8...d6. From now on the game proceeds like clockwork.

9.Qb3 d5

Black gives back the pawn to parry the threat: 10.Bxf7#.

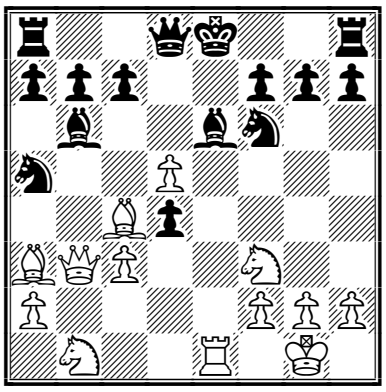
10.exd5 Na5

With this simultaneous attack on White's queen and bishop, Black hopes to get rid of the dangerous bishop.

11.Re1+ Be6 (D)

Starting a very pleasant combination. White, who is already playing minus a rook, sacrifices his queen.

12.dxe6! Nxb3



After Black's 11th move

This should have been declined, but in any case Black's position is hopeless. White announces mate in six moves:

13.exf7+ Kd7 14.Be6+ Kc6 15.Ne5+ Kb5 16.Bc4+ Ka5 17.Bb4+ Ka4 18.axb3#

Is there an infallible recipe for such mates? We do not think so. In the example we have just given the king was collected at its initial square and gradually dragged to the other side of the board, where it was mated.

One thing can be said, however: An experienced player feels instinctively that positions, such as the one in the diagram, are full of latent possibilities. Since all the moves are forced and since there are no variations to complicate the line of play, it is relatively easy, with some practice, to foresee the consequences of the sacrifice and to calculate the number of moves necessary to bring about the mate. And even if he is not able to foresee the whole mating process, the good player will "feel" that the king is about to embark on a journey from which it will not come back.

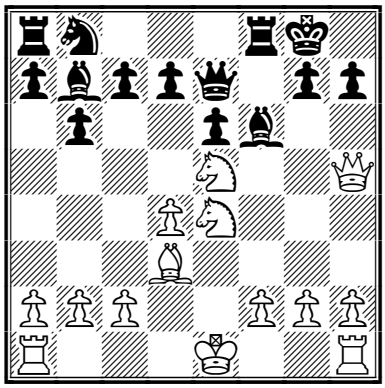
Here is another famous game to which the same principles apply:

(2) Ed. Lasker – Thomas
Dutch Defense
London 1912

1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 f5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.Bxf6 Bxf6 6.e4 fxe4 7.Nxe4 b6 8.Ne5 0-0 9.Bd3 Bb7 10.Qh5

It is impossible to parry the threatening attack on h7. If 10...h6, 11.Qg6 wins. And if 10...g6, 11.Nxg6 hxg6 12.Qxg6+ Bg7 13.Ng5 and wins.

10...Qe7 (D)



After Black's 10th move

The text move seems to save the game, for h7 is covered by the queen after 11.Nxf6+ gxf6. This position, however, is as full of hidden possibilities as the one in the Morphy game we have just quoted.

Edward Lasker announced mate in eight moves:

11.Qxh7+ Kxh7 12.Nxf6+ Kh6 13.Neg4+ Kg5 14.h4+ Kf4 15.g3+ Kf3 16.Be2+ Kg2 17.Rh2+ Kg1 18.Kd2#.

This death march of the king seems amazing to the beginner. But, since all the moves are forced, the combination can be calculated accurately without a considerable mental effort. Here also, no definite rule can be laid down. The idea is to snatch the king from its initial square and by checking it constantly to lead it to the fatal mating square. It is a question of rapid judgment, imagination and practice.

To be able to mate in a definite position, two conditions are required:

(1) To be aware of a possible mate.
(2) To be able to carry it out.

We have therefore endeavored to classify methodically all such positions; and for each one we have given the mating process. We then give three practical examples to illustrate each mate. The first includes games that end with the typical mate; the second includes games which end with a variation, or modification, of the typical mate. The third is rather more complicated. Between strong players it is rare that such typical mates occur. In most cases there is just the threat of a mate. In order to avoid it, the opponent is compelled to make a defensive move, which either weakens his position or results in loss of material.

In 95 games out of a hundred the two opponents castle; and 90 times out of a hundred they castle on the kingside. We shall therefore suppose, in the examples we are about to give, that all attacks are delivered against a castled position on the kingside. And if such an attack is to take place, certain preliminary conditions have to be fulfilled:

(1) The castled position must show a weakness.

There are two kinds of weaknesses:

(a) Permanent and irrevocable ones, such as the advance of one of the pawns protecting the castled position (f-, g-, h-pawn).

(b) Temporary ones, such as the removal of pieces that defend the castled position. For instance: the removal of the f3- or f6-knight or one of the pieces that protects the knight; e2- or e7-bishop; d2- or d7-knight; d1- or d8-queen.

(2) The possibility of exploiting such a weakened position.

For this it is necessary to have:

(a) Open lines (files, ranks, or diagonals) leading to the castled position of the opponent.

(b) Pieces on those open lines.

(c) More pieces for the attack than the opponent has for the defense. It is immaterial whether the defender's total number of pieces is superior to the attacker's; the important point is that these pieces have neither the time not the opportunity to reach the crucial defensive spot.

These are principles which will constantly be used. They are equally applicable to positional and tactical play. In fact, they rule the conduct of the game. Although the scope of this study is limited to typical mating positions, it will, we hope, initiate the reader gradually into the general methods of play. The best way to learn the principles of the game is to see their application in the most dramatic situation on the chessboard: mate which can be announced in a definite number of moves.

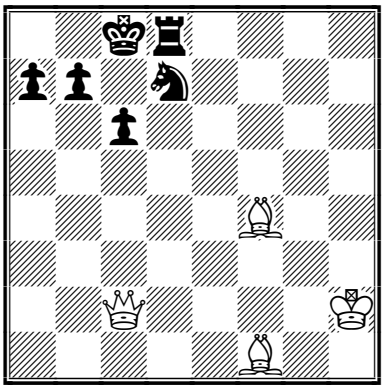
Before we end this introduction let us remind the reader that, although these typical mating patterns are met often, the mates do not always occur. In fact, they rarely occur with players of equal strength. One of them may resign because he has lost a piece, or even a pawn; or he may realize that the endgame is hopeless. Let the reader, therefore, not imagine that he will always be able to force a typical mate; or even think he may sacrifice pieces at random. Each mate demands the fulfillment of certain conditions. And if one of the conditions is missing, the sacrifice is useless, and will simply leave the player with one or two pieces down and a lost game.

Let us be bold by all means – it is the only way to victory – but let us be cautious as well.

Chapter 6: Boden's Mate (Mate No. 6)

This mate usually occurs when one of the players has castled on the queenside.

Mate No. 6 (D)

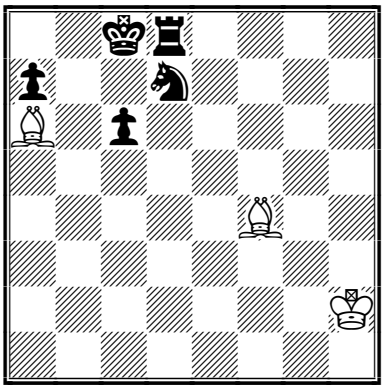


White to play and mate in 2

Black's castled position is weakened by the advance of the c-pawn, and this gives White's bishop full control of the diagonal. If the b-pawn were not there, White could mate in one move with Ba6. The mating maneuver will therefore consist in forcing the opening of the mating diagonal.

1.Qxc6+ bxc6 2.Ba6#

Pattern of Mate No. 6 *(D)*



Black is mated

This diagram shows that only two bishops deliver mate, and that the mating maneuver consists in opening a diagonal instead of a file.

Here is a practical application of this mate:

(54) Brown – Essery
Scandinavian Defense
This game was played in 1913 by two British amateurs

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Qxd5 4.Nc3 Qa5 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.h3 Bxf3 7.Qxf3 c6 8.Bd3 Nbd7 9.0-0 0-0-0

There was no need to castle queenside, especially in view of the fact that the c-pawn has moved. It is true that White's castled position is also weakened by the advance of the h-pawn, but this weakness is not immediately exploitable, as Black has exchanged his light-square bishop, whereas:

10.Bf4

White takes immediate control of the weakened diagonal pointed toward the king's position.

10...e6 11.a3

Initiating a pawn attack. When the kings have castled on the opposite sides, the player with the better development usually has a decisive advantage.

11...Qb6

A very bad mistake. The better 11...Nd5, however, was a losing move too.

12.Na4 Qxd4 13.Qxc6+ bxc6 14.Ba6#

The following example is much more interesting.

(55) Ed. Lasker – Englund
Four Knight's Game
Scheveningen 1913

Edward Lasker, born in 1885 in Germany, emigrated to the United States in 1914 and became an electrical engineer. He is a very well-known player, and made a reputation for himself with his book *Modern Chess Strategy* (1914), in which, for the first time, an author deals systematically with the conduct of the game.

Fritz Englund was a strong Swedish player.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bb5 Nd4

At the time this game was played, this old move, which has since been reintroduced by Rubinstein, had not been much analyzed and its true value not assessed.

5.Nxe5

This continuation gives rise to terrific complications.

5...Qe7 6.Nf3

Nowadays one would prefer to play 6.f4 with a sharp struggle for both players.

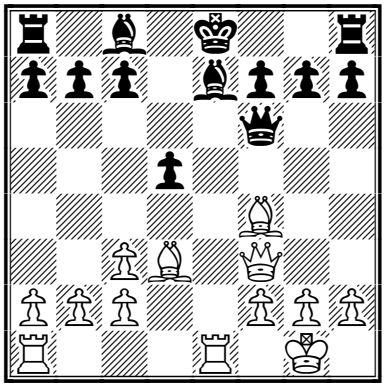
6...Nxe4

This does not seem the best move. The correct continuation is 6...Nxb5 7.Nxb5 Qxe4+, with equality.

7.0-0! Nxc3 8.dxc3 Nxf3+ 9.Qxf3

White's better development is a compensation for his doubled pawns.

9...Qc5 10.Re1+ Be7 11.Bd3 d5 12.Be3 Qd6 13.Bf4 Qf6 (D)



After Black's 13th move

Black must have thought his troubles are over, and he is making ready to castle peacefully. But…

14.Qxd5! c6

If Black castles, he loses the c-pawn, and if he accepts the sacrifice, he loses the game, e.g., 14...Qxf4 15.Bb5+ c6 (if 15...Kf8, 16.Qd8+ Bxd8 17.Re8#) 16.Bxc6+ bxc6 17.Qxc6+ Kf8 18.Qxa8 Qc7 19.Re3 followed by 20.Rae1 with a winning position.

15.Qe4

Preventing Black from castling.

15...Be6 16.Re3 Bc5 17.Be5 Qh6 18.Rg3 Bf8

If 18...Qd2, 19.Rf1, threatening 20.Bf4, and Black has no defense.

19.Rd1

It would have been better to play 19.c4 to prevent 19...Bd5. Lasker was probably relying on his opponent's blundering, which is perhaps inadvisable but not forbidden by the rules.

19...0-0-0??

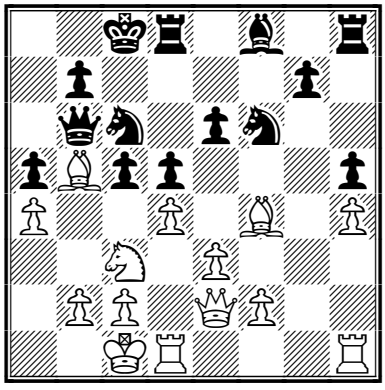
Lasker was right. Englund absentmindedly castles on the queenside, forgetting about the opportunity he is giving White to play Boden's mate.

20.Qxc6+ bxc6 21.Ba6#

Endgame No. 14a

Here is a position taken from the Nimzovitch-Alekhine game played at the Vilna tournament of 1912 when Alekhine was 19 years old.

Nimzovitch – Alekhine (D)



After White's 15th move

White has just played 15.0-0-0, and in so doing has set a very subtle trap; in fact, if Black attempts to win a pawn, this is what happens:

15...cxd4 16.exd4 Nxd4 17.Rxd4 Qxd4 18.Qxe6+ Nd7

If 18...Rd7, 19.Bxd7+ Nxd7 20.Qe8#.

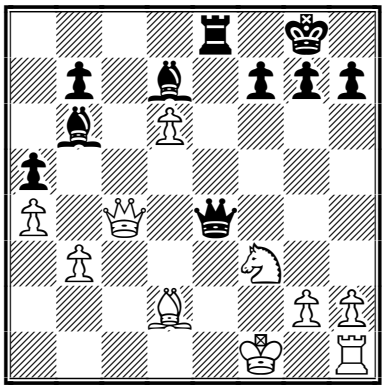
19.Qc6+ bxc6 20.Ba6#.

And this is the typical position of the Boden Mate. Alekhine, of course, saw through the threat and played 15...Bd6 in time. But as can be seen, the latent threat of this mate prevented Black from capturing the pawn.

What is characteristic about the Boden Mate is not so much the mate itself, but the maneuver which leads up to it.

The king need not necessarily have castled queenside for this mate to take place, as the next examples will show:

Endgame No. 15
Harrwitz – Healey
About 1865 (D)



Black to play and mate in 2

1...Qxf3+ 2.gxf3 Bh3#

Endgame No. 15a
Alekhine – N. N.
Simultaneous Exhibition 1925 (D)