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Preface

Chess players are praised for their ability to look ahead, formulate a clear plan, and act accordingly. And rightly so. Our beautiful game is the perfect learning environment for becoming a **strategic expert**. But what should a chess player do to reach such a level? It starts with playing many games and analysing them carefully afterwards. At the same time, you should **learn from the best** by studying the games of the world's strongest players and gradually build their techniques into your play.

100 strategic exercises

Deducting useful lessons from top-level games can be a real challenge since most of the decisions are taken subconsciously and can easily stay under the surface. Luckily, you are not on your own. I have created **100 strategic exercises** from the games of the most recent **World Chess Champions**, from Bobby Fischer to Ding Liren. Solving these exercises will help every **ambitious club player** to better construct their own plans in a chess game.

This book teaches you how to:

- improve your worst-placed piece;
- exploit a lead in development;
- make the right piece trade;
- create a strong square;
- discover your opponent's weakest spot;
- use an open file;
- launch a powerful pawn break;
- open up the position when needed;

and much more.

Take it slow

You will get the most out of this book if you take your time and solve the exercises one by one. I advise you to put the positions on a chessboard and only write down your answer when you would have been ready to **play the key move in a real game**. Afterwards, you can compare your solution to the game analysis on the backside of the page. You can be very proud of yourself if you have found the World Chess Champion's move! If not? Even better. **This means that you have learned something!** I recommend you to mark these exercises and retry them later.

Have fun!

I sincerely hope you will enjoy solving the exercises, and I wish you all the best in your chess career! If you have any comments regarding this book or stories to tell about how you were able to apply your new skills in your games, please feel free to reach out to me at chesstoolbox@outlook.com.

Now let's see if you can come up with the same plan as a World Champion did!

Good luck!

Thomas Willemze
Haarlem, June 2023

PART 1

Bobby Fischer

1.1 Introduction

Our **World Chess Champion Strategy Training** kicks off with **Bobby Fischer** (1943-2008). He gained the title in 1972 after beating Boris Spassky in what has to be the most famous chess match that was ever held. ‘I believe in good moves!’ was a typical Fischer quote and he certainly made a lot of them during his career.

Fischer was famous for his incredible fighting spirit and the fact that he never shied away from a confrontation. When I started analysing his games, I expected to find many complex attacks, but eventually, his flawless technique stood out. Fischer always seemed to be in control, and it is amazing to see how sound his games were – even when you check them with modern engines. In this introduction, I will show you two typical Fischer games. In the first one, he **carefully builds up a kingside attack** before he overpowers his opponent. The second game is a clean, technical win where Fischer uses an **outpost** to dominate an **open file** and demonstrates how you can have **too much space** when you run out of pieces.

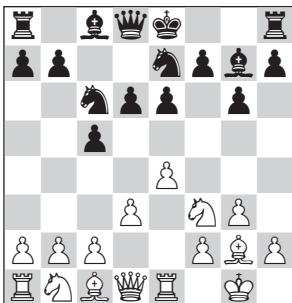
1.1.1 Smooth kingside attack

Bobby Fischer

Oscar Panno

Buenos Aires 1970 (8)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d3 ♘c6 4.g3 g6
5.♙g2 ♙g7 6.0-0 ♝ge7 7.♞e1 d6



8.c3

Fischer likes to keep things simple in the opening. Instead of rushing into concrete play, he first develops his pieces and calmly builds up a strong centre.

8...0-0

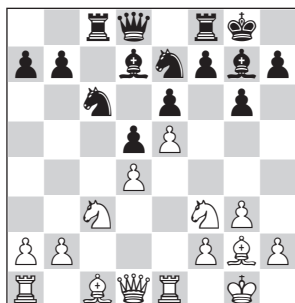
This standard move gives Fischer the central control that he was aiming for. Nowadays, most players opt for the more challenging move 8...e5.

9.d4 cxd4 10.cxd4 d5

In hindsight, it would have been wiser for Black to keep the centre fluid with 10...♙b6. The text move

gives Fischer his desired closed centre, which enables him to initiate a kingside attack.

11.e5 ♖d7 12.♗c3 ♜c8



13.♙f4

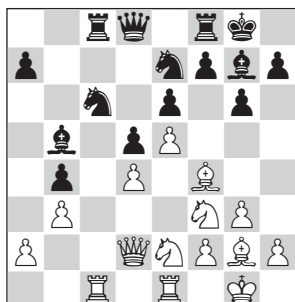
Fischer overprotects the important e5-pawn to discourage the move ...f7-f6. This pawn break is Black's only way to open up the centre and, therefore, a very important defensive resource.

13...♘a5 14.♜c1

Note how Fischer first takes prophylactic measures on the queenside before directing his pieces towards the black king.

14...b5 15.b3 b4 16.♘e2 ♙b5

17.♞d2 ♘ac6



18.g4!

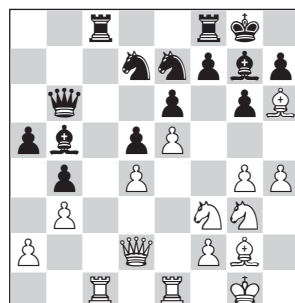
This is the most precise way to get the kingside attack started. 18.h4

is met by 18...♘f5!, after which it becomes difficult for White to make progress because 19.g4 runs into 19...♘xh4!.

18...a5 19.♘g3

Black really needed the f5-square to organize his defence. It is now up to Fischer to slowly but surely build up an irresistible attack.

19...♞b6 20.h4 ♘b8 21.♙h6 ♘d7



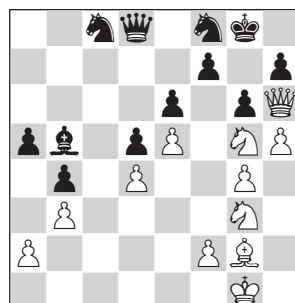
22.♞g5 ♜xc1 23.♜xc1 ♙xh6

24.♞xh6 ♜c8 25.♜xc8+ ♘xc8 26.h5!

Fischer softens Black's pawn structure before sending in his pieces.

26...♞d8 27.♘g5 ♘f8

This position could have been an exercise.



How did Fischer bring in an extra attacker?

28. ♖e4!

After this brilliant move, Fischer will have either the bishop or an extra knight available for his attack.

28... ♜e7

28... dxe4 loses quickly after
29. ♘3xe4 ♖e7 30. ♘f6+ ♔h8
31. ♘xf7#.

29. ♘h7!

The attackers are in place. The next step is to create an entrance towards the black king.

29... ♘h7 30. hxg6 fxg6 31. ♖xg6**31... ♘g5**

31... ♜g7 32. ♖xh7+ ♜xh7 33. ♜xe6+ wins the knight and the game.

32. ♘h5 ♘f3+ 33. ♖g2 ♘h4+ 34. ♖g3 ♘xg6 35. ♘f6+ ♖f7 36. ♜h7+

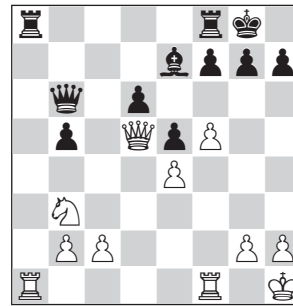
Black resigned in view of 36... ♖f8
37. ♜g8#.

This game taught us that there is no need to hurry if you want to crush your opponent in a **kingside attack**. You will get the best results if you first start controlling or closing the **centre** and ensure your opponent cannot develop any **counterplay**.

1.1.2 Outpost and space ‘advantage’

Wolfgang Unzicker**Bobby Fischer**

Varna ol 1962 (7)

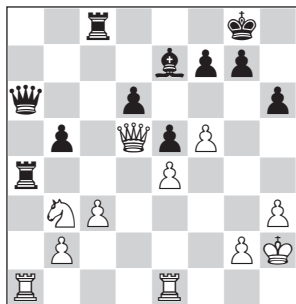


White has just traded two sets of minor pieces and is ready to play against the ‘bad’ bishop on e7. However, it turns out that the white knight is the real poor piece and, more importantly, that Fischer can take advantage of the open a-file.

19... ♖a4!

Making use of an **outpost** is a very important technique in the fight for the **open file**. An effective outpost is one where a trade would harm your opponent. In this concrete position, White is unable to take the rook on a4 because 20. ♖xa4 bxa4 loses the b2-pawn. This means that the black rook can stay on a4 for the moment, and Fischer can soon add more pressure by placing a queen or a second rook on the a-file.

20. c3 ♜a6 21. h3 ♜c8 22. ♖fe1 h6 23. ♖h2



Fischer's major pieces have reached promising squares. It is now time to activate the 'bad' bishop.

23...♗g5!

The a-file is not White's only concern in this position. White has a lot of space but no pieces to protect that space! Especially the dark squares are extremely vulnerable, as Fischer is soon going to highlight.

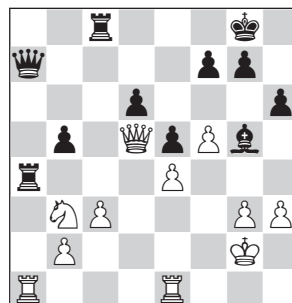
24.g3

Aiming for 25.h4 in order to chase the bishop away.

24...♖a7!

White is too late. Fischer's rooks are unleashed and are about to enter the white ranks with deadly force.

25.♔g2



25...♖a2!

The rook enters the **second rank**, and the game is almost over.

26.♔f1 ♖xc3 0-1

Remember how Fischer used an **outpost** to increase the pressure on his opponent and how he turned his opponent's **space 'advantage'** into a liability by manoeuvring his pieces towards the critical squares.

1.1.3 Conclusion

Fischer was a very technical player with an incredible fighting spirit. This introduction already showed us how a **closed centre** can help you to build up a kingside attack without allowing any form of **counterplay** by your opponent. We also witnessed how you can use an **open file** to dominate your opponent and how you can exploit your opponent's weaknesses. There is more to come in the exercise section.

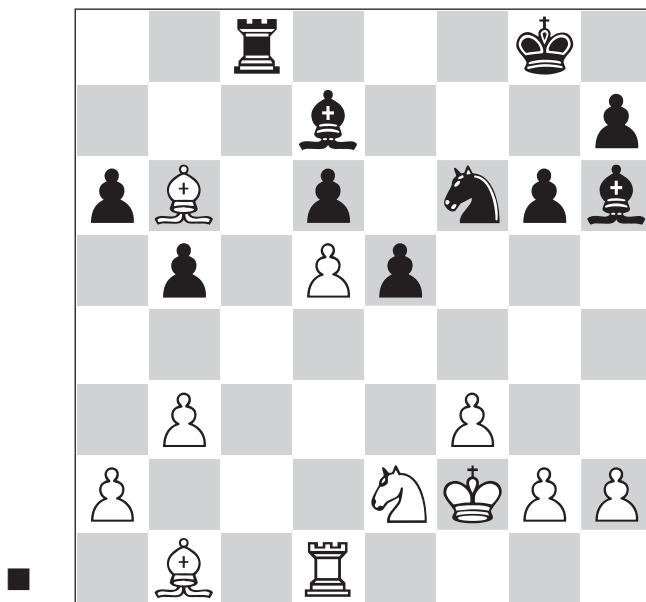
Good luck!

1.2 Exercises – Exercise 1

Julio Salas Romo

Bobby Fischer

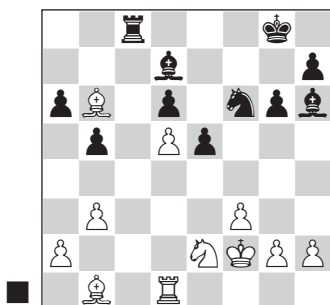
Santiago de Chile 1959 (8)



How did Fischer materialize his control over the c-file?

1) Salas Romo–Fischer

Santiago de Chile 1959 (8)



Fischer has already taken two important steps in the fight for the open c-file. His rook is placed on the open file, and his dark-squared bishop controls c1 to prevent the white rook from fighting back. Black controls the open file but cannot really benefit from it because the **entrance squares** c1, c2, and c3 are all well-protected. An open file without a way to enter a promising rank in your opponent's camp isn't worth much. This is why Fischer came up with the following move:

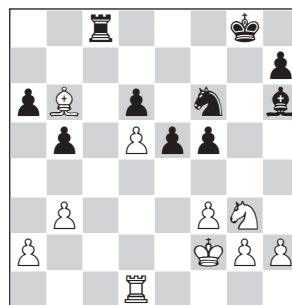
26... ♖f5!

Fischer wants to trade the light-squared bishop to **eliminate the defender** of the key c2-square.

27. ♗xf5

White cannot avoid the trade and decides to capture the bishop in an attempt to create a weakness in the black pawn structure.

27... gxf5 28. ♘g3



The knight forces the f-pawn to move up to f4 and restrict the black bishop.

28... ♖c2+!

Mission accomplished! The rook enters the **second rank**. This is the ultimate goal in the fight for the open file.

29. ♖g1 f4

With such a powerful rook, Fischer does not mind retreating his bishop on the next move, although 29... ♗d2 30. ♗xf5 ♗xd5 would have been even more convincing.

30. ♗f5 ♗f8 31. a4

This is a highly unpleasant ending for White. His rook is tied to the defence of the d-pawn, and his queenside pawns are no match for the black rook.

31... ♖b2 32. ♗d8 ♖f7 33. axb5

axb5 34. g4 fxg3 35. ♗xg3 ♖xb3

36. ♗xf6 ♖xf6

With an extra pawn in the pocket, Fischer won this ending without much trouble on move 66.

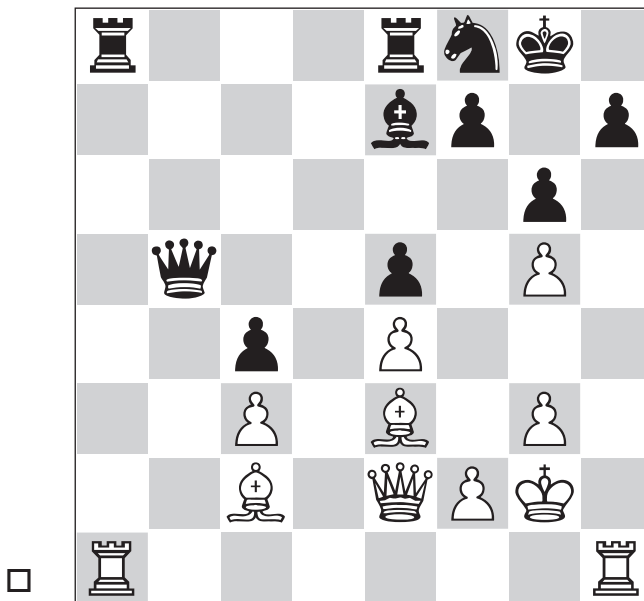
Conclusion

Eliminating the defender is a very important technique in the fight for the **entrance square** on an open file, for example on the **second rank**.

Exercise 2

Bobby Fischer
Ruben Shocron

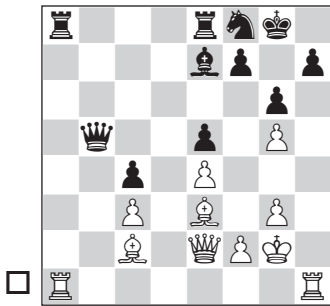
Mar del Plata 1959 (7)



How did Fischer win the fight over the control of the a-file?

2) Fischer-Shocron

Mar del Plata 1959 (7)



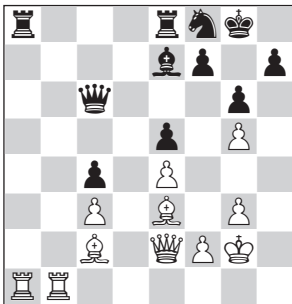
Fischer found a clever way to double his rooks on the a-file.

32. ♖hb1

The rook uses an attack on the black queen to join its colleague on the a-file with tempo.

32... ♕c6

Forced since the queen has to keep an eye on c4.



33. ♖b6!

Fischer improves his rook **with tempo** for the second time. The a-file is already in sight.

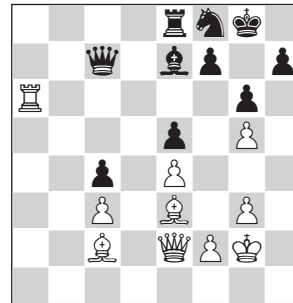
33... ♕xb7

33... ♕xb7 is a clever way to trade a set of rooks, but White nevertheless gets a rook on the seventh rank after 34. ♖xa8! ♕c6 35. ♖a7!. Black is in serious trouble due to the upcoming ♗c2-a4-b5.

34. ♖ba6 ♖xa6

This move is forced because 34... ♕b7 35. ♖a7! ♕c6 36. ♗a4! loses material.

35. ♖xa6



Mission accomplished! Fischer has conquered the a-file and is clearly better.

35... ♖c8

This move brings us to the next exercise.

Conclusion

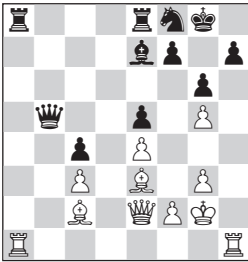
Fischer gave a fine demonstration on how to **double your rooks** with tempo to **conquer the open file**. The ♖b1-b6-a6 manoeuvre is worth remembering!

1.3 FLASH CARDS FISCHER



Entrance square – Eliminate the defender

Conquering an open file only adds value if you have an **entrance square** available that your rook can use to **enter a rank** in your opponent's camp. Fischer brought his rook to the second rank by **trading the defending bishop** with 26... ♖f5!



Open file – Double your rooks with tempo

With the elegant ♖h1-b1-b6-a6 manoeuvre, Fischer managed to **double his rooks with tempo** and gain control over the a-file. Shortly after, Fischer could have got a large advantage by placing his rook on the **entrance square** a7.

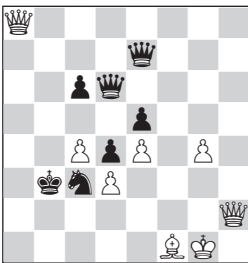


Central passed pawn – Trade the blockading piece

Fischer taught us an important rule:

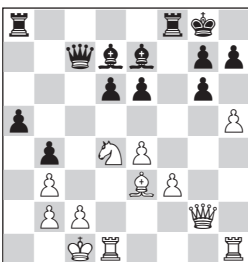
If you possess a passed pawn, try to exchange as many minor pieces as possible!

With 29... ♙e4!, he traded the last blockading minor piece, forced his opponent into passive defence, and won the game convincingly.



Queen endings – King safety is key!

Queens are excellent attackers, which means that **king safety** is an important element in queen endings, even more so when both sides possess two queens! Fischer's best chance in this position was to **open up a diagonal with 42.c5!** and start an **attack on the enemy king**.



Opposite-side castled kings – Trade attacker

Time is important in positions with opposite-side castled kings, but sometimes it pays off to **be patient** and take **prophylactic measures** before starting your own attack. Larsen demonstrated how to **eliminate your opponent's attacker** with 20...g5!.

PART 3

Garry Kasparov

3.1 Introduction

Garry Kasparov (1963) took over the world title from Karpov in 1985 after they had contested each other for more than a year. Kasparov was called **The Beast of Baku** for his energetic and aggressive play, and he was feared for his excellent opening preparation.

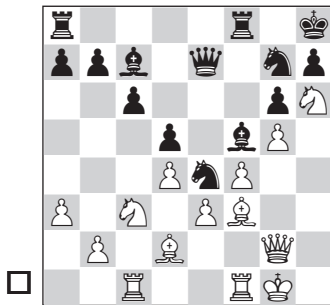
Kasparov was a fierce attacker who could develop a powerful initiative from almost any position. Somehow, he always found ways to manoeuvre his pieces into enemy territory. I have selected two games as an example. In the first one, Kasparov opened up **diagonals** and created an **open file** to activate his pieces. In the second one, he skilfully created an **entrance for his queen** to decide the game in style.

3.1.1 Opening up diagonals

Garry Kasparov

Sergei Vdovin

Soviet Union 1979



Kasparov already has a fantastic position due to his powerful knight on h6. His next step will be to open up diagonals for his bishops to threaten the enemy king even further.

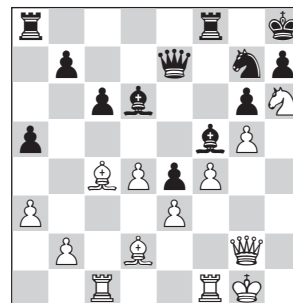
27. ♖xe4

This trade opens up the a2-g8 diagonal for the light-squared bishop.

27...dxe4 28. ♗e2 ♗d6 29. ♗c4

The first bishop has reached a tasty diagonal. Soon Kasparov will open up a second diagonal with d4-d5.

29...a5



30. ♗a2!

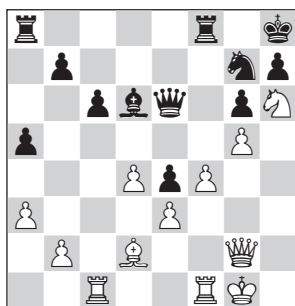
Putting your bishops as far away from your opponent as possible

is a good habit. Kasparov could have played 30.d5 immediately, but wanted to avoid 30...b5 31.♙b3 c5.

30...♙e6

It was already very difficult for Black to come up with a constructive plan. The move 30...♘e6 would, for instance, lose instantly after 31.♙xe6 ♙xe6 32.d5 ♙xd5 33.♙c3+.

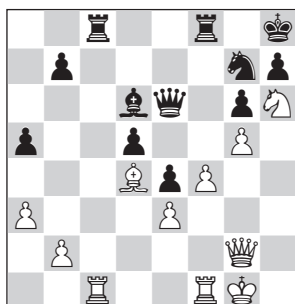
31.♙xe6 ♙xe6



32.d5!

For the second time, Kasparov opens up a diagonal for his bishop.

32...cxd5 33.♙c3 ♖ac8 34.♙d4



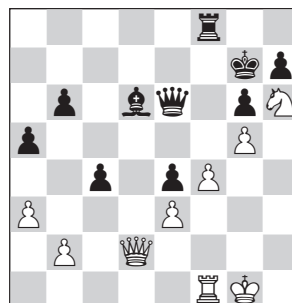
Kasparov is extremely happy with his bishop and wants to avoid 34...♖xc3.

34...♖c4 35.♖xc4!

Kasparov prevents another exchange sacrifice and is on his way to decide the game with ♗g2-d2-c3.

35...dxc4 36.♗d2 b6

37.♙xg7+ ♔xg7



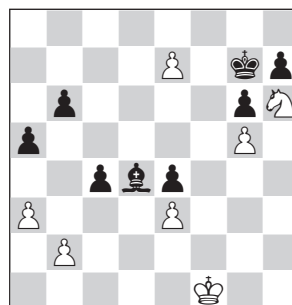
38.♗d4+

Look how perfectly the white queen, knight and pawns are cooperating! The rook is the only piece that has room for improvement.

38...♖f6 39.f5!

Kasparov opens up the f-file and invites the rook to the party. It is game over.

39...♙e5 40.fxe6 ♖xf1+ 41.♔xf1 ♙xd4 42.e7



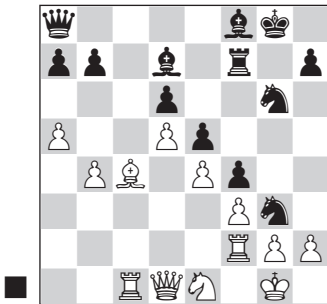
Black cannot stop the pawn from promoting and therefore resigns.

3.1.2 Creating an entrance for the queen

Jeroen Piket
Garry Kasparov

2540
2775

Tilburg 1989 (8)



Kasparov has already acquired two minor pieces for a rook but can only get an advantage if he can bring his pieces closer to the enemy king.

25...a6!

This subtle move opens up the diagonal for the queen!

26. ♖d3

26.hxg3 fxg3 27. ♖a2 ♔a7+, followed by ...♗f7-f4-h4, is also devastating for White.

26... ♔a7!



Kasparov is winning due to his complete control over the dark squares. White is left without any counterplay and is defenceless against the upcoming manoeuvre of ...♕f8-e7-h4.

27.b5

White's final attempt to activate his pieces enables Kasparov to finish the game in style.

27...axb5 28. ♕xb5 ♖h1! 0-1

3.1.3 Conclusion

Kasparov was a very aggressive player who continuously tried to maximize his piece activity and create entrances towards the enemy king. In the exercise section, you will find quite a few positions that require the same amount of energy, although I must admit I have added a few of Kasparov's technical accomplishments as well.

Good luck!

Exercise 33

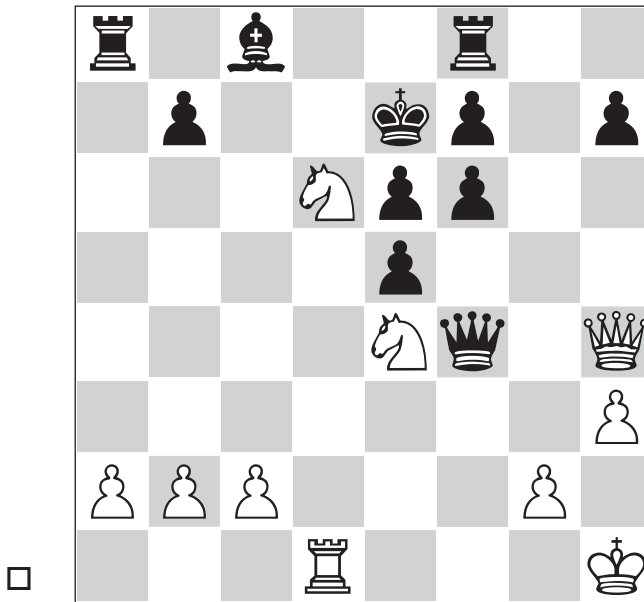
Garry Kasparov

2770

Viswanathan Anand

2650

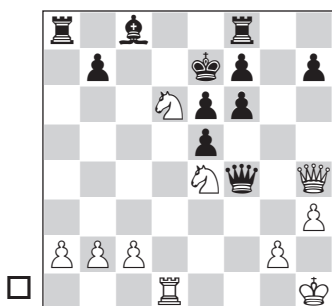
Tilburg 1991 (5)



Can you find a way to keep Kasparov's initiative going?

33) Kasparov–Anand

Tilburg 1991 (5)



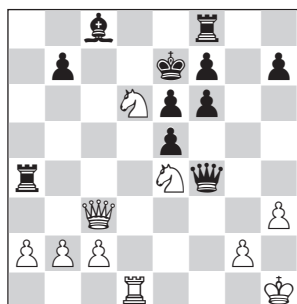
23. ♖e1!

With an exchange and a pawn down, White must **keep the queens on the board**. Kasparov has rightly estimated that his queen is needed on the other side of the board.

23... ♖a4

23...f5 looks tempting, but it leads to mate in four! 24. ♘xc8+ ♖axc8 25. ♖b4+ ♖c5 26. ♖xc5+ ♔e8 27. ♘f6#.

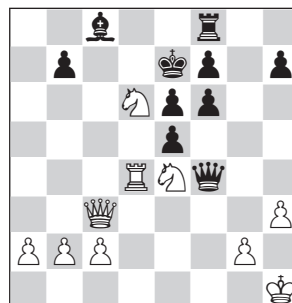
24. ♖c3



24... ♖d4

24... ♖xe4 runs into another forced mate after 25. ♖c7+ ♔d7 26. ♘f5+ exf5 27. ♖xd7#.

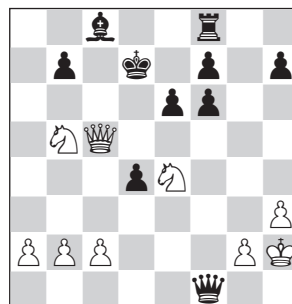
25. ♖xd4



25... ♖f1+

25...exd4 loses the queen after 26. ♖c7+ ♔d7 27. ♘c8+! ♖xc8 28. ♖xf4.

26. ♔h2 exd4 27. ♖c5 ♔d7 28. ♘b5



It is impossible to defend yourself against a queen and two unleashed knights. Black gave another check and resigned after

28... ♖f4+ 29.g3

in view of 29... ♖e5 30. ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 31. ♖d6+ ♔e8 32. ♘c7#.

Conclusion

Try to keep taking the entire board into consideration during your games. Kasparov realized that his queen had got stuck on the kingside and won the game convincingly by rerouting it to the other side of the board.

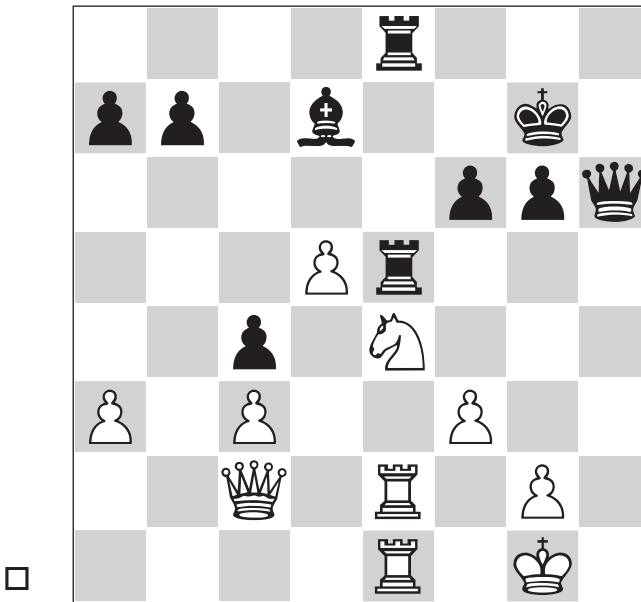
Exercise 34**Garry Kasparov**

2595

Stefano Tatai

2465

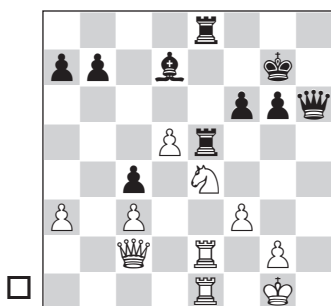
Dubai ol 1986 (13)



Kasparov has a clear vision of the kind of endgame he wanted to play. Can you find the best move in this position?

34) Kasparov–Tatai

Dubai ol 1986 (13)



Kasparov dreamed of an ending with queen and knight vs queen and bishop.

34. ♖d6!

This is the **right trade**. White must get rid of the rooks.

34... ♜xe2

Black will soon regret giving up his rooks without a fight. 34... ♜8e7! 35. ♜e4! ♜xe4 36. ♜xe4 ♜e5 would only have given White a slight edge.

35. ♜xe2 ♜xe2 36. ♚xe2 ♚c1+

37. ♚f2 ♚f8 38. ♚e3 ♚xa3

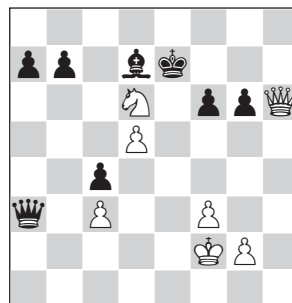
38... ♚xe3+ 39. ♚xe3 b5 40. ♚d4! is hopeless for Black.

39. ♚h6+!

Kasparov is about to start a small masterclass on the queen and knight tandem.

39... ♚e7

39... ♚g8 40. ♚xg6+ ♚h8 41. ♚f7#.



40. ♚g7+!

Kasparov again chases the black king to a very uncomfortable square.

40... ♚d8

40... ♚xd6 runs into a deadly skewer: 41. ♚f8+ ♚c7 42. ♚xa3.

41. ♚f8+

Kasparov creates a battery with tempo. Black resigned because he loses the queen after 41... ♚c7 42. ♚b5+ ♚xb5 43. ♚xa3.

Conclusion

Kasparov won this game convincingly because he **traded the right pieces**. Without the rooks, he could unleash the deadly combination of a queen and knight and decide the game with a textbook combination.

Exercise 35

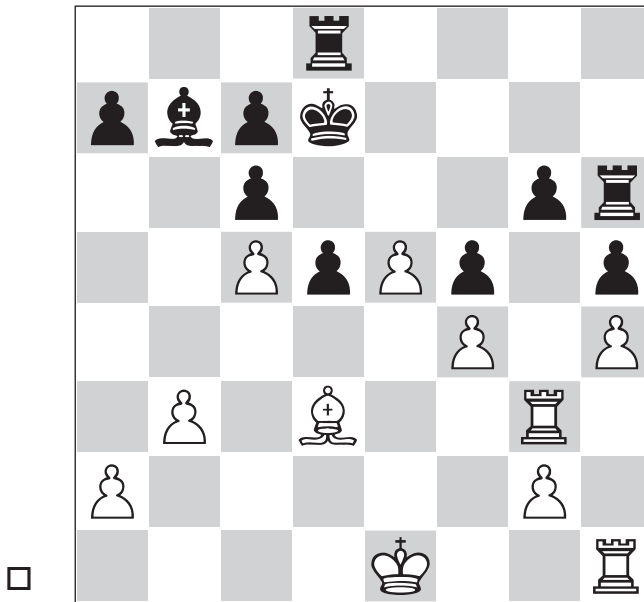
Garry Kasparov

2851

Etienne Bacrot

2594

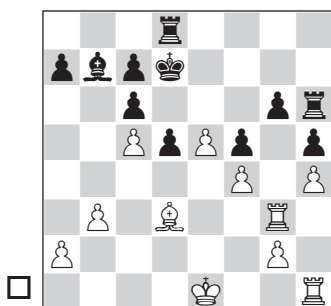
Sarajevo 2000 (1)



Kasparov has the superior pawn structure and more active bishop but has no clear way to get his pieces behind enemy lines. How should he continue?

35) Kasparov–Bacrot

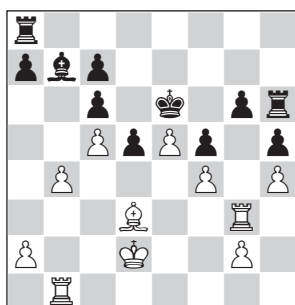
Sarajevo 2000 (1)



25.b4!

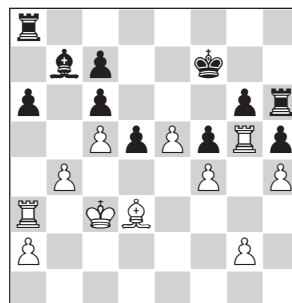
This is textbook strategy. Kasparov has already created a weakness on the kingside and is on his way to do the same on the other side of the board.

25...♔e6 26.♔d2 ♖a8 27.♞b1!



The rook is heading for a3 and prevents ...a7-a5 along the way.

**27...a6 28.♞b3 ♔f7 29.♞a3 ♜hh8
30.♞g5 ♜h6 31.♔c3**



Black is completely paralyzed, which means that Kasparov has all the time in the world to improve his pieces.

**31...♞b8 32.♞a5 ♖a8 33.♔d4 ♜hh8
34.♔c2 ♜ab8 35.♔d3 ♖a8 36.♔e2!**

Very subtle play by Kasparov. The third rank has become a two-way street, meaning his opponent must be prepared for both ♞g5-g3-a3 and ♞a5-a3-g3!

36...♜hb8

36...♔g7 37.♞g3 ♖a7 38.b5 is also hopeless for Black.

37.♞a3 ♜h8 38.♞ag3 ♞ag8 39.♔xh5
Black resigned.

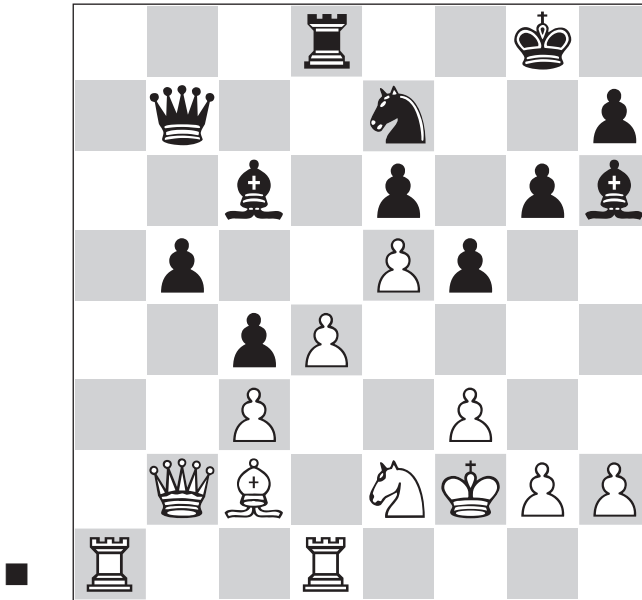
Conclusion

Kasparov demonstrated how to **create a second weakness** to turn a favourable position into a full point.

Exercise 36

Aram Gasarjan
Garry Kasparov

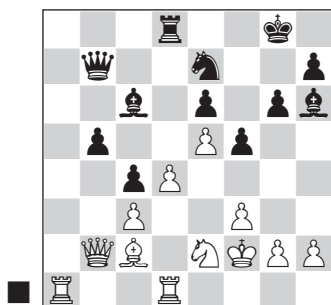
Baku tt 1974



Kasparov has sacrificed an exchange and must prove his compensation for it. What would you play?

36) Gasarjan-Kasparov

Baku tt 1974

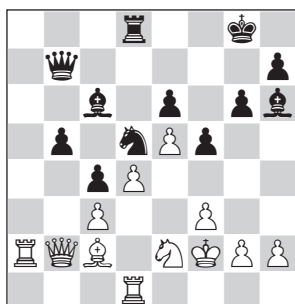


Kasparov realizes that his opponent dearly misses his dark-squared bishop and uses White's vulnerability on this specific colour complex to manoeuvre his pieces into the enemy position.

33...♖d5!

He first improves his knight. This is the only move that gives Black the advantage. Advancing the kingside pawns is too slow and enables White to trade queens, for instance, after 33...g5 34.♙a2 g4 35.♙a7.

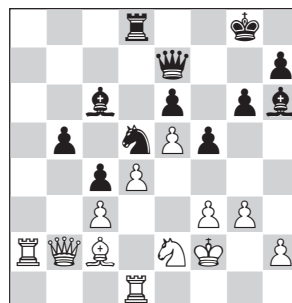
34.♙a2



34...♙e7

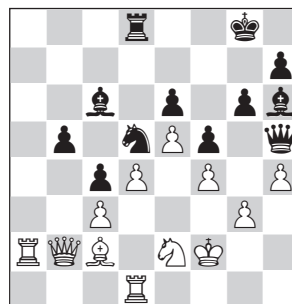
The next step is to bring in his queen. 34...♙e3+ 35.♙f1 ♜g7, followed by ...♙h6, would also have been very strong.

35.g3



White is well aware of the danger and uses his pawns to shut down the dark-squares.

35...♙g5 36.f4 ♙h5 37.h4



The white pawns do their best to compensate for the missing dark-squared bishop. You can move on to the next exercise to discover whether this was sufficient to keep White's king safe from Kasparov's active pieces.

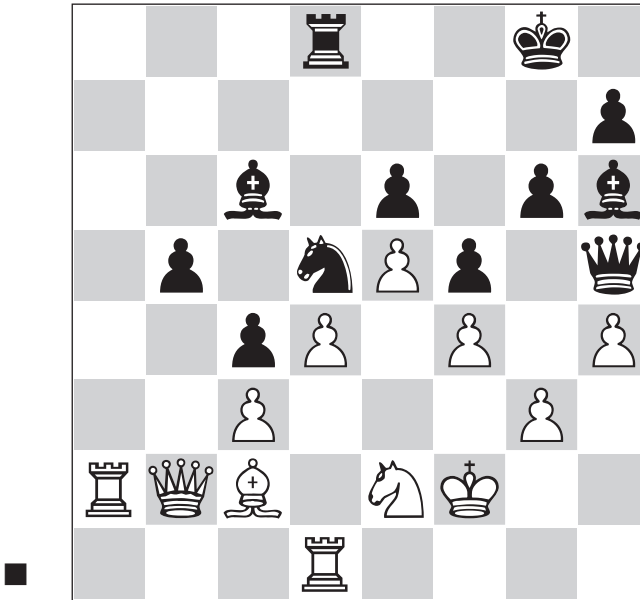
Conclusion

Kasparov recognized that the dark-squares were the most vulnerable part of his opponent's position and used them to manoeuvre his pieces into enemy territory.

Exercise 37

Aram Gasarjan
Garry Kasparov

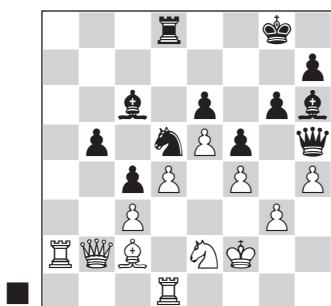
Baku tt 1974



Kasparov has skilfully directed his pieces towards the white king. Can you find a way in?

37) Gasarjan–Kasparov

Baku tt 1974

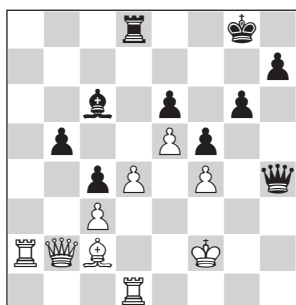


The previous exercise showed us how Kasparov used the dark squares to bring his pieces closer to the king. It is now time to force a way in.

37... ♕xf4!

The white pawn shield was White's main defensive resource and had to be removed forcefully. Note that 37... ♖xf4 38.gxf4 ♗xh4+ also wins.

38. ♖xf4 ♖xf4 39.gxf4 ♗xh4+!



The white pieces are very poorly coordinated and too far away from

the king. As a result, Kasparov only needs two attackers to achieve his goal.

40. ♖f1 ♗h1+ 41. ♖f2 ♗g2+ 42. ♖e3 ♗g3+ 43. ♖d2 ♗xf4+!

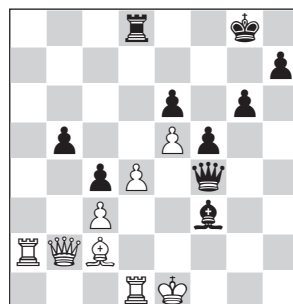
This was an important move.

Kasparov cannot allow the king to reach c1.

44. ♖e1 ♗e3+

In the next phase, Kasparov plays around with the white king until he finds a way to start winning back material.

45. ♖f1 ♗h3+ 46. ♖e1 ♗h4+ 47. ♖d2 ♗f4+ 48. ♖e1 ♖f3



This is the decisive move. Black threatens mate in three and forces his opponent to sacrifice a bishop. White went for

49. ♖a4 bxa4 50. ♖d2

and was outmanoeuvred by:

50... ♗h4+ 51. ♖f2 ♗e4+ 52. ♖f1 ♗d3+ 53. ♖g1 ♖e4 54. ♗d2 ♗g3+ 55. ♖f1 ♖d3+ 56. ♖e2 ♖b8

White resigned.

Conclusion

Kasparov realized his opponent's king was left without defending pieces and showed no hesitation. He **sacrificed a piece** to bring his queen and bishop behind enemy lines and won the game convincingly.

7.2 Exercises – Exercise 91

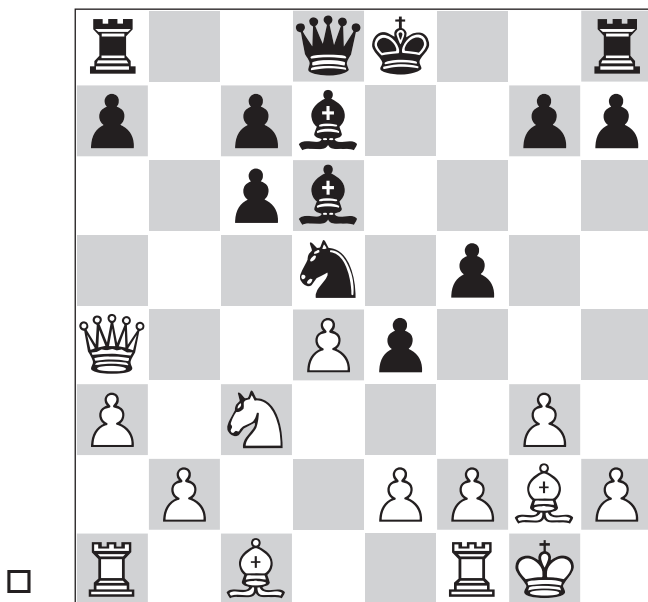
Ding Liren

2805

Ian Nepomniachtchi

2775

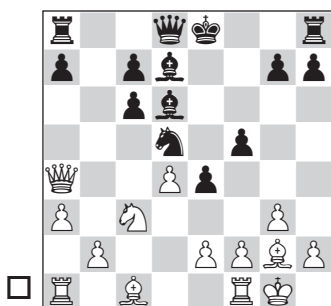
Zagreb 2019 (6)



Ding Liren is already quite far in his development. What should be his next step?

91) Ding Liren–Nepomniachtchi

Zagreb 2019 (6)



14.f3!

With the **black king still in the middle**, Ding Liren **opens up the position as quickly as possible!**

Increasing the pressure on d5 with 14.♖c4 does not lead to an advantage because of 14...♘b6! 15.♗b3 ♗f6, followed by 16...♙e6 and 17...0-0.

14...exf3

Black does not really have a choice because 14...e3 15.f4! is even worse than the game.

15.♙xf3!

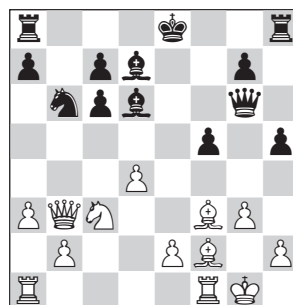
The most promising recapture, pressuring d5 and preparing e2-e4 to open up the centre.

15...♘b6 16.♗b3 ♗f6 17.♙e3

Simple and strong, from a human perspective. We already know that Ding Liren likes his bishops on adjacent squares. Stockfish does not fully agree and suggests a more

concrete approach with 17.♘e4! ♗xd4+ (17...fxe4 18.♙h5+) 18.♙e3 ♗c4 19.♘xd6+ cxd6. White has acquired the pair of bishops and gets a large advantage by trading queens on his own terms with 20.♗b4! ♗xb4 21.axb4.

17...♗g6 18.♙f2 h5



19.e4!

With the black king still in the middle, Ding Liren makes a second attempt to **open up the centre**.

19...h4 20.exf5 ♗xf5 21.♖ae1+ ♔d8

22.♘e4 ♗g6 23.♘d6 cxd6 24.d5

Once again: **open up the position!**

24...c5 25.a4!

Ding Liren sacrifices the a-pawn to make it harder for the black king to shelter on the queenside.

25...♙xa4 26.♗a3 ♖e8 27.b4!

Open up the position! It is almost game over now.

27...♖c8 28.bxc5 ♖xe1 29.♖xe1 hxg3

30.hxg3 dxc5 31.♔g2 ♗c2 32.♗e3

♖c7 33.♗e6 ♖d7 34.d6 ♔c8 35.♖h1

Black resigned.

Conclusion

With your opponent's king in the middle, **open up the position!** Ding Liren took this rule very seriously and chased the enemy king until the end.

Exercise 92

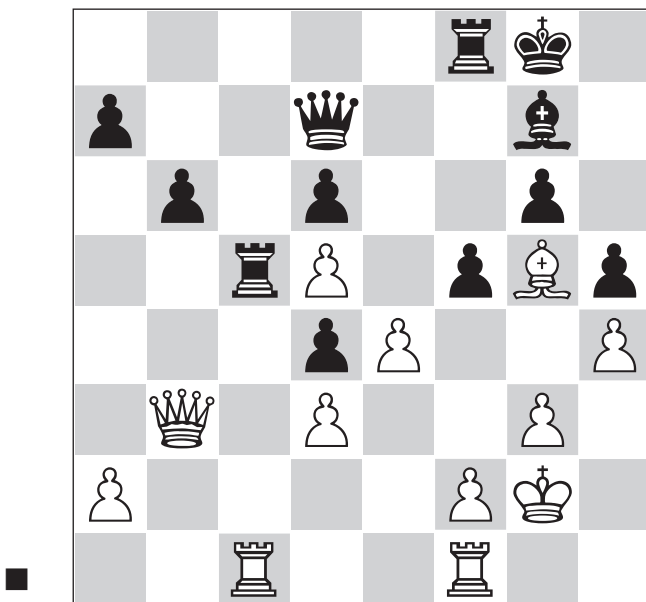
Fang Yuxiang

2498

Ding Liren

2759

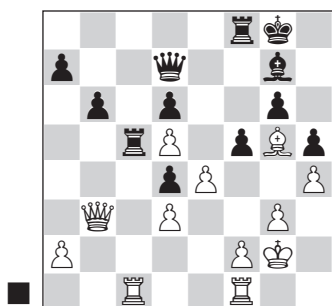
China tt 2017 (4)



Both sides have put their rook on the open c-file. What should Ding Liren play?

92) Fang Yuxiang–Ding Liren

China tt 2017 (4)



21...Rc3!

Ding Liren uses an **outpost** to install his rook on the **third rank**. The idea behind this move is that when our opponent captures the rook, we will get a very **dangerous passed pawn** in return.

21...fxe4 22.dxe4 Rxc3 with the same idea is also strong.

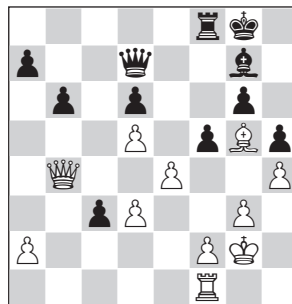
However, doubling the rooks with 21...Rfc8 is harmless because White can **protect the entrance square** with 22.Rxc5 Rxc5 23.Qd2.

22.Rxc3

White decides to trade the rooks and allow a dangerous passed pawn on c3.

22.Qd1 fxe4 23.dxe4 b5! was also better for Black.

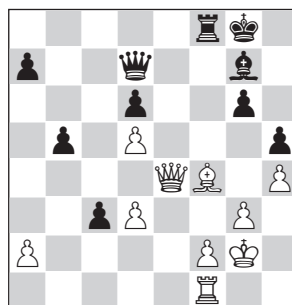
22...dxc3 23.Qb4



Ding Liren now pushes his queenside pawns to support the passed c-pawn.

23...b5! 24.Qf4 fxe4 25.Qxe4

25.dxe4 Rxf4! 26.gxf4 Qg4+ is terrible for White.



25...a5

Ding Liren continues his plan, although 25...Qf5 would have been stronger.

26.Qxg6 b4 27.Re1

The game continues with the next exercise.

Conclusion

Ding Liren used an **outpost** to install his rook on the **third rank**. His opponent could capture the rook, but then he had to face a **dangerous passed pawn** instead.

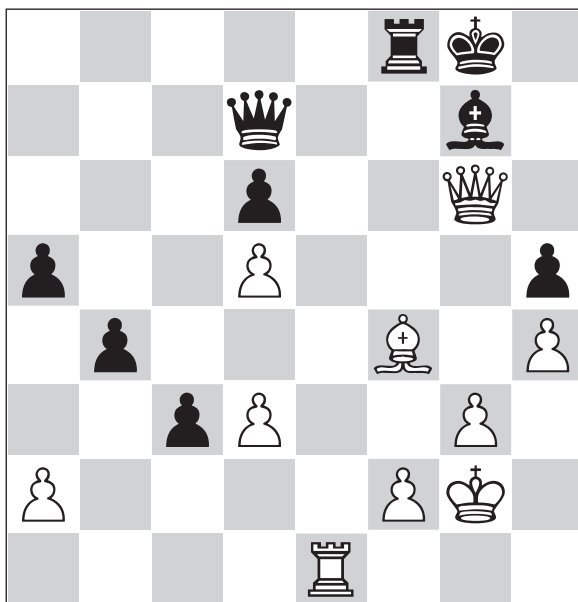
Exercise 93**Fang Yuxiang**

2498

Ding Liren

2759

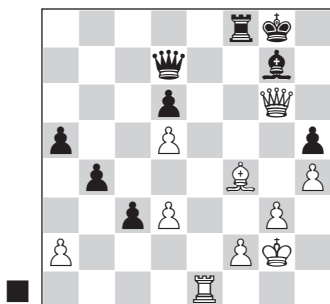
China tt 2017 (4)



Ding Liren has very dangerous queenside pawns but is under pressure on the kingside. How should he continue?

93) Fang Yuxiang–Ding Liren

China tt 2017 (4)



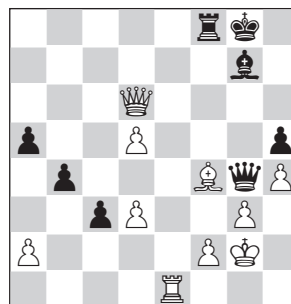
27... ♖g4

Ding Liren's wants to **trade** his opponent's **most dangerous attacker** before pursuing his own plan on the queenside.

27...a4 wins for White after 28. ♕xd6!, followed by ♕xb4, whereas 27...c2 28. ♖c1 ♖c8 29. ♕h6 gives White enough counterplay to hold the balance.

28. ♖xd6

28. ♖xg4 hxg4 29. ♕xd6 ♖d8 is a clear win for Black.



28... ♖xf4

This was the point! Ding Liren sacrifices an exchange to **force the queen trade**. His far-advanced queenside majority will do the rest.

29. ♖xf4 ♖xf4 30. gxf4 a4 31. d6 c2 32. d7 ♕f6

White cannot stop ...b4-b3-b2 and is lost.

33. ♖e8+ ♔f7 34. ♖c8 b3 35. axb3 axb3 36. ♖c6 ♕d8

White resigned.

Conclusion

Ding Liren realized that **trading his opponent's most dangerous attacker** was his key priority. He sacrificed an exchange to reach his goal, and his advanced queenside pawns did the rest.

Exercise 94

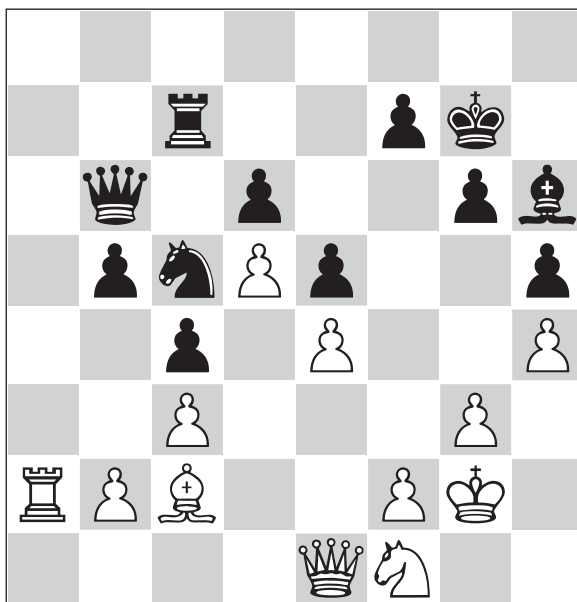
David Navara

2745

Ding Liren

2778

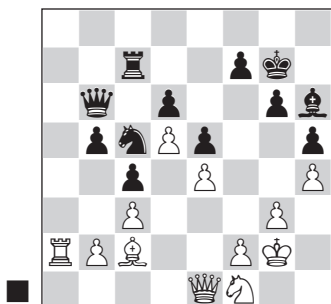
Shamkir 2018 (7)



How did Ding Liren push his opponent over the edge?

94) Navara–Ding Liren

Shamkir 2018 (7)

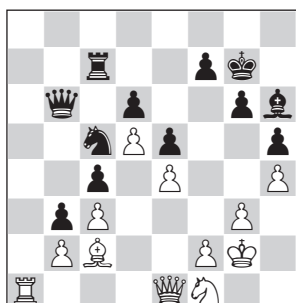


33...b4!

Ding Liren is on his way to **open up the c-file** for his rook.

34.cxb4

34.♖a1 b3!



analysis diagram

This is even worse for White, since 35.♗b1 ♖a7 leaves White with a horrible bishop, and 35.♗d1 ♖a7

36.♖xa7 ♕xa7 37.♗e2 ♕a2 gives Black a decisive passed pawn.

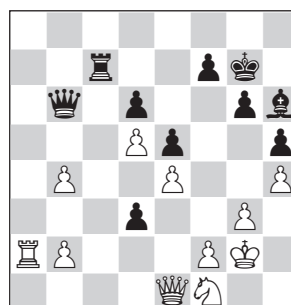
34...♗d3!

This was the move that Ding Liren was aiming for. He uses a **piece trade to open up the file** for his rook.

35.♗xd3

This move is forced since the queen has to keep an eye on the f2-pawn and 35.♕e2 is met with 35...♗c1! with a double attack on the queen and rook.

35...cxd3



In one move, Ding Liren **opened up the c-file** and **created a beautiful outpost** on c2 for his rook.

36.♖a1 ♖c2

White resigned in view of 37.♗h2 ♖e2 38.♕f1 ♗e3, rounding up the f2-pawn and White's king.

Conclusion

Ding Liren sacrificed a pawn to **open up the c-file** and **create an outpost** for his rook in one go. It is once again instructive how the game ended immediately when the rook arrived on the **second rank**.