

TOGETHER WITH MAMEDYAROV

Calculation training tools
and practical decision making

by

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Typesetting
i-Press <www.i-press.pl>

First edition 2020 by Thinkers Publishing

Together with Mamedyarov
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ISBN 978-94-9251-071-6
D/2020/13730/10

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

e-mail: info@thinkerspublishing.com
website: www.thinkerspublishing.com

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
△	with the idea of
▷	better is
≤	worse is
N	novelty
+	check
#	mate

INTRODUCTION

A very long time ago when Anatoly Karpov had just tried on his first laurel of the World Championship and Victor Korchnoi had been crushing the other candidates on the way to his title match with Karpov a young candidate master named Garry Kasparov had been fighting for the title of “Master of sports of the USSR”. Around this time I had become acquainted with an original chess book my dad had bought. The book was written by two outstanding Czech grandmasters, Vlastimil Hort and Vlastimil Jansa, and it became my outright favourite book! This book contained 230 tests from the authors’ games as well as their bright and sometimes a bit ironic comments where the authors wrote one or two sentences discussing their thoughts and emotions before, during and after the game. But more they commented on finding the solution to the position and this gave me the feeling of having a dialogue with them. I started to solve the tests and imagined myself to be a grandmaster and that these exact positions arose in my games and that I had to play as Hort or Jansa or even better than they! The title was Together With Grandmasters. It was later published in English under the title The Best Move.

Years had passed and I wanted to write a similar study-book myself or even series of books where readers could get acquainted with the creativity of eminent grandmasters in a format of tests/tasks. So the series “Together With...” appeared. The book that you are holding in your hands is a continuation of this series. The two prior books concerning the chess creativity of Alexander Morozevich and participants in the candidates tournaments was written for rather experienced players. This book is different in that “Together With Mamdeyarov” has been written primarily for chess players with ELOS ranging 1400–2100.

While working on the book I followed two objectives. First to help the players’ improvement and secondly to closer acquaint the readers with the creativity of one of the brightest contemporary grandmasters. If I were to characterize Mamdeyarov’s play in one word I would use the adjective “powerful” and if I were to use two words then perhaps “power chess”. Namely this energy and power are the dominants of his creativity with his opening preparation being only a supplementing factor.

While gathering the material for the book it became clear to me that the given examples must be clear for a wide circle of chess lovers. In order to obtain this clarity, I had to exclude some tests that would be interesting for higher rated players. “Together With Mamedyarov” is not a collection of his selected games but it is primarily a study-book. It contains test positions taken from games of the famous Azeri grandmaster with detailed comments on the solutions to the tasks.

In this book the solutions have been placed right after a diagram with a test except for the six positions given as a warm-up in the beginning of the chapter one. For those of you who work without the assistance of a coach I would recommend that you cover the answer with a sheet of paper to avoid spoiling the benefit of solving the problem.

The tests’ tasks are intended for training:

- a) tactical vision,
- b) calculation of variations
- c) strategic decision making
- d) your assessment of a position

The solutions have been given points ranging from 1 up to 7. After calculating their total amount, you can determine your approximate level by the author’s ranking scale. But do not forget that this ranking scale is subjective. After totalling your result you should have an idea about what type of tasks are the most challenging for you. This will help you direct your time and efforts on the areas where you need further improvement.

The tests given in the first and the second chapters differ by the level of complexity. The tests in chapter one correspond to an Elo rating of 1400–1900 while chapter two is aimed at players rated 1700–2100.

When you solve the tests from Mamedyarov’s games try to reproduce the thought process of one of the most creative and bright grandmasters of today. Imagine yourself in his place during a game, look at the chessboard through his eyes and think about the positions together with Mamedyarov.

This book is dedicated to all young chess players aspiring to improve but I also hope that it will be interesting for admirers of the Azeri “number one” chess player’s creativity and his fans. Further I hope this book will be useful for coaches in their work.

Perhaps some tests will be “hard nuts to crack” for beginners — do not get upset! I am sure that their solutions will give you an aesthetic pleasure despite the challenge! And if a reader finds new variations or improves the ones given by the author it will mean that you have been working on this book together with the author and “played” together with Mamedyarov.

Alexey Kuzmin, Doha/Moscow, November 2019

CHAPTER 1.

BEGINNING TO THINK LIKE A GRANDMASTER

This chapter presents 80 tests in chronological order. By their difficulty they correspond to the rating 1400–1900. Of course, this range is approximate and takes into account that during the initial stages of improvement the rating figures fluctuate. We must realize that the quantity and quality of the events played in also has an impact on the rating as well as the countries where the events are held and even the ages of the players impacts the final result.

However, I hope that even stronger players will be interested in solving the positions as a training method for blitz events.

The majority of the tests consist of two parts. The first one is a question about assessment of the position. The second part is a task of finding the best move, variations and even the plan. During a game the assessment and calculation factors are inextricably linked. A correct assessment of a position is often the key for finding the right decision. On the other hand, precise calculation of variations can radically change an initial assessment of a position.

When formulating the questions of the tests I avoided specificities: “find a winning continuation” or “make draw” to bring the task of solving the positions closer to the conditions of a real game.

The scale of estimating your decisions — in the given chapter from 1 to 6 — considerably reflects the degree of task complexity. Most of the readers will want to calculate the total amount of scored points. If your total points earned is greater than 300 it will mean you are already a rather experienced chess player and the tests from chapter two will correspond more to your level of play based on their degree of complexity. A score of 250–300 shows that you are definitely not a beginner in chess and such a score corresponds to approximately a 1600–1800 rating. If the total amount of your scored points is less — do not get upset — a wide field stretches before you to perfect your skill!

All the introductions have been written — it is time to get started. To begin with I present six simple positions as a warm-up.

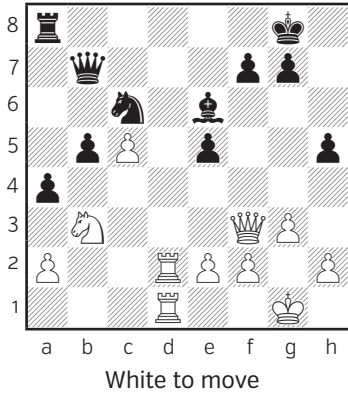
WARM-UP

Find the shortest way to win in all the positions.

Example 1

.....

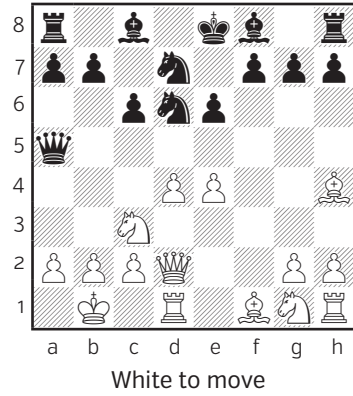
- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2733]
- ▶ P. H. Nielsen [2693]
- Beijing 2011 (blitz)



Example 2

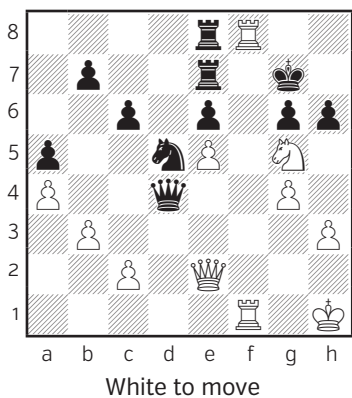
.....

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2743]
- ▶ J. Polgar [2685]
- Dubai 2014 (blitz)



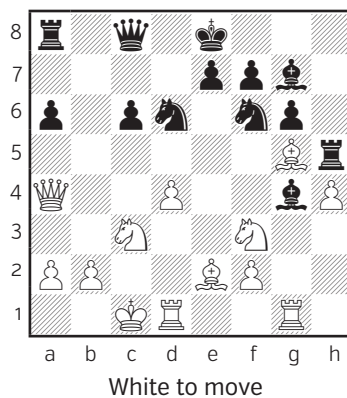
Example 3

- ▷ **S. Mamedyarov [2765]**
- ▷ **P. Leko [2723]**
- Beijing 2014 [blitz]



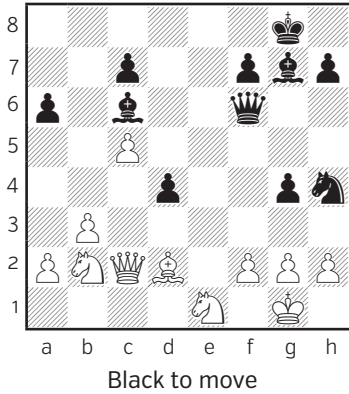
Example 4

- ▷ **S. Mamedyarov [2800]**
- ▷ **V. Topalov [2749]**
- Paris GCT Blitz, 2017



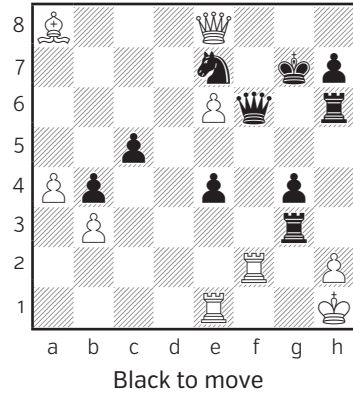
Example 5

▷ E. Hansen [2629]
 ▶ S. Mamedyarov [2804]
 PRO Chess League 2018



Example 6

▷ F. Caruana [2816]
 ▶ S. Mamedyarov [2808]
 Leuven GCT 2018 (rapid)

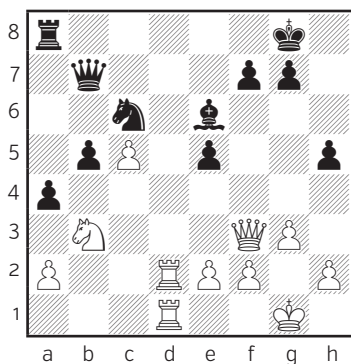


WARM-UP SOLUTIONS

Example 1

.....

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2733]
 ▶ P. H. Nielsen [2693]
 Beijing 2011 [blitz]



25. ♖a5!

This is a classic deflecting sacrifice. The black knight controls the d8-square — it must be deflected.

25... ♞xa5

Of course Nielsen understood outright what would happen if the knight were captured but he decided not to deprive the audience of the pleasure of seeing checkmate on the board.

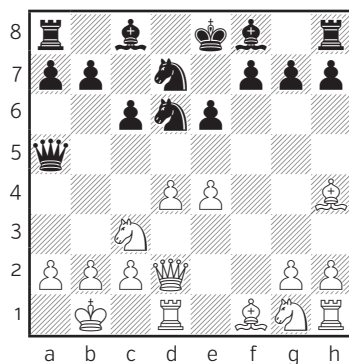
26. ♖d8+ ♔h7 27. ♚xh5# 1-0

Thank you, Peter!

Example 2

.....

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2743]
 ▶ J. Polgar [2685]
 Dubai 2014 [blitz]



“She will not play 10... ♞e7 as after the exchange the right to castle is lost, nor can a knight or bishop be placed on d7. What will Judit do?” — Though Shakh making his last move 10. ♔b1.

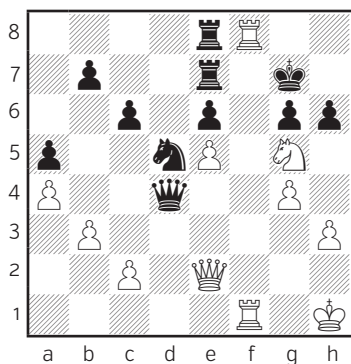
11. ♞d5!!

After the white king had retreated the capture 11... ♚xd2 happens without check and Black simply gets checkmated with 12. ♞c7#. Therefore, Judit resigned.

1-0

Example 3

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2765]
 ▶ P. Leko [2723]
 Beijing 2014 [blitz]



29. ♘xe6+!!

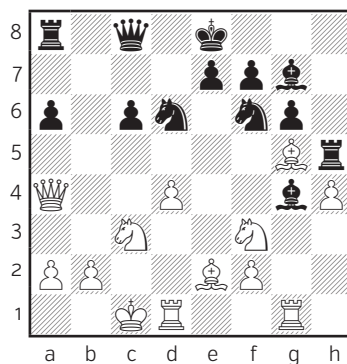
On the knight capture 29... ♖xe6
 White mates with 30. ♖1f7#.

While Black can retreat the his queen
 is also attacked thus resignation is in
 order.

1-0

Example 4

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2800]
 ▶ V. Topalov [2749]
 Paris GCT 2017 [blitz]



As we can see sometimes mating
 threats succeed even at the top level!
 However, if a piece can be won — it
 also brings the full point!

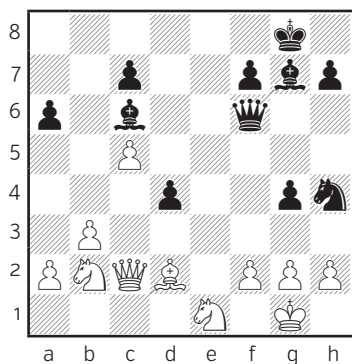
20. ♙xf6 ♙xf6 21. ♖xg4!

This is a small combination which de-
 flects the queen.

21... ♙xg4 22. ♙xc6+ 1-0

Example 5

▷ E. Hansen [2629]
 ▶ S. Mamedyarov [2804]
 PRO Chess League 2018 [blitz]



Eric decided that having placed the knight on e1 he was protected from mating threats. However, it was only an illusion.

27... ♖xg2!

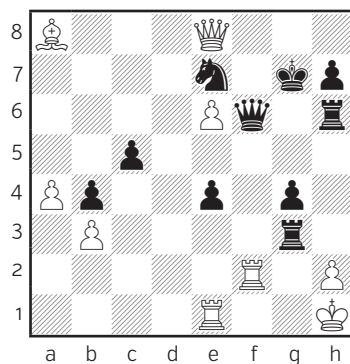
After 28. ♘xg2 Black will play 28... ♕f3 and in case of any retreat of the knight then 29... ♖h1#. The white king hasn't managed to escape: 29. ♔f1 ♕xg2+ 30. ♔e2 ♕f3+ 31. ♔d3 ♕f1#.

Therefore, White resigned.

0-1

Example 6

▷ F. Caruana [2816]
 ▶ S. Mamedyarov [2808]
 Leuven GCT Rapid, 2018



48... ♖xh2+!!

The simple 48... ♕f3 49. ♖xf3 exf3 also leads to a win. But the task was: "find the shortest way to win".

Therefore, only the rook sacrifice is a correct answer. After 49. ♖xh2 or 49. ♕f3+ White gets mated.

Therefore, White resigned.

0-1

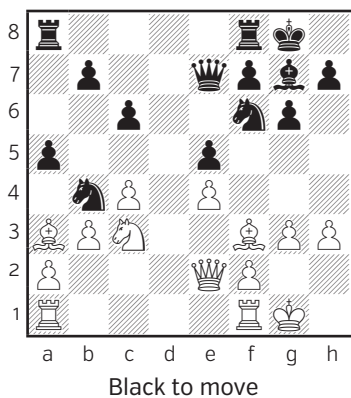
TESTS

Now that your brain has warmed up and your combination vision has sharpened, one can start to solve more complicated tasks. Just remember: a right decision is not always a bright tactical stroke. Sometimes it can be a fine positional manoeuvre or even a precise defending resource.

Test 1

.....

▷ F. Abdulin
▶ S. Mamedyarov [2201]
Baku 2000

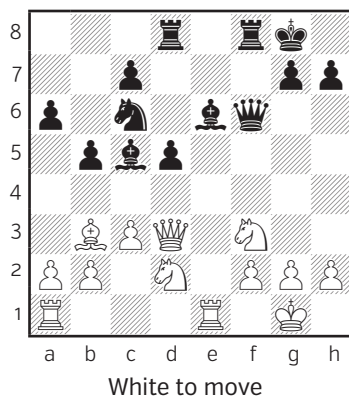


- A. Black's position is:
a) somewhat better,
b) somewhat worse,
c) equal.
- B. How should he continue?

Test 2

.....

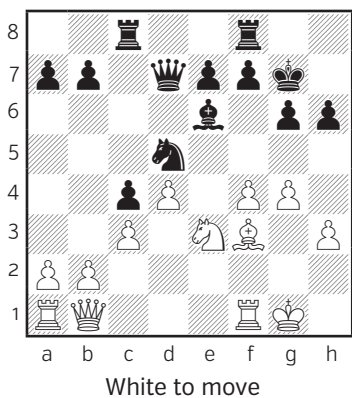
▷ S. Gurbanov
▶ S. Mamedyarov [2201]
Baku 2000



- A. White's position is:
a) better,
b) worse,
c) approximately equal.
- B. What do you think about the move
17. ♖xe6?

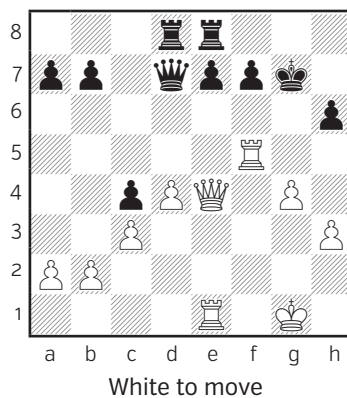
Test 3

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2201]
 - ▷ S. Dolmatov [2615]
- Dubai 2000



Test 4

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2201]
 - ▷ S. Dolmatov [2615]
- Dubai 2000



- A. White's position is:
- a) equal,
 - b) worse,
 - c) better.

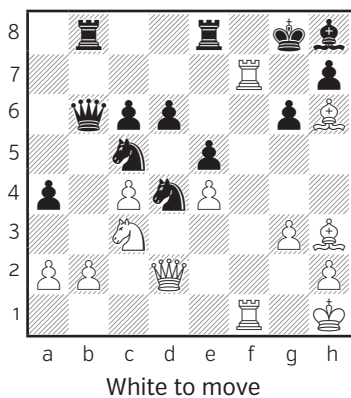
B. How should he continue?

Find the strongest continuation.

Test 5

.....

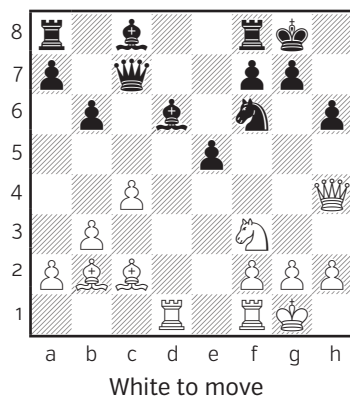
- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2479]
 ▶ R. Babaev [2334]
 Baku 2001



Test 6

.....

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2479]
 ▶ S. Davidov [2217]
 Baku 2001



Find the best continuation.

- A. White's position is:
 a) better,
 b) winning,
 c) equal.

B. Prove your assessment with a variation.

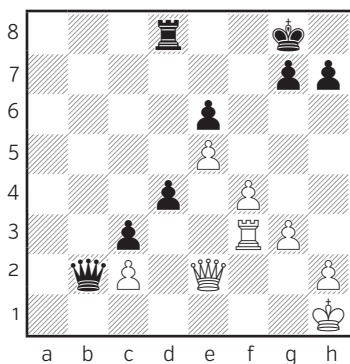
Test 7

.....

▷ L. Trent [2217]

▶ S. Mamedyarov [2503]

Oropesa del Mar 2001



Black to move

How should he continue?

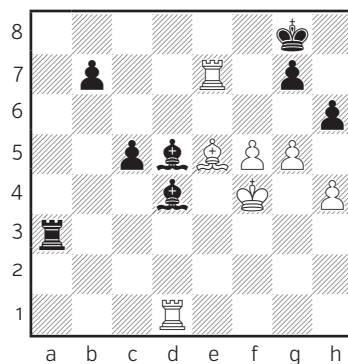
Test 8

.....

▷ J. Isaev [2455]

▶ S. Mamedyarov [2522]

Moscow 2002



Black to move

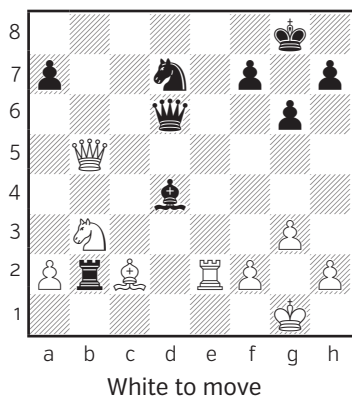
- A. Black's position is:
- somewhat better,
 - worse,
 - winning.

B. Prove your answer with an analysis.

Test 9

.....

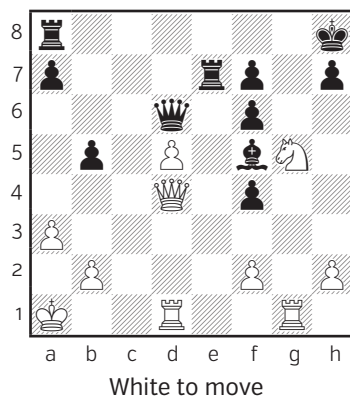
- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2522]
 ▶ A. Lastin [2630]
 Moscow 2002



Test 10

.....

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2542]
 ▶ P. V. Tregubov [2627]
 Dubai 2002



Which of two moves is better:

- a) 29. ♖d2
 b) 29. ♕e4?

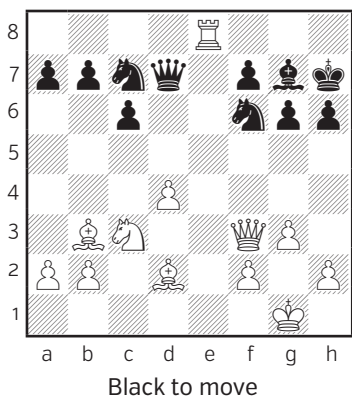
A. White's position is:

- a) considerably better — he plays to win,
 b) somewhat worse — he has to fight to equalize,
 c) equal.

B. Show how White should continue.

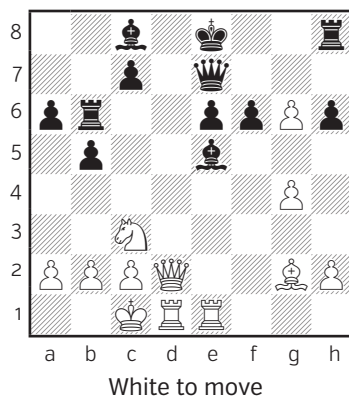
Test 11

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2542]
 - ▶ V. Priehoda [2425]
- Batumi 2002



Test 12

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2542]
 - ▶ A. Anastasian [2591]
- Batumi 2002



A. Which capture would you recommend for Black — 23...♔xe8 or 23...♞cxe8?

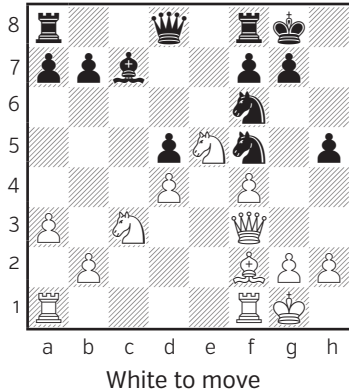
How should White realize his evident advantage?

B. Support your reply with a variation.

Test 13

.....

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2542]
 ▶ V. Gaprindashvili [2471]
 Baku 2002

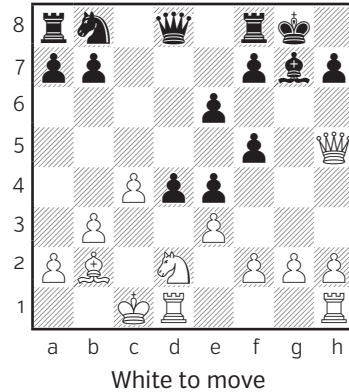


- A. White's position is:
 a) equal,
 b) better,
 c) worse.
- B. How should he continue?

Test 14

.....

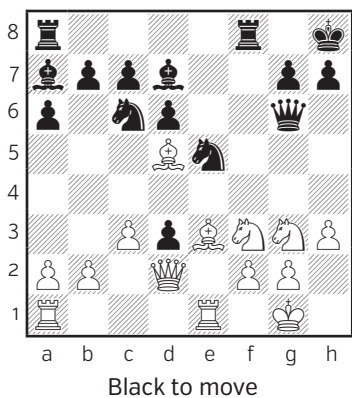
- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2542]
 ▶ S. Guliev [2481]
 Saraybahce 2002



- A. Assess the position:
 a) White has a big advantage,
 b) both sides chances are equal,
 c) Black is somewhat better.
- B. Prove your assessment with a variation.

Test 15

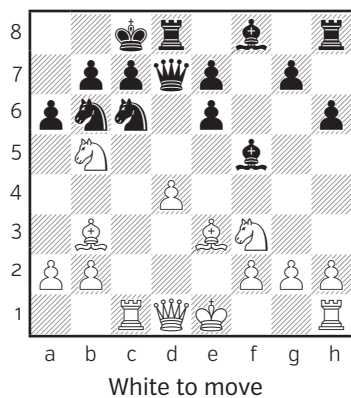
- ▷ A. Kosteniuk [2457]
 - ▶ S. Mamedyarov [2585]
- Lausanne 2003



Find the strongest continuation.

Test 16

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2595]
 - ▶ S. R. Mannion [2348]
- Plovdiv 2003

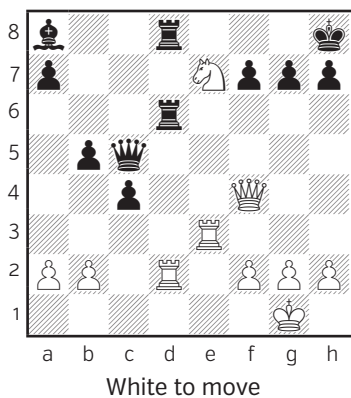


Find the strongest continuation.

Test 17

.....

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2646]
 ▶ A. Timofeev [2578]
 Moscow 2004

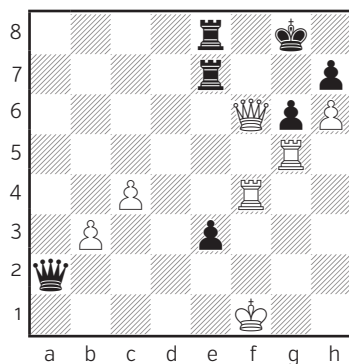


White to move

Test 18

.....

- ▷ S. Mamedyarov [2657]
 ▶ M. Al Modiahki [2579]
 Dubai 2004



White to move

What is the best continuation for White?

Find the strongest continuation for White.