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THE POWER OF TACTICS

Volume 3

**Calculate
like Champions**



Chess
Evolution

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate

PREFACE

The middlegame is the most important part of the game, as the majority of encounters are decided there. We know that sometimes it is difficult to divide strategy and tactic, as they both have the same aim — to win the game. Strategy is the more difficult subject, because it involves planning and structures: tactics helps to conduct these plans in the fastest way.

In olden times it was the division of the style of players — TACTICAL and STRATEGIC. In modern chess this division practically does not exist, as every top player is able to operate with all tools. Still we can name as tactical-style players such great attackers as Mikhail Tal, Rashid Nezhmetdinov, Albin Planinc and Victor Kupreichik. Perhaps, in reality, their strategy was a bit simpler with the aim of direct attack on the opponent's king, and not simply attacking some weakness on the queenside, for example.

During the times of the Soviet chess school, the label TACTICIAN led to an underestimation of attackers. But we all know that the chess public enjoy attacking play and admire great attackers much more than pure, boring strategists. Of course, this attitude is connected with the openings.

For example, in gambits, players have to consider many more tactical elements than in, for example, the Carlsbad variation of the Queen's Gambit. Likewise, the Sicilian Defence with kings castled on different sides and fierce pawn attacks on both flanks; here tactics and sacrifices are in the air as the strategy was prepared from the first moves of the openings.

There are many valuable books on tactics, and many authors have presented classifications of tactical motifs and themes. But some of them are too academic — in modern times we require a much more practical education. For this reason, nowadays different test books are becoming very popular.

Calculate Like Champions is the third book in the series *The Power of Tactics*. In this third volume, the authors continue to develop their ideas from the first two books — *Tactics According to Smyslov* and *Become a Tactical Wizard* — where they explain that in chess there are four main tactical elements (check, pin, double attack and unprotected pieces).

They have added very instructive exercises revolving around mating attacks and queen sacrifices to achieve different goals and, in my opinion an extremely important element, defensive tactics.

IGM Aleksandr Beliavsky

INTRODUCTION

Tactics, including the calculation of variations, is the most important part of chess. Knowledge of openings, middlegames, endgames, strategy, technique, realization of the advantage and similar is also extremely important. But all this knowledge doesn't help us if we don't calculate properly.

There are many great books on tactics, wherein the authors have assembled different tactical motifs and elements. This area of chess is more or less very well covered in literature. This begs the question, why then have we decided to write and publish our book?

Firstly, during all these years that we have been working as chess coaches, we collected a huge amount of instructive material, and it made sense to us to share it with our readers as well.

Secondly, you can never have enough tactics. Every chess player must solve as many puzzles as possible in order to grow stronger.

Lastly, we have been friends for many years and work well together, and we simply decided to show this through our books.

Our plan was rather ambitious — to publish a set of three books. The books are designed for different levels. The first book is appropriate for players with rating up to 1800, the second for rating up to 2100 and the third for rating above 2000.

Our final book of the trilogy is some kind of manual for calculation of variations and decision making in complicated positions. We wanted to make an instruction book for strong players over 2000. Some exercises are more difficult, appropriate even for the GMs!

The great trainer Vladimir Yurkov (he trained Yuri Balashov and Aleksander Morozevich) used to say that the technique of calculation is the most important ability of strong players. And it is true — every Champion has developed his own tremendous calculation technique. Each and every one of them had their own specific way of calculation.

Some of them calculated much more, such as Garry Kasparov and Mikhail Tal, and some others much less, like Jose Raul Capablanca and Anatoly Karpov. Despite their differences they all had the ability to spot the best move immediately and then they only needed to check it with calculation to make sure that the move works.

It is of course very important that we understand that we don't need to calculate everything. Through calculation we try to determine whether our plan works or not. We check if our opponent has any good tactical response against our planned move.

We prepared clear and, we hope, nice examples, plus a lot of exercises for levels up to 1500. Study, enjoy and use tactics as much as possible in your games! Combinations really are brilliant moments in a chess game.

RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT SOLVING THE PUZZLES

At first try to solve every puzzle from the diagram itself. If it proves too difficult, then put the position on the board and try to solve it without moving the pieces. Exercises are divided into two levels, easier and then more complicated.

Adrian Mikhalchishin
Tadej Sakelšek

CALCULATE LIKE CHAMPIONS

In the first book we tried to demonstrate a slightly different approach to studying tactics and we chose tactical elements according to a great champion, former World title holder Vassily Smyslov, to do so. In the second book we further developed the idea from the first book and also added much more complicated tactical ideas and motifs. In the third and final book we continue to follow the ideas from the first two books, but here we will focus mainly on the practical exercises from different areas of the game and different areas of calculation.

Now let's move on to a brief explanation about the book's composition.

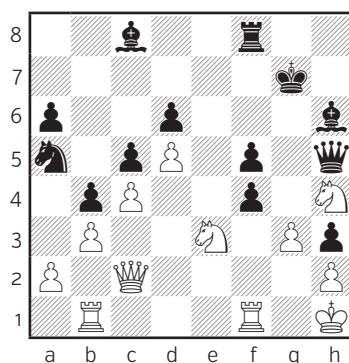
SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

Even on a higher level there are a lot of tactics in simple forms. Frequently these ideas are underestimated even among top players.

Example 1

▷ **K. Stupak**

▷ **V. Rasik**



In this critical position White decided to enter the wrong endgame:

27. ♖hxf5+?

Winning was the simple 27. ♖d1! and Black is more-or-less forced to enter the endgame 27... ♖xd1 (Bad would be 27... ♖g5 28. ♖xf4+-; or 27... ♖f7 28. gxf4+-) 28. ♗xd1 fxe3 29. hxe3+-

27... ♗xf5 28. ♗xf5+ ♖xf5 29. ♖xf5 ♖xf5 30. gxf4 ♖xf4 31. ♖xf4 ♗xf4

and the endgame is clearly in Black's favor as he always has the option of sacrificing the knight on b3 or c4.

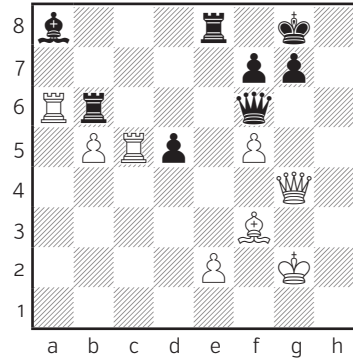
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WIN THE MATERIAL

As we know in chess there are two strategies — one is playing for checkmate, which basically means to attack the opponent's king. The second strategy? To win material and later transfer the game into an easily-winning endgame. In many cases these strategies can be changed or mixed. But winning material is generally a much more common strategy. Every player has to be careful and protect his own pieces. A famous quote of Botvinnik about Fischer is: "His pieces are always protected". So, remember Smyslov's fourth element — the UNPROTECTED PIECE!

Example 2

▷ L. van Wely
▶ T. Beerdse



42. ♖xb6! ♜xb6 43. ♜c8!

Power move number 1: White occupies Black's back rank with a hanging rook

43... ♜d8

a) 43... ♜xb5 44.f6! g6 45. ♜f4!+- and the threat of 46. ♜h6 followed by 47. ♜g7++ is decisive;

b) 43... ♜f8 44.f6! g6 45. ♜xf8+ ♔xf8 46. ♜c8+-;

c) 43... ♔f8 44. ♜b4+-

44.f6!

Number 2: White threatens checkmate on g7 while opening the g4-c8 diagonal for his queen

44... ♖xf6

After 44...g6 White's next move from the game would be even stronger 45. ♖d7+-

45. ♖d7!

and the final point. White conquers the back rank, winning Black's bishop on a8.

45... ♖xc8

45... ♖g6+ 46. ♔f1 ♖b1+ 47. ♔f2+- changes nothing.

46. ♖xc8+ ♔h7 47. ♖xa8+- 1-0

TACTICS ACCORDING TO SMYSLOV

We remind our readers here about the first book and its title. The Great World Champion Vassily Smyslov formulated the four most important tactical elements, as he believed that all other elements combine around them.

The four elements are:

1. **Check** as accelerator.
2. **Pins** as the most dangerous configuration of the pieces.

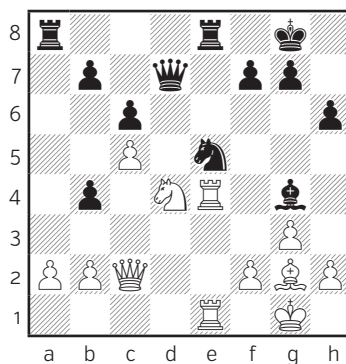
3. **Double attacks.** The legendary David Bronstein simply said that 'Chess is the game of double attack'. Forks are the most common form of double attacks.

4. **Unprotected pieces and pawns.** It is important to note here one of the lessons that Smyslov taught — pieces and pawns must be protected!

Combination of elements.

Example 3

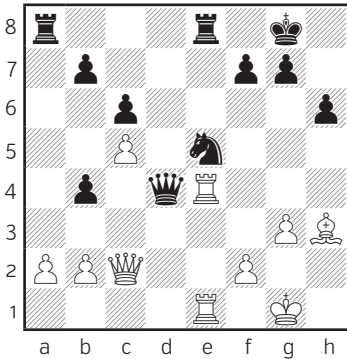
- ▷ L. Polugaevsky
- ▷ V. Smyslov



21. h3! ♕xh3

After 21... ♕h5 White can take the knight due to an unprotected piece being created: 22. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 23. ♖xe5 ♖xd4 24. ♖xh5+-

22. ♖xh3 ♚xd4!?



A final chance to complicate things

22... ♚xh3 23. ♖xe5+-

23. ♖g2!!

A nice prophylactic move — White prevents Black’s tactical solutions and prepares to exploit the pin!

Of course not 23. ♖xd4?? ♜f3+ 24. ♖h1 ♜xe1+ 25. ♖g2 ♜xd4 26. ♚c4 (26. ♚d2?? ♜g1+-) 26...b3 27. axb3 ♜d8±

23... ♚d5 24. f4+- 1-0

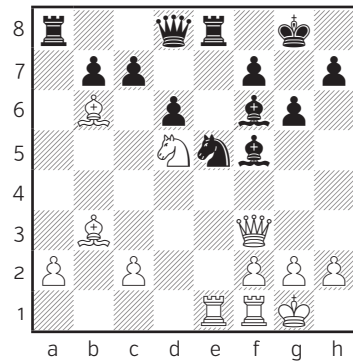
UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY

Players must always be alert as positions can change every half a move and new tactical elements might ap-

pear. These elements sometimes do not seem logical from the perspective of the development of the game, and even top players in many cases do not spot them!

Example 4

- ▷ A. Tari
- ▷ E. Torre



At the critical moment of the game White decided to play...

19. ♖xe5?

Instead White could have played 19. ♚xf5! A fantastic queen sacrifice 19...gxf5 20. ♖xc7 ♜e6! would be the best defensive option, as after (20... ♚c8 is not good as White simply gets too much material for the queen 21. ♜xf6+ ♖h8 22. ♜xe8 ♚xe8 23. ♖xd6 ♜f6 24. f4+-) 21. ♖xd8 ♖xd8± White would have a huge positional advantage, though despite it all Black is still alive!

19... ♔xe5 20. ♘xc7 ♖c8 21. ♘xe8
♙xb6-+

Black has a winning advantage.

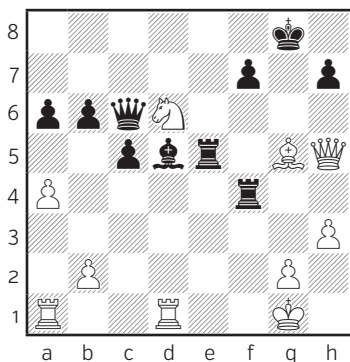
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MAKE A CHOICE

Chess is a game of choices. Usually we have a few options and it is necessary to make the correct decision while taking care of all the tactical elements in the position. A decision can be positional, defensive or in the form of concretely-calculated line.

Example 5

- ▷ L. Portisch
- ▷ I. Radulov



Black should decide between 23...f6 or 23...h6, or maybe something else!

23...f6?

was the wrong decision (Also bad was 23... ♙xd6 24. ♔xf4+-; 23...h6!! was the move that would save the game as now 24. ♖e1?? does not work (After the correct 24. ♘c8! hxg5 25. ♘e7+ ♖xe7 26. ♙xg5+ ♙g6 27. ♖xd5 ♙xg5 28. ♖xg5+ ♔f8= the game would have finished in a draw.) 24... ♖xg5 25. ♖e8+ ♔g7-+) as after...

24. ♖e1!

Black simply resigned!

24. ♖e1 Black resigned in view of 24... ♖xg5 (24... ♙xd6 25. ♔xf4+-) 25. ♖e8+ ♔g7 26. ♖e7+ ♔f8 27. ♖f7+! ♔g8 (27... ♔xf7 28. ♙xf7#) 28. ♙xh7#]

1-0

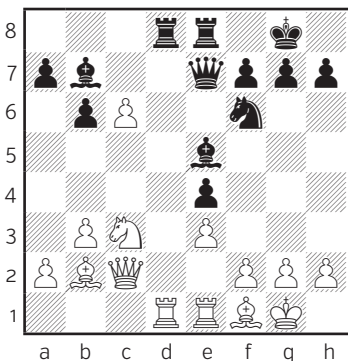
EVALUATE IF THE MOVE IS POSSIBLE

Here we try to demonstrate how decisions are made by top players. There are a variety of moves possible in any position, but we can see immediately which move is logical

and players must answer as to why a certain move must be played — or if this move can be played at all. The players must answer what tactical elements are in the calculations. The most common question during the game is — can I play this move or not? Is it good or not? What tactical possibilities of my opponent must I calculate?

Example 6

▷ Y. Pelletier
▶ B. Gelfand



Is 17... ♗h2 possible?

17... ♗xh2+??

A typical sacrifice of the bishop on h2 does not work, therefore 17... ♗xc6 was a simpler and better try:

17... ♗xc6=

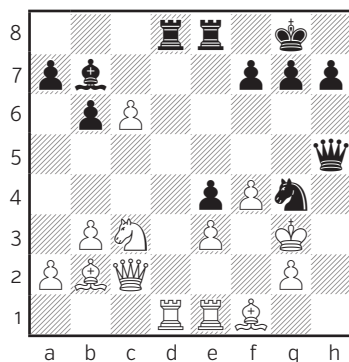
18. ♖xh2 ♘g4+ 19. ♖g3

White could also play 19. ♖g1 ♗h4 20. ♗b5! ♗h2+ 21. ♖f1 ♗h1+ 22. ♖e2 ♗xg2 23. ♘xe4+—

19... ♗e5+ 20. f4!

20. ♖xg4?? ♗h2!!—+

20... ♗h5



20... exf3+ 21. ♖xg4+—

21. ♖xd8??

White missed a win!

21. ♘xe4+—

21... ♗h2+ 22. ♖xg4 h5+??

An inexplicable mistake by Black. 22...f5+ leads to checkmate in two moves: 23. ♖g5 ♗g3+ 24. ♖h5 ♗g4#

23. ♖g5??